

VTRANS

VIRGINIA'S
TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Mid Term Needs
Assessment Regional
Workshop Summary
Bristol-Kingsport
July 31, 2019



Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment

1221 E. Broad Street

Richmond, Virginia 23219

Final - September 23, 2019

Prepared in support of VTrans, Virginia's Statewide Multimodal
Transportation Plan

Contract Number 47082, Task Two: Agency Involvement

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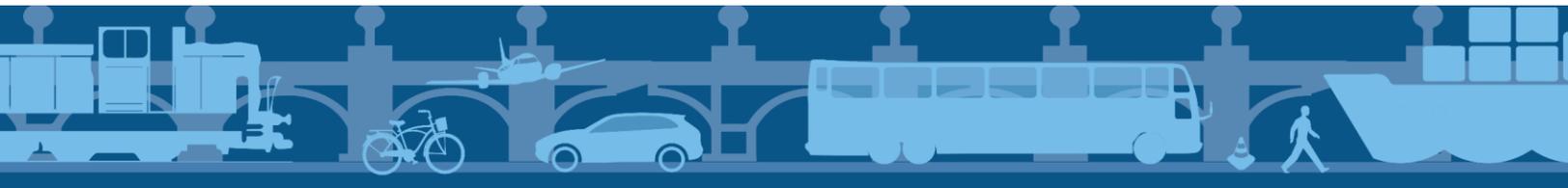
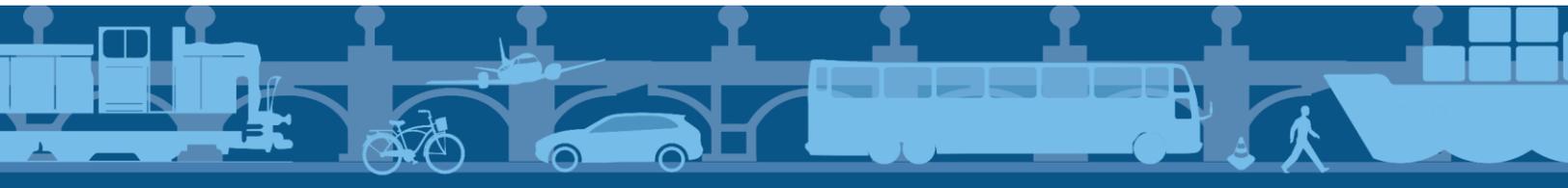


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1 INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes the input from a workshop conducted by the Virginia Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment (OIPI) with representatives of local, regional, and state agencies that support transportation planning for the Bristol District area. The purpose of the meeting was to elicit input on the analysis methods (specifically, key performance measures) and the regional results of initial analyses conducted to identify statewide transportation needs for the coming seven to ten years.

2 MEETING LOCATION AND PARTICIPANTS

The workshop was conducted at the Holiday Inn Bristol Conference Center, Bristol, Virginia, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Table 1 provides a list of participants and invitees.

Table 1: Workshop Participants and Invited Representatives

Name	Agency	Title
Regional and Local Representatives		
Alicia Roland	Washington Co.	Public Information Officer
Angela Beavers	Cumberland Plateau PDC	Transportation Planner
Bill Albright	Kingsport MPO	Transportation Planning Manager
Billie Roberts	Town of Bluefield	Community Development Coordinator
Brenda Sutherland	Grayson County	Board of Supervisors
Cecil Hicks	Town of Marion	Asst. Town Manager and Town Engineer
Dane Poe	Lee County	County Administrator
David Metzger	Bristol MPO	Traffic Engineer
Emmie King	Town of Abingdon	GIS Technician
Eric Workman	Bland County	County Administrator
Freda R. Starnes	Scott County	County Administrator

Glenn Bishop	Town of Big Stone Gap	Public Works Director
Jay Detrick	City of Bristol	Transportation Planner
Joe Ratliff	Four County Transit	General Manager
John D. Woods	Town of Wytheville	Engineering Technician - Landscape Architect
Kristi Blevins	Bland County	Project Coordinator
Laura Craft	Town of Wise	Town Planner
Mason Gragg	Town of Abingdon	Code Compliance Officer
Matthew Bright	Town of Big Stone Gap	Building/Zoning Official
Michael Carter	Smyth County	County Administrator
Mike Watson	Town of Bluefield	Town Manager
Mollie B. Smith-Steffey	Mountain Lynx Transit	Transit Operations Manager
Randall Noonchester	MEOC-Transit	Operations Director
Rex Montgomery	Bristol MPO	Transportation Planning Manager
Rocky Warren	MRPDC	Regional Planner
Stephen Bear	Wythe County	County Administrator
Timothy Taylor	Town of Richlands	Town Manager
Wallace McCulloch	City of Bristol	Public Works Director
Will Crawford	Grayson County	Community Development Director

Additional Regional and Local Representatives Invited but Unable to Attend

Daniel Riegel	City of Galax	Zoning Administrator
David Moore	Dickenson County	County Administrator
Duane Miller	Lenowisco	Executive Director
Eric Young	Tazewell County	County Administrator
Fred Ramey	City of Norton	City Manager
Greg Jones	Town of Gate City	Town Manager
James Hampton	Graham Transit (Bluefield)	Treasurer/Transit Director

Jimmy Adkins	Lenowisco	Transportation/Regional Planner
Ken Dunford	Tazewell County	Director of Engineering
Marcus Stiltner	Buchanan County	
Michael Hatfield	Wise County	County Administrator
Ronald Newman	Carroll County	Land Use and Planning Coordinator
Todd Day	Town of Tazewell	Town Manager
Troy Ebert	TDOT	
State Agency Staff		
Blake Ailor	VDOT - Bristol District	Planning District
Chris Wichman	OIPI	Transportation Planner
Darrel Johnson	VDOT - TMPD	Rural Planning Program Manager
Emily Stock	DRPT	Manager of Rail Planning
Jitender Ramchandani	OIPI	Transportation Planning Program Manager
Katie Schwing	OIPI	Transportation Planner
Matthew Cox	VDOT	Planning Investment Manager
Mike Mucha	DRPT	Transit Program Manager
Consultant Facilitators and Scribes		
Hannah Twaddell	VTrans Consultant Team	Facilitator
Vlad Gavrilovic	VTrans Consultant Team	Facilitator
Phil White	VTrans Consultant Team	Scribe
Marissa Sperry	VTrans Consultant Team	Scribe

3 AGENDA AND MATERIALS

Following a plenary presentation and discussion of the VTrans Needs Assessment method and performance measures, the participants broke into small groups to review the information

developed for the region. They regrouped at the end of the meeting to share their findings and to hear about the process and schedule for developing, reviewing, and finalizing the VTrans Mid-term Needs Assessment.

At sign-in, each participant received a packet with the following materials, all of which are available for download from VTrans website.¹

- Agenda
- Plenary presentation slides
- VTrans Summer 2019 Newsletter
- VTrans Mid-Term Needs Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)
- Comment Form
- Regional maps, charts, and/or tables of the data. Detailed descriptions of each measure and analysis method are included in the plenary presentation slides.
- Summaries of transportation needs in each of the region's designated Urban Development Areas as identified by local governments through an online survey conducted by OIPI in June-July 2019. Participants were invited to comment upon the identified needs, and to identify any potential new Urban Development Areas (UDAs) that the localities in the region might consider adopting prior to April 1, 2020 (the deadline for establishing UDAs as candidates for the 2020 round of SMART SCALE grants).
- A list of Business Ready Sites in the region drawn from the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP) database. These sites are locally identified subareas of 25 or more contiguous acres that have the potential to be developed into industrial parks, office campuses, research facilities or other economic hubs that could generate transportation needs. Participants were asked to identify sites that were in an advanced stage of development planning and investment, and to describe associated transportation impacts that might be generated within the coming ten years. They were also asked to comment upon the most appropriate threshold for identifying potential sites across the state, based upon the five levels of business readiness assigned by VEDP.

4 SYNTHESIS OF COMMENTS

The following section provides a summary of



¹ VTrans website: www.vtrans.org Location of workshop summaries: <http://vtrans.org/get-involved/online-meetings/VTrans-Mid-Term-Needs-Regional-Workshops>

comments about each performance measure, compiled from the plenary session, breakout groups, and comment sheets. The appendix includes transcripts of the sessions and sheets, including photos of the marked-up maps developed by each breakout group. After the participants have reviewed and vetted the draft report, OIPI will synthesize the comments that were associated with the maps and upload them to the online InteractVTrans map (www.vtrans.org/mid-term-planning/InteractVTrans). In addition to serving as a repository for regional workshop comments, InteractVTrans provides a publicly available resource for ongoing input from local stakeholders and the public.

Table 2 Synthesis of Comments

Comment	
Congestion: Percent Person Miles Traveled in Excessively Congested Conditions (PECC)	
1.	Weekend traffic congestion builds up from combination of recreational tourists visiting the Appalachian Trail/ GW Forest/ regional scenic roads and resources; beach traffic driving through the region (and slowing down in the I-77 tunnels); and a large catchment area of people making long distance trips to handle errands, shopping, and entertainment.
2.	Congestion on I-81 may dissuade companies that need freight/truck access from locating near I-81 north of Wytheville.
3.	The congestion hotspots on I-77 are likely due to grade changes (trucks slowing down as they climb) and tunnels. Trucks with hazardous materials have to be escorted through the tunnels. In general, trucks and passenger vehicles routinely slow down in the tunnels, especially tourists traveling through the region from Ohio to the Carolina beaches. Major traffic flow - designed for 3,000 vehicles, gets some 60,000, gateway to the Great Lakes, Ohio, West VA, and PA. Rt 52 is alternate route when tunnels back up, but road switchbacks not designed to handle trucks.
4.	Congestion volume and travel delay together make sense as a measure.
Congestion: Travel Time Index (TTI)	
5.	Regional network congestion is largely around school traffic.
6.	Consider measuring delay in terms of personal costs (time spent on other activities, etc.)
7.	Weather-related incidents and spot issues are major contributors to unreliable delay.
Passenger Rail: Amtrak Station On-Time Performance	
8.	This region does not have Amtrak service. Intercity bus from Bristol to Roanoke (e.g. Virginia Breeze extension) may be more cost-effective than rail.
Accessibility: Transit Access Deficit to Activity Centers	

	Comment
9.	45 minute travel time might be too short a cutoff in this area, especially for transit
10.	People bike to get to transit service (example Lebanon and Grundy) - ties into bike-tourist traffic
11.	In this area, the distance you have to travel from home to work is high, as there is a shortage of jobs in the region. Demand response transit for workforce is more widely used, though, if workers have varying shifts across employers that is not conducive for fixed schedules.

Travel Options: Disadvantaged Population Beyond ¼ Mile Access to Fixed Route Transit

12.	This area has a mix of transit services, and more deviated-fixed-route transit than standard fixed-route transit. Need to take this into account - overlay different types of services on the maps. Expanding demand response service should be a priority.
13.	Suggest looking at response times of demand response transit services as a metric to identify needs.
14.	The age of disadvantaged populations is disproportionately skewing older.
15.	An emerging regional issue is hospital consolidation, which leads to new transportation needs [longer travel required to reach medical services when smaller local hospitals close].

Safety: Vehicle Crashes

16.	Can use local conflict studies (proactive) and police reports (reactive) to identify local projects/ needs. Unsafe areas (e.g. hilly terrain, poor sight distance, sharp curves) may have little crash data - local users are aware of the problems but others aren't. Less stringent thresholds/ qualification allows for more flexibility; maybe don't just expand the list, but allow supplemental data.
17.	We don't have bike lanes in this area, and mostly attract long distance bike riders - could we establish a "CoSS" for bike routes?
18.	Motorcyclists are a major concern - especially on scenic/ curvy roads like the Rt 16 "Back of the Dragon."
19.	Look at RATE of injuries/ fatalities per VMT, per population.

	Comment
20.	Pedestrian and bicycle safety is a concern in towns without sidewalks, and throughout the rural region. For example the Clinch River Walking Trail in Richland crosses US 460 and rail tracks in three places; many people try to walk and bike on the 55-mph highway between Appalachia and Big Stone Gap highway, which has rail tracks on one side, a river on the other, and no bike or pedestrian facilities; US 23 attracts many recreational cyclists, even though there are no bike lanes to accommodate them.
21.	GPS navigational systems route heavy trucks and passenger traffic into unsuitable/unsafe areas. Examples: visitors to Hungry Mother State Park drive through residential areas; semis are diverted from interstates onto the Rt 16 “Back of the Dragon” where they cannot turn back, and they come into conflict with speeding motorcyclists.
22.	Tennessee uses Critical Rate Factor, which is similar to potential for safety improvement (PSI), but uses severity of incidents as a metric - recommend using this metric for this region.
23.	Accidents causing fatalities or injuries should carry more weight.
24.	The number of fatalities at a particular location is a poor safety indicator. Unsafe conditions, such as volume and frequency of all types of accidents, are better indicators.
25.	Measures should be specific to districts or regions, so that everyone is able to get funding.
26.	The current system seems to be biased against safety issues in rural low volume roads. Big safety issues with few people at risk are a low priority.
27.	Measure bike/ped safety and motorcycles, too; [develop a] CoSS for bikes.
28.	Overlay accidents per vehicle miles traveled onto crash charts to make the measure more meaningful.
29.	Suggest a “potential conflict” measure, not just crashes. Charlottesville VA Transportation Research Council can train localities on this
Economic Development: Urban Development Areas and VEDP Business Ready Sites	
30.	Generally in favor of adding VEDP sites - allows identification of needs outside CoSS, RN, and UDA locations; would allow areas without a lot of congestion to qualify for improvement projects.
31.	Consider that SMART SCALE [already] awards points for economic development.
32.	Smaller communities have less money to invest, or projects might take longer to progress - maybe a “sliding scale”

	Comment
33.	Important to consider other economic drivers, especially tourism; recreation-related tourist traffic coming into and through this region drives weekend traffic congestion and needs for trails, streetscaping, and transit
34.	The VEDP data is limited by a lot of uncharacterized sites and some inaccuracies - localities need to work with VEDP to correct these.
35.	Consider adding enterprise zones / opportunity zones to the needs assessment and/ or SMART SCALE parameters; creates opportunity to leverage sources such as Federal Opportunity Zone grants that are approved by the Governor.
36.	Freight rail access in the area is inconvenient and spotty; the industrial parks are not linked to the rail lines. Freight rail was built to move coal; trucks are more reliable and have door-to-door service.
37.	Add small airports (Highland, Mountain Empire, Tri Cities) to list of economic activity centers - they serve executives, golfers, national college/ professional basketball coaches, all of whom are important to the regional economy.
38.	Need to move ahead with proposed I-74 connection to/from North Carolina (Mt. Airy/ Salem/ Rockingham to coast). Gateway to Charlotte and NC/ SC beaches.
39.	Add community colleges and small universities to list of economic activity centers.
40.	VEDP measures for sites should be relaxed in rural communities that may not have the resources get a site to a 3 or 4, but do have an economic development transportation need.

5 APPENDIX: COMMENTS FROM PLENARY PRESENTATION, BREAKOUTS, AND WORKSHOP HANDOUTS

i. COMMENTS DURING PLENARY PRESENTATION

Most of the discussion took place during the breakout group discussions. During the plenary, participants indicated general responses to two questions from the OIPI presenter as follows:

- When asked if they had submitted projects to SMART SCALE, the majority of participants raised their hand affirmatively.
- The majority of participants agreed that traffic is a moderate problem in this region, even though there is considerably less traffic in this area than others around the state.

INTRODUCTION/OVERVIEW

- Jitender re-introduced the purpose of VTrans, the planning context and the federal and state requirements
- He emphasized that the data and analysis presented is meant to spur discussion, and is not the final Needs. He requested that participants also review the data with an eye for completeness/accuracy.

SUMMARY/WRAP-UP

- The facilitators briefly summarized the discussion and comments received at each table
- Jitender asked the group if there was anything that wasn't covered that the participants expected to cover. There wasn't any discussion on this question.

ii. BREAKOUT SESSION COMMENTS

The following synthesis reflects input from all the breakout groups. Participants were asked to reflect broadly upon the issues addressed by the performance measures (i.e., congestion, reliability, passenger rail on-time performance, accessibility to activity centers, travel options for disadvantaged populations, safety, and economic development. They were also asked for input on the regional applicability of each measure.

Facilitators and scribes assigned to each group recorded the input by writing notes on a flip chart and on a laptop. For comments with geographic specificity, facilitators and/ or group members placed numbered stick-on dots onto a poster-sized base map and noted the meaning of the numbered dot on the flip chart.

Participants were invited to jot down additional notes on the Comment Form and return it to a facilitator at the end of the meeting, or to fill it out later and email their responses to OIPI staff. A summary of input from the written Comment Forms is included at the end of this section.



GROUP 1 COMMENTS (BRISTOL AREA)

(NOTE - Group 1 did not mark up a map)

Economic Development

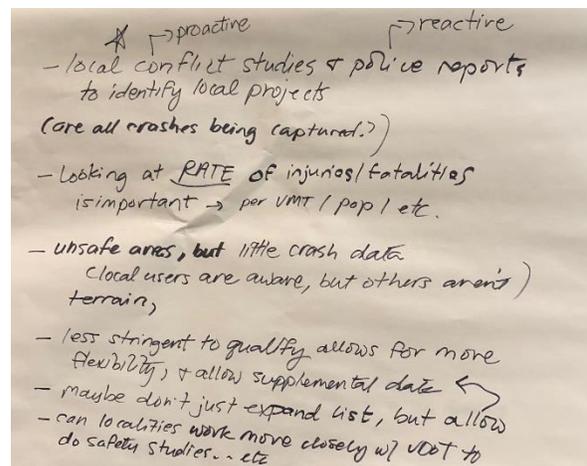
VEDP business ready sites and Urban Development Areas

- Generally in favor of adding VEDP sites
 - allows identification of needs outside CoSS, RN, and UDA locations;
 - would allow areas without a lot of congestion to qualify for improvement projects
- BUT - SMART SCALE awards points for economic development
- Lots of the sites are on CoSS - Catch-22 - can't do improvements because can't apply for dollars
- Smaller communities have less money to invest, or projects might take longer to progress - maybe a "sliding scale"
- What about tourism? - Trails, streetscaping, transit, weekend traffic
- Other areas need attention too - could consider more UDA options

Safety

Vehicle crashes

- Can use local conflict studies (proactive) and police reports (reactive) to identify local projects/ needs
 - Are all crashes being captured with the VTrans data?
 - Unsafe areas (terrain) may have little crash data - local users are aware, but others aren't
 - Bicyclists - don't have bike lanes in this area, mostly long distance bike riders - [could we establish a] "CoSS" for bike routes?
 - Motorcyclists on rural roads
- Looking at RATE of injuries/ fatalities is important - per VMT, per population
- Less stringent qualification allows for more flexibility; maybe don't just expand the list, but allow supplemental data
- Can localities work more closely with VDOT to do safety studies?



Accessibility to Activity Centers

Transit deficit to local-serving and knowledge-based activity centers

- Only a few activity centers are identified (Bristol regional network is small)
- 45 minute travel time might be too short a cutoff in this area, especially for transit

- People bike to get to transit service (example Lebanon and Grundy) - ties into tourism as well

Travel Options for Disadvantaged Populations

Disadvantaged population with ¼ mile of fixed route transit

- Mix of services in this area - more deviated than fixed route transit - does the map take deviated (non-fixed-route) transit into account?
- Sometimes service is only a few days a week
- Lower density makes it hard to provide transit
- What about contracting with health providers?

Passenger Rail On-Time Performance

- What about intercity bus from Bristol to Roanoke? May be more cost-effective than rail.
 - Virginia Breeze extension - connections to local transit services
 - [Helps to] avoid interstate congestion - highway expansion is expensive
- Cost of trip is important
- Important travel markets/ patterns
 - Tourism
 - Bi-directional travel between four-county area and Tri-Cities
 - Bluefield to New River Valley area - medical trips
 - Grayson to Winston-Salem and Roanoke
 - Abingdon to Johnson City - medical trips

Congestion

PECC and Travel Time Index

- Key locations along I-77
 - Tunnels, especially in summer with tourists
 - Wytheville - worse than I-81, might be alternative routes
 - Lots of enforcement in Bland

Reliability

Unreliable Delay

- Weather-related incidents and spot issues
- Weekend long-distance trips pull from a large geographic area for shopping, errands, entertainment, Walmart/Sams

Buffer Time Index

- Rt 11 Smyth near Rural Retreat
- Rt 58 Grayson/ Washington - windy road - Whitetop
- Overall, this measure matches expectations

GROUP 2 COMMENTS (BRISTOL AREA)**Breakout Group 2 (Bristol area) Marked-Up Map***Economic Development*

VEDP business ready sites and Urban Development Areas

1. American Merchants - this site needs access from Exit 5.
2. The bridges over the river present an access problem for a crane manufacturing company in Richland.
3. The Bristol/Washington County Industrial Park lost a major employer and is no longer listed as a VEDP site. Direct access is needed from this site (between Exits 10 and 13) to I-81.
4. Piedmont Avenue Bridge provides access to downtown Bristol; however, it is in very poor condition and there are safety concerns, as heavy trucks, including fire trucks, cannot use the bridge.
5. Exit 78 on I-81 has congestion issues due to lack of traffic signals and traffic from the nearby civic arena.

6. The Northwinds Apartments, on US 52 in Wytheville, need access to shopping across I-81.
7. The Clinch River Walking Trail in Richland crosses US 460 and rail tracks in three places.
8. The Mendota Trail should be connected to downtown Bristol.
9. Progress Park in Wytheville needs better access - currently, access is granted from Exit 41 on I-77 and Exit 73 from I-81.
10. Chatham Hill Road and Main Street intersection in Marion - installing a roundabout at this location may improve downtown access. The existing geometry of the intersection is poor.
 - Signs are needed from I-81 directing tourists to businesses in downtown Wytheville.
 - GPS sends visitors to Hungry Mother State Park through residential areas.
 - Left turns from Exit 70 (I-81) create gridlock.

Safety

Vehicle crashes

11. Spearhead Trail in Richlands - a new trailhead is being constructed.
12. Wytheville is considering potential road diets, roundabouts and crosswalks on Main Street.
 - Tennessee uses Critical Rate Factor, which is similar to potential for safety improvement (PSI), but uses severity of incidents as a metric.
 - King Mill Pike has sharp curves and frequent accidents - applied for, but did not receive, Highway Safety Improvement Program funding.
 - Recommend adding severity of incidents to the safety metric for this district.
 - Lee Highway in Bristol and US 460 in Richlands need sidewalks and crosswalks - both currently have sporadic segments of sidewalks.
 - Bristol installed a road diet on Cumberland Street and Kingsport installed one on East Central Street.

Congestion/Reliability

PECC, Travel Time Index/ Unreliable Delay, Buffer Time Index

- Congestion on I-81 may dissuade companies that need freight/truck access from locating near I-81 north of Wytheville.
- The congestion hotspots on I-77 is likely due to grade changes and tunnels (particularly when trucks with hazardous materials have to be escorted through the tunnels).
- I-77 sees an increase in congestion on holidays and weekends due to tourists.
- Mostly, congestion in the area is due to incidents on I-81 or construction projects causing delays.

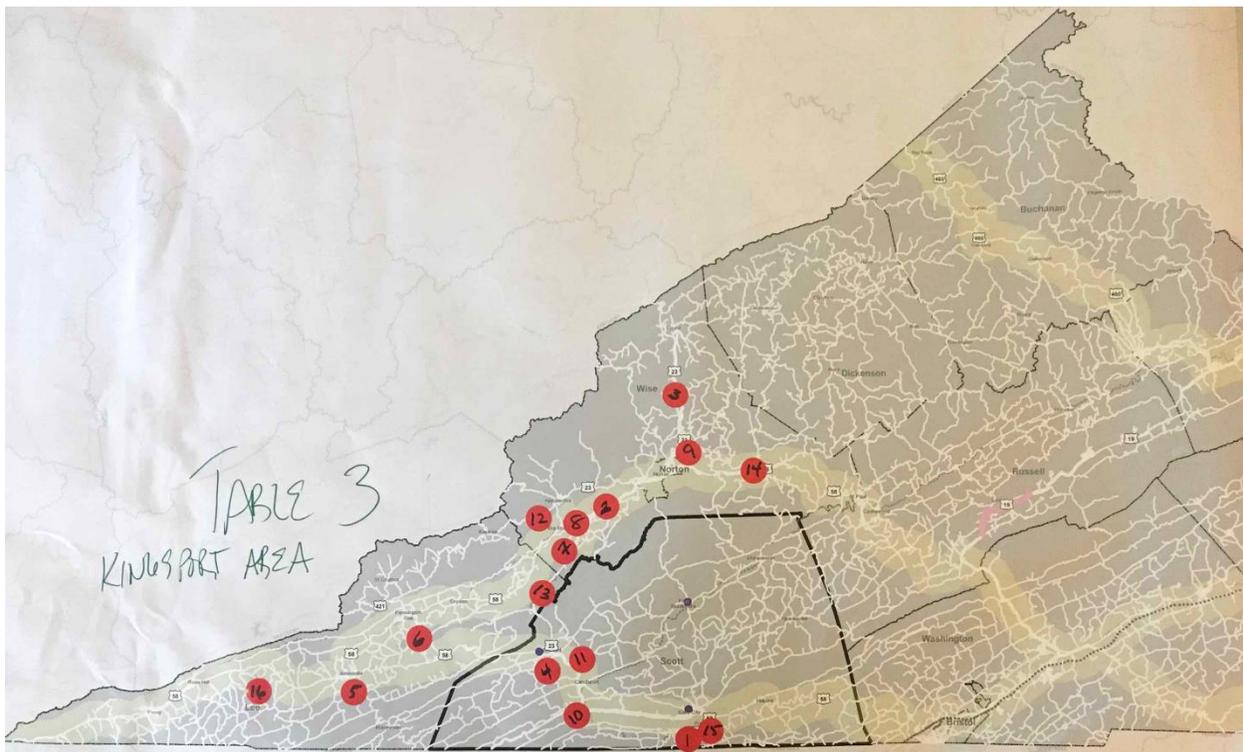
- There is a need for congestion relief on Main Street in Abingdon (e.g., the French Moore Boulevard project).

Accessibility to Activity Centers/ Travel Options for Disadvantaged Populations
 Transit deficit to local-serving and knowledge-based activity centers / Disadvantaged population with ¼ mile of fixed route transit

- The only fixed route transit services are in Bristol, Abingdon and Bluefield.
- Four County Transit has some deviated fixed route service in Richlands and Lebanon.
- Kingsport used to use taxi service vouchers as a transit service proxy.
- In terms of transit need, suggest looking to response times of demand response services as a metric.
- There is a general need for accessibility on Route 11 from Exits 7 to 22.
 - Lee Highway (Route 11) serves as a parallel collector to I-81, though one stretch is still just two lanes.

GROUP 3 COMMENTS (KINGSPORT AREA)

Breakout Group 3 Marked-Up Map



Economic Development

VEDP business ready sites and Urban Development Areas

1. Riverside Development is missing from the VEDP inventory.

2. Industrial Development Authority sites are located in the Norton-Big Stone Gap area along US 58 (located within Enterprise Zones)
 3. US 23 is included in US 58 Corridor of Statewide Significance. US 23 is used to get from town to work.
 4. Intersection of US 23 and US 58 (a screened out SMART SCALE location).
 5. Blackwater area - SR612 at VA 70 - lack of truck bypasses make it difficult for freight industries, hindering economic development.
 6. Pennington Gap area - US58 at US 421 - lack of truck bypasses make it difficult for freight industries, hindering economic development
 7. US 23 southwest of Big Stone Gap - lack of truck bypasses make it difficult for freight industries, hindering economic development.
- The VEDP list of sites includes a data limitation for uncharacterized sites.
 - Many of us within the region need to work with VEDP to update our sites' status.
 - There are many properties that are shovel ready, but yet nothing is being done.
 - The tier levels of specific sites are not accurate on the provided list.
 - Could the fact that Riverside Development is located within an Opportunity Zone (a Federal program) be leveraged? There are funds in place for Opportunity Zone development, but the incentives expire in ten years.
 - Localities can submit for Opportunity Zone designation, and the Governor has final say.
 - Could SMART SCALE parameters be changed to include enterprise zones in the scoring?

Safety

Vehicle Crashes

8. Wood Avenue and Shawnee Avenue intersection in Big Stone Gap. Big Stone Gap has several intersections such as this one that the Town has tried to fix, but the angles make it tough. The accidents are technically outside of the intersection but are almost certainly due to congestion at the intersection.
9. US 23 at US 58 in Norton - there is a perception of unsafe conditions, which are not captured in the data.
10. Angler's Way in Clinchport.
11. Natural Tunnel State Park - access is gained through a four-lane intersection with an s-curve. There is a seasonal influx of drivers, which could be watering down the annual measurements. Also the weekend influx of drivers should be considered.
12. Between Appalachia and Big Stone Gap - it is a 55 miles per hour highway, with rail tracks on one side and a river on the other. There are no safe connections for

pedestrians or bicyclists, though many people try to walk and bike there. Requests for funding have been unsuccessful.

13. US 23 - there is a notable amount of recreational cyclists, even though there are no bike lanes to accommodate them. There was a recent accident due to a bus trying avoid the bicyclists.

- Accidents causing fatalities or injuries should carry more weight.
- The number of fatalities at a particular location is a poor safety indicator. Unsafe conditions, such as volume and frequency of all types of accidents, are better indicators.
- The PSI measures seems to be working well.
- The data is not picking up Scott County's problem areas well.
- Measures should be specific to districts or regions, so that everyone is able to get funding.

Accessibility to Activity Centers

Transit deficit to local-serving and knowledge-based activity centers

- In this area, the distance you have to travel from home to work is high, as there is a shortage of jobs in the region.
- Demand response for workforce is more widely used, though, if workers have varying shifts across employers that not conducive for fixed schedules.
- The demand response vehicles are ADA-compliant.

Travel Options for Disadvantaged Populations

Disadvantaged population with ¼ mile of fixed route transit

- The age of disadvantaged populations is disproportionately skewing older.
- An emerging regional issue is hospital consolidations which lead to new transportation needs.
- Expanding demand response service, especially to Kingsport should be a priority.

Passenger Rail On-Time Performance

- On Amtrak, there is a limitation of destinations that can be reached in Tennessee, for instance, there is no direct connection to Nashville.
- Most of the available resources seem to be going to the issue with the Long Bridge, which affects all Amtrak service going north.
- If there is a need for rail, it is encouraged that localities look to intercity bus lines as a first step.
- Virginia Breeze could be an alternative for intercity travel; it stops in Blacksburg, and is seemingly compensated by major bus lines.

- Most routes move people east-west; there is a lack of north-south routes.
- Freight rail access in the area is inconvenient and spotty; the industrial parks are not linked to the rail lines.
- Freight rail was built to move coal.
- Trucks are more reliable and have door-to-door service.

Congestion

PECC, Travel Time Index

14. US 58 near Tacoma - The data at this location may be off. The area has a small population and thus a very low volume of traffic. It is surprising to see congestion shown here.
 15. US 23 from Gate City to the State Line is a hot spot that is not caught by the data. There is an at-grade rail crossing and no redundancy.
- The only congestion in the Coeburn area is around Hardee's and the post office in the morning.
 - In region, true congestion only really occurs around the schools.
 - Volume and delay together make sense as a measure.

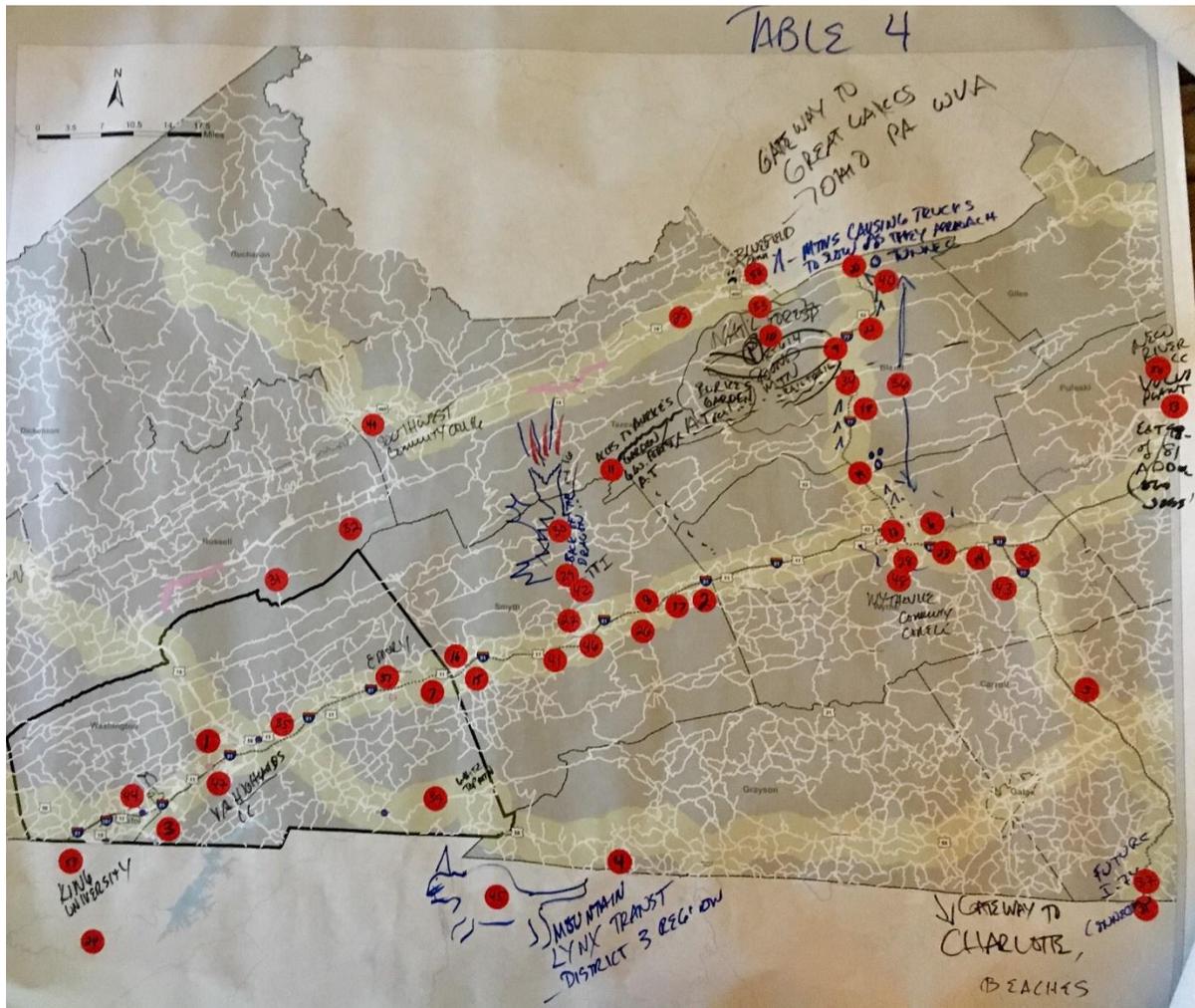
Reliability

Unreliable Delay, Buffer Time Index

16. US 58, west of Rose Hill. There is bad cell service in the area.
- The majority of the highlighted areas have to do with school traffic.
 - Both the terrain and schools are causes of delays.

GROUP 4 COMMENTS – (BRISTOL AREA)

Breakout Group 4 Marked-Up Map



Economic Development

VEDP business ready sites and Urban Development Areas

1. Highland Airport missing from map - serves Food City executives, golfers, etc.
2. Mountain Empire Airport services Pepsi, Hospital patients and executives, golfers, and basketball coaches going to Oakhill in Grayson
3. Related to #1 - Virginian and farm use at Highland Airport
4. Related to # 2- Oakhill Academy is the #1 basketball team in the nation, coaches fly in to Mtn Empire airport to scout recruits
5. Wildwood Industrial Park - exit 19 on I-77 - truck traffic
6. Progress Park encompasses sites 3 and 6 on the VEDP list
7. Highlands Business Park - access is OK, expecting increased truck traffic due to wood stave mill (for whiskey barrels) shipping to cooperage in Atkins

8. Atkins cooerage (truck traffic coming in from Highlands Business Park, see #7)
9. Commerce Park - Exit 58 off I-77 - business, local retail, interstate-related retail, gas, access to Appalachian Trail and George Washington Forest, Round Mountain biking trails. Comp plan zone. Expect increased traffic.
10. Rt 614 - access to George Washington forest trails - this whole area between I-81 and I-77 is a major draw for outdoor recreational tourism - hikers, cyclists, motorcyclists. (see also #11)
11. Access to Burke's Garden / Appalachian Trail/ GW Forest / Round Mountain rail-trail - bookend to the area noted in #10
12. Progress Park access road was funded in SMART SCALE. Current businesses include Gatorade bottling plant, pipe manufacturer, auto manufacturer; five more graded sites. Aiming for 2,000-3,000 employees at buildout. It has rail access to Norfolk Southern main line.
13. Volvo plant currently draws the most people in our region, major job center.
14. Current park and ride lot - just a piece of pavement but has about 40-50 cars daily - need to formalize and upgrade
15. Exit 35 VDOT park and ride lot serves about 25 cars - also informal, could improve
16. Pathway Industrial Park has 70 acres of green space with rail access. Need access at Exit 35. Some improvements planned.
17. Mountain Empire Industrial Park - utility trailer, etc. almost all filled. Issue is access on Nicks Creek Road of Exit 50.
18. Rt 42/52 in Bland is ABB - largest employer (400 employees) and access to state penitentiary. Inadequate shoulders, turn lanes, sight distance.
19. Congestion around tunnels is partly due to people slowing down inside the tunnel, especially tourists coming through on weekends from Ohio to Myrtle Beach and people coming into this region for outdoor recreation
20. I-77 Eastern tunnel backup is a huge issue - designed for 3,000 vehicles, gets some 60,000, and trucks slowing down on uphill grade exacerbates the slowdowns. Major traffic flow - gateway to the Great Lakes, Ohio, West VA, and PA
21. Need to move ahead with proposed I-74 connection to/from North Carolina (Mt. Airy/ Salem/ Rockingham to coast). Gateway to Charlotte and NC/ SC beaches. Related to issues with tunnels.
22. Rt 52 is alternate route when tunnels back up, but road switchbacks not designed to handle trucks
23. I-77/I-81 overlap - exit 77 access to Progress Park; exit 80 not designed for this level of traffic

24. Tri-Cities Airport of regional importance, although a lot of people fly out of Greensboro
25. Bluestone Park off 460 (Tazewell Co) will put more pressure on I-77 corridor tunnel area
26. Exit 54 - Old General Shale brick plant being marketed for re-use, in the early stages.
27. Exit 44 - doesn't have full interchange, but the Hull property there includes an available vacant lot of 300+ acres; in the early stages of development planning, some challenges.

Safety

Vehicle Crashes

28. I-77 mile marker 40/I-81 mile marker 72 - major design/curve safety issue - trucks overturning from tipping or overcompensating - causes hazmat spills into creeks. Some improvements with widening to alleviate congestion.
29. Rt 16 "Back of the Dragon" stretch of curving steep grade attracts daredevil motorcyclists. Exacerbated by the fact that GPS apps route trucks to this road, and there is no way to turn around.
30. New overlook in Hungry Mother State Park will attract even more recreational riders.
31. Several routes in Russell County should be off limits to trucks- 80
32. See #31
33. Rt 614 (continuation of #31-32)
34. I-77 switchback at top of Rushy Mountain is a high crash location
35. I-81 exit 17 (Abingdon) - reconfiguration may help with current safety problems

Congestion

PECC, Travel Time Index

36. Key issue is trucks slowing down while climbing - worsened by congestion with increased traffic in summer, and during bad winter weather
37. Fancy Gap - fog is key concern here, don't have lighting in the road yet (as was done at I-64 Afton Mtn crossing in Nelson/ Albemarle)
38. I-77N onto I-81 - significant beach traffic - the recent widening has helped, but truck climbing lanes are needed. Exacerbated by GPS systems that tell drivers to merge left some two miles before it's needed, causing slower drivers to move from the right lane into the left lane much too early
39. Crooked Road from Damascus to White Top Mtn - slowdowns are likely due to scenic, curvy nature of roadway
40. Congestion caused by people attempting to use alternate route to avoid I-77 tunnel slowdowns

Reliability

Unreliable Delay, Buffer Time Index

41. This apparent slowdown is probably due to recent bridge construction
42. Slowdown is due to curves in roadway
43. Rte 52 south (Exit 8) alternate route to I-77 backup, and also a commuter route from Grayson and Carroll to Wythe and Pulaski. Slowdown is exacerbated by a neckdown from 4 lanes to 2 lanes.
44. Slowdown may be construction-related, but it is a busy area with lots of through traffic in town, people accessing hospital and Walmart. Need signalization and turning movement improvements.

Travel Options for Disadvantaged Populations

Disadvantaged population with ¼ mile of fixed route transit

45. Mtn Lynx transit generally covers PDC 3 region
46. Nursing home in Marion

Accessibility to Activity Centers

Transit deficit to local-serving and knowledge-based activity centers

47. Virginia Highlands Community College and the following colleges and universities should be considered for additional activity centers
48. Wytheville Community College
49. Southwest Community College
50. New River Community College
51. Emory University
52. Bluefield Community College
53. King University

iii. WRITTEN COMMENTS

The following section lists the written input from participants who chose to fill out the printed comment sheet in their meeting packets. Key points and concepts from this input are reflected in Table 2 (Synthesis of Comments). Some participants planned to send comments to OIPI staff after the meeting; input from these post-meeting messages may not be captured in this meeting summary, but OIPI is considering all continued input during the development of the needs assessment.

CONGESTION

Does Congestion affect this region's economic competitiveness? If so - where, how, and why?

- Congestion here is seasonal and incident related. Accidents/ incidents are more frequent on I-81 and affect its reliability.
- Yes - US 23 through Weber City/ Gate City area (Scott County) experiences significant congestion throughout the week with traffic volumes approaching 25,000/day.
- Not really enough population to have congestion

Percent Person-Miles Traveled in Excessively Congested Conditions (PECC)

Does this measure reveal the region's needs as YOU perceive them? If not, why?

- Yes - commuter traffic to Kingsport

Do you have an opinion on the Analysis threshold?

- Single Occupant Vehicle (SOV) is predominant along US 23/ 58/ 421 (Gate City/ Weber City area)

Travel Time Index (TTI)

Does this measure reveal the region's needs as YOU perceive them? If not, why?

- Yes - lengthy trip time to Norton/ Wise/ Kingsport
- Yes - very important

Do you have an opinion on the Analysis threshold?

- [no comments]

In addition to the analysis of statewide measures, what other data or information could help us to pinpoint mid-term needs associated with congestion?

- Lack of economic growth in Scott County
- Developers of business parks and retail want unlimited access (curb cuts) along major thoroughfares (US 53, US 58, SR 224, SR71, SR 72).
- We need local and regional data to make informed decisions and to justify funding requests

RELIABILITY

Does travel time reliability affect this region's economic competitiveness? If so - where, how, and why?

- Travel time reliability is important long commutes to Bristol and Kingsport
- Yes, travel time affects everything in our area.

Person Delay During Unreliable Conditions (UD)

Does this measure reveal the region's needs as YOU perceive them? If not, why?

- Delay = time for other needs

Do you have an opinion on the Analysis threshold?

- Delay/ person costs \$

Buffer Time Index (BTI)

Does this measure reveal the region's needs as YOU perceive them? If not, why?

- Unfortunate that this has to be built in.

Do you have an opinion on the Analysis threshold?

- [no comments]

In addition to the analysis of statewide measures, what other data or information could help us to pinpoint mid-term associated with travel time reliability in this region?

- Local measures are very important.

PASSENGER RAIL ON-TIME PERFORMANCE

Does passenger rail on-time performance affect this region's economic competitiveness? If so - where, how, and why?

- Rail transport is non-existent.
- No - not available in Bristol district
- Rail service expansion is of interest. Priority for passenger rail: improving reliability/ capacity on existing roads. DRPT is not investing in this at this time, but the Virginia Breeze intercity bus could fill this need, and help to gauge the potential ridership for passenger rail. New routes are being studied in southside Virginia (Danville, Martinsville). Future service from Blacksburg to Bristol could be explored.

Accessibility to Activity Centers

Is accessibility to activity centers a concern for this region? If so- where, how, and why?

- Industrial areas face difficult access due to inadequate turning radii and narrow roads.
- Yes, especially medical services and social services
- Yes, to get to employment
- American Merchant site on Old Abingdon Highway in Bristol - restricted width at railroad underpass
- Bristol-Washington County Industrial Park on Lee Highway between interchange Exits 10 and 13 - no direct access to I-81, [need] oversize load access
- Piedmont Ave bridge in downtown Bristol - weight posted 17T/ 26T

Transit Deficit to Activity Centers

Does this measure reveal the region's needs as YOU perceive them? If not, why?

- Yes, definitely
- Yes

Do you have an opinion on the Analysis threshold?

- Good measure

In addition to the analysis of statewide measures, what other data or information could help us to pinpoint mid-term needs associated with accessibility to activity centers in this region?

- Add Ager Industrial Park Wytheville on Stafford-Umberger Drive near I-81 Exit 70
- Pedestrian safety I-81 Exit 70 Rt 52/21 between northwinds apartments and town (Wytheville)
- Access to Progress Park via I-77 Exit 41/ I-81 Exit 73
- Traffic control at I-81 Exits 78 and 80
- Local info helps us to see needs for service

TRAVEL OPTIONS FOR DISADVANTAGED POPULATIONS

Is the availability of travel options for disadvantaged populations a concern for this region? If so - where, how, and why?

- The current system does not anticipate the unique needs of FLEXIBLE-FIXED route transit in small towns
- Yes - we have a high percentage of elderly population and medical needs for people with disabilities
- Yes, we do paratransit

Disadvantaged Population Beyond ¼ Mile Access To Transit Service

Does this measure reveal the region's needs as YOU perceive them? If not, why?

- Yes
- Yes - helps us to see needs of service
- Looks like the maps don't take into account deviated fixed route systems in Grayson, other sectors

Do you have an opinion on the Analysis threshold?

- Important measurement

In addition to the analysis of statewide measures, what other data or information could help us to pinpoint mid term needs associated with travel options for disadvantaged populations in this region?

- Overlay fixed- and non-fixed-transit service areas (including “deviated fixed-route”) so you could clearly see the gaps and clearly see where and existing service could be more easily expanded.

SAFETY

Is traveler safety a concern for this region? If so - where, how, and why?

- Yes. Pedestrian use in areas without sidewalks, and truck traffic on I-81 causing accidents and delays.
- #1 - especially at major thoroughfares.
- Yes - [in addition to passenger vehicles/ trucks] bike/ped and motorcycles are a huge safety concern

Vehicular Crashes

Does this measure reveal the region’s needs as YOU perceive them? If not, why?

- The current system seems to be biased against safety issues in rural low volume roads. Big safety issues with few people at risk are a low priority.
- Yes
- Measure bike/ped safety and motorcycles, too; [develop a] CoSS for bikes.
- Overlay accidents per vehicle miles traveled onto crash charts to make the measure more meaningful.
- Suggest a “potential conflict” measure, not just crashes. Charlottesville VA Transportation Research Council can train localities on this.

Do you have an opinion on the Analysis threshold?

- #1 in importance.

In addition to the analysis of statewide measures, what other data or information could help us to pinpoint mid-term needs associated with safety in this region?

- Provide funding source for pedestrian improvements that are NOT streetscapes.
- Local data drives everything - as they say, politics are all local

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

Please provide your thoughts about mid-term transportation needs related to economic development in this region’s activity centers, urban development areas, and/ or industrial development areas.

- The urban development area concept is vague. Urban development in our town is promoted and active, but our town is not listed as a UDA.
- Bristol district does not have UDAs

- Economic development (VEDP) sites are a good measure of VTrans needs.
- Don't forget tourism/ retirement areas that may be outside a UDA.
- VEDP measures for sites should be relaxed in rural communities that may not have the resources get a site to a 3 or 4, but do have an economic development transportation need.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

What did you find most useful about this workshop?

- Helped identify problem areas/ sites
- Loved it brought people together
- Discussion at tables was great. Would be even better if tables were further apart - could hear better.

What could we do to make future workshops better?

- Bring more specific data for problem areas
- Send data before meeting to review
- My agency rep registered me but I didn't get the actual calendar invite with map location of meeting, etc. and my name was not on the invite list.

Do you have any concerns or questions we didn't get a chance to discuss today?

- US 23 should (MUST) be added to list of CoSS.