

# DRIVING CHANGE IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

The Transformative Impact of the  
Afton Express Commuter Bus Service



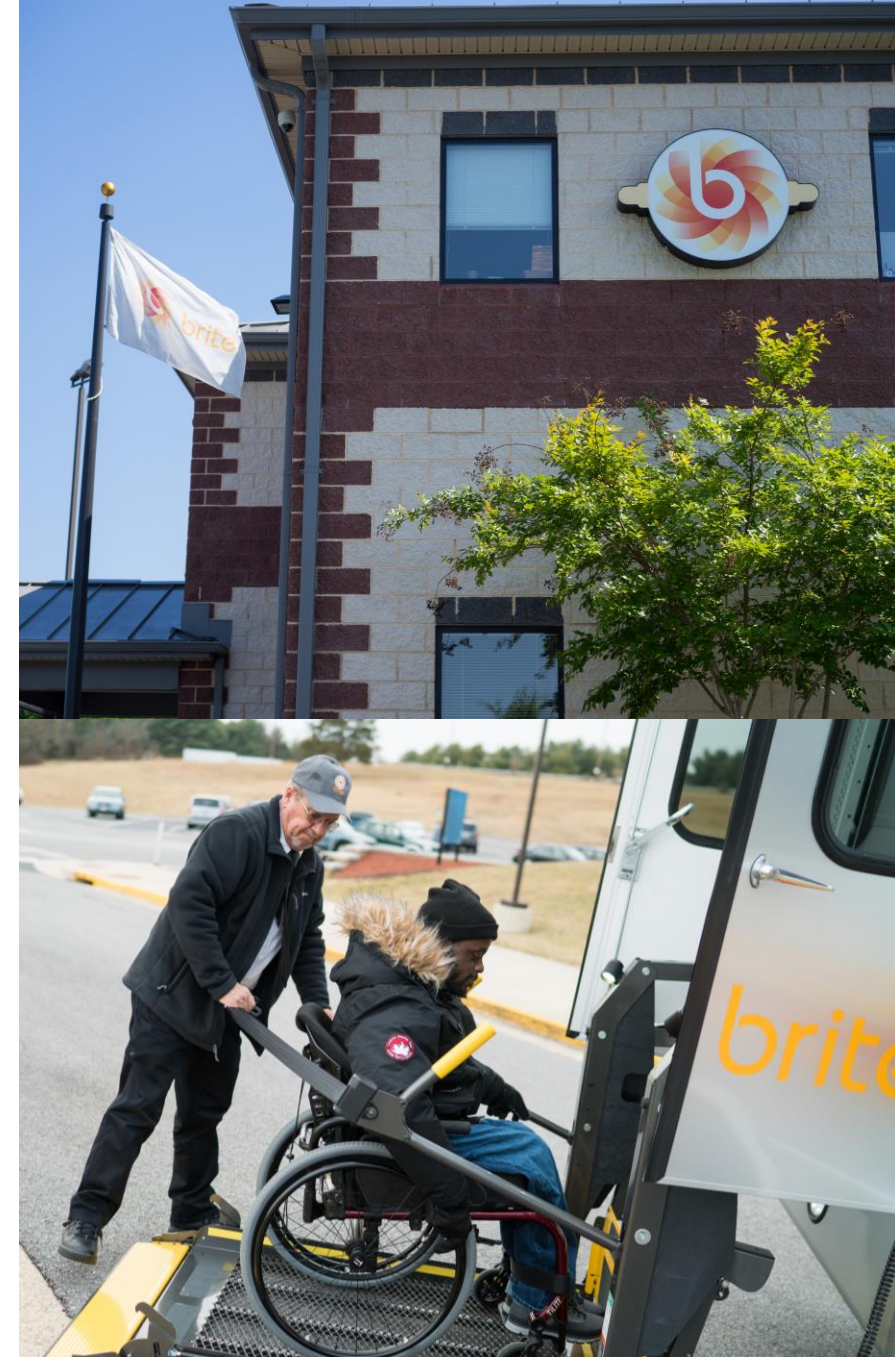
# INTRODUCTION

- Who are we?
- Overview of the Afton Express
- How'd we get here?
- Lessons learned
- Impact



# BRITE TRANSIT SYSTEM

- Regional Public Transportation System
  - City of Staunton, City of Waynesboro, & Augusta County (Stuarts Draft, Fishersville, Verona, Weyers Cave)
- Both Rural & Small Urban Service; Funded through Federal & State Programs with Local Match
- Fixed Route & Paratransit Service
- Turnkey Service Contract with Virginia Regional Transit

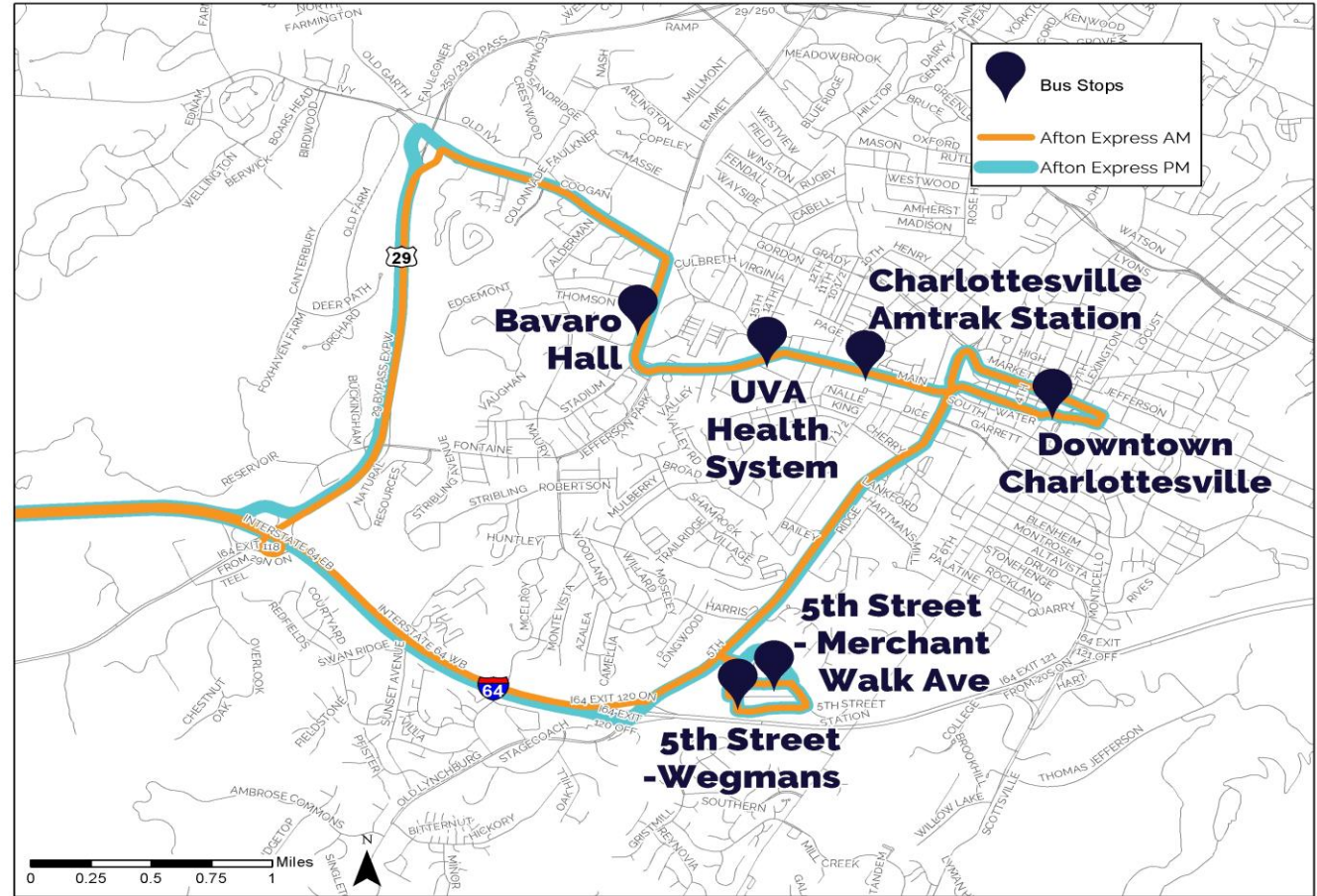


# THE AFTON EXPRESS



# ROUTES & STOPS

- Staunton Mall
- BRITE Transit Facility
- Waynesboro Park & Ride Lot
- University of Virginia – Bavaro Hall
- University of Virginia Hospital Complex
- Fontaine Research Park (UVA)
- West Main Street & Amtrak
- Charlottesville Downtown Transit Center
- OMNI Hotel & Downtown Walking Mall
- Wegmans & 5<sup>th</sup> Street Station



**OUR DRIVE. YOUR DESTINATION.**



# FARES & AMENITIES

\$3 per one-way trip

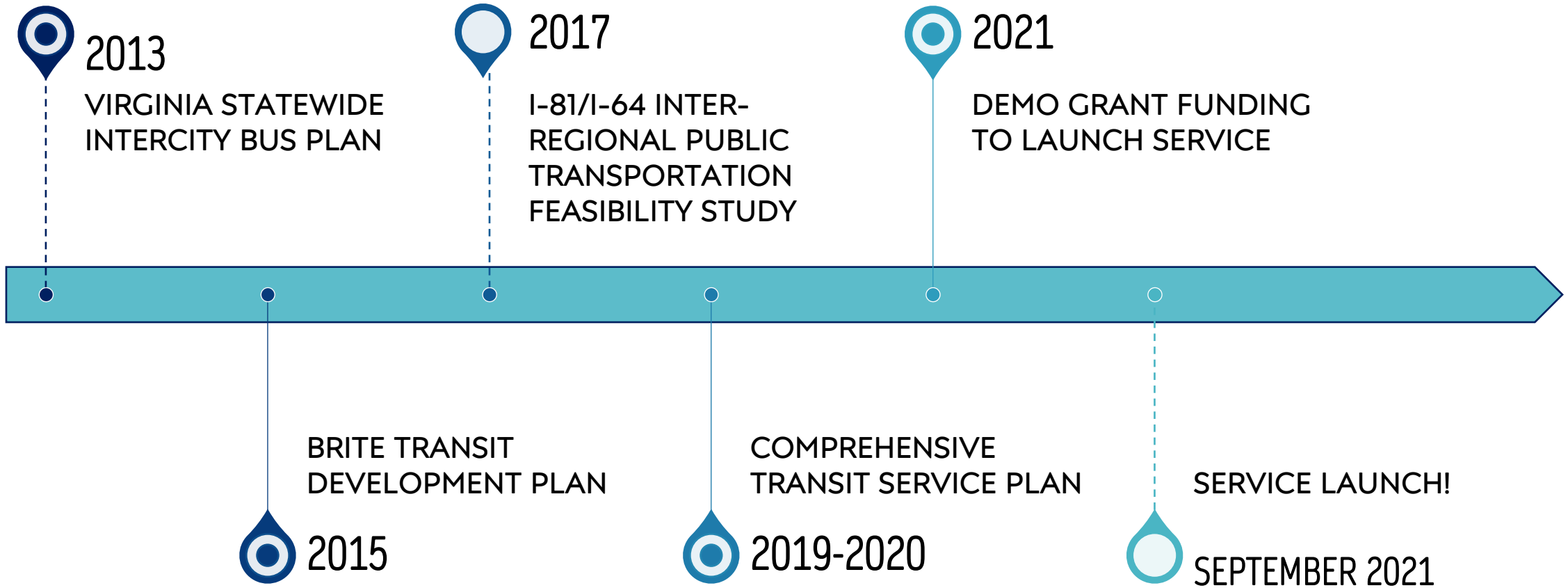
10-trip farecards available for \$25

Plush, comfortable seats

Free Wi-Fi on board

Luggage rack

# BACKGROUND & TIMELINE



# FUNDING

- Demonstration Funding from DRPT
  - 80% state / 20% local
- 4-Year Commitment to Match from local partners
  - Split between east & west regions
- Fare revenue
- 5311 Rural Transit Program funding (as of FY24)
  - 50% state / 50% local



## LOCAL PARTNERS



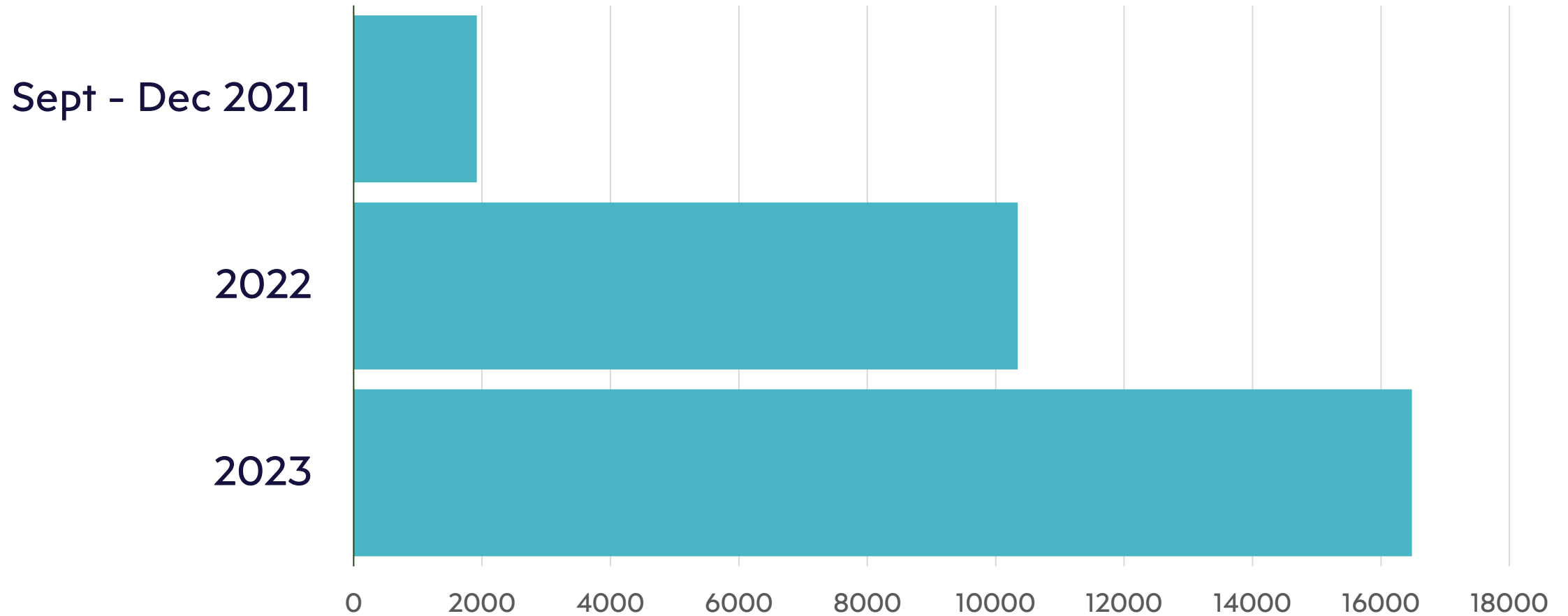
Albemarle County  
Augusta County  
City of Charlottesville  
City of Staunton  
City of Waynesboro  
University of Virginia

# DEMONSTRATION PERIOD (FY21 – FY23)

| Pre-Launch/Development | Planning, Branding, Marketing   |
|------------------------|---|
| September 2021         | Launch!   |
| June 2022              | Began expansion planning; acquired additional bus   |
| September 2022         | One-Year Celebration (Outreach, marketing)  |
| October 2022           | Revised timetable/schedule to reflect traffic conditions  |
| February 2023          | Expanded schedule: Added PM trip and bi-directional trips (Big marketing campaign with expansion) |
| July 2023              | Rolled Afton Express into BRITE System & Funding  |

# RIDERSHIP

## Total Passenger Trips



# PRESENT DAY & FUTURE

## FISCAL YEAR 2024

- Transition to funding through the 5311 Program
- Staunton Crossing Park & Ride Lot
- Additional Stop – Fontaine Research Park

## FISCAL YEAR 2025

- Expanded partnerships with local employers & schools
- Added trip times in AM and/or PM

## FISCAL YEAR 2026

- Added trip times in AM and/or PM
- Crozet Park & Ride Lot

# CHALLENGES & LESSONS LEARNED

- Driver Shortage; Staffing Capacity
- More Service vs. Express
- Diverse Employee Work Schedules
- Keeping Costs Low
- Multimodal Lot Maintenance



# IMPACT

- Decrease in Single-Occupancy Vehicle Trips along I-64 Corridor
- A useful tool in shifting mindsets and changing behavior among commuters
- Access to jobs/training, creating new opportunities
- Creating a space to talk about transit needs with stakeholders
- **HAPPY COMMUTERS!**





“Offers a great alternative to me as a nurse who works nightshift to get home safe without fear of falling asleep while driving after working all night.”

“The service is safe, reliable, and affordable. It has helped me save money during my first year at school and I am so grateful for it.”

“If not for the Afton Express and the low price to ride, I would not have been able to work at the main campus of UVA.”

# QUESTIONS





**GROUP DISCUSSION**

**What is the biggest challenge you experience in your role while working in rural areas?**

# CONTACT

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