VTrans Webinar: Urban Development Areas Needs Assessment Process – Friday, June 14th, 2019
Transcript
Video Recording file can be found at www.VTrans.org

Slide 1: Katie Schwing: So without further ado, I'd like to turn over the presentation to Jitender Ramchandani, who is also with the Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment, who will be giving the presentation. Jitender?

Jitender Ramchandani: Thank you Katie. Hello, my name is Jitender Ramchandani, as Katie mentioned I'm with the Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment, or OIPI. Our office is assisting the Commonwealth Transportation Board, or CTB, with the update of VTrans, Virginia's transportation plan.

For a quick overview, VTrans is Virginia's multimodal transportation plan that is updated every four years. The CTB kicked-off the current update in October 2018.

On May 30th, we conducted a webinar to explain the overall VTrans Needs Identification Process. The purpose of today's webinar is to share more detailed information on the Needs Update Process for Urban Development Areas or UDAs. Our primary intended audience are the designated UDA contacts for localities, as well as localities who are in the process of establishing UDA's. Of course anyone interested in how UDA Needs are established for VTrans is also welcome.

Slide 2: Our presentation will cover four main topics:

We will share some history and background information on Urban Development Areas, and explain the context of how UDAs fit into the VTrans Needs Identification Process.

We will explain the process for updating UDA needs identified in 2015 as part of the previous update of the VTrans. As I mentioned, VTrans is updated every four years. The last time VTrans Needs were updated was 2015.

And, finally we hope to walk everyone through a survey questions and share some key dates.
Slide 3: Urban Development Areas as we know them were originally established in Virginia's code as a result of an initiative of the General Assembly in 2007.

The goal was to promote transportation efficient land use and land development patterns to help reduce the impact of growth on the state's transportation network. At that time, the requirements for the UDA's were mandatory in nature. Since 2013, further legislation has made UDA's open to more localities and development types.

In 2009, the state code was revised to require VTrans to identify transportation needs of designated UDA's.

I wanted to quickly point out that this webinar discusses the UDA Needs Identification process for VTrans. We will not be discussing how to go about designating a UDA, nor discussing OIPI's UDA Grant Program which has been administered by OIPI to help localities with the UDA designation process, among other things. If you have any questions about those processes, please feel free to contact us separately.

Slide 4 Currently, the code describes UDA's as the following:
These areas are designated by a locality that has the appropriate zoning authority
May be sufficient to support 10-20 years of projected growth and,
May extend planning horizon to 40 years around current/ planned rail transit
May be appropriate for compact residential densities and higher commercial floor area ratios
Shall incorporate principles of traditional neighborhood design (TND) outlined on this slide.

Slide 5: This slide shows the difference between Traditional Neighborhood Design and a more dispersed development pattern.

As you can see, a dispersed development patterns increases the burden of maintaining and expanding the transportation system. This development is characterized by separated, dispersed land uses that can drive demand for roads by requiring longer trips than otherwise.

On the other hand, compact, TND development patterns, under typical circumstances, may provide more options for connections between two points and may accommodate more people with less infrastructure.

These preferences, again, are controlled by localities, and OIPI does not play a role in that.

Slide 6: As I mentioned, OIPI does not play a role in locality's designation process. The UDA designation is voluntary, optional, and based on a locally-driven process.

The Term Urban Development Area is one that is referenced in the state code, but many localities refer to their UDA areas by other terms, such as Designated Growth Areas, Development Districts, etc. For us the key is to be able to locate the reference to the State Code's UDA section in the Comprehensive Plan, irrespective of the term.

UDA's are flexible in terms of the type of zoning and development that occurs within them, and in what timeframe. In other words, the designation can be tailored to local needs.

The key is, in this instance, to reduce the needs for additional transportation network - it is essentially focused on ensuring that existing areas can accommodate more density and that the appropriate infrastructure is provided.

Slide 7: UDA's can be found throughout the state, in both more urban and rural areas. This map shows the locations of UDA's across the Commonwealth, at least as of May 2018. As you can see, 62 localities

(which include Counties, Cities, and Towns) have designated UDA's, and many localities have designated multiple UDA's in their jurisdictions.

We have conducted an outreach process to ensure our list is as complete as possible. It is, however, possible that there are other UDAs that we are unaware of. So if you happen to be one of those localities that has a UDA's but it is not shown on the map, please let us know. We would like to make sure our list is as complete as possible.

We will be updating this list as we go through the Needs update process.

Slide 8: This map provides an example of UDA areas in the Northern Virginia area. As you can see, UDA's can vary greatly in size, shape, and development density.

Slide 9: In this map of the Middle Peninsula area, you can see that in some areas of the state, there are fewer UDA's than in others. Again the size, number of UDA's, is a locally-driven decision.

I would like to pause here to see if anyone has any questions about how UDA's are identified. We do not plan to provide detailed information on how to designate a UDA in this webinar, but we can provide that guidance to you individually upon request. But if there are general questions on UDA's we can take them now before we move onto the Needs Assessment Process. Katie, do you see any questions at this point?

Katie Schwing: Hi Jitender, there's nothing in the chat pod at the moment, but it looks like somebody is typing, so I'm going to give them a minute to send in a question if they're going to and hopefully we can address that here. So if we wait for about 30 seconds I think we'll get a couple questions. Ok so one just came in: for designated UDA's, are there any positive considerations in the SMART SCALE evaluation?

Jitender: Well I'm glad this question was posted. I think one of the key points here is that - and that we plan on covering later in this presentation - is that the UDA needs that are identified as part of the VTrans process become eligible for SMART SCALE funding. SMART SCALE is a program under the purview of the Commonwealth Transportation Board and is assisted by OIPI. SMART SCALE has three requirements - of the three, key requirements (eligibility, readiness, inclusion in VTrans). So the purpose of the identification of this webinar is to help identify Needs that will be used in the next Round of SMART SCALE, which will be in the Spring of 2020.

Katie: Great thanks. We just got another quick one that came in. So is the UDA selected by local jurisdictions given in Comp Plan - so I'm thinking they're asking, are the UDA's shown in the Comp Plan - so can you speak to how we know that it's a designated UDA?

Jitender: Sure, so in this case, the code requirement is, irrespective of the term that is used, as I mentioned, the key point is the Code reference to UDA's is included in the comprehensive plan and has gone through the appropriate processes for that inclusion.

Katie: Ok, looks like there's one more. Let's see, if some of the areas are very small, should we point to areas with an arrow and UDA name? How will they be labeled in other VTrans data? Each locality knows their respective areas, however for folks reviewing data, labels might be helpful. So I think this might - I'm going to go ahead and take a stab - I think this might be something that we continue to work on through the VTrans process, but as of right now our goal is connecting with each locality to make sure we have the correct areas for the UDA's, and then as we communicate it we'll have different ways of showing it. Is that correct, Jitender?

Jitender: Yes, I'm trying to understand the question, if the areas are too small on a map - if that is what the question is asking - as long as there is a designated UDA area with the appropriate reference in the comprehensive plan, that area will be identified and included in VTrans.

Katie: ok great.

Slide 10: Moving into the VTrans process, I wanted to remind you of the Goals that the Commonwealth Transportation Board, or CTB, established in 2015 for VTrans as part of the last update of VTrans. At this time, the staff recommendation to the CTB is to retain these goals and then take their guidance and then modify as they find appropriate, and at this point we also hope to tie the goals ore closely to the Needs assessment process, which includes UDA's.

Slide 11: So I mentioned the code reference, this slide shows the code reference that we will be looking for in the comprehensive plans.

The Needs Assessment Process is required by State Code to be conducted for three Travel Markets, and for Safety Needs statewide. Travel markets serve different roles in the overall transportation network. UDA's are one of the three travel markets, and are intended to serve more local travel. Regional Networks serve regional commuting and economic activity, and Corridors of Statewide Significance serve inter-city, inter-regional, and inter-state travel for both passengers and freight.

Safety needs are identified within each Travel Market, as well as for the entire state.

Slide 12: This map shows where the travel markets have been established around the state.

Needs identified for all three travel markets, and Safety, are used for SMART SCALE purposes, SMART SCALE is a funding program under the purview of Commonwealth Transportation Board. All funding applications for the SMART SCALE program have to meet one or more needs identified in VTrans become eligible for the next round of SMART SCALE funding that will start application intake in spring of 2020.

Colored lines show Corridors of Statewide Significance, or CoSS. Orange polygons show Regional Networks. UDAs are shown in the form of dots. As you can see, there can be some overlap in these markets. For example, many UDA's can be found within Regional Network areas.

Slide 13: The UDA Needs Identification process will follow closely with the process that was done for the last VTrans update. In this case, identified UDA needs that approved by the Commonwealth Transportation Board or CTB will be the starting point,

Each locality identified needs through a survey that were put into profile documents by OIPI. 126 profiles were developed for 212 unique locations.

In addition to the Needs, the profiles also included some key background information such as a map and description of the UDA, the current and planned land use place type (from rural or village center, to urban core), and population and employment data.

Slide 14: Since UDA's are optional, locally determined areas, localities play a key role in defining UDA-specific VTrans Needs.

- Consistent with legislative purpose of UDAs, UDA needs typically focus on:
- Context sensitive multimodal transportation solutions
- Last-mile access
- Bicycle and pedestrian circulation
- Safety
- Connections to local multimodal networks and regional transportation options
- LOCALLY established plans and goals

In practice this has been through the completion of an online survey.

As I mentioned, primary contacts for all UDAs should have received an email with a link to the survey questionnaire. We will walk everyone through the questionnaire in a minute.

Slide 15: Many UDA's have not changed significantly since the last VTrans Update, and we recognize that.

This Needs update process will allow localities to make updates, but the Needs could end up being the same as the previous Needs.

As part of the questionnaire, we ask to localities to identify locally-driven priorities for specific improvement types which can be, for example, completion of sidewalk network. This will allow us to differentiate priorities that may be of higher priority to localities, and appropriately reflect those priorities in VTrans.

Slide 16: So, here is how the process will work: localities will fill out the Needs Questionnaire via the online survey. If you are a primary contact for a UDA and have not received a link to the survey questionnaire, please let us know.

OIPI may follow up with the UDA contacts to clarify of verify the responses.

OIPI will create summaries based on the questionnaire submittals, which will be presented as part of the Draft needs package this Fall. Draft needs will be open public review as well as review by the Commonwealth Transportation Board. The Needs are slated to go for final review by the CTB in October this year and we intend to request CTB action at the Board's December meeting.

Slide 17: So I mentioned an online survey. So in this case, the email with the survey weblink should also include a PDF copy of the UDA needs identified in 2015. This is for your reference and to assist you with completion of the questionnaire.

We will be relying on Primary contacts (those who have received these emails) to ensure that their responses are representative of their locality and they have contacted all appropriate stakeholders.

For established UDAs, please do refer to the needs submitted in 2015, they provide some good information.

Here is a key point - If you are planning to designate and locally approve a new UDA by April 1st, 2020, we request that you also complete a questionnaire, even if the designation may not exist at this time. The intent is to ensure the list is as comprehensive as possible by the time we reach April 2020 - and the reason that date is important is because those Needs will be used in the next Round of SMART SCALE, which will start accepting applications around that time.

Slide 18: So now we will get into the details of the questionnaire, the survey web link that you may have received.

The survey takes about 15-30 minutes to complete, in addition to time for compiling information to complete the survey, and may vary depending on how many UDAs you are providing responses for. We will share the questions on this webinar so that you can collect all the required information before you start filling out the online questionnaire.

We are asking each jurisdiction to provide responses for all designated UDAs in your location as well as areas that you are planning to designate as a UDA. You will have the opportunity to provide responses for up to 10 UDAs in one survey.

You may also save the survey to complete at a later time by clicking the "Save and Continue Later" button at the top of each page. You will be asked again to provide your name and your email address. You will receive a unique link with a partially completed survey. When you enter more information and want to take a second or third break, please submit your name and email address again to get another unique link.

As part of the survey, we are also asking localities to reconfirm UDA boundaries. If you would like to share new boundaries in the form of GIS shapefile, or share any other documents, you will be able to do that at the end of the survey. If you run into any technical troubles, please feel free to email us.

Finally, at the end of the survey, once you submit your response, you will receive an email from "Survey Gizmo" with a pdf file that will include everything that you provided to OIPI. We request that you review that file for accuracy and completeness. If you see anything missing, please contact us immediately so that we can make appropriate changes.

Slide 19: So again, you should have received an email link by this time.

Please contact the appropriate stakeholders. If you are unable to complete the survey, the link may be forwarded to the correct person.

We recommend that you review UDA profiles from the last update as well as the questions that we will share in a minute, in order to compile any required information before you complete the survey.

A reminder, please send us copies of any required document or shapefiles via the email link at the end of the survey. More information is better.

Finally, please complete survey for all UDAs in your jurisdiction by July 12.

Slide 20: And now at this point we will quickly walk through the key questions that will be found on the survey. The purpose is to give you a flavor of the type of information you will need before you respond to the survey.

The first set of questions ask you to completely fill in the contact information of the primary and secondary UDA contacts. These contacts are the ones that OIPI will be working with for locally-identified UDA needs.

The next questions ask about UDA's generally in your jurisdiction. This will help us make sure we have a complete listing of the current UDA's.

Question 5 and 6 are inquire about the number of UDAs in your jurisdiction - to ensure that we have all the UDA's that may exist in your jurisdiction.

Question 7 is for localities that may have had a UDA but, for some reason, chose to remove the UDA designation. We would want to know that as well.

Question 8 gives you the flexibility to fill out one response that applies to all UDAs within your jurisdiction or fill a unique one for each. We encourage you to be as specific as possible. In other words, fill out one for each UDA. It may take more time but it will be more accurate that a blanket one that applies to all UDAs.

Once you have completed this survey page, you will be directed to a new page to fill out information on the specific UDA.

Slide 21: So the questions that you see on this page - Questions 9 to 19 - are specific to UDA's. So if you chose will allow to you list UDA needs.

In response to Question 8, if you chose to complete separate surveys for each UDA, you will have to answer Question 9 through 19 for each UDA. So will have to fill out 3-4 times if you have 3-4 different UDA's in your area.

In the end, you will have one opportunity to submit files for all UDA's in the designated area.

Slide 22: Next I want to do a live demonstration of the UDA survey and a UDA webmap.

These links have been made available to you via the email that was sent to you.

Katie, at this point can we pull up the screen and walk through the questionnaire very quickly?

Katie: Sure, we just have to set it up for a second so that we can share my screen, so we can go to this live link. So please bear with me for just a moment. Ok - Jitender can you see my screen?

Jitender: Yes I can. Ok, so this will be the landing page when you click on the survey link. It provides the reference to the UDA code, in the Code of Virginia. It provides some basic instructions as we scroll down the page. Some of that information is already covered as part of this webinar but we encourage you to take a look at it again. For those who are not familiar with the code reference and the specific language in the code, there is some background information for that, and again it includes some contact information. It also includes a link to the VTrans website.

When you click on next, it will take you to the second page, which will ask for information on primary and basic information.

There are three mandatory questions on this page. The first one is the contact information - we request that you fil out as many fields as possible so that we know we have the most updated information about you. The Email that you fill out here is the one that will receive the PDF files with the completed questionnaire. So it is very important that you verify this email address once it is included. We also request that if there is a secondary contact that you fill that out as well- all the fields here are pre-filled just for reference, and it will be blank when you open the questionnaire.

The next set of questions are to ensure that the responses are representative of the UDA that you are providing responses for. And question number 6, as you can see, is asking about how many UDA's exist in your jurisdiction. In this case, Katie has selected just one, and as we scroll to the bottom of the page, you will have an opportunity to identify if you would like to respond to one set of questions, or multiple sets of questions, in which case we ask that you provide the names of each UDA in the blank field.

When you click on the next page, this is where you will providing specific responses to UDA questions. So if you chose to provide one set of responses, the responses you enter on this page will apply to all

UDAs, as opposed to if you chose to provide responses for each UDA, so you have to fill out responses for questions 9-19 multiple times.

We won't go through all the questions in detail, as you get to the bottom of the page it asks you, are there any other UDA's that you would like to add.

Question 20 asks you if you are going to submit any files. In this case, yes, you will go to the next page, which is the last page, and will include the contact information, next steps, and link to upload the files. When you click on this link, essentially your email browser will open and you will then be able to share and upload files via that link.

So very quickly I mentioned one of the points that we wanted to share, is that as part of the questionnaire, on page 2, there is a link that takes you to a webmap where you can verify, as part of question 14, the boundaries of your UDA. Again the link is included in the questionnaire. We ask that you look at it carefully and identify that the boundaries depicted on it are accurate and up-to-date. So Katie can we quickly select one and see what information exists. So in this case it is the UDA in Albemarle County. The "More Info", when you click on it, will take you to the profiles that were submitted last time. You should have received this information in your email, but this is just another place for you to access it.

So this was a very quick demo. Katie, can we switch back to the powerpoint slide at this point?

Katie: Sure, I just unshared.

Jitender: So we only have three or four slides remaining.

Slide 23: I would like to go over the schedule for the Needs survey. Localities will have until July 12th to complete the survey for all UDA areas. Once we receive the responses, we will go through them and we may follow up with the UDA contacts if we have any questions. For example, if no Needs are selected, or no supporting documentation is attached for a new UDA, etc. When the profiles are complete they will be taken to the Commonwealth Transportation Board or the CTB for review and released for public comment by October.

Slide 24: Our hope is to request CTB action at the December Board Meeting. The updated Needs can then be used in the upcoming round of SMART SCALE funding program, which will start application intake in spring 2020.

Another quick reminder - if a locality is expecting a newly designated UDA by April 1, 2020, you will be able to complete the survey but the identified needs will become eligible for the SMART SCALE funding program only if you provide the required documentation to OIPI by April 1, 2020. By that time we would reach out to you to seek documentation related to the comprehensive plan amendment that you make undertake.

Slide 25: If you have any questions, our team is available to assist you. Katie Schwing and Chris Wichman, members of the VTrans team, are serving as points of contact for regions and localities. This map shows the areas that Katie and Chris are covering, please feel free to reach out to them directly.

Slide 26: Their contact information as well as mine is shown on this slide. Additionally, our website VTrans.org serves as the best resource for accessing information -- particularly the Events and What's Happening sections are routinely updated to keep visitors up to date on project progress and opportunities to attend agency and public meetings.

This webinar is being recorded and will be made available on the VTrans website. You will also find similar recordings on the website.

Slide 27: Thank you very much for your attention and participation. That concludes the formal presentation. We will now take the remainder of the time to answer
any questions from the audience.

And now I will turn the audio over to Katie Schwing to see if she has received any additional questions. Katie -

Katie: Hi, yeah Jitender we've got a couple more questions that have popped up in the chad pod, and the first one is if a locality wanted to add a new UDA, what's the deadline?

Jitender: Yes, so the deadline is April 1st, 2020, again that is the deadline for inclusion in the comprehensive plan, so there might be some interim deadlines for you al lto go through, but the hope is that by then there can be the reference in the comprehensive plan that can be utilized. And the reason that date is important, is that when we submit Needs so areas that are going though the designation process, and we include those needs in the list that is submitted to the Commonwealth Transportation Board, we will put a note that those needs will only be valid when there is an appropriate reference in the comp plan.

Katie: Ok great. We had another one that came in, is OIPI intending to update other VTrans Needs (the Regional Networks and CoSS) this year, or before the next request for SMART SCALE applications?

Jitender: Right, so as I mentioned we had a webinar before on May 29th, if you did not get a chance to see it, we will post a link in the chad pod, and it is posted on the VTrans website, as well. If you were not able to attend that, please do take a look at it, and be on the lookout for additional information as it becomes available. We are updating needs for all travel markets and safety, so this is a key duration to ensure interest for localities that are outside UDA areas are appropriately covered.

Katie: we have one more: So what are the criteria/specifics for the acceptance of applied UDA's? Size, land use, population, etc.? And is there any weighting aspects to the selection?

Jitender: So there are two questions in this. So the first one is related to the designation of a UDA. As I mentioned, the code requirement provides plenty of flexibility to localities to identify areas that are

suitable for land use patterns and local goals and priorities. So there are no minimum and maximum thresholds by UDA size etc. There is some guidance in the code for density and development patterns, essentially the intent of UDA's is to focus on traditional neighborhood design. As for the second part of the question, as of right now, there is no weighting. We do request as part of the questionnaire for localities to identify higher priorities, as eventually all UDA Needs will be categorized in Tiers to ensure that for planning purposes, priorities are clear. There will not be any consideration for different weightings.

Katie: Ok thanks. So I haven't seen any other questions come into the chat pod, and I don't see anyone typing, so I think that might be it for now. So if that's the case, then I guess we can conclude today's webinar. I just wanted to remind folks of a few things. Like I mentioned earlier, at the VTrans.org website, you should be able to download a copy of the slides that were used today, and within a day or two you should be able to see a recorded version as well,

Looks like we did have one more question come in, and we do have time, so if it is ok with you, I will convey that you, Jitender?

Jitender: Sure

Katie: Ok, Unlike, COSS and RN Needs, some UDA needs are very board which makes it difficult to come up with a recommendation for those needs, i.e. equity. Is there any plan to come up with more defined needs for UDA's?

Jitender: So as I mentioned before, UDA designation is optional and is locality-driven. Our intention is to make sure that localities are able to identify needs that are consistent with their priorities, and consistent with the legislation. As long as those items are met, our goal is to utilize them to the fullest extent possible. As far as project selection, those will come in down the road and will be determined by localities as far as what they submit for SMART SCALE and other funding programs.

Katie: Ok, and also I forgot to mention that we did have some questions that came in while folks were registering for the webinar. We had one asking if the needs included needs specifically for ADA access, bicycle and pedestrian, and freight needs within the UDA?

Jitender: So I think for people with disabilities, improvements will be consistent with traditional neighborhood design, making neighborhoods more accessible to people with all ages and varying abilities. As far as the freight needs, you may have to see in the locality - the intent of UDA's is a traditional neighborhood design - so freight needs are part of any commercial development - so if it is related to that, then it would be consistent with the intent of the UDA. there may be some instances where freight projects may not be consistent with the intent of the UDA. So it would depend on the case.

Katie: Great, and one more question. This is a locality asking, if we remove a UDA, do we have some send a new shapefile or can you just remove that one UDA? I can go ahead and take that one. So if you remove one UDA, as long as you are very clear about the instructions to us, we can remove that one

UDA. You are always welcome to send updated files to us just to make sure that we have the most up-to-date version, but if it's as simple as this UDA is no longer in existence we can remove that.

There was a question in the registrations, to find out more about the process to designate a UDA, so what's the easiest way for a locality to find out more about how to designate?

So in that instance, I would encourage localities to get in touch with Chris and Katie based on the map that I showed earlier, and they can help you and provide the steps for UDA designation.

Katie: one more: are the different area types - and I guess they mean travel markets, going to be separate i.e., if a COSS or Regional network and a UDA overlap, are they separate?

Jitender: Yes, they are separate because they serve different needs. Physical proximity or overlay might be a spatial feature, but the intent behind the travel markets is the different trip types. So it is very possible that and area designated as a UDA has different types of needs. For example it might have needs associated with local trips, but on the periphery of the UDA, it might have needs associated with regional connectivity, and this is relevant especially for downtowns. Downtowns have needs for circulation within, and to and from them.

Well, I don't see any more questions coming in, so with that I think we can conclude today's webinar. One final reminder that the locality surveys will be open until July 12th, and we may follow up with you just in case we need clarification on anything that you submit to us. Well thank you very much for attending the webinar, and we'll be in touch about UDA needs. Thank you!