Section 10: NEXT STEPS

This study represents a regional effort to identify and recommend a preferred corridor and to inform development of future active transportation projects in the Richmond region. While there is no dedicated funding set aside for the design and construction of segments along the preferred corridor, the study analysis and recommendations can be used to guide future funding coordination and investments. The next steps of the study would include applicant selection of individual projects along the preferred corridor to apply for funding. Following funding allocation, compliance with NEPA and related environmental statutes and regulations would require analyses of the preferred corridor or individual project segments along the preferred corridor. The environmental processes would apply and build upon the environmental work, public input, and STAG and EAWG outreach conducted during this study. Following the completion of separate environmental reviews, detailed design would be developed and permitting efforts, if necessary, would take place. Another potential next step in the segments' development could include the formation of a foundation to support project development for the preferred corridor or individual project segments.

This section also includes supplemental information obtained during the study process feedback and potential considerations for utilization as projects proceed to implementation, including descriptions of various funding sources, information on logical termini and independent utility to meet NEPA criteria and funding requirements, review of potential future spur connections to the preferred corridor, and typical section width and safety measure considerations.

Forming a Foundation

There is potential for the ATP Trail Study to prompt the development of a foundation for the preferred corridor, which could serve as a nonpartisan advocacy partner. This potential partnership could provide trail expertise, assist in raising public awareness of the trail, and seek funding for trail segment development and construction, and assist with aspects of future trail maintenance.

Funding

While there is no dedicated funding source for design and construction, this study serves as a resource for localities as they pursue state, federal, and non-traditional funding sources for individual trail segments. The associated localities are encouraged to use portions of this study in their own planning efforts, whether in comprehensive plan updates, amendments, or in future funding applications.

The results of the study are intended to help establish trail priorities and minimize unforeseen constraints as projects proceed to implementation. Implementation of individual project segments along the preferred corridor could occur after the allocation of appropriate potential future project application and funding and following the completion of separate environmental reviews and development of detailed design, as necessary.

Currently, no funding has been identified for the preferred corridor identified in the ATP Trail Study. The preferred corridor conceptual design packages, described in **Section 9: Preferred Corridor Conceptual Design**, were developed to inform future applications for funding for improvement projects along the preferred corridor. Potential funding sources are SMART SCALE, the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP), Surface Transportation Program (STP) (State or Regional STP), Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) and other funding mechanisms as determined by the applicable entity applying for funding. **Appendix C: Preferred Corridor Conceptual Design** contains conceptual design information to inform potential funding applications and the methodology used during development of the conceptual design packages.

Example packages from **Appendix C: Preferred Corridor Conceptual Design** were developed utilizing SMART SCALE criteria due to the high level of detail necessary for SMART SCALE applications compared to other funding programs. Although the conceptual design packages were developed at a SMART SCALE application level, other funding mechanisms could be utilized. Following is a brief description of potential programs that could be utilized but are not limited to for funding, including SMART SCALE:

- The **SMART SCALE**[17] program is a competitive application process that scores transportation projects based on an objective, outcome-based process. This process evaluates each project's merits using the following key factors: improvements to safety, congestion reduction, accessibility, land use, economic development, and the environment. Active transportation improvements, including bicycle and pedestrian projects, are eligible for SMART SCALE funding. There were 133 projects selected for SMART SCALE funding in Round 3 for FY 2020. A total funding amount of $869 million was allocated through SMART SCALE during this cycle.
- The **Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Program (TAP)**[18] is intended to fund projects that will increase non-motorized transportation opportunities, including bicycle and pedestrian trails, and enhance the public's traveling experience. The program allows a maximum of 80 percent federal reimbursement for eligible project expenditures and requires a minimum 20 percent local match contribution.
- The **Highway Safety Improvement Program's (HSIP) Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Program (BPSP)**[19] provides funding for implementing low-cost, highly effective bicycle and pedestrian safety projects in Virginia that address documented, non-motorized safety concerns on any public road, public surface transportation facility, or publicly owned bicycle or pedestrian path or trail. Program funds are allocated by evaluating each project application on a case-by-case basis and does not require a local match. The evaluation of each project looks at how the proposal addresses non-motorized safety issues such as a reduction in bicycle and pedestrian crashes.

[17] SMART SCALE funding information can be found here: http://www.smartscale.org/faqs/default.asp
[18] TAP funding information can be found here: http://www.virginiadot.org/business/prenhancegrants.asp
[19] HSIP and BPSP funding information can be found here: http://www.virginiadot.org/business/ted_app_pro.asp

- The **Revenue Sharing Program**[20] provides additional funding for use by a locality to construct or improve the transportation network within said locality. There are statutory limitations on the amount of state funds authorized per locality. Per the *Revenue Sharing Program Guidelines* (2018), "a locality may apply for a maximum of $5 million in matching allocations per fiscal year ($10 million per biennial cycle) and the maximum lifetime matching allocation per project is limited to $10 million in matching allocations. This limitation includes any allocations transferred to the project. Up to $2.5 million of these requested funds may be specified for maintenance projects" (FHWA, 2019). The program requires a 50 percent local match (50 percent state). Pedestrian and bicycle improvement projects are eligible under the Revenue Sharing Program.

- The **Surface Transportation Program (STP)**[21] is a funding source that provides funds to States and localities. The funding can be used for "…projects to preserve and improve the conditions and performance on any Federal-aid highway, bridge and tunnel projects on any public road, pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, and transit capital projects, including intercity bus terminals" (FHWA, 2019). **Regional Surface Transportation Program (RSTP)** is a sub-allocation of the STP and is allocated through MPOs.

- The **Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program**[22] offers a funding source to state and local governments that meet CMAQ funding requirements. These funds can be used for transportation projects and programs to help meet the requirements of the Clean Air Act. Funding is allocated by MPOs and is available to help reduce congestion and improve air quality for areas that do not meet the National Ambient Air Quality Standards for ozone, carbon monoxide, or particulate matter (nonattainment areas) and for former nonattainment areas that are now in compliance (maintenance areas).

Logical Termini and Independent Utility

The study limits and resulting preferred corridor termini of the ATP Trail Study extend from Carter Park in the Town of Ashland to Patton Park in the City of Petersburg. These limits provide direct connectivity to the Ashland Trolley Line Trail and the Lower Appomattox River Trail, respectively, which are existing active transportation facilities. These facilities serve as logical end points for similar transportation improvements to enhance the active transportation network in the Richmond region.

Although these study limits represent logical termini for the identification of a preferred corridor through the Richmond region, they are not intended to preclude the implementation of other foreseeable projects, such as a connection to historic downtown Petersburg; currently under development and design by the City of Petersburg, in conjunction with FOLAR.

[20] Revenue Sharing Program funding information can be found here: http://www.virginiadot.org/business/local-assistance-access-programs.asp
[21] STP funding information can be found here: https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/map21/factsheets/stp.cfm
[22] CMAQ program funding information can be found here: https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/fastact/factsheets/cmaqfs.cfm

Virginia Capital Trail (Richmond)

Upon identification of individual project segments along the preferred corridor, logical termini and segment independent utility must be considered according to FHWA regulations wherein 23 CFR 771.111(f) outlines logical termini and independent utility are to be used to frame a highway project[23]. In order for a project to have independent utility, it must be "usable … even if no additional transportation improvements in the area are made" (FHWA, 1993). Logical termini are defined as "rational end points for a transportation improvement" (FHWA, 1993). Additionally, the VDOT Local Assistance Division TAP Program Guide outlines the importance of establishing "logical" termini to create "independent" utility or a usable facility even if a project does not continue or expand into future phases (VDOT, 2017). According to the VDOT Local Assistance Division TAP Program Guide, typical "logical" termini for pedestrian and bicycle facilities can be represented by, but are not limited to:

- A roadway intersection
- Connection with another facility (e.g., sidewalks, bicycle lanes, or shared use path)
- Delivery to a destination (e.g., entrance to a park, recreational facility, school, or community facility)

Potential Future Spur Connections

During the development and evaluation of the preliminary corridor options, the importance of connections to other destinations of interest and active transportation facilities was considered Specific spur connections were not evaluated in detail or included as part of any segments along the preferred corridor. However, this study does not preclude these potential spur connections from being implemented as part of a separate study or project in the future.

[23] According to 23 CFR 652.7(b), the implementation of pedestrian and bicycle accommodations may be authorized for Federal-aid participation as either incidental features of highways or as independent projects.

Throughout the study, suggested connections to the following locations were discussed by STAG members:

- Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens (Henrico County)
- Boulevard to Appamatuck Park trail (City of Colonial Heights)
- Richmond Main Street Amtrak Station (Department of Rail and Public Transportation)
- Staples Mill Road Amtrak Station (Department of Rail and Public Transportation)
- Ettrick Amtrak Station (Department of Rail and Public Transportation)
- Appomattox River Trail (FOLAR/City of Petersburg)
- Old Town Petersburg (FOLAR/City of Petersburg)
- East/West Appomattox River Trail (FOLAR/City of Petersburg)

Additionally, to provide consistency with active transportation planning in the Richmond region, a majority of STAG members suggested a connection to the Virginia Capital Trail. For example, from Brown's Island where the preferred corridor connects via Tredegar Street prior to crossing the T. Tyler Potterfield Bridge, an approximately 1.0-mile connection could utilize the trails along Brown's Island to the Canal Walk to reach the floodwall entrance to the Virginia Capital Trail adjacent to Dock Street.

Maintenance and Feel

Throughout the study, stakeholders and the public noted the importance of trail maintenance and aesthetic considerations, including trail continuity, feel and signage. Future trail maintenance will be determined based on the funding source and location of the trail segment of the preferred corridor; however, the individual project segments will be developed to VDOT design standards in the event that VDOT accept responsibility for trail operations and maintenance after construction.

In addition to trail maintenance, the importance of other trail development components, including wayfinding signage and other aesthetic considerations, have been discussed and would be included during individual project development. Specific branding, signage, trail lighting, landscaping, and amenity locations were not evaluated in detail, included in preliminary or conceptual design cost estimates or included in any prioritized segments identified as part of this study. However, the development of branding, signage, landscape plans, bathroom locations, trailheads, trail lighting, and other amenity details are recommended to be included during funding applications or final design of segments along the preferred corridor. Trail lighting was not evaluated as part of this study, however, STAG members noted desire for trail lighting throughout the study process; this amenity should be considered by funding applicants during the funding application process.

Although this study documentation is referred to as the Ashland to Petersburg Trail Study, this naming convention has not been selected as an official trail title or used officially in other associated documentation. Depending on the location and number of individual project segments that are identified along the preferred corridor, as well as the schedule for funding and implementation, the naming conventions for the corridor or individual project segments will be developed at a later time.

Typical Section Width

For the purposes of the ATP Trail Study, a 10-foot shared use path has been assumed. VDOT's RDM requires a 10-foot minimum paved width of a two-directional shared use path with a minimum three-foot clearance maintained on either side of the path to signs, trees, and other lateral obstructions (VDOT, 2019). The VDOT RDM also states that it may be necessary to increase the width of a shared use path to 11 feet, or even 14 feet, due to substantial use by people bicycling, running, walking and using other active transportation methods. The conceptual design packages located in **Appendix C: Preferred Corridor Conceptual Design** include typical sections with varying shared use path widths. The ultimate shared use path trail width and specific configurations of the trail facility within the prioritized segments along the preferred corridor will be determined during final design of each individual project that moves forward.

Safety Measure Considerations

Patton Park (Petersburg)

The development of the trail corridor options and recommended preferred corridor have been informed by existing and future active transportation plans, as well as the planning efforts related to railroads and railroad crossings. All railroad crossings of the recommended preferred corridor have been accounted for in the preliminary cost estimate and were assumed to meet applicable regulations and requirements. Railroad crossings were further evaluated in the conceptual design packages, as necessary. Additionally, as part of the development of project information packages for prioritized segments along the preferred corridor, the ATP Trail Study included recommendations to address safety at uncontrolled roadway crossings, including rectangular rapid flashing beacons and pedestrian hybrid beacon installations. Crossing features such as curb extensions, medians and pedestrian refuges, raised crosswalks, flashing signals, signage, and other safety measures will be evaluated as part of final design. Detailed design of crossing treatments and safety measures will be incorporated as segments are selected for funding and further designed during project development.

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