



Joint Statement of Support

**Bedford Area and the Smith Mountain Lake Regional Chambers of Commerce
Subject: AMTRAK Rail service to Bedford**

In December, 2013, the Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia announced an agreement to extend the Lynchburg rail line to Roanoke by 2017. The slated passenger service will travel through the center, downtown section of the Town of Bedford, but will not stop. When several local government and private sector organizations, legislators, and concerned citizens asked for a reconsideration, Aubrey Layne, the Commonwealth's Secretary of Transportation, cited in a 14 February letter to Bedford County, "policies and best practices for station location decisions" as providing the rationale to bypass Bedford. The Secretary emphasized such factors as population density, growth, and the importance of citing stations in "regional centers of activity where it is most convenient and in close proximity to destinations that maximize initial ridership."

While finding no fault with the criteria for evaluation, the Bedford and Smith Mountain Lake Chambers respectfully disagree with their application, especially with regard to the population served. The Bedford station would serve far more than only the population of Bedford (6,200); in fact it would serve the majority of Bedford County (69,800) and the Smith Mountain Lake region including parts of northern Franklin County, areas that now find travel to the Lynchburg station, and likely the new one in Roanoke, tedious, costly and inconvenient with woefully inadequate parking. We'd conservatively estimate the served population for the Bedford stop during the off peak season to be about 60,000 and possibly in excess of 75,000 in the summer months when tourists flock to Smith Mountain Lake, the D-Day Memorial, Jefferson's Poplar Forest, the Peaks of Otter and the Appalachian Trail, to name a few attractions. Moreover the region's population growth is estimated to be a respectable 1.9% per year, but looking at that in isolation ignores the even faster growth rates in the mid-Atlantic region, a key demographic for the areas tourist and retirement venues who, we believe, would find an AMTRAK stop in Bedford an attractive incentive.

The Bedford Area and Smith Mountain Lake Regional Chambers urge the Commonwealth to once again reconsider a rail stop in Bedford. We find it inconceivable that train service might be routed through the heart of our region but would deny our businesses and citizens convenient access along with the economic development and increased tourism that would surely result.

Approved by the Board of Directors, Bedford Area Chamber of Commerce – 5/27/14

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jeff Wood".

**Jeff Wood, Chairman
BACC Board of Directors**