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[00:00:06] Good morning, everyone. My name is Jimmy Bierman, Transville District Supervisor. Most of you know me. We are starting today's board transportation committee meeting, as we always do, which is looking at the minutes from our last meeting on February 24th. Are there any changes to the minutes? Don't all speak at once. Didn't think so. Moving right along. Today's meeting is a really, really important one today, and I want to sort of center what we're doing today before we get

[00:00:43] started. We are going to be talking about transportation project timelines and the things that cause delays in transportation projects and what makes them take the time that they take. We are having this discussion, admittedly, because I think everybody here agrees that our transportation project timelines are too long. So we are trying to find ways to have better efficiency and to deliver projects faster. These projects, as you will see from the presentations today, are extremely complex, and they involve a lot of moving parts, some of which are in our

[00:01:18] control with respect to FCDOT, some of which are out of our control with respect to, say, VDOT or, unfortunately, utility companies. The purpose of today is to outline where we're at, to think about what our efficiencies going forward could be and in truth today is really the first of two meetings on this topic because currently our audit committee and our board auditor is looking at all of these timelines and producing an audit which will hopefully have some action steps in the

[00:01:53] future so with that we're going to go into uh we're going to go into the presentations when the presentations are over, the purpose of committee meetings, as Chairman McKay has reminded me about 50 times, is to have discussions. And I am going to try and be quiet after that and leave it up to my board colleagues to ask important questions. Brian, don't look so amused. But we are, we're going to go over this. And today is a day to have discussions that can be built on in the future, in future months as we come up with specific action steps to make our processes as efficient

[00:02:31] and effective as possible. Thank you. And with that, I'm going to turn it over to our Director of Transportation, Greg Stevenson. All right. Let's see if we can get this one up on the screen. All right. There we go. Good morning, members of the board. My name is Greg Stevenson. I'm the Director of the Fairfax County Department of Transportation. With me here today is Martha Coelho who is our deputy director here at FCDOT. We've got two presentations today both regarding process and schedule for active transportation projects. The first presentation is going to

[00:03:11] provide information regarding projects in general and then the second one we're going to specifically go into projects that are part of the 100 million dollars for active transportation. Now before I begin, I really want to take a moment to thank my team. My team really helped us put together this presentation, but they also really helped in developing some of the ideas for streamlining processes. Martha, who sort of led that team, I'd like to thank her. Obviously, my active transportation team, our capital projects team, our design division, our marketing and communications

[00:03:49] team, and really everyone at FCDOT for looking into this process and developing ways to make the processes better. So with that, let's get to the presentation. If the clicker can work. Uh-oh. Ah, okay. All right. We're going to have to go old school. I'll just say next slide when we're ready to go to the next slide. So as of now, once funding's allocated, and when I say allocated, I'm going to use this term a lot, that means that the project's been prioritized, It's been chosen, and we've put money on that project.

[00:04:27] Once funding has been allocated to the project, the project goes through six steps, as we have shown here. We're going to talk about each of those steps in more detail as we go through the presentation.

[00:04:43] But the process for a project, again, we're talking about active transportation projects. It generally takes about three to six years, and I'll tell you that we've worked with our team internally as we've worked through projects in the past, as we've worked through projects in the consulting world, and all of our history to sort of develop those timelines.

[00:05:05] We've talked to people in the industry. We've talked to other jurisdictions, and three to six for these sorts of projects is sort of the norm, but that doesn't mean that we can't do better and we can't work on things to help streamline and avoid some of the delays in the process.

[00:05:22] I'm not going to go through this slide in really heavy detail because we're going to tackle each of these steps a little bit more in subsequent slides, but this really covers the steps and generally how long they take. As I said, this is information that's been taken from the knowledge and experience of staff and our conversations with other jurisdictions.

[00:05:45] A couple of things that I'm going to talk about on this slide. Number one, if you see in the middle column there, land acquisition and design, oftentimes they overlap. They're able to overlap

because we're able to tackle some of the aspects of looking at land acquisition while we're working on design.

[00:06:04] So that's helpful. But depending on the size of the project, and you'll see here some of the categories all the way from small projects under \$150,000 all the way up to really big intersection projects where we're either redoing pedestrian signals or we're adding in curb ramps everywhere or crosswalks everywhere.

[00:06:25] There's a range here in these sorts of projects, and you can see on the right where we get our three- to six-year time frame. So now that we have an idea, again, this is through our experience and our discussions with other jurisdictions, how long projects take.

[00:06:46] Now let's talk about the things, number one, that can cause schedules to slip. And then number two, ways that we can not only compress and speed up timelines, but more importantly, avoid the things that make project timelines slip.

[00:07:02] We're going to go through each of the phases that we showed in the previous slide, starting with project scoping. Project scoping, the point of project scoping is really to decide what the project's going to be. We'll look at sort of a conceptual design. We'll come up with a preliminary cost estimate for the project.

[00:07:21] But this is the stage where if they're red flags, we need to find them and find them quickly. We need to tackle them, decide what to do. Do we want to do the project? Is it going to be too cost prohibitive? Do we need to pivot? Do we need to change something? Within Project Scoping, we have our initial project review meeting where we sit down with other agencies, whether internal to the county or VDOT.

[00:07:44] Oftentimes, some of your aides on the board are there with us as well. And again, we denote the major issues and red flags. But also, this is the stage where if a traffic study is needed in order to get VDOT approval for installing a rapid flashing beacon or a pedestrian hybrid beacon. This is where that happens. So what do we run into challenge-wise during project scoping? I just talked about it, right? The traffic study. If we have to do a traffic study, that can absolutely take time.

[00:08:17] And the reasoning for that is twofold. Number one, obviously there's a timeline that VDOT is allowed by code to review things. They have 30 days to review a traffic study. But secondarily, just because they have 30 days to review and review once, that doesn't mean that you're only going to get one review. Whether there's comments, whether there's changes to be made, oftentimes there will be multiple reviews of a traffic study. And so things like that can really take time and really mess with the schedule in the project scoping process. We could also sometimes run

[00:08:55] into delays from other agencies, whether it may be stormwater or whether it's environmental concern or something of that nature. So really at this stage of the game, it's about trying to minimize the amount of time that's needed to review. So how do we avoid some of these delays?

[00:09:15] Well, I'm going to take an overarching view before I go into the nuances of this. One of the first things that the team talked about and one of the things that I am very supportive of, we have a schedule that sort of tackles how long does project scoping take, how long does designs take, et cetera, et cetera. But I think the team and I want to go deeper into the nuances of each of those processes, right?

[00:09:37] So how long does – not only how long does a traffic study get – to get from point A to point B take, but how long did it take for us to get comments back? How long did it take for VDOT to comment? When we're doing our initial project reviews, how long after we decided to do this project did we get to the initial project review?

[00:09:57] And throughout all of these processes – and I'm going to talk about this more as we get into some of the other processes – We're looking at specifics of the phase and are the things that we're doing helping? Are we able to shave time off when we do X or Y or Z?

[00:10:14] So that's sort of a big picture thing. But within project scoping, I think one of the things that we want to look at is, number one, can we start our outreach and engagement earlier? We're going to talk as we get into design how challenging things can be when outreach and engagement leads to a change in a project scope or leads to a larger project than what we thought. And so getting out earlier to talk about some of these things, the hope is that we can have the conversation, make some decisions on the project scope, and not have to come back later

[00:10:47] and deal with a scope creep or a scope change. And I'll also say within this process, workload, staff capacity can also be a challenge. I'm going to talk about that a lot more in the next presentation. It's not always an issue, but it can be an issue depending on what's going on, depending on how many people we have or vacancies we have. But as I said, I'm going to talk about that a little bit more in the next presentation. Really, the only things you can do there is add

[00:11:19] more staff or minimize the workload. As we get from project scoping into the survey and pre-design work. Really what this step is about is going out to the field and figuring out what's going on out there. We do our survey work. We find all the potential deal breakers that are out in the field. Are there utilities out there? What's the slope of the ground that we're working on?

[00:11:48] Do we need right-of-way? Things of that nature to try and really understand what we're getting ourselves into and if there's something in there that's going to cause the project to be more expensive or take more time. Also during this time period, we bring on our design consultant so that we prepare ourselves to do the next step, which is the design work. Really the big schedule drivers here are, again, workload and the possibility for a backlog of doing survey work.

[00:12:21] Department of Public Works really tackles the survey work. They're great at what they do. What we need to do on our end is to make sure we don't create a backlog for them. They have other work. We're not the only people that they're doing work for. And so we have to do a good job of helping them manage their backlog and work.

[00:12:40] We do have consultants that can supplement the work. And so from our perspective, we need to work with Public Works to make sure that where consultant support is needed, We provide it, and so we don't create an unnecessary backlog for them. Also, within this process, surveys, when you're going to do survey work, it requires a 30-day notification to the property owner that you're going to be out there.

[00:13:04] I think what we can do and what can help is start sending those letters earlier. Definitely even during the pre-scoping or the scoping phase, as we better understand, you know what, we're going to need survey work. Let's not wait and, you know, send this out a couple of days before we need to be out there knowing that it's a 30-day window.

[00:13:26] Back it up as far as you can knowing that you have to be out there for survey so that we can save some time on the back end. One other thing, and I get to tackle this one. I don't think it's a huge time drain, but because it's me, I can say that. But here's the deal.

[00:13:42] We bring on our consultants that are going to do the design work. The team does the review of the task order, negotiates the costs, and works to put together the task order. In a lot of instances, based on what's called the delegation of authority matrix, which means who gets to sign what, a lot of things come to me for signature.

[00:14:02] I think I move fast, but that doesn't mean that I do move fast. And whether I take a two- or three- or four-week time to get to something, if I can provide the ability for someone else to sign off on it, that might cut two or three weeks out of the process. which may not sound like much but it's two or three weeks. I've done that before. We had construction documents that were required that I sign them. They're now delegated to the chief of our design division. Gets it out of my queue and allows for someone else to tackle it and get things done in a couple of weeks faster. All right moving on to the design stage this is where things

[00:14:41] can really go right or really go wrong. There's a lot that goes into this and here's the things that I'm going to point out here, you see in here it says intermediate design, pre-final design, final design, right? That's three stages of design review. Each of them have a 30-day review time. So that's three months right there. And that's if you do everything right the first time, which I'd love to think we always do, but there's almost always a comment. And multiple comments and multiple rounds of review create time frame and schedule drains. But that's really

[00:15:19] the most intensive part of this. It's the review. But another intensive piece in here is this is where we really do our heavy community outreach. And while we care a lot about community involvement, we want community feedback. We want to hear the community's thoughts. Sometimes what happens is the project we thought we were going to do is not the project we end up with once we've had community review. And so going back and having to redesign or redo something can create a lot of delays. So trying to figure out how to balance community input with literally going back and

[00:15:59] doing an entirely new project is something that we really have to talk about and we really have to think about in terms of timelines. Do we, can we, should we cut off a timeline for maybe large community input or maybe certain aspects of community input? But we've seen far too many times where we have a project, we have a scope, we have an idea, we're in 60% design, we go to a community meeting, and that changes completely. I would also say in terms of comments, the other issue that we run into, sometimes you get a different reviewer at VDOT. You're doing a 60%

[00:16:38] review. It's one reviewer. They have no comments. You get to 90% same reviewer, no comments. You get to 100% new reviewer. Hold on a second. Now we've got comments. And so that can also create a huge issue because if we're at 100% design, we're pretty much ready to go to construction. It's not the time to be in trying to make large-scale decisions, solutions, changes. And so how do we try and tackle each of these potential schedule drains? Again, on our end, we got to talk about us first, right? And I'm going to talk about our consultants. We've got to make sure our consultants

[00:17:17] are doing what they need to do when the time comes to do submittals. If I submit something in round one and the comment is X, Y, and Z, and we don't QA, QC to make sure that we've done X, Y, and Z, then I expect more comments from VDOT. That's not VDOT's fault. That's our fault.

[00:17:34] And so we've got to make sure that we are holding consultants accountable. We're holding ourselves accountable for checking things. Are the submittals where they need to be when they get to VDOT? And we're going to do that with respect to our consultants. And if the consultants do good work, they get more work. They don't do good work, they're not getting work. It's just the bottom line there. From the review perspective on the VDOT side, what I really want to do is I want to have a solid VDOT point of contact. I'm not going to call out specific names, but I really want to have a specific VDOT contact that can help negotiate and talk through some of these issues

[00:18:12] that we have. Somebody that can say, you got no comments at 60%, you got no comments at 90%, I'm not comfortable with at 100% saying now go change everything or someone where there's conflicting comments from the VDOT perspective, from location design or traffic engineering to work through and say this is how we're going to solve that versus having to chase around people to figure out how we're going to do things.

[00:18:38] And then, again, as I talked about, as we're dealing with community engagement, how do we balance the fact that at a certain point, the law of diminishing returns is going to make it very difficult for us to complete projects on time if we're at 100% design going to the community and there's a number of different changes.

[00:18:59] So these are tough decisions, things that we've got to talk about, but the design phase is where a lot of the delay can happen or a lot of time can be saved. Generally concurrent with design is land acquisition. Here's what I'll say about land acquisition, and it's handled generally by public works. It covers, you know, preparing the plats to acquire the land, appraisals, negotiation, offer letters, things of that nature.

[00:19:29] There's not a ton of project enhancement that can be achieved here because what you're dealing with is a property owner and they either want to negotiate or they don't want to negotiate. Either they want to be difficult or they don't want to be difficult. Either you offer them something, they go, thank you, we'll take it, or they go, eh, I'm going to haggle for \$50,000 more or whatever the case may be.

[00:19:50] The only option of that is condemnation. And condemnation, if you're dealing with a very difficult property owner, can save you a lot of time. But sometimes you don't know that you're dealing with a property owner until you're halfway through the process and a five-month condemnation process when you're already six months in, not always that great.

[00:20:08] And I would also say condemnation can give a perception of an organization that either we're just steamrolling people and we're not being cooperative or friendly or negotiating with the property owners.

[00:20:24] So we have to be a little bit careful about that as well. So utilities, again, it's something that I would say it can be a very big time drain. I don't know that we have a ton of control over it. The utility has to develop their plan.

[00:20:42] Their workload dictates how quickly they can get to doing the relocation itself. Our design division chief, I think, is continuing to try and establish relationships with utility companies. Who do we talk to? Who can I press on to get this moving faster?

[00:20:59] Is there someone that can help me get through this without as much difficulty as maybe we've been dealing with? I know we've also reached out sometimes to you all on the board to help sort of broker

that and talk that through. But again, it's really about trying to find the right people and getting them on board with moving utilities. But outside of that, there's not a ton that can be done in the utility phase. Construction is pretty straightforward for the most part. The biggest things that can cause delay here, did somebody miss a utility? Is there some black fiber running in the ground from an agency with three initials that we weren't aware of?

[00:21:39] Are you digging in the ground and you hit rock and you weren't expecting rock to be out there? There's also some time of year weather things that you can run into. But the main thing here is to make sure that you do your constructability reviews early, you talk to the construction crew, make sure that there aren't any unforeseen circumstances that are out there because that can lead to delays. But otherwise, construction is usually fairly straightforward. And you also get a little bit of grace because physically dirt's moving and people see dirt moving as opposed to in the design phase, you don't see anything happening. So people's patience is

[00:22:18] sometimes a little bit less forgiving. So let's talk next steps a little bit here. First thing I'm going to say out the gate is this is not a we do two or three things and we're done never to do anything again. This is about taking stock of where we are, taking steps, seeing where we are, looking at more steps, seeing if they help, so on, so forth. It's a process. This isn't like you're in a speedboat and you turn the steering wheel and the boat goes exactly where you want. It's a little bit more about turning a freighter ship. You got to move it a little bit,

[00:22:54] a little bit at a time and get to where you want to go. Some of the changes that we've talked about on our end can knock weeks maybe or so off here and there. But our real changes here are about preventing the things that create delays. That's where your real-time savings shows up is when you prevent things from happening, that can cause delays. Again, we talked about some of these things, putting together that more detailed schedule and checking it versus what's happening out there. Are we hitting our marks? Are we having delays? And if we are having delays,

[00:23:30] what's the reason? Is it something that happens all the time that we have to fix? Is it a one-off? So putting together that detailed schedule is important. How we get better, how we work through processes. We already talked about raising the signatory rates. That's just something that we're doing now, and we're codifying now, and we're prepared to do that. The team is also preparing to start modifying those survey timelines and sending out the survey letters early, so that's something that we're focused on doing shortly as well. Over the next month or two, my plan is to reach out to VDOT, talk with their new Fairfax liaison, and start to talk about some of the

[00:24:10] things that and the challenges that we're having in the VDOT realm and how do we work through some of those things. As I talked about, our design chief is continuously meeting with utility companies to further establish relationships, talk about contacts. And as we talked about at the beginning, Supervisor Beerman talked about at the beginning, the auditor to the board is looking at the active transportation project process as a part of the \$100 million for active transportation.

[00:24:38] And they'll be coming up with recommendations that we're going to implement along with timelines. And I think all this gels fairly well together because a lot of things we talk about today, I'm sure the thought is, okay, what's the timeline on that? When are we going to do that? All those things can be put together, even in some instances things that may not necessarily be in the audit.

[00:24:59] But we can combine things together and develop a timeline that says, here's where things are going to get implemented and how we're planning on doing that. So with that, I have a couple of feedback questions for you all. Quite frankly, we've presented a lot of information here, a lot of things for improving project delivery.

[00:25:19] But obviously, we want your feedback on whether you agree, disagree, things that you like, things you don't like, and if there are other additional suggestions that you may have. And secondarily, and this is a challenging one, and I don't know that I necessarily need etched in stone your answer, but I need some thoughts and feedback about the concept of public involvement and how we tackle that vis-a-vis our process.

[00:25:44] Is there a willingness to have a cutoff point somewhere in design where we understand and know that we're not taking feedback that will create massive changes? And with that, I will open it up for questions.

[00:26:01] Thank you, Greg. I really appreciate something you said earlier, which is, are the things that we're doing helping? I think that's the key question here. With that, I'll open it up to Chairman McKay first and then the rest of the board. Yeah, thank you. First, thank you for taking all the time to go through this and look for opportunities.

[00:26:20] I will speak for myself and say yes to all of them. Like, my hope would have been we've already been doing a lot of these because this problem with how long it takes to get things done is not a new problem that we've been dealing with. that it maybe has been risen to a new level more recently.

[00:26:35] But yes, I think do all of these things. I guess the couple of questions I would have is, well, first, just a comment. The concern with VDOT with regard to comments on plans is not dissimilar at all from the complaint the private sector has about the county on plans.

[00:26:54] And I know that's not your department, that's LDS, but I think, you know, if we are seeking relief on that front with VDOT, we should be following the principles that we're using to improve that process on the county side with the private sector because we've put in place some requirements on comments in terms of duplication of them, in terms of referencing them, in terms of cutting and pasting them just because it's convenient.

[00:27:20] You know, if we're going to sit down with VDOT and talk about that, we should be looking at the things we're trying to do on our end because this has been a chronic problem with the private sector and the county going through our plans review process as well. I would love to see us on some of these projects set a very clear goal on day one, that if we move forward with this, we have a goal to reduce the timeline it takes to get some of these things done and measure against that goal as we're going through the process and, frankly, be updating the supervisor's office on what's causing that goal to have to be

[00:27:53] modified or changed? And if it's our fault, tell us that. But to me, taking 50 to 54 months to do a \$500,000 trail or sidewalk would not seem to be an acceptable goal to anyone. And so what would that number look like? And how can we reasonably achieve that? And how can we monitor that as we're going through the process to point out where the flaws are very clearly to improve for the next time. And it might be a particular utility. It might be a particular comment from VDOT. It may be a particular supervisor's office that's challenged with meeting the deadline and

[00:28:30] helping you meet the deadline. We all need to be held accountable for that. And so I would love to see us come up with what our goals are for what to get these projects done are. Not what it takes, but what is our goal to accomplish those things, knowing that time is money. And then on the piece about the public engagement, absolutely I think earlier engagement helps. I would just say manage expectations with people going in when we give presentations, telling them what our goal timeline is, what the hurdles might be to getting the money lined up that could alter that, just being very

[00:29:09] transparent with them that we're doing early engagement. I think most people think if we're talking about a sidewalk by like next Friday, they'll be out there building it if we have a public meeting. And so if we're going to engage earlier, we need to have a concerted effort to manage expectations on timeline at the same time we're doing that. And I think that, to me, that would make sense. Cut off in the design process, absolutely. I think if we need to be bold, you know, with our communities too, when these projects come forward and be participating in the process and recognizing that at a certain point, we have to make a decision. We're moving

[00:29:45] forward with the way it is. We can't go back and redesign something at great expense because here's the thing, it's costing another community their opportunity to get an infrastructure improvement now. So I think at some point we can't just be so selfish as to say we're going to drag this out, design, redesign, redesign, redesign, because there's some element of it we don't like, while another community is waiting in line to get a sidewalk up and going or a pedestrian and improvement. So I absolutely support the, once we get to this point in the design process, that's it in terms of making changes to it. And I think that will speed up things and we can help

[00:30:22] you with that. And so I think a lot of good recommendations in here, I would say yes to all of them with the caveats that I just mentioned and with the idea that time is money. Time is important, staff time, but money right now in particular is not just for the project we're talking about, but what does that do to affect other projects that are in the pipeline? And we have to be thinking that way at a certain point. And so I appreciate the work you've done and fully support it. Well, I agree with all that. Kathy, go ahead. Thank you. A couple clarifying

[00:31:01] things, and then I have some questions. On slide four, under the common challenges, It talks about timely comments with contributing entities. Are you talking about the entities outside of the county there, or is some of it comments from, like, the park authority and all of that?

[00:31:20] Yes. Yes, okay. And so I definitely share the concerns there. I just wanted to clarify that. Slide five, the common challenges, the survey, backlog, and workload. And you talked about that, whether it's staff vacancies or whether it's workload.

[00:31:39] One of the things that I have found, because for a gazillion years, we worked with the same employees who are gone, and then issues come up with a project, and it seems like there's a disconnect, that knowledge isn't there for the person who's taken over, and that adds time for them to get that information.

[00:31:57] So some kind of process to ensure that something that might take five or ten years to get to, It's just not lost in starting the game all over again. Thank you. I agree with the chairman's comments about community feedback easier.

[00:32:15] It's earlier. I think one of the problems, you know, you talk about stopping design work at a time. I have a classic project, 2014 TPP project, sidewalk. We did community engagement.

[00:32:30] Then you get to the part that you need property from people. This project is still ongoing. I'm hoping there is an end in sight, but because of the comments from the community so late in the project, now we're changing stormwater, okay? And so something has to change there.

[00:32:48] I'm very frustrated. It's a lot of money that another community might appreciate more. On slide eight, we talk about opportunities for enhancement, and we talk about bringing the supervisors in.

[00:33:05] I hate that we would have to get to that point, But my question in that is, how long do you just keep going? How long do you talk to this utility? And, you know, they're businesses, but we're all the same community. And so in a perfect world, we would be able to get them on the same page to get the work done.

[00:33:26] But if you are going to depend on getting supervisors involved, I don't think you want to wait too long to get to that piece, right? Hold on a second. Supervisor Smith, you know, that's a really good point. You know, we've been working on so many projects, and I'll use the BRT, for example, very high complex projects.

[00:33:47] So I think what we're going to try and do is figure out exactly when that trigger point is, and I think we need to put that in the timeline. But I think before we get you involved, there should be some other types of things we can do moving that process forward.

[00:34:03] That would be my preference. Okay. On that point, you know, if we set a goal and you know you can't make it now because of something that's happening, that's when you call the supervisor and say we can't meet the goal because this is what's happening with it now and solicit help. I mean, I think it's good to have that, and I think if we had a goal for how long these projects took instead of just this is how long they take, that would be the triggering factor to get the supervisor's office involved when one is no longer meeting that timeline.

[00:34:30] I did have a question that I skipped on the mandated public hearings on slide six. When you talk about mandated public hearings are required, are you talking about our board or other agencies?

[00:34:50] I wasn't sure what that meant. Under community information meetings and comments, special considerations. Oh, yeah. Yeah, so when it comes to design projects, obviously, whether it's our project or others, there is some public engagement that has to be done.

[00:35:12] And so we have the, as you'll see sometimes, VDAL do the notice of willingness to hold a public hearing. What it really breaks down to is when we decide to and when the goal is to do a public hearing, there's a sort of a two-month time frame of getting things scheduled for the public meeting, having the public meeting put together comments.

[00:35:34] And so normally I would say we're going to have to do one public meeting at least. We probably should start early to decide are we going to do multiple ones, are we going to do it, and when we're going to do it. But it's just sort of the conversation surrounding we're doing these projects.

[00:35:50] We have to go to the community and have sort of a public meeting, show the design plans, talk about. So I guess part of my preference is that is you have a public meeting earlier to talk big picture about

a project. The people that are going to be more involved in the details, I would think, are the people that are impacted by the project.

[00:36:08] But you need to hear community comments before you're at, you know, this final design thing. Thank you. Thank you. Next, I have Supervisor Palchuk, and then Supervisor Lusk, Supervisor Herity, and Supervisor Alcor. All right. Well, thank you to you and your incredible team. I know it's a big effort and always room for all of us, I think, to improve that.

[00:36:31] Agree with everything the chairman said, and the only thing I would maybe add for us to consider is, again, there are so many different projects we're going out and getting engagement from the community. A, I think sending the survey letters earlier will help because, as you know, a lot of people aren't engaged even if we send out the information until there's a notice that it might impact them.

[00:36:52] So I think that will help. Number two, I think we should consider, I don't know if you're looking at standardizing, having the timelines, but maybe platforms that are easier to use with our community. I know some of our surrounding jurisdictions maybe use some of the smaller consultants that do a lot of that engagement for them.

[00:37:14] So if there are things we can learn or hire them to help figure out how to make it easier, both to engage with the community and have those timelines, but with our offices as well, right? Because we're always training staff, and it's different with every agency. So I think just standardizing it and making it so people can easily follow it when they're really busy will be helpful.

[00:37:35] And to me, the big thing about that is, yes, I'm happy to say we have a timeline, but I think we need to feel that it's not just a checkbox, right? It really truly is. This is where we are. This is where there's feedback that's asked for. This is where changes can happen. And then there's, you know, a firm deadline.

[00:37:56] And then the other thing I would say from us, but for you as well, I don't know what level of debrief and review and redesign there is of both the engagement and the process. How well did it work, right? The iterative process of understanding, okay, this, it was a great design, but like the outreach, right, really struggled.

[00:38:19] And maybe having us and the community have a way to do that as well. The technical stuff you guys have down, but I think continuing to improve how, when, and the boundaries, right, for the engagement will be very helpful. Thank you.

[00:38:35] Thank you for those comments. I agree with all of them again. Supervisor Lusk. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'll dovetail a number of the comments that were made and say I appreciate the presentation as well. Appreciate the comments from Vice Chair Smith as well, particularly with the community.

[00:38:55] But what I'd also like to add is I think in the scoping section, we should also think about some of the environmental issues, kind of bringing those up front. Because I've seen, obviously, with the Cinderbeg Road Trail, how we have had to deal with that kind of after the fact.

[00:39:11] And I think some of this could have been possibly avoided if we had moved that earlier in the process. So I think looking at some of those tree save and other environmental issues sooner could certainly be a benefit. And then I also like the idea about this process reengineering.

[00:39:33] I mean, there's always opportunities for us to look at the way that we do things and to see if there are streamlined processes or revisions or changes that we can employ that will make the process better. and I want to acknowledge that point and then I'm just trying to think if there's you know in terms of the other concerns just making sure you know the community feels that they are a part of the process I know that in some cases the actions and the steps that we're taking and the process that we're using

[00:40:12] makes them feel that they are kind of outside of it so doing what we can to make it a little more inclusive is going to be great. And then the last point I'll make is just thinking about if there are any lessons from the private sector, and I think the chairman was alluding to this, I mean, there are things that we can, you know, adopt from their processes to help us streamline and improve the work that we're doing with regard to, you know, our scoping and our construction, I think would be certainly helpful. So with that, I'll conclude my remarks.

[00:40:46] thank you very much thank you uh we're four for four on great comments no pressure pat you're up interesting how you did that um so i yeah go ahead i'm going to echo some other things i mean certainly community input i think early and often is what really needs to happen and i think virtual helps today they're a little bit easier to do than they used to be when you had to rent a school and get a bit but i think regular touch points because the community on a couple of my projects have provided some pretty valuable guidance. The most recent one was the, they were

[00:41:25] going to, it's Parkway and Cammerich, and anyway, they were going to limit the turns. It was going to be a nightmare, but the community saved that from happening. It wasn't one of yours. I think that was a VDOT one. So question, where do we look, and this is the tough one at right-sizing and look at making things more efficient up front, the capacity versus the needs.

[00:41:56] I'm going to use Rolling Road as an example. When Rolling Road came to me, it was 10-foot trails on both sides, all the way down, taking people's front yards. I know the neighborhood. There's no way we need 10-foot on either side for pedestrian trails.

[00:42:11] We ended up with 8 feet and a 5-foot sidewalk, but that saved, A, a ton of money. It saved a ton of time and condemnation. We're going to end up with a better project there. It's saved on utility impacts. At what point, and to go to Rodney's point, environmental issues, I mean, fewer trees taking.

[00:42:31] At what point in this are we looking at how we design it in order to either reduce the cost impact and reduce the environmental impact? Is that all in scoping, and who does that? And do we actively do that, which is kind of my question, because you asked for additional suggestions.

[00:42:52] You know, sometimes perfect is the enemy of the good. And I don't want to see us do the perfect when good works and gets us done a lot quicker and we can do a lot more projects, which is perfect. Yeah.

[00:43:09] So project scoping is where if you're going to look at 10 foot to 8 foot, if you're going to look at the segment's going to be shorter or things like that, that happens at project scoping. I am going to get into – supervisor, let's touch on this. I'm going to get in the next presentation into some of that environmental stuff because I think even earlier than project scoping is when we're going to think about tackling that.

[00:43:33] So you're going to see a little bit of that, and we're going to talk about a little bit of that in the next presentation. But project scoping is usually when you tackle some of those, hey, we want to make this a slightly smaller project, or hey, we want to go here versus there, or we want to tackle this in a different

way. Because you definitely don't want to do it when you're at design, because by then you've already allocated money, you've decided what it's going to be, and now you're looking at going backwards and having to find more money.

[00:43:58] So you said, I'm going to pick on words for a minute, you said that's where you would look at it. Is that where we do look at it? That is where we do look at it, yes. Okay. I just want to make sure that there's a box that says we've looked at how we could make this a more reasonable, less environmentally, less utility, impactful project.

[00:44:17] That's part of, quite frankly, that's part of the IPR review. When people come together, if somebody sees something or if we're having a conversation where something pops up or if there's a decision from one of the other agencies that, hey, this is too impactful, this is a problem, that's when we talk about that.

[00:44:33] Same with when the board aides are involved. If there's something that they see on your behalf that we're like, we don't want to do this or we don't want to deal with that, that's where we tackle that. Real quick, I want to echo the whole parallel versus sequential, sending the survey lines early. As long as you're not spending a lot of money sending, but notices seem like a pretty inexpensive thing to do pretty easy.

[00:44:56] You know, kind of jokingly, I'll tell that time you're going to say, regular check-ins with the supervisor office, I don't know that, I mean, I know my office doesn't have those. And I don't know whether that would be something good just to go over the whole project list. You're going to save all that time not having to review those projects.

[00:45:14] I'm just teasing. But that might be a way to improve the communication, and I don't know whether some staff are afraid of the contact with supervisor's office or not. But just as a suggestion, in my last one's attempt to end on a humorous note, why is everybody afraid to say bats are the cause of so many delay in design and cutting down trees or issues?

[00:45:42] Because I'm not going to pick on a very specific thing. I've just heard so many projects delayed anyway. Can I make one comment? We do send out notifications electronically, but maybe we need to figure out another process, maybe create a dashboard and then put it in a new – something else has to happen so they don't miss the electronic dissemination, and maybe we need to send it directly to the supervisor or maybe to the chief of staff or something, but something's arrived there.

[00:46:15] I think there's going to be a lot of changes and edits when it comes to not only the communication, but also to, I forgot whose point it was, but about the schedule and timeline and the visibility of those schedules and timelines.

[00:46:31] I think that's a huge part of where we need to be going. Jen Miller, Deputy County Executive, just two points that I've heard a number of folks made. One is on the community engagement piece, and I think you've heard me talk about the struggle before and the inconsistency I think we have even for like-type projects across the county.

[00:46:46] So internally, Chris Harrington's team, for me, reviewed all of our different methods for all of the community development pieces of community engagement, and not shockingly to anyone, I think, realized that we are not consistent necessarily, as some divisions are, but not across the county. So we threw this under the board matter for the Housing Task Force, even though it's really a lot beyond housing.

[00:47:07] But Tony Zolicoffer is leading an effort with Chris Harrington looking at community engagement across the entirety of the county. So more to follow on that. I wish I already had an answer. All I can tell you so far is we don't necessarily have consistent engagement. This will not shock anyone. But I think having a standard template to the extent that we can for like projects that you then would intentionally deviate from is something, if warranted, is something that we're looking to do.

[00:47:33] The other thing that I would say is on the benchmarking, and Greg's heard me pound on this for a while and I think has done a great job with the team in working on it. But I agree with you. There's a lot of elements we can't control. But nonetheless, we can have the shot clock mentality. So when someone says this transportation project takes too long, I always say, how long should it take, right?

[00:47:53] And we don't know necessarily. And there's elements that at least we can say, on average, if we hear back from the community in this period of time, then it takes staff this much time. So that shot clock is the step one. And then the step two is benchmarking against other jurisdictions. So that is something, and Greg has that in here, and I know his team has been meeting on and working on it.

[00:48:12] Thank you. Thank you for your question, Supervisor Herity. Thank you for the comments. Supervisor Alcorn, you're up. All right, thank you. I want to go back to Greg. You mentioned visibility and looking at how we're making these projects and the information about them visible.

[00:48:30] And I just have a question about the TDD Monthly Status Report Transportation Design Division. And that has a lot of good information, but obviously it's a subset of projects that the department is looking at.

[00:48:47] Could you talk to that just a little bit in terms of what's in there and what's not? Right. And the design status update is really helpful in getting an understanding of what the project is, how it's funded, what the cost is, what the schedule is set to be, all the way from design through to construction.

[00:49:11] Here's what I'll say it doesn't include and why I think, you know, and Deputy County Executive Miller talks about, it doesn't include, so for example, if I give you a report in January and it says the project will be complete in December and then I give you one in March and it says it'll be done in the following February, it's hard to track what's happened over time, right?

[00:49:37] If you want to go back and look at all the reports, you can absolutely figure that out. But I think from our perspective, trying to make that more available and visible so we understand kind of what's going on I think is the helpful piece. But it is very important, and I use it quite a bit.

[00:49:55] When people ask me a question about a project, I'm quickly frantically looking it up going, oh, that's right. This one is here. It's at this stage of the game. The next step is we're going to do land acquisition, and it's set for this time frame. So those are on the website, and we'll continue to sort of put these things together.

[00:50:12] My goal in the future, and the team has heard me talk about this hundreds of times as we develop our sort of capital project management system that will, you know, track these projects better, is to have this on GIS, on the website. If you want to click on a project, you can click on it, find out all the history of it so that you're not looking through sort of a PDF or something like that.

[00:50:34] If you want to cordon off an area and see all the projects in an area and what their time frame is, you can do that. That's my goal. We've got to work through and get the system up and running. But that's

where I'm looking to go with this. Yeah, that would be great. I would also suggest I think there are a couple.

[00:50:51] Are all the VDOT projects on this list or not, right? No. These are generally our projects. We have the status report, which is done twice a year, that covers everyone's project, including VDOT projects. But that one is a more snapshot in time of where everything is.

[00:51:10] But again, the goal is – and it might be a little tougher with other people's projects because the project managers aren't there to update it. Right. But the goal is to have all of this in one specific spot so people can see it. That would be great. And the other, I think, area that has been discussed but may not be shown exactly the same way but perhaps in the system that you're talking about could be is just the early projects, the projects that are early in their development.

[00:51:37] They're still conceptual. I mean I know in Hunter Mill alone, I believe there are 277 pedestrian active transportation projects that have been requested at some point by somebody. So not suggesting those all go onto a GIS, but it seems to me once there's some official action moving forward with the project, there needs to be a centralized way of people seeing the status of it, next steps, and projected schedule.

[00:52:09] So thank you for looking at the visibility. Thank you, Supervisor Alcorn. Next up, we have Supervisor Stork. Most of my questions didn't answer, but I guess I want to just make sure I understand the project expectation piece of this.

[00:52:28] And a lot of it has to do with the items that are laid, the timelines, et cetera, that have been laid down here and the qualifications or the ways that you would assess that. Are those consistent with industry practices in other jurisdictions, specifically speaking about government at the moment?

[00:52:44] And then how do they connect and how do we see private industry do something similar to this? I realize there's different audiences and different ways that you have to look at that. But as part of your overview of this, have you looked at those elements as well?

[00:53:03] So real quick, if I could ask you to restate the first part, because I heard what you're asking in terms of how we do things, how the private sector, but let me specifically make sure I understand what you're saying. Number one, project expectations are the most essential thing I want to know, because that at least helps me to explain to the folks on Newington Road that, no, this is going to take five to X number of years. And even though I say that, I still have individuals who want to ignore that issue or think they can expedite this in some way. So having a clear expectation

[00:53:41] helps me. And then explain much of what you have in here already helps me to then say, well, here are the pieces of this. And first off, we're at step two. And we're not going to get to step three, unless somebody finds \$10 million, you know, or et cetera, et cetera. So that's kind of one piece of that, and that's really critical to me, helps me to explain to others, and even if people in the community might ignore that, you know, because they think it doesn't hurt to keep repeating the same thing over and over again and thinking that there'll be a different outcome.

[00:54:13] But the other part is, jurisdictionally, the parameters that you put in here, how do they stack up with best practices in other places like sector and then obviously private sector is a whole different level. But I mean, I'm still curious. They still have some of the same core elements that we have. Yeah. And that's part of some of the research that we're doing and continue to do when we talk with other jurisdictions,

other agencies. We talk with VDOT about best practices. You know, I have begun having meetings with the directors of transportation in Arlington,

[00:54:51] Prince William, Anne Loudon. We're going to start meeting as a group of people. And I think having some of those conversations, because some people are able to do things differently. Some people are full-on condemnation people, for example, or some people are, you know, I'm just throwing it out there, but things, what people do and how well they work is really a part of this discussion and having peers to say, oh, we've tried that and it's terrible, or we've tried that and it's worked.

[00:55:19] And so I think that group is really going to get into the meat of, all right, let's figure out and find things that work in other agencies. The other piece you talk about really goes back to the deputy county executives piece, which is having the shot clock. If you want to be able to tell somebody that this project is supposed to take six months from X point to Y point, then we've got to have data that tells you that the past 12 projects we've done, it's been six months from X to Y.

[00:55:47] Or it's been three months, five months, 12 months, eight months. Predictability matters, and I know that people care about predictability. I care about predictability. As much as we can have that, it's phenomenal. But if we find out that predictability is not the case and we find out why predictability is not the case, then we can have a better chance of fighting through that issue that we have with predictability.

[00:56:12] So I 100% understand where you're going. I think that's part of the – as we start to really track more phases and more nuanced pieces of the phases, we're going to get more of that information so that we can go, you know what? This is probably going to take three months, but just FYI, the past 12 projects have widely varied.

[00:56:32] And so we're going to try and do three months, but be aware this, this, this, this, and this might make that more difficult. So more to come on that, and that's why I said this isn't a one or two things, implement it, and we're good to go. and it's not like turning a speedboat. This is going to be an iterative process that we're going to continue to come back to you, continue to have conversations with you about, and continue to track and monitor.

[00:56:53] Thank you. And please, when you do that, tell us what are things that we maybe can do to expedite or things that are at risk that might delay that process. I mean, I think for a supervisor's office, that kind of information is very helpful. Thank you. Absolutely.

[00:57:09] Thank you, Supervisor Sizemore Heiser. Thank you. And I don't have very many questions. Most of my questions have been answered, but a couple of things just as I'm listening to you. One, I know in here you wrote that VDOT has a 30-day approval timeline. Do you find that generally they stick to that, or are there issues?

[00:57:27] I know in Braddock a lot of the delays have sometimes been because of VDOT approval, so I wasn't sure if that was part of a process we needed to work hand-in-hand with our state partners, right, because I know that there's desire in the state as well to be faster with some of these projects. So I was curious what you were seeing on that side. Yeah, I've heard recently it's been a little bit more of a struggle to hit those timelines.

[00:57:49] I do think having the conversation, reiterating that is going to be helpful, beneficial. I think also where we can sort of, not that we're going to say, hey, could you do this earlier? But hey, maybe, can you do this earlier? I would also say from our end, again, the conversation surrounding making sure that

our submittals or resubmittals are where they need to be is also super helpful, because if someone asks you to do five very straightforward things, and you do those five very straightforward things, fingers crossed, my hope is that it doesn't take 30 days for someone to review and sign off on that. But these are all things that

[00:58:27] we've got to continue to sort of have the conversation with VDOT about and be very straightforward and honest with each other about what's going on. Yeah, and I think, to your point, we can only control our own internal processes, right, and making sure those are streamlined. But it's always good to work with our partners at VDOT.

[00:58:44] The other thing I wanted to ask about is what sort of knowledge management internally do you have on some of these projects that can take three, four, five years? I think someone mentioned earlier turnover in staff, but I'm assuming there's some knowledge management processes. Maybe that's something you're looking at moving forward to help streamline that if there is someone who leads in the middle of a project.

[00:59:03] Yeah, and that can absolutely be a challenge. The goal is you don't want people to leave partway through a project. the goal is also that if they do leave that they've passed along knowledge to someone else that doesn't always happen but what I will say that we've been pretty good about is the people who have risen in the ranks in the organization have been here and have worked on projects and have been through the project processes and understand some of those things and are then able to sort of train the new staff but that staff startup if someone comes in halfway through a project it's always going to be a little bit of a challenge but having the people in the leadership

[00:59:42] positions to be able to talk them through it has been super helpful and key yeah i think sometimes just processes because you can't always control having that handoff time right or having somebody who's in leadership who's been intimately involved with the project at that level so just something to think about as you're looking at your processes is what can you put in systematically so someone can walk in and say all right here's the memo on this project or here's the background on this project. And then the only other question I really had is, I love looking at trying to create a streamlined process and having maybe a process that can be modified depending on the size and

[01:00:17] scope of any project. But it would be helpful, I think, to have maybe one-pagers for the supervisor's office to the community. So when someone's saying, hey, I want a sidewalk here, then they might know, all right, here's what it's going to take. And we're working on creating some of the communications ourselves but coming from your side so that way we can help better set community expectations especially if there's going to be a spot where we're going to say in the design part here's where we're going to cut off engagement right and then the last question I asked is is there going to be someone who's going to be responsible for saying this is the moment in that design process right what is that process going to look like to say here's where we're taking all the engagement we're going to take and

[01:00:55] feedback and now we're going to move forward but I think having those one pages or information the community so we can help set expectations on the community might be helpful. Good point. Thank you. Thank you. Mr. Chairman. Yeah, just very quickly because I thought the last question was going in a different direction, but I don't want to lose sight of something that has me a little bit bothered, and I just want to bring it up on page 10. Under your next steps, you have developed consultant

quality control materials, and that jumps out at me because, you know, my first instinct is we go through a procurement process

[01:01:33] and we have standards. I would hope that you're being worked with you in procurement in terms of what the expectations are. I know we hire consultants in cases where we don't have the in-house expertise, or frankly, it can help alleviate some of the staffing issues and allow our staff to focus on other things. If we have to spend a lot of time coaching, overseeing, helping, facilitating consultants, then it begs the question of, you know, one, what's wrong with our front-end process where we don't have higher expectations for consultants that we're paying to make our life easier, not harder? Or two, did we need them in the first place if we have to do

[01:02:12] all that? And so I just leave that thought in your mind because I hear a lot of times it's quick to go the consultant route. And I don't have a problem with that as long as going the consultant route brings in expertise we don't have and creates efficiencies for you and your staff. If in any circumstances not doing those two things, then it begs the question. And so I would just say looking at and talking maybe with procurement about what the upfront expectations are, because if you're spending a lot of time coaching consultants through a process, then I don't know what the value add is at the end of the day. And so just something to think about and look at.

[01:02:46] That's probably not the greatest word choicing for that slide. I think what it's really about is making sure that when things are provided or submitted that we know that they're doing it the way that needs to be done and making sure that if they're not, to your point, that we're not using them.

[01:03:05] It's just more about following up and checking. And thinking about on the front end when we put out specs for things that we're putting out there exactly what we want and then holding them accountable. Yeah, a large QAQC section in your contract and in your request for proposals.

[01:03:22] Yes, absolutely. Okay, thank you. Great. Well, I actually had a question in my notes about the pros and cons of using consultants. So well done, Chairman McKay. I think that was a great discussion. I think you're hearing a lot of themes from this side of the table.

[01:03:41] Supervisor Palchuk pointing out how well did it work. so when we start making these changes, we want to track them. Supervisor Alcorn bringing up TDD and sort of the transparency of the documents that we put out to the community and how we track things. Supervisor Herity talking about both parallel and sequential, not always doing things sequentially, but trying to find opportunities for parallelism. I think we're hearing a lot about overall transparency, trying to manage the expectations both of supervisors and the expectations of our community. And I love that Supervisor Stork said, what are things that we

[01:04:20] can do? I think you're seeing that our side of the table, we're very much, we want to be a part of this process and a part of the solution. Going back to something that Vice Chair Smith was talking about with utilities, you know, the other day I had some people come to me asking about utilities because a utility company failing to provide plats on a project had delayed us by nine months.

[01:04:44] I wish you'd come to me about six months ago, but also, look, I'm very, very good at pounding the table, and we all know that, and hopefully our discussion with that utility company works, but we also need to continually build those relationships, as you said, both with those utility companies, with our partners at VDOT, with all of our partners, and we need to know what our contingency plans are if those

partners are not going to act appropriately or play ball, not to make more work for Beth Teer, but you've got more work on that one.

[01:05:20] And with that, I think we can move on to the second presentation, which is talking about the \$100 million for active transportation access and safety improvements and a discussion of where some of those projects are at.

[01:05:38] I, again, going back to the theme, I have pounded the table about this in the past, so I'm not going to do it today. But we're going to get an update, and then we're going to have some more questions from the board. And, again, I think the other words that were used by Supervisor Palchek, this is an iterative process.

[01:05:56] We are trying to find ways to do this better. So go ahead with the next presentation. Thank you. Thank you. Again, Greg Severson, Director of FCDOT. Martha Coelho is here with us. I'm going to try and go through this presentation a lot more quickly than I imagined doing it because we've got 20 minutes left, and I definitely want to leave time for you all to ask questions.

[01:06:17] So this presentation is specifically dealing with the projects that were funded through the additional \$100 million for active transportation. This is your brief refresher. 2021, the board asked the county to find \$100 million over a six-year period to fund active transportation projects. \$82 million has been provided to this point. We've allocated \$56.7 million with \$25.4 million left to allocate in what's called Round 4. And you'll find out why it's called Round 4. It's not very difficult why, but you'll see here. This is our timeline from

[01:06:51] 2021 until now. As I said, in 2021, there was the board matter that requested the funding. In early 2022, we sort of developed a list of projects and \$5 million was approved for round one. We allocated the funding to the projects in later part of 2022, but we also received another \$25.2 million in the fall of 2022 as well. We approved for another \$26.5 million in the fall

[01:07:20] 2023. And then in round four, 2024, another \$25.4 million was approved. I'm going to stop here for a second to say this is a case of FCDOT, be careful what you wish for, right? Here's the thing.

[01:07:40] Our Department of Management and Budget, to their credit, was able to approve \$82 million dollars in a three-year window. So that's 82% of the money we asked for in 50% of the time we asked for it, which is a phenomenal job by DMB, but it's created a situation on our end where we asked for something and now the workload hits you and you've got to deal with that workload. And I'm not going to shy away from that. It just, it is what it is. Be careful what you wish for. We did our math, six years, \$100 million, you're thinking a certain amount every year. But when someone

[01:08:18] goes above and beyond, sometimes you feel the ramification of that. I'll also point out that in rounds one through three, there was a much shorter turnaround in terms of project approval to project allocation. Round four, we struggled with that. And I'll give you some reasons for that in a minute. And I'll also give you a solution that I'm thinking about in order to tackle that. So the next few slides, I'm really going to go through these fast. This is going to have to be where I cut a little bit of time. But the point of these three slides is really just fundamentally to outline where each of the projects are in each of the rounds. Round one

[01:08:56] had 17 projects. They were quick hitting projects. We've got 11 of those done. It's been three and a half years since allocation, four since funding was approved. So we're in the three or four year

window for these projects. But when we start getting into, and I will say real quick, the project that's shown on hold, I'm going to talk about it in a little bit because it deals with some of the challenges we've run into with some of these projects. But as we move to round two, now we're up to 30 projects. And we're up to, I believe it was \$25 million. Half of these are in

[01:09:35] the design phase, three in land acquisition, six in pre-design, three in scoping. And then three are on hold because of, again, project funding and project costs that have gone up. The one that's been canceled, VDOT's implementing it through its Highway Safety Improvement Program. But really quickly here, what I want to talk about on this slide, the three projects that are still in project scoping, as we talked about in the previous presentation, they all have traffic studies, and they've all been trying to work through the traffic analysis process, whether they're changing something with the traffic signal timing, whether they're asking for a rapid flashing beacon or a pedestrian hybrid beacon.

[01:10:15] There's something in there that requires a traffic analysis, and that study is taking time to do. One other thing I will note in this is that the first group of projects were all very quick-hitting crosswalk projects.

[01:10:30] We've started to add more sidewalk and trail projects in here, but also what I'm going to point out, and it's going to apply a lot more as we get into the next round. In 2024, we got hit with a change in sort of the rules of how you do crosswalk projects and curb ramp projects.

[01:10:52] And so things that used to be a crosswalk and two curbs got hit with something called PROAG. PROAG stands for Public Right-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines. I'm going to show you a picture and a couple of slides. What that means is when you go out and you're planning to do a crosswalk and two ramps, if you touch the intersection, now you're doing the entire intersection.

[01:11:14] You're doing more crosswalks, you're doing more ramps. And so projects that were short and quick now became a lot more challenging and a lot more costly. And so we're going to talk about that as we get into the slides a little bit further. Round three, as you can see, the workload's starting to become more challenging, but even more so, the pro-ag is really hitting us now because all of these crosswalk projects that we felt would be small scope, crosswalk, two ramps are now becoming full intersection redos.

[01:11:49] And so we've got to make some determinations of how we tackle that. Most of the time, our goal is we want the project, so we're willing to figure out how to fund the remainder of the intersection in order to do that project. Again, now we've gone from three sidewalk trail projects in round two, we're up to like 11 or 12 in this round.

[01:12:14] So projects are becoming more complex, guidelines and guidance is starting to catch up with us. But as we start talking about the nuances of some of the things that I've been talking about in the previous presentation, now we're going to get into some actual details for actual projects.

[01:12:34] Before I get into those, I want to talk a little bit about some of the workload challenges that we've talked about. In 2022, after the pandemic, during the pandemic, not a whole lot of people left the agency. People were good in their jobs, didn't want to go anywhere. But in 2022, people started finding jobs.

[01:12:50] People started going places, moving around. And so we had a lot of vacancies in 2022. We've shored that up quite a bit as we get into 2025 and now 2026. But also we had some of the budget cuts, and we've had to eliminate some positions as well in that time frame.

[01:13:07] And so if you look in the bottom left table, what used to be sort of a standard of three or four projects per person, in addition to their other workload, you know, you got your soapstones, you got your Richmond Highway BRTs, but you also have four or five of these projects, has now ballooned six, seven, eight of these projects.

[01:13:28] And so the workload, again, is starting to catch up. As I talk about some of the nuances, I talked about ProAg. That top left picture is an example of pro-ag. And if I remember correctly, I think that is, let me get my facts straight, that is Seidnstricker and Arlie, which is one of the round two projects.

[01:13:50] And the goal was to do the green. We're doing a crosswalk. We're doing ramps. Pro-ag now means you're probably now doing all that that's in red as well. And so your small project has turned into a larger intersection project. Bottom left is what's called logical termini, and this is the intersection of Who's Road and Deadly Drive, which is the round one project that's on hold.

[01:14:18] Logical termini basically means you can't put in a crosswalk with no attached sidewalk that gets you to a logical terminus point. Sounds great in theory, and it's great in terms of the end result. But when that was not the initially proposed scope, now all of a sudden your couple hundred thousand dollar project is getting up close to a million dollars.

[01:14:42] We talked about the traffic analysis piece, so I don't need to go through that. That's the top middle. We talked about new comments at later stages. We've talked about right-of-way utility impacts. I will say engineering solutions exceeding estimated costs.

[01:14:59] What happens sometimes is when you're doing the pre-design and your survey work, as I said, you go out of the field, you see conditions, you find out, oh, there's a slope out here. Oh, there's an issue out here. And now what you thought was your project scope now gets increased because of field conditions.

[01:15:17] And that's happened in a couple of instances as well. As we move on to the next slide, and I'm checking my time, we talked a little bit in the previous presentation about the challenges, so I don't need to reiterate many of those, and we talked about enhancements as well, so I don't know that I need to reiterate too many of those as well.

[01:15:40] So let's move on to something that we did not talk about in the previous set of slides, which is the project prioritization process. And this is when in the earlier slide I talked about the time frame that it's taken for round four to get us to projects.

[01:15:59] Here's what's going on in this instance. What our goal is and what our goal was in rounds one, two, and three, we had projects sort of in the queue. We wanted to move quick-hitting projects forward. We had projects that you all were interested in doing that were already prioritized.

[01:16:15] But in round four, between 2023 and 2024, we got a ton of, and I think Supervisor Alcorn mentioned this, projects from the unfunded list. We get somewhere between 15 and 20 projects a month that come in on the unfunded list, which leads to a couple of hundred projects every year that people are requesting.

[01:16:34] Our strategy for round four was, okay, let's include those projects, let's prioritize them, let's reach out to the community for public input and do a reprioritization of projects. Sounds good in theory, but I think it's taken longer than it should for a number of reasons.

[01:16:55] As we start to get into some of the challenges with this part of the process, I think we struggle a little bit with what's called overlapping projects. due to size. Quick example, let's say I've got someone that wants a sidewalk from intersection A to intersection B. I've got someone else who wants it from intersection B to intersection C.

[01:17:17] I've got someone who wants it from intersection A to intersection C. And then someone who wants it from intersection A to intersection D. I've got to put all those together, figure out what is the project we need to do considering all of the struggles, inputs, and things related to the site. And we've got to make sure that any other ancillary, oh, I wanted a rapid flashing beacon, oh, I wanted a curb extension, that they're all included, and when we develop that project, that it's prioritized. I think we've also, we could do a better job. We talked a little about surveys. I think we could do a better job in developing sort of our survey strategy.

[01:17:52] I think we can be, as we talked about, a little bit more aggressive with you all when it comes to, hey, I got a deadline for when I need your projects. Can I get those projects that you all are asking about, prioritize, and to us, I think we probably need to be a little bit more aggressive there as well. We talked about flagging projects that have environmental concerns. I think that's something that we're proposing to do, and I'll talk about that a little bit more, but I think prioritization might be the step where we tackle that so that we get an idea of, if we're getting ready to prioritize projects, do we want to tackle this one, knowing that there's an environmental,

[01:18:32] potential environmental issue. We've also got some requests to flag quick hitting projects, which I think we can do as well. But here's where the rubber meets the road, right? I think for round four, I think what we did here was our goal was to go through this process and get everything reprioritized with all of the new unfunded projects. I think that is probably not the greatest strategy because you get the funding and then you're going to do the prioritization.

[01:19:02] This is what I want to do. My goal is rather than take the funding and as you get the funding, you go through the prioritization process. We just do it cyclically. We do it once every three years. We prioritize projects. We go, we do the outreach. We talk to you all about the projects you want.

[01:19:21] And when funding comes in, whether it's at the end of the three-year period, whether it's somewhere two years after that, we have a list. The list is there. We understand and know that these are the projects we're working with and we're picking from these top ten or five projects versus doing it after we've gotten the funding.

[01:19:43] I think that will structure things in a better way. But even more so than that, I think that gets us out of this sort of struggle that we run into with all the things that we're evaluating. It gives us a chance to include the environmental piece. It gives us a chance to include the quick-hitting things.

[01:20:00] But it sets us up in a time frame where everyone is aware of, here's when these projects are going to be prioritized, and we look at that list from that step forward. The downside of that, obviously, is if a project comes in during that time period, it's not going to get evaluated and prioritized until the next three-year window. But again, the goal here is to not have situations where as much as I appreciate and want the outreach, the talking to you all and getting your priorities, prioritizing, I don't want to do that as we get

[01:20:35] funding. I want to have those projects set before we get to that piece. And I'm sorry I'm running through this quickly. I know we're short on time. So really, the feedback I'm looking for here, I talked a lot, a little bit about the projects that are on hold. I think our goal here is for round four, I want to do the prioritization, but I think we need to look at using some of the round four funding to tackle some of these projects that are on hold for these cost increases.

[01:21:08] We're developing or we've developed a list of exactly what that number is, and we're going to present that to you. Our goal here is not to get sort of, again, an etched in stone decision, but to get your sort of initial thoughts on the projects that are on hold.

[01:21:24] Do we want to provide round four funding to tackle them in some, in part, or in all? And then secondarily, do you all support sort of the strategy of developing a cyclical process so that when we do get funding, we're not having to tackle each of those four steps to get to the end result?

[01:21:42] Again, apologies for flying through this. There are a lot more things I kind of wanted to talk about. We've only got five minutes left, and so with that, I want to end it there. Thank you. Mr. Chairman? Yeah, in light of the fact that we only have five minutes, I do think we should look at the cyclical process.

[01:22:02] I know that there are some challenges with that, but frankly, there are challenges with the way we do it now. And if this can improve overall, I think it's worth experimenting with and trying. The one thing on the pro-wag that I was unclear on is we talked about evaluating those projects.

[01:22:20] Is there a waiver, a modification? I mean it just seems like to me that's an absurd requirement that will prevent us from doing a lot of projects in the future and it's relatively new. If we're not tackling some grace with it now, it's only going to become a larger problem as we progress.

[01:22:39] Yeah. I'm not certain whether there is going to be sort of the ability to waive it. I don't get the sense that that's the case, but I am all for having the conversation and trying to find a way to work around it because having one crosswalk and trying to do the right thing to add in a crosswalk and then having that balloon into doing an entire intersection, I understand why someone might ask for that, but it's very difficult for us as an agency trying to fund a project to make that happen and feel comfortable that that's the right result.

[01:23:15] We do need to dig into that deeper, including what we need to do as a board to weigh in on that. Because to me, improving an intersection with providing one crosswalk versus doing nothing or doing all four and then not doing three others in the county is not a good outcome in a county of our size, especially when you have complications in each of these projects that you might not want to trigger.

[01:23:37] Yeah, I like that, you know, expanded right away or other things. And so this will have the effect of killing a lot of projects and making every project more expensive for reasons that don't seem to be entirely justifiable, certainly not justifiable if you get on the ground level of some of these projects that you work on.

[01:23:54] So I think we need to be more involved in that because that's a huge red flag in here when I look at this. But, you know, the answer is yes to the cyclical process to come back to us with more on that issue so that we can get involved and weigh in on this, too.

[01:24:10] Because that's just I was unaware of that, honestly, at least level of detail until we got this presentation today. And that just doesn't make any sense to me at all. Last question on staffing, because

I'm a little bit of a broken record on this, because it seems like every time we have a challenge doing something in the county, the instinct is we need more people.

[01:24:32] I would like to know a little bit more about what the vacancy level is and what the difficulty has been in some cases recruiting and getting people to fill these jobs. I mean, we're in a time right now where whether we like it or don't, and I don't like it at all, there's a lot of talent out there looking for work that was involved in federal space or contractor space.

[01:24:53] And if there's a way for us to, you know, expedite our recruitment, hiring, if that's the issue. I don't know all the issues with it, but I think we need to dig a little bit deeper. And I'd be happy to talk to you more about that. Absolutely. Yeah. Hold on, Greg. To get to your point, sir, I think you and I have had these conversations.

[01:25:11] We need different staffing. So changing the mindset of where we were to where we're going is a different type of staffing. And if we can build current staff up to get to there, obviously we certainly will.

[01:25:28] But, again, there's going to be a time where we're going to have to have different type of skill set to do the things that we're doing because we're changing how we're doing it here now. So I just want to make sure we say that as well. Hey, I couldn't agree more. And that's what we need to be doing. I really appreciate that answer because I don't think it's a DOT issue.

[01:25:45] I think it's, you know, a countywide issue where we need to be thinking about that. I don't think necessarily in all cases we have a headcount problem. I think in some cases we have a prioritization or a transition into new skills and new ways of doing things challenge that we have to address.

[01:26:01] And so I appreciate the county executive weighing in on that. Thank you. Supervisor Palchuk, Supervisor Herity, and Vice Chair Smith. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Greg and the team. To be brief, you know, it's been a really frustrating process. So I appreciate that, you know, you shared at the beginning.

[01:26:18] But I don't think it's just on the budget side, right? I think the way we're funding them, knowing that they take a long time, understanding that we need not just an iterative process, but, right, if the money's sitting there, millions of dollars for 10 years, it's not being used efficiently, right?

[01:26:39] So I assume that's being reviewed in all of this. To me, I think that's a big concern that I think my colleagues have brought up in the past. I would also say I support the three-year process. I think we need to improve the process. The three-year sounds good, but we need a contingency plan for each of those because I think whether it's pro-ag or something else that's going to pop up, right, another issue, we want to be ready to keep going and moving forward.

[01:27:06] If one project needs to be put on pause to be fixed, we need to be ready with the other projects. We have a very long list, right, and so be able to do that. And, you know, I think one of the other big frustrations we've had is understanding and we will to communicate the true cost or cost range of a project is it 14 million dollars for this mile is that million why that the lack of communication um and i think as we talk about the type of staffing we need that piece is critical right it's not just the uh

[01:27:39] expertise um technically but communicating with us with the community um updating how right we track projects, those things that bring us up to, I would say, the modern era of how a transportation agency our size is expected to work.

[01:27:56] And that's from someone who's been trying to learn as much as I can for six years and work. You have incredible staff. But I think we really need to tighten that up and be more nimble and more communicative as to why and how and managing those expectations.

[01:28:12] But yes, I support these changes. Thank you. Thank you. Supervisor Herity. Just to – I'm going to be real, real quick to go back to ProAg. Is that federal or state? I believe it's through GSA. Okay, so it's – Yeah, I think it is.

[01:28:27] I was just curious whether we were able to try to do something about that at the state level because that is a concern, and that goes back to – the second point I was going to make is the whole right-sizing. That forces us to probably oversize in a lot of places, but I think right-sizing is key.

[01:28:45] On your questions, I would say yes to the first one to, you know, address increase in costs. But I think we also need to include maintenance. I mean, our maintenance backlog, most of the calls I get in my office about sidewalks are two.

[01:29:02] They're one of the missing links, obviously, but the biggest one is maintenance. So we need to make sure we don't forget maintenance as we're allocating these funds. In the second to three-year cycle, I think that makes sense as well. I love flagging quick-hit projects, ones that you can just go out and get done, and I'll conclude.

[01:29:25] I've got more to say, but I'll conclude with that. Thank you. Vice Chair Smith. Thank you. Slide seven, what is PHB? Pedestrian hybrid beacon. They call them HAWC signals. Thank you very much. On slide six, I have two projects on hold.

[01:29:42] I knew one of them was on hold. I didn't know the other was on hold, so Kim from my office found out why. And then it comes back to your requested feedback about using carryover funds for projects that couldn't be done. I think part of that discussion has to be the scope of a project.

[01:29:59] And before I knew this was on hold, I had had a discussion with staff about scope. And so I think it's not an easy answer. And I do think you do need to look at a different way to do this with a cycle. Is three the magic time? I don't know. And, you know, with the board, it's like anything.

[01:30:16] If something comes up, sometimes we want to know, okay, there's an urgency there. But I do think we need to prioritize for a longer period. Yeah, real quick in that, I do want to say if we go to a more cyclic process, the goal is, and I don't want to use it often, but obviously if there's a very important safety issue or something that pops up within that cycle, I'm not going to just go, ah, too bad, we can't do it.

[01:30:38] I just don't want it to become sort of like the norm where it's like, oh, we've done this prioritization, but here are these five things I want to do. But absolutely, we'll leave in the room to be able to go, hey, there's this project. Three people got hit out here. We have to do something right now. Okay, let's do it.

[01:30:54] Yeah, I think safety needs to be top of mind. Thank you. Thank you all for an excellent discussion today. Thank you for lots of ideas that we discussed and threw out here. Again, this is in some ways the first of a two-parter because we have an audit committee meeting coming up with respect to a audit of all of our active transportation systems, during which we will have more concrete action steps proposed, though I will say, going back to the very first comment that was made, which was Chairman McKay, which was, do all of it, sounds great.

[01:31:34] So thank you very much for putting this together, and with that, we are adjourned. Enjoy lunch.



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