

Richmond Connects Steering Committee

MEETING SUMMARY

February 22, 2024 | 1:00-2:30pm | Teams meeting

ATTENDEES

Andreas Addison, Richmond City Councilmember, 1st Voter District, West End

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

Mihir Bhosale, Jarrett Walker & Associates (Richmond Connects Consultant Team)

Andy Boenau, City of Richmond, Department of Public Works (DPW), Transportation Engineering Program Manager

Lucy Bolin, City of Richmond, Office of Equitable Transit and Mobility (OETM), Intern

Anna Bon-Harper, OETM, Intern

Chenice Brown, OETM, Community Outreach Specialist

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

Jimmy Dealaman, City of Richmond, Department of Planning and Development Review (PDR), Planner Associate

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

Vlad Gavrilovic, EPR (Richmond Connects Consultant Team)

Sherrill Hampton, City of Richmond, Department of Housing and Community Development

Adam Hohl, City of Richmond, Office of the DCAO for Operations, Senior Policy Advisor

Jasmin Johnson, City of Richmond, Office of Sustainability (OOS), Energy Coordinator

M. S. Khara, DPW

Brandon King, OETM, Program and Operations Supervisor

Daniel Klein, OOS, Sustainability Coordinator

Samantha Lewis, PDR, Policy and Planning

Atiba Muse, OETM

Dawn Olesky, OOS, Energy Program Manager

Alyson Oliver, PDR, Planner

Marianne Pitts, PDR, Deputy Director, Planning and Policy

Amy Robins, Liaison for Councilmember Stephanie Lynch, District 5: Richmond Central

Corey Robinson, GRTC

Guy Roach, GRTC, Capital Improvements Project Manager

Ray Roakes, PDR, Urban Design Planner/ Committee Secretary

Emily Routman, EPR (Richmond Connects Consultant Team)

Kelli Rowan, OETM

Thomas Ruff, Timmons Group (Richmond Connects Consultant Team)

Mike Sawyer, DPW, City Transportation Engineer

Laura Thomas, OOS

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.



Update on Near-Term Strategic Plan and Action Plan

Kelli recapped the past few efforts for the Richmond Connects process, including the last Advisory Council meeting (10/27/2023) in which the Action Plan strategies and projects were presented, as well as the Steering Committee “Office Hours” Session (11/28/2023). Since those two meetings, the public reviewed and gave comments on the Action Plan in November and December of 2023. After the team made final edits to the Action Plan and Strategic Plan, Richmond Connects leadership has been meeting with the CAO and City Council members one on one to get their feedback. Consequently, the adoption of the plan by City Council has been moved to the March 25th, 2024 City Council meeting.

Kelli then gave a brief overview of the projects and strategies from the Action Plan and Strategic Plan. All projects were categorized into one of four categories:

- Prioritize What the People Need,
- Finish What We Started,
- Move Forward With What We Can, and
- Longer-Term.

Kelli recapped the non-mappable strategies, including the “How We Do Business” strategies.

Kelli mentioned public comments were received in the final stage of engagement with the Action Plan. There were 369 public comments, which were generally supportive and mostly project-specific.

Finally, the Next Steps for both plans were presented. First, the aim is to get both plans adopted at the March City Council meeting. Key transportation elements from the plans will be used to amend the *Richmond 300* Master Plan, which will go to Planning Commission. Then, the Lighter/Quicker/Cheaper program will commence. As implementation occurs, there will be on-going project development and associated public outreach from OETM and DPW.

Long-Term Scenario Planning

Refresh on Scenario Networks & Assumptions

Kelli refreshed the group on the purpose and outcomes of the scenario planning effort. It asks, “What if we invested heavily in X, Y, or Z transportation, and what does that do for equity?” There are three scenarios being evaluated – each scenario assumes that growth occurs largely in the Nodes and holds land use changes constant across all scenarios. The quantitative accessibility modeling effort will measure changes in access to jobs, healthcare, greenspace, and retail by various modes of transportation, especially looking at Communities of Concern. The outcome of the Scenario Plan will be guidance for policymakers on the possible trade-offs of different directions of transportation investments.

The scenario planning process will:

- Define 3 potential alternative future scenarios in addition to a baseline scenario
- Run each future scenario in an accessibility model that will output accessibility scores
- Assess potential qualitative risks for the each potential scenario

Jessica Dimmick presented each of the Scenarios and their assumptions. Mihir Bhosale helped talk through the differences in the 2045 Baseline and Scenario A transit networks. The descriptions of the four scenario networks and links to web maps of the scenario networks are provided in the meeting presentation.

Breakout Groups: *What might these scenarios mean for displacement, climate resilience, and safety? What are the risks and benefits of each?*

After presenting each of the scenario themes and assumptions, participants broke out into smaller groups to identify the risks and benefits of the scenarios on a particular topic. The three breakout group topics were:

- 1) Housing affordability, gentrification, and displacement
- 2) Sustainability and climate resilience
- 3) Safety and security

Each breakout group identified the risks and benefits of each of the three scenarios on their assigned topic. The results of the breakout groups by topic are provided in the tables below.

Group 1: Housing Affordability, Gentrification, and Displacement

	Scenario A – Equitable Transit	Scenario B – Active Nodes	Scenario C – Emerging Technology
Risks	<p>Could worsen displacement - potential double-edged sword depending on whether transit improvements are to wealthier or poorer areas</p>	<p>Weather doesn't always cooperate</p> <p>Not everyone can use these (seniors, people with disabilities)</p> <p>Some important areas are not in Nodes, but may need these improvements too</p>	<p>Would attract younger populations, which could increase displacement</p> <p>Cost of EVs is expensive for individuals</p> <p>Would have to increase education (costly and time-consuming)</p> <p>We don't know 100% if these tech options are definitely useful compared to tried-and-true methods (sidewalks, bikes), there may be other tech we don't know about</p>
Benefits	<p>Increased access to transit would reduce transit costs for families</p> <p>Might help prevent displacement if targeted to poorer, higher need areas</p> <p>Could help increase density of development --> greater housing affordability</p> <p>HCD affordable housing is very concerned with transit options in new developments</p>	<p>Would make Nodes more desirable, add housing in Nodes that aren't as residential, could expand affordable housing options</p> <p>Would create a synergistic effect with increasing transit ridership</p>	<p>Bus performance improvements would help reliability --> time is money, people may be more likely to use transit</p>
Methods and Resources	<p>Research into gentrification and infrastructure investments coming out of Washington DC</p>		
Other Notes	<p>Make sure to target Communities of Concern first which should mitigate the risks of gentrification in those areas in Scenarios A and B – not so sure about Scenario C</p>		

Group 2: Sustainability and Climate Resilience

	Scenario A – Equitable Transit	Scenario B – Active Nodes	Scenario C – Emerging Technology
Risks	<p>If we don't have EV replacements for diesels/busses/CNG, we are risking air pollution.</p> <p>Circular waste economy - recycling bus batteries,</p> <p>Source of electricity needs to be independent from fossil fuels.</p> <p>East of City and Route 5, lacking. Henrico 'loves library oriented development,' (look at the growth scenario, why don't we have more?)</p> <p>Traditional transit - heavy!! Infrastructure load.</p> <p>Redundancy? (lack of modal options, less ability to travel via other modes)</p>	<p>Environmental impacts (heat, more frequent storms, etc.) can affect ability to bike/walk comfortably.</p> <p>Maintenance cost of expanded urban canopy</p> <p>Flooding risk of pedestrian infrastructure network</p>	
Benefits	<p>If all electric, huge win.</p> <p>Community charging.</p> <p>Stops are all covered, resiliency.</p> <p>Infrastructure improvements for heavy vehicles are good for roads resiliency?</p>	<p>If this includes full landscaping - could help overall heat resiliency.</p> <p>Redundancy issues if using same infrastructure? Also risk</p> <p>Health and education, this has landscaping and localized green jobs that can't be automated, outsourced</p>	
Methods and Resources	<p>https://toolkit.climate.gov/tool/rvagreen-2050-climate-equity-index</p> <p>Dominion commitments to energy usage, VA clean economy act (sets goals/targets we can assume)</p> <p>Green infrastructure mapping tool. What routes are more likely to flood out sooner.</p> <p>Climate vulnerability and risk assessment.</p>	<p>https://analyzer.treeequityscore.org/richmond/map</p> <p>Prioritization index- weighted the community priorities</p>	

	Scenario A – Equitable Transit	Scenario B – Active Nodes	Scenario C – Emerging Technology
Other Notes	Will Nickel bridge have infrastructure to accommodate transit?/ other aging infrastructure?	Where/how much is the green infrastructure? Where is redundancy? Heat risk, flooding Need to clarify assumptions about trees, landscaping, shade.	Did not have time to discuss specifics of scenario C, but agreed the same questions should apply to each: Where/how much is the green infrastructure? (Need to clarify assumptions about trees, landscaping, shade.) Where is redundancy? Not just redundancy in routes, but redundancy in access to vital destinations (<i>eg.</i> If access to grocery store 1 is out, is there a grocery store 2?) Where is heat risk, flooding risk

Group 3: Safety and Security

	Scenario A – Equitable Transit	Scenario B – Active Nodes	Scenario C – Emerging Technology
Risks	Issues with crime increasing where bus shelters are located, using the shelter for non-civil purposes. (How to mitigate?) Increased lighting may be an option to address. Late night concerns and how system is used at later hours/after dark. More safety concerns at later hours. Security concerns at the transit stops. Increased demand will bring conflict with mental/homeless population utilizing free-fare bus service. Later transit service means more bike/ped activity in dark and could increase safety concerns.	Increased network may lead to more opportunities for bike/walk, which may lead to more interaction with vehicles. For more suburban areas of the City, difficulty with ROW/space for introducing bike/ped spaces without higher cost or pushback. Usage of bike lanes or sidewalks for parking by service/emergency vehicles because roadway has been narrowed to introduce those elements. Increased potential for bike/ped collisions with vehicles. Cost of upgrading network to ADA standards and maintaining ADA standards is high.	Technology can only go so far to address built infrastructure. Security of IT/technology controlled by the City, will need more protection from outside action. Cybersecurity.

	Scenario A – Equitable Transit	Scenario B – Active Nodes	Scenario C – Emerging Technology
Benefits	<p>Less drivers on the roadway, less cars for crashes. More automated bus drivers will have better safety operations. Reduced need for CDL/licensure if automated transit service.</p> <p>Regional connectivity of increased transit service. In turn creates economic benefit.</p>	<p>Leads to increased e-bike usage, which is a major positive.</p> <p>Increased network leads to more opportunities for benefits (net multiplier positive benefits). More usage by young/senior riders with an overall safer system.</p> <p>Bike/pedestrian requires less overall ROW/space, which can lead to converting that space to more dense development/land use.</p> <p>More people using the system will create more safety from group/herd effect.</p> <p>Vision Zero is easier to achieve with lower speeds therefore lower incidence and lower injury.</p> <p>Cost to maintain bike/ped infrastructure is generally lower than vehicle infrastructure.</p>	<p>Mode shift to e-bikes increases mobility.</p> <p>City is already seeing benefits from ITS improvements for signals and could see more with improved AV. Emergency vehicle pre-emptions.</p>
Methods and Resources			<p>Review international usage for discussions related to storage/security.</p> <p>Potential net-multiplier from e-bike usage. Longer trips, heavier trips, as well as ability to address more terrain/geography.</p>

Full Group Discussion: What is ‘adequate’ accessibility?

After each group briefly reported on their discussions in the breakout rooms, the entire group came back together to assess the “adequacy” of future accessibility in each of the scenarios.

	Food	Greenspace	Jobs
Starting Adequacy Assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2 grocery stores within 15 minutes by transit - 1 grocery store within 20 minutes by walking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1 park within 10 minutes by walking - 2 parks within 15 minutes by transit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Transit: 1 relevant job for every person within 45 minutes by transit - Bike: 1 relevant job for every 2 people within 30 minutes by bike - Walking: 1 relevant job for every 4 people within 20 minutes by walking

	Food	Greenspace	Jobs
Discussion Notes	<p>Potential to lower grocery store walking distance to 15 minutes.</p> <p>How are we looking at walking/transit scores for non-mobile populations?</p> <p>Half mile is an option for upper limit.</p> <p>Corner store vs Kroger is a major difference in access and equity. Make sure model incorporates access appropriately.</p>	<p>Consider cemeteries as greenspace.</p> <p>Consider schools as parks.</p> <p>Is there an option to add 5 minute walk to determine how many people are within that distance?</p> <p>If using cemeteries as greenspace, make sure it does impact actual usage of cemetery as revered space.</p>	<p>Is 45 minutes too long for 1 job? Should that be 30 minutes?</p>
Other Notes	<p>Access for cargo e-bikes is different than walking or transit distances, could increase opportunities. Would that open up access due to faster ability.</p> <p>Should we reconsider walking scores for poor weather or disabilities?</p>		

Next Steps

- Steering Committee members are encouraged to go support the adoption of both plans at the City Council meeting(s).
- The Richmond Connects team will continue to run the accessibility models, with a post-model qualitative risk assessment expected to be completed in March.
- By April, the Richmond Connects team expects to have Draft Conclusions and Recommendations for the Scenario Plan. The team will conduct focus groups and then present the findings and draft recommendations to the Advisory Committee. There will be a public review period for the draft scenario plan.
- The Scenario Plan is expected to be adopted by City Council in June.