

# Richmond Connects Steering Committee

## MEETING SUMMARY

June 1, 2023 | 3:00 pm to 4:30 pm | ZOOM

### ATTENDEES

Andreas Addison, Councilmember, Richmond West End 1<sup>st</sup> Voter District

Meloni Alexander, City of Richmond Dept. of Public Works (DPW), Parking & Shared Mobility Division

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

Chenice Brown, City of Richmond Office of Equitable Transit and Mobility (OETM), Community Outreach Specialist

Carla Childs, City of Richmond Dept. of Economic Development

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

Jakob Helmboldt, DPW, Pedestrian and Trails Coordinator

Adam Hohl, City of Richmond, Office of the Deputy CAO for Operations, Policy Advisor

Brandon King, OETM

Lynne Lancaster, DPW, Parking

Crystal Lowery, DPW

Dironna Moore Clarke, OETM

Ernest Moore Jr., OETM

Atiba Muse, OETM

Maritza Pechin, PDR

Michelle Peters, City of Richmond Dept. of Housing and Community Development

Yessenia Revilla, PDR

Emily Routman, EPR (Richmond Connects Consultant Team)

Thomas Ruff, Timmons Group (Richmond Connects Consultant Team)

Kelli Rowan, OETM

Mike Sawyer, DPW, City Traffic Engineer

Brad Shelton, Michael Baker International (Richmond Connects Consultant Team)

Laura Thomas, 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](mailto:Kelli.Rowan@rva.gov).

### Needs Narratives

The Richmond Connects team summarized the wealth of needs data into user friendly 3-page narratives. There are 17 Needs Narratives total – one for each Needs Area in the City.

The Needs Narratives have been posted to the Richmond Connects website at <https://rvaconnects.com/needs-summaries>. The team is sending an e-blast to the Richmond Connects contact list notifying people that the Needs Narratives are available.



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## Near-Term Action Plan

### Existing Recommendations from Prior Efforts

The Richmond Connects team collected project ideas and recommendations from prior plans and studies. These recommendations numbered over 8,000 individual features. The team eliminated redundancies and culled down the list to about 2,200 recommendations and assigned a funding status to each recommendation (funded or unfunded). These “existing recommendations” from prior efforts are provided in a searchable web map.

The team asked the Steering Committee to provide final QA/QC on the searchable web map, especially the funding status.

### Which existing recommendations meet a Tier 1 Need?

The Richmond Connects team overlaid the existing recommendations from prior efforts onto the needs maps, and identified which recommendations meet a Tier 1 need. Kelli Rowan presented the buffer distances that the team is using.

### New Recommendations

The team is identifying high need areas where there are no existing projects and developing new recommendations for these high need areas. The recommendations for the modal investment need categories (Pedestrian, Bike, Transit) are relatively straightforward.

For the non-modal investment need categories (Freight, Land Use, Connectivity, Economic Development, Technology, and Sustainability), the Richmond Connects team identified recommendations for high need areas in these investment need categories. Kelli Rowan presented recommendation ideas and asked for feedback from the Steering Committee.

### *Economic Development*

Maritza Pechin commented that the high need areas for economic development are very low density and do not have a lot of access to everyday destinations including grocery stores. Maritza noted a grocery store was just built in Church Hill, but it does not offer the same price point as Wal-Mart, and GRTC Route 7 goes to the Wal-Mart on Nine Mile Rd today.

Maritza Pechin also noted that the answer to better access to relevant jobs may be land use and housing solutions, such as affordable housing in Short Pump, not infrastructure solutions. Transportation solutions to solve these issues may not be realistic. Kelli Rowan responded that the narrative section of the plan can explain other things that are needed to meet these needs beyond infrastructure investments.

Mike Sawyer explained that projects in the public right-of-way that create a sense of place and a good feel can generate economic interest. The City installed a roundabout at 25<sup>th</sup> St and Fairmount, and then development came in with a grocery store and culinary school. The roundabout at 4<sup>th</sup> St and Maury St is generating new interest in Manchester. The City is investing \$450 million into Hull Street with sidewalk, a side path, and streetscaping. Hull Street will be different 10 years from now, and transit may follow, and present opportunities for affordable housing.

Michelle Peters noted that Nine Mile Road has transportation to shopping, but the issue here is that bus stops have no amenities and no sidewalks. Bus stops can be economic development and placemaking opportunities too.

Maritza Pechin reiterated this need is about zoning and land use. The reason why the City is seeing development in Manchester is because the City rezoned that area in 2007. Even though the City is growing, a lot of areas have densities below the peak densities in 1950, and it's not enough to support grocery stores within an easy bus ride. Maritza encouraged the team to strengthen the discussion about getting more density, street grids, and intentional TOD-style growth.

### *Sustainability*

Laura Thomas suggested that all bus stops should have cover. This is RVA Green Strategy 2.2. The group discussed having a pre-approved bus stop design that includes these sustainability features that can be implemented quickly. Kelli Rowan shared an idea for using shipping containers for modular bus stops with solar panels for Wi-Fi and fans. Laura added that a modular approach could also be applicable to electric vehicle charging stations.

Laura Thomas also indicated the flooding data is from a very high level model. In the future, there will be more refined datasets available.

Aaron Bond suggested receptacles for trash and composting at high ridership bus stops, and coordinating this with trash pick-up. He also suggested incorporating bike fix-it stations where you can fix a tire while waiting for the bus.

### *Freight*

Yessenia Revilla suggested the Richmond Connects team look at the “Report of the Task Force on the Economic Revitalization of South Richmond” from 2019.

### *Other Discussion*

Maritza Pechin shared a long-range idea to move to light rail or heavy rail. This investment might spur more ridership and desired densities and would be more reliable if it is on a route that is not disrupted by car traffic. The group mentioned the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority is a potential state level resource for funding improvements. The group discussed possibly amending one of the Richmond Connects long-range scenarios to include light rail.

Aaron Bond shared a link to an article in reference to zoning changes needed for car-free neighborhoods:

<https://jalopnik.com/despise-multiple-attempts-to-stop-them-car-free-commun-1850229660>

### *Unmappable Needs*

Kelli Rowan asked the Steering Committee to review the spreadsheet of existing and new programmatic and strategic recommendations, fill in a status update for all recommendations applicable to your department, and add ideas for how to strengthen or edit these recommendations.

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## Long-Term Scenario Planning

Jessica Dimmick reviewed the purpose and approach for the long-term scenario planning effort. She shared the proposed growth and land use assumptions that will be held constant in all 3 future scenarios. She shared a matrix describing how each scenario will be different in terms of the investments in transit service, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, micro-mobility, and electric vehicle charging stations. The Richmond Connects team is working to complete defining the list of proposed transportation investments for each scenario. The next step will be to modify the accessibility model to reflect these proposed changes for each scenario.

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## Phase 4 Engagement

The Richmond Connects team is preparing for Phase 4 of community engagement. The engagement will be primarily focused on reaching Communities of Concern (Communities of Opportunity) through in-person events with incentives, as well as telephone town hall meetings, and potential utility mailers and/or purchasing phone numbers for text messaging. The general public will be able to provide feedback during this phase through online engagement and canvassing at large city summer events.

The method for gathering input will be a series of 17 surveys – one for each Needs Area. The surveys will list the top 8-16 recommendation for that area and ask participants if they had \$100, how would they spend it amongst the top recommendations. Participants can complete one, several, or all 17 surveys – as many as they wish.

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## Other Discussion

Maritza Pechin said she does not want people to get confused between the Richmond Connects effort and the Reconnect Jackson Ward and Gilpin Community Plan efforts. PDR just finished drafting the Gilpin Community Plan and will finalize all changes to the plan by the end of September. Maritza asked the Richmond Connects team if they receive good content from the Gilpin area survey that should be included in the Gilpin Community Plan, to please share this with PDR.

Maritza Pechin asked that the Reconnect Jackson Ward be included in the map for Gilpin, as well as mappable recommendations from the Gilpin Community Plan, including closing Baker Street to vehicular traffic and transforming it into a shared-use path greenway connector.

Maritza Pechin explained that Gilpin currently has excellent transit service. Planning efforts including Richmond Connects and GRTC’s North-South BRT Study need to make sure Gilpin continues to have excellent transit service, especially as the north-

south BRT gets designed. The north-south BRT may not need to serve Gilpin directly, but the Gilpin neighborhood needs to continue to have the same level of transit service it has today, which is two 15-minute buses.

The committee suggested adding the interchange redesign of Belvidere and Chamberlayne.

## NEXT STEPS

Action Items	Person responsible	Deadline
Review the recommendations for the non-mappable needs and indicate the current status.	All Steering Committee members	Monday June 5 <sup>th</sup>
Review the table of existing recommendations from prior efforts for accuracy (especially funding status) and completeness	All Steering Committee members	Wednesday June 7 <sup>th</sup>

## NEXT STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

The next Steering Committee is scheduled for Tuesday July 25, 2023, at 10:00 AM.