

THOMAS JEFFERSON PLANNING DISTRICT COMMISSION

Summary of Activities October through December 2020

Environment:

The contract for the 2020 **Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Planning (WIP) Assistance program** was submitted to the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) on December 31. The WIP page on the TJPDC website has undergone significant modifications to improve access to WIP materials for DEQ and regional stakeholders. Staff presented at a County and City Water Quality meeting in December, followed by a similar contract overview with the TJPDC Commission. Staff continues to work alongside the Rivanna Stormwater Education Partnership (RSEP) to continue the #LoveYourWatershed social media campaign. The local watershed cleanup with RSEP, Rivanna Conservation Alliance (RCA), Three Notch'd Brewing (3NB), and the TJPDC took place on November 6. Finally, the 3NB CARES community program is planning a Spring launch for a "Watershed" beer Round-Up campaign with RSEP. Those proceeds will go to furthering RCA's Rivanna maintenance and outreach efforts.

The **Rivanna River Basin Commission (RRBC)** continues to provide technical steering assistance to the WIP contract. The RRBC Facebook page and website continue to be the primary location for social media and marketing content, as well as informational guides created by RSEP and other affiliated environmental groups.

The **Regional Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan** commenced with a kick-off meeting of the working group in mid-November. This meeting served as the formal start of the planning process and enabled the working group, consisting of stakeholders throughout the region, to review the proposed project timeline and scope of work. Based on the working group's suggestion, it will meet monthly throughout the duration of the project. In December, the group met to review the hazard threat matrix identified in the 2018 plan and to provide guidance to staff on additional stakeholders to include on the working group. Staff also has worked closely with its State and Federal partners to identify hazard mitigation training opportunities and resources that could assist in future planning efforts.

Housing:

The **Rent and Mortgage Relief Program (RMRP)** has shifted to being a state-run program. Through the summer and fall, the TJPDC served as the administrator of the program in our region, with program funding distributed to partner agencies, who then used this federal CARES Act funding to make rent or mortgage payments on behalf of qualifying households. The region utilized \$1.625 million in emergency relief, serving 571 unique households with an average payment of \$2,100 per household request. Relief payments could pay rent or mortgage in arrears since April 1 through December 31, for eligible individuals and families who experienced a COVID-related loss of income. For phase two of the RMRP program, the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development has contracted with DEVAL to serve as the single point of intake for all households in the Commonwealth. Further, they have contracted with Virginia Housing to serve as the point of intake for landlords applying on behalf of their tenants. For more information, visit <https://www.dhcd.virginia.gov/rmrp>.

The **Central Virginia Regional Housing Partnership (RHP)** debuted the "Regional Housing Locator" website in November with an exciting new look and name, *PorchLightVA*. This online platform will feature both for sale and rental affordable housing listings. It also will feature a regional housing resource site which collates existing housing-related programs and services by locality, region, state and nation. Visit porchlightva.org to check out the new tool in our region.

The RHP also has completed the **Fall Speaker Series**, “Navigating Today’s Affordable Housing.” The series was sponsored by the Charlottesville Area Association of Realtors (CAAR) and Virginia Housing and was hosted by the RHP. Topics in the series included: The Impact of COVID-19 on the Charlottesville Area Housing Market, Regional Housing Strategies and Policies, an Introduction to the Housing Resource/Locator Service, and the Conversion of Existing Structures for Homeless/Permanent Supportive Housing Solutions. The CVRHP Events Committee is in the process of planning a Spring 2021 Virtual Educational Series. For more information or to suggest a housing-related topic for discussion in the virtual series, contact lschannon@tjpd.org.

The **HOME** program has distributed \$105,420 in funds to our sub-grantees. The funds went toward down payment assistance for first-time homebuyers, home rehabilitation projects, and building new affordable units in our urban and rural communities. The **Housing Preservation Grant** program has distributed \$24,038 in funds to our sub-grantees for home rehabilitation projects in our rural communities.

The **Thomas Jefferson Community Land Trust (TJCLT)** had a successful Fall with funding raising from private sector sources. There are two major projects underway, one in the City and one in Albemarle County, for a combined build of 21 Land Trust homes. Land Trust homes are maintained under permanent affordability (90 years or more) to homebuyers earning 60 to 80% of Area Median Income.

Legislative Services:

Local governing bodies in the region approved the **2021 TJPDC Legislative Program** at meetings during November and December. The program was revamped this year to focus on fewer top priorities and to also take positions on a shorter list of topics of prime importance to local governments. “Support for Recovering Communities” during the ongoing public health emergency is the top priority of the program for the 2021 General Assembly session, followed by “Budgets and Funding” and “Broadband.” The TJPDC localities and their staffs helped shape this program, which will inform our legislators and help guide lobbying efforts during the 2021 session. The legislative services program also worked with several localities to shape their local legislative position statements and bill requests for this year.

Various state level meetings were monitored during the quarter, including the House and Senate budget retreats, the Joint Money Committees, and the Virginia Freedom of Information Advisory Council. The Director of Legislative Services also participated virtually in the Virginia Association of Counties Annual Conference and the Virginia Municipal League Annual Conference, facilitated the October meeting of the Mayor & Chairs/CAOs and participated in meetings with Fluvanna and Louisa Counties and their state and federal legislators. He also continues to serve as the Executive Director for the Virginia Association of Planning District Commissions.

Local/Regional Support:

The TJPDC hosted an initial meeting of an exploratory committee for a **Regional Broadband Partnership (RBP)**. This initial step to shaping an RBP was to help determine the direction of an RBP, and to assist in designing the structure, function and objectives of such a partnership.

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**. We are awaiting word on application approval, and if approved, the Department of Commerce would pay 80% of project costs, with the local match being 20%.

The TJPDC continued administering the **Nelson CARES 2020** business assistance grant program for Nelson County. The program directed grants to eligible small businesses in Nelson that experienced business interruption due to required closures as a result of the COVID-19 emergency. Nelson County identified \$350,000.00 in emergency relief funds to support small businesses that were directly affected by the pandemic. The program assisted 52 unique businesses with one-time grants to cover critical business expenses or a loss of income related to the pandemic.

The **Zion Crossroads Small Area Plan** continues to move forward. In December, Kittelson & Associates, Inc. launched a virtual workshop and MetroQuest survey to get public feedback on needed transportation system improvements. The survey and workshop closed on January 11, and the next steps will be to analyze the public feedback and develop draft recommendations.

The TJPDC hosted a December webinar on **local cigarette taxation authority**. Counties have new authority to levy a local tax on cigarettes, effective July 1. The Treasurer for Charlottesville, which already taxes cigarettes, gave an overview of the City's program and answered questions about implementing the tax. Staff is exploring implementing such a taxation program in our region, and had discussions with a representative of the Northern Virginia Cigarette Tax Board, which administers cigarette taxes for 19 localities in that region.

Transportation:

The **Charlottesville-Albemarle Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO)** Policy Board met in December and approved UPWP and Title VI updates, and discussed the Asset Condition and Safety Target options for the next update. MPO staff met with all three MPO committees to discuss Safety Targets and the MPO's options and responsibilities. Staff also prepared a performance measures overview for CAMPO. Finally, an Electric Vehicle Charging Station Needs Assessment has been drafted and is in the process of being finalized. The **MPO Technical Committee (MPO Tech)** met in November and also received presentations from VDOT and OIPI staff on Transportation Performance Management and the Vtrans Mid-Term Needs. The Committee also learned about changes to the PDC's Smart Scale process.

The **Rural Transportation Advisory Committee** continues to meet virtually bi-monthly. The Advisory Committee provided feedback on the updated FY21 Rural Work Program, which reallocated funds from the proposed regional freight study to the Route 29 Corridor Study (set to commence in early 2021). At its November meeting, the Committee identified topical areas of interest for future meetings, such as rural place-making.

The Department of Rail and Public Transit (DRPT) awarded the TJPDC approximately \$450,000 in **grant funding for two transit planning studies**. The Regional Transit Partnership (RTP) will serve as the official advisory committee for one of these studies (the Charlottesville and Albemarle County Regional Transit Vision Plan) and will be informed of all major steps of the other study (Albemarle County Transit Expansion Feasibility Study and Implementation Plan). The RTP met virtually in October, hearing updates from transit providers and discussing short- and long-term goals for the RTP and regional transit service.

The **Citizens Transportation Advisory Committee (CTAC)** met in November, discussing MPO performance measures and targets, as well as changes to the Smart Scale process. The group also received updates from staff on the Rivanna River Bicycle and Pedestrian Bridge feasibility study and the results of the Fall Bicycle and Pedestrian Count (see below).

Bike and Pedestrian News:

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. Staff from Charlottesville, Albemarle County, and the University of Virginia approved nine priority count locations and volunteers were recruited to count at all nine locations (and a tenth lower-priority location) for both a morning and evening count. Data was compiled into location-specific and a "summary" worksheet. The data is available on the TJPDC website at <https://tjpd.org/our-work/bike-and-pedestrian/>.

The **Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordination Committee** is discussing One Map efforts, the Bicycle and Pedestrian Count, the Bicycle and Pedestrian Bridge feasibility study, and efforts to create an extended East-West shared use path known as the Three Notch'd Trail.

The TJPDC staff collaborated with VDOT, Charlottesville and Albemarle County to host an online workshop, attended by 67 viewers, to discuss a VDOT-completed feasibility study of a possible **bicycle and pedestrian bridge over the Rivanna River** in the vicinity of Riverview Park. In addition, 25 emailed comments/questions about the study were compiled. Neither of the two route options presented garnered clear support, but those who stated their feelings about the project spoke positively about a bicycle and pedestrian crossing of the Rivanna.

RideShare:

RideShare continues to promote Telework VA! with DRPT and the Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission (CSPDC). Staff attended the Association of Commuter Transportation virtual TDM Forum, where Program Manager Sara Pennington was honored as a Top 40 Under 40 TDM Professionals. Staff continues to serve on the Community Climate Collaborative steering committee for the Better Business Challenge and in October, was the keynote speaker for its webinar, “The Cleanest Commute-Keeping Employee Vehicle Emissions Down Post-COVID with Telecommuting.” Staff completed the quarterly park and ride inventory in December and began work on another webinar to promote telework for businesses post-pandemic. Staff also has partnered with the CSPDC and UVA to explore co-working opportunities to help minimize commutes in the region, and has resumed work with the Afton Express branding and marketing in anticipation of the launch of the bus service next year.