Danville MPO Completes Transportation Analysis Zone Updates

In June 2014, the Danville Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), staffed by the West Piedmont Planning District Commission (WPPDC), completed updates to the MPO’s transportation analysis zones (TAZ). TAZs are geographical divisions comprised of census blocks which are used in transportation modeling activities by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT). Each TAZ contains information pertaining to population, number of households, jobs, and vehicles.

Multiple steps were involved in the TAZ update process. First, MPO staff used data from the U.S. Census Bureau to establish the 2010 population and number of households for each TAZ, which were obtained from census blocks. Next, 2010 (or the most recent) job numbers were established. This was accomplished by obtaining the most recent job counts for as many employers as possible in the region using information obtained from the Danville Office of Economic Development and by calling employers, and then by averaging out employment among remaining non-residential addresses. Using VDOT’s recommendation, vehicle estimates (and projections) were obtained by multiplying the average number of vehicles per household, based on median household income within a given census tract, by the 2010 and projected number of households for each TAZ containing that estimated income.

To project the 2010 population to 2040, staff utilized historic population trends for each TAZ, but also took into account local dynamics such as future development potential based on various factors. The projected number of households was derived from the projected household population in 2040 (total population – group quarters population). The number of projected jobs in 2040 was established by adding proposed jobs to the 2010 (or most recent) job estimates for each TAZ. This was accomplished by researching news articles and the region’s Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), visiting websites such as the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP) site, and obtaining input from local planners and other officials.

Many local dynamics influenced how projected population and job growth was distributed across TAZs. These dynamics included the general build-out of land in each TAZ, development within the River District in downtown Danville, the development of industrial parks in the MPO including the planned Berry Hill Industrial Park in Pittsylvania County, and areas around the MPO in which proposed residential and/or commercial developments were likely to take place in the future.

In terms of population projections, the MPO was constrained by 2040 projections generated by the University of Virginia’s Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service. These constraints applied stringently to the City of Danville, but for the urbanized portion of Pittsylvania County, there was some flexibility, as this portion of the county is simply a fraction of the entire county’s area. The Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service projects the City of Danville’s population to increase from 43,072 in 2010 to 44,119 in 2040. The urbanized portion of the county was projected to increase slightly in population. Over the same time period, the MPO projected the number of jobs in the city to increase from 23,033 to 26,515, whereas in the urbanized portion of the county, employment was projected to increase from 4,958 to 9,975.
City of Martinsville Awarded Grant to Revitalize Northside Neighborhood

In June, it was announced that the City of Martinsville would be awarded a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), via the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), to revitalize the city’s Northside neighborhood. The grant amount will be $934,904, which will be matched by $233,000 from the City, for a total of $1,167,904 for the improvements.

The Northside project area consists of Warren Court, Dillard, Franklin, and Ruffin streets. The grant will fund improvements to 44 residential structures throughout the project area. Additional improvements will include street repaving and installation of curbs and gutters along Franklin Street, and storm drain and pipe installations on Franklin Street; driveway rehabilitations will take place on Dillard and Franklin streets. Other work will involve the City purchasing five vacant homes in the neighborhood, either refurbishing or rebuilding them, and selling them as low or moderate income housing.

The work is anticipated to begin in the fall and will require 30—36 months for completion. The grant is among 13 which DHCD awarded throughout the Commonwealth and funded by the federal government. In 2013, DHCD awarded the City a CDBG planning grant in the amount of $30,000, which was used in planning activities in advance of the project.

Danville Riverwalk Trail to Expand

In April, it was announced that the City of Danville was awarded a Fiscal Year 2015 MAP-21 Transportation Enhancement grant totaling $204,828 to extend the Danville Riverwalk trail by approximately one-half mile from Advance and Trade streets on the north side of the Dan River, west to Piedmont Drive and the Robertson Bridge. This trail extension will facilitate connections from the trail north of the Dan River to Ballou Park and to points south of the river, via the Robertson Bridge. It is expected that construction on this section of the trail will begin in 2016 and will be complete in either 2016 or 2017.

Another addition to the Danville Riverwalk Trail will comprise a section extending from the approximate area of the JTI Fountain downtown to the existing trail north of the Dan River. This extension will involve the conversion of one of the northbound lanes of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Bridge to a ten-foot wide sidewalk to accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians. Once across the bridge, the trail connection will turn east along Riverside Drive, and then turn south and connect with the existing Danville Riverwalk Trail.

A third section of the trail that is soon planned to get underway is that segment extending from approximately the 2200 block of Riverside Drive, crossing Sandy Creek, and extending to the area of Danville Plaza. The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) awarded the city a $108,487 grant to span the creek. The additions will result in extension of the Danville Riverwalk Trail from 8.5 miles to approximately 9.5 miles.

NCI Named Center of Excellence for Advanced Manufacturing

In May 2014, New College Institute (NCI) was named a Center of Excellence for Advanced Manufacturing by the Virginia Tobacco Commission. With this designation, NCI will train between 70 and 80 students annually in advanced manufacturing, industrial mechanics, and precision machining. Several specialized areas in which students will receive training include the downstream supply sectors for aerospace, heavy machinery, and the automotive industry, along with a $200,000 grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC). The Virginia Tobacco Commission also provided NCI with a $2 million grant, and this grant along with the Center of Excellence designation will furnish NCI with training equipment as well as operating support. The Southern Virginia Higher Education Center (SVHEC) in South Boston was also named a Center of Excellence by the Virginia Tobacco Commission.

In early June, staff who will occupy NCI’s new uptown Martinsville facility began moving into the new building. A dedication ceremony for this facility is planned to take place on September 12th.
Fayette Square Adds Public Space and Art to Uptown Martinsville

On Thursday July 17th, a grand opening ceremony was held for Fayette Square, uptown Martinsville’s newest pocket park. Fayette Square is situated near the intersection of Moss, Fayette, and Main streets and comprises numerous wooden planters, metal picnic tables, and a mural painted by New College Institute (NCI) interns. The mural depicts the June German Ball, an annual entertainment event that is a significant part of Martinsville’s heritage.

On Friday July 18th, the Fayette Square Festival took place, which was an event sponsored by the City of Martinsville, New College Institute, the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), and various community partners to introduce the facility to the public. The event included a bounce house for children, a band for live entertainment, local food available for purchase, and other activities.

Fayette Square was constructed on vacant land once occupied by businesses. The picnic tables and planters are moveable, so if the property is to be developed in the future, these items could be moved elsewhere in the city. The park was constructed using Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds totaling $42,174 and $46,606 in in-kind labor by city employees.

Martinsville’s pocket park initiative was launched to improve uptown’s quality of life and to eliminate blight. College Park, the city’s first pocket park, located further east along Fayette Street, was developed in the spring of 2014.

Area Schools Earn Virginia Index of Performance (VIP) Awards

In April, it was announced that several schools in the West Piedmont Planning District earned the 2014 Virginia Index of Performance (VIP) awards, which “recognizes schools and divisions that exceed minimum state and federal accountability standards and achieve excellence goals established by the governor and the board [of Education],” according to a Commonwealth of Virginia press release.

The District’s schools that earned recognition include Galileo Magnet High School in Danville, Tunstall High School in Pittsylvania County, and Rich Acres Elementary School in Henry County. The VIP program was established in 2007 by the Virginia Board of Education to bestow recognition on schools that greatly surpass accountability standards at the state and federal levels. Schools and school divisions are recognized by the percentage of students that perform at the advanced level of Standards of Learning evaluations as well as the degree of progress made toward Board of Education goals.

There are three VIP award categories: the Governor’s Award for Educational Excellence, the Board of Education Excellence Award, and the Board of Education Distinguished Achievement Award; the Governor’s Award is the highest possible award a school or division can earn. The three schools in the District were among 136 out of a total of more than 1,850 in Virginia—or 7 percent of schools—to earn this award. This year, five schools earned the 2014 Governor’s Award for Educational Excellence, 71 schools and one school division earned the 2014 Board of Education Excellence Award, and 136 schools and three school divisions earned the 2014 Board of Education Distinguished Achievement Award.
In 2009, Martinsville and Henry County, in conjunction with RADAR of Roanoke and the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT), initiated the Piedmont Area Regional Transit (PART) system to serve areas within the county and city.

The two charts at right, *July 2014 PART Ridership by Stop, City of Martinsville* and *July 2014 PART Ridership by Stop, Henry County*, provide a snapshot of the destinations of riders of Piedmont Area Rapid Transit (PART).

In the City of Martinsville, the destination with the greatest ridership was the City Municipal Building, serving 201 riders. This was followed by the Social Services Department, destination for 180 riders; the Virginia Museum of Natural History, destination for 168 riders; Patrick Henry Mall, destination for 163 riders; and Liberty Fair Mall, destination for 134 riders. The fact that the Social Services Department is a prominent destination reveals that PART is providing an important function in the city to those who may lack other means of mobility. Additionally, the two malls in the city are popular destinations for PART riders, indicating that the system is performing an important service by enabling riders to fulfill their shopping needs.

In Henry County, the most popular destination, by far, was Wal-Mart, destination for 283 riders, partially because it is a transfer point between the Henry County and Martinsville routes. The second most popular destination in Henry County, with 164 riders, was Lowes, nearby Wal-Mart. While PART only reported 79 riders having Patrick Henry Community College (PHCC) as their destination, this data is from July, when most courses were not in session. PART’s October 2013—July 2014 data shows 1,532 total riders for PHCC, which averages approximately 153 per month over that ten-month period.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2008—2012 American Community Survey (ACS), 4.9 percent of workers 16 and over had no vehicle available in the City of Martinsville. In Henry County, this figure was 2.4 percent, and for the Commonwealth of Virginia, the figure was 2.7 percent. Based on this data, PART serves an important purpose, especially for the residents of the City of Martinsville.
The table above, entitled *Attributes of the West Piedmont Health District, 2014 Regional Profile*, provides a plethora of health-related data for the Commonwealth of Virginia and the West Piedmont Health District including the District’s constituent localities comprising Franklin, Patrick, Henry, and Pittsylvania counties, and the cities of Danville and Martinsville. The data are presented on a locality-level basis; at the Health Planning District (HPD) level; and at the state level, for comparison. The data show that seniors age 65+ comprised a larger share of the HPD’s population than at the state level, indicating the need for services targeted to this cohort.

The share of uninsured adults age 19—64 was somewhat higher in the region than at the state level. According to the data, the share of adults age 18+ that were in fair or poor health and the share of adults age 18+ not meeting physical activity recommendations were not significantly higher than the figure for the state. The rates of COPD or asthma in older adults, diabetes, and congestive heart failure were significantly higher in some localities than the respective rates for the Commonwealth.
The table above, entitled *Attainment of Work Readiness Goals for the Dan River Region Collaborative, January 1, 2012—July 31, 2014*, relates to current goals attained by each locality in the Dan River Region Collaborative footprint, with regard to becoming an ACT Certified Work Ready Community. Attainment of ACT Certified Work Ready status is important to the region because it certifies that a minimum number of the region’s residents are able to perform certain jobs. For instance, bronze certification, the lowest certification level, ensures that an individual can perform 16 percent of jobs; and platinum, the highest, ensures that an individual can perform 99 percent of jobs. The exam one would take to determine work ability evaluates skills in applied mathematics, reading for information, locating information, and “soft skills.” The table shows goals set for each locality in the region, as they pertain to accomplishment of work readiness certification status as well as the progress achieved for attaining those goals, expressed in both absolute numbers and percentages. Under the heading “Workforce Type,” Emerging workforce refers to those individuals currently employed in either the public or private sector; the Transitioning workforce refers to those who are unemployed, are participating in an adult education or GED program, or have recently completed such a program; and Employers Supporting refers to businesses that have chosen to recognize, recommend, or prefer the National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) in supporting their locality to become a certified work ready community.

Based on the most current data, Henry County is the closest of the localities to attaining ACT Certified Work Ready status, at 73.2%, and Martinsville is just behind, at 66.0%. What is interesting to note is that Henry County exhibited a slight increase in total Work Ready status between the periods ending December 31, 2013 and February 28, 2014, increasing from 54.5% to 56.9%; however, latest figures show a significant jump to 73.2%. A similar trend can be noted for Patrick County, which increased from 30.7% to just 31.6% during that time period, and then jumped to 45.0% currently. Similarly, Danville experienced an increase over that time period from 26.9% to 30.6% and now to 45.0%; Martinsville increased over that time period from 51.4% to 53.5%, and to 66.0% currently; and Halifax County increased from 17.3% to 20.0%, and then to 36.3%. Within two years, the region will become a Certified Work Ready Community if 2,300 residents earn ACT Work Ready Certification. The Dan River Region Collaborative is serving as a pilot for this program in Virginia, as it is the first region in the Commonwealth to implement it.

### Attainment of Work Readiness Goals for the Dan River Region Collaborative, January 1, 2012—July 31, 2014

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<th>Workforce Type</th>
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*Indicates that the Actual NCRC has surpassed the goal. In this case, the locality is not given additional credit for surpassing the goal, so the Actual NCRC figure only reflects the maximum for which a locality can take credit.

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