



Central Virginia Planning
District Commission
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**Central Virginia Planning District Commission
Executive Committee Meeting – Draft Minutes
September 19, 2024; 5:00 PM**

**Meeting Location - CVPDC Offices
828 Main Street, 12th Floor
Lynchburg, VA 24504**

Members Present:

Chairman Reggie Bennett, Altavista Town
Frank Rogers, Campbell County
Tom Lawton, Campbell County
Greg Patrick, City of Lynchburg, Proxy for Wynter Benda
Jeremy Bryant, Amherst County
Gary Shanaberger, Altavista Town
Bruce Johannessen, Town of Bedford
John Sharp, Bedford County
John Spencer, Appomattox County
Megan Lucas, Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance

Members Joining Virtually:

None

Staff Present:

Alec Brebner
Sandy Dobyns
Kelly Hitchcock
Mariel Fowler
Patti Lassiter
Ada Hunsberger

Others Present:

Emily Stock, VA Department of Rail and Public Transportation: Central Virginia
Rail Economic Development Study (Guest Speaker)
Donna Vincent, Greater Lynchburg Habitat for Humanity: CVPDC Housing
Development Program grantee (Guest Speaker)

1. Welcome and Introductions

Chairman Reggie Bennett welcomed the Board and guests. The meeting started at 5:01PM.

2. Consideration of Requests for Electronic Participation

There were no members joining virtually for this meeting.

3. Special Guests: VA Department of Rail and Public Transportation: Central Virginia Rail Economic Development Study

- a. Emily Stock virtually joined the meeting to discuss the Central Virginia Rail Economic Development Study. Emily gave an overview of the study that Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation was asked to do by the General Assembly with the assistance of the Virginia Economic Development Partnership. The goal of the study is to evaluate rail-centric economic development opportunities in Central Virginia. DRPT has been asked to look at both passenger and freight rail enhancements that encourage intermodal and other non-intermodal market opportunities that may yield long-term success and growth in the region. The study is due to the General Assembly by November 1.

The study area included the City of Lynchburg and Bedford, Campbell, Amherst, and Appomattox counties. The first step was the literature review. Based on that information, DRPT developed four different opportunity concepts.

- the potential for a Bedford passenger rail stop
- a potential transit-oriented development at Lynchburg's Kemper Street Station
- rail-served site – a typical economic development site
- transload facility – not necessarily a manufacturing site but more of a transfer point between rail and truck.

The four opportunity concepts were then put through a multi-criteria analysis that allowed for an initial screening. This allows for a better comparison between four very different scales of economic development, freight and passenger rail. All the projects scored similarly except the Lynchburg Kemper Street Station. This is due to the concept not being as well developed right now. The remaining three potential projects were taken through an economic impact analysis and a benefit-cost analysis. All three scored above 1 and were determined to be good investments.

Working with the VEDP, a site analysis was also completed for the study. This was to look for potential rail-served sites. Bedford already has the station location that has been determined and set but the other two options don't. After looking at sites in the region that are available and have rail access now. The tract in Amherst, Dillard's tract, rose to the top.

- b. Reggie introduced the next guest speaker, Donna Vincent of Greater Lynchburg Habitat for Humanity to speak with the Board about the work they are doing through the CVPDC Housing Development Program. Donna gave an overview of Greater Lynchburg Habitat for Humanity. Since 1988 they have partnered with 316 families. Habitat offers a zero-interest loans with mortgage payments fitting within the income of the family.

Donna posed the question, “Why does someone support Habitat? Because everyone needs a home. The service industry, made up of fireman, bank tellers, nurses, teachers to name a few, all need a home; and if it’s not affordable here, they will go elsewhere.” Donna thanked the Commission for their assistance with the grant.

Donna gave a progress report of the Knott Street Development that the grant has helped fund. The grant has allowed GLHFH to build the road, implement stormwater maintenance, and purchase contiguous properties. When this project is complete this grant will have helped to fund 9 properties totaling over \$2 million in appraised value.

4. Approval of Regular Meeting Minutes, July 18, 2024

Reggie asked if there were any changes to the minutes of the July 18 meeting. No discussion or other changes were made. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Tom Lawton and seconded by Jeremy Bryant. All were in favor, and the motion passed.

5. Central Virginia Flood Resilience Plan: Adoption

Alec presented the request for adoption of the Central Virginia Flood Resilience Plan. This plan was presented to the Commission in July by Kate Jones. The plan has a section for each locality should it decide to pursue funding. This plan was funded by the Community Flood Preparedness Fund. The 10 percent match came from the Commission. There was a public comment period, and with no public comments for/or against the plan, staff believes the plan is suitable for adoption by the commission at this time.

Frank Rogers asked “What is next? Will the locality be responsible for the recommendations?”

Kelly Hitchcock stated that the PDC can serve as the applicant and use the plan to help the locality pursue additional funding if they so choose.

Tom Lawton asked for further clarification about the November deadline mentioned. That deadline is associated with construction dollars. If a locality wants to pursue construction dollars they are required to have an approved Resilience Flood Plan. So, staff initiated the Resilience Flood Plan so the region’s localities could pursue construction dollars. The next round of allocations will have a deadline of November 15.

Reggie asked if there was a motion for adoption of the CVPDC Flood Resilience Plan. A motion to approve the plan was made by Frank Rogers and seconded by Gary Shanaberger. All were in favor, and the motion passed.

6. Presentation: Central Virginia Commuter Assistance Program Strategic Plan

Reggie introduced CVPDC staff member Ada Hunsberger who gave a presentation on the Central Virginia Commuter Assistance Program Strategic Plan. Ada thanked the Board and gave a brief overview of the new program. The PDC has had a long-standing commuter assistance program which was part of a multi-regional collaboration called Ride Solutions. Over the past year, DRPT has made some changes to the operations of its statewide commuter assistance program.

Ada explained, “Those changes brought us to the idea that maybe we needed to come up with a stronger commuter program locally. To align further with the statewide branding and to get something established that’s more familiar on the local level, working with DRPT and local partners, we’ve come up with a rebranded program called Central Virginia Commuter Services. This program is starting fresh, so that means a new website, new logo, and new marketing. The message is concise, this is that we’re doing in Central Virginia, which will help us promote our local program instead of the multi-regional (approach).”

For several years, CVPDC has applied for funding through the DRPT to fund the Commuter Assistance Program. New funding requirements necessitated the development of a strategic plan. Over the past 18 months, staff, together with statewide partners and community volunteers (the steering committee), have worked together to create this plan.

The purpose of the strategic plan is to guide the programming activities and ensure resources are being used most effectively. The plan is data-driven and establishes the mission, goals, objectives, and performance measures by which the program will be evaluated. This five-year plan will be updated annually so that staff can continually evaluate the plan and the strategies used to ensure they are most effective.

The purpose and the goals of the Commuter Assistance Program are these three key points

- increase transit ridership;
- to increase car and van pools in our region, walking and/or biking; and
- to get involved with local employers to initiate commuter benefit programs. This DRPT grant funding will allow for free resources employers can pass onto the employees.

Next steps are holding a public comment period from October 1 through the 31. Staff will ask for consideration of adoption at the next meeting November 21, 2024. In order to, be eligible for grant funding next year, DRPT requires the plan to be adopted by November 24.

Frank Rogers asked for more information about the strategies to connect with employers. Ada said that the document will list strategies that staff will use. Ada also shared some examples of how she has been going out to the business networking meetings being held by the Chamber. Ada and Kelly will also be doing a Podcast for a Chamber. Staff will also make direct contact with businesses. Staff is working with DRPT to connect with employers who might be interested in starting a vanpool program.

Tom Lawton asked if this program would assist with taking people to medical appointments. Ada stated that the program focuses on people's commute to work.

7. Presentation: Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Research

Reggie introduced Mariel Fowler, senior planner with the CVPDC, who will present her research into Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure. Mariel stated that this request came from the TPO committee, asking for information to see what programs are available to localities to expand their EV infrastructure as the demand grows in the region. Erin Belt, Program Manager with VDOT gave a presentation about the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) program to the TPO, and based on questions from the presentation, Mariel did her research.

The two questions from that meeting were

- What resources are out there to assist localities pursue federal funding?
- How can the CVPDC help?

Mariel found a lot of available resources like mapping and data analysis locator projection tools and technical assistance programs that are ready to work with localities one on one. There are also grant funding opportunities like VDOT's statewide NEVI program and the Federal Charging and Fueling Infrastructure funding.

Mariel went on to describe an effort that staff can undertake to enhance potential future applications and prepare for the next round of funding. Currently, most of the competitive grants are closed, but how can staff start preparing for funding now for next year. Today, staff seeks direction from this Board to continue with this effort. If the Board approves moving forward, the Virginia Clean Cities (VCC) is willing to provide support and assistance for the development of a regional plan.

Frank asked the questions, "Is this an appropriate role for government? Is there not a private-sector solution to this? What are all the localities stepping into this instead of waiting for Target or Sheetz to come to it?"

Mariel explained that VDOT's NEVI program encourages that public-private partnership. The program says to have the locality apply for the funding and the vendor provides the 20%. Sometimes the site host will be a locality-owned facility. Alec commented that in the packet VCC has sent a draft scope of work that is for your consideration. CVPDC would be happy to assist with this if the Board wishes to move forward.

Tom Lawson asked, "How many charging stations are in our area? Would that include buses? AltaVista schools are using them."

Mariel said she can forward the link to the website that has that information. Frank asked for the data breakdown for our area. As of 2021, there were 500 and as of 2023 there are 926.

Reggie asked if the Board would like to have more time to review the information and revisit it at our next meeting. Frank agreed with the Chair. Reggie asked Alec to get all the information to the commissioners for review; and then at the next meeting, they would readdress.

8. Organizational Reports

b. Financial Report – Fiscal year 2025

Alec asked Sandy Dobyons to update the Board on the Year-End and July Financial Reports. Sandy explained that the YE Report has not changed, it is the same as she previously reported. CVPDC did come in under budget. Sandy stated that the audit is still being worked on. The July report looked fine – nothing unexpected.

b. Executive Director’s Report

i. Annual Audit Update

Alec mentioned that he and the Chair had a Letter of Engagement to sign for the auditors. The audit should be completed and able to be presented in January.

ii. On-Call Consultant bench update

Alec updated the Board on a Procurement Directors and Purchasing Officers lunch that the CVPDC will host. CVPDC did this last year and wanted to give procurement agents the opportunity to meet the new Department of General Services Representative for our region, Kimberly Mitchell. During the meeting, CVPDC will share the On-Call Consultants bench that will be uploaded to our website. These consultants can provide planning, architectural, and/or engineering services. At the request of Robert Hiss, Alec has gathered information about on-call grant writers as well. That will be made available.

Alec deferred to Megan Lucas from Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance who gave an update on the current rail study. She explained that it’s a result of the previous request by Senator Newman for an inland rail port. The region did not win that study, so Senator Newman requested this study. There are no surprises in the study; it has good information but says to do more studies. “What we were hoping the study would identify in the region are the potential rail serve industrial sites. We can look at our own localities’ industrial sites and say ‘It’s got rail; we know that will work.’” Megan further stated, “If we want that information we’ll have to do another study.”

9. Other Business

Gary Shanaberger mentioned that they received a letter from DEQ asking for contact information for our Regional Water Supply Plan. “Are we going to do this as a region or is every locality going to be responsible for this?”

Frank commented that CVPDC has taken the lead on this in the past but thinks they had received a grant to do the work. Frank would like the CVPDC to do that again but understands there is no compensation being offered at this time by the DEQ. Frank believes a coordinated response would be best but not sure what the budget might be, not only dollars but staff time. Alec stated that he would be going to the Virginia Association of PDCs in Charlottesville and will discuss there and get back to the Board.

The Chair mentioned that if your locality has anything you’d like to work on this upcoming year please reach out to Alec or himself.

10. Adjournment

The motion to adjourn was entertained by the Chair. Megan made a motion to adjourn, and Tom seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 6:06 PM.

X _____
Signature attest Date