Albemarle County Planning Commission
FINAL Minutes December 10, 2019

The Albemarle County Planning Commission held a public hearing on Tuesday, December 10, 2019, at 6:00 p.m., at the County Office Building, Lane Auditorium, Second Floor, 401 McIntire Road, Charlottesville, Virginia.

Members attending were Tim Keller, Chair; Daphne Spain; Julian Bivins, Vice-Chair; Karen Firehock; Bruce Dotson; and Pam Riley.

Members absent: Jennie More; and Luis Carrazana, UVA representative.

Other officials present were David Benish, Planning Director; Carolyn Shaffer, Clerk to Planning Commission; Kevin McDermott; and Andy Herrick.

Call to Order and Establish Quorum

Mr. Keller called the regular meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and established a quorum.

From the Public: Matters Not Listed for Public Hearing on the Agenda

Mr. Keller asked if there were any matters from the public not listed for public hearing on the agenda that anyone would like to speak to.

Mr. Neil Williamson (Free Enterprise Forum) said the FEF annual presents an annual re-worked holiday song as a literary gift to the Planning Commission. He said last year, they altered the cherished Christmas carol "Frosty the Snowman" to bring them "Rio, the Small Plan."

Mr. Williamson read, "Walking in a Form-Based Wonderland," of which he provided a copy to each commissioner.

Mr. Keller closed matters from the public and moved on to the next item.

Consent Agenda

There was no consent agenda.

Work Session

Avon Street Extended Corridor Study

Mr. Kevin McDermott, Principal Transportation Planner, provided background on the study. He said this was based back in 2017, when the Board of Supervisors had approved the Neighborhood Improvement Funding Initiative (NIFI) to put money directly to the development areas, with the Community Advisory Committees being allowed to select what projects they want to fund with this. He said the 5th and Avon CAC determined that they wanted to use a portion of their funds to do a corridor study for the Avon Street Extended Corridor.

Mr. McDermott said the project had started in the beginning of 2019 and has been going on for a year. He said the Board had hoped they could use the study to set up a template for how the County could do other corridor studies in the region, which is why they were happy to put the NIFI funding towards this particular corridor study. He said over the year, a great deal of work has been done.

Mr. McDermott said he would present an overview of the process and recommendations, then ask the Planning Commission to weigh in with any questions, suggestions, or comments. He said if the Commission so chooses, they can endorse it to the Board of Supervisors.

Mr. McDermott said the study was undertaken by the design firm Line + Grade, noting there was a representative from the firm present that evening (Daniel Hyer) who has been working on the project for the past year and that Mr. Hyer would be able to answer questions on the specifics.

Mr. McDermott said the first slide shows the defined project outline. He noted there was a process where staff began by listening to the people in the corridor, defining what the corridor was about, the issues there, developing solutions, delivering those solutions to the people, taking their feedback, and then moving on into how those alternatives might impact the corridor in a positive way.

Mr. McDermott said the process began with the Listening Phase, during which they held meetings at the CAC. He said some of the identified concerns related to safety (especially bike-ped safety in the corridor) and to the aesthetic character of the corridor (as it is an interesting area of the County that butts up against the City boundary, but goes through many changes throughout the corridor). He said it is currently an Entrance Corridor with a very residential feel, especially in the heart of it. He said there are connectivity issues related to bike-ped connections and the major destinations in the area, including many schools and employment areas. He said there is a need for transit options in the corridor that do not exist yet.

Mr. McDermott said in terms of functionality, the density in the corridor has increased, with many new developments coming on. He said they are beginning to notice that some of the functionality of the intersections in the corridor could be improved, and that they could also see this with traffic demand increase in the future developments.

Mr. McDermott presented a list of some of the outreach and coordination efforts staff undertook, noting there were eight CAC meetings and that stakeholder meetings were held with the list of stakeholders presented on the slide. He said there was also a very large public outreach meeting, and the CAC endorsed the plan at their November meeting.

Mr. McDermott said that in the defined stage, there were things staff noticed about the corridor. He said there is a suburban context there, but there are also Light Industrial uses, especially in the north between the City line and I-64. He said there are also retail uses there at the Mill Creek intersection where there is both mixed use and residential. He noted this is very adjacent to the City, and so many commuters go into the City and UVA to work. He said there is also a strong education presence in the corridor with PVCC, Monticello High School, Cale Elementary, and other educational institutes and potential future ones.

Mr. McDermott said the corridor is a transitional one that goes from urban to rural. He said there is a lot of new development coming in there, and there are multiple land use changes throughout it. He said there are distinct nodes and connections including the City line and Moores Creek

(where there is currently a greenway), 5th Street Station (road and development), Mill Creek Drive, Route 20, and the future Biscuit Run Park at the southern end.
Mr. McDermott said that once staff defined what the corridor was about, they began to consider how they could develop some alternative solutions. He said he went out and looked at the existing road to determine how changes could be made. He presented a slide that explained how they could consider narrowing roads, reducing some of the length of the turn lanes, and adding landscaping and additional bike-ped facilities.

Mr. McDermott said staff looked at different elements of the corridor and took feedback. He presented the diagrammatic view that shows how staff took feedback and were able to come up with some ideas about different ways they can improve the corridor and connections they could make. He pointed out that as they did this, they were also considering how things could be funded, and so if they take the recommendations, they can look at how those recommendations could be funded through different grant funds that are available through the State, as well as with other options. He noted it was important to ensure they tied in the funding to the improvements as they do not want any disconnect there, and they didn't want to come up with solutions they knew would never work.

Mr. McDermott said staff also broke up the corridor into some defined areas to help come up with the solutions. He said much of the focus was at Avon Street at Cale Elementary, where there is currently a project to make sidewalk and pedestrian improvements. He said the intersection of Avon and Mill Creek, as well as the intersection of Avon and Southern, were other areas they focused on, as well as in front of Lakeside Apartments crossing the highway and the intersection with Avon Street and 5th Street Station Parkway.

Mr. McDermott said staff delivered the potential solutions to the public, breaking the corridor up into a few areas (northern, central, and southern). He said staff also looked at the branding aspect of the corridor and about what it really meant to people, and engaged with the public in a very large public meeting. He said they received a lot of feedback there.

Mr. McDermott noted that staff had rolled out large maps at the public meeting and that the public was very engaged, offering their own drawings on the map as well as comments about the suggestions made to address the issues in the corridor. He said staff received many recommendations and thoughts and had the public vote through a corridor priority matrix. He said the feedback was categorized into different types of improvements and what segments were most important. He said staff also followed this up with an online survey, and with all this information, they were able to define what they really wanted to do in the corridor and develop some solutions.

Mr. McDermott presented a breakdown showing what the different members of the public viewed as important, and the Mill Creek/Southern Parkway intersection was a very important section of it, as well as the area in front of Lakeside Apartments and having some sort of connection over the I-64 bridge (and additional pedestrian facilities connecting those). He said from this, staff was able to develop the list of those priority projects.

Mr. McDermott said the result of the study was that staff defined more detailed solutions. He presented a breakout of the project for pedestrian facilities from Mill Creek to Southern Parkway. He said Southern Parkway is an area where many complaints are being received about congestion, especially at peak hours.

Mr. McDermott said staff is trying to come up with a solution there, the idea being that they could remove left turns from that intersection (as this is a difficult movement to make) and have everyone make a right and go down to the Mill Creek intersection, where they could implement a roundabout. He said on the plan, there is an additional pedestrian crossing in this area, lots of landscaping shown, and a new shared use path all along the west side of the road through there that connects people all throughout that area where currently, there are no pedestrian facilities at all.

Mr. McDermott said the second recommendation was a new bike-ped bridge across I-64. He said I-64 currently is a barrier to bike-ped movement in the corridor, with 5th Street Station just on the north side there, and all the residential on the south side. He said trying to bridge that connection with a literal bridge was the recommendation.

Mr. McDermott noted that the slides included cost estimates for the projects at a conceptual level.

Mr. McDermott said the final project of the three priority recommendations was the roundabout at Mill Creek and Avon. He said staff believes this will greatly help the congestion and flow in the area while also improving the pedestrian connections in the area, as it is much safer for pedestrians to cross at a roundabout as opposed to the existing pedestrian crossings at the signals. He explained that roundabouts have a better safety record and would allow for more crossings, noting that there is currently only one crossing on one side because if they start adding more, they are delaying the movement of the vehicles.

Mr. McDermott said the roundabout would also act as an entrance feature for the corridor, as this is the heart of the corridor, and this is a more focal feature there. He said as the County sees residential growth or development in the corridor, they would see that this would help continue to serve that area without increasing delay significantly.

Mr. McDermott said that in summary, the 5th and Avon CAC endorsed the plan at the November meeting. He said one request was to ensure that the final report recognized the questions related to the corridor's connection with Biscuit Run Park.

Mr. McDermott explained that there was an intersection concept that was approved as part of the Biscuit Run Park plan, but there are still many questions in the community as to whether or not this is the right solution. He noted that the traffic study project, however, was not focused on that, and that this is for the Biscuit Run Park Master Plan to focus on. He said staff has removed this portion in the plan and has determined they would let Biscuit Run figure this out, noting there was currently a design process going on as well as a transportation assessment for that area.

Mr. McDermott said that regarding the Impact section, staff was waiting to make sure that the Planning Commission and CAC were okay with the final recommendations before completing that section. He said Mr. Dotson had sent in some suggestions as to how this could be structured and that it worked well. He said staff would like to move the priority recommendations into the body of the report, then structure it as Mr. Dotson suggested with the type of impact that each improvement would have, how it is being addressed, and what the funding potential and timeline of each of those are. He said this is how staff would like to finish the Impact section, but that the information was already there with the priorities.

Mr. McDermott reminded the Commission that the information was being brought to them as a work session in order to provide staff with some feedback on whether or not the recommendations are consistent with the community feedback and Comprehensive Plan's objectives. He asked the Commission to note if there is anything missing or if they had any questions or concerns about the plan.

Mr. McDermott said staff would be going to the Board of Supervisors for a work session. He said if the Planning Commission wanted to shorten the timeline of all the approvals, he was glad to accept an endorsement that evening with whatever changes the Commission may suggest. He said that staff could then make those changes before going to the Board, if the Commission would like to move forward.

Ms. Riley asked if there were projections done for the increased vehicles due to Biscuit Run being included in the study.

Mr. McDermott replied that staff recognized that there would be an increase, but that they did not make future estimates of what those vehicle numbers would be. He said they do have those numbers now from the Biscuit Run plan, as they are trying to develop the intersection at the southern end of the corridor. He said the recommendations staff included in the report were based on their confidence in any additional traffic being handled by this.

Mr. Bivins said the Commission has had a number of projects come before them in the past year, citing Galaxie Farm as an example. He asked if those increases in traffic have been included in the design.

Mr. McDermott replied that all those projects were identified prior to the study, and so staff considered what the future development would be. He said currently, staff is not seeing major congestion impacts on the corridor as they are in other areas of the County. He acknowledged there is peak hour congestion which slows up, but noted that it is a short peak hour.

Mr. McDermott said when staff looked at the study, they looked at the future developments coming in. He said Galaxie Farm isn't a major one and will not be sending much traffic to Avon (as their primary access is down to Route 20), but that other projects like Spring Hill (at the southern end) will increase the residential density in the area and send much more traffic into the corridor. He said Biscuit Run would likely have the biggest impact. He reiterated that staff considered those upcoming developments in their plans.

Mr. Bivins asked for an additional clarification. He said there was an idea that the Southern Parkway was never going to be a parkway.

Mr. McDermott asked Mr. Bivins if he was asking about a future connection on Southern Parkway to elsewhere.

Mr. Bivins said yes. He said when a road is called a "parkway," he assumes it is going someplace. He said he thought he recalled that it was done and would not.

Mr. McDermott recalled there was an application with the school there and that there had been discussed about this. He said that as staff looks at the long-range plan for the region (which was done through the Charlottesville-Albemarle MPO), the MPO had evaluated many alternatives. He said it appears that connection across Biscuit Run in that location is probably never going to be

necessary. He said the 5th Street Station Parkway relieved much of the traffic staff was looking at when the connection was initially proposed over a decade ago. He said because of the costs of new road connections, especially one like this that would cross a major creek and valley, the implementation was not likely. He said staff did not consider that Southern Parkway would, in the future, connect to 5th Street.

Mr. Dotson said that since this was a NIFI project, with the hope to be a model for others. He asked what the cost of the study was.

Mr. McDermott replied that the total cost of the study was about $70,000-75,000.

Mr. Dotson said sometimes the first time a project is done, it is done as a loss leader. He said the thought behind it is that in the future, it will cost more, but there is a desire to proceed with it. He said it could also be the other way around, and that the most expensive project would be the first one where they figure out how to do it and then do it more cheaply in the future. He asked if Mr. McDermott had any thoughts along those lines, and if the County were to pick this up at about the same scale in another area, if this was a reasonable cost estimate.

Mr. McDermott replied that it was definitely reasonable. He said they would save some money on figuring out how this would go, and that they had a good template as far as how the public coordination goes and the structure of the document. He noted that any corridor they look at will be much different. He said when the Board had first approved the study, one of the corridors that came up was the Rio corridor. He said these were totally different corridors and that with Avon, staff was primarily looking at the lack of bike-ped infrastructure and the fact that most of the corridor is still a rural section, with open ditch roads, and trying to bring it up to the standards the County would expect as an urbanizing corridor.

Mr. McDermott said Rio Road would be completely different and that staff didn't do traffic counts for the Avon corridor, but relied on existing ones to do that study and then projected those out. He said if they did a study for Rio, staff would want the consultant to hire a traffic company to make traffic counts and operations assessments at every intersection. He said there is much more detail in a place like Rio, and they would see the costs of the study go up as a result. He said there are also more intersections that need to be addressed in the Rio corridor than in Avon. He said the County would, however, save some money as they now know how the process can look.

Mr. Dotson said when the rezoning of Downtown Crozet was approved, there was mention of some sort of a transportation study and that it encompassed more than just one project. He asked how a study like this would be scoped and compared against the study for Avon. He said he wanted to develop a vocabulary of different transportation studies.

Mr. McDermott said Mr. Dotson was referring to Barnes Lumber and that the proffer in that project was for a transportation study. He said this study was not actually a corridor study, but was more regional and looked any many different intersections and corridors throughout that area. He said this has been scoped with the transportation engineering company and were close to kicking it off. He said this was broader in scope than the study for Avon.

Mr. David Benish (Director of Planning) added that the offer of the proffer was around $48,000, reiterating that this was a regional study of multiple intersections within the Crozet area.

Mr. McDermott said this was being completed in line with the Crozet Master Plan updates and that the information from that is directly informing that Master Plan.

Mr. Dotson thanked staff, explaining that he was trying to understand different types of transportation studies.

Mr. Keller said he wanted to revisit the status of the connection or proposed roads for discussion as to whether they should be addressed in the project (if it was no more than addressing it the way they addressed the entrance to Biscuit Run). He said it seemed to him that with the new high school center that is being proposed for the area, development on Route 20 they could see (such as the community college development has been discussed) that if some of the connection roads go from Route 20 up to Avon Street, there is a different set of circulation patterns than could occur.

Mr. Keller said the Commission had found itself in a challenging position with Peabody School, where the applicant and VDOT were making assumptions for what couldn't be done for access off of Southern Parkway into that property because of the proposed status of that. He said he felt that as part of this study, there should be thought and resolution as to whether these will continue to be proposed routes or not. He said if the County could determine they are not going to occur, then there is one set of assumptions.

Mr. Keller asked to revisit the slide that showed there is more than just the Southern Parkway to the east. He said there were several others. He said it was not just Peabody that was relevant to this discussion, as there have been discussions between the developer of Galaxie Farm and the Supervisors about potential connection there. He said that both of those are important to the study, and that the study has the opportunity to remove some of the variables, or to acknowledge them and propose their importance to the plan.

Mr. McDermott said he wanted to make sure he understood that this was actually supposed to be a corridor study that focused on what is happening on Avon, with the understanding that the intersections that come up to it will be important to that. He said currently, even in the Master Plan, there are no new proposed connections. He said the connection for Galaxie Farm winds around and connects to Mill Creek, which eventually could send additional traffic up to Avon at the Mill Creek intersection. He said that intersection was addressed in this study.

Mr. McDermott said he was sure the Master Plan didn't recommend any additional connections beyond that. He said as far as Biscuit Run, this would have to be evaluated through a separate study and if there are future connections, those would need to be addressed at that time. He said staff does not have any current information about new connections that he is aware of.

Mr. Keller suggested that those need to be removed or "grayed out" as well so the document acknowledges this. He said, for instance, that many people come to work from Route 20 South and then move onto Avon Street Extended, but if there was a piece through Galaxie Farm, they might stay on Route 20, which has its set of development standards, and then move up through and use the last part of Avon Street. He said all of this would be interesting over the next several years with the Belmont Bridge Replacement Project and the 250 East project that is being proposed.

Mr. Keller said that for those who follow how workers commute in the greater Charlottesville Albemarle southern and eastern regions, these connections could have significant impacts on the corridor.

Mr. McDermott agreed, stating that they have the potential to add additional traffic [inaudible].

Mr. Keller said he didn't see those things acknowledged in the plan. He said if it was no more than an acknowledgement like the Biscuit Run entrance being stated that it was not part of the scope of this, he believes that pieces that relate significantly to the project need to be called out as well. He said it was a matter of how to make this better.

Mr. McDermott said staff did look at some other connections in the region. He said staff could make sure to include in the report another piece of the early parts of the projects where staff had looked at all the other future connections in the area. He said those were assessed as part of the project, and staff could make sure that this actual diagrammatic map could be placed in the report.

Mr. Keller said this was what he was suggesting. He said it was great that staff had done the work, and so it should be included.

Mr. Keller said that this was a discussion the Commission had in terms of the project that was brought before them the week prior. He said they need an executive summary that hits the key points up front and a summary area, and that Mr. McDermott had shown where this is already included in the template of the report. He said pieces of information such as this need to appear in the main body of the report for a quick read by residents as well as future and elected appointed officials.

Mr. Benish said the Southern Parkway status is identified in the Master Plan, and so staff could make sure that the status of not being needed in the next 20 years could be referenced so that someone who looks at this document would know what is in the Master Plan.

Mr. McDermott said if there are questions for Mr. Hyer, he could respond to them and offer details. He said part of the direction from the Board of Supervisors was that they didn't want this to be a Comprehensive Plan update, and so staff would not be updating the plan at all. He said staff does recognize, however, that this area needs a Comprehensive Plan update, and this is scheduled. He said the hope is that the study will inform that update, and when they do the Comprehensive Plan update, it will be when they have to look much more regionally at all the connections and how this corridor fits into that, which is part of a bigger question.

Ms. Riley said she didn't know when the Master Plan update would occur, but perhaps it was not as soon as those in the area would want one to occur. She said it was all the more important, therefore, to include in this document things that could feed into that or substitute for that Master Plan update in the interim period. She agreed with addressing or acknowledging the other major feeder or potential connector roads.

Ms. Riley said there is an additional land use that has occurred, perhaps a week after the CAC endorsed the project, which was the School Division's and Board of Supervisors' decision to site Center 2 off of Galaxie Farm Lane. She said this needs to be referenced in the document, and what she has been struggling with is about what additional work could or could not occur before the plan is finalized to determine when a transportation plan for the new center will occur and that would encourage the coordination between the School Division and the Community Development

Department.

Ms. Riley said this use will have significant impact on the corridor, and that it will make a difference between whether the school will actually provide bus transportation or if families will be individually responsible for transporting their students. Recognizing that the consultant's work was done, she said she felt as if there is an opportunity before going to the Board of Supervisors and that perhaps staff could initiate a conversation with the School Division. She suggested having a meeting and some reporting out (such as the format they used with PVCC and Cale) to at least get this in the study in some manner and to encourage best practices of co-division planning.

Ms. Riley said this is happening more and more where the School Division and County recognizes transportation as a significant common need to plan around. She said she was interested in Mr. McDermott's opinion on how this might be included in the study, as it seemed there was an opportunity to do that.

Mr. McDermott agreed, suggesting that staff could go back and add some information about the development of Center 2 into the beginning or defined section of the report so that it is acknowledged there. He said that in the areas where there may be impacts to the corridor from that which staff is trying to address (e.g. at the intersection of Mill Creek and Avon) and as far as how they are going through the recommendations that Mr. Dotson had for how those are addressing those things, staff could include some language in that piece as well so that it says the center needs to be identified, and how this could work with whatever future development that center looks like, how this might impact the transportation network, and how it could supplement it.

Mr. McDermott asked Ms. Riley if this would cover what she was looking for.

Ms. Riley replied that she would have to think about what Mr. McDermott just said.

Mr. McDermott acknowledged that this was difficult, as Center 2 did came up so late in staff's process.

Mr. Benish clarified that while the County, School Board, and Board of Supervisors have agreed to a potential use of that property, that use is subject to compliance with the Comprehensive Plan review. He said the Commission would therefore be reviewing that proposal for its consistency with the Comprehensive Plan. He said this had not be scheduled yet, nor had the application for it been submitted.

Ms. Spain said there was a reference in the presentation to "road diet" and that she hadn't heard that term before. She asked what this meant.

Mr. McDermott explained the concept of a road diet. He said if a road has an additional lane (e.g. a center turn lane or right-turn lane) that is not necessary, it could be removed to give additional space for things such as landscaping or bike-ped facilities. He said the term "lane diet" is also used, where if there are lanes that are 12 feet wide, but that 12-foot-wide lanes are not needed, extra space could be gained there.

Ms. Spain remarked that it was "slimming," in other words.

Mr. McDermott replied yes.

Mr. Benish brought up an example of a road diet, explaining that Hillsdale Drive used to be four lanes years ago and was reduced to two lanes, with pedestrian-safe islands and crossings.

Ms. Spain said on page 4 of the report, there is a graph that talks about alignment and reward. She said she wasn't sure if this report was going to the Board of Supervisors or to the public, but if there is a chance to redo parts of the report, it would be a good idea to eliminate the "right values, right place, right time" line. She said when she read through it all, she thought of the Chinese "Great Leap Forward." She said alignment of resources was a minor issue, but it seemed odd.

Mr. McDermott said the language could be easily changed.

Mr. Dotson said that because there is new process language in the report, a glossary could help to define terms. He said legends on the maps could also help because sometimes the diagrams were not self-explanatory. He said though he likes keeping them simple, for a reader who didn't participate in the process, a glossary and legends would be helpful, particularly if the report was going to become a template and vocabulary the County would want to use again.

Mr. Bivins asked to see page 10 of the report regarding the June 6 meeting with CAT. He pointed out Item 4 that said, "New route to Mill Creek anticipated in the near future." He asked if this would be a terminus or if they were talking about taking public transportation to the entrance of Biscuit Run.

Mr. McDermott said it was Mill Creek.

Mr. Bivins acknowledged this, but asked if there is talk about extending access, and if there has been any conversation about being able to take public transportation from the City all the way down and stopping at various points on Avon Street to get to the new park entrance.

Mr. McDermott replied that there has been conversation about that. He said there was a recommendation to bring fixed route transit service down to the Mill Creek area that predated talk about Biscuit Run Park. He said one of the things that staff is seriously considering with JAUNT is something that would equate to an on-demand service where one could pay additional to go further out (e.g. to Biscuit Run). He said that although he didn't think there would be a regular fixed route going there, the County is looking at ways to serve that.

Mr. Bivins said one of the major desires from the CAC in that area was for bike-ped access that would get people out of cars and moving in a different way. He said being able to say that on-demand was part of that solution as a way of getting people to the major recreation there could provide some of the buildup that would help move this along. He said while this is about moving traffic, many of the three projects mentioned are about how to move people and get them outside of their cars. He said given there would be a huge attraction at the end of the street, he hoped they were also talking about how to get people there with ease and safely.

Mr. McDermott said the bike-ped connection there is a focal point. He said with transit, what was being evaluated was enabling the corridor to have transit in the future, and that this was represented in the study.

Ms. Spain asked if the request for the preference to have no bus stops within shopping centers only and the right-of-way came from CAT or from the meeting. She referred to Items 1-6 on page 10 of the report.

Mr. Hyer replied that the six bullet points under June 6 were all snippets of the conversation with CAT when staff met with them. He said these were CAT's comments that staff had reported.

Ms. Spain clarified that this was not part of the public meeting.

Mr. Hyer said it came from CAT staff. Referring back to the comments from the meeting, he said CAT did acknowledge the Biscuit Run entrance and that they prefer having a turnaround that is built into the entrance. He said it is dependent upon the terminus and if it is a "stop and back up" situation or a turnaround. He said their hope is for a circular terminus at the park.

Ms. Spain said it concerns her that there wouldn't be bus stops in the shopping center, as that is where people will have their groceries, and they cannot walk down to Avon and 5th Street. She noted that at Pantops, the bus stop is by the Food Lion.

Mr. Hyer said they have come to learn that CAT doesn't prefer to have bus stops on private property for a couple of different reasons: liability; and the fact that the buses tear up the asphalt parking lots, which becomes a nightmare for relationships between CAT and the landowner for that shopping center. He said the goal is to get the stops close using public spaces in the right of way, but then not have stops on private property. He reiterated that this information is coming from CAT.

Ms. Spain asked where people would go from a stop at Avon and 5th Street station. She asked if they would get off there and then hike up to the shopping center.

Mr. Hyer replied yes, explaining that it could alternatively be a transition point where two buses can pull and park, one behind the other. He said CAT advised on where they prefer stops and that he was sure CAT had reasons for not wanting to be on private property.

Mr. Hyer said to CAT's defense, in one regard, where the corridor is narrowest is right in front of the CAT yard and that they could not fit a sidewalk or any kind of connection within the public right of way. He said CAT had agreed to give the County the space they needed to create the connection for pedestrian continuity through the corridor. He said there was certainly support from CAT for the project and in uniting the corridor for the various modes of transportation.

Ms. Spain expressed that it was unfortunate that people who really depend on buses seemingly cannot get the service that is most effective for them, and people who have pedestrian and bicycle access seem to have an easier time than those who are dependent on buses. She said she knew that this wasn't Mr. Hyer's issue and that she understood the reasons for CAT, but it is part of the system that they do not acknowledge as a shortcoming, often enough.

Mr. Hyer offered that an interesting player in the conversation, going forward, would be JAUNT because more of the on-demand transit (where people can specifically be picked up at their house and taken to grocery stores or other places) would become more prominent.

Ms. Spain asked if with JAUNT, the user has to have an app to be able to use them or if they could call them on the phone.

Mr. Hyer replied that he didn't know if JAUNT had an app at that moment.

Mr. McDermott replied that JAUNT does not have an app, but is looking to add an app. He said his understanding was that they will continue to allow for phone calls to get service.

Mr. Hyer noted that all the meeting minutes were in the long version of the report. He said their meeting with JAUNT was interesting because it does sound like there is conversation between groups like JAUNT, CAT, and some of the micro-transits (e.g. scooters) to create transportation hubs where someone can get off of a bus and hop onto on-demand transit. He said it is an industry that is being rethought and that the transportation hubs will be an interesting component.

Ms. Riley said she realized the new high school center was not an approved project yet in its entirety and wondered if Mr. Hyer had any ideas as to how to create awareness in the document about the new use. She asked if, similar to those kinds of agency meetings, it would make sense to do something like that to at least get the new use in the document and create general awareness that transportation is something that needs to be coordinated.

Mr. Hyer asked what Ms. Riley meant by the "new use."

Ms. Riley replied that she was referring to the new high school center.

Mr. Hyer replied that when thinking about how to templatize this, they were at an interesting jumping-off point because largely, their effort to date had been more design driven in coming up with a vision for the corridor. He said they could translate all the data and ideas into a very comprehensive document. He said it was a matter of how, with this project, to keep things simple and digestible while on the other hand, setting themselves up for a very robust and comprehensive report.

Mr. Hyer said currently, they are likely more on the "easily digestible" side of the spectrum and if they need to transition to more of a very comprehensive document that has the nodes and connection points, they have the resources to pull this together, but that this wasn't how it was organized at this time.

Mr. Keller said that having been involved with many reports in a lifetime, he did enjoy the attempt (graphically and texturally) to minimize. He said while there are things the commissioners pointed out that they would like to see, it has worked remarkably effectively for him to get the gist of what they were doing with this approach. He applauded Mr. Hyer and staff for that.

Mr. Keller opened the public comment period.

Mr. Roger Schickedantz (1858 Scottsville Road) said he was co-chair of the 5th and Avon CAC during the process. He thanked the County (notably, Supervisors Randolph and Palmer) for their efforts to help procure funding and get the project authorized. He said it was timely because of the increased congestion of vehicular and pedestrian transportation along the corridor upon the opening of 5th Street Station. He said there have been concerns about pedestrians, in particular, and safety along the corridor.

Mr. Schickedantz said the CAC felt as if the concerns were addressed very well and they were happy with the results. He said one in particular that resonates is the crossing over I-64 with a pedestrian bridge, stressing that this was necessary because there is no shoulder off the road. He said the roundabout at Mill Creek also seems like a good solution. He said the roundabout was controversial, as well as the Southern Parkway intersection and that when this was up for public comment, there were people who were very outspoken on both sides. He said the communication process will be important, as this goes forward, to make sure people are brought up to speed and understand the benefits.

Mr. Schickedantz said the Biscuit Run intersection was originally intended to be addressed fully as part of the study, but because of the overlapping jurisdictions between the Master Planning process and the corridor study, this wasn't resolved. He said there were public comments against the solution that came up through the Master Planning process, particularly about its functionality. He said he believes there is still an opportunity to provide something that is elegant as well as more functional than what is being shown now.

Mr. Schickedantz said the CAC is looking forward to seeing the specific projects implemented and was happy with the way it was broken up into funding segments so that it can be done incrementally. He thanked Mr. Hyer and his team, and Mr. McDermott, for shepherding the process through.

Ms. Melanie Brady (Mill Creek resident) said she represented herself as a bicycle commuter. She said she rides almost every day between Mill Creek and UVA. She thanked all the people who were involved in the design process, noting there was great potential there. She said speaking as a person involved directly, she is seeing more people biking and that she was very happy to see this as the more people who are biking, the safer every cyclist will be, because cars will start to become more familiar with seeing bikes on the road. She said she would like to see this be more accessible to more people.

Ms. Brady said one of the things that is very promising about having the separated space is that it means she will not be the odd person who sometimes trims the trees that overhang, as VDOT only goes out once a year to do so. She said she recently stopped on the bridge and had to move several cinderblocks that fell and cracked in the road. She said some of them were still there and that she was at least able to move them to the side. She said she is a comfortable, assertive rider and that she was willing to do those things that most people aren't. She said the potential to make bike-ped more accessible for more people is great.

Ms. Brady said one thing in the process going forward that she would advocate for is that once they get to the implementation stage, she was hopeful that there can be attention to maintaining what is accessible now. She said she knew, for example, that the idea of narrowing the lanes in order to create medians was logical. She said she was hopeful that in that process of construction, there can still be passable area because if the road is under construction and the pedestrians' spot is not there first, the very minimal shoulder that is there now would become no shoulder and would change the safety in that corridor. She said she hoped this would be attended to in the process.

Mr. Keller asked Ms. Brady what her route is to UVA.

Ms. Brady replied that she comes up Mill Creek Drive from the neighborhood and turns onto Avon. She said she used to go all the way to Cherry Avenue and turned left, but once the road to 5th Street Parkway went in, she now turns there and goes up through Fry's Spring, as there is a bike lane there, which is preferable to having no bike lane.

Mr. David Storm (resident of Willoughby, in the County portion of the neighborhood) said he co-chaired the 5th and Avon CAC through the process. He said he was not at the meeting when the CAC endorsed the project, and that he wanted to offer his endorsement. He said there are two main reasons for his endorsement, adding he would also address some things the commissioners brought up.

Mr. Storm said he believes the process was a good one. He said there was engagement throughout the process with the citizens and major stakeholders throughout the region (e.g. CAT, JAUNT, PVCC). He said in all those ways, they saw a process that can work.

Mr. Storm said as far as Mr. Dotson's point about where the cost savings would be in the future, he believed it was about process. He said Mr. McDermott and his staff have developed what they need to be able to implement this elsewhere, and so cost savings will appear in staff time. He said this probably wouldn't happen in a consultant's role, as they may have traffic studies that need to be done, but that there would be cost savings in staff time and that they would become more efficient each time in doing this.

Mr. Storm said to Mr. Bivins' point, it was about moving people through the corridor and specifically not about moving vehicles, but about moving people. He said this is what the CAC wanted to see. He acknowledged that there are things going on tangentially, and that PVCC is moving on a trail to Biscuit Run that goes under I-64. He said there will be multiple ways to get through.

Mr. Storm addressed Ms. Spain's point, noting that there is currently a bus stop on Merchants Square within the 5th Street Station shopping center. He said it is not close to Wegman's, but it closer to Dick's and Field and Stream. He said bus riders will not have to go all the way up, but that her point was well-taken in that regard.

Mr. Storm said he also serves with Mr. Dotson on the Schools' Long-Range Planning Advisory Committee and that they didn't talk about locating Center 2, but his understanding was that even though it is a Galaxie Farm property, they are looking at that more as access to Founders Way, coming off of Mill Creek Drive opposite Monticello High School. He said the School Division has pointed out that they do expect to run buses to all the centers once they are complete. He pointed out that this would not stop students from driving, as the County has seen at Monticello, Western Albemarle, and other schools.

Mr. Storm said the other piece is that they have not seen schools wanting through connections. He said perhaps Galaxie Farm Lane does not get connected. He said sometimes it is an issue of safety, as they may not want more traffic coming by a school in that way. He said it was an interesting point and, as Ms. Riley had pointed out, came very late in the process.

Mr. Storm said at multiple meetings, Elaine Echols had said that as 5th Street Station developed, the Southern Parkway was coming out of the Comprehensive Plan. He said it remains in the plan because there hasn't been an update for that part of the County.

Mr. Storm said he was happy to answer any questions about the points he brought up.

Ms. Riley thanked Mr. Storm, Mr. Schickedantz, Mr. Hyer, and staff. She agreed that it was an excellent process and that the CAC did great work. She said it truly did involve the public and the various stakeholder agencies. She said everyone deserved credit for a very well-done job.

Mr. Storm commented that Mr. Hyer, Mr. McDermott, and their team led a great process, and that the CAC was very pleased with what they saw. He said the corridor is in transition in a number of ways. He said it was originally designed with a lot of Light Industrial, but now, the County is seeing so much residential coming through there. He said the Light Industrial, however, remains and will remain as it is a popular location for many different reasons and uses. He said they need to be able to move those people through.

Mr. Storm said that in some respects, he would like to see JAUNT expanding their Connect program to call it, "Avon Connect Basic" and have it start at Spring Hill Village and Avon Park when they are complete and serve as a commuting path into the City, if this is something CAT wants to adopt. He said he didn't think CAT had expressed a great interest in going all the way down the corridor, but that moving people safely was important (and not necessarily in their cars).

Mr. Storm stressed that the biggest project the community brought up was the connection over I-64 and the fact that it can be on the west side, which puts people closer to 5th Street Station so that they do not have to navigate across at that light and then down the hill directly.

Mr. Storm said the other piece was trying to get CAT out to the regional jail, as when people are released, they are stuck there and do not have transportation back into the City, where they may need to go. He said there is currently not a bus stop there.

Mr. Storm said there are reasons for all those things.

Mr. Keller asked Mr. McDermott to restate what he would like from the Commission that evening.

Mr. McDermott said they had covered the questions he had for the Planning Commission about the proposed connections. He said they covered if they have anything else to add about the proposed recommendations, what they understand and expect, and about the topics missing. He said it was now up to the Commission, as it is a work session. He said he could take the information and re-work it; or the Commission could endorse the plan to the Board of Supervisors, and staff could work over the next few weeks to address the suggestions heard, then move it on to the Board for approval. He reminded the Commission that this would not involve Comprehensive Plan updates nor any public hearing, but would be an endorsement of the plan.

Mr. Keller recalled that Mr. Dotson and Ms. Riley had some comments in particular about the project. He asked for their feelings on taking next steps.

Mr. Dotson said in general, he was biased towards moving things along. He said he would support endorsing the plan, with the comments to go along with it. He asked if Ms. Riley would like to make a motion.

Ms. Riley agreed that she would like to see things move forward. She said in terms of the high school center, she knew she hadn't made a specific proposal about how it would be addressed. She suggested that minimally, on page 5 under "Schools," they could include a potential Center

2 to be identified as another school. She asked staff to look at other ways in which to determine if there is an appropriate place to identify the potential Center 2. She said she was happy to make the motion, unless there was further discussion.

Mr. Bivins said he had a question. He said on much of the road there, the pedestrian walkway is asphalt. He asked if it would remain asphalt.

Mr. McDermott replied that some would. He explained that asphalt is the standard for shared use path recommendations and that there is a shared use path that will remain. He said they also have concrete sidewalks, but that much of it would remain asphalt.

Mr. Keller asked if it would be separated from the road one way or another, throughout.

Mr. McDermott replied yes.

Mr. Keller said topographically, they have so few opportunities like this in the County or City, and this was the place where they could have a major commuter route that actually does have its own separated piece the way they see, for instance, outside of Copenhagen.

Mr. McDermott said there is a segment as one approaches the City where it is brought back in to be a bike lane, where it would ride with traffic for a short segment on the downhill portion. He said this was due to the topography, but that for the bulk of the corridor, there is a separated path.

Mr. Keller asked if staff had explored the opportunities of separation at that spot and if it seemed less feasible.

Mr. McDermott replied yes. He said it is a very odd shape because it is incised there, but that the segment that would have bikes having to be with traffic was minimized. He said this is a conceptual plan at this time, and when the project receives funding and staff does a detailed design, they will do their best to push everything out to give it its own separated area. He said another opportunity staff is starting to look at now is to have bike lanes, but to have them be buffered so there can either be a physical or space separation between the bike lane and the traffic. He said staff will seek out more opportunities as they get into the detailed design, but with the concept plan, it does have a segment that would have a bike lane being in the road.

Mr. Keller said in conclusion, the County badly needs an example in the greater community of a commuter route that has as much full separation as possible so that both people on bicycles and people in automobiles can see the value. He said this would also let the County and City officials see how the numbers will increase because of the safety aspects of that separation. He suggested staff consider adding this as a sentence somewhere in the report. He said if staff is truly moving towards that, then just as Mr. Dotson had talked about having a model document for looking at others, this report could conceivably be the model that could affect other pieces being considered in the future (e.g. 29 North commuter ride in).

Mr. McDermott said staff is moving forward on the Berkmar Connection so that there will be a separated facility for the full length of Berkmar from Rio all the way to the Hollymead area. He said there is a brief section in Hollymead where it is going to be an in-lane bike facility, but then going north of Hollymead and into the UVA Research Park, it will go back to separated. He said what the County terms the "Northtown Trail" is funded to be constructed as a separated facility. He said they do already have one going already in the area.

Mr. Keller said this was significant when thinking about the population that is anticipated in that greater area.

Ms. Firehock said she didn't make many comments as she had attended many of the CAC meetings and had the opportunity to hear about the plan in great detail. She complimented the planners and designers on the great job of incorporating people's comments and when they were asked to follow up, they would have the meeting and report on it.

Ms. Firehock said she would make the same comment she made for the Rio-29 plan, which was whenever the County has an opportunity to add medians, they should also consider stormwater management. She said instead of planting medians as humps where the water shoots off, they would be recessed and get the opportunity to have additional stormwater management. She explained that much of Avon existed before stormwater management requirements were in place, and that this was a chance to co-locate a good green design.

Ms. Firehock said similarly, she was pleased to see trees planted as part of the design. She said trees are traffic calmers, as they visually stimulate the brain and people drive more slowly when they see more things in their field of vision (noting this fact has been documented). She noted that she doesn't want the County to be replacing those trees, however, in 7-9 years because they were planted poorly without enough space. She said the County needs better tree planting standards, which come into VDOT's purview and that they do not have record standards, either. She suggested considering planting trees they intend to last and will grow large enough to soak up more stormwater and provide more shade for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Ms. Firehock said there are designs for the middle green space in traffic circles to also be recessed, and to function as a bioswale. She acknowledged that the traffic circle is expensive, but pointed out that when they are paving all the circular lanes, they can be sloped into the middle and have the stormwater in the ground instead of trying to curb and gutter everything and sending it into the river untreated.

Mr. Keller said the public hearing had been closed, but allowed another member of the public to speak quickly.

Mr. Jonathan Earl said he lives off Avon and Lake Reynovia. He said the Commission had him thinking about what could be done in the process, and that he was wondering about utilities and if there was anything included in the planning process to bury power lines.

Mr. McDermott replied that staff did not discuss the utilities as part of the project but that it was something they could look at when they move to the design phase. He said an unfortunate thing is that undergrounding utilities is not covered under most of the grants the County usually goes for. He said that though it adds costs, staff can always consider determining what the desire is for the additional cost.

Mr. Earl said it was a practical and beneficial thing to bury the utilities.

Mr. Keller said the Commission and staff all appreciate the comments. He said in the process, because they know there is a significant portion of residents who have those concerns, perhaps staff could provide some figures (not necessarily in this project, but in future ones). He said that everyone who has been involved in these projects has seen how undergrounding utilities can

astronomically increase costs, and so using the Virginia Power formula for how many dollars per mile or quarter mile its costs could be shared with the public so they can see, with the County's limited taxpayer dollars, what it takes to accomplish projects. He said they could then focus on whether there are certain areas where there may be merit in spending those additional funds.

Ms. Spain said it was interesting that the images do not show any utility wires, and that everything looks clean and beautiful.

Mr. Hyer said they are finding it is more affordable to move power further away from the corridor, perhaps routing it behind commercial centers. He said that way, it would still serve the corridor, but not be in the corridor itself. He said it would be substantially cheaper than going underground and that the visual obstruction aspect would be removed.

Mr. Hyer said regarding the discussion of the narrow portion of the corridor from the City line to 5th Street Station, he had gotten distracted with a mistake he saw and was trying to make a note. He explained that there is a full shared use path from 5th Street Station to the City line and that it is on the east side of the road. He said they have a dedicated climbing bike lane in the road coming from the City, heading south on Avon. He said if someone is at Mill Creek, they are on the west side of the road on a shared use path, and so they go across the bridge and get to the bus stop at 5th Street Station, where they cross at the light and then the shared use path continues all the way to the City line. He said thus, there is the full program of what they would hope for in a multi-modal corridor.

Mr. Keller suggested again finding a place to have a sentence or two that clearly states this, which would answer many people's questions and help with support.

Mr. Hyer agreed, stating that it was good to get the Commission's feedback on what was not clear. He said staff would include this in the report.

Mr. McDermott added that this would fit very well with Mr. Dotson's recommendation for the structure of the impact where he has how these improvements can affect different areas, such as a bike-ped environment. He said this statement could be fit there very well.

Mr. McDermott apologized for misspeaking. He said originally, they had had trouble making room for the shared use path, but that as Mr. Hyer explained, it was able to be fit in.

Ms. Firehock followed up by explaining that one of the challenges with underground utilities is that they are often put in the planting zone, as this is determined to be the easiest place to dig up. She said the tree roots are then compromised and cut every time the utilities must be repaired, and the tree falls. She clarified she was not saying that trees are the most important thing, but that she was cautioning to be careful what they wish for. She said they were not designing the corridor from scratch and if they were, staff's job would be much easier, and they would be able to figure everything out. She said they are, however, trying to retrofit things and so they may not have room to underground utilities.

Ms. Firehock said that as far as putting the utilities out of sight, she wouldn't want to see this requiring more tree cutting behind the shopping mall, which would cause more blight for creatures.

Mr. Benish said that bringing utilities off the corridor is what FES did in the design for the Crozet streetscape, and instead of going underground, the lines were put in the alley system parallel, about a block off. He said this has been effective so far, noting that with Barnes Lumber coming in, it may raise some new issues as it builds.

Ms. Riley thanked Mr. Dotson for providing the Impact section, which saved the Commission a lot of discussion time that evening. (note: a copy of Mr. Dotson's suggestions are attached to these minutes for reference)

Ms. Riley moved to endorse the Avon Street Extended Corridor Plan to the Board of Supervisors, including comments and recommendations made by Planning commissioners that evening.

Ms. Firehock seconded the motion, which carried unanimously 6:0. (Ms. More was absent from the meeting and vote.)

Committee Reports

There were no committee reports.

Review of November 20 Board of Supervisors Meeting

Mr. Benish said that for the December 4 Board of Supervisors meeting, there were three items that the Planning Commission had previously reviewed that the Board had acted on. He said ZMA201900013 (Biscuit Run Park rezoning) was approved as the Commission had reviewed it, and as recommended by staff.

Mr. Benish said ZMA201800012 Galaxie Farm was approved as recommended by the Planning Commission.

Mr. Benish said ZTA201900005, a Zoning Text Amendment to modify the requirements for applications for Special Use Permits allowing electrical cooperatives to make application without full ownership of properties involved, was approved as recommended by the Planning Commission.

Old Business

There was no old business.

New Business

Mr. Benish reminded the Commission that he had previously given the Commission the draft dates for next year's meetings. He thanked Ms. Spain for a correction on those. He said one thing the Commission will need to address next year is committee memberships, and so he was sending the commissioners a list of committee memberships.

Mr. Benish said he was not sure that they had completely updated the committee membership list from changes that may have been made mid-year, but that he thought it would be useful for the Commission to have this list.

Mr. Benish said he didn't need anything from the Commission and that it would be scheduled for January 14 for discussion with new commissioners. He said if the commissioners did have thoughts about the list, he was happy to take those before then.

Mr. Benish said another thing the Commission would be doing on January 14 was acting on the rules and procedures for the Planning Commission. He said he didn't recall that there were any changes that commissioners had identified that they might want to change in the rules and procedures. He encouraged the commissioners to let him or Mr. Herrick know if there is anything about the processes that they would like to change. He said giving staff an early heads-up on that would allow them to determine if they need to make any adjustments to the rules and procedures. He said he had some minor suggestions, including how they title some of the agenda headings, noting those are dated.

Mr. Keller said that Mr. Herrick had collected some of those things over the course of the year.

Mr. Herrick said he did not recall any changes that he was planning on suggesting from what had previously been brought to the Commission.

Mr. Keller said he would go back to his notes, as there were a couple of things that Mr. Herrick had mentioned at some point. He noted they were not consequential, but were more about clean-up.

Mr. Herrick welcomed any suggestions any commissioners may have, noting that the time to do this would be before the organizational meeting on January 14.

Adjournment

At 7:29 p.m., the Commission adjourned to December 17, 2019 Albemarle County Planning Commission meeting, 6:00 p.m., Lane Auditorium, Second Floor, County Office Building, 401 McIntire Road, Charlottesville, Virginia.

David Benish, Interim Director of Planning

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

Approved by Planning Commission
Date: 01/14/2020
Initials: CSS

Attachment:

Avon Corridor Study: Concluding Impact section suggestions (B. Dotson)

My thoughts on how to draw this report together in the, as yet, unwritten, "impacts" section, a challenge to keep it brief

1. Organize by type of impact
    a. Traffic
    b. Pedestrian
    c. Bicycle
    d. Transit
    e. Landscaping
    f. Land Use

2. For each category, address timing of need/justification
    a. Immediate
    b. 5 year (CIP time frame)
    c. 6-10 year (CNA time frame)
    d. 10+ years (Comp Plan and Capacity Report time frame)

3. Pedestrian, particular issues/opportunities
    a. Gaps/Continuity
    b. Safety
    c. Users/Destinations
        i. Currently
        ii. Potential
    d. Method for tracking user numbers

4. Bicycle, particular issues/opportunities
    a. Gaps/Continuity
    b. Safety
    c. Users
        i. Recreation/Commuters
        ii. Currently
        iii. Potential
    d. Method for tracking user numbers

5. Transit, particular issues/opportunities
    a. Current deficiencies (where corrections could make a difference in use)
    b. Method for tracking user numbers

6. Landscaping (could be in conjunction with any of the above)

7. Land Use (perhaps should go first rather than last)
    a. Vacant, infill, redevelopment capacities, from the Capacity Report
    b. Connection to the needs/projects addressed above