

Harrisonburg-Rockingham Metropolitan Planning Organization Policy Board Minutes July 17, 2025, 3:00 p.m.

Meeting Conducted Virtually

Voting Members		Alternates		Staff
City of Harrisonburg	✓*	Dylan Nicely, Rockingham	✓*	Ann Cundy
Laura Dent, Vice Char		Rachel Salatin, Rockingham	✓*	Paula Melester
Dany Fleming		Cheryl Spain, Harrisonburg	✓*	Garreth Bartholomew
✓* Gerald Gatobu		Tom Hartman, Harrisonburg		
Nasser Alsaadun	✓*	Alex Wilmer, Bridgewater		
Ande Banks		Robert Taylor, Mt. Crawford		
	✓*	Libby Clark, Mt. Crawford		Others
Rockingham County		Gary Corder, Dayton	✓*	Kyle Lawrence
✓* Sallie Wolfe-Garrison		Jeff Lineberry, VDOT	✓*	Kim Sandum
✓* Casey Armstrong	✓*	Adam Campbell, VDOT		
Town of Bridgewater	✓*	Don Komara, VDOT		
Jay Litten		Jeremy Mason, VDOT		
Town of Dayton		Non-Voting Members		
✓* Brian Borne	✓*	Rusty Harrington, Aviation		
Town of Mt. Crawford	✓*	Grace Stankus, DRPT		
✓* Neal Dillard, Chair		Bill Yates, JMU		
VDOT	✓*	Valerie Kramer, JMU		
Todd Stevens	✓*	Shane McCabe		

*Indicates virtual attendance

Call to Order

The July 17, 2025, Harrisonburg-Rockingham Metropolitan Planning Organization (HRMPO) Policy Board meeting was called to order at 3:00 p.m. by Chair Neal Dillard. The meeting was conducted virtually with no in-person option.

Approval of Minutes

Chair Dillard presented the minutes from the May 22, 2025, Policy Board meeting.

Mr. Casey Armstrong moved to approve the minutes; seconded by Ms. Sallie Wolfe-Garrison. The motion carried unanimously.

Public Comment

Chair Dillard opened the floor for public comment. There were no public comments.

HRMPO Internal Process Review (Board Memo #25-05)

Ms. Paula Melester presented information about internal tasks that staff will be working on over the next six to eight months. Ms. Melester explained that HRMPO staff conducted a staff retreat in April, and one central topic of discussion was how to best navigate changing federal and state funding priorities. In response, the team will be conducting an internal review of processes, procedures, and update governing and planning documents to identify areas for improved efficiency and ensure compliance with changing federal and State requirements while also better serving local and regional transportation needs.

The first step will be meeting with each locality and agency to get feedback on priorities and how staff can best support them. After receiving feedback, staff will examine process and policy documents and update the Title VI Plan, public participation plan, and bylaws, and incorporate new processes and procedures as necessary.

Presentation: Shenandoah Rail Trail Update – Brad Reed, VDOT Staunton District Planning

Mr. Brad Reed from VDOT provided an update on the Shenandoah Valley Rail Trail assessment covering the 50-mile Norfolk Southern-owned right-of-way between Broadway and Front Royal. Recently, elected leaders expressed renewed support for the rail-to-trail alternative to the Commonwealth Transportation Board, calling it the highest and best use of the corridor.

The General Assembly allocated \$35 million for trail development following a 2021 feasibility study, but included language requiring consideration of options to maintain rail transportation before funds can be accessed. Rail transportation is not currently active on the 49-mile corridor with no current customers, and Norfolk Southern has expressed interest in selling the line.

The current three-phase rail-with-trail assessment examines engineering considerations and costs for delivering a trail beside the rail line. Phase one included stakeholder interviews and typical section development. Phase two, expected for public release at the end of July, includes environmental details, structure reviews, rail status evaluation, and public engagement summaries. Phase three will focus on cost estimates comparing both alternatives, updating the rail-to-trail cost estimate from 2023.

Public engagement in April included three meetings with 550 attendees and an online survey with 5,000 participants. Results showed 54% preferred rail-to-trail, 31% preferred rail-with-trail, 13% supported both options, and 5% opposed any action. Safety ranked as the highest priority issue, followed by environmental impacts and costs. Phase three public engagement is expected in late summer with three in-person meetings and an online survey.

Agency Updates

Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT)

Mr. Adam Campbell provided the following updates:

- Vine Street STARS Study: Work session held with consultant ATCS and Harrisonburg Public Works staff to refine corridor improvement alternatives. The next study team meeting to review

improvement alternatives and determine which to advance for public engagement is scheduled for August 19 at 2:00 p.m.

- Route 42 Pipeline Study from Gay Street to Northern City Limits: Phase one report presenting existing conditions analysis and findings is under review by the study team. The study team alternative screening meeting is scheduled for 10:00 a.m. on July 18.
- VDOT I-81 Corridor Improvement Plan: VDOT conducted two meetings in the Staunton District to outline the I-81 Plan. Candidate projects for the next round of I-81 Capital Improvement Plan funding have been identified based on performance measures matching those used for the first corridor improvement plan in 2018.
 - The second round of public outreach is currently ongoing through an online survey for feedback on candidate projects. Between Staunton and Harrisonburg, numerous proposed improvements would fill gaps between the current Staunton widening under construction, the Weyers Cave truck climbing lanes, and the southern end of the upcoming Harrisonburg widening.
 - The next funding round expects \$2.2-2.25 billion, which will not address all candidate projects. After receiving public input, candidate projects will be refined and prioritized using measures similar to Smart Scale. Final recommendations will be presented at public meetings this fall with another opportunity for public participation.
- Smart Scale feedback: The Staunton district hosted the July CTB meeting in Winchester. An update from the Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment (OIPI) presented findings from a Round 6 Smart Scale survey conducted over the spring. The presentation covers applicant feedback on the process and previews Round 7.

Mr. Donald Komara provided the following updates:

- I-81 Staunton Project: Three-year project currently 42% complete after slightly over one year.
- I-81 Weyers Cave project: Construction progress continues through Weyers Cave with barriers installed on both sides and narrowed lanes requiring 60-mph speed limit compliance. Speed enforcement planned for this fall.
- I-81 Harrisonburg Project: Project from mile marker 242 to Route 33 scheduled for advertisement this late fall/early winter, with contractor expected by this time next year.
- Route 33 Mountain Project: The project is nearly complete and assists commuters from West Virginia into Virginia.
- Route 11 Four-Lane Fairgrounds Project: Fall advertisement is planned, and letters to remaining property owners will be sent with tentative meetings scheduled with the property owners.
 - Ms. Wolfe-Garrison asked how many condemnation letters would need to be sent for properties that have been in negotiation for 3-4 years. Mr. Komara responded that one letter has already been sent, with three additional properties still in negotiation, including a restaurant that recently sold, a church, and several others. Mr. Komara indicated condemnation letters would likely need to be sent soon.
 - Ms. Garrison asked for clarification about the Village Inn acquisition, specifically whether the sale meant restarting conversations with the new owner. Mr. Komara confirmed that the Village Inn would settle with VDOT before completing their sale.

- **Flooding and Maintenance:** Significant flooding due to heavy rainfall caused infrastructure damage, including a lost pipe on Spring Creek in Staunton requiring road closure and pipe replacement. Other maintenance activities include debris removal, ditch cleaning, pipe clearing, patching, and mowing completion. Staff preparing areas around Bridgewater and Mount Crawford for upcoming community events.

Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT)

Ms. Grace Stankus provided the following updates:

- DRPT is hosting an annual post-award webinar for FY 2026 grant recipients on July 23 at 11:00 a.m. MPO staff and HDPT have registered, with the registration link provided in the chat.
- DRPT is hosting a second National Transit Institute course covering state and metropolitan planning on September 15-16 at PlanRVA in Richmond. DRPT received positive feedback from the previous NTI course held earlier this month. The course is free with travel expenses reimbursable through 5303 funding.

Harrisonburg Department of Public Transportation (HDPT)

Mr. Gerald Gatobu provided the following updates:

- HDPT concluded their triennial review after months of preparation. A final exit interview is scheduled.
- HDPT is preparing for fall semester operations for both JMU and Harrisonburg City Schools.

Locality Updates

Town of Bridgewater

The Town had no updates.

Town of Dayton

The Town had no updates.

City of Harrisonburg

The City had no updates.

Town of Mount Crawford

Ms. Libby Clark reported the following update:

- Zach Beard met with Royce Hilton and the Timmons Group to work on stormwater management issues along Route 11 and Parsons Street, with VDOT's approval.

Rockingham County

The County had no updates.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Upcoming Meetings

Chair Dillard noted that the next TAC meeting is scheduled for August 7, 2025, at 2:00 p.m. and the next Policy Board meeting is scheduled for August 21, 2025.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 3:43 p.m.

Respectfully,



Paula Melester, Director of Transportation

