

Chapter 425 Stakeholder Advisory Group

Minutes

September 23, 2022

10:00 a.m.

Virginia Department of Transportation
Highway Building Auditorium
1221 E. Broad St.
Richmond, VA 23219

A meeting of the Chapter 425 Stakeholder Advisory Group was held in the Auditorium of the Virginia Department of Transportation's (VDOT's) Highway Building, 1221 E. Broad St., Richmond, VA 23219 on September 23, 2022.

Members Present:

Phil Abraham – Virginia Association of Commercial Real Estate

Andrew Clark – Home Builders of Virginia (HBVA)

Scott Dunn – HBVA

Kevin Gregg – VDOT

Robert Hofrichter – VDOT

James Hutzler – Virginia Association of Counties

Harley Joseph – VDOT

Lynne Lloyd – VDOT

Kathryn Pobre – VDOT

Trip Pollard – Southern Environmental Law Center

Craige Shelton – HBVA

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at approximately 10:02 a.m.

2. Welcome and Introductions

VDOT Chief of Maintenance and Operations Kevin Gregg welcomed attendees to the meeting. Attendees introduced themselves.

3. Group Chair Selection

A motion was made by Phil Abraham, seconded by Robert Hofrichter to elect Kevin Gregg as Chair of the Advisory Group. Motion carried unanimously.

4. Electronic Meetings Policy

A motion was made by Robert Hofrichter, seconded by Andrew Clark to approve the Chapter 425 Stakeholder Advisory Group Policy for Electronic Meetings Held under § 2.2-3708.3 of the *Code of Virginia* as presented to attendees at the meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

5. Legislation (Chapter 425 of the 2022 Acts of Assembly)

Mr. Hofrichter described the origins of the Subdivision Street Acceptance Requirements (SSAR) and explained the requirements of Chapter 425 of the 2022 Acts of Assembly.

6. SSAR Connectivity

Mr. Hofrichter explained the history and purpose of the SSAR connectivity requirements. Conversation ensued regarding the requirements for stub outs, the use of bike and pedestrian trails, and current VDOT practice surrounding connectivity exceptions.

It was noted that when new developments are built, connections with existing developments may not be desired by the residents of those existing developments. However, bicycle and pedestrian connections may be received more favorably.

The National Fire Code may require additional access for additional units of development. Additional pavement may affect water runoff.

VDOT's Office of Land Use tracks SSAR connectivity exceptions issued. In a recent year, approximately 25% of approved statewide SSAR network additions included a connectivity exception. Exceptions must be reviewed and approved by a VDOT District Engineer or their designee. Resources are required of both VDOT and the developers to submit/review exceptions. Although the forms for requesting an exception are short, the discussions and design efforts take more time. Different VDOT districts may interpret SSAR provisions differently. VDOT is working on statewide training for Districts to ensure standard interpretations.

It was mentioned that during rezoning discussions, developers focus on utility connections, and designs generally rely on those utility connections and developments are phased based more on utility connections rather than road connections. A question was asked relating to how many exception applications were denied. VDOT will have to collect that information from each district. It was observed that the 2011 version of the regulation was expanded to include numerous connectivity exceptions, and the fact that so many are issued may mean the existing process is working and a good compromise. VDOT often looks to a locality's Comprehensive Plan for future development needs in the process to determine there is an expectation for connections to be made, which is part of the process to review and approve connectivity exception requests.

7. Connectivity Research

Mr. Hofrichter described the research currently available regarding network connectivity. Access to this research was provided to the Advisory Group. A request was made to members to identify additional research on the topics at hand.

8. Adjournment

Mr. Hofrichter discussed the forthcoming outreach to Advisory Group members to schedule the next meeting. In preparation for the next meeting, VDOT will work to compile information regarding connectivity exceptions. Chairman Gregg adjourned the meeting at approximately 11:21 a.m.