

Richmond Gateway public alternatives meeting

August 10, 2023

Dan Mallach/DuBois&King, Cathleen Gent, Keith Osborne (zoom), Bryan Davis/CCRPC (zoom), Betsy Harding (zoom), Jon Kart (zoom), Wright Preston, John Hamerslough, Lucie Whiteford, Marilynne Johnson, Jessie Heiser

Agenda/Notes

This is a reschedule of the July 13 meeting which was canceled due to storms and technical issues. Dan welcomed everyone, recognized some of the challenges with this project, and noted there is no right answer but rather an effort to be transparent and considerate of all aspects of each alternative, and it will be up to Town leadership to decide on a preferred alternative based on public feedback and the project analysis.

Introductions were made and Dan gave a brief description of the scoping study process. Dan reviewed the project goal and rationale for this project at this time. This project does not preclude the Town from working on other projects, nor does it require the Town to continue pursuing the preferred alternative at the conclusion of the study. It will, however, provide support and technical basis for their pursuit of grant funding in the future for design/construction to complete it.

The project goal is to build on prior work to provide the Town of Richmond with a path feasibility study that illustrates a potential multi-use connection between the Village of Richmond, the Park and Ride, and the Riverview Commons neighborhood, including public opinion, analysis of technical feasibility, and estimated costs.

The project is being undertaken because there is no path currently, there's a need for a connector to the transportation center at the park and ride, residential properties of Riverview Commons are disconnected from village amenities and services, and this is part of a broad initiative to have a walkable/bikeable/safe/accessible Richmond that includes other streets and paths.

1. Review existing conditions:

- Dan provided the context of the project area and noted some of the natural and man-made features.
- A review of prior studies and existing Town documents was completed as part of this project.
- A similar path scoping study was completed in 2014, upon which this project builds. The railroad right-of-way presents a significant challenge to the preferred alternative from that study, which was a shared use path on the south side of Route 2.
- Considerations of this project area include slope, utilities, roadway characteristics, path characteristics and more.

2. Review results of earlier survey, and introduce new survey:

- There were 149 responses to the first survey.

- Two-thirds of respondents do not currently walk, bike, etc. between the village, park and ride, Riverview Commons.
- More than two-thirds of respondents reported they would walk, bike, etc. if there were a safe and easy path between any portion of the route between the village, park and ride, Riverview Commons.
- A third of respondents live in the village area while more than half live elsewhere in Richmond.
- Respondents ranked the importance of the project goals.
- Age of respondents: 39% between 61-80, 29% between 41-60, 26% between 21-40.
- Open ended comments included:
 - It would be a huge community asset
 - Concern for the aesthetic impacts of potential solutions
 - Concern that the high cost of such solutions, combined with implementation challenges, won't be satisfactory
 - It would be wonderful if this path could connect to the larger network of local trails
 - Should it connect to the schools?
 - Spend money elsewhere, such as on Cochran Rd
 - Recognize the rights and concerns of property owners
 - Try to decrease speeds as well
 - Not sure it would be used by enough people
 - Rather have a bike lane away from the road, too dangerous near Route 2
- Dan noted that the project team hosted three focus groups early in the process with the cemetery commission, school representatives, and residents of Route 2.
- School reps were concerned about safety considerations of creating an additional access point to the school. The team followed up with the school superintendent, whose primary concern is student safety and security but also in support of making a connection, or illustrating one in the final plan, so that if funding were available then the school would be in a position to consider the path option further.
- Guest asked where the current GMT buses travel. They travel between Burlington, Richmond, Waterbury and Montpelier. How many buses per day? There are 11 buses headed eastbound and 11 buses headed westbound on weekdays.
- Guest asked if Town has considered a shuttle bus between the village and park and ride, such as using current vehicles like the police cruisers. Cathleen noted a consulting firm looked at transit options for Richmond, including a shuttle
https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Selectboard/Meetings/2023/06/3c_Memo_Regarding_Transit_Service_In_Richmond.pdf
- Guest noted the park and ride area has flooded twice in the last month, has that been considered? Dan suggested we follow up with VTrans and CCRPC about potential improvements to the park and ride to address flooding.

3. Present and discuss details of potential alternative design concepts:

- Dan shared images of the study area corridor and described some key areas.

- Existing sidewalk on north side of Route 2 in the village could be extended westerly. Widening it to 8-10 feet would have impacts on private properties. There are sight issues due to the vertical grade at the edge of the village. Engineers would need to measure the slope to determine compliance with ADA requirements.
- Concept 1 is the North Side Straight, which is the most efficient route, greatest technical feasibility and lowest cost, but closest to Route 2 traffic. Dan noted a recent project in Williston at Exit 12 that included a shared use path behind Interstate bridge abutments, which could be an alignment option at Exit 11 in Richmond. For areas with limited width, installing vertical barriers like bollards or flex posts could provide separation between vehicles and people walking/biking. Discussion of “pinch point” study currently underway to address Route 2 shoulder widths where repaving will not be widened to 5 feet.
- Concept 2 is the Emerald Trail. The eastern area is similar to concept 1 (general alignment follows Route 2) but further west it separates from Route 2 to the north, going around/behind the gas station and park and ride. At the interstate ramps, underpasses could provide walk/bike access and avoid vehicular traffic. Guest asked if this area would be in the floodplain. Guest asked about a bridge instead of underpass. Dan pointed out that because the ramps and interstate are built above grade, a bridge would be more complex and expensive than an underpass but wouldn’t be impossible.
- Dan used photos to point out specific conditions and features for technical consideration along the Route 2 corridor as part of concept 1 including residential and commercial properties, slope, right of way, utilities, potential alignments away from Route 2, trees and vegetation, cemetery, shoulder widths (existing and widened through repaving), wetlands, compatibility of path/driveway materials, culverts and ditches, retaining walls, potential parking impacts at park and ride, interstate on ramp slip lane, and roadway crossings.
- The Emerald Trail concept includes additional features for technical consideration. These include wetlands behind gas station, navigating the interstate ramps (potentially using underpasses), and drainage features. It also includes opportunities for pause places, a more scenic route, use of boardwalks, and long term bike parking (e.g., lockers).
- Potential access options to access Riverview Commons along Governor Peck Rd are through GMP property, Cleary Stone property, or following Route 2/117 to Riverview Commons entrance.
- If the Town were to extend its existing utilities further west, there may be opportunities to incorporate a path as part of the project.
- Guest asked about looking at other alternatives in the corridor, but it doesn’t seem like there are other potential alternatives. Dan noted there are some variations but introduce other challenges, considerations and costs.
- Guest asked about moving the guardrail to create additional space. Dan notes the pinch point study is considering this type of opportunity. Our team has also been in touch with the State about moving the guardrail and widening the roadway more than what is included in the current repaving project, but State staff indicated the repaving scope

and State right-of-way limits do not allow for additional widening in pinch point locations.

4. Assess Concepts Evaluation Matrix:

- Dan showed a draft concepts evaluation matrix, which will be used as a tool to evaluate and score the concepts based on several factors. This matrix will be updated and applied to the concepts following feedback from the public.

5. Project next steps:

- So far we've received about 30 responses to the new survey, which is open until August 15. Please help share!
- The project team will evaluate input from tonight's meeting and the public survey.
- The project team will work with CCRPC and Richmond Transportation Committee to select the preferred alternative.
- Graphic refinement of final recommendations, with permitting and estimates anticipated by Fall 2023 and to be presented to the Selectboard.