

CITY OF CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA  
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA



Agenda Date:	July 19, 2021
Action Required:	Resolution of support for TAP grant application
Presenter:	Chris Gensic, Dept. of Parks and Recreation Amanda Poncy, Dept. of Public Works
Staff Contacts:	Chris Gensic, Park and Trails Planner Amanda Poncy, Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator
Title:	<b>Resolution of Support for TAP Grant Applications for: Meadow Creek Valley Trail bridge, and Safe Routes to School Program and Coordinator - \$875,000</b>

**Background:**

**Meadow Creek Valley Trail Bridge:** The City of Charlottesville, through the Parks and Recreation Department, is applying for Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) grant funding through the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) in the amount of \$675,000, for design and construction of a stone dust surfaced shared use path system and bike/pedestrian bridge across Meadow Creek near the Virginia Institute for Autism on Greenbrier drive as part of the approved Meadow Creek Valley park and trail plan.

**Safe Routes to School Program and Coordinator:** The City of Charlottesville is also applying for TAP grant funding in the amount of \$200,000, to continue the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Programming in Charlottesville City Schools for school years 2022-2024. The SRTS grant request will allow the City to continue to fund a full-time Safe Routes to School Coordinator and the supplies needed to implement the recommendations included in the Program Plan.

**Discussion:**

**Meadow Creek Valley Trail Bridge:** Charlottesville Parks and Recreation is constructing the Meadow Creek Valley trail system to provide safe and convenient transportation and recreation options for bicyclists and pedestrians from the Greenbrier Park to Michie Drive. In the late 1990's, the Rivanna trail foundation constructed a timber bridge with a staircase at this location which was severely damaged by storms and finally removed as part of the Meadow Creek Restoration project. After acquiring new parkland in this area and rebuilding Meadow Creek, we are ready to replace this bridge with a new design that will accommodate all users, provide much needed access to the developing multi use trail along Meadow Creek, and last much longer than the previous RTF bridge.

This stone dust ADA accessible shared use path is part of the publically developed and adopted Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan for the City as well as the Meadow Creek Valley Master Plan. This is the second grant request for this project to provide the funding needed to construct the entire trail system. The grant application is due October 1, 2021. A design firm is currently working to complete the plans and cost estimate in time for the final grant application deadline.

**Safe Routes to School Program and Coordinator:** The City of Charlottesville has provided Safe Routes to School programming for the last five years with the support of the VDOT Safe Routes to School Non-Infrastructure grant. In the spring of 2021, VDOT announced that future grant awards would be provided by Transportation Alternatives Program.

Since the program started in 2016, there has been an observed increase in walk/bike travel to/from school from an average of 7%, to an average of 14% (for K-8 students city wide). Data is based on travel tallies taken annually in schools. In addition, Bicycle and Pedestrian education is taught in every public school serving grades K-8. There is an established free helmet program for city school students and there are fleets of 25 bikes at 6 city schools.

The following will items will continue to be emphasized as part of the program:

- Institute bike riding, repair, and safety curriculum
- Develop a division-wide SRTS website social media presence
- Regularly host walk- and bike-to-school events
- Conduct Neighborhood Bike Repair Days
- Expand the bike helmet give-away program
- Administer student travel tallies
- Monitor school transportation data and keep records of participation in workshops, biking and walking trains, bike rodeos, afterschool clubs, and other events

### **Alignment with City Council's Vision and Strategic Plan:**

Both of these projects will support City Council's "Green City" vision as well as the "Connected Community" vision, and aligns with Goals 1 and 3 of the Strategic Plan, to be an inclusive, self sufficient community and a healthy and safe city.

The initiatives further implement recommendations within the Comprehensive Plan (2013), Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan (2015) and supports the City's Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL) Resolution.

### **Community Engagement:**

**Meadow Creek Valley Trail Bridge:** Charlottesville Parks and Recreation provided multiple opportunities for the public to provide input into the planning process for the Meadow Creek Valley. 6 separate public meetings were held during the planning process, beginning in September of 2012. These meetings included a general informational overview and process review meeting, a formal public hearing in front of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, and a public hearing in front of City Council in June of 2013.

**Safe Routes to School Program and Coordinator:** Further, city staff from Neighborhood Development Services worked with staff from the Thomas Jefferson Health District and

Charlottesville City Schools (Physical Education and Pupil Transportation) to create a Safe Routes to School Task Force in 2016 that was responsible for outlining elements of a city-wide Safe Routes to School Activities and Programs Plan (APP). The task force included representatives from city schools, community organizations, multiple city departments (NDS, Public Works, Parks and Recreation), as well as health and enforcement disciplines. The APP was developed by the task force with input from parents (via Parent Survey) and further discussed/refined at public meeting in February 2016. The Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee provided feedback on the updates every year since. This year a public meeting was held on February 24, 2021, to gather community feedback.

Both projects implement recommendations included in the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan (adopted 2015), which included significant public involvement.

### **Budgetary Impact:**

There is no budgetary impact at this time, as this resolution is just Council approval for the City to apply for these grants. Should either or both of these grants be awarded, Council may be requested to approve a project administration agreement with the Virginia Department of Transportation for each project, and to appropriate any grant funds received for expenditure within the respective projects (along with any local-match funds).

**Meadow Creek Valley Trail Bridge:** For the Meadow Creek Valley Trail project, a local match of \$135,000 would need to be provided. The City's FY22 Annual Budget Appropriation contains a lump sum amount within the Parks & Recreation Operating Budget for Parkland and Trail Acquisition and Development (PTAD). If the City is successful in obtaining this grant, then the amount required for the local match could be drawn from the PTAD, and Council would need to appropriate grant funding for expenditure within the project. Albemarle County may contribute additional match funds to this Project, but exact amounts have not been confirmed at this time. Eventually, a total budget will need to be established specifically for this Project.

**Safe Routes to School Program and Coordinator:** The Safe Routes to School grant requires a 20% match (cash or in-kind donations are acceptable). The nature of this Project is operational, and any grant funding received would be appropriated by City Council to the Department of Public Works (DPW) Engineering Department FY 2022 operating budget (likewise, the 20% match would be drawn from amounts included within the City's FY22 Annual Budget Appropriation for the DPW Engineering Operating Budget.

### **Recommendation:**

Staff recommends approval of the resolution in support of the grant application.

### **Alternatives:**

**Meadow Creek Valley Trail Bridge:** If grants funds are not sought, this project would need to be funded entirely with local funds.

**Safe Routes to School Program and Coordinator:** If the full grant amount is not awarded, the position could be funded part-time. Alternately, Safe Routes to School programming could potentially continue in an ad-hoc fashion with assistance from local P.E. teachers, community partners and parent volunteers.

**Attachments:**

Resolution, Map

**RESOLUTION**  
**AUTHORIZING APPLICATION FOR TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES**  
**FUNDING FOR A MEADOW CREEK VALLEY TRAIL BRIDGE AND FOR THE SAFE**  
**ROUTES TO SCHOOL PROGRAM AND COORDINATOR**

**WHEREAS**, in connection with a grant application, the Commonwealth of Virginia Transportation Board requires City Council to adopt a resolution requesting the Virginia Department of Transportation to establish a Transportation Alternatives project in the City of Charlottesville.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA, THAT** the Commonwealth Transportation Board is hereby requested to establish a Transportation Alternatives Project for the improvement of Meadow Creek Valley Trail Bridge within the City of Charlottesville, and also to establish a Transportation Alternatives Project to continue the Safe Routes to School Program within the City of Charlottesville; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the City of Charlottesville hereby agrees to provide a minimum twenty percent (20%) local matching contribution for each project; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the City of Charlottesville hereby agrees to enter into a project administration agreement with the Virginia Department of Transportation, to provide the necessary oversight to ensure that each Project is developed in accordance with all state and federal requirements for design, right of way acquisition, and construction of a federally funded transportation project, and other federal and state requirements; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the City of Charlottesville will be responsible for maintenance and operating costs of any facility constructed with Transportation Alternatives Program funds, unless other arrangements have been made with the Commonwealth Transportation Board/ Virginia Department of Transportation; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that if the City of Charlottesville subsequently elects to cancel either of these projects prior to completion, the City of Charlottesville hereby agrees to reimburse the Virginia Department of Transportation for the total amount of costs expended by the Department through the date the Department is notified of such cancellation; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT** the City of Charlottesville also acknowledges and agrees that it will be required to repay any funds previously reimbursed from Transportation Alternatives Funding that may later be deemed ineligible by the Federal Highway Administration ineligible for funding.

Adopted this \_\_\_\_\_ day of July, 2021  
Charlottesville, Virginia

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Attest