



**Charlottesville-Albemarle Metropolitan Planning Organization**  
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CHART Advisory Committee Meeting  
September 2nd, 2009 Minutes

**Present**

Members

Stephen Bach  
Mac Lafferty, Vice Chair  
Jeff Monroe  
Bruce Odell  
John Pfaltz  
Linda Seaman, Chair  
Peggy Westfall

Representing

MPO, Bicycling  
Albemarle County At-Large  
Albemarle County At-Large  
City-At-Large  
City At-Large  
City-At-Large  
City-At-Large

Not Attending

Bobby Burke MPO, Pedestrian  
Jim Currie Albemarle County, Environment  
Marc Evans MPO  
Tom Loach County Planning Commission  
Bill Wuensch MPO

Staff:

Sarah Eissler TJPDC  
Chuck Proctor VDOT  
Steve Williams TJPDC

Ms. Seaman called the meeting to order and asked committee members to introduce themselves.

**Matters from the Public**

Jerry Deily stated that he had some comments regarding the future of role of the CHART Committee and that he would add to the discussion when this agenda item was reached.

**Staffing Changes at the TJPDC**

Mr. Williams introduced Sarah Eissler as a new full-time transportation planner for the TJPDC and the MPO. Mr. Williams also stated that Melissa Barlow the former director of the MPO has moved on to a new job with the Federal Transit Authority. Mr. Williams continued that the TJPDC has hired a new Transportation Planner who will work solely on Transportation Modeling. The new transportation planner is named Johnny Han and he previously worked for the transportation planning firm HNTB in Atlanta. Mr. Han has a PhD in Civil Engineering and has focused on transportation forecasting modeling. Mr. Williams also stated that Mr. Han is from the People's Republic of China and that staff is currently working to update Mr. Han's visa before he can start work. Mr. Williams stated that they hope Mr. Han will begin work in late October.

**Approval of the Minutes**

Mr. Monroe stated that he did not attend the June 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting and that his name should be listed as not attending.

Mr. Lafferty stated that on page 3 the word “impact” should be changed to “do”. Mr. Lafferty also stated that the first sentence on the first paragraph on page 3, which discussed committee consistency in voting on projects, did not correspond to the main topic, about the new rail service in the region. Mr. Lafferty requested that the sentence be removed.

**Upon a motion from Mr. Pfaltz, seconded by Mr. Lafferty, the June 3, 2009 meeting minutes were unanimously approved as amended.**

#### **Election of New Committee Members**

Ms. Seaman turned over control of the meeting to Mr. Williams. Mr. Williams stated that each September new committee officers are elected for all MPO Committees. Mr. Williams asked CHART committee members if they had any nominations for Chair or Vice Chair. **Mr. Pfaltz stated that he would like to nominate Ms. Seaman as Chair. Mr. Lafferty seconded the nomination.** Mr. Williams asked the committee for any other nominations. No other nominations were made. Mr. Williams asked the committee to vote on the reappointment of Ms. Seaman. **The committee voted unanimously to reappoint Ms. Seaman as Chair.** With Ms. Seaman’s reappointment Mr. Williams turned control of the committee over to her. Ms. Seaman asked the committee if there were any nominations for Vice Chair. **Mr. Pfaltz stated that he would like to nominate Mr. Lafferty as Vice Chair. Mr. Bach seconded the nomination.** Ms. Seaman asked the committee for any other nominations. No other nominations were made. Mr. Seaman asked the committee to vote on the reappointment of Mr. Lafferty as Vice Chair. **The committee voted unanimously to reappoint Mr. Lafferty as Vice Chair.**

#### **Overview and Discussion of the Northern Commuter Bike Route Project**

Ms. Eissler presented on the TJPDC’s involvement with the planning of a commuter bike trail from the Hollymead portion of Albemarle County into the City of Charlottesville’s downtown. Ms. Eissler stated that this project was in the Preliminary Technical phases and that currently TJPDC staff is gathering as much data as possible to determine the best possibilities for this commuter bike route. Ms. Eissler continued that the Steering Committee was recently formed. This committee consists of technical planning staff from both the City and the County. The City representatives are Donovan Branche, in the Office of Neighborhood Services, and Chris Gensic of Charlottesville Parks and Recreation. The County Representative is Wayne Cilimberg of Albemarle County Planning.

Mr. Pfaltz stated that the difficulty of a commuter trail was crossing the south fork of the Rivanna. Ms. Eissler concurred that the only in-place crossing of the south fork was on the route 29 bridge. Ms. Eissler continued that the other issues she is reviewing are barriers to the bike project, including the Norfolk Southern Railroad. Mr. Proctor stated that there are old railroad bridge piers near the current railroad bridge crossing of the south fork. Mr. Proctor continued that he thought the piers could be utilized for a bicycle and pedestrian crossing. Mr. Pfaltz stated that the CHART committee had previously suggested the extension of Ashwood Boulevard, which would allow for a bicycle and pedestrian crossing. Mr. Pfaltz asked Mr. Bach if there was a planned bike route along the Rivanna. Mr. Bach stated that he was unsure, but that a route along the Rivanna does not fit the description of a commuter bike route.

Ms. Eissler also clarified that the County portion of this commuter bike path is being placed in the context of the Places29 plan. Mr. Proctor stated that the Belvedere Residential Development in Albemarle County is dedicating a 100 foot right-of-way from Rio Road all the way to the Rivanna River that could be utilized for this project.

Mr. Odell asked if gradients and elevation changes were being considered in the commuter trail. Ms. Eissler stated that gradient changes were being considered but that in certain areas gradient issues might be unavoidable. Ms. Eissler also stated that a program called “Map My Route” is helping staff gather elevation data. Mr. Odell thought that encouraging switch-backing routes could help make significant grades more accessible for novice riders.

Mr. Lafferty asked how the Steering Committee was selected and if Mr. Williams was on the Committee. Ms. Eissler stated that Mr. Williams will attend the meetings as staff. Ms. Eissler continued that the MPO executive committee picked the steering committee participants among City and County staff. Mr. Lafferty stated that he would like to see citizen representatives on the steering committee. Mr. Lafferty was also concerned that the Downtown Trail would utilize sidewalks, which he thought was not ideal.

Ms. Seaman asked if staff would update CHART on the project or if CHART had another role. Mr. Williams stated that as the project gets more involved that the committee will be asked to give input throughout the process.

Mr. Odell asked if funding was in place for the trail. Mr. Williams stated that it was not. Mr. Williams also stated that the committee was reviewing numerous types of bicycle path options.

Mr. Proctor also stated that Places29 included a 10 foot bike trail along the planned Berkmar Bridge project that this commuter bike path could utilize.

Mr. Williams stated that the TJPDC staff was also reviewing cross-connection to ensure that the bike route is continuously accessible.

Mr. Pfaltz asked if there was any data on biking from Hollymead into the Downtown that was currently available. Mr. Pfaltz stated that if the commuter bike path is built having current data could serve as a measure of the bike route's success. Mr. Bach stated that the numbers were likely extremely low and that A-C-C-T is about to perform the first bike count data collection project implemented in the region. Mr. Bach continued that this project will be focused in the city.

Mr. Williams also mentioned that the TJPDC is working with and expanding a transportation model from VDOT. This model includes a multi-model component. Mr. Williams also stated that the TJPDC is working with A-C-C-T and UVa to collect data about biking in the community. Ms. Westfall asked about contacting local high school students to aid in the count. Mr. Williams stated that this was certainly a possibility worth investigating.

Mr. Odell stated that he noticed that future development was a part of the downtown trail scope of work and asked if proffering was being considered for the project. Mr. Williams stated that proffering was being considered.

### **Discussion on the Role of CHART**

Ms. Seaman stated that this discussion is important because many of the plans that the CHART committee advises on have been completed in the past year, therefore it is a good time to redefine the committee's role. Mr. Williams stated that CHART's only official mention is in the MPO Policy Board bylaws and that per these bylaws the committee's purpose is to advise on the long range transportation plan. If not advising on the long range plan the committee is only required to meet annually. Mr. Williams stated that the CHART committee's role has moved beyond the bylaws definition, but that this role now needs to be clarified in order for CHART to have a clear focus.

Mr. Williams stated that with this redefining in mind, TJPDC staff has found that the old model is no longer effective. This historical model allowed public input only during public hearings at which time most of the planning process is complete. Mr. Williams stated that he would like to make public participation a more proactive and on-going input process and believed that the CHART committee was the best outlet for improving public participation. Mr. Williams then asked committee members to contribute their thoughts about improving public participation.

Mr. Deily asked to give a bit of history on the CHART committee. Mr. Deily was a member of the committee when it was organized in 2001. The committee was organized at the urging of the area's

FHWA representative Ivan Rucker. The CHART committee was originally created as a citizen advisory group for the long range transportation plan. This committee's creation meets one of the LRTP's legal requirements. Mr. Deily stated that Ivan Rucker might be a helpful resource in defining the committee's role.

Mr. Odell asked if the MPO Policy Board, along with the City and County, felt the CHART committee was a valuable committee beyond providing input for the long range transportation plan. Mr. Williams stated that all agencies were open to public input opportunities, however all parties were frustrated with the process that is currently in place. Mr. Williams continued that the TJPDC is attempting to achieve a better public input model. Ms. Seaman stated that current public participation methods require the public to react to plans, but not participate in the shaping of plans. Ms. Seaman also stated that this reactionary input method is not promoting the best planning process and that the CHART committee can aid in improving that process.

Mr. Pfaltz stated that he thought the CHART committee was meant to serve the public. Mr. Pfaltz stated that the CHART committee should represent the area as a whole, by encouraging good transportation planning.

Mr. Williams stated that one of the best ways to encourage public participation was to not ask citizens to come to public hearings, but to send representatives out to locations and interact with the public in a different environment. Mr. Williams mentioned scheduling presentation at local community clubs, like the lions club or the rotary club, and asking simple focused question to get a feel for transportation issues. This method help builds a base of information for public comment.

Mr. Lafferty stated that he was appointed to the committee to represent a specific group as were other members and in that capacity committee members give input on projects. Mr. Lafferty expressed concern that if the CHART committee was only in place to fulfill a federal legal requirement regarding the long range transportation plan that the committee might not be effective. Mr. Lafferty also expressed concern that the CHART committee's input was not appropriately considered by the MPO Policy Board.

Ms. Seaman stated that the issue boils down to one question, is the CHART committee's mission defined by the MPO Policy Board or is the CHART committee self determining. Mr. Pfaltz stated that he thought the committee should be self determining. Mr. Williams stated that the TJPDC and the MPO feel CHART is a vital committee, however the committee's role should be redefined to ensure that the committee has a voice. Mr. Pfaltz stated that he thought Mr. Williams public participation tactics were good ideas. Ms. Westfall concurred with Mr. Pfaltz, but reiterated that there is still the concern that the committee is not being heard by decision makers. Mr. Pfaltz stated that if we build strong public comment options it is harder for the MPO Policy Board to overlook the CHART committee.

Mr. Lafferty stated that he welcomed the opportunity to redefine CHART's role and make the committee more relevant. Mr. Lafferty continued that he thought CHART should be involved in the plans being written and reviewed by the City and the County, such as the Crozet Master Plan and the Rivanna Water and Sewer Plan. Mr. Lafferty continued that it is a good idea for CHART committee members to convey information to other groups and return information from those groups.

Ms. Seaman stated that the committee's public participation efforts are potentially laying the groundwork for the next long range transportation plan (LRTP). Ms. Seaman continued that instead of creating a plan and then seeking public comment it is more advantageous to lay the ground work for public participation and then seek public comment in the creating of the LRTP.

Mr. Morris stated that it all returns to the issue of whether CHART is an effective committee or conduit for public participation. Mr. Odell stated that in his experience elected officials are very supportive of a committee that can tap into the public synapse. Mr. Odell continued that he thought elected official would

appreciate the committee more if it could successfully and continuously tap into the public and find a pulse on certain transportation issues.

Ms. Seaman asked if the committee were to garner effective public participation would the MPO Policy Board be willing to listen to the CHART Committee. Ms. Seaman also asked if the CHART committee needed to speak to the MPO Policy Board about this issue. Mr. Williams stated it would be difficult to get the MPO Policy Board to admit in a public forum that they are not considering the CHART committee's suggestions. Ms. Seaman asked if this conversation would be more effective if the Chairs of both committees discussed it privately. Mr. Williams stated that it would be more effective to provide the Policy Board with persuasive public input rather than trying to convince the Board to consider CHART. Mr. Williams continued that the Charlottesville/Albemarle MPO has been focused on process. Mr. Williams would like to change the MPO's approach towards a role of technical expertise, in order to go to the Policy Board and public with data that supports the MPO's transportation plans. Mr. Williams continued that he is trying to make two changes in the MPO, the first is to make a better on-going public participation process and the second is to make a better on-going technical analysis process. Mr. Williams stated that he hoped these two goals would facilitate better planning and better decision making.

Mr. Lafferty asked what the committee members could do aid this process. Mr. Williams stated that at the next meeting TJPDC will have drafted a one-page scope of work for the committee, which would help outline what the TJPDC needs from CHART. If the committee finds this scope of work acceptable we could then move forward with plans for implementing this program.

Mr. Lafferty reiterated his concern that the Downtown Commuter Trail bike project did not include public participants. Mr. Lafferty continued that if CHART's goal is to implement the new public participation model that we ought to begin immediately with the Hollymead to Downtown Commuter Bike Trail project.

Ms. Seaman asked if the committee members generally agreed that TJPDC staff should draft a scope of work that could be reviewed at the next CHART meeting. Mr. Bach stated that he agreed that the TJPDC should get started; however, he thought that defining the committee's goals too quickly could be problematic. Mr. Bach continued that another discussion like the one at this meeting could be advantageous.

### **Other Business**

Ms. Seaman asked committee members if CHART should meet monthly or in two months. Mr. Pfaltz stated that he thought CHART should meet monthly. The committee agreed that CHART should meet monthly.

Mr. Odell stated that at the June Meeting it was planned to try and invite Bill Watterson of CTS to CHART to discuss the marketing study. Mr. Williams stated that Mr. Watterson teaches a class at the University of Richmond on Wednesday nights this Fall and that the first time Mr. Watterson is available to come to CHART is in December.

Ms. Eissler stated that RideShare and transit agencies in the area are participating in Try Transit week, from September 21st to 25th. Ms. Eissler continued that the goal is to get as many people as possible to pledge to try transit during the week.

Mr. Pfaltz stated that he and Meredith Richards are trying to convince AMTRAK to participate in efforts to establish commuter rail from Crozet to Charlottesville. Ms. Seaman stated that she would like to have Meredith Richards present to the CHART committee about the state of rail in our region.

**Additional Matters from the Public**

Mr. Deily stated that the Rural UnJAM approach to Public Participation was a good idea. Mr. Deily also announced that Peter Norton will speak on Reclaiming Our Streets at CitySpace on September 3<sup>rd</sup> 2009.