

Harrisonburg-Rockingham Metropolitan Planning Organization Policy Board Minutes August 21, 2025, 3:00 p.m.

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

	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	✓	Zach Beard
✓	Nasser Alsaadun	✓	Alex Wilmer, Bridgewater		
	Ande Banks		Robert Taylor, Mt. Crawford		
			Libby Clark, Mt. Crawford		Others
	Rockingham County		Gary Corder, Dayton	✓	Kim Sandum
✓	Sallie Wolfe-Garrison		Jeff Lineberry, VDOT	✓	Jakob zumFelde
✓	Casey Armstrong	✓	Adam Campbell, VDOT	✓*	Ruoyu Liu
	Town of Bridgewater	✓	Don Komara, VDOT	✓*	Steve Tuttle
	Jay Litten	✓	Jeremy Mason, VDOT	✓*	Andrea Trotter
				✓*	Fionnuala Quinn
	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 August 21, 2025, Harrisonburg-Rockingham Metropolitan Planning Organization (HRMPO) Policy Board meeting was called to order at 3:00 p.m. by Chair Neal Dillard. Pursuant to §2.2-3708.2 of the Code of Virginia, HRMPO Board members and attendees may participate in HRMPO meetings through electronic communication. Those who attended virtually are indicated by an asterisk; all others attended in-person.

Approval of Minutes

Chair Dillard presented the minutes from the July 17, 2025, Policy Board meeting.

Mr. Casey Armstrong moved to approve the minutes; seconded by Mr. Brian Borne. The motion carried unanimously.

Public Comment

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

Resolution of Support for FY27 Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) Application (Board Action Form #25-07)

Mr. Zach Beard presented the resolution of support for a VDOT Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) application for the City of Harrisonburg. The VDOT TAP program provides an 80-20 match with 20% matched by the locality. VDOT requires that TAP applications within an MPO area receive a resolution of support from the MPO.

Harrisonburg submitted the only TAP application this cycle within the HRMPO for funding a full-time Safe Routes to School Coordinator position within the City's Public Works Department. The coordinator will lead citywide programming and outreach initiatives to encourage active transportation among students, including safe walking and biking.

Mr. Tom Hartman explained this is a refunding request, as they received approval for Safe Routes to School infrastructure in the last round of TAP funding. The City hired Andrea Troyer, who has been with the city since October and has accomplished significant work. Mr. Fleming expressed appreciation for the program, noting it generates involvement from parents and is important for student safety.

Mr. Fleming moved to approve the resolution for the City of Harrisonburg TAP application; seconded by Mr. Armstrong. The motion carried unanimously.

Conditional Approval of Travel Demand Model Transportation Analysis Zone (TAZ) Demographic Data (Board Action Form #25-08)

Zach Beard presented the conditional approval request for the Travel Demand Model Transportation Analysis Zone (TAZ) demographic data. HRMPO began updating the travel demand model last fall with VDOT and consultant WSA, with the process scheduled to conclude in spring 2026. The current model has not been updated in 10 years and uses demographic data from 2015 projecting to 2045. The update will bring the base year demographic inputs from 2015 to 2022 and project out to 2050.

The model serves as the primary tool for projecting future travel volumes and travel behavior based on demographic and socioeconomic data. Planning staff for the MPO and localities use the model to conduct transportation studies and assess the impact of transportation improvements on the regional network. The board approved 2022 base year demographic numbers in November 2024.

TAZ Demographic Updates

The current step in the model update process involves taking demographic data and assigning numbers across the region within different travel zones based on existing land use and development. Local planning staff from each locality provided input on the consultant's initial geographic distribution assignments. Because changes have not been fully incorporated, staff requested conditional approval with the understanding that the modeling team will incorporate all locality comments into the final model.

Mr. Beard explained that TAZs are the building blocks of the model, representing geographic areas based on U.S. Census block boundaries and adjusted based on roadway characteristics and existing development. Each TAZ receives specific demographic and economic attributes. The update increased TAZs from 263 in the old model to 349, with most new TAZs accounting for new development and roadway network additions since the previous model. The modeling team segmented demographic and employment data into 65 different categories including construction, manufacturing, wholesale trade, retail trade, and finance, assigning these subsets throughout each TAZ within the HRMPO.

Locality Input and Questions

Mr. Steven Tuttle from RSG provided details about the model data, including demographic information (people, households, workers, autos, students) from sources like census-affiliated ACS data and universities, and employment data by sector developed from public and private sources plus the old model. The data forecasts trip making across different markets including resident travel, university travel, and truck and commercial vehicle travel.

Mr. Tuttle noted that the modeling team received information from census and universities to better reconcile data and received new information to clarify off-campus student locations and parking details, and that locality comments on employment data helped identify zones where adjustments to initial coding were needed. Mr. Tuttle said that the model should be complete by April 2026.

Chair Dillard asked questions about the 30% increase in TAZs from the previous model. HRMPO staff explained the increase provides more granularity to capture aspects the previous model could not, particularly around university travel and areas that made more sense to split into multiple TAZs.

Mr. Fleming asked about the model's capabilities for scenario analysis. Mr. Tuttle explained that the model can incorporate various scenarios including land use growth, population and employment growth, changes in university student numbers, roadway projects, transit service changes, and external trip assumptions. Traditional long-range planning typically looks 25-30 years into the future, though intermediate 10-15 year scenarios are also possible.

Ms. Laura Dent moved to conditionally approve the TAZ demographic data pending all locality input is reviewed and incorporated into the updated Travel Demand Model; seconded by Mr. Fleming. The motion carried unanimously.

Presentation: Traffic Garden Design and Implementation – Fionnula Quinn, Discover Traffic Gardens

Mr. Bartholomew introduced Ms. Fionnuala Quinn from Discover Traffic Gardens, describing her transition from civil engineering to helping children and young users explore transportation networks safely through the planning and implementation of traffic gardens.

Ms. Quinn explained her consulting business covers all aspects of traffic garden planning, design, and installation support, and that a traffic garden is a network of scaled-down streets and traffic elements creating a simplified version of the real built world, free of motor vehicles, intended as a comfortable place to practice skills, have fun, and hold programs.

Traffic Garden Background

Traffic gardens originated in Ohio in 1937 when a patrol officer painted lines on the ground in response to increasing child fatality rates after motor vehicle adoption. The idea became a sensation, with federal officials visiting and the concept spreading nationally and internationally. Modern traffic gardens use similar concepts with gentle adult coaching and children using devices to navigate the small world.

Ms. Quinn considers traffic gardens community amenities and outdoor classrooms providing interactive learning. She noted a significant decline in child biking in the U.S., approaching 60% in the last 15 years, making traffic gardens places where children gain skills they previously acquired through neighborhood biking.

Quinn has mapped over 350 traffic gardens in North America and several thousand worldwide, finding them clustered in hotspots where the idea spreads once implemented. Traffic gardens serve various purposes including pedestrian education, railroad safety, bike fitting and helmet education, and active play spaces.

Types of Traffic Gardens

Quinn categorizes traffic gardens into two types: those with actual physical streets and painted streets on hard surfaces, which is the current preferred type using high-grade paint products that are vibrant and long-lasting. Most current installations repurpose existing hard surfaces like underutilized parking lots, basketball courts, or tennis courts. Ms. Quinn highlighted several Virginia examples:

- Roanoke: Former parking lot next to elementary school, funded through Department of Motor Vehicles grant with road safety focus
- Alexandria: School playground and recreation center with gates allowing shared use
- Maryland park: Former basketball court with vibrant court resurfacing products designed to last most of a decade
- Waynesboro Rotary Traffic Playground: Large aerial installation with partnerships providing bikes, helmets, benches, and other amenities

Funding approaches include various grant sources beyond expected transportation-related grants. Projects have received AARP community engagement grants, state grants, national grants like Governor Highway Safety Fund grants, and State Farm funding. Projects are typically completed within one year.

Closing Questions and Remarks

Board members asked about the sizes and configurations of traffic gardens, and Ms. Quinn noted the Waynesboro installation used an unusually shaped repurposed DuPont parking lot, demonstrating flexibility in working with available spaces including narrow sites, vacated streets, areas under bridges, and old tennis courts. Ms. Quinn also explained that traffic gardens often locate next to playgrounds and can integrate with play features like basketball hoops, foursquare, and hopscotch in school settings, and noted the importance of adequate buffer space around other structures.

Agency Updates

Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT)

Mr. Adam Campbell provided the following updates:

- Route 42 Study (Gay Street to northern city limits): Phase 1 completed with existing conditions analysis and preliminary improvement alternatives. Study team meeting held last month to review initial improvement ideas. Phase 2 starting to evaluate alternatives in detail and develop preferred solutions for potential funding applications.
- Vine Street STARS Study (Market Street to US 11): The study team is working to refine the improvements recommended and is preparing for a second round of public outreach to present improvement alternatives and gather feedback to inform final alternatives as the study concludes by the end of 2025.

Mr. Don Komara provided the following updates:

- I-81 Staunton and Weyers Cave projects: The Staunton I-81 section is about 45% complete after one year of a three-year contract. The Weyers Cave section is undergoing earthwork between northbound and southbound lanes and using the material for paving.
- I-81 Harrisonburg project: The project is targeted for a late fall advertisement, and construction is anticipated next year. The project includes 9 bridges over various features plus 1 over the roadway, requiring contractors with multiple bridge crews.
- University Boulevard Project: Mr. Komara praised the \$10 million project's progress in 3 months, noting the benefits of working with reduced traffic in the summer.
- Route 33 Mountain Project: The project is complete and VDOT hopes to eventually extend the improvements to the West Virginia line.
- Route 11 Four-Lane Fairgrounds Project: Continuing right-of-way negotiations with three properties remaining, though one property sale created new negotiations. VDOT is planning for late fall advertisement, but ownership changes may cause delays.

Mr. Fleming asked about the I-81 Harrisonburg project cost range. Mr. Todd Stevens estimated \$200-300 million for the contract and noted that the project may be the largest design-bid-build project in Virginia state history, contrasting with typical design-build projects like bridge tunnels and hot lanes. The design-bid-build approach means 100% complete engineering plans, eliminating the year delay for contractor design completion seen in other projects.

Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT)

Mr. Beard provided the following updates on behalf of Grace Stankus:

- Potential applicants for Smart Scale Round 7 projects primarily focused on rail or transit must meet with DRPT by October 31. Projects that are roadway-based with minor transit elements are exempt from this requirement.

Harrisonburg Department of Public Transportation (HDPT)

Mr. Gerald Gatobu provided the following updates:

- HDPT completed a triennial review with an exit interview and final meeting last week, performing well with next review in 2028.
- Fall semester started for schools with JMU and Harrisonburg City Schools beginning the same day.

- HDPT will be receiving three electric school buses in the next two weeks.

Locality Updates

City of Harrisonburg

Mr. Tom Hartman provided the following updates:

- Country Club Sidewalk Project: Beginning to construct a sidewalk from a mobile home park to Linda Lane.
- Mason Street Demonstration Project: In July the demonstration project removed two lanes, shifted traffic to northbound direction with temporary roundabouts on Mason Street. The project concluded on August 4 with data collection showing 85th percentile speeds dropped from 35 mph to 26 mph during the project. Travel times reduced about 15% despite lower speeds due to smoother traffic flow without signals. Vehicle volumes dropped 20% as people avoided the area due to the appearance as a work zone appearance. Staff are now incorporating the results into the Northeast Neighborhood Small Area Plan.
- Erickson Avenue Study: The next public meeting is on September 18 from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. at Public Works. Consultants completed land use and future condition analysis showing alarming no-build scenarios, and the study group is working on mitigation including potential new connector roads and a quadrant roadway.
- Stone Spring growth: Hartman noted the rapid growth in the Stone Spring area, where roads built 13 years ago now carry 20,000 and 15,000 vehicles daily. The intersection of Main, Stone Spring, and Erickson sees over 40,000 vehicles daily with everyone wanting to make left turns.
- Route 42 timing study: A new Route 42 corridor timing study, the first in four years, will be implemented in the winter and next spring.

In response to the Erickson Avenue Study and Stone Spring growth discussion, Ms. Sallie Wolfe-Garrison asked about conducting retrospective analysis of projections versus actual usage. Mr. Hartman noted the University Boulevard project provides an opportunity for such analysis since pre-construction modeling was completed. For older projects like Stone Spring Road, determining available historical data and modeling capabilities from the 1990s would be necessary for retrospective comparison.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Upcoming Meetings

Chair Dillard noted that the next TAC meeting is scheduled for September 4, 2025, at 2:00 p.m. and the next Policy Board meeting is scheduled for September 18, 2025.



**Harrisonburg
Rockingham**
Metropolitan Planning
Organization

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Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:25 p.m.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Paula Melester". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Paula Melester, Director of Transportation
