

**PLACE Design Task Force Minutes  
December 13, 2018 - 12:00- 2:00 p.m.  
Neighborhood Development Services  
Conference Room, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor City Hall**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Michael Stoneking, Chris Henry, Fred Wolf, Lena Seville, Andrew Mondeschein, Serena Gruia, Kathy Galvin, and Mark Rylander

**STAFF PRESENT:** Alex Ikefuna, Carrie Rainey, Jeff Werner and Kari Spitler

**CALL TO ORDER**

Mike Stoneking called the PLACE Design Task Force Meeting to order at 12:10 p.m.

**1. MATTERS BY THE PUBLIC (5 minutes)**

**Sean Tubbs:** Notes that the Board of Supervisors in Albermarle County adopted the Rio Road Small Area Plan yesterday encourages members to take a look at it to see what that type of plan would look like

**2. EMMET STREET STREETScape PRESENTATION (60 minutes)**

**Presenters: John Stuart, Clark Nexsen and Michael Callahan, EPR**

Purpose of presentation is to provide an update on the project

The project was awarded funds to construct it and the objective is to provide multimodal improvements to complete streets that work for all users and make the area more inviting.

The process began by surveying for the project, for which a multimodal traffic study was conducted.

They are currently in the stage of locking in preliminary designs and incorporating improvements that will meet the needs of the project. Final design is expected to be towards end of next year. In May 2021, they are projected to make final plans and begin construction and to complete the project by 2023.

They have had active public engagement throughout the process and have gotten a lot of good feedback guiding them on things that would and would not work in the area. Currently, there is an active survey open for comments on the project at <http://www.emmetstreetscape.com> and will remain open until the concepts are ready to get input on.

On April 18 a Steering Committee meeting was held, followed by the first community meeting on May 12. Following this was a CAT/UTS meeting on August 9 and then a UVA student information meeting on September 17. There were 25 people at the first community meeting, where they went on a walking tour that provided a lot of helpful feedback. During this meeting they learned about several community concerns, particularly regarding the speed limit of the road. Most feedback encouraged them to slow the speed limit of the road and make it walkable/bikeable, but this was not a unanimous response. Another key question of concern was determining if the tunnel should be located on the east or west side. Smart scale recommended the east, however according to public engagement, they would prefer to see it on the west side. About 20 UVA students attended the student meeting and it was determined that bike and pedestrian facilities were of major interest to students. They gave overwhelming support for a physical separation from traffic for safety to travel. Students also wanted to put the shared-use path on the east side, but again majority of the community still prefer the west side, as the vote is split at 60/40.

**Mike Stoneking:** Asks what the difference is between the shared-use path bike lane, bike lane and pedestrian lane

**Michael Callahan:** States that it is a little redundant and they have asked UVA if a bike lane is needed with the shared-use path in place. Notes that the shared-use path is better for recreational bikers and pedestrians that don't feel comfortable being close to traffic and the bike lane is better for faster traffic

**Lena Seville:** Asks to confirm that there is a bike lane, shared-use path but no sidewalk

**Michael Callahan:** Notes that there will be a 7 foot sidewalk on the east side, a buffer of 6 feet, and then a raised bike lane next to the curb. The west side is the shared-use path that functions as the sidewalk

**Chris Henry:** Why not make roads skinnier and increase shared use path to 25-30 feet?

**John Stuart:** They are using reduced lane widths already to incorporate the bike lane and shared-use path. Separation is needed between the bike lane and shared-use path

**Lena Seville:** There has been a lot of pushback on having the cars separated by a green buffer and then the bikes/pedestrians because our government treats bikes more as cars, whereas other countries treat them more as an offshoot of pedestrian traffic. It's unfamiliar so the consultants are hesitant to do it

**Michael Callahan:** Notes a practical issue that they've experienced throughout the project is the railroad bridge is 40 feet between the columns and there's only funding for one tunnel, which means having shared-use paths on both sides isn't possible. Shared-use guidelines are usually 8-12 feet and the tunnel is projected at 10 feet right now

**John Stuart:** There is a lot of established guidance on having a separate bike lane path that is dedicated solely for bikes

**Kathy Galvin:** Notes that there is a multi-use trail on the east side of the John Warner Parkway and there are on-street lanes. The topography is also important and it all depends on what if bikers are in a hurry or in a contemplative mode, and it depends on what people are used to. Notes there is no friction with this project because there's no built form on the adjacencies of the street, but is concerned that the road will be very fast because there are no buildings nearby

**Mike Stoneking:** Notes that people are worried about the extra lane that promotes the extra width and speed. If you can get rid of a whole lane by having the multi-use path, the asphalt would be narrower

**Michael Callahan:** A road diet was studied regarding this, but doesn't believe this road would ever become a fast road

**John Stuart:** Putting an in-lane bike lane was considered but the raised and the mountable curb bike lane will provide safety and protection from vehicles

**Serena Gruia:** Asks what guidance is received by the firm on how to create an engagement plan

**Michael Callahan:** Notes that they collaborated with city to create an engagement plan and every project is a thoughtful project. For example, the walkthrough for this project was very insightful and provided a lot of good feedback. All of the plans are unique to each project

**Andrew Mondeschein:** Regarding the issue of friction, notes that if the Ivy garage turn is being eliminated that wouldn't be any turns from Massie down to Ivy Road. Doesn't like that there needs to be two lanes headed southbound, but rather to have a right turn lane at Massie and then the road would be viable for pedestrian traffic. It's not built environment friction, but rather traffic friction because the traffic stops there anyway. Beyond that, it's a very slow two lane roadway with pedestrians frequently crossing and it's unfortunate that this project can't be made more of a complete street because the traffic is slow and it's still going to be backed up somewhere no matter what you do

**Michael Callahan:** Agrees that the area suffers from a lack of connectivity. One issue they've noticed is at night the connections are often missed. Notes that the traffic count on Emmet is 26,000 vehicles, so it is handling a lot of traffic per day

**Kathy Galvin:** There is nothing on Emmet at this point that would be a pedestrian generator and UVA is focused on turning Ivy into a pedestrian street. The university wants to keep open space leading up to the gateway and there is nothing we can do about that so it's going to remain a fast road. Notes the only pedestrian traffic is on game day

**Michael Callahan:** There are about 1,000 travelers per day

**Andrew Mondeschein:** The quality of the street will change and agrees that it is not planned to be urban. Notes there is an opportunity here because the traffic has to slow down anyway just past Ivy Road and we shouldn't build in a more vehicular pattern when it will be slowed naturally most of the time

**Chris Henry:** Notes there is an overwhelming private sector demand to draw in traffic for commercial use in these high traffic areas

**Andrew Mondeschein:** Agrees, but notes that it will be difficult for students to cross those intersections. Has no interest in widening the intersections because of safety reasons

**John Stuart:** The multimodal study recommends reducing the speed limit to 25 mph from Ivy to Massie and then 35 mph north of Massie

**Lena Seville:** Asks if the CAT/UTS meeting was primarily about bus stops or were there other discussions

**John Stuart:** The meeting was all about bus stops and their engagement was very helpful to determine that the best plan would be to have three curbside bus stops with shelters and the best location of the new bus stops would be north of the Goodwin Bridge

**John Stuart:** Continues presentation by looking at some of the concepts used for public engagement. They incorporated the shared-use path, the best bike lane configuration, whether a mid-block crossing at would be appropriate underneath the overpass, the width of the lanes, and working with the transit and bus operators. Some of the preferred concepts that have been decided upon are the 10 foot shared-use path, 6 foot greenway, a 2.6 foot wide mountable curb and gutter, 10 foot southbound right turn lane, a 6

foot bike lane, a 10 and an 11 foot southbound lane from Ivy up to the railroad. The northbound lane would have an 11 foot northbound lane, 5 foot bike lane, a mountable curb, 6 foot greenway, and a 7 foot sidewalk. This gets as many of the key design features in as possible

**Lena Seville:** States that the green paint might be critical for that stretch at Emmy Street at Ivy Road for safety reasons because they are so wide and to be sure that oncoming traffic recognizes that they are bike lanes. Asks if there are buffers for the bike lanes

**John Stuart:** There will be 6 foot bike lanes but currently there are not buffers

**Mike Stoneking:** Asks why the median in the third sector is retained, as opposed to collapsing the road to be more like the middle sector. Believes it's an excuse for vehicles to go faster because it feels like a thruway. There is a rule for how big a median has to be and asks if it fits within that scope

**John Stuart:** It's a green pervious area. There is a 16 foot wide median that goes across and reconstructing the entire length of the road was most likely not accounted for in the budget and it would be an extensive reconstruction

**Tim Motsch:** Notes that UVA has a lot of input on the project and everyone has stated that preserving the median is important. With the project being multimodal, the goal is to balance the high traffic without choking them down. Looking forward people may question why there is so much pavement, however the land-use on either side is beyond the City's scope

**Mike Stoneking:** Believes that the area will eventually be a tight urban condition and the sooner the infrastructure projects that, the better. When the infrastructure follows the development, things get messy

**Tim Motsch:** Notes that is a valid point. Notes that they could study different options, while still allowing the traffic and the turns, to reduce the median and put greenspace on the outside of the road to see what it might look like

**Michael Callahan:** States that turn lane into the parking lot is UVA controlled and they have expressed that they want development potential there. UVA owns all but maybe two parcels in the corridor except for the road

**John Stuart:** Moving to the historic bridge, they are not planning to touch but they have to get the bike lanes within existing road width of 40 feet. There is a 10 and an 11 foot southbound lane, 10 foot northbound lane, 4 foot bike lane on the east side and the existing sidewalk in the current plan. They are coordinating closely with the railroad on the proposed tunnel.

**Mark Rylander:** Asks if there are plans to have any large canopy trees on the Massie Road to Arlington Boulevard area. Notes that is a great location for large canopy trees and it is an entrance corridor and notes that he does not recommend painting a pervious surface green in a diagram because it is deceptive

**John Stuart:** There are plans for trees, but discussions have not been made yet regarding what kinds of trees would be planted there

**Mark Rylander:** Where the existing trees are being preserved, has anyone spoken with the city forester about the condition of those trees and asks if they are worth saving/ would it kill them to have them surrounded by pavement

**John Stuart:** Have not spoken with the city forester but it would be a good question to look into. The intent is to keep them if they are in good condition

**Fred Wolf:** Asks if there were any pervious pavement areas in this project, as it could provide the added benefit of surface absorption

**John Stuart:** It is an option that is looked at in most projects, but it has not come up yet in this project so it would be unlikely at this point. The current plan for the storm water is to use a system to draw it underneath the sidewalk

**Mike Stoneking:** Asks what the strategies are to make it aware to the public that there will be a reduced width on the Massie to Arlington area

**John Stuart:** There would be some signage that there will be a reduced width but 7 foot is the minimum you'd want for a shared-use path. Bikes would have to cross to the west side when the lane ends and use the normal crosswalk

**Michael Callahan:** Notes that they plan to use a two-stage turn box at Massie rather than a bike box

**Serena Gruia:** Asks if companies ever produce VR experiences to test design and usability with the public. Notes that it would be more beneficial to put the money upfront to do that instead of changing it in the future

**John Stuart:** To a degree it could be done, but they haven't seen a lot of it yet. It would be a great idea though. They did a 3D model of a roundabout to communicate better with the public in Henrico County.

Notes they've incorporated the shared-use path tunnel under the railroad. The existing railroad bridge is a historic bridge built in 1934 and it's a fairly active railroad. At this point the west location is optimal place to put it. From a structural standpoint, they are looking at making it circular but discussions are still in progress to ensure that it is visually appealing and safe. It is planned to be about 80-100 feet

**Serena Gruia:** Advocates for an art instillation in the tunnel because there will be an echo within it

**John Stuart:** Notes that the project is in compliance with the Comprehensive Plan and everything is in compliance. The next steps are to meet with the Planning Commission next week for a work session. An informational meeting is scheduled for the spring, the project scoping is in June, and the public hearing will roughly be next fall.

**Mike Stoneking:** Notes that PLACE has an obligation to write a memo to the Planning Commission. Confirms with members that primary questions and concerns were regarding the turn lane on Ivy and if it is necessary, the shortening of the intersection that could result in the safety issues with the bike lane if it were removed, asking if the shared bike plan on the east that terminates should be expanded the whole way on the east side, studying the median further, and the commitment to large canopy trees. Requests to

see the tunnel after a plan has been designed to further to help mitigate the issues that could arise just by the nature of tunnels.

**Serena Gruia:** How might the feedback from the public meeting in May be incorporated into the June deadline? Realistically how much impact would that have?

**Tim Motsch:** The meeting was weighted towards having the tunnel on the west side and the public informed them on how to handle that. Public outreach also informed the city to have vertically separated bike paths where possible, both of which informed the decision to have the meeting. VDOT also requires them to have a meeting and hopefully the public can look at the updates and provide feedback

**John Stuart:** Answers that most of the core elements would be addressed by that time, so major shifts would try to be avoided, but there would still be an opportunity to modify the design if serious issues were raised

**Serena Gruia:** When you have the meetings, do the public view the contractors as city employees or contractors?

**Michael Callahan:** Notes that they try to be very careful to introduce ourselves as contractors so the public is very aware of that

Presentation Concluded at 1:40 pm

**Mike Stoneking:** Notes that it could be helpful for the PLACE committee to see plans like these earlier on in the developmental stage so they could provide more input. Asks Bike/Ped PLACE members to provide clarity on the raised bike path versus the separated bike path

**Tim Motsch:** Notes that it was less of an issue between a raised vs horizontal structure and more of having the greenspace between the area, as well as the number of driveways that are crossed by going up and down the road

**Lena Seville:** Reiterates that the green bicycle lanes on the diagram cause a lot of confusion between them and the greenspace areas and recommends another color is used going forward

### **3. DOWNTOWN MALL AREA IN FRONT OF CODE BUILDING DISCUSSION (30 minutes)**

**Mark Rylander:** Tree commission received a presentation that showed temporary construction staging that will require removing trees, ramps of the skating rink are being removed, and the design process is structured to put it back the way it was. The tree Commission saw this as a missed opportunity and because construction will take 3 years, there might be an opportunity for PLACE to initiate a process to design the mall more thoughtful and comprehensively

**Fred Wolf:** The path is not ADA accessible and it is not part of the historic mall, so we can take advantage for the project and put it back in a way that promotes trees

**Jeff Werner:** Notes that the mall will be dug up at that end and put back together. The only thing approved for the Vinegar Hill Park is signage and a few narrative marks and the City allotted \$15,000 for that. There are limitations on what they can do to put it back together that aligns with how much they planned to spend

**Fred Wolf:** Notes that there are limited ways to arrange the space to make it ADA accessible because of the constraints of the building

**Jeff Werner:** The big idea phase was discussed and they looked at it to see what would happen if it got redesigned into a huge \$10 million project and the conclusion was that it would never happen. That being said, they are trying to create a design that facilitates ADA and to go forward with the assumption that there is no city funding except for the \$15,000 for signage

**Mike Stoneking:** Comments that they do not want to extend the design of the building onto the space. That space is an extension of the mall and it's a perfect opportunity for the west streetscape and the mall and would make a better entryway threshold from Water Street. If this can opportunity can be taken advantage of because of something that's going to happen naturally because of construction, it should be pursued

**Mark Rylander:** It seems like a waste to build something and then go back and make additional changes to it. If this were to happen, the goal would be to finish it when construction finishes, which would be in the first quarter of 2021

**Mike Stoneking:** When it comes to place making, it is not good practice to put back what was already there. Advocates somehow creating funding for design, regardless of whether or not it can be implemented immediately

**Jeff Werner:** There were concerns from the Historic Resources Committee about the park not being delivered and there were a lot of opportunities, however it quickly became establishing something that the developer couldn't finish and the City couldn't fund, which means the project would be put back together exactly how it was. They wanted to design it in a way that was ADA accessible and incorporate some things but they wanted to keep it within the constraints that they were originally proposed

**Lena Seville:** What if it was approached in an aspect of short and long term goals?

**Jeff Werner:** Thinks it's a great idea but in the context of what is going on right now it becomes an either/or answer and they would like to move forward with a project in a positive way

#### **4. NEW BUSINESS (15 minutes)**

**Mike Stoneking:** For the next meeting, Tim Mohr would like to add the Minneapolis discussion about ending single-family zoning on the agenda, and Chris Henry would like to add the NACTO discussion about the heightened public safety risks directly related to wider streets designed for large emergency and service vehicles

#### **5. MATTERS BY THE PUBLIC (10 minutes)**

None