

HRMPO TAC Minutes June 6, 2024, 2:00 p.m.

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

Voting Member	Alternates	Staff
City of Harrisonburg	Megan Byler, Bridgewater	✓ Paula Melester
✓ Tom Hartman	Libby Clark, Mt. Crawford	✓ Garreth Bartholomew
✓ Bill Blessing, Chair	✓ Jakob zumFelde, Harrisonburg	✓ Kimberly Miller
✓ Thanh Dang	Elliot Menge, Harrisonburg	
✓ Erin Fisher*	Dan Rublee, Harrisonburg	Others
✓ Cheryl Spain	Gerald Gatobu, Harrisonburg	✓ Kim Sandum, Shenandoah Alliance
Rockingham County	Kayla Yankey, Rockingham	✓ Sam Styers, VDOT*
✓ Rhonda Cooper, Vice Chair	✓ Rachel Salatin, Rockingham*	✓ Timothy Mason, Harrisonburg
Casey Armstrong	✓ Brad Reed, VDOT	
✓ Dylan Nicely	✓ Jeremy Mason, VDOT	
Town of Bridgewater	Jeff Lineberry, VDOT	
✓ Alex Wilmer	Tiffany Dubinsky, DRPT	
Town of Dayton		
✓ Meggie Roche		
Town of Mt. Crawford	Non-Voting Members	
✓ Robert Taylor, Jr.	Kevin Jones, FHWA	
VDOT	Chelsea Beytas, FTA	
✓ Adam Campbell	Bill Yates, JMU	
✓ Don Komara	Rusty Harrington, Aviation	
DRPT	✓ Valerie Kramer	
✓ Grace Stankus*		

Call to Order

The March 7, 2024, meeting of the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Metropolitan Planning Organization (HRMPO) Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) was called to order at 2:00 p.m. by Chairperson Bill Blessing. Pursuant to §2.2-3708.2 of the Code of Virginia, HRMPO TAC 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.

Introductions

Chairperson Blessing asked the new HRMPO staff to introduce themselves. Ms. Melester is the newly promoted CSPDC Director of Transportation and will be the primary point of contact for the HRMPO. Mr. Garreth Bartholomew is the new CSPDC Transportation Planner and will provide planning support to the

HRMPO. Ms. Kimberly Miller is the new CSPDC Office Manager and will provide administrative support to the HRMPO.

Minutes

Chairperson Blessing presented the minutes from the March 7, 2024, TAC meeting. ***Mr. Komara moved, seconded by Ms. Cooper, to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously.***

Public Comment

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

Consideration of SMART SCALE Round 6 Applications (TAC Action Form #24-02)

Chairperson Blessing presented for consideration SMART SCALE Round 6 Applications. Mr. Bartholomew gave a review on the SMART SCALE Round 6 Applications, noting that two applications were conditionally screened: the South Main Street Pipeline Project and the I-81 Exit 245/Port Republic Road Project. He requested that the TAC recommend the Policy Board approve the submission of these two HRMPO SMART SCALE Round 6 applications for the full application cycle which closes on August 1st.

Ms. Cooper moved, seconded by Mr. Hartman, to recommend the HRMPO Policy Board approve the SMART SCALE Round 6 applications for submission. Motion was carried by unanimous vote.

VDOT Functional Classification Update (TAC Memo #24-06)

Chairperson Blessing presented for discussion the VDOT Functional Classification Update.

Mr. Campbell presented an update on the ongoing Federal Functional Classification (FFC) process based on the 2020 Census data which was released in March of 2022. This statewide update, conducted by VDOT, classifies public roads into categories (arterials, collectors, and local roads) based on service type and traffic volume. The classification impacts federal funding eligibility, with urban minor collectors or higher qualifying for federal aid. VDOT, assisted by Michael Baker International, has made initial updates including new roadways and necessary adjustments since the last update in 2014.

The process now involves MPO review and outreach to localities. While an initial July deadline was mentioned, there is flexibility to extend the review period, with VDOT aiming to submit the update to FHWA for approval by September 2024. Mr. Campbell explained the hierarchy of road classifications from interstates to local streets, emphasizing their importance for design criteria and maintenance reimbursements.

The committee discussed specific examples of classification changes and their implications, particularly for access management in Harrisonburg. It was agreed that localities would review the classifications using provided definitions and submit comments, focusing mainly on local, minor, and major collector roads. The importance of accurate classification for development and access management purposes was highlighted.

VDOT is requesting that each MPO Policy Board approve a resolution acknowledging the coordination effort within Virginia on the FFC Update. Ms. Melester said that the resolution will be presented to the Policy Board in August or September to allow time for thorough review and incorporation of any changes. This will ensure all necessary adjustments are made before the final submission to FHWA.

Presentation: FY25 Port Republic Road and Peach Grove/Neff Avenue Small Area Study Overview by Mr. Tom Hartman, City of Harrisonburg

Chairperson Blessing presented the FY25 Port Republic Road and Peach Grove/Neff Avenue Small Area Study by Mr. Tom Hartman.

Mr. Hartman presented an overview of the upcoming small area study for the intersection and surrounding segments. The study area includes Port Republic Road from Devon Lane to just past the city-county line, Neff Avenue up to Reservoir Street, and Peach Grove to Stone Spring Road.

The area is bounded by JMU to the west, I-81, and the county UDA and hospital to the east. Several approved developments, primarily housing, are within the study area. Traffic projections for 2030 show high volumes during peak hours, with significant queuing issues at the intersection. The intersection has the highest total crashes in the MPO area and the third highest in the state construction district.

The study aims to address challenges with individual developers' traffic impact analyses and provide a holistic approach to the intersection. It will include operational and safety analysis, development of alternatives for intersection improvements, new connectivity, signal reconfigurations, access management strategies, and multimodal infrastructure enhancements.

The study will also incorporate sensitivity analysis to ensure proposed solutions remain effective 5-6 years beyond the build year. Results will be used to update the city's comprehensive plan, influence transit and bike-ped planning, guide future development negotiations, and establish threshold trip points for proactive intersection management.

Mr. Hartman emphasized the importance of this study in managing the growing traffic demands and improving safety at this significant crossroads for the area. Next steps for the study will be to assemble a study team and begin the process to finalize a scope of work for the study.

Agency Updates

Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT)

Mr. Campbell reported that VDOT has entered the full application phase for the current round of SMART SCALE. The Central Office and the Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment (OIPI) have transferred all pre-applications to full applications in the SMART Portal as of Monday, including their pre-screening comments. VDOT has begun reaching out to Harrisonburg and other localities to address these comments for the full applications.

A two-hour online full application training was held on Tuesday afternoon. The recording of this training is expected to be available on the SMART SCALE website soon, and Mr. Campbell will notify everyone when it's posted.

He emphasized two important upcoming deadlines: July 15th for the readiness requirements, and August 1st for the full application submission. Mr. Campbell stressed that these deadlines will approach quickly and encouraged everyone to work towards meeting them.

For updates from the VDOT Harrisonburg Residency, Mr. Komara reported on several ongoing and upcoming VDOT projects:

- The Market Street project is progressing well. Construction is moving along as planned, with a couple of significant concrete pours recently completed. Traffic patterns will be switching close to the end of the month.
- Route 33 West improvement project over the mountain is progressing well, with significant earthwork being done to flatten curves and add passing lanes. The project is expected to be completed in June 2025.
- The Route 11 project is still in the right-of-way acquisition phase, with advertisement expected in the fall.
- An intersection improvement project at Routes 620, 33, and 276 is set to begin next month, creating a dedicated left turn lane.
- Extensive construction is underway on Interstate 81 from mile marker 221 to 225, including median work and Jersey barrier installation.
- The Barter Brook Road Bridge project is ahead of schedule, with pier construction progressing well.
- I-81 climbing lanes project from mile marker 232 to 238 is set for advertisement in August this fall.
- A major I-81 project in Harrisonburg from mile marker 242 to 248 is planned for fall 2025.
- The Six-Year Plan meeting for the gravel road improvement program is scheduled for June 12th at 3:00 PM.

Mr. Komara also mentioned ongoing maintenance activities including mowing, dust control on gravel roads, and patching work. He emphasized the need for caution when driving through the numerous construction zones that will be active simultaneously in the coming years.

Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT)

Ms. Stankus announced that DRPT will be launching a new Virginia Breeze service called the Tidewater Current. This new intercity bus service will connect the Shenandoah Valley to the Tidewater area. The decision to expand the Virginia Breeze service was based on a needs assessment conducted by DRPT, which identified an unmet need for intercity connections along the I-64 corridor. The new service will operate 365 days a year, with one westbound and one eastbound trip daily. The target launch date is set for late spring or early summer of 2025.

She reported that current activities in preparation for the launch include ramping up stakeholder engagement with transit systems, VDOT, and businesses along the corridor, as well as working on logistics to identify operationally feasible bus stop locations. Once bus stop locations are decided and secured, DRPT will begin working on pricing and scheduling. Ms. Stankus offered to provide a more detailed overview of the service closer to the official launch if there is interest from the TAC. She welcomed any questions from the committee members.

City of Harrisonburg Department of Public Transportation (HDPT)

The HDPT update was provided in advance by Ms. Spain and delivered to the TAC by Mr. Bartholomew:



1. The Harrisonburg Transit rebranding name and delivery were presented to City Council on May 14, 2024.
2. The Transit Strategic Plan (TSP) is now available online for community feedback until June 23, 2024.
3. HDPT has successfully put two electric school buses into service.
4. HDPT received notice of selection for funding from the 2023 EPA Clean School Bus Rebate Application for three additional electric school buses. HDPT is working on submitting all required documentation by November 29th and hopes to receive award notification after that.

Localities

There were no locality updates.

Other Business

Mr. Bartholomew reported on the successful open house held on May 21st for the Dinkel Avenue/Friedens Church Road study at Smiley's Ice Cream. The event was well attended with 44 participants and 13 public comments received. VHB, the consultant for the small area study, is finalizing the report and will present it, along with public comments, to the Policy Board on June 20th.

Additionally, two Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) amendments have been submitted for public comment, which will conclude on June 15th. These amendments concern Federal Highway Administration funds for bridge maintenance and Federal Transit Administration funds. After the 21 required days of public comment, HRMPO Staff will present these amendments for approval at the upcoming Policy Board meeting.

Upcoming Meetings

Chairperson Blessing announced that the HRMPO Policy Board will hold a meeting on June 20, 2024, at 3:00 p.m.; and there will be no HRMPO TAC meeting in July due to the July 4th holiday; the next meeting is scheduled for August 1, 2024, at 2:00 p.m.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 2:48 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Paula Melester
Director of Transportation