

MINUTES
NVTC COMMISSION MEETING – MARCH 1, 2007
NVTC CONFERENCE ROOM – ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA

The meeting of the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission was called to order by Chairman Snyder at 8:25 P.M.

Members Present

David Albo
Sharon Bulova
Gerald Connolly
Adam Ebbin
Paul Ferguson
Catherine M. Hudgins
Dana Kauffman
Elaine McConnell
Thomas Rust
Scott Silverthorne
David F. Snyder
Matthew Tucker
Mary Margaret Whipple
Christopher Zimmerman

Members Absent

Jeannemarie Devolites Davis
Eugene Delgaudio
William D. Euille
Jay Fiset
Joe May
Paul Smedberg

Staff Present

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

Chairman Snyder suggested beginning the meeting with the Metro presentation while waiting for a quorum. There were no objections.

Metro Service Issues

Chairman Snyder introduced Charlie Dziduch, WMATA's Orange Line Manager, who gave a short presentation on Metro issues and responded to commissioners' questions and concerns.

Mr. Dziduch reported that in order to ease overcrowding on Metrorail, WMATA will add 24 railcars (6000 series) systemwide by the end of March. In response to a question from Mr. Zimmerman, Mr. Dziduch further explained that two eight-car trains will be added on the Orange Line. Mr. Zimmerman reported that the total 6000 series railcar order is for 164 railcars and Metro has already received 48 railcars, with most of them in service on the Green Line. Mr. Dziduch stated that a railcar has approximately 50-60 seats and can hold up to 200 people per railcar (crush load). The additional 24 railcars (four on each line) will provide space for 1600 more passengers per hour. Mr. Connolly stated that it is encouraging that relief is on its way and there are still more railcars to come. He asked for a fact sheet on these ridership statistics at a subsequent meeting.

Mr. Dziduch stated that there is also a power capacity issue on the Orange Line. Work is being done to increase the power of the line to allow additional trains to run.

Chairman Snyder asked for information on safety upgrade issues. He stated that as a regular rider, he is concerned that information from operators to passengers is inconsistent. When there are delays, it is important to convey updates every two-three minutes. Chairman Snyder requested that the fact sheet also summarize safety issues for both rail and bus.

Mrs. McConnell stated that it is important to convey to Metro riders and the public how Metro is addressing these issues, especially with bus safety. Mr. Taube announced that Metro's new General Manager, John Cato, has been invited to a NVTC meeting in the near future.

VRE Items

Mrs. Bulova reported that there are no VRE actions items. Mr. Zehner announced that the second rail bridge over Quantico Creek was completed and became operational for the rail lines on February 27, 2007. It has already made a big difference with on-time performance. There will be a two-week period where VRE service will need to be modified in order to install a switch north of the bridge.

Regional Transportation Items

I-95/395 HOT Lane Project Update. Mr. Taube reported that the taskforce of transit system representatives convened by DRPT met on March 1st to review a detailed scope of work for a corridor transit planning study. The scope includes regular briefings of NVTC by the consultants to report progress and receive feedback.

Mr. Silverthorne arrived at 8:53 P.M.

Mr. Connolly asked that NVTC request Fluor-Transurban to meet with NVTC to discuss the project. Mr. Taube responded that this is already scheduled for the April meeting. Delegate Albo asked what are the basic concerns regarding the HOT Lanes on I-95/395. Mr. Zimmerman explained that some of the concerns particularly pertain to transit and what it will mean to existing service. There are many unanswered questions about how it will operate. For the northern portion new capacity is not being created; it will use the shoulder space and there are concerns about how incidents will be handled. Delegate Albo observed that the general theme is to make sure that transit/buses can move at their current rate and won't be compromised by the HOT lanes.

Public Transportation and Petroleum Savings in the U.S. Regular use of public transportation saves \$6,251 per household and 1.4 billion gallons of gasoline annually. By comparison, the average U.S. family spends \$5,781 on food in 2004. APTA's January 9, 2007 report, prepared by ICF International, shows that these savings are equivalent to 108 million full automobile gas tanks each year (or 300,000 each day).

SmarTrip Farebox Installation at DASH. On February 3rd the full fleet installation of SmarTrip fareboxes began at the Alexandria DASH garage. Staff from DASH, WMATA, GFI, Cubic, IBI and NVTC all participated in this critical step towards a fully integrated regional fare collection system. By that evening, the entire fleet of 57 DASH buses was equipped with SmarTrip fareboxes. These buses were placed into revenue service the following morning. So far, the new fareboxes are performing properly. The remaining installations in Northern Virginia are scheduled to be completed in the spring.

Minutes of NVTC's Meeting of February 1, 2007

On a motion by Mr. Connolly and a second by Senator Whipple, the commission unanimously approved the minutes. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Albo, Bulova, Connolly, Ebbin, Ferguson, Hudgins, Kauffman, McConnell, Rust, Silverthorne, Tucker, Snyder, Whipple and Zimmerman.

Request for Proposals for Alexandria Transit Improvement Project

Mr. Taube explained that commission approval is requested to issue an RFP for technical consulting services, to develop the software which will provide the real-time bus information, and interface with the regional ITS architecture. Consultant costs are estimated to be about \$225,000. Federal grants would cover 80 percent of the cost of the project, with Alexandria and DRPT providing the remaining funds.

Mr. Connolly moved, with a second by Mr. Zimmerman, to approve issuing the RFP. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Albo, Bulova, Connolly, Ebbin, Ferguson, Hudgins, Kauffman, McConnell, Rust, Silverthorne, Tucker, Snyder, Whipple and Zimmerman.

Federal Grant Application for Arlington's Crystal City/Potomac Yards Corridor

Mr. Taube stated that the commission is asked to approve Resolution #2055, which would authorize NVTC's executive director to apply for \$1.2 million in RSTP grant funds on behalf of Arlington County for bus improvements in the Crystal City/Potomac Yards corridor. There was no discussion.

Mr. Zimmerman moved, with a second by Mr. Ferguson, to approve Resolution #2055. (copy attached). The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Albo, Bulova, Connolly, Ebbin, Ferguson, Hudgins, Kauffman, McConnell, Rust, Silverthorne, Tucker, Snyder, Whipple and Zimmerman.

Legislative Items

Chairman Snyder thanked NVTC's General Assembly members for their hard work down in Richmond during the General Assembly session.

Delegate Albo stated that if the Transportation Bill HB 3202 doesn't pass, there probably won't be another bill for at least four years. It's the only hope for Metro funding, VRE funding and other statewide funding. It is his hope that everyone will be willing to compromise, from the executive branch, local governments and the General Assembly. Delegate Rust expressed his opinion that if there is a major revision to the bill, he believes that it could become a problem. He stated that the bill is not a perfect solution, but they are committed to making it work.

Senator Whipple expressed her concern that for this legislation all the local governments must agree to raise their taxes, but the legislation does not in and of itself raise any money for NVTC's jurisdictions and, therefore, the state is not being a partner in raising taxes at the state level. She also expressed concern about having bonds secured by general funds.

Tom Biesiadny, of the Fairfax County staff, reviewed a blue agenda item that provided a comparison of NVTC/NVTA/NVRC principles regarding HB 3202. This is a consensus document among jurisdictional staff.

Mr. Connolly stated that he has talked with Delegates Albo and Rust and Delegate Albo has indicated a willingness to drop the devolution provision or to make it optional. Fairfax County's position is that this is a "take it or leave it" provision and if it is mandatory, the county would ask the governor to veto the bill. Delegate Albo explained that Fairfax County would receive \$80 million in cash with this provision, so the intent was to provide a benefit to the county. However, he has no problem with changing the legislation to address Fairfax County's concerns.

Mr. Connolly observed that Henrico County gets \$12 million resulting from this bill just for voting for it, but there are enactments, taxes and conditions for the rest of the Virginia counties.

Chairman Snyder stated that a draft letter has been prepared to send to Governor Kaine regarding this legislation. Delegate Albo expressed his concern that the letter is counter productive and asked where NVTC gets the authority to lobby. Chairman Snyder explained that NVTC's legal counsel has reviewed this issue and determined that NVTC has the authority to express analysis and views on those votes that pertain to transportation funding. Delegate Albo cautioned the commission that sending this letter would be like "taking a match and throwing it into kerosene." These concerns should be expressed by local officials as supervisors or councilmembers. It is important for all parties involved to work together and compromise.

Mr. Connolly stated that he understands Delegate Albo's perspective but he views the letter as laying out the parameters of the concerns of NVTC, which is consistent with the principles NVTC has adopted. These are not new concerns. The letter does not call for veto, nor endorse a competing piece of legislation, and does not convey that there is no chance for finding a common ground. However, it does lay out the principles of NVTC, NVTA and NVRC that have been adopted as a region in a bipartisan manner.

Mr. Connolly moved, with a second by Mr. Zimmerman, to authorize Chairman Snyder to send the letter to Governor Kaine.

Mr. Zimmerman acknowledged Delegate Albo's and Rust's position but agreed with Mr. Connolly that it is important to find a common ground. He finds the letter to be fairly tame and it's appropriate for NVTC, as the body most directly related to the administration of public transportation in the Northern Virginia region, to state clearly its position and principles already adopted. Senator Whipple stated that she would like to think that a letter from NVTC could cause a spark.

Chairman Snyder suggested that the first paragraph of the letter include an expression of gratitude for the work that has been done so far. Mr. Connolly agreed to accept this friendly amendment.

The commission then voted on the motion and it passed. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Bulova, Connolly, Ebbin, Ferguson, Hudgins, Kauffman, McConnell, Silverthorne, Snyder, Whipple and Zimmerman. Delegate Albo and Delegate Rust voted against the motion and Mr. Tucker abstained.

Senator Whipple reported that her bill seeking to equalize the per diem payment for local commissioners and legislators passed through the Senate but died in a House subcommittee. Chairman Snyder stated he was encouraged to see the progress being made on red light legislation. Mr. Connolly stated that the cell phone bill is important. In Fairfax County, 24 percent of all traffic fatalities are teenagers. This legislation is a step in the right direction.

Urban Partnership Agreement for Congestion Pricing

Mr. Taube gave a PowerPoint presentation summarizing the status of this federal initiative that NVTC and local staff have been actively tracking for several months. USDOT is offering significant financial assistance to regions willing to demonstrate the effectiveness of variable pricing of roads, with an initial application deadline of April 30, 2007. Mr. Taube stated that VDOT and DRPT intend to submit a proposal. They are willing to work with local governments and others to develop a consensus proposal. The District of Columbia may also submit a proposal for the 14th Street Bridge and other corridors.

Mr. Taube reviewed the following actions the commission is being asked to authorize:

- 1) Send a letter to Virginia Transportation Secretary Pierce Homer urging the commonwealth to submit a comprehensive Urban Partnership application for USDOT financial assistance to benefit Northern Virginia.
- 2) Offer NVTC's full cooperation as a partner in such an Urban Partnership Agreement (UPA).
- 3) Suggest to the commonwealth that the following elements be considered for the UPA:
 - A commitment to a phased approach of examining a network of variably priced roads.
 - At the core could be the existing HOT-lane proposals, augmented with significant new initiatives in telework, technology and transit.

- The following agencies should be actively involved in the preparation of the Northern Virginia applications: NVTC, NVTA, PRTC, TPB and its Value Pricing Task Force, VDOT, DRPT, Fluor-Transurban, other potential private sector partners, plus each local government and transit system.
- NVTC could volunteer to lead the public involvement element of the applications.

In response to a question from Mr. Connolly, Mr. Tucker stated that the commonwealth is looking at the I-95/495 corridor for a potential proposal. Mr. Taube explained the rationale behind the proposed actions, including that it provides NVTC a seat at the table. In the case of the HOT-Lane proposals, local governments and transit agencies haven't really been fully involved, and as a result there are many concerns in the I-95/395 corridor about the potential for degraded transit service. In this instance, NVTC has an opportunity to be a full fledged partner and to give input about what should be included in an application.

Mr. Connolly observed that the HOT-Lane project on I-95/395 will lead to taking an existing facility and tolling it. Congressman Wolf wants to introduce legislation that would cap tolls on private toll roads, as a result of getting so many complaints from his constituents. Mr. Connolly disagreed with Mr. Taube that local governments have not been involved. He stated that Fairfax County was the first local government to go on record saying that the Beltway HOT lanes project had promise and encouraged the state to pursue it. He stated that he is not prepared to vote to authorize proceeding with the Urban Partnership application, understanding that the outcome is likely to involve taking an existing facility and tolling it.

Mr. Tucker stated that DRPT is emphasizing the other aspects of the proposal including telework and congestion management. DRPT's goal is to work collaboratively with Northern Virginia to put together a proposal.

Mr. Taube clarified that it is his understanding that Secretary Homer intends that the initial application would focus only on the Beltway portion of the HOT Lanes. In the initial application there would be no other tolled facilities included.

Mr. Kauffman left the meeting at 9:40 P.M. and did not return.

Mr. Zimmerman asked what is the role of a partner. Mr. Tucker stated that the meetings are intended to develop an application. NVTC's MAC group has met and discussed this proposal.

In response to a question from Mr. Connolly, Mr. Taube clarified that a successful application should receive the support of the governments that are affected. At issue is how the region provides the support. Should local governments help prepare the application or wait for the application to be completed by the state and then review it?

Ms. Hudgins expressed concern that there needs to be a clear direction of where the proposal is intending to go before the process begins. Fairfax County would not want to see a portion of the Beltway as part of the project without having a sense of where the network would eventually end up. She doesn't want to kill the interest in value pricing but these issues need to be addressed. She suggested providing the state with what NVTC wants to accomplish, including a set of principles or premises, before joining as a partner.

Mr. Connolly expressed his disappointment that this is the first time he is hearing about an April deadline and the proposed application. It is not fair to just learn about this and then be asked to vote on it right away. Senator Whipple expressed her surprise as well. Mr. Zimmerman stated that if VDOT and DRPT haven't made up their minds about the application and are open to discussion, conversation with our staff is fine, but he's not prepared to endorse anything today. Mr. Tucker offered to send memorandums of what happened at previous meetings and future meetings to NVTC and will also convey NVTC's comments and concerns to VDOT and DRPT staff.

Chairman Snyder observed that it was the consensus of the commission that no action will be taken at this time.

Review Draft Code Orange/Red Evaluation Survey

Chairman Snyder reminded commissioners that they earlier asked for an opportunity to review the draft survey questionnaire. When the form is final, it will be administered to bus passengers on two bad air days this summer. A vigorous marketing campaign will also be implemented. By the fall of this year consultants and staff expect to return to the commission with findings and recommendations on the effectiveness of the free bus fare program. Chairman Snyder stated that commissioners had another week to submit their comments or concerns.

Grant Application to Improve Northern Virginia's Bus Shelters

Mr. Taube explained that the commission is asked to authorize staff to submit a letter of interest for \$150,000 of state funds with \$16,000 of NVTC in-kind contributions. The purpose of the letter of interest is to allow those NVTC jurisdictions that choose to participate the opportunity to enhance their bus shelter programs by:

- 1) Identifying methods and designs to improve accessibility by pedestrians and persons with limited ability;
- 2) Suggesting model ordinances and other institutional improvements, including streamlining VDOT and local government easement processes; and

- 3) Developing analysis tools to be used by jurisdictions to identify promising locations for new shelters.

On a motion by Mr. Zimmerman and a second by Mrs. Bulova, the commission unanimously authorized staff to submit a letter of interest for the state grant.

Mr. Connolly stated that Fairfax County has concerns regarding the safety of some of its bus stops in perilous locations, which are accidents waiting to happen. It needs to be a priority to look at these safety issues.

The commission then voted on the motion and it passed. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Albo, Bulova, Connolly, Ebbin, Ferguson, Hudgins, McConnell, Rust, Silverthorne, Tucker, Snyder, Whipple and Zimmerman.

NVTC's Annual Transit Performance Data

Mr. Taube reported that each year NVTC staff compiles transit performance data from the region's transit systems. Transit performance for FY 2006 is strong and trending upward for the region, including the following:

- Annual transit ridership in Northern Virginia up 17 percent since FY 2002 to 137 million;
- Average weekday transit trips in Northern Virginia up 14 percent to 463,353;
- Annual passenger miles on transit in Northern Virginia up 20 percent to 868 million; and
- Annual bus and rail miles in Northern Virginia up 34 percent to 52 million.

Mr. Connolly observed that it is important to get the word out about Northern Virginia's statistics, because many use national statistics to show the downward trend in transit usage. Northern Virginia's results are very different.

Mrs. McConnell moved, with a second by Mrs. Bulova, to authorize staff to issue a media release describing these results. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Albo, Bulova, Connolly, Ebbin, Ferguson, Hudgins, McConnell, Rust, Silverthorne, Tucker, Snyder, Whipple and Zimmerman.

Northern Virginia Transit Tour

Mr. Taube stated that the long-planned transit tour of Northern Virginia for DRPT's Director, Matt Tucker, and several other senior state officials has been scheduled for March 22-23, 2007. Commissioners are invited to participate.

Status of \$40 Million for WMATA Railcars

In response to a question from Chairman Snyder, Mr. Tucker announced that the commonwealth is ready to move forward to provide the \$40 million appropriated by the 2005 Virginia General Assembly for Metro railcars as part of the Metro Matters agreement. He clarified that these funds have not been designated for the Dulles Rail project. He provided a letter from Secretary Homer in response to Chairman Snyder's earlier letter.

Mr. Connolly moved, with a second by Mr. Zimmerman, to authorize Chairman Snyder to send a letter of appreciation to Secretary Homer. The unanimous vote in favor was cast by commissioners Albo, Bulova, Connolly, Ebbin, Ferguson, Hudgins, McConnell, Rust, Silverthorne, Tucker, Snyder, Whipple and Zimmerman.

NVTC Financial Items for January, 2007

The financial reports were provided to commissioners and there were no questions.

Adjournment

Chairman Snyder presented a gift of appreciation to Mr. Connolly for his service in 2006 as NVTC chairman.

Without objection, Chairman Snyder adjourned the meeting at 10:07 P.M.

Approved this 5th day of April, 2007.

David F. Snyder
Chairman

Christopher Zimmerman
Secretary-Treasurer