

MPO approves bike trail plan, hears details of sustainability awards  
written by Newspack Team | November 24, 2010



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Charlottesville Tomorrow

Wednesday, November 24, 2010

The

MPO Policy Board

has been briefed on how the

Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission

will use a \$990,000 “sustainable communities” grant awarded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

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Stephen Williams, the TJPDC’s executive director, said the money will be used to implement the Sustainability Accords which were developed by the Thomas Jefferson Sustainability Council and signed by regional governments in 1998.

“The alternative to a sustainable future is an unsustainable one in which both nature and community are at risk,” reads the document’s preamble. The accords call for action on 68 individual objectives ranging from encouraging compact land use to reducing single occupancy vehicles.



Download narrative used by TJPDC's grant application

The grant will allow the TJPDC to implement and measure progress on some of those objectives.

"One of the products [will be] a behavior change plan that would focus on what needed to be done to bring about those changes," Williams said. This will involve further development of transportation demand management plans and support for the

Local Energy Alliance Program

(LEAP).

Other products will include benchmarks to gauge performance on achieving the objectives, the development of a cross-jurisdictional land-use map, the integration of sustainability principles into city and county comprehensive plans, and recommendations for code changes that might be necessary to implement best management practices.

"We expect this sustainable communities grant will allow us to move some very important work forward," Williams said. Much of that work will be done as both communities begin revision of their comprehensive plans.

The grant will allow the TJPDC to hire a project manager for two and a half years to shepherd the project, as well as two more planners.

"We did not want to create something that was going to create extra work for [city and county] staff after the grant was over," Williams said.

Neil Williamson of the

Free Enterprise Forum

expressed concern about the grant in a blog post last week, likening the grant to a "planner employment plan."

"Rather than "removing barriers" to sustainable development, we have seen such efforts in the past become mandates for specific design criteria," Williamson wrote. "The government goes too far when it dictates design criteria, that's the market's job."

Williamson said he would prefer to see the money used directly on actual transportation and transit improvements as opposed to more planning.

MPO endorses Northtown Trail plan



Source: TJPDC

The MPO adopted a final plan for the creation of a 14.1 mile long bike commuter trail spanning from northern Albemarle County to Charlottesville's downtown mall.

The Northtown Trail

will be built in phases over many years as new transportation infrastructure is constructed.

"A good bit of this will be constructed with the

Meadowcreek Parkway

and the

Belvedere

development," said Albemarle Supervisor

Dennis Rooker

. "The real challenge is going to be getting across the [Rivanna] river."

That will depend on the building of a new bridge to allow for the extension of

Berkmar Drive

across the Rivanna River. Earlier this month, the

Albemarle Board of Supervisors opted against further consideration of a comprehensive plan amendment to bring land north of the river into the development area

. Developer Wendell Wood had offered to pay for a portion of the road and bridge's \$25 million cost, but that plan is now in doubt without the expansion.



Download final draft of Northtown plan

Also at Monday's meeting, the MPO endorsed an application for a VDOT transportation enhancement grant to help pay for a bike/pedestrian bridge to connect the eastern and western sides of McIntire Park. The project will cost about \$400,000, according to city trails planner Chris Gensic.

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