

Richmond Transportation Committee

Meeting Minutes – March 14, 2023

Committee members present: Chris Cole (Chair), Cathleen Gent (Vice Chair), Keith Jennings, Jon Kart, Allen Knowles

Others present: Andrew Bessette (Richmond resident); Amanda Froeschle (Public Health Specialist, VDH Healthy Communities), Susan Wells (Richmond resident)

All attended remotely.

A quorum was reached and the Chair convened the meeting at 5:33 PM.

Abbreviations used in these minutes: ARPA = American Rescue Plan Act of 2021; CCRPC = Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission; D&K = Dubois and King; GMT=Green Mountain Transit; PPL = Project Pipeline Document; RTC = Richmond Transportation Committee; RVC=Riverview Commons; SB = Selectboard; TAP=Transportation Alternatives Program; UPWP = Unified Planning Work Program; VDH = VT Dept. of Health; VTRANS=Vermont Agency of Transportation;

1. Public Comment: Andrew Bessette expressed concern over the fact that with US2 repaving resuming this spring, the practice of occasionally closing Cochran Rd for events would conflict with the need to use Cochran Road for traffic to bypass construction lane closures. He stated that he did attend the SB meeting 3/13/2023 to present this concern, but the meeting ran so late he was unable do so. He reported giving his concerns in writing to Town Manager Josh Arneson.

Knowles noted that the problem would not apply to weekends, but Cole noted that Saturdays are sometimes work days.

Cole agreed with Mr. Bessette about the issue, but noted that it is up to the SB. Cole will email Town Manager Arneson to express the consensus of the RTC that we agree with Mr. Bessette’s concern, and suggest that event closures of Cochran Road be limited to Sundays while the Rt2 repaving project is in progress. (Further action, Cole)

2. Revisions to the Agenda: Gent requested discussion of the planned presentation to the SB about sidewalks and Bridge St improvements. This is added as “d” under 4. Updates. Requested discussion of the consultant’s letter about GMT route feasibility will be deferred to the next meeting.

3. Approval of Minutes from February 21, 2023: There were no corrections or additions to the minutes. **Motion by Gent, seconded by Kart, to approve minutes. Approved unanimously.**

4. Updates on UPWP Studies:

a. Western Gateway Scoping Study: The school focus group met 3/9/2023. Knowles has provided notes from that meeting. In brief, school administration and staff were favorable to a multi-use path as beneficial to their students and the community as a whole, with the caveat that connecting it to the school grounds was problematic and not something they were prepared to greenlight at this time. Also, an obvious route for the path was not apparent. The Rt2 landowners, residents, and RVC residents focus group is scheduled for 3/16/2023. The public survey is to go live for the month of April. A public comment meeting is scheduled for 4/10/2023 at the Town Center Conference Room A and online.

b. Cochran Road - Mid-year Adjustment Program: This is the temporary traffic calming project for Cochran Road, under the auspices of the SB and CCRC. Gent reported that D&K has experienced some staffing issues and the start of the project is delayed for 4-6 weeks, until sometime in May. The project will need a steering committee. Susan Wells agreed to be on the steering committee, and Gent will forward her name to Town staff. (Further action, Gent)

c. Rt2 Pinchpoint Study: No new information.

d. Bridge Street East Side Sidewalk and Related Improvements: Cole, Gent and Kart reported on the 3/13/2023 SB discussion of issues of public engagement that were raised at the Town Meeting Budget Vote on 3/6/2023. The RTC is on the SB agenda for April 3, 2023 to review the proposals that came out of the FY2021 Bridge Street Complete Streets Corridor Study and the FY22 Sidewalk Scoping Study. Kart discussed some of the issues raised, such as greenspace and proximity to burials at the cemetery. Knowles noted that sidewalk setbacks from the roadway can be adjusted to the most practical distance for a given section, and Cole noted that if old, unmarked burials are discovered in the engineering process, that there are statutory rules for dealing with that. Amanda Froeschle of the Healthy Communities program at the VT Dept. of Health commented that the VDH has recommendations for the amount of physical activity that is needed for different age groups, and how adequate pedestrian infrastructure contributes to meeting those needs.

5. Walkability Audit Report: Status and Preparations for Presentation to the SB: Kart has completed most of the editing. He feels the report could benefit from improved photographs of problem areas, and has contacted Jared Katz about doing some photography. There was discussion of whether further delay in completing the report and presenting it to the SB was advisable. The amount of delay for photographs could be weather dependent, and winter conditions continue. Cole is providing updates to the Deficiencies and Solutions table. Gent will check with Town staff about when a presentation to the SB might be scheduled.

6. Cochran Road/Bridge Street/Thompson Road/Huntington Road Intersection – Next Steps per 2021 VHB Report: Gent provided a memo detailing the alternatives for this intersection given in the FY21 Bridge Street Complete Streets Corridor Study. The study was accepted by the SB on June 21, 2021, but no action has been taken. Gent raised the question of how we re-engage with this issue. The original 3 alternatives, and the final fourth Preferred Alternative, were reviewed. Andrew Bessette asked how frequently accidents occurred, and whether any change was needed. Susan Wells noted that the intersection is very difficult to negotiate on foot, and Gent agreed with that. Cole noted the recent change in traffic pattern at the Richmond-Hinesbug Road intersection with North Road and Texas Hill Road as an example of change being instituted to improve safety. Knowles gave his recollection that RTC did not agree on one of the original three alternatives, and VHB felt that a “no-build” option was not acceptable from a professional traffic engineering standpoint; VHB then developed the fourth Preferred Alternative. Susan Wells noted that Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons are helpful for pedestrians. Cole noted there are limitations on how close together they can be placed, and also that they are not used at intersections. The Round Church crosswalk may be an appropriate location for one. Cole stated that RTC members should refresh their familiarity with the report, and we should consider another public comment meeting; also, he will ask CCRC about the final plans.

7. General Updates:

a. Town Planner Hiring: Cole reported that an offer has been extended to an applicant.

b. Railroad: Cole has emailed the railroad, but not yet received a reply. Gent noted that the upper portion of an east side sidewalk on Bridge St will cross the railroad, and Cole noted that a bicycle climbing lane would, too. Neither would seem to require any significant alteration of the crossing.

8. Agenda Items For Next Meeting:

- Jon Kart to give status of final Walkability Audit Report
- Discussion of the GMT scoping report
- FY23 UPWP updates
- Preparation for the April 3, 2023 presentation to the SB on Bridge Street East Side Sidewalk and Related Improvements
- Revisiting the portion of the FY22 Sidewalk Scoping Study that addresses the section between School St. and Southview Road. Cole will ask CCRCP about this, and also any further input they have on the VHB plans for the Preferred Alternative for the Bridge/Cochran/Thompson/Huntington Rd intersection.

9. Adjournment: Time having run out, the meeting was adjourned by consensus at 6:55 PM.

Minutes by Allen Knowles

Further Action:

- Cole will email Town Manager Arneson to express the consensus of the RTC that we agree with Mr. Bessette's concern, and suggest that event closures of Cochran Road be limited to Sundays while the Rt2 repaving project is in progress. (See 1 above)
- Gent: Susan Wells agreed to be on the steering committee for the FY23 Cochran Rd Traffic Calming Study, and Gent will forward her name to Town staff. (See 4b above)