

**CITY OF CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA**



Agenda Date:	December 5, 2011
Action Required:	Yes (First Reading of Ordinance)
Presenter:	James E. Tolbert, AICP, Director of NDS
Staff Contacts:	James E. Tolbert, AICP, Director of NDS Jeanie Alexander, City Traffic Engineer
Title:	Opening of the County Portion of the Meadow Creek Parkway

Background: VDOT has recently completed construction of the Meadow Creek Parkway in Albemarle County. Because construction is complete, we anticipate that the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors will request that it be opened to traffic. A resolution to that effect is on their December 7th agenda.

In June 2008, the City Council approved permanent and temporary easements for VDOT to build a portion of the Parkway across City-owned property near Melbourne Road in the County. The ordinance authorizing the easement contained five conditions:

1. That no part of the Meadow Creek Parkway project (i.e., the Albemarle County Meadow Creek Parkway section, the City McIntire Road Extended section, or the Interchange/Intersection project at the 250 Bypass and McIntire) will be open for public use until the entire project is complete and ready for opening;
2. That safe and efficient means of passage for bicycles and pedestrians will be created and maintained at the intersection of the Parkway and Melbourne

Road, as well as around Charlottesville High School property generally and around CATEC property (At a minimum there will be, well-marked crosswalks with pedestrian-activated, timed crossing lights at the Melbourne intersection and the entrance to CATEC);

3. That appropriate landscaping and planting will be done to screen the Parkway from the playing fields;
4. That the speed limit will be 25 miles per hour on the Parkway approaching the intersection in both directions at Melbourne Road and approaching in both directions the entrance to CATEC, marked by standard school zone signs with flashing lights; and,
5. That the deed of easement conveying the permanent easement for construction of the road right-of-way will specifically provide, at such time as the Meadow Creek Parkway/McIntire Road Extended from Rio Road to the Route 250 Bypass is open to traffic, that the City of Charlottesville may enter into an agreement with the Virginia Department of Transportation Commissioner to assume maintenance responsibility, including the operation of the traffic signal, over the intersection of the Meadow Creek Parkway/McIntire Road Extended and Melbourne Road for purposes of maintenance and the control and regulation of motor vehicle, pedestrian and bicycle traffic.

The following is a chronology outlining the circumstances surrounding the adoption of the ordinance with the conditions:

November 2007 – VDOT initiated discussions regarding the acquisition of the City-owned right-of-way in the County next to the CHS stadium. The City Attorney issued his opinion stating that although the property was titled in the name of the City, it was part of the CHS campus and had been used as such, and that under Virginia law the City School Board would need to consent to any conveyance of the property to VDOT.

April – May 2008 – VDOT's request for a donation of a permanent easement

was discussed by the City School Board at meetings on April 3, April 17 and May 1, with City and VDOT staffs present. Several conditions, including the one regarding opening the Parkway, are proposed at the second meeting.

May 5, 2008 – City Council has a first reading of an ordinance authorizing the conveyance of the permanent easement to VDOT. The ordinance contains the conditions and “expectations” as proposed by the City School Board.

May 9, 2008 – The VDOT District Administrator expresses concern with two of the conditions in the ordinance, including the condition regarding the opening of the Parkway. He suggests adding a phrase to the condition that would delay the opening for a period “no longer than one year after the project is completed”. The second condition of concern involved which entity would control the intersection at Melbourne Road and the Parkway.

May 30, 2008 – A meeting is held between City, State and VDOT officials and staff regarding Parkway and McIntire Road Extended issues. At the meeting the City and VDOT reached agreement on revising the language regarding control of the Melbourne Road intersection. With regard to the condition on the opening, a subsequent memo from Angela Tucker (October 2008) states that “at the meeting held May 20, 2008, as a commitment of good faith, all parties agreed to this point”.

June 2, 2008 – City Council passes the ordinance on second reading, with VDOT’s proposed language regarding the control of the intersection.

August 18, 2008 – At the May 30th meeting the City agreed to adopt a resolution stating that it would act in good faith in pursuing the completion of the interchange project, so that the opening of the Parkway and McIntire Road Extended would not be delayed indefinitely. City staff did the initial draft of the resolution language, and it referenced the opening of the interchange no later than one year after the completion of McIntire Road Extended. At the request of VDOT that time period was changed to six

months. The “good faith” language was adopted by Council as part of a resolution approving a design alternative for the interchange. The specific language is as follows:

Therefore be it resolved, in the spirit of cooperation and coordination for the public good, that the Council of the City of Charlottesville hereby states its good faith intent to move forward expeditiously in pursuance of a satisfactory grade-separated interchange design which allows for a synchronized construction schedule and roadway opening date of said interchange no later than six months after completion of the McIntire Road Extended Project.

The accompanying agenda memo stated that the Meadow Creek Parkway and McIntire Road Extended were scheduled to be completed in the Fall of 2011, and that the Interchange would be advertised for construction in April 2010 and completed in the Spring 2012.

September – October 2010 – VDOT opened the Parkway on a temporary basis so that Rio Road could be realigned. At that time the VDOT District Administrator stated that “in compliance with the City’s June 2, 2008 Ordinance, there are no plans to reopen Meadow Creek Parkway to traffic until all three projects (Meadow Creek Parkway, McIntire Road Extended, and the Route 250 – McIntire Interchange) are completed”.

Discussion: In considering the early opening of the Parkway there are two independent issues that must be considered by Council. These are the condition in the ordinance which contemplates that all segments of the road will be opened at the same time, and traffic concerns.

Albemarle County and VDOT officials have acknowledged the limitation in the ordinance but argue that conditions have changed since the ordinance was adopted in 2008. At that time, the expectation was that McIntire Road Extended and the interchange project would both be completed within six to twelve months of completion of the Parkway. At the time of those discussions that may have been

a valid expectation. However, delays with the permitting and Memorandum of Agreement processes have pushed the completion of both projects well beyond what was anticipated. While the delays have not been the result of City action or inaction, the current expectation is for McIntire Road Extended to be completed in the Fall of 2013, and the interchange project to be completed in 2014.

If Council decides that the early opening of the County portion is acceptable, the traffic implications should be considered. Several Councilors have expressed concern that when the Parkway was opened on a temporary basis in 2010, there were safety issues experienced by the students and faculty at Charlottesville High School. When the City was first approached by the County and VDOT earlier this year to discuss the early opening, City staff requested a traffic analysis to determine potential impacts to the road network. VDOT commissioned a study by Kimley-Horn that was published in June 2011. Upon review of the reports, City staff was concerned that it was based on traffic counts performed after City schools were closed for the year, and VDOT was asked to obtain new counts and to re-examine the findings of the report. The City Traffic Engineer worked with VDOT and TJPDC staff to review the updated reports and determined that the basic assumptions by Kimley-Horn were valid. Those assumptions are summarized as follows:

- While traffic will increase, most of the increase in the City will be on Melbourne Road between the Meadow Creek Parkway and Park Street.
- Traffic will increase on Grove but not beyond normally accepted levels for residential streets.
- Improvements (to be described below) will be needed to facilitate the movement of vehicles, including buses, when the Parkway is opened.
- The traffic counts experienced when the Parkway was opened in 2010 are a worst case scenario. At that time Rio Road was closed and all traffic was diverted to the Parkway. Melbourne Road (between the Parkway and Grove Road) in particular experienced a significant increase in traffic in the east bound direction but the analysis indicates that the increase will be less with

both the Parkway and Rio Road open.

In addition, staff examined vehicle crash data around Charlottesville High School over the last three years. There was only one accident not within the school property, and that involved a vehicle making an illegal U-turn.

Budgetary Impact: None if recommendations are followed

Recommendation: If Council decides to consent to the early opening of the County portion of the Meadow Creek Parkway, City staff recommends that the following should be conditions of that consent:

- That the posted speed limit will be 25 miles per hour on the Parkway approaching the intersection in both directions at Melbourne Road, and approaching in both directions the entrance to CATEC, marked by standard school zone signs with flashing lights; and
- That the City and VDOT enter into an agreement for the City to assume maintenance responsibility, including the operation of the traffic signal, over the intersection of the Meadow Creek Parkway/McIntire Road Extended and Melbourne Road for purposes of maintenance and the control and regulation of motor vehicle, pedestrian and bicycle traffic.
- That the following improvements recommended by the Kimley-Horn Study be made prior to the Parkway opening at VDOT's expense:
 - (1) At the intersection of Melbourne Road and Rio Road/Park Street, the radius in the southwest quadrant should be improved to accommodate existing and future overlap movements from eastbound Melbourne Road to southbound Park Street. When making the right-turn movement from Melbourne Road, school buses often encroach on the northbound left-turn lane.
 - (2) At the intersection of Melbourne Road and Rio Road/Park Street, the northbound left-turn lane storage should be increased from

165 feet to 265 feet to accommodate the additional left-turning vehicles. The existing taper length of 150 feet should be maintained. The width of Park Street within this distance is approximately 36 feet, which could accommodate this improvement.

- (3) At the intersection of Melbourne Road and Meadow Creek Parkway in the westbound direction, the intersection should be striped to allow for a through lane and a separate right turn lane. The existing width of pavement in this area will allow for this configuration. This improvement would accommodate future overlap movements from westbound Melbourne Road to northbound Meadow Creek Parkway.
- (4) At the intersection of Rio Road/Meadow Creek Parkway and Rio Road/CATEC Entrance, an exclusive westbound right-turn lane should remain to accommodate future overlap movements from westbound Rio Road to northbound Rio Road.
- (5) At the intersection of Rio Road/Meadow Creek Parkway and Rio Road/CATEC Entrance, a continuous left-turn lane could be provided on southbound Rio Road instead of a continuous right-turn lane. The southbound right-turn lane could be striped to include 500 feet of storage and 200 feet of taper.”

The first of these improvements will involve construction and possible right-of-way acquisition. City staff and VDOT staff are working to determine the cost of the improvements, to identify possible funding sources and the development of a plan to proceed immediately with the work.

Attachments: Ordinance

**AN ORDINANCE
CONSENTING TO THE OPENING OF THE MEADOW CREEK PARKWAY
TO VEHICULAR TRAFFIC**

WHEREAS, the Virginia Department of Transportation (“VDOT”) has completed construction of the Meadow Creek Parkway located in Albemarle County between East Rio Road and Melbourne Road; and,

WHEREAS, the Ordinance that authorized the granting of a permanent easement for that portion of the Parkway that crosses City-owned property provided that the Parkway would not open until both the McIntire Road Extended project and the McIntire Road Extended / Route 250 Interchange project were completed; and,

WHEREAS, since McIntire Road Extended and the Interchange project are not expected to be completed until 2013 – 2014, VDOT and the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors would like the Meadow Creek Parkway to be opened to vehicular traffic now; and,

WHEREAS, traffic studies and analysis indicate that the Parkway can be opened without adverse traffic impacts if certain improvements are made prior to the opening.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED by the Council for the City of Charlottesville, Virginia that the Council hereby consents to the opening of the Meadow Creek Parkway upon completion of the following improvements, to be undertaken at the expense of the Virginia Department of Transportation:

- (1) The posted speed limit will be 25 miles per hour on the Parkway approaching the intersection at Melbourne Road, and approaching in both directions the entrance to CATEC, marked by standard school zone signs with flashing lights.
- (2) The City and VDOT enter into an agreement for the City to assume maintenance responsibility, including the operation of the traffic signal, over the intersection of the Meadow Creek Parkway/McIntire Road Extended and Melbourne Road for purposes of maintenance and the control and regulation of motor vehicle, pedestrian and bicycle traffic.
- (3) At the intersection of Melbourne Road and Rio Road/Park Street, the radius in the southwest quadrant should be improved to accommodate existing and future overlap movements from eastbound Melbourne Road to southbound Park Street. When making the right-turn movement from Melbourne Road, school buses often encroach on the northbound left-turn lane.
- (4) At the intersection of Melbourne Road and Rio Road/Park Street, the northbound left-turn lane storage should be increased from 165 feet to 265 feet to accommodate the additional left-turning vehicles. The existing taper length of 150 feet should be maintained. The width of Park Street within this distance is approximately 36 feet, which could accommodate this improvement.
- (5) At the intersection of Melbourne Road and Meadow Creek Parkway in the westbound direction, the intersection should be striped to allow for a through lane and a separate right turn lane. The existing width of pavement in this area will allow for this configuration. This improvement would accommodate future overlap movements from westbound Melbourne Road to northbound Meadow Creek Parkway.
- (6) At the intersection of Rio Road/Meadow Creek Parkway and Rio Road/CATEC Entrance, an exclusive westbound right-turn lane should remain to accommodate future overlap movements from westbound Rio Road to northbound Rio Road.

- (7) At the intersection of Rio Road/Meadow Creek Parkway and Rio Road/CATEC Entrance, a continuous left-turn lane could be provided on southbound Rio Road instead of a continuous right-turn lane. The southbound right-turn lane could be striped to include 500 feet of storage and 200 feet of taper.