

Regional Transportation Partnership Meeting

Minutes, June 24, 2021

The recording for this meeting can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bkUDjCUM8iw>

VOTING MEMBERS & ALTERNATES		STAFF	
Nikuyah Walker, Charlottesville	x	Jessica Hersh-Ballering, TJPDC	x
Lloyd Snook, Charlottesville	x	Lucinda Shannon, TJPDC	x
Diantha McKeel, Albemarle	x	Gretchen Thomas, TJPDC	x
Bea LaPisto-Kirtley, Albemarle	x	Christine Jacobs, TJPDC	x
Neil Sherman, DRPT	x	Sam Pittman	x
Randy Parker, Jaunt Rural	x	David Blount, TJPDC	x
Lucas Ames, Jaunt Urban	x		
Becca White	x		
NON-VOTING MEMBERS		GUESTS/PUBLIC	
Stephen Johnson, Jaunt	x	Trevor Henry	x
Garland Williams, CAT	x	Chuck Proctor, VDOT	x
Jim Foley, Albemarle County PS	x		
Sally LeBeau, UVA Hospital			
Peter Thompson, CAA	x		
Sandy Shackelford, CAMPO	x		
Sara Pennington, Rideshare	x		

Note: The Governor has declared a state of emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the nature of this declared emergency makes it impracticable or unsafe for the Regional Transportation Partnership to assemble in a single location. This meeting was held utilizing electronic virtual communication with the Zoom software application, and in accordance with virtual meeting procedures and policies as outlined in Item 4.0-01 of the Virginia state budget (HB29), as effective April 24, 2020. A recording of the meeting was made available to the public on **May ,2021 at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g-kfKHK5PKM&feature=youtu.be&ab_channel=TJPDC-MPO**.

1. CALL TO ORDER:

The Regional Transportation Partnership Chair, Diantha McKeel, presided and called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m. and read the Notice of Electronic Meeting and Commissioner and Public Protocol. Jessica Hersh-Ballering took attendance by roll call, and certified that a quorum was present.

2. MATTERS FROM THE PUBLIC (MINUTE 3:33):

Ethan Heil, daily CAT commuter in Charlottesville, also appointed to CAT Advisory Board, has not heard anything from that board since he was appointed. Is hopeful that the board will be re-engaged soon.



Caetano de Campos Lopes, C3 Climate Policy Director, said the largest portion of climate change comes from the transportation sector and she feels that the RTP is set to lead the way. He is grateful the work that has already been done in the transit community regarding this concern. C3 presented a letter that recommends a number of crucial elements that must be considered and kindly hopes that the RTP would consider those recommendations. **(Letter is attached)**

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES (MINUTE 8:50):

Motion/Action: Christine Jacobs noted in the state of emergency portion of the minute, the date needs to be changed from March to May. On a motion by Randy Parker, seconded by Bea LaPisto-Kirtly, the committee approved the minutes of the May 27, 2021 meeting, with Becca White, Lloyd Snook, and Stephen Johnson abstaining.

4. MEMBER SPOTLIGHT – BECCA WHITE AND JIM FOLEY: (MINUTE 10:40)

Becca White introduced herself and her position and work she does for University Transit Service.

Jim Foley then introduced himself, his position and the work he does for Albemarle County Public Schools and Transit. There was some discussion about cameras on the busses and speed cameras in school zones.

5. SMART SCALE APPLICATION ASSISTANCE FOR TRANSIT: (MINUTE 19:20)

Chuck Proctor, Culpeper District Planning Manager, reported that VDOT works with all the localities to help them get their applications together including sketches, putting together the concepts, and helping to complete the application.

After some discussion, Ms. McKeel said she would like to know more about how to properly build a Park and Ride. This may become a topic for a future meeting.

6. REMOTE MEETING PARTICIPATION (MINUTE 32:57)

David Blount, with TJPDC, presented the Board with the Remote Participation Policy and the reasoning behind it. Members will be required to attend meetings in person starting in July unless they meet the exemptions listed in the policy.

The changes in the policy would include “for personal matter” or “medical provision or disability.” The limitation of missing up to two meetings a year (or 25%) is for “personal matters” provision only.

Mr. Parker asked whether we should encourage remote participation because it reduces carbon emissions and participation has been increased with remote meetings.

Mr. Blount said there may be new policies created in the new General Assembly, but for now this policy is based on the current law.

Ms. White made a motion to accept the Remote Participation Policy as presented in the packet and amended. Mr. LaPisto-Kirtly seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

7. TRY TRANSIT WEEK: (MINUTE 54:36)

Sara Pennington said Try Transit Week is usually in September. Last year, DRPT declared September Transit Month and focused on safety. She assumes it will go back to just a week this year. She wanted to get it on everyone's radar to think about how to market it best to the region.

8. EQUITABLE DRIVER APPRECIATION PROJECT UPDATE: (MINUTE 58:37)

Sam Pittman, intern at TJPDC, introduced himself and gave an update on the equitable driver appreciation project. He spoke about the Virginia Transit Authority forum highlights, current issues and ways to improve transit systems and driver retention.

Ms. McKeel said it would be interesting to find out if Charlottesville and Albemarle combined to drive students to school. She said it would be interesting to see if it would save money and reduce the carbon footprint.

9. DRPT GRANT UPDATE: (MINUTE 1:21:05)

Jessica Hersh-Ballering gave an update on the Regional Transit Vision plan. The project has begun and will continue through June 30 in 2022. The AECOM-led consulting team has been chosen, which includes AECOM, Jarrett Walker and Associates and EPR.

She gave an update of the Albemarle County Transit Expansion Study. There are upcoming stakeholder focus groups/public engagements, creation of a project website, and a Metroquest survey.

10. NOMINATING COMMITTEE FOR FY21 ELECTION OF OFFICERS: (MINUTE 1:27:34)

Ms. McKeel said the bylaws can name a nominating committee. Ms. LaPisto-Kirtley has volunteered to be on the committee. Lloyd Snook also volunteered to be on the committee.

9. MPO UPDATES: (MINUTE 1:29:01)

Sandy Shackelford said the CTB met this week and approved the 2022-2027 six year improvement program. That included the funding for Smart Scale. Because the money has already started to come in for the projects, some of the projects could be escalated and come on board faster than initially estimated.

Ms. Shackelford shared two resolutions of support: one for the Transportation Alternative Program (TAP) grant application for the Meadow Creek shared use path and bridge, and the second is the Safe Routes to School program grant.

TJPDC will be applying for another grant, the Rebuilding the American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) planning grant, called the Charlottesville Regional Multimodal Transportation Station Master Plan grant. Ms. Hersh-Ballering reviewed the reasoning behind the application and need for the grant.

Ms. LaPisto-Kirtley made a motion to approve the resolutions of support. Mr. Snook seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

11. TRANSIT PROVIDER UPDATES: (MINUTE 1:41:56)

CAT: Mr. Williams said CAT was informed by Rio Hill shopping center that they want the bus stop removed no later than the end of September. The shopping center will be undergoing renovations and the bus stop as it currently stands does not work with the renovation. The bus stop will be on the outskirts in the future.

UTS: Becca White said summer session are virtual. The Fall session will be on Grounds. There will be more activity in the third week in August. Masks and rear loading are still required.

Jaunt: Stephen Johnson said ridership is slowing coming back. Remote working policies are affecting the ridership. Jaunt is still working at 50% capacity on the busses and is unsure when it will be back to 100% capacity. He also reported that their offices will be reopening on July 6. There is also a new remote work policy in effect. They have also adopted a new mission and vision statement. He asked whether there are names associated with bus stops and asked if there was a way to stay in sync on how to refer to them.

Ms. White said she would contact Mr. Johnson and Mr. Williams separately.

Albemarle County Public Schools (ACPS): Mr. Foley reported said the schools are still running SPED and summer school students. They applied for two electric school busses and are hoping to be successful in that endeavor.

12. OTHER BUSINESS: (MINUTE 1:51:22)

Ms. McKeel asked if there was an update on the CAT Advisory Board.

Ms. Walker and Mr. Snook said the council is waiting on a proposal from Mr. Williams.

Mr. Williams said he has not had a chance to find a consultant because of the extra work from the pandemic.

Ms. McKeel said the representative from C3 about getting a roundtable group on transit options. Ms. Jacobs said there has been discussion about getting that done and suggested that perhaps the RTP sponsor that roundtable.

Mr. Williams said his concern it is unusual for the public to be included in the selection of equipment and running the transit system.

Mr. Williams said he would share the information from the scope, study, and plan with C3 and other members of the public. It needs to be shared with FTA, DRPT, and with the City Manager first.

The next meeting will be on July 22, 2021

ADJOURNMENT: Ms. McKeel adjourned the meeting at 6:06 p.m.

June 24, 2021

Dear Charlottesville City Manager Chip Boyles and Charlottesville City Council -

As nonprofit and for-profit businesses working in the City of Charlottesville and Albemarle County, we share a common goal to protect the health and vitality of our community against the effects of climate change on our built, social, and natural systems. Our community, our children, and our legacy are dependent on our ability to slash our greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

On July 1, 2019, Charlottesville's City Council set an ambitious target to reduce GHG emissions by 45% by 2030 and reach carbon neutrality by 2050. The City's Climate Action Plan is still under development, however, and until it charts the course for reaching these crucial goals, we must ensure that major City decisions and initiatives will not hinder us from reaching those climate goals by prolonging the City's reliance on fossil fuels. We are writing to raise our concerns with two important issues that bear directly on this concern.

1. Improving our Transit System:

Transportation is the leading source of carbon emissions, both in our community and in Virginia as a whole. Tackling climate change requires that we reduce vehicle emissions, and an improved transit system that reduces vehicle miles traveled is essential to that goal. We applaud the leadership of Charlottesville Area Transit (CAT) in moving to a fare-free system and working toward improving reliability and frequency throughout its service area, as these are important components of making transit work better for more people.

Another important component is addressing the air pollution — both carbon and other types — that the transit system generates. We understand that CAT is set to launch a feasibility study to assess the best options for complementing its current fleet with alternative fueled buses. We also understand that part of the basis for this feasibility study is CAT's commendable desire to have a mixed bus fleet (with buses running on at least two different fuel sources) in the short- and mid-term because it will increase the system's reliability and is a necessary stage for any gradual transition to a cleaner technology.

However, the scope of the study has not been made public, and there are a number of crucial elements it must include in order to ensure that this major decision is based on all relevant information. These crucial elements include:

- A comparison of the net benefits of each possible pair of fuel sources for CAT's fleet: compressed natural gas (CNG) buses and diesel buses; CNG buses and battery electric buses (BEBs); diesel buses and BEBs.
- Consideration of how emissions of greenhouse gases and local air pollutants vary under each combination of fuel sources, which should factor in expected reductions from the electrical grid as electricity generation moves to cleaner sources in the coming years.
- Consideration of the rapidly evolving nature of BEB technology and charging infrastructure.
- An assessment of future compatibility with other local transit systems, particularly in light of UVA's plans to convert University Transit Service to 100% Battery Electric Buses over the next 15 years.
- Consideration of Virginia's new [capital assistance program prioritization method](#) for funding transit agencies, which gives higher priority to electric or hybrid technologies.

- Consideration of future policy initiatives to decarbonize transportation, with potential for increased relative fossil-fuel costs due to carbon pricing and future incentives for electrification of transportation.
- Opportunities for public involvement and comment as the study is developed, and this should include input on the study scope before it is finalized.

In addition, we recommend that CAT and/or the Regional Transit Partnership ensure future transparency and stakeholder engagement through the creation of a Community Transit Advisory Council (with a variety of interested parties representing the Charlottesville and Albemarle community, their households, nonprofits, and businesses) that could guide future decision-making.

2. The City of Charlottesville’s Comprehensive Plan and Natural Gas:

The City is currently considering its Comprehensive Plan — an important compass for long-term decision-making. Although the Comprehensive Plan has not historically highlighted addressing climate change as a key element, the crisis is now at a point that reducing GHG emissions and improving climate justice through energy equity and transportation equity must be a top priority in Charlottesville’s blueprint for the future, and the goals and strategies it includes should be consistent with that priority.

Unfortunately, the [current draft of the Comprehensive Plan](#) includes a goal that points in the opposite direction. Specifically, Goal 11 of chapter “Community Facilities and Services” states that the City should “Improve and maintain the existing gas system within city and county limits, expand the system as needed (...).”

Expanding natural gas infrastructure would move the City decisively away from achieving carbon neutrality by 2050. We recommend the following actions:

- Striking “expand the system as needed” from the proposed language for Goal 11.
- Ensure that the City’s Climate Action Plan — the completion of which needs to be prioritized — must identify opportunities to decommission the City’s current fossil fuel infrastructure.

Climate touches every aspect of our community — our health, our food, our economic well-being, and the affordability of our homes and businesses. While City leadership has made important commitments to major emissions reductions and carbon neutrality, it is time our infrastructure decisions and Comprehensive Plan goals reflect them.

We appreciate the opportunity to address these important issues. We believe that our City has the creativity, leadership, and community resources that will allow us to align all our planning efforts around mutual goals of creating a more just and sustainable future.

Sincerely,

Members of the Charlottesville and Albemarle Nonprofit and For-Profit Business Community

CC: Garland Williams, Director, Charlottesville Area Transit
 Kristel Riddervold, Environmental Sustainability & Facilities Development Manager, Charlottesville
 Susan Elliott, Climate Protection Program Manager, Charlottesville
 Regional Transit Partnership Board Members
 Comprehensive Planning Team

