

MINUTES
NVTC COMMISSION MEETING – JANUARY 8, 2009
NVTC CONFERENCE ROOM – ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA

The meeting of the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission was called to order by Chairman Euille at 8:26 P.M.

Members Present

David Albo
Charles Badger
Sharon Bulova
Kelly Burk
Adam Ebbin
William D. Euille
Jay Fiset
Catherine Hudgins
Mary Hynes
Jeffrey McKay
Paul Smedberg
David F. Snyder
Mary Margaret Whipple
Christopher Zimmerman

Members Absent

Jeffrey Greenfield
Mark R. Herring
Pat Herrity
Joe May
Thomas Rust

Staff Present

Lynn Everett
Rhonda Gilchrest
Scott Kalkwarf
Greg McFarland
Adam McGavock
Kala Quintana
Rick Taube

Minutes of the December 4, 2008 NVTC Meeting

Senator Whipple moved, with a second by Mrs. Bulova, to approve the minutes. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Badger, Bulova, Burk, Ebbin, Euille, Fisette, Hudgins, Hynes, McKay, Smedberg, Snyder, Whipple and Zimmerman.

Oath of Office for New Commissioner

Chairman Euille noted that no new commissioners have been appointed to NVTC at this time.

Election of NVTC Officers for 2009

Chairman Euille reported that NVTC's executive committee served as the nominating committee and recommends the following slate of officers for 2009:

Chairman: Chris Zimmerman
Vice-Chairman: Catherine Hudgins
Secretary-Treasurer: Bill Euille

In response to a question from Mr. Smedberg, Chairman Euille reported that NVTC has a quorum.

Delegate Ebbin moved, with a second by Mrs. Bulova, to approve the recommended slate of officers, with the understanding that it is contingent upon subsequent action taken by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors at its January meeting. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Badger, Bulova, Burk, Ebbin, Euille, Fisette, Hudgins, Hynes, McKay, Smedberg, Snyder, Whipple and Zimmerman.

Chairman Euille administered the oath of office to the new officers. Commissioners congratulated Mr. Zimmerman, Mrs. Hudgins and Mr. Euille.

On behalf of NVTC, Chairman Zimmerman presented a plaque to Mr. Euille for his service as chairman in 2008. Mr. Euille stated that he enjoyed serving as chairman for a second time. He observed that the region is faced with serious economic challenges ahead which will be difficult.

Selection of NVTC Representatives to Boards and Committees

Chairman Zimmerman announced the nominations for the WMATA, VRE and VTA boards, with the understanding that the action is contingent upon subsequent action taken by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors at its January meeting.

WMATA Board

Principals: Chris Zimmerman and Cathy Hudgins

Alternates: Bill Euille and Jeff McKay

VRE Operations Board

Principals: Sharon Bulova, Pat Herrity, Chris Zimmerman
and Paul Smedberg

Alternates: Jay Fiset, Timothy Lovain and Jeff McKay

Virginia Transit Association Board of Directors

Principals: Chris Zimmerman and Bill Euille

Alternates: Mary Margaret Whipple and Rick Taube

NVTC Legislative Committee

Dave Snyder (Chairman)

Dave Albo (House of Delegates)

Mary Margaret Whipple (Virginia Senate)

Bill Euille

Catherine Hudgins

Mary Hynes

Jeff Greenfield

Kelly Burk

NVTC Executive Committee

Chris Zimmerman, Chairman

Catherine Hudgins, Vice-Chairman

Bill Euille, Secretary-Treasurer

Mary Margaret Whipple, General Assembly

Delegate Albo arrived at 8:32 P.M.

Chairman Zimmerman moved, with a second by Delegate Ebbin, to approve the selections of NVTC's representatives on the Boards and Committees, subject to Fairfax County action. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Albo, Badger, Bulova, Burk, Ebbin, Euille, Fiset, Hudgins, Hynes, McKay, Smedberg, Snyder, Whipple and Zimmerman.

Designation of NVTC Signatories and Pension Trustees

Mr. Taube stated that Resolution #2118 would establish that Mr. Euille, as the new secretary-treasurer, is eligible to sign NVTC documents (including financial documents) and to serve as trustee of NVTC's Employees' Pension Trust. Mr. Taube explained that at the recommendation of NVTC's auditors, the resolution has been changed to remove Colethia Quarles, NVTC's Assistant Financial Officer, from the names of NVTC's signatories and to list her only as a NVTC employees' pension trustee.

Senator Whipple moved, with a second by Mrs. Bulova, to approve the amended resolution (copy attached). The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Albo, Badger, Bulova, Burk, Ebbin, Euille, Fisette, Hudgins, Hynes, McKay, Smedberg, Snyder, Whipple and Zimmerman.

Public Hearing on and Approval of NVTC's 2009 Workprogram and Schedule

Mr. Taube gave a brief presentation reviewing 2008 accomplishments and plans for 2009 prior to the public meeting. Chairman Zimmerman then opened the meeting for public comment.

Mr. Ed Tennyson stated that the coming year may be the toughest year ever faced by NVTC with the collapsed economy, increasing costs and decreasing revenue. NVTC must focus on finding income and cutting costs wherever it will not hurt the public interest. WMATA must increase its productivity, including cutting two million bus-miles a year. Arlington County and the District of Columbia have added duplicative Circulator bus service that must be rationalized. In regards to Metrorail, its load factor was only 26 passenger-miles per car-mile, which falls short compared to Los Angeles' 30 passenger-miles per car-mile. Fares cannot be raised much higher. Hopefully, the General Assembly will allow us to levy the full four percent motor fuel sales tax approved by Governor Baliles but cut in half the next year.

Mr. Tennyson stated that VRE is grossly overcharged by the commonwealth for insurance. The national average cost of commuter rail insurance is only 1.1 cents per passenger-mile or 2.9 percent of operating costs. VRE is charged over 300 percent more, 4.6 cents per passenger-mile and 12.3 percent of expenses. He stated that the commonwealth should be asked to absorb the insurance costs to offset its failure to fund other mandated costs.

Mr. Tennyson also stated that NVTC should continue to support the Dulles Metrorail "Silver Line" extension, the VRE Gainesville/Haymarket extension; federal aid for half-fares for the disabled and seniors; the implementation of the Columbia Pike Street Car; and the Trans-Dominion Express.

Alan Muchnick, president of the Virginia Bicycling Federation, stated that he has been asking NVTC for more than a decade, to improve pedestrian and bicycle access to public transportation in Northern Virginia, especially for Metrorail and VRE. It is difficult to find information about bicycle access on the VRE website. VRE's website needs to be updated to provide more user-friendly information about pedestrian and bicycle access to VRE. He stated that before expanding free motor vehicle parking for VRE customers, VRE should provide quality bicycle parking in the form of both rental bicycle locations and weather-protected bike racks at every suburban station. He also urged VRE to establish a bike-on-rail policy for regular bicycles, now that every VRE railcar is designed to accommodate bicycles.

Mrs. Bulova requested that the commission receive copies of the testimony (copies attached). Mr. Tennyson and Mr. Muchnick both submitted their written comments. Chairman Zimmerman suggested that Mr. Tennyson's comments be forwarded to WMATA and Mr. Muchnick's comments be forwarded to VRE.

Mrs. Bulova stated that Mr. Muchnick's suggestions are good ones for improving VRE's website to provide more user-friendly information about pedestrian and bicycle access to the stations, which would provide more connectivity of pedestrian and bicycle access to rail.

In response to a question from Mr. Fisette, Mr. Taube stated that NVTC will respond to these public comments at a future NVTC meeting. Mr. Smedberg asked if Mr. Muchnick has been in contact with VRE staff about the issues he raised in his testimony. Mr. Muchnick stated that he has spoken with Mr. Zehner, VRE's Chief Executive Officer.

Mr. Snyder asked that Metro and local jurisdictions work together to coordinate service so there is no duplicative service. Chairman Zimmerman stated that local jurisdictions and Metro do work together. There may be some service that runs on the same corridors, but it is not redundant service because it runs at different times and/or the buses are full.

There being no further public comments, Chairman Zimmerman closed the public comment period.

Mr. Snyder moved, with a second by Mrs. Hudgins, to approve the 2009 workprogram and schedule. He asked that page 11, paragraph 13 include the wording "...and assist Falls Church in considering participation in future expansion." Mr. Smedberg stated that Alexandria should also be added. Following discussion, the following wording was agreed to: "If asked by participating jurisdictions, serve as project manager for regional streetcar/light rail projects and assist jurisdictions in considering new and expanded projects." There were no objections.

Mrs. Hynes stated that given the budget crisis, she wondered if there should be some new purpose for the CMAQ funding for Code Red Days, where it could be quantified that the program is bringing in new riders and it is effective. Chairman

Zimmerman and Mrs. Bulova agreed. Mr. Taube stated that no new CMAQ money is being requested; funding has already been appropriated and is under contract. Mrs. Bulova suggested including language in the goals that the program would be suspended this year and that NVTC would evaluate a reallocation of funding for another higher priority project. Senator Whipple suggested “manage the region’s ongoing CMAQ funded program to provide the most effective way to improve air quality during forecast ozone alerts.” Mrs. Bulova stated that she can support this language as long as NVTC is not subsidizing free bus service during ozone alert days. Senator Whipple then suggested the following wording: “Analyze the transit components of the region’s ongoing air quality program to ensure the most effective use of federal funds to reduce air pollution and greenhouse gases.” Commissioners agreed to this language. Chairman Zimmerman stated that it is implicit that the Executive Director will come back to the commission with specific recommendations well in advance of the ozone alert season, subject to the conditions of the existing contract. The commission then approved the amended motion. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Albo, Badger, Bulova, Burk, Ebbin, Euille, Fisette, Hudgins, Hynes, McKay, Smedberg, Snyder, Whipple and Zimmerman.

Chairman Zimmerman announced that Mr. Badger has been named Acting Director of the Virginia Department of Rail and Transportation.

FY 2010 NVTC Administrative Budget and Performance Objectives

Mr. Taube stated that in light of the economic changes since September, when the preliminary budget was first presented to the commission, he asked for guidance from the commission on how to proceed with the budget. Following discussion by the commission, Chairman Zimmerman summarized the three principles for the budget: 1) no increase in local subsidies; 2) employee compensation policy should be consistent with the majority of the local governments; and 3) no overall increase from prior year’s budget.

Mr. Euille moved, with a second by Mrs. Bulova, to approve these principles. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Albo, Badger, Bulova, Burk, Ebbin, Euille, Fisette, Hudgins, Hynes, McKay, Smedberg, Snyder, Whipple and Zimmerman.

Mr. Taube stated that staff will go back and rework the budget using these principles and will return to the commission with a new budget at a subsequent meeting.

VRE Items

Report from the VRE Operations Board and VRE Chief Executive Officer. Chairman Zimmerman noted that Mr. Zehner had not yet arrived. Commissioners agreed to proceed with VRE agenda items and give Mr. Zehner an opportunity to answer questions or make comments when he arrives. Mrs. Bulova encouraged commissioners to read the minutes of the December 19, 2008 VRE Operations Board

meeting. She also reported that ridership is up eight percent compared to the same time last year.

Approval of FY 2010 VRE Capital and Operating Budget and Revisions to the FY 2009 Budget. Mrs. Bulova explained that Resolution #2119 would approve VRE's FY 2010 capital and operating budget as well as revisions to VRE's FY 2009 budget. VRE would continue to operate 30 trains each workday with projected average daily ridership of 15,600. Fares would be increased six percent on July 1, 2009. The total jurisdictional subsidy would be reduced by \$900,000 from FY 2009. Following passage by NVTC and PRTC, VRE's FY 2010 budget would be forwarded to participating and contributing jurisdictions for their consideration under the terms of the VRE Master Agreement.

Mrs. Bulova moved, with a second by Mr. Smedberg, to approve Resolution #2119 (copy attached). The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Albo, Badger, Bulova, Burk, Ebbin, Euille, Fisette, Hudgins, Hynes, McKay, Smedberg, Snyder, Whipple and Zimmerman.

Chairman Zimmerman stated that this would be the third fare increase in 18 months, although it is not as big as was first contemplated. Mrs. Bulova stated that riders seem tolerant of some fare increase but would not accept service reductions. Mr. Smedberg stated that VRE staff did an excellent job reviewing the budget at the Operations Board meeting.

Inauguration Day Service. Chairman Zimmerman announced that VRE will be providing service on Inauguration Day. Riders will be able to purchase a special \$25 commemorative round-trip ticket. Each ticket will be for a specific reserved train. Delegate Ebbin asked what VRE's capacity would be for that day. Chairman Zimmerman suggested waiting and asking Mr. Zehner when he arrives. Mr. Badger estimated that VRE could carry 8,600 passengers on Inauguration Day and VRE has sold about half of the tickets at this time, but he stated that this information should be confirmed by Mr. Zehner.

Extend Railroad Operating Agreements. Mrs. Bulova stated that the operating agreements with CSXT and Norfolk Southern need to be extended on the same terms while negotiations on revised agreements continue. The current extensions expire on July 31, 2009. Resolution #2120 would authorize the extension of the CSXT agreement through July 31, 2009 and Resolution #2121 would authorize the extension of the Norfolk Southern Agreement through July 31, 2009.

On a motion by Mrs. Bulova and a second by Mr. Smedberg, the commission unanimously approved Resolutions #2120 and #2121 (copies attached). The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Albo, Badger, Bulova, Burk, Ebbin, Euille, Fisette, Hudgins, Hynes, McKay, Smedberg, Snyder, Whipple and Zimmerman.

Testimony for the Commonwealth Transportation Board

Mr. Taube reported that CTB will conduct a public hearing on January 13, 2009 at the Fairfax County Government Center's Board Room. NVTC previously approved a draft statement in October, 2008 but since the hearing has only recently been scheduled it is necessary to update the testimony. Local staff have reviewed the revised draft. A detailed PowerPoint version will be copied for CTB members. A much shorter version is provided to be read by NVTC's chairman or his designee.

Chairman Zimmerman expressed his opinion that the PowerPoint version is not necessary and he suggested putting it into a different format that is easier to read. Senator Whipple stated that she is a visual person and she likes the PowerPoint version.

Senator Whipple moved, with a second by Mrs. Bulova, to authorize NVTC's chairman or his designee to present the testimony on behalf of the commission. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Albo, Bulova, Burk, Ebbin, Euille, Fisette, Hudgins, Hynes, McKay, Smedberg, Snyder, Whipple and Zimmerman. Mr. Badger abstained.

Legislative Items

Mr. Taube reported that NVTC's legislative agenda has been distributed to the Northern Virginia General Assembly and congressional delegations, NVTC's jurisdictions, the Governor's office, and posted on NVTC's website.

In response to a question from Delegate Albo, Mrs. Bulova stated that VRE has a "ready to go" list of projects to be funded, including acquisition of locomotives, the Gainesville/Haymarket extension, platform extensions, and the Cherry Hill station.

Delegate Albo reported that he is drafting a bill so that if there is a federal economic stimulus package, the funds would have to be distributed through the transportation construction formula fund. If it goes through maintenance, this region will get very little of it. He predicts that there would be a huge battle for the funds. Mr. Badger stated that it is Secretary Homer's intent to restore previously cut funding with any stimulus funds. Chairman Zimmerman suggested NVTC have a more detailed discussion of this issue at its February 5th meeting in Richmond. Mr. Snyder stated that staff should put together criteria for projects that move people and freight.

Senator Whipple stated that she spoke with the Governor and expressed concern that with the economic stimulus package, there could be confusion between the urgent and the important and that highway projects would get preference over transit projects.

Mrs. Burk left the meeting at 9:33 P.M.

Chairman Zimmerman stated that WMATA formally adopted a list of projects totaling \$500 million that are ready to go. Mrs. Hudgins stated that the Dulles Rail Phase II would be a good project for funding consideration. Mr. Smedberg stated that it would be helpful to have a letter drafted including some of these points for next month's meeting. There is a concern that these decisions will be made at the state level.

Mr. Snyder moved, with a second by Mr. Euille, to endorse Metro's list of ready to go projects. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Albo, Bulova, Ebbin, Euille, Fiset, Hudgins, Hynes, McKay, Smedberg, Snyder, Whipple and Zimmerman. Mr. Badger abstained.

Chairman Zimmerman asked local boards and councils to include the endorsement of Metro's list on their next agenda.

Metro Items

Metro Budget Chairman Zimmerman reported that Metro's proposed budget would hold subsidies level, with no fare increase. This requires substantial cuts in the budget, including eliminating 891 positions and an eight percent reduction in bus routes.

Ridership at Virginia's Metrorail Stations. Metrorail ridership remains very strong in Northern Virginia. In response to a question from Delegate Ebbin, Chairman Zimmerman stated that the last three highest Metrorail ridership days were normal work days, with an additional sports game or other event to boost ridership over the top.

Inauguration Day Planning. Chairman Zimmerman stated that Metro will provide enhanced service on the weekend before the inauguration, running eight-car trains and augmenting existing routes. On Inauguration Day, Metro will run continuous peak service for 17 hours. Other Inauguration Day transit plans were discussed, including crowd control measures.

Series 7000 Railcar Procurement. On December 18, 2008, the WMATA Board of Directors approved the procurement of 748 new railcars, which will be delivered over a five-year period commencing in FY 2013. A best value competitive negotiation procedure will be followed. The estimated cost is over \$2 billion. Of the 748 railcars, 128 are for the Dulles project to be delivered in FY 2013 and 2014.

Paper Transfers Eliminated. After an extensive public information campaign, WMATA eliminated paper transfers on January 4, 2009.

Regional Transportation Items

I-95/395 HOT Lanes Correspondence. Commissioners were provided with a copy of “*Documentation of FHWA Review*,” which noted NVTC and PRTC concerns, but FHWA has “determined that these concerns do not raise any environmental issues that would prevent FHWA from completing its review of the Categorical Exclusion (CE) and the supporting documentation.” The CE was approved and signed on January 7, 2009, under the National Environmental Policy Act for the northern segment of the project.

Transit Ridership Gains. The American Public Transportation Association has reported that nationwide public transit ridership rose by over six percent in the third quarter of calendar 2008 (July – September). Results for the first five months of FY 2009 (July – November) in Northern Virginia are also outstanding.

Inauguration Planning. VDOT asked NVTC staff to help coordinate planning for safely and efficiently transporting people participating in Inauguration Day on January 20th.

America’s Worst Small Towns for Commuters. Forbes has identified what it characterizes as the worst small town commuting locations in American. The “winner” is Linton Hall, Virginia, an unincorporated area identified by the U.S. Census located 25 miles from Washington, D.C., four miles south of Gainesville (Rt. 29 and I-66). Forbes says 78 percent of its 21,118 residents drive an average of 46.3 minutes to get to work. The author used Census data released in early December, 2008.

Michael Townes Interview. Michael Townes, Hampton Roads Transit’s Chief Executive Officer, reflects in a Mass Transit article from November, 2008, about transit in the Tidewater area and his recently concluded tenure as chairman of APTA. He cites Northern Virginia as a positive example of how to be successful with the General Assembly.

NVTC Financial Items for November, 2008

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

Adjournment

Mr. Euille moved, with a second by Mrs. Bulova, to adjourn the meeting. The vote in favor was unanimous. Chairman Zimmerman adjourned the meeting at 9:50 P.M.

Approved this 5th day of February, 2009.

Christopher Zimmerman
Chairman

William Euille
Secretary-Treasurer