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Joint Meeting, Thursday, October 15, 2009, at 7:00 p.m. Government Center, Verona, VA.

PRESENT: Larry C. Howdysshell, Chairman  
David R. Beyeler  
Jeremy L. Shifflett  
Becky Earhart, Senior Planner  
Patrick J. Coffield, County Administrator

ABSENT: Gerald W. Garber, Vice-Chairman  
Tracy C. Pyles, Jr.  
Wendell L. Coleman  
Nancy Taylor Sorrells

VIRGINIA: At a joint meeting of the City of Staunton Council and the Augusta County Board of Supervisors, held on Thursday, October 15, 2009, at 7:00 p.m., at the Government Center, Verona, Virginia, and in the 234<sup>th</sup> year of the Commonwealth....

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Chairman Howdysshell welcomed the Staunton City Council and those in attendance to the meeting.

Chairman Howdysshell recognized Mayor King from the City of Staunton who called the Council to order.

Chairman Howdysshell introduced Jennifer Hibbert, Senior Transportation Planner with the Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission and the project manager for the Route 250 Multi-Modal Corridor Study.

Ms. Hibbert thanked the audience for attending the meeting. She stated that this was the last public meeting in the process. They held two (2) previous public meetings, the last one as a joint meeting with Staunton and Augusta County in July. She stated the purpose of the meeting was for the consultant team to outline all the recommendations for the corridor and obtain input on the ideas presented in the study. She turned the meeting over to Hannah Twaddell of Renaissance Planning Group.

Ms. Twaddell introduced the staff members who worked on the study - Kristen Nelson an urban planner with her firm and Scudder Wagg with Baker, a transportation engineering firm. Amanda Poncy, the deputy project manager with Renaissance, and Milton Herd, Herd Planning and Design, also worked on the project, but were unable to attend the meeting. Ms. Twaddell stated this project was a joint project of the Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission, the City of Staunton, and Augusta County, with funding from the Virginia Department of Transportation.

Ms. Twaddell stated the study area for the Richmond Road project was from Greenville Avenue near the Villages in Staunton to the intersection with Desper Hollow Road in Augusta County. There is a good deal of development along the corridor now and a lot of potential for increased development in the future. She stated this is a key spine for commercial development and it is important for future investments in the corridor to work.

She gave a brief history of the project which began in June of 2008. The project involved personal interviews with key stakeholders in the corridor. She identified the desired outcomes of the study were:

- Multi-modal transportation improvements to support desired future development
- Access management and intersection improvement strategies
- Context-sensitive solutions that enhance corridor character
- Design principles that can be replicated in other areas

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The goals of the project were:

- Support community cohesiveness and connectedness
- Ensure orderly + efficient traffic flow
- Foster commercial activity
- Enhance the corridor as a gateway to the community

To implement those goals, the following objectives were developed:

- Develop a safe, connected, and attractive network of multimodal facilities along the corridor
- Maintain adequate capacity and safety for regional and local traffic
- Promote and enhance the special character and identity of different segments along the commercial corridor
- Create an attractive and viable corridor that supports the economic development goals of the community

Ms. Twaddell stated they worked with the Steering Committee to develop reasonable growth estimates for the corridor. She indicated the capacity in the corridor is very large and would include over 6.5 million square feet of additional commercial development and 2500-3000 additional dwellings. For the 2035 timeframe, the planning horizon for this study, the figures of approximately 2.8 million square feet of commercial development and 1600 dwellings was selected. Using those figures, the average daily traffic counts along the corridor would range from 17,000 to 50,000 vehicles per day. The key questions for the study were if we get that amount of development, how do we accommodate it and have the corridor stay in character with community desires.

Ms. Twaddell indicated that the study shows that most of the intersections work fairly well now and will continue to do so. There will be issues at the intersections with Statler Boulevard and Frontier Drive that will need to be addressed. She stated another aspect of the study was to look at the spacing of traffic signals. VDOT has new guidelines for signal spacing that they used to evaluate the corridor. They analyzed the corridor using the VDOT recommended spacing for major arterials of 2600' between signals and determined that was too far apart to work in this corridor with its existing development. They also used the standards for minor arterials of 1300' between signals. Over time, as development and redevelopment occurs, they recommend using that standard as a guideline, although at the interstate the lights will have to be closer together. While it may not be the most desirable scenario, it is a compromise position.

She stated the plan includes corridor improvements ranging from widening the roadway near the interstate to narrowing the roadway near its intersection with Greenville Avenue and includes intersection improvements in between. She said interparcel connections are key to improving the efficiency of the corridor. She turned the meeting over to Scudder Wagg to describe the recommendations for the corridor in more depth.

Mr. Wagg stated the Corridor was broken into five (5) study areas with distinct recommendations for each. The Urban Gateway runs from Greenville Avenue to Statler Boulevard. The recommendations for that section of the road include the addition of 2 roundabouts at the intersection of Greenville and Richmond Road and Greenville and Commerce Road. In order to slow traffic down as you enter the City, the study recommends a "road diet" or narrowing the traffic lanes to 1 in each direction, a landscaped median, left turn lanes, and a sidewalk on the north side of the corridor.

Local Service Area runs from Statler Boulevard to Community Way. The roadway would be widened through this corridor and intersection improvements made at Statler Boulevard adding turn lanes. The plan proposes adding parallel streets to Richmond Road for additional access to the businesses, as well as for better pedestrian access.

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He stated they are recommending moving the traffic light from National Avenue to Kenyton Road and making the outside travel lane of the road 14' wide to serve as a shared lane for bicyclists.

The Regional Service Area runs from Community Way to the Interstate. This is the portion of the corridor that is expected to see the largest amount of new development and the most significant traffic generators. The plan recommends adding one additional lane in both directions and encouraging pedestrians to get off the roadway entirely by developing an alternative bike and pedestrian network. Mr. Wagg stated the redevelopment of the Western State Hospital property and the additional development proposed for the Frontier Culture Museum could generate significant amounts of additional traffic. Therefore, the plan proposes three different options to handle the new development. Options include enlarging the existing intersections at Western State and the Frontier Culture Museum, building a bridge over Route 250 connecting both developments allowing a right in, right out movement on both sides of the road, the final option would be to make the Western State entrance a right in, right out, with the main entrance to the development off north Frontier Drive which has the capacity to handle additional traffic. A traffic impact analysis will be required to see the final impacts of the new development and the most suitable option for the traffic can be determined at that point.

The Interstate Service Area goes from the Interstate to Rowe Road. The road can transition back to a four lane section and will involve new signals at the interstate ramps and moving the light from Sanger's Lane to Rowe Road in coordination with the rerouting of traffic from Sanger's Lane through the proposed Horizon Ridge project to their proposed entrance further east. Mr. Wagg stated the study recommends taking the pedestrians off Richmond Road through this area and establishing a parallel network using the railroad tracks as a potential option. He stated the rail with trail greenway concept has been successfully used in 50 to 60 places across the country. The trail is 10'-20' wide and is offset approximately 30' from the railroad tracks. Using this trail would allow the pedestrians and bicyclists a way to get across the interstate barrier.

The final section of the corridor is the Rural Parkway which runs from Rowe Road to Desper Hollow Road. Mr. Wagg stated there are not many changes recommended for this portion of the corridor. However, the plan does recommend an 8' wide shoulder to give the bicyclists an opportunity to ride in the shoulder versus the roadway.

Mr. Wagg presented the costs and timeline associated with the study's recommendations. He stated the study broke the recommendations into short, medium, and long-term recommendations. The projects listed are both public and private improvements. Short-term recommendations involve the work at the Villages to provide a parallel network in the Urban Gateway section of the corridor and restriping Richmond Road from Statler Boulevard to Community Way to create the shared bike/vehicle lane. That improvement is the one of the easiest and cheapest things to do- less than \$30,000. He stated the mid-term recommendations include adding the roundabouts to Greenville Avenue, the road diet in this same section (which is the most expensive project proposed for the corridor at \$6 million), the Statler Boulevard and Frontier Drive intersection improvements, moving the traffic light at Kenyton, and widening the shoulder from Rowe Road to Desper Hollow Road. The longer term recommendations of the study include widening the roadway to 6 lanes, developing the parallel road networks, reworking the interstate ramps, and developing the rails with trail network. Mr. Wagg stated the widening of Richmond Road to 6 lanes won't be necessary until you reach 2/3 of the buildout assumed in the study.

Ms. Twaddell presented the design guidelines that were developed to go along with the road improvements in the study. The guidelines are designed to complement the entrance corridor overlay district in the City and to be a resource for the County in looking at future development. She recommended that the City think in terms of starting

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in the Local Service Area with their public dollar investments since it is less likely that private dollars will be available for projects in this area.

Mr. Wagg reviewed the access management recommendations in the study. He stated that the study does not recommend that entrances be closed right away, but proposes a plan for consolidation of entrances, interconnectivity, and development of a parallel road network to be done as development and redevelopment occurs in the corridor.

County Administrator Coffield stated that the Augusta County Fire Department would be staying at their current location on Richmond Road, so the study should plan for accommodating large fire trucks in and out of the site.

Ms. Twaddell indicated that they would do that. She also indicated that roads need to be designed for truck turning movement, but not necessarily by widening the entire roadway, just doing things like having mountable curbs.

City Manager Owens asked about having bicyclists along the railroad, as well as the roadways.

Mr. Wagg stated that the rails with trails concept was part of the Virginia Outdoors Plan.

There was a question from the audience about the access management recommendations of the study. Mr. Wagg stated that, over time, the existing entrances along the corridor are expected to be consolidated and new access points along parallel roads will be added. The goal will be to encourage the closing of some of the entrances along Richmond Road and as redevelopment occurs, to require some of those entrances to be closed. Ideally, the corridor will change over time to reflect the plan's recommendations.

Councilman Elder asked about the two roundabouts planned for the entrance to the City's downtown and how pedestrian access would be maintained.

Mr. Wagg stated the roundabouts are designed with pedestrian crossings in them and because vehicle speed tends to be slower in a roundabout, pedestrians are able to cross safely.

There was a question about how receptive the railroad was to a rails with trails concept.

Mr. Wagg stated it can be a challenge to deal with railroads. He stated that there are some benefits to the railroad including less vandalism and whoever maintains the trail pays a fee and accepts liability for the trail which helps the railroad financially. They have had some initial discussions with the Buckingham Branch Railroad which is operating the CSX line in the corridor and they are somewhat receptive to the idea, but want the trail fenced.

Ms. Twaddell closed the presentation by reminding people to fill out comment sheets. She turned the meeting back over to Ms. Hibbert. She indicated that the draft study was available on-line at [www.cspdc.org](http://www.cspdc.org). Her contact information is also on that site if people have additional questions or comments.

Chairman Howdyshell thanked everyone for coming and turned the meeting over to Mayor King.

Mayor King thanked the Board of Supervisors for hosting the meeting and stated, with the general agreement of those present, the meeting was adjourned on behalf of the Board of Supervisors and the City Council at 8:07 p.m.

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Chairman, Board of Supervisors

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County Administrator

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