

MINUTES
Regional Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee
June 21, 2018

Members present

Anita McMillan, Vinton
Andrea Garland, Roanoke
Wayne Wilcox, Roanoke County
Cecile Newcomb, Roanoke County
Jessica Preston, Salem
Erik Olsen, Montgomery County
Greg Walter, Greenway Commission
Carol Linkenhoker, VDOT
Robert Robillard, at-large
Lisa Wever, at-large
Kristine McCormick, at-large
Lisa Cooper, at-large
Jim Lee, at-large
Vickie Browning, at-large
Colie Touzel, at-large

Jeremy Holmes, at-large

Members absent

Michelle Via
Garrett Brumfield
David Radcliffe, Botetourt County

Others present

Lisa Tays

Staff present

Rachel Ruhlen
Amanda McGee
Frank Smith (intern)
Hunter Wolz (intern)

1. Introduction and Orientation

Rachel Ruhlen explained what a metropolitan planning organization is, the relationship of the Regional Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee to Roanoke's metropolitan planning organization, and a history of bike/ped planning in the Roanoke Valley.

A metropolitan planning organization is a coalition of local governments (cities, counties, and towns) and transportation agencies. To receive federal transportation funds, urbanized areas with population of 50,000 or more must have a metropolitan planning organization which identifies regional transportation needs and advances transportation projects. The Roanoke Valley Transportation Planning Organization (RVTPO) is the metropolitan planning organization for the Roanoke Valley urbanized area. Transportation projects in the RVTPO area that receive federal funds must be included in the RVTPO's Fiscally Constrained List of Projects and the Transportation Improvement Program. The Fiscally Constrained List of Projects is in the RVTPO's Long-Range Transportation Plan, a 20-year plan updated every 5 years. The Transportation Improvement Program is a list of all projects slated to receive federal funding in the next 5 years.

The RVTPO Policy Board is made up of elected officials from member localities and representatives of transportation agencies. The RVTPO Transportation Technical Committee advises the Policy

TPO POLICY BOARD: Cities of Roanoke and Salem; Counties of Bedford, Botetourt, Montgomery and Roanoke; Town of Vinton; Greater Roanoke Transit Company (*Valley Metro*); Roanoke-Blacksburg Regional Airport; Virginia Department of Rail & Public Transportation; Virginia Department of Transportation

Board and is made up of staff from member localities and transportation agencies. The Regional Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee advises the Transportation Technical Committee on matters pertaining to bicycle and pedestrian planning.

The RVTPO is staffed by the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission, a coalition of local governments that includes most of the RVTPO localities plus several rural localities.

Timeline of bike/ped planning in the Roanoke Valley:

1975: The Regional Commission adopted its first Bikeway Plan.

1981: Bikeway Plan update. The Roanoke Valley had two signed bike routes, one on Wiley Drive and one in Salem.

1991: No progress had been made since the last update. But new federal legislation allowed, for the first time, bike/ped and transit projects to receive federal transportation funds.

1997: The Valley Beautiful Foundation advocated for Greenways, and the Greenway Commission formed in 1997.

2004: VDOT adopted its first Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Program.

2005: Another Bikeway Plan update.

2008: The League of American Bicyclists visited to give the City of Roanoke feedback on how to become a Bicycle Friendly Community and recommended formation of a Bicycle Advisory Committee.

2010: City of Roanoke designated a Bronze Level Bicycle Friendly Community.

2012: The Bicycle Advisory Committee oversaw the Bikeway Plan update.

2015: The RVTPO adopted a Pedestrian Vision Plan.

The Bicycle Advisory Committee was involved with the City of Roanoke's Bicycle Friendly Community application, guided the 2012 Bikeway Plan update, and gave feedback and input on locality projects and planning. The committee consisted mainly of locality staff and members of the Blue Ridge Bicycle Club. It did not have a formal membership process, officers, or voting. It was not clear what agency the advisory committee advised. By 2016, the Bicycle Advisory Committee had not met in a couple of years. When it did meet, it was mostly locality staff who missed the citizen input.

In 2018, the committee was revised as the Regional Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee to the Transportation Technical Committee.

2. Nominations are open for the Chair and Vice-chair. Self-nominations are encouraged.
 - a. Duties of Chair and Vice-Chair
 - i. Work with staff (phone, email, or in person) to create agendas.
 - ii. Facilitate meetings or delegate this responsibility.
 - b. Nominations due by Friday, August 24, 2018.

3. Bike/Ped Committee Action Plan

The committee Procedures state that the Transportation Technical Committee will approve this committee's Action Plan. The Bike/Ped Committee Action Plan will list specific tasks that the

TPO POLICY BOARD: Cities of Roanoke and Salem; Counties of Bedford, Botetourt, Montgomery and Roanoke; Town of Vinton; Greater Roanoke Transit Company (*Valley Metro*); Roanoke-Blacksburg Regional Airport; Virginia Department of Rail & Public Transportation; Virginia Department of Transportation

committee will accomplish during the ~12 hours it meets during the entire year (four 2-hour meetings and one half-day workshop). Following the committee's discussion, staff will draft the Bike/Ped Action Plan, have the committee review it by email, then forward it to the Transportation Technical Committee for approval.

The tasks on the Bike/Ped Committee Action Plan should support the purpose of the committee and the RVTPO work program.

- The purpose of the committee is to facilitate regional collaboration with diverse stakeholders in planning bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.
- The RVTPO work program item 2.07 states that Bicycle & Pedestrian Planning is a continued effort to implement bike/ped recommendations from the Bikeway Plan, the Pedestrian Vision Plan, the Greenway Plan, and the Transit Vision Plan.
 - The most important of these are the Bikeway Plan and the Pedestrian Vision Plan. This committee coordinates with the Greenway Commission and transit.

The following topics came up during the discussion of the Bike/Ped Committee Action Plan.

- a) The committee's authority to carry out tasks.

The Transportation Technical Committee specifically did *not* authorize this committee to advocate directly to elected officials or to write letters of support to localities and agencies. The rationale was that formal resolutions or letters of support should come directly from the Policy Board on behalf of the RVTPO rather than one of its individual committees. The committee can provide feedback or input to locality and agency staff at committee meetings and can make recommendations to the Transportation Technical Committee if it perceives a need for a formal resolution or letter of support. The committee has indirect access to elected officials who serve on the Policy Board.

- b) Direction for the first year of the committee

Some members wanted to jump into action rather than spend a year learning about relevant plans, studies, and the transportation planning process. One suggestion was to first learn about transportation projects currently under consideration and their bike/ped components, then discuss concerns and make recommendations to TTC so that future project applications can address those concerns. Locality staff were interested in getting feedback from the committee on plans, projects, and issues and interest from committee members in having an opportunity to comment on locality plans, projects, and issues.

- c) What are examples of past successes of the Bicycle Advisory Committee?

Roanoke County had ideas for bike/ped accommodations on Plantation Road that they substantially changed after receiving input from the committee before applying for funding.

The City of Roanoke welcomed committee input on projects after hearing mixed and confusing feedback from the public on an experimental treatment.

The committee helped the City of Roanoke with the Bicycle Friendly Community application.

Other localities commented they have appreciated being able to learn from the City's experiences, which has led the way in the region in bicycle infrastructure.

TPO POLICY BOARD: Cities of Roanoke and Salem; Counties of Bedford, Botetourt, Montgomery and Roanoke; Town of Vinton; Greater Roanoke Transit Company (*Valley Metro*); Roanoke-Blacksburg Regional Airport; Virginia Department of Rail & Public Transportation; Virginia Department of Transportation

d) How do projects get started and ultimately funded? Specifically, the roundabout project on Colonial Avenue. Why is this project being built instead of needed maintenance repairs? Capital improvements like Colonial Avenue roundabouts use federal funding that comes through VDOT. Virginia Western also provided some funding since this project benefits them. Roundabouts are a proven extremely effective safety measure that slow traffic, which improves safety for all users (bicyclists, pedestrians, and motorists). There have been zero crashes at the Riverland and Mt Pleasant roundabout since it was constructed. They cost less to maintain than a traffic signalized intersection. However, they are still being studied for people with visual impairment. In Virginia, the largest projects (like Colonial Avenue) are funded through the competitive Smart Scale program which scores projects on six factors. Bike/ped elements and roundabouts increase a project's Smart Scale score. The City's next big project is Orange Avenue, and it was selected because it's been talked about for years and appears in several plans. Smart Scale is only for improvements, not maintenance. The City of Roanoke has its own maintenance budget.

VDOT has a six-year time horizon for projects. Smart Scale fully funds projects, unlike in the past when projects would get funding for planning and design but not construction, which was wasteful. Localities are submitting Smart Scale applications this summer and Fall 2018 would be a good time to start talking about the next Smart Scale application cycle (every two years).

More information about Smart Scale is at <http://vasmartscale.org/>.

A smaller funding program important for bike/ped safety is the Highway Safety Improvement Program (~\$100,000 range). Localities use input from the public to determine these projects. This year, the City of Roanoke is installing six rapid rectangular flashing beacons, a proven safety countermeasure for crosswalks, funded through the Highway Safety Improvement Program. Localities would like input from the committee to develop applications for Highway Safety Improvement Program funding.

Localities have had difficulties applying for Safe Routes to School funding because of lack of support from schools. Individual committee members could assist with outreach to school administration, staff, and families to help localities get support for Safe Routes to School projects.

e) Bikeway Plan and Pedestrian Vision Plan

The committee had some interest in developing a wish list of projects, which led to a discussion of the Bikeway Plan and Pedestrian Vision Plan. The committee could familiarize itself with these plans and consider updating the project lists. The committee feels the RVTPO should consider combining the plans next time one is updated. Most localities have a single bike/ped plan. The Bikeway Plan was last updated in 2012.

f) Non-infrastructure projects

Amanda McGee reported on the National Bicycle & Pedestrian Documentation Project. The Regional Commission has conducted bike/ped counts since 2012 using the methodology developed by the National Bicycle & Pedestrian Documentation Project. The counts are volunteer- and time-

TPO POLICY BOARD: Cities of Roanoke and Salem; Counties of Bedford, Botetourt, Montgomery and Roanoke; Town of Vinton; Greater Roanoke Transit Company (*Valley Metro*); Roanoke-Blacksburg Regional Airport; Virginia Department of Rail & Public Transportation; Virginia Department of Transportation

intensive and have not yielded consistent or reliable data. She is researching alternate bike/ped count methods and would like the committee's input.

Jeremy Holmes reported on BikeShare. Station sponsors have been selecting the station locations but the program has expanded enough that locations can be more strategic. Jeremy would like input on either future station locations or general criteria to help him select locations.

Andrea Garland reported on the Community Based Bike/Ped Safety Assessment, a tool being piloted by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. This will include a survey to supplement crash data because bike/ped crashes are under-reported. She asked committee members to take the survey when it is live and distribute it to their networks. Committee members suggested she look in the Transit Development Plan for safety issues and add a question to the survey of what places people avoid.

g) General comments

Should regularly provide recommendations to the Transportation Technical Committee
Should think regionally – how to get from Salem to the Blue Ridge Parkway, for example.
Learn what projects are under consideration now and what isn't being considered
Learn who to contact with an idea or an observed problem
It is important to keep in mind how people with disabilities will use facilities. It is everyone's job to remember that. People with disabilities can help us understand and think about their needs.
Do bicycle and pedestrian issues ever conflict with each other? The committee speculated on this and believes that generally these go together, and rarely if ever does anyone have to choose.
The committee commented on the importance of education and awareness, and its role in pushing for a cultural shift in thinking that prioritizes bike/ped safety.
The committee's work is important because VDOT *does* look at plans and incorporates these into its improvements.

Other comments from members who were unable to attend:

When people are aware of the process they are empowered to get involved and get their transportation issues resolved.

I'm concerned with 'blue collar' bicycling and walking. Do Roanoke & surrounding areas have targets for CO2 emissions and climate change?

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 pm.

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