

Seven Corners Connectivity Working Group – Meeting #4 Summary
December 18, 2012

Attendees:

Members:

Rick Cheston
Ben Cooper
Doug Smith
Jan Reitman
Steve Yaffe

County Staff:

Mike Garcia (Fairfax Department of Transportation)
Kris Morley-Nikfar (Fairfax Department of Transportation)
Chris Wells (Fairfax Department of Transportation)
Vanessa Aguayo (Fairfax Department of Transportation)
Bernie Suchicital (Department of Planning and Zoning)
Liz Hagg (Office of Community Revitalization)
Matt Flis (Office of Community Revitalization)
Aaron Frank (Supervisor Penny Gross' Office)

- The meeting began at 6:30 pm.. The group voted 5-0 to approve the meeting minutes with minor changes from November 15, 2012 meeting.
- Chris Wells, Pedestrian Coordinator from the Fairfax County Department of Transportation, was introduced.
- Chris Wells discussed his position as a pedestrian coordinator for Fairfax County DOT and focusing on the three E's of pedestrian planning – engineering, enforcement, and education.
- He discussed recent pedestrian improvements in the Seven Corners area: the pedestrian bridge over route 50 and the sidewalk and bus shelter improvements at Patrick Henry Drive and Route 7.
 - Chris explained that the fourth crosswalk was not installed at this intersection because VDOT said it would mess up traffic too much.
- The Seven Corners area developed in the 1950s and did not need to be ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) accessible.
- The 2007 Transportation Bond was discussed. Chris noted a portion of the bond was to fund sidewalks on both sides of Route 7 or at least one side of Route 7 from the City of Alexandria to the City of Falls Church.
 - He noted the County typically builds 5-foot sidewalks and not a major paved trail which is 8-feet wide. This is because the County is constrained by right-of-way and money.
 - The plans for sidewalks on Route 7 have finished design and the County is now in right-of-way discussions with land owners where there is insufficient right-of-way.
 - There was a discussion about the missing sidewalk just east of Patrick Henry along Route 7 where the condos are located. Chris noted that this connection is not likely to be constructed because it's too contentious and may be too expensive because of the need to remove trees and retaining walls and the possible loss in parking. This link could potentially be built later if every other link is constructed along Route 7.
 - There was a discussion about the timing and priority of the segments. Chris noted that implementing the designs take time and money because it's a big corridor.

- The County is hopeful to be done with right-of-way discussions by early 2013 to possibly go into construction in late 2013 but it could be early 2014.
- The estimate for the Route 7 sidewalk improvements is approximately \$4 million and the County does have the funds to construction the improvements.
 - There was a question about service roads and how these are treated with the designs. Chris noted that if there is a sidewalk on one side of the service road then the County considers that to be a complete segment.
 - Chris talked about the Seven Corners interchange and the County's plans to install crosswalks and pedestrian heads for people to cross.
 - The pedestrian improvements have support from VDOT.
 - There is a need to buy and install a signal controller box because of the complicated timing of the interchange.
 - There will be a need to introduce one phase to the existing interchange to allow pedestrians to cross the Route 50 eastbound on-ramp. It's the only link where there is a continuous flow of traffic.
 - No lighting is budgeted for this project. Chris explained that street lighting is actually not that expensive. It only costs about \$2,000 for a street light but the budget does not have street lighting. Chris noted that the County paid Virginia Tech in the past to create lighting standards but the standards were never implemented. There is currently no policy on lighting standards. He said citizens can request lighting for safety reasons but it may take time to install because of the limited budget with at the County and with VDOT.
 - The County is not fixing the sidewalks on the interchange because it requires a structural analysis of the bridges to see if they can withstand the extra load from the concrete.
 - Chris noted part of his job is fixing problems now and the County will invest in pedestrian projects if the sidewalk or trails if the County can get at least a year's worth of useful like out of the improvement. This was stated in response to a concern that once the County installs pedestrian improvements at the interchange then the County will just move and not address the larger traffic problem.
 - There was a discussion about signal timings and why Castle Road is not timed correctly. The response was VDOT controls the timings and it's difficult to have Castle Road timed perfectly with the interchange because of the complicated signal timing at the interchange.
 - Route 50 pedestrian improvements were discussed.
 - VDOT has an agreement to do the pedestrian improvements from Jaguar Trail to the Seven Corners interchange along both sides of Route 50. Many sections will have a major paved trail, which means at least 8-foot wide.
 - Construction is still a few years and it is almost fully funded.
 - There was a discussion about the sidewalk conditions in the Seven Corners area and that in certain areas the sidewalks have deteriorated. Chris stated that the County will fix the sidewalk in front of Sears on Route 7.
 - Chris talked about the fiscal reality and the Board of Supervisors just passed its 4-year transportation plan.
 - The County's Commercial and Industrial (C&I) tax is encumbered through fiscal year 2014 and probably till fiscal year 2015 or 2016.

- Federal money is encumbered through fiscal year 2017.
 - The projects in the County's 2014 Transportation Bond have already been solidified and no new projects can be added.
- The group was informed that at the next meeting we would discuss listing and prioritizing pedestrian, bicycle, and transit improvements that can be implemented in the near term. Each member is to bring or send a list of their suggested improvements for discussion.