



Clarke County Planning Commission

MINUTES – Policy & Transportation Committee Meeting

Wednesday, August 9, 2023 – 2:00PM

Berryville/Clarke County Government Center – A/B Meeting Room

ATTENDANCE:			
Buster Dunning (White Post)	✓	Gwendolyn Malone (Berryville)	✓
Bob Glover (Millwood)	✓	George L. Ohrstrom, II (Ex Officio)*	✓

* Chair Ohrstrom served as the alternate member for this meeting.

STAFF PRESENT: Brandon Stidham (Director of Planning), Jeremy Camp (Senior Planner/Zoning Administrator)

OTHERS PRESENT: Doug Lawrence (Board of Supervisors/Planning Commission alternate)

CALL TO ORDER: By Mr. Stidham at 2:00PM.

Chair Ohrstrom recognized the passing of Commissioner Scott Kreider and the Committee had a moment of silence in his honor.

1. Approval of Agenda

The meeting agenda as presented by Staff was approved by consensus.

2. Approval of Minutes – June 14, 2023 Meeting

A motion to approve the June 14, 2023 meeting minutes as presented by Staff was approved unanimously.

Motion to approve June 14, 2023 meeting minutes as presented by Staff:			
Dunning	AYE	Malone	AYE (seconded)
Glover	AYE	Ohrstrom	AYE (moved)

3. Continued Discussion, Transportation Plan Update

Mr. Stidham reviewed the initial draft of the revised Transportation Plan.

Chair Ohrstrom noted on Page 2, Item 1, “needs assessment” should be “needs assessments.” Mr. Stidham replied that this is a quote from the 2022 Comprehensive Plan so it would need to be corrected in that document.

Chair Ohrstrom noted on Page 3, first paragraph, “adds to congestion” should be changed to “causes congestion.” Mr. Stidham replied that this is better and he would make the correction.

Mr. Stidham noted the last two sentences in the second paragraph which state that rural areas should expect a rural level of service in regards to transportation. The language goes on to state that increasing the capacity of existing roads and constructing new roads in rural areas is

unnecessary and can facilitate development pressures. He said this concept is counterintuitive to what most other localities in the state follow and he expects to get push back from the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) on it. Chair Ohrstrom suggested tying this to safety and Mr. Stidham replied that the draft states that only safety and functional improvements should be considered in the rural areas. Mr. Stidham added that the overall concept is that we do not cause growth to occur in our county and that VDOT uses counties' decisions to allow development in order to justify capacity improvements. Chair Ohrstrom replied that he noted this concept in several different places in the draft. He said that he agrees that this Plan is intended to be nonresponsive to growth pressures caused by other counties but said he expects to get a lot of push back from VDOT. Mr. Stidham replied that it should be VDOT's responsibility to address outside growth pressures and also should be subject to Clarke County's approval. In the fourth line, Commissioner Glover suggested changing "over many years" to "over many decades." Mr. Stidham replied that he would make this change.

Chair Ohrstrom asked if "rural level of service" is an actual criteria of level of service. Mr. Stidham replied that former commissioner Jon Turkel was probably the first person to coin that term but that it is not a formal transportation criteria.

Mr. Stidham noted that the wording of the first item in the County's transportation philosophy places the responsibility on VDOT to ensure that the County has a safe and efficient road network through their guidance and provision of funding opportunities. He added that it is VDOT's position that when counties allow growth to occur, they bear responsibility to apply for funding for transportation improvements. Chair Ohrstrom said this is true and that VDOT does not want to see levels of service drop between jurisdictions. Mr. Stidham noted that we may not want to tolerate VDOT wanting to expand capacity of primary highways in Clarke to account for traffic in adjacent jurisdictions.

Regarding the second item pertaining to expansion of road capacity, Chair Ohrstrom asked if we wanted to add the words "in the county" after the word "generate" to clarify that we will not cause unplanned growth to occur in Clarke County. Mr. Stidham agreed and said he would make this change.

Mr. Stidham asked if there is anything missing from the list that should be added. Mr. Camp suggesting adding a fifth item to ensure that developers bear responsibility for road improvements to mitigate their impacts on the road network. Mr. Stidham said that is a good one and he will add it to the list. Commissioner Glover asked if something could be added to ensure that new private roads and access easements have safe connections to public roads. Mr. Stidham replied that this could come in the form of stronger design criteria to be added to the Subdivision Ordinance. He suggested adding language to the fourth item regarding private road design criteria to maximize safety and minimize environmental impact.

Under the Existing Transportation Network section on Page 7, Mr. Stidham noted that he will add definitions for each of the functional classifications. Members agreed that this would be helpful. Commissioner Glover asked where the classifications came from. Mr. Stidham replied that these are VDOT classifications and that they were last updated in 2015.

Regarding the description of the Rural Rustic Roads program, Mr. Stidham noted that an unpaved road must have a maximum traffic of 1,500 vehicles per day to qualify. Commissioner Dunning asked if that should be a minimum instead of maximum. Mr. Stidham replied that it is maximum because the Rural Rustic Roads program is for low volume roads and unpaved roads with higher traffic volumes have to be hard surfaced through other programs. He then explained that the Rural Rustic Roads program only adds a basic hard surface over the existing gravel roadway.

Regarding the Bicycle-Pedestrian Plan language added on Page 12, Mr. Stidham noted that the Plan was completed in 2014 and probably needs to be updated at some point. Chair Ohrstrom suggested discussing Jon Turkel's recent email expressing concerns over shoulder rumble strips on Route 7 interfering with cyclists. Mr. Stidham said that when the Plan was developed, Mr. Turkel was a big proponent of maximizing how roads are shared with cyclists. Mr. Stidham said that he took the opposite position that most secondary roads would have to be significantly widened in order to accommodate bicycle lanes. He cited Bishop Meade Road as an example in which road widening to add bicycle lanes would likely impact stone walls and drainage ditches and require significant right of way to be acquired. Chair Ohrstrom cited Pyletown Road as having blind hills. Mr. Stidham said that he leans in favor of driver and cyclist safety. Commissioner Glover asked if the rumble strips are required to be installed. Mr. Stidham said that he thinks they are being installed at the same time that other work is being done. He said that primary highways should definitely have them and Commissioner Dunning noted that they are on a lot of secondary roads as well. Chair Ohrstrom said that the rumble strips are in the middle of secondary roads but that Mr. Turkel is concerned with the ones on the edge of the road.

Regarding Chapter II, Objective 3 on Page 16, Chair Ohrstrom suggested referencing the Comprehensive Plan in the bulleted list of plans in Strategy 3. Mr. Stidham said that he would make this change.

Regarding Chapter III, Mr. Stidham said that he plans to add a vicinity map from the County GIS for each of the proposed projects. He also explained that the cost estimates were developed using a tool provided by VDOT. Commissioner Glover asked if 2015 is the date of the software and Mr. Stidham replied that the tool is a spreadsheet. Mr. Stidham added that they do not update the tool very often. Commissioner Glover suggested referencing that this is the current version of the tool.

Mr. Stidham reviewed the project list and noted that he has prioritized the projects at the Committee's direction. Members had a brief conversation about VDOT's current plans to modify the intersection of Va. 7 and Shepherds Mill Road.

Regarding the Appalachian Trail (AT) pedestrian crossing project, Commissioner Lawrence explained that Federal law requires the crossing to be handicapped accessible even though the AT is not accessible. He added that this requirement has likely caused the project to be significantly more expensive. He suggested that a single bridge could be constructed at the top of the mountain that would serve as the pedestrian crossing for the AT in project 3 and the Route 601 intersection improvement for project 4. He said that combining these two projects may be a

better approach. Mr. Stidham suggested adding language to the end of the project 3 description to study combining projects 3 and 4 as an alternative approach. Members agreed with adding this language.

Mr. Stidham reviewed the project to improve East Main Street in Berryville (project 5) and he discussed how the scope could be impacted if the Town's southeastern collector road project is constructed. He also said that the need for improvements to West Main Street (project 6) should be evaluated because this project was scoped before the Town's sidewalk improvements and construction of the roundabout. Chair Ohrstrom agreed that this segment does not appear to need additional improvements. He added that it might be a good idea to consider turn lane improvements at the park entrance.

Mr. Stidham noted that the Waterloo intersection project (project 7) was scoped before the HandyMart road improvements were constructed. He added that the scope of this project might be reduced to two turn lane improvements – eastbound right turn lane onto U.S. 340 towards Double Tollgate and westbound right turn lane onto U.S. 340 just past the McDonalds entrance.

Mr. Stidham said that the Boyce drainage improvements project (project 8) may not be needed because of improvements that were constructed on U.S. 340 when Roseville Downs subdivision was developed. Commissioner Lawrence said that VDOT has plans to improve the stormwater basin behind the Boyce fire house along with drainage improvements at the railroad crossing. Mr. Stidham noted that if VDOT completes these improvements, we might be able to delete this project at the next plan update.

Mr. Stidham explained the addition of the Town's southeastern collector road project under a new section called "Other Unprioritized Projects." Commissioner Malone asked if there are plans to construct other improvements such as a roundabout at the intersection of U.S. 340 and Hermitage Boulevard since the pavement area is so wide. Mr. Stidham said that the intersection was probably constructed before VDOT began promoting roundabouts. He also noted that VDOT tends to avoid roundabouts on primary highways although VDOT has constructed them in some places such as U.S. 50 in Loudoun. Chair Ohrstrom said they work much better than signalized intersections. Mr. Stidham explained how this project would have to be planned in order to be competitive for SmartScale funding. He said that he listed this project as unprioritized because it can be studied and modified over the years and could eventually be added to the prioritized list. Chair Ohrstrom said that the project could also be vetted by the Berryville Area Development Authority (BADA).

Regarding the Conclusion (Chapter IV), Commissioner Glover suggested adding the Comprehensive Plan to the end of the first sentence after "land use philosophies." In the second paragraph, second line, Chair Ohrstrom suggested replacing the word "can" with "does." In Item 2, beginning of third sentence, Mr. Camp suggested adding the word "The." Mr. Stidham said he would make these changes.

In Appendix A, Commissioner Glover noted that the projects at the top of the mountain are missing and there is nothing in the legend to explain what the colored numbers mean. Mr.

Stidham said that he missed several edits with this version of the map and will make these corrections with the next version.

At the request of Commissioner Lawrence, members had a brief off-topic discussion about the potential impacts of Frederick County constructing the eastern extension of Route 37 on Clarke County.

Members agreed by consensus to cancel the next scheduled meeting and to forward the current draft to the Planning Commission for review.

ADJOURN: Meeting was adjourned by consensus at 3:34PM.



Brandon Stidham, Clerk