

HRMPO Policy Board Minutes June 20, 2024, 3:00 p.m.

**Rockingham County Administration Center
20 East Gay Street
Harrisonburg, Virginia 22802**

Present (18):

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

*Indicates virtual attendance

Call to Order

The June 20, 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 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.

Minutes

Chairperson Dent presented the minutes from the May 16, 2024, Policy Board meeting.

Mr. King moved, seconded by Mr. Fleming, to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Public Comment

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

Consideration of the FY24-27 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment (Board Action Form #24-05)

Chairperson Dent presented the FY24-27 TIP Amendments. Mr. Bartholomew stated that at the May 2024 meeting the Board approved the release of the two amendments for public comment. There were no public comments received, and staff requested a motion to approve both TIP amendments to be placed into the TIP document.

Mr. Dillard moved, seconded by Mr. Fleming, to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Consideration of SMART SCALE Round 6 Resolutions of Support (Board Action Form #24-06)

Chairperson Dent presented for consideration the SMART SCALE Round 6 Resolutions of Support. Mr. Bartholomew stated that there are five Resolutions of Support for applications that are within the HRMPO region. The projects were discussed in January with the Board and there have been no significant changes. Two applications are being submitted on behalf of the City of Harrisonburg by the HRMPO, and three applications are being submitted by Harrisonburg.

Mr. Hartman gave an overview of the five projects being proposed by Harrisonburg:

- Port Republic Road at Exit 245: This project focuses on adding a right turn lane from Port Republic Road onto Forest Hill Drive (soon to be renamed University Boulevard). It also includes additional bike facilities, connecting a separated bike lane from Devon Lane to Port Republic Road, and extending it around the gas stations to University Boulevard. This will link to an existing shared-use path on University Boulevard.
- South Main Street: This project installs a 950-foot median from Southgate Court to Baxter Drive along the South Main Street corridor, and constructs 4,600 feet of new sidewalk. Public transit improvements include four new bus stops with shelters and benches.
- Mount Clinton Pike Corridor Study: This resubmitted application proposes adding sidewalk on the north side of Mount Clinton Pike from near Technology Drive to connect with existing sidewalk on Acorn Drive. It also includes a roundabout at the intersection of Mount Clinton Pike and Acorn Drive to improve safety for left turns. Additionally, it addresses the North End Greenway, improving the crossing of the railroad tracks to Route 42.

- **Bluestone Trail Extension:** This project extends the Bluestone Trail by 0.7 miles from the current endpoint at Stone Spring Road to Rocktown High School. The extension includes a new bridge over Blacks Run and the parallel railroad, and compliments a recent path built on the high school campus.
- **Reservoir Street Median:** This project focuses on the small section between University Boulevard and Neff Avenue, near Costco. It proposes installing a channelized median allowing left turns onto University and a left turn onto Neff while blocking other left turns. This aims to address ongoing safety concerns in this high-traffic area that sees about 20,000 vehicles per day.

In response to a question about PSI, Mr. Campbell explained that PSI (potential safety improvement) is a high-level safety screening tool that VDOT uses to look at intersection and roadway segments and compares the expected crashes (based on the characteristics of the roadway) versus actual, typically over a five-year period. The difference between the two gives a ratio called the PSI.

Mr. Hartman noted that some of these projects are resubmissions, emphasizing the City's commitment to securing funding for these important infrastructure improvements. He also fielded questions about project specifics and potential impacts on traffic patterns, particularly considering new developments like the high school.

Ms. Melester mentioned that the County is also submitting SMART SCALE applications, but those fall outside the MPO boundary.

Mr. King moved, seconded by Mr. Fleming, to approve the SMART SCALE Round 6 Resolutions of Support. Motion carried unanimously.

Presentation: Dinkle Avenue/Friedens Church Road Study Report – Sean Becker, VHB

Mr. Sean Becker, Senior Traffic Engineer with VHB, presented the findings of the Dinkle Avenue/Friedens Church Road Small Area Study. The study, initiated by HRMPO in fall 2023, covered a diverse 3-mile corridor from I-81 Exit 240 to VA 42 in downtown Bridgewater, complementing Rockingham County's Comprehensive Plan update.

Mr. Becker outlined the study's methodology, which included extensive data collection, traffic analysis, and public engagement through an online survey and in-person meeting. The analysis divided the corridor into four segments, and found current levels of service acceptable and no significant crash hotspots. Despite projecting significant traffic growth by 2045 (ranging from 37% to 76% in different segments), the model shows minimal reductions in level of service and average speeds.

Based on these findings, Mr. Becker presented several key recommendations:

- No current need to widen Dinkle Avenue.
- Further study needed for traffic control at Mount Crawford Avenue intersection.
- Potential need for turn lanes and access management changes as development occurs.
- Suggested shared-use paths in certain sections, aligning with comprehensive planning documents.

Mr. Becker emphasized that this study serves as a baseline for future analysis, allowing for model updates as development patterns change. He also noted the importance of Dinkle Avenue as a key corridor for truck traffic between I-81, US 11, and VA 42.

Agency Updates

Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT)

Mr. Campbell provided information on two key SMART SCALE deadlines:

- July 15 is the readiness requirements deadline for applications. The supporting documentation for each project must be uploaded by that date.
- August 1 is the full application deadline, and an OIPI training is available for review at: smartscale.virginia.gov.

Mr. Campbell also discussed the current update to the State's functional classification system and noted that this system designates roadways based on their importance for mobility versus access. The designations are updated every 10 years following the census, and the process began in the HRMPO region at the TAC meeting earlier this month. Discussions with Harrisonburg about suggested updates have taken place, and District Planning supports the updates.

The next step is to meet with the Central Office to share suggestions and get feedback. The process is expected to extend into the fall, and the goal is to have resolutions of support from all MPOs across the state by the end of the year, and changes will be implemented next year. Mr. Campbell assured the Board that they would be kept informed of the process and that a more detailed presentation would be made at a future policy board meeting.

Mr. Mason provided several updates:

- Summer maintenance activities are in full swing, particularly mowing. He noted four mowing accidents in the past two weeks and urged caution around mowing crews.
- The Route 33 project in the city has moved into a new phase, with westbound traffic shifting onto the new, middle section of bridge. This shift has gone smoothly so far. Mr. Hartman noted that due to delays caused by the railroad, the I-81 project may cause traffic issues over the next few weeks.
- The Cross Keys Road project, which includes adding a right turn lane coming out of Keezletown and extending the turn lane, has been awarded to North Construction. Work is expected to start mid-July.
- I-81 projects in the Staunton area are progressing rapidly, giving a preview of what's to come in Harrisonburg. The Weyers Cave project will be advertised this fall, with the Harrisonburg project following next fall.

- In response to a question about railings on the I-81 bridges over North River, Mr. Mason said that the resurfacing project on I-81 includes the installation of higher railings on bridges as a new safety measure for workers.

Department of Rail & Public Transit (DRPT)

Ms. Stankus reported that Zach Trogdon was appointed as acting director, effective June 10, to replace Jennifer DeBruhl who retired. Prior to this role, Mr. Trogden was chief of public transportation.

She mentioned the new “Tidewater Current” bus service that will connect the Shenandoah Valley with the Virginia Tidewater area via Route 64. The launch is expected in Spring 2025. Stakeholder engagement is currently in process, and stop locations need to be secured. Once the official launch is closer, DRPT can provide a more in-depth presentation to the Board. In response to a question, Ms. Stankus said she believes that the western termini may be in Harrisonburg.

City of Harrisonburg Department of Public Transportation (HDPT)

Ms. Spain reported the following:

- The Harrisonburg Transit rebranding plan was presented to City Council in May, named “HB Connect” and paratransit named “HB Access.” She showed a drawing of the new bus design and said the new buses should arrive in September, and the paratransit buses will be ready next year.
- The Transit Strategic Plan (TSP) will go to City Council on June 25, it is available online for community feedback until June 23rd; so far 8 comments were received, most positive.
- HDPT has successfully put two electric school buses into service; and applied for three more.
- The extended City routes are doing well with close to 4,000 trips just on the expanded hours since June 1. The need is recognized, but these hours will have to cease in August until the hours can be reworked back into the schedule and bus driver coverage can be obtained.
- The transit conference held in Harrisonburg was sold out, went very well and attendees enjoyed the City and the conference.

Localities

Mount Crawford

- Mr. Dillard stated that the construction of the Sheetz is progressing.

Harrisonburg

- Mr. Hartman added to prior updates on Harrisonburg projects about summer operations: mowing, night paving on East Market Street, and some curb and gutter replacements.



Upcoming Meetings

Chairperson Dent announced that the HRMPO Policy Board will hold a meeting on July 18, 2024, at 3:00 p.m., and there will be no HRMPO TAC meeting in July due to the July 4th holiday. The next TAC meeting is scheduled for August 1, 2024 at 2:00 p.m.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 4:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Paula Melester
Director of Transportation