

Thomas Jefferson District Planning Commission

Move Safely Blue Ridge Virtual Community Open House Summary

December 11, 2024

12:00 PM – 12:45 PM & 5:00 PM – 5:45 PM

Zoom Webinar

Attendees:

- TJPDC Staff: Ruth Emerick, Gorjan Gjorgjievski, and Sarah Simba
- Move Safely Blue Ridge Project Team: Rashaun Bennett, Rossana Gonzalez, Danielle McCray, Erin Murphy
- 35 total community participants

Meeting Overview:

- **Welcome:** Gorjan Gjorgjievski welcomed participants and gave a brief introduction on transportation safety and how public input can shape safety solutions.
- **Housekeeping:** Rashaun Bennett explained the housekeeping rules, stating that all participants are muted on entry, and giving a brief overview of the webinar tools, including the live captioning function and the Q&A box to submit questions. He instructed participants to message Rossana Gonzalez for technical assistance.
- **Project Overview:** Danielle McCray provided an overview of the agenda and the project, highlighting that it's funded and administered through the US Department of Transportation's Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) program, with a focus on reducing roadway fatalities and serious injuries for all road users.
- **Data Presentation:** Danielle McCray presented data from the six jurisdictions, including the City of Charlottesville and the Counties of Albemarle, Fluvanna, Greene, Louisa, and Nelson. She shared statistics on fatalities and serious injuries and discussed each jurisdiction's commitment to reducing these numbers within specified timeframes.
- **Project Timeline:** Danielle McCray discussed the steps they've taken as a project team, highlighting two rounds of engagement, the first of which was conducted in spring of 2024 and focused on gathering feedback on issues, opportunities and safety challenges faced by the community. She explained that Round II was still in progress, with a focus on safety solutions. She stated that the final step would be the development of the safety action plan with feedback from the community.
- **Community Engagement:** Rashaun Bennett summarized the in-person engagement efforts from Round II, including events such as football games, a 5K race, city markets, libraries, and food pantries. He mentioned that the team engaged nearly 500 individuals in person, gathering feedback, distributing information, and guiding them through an interactive activity where they allocated tokens representing money, time

and resources towards their preferred safety solution. He also emphasized the team's outreach to underserved communities, including the Hispanic population, youth, unhoused communities and faith-based communities.

- **Interactive Poll:** Erin Murphy instructed participants to use their computer or mobile device to participate in an interactive poll, with a series of questions related to their thoughts on safety solutions in the region. Results are shown in Appendix B of these notes.
- **Roadway Safety Solutions:** Danielle McCray presented the 13 emphasis areas selected by TJPDC in partnership with jurisdictions and the solutions aligned with addressing those trends, based on the 4Es framework (Engineering, Education, Enforcement, and Emergency response) to improve roadway safety. She explained each E and invited participants to provide feedback on the first three through the interactive poll. Participants chose which E they would prioritize and selected their preferred solutions from each category. As the results came in, she highlighted the most popular responses and compared them to feedback from the previous webinar and in-person engagements.
- **Community Champion:** Rashaun Bennett shared a video recording of Bertha Armstrong, a community champion of the Move Safely Blue Ridge Campaign. Bertha Armstrong introduced herself and shared her background, including her work with MACAA and her involvement in various boards related to wastewater, healthcare, and revitalization. She spoke about her commitment to increasing community involvement, particularly within the Black community, and stressed the importance of awareness and participation in local issues, including road safety. She highlighted the need for better understanding of safe driving practices, such as avoiding drinking and driving, ensuring proper car inspections, and having insurance.
- **Conclusion and Next Steps:** Rashaun Bennett encouraged participants to visit the project website at movesafelyblueridge.com, spread the word to their community, and complete the online survey. He mentioned that the next round of engagement would take place in spring 2025. Gorjan Gjorgjievski concluded the webinar by thanking participants for their attendance and feedback and encouraging them to reach out with questions and stay updated on the project.

The recording of the zoom meeting can be found on the [project website](#). Questions regarding Move Safely Blue Ridge can be directed to info@movesafelyblueridge.com.

Appendix A: Frequently Asked Questions

- **What inspired the creation of the Move Safely Blue Ridge project?**

The Move Safely Blue Ridge” project is this region’s defined Road Safety Action Plan funded by the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) Safe Streets and Roads for All program. The USDOT’s goal for zero roadway fatalities inspired the project. Each locality in the TJPDC contributed a portion for seeking the grant to serve a shared interest in reducing roadway fatalities in the area, which increased in number between 2018 and 2022. This regional effort encompasses six jurisdictions, including the City of Charlottesville and the counties of Albemarle, Greene, Nelson, Fluvanna, and Louisa. Each jurisdiction, through elected leadership, has committed to reducing the number of roadway fatalities and serious injuries moving forward.

- **What are the themes you’re hearing as folks are engaging in this project?**

Driver behavior is a concern and promoting rideshare programs to deter impaired drivers from getting behind the wheel has been emphasized across jurisdictions. There has also been an emphasis on working with the existing infrastructure in the region, which includes making sure pedestrian crosswalks connect to continuous pedestrian sidewalks.

- **How does this project fit into the broader context of community safety and transportation in our region?**

Recognizing the importance of safety, there are a variety of parallel and complimentary efforts underway within the region across the 4 four E’s of Roadway Safety – Engineering, Education, Enforcement, and Emergency Response. Our goal is to recognize the region’s work comprehensively. In addition to the USDOT and representatives from the six TJPDC jurisdictions, we are partnering the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) to accomplish this effort. This project will allow the region to make a stronger case for future federal funding opportunities, which allows us to bring the tide up for the whole region in terms of safety. One way we have made this dialogue a priority is by hosting a Roadway Safety Summit in 2024 that allowed people from neighboring jurisdictions to come together and discuss safety opportunities.

- **What role does community feedback play in shaping the Move Safely Blue Ridge project?**

Community feedback plays a very key role in the success of this project. This is a community centered project. Ultimately, the plan is developed and refined through a combination of safety data and community feedback. In Phase I of our engagement, we raised awareness and got feedback about safety concerns. Phase II has been about seeking feedback from the public on priorities for safety strategies and giving an opportunity to weigh in in community values. Round III of Engagement will focus on on-the-ground outreach seeking feedback on the draft Safety Action Plan in the Spring of 2025.

- **What are the long-term goals for Move Safely Blue Ridge?**

The long-term goals for the Move Safely Blue Ridge project are to make roads in the City of Charlottesville, and the counties of Albemarle, Louisa, Fluvanna, Greene, and Nelson safer, so that fatal crashes are a rarity, and where residents and visitors can travel securely by foot, wheel, transit, and car.

- **What's next in this project?**
 - Round 2 of Engagement coming to a close
 - Developing Strategies for the Safety Action Plan in **Winter of 2025**
 - Round 3 of Engagement to take place in **Spring of 2025** will involve reviewing the draft Safety Action Plan
 - Planned Draft Action Plan Completion Date: **Winter 2025**
 - Planned Action Plan Completion Date: **Spring 2025**
 - Planned Action Plan Adoption Date: **Summer 2025**
 - Planned SS4A Final Report Submission Date: **Fall 2025**

- **What about tailgating? Where does that fit? Speeding?**

The [USDOT Safe Systems Approach](#) takes a holistic view of the road system that first anticipates human mistakes and second keeps impact energy on the human body at tolerable levels. Making a commitment to zero deaths means addressing every aspect of crash risks through the five elements of a Safe System – safer people, safer vehicles, safer speeds, safer roads, and post-crash care. The Safety Action Plan develops safety countermeasures based on the specific characteristics of the area and recent fatal and serious injury crashes. Countermeasures can include education about the dangers of aggressive driving, designing roads for lower speeds, and specific enforcement tactics related to aggressive driving and speeding.

- **Has anyone walked or biked 151 between the 250 roundabout to the turn to RT 29 at the power station?**

Yes, members of the TJPDC team have experienced this area. We will consider this location as we develop engineering recommendations in the plan.

- **Can enforcement and education be combined? Enforcement that doesn't change behavior is not useful. That doesn't mean that it isn't appealing but only if it saves lives.**

Yes, a comprehensive, holistic approach is most likely to reduce roadway fatalities and serious injuries. The four 4 E's of Roadway Safety – Engineering, Education, Enforcement, and Emergency Response – work together. Further, the recommendations in the Safety Action Plan will be based on proven safety countermeasures that are tailored to the specific characteristics of the region and recent crashes as well as community feedback.

- **How successful are “awareness” campaigns? Do we have any data on this?**

The USDOT recommends a [Safe Systems Approach](#) that focused on people, vehicles, speeds, roads, and post-crash care. In terms of people, shared responsibility and proactivity are very important as is redundancy, or the idea that all elements of the transportation system should be strengthened so that people are protected even if one part of the system fails. In short, education including awareness campaigns are one part of our approach, but not the whole approach. We recommend leveraging evidence-based behavior campaigns that have been vetted by organizations such as the [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration](#) which published safety research in addition to providing safety resources.

- **How will the reduction of motor vehicles (with drivers transitioning to other modes of movement, including transit) factor into solutions?**

Public transportation is shown to have lower crash rates as well as death and injury rates compared to automobile travel and presents an opportunity to reduce traffic deaths and serious injuries. The solutions that we prioritize as part of the Safety Action Plan will consider crash data, context, proven countermeasures, and community input.

- **Many Virginians don't realize that it's illegal to be using a cell phone while driving. How can the police increase awareness of the issue of distracted driving and the repercussions of driving while using a cell phone? AND Is there data on safety results from drunk driving education? If so, then that education really saved lives and could potentially be replicated with distracted driving?**

We've received a lot of feedback on distracted driving that will be considered in prioritizing solutions. This is a case where the four 4 E's of Roadway Safety, and specifically Education and Enforcement, can work together to reduce traffic deaths and serious injuries. There are some jurisdictions that are committing additional resources to this topic, including signage related to no cell phone use, that could provide a template.

- **At the beginning of this project there was data provided that showed some fairly significant reductions nationally over a certain time period. Has the primary source of the reductions been identified?**

The data that we are using as part of the Safety Action Plan are developed using official police reports, compiled by VDOT. If you're interested in reviewing statewide safety trends, VDOT develops the [Virginia Strategic Highway Safety Plan](#).

- **What do you have in place to verify or keep track of what jurisdictions are actively doing to improve road safety on a yearly (or otherwise) basis?**

The USDOT SS4A Action Plan requirements include a leadership commitment and goal setting for the reduction in deaths and serious injuries, establishing strategy and identification of projects, and the last component is called progress and transparency. Progress and transparency is a method to measure progress over time after an Action Plan is developed or updated, including outcome data. It's a means to ensure ongoing transparency

is established with residents and other relevant stakeholders. The approach must include, at a minimum, annual public and accessible reporting on progress toward reducing roadway fatalities and serious injuries and public posting of the Action Plan online. TJPDC will work with the jurisdictions and community to establish our benchmark for progress and transparency moving forward. Further, a benefit of completing a formal Safety Action Plan is making projects eligible for SS4A implementation dollars so that projects can come to fruition.

- **Could the baseline numbers of fatalities and injuries (2018-2022) have been influenced by the pandemic? Are these reasonable for a baseline, or were there odd trends those years (and how does that reflect on county commitments to half or eliminate fatalities)?**

The [Virginia Strategic Highway Safety Plan](#) shares recent crash data statewide. In its overview section the plan says, “Nationally, as in Virginia, the trend has been an increase in fatalities even in the face of lower vehicle miles traveled during the COVID-19 pandemic, and this dangerous trend has continued.”

- **Who is reaching out to farmers, tractors, horse trailers, horse crossings, etc.?**

This particular group is included in our outreach to rural communities, and we have some limited, but direct feedback from the farming and horse communities. If you have any feedback including groups we can reach out to specifically, please let us know.

- **For your research, can you make driving while using cell phones its own category (not combined with other items)? In today’s society and with our cell phone addictions, this needs to be elevated.**

For the purposes of the analysis, TJPDC and member jurisdictions decided to look at the collective impaired driving causes as an emphasis area. This includes distracted (including cell phone), drunk, drugged, and drowsy travel. We’ve received a lot of feedback on distracted driving that will be considered in prioritizing solutions.

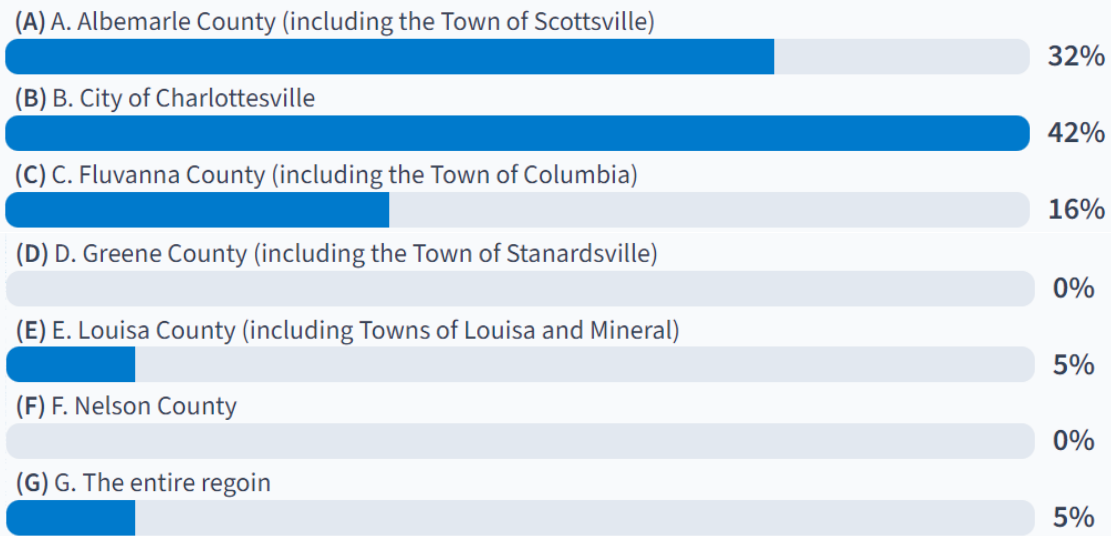
- **How are you planning to balance an evidence-based approach for where there is the most need (e.g., that the majority of fatalities were from running off the road) and community feedback?**

The high injury network, or HIN, helps us understand where the most severe crashes are on the roadway network. We couple this with public input that helps us fill in gaps to understand that there are safety concerns including near misses. Both datasets inform our projects and priorities, though we expect the HIN helps us identify the majority of the areas with need and the community feedback helps us identify any data gaps.

Appendix B: Live Survey Results

Webinar 12/11/2024 at noon

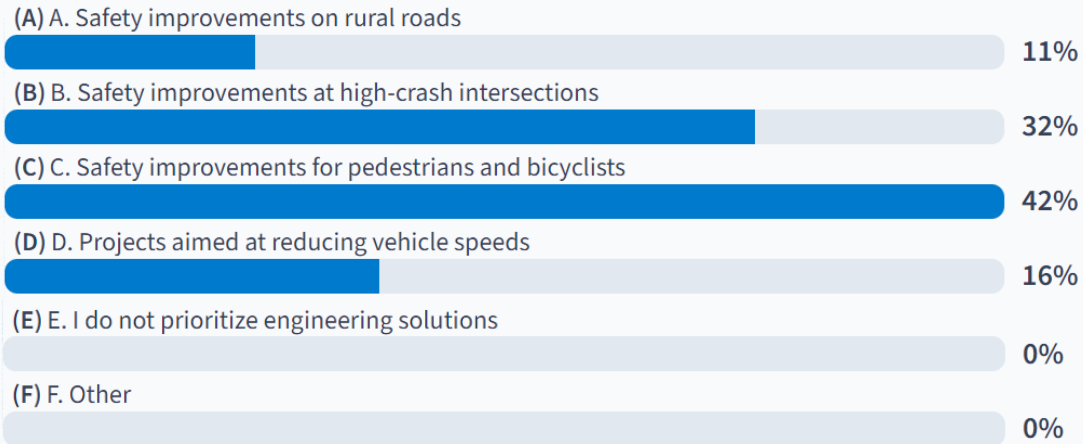
Please select one jurisdiction on which you'd like to comment via upcoming poll questions



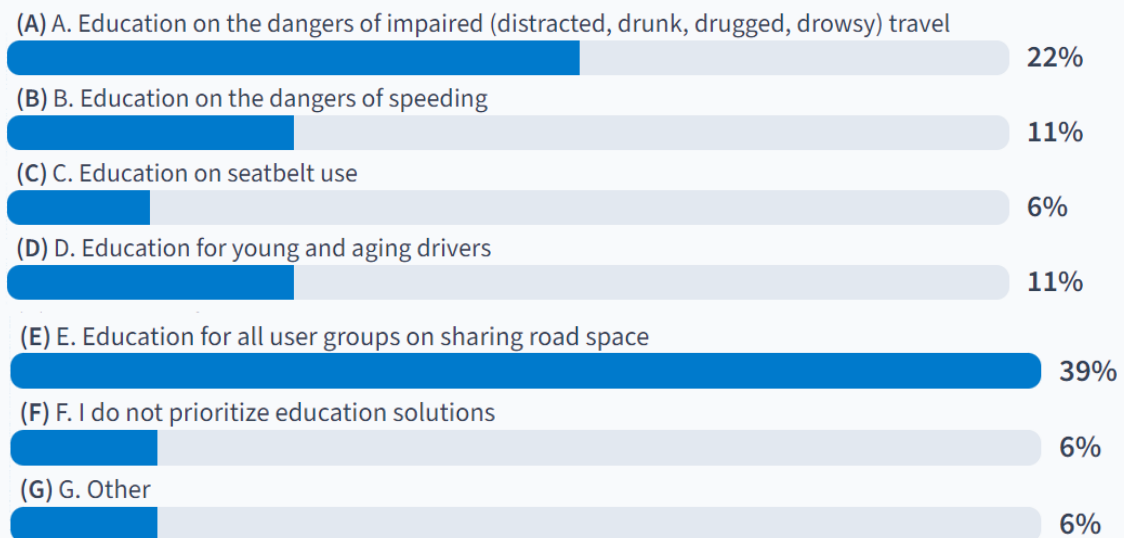
Which strategy would you prioritize to address roadway facilities and serious injuries in your community?



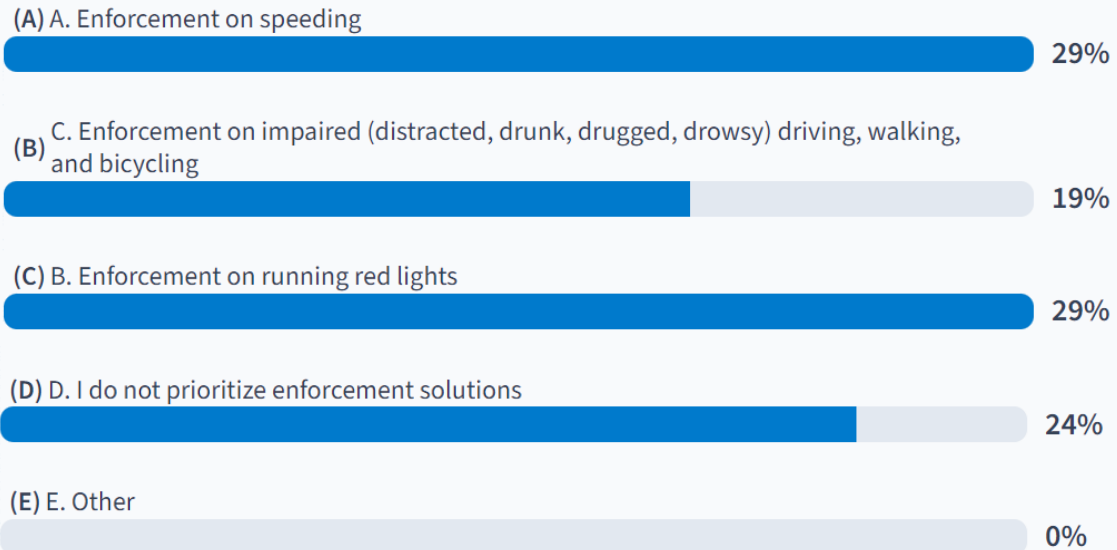
Which engineering solution would you most like to see in your community?



Which education solution would you most like to see in your community?

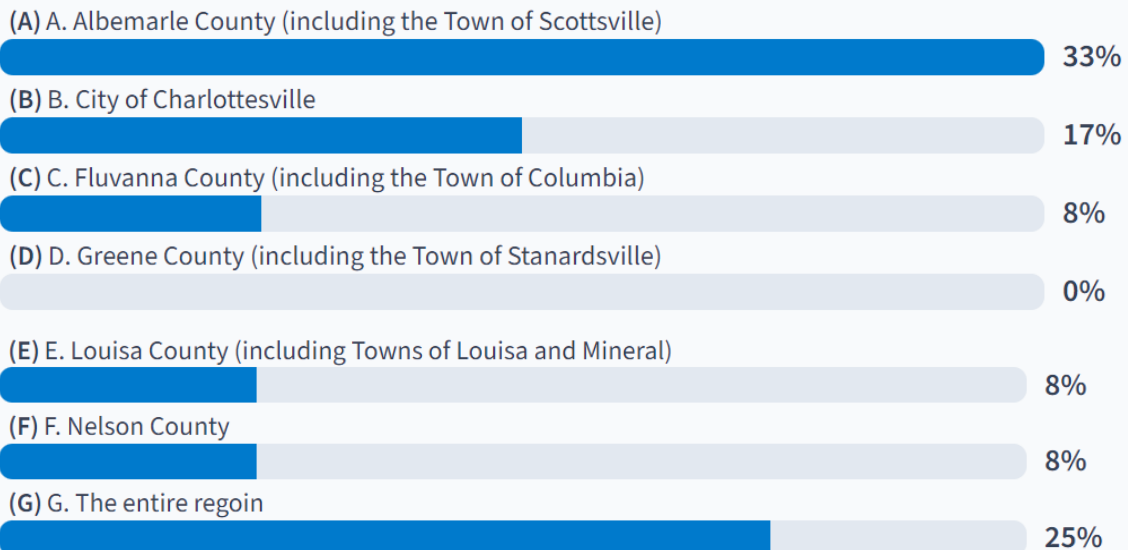


Which enforcement solution would you most like to see in your community?



Webinar 12/11/2024 at 5 PM

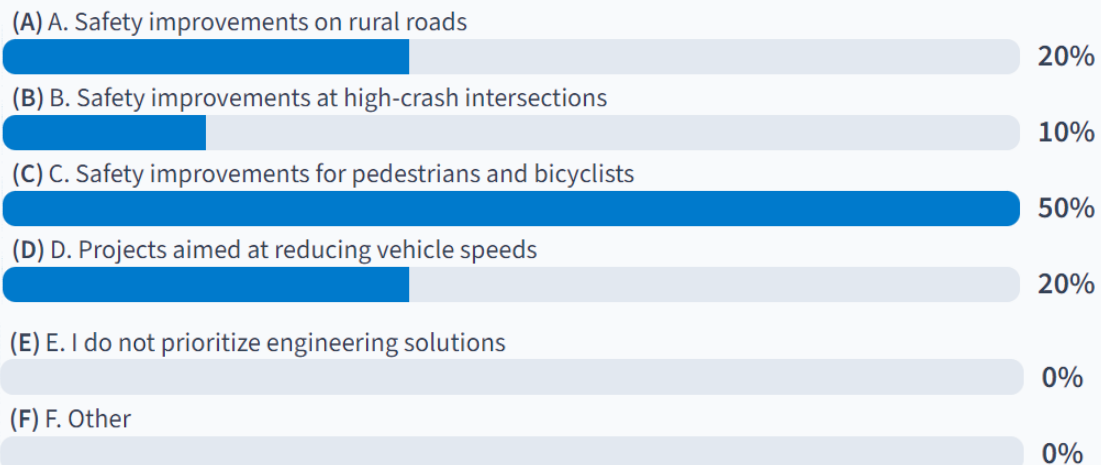
Please select one jurisdiction on which you'd like to comment via upcoming poll questions



Which strategy would you prioritize to address roadway facilities and serious injuries in your community?



Which engineering solution would you most like to see in your community?



Which education solution would you most like to see in your community?

