



112 MacTanly Place  
Staunton, VA 24401

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**BRITE Transit Advisory Committee Meeting Summary  
January 8, 2020, 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                            |
| ✓ | Luke Juday       | City of Waynesboro                           |
| ✓ | Karen Clark      | Augusta Health                               |
| ✓ | Russell Neyman   | Wilson Workforce & Rehabilitation Center     |
|   | Greg Beam        | Staunton Downtown Development Association    |
| ✓ | Terry Rodgers    | Shenandoah Valley Social Services            |
| ✓ | Cynthia Page     | Blue Ridge Community College                 |
| ✓ | Becky Messer     | Transit Service Rider                        |
| ✓ | Paul Terry       | Transit Service Rider                        |
| ✓ | Susan Newbrough  | Virginia Regional Transit                    |
| ✓ | Steve Hennessee  | Department of Rail and Public Transportation |

|   | Name                             | Organization |
|---|----------------------------------|--------------|
| ✓ | Ann Cundy                        | CSPDC        |
| ✓ | Aidan Quirke                     | CSPDC        |
| ✓ | Devon Thompson                   | CSPDC        |
| ✓ | Bonnie Riedesel                  | CSPDC        |
| ✓ | Nancy Gourley                    | CSPDC        |
| ✓ | Kira Johnson, City of Waynesboro |              |
| ✓ | Steve Wilson, VRT                |              |
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**Call to Order**

The meeting of the BRITE Transit Advisory Committee (BTAC) was called to order at 2:32 PM by Ms. Terry Rodgers, Chairperson.

**Public Comment**

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

**Approve Minutes**

Chair Rodgers presented the minutes from the November 13, 2019 BTAC meeting.



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Ms. Jennifer Whetzel moved, seconded by Mr. Paul Terry, to approve the minutes of the November 13, 2019 meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

### **Business**

2019 Transit Development Plan (TDP) Update Letter: Mr. Aidan Quirke indicated that after a transit agency's Transit Development Plan (TDP) has been completed they are required by the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) to submit a yearly update letter. TDP update letters describe implemented progress of the TDP and any significant changes. The 2019 update letter will be submitted on the due date of January 15, 2020.

Mr. Steven Hennessee indicated that everything submitted in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 applications should be included in the TDP update letter under FY2021 items.

FY 2021 Budget & Grant Application Update: Mr. Quirke indicated that the FY2021 budget was being finalized. Concurrently, eight applications to the state were being made, and were due on Monday, February 3, 2020.

- **Capital Assistance:** Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) – for first phase implementation of the ITS Plan
- **Technical Assistance:** Transit Development Plan (TDP) – for a DRPT on-call consultant to update the TDP for a ten-year outlook on BRITE service
- **Capital Assistance:** Waste Oil Heater – for replacing an out of service waste oil heater at the BRITE Transit Facility (there are two waste oil heaters at the facility that provide heat to the shop)
- **Capital Assistance:** Solar Panels – for solar panel installation at the BRITE Transit Facility to offset energy consumption and costs
- **Operating Assistance (5307 – Urban):** Urban Operating Assistance
- **Capital Cost of Contracting (5307 – Urban):** Urban Capital Cost of Contracting assistance
- **Operating Assistance (5311 – Rural):** Rural Operating Assistance
- **Capital Cost of Contracting (5311 – Rural):** Rural Capital Cost of Contracting

*\*The application list changed prior to the submittal of grants on Monday, February 3, 2020. Technical assistance for the TDP was removed, and the capital assistance for ITS implementation was apportioned between 5307 (Urban) and 5311 (Rural). Additional DRPT grant applications submitted included the Afton Express Demonstration Grant and the Rideshare Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Grant.*

Ms. Bonnie Riedesel indicated that the CSPDC may request letters of support for the grant applications, if needed. Mr. Quirke noted that these letters indicated that agencies have done their due diligence and projects are fully supported by their partners and communities.

2019 Triennial Review Update: Ms. Gourley reminded the committee that the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Triennial Review was conducted in September 2019. The Review concluded with deficiencies found in three areas



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– two were related to financial procedures and one was related to Title VI language. Ms. Gourley updated the committee on the status of the findings and the progress on the FTA-mandated corrective actions.

The first finding was related to how money was drawn down from FTA funds, which was how the CSPDC reimbursed themselves from the grants. There was some challenge in answering the questions related to FTA drawdowns during the on-site visit since the previous Finance Officer had resigned. This finding has been closed. FTA accepted the explanations and new, detailed procedures.

The second finding was related to Federal Financial Reports (FFR), which was an annually completed report that indicated the status on the use of the funds that have been awarded. Under that corrective action there were three tasks to complete. Two tasks have been completed and closed out, and work on the final task was underway and should be ready for submittal on February 15, 2020.

The third finding was related to Title VI language on the BRITE website and printed materials. Too many classes of persons were being protected under the previous language, and new language needed to reflect what was in the original legislation. Ms. Devon Thompson edited the language on the website while the reviewers were on-site, and posters and printed schedules languages have been edited as well. Edited materials have been sent to the FTA Title VI office for review, and once approved the finding will be closed.

*\*This finding has since been closed.*

Ms. Riedesel reiterated that all transit agencies in the nation undergo these reviews, and CSPDC did a commendable job with only three deficiencies. Ms. Riedesel indicated that the reviewers requested examples of contractor oversight for best management practices. The reviewers were also impressed with the operations and the BRITE Transit Facility. Ms. Riedesel extended her thanks to CSPDC and VRT staff – Ms. Gourley, Ms. Newbrough, and Ms. Thompson.

Mr. Hennessee inquired as to when the new schedules and posters would be printed. Ms. Thompson indicated that both the schedules and posters have been printed – the text was approved by the reviewers on-site, and staff is awaiting the official acceptance of the language from FTA.

Afton Express Update: Ms. Gourley reviewed the background information for this project. The Afton Express is service planned between Staunton, Waynesboro, and Augusta County and Charlottesville. Ms. Gourley indicated that the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) has been taking the lead on the next level of planning for the proposed transit service and has retained the services of Kimley-Horn to reaffirm the need and data from the original feasibility study, as well as develop a service plan, budget, peer comparison, and performance measures.

A stakeholder meeting was hosted in November 2019. During this meeting, it was decided that the initial phase would originate at park and ride lots in Staunton (temporarily at Martin's until lot at Staunton Crossing is constructed around 2022), Fishersville (BRITE Transit Facility), and Waynesboro (existing park and ride lot). Buses



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would then travel to Charlottesville and stop at the University of Virginia (academic and medical), Downtown Charlottesville, and Fifth Street Station (retail development in Albemarle County). Ms. Gourley indicated that the CSPDC would be the applicant for State and Federal funds to operate the service. It was assumed that the service would operate under the existing Virginia Regional Transit (VRT) contract as an amendment – so, VRT would provide drivers, buses, maintenance, and customer service.

The DRPT grant application was due on February 3, 2020. The CSPDC has been directed to submit a two-year demonstration grant, which provides 80 percent funding and requires a 20 percent local match. After the two-year demonstration grant, the service would qualify for rural program funding, and requires about a 22 percent local match. It was assumed that the first month of operating would include free fares to get riders acquainted with the new service. Beyond that, fares would be \$3.00 one way, with an option to purchase passes at a reduced rate.

Ms. Gourley indicated that a significant challenge was determining how to come up with the local match to the Federal and State funding. The stakeholder group discussed options, and agreed that it would be split 50/50 between the east-side of the mountain and west-side of the mountain partners. Each side of the mountain would come up with their own split of their half. Funding is not needed at the time of application, but firm commitments are needed to accompany the application. Ms. Gourley indicated that to date staff had participated in a Staunton City Council meeting, and Staunton voted to support one-third of the west-side of the mountain partners' funding. Staff also attended the east-side of the mountain partners' Regional Transit Partnership meeting where they voted to support the service (the Regional Transit Partnership is made up of elected officials that recommend action and activities to their respective jurisdictions). This action was then taken to the respective Board and Council of Albemarle County and City of Charlottesville for approval. Support had also been confirmed from University of Virginia. Ms. Gourley indicated that staff planned to participate in the Board of Supervisors meeting for Augusta County and the City Council meeting for City of Waynesboro later in the month so they can consider action, respectively. Ms. Gourley announced that the grant was drafted and ready to be entered into the grant application system, pursuant to the commitments.

*\*Subsequently, prior to the grant deadline, all partners took action to support the project financially.*

Ms. Gourley presented a projected timeline and overview of the service:

- February 3, 2020: Application made and submitted
- July 1, 2020: Grants awarded begin
- July 1 – December 31, 2020: Six months of preparation and planning (amend contract, order buses, hire & train drivers, promote and market, etc.)
- First Quarter of 2021: Intended start date of service

The service would be operated with three, 32-passenger buses. Buses would travel across and back over the mountain for commuters and reverse commuters. Two buses would make four trips in the morning and four trips in the evening, with a third spare bus.



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Various committee members asked questions based on Ms. Gourley's update on the Afton Express. Ms. Whetzel sought clarification regarding the timeline of the grant application and funding – the grant application is due February 3, 2020 with funding commitment letters, and funding to be available after July 1, 2020, which would be included in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 budget. Ms. Gourley confirmed that Ms. Whetzel's statement regarding the funding was correct. Ms. Riedesel indicated that the first year would include the planning money with a lower contribution, and the remaining years (beginning FY 2022) would include service with a higher contribution. In FY 2021, the local match for the west-side partners would be approximately \$4,500, and in FY 2022, the local match would approximately be \$32,000. Mr. Luke Juday inquired about the exact dollar amounts for the local match for all years of service. Ms. Gourley indicated that funding commitments would be for three years and the dollar amount for each of the west-side partners would be a third of the \$32,000 in FY 2022, and additional years would be approximately \$11,000-12,000 for each locality on the west-side of the mountain. Mr. Juday also inquired about farebox recovery for this system and whether or not it would have an impact on the local contributions. Ms. Gourley indicated that fares and ridership were projected very conservatively in the plan. Fares come off the top – all expenses were summed less the fares and the subtotal remaining was what was split amongst funding partners. Thus, a little increase or decrease in fares would have a nominal impact on the local contributions. It was noted that farebox recovery was low on BRITE, but would be higher for Afton Express; Ms. Gourley confirmed the statement and explained that it is higher on the Afton Express due to higher fares than other BRITE routes. Ms. Riedesel indicated that adding more partners would have an impact on the local contribution, and this is something that could grow as the service became more successful. Ms. Karen Clark inquired as to whether or not the current local BRITE routes served the park and ride lots that would be used as stops for the Afton Express. Ms. Gourley indicated that the Waynesboro park and ride lot was currently served by a BRITE bus route; a BRITE bus route ran adjacent to the Fishersville park and ride lot (BRITE Bus Transit Facility); and another BRITE bus route ran adjacent to the Martin's in Staunton. Mr. Juday inquired about the status of Martha Jefferson Hospital as a stop location. Ms. Gourley indicated that Fifth Street Station was chosen since it was on the route (less time and expense), but Martha Jefferson Hospital could be considered as a future stop if they became a funding partner. Ms. Becky Messer inquired as to whether or not the bus would stop at Fontaine Research Park. Ms. Gourley answered no, but it had been explored – there is no convenient way for the bus to get in or out of the research park.

Contractor Update: Ms. Newbrough discussed various items with the committee:

- General Service: Ms. Newbrough indicated that there was an increase in ridership between December 2019 and December 2018. Ms. Newbrough also indicated that the first inclement weather closing of the season occurred recently. Service on January 7, 2020 started as regularly scheduled, although service was suspended at 11:30AM due to the inclement weather. Passengers were notified immediately and the inclement weather plan was followed. The road conditions were assessed later in the day to determine whether or not to resume service, but it was determined that road conditions were still unsafe. Service resumed as scheduled on January 8, 2020.
- Proposed BRCC Shuttle Change: Ms. Newbrough indicated that CSPDC and VRT staff met with Ms. Cynthia Page, Blue Ridge Community College (BRCC), to discuss a proposed change to the BRCC Shuttles. The



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proposed change would be a seamless switch, and would have no impact on the schedule and passengers. Passengers would benefit from the change, and it should also assist with connectivity when there was an incident on Interstate 81. The BRCC Shuttles had trouble connecting to one another when accidents occurred on Interstate 81 and subsequent traffic was congested. The proposed change would help mitigate this challenge. Currently, one bus travels from Staunton to Weyers Cave (BRCC Campus) and another bus travels from Weyers Cave (BRCC Campus) to Harrisonburg. The proposed change would make it so that each bus completes an entire route loop. One bus would start in Staunton and travel to Weyers Cave (BRCC Campus), and instead of returning back to Staunton it would continue to Harrisonburg. One bus would start in Weyers Cave (BRCC Campus) and travel to Harrisonburg, and instead of returning back to Harrisonburg it would travel to Staunton. Drivers would have to switch their marquees when they arrived at Weyers Cave (BRCC Campus) to indicate the route – BRCC North or South Shuttle. The schedule would remain the same, and passengers would no longer have to pay twice since they would not be transferring buses at Weyers Cave (BRCC Campus). The buses would also continue to meet at Weyers Cave (BRCC Campus) as scheduled. If one of the buses was delayed, passengers would not have to wait for a connection.

Ms. Newbrough indicated that BRCC was supportive of the change, and it would be implemented on Monday, January 27, 2020. Mr. Quirke indicated the decision was based on improving travel times and would serve as an improvement.

- Saturday Service Implementation: Ms. Newbrough indicated that prior to implementing Saturday service Ms. Thompson pushed out a significant amount of information and communication and garnered some press coverage about the expanded service. Riders have been asking about this service and were very excited about the addition. Ms. Newbrough reviewed the hours and ridership statistics on the first day of implementation (Saturday, January 4, 2020):
  - North & West Loops (Saturday, 8:00AM-6:00PM): 65 passenger trips  
Hours concluded at 6:00PM, which was when the Saturday Night Trolley begins operating, and this route relatively covers the same area as the Loops.
  - Waynesboro Circulator (Saturday, 7:30AM-8:22PM): 128 passenger trips  
Hours accommodated connections to the 250 Connector at the Walmart Waynesboro Hub.

Ms. Newbrough indicated that the ridership numbers would continue to increase as the new hours continue to get promoted.

Other Business:

No other business was brought before the BTAC.

**Adjournment**

There being no further business to come before the BTAC, the meeting concluded at 3:05 PM.