



MINUTES

NVTC COMMISSION MEETING – SEPTEMBER 4, 2008
NVTC CONFERENCE ROOM – ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA

The meeting of the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission was called to order by Chairman Euille at 8:18 P.M.

Members Present

Charles Badger
Sharon Bulova
Kelly Burk
Gerald Connolly
Adam Ebbin
William D. Euille
Jay Fisette
Jeffrey Greenfield
Mark R. Herring
Catherine Hudgins
Jeffrey McKay
Thomas Rust
Paul Smedberg
David F. Snyder
Christopher Zimmerman

Members Absent

David Albo
Pat Herrity
Mary Hynes
Joe May
Mary Margaret Whipple

Staff Present

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



Minutes of the July 3, 2008 NVTC Meeting

Mrs. Bulova moved, with a second by Mr. Zimmerman, to approve the minutes.

Mr. McKay stated that although he was not at last month's meeting, the minutes should be changed to clarify (on page 7) that the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors created a special subcommittee to deal with "I-95/495 HOT Lane" issues.

The commission then voted on the amended minutes and the motion passed. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Badger, Bulova, Burk, Connolly, Ebbin, Euille, Greenfield, Herring, McKay, Smedberg, Snyder and Zimmerman.

Metropolitan Area Transportation Operations Coordination Program Steering Committee

Mr. Snyder stated that this effort really started two weeks after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Congressman Moran procured a \$2 million start-up grant for this committee. Mr. Snyder stated that it is important for transportation agencies to support this entity to provide regional cooperation in the event of a natural or man-made catastrophe. He welcomed Mr. Dick Steed, the chair of the Metropolitan Area Transportation Operations Coordination Program Steering Committee (MATOC), who gave a presentation on the committee's work, with emphasis on public transit emergency response.

Mrs. Hudgins arrived at 8:19 P.M.

Mr. Steed recapped the history of MATOC. In response to a question from Mr. Connolly, Mr. Steed stated that MATOC's vision is to ensure that travel in the National Capital Region (NCR) is the safest and most efficient in the nation through effective information dissemination and regional coordination. MATOC's mission is to provide situational awareness of transportation operations in the National Capital Region through the communication of consistent and reliable information to enable the traveling public and operating agencies to make effective and timely decisions; and to develop the tools and processes needed to facilitate coordinated operating agency response.

Mr. Steed explained that the Regional Integrated Transportation Information System (RTIS) and agency systems will be used to share timely, accurate transportation systems condition information across the region.

Mr. Fisette arrived at 8:25 P.M.

Mr. Steed reviewed MATOC's objectives, which include:

- 1) To provide for the quick and reliable exchange of transportation system information among operating agencies in the NCR.

- 2) To provide accurate and timely information on transportation system conditions to the public, taking advantage of a wide variety of public and private dissemination means.
- 3) To enable agency operations staffs to more effectively and reliably coordinate with each other when a major incident or emergency has occurred.
- 4) To continually improve regional preparedness for effectively managing the transportation system in response to major incidents or emergencies on critical transportation system links.
- 5) To continually improve the region's ability to inform the public and coordinate management of the transportation system.
- 6) To continually improve the performance of agency operations personnel in coordinating with their peers in other agencies in the region.

Mr. Steed stated that time is of the essence. It is the committee's intent to deploy proof of concept in December, 2008 with full implementation expected by July, 2009. He then reviewed the "to do" list of those items that still need to be accomplished.

Mr. Zimmerman asked how this effort will matter to the individual commuter. Mr. Steed responded that it will matter because there can be a quicker and more appropriate outreach to the public to get the information out when there is a major incident. Mr. Steed used a recent incident in Springfield as an example.

Delegate Ebbin asked if any other state or multi-state region is doing anything similar. Mr. Steed stated that initiatives are being done in other areas but not to the same extent.

Mr. Connolly asked why it is taking so long if time is of the essence and the \$2 million was awarded back in 2005, and yet it won't be implemented until July, 2009. Mr. Steed stated that this is a legitimate question. It has taken this long to work out the agreement and process. Many of the people working on this committee have other full time jobs. There have also been legal issues that have had to be dealt with before proceeding.

Mr. Snyder asked that Mr. Steed be invited to return in December or January to provide a status report on MATOC.

VRE Items

Report from the VRE Operations Board and Chief Executive Officer. Mr. Zehner reported that ridership was up 10 percent in August compared to the same time last year. On-time performance for August was 92 percent systemwide (94 percent on the Fredericksburg Line and 91 percent on the Manassas Line). The new Burke garage opened in July and is now 50 percent filled. The new Manassas garage opened last

week and is at 90 percent capacity. He also announced that the last five railcars of the 50-car option will be delivered in two weeks. VRE sold the 13 Kawasaki railcars in August.

Delegate Rust joined the discussion at 8:36 P.M.

Mr. Connolly asked if VRE has been negatively impacted by the failure of the General Assembly to pass a substitute transportation bill in light of what happened to HB 3202. Mr. Zehner replied that VRE has been impacted. Mr. Connolly suggested that staff compile a list of all the projects that are not going to happen because of that failure. Mr. Connolly stated that the list could be very instructive for General Assembly members to see and to educate the public on what are the consequences for not receiving funding.

Referral of Preliminary VRE Operating and Capital Budget for FY 2010. Mrs. Bulova reported that VRE ridership is up, but costs, especially fuel, are also up. VRE is struggling with a projected deficit for FY 2010. VRE staff recommends fare increases to be effective January, 2009 and again in July, 2009. VRE is currently holding public hearings on the proposed fare increase.

Mrs. Bulova stated that if the General Assembly had fixed HB 3202, VRE would be receiving \$25 million annually and adding service, but instead is looking at service reductions and fare increases.

Mrs. Bulova moved, with a second by Mr. Smedberg, to approve Resolution #2114, which would forward the preliminary VRE budget for review and comment to the VRE participating and contributing jurisdictions that are NVTC members. (A copy of the resolution is attached.)

In response to a question from Mr. Connolly, Mrs. Bulova stated that the Operations Board is not attempting to increase jurisdictional subsidies.

Mrs. Bulova stated that VRE staff put together a two-page explanation of the current situation and why VRE has proposed a fare increase. She suggested that the paragraph on page two explaining the loss of the HB 3202 funding be moved to the first page as the first bullet point. In addition, VRE could list the projects that would have been funded. Mr. Zimmerman stated that it is important to get this information out to the public. He suggested "punching it up" and directed NVTC staff to work with VRE staff so that it grabs people's attention. Mr. Connolly suggested also doing something similar for Metro and NVTA to get all the information out there. He suggested using very little narrative and listing the projects that are on hold because the HB 3202 funding was not replaced. He stated that it is ironic when ridership on VRE and Metro is at an all time high.

The commission then voted on the resolution and it passed. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Badger, Bulova, Burk, Connolly, Ebbin, Euille, Fisette, Greenfield, Herring, Hudgins, McKay, Rust, Smedberg, Snyder and Zimmerman.

Award of Contract for Alexandria's Real-Time Bus Status System

Mr. Taube reported that NVTC is managing this federally funded project for the city of Alexandria. The system will permit customers to learn the precise arrival times of buses at each specific bus stop. It will also provide helpful information to transit system managers. When designed and tested this system has the potential to be applied throughout the region through integration with WMATA's and local bus systems' databases. Six teams of consultants responded to the RFP. A committee of technical experts from Alexandria, Alexandria DASH, WMATA and DRPT ranked the proposals and conducted oral interviews. The technical selection committee completed earlier today the best and final offers from three firms. The top ranked firm is Strategic Mapping, Inc of Toronto, Ontario. Mr. Smedberg explained that the commission is not being asked to award a contract, just directing staff to negotiate with the top-ranked firm. The commission will be asked at its October 2nd meeting to authorize award of the contract and to issue the notice to proceed.

Mr. Connolly moved, with a second by Mr. Zimmerman, to authorize NVTC's executive director to negotiate with the top ranked firm (and, if not successful, with the remaining firms in order) to agree on an acceptable contract. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Badger, Bulova, Burk, Connolly, Ebbin, Euille, Fisette, Greenfield, Herring, Hudgins, McKay, Rust, Smedberg, Snyder and Zimmerman.

NVTC's Preliminary Administrative Budget for FY 2010

Mr. Taube reported that for FY 2010, NVTC staff is proposing a budget that would hold constant total local contributions at \$310,000. The requested contributions from each individual jurisdiction are based on the relative shares of financial assistance received from NVTC. This procedure is set in the Code of Virginia. He further explained that total expenditures would rise by 3.1 percent (exactly half of the 6.2 percent increase in the Consumer Price Index in the last year). Local staffs have reviewed the preliminary budget and their comments have been considered and incorporated.

Mr. Zimmerman moved, with a second by Mr. Connolly, to authorize NVTC's executive director to forward the preliminary budget to the member jurisdictions. The commission will be asked to approve the final NVTC budget in January or February of 2009.

Mr. Connolly expressed his appreciation for keeping local governments' contributions capped. Fairfax County is anticipating its school board and county board budgets combined will have a deficit of \$430 million. The county is going to have to look at freezing or reducing subsidies and dues the county is paying to various organizations.

Mr. Taube also stated that the budget contains financial and project management objectives that provide a means to measure NVTC's performance. While most

objectives were met for FY 2008, there is room for improvement in some and management will focus on these areas (e.g. use of NVTC's website as a public information tool).

Chairman Euille noticed that the line item for commissioners' per diem has changed. Mr. Taube explained that NVTC had been optimistically carrying enough funds in that line item for all commissioners to receive a \$200 per diem. General Assembly members receive \$200 but other commissioners receive \$50. After failing to even have legislation introduced, NVTC staff decided to drop the additional funds from the budget. It is presumed that General Assembly members will continue to receive a higher per diem than other commission members.

Mr. Zimmerman stated that the per diem issue needs to be equalized somehow. He does not care about the amount, but he expressed his opinion that members of the General Assembly ought to be ashamed that they are collecting four times what other members are getting. He suggested that NVTC budget for one level, assuming there is legislative action to correct this embarrassing situation. Otherwise, General Assembly members should consider giving back some of their per diem. He will propose something when the commission is asked to approve the budget if there is not a legislative solution to this disparity.

Mr. Smedberg asked about NVTC's health insurance costs and asked if consideration has been given to joining in with one of the jurisdiction's health plans to save money. Mr. Taube stated that periodically NVTC staff surveys the jurisdictions and can take another look at it.

The commission then voted on the motion and it passed. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Badger, Bulova, Burk, Connolly, Ebbin, Euille, Fisette, Greenfield, Herring, Hudgins, McKay, Rust, Smedberg, Snyder and Zimmerman.

Try Transit Week

Mr. Taube reported that DRPT is enthusiastically promoting Try Transit Week, to be conducted September 22-25, 2008. Many Northern Virginia transit systems are participating, although some are experiencing serious capacity constraints. Resolution #2115 would endorse Try Transit Week in support of DRPT's statewide initiative.

Mr. Connolly moved, with a second by Mr. Greenfield, to approve the resolution (copy attached). The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Badger, Bulova, Burk, Connolly, Ebbin, Euille, Fisette, Greenfield, Herring, Hudgins, McKay, Rust, Smedberg, Snyder and Zimmerman.

Legislative Items

State. Mr. Taube reported that Governor Kaine has announced a sharp deterioration in projected state revenues and cautioned that he may be forced to proposed

cutbacks in state programs including education and transportation. Governor Kaine has ruled out asking for tax increases to meet the impending deficit, which may reach \$1 billion.

Federal. Mr. Taube reported that several important bills are pending in Congress that would reauthorize Amtrak, provide funding for Metro, increase Metrochek monthly limits, and provide more funding for transit via energy and climate change bills. Another major task for the next Congress will be the reauthorization of the six-year highway programs, which expire a year from now. Many are suggesting that rather than the usual fine-tuning of existing programs, a major restructuring is overdue. NVTC's Legislative Committee will look at this issue when they meet to discuss NVTC's Legislative Agenda. Mr. Snyder stated that the Transportation Planning Board is also engaged in a similar process of putting together a set of principles regarding the federal reauthorization and suggested NVTC and TPB could work in tandem.

Department of Rail and Public Transportation Policies and Programs

Mr. Badger stated that to save time he will not give his full presentation, but commissioners were provided with a copy of the PowerPoint presentation. He explained that DRPT has responded to NVTC's earlier comments on the draft policy document. The final version of the policy is expected to go to the Commonwealth Transportation Board for action in October, 2008. Mr. Taube stated that DRPT has scheduled a workshop in Northern Virginia on September 16th and Mr. Badger stated that NVTC can discuss in more length its comments and concerns at that meeting.

Mr. Connolly stated that it is gratifying to have DRPT listen and to respond to NVTC's comments and concerns. He reaffirmed NVTC's appreciation to Mr. Tucker and his staff and asked Mr. Badger to again convey NVTC's appreciation.

Metro Items

Monthly Ridership at Virginia's Metrorail Stations. Metrorail ridership remains very strong in Northern Virginia (and indeed throughout the entire system with many record days of ridership achieved during the last two months).

New Parking Garage Opens at Huntington Station. A new \$31 million parking structure opened in mid-August with 1,424 spaces (replacing a 924-space surface lot). The new structure is part of a mixed use project on a 60-acre parcel.

Metrorail to Dulles. Mr. Connolly announced that FTA granted permission to begin construction in Tysons Corner. Route 7 is now under construction and the foretold congestion nightmares have not materialized. Traffic is moving. Secretary of Transportation Peters has expressed her hope that the full funding agreement will be completed while she is still in office. This is all good news for the region.

Regional Transportation Items

I-95/395 HOT Lanes. In response to a question from Mr. McKay, Chairman Euille stated that NVTC has not received a response from its June, 2008 letter to Secretary Homer. He will personally call Secretary Homer to discuss this issue.

US PIRG Report: Squandering the Stimulus. An analysis by U.S. Public Interest group shows that the average U.S. family with two parents and a child has spent more than \$1,500 since February, 2008 on gasoline. This matches the standard stimulus rebate check. The average weekly cost per household for gasoline has risen to almost \$100 from \$60. The rebate program is reported to cost \$168 billion. On the other hand, the federal government is spending only about \$6.6 billion over four years to support new public transit projects. Transit saved 3.4 billion gallons of motor fuel as of 2006, or about \$13.6 billion at today's prices.

Joe Alexander Selected to APTA's Hall of Fame. Chairman Euille reported that former NVTC commissioner Joe Alexander will be honored at the annual meeting of the American Public Transportation Association in early October in San Diego.

Governor Kaine's Expanded Telework Policies. Governor Kaine has announced a new initiative for 120 employees in the Cabinet and Governor's office as well as an expanded policy that directs all staff agencies to consider ways to "improve and expand agency telework and alternative work schedule programs."

Relationship of Gas Prices to Highway Deaths. Researchers Michael Morrissey and David Grabowski have found that over the period 1985-2006, a 10 percent increase in gasoline prices was associated with a 2.3 percent reduction in highway deaths. The impact was more pronounced among younger drivers. The National Safety Council has reported a nine percent decline in highway fatalities in January through May, 2008 compared to the same period a year earlier. During the same period, gas prices are up sharply while highway vehicle miles traveled are down significantly.

Mr. Connolly stated that these findings are dramatic. He stated it has always been an unanswered question of what would be the price point of gasoline as to when behavior would change. It turned out to be \$4. He asked staff to do a literature search documenting behavior changes from increases fuel costs. In response to a question from Mr. Fiset, Mr. Taube explained that NVTC's fuels tax data have a lag of about two months.

New NVTC Website Design

Ms. Rodgers gave a presentation on the new website, which has improved its design and functionality. Commissioners were shown the changes to the website, including an introductory flash movie built around NVTC's mission. Mr. Fiset observed that the dated photographs of early NVTC history do not set the right tone. Staff might also want to look at changing the background music.

NVTC Financial Items for June and July, 2008

Commissioners were provided with the financial reports and there were no questions or comments.

Adjournment

Chairman Euille stated that the closed session will be deferred to the October 2nd meeting.

On a motion by Mr. Greenfield and a second by Mr. Zimmerman, the commission unanimously voted to adjourn. Chairman Euille adjourned the meeting at 9:10 P.M.

Approved this second day of October, 2008.

William D. Euille
Chairman

Gerald E. Connolly
Secretary-Treasurer