Albemarle County Planning Commission
Work Session and Regular Meeting
Draft Minutes May 6, 2025

The Albemarle County Planning Commission held a public meeting on Tuesday, May 6, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.

Members attending were Fred Missel, Chair; Luis Carrazana, Vice-Chair; Julian Bivins; Corey Clayborne; Karen Firehock (arrived at 6:04 p.m.); Nathan Moore; Lonnie Murray.

Members absent:

Other officials present were Michael Barnes, Director of Planning; Tonya Swartzendruber, Planning Manager; Kevin McDermott, Deputy Director of Planning; Andy Herrick, County Attorney; and Carolyn Shaffer, Clerk to the Planning Commissions.

Call to Order and Establish Quorum

Ms. Shaffer called the roll.

Mr. Missel established a quorum.

Mr. Missel stated that tonight's meeting was a work session and therefore there would not be input from the public tonight.

Consent Agenda

Mr. Clayborne motioned that the Planning Commission approved the Consent Agenda as presented. Mr. Carrazana seconded the motion, which carried unanimously (6-0). (Ms. Firehock was late)

Work Session

CCP202100002 AC44 Comp Plan Update – Transportation

Tonya Swartzendruber, Planning Manager, said that she was joined by several colleagues to discuss the Transportation Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan this evening. She said that per usual, they would review a summary of feedback received, consider community input, provide a chapter overview, and review the upcoming schedule. She said that this would be the time for questions, comments, and discussion on the proposed actions.

Ms. Swartzendruber said that tonight, they would focus on two key topics. She said that while these topics may require some background information, she would provide that at the end of their presentation as she typically did. She said that regarding previous feedback on transportation within the development area, it was stated to be essential to prioritize investments in these areas while focusing on safety, rural recreation, and rural character in the rural area.

Ms. Swartzendruber said that they aimed to enhance transit in the development areas by expanding MicroCAT services and maintaining a coordinated approach to trails and greenways,

ensuring connections to denser, more populated areas. She said that in the rural area, they planned to use data and community input to verify where people were already walking and biking, and then incrementally improve infrastructure in coordination with Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), such as shoulder widening. She said that safety improvements were also a priority in the rural areas, and they would provide a type and level of service, including on-demand paratransit and commuter transit.

Ms. Swartzendruber said that some community input themes for the development areas included providing safe, comfortable infrastructure, such as separated sidewalks and bike lanes, frequent and reliable transit, and reducing parking requirements and slow traffic. She said that there was also a concern about traffic congestion and the need for infrastructure to support growth without exacerbating congestion. She said that safety remained a top concern. She said that for the rural area, they aimed to explore and implement ways to make walking and biking safer, including small-scale improvements such as widening shoulders, adding signage, and developing off-street paths and trails. She said that next, they needed to consider continued transit options that were required, particularly in urban areas to meet daily needs.

Kevin McDermott, Deputy Director of Planning, said that it was noted that there were various concerns raised by the public, the Board, and the Planning Commission regarding the development area and the rural area. He said that he believed this was a key aspect they had been examining in the land use chapters, in terms of the differences between the development area and rural area. He said that these differences continued to manifest in the challenges they had identified with transportation.

Mr. McDermott said that specifically, the transportation needs and infrastructure in the development area and rural area differed significantly. He said that in the development area, they observed a high peak hour demand, fragmented multimodal networks, and limited funding and rising project costs. He said that the development area's costs were driven by the need to acquire and relocate existing facilities, including utilities, stormwater management, and other infrastructure.

Mr. McDermott said that the VDOT's ownership of roadways imposed high standards with limited flexibility, making it more difficult to secure approvals and complete projects in the development area. He said that in contrast, the rural area's primary concern was safety, with narrow, winding roads, limited clear zones, and a high rate of fatal and severe accidents, including wildlife collisions. He said that the rural area also struggled with an aging population lacking access to transit service, and there was a strong desire for biking and walking, recreation, and exercise.

Mr. McDermott said that this desire was not only driven by rural residents but also by those living in the development area, who sought to bike or run on rural roads that offered a more aesthetically pleasing and lower-traffic environment. He said that based on these differences, they had established two distinct transportation goals, one for the development area and one for the rural area.

Mr. McDermott said that in the development area, their primary focus was on increasing safe, comfortable, and accessible multimodal options for all users. He said that this was where they would see the most significant impact, due to the density, as more people would want to walk and bike to their daily trips. He said that this was a key focus of the development area. Additionally, they aimed to utilize placemaking to encourage people to walk, bike, and use transit.

Mr. McDermott said that in contrast, in rural areas, their goal was to improve the movement of goods, mostly on primary roads, including interstate highways and rail. He said that they also strove to connect rural area residents to the services and opportunities within the development area, such as jobs, shopping, and healthcare facilities. He said that they were committed to ensuring that rural area residents had good access to these necessities. He said that they were dedicated to supporting the land use strategies outlined in the AC44 rural and development area land uses.

Mr. McDermott said that this included the growth management policy, which directed future growth and density into development areas. He said that they also recognized that creating a high-quality multimodal transportation network took time and significant investment. He said that therefore, they must carefully select projects and prioritize them to maximize the impact of their efforts.

Mr. McDermott said that to achieve this, staff recommended developing a comprehensive multimodal transportation plan. He said that given the level of detail required, they suggested revisiting this topic in a separate plan. He said that some key elements of this transportation planning strategy included articulating a long-term strategy, prioritizing projects over time, and integrating land use and transportation planning to ensure that proposed transportation solutions aligned with recommended land uses and zoning updates.

Mr. McDermott said that they aimed to establish a multimodal network, focusing on transit, bike, and pedestrian routes, and identifying the best routes for travel throughout the County. He said that this process would also define typical cross-sections for future roadway design, allowing them to work with VDOT to develop road designs that met their needs. He said that by prioritizing projects based on limited resources and constraints, they could establish a consistent prioritization process, similar to their past project prioritization.

Mr. McDermott said that the primary objective was to develop a comprehensive transportation plan, with the multimodal plan being a crucial component. He said that this plan would also inform area and corridor plans, emphasizing the importance of the planning function in transportation. He said that the second objective focused on building out their bike and pedestrian network.

Mr. McDermott said that the third objective was about transit service. He said that the fourth was focused on ensuring that their road network supported personal vehicle travel. He said that the fifth objective examined regional and inter-City transportation, including primary roads, highways, interstates, airports, and rail, with the goal of integrating these systems.

Mr. McDermott said that next, they had a safety objective, aiming to improve safety for users of the system. He said that they finally aimed to address greenhouse gas emissions and climate change, recognizing the significant role transportation played in achieving their climate goals. He said that moving onto the rural area, their priority was to invest in projects that enhanced safety while maintaining the rural character of those roads.

Mr. McDermott said that their primary focus was on increasing connections for rural residents to commuter services, such as the Afton Express and JAUNT's connect routes. He said that they wanted to expand these existing services to rural areas, providing access to existing fixed-route

transit, while also addressing the need for paratransit services. He said that this would ensure equitable access to transportation for rural residents.

Mr. McDermott said that they also needed to address traffic fatalities and serious injuries, a major concern in rural areas. He said that to do this, they aimed to improve walking and biking opportunities in rural areas, recognizing that many residents lacked safe access to these options. He said that they would identify and enhance resources that supported walking and biking safety, providing a safer and more equitable transportation system for rural residents.

Ms. Swartzendruber said that they had discussed transportation issues in several of their chapters, including land use, environmental stewardship, a thriving economy, and housing. She said that it was apparent how these topics were interconnected within the plan. She said that with regard to their upcoming schedule; they planned to meet with the Board on May 28 to discuss this Transportation Chapter and gather their feedback. She said that their Cultural Resources Chapter would be sent to the Commission via email in the next couple of days, and they would be meeting with the Board on May 24 to discuss that.

Ms. Swartzendruber said that furthermore, there were several ways to engage with AC44, primarily through the Engage Albemarle website, which served as the best resource for up-to-date information. She said that their chapters and engagement activities were shared there. She said that any work sessions or activities would be posted on the main page, and the public could also sign up for emails and newsletters. She said that she would now turn it back to the Commission to discuss the focus topics for the Transportation Chapter.

Mr. Clayborne said that he was curious to know if there were any roads in the rural area that frequently experienced flooding. He said that if the answer was yes, he would like to know if the issue had been elevated to a point where they needed to consider mitigating measures as part of this project. He said that he did not see any mention of flooding in the document.

Mr. McDermott said that was a valid point. He said that he thought the idea of safety, ensuring their roads were safe and keeping them out of floodplains, may be partially related to this issue. He said that he agreed that it was an element they should be concerned with. He said that they utilized the knowledge base of their VDOT experts to identify areas where this had occurred, as they continually addressed flooding issues. He said that they heard from people in the field, which reinforced the importance of keeping an eye on this issue. He said that it was reasonable to consider incorporating this aspect of safety into their rural area planning as well.

Mr. Clayborne said that he wanted to ask staff to consider whether it was an issue that should be explicitly stated or implicit in their planning.

Mr. Murray said that he agreed it was a very important point. He said that roads had been built in the past by following the path of least resistance, with many constructed adjacent to streams. He said that he was not sure it was practical, but he had long considered the possibility of relocating roads like the one on Sugar Ridge, perhaps purchasing an alternative route to bring it away from the stream. He said that he was not sure how they could approach this issue in a way that was sustainable for rural areas, where many of these roads had been built without long-term environmental considerations in mind.

Mr. Missel said that he wondered if there was a way to consider the Climate Action Plan in conjunction with resilience and other sustainability efforts. He said that specifically, he was thinking about how the Transportation Chapter might incorporate the potential for more frequent floods, as he had mentioned, and how that could be integrated into the overall plan. He said that this could be one item that could be woven into other chapters, including this one, to create a more comprehensive approach to addressing climate-related issues.

Ms. Swartzendruber said that it will be addressed in their next session. She said that they will be discussing cultural resources, as well as their response to climate change and community health. She said that that action was likely to be included in the Environmental Stewardship Chapter.

Mr. Missel said that he wondered, as they were discussing the design of roads, what the implications were for 100-year floods. He said that he was wondering whether they had changed their road designs to account for the changes in flooding frequencies.

Michael Barnes, Director of Planning, said that he was aware that this was a criterion that was now being considered in Smart Scale, as it had been discussed and was being designed to be more resilient to flooding, particularly at the state level where coastal zones were a concern. He said that Mr. Murray's point was that relocating roads, especially to get them out of a stream valley, was extremely costly. He said that given the numerous priorities they were competing against, he was curious about the available resources to address some of these issues.

Ms. Firehock said that there were situations where the culverts were now undersized, and the type of storms they were experiencing, which could cause the creek to overflow. She said that this was not necessarily about moving a road, but she could think of multiple roads that were blocked because the creek was jumping over the outside of the road, hitting the full culverts, and crossing the road. She said that if the culvert were bigger, the creek could still remain in its banks. She said that she was sure staff was familiar with those locations as well. She said that this was something they could pay more attention to.

Mr. Missel said that they skipped to the last bullet point, as there were additional items that they believed might be missing from the chapter.

Mr. Moore said that he had some clarifying questions regarding the action steps outlined in the plan. He said that he thought that the multimodal plan would address his initial question, which was that there were numerous action items, and he was wondering if there were any priorities. He said that it appeared that the plan would help identify priorities as they moved forward. He said that he was curious about some of the terminology and concepts presented in the plan, particularly those that he was not familiar with. He said that he would like to understand the definition of “low plan/no plan” projects in the context of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, as described in Action 2.2.

Ms. Swartzendruber said that low plan/no plan projects were smaller and faster to implement and may be feasible for the County to undertake in conjunction with VDOT with minimal construction detail. She said that these projects could be completed in the field with simple infrastructure.

Mr. Moore said that he was curious to hear more about intelligent transportation systems and travel demand management, as these concepts related to Actions 4.1 and 4.2. He said that he

did not fully understand the term, so he would appreciate a more detailed explanation of how these systems operated and what they entailed.

Mr. McDermott said that Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) referred to advanced technologies such as connected signal systems and corridor signal systems that could dynamically adjust their patterns in response to real-time traffic conditions. He said that this was also where artificial intelligence (AI) came into play, as some were exploring its potential to learn traffic patterns and adapt signal timings accordingly. He said that in addition, travel demand management was a concept that may seem high-tech, but it was actually a common practice.

Mr. McDermott said that this involved utilizing strategies such as park-and-ride programs and ride-sharing services to manage traffic demand. He said that the action step mentioned earlier, involving the Charlottesville-Albemarle Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission (TJPDC), highlighted a specific program that connected riders and supported vanpooling, providing opportunities for such initiatives.

Mr. Barnes said that he believed one of the key factors was that their current road system was mature and very expensive to expand. He said that to increase efficiency, they needed to find ways to optimize that system. He said that that was what both the Smart Scale projects and the sidewalk expansion were trying to achieve.

Mr. Moore said that there was mention of daylighting cul-de-sacs for bikes, but he did not see any mention of daylighting cul-de-sacs or neighborhoods with only one way in and one way out for actual cars. He said that he was wondering if there were any plans to address this issue, as he was aware of numerous subdivisions with hundreds of residents living in areas with only one way in and one way out. He said that this would be an expensive adaptation, but it was a significant concern given the current situation.

Mr. McDermott said that he believed these opportunities were great and something that they could work on when updating their zoning code. He said that specifically, projects that required connections could be addressed. He said that when development projects came in, driven by the private sector, they could work with them to create these connections. He said that as Mr. Moore had mentioned, it could be expensive for the county to implement, but there were opportunities.

Mr. McDermott said that part of this idea was to improve vehicular connections, aiming to create a network or a more grid-like system. He said that while it may not be a perfectly grid-like system, having connections could provide people with more options to get around. He said that he agreed that this could be done for vehicles, just as much as for bicycles and pedestrians.

Mr. Moore said that not everyone in his neighborhood would agree with him, but he found it challenging to have only one way in and out, and it could be frustrating at times. He said that he had noticed that there were a surprising number of neighborhoods with similar limitations, not just those from the 1960s. He said that he was also thinking about the section and their previous conversations about microtransit and MicroCAT.

Mr. Moore said that while he was not sure if it would make a significant difference in terms of cost per rider, he had found that the University of Virginia's transportation system had a UTS on-demand service for night-time that operated similarly to microCAT, but with fixed routes to 50 specific destinations. He said that this meant that one could travel to various locations, but it would

not come directly to their doorstep. Instead, it would arrive in the neighborhood. He said that he wondered if this middle-ground approach might help with cost per rider efficiencies.

Ms. Swartzendruber said that that was a helpful piece of information.

Mr. Missel said that to continue building on their thoughts, he would like to address a couple of points they made. He said that as they were discussing, he had been trying to determine who the intended audience was for this, as there were some terms that may be unfamiliar to many people. He said that for example, acronyms like TIA, micromobility, ADA, PROWAG, and CAMPO were commonly used in this context. He said that he thought it would be beneficial to provide a brief explanation or definition for each of these terms to ensure clarity for their audience.

Ms. Swartzendruber said that she understood. She said that they often took for granted that they understood what those terms meant. She said that perhaps they should establish some clear definitions or callouts, especially in this chapter, to ensure clarity and consistency.

Mr. Bivins said that some colleagues had suggested that he might consider consolidating certain elements that had similar ideas. He said that for instance, he had been suggesting that they review the objectives under the development areas, particularly Objectives 1 and 2, as they seemed to convey the same message. He said that he believed there may be a way to streamline this language.

Mr. Bivins said that similarly, under Objectives 3 and 5, there may be opportunities to simplify the language and reduce its length. He said that perhaps by combining certain elements, they could eliminate some of the redundancy and make the language more concise. He said that under the rural areas, objectives one and three could potentially be merged, creating a more cohesive and flowing set of objectives.

Mr. Bivins said that he found the explanation to be more palatable than the document, and he appreciated the effort they had put into presenting it to them. He said that if they could distill this into a chapter, he thought it would feel more forward-thinking and considerate of the various perspectives that had been shared, rather than simply reiterating ideas that had already been discussed multiple times.

Ms. Firehock asked if Mr. Bivins could clarify what he specifically was referring to.

Mr. Bivins said that these discussions seemed to be revisiting the same issues they had over the years. He said that some of their challenges stemmed from the fact that they were using Route 29 for multiple purposes. He said that this was a result of a decision made in the 1980s. He said that to move forward, they needed to address the traffic that passed through the area, which was not being discussed here. He said that they must consider the traffic that connected their community to surrounding areas, both locally and to the interstate.

Mr. Bivins said that this was a critical aspect of their traffic management, and they would be having different conversations about how to handle it if the traffic were diverted elsewhere in the county. He said that for example, if some of that traffic were redirected, it would have a significant impact on the land use in their community. He said that what was relevant was that they were trying to manage a quasi-suburban traffic pattern, but their location was actually situated near a major interstate.

Ms. Firehock said that they also had this suburban development, which was what he had mentioned earlier. She said that this had resulted in isolated neighborhoods being treated as little islands. She said that now, they were attempting to convert them into an urban grid, but this was a challenging task. She said that they were largely locked into the decisions of the past.

Mr. Bivins said that was the key point for him when he read this. He said that unless they could retrofit, he did not want to discuss multimodal transportation. He said that when he saw page 7, which showed that multimodal transportation accounted for only 4% of the transportation and commuting needs, and they were not effectively addressing the 66% that remained, that was when he believed they started talking about quality of life.

Mr. Bivins said that was when he believed they started talking about how they were making this place a place that addressed the issues deeply embedded in their culture and community, making it a truly desirable place. He said that but they were not solving some of the severe issues related to the disconnected, disparate development areas. He said specifically that he wanted to know how they were addressing the disparate, dispersed, or disconnected development areas.

Ms. Firehock said that they had a goal of connecting new developments, such as finding a link between two subdivisions, but they experienced a significant influx of people.

Mr. Bivins said that this was not the main point he was trying to make. He said that the subdivision was not the focus of his concern. He said that rather, he was interested in how they could connect Crozet, Pantops, and areas north of the Rivanna. He said that he was also curious about how they could provide alternative transportation options to the airport, without relying on personal vehicles. He said that this was about enhancing the quality of life for their residents, and many of them had discussed the need to reduce their reliance on cars. He said that unfortunately, what he had read did not provide a viable alternative to driving.

Ms. Firehock said that one of the sub-actions she suggested in her edits was that they should have commuting opportunities to the airport. She said that they had mentioned the train station, but they did not include the airport in their plans.

Mr. Missel said that he believed the airport was indeed included in the plan.

Ms. Firehock said that maybe she had missed it. She said that she was looking for language regarding providing transit to the airport, but only found such language related to the train station. She said that people parked their cars at the airport all week, but people did not necessarily want to do that. She said that promoting transit to and from the airport was essential.

Mr. Barnes said that Mr. Bivins was mentioning a topic that touched on one of the central themes. He said that it was supposed to be a key issue, and they would hope it was addressed, which was that yes, 66% of commuters used single occupancy vehicles, and they were anticipating to add 31,000 people to this County over the next 20 years. He said that therefore, they must determine how to accommodate that growth without expanding the road network.

Mr. Barnes said that he thought that was what they were trying to directly tackle by saying they would always encourage and support people who drove and needed to drive, as that was who they were as a culture and as a country. He said that however, they were not trying to negatively

view people who drove. He said that instead, they needed to look for alternative solutions, and transit and biking were opportunities in their relatively small area. He said that while they may not have a light rail, they also would not have a light rail to the airport. He said that he thought some of their challenges were commensurate with the size of their community.

Mr. Barnes said that the main point he would like to make is that he had hoped the message would convey their recognition of the limitations placed upon them as a community in expanding their road network to accommodate the growing number of drivers. He said that as they became denser, it would become increasingly challenging to do so. He said that they must focus on developing a strong plan that connected their activity centers, destinations, and provided opportunities for alternative modes of transportation. He said that he hoped this theme was effectively conveyed in the chapter.

Mr. Missel said that there was an issue of outside commuters were coming into the County, which was partially related to the need to provide affordable housing so people would not need to commute, while the other aspect was about supporting regional transit. He said that there was also the internal component of people moving around the County.

Mr. Bivins said that there was a human element to this issue, and then there was the goods. He said that they moved a significant amount of goods along Route 29. He said that while they may pretend that it was primarily driven by people coming from Forest Lakes or Crozet, the reality was that a significant amount of traffic was generated by a decision that had a profound impact on how they utilized their land. He said that now, they were trying to retrofit everything north of the Rivanna River, but they would not be biking or walking into the City.

Mr. Bivins said that he understood what Mr. Barnes was saying, and he was wondering how to address the margin, where they needed to improve a system that was not even considered in its original form. He said that there was no thought given to how it would compete with the various means it was competing against now. He said that they needed to consider how to accommodate the 30,000 people expected to arrive, which was approximately 10% of their current population. He said that he wondered how they would blend these two elements together.

Mr. Bivins said that he was excited to hear the conversation, as it seemed to be taking a thoughtful and innovative approach to solving these issues. He said that however, this approach still felt task-focused on issues that were not solvable with current funding or resources, and they did not address the legacy developments that were causing their current problems.

Mr. Carrazana said that he would like to interject here, as he had a similar perspective when he first read this. He said that he had a discussion with colleagues yesterday, and they worked through some of the ideas. He said that he found the staff's presentation today to be concise and well-structured in outlining the process. He said that what they had before them was a high-level concept of the approach, which aligned with bullet point number one and, in his opinion, also number three.

Mr. Carrazana, they were now entering the discussion of bullet three. He said that he agreed with this approach. He said that Mr. Bivins and he shared a similar concern, which related to bullet three. He said that the crux of this was that this was not a complete solution; these were just high-level approaches. He said that he believed they needed to address the legacy issues they were facing. He said that like many communities, they were not unique in this regard.

Mr. Carrazana said that decisions made 30, 40, or 50 years ago still impacted them today, particularly in transit. He thought the key was ensuring they had the right approach as they moved into the implementation phase, which would help identify high-priority projects and initiatives to address. He said that they could not tackle everything at once. He said that he would like to pose the question: did they have the right overall strategy in place, or were they missing a few components?

Mr. Murray said that he wanted to jump on the conversation about connectivity and tying the pieces together. He said that one of the points he had made in the parks section was that he believed they needed a parks greenway fund as a voluntary alternative. He said that people often proposed bike lanes or sidewalks, but they often did not materialize.

Mr. Murray said that what people really wanted was a sidewalk just down the street, as they had seen at Crozet. He said that there were high-priority locations that were never developed enough to accommodate bike lanes or sidewalks. He said that if they had a fund where people could contribute voluntarily, they might be able to find alternative solutions. He said that instead of putting a pocket park or tiny dog park in a specific location, they could contribute an equivalent amount to the fund, allowing them to make more effective use of their resources.

Ms. Firehock said that with enough tiny dog park contributions, they could make a real park instead.

Mr. Murray said that alternatively, they could create a genuine greenway or comprehensive system. He said that as they moved into the chapter focus topics, he would like to add a few points. He appreciated the inclusion of the green streets in Action 7.1 of the plan. He said that they had that in Crozet, and he thought it was a great feature of downtown Crozet. He said that it was a good model of a green street. He said that he was glad biodiversity had been taken into consideration, particularly in road paving.

Mr. Murray said that however, he believed biodiversity could also be extended to other road management. He said that he knew that often roadsides were important refuges for rare plants. He said that due to fire suppression, they used to have regular fires in their woodlands, which maintained these open spaces where rare plants would thrive. He said that now, many of these had been confined to roadways. He said that in the past year, he and his wife had discovered a critically imperiled species in Albemarle County on a County roadway.

Mr. Murray said that they had worked with VDOT to install no-mow signs to protect that species. He said that it would be beneficial if they were more proactive as a County, thinking about how they maintained biodiversity on their roadways. He said that regarding the bullet point two about a program to support active recreation on rural roads, he wholeheartedly supported that. He said that however, he had some reservations about the plan's emphasis on pairing walking and biking with recreation in rural areas.

Mr. Murray said that he was concerned that this might overlook recreational vehicle travel, although it was worth noting that traffic on the Blue Ridge Parkway was largely recreational, except for emergency vehicles. He said that in his neighborhood, on a typical Saturday, 90% of the vehicular traffic was recreational. He said that people going to restaurants, wineries, or taking their kids to soccer practice were engaging in recreational activities.

Mr. Murray said that they were not explicitly calling this out, even though it did exist. He said that there was a section that mentioned biking and walking on rural roads for recreational exercise, rather than accessing jobs or resources, but these uses of roadways were valid. He said that the way that it was stated made it feel apologetic, and while he agreed that affirming these uses was important, but ultimately, when a runner, walker, or cyclist was on a rural road, that user was present, and they should plan for their presence regardless of the reason for their presence.

Mr. Murray said that he worried that overemphasizing the recreational aspect may inadvertently create a perception that these users were of lesser value. He said that in reality, using a rural road to walk or bike to a friend's house or go fishing was an equally valid use of the road, and should not be treated as inferior to using the road for recreation.

Mr. Missel asked if Mr. Murray was suggesting that all users of the road be considered as one category.

Mr. Murray said that recognizing the importance of equity in this context was key. He said that what he meant was that, in addition to the recreational activities such as biking and running, a significant amount of activity in rural areas, particularly on weekends, was actually related to tourism and other leisure pursuits. He said that if they were going to call out certain uses as recreational, he believed the point at which it made sense was when they discussed working with Parks to identify areas specifically for a recreational plan. He said that this would provide a purpose for calling out such uses.

Mr. Murray said that the question was, when they called something a recreation, why were they calling it out? He asked if it was to reach out to the user groups involved. He said that he would like to see an action item created to proactively engage with groups focused on walking, running, and cycling in the area on key decisions. He said that this would be a valid reason to call out such uses. He said that ultimately, he thought that when they made transportation decisions, they should recognize that all users, regardless of the mode of transportation, were present and should be considered in the decision-making process.

Mr. Missel said that he concurred. He said that the one thing he would not want to lose was the distinction that if someone was driving a car, it was a different safety concern than if they were riding a bike, jogging, or riding a horse. He said that when they discussed initiatives like safe streets and Vision Zero, he believed it was essential to ensure that these were separate and that they provided necessary signage, shoulders, and other infrastructure to protect the most vulnerable road users.

Mr. Murray said that he believed one potential positive aspect was leveraging existing groups, such as the bike-ped group that met regularly. He asked if Mr. McDermott participated in that group.

Mr. McDermott said that yes, it was run out of the Piedmont Environmental Council (PEC).

Mr. Murray said that actively participating in those groups was essential, but he also thought that even with a County advisory group, having groups that specifically represented non-vehicular traffic could ensure that they had good representation when key decisions were made. He said that it would be beneficial to include an action item in staff reports, particularly when there were

rezonings or special use permits, to analyze the impact on areas highly used by cyclists, runners, or horseback riders.

Mr. Murray said that for instance, when a special use permit was considered, it would be helpful to include discussions on roads used by these groups. He said that currently, they only got vehicle counts, but there was no consideration for roads used by other groups. He said that explicitly stating this as an action item would be a game-changer, especially when it came to road paving. He said that additionally, it would be helpful to be more intentional about utilizing multi-use parking lots in the rural area.

Mr. Murray said that there were several privately owned parking lots, such as the one in White Hall that was frequently used by runners and cyclists, and also by utility companies when they needed to access the area. He said that it would be beneficial to leverage these lots for a commuter-type program, allowing people to ride share or engage in other activities from the rural area.

Mr. Bivins said that he wanted to remind Mr. Murray of their previous attempt to implement a ride-share program near Patterson Mill. He said that the number of letters they received from people expressing concerns about the proposed location was quite remarkable to him, considering it was a relatively isolated area. He said that it was unlikely that the parking lot would be visible from Patterson Mill, near the VDOT lane.

Mr. Bivins said that what Mr. Murray was also suggesting was that if community members and groups were brought into the conversation, their role should be to advocate for these initiatives, rather than simply complaining. He said that this was often the case with some groups, who tended to focus on criticism rather than constructive input. He said that if they were to be part of the conversation, they should also be willing to contribute to finding solutions, rather than simply participating in naysaying.

Mr. Murray said that he agreed that was a valid point. He said that currently, he believed there were excellent locations available, such as the lot offered by Miller School on Dick Woods Road, which was highly utilized. He said that as he saw it, the County should continue becoming more proactive in recognizing the value of these areas where people gathered and parked. He said that he thought that would be a significant asset to the rural area.

Mr. Barnes said that over the past year, he had heard Mr. Murray mention the need for improvement on rural streets in his area, which would greatly benefit the recreational components. He said that in staff’s presentation, they mentioned that due to their constrained funding environment, they could not address everything.

Mr. Barnes said that in the rural areas, they must identify their top priorities. He said that Mr. Murray had provided a lengthy list of potential projects, including plant protection and other initiatives. He said that their goal in the comprehensive plan was to create a "to-do list" to focus on key areas where they could allocate their resources. He said that without focus, their efforts may become dispersed, and they may not achieve the transformative changes needed to address the concerns raised by Mr. Bivins.

Mr. Barnes said that with regard to the rural area, they were trying to identify places where they could concentrate their efforts because some areas were heavily used for recreational purposes,

and they may prioritize those. He said that in Esmont, where he used to live, the streets were often filled with dangerous traffic, and they had tried to address the issue with signs to get drivers to slow down, but it was very ineffective. He said that they wanted a sidewalk, but there were not enough people to warrant the construction of a sidewalk. He said that their goal was to strike a balance between competing priorities, as they did in this chapter of the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Missel asked if they could provide a reference to the slide that compared the differences between rural areas and development areas, as it would help facilitate this conversation and direct them to the first bullet point. He said that there was a slide that discussed the implementation process for these challenges. He said that Mr. Barnes had stated their goal was to identify the "what," which referred to the things that should be in there, and the multimodal plan would include the "how." He said that however, at some point, they would need to add some priorities and recommendations in terms of that. He said that at this juncture, it would be best to focus on the "what" in the rural and development areas, respectively.

Mr. Murray said that he would like to revisit that point briefly. He said that they had mentioned a slide that discussed increasing road margins. He said that there were only about a dozen highly used areas for walking, running, and cycling, and most of these were used for these purposes because they were already safer than other areas. He said that however, there were exceptions, such as Route 76, which was extremely hazardous.

Mr. Murray said that in many cases, adding just a few inches to the road margin could make a significant difference in safety. He said that if they could work with a cooperating landowner to create a small trail off the road, it could help divert pedestrians away from the road. He said that they had a very successful recent meeting about Ridge Road, where they had discussed potential improvements, such as the connection between Ridge Road and Decca Lane. He said that they were not looking to make drastic changes, but rather small tweaks. He said that he would not expect or want sidewalks and bike lanes in rural areas unless, of course, they had a regional transportation network like the Three Notched Trail.

Mr. Murray said that however, the connection between Jarmans Gap and the Crozet development area could be beneficial, as it was close to a development area and highly used. He said that ultimately, their goal was to do no harm and preserve existing safe routes, as seen in Keene, where there were still widely used walking and running areas. He said that when one of those roads was before the Board to be paved, a representative from the community spoke up, stating that paving the road would make it safer for cyclists, as they frequently used this road.

Mr. Murray said that no one questioned this statement, but upon reviewing the map, he believed that two of the accidents described, which resulted in serious injuries, may have actually occurred in the Keene area. He said that therefore, he thought it was essential to consider the "do no harm" principle, recognizing the existing uses of the area and avoiding actions that would harm or eliminate those uses, or impair them in any way.

Mr. Moore asked if they could return to discussing the development area transportation if there were no further comments about the rural area.

Mr. Missel said that in addition to what had been discussed, he would like to add one more point regarding rural areas. He said that he was considering the goals for the multimodal transportation

plan and how they related to rural roads. He said that to him, the goals should prioritize safety, which included awareness.

Mr. Missel said that for example, signage could play a crucial role in educating both cyclists and motorists about safe distances from the edge of the road. He said that if cyclists were aware of their surroundings and motorists were aware of the cyclists, it could be a safer and more effective experience. He said that they had touched on connectivity, which was essential for linking rural areas to development and identifying ways to achieve this. He said that sustainability, economic vitality, and supporting access to jobs, housing, and commerce were also important considerations.

Mr. Missel said that maximizing the use of existing infrastructure was crucial, and this could be achieved by identifying ways to avoid additional funding and instead, optimize the use of existing infrastructure. He said that understanding user patterns, as had been mentioned, was essential in prioritizing transportation projects. He said that it would be beneficial to benchmark what other communities were doing in similar settings. He said that perhaps they could establish a user group or advisory committee composed of local users to provide valuable insights and inform their decision-making process.

Mr. Murray said that one thing he left out, though, was that communities like Batesville also had pedestrian needs. He said that when he lived in Batesville, during significant weather events, the ability to walk to the Batesville Store was crucial. He said that now that he was aware of their need for a crosswalk, he was reminded that it was often obliterated by VDOT on a daily basis. He said that this situation served as an example of the importance of connectivity to a crossroads community, which was vital for the people of Batesville.

Mr. Missel said that that was also true, particularly in areas like North Garden, where access to essential services such as physicians and emergency services was available. This made sense. He said that he did not have any other thoughts on the rural area chapter at this time.

Mr. Clayborne said that he had a couple of points to bring up regarding signage. He said that if that warranted further action, he suggested that they consider implementing share-the-road signs or other communication tools to alert drivers. He said that he wanted to draw attention to Section RA Transportation 1, and Objective 1.3, which discouraged the construction of new roads or road paving that would fragment core habitats or impair pedestrian roads.

Mr. Clayborne said that the final sentence of this section stated that new roads should only be built for agricultural and forestry purposes. He said that he was not entirely in agreement with this stance. He said that looking 20 years ahead, this statement stood out to him. He said that they had previously discussed the concept of 20-acre allotments for development, and he believed it was essential to consider how their policies might impact future development in rural areas.

Mr. Clayborne said that for example, in 20 years, a development of eight homes on 2 acres each, or a community of tiny homes, might require roads. He said that he wanted to be cautious in how they presented their vision for development in rural areas, as the current language may give the impression that they were completely opposed to new homes in the area.

Mr. Murray said that he may be able to provide a clearer example. He said that for instance, consider Fox Mountain, which was identified as a large core area in the Biodiversity Action Plan.

He said that on Fox Mountain Road, a road that was once on the paving list, for sale signs began appearing as soon as it was listed. He said that these signs were not for affordable homes, but for people who wanted to build large houses with scenic views. He said that this illustrated a natural progression that occurred in rural areas, where a farm road became a gravel road, and eventually, it became paved.

Mr. Murray said that the moment a road was paved, subdivisions and residential development often sprouted up along that road. He said that this was evident in the case of Dick Woods, which branched off from Ivy to Miller School Road. He said that the gravel portion of Dick Woods, starting at Miller School and extending to Nelson County, was primarily composed of farms. He said that when these gravel roads were paved, it accelerated development. He said that this was a de facto process that occurred when roads were paved, leading to increased development in the surrounding area.

Ms. Firehock said that she believed that was why the County had a policy not to pave rural roads. She said that it was policy, and it was reiterated in the document.

Mr. Bivins said that there was some ownership to be considered, as well.

Ms. Firehock said that they did let someone very wealthy pave the road their self.

Mr. Bivins said that he believed that the property in question had been sold for a substantial amount of money. He said that what struck him was the unusual situation where those individuals received fiber-optic installation on the road, whereas residents closer to the area, such as himself, were not eligible for the service due to the high cost. He said that the two properties on Dick Woods Road were allowed to subdivide into large lots.

Mr. Bivins said that the decision to permit this development was a significant factor in the paving of the road from Interstate 64 to Dick Woods. He said that it was not the road paving that was the issue, but rather the conversation surrounding the development of those properties and the individuals involved. He said that the question of who owned the property and the impact of their ownership on the development was a complex one.

Mr. Murray said that he believed they could have a reasonable conversation about potential development in rural areas. He said that he thought their previous discussion had highlighted the possibility of having smaller lots instead of large farm states. He said that he agreed wholeheartedly on that point. He said that they needed to continue that conversation. He said that he thought it was essential to distinguish between areas that were suitable for development, such as rural areas with existing roads and infrastructure, and those that were currently large forests with minimal fragmentation.

Mr. Murray said that in unfragmented areas, the absence of roads and cars reduced the introduction of invasive species and protected wildlife from constant traffic. He said that as a result, these areas tended to have higher biodiversity and were safer for other recreational activities. He said that in such areas, making strategic improvements to existing infrastructure for residential or other uses could be a more sensible approach.

Mr. Clayborne said that he believed the language needed to state it as such. He said that as it stood, he did not agree with it. He said that he respected everyone's perspective here and

appreciated Mr. Murray's point. He said that the way it was worded was not conveying that same point. He said that they needed to be careful with the wording because strategic development of homes was not the intention in the rural area, but saying 20 years out that they did not want any new homes in the rural area did not seem realistic. He said that therefore, he believed the wording was the issue.

Mr. Murray said that he did not believe that the phrase "new roads for agriculture and forestry purposes" was necessary to include anywhere. He said that he thought the sentence was fine without that clarification.

Ms. Firehock asked if the roads were referring to a road to access a logging site, or a public road.

Mr. Clayborne said that he had read it as being a real road.

Mr. Missel said that those referred to would likely be temporary. He said that perhaps it could be rewritten to discourage new roads or road paving that would fragment core habitats and impair roads used by pedestrians, and when paving was deemed necessary, prioritizing spot improvements.

Mr. Murray said that he believed that the "or encouraging additional residential development" was valuable, but needed rephrasing. He said that the Rural Rustic Roads Program actually included a provision that stated, in the authorization, that there was no anticipated development on that road, so it was not discouraging development altogether but ensuring it did not result in fragmentation of forests and agricultural land.

Mr. Missel said that they were discussing maintaining the rural character, so they all had to agree that paving roads did encourage additional residential development. He said that he was not sure that it did; it seemed logical but he was unsure if they all agreed. He said that zoning regulations were what ultimately controlled the situation. He said that personally, he did not have a strong attachment to the wording, but to him, it did not seem necessary for it to be there.

Mr. Barnes said that the last sentence appeared to be the most problematic, so they would be glad to strike it.

Mr. Clayborne said that he wanted to clarify the meaning of the phrase "investigate educational programming intended to improve road user safety." He asked what "investigate" meant in this context.

Mr. McDermott said that they were exploring the possibility of collaborating with the Albemarle County Police Department on educational opportunities, even for new drivers. He said that the idea was to utilize available resources to teach young drivers how to be safer and make better decisions behind the wheel. He said that what frustrated him was that he frequently saw an issue in their rural areas, where road fatalities were often the result of unbuckled drivers. He said that this was why he believed it was essential to leverage existing resources to promote safer driving practices among young drivers.

Mr. Clayborne said that he would appreciate consideration of the verbs used in this language to ensure they were effective at conveying their intended actions.

Ms. Firehock said that she had noticed throughout the document that some objectives were written in such a vague way that it would be impossible to truly determine if they achieved it.

Mr. Missel asked if that specificity could be achieved in the multimodal transportation plan.

Mr. Carrazana said that he wanted to add to Ms. Firehock's point that he had also found a lot of the language used to describe a generalized approach to a particular item. He said that he was concerned that this approach may not necessarily lead to implementation, but rather to exploration. He said that he thought it would be beneficial to review the terminology used, as it could be misleading. He said that many things could be explored without resulting in tangible outcomes. He said that if an item was deemed important, he believed there should be a clear, actionable plan or measurable outcome.

Mr. McDermott said that it was a great point and they would review the actions and the chapter overall to ensure the language was direct.

Mr. Missel said that they could even just include an additional "with a goal of…" to ensure the action and outcome were identified.

Mr. Carrazana said that going back to page 16, with the multimodal transportation plan implementation, he would like to focus on the first bullet point, which mentioned prioritizing infrastructure investments. He said that he believed this was a key area because it directly addressed the desired outcomes of the multimodal plan.

Mr. Carrazana said that to move forward, they needed to identify the actionable first steps and prioritize the highest-impact projects. He said that as staff had mentioned, they did not have the resources to tackle everything, and narrowing down the list was essential. He said that he thought it was crucial to evaluate the process they used to fund these projects.

Mr. Carrazana said that they should also consider alternative approaches to increase the likelihood of securing the necessary funds through their current process. He said that this might involve exploring formal processes, public-private partnerships, or innovative solutions that they had not considered yet, such as pursuing outside-the-box ideas to boost their chances of success in securing high-priority projects throughout the County.

Ms. Firehock said that she wanted to add to that. She said that given the current administration, she wondered if they truly believed that they would be receiving funding from the federal government for transportation projects. She said that the Federal Highway Administration had been canceling federal grants, which suggested that they would not be issuing new ones. She said that that was her observation. She asked what staff's experience was with this matter.

Mr. Barnes said that his experience was that things changed over time, and different administrations brought about new changes.

Ms. Firehock said that she believed that nothing would change for the next four years, and they typically updated the comprehensive plan every five years. She said that she felt that they needed to address the elephant in the room when she read this document, and that was what they would do as a County. She said that perhaps when staff developed work plans, they would have to compete for funding with other agencies, particularly when there was no federal government

funding available. She said that the Federal Highway Administration was ending grant programs, which would impact various agencies.

Mr. Barnes said that they had been working on this plan for several years. He said that he understood the frustration and shared it. He said that he thought Mr. Carrazana's point was well-taken, as he was highlighting the importance of positioning their community to take advantage of funding programs. He said that their priorities should align with those programs. He said that he would like to draw attention to a statement made during one of the sections, which mentioned using Smart Scale grants to address vehicular solutions.

Mr. Barnes said that the current administration had made this a high priority for the program. He said that looking back, previous administrations had made multimodal projects more eligible for funding. He said that the federal government's changing funding priorities were also a factor. He said that it was uncertain what the future held, but for their community, it was essential to consider how they could achieve their goals. He said that as Mr. Bivins had mentioned, clarity was key. He said that what they were trying to convey was that they needed to find alternative ways to accommodate the growing population and resulting congestion.

Mr. Barnes said that the funding aspect of this plan was also a recognition that they were adopting a low plan/now plan approach, similar to Henrico County, which had more control over its own streets and had implemented various solutions. He said that Henrico County had found it more cost-effective to sometimes bypass a thorough engineering process and implement improvements directly, rather than investing in a more extensive analysis. He said that this approach allowed them to utilize the cost savings to rectify any mistakes made during the attempt to fix the issue.

Mr. Barnes said that in essence, they opted for a more streamlined approach, focusing on smaller projects such as crosswalks and sidewalk repairs. He said that he believed that this was one way they were attempting to be innovative. He said that another approach was to acknowledge that for certain locations, particularly those in the gap between building and funding multimodal facilities, such as bike lanes or transit facilities, they may need to take on a more active role.

Mr. Barnes said that it could involve using their revenue sharing opportunities to fund these projects or building capacity within the community to undertake them themselves, rather than relying on VDOT. He said that VDOT's high cost of production was a significant factor in this consideration. He said that these types of projects were included in the plan, and if they were not being adequately represented, it may indicate a need to revisit and revise them.

Mr. Carrazana said that he believed they needed to move beyond their wait-and-see approach, particularly with regards to VDOT and Smart Scale, as even last year's administration and federal government cuts did not yield the desired results. He said that their higher priorities had not been approved, and many projects had been put on hold, such as those on Fifth Street. He said that he personally thought that VDOT needed to reassess its own planning process and its cost estimating of projects.

Mr. Carrazana said that it appeared that they often underestimated costs and were prone to price escalations by the time projects were completed. He said that this resulted in wasted time and effort, as they had seen time and again. He said that he thought they needed to be more creative

as a community and explore alternative solutions to get their high-priority projects done, even if it meant seeking out limited federal funding or finding other sources of support.

Mr. Missel said that another example of the benefits of public-private partnerships (P3), was the developer engagement that could facilitate progress. He said that he would process this information. He said that in his personal experience, he had found that one of the key factors was that they were able to get the project moving forward.

Mr. Missel said that multimodal paths can be a significant amenity. He said that what people wanted was to live in a community that offered this type of infrastructure, and there was value placed on it. He said that as a development community considered implementing multimodal paths, it was worth noting that other communities had included them in their site plan checklists.

Mr. Missel said that including actionable items that created accountability in the application process was very beneficial. He said that he believed this was a valuable aspect of multimodal paths. He said that a hypothetical project could involve a Smart Scale improvement that was funded, but had a gap in funding. He said that in this scenario, the developer could step in to fill the gap, and the County could then use those funds to complete the smart scale project, essentially forming a mini partnership.

Ms. Firehock said that she was also thinking about some of the smaller, local initiatives in this area, such as trying to install charging stations for electric vehicles, which got her thinking about incentives. She said that perhaps they could offer benefits to developers who install charging stations, such as a density bonus or other incentives, similar to what they had done in Charlottesville when they added a density bonus for developers who built near transit stops.

Ms. Firehock said that when she was on the Planning Commission, they had successfully encouraged development around existing transit infrastructure by offering such incentives. She said that she was thinking about how they could encourage more innovative solutions, like a regional bike commuter route that did not follow traditional road routes, but instead used existing parkland or other green spaces. She said that in Lynchburg, they had successfully integrated bike lanes and routes through parks, which had become popular commuter routes.

Ms. Firehock said that she thought they should consider thinking outside the box rather than requiring a paved path in front of a development that lacked connection to anything. She said that they could consider paying in lieu of funds to support greenway projects, but perhaps this was a separate consideration or part of the master transportation plan. She said that she hoped the transportation plan was taking into account off-road transportation options as well. She said that she thought they could offer incentives for some of these smaller-scale projects so a developer could help bring them to fruition.

Mr. Murray said that he would like to highlight a smaller-scale example that he believed was worth mentioning. He said that in Crozet, one issue that had been significant was the intersection of Miller School Road and Crozet Avenue. He said that while they often discussed larger projects like roundabouts, he would like to bring attention to a specific problem that had been ongoing for years. He said that the issue was that drivers were turning right onto Crozet Avenue to access the high schools on Miller School, but the left turn lane was often congested, causing traffic to back up all the way to Crozet Avenue. He said that by installing a new pavement section in that

area, they had seen a significant improvement in traffic flow, reducing congestion by approximately 20 minutes.

Mr. Barnes said that that was a good example of a low plan/no plan development.

Mr. Murray said that he believed there were other opportunities to make a significant impact by simply expanding existing turn lanes. He said that for instance, a longer turn lane could have a substantial effect. He said that he wished they would do more to identify these opportunities. He said that in some cases, it was as simple as reaching out to community members and asking for their input. He said that by doing so, they could identify turn lanes that could be improved. He said that typically, by the time VDOT addressed these issues, the turn lane had already become a bigger issue than it was initially.

Mr. Moore said that some of the conversation reminded him of Doc Brown saying “where we’re going, we don’t need roads.” He said that in his experience, living in Madison, Wisconsin, they had beautiful, dedicated bike paths that allowed for easy cross-city travel. He said that as someone who commutes by bike from his neighborhood to work, just west of UVA, he could attest to the challenges of navigating their current infrastructure.

Mr. Moore said that a car ride took 12 minutes, covering five miles, while the safest bike route, using the parkway bike path, was eight and a half miles long and relatively unsafe in some areas. He said that he would like to suggest a few priorities, building on Mr. Bivins' earlier comments about the dominance of cars in their transportation system. He said that while he would love to see more bike use, it was not easy, even in areas like his own neighborhood. He said that until they had the necessary infrastructure, cars would remain the primary mode of transportation.

Mr. Moore said that to that end, he did not think adding more lanes to existing highways was the solution. He said that instead, he proposed exploring alternative approaches, such as utilizing the stormwater floodplain metaphor, with numerous small connections and parallel routes. He said that however, given the limited land available and the constrained nature of many developments, this may not be feasible.

Mr. Moore said that if they had more grid-like ways to navigate areas that were not Route 29 or Hydraulic, they might have a chance of redirecting traffic into neighborhoods, rather than just speeding traffic, and absorbing some of that traffic without having to excessively expand their highways. He said that his second priority would be to improve public transportation within the urban ring of the County. He said that currently, it was extremely difficult, and unless one lived right next to a bus stop, it was nearly impossible.

Mr. Moore said that his commute to work took 12 minutes by car, but it would take a minimum of 1 hour and 19 minutes by public transportation, effectively making it unfeasible for him to use that option. He said that he agreed that microtransit was a key component of their strategy, and he thought exploring different versions or hybrid models within the development area of the County, even those that did not extend beyond the Rivanna River, could be beneficial. He said that if it was 24 minutes rather than 12, he could consider it, but they needed to address this issue for the people who lived in these areas. He said that he hoped they could prioritize this as the second priority.

Ms. Firehock said that microtransit was already mentioned in the chapter. She asked if Mr. Moore wanted it to be a higher or more predominant priority.

Mr. Moore said that for their development pattern, which was not particularly dense, implementing fixed routes would be extremely challenging.

Ms. Firehock said that there is a lot of great technology available for on-demand services.

Mr. Moore said that when they compared the costs of MicroCat to some of the fixed routes, it actually came out on top in two or three of those comparisons. He said that he was surprised. He said that he thought bike commuting would be great. He said that the Rivanna, which was an informal river, and Route 250, which was essentially a river in terms of how much it blocked safe crossing north or south, presented a significant challenge. He said that until that issue was addressed, and a significant portion of it was in the City, he was not sure how they could make progress. He said that there were more crossings in the City, particularly around Locust Grove and downtown, but there were fewer in the County portion that they could realistically address.

Mr. Moore said that he would love to see that happen. He said that he brought up these points because, again, their development efforts were mostly located north of the City, which meant that many trips involved traveling north-south, up-and-down from the City to the suburbs. He said that this highlighted the need for City-County collaboration on this issue. He said that in fact, there had been a mention of coordinating with the City, and he believed it was essential that they work together on this. He said that he was concerned that their priorities may not align with those of the City, particularly when it came to getting people to and from work efficiently and safely.

Mr. Moore said that some recent news articles had raised questions about the City's priorities, and he was not sure if they shared their goal of making transportation safe and efficient. He said that the City was discussing reducing lanes on a major corridor, which was already congested with traffic. He said that they had failed to conduct a traffic light coordination study years ago, and it would not be completed until next year, so the situation would only continue to deteriorate. He said that to move forward, he believed it was essential to align their current situation with the City’s, at least to the extent that they could establish some kind of sensible coordination across the boundaries, which would be crucial going forward.

Mr. Bivins said that he wanted to add to what he previously stated, as he believed it was essential to acknowledge that their current situation was not where they were. He said that instead, they were part of a larger ring that encompassed a destination point, drawing people from Orange, Greene, Augusta, Fluvanna, and Nelson Counties. He said that recognizing the severity of the problem was crucial, as it was not limited to the 140,000 residents of Albemarle County. He said that it was a regional issue that affected the entire area, particularly those traveling through them to access major health, education, and employment hubs.

Mr. Bivins said that he had said before that many of them had been vocal about their aspirations, and he recalled when he attempted to relocate to North Fork for a free building, it was the six-figure employees who lived in the eastern gated community who ultimately scuttled the deal. He said that typically, it was the six-figure earners who influenced decision-making, often at the expense of those who did not make six figures. He said that they had a significant number of residents who did not earn six figures, and many of the solutions they proposed may be geared towards a more affluent community.

Mr. Bivins said he would like to illustrate this point with a personal example. He said that he recently spoke with a passionate young man who was likely to join the Community Climate Collaborative (C3). He said that he was a passionate young man from Barracks Road who shared with him that he wanted the sidewalks clean so he could ride his bike. He said he explained that he could not ride his bike anywhere, which sparked his interest. He asked him to elaborate on his bike-riding experiences, and he mentioned that he saw a lot of electric bikes being thrown aside of the road.

Mr. Bivins said that he had challenged him to find a bike that was less than $2,000 and would be reliable enough for someone to give to a friend. He said that the reality was that most people who rode bikes to work were likely C-suite white men in this community, who could afford the lifestyle. He said that this conversation made him think about the narrative surrounding multimodal transportation. He said that as he considered the concept of commuting, he was trying to analyze its functionality. He said that according to page 7, 20% of the population worked from home, and 66% of the population consisted of single-occupancy cars.

Mr. Bivins said that he wondered how they could realistically expect these groups to transition from their cars to a multimodal transportation system. He said that this was the key point he had been trying to articulate. He said that when discussing priorities, he often expressed frustration because he wanted to focus on how to move people more efficiently. He said that he was trying to find options, but they had lost an opportunity in court that would have been beneficial for the north side of town. He said that although the paperwork was unclear, he believed they could not hold the development to a standard that seemed beneficial to everyone. He said that as a result, the people in that area lacked a public or shared means of accessing town, relying instead on private transportation.

Mr. Bivins said that examining the density map revealed that the north side of the Rivanna River had a higher population density than any other area in the development, including Pantops and Crozet. He said that he wondered how they could provide options for these people to improve their quality of life. He said that they needed to offer affordable transportation options that allowed them to go from home to chores, recreation, and scenic views without breaking the bank. He said that this was essential for maintaining a healthy and price-sensitive community. He said that he was seeking answers to these questions, which was why he had been pushing for ways to retrofit existing ideas and connect underutilized development areas, which he believed were currently underserved.

Mr. Murray said that recently, someone mentioned that they did not have enough roads and transportation to accommodate all of them commuting to Charlottesville. He said that, in reality, they needed to develop to the point where they had employment centers that could support local residents in Crozet to eliminate the need to commute. He said that this was outside of the current chapter, but he believed it was essential to consider as they developed employment centers in other areas, reducing the need for long commutes.

Mr. Murray said that he also thought they needed to reevaluate their approach to road development, particularly with regards to the continually adding more lanes to Route 29. He said that in hindsight, he wished they could go back in time and rethink that decision, as it had led to a disaster. He said that he believed they needed to fundamentally rethink their philosophy on road development and the impact it had on their community.

Mr. McDermott said that Mr. Murray was making a really good point that he would like to reiterate to ensure everyone recognized it. He said that when responding to Mr. Bivins, he would ask that they please keep in mind that none of these action steps were a silver bullet. He said that everything must be considered holistically, and they needed to carefully select the right solutions, which often involved multiple chapters, not just the Transportation Chapter.

Mr. McDermott said that many of the questions being raised by Commission members were actually answered in the Land Use, Housing, and Economic Development Chapters. He said that when it came to implementation, they would be examining how these different sections intersected and informed one another. He said that for instance, they needed to provide places for people to live, reducing the need for lengthy commutes. He also said that they needed to create jobs in various areas. He said that the activity center concept was specifically focused on addressing these issues, and the Transportation Chapter was meant to emphasize how they built those centers up.

Mr. Carrazana said that the transportation facilitated the activity centers, which in turn worked off of each other. He said that they relied on each other, so neither was a standalone component. He said that this was where the implementation piece came into play, and he believed they had already discussed these aspects.

Mr. Carrazana said that to ensure a successful implementation, they needed to have all the necessary components in place. He said that he believed they had a solid foundation for this, and he had heard them address some of the concerns that needed to be addressed. He said that in his opinion, the foundation was there to implement the multimodal transportation system successfully.

Mr. Missel said that a couple of things stood out to him. He said that one was that, based on their previous discussions, the process included prioritizing, implementing, understanding the implementation, sustaining, and measuring success. He said that measuring success was a crucial aspect of this process. He said that additionally, when considering the multimodal transportation plan, he believed it was essential to include ways to measure success as part of the process.

Mr. Missel said that they had discussed land use as it related to this, and to him, the transportation aspect was intrinsically tied to land use, as it was all about how they were using the land. He said that this was very much tied to zoning, which they would likely discuss at a later point. He said that this was where they started exploring questions like whether they had too much parking as a requirement, how to share parking, and strategies for doing so, such as electric vehicle infrastructure.

Mr. Missel said that these were all based on zoning strategies, which tied to the transportation plan. He said that he believed separating rural area and development area challenges was helpful in answering the first question. He said that the investigation into a program to support active recreation seemed like a sensible approach. He said that furthermore, implementing a multimodal transportation plan appeared to be a logical next step. His question was, when could they expect this to happen? He said that he estimated it would likely occur by October, pending approval of the AC44. He said that they had discussed many plans, so he was curious to know if there was a

strategy within those plans to prioritize them, and how that prioritization was being determined or discovered.

Mr. Barnes said that they had planned to organize the content into chapters and establish connections between them, but it became clear that a focus within topic areas was necessary to avoid combining unrelated elements. He said that the process had been interesting, as they had attempted to write a chapter on transportation while touching on environmental and agricultural considerations.

Mr. Barnes said that Ms. Swartzendruber and her team were currently focused on the implementation component of the plan, which was a crucial aspect to ensure that the plan was effective and measurable. He said that one of the key challenges was translating a plan into action, as it was easy to create a plan and revisit it five years later, but they believed that they were committed to focusing on implementation and establishing metrics to gauge their progress.

Mr. Barnes said that while they were not ready to disclose the specifics of their proposal just yet, they could offer a preview. He said that their proposal aimed to rethink the concept of activity centers and how they allocated resources to accommodate the 30,000 people they were trying to serve. He said that they had decided to concentrate the majority of the population in these centers and may adjust zoning regulations in lower-density areas to allow for more missing middle housing.

Mr. Barnes said that however, the lion's share of the population would be concentrated in these activity centers, and they would need to balance this with the idea of having strong bike and pedestrian infrastructure, while also considering the regional transit system, which operated somewhat independently. It was crucial that they were discussing this from a staff perspective, as they were actively working to develop a feasible multimodal plan that brought together bike trails, pedestrian infrastructure, and connections to activity centers to the City. He said that their goal was to identify gaps in the existing systems within these activity centers and create a comprehensive list of necessary improvements.

Mr. Barnes said that he was unsure how they would fund these projects, but they were exploring options such as self-funding or partnering with VDOT to take advantage of upcoming federal grants. He said that finally, a good plan was crucial when they communicated with their partners in the development community and built a significant portion of the public infrastructure in their community. He said that it ensured that they were incorporating key elements of this plan into their projects.

Mr. Barnes said that he believed that if they had had a stronger multimodal plan in place 10, 15, or 20 years ago, they may have made more progress than they had so far. He said that in summary, he thought that they would attempt to present something to the Commission in the June timeframe, and it would be outlined in the document, highlighting the key aspects that he believed were necessary to move forward from this planning exercise. He said that their goal was to create a foundation that, in five years, would allow them to revisit and refine the policy aspects and implementation strategies, providing a clear direction and focus.

Mr. Missel asked if it would provide an answer to the question of how they were doing.

Mr. Barnes said that yes, it would also provide a way to help them course correct and have an implementation strategy within the comprehensive plan.

Mr. Missel said that transportation was also key to affordable housing.

Ms. Firehock said that it was now reflected in this chapter, which they had requested, and she was happy to see that.

Mr. Missel said that as they considered how they utilized County funds, including whether to raise taxes or allocate surplus funds to support affordable housing and other initiatives, it was essential to keep in mind that they needed to fund both housing and infrastructure to make housing successful. He said that they could not simply focus on providing housing units without also investing in the necessary infrastructure to support them, such as roads and public transportation. He said that this was often overlooked, as they may focus on getting people into housing, but they also needed to ensure that they could access their homes without having to purchase a car.

Mr. Bivins said that this was where regional transportation planning became essential. He said that Charlottesville Area Transit (CAT) had the ability to determine how their transit was developed. He said that Mr. Missel was right; if people were being asked to live somewhere, they needed to consider how they would be moved around. He said that this was not just about affordable housing; it was about how they would transport people, as getting them out of cars could lead to a healthier lifestyle.

Mr. Bivins said that a healthier lifestyle was beneficial for the entire community. He said that what was being asked about was that the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) should also include a piece that addressed how they would extend public transit options to other parts of the County. He said that this was crucial, as the County did not currently own the transportation system. He said that perhaps the regional transit partnership would lead to shared ownership, which would be a brilliant development, but for now, one entity had the ability to say no.

Mr. Murray said that recently, they had a proposal for a trailer park that, although it would be affordable to live in, would still have a commute to employment similar to a commute from Fluvanna. He said that he wondered if it was really helpful to provide that type of development.

Mr. Bivins said that he felt people could make their own decisions about whether to commute or not and deciding whether someone should drive into town or not was not their role.

Mr. Missel said that he thought they were generalizing. He said that in general, affordable housing benefited from available transportation.

Mr. Bivins said that his concern was that Albemarle's interpretation of affordable housing included a home that may be near $500,000. He said that most of their discussions about affordable housing were not referring to housing vouchers or deeply affordable housing. He said that they were talking about households that make $100,000 per year.

Mr. Clayborne said that for clarity, the section DA Section 5, Strength in Regional and Inter-City Transportation, he would appreciate it if they could briefly explain the points 2, 3, and 4. He said that according to the information provided, the section aimed to support the Charlottesville Amtrak station passenger train rail to meet future demand. He said that he was unclear if this was a

renovation to expand the existing facility. He asked if staff could clarify the intention behind these three points.

Mr. McDermott said that Action 5.2 was one of the ideas being considered. He said that several years ago, there was a regional effort to improve the station and make it more suitable for increased rail transit. He said that this regional effort was something that they had looked at.

Mr. Clayborne asked if it was an expansion of the building.

Mr. McDermott said that he believed it encompassed a combination of factors. He said that although he did not recall all the details.

Mr. Bivins said that the entire building used to be used, so this action would reclaim and reuse the existing building. He said that he believed they would be adding another train, as well.

Mr. McDermott said that there was a state rail plan in place, although he was unable to recall the exact number.

Ms. Firehock said that she recalled it was the most profitable line of Amtrak.

Mr. McDermott said that Action 5.3 was essentially about supporting the efforts by the Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) to continue increasing opportunities for rail transit, both in the north, south, and east, as well as the west.

Mr. Barnes said that there had been some discussions about the east-west line, so their attempt was to get ahead of that in case it became a more tangible project so they would have a corresponding plan to be part of that.

Mr. Clayborne said that it was helpful to know. He said that he was curious about the wording in Action 5.4.

Mr. McDermott said that for grants or other initiatives, they would need to state it was in this plan.

Mr. Clayborne said that his final question was something for the staff to consider. He said that when reviewing DA Transportation 3, Increase the Reliability and Frequency of Public Transit Service, his initial thought was, what was the underlying cause of their unreliable and infrequent public transit service?

Mr. Clayborne said that upon reviewing the actions, he noticed that they did not directly address the issue. He said that for instance, the lack of high-quality ADA PROWAG compliant transit stops did not seem to be the primary reason for the unreliability and infrequency of their public transit service. He said that collectively, the actions appeared to be insufficient in addressing the root cause of the problem. He said that it was worth considering whether the actions aligned with the wording and the intended solution.

Mr. McDermott said that Action 3.4 was attempting to address that they had stops, but many of them were inaccessible to people with mobility issues because they were located in the dirt on the side of a road.

Mr. Bivins said that this was another area where the regional transit partnership may be able to assist in solving their problems.

Mr. Carrazana said that on page 16, regarding the bullet points that referred to the multimodal transportation plan, it did not mention cross-agency collaboration with the City and UVA. He said that there were other plans from other organizations that they must consider in order to be successful. He said that he was wondering how they approached collaboration with other agencies in the implementation of this project. He said that they had mentioned it in some places and in MPO discussions, but he believed that there should be a greater emphasis on how they were working with other agencies in the implementation.

Committee Reports

Mr. Moore said that the Rio Places 29 Committee Advisory Committee met, and there were a couple of proposals for feedback. He said that one of them was for Arden Place on Rio Road. He said that the project was seeking feedback to modify the small area plan, which would convert some of the core area to flex space, and they also had a proposal for housing. He said that a concern that had been expressed was the difficulty in achieving the 60% Area Median Income (AMI) threshold, even with the tax credit incentive. He said that there was a conversation about this issue. He said that he needed a moment to locate the rest of his notes.

Review of Board of Supervisors Meeting: April 23, 2025 and April 30, 2025

Mr. Barnes said that he would like to follow up on Mr. Moore's mention of Arden 2. He said that they had lost power at that meeting, so the presentation was done on a laptop with a crowd around it. He said that he believed Commissioner Moore was trying to discuss the specific form-based code issue that was part of the rezoning process. He said that in form-based code, there was a core section and a flex zone, and they were working with the applicant to rezone the area to allow for more flex zone, which would alleviate some of the commercial issues. He said that they anticipated bringing this to the Commission in the June-July timeframe.

Mr. Barnes said that the Board of Supervisors meetings were relatively uneventful, with the first one on April 23 being a public hearing for the new budget, and the one on April 30 being for the establishment of the property tax rate and personal property tax rate. He said that there were no new items before the Board that the Commission had considered.

Mr. Missel asked if the Board would be reviewing another AC44 chapter this week.

Mr. Barnes said that yes, they would be discussing Housing tomorrow.

New Business

Mr. Barnes said that he would like to touch on a few points they had discussed yesterday with Mr. Missel. He said that specifically, they had a scheduled item for the June 10 meeting, a Zoning Text Amendment for the second round of the data center conversation. He said that it appeared that item had been pulled from the agenda. He said that instead, they planned to hold a public meeting before bringing it to the Commission. He said that this had created an opportunity for them to provide a presentation on a list of items.

Mr. Barnes said that in a previous meeting, they had discussed the need for a general update on various topics. He said that housing may be a suitable topic for that meeting, as Dr. Pethia had recently released a housing report. He said that although Mr. Missel would not be present at that meeting, he would work to find a suitable replacement for you. He said that if he was unable to find something on short notice, they may need to cancel the meeting.

Mr. Missel asked if the Commission had other suggestions for topics to discuss at that meeting. He said that transportation had been previously suggested.

Mr. Barnes said that transportation was discussed, and he believed the suggestion was to review the current status of their ongoing projects. He said that Mr. McDermott proposed that they schedule a meeting with VDOT on May 12, allowing them to provide the most up-to-date information. He said that they could likely accomplish this on the meeting on May 25, as he thought they only had one item on that agenda.

Mr. Barnes said that he understood that they all wanted to be better informed about the development of various aspects they had discussed in the comprehensive plan. He said that to address this, they were making an effort to provide more topical reports. He said that although their time had been occupied with the AC44 planning, he believed they could get back into the rhythm of delivering timely updates to the Commission.

Mr. Bivins asked if they could discuss the taxation of Ag-Forestal District properties. He said that he recalled a memo distributed regarding the impacts.

Mr. Murray asked if it would be possible to learn more about form-based code in the County, considering he was not on the Commission when it was implemented.

Mr. Barnes said that staff was currently working on updating the adopted form-based code for Rio, so they would be bringing something to the Commission in a work session on that topic.

Mr. Moore thanked Mr. Barnes for elaborating on Arden 2. He said that the other proposal that was presented to the CAC was a community meeting held at 600 Rio Road West, located on the other side of 29, where a proposal was presented to build several multifamily units, situated just up the hill from the pawn shop. He said that according to the proposal, there were up to 153 units in question. He said that this would be a conversion from a commercial office to a neighborhood model district, as per the technical definition.

Old Business

There was none.

Items for follow-up

There were none.

Adjournment

At 8:15 p.m., the Commission adjourned to May 13, 2025, Albemarle County Planning Commission meeting, 6:00 p.m.

Michael Barnes, Director of Planning

(Recorded by Carolyn S. Shaffer, Clerk to Planning Commission & Planning Boards; transcribed by Golden Transcription Services)

Approved by Planning Commission
Date:
Initials: