Richmond Connects Advisory Committee MEETING SUMMARY

February 21, 2023 | 10:00 am to 12:00 pm | Zoom

Attendees

Omari Al Qadaffi, Community Unity in Action/Legal Aid

Ashley Austin, Henrico County Department of Public Works, Transportation Development

Lamont Benjamin, City of Richmond Department of Public Works (DPW), Transportation Engineering

Yesmine Bethea, Path to Equity Ambassador, Southside – Aajah House

Boz Boschen, Citizen Ambassador in the Museum District

Aaron Bond, City of Richmond Office of Equitable Development

Missi Boyer, Senior Connections, Capital Area Agency on Aging

Eva Colen, City of Richmond, Office of Children and Families, Senior Policy Advisor

Steve Cummings, UZURV

Tiffany Dubinsky, Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT), Statewide Transit Planning Manager

Joh Gehlbach, Richmond Association of Realtors

Richard Hankins, RVART

Grady Hart, Rosedale Civic Association President, Richmond Public Schools Community Partnerships Coordinator

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

Max Hepp-Buchanan, Venture Richmond, Director of Riverfront and Downtown Placemaking

Noah Holmes Foster, Summit Design & Engineering

Tameka Jefferson, Richmond Region Tourism

MS Khara, City of Richmond DPW

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

Emily Monroe, Bike Walk RVA Community Engagement Coordinator

Nicole Mueller, Virginia Department of Transportation, Richmond District Planning

Chet Parsons, PlanRVA (RRPDC)

Quawneisha "Bre" Peoples, Virginia Department of Health

Sven Philipsen, Council Liaison for Second District Councilor Katherine Jordan

Damian Pitt, VCU Urban and Regional Studies and Planning

Aquanetta Scott, Path to Equity Ambassador

Von Tisdale, RideFinders

Brantley Tyndall, Bike Walk RVA, Sports Backers

Daniel Wagner, DRPT

Lawrence West, Black Lives Matter RVA

Tony Williams, Senior Connections, Capital Area Agency on Aging, Mobility Program Manager

Richmond Connects Team

Chenice Brown, OETM

Jessica Dimmick, EPR

Brandon King, OETM

Atiba Muse, OETM

Dironna Moore Clark, OETM

Kelli Rowan, OETM

Thomas Ruff, Timmons Group

MEETING SUMMARY

The Richmond Connects Team shared an update on the needs analysis for the near term action plan, which is in the final stages. The Team shared the outcomes from Engagement Phase 2. The Richmond Connects Advisory Committee reviewed the proposed approaches for Engagement Phases 3 and 4, as well as an overview on the scenario planning effort for the long term plan. The Committee discussed preparations for the next meeting, which will be an in-person workshop to develop recommendations for the highest needs.

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.

Finalizing the Needs Analysis

In January, the Richmond Connects Advisory Committee reviewed the equity-weighted needs maps. The Richmond Connects Team converted these maps from a continuous gradient into four discrete need levels, which are now the tiered needs maps. The Team is also working on applying the need levels from the area-based zones onto the street network for three Investment Need Categories, as well as incorporating the public input into the needs maps.

For the non-mappable (citywide and programmatic) needs, the Richmond Connects Team developed a series of questions to vet and refine the non-mappable needs.

Next steps to finalize the needs analysis include:

- Formulating narratives for the highest needs
- Finalizing the non-mappable needs
- Pulling existing recommendations
- Developing new recommendations

Community Engagement Phase 2

Phase 2 of community engagement for Richmond Connects occurred from November 2022 through early February 2023. This phase focused on identifying the top needs and asking what needs are most important.

The Richmond Connects team identified where input was missing from Phase 1. Phase 1 input was lacking most from BIPOC, low-income, and other communities of concern. Richmond Connects is grounded in equity, with a focus on providing access to opportunities and removing barriers for people who are experiencing burdens and injustices. Phase 2 included a range of activities and engagement opportunities for the general public, and focused on reaching BIPOC, low-income, and other communities of concern.

Engagement activities and opportunities in Phase 2 included:

- In-Person Pop-Ups

- Focus Group Sessions
- Telephone Town Hall Meetings
- Survey on Equity-Weighted Needs Maps
- 90-Second Video
- Website Updates
- E-Blasts
- Opt-In for Text Messages

The Richmond Connects team shared the results from the in-person pop-ups, which asked people in the communities of concern which of the top 10 issues they think should be fixed first. **The meeting presentation shows the results for each of the five communities of concern areas.** The top issues included lacking sidewalks, poor sidewalk condition, feeling unsafe crossing the street, and potholes and poor road maintenance. **The team also shared high level results from the focus groups, also available in the meeting presentation**.

Advisory Committee members asked how the top 10 issues were identified and if they reflected input from traditionally underrepresented (black and low-income) groups. Richmond 300 had a target number of responses from black and low-income respondents. The Richmond Connects process has a similar goal of reaching 3 percent of Richmonders, with representation from minority and low-income groups equal to the demographic and socio-economic makeup of the City population. Despite efforts to promote the survey and gather responses at events targeted to and in neighborhoods of minority and low-income residents, the Phase 1 survey responses were lowest for these groups, as well as younger residents. The Richmond Connects team explained the shift in approach to more quality-driven lower-numbers outreach in the communities of concern.

The Committee asked if the team will continue to engage the community at large on the execution of the strategies and the decisions made. The Committee provided suggestions for urban culture Instagram accounts that have lots of participation from young black Richmond residents.

Community Engagement Phases 3 and 4

The Richmond Connects team proposed to have Phase 3 occur in March 2023 and consist only of information sharing, without a survey or specific ask of the public. Phase 4 would consist of a bigger push in the early summer timeframe, and would share initial project recommendations, and which of the recommendations are your priorities.

Committee members responded to a poll to gauge their support for the approach to save the big push for public engagement to when we have project recommendations to share.

- 13 committee members indicated support for this approach
- 3 committee members indicated they did not support this approach
- 3 committee members indicated they didn't know or had no opinion on it

Committee members who did not support the proposed approach, didn't know, or had no opinion on it indicated their reservations were concerns about the demographic representation of the 5,000+ responses that are forming the basis of the public input, especially the lower age (18-25) demographic. It is difficult to get younger people to respond to a poll. Lower income communities skew younger in

age, and improvements that are implemented in the next 5-10 years are particularly important for lower age demographics.

The Richmond Connects team explained they have shifted the approach since the Phase 1 survey where the 5,000+ comments were gathered and compiled. Outreach efforts in Phase 2 have been focused on going into communities and talking to people in their communities, including young people. The outreach team conducted outreach at several events and locations focused on young people, including the senior class picnic at Armstrong High School and the family engagement night at John Marshall High School. The committee and team agreed that young people's input is very important.

The committee understood the steps the team has taken and budget limitations. Question about the quality of the outreach and if certain populations were not reached may continue to be asked. This will remain a key focus point for the process.

Upcoming Work Session: Recommendations for High Need Areas

The next Advisory Committee meeting will be an in-person work session, likely occurring in late March or early April 2023. At this point, the Richmond Connects team will have draft recommendations to share, and we will work together with the Advisory Committee in the work session to develop additional recommendations and fill in the gaps in the highest need areas.

The team asked the committee about their preferences for the structure and format of the upcoming work session.

Workshop Format Preferences:

Breakout Groupings	No. of Votes
Breakout groups by Mode	4
Breakout groups by Council District	4
Breakout groups by other Neighborhood breakdown	2
Breakout groups by Master Plan Node and Corridors groupings	7

Rotations	No. of Votes
Rotate between all stations. Smaller amount of time; visit and give feedback on all stations.	9
Spend the whole time on one or two stations. Go in depth; don't comment on all stations.	10

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A committee member suggested recording the breakout groups so that people could listen to what was discussed and provide additional comments and ideas afterward.

Long-Term Planning: Introductions to 2050 Scenarios

The Richmond Connects team gave an overview of what the scenario planning process is and the outcomes that will result. The goal of the Richmond Connects scenario planning effort is to improve equity through transportation investments. The desired outcomes are actionable recommendations for policy-makers to realize the visions and policies in Richmond 300, Path to Equity, and RVAGreen, as well as information policy-makers and decision-makers can use on the tradeoffs of different investment decisions.

The team proposed three scenarios:

	Modal Emphasis	Spatial Lever	Scale of Investment Lever
Scenario A: Equitable Transit	Majority of investments go to better transit service. Bike/ped improvements are focused on access to high-frequency transit stops.	City-based: improve transit service from COC areas to good-paying jobs	Fewer projects funded. Projects that are funded are high cost, higher capacity transit
Scenario B: Active (Walkable & Bikeable) Nodes	Majority of investments go to bike & ped infrastructure and micro-mobility	Neighborhood-based; focused on Nodes	Lots of small (lower cost) projects.
Scenario C: Emerging Technology	Invest in preparing for electric vehicles, e-bikes, and shared economy	Regional-based: Investments focused on reaching long distance destinations outside the city	A mix of small localized infrastructure investment with large programmatic investments.

The committee reacted to the proposed scenarios through a poll that asked, "**Do these 3 scenarios capture the 'potential futures' you and your organization would like to see tested?**"

Response	No. of Votes
Yes. You have my OK to move forward.	5
Mostly Yes, but I would like to provide more comments on the variables.	4
No, I think these are missing the mark.	0
Don't know or don't have an opinion.	2

A committee member asked what are the consequences of testing these scenarios, and what would it take for us to achieve the scenarios? The Richmond Connects team explained the goal is not to choose one scenario over the other. Instead it is to understand what types of investments could be made and

how much those investments improve equity through improving access to opportunities and reducing barriers.

The committee asked about the overlap between the Richmond Connects scenario planning process and the PlanRVA scenario planning process. These are two separate and very different processes. The PlanRVA process has a lot of variables including land use, economic development, and environmental factors that the Richmond Connects process is holding steady. PlanRVA is an active participant in the Richmond Connects process, and so the two processes will be conducted in coordination.

Next Steps

Committee members were encouraged to send additional studies or plans to pull existing recommendations from, as well as to be thinking creatively about how we can address the top needs.

NEXT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Anticipated for late March/early April 2023 as an in-person work session.