

Richmond Connects Steering Committee MEETING SUMMARY

January 24, 2023 | 10:00 am to 12:00 pm | ZOOM

ATTENDEES

Alex Bell, Renaissance Planning Group (Richmond Connects Consultant Team)

Aaron Bond, City of Richmond Dept. of Planning & Development Review (PDR)

Carla Childs, City of Richmond Dept. of Economic Development

Dironna Moore Clarke, City of Richmond Office of Equitable Transit and Mobility (OETM)

Leandra Colella, Timmons Group (Richmond Connects Consultant Team)

Jessica Dimmick, EPR (Richmond Connects Consultant Team Project Manager)

Jakob Helmboldt, City of Richmond Dept. of Public Works (DPW), Pedestrian and Trails Coordinator

MS Khara, DPW

Brandon King, OETM

Brian Kingery, Timmons Group (Richmond Connects Consultant Team)

Crystal Lowery, DPW

Atiba Muse, OETM

Maritza Pechin, PDR

Yessenia Revilla, PDR

Kelli Rowan, OETM

Mike Sawyer, DPW, Traffic Engineering

Sam Sink, GRTC

Ebony Walden, Ebony Walden Consulting (Richmond Connects Consultant Team)

Alicia Zatcoff, City of Richmond Office of Sustainability

MEETING SUMMARY

Kelli Rowan provided a copy of the meeting presentation to the Steering Committee in advance of this meeting. This summary documents the key points of discussion, action items, and next steps.

To obtain a copy of the meeting presentation, email Kelli Rowan at Kelli.Rowan@rva.gov.

Project and Schedule Update

At the last Steering Committee meeting in November 2022, the Richmond Connects team gave an update on the Phase 2 Engagement activities and presented the unweighted needs maps. The committee also discussed un-mappable needs, and then reviewed the unweighted needs maps as follow-up homework.

Since the last meeting, the Richmond Connects team developed an approach for prioritizing the near-term needs and began compiling recommendations. The team shared updates on these efforts with the committee. The team also introduced the long-range scenario planning effort, which is just beginning.

At the next Steering Committee meeting, scheduled for March 28, 2023, the Richmond Connects team will present a draft of the near-term recommendations and share the long-term scenario narratives and evaluation metrics, which the Technical Subcommittee will work on. Phase 3 of community engagement will be underway.



Prioritization of Needs

Need Level Definitions

Jessica Dimmick presented the first draft of the Need Level definitions for tiering the needs. The committee reviewed drafts of four of the 11 Investment Need Category maps that show what the maps would look like with the proposed Need Level definitions.

The proposed Need Level definitions were applied to four example Investment Need Category maps. These maps can be viewed here: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/collections/dd8db5a531c644ae9d3905a697756fbc?item=6>

Discussion:

- The Nodes from the Richmond 300 Master Plan are incorporated into the analysis and clearly visible in the results.
- AECOM will be conducting a Tabletop Infrastructure Assessment, and the Nodes will be important in this effort.
- Consider calling the 0.0 to 0.4 Need Level something besides “No Need”. “Long term need” or “lowest need” are not as strong as “no need.”
- Many of the highest need areas on the Bicycle and Pedestrian needs maps are areas where land uses are not supportive of these modes. In these areas, typically the land use needs should be addressed first or along with the transportation infrastructure investments. Bike lanes and trails may be recommendations in these areas, but should not be built alone without recommendations for addressing the land uses. Bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure improvements in low-density areas do not score well in SMART SCALE.
- The Richmond Connects team did some preliminary work to test out combining the need scores from all 11 Investment Need Category together. Ultimately, that may assist in determining the topmost needs. However, at this point, the focus is on nailing down the Need Level definitions for the tiered needs. The final Near Term Action Plan will have narratives that describe how high need areas are high need across various Investment Need Categories.

Incorporating Public Input

Jessica Dimmick presented a proposed approach for incorporating public input into the needs analysis. The proposed approach would allow areas with high levels of public input to bump up an area to the next Need Level.

Initial example maps of this approach can be viewed online here:

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/collections/dd8db5a531c644ae9d3905a697756fbc?item=6>

In addition, the top needs that were identified through public input in the Communities of Concern areas would become “super needs” that are automatically assigned the highest need level.

Discussion:

- The areas with a lot of bicycle comments are also generally areas with high density. These are areas where riding bikes is most viable, and it’s important to have a good bike network here, even if the data-driven need level is low.
- There are very few comments in District 8. These are areas where it is difficult to get public input. The “super needs” identify the top needs that were identified in the Communities of Concern areas, including District 8.
- The identification and prioritization of needs is based on equity, but it does not only look at the Communities of Concern areas.
- The committee agreed the comments are a good way to confirm what the data is showing, but some committee members were initially unsure about giving more weight to the needs based on the comments.
- The Richmond Connects team will test this method and share the initial results with the Technical Committee for their review and feedback.

Near Term Action Plan Outcomes

The prioritization of needs will lead to two outcomes in the Near Term Action Plan:

1. A list of prioritized projects
2. A list of action items for high need areas without well-defined project ideas

Discussion:

- The Near Term timeframe is 5 to 10 years. Projects within this near term timeframe need immediate project development to apply for funding that is 10 years out. Many projects will need multiple funding sources including CVTA funding, especially because costs are rising due to inflation.
- The Long Term timeframe is for 2050. What will happen in the mid-term timeframe, between 2035 and 2050, and how is this being considered? We should plan for mid- and long-term. The high, medium, and low need levels will be one of several criteria to determine if a project will happen in a near, mid, or long term timeframe.
- The “super needs” that are the top needs from public input in the Communities of Concern should be the highest priority.
- The Near Term Action Plan should be very clear about the immediate high priority projects to give City staff clear direction on what projects they need to work on and prioritize for funding. However, projects can get implemented in different ways, including as opportunities arise in the development review process. Lower need projects are still beneficial, and City staff should be able to use the Near Term Action Plan in conversations with developers to identify desired projects, even if the project is a lower need.
- The Near Term Action Plan is intended to be a strategic plan.

Prioritizing Un-mappable Needs

Kelli Rowan presented a proposed approach for prioritizing the un-mappable needs. The proposed approach consists of a set of questions that each un-mappable need would be evaluated against. The committee reviewed the proposed approach. Discussion was limited, and the committee will consider the proposed approach and provide feedback as follow-up to the meeting.

Please review and provide comments on the proposed approaches **by Friday January 27th**.

Recommendations

The Richmond Connects team is in the process of compiling project ideas and recommendations from all of the documents that were provided and reviewed as part of the Review of Plan in April and May 2022. The team shared a work-in-progress version of an online map of the recommendations compiled to date, available at <https://bit.ly/3Xw2iEm>

The team share the list of plans and other documents that they are pulling recommendations and project ideas from. Thomas and Kelli will be reaching out to committee members and others to request GIS shapefiles.

The committee will review the online map and list of documents and provide additional recommendations and project ideas from other efforts if they are not already included.

Long Term Scenario Planning

Kelli Rowan introduced the concept of scenario planning. About half of committee members present at the time indicated they had participated in a scenario planning process before. Kelli shared the goal and desired outcomes of the scenario planning effort for Richmond Connects. She shared a high level overview of the long term vision, potential variables and metrics.

The Richmond Connects team is in the beginning stages of the scenario planning, and will work with the Technical Subcommittee over the next couple of weeks to develop draft narratives of the scenarios and metrics for evaluating the scenarios.

The scenarios are to be determined and could test how focusing investments for different modes, investing in different spatial patterns, and investing in fewer bigger projects or more smaller projects improve equity. Evaluation metrics are also to be determined, and will be rooted in the policies, goals, and objectives of Richmond 300, Path to Equity, and RVAGreen 2050. The scenarios will likely hold constant future predictions about land use, climate change, economic stability, and other factors.

Kelli asked the committee to share tools and forecasts you developed or know of for the 2045-2050 planning horizon for use in the scenario planning effort.

NEXT STEPS

Action Items	Person responsible	Deadline
<p>Review the following items and provide comments and feedback by email to Kelli Rowan at Kelli.Rowan@va.gov.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Proposed Need Levels for categorizing the weighted needs into discrete tiers.Proposed method for incorporating public input into the needs analysis <p>https://storymaps.arcgis.com/collections/dd8db5a531c644ae9d3905a697756fbc?item=6</p>	All Steering Committee members	Friday January 27 th
<p>Provide additional ideas for qualitative methods to rank and prioritize the non-mappable needs. Send ideas to Kelli Rowan.</p>	All Steering Committee members	Friday January 27 th
<p>Review the online map of recommendations and list of documents. Provide additional recommendations and project ideas from other efforts if not already included. Send these to Kelli Rowan.</p> <p>https://bit.ly/3Xw2iEm</p>	All Steering Committee members	Friday January 27 th
<p>Share forecasts and prediction tools you are aware of that may provide useful insights to the scenario planning effort. Send these to Kelli Rowan.</p>	All Steering Committee members	Friday January 27 th

NEXT STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

The next Steering Committee is scheduled for Tuesday March 28, 2023, at 10:00 AM.