

Albemarle County Planning Commission
DRAFT MINUTES September 3, 2019

The Albemarle County Planning Commission held a public hearing on Tuesday, September 3, 2019, at 6:00 p.m., at the County Office Building, Lane Auditorium, Second Floor, 401 McIntire Road, Charlottesville, Virginia.

Members attending were Tim Keller, Chair; Julian Bivins Vice-Chair; Daphne Spain, Karen Firehock; Pam Riley; Jennie More; Bruce Dotson; and Luis Carrazana, UVA representative.

Other officials present were David Benish, Interim Director of Planning; Carolyn Shaffer, Clerk to Planning Commission; Daniel Butch; Chip Boyles; Tim Padalino; Kevin McDermott; and Andy Herrick.

Call to Order and Establish Quorum

Mr. Keller called the regular meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and established a quorum.

Public Hearing Items

CPA201900002 Charlottesville Albemarle MPO 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan

Mr. Keller asked for the staff report.

Mr. Daniel Butch, Transportation Planner for Albemarle County, explained that Mr. Chip Boyles would be presenting an overview of the plan, and that he would be covering the Comp Plan Amendment (CPA) portion of the presentation.

Mr. Chip Boyles (with Thomas Jefferson Planning District and Charlottesville Albemarle Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)) presented. He acknowledged that the commission had been briefed on the Long-Range Transportation Plan in the past, both through individual participation and several engagement sessions. Mr. Boyles recalled that at other times, updates were provided to the commission.

Mr. Boyles explained that the MPO is made up of two representatives from Albemarle County and two representatives from the City of Charlottesville, as well as a representative from the Virginia Department of Transportation who had already approved and recommended the plan to go forward. He said the MPO is a policy-making and planning body, with representatives from all of the aforementioned governments. He said it is a forum for cooperative decision making for the key stakeholders.

Mr. Boyles said it is a federal requirement to use any federal funds towards transportation in municipal areas greater than a population of 50,000 people. He said that Long Range Transportation Plans are required, and the decision-making for that funding rests with the MPO, except that the decision making is a yes or no decision and that the MPO does not have the ability to raise taxes, raise revenues, or come up with any other types of funding, unless so given by the state (which their MPO does not have).

Mr. Boyles said the MPO area for the region includes the entire City of Charlottesville and portions (not all) of Albemarle County. He said the portions of the county are mostly the urbanized areas that comprise the urban ring around Charlottesville and goes up to Crozet on the north side of I-

64, then runs up Route 29 all the way to Hollymead, then down Route 20 south of the City of Charlottesville. He explained that the Long-Range Transportation Plan includes only areas within the MPO and is not for the rural areas.

Mr. Boyles said the plan is a 25-year plan and is updated every five years, with a focus on understanding both current and future predicted transportation needs within the region. He said these projects must be included in a Long-Range Transportation Plan to be able to be applied for and awarded funding from Virginia's Smart Scale Program.

Mr. Boyles described the Smart Scale funding that VDOT now pursues every other year, stating that a project has to be listed, whether it's in the constrained (which means estimated for funding) or the non-constrained part of the LRTP. He said that as long as the project is in the plan somewhere, it can be applied for Smart Scale funding, noting that it does not matter whether it is Number 1 or Number 50 – it just has to be in the plan. Mr. Boyles noted that where the project is in the plan does not provide more or less points towards Smart Scale, and the real emphasis of the LRTPs prior to Smart Scale was on much more influence of the funding of projects. He said that currently, there is competition either for district funds or state-wide funds, and that each project has to stand on its own. Mr. Boyles reiterated that where the project stands in the LRTP no longer has any weight on this.

Mr. Keller said that since there are members of the public that the commission typically does not have present, and because there were a number of students in attendance, he wanted Mr. Boyles to take a moment to explain regional planning, as well as what Smart Scale means.

Mr. Boyles said he would be glad to and acknowledged that the Planning Commission had heard much of this information already, though he was willing to answer these questions. He explained that Smart Scale is the state's funding mechanism and that for the most current round, the state had \$800 million available for transportation projects. Mr. Boyles said that \$400 million of this money was available state-wide, so projects in Albemarle County competed with projects in Roanoke, Northern Virginia, and Hampton Roads. He explained that the competition is based on how they score to relieve congestion along the roadways, to improve safety, to create economic development improvements, and to create environmental improvements.

Mr. Boyles continued that there is a ranking and criteria system at the state level, and all of the projects compete towards that funding. He said that the local MPO is able to compete on big projects state-wide. Mr. Boyles said that smaller projects compete within the district, which has much less funding, noting that Culpeper had \$20 million available for projects within the entire Culpeper district. He said that smaller projects compete solely within the Culpeper boundaries, but that bigger projects compete state-wide.

Mr. Boyles said another important aspect of the funding scenario with Smart Scale is that the end score is a Return on Investment (ROI) for the state. He said that once the projects are ranked, if any local dollars are being put into the project, it increases the ROI by the state. Mr. Boyles noted that it is tough for rural areas such as Albemarle County to compete with Northern Virginia and Hampton Roads, who have their own funding mechanisms. He said that, for instance, the highest scoring project in the Commonwealth with the latest round was a tunnel projects in Hampton Roads through which the local entity only asked for \$200 million of a roughly \$2 billion to \$3 billion project. Mr. Boyles said the ROI is enormous on a project such as this one, and therefore it scored the highest in the state.

Mr. Boyles continued to say that for areas like Albemarle County, it makes it difficult to be awarded

funding for the projects. He noted that the county can apply every two years and that they normally apply in August. Mr. Boyles said the projects are not awarded until June of the following year, and then they must be completed by the end of the sixth year from that time. He said that even when projects are awarded, they are 6-7 years out before they were ever constructed.

Mr. Keller asked Mr. Boyles to also describe the MPO.

Mr. Boyles said the MPO is comprised of elected representatives from the City of Charlottesville, Albemarle County, and one representative from VDOT. He said this group reviews all of the transportation projects within the region that are federally funded. Mr. Boyles said that though MPO does prioritize other projects, the requirement is that to receive federal dollars, the MPO does have to approve through the LRTP. He said this plan took about 2.5 years to complete, involving about a dozen community engagement efforts as well as social media and electronic media in order to receive citizen comments on what are the priority projects. Mr. Boyles said that projects do not only just include roadways, but also bridges, regional transit systems, and bicycle and pedestrian improvements.

Mr. Boyles said that after 2.5 years, coming to the Planning Commissions both in Charlottesville and Albemarle, and coming to the elected bodies, as well as going through many community engagement efforts, the MPO approved the LRTP.

Mr. Boyles described the LRTP as the plan that attempts to improve safety, congestion, freight, accessibility, state of good repair, and transit. He said the LRTP includes portions that are both fiscally-constrained as well as an unconstrained. Mr. Boyles explained that constrained means that it must be determined if money is available for the projects and that with Smart Scale, by federal law, the constrained projects must be listed, but that the designation doesn't matter anymore. He said that a project could be on the unconstrained project and if applying for Smart Scale, that project could score very highly based on the individual project.

Mr. Boyles said that within the LRTP, there are roughly \$354 million that is included in the constrained list of projects. He said that this amount is for the lifetime of the plan, which is 25 years' worth of projects that have been estimated by VDOT, and that this estimate is what is likely expected to be received. Mr. Boyles noted that with Smart Scale, it could be all of it or none of it. He said that during the last round of Smart Scale, the Culpeper district had \$20 million available, and the state had \$800 million.

Mr. Boyles said the goals of the LRTP are accessibility, attempts to improve economic development opportunities and land use, operations and maintenance of the systems, safety (predominantly accidents involving injuries), congestion, and benefits to the environment and the community.

Mr. Boyles said the process includes developing goals and objectives for the entire MPO area, creating a certain performance criteria that includes all of the evaluation items listed before, identifying current deficiencies in the system, developing the project list, evaluating all the projects, then running modeling numbers on most of the projects to determine if the proposed improvements would in fact make a positive difference. He said that then, based on all those factors, a constrained projects list is developed based on the available money that is expected to be received.

Mr. Boyles continued that each project is then put into a format, noting that this format could be seen presented on the screen, which includes a description of each project and its criteria. He

explained that some of this would help to guess what the projects may score if they are submitted for a Smart Scale application. Mr. Boyles said they are then divided into five categories and that each one is ranked within its own area, with the areas being Roadway Projects, Transit Projects, Intersections, Bike and Pedestrian, and Bridge Projects.

Mr. Boyles said that Bike and Pedestrian projects are unique because they get “two bites at the apple.” He said that some projects may be solely Bike and Ped, but others can be added to a Roadway project. Mr. Boyles noted that normally, the best way to improve the scores for a Roadway project are when Bike and Ped improvements can be added as part of moving vehicles.

Mr. Boyles provided the details of developing a project list. He said this includes reviewing all the deficiencies, considering local priorities (noting that none of this is done in a vacuum, and that work is done with local government staff and existing plans so that priorities can be developed at the local level), developing the project list, scenario planning, and providing a recommendation to the MPO Policy Board itself.

Mr. Boyles indicated on the presentation to the project list. He said that those present who have been involved in the process for some time, as well as those in the audience who travel around Charlottesville and Albemarle, would see that the Hydraulic and 29 intersection area is by far the highest priority Roadway and Intersection improvements on the list. Mr. Boyles said that unfortunately, because of the cost of the projects, three separate scenarios were submitted the last round, none of which were funded. He said that two of the three ranked in the 300 levels, whereas the top 20 projects were funded. Mr. Boyles said the others did not score well based upon the dollar amounts.

Mr. Boyles indicated to the presentation, noting that the Hydraulic and 29 intersection, Angus Road and Zan Road projects pulled together totaled about \$150 million to construct, if they were constructed today. He explained that Smart Scale takes into account the time value of money and when the money would be used. Mr. Boyles said that because of this, the project cost in six years would actually be \$206 million. He said that factors such as this caused the projects not to score very well.

Mr. Boyles indicated to the high priority projects in the constrained list, noting that there was also a transit list included in the commissioners’ packets, bridge list, and bike and ped constrained list. He said that Mr. Butch may answer questions or hold discussion about specific projects.

Ms. Spain asked if the county and MPO were competing against each other for Smart Scale money, or if the county’s requests channel through the MPO.

Mr. Boyles replied that they could be competing with each other. He said that the MPO spends a lot of time coordinating the projects ensure the best value for the money. Mr. Boyles said that for instance, in the last round, each local government can only apply for four projects. He said that Albemarle County can apply for four, the MPO can apply for four, the City of Charlottesville can apply for four, and the Thomas Jefferson Planning District can apply for four. Mr. Boyles said that the MPO coordinates this, explaining that in the last round, Albemarle County had five projects it wanted to apply for, and the MPO applied for one of those. He said the City of Charlottesville then applied for the fourth project (a turning lane off of 250 Bypass onto Hydraulic), explaining that the city had an extra spot to apply.

Mr. Boyles continued that this was more about coordination ahead of time, but if the MPO was not coordinating it, the localities would be competing against each other.

Ms. Spain asked if this is how this is done in other counties.

Mr. Boyles replied yes. He said it was a state-wide program and that everyone is treated the same, except for the amount of money they receive.

Ms. More asked about the scenario evaluation process included in the packet, which described that one of the reasons the method is used is because including one project might eliminate a need or decrease the need for another project. She added that it speaks specifically about calculating capacity, with congestion being an example where that might occur.

Ms. More said she was curious about how there are certain types of projects. She used Eastern Avenue in Crozet as an example, acknowledging that there were likely other the situation would apply to. Ms. More said she understood how the scenario evaluation is started, but that it seemed odd to her that this project is in Scenario B for connectivity because there is not an existing connection that is trying to be achieved. She said that she did not understand how it does not apply in capacity, because achieving the connection would address some of the projects on the longer list that are experiencing capacity issues. Ms. More said that this project, and perhaps others, could fall under scenarios A, B, and C.

Mr. Boyles replied that it is a matter is trying to determine which criteria it would be fit in. He said that also, with being familiar with Eastern Avenue, with congestion the scores are usually higher with the regional and state-wide corridors and noted that Eastern Avenue is not one of these but rather, is a local road. Mr. Boyles said that roadways such as Routes 29, 20, and 250 that carry people through jurisdictions normally rank higher. He said that using this information, these tend to be pushed to congestion relief. He acknowledged that Ms. More had a good point that the process is subjective and that there is no real science to it, but rather it is about where transportation planners feel the projects will be ranked the highest.

Ms. More said she understood that part of this may have been because of the discussion with the committee.

Mr. Boyles added that the MPO relies heavily on representatives of local government, especially staff. He said they function to try to get the most they can for the local governments and rely on their expertise and knowledge of the circumstances for each of the projects. Mr. Boyles said that sometimes, this information is used to try to make the projects fit the best they can. He reiterated that were they fall in the listing does not help anymore with how they are funded, as long as they are in the plan.

Ms. More commented that it looked as if, working through the evaluation project at one point, the project slipped into a visioning list, which did not sound positive to her. She said that working through it, it is now back on. Ms. More said this made her consider the connectivity scenario, which would offer capacity relief on some of the smaller roadways, which she understood are different than the larger corridors Mr. Boyles mentioned. She expressed that she was happy to see the project on the list again, but that she was also worried that there are other projects that may have benefits on the smaller roads where there are congestion issues and that some of the projects slip away.

Ms. More echoed Mr. Boyles' remark about getting the best value for the money, and that she hoped that other project do not miss an opportunity to be on the list when they would offer congestion relief, even on a smaller scale.

Mr. Boyles noted that some LRTPs only work with a constrained list, and that for the MPO, they want to hear what the public has to say because sometimes, the conditions of a road system have a bigger effect than what the numbers will show. He said that for instance, sometimes intersections will have a large number of accidents there, and in scoring and prioritizing, it is based on injury to the occupants versus property injury. Mr. Boyles said they know that more accidents is a negative factor that contributes to congestion, which is why the MPO tries to hear from the public to be able to use their comments as the intangibles or gray area to ensure that some projects are listed, even when perhaps their scoring doesn't promote it.

Ms. Firehock asked that regarding ROI and the proportionality of what's invested by the locality versus the state, if it was based on the percentage or the total dollar amount. She asked that if there was a small project that Albemarle County put up 50%, but was not a high dollar amount, if it would count for more.

Mr. Boyles replied that it does, and that there is even a separate program where if a local government will put up 50% of the funding for a project, it doesn't have to go through the Smart Scale ranking but rather, a separate ranking just for local matches (revenue-sharing projects). He said that smaller projects can have a much greater reward from the local money than bigger ones do. Mr. Boyles said that for this reason, in the first-round funding was applied for to improve Exit 118 with a major overhaul of the intersection and that it scored next to last or third from last in the state. He said the project was broken down into smaller projects with local funding, which scored very well. Mr. Boyles summarized that smaller projects stand a very good chance for state funding if there are local funds associated.

Mr. Dotson recalled that Mr. Boyles indicated that the planning process takes about 2.5 years and that it is updated every five years. He asked if this meant 2.5 years from now, this process would be started all over again.

Mr. Boyles replied that in a little less than 2.5 years, the process will start again. He explained that the plan was approved in May, and that it was currently September. He said they would go through much of FY 20 without doing much on it but that in the latter half of FY 21, they will begin to put together the process again. Mr. Boyles noted that it changes every time this is done.

Mr. Keller opened the public hearing.

Mr. Bivins reminded the public that the Galaxie Farm item had been deferred. He asked if anyone would like to speak on the MPO LRTP.

Hearing no comments from the public, Mr. Keller closed the public hearing and brought the meeting back to discussion and action.

Mr. Butch said that the Comp Plan Amendment (CPA) before the commission references adjusting the reference to the 2035-2040 LRTP. He said the LRTP was referenced in the county Comprehensive Plan, Chapter 10 "Transportation at Large," but that the specific 2040 LRTP is referenced in Appendix A-10.9.

He said that this CPA201900002 would amend this.

Mr. Butch said that staff recommends the Planning Commission moves to adopt the attached resolution (Attachment E in the staff report) to approve amending the Albemarle County Comprehensive Plan CPA201900002 to formally incorporate recommendations from the 2045

L RTP and amend Chapter 10 Transportation Appendix A-10.9.

Mr. Keller asked if this needed to be two motions or one.

Mr. Herrick said it is a single motion but that they would ask that, to the extent the commission is inclined to, follow staff's recommendation that it be in the form of adopting the resolution rather than simply recommending the amendment.

Ms. Riley commented that she had the pleasure of serving on the Citizens Transportation Advisory Committee for about two years for the process. She thanked county staff and the MPO staff, noting that seeing the results of the work was positive and that it was an interesting and thorough report. Ms. Riley said she was especially pleased to see the current version (compared to the previous one) including much more in terms of bike and ped recommendations.

Mr. Dotson said he looked at the list of Roadways projects, noting that there were 19 projects considered. He said he then checked to see how many were in the constrained list, and that there were three or four, recalling that Mr. Boyles had said that up to four can be submitted by a given entity. Mr. Dotson said that then 15-16 projects are not anticipated to receive funding, which then makes him wonder what should be done about this and what are the other sources or ways to possibly begin getting at some of the other projects. He admitted that as he reads discussions about transportation funding, there is a myriad of state and federal programs, as well as local money, and that sometimes these combine.

Mr. Dotson expressed his wish that at some point, a simple chart could be made to look at the various possibilities for funding when, at most, 3-4 projects are expected to be funding with 15-16 projects that need to be accommodated.

Mr. Boyles explained that in the interim between L RTPs, the MPO develops a work scope for its staff each year. He said during the interim, they have one of their planners working on exactly what Mr. Dotson described, and that they formulate a spreadsheet of existing funding sources in addition to Smart Scale. Mr. Boyles said that this also includes some of the possible funding sources. He said that Northern Virginia uses tax increment financing with some of their development that goes into matching their road projects. Mr. Boyles said that Hampton Roads has its own transportation authority with taxing authority. He clarified that his scenario wouldn't necessarily fit in this situation, but that there was a project being done considering other funding sources that would later be presented to the commission.

Ms. Spain said she had had the same question as Mr. Dotson. She recognized the amount of work that was put into the plan and was impressed. Ms. Spain said it was frustrating for everyone to have the L RTP saying that it needs to coordinate transportation with land use, and then land use decisions are made through Special Permits and Zoning Map Amendments. She said it was difficult to mesh them and that perhaps now, the public has learned more about what is involved in planning and the challenges that exist when trying to combine land use and transportation planning.

Mr. Dotson moved to adopt the attached resolution (Attachment E in the staff report) to approve amending the Albemarle County Comprehensive Plan CPA201900002 to formally incorporate recommendations from the 2045 L RTP and amend Chapter 10 Transportation Appendix A-10.9.

Ms. Riley seconded the motion, which was carried by a vote of 7:0.

Mr. Keller encouraged the audience to take a look at the Albemarle County website and Planning Commission agendas to see what other items will be presented, and to look at the CPA project as well as the one for the rural roads, noting that there was interesting information about the county there in reference to the Comp Plan. He encouraged those in the audience who were not aware of the Comp Plan to look at it as well. Mr. Keller addressed the students in the audience, acknowledging that there were great student projects there, and said that the plan would be implemented when the students are older and to think now about the plan and the changes it would bring.

CPA201900003 Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission 2040 Rural Long Range Transportation Plan

Mr. Boyles presented, representing the Thomas Jefferson Planning District. He said that this amendment was similar to what had just been discussed but relates to the rural areas of Albemarle County, and that this plan would also include the other counties within the region (Fluvanna, Louisa, Greene, and Nelson). Mr. Boyles noted that the City of Charlottesville was not included in this plan, and rather it includes the areas not in the MPO of Albemarle County. He said this was not a federal requirement for funding, but something that the PDC has been doing for a number of years as it has found that it is important to help coordinate the rural roads, much like the urban roads are with the MPO.

Mr. Boyles said the evaluations are similar and are also used to apply for funding for Smart Scale. He said in this case, a project does not necessarily have to be in the Rural Long-Range Transportation Plan to qualify for Smart Scale, but it does have to be included in some type of long-range plan. Mr. Boyles explained that the project could be in the local Comp Plan (not in the MPO's) and still qualify for Smart Scale funding.

Mr. Boyles explained that the Rural LRTP feeds into the state's LRTP called VTrans. He said that VTrans' update is currently underway and that much of the information can be found on VDOT's website, noting that if anyone would like to participate, he was all for suggestions for any types of projects – either those in the rural plan, or projects that perhaps are not. Mr. Boyles noted that a project does have to be listed in VTrans in order to apply for Smart Scale funding.

Mr. Boyles regretted that there was so much emphasis on funding, stating that roads and bike and ped movements should be considered as far as what is needed and not what is fundable. He said that unfortunately, if the projects are not funded, they cannot go any further. Mr. Boyles said that much of what is done is centered around whether or not money can be received for the projects.

Mr. Boyles said the plan is updated every five years and began in 2004 working on what was called Unjam 2025, which became a 2035 plan and now a 2040 plan. He said many demographics criteria are used in determining the rural roads system and includes all the same items as before (intersections, roadway systems, and bike and ped movements). Mr. Boyles said there is a map included in the plan that shows the areas of the rural system and indicated to the detail of the map, explaining that it is broken down into Operations, Safety, or both. He said the white areas of the map are rural, are the dark areas are within the MPO for Albemarle County.

Mr. Boyles indicated on the presentation to a list solely for Albemarle County prioritizations, noting that they do not have to be constrained or non-constrained and that the list includes all the intersection, roadway, and bike/ped projects. He said that the rural plan doesn't take as long as the urban plan does and that it took about one year to 1.5 years to complete. Mr. Boyles said that

in May, the plan was presented to all counties in the plan, and then the TJPDC (of which Albemarle County has two representatives) unanimously approved the plan in June.

Ms. Firehock asked about the rationale behind which roads were listed and which were not on the maps in the report. She asked if they were listed by the capacity or size of the road.

Mr. Boyles replied that it was for what the benefit of the improvement would bring. He said that looking at the deficiencies in the roads, types of improvements are considered and that usually, the higher capacity or bigger the road, the bigger the improvement would be.

Ms. Firehock asked if the road has to be a certain size. She noted there were some roads missing that are some of the only paved roads in certain areas of the county, and that she was trying to understand why they were not listed.

Mr. Boyles replied that through the process, there is no minimum or maximum but that it mostly relies on county staff as well as the citizens who attended the meetings.

Ms. Firehock clarified that her question wasn't about what was prioritized, but that she was wondering if crash data and safety is considered in determining if a road gets on the list and then onto the map.

Mr. Boyles responded yes.

Mr. Keller opened the public hearing to hear comments from the public. Hearing none, he closed that portion of the meeting and brought it back to discussion and action.

Mr. Butch said the item was for CPA201900003 Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission 2040 Rural Long-Range Transportation Plan referenced within the Albemarle County Comp Plan Chapter 10 – Transportation. He pointed out that it was noted in the proposal in the staff report that in Chapter 10 – Transportation – Strategies (1.e) it states, “to continue to recognize that TJPDC’s rural planning function, by taking formal action on rural transportation planning recommendations, and reviewing the TJPDC’s adopted studies and, where appropriate, consider adopting such studies into this plan.”

Mr. Butch said staff recommends that the Planning Commission move to adopt the attached resolution, Attachment F of the staff report, to approve amending the Albemarle County Comprehensive Plan CPA201900003 to formally incorporate recommendations from the 2040 Rural LRTP and amend Chapter 10 Transportation, Appendix A-10.19.

Ms. Riley moved to adopt the attached resolution, Attachment F of the staff report, to approve amending the Albemarle County Comprehensive Plan CPA201900003 to formally incorporate recommendations from the 2040 Rural LRTP and amend Chapter 10 Transportation, Appendix A-10.19.

Ms. Spain seconded the motion, which was carried by a vote of 7:0.