



GO Alex Annual Report FY2021

Inside

Employer Outreach

Residential Outreach

FY22 Goals and Priorities



I. OVERVIEW

This report summarizes the activities for GO Alex, the City's dedicated Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program. TDM is the application of policies and strategies to increase the percentage of commuters using alternative transportation options (a key indicator in the FY 2017 to FY 2022 Alexandria Strategic Plan), while still ensuring residents, workers, and visitors can reach destinations within Alexandria. Through the use of incentives, education, and marketing, TDM promotes a more efficient use of the existing transportation system by influencing the time, route, or mode selected for a given trip. TDM also increases travel choices, offering the opportunity to choose how, when, and by what mode people travel. Recent concerns about climate change have also highlighted the environmental benefits of TDM programs in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, as outlined in the City's Environmental Action Plan.

In FY 2021, GO Alex continued to address major challenges while refining how it delivers its services, most notably the travel changes COVID and subsequent recovery brought. In FY 2022, GO Alex will continue to deliver value to the City by continuing current TDM programs and developing new programs to support pandemic/post-pandemic travel. With a dedicated staff of two full-time employees and one part-time employee dedicated to employer outreach, the GO Alex team provides TDM assistance throughout the City and supports an established retail outlet in the GO Alex Mobile Store. GO Alex will continue to expand these programs into FY2022.



HIGHLIGHTS FROM FY 2021

338

Number of new employers introduced to GO Alex's Services

Successful in-person events, including Bike to Work Day and Winter Bike to Work Day, as well as the Transportation Management Plan Summit

\$1.5M

Amount of money managed in state and federal grants

Growth of involvement in active commuting, including increased marketing

\$40K

Supported Capital Bikeshare marketing operations, including the promotion of three stations and collection of \$40,000 towards operating expenses

Support of a direct commuter assistance program, which assisted transit users during the COVID-19 pandemic. This program assisted essential workers during the pandemic

II. About GO Alex

GO Alex is the City's Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program. The program's mission statement is to promote, plan and support mobility options to benefit the quality of life, economic development, and the experience of people traveling in Alexandria. City Council, through the FY2017-2022 Strategic Plan (Multimodal Transportation Chapter) and the Alexandria Mobility Plan, directs the City to enhance and promote multimodal transportation options for residents, visitors, and workers. GO Alex promotes alternative transportation options such as transit, biking, walking, and teleworking through a robust outreach program, and with strong partnerships with DASH, WMATA (Metrorail and Metrobus), VRE, and regional TDM agencies, such as Arlington Commuter Services and Fairfax County DOT. GO Alex is also working with other parts of Transportation and Environmental Services on redefining its role in the ongoing Alexandria Mobility Plan.

Specifically, GO Alex includes the following program areas:

Employer Outreach – GO Alex works with employers in Alexandria to help their employees commute efficiently. Projects include workshops for employers and individual consultations, as well as transit benefits such as +50

Residential Outreach – This includes outreach to residents of Alexandria, letting them know about transportation options. Examples include events, outreach and coordination with apartment buildings, and direct ride-matching services

Active Commuting – GO Alex supports active commuting, designing programs to promote Capital Bikeshare in the City of Alexandria and create harmonious use of dockless mobility

Mobile Store - This store provides direct commuter assistance wherever the commuters are. Projects include selling fare media and helping commuters plan trips



III. Highlights for FY2021

EMPLOYER OUTREACH

A key element of GO Alex is the Employer Outreach program. Industry best practice for TDM is to have a program to work with employers, as employers are an influential part of any work trip. The City has an employer outreach coordinator on staff who develops and implements programs, maintains employer-facing communications, and recruits new employers to GO Alex.

Major Highlights

- GO Alex began regular communication and service to 471 employers in FY21, compared with just 133 employers in FY20
- Development of new programs, including a parking cashout pilot and +50 a transit incentive program for workers in the City
- Far more active engagement of employers, as shown with lunch and learns and increased open rate for newsletters. One employer established a TDM program in FY2020, with more imminent in 2020
- Piloted customized commuter plans with six mid-sized employers in a year when most employees were teleworking
- Continued communication, including a monthly newsletter, with an open rate of 29 percent (compared with 33 percent in FY20)
- Developed partnerships with several local and regional entities, including Visit Alexandria, the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce, Alexandria Economic Development Partnership, the Greater Washington Partnership, and Telework!VA. This resulted in programs such as working directly with employers via workshops

RESIDENTIAL OUTREACH

As part of its mission, GO Alex engages with the community to generate interest in alternative forms of transportation. GO Alex conducts outreach to residents through events and direct communication.

At the core of this program is the Commuter Connections Ridematching system. Funded and maintained by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Government's Commuter Connection program, this program matches residents who are interested in carpools. In FY 2021, there were 45 residents who applied for ridematches, compared with 45 residents in FY 2020. COVID has depressed these numbers further, though it is anticipated that ridematching activity will pick up as the pandemic fades.

Major Highlights

GO Alex has hosted or participated in several events to support its mission. Events hosted include the following:

- **Winter Bike to Work Day and Bike to Work Day** – Winter Bike to Work Day and Bike to Work Day are events that support active commuters. During these events, bicyclists who register interact with the GO Alex team and receive alternative commute information. Winter Bike to Work Day was held in February, and gave coffee to winter bicyclists. Bike to Work Day, a much larger event in May, supported hundreds of bicyclists and hosted the event at three bike shops: Conte's Bike Shop, Pedego, and Big Wheels Bicycle shop. Food and beverages were provided, as were bicycle services.
- **Operation Illumination** – An annual giveaway of bike lights and reflective gear held in early November, just after the change from daylight savings time to standard time. GO Alex organized giveaways at places like the Holmes Run Trail, Four Mile Run Park, and the transit hub at Duke Street and Jordan Street, the busiest bus stop that is not a Metrorail station

Event scheduling was light in FY21 because of the ongoing COVID pandemic. GO Alex will resume programming in FY22 as the pandemic recedes.



Mobility Services
421 King Street Suite 235
Alexandria, VA 22314
703-746-4686 FAX 703-746-6433
GOAlex@Alexandriava.gov



NEWSLETTER



SUMMER 2021

WELCOME MESSAGE FROM GO ALEX

GO Alex promotes, plans, and supports mobility options to benefit quality of life, economic development, and the experience of people traveling in Alexandria. There are many ways to do that, including biking, walking, transit, and other modes. There are many challenges to this, but we are always there to help you address them.

Ready to start your trip? Visit us at alexandriava.gov/GOAlex or contact us at GOAlex@alexandriava.gov

WHAT'S INSIDE

- 01 Changes to DASH
- 02 Returning to Work Safely
- 03 Bike to Work Day Recap

Active Commuting

GO Alex became more involved in active commuting promotion in FY21. Specifically, GO Alex Staff completed the following:

- Promotion of three new Capital Bikeshare stations
- Promoted proper etiquette for riding dockless devices, including fliers at two dockless corrals
- Events for the bicycling community, including Winter Bike to Work Day and Bike to Work Day
- Facebook posts on active commuting

Other communications

GO Alex educates residents about multimodal options, as well as informs them about transportation projects of significance, including the Platform Improvement Project and the Alexandria Mobility Plan.

Channels used include the following:

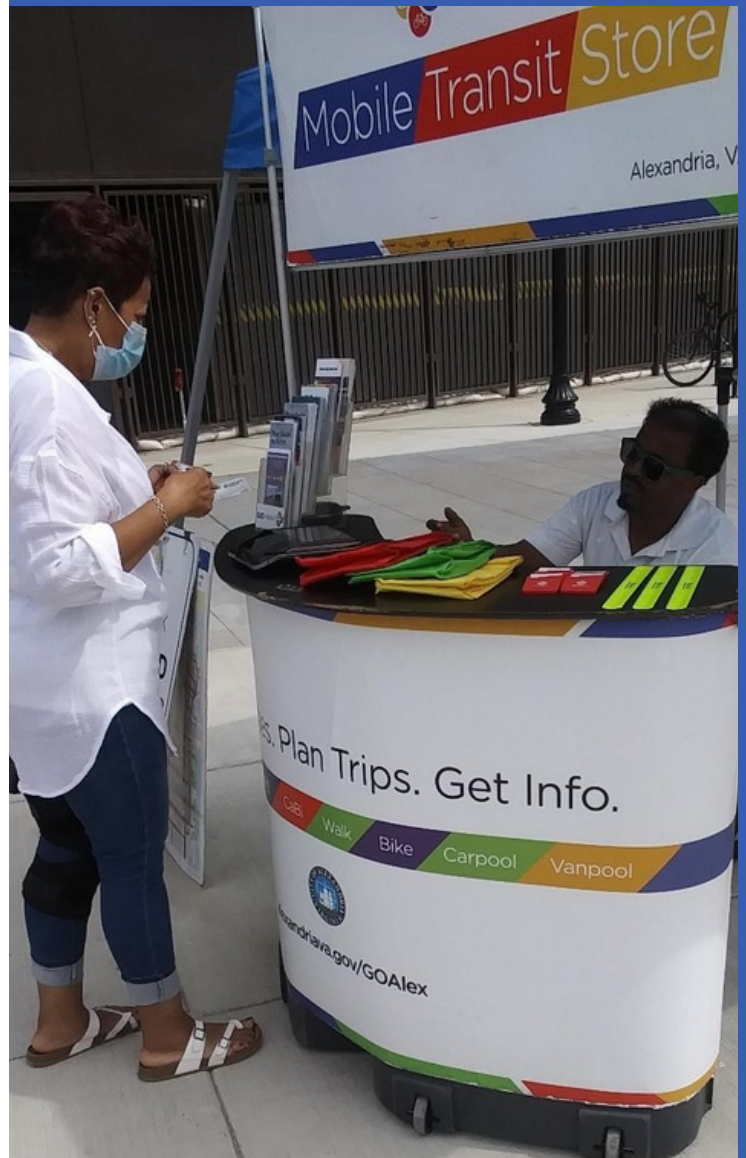
- 15,000 newsletters sent to residents twice that covered transportation issues, as well as safe commuting tips
- Over 1,000 mailers for new homeowners that let homeowners know about their options.
- Social media, primarily Facebook, and also posts on the Transportation and Environmental Services' Instagram page

The Mobile Store

The Mobile Store is the City's Commuter Assistance program. Designed to move to wherever there is demand, the Mobile Store helps commuters a.) buy fare media, such as SmarTrip cards and DASH passes, and b.) with trip planning. The Mobile Store also helps essential workers, including trip planning, providing information in a rapidly changing transit environment, and other support.

The Mobile Store assisted over 6,400 people in FY2021, a 68 percent decrease over the prior fiscal year. The decrease happened for two reasons. Firstly, all of FY2021 occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, which saw a decrease in travel activity. Metrorail, where most of the commuters were served, saw up to an 85 percent decrease in riders over the 2019 baseline.

The second reason is that FY 2020 was an extraordinarily busy year. The Platform Improvement Project, which closed all four Metrorail stations in Alexandria, meant that the Mobile Store teams were far busier than normal, with first quarter FY2020 interactions 61 percent greater than the same period last year. Absent a commuting event of the same scale, GO Alex does not anticipate similar interactions with the current model.



	FY19 Interactions	FY20 Interactions	FY21 Interactions	FY19 Sales	FY20 Sales	FY21 Sales
Q1	7,112	11,444	1,654	\$ 1,694	\$ 33,574	\$ 986
Q2	6,247	3,237	1,053	\$ 1,554	\$ 9,323	\$ 815
Q3	2,376	3,893	876	\$ 1,142	\$ 9,645	\$ 1,479
Q4	8,551	1,940	2,864	\$ 20,006	\$ 170	\$ 4,913
	24,286	20,514	6,447	\$ 24,396	\$ 52,712	\$ 8,193
	Increased activity due to prolonged Metrorail shutdown					

The Mobile Store stepped up to several extraordinary challenges this year. For one, the Mobile Store continued to be a presence during COVID. Despite the low volume of commuters overall, those that were taking public transportation were those who were essential workers and had absolutely no other choice to get to their jobs. Anecdotal reports suggested that the Mobile Store was so effective, Metrorail station managers directed their customers to store staff to answer questions.

+50

+50 is an incentive program that is designed to help commuters take transit options. The program gives a \$50 incentive for transit if a worker inside the City decides to enroll in SmartBenefits, a regional provider of commuter benefits that is part of WMATA.

Commuter benefits are an employee benefit that employers can provide and deduct the benefit from their corporate taxes. Employees can also contribute to their benefits on a pretax basis. Currently, the IRS allows contributions up to \$270 per person per month.

A barrier to the success of the SmartBenefits program is the lag between signing up for this benefit and actually receiving the benefit. SmartBenefits requires employees to choose by the 15th of the month whether to receive benefits for the following month. The \$50 incentive from +50 covers at least some of the cost of commuting while workers wait for their commuter benefits to take effect.

The program is cobranded with an identical program offered by Fairfax County Commuter Services and is funded and approved by a CMAQ/STBG grant provided through DRPT. However, DRPT has asked the City to suspend the promotion of the program during COVID. Promotion is expected to resume once the state lifts its public health emergency.

LONG-RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

GO Alex collaborated with Transportation Planning and other stakeholders to write the Alexandria Mobility Plan (AMP). Passed by City Council, the AMP outlines strategies for TDM under “Mobility Options.” AMP calls for several long term strategies, which include the following:

Use information, programs, and encouragement to make it easier for residents and workers to choose options other than driving alone

- Identify an expanded set of community influencers (such as religious leaders, school principals, and athletic organizations), in addition to employers and residential property managers, to help encourage alternatives to driving alone
- Update the Transportation Management Plan program so new developments can better reduce and track congestion
- Develop a travel training and commuter assistance program to provide hands-on experience on taking a new (to you) way of traveling
- Expand use of real-time information to promote travel choices

Use the Potomac River to expand transportation options

- Partner with other jurisdictions, agencies, and private partners to determine the best ways to utilize the Potomac River as a transportation option
- Explore and evaluate new water transportation routes and services for commute and trips, errands, or entertainment
- Identify opportunities to integrate with other modes of transportation

Create mobility hubs

- Identify optimal locations for mobility hubs in strategic locations around the city. These mobility hubs will differ in size and scope based on location type and may incorporate elements to improve navigation for all users of the site through wayfinding and other features
- Incorporate charging infrastructure for carshare vehicles, personal vehicles, and micromobility devices (electric bikes, scooters, etc.)
- Focus on traditionally underserved communities and strategic locations to address first- and last-mile travel needs citywide

Pursue regional approaches to reduce traffic and congestion, particularly during peak times

- Coordinate with neighboring jurisdictions and regional entities to explore unifying local TDM programs into a more comprehensive regional effort
- Advocate for policies that will help manage congestion, such as telework incentives or a regional congestion pricing program
- Continue to support regional transportation initiatives, including Commuter Connections, and targeted TDM initiatives of a regional scale, such as the Northern Virginia Regional Multi-Modal Mobility Program (R3MP)

IV. FY22 Goals and Priorities

GO Alex has several goals and priorities in FY22 to continue to support the City's goals for providing multimodal travel options, as briefly summarized below (and support from DRPT to restart programming and events).

Acceleration of Core Outreach Activities

For a health and safety reasons and budget constraints related to COVID-19, GO Alex was asked to stop various programs, including +50, Water Taxi Reimbursements, and several others. GO Alex also had to cancel several events due to stay at home orders or social distancing guidelines, such as Park(ing) Day. In May and June of 2021, though, GO Alex resumed outdoor outreach as the COVID pandemic became more manageable. GO Alex will continue this resumption into FY22, including attending outdoor events, and organizing meetings.

Additionally, GO Alex will restart several programs slated for expansion as early as FY 2020, but were ultimately postponed, even through most of 2021. Such projects include +50, reimbursement of the Water Taxi, and enhanced partnership with employers.

GO Alex has plans for enhanced operations in FY22. Among those plans include the following:

- Support transit as it continues recovery from the pandemic, including efforts to promote DASH
- Continuing to develop new content for employers, including new webinars, lunch and learns, and other forums for employers to interact
- Restore Capital Bikeshare annual membership to pre-pandemic levels, and create a stable glidepath for the return of trips
- Reform transportation management plans with new and existing developments, and empower more stakeholders to make transportation decisions
- Developing and piloting a parking cash out program. This program, used in other areas to promote multimodal transportation, pays workers for using a multimodal option to get to work

Capital Bikeshare

A growth opportunity GO Alex has identified is Capital Bikeshare promotion. Alexandria is one of eight jurisdictions that co-own the Capital Bikeshare system. GO Alex sees a number of growth opportunities, including the following:

- Grow monthly purchases of annual memberships in Alexandria to pre-COVID baseline
- Expand growth with targeted outreach to key ridership groups. Such groups may include residents of multifamily housing developments, members returning to work, and other communities
- Support the planned doubling of bikeshare stations, including in the West End and Potomac Yard
- Promote the Capital Bikeshare for All program, which is a program that offers \$5 annual memberships to recipients of certain federal benefits, including Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)



Support Transit



GO Alex is working with transit systems and DRPT to support transit as they recover from the pandemic. At the moment, the program's messaging is to reinforce safety. GO Alex is currently participating with several transit agencies, including the DRPT, to bring riders back to transit.

GO Alex will support transit in the following ways:

- Close cooperation with DASH in its marketing. GO Alex worked with DASH in the run-up to implementing free fares and a new Transit Vision in September. GO Alex provided copy support and assistance with outreach.
- Continued transit outreach to communities that may depend on transit, particularly in areas of the City with a higher transit dependence. The GO Alex Mobile Store is expected to play a major role in this outreach
- Strategize and implement new marketing with transportation capital projects entering the City. These projects include the King St. Metro bus bay relocation project, Eisenhower Avenue widening, and especially the planned opening of the Potomac Yard Metrorail station in 2022

Reform to TMP Process

GO Alex expects to finalize TMP reform in late FY2022 and begin implementation in FY23. A Transportation Management Plan (TMP) is a site-specific plan of TDM strategies to encourage residents and employees to take public transportation, walk, bike, or share a ride, as opposed to driving alone. The TMP is required by ordinance through the City's development review process, depending on the size of the development. Currently, the TMP process neither encourages the use of alternative transportation nor reduces congestion.

GO Alex will refresh this process, which had only one other reform, in 2013. GO Alex will work with transportation professionals, the development community, and the public to ensure the new TMP program is fair, equitable, and achieves measurable reductions in congestion. Once Council passes a reform, GO Alex plans to spend FY23 working with TMPs directly, helping them to shift to a new model, and also measuring more effectively how the City and TMPs can reduce congestion.

Support Long Range Planning

- GO Alex will continue to implement strategies of the AMP. Specifically, it will continue to craft and implement programs from Strategy 1 (Use information, programs, and encouragement to make it easier for residents and workers to choose options other than driving alone), and pilot ideas from Strategy 3.
- GO Alex also supports other TDM programs and transportation entities in their planning, especially if it may involve an impact on Alexandria commuters. Among those efforts include the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments Commuter Connection, the I-66 Outside the Beltway Transportation Management Program, and the I-495 American Legion Bridge Transit/TDM Study.

V. HOW GO ALEX IS FUNDED

\$116,377

Commuter Operating Assistance Grant

COMMUTER OPERATING ASSISTANCE GRANT

For state funding, GO Alex uses a DRPT TDM Operating Assistance grant. This TDM Operating Assistance grant funds baseline activities, including two full-time employees to manage the GO Alex program, and related support functions. In FY 2021, the City provided a local match of \$29,094 toward this grant and received \$116,377. Funding was reduced in FY 2021 due to COVID, and is expected to increase in subsequent years.

RIDESHARE ENHANCEMENTS (CMAQ/STBG GRANT)

The Rideshare Enhancements grant is designed to fund the bulk of the City's TDM programming. In years past, this grant has been used to fund a "street team" (marketing team at City events) and paid advertising. The City is currently using FY2019 funds, valued at \$526,000 before using FY 2020 and 2021 funding (a total of \$1.2 million). While this grant was slated to fund many projects mentioned in this report, including +50 and a parking cash out program, the DRPT has asked us to stop spending on these projects due to COVID. Staff anticipates resuming spending in FY21.

\$600,000

Rideshare Enhancements Grant

V. HOW GO ALEX IS FUNDED

\$600,000

CMAQ/STBG grant

ALEXANDRIA TRANSIT STORE (CMAQ/STBG GRANT)

The Alexandria Transit Store grant funds the Mobile Store. This grant is awarded once every three years. In FY 2021, this grant was \$600,000. Staff will spend the grant until the City receives the next installment, which is no earlier than July 1, 2023 (FY 2024).

VDOT EMPLOYER OUTREACH GRANT

The City receives an annual grant from the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) that is used toward employer outreach. In FY 2021, the City received \$56,900 from VDOT. This grant is used to fund the employer outreach coordinator as a part-time position, as previously described.

\$56,900

VDOT grant

TMP Contributions

All TMPs collect a combined total of \$2.2 million dollars. These additional funds do not go directly to the City, but developments must spend these funds on approved transportation activities. Examples of approved activities include TDM education, carsharing, capital improvements (such as bike racks or showers), and shuttle bus expenses.