



112 MacTanly Place
Staunton, VA 24401

Phone: (540) 885-5174
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**BRITE Transit Advisory Committee Meeting Summary
September 14, 2016, 2:30 p.m.**

Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission
112 MacTanly Place
Staunton, VA 24401

	Name	Organization
✓	Steve Rosenberg	City of Staunton
✓	Jennifer Whetzel	County of Augusta
✓	Michael Barnes	City of Waynesboro
✓	Lisa Cline	Augusta Health
✓	Russell Neyman	Wilson Workforce & Rehabilitation Center
✓	Julie Markowitz	Staunton Downtown Development Association
✓	Terry Rodgers	Shenandoah Valley Social Services
✓	Wayne Martin	Blue Ridge Community College
✓	Stephen Ferguson	CATS Board
	Becky Messer	Transit Service Rider
✓	Susan Newbrough	Virginia Regional Transit
✓	Patrice Strachan	Department of Rail and Public Transportation

	Name	Organization
	Nancy Gourley	CSPDC
✓	Devon Thompson	CSPDC
✓	Bonnie Riedesel	CSPDC

Call to Order

The meeting of the BRITE Transit Advisory Committee (BTAC) was called to order at 2:34 PM by Mr. Wayne Martin, Chairperson.

Public Comment

Chair Martin opened the floor for public comment. There were no public comments.

Approve Minutes

Chair Martin presented the minutes from the May 11, 2016 BTAC meeting.



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Ms. Julie Markowitz moved, seconded by Mr. Russ Neyman, to approve the minutes of the May 11, 2016 meeting, as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Business

Triennial Review Status Update: Ms. Bonnie Riedesel updated the committee on the Triennial Review conducted by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) in March 2016. Ms. Riedesel reported that six of the seven findings have been resolved and closed out. The final finding involves the maintenance and ownership of the transit facility located in Fishersville, and FTA, Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT), and Virginia Regional Transit (VRT) are working to resolve this.

Inter-Regional Study Update: Ms. Riedesel updated the committee on the progress of the Inter-Regional Transit Study. The project is studying the feasibility of offering transit service in the Interstate 81 and 64 corridors, connecting Harrisonburg, Staunton, Waynesboro, and Charlottesville. The stakeholder Steering Committee met recently, and the consultants, KFH Group presented the data collected from the online commuter survey conducted earlier this year. KFH Group analyzed the results, and created a framework of what a potential system could look like, such as the route and timetable, number of buses, location of stops, etc. The consultants are also working on service alternatives and the projected costs associated with each of them. The planned completion date for the study is the end of the calendar year. Next steps for the project include prioritizing service alternatives, projecting capital and operational costs, as well as making recommendations on oversight providers and funding sources. KFH Group will present the work that has been completed to date on the plan at the Joint MPO Meeting (Staunton-Augusta-Waynesboro Metropolitan Planning Organization and Charlottesville-Albemarle Metropolitan Planning Organization) that will be held in late October.

Ms. Riedesel also indicated that while there is a demand for such a service, there are some challenges to its provision, such as finding conveniently located park and ride lots for the service. Consultants and the Steering Committee have been working together to identify park and ride lot locations, and a few options have been identified. In Waynesboro, a Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) SMART SCALE application will be submitted for improving the current Park & Ride lot at the Waynesboro Town Center. Similarly in Staunton, at the new Staunton Crossing development, there are plans to include a Park & Ride lot within the development, and a SMART SCALE application will be submitted for this as well.

Procurement Status: Ms. Riedesel informed the committee on the status of the procurement process related to one of the Triennial Review findings. A turnkey contract needs to be executed in time to have service in place by July 1, 2017. An RFP is currently being developed that includes provision of buses and service for both the urban and rural routes. DRPT has provided a consultant to assist with the development of the RFP document to insure that it meets all of the federal and state requirements. The



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plan is to release the RFP in early December, receive proposals by mid-January, and select a provider and have them under contract in time to meet the July 1, 2017 deadline.

Bus Stop Sign Project: Ms. Devon Thompson updated the committee on the status of the bus stop sign inventory that commenced this month. Now that sign design has been completed, Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission (CSPDC) and VRT staff are jointly working on inventorying all of the bus stops for each of the routes served by the transit service. Currently, the Downtown Trolley route and the West Loop route in Staunton have been completed, and this week the remaining Staunton routes, the Saturday Night Trolley and the North Loop, will be completed. The remaining routes to be inventoried during September include the 250 Connector, Waynesboro Circulator, Stuarts Draft Link, and the North and South Blue Ridge Community College Shuttles. The inventory is comprehensive and includes information such as GPS coordinates; photos of the stop locations; landmarks at or near the bus stops; a listing of existing amenities at the stop, such as benches, lighting, trash cans, etc.; a listing of routes served by the stop; and the current sign mounting. Inventories will continue the entire month of September and into October in preparation for ordering and installing the new bus stop signs.

Shelter/Bench Plans: Ms. Thompson indicated that Ms. Nancy Gourley initiated and released a RFQ for pricing on up to four shelters, including display holders for schedules, and two benches. Two quotes have been received, and a third is expected. Funding is available for these items, and more funding will be applied for in the next grant application.

An inquiry was made as to how much these items cost. Ms. Thompson nor Ms. Newbrough were aware of the cost associated with these items, but will report the cost estimates in the minutes. Bus shelters with bench cost about \$5500; a stand alone 8' bench is \$1500. Grants have been awarded for one shelter and two stand-alone benches. These costs do not include the cost of a concrete pad or installation. Discussion ensued concerning the potential locations for the shelters and benches. Ms. Newbrough indicated that the locations would be within the small urban area.

Discussions also took place about procuring money from outside sources to fund amenities, such as shelters, and potential shelter placement in Verona. Ms. Newbrough indicated that she and Ms. Gourley have spoken with Augusta County and discussed the challenges of shelter placement in that area. Specifically, shelter placement along Route 11 has the challenge of getting permission from the business(s) to install a shelter or bench on private property. Relocating the Verona stop(s) to the Government Center would add time to the BRCC routes that is not available in the schedule. CSPDC and VRT staff are looking into potential alternatives and solutions. Other challenges indicated by committee members were also discussed and noted. Ms. Newbrough also indicated that Ms. Gourley would be the best resource for finding out what is allowable in using outside sources of funding.



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August 22 Service Changes Report/Bus Re-Branding: Ms. Thompson outlined the service changes that were implemented on August 22nd. These service changes were the last remaining route modifications that were recommended in the Transit Development Plan (TDP):

- **BRCC North & South Shuttles:** The evening service breaks were closed. Now service operates on one hour headways all day with no interruptions.
- **Waynesboro Circulator:** This route was revamped to improve reliability and on-time performance. A stop was added at the new Walmart Neighborhood Market, and under-utilized stops were removed ensuring timely connections to the 250 Connector and Stuarts Draft Link could occur at the Waynesboro Hub.
- **Stuarts Draft Link:** The Link was introduced to replace the underperforming 340 Connector, and to better serve the residents of Stuarts Draft. This new route includes the addition of stops at retail, medical, and employment destinations within Stuarts Draft as well as providing service to the Waynesboro Hub and Augusta Health, allowing additional connections throughout the entire system.

Ms. Susan Newbrough indicated that the new changes have been well-received. No negative reports have been received.

- Waynesboro riders appreciate the hourly service without detours.
- The Stuarts Draft Link ridership is growing. CSPDC and VRT staff are scheduled to give a presentation about the service to the retirement community in November, and bus drivers are encouraging riders at the Waynesboro Hub to ride the new route, which alleviates some stress on the 250 Connector.
- BRCC Shuttle riders are appreciative of the uninterrupted service.

Ms. Riedesel indicated that all of the buses have been rebranded, excluding the BRCC North and South Shuttles. Ms. Riedesel also indicated that since the Transit Development Plan (TDP) was adopted in August 2015 most of the recommended changes have been implemented.

Richmond Avenue Discussion: Ms. Newbrough informed the committee of some challenges for the 250 Connector stop areas along Richmond Avenue. Ms. Newbrough provided maps to the committee members to show the particular area. Ms. Newbrough indicated that there is still flag-down service since designated bus stops aren't located in every desired area. Because of the speed limit and traffic congestion, Route 250 is a challenging corridor to maneuver when picking-up and dropping-off passengers, both for the passengers and the bus drivers. VRT staff determined two safe stop locations in this corridor – Waffle House and Starbucks. Ms. Newbrough provided the justification for choosing these locations for stops, and indicated that passengers will be notified verbally by the drivers, posters on the buses, and through social media and websites. The BTAC concurred with the relocation of these two stops.



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Discussion then ensued concerning new commercial developments in this particular area of the Richmond Avenue corridor and how that may impact future stop locations. It was noted that as the construction progresses and this becomes a bus rider destination, conversations about additional stops will occur.

Discussion on BRCC Schedule: Ms. Riedesel indicated that an email had been received from an instructor at Blue Ridge Community College (BRCC) concerning timing of the shuttle's arrival to the college. On this specific day, the bus departed the Staunton Hub at 7:30 AM and arrived at BRCC at 8:01 AM, and the class he instructs begins at 8:00 AM. The instructor inquired as to whether or not the schedule could be adjusted so riders can arrive before classes begin. Ms. Riedesel mentioned that this type of complaint hasn't been brought up before. Chair Martin indicated that instructors at BRCC are advised to allow some flexibility for students who utilize public transportation.

Additional discussion took place regarding the impacts of making changes to the existing schedule. If the schedule is changed for this route, routes with connections to it will be effected as well, and riders would miss their transfers at the Hub(s). Ms. Riedesel indicated that staff would respond, and that this committee would be consulted about any decisions that are made concerning this. Various points and potential solutions were discussed by the committee, such as changing the schedule for the first bus of the day only, budgeting for different service hours if a change were made, time performance over the history of the route, and addressing other factors that could be impacting ridership on this route. Committee members agreed that staff should reach out to BRCC administration to see if this is a concern for BRCC and if they would like to see a change made.

Try Transit Week: Ms. Riedesel announced that BRITE will again this year be partnering with DRPT to participate in the statewide Try Transit Week, held the week of September 19-23. As in previous years, BRITE will participate by offering free rides that Wednesday. For promotion, press releases have been issued, information has been posted on social media and websites, drivers are announcing to passengers, and posters have been created and posted on buses and shelters. Ms. Riedesel passed out additional posters to committee members to take and display at their respective offices and agencies. Ms. Riedesel indicated that the free rides offered last year increased ridership by 200 riders for the day. Also, if riders go to the Try Transit website and pledge to ride public transportation, they will be entered in a contest to win two free Amtrak tickets.

*Additional Announcements/Business: Ms. Newbrough indicated that recently she received a phone call from two visitors who rode the Staunton Downtown Trolley, and received wonderful comments about the driver and service they had using the Trolley. The driver has been nominated to be VRT's employee of the month.



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Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the BTAC, the meeting was adjourned at 3:26 PM.

The next meeting will be held Wednesday, November 9, 2016 at 2:30 PM at the CSPDC office.