

Richmond Connects Advisory Committee

MEETING SUMMARY

October 18, 2022 | 9:30 am to 11:00 am | Zoom

Attendees

Meloni Alexander, City of Richmond Department of Public Works (DPW), Parking and Shared Mobility

Memily Ann

Ashley Austin, Henrico County Department of Public Works

Yesmine Bethea, Path to Equity Ambassador

Aaron Bond, City of Richmond Office of Equitable Development

Tanaya Booth, Path to Equity Ambassador, Chesterfield

Missi Boyer, Senior Connections, Capital Area Agency on Aging

Matthew Clites, City of Richmond, Parks and Recreation

Sera Erickson, Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), Alternative Transportation Coordinator and Bicycle Program Coordinator

John Hamilton, Richmond Area Bicycling Association, Richmond resident

Jakob Helmboldt, City of Richmond DPW, Pedestrian and Trails Coordinator

Tiffany Hanks, City of Richmond Office of Community Wealth Building (Jackson Ward/Gilpin Court)

Max Hepp-Buchanan, Venture Richmond

Kristen Holt, Reynolds Community College

Tameka Jefferson, Richmond Region Tourism

Elena Johnson, VCU Student

Karen Kahn, Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI)

Lynne Lancaster, City of Richmond DPW, Parking and Shared Mobility

Leslie Mehta, Richmond Metropolitan Transportation Authority

Crystal Lowery, City of Richmond Office of Equitable Transit and Mobility (OETM)

Emily Monroe, Bike Walk RVA Community Engagement Coordinator

Barbara Nelson, Port of Virginia

Chet Parsons, Plan RVA (RRPDC)

Maritza Pechin, City of Richmond, Planning and Development Review (PDR)

Quawneisha "Bre" Peoples, Virginia Department of Health

Damian Pitt, VCU Urban and Regional Studies and Planning

Yessenia Revilla, City of Richmond, PDR

Karen Roane, DBVI

Ellen Robertson, City Council VP- 6th District

Patricia Robinson, GRTC

Mike Sawyer, City of Richmond DPW, Transportation Engineering

Aquanetta Scott, Path to Equity Ambassador

Brantley Tyndall, Bike Walk RVA

Daniel Wagner, Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation

Faith Walker, RVA Rapid Transit

Ross Ward, Hanover County Department of Public Works

Richmond Connects Team

Alex Bell, Renaissance Planning

Chenice Brown, OETM

Windy Campbell, On Point Transportation PR

Mike Carosi, On Point Transportation PR

Jessica Dimmick, EPR

Vlad Gavrilovic, EPR

Brandon King, OETM

Atiba Muse, OETM

Amanda Poncy, EPR

Michael Riter, Timmons Group

Kelli Rowan, OETM

Thomas Ruff, Timmons Group

Ebony Walden, Ebony Walden Consulting

Aaron Weinstock, Renaissance Planning

MEETING SUMMARY

The Richmond Connects Advisory Committee reviewed and discussed the results from the first phase of community engagement and reviewed the approach for the second phase of engagement. The committee previewed a draft video and broke into smaller groups to discuss the results of the Phase 1 survey in different areas across the City. The committee provided feedback on the survey results and also provided suggestions on the proposed approach for Phase 2.

The following sections describe the outcomes and feedback from the committee's discussions and activities. To view the presentation from the meeting, email Kelli Rowan at Kelli.Rowan@rva.gov to request a copy of the meeting presentation.

Community Engagement Phase 1 – What did we hear?

The first phase of Richmond Connects is identifying needs – what needs to be improved to make transportation in Richmond safe and easy for everyone? To identify needs, the Richmond Connects team is combining the results from community input with a data-driven technical analysis.

The Richmond Connects team shared the results from the Phase 1 survey. Over 1,000 responses from the Phase 1 survey were combined with ~4,000 relevant responses from the Richmond 300 Master Plan and Path to Equity efforts.

Over 5,000 responses indicated a lot needs to be improved! Over 2,000 responses explicitly mentioned safety. The Richmond Connects team read through each comment and tagged them according to the 11 investment need categories, which represent different types of projects. The Richmond Connects team reviewed the common themes, big ideas, and recurring comments for each investment need category. The summary of survey responses can be viewed in the meeting presentation.

Community Engagement Phase 2 - Messaging

Video Preview

The Advisory Committee previewed a draft 90-second video that will serve as the main channel for communicating with the general public and existing contacts in Phase 2. The committee's reactions were very positive. They thought the draft video successfully achieved what they suggested in the last

meeting as an easy, short video to explain what Richmond Connects is, why it is important, and how to contribute.

The committee offered the following positive comments on the draft video:

- Good representation of the survey data
- Thoughtful and hopeful
- Good representation of Northside, Southside, and different modalities
- Loved seeing the communities that are speaking up for themselves

The committee offered the following suggestions for edits:

- Highlight using the text message service a little more
- Replace the example of bike lanes on Brooklyn Park Boulevard with a different example of a bike-related comment in the Northside.
- Time is too short to read or understand the maps. Consider just focusing on people and images.

Phase 2 Engagement Approach

The Richmond Connects team reviewed the proposed approach for Phase 2 of the community engagement, which can be viewed in the meeting presentation.

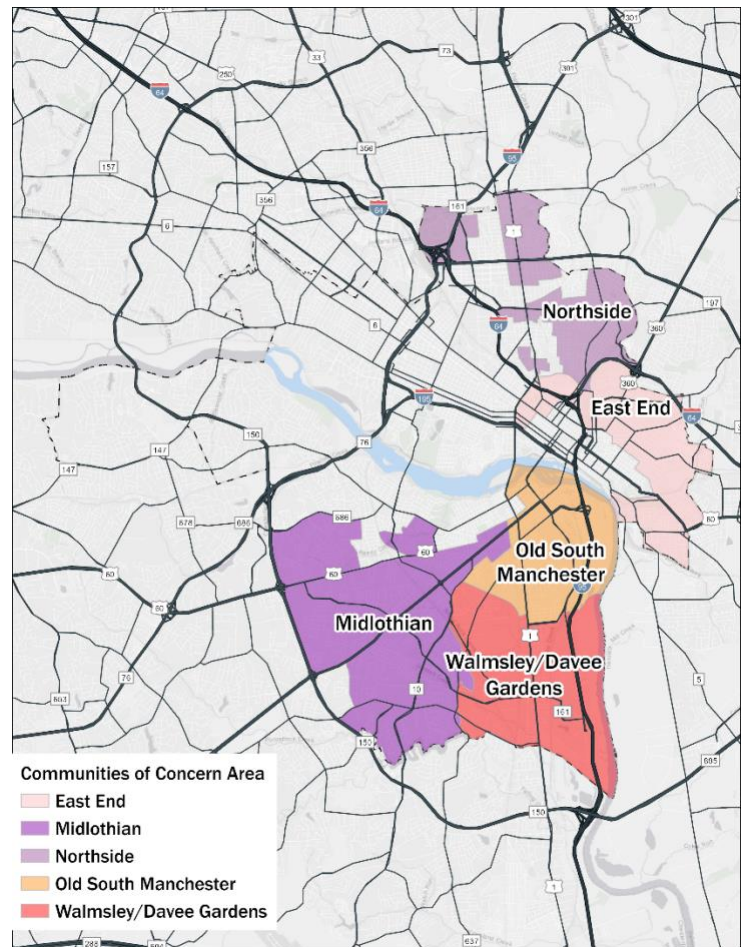
The City of Richmond Department of Planning and Development review recently hosted a telephone town hall that was a successful engagement strategy. PDR suggested the Richmond Connects team consider hosting a telephone town hall as an engagement strategy. Petula Burks organized the telephone town hall for PDR and would be a resource.

Community Engagement Phase 2 – Communities of Opportunity Focus Areas

The Richmond Connects team identified five Communities of Opportunity (i.e. Communities of Concern) areas within the City of Richmond that exhibit high concentrations of three or more of the eight characteristics that define communities of concern: BIPOC, low-income, old age, renters, non-English primary, at-risk youth, BIPOC renter, and limited mobility. The five Communities of Opportunity areas are shown in the map to the right.

The Advisory Committee broke into five small groups to explore the key themes (i.e. big ideas) and common issues identified in the Phase 1 engagement for each area.

The initial big ideas and most recurring comments for each area were presented and are



available in the meeting presentation. Facilitators asked the groups if anything was missing from the big ideas and recurring comments, if the summary captured the themes in a meaningful way, and what non-mappable needs are in the area. Facilitators also asked for Phase 2 outreach, where within each area should we focus, and do you have contacts that could help host a mini pop up event.

Group 1: Communities of Concern in the East End

Note: Jackson Ward and Gilpin neighborhoods were included in the East End in the initial survey results. The Richmond Connects team will move the Jackson Ward and Gilpin neighborhoods into the Northside area for future presentations.

Reactions to the big ideas and examples of recurring comments:

- Thankful for the grassroots approach to survey collection
- Agreement on sidewalks and pothole management opportunities
- Pedestrian safety is an issue in Whitcomb and Mosby Courts, and there are not enough accessible destinations for people who live in these communities
- Fairmount Avenue is difficult to cross from MLK bridge all the way down. The speed of this street needs to be decreased to encourage safer pedestrian and micro-mobility opportunities.
- Need for pedestrian improvements and sidewalks around Gilles Creek and in Church Hill.
- More transit connectivity via bus stops or micro-mobility options with shelters and benches within the neighborhood.

Ideas for where to focus engagement within this area:

- Boys and Girls Club next to Creighton Court
- Many churches in Church Hill have community feedings
- Cedar Street BC FW would like to have access to Richmond Connects
- Fulton Outreach Center

Other notes:

- Site navigation over mobile devices creates a difficult interface
- Pedestrian clusters, bicycle lanes, and parking irregularities should be observed in maps

Group 2: Communities of Concern in Midlothian

Reactions to the big ideas and examples of recurring comments:

- The themes and needs are captured well
- Pedestrian access to River City Middle School – Clarify that sidewalk improvements are needed along Hull Street, Hey Road, and Elkhardt Road. The area right in front of the school has sidewalks and crosswalks, but further away from the school there are missing sidewalks on these roads.

Ideas for where to focus engagement within this area:

- Southside Plaza – lots of transfers, people waiting for buses
- Kroger by Spring Rock Green
- Food Lion on Hull Street right before Chippenham Parkway

Group 3: Communities of Concern in Old South Manchester

Reactions to the big ideas and examples of recurring comments:

- Traffic is too fast and speed limit enforcement is needed on Commerce Road, Hull Street, and the 14th Street bridge.
- Narrow right-of-way poses challenges for both pedestrians and drivers on Hull Street at the railroad tracks.
- There are poor crosswalks on Hull Street and Commerce Road, but the Fall Line trail may correct this.
- Walking and bicycling are unsafe on the Lee bridge (Belvidere Street bridge). Vehicles drive too fast. There is an unsafe crossing along River Road at the end of the bridge. The bike lanes are unsafe. The pedestrian crossing is unsafe.
- The intersection of Hull Street and Route 1 is unsafe. The sidewalk dumps you into an unmarked crosswalk. The far right turn lane needs to be marked because people are using it to keep straight. Safer crosswalks are needed for the entire intersection, including in the median. The bus stop on the south side of Hull Street needs a shelter.

Other comments:

- The Fall Line trail will improve a lot of the problems in this area, and there are other improvements planned in this area in the next 5-10 years.
- The Mayo bridge will be replaced soon and will be closed for 2 years.
- The lack of pedestrian infrastructure due to redevelopment crushes connectivity and makes pedestrian safety challenging.

Group 4: Communities of Concern in Walmsley/Davee Gardens

Reactions to the big ideas and examples of recurring comments:

- The bus stops changed at Davee Gardens and now require long walks to the new bus stops on Route 1 (Richmond Hwy).
- There is a lack of safe bike infrastructure and there is speeding in the area between Jeff Davis and Commerce. The speed limits may be too high.
- Roadway design creates speeding zones. Drivers do not respect speed limits. Lack of law enforcement of speed limits as well. Need for speed limiting enforcement or technology. Urban design in the area lends itself to speeding. Contrasted with Carytown for example. The lack of commercial and pedestrian infrastructure contributes to speeding issue.
- Have best practices in mind when making design choices in the future for Richmond Connects.
- Dirt bikes / ATVs becoming an issue.
- Lack of sidewalks, adequate drainage should be a priority as they have been promised in the past.
- Bike lanes are a relatively new initiative.
- Senior Citizens are using bike lanes for safety in their mobile chairs. Many bike lanes do not have barriers to separate them from cars and the cyclists do not expect them to be there. Unexpected number of mobile chairs. Need more buffered bike lanes.
- On Jeff Davis and Walmsley, no sidewalks over the railroad tracks. There are lots of walkers, and it's extremely unsafe.

Group 5: Communities of Concern in Northside

Reactions to the big ideas and examples of recurring comments:

- Brookland Park Blvd is too narrow to pursue bike lanes, need to keep parking
- Chamberlayne is too busy/unsafe for all users, place bikes on sidewalks if possible, or do a complete rebuild. Buildings/alleys along the corridor in poor condition, which contributes negative environment for walking
- Incorporate safe routes for elementary (or all) schools to determine project ideas and part of the prioritization process
- Chamberlayne should be prioritized as a transit corridor
- Azalea/Chamberlayne has high utilization for blind pedestrians

Other comments:

- Maps are overwhelming, which creates difficulty on understanding what should come next. Talk more about solutions moving forward, not rehashing the problems.
- For community engagement, try to summarize issues and work on solutions
- Overlay bike routes and other planned improvements to provide additional context on mapping.

Next Steps

Committee members were encouraged to send ideas for people and places to focus on in the Communities of Opportunity to the Richmond Connects team.

The Richmond Connects team will share the data-driven needs maps with the Advisory Committee and ask the committee to review the needs maps in detail.

Once the video is finalized, the Advisory Committee is encouraged to share it.

NEXT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Anticipated for Winter 2023.