Project Narrative

To: City of Richmond – Urban Design Committee

From: Yongping Wang – DPW
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Date: July 15, 2026

Subject: Scotts Addition to Science Museum BRT Station Shared Use Path
Final UDC Review – Project Narrative

Conceptual UDC Recap

The project design was recommended for approval by UDC on June 6, 2024 with the following conditions:

Outdoor lighting be sensitive to light pollution or dark-skies compliant.

The project does not include lighting improvements, and lighting was not included in the SMART SCALE application scope or budget. A lighting plan has been prepared; however, it is limited to conduit and junction boxes to facilitate future lighting installation under a separate project. Consequently, no lighting is proposed as part of this project, and dark-sky compliant lighting requirements are not applicable at this time.

The Applicant show in the FINAL Plan, locations for future signage that labels for drivers the trail crossing, and for trail users the upcoming cross streets and points of interest.

Wayfinding signage identifying trail destinations, cross streets, and points of interest is not included in the SMART SCALE-funded project scope or budget. However, the proposed design includes warning and regulatory signage for both motorists and shared-use path users in advance of and at the Leigh Street crossing to promote safe crossing movements.

The Applicant include some portion of existing rail items for the entire length of the path, including the Movieland Property, in the FINAL Plan.

The trail alignment has been revised within the Movieland property to periodically diverge from the former railroad corridor, preserving and showcasing existing rail features at select locations while maintaining a continuous shared-use path.

The Applicant provide lighting throughout the length of the trail to anticipate night users.

The project does not include lighting improvements, and lighting was not included in the SMART SCALE application scope or budget. A lighting plan has been prepared; however, it is limited to conduit and junction boxes to facilitate future lighting installation under a separate project.

Consequently, no lighting is proposed as part of this project, and dark-sky compliant lighting requirements are not applicable at this time.

FINAL Plans shall include seating and trash location(s) in the "Proto-Path" and "Movieland" sections, respectively.

The final plans have been updated to include seating and trash receptacle locations within both the Proto-Path and Movieland sections.

Applicant to provide a nonpaved shoulder to the proposed path, at time of FINAL application.

A 3-foot gravel shoulder has been added along the east side of the shared-use path. The ability to provide additional shoulder width or increase the path width is limited, as expanding the disturbed and impervious footprint would necessitate additional stormwater management measures and associated right-of-way impacts, resulting in costs beyond the SMART SCALE project budget.

Project Overview

This Department of Public Works project proposes to construct a shared use path from West Broad Street to the Arthur Ashe Boulevard Bridge using existing right-of-way along Terminal Place and an abandoned railroad corridor. The purpose is to provide a dedicated bicycle and pedestrian connection from the Scott's Addition neighborhood to the Pulse BRT stations at Robinson Street.

The project is funded through VDOT's SMART SCALE program, which means the project has fixed termini, a fixed budget, and limitations on what portions of the scope can be included or excluded. The project received $2.99 million in funding from the grant program, which was applied for in 2018 and selected for funding in 2019. Funding became available for preliminary engineering in 2023. Right-of-way acquisition is scheduled for Fall 2026 and construction is anticipated to begin in Fall 2029. Upon completion, the path, amenities, and stormwater management infrastructure will be maintained by the Department of Public Works.

This project narrative splits the project up into 5 unique segments, which are described below from south to north:

1. Terminal Place
2. Proto Path – Trail Alignment
3. Proto Path – Park Space
4. Leigh Street Crossing
5. Movieland

Public/Stakeholder Engagement and Concept Development

The project team developed the concept with input from a stakeholder group through an initial project meeting held in November 2023 and a design charrette in May 2024. This stakeholder group includes people that represent the following organizations: Science Museum of Virginia, Children's Museum of Richmond, Greater Scott's Addition Associates, City of Richmond Department of Public Works, City of Richmond Department of Public Utilities, City of Richmond Department of Parks and Recreation,

and City Council. This early engagement informed the design and the final design represents the preferred alternatives as selected by this group of stakeholders.

To satisfy VDOT public involvement requirements, the City of Richmond subsequently published a Notice of Willingness to Hold a Public Hearing, making project plans and environmental documentation available for public review and providing an opportunity for interested parties to request a public hearing. The notice stated that written requests for a public hearing could be submitted through the designated comment period. No requests for a public hearing were received within the required timeframe; therefore, a public hearing was not required and the project advanced without further public involvement activities

Basis of Design by Segment

Terminal Place

The project's southern terminus is at the intersection of Terminal Place and West Broad Street. The Science Museum of Virginia (SMV) has recently completed "The Green" in front of the Children's Museum of Richmond (CMoR) and SMV along the Broad Street frontage, which includes wide pedestrian connections around the site and along Broad Street. This project proposes to connect to the existing "Allee" that runs parallel to Broad Street along the front of the SMV property to begin the shared use path.

The final design constructs a 10-foot wide concrete shared use path on the east side of Terminal Place from Broad Street along the length of Terminal Place. Southbound turn lanes on Terminal Place will be consolidated into a single turn lane to provide a landscaped 8-foot wide buffer between the path and Terminal Place from Broad Street to the CMoR entrance. The entrance will be reconstructed to consist of a concrete curb apron that allows the pedestrians and cyclists to continue across the entrance without grade change or ramps, for ease of movement, and to provide path users the right-of-way.

North of the CMoR entrance curbside parking is maintained and is defined by curb extensions to allow for convenient drop-off and pick-up by parents for the Sprout School, a daycare facility within the CMoR who's main doorway opens to Terminal Place. Planter boxes were previously considered to control path users' speeds along the Sprout School's building frontage, however because this would present unexpected obstacles and present accessibility challenges, the option has been eliminated.

In the previous concept, a raised concrete "mixing zone" was proposed where Terminal Place terminates into the SMV rear parking lot. However, to reduce construction costs, this concept was removed from the scope. Alternatively, to alert vehicles of the change in function of the roadway, a center median is proposed to reduce speeds by constricting the lanes for drivers as well as to serve as a gateway to the park space.

Proto Path – Trail Alignment

There is an existing crushed stone path in the abandoned railroad corridor that stretches from the rear SMV parking lot to Leigh Street called the "Proto Path." This project will utilize much of the

existing Proto Path alignment while paving a 10-foot wide asphalt path. Two different alignments were considered for the shared use path through the southern area of this segment, which varies from 60' to 160' in available width. The existing Proto Path hugs the eastern property line just to the southwest of the Bon Secours Park/Midtown Green, whereas the existing rails followed the western side of the property. The western alignment is the proposed option to maximize the available space for a variety of programs and uses. The western alignment hugs the western property line and therefore minimizes the need for park users to cross the shared use path and present potential conflict points between path and park users.

Following the 30% plan submittal and UDC review, a 3-foot gravel shoulder was added to the east side of the shared-use path to provide an alternative surface for runners, pedestrians, and users with dogs who may prefer a cooler, non-paved walking surface during warmer weather. The gravel shoulder is present along the full length of the shared use path. Seating and trash cans are also proposed along the full shared use path. Additionally, conduit and junction boxes are proposed along the length of the shared use path to accommodate future lighting infrastructure that was not included in the fixed VDOT SMART SCALE project scope and budget.

Proto Path – Park Space

Since the project has a fixed budget from VDOT's SMART SCALE grant program, the scope of park and amenities that can be funded with this project is limited. However, the project team desires to be intentional about leaving a master-planned space for future park uses. As project design progresses, the full scope of what park and amenity improvements that can fit within the project's current budget will become more known.

Following the charrette with stakeholders, the preferred program for the park space was developed to include Art Nodes, Open Lawn/Green Space, Shade Structure/Picnic Area, Seating Areas, Kids Demonstration/Educational Space, Outdoor/Lawn Games, Fitness Area, Dog Park, and a Nature/Plant Walk using existing plantings. The existing depression and drainage inlet were initially identified as a potential bioretention area for stormwater management; however, the 60% design determined that bioretention is not needed to meet Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) stormwater management quantity and quality technical criteria at this outfall location. See the project Drainage Narrative for more information.

The charrette results indicated that aligning the shared use path through the middle of the space, following the alignment of the remnant railway tracks, is highly favored, facilitating pedestrian use, fire truck access, connections between spaces, and reducing potential conflicts. Proposed development themes of "Trailside Tranquility" and "Railway Remnants" are being combined to create a curvilinear green space with nodes referencing the old railroad along the shared use path. As the concept is refined, concerns such and infrastructure requirements and maintenance needs will continue to be coordinated with Public Works and Parks and Recreation. It's imperative to establish a clear maintenance plan in coordination with Public Works, Parks and Recreation, and/or relevant entities to ensure the park's long-term viability.

Leigh Street Crossing

The proposed path will follow the abandoned railroad corridor to cross Leigh Street approximately 250 feet east of Myers Street. In the existing condition, Leigh Street includes two westbound through lanes, one eastbound left-turn lane into the rear Movieland parking lot, one eastbound through lane, and one parking lane – which amounts to an 80-foot wide crossing. To reduce the width of the path crossing that is exposed to vehicular traffic, the project proposes to significantly narrow the roadway on Leigh Street. The proposed crossing will include just one travel lane in each direction to limit the total crossing to 12-foot across each direction.

Leigh Street also includes existing bike lanes that begin east of Myers Street. The Leigh Street crossing design includes 5-foot separated bike lane pass-throughs to accommodate the existing bike lanes.

The crosswalk will also include user-activated rectangular rapid flashing beacons (RRFBs) to enhance trail user safety when crossing Leigh Street. RRFBs have been shown to reduce pedestrian crashes up to 47% and increase motorist yielding rates up to 98% (source: FHWA).

Accompanying the RRFBs, advanced trail warning signage is proposed along Leigh Street and advanced warning and regulatory signage and markings are proposed along the shared use path. Additional wayfinding signage recommended in the Conceptual UDC meeting was not included in the SMART SCALE funding application scope or budget; therefore, it is not included in the final design.

Figure 1: Example of RRFBs

Movieland

The northern limits of the project will continue to follow the abandoned railroad corridor through the Movieland parking lot from Leigh Street to the Arthur Ashe Boulevard Bridge. The City of Richmond has a separate project using an FHWA grant to reconstruct the aging bridge over the CSX railroad. The bridge project will include a direct pedestrian connection under the bridge to planned shared use path segments along Patton Ave parallel to CSX right-of-way through Scott's Addition. The bridge will also include improved pedestrian connectivity over the CSX railroad to connect to the future Diamond District.

Through the Movieland parking lot, the proposed alignment crosses parking lot entrances/access aisles at three separate locations. This project proposes closing two of these entrances to limit conflict points between path users and motor vehicles. At the third crossing, which is integral to site circulation, a raised crosswalk will be constructed to slow vehicles, alert drivers of crossing pedestrians and cyclists, and provide a smooth and uninterrupted movement for path users. Additionally with the final design, several parking spaces along the alignment are proposed to be repurposed to green space to offset increased impervious area from the shared use path and meet DEQ stormwater quantity technical criteria in this segment of the project.

Following submittal of 30% plans and UDC review, the path alignment was modified to meander off the existing railroad alignment to highlight the historic rails at select locations along the Movieland section. Landscaping is proposed around and between the rails to further showcase the historic railroad. Seating and trash cans have been added to the Movieland segment in the final design to ensure amenities are provided along the length of the shared use path.