



**Charlottesville-Albemarle Metropolitan Planning Organization
of the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission**

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Memorandum

TO: CHART Committee
FROM: Melissa Barlow, Director of Transportation Programs
DATE: December 31, 2007
Re: UnJAM 2035 Update: MPO Area Connectivity Discussion

Recent conversations regarding potential connections between existing subdivisions in the MPO area have highlighted the need for a broader-level discussion of network connectivity. Connectivity should improve mobility while discouraging cut-through traffic between local destinations. A CHART Committee discussion is the next step in the process of clarifying how the MPO should address network connectivity in the Long Range Plan update, UnJAM 2035.

To facilitate an efficient discussion, the planning documents in use or under consideration in the MPO and TJPDC as a whole are summarized below.

UnJAM 2025

Building on the planning principles outlined in the Eastern Planning Initiative, UnJAM 2025 addresses connectivity in the Regional Vision Transit-Ready Development section (p. 67) citing “an ‘urban’ street grid (providing plenty of connections versus cul-de-sacs)” as a desirable characteristic of new subdivisions. The UnJAM 2025 Action Agenda goes on to identify a “more complete network of parallel and connector roads” as a goal for roadway implementation strategies (p. 144).

UnJAM 2025’s vision for a more connected urban fabric defining new development in the MPO is echoed in the more recent City of Charlottesville and Albemarle County Comprehensive Plans, and VDOT’s draft Secondary Street Acceptance Requirements.

Updated Plans Since UnJAM 2025

I. City of Charlottesville 2007 Comprehensive Plan

While the City promotes connectivity between arterial roads and residential areas, it discourages neighborhood-level transportation improvements that make through-travel convenient. “The local street system makes up the majority of the roadway network within the City. Its primary purpose is direct access to property and, as a result, it offers the lowest level of mobility. Service to through-traffic is deliberately discouraged on these roadways.” (Chapter 6, p. 115)

Additionally, the Plan notes cut-through traffic as a City-wide issue, “ISSUE III: Vehicles are traveling at high speeds on local streets and cutting through neighborhoods rather than using the arterial and collector roadway network in place for this type of travel” (p. 132).

II. Albemarle County Comprehensive Plan (amended in 2005):

The Albemarle County Comprehensive Plan’s Transportation Chapter outlines a set of transportation goals that support the need for more connectivity “within and between neighborhoods,” in order to better serve all members of the community (p. 169).

Additionally, the 12 principles of the County’s Neighborhood Model include “transportation networks and interconnected streets” (174). Subsequent road design standards “require interconnection of adjacent developments/neighborhoods within Development Areas, and where appropriate in Rural Area development, to achieve a local road system and provide alternatives to the regional road network for local trips” (186).

Plans Under Development

I. Area Plans

Plans under development in Albemarle, Fluvanna, Louisa and Nelson Counties—Places 29, the Northwest Fluvanna/Southwest Louisa Corridor Study, the Lovingston Safety Study and the Nellysford Community Plan—emphasize the importance of building a multi-modal network and encouraging connectivity amongst and between local network destinations.

II. VDOT Secondary Street Acceptance Requirements (SSARs)

VDOT is in the process of updating its SSARs. The draft regulations respond to a state statute that mandates “requirements to ensure the connectivity of road and pedestrian networks with the existing and future transportation network.”

The current draft regulation measures connectivity using a link-node ratio, or connectivity index. The link-node ratio is calculated by dividing the number of links (street segments and stub streets) by the number of nodes (intersections or cul-de-sacs). The connectivity requirements vary based on area type, and logically are higher for compact areas than for rural areas.

UnJAM 2035

As the CHART Committee has discussed, the principle of connectivity is often at odds with what area residents want in their neighborhoods. While a connected grid of local roads and streets is beneficial for pedestrians, cyclists, and an aging (and less mobile) population, the issue of cut-through automobile traffic traveling at high speeds has prevented planned neighborhood connections from being constructed, despite UnJAM 2025 and the localities’ Comprehensive Plan goals.

Through UnJAM 2035, the MPO has the opportunity to refine its connectivity goals to reflect the increased mobility benefits of connectivity, remain sensitive to citizen concerns about cut-through traffic, and outline strategies for reducing cut-through traffic, such as traffic calming measures and appropriate road design.