

Planning and Coordination Council Quarterly Meeting Minutes

August 20, 2015

Albemarle County Office Building (McIntire Road)

Room 241

2:00pm

PACC Members in Attendance: Tom Foley, Pat Hogan, Satyendra Huja, Maurice Jones, Diantha McKeel, Colette Sheehy, Brad Sheffield (Chair), Dede Smith

Others in Attendance: David Benish, Chip Boyles, Wayne Cilimberg, Diane Mullins (secretary), Amanda Poncy, Julia Monteith, Sean Tubbs, Rebecca White, Megan Lowe, members from the public, media members.

1. Call to Order

Supervisor Sheffield called the meeting to order at 2:04 p.m.

2. Approval of Past Minutes

Supervisor McKeel offered a motion to approve the November 20, 2014 meeting minutes as written; Pat Hogan seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously by voice vote.

3. City/County/University Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning

Amanda Poncy, Charlottesville Bike and Pedestrian Coordinator, provided an overview of the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). She noted that the MPO helps coordinate regional transportation efforts, long range transportation planning, joint studies, provides equal access for bicyclists and pedestrians, does data gathering and analysis, and identifies infrastructure investment priorities. She shared plans for improving the JPA/Emmet Intersection and an overall vision for City of Charlottesville streets. Ms. Poncy discussed City/County connections and the City's bicycle/pedestrian master plan vision: "walking and biking will be practical, convenient, safe and pleasant ways to travel to destinations within and adjacent to the City." Ms. Poncy noted the City's sidewalk priorities for 2016-2021 and also provided pictures of Charlottesville's trail implementation efforts. She provided a list of near-term on-street/trail plans as well as on-going bicycle/pedestrian priorities and implementation efforts. Mr. Sheffield said he would like to see more County/City bike/pedestrian trail connections, adding that he would like to involve VDOT's help in that regard. Ms. McKeel said she would like to see more effort toward making bike lanes safer, particularly as it relates to cars driving in the bike lanes.

David Benish, Chief of Planning for Albemarle County, reported that the County works toward having consistency related to bike/pedestrian connections adding that the County has recently hired a Transportation Planner, which will help in that regard. He reported that the County works on some of the same projects that the City does but, because all of the roads in the County are VDOT roads and subject to state standards, the resources are different and there are limitations which affect the way improvements are done. He stated that the County's Parks and Recreation Department works more closely with the City on ways to develop recreational and commuter trails. He identified recently completed high priority projects: Sunset Avenue, Proffit Road, Old Ivy Road and Fifth Street Extended, Jarman's Gap Road, the John Warner Parkway Trail, and Georgetown Road. He stated that the County has a very long list of sidewalk projects that are working their way through the process. Mr. Benish

mentioned the Rt. 29 Solutions project which has a number of improvements such as sidewalks on some portion of the road, a shared-use path along the entire length, Berkmar Extended is slated to have sidewalks on one side as well as bike lanes, a shared-use path and potentially a trail to the Rivanna Greenway Trail. Regarding the Northtown Trail, he said that trail would connect Hollymead to downtown and would use the Berkmar alignment as part of that. He said one problem with getting off-road trails done relates to getting the property owners on board. He said there will be a missing piece of the northern connection because the property owners have indicated some concern with regard to granting public access.

Mr. Benish stated that the County has some sidewalk and/or trail improvements in its CIP which should provide better connections to places such as Region Ten Offices, Azalea Park, Bent Creek Drive, and 5th Street Center. He said there are proffers and some grant monies in place for some of these projects. Mr. Benish reported that the Ivy Road project will install sidewalks from the City limits to the Kluge Center including a 10-foot shared use bike lane to the by-pass. He said the project is in design now and is slated to be finalized sometime in the September/October timeframe.

Mr. Sheffield wanted to ensure all of these projects line up graphically with the County, City and the University and to also provide some indication for the public that there is a connection to each of those projects.

Julia Monteith, Senior Land Use Planner for the University of Virginia, discussed the University's bicycle and pedestrian improvements. She pointed out that, of the 1135 acres of University property, approximately two-thirds is in the County; one-third is in the City. She said the University is working constantly on how to work together and meets regularly with City and County staff to review plans in an effort to move projects forward. She stated that pedestrian improvements which have been implemented include: JPA/West Main crossing, Stadium Road turning lane narrowed for safety reasons, 15th Street raised speed table, widening sidewalks at McCormick Road, Ivy/Emmet received wider sidewalks and bike lanes, improvements to Arlington Blvd. sidewalks and bike lanes leading to north grounds, and the Lambeth Pedestrian Bridge was added. Ms. Monteith said additional bike projects include the U-bike program which will use grants to help fund these programs. She reported that docking stations have been completed and the University is currently in the process of installing kiosks for easier check-out, all of which will provide continuous connections for students. She said the U-Bike system will be reevaluated after three years to determine its success. She noted that City/County/University efforts which encourage bike-riding include a safety committee, bike rodeos/helmet giveaways, public service announcements, a Bike-Smart map, on-grounds bike/ped orientation for first year students as well as bike training courses for all students.

Mr. Sheffield suggested all three entities begin to collaborate/coordinate priorities and then work with VDOT for improvements as a whole going forward.

4. Regional Transit Authority (RTA)

Mr. Sheffield indicated that this topic is one that is regularly mentioned by constituents in his district as well as Ms. McKeel's District. He suggested a discussion to perhaps identify some obstacles which might keep an RTA from moving forward. He said he invited Chip Boyle from the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission (TJPDC) to provide some insight. He was anxious to hear thoughts from the PACC and then perhaps request TJPDC for additional work. He said the benefits of having a more unified,

comprehensive system would be better than a segmented system. Ms. McKeel felt there could definitely be some cost savings and suggested that, down the road, a regional transit authority will become a necessity. She said it would be helpful to identify the obstacles and see if there was any way to overcome those. She said the TJPDC would be a good place to start.

Mr. Jones said some of those obstacles which would need to be addressed include funding adding that nothing has changed with the General Assembly. He said another issue would involve governance and if it should be expanded beyond the region. He said CAT and JAUNT assets and cost sharing issues, in addition to others, are also issues which would need to be addressed.

Mr. Hogan said it was not clear to him how the University would be able to save money with an RTA and noted that it would be more expensive from the University's perspective. He said, in addition to the cost, there would be a concern about being able to serve the students as well as their system currently does. He said the University needs the ability to control their transit system in order to keep its students moving and to keep classes going which is critically important.

Mr. Sheffield said he sees the University as secondary given that it is more contained. He suggested the City and County get the basics down and then bring the University into the discussion.

Ms. McKeel said the community should look at it to see what would actually work adding that there are some models which could be studied. She said TJPDC is poised to gather data and help with the discussion. She said it is time to sit down and look at this and thought TJPDC would be the appropriate entity to do this. Mr. Sheffield said TJPDC could look at other models and identify barriers. He said he would like to consider a more unified approach as a means to access additional funding.

Chip Boyles, Executive Director for the TJPDC said he sees this process as a joint venture between the TJPDC and the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). He said he would like to look at it in terms of a regional transit issue instead of a regional transit authority; one that would look for the opportunities which currently exist, and/or identify concerns and the needs within the current system due to it not being done jointly. He said he sees this effort as a cooperative endeavor and one which could possibly extend outside the region. He said, at the end of the day, it could end up being a transit authority, or a joint transit opportunity with cooperative endeavor agreements or it could validate current methods but with some minor adjustments. He said the TJPDC has the initial funding and is ready to begin to facilitate those discussions.

Mr. Hogan asked about the process. Mr. Boyle said the PDC would facilitate by bringing everyone to the table with the PDC and the MPO drafting a report/executive summary at the end with appropriate data/information, opportunities and options.

Mr. Hogan said he could provide the necessary data on the University side and looks forward to being involved in the study, however, he noted that the University's transportation system's purpose/mission is to serve its students, not city and/or county residents. He said he could perhaps recognize some of the positives if it would mean less traffic/parking demands for the University.

Mr. Sheffield said it appears that the City, County and University agree to have the PDC facilitate, and to also share any necessary data in an effort to assist with the study.

Mr. Foley said it would be helpful if Mr. Boyle could provide an outline of the objectives with criteria related to cost, service, governance, etc. He mentioned the earlier study which addressed all of the hard issues, however, the grand vision was simply too expensive to move forward.

5. Strategic Plans (Identify Common Issues)

Mr. Sheffield identified the lack of community engagement on this topic and asked if PACC members could work together on this issue. He noted that on-going training for city and county staff might also be an area which could be done jointly. He mentioned organizational excellence and thought it could be more unified between the City and County. He identified environmental stewardship as another area to be considered by PACC.

Ms. McKeel noted that there are times when the County is engaging with its citizens and does not always reach out to citizens on the City side. She said there are opportunities to reach out to the community and coordinate better.

Ms. Smith said, when issues with common borders arise, it would be an excellent opportunity to bridge the gap between localities. She said matters of an historical nature are another area where all three entities could and should work together.

Mr. Jones noted that it is difficult to get community members to serve on various committees. He said he would be willing to work with the County and the University in this regard.

Mr. Foley said staff will plan to sit down with staff members from the different entities to identify opportunities, all of which could be a focus of future efforts.

Mr. Hogan stated that he would like to see the University more engaged in issues which affect everyone and welcomes being involved.

6. Wrap Up; Future Agenda Items

Mr. Boyle announced that TJPDC would like to submit an application to host the 2017 Town & Gown Association's 2017 Conference. He said the application deadline was November 5. PACC agreed that Mr. Boyle should move forward with the application process.

Mr. Sheffield said he would like to hear a report at the November meeting on the "Go Driver" program specific to funding and expected outcomes.

6. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:50 p.m.