The City of Harrisonburg, Virginia

Office of the Public Works Department

STREET MAINTENANCE
TRAFFIC ENGINEERING
TRANSPORTATION PLANNING
REFUSE/ RECYCLING
CENTRAL STORES

Memorandum

To: **City Council**

From: **Thanh Dang, Transportation & Environmental Planning Manager**

CC: **Kurt Hodgen, Jim Baker, Tom Hartman, Brad Reed, Adam Fletcher, Bicycle & Pedestrian Subcommittee**

Date: **July 21, 2015**

Re: **Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan Update**

The City's Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan was adopted in 2010 (amended 2011) and is part of the City's Master Transportation Plan as referenced in the Comprehensive Plan. The Master Transportation Plan establishes the City's long-range transportation policies and projects. To stay relevant, it is the City's goal to update the Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan once every 5 years. Like the previous update, the Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan is being updated about 1 year in advance of the Comprehensive Plan update, and will inform the next update of the Comprehensive Plan.

The Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan update is being led by the Department of Public Works and the Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission's Bicycle & Pedestrian Subcommittee. However, this is the City's Plan and the Departments of Planning & Community Development, Parks & Recreation, Public Transportation, Police, and Economic Development are involved. Before the Plan is submitted to City Council to consider for adoption in Summer 2016, the Plan will be reviewed by the Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission and the Planning Commission.

City staff and the Bicycle & Pedestrian Subcommittee initiated an information gathering period starting with a public workshop on May 19, 2015, followed by a public comment period. There were over 30 attendees at the workshop and 59 written comments received, not including comments collected during the workshop. Summaries of the workshop and comments received are available here, http://www.harrisonburgva.gov/bicycle-pedestrian-plan.

Planned are meetings with Stakeholder Focus Groups, developing the list of infrastructure projects to be included into the Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan, and prioritization of those projects. Below is a summary of next steps and requests for City Council's input. **Please share your input and thoughts with City Manager Hodgen who will distribute to city staff.**

Proposed Stakeholder Focus Groups

The purpose of Stakeholder Focus Group meetings is to gather practical feedback and guidance from various perspectives, and to foster buy-in and consensus among partners and organizations that play an active role in implementing plan policies and recommendations.

City staff and the Bicycle & Pedestrian Subcommittee recommend hosting Stakeholder Focus Group meetings surrounding:

- Business and Economic Vitality
- Safety, Enforcement, Safe Routes to School
- Institutions: Higher Ed and Retirement Communities
- Housing Providers: Apt Complexes, Property Managers
- Disadvantaged Populations

There will be one meeting per focus group. These meetings will be by invitation only and take place in August and September 2015. Focus groups will also be guided through a series of lead questions.

We are seeking City Council's input on the focus group topics, as well as recommended agencies and organizations to invite for each meeting. To begin planning for and scheduling meetings, we would appreciate input on these groups by August 11 meeting, if possible.

Below is a list of suggested agencies:

- Business and Economic Vitality - Shenandoah Valley Partnership, Chamber of Commerce, Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission, Harrisonburg Economic Development

- Safety, Enforcement, Safe Routes to School - Harrisonburg City Public Schools, Sentara RMH's safe routes to school coordinators, Police Department, Fire Department

- Institutions: Higher Ed and Retirement Communities – James Madison University, Eastern Mennonite University, Blue Ridge Community College, Virginia Mennonite Retirement Community

- Housing Providers: Apt Complexes, Property Managers – Harrisonburg Redevelopment & Housing Authority, Builders Association

- Disadvantaged Populations - Valley Associates for Independent Living, HRHA, Open Doors (formerly HARTS)

Proposed Factors for Prioritization of Infrastructure Projects

Transportation needs will almost always be greater than the funds available to address them. Prioritizing infrastructure projects as part of the Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan helps guide the City to the best use of limited funds, and provides support for grant applications and allocation requests from state, federal, and private sources (e.g. Revenue Sharing, Transportation Alternatives Program, Highway Safety Improvement Program, and funds available through the House Bill 2's prioritization process).

The Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) will use House Bill 2's prioritization process which evaluates projects based on "weights" (key factors) of economic development, congestion mitigation, accessibility, safety, and environmental quality. Similarly, city staff recommends use of a prioritization process for the City's Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan. ActiveTrans Priority Tool (APT), developed by the Transportation Research Board, is a methodology for evaluating and prioritizing pedestrian and bicycle improvements along existing roads. The methodology is flexible, allowing communities to assign factors and weights reflective of their own goals and values. APT has been used by many communities including City of Charlottesville, VA in development of its 2014 Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan.

Following the identification of the projects within the Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan, city staff will be tasked with prioritizing the projects. Staff will use the factors and weights developed by using the APT system, and will include the results in the final plan.

It is important to note that the Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan is a planning document. As such, after the Plan is adopted, City Council is not required to pursue or fund the highest scoring projects.. This is especially helpful if there is a constraint or opportunity that makes a lower ranking project a better option to pursue before a higher ranking project.

City staff and the Bicycle & Pedestrian Subcommittee have completed Step 1 as laid out in the APT guide, which is to define the purpose of the prioritization effort by determining the following:

- APT will be used to prioritize both bicycle and pedestrian improvements and will evaluate each of these modes of transportation separately.
- Based on the input received at the May 19 public workshop visioning exercise, improvements in the Plan should promote safety, enable connectivity, be accessible to all users, be orientated to kids being able to bike and walk to school safely, and be implemented in a timely manner.
- Prioritization will be used to rank all of the location-based projects recommended by the Plan. Projects considered will include spot improvements, roadway segments, and entire neighborhoods.

Step 2 of the APT process involves the selection of factors. City staff recommends the following factors:

- Connectivity – Higher scores may be considered for projects along routes with higher demand and projects with more connections to existing and/or proposed infrastructure.

- Equity – Higher scores may be considered for projects in areas with higher population density and projects in areas with higher levels of poverty.

- Existing Roadway Conditions – Higher scores may be considered for projects along routes with higher volumes of traffic, and higher posted speeds.

- Implementation Effort – Higher scores may be considered for projects that are less expensive (scaled by quartile to reduce impact of outliers), are eligible for grant funding, and can be incorporated into a scheduled roadway reconstruction or resurfacing project.

- Public Support – Higher scores may be considered for projects that receive greatest public support represented by a recommendation by a committee, or via quantitative documents of requests/ comments from the public.

- Safety – Higher scores may be considered for projects that address an area with a history of bicycle or pedestrian crashes. For bike facility projects, higher scores may be considered for projects along routes with higher levels of traffic stress as identified on the City's Bike Map (http://www.harrisonburgva.gov/bike-map).

City staff seeks City Council's input on these factors – Are these factors appropriate? Should these factors be defined differently? Should other factors be considered? What order should factors be ranked from highest weight to lowest weight? Weights are numbers used to indicate the relative importance of different factors. We would appreciate receiving input from City Council by the end of August, if possible.

After feedback is received, city staff will work with the Subcommittee on developing weights and variables for each factor. Variables are characteristics of roadways, intersections, neighborhood areas, and other features that can be measured and are the core components of the prioritization process. Each prioritization factor is represented by a set of related variables.

For more information and guidebook on the ActiveTrans Priority Tool, http://www.pedbikeinfo.org/planning/tools_apt.cfm.

Proposed Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan Update Schedule

- **August –** Host meeting with City Department representatives; schedule one-on-one meetings through August as appropriate
- **August-September –** Host Stakeholder Focus Group meetings
- **September 28 –** Subcommittee meeting - discuss and recommend to City Council factors, weights, and variables for prioritization
- **November 16** – Subcommittee meeting – discuss compiled comments, maps, and prioritization
- **January 25** – Subcommittee meeting - review draft Plan
- **January 25** – **March 1** – Public Comment Period Open
- **Mid-February** – Host Public Open House
- **March 28** – At subcommittee meeting, review changes and discussions, and make recommendation
- **March 28** – Subcommittee meeting – review public comments and draft Plan. Make recommendation
- **Spring 2016** – Submit and present draft Plan to Planning Commission and Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission
- **Summer 2016** - Present to City Council and Public Hearing