

MINUTES
NVTC COMMISSION MEETING – NOVEMBER 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

Chip Badger
Sharon Bulova
Gerald Connolly
Adam Ebbin
William D. Euille
Jeffrey Greenfield (alternate, City of Fairfax)
Catherine M. Hudgins
Timothy Lovain (alternate, City of Alexandria)
Joe May
Elaine McConnell
David F. Snyder
Mary Margaret Whipple

Members Absent

David Albo
Eugene Delgaudio
Jeannemarie Devolites Davis
Paul Ferguson
Jay Fisette
Dana Kauffman
Thomas Rust
Scott Silverthorne
Paul Smedberg
Christopher Zimmerman

Staff Present

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

Oath of Office for NVTC Alternate

Chairman Snyder administered the oath of office to Jeffrey Greenfield, an alternate for the city of Fairfax. Commissioners welcomed Mr. Greenfield to NVTC.

Metro Items

FY 2009 Budget and Fare Increase. Mr. Taube reported that the WMATA Board has put together a fare increase proposal to be presented for public comment. In Northern Virginia, public hearings are scheduled for November 13th in Reston and November 15th in Arlington. Ms. Hudgins explained that the scope of the fare increase is broad enough to include the concerns of the Northern Virginia WMATA Board members. The proposal includes a range of increases so that the Board is not held to a particular fare increase, which provides some leverage. It is important to have balance over the entire system (bus, rail and parking). Mr. Connolly stated that it is important to make sure that the interests of Northern Virginia riders are protected. WMATA has always functioned with coordination and compromise among the three jurisdictions (Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia). NVTC feels that there needs to be a balanced approach. Mr. Euille further stated that the jurisdictional subsidies need to be held on the low side since localities are suffering too.

Chairman Snyder observed that the maximum fare for peak travel on Metrorail could increase significantly. Mr. Taube clarified that it would be a potential increase of up to 80-cents for a total of \$4.70. Mr. Euille explained that it is "up to" \$4.70 so that it gives the Board latitude to decide a fare increase in that range. Chairman Snyder suggested that the chart be changed to clarify this.

Mr. Connolly stated that in Northern Virginia a combined transit fare and parking charge could be as high as \$15.90 for a round-trip, while a person in the Core taking the bus would only have to pay \$2.70 round-trip. He stated that the Northern Virginia region works hard to encourage people to take transit and although the suburbs have different concerns and needs than the Core, they are just as legitimate.

Senator Whipple asked if the public hearing in Reston is transit accessible. Ms. Hudgins responded that the Reston site is not directly on a Metrorail line, but there is a park-and-ride lot close by served by Metrobus to shuttle people to the site.

Mrs. McConnell asked what the potential cost would be per month to ride Metro based on the new maximum proposed fares. Mr. Connolly stated that it could be over \$300 per month. Senator Whipple observed that this is as much as a car payment.

NVTC Exhibit on Inflation-Adjusted Metro Bus and Rail Fares. In an effort to provide a historical perspective to NVTC commissioners involved with the WMATA budget discussions, NVTC staff prepared a chart showing the annual average fare paid by Metrorail and Metrobus customers for the period of time between 1977 and 2007.

Communication Initiatives. Chairman Snyder stated that this presentation provided to commissioners describes Metro efforts to achieve its vision of giving customers “the best ride in the nation.” The focus is on unplanned service disruptions.

Other Metro Items. Chairman Snyder asked if Light Rail is receiving any attention at Metro. Mr. Euille stated that the WMATA Board discussed it several years ago. However, individual jurisdictions, including Arlington, Alexandria and Fairfax County, are talking about it now. Chairman Snyder asked NVTC to have a discussion of this at a future meeting. Senator Whipple stated that one issue is the carrying capacity of Light Rail. Mr. Connolly stated that respective comprehensive plans throughout the region include Light Rail in designated corridors throughout the region. The Columbia Pike Corridor has been approved by Arlington and Fairfax counties. Chairman Snyder stated that he would like to see Light Rail in the Route 7 Corridor, connecting Skyline and Tysons Corner.

NVTC Minutes of the October 4, 2007 Meeting

Mr. Connolly moved, with a second by Senator Whipple, to approve the minutes. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Badger, Bulova, Connolly, Euille, Greenfield, Hudgins, Lovain, May, McConnell, Snyder and Whipple.

VRE Items

Report from the VRE Operations Board and VRE's Chief Executive Officer. Mr. Zehner reported that ridership is up five percent compared to the same time last year, with an average of 15,100 daily trips. It is a marked improvement over last year. VRE will now concentrate on operations, including dispatching and leaving stations on-time, in order to keep on-time performance above 90 percent. Construction of the Manassas parking garage began on September 24, 2007. The completion of the 531-space garage is scheduled for next fall. The Burke Centre garage is also under construction, which when completed will double the parking capacity to 1300 spaces.

Sale of Four Budd Cars. Mrs. Bulova moved, with a second by Mrs. McConnell, to approve Resolution #2081, which would authorize VRE's CEO to sell four surplus Budd railcars to the Collis P. Huntington Railroad Historical Society, Inc. for \$1 per car.

In response to a question from Chairman Snyder, Mr. Zehner explained that these cars have not been in service for over five years and were some of the original VRE railcars. There is no remaining federal or state interest in these railcars. VRE also posted a web-site advertisement for their sale, but there was no interest over the last 10 months. The disposition cost of the cars is high and the proposal would save these costs. The sales agreement requires the buyer to deposit freight costs into an escrow account to ensure removal of all cars.

Chairman Snyder requested that VRE obtain a legal waiver/hold harmless agreement from the buyer.

The commission then voted on the motion and it passed. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Badger, Bulova, Connolly, Euille, Greenfield, Hudgins, Lovain, May, McConnell, Snyder and Whipple. A copy of the resolution is attached.

Extend VRE Office Loan. Mrs. Bulova explained that the VRE Operations Board recommends approval of Resolution #2082, which would authorize VRE's CEO to execute an extension of a loan with SunTrust Bank for VRE's office, located in a condominium building at 1500 King Street in Alexandria. The original loan agreement executed in 2002 had a five-year term and SunTrust Bank has offered an additional five-year term at a favorable fixed rate of 4.31 percent per annum. Chairman Snyder observed that this is a good rate.

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 Badger, Bulova, Connolly, Euille, Greenfield, Hudgins, Lovain, May, McConnell, Snyder and Whipple.

Ride Free (Code Orange/Red) Program Evaluation and FY 2009 CMAQ Application

Mr. Taube introduced Joe Mehra, president of MCV Associates, Inc., which was the company that conducted the survey. Mr. Taube explained that staff from NVTC and its regional partners (including participating local governments and transit agencies) met several times in the past weeks to evaluate the effectiveness of the existing program and to consider alternatives. The recommended Ride Free Program modifications include:

- 1) Kick off the revised program for summer of 2008 with a Ride Free day and associated promotions to allow the public to experience the program on a date certain.
- 2) On forecast Code Orange days, bus fares will be free, but only until noon. This will significantly reduce the cost of the program.
- 3) On Code Red days, bus fares will be free all day (same as current program). Since there have been very few forecast Code Red days for the past several years, it is expected that continuing this provision will be affordable.
- 4) Continue an aggressive regional marketing program throughout the summer to create awareness.

- 5) Seek \$800,000 of available pre-FY 2009 CMAQ funds from NVTA for the modified Ride Free program during summer 2008, to be combined with a carry over of up to \$750,000. This would cover at least 20 Ride Free days (mostly Code Orange) and provide an allowance for marketing. Apply for FY 2009 CMAQ funding of \$1.5 million for the summer of 2009. For possible expansion of the program to include a monthly ozone pass, seek an additional \$1 million from NVTA from new regional funding sources, since no additional FY 2009 CMAQ funds are expected to be available. Any unspent funds from summer of 2008 and 2009 would be carried over to future summers.

In response to a question from Mr. Connolly, Mr. Taube explained that this new approach will allow more accurate ridership data to be gathered, to better evaluate the success of the program. Senator Whipple asked if the \$1.5 million is similar to what has been spent in the past. Ms. Rodgers replied that \$1.7 million was spent on the program this past summer.

Mr. Connolly moved, with a second by Mr. Euille, to approve the staff recommendations for modifying the program and funding it for the summers of 2008 and 2009. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Badger, Bulova, Connolly, Euille, Greenfield, Hudgins, Lovain, May, McConnell, Snyder and Whipple.

CTB Hearing Statement

Chairman Snyder announced that the annual CTB fall hearing on Virginia's Six-Year Transportation Program will be held at the Fairfax County Government Center on November 13th. Since he will be out of town, Chairman Snyder designated Mr. Connolly to give the statement.

Mr. Euille moved, with a second by Senator Whipple, to authorize Mr. Connolly to present NVTC's testimony at the CTB hearing. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Badger, Bulova, Connolly, Euille, Greenfield, Hudgins, Lovain, May, McConnell, Snyder and Whipple.

Delegate Ebbin arrived at 8:55 P.M.

Legislative Items

Federal. Mr. Taube reported that the U.S. Senate has now approved Senate Bill 294, the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2007, which reauthorizes Amtrak, also offers opportunities for VRE and DRPT if it is enacted. Among many other provisions it enables (with grants) service in new rail corridors and authorizes the Surface Transportation Board to investigate whether failure to achieve minimum passenger train performance is due to freight interference. NVTC staff is also following

the progress of HR1475 and S712, which would increase tax free transit benefits to \$215 monthly to match benefits now available for employer-provided parking. Neither bill has yet been acted upon in committee.

State. Mr. Taube reported that some legislators in the Hampton Roads region are not satisfied with the revenue sources resulting from HB3202 and are talking about trying to change it during the next General Assembly session. This would be a concern to the Northern Virginia region and should be monitored.

Mr. Taube reminded commissioners that later this month NVTC's Legislative Committee, chaired by Mr. Connolly, will meet to put together NVTC's Legislative Agenda for 2008.

Regional Transportation Items

NVTA Administrative Actions. Several NVTA committees have continued to meet to pursue such matters as projects to be funded over the next two years, hiring an executive director and obtaining office space. The next scheduled meeting is November 8th.

Chairman Snyder reported that the Virginia Supreme Court has agreed to hear an appeal review of the Circuit Court's decision regarding the constitutionality and other issues concerning NVTA. Arguments should be presented in January, 2008.

Update of NVTC's Hydrogen Fuel Bus Demonstration. Mr. McGavock reported that in August of 2007, the first of four Hydrogen Fuel Injection retrofit kits was installed on Bus #826 at Fairfax CUE. This bus was chosen because it recently had undergone a major engine rebuild, which included an entire new cylinder head. Preliminary fuel usage analysis indicates that the fuel economy of Bus #826 has improved from 3.6 miles per gallon to 3.9 miles per gallon, an increase of six percent. This is less than the 10 percent reduction in fuel usage that is normally seen by truckers, but that may be a result of the stop-and-go transit environment. At a price of \$2.50 per gallon of diesel fuel, a six-percent increase in fuel economy could yield an annual savings of 900 gallons of diesel fuel, or \$2,250. Each HFI unit costs approximately \$12,000.

Mr. McGavock further explained that the lead installation mechanic also feels that the Cummins diesel engine on Bus # 826 was tuned to run extremely lean (in an effort to pass the recently adopted and very stringent emissions regulations), and that the bus should be able to achieve 5 miles per gallon if the fuel/air mixture is revised. He believes the HFI kits will allow the CUE buses to run a richer fuel/air mix and still pass emissions testing.

CUE drivers report that HFI-equipped bus feels more powerful than before, and that the engine sounds better and seems to emit less smoke on acceleration. The remaining three HFI kits will be installed on CUE buses by mid-November. The

emissions will be formally tested at the conclusion of the demonstration in the spring of 2008.

Coves Conference: Energy Presentation. Mr. Taube reported that he gave a presentation on how to reduce energy consumption of individuals at the Commonwealth of Virginia Energy Sustainability conference, which was held at Virginia Military Academy in Lexington on October 16-18, 2007. Fuel savings annually from persons using public transit in Northern Virginia are about \$819 per rider with gas at \$3 per gallon. This amounts to \$190 million for all of Northern Virginia (assumes 273 gallons saved per person per year times 232,000 daily transit users).

APTA: Transit Ridership Climbs. The American Public Transportation Association has reported that 78 million more transit trips were taken nationwide in the first six months of 2007 compared to 2006. This represents a 2.3 percent increase in the second quarter and a 1.1 percent increase in the first quarter.

Transportation Accountability Commission Final Report. Governor Kaine created by Executive Order 37 a 21-person commission, which has recommended seven "overarching" transportation system goals and 34 performance measures. For example, it recommended that DRPT establish key objectives of managing congestion, delivering economic benefits and delivering social benefits. For each, measures would be established, such as increasing public transportation trips per capita and percentage of freight shipped by rail, number of jobs created and transit use by elderly, disabled and low-income persons.

Public Transit and Climate Change. David Gardiner, of David Gardiner and Associates, Inc., presented a PowerPoint presentation at the APTA annual conference, which included graphics that provide a striking visual statement regarding the association of CO₂ and temperatures as well as public transit's beneficial effects in general and in central cities in particular.

FY 2008 NVTC Projected Transit Funding Sources. It is projected that \$636 million will be spent on transit services in NVTC jurisdictions (including VRE but excluding PRTC's buses). Local and regional sources should cover about 60%, the state less than 25% and the federal government the remainder.

Washington Post Statewide Traffic Congestion Survey. On October 21, 2007 The Washington Post published a report on a statewide poll. Throughout Virginia, 63% felt traffic congestion is a problem (with 39% viewing it as a serious problem).

Christopher Newport University Poll on Virginia Traffic Congestion. The CNU poll showed 61% of Virginians believe more is needed than the transportation funding package enacted this year. The regional funding approach included in the package is favored by 55% statewide, with a lower percentage in Hampton Roads (50%) and a higher percentage in Northern Virginia (60%).

Briefing on I-95/395 Transit/TDM Study

Corey Hill of DRPT and Jay Evans of Cambridge Systematics, gave a briefing on the Transit/TDM study. Mr. Evans reported that recent activities include conducting market research, modeling tiered transit/TDM alternatives and initiating an evaluation of park-and-ride needs. The market research found that awareness of HOT lanes is high, in which nearly all sluggers (94 percent) are aware of the HOT lanes. However, sluggers are especially likely (71 percent) to believe that HOT lanes will discourage drivers from picking up sluggers. In response to a question from Delegate Ebbin, Mr. Evans stated that they have already looked at ways to counter-act this perception.

Mr. Evans also stated that research shows that the likelihood of using the HOT lanes is highest among commuters from Spotsylvania, Stafford and Prince William counties compared to the northern suburbs. Less than 30 percent of SOV (single occupancy vehicles) commuters are willing to pay for the time savings, and the number drops significantly as the price increases.

Mr. Evans then reviewed some of the key findings from the travel forecasting. Three transit/TDM alternatives were tested (low: approximately \$250 million; medium: approximately \$500 million; and high: unconstrained). Transit's share and ridership level grows to 2030 at small expense to HOV3+ and LOV, but not much difference among alternatives. Key findings include:

- CLRP Baseline Alternative has significant service additions and is already a very strong performer.
- The greatest difference among tested alternatives was in the competition among transit modes.
- HOT lanes generally did not adversely impact transit or carpool mode share versus today.
- The transit/TDM alternatives maintain high mode share in the corridor even with significant increases of travel in the corridor.
- Many of the new proposed transit routes show strong ridership.

Mr. Connolly observed that the findings show that HOT lanes did not adversely impact carpools including sluggers. Mr. Evans stated that the attitude preference survey and market research back up this same conclusion. Mr. Connolly stated that it is important to convey this information to Prince William County officials. Mr. Hill stated that this same presentation was given at the PRTC meeting. Mr. Connolly suggested that this presentation be given to media in the Prince William County region.

Mr. Evans explained that the next steps include refining alternatives, sensitivity tests of the fare buy down and BRAC alternatives, park-and-ride needs analysis, and

cost/revenue projections. The draft final report should be finished in December with a revised CLRP submission in January, 2008.

In response to a question from Chairman Snyder, Mr. Hill explained the decision making process of what alternatives were kept or dropped. Chairman Snyder asked about funding. Mr. Hill stated that they are still in the process of getting this information, but preliminary estimates are that it is a \$390 million project, with \$195 million in revenues projected from the HOT lanes. The Commonwealth Transportation Board will ultimately make the final decision.

Mr. Lovain noted the concern of the City of Alexandria with the treatment of any new ramps at Seminary Road.

Chairman Snyder asked if any of the high capital projects were modeled. Mr. Hill stated that it is important to look at improvements to Metro and VRE. When analyzing unconstrained projects, it was found that significant money would be invested without substantial increases in ridership. Mr. Evans stated that there are improvements to VRE in the refined alternatives.

December 6th Ceremony at NVTC's Meeting

Chairman Snyder announced that several commissioners will be leaving NVTC at the end of the year, including Paul Ferguson, Dana Kauffman and Elaine McConnell. At the close of NVTC's December 6th meeting, special recognition will be given to them for their service.

NVTC Financial Report for September, 2007

The financial report was provided to commissioners. They had no questions or comments.

Adjournment

Senator Whipple moved, with a second by Mrs. Bulova, to adjourn. Without objection, Chairman Snyder adjourned the meeting at 9:26 P.M.

Approved this 6th day of December, 2007.

David F. Snyder
Chairman

Christopher Zimmerman
Secretary-Treasurer