

**CITY OF CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA**



Agenda Date:	December 2, 2024
Action Required:	Approve Resolution
Presenter:	James Freas, Deputy City Manager
Staff Contacts:	Steven Hicks, Director of Public Works
Title:	Resolution for VDOT Portfolio SmartScale re-allocation, cancelation, project development agreement termination, and revised projects scope

Background

On May 16, 2005, the City entered into an agreement with the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) to participate in the Urban Construction Initiative (UCI) (also known as the First Cities Initiative). Through this program, the City is responsible for administering its urban system construction program, consisting of design, right-of-way acquisition, utility relocation, and construction. The roadway program is funded through local funding and a variety of state and federal grant programs (including Smart Scale, the VDOT Revenue Sharing Program, the State of Good Repair Program, and the Virginia Highway Safety Improvements Program). VDOT continues to be an important partner providing guidance, oversight in coordination with the Federal Highway Administration and other regulatory agencies, authorization to advance projects throughout the development process, and assistance with the aforementioned grant opportunities. The City may also request for VDOT to provide support activities such as surveying, environmental assessments, and consideration of cultural and historic resources. In some cases, VDOT administers a local project in its totality to allow the City to focus on the successful delivery of other, mutually-agreed upon projects in a timely manner. Consistent with these principles, City Council approved a resolution on July 15, 2024, to authorize the City Manager to sign and execute a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the City and VDOT, allowing VDOT to lead in the administration of City transportation projects on a case-by-case basis.

Discussion

Since 2005, the City's transportation program has grown to 34 projects totaling approximately \$185 million. City staff actively evaluates the overall portfolio of projects in relation to key variables including current and future local funding obligations, schedule commitments and deadlines, staffing capacity, and the spectrum of current and forecasted bidding and pricing factors within the transportation industry. A work session with City Council and the Planning Commission was held on May 24, 2022, to identify steps forward to ensure priority transportation projects are allocated the necessary resources to steadily advance. As a result, on June 6, 2022, Council passed a resolution to allow VDOT to exercise project oversight of the Route 250/Hydraulic Road Turn Lane Extension Project. The resolution also authorized the City Manager to cancel the West Main Streetscape project (Phases 1, 2 & 3), Emmet Street Signal Coordination project, Pedestrian Improvements at Monticello

Avenue/Ridge Street project, and Preston Avenue/Grady Avenue Intersection Improvements project. Similarly, a work session with City Council was held on November 4, 2024, to provide an overview of the Transportation Project Portfolio, including project schedules and cost estimates. During the work session, staff provided an overview of all Smart Scale projects and identified projects, discussed below, that were over budget. This resulted in a recommendation to cancel the Emmet Street Phase II project and the 5th Street SW and Ridge project, in order to redistribute the funds to other active Smart Scale projects with funding deficits. In addition, staff recommended that the Fontaine Avenue project be managed by VDOT.

1) Fontaine Avenue Streetscape (UPC 109484) (Request VDOT Administer with revised scope)
The original project scope included a three-lane roadway with 10-12' wide median strips with trees where median width allows and two dedicated left turn lanes; a 5' sidewalk; 6' landscape and tree buffer; 6' curb and 5' bike lanes on both sides of the street; improvements regarding access for those with disabilities; rapid-flash beacons at one intersection; and significant pedestrian-scale lighting. The cost estimate for this original project scope has increased to \$32 million, which is \$18 million over budget.

Staff reviewed the project to identify opportunities to reduce the project's cost while maintaining the primary project objectives. Staff recommended staying within the existing right of way as much as possible by removing parking on one side of the street to facilitate a shared use path in lieu of creating new buffered bike lanes. With this and other recommended changes, the new cost estimate is \$24,940,000, with current funding of \$17,927,000. The remaining balance of \$7,013,000 will be met through the reallocation of current funding from the Emmet Street Phase II and/or 5th Street SW and Ridge projects.

2) Emmet Streetscape – Phase II Smart Scale project (UPC 118867) (Cancel)
The proposed project would provide bicycle and pedestrian accommodations along Emmet Street between Arlington Boulevard and Barracks Road to include a shared use path. Emmet Street Phase II is scheduled to begin preliminary engineering in 2026. The current funding is inadequate to deliver the proposed scope and any reductions in the project scope will not accomplish the project goals. The current funding allocation for the project is \$20,465,000. These funds will be considered for reallocation to other Smart Scale projects currently under design.

3) 5th Street SW and Ridge Smart Scale project (UPC 124409) (Cancel)
The proposed project would provide multi-modal improvements along the Ridge Street Corridor to include sidewalk and curb ramp upgrades, signal improvements on Monticello Road, curb extensions on Ridge, Dice, and Oak Streets. The 5th Street SW and Ridge project is scheduled to begin preliminary engineering in 2025. City staff met with VDOT staff to discuss potential reductions in the project scope that could allow the project to be accomplished with current funding, but it was determined that such design changes would not meet the original intent of the project while also remaining within the budget. The current funding allocated to the project is \$14,841,054. These funds will be considered for redistribution to other Smart Scale projects currently under design.

4) Barracks Road/Emmet Street SmartScale project (UPC 111796) (Revised scope)

The original project scope would create additional right turn lanes in the northbound Emmet Street (Route 29) corridor and westbound Barracks Road. A shared use path would also be constructed along Emmet Street south of Barracks Road and a shared use path, or climbing lane, would be constructed on the south side of Barracks Road toward Hilltop Road. In addition, pedestrian refuge islands were proposed at the south crossing of Emmet Street and the east crossing of Barracks Road. The cost of this project is estimated to be \$17 million.

Staff reviewed the project to reduce the project cost to be in line with the current budget. Staff recommended to revise the scope to widen the existing sidewalk along Barracks Road to 6 feet, rather than creating a shared use path, eliminating the need for retaining walls and tree removal. All proposed improvements to the intersection remain unchanged. With this reduced scope, the cost estimate of the project is \$7,854,358. Currently, \$9,136,000 is budgeted for the project; the remaining balance of \$1,281,642 would remain with this project to offset any expenses related to right-of-way acquisitions and construction contingencies.

5) Emmet Street Smart Scale (UPC 109551) (no changes to scope)

The project scope includes a multimodal streetscape with a shared use path between Ivy Road and Arlington Boulevard. The cost estimate is \$23,019,581, with current funding of \$17,735,226. The remaining balance of \$5,284,355 will be met through the reallocation of current funding from Emmet Street Phase II and/or 5th Street SW and Ridge projects.

6) East High Smart Scale (UPC 109480) (no changes to scope)

The project scope includes expanding pedestrian and bicycle accessibility associated with the Belmont Bridge along East High Street to Locust Avenue. The cost estimate is \$15,666,248, with current funding of \$10,260,916. The remaining balance of \$5,405,322 will be met through the redistribution of funds from Emmet Street Phase II and/or 5th Street SW and Ridge projects.

Alignment with City Council's Vision and Strategic Plan

The work of this proposal is closely aligned with City Council's vision of the City of Charlottesville as a community in which everyone can thrive, and specifically with the strategic plan to provide a regional transportation system that increases mobility options and is reliable and affordable for all

Community Engagement

Each of these projects and their design, construction, and costs have been the subject of public meetings. Staff plans to hold additional public meetings regarding Fontaine Avenue and Barracks Road/Emmet Street to share the revised scope of these projects.

Budgetary Impact

Staff is working with VDOT to reallocate approximately \$20 million from the current funding sources from Emmet Street Phase II and 5th Street SW and Ridge projects. These funds will be reallocated to Fontaine Avenue, Emmet Street, and East High Street. Some additional appropriations will be necessary in the future.

Recommendation

Staff recommends approval of the resolution.

Alternatives

Council could choose not to approve the resolution.

Attachments

1. RESOLUTION - VDOT projects 12.2.24