



MINUTES OF THE EMBARK RICHMOND HIGHWAY ADVISORY GROUP

On March 28, 2016, the Embark Richmond Highway Advisory Group (AG) held its fifth meeting at South County Center, 8350 Richmond Highway, Alexandria, VA 22309.

**AG members present**

Walter Clarke, co-chair	Bruce Leonard
Frank Cohn	Rodney Lusk
Earl Flanagan	Rebecca Todd
Carlos Heard	
Dale Johnson	

**AG members absent**

Richard Knapp	Tim Sargeant
Vernon Lee	Chris Soule
James Migliaccio	

**County Staff and Guests Present**

See attached sign-in sheet.

**Call to Order**

Mr. Clarke called the March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2016 meeting to order at 8:37 a.m.

**Administrative Items**

A motion was made **to approve the meeting minutes for the February 18, 2016 Advisory Group meeting.** A vote was taken, and the motion carried unanimously.

*May Community Meeting*

The AG discussed the three options for the meeting date. The evening of Monday, May 9 was chosen. The meeting is proposed to be held at Whitman Middle School, starting at 7:00 p.m.

Meghan Van Dam, Fairfax County Department of Planning and Zoning, provided suggestions for meeting procedures and the AG role at the meeting. Ms. Van Dam suggested placing a greeting table at the entrance to welcome guests. An open house would consist of stations set up around the room with information about the Embark Comprehensive Plan amendment, a long term timeline, facts about BRT and examples of BRT systems, and the existing conditions information. Staff will answer questions and listen to community feedback as guests circulate among the various stations. Ms. Van Dam suggested a PowerPoint presentation could be pre-recorded on a loop for people to view at their convenience. She strongly encouraged the Advisory Group members to attend, so they could introduce members of their organizations and community to staff, lead people through the various stations, and listen to individual feedback. A comment was made to consider having a set, one-time presentation at some point during the meeting.

In terms of how the information will be provided and feedback is gathered, one suggested approach was to have tables by topic area, with guests spending 10-15 minutes at each table before rotating to the next table. Comments and questions from each group would be recorded. It was noted a fairly large venue is needed for this type of meeting and that is challenging if the number of attendees is not known; however this could be an appropriate approach for one of the community meetings further along in the process.

A question was asked about whether this will be the only community open house, Ms. Van Dam replied there are five community meetings proposed in addition to the May meeting. A comment was made that success of the first community meeting is critical, if the public feels they are being ignored, they will not continue participating. A comment was made to articulate up front that this is an extensive and iterative process, and we are at the beginning. Staff and the AG want to hear feedback to make the process better. A comment was made to stress the overall timetable; people are going to be interested about what is going to happen to their area.

A comment was made that the next AG meeting should focus on the May community meeting, and it may not be too early now to think about some of the issues that may be raised: What is the volume of traffic coming the surrounding area? Fort Belvoir receives traffic from Maryland and from points south; there is a tremendous amount of commuter traffic from Prince William County to DC; lastly, there is a great deal of visitor traffic.

Mr. Clarke stated staff will provide refined details about the May meeting at the April 25 Advisory Group meeting. The AG should send additional questions about the community meeting to Ms. Garcia.

#### *Reston Activity Density*

Ms. Van Dam stated the concept of activity density and examples from Arlington, Alexandria, as well as Fairfax County were presented at previous meetings. Reston is being presented in response to a request at the February AG meeting. Ms. Van Dam noted the other activity densities were calculated based on the number of jobs and the population for the ½ mile radius around the Metrorail Stations. For Reston, the land areas recommended for transit oriented development (TOD) close to the Metrorail stations vary in shape and size, therefore the activity densities do not correspond to ½ mile radii. Ms. Van Dam presented the planned activity densities for the Wiehle, Reston Town Center, and Herndon TOD areas.

A question was asked about why the area on the north side of the Toll Road for the Herndon TOD is not shown. Ms. Van Dam responded this area is part of the Town of Herndon, and they develop their own land use recommendations independent from Fairfax County. A comment was made about providing the number of population and jobs for all the examples so comparisons can be made, recognizing that the balance of jobs and households can change and produce the same activity density. Ms. Van Dam responded staff will look into whether the consultant for DPRT can provide the population and household numbers for the non-Fairfax County examples, and if this information is available it will be provided to the AG.

A question was asked about the densities needed to support Metrorail. Tom Burke, Fairfax County Department of Transportation, responded the DPRT Route 1 Multimodal Alternatives Analysis recommended an activity density of 70 people and jobs/acre for Metrorail, and 35 people and jobs/acre for BRT.

A comment was made about seeing the historical data on the jobs and population when Metrorail opened. Fred Selden, Director, DPZ and Marianne Gardner, Director, Planning Division, DPZ, noted differences in station area planning in the 1960s and 1970s; market conditions have changed, and at that time the main consideration was placing employment around mass transit stations, whereas the current practice is to consider mixed use development. Tom Biesiadny, Director, FCDOT, added the stations were part of a negotiated 109 mile system, and the federal government used completely different factors in the 60s and 70s when considering mass transit.

Ms. Van Dam noted that in the interest of limited time and staff resources, efforts should be primarily dedicated to advancing the Plan amendment process rather than devoting significant time on activity density.

#### *Embark Facts Sheet*

Ms. Van Dam thanked the AG for their comments on the facts sheet at the February meeting. Staff is working on adding a BRT project sequence timeline, updating the graphics, and making other modifications. A revised Facts Sheet will be distributed for AG review.

#### **Comprehensive Plan Text – Concept for Future Development, Planning Objectives, Areawide Recommendations**

Ms. Van Dam reminded the AG of the comments received on the draft text at the last AG meeting, to consider the inclusion of the tree canopy and workforce housing. Ms. Van Dam stated there are two goals to these initial revisions; to incorporate notions of BRT and Metrorail, and to bring the text into a more contemporary format. She also asked if the AG had enough time to review. The AG requested another week to review, or until April 4. Mr. Clarke asked comments be emailed to Ms. Garcia.

A question was raised about whether the Background and Character sections of the Richmond Highway Corridor Area guidance are going to be deleted. Ms. Van Dam stated they will not be deleted. Revisions to these sections will be considered further along in the planning process, as the envisioned character of station areas and corridor becomes clearer and the background information can be updated. Ms. Van Dam suggested the cover sheet of the draft text be revised to mention the Background and Character sections.

#### **Existing Conditions**

Ms. Van Dam reviewed the maps and information displayed for Selected Environmental Features, Schools, Public Safety and Libraries, and Housing and Community Development.

#### *Selected Environmental Features*

Ms. Van Dam noted the Environmental Quality Corridors (EQCs) are not mapped, this information is being updated on a countywide level in GIS. A comment was made to add labels to help orient people. Ms. Van Dam stated labels for landmarks and street names can be added. A comment was made to make clearer the boundary of the Embark study area so people can identify whether they are in the ½ mile buffer area. Ms. Van Dam noted staff will consider ways to delineate the study area more clearly. A comment was made that redevelopment will improve stormwater management and the ability to control runoff. A related suggestion was made about including a statement about protecting environmental resources and better controlling stormwater runoff with new development. Ms. Van Dam noted this idea could be added to the display or included in the PowerPoint presentation. A comment was made to consider adding tree cover, this topic may be raised at the community meeting.

### *Fairfax County Public Schools*

Ms. Van Dam noted that overall, elementary, middle, and high schools are close to capacity when comparing the projected enrollment for school year 2016-2017 to facility capacity. She also pointed out the facilities that are currently over capacity, and how it is being addressed. A comment was made that two elementary schools are missing from the map – Fort Hunt and Waynewood. Ms. Van Dam replied that staff will look into whether students living in the study area attend these elementary schools and the school pyramid. A question was asked about whether there is data available for the Embark study timeframe. Ms. Van Dam stated Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) projections are completed for 6 year intervals. A suggestion was made to change the color coding to show which schools feed into a certain high school pyramid. Ms. Van Dam stated staff will look into this; another approach could be to include a table that lists the schools that feed into each high school pyramid.

### *Public Safety and Libraries*

Ms. Van Dam described the police, fire and rescue, and libraries that serve the population in the Embark study area. She noted a new South County Police Station is going to be constructed. Three locations in the Laurel Hill area are being considered for the new station location. A question was raised about whether police substations should also be shown, such as the facility by the Huntington Metro Station. Ms. Van Dam replied these types of facilities can be shown. A comment was made about whether this study provides an opportunity to examine whether there would be opportunities to co-locate public safety facilities in office buildings or with other types of uses. A related comment pointed to the Potomac Yard Fire and Rescue station as a local example. Ms. Van Dam noted there is an opportunity to reexamine how these services are being provided, and concepts such whether co-location is an option for the corridor will be studied further.

### *Housing and Community Development*

Ms. Van Dam described the goal for all who live and work in Fairfax County to have an opportunity to purchase or rent housing within their means, and for affordable and workforce housing to be located close to employment opportunities. Comments were made to add workforce housing to the headings, and including the number of Section 8 Housing recipients in the corridor. A question was raised about whether the number of affordable housing units shown is adequate and if there is a target for affordable and workforce housing units. In response to whether the number of units is adequate, a comment was made that the number of units, especially in the private side, are not very substantial. A comment was made about the Tysons Plan containing a goal for workforce housing, and whether there be something similar for the Richmond Highway Corridor; furthermore, would there be a consideration of commercial property developers contributing to workforce housing. Ms. Gardner replied this is something that will be considered.

### *Dates and Draft Agendas for Advisory Group and Community Meetings*

Ms. Van Dam first presented the summary timeline, noting that staff had been hearing comments about expediting the process. Staff took some time to figure out whether the process could be expedited and what this means for overall process and the Advisory Group. The original schedule proposed public hearing dates in the spring of 2018, and the schedule being discussed today proposes public hearing dates in early 2018 (January Board of Supervisors).

Ms. Van Dam then reviewed the proposed month-by-month Advisory Group and community meeting agendas through March 2018. A question was raised about whether the Supervisors' offices can help gather community input about the land use alternative. Ms. Van Dam noted staff could talk to the

Supervisors about this, and opportunities for people to provide ideas and comments are available through the study email address, and other mechanisms to provide feedback will be made available through the Embark website.

A comment was made to strike the December 26, 2016 meeting. With regard to the urban design guidelines, a question was raised about whether the Mount Vernon Council should be consulted about the urban design guidelines, since they had a role in developing the adopted Richmond Highway Corridor urban design guidelines. Questions were asked about how the Comprehensive Plan will link to or relate to the separate urban design guidelines. Elizabeth Hagg, Office of Community Revitalization (OCR), explained the Comprehensive Plan will still address urban design, but detailed recommendations, for example types of plantings or building materials, may change over time and should be included in a separate document. This approach may prevent the need for a Comprehensive Plan amendments related to these detailed design elements.

#### *Richmond Highway Corridor Funded Projects*

Mr. Biesiadny explained page one of the handout includes projects that are already programmed; page two includes projects programmed for years 2021-2024; and page 3 provides details on the projects and their status. He pointed out a number of projects are anticipated to be constructed this summer.

#### **Public Comment**

##### *Transportation*

A comment was made about the issue of cut-through traffic. If solutions to reducing cut-through traffic could be presented, that could go a long way in getting community support.

A suggestion was made for the Advisory Group to become involved with The Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA) TransAction 2040 update. This plan has implications for funding; it would be helpful for the AG to testify at meetings. The more this is done, the more likely the multimodal transportation recommendations for the Richmond Highway Corridor will receive support.

<http://www.thenovaauthority.org/planning-programming/transaction-2040-update/>

#### *Embark Comprehensive Plan Amendment Process*

Comments were made in support of an expedited process. Representatives from the Coalition for Smarter Growth and Mount Vernon Council offered to help get the word out, and also suggested keeping these groups involved throughout the process.

Mr. Clarke adjourned the meeting at 10:23 a.m.