



112 MacTanly Place  
Staunton, VA 24401

Phone: (540) 885-5174  
Fax: (540) 885-2687

**BRITE Transit Advisory Committee Meeting Summary  
May 13, 2020, 2:30 p.m.**

*Video Conference Meeting via Zoom*  
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
✓	Steve Wilson	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	

**Call to Order**

The meeting of the BRITE Transit Advisory Committee (BTAC) was called to order at 2:33 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 March 11, 2020 BTAC meeting.



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Ms. Jennifer Whetzel moved, seconded by Mr. Russ Neyman, to approve the minutes of the March 11, 2020 meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

## **Business**

BRITE COVID-19 Response: Mr. Aidan Quirke reviewed various topics concerning BRITE's COVID-19 response:

- Ridership Impact: Mr. Quirke illustrated ridership impact due to COVID-19 by comparing April 2020 and April 2019 ridership. There was approximately a 60 percent decrease in ridership across all BRITE Bus routes – a 40 percent decrease in paratransit ridership and a 59 percent decrease in fixed route ridership. Mr. Quirke indicated that BRITE had been maintaining the same level of service through the pandemic – no additional service had been added and no service had been removed.

Ms. Karen Clark inquired as to whether or not the decrease in ridership was secondary to the closing of businesses and organizations. Mr. Quirke specified that in addition to stay-at-home orders, BRITE had been encouraging passengers to only use transit for essential transit trips. Mr. Quirke indicated that other transit agencies across the state had seen decreases in ridership up to 80 percent. Mr. Steven Hennessee indicated that Harrisonburg Department of Public Transportation (HDPT) had seen a 90 percent decrease in ridership due to James Madison University (JMU) being shutdown.

- State Guidelines for Transit Service: Mr. Quirke reviewed the state guidelines that BRITE has been adhering to. The Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) came out with guidelines for transit operators in Virginia that included limited bus capacity, suspended fare collection, encouraged essential transit trips only, etc. BRITE had mandated that passengers keep six feet apart for social distancing on the vehicles, and seats had been marked off to indicate appropriate spacing. Mr. Quirke indicated that buses underwent vigorous cleaning and disinfecting process as well. Mr. Quirke thanked Mr. Hennessee for all his work on disseminating information from the State to the grantees, and the additional guidance for implementing the measures.
- Communications: Ms. Devon Thompson reviewed how information was being shared with the community. With this being a fluid situation, there was additional news and information that needed to get to riders, and staff had been working to get all communications out through various outlets. Ms. Thompson indicated that information primarily had been being shared through the BRITE Bus website, social media, and on the buses. Communications had mainly been to convey that BRITE was still operating for essential transit and any operational changes. Staff had been participating in many webinars regarding crisis communications and learning best practices for spreading and sharing information. Next steps would include preparing recovery period communications and getting riders to feel more comfortable getting back on the buses. Ms. Thompson welcomed any suggestions about improving and furthering communications with riders and the public, and thanked committee members that had assisted in sharing BRITE communications.



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- Financial Updates: Mr. Quirke announced that BRITE was the recipient of three emergency allocations during the pandemic, for a total of approximately \$3 million. All allocated funds would go towards COVID-19 expenses – operating expenses, hazard pay, and personal protective equipment (PPE). Mr. Quirke indicated that all operating expenses for Fiscal Year 2021 were going to be covered by the allocations, saving the funding partners from their yearly match contributions. Mr. Quirke expressed gratitude for receiving the emergency allocations. Mr. Quirke indicated that approximately \$44,000 was received from the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) emergency fund, and \$35,000 of that amount was used to fund hazard pay for front-line transit operations staff. This amount of funding was adequate to continue hazard pay through the month of May, at which point CSPDC will reevaluate the status of funding and possible extensions.

Mr. Hennessee indicated that part of the CARES Act funding would be distributed to the 5311 portion of funding that BRITE receives. DRPT continued to work with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to get the funds allocated.

FY 2021 DRPT Grant Status Update: Mr. Quirke indicated that most of the DRPT grant applications previously discussed at the March 2020 meeting were recommended for funding by DRPT staff. The applications recommended for funding included:

- 5307 Formula Funding Operating (Urban)
- 5307 Formula Funding Capital Cost of Contracting (Urban)
- 5311 Formula Funding Operating (Rural)
- 5311 Formula Funding Capital Cost of Contracting (Rural)
- Waste Oil Heater for the BRITE Transit Facility
- ITS Phase I

Mr. Quirke specified that the application for solar panels at the BRITE Transit Facility was not recommended for funding. Mr. Quirke indicated that Ms. Thompson would speak to the Afton Express application later in the meeting.

Round 4 (FY22) SMART SCALE Applications Update: Mr. Quirke reviewed with the committee that three pre-applications for pedestrian improvements and amenities for Round 4 of SMART SCALE were submitted to the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT). The three site locations included: Route 250 at Sangers Lane (Augusta County); Route 250 at Low Dewitt Boulevard (Waynesboro); and Route 11 at Dick Huff Lane (Verona). Mr. Quirke extended his thanks to VDOT for their assistance in submitting the pre-applications. Staff will await news if the pre-applications were screened through to the next step of completing a full application.

Afton Express Update: Ms. Thompson indicated that as discussed at the March 2020 meeting, application was made for a Demonstration Grant to the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) to fund two years of operations for the Afton Express, transit service between Staunton-Augusta-Waynesboro and Charlottesville. DRPT made their recommendation for funding. Ms. Thompson indicated that presentation to the Commonwealth



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Transportation Board (CTB) was supposed to take place in May, with final funding was to be formalized by vote of the CTB in June, but due to COVID-19 this has been postponed. Ms. Thompson inquired as to whether or not Mr. Hennessee could speak to the updated timeline for presentation and voting of the CTB. Mr. Hennessee indicated that details regarding the CTB meeting and vote were still being determined, and DRPT was awaiting further guidance from the Secretary of Transportation's and Governor's Offices.

While awaiting a formal vote from the CTB, Ms. Gourley continued to move ahead with a variety of tasks to keep the project moving forward:

- Refining the timings and locations of stops;
- Continuing to develop a logistical plan for use of the current Waynesboro Park & Ride Lot until and during construction of expansion and improvements;
- Developing the brand – Ms. Thompson indicated that stakeholders met recently for a presentation on the final three logos and two taglines developed, and Ms. Gourley was awaiting the final vote tally to determine the winning logo and tagline;
- Developing the specifications for the buses so that they can be ordered immediately following award of the Demonstration Grant;
- Creating a webpage on the BRITE website dedicated to the Afton Express; and
- Developing the addendum to the BRITE service contract to add the hours and specifics of the Afton Express service.

Title VI Plan Update: Mr. Quirke indicated that BRITE was required to have a Title VI Plan. Mr. Quirke clarified that Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 protects against discrimination based on race, color, or national origin. Title VI plans work to ensure that transit service is equitable. Mr. Quirke indicated that the plan would be released for public comment in the coming weeks, and would be presented to the Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission (CSPDC) Board for adoption in June 2020.

Contractor Update: Mr. Wilson discussed various items with the committee:

- VRT COVID-19 Response: Mr. Wilson indicated that Virginia Regional Transit (VRT) had been participating in various webinars regarding COVID-19 response. Mr. Wilson reiterated that they had been adhering to the social distancing guidelines on the buses, and seats had been marked off accordingly. If buses reached capacity, VRT would dispatch additional resources to get all riders where they need to be; and Mr. Wilson indicated that there hadn't been a lot of pushback from riders concerning the limited bus capacity. Mr. Wilson indicated that Ms. Thompson had also ordered face masks for the drivers. Mr. Wilson specified that since the pandemic, there were a few drivers that opted not to work due to their or their families vulnerabilities. But, since schools were closed there were additional school bus drivers available for additional work. Passengers had been responsive to the changes and accepting of the guidelines and mandates from the State and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
- Staunton Downtown Trolley Summer Hours: Mr. Wilson announced that the Staunton Downtown Trolley and Saturday Night Trolley would be maintaining their Winter hours due to COVID-19. Mr. Wilson indicated



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that there was some overlap in service between the Staunton Downtown Trolley and the Staunton North & West Loops, and the delay shouldn't have a negative impact. If input was received from riders regarding the delay in its implementation, VRT would pass those along to the CSPDC and City of Staunton. Mr. Quirke clarified that the implementation of the Summer hours had been delayed; BRITE did not feel it was appropriate to extend service hours during a pandemic. Mr. Quirke reiterated that due to the delay two stops were being missed. Notice had been posted on these stops, as well as close alternative stops that could be used.

- Pinnacle Drive Stop Request Update: Mr. Quirke indicated that the timeline for implementing the Pinnacle Drive bus stop discussed at the March 2020 meeting had been postponed due to the pandemic. As with the Summer hours, staff didn't feel it was appropriate to add service at this time. An update would be announced once work resumed adding the stop to the Stuarts Draft Link route.

#### Other Business:

- No other business was announced.

#### **Adjournment**

Chair Rodgers indicated that the next meeting would be held on Wednesday, July 8, 2020, and it was unknown how the meeting would be conducted – in-person or video conference. Ms. Thompson would be in touch closer to the meeting time with details. There being no further business to come before the BTAC, the meeting concluded at 2:55 PM.