

Staunton-Augusta-Waynesboro Metropolitan Planning Organization Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Regular Meeting Minutes January 7, 2026, 2:00 p.m.

Meeting held at Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission Office at 112 MacTanly Place,
Staunton, VA 24401 and virtually via Teams

Voting Members				Others	
City of Staunton		VDOT		Staff (CSPDC)	
✓	Rodney Rhodes (Chair)	✓	Don Komara	✓	Zach Beard
	Meggie Taylor (Alt)	✓	Brad Reed (Alt)	✓	Garreth Bartholomew
	Lyle Hartt (Alt)	✓	Shane McCabe (Alt)	✓	Devon Thompson
✓	Susan Wilson	✓	Cody Huffman (Alt)	✓	Paula Melester
		VA DRPT			
Augusta County		✓*	Grace Stankus		
✓	Doug Wolfe (Vice Chair)				
✓	Julia Hensley	Non-Voting Members			
	Garret Shultz (Alt)			Other attendees	
		VRT			
City of Waynesboro			Steve Wilson		
✓	Leslie Tate	✓*	Phil Thompson (Alt)		
✓	Alisande Tombarge	Federal Highway Admin.			
	Scott Kesecker (Alt)		Kevin Jones		
✓*	Jeff Oswald (Alt)	Federal Transit Admin.			
			Lora Grady		
		VA Dept. of Aviation			
			Rusty Harrington		

*Virtual attendance

Call to Order

Chair Rodney Rhodes called the meeting of the Staunton-Augusta-Waynesboro Metropolitan Planning Organization (SAWMPO) Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to order at 2:00 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

Chair Rhodes presented the minutes from the November 5, 2025, TAC Meeting for approval.

Ms. Leslie Tate moved to approve the minutes; seconded by Ms. Julia Hensley. The TAC approved the motion by unanimous vote.

Public Comment

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

Public Participation Plan (PPP) Release for Public Comment (TAC AF #26-01)

Mr. Zach Beard presented proposed updates to the SAWMPO Public Participation Plan (PPP) for TAC consideration. Mr. Beard explained that as part of the ongoing internal review process, staff reviewed the PPP and determined the existing 2019 document contained confusing technical jargon, unnecessarily restrictive public notice timeframes, and unrealistic response requirements for public information requests. Staff conducted a comprehensive update to streamline procedures and align with peer MPOs across Virginia.

Mr. Beard presented a summary table of seven categories of content-related changes. The most significant changes involve public comment periods, which were reduced from 21 days to 14 days for most document approvals and amendments to align with similarly-sized MPOs. Mr. Beard noted these represent minimum timeframes and staff can extend comment periods as needed. The PPP approval and amendment comment period remains at 45 days as required by federal regulation. Additional changes include reducing accessibility service request timeframes from seven working days to three business days, removing specific staff response time requirements for general public inquiries that no other Virginia MPO documents, and eliminating newspaper publication requirements for most processes except the annual meeting schedule and study-related public meetings.

Discussion ensued regarding public engagement challenges. Mr. Don Komara addressed public engagement challenges, noting that meaningful feedback often arrives late in the project development process and tends to originate from organized interest groups rather than individual residents. Ms. Paula Melester noted that as part of the LRTP process, staff worked with a consultant to develop a public engagement strategy guide tailored to the region with specific strategies for rural areas. Staff plans to condense this guide into a resource to share with TAC members by the end of the fiscal year. Mr. Brad Reed commented that regarding TIP amendments, shortening the public comment period would help expedite the process of getting amendments to state and federal agencies

Mr. Beard noted that pending TAC recommendation, staff will present the draft PPP to the Policy Board at the January 21, 2026, meeting and request release for a 45-day public comment period, with final adoption anticipated at the March Policy Board meeting.

Ms. Leslie Tate moved to recommend that the Policy Board release the Public Participation Plan for a 45-day public comment period; seconded by Ms. Julia Hensley. The motion carried unanimously.

SAWMPO Virtual Meeting Policy Approval (TAC AF #26-02)

Mr. Garreth Bartholomew presented the Virtual Meeting and Virtual Participation Policy for annual readoption as required by the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Mr. Bartholomew explained that the July 2024 FOIA amendments established that public bodies may hold a maximum of two all-virtual meetings per calendar year or 50 percent of total meetings, whichever is fewer. The

amendments also clarified quorum requirements and created an exception for members with disabilities or caregiving responsibilities to participate remotely and count toward a physical quorum.

Mr. Bartholomew noted the SAWMPO policy allows the Policy Board and TAC to hold up to two all-virtual meetings each on an as-needed basis, providing flexibility for inclement weather or other circumstances. Staff would notify the TAC or Board Chair to make virtual meeting decisions and post public notice on the MPO website at least seven days in advance.

Ms. Julia Hensley moved to recommend that the Policy Board approve the Virtual Meeting and Virtual Participation Policy for 2026; seconded by Mr. Don Komara. The motion carried unanimously.

2026 Presentation Prioritization Poll and Discussion

Mr. Bartholomew facilitated a discussion on potential presentation topics for 2026 TAC meetings. Mr. Bartholomew explained that as part of the internal review process, staff identified opportunities to make meetings more engaging by providing professional development and information on topics of interest to the group. Staff compiled eight potential presentation topics and used Mentimeter polling software to allow members to rank their preferences.

Based on the poll results, the TAC ranked the topics as follows: (1) Economic Development & Transportation, (2) Emergency Management & Traffic Operations, (3) Federal Policy & Reauthorization, (4) Innovative Intersection Designs, (5) DRPT Programs & Services Update, (6) Truck Parking in the Valley, (7) Updating Google Maps & Waze, and (8) MPO On-Call Consultant Program.

Mr. Bartholomew clarified that staff would identify subject matter experts to present on these topics rather than presenting all information themselves.

Ms. Susan Wilson recommended showcasing local projects and facilitating peer exchange among member localities to share best practices and lessons learned. Ms. Wilson also suggested coordination between SAWMPO and HRMPO given the shared I-81 corridor issues. Mr. Komara noted the MPO previously held joint meetings with the Charlottesville-Albemarle MPO regarding I-64 corridor projects and suggested similar collaboration with HRMPO may be appropriate given the current level of I-81 construction activity.

Mr. Reed suggested incorporating policy and legislative updates into meeting agendas, noting that VDOT's Government and Legislative Affairs group maintains a running list of law and policy changes.

Agency Updates

VDOT

Mr. Reed provided the following updates:

- Staff continues work on the Rosser Avenue Project Pipeline study and will meet later in January to select a preferred alternative for Phase 3.
- VDOT is initiating outreach regarding SMART Scale applications for the upcoming funding cycle and invites localities with potential projects to contact staff.

- At yesterday's Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) meeting, a scenario for the I-81 Corridor Improvement Plan (CIP) was approved that differed from the staff-recommended scenario. Details on specific project changes were not published in the agenda, but one or more Augusta County/Rockbridge County projects were affected, and the Exit 310-313 project in Frederick County was added. Mr. Reed noted this was a surprise change from the scenario the I-81 Advisory Committee had voted to support.

Mr. Komara provided the following updates:

- The I-81 widening project through Staunton (mile markers 221-225) is approximately 60% complete. Kokosing continues to make excellent progress.
- The Weyers Cave project with Branch Civil is approximately 35% complete and progressing well.
- Speed enforcement cameras on I-81 through the Staunton work zone remain anticipated for implementation this fiscal year, though the timeline remains uncertain.
- The CTB awarded the Harrisonburg I-81 widening project (mile markers 242-248, six miles) to Triton Construction at \$218 million, with the next lowest bid at \$228 million. This is a six-year design-bid-build contract including bridges at the Route 33 interchange. Triton previously completed the Route 33 project at \$43 million, \$13 million below the next bidder, on time and on budget.
- The Mill Place project contractor continues incremental work through the winter.
- Surface treatment contracts were released early, and S L Williamson completed work this fall.
- The Route 254 intersection widening project at New Hope Road has begun, with the contractor starting surveying and signage installation.
- Snow removal operations continue, with salt prices continuing to increase significantly.
- Weatherman-Collins, a local contractor, is being acquired, though they are expected to continue operations and have been a reliable partner for VDOT and municipalities.

DRPT

Ms. Grace Stankus provided the following update:

- FY27 rail and transit grant applications are due February 1, 2026.

BRITE and Afton Express

Ms. Devon Thompson provided the following updates:

- BRITE staff is working on FY27 grant applications for rural and urban capital, cost of contracting, operating assistance, commuter assistance program (CAP) projects for BRITE marketing, CAP operating for the rideshare program, and MERIT capital grants for transit facility equipment and bus shelter access projects.
- The procurement process continues for a new turnkey contract for BRITE Bus management, operations, and maintenance. The current contract with Virginia Regional Transit expires June 30, 2026.

- BRITE is hosting a State of Transit event on January 14, 2026, from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. at Augusta Health.
- The revised Afton Express schedule was implemented December 1, 2025. The new schedule aligns with known work schedules and passenger needs and adds a fifth morning trip. Initial feedback indicates the schedule is working well.

Locality Updates

Augusta County

Mr. Wolfe and Ms. Hensley provided the following updates:

- The new courthouse is nearing completion, requiring an additional incoming lane to the Government Center. This project will go to advertisement in February with construction anticipated to begin in April 2026.
- Staff is developing a timeline and scope of work for the Greenville Small Area Plan. The County will rely on the MPO for transportation and land use components. The departure of a planner has reduced staff capacity, and the timeline for the study remains to be determined as the Planning Department assesses workload.

City of Staunton

Ms. Wilson provided the following updates:

- A public hearing for the Commerce Road Greenway project is scheduled for February 25, 2026, at City Hall Council Chambers. The project will convert two existing travel lanes on Commerce Road between Statler Boulevard and Richmond Avenue to a 10-foot-wide shared-use path.
- On January 8, staff will present to City Council Work Session on Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) funded signal upgrade projects at downtown intersections, building on the STARS study VDOT completed in 2022. The presentation will discuss proposed curb extensions that would narrow Beverly Street to one lane at intersections to meet ADA requirements.
- The City's long-term goal is for Beverly Street to become a single travel lane with wider sidewalks. Staff submitted a last-minute application to the Virginia Walkability Action Institute (VWAI) for a demonstration project on Beverly Street, requesting approximately \$6,000 of the program's \$30,000 total funding.

City of Waynesboro

Ms. Tate provided the following updates:

- Work continues on the comprehensive plan update, with two large open house community events completed to date.
- The City applied for Revenue Sharing funds to address a funding shortfall on the East Main Street streetscape project.
- The Waynesboro Transit Access Project (improved bus shelters at five locations with sidewalk segments and ADA compliance) was a staff-recommended SMART Scale

application but was not funded. The City previously submitted a Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) application and plans to apply to DRPT for this project.

Other Business

Mr. Zach Beard provided an update on the MPO boundary extension. The Policy Board previously approved extending the MPO boundary to include the Greenville area, and staff recently received official notice that the Secretary of Transportation signed and approved the boundary change. As a result, staff will need to amend the recently adopted Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) to incorporate the new area. Mr. Bartholomew is developing a scope for a baseline-level amendment that provides an overview of the Greenville area without excessive detail. Staff anticipates completing the amendment within two months.

Upcoming Meetings

Chair Rhodes announced the following upcoming meetings:

- January 21, 2026 – SAWMPO Policy Board Meeting, 10:00 a.m., CSPDC
- February 4, 2026 – SAWMPO TAC Meeting, 2:00 p.m., held virtually via Teams

Meeting Adjourned

Chair Rhodes adjourned the meeting at 2:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Zach Beard, Program Manager