

ROANOKE VALLEY AREA METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

STAFFED BY THE REGIONAL COMMISSION

RSTP Project Profile – Bikeshare Feasibility and Market Study

Please limit overall application to a maximum of 5 pages (11 pt. font 1.5 spacing) – supporting materials such as a previous study or aerial photography may be submitted as an addendum and not subject to 5 pages maximum.

1. **Project Sponsor(s):** Roanoke Valley Area Metropolitan Planning Organization - RVAMPO (lead applicant), sponsors (letters of support), City of Roanoke.

2. **Proposed Implementing Agency:** RVAMPO – lead agency, with consultant support as necessary.

3. **Project Description and Attached Aerial Showing Proposed Improvement Location:**

This project will explore the feasibility of a bikeshare program in the Roanoke Valley, including station locations, pricing models, management models, and pricing options. The study will also examine the potential impacts on various community sectors, including transportation, mobility, public health, economic development, and air quality. Finally, the study will determine the appropriate program footprint – what communities/locations would be required to make the system functional and sustainable.

4. **Detailed Scope of Work, proposed Schedule and Relation to Other Projects or Project Phases, Project Status, and Other Funding Sources:**

Bikesharing is becoming an increasingly popular service in many communities across the country, and stakeholders within the Roanoke Valley – including Carilion Clinic – have expressed interest in implementing bikesharing here. However, a bikesharing network requires very specific qualities to be successful and sustainable, including appropriate densities, likely users, community support, and clear goals for what the system is intended to accomplish. It also requires a sustainable funding model that will generally be a combination of user fees, private sponsorship, and public funds. Finally, it requires an

appropriate management model, which can range from local governments, to transit agencies, to brand-new nonprofits created explicitly to run the service. Bikeshare programs can meet a number of community goals, from reducing traffic congestion, to providing healthy transportation options, to augmenting transit service. Previous to this proposal, stakeholders such as Carilion Clinic have already expressed a desire to fund, at least partially, such a network. This study seeks to determine if a bikeshare program would be feasible, what commitments would be required from local governments and/or other organizations, and the initial and ongoing costs of running a system.

The project timeline would be approximately six months and would receive additional staff support as necessary through the Commission's TDM Operating Assistance grant.

The estimated cost of this study, based on review of other similar projects would be approximately \$35,000 budgeted as follows:

Salaries: \$21,800

Advertising: \$1,000 – to promote public meetings and workshops

Travel: \$700 – One off-site visit to existing bikeshare program in analogous service area

Consultant: \$11,000 – Assist in bikeshare feasibility analysis and initial marketing plan

Meetings : \$500 – hosting public information meetings and forums as necessary

Items 5-9 Pertain to Highway Projects:

5. Functional Classification: (Not Applicable – Planning Study)

6. Existing Traffic Volume and Level of Service with Improvement: (Not Applicable – Planning Study)

7. Existing Volume/Capacity: (Not Applicable – Planning Study)

8. Future Traffic Volume or Projected Ridership with Service Implementation: (Not Applicable – Study)

9. Future Volume/Capacity and Level of Service: (Not Applicable – Planning Study)

10. Estimated Project Cost by Phase (Preliminary Engineering, Right-of-Way (including utilities) and Construction (including administration): (attach budget document if available)

- Study Cost: \$35,000 - PE, RW and CN not applicable.

11. RSTP Candidate Project Rating Factors

Please explain how the candidate project relates to each of the following selection criteria: (each criteria will be assessed by the number of points indicated for a maximum total of 120 points).

A. Regional Project Consideration (30 points) – Though as yet undetermined, it is suspected that for a bikeshare program to be feasible in the Roanoke Valley, all areas of any sufficient density will need to be considered for bikeshare stations. This may mean proposing sites in downtown Roanoke, downtown Salem, downtown Vinton, Hollins University, Roanoke College, and possibly others, including some neighborhoods. In addition, it is likely that a key market for bikeshare use will be users of the regional greenway system, which may justify stations installed at a number of greenway parking lots across Roanoke City, Roanoke County, and Salem. Further, to the extent that the study will identify potential patterns of growth, it has been the case in other programs – such as Capital Bikeshare in Northern Virginia – that as the popularity of bikeshare grows, expansion inevitably happens in surrounding municipalities. Therefore, we can assume even if initially a bikeshare program only makes sense in a limited geography, once implemented its growth could eventually impact most MPO jurisdictions.

B. Support the Economic Vitality of the Metropolitan Area (10 points) – The Roanoke Valley had tied an important facet of its economic vitality to branding outdoor activities and its abundant natural beauty through the Roanoke Outside program and efforts by local governments' own parks and recreation programs. Indeed, bicycling itself has become an important part of the community, not only as a viable transportation alternative, but as a quality of life amenity. Over the past five years, the MPO governments have increased the number of on-road bicycle accommodations – not including greenways – by over 600%, while the U.S. Census reports that the number of citizens citing bicycle riding as their primary commute mode has increased by 150%. Downtown Roanoke's boom in residential development has seen the number of people living in downtown swell from 50 to 1300 in the last several years, with more development yet to be completed, including The Bridges project on southern Jefferson St. These residential patterns are consistent with the demographic and lifestyle trends that both support bikeshare, and see bikeshare as a positive amenity that can sell a community. Therefore, bikesharing has the potential to both firm up and support existing economic development opportunities, as well as trigger new ones.

C. Increase the Safety and Security of the Transportation System (10 points) – To the extent that bikeshare helps individuals to make short trips by bicycle rather than by car, a successful bikeshare program has the potential to reduce automobile demand on some of the region's most congested roads, reducing the opportunity for accidents and increasing road capacity at the same time.

D. Increase the Accessibility and Mobility Options Available to People and/or Freight (10 points) – A recent study by UC Berkeley determined that bikeshare programs not only provide a mobility option unto themselves, but can service as an aspect of a region’s transit program. The Capital Bikeshare program, for example, has been successful at increasing the capacity of its regional bus system by helping to replace certain short bus trips with bicycle trips, while simultaneously making the bus more accessible to folks who may have been just outside a stop’s reasonable walking distance. Within the urbanized part of Roanoke served by Valley Metro, we know that “last mile” gaps in service often make transit unworkable for some travelers. Bikeshare may provide a solution to these “last mile” gaps without the expense of additional transit service or pedestrian infrastructure. In areas where there is no public transportation, properly sited bikeshare stations – if feasible – may provide a mobility option where none currently exists. These are the program features the planning study will seek to quantify.

E. Protect and Enhance the Environment, Promote Energy Conservation, and Improve Quality of Life (10 points) – Bikeshare has been successful in many communities at replacing automobile trips with bicycle trips. Not only will this reduce vehicle emissions and improve air quality, a successful bikeshare program can have a positive effect on public health by providing an active transportation option. Bikeshare stations can also replace the need for automobile parking in high-demand areas, which can serve as a strategy to address stormwater management issues in the valley.

F. Enhance the Integration and Connectivity of the Transportation System, Across and Between Modes, for People and/or Freight (10 points) – As mentioned, bikeshare has the potential to not only bring additional mobility options to the community, but enhance options that already exist by making both transit and pedestrian choices more attainable.

G. Promote Efficient System Management and Operation (10 points) – A successful bikeshare program has the potential to augment the return on investment the local governments have made in on-road cycling infrastructure by making bicycles more affordable, available, and attractive to a wider audience than might normally cycle for transportation. In addition, a bikeshare program that took advantage of the growing connectivity of the greenway network in the valley can make good use of that system as a transportation network in addition to its success as a recreation network, making the investments that have been made in those paths even more valuable.

H. **Emphasize the Preservation of Existing Transportation System (10 Points)** – By encouraging mode shift from short automobile trips to bicycle or transit trips, bikeshare has the potential to reduce wear and tear on the region’s urban road system and increase longevity.

I. **Cost/Benefit Consideration (10 points)** – Many stakeholders have expressed interest in a bikeshare program in the valley, but the MPO wants to pursue a potential program carefully to make sure it is well considered, managed well, utilizes appropriate technology, and is priced and located appropriately for our market. This feasibility study will help avoid missteps in implementing a service – or determine a bikeshare program is not feasible for the area at this time, allowing stakeholders to go about creating the conditions that would make a program successful or moving on to other projects.

J. **Projects included in previous plans that had a public input process associated with the plan (10 points)** – Bikeshare has not been addressed specifically in previous plans, though several plans involving cycling have implications for the success of a bikeshare program, including the regional Bicycle Master Plan, the Transit and Pedestrian Vision Plans, and the City of Roanoke’s Complete Streets guidelines.



September 23, 2014

Roanoke Valley Area Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization
313 Luck Ave. SW
PO Box 2569
Roanoke, VA 24010

Dear Members of the MPO

I am writing to encourage the allocation of Regional Surface Transportation funds for a feasibility study of a regional bike share program.

The community narrative of the region has shifted to one with a strong emphasis on the outdoors, and it's important we continue actively investing in improving the outdoor infrastructure. Existing companies are already using our outdoor story to attract talent to the area and a strong cycling culture makes for an easier sell. More and more businesses are looking at the cycling infrastructure of a community when making decisions regarding site location. As an example, Google will not consider any city that is not committed to improving cycling accessibility – this is becoming more common.

Progressive growth metros either already have, or are implementing, bike share programs. The region can be ahead of the curve by acting now, or it can play catch up in a few years. A feasibility study will help determine the sustainable bike share model that is appropriate for a region of our size.

The impact of a bike share program on the region meets the requirements of the Regional Surface Transportation Program; from improving efficiency of the transportation network to quality of life to environmental benefits to the potential to improve mobility options for large numbers of people. On behalf of the Roanoke Outside Foundation I ask for your favorable consideration of this request to complete a planning study for bikeshare in the Roanoke region.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Pete Eshelman", written in a cursive style.

Pete Eshelman
Director



September 26, 2014

Roanoke Valley Area Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization
313 Luck Ave. SW
PO Box 2569
Roanoke, VA 24010

Dear Members of the MPO:

I am writing to request your support for Regional Surface Transportation funds for a planning study to determine the feasibility of a regional bikeshare program for the Roanoke Valley.

Increasingly, cycling has become an important feature of the valley's transportation and quality of life, particularly with the development and growth of the regional greenway network. In other cities across the country, bikeshare programs have proven to be an effective form of alternative transportation. Beyond providing an affordable, accessible transportation option, bicycling promotes physical activity, a major contributor to good health. And improving the health of the people of the Roanoke Valley is Carilion Clinic's mission as the region's primary health care provider.

We join with numerous other stakeholders in the Roanoke Valley who would like to determine whether a bikeshare is feasible here. Because the program needs to be appropriate and sustainable, a planning effort to determine that feasibility is a necessary first step.

Due to the potential of a bikeshare program to improve the efficiency of the valley's transportation network, and its positive contribution to the region's quality of life and environment, as well as its potential to improve mobility options for large numbers of residents, this planning effort meets the requirements of the Regional Surface Transportation Program. On behalf of Carilion Clinic, I ask for your favorable consideration of this request to complete a planning study for bikeshare in the Roanoke region.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "L Staley".

Linda Staley
Brand Manager/
Bicycle Friendly Business Coordinator