

Southside Planning District Commission
Transportation Technical Advisory Committee Meeting
Tuesday, November 21, 2023

The Transportation Technical Advisory Committee (TTAC) met on Tuesday, November 21, 2023, at 10:00 A.M. in the conference room of the Southside Planning District Office. It was a hybrid meeting with attendees having the option to access the meeting virtually or in-person. Those attending in-person: Robert Hendrick, Mecklenburg County; and Chad Neese, SPDC. Those attending virtually: Carl Espy, Town of Halifax; Justin Lackey, South Boston; Hope Cole, South Boston; Nicole Mueller, VDOT Richmond District; Dusty Forbes, Chase City; Rick Youngblood, VDOT Lynchburg District; David Cook, VDOT Central Office; Todd Scheid, VDOT Richmond District; Sarah Rhodes, VDOT Richmond District; and George Morrison, Brunswick County. Don Dugger, Town of Brodnax, had the AI meeting assistant OtterPilot attend and take notes on his behalf.

Call Meeting to Order

Chad Neese called the meeting to order at 10:02 A.M.

Approval of Minutes from January 21, 2022

On a motion by Carl Espy and second by Robert Hendrick, the minutes from the January 21, 2022, meeting were approved as presented.

Public Comments

None.

Southside Active Transportation Plan

Chad Neese noted that the draft Active Transportation Plan (ATP), once completed, will serve as an update to two existing bike, pedestrian, and trail plans in the district while also consolidating them into one regional document. The completed aspects of the planning process were briefly reviewed, including: data collection, preliminary locality meetings, public outreach and survey, community meetings, and plan refinement with localities. Next steps include the Committee reviewing and providing any comments on the ATP's stated Vision, Goals, and localities finalizing their priority projects. A public comment period will be held in December. The ATP is on track to be recommended by the Committee and adopted by the SPDC Board in January. Mr. Neese then previewed the ATP in its [StoryMap format](#), noting that once final edits are made a print version will also be made available to ensure compliance with federal regulations.

2050 Rural Long-Range Transportation Plan

Mr. Neese also noted that SPDC staff has begun work on the 2050 RL RTP update. Data collection and table/chart creation is mostly complete, and he will soon begin reaching out to localities to review projects from the 2045 plan and to start identifying potential projects for inclusion in the update. It is anticipated that work will be completed on the plan by this coming summer. Work on the 2050 RL RTP may also help identify priority projects for Round 6 of Smart Scale. The Committee was asked to review the goals and provide any comments. The presentation will be emailed out for everyone's reference.

Smart Scale Update

Round 6 of Smart Scale will open in the spring of 2024. While there are numerous changes being proposed to the program, Mr. Neese focused on a just few of the more locally impactful ones. Localities will see a slight reduction in the number of applications that they can submit from 4 down to 3. The more populated areas which have traditionally been able to submit up to 10 applications are proposed to see their

applications reduced to 4 or 6, based on population figures. Land Use will be modified to serve as a multiplier in other factors areas to reduce the influence it had during Round 5. This will most likely reduce the number of bike/pedestrian projects that will receive funding in Round 6. It was noted that if this proposed change was in effort during Round 5, the pedestrian project in the Town of Halifax would not have been selected for funding. The economic development component will also change. Historically, any non-residential development within a given project's buffer area was acceptable. It's now proposed that only VEDP listed sites within a project's buffer area will be eligible for economic development points. The scoring criteria for eligible sites was briefly discussed. Carl Espy asked VDOT representatives to weigh in on the changes to Smart Scale. Rick Youngblood noted that changes are made to Smart Scale after each round, although maybe not the same level as the ones currently proposed. The CTB is expected to take this matter back up at their next meeting in December. He also noted that the studies performed by the Lynchburg District meet VTrans needs, so these studies can be helpful when pursuing Smart Scale funds. Sarah Rhodes echoed Mr. Youngblood's thoughts. She suggested that those interested in applying should reach out early to their VDOT contacts so that projects can be discussed with eligibility and competitiveness in mind. VDOT is hoping to have more information on Smart Scale by January. It was further clarified that the CTB will continue discussions on Smart Scale at their December 4th work session with possible action on the matter most likely occurring on December 5th.

Tobacco Heritage Trail

A segment of the Tobacco Heritage Trail (THT) has previously been recognized by the Virginia legislature as one of 5 "Priority Trails". The segment runs from Skipwith Road to Rudd's Creek in Mecklenburg County and this designation came with VDOT being tasked with spending up to \$1 million for pre-scoping activities. While grateful, the Roanoke River Rails-to-Trails Board and SPDC staff have remained vocal that identified 2-mile segment of the THT doesn't connect to any existing trail segments, including the 1.1 mile segment in extremely close proximity but cut-off by Highway 58. VDOT Richmond District staff have been understanding partners in helping to push for the additional mileage and tunnel under Highway 58 for trail connectivity but there are no guarantees as to what the CTB will do. Initial cost estimates for the Skipwith Road to Rudd's Creek segment range from \$3.3-\$3.6 million, while the additional mileage and tunnel would greatly increase the cost. An initial site visit by VDOT was conducted in June and they plan a follow-up site visit in November. Survey work should be completed by the spring of 2024. Rick Youngblood noted that the Peaks to Creeks Trail is similar to the THT and he is hopeful that funding will be provided by the CTB to make the trail projects a kind of showcase.

Mr. Neese reported that the Roanoke River Rails-to-Trails Board voted in October to de-designate a portion of on-road bike routes from South Hill to Chase City over safety concerns. Highway 47 had recently received much needed safety improvements by way of rumble strips. However, the rumble strips have caused issues for cyclists by narrowing the road shoulder and in some cases leaving no shoulder at all. VDOT officials were consulted over the safety issues and steps to de-designate the on-road route, in addition to feedback being received from avid cyclists in the area. The SPDC is currently in the process of coordinating with David Cook on the removal of the signs. David Cook noted that they have been able to find the original Land Use Permit and that the SPDC will need to help identify the signs to be removed. He also noted that our reporting the issue raised an awareness that VDOT needed to be more vigilant when implementing roadway improvements so that they do not create issues such as this and memo to that effect was sent out to VDOT staff. The memo offered specific best practices on how to implement rumble strips while also accommodating cyclists.

High-Speed Rail Update

Mr. Neese noted that the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority has been in contact with the SPDC and several localities in the District concerning the long talked about high-speed rail project that would connect Richmond to Raleigh. Of note is that there is a proposed stop in the Town of La Crosse and the rail project will intersect the THT in two locations. Additional details will be shared with the Committee as they become available.

Locality Updates

Carl Espy inquired if VDOT Lynchburg District staff, as well as David Cook, could coordinate with the Town on how best to implement the recommendations from a recent safety study conducted in the Town of Halifax. Rick Youngblood stated that he would be more than willing to get something organized.

Other

None.

Adjournment

With no further business the TTAC meeting was adjourned at 11:10

DRAFT