

The Parkfairfax Transportation and Land Use Committee (TLUC) met virtually on 10 June 2021 and was privileged to welcome its newest member and Ward 2 representative, Mr. Hector Mares.

The TLUC addressed various issues of interest to the community including:

1. ATC (DASH) Board of Directors meeting of 09 June where it was reconfirmed that DASH will become “fare-free” coincident with inauguration of the New Bus Network on 05 September 2021. While it is the intent to continue the fare-free program indefinitely, there will be an annual reevaluation based upon ridership changes and budgetary concerns.
2. The recent decision to double service frequency and extend service hours for Pentagon routes AT3 and AT4, which took effect on 07 June, was also discussed. Anticipating a resurgence in ridership, DASH now operates these routes at an individual peak hour frequency of every 30 minutes resulting in a combined 15 minute headway from Martha Custis and Gunston.
3. The Chair mentioned the VDOT Route 1 Multimodal Improvements Feasibility Study which considers dismantling the elevated section of Route 1 through Crystal City and replacing it with a surface level “urban boulevard,” infested with grade level signalized intersections at 12th St. S., 15th St. S. and 18th St. S. Those concerned with the safety impact of replacing three underpasses with left-turn lanes, bike lanes, parallel parking, and pedestrian crossings, should attend the VDOT Virtual Public Information Meeting on June 16th at 6:30 PM. www.virginiadot.org/route1multimodalstudy.
4. The King St. bridge over I-395 which was found to be “structurally deficient” in 2015 is, at long last, undergoing rehabilitation now. Work was delayed due to a lack of funding and the need to deconflict the project from the Express Lanes construction directly below.
5. On-Site Lighting LLC of Buffalo, MN conducted a survey of Parkfairfax outside lighting and the results are expected to be presented to the Board in June. If an additional assessment of lighting would be helpful, the TLUC will consider such an undertaking this summer.
6. A member questioned potential solutions to the dangerous merge into the Shirlington Circle from Quaker Lane, and to a lesser degree, from Shirlington Road. It was explained that VDOT had undertaken a major study over the last 5 years resulting in a “hybrid” solution to this longstanding accident-prone roadway configuration. While the circle itself “belongs” to VDOT, it is the responsibility of Arlington and Alexandria to raise about \$11M to accomplish the redesign. The TLUC has partnered with Fairlington, Green Valley, Parc East and Shirlington and here is the latest from T&ES “Hi Bob – we are currently working with Arlington County to add this project to the TransAction Plan, the long range transportation plan for Northern Virginia, that is updated every five years by the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA). The plan is in the early stages of its next update, and we will work with NVTA to include the project, so that it can be eligible for future NVTA 70% grant funds that are used for regional transportation projects. In addition, we will consider this project for the next round (Round 5) of SmartScale funding, which prioritizes projects that address the State Transportation Plan (VTrans). We did not include the project with the current Round (4) of Smartscale because we had already identified and applied for other projects. Please let us know if you have any other questions.” Bottom line – it will likely be submitted as a Smartscale candidate in the spring of 2022 so it’s still years away from being funded and construction.

7. There was a lengthy discussion regarding electric vehicle (EV) charging stations. This is not the first time the subject has been raised, but it is unclear if there is a present or future potential demand signal. It is the opinion of the Chair and several TLUC members that, before the Board decides whether to pursue installation of EV charging stations, residents should be surveyed to determine whether they currently own an electric vehicle or plan to acquire one in the near term, and whether the installation of EV charging stations will be a factor in their decision. Residents should also be asked how far from home they would find an EV charging station to be useful, given the time required to fully charge a battery. It was also noted that there is a parallel study by the City to consider installing EV charging stations on City streets for those who do not have off-street parking available. <https://www.alexandriava.gov/tes/ecocity/info/default.aspx?id=109894> . Parkfairfax is somewhat unique in that we have a combination of parking on City streets and Association-controlled areas including four Lanes and the 3100 block of Ravensworth Place. While City street parking spaces outnumber Parkfairfax-controlled spaces, most residents choose to park closest to their home. Many would cry “foul” if scarce parking spaces were forfeited for EV charging station. Further complicating the equation is the fact that we are a sprawling 130 acre community with no center of gravity, no central location convenient to all residents, and there are no personnel to enforce time limits to ensure that charging station spaces would not become ersatz overnight parking spaces. But whether Parkfairfax considers installation of an EV charging station or stations, or lobbies the City for or against such stations, it should not be based on conjecture, but rather a comprehensive resident survey to ascertain current and future demand.

8. The EV charging station discussion led to a walk down memory lane where it was noted the TLUC proposed a permit (sticker) system to maintain a modicum of control over Parkfairfax common-element parking areas, an idea the Board flatly rejected about 5 years ago as being an infringement upon civil liberties, or something to that effect. With modern technology, a permit system could be established without the use of stickers or hangtags, if those pose security or privacy concerns. Some years ago, the DoD eliminated base decals and most jurisdictions in Virginia, including Alexandria, now use license plate scanners instead of decals to identify vehicles for personal property tax collection purposes. It may be time for Parkfairfax to think outside the box and provide fair and enforceable parking priority for residents in good standing.

The next meeting of the TLUC will be Thursday July 8th at 7PM. Details to follow.

Bob Gronenberg

Transportation & Land Use Committee Chair