

Arlington Transit Advisory Committee
Meeting Notes
September 14, 2021
7:00 PM
Microsoft Teams Meeting

TAC Members Present:

John Carten
Deidre Grant
Richard Price
Erika Chiang
Alexa Mavroidis
Laura MacNeil
Kate Garman
James Davenport

Attendees Present:

Lynn Rivers (staff)
Pierre Holloman (staff)
Kirk Dand (staff)
Robin McElhenny (staff)
Diana Isaza (staff)
Paul Mounier (staff)
Christine Baker (staff)
Jim Larsen (staff)
Michelle Congdon (staff)
Jay Lawson (staff)
Jiaxin Tong
M. Garret

Call to Order

- John Carten opened the meeting at 7:01 pm.

Introductions

- John Carten led roll call of TAC members present, Arlington staff, and others present.

Public Comment

- No public comments submitted, no speakers from the public.

Approval of Meeting Notes from July 20, 2021 TAC Meeting

- The amended meeting notes were approved unanimously.

TAC Vice Chair Nominations Announcement

- John Carten noted the TAC is seeking a Vice Chair position. Nominations shall be sent to Pierre Holloman by no later than October 31, 2021. If nominations are received and accepted, the TAC will vote on its next Vice Chair at the November 9, 2021 TAC meeting.

Columbia Pike Transit Stations Update

- Kirk Dand provided an overview of existing and proposed Premium Transit Network services which operate along Columbia Pike. In 2018, the first phase was implemented with restructuring of the Metrobus 16 line. In spring 2023, it is anticipated that the second phase including the Metrobus 16M to Crystal City will be implemented as well as a simplified limited stop Metrobus service for frequent, faster trips to the Pentagon and points in DC.
- Jay Lawson provided an update on the Columbia Pike Transit Stations projects. It was noted that the goals include:
 - Gateway to the Premium Transit Network
 - Help transform Columbia Pike into a vibrant, walkable “Main Street”
 - Accommodate ridership on Virginia’s busiest bus corridor
 - Support attractiveness and reliability of transit
 - Support Columbia Pike growth and redevelopment
- Mr. Lawson stated that as of December 2020, foundations and platforms for the first 8 stations (westbound: S Glebe, Oakland, Buchanan, Dinwiddie, Greenbrier and eastbound: Greenbrier, Columbus, Four Mile Run) have been substantially completed. Temporary bus shelters have been installed at the first 8. In November 2020, Arlington’s shelter manufacturer, Future Systems, identified a stability issue while assembling a prototype kit-of-parts shelter which was designed by Parsons (Engineer of Record). The kit-of-parts prototype did not meet structural stability requirements due to significant torsional motion around its central column when subjected to lateral loads. In December 2020 – February 2021, Parsons revised the shelter design; however, Future Systems raised constructability concerns with the revised design. Such design challenges continued to increase costs and delays on the project.
- Mr. Lawson noted that design work on the kit-of-parts shelter began in 2015; however, in the spring of 2016, the Arlington County Board directed the County Manager to investigate options for a prefabricated shelter to reduce cost. In October 2016, the County Board approved staff’s recommendation to adopt a hybrid approach which maintained the kit-of-parts design and allowed potential contractors to propose different ways to build and install shelters. In June 2019, a contract was awarded to Future Systems to fabricate all 23 Columbia Pike Transit Station shelters and amenities. In July 2019, the Arlington County Board approved a contract with Sagres Construction Corporation to build the foundations, platforms, and install shelters and amenities at four locations (westbound: S Glebe, Oakland, Buchanan, and eastbound S Four Mile Run). Work on foundations and platforms by Sagres began in early 2020 and were substantially completed in the fall of 2020. In December 2020, foundation and platform work on the other four stations were completed as part of the Columbia Pike Multimodal project. The remaining foundation and platform work for the Columbia Pike Transit Stations project will be constructed under the Columbia Pike Multimodal project.
- As a result of the challenges, costs, and delays related to the kit-of-parts design, it was designed that Arlington shall move forward with a modular prefabricated design with

modifications which would meet the design intent called upon in 2015 and 2016 as well as provide many of the same amenities as the kit-of-parts design in terms of seating, lighting, real time bus information, public art and a map display. It is anticipated that the prefabricated design with modifications shelters will be installed by spring/summer 2022 at the noted 8 locations.

- The TAC asked if there were more details which could be shown related to the shelter, real-time sign, and station flag. Mr. Lawson noted the County and Future Systems are currently working to further develop the design and a better drawing will be provided. The information shown in the presentation was to provide an understanding of the concept design and where items would be placed in relation to the platform.
- The TAC noted this project has taken a long time to move forward. One TAC member noted that this is disappointing news as this project has had setback after setback and the stations were supposed to get attention and high priority after the cancellation of the streetcar project. Several TAC members inquired if the County could have anticipated the structural and torsional issues before the design was finalized as design began four to five years prior to the prototype development. The TAC also questioned the public outreach related to the design change and if this item has been brought to other groups such as the Transportation Commission. Mr. Lawson noted that the Arlington County Board chose to move forward with the prefabricated design with modifications during the CIP adoption in July 2021. Lynn Rivers noted this went to the Arlington County Board first and there have been meetings with the Columbia Pike Revitalization Organization, Pike Presidents' Group, and with the chair of the Transportation Commission. Mr. Lawson stated the change to the prefabricated design with modifications is an attempt to meet expectations and the goal of this briefing to the TAC is to bring the TAC up to speed on where things stand as of today and to note the expected delivery of the project.

Arlington Transit (ART) & Specialized Transportation for Arlington Residents (STAR) Update

- Paul Mounier provided a detailed overview of ART and STAR's FY2021 Service Evaluation Report. It was noted that public outreach and data play a critical role with both ART and STAR as such helps staff to evaluate the system/services, make changes to schedules and services, and feeds into the budget and transit development plan discussion. In FY2021, ART carried 1,391,820 passengers, a decrease of 43.5% from FY2020. During FY2021, ART did not operate on a full schedule and fare collection started in January 2021. Routes 53, 61, 62, and 74 did not operate in FY2021 due to the covid-19 pandemic and low demand. These routes returned to service on September 7, 2021. ART continues to work with its contractor, First Transit, to address service challenges. Masks are still required on board all ART buses. On time performance increase by 13% from FY 2020 at 77% to 87% in FY 2021.
- On January 6, 2021, ART had a suspension of service due to the incident at the US Capitol; a total of 84 trips were missed. Due to severe weather (snow, freezing rain and sleet) on 2/17 and 2/18, ART operated on a limited service; as a result, ART missed a total of 495 trips for those two events. There were 45 less road calls in FY2021 compared to FY2020. Maintenance continues to make strides in maintaining the fleet and reducing the number of road calls.
- In FY2021, 31,928 trips were scheduled for STAR, and 26,020 were completed. A total of 31,769 passengers were carried on STAR in FY 2021 (19,599 via Diamond and 12,170 via

Red Top Cab). In terms of ridership by each zone, Zone 1 represented 57% of all trips, Zone 2 represented 34% of all trips, and Zone 3 represented 8% of all trips. The average cost per trip for STAR in FY2021 was \$51.54, and the average passengers per service hour for both Diamond and Red Top combined was 1.6 passengers. STAR received 1.7 complaints per 1,000 rides in FY2021 (59 comments, 6 commendations, and 53 complaints). From FY20 to FY21 total STAR ridership decreased of 51.7% due to the covid19 pandemic starting from March 2020. STAR ridership on Diamond fell from 32,418 in FY20 to 19,599 in FY21, a decrease of 39.5%. STAR ridership on Red Top fell from 32,719 in FY20 to 11,809 in FY21, a decrease of 63.9. And for the month of April, May, and June in FY21, there's an increase in ridership. Trip cancellations decreased 32.9% from 1,131 in FY20 to 736 in FY21. No shows decreased 43.4% from 1,598 in FY20 to 904 in FY21.

- It was noted that monthly and quarterly reports for ART and STAR are on the Arlington Transit website (<https://arlingtontransit.com>) on the Accountability & Transparency page.

School Zone Slow Zones

- Christine Baker provided an overview of Demonstration School Slow Zones Proposed Plans & Locations which has been developed by Arlington County Transportation Engineering & Operations, Arlington Public Schools (APS), and the Safe Routes to School program. It was noted that slower speeds around schools is beneficial for everyone as: one in four crashes in Arlington involves speeding, every year, there are 10+ crashes involving speeding around schools, and the risk of injuries and deaths increases as vehicle speed increases. It is critical that school zones are made safe because children are still learning how to travel safely.
- Creating new school zone guidelines is recommended in the Vision Zero Action Plan:
 - School Zone Guidelines will set standards for speed limits, typical signs, crosswalks, pavement markings, and other aspects in areas within 600 feet of school access points.
 - Arlington plans to make all school zone speed limits as 20 or 25mph as part of the guidelines either dynamically using beacons at arrival/dismissal times or statically using new permanent slow zones.
 - The purpose of these school slow zone demonstrations is to test the proposed school slow zone treatments in a few locations to see how they work before we invest countywide.
- Infrastructure characteristics on local/neighborhood streets within 600ft of a school access point include:
 - "Speed Limit 20" sign with a "School" sign on top "NEW" signs as we roll out the program
 - "20 MPH" pavement markings to reinforce that the speed limit is constant. Used primarily where transitioning from a higher volume/speed road to a lower volume/speed road OR adjacent to school
 - "End of School Zone" or speed limit signs where slow zone ends
 - School Crossing signs and high visibility markings at crosswalks within the slow zone
 - Remove "When Flashing" from school beacon signs in areas with existing beacons that now qualify for static school slow zones; continue to operate school beacons during school arrival/ dismissal

- Eleven APS schools and one private school have been identified to demonstrate the school slow zone concept in different environments and assess if the materials effectively reduce vehicle speeds. Staff will collect before/after speed data to assess the effectiveness of the school slow zones with before data to be collected Sept – Nov 2021 and after data to be collected Feb – April 2022. Staff will gather feedback from the community during the demonstration and feedback to be collected and assessed in spring of 2022
- The TAC inquired if the change in speed limits require a change to local, state, or federal regulations. It was noted that yes, regulations had to be changed to accommodate the 25 mph. The TAC also inquired if there has been an uptick in the number of parents driving kids back to school compared to kids who take the school bus, an ART bus, or walk. It was noted that there will be follow up discussions with APS to understand any emerging trends. The TAC also asked about the approaches used on arterial and local roads in terms of speed limits as well as the ability to turn right on red and the lack of sidewalks in some areas in Arlington. It was noted that staff will be checking to see how this demonstration works on neighborhood streets as such will help determine how it will be applied on arterials.

Report from Accessibility Subcommittee

- Alexa Mavroidis mentioned there was discussion regarding the number of wheelchair accessible vehicles being provided for STAR. It was noted by staff during the subcommittee meeting that the issue related to not having enough drivers. Overall, this is a concern, and the subcommittee and staff are looking at best practices in terms of a recommendation on how to resolve this issue. The subcommittee would like to ensure that individuals can get and book rides when wheelchair vehicles are requested/needed. Lynn Rivers noted that she will follow up with William Jones regarding the shortage of wheelchair accessible vehicles; and noted, the STAR Call Center contract has been signed. First Transit is the awardee of the new contract.

Additional Items from Committee Members and Staff

- John Carten asked if staff can provide more clarity regarding how much bus miles decrease in FY2021, how is ART responding to changes in ridership trends (it was noted that ridership seems to be higher outside of the traditional peak hours) and how will changes impact the budget. Lynn Rivers noted that staff get back to the TAC on these items.
- James Davenport asked where does ART stand with free fares. It was noted that DASH is going to free fares and other transit operators around the DC Metro area are considering free fares. Lynn Rivers noted that several fare ideas are being considered including but not limited to a targeted fare program for low-income individuals. It was noted that many of Arlington's transit services is operated by WMATA; moreover, in looking at free fares there has to be an equity lens and well as coordination on what the impacts will be to ART and Metrobus.

Adjournment

- The meeting was adjourned at 8:32 pm.

Next Meeting

- The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, November 9, 2021.