

**Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)
Regular Meeting Minutes
February 21, 2024, 2:00 p.m.
Via Zoom Video Conferencing**

Present (17)

Voting Members				Others	
City of Staunton		VDOT		Staff (CSPDC)	
✓	Rodney Rhodes	✓	Don Komara	✓	Ann Cundy
✓	Tim Hartless (Alt)	✓	Brad Reed (Alt)	✓	Zach Beard
	Lyle Hartt (Alt)		Cody Huffman (Alt)	✓	Devon Thompson
			Shane McCabe (Alt)	✓	Paula Melester
		VA DRPT			Ansley Heller
	Augusta County	✓	Grace Stankus	✓	Allyson Finchum
✓	Doug Wolfe				
	Alidia Vane	Non-Voting Members		Other attendees	
	Elizabeth Goodloe (Alt)				
✓	Julia Hensley (Alt)	VRT		✓	Sam Styers
	City of Waynesboro		Steve Wilson		Avery Daugherty
	Leslie Tate, Chairperson	✓	Phil Thompson (Alt)		
✓	Alisande Tombarge	Federal Highway Admin.			
✓	Scott Kesecker (Alt)		Kevin Jones		
✓	Chad Rambo (Alt)	Federal Transit Admin.			
			Michele DeAngelis		
		VA Dept. of Aviation			
			Rusty Harrington		

Call to Order

The meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) of the Staunton-Augusta-Waynesboro Metropolitan Planning Organization (SAWMPO) was called to order at 2:01 p.m. by Mr. Rodney Rhodes, voting TAC member from the City of Staunton. Based on the 2022 amendment to Virginia’s FOIA law, the SAWMPO is

eligible to hold up to three meetings virtually each year. The SAWMPO TAC meeting for February 21, 2024 was conducted via video conferencing using Zoom.

Public Comment

Mr. Rhodes opened the floor for public comment. There were no comments from the public.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Rhodes presented minutes from the January 17, 2024, TAC Meeting. Mr. Doug Wolfe moved, seconded by Mr. Brad Reed, to approve the minutes of January 17, 2024 as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

SMART SCALE Round 6 Pre-Applications (TAC 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. Mr. Beard said that the SAWMPO staff is working with Augusta County and VDOT to submit up to three SMART SCALE Round 6 pre-applications by the April 1, 2024 deadline. According to Mr. Beard, the three tentative 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.
- The *I-81 exit 235 Bridge Widening* would construct an extra turn lane on the bridge, and is a project that was derived from the MPO's Exit 235 Study in 2022.

Doug Wolfe clarified that the County will be submitting the Exit 235 application, and the application will not be submitted by the MPO. Mr. Beard closed by stating that the MPO can submit up to five pre-applications, and four applications in the full application cycle, which is open from June 1 through August 3, 2024.

Potential Transportation Safety Initiatives (TAC Memo #24-02)

Mr. Beard provided an overview of potential transportation safety initiatives that the SAWMPO could conduct in 2024. Mr. Beard 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. Beard 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. SS4A provides an 80% match for both transportation planning and projects, and requires applicants to establish a Safety Action Plan that has nine different requirements before being eligible for project implementation funding.

SAWMPO Highway Safety Plan and SS4A

Mr. Beard explained that the SAMWPO's Highway Safety Plan finished in February 2023 meets several of the criteria included in the SS4A Safety Action Plan requirements. During the development of the Highway Safety Plan, the SAWMPO considered expanding the scope of the study to meet SS4A requirements. However, the MPO determined that meeting all of the SS4A requirements would not be met within the study timeline and require additional supplemental funding. Additionally, any planning or project implementation projects would require a 20% project match in additional funding from localities.

Mr. Beard recommended that the MPO utilize the LRTP update process to identify new projects or initiatives to address safety, and to revisit the SS4A grant after the LRTP is complete to gauge interest, support, and whether as a region it makes sense to move forward on developing a more robust safety plan outside of the existing plans and what will be contained in the LRTP.

Discussion

Mr. Sam Styers pointed out that the MPO would likely not be able to apply for the SS4A grant at the end of the 2050 LRTP update process due to the SS4A grant funding timeline ending before then. Mr. Beard responded that the information will be presented to the Policy Board during the March meeting, and the Board will have the option to consider whether applying for SS4A before the 2050 LRPT is complete is worthwhile.

Draft FY25 UPWP and 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan Draft Scope of Work (TAC Memo #24-03)

UPWP

Mr. Beard summarized a memo on the FY25 UPWP and the MPO's 2050 LRTP update process. 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 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

Mr. Beard noted that the focus on the MPO's work in FY 25 will be on updating the LRTP. 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 and project evaluation criteria used to screen projects, taking place during fall and winter of 2024 and 2025.

Phase III

Tasks 7 through 9 will become the focus in spring and summer 2025 with project identification and evaluation, and base evaluation of projects on whether they 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 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.

Agency Updates

VDOT

Mr. Don Komara provided the following update:

- The sidewalk on Route 11 and Route 612 continues
- Staunton Crossing making good progress
- I-81 work in the Staunton area continues
- Barterbrook Road the bridge has been removed
- The Richmond Avenue Crossing Shared Use Path information project meeting will be at the American Frontier Culture Museum meeting from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m.

Mr. Brad Reed added that the SMART SCALE Round 6 application cycle is now open, and VDOT can assist localities with applications.

DRPT

Ms. Grace Stankus provided the following update:

- DRPT Connects business marketing campaign continues to assist businesses with connecting their workforce to transit and commuter benefits, and increase general awareness of the DRPT Commuter Assistance Program.
- 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.

Transit

Ms. Devon Thompson gave the following BRITE Transit updates:

- Implementation for BRITE's mobile data collection system (MDCS) continues to progress, and all mobile data terminals have been installed on the buses, and on-site training has been conducted with Passio. Once drivers are trained on the tablets, the launch will move forward.
- 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, 2024. 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 notify the public and passengers of the temporary change.
- BRITE and Afton Express celebrated Transit Equity Day on February 5, 2024 with free rides to honor Rosa Parks' birthday.

Afton Express

Ms. Paula Melester gave the following Afton Express update:

- The Afton Mountain Annual Report was released, and ridership continues to exceed expectations, with ridership increasing 59% from year one to year two. Utilization is growing and more riders are taking more trips for non-commuter reasons, and traveling to 5th Street Station and the downtown Charlottesville Amtrack.

Locality Updates

Augusta

- Mr. Doug Wolfe stated the Verona Pedestrian Project is progressing along Route 612, US 11 portion will soon start.
- Ms. Julia Hensley noted that the County's Comprehensive Plan process continues, and there will be transportation-specific focus groups in Spring 2024.

Staunton

- Mr. Rhodes noted that the West Beverley Street Improvements went out to bid on January 31, 2024 and conducted the mandatory pre-bid meeting on February 15, 2024.

Waynesboro

- Mr. Scott Kesecker said that the City is in the design phase of the West Main Street Streetscape SMART SCALE project, and is moving forward with the Broad Street Streetscape project.
- The Delphine Roundabout Smart SCALE project continues.



- Rosser and 13 Street is in the design phase.
- Greenway Phase III is going to ROW, and Greenway Phase IV is upcoming.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Upcoming Meetings

Mr. Rhodes stated that the Policy Board is scheduled to meet on March 6th and the TAC on March 20th.

Meeting Adjourned

The meeting was adjourned at 3:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Zach Beard".

Zach Beard, Senior Planner