



**Minutes**  
**Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission Meeting**  
**112 MacTanly Place**  
**Staunton, VA 24401**  
**April 21, 2025, 6:00 p.m.**

**Attendance: 24**

<b>Augusta County</b>		<b>Rockbridge County</b>		<b>Staff</b>
Butch Wells		Jay Lewis	✓	Zach Beard
Pam Carter	✓	Chris Slaydon	✓	Philippe Bone
✓ Julia Hensley		<b>Rockingham County</b>	✓	Jeremy Crute
<b>Bath County</b>	✓	Sallie Wolfe-Garrison	✓	Ann Cundy
Lynn Ellen Black		Joel Hensley	✓	Danielle Gannon
<b>City of Buena Vista</b>	✓	Rachel Salatin	✓	Elizabeth Goodloe
✓ Tyson Cooper	✓	Kim Sandum	✓	Donnie Kern
<b>City of Harrisonburg</b>		<b>City of Staunton</b>	✓	Rachel Kinzer
Laura Dent	✓	Brad Arrowood	✓	Paula Melester
✓ Nasser Alsaadun	✓	Sharon Angle	✓	Kimberly Miller
Adam Fletcher		<b>City of Waynesboro</b>	✓	Rich Sagui
<b>Highland County</b>		Terry Short, Treasurer	✓	Carrie Sensabaugh
Henry Budzinski, Vice Chair		Leslie Tate	✓	Devon Thompson
<b>City of Lexington</b>				<b>Others</b>
Frank Friedman, Chair			✓	Dave Covington, VDOT
			✓	Kayla Dixon, JMU*

\*Virtual Participation by Zoom

**Call To Order**

The Commission meeting of April 21, 2025, was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Acting Chairperson, Tyson Cooper.

**Public Comment**

Acting Chair Cooper opened the floor for public comments. There were no public comments.

**Consideration of Minutes**

Acting Chair Cooper presented the minutes of the meeting held on February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2025. ***Ms. Hensley moved, seconded by Ms. Sandum to approve the minutes as presented. The motion carried unanimously.***

**Chair's Report**

Acting Chair Cooper announced that the Commission has a new caterer, North Ridge Café, from northern Staunton, and expressed appreciation for their services.

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Acting Chair Cooper announced a new appointee, Mr. Joel Hensley, an elected official representing Rockingham County.

Acting Chair Cooper informed Commissioners about the upcoming Executive Committee elections. Ballots will be mailed by the end of the week with instructions for return deadlines. The results of the election will be announced at the June Commission meeting. The newly elected members will meet following the Commission meeting to elect officers.

### **Executive Director's Report**

Under the Executive Director's Report, Ms. Cundy reported on the following items:

1. Staffing  
Ms. Cundy marked her first year as Executive Director and expressed gratitude to the staff for their hard work, intelligence, and teamwork. She introduced Kayla Dixon, a JMU student who will be joining as a summer intern and later as a graduate assistant, working on transit and community development projects.
2. FY26 Budget  
Staff have been working on the FY26 budget and do not anticipate negative effects from federal funding freezes. The Appalachian Regional Commission grant was approved with additional funds for training expenses.
3. Operational Improvements:  
The administrative team has identified over \$31,000 in savings by renegotiating service contracts and bringing marketing and communications functions back in-house. A revised strategy for allocating staff hours and recurring costs has helped keep overhead low.
4. Transportation Projects:
  - a. SAWMPO is developing a long-range transportation plan through 2050, with public engagement from over 500 community members.
  - b. HRMPO is completing a small area study of the Port Republic Road, Peach Grove, and Neff Avenue intersections, addressing safety concerns in an area with 148 crashes over five years.
  - c. The regional EV Charging Infrastructure Site Assessment Study is identifying optimal locations for charging stations, with projections of approximately 25,000 EV drivers in the region by 2035.
5. Recognition:  
The PDC received a commendation from the Augusta County Garden Club for the Lewis St. Hub project, which beautified a public space with native plantings and lighting.

Ms. Wolfe-Garrison inquired about the criteria for selecting good locations for EV charging stations, noting that towing companies in Rockingham County have experienced a noteworthy increase in business due to EVs that have lost either charge or internet connectivity. Staff explained that the study considers grid capacity, existing amenities (restrooms, dining options), and demand in the area. The "charge formula" evaluates parcels across the region to identify those best suited for EV charging over the next decade. The region is projected to need approximately 400 additional charging ports, as about 10-15% of EV owners will not have access to charging at home.

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### **Treasurer's Report**

Acting Chair Cooper presented for consideration the Treasurer's Report. In Mr. Short's absence, Mr. Kern presented the Treasurer's Report as of February 28, 2025. Mr. Kern reported that CSPDC's financial position remains strong. The fund balance for the period increased by \$882,000, driven by reimbursements from DRPT for the Lewis Street Hub project and timely reimbursements for the transit program. He noted that the transit and finance teams are working cohesively to process reimbursements efficiently, which has allowed the PDC to maintain a healthy cash flow compared to the prior year.

Mr. Kern reported that revenues exceeded expenditures for the period by \$62,000, though he noted this could change as the year progresses. Regarding federal funds, Mr. Kern highlighted that they exceeded budgeted amounts due to additional, unplanned funds received for the Waynesboro Native Tree Planting project in the amount of \$238,000, which was passed through to the City of Waynesboro.

***Ms. Hensley moved, seconded by Mr. Arrowood, to approve the Treasurer's Report. The motion carried unanimously.***

### **Consideration of Water Supply Planning Assistance Grant Applications (BAF #25-03)**

Acting Chair Cooper presented the Water Supply Planning Grant Applications. Mr. Jeremy Crute, Director of Planning, explained that in October, the General Assembly mandated all localities or regions across the Commonwealth to develop water supply plans to ensure safe and adequate water supply for Virginians in the future. These plans must evaluate water sources and usage, project future demand, identify risks, and develop solutions and strategies to address those risks, including drought response and contingency plans. The plans must be completed by 2029.

Mr. Crute noted that the CSPDC region is split between two DEQ Regional Planning Units (RPU): the Shenandoah River 1 RPU, which includes Augusta and Rockingham counties along with their cities and towns; and the Upper James 1 RPU, which includes Bath, Highland, and Rockbridge counties along with their cities and towns.

To offset development costs, DEQ is offering Regional Water Supply Planning grants of up to \$8,884 per RPU for FY25. The resolutions before the Commission would authorize the PDC to apply for these grants for each RPU and allocate the funds to begin the planning effort, particularly for developing a stakeholder engagement plan and beginning data collection on usage and water resources.

During discussion, Ms. Sandum asked whether the plans would assess not just water usage but also available capacity. Mr. Crute confirmed that the plans would examine water sources to determine capacity compared to current and projected future usage to ensure sufficient water supply. He noted that the plans would primarily focus on public water systems rather than private wells, though groundwater resources would be considered, especially in regions where wells are a primary water source.

Ms. Hensley mentioned that Augusta County is experiencing significant issues with fire flow (available water pressure for fire fighting), particularly in the eastern part of the county, and expressed support for the resolutions. Ms. Cundy added that while the PDC is pleased to receive this initial funding from DEQ, the project is significantly underfunded. She noted that if outsourced to consultants, each plan would cost approximately \$300,000. The PDC plans to complete the work in-house at a much lower cost but needs additional DEQ funding to cover expenses. She indicated that VAPDC plans to work with DEQ and

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potentially the legislature to secure more funding and encouraged jurisdictions to amplify this need with their representatives.

***Ms. Hensley moved, seconded by Ms. Sandum to approve the endorse the Resolutions authorizing the applications for FY25 DEQ funds for regional water supply planning. The motion carried unanimously.***

**Consideration of BRITE Public Transit Safety Action Plan (PTASP) Update (BAF #25-04)**

Acting Chair Cooper presented the BRITE PTASP Appendix Annual Update. Ms. Devon Thompson, Transit Program Manager, explained that the Virginia statewide Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) was developed by the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation in 2020. The plan is a comprehensive and mandated outline of Safety Management System (SMS) programs for 15 small transit agencies throughout the Commonwealth, with each agency maintaining its own appendix within the statewide plan.

Ms. Thompson outlined the four key components of the PTASP:

1. Safety Management Policy - the documentation of BRITE's commitment to safety,
2. Safety Risk Management - the process used to identify, analyze, and assess hazards and mitigate safety risks,
3. Safety Assurance - ensuring effective implementation of safety risk mitigation and meeting safety objectives, and
4. Safety Promotion - training and communication of safety information.

Ms. Thompson explained that the SMS is a formal approach for managing safety risks and assuring the effectiveness of the transit agency's risk mitigation through systematic procedures, practices, and policies. She emphasized that safety is a core component of the BRITE Bus Appendix update. The plan reflects how BRITE staff, CSPDC, and VRT staff adhere to safety practices.

She stated that the annual update reflects several changes, including:

- Designation of the new "Accountable Executive" (the Executive Director),
- Compliance with new federal requirements regarding near misses and assaults on transit workers,
- Additional safety performance targets,
- Enhanced employee safety reporting procedures,
- Updated accountability and responsibilities,
- Added guidance from various oversight authorities,
- Enhanced hazard assessment processes, and
- Inclusion of de-escalation training and safety identification concerns.

Ms. Thompson noted that while past annual updates have been nominal enough not to require board approval, DRPT advised obtaining board approval due to the extensiveness of this update.

***Ms. Angle moved, seconded by Mr. Arrowood, to approve the BRITE Bus Appendix annual update within the Virginia Statewide Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP). The motion carried unanimously.***

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**Consideration of Rural Transportation Planning Grant Application & Work Program (BAF #25-05)**

Acting Chair Cooper presented the FY26 Rural Transportation Planning Grant Application. Mr. Garreth Bartholomew, Transportation Planner, requested approval of the Transportation Planning Grant application for fiscal year 2026. The program will provide \$58,000 in funding with a \$14,500 match from the CSPDC, financed through member assessment revenue.

Mr. Bartholomew explained that the Rural Work Program for FY26 supports four key areas:

1. Direct planning assistance to rural localities,
2. Regional multi-modal planning including bike and pedestrian programming for tourism,
3. Completion of another small area study for a rural area, and
4. Assistance with coordination for other state transportation initiatives.

Mr. Bartholomew highlighted several successful planning studies completed through this program, including:

- The Hot Springs Small Area study, which analyzed intersection safety and pedestrian improvements along Route 220,
- A regional safety study identifying 40 safety hotspots for future improvements, and
- The regional EV readiness assessment to prepare rural regions for charging infrastructure needs for the next decade.

He also noted that the program has provided grant application assistance to localities, including Southern Virginia University's planning grant application for Route 60, which secured funding to evaluate traffic implications near SVU.

***Mr. Arrowood moved, seconded by Ms. Hensley, to approve the Rural Transportation Planning Grant Application and Work Program. The motion carried unanimously.***

**Presentation: Improve I-81 Program Updates, by Dave Covington, I-81 Program Delivery Director, Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT)**

Acting Chair Cooper presented the I-81 presentation. Mr. Covington introduced himself and presented an update on the I-81 Corridor Improvement Program, emphasizing the program's mission to deliver targeted improvements that enhance safety and quality of life for residents and businesses along the corridor while supporting economic growth. The program focuses on three primary benefits: 1) enhancing safety through improvements such as lane and shoulder widening to reduce crash rates and frequency, 2) reducing congestion by adding capacity in targeted areas and improving incident clearance speed, and 3) supporting economic development by ensuring goods and services move safely and efficiently through western Virginia's main economic artery. The I-81 corridor spans 325 miles through three VDOT construction districts—Bristol, Salem, and Staunton—serving 22 localities from Bristol to Winchester, making it the longest Interstate system in Virginia.

**Program Status - Takeaway Scorecard**

Mr. Covington presented the program's status using a scorecard showing both operational and capital project achievements. All operational improvements have been completed, including improved incident clearance, safety service patrol expansion to achieve 100% coverage along 325 miles, and the installation of 51 additional cameras and 30 additional digital message signs. The program has achieved a 24% reduction in crash clearance time through their towing and recovery incentive program.

For capital projects, the program consists of 65 total projects valued at \$3.7 billion. Since construction began in 2020, 35 projects have been completed, 16 projects are currently under active construction

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with completion expected by March 2031, and 14 remaining projects are upcoming with all expected to be complete by 2035.

#### Project Categories and Types

Mr. Covington detailed the various types of improvements being implemented throughout the corridor:

- Widening projects total 12 improvements, with six projects currently under construction for completion in 2031 and six future projects scheduled for completion by 2035 or earlier. These represent the program's largest initiatives from both cost and impact perspectives.
- Acceleration and deceleration lane extensions comprise the largest category with 36 improvements addressing outdated ramp designs from the 1960s and 70s that no longer meet current safety requirements. Of these projects, 25 are complete, three are under construction, and eight future projects will be completed by 2033.
- The program includes five truck climbing lane improvements, with one complete and four projects under construction. Two will be completed in 2025, and two by 2028, addressing steep grades that contribute to rear-end collisions.
- Four auxiliary lane improvements connect interchanges to eliminate the need for merging into through traffic, with one project complete and three under construction.
- Shoulder widening and curve improvements total eight improvements, all of which are complete. Notably, one shoulder widening project was converted to a full lane widening project from Exit 205 to Exit 200 southbound to maximize benefits. Curve improvements include the installation of flashing chevron signs in challenging areas to help keep vehicles on the roadway.
- Operational improvements include over 200 signal systems upgraded from old technology to smart technology, with 42 VDOT signal improvements complete and 46 under construction, plus 55 locality signal improvements complete and 57 under construction, all expected to be finished by 2025.

#### Project Development Process and Current Status

Mr. Covington explained the systematic project development process, showing how projects move from Planning to Preliminary Engineering and Environmental Evaluation, to Design, to Right of Way and Utility Coordination to Construction and finally, to Completion. Currently, no projects remain in the planning phase, with all projects in some stage of engineering or construction. Sixteen projects are under construction, and 35 projects are completed. This represents significant progress from October 2023, when the program had 64 projects across development phases.

#### Project Updates – Bristol and Salem Districts

The Bristol District program is nearly complete, having finished 18 projects including acceleration/deceleration lanes, truck climbing lanes, curve improvements, and auxiliary lanes. Eight projects remain under construction, with completions scheduled between June 2025 and 2027. Only one future project remains: the Exit 45 deceleration lane extension in Marion starting construction in 2025.

The Salem District features fewer but larger projects, including some of the program's most significant initiatives. With six completed acceleration lane extensions and curve improvements projects, two major widening projects are currently under construction. Future projects include acceleration lane extensions starting in 2025, the complex Exit 128 to Exit 137 widening beginning in 2026, and the Christiansburg to Ironto northbound widening starting in 2028.



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### Project Updates - Staunton District

The Staunton District has completed 10 acceleration/deceleration lane projects and one curve improvement. Current construction includes the Exit 221 to Exit 220 auxiliary lane completing in October 2025, the major Staunton area widening from Exit 221 to Exit 225 completing in June 2027, the Strasburg widening completing in September 2027, and the Weyers Cave truck climbing lanes completing in 2028. Upcoming projects include the complex Harrisonburg widening starting in 2025, Winchester widening beginning in 2028, Mount Sidney Rest Area improvements in 2028, and the Raphine to Fairfield widening in 2028.

### Economic Development Impact

Mr. Covington presented extensive evidence of economic development activity along the Virginia I-81 corridor. He displayed multiple examples of major business investments and facility announcements with companies specifically citing I-81's reliability and VDOT's commitments to improvement as factors in their location decisions. The corridor carries more heavy truck traffic than any other Interstate in Virginia, making transportation reliability crucial for business operations.

Construction activities generate significant local economic impact through the employment of local contractors and increased business activity. Mr. Covington shared detailed examples from the Staunton widening project showing extensive use of local businesses for supplies, equipment, and services, plus numerous restaurants and hotels benefiting from construction crews.

### 2025 Corridor Re-evaluation

The program is conducting a comprehensive corridor re-evaluation to update the original plan and address changes since initial development, including post-COVID traffic pattern shifts. The systematic process began in December 2024 with project initiation, followed by data collection in January 2025, and virtual public engagement from March to April 2025. Issue identification through virtual and in-person meetings is scheduled for June-July 2025, with potential solutions development from September to October 2025, solution refinement in October-November 2025, and a draft corridor plan in December 2025. The I-81 Advisory Committee will review progress at multiple points, with Commonwealth Transportation Board briefings scheduled throughout the process. This comprehensive evaluation may result in revised project priorities and additions to address current corridor needs.

### Programmatic Tools and Standards

To ensure consistency across the extensive 325-mile corridor and multi-billion-dollar program, VDOT has developed several corridor-wide tools and standards. These include a comprehensive design guide for project consistency, transportation management plan guidance for uniform work zone experiences, a materials estimating tool providing five-year forecasts to help industry partners prepare for material needs, and a regional transportation management plan specifically for the Salem District's Christiansburg to Troutville area where multiple large contiguous projects require careful coordination.

### Public Information and Communication

Mr. Covington emphasized VDOT's commitment to comprehensive public communication through multiple channels. The department publishes a quarterly newsletter available for download at [Improve81.org](https://www.improve81.org), with email signup options for convenient subscription. The program has produced extensive multimedia content including 28 videos, 30 podcasts, and 13 newsletters covering various aspects of the program. The website at [Improve81.org](https://www.improve81.org) also features the "Improve 81 Podcast Series" and comprehensive project information. These resources allow citizens to access information at their preferred level of detail, from brief video overviews to detailed podcast discussions, ensuring broad public understanding of this significant infrastructure investment.

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### Questions and Discussion

During the Q&A session, Mr. Covington clarified that economic development is a program goal added in 2018 at gubernatorial directive but is not used as a project selection criterion, which focuses primarily on safety and congestion relief. He explained that the current plan update methodology excludes areas with major ongoing projects to avoid skewed data analysis and confirmed that completed three-lane sections will follow existing Virginia law prohibiting trucks from travelling in the far-left lane, with appropriate signage to be installed for enforcement support.

Presentation attached to file minutes.

### **Intergovernmental Reviews (Board Memo #25-01)**

Acting Chair Cooper presented Intergovernmental Reviews (IR). Ms. Cundy stated that one IR was submitted by DEQ to expand the monitoring capabilities of recently drilled wells, two of which are in our region. No response or action is required, but the comment period is open through May 11, 2025.

### **Other Business**

Acting Chair Cooper presented the FY2025 Audit Communication Letter. Ms. Cundy stated that enclosed for the Commission's awareness is a letter outlining the scope of work for the FY2025 audit. CSPDC has reprocured Brown Edwards, Certified Public Accountants, as our auditing firm for the next three years with some options to extend. We look forward to having them; we had a good experience with them this year.

### **Adjournment**

There being no further business to come before the body, the Commission meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



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Kimberly Miller, Commission Clerk