

Route 1 Multimodal Study – Task Force Meeting No. 4

MEETING SUMMARY

SUBJECT: Task Force Meeting 4
DATE/TIME: June 14, 2021, 6:30 - 8:30 PM
LOCATION: Virtual via Microsoft Teams

ATTENDEES:

- VDOT:** Dan Reinhard, Lauren Mollerup, Nick Roper, Steve Bates
- Arlington County:** Dennis Leach, Sarah Crawford
- Crystal City Citizens Review Council:** Harmar Thompson, Christer Ahl
- National Landing BID:** Andy Van Horn, Tracy Gabriel, Matt Gerber, Robert Peck
- Arlington Ridge Civic Association:** Arthur Fox
- Aurora Highlands Civic Association:** Darren Buck
- Crystal City Civic Association:** Eric Cassel
- Arlington County Planning Commission:** James Schroll
- Arlington County Transportation Commission:** Chris Slatt
- Arlington County Bicycle Advisory Committee:** Steve Offutt, Dana Bres
- Arlington County Pedestrian Advisory Committee:** Pamela Van Hine
- Arlington County Transit Advisory Committee:** James Davenport
- MWAA:** Mike Hewitt
- WMATA:** Jim Ashe
- City of Alexandria:** Chris Ziemann
- National Park Service:** Aurelia Garcia, Laurel Hammig
- Kimley-Horn:** John Martin, Geoff Giffin, Danielle McCray, Rebecca Sulla, Anthony Gallo, Mark Phillips

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION:

1. Welcome and Introductions

Dan Reinhard (VDOT Project Manager) welcomed the group and facilitated introductions of the different agencies represented. It was noted that this Task Force meeting is the last meeting for this phase of the study.

2. Presentation

VDOT and project team presented a prepared slide deck for the Task Force Meeting. *Please refer to the copy of this meeting presentation attached to this meeting summary, which was used to cover the following topics:*

- A. Update on Route 1 Multimodal Study
- B. Preview of Public Information Meeting (PIM) No. 3, Wednesday 6/16
- C. Next steps/future meetings

3. Discussion

After the formal presentation, a discussion period was held where Task Force members asked the following questions and the Project team provide responses. The following is a summary of those questions and responses.

- A. **Question:** Can you describe the results of any ground truthing you may have done on the 2025 and 2040 data? Some of the turning maneuvers seem to have been underestimated. For example, the model seems to suggest no vehicles heading south on Rt 1 will turn onto 23rd Street westbound.

Response: These volume forecasts were from the County. We will take a closer look at that. Some of the existing volumes are low – we don't expect that to change.

- B. **Comment:** I would not characterize the BID doc as a “local planning document.” It was not written with community input, by a local planning agency.

Response: Comment noted.

- C. **Question:** Wouldn't it be appropriate to include the cost of ped crossing at the 18th into the cost comparison?

Response: The grade-separated pedestrian crossing warrants further study. If it is found that a ped crossing would be feasible and make sense, then yes, it would be included in the costs.

- D. **Comment:** I would recommend adding the Livability Framework as a guiding document

Response: Great suggestion.

- E. **Comment:** The at-grade renderings show a vastly improved environment along the Route 1 corridor. The VDOT proposal has made significant progress since our last meeting.

Comment noted. We heard that concepts needed to show people, and we wanted to show a people-friendly environment.

- F. **Question:** What will the process be for determining the ultimate use of the land created by the removal of the ramps?

Response: That is a complicated process. There is the actual surplus'ing of the land that can be removed and sold off to someone. Land use is driven by the locality, so there would be an Arlington County process as well to determine what the land is turned into.

- G. **Comment:** The boulevard comparison slide highlights the disadvantages of the sector plan proposal, when reviewing the impact with a holistic planning focus.

Comment noted.

- H. **Question:** How much delay will be added to pedestrian trips across Route 1 at the new 18th St intersection? How many more pedestrian involved crashes do you forecast occurring at 18th?

Response: See slide 40 for the increase in pedestrian crossing times along 18th Street between Eads and Bell. To improve pedestrian safety, we are proposing lowering the speed on Route 1 and recommending restricting left turns at 18th Street. A separate grade-separated pedestrian crossing would also alleviate some concerns.

- I. **Question:** What will be done to these new intersections to avoid creating a new 23rd St (between Eads and Route 1)? How will the Route 1 boulevard accommodate the police so they can perform enforcement?

Response: 23rd Street is a complicated intersection. In comparison to what we are proposing for 18th Street – it does have left turns, which is a complication that is proposed to be eliminated at 18th Street. One of the key things we see with the 23rd Street intersection is the proximity of Clark Street with Route 1. That creates a very complicated signal timing and set of vehicular movements, and that will not be the case at 18th Street where we are proposing restricting left turns. Clark street doesn't exist anymore at 18th Street because Arlington County has removed it over the past several years. We believe that the 18th Street intersection would operate better than 23rd Street by simplifying the operations of the intersection.

- J. **Question:** Please address how the investments in transit in Crystal City will benefit those motorists driving to DC from outside Arlington?

Response: TDM comes with making that transit option as easy as possible. That comes with advertising, park and ride lots, and ways to get to transit easily. In addition, investments in transit in the National Landing area will draw people out of their cars and reduce auto trips along Route 1, especially short-distance trips. The Commonwealth is also heavily investing in parallel transit options to Route 1 that extend well beyond the National Landing area, including a new VRE station in Crystal City that will significant increase VRE capacity and a new Potomac Yard Metrorail station to improve Metro access.

- K. **Question:** Transit effectiveness is worse at the at-grade option - why is this the case?

Response: With the at-grade configuration, the buses are going with the vehicular traffic. If we are able to mitigate the traffic congestion with a TDM strategy that will also help transit operations; getting more people on the buses and out of cars serves that same purpose.

- L. **Question:** The underpass would need to support cyclists as well as peds. Cyclists are at comparable risk.

Response: We are proposing that bicycle lanes continue on the sides of 18th Street. We are also proposing with the reconfiguration to add bicycle lanes to both sides of 15th Street. We would propose to use high visibility markings to lead cyclists across Route 1.

M. Question: How will the ongoing costs of TDM be paid?

Response: This is a “to-be-determined” question.

N. Comment: Disappointed the concept that was presented to VDOT is not included. Wish some of the ideas from Livability 22022 were considered. Don’t think underpass will be seriously considered/engineered for bikes?

Response: The analysis we have been trying to achieve is looking at a homogeneous solution. Some of these options could work we would need to look forward at design. An overpass or underpass for bikes is something to be considered.

O. Comment: A lot of information on slides; need some work to understand which alternative is which. Concerned about how the underpass may be proposed, considering safety for pedestrians will be important. Really concerned about where diversion traffic will go. Pam will send Dan comments.

Response: The diversion of traffic into neighborhood is something we are also concerned about. It is something we need to look at further with the additional studies.

P. Comment: I sincerely appreciate the detailed overview and sharing of analyses throughout the presentation. Much work went into your presentation, and it shows that in this document.

Thank you for this comment.

Q. Question: Who is paying for TDM? Is VDOT going to take on those long-term costs?

Response: This is something we will look at in a future study as to who we are targeting and who ends up paying for that and what are the long-term costs. We don’t know what those costs will be at this point. Much of the regional transit investment is being done by the Commonwealth.

R. Comment: As a representative of the BID, I believe that the VDOT recommendation is balanced and supports a good outcome. I cannot imagine a modern, growing city recommending the continuation of or revised grade separated outcome. This would be immediately obsolete, disregard the future expectations around vehicle travel changes and greatly diminish the long-term potential of National Landing (the combined Pentagon and Crystal City areas).

Response: Comment noted.

S. Comment: On slide 63, safety is paramount but when you talk about safety it is defined as avoiding crashes. This conclusion is something that will bother a lot of people.

Sounds like we need to dive into this slide further on Wednesday [at the PIM].

- T. **Comment:** Appreciate the evolution of the design to a narrower, safer, more urban boulevard. I hope at Wednesday's presentation that you can clarify that the study of an elevated overpass or underpass for 18th street will not compromise the goal of ensuring the at-grade crossing is as ped- and bike friendly as possible

Response: Comment noted.

- U. **Question:** What is the anticipated speed for an at-grade boulevard? Will it be consistent with Vision Zero?

Response: We started with 30 mph in our analysis; it could be lower than 30. A lower speed limit is consistent with Vision Zero. We are trying to gauge the impact on traffic. We are taking that first step down to 30 mph; we could consider changing that to a lower speed, but this would need to be looked at in more detail.

- V. **Comment:** Explain how walkability and pedestrian safety are two different concepts; agree that proposed underpass needs to support bikes as well; explain MOEs more and how they were graded.

Response: We are using Jeff Speck's theory on walkability – must be safe, comfortable, useful and interesting. The thought there is if you have an at-grade urban boulevard where you can walk along, that is more comfortable than climbing stairs to get to your destination. We made a decision to keep walkability separate from pedestrian safety. For walkability we looked at the positive – we are proposing to add connections along Route 1 and access to spaces that aren't used. We came out as neutral because the walkability across Route 1 is not as favorable as when there is a grade separation. The ped operations and safety has a bit of a negative [in the at-grade scenario] for peds crossing Route 1. That's why we are proposing to offset that with an underpass. We are looking at walkability and ped safety as two different things.

- W. **Comment:** Seems like you are looking for ways to reduce the costs so you can say "this is the option we want"

Comment noted.

- X. **Comment:** Agrees with Pam's comment that it is easy to lose track of which option is which in the slides; I hope that the report is going to include information about non-peak periods because people live along Route 1; I want to know if any discussions have been held about off-peak parking.

Response: We received a lot of comments about enforcement and how that affects lowering the speed. Several comments have been to provide facilities for enforcement to happen, but this is not really driving our decision for at-grade or elevated. As far as the analysis goes, we have been only looking at the peak periods. One recommendation we made was to look at traffic volumes again after COVID; this is something we will look at going forward. It appears off-peak parking is allowable. VDOT does not maintain on-street parking. It is a conversation that needs to be had with Arlington County.

Y. **Comment:** 25 mph would be better for ped safety.

Comment noted.

Z. **Question:** Regarding proposed overpass and tunnel, is it possible to take into account personal safety issues with a proposed tunnel. Would such a tunnel encourage a rise in crime?

Response: The intent would be that if an underpass is feasible, the consideration of security would be a part of the feasibility analysis. Where we would try to locate the tunnel would be as close to the Metro/18th Street as possible. We would anticipate a fair amount of use with people trying to access Metro, and with that use would come safety.

AA. **Question:** Is 25 mph working on Route 1 in Alexandria? If so, why not continue that to the north?

Response: We will take that into consideration. Alexandria is a different case – they bring Route 1 down to two lanes and traffic volumes drop off. It is a different case but something we can consider.

BB. **Comment:** The Crystal City Underground does not seem to have any notable safety issues? A straight tunnel that is well lit and regularly patrolled by (potentially) JBGS would likely be as safe as the underground.

Comment noted.

CC. **Comment:** I like the existing Crystal City Connector (bike connector).

Comment noted.

DD. **Question:** If traffic from Glebe is causing a surge to Rt 1 traffic, why not divert the Glebe traffic onto 395?

Response: That is something that can be considered.

4. **Next Steps**

- Receive public comments following the PIM presentation on 6/16 – allowed until 7/12
- Draft report – August
- Final report – September
- Phase 2 study – starting Fall 2021; would potentially consider:
 - Post-COVID traffic counts/analysis
 - Pedestrian overpass configuration
 - Expanding intersection analysis
 - Travel demand management strategies
 - ~~5% plan~~ Further concept development
 - Other considerations – transit accommodations, ~~environmental review~~, etc.



**Route 1 Multimodal Study
Task Force Meeting Summary (June 14, 2021)**



Attachment:

Route 1 Multimodal Task Force Meeting No. 4 – June 14, 2021 Slides for Discussion (PDF)