



Staff Report
City of Richmond, Virginia
Planning Commission



UDC 2024-25	CONCEPT Location, Character, Extent Review	Meeting Date: 6/18/2024
Applicant/Petitioner	Alix Warren, Whitman, Requardt and Associates Adel Edward, City of Richmond Public Works	
Project Description	UDC 2024-25 CONCEPT Location, Character, and Extent review for a proposed shared use path from Terminal Place, across Leigh Street, and terminating at Arthur Ashe Boulevard.	
Project Location		
Address: between Terminal Place and Arthur Ashe Boulevard		
Property Owner: Commonwealth Of Virginia Science Museum Of Virginia, Btp Boulevard Square Llc		
<p>High-Level Details:</p> <p>The project proposes to shared use path from Broad Street to the Arthur Ashe 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 Scott's Addition to the Pulse BRT stations at Robinson Street.</p> <p>The project is funded through VDOT's SmartScale program, which means the project has a fixed scope and budget.</p>		
UDC Recommendation	Approval, with Conditions	

Staff Contact	Ray Roakes, Planner, raymond.roakes@rva.gov
Conditions for Approval	<p><u>Recommended CONCEPT Conditions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdoor lighting be sensitive to light pollution or dark-skies compliant. • 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. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 Applicant provide lighting throughout the length of the trail to anticipate night users. • FINAL Plans shall include seating and trash location(s) in the “Proto-Path” and “Movieland” sections, respectively. • Applicant to provide a nonpaved shoulder to the proposed path, at time of FINAL application.

Findings of Fact

Site Description	The location of the proposed was previously CSX railroad property. It will be obtained by the City for the construction of the path and will be maintained by the City of Richmond Parks and Recreation.
Scope of Review	The project is subject to location, character, and extent review and under section 17.07 and recommendation under 17.05 of the Richmond City Charter.
Prior Approvals	NA
Project Description	<p>The Applicant states: “This Department of Public Works project proposes to construct a shared use path from Broad Street to the Arthur Ashe 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.”</p> <p>This project can be split into 4 unique segments, which are described below from south to north:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Terminal Place 2. Proto Path 3. Leigh Street Crossing 4. Movieland <p>“Terminal Place Starting at Terminal Place and Broad Street with a 10’ wide concrete shared use path. Southbound turn lanes on Terminal Place will be consolidated and streetside landscaping space improved.</p> <p>A raised “mixing zone” is proposed where Terminal Place terminates into the rear parking lot and beginning of the former rail location. The “mixing zone” will consist of concrete raised to curb height to control vehicle speeds and intentionally blur the separation between bicycle/pedestrian space and vehicle space. The proposed shared use path crossed the road at this location to enter the former railroad space.</p> <p>Proto Path There is an existing crushed stone path in the abandoned railroad corridor that stretches from the rear parking lot to Leigh Street called the “Proto Path.” This project will utilize much of that existing alignment with 10’ wide asphalt path. Rail items remain at this location to varying degrees, including the original rail and railroad ties, and will be incorporated into the final trail design.</p> <p>Since the project has a fixed budget from VDOT’s SmartScale 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 within the CONCEPT approval.</p> <p>This includes Art Nodes, Open Lawn/Green Space, Shade Structure/ Picnic Area, Seating Areas, Kids</p>

Demonstration/Educational Space, Outdoor/Lawn Games, Fitness Area, Dog Park, and Nature/Plant Walk utilizing existing plantings.

Leigh Street Crossing

To reduce the width of the path crossing that is exposed to vehicular traffic, the project proposes to reduce the travel widths along Leigh Street via bumpouts and center median pedestrian refuge. The proposed configuration at the crossing will include one travel lane in each direction of Leigh Street to limit the total crossing to 12' across each direction. The crosswalks will also include user-activated rectangular rapid flashing beacons (RRFBs) to enhance trail user safety when crossing Leigh Street.

Leigh Street currently includes bicycle lanes to the east of the proposed crossing. The project proposes to provide ramps within the bumpouts to connect from these bicycle lanes in each direction to the shared use path. The connection of surrounding bike infrastructure to the proposed path, and the proposed path's future connection to Scotts Addition, will provide a significant safety improvement for bicycle access across Arthur Ashe to Scotts Addition.

Movieland Property

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. Rail items remain at this location to varying degrees, including the original rail and railroad ties, and are not currently intended to be incorporated into the final trail design due to size issues.

The City of Richmond has a separate project using an FHWA grant to reconstruct the aging bridge over the CSX railroad.

The future bridge project intends 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 active 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."

Staff Review

Planning Staff's primary concern is safety where the path crosses streets. The project includes significant considerations to safety improvements at these locations, including raised crosswalks, bumpouts, and flashing pedestrian lights.

The project includes landscaping and other pedestrian improvements to the section referenced as the "Proto-Path" which will create great interest along the path and increase pedestrian users comfort with shade and seating.

Staff has provided a condition that the FINAL Plans shall include at least one seating and trash location in the "Proto-Path" and "Movieland" sections, respectively. It is the intent of the applicant to provide a number of locations for such furnishings (especially in relation to the more parklike space), but due to budget constraints is unsure how many will be possible. Due to the limited length of each segment, Staff suggests one is sufficient in each section.

Decorative and informational signage specifics are not provided at this stage of planning.

Staff recommends that directional signage at the Leigh Street intersection for both street users and path users. Signage should provide information on the Museums and Pulse station, as well as future Diamond District.

Safety and traffic signage will be provided to all applicable standards and requirements.

Staff has provided a condition that space for such signage be provided and detailed in the FINAL Application.

Sidewalk at the Leigh Street crossing is of appropriate size to anticipate future adjacent development at 7ft and 11ft on either side.

Connection to Arthur Ashe Blvd and Scotts Addition under the Arthur Ashe bridge are pending that project design and approval. The Master Plan also indicates a “Bicycle/Pedestrian Bridge Over Tracks” at this location as well to connect to the Diamond District.

Staff has provided a condition that requires lighting to be provided to anticipate night users, at FINAL review. Staff recommends that due to the urban location of the path, and its role as an important transportation connection, the City needs to ensure that the path is safe for users during nighttime hours, rather than consider the path closed at sundown. Further, the paths location as being “at the back” of several developments necessitates the need for adequate lighting to discourage bad actors in locations that are difficult to see from the street.

Staff recommends approval, with conditions.

The proposed path is shown in the Master Plan as a shared use path.

Staff strongly supports the increase in high quality pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. Specific effort has been undertaken to provide adequate safety as the path crosses existing streets. The path will also create stronger connections in a very popular part of town – and has the potential to create greater connections in relation to the future Diamond District and the Pulse Transit System. Staff suggests it is important to preserve the area’s rich railroad history, and has provided a condition of approval to incorporate existing railroad items in the future trail.

The UDC recommended approval, with conditions.

The UDC added a condition to the Staff recommendation.

- Applicant to provide a nonpaved shoulder to the proposed path, at time of FINAL application. This was in response to some member concerns for the comfort of pet users when the pavement becomes hot.

The UDC discussed the material of the path, lighting, public outreach, ROW acquisition, pet user comfort, and the layout of the parking lot.

Urban Design Guidelines and Master Plan

	Text	Staff Analysis
Master Plan		
	<i>The path is shown on the Richmond 300 Future Connections map as being a shared use path.</i>	The proposal creates an important connection shown in the Master Plan.
URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES		
	<i>(P.7) Pedestrian Crossings: Pedestrian crossings should generally be confined to intersections. Midblock crosswalks should be discouraged, except for instances of extremely long distances between intersections. In these instances, a signalized crossing is preferred. Pedestrian crossings should be clearly marked and refuge islands should be provided where necessary.</i>	Signalized crossings are provided on Hull and Midlothian, the most traveled streets. Raised crosswalk is also provided on Broad Rock. Staff has provided a condition of approval that increased visibility of intersections.
	<i>(P.7) Pedestrian Crossings: Pedestrian crossings should generally be confined to intersections. Midblock crosswalks should be discouraged, except for instances of extremely long distances between intersections. In these instances, a signalized crossing is preferred. Pedestrian crossings should be clearly marked and refuge islands should be provided where necessary.</i>	The project includes significant improvements to the Leigh Street crossing.
	<i>(P.9) It is important that the design of public parks facilitate programming that furthers placemaking, or the creative patterns of use that leverage physical, cultural, and societal identities to define a place.</i>	Staff recommends that the project include some portion of rail items the entire length of the path, including Movieland Property.

