

MINUTES  
NVTC COMMISSION MEETING – JUNE 5, 2008  
NVTC CONFERENCE ROOM – ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA

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

**Members Present**

David Albo  
Sharon Bulova  
Kelly Burk  
Gerald Connolly  
Adam Ebbin  
Jay Fisette  
Mark R. Herring  
Pat Herrity  
Corey Hill (DRPT)  
Catherine Hudgins  
Mary Hynes  
Joe May  
Jeffrey McKay  
Thomas Rust  
Scott Silverthorne  
Paul Smedberg  
David F. Snyder  
Mary Margaret Whipple  
Christopher Zimmerman

**Members Absent**

William D. Euille

**Staff Present**

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

### Oath of Office for New NVTC Commissioner

Vice-Chairman Zimmerman announced that Senator Mark Herring has been appointed to replace Senator Devolites-Davis. Vice-Chairman Zimmerman administered the oath of office to Senator Herring. Commissioners welcomed him to NVTC.

### Minutes of the May 1, 2008 NVTC Meeting

On a motion by Mr. Connolly and a second by Mr. Smedberg, the commission unanimously approved the minutes. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Albo, Bulova, Burk, Connolly, Ebbin, Herring, Herrity, Hudgins, Hynes, May, McKay, Rust, Silverthorne, Smedberg, Snyder, Whipple and Zimmerman.

### VRE Items

Report from the VRE Operations Board and Chief Executive Officer. Mrs. Bulova encouraged commissioners to read the minutes of the May 15<sup>th</sup> VRE Operations Board meeting. Mr. Zehner reported that ridership has surged over the last two months and it is up six percent compared to last year at the same time. It is expected to continue to increase. There are now standees on some of the peak trains. He also announced that VRE had a planned service disruption on May 30, 2008, for track work to extend the third mainline track at "RO," an area just south of the Potomac River Bridge near the Crystal City station. VRE train service was terminated outside of the suspension area. Fredericksburg Line trains were terminated at the Franconia-Springfield station and Manassas Line trains ended at the Norfolk Southern facility near the Van Dorn Metrorail station where passengers were bused to the Metro station. VRE passengers were able to transfer to Metro using their VRE ticket. It went very well and Metro did a good job of handling the extra passengers.

Mr. Zehner stated that VRE is still working on improving on-time performance. Train interference is the main reason for train delays. Delegate Rust asked if there is a national standard for on-time performance. Mr. Zehner explained that there is not a national standard but VRE has set a goal of 90 percent.

Mr. Connolly stated that he has heard that a British firm is attempting to bid to purchase CSX. Mr. Zehner explained that it is a hostile bid. Mr. Connolly further stated that legislation will probably be introduced in Congress to block it, since it would be considered foreign ownership. Mr. Snyder suggested that as these CSX buy-out

negotiations continue, VRE look at various strategies to leverage a better potential outcome.

Mrs. Burk asked if there is a reason why ridership is up. Mr. Zehner replied that the price of gasoline could be a contributing factor, as well as traffic congestion. VRE is more reliable day-to-day compared to commuting by automobile. Riders are also pleased with the new railcars. However, with new riders, on-time performance is even more crucial.

Delegate May asked about the status of the locomotive acquisition. Mr. Zehner replied that VRE is ready to sign a contract for locomotives; however, VRE has funding for only two locomotives, since the option for additional locomotives would have been primarily funded by HB 3202. VRE will try to exercise the option over the next four to five years using different sources of funding, unless funding can be restored during the upcoming General Assembly Special Session. Mrs. Bulova stated that locomotive performance impacts on-time performance. Vice-Chairman Zimmerman asked if the new locomotives are more efficient. Mr. Zehner explained how the new locomotives will be more efficient and environmentally friendly.

Mr. Snyder also observed that several years ago, NVTC did an economic analysis of the costs of a Metro trip from the outer suburbs to D.C. compared to driving (gas, wear and tear on vehicle, insurance, parking, etc.). With the increase in fuel costs, this type of analysis could be helpful for VRE and Metro riders to see and he asked that staff do some analysis using a couple of different scenarios. Mrs. Bulova stated that this information could be used as a marketing point.

Mr. Hill and Mr. Fisetto arrived at 8:18 P.M.

Sale of Five Gallery Cars. Mrs. Bulova reported that the VRE Operations Board recommends approval of Resolution #2107, which would authorize VRE's CEO to sell five Gallery cars to Chicago Metra for \$5,500 per car. These are the last five of a lot of railcars that VRE has advertised for sale. Twenty were sold previously. The sale is contingent on FTA approval. VRE has calculated that no federal or state interest will remain in these cars at the time of the sale. Mrs. Bulova stated that this transaction includes the buyer paying freight to remove the cars from VRE property. Previous Gallery car sales were approved at \$1 per car (for cars without working air conditioning) and \$4,000 per car (for cars with working air conditioning).

Mrs. Bulova moved, with a second by Mr. Smedberg, to approve Resolution #2107 (copy attached).

Vice Chairman Zimmerman noted that the resolution needs to be changed to reflect that the buyer is “Metra” and not “Metro.”

The commission then voted on the amended resolution and it passed. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Albo, Bulova, Burk, Connolly, Ebbin, Herring, Herrity, Hill, Hudgins, Hynes, Fiset, May, McKay, Rust, Silverthorne, Smedberg, Snyder, Whipple and Zimmerman.

Other VRE Items. Mrs. Bulova announced that VRE will have ribbon cutting ceremonies for two new parking facilities. The Manassas parking garage ribbon cutting ceremony will be held on June 26<sup>th</sup> and the ceremony for the Burke Centre facility on June 28<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Connolly stated that signage needs to be improved around the Burke Centre station. He asked VRE to work with VDOT and Fairfax County staff on this issue. Commissioners should be receiving invitations to these events.

### Legislative Items

Commissioners were provided with details about the governor’s proposal of a transportation funding mechanism to be considered at the upcoming General Assembly Special Session and its implications for transit. Mr. Taube explained that Resolution #2108 has been drafted expressing NVTC’s support for the governor’s proposal.

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

Delegate Albo congratulated the governor for putting together a proposal; however, looking closer at the numbers, Northern Virginia would be putting in 40 percent for maintenance costs, while only receiving back 14 percent. He does not want to be on record supporting the specifics of the governor’s proposal, since he and Delegate Rust will also be introducing legislation for the Special Session. Mr. Connolly observed that the resolution says that NVTC “supports the governor’s proposal as a useful starting point for General Assembly consideration...” and it does not endorse the governor’s entire proposal or in no way precludes other proposals. Delegate May expressed his concern that the language of the resolution could be taken out of context if not read in its entirety. He sympathizes with what NVTC is trying to convey, but would prefer to abstain from the vote.

Mr. Herrity stated that Fairfax County approved something similar, but included the principle that revenues raised in Northern Virginia need to stay in Northern Virginia. Mr. Connolly suggested changing #4 of the resolution to read: “It utilizes easily understood revenue sources and provides that the revenues raised in Northern Virginia stay in Northern Virginia.” Senator Whipple observed that she is supportive of the

motion, but warned that it is not realistic to think that all of the revenues will stay in Northern Virginia because of maintenance issues. Mr. Taube stated that the governor's effort would seek to balance the outflows and inflows. Maintenance funds could have a net out flow while the transit funds could have a net in flow to Northern Virginia. Senator Whipple withdrew her concern.

In responding to Delegate May's concerns, Mr. Fisette suggested that the resolution's subject line be changed to "Support for State and Regional Transportation Funding Proposal as a Useful Starting Point." Mr. Connolly accepted this suggestion as a friendly amendment. There were no objections.

The commission then voted on the amended resolution and it unanimously passed. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Albo, Bulova, Burk, Connolly, Ebbin, Herring, Herrity, Hill, Hudgins, Hynes, Fisette, May, McKay, Rust, Silverthorne, Smedberg, Snyder, Whipple and Zimmerman.

#### I-95/395 HOT Lanes

Mr. Taube reminded commissioners that Secretary Homer asked that discussion on this subject be deferred until the June 5<sup>th</sup> NVTC meeting. NVTC is still waiting for the information it requested, including the results of the Halcrow safety study. A letter to Secretary Homer has been drafted to remind him about these outstanding issues.

On a motion by Mr. Connolly and a second by Senator Whipple, the commission unanimously approved the letter. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Albo, Bulova, Burk, Connolly, Ebbin, Herring, Herrity, Hill, Hudgins, Hynes, Fisette, May, McKay, Rust, Silverthorne, Smedberg, Snyder, Whipple and Zimmerman.

#### Comments on DRPT Transit Policies

Mr. Taube stated that at last month's meeting the commission discussed its concerns regarding DRPT's policies on Maintenance of Effort, off-the-top DRPT administrative fees, and below average statewide matching ratio for NVTC. These concerns were included in Chairman Euille's testimony for NVTC at the Commonwealth Transportation Board hearings on May 14<sup>th</sup>. CTB will be asked to approve these policies at its June meeting.

Mr. Hill stated that DRPT received a number of comments on these policies. At this time, in regard to Maintenance of Effort, DRPT will calculate passenger fares as part of the local contribution. In regards to the other two issues, DRPT is in the process of providing a response to NVTC by June 10<sup>th</sup>. Senator Whipple stated that she is pleased to hear that the ridership revenue will be included. She suggested that these three issues be brought specifically to the attention of CTB's members, Judy Connolly

(At-Large Urban) and Doug Koelemay (Northern Virginia), and to ask them to shepherd these issues through the CTB discussion.

Senator Whipple moved, with a second by Mr. Connolly, to send letters to CTB members Connolly and Koelemay concerning these issues. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Albo, Bulova, Burk, Connolly, Ebbin, Herring, Herrity, Hill, Hudgins, Hynes, Fisette, May, McKay, Rust, Silverthorne, Smedberg, Snyder, Whipple and Zimmerman.

Mr. Connolly asked Mr. Hill to convey to Mr. Tucker NVTC's appreciation that DRPT took NVTC's concerns into account. Mrs. Burk also expressed Loudoun County's gratitude to NVTC for assisting in this issue.

### Metro Items

Mr. Snyder requested that in light of yesterday's delays on Metrorail due to power failures, NVTC put on an upcoming meeting agenda a discussion about incident management including a presentation on the region's efforts to create a regional transportation coordination group to handle incidents like this and how to communicate to the public. The Metro delays really inconvenienced riders. Some of it was out of Metro's control, but communication needs to be improved so riders are not left in the dark about what is happening. The region needs to have a coordinated effort. Vice-Chairman Zimmerman asked if Mr. Snyder was specifically referring to the group at TPB. Mr. Snyder replied affirmatively and stated that the group is the Metropolitan Area Transportation Operations Coordination Program Steering Committee (MATOC). He suggested inviting Dick Steed of VDOT and a Metro representative to participate in the discussion.

Monthly Ridership in Virginia's Metrorail Stations. Mr. Taube reported that Metrorail ridership at Virginia stations is very strong in FY 2008 through April compared to FY 2007 and is up eight percent on a month-to-month basis. Delegate Albo observed that there has been a surge in ridership and an increase in gasoline prices, which impacts gas tax revenues. He asked if Metro is swimming in money due to increased gas tax collections, and if so, can Metro spend it on capital improvements. Vice-Chairman Zimmerman replied that Metro is not swimming in money. Northern Virginia's gas tax revenues go to NVTC and fund a very small fraction of Metro's budget (approximately two percent). Additional passengers will result in more revenue; but on the other hand, Metro is over budget on its gas costs. Mr. Taube stated that gas tax collection charts are showing that gas consumption has gone down. Vice-Chairman Zimmerman agreed that there is some evidence that people are driving less. Mrs. Hudgins stated that it is important to look at how transit systems can make adjustments

with the increases in gasoline costs. Mr. McKay announced that Metro broke ridership records last Tuesday. Vice-Chairman Zimmerman further announced that five out of the 10 highest Metrorail ridership days have been in the last two months.

Buses Operating on Shoulder Lanes. WMATA Chairman Zimmerman's proposal to consider a system of shoulder lanes on which buses could operate is being considered by VDOT. An evaluation involving new signals for existing shoulder lanes on I-66 outside the Beltway is being done.

Metrorail Capacity Needs. WMATA's Metro Matters investments need to be reallocated to respond to other urgent unfunded capital needs. The new plan defers \$109.5 million of Metro Matters projects. Combined with proposed borrowing of \$48.0 million, the \$489 million deficit of unfunded needs would be trimmed to \$332 million.

Bus Corridor Improvements. Metro has completed a new extensive study to revamp its heavily used Metrobus #30 lines operating across the District of Columbia. The process features opportunities for public input at several steps. Metro staff is proposing that the process be repeated in many other corridors in D.C., Maryland and Virginia to upgrade performance.

### Regional Transportation Items

Virginia Transit Association Spring Meeting. VTA met May 19-21, 2008 at the Hilton Crystal City. VRE, Loudoun County and NVTC all received awards. NVTC received an honorable mention award from VTA in its Innovative Program category for NVTC's Senior Mobility Transit Training project.

Housing and Transportation Affordability Index. Mrs. Hynes noted that the website address listed for this index is incorrect. Mr. Taube stated that staff will provide commissioners the correct link.

### NVTC Financial Items for April, 2008

Commissioners were provided with the financial reports for April, 2008. There were no questions or comments.

Award of Appreciation for Scott Silverthorne

Vice-Chairman Zimmerman noted that Mr. Silverthorne has represented the city of Fairfax on NVTC for nearly 10 years. After serving nine terms on the Fairfax City Council, Mr. Silverthorne did not seek re-election. In appreciation of his many years of service to NVTC, Vice-Chairman presented Mr. Silverthorne with an award.

Adjournment

Without objection, Vice-Chairman Zimmerman adjourned the meeting at 8:55 P.M.

Approved this 3<sup>rd</sup> day of July, 2008.

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William D. Euille  
Chairman

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Gerald E. Connolly  
Secretary-Treasurer