



Albemarle County

Legislation Text

File #: 22-235, **Version:** 1

AGENDA DATE: 4/6/2022

TITLE:

The Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity Grant Application - Three Notched Trail Shared Use Path

SUBJECT/PROPOSAL/REQUEST: Board of Supervisors Support for a Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity Grant Application for the Three Notched Trail Shared Use Path

ITEM TYPE: Regular Action Item

STAFF CONTACT(S): Richardson, Walker, Herrick, Filardo, Rapp, McDermott, Hersh-Ballering

PRESENTER (S): Jessica Hersh-Ballering, Kevin McDermott

LEGAL REVIEW: Yes

REVIEWED BY: Jeffrey B. Richardson

BACKGROUND: The Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Discretionary Grant program is an opportunity for localities to leverage federal funding for the construction and/or planning of surface transportation infrastructure projects that would have a significant local or regional impact. The RAISE program is particularly useful for funding multi-modal, multi-jurisdictional projects that would be more difficult to support through traditional Department of Transportation (DOT) programs. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act authorized and appropriated \$1.5 billion to be awarded for RAISE 2022.

RAISE grant applications can be submitted for "Capital Funding," in which right-of-way can be acquired and construction can proceed. Alternatively, RAISE grant applications can be submitted for "Planning Funding," in which project planning, preparation, and design can occur, but no right-of-way acquisition or construction can begin. No less than \$75 million will be awarded to planning funding applications.

Albemarle County is eligible to submit applications for funding through RAISE as a rural area. With the rural designation, the County's grant request must be between \$1 million and \$25 million. A local match is not required. If funding is awarded, all funds must be obligated by September 30, 2026 and expended by September 20, 2031.

RAISE applications are scored on how effectively the project targets the following RAISE program criteria: safety, environmental sustainability, quality of life, mobility and community connectivity, economic competitiveness and opportunity, state of good repair, partnership and collaboration, and innovation.

Shared use path planning and/or construction projects are eligible for RAISE funding. A shared use path is typically a 10' wide paved path that is physically separated from the motor vehicle travel way and allows bi-directional pedestrian and bicycle traffic.

There has long been local and regional interest in the development of a shared use path along the historic Three Notched Road. A shared use path along Three Notched Road is highlighted in the Albemarle County Comprehensive Plan, the Crozet Master Plan, the Jefferson Area Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, and the most recent Virginia Outdoors Plan. Segments of the shared use path were prioritized in the 2019 update of the Albemarle County Transportation Priorities list.

The shared use path is generally expected to serve both transportation and recreational purposes, having a significant impact on the safety of vulnerable road users, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, improving quality of life by increasing opportunities for physical activity and access to nature, and having a positive impact on the local economy.

STRATEGIC PLAN: Infrastructure Investment - Prioritize, plan, and invest in critical infrastructure that responds to past and future changes and improves the capacity to serve community needs.

DISCUSSION: Despite the public interest in a shared use path along the historic Three Notched Road and its inclusion in multiple plans, there has been no publicly funded feasibility study at this time. A feasibility study is needed to determine an alignment for the shared use path. The alignment must be determined before design planning can begin.

Staff proposes the submission of an application for RAISE Planning Funding to:

- 1) conduct a feasibility study to identify potential alignments for the shared use path along Three Notched Road from the Blue Ridge Tunnel through Crozet to the City of Charlottesville;
- 2) conduct public outreach to determine a preferred alignment;
- 3) reach 60% design for the entirety of the preferred alignment; and
- 4) identify segments of the alignment that would have independent utility if constructed separately.

This Planning Funding application would be limited to project planning, preparation, and design; right-of-way acquisition and construction would not be allowed. As a result, no more than 60% design is expected at this time. Right-of-way acquisition typically begins after reaching 60% design, then designs are modified through the right-of-way and construction process to reach 100% design.

The application would likely request just over \$1 million to fund County staff time (0.5 FTE for up to two years) to both administer the project and pay a consulting firm to complete the above four tasks.

Following the completion of this project, County staff would identify opportunities, including (but not limited to) Transportation Alternatives, Revenue Sharing, Smart Scale, and future rounds of RAISE, to fund construction of the shared use path segments until the entire distance between the Blue Ridge Tunnel and Charlottesville was completed.

Though a resolution of support for a RAISE grant application is not required, staff is requesting feedback and general support from the Board regarding the proposed application.

BUDGET IMPACT: If the RAISE application were successful, the budget impact would be limited to staff time, which would largely be reimbursed by the grant, as it would fund 0.5 FTE for the two-year duration of the project. During the application process (between now and April 14), budget impacts would be limited to staff time spent working on the application.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Board endorse Albemarle County's RAISE grant application for planning funds to reach 60% design for a shared use path from the Blue Ridge Tunnel through Crozet to the City of Charlottesville.

ATTACHMENTS:

A - RAISE 2022 Notice of Funding Opportunity