



Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation Multimodal and Public Space Design Guidelines

Steering Committee Meeting #2
June 15, 2011, 10:00am – 2:00pm

Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission, Water Street Center
Charlottesville, Virginia

The overall goal of the Multimodal and Public Space Design Guidelines is to expand upon the existing Transit Service Design Guidelines (November 2008) and other related efforts by developing a set of statewide guidelines for multimodal planning and public space design at the corridor, district and transit station area scales. The scope of the guidelines will also include guidance on Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies and discussions of multimodal planning approaches most relevant to the Virginia context. The project's Steering Committee, comprised of local government staff, planning district commission/MPO staff, transit agencies, VDOT, and other state agency staff representing a broad cross section of viewpoints, met for a second time on Wednesday, June 15, 2011, from 10AM to 2PM to review concepts thus far and provide further guidance on the direction of the project. The meeting consisted of a presentation and group discussion to review an outline of the content of the guidelines and a walking tour of downtown Charlottesville to assess existing conditions of the urban fabric, design elements, and network connectivity, which provided additional input on content the design guidelines can address.

The major objectives of this meeting were to:

- Discuss and agree on the overall content and structure of the guidelines
- Experience and observe real world multimodal conditions

Meeting Participants

1. Nick Alexandrow, Potomac & Rappahannock Transportation Commission
2. Bee Buergler, Arlington Co. Dept. of Environmental Services Transportation Division
3. Wayne Cilimberg, Albemarle County
4. Austin Clark, Virginia Regional Transit Association
5. Scott Clark, GRTC Transit System
6. Cristina Finch, Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission
7. Robin Grier, VDOT/ VASITE
8. Jennifer Hibbert, Central Shenandoah PDC
9. Sean Kennedy, WMATA
10. Mike Latiff, Amtrak Stations Development/ ADA Program
11. Rebecca Martin, Blacksburg Transit
12. Mark McGregor, Virginia Regional Transit Association
13. Linda McMinimy, VA Transit Association
14. Sandi McNinch, VA Economic Development Partnership
15. Clara Meier, Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission
16. Peter Ohlms, JAUNT, Inc
17. Gary Okerlund, University of Virginia
18. Benito Perez, Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization
19. Daniel Reese, FAMPO/ GW Regional Commission
20. Sarah Rhodes, Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission
21. Mike Royster, Virginia Department of Health
22. Mark Schnauer, City of Virginia Beach
23. Elijah Sharp, New River Valley Planning District Commission
24. Glen Slonneger, Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired
25. William Wuensch, VASITE

Teleconference Participants

1. Mike Carroll, Greater Lynchburg Transit Company
2. Nancy Lo, VA Department for the Aging

Summary of Key Reactions and Observations

- There is a need for compatibility between these guidelines and other statewide codes and standards (e.g. VDOT's standards and the Virginia State Code)
- There is a need for case studies to showcase how localities in Virginia have overcome political and fiscal obstacles to implementation.
- Consider connectivity between different transects or place types and on different scales.
- The language and methodology of the guidelines needs to be clear and easily understood, especially in the explanation of the transect zones and place types.
- Both pedestrian infrastructure and strong anchors (destinations) are needed to make a place walkable.
- Build partnerships with public health and housing communities and other non-traditional partners.

Flip Chart Notes from Group Discussion on Guidelines Content and Organization:

- Concern about fate of small urban MPOs and state funding for regional infrastructure.
- Need sheet of acronyms (MPO, etc.)
- Concern over the density and timing of usage and jobs/housing balance within the nodes.
- Provide guidance on connectivity between different transects and place types.
- Add multimodal functional zones to table of contents.
- Suggest locating place types according to Secondary Street Acceptance Requirements context zones.
- Need to clarify multimodal corridor intensity zones and multimodal context.
- Note the significant obstacles (citizen, fiscal, etc.) to connectivity at the local level.
- Need to look at the more rural areas (T-1 to T-3) especially in a countywide context and the need to lay the infrastructure framework.
- Consider using vanpools and rideshare as a multimodal way to connect T1 and T2 transect zones.
- Challenge of creating a level playing field between fringe/ Greenfield development and infill/ retrofit development because of the cost differential.
- Challenge of dealing with growth in traffic as areas evolve and get denser.
- Need to be aware of Virginia limitations in State Code on financing transportation improvements.
- Need to have a section on overcoming obstacles in general (e.g. clear zones on streets that need multimodal improvements).
- Need Steering Committee to provide feedback on Table of Contents and typical obstacles (ask colleagues too).
- Need to address protection of land in the T-1 natural zone.
- Consider legislative advocacy for multimodalism and legislative or state agency policies that need to be changed.
- Contact colleagues or create a survey on Survey Monkey to ask about multimodal obstacles.
- Look at proffers as a way to implement and what localities in VA are doing.
- Identify natural and geographic barriers to connectivity (e.g. topography, water, etc.) that dictate where development happens.

- Need to explain methodology for establishing the transect zones and place types in a locality.
- Build collaborations with non-traditional partners to look at public health and housing impacts of multimodal improvements. Need to carve out time at next meeting for Mike Royster to explain health connections to this effort.
- Look at Brookings Institution study on transit and jobs connection.
- Need to flesh out TDM chapter.

Walkabout Observations:

Group 1

- Full bike racks demonstrate bike activity and demand for facilities. No bikes allowed on pedestrian mall; need to establish alternate bike route.
- Water Street is a major transit corridor.
- Court Square is missing strong anchors that would tie it to the transit corridor. The pedestrian mall has great anchors (Omni Hotel and Pavillion).

Group 2

- Area has a diverse mix of uses.
- Need more signage for way-finding and for bicyclists and pedestrians, particularly for bike racks at the transit center.
- Sidewalk impediments present access issues.
- Good ADA facilities: pebble texture at curb ramps, audible cross walk signals, flashing lights in pavement
- Context often determines motorists' awareness for pedestrians. Drivers in the suburbs are not as attentive as those in a downtown.

Group 3

- Way-finding signage needed to "find the hidden gems" (e.g. shortcuts to the pedestrian mall)
- Poor ADA facilities. Need to fix sidewalks.
- Very walkable context.
- Stark difference between residential area to the south and downtown area.
- Needs more connectivity
- Public investment vs. market demand – which comes first? It takes time to plan and invest. Need to keep focus on the process and stand ground on continued investment for long term return.
- Good major anchors on the pedestrian mall
- Narrow sidewalks have tripping hazards and are challenging to retrofit.
- Transit center is located close to the pedestrian mall and visitor center creating good proximity to destinations.
- Parking structures create dead zones. Why were they built?
- Need more recreational services, especially a full service grocery store. Parking for grocery stores in downtown areas is a challenge. Can provide a structured deck. Many people walk with collapsible carts.
- Need to put the utilities underground to achieve a Complete Street.

Group 4

- Area is walkable and overall has a good sidewalk network.
- Good public spaces exist including Court Square.
- Some older sidewalks are deteriorated.
- The transit center has sidewalks on all sides but lacks way-finding signage.
- There is not a lot of parking for the section of downtown near the Pavillion except for private lots.
- Public health irony at the transit center: The building is LEED certified and there are no smoking signs posted, but the air is filled with exhaust from the buses.

Group 5

- Saw bicyclists on the road, but no bike infrastructure except for bike racks at the transit center.
- Saw lots of walking, good for public health.
- Area lacks a grocery store; needs access to healthy food.
- The pedestrian mall provides a good social atmosphere.
- Public housing is integrated into the urban fabric and has access to public amenities. This statewide plan should address equity for low income groups including the location and design for access.
- Major employers in the downtown area help to integrate the urban fabric.

Action Items for Next Meeting:

- Create sheet of acronyms.
- Update Steering Committee contact list with today's participants.
- Prepare additional tent cards for new members.
- Receive comments on Table of Contents from Steering Committee members by July 1, 2011.
- Obtain feedback from Steering Committee members and colleagues on obstacles to achieving multimodal transportation facilities and places either through email or survey.
- Include discussion for nontraditional partners with commitment to the same issues (public health community, housing department, etc.) on next meeting agenda, specifically Mike Royster with Virginia Department of Health to explain public health connections to this effort.