

Charlottesville lining up funding for bike, pedestrian projects  
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Charlottesville's Department of Neighborhood Services has spent much of the last two years working on a series of transportation-related planning initiatives. And as the plans are finalized, the city is lining up funding for implementation.

State transportation grants are expected to help fund intersection improvements, new sidewalks and safer walking routes to schools for students.

"The [bike and pedestrian master] plan's vision is to make walking and biking practical, convenient, safe and a pleasant way to travel to destinations both within and adjacent to the city," said Amanda Poncy, the city's bicycle and pedestrian coordinator.

The bike and pedestrian master plan, adopted by the City Council at its meeting last week, comes while staff also is collecting input on the Streets That Work initiative authorized by the council in February 2014.

Among other things, the Streets That Work plan is intended to ensure that new and redeveloped roadways are built not just for motor vehicles, but with pedestrians and cyclists in mind, too.

"We're really identifying the [bike and pedestrian] network here in this effort and really thinking about the 'how' in the Streets That Work plan," Poncy said.

Streets That Work will recommend standards for how wide new sidewalks should be, what kinds of street trees are suitable and other ways to make streets more accessible to bikes and pedestrians.

The streets plan is not expected to be adopted by the council until April at the earliest, but city officials are seeking funding from multiple sources to pay for bike and pedestrian projects called for in both plans.

The council also took action on three transportation-related funding items last week.

First, the city received a nearly \$200,000 “safe routes to school” grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation. The city will put up \$50,000 in matching funds for the grant from a fund set aside to make sidewalks compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

That money will be used to rebuild the intersection of Harris Road, Camellia Drive and Jefferson Park Avenue Extended. The project also will help build an off-road trail along Moores Creek. Both are intended to help students walk to Jackson-Via Elementary School.

The council also agreed to ask for \$295,000 in sidewalk and bike funding through the Virginia Department of Transportation’s revenue-sharing program. If awarded, the city would match funding from its capital improvement program.

Finally, the council agreed to identify three streetscape projects as its top priorities for funding from VDOT.

The Virginia General Assembly passed a law, known as HB2, that requires transportation projects to comply with a series of state priorities before funding will be allocated.

“Submitted projects are reviewed by the state to determine if they qualify to be scored, and those that are scored will be based on a statewide system of scoring,” said Missy Creasy, the city’s planning manager.

Localities in the Culpeper District, which includes Charlottesville, will compete for about \$30 million in funding for projects intended to serve communities. There is another pool of money for projects that enhance the state network of roads, such as the replacement of the Belmont Bridge.

“Ultimately, the Commonwealth Transportation Board makes the determinations but we have these two different routes for projects,” Creasy said.

The three local projects the city will submit for VDOT’s consideration are a streetscape for East High Street, a streetscape for Fontaine Avenue and improvements to Emmet Street.

The East High Street project would span from Seventh and Market streets to the CFA Institute in the former Martha Jefferson Hospital building.

“That plan would include widening the sidewalks, landscaping, intersection improvements for ADA and pedestrian access, bike lanes, stormwater quality features, improved wayfinding upgrades and better access to our mass transit,” said Tony Edwards, the city’s development services manager.

The Fontaine Avenue project also would widen sidewalks, add turn lanes in certain locations, create landscaped medians and add bike lanes. The project has been dormant for many years but has been revived as part of the new bike and pedestrian master plan.

The Emmet project would extend from University Avenue to Arlington Boulevard and would include a

shared-use path, bus shelters, landscaping and enhanced pedestrian crossings.

"I especially like the project on Emmett Street because they are improvements that I have been arguing for for years," said Stephen Bach, a cyclist who was the lone member of the public to speak at the public hearing on the city's priorities.

While they are mentioned in the bike and pedestrian plan, the three priorities were not selected through a public process because VDOT needed an answer from the city by Sept. 30.

"I think in the future, if this [HB2] process does continue, we'll know in advance and we'll be able to build in some community engagement," said City Manager Maurice Jones.

An open house on the Streets That Work initiative will be held at 7 p.m. Tuesday at CitySpace.