

# Richmond Connects Engagement Phase 2

## NORTHSIDE FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY

February 2, 2023 | 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm | Six Points Innovation Center

### Participants

Tanya Simms, Northside

Renita Vaughan, Northside

Deborah Walker, Northside

Jackie McDonnough, Highland Park

Autumn Doswell, Gilpin

Kiara Harris, Gilpin/Jackson Ward

Blikda Mickens, Northside

Ronald Wright, Northside

Nick Amber, Northside

Wina Cook, Northside

Teenora Thurston, Northside

Krystle Voss, Northside/Highland Park

Kailee Lundy

Ava Lundy

### Richmond Connects Team

Jessica Dimmick, EPR

Kelli Rowan, OETM

Ebony Walden, Ebony Walden Consulting

### FOCUS GROUP PURPOSE

As part of Phase 2 of the community engagement for Richmond Connects, three focus group sessions were held in January and February 2023 to share the weighted needs maps with people who live in or represent one or more communities of concern. Community members reviewed the needs maps and provided feedback on what makes sense and what is missing.

The participants in this focus group reside in communities of concern areas in Richmond's Northside. The group discussed the needs maps for the entire City of Richmond. Many comments pertain specifically to the Northside, and other areas of the City were discussed as well.

### Review of Needs Maps

The Richmond Connects team shared the weighted needs maps for five of the eleven Investment Need Categories established by Path to Equity, including:

- Bicycle (INC 1a)
- Pedestrian (INC 1b)
- Transit (INC 2)
- Safety/Security (INC 5)
- Maintenance (INC 7)

These maps represent the weighted needs from the analysis of data, but do not yet reflect public input.

Each of the weighted needs maps included a scale from low to high need. Participants viewed each map and reflected on their experiences. Facilitators asked participants to identify 1-3 things that made sense on the maps and 1-3 things they felt were missing from the maps.



## Key Themes

Many of the comments on sticky notes that were about the Northside were captured in the Top 10 Needs Community of Concern poster, and also mirrored other prominent public comment themes from the previous engagement initiatives. Transit needs talked about certain intersections that need bus stops and issues of accessibility with the bus. Maintenance comments mostly revolved around certain roads that needed sidewalk improvements or had potholes. Bike comments included existing bike lanes that need enhanced protection, streets that need new bike infrastructure, and a lack of bike infrastructure connectivity. Lastly, the safety comments mostly discussed safe bus stops, issues with roundabouts, and traffic calming infrastructure along certain streets.

The tables below show the items identified in this exercise. **Blue text indicates that a sticky note corresponded with a numbered sticky dot placed on the needs maps; the number in parentheses is the corresponding sticky dot identifier.** Black text indicates a comment that did not correspond with a sticky dot placed on the needs maps. Participants often noted needs and voiced opinions about what should be done irrespective of the needs maps. These comments were captured and often included in the Missing column.

### Bicycle Needs (INC 1a) Results

Makes Sense	Missing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Chamberlayne needs bike lanes</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Bike lanes in Gilpin (Charity St) that connect to other bike lanes</li><li>Getting from Highland Park to Capitol Trail is hard</li><li>Unsafe &amp; unclear after Richmond Henrico Tpke</li><li>Make sure we have bike fixing stations along all bike routes - none in Northside (bike pumps along the trail)</li><li>Leigh St has bike lanes, 1<sup>st</sup> St has bike lanes</li><li>The City has a contract for the next 10 years to host. They already made bike lanes to accommodate for them.</li><li>Brook Rd – parking lane in the middle of the street doesn't make sense</li></ul>

## Pedestrian Needs (INC 1b) Results

Makes Sense	Missing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Agree – high need – 17<sup>th</sup> Street needs sidewalk (3)</li><li>• Few sidewalks on 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave and Fourqurean Lane</li><li>• Yes Gilpin has broken sidewalks, should be wider</li><li>• Yes, St. Peter @ community garden needs sidewalks</li><li>• Chamberlayne Parkway – no barrier between traffic and pedestrians</li><li>• The bridge between Charity and Calhoun</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Should be higher need – Lombardy @ Chamberlayne lacks sidewalks (5)</li><li>• Disagree – it's ok, not high need – Grey's Park on W. Leigh across from fire station – sidewalks have been redone</li><li>• Disagree – should be high need – Magnolia St bridge – when it rains, it floods &amp; people can't see; some people have drowned. Needs a stop light (4)</li><li>• Disagree – this is not high need – Azalea @ Brook Rd and Old Brook Rd (2)</li><li>• Highland Park sidewalks are broken – 4<sup>th</sup>, 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup>, trees make them uneven (needs to be higher need)</li><li>• More sidewalks in North Highland Park near Richmond-Henrico Turnpike, north of Carolina, plus Hazelhurst &amp; Hunt</li><li>• 1<sup>st</sup> between Highland and Milton</li><li>• Safety – yield sign @ St. Peter where it becomes Calhoun</li></ul>

## Transit Needs (INC 2) Results

Makes Sense	Missing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bus on Fendall was eliminated, now need to walk 4 blocks to get to the bus - this is high need (1)</li><li>• High need at Laburnum @ North Ave - there is no stop here, the nearest bus stop is too far away (3)</li><li>• Overall, Citywide<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Elderly &amp; people with mobility issues need door-to-door service; can't walk to the stop</li><li>○ Medicare only pays for 2 van rides each month</li><li>○ Buses stop every 4 blocks, should be only 2 blocks because people are elderly and have trouble walking</li><li>○ More transit in &amp; out of city, Short Pump + Amazon + jobs</li><li>○ Poor bus service</li></ul></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Need bus stop at Brookland Park Blvd Senior Apartments - our closest bus stop is too far away - should be Six Points - should be higher need (2)</li><li>• 1st and Baker St has traffic coming off the highway, downtown, and Chamberlayne into a residential street without a stop light or a crosswalk for the residents to use to cross or stop traffic</li><li>• An app for GRTC to have more accurate info on bus schedule - improve transit app - look at NYC</li></ul>

## Safety/Security Needs (INC 5) Results

Makes Sense	Missing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gilpin good but no bus stops internal, just around (transit need)</li> <li>• Not disability friendly along Chamberlayne &amp; going to Gilpin and Jackson Ward</li> <li>• Yes, corner of Hill &amp; St. James - a lot of accidents you can't see</li> <li>• Mechanicsville Tpke unsafe</li> <li>• Yes - roundabout is a safety issue</li> <li>• Agree – high need – Brooklyn Court: Cool Ln – there's a court and jail, a lot of people going to court from there (1)</li> <li>• Laburnum @ North: unsafe to cross when walking; traffic doesn't stop to let you cross; section in between the 2 lights you need to put something to make traffic stop, kids walk to school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No bus shelters in Highland Park but it's a safety issue (need balance)</li> <li>• Need bus shelters/seats and trash cans in Gilpin</li> <li>• PSA about how to use roundabouts especially for 40+</li> <li>• Richmond-Henrico Tpke needs lighting and panic buttons and no railing in places</li> <li>• Speed bumps on 1st Ave between Meadowbridge &amp; Highland - cars race</li> <li>• Should be higher need – Laburnum @ North Ave: a lot of accidents, a lot of potholes, swerve into other lane, sidewalk needs repair, 10 accidents a week (2)</li> </ul>

## Maintenance Needs (INC 7) Results

Makes Sense	Missing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I agree with Oliver Hill Way</li> <li>• Overall someone needs to walk on the roads to see where broken sidewalks are</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Should be high need - Laburnum @ North Ave (potholes, broken sidewalks) (1)</li> <li>• 1st Ave between Pollack &amp; Highland - uneven sidewalks</li> </ul>

## Overlap with Top Issues from Public Input

At the end of the session, focus group participants were asked to look at the top 10 issues in communities of concern in the Northside that were identified through public input. These issues were previously identified as the top issue from 5,000+ public comments from the Phase 1 survey and prior survey efforts.

Participants placed a dot at each issue if that issue came up during the review of the needs maps.

Top Issue Identified from Public Input	No. of Dots
Lack of bus stops, especially near senior housing	7
Pulse does not serve Northside	5
Potholes and poor pavement on streets	5
Many streets lack sidewalks or existing sidewalks are broken	5
Speeding on major streets, like Laburnum Ave, Brook Rd, and Chamberlayne Ave	4
Crossing the street on North Ave feels unsafe	2
Walking and riding a bike on Chamberlayne Ave feels unsafe	2
Intersection at Laburnum Ave and Hermitage Rd feels unsafe	1
Riding a bike from Northside to downtown feels unsafe	1
Riding a bike on Brookland Park Blvd feels unsafe	1

