

1 **Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan Focus Group Three: Higher Education & Retirement**  
2 **Communities**

3 **Friday, October 16, 1:30pm-3pm**

4 **Meeting Summary**

5 Focus Group Participants:

- 6 • Lee Eshelman, James Madison University
- 7 • Angela Crow, James Madison University
- 8 • Eldon Kurtz, Eastern Mennonite University
- 9 • Heather Yoder, Virginia Mennonite Retirement Community

10 City Department Participants:

- 11 • Adam Fletcher, Planning & Community Development Department
- 12 • Brad Reed, Public Works Department
- 13 • Avery Daugherty, Harrisonburg Department of Public Transportation

14 Other Participants:

- 15 • Moderator, Thanh Dang, Public Works Department
- 16 • Notetaker, Danielle Morris, Public Works Department
- 17 • Eric Saner, Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee

18  
19 1) Thanh welcomed the group, described the purpose, and guidelines for this meeting.

20  
21 Thanh introduced City department representatives.

22  
23 2) Participants introduced themselves.

24 a) Heather Yoder – VMRC Wellness Center. Residents and community members can use  
25 the wellness center.

26 b) Lee Eshelman – JMU Transportation Demand Management. Responsible for supporting  
27 transit, bicycle & pedestrian planning and implementation, transportation safety and  
28 signage on campus.

29 c) Angela Crow – JMU writing and rhetoric department, does research on bicycling, and  
30 serves on JMU Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee.

31 d) Eldon Kurtz – EMU, Director of Facilities – works with traffic and infrastructure  
32

33 3) Thanh – In a typical week, what places do you, students, faculty, staff, residents need to go to  
34 and how do they get there?

35 a) Lee –

36 i) JMU has a contract with Public Transit to use their buses to get students from off-  
37 campus to on-campus, and runs shuttles across campus all day into the early evening.  
38 Public Transit serves approximately 2-2.5 million riders per year. JMU also uses them  
39 for games and graduation events. All buses have bike racks. Has done surveys,

40 ii) Lots of walking and biking on campus. Has collected data on key corridors.

- 41 iii) Bluestone Trail – lots of students bike from the apartments to campus via the trail.  
42 JMU plans to build the trail thru campus soon and wants to connect with Northend  
43 Greenway.
- 44 iv) Lee is wondering what are safe routes from apartment complexes; especially those  
45 that are further out from campus. Ex. Copper Beech, South View, etc.
- 46 v) JMU has surplus bike racks they don't know what to do with them.
- 47 b) Eldon –
- 48 i) Residents surrounding EMU and EMU students go to the Harmony Square shopping  
49 center by biking, walking, driving, and bus.
- 50 ii) Red Front – there is a need for pedestrian enhancements to get residents and students  
51 there safely. Also a route towards downtown, and La Morena.
- 52 iii) The shopping center along Mt. Clinton Pike (Gift & Thrift/ Traditions) – students and  
53 residents go there via all modes of transportation.
- 54 iv) There are people who work/ attend EMU who are residents living in/around  
55 downtown and would like a route to bike and walk between EMU and downtown  
56 without competing with the chicken trucks.
- 57 v) Eldon is noticing more bus riders, observed people at bus stops. But there is a big  
58 delay between the buses that service the area – so people drive instead of waiting an  
59 hour to hour and a half. Need more frequency of buses.
- 60 c) Heather –
- 61 i) VMRC is next to EMU, so share similar needs with transportation.
- 62 ii) Residents who can't drive rely on each other for transportation or buses, but have to  
63 wait on the buses due to the delay between buses on the routes. Some residents need  
64 the para-transit buses, which is helpful for those have limited mobility.
- 65 iii) Some residents walk (or use motorized chairs) to Harmony Square. Relatively safe to  
66 get there, but it isn't always safe at the roadway crossings or drive entrance crossings.
- 67 iv) Residents also go to Rite-Aid on Rt. 42.
- 68 v) They are seeing younger residents at VMRC who bike. They bike on Rt. 42 North,  
69 but the bike lanes “cut-off” as you enter the City from the County.
- 70 vi) Staff sometimes use the bus system, but most staff live in Elkton, VA or in Bergton,  
71 WV.
- 72 d) Angela –
- 73 i) Has been trying to figure out how to do education for JMU students, but has been  
74 difficult. Trying to partner with UREC.
- 75 ii) Her freshmen students are gathering information on other universities' education  
76 programs/ videos and will share with Lee.
- 77 iii) The women in her classes say they would not walk/bike alone, but would in a group.  
78 Most do not feel safe walking alone especially at night. Most live in apartments, etc.  
79 that are in “less visible” areas. Some even don't feel safe walking through Arboretum  
80 at night.
- 81 iv) She suggested a college-level “safe routes to school” program (with different name)  
82 to help women group together to walk home.
- 83 v) She said that JMU makes campus a safe place to walk.
- 84 e) Lee –
- 85 i) Is working on a campus survey on transportation that asks about perceptions about  
86 safety.

- 87 4) Thanh – Have you experienced, observed, or received feedback about difficult places and  
88 routes to access places in Harrisonburg?  
89 a) Lee – is working on a survey out asking students where the most dangerous locations or  
90 conditions on campus are.  
91 b) Heather – difficult to get to Rite-Aid, Gift & Thrift (on Mt. Clinton Pike) and Harmony  
92 Square (even though it's on the same side of the road, getting across roadway crossings &  
93 drive entrances is difficult)  
94 c) Eldon & Heather - Parkwood Dr has no sidewalks so you have to walk in the roadway  
95 and the high school is on that road.  
96 d) Eldon - will there be mid-point crossings in new roundabout on Mt. Clinton Pike?  
97
- 98 5) Thanh – What could be done to encourage people to walk, bike, or take transit more?  
99 a) Lee – build infrastructure to make it more attractive and safe and then do more education.  
100 And then enforce. You shouldn't start writing tickets to bicyclists who don't have  
101 anywhere safe to ride or haven't been educated.  
102 b) Thanh asks, what features makes a route for walking or biking more attractive and safe?  
103 c) Lee - Shared use path concept is good. It does not physically separate bicyclists and  
104 pedestrians from each other, but separates them from drivers.  
105 d) Angela – Shared use paths need signage to explain shared space.  
106 e) Lee –  
107 i) In ideal world we would be able to separate and give bicyclists, pedestrians, and  
108 drivers each their own space.  
109 ii) The Bluestone Trail is gorgeous from Purcell Park to JMU, along Newman Lake. Its  
110 attractive.  
111 f) Heather –  
112 i) Well maintained,  
113 ii) No trip hazards,  
114 iii) Benches placed along the way for when people need to take a break when they get  
115 tired.  
116 g) Eldon -  
117 i) Appropriate lighting  
118 ii) Trees and vegetation can enhance a space, but beware of creating “lurking” spots  
119 around vegetation. Balance those things.  
120 h) Angela –  
121 i) Student population not comfortable on roads, the paths are a starting point to help get  
122 them acclimated.  
123 ii) For women, having groups of women able to ride with other women helps them learn  
124 how to ride on the road more safely. Such as Harrisonburg Women on Wheels group  
125 and group in Staunton. Having a group women encourages women to try biking,  
126 gives them a sense that the streets are not as horrific as they thought. Research shows  
127 that women are less likely to take risks on bicycles. Research shows that women will  
128 take risks if they are not riding alone and there is someone there to help them learn. If  
129 the can be a program supported by the City or others, it would be good.  
130 i) Lee –  
131 i) Other part of the equation is to educate drivers.

- 132 ii) Lots of drivers are in a hurry and don't know how to drive around bicyclists and  
133 pedestrians.
- 134 iii) JMU trying to change the signage on campus to make it more apparent that the  
135 bicyclist does not need to accommodate the vehicle, the vehicle needs to  
136 accommodate the bicyclist.
- 137 iv) Also have skateboarders to educate.
- 138 j) Thanh asks what programming have you seen other communities do to educate?
- 139 i) Heather - VMRC offers drivers safety courses with AARP.
- 140 ii) Lee - Educate drivers about the right-of-way for bikes and the three foot rule. He  
141 doesn't think that is common knowledge.
- 142 iii) Eldon – it's been a long time since he's taken drivers education and how to drive  
143 around bicyclists and pedestrians wasn't included then.
- 144 iv) Avery –
- 145 (1) Transit drivers are trained and model how to drive around bicyclists and  
146 pedestrians
- 147 (2) Thinks there needs to be some consequence after education efforts are made or  
148 bad behaviors will continue.
- 149 v) Eldon –
- 150 (1) Cultural awareness needs to develop. Now drivers are stopping on Park Rd at  
151 crosswalks, but it didn't use to be that way.
- 152 (2) More traffic calming.
- 153 vi) Angela - Signage can be confusing –
- 154 (1) "BIKE LANE ENDS" doesn't mean the bicyclists have to get off the roadway,  
155 but some people think that.
- 156 (2) Maybe another sign indicating the bike has use of the full lane – "Bikes May Use  
157 Full Lane".
- 158 (3) Consistency of signage across the city recommended.
- 159 (4) Recognizes there are limited ways to teach bicyclists and drivers; can't require all  
160 to take drivers exams again.
- 161 vii) Thanh - ...Changing laws and expectations...
- 162 viii) Eldon – ... greater prominence of bicycles as a viable form of transportation.
- 163 ix) Angela – Other community, Mobile(?), created videos to show people how to pass.
- 164 x) Lee – maybe pamphlets on windshields.
- 165 xi) Adam – advertising on transit buses.
- 166 xii) Angela –
- 167 (1) Stanford has a commuting buddy system.
- 168 (2) Suggests creating sticky stories to encourage
- 169 (3) Connect people to the Comfort Bike Map
- 170 xiii) Brad explained the Comfort Bike Map.
- 171 k) Thanh summarized what was discussed:
- 172 i) Education for bicyclists, pedestrians, and motorists
- 173 ii) Improved infrastructure such as crossings
- 174 iii) Shared use path design to be safe and attractive
- 175 iv) Improve Public Transit
- 176

- 177 6) Thanh – If you were given a list of new bike/ped projects and programs needed in the City,  
178 how would you prioritize which projects should be funded? How would you decide what is  
179 the most important? What considerations would you make?  
180 a) Heather – Safety. Defined as looking at accident rates  
181 b) Lee – Identify major thru-fares for bicyclists and pedestrians and then make them more  
182 attractive and safe so then they would use those more, and stay off of busy streets and out  
183 of parking lots. North-south shared use path is great, what about east-west corridors?  
184 c) Eldon – Noted a written piece by Bob Berson - Why not have something [a trail] head out  
185 to Dayton or Bridgewater?  
186 d) Eldon – for prioritization observe bike and ped heavy use areas  
187 i) Where’s the heavy use? If we build it, will it get used?  
188 e) Thanh asks – what are indicators of where heavy use is and where it could be?  
189 i) Lee & Eldon – where we don’t have sidewalks we see cow paths  
190 ii) Lee – JMU Bicycle & Pedestrian Master Plan had a smart phone app to trace where  
191 the bike/ped person moves to/from (voluntary), could be used in city to track people  
192 (JMU MOVES app) – could also see where they are going for future projects.  
193 f) Thanh asks – how do we determine where people want to go?  
194 i) Lee – create routes such as Grace St corridor improvements by looking at maps and  
195 seeing where people are going  
196 g) Angela – Gender issues. Men and women have different comfort levels and often choose  
197 routes differently.  
198 h) Avery asks - does JMU or EMU have a registration requirement for bicycles?  
199 i) Eldon & Lee – JMU & EMU do not require registration for bicycles currently  
200 ii) Lee – Kicking around idea that if you do register you’d get a free bike helmet and a  
201 pamphlet with education information. But there’s really no incentive to register your  
202 bike. We don’t have a big theft issue in Harrisonburg so why would you register your  
203 bike?  
204 iii) Eldon - It is recommended, especially if bike were to be stolen and left somewhere.  
205 iv) Avery – sometimes people forget and leave their bikes on the transit bus. About one  
206 bike per week.  
207  
208 i) Thanh – These are all great ideas. When we summarize this report, I hope it will spur  
209 other good ideas and partnerships.  
210 i) Lee – The beauty of this discussion is if we could standardize some of these  
211 approaches – enforcement, signage, wayfinding, registration, etc – try to make it  
212 uniform to reduce confusion. It would be good to keep this going with ideas.  
213 ii) Eldon – This would help reinforce the culture we are trying to develop.  
214  
215 j) Thanh - What ideas do you have for encouraging this type of conversation with these  
216 players? Are there any other players missing? What kind of forum? How frequent would  
217 they meet? What would incentivize people to participate?  
218 i) Angela – likes the JMU BPAC. There is overlap with the City Bike-Ped  
219 subcommittee.

- 221 ii) Thanh – There’s the Harrisonburg & Rockingham Bike-Walk Summit coming up, is  
222 that the forum?
- 223 iii) Eldon – Events like “Bikes, Burgers, and Beers”?
- 224 iv) Lee – if someone like Angela brought an idea to him, he can reach out to city staff to  
225 discuss?
- 226 v) Angela - if groups get together they can see what each are doing and not waste time  
227 by doing the same thing and spinning their wheels.
- 228 vi) Lee said JMU BPAC has organized subcommittees around 5Es – education,  
229 encouragement, engineering, enforcement, and evaluation.
- 230 vii) Angela – there are now also 5C’s for women.
- 231
- 232 k) Thanh summarized the discussion on prioritizing projects, not in any order:
- 233 i) Safety – looking at accident history; identifying opportunities where short term fixes  
234 are;
- 235 ii) Look at where heavy use exists and where there is potential for heavy use – using  
236 apps and talking to people about where they want to go;
- 237 iii) Identify major corridors for pathways for bicyclists and pedestrians to go north-south  
238 and to go east-west;
- 239 iv) Need a forum to help coordinate messaging and infrastructure improvements across  
240 organizations and throughout the community.
- 241
- 242 l) Eldon – While encouraging people to bike, providing places to park bikes is important;  
243 Also consider appropriate storage for the length of time people need
- 244 m) Lee – JMU campus is evaluating their bike racks – number and locations, including  
245 sheltered bike racks and appropriate style of bike racks; sometimes bike racks are  
246 overflowing
- 247 n) Adam – suggested huge posters in department stores (Walmart, Target), on city buses,  
248 where I pay my bills with a “DID YOU KNOW...” kind of message. Would need to be a  
249 consistent design. Maybe put on side of transit buses. Not a small handbill. WOW factor,  
250 in your face.
- 251 i) The group expressed support of this.
- 252 ii) Discussion of importance of consistent messaging, consistent visual cues, branding so  
253 people will remember. Example: Doodie-Free Harrisonburg campaign from 2008.
- 254 o) Eldon – evening news could reach out to older residents.
- 255 p) Brad asked if JMU or EMU was exploring Bike Share Programs
- 256 i) Eldon said a number of years ago there was a bike share program with yellow painted  
257 bikes, but then they were taken and wrecked.
- 258 ii) JMU said that UREC has a bike share program.
- 259 iii) There was discussion about a more professional bike share program, rental with credit  
260 card that would also be tied with off-campus housing.
- 261 q) Avery – Is it a requirement/could it be a requirement for students who register for classes  
262 to indicate where they live in the city? If so, that information could be used to show  
263 initial surges of where students are coming from and when.
- 264 i) Eldon – Information exists in a protected directory. EMU could not give addresses  
265 out unless it was voluntary.

- 266 ii) Brad – Points could be provided on a map like it was for SRTS projects he’s worked  
267 on. Info from school provides areas the students are from represented as dots on a  
268 map – no detailed address or other specifics are provided.
- 269 iii) Lee – are there places where bikes should not go/be?  
270
- 271 7) Thanh asked if Eric had any questions or thoughts for the group. Eric -  
272 a) Noticed a lot of interest in education and getting information out there. There was a  
273 suggestion to do this by requiring people to register their bikes and giving out materials  
274 then. He recommended also giving out materials to educate drivers when they register  
275 their cars for parking on campus and suggested handouts with rules of the road for  
276 drivers.
- 277 b) Noted discussion about enforcement and suggested not forgetting also to do positive  
278 enforcement. A short PSA could be to stop people who are doing things the right way.  
279 Maybe the evening news would cover or you could get a gift card.
- 280 c) Cautions against required bike registration. Especially if it leads to ticketed enforcement.  
281 It could hurt low income people and a barrier to everyone biking.
- 282 d) Liked comment made about need for good parking facilities. Noted SVBC has program  
283 that encourages community bulk bike rack purchase.  
284
- 285 8) Thanh – did we miss anything?  
286 a) Angela – Marking streets – May make sense to identify with markings on the street  
287 which streets are safer to ride on. Some people don’t know what markings are supposed  
288 to mean. Just came back from a trip in the Netherlands where markings were clear.
- 289 b) Lee – there may be some places where we shouldn’t have bikes. There’s no shoulder or  
290 room to share, and speeds are very high. How do we make that work safely?
- 291 c) Angela – consider if there is another safer route vs. improvements to be made where there  
292 is not an alternative.
- 293 d) Heather – Bus System/Schedule – There are residents who have lost their licenses or their  
294 family don’t think it’s safe for them to drive anymore. They need to pick up groceries and  
295 the bus schedule can be overwhelming to those who have never done it. Is there a  
296 program to help teach them to use the buses?
- 297 i) Avery – already partners with Bob Horst at VMRC to assist elderly on how to  
298 navigate the system – twice a year. Additional times can be scheduled. Transit brings  
299 a bus and para-transit to show them how to get on, etc.
- 300 e) Adam & Heather – is it possible for the bus drivers to help/assist the person getting on  
301 the bus: putting bike on rack, etc.?
- 302 i) Avery – liability issues for potential damage to bicycles. Drivers can only help from  
303 the edge of the ramp up to the bus per ADA regulations.
- 304 ii) Heather – VMRC may need to think about enhancing their own transportation  
305 program versus using public transit.  
306
- 307 9) Thanh – summarized next steps for the Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan.  
308 a) Thank you for coming out today.