

MINUTES
NVTC COMMISSION MEETING – JULY 2, 2009
NVTC CONFERENCE ROOM, ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA

The meeting of the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission was called to order by Chairman Zimmerman at 6:50 P.M.

Members Present

David Albo
Charles Badger
Sharon Bulova
Adam Ebbin
William D. Euille
John Foust
Mark R. Herring
Catherine Hudgins
Dan Maller
Joe May
Jeffrey McKay
Thomas Rust
Christopher Zimmerman

Members Absent

Kelly Burk
Jay Fisette
Jeffrey Greenfield
Pat Herrity
Mary Hynes
Paul Smedberg
Mary Margaret Whipple

Staff Present

Lynn Everett
Rhonda Gilchrest
Corey Hill (DRPT)
Scott Kalkwarf
Greg McFarland
Adam McGavock
Kala Quintana
Jennifer Straub (VRE)
Rick Taube
Dale Zehner (VRE)

Chairman Zimmerman suggested that while the commission waits for a quorum, Corey Hill begin his presentation. There were no objections.

Briefing on I-95/395 HOT Lanes Bus Rapid Transit Operational Study

Mr. Hill gave an overview of the study and the transit/TDM study recommendations, which include \$137 million in capital projects and \$161 million in operating costs over a 20-year period. He then reviewed the BRT Operational Study analysis.

Delegate Ebbin arrived at 6:56 P.M.

In response to a question from Chairman Zimmerman, Mr. Hill explained that they are trying to take advantage of existing transit service and stations, so there will be new service as well as modifications to existing service. In response to a question from Mrs. Bulova, Mr. Hill reviewed the proposed station locations and stated that the Franconia/Springfield station is not being tested in the BRT study. There is a time sensitivity issue to keep riders moving. If a bus has to come off I-395 and go to Franconia/Springfield station, pick up riders and then come back out to I-395, it takes a long time and the attractiveness of the service drops. However, the Franconia/Springfield station could be a termination or an origination point. Mrs. Bulova observed that people will want to get on the new HOT lanes from the communities that are near the HOT lanes construction.

Mr. Hill announced that the preliminary BRT study recommendations should be finalized in the next three weeks and the draft report completed in August 2009. Coordinated activities include the ARRA Stimulus Proposal due in September 2009 and the I-66 Transit/TDM study in November 2009.

Chairman Zimmerman observed that a quorum has been reached and he suggested the commission move forward to action items and then return to this item later in the meeting to allow commissioners to ask questions. There were no objections.

Minutes of the June 4, 2009 NVTC Meeting

Mr. Euille moved, with a second by Mr. Maller, to approve the minutes. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Albo, Badger, Bulova, Ebbin, Euille, Foust, Herring, Maller, McKay, Rust and Zimmerman.

VRE Items

Report from the VRE Operations Board. Mr. Zehner reported that VRE's year-to-date on-time performance has increased by three percent systemwide. VRE has issued a RFP for a service provider. Amtrak has been VRE's sole source provider since VRE's inception. He reported that 16 vendors, including Amtrak, attended the required pre-proposal conference. Proposals are due at the end of August with the provider to begin service in July 2010.

Modify Contract for New Locomotives. Mrs. Bulova reported that the VRE Operations Board recommends approval of Resolution #2125, which would authorize VRE's CEO to modify the contract with Motive Power, Inc., to increase the base order to 12 from nine locomotives. This increases the contract value to \$48.5 million, an increase of \$12 million including contingency. The unit price of the new locomotives remains the same at just under \$3.7 million. Grant funds are available for this purchase.

On a motion by Mrs. Bulova and a second by Mr. McKay, the commission unanimously approved the resolution (copy attached). The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Albo, Badger, Bulova, Ebbin, Euille, Foust, Herring, Maller, McKay, Rust and Zimmerman.

Extend Contract with CSXT. Mrs. Bulova stated that Resolution #2126 would extend the operating access agreement with CSXT through January 31, 2010. The current agreement expires July 31, 2009. Failure to agree on the level of liability protection has delayed completion of a new contract.

Mrs. Bulova moved, with a second by Mr. Foust, to approve Resolution #2126 (copy attached). The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Albo, Badger, Bulova, Ebbin, Euille, Foust, Herring, Maller, McKay, Rust and Zimmerman.

Extend Contract with Norfolk Southern. Mrs. Bulova reported that Resolution #2127 would extend the operating access agreement with Norfolk Southern through January 31, 2010, since the current contract extension expires July 31, 2009. Liability protection issues have also delayed the completion of a new contract.

Mrs. Bulova moved, with a second by Mr. Foust, to approve the resolution.

In response to a question from Delegate Rust, Mr. Zehner stated that the railroads want VRE to have \$500 million in liability insurance. VRE currently has \$250 million in insurance. Following this discussion, the commission unanimously approved

the resolution (copy attached). The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Albo, Badger, Bulova, Ebbin, Euille, Foust, Herring, Maller, McKay, Rust and Zimmerman.

Gainesville-Haymarket Alternatives Analysis Report. Mrs. Bulova stated that the VRE Operations Board asked that the commissions be briefed on this item prior to the release of the RFP for the Gainesville-Haymarket Environmental Analysis and preliminary engineering services. Mr. Zehner provided an overview of the results provided to the Operations Board of the recently competed Gainesville-Haymarket Alternatives Analysis. The next step in the project development process is to procure engineering and environmental services to conduct environmental analysis to fulfill National Environmental Policy Act requirements and to prepare the preliminary engineering and design. The scope of work for this phase includes defining and analyzing various implementation alternatives; identifying potentially affected environments; conducting a capacity study to determine rail infrastructure needs; developing various design options for the proposed extension (including right-of-way acquisition and potential station locations); and refining the general project scope of work, project cost estimate, time line, and ridership projections developed for the Alternatives Analysis. The environmental analysis and preliminary engineering work will take approximately three years to compete. Upon receipt and review of proposals, VRE staff will return to the Operations Board with a recommendation for award. Mr. Zehner stated that this project has garnered a great deal of interest from people living in the Gainesville-Haymarket area.

Delegate May arrived at 7:19 P.M.

Mr. Badger stated that there are significant costs involved with this project and it is appropriate for policy makers to look at this before proceeding. Mr. Zehner stated that the Environmental Analysis is not completed yet and therefore cost estimates are not available. Mr. Badger stated that there are preliminary numbers. Mr. Zehner stated that Mr. Badger is correct that there will be substantial costs for this project (\$150 - \$250 million). Following the Environmental Analysis and preliminary engineering, which will cost \$5 million, solid cost estimates will be available.

Delegate Rust observed that the projected capital costs seem to be coming down. Mr. Zimmerman explained that these reductions are the result of NS putting in a signal system and therefore, VRE will not have to do it. Chairman Zimmerman observed that the recommendation of award by the Operations Board is expected in November 2009. This will provide some time to look at the numbers that will be available soon.

Delegate Albo asked if the region really wants to spend \$5 million on analysis of a project that the region has not yet committed to funding. Chairman Zimmerman stated that would be a question that needs to be answered in November.

Mr. Maller disclosed that he will recuse himself from any action concerning this project because he has a potential conflict of interest since one of his clients owns a piece of property in the service area, which may be the location of a proposed station, and Mr. Maller has a personal financial interest in the affected property.

Delegate Albo asked why it costs \$250 million for an extension project that is basically a new station and parking lot. Mr. Zehner stated that cost estimates for service from Manassas to Haymarket include at least one more rail line, three stations, and three parking garages. If the service is only extended from Manassas to Gainesville, the costs would be significantly lower.

In response to a question from Delegate Rust, Mr. Zehner explained that the analysis shows that rail in this corridor would carry many more people than bus-only on I-66.

Delegate May expressed his opinion that this extension is a good idea because for every car that can be taken off I-66, the entire corridor benefits. There is interest in this project from the business community. He stated that he would like to see the project move forward.

PRTC Resolution. Mr. Taube explained that a copy of a resolution to be discussed and acted upon at PRTC's July 9th meeting has been provided to NVTC at the request of VRE counsel. The resolution would provide authorization to execute a proffer statement for zoning reclassification of a parcel at Leeland Road VRE Station in Stafford County. NVTC does not need to take any action.

Authorize Purchase of Mobile Data Terminals for Alexandria's Real-Time Bus Information Project

Mr. Taube explained that the commission is asked to authorize NVTC's executive director to spend \$37,288 of existing project grant funds to equip DASH buses with mobile data terminals. NVTC is currently managing a contract with Strategic Mapping, Inc., to install a passenger information system on the Alexandria DASH bus system using a federal earmark. Alexandria DASH wishes to enhance this system with the addition of mobile data terminals on each of their 62 vehicles. The terminals will allow

the DASH drivers to better maintain schedules, monitor the passenger information system and will allow for the broadcasting of alerts and emergency notifications.

Mr. Euille moved, with a second by Mr. McKay, to authorize the executive director to spend \$37,288 of project funds to equip DASH buses with mobile data terminals. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Albo, Badger, Bulova, Ebbin, Euille, Foust, Herring, Maller, May, McKay, Rust and Zimmerman.

Mr. Euille left the meeting at 7:32 P.M. and did not return.

Continuation of the Briefing on I-95/395 HOT Lanes BRT Operational Study

Chairman Zimmerman opened the floor for questions on the earlier briefing by Mr. Hill.

Chairman Zimmerman asked about off-corridor improvements. Mr. Hill responded that it does not make sense to invest in corridor improvements and then lose commuting time because there are back-ups getting off the HOT lanes, so off-corridor improvements are being analyzed. Chairman Zimmerman stated that it is important to look at on and off locations. If in-line stations are built then basically no development around the station is available. Mr. Hill stated that in-line stations as well as direct access ramps will be analyzed. Chairman Zimmerman observed that while it is good to model new service, there is already existing service and it is important to look at how to integrate it all.

Mr. McKay asked about how to get people from the Lorton Station to Fort Belvoir. Mr. Hill agreed that this is a huge task. He agreed that there needs to be better access. Mr. McKay stated that existing bus service to Fort Belvoir is already heavily used. He is still unconvinced that Franconia/Springfield should not be considered a BRT station. He also observed that there are distinct differences between the two sides of I-95 in Springfield area. It merits another look and he suggested looking at doing something on the west side of I-95. He stated that it is important not to assume that when buses arrive at the Franconia/Springfield station that people will switch to rail. Many people prefer riding the bus rather than rail. Delegate Albo agreed that there will be many people coming from the south into the Springfield area and Fort Belvoir. Chairman Zimmerman stated that a bus-only lane is needed across the 14th Street Bridge.

Mr. Hill stated that he will take these comments back to DRPT's consultants. He stated that DRPT can do a better job of articulating how the Franconia/Springfield area

is already being served by the many bus routes and transit services and how it will be integrated into the entire system.

In response to a question from Mr. Maller, Mr. Hill explained that BRT is broadly described and flexible.

Bus Rapid Transit Stimulus Funding Application

Mr. Taube stated that TPB's Scenarios Task Force is coordinating an ambitious application for up to \$300 million of discretionary federal stimulus funding for a regional BRT network. Proposals are due September 15, 2009 and federal selection criteria have been released. The criteria are being used by local/regional staff to evaluate candidate routes for this regional proposal. Whatever is included in the application and funded must be completed by September 2012. The Task Force is expected to meet on July 15th to finalize the list of projects.

Mr. Taube also reported that the Regional Priority Bus Conference held on June 24th was very well attended. There was a good discussion about BRT services across the country. Also, the second year of the SJR 122 Joint Subcommittee will look at BRT systems in Northern Virginia. The subcommittee will meet three more times. At the June 24th meeting, Secretary Homer gave a presentation that emphasized the need for a dedicated, sustainable source of funding for rail passenger and transit operating expenses. The lack of such operating funding will be an impediment to any plans for expanded BRT services.

Mr. Taube stated that regarding the state transportation six-year program, Secretary Homer pointed out that \$3 billion of bonds initially anticipated over 10 years has shrunk to \$2.2 billion and even the first sale cannot occur until calendar 2010 if insurance proceeds warrant. It may be time to consider stepping back from bonds entirely to a pay as you go approach. Without continuing drastic cuts in VDOT's budget, including large layoffs, federal funds may not all be matched. And if federal highway funds are not available to reimburse Virginia (because of deficits in the Federal Highway Trust Fund), then the commonwealth will be in even more serious trouble.

Mrs. Hudgins arrived at 7:57 P.M.

Chairman Zimmerman agreed that the conference was well attended. The bus-on-shoulder program in Minneapolis-St. Paul area is very interesting, which was highlighted at the conference. The 270-miles of bus lanes in that region are heavily used and have been operational for approximately 16 years. He stated that he would

like to see VDOT be as creative. It could be a big increase in the region's transportation capacity with a modest investment.

Status of the GEORGE Bus Service

Mr. Taube explained that Arlington's ART is set to take over operation of Falls Church's GEORGE bus system on July 6th. An operating agreement will be signed between those two parties and NVTC will be relieved of its responsibilities to take ownership of the buses even if Arlington ceases to operate them. On the advice of a Federal Transit Administration (FTA) official, supported by legal counsel, Arlington will now be responsible instead of NVTC. Arlington County has agreed. Based on the advice from FTA, NVTC staff wrote to WMATA to accomplish the transfer of the four buses directly from WMATA to Arlington. Effective July 6th the new fares for GEORGE will be \$1.35 cash or \$1.25 with a SmarTrip card, which is the same fare as Arlington County's ART service. These prices will remain until September while the fareboxes are being reprogrammed and then the fares will be reduced to \$1 on September 8th.

Mr. Maller thanked Arlington County for their partnership with the city of Falls Church to keep the GEORGE Bus system running.

Employer Assistance for Commuters from Virginia's State of the Commuter Survey

Mr. Taube reminded commissioners that at the last meeting there were questions raised about the shares of respondents reporting employer-provided commuting services. The findings may reflect fundamental misunderstandings of who is providing the service. In Northern Virginia, the guaranteed ride home program of MWCOG is available to virtually any commuter. While respondents may not distinguish correctly between an employer-provided versus an employer-endorsed program, another pitfall in interpreting these responses includes the possibility that respondents may not be fully aware of the services offered by their employers and thus under report. The survey does confirm the effectiveness of employer-provided commuter services for those employees who actually use the services.

Mr. Hill stated that Northern Virginia has a guaranteed ride home program run by Commuter Connections; however, the rest of the state generally does not have these guaranteed ride home programs.

WMATA Items

Next Metro Capital Funding Agreement. Mr. Taube reported that meetings are underway with local, regional and state financial staffs to determine the shape and form of the successor capital funding agreement to Metro Matters. Early indications are that most favor another multi-year agreement, commencing in FY 2011.

Metro Access Status. The costs of this federally mandated service continue to rise sharply, which has serious implications for the future success of WMATA.

Public Hearing on Relocation of Royal Street Garage. Mr. Taube stated that a public hearing on the relocation of the Royal Street Garage has been scheduled for July 28, 2009 in Supervisor McKay's offices. The Royal Street operations would be moved to Newington in Fairfax County to a site on Cinder Bed Road. Funding would have to be identified in the successor to Metro Matters.

Recent Metrorail Accident. Delegate Albo asked if WMATA has an insurance cap similar to VRE. Chairman Zimmerman stated that he does not have this information and WMATA Board members are unable to discuss the details of the accident.

Other Metro Items. As of July 1st Metro riders can find real-time information about bus arrivals through the use of a cell phone, web-enabled device or computer.

Legislative Items

Mr. Taube reviewed the Obama Administration's proposal to borrow \$20 billion of general funds to cover the Highway Trust Fund shortfall. This extension proposal, which is labeled "Stage 1 Reauthorization," calls for \$300 million to help states and metropolitan planning organizations evaluate their transportation systems. It would provide \$10 million to help DOT "develop performance goals and establish guidelines for states and localities on project evaluation."

Delegate Albo questioned the number of people who will actually use the rail service from Lynchburg to Washington, D.C. Mr. Badger clarified that it is not just service between Lynchburg and D.C, but passengers can continue on to Baltimore, New York and Boston. Delegate Albo expressed his opinion that the cost per person is not a good value. Delegate Rust stated that the authorization for this three-year trial came out of the budget and not legislation. Chairman Zimmerman noted that generally intercity rail in Virginia is a good thing. The potential ridership on the rail line from Washington, D.C., to Richmond is good. Mr. Foust asked if the Lynchburg service will

connect to Richmond. Mr. Badger stated that it does not. The rail lines follow the Route 29 and I-95 corridors.

Regional Transportation Items

Highlights of the Virginia Transit Association Conference. Mr. Taube reported that the VTA Conference was held in Fredericksburg on June 8-9, 2009. Mr. Euille was elected President of VTA and Senator Whipple, Delegate May and Director Badger received VTA recognition. Mr. Fisette received the VTA Public Official of the Year award for his strong advocacy of transit, smart growth and particularly his work with the "Go Green Virginia" initiative that he helped launch through VML/VACO.

Status of Virginia's VTrans 2035 Plan. A public meeting was held on June 22, 2009 at the Mary Ellen Henderson Middle School in Falls Church.

Comparative Review and Analysis of State Transit Funding Program. Statewide in Virginia, transit funding for FY 2010 consists of operating revenues of 31 percent plus local government funds of 25 percent for a combined local share of 56 percent. Federal funds contribute another 26 percent. State funds provide the remaining 18 percent.

Monthly Northern Virginia Transit Ridership. Commissioners were provided with charts showing monthly and cumulative ridership through May, 2009 for Northern Virginia. Mr. Taube stated that results are generally positive. For the first 11 months of FY 2009, transit ridership is still up four percent compared to the same period in FY 2008. The American Public Transportation Association has announced that transit ridership nationwide in the first quarter of calendar 2009 reached 2.6 billion trips. However, that was down 1.2 percent from the same (record) period last year. Vehicle Miles Traveled fell nationwide in the first quarter of 2009 by 1.7 percent. In Northern Virginia, transit ridership was up 2.7 percent in the first quarter of 2009 compared to 2008.

Eye-Stop Bus Shelters. MIT engineers designed an iPhone-like interactive bus stop for Florence, Italy. Users can plan bus trips in an interactive map, exchange information on a digital message board, surf the web and monitor their real-time exposure to pollutants. It is powered with sunlight.

NVTC Financial Items for May, 2009

Commissioners were provided with a copy of NVTC's financial reports. Mr. Taube observed that gas tax revenues continue to trend downward.

Next Month's Meeting

Chairman Zimmerman reminded commissioners that NVTC will not meet in August. The next meeting is scheduled for September 3rd at 8:00 P.M. He invited commissioners, staff and the public to stay after this meeting and view an optional 53-minute documentary on the history of smart growth planning and the ascendance of Metro in Arlington. Chairman Zimmerman also noted that the documentary can be viewed on-line.

Adjournment

Without objection, Chairman Zimmerman adjourned the meeting at 8:23 P.M.

Approved this 3rd day of September, 2009.

Christopher Zimmerman
Chairman

William Euille
Secretary-Treasurer