

Focus Group Meeting #4



Below is the meeting summary for the fourth and final Focus Group meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to review the topics and goals created by each Focus Group and to comment on draft Strategic Initiatives generated from that work. All of the collected Focus Group information will be incorporated into the Community Strategic Plan document which will be considered by the Board of Supervisors later this year.

Meeting Date: 4/28/16

Recorder: Karen Thomas

Meeting Location: Vinton War Memorial

Number of Attendees: 35

Host: Supervisor Jason Peters

Other Supervisors in Attendance: Supervisor Martha Hooker, Supervisor George Assaid

Lead Staff: Dan O'Donnell, Jill Loope, Megan Cronise, Billy Driver, Rebecca Owens, Jessica Webb and Howard Hall

Staff Facilitators: Jay Brenchick, Tori Williams, Karen Oliver, David Holladay, Karen Thomas, Ashley King and Brian Simmons

* * * * *

Comments on Draft Strategic Initiatives

1. Connect Roanoke County to the World

- This focus on interstates is wrong-headed and did not come through the focus group process! Interstate highway projects are mega-million dollars each and need to be seen in terms of how many smaller, better, and more important quality of life transportation projects each one would prevent.
- I-73 is a waste of county time, money and focus. It cannot be justified and is an environmental nightmare.
- I-73 is an extremely bad idea. It will (if it is ever built) suck the economic life out of the Roanoke Valley. The only ones who will benefit are the sprawl builders of Franklin County.
- Important for transit to be a major connection to airport and rail equation less we depend solely on the automobile, leaving community open to unmitigated congestion. Transit is the alternative to achieve balance and mobility options and maintain controlled congestion and ambient air quality.
- Strategic partnerships with other localities. Strategies to engage and mobilize your employees. Leadership development and alignment to enhance leadership presence to create a dynamic culture.
- More affordable and easier acquirable / accessible internet
- Broadband –Yes!
- The future is not something to be wished for; the future is something to be achieved. The future is not a matter of chance; the future is a matter of choice
- Transportation must include greenways. Add rails to trains and rails with trails. Add

roll on / roll off served by passing resolution in support of bike or train.

- It is important to keep airport as part of discussion on economic development opportunities. Airport needs to know so that airlines can be made aware of growth of area and demand for service.
- Economic development and transportation connect to the world and the original plan for the greenway was to Dixie Caverns. The plan for the greenway should extend the entire width of the county and the Roanoke River greenway must connect the greenway to the Huckleberry trail. The Huckleberry trail connects to the beaches and Blue Grass trail (all the way)

2. Position Roanoke County for Future Growth and Success

- Be careful of business friendly development processes. Must be protective of our environment.
- Identify the under-employed inventory job skills to market to businesses outside of Roanoke

3. Promote Neighborhood Connections

- Roanoke County Glenvar Area – Activity Center Gym
- Virginia Beach. Connect the Roanoke River Greenway to the James River Blueway. Connect the Roanoke River Greenway to the Appalachian Trail. Connect the Roanoke River Greenway to Franklin County – use the Pumpkin Vine rail line with rail with trails to connect Ferrum to the Roanoke Valley and Regional Trail systems.
- Quality of Life – connect the Blue Ridge Parkway to the county. Bicycle across and walking and horseback riding trails. There should be a way for residents to access the Appalachian Trail and the Blue Ridge Parkway from their neighborhoods without having to drive to a trail head.
- Reduce cost of public transit to government by increasing costs to users. How long has it been since bus ticket prices were increased?
- Think of the county as a whole – not part of the county at a time – don't refer to "South County" as the affluent section of the county, for instance.
- This transportation goal comes from several groups and is extremely important to quality of life, economic vitality and mobility.
- Transportation – Greenways ultimate transportation corridor – Topic 1 – Goal 1 – Complete streets passed in 2004 by Commonwealth Transportation Board. Greenways are alternative transportation – connect to world. Greenways connect neighborhood community regions and the commonwealth. The Roanoke River Greenway should / can connect to the Huckleberry Trail. The Huckleberry Trail connects to the beaches and Bluegrass trail. Connect to Ferrum through the Pumpkin trail. Control traffic / speed in neighborhoods. Stop signs are not the answer. Current roundabouts are ugly and poorly designed. Look at roundabouts in Blacksburg and Roanoke to architect more upscale look. Libraries – are they accessible to all people?

4. Ensure Citizen Safety

- Share fire facilities as fire and police area offices.
- School police should allow youth to walk to school. Need alternative transportation network to connect neighborhood to schools and senior centers. And streets, design roads so people can get across them without having to be in a car. Right now major roads divide the county.

5. Be a Caring and Inclusive Community

- Community health and well-being – allow Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts to use schools after hours for afterschool meetings.
- Education – libraries involve multiple classes. Virginia Cooperative Extension office provides a valuable service. Course offerings are for all ages. The topics offered are wide ranges.

6. Promote Lifelong Learning

(No comments)

7. Keep Roanoke County Healthy, Clean and Beautiful

- The greenway goals that come through the focus group process are vital and need to be featured prominently here.
- Brand Roanoke County / Identity for me is: Spring Hollow Reservoir, Explore Park, Green Ridge, The World is Not Your Ashtray, Cold Water Trout Fishing.
- For such a beautiful area, we have an inordinate amount of litter. Enforce litter laws and require bagging of trash.
- Fit in the littering issue for the county!