

**Arlington Transit Advisory Committee**  
**Meeting Notes**  
**March 14, 2023**  
**7:00 PM**  
**Microsoft Teams Meeting**

**TAC Members Present:**

John Carten	James Davenport	Ronald Decker
Herschel Kanter	Patrick Thompson	Frank Krol
Andrew McAllister	Harvey Berlin	Alexa Mavroidis

**Attendees Present:**

Lynn Rivers (staff)	Pierre Holloman (staff)	Robin McElhenny (staff)
Kirk Dand (staff)	Lauren Breyer (staff)	Clinton Edwards (staff)
Diana Isaza (staff)	Ryan Jones (staff)	Leah Gerber (staff)
Jim Larsen (staff)	Steven Frazier (staff)	Andre Stafford (WMATA)
Marion Flores	Kent Keyser	Steven Waters
Jiixin Tong	Doris Ray	Dana
Bonnie		

**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. Clinton Edwards as introduced as Arlington Transit’s new Transit Services Manager.

**Public Comment**

- Doris Ray provided the following comments:
  - ‘The apparent resurrection of a proposal for changes in STAR services that was presented last year by staff; but we understood [those changes] to be withdrawn in order to have civic engagement, to discuss the kinds of changes that might be made, and then prepare a new version. So, we want to express our concerns about that if this comes up with this committee. Also, we want to express concern that the taxi industry is seeking increases in fares, and yet the service provided to the riding public, and I certainly am a regular taxi user in Arlington. The service has gone downhill since 2017 and is deplorable when it takes sometimes an hour, even two hours, to try to get a cab and yet, pull paying customers are expected to pay increases now. I think that the TAC should scrutinize that and not let this go forward. Thank you very much.’

**Approval of Minutes from the January 17, 2023, Meeting**

- The amended meeting notes were approved unanimously.

## **Introduction of New Transit Services Manager**

- Lynn Rivers introduced Clinton Edwards as Arlington Transit's new Transit Services Manager. Mr. Edwards provided the TAC with his background and noted looking forward to working with the TAC and the Arlington community to improve transit throughout Arlington.

## **Future TAC Meetings (Hybrid and Virtual)**

- Pierre Holloman noted that after the January 17, 2023, TAC meeting, a poll was sent out to note a preference for future meetings as a few TAC members have inquired about having a hybrid meeting (in-person and online). It was noted that some other committees are meeting 100% virtually while some are holding hybrid meetings. Based on the poll results, there were seven TAC members in favor of having a hybrid meeting while five were in favor of staying all virtual. Mr. Holloman noted that the TAC can decide on which potential meeting shall be hybrid in the future as staff will need to coordinate obtaining a meeting room as well as providing staff resources in-person to help facilitate those meetings. Mr. Holloman noted that an additional poll could be sent out to provide options on future hybrid meetings and/or the TAC can have that discussion during this TAC meeting. Mr. Holloman noted that one TAC member has suggested the November 14, 2023, meeting as the hybrid meeting.
- The TAC noted how impressed and well the virtual meetings have worked and how such has helped to improve attendance. TAC member Harvey Berlin made a motion to have all future TAC meetings to be hybrid meetings, this motion was seconded by TAC Member Ronald Decker (this motion was modified to note that all future TAC meetings be hybrid except for the May 2023 TAC meeting which would remain virtual). The TAC had a discussion on this motion and the following comments/feedback was provided:
  - Suggest only one meeting a year as hybrid in either September or November to give everyone sufficient time and to see how it goes
  - Hybrid meetings take a lot more work in terms of set-up and time
  - Noticed that in other hybrid meetings, it has been difficult to coordinate discussion so that everyone can hear and see the same things
- The motion did not carry on a vote of four in favor, four against, and one abstain.
- The TAC decided to hold the September 2023 meeting as hybrid and will see how such goes before making decisions on future meetings.

## **S George Mason Drive Update**

- Leah Gerber provided an overview of the S George Mason Drive Multimodal Corridor study. This study kicked off in April 2022. It was noted that there will be an upcoming virtual public engagement opportunity to learn more about the project on March 22, 2023; and, there will be an online feedback form on the project's site after the meeting to allow staff to obtain additional input. During the first round of public engagement there was a discussion regarding existing conditions on S George Mason and during the second round of public engagement there was a discussion on the cross-sections. The prior public engagement opportunities included virtual meetings, an online questionnaire with 404 responses, in-person community workshops, and walking tours. The study's goal is to improve safety along all of S George Mason Drive. This study also emphasizes the multimodal aspect for those who walk, roll, drive, take transit, scooter and cycle along the corridor; moreover, improving safety for all users. This study involves working with other departments within Arlington including but not limited to the Department of Parks and Recreation, the Department of Community Planning, Housing and Development, and others. The study area runs from Arlington Blvd in the north to the Arlington / Fairfax County board to the south. The focus on the 15% design element of the study is a portion of S George Mason Drive from

Columbia Pike to the Arlington / Fairfax County line. It was noted that there are two Vision Zero hotspots within the study area; these are areas which have high crash rates relative to the rest of Arlington. It was also noted that the corridor has been divided up into segments and there has been quite a bit of feedback through the public engagement process on the needs and challenges with existing and potential cross-sections along the segments. The delivery goal is to turn this study into a capital project for future improvements along the corridor.

- The TAC inquired about the Vision Zero hotspots in the corridor and requested more detail. Additional details were provided, and it was noted that the intersection of S George Mason @ Columbia Pike was one of the hotspots and the intersection of S George Mason @ S Four Mile Run (both major and minor) was the other hotspot. The TAC expressed concerns about the narrowing of the lanes, particularly the impact on transit buses and bikes sharing lanes with transit buses especially on a major corridor such as S George Mason. It was noted that the outside lanes in all of the cross-sections are 11' which is Arlington's minimum width to accommodate transit buses and there is hope that there is a trail included as part of the cross-sections for cyclist as such would eliminate the need for bikes to utilize the travel lanes and this is something staff will keep in mind in moving the study forward (eliminating such conflicts). The TAC asked for clarification on if there will be a cycle track along the corridor. It was noted that the proposed cross-sections include a multi-use trail and not a cycle track. The TAC asked for clarification on the limits of the study area based on what was shown within the presentation. It was clarified that the study area extended just to the north of Arlington Blvd (US 50) as such would connect to a trail study which is being conducted and there is a goal of connecting the proposed trail with an improved Arlington Blvd. trail; however, this was noted to be at a very concept level in terms of planning and design and a lot depended on when the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) would redo the bridge over Arlington Blvd. The TAC also inquired on if narrowing the lanes would help reduce accidents. It was noted that reducing lanes is one way to slow down traffic as such acts as a traffic calming measure as well as such reduces the area which pedestrians would need to cross S George Mason Drive.
- Staff member Steven Frazier asked what the speed limit would be reduced to compared to the existing speed limit. It was noted that the multimodal toolbox that was developed as part of Vision Zero would assist with this discussion. Right now, there is a school zone at Wakefield High School which makes S George Mason 20 mph at certain times which school starts and lets out. Based on a look at existing data, it was noted that generally people are going about 10 miles over the speed limit which could be because of the hilly terrain and curves. It was noted that the speed limit will not be set until the engineers run their analysis.

### **Arlington Transit and STAR Online Data Dashboard**

- Lauren Breyer provided an overview of the Arlington Transit Data Dashboard project. The goal of this project is to provide a better visualization of data and making data more accessible online. The dashboard has been designed to be an interactive tool which includes graphs, tables, and summary text to maintain data transparency. An overview of how to use the dashboard, data definitions, and the ease to use such were provided which focused on a beta demonstration page which would be shared with the TAC after the meeting. The dashboard contains several performance metrics for Arlington Transit which users could explore and analyze several years' worth of data, performance and changes. Users can also break data down to the route level. It was noted that additional changes can be made as this project is flexible, dynamic and staff seeks to adapt the dashboard based on feedback from the public to remove and/or add in additional metrics. The TAC was encouraged to provide their feedback on the beta dashboard to Pierre Holloman by close of business, March 24, 2023.

- The TAC inquired about the accessibility of the dashboard and website for individuals using screen readers. It was noted that the data within the dashboard utilizes a readable text to speech software via Microsoft PowerBi and staff will monitor this as the dashboard goes live to the public.

### **Arlington Transit Strategic Plan Update / What's to Come**

- Paul Mounier provided an update on some key dates which are coming up with the Transit Strategic Plan. Staff is working on finalizing the recommendations that will be sharing as part of future public engagements. Previous public outreach events captured what the needs are from riders, residents, and others. Upcoming public outreach include an online public meeting and at least 16 pop-up meetings. For the second round of public engagement, staff will be taking comments, reviewing recommendations from the public and making adjustment to the plan as needed. After this step, a constrained financial plan will be developed. The goal of this plan is to be flexible and an outline on how Arlington Transit will provide service for over the next 10 years. It was mentioned that the goal is to have this plan adopted by the Board by early fall 2023. Staff will come back to the TAC with an overview of what was heard during the second round of public outreach after the public engagement activities.
- The TAC inquired what will be the setup of the upcoming pop-up events in terms of reaching individuals? It was noted that staff plans to conduct outreach at major hubs including but not limited to Columbia Pike @ Dinwiddie, Shirlington, N and S Glebe Road, and other locations. Staff participating at the pop-up events will have devices with questions to allow individuals at such events to take an online survey. The pop-up events will also allow people to talk to staff and provide input directly. There was a question from a member of the public which asked, will there be Spanish speakers at these pop-up events. It was confirmed that every pop-up event will have staff who are fluent in Spanish. It was also noted that all materials will be translated into the five major languages which Arlington Public Schools recognizes being spoken in schools.

### **WMATA Subsidy and 16M Update**

- Kirk Dand gave an overview of Arlington's subsidy as part of the FY2024 WMATA Operating and Capital budget as well as an update on the pending implementation of the Metrobus 16M service. The TAC was informed that detailed information on the WMATA FY2024 budget can be found at <https://wmata.com/budget>. WMATA conducted a virtual public hearing as well as in-person public hearings in DC, MD, and VA on the budget the week of March 5, 2023. Last year's Arlington subsidy was around \$80M. For FY2024, the Arlington base subsidy is \$83.3M. The WMATA Capital Improvement Plan includes about \$24.1M from Arlington. The FY2024 WMATA Operating and Capital budgets are expected to be adopted in April 2023. Regarding the 16M, the route will travel from Skyline in Fairfax County to Crystal City via Columbia Pike. The 16M has been proposed to run every 12 minutes all day; however, Arlington has submitted a Commuter Choice grant application to NVTC to have 6-minute headways in the peak period in the peak direction which is a caveat of the Commuter Choice program (peak period in the peak direction). NVTC is currently in technical review of the Commuter Choice applications. It was noted that WMATA is dealing with a bus operator shortage which may impact the ability to provide the 6-minute headways. There is up that with the next bus operator bid that WMATA will assign additional operators for the additional service.
- The TAC inquired if the WMATA subsidy asks are in sync with Arlington's proposed budget. It was noted that WMATA's subsidy asks were provided and included in Arlington's proposed budget. The TAC asked how did the FY2024 subsidy compare to previous years. It was noted that the operating subsidy in FY2022 was \$80M and there was about an \$1.3M growth in the Capital subsidy as compared to FY2022. The TAC inquired about ridership on the Silver Line and asked

when will the Potomac Yard station open. It was noted that the Potomac Yard station will open in May. Regarding Silver Line ridership, it was stated that ridership is growing leaps and bounds. The TAC inquired about the upcoming Orange Line summer shutdowns. It was noted that there will be shuttle services to Ballston from points west as East Falls Church station will be shut down for part of the time. Andre Stafford confirmed that shuttles will run between Ballston and McLean on the Silver Line. The TAC inquired about the status of the DC City Council proposal to make Metrobus free in the District of Columbia. It was noted there are still ongoing discussions between the DC City Council and Mayor and official word has yet to be determined.

### **Report from the Accessibly Subcommittee**

- Alexa Mavroidis noted the Accessibility Subcommittee was told that it is still unknown on when public engagement for the draft STAR Policy changes would happen. During the Subcommittee meeting, the Subcommittee heard that the proposed Policy changes from last year will not include any amendments. It was noted that on one hand this approach is understood in making sure that everyone who can make comments get the same look; however, it was also noted that it was troubling that there have been comments from some people which have been the same. It was noted that the people who gave public comments at the prior Subcommittee meetings are concerned that there have not been many changes to the draft STAR Policy proposals based on their feedback. One of the items which was concerned to those individuals was the proposal to change a reasonable accommodation. It was noted that Arlington already has feedback from those individuals but plans to look at those comments after hearing from others and there is a feeling among some that by using such approach, this process is starting from zero again. Concern was expressed over this approach.
- It was noted that most of the March 14, 2023, Subcommittee meeting was taken up with people providing public comment, many related to the draft STAR Policy changes as there was a belief that staff would look at the comments which have been made and was in the process of having public engagement on the proposed changes. It was also mentioned that there is a feeling that those who provided public comment during the Subcommittee meetings are not being heard and their concerns are not being addressed.
- Subcommittee member Herschel Kanter noted that it was not a surprise that staff has the same draft proposal from 2022 and noted there were negative reviews of the proposal at prior Subcommittee meetings. Based on a study looking at comparable systems, finding ways to save money, and still meet ADA standards for service, the concern is that the proposals will provide less to STAR users but still be consider meeting ADA according to staff; however, several do not believe this is accurate. It was also noted that there were questions and concerns about the study which staff developed. An example of persons having to schedule advanced pickups for medical trips was a major concern as individuals do not know when they will get out of a doctor's appointment. The idea of this would be something that should be sent to and considered by the County Board was noted. The Commission on Aging sent a letter to the County Board on these draft proposed changes. The Subcommittee will share this letter with the TAC Chair.
- Lynn Rivers noted that staff has yet to make changes to the draft proposals because such proposals have only been shared with the Accessibility Subcommittee and the next step was to take the draft proposals out to the public as part of a public engagement process. It was noted that there was a change in staff; moreover, the draft proposals were halted. It was noted that it would be fair to share the draft proposals with the public at large prior to making any changes to get feedback as these are only draft proposals. The idea for the public engagement activities is to give others the opportunity to provide feedback and react. It was noted that this public engagement

process is similar to other projects such as the S George Mason Multimodal Study which was presented earlier in the TAC meeting. Staff was planning on using the same public comment process; however, that has yet to happen as the process was halted by staff changes.

#### **Additional Items from Committee Members and Staff**

- TAC Charter Changes
  - Pierre Holloman noted there is hope that draft language for the TAC Charter changes can be share at the May TAC meeting; however, there is still some work which is ongoing in terms of coordinating the language with the PAC and BAC.

#### **Adjournment**

- The meeting was adjourned at 8:23 pm.

#### **Next Meeting**

- The next meeting will be Tuesday, May 9, 2023.