



112 MacTanly Place
Staunton, VA 24401

Phone: (540) 885-5174
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**BRITE Transit Advisory Committee Meeting Summary
September 9, 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
	Russ 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
✓	Devon Thompson	CSPDC
✓	Bonnie Riedesel	CSPDC
✓	Kira Johnson, City of Waynesboro	

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 May 13, 2020 BTAC meeting.



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Ms. Becky Messer indicated that there was a misspelling of administration (on page three). Ms. Devon Thompson indicated that she would make the revision.

Ms. Messer moved, seconded by Mr. Steve Rosenberg, to approve the minutes of the May 13, 2020 meeting, as revised with the aforementioned edit. Motion carried unanimously.

Business

BRITE COVID-19 Response: Ms. Thompson reviewed various topics concerning BRITE's COVID-19 response:

- Ridership Impact: Ms. Thompson illustrated ridership impact due to COVID-19 through comparing 2019 and 2020 passenger trips, January through August. March 2020 was the initial start to the ridership decline, and the most severe decreases in ridership were seen in April 2020 and May 2020 at 59 percent and 57 percent, respectively. The ridership decreases in June 2020 and July 2020 were not as dramatic at 48 percent. The decrease in August 2020 ridership was around 50 percent. Ms. Thompson 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. Thompson indicated that staff would continue to monitor, track, and compare ridership through the pandemic. Ms. Thompson offered to share the ridership data with committee members to share with their respective organizations/agencies.

- Financial Updates: Ms. Thompson indicated that beginning in July 2020, BRITE started using CARES Act funding to operate the transit system, and these funds would be used to operate through the remainder of the fiscal year. Ms. Thompson announced that the COVID response funds that were received and expired at the end of September had been spent out on COVID response activities, such as hero pay and safety measures on the buses and at the facility.

FY 2021 DRPT Grant Status Update: Ms. Thompson indicated that the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) was scheduled to meet later this month, and staff continued to wait on the status of the capital projects that were previously recommended for funding. Those projects included Afton Express and Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) Phase I.

The Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) prepared action items for the meeting. Ms. Thompson inquired as to whether Mr. Steven Hennessee had any additional information to share. Mr. Hennessee indicated that the CTB would be acting on approving a second quarter of operating funds based on Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 operating funding, similar to what was approved for the first quarter of FY 2021. Mr. Hennessee assumed there would be no capital items going to the CTB this month, but those are expected to go to the CTB in October. Mr. Hennessee announced that there was no indication of level of funding expected since General Assembly was still meeting, and until this information was known they can't move forward on any capital items.



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Round 4 (FY22) SMART SCALE Applications Update: Ms. Ann Cundy announced that on August 17, 2020, applications for pedestrian improvements and amenities for Round 4 of SMART SCALE were submitted, on behalf of BRITE, to the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT). SMART SCALE is the State's main program for funding transportation and transit projects, and operates on a two-year grant cycle. There were three stand-alone applications for three sites, and the fourth application submitted was the three applications together as a package for system-wide improvements. The three site locations included: Route 250 at Sangers Lane (Augusta County); Route 250 at Lew Dewitt Boulevard (Waynesboro); and Route 11 at Dick Huff Lane (Verona). These sites were selected based on their higher boarding and alighting and safety challenges for pedestrian access.

Ms. Cundy illustrated an example sketch included in an application. Ms. Cundy indicated that this example was fairly representative of the kinds of improvements that were proposed at the other locations – high-visibility crosswalks with push-button activated pedestrian countdown signal and landing pads with bus shelters. Ms. Cundy also reviewed the cost estimates associated with the applications.

Ms. Cundy indicated that applications were currently being validated by VDOT and DRPT staff. By January 2021, there should be a draft recommendation list of projects.

Afton Express Update: Ms. Thompson indicated that while awaiting a formal vote from the CTB, Ms. Nancy Gourley continued to move ahead with a variety of tasks to keep the project moving forward:

- Developing the final logo and tagline (shared with the committee in their July transit update);
- Purchasing the domain AftonExpress.org and creating draft webpages that will be part of the BRITE Bus website;
- Refining the timings and locations of stops;
- Developing the specifications for the buses so that they can be ordered immediately following award of the Demonstration Grant; and
- Developing the addendum to the BRITE service contract to add the hours and specifics of the Afton Express service.

Mr. Luke Juday inquired about availability of funding. Mr. Hennessee reiterated that DRPT was still awaiting a FY21 budget, which would determine levels of funding for projects. Mr. Hennessee indicated that there was CARES Act funding available, and that those funds could be deobligated in the beginning of Calendar Year (CY) 2021. The timeline for that was still unknown.

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

- Operations: Mr. Wilson reiterated that there was approximately a 50 percent decrease in ridership. Mr. Wilson indicated that Virginia Regional Transit (VRT) continued to educate passengers about wearing masks on the buses. A quarterly meeting with the drivers was scheduled for this month, and this message would be reiterated to drivers. Mr. Wilson also announced that VRT had employment opportunities for part-time bus drivers.



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- Staunton-Augusta Health Department Stop Request: Mr. Wilson presented information on a bus stop request received from the Staunton-Augusta Health Department, located on North Augusta Street in Staunton. Mr. Wilson indicated that two bus routes serve the area around the health department, but don't directly serve it.

The presentation reviewed the following information (see attached presentation for further details):

- Defining the need (currently served by BRITE Access – paratransit service);
- Feasibility and route impacts (for BRCC Shuttle South and Staunton North Loop);
- Impact of rerouting on surrounding neighborhood;
- Safety concerns;
- Transit infrastructure; and
- Stop alternatives and options

Following Mr. Wilson's presentation, Ms. Riedesel inquired about who the request came from, and Mr. Wilson indicated that the Staunton-Augusta Health Department made the request.

Discussion ensued regarding the clarification of existing routes that serve the area. Mr. Rosenberg requested clarification regarding northbound and southbound travel of the BRCC Shuttle South route in relation to the health department, and the proposed travel path through the neighborhood adjacent to the health department. Ms. Jennifer Whetzel sought clarification on the closest existing bus stop near the health department. Mr. Wilson provided clarification on all topics and inquiries.

Mr. Rosenberg also inquired as what staff recommendation was and whether or not this proposition was conferred with Staunton City staff. Mr. Wilson indicated his recommendation would be implementing a trial call stop at the health department to gauge need and use, and that Staunton City staff had not been contacted. Mr. Rosenberg indicated that if there was no immediacy to the request, he would like to schedule a meeting with BRITE staff and Staunton City planning staff to discuss the proposed route. There was no opposition among the committee to postpone the decision. Chair Rodgers indicated that this item would be addressed at the next meeting to allow time for a meeting and discussion between Staunton City staff and BRITE staff.

- Staunton Downtown Trolley Summer Hours: Mr. Wilson announced that the Staunton Downtown Trolley and Saturday Night Trolley Summer hours had not been and most likely would not be implemented. Mr. Rosenberg indicated that City of Staunton would not make the ask for implementing Summer hours – the Staunton Visitor Center would be closed until October, and the extended hours are typically for the benefit of tourists. Mr. Greg Beam agreed with Mr. Rosenberg about keeping the hours that had been operated so far this year.



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- Pinnacle Drive Stop Request Update: Mr. Wilson indicated that the timeline for implementing the Pinnacle Drive bus stop continued to be postponed due to the pandemic.

Other Business:

- Chair Rodgers announced that Mr. Russ Neyman, Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center (WWRC), had retired. A new representative would need to be identified by WWRC to fill the vacancy.
- Ms. Thompson announced that in lieu of Try Transit Week in September, DRPT was planning Transit Appreciation Month in October. This opportunity would allow DRPT to assist transit partners with marketing, and BRITE would be participating. Each week there would be a different theme, featuring safety measures, employee recognition, information about transit agency options and initiatives, and profiles of essential employees using this vital service.
- Mr. Rosenberg inquired about the vacant transit position at the CSPDC. Ms. Bonnie Riedesel indicated that Ms. Thompson was acting in the position in the interim, and that the job posting for the Transit Program Administrator would be advertised later that week.

Adjournment

Chair Rodgers indicated that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday, November 10, 2020 at 1:30PM, and it was decided that the meeting would be held via video conference. There being no further business to come before the BTAC, the meeting concluded at 3:06 PM.

Staunton Augusta Health Department Stop Addition



BTAC Discussion

- Define the need
- Feasibility and Route Impact
- Impact of Rerouting on Surrounding Neighborhood
- Safety Concerns
- Sign Placement
- Stop Alternatives and Options

Need ?

Requested Stop at 1414 North Augusta St. Staunton-Augusta Health Department

- Brite currently services this area through Brite Access (Paratransit).
- VRT records show 130 trips YTY 2019-2020 via the Brite Access.
- Although not supported by tracking, we have very few, if any, requests for service to the Health Department.
- This could be due to clients knowledge of the current routing system, causing them to seek alternative transportation or use the current system in place.

Timing Impact N/W Loop & BRCC

Route Changes?

BRCC South

- Very Little Impact on Route (although long travel time and possible bus change required).
- No Service Direction Impact
- Map Changes
- Schedule Changes

North Loop

- Extra Time on the Route
- Service Direction Impact
- Brochure Changes
- Map Changes
- Schedule Changes

North/West Loop

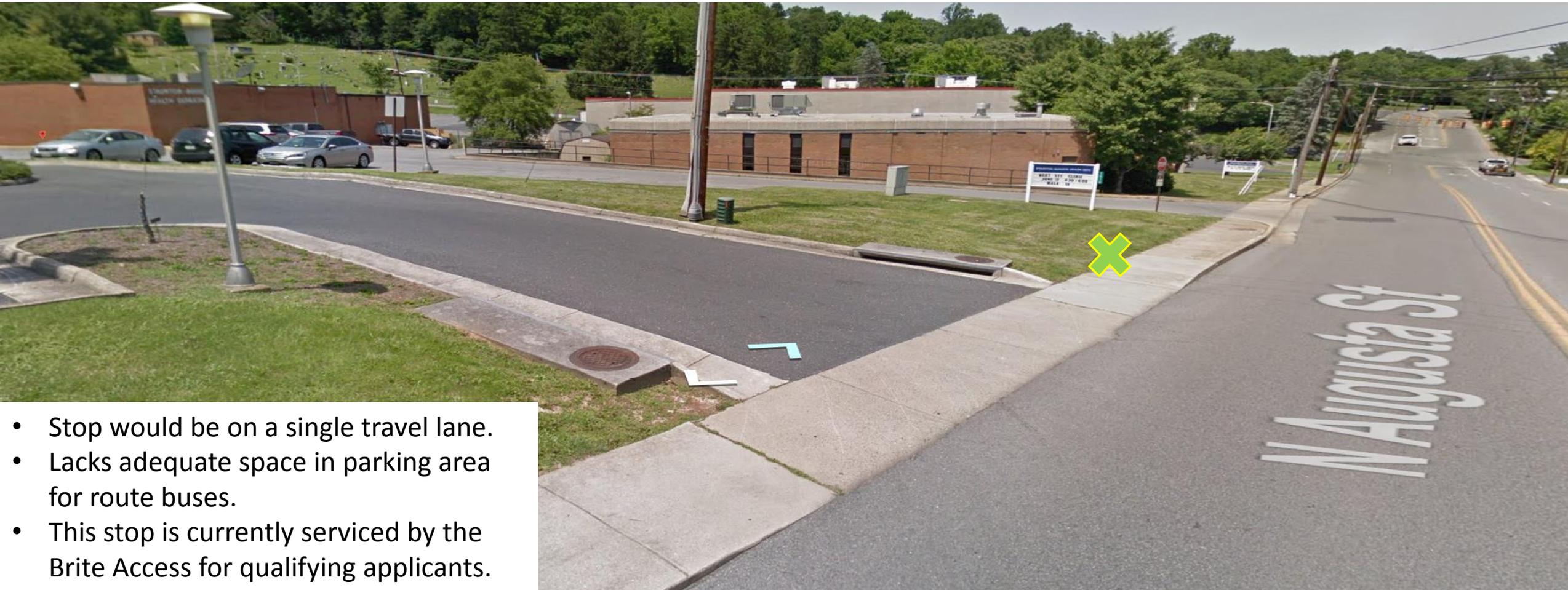


N/W Loop turns left from Lambert St. onto N. Augusta St. and does not pass directly in front of the Staunton Augusta Health Services entrance.

BRCC Southbound



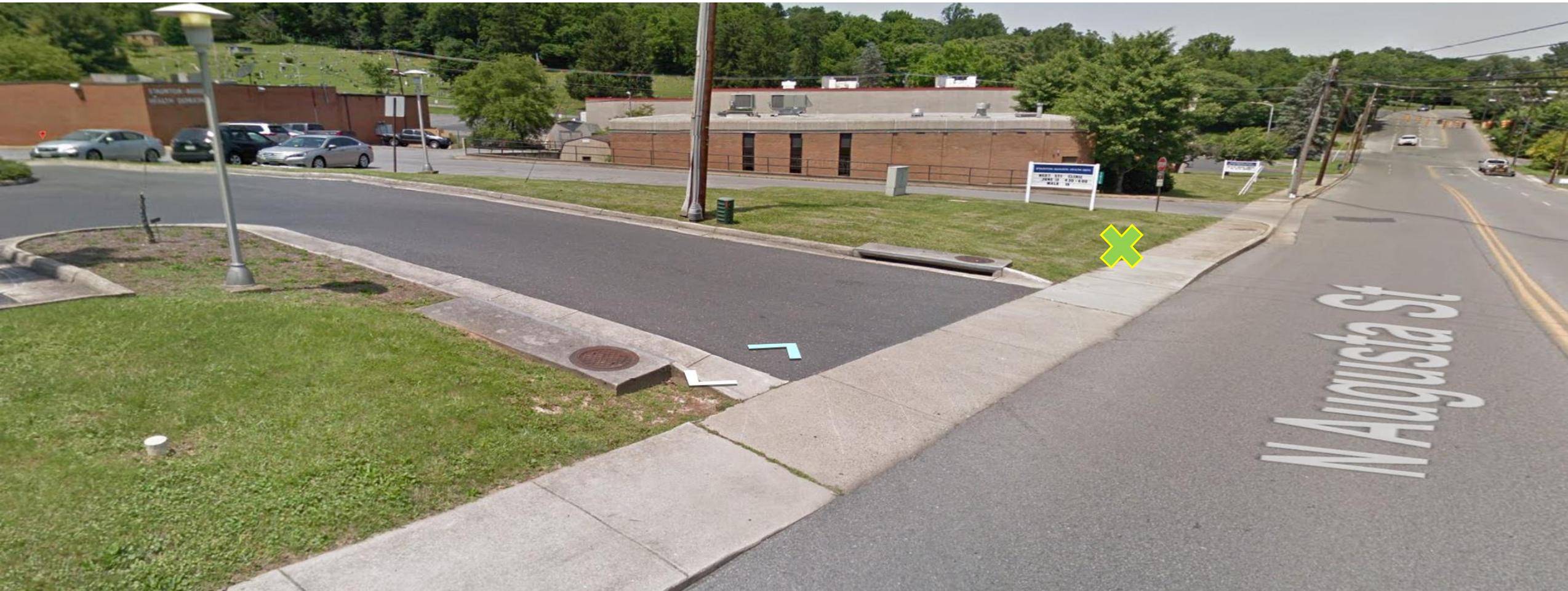
Safety Concerns

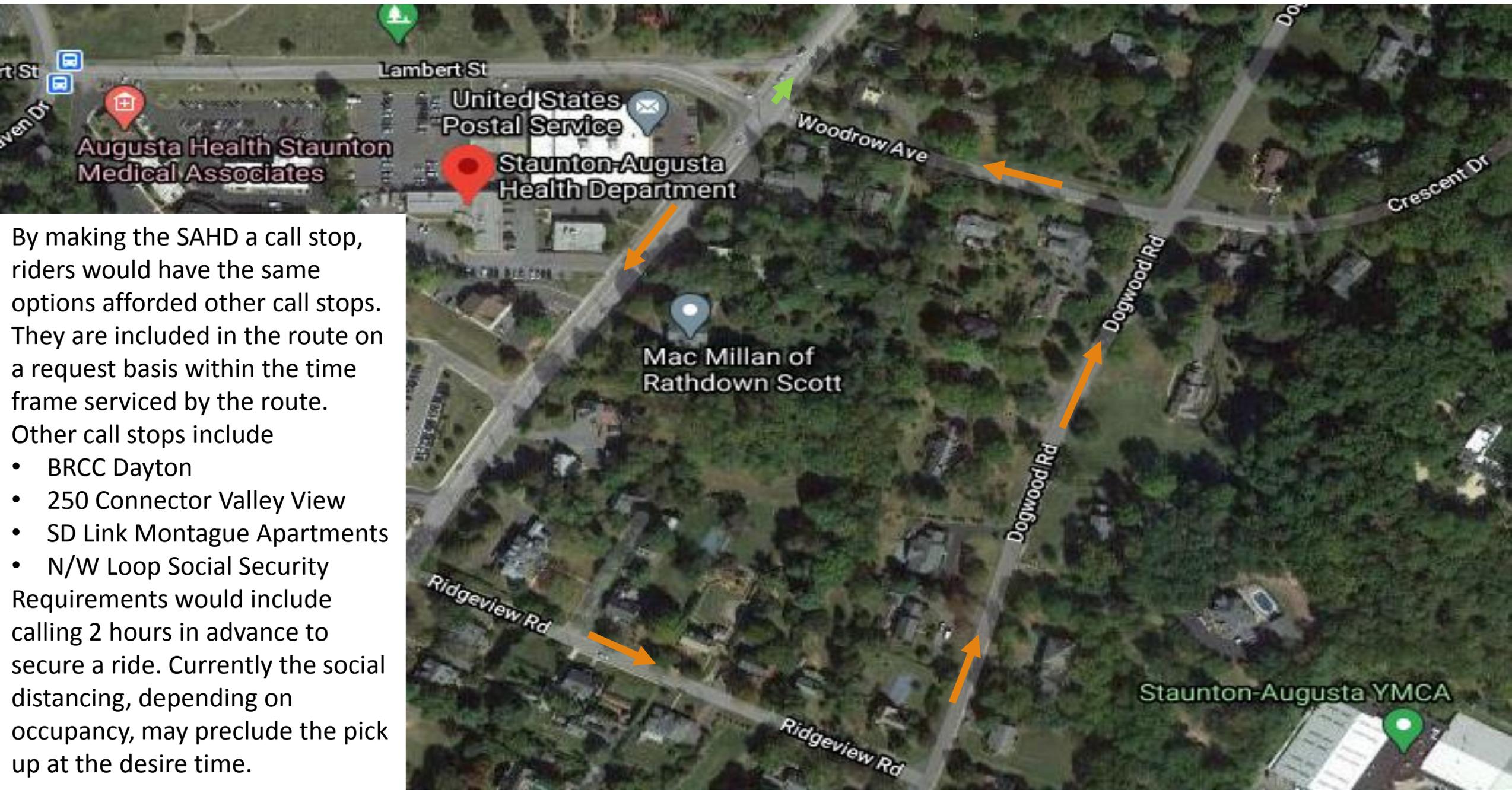


- Stop would be on a single travel lane.
- Lacks adequate space in parking area for route buses.
- This stop is currently serviced by the Brite Access for qualifying applicants.

Sign Designation

Call Stop Would Not Require a Sign





By making the SAHD a call stop, riders would have the same options afforded other call stops. They are included in the route on a request basis within the time frame serviced by the route.

Other call stops include

- BRCC Dayton
- 250 Connector Valley View
- SD Link Montague Apartments
- N/W Loop Social Security

Requirements would include calling 2 hours in advance to secure a ride. Currently the social distancing, depending on occupancy, may preclude the pick up at the desire time.