

Hydraulic Community Advisory Committee Minutes Monday, December 12, 2022 | 5:30pm-7:00pm

IN-PERSON MEETING – Greer Elementary Media Center

ATTENDEES:

Kate Acuff, Julian Bivins, Vitto Cetta, James Clemenko, Rudy Fernandez, Jane Foy, James Groves, Jessica Hersh-Ballering (Principal Planner – Transportation, Albemarle County); Kate Lambert (CEO of Boys and Girls Club), Bill Love, Diantha McKeel, Rosemary Miller, Cynthia Neff, Chris Rembolt, Kim Swanson, Garland Williams (Director of Transit, Charlottesville Area Transit / CAT)

Diantha McKeel called the meeting to order (Chair Yolanda Speed and Vice Chair Kim were both unavailable at the beginning of the meeting). Before approving the September minutes, Bill Love had two changes: 1.) Katrina Callsen had been listed as District Attorney, but she is actually the Rio representative for the Albemarle County School Board. 2.) At one point in the minutes, it stated 50% of Albemarle County students attend schools in the Lambs Lane campus. The correct number is 25%. Cynthia Neff called to approve minutes from the September 2022 meeting and Bill Love seconded the approval. The group approved the September Minutes WITH CHANGES.

James made the motion to approve October Minutes. Vitto Cetta seconded. Everyone agreed to approve October minutes.

AGENDA:

1. CAT (Charlottesville Area Transit): the Present and the Future

Garland Williams, Director of CAT

- FY22&23 Expanded Bus Amenities. CAT recently went through an assessment program to look at all bus stops, bus shelters, etc.
- DRPT (Virginia Department of Rail and Transit) gives capital money and some operating money to do these types of projects.
- Why are they looking at all bus stops? Enhance streetscape and accessibility, safety, ease of maintenance for CAT, consistency of the CAT brand (recognition of bus system), improved passenger amenities, a functional shelter that fits into the context of the area.
- There is an issue of confusion among riders between City and County bus programs.
- CAT applied for and received a grant for \$300,000 for improvements to bus shelters. They did an extensive process looking at bus stop design – lots of options! Grant funding included paying for a consultant for design.
- One challenge will be installation, which will require permission from each location to install each bus stop. In Albemarle County, VDOT will be responsible for most of the permissions.
- The public participated in selecting bus stop design – public marketing campaign, survey, etc. Currently working through the model which incorporates the best parts of each design into a custom design specific to our area. Final designs should be ready at the end of January.
- Working to incorporate artwork into the bus stop designs.
- Kim Swanson and Bill Love asked about whether the shelters protect people from the weather / having a deeper or more enclosed shelter would be more effective against the weather. Mr. Williams educated the group about the difference between a “shelter” and a building, according to VDOT. Most shelters must be less than 5’ deep in order to be in compliance with VDOT. If they

are larger, it gets much more costly and complicated, and could include having the purchase easements.

- Diantha asked about some bus stops that she's noticed, which have sides. Mr. Williams confirmed that these are older bus stops which have been grandfathered in. There are some standard models, which have two sides, but much less seating. Leaving the front open and sides closed is the current direction CAT is leaning towards. Diantha also confirmed that CAT is prioritizing some bus stops over others, depending on which are used more. CAT is being diligent about deciding which bus stops to invest in and want to ensure they will be permanent bus stops.
- Diantha advocated for artwork at some of the bus stops in order to create a "sense of place." Not all bus stops will have art, but Mr. Williams confirmed that incorporating art is in the plan!
- There are currently over 600 bus stops between the City and the County. \$300,000 would upgrade 50-75 bus stops, depending on how much engineering is involved with each stop.
- A model bus stop is being installed at Stonefield (should be installed in the next few weeks). Thanks to Northrop Grumman, funding has been provided for artwork at the Stonefield stop.
- James Groves asked about putting in "live" updates at bus stops to say "Bus 6 is five minutes away". Mr. Williams explained that our current system is predictive and not able to do this. CAT is currently working on a \$1 million grant to gain this technology. In order to have any electricity at the bus stops, VDOT won't allow it, but CAT is going to use Solar in order to possibly be able to implement this technology in the future.
- Bill Love shared his own experience with having some poor experiences with waiting for buses. When Mr. Williams started, the on time performance was 55%, now around 67%.
 - CAT has 36 buses. The diesel hybrid buses are the worst performing buses and very expensive to maintain. Buses cannot be retired until they have reached 12 years AND 350,000 miles.
 - The current push to "go electric" is unpredictable and Mr. Williams thinks now is not the time. Within five years, the technology will be better. The bus-buying process is long and complex.
- Kim Swanson asked about a bus stop on Commonwealth Avenue (?) with broken glass. No one is sure who installed the bus stop – probably the apartment complex. If that's the case, the apartment complex would be responsible for updating. Kim also asked about a specific bus stop in a neighbor's yard. Mr. Williams reminded the group that part of this assessment will be to look at *all* of the bus stops.
- Kate Lambert asked about the process for selecting artwork for future bus stops. Diantha explained that we're not at that point yet, but there will be a committee.
- Mr. Williams is focused on making sure they have the right equipment and the right people to keep the system working! The department is bare bones and they need more people in order to make CAT system more reliable.
- Diantha's hope is that there will be a transit authority to integrate the city, county – all the systems! Diantha shared with the group that a Micro Transit Pilot will take place around 29N and Pantops and will be a model similar to UBER (on-demand services). It has not been decided whether it will be operated by CAT or a third party. In the future, the system might have fewer fixed routes, plus the Micro Transit program to serve a larger area.
- Julian asked that CAT consider that people should be able to type in a destination and figure out how to get from Point A to Point B without having to navigate multiple bus systems. Diantha agreed and said that is the hopeful direction we are headed (with help from the Transit Authority).

2. AC Broadband and Connectivity

Mike Culp, Broadband Accessibility and Affordability Office

- Mission: Accomplish the county's mission by ensuring resident of all means have access to adequate and affordable broadband service, with Accessibility and Affordability.
- The understanding of Broadband has changed as internet needs have increased (being able to do multiple video conferencing simultaneously).
- Broadband internet includes above-ground wires and buried lines. Local companies include ComCast, CenturyLink (which is now BrightSpeed), Firefly, Ting, others
- Virginia Telecommunication Initiative Grant: Albemarle County has been the only County that has received this grant from the State every year. Requires a partnership between public and private entities – combines public and private funds to expand Broadband service.
- Virginia DHCD (LOOK THIS UP) – working with this group to expand
- Funding has come primarily from providers and State funding. By the end of 2025, there will be fiber internet everywhere in Albemarle County.
- There is now competition between multiple providers, which helps keeps costs lower.
- Addressing affordability: Broadband is essential for work, school, telehealth, engagement. Right now it's very expensive to have fast internet – more than \$65/month, which is unaffordable for many. (Many people in rural areas rely on wifi hotspots through their cell phone provider.)
- Affordability Programs:
 - ACP: Affordable Connectivity Program: Federal program providing up to \$30/month for internet. Currently 8,200 households are eligible, but only 1,600 currently participating. They are working with local nonprofits to get people signed up.
 - Comcast Internet Essentials Partnership Program (IEPP): no-cost broadband program for ACPS households who participate in the School Lunch Program (as long as they can connect with Comcast). Seniors and others not involved in the school system are now also eligible.
 - NEW ACP Bridge Supplement: New County program that provides up to an additional \$20 per month to Albemarle County households.
- Regional digital equity program has digital navigators helping Albemarle County residents helping people get signed up for affordability programs and get Broadband at home.
- This group deals with Broadband issues and outages, advocate for updates, working to achieve universal access, develop and support programs that address digital inclusion, and promote affordability programs.
- Bill Love asked about improvements to people who already have broadband service. Mike offered to escalate any personal issues and advocate.
- Kim Swanson asked about Ting – this group had heard a presentation from Ting long ago and Ting services are still not in this area. Why are they running to other areas and not our area? Diantha explained that Ting wants to go to newer neighborhoods and denser neighborhoods. Our area is more "door to door" and much more expensive to Ting. Older neighborhoods will likely not get Ting internet.
- Julian explained a bit of background behind the frustration
- Vitto Cetta asked about his neighborhood, where they have comcast. Will this service be improved or any competition being brought in the neighborhood? Mike confirmed that they will

likely not upgrade anything until the Federal Government requires upgrades of Coax cables (which is not as effective as direct fiber lines).

- Rosemary asked about a comparison to other surrounding counties – do other counties have the same goals (full broadband coverage by 2025)? Mike explained that the real goal is to get the whole region connected.

3. Board of Supervisors, Planning Commission and School Board Updates

- Kate Acuff, Albemarle County School Board
 - A school board member recently resigned. Many people applied for the position and all interviews were conducted publicly online. The position will be filled soon.
 - Meeting with legislators this week to advocate for Mental Health in schools (provide more funding for mental health services in schools);
 - Focusing on funding for buses/transportation (currently have 160-180 buses, but not enough drivers). The salary has increased.
 - The School Board has developed Albemarle County Public Education Fund, which is now taking donations!
- Julian Bivins, Planning Commission
 - Commission heard about Old Ivy Road, which failed. The project will move on
 - Woodridge Solar project – a solar system off southeastern part of the County. The property is approximately 1000 acres, a former tree farm to be used as a solar project. The planning commission will hear this project soon.
 - On the Comp Plan, the staff is looking at the future of zoning ordinances. If people are interested, the group is meeting at 4pm tomorrow.
- Diantha McKeel, Board of Supervisors
 - Working on CIP, financial planning, and strategic plan
 - VDOT sent in street sweeper! Albemarle County has put money into a street sweeper (starting next spring/summer). The public schools have a contest to name the street sweeper!
 - For the future, the Board is talking about establishing a public works department, along with a Transit Authority.
- Kate Lambert, Boys and Girls Club
 - Boys and Girls Club building is coming! Currently in the completion fund. They had been waiting on breakers and electrical equipment, but anticipate certificate of occupancy at the end of February with hopes of opening after Spring Break.
 - After the new space opens, the Cherry Avenue space will continue to operate and be able to expand their services.
 - Initially, there will be 230 kids per day, with big plans. The CAC plans to tour the new facility in the near future.
- Jessica (Transportation Planner for the County):
 - Update on Sidewalks! Consultants are waiting on comments for their designs for Commonwealth Avenue Sidewalk Project. We should have approvals in January 2026 with the sidewalk completed by December 2026.
 - For the extra bit along Commonwealth leading to Charlotte Humphris Park, it is currently not included in the Commonwealth Avenue Sidewalk project because of

the high costs of construction. Diantha noted that she will push to possibly have this pushed through as a separate project.

- The school sidewalk project – connecting Greer, Journey, and Albemarle is near completion and should be complete in January 2023.

4. Other Business

- Diantha reminded the group about the Mingle and Jingle party!

Next meeting: