

Section 3: AGENCY/STAKEHOLDER COORDINATION AND PUBLIC INPUT

In addition to reviewing and incorporating recommendations from state, regional, and local transportation planning, the ATP Trail Study involved coordination with local, state, and federal government agencies, and interested stakeholders, as well as input from the public. Public outreach occurred following VDOT's *Public Involvement Manual* which was established in accordance with Federal Regulation 23 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 771.111(h) and 23 United States Code 128, Section 33.2-208 and has been endorsed by FHWA. Coordination took place with the following groups at different times during the study process:

- Stakeholder Technical Advisory Group (STAG)
- Environmental Agency Working Group (EAWG)
- Public

Figure 3-1 displays the multiple levels of coordination among stakeholders throughout the study process; including where key feedback was received from the STAG and EAWG, and where public involvement took place.

Figure 3-1. Study Process



STAKEHOLDER TECHNICAL ADVISORY GROUP

As part of the collaborative effort of the ATP Trail Study, in early 2019, VDOT identified an initial number of localities, metropolitan planning organizations, planning district commissions, and interested stakeholders to be included in a STAG throughout the duration of the study. The established STAG included government agencies, localities and special interest groups that provided key input and guidance in the development of the study and included:



Chesterfield County



City of Colonial Heights



City of Petersburg



City of Richmond



Hanover County



Henrico County



Town of Ashland



Crater Planning District Commission



Department of Conservation and Recreation



Department of Rail and Public Transportation



Dominion Energy



Friends of the Lower Appomattox River (FOLAR)



Richmond Regional Planning District Commission (PlanRVA)



Sports Backers



Virginia Capital Trail Foundation (VCTF)

The goal of the STAG was to provide input in the development of the preliminary trail corridor options and identification and feedback on a preferred trail corridor option that meets local and regional needs. STAG meetings were held over the course of the study on the following dates:

- February 15th, 2019 – Hanover County
- February 15th, 2019 – Town of Ashland
- February 20th, 2019 – City of Colonial Heights
- February 25th, 2019 – Chesterfield County
- February 27th, 2019 – Henrico County
- March 1st, 2019 – Crater Planning District Commission
- March 5th, 2019 – Richmond Regional Planning District Commission (PlanRVA)
- March 12th, 2019 – City of Richmond
- March 15th, 2019 - Sports Backers
- March 20th, 2019 – City of Petersburg
- April 24th, 2019 – All STAG Members
- July 18th, 2019 - Richmond Regional Planning District Commission (PlanRVA)
- July 29th, 2019 – All STAG Members
- August 23rd, 2019 – City of Richmond

Table 3-1 provides an outline of key input and feedback on the study progression from the STAG.

Table 3-1. Stakeholder Technical Advisory Group Key Input

Study Process	Study Timeframe	Key Input
Data Collection and Existing Conditions Inventory	February – April 2019	Meeting with individual localities and stakeholders (February/March)
Development of Corridor Options	March – June 2019	Input received on Study Needs and preliminary trail corridor options during April STAG Meeting
Identification of Recommended Preferred Corridor Option	June – November 2019	Opportunity to provide suggested modifications and input on the identification of priority segments along recommended preferred corridor during the July STAG Meeting

In February and March 2019, VDOT conducted individual meetings with each of the localities, planning district commissions, and regional transportation planning organizations within the STAG to formally introduce the ATP Trail Study and outline the study process and stakeholder involvement process. The meetings were held to review study objectives; establish a point of contact; provide an overview of the study coordination process and anticipated schedule; review existing data; seek input on known issues; and review preliminary study needs.

During and following the April 2019 STAG meeting, feedback was solicited on the study needs and on the preliminary trail corridor options, including primary destinations of interest and/or suggested modifications for consideration to the preliminary trail corridor options. The meeting reviewed the feedback from the public information meeting in March 2019 and subsequent public comments which contributed to the development of the preliminary corridor options (see **Appendix B: Public Comment Summary**).

The STAG meeting in July 2019 reviewed the study progress since the previous STAG meeting, overviewed the preliminary and detailed evaluation of the multi-use trail corridor options and the evaluation results, and offered the opportunity to provide suggested modifications and input on the recommended preferred corridor. Coordination with other study participants also took place at key points throughout the study process, including a meeting with Virginia State University on September 6th, 2019. Specific feedback from the STAG is documented in **Section 7: Detailed Evaluation** and **Section 8: Preferred Corridor**.

ENVIRONMENTAL AGENCY WORKING GROUP

Additionally, VDOT coordinated with federal and state government agencies with jurisdiction or oversight as well as those that have regulatory responsibilities for future project implementation to be included in an Environmental Agency Working Group (EAWG) for the study, including:



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Highway
Administration**

**U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration**



**US Army Corps
of Engineers®**

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers



**Virginia Department of Environmental
Quality**

Similar to the *National Environmental Policy Act and Clean Water Act (Section 404) Merged Process for Highway Projects in Virginia*, the ATP Trail Study followed a “merged-like” process to allow for review, revisions and ultimately agreement on resource evaluation criteria and methodologies⁶. The merged-like process facilitates an environmental review that helps to develop a project that appears to be permissible if and when the project advances to design. The goal of the involvement and coordination with the EAWG during the study process was to achieve agreement on a trail corridor that appears to be permissible⁷.

⁶ The process is intended to facilitate an environmental review process and development of documentation that comply with the requirements of NEPA and provide sufficient information to support FHWA approval or Federal regulatory decision-making, including permits issued by other Federal agencies.

⁷ No permits were secured as part of the planning study.

EAWG meetings or teleconferences were held over the course of the study on the following dates:

- February 13th, 2019
- March 13th, 2019
- April 10th, 2019
- May 8th, 2019
- June 12th, 2019
- July 26th, 2019
- August 14th, 2019
- September 11th, 2019
- October 9th, 2019
- November 13th, 2019

Table 3-2 provides an outline of key input on the study progression from the EAWG during the study process.

Table 3-2. Environmental Agency Working Group Key Input

Study Process	Study Timeframe	Key Input	Agreement Date
Documentation of Needs	March – May 2019	Agreement on Study Purpose	April 10 th , 2019
Evaluation of Corridor Options	April – June 2019	Agreement on Multi-Use Trail Corridor Preliminary Evaluation Approach	May 22 nd , 2019
		Agreement on Options Retained for Detailed Evaluation	June 26 th , 2019
Identification of Recommended Preferred Corridor Option	June – November 2019	Agreement on VDOT's Recommended Preferred Corridor Option	July 31 st , 2019

The EAWG provided agreement in several key areas during the development of the study: the study purpose, the multi-use trail corridor preliminary evaluation approach, and the corridor options retained for detailed evaluation. At the July 31st, 2019 EAWG meeting, the group agreed with VDOT's recommended preferred corridor, affirming that the preferred corridor preliminarily represents the least impactful option to environmental resources, with consideration given to cost and feasibility of implementation. This step in the study facilitated further evaluation of the preferred corridor and creation of the conceptual trail design⁸.

⁸ The conceptual design sketches for the preferred corridor, typical sections, associated preliminary engineering cost estimates and schedules are included in **Appendix C: Preferred Corridor Conceptual Design**.

PUBLIC INPUT

March 26th, 2019 Public Information Meeting

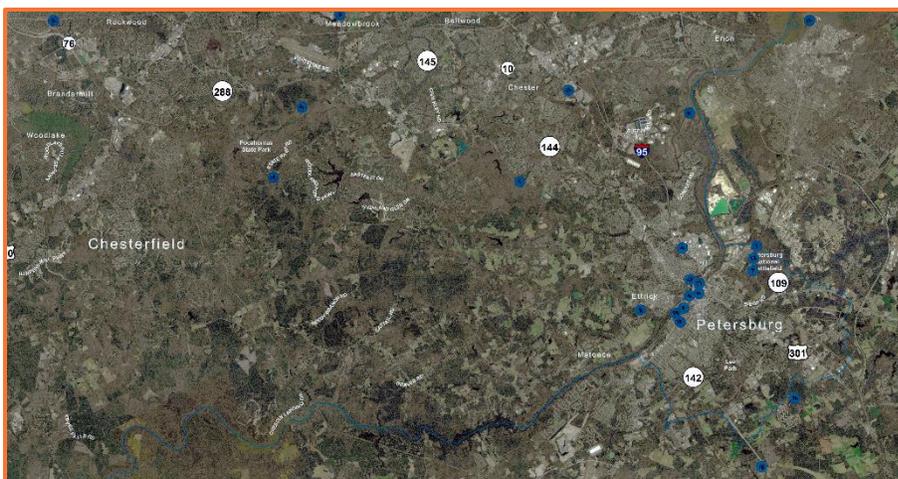
The purpose of the March 2019 public information meeting was to introduce the study and offer an opportunity for the public to provide input to VDOT on active transportation (walking or jogging, biking, and human-powered transportation) needs in the study area. The public was invited to provide comments on where they would like to walk or bicycle for work or recreation, and to identify important criteria to consider the development and evaluation of potential multi-use trail corridors during the study.



Materials available for review at the public information meeting included meeting boards, a brochure and accompanying survey and an interactive mapping station.

The public information meeting boards introduced the study and reviewed the following:

- Study process,
- Study purpose (interactive board station where stickers were placed on a preferred study need element box),
- Potential types of trails that could be utilized for the study,
- Interactive mapping station directions and goals (stickers were placed on mapping to identify a destination point, desired connection or potential constraint in the study area),
- Corridor evaluation considerations used to identify the preferred corridor, and
- Information for the public to continue to stay involved.



During the open house style meeting, VDOT representatives were available at the interactive mapping station where members of the public were able to discuss destinations of interest, potential constraints and barriers, and corridor locations to consider. Additional feedback was

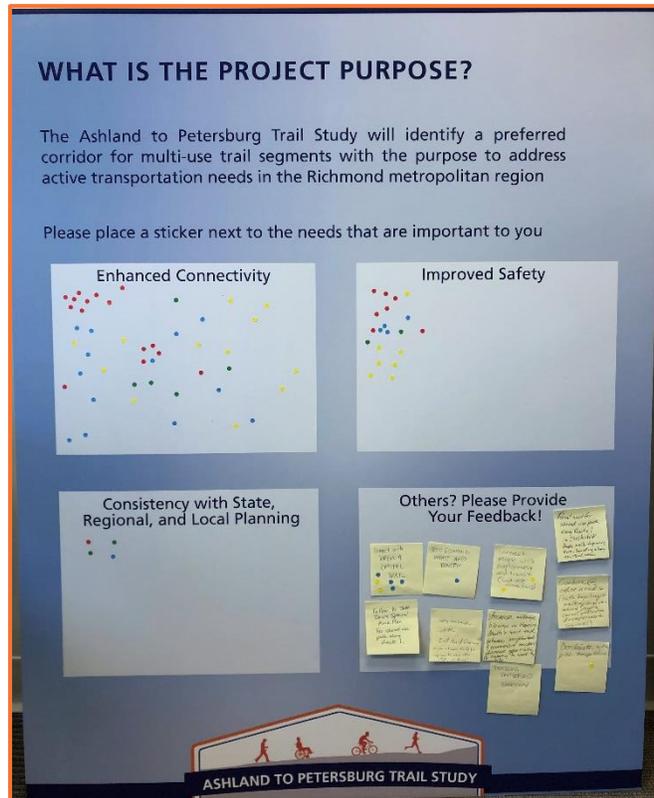
requested on the corridor evaluation considerations to be utilized during the development and resulting recommendation for the preferred corridor. Comments were accepted during the public meeting and by mail or e-mail during the comment period from March 11th to April 9th, 2019. A

survey and online interactive mapping tool was also available for the public to provide feedback. The public information meeting, survey, and online interactive mapping tool was advertised and posted to the project website and VDOT’s social media accounts on Facebook and Twitter. Additionally, meeting notifications were included in a press release and notices placed in local newspapers.

The virtual public information meeting was available online, prior to the date of the in-person public information meeting, where the public was guided visually and audibly through the meeting boards and directed to the online interactive mapping tool where comments and feedback were submitted.

One hundred and forty-one (141) members of the public attended the public information meeting. During the comment period, 1,055 mapping comments were received; 106 were received at the public meeting and 949 were received through the online interactive mapping tool. Survey responses exceeded 800; 53 responses were received at the public meeting and 778 were received online. The project purpose was informed by public feedback received during the March 2019 public meeting and comment period. Feedback from the public comments also identified the following as the top public destinations of interest:

1. Pocahontas State Park
2. Bryan Park
3. Virginia Capital Trail
4. James River
5. Crump Park
6. Stratton Park
7. Carter Park
8. Downtown Petersburg
9. Deep Run Park
10. Trolley Line Trail Historic Termination Point



Consistent with the feedback on destinations of interest including seven parks and two existing active transportation facilities, a majority of respondents indicated active transportation access to parks and recreation as very important (67%). Overall, results suggested that the public utilizes active transportation primarily for recreation or to access park facilities, is concerned about the safety of active transportation, and travels a range of distances on average active transportation trips; from less than five miles to 20 to 40 miles. For a more detailed summary of the public comments and feedback, see **Appendix B: Public Comment Summary**.

September 30th and October 1st, 2019 Public Information Meeting



From September 16 through October 11, 2019, VDOT conducted a public comment period on the preferred corridor for the ATP Trail Study. Public information meetings were held on September 30th and October 1st, 2019. The purpose of the public outreach was to provide an overview of the study process to date, present the findings from the development and evaluation of multi-use trail corridor options, present the preferred corridor and solicit feedback on the study findings and recommendations. Materials available for review at the public information meeting included meeting boards, a brochure and accompanying survey, and mapping of the preferred corridor. Comments were submitted at the public meetings and by mail or e-mail during the public comment period. A survey

and online interactive mapping tool was also available for the public to provide feedback on the preferred trail corridor. The public meetings, survey, and online interactive mapping tool were advertised and posted to the project website and VDOT's social media accounts on Facebook and Twitter. Additionally, meeting notifications were included in a press release and notices placed in local newspapers.

Attendance at both meetings totaled 200, with 70 attendees at the first meeting and 130 attendees at the second meeting. During the comment period, 284 mapping comments and 411 surveys were received. Specific online mapping comments focused on extending the trail termini, adding destinations, minor location modifications, and safety concerns. Survey results included 322 online survey responses and 89 public meeting surveys (22 responses from September 30th, 2019 meeting and 67 responses from October 1st, 2019 meeting). The preferred corridor was supported by public feedback received during the fall 2019 public meetings and comment period. Survey responses also indicated agreement that the preferred corridor would address the indicated need elements. Additional survey responses noted the importance of consistent design, signage, lighting and barriers to construction. In response to the survey question regarding which segments of the preferred trail corridor would be beneficial to advance earliest, responses favored initial construction in the Town of Ashland towards the City of Richmond. For a more detailed summary of the public comments, see **Appendix B: Public Comment Summary**.

