

Chapter 2: Public Outreach and Consultation

This chapter covers the 2045 LRTP public outreach process and resource agency consultations. Community members provided input from two public engagement phases. The first phase gathered input from the public, stakeholders, and local government to understand the region's transportation needs, while the second phase focused on receiving public comment on the draft LRTP document, and the projects identified in the CLRP.

This chapter addresses:

2 – 1 Needs Identification

2 – 2 LRTP Draft Input

2 – 3 Resource Agency Consultations

2 – 1 Phase One: Needs Identification

SAWMPO Staff conducted the first public engagement phase from August to November 2019 to assess current and future transportation needs in the areas of safety, congestion, access, and mobility. The first phase consisted of seven in-person meetings with transportation stakeholders and the public, as well as an online survey. The meetings included four “pop-up” meetings around the region to gather input on transportation needs, one meeting with regional transportation stakeholders, a work session with the SAWMPO policy board, and a meeting with BRITE Transit. Five themes were identified from the input:

- Improve pedestrian and bicycle connections;
- Improve transit service;
- Prioritize travel options for the aging population;
- Address I-81 and I-64 and congestion and safety; and
- Develop multi-modal infrastructure as an economic development tool.

Stakeholder Meeting and Policy Board Input

Staff conducted a stakeholder engagement meeting with a regional group of local government and transportation professionals on August 23, 2019, and the Policy Board on September 4, 2019 to collect input on current and future transportation challenges in the region. The meetings focused on further prioritizing needs in the areas of safety, congestion, access and mobility, and economic development.

Both meetings included a presentation and small group discussion. SAWMPO Staff presented a regional profile of existing socio-demographic, employment, and transportation conditions, and also projected regional conditions in 2045.

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Participants formed four groups to discuss present and future transportation needs within each of the four needs areas of safety, congestion, access and mobility, and economic development. Each group then shared their input and summarized their discussion. The Policy Board also held a discussion in all four needs areas.

Summary of Input by Needs Area

Below is a summary of input from both meetings for each needs area. The full comments for each meeting are in **Appendix D**.

Safety – What areas feel unsafe or are a risk to travel, either by driving, walking, biking or taking transit?

- Sidewalk and shared-use path connectivity and circulation for pedestrians and bicyclists is disconnected in the urban areas of Staunton and Waynesboro, schools, and senior living areas.
- Transit stop shelter facilities need improved connectivity and circulation.
- Poor access management fragments pedestrian facilities and creates stop-and-go driving.
- Diverted traffic from incidents on I-81 leads to safety concerns along parallel routes.
- Distracted driving, such as cell phone use, continues to be a problem.

Congestion – What areas have consistent travel delay, and at what time during the day do delays occur?

- Overall, the region has limited congestion. The main concern is the continued growth of traffic volume on I-81 and I-64, and the congestion along exits and interchanges.
- Future growth along interstate interchanges may require redesign, restricted use, or new interchanges.
- Congestion occurs during the morning and evening commutes. Specific sites mentioned include exit 235 at BRCC and exit 94 in Waynesboro.
- Future new development outside of Staunton and Waynesboro and within Fishersville should be focus areas for future planning efforts.

Access and Mobility – What areas or population segments lack transportation options, alternatives, and proximity to basic services such as food and medical care?

- Transit stop shelter facilities need improved connectivity and circulation.
- Bus service from the SAW area to Charlottesville and Harrisonburg should be a priority.
- Passenger rail improvements from the SAW area to DC.
- Connecting transit and transportation infrastructure to senior living facilities should be a priority as the population ages.
- An intercity greenway and multi-use trail connecting Staunton, Augusta County, and Waynesboro.

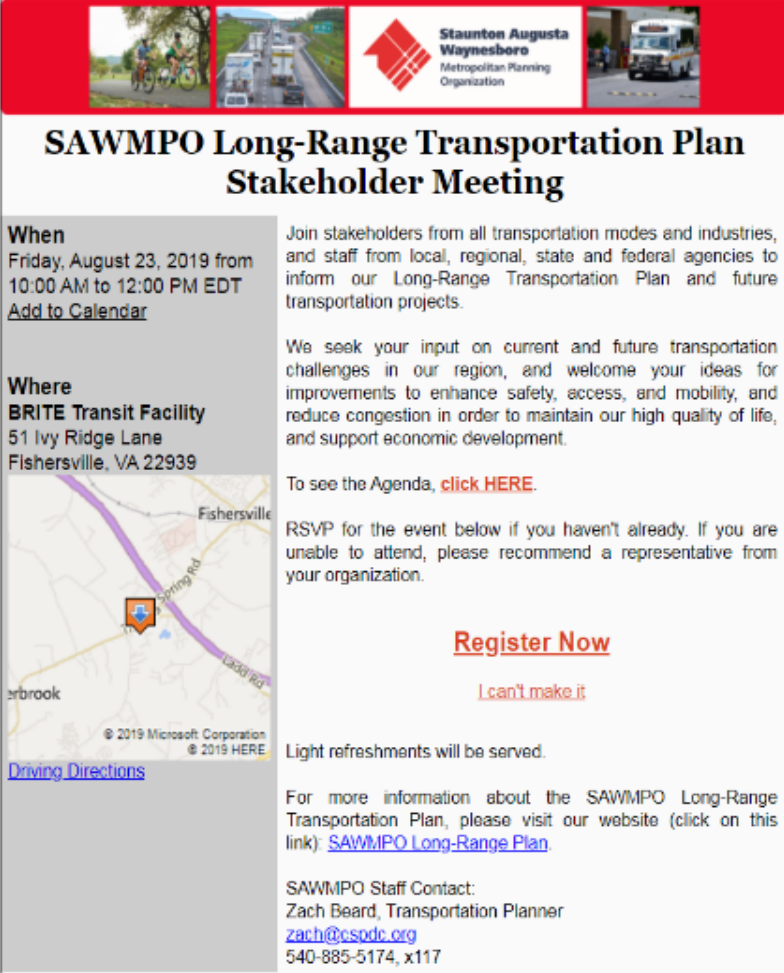
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- Sidewalk and shared-use path connectivity and circulation for pedestrians and bicyclists is disconnected, with a need for improvement in the urban areas of Staunton and Waynesboro, schools, and senior living homes.

Figure 1: Stakeholder Meeting Invitation

Economic Development – What areas need improved access or efficiency for the movement of goods, people, and services?

- Improved multi-modal infrastructure could augment the area's already high quality of life and increase competitiveness in attracting and retaining businesses and individuals.
- Similarly, transit and passenger rail service connectivity to Charlottesville and DC may also make the region more attractive to employers.
- Anticipate growth in areas such as Staunton Crossing, the airport, and Fishersville to improve access and circulation.
- Ensure access for trucking and rail in the future.
- Future plans and projects need to continue to ensure efficient throughput and access for freight and rail, and also anticipate future development and traffic conditions along interstate interchanges.



SAWMPO Long-Range Transportation Plan Stakeholder Meeting

When
Friday, August 23, 2019 from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM EDT
[Add to Calendar](#)

Where
BRITE Transit Facility
51 Ivy Ridge Lane
Fishersville, VA 22939

Join stakeholders from all transportation modes and industries, and staff from local, regional, state and federal agencies to inform our Long-Range Transportation Plan and future transportation projects.

We seek your input on current and future transportation challenges in our region, and welcome your ideas for improvements to enhance safety, access, and mobility, and reduce congestion in order to maintain our high quality of life, and support economic development.

To see the Agenda, [click HERE](#).

RSVP for the event below if you haven't already. If you are unable to attend, please recommend a representative from your organization.

[Register Now](#)

[I can't make it](#)

Light refreshments will be served.

For more information about the SAWMPO Long-Range Transportation Plan, please visit our website (click on this link): [SAWMPO Long-Range Plan](#)

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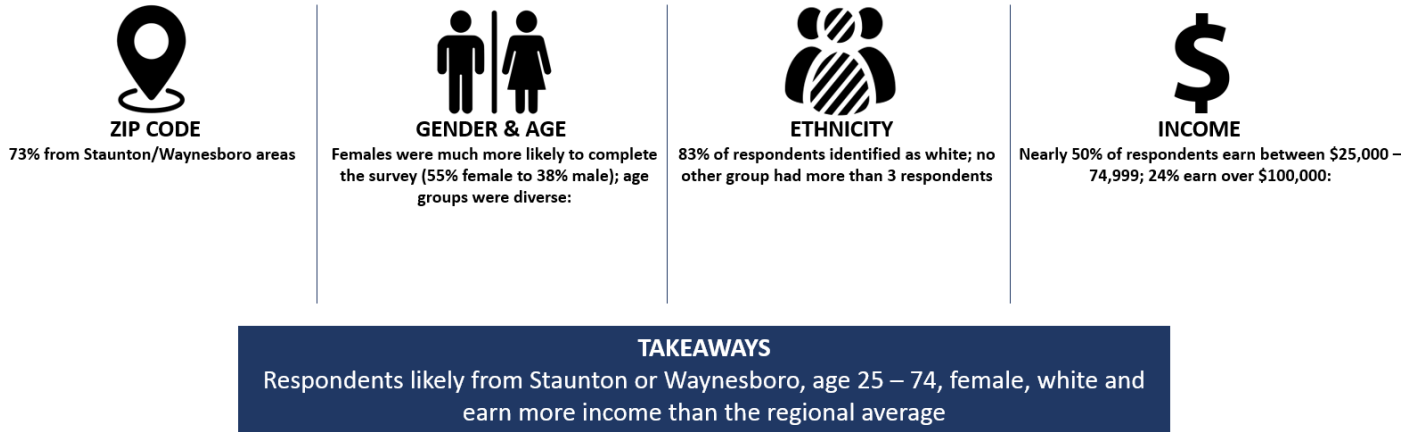
Online Survey Summary

The survey was available to the public from September 6 to November 7, 2019 and had a total of 206 respondents.

Figure 2 summarizes the background of respondents.

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Figure 2: Summary of First Public Survey



The results from the online survey reinforce the priorities from the in-person meetings (see **Figure 3**). Online respondents prioritized improving pedestrian infrastructure, enhancing transit service, and continuing to address I-81 concerns. There was also support for improved road safety measures and the maintenance of existing roads. See **Appendix D** for the full survey results.

Figure 3: Survey and Stakeholder Input Summary

Survey Takeaways

- Improve ped
- Improve transit
- Continue to address 81
- Safety and maintenance of existing roads
- Congestion and new roads are less priority

Stakeholder Takeaways

- Improve bike/ped
- Improve transit
- Continue to address 81 and 64
- Prioritize travel options for the aging
- Promote multi-modal options to contribute to economic development

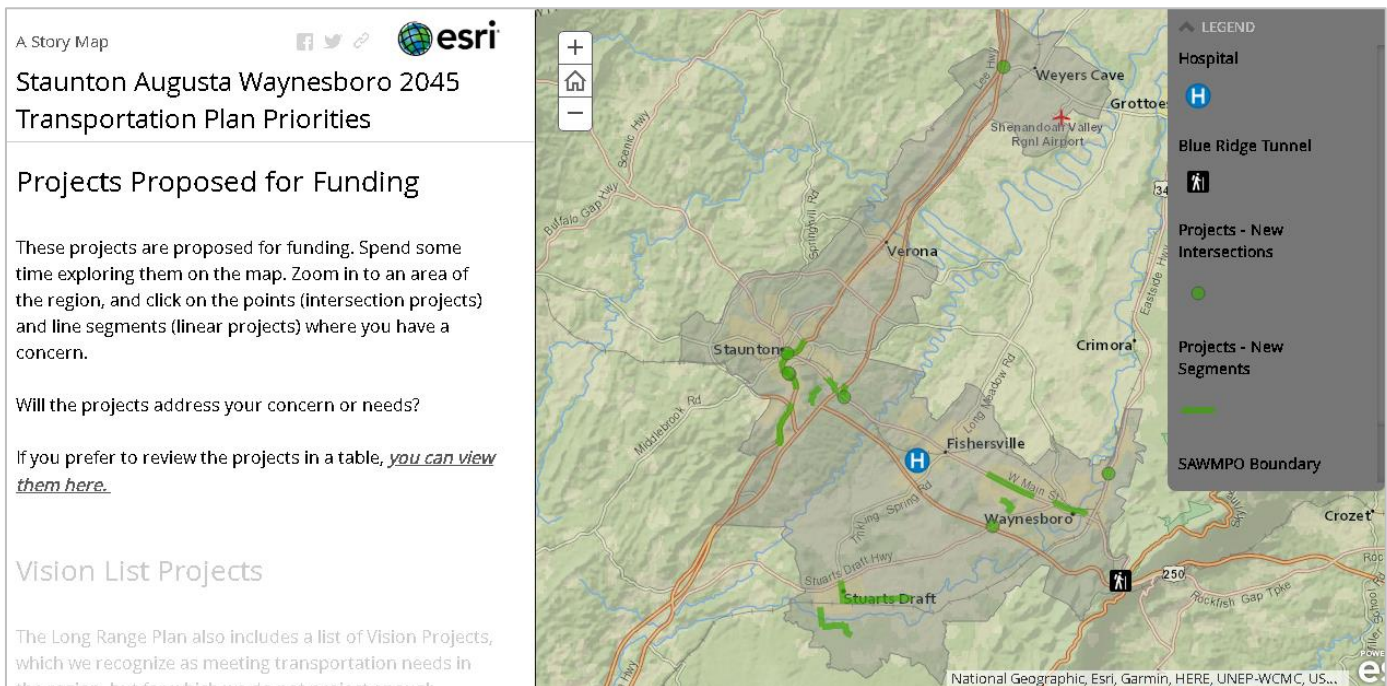
2 – 2 Phase Two: Input on Proposed LRTP Projects

The second LRTP public engagement phase focused on receiving input on the proposed CLRP and Vision List projects included in **Chapter 8** and **Appendix A**. Due to the limitations on safely holding in-person meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic, the second public engagement phase was exclusively online with an interactive website with project maps and a questionnaire. The website was available to the public from October 1 – 31, 2020, and advertised in local newspapers, the SAWMPO website, and social media accounts associated with MPO localities.

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The online map-based platform through ESRI and ArcGIS Online allowed users to review LRTP projects by location, description, and estimated cost. Respondents could share their thoughts on how well the projects meet their transportation needs, or if there are other challenges or concerns not addressed by the projects (see **Figure 4**), which outlines the projects proposed for funding). Additionally, the BRITE Transit expansions and improvements to routes, service hours, and amenities were included in the application for review.

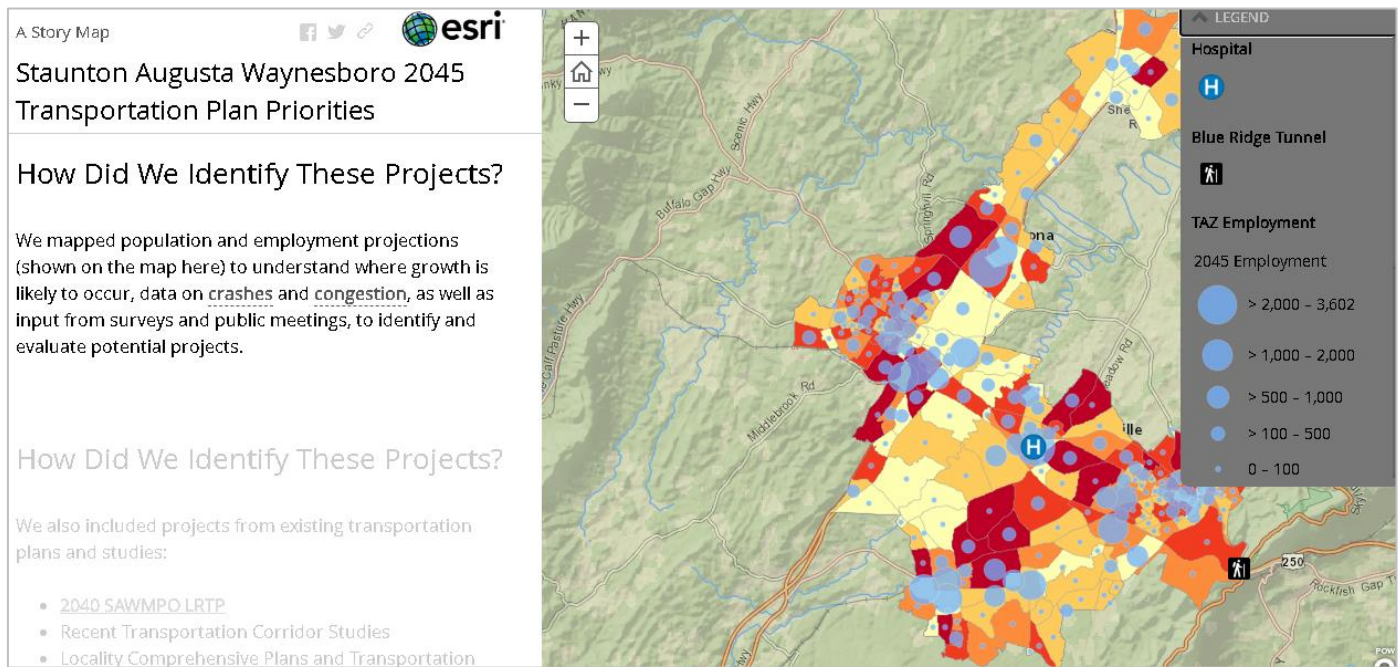
Figure 4: Proposed Projects Map from Online Public Engagement Application



The website also summarized the LRTP planning process, goals, and provided an outline on how projects were evaluated and identified. A map showing population and employment projections was included to allow users to understand where growth is likely to occur, data on crashes and congestion, as well as input from the fall 2019 surveys and public meetings.

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Figure 5: Population and Employment Map from Online Public Engagement Application

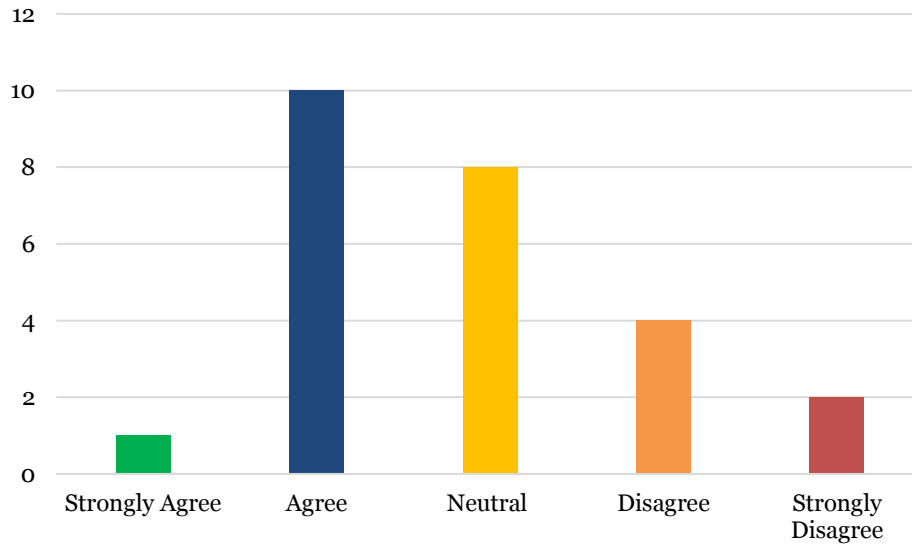


Phase Two Summary

A total of 25 respondents completed the ArcGIS Online questionnaire. The input was incorporated into the final draft of the report and reviewed by the Policy Board at the November 4, 2020 Board meeting. When asked if the proposed projects meet the region's future transportation needs, the majority of responses ranged from "Neutral" to "Agree" (see **Figure 6**). Comments, which are included in **Appendix D**, reiterated the needs identified from the first public engagement phase, which outlined needs for more multi-modal transportation options such as improved pedestrian and bicycle connections, greenways, shared use paths, and transit.

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Figure 6: Do the Proposed Projects Meet the Region's Transportation Needs?



2 – 3 Resource Agency Consultations

The outreach process included consulting with a list of state and federal resource management agencies provided by the FHWA on the selection of projects, which may affect the programs, lands, or policies over which they administer (see **Figure 6**).

Staff requested their comments related to the planning process, sections of the draft plan, the proposed projects, and also the potential impacts of the projects on other transportation modes and natural and cultural resources on September 23, 2020. The input, which was requested by November 25, 2020, is documented in **Appendix E**, and was reviewed at the November 4, 2020 Policy Board meeting.

Figure 7: Resource Agency Consultations

Federal	State	Regional/Local
Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)	Virginia Clean Cities (VCC)	Amtrak
Federal Transit Administration (FTA)	Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (VDNR)	Buckingham Branch Railroad
National Park Service (NPS)	Virginia Department of Emergency Management	CSX

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Federal	State	Regional/Local
United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)	Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (VDEQ)	Greater Augusta Regional Tourism
United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA)	Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOP)	Greater Augusta Regional Chamber of Commerce
United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF)	Norfolk Southern
United States Fish and Wildlife (USFWS)	Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR)	RideShare
United States Geological Survey (USGS)	Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC)	Shenandoah Valley Railroad

Appendix D includes the letter sent to each agency, and the responses to the request for comment on the project evaluation and selection processes.

2 – 4 Summary

Overall, public and stakeholder input from the two public engagement phases identified the need to address the region's existing road network through safety and congestion improvements, and further developing a multi-faceted network that accommodates non-motorized travel needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users.