

**Arlington Transit Advisory Committee
Meeting Notes
September 10, 2024
7:00 PM
Microsoft Teams Meeting**

YouTube Meeting Video Link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FtA8ijcieaY>

TAC Members Present:

John Carten	James Davenport	Harvey Berlin
Frank Krol	David Sisson	Roseann Ashby
Andrew McAllister	Mariela Garcia-Colberg	Erika Chiang

Attendees Present:

Pierre Holloman (staff)	Robin McElhenny (staff)	Kirk Dand (staff)
Clinton Edwards (staff)	Diana Isaza (staff)	Diane Trent (staff)
Eric Balliet (staff)	Josh Riebe (staff)	Ryan Jones (staff)
Josh Drucker (staff)	Rocco Visconti (staff)	Paul Mounier (staff)
Sarah Crawford (staff)	Andre Stafford (WMATA)	Lora Byala
Kent Keyser	Lisa Kay Schweyer	W. Gonçalves
Maria Martinez	Catalina Calachan	Samantha Bond

Call to Order

- John Carten opened the meeting at 7:02 pm.

Introductions

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

Public Comment

- Kent Keyser provided the following comment, "I'm a member of the Accessibility Subcommittee, and I wanted to bring to everyone's attention and concern as we're just learning about this microtransit pilot proposal. It is in an area as I understand, it's underserved by transit because of cutbacks because of low ridership. But it is in an area that is at least the 2nd wealthiest in the county in terms of household incomes. So, I'm wondering why we're spending precious public resource dollars on that area of the county when there are so many unmet needs and other populations or instance the disability community, which historically has had double unemployment rates, typically lower incomes, and since 2015 at least, has been promised by the county of very similar service to the Microtransit pilot proposal, which would include an app to schedule on demand trips to do tracking of the vehicles in real time. Just that entire menu that's in the presentation that we saw today at the subcommittee. So, I'm eager to learn more about this proposal, but I just wanted to alert the committee that this is an area that

is the 2nd wealthiest in the county if you overlay a household income map over the proposed zone. Thank you very much.”

Approval of Minutes from the May 14, 2024, Meeting

- The meeting notes were approved unanimously.

Recap of Transit Capital Projects Tour

- Robin McElhenny provided an overview of the annual Transit Capital Projects Tour which took place on July 30, 2024. At the start of the tour, the TAC visited the Arlington Transit Operations and Maintenance Facility (AOMF) where the TAC was able to visit portions of the interior maintenance areas of the facility. The AOMF is expected to reach substantial completion in the fall 2024. The tour then moved to Shirlington Station which is currently under a feasibility study for expansion. Shirlington Station was opened in 2008; however, due to growth in terms of ridership as well as bus service at this facility since 2008, the facility has a need for expansion. The expansion of this station is being funded with funds from the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA). The TAC visited the Pentagon City Elevator Project which is under construction and expected to be completed in the fall 2024. The last part of the tour involved the TAC traveling to Crystal City to visit the site of the Crystal City East Entrance Project. At the time of the tour, the Crystal City East Entrance site was undergoing the start of site excavation. The new station entrance is expected to open in April 2027. Although Arlington Transit’s ADA bus stop improvements was not part of the tour, an updated was provided on work which was completed during FY2024 including but not limited to: completion of a bus stop inventory of 900+ stops, 34 ADA upgrades at bus stops, 14 curb ramp improvements, and 16 design plans for future construction.

Arlington County Commuter Services Strategic Plan

- Eric Balliet introduced Sarah Crawford, Arlington’s Assistant Director of Transportation, and Lora Byala with Foursquare ITP. Sarah Crawford noted that recommendations from the Commuter Services Strategic Plan will be shared with the TAC as part of the presentation. The Strategic Plan outlines both the successes and next steps that are recommended for increasing mode share in Arlington. Lora Byala provided a background and overview of Arlington County Commuter Services (ACCS) and noted that the Strategic Plan is a requirement of the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation as each TDM program must develop this plan.
- For the plan, it is an assessment of the current ACCS program, the results of such programs, and the need for travelers. As part of the recommendations, the plan attempts to ensure the focus is on people making all types of trips throughout the day and night. This plan will provide a path for ACCS’ services and resources needed over the next five years to maximize individuals to use alternative ways to travel in the most cost-effective manner. The first major program that ACCS operates is the business outreach, education, and incentives. ACCS works directly with county-based employers, multifamily residential buildings, commercial properties, hotels, and schools in Arlington to help them to provide transit benefits to their individuals, which covers the cost of transit for such or a portion of transit. ACCS also provides site plan assistance. With developer-construction projects, ACCS helps to make sure developers know which programs can be implemented to help improve the mode share of people getting to and from such sites. ACCS also does a lot of marketing to consumer level marketing and also on social media. ACCS provides commuter and traveler support through a call center as well as sale transit passes and fare media through commuterdirect.com and the commuter stores throughout Arlington. ACCS also performs reach and reporting of travel as well as oversee the operations and maintenance of Capital

Bikeshare contract for future stations and promotion of Capital Bikeshare to ensure equity throughout Arlington.

- ACCS's updated vision notes that ACCS supports and champions Arlington as a place where people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds find it easy, desirable, and safe to choose transit, walking, biking/scooter, and carpooling/vanpooling for all types of trips. ACCS updated mission is to educate and empower everyone who travels to, through, and within Arlington with timely and useful information about transit, walking, biking/scooter, and carpooling/vanpooling.
- The goals of the plan are as follows:
 - Goal 1: Provide education, outreach, and encouragement about non-single occupancy vehicle travel modes to all audiences using a wide range of media and messaging styles that results in travelers choosing a trip mode other than driving alone.
 - Goal 2: Increase the share of all Arlington trips taken by transit, walking, biking/ scooter, and carpooling/ vanpooling through actions that facilitate and encourage behavior change and reduce vehicular emissions.
 - Goal 3: Optimize the organizational and operational effectiveness of ACCS and identify and apply for additional funding sources to diversify ACCS' funding structure while leveraging partnerships to expand ACCS' reach.
 - Goal 4: Leverage data and key performance indicators to evaluate the performance and impact of ACCS services and communicate program success to stakeholders and funding partners.
- The recommendations of the plan are as follows:
 - Rebrand ACCS and refocus to be inclusive of all trips – not just for commuting.
 - Update and consolidate branding and websites.
 - Focus on equity populations – employees and residents.
 - Performance reporting.
 - Stronger TDM/Transit collaboration.
 - Streamlined site plan oversight process.
 - Develop a plan for funding resiliency.
- ACCS is looking to obtain County Board approval of the Strategic Plan in October 2024 and will submit the plan to DRPT by no later than November 30, 2024.
- The TAC inquired how often is this plan updated. It was noted that the plan is updated every five years and if there are substantial changes to the plan, ACCS can do annual updates to DRPT as well. The TAC also asked, looking at the state of our commuter services, what are the things that really stand out in Arlington as opposed to other parts of the state as well as what can Arlington be proud of in terms of what we've done and accomplished? It was noted that Arlington has a very robust program and is one of the leading organizations in the entire country when it comes to TDM, outreach, marketing, and offering programs for various modes of transportation.

Overview of Arlington Transit's Microtransit Implementation Plan

- Paul Mounier provided an overview of the Arlington Microtransit Implementation Plan. This plan will help to develop a scope of work for the implementation of a microtransit pilot in Arlington next year. There have been multiple planning efforts and studies on microtransit in the county, the most recent which Arlington's microtransit project is being based on is from the Arlington Transit Strategic Plan which was adopted in 2023. Arlington Transit will attempt to launch a microtransit

pilot next year (2025) and will use performance metrics to assess the program. Recommendations for the scope of work is expected to be completed by the end of November 2024 and procurement of services is expected to start in January 2025. The proposed zone of for the pilot in the northwestern corner of Arlington was identified as part of the Transit Strategic Plan due to the proposed removal of low performing routes and that zone's proximity to the Virginia Hospital Center (VHC).

- It was stated that Microtransit is an on-demand service that individuals can book rides using a technology-based app which allows for an individual to obtain information on the vehicle's location. This service is flexible and typically microtransit operates within zones or using a model of connecting zones with hubs/nodes (and vice versa). For the pilot, examples of a hub/node would be the East Falls Church Metrorail Station and the Ballston Metrorail Station. The intention of Microtransit is not to replace TNCs such as Uber nor is it intended to mimic fixed route transit. The idea of utilizing Microtransit is to utilize smaller vehicles to provide some level of public transit where there is not enough ridership to support fixed route transit.
- Regarding next steps, staff plans to brief Arlington leadership and have additional discussion with the Accessibility Subcommittee and the TAC as well as future marketing. The Microtransit Implementation Plan is expected to be complete by the end of November 2024. It is anticipated that the Microtransit Pilot will launch in the summer of 2025.
- The TAC inquired on how the pilot will work in terms of implementation, what will be the service level, hours of operation, parameters for using the service, etc. It was noted that staff is still working out the details to these questions, but the pilot will be implemented using a method where individuals can book trips using an app and the provider of the service will be able to communicate the vehicle's location and pickup point to the individual. A member of the public commented on the need to expand the zone of the pilot to Westover to serve areas where are affordable housing. Staff acknowledged the comment and noted that such feedback will be evaluated. Clinton Edwards noted that the zone identified for the pilot in northwest Arlington was included as part of the Arlington Transit's Strategic Plan which was adopted by the Board. It was noted that northwest Arlington is the first zone, and that staff will follow what the strategic plan noted with potential opportunities for other pilots or expansion in the future. It was noted that staff has not reached the point of making any recommendations; however, staff will follow the recommendations as prescribed in the Board adopted Arlington Transit Strategic Plan. It was also noted that the TAC will receive additional information about the Microtransit Implementation Plan at their November 12, 2024, meeting.

Arlington Transit and STAR System-Wide Performance

- Josh Drucker provided an overview of Arlington Transit's and STAR's year over year system-wide performance. As of June 2024, Arlington Transit's (ART) FY2024 ridership was up by 485,808 compared to FY2023. On-time-Performance (OTP) however went down by 8% in FY2024 as compared to FY2023. It was noted that the ART 41 continues to be the highest performing route in the system. Regarding STAR, ridership went up by 4,128 in FY2024 as compared to FY2023. Trip cancellations and no-shows also went up in FY2024 by 339 as compared to FY2023. The number of complaints related to STAR went down by 53 complaints in FY2024 as compared to FY2023. In July, ART introduced the new ART 56 route. In July 2024, ridership on the ART 56 was 2394. Passengers per trip went up 131% in July 2024 compared to the routes that were canceled and portions which the ART 56 replaced. Passengers per hour also increased 32% and passengers per mile increased 20% for the ART 56 in July 2024 as compared to the services which it replaced

/ combined. Also in July, ART implemented a new adult fare at \$2.25 per trip and a new fare for select groups at \$1.10 a trip. This had no impact to the transfer policy between ART and Metrobus, riders can still make free transfers within the given window.

- In May 2024, ART implemented a new system that allows dispatch to post alerts and cancel trips on apps like Google Maps, Apple Maps, Transit App and Moovit. This new system still requires timely input from the operations dispatch team. On average over the year before implementation, there were 2 comments of ghost buses per month. On average since implementation, there have been 0.6 comments of ghost buses per month. The operations team is still getting better and better at posting the alerts in a timely manner.
- The TAC inquired if there have been incidents where alerts were posted to note that buses were cancelled; however, they weren't as there have been cases where there has been a notification of a cancelled bus; however, the bus showed up. Staff noted that they have not heard of this issue to date as there has not been a complaint related to this, but it is possible it could have been human error, and something potentially occurred. Staff will investigate this issue. The TAC inquired if there will be improved communications once the Arlington Transit Operations and Maintenance Facility (AOMF) opens. Staff noted that communications will improve as the administration, operations, and maintenance teams for ART will be in the same facility; currently, these functions are spread out through various locations in Arlington and in Alexandria.

Report from the Accessibility Subcommittee

- Clinton Edwards noted that the Subcommittee received presentations on the Transit Capital Projects Tour and the Microtransit Implementation Plan. The Subcommittee also asked staff a question on the status of the STAR operator RFP. The Subcommittee is looking to expand their membership. Issues with accessibility related to the audio announcements was also brought to the attention of staff.

Additional Items from Committee Members and Staff

- No additional items were provided.

Adjournment

- The meeting was adjourned at 8:18 pm.

Next Meeting

- The next meeting will be on Tuesday, November 12, 2024.