

2018-01-08

Falls of Neuse Confirmation Group Meeting #6

Abbott's Creek Community Center

Staff present: Jason Hardin, Bynum Walter

Members present: Bob Fry, Leon Cooke, Susan Burton, John Toller, John Purves, Andi Curtis

Opening remarks

- Project Manager Jason Hardin opened the meeting and discussed the next steps for the project. This purpose of this meeting is for the Group to review comments received during the second comment period and to consider whether they align with public input received during the planning process. Following any revisions, a new draft report will be published, along with a list of comments and responses.
- Hardin stated that the next step for the project will be to present the report to City Council for potential referral to the Planning Commission. That will begin the process of review and potential adoption of the plan.

Discussion of public comments

- The group discussed each of the 11 public comments made during the second comment period.
- The group agreed that two comments advocating against the study of a potential sidewalk segment along Falls of Neuse Road between Durant Road and Raven Ridge Road were not aligned with the overall public input contained in the plan, and that the study and potential sidewalk construction should remain in the plan.
- The group discussed a comment that all sidewalks along Falls of Neuse Road be upgraded to multi-use paths and a comment that the existing sidewalk on the west side of Falls of Neuse Road north of Raven Ridge Road be upgraded to a multi-use path. Hardin stated that the BikeRaleigh plan currently recommends separated bikeways on this portion of the road and that such facilities likely would take the form of a multi-use path. He stated that while creating a complete sidewalk network was discussed throughout the process, the possibility of additional multi-use paths in place of sidewalks was not discussed. The group agreed that a revision to the report to study the issue further would be in keeping with public input. The timing of the study would be linked to the timing of an existing plan recommendation for study of the city-owned Leonard Tract with respect to future park facilities. By potentially making future park facilities safer and easier to access for people walking or biking, that linkage would support the plan themes of active living and improved recreation opportunities.
- The group agreed that a comment recommending the inclusion of sidewalks along the portion of Raven Ridge Road between Falls of Neuse Road and the utility easement to the south was aligned with the themes of the plan and the recommendation for addressing gaps in the sidewalk network. Hardin stated that that section of Raven Ridge Road is planned for future improvements including sidewalks, but that inclusion of the recommendation in the plan could improve the chances of funding. The group agreed that the sidewalk section should be included in the plan recommendations.

- The group discussed a comment advocating for a recommendation to explore the possibility of a trail along the Duke Energy easement paralleling Falls of Neuse Road. Hardin stated that the easement is entirely beyond the study area and that the concept was not discussed at any plan meetings. The group agreed that the inclusion of the recommendation would not be supported by public input.
- The group discussed a comment stating that a plan recommendation to study additional separation between pedestrians and cars on the Falls of Neuse bridge should be removed. Hardin stated that the recommendation, which is aimed at making the bridge sidewalk safer and more comfortable, is in line with the plan emphasis on creating an improved pedestrian network. The group agreed that removing the recommendation would not be in line with received input.
- The group also discussed other comments that did not specifically request a change to the report but that will receive a response. Hardin stated that responses will be published along with the revised project report.

Discussion of Comprehensive Plan amendments

- Hardin distributed draft copies of amendments to the Comprehensive Plan that would accompany the project report through the review and adoption process. He stated that the amendments are the means by which the plan's policies would be implemented.

Meeting Adjournment

- Jason Hardin stated that the project report and responses to comments will be published in the coming weeks, and that the report could go to Council in February. He stated that the Group will be kept apprised of upcoming meeting dates.
- Hardin and Walter thanked the group members for their contributions to the planning process.