

Citizen Transportation Advisory Committee Draft Meeting Minutes: July 15, 2020

Committee – Voting Members (Present)

Chair – Tristan Fessell (Albemarle County)

Vice Chair – Stuart Gardner (MPO)

Joseph French (City of Charlottesville)

Lucas Beane (City of Charlottesville)

Travis Pietila (MPO)

Tim Keller (Albemarle County – Planning Commission)

Donna Chen (MPO)

Ray Heron (City of Charlottesville)

Gary Heaton (City of Charlottesville – Planning Commission)

Lee Kondor (Albemarle County)

Voting Members (Absent)

Vacant (City of Charlottesville)

Vacant (Albemarle County)

Marty Meth (Albemarle County)

Staff (Present)

Chuck Proctor – VDOT

Chip Boyles – TJPDC/CAMPO

Jessica Hersh-Ballering – TJPDC/CAMPO

Lucinda Shannon – TJPDC/CAMPO

Sandy Shackelford – TJPDC/CAMPO

Alleyn Harned – Virginia Clean Cities

Call to Order

The virtual meeting (held on the Zoom platform) was called to order by Chair Tristan Fessell at 7:02pm.

Matters from the Public

There were no matters from the public.

Approval of July 15th Meeting Minutes

Tristan Fessell moved to approve the July 15th meeting minutes. Travis Pietila seconded the motion. The committee voted unanimously in favor. The motion passed.

Electric Vehicles – Alleyn Harned (Exec Director of VA Clean Cities) and Lucinda Shannon (CAMPO)

Alleyn Harned, Executive Director of Virginia Clean Cities, joined the group to discuss changes to the Increased Highway Use Fee (HUF) for personal electric and fuel-efficient vehicles. In summary, there is an increase in the existing fee for electric vehicles of all sizes and a new fee for fuel-efficient vehicles. The HUF is intended to cover a portion of the reduced amount of gas tax these owners pay per vehicle mile traveled compared to less fuel-efficient vehicle owners.

Travis Pietila asked about an option for a fee reduction for EV and fuel-efficient vehicle owners who use their vehicles for a limited number of miles traveled per year. Alleyn commented that that option is not available yet. Stuart Gardner commented that it seemed bizarre to have a flat fee when people might travel very different distances. Donna Chen commented that her research identified that the administrative cost of a VMT program would outweigh the tax collected with the current number of EVs in use.

Stuart asked if this fee is up for review. Alleyn responded that this had come through the omnibus transportation package, but would be up for a review in a year.

Alleyn noted that an “efficiency fee” like this is uncommon in the US.

Lucinda Shannon presented on the TJPDC’s electric vehicle charging station needs assessment study. She specifically asked CTAC if they would like to add any organizations to the stakeholder list. Dominion Energy was recommended, as was Blink and other charging networks.

Donna Chen asked how need for charging was being assessed. Lucinda listed the variables that were part of the study’s projections. Donna offered to share her models and Stuart offered to share some contacts in the automotive industry. Tim Keller asked about gas station companies and their plans to include EV charging infrastructure. Chip Boyles commented on the need for planning requirements to catch up to the need for this technology (e.g. parking space requirements).

Alleyn Harned noted the Alternative Fuel Data Center can be a good resource for individuals interested in this topic. Alleyn also noted Virginia’s “Right to Charge” law.

Lucinda noted that the timeline for rolling out the final results for this project was about six months from now.

MPO Documents – Sandy Shackelford (CAMPO) and Lucinda Shannon (CAMPO)

Sandy Shackelford reviewed the public comments on the MPO’s public participation plan, which is the plan that states how the organization will meet the federal requirements for public input on planning decisions. Sandy reminded CTAC that this year’s update was intended to be a minor update to make sure the MPO is in compliance and the organization’s current practices were reflected in the updates.

Some of the public comments pointed toward larger or deeper changes that should be made, but were outside of the current scope/budget for revisions. Sandy divided the comments into simple

fixes, which will be addressed immediately, and more substantive changes that will be addressed in a more comprehensive update – to be included in the MPO’s work plan in the near future.

Sandy answered questions from CTAC and reminded CTAC that they can make a recommendation to the MPO Policy Board in regards to the plan.

Jo French commented that the regulations in regard to the fact that the amount of public outreach seemed very short/limited compared to the long/large scope of the planning projects being discussed. He recommended a monthly meeting for the MPO to talk about all projects so the public was not surprised by a near complete project at a project-specific public input meeting.

Jo asked for the timeline for the more substantive changes. Sandy said the process might begin as early as February or March, but would conclude around June, especially if there would be a survey or public meeting for additional public feedback on the changes.

Jo French moved that CTAC recommend the Policy Board adopt the public participation plan with the simple changes and with the caveat that more substantive changes begin by June 2021. Travis Pietila seconded the motion. The committee voted unanimously in favor of the motion. The motion passed.

Lucinda Shannon described the updates to the MPO’s Title VI Plan. She noted that like the public participation plan, more substantive changes are planned for the future. She asked the group if they had any questions or comments. Jo French asked what more robust changes might be included in a future update. Lucinda described a few innovative ideas she had seen in other organization’s plans. Chip Boyles noted that one of the things the MPO has struggled with is diverse representation on committees like CTAC. Jo French recommended the use of financial compensation to individuals who want to be involved but need to use all of their time to earn money for life essentials. Travis Pietila noted that there are broader, less technical questions that should be asked in committees/at public meetings that might be more approachable for more members of the public.

Lee Kondor moved that CTAC recommend that the MPO Policy Board accept the changes to the Title VI Plan with the caveat that more substantive changes are made in the near future. Donna Chen seconded the motion. The committee voted unanimously in favor of the motion. The motion passed.

Lucinda Shannon explained that the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is the document that the localities use to track funding that has been appropriated for transportation projects in our region. Looking at the document, each block is a transportation project or group of transportation projects that has had funding allocated to it by the state. Often, money is moved around or costs are adjusted and those adjustments need to go through the policy board.

Chuck answered a few technical questions about the amendments. He clarified that no projects were *not* receiving funding because of the movement of funds described in the amendment.

Smart Scale updates – Chuck Proctor (VDOT), Lucinda Shannon, and Chip Boyles (TJPDC/CAMPO)

Chuck described the changes to the design of the Fontaine intersection Smart Scale submission. He described the history of the project and the need to come up with a lower cost design than had been previously submitted. The new design is a diverging diamond.

Stuart Gardner asked what was driving the large traffic volumes in this area requiring the improvements. Chuck Proctor talked about out-of-town traffic accessing the City of Charlottesville through this pinch point. Stuart also asked if increasing efficiency at this intersection would increase congestion in the Fry's Springs neighborhood. Chuck then clarified that the University of Virginia's research park was also a major driver of traffic volumes in this area and this design includes two right-turn lanes into the research park.

Tim Keller noted that there are long-term plans that have gone before the Albemarle County Planning Commission describing the University of Virginia's expectations for the Fontaine Research Project. Tim asked if implementing this design improvement would actually create more problems in the future to accommodate significantly increased use of the research park. Chuck noted that without additional funding from the University of Virginia, this design is more likely to be funded through Smart Scale. Stuart clarified that the main impetus of this improvement is to improve access to the research park, but it would also address some safety issues with traffic entering/exiting I-64; Chuck confirmed that statement.

Travis Pietila moved that CTAC recommend that the MPO Policy Board accept this amendment to the design of the Fontaine intersection Smart Scale application. Tristan Fessel seconded the motion. Lee Kondor, Jo French, Tim Keller, and Lucas Beane abstained from the vote. The motion did not pass, and another motion was not made.

Chip Boyles described the new draft processes for Smart Scale applications. The most recent round of Smart Scale applications brought a number of comments from the public stating that they did not feel that there was enough public engagement early enough in the application process. Chip also pointed to the thorough public engagement process for the Hydraulic/29 intersection application as an example of the kind of public engagement the PDC/MPO aspires to for complex projects. Chip also noted that there is, of course, a limit on resources (time, money, etc.) that can be spent on any funding application.

The draft processes Chip described are contained within the memo included in the meeting materials. This new process would only impact projects that City of Charlottesville and Albemarle County request the PDC/MPO to apply for on their behalf; it would not apply to projects the city or county are applying for on their own.

Travis Pietila commented that determining which projects are major versus minor should include "expected controversy" and other details, in addition to project size, cost, etc. Chip agreed that determining which projects are major versus minor would likely be the most difficult part of this new process.

Chip requested that CTAC members review the memo provided in the meeting materials, email or call any PDC/MPO staff with questions at any time ahead of the next CTAC meeting, and please be prepared to make a recommendation on the draft process.

COVID-19 Impacts on Transportation (ONLY if sufficient time available) – Jessica Hersh-Ballerig (CAMPO)

There was not enough time to include this agenda item. It will be moved to a future agenda.

Additional Matters from the Public:

There were no matters from the public.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:43 PM.