

THOMAS JEFFERSON PLANNING DISTRICT COMMISSION

Summary of Activities July through September 2020

Environment:

The 2021 Scope of Work for the **Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Planning (WIP) Assistance program** was submitted to the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) on September 30. Staff continues to create Water Quality Guide booklets, which are being created as part of the WIP contract. The booklets are being distributed through social media and PDC websites. In conjunction with the Rivanna Stormwater Education Partnership (RSEP), posts are being shared on the #LoveYourWatershed social media campaign. Finally, the initial planning stages for a local watershed cleanup with RSEP and the Rivanna Conservation Alliance (RCA) have begun.

The **Rivanna River Basin Commission (RRBC)** and the TJPDC hosted a successful Fifth Annual Rivanna River Conference via Zoom in late September. Approximately 50 people participated. Septic pumping in underserved regional communities was addressed as a major topic when discussing Best Management Practices (BMPs) for Stormwater Management and their impact on overall watershed health. BMPs also were discussed in a presentation by Anne Coates of the TJSWCD. Finally, a detailed overview of the WIP contract and climate agreements was provided by James Davis Martin from DEQ. Participants also addressed other notable Rivanna topics during the Q & A portion of the event.

Work on the five-year update to the **Regional Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan** began in late July. Staff participated in a virtual webinar put on by the DEQ on the plan update process and engagement efforts that should be incorporated into the plan. Staff now is in the process of assembling a working group committee that will guide this planning process, which will commence with a kickoff meeting with the group to review the project scope of work and anticipated timelines.

Housing:

As of September 30, 2020, the TJPDC has been awarded \$900,000 for the Emergency **Rent and Mortgage Relief Program (RMRP)**. Funding comes from the federal CARES Act, and the TJPDC serves as the administrator of the program in our region, with program funding distributed to partners that are performing intake in each locality. Program funding is distributed on a per capita basis to make rent or mortgage payments for eligible individuals and families who have experienced a loss of income due to the pandemic. Recent program changes allow rent and mortgage payments be made for rent in arrears, the current month's rent, and future rent payments through December. Applications will continue to be approved until November 13, when the RMRP program will transition to a new program to be determined. As of September 30, 266 families in our region have received over \$529,000 of rent and mortgage support with an average payment of \$1,726. The RMRP is a partnership with the Department of Housing and Community Development, and is being run in conjunction with area partners that include the City of Charlottesville's Pathways program, the United Way of Greater Charlottesville, the Monticello Area Community Action Agency, and the Nelson County Community Development Foundation.

The **Central Virginia Regional Housing Partnership (RHP)** is working with a software company to create the "Regional Housing Locator" website. This online platform will feature affordable housing listings for both sale and for rent. It also will feature tools such as a housing affordability calculator and a listing of housing resources in the region. We have been working with the local governments and the Charlottesville Area Community Foundation to obtain the necessary dollars to fully implement it. The RHP also has kicked off a Fall Speaker Series, called "Navigating Today's Affordable Housing Virtual Series." Registration for the events, and the recording and presentation from the September session, are available on the [RHP website](#). The next event is a panel discussion on October 22 on the topic of "Regional Housing Strategies and Policies." Finally, the Regional Housing Plan is actively underway, with the completion of the first locality draft chapter. Completion is slated for the December/January timeframe.

The **Thomas Jefferson Community Land Trust (TJCLT)** is engaged with engineering and permit requirements for building the next four homes in the City of Charlottesville. The Land Trust also has received grant reimbursement from Virginia Housing for completing its first Strategic Plan. Guided by this strategic plan, the Land Trust recruited two new Board members, is engaged in diversifying its funding sources and has launched a crowdfunding initiative called the “Social Equity Game” for the purposes of raising awareness of the Land Trust mission, and funding diversification.

The draft 2019-2020 program year **HOME Investment Partnership Program Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER)** was presented to the TJPDC Commission in September. Fifteen activities across the region were completed for the program year beginning July 1, 2019, and ending June 30, 2020, which included 10 homeowner rehabilitation projects, one down-payment assistance project for a first-time homebuyer, construction of three new rental units and acquisition of one rental unit.

Legislative Services:

Development of the **2021 Legislative Program** got underway this quarter. With input from the local governing bodies, the program was drafted and then distributed to localities in early October, with program approval by each local governing body slated to occur in November. There also was work with several localities on their local legislative initiatives during the quarter.

A special session of the General Assembly began in August. Bills and the budget proposal were monitored and lobbied. Weekly newsletter updates also were produced. Frequent conference calls were held with other legislative liaisons. Virtual policy committee meetings and workgroup meetings of the Virginia Municipal League and the Virginia Association of Counties also were monitored. The July Mayor & Chairs/CAOs meeting also was organized and held.

Local/Regional Support:

At the direction of the TJPDC Commission, the TJPDC is establishing a **Regional Broadband Partnership (RBP)**. The initial step to shaping the RBP is to have an exploratory committee help determine the direction of an RBP, and to assist in designing the structure, function and objectives of such a partnership. The TJPDC will act as the regional body to facilitate the organization and workings of the RBP, which will serve as a mechanism for knowledge-sharing and common understanding of the current and future needs of high-speed broadband services. The Partnership will enable high-level coordination, while providing a platform for information-sharing and creating a united voice to inform and advocate with stakeholders.

A joint application by the TJPDC and the Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission (RRRC) was submitted to the US Department of Commerce to undertake a **Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) plan**. The application included 11 letters of support from localities and organizations within the two regions. Under the federal CARES Act, if awarded, the project would require an 80/20 funding allocation, with the Department of Commerce providing 80% of project costs, and the two regional bodies providing the remaining 20%. Award notification could come in November.

The TJPDC is administering a small business assistance grant program for Nelson County. **Nelson CARES 2020** will provide up to \$350,000 in CARES Act funding for direct grants to small businesses located in Nelson that have experienced business interruption due to required closures as a result of the COVID-19 public health emergency. Grants will range from \$1,000 to \$30,000 based upon the number of full-time employees of a business to help offset temporary loss of revenue, increased costs due to mitigation measures, and other business critical operating expenses incurred due to the effects of COVID-19. Through the end of September, 11 applications had been received requesting more than \$83,000 in assistance.

Activity on the **Zion Crossroads Small Area Plan** ramped up in the last quarter. Kittelson and Associates, Inc., the consultants retained for the project by VDOT, completed the initial “existing and future no-build conditions analysis” of traffic safety and performance conditions. TJPDC staff completed a survey with Fluvanna County to receive feedback from stakeholders on their preferences for future development of the area, which will supplement the work Louisa County recently conducted during its Comprehensive Plan update. The Advisory Committee, composed of representatives from both Fluvanna and Louisa Counties, met to review the findings from the Kittelson report and plan for next steps, which will include

public workshops to discuss the current conditions and to identify community goals and concerns.

The **Lovington Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) project** was completed in mid-September. As part of that project, staff developed an Economic Restructuring Report (ERR) to provide background data on existing conditions in the Village of Lovington and to identify potential strategies to boost investment in the area. The ERR was coupled with the work completed by the consultant team from LPDA who drafted streetscape design plans and a preliminary engineering report. Staff is now in the process of compiling the ERR and the consultant design work into one, cohesive document.

Field work for the **Albemarle Community Inventory** project wrapped up in July. Staff then drafted the final report, which was completed in mid-September. The report highlights the data collection gathered from the field through a series of thematic maps displaying the location and condition of various infrastructure in the two study areas.

Transportation:

The **Charlottesville-Albemarle Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO)** Policy Board met in July and September. It adopted resolutions supporting 13 Smart Scale applications and endorsing the MPO's submission of three transportation projects for Smart Scale consideration (see below for further details). MPO staff also hosted a public meeting on Fontaine/US 29 Smart Scale application design updates. Following a pair of public hearings, the Transportation Improvement Plan was amended and adjusted in collaboration with VDOT. Public hearings also were held for the public participation plan, prior to the MPO Policy board approving the updated plan in September.

Additionally, the MPO disseminated the draft State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) to the public and relevant committees for review. The MPO's website and Facebook pages were updated with notices on MPO activities and transportation in the area. Finally, an Electric Vehicle Charging Station Needs Assessment project held a kickoff meeting, developed a scope and gathered input from the two MPO committees.

The MPO submitted three **Smart Scale project applications**. Two are for projects based on the recommendations of the 29 Solutions Committee to improve transportation network performance on Route 29 near Hydraulic Road, and one is for a reconfiguration of the intersection of Fontaine Avenue and Route 29 that was requested by Albemarle County. The TJPDC also submitted four Smart Scale project applications, all on behalf of Albemarle County. Two of the projects are to construct new bike and pedestrian facilities, one is for a Park & Ride lot off of I-64 near Exit 107, and the final one is for a reconfiguration of the intersection at Frays Mill Road, Burnley Station and Route 29. TJPDC staff also provided technical support to Nelson County in its submission of three Smart Scale applications.

The **Rural Transportation Advisory Committee** met virtually for its regularly scheduled meetings in July and September. At the July 21st meeting, committee members reviewed the Rural Work Program for the upcoming fiscal year and held elections for chair and vice-chair. At the September 15th meeting, the committee was updated on the bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure assessment project (see below for more information) and the electric vehicle needs study.

The **Regional Transit Partnership (RTP)** met virtually in August to hear updates from transit providers on COVID-19 service and funding changes. The RTP subcommittees continued to work on reviving an improved regular ridership report, as well as other efforts. Additionally, TJPDC staff have been in conversations with the Community Climate Collaborative – which is engaging in equity and transit work – in order to ensure that our efforts complement, rather than duplicate, each other.

The **Citizens Transportation Advisory Committee (CTAC)** met in July and September. At the July meeting, members provided feedback on the MPO transportation one-page primers, the MPO's public participation plan and the Smart Scale applications. In September, CTAC members heard a presentation from Alleyn Harned (Executive Director of Virginia Clean Cities) regarding the new highway use fee on electric and fuel-efficient vehicles. CTAC also provided feedback on the TJPDC's electric vehicle study, the TIP, Title VI update and draft revisions to the Smart Scale application process.

Bike and Pedestrian News:

TJPDC staff members are leading a **Rural Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure Assessment** in the region's incorporated towns. So far, Albemarle County and Scottsville have approved the scope of work for this project, which includes an assessment of formal and informal bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure

in the towns, surveys of leadership/planners and residents to better clarify town goals investment, the production of a gap report highlighting and prioritizing areas of needed investment, and the production of a solutions report identifying specific projects and funding opportunities to address gaps in infrastructure.

The MPO has restarted and refocused its **Bicycle and Pedestrian Count** to count at locations that will soon be and/or have recently undergone bicycle- and/or pedestrian-focused infrastructure improvements. Over time, these counts will capture valuable before-and-after project data that will improve planning for these vulnerable road users. Staff from Charlottesville and Albemarle County have approved the scope of work for these new counts, and will approve count locations in the next quarter.

The **Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordination Committee** met monthly over the summer. At these meetings, staff from Charlottesville, Albemarle County, UVA, VDOT, and members of the public provided feedback on the creation of a combined map of bicycle, pedestrian and trail infrastructure for the region; the bicycle and pedestrian counts; a potential VDOT-funded feasibility study for a “Three Notch’d Shared Use Path” for commuters and recreational use; the results of a VDOT-funded feasibility study regarding a bicycle and pedestrian crossing of the Rivanna River; and Smart Scale projects with significant bicycle and/or pedestrian components.

RideShare:

RideShare continues to promote Telework VA! with DRPT and the Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission. Staff attended the Association of Commuter Transportation virtual international conference in August, which discussed the many ways commuter behavior has changed during the pandemic. Staff continues to serve on the Community Climate Collaborative steering committee for the Better Business Challenge, and completed the quarterly park and ride inventory. The program continues to operate with quarterly funding until final state transportation budgets have been approved.

Commission Information:

The TJPDC submitted a required annual report to the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) at the end of August, which is required of each PDC. The report includes various financial, strategic/work plan information and highlights of successes and achievements of special note about regional efforts of cooperation. The report was approved by DHCD in September, which sets in motion the process for DHCD to make quarterly payments of state funding to the TJPDC.

Two new members of the TJPDC Commission were present at its most recent meeting. Willie Gentry, who previously served on the Commission, is again serving as a member representing the Louisa County Board of Supervisors. Charlottesville has a new appointee as well. Rory Stolzenberg is now representing the City Planning Commission on the Commission.