

Policy Briefing Summary

City Council



Regarding:	Resolution to Identify a Final Preferred Design Alternative for the Avon Street Streetscape Project
Staff Contact(s):	Ben Chambers, Transportation Planning Manager
Presenter:	Ben Chambers, Transportation Planning Manager
Date of Proposed Action:	August 18, 2025

Issue

The Virginia Department of Transportation ("VDOT") is managing the construction of multimodal improvements on Avon Street and is requesting City Council's support for a preferred design alternative, approval of the removal of on-street parking spaces, and the acceptance of ownership of a proposed pedestrian bridge over Moore's Creek.

Background / Rule

In 2023, the Charlottesville Albemarle Metropolitan Planning Organization submitted a SMART SCALE application to apply for high-priority network improvement funds for multimodal improvements on Avon Street between Druid Avenue in the City and Avon Court in Albemarle County, Virginia. Awarded funds for design and construction are being managed by VDOT. VDOT has proceeded with initial design and preliminary engineering work, developing two (2) alternative designs. VDOT Staff held a Citizen's Information Meeting in May 2025 to review the two (2) alternative designs and provide feedback.

Given the feedback and anticipated costs and Project impact, VDOT and City Staff are recommending that City Council adopt Alternative "B," which would provide a shared-use path throughout the length of the Project area, as the preferred alternative. VDOT also seeks City Council's acceptance of the loss of on-street parking and of ownership of the proposed pedestrian bridge over Moore's Creek as part of adoption of the preferred alternative.

Analysis

The initial design for the multimodal improvements on Avon Street included sidewalks along the western side of the road and unprotected bike lanes in each direction. This design is referred to as Alternative "A." Concerned with the escalating cost estimates occurring on projects across the Commonwealth, VDOT identified the potential for budget overruns associated with the conceptual design of Alternative "A," which would require additional right-of-way and the construction of retaining walls for the new sidewalk. VDOT recommended the development of an alternative with fewer grade and right-of-way impacts, resulting in the creation of a design which only has a shared-use path on the east side of Avon Street, which became Alternative "B."

Both alternatives would result in the reduction of on-street parking spaces, removing thirty-three (33) spaces, mostly on the east side of the road between Druid Avenue and Belmont Cottage Road. All the homes facing Avon Street in this section have off-street parking and limited use of existing on-street parking (particularly north of Palatine Avenue). In both alternatives, the removal of on-street parking is used to minimize impacts to right-of-way and private property.

The original conceptual design for the Project did review the possibility of placing the shared-use path on the existing roadway bridge, but VDOT's Central Office Bridge Division Staff concluded that the

existing structure would not support the additional concrete pathway, and an additional pedestrian bridge structure was found to be necessary. VDOT recommends that the City take ownership of the pedestrian bridge. This will allow VDOT to build a bridge that is more aligned with City standards and contain cost impacts that might be associated with VDOT standards for pedestrian bridges, which are more similar to those used for bridges accommodating vehicular traffic. VDOT will work through questions about handing over right-of-way and bridge ownership with Public Works over the next two (2) to three (3) years as engineering and construction work proceed and will develop maintenance plans with Public Works during that timeframe as well. During the VDOT management of the Project through construction, VDOT will lead the process of securing necessary right-of-way easements and coordinate with DPW and the City Attorney's Office as needed.

Alternative "B" has fewer impacts to right-of-way and private property than Alternative "A," but also shrinks the available roadway travel surface. This design follows direction from City Staff to reduce travel design speeds on entrance corridors into the City, and will help mitigate speeding concerns present in the corridor today.

Financial Impact

The initial conceptual design for the Avon Street Multimodal Project included a cost estimate of \$15.8 million. This conceptual design was further developed as Alternative "A," and has an estimated total cost of \$16.0 million. Due to this growing financial concern, VDOT began developing a lower-cost option, which became Alternative "B," and has an estimated total cost of \$13.0 million.

This is a VDOT funded project and no City funds are anticipated to be needed.

Recommendation

City Staff supports VDOT's recommendation that City Council adopt the attached Resolution identifying Alternative "B" as its preferred alternative. Staff also recommends that, by Resolution, City Council approve the loss of the on-street parking spaces in this Project area, and accept the ownership of the proposed pedestrian bridge.

Recommended Motion (if Applicable)

"I make a Motion to adopt the attached Resolution identifying Alternative "B" as City Council's preferred alternative to the Avon Street Streetscape Project, approve the loss of the on-street parking spaces in the Project area, and accept the ownership of the proposed pedestrian bridge."

Attachments

1. Avon Street Multimodal Improvements
2. RESOLUTION OF SUPPORT FOR UPC 124020 (2)