

RANSON-CHARLES TOWN GREEN CORRIDOR REVITALIZATION

APPLICATION FOR DOT TIGER PLANNING GRANT & HUD CHALLENGE GRANT FUNDING

The City of Ranson, WV and its partner the City of Charles Town intend to seek \$980,000 in joint U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) TIGER Planning and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Challenge grants for a \$1.4 million total project to plan and engineer a “Green Corridor Revitalization” that will link a “complete street” improvement of the main commercial roadway (Fairfax Boulevard-George Street) to a new regional Commuter Center for bus and rail transit access. This green corridor will be planned within the context of a new Ranson, form-based smart code system that links together a green downtown overlay district with a new zoning approach for the undeveloped, outlying areas of the City that combines traditional neighborhood and mixed use development with green infrastructure. This endeavor will show how small towns on the fringe of a major metropolitan area like the Baltimore-Washington Metropolitan Area can foster sustainable economic development, clean transportation, and community livability with the right planning and infrastructure investments.



Ranson and Charles Town are underway with a comprehensive initiative to revitalize their adjacent and linked downtowns and idled brownfields. The downtown development is taking place within the context of larger efforts to plan for smart growth in currently undeveloped, annexed areas of Ranson and Charles Town to avoid the scattered sprawl that has challenged the western reaches of the DC metropolitan area. The “Green Corridor” initiative outlined here will link these growth and development components together with a complete street corridor, a commuter center, and smart zoning incentives.

COMPONENTS OF RANSON-CHARLES TOWN “GREEN CORRIDOR”

To make this plan work, Ranson and Charles Town need TIGER resources to plan for “Green Corridor” improvements to the cities’ main roadway and a planned Commuter Center. Ranson also needs HUD Challenge resources to move forward on “smart code” and “green overlay” planning for the areas in and around the transportation corridor. When complete, this green corridor will use sustainable transportation investments to link key community, housing and economic centers. The initiative will be central to a pioneering WV Department of Transportation effort to better connect land use and transportation investments in the state. The specific Ranson/Charles Town project and request for DOT-HUD funding includes:

- **DOT TIGER Planning funding** to support \$1.05 million in transportation planning:

- **Fairfax Boulevard & George Street Complete / Green Street Plan** – \$800,000 for the planning, engineering, permitting, and construction documentation for a “complete streets” improvement to the central “Fairfax Boulevard-George Street” corridor that serves as both the main street and commercial corridor that links the two cities. The plan for this complete street improvement will be to connect the central downtown areas including brownfields revitalization and workforce housing areas to the Charles Town Commuter Center, community and institutional facilities, park/recreational facilities, and new jobs centers. The complete street will include improved pedestrian and handicapped accessibility, dedicated bicycle lanes, traffic calming and wayfaring, roundabout roadway



facilities modeled after the century-old land use plan for the community, public spaces for future plug-in hybrid vehicle charging infrastructure, and green infrastructure facilities including raingardens and bioswale medians to manage stormwater in this Chesapeake Bay watershed community.

- **Commuter Center** – \$250,000 for the design, engineering, permitting and construction documentation for a new, regional Charles Town Commuter Center at the historic Charles Washington Hall at the main crossroads of the county and region. Charles Washington Hall is a public, underutilized building that sits at the intersection of the Fairfax Boulevard/George Street corridor and S.R. 51 which leads directly to the regional MARC commuter rail stations located in Harpers Ferry, WV and Brunswick, MD. Already the regional PanTran public bus transit system stops outside of Charles Washington Hall and provides access to MARC rail and other jobs centers, but the stops are uncovered, unmarked, unsafe, and underutilized. The City of Charles Town is underway with an initiative to transform Charles Washington Hall into a Commuter Center for PanTran bus and MARC rail service that includes a transit commuter waiting, ticketing, and information area. This public transit facility will serve the central commercial and downtown neighborhood areas of Charles Town and Ranson, provide the only regional transit service hub for the entire County (where 50% of employed persons commute to the DC area), and connect to other public facilities including the



Photo: Charles Washington Hall

County and City visitor centers, the City and County government and judicial centers, and the social service facilities for the region. TIGER funding will enable Ranson/Charles Town to design, engineer, and prepare the Commuter Center for future construction.

- **HUD Challenge funding** to support a \$350,000 “Plan Ranson” initiative that will improve the Ranson planning, zoning and incentives system for development around the Fairfax Boulevard/George Street corridor, the downtown brownfields revitalization area, and in the undeveloped, annexed areas outside of the central city. Several connected smart growth planning efforts are already underway in Ranson, but the City needs additional resources and capacity to link these plans together into a cohesive, compelling, and effective overall system to transform the errant growth and development patterns that have marked this community for the past half-century. HUD Challenge funding will provide Ranson with much-needed resources for consultants, stakeholder collaboration, and public outreach needed to link together a number of nascent planning efforts underway, but which are in need of enhancement and integration:
 - A **“green overlay” zoning district** for downtown Ranson and its brownfields revitalization areas, based primarily on LEED-ND standards;
 - A **“green infrastructure” incentive system** that will foster low-impact development and green infrastructure deployment in all new development as well as site retrofits, to deal with the complete lack of stormwater infrastructure in this Chesapeake Bay watershed community.
 - A **form-based “Smart Code” system** for undeveloped and underutilized spaces outside the central downtown area. Because of the massive and scattered sprawl that has been overtaking Jefferson County and the broader western DC-Baltimore region, Ranson annexed the undeveloped areas on the fringe of the community, and convinced Jefferson County to establish a comprehensive land use plan that would direct future growth into the Ranson-Charles Town central area. Ranson wants to ensure that future development in this centralized area is traditional-neighborhood, mixed-use, green-focused development. Ranson is already underway with the national “Smart Codes” and “Placemakers” organizations on the initial stages of establishing a new form-based, smart codes incentive system that will foster mixed-use, green development in these undeveloped, annexed areas in Ranson;
 - A **web- and booklet-based “Guidebook for Green Development” in Ranson**, used to guide citizens and developers on how the new green overlay district and smart codes systems can help them to conduct community development and improvement projects in a way that can fulfill the locality’s vision for smart, sustainable, prosperous and green growth. For a model of what Ranson seeks to achieve with this component of Plan Ranson, see www.plancheyenne.com.

BENEFITS, OUTCOMES & OUTPUTS OF INITIATIVE

If DOT and HUD provide the grant funding needed to leverage an additional 30% match and other local and private sector resources for the Green Corridor Revitalization Project, it will produce significant benefits and outcomes for not only Ranson and Charles Town, but for the broader region and for the nation.

- ***Makes the Green Corridor Ready-to-Go*** – Ranson and Charles Town will have plans, designs and construction documentation for the Fairfax Boulevard/George Street and Commuter Center project. These plans will enable Ranson and Charles Town to move into finance and construction of projects that will be ready-to-go.
- ***Pioneering WV Effort*** – The Ranson and Charles Town transportation projects will serve as the pioneering model of transit-oriented development, complete streets, community revitalization and land use-transportation integration for the State of West Virginia, which is just now embarking on the exploration of such efforts.
- ***Smart Code System*** – Ranson will be able to complete and integrate key smart growth planning efforts into a cohesive, user-friendly Smart Code incentive system that will transform development patterns in the City and region.
- ***Multi-Jurisdictional Cooperation*** – These federal resources will help forge a stronger multi-jurisdictional partnership between two adjacent cities at the center of the region that are trying to be a model for sustainable development.
- ***National Model*** – The Ranson and Charles Town green corridor project will serve as a replicable national model for how small, rural communities on the fringe of major, sprawling metropolitan areas can use transportation investments and proactive planning to transform development to achieve a sustainable community.

WHY HUD FUNDING IS NEEDED

Ranson and its partner Charles Town cannot move forward on these ambitious plans without federal support. While the communities have made great progress already on key components of these initiatives, the communities need federal support and leverage to integrate and complete the plans for Fairfax Boulevard/George Street and the Commuter Center, and the Plan Ranson initiatives. A federal grant of \$980,000 in TIGER Planning / Challenge funding could be the linchpin of sustainable community transformation.