

Biscuit Run Gateway

I. Summary:

The Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission recommends that the Metropolitan Planning Organization Policy Board vote to combine several existing projects on the Long Range Transportation Plan vision list, while integrating a few additional components in order to maximize regional goals of connectivity, alternative transportation, mobility, transit and affordable housing.

The result of this strategic recombination will be the region's largest contiguous walkable and bikeable area -- accessible by the area's biggest population centers -- and will create a northern and western gateway into the future Biscuit Run Park and through to Scottsville for all forms of transportation, including buses, bikes, walking and even horses.

II. Specific Recommendations:

TJPDC staff recommends combining the following projects:

- BP36 Old Lynchburg Road
- BP37 5th Street Extended
- BP41 Bent Creek Path
- BP43 Route 20

Additionally, the TJPDC recommends integrating in the following infrastructure components into the project:

- Extension of BP36, BP37 and BP41 through the Southwood Mobile Home Park and incorporation of trail-head parking, and enhanced transit amenities to create multimodal access to the Biscuit Run Park.
- Improvement and extension of Sunset Road across Old Lynchburg Road to tie in to existing road network in Southwood and provide direct multimodal access to the Biscuit Run Park for residents living in Western Albemarle, the Southern Neighborhoods (including the Granger Property/Center) of the Albemarle County Growth area, the University area and all of the City of Charlottesville. This set of improvements will also enable direct vehicular and alternative transportation access to an active use public recreational park anticipated as part of eventual Southwood redevelopment.
- Improvements of existing rights of way in Southwood to complete a section of the future Southern Connector with bike lanes, street trees and transit stops, as per the Albemarle County Comprehensive Plan.
- Pedestrian connections to public trails identified on the Department of Conservation and Recreation Biscuit Run master plan.

III. Consistency with local and regional objectives:

This update to the LRTP vision list is consistent with a very lengthy list of central goals of recent, publically-generated planning documents:

One Community:

The Albemarle and Charlottesville Planning Commissions met for two years beginning in March 2011 as part of the Livability project in order to coordinate their updates of their respective comprehensive plans and to generate a list of joint goals and objectives. At the conclusion of this effort, the two bodies voted to elevate two goals as the top two priorities for the City and County to work on jointly. This recommendation directly supports one of those primary goals regarding connecting areas of vitality across jurisdictional lines. Specifically, the recommendation from the commissions was to coordinate “building the sidewalk network across City-County boundaries, and create dedicated bike-pedestrian connections across physical barriers within the community.”

- This proposal creates and enhances direct multimodal connectivity from the Fry Springs and University commercial and residential areas, through the Southern Neighborhoods in the county Development Area, to the region’s largest State Park. It will eventually also tie together these residential and commercial areas to a new Neighborhood commercial area anticipated as part of Southwood redevelopment as well as an active use recreational facility.

Albemarle County Comprehensive Plan (2015 update pending):

Chapter 10: Transportation

- o Objective 1: Continue to plan transportation improvements in accordance with the County’s Growth Management Policy
- o Objective 3: Continue to improve, promote, and provide regional multimodal and accessible transportation options.
 - Strategy 3c: Create dedicated bicycle-pedestrian connections across physical barriers within the community
- o Objective 4: Strengthen efforts to complete a local transportation system that includes access to pedestrian and bicycle facilities
 - Strategy 4a: Continue to include bicycle lanes, bikeways, sidewalks, and crosswalks with in new developments in the Development Areas
 - Strategy 4b: Improve funding for an ongoing walkway, bicycle, and greenway construction fund ...Utilize all possible funding sources for the construction of walkways and bicycle facilities

- o Objective 6: Continue to provide safe, effective, and improved urban roads in the Development Areas while recognizing that multimodal opportunities help to improve road functions
- o Objective 7: Continue to provide safe and effective transportation options while preserving the character of the Rural Area. With their scenic and visual character, roadways in the Rural Area serve as gateways for people traveling to visit the County's rural resources such as historic sites or wineries. Greater traffic volume and traffic safety on these roads is a concern to residents and drivers. Roadways in the Rural Area are shared by pedestrians, equestrians, farm vehicles, bicyclists, and automobiles
- o Objective 8: Continue to improve public transit service

Development Area Chapter

- o Objective 4: Achieve high quality development through application of the Neighborhood Model Principles.
 - Neighborhood Centers
 - Sidewalks along streets and pedestrian paths
 - Mixture of uses
 - Mixture of housing types and affordability
 - Interconnected streets and transportation networks
 - Multi-Modal transportation opportunities
 - Parks, Recreational Amenities and Open Space
 - Promote redevelopment as a way to improve, and not expand the Development Areas
 - Respecting terrain and careful grading and regarding of terrain
 - Clear boundaries with the Rural Area
 - Facilitate infill development. Plan and provide for necessary infrastructure improvements that are currently impediments to developing vacant sites
 - Match infrastructure availability and capacity with new development, especially in priority areas

Chapter 9: Housing

Goal: Located primarily in the Development Areas, housing in Albemarle will be safe, decent, and sanitary, available to all income and age levels, and available equally to all current and future County residents.

- o Continue to work with non-profit partners to assist them in securing funding
- o Objective 4: Provide a variety of housing types for all income levels and help provide for density in the Development Areas

- o Objective 6: Provide affordable housing options for low-to-moderate income residents of Albemarle County and those persons who work within Albemarle County who wish to reside in Albemarle County
- o Objective 7: Promote the mixing of affordable units mixed throughout neighborhoods
- o Objective 8: Work with the City of Charlottesville to provide a range of housing types that support various incomes, ages, and levels of mobility. These housing types should be connected to community amenities, parks, trails and services in the City and located in the County's Development Areas

Southern and Western Neighborhoods Chapter:

The Southern and Western priority areas are as follows...

Southwood: The Redevelopment of the Southwood Mobile Home Park should be as a mixed-income, mixed use community. A mixture of housing types for different income levels is expected. A center should be provided for neighborhood supporting commercial uses. The proposed Southern Connector road project is also a part of the planned future development. At this time, Habitat for Humanity is planning for the redevelopment of the mobile home park as a mixed-income, mixed-use community. During the planning stage, opportunities may exist for the County to partner with Habitat for Humanity to help request grant money, significantly improve and expand the regional inventory of affordable housing, tie into the transportation network throughout the area, and if Habitat for Humanity is able to exchange land owned by the State for Biscuit Run State Park, obtain land to add to the County inventory of playing fields.

Trail Recommendations:

Secure continuous greenways along Moore's Creek, Morey Creek, and Biscuit Run.

Southern Parkway Connector Road Recommendations:

The Southern Parkway Connector Road (the Southern Connector) is a planned street for which the right-of-way was secured on the east side of Biscuit Run Creek with the Mill Creek development but not secured across Biscuit Run.

From modeling, the following recommendations have been made:

- o Secure and retain right of way for the Southern Connector. In areas where the street is not built, use the right-of-way for pedestrian and bicycle access
- o Build the portion of the Southern Connector through Southwood Mobile Home Park. The ultimate roadway section for the Southern Connector through

- Southwood Mobile Home Park will be built out as two lanes with street trees, sidewalks and bike lanes. The alignment and construction of this section of the road will be coordinated with the owner's plans for redevelopment; and
- o When constructed the remaining parts of the Southern Connector should have street trees, sidewalks and bike lanes

Charlottesville City Comprehensive Plan (2013)

Transportation Chapter:

Vision: The City of Charlottesville's transportation network... connects people to each other and to destinations, fosters economic activity and provides public space for human interaction. As a result, the transportation system should be designed for everyone, whether young or old, motorist or bicyclist, walker or wheelchair user, bus rider or shopkeeper. A multimodal transportation network is an effective, flexible framework for building community.

- o Goal 1: Increase safe, convenient and pleasant accommodations for pedestrians, bicyclists and people with disabilities that improve quality of life within the community and within individual neighborhoods
- o Goal 2: Improve transportation options and quality of life...
 - 2.1 Provide convenient and safe bicycle and pedestrian connections between new and existing residential developments, employment areas and other activity centers to promote the option of walking and biking
 - 2.2 Encourage new street connections and alternate traffic patterns where appropriate to distribute traffic volumes across a network and reduce trip lengths for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles
- o Goal 6: Create a transit system that increases local and regional mobility and provides a reliable and efficient alternative for Charlottesville citizens
- o Goal 7: Continue to work with appropriate governing bodies to create a robust regional transportation network
 - 7.4 Increase communication and cooperation among the City, County, institutes of higher education, interest groups, developers and the public to develop and enhance recreational and transportation trails to ensure consistency of bicycle and pedestrian facilities across City-County boundaries
- o Goal 9: Identify and seek new sources of sustainable funding protocol and mechanisms for the maintenance of existing infrastructure and facilities and future development of the transportation system
 - 9.3 Coordinate the funding and development of transportation facilities with regional transportation and land use plans and with planned public and private investments

Housing Chapter:

Vision: In order to be a truly world class city, Charlottesville must provide sufficient housing options to ensure safe, appealing, environmentally sustainable and affordable housing for all population segments and income levels, including middle income. Consequently, City neighborhoods will feature a variety of housing types, housing sizes, and incomes all within convenient walking, biking or transit distances of enhanced community amenities... at employment centers connected to facilities, parks, trails and services.

- o Goal 5: Support projects and public/private partnerships (i.e. private non-profits, private developers and governmental agencies) for affordable housing, including workforce housing and mixed-use, and mixed-income developments.
 - o 5.6 Work in cooperation with local governments and regional agencies to promote a regional fair share approach to providing affordable housing at a variety of income levels
 - o 5.7 Support housing programs at the local and regional level that encourage mixed-income neighborhoods and discourage the isolation of very low and low income households
- o Goal 8: Ensure that the City's housing portfolio offers a wide range of choices that are integrated and balanced across the city to meet multiple goals including: increased sustainability, walkability, bikeability, and use of public transit, augmented support for families with children, fewer pockets of poverty, sustained local commerce and decreased student vehicle use.

IV. LRTP Measurements:

This recommendation is consistent with multiple principles enumerated in the 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan. The performance measures in the Plan reflected a wide variety of transportation issues, ranging from the congestion related to environmental impacts.

These performance measures are divided into four general categories: Mobility, Economy, Environment, and Community.

1. **Mobility** measures assess how each scenario affects the regional transportation system. For example: does the scenario relieve congestion? Not only does the Gateway Project take cars off the road in favor of bicycles, but it provides a means to enhance a section of road enabling multimodal travel that can tie into an eventual Southern Connector at the point in time that it is warranted.
2. **Economic** measures consider how each scenario affects the region's economic potential. For example: does the scenario provide better access to jobs? Southwood currently houses 1,500 of the area's lowest-income wage earners, many of whom rely on public transportation and who make Route 3 the single

most well-used route in the CAT system. The Gateway project opens up opportunities for enhanced transit for current Southwood residents and for the approximately 350 additional residential units anticipated as a result of redevelopment and the thousands of other units located within one square mile of the geographical center of Southwood.

3. Any potential negative **environmental** impacts of this recombination would be minimal given that the gateway project envisions utilizing existing rights of way predominately. In terms of environmental justice and Title VI, this project has the potential to dramatically increase the number of minorities, seniors, limited English-speaking and low-income residents who have access to transit, alternative forms of transportation, the State Park and other public recreational amenities and commercial centers.
4. This project will connect two jurisdictions and their respective diverse neighborhoods, **community** amenities and commercial establishments.

As the LRTP was being developed, bicycle connectivity was a major issue for the public during meetings. Bicycle connectivity was calculated based on a previous analysis conducted by the MPO during the transportation deficiencies assessment. MPO staff assessed network bicycle connectivity by determining the main barriers to regional bike connectivity. These barriers included everything from high-volume, high-speed roads to river and streams.

Using these barriers, MPO staff was able to develop zones of bike-ability: areas that one could bike within, but could not easily leave via bike. Staff used existing facilities, bike lanes, and multi-use paths to find connections between these zones, in some cases merging them. This process resulted in eight adjacent zones of bike-ability, with the largest, or core, zone centering over the northern part of Charlottesville and bordering Albemarle. As new projects were considered, the overall size of the core zone either stayed the same or expanded due to improvements included in each project. The Gateway project not only would create the largest single area of bicycle connectivity, but would also allow the Southern Area of the County to tie in with the other connected zones.

The collective project would create a northern gateway into Biscuit Run park and allow the region to tie into the trails and facilities there. Additionally, by creating this connection, the Gateway would tie in to US Bicycle Route 76 and the proposed Heritage Trail along Route 20, providing a direct connection through the park to Scottsville and the James River.

V. Southwood:

The Southwood is the region's largest single concentration of affordable housing, with 1,500 residents (all below 50% of area median income) housed in 342 trailers. Habitat for Humanity of Greater Charlottesville purchased Southwood in 2007 and

later developed a value statement that affirmed, among other guiding principles, a commitment to non-displacement. In 2011, the Habitat Board of Directors passed the following resolution:

Habitat for Humanity of Greater Charlottesville is committed to redeveloping the Southwood Mobile Home Park as a well-designed, sustainable, mixed income community of substantial benefit to the region guided by the following core values:

1. **Non displacement:** Facilitating healthy rehousing choices for each current resident of the trailer park.
2. **Net increase in affordable housing:** Causing a significant increase in the overall local affordable housing stock, responsive to the evolving regional need.
3. **Community engagement:** Creating a plan of development resulting from extensive interaction with Southwood residents - taking into account their needs, desires and abilities – and other stakeholders in the community (surrounding neighbors, County officials, etc.)
4. **Asset-based approach:** Building on existing community assets by being responsive to what's already good about Southwood, both socially and physically.
5. **Self-help model:** Basing redevelopment strategies on Habitat's central belief that a "hand up" is better than a "hand out." Redevelopment will include substantial opportunities for current residents and other low-income residents of the area to earn the chance to build and purchase Habitat homes and/or otherwise participate in the rebuilding of the community.
6. **Fiscal responsibility:** Managing the redevelopment process in a financially sustainable way that allows Habitat to continue with its core mission of building affordable homes into the future.

Prior to establishing these core values, Habitat completed the redevelopment of Sunrise Park in the Belmont-Carlton section of Charlottesville. Sunrise is the first trailer park transformation in the nation without resident displacement. Once a 16 unit low-income trailer park with a decaying infrastructure, Sunrise is now a green, mixed-income, mixed-use community inclusive of long-time residents, new Habitat Partner Families (60% and below first time homeowners) and market rate homeowners. The enhanced community is anchored by a vibrant neighborhood center which brings together an extremely diverse demographic, enables seniors to avoid isolation and invites the greater Charlottesville community to participate in programming.

At Southwood, Habitat has invested almost \$2m in upgrading failing and dangerous infrastructure and is working through an unprecedented community development program that will allow the residents themselves to determine the shape and form of the redeveloped community. Currently, Habitat employs a full time bilingual staff of nine to employ methods of appreciative inquiry in order to help each family plan a more sustainable future and in order to generate a collective community vision that

will yield a rezoning application likely in early-to-mid 2016. This provisional timeline puts the beginning of redevelopment sometime in 2018.

However, because the Gateway project utilizes existing rights of way, construction of the elements of the plan internal to Southwood can begin as soon as funds are available. Gateway improvements, in short, are not dependent on a particular timeline or redevelopment plan in order to move forward.

VI. Biscuit Run:

Biscuit Run State Park is an 1,195 acre public open space within Albemarle County's southern development areas and in close proximity to the City of Charlottesville. The planned park will provide popular close-to-home trail access for area residents wishing to enjoy traditional family-oriented outdoor recreation activities and access to open space areas. However, one of the limitations of the master plan is that the DCR is planning only one formal entrance to the park, located to the east on Route 20 making it accessible to the majority of the region only via a long car ride. Nonetheless, DCR representatives enthusiastically expressed support for trail (non-vehicular) connections through Southwood and have been working closely with Habitat to plan jointly.

Multimodal elements of the Gateway would likely include daily parking areas for horse trailers and an enhanced network of bike and pedestrian connections through the Southwood Trailer Park. These connections would then tie in to Route 20, U.S. Bicycle route 76, Mill Creek and the proposed Heritage Trail to Scottsville and the James River.

In short, the Gateway plan would significantly enhance multimodal transportation elements from Scottsville, northward through the Biscuit Run State Park, Southwood center, the Granger property to the City of Charlottesville and points north and west.

