

**Policy Board
Regular Meeting Minutes
March 6, 2024, 10:00 a.m.**

Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission*
112 MacTanly Place, Staunton, Virginia

Voting Members		Non-Voting Members		Others	
	City of Staunton	✓	Shane McCabe (Alt)		Staff (CSPDC)
✓	Brad Arrowood, Vice Chair	✓	Cody Huffman (Alt)		Bonnie Riedesel
	Amanda Kaufman		VA DRPT	✓	Ann Cundy
✓	John Blair (Alt)	✓*	Grace Stankus	✓	Zach Beard
	Augusta County		VRT	✓	Devon Thompson
✓	Tim Fitzgerald	✓*	Steve Wilson	✓	Paula Melester
✓	Carolyn Bragg (Chair)		Phil Thompson (Alt)	✓	Allyson Finchum
	Jennifer Whetzel (Alt)		Kevin Jones		Others
	Pam Carter (Alt)		FTA		
	City of Waynesboro		Chelsea Beytas		
✓	Jim Wood		VA DOA		
✓	Todd Wood		Rusty Harrington		
	Michael Hamp (Alt)		CTB		
	VDOT		Mark Merrill		
	Todd Stevens				
✓*	Brad Reed (Alt)				
	Don Komara (Alt)				
	Matt Dana (Alt)				
✓* Indicates Zoom Participants					

Call to Order

The SAWMPO Policy Board meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Carolyn Bragg, Chair. Pursuant to §2.2-3708.2 of the Code of Virginia, SAWMPO Policy Board members may participate in meetings of the SAWMPO or its committees through electronic communication means. Those who attended virtually were indicated by an asterisk; all others attended in-person.

Public Comment

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

Approval of Minutes

Chair Bragg presented the minutes from the January 3, 2024, Policy Board meeting. Mr. Todd Wood moved, seconded by Mr. Tim Fitzgerald, to approve the minutes as presented. The motion was carried by unanimous vote.

SMART SCALE Round 6 Pre-Applications (Board Action Form #24-01)

Mr. Zach Beard provided an update on SMART SCALE Round 6 pre-applications. Mr. Beard explained that the pre-application cycle is open March 1 through April 1, 2024. SAWMPO staff is working with Augusta County and VDOT to submit two SMART SCALE Round 6 pre-applications by the April 1, 2024 deadline. The two possible pre-applications are:

- The *WWRC Long-term Access Improvements*, which are constructing a new alignment to connect US 250 to WWRC; we have submitted a SS application every year of SS since 2018 or 2019 and it continues to be overlooked due to the high cost; the County noted that the project could have additional funding based on a state budget amendment this time around, which could make the application more viable than in the past
- *I-64 and US 250 Exit 99 Improvements*, which includes a signalized continuous green T intersection. The pre-application may not be submitted because the project was also submitted as an HSIP application. If the project is funded through HSIP, the application will not be submitted through SMART SCALE.

Ms. Ann Cundy noted that the changes to eligibility means that there are fewer types of projects that the MPO can submit. However, locality-submitted projects would be submitted under the District Grant program.

Chair Bragg called for a motion to approve the submission of the two pre-applications. Mr. Fitzgerald moved to approve, and the motion was seconded by Mr. Jim Wood. The motion was carried by unanimous vote.

Potential Transportation Safety Initiatives (Board Memo #24-03)

Ann Cundy provided an overview of potential transportation safety initiatives that the SAWMPO could conduct in 2024. Ms. Cundy said that SAWMPO staff presented an overview of the MPO's annual transportation safety targets at the January 2024 Policy Board meeting and highlighted that fatal injury crashes continue to increase in the region. In response, the Policy Board discussed how the MPO should

address the increase fatalities through future plans and projects that address not only physical infrastructure improvements, but also the behavioral aspects of transportation safety.

The Board requested that MPO staff provide a summary of how the MPO can pursue objectives that support the adopted annual safety targets, either through studies, grants, or otherwise. Mr. Cundy said that the 2050 LRTP update and federal Safe Streets for All (SS4A) program are both opportunities for the MPO to further address safety concerns. Ms. Cundy said that the LRTP update process is an opportunity for the MPO to articulate safety priorities and concerns in the narrative, through project scoring evaluation criteria that emphasizes safety, and working on the recommendations from recent MPO studies such as the SAWMPO Highway Safety Study, and the Exit 235 Study.

SAWMPO Highway Safety Plan and SS4A

Ms. Cundy explained that the most prominent federal transportation safety grant funding program available for MPOs is the US DOT Safe Streets for All (SS4A) Program. Ms. Cundy said that due to staff constraints, it is not feasible to conduct a SS4A study during the same timeframe of conducting the 2050 LRTP. The MPO could support localities applications for the program; however, the grant is an 80-20 match, which means localities would be responsible for a sizable share of funding the SS4A plan.

Community Event

Ms. Cundy provided an overview of an upcoming walking and biking safety awareness event in Waynesboro for both the general public and local government. Several community organizations are co-sponsoring the event, which is tentatively scheduled for June 2024 at the Wayne Theater. The event includes screening a film which summarizes the current increase in bicycle and pedestrian fatalities. The organizations approached the MPO for co-sponsorship, but federal regulation prohibits the MPO from co-sponsoring events. Staff will notify the Board with the event details.

Draft FY25 UPWP and 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan Draft Scope of Work (Board Memo #24-04)

UPWP

Mr. Beard summarized a memo on the FY25 UPWP and the MPO's 2050 LRTP update process, which was shared with the TAC at the February Committee meeting. Mr. Beard explained that every year in the spring the MPO develops the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), which is the MPO's annual work plan and budget, and shared the revenue being received from VDOT and DRPT for the upcoming fiscal year. The focus of work in FY25 will be on the 2050 LRTP update process.

LRTP Timeline Overview

The last LRTP was approved in December 2020. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) requires that MPOs update long range plans every five years, and we must update our new LRTP by December 2025. LRTPs must identify regional needs, specific transportation projects, and include a financial plan that indicates how the improvements will be funded over the five-year period.

Mr. Beard said that the update process for SAWMPO will benefit from the lessons learned from past LRTP efforts with the SAWMPO and Harrisonburg-Rockingham MPO (HRMPO), and will incorporate some of the approaches that worked best for the HRMPO. Mr. Beard described the tentative timeline of the update process, and divided each of the 9 main tasks into three different phases.

Phase I

Mr. Beard explained that the Scope of Work has 9 different tasks that will take place between May 2024 and December 2025. The TAC will serve as the LRTP Working Group. Tasks 1 through 4 include MPO Coordination, the first phase of public engagement, existing conditions summary, and 2050 projections.

Phase II

Task 5 – Needs, and Task 6 – Goals will take place during fall and winter of 2024 and 2025.

Phase III

Tasks 7 through 9 will begin in spring 2025 with project identification and evaluation based on whether projects 1) meet a VTrans need, 2) align with the 2050 LRTP Goals, and 3) address identified needs. Projects not meeting the screening criteria will be included in a Projects for Future Study list or a project Vision List.

New Planning Process

Mr. Beard noted that due staff is recommending conducting the public engagement and project scoring in coordination with consultants, which should streamline some of the more time-consuming tasks. As a result, staff will have more time to conduct the following:

- A more robust public engagement effort in coordination with a consultant, using the HRMPO public engagement process as a blue print to understand the needs of every segment of the population that may be overlooked
- Examining specific areas in the MPO where transportation directly overlaps and impacts land use and accessibility issues that have the most acute needs, for instance whether issues like housing, workforce recruit and retention, and long-term demographic changes like an aging population overlap with transportation needs.

Mr. Don Komara expressed support for conducting the plan in-house. He noted that one key aspect of transportation planning that is overlooked is accounting for new suburban development and the impact on secondary rural roads. Projects addressing secondary road safety and congestion issues do not score well in SMART SCALE, and as a result this is an issue that could be examined in the LRTP update, and documenting and capturing local input and knowledge of secondary road issues.

Agency Updates

Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT)

Mr. Shane McCabe shared that the SMART SCALE Round 6 application window is now open. Mr. Komara provided the following updates:

- Staunton Crossings is on schedule and will conclude this spring.
- The Southern Connector is underway with completion date of September 2025.
- Route 262 project – southern portion will be complete this spring.
- I-81 widening project has begun; local firms are being utilized.
- Route 635 Barterbrook Road bridge project for bridge replacement is ahead of schedule.
- Weyers Cave turn lane project is complete.
- The Verona sidewalk project improvement is progressing.

DRPT

Ms. Grace Stankus provided the following updates:

- The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) is proposing a new rail route from New York City to Houston which goes through the MPO area, and comment is available through March 8, 2024.
- The FTA has announced NOFOs for the Low-No and Buses and Bus Facilities for application due on April 25, 2024.

BRITE Transit

Ms. Devon Thompson gave the following BRITE Transit updates:

- Implementation for BRITE's mobile data collection system (MDCS) is progressing. All mobile data terminals have been installed on the buses, and on-site training has been conducted with Passio. A hard launch went into effect March 1.
- The CSPDC advertised the Invitation to Bid for construction at the Lewis Street Hub in late January and hosted a pre-bid conference in early February. Bids are due March 6. The CSPDC has been working with the City of Staunton on the location of 20 temporary parking spaces while construction in the



area takes place on North Augusta Street, and the City will notify the public and passengers of the temporary change.

Afton Express

Ms. Paula Melester gave the following Afton Express update:

- Staff released the Afton Express annual report, which notes that ridership continues to exceed expectations, with ridership increasing 59% from year one to year two. The Waynesboro stop and the UVa hospital stop are the two most popular spots. Trip 2 in the morning and afternoon is the most preferred trip by riders, and there were a few days where occupancy was nearly at capacity. Staff is evaluating how to add different trip times to address capacity. Ms. Melester noted how the impact of the service, such as reduction in emissions and gas usage, can be assessed through RideShare user data.

Localities

City of Waynesboro

- Mr. Jim Wood described a new initiative by a local Rotary Club in coordination with the Shenandoah Valley Office of Youth to conduct a traffic garden educational installation to instruct children on roadway safety.

City of Staunton

- Mr. John Blair said that the Staunton Crossing Project is the most significant on-going project.

Augusta County

Mr. Tim Fitzgerald gave the following update:

- The Comprehensive Plan update is ongoing. The Board appointed a Steering Committee and will work with Focus Groups.
- The WWRC SMART SCALE application is utilizing extra funding associated with a Crisis Intervention Unit being constructed adjacent to the WWRC complex. As a result, funding for at least partial construction of the new roadway alignment should be secured through the Commonwealth's new project.

Other Business

There was no other business.



Upcoming Meetings

Ms. Bragg announced that the next TAC meeting is scheduled for March 20, 2024, at 2:00 p.m., and the next Policy Board meeting is scheduled for April 3, 2024, at 10:00 a.m.

Meeting Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Policy Board, Chair Bragg asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was made by Mr. Jim Wood and seconded by Mr. Tim Fitzgerald. The meeting was adjourned at 11:04 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Ann W. Cundy".

Ann W. Cundy
Director of Transportation