

MINUTES
NVTC COMMISSION MEETING – OCTOBER 4, 2007
NVTC CONFERENCE ROOM – ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA

The meeting of the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission was called to order by Chairman Snyder at 8:08 P.M.

Members Present

Chip Badger
Gerald Connolly
Jeannemarie Devolites Davis
Adam Ebbin
William D. Euille
Paul Ferguson
Jay Fisette
Catherine M. Hudgins
Dana Kauffman
Elaine McConnell
Scott Silverthorne
Paul Smedberg
David F. Snyder
Mary Margaret Whipple

Members Absent

David Albo
Sharon Bulova
Eugene Delgaudio
Joe May
Thomas Rust
Christopher Zimmerman

Staff Present

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

Chairman Snyder suggested the commission begin discussion of the information items while waiting for quorum. There were no objections.

Metro Items

FY 2009 Budget and Fare Increase. Mr. Euille reported that Metro faces a significant budget shortfall in FY 2009 and the Metro Board is considering a fare increase to help close the funding gap. He explained that the Board will work towards some level of a fare increase (anywhere from 5-cents to 45-cents). The Board has asked for some additional information from Metro staff before any decision is made. He stated that the message is loud and clear that jurisdictions do not want increases to their subsidies.

Chairman Snyder underscored the importance of service reliability. Passengers need to feel that they are getting improved service. There continue to be service delays on the Orange Line. Mr. Euille stated that there will be more delays without increased funding because funds are needed to improve and upgrade the system. A fare increase will bring in these additional funds.

Status of Federal Dedicated Funding Bills. Chairman Snyder reported that there have been discussions between elected officials and business leaders from Maryland, the District of Columbia and Virginia concerning the dedicated funding bill. He asked for a progress report at the next meeting.

Survey of Metrorail and Metrobus Customer Attitudes. Mr. Taube reported that Metro conducted two telephone surveys. Despite problems Metro is facing, the survey results show that 87 percent of Metrorail riders and 81 percent of Metrobus riders are satisfied with Metro. When people were asked to rank their preferred mode of travel, Metrorail is consistently chosen as the best way to travel. Another interesting finding is that the great majority of Metro customers have a vehicle available for travel, so they are discretionary riders.

Metro Board Letter on the Dulles Rail Project. Local, state and federal officials gathered to announce that cost reductions have been achieved in the project and to urge FTA to act promptly and favorably. In a letter to the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority, WMATA's General Manager accepts the proposed changes with two caveats. First, further refinements will be required during the final design process. Second, Metro is not in a position to verify the cost savings.

Regional Transportation Items

NVTA Administrative Actions. Mr. Taube reported that NVTA met on September 27th and is scheduled to meet again on November 8th. Chairman Snyder stated that NVTA is continuing to implement its approved decisions and actively participate in the bond litigation against NVTA. In response to a question from Mrs. McConnell, Tom Biesiadny of Fairfax County explained that opponents have appealed the court's decision in favor of NVTA. Now the Virginia Supreme Court needs to decide if it will hear the appeal.

NVTC reached a quorum when Mr. Fisette arrived at 8:17 P.M.

"Cruising for Parking" Article. Mr. Taube reported that Donald Shoup, who has published extensively on his research regarding the costs of parking, has produced some startling estimates of the extent to which driving around looking for curbside parking spaces contributes to congestion. Based on observations in a congested Los Angeles neighborhood, cruising for parking there generated 950,000 excess vehicle miles traveled (VMT), which would be equivalent to four trips to the moon, wasting 95,000 hours (11 years) and 47,000 gallons of gasoline and producing 730 tons of CO₂. Mr. Shoup suggests that curb parking prices should be gradually increased until an average of about 85 percent of metered spaces are occupied.

I-95/395 Transit/TDM Study Progress Report. While the transit/TDM study should still be completed by December, 2007, it now appears that the agreement between Fluor-Transurban and the commonwealth on the northern segment will not be completed until spring or summer of 2008. Thus, not only will the transit/TDM study help guide input for constrained long range plans at TPB and FAMPO, but it could also play an important role in shaping the HOT Lanes forecasts and project agreement.

Texas Transportation Institute's 2007 Urban Mobility Report. This annual report, produced by the Texas Transportation Institute, provides an easily understood analysis of congestion and mobility issues nationwide. The 2007 report, based on 2005 data collected from state and federal traffic agencies covering 437 urban areas, seeks to quantify congestion and mobility issues, as well as show the costs of congestion in terms of time and fuel. The report also provides consistent comparisons of congestion in very large, large, medium and small urban area. Mr. Taube stated that the Washington metropolitan region still ranks very high in terms of congestion costs, but the transit investments substantially reduce these costs. However, the amount reduced is much lower this year compared to previous years (roughly a half billion dollars this year versus more than a billion dollars in past years.)

New Data on Slugging in the I-95 Corridor. VDOT has shared some 2006 data on slugging activity (informal carpooling). The Horner Road Park-and-Ride

lot in Prince William County is the most heavily used location with 1,566 commuters per day out of 6,459 total slugging.

Earlier Commute Times. USA Today has reported on census data confirming that commuters are leaving for work much earlier to avoid congestion. In 2000, one worker in nine left by 6:00 A.M., while in 2006 it increased to one in eight. This puts 207 million additional drivers on the road nationwide. As a result, businesses, such as fast food restaurants, are altering their menus and business plans.

Media Coverage of NVTC's Mode Share Report. At its September 6th meeting, NVTC staff presented the results of a study (with 2006 data) counting traffic by mode in the I-395/Route 1 corridor at Glebe Road inside the Beltway. Two-thirds of persons traveling in-bound each morning used transit and ridesharing.

Test of Vehicle Miles Fees. Researchers will attach GPS trackers in the vehicles of 2,700 volunteers in Austin, Baltimore, Boise, San Diego, Eastern Iowa and the Research Triangle of North Carolina. The devices will measure miles driven and sample bills will be sent over the next two years each month. The volunteers can compare what they pay in gas taxes to what they would have paid in per-mile fees. Congress is set to receive recommendations on future sources of funding for surface transportation improvements and this new study should help inform those decisions.

Virginia Transit Association. Mr. Taube announced that Mr. Euille was elected VTA Vice-President by the VTA Board on September 17, 2007. VTA's Vice-President typically serves two years in that office and then moves up to President for two years. Mr. Zimmerman has served as VTA President in the recent past.

NVTC Minutes of September 6, 2007 Meeting

Mr. Kauffman moved, with a second by Mr. Euille, to approve the minutes. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Badger, Devolites Davis, Euille, Fisetite, Hudgins, Kauffman, McConnell, Silverthorne, Smedberg, Snyder and Whipple.

Mr. Taube announced that Chip Badger, Deputy Director of DRPT, is now serving as a regular member of NVTC. Mr. Tucker will serve as his alternate.

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

Mr. Taube explained that NVTC staff is completing an evaluation report on the program of free bus fares on forecast bad air quality days (currently Code Orange and Code Red). The report is still being reviewed by local staff but a decision is needed immediately on future funding for the program given deadlines for applying for federal funds through the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority.

Mr. Taube gave a brief history of the program, described the tentative evaluation findings, and discussed several alternatives for the future of the program. The final report and consensus staff recommendations are expected by NVTC's November meeting. At that time the amount of CMAQ funds requested can be refined or the entire application withdrawn. This approach will provide additional time to refine the program while remaining eligible for future funding.

Mr. Taube stated that several alternative approaches were evaluated. After consulting with the Management Advisory Committee and other jurisdictional staff, the following approach is being considered:

1. For 2008: Alternative 3: Reduce Program Cost by Offering 50-Cent Fares on Forecast Bad Air Days; and for the future consider Alternative 4: Offer Reduced Fare Monthly Regional Ozone Bus Passes.
2. For FY 2009 and beyond: CMAQ funding would continue at about \$2.5 million annually. Less than \$1 million would support the 50-cent fare program. About \$100,000 would be used for marketing and surveys. A target for private-sector fundraising would be set for at least \$100,000 annually. The remaining funds (about \$1.5 million) could be used to reimburse the transit systems for discounted monthly ozone passes in the future.

This approach also assumes that WMATA and its contractors will successfully complete upgrades to the regional SmarTrip farebox clearinghouse so that the passes could be accepted in the future and revenue cleared conveniently between transit systems.

Mrs. Hudgins moved, with a second by Mr. Euille, to apply to NVTA for a FY 2009 CMAQ grant of \$2.5 million for the summer of 2009 and to apply for other NVTA-allocated funds for summer 2008. Commissioners were reminded that these applications can be withdrawn or altered based on NVTC's evaluation of the final report at the November 1st meeting.

Commissioners Ebbin and Ferguson arrived at 8:42 P.M.

Senator Devolites Davis stated that it is difficult to fully evaluate the program with incomplete ridership counts. She suggested using some of the remaining balance of funds (\$770,000) to devise some type of button or device that the passenger could push when boarding the bus, to gain a more accurate count. Chairman Snyder observed that if a reduced fare was implemented it would automatically be counted with the farebox. Senator Devolites Davis stated that "free" is more meaningful to riders and she wagered that a reduced fare would not be as enticing. Mrs. Hudgins stated that the survey results showed that "free" wasn't necessarily the most important incentive. Senator Whipple stated that she has been a long-time advocate of charging some type of reduced fare. It is very costly to pay full fares for those passengers who would have already been riding anyway. Changing it to a reduced fare also has the added benefit of providing an accurate count.

Mr. Fisette asked if there are other cities that do similar programs and have more accurate counts. Ms. Rodgers reported that in the San Francisco Bay area they spent \$8.5 million for four Code Red days. Mr. Fisette stated that the key seems to be getting more people to become regular transit riders. He stated that in Arlington County when there is a new development, the developer often subsidizes transit for a period of time (often six months) to encourage transit ridership. This gets new riders using the system. Senator Whipple also stated that in the past Metro issued free ride coupons to promote new bus routes. Chairman Snyder stated that in some European cities hotels hand out transit passes to their guests.

Mrs. McConnell suggested initiating a similar kind of program for bad weather days during the winter months. Senator Whipple responded that it could address safety issues but it wouldn't reduce the summer ozone problem, although CO₂ emissions would be reduced.

Mr. Connolly arrived at 8:53 P.M. and joined the discussion.

Chairman Snyder stated that he would like NVTC to look at these transit issues in the context of CO₂ and other greenhouse gases.

The commission then voted on the motion and it passed. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Badger, Connolly, Devolites Davis, Ebbin, Euille, Ferguson, Fisette, Hudgins, Kauffman, McConnell, Silverthorne, Smedberg, Snyder and Whipple.

NVTC Financial Report for August, 2007

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

VRE Items

Report from the VRE Operations Board and VRE's Chief Executive Officer. Mr. Kauffman urged commissioners to read the minutes of the VRE Operations Board meeting of September 21, 2007. Mr. Zehner reported that ridership is up six percent in September compared to a year ago at the same time. VRE has a radio campaign running to promote ridership. He invited commissioners to attend the ground breaking ceremony on October 18th for the new 520-space parking garage at the Manassas Station. Also, VRE is expecting to receive five new gallery coaches per month starting in December 2007 and ending in October, 2008. By November, 2008 all 61 new gallery coaches will be in service on peak-period trains.

Senator Devolites Davis noticed that the delays in August were much longer compared to last year. Mr. Zehner stated that the two long delays were caused by unusual events, including a suicide on the tracks in Alexandria.

Sale of Five Gallery Cars. Mr. Kauffman stated that Resolution #2077 would authorize VRE's CEO to sell five Gallery cars to Dan Behr Associates for \$1 each. That is the same price paid by VRE with no additional VRE funds invested in them and no residual value.

Mr. Kauffman moved, with a second by Mrs. McConnell, to approve the resolution (copy attached). The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Badger, Connolly, Devolites Davis, Ebbin, Euille, Ferguson, Fisette, Hudgins, Kauffman, McConnell, Silverthorne, Smedberg, Snyder and Whipple.

Continued Lease of Sounder Railcars. Mr. Kauffman explained that the VRE Operations Board recommends commission approval of Resolution #2078, which would authorize VRE's CEO to increase the authorization limit for leasing railcars from Sound Transit by \$500,000. The limit would increase to \$8,726,000 from \$8,226,000. This will allow VRE to continue to lease one set of bi-level railcars though June 30, 2008. Funds are available in VRE's approved capital budget using a FY 2006 federal grant.

On a motion by Mr. Kauffman and a second by Mr. Smedberg, the commission unanimously approved the resolution (copy attached). The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Badger, Connolly, Devolites Davis, Ebbin, Euille, Ferguson, Fisette, Hudgins, Kauffman, McConnell, Silverthorne, Smedberg, Snyder and Whipple.

Facilities Maintenance Option. Mr. Kauffman moved, with a second by Mrs. McConnell, to approve Resolution #2079, which would authorize VRE's CEO to exercise the third option year of a contract with NV Enterprises, Inc. for maintenance of VRE facilities. The cost will not exceed \$2 million of budgeted funds.

The commission voted on the motion and it passed. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Badger, Connolly, Devolites Davis, Ebbin, Euille, Ferguson, Fissette, Hudgins, Kauffman, McConnell, Silverthorne, Smedberg, Snyder and Whipple.

Closed Session on VRE's Insurance Plan. Mr. Kauffman moved, with a second by Mr. Smedberg, the following motion:

Pursuant to the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (Section 2.2-3711A(7) of the Code of Virginia), the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission authorizes discussion in closed session regarding one legal matter pertaining to VRE's Insurance Plan.

The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Badger, Connolly, Devolites Davis, Ebbin, Euille, Ferguson, Fissette, Hudgins, Kauffman, McConnell, Silverthorne, Smedberg, Snyder and Whipple.

Chairman Snyder stated that he would not participate in the discussion or any action, since he works in the insurance industry. The commission entered into closed session at 9:00 P.M. and returned to open session at 9:25 P.M. Chairman Snyder turned the chair over to Vice Chairman Euille.

Mr. Kauffman moved, with a second by Mrs. McConnell, the following certification:

The Northern Virginia Transportation Commission certifies that, to the best of each member's knowledge and with no individual member dissenting, at the just concluded closed session:

- 1) Only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements under the Freedom of Information Act were discussed; and
- 2) Only such public business matters as were identified in the motion by which the closed session was convened were heard, discussed or considered.

The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Badger, Connolly, Devolites Davis, Ebbin, Euille, Ferguson, Fisette, Hudgins, Kauffman, McConnell, Silverthorne, Smedberg, Snyder and Whipple.

Mr. Kauffman moved to approve Resolution #2080 (copy attached) as presented to the commission during closed session. Mrs. McConnell seconded the motion. Senator Devolites Davis stated that for the record she is in agreement with exclusion 1.g. of the resolution but not with exclusion 1.d.

The commission then voted on the motion and it passed. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Badger, Ebbin, Euille, Ferguson, Fisette, Hudgins, Kauffman, McConnell, Silverthorne, Smedberg and Whipple. Commissioners Connolly, Devolites Davis and Snyder abstained.

Vice Chairman Euille turned the meeting back over to Chairman Snyder.

Other NVTC Business

Mr. Kauffman distributed copies of a George Mason Alumni magazine article about Paul Ferguson.

Adjournment

Mrs. Hudgins moved, with a second by Senator Whipple, to adjourn. Without objection, Chairman Snyder adjourned the meeting at 9:29 P.M.

Approved this 1st day of November, 2007.

David F. Snyder
Chairman

Christopher Zimmerman
Secretary-Treasurer