



112 MacTanly Place
Staunton, VA 24401

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BRITE Transit Advisory Committee Meeting Summary May 13, 2026, 2:30 p.m.

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

[Click Here for Audio Recording of Meeting](#)

	Name	Organization
✓	Susan Wilson	City of Staunton
	Meggie Taylor	City of Staunton
✓	Julia Hensley	County of Augusta
✓	Jennifer Whetzel	County of Augusta
✓	Leslie Tate, Vice Chair	City of Waynesboro
✓	Alisande Tombarge	City of Waynesboro
	Krystal Moyers, Chair	Augusta Health
	Abby Calvert	Augusta Health
✓	Mike Kelley	Wilson Workforce Rehabilitation Center
	Amy Blalock	Wilson Workforce Rehabilitation Center
✓	Adam Greenbaum*	Staunton Downtown Development Association
	Melissa Walker	Blue Ridge Community College
✓	Mike Obenschain	Blue Ridge Community College
✓	Julie-Ann Kent	Shenandoah Valley Social Services
✓	Tammy DuBose	Valley Community Services Board
✓	Becky Messer	Transit Service Rider
	Paul Terry	Transit Service Rider
✓	Kyle Trissel	Department of Rail and Public Transportation

	Name	Organization
	Ann Cundy	CSPDC
✓	Paula Melester	CSPDC
✓	Devon Thompson	CSPDC
✓	Danielle Gannon	CSPDC
✓	Garreth Bartholomew*, CSPDC	
	Zach Beard, CSPDC	
✓	Phil Thompson*, VRT	
✓	Alex Wilmer*, Town of Bridgewater	
✓	Brian Borne, Town of Dayton	
	<i>*Indicates participant attended virtually</i>	



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Call to Order

The May 13, 2026 meeting of the BRITE Transit Advisory Committee (BTAC) was called to order at 2:30 p.m. by Ms. Leslie Tate, Vice Chair. Pursuant to §2.2-3708.2 of the Code of Virginia, BTAC members may participate in meetings through electronic communication means. Members who participated virtually are marked accordingly.

Public Comment

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

Approval of Minutes

Vice Chair Tate presented the minutes from the March 11, 2026, BTAC meeting for consideration. No changes were requested.

Ms. Alisande Tombarge moved, seconded by Ms. Jennifer Whetzel, to approve the minutes of the March 11, 2026, meeting, as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

Vice Chair Tate introduced Mr. Adam Greenbaum, newly appointed Executive Director of the Staunton Downtown Development Association (SDDA), who was attending his first BTAC meeting. Mr. Greenbaum briefly introduced himself.

Business

Fiscal Year 2027 BRITE Budget and Work Program (see attached presentation slide deck for details):

BRITE Budget: Ms. Paula Melester presented the FY27 BRITE budget. She noted that costs were rising more than in prior years, driven primarily by contract re-procurement. Operations were previously through a negotiated contract with a fixed escalation rate, and operating costs had not kept pace with post-Covid inflation. The return to the open market brought a higher base cost, but also encompassed a new fleet, competitive operator wages and benefits, and increased maintenance costs. Additional cost pressures included rising fuel prices — requiring three budget revisions since January 2026 — tariff-related parts costs and delivery delays, and increased paratransit service hours. The total difference between the FY26 and FY27 budgets was approximately \$1.7 million, which Ms. Melester noted was less than originally anticipated when the re-procurement process began.

Ms. Melester outlined the budget's funding sources: approximately 61% from federal formula grants, roughly 22–25% from state formula funding, approximately 9% from local partner match assessments, and the remainder from facility lease revenue, interest income, and fares. To buffer the impact on local partners, CSPDC would draw on reserve funds to cap any single partner's local match increase to no more than 12% over the prior year. Memoranda of Understanding reflecting each partner's FY27 match would be distributed to partners by the end of that week, with individual locality meetings already completed. Committee members were encouraged to contact CSPDC staff directly with any questions.

Ms. Susan Wilson inquired about the fuel cost assumptions, noting the year-over-year increase appeared modest. Ms. Melester explained that the prior year's budget had been set conservatively, with a high per-gallon projection, making the comparison appear smaller than the actual cost change would suggest, and that the FY27 budget reflected



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current elevated fuel prices. Mr. Mike Obenschain asked about the fleet's fuel composition. Ms. Melester clarified that the four Afton Express vehicles are diesel and the remainder of the fleet runs on gasoline, and that under the new contract paratransit service would transition to smaller transit-style vans, which were expected to improve fuel efficiency, though those anticipated savings were not formally included in the FY27 projections.

Ms. Melester outlined longer-term strategies for cost sustainability, including system evaluation and route analysis to identify efficiencies, exploration of hybrid or microtransit approaches informed by the completed microtransit study, strategic marketing and outreach to grow ridership and fare revenue, and pursuit of additional funding partners to broaden the cost-sharing base. She noted that all FY27 grant applications submitted to the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) were recommended for funding in the draft Six-Year Improvement Program (SYIP).

BRITE Work Program: Ms. Devon Thompson presented the FY27 work program highlights. Ms. Thompson announced that Ms. Kayla Dixon, currently a James Madison University (JMU) graduate assistant with CSPDC, would join the organization full-time as an Outreach and Engagement Planner beginning July 1, 2026, focusing on community engagement, partner outreach, and travel training. This increased outreach capacity would also support public engagement for the Transit Development Plan, expected to launch in mid-FY27. On marketing, Ms. Thompson reported that a comprehensive marketing campaign for the broader BRITE system had been recommended under the FY27 Six-Year Improvement Program (pending Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) approval at their June meeting), modeled after the Afton Express campaign, and would include digital and print advertising, geofencing, television broadcast, an updated photo catalog, a website refresh, and how-to-ride videos.

On route planning, Ms. Thompson reported that staff would evaluate the Blue Ridge Community College (BRCC) Shuttles route during FY27, and would examine ridership, alignment, and timing to optimize service along Routes 11 and 42, accounting for ongoing Interstate 81 construction and the anticipated Mount Crawford Park and Ride SMART SCALE project. On paratransit, Ms. Thompson reported that for the first time BRITE would offer Saturday paratransit service in FY27, with four hours of service budgeted. Ms. Melester added that the new contractor would introduce dynamic routing and dispatch software for paratransit, enabling more flexible, demand-responsive scheduling. Retaining the Saturday hours rather than cutting them was described as a deliberate priority given the importance of Saturday access for senior citizens and individuals with disabilities.

On infrastructure, Ms. Thompson reported that grant funds had been secured to install one new bus shelter in each of the three localities. In Waynesboro, the shelter would contribute to a transit access project recommended for funding, encompassing five stops with shelter additions and ADA improvements. In Augusta County, grant funding was recommended to improve ADA access at the Augusta Health facility shelter in Stuarts Draft. In Staunton, the installation location was being finalized in coordination with City staff.

Afton Express Work Program: Ms. Danielle Gannon reported that FY26 was a significant year for the Afton Express, during which a revised schedule was launched and a major marketing campaign was implemented, each contributing to an acceleration of the route's four-year consecutive ridership growth trend. For FY27, the primary goals would be to sustain that momentum and monitor ridership patterns — including which trips and stops are most utilized — to assess whether schedule changes were holding ridership. The Afton Express marketing campaign was set to



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conclude on June 30, 2026, and staff would monitor trends following that date. Ms. Gannon also noted that the deployment of new Afton Express vehicles on July 1, 2026 would represent a milestone for the service, as Afton Express riders face longer and more demanding commutes than typical local fixed-route passengers and would benefit from the newer, higher-capacity buses. Should ridership trends hold as expected, data gathered in FY27 would inform future conversations regarding service expansion changes.

Future Bus Stop Requests: Ms. Melester presented a proposed update to the process for reviewing and approving bus stop requests, prompted by feedback from the March 2026 meeting. She noted that as BRITE's routes have become more constrained, accommodating new stops increasingly requires trade-offs elsewhere in the system. Ms. Melester reviewed the new process:

- Upon receipt of a bus stop request, CSPDC staff would first consult with the relevant locality and any significantly impacted partners outside of the regular BTAC meeting cycle.
- Staff would then conduct planning analysis and modeling of the proposed change before submitting it to the contractor for safety and timing review, after which a vetted recommendation would be brought to the full BTAC for a vote.

Ms. Melester noted the process was expected to take up to six months and encouraged localities to communicate this timeline to developers when transit access is raised during site plan review.

The River City Bread Basket request from the March meeting was cited as an illustration of how a thorough review can bring to light broader service opportunities — mapping the proposed change revealed potential to serve nearby locations in addition to the requested stop, benefiting a wider area than the original request contemplated.

Ms. Susan Wilson inquired whether six months represented a worst-case scenario and whether localities could expedite their portion of the review. Ms. Melester acknowledged that the timeline could be shorter with prompt engagement from localities and the contractor, but that the BTAC's bimonthly meeting schedule inherently builds in time between steps. Mr. Mike Kelley expressed support for the proposal, noting the value of having requests vetted through localities and partners before reaching the full committee.

The committee indicated consensus support for the proposed bus stop request review process. No formal vote was taken.

Ms. Melester confirmed that the outstanding requests from the March meeting remained under review. The River City Bread Basket stop in Waynesboro was expected to move forward following timing checks after the contractor transition occurring in July. The Staunton Redevelopment and Housing Authority requests were being further evaluated for viable alternatives.

Turnkey Contract Transition: Ms. Melester provided an update on the transition to the new transit operations contractor, Resource Management Systems (RMS), effective July 1, 2026. She reported that Virginia Regional Transit (VRT) had been cooperative throughout the process and that CSPDC staff were working closely with both VRT and RMS to ensure service continuity, with no disruption anticipated for riders. Most VRT operational staff were expected



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to remain with the new contractor, and the new fleet had been ordered. RMS representatives were onsite that week for an onboarding check-in, finalizing technology decisions, and creating training schedules. Ms. Melester formally recognized VRT for its years of service to CSPDC and the BRITE region, noting that VRT formed the foundation of the service. Vice Chair Tate echoed this recognition on behalf of the committee.

Contractor Update: Mr. Phil Thompson provided the operations update on behalf of Virginia Regional Transit (VRT). Mr. Thompson expressed appreciation for the recognition extended to VRT and reaffirmed the organization's pride in serving the community. Mr. Thompson reported continued ridership growth over recent months: 17,033 rides in February 2026 (previously reported); 18,638 in March, a 9% increase over February; and 19,405 in April, a further 4% increase over March. He attributed this growth to the dedication of VRT's area staff, who continued to ensure rides for passengers traveling to work, grocery stores, and medical appointments through the transition period. Mr. Thompson confirmed that all routes continued to operate without disruption.

Other Business

Ms. Thompson reported that the BRITE Title VI Plan was out for public comment, with the comment period closing June 4, 2026. The plan would then be brought to the CSPDC Board of Commissioners for full approval at their June 12, 2026 meeting and subsequently submitted to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for review. She noted the Title VI Plan is required to be updated on a three-year cycle.

Ms. Melester announced that the Afton Express had been awarded a University of Virginia (UVA) Sustainability Leadership Award. CSPDC staff attended the ceremony with UVA partners and were presented with the award. Ms. Melester expressed appreciation for the recognition on behalf of CSPDC and UVA. The award reflects Afton Express's contribution to the sustainability goals of UVA and the City of Charlottesville.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:34 p.m.

Next Meeting: July 8, 2026, 2:30 p.m. Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission Offices, 112 MacTanly Place, Staunton, VA 24401