

1 **Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan Focus Group Two: Transportation Disadvantaged,**  
2 **Traditionally – Underrepresented**

3 **Tuesday, October 13, 3:30pm-5pm**

4 **Meeting Summary**

5 Focus Group Participants:

- 6 • Beth Bland, Valley Program for Aging Services
- 7 • Sarah Coleman, Church World Service Harrisonburg/ Refugee Resettlement Office
- 8 • Gayl Brunk, Valley Associates for Independent Living
- 9 • John Malone, Community Service Board
- 10 • Daniel Anderson, client of Community Services Board, member of Summit House

11 City Department Participants:

- 12 • Adam Fletcher, Planning & Community Development Department
- 13 • Matt Little, Parks & Recreation Department
- 14 • Brad Reed, Public Works Department
- 15 • Tom Hartman, Public Works Department
- 16 • Jim Baker, Public Works Department
- 17 • Avery Daugherty, Harrisonburg Department of Public Transportation

18 Other Participants:

- 19 • Moderator: Thanh Dang, Public Works Department
- 20 • Notetaker: Zach Nagourney, Public Works Department

21  
22 *Note: During the meeting the group was informed that statements placed into the meeting*  
23 *summary would be anonymous. However, Thanh Dang contacted participants afterwards and*  
24 *received approval to include identifying information in this summary.*

25 1) Thanh welcomed the group, described the purpose, and guidelines for this meeting.

26  
27 2) Thanh said that this focus group has been invited to discuss the needs and wants of people  
28 who are transportation-disadvantaged. Who have challenges getting around independently  
29 around the city and may need to rely on walking, biking, or transit.

30 Thanh introduced City department representatives.

31 3) Participants introduced themselves.

- 32 a) Beth Bland, Valley Program for Aging Services, provide services for adults 60 years and  
33 older
- 34 b) Sarah Coleman, Church World Service Harrisonburg/ Refugee Resettlement Program,  
35 serves refugees new to the area

- 36 c) Gayl Brunk, Valley Associates for Independent Living, serves all planning district 6, and  
37 work with individuals with disabilities – physical, sensory, cognitive, intellectual, any  
38 disability, any age.
- 39 d) John Malone, Community Service Board, works with adults and children with behavioral,  
40 health, substance abuse, and developmental disabilities.
- 41 e) Daniel Anderson, client of Community Services Board, VAIL, has a disability.  
42
- 43 4) Thanh – In a typical week, what services do you and/or your clients need to get to and how  
44 do they get there?
- 45 a) John – most services are at the center, clients coming from county and city to center and  
46 traveling around to doctors, social services, family, friends, etc.
- 47 b) Gayl – Workswith folks with disabilities in the community, going from their homes to  
48 wherever they need to go. Some need to get out to the County, or live in the County and  
49 need to get to the City. Sometimes they are going to UVA for medical services but  
50 mostly around the community.
- 51 c) Sarah – Many people going to social services, social security, etc. which are all located  
52 downtown. Also going to English classes. Career Development Academy in Memorial  
53 Hall, RMH, S. Main, and Harrisonburg Community Health Center. Many work outside of  
54 the city and getting there is a challenge.
- 55 i) Thanh – How are they getting there now?  
56 (1) Sarah – Carpool.
- 57 d) Beth – Echoes previous comments. Her agency does provide some transportation to and  
58 from senior center. People going to supermarket, doctor’s appointments, etc. very much  
59 like everyone else. Just recently started a limited transportation program within the city  
60 for 60+ year olds or with some sort of disability. Price Rotary Center Senior Center at  
61 Westover Park.
- 62 e) Daniel –
- 63 i) Uses Harrisonburg transit but has a tough time working around JMU’s bus schedule  
64 to get to and from work. May have a job that goes to 8-9 at night at Wal-mart, taking  
65 a cab is too expensive for someone on a budget with supplementary income. Need to  
66 have transportation beyond JMU schedule to go later year around, like when JMU is  
67 out of session. Bus fare is 50 cents, and maybe people would be willing to pay more.
- 68 ii) City traffic is more of an issue he has now. Bought a Moped and uses it to commute  
69 even though he’s been hit by reckless drivers 3 times and feels unsafe on higher speed  
70 roads because people barrel past him. He has spoken with police department.
- 71 iii) Difficult for some people with disabilities to get from bus stop to Summit House.  
72 Could the city transit add a new bus stop beside Summit House entrance?  
73
- 74 5) Thanh – Asked the whole group, is the JMU schedule an issue?
- 75 a) Sarah – The buses stopping as early as they do is a problem for our clients who need to  
76 get around later in the evening and they can’t get home after it’s over. And the working  
77 around the summer schedule is difficult. Would like to see a more consistent bus  
78 schedule.
- 79 b) John – Agrees with Sarah
- 80 c) Gayl – They can’t go to the movies on the weekends.
- 81

- 82 6) Thanh - Are there any areas in the city where your services aren't accessible from a bus stop?  
83 a) John – The bus stop across from CSB, no pedestrian crossing. CSB on west side, bus stop  
84 on east side. Pedestrians could go down to stop light and cross but they choose not to.  
85 There isn't a bus shelter but had asked a couple of years ago for one, a lot of clients wait  
86 there for a while.  
87 i) Adam – Have there been any specific complaints about there being no sidewalks on  
88 N. Main?  
89 (1) John – Nobody has come to me but I'm sure people complain because it is a  
90 pedestrian thruway. Frightening is when people use mobility devices on Main St.  
91 We get a lot of traffic from CSB to apartments down Main Street. They typically  
92 just walk in the street. Does the city need a certain number of names/ comments to  
93 make improvements?  
94 (2) Adam – not necessarily.  
95
- 96 7) Thanh – Do you have suggestions to improve our outreach?  
97 a) Sarah – For out folks, it's tough to read the bus schedule. Teaches people to ride the bus  
98 because she teaches English classes and wants to help her students get there. She shows  
99 them to look at the map to see where the stops are, then shows them to find the bus  
100 number and look at the schedule. She uses google maps to figures out the routes, but not  
101 everyone has access to the internet. It is difficult to read the paper map especially for  
102 people who are still learning English.  
103 b) Beth – People have trouble understanding and comprehending the schedule, getting to  
104 and from the bus, needing assistance with carrying packages and groceries, and  
105 organizing their day to match the bus schedule because it drops them off, then they have  
106 to wait a long time for it to come back.  
107 i) Sarah – Heard this complaint too. Leaving for English class 2 hours before the class  
108 then waiting 45 minutes after class to take the bus home. Takes up half their day  
109 waiting for the bus.  
110 c) Gayl – Would like to see Harrisonburg Transit come out with their own app for smart  
111 phones. Particularly as a service provider it would help her share information.  
112 i) Thanh – How many folks have smart phones?  
113 (1) Gayl - Everyone has smart phones. There are programs you can get them for free.  
114 (2) Sarah – agreed with Gayl that everyone has smart phones.  
115 (3) Daniel – QR code reader isn't great and doesn't work properly.  
116 (4) Sarah – NextBus doesn't really do much good because figuring out the route they  
117 need is more important than when the next bus is arriving.  
118 (5) Beth – Very few of her clients have smart phones.  
119
- 120 8) Thanh - What influences decisions to walk or bike for those who are able to do so?  
121 a) Gayl –  
122 i) Path of Travel.  
123 ii) Commends Public Works for making the city more accessible. Been at VAIL for 16  
124 years and has seen a lot of improvement with wider sidewalks and ramps, especially  
125 with the downtown streetscape.

- 126 iii) Knows a man in a wheelchair who got cited as a motorized vehicle because he got hit  
127 in the street. Case got dropped because the state code was clearly meant to for  
128 mopeds. He was traveling on a street without sidewalks.
- 129 iv) She worked to get sidewalks into the City's Design & Construction Standards  
130 Manual. She fought to get sidewalks in the area but there are still some places that  
131 need improvements.
- 132 v) There are even in places without accessible parking.
- 133 b) Sarah – Clients do tend to walk unless they have children or bigger families. Children  
134 can't keep up as well. Biking depends on culture, how biking is perceived in their native  
135 culture. Sometimes they bike a lot, sometimes biking was for kids.
- 136 c) Beth – Majority of people she works with can't walk or bike.
- 137 d) John – Many clients can afford vehicles and upkeep so many people do walk.
- 138 e) Sarah – For some its affordability. Many of clients don't know English and can't get their  
139 licenses so they are forced to walk, bike, take the bus, or beg for a ride.
- 140 f) Daniel –
- 141 i) Got a job coach to help get a job and difficult to find employment that fit the bus  
142 schedule. Got a job that threw in \$500 to buy a Moped to get to work. Hard to find  
143 the extra time to take the bus. Tough to find a cab from the east side of town to the  
144 north side of town.
- 145 ii) Has noticed down at Vine, southbound to N. Main, there is not a lot of room to get  
146 down there and thinks there should be a crosswalk there to get across safely. Not  
147 enough sidewalk downtown. Roads need to be redone by police department down to  
148 Blue Ridge Florist because the road is bumpy.
- 149 iii) Left on Wolfe Street, road is messed up there. Reservoir Street, going toward E.  
150 Market there isn't enough lighting especially past the cemetery. How serious does  
151 something have to be to get a speed bump?
- 152 (1) Thanh – Talk to Brad after the meeting about Traffic Calming.
- 153 g) Sarah –Some of her staff mentioned crosswalks to shopping areas, were it was not set up  
154 for people walking, was set up with drivers in mind, people crossing busy streets.  
155 Specifically around University Boulevard & Reservoir Street around Wal-mart. Will find  
156 more specific locations to send to us later.
- 157
- 158 9) Thanh - Suggestions to improve our outreach or how you can be conduits to get information  
159 to other people?
- 160 a) Daniel – crosswalk near parking deck on N. Mason St., almost hit multiple times. Needs  
161 to be fixed. He'll make a list of places.
- 162 i) Thanh – How would you suggest friends or family get in contact with the city?
- 163 (1) Daniel – Put out a petition, he like being hands-on and helps out.
- 164 (2) Gayl – There were focus groups in the past where Jim Baker and Drew Williams  
165 had attended. But now clients call her and then she calls the city. Could to have  
166 more targeted meetings maybe once a year because people appreciate those.
- 167 (3) Beth – Maybe we could bring all organizations that are offering transportation to  
168 see where there is duplication, opportunities to enhance programs. To possibly  
169 pull in Rockingham County's transportation program. And other ways to  
170 collaborate and expand.

- 171 (4) Gayl – We used to do that; bringing in area transportation providers come to  
172 share. We might be primed for a new opportunity with more conversations  
173 happening. Agrees with Beth’s idea of bringing groups together and to see where  
174 there was overlap and opportunities.  
175 (5) Daniel – Saw cement trucks racing on Erickson Avenue while he was on his  
176 scooter and felt unsafe. Will the sidewalks on Erickson be finished?  
177 (a) Tom – the next phase will be finishing sidewalks through Garbers Church  
178 Road.

- 179  
180 10) Thanh - Are there any other ideas for encouragement programs or education?  
181 a) John - Gather or distribute information at sites where there are many pedestrians and give  
182 them contact information. A lot of people walk to his agency.  
183 b) Gayl – Has there been any thought for the individual that doesn’t have Medicaid, has  
184 lower income, with no car, and needs to get to UVA?  
185 i) Brad – There has been talks within Planning District Commission for transportation  
186 between JMU and UVA. Doesn’t know much more.  
187 ii) Avery – Went to a focus group meeting where there were talks of transporting to and  
188 from UVA, trying to come up with idea of participants, but it is something that hasn’t  
189 really been developed yet.  
190 iii) Daniel – Expressed a complaint about a cab company.  
191 (1) Gayl – There is a complaint process for Logistic Care and she’ll get that  
192 information to Daniel.

- 193  
194 11) Thanh – The City receives a lot of input on where projects are needed. If you were given a  
195 list of projects, how would you prioritize projects?  
196 a) Sarah – Prioritize bus schedule, expand the bus schedules, or add more buses. We would  
197 like more sidewalks, but my clients use the bus a lot.  
198 b) Daniel – Is there any law against talking on the phone while biking? Anything can be  
199 done to those who violate the law?  
200 i) Brad – Cyclists are subject to the same laws as vehicle operators when riding in the  
201 street. Police will enforce those laws. You should contact the Police Department to let  
202 them know.  
203 ii) Daniel – Has a problem with police when he was in a Moped accident on Carlton  
204 Street with a driver pulling out of the shopping center. Daniel received a citation for  
205 not having a registration. The police did not issue the driver a citation because there  
206 was less than \$1,500 in damage done. Says it is not always damage to vehicle that  
207 matters. If a human being is hurt and an ambulance is called why would the driver not  
208 get a citation for reckless driving?  
209 iii) Thanh – Those are important points. We don’t have a representative from Police  
210 Department here and we can help you get in touch with the Police to get answer to  
211 those questions.  
212 c) Thanh - Do you have suggestions for how the City should prioritize projects? Sarah had  
213 suggested bus schedule expansion.  
214 (1) Daniel – The bus schedule is most important. He rides his scooter, but hard in  
215 wintertime.

- 216 d) John – Would prioritize the bus schedule, then sidewalks, then bike lanes because of  
217 weather issues. If it's really bad weather or really hot, the buses are the best way.
- 218 e) Gayl –
- 219 i) She agrees about bus schedule.
- 220 ii) Looking at infrastructure, everything should be accessible. Particularly, because we  
221 get federal funding. Ex. CDBG funding.
- 222 iii) We need to look at bus stations and bus stops making sure they are accessible.  
223 Getting people off paratransit and onto main bus routes.
- 224 iv) Then sidewalks and curb cuts to be fully accessible, that creates path of travel  
225 throughout the community that is more seamless.
- 226 f) Thanh – To make everything accessible, how would you prioritize existing infrastructure  
227 vs. need for new infrastructure or is it location based on proximity to places?
- 228 i) Gayl –if somebody is building a housing complex they should build everything to be  
229 accessible, unless they get an exemption. Then we should make sure that everything  
230 we already have is accessible. Make sure existing sidewalks have curb cuts, and then  
231 plan for future growth and create new accessibility.
- 232 g) Daniel – Since City buses were bought by JMU, how much influence does JMU have on  
233 Harrisonburg Transit since they bought it?
- 234 i) Avery – A common misunderstanding. 80% of buses purchased through federal  
235 funding, 10% from state, 10% combination of city and JMU.
- 236 h) Daniel – Is there any way to get Logistic Care to pay for bus tickets to help people get  
237 around the city, instead of paying for cab rides?
- 238 i) Avery – I can speak with you after the meeting.
- 239 i) Beth – Older population has very unique needs, while so much has been focus on the  
240 student community and they are important, we need to look at how we can better meet  
241 the needs of older adults with limited options. Many can't drive, have physical  
242 disabilities, cognitive disabilities, because they still have to get places. What partnerships  
243 might we might form to meet those needs?
- 244 i) Brad – What are some examples you have in mind to help the elderly?
- 245 (1) Beth – Finances to pay for cabs or paratransit and we don't have enough  
246 assistance to help carry groceries, put on coats, etc. Having to wait for a vehicle to  
247 drop them off and circle back around can be difficult for them.
- 248 (2) Brad – Are there specific pedestrian improvements?
- 249 (a) Beth – Not many elderly walking very far, they need some type of vehicular  
250 transportation.
- 251 (b) Daniel – some people who qualify for paratransit don't take advantage of it  
252 because they do find that a \$4 round trip is more expensive than a \$1 round  
253 trip ticket.
- 254 j) Elise – Sounds like affordability might be a good way to prioritize.
- 255 k) Sarah – Her clients receive Medicaid for 8 months so they get the discount for price. She  
256 thinks it's very affordable for public transportation. Harrisonburg is the cheapest bus  
257 system she's seen.. Thinks that the people paying 50 cents might pay a little more if it  
258 meant they didn't have to wait so long. But that's an opinion of her population.
- 259 l) Daniel – Summit House has been generous enough, if people stay long enough they do  
260 provide them with a bus ticket home. There are some people who don't take advantage of  
261 the system, they use it properly and they hang on by a thread. It depends on what you

- 262 receive every month. Affordability is a big problem for most friends he goes to Summit  
263 House with.
- 264 m) Beth – Her agency doesn't charge, instead they ask for a donation. Could provide more  
265 services if they had more volunteers.
- 266 i) Daniel – Maybe there could be a program that receives donated vehicles to City  
267 transit, or other organization. If people don't need a hydraulic lift and they were able  
268 to get into a car, have a separate service that volunteers could drive people to places.  
269 Similar to Logistic Care, but similar to paratransit in scheduling pick up.
- 270 (1) Thanh – What are opportunities or challenges to Daniel's suggestion?
- 271 (a) Gayl – Can't get the volunteers to drive. Also have issues. For example, Uber  
272 drivers are not held to the same accountability and regulations as taxi drivers.  
273 There's a battle between those two communities. Anyone want to guess what  
274 locality in the Commonwealth of Virginia has the most Uber registered  
275 drivers? Answers, Harrisonburg. Many JMU students. May not be highly  
276 utilized yet.
- 277 (b) Gayl- The bus is very affordable. It's getting to the bus, the bus schedule, and  
278 the logistics.
- 279 (c) John – This bus is fine. But any alternative to the bus, not walking, taking a  
280 cab, that is challenge. Cabs are expensive.
- 281 n) Thanh – Summarizing what was been said:
- 282 i) Prioritize bus schedule expansion,  
283 ii) Accessibility of sidewalks leading up to bus stops,  
284 iii) Repairing existing sidewalks to make more accessible, safety at pedestrian crossings.  
285 Separately, make sure the city's design standards and construction process ensures  
286 that new facilities are accessible.
- 287 o) John - Specifically no sidewalk on North Main.
- 288 p) Sarah – When would you need suggestions for sidewalks? She could talk to clients.
- 289 i) Thanh – Provides overview of Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan process. Input was received  
290 in May 2015, and through a previous collection effort with Rockingham Co. Open to  
291 receiving information whenever but would like comments November 15<sup>th</sup> at the latest  
292 for the first draft of the Plan.
- 293 q) Daniel – How much does JMU have say in how city transit runs? Where does JMU get  
294 their money to build new convocation center, a plaza, etc.?
- 295 i) Gayl – Its 2 separate pots of money; one for capital funding and one for other.  
296
- 297 12) Gayl – Since Harrisonburg is an MPO, which includes some of the County, what point  
298 should we expect to see the transportation, biking, and pedestrian plan be all inclusive of the  
299 whole MPO area.
- 300 a) John – What is MPO?  
301 b) Gayl – Metropolitan Planning Organization.  
302 c) Avery – From City transit's perspective, it would be when the county contributes to  
303 transportation.  
304 d) Thanh – The Metropolitan Planning Organization member jurisdictions are Harrisonburg,  
305 Rockingham County, Bridgewater, Dayton, and Mt. Crawford. The group is made up of  
306 elected officials and city staff to facilitate transportation planning – transit, bike, ped,  
307 freight, etc.

- 308 e) Brad - MPO is currently working Bike/Ped Plan to encompass entire area. Rockingham  
309 County and JMU are working on plans. We are always talking to each other to coordinate  
310 efforts and connect facilities, but many different challenges come into play across  
311 jurisdictions.
- 312 f) Gayl - Fascinating that we've been an MPO for a while but most of its concentrated  
313 within the city limits.  
314
- 315 13) Daniel – Is CAT's bus connected to city transit?  
316 a) Avery – A company called Virginia Regional Transit contracted with Blue Ridge  
317 Community College. They run services from Blue Ridge to/ from JMU.  
318 b) Daniel – only 50 cents to get from JMU to Staunton.  
319 c) Gayl – But you can't get back in the same day.  
320
- 321 14) Thanh – Before we wrap up, is there anything that we've missed?  
322 1) Elise – Is there anyone not here who you think would be important to hear feedback from?  
323 a) Sarah – Would have been interested to have a few of her clients represent their  
324 communities here. We had 60 people arrive in September so we have been very busy  
325 and were unable to invite community leaders to this meeting. They would know what  
326 their community members are using and needs.  
327 b) Daniel – Pleasant View(?) would have some good feedback.  
328 2) Avery – We schedule a “Ride the Bus” program to help people get acquainted with the  
329 bus system. And could coordinate this with your organizations on a bi-annual basis.  
330
- 331 3) Thanh – Thank you for coming out today.  
332