

**MINUTES**  
**NVTC COMMISSION MEETING – MARCH 2, 2006**  
**NVTC CONFERENCE ROOM – ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA**

The meeting of the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission was called to order by Chairman Connolly at 8:10 P.M.

**Members Present**

Sharon Bulova  
Gerald Connolly  
Tanya Husick (DRPT)  
Dana Kauffman  
Elaine McConnell  
Scott Silverthorne  
Paul C. Smedberg  
David F. Snyder  
Christopher Zimmerman

**Members Absent**

David Albo  
Eugene Delgaudio  
Jeannemarie Devolites Davis  
Adam Ebbin  
William D. Euille  
Paul Ferguson  
Jay Fisette  
Ludwig Gaines  
Catherine M. Hudgins  
Mary Margaret Whipple

**Staff Present**

Rhonda Gilchrest  
Scott Kalkwarf  
Jana Lynott  
Adam McGavock  
Kala Quintana  
Elizabeth Rodgers  
Jennifer Straub (VRE)  
Richard K. Taube  
Dale Zehner (VRE)

Minutes of NVTC Meeting of February 9, 2006

On a motion by Mr. Zimmerman and a second by Mrs. Bulova, the commission unanimously approved the minutes. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Bulova, Connolly, Husick, Kauffman, McConnell, Silverthorne, Smedberg and Zimmerman.

VRE Items

Report from the VRE Operations Board and VRE Chief Executive Officer. Mr. Zehner reported that the Rail Liability Act was passed by both houses of the General Assembly and will go to Governor Kaine for his signature. Although it is not exactly what VRE was seeking, the legislation does provide a \$250 million liability insurance cap. It has exemptions for gross negligence. It also does not cover third parties, such as property owners adjacent to railroad rights-of-way. Delegate Albo patroned the bill in the House and Senator Saslaw patroned it in the Senate.

Mr. Zehner also stated that 15 additional railcars have been added systemwide to provide an additional 1500 seats. Trains no longer exceed capacity and currently there are no more standees. He also announced that the public hearings for the proposed fare increase begin on March 9<sup>th</sup>. Recommendations on the procurement of 50 VRE railcars will be made at the Operations Board meeting in April.

Mr. Snyder arrived at 8:15 P.M. and joined the discussion.

Chairman Connolly observed that there are operational costs associated with the new railcars. Mr. Zehner stated that as it is right now there would need to be a subsidy increase. Chairman Connolly stated that the current VRE subsidy formula needs to be reexamined. Some jurisdictions will not continue to consent "in perpetuity" to a formula that does not reflect relative ridership levels. Mr. Zehner stated that this issue was discussed by the VRE Operations Board in closed session at its last meeting. VRE Chairman Caddigan has convened a subcommittee to look at this issue. Mrs. Bulova and Mr. Kauffman are both members of that subcommittee.

Mrs. McConnell stated that if the outlying jurisdictions don't join VRE and help with the subsidy, the trains will just continue to become more and more crowded. Mrs. Bulova acknowledged that the formula is not ideal, but riders from outside VRE jurisdictions are riding the trains regardless of the jurisdiction joining VRE. It is important for these jurisdictions to join VRE and contribute financially. Chairman Connolly stated that there is a growing gap between ridership versus subsidy for some jurisdictions. He is pleased to hear that a subcommittee has been formed. Mrs. Bulova stated that it is a good time to look at the issue before other jurisdictions join VRE.

Contract Award for Warehouse Management. Mrs. Bulova reported that the VRE Operations Board recommends approval of Resolution #2013, which would authorize award of a contract for up to three years with RailPlan International for warehouse management services at a cost not to exceed \$250,000 per year. Funds are available in VRE's FY 2006 and 2007 operating budgets.

Mrs. Bulova moved, with a second by Mr. Zimmerman, to approve the resolution (copy attached). Affirmative votes were cast by commissioners Bulova, Connolly, Husick, Kauffman, McConnell, Silverthorne, Smedberg, Snyder and Zimmerman.

Contract Award for Locomotive Maintenance. Mrs. Bulova stated that Resolution #2014 would authorize award of a contract for locomotive maintenance to Transportation Technology, Inc. at a price not to exceed \$3 million per year for a term of up to three years. Funds are available in VRE's FY 2006 and 2007 operating budgets and federal capital grants.

On a motion by Mrs. Bulova and a second by Mrs. McConnell, the commission unanimously approved the resolution (copy attached). The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Bulova, Connolly, Husick, Kauffman, McConnell, Silverthorne, Smedberg, Snyder and Zimmerman.

#### Approval of NVTC's Senior Mobility Study Phase 1 Report

Jana Lynott explained that action is requested to authorize the release of the final report and press release. The report has been reviewed by the study's technical committee of regional and local transportation and social service staff as well as by NVTC's Management Advisory Committee. Chairman Connolly suggested that the press release include quotes from commissioners to provide a human voice. Mr. Zimmerman stated that Chairman Connolly should be quoted, but he would like to also be involved.

Chairman Connolly stated that seniors are a growing segment of this region's population. For Fairfax County by 2030, although the county could still be below the national average in terms of percentage of seniors, the sheer number of seniors will be huge. Mr. Zimmerman stated that for Arlington County, from now until 2030, the growth in the general population is projected to be 27 percent and the population of over 65 years old is projected to grow 106 percent. Arlington County has begun to look at this issue much more seriously and NVTC's study is timely and will be a useful source of information. Arlington County has just approved a Task Force on Elder Readiness to meet the needs of seniors.

Mr. Kauffman asked if there is a link between this study and the work done at MWCOG on transportation needs for persons with low income and/or

disabilities. Mr. Taube observed that Agenda Item #6C summarizes the COG study, which cited NVTC's Senior Mobility Study.

Mr. Kauffman stated that 61 percent of Fairfax County's budget goes towards persons 18 years and under while two percent (1.6-1.9 percent) goes to seniors. Chairman Connolly explained that of that 61 percent, 53 percent of it goes towards education, which leaves eight percent for other children and youth programs. It is still much more than what is provided for seniors.

Mr. Snyder asked where NVTC goes from here. He observed that the lead recommendation of the study is to disseminate the information. Ms. Lynott stated that the recommendations are not necessarily in order of what would be done first. Phase 2 of the study is now underway with funding from VDOT. During the second phase, recommendations from Phase 1 will be tested and the findings of the Phase 1 study will be more widely disseminated.

In response to a question from Mr. Snyder, Ms. Lynott explained that the recommendation of "a centralized information and referral service" refers to MWCOG and WMATA working together to provide a clearinghouse of information. It would be a "one-stop" shop for seniors. It is important to provide a human element, since seniors probably won't rely on only the Internet to get information. It would be ideal to have one telephone number to call to talk with a mobility manager to walk someone through how to use the different transit services. Ms. Lynott stated that this type of service is very expensive and she is not aware of any one agency willing to step up and do it.

Mr. Snyder asked NVTC to forward the study to WMATA and get comments on what WMATA is doing and what their suggestions would be to implement these recommendations. Without objection, Chairman Connolly so ordered.

Chairman Connolly observed that since this is a NVTC study, the main body, appendices and press release of the report should include information about NVTC as an organization and its membership. NVTC can't be an anonymous organization.

Mr. Zimmerman moved, with a second by Mr. Smedberg, to approve the report to be posted on NVTC's website and distributed to interested individuals and groups. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Bulova, Connolly, Husick, Kauffman, McConnell, Silverthorne, Smedberg, Snyder and Zimmerman.

### Legislative Items

Chairman Connolly asked if commissioners felt that holding NVTC's February meeting in Richmond was beneficial. Commissioners agreed that it was beneficial. Mrs. Bulova observed that Northern Virginia has had an outstanding presence in Richmond during this General Assembly Session.

Chairman Connolly stated that the more the region can be present collectively, it will make a difference. He stated that he hopes NVTC can continue the tradition of holding a meeting in Richmond. Mr. Smedberg thanked NVTC for allowing NVRC to participate in the press conference along with NVTC and NVTA.

Mr. Taube reported that Senator Whipple's S267 passed the Senate 36-3 and has also been embedded in the Senate budget in such a way that it is likely to enter into the budget conference committee's deliberations. A floor amendment was added to S267 that makes the new Virginia quarter-cent sales tax contingent on authorization, appropriation and distribution of the matching federal funds in Representative Davis's bill.

Mr. Taube explained that staff has used DRPT's benefit-cost model to calculate the net benefits of dedicated Metro funding. NVTC staff consulted with DRPT staff and applied the model to the 340 new Metro railcars that would be provided via new dedicated funding. The benefit-cost ratio is a resounding 22 to 1, with benefits of \$15 billion over 20 years compared to costs of \$680 million.

Chairman Connolly stated that NVTC's Executive Committee discussed a draft letter to the Northern Virginia General Assembly delegation to encourage them to achieve dedicated funding for Metro. He explained that the committee suggested some changes that will be incorporated into the letter, including a final bullet that reminds them that these provisions are also included in the Senate budget.

Mr. Zimmerman moved, with a second by Mrs. Bulova, to authorize NVTC's chairman to sign and send the letter. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Bulova, Connolly, Husick, Kauffman, McConnell, Silverthorne, Smedberg, Snyder and Zimmerman.

Tom Biesiadny of Fairfax County stated that next week will be crucial for transportation legislation in the General Assembly. In response to a question from Chairman Connolly, Mr. Biesiadny stated that it seems that the General Assembly will either have to extend its session or Governor Kaine will have to call them back for a special session. Mr. Snyder recognized Mr. Biesiadny's hard work in Richmond. He asked where does the region go from here, how do we keep up public pressure, and how are we organized to actively participate in budget negotiations? Chairman Connolly stated that each entity has to connect to the process in Richmond, including individual jurisdictions, NVTC, Metro, VRE and other agencies. There is also person-to-person contact with General Assembly members.

Kala Quintana stated that the business community is also pressuring legislators for dedicated Metro funding. Shiva Pant of WMATA stated that conferees have been named and letters could be sent to them. Chairman Connolly suggested slightly altering the previously approved letter and sending it to the conferees. There were no objections.

## WMATA Items

Mr. Kauffman reported that he is chairing WMATA's ad hoc committee to look at paratransit issues and the MetroAccess service. It has been suggested that an audit of the contractor be conducted after a year of service, but there will also be monthly reviews to insure quality of service. On May 13<sup>th</sup> WMATA will conduct a public forum to allow the public to provide suggestions on how to improve the service. Both WMATA and Montgomery County provide free service to paratransit customers, while CUE, Connector, DASH, ART and Prince George's County do not. If all the transit services provided free paratransit service it would make overall service more seamless and efficient.

In response to a question from Chairman Connolly, Mr. Kauffman stated that the new WMATA Acting General Manager, Dan Tangherlini, is energetic and creative. He has received good press coverage. Chairman Connolly stated that at his urging Mr. Tangherlini visited Richmond to experience what WMATA is up against.

## Regional Items

MWCOG Traffic Congestion Report. MWCOG released the most recent results of its periodic traffic analyses. Using 80,000 aerial photos of peak period traffic, the study showed the number of vehicles from interchange to interchange. Compared to the last study three years ago, virtually all of the region's commuting corridors are chronically clogged. The worst congestion appears in Virginia locations.

Improving Demand Responsive Services for People with Disabilities in the Washington Region. Mr. Taube stated that MWCOG has released a study of ways to improve the quality and efficiency of transportation for persons with disabilities. In its coverage of the report the Washington Post reported that the study concluded MetroAccess "...compares poorly with similar services in other major cities." And that it was "inferior to similar services provided in Baltimore, Philadelphia and New York." However, there appear to be no such conclusions in the report and one of its authors confirms this fact. In the section on performance, MetroAccess shows greater growth in annual trips between 2000 and 2003 than Philadelphia and New York. MetroAccess also showed a greater reduction in trip cost than both of these other cities. MetroAccess operating cost per passenger trip is less than half of New York's but slightly higher than Philadelphia's. There were no comparisons to Baltimore in this report. Mr. Tennyson pointed out that according to the Maryland budget report, paratransit service in Baltimore is so bad that it collapsed and had to start over.

Mr. Zimmerman asked if NVTC should respond to the Post article. Chairman Connolly observed that NVTC may wish to urge Mayor Porter to send a letter. Mr. Kauffman asked staff to put together information and he would pass

it on to Mayor Porter. Chairman Connolly stated that if staff drafted a letter he would sign it.

#### 2006 NVTC Handbook

Mr. Taube reported that staff has updated the handbook which is available on NVTC's website. He encouraged commissioners to look over their biographies and submit changes to staff.

#### NVTC Financial Items for January, 2006

Mr. Taube reported that during the past month NVTC staff has worked with the Virginia Department of Taxation to verify the reconciliations of actual fuel tax collections to the estimates by which payments have been made to NVTC for the past several months as the Tax Department made a transition to a new computer system.

Mr. Taube explained that actual payments received by NVTC in January from the Department of Taxation reflect two unusual circumstances. First, a major taxpayer has made a payment to correct previous underpayments, and NVTC's share is \$2.2 million. Second, previous estimates of fuel tax collections from September through December were too low by \$1.1 million. As actual collections for January, 2006 were \$2.5 million, the total received by NVTC was \$5.8 million.

#### Adjournment

There being no further business, Chairman Connolly adjourned the meeting without objection at 9:03 P.M.

Approved this 6<sup>th</sup> of April, 2006.

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Gerald Connolly  
Chairman

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William Euille  
Secretary-Treasurer