

**Bedford/Franklin Regional Rail Initiative (BFRRI)**  
**Rationale for a Bedford Amtrak Station**  
**June 30, 2015**

SUBJECT: Bedford Amtrak Station – Why an Amtrak station in Bedford makes sense.

- I. **BACKGROUND:** In January of 2014 outgoing Governor Bob McDonnell approved the agreement to extend Amtrak rail passenger service from Lynchburg to Roanoke, Virginia. The train would pass through the Town of Bedford, but no plans were made for it to stop there. Citizens, the Bedford County Board of Supervisors, the Franklin County Board of Supervisors and the Bedford Town Council have reviewed the issue and find compelling reasons for an Amtrak Station in Bedford serving the Bedford/Franklin Region.
  
- II. **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:** BFRRI has reviewed in depth letters on this subject from the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DPRT) and has examined each point raised by DPRT. We find the following:
  - The Population Center surrounding a Bedford station would approach 91,000 people, a significant number with a high demographic naturally inclined to rail passenger service
  - The Bedford/Franklin "Travel Shed" favors a Town of Bedford Station because travel to Lynchburg requires time that discourages use of passenger rail compared to the convenience afforded by a Bedford station.
  - Station spacing including a Bedford stop significantly exceeds station spacing already provided by the very trains expected to be extended to Roanoke
  - Because the Bedford/Franklin area features tourism attractions not found in either Lynchburg or Roanoke, a stop in Bedford would facilitate tourism ridership not feasible via the other stations
  - The proposed location of a Bedford Station is significantly more convenient than either Lynchburg or Roanoke because of close in parking, much less traffic, and the intent to utilize a state-of-the-art retractable high-level platform currently being developed for the Keystone Corridor in Pennsylvania.
  - The Town of Bedford owns the land on which the proposed station is to be located and has committed that land to be used for the station.
  - Time loss/schedule impact is estimated at three to five minutes. This is based on an examination of many existing Amtrak schedules (notably including the very trains that will be extended to Roanoke), as well as service provided by the former Norfolk & Western.
  - The only times affected would be the Roanoke arrival and departure times.
  - Incremental cost of track improvements for a Bedford Station would be nil, as the proposed location is on the existing main track of Norfolk Southern, adjacent to a lengthy passing siding (which would allow

freight train passing, if needed) and bounded by land owned by the Town of Bedford.

- Several potential funding sources have been identified for the incremental cost of the retractable high-level platform.

III. **REVIEW AND ANALYSIS:** The following is a summary of the major considerations BFRRI believes to be the basis of further discussions with the Commonwealth of Virginia on the issue of a Bedford Regional Train Station.

A. Population Centers: Population density and growth projections for the future have particular significance for new passenger rail services as they, along with projections of incoming traffic (e.g., tourism – see below) are important drivers for ridership.

i. Current Density:

US Census Bureau Data.

	Bedford County	Franklin County (North County = ¼ of total including Smith Mtn. Lake)	Total
Population	76,583	14,090	90,673
Persons/ Square Mile	91	81.3	86
Total # of Firms	5,647	1,273	6,920

ii. Growth: Population density and its growth projections for the future have particular significance for new passenger rail services as it, along with projected incoming traffic, is one of the primary driver for ridership. The projected growth of both Bedford and Campbell Counties is similar, (i.e., approximately 2.3% per year according to the US Census Bureau).

iii. Projected Ridership: The Bedford/Franklin Regional ridership should take into consideration the demographics of the area that may reflect differing ridership potential and needs, such as the demand for convenient, rider friendly facilities. For example, people of age 65 years and older (20.2% for Franklin County, 18.6% for Bedford County, compared to 13.4% for Virginia) represent retirees with greater leisure opportunities, but who also may have special needs in accessing and boarding trains. Plans for the Bedford Station will focus on the use of same-level boarding platforms to avoid

the need to use the stairs of the train's passenger cars. These amenities should draw new and more reliable ridership above and beyond those riders currently utilizing the Lynchburg station.

- B. “Travel Shed”: The concept of a “travel shed” is often used to define the potential for ridership based on the area within which a traveler would find it more convenient to choose a particular station over another, given the distance between stations and time required to travel to access a particular station.
- i. “Travel Shed” as Measured by Distance Between Existing Stations: The Town of Bedford is located approximately 25 miles from Lynchburg's Kemper Street Amtrak Station and approximately 28 miles from Roanoke Virginia. This places the Bedford Station further from both the Lynchburg station and the Roanoke station than four station pairs found between Lynchburg and Washington DC (Manassas-Burke Centre-Alexandria-L'Enfant Plaza-Union Station), which indicates that distance alone is not, in and of itself, determinative in evaluating station locations, as shown by existing station stops on the Amtrak Regional trains extended to Lynchburg.
  - ii. Lynchburg Station “Travel Shed” Time Considerations: Commute time from the Town of Bedford to either Lynchburg or Roanoke is about 30 - 40 minutes. Applying this criterion of time needed to reach the Lynchburg or Roanoke station from Bedford, those travelers originating in the Bedford/Franklin Region outside of the Town of Bedford would require additional the time to reach Bedford, the transportation hub of most major transportation arteries. Adding the time required to reach the Town of Bedford is a 30 to 40 minutes of drive for most Franklin County and Smith Mountain Lake residents. The total time currently required to travel to the Lynchburg or Roanoke station would therefore be 60 to 80 minutes (i.e., 30 to 40 minutes to Bedford, plus another 30 to 40 minutes to Lynchburg or Roanoke). A station located in Bedford would accomplish far more than merely shift ridership from Lynchburg's station; it would increase total new riders due to time-savings alone. In addition, ridership shifts are far more likely to occur from Roanoke than from Lynchburg, for the simple reason that shifting from Roanoke inherently reduces total travel time, whereas shifting from Lynchburg would increase travel time. In either event, a Bedford Station offers the more convenient location to catch the train.

- iii. Bedford “Travel Shed”: Applying an analysis of “travel sheds” to a Bedford Station (i.e., using a Bedford station in downtown Bedford as the destination) reveals that a population of approximately 52,000 residents live within the Bedford “travel shed.” That is, there are 52,000 potential travelers who are closer to the Town of Bedford than to either the Lynchburg station or the Roanoke station., as noted below:

BFRRRI “Travel Shed” Analysis

	Bedford County	Franklin County (Northern, including Smith Mtn. Lake)	Total
Population	45,582	6,355	51,937

- C. Incoming Traffic –Tourism: It is important to note the potential for ridership of incoming traffic (i.e., travelers who originate their travels from outside the referenced markets) when computing projections of total ridership. Bedford/Franklin Regional tourism is an extremely important element of the local economies, both current and projected. It is a major draw for tourists originating along the Northeast rail system. The Town of Bedford is located at the transportation hub of the region, with four major state routes intersecting each other at the Town and radiating out in seven directions into and from the Town of Bedford. Tourism is and will be a primary economic driver for the Bedford/Franklin Region. The region boasts such popular attractions as Smith Mountain Lake, the Blue Ridge Parkway, D-Day Memorial, Booker T. Washington National Monument, Jefferson’s Poplar Forest, the Blue Ridge Mountain Region, numerous country fairs and wine festivals, Bed & Breakfasts, Lodges, historic downtown Bedford, etc. Ignoring tourism in its analysis does a disservice to Amtrak as well as the Bedford/Franklin Region and its community.
  
- D. Station “Convenience” factors: The Federal Railroad Association’s (FRA) planning document for high-speed and intercity passenger rail, which calls for locating stations “... where it is most convenient and in close proximity to destinations that maximize initial ridership.” Convenience considerations extend to the amenities of the station itself. Here, the proposed Bedford Station excels, with particular and specific attention given to the unique requirements of Bedford/Franklin Regional ridership:
  - i. Station Location: The Bedford Station is easily located just one block of Main Street of a small town.

- ii. **Parking:** The Bedford Station distinguishes itself in proposing over 90 parking, spaces, all at the same level as, and adjacent to, the boarding platform. Intermodal transportation is equally located and accessible.
  - iii. **Security:** Late night arrival of trains raises concerns about personal security. The proposed Bedford Station is in a central, well-lit, easily accessed part of town, with low, if not non-existent, crime.
  - iv. **Access:** The proposed Bedford Station anticipates state of the art access for all travelers with transfer to and from trains made easy with adjacent parking and convenient loading and unloading using same level access.
- E. **Time-Loss (Stopping More Frequently):** A review of Amtrak schedules reveals that additional stops require three to five minutes, depending on various factors. The Bedford Station, located on the main track, is expected to easily fall within that range. Stoppage time would be kept to a minimum with the plans for the Bedford Station to include to the maximum extent practical same level boarding and disembarking platform facilities. In addition, there would be no changes in schedules of train stops east of Bedford with the addition of a station in Bedford when the Roanoke extension is realized: The three+ minute difference would be simply be factored into the Roanoke arrival and departure times of the newly introduced service.
- F. **Cost of Track Improvements and Platform:**
- i. **Preserving Freight Capacity and Allowing for Safe Passenger Rail Service:** Studies performed for Norfolk Southern and available on the Internet, show conclusively that a stop in Bedford will not impact freight railroad schedules as the train will already be passing through the town. Amtrak merely has to stop, and the above-referenced studies show that the three-to-five minute additional running time between Lynchburg and Roanoke would not affect any freight schedules.
  - ii. **Track Improvements, Sidings, Crossovers:** The station location selected by BFRRI eliminates the need for any changes in track improvements, sidings, crossovers, servicing facilities, turning facilities, configurations, etc. The train will be passing through the Town of Bedford and merely has to stop on the existing rail configuration. The need for these additional expenses appears to be either non-existent or minimal. BFRRI is confident that a thorough and professional independent assessment would

verify that there are no required improvements and associated costs.

- iii. Platform: BFRRI believes the above points show conclusively that the best interests of the Bedford/Franklin "Travel Shed" would be served by a Bedford Station, with insignificant impact to the freight traffic and a high potential for a favorable impact on ridership.

IV. **CONCLUSION:** BFRRI has found sufficient grounds to place a regional passenger rail station in the Town of Bedford and invites senior representatives of DRPT and the Commonwealth Transportation Board to meet to review the BFRRI findings, mindful of the need to meet in time to have a Bedford Station ready for service upon the extension of passenger service to Roanoke.

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