

City of Alexandria, Virginia
FY 2023 Proposed Operating Budget & CIP
Budget Questions & Answers

April 8, 2022

Question: Can we prepare a memo on the unfunded DASH service expansion requests?

Response:

In response to Budget Question #096; this memo outlines the unfunded DASH service expansions associated with the New DASH Network, which launched September 5, 2021. These service expansions are a part of the Alexandria Transit Vision Plan (ATV) as adopted by the Alexandria Transit Company (DASH) Board of Directors in December of 2019; and as reaffirmed by the Alexandria City Council in adopting the Alexandria Mobility Plan in October 2021.

The ATV bus network seeks to increase the relevance and ridership of bus service in Alexandria by providing more useful bus service in places where more people can use it. DASH's systemwide ridership has grown by 50% in its first four (4) months of operations. After a decrease in January ridership associated with the COVID-19 Omicron surge, the system is already seeing ridership growth rebound. Further increasing the demand for reliable and frequent transit are inflation, severe spikes in gasoline prices, and a return to the office for most of the workforce.

When the ATV was adopted, it included a "fiscally constrained" version of the New DASH Network available to be implemented in FY 2022. This was in line with providing the community a new and improved DASH system regardless of the fiscal capacity of the City's budget. This version was ultimately implemented and did not include several of the key improvements called for with the ATV. This memorandum outlines the remaining 2022 improvements that were deferred in FY 2022. The complete "New DASH Network" (as determined by the ATV) is scheduled for implementation by FY 2030.

The remaining unfunded route improvements from the FY 22 version of the New DASH Network (when implemented) will significantly improve transit access and reduce headways in neighborhoods across the City including: South Van Dorn; Landmark; Arlandria; Eisenhower Valley; Del Ray; Potomac Yard; and Old Town.

Further, the improvements include enhanced connectivity between Old Town and the rest of the City by reducing or eliminating the need for transfers on many trips, especially those from West Alexandria. These improvements in total cost \$2.6 million and all, or portions can be implemented in FY 2023 utilizing the existing DASH bus fleet, if funded. The improvements are projected to generate over 230,000 additional passenger boardings in the first-year full year of service.

Details of the unfunded improvements from the 2022 Alexandria Transit Vision Plan are as follows:

1. **Line 30 (Van Dorn Metro to Braddock Road Metro via Duke Street).** Extend all weekday peak trips from King Street Metro to Braddock Road Metro to provide 10-minute peak headways in Old Town; extend all weekend trips from Landmark Mall to Van Dorn Metro to provide 30-minute frequency on South Van Dorn Street instead of the current 60-minute service.
 - a. **Cost:** \$1,140,000
 - b. **Anticipated ridership impact:** +144,000 annual boardings
 - c. **Benefits:** Frequency improvements on Line 30 will improve weekday peak service in Old Town and benefit any passengers traveling into Old Town from West Alexandria and Duke Street. West End residents, for example, often need to make two transfers to get from Beauregard Street to City Hall, but this improvement would ensure that only one transfer is required at all times. This would reduce their travel time by an average of 10-15 minutes. Staff estimates that over 200 daily passengers on Line 30 are forced to make a transfer at King Street Metro. This improvement eliminates the need for such a transfer. Weekend frequency improvements between Landmark Mall and Van Dorn Metro make Line 30 much more convenient on weekends, especially for riders along the South Van Dorn Street corridor.

2. **Line 31 (NVCC Alexandria to Braddock Road Metro via King Street).** Extends all off-peak and weekend trips from King Street Metro to Braddock Road Metro to provide 15-minute off-peak headways in Old Town.
 - a. **Cost:** \$790,000
 - b. **Anticipated ridership impact:** +47,000 annual boardings
 - c. **Benefits:** Similar to the Line 30 changes, the frequency improvements on Line 31 also improve weekday peak service in Old Town, which benefits any passengers traveling into Old Town from West Alexandria and King Street. With this improvement, staff estimates that more than 100 daily transfers from Line 31 at King Street Metro are eliminated.

Lines 30 and 31 are co-branded as the “Old Town Circulator (OTC)”. These improvements allow the OTC to run every five minutes during weekday peaks and every 8-15 minutes during middays, evenings, and weekends. This represents a significant increase from the current 8–10-minute service during weekday peaks and 15-minute service during all other times. This additional

frequency makes buses much more relevant and useful in Old Town and leads to reduced traffic, increased visitors, increased business and significantly reduces parking demand.

3. **Line 33 (King Street Metro to Potomac Yard via Del Ray).** Improves Sunday service to every 30 minutes instead of every 60 minutes.
 - a. **Cost:** \$110,000
 - b. **Anticipated ridership impact:** +11,000 annual boardings
 - c. **Benefits:** Line 33 (*formerly the AT-10*) provides seven-day service from the King Street Metro to Potomac Yard via Mount Vernon Avenue in Del Ray and Arlandria. This improvement makes Sunday service on this route much more useful with buses running every 30 minutes instead of only once per hour. This helps to ensure that there are useful bus connections to the new Potomac Yard Metro station, seven days per week, year-round.

4. **Line 34 (Lee Center to Potomac Yard via Old Town).** Improves Sunday service to run every 30 minutes instead of every 60 minutes.
 - a. **Cost:** \$110,000
 - b. **Anticipated ridership impact:** +7,000 annual boardings
 - c. **Benefits:** Line 34 provides 7-day service from Lee Center to the new Potomac Yard Metro via City Hall and Old Town North. This improvement makes Sunday service on this route much more useful with buses running every 30 minutes instead of only once per hour. This helps to ensure that there are useful bus connections to the new Potomac Yard Metro station, seven days per week, year-round.

Line 32 (Landmark Mall to King Street Metro via Eisenhower Avenue). Improves midday, evening and weekend service to run every 30 minutes instead of every 60 minutes.

- d. **Cost:** \$440,000
- e. **Anticipated ridership impact:** +26,000 annual boardings
- f. **Benefits:** Line 32 (*similar to the old AT-7*) provides 7-day service from Landmark Mall to the King Street Metro via Holmes Run Parkway, South Van Dorn Street and Eisenhower Avenue. This improvement makes service on this route much more useful with buses running every 30 minutes instead of once per hour during weekday middays, evenings and weekends. This is a critical improvement for continuing to support existing and future transit needs along Holmes Run Parkway, South Pickett Street, and the dense development in Eisenhower East.

Further analysis regarding costs, ridership impacts, equity implications, and cost efficiency are included in the attached table. A map of the entire DASH transit system is also provided for reference.

Attachments: (1) DASH System Map
(2) DASH FY23 Unfunded Improvements Table