

MINUTES
NVTC COMMISSION MEETING – MAY 6, 2010
NVTC CONFERENCE ROOM – ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA

The meeting of the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission was called to order by Chairman Hudgins at 8:07 P.M.

Members Present

Sharon Bulova
Barbara Comstock
John Cook
Thelma Drake
William D. Euille
Jay Fisette
John Foust
Catherine Hudgins
Mary Hynes
Dan Maller
Jeffrey McKay
Thomas Rust
Paul Smedberg
Christopher Zimmerman

Members Absent

Kelly Burk
Adam Ebbin
Jeffrey Greenfield
Mark R. Herring
Joe May
Mary Margaret Whipple

Staff Present

Rhonda Gilchrest
Scott Kalkwarf
Stephen MacIsaac (VRE)
Greg McFarland
Adam McGavock
Jennifer Mouchantaf (VRE)
Kala Quintana
Rick Taube
Dale Zehner (VRE)

Minutes of the April 1, 2010 NVTC Meeting

On a motion by Mr. Euille and a second by Mrs. Bulova, the commission approved the minutes. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Bulova, Cook, Drake, Euille, Fisette, Foust, Hudgins, Hynes, McKay, Rust and Zimmerman. Mr. Maller and Mr. McKay abstained.

WMATA Items

Chairman Hudgins introduced Richard Sarles, WMATA's acting general manager. Mr. Sarles gave an overview of his first month on the job. His first priorities are safety, reliability of service, budget issues and WMATA's capital program. He stated that communication is also an issue, which affects safety as well as other issues. More forced communication is needed including establishing a safety hotline, reintroducing the whistle blower protection program, and improving communication training. Concerning reliability, Mr. Sarles reported that service will be adjusted on the Red Line by lengthening trains and adding longer headways, which should result in less congestion and better on-time performance. There are many issues related to the elevators and escalators and experts will be brought in to look at these issues. Also, WMATA staff is working with local staff to put together a new Metro Matters agreement.

Delegate Comstock arrived at 8:20 P.M.

Mrs. Bulova asked Mr. Sarles for his first impressions of the governance structure of the WMATA Board. Mr. Sarles stated that although they may have differing viewpoints about many issues, all the WMATA Board members have a passion about Metro and want to make it better. Mr. Sarles stated that he has worked with three different boards during his career, but the WMATA Board structure is unique since there are three jurisdictions (Virginia, Maryland, and District of Columbia) and much of what the WMATA Board does is in full view of the public. In response to a question from Mr. Smedberg, Mr. Sarles stated that the biggest surprise during his first month is the number of public hearings he has attended. Mrs. Drake stated that she is pleased to hear that communication is a priority. There is a disconnect where the states need to feel that they are more than just a funding source. She stated that she would like to set up a meeting with Secretary of Transportation Connaughton and the Virginia WMATA Board members.

Mr. Sarles emphasized that WMATA safety issues are of the utmost concern. There are a number of open safety cases and his goal is to close ten cases a month. The WMATA Board has approved \$6 million to bring in a consultant to look at safety issues. Mr. Cook stated that he is pleased to hear that safety is a priority, especially training. He observed that it has been suggested that the governance structure include more professional transit experience/oversight.

In response to a question from Mr. Smedberg, Mr. Sarles reported that generally the Metrobus system is in good shape and is ahead of Metrorail in safety and

communication issues. He explained that he will mainly be focusing on rail during his tenure at WMATA. Mr. Fisette stated that labor costs and paratransit costs are two of the least sustainable costs. Arlington County had to overhaul its paratransit service because it was bankrupting the system. Mr. Sarles asked that Arlington County representatives talk with him about this issue and share their experience. Chairman Hudgins observed that there is much that can be learned from the jurisdictions. NVTC is very passionate about the Metro system and is looking forward to working with Mr. Sarles and the WMATA staff. The public is also very supportive.

There was a discussion about the WMATA budget process. Chairman Hudgins reported that public hearings have concluded. The FY 2011 budget is still not resolved; however, it needs to be approved by June, 2010. In response to a question from Mr. Fisette, Mr. Zimmerman reported that Maryland has agreed to pay their share of Metro Matters for the next two years.

Oath of Office for New NVTC Commissioner

Chairman Hudgins announced that Speaker Howell has appointed Delegate Barbara Comstock to replace Delegate Albo as a NVTC commissioner. Chairman Hudgins welcomed Delegate Comstock and administered the oath of office to her. Commissioners welcomed Delegate Comstock to NVTC.

VRE Items

Mr. Zehner reported that on-time performance was at 85 percent for both lines for the month of April. Fifty percent of the delays were caused by track work on both lines and a major hostage crisis on April 2nd in Alexandria which shut down the rail lines for over three hours. VRE ridership remains strong with over 17,000 passenger trips per day during the month of April. VRE staff continues to conduct Meet the Management events at the stations, which will be held through August 11th. The dedication ceremony for the Woodbridge Second Platform is scheduled for next week.

Delegate Rust asked how many VRE riders bike to the station. Mr. Zehner replied that it is less than five percent of the total ridership. VRE railcars are designed to accommodate bikes on the trains, in which four seats flip up to provide room for a bicycle. There are not many people who board with their bikes, but more people bike to the stations and leave their bicycles at the station.

Delegate Comstock asked about the demographics of VRE riders. Mr. Zehner replied that 65 percent of riders are male and 35 percent female. The majority of riders are from a higher income bracket and are 35 years old or older.

Mrs. Bulova announced that the VRE Operations Board unanimously voted to name the first delivered locomotive after Elaine McConnell, a former NVTC commissioner from Fairfax County who was extremely helpful in getting VRE running.

Closed Session. Mrs. Bulova moved, with a second by Mr. Smedberg, the following motion:

Pursuant to the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (Sections 2.2-3711A (7) and (29) of the Code of Virginia), the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission authorizes discussion in Closed Session concerning an access and storage agreement with Amtrak.

The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Bulova, Comstock, Cook, Drake, Euille, Fissette, Foust, Hudgins, Hynes, Maller, McKay, Rust, Smedberg and Zimmerman.

The commission entered into Closed Session at 8:54 P.M. and returned to Open Session at 9:38 P.M.

Mrs. Bulova moved, with a second by Mr. Zimmerman, 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 Bulova, Comstock, Cook, Drake, Euille, Fissette, Foust, Hudgins, Hynes, Maller, McKay, Rust, Smedberg and Zimmerman.

On a motion by Mrs. Bulova and a second by Mr. Zimmerman, the commission unanimously approved Resolution #2142. The resolution approves a five-year agreement with Amtrak for access and storage at the Union Station Terminal. (A copy of the resolution is attached.) The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Bulova, Comstock, Cook, Drake, Euille, Fissette, Foust, Hudgins, Hynes, Maller, McKay, Rust, Smedberg and Zimmerman.

Additional Federal Grant Application for Alexandria

Mr. Taube explained that Resolution #2143 would authorize him as executive director to apply for eight grants totaling \$7.1 million in RSTP and Section 5309

SAFETEA-LU grant funds from FTA on behalf of Alexandria for four transit projects within the city. The resolution also adds these projects to NVTC's work program. NVTC will incur no financial obligation for this project other than staff time estimated at 200 hours annually for obtaining and managing the grants. The projects themselves will be managed by Alexandria staff and consultants.

Mr. Taube stated that Alexandria will protect NVTC's other jurisdictions against 13(c) claims by agreeing to provide from state aid held by NVTC whatever claims and related costs may be incurred. Local jurisdiction attorneys have had the opportunity to review this protection. Resolution #2143 includes this protection. Also, Alexandria will be required to sign NVTC's standard sub-recipient agreement before NVTC staff executes the grants. The sub-recipient agreement ensures that Alexandria will comply with all applicable FTA regulations.

Mr. Smedberg moved, with a second by Mr. Euille, to approve the resolution. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Bulova, Comstock, Cook, Drake, Euille, Fisette, Foust, Hudgins, Hynes, Maller, McKay, Rust, Smedberg and Zimmerman.

Testimony to the Commonwealth Transportation Board

Mr. Taube reported that the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) will conduct a hearing on the draft Six-Year Program on May 26th at Fairfax City Hall on May 26, 2010. Comments on NVTC's draft testimony are still welcome.

Mr. Euille moved, with a second by Mr. McKay, to authorize NVTC's chairman or her designee to present the testimony. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Bulova, Comstock, Cook, Drake, Euille, Fisette, Foust, Hudgins, Hynes, Maller, McKay, Rust, Smedberg and Zimmerman.

Mrs. Hynes observed that the testimony looks very similar to last year's testimony. She suggested using the message being prepared for the transit tour which makes a direct connection between transit and mobility, job creation, and the economic vitality of the region.

Legislative Items

Chairman Hudgins stated that the draft plan for the transit tour is ready for commission review. Ms. Quintana reviewed the details of the tour. The overriding message is the direct connection between transit and mobility, job creation and the economic vitality of the region. Mr. McKay expressed his disappointment that the bus ride on Route 1 is at 10:45 A.M., which will not show the full impact of how bad congestion is in this region. 8:00 A.M. or 5:00 P.M. would be better times. Mrs. Hynes stated that if part of the message is about business and job creation, it may be good to invite some key business leaders. Ms. Quintana stated that the message will be discussed at every point of the tour and business leaders are being invited to the dinner.

Chairman Hudgins observed that the consensus of the commission is for staff to proceed with the transit tour plans.

Restated NVTC Pension Plan

Mr. Taube explained that NVTC's pension plan administrator has informed NVTC that it must restate the plan to conform to federal laws and regulatory guidance. The changes included in the restatement of NVTC's plan do not affect the eligibility requirements, contribution calculations or vesting schedule and are considered routine. NVTC's Pension Plan trustees recommend this action and NVTC's executive Committee has been briefed. Resolution #2144 would approve the restatement of NVTC's Pension Plan. Mr. Euille noted that that NVTC's Pension Board trustees are Mrs. Hynes, Mr. Taube and Mr. Kalkwarf.

Mrs. Bulova moved, with a second by Mr. Smedberg, to approve Resolution #2144 (copy attached). The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Bulova, Comstock, Cook, Drake, Euille, Fiset, Foust, Hudgins, Hynes, Maller, McKay, Rust, Smedberg and Zimmerman.

Regional Transportation Items

Future of Transportation – National Survey by Transportation for America. The telephone survey of 800 registered voters nationwide took place from February 27th through March 2, 2010.

Virginia Transit Association Conference. VTA's conference, including a Bus Expo (vendor displays) will be held in Richmond June 10-11 2010.

Bike to Work Day. This annual event coincides with National Bike to Work week. There are 35 "pit stop celebrations" planned for the 2010 event, including 16 in Northern Virginia.

Transit Ridership Trends. Beginning in mid FY 2008, transit ridership in Northern Virginia rose sharply as gas prices spiked upward. Transit ridership continued to climb even as gas prices receded beginning in FY 2009. Only the sharp recession has slowed transit ridership in the current fiscal year although some systems are still experiencing record ridership peak days, such as Metrorail and VRE.

I-95/395 Bus Rapid Transit Study. VDOT's Virginia Megaprojects Office has released a report titled I-95/395 Bus Rapid Transit Study that was prepared by consultants ATCS and Baker Engineering in coordination with DRPT and local transit systems. The report follows up on DRPT's I-95/395 Transit/Transportation Demand Management Study that examined enhanced transit to be established in conjunction with, and funded by, the proposed HOT Lanes project in that corridor. The BRT study examined the BRT option in more detail, together with potential "in-line" stations

(located in the Interstate Highway right-of-way) and other station-specific details. The study also examined the market demand for BRT.

Some of the transit operators who participated in this study as part of the technical advisory group have expressed concerns with the final report. PRTC is being asked to approve a letter to Secretary Connaughton explaining several shortcomings of the study. The primary concern is that this study may be used by VDOT and/or Flour-Transurban to reduce transit and parking commitments agreed to by transit systems in DRPT's 2008 study.

NVTC Financial Items for March, 2010

Commissioners were provided with the financial items and there were no questions.

Adjournment

On a motion by Mr. Euille and a second by Mrs. Bulova, the commission unanimously moved to adjourn the meeting. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Bulova, Comstock, Cook, Drake, Euille, Fisette, Foust, Hudgins, Hynes, Maller, McKay, Rust, Smedberg and Zimmerman. Chairman Hudgins adjourned the meeting at 9:53 P.M.

Approved this 3rd day of June, 2010.

Catherine Hudgins
Chairman

Mary Hynes
Secretary-Treasurer