

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Regular Meeting Minutes August 21, 2024, 2:00 p.m.

Meeting Held Virtually at Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission Office

Voting Members				Others	
City of Staunton		VDOT		Staff (CSPDC)	
✓	Rodney Rhodes (Chair)	✓	Don Komara	✓	Zach Beard
✓	Tim Hartless (Alt)	✓	Brad Reed (Alt)	✓	Garreth Bartholomew
	Lyle Hartt (Alt)		Shane McCabe (Alt)		Devon Thompson
		VA DRPT			Ann Cundy
	Augusta County	✓*	Grace Stankus		Paula Melester
✓	Doug Wolfe (Vice Chair)				
✓	Julia Hensley (Alt)	Non-Voting Members		Other attendees	
		VRT			
	City of Waynesboro	✓*	Steve Wilson		
	Leslie Tate	✓*	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		

*Virtual attendance

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 2:00 p.m. by Mr. Rodney Rhodes, Chairperson.

Public Comment

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

Approval of Minutes

Chairperson Rhodes presented the minutes from the July 17, 2024 TAC Meeting. Mr. Zach Beard noted one correction: for the City of Staunton's attendance, Tim Hartless should be replaced with Lyle Hartt.

Mr. Doug Wolfe moved to approve the minutes; seconded by Ms. Alisande Tombarge. The TAC approved the motion by unanimous vote.

Presentation and Discussion on the 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) Update

LRTP process overview and existing conditions update

Mr. Garreth Bartholomew and Mr. Zach Beard presented an update on the 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) process. They reported that the public engagement phase is well underway, with a visioning survey released on August 12, 2024, garnering over 100 responses in its first week. Two community consultation sessions were held at the BRITE Transit office, and staff are actively promoting the survey through presentations to local governments and attendance at community events. The survey will close on September 30, 2024.

The presenters shared key findings from the existing conditions analysis, noting approximately 1% population growth across the region since 2017, with slight variations among Augusta County, Staunton, and Waynesboro. They highlighted new census tracts and block groups in areas around Fishersville, Weyers Cave, and Mount Sidney, reflecting the area's growth.

Demographic changes since the 2045 Plan

Demographic and socioeconomic data were presented, including a regional poverty rate of 10.5%, comparable to the state average. The presenters noted increases in the elderly population, individuals with disabilities, and those with limited English proficiency. Mr. Scott Kesecker inquired about the methodology for identifying and engaging underserved populations in the planning process. Mr. Bartholomew responded that they are fostering relationships with community organizations to better reach these groups, acknowledging the challenges in engaging traditionally underrepresented populations.

Infrastructure and safety changes

Infrastructure updates included information on bridges classified as "poor" by VDOT and bike and pedestrian infrastructure data through 2021. Mr. Brad Reed asked if the presentation would include potential safety improvement (PSI) intersection data, to which Mr. Beard confirmed it would be included in the needs assessment section of the plan.

The safety portion of the presentation sparked considerable discussion, particularly regarding the increase in fatal crashes since 2020. Ms. Julia Hensley asked about the reasons for the significant jump in fatalities in 2021. Mr. Reed suggested that increased speeding during the COVID-19 pandemic may have been a contributing factor statewide, while Mr. Don Komara noted a concerning uptick in motorcycle accidents in recent years.

Public engagement Phase I overview

Mr. Garreth Bartholomew presented an update on the 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) public engagement phase I process. Mr. Bartholomew said that MPO staff are working with the consultant Avid Core to ensure inclusive and public engagement. He noted that a visioning survey will be distributed starting August 12, allowing participants to map problem areas, indicate transportation needs and uses, and prioritize top needs.

Two community consultation sessions were conducted on August 12 and 15 at the BRITE Transit office, involving various community representatives to understand how to best engage their networks and cultivate relationships with organizations and population subsets that are typically overlooked in the transportation planning process.

Mr. Bartholomew also explained that MPO staff will be presenting an update on the LRTP at localities in August, and also will be attending events throughout the region to promote the LRTP survey, plan process, and increase general awareness of the MPO as an organization, to include farmers markets and downtown businesses. Staff is also assisting Avid Core with developing a toolkit and community outreach materials for Policy Board and TAC members to share with their networks.

The presentation concluded with a discussion on public engagement strategies. Ms. Hensley offered to help promote the survey through Augusta County's social media channels and suggested utilizing existing community groups and libraries to reach a broader audience. Mr. Kesecker emphasized the importance of engaging populations that may not typically participate in online surveys, such as those without internet access or limited English proficiency. The committee agreed on the need for diverse outreach methods to ensure comprehensive community input in the LRTP process.

At the next TAC meeting, staff will present the existing conditions chapter of the LRTP, detailing changes since the 2045 LRTP in socioeconomic and demographic conditions, as well as transportation-related changes over the past five years.

Agency Updates

VDOT

Mr. Brad Reed provided the following updates:

- SMART SCALE Round 6: 27 applications submitted in Staunton district, totaling approximately \$300 million. Funding decisions expected later this year.

Mr. Don Komara provided the following updates:

- I-81 widening project (Exits 221-225): Progressing well, with significant earthwork underway.
- Barterbrook Road bridge project: Ahead of schedule, girders to be set soon.
- 35 pole-mounted lights at Exit 99 I-64/Route 250 interchange on Afton Mountain.
- Additional I-81 projects: Upcoming work between mile markers 232-238, with construction expected to start in spring 2025.
- Potential implementation of speed cameras in construction zones discussed.

DRPT

Ms. Grace Stankus reported no updates for DRPT.

Transit (BRITE) and Afton Express

Mr. Zach Beard provided the following updates on behalf of Devon Thompson:

- CSPDC awarded technical assistance grant from DRPT for microtransit feasibility study.
- Lewis Street Hub construction nearing completion, with ribbon-cutting on August 29.
- Afton Express plans to relocate Staunton Mall stop to Staunton Crossing Park and Ride Lot by September 3.

Locality Updates

Augusta County

Ms. Hensley reported:

- Applied for Congressionally Directed Spending for Exit 213 in Greenville for \$150,000.
- Comprehensive Plan update continues, including revisions to the transportation section.

Staunton

Chairperson Rhodes reported:

- Staunton Crossing Way extension officially opened.
- No new updates on previously mentioned transportation projects.

Waynesboro

Mr. Kesecker reported:

- Exit 94 ramp widening project moving forward.
- ADA ramp improvements completed at 11 intersections.
- Transitioning speed complaint handling from Public Works to Police Department, utilizing new radar speed display signs.

Other Business

Mr. Bartholomew announced that applications are open for the 2025 Virginia Walkability Action Institute (VWAI) cohort, a program promoting walkable and multimodal communities in Virginia.

Meeting Adjourned

Chairperson Rhodes adjourned the meeting at 3:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Zach Beard, Program Manager