

HRMPO Policy Board Minutes
May 16, 2024, 3:00 p.m.

Rockingham County Administration Center
20 East Gay Street, Harrisonburg, VA 22802

Present (22):

Voting Members	Non-Voting Members	Staff
City of Harrisonburg	Kevin Jones, FHWA	✓ Ann Cundy, CSPDC
✓ Laura Dent, Chairperson	Chelsea Beytas, FTA	✓ Paula Melester, CSPDC
✓ Dany Fleming	Rusty Harrington, Aviation	✓ Garreth Bartholomew, CSPDC
✓ Gerald Gatobu	✓ Grace Stankus, DRPT*	✓ Kimberly Miller, CSPDC
Deanna Reed	Bill Yates, JMU	
Ande Banks	Valerie Kramer, JMU	Others
Rockingham County	Alternates	✓ Kyle Lawrence, SVBC
✓ Leila Longcor	Rhonda Cooper, Rockingham	✓ Maya Alexander, The Alliance
✓ Stephen King	Rachel Salatin, Rockingham	✓ Kim Sandum, The Alliance
Casey Armstrong	Cheryl Spain, Harrisonburg	✓ Tom Hartman, Harrisonburg
Town of Mt. Crawford	Meggie Roche, Dayton	✓ Jeremy Mason, VDOT
✓ Neal Dillard, Vice Chairperson	✓ Alex Wilmer, Bridgewater	✓ Shane McCabe, VDOT*
Town of Dayton	Robert Taylor, Mt. Crawford	
✓ Brian Borne	Libby Clark, Mt. Crawford	
Town of Bridgewater	Jeff Lineberry, VDOT	
Jay Litten	✓ Adam Campbell, VDOT*	
VDOT	✓ Don Komara, VDOT	
✓ Todd Stevens	Matt Dana, VDOT	

Call to Order

The May 16, 2024, meeting of the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Metropolitan Planning Organization (HRMPO) Policy Board was called to order at 3:00 p.m. by Chairperson Laura Dent. Pursuant to §2.2-3708.2 of the Code of Virginia, HRMPO Policy Board members may participate in meetings of the HRMPO or its committees through electronic communication means. Those who attended virtually are indicated by an asterisk; all others attended in-person.

Approval of Minutes

Chairperson Dent presented the minutes from the April 18, 2024, HRMPO Policy Board meeting. Mr. Fleming moved, seconded by Mr. Borne, to approve the minutes as presented. Motion was carried by unanimous vote.

Public Comment

Ms. Cundy announced that Ms. Paula Melester has been selected for the Director of Transportation position that was open after Ms. Cundy's promotion to Executive Director. Ms. Melester has been with the CSPDC for over two years and started her new position at the beginning of May. Ms. Cundy also stated that Ms. Melester was part of the Transit Planning team, working on the implementation of Afton Express and the Lewis Street Hub reconstruction project, and that she will be the new primary contact person for the HRMPO. Ms. Cundy also welcomed Mr. Bartholomew and Ms. Miller from the CSPDC, who are part of the HRMPO support team.

Chairperson Dent opened the floor to the public for comments. There were no comments from the public.

Consideration of FY 2025 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) (BAF #24-3)

Chairperson Dent presented for consideration the HRMPO FY 2025 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). Ms. Melester noted that the draft UPWP was released at last month's meeting for the required 21-day public comment period and that no public comments were received. Ms. Melester requested that the Board approve the UPWP. **Mr. Fleming moved, seconded by Mr. Borne, to approve the FY 2025 UPWP. The motion was carried by unanimous vote.**

Consideration of FY 2024-2027 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendments (BAF #24-4)

Chairperson Dent presented for consideration the HRMPO TIP Amendments. Mr. Bartholomew gave a brief review of the amendments to the FY 2024-2027 TIP, noting that bridge maintenance funding for 2024 was updated and the FTA 5307 amount was reconciled with the state plan; the updated numbers are reflected in the amended TIP on pages 12 and 23. He stated that due to the net increase being greater than \$2million, these are not considered "administrative" changes, but must be released for the 21-day public review and comment period. **Mr. Fleming moved, seconded by Mr. King, to release the FY 2024-2027 TIP Amendments for public comment. The motion was carried by unanimous vote.**

Harrisonburg and Rockingham Bike Walk Summit Recap – Kyle Lawrence, Executive Director of Shenandoah Valley Bicycle Coalition (SVBC)

Mr. Lawrence introduced himself and Ms. Maya Alexander to the Board. Ms. Alexander is the Community Engagement Manager for the Alliance for the Shenandoah Valley and was part of the Bike Walk Summit program planning. Mr. Lawrence provided a brief history of the Bike Walk Summit and the partnership between the SVBC and the HRMPO which started in 2012. The Summit brings in speakers annually to look at areas where ideas and inspiration can be found. Mr. Lawrence stated that the day prior to the Summit, they spent with the keynote speaker along the Shenandoah Valley Rail Trail.

Mr. Lawrence discussed the keynote speaker, Mr. Ryan Hale, the founder and director of the Razorback Regional Greenway and other trails, in northwest Arkansas. Mr. Hale currently gives tours of the northwest Arkansas area and the development there. Ms. Cundy stated that she recently attended a conference in Bentonville and was able to see the trail first-hand and stated that it was very impressive.

Ms. Alexander emphasized Mr. Hale's experience and how similar the area where he established the Regional Greenway is to our region. Both regions contain small rural towns that benefit from economic development opportunities. She said that the Summit focused on learning how Mr. Hale's experience could help this region boost economic development, with particular interest in the Shenandoah Valley Rail Trail.

Mr. Lawrence affirmed that Mr. Hale was invited to speak at the Summit because of his work on the Razorback Regional Greenway and noted comparisons to the Shenandoah Valley Rail Trail and the potential for longer connectivity to the Rail Trail, as evidenced by the Razorback trail. The Razorback trail links 6 communities in northwest Arkansas by a 36-mile long, primarily off-road, 10-12 foot wide hard-surfaced trail. Along the stretch are 6 downtown areas, 3 major hospitals, 23 schools, the University of Arkansas, and the corporate headquarters of Walmart, JB Hunt, and Tyson.

Mr. Lawrence highlighted the importance of a regional approach, emphasizing the interconnectedness of towns and the benefits for both businesses and communities. He discussed the creation of adaptive trails for increased accessibility and the economic impact of bicycling in the region and noted the potential for health savings. Lastly, he underscored the need to invest in and improve the region's outdoor assets to increase quality of life and attract new businesses and talent.

Mr. Lawrence summarized the potential of the trail system to boost economic development and sustainability by connecting communities and offering opportunities for outdoor activities and the hope that the example of the Arkansas Razorback Trail system would inspire the Shenandoah Rail Trail initiative. He invited feedback and ideas for next year's event.

Agency Updates

VDOT (Don Komara) provided the following updates on:

- The I-81 Exit 247 bridge project, noting it is proceeding well.
- The I-81 projects are underway in the Staunton area.
- The Barterbrook Road bridge replacement project, saying it is progressing rapidly.
- The I-81 Weyers Cave truck climbing lanes project, mentioning construction will begin this fall after the contract is awarded.
- The Route 11 four-lane project, noting that VDOT is purchasing rights-of-way, with advertisement for construction expected in late spring.
- The widening of Route 33 west towards West Virginia, saying the project is moving along very well.



- A reminder for everyone to visit [Improve81.org](https://www.improve81.org) for updates on ongoing I-81 projects.
- Upcoming maintenance activities like grading dirt roads, the start of mowing season in May, skin patching and surface treatments in preparation for paving.

VDOT (Adam Campbell) provided a Smart Scale Update. Last month, Mr. Campbell went over the pre-applications submitted. He stated that the full application window will open on June 1. The Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment (OIPI) sent out an e-mail last week for full application training which will be held on June 4, from 2:00 to 4:00 pm.

DRPT (Grace Stankus) announced an open house on May 29, at 2:00 pm in Richmond, to celebrate Director Jennifer DeBruhl's career.

HDPT (Gerald Gatobu) gave the following updates:

- HDPT has developed a new design for their fixed route buses, which was presented to the City Council. Plans are to rebrand 15 buses with the new design by September/October. They are looking at potentially unveiling the rebranded buses at a football game.
- HDPT is finalizing the draft of their required Transit Strategic Plan (TSP) to release for public comments soon. After the public comment period, they will take the plan to the City Council for adoption. This is a requirement from DRPT for agencies of HDPT's size.
- Two new electric school buses are now operating, and HDPT will monitor their performance, especially during winter conditions. HDPT has also applied for 3 more electric buses from the EPA.
- City routes 1, 2, and 6 now run until 9-9:30pm, which has seen good ridership response. This is a trial period until August 10, to assess potential for permanently extending the evening hours.
- The Virginia Transit Association (VTA) conference will be held in Harrisonburg next week, May 23-25, with many Virginia transit agencies attending.

Locality Updates

Town of Mt. Crawford (Neal Dillard) said that there is a lot of construction in the town for the new Sheetz and new townhomes. Some residents adjacent to the Town Hall are interested in partnering with the Town to build a walkway along the river and connecting to downtown. The Town was awarded a grant to put a park and picnic area at the Town Hall that they'd like to connect to the walking trail. He expressed interest in partnering with Bridgewater to connect the two localities by a walking trail.

Town of Bridgewater (Alex Wilmer) highlighted completing the second phase of their riverwalk trail which adds another 1,000 feet to their existing riverwalk. The project was funded primarily by a VDOT Transportation Alternatives grant.

Town of Dayton (Brian Borne) said the wayfinding signs have been installed on Route 42 and landscaping will be done soon.

City of Harrisonburg (Tom Hartman) gave the following updates:

Regarding planning studies and initiatives, the City of Harrisonburg is nearing the middle of their Chicago Avenue and Waterman Drive Transportation and Stormwater Study. They have collected traffic counts and built storm models so far. Over the summer, they will work on drafting ideas and a plan, which they will then take to the community in the fall to get input on potential transportation and multimodal improvements along those corridors. Additionally, the city recently applied for the Safe Streets for All grant program through USDOT. If awarded, this grant would allow them to create the city's first Transportation Safety Action Plan, update their Bike/Ped Plan that hasn't been revised since 2017, develop a Safe Routes to School Plan for all 10 schools, and establish a Complete Streets Guide for development and redevelopment projects. It is a highly competitive grant, with results expected in Fall 2024. If successful, it would kick off a yearlong process in July 2025 to complete these planning initiatives.

Regarding construction projects, Mr. Hartman said the city recently finished paving on Chicago Avenue. In late May, they will be doing nighttime paving of the eastbound lanes of East Market Street from Chick-fil-A to the city/county line. They also have upcoming ADA ramp upgrades and sidewalk improvements planned in residential areas prior to paving schedules there. The Mt. Clinton Pike Shared Use Path project is ongoing, with work currently focused on completing the stormwater component before path construction begins in November. The Federal Street Downtown Shared Use Path project is nearly complete, with some final median and ramp adjustments needed before paving completion around mid-June. Lastly, a public art installation of a statue outside the city building was planned for tomorrow but has been delayed. They are now expecting installation either next week or the week after due to delays from the artist.

Other Business

Mr. Komara mentioned that at the intersection of Route 620 and Route 33, North Construction company was identified as the low bidder for a construction project. This project aims to improve the intersection by extending the left turn lane for eastbound traffic, widening 620 to accommodate a dedicated thru-right turn lane, and adding a designated left-turn only lane. The original plan was for construction to begin in the fall, but VDOT is encouraging the contractor to start work sooner than initially scheduled.

Ms. Melester said that a public meeting for the Dinkle Avenue Small Area Study is planned for May 21 from 4-6pm at Smiley's Ice Cream on Dinkle Avenue.

Upcoming Meetings

Chairperson Dent announced the following upcoming meetings: HRMPO TAC meeting will be held on June 6, 2024, at 2:00 p.m., and the HRMPO Policy Board meeting will be held on June 20, 2024, at 3:00 p.m.



Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the HRMPO Policy Board, a motion for adjournment was unanimously passed at 4:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paula Melester".

Paula Melester
Director of Transportation