

DRAFT MINUTES

Regional Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee

4:00 pm August 30, 2018

313 Luck Ave SW, upstairs conference room

Members present

Anita McMillan, Vinton
Wayne Wilcox, Roanoke County
Cecile Newcomb, Roanoke County
Jessica Preston, Salem
Liz Belcher, Greenway Commission
Carol Linkenhoker, VDOT
Robert Robillard, at-large
Lisa Wever, at-large
Kristine McCormick, at-large
Jim Lee, at-large
Vickie Browning, at-large
Colie Touzel, at-large
Jeremy Holmes, at-large
Michelle Via, at-large
Garrett Brumfield, at-large

Pete Peters, Vinton
David Radcliffe, Botetourt County (on phone)

Members absent

Erik Olsen, Montgomery County
Lisa Cooper, at-large
Andrea Garland, Roanoke City

Others present

Jeff Collignon, United Way
Dave Holladay, Roanoke County

Staff present

Rachel Ruhlen
Amanda McGee

1. Announcements

- VDOT kicked off its Transportation Safety Analysis for the Roanoke Valley meeting with locality staff and others.
- The Alternative Transportation Social for the New River and Roanoke Valleys is August 31.
- Jim Lee mentioned that the Galax to Green Hills trail has been in the news lately and after decades of wishful thinking seems to be gaining momentum.

2. Election of officers

Jim Lee was nominated for Chair and received 14 votes. Cecile Newcomb and Colie Touzel were nominated for Vice-Chair. Colie Touzel received 8 votes for Vice-Chair. Cecile Newcomb received 6 votes for Vice-Chair.

3. Discussion with Roanoke County on active and planned bike/ped projects – Dave Holladay

Dave Holladay showcased Roanoke County Transportation Projects for Bicycle, Pedestrians & Greenways ([interactive map link here](#)). Dave Holladay can be reached at dholladay@roanokecountyva.gov or (540) 772-2094.

The County learned a lot from the Plantation Road Bicycle, Pedestrian and Streetscape Improvement Project because of having to avoid and move utilities. The project evolved from sidewalks and bike lanes to a single multiuse path on the west side. Phase 1 is complete, and Phase 2 will continue the project to the north.

Williamson Road Pedestrian Improvements will address high activity including a couple of fatalities in the area. The sidewalk on Williamson will be extended as far as possible, probably as far as the North Roanoke Assisted Living Facility which generates a lot of pedestrians. With some additional funds VDOT has been able to add to the project, it may be able to go further. The sidewalk is on one side only, which is the easier side to do, and Roanoke County has does what it can first and then pursues more difficult projects. The footpath in the grass on that side of Williamson shows the need for this sidewalk. This sidewalk will connect from Peters Creek Road to Plantation Road. Robert Robillard asked about if a roundabout was being considered at Peters Creek Road and Williamson Road. Dave explained that the County and VDOT work together to study the intersection and design the project, and a roundabout could be considered.

The West Roanoke River Greenway project will connect the isolated fragment of the Mill Lane section of the Roanoke River Greenway both directions, to Green Hill Park and to the rest of the Salem section of the Roanoke River Greenway. Terrain and right-of-way issues make this a challenging piece to build.

The West Main Street Pedestrian Improvements project is an interesting historical perspective. In the past, VDOT required counties to pay for sidewalks if they wanted them, but the Roanoke County Board of Supervisors, although they wanted sidewalks, believed that VDOT should pay for sidewalks on VDOT roads. Therefore, sidewalks did not get built in Roanoke County. But when improvements on West Main Street went for public hearing, the Board of Supervisors asked for sidewalks and VDOT worked with them to add sidewalks to the project. Because of construction cost overruns, the sidewalks weren't completed as hoped. This project will fill in those gaps. Kristine McCormick said the wide shoulders which accommodate vehicle turning movements as well as bicycle travel are filled with pieces of tire and gravel. Carol Linkenhoker suggested reporting maintenance needs to the myVDOT site ([link here](#)). Jim Lee asked if bikes are allowed on sidewalks, and Dave answered there is no law in the County prohibiting it.

The four East Roanoke River Greenway projects will take the Greenway from the sewer plant at Tinker Creek through Explore Park to Back Creek: to the Blue Ridge Parkway, under the Blue Ridge Parkway, across the old landfill, and through Explore Park.

The Catawba Blue Blaze Trail project will create a spur from the Appalachian Trail to the Catawba community and provide a much needed parking lot with restrooms, while the McAfee's Knob project will build a pedestrian bridge on the Appalachian Trail to eliminate the dangerous Hwy 311 crossing. Jeff Collignon commented that the hotels on Plantation Road near I-81 exit 146 provide good access to Carvins Cove, if there were a more comfortable way to cross the interstate. Although there is not currently anything in the plan to address that crossing, Dave commented that the County is working on an agreement with Hollins University to allow access of the Tinker Creek Greenway from Friendship Lane, which will require construction of a bridge over Carvins Creek. Liz Belcher asked about prioritization and citizen involvement in this. The County will seek more public input on this and other projects when they begin developing the new Comprehensive Plan.

Committee members enjoyed learning about Roanoke County bike/ped projects and appreciated Dave Holladay taking the time to talk about it.

4. Adoption of 2018-2019 Bike/Ped Committee Action Plan

Rachel Ruhlen explained that the Action Plan falls between the Purpose statement of the committee and the individual agendas for each meeting. It provides more guidance than the purpose statement but not as much detail as the agenda.

Liz Belcher suggested the committee consider site visits to on-road connections to greenways. The new Greenway Plan identifies on-road connections (the pink lines), in response to public demand for access to greenways without driving. Locality staff identified the on-road connections on maps but they have not been reviewed on the ground. The committee could organize small groups to visit the on-road connections and determine what is needed for biking, walking, and disability access. Some might just need signs while others might need more extensive infrastructure. Committee members were enthusiastic and positive about this activity which fits well with the draft of the action plan.

Cecile Newcomb requested “This committee” and “It” be clarified. Jim Lee moved to approve the Regional Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee Action Plan 2018-2019 with this correction. Robert Robillard seconded. Motion passed.

5. Discussion of options to replace or supplement bike/ped counts – Amanda McGee

Amanda McGee explained the history of bike/ped counts in the Roanoke Valley and the limitations 2 hours of counts by volunteers once a year. The Virginia Transportation Research Council recently released a paper recommending that VDOT acquire and operate four Eco-Counters in the Salem district for bike/ped counts. Amanda presented three scenarios:

- a) Continue the manual count program
- b) Expand the greenway count program with TRAFx counters to on-road counts
- c) Invest in a new system such as Eco-Counter that provides real-time data

Both TRAFx and Eco-Counter use infrared sensors. TRAFx also carries magnetometers and

Committee members had several questions about the program. Cecile Newcomb suggested contacting Steve Hankey at Virginia Tech who operates a bike/ped count program in Blacksburg with students for his research.

Committee members agreed that the manual count program does not benefit the area. They discussed the difficulty and expense of transitioning from TRAFx to Eco-Counter and whether that transition will eventually occur if TRAFx stops supporting the current counters. The transition could involve a small number of counters that are moved from place to place. Eco-Counters have more secure housing that is resistant to vandalism and theft. The batteries of both TRAFx and Eco-Counter are long-lasting. The real-time data of Eco-Counters is not available where there is not signal, and many TRAFx counters are on remote trails. To fund new counters, staff could investigate Highway Safety Improvement Program funding or rent the equipment to events such as Go-Fest.

Staff will distribute the Research Council paper, research the cost of TRAFx magnetometers, and reach out to Steve Hankey.

6. Updates

Individual committee members updated the committee on items of interest.

Colie Touzel – ROAM bike share launched in Blacksburg and its busiest day this month was the first day of classes.

Vickie Browning – Local Office on Aging and AARP have been discussing transportation in underserved areas, something like Carilion's Starline Trolley.

Kristine McCormick – The Roanoke chapter of the International Mountain Biking Association has a new name, the Blue Ridge Off-Roads Cyclists, to be more inclusive of the area served. The group is seeking funding for an executive director position.

Lisa Wever – The new Fallon Park Elementary School is under construction and staff are discussing a Bicycle Safety Program.

Jim Lee – Ray Smooth of Blacksburg has been appointed to the Commonwealth Transportation Board. Ray has been a strong and influential proponent of initiatives linking Roanoke and Blacksburg, such as the Hotel Roanoke renovation and the medical school.

Garrett Brumfield – will be traveling to New Orleans and Denver to do accessibility audits.

The meeting adjourned at 5:52 pm.

The next meeting will be October 30, 4:00 – 6:00 pm.