



MINUTES OF THE EMBARK RICHMOND HIGHWAY ADVISORY GROUP

On July 18, 2016 the Embark Richmond Highway Advisory Group (AG) held its ninth meeting at the South County Government Center, Room 221, Richmond Highway, Alexandria, VA 22309.

AG members present

Tim Sargeant	Bruce Leonard
James Migliaccio	Earl Flanagan
Walter Clarke	Frank Cohn
Richard Knapp	Carlos Heard

AG members absent

Chris Soule	Vernon Lee
Rebecca Todd	Rodney Lusk
Dale Johnson	

County Staff and Guests Present

See attached sign-in sheet.

Call to Order

Mr. Knapp called the July 18, 2016 meeting to order at 8:34 a.m., followed by Advisory Group and county staff introductions.

Administrative Items

Approval of meeting minutes from June 27, 2016

A motion was made to approve the meeting minutes for the June 27, 2016 Advisory Group meeting. A vote was taken, and the motion carried unanimously. Mr. Sargeant abstained from the vote as he was absent from the meeting.

Planning Objectives

Jennifer Garcia, Department of Planning and Zoning, reviewed two changes to the Planning Objectives document since it was last presented at the June meeting. The first change is to add a statement about the Richmond Highway Corridor urban design recommendations to the beginning of the Planning Objectives section. The second is to change the title “Areawide Recommendations” to “Corridor-wide Recommendations”, to make clear the recommendations in this section of the Plan apply only to the Richmond Highway Corridor.

Draft Measures of Effectiveness (MOEs)

Tom Burke, Department of Transportation, reviewed revisions to the draft MOE's. A question was asked whether there could be a MOE for the interim period before construction takes place. What are the goals during construction and traffic mitigation before the full build-out of the multimodal improvements? Tom Biesiadny, Director, Department of Transportation, replied the county could look at the mitigation of traffic during construction but that the MOE's are designed to measure effectiveness of the future network. Identifying traffic mitigation measures during the interim period is outside the scope of the project. Mr. Burke added the project team is tasked with an existing conditions and 2040 analysis so the ultimate condition is known; staff is not completing a 2020 analysis, for example.

Project Schedule

Ms. Garcia reviewed the schedule of the Comprehensive Plan amendment. Ms. Garcia stated the Plan amendment public hearings are still on track for the end of 2017 through early 2018. She noted the main difference is the separation of the Richmond Highway and North Kings Highway cross section discussion, so they now appear as line items 6 and 7. The Richmond Highway cross section discussion occurred ahead of schedule, and the detailed North Kings Highway discussion will begin in early 2017 after the Project Management Consultant (PMC) for the BRT system is hired.

Update on Draft Richmond Highway Cross Section

Tom Burke reviewed the revised concept for the Richmond Highway cross section. The revised concept shows the landscape panel between the bike lane and the sidewalk, rather than between the travel lane and the bike lane. The bike lane would be separated from the travel lanes by a buffer. Mr. Burke also presented options for possible utility pole locations to reflect the current condition of the utilities located above ground, and noted this is a matter that will be examined closely during the roadway design phase.

A question was asked about the existing right-of-way (ROW) width. Mr. Burke answered that it varies depending on location. For example, in some places the highway is four lanes while in places that are six lanes the ROW is greater. Barbara Byron, Director, Office of Community Revitalization, stated the county is recommending to keep the cross section consistent with the existing Comprehensive Plan recommendation (178' or 89' from centerline). Compromises had to be made in developing the cross section, and staff is mindful that pedestrians will be crossing Richmond Highway. Mr. Biesiadny reiterated the ROW varies considerably, and service drives should also be accounted for in ROW variations. A question was asked about the width of the building zone. Mr. Burke replied the building zone is envisioned to be wider in station areas and may be narrower outside of station areas. He added the building zone is outside of the ROW.

A discussion about undergrounding utilities followed, and if utilities have to be moved anyway, could they not be placed underground? Mr. Biesiadny stated at this time, undergrounding utilities not proposed because of the added cost and years to the

project. Connections to each of the businesses along the entire corridor will need to be reestablished which contributes to the time and cost. For the three mile section from Jeff Todd Way to Napper Road, undergrounding utilities would cost an estimated \$60 million and lengthen the construction schedule. This additional \$60 million is about one third of the total cost of the project. A comment was made that consideration for how utility trucks access the utilities lines should be considered. A comment was made that not undergrounding utilities would be a major shock to the community and it is a recommendation in the Comprehensive Plan. A question was asked about whether utilities were undergrounded in Tysons. Mr. Biesiadny replied only in one section in Route 7 was done. In other revitalization places, like Annandale, this is a request to developers. Ms. Byron added the county has not had an undergrounding project in a revitalization area in a long time.

Mark Gibney, Virginia Department of Transportation, raised a concern about the location of the utility poles in the buffer area as depicted in the draft typical cross section, and suggested further discussion occur between VDOT and county staff.

A suggestion was made that it may be helpful to have a plan view /birds eye of an intersection to show the relationship between the station platform and the left turn lane.

Mr. Burke noted the 16 foot medians are envisioned throughout the corridor, including outside of the station areas, so the 178 foot ROW is consistently maintained. A comment was made that a large pedestrian refuge in the center of Richmond Highway is a good idea. A question was asked about how long it would take to cross Richmond Highway. Mr. Burke replied about 45 seconds (*note: details about pedestrian crossing times are provided in the table at the end of the May 23 minutes*).

Land Use Alternative Discussion

Meghan Van Dam, Department of Planning and Zoning, reviewed the draft initial land use alternative for Huntington, Penn Daw, and Beacon/Groveton bus rapid transit (BRT) station areas. A comment was made that the proposed amount of retail in the Beacon/Groveton seems low. The plan for the future development of the Potomac Yards metro station area was mentioned as a good comparison in the region. There was mention of a strong military rental housing market in both Potomac Yards and Richmond Highway.

Ms. Byron stated the land use alternative analysis is by land unit, but as the conceptual building massings shown, some land units may be combined. Ms. Gardner added that these numbers will be used for the transportation analysis. A suggestion was made to add the floor area ratios (FARs) to the charts. There was discussion about retail uses in the corridor, including current market demand for retail space per multifamily unit, the success of the existing retail in Beacon/Groveton CBC, and the need to ensure there is a critical mass of retail. A comment was made that it is challenging for office use to be

successful in existing neighborhoods that do not have an office market, and it is easier to sprinkle other types of uses in existing neighborhoods. A comment was made that it may be helpful to include a comparison to existing land use.

A question was raised about whether there are planned redevelopments on the west side of Richmond Highway, and it was noted there seem to be a number of ongoing site specific Board authorized amendments. On the west side of the corridor, there needs to be something done to work with citizens to prepare them for these proposed changes. Mr. Heard mentioned that staff has invited BF Saul meet and talk about their vision for the Beacon Center property. A comment was made that retail uses, like Walmart, include benefits like providing groceries and fresh produce, and this should be considered. The project should consider elements for creating healthy communities.

Ms. Byron mentioned that the county can request proffers along the entire Richmond Highway Corridor, whether it is within the CRD or not, and noted the need to be mindful about the edges of CBCs as well. Ms. Bryon also stated this is a long range land use plan and a transportation analysis, and today's market may not be market in 10 to 15 years. A comment was made that most reductions between the Comprehensive Plan and draft land use alternative seem to be in office use, and some in retail. Staff needs a good rationale for explaining to community, they will ask why taking those uses are proposed to be taken out of Plan. A comment was made that developers can pursue additional development under existing zoning in areas that have unused development potential, rather than rezoning and replanning. A comment was made that the county should think about how to sequence this planned development, and by area. Mr. Biesiadny replied that staff needs to conduct a transportation analysis to get an idea of whether the transportation system will work and there is an understanding that development will be phased over time. Ms. Van Dam mentioned that the planned numbers are flexible, the Comprehensive Plan guidance is flexible.

Tony DeLorenzo, Office of Community Revitalization, provided an example conceptual building diagram of the Penn Daw area. A comment was made that the Hybla Valley CBC which will be an eventual Metro station is more appropriate for a podium parking product, and the BRT station areas will be more appropriate for wrapped parking. A comment was made that a prior Task Force proposed a reconfiguration of Richmond Highway in the Penn Daw CBC that recommended undergrounding Richmond Highway as part of the separation between Kings Highway and Richmond Highway.

Advisory Group report on community feedback

Mr. Cohn stated the community associations along Richmond Highway think that the Embark project only involves the roadway, not any of the CBCs or other areas off the highway, and that its crucial staff make them aware of this.

Mr. Sargeant mentioned that transition issues between existing conditions and the future planned conditions need to be considered, and that citizens are reacting

negatively now saying there are issues with traffic and land use that that are not being addressed now, and these concerns will affect their reactions to future planning. Need to develop solutions to problems that may occur before we reach the future planned condition.

Mr. Flanagan asked how parallel roads will be incorporated into future plans? Elizabeth Hagg, Office of Community Revitalization, stated these will be conceptually planned, a comparable is what was done in Seven Corners.

Public comment

A question was raised about whether the section being widened from Richmond Highway to Fort Belvoir can accommodate space for BRT. County staff replied the future improvements will accommodate the right-of-way for BRT.

A question was raised about who on the Advisory Group is tasked with raising considerations for environmental and historic impact. County staff replied they are looking at environmentally sensitive areas and heritage resources. A comment was made that staff should be aware that Dogue Creek and rare species habitats need to be considered when the BRT is designed and future development occurs.

A request was made for staff to put all the materials that will be presented on the website before the Advisory Group meetings, so that citizens can access it before the meeting.

A comment was made that utilities above ground are ugly and unsafe, and please spend money on undergrounding the utilities.

Closing items

Ms. Garcia reviewed the location of the next Embark community meeting, West Potomac High School. She reminded everyone of the Ask Fairfax online chat scheduled for July 28th. An announcement was made that the next AG meeting is scheduled for August 22nd.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:30 a.m.

Items recorded on the flip chart

Comment or Question	Response
Provide more information regarding mitigation of interim challenges within the study area during the transition period before BRT begins operation.	The county will consider the mitigation of traffic during construction. The Measures of Effectiveness (MOEs) for the transportation analysis are designed to measure the performance of the future network. Identifying traffic mitigation measures during the interim period is outside the scope of the project.
Considerable questioning regarding relocation of utilities underground. Citizen also provided comments regarding community support for undergrounding utilities during public comments/questions.	County staff can provide more information regarding the cost, timing, feasibility, and other considerations for undergrounding utilities as further research is conducted. County discussions are ongoing.
Request made for top-down view of cross section.	County staff will work on producing this graphic.
Concern expressed about environmentally sensitive portions of the study area, notably Dogue Creek and adjacent watersheds. Question asked about who or how environmental concerns were being represented within the AG and/or throughout the study area.	The county is including environmentally sensitive areas and heritage resources in the development and analysis of the land use alternative.
Provide comparison between existing development and Comp Plan land use numbers to give a sense of what is on the ground already.	County staff will include existing development for the station areas during the discussion of the land use alternative.