



112 MacTanly Place  
Staunton, VA 24401

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**BRITE Transit Advisory Committee Meeting Summary  
May 12, 2021, 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
✓	Mike Kelley	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
✓	Mike McDaniel, DARS	

**Call to Order**

The meeting of the BRITE Transit Advisory Committee (BTAC) was called to order at 2:30 PM by Ms. Karen Clark, Vice Chairperson.

**Public Comment**

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

**Approve Minutes**

Vice Chair Clark presented the minutes from the March 10, 2021 BTAC meeting.



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Mr. Paul Terry moved, seconded by Mr. Luke Juday, to approve the minutes of the March 10, 2021 meeting, as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

### **Business**

Election of Chair & Vice Chair: Vice Chair Clark reviewed the past history of the current Chair and Vice Chair terms. In 2018, Chair Rodgers was nominated as Chair for her current term, and Vice Chair Clark took on the role from her predecessor, Ms. Lisa Cline. Vice Chair Clark indicated that she and Chair Rodgers were agreeable to serve another term if there were no other nominees.

Ms. Devon Thompson reviewed Chair and Vice Chair term limits and roles. According to the Bylaws, Officers would assume their duties on July 1 for a three-year term, and those duties include:

- Work with the PDC staff to develop meeting agendas;
- Preside over all meetings of the BTAC;
- Be eligible to vote on all issues;
- Perform other duties as may from time to time assigned by the BTAC;
- May from time to time establish special committees as deemed desirable for effective completion of specific projects related to the duties of the BTAC; and
- Vice Chairperson – in the absence or inability of the Chairperson, perform all duties and exercise all powers of the Chairperson.

Ms. Thompson also indicated that Chair and Vice Chair could be reappointed for no more than one additional consecutive term. Chair Rodgers and Vice Chair Clark were eligible for one consecutive term, or new appointments could be made.

Ms. Jennifer Whetzel moved, seconded by Mr. Mike Kelley, to nominate Ms. Terry Rodgers as Chair and Ms. Karen Clark as Vice Chair. Motion carried unanimously.

Staunton Hub: Ms. Bonnie Riedesel announced that the Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission (CSPDC) purchased the Staunton Lewis Street Hub; the closing took place on April 20, 2021. The two-acre property located at 240 North Lewis Street in downtown Staunton was previously owned by American Shakespeare Center (ASC), and was leased by the City of Staunton as a parking lot. It has also been the location of the BRITE Transit Hub since the CSPDC assumed responsibility for the transit service in 2014. Four buses meet every hour at the hub, the Staunton Downtown Trolley, 250 Connector, BRCC Shuttle South, and the North/West Loops, making it a lynchpin for the system. Prior to the pandemic, passenger counts confirmed that over 2,200 riders accessed or departed a bus at this location in a one-week period. The City of Staunton has confirmed that they will continue to lease the portion of the property that is used for public parking, with those lease payments directed to the CSPDC. Routine maintenance such as snow removal, trash pickup, and utilities will continue to be provided by the City of Staunton at no cost to CSPDC/BRITE. Ms. Riedesel also indicated that over the next few years improvements will be made to the lot.



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Draft Six-Year Improvement Program: Ms. Thompson indicated that the draft Six-Year Improvement Program (SYIP) was released and available for public comment. The CSPDC applications recommended for funding included: Urban Operating and Capital Cost of Contracting (Capital); Rural Operating and Capital Cost of Contracting (Capital); Technical Assistance for the Transit Development Plan (TDP); and Commuter Assistance Program Operating Funds for RideShare.

Mr. Steven Hennessee indicated that the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) will vote on the draft SYIP at their June meeting. The CTB had directed the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) to focus on funding State of Good Repair and Rolling Stock, which was why one of the CSPDC applications was not recommended for funding.

Afton Express: Ms. Thompson announced that the Afton Express Transit Service has a planned start date of September 1, 2021. The first of three buses had been purchased and would be arriving later in the week. Staff would be working with HIVE Creative and Trim Tek on the bus decal installation. Staff had also scheduled the first marketing plan meeting, and the marketing committee consisted of CSPDC staff, Ms. Thompson, Ms. Nancy Gourley, and Ms. Rachel Salatin; Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission (TJPDC) staff, Ms. Sara Pennington; and University of Virginia (UVA) staff, Mr. Patrick Clark, UVA Parking and Transportation Department. These meetings would help facilitate marketing the service and finalizing operations.

Transit Ridership Incentive Program (TRIP) – Fare-Free and Low-Income Programs and Fare Collection: Ms. Ann Cundy announced that staff was following a new DRPT program, Transit Ridership Incentive Program (TRIP). The TRIP program was created in the 2020 General Assembly session, with \$25 million in statewide funding for fare-free transit and inter-regional connectivity. Ms. Cundy indicated that when the call for applications was announced in Summer that the CSPDC would likely apply for a grant to make BRITE and Afton Express fare-free for a period of time. DRPT and other agencies were interested in fare-free programs prior to the pandemic, and the program was put on hold due to COVID-19. The pandemic gave DRPT and transit agencies the opportunity to see the value of fare-free public transportation since many transit agencies went fare-free with the help of CARES Act funding. The projected timeline for applications would probably be around August or September, with awards announced prior to budget development of Fiscal Year (FY) 2023.

Ms. Cundy indicated that BRITE would stay fare-free through end of FY 2021 and would resume fare collection in FY 2022, since the budget was built around that assumption to calculate local match. If application was made and the grant awarded, the timeline for rolling out fare-free operations would be dependent on how DRPT phased the funding. Ms. Whetzel inquired about whether the grant would go toward local match that was currently collected as fares. Ms. Cundy indicated that fare revenue comes off the top of the program, and thus it was accounted for and then from there the additional match funds were calculated. So, the grant would replace the fare revenue.



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ITS Phase I Implementation: Ms. Thompson indicated that staff initiated the kick-off of ITS Phase I with consultant Kimley-Horn. Staff would be moving forward with procurement and installation of ITS, specifically a mobile data collection system, on the BRITE buses. Ms. Thompson and Ms. Cundy were working with Kimley-Horn, the same consultant that completed the ITS Plan in 2017, to develop a scope of work and cost estimate for their assistance with the procurement and installation process. Ms. Thompson indicated that they would keep the committee updated as the project progressed more.

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

- General Operations:
  - Masks were still being offered and distributed on buses for passengers to comply with the CDC Mask Order where masks were required to ride public transit (issued on January 29, 2021, and recently extended until September 13, 2021).
  - The 50 percent bus capacity continued to do well and was proving to be beneficial.
  - VRT was hiring transit drivers – the market for bus drivers had become competitive. Driver retention also posed a challenge.
  - Ridership continued to improve gradually from the height of the pandemic, but still not at the levels of pre-pandemic ridership.
  - Regarding the potential fuel shortage, there had been some slight challenges finding gas stations to refuel the buses.
  
- Summer Hours: Mr. Wilson indicated that Staunton Trolleys' Summer hours were not implemented in 2020 due to the pandemic, but these hours would be implemented this year beginning May 28, 2021 (delayed from the usual start date of the first Monday in May). Hours would be extended three hours in the evening Monday through Friday on the Staunton Downtown Trolley, and hours would be extended one hour in the evening on the Staunton Saturday Night Trolley.
  
- Myers Corner Bus Shelter and Bench Installation Update: Mr. Wilson indicated that within the Myers Corner development in Fishersville a new bench and shelter would be installed. Installation had been continually delayed.

Other Business:

- Vice Chair Clark indicated that the vaccine clinic at Augusta Health was still open for those still unvaccinated.

### **Adjournment**

Chair Rodgers indicated that the next BTAC meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, July 14 at 2:30PM. The meeting would be held via video conference.

There being no further business to come before the BTAC, the meeting concluded at 2:54 PM.