

MINUTES
NVTC COMMISSION MEETING – APRIL 7, 2011
NVTC CONFERENCE ROOM – ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA

The meeting of the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission was called to order by Chairman Euille at 8:09 P.M.

Members Present

Sharon Bulova
Barbara Comstock
John Cook
Adam Ebbin
William D. Euille
Jay Fisette
John Foust
Jeffrey Greenfield
Michael Harris (alternate, DRPT)
Catherine Hudgins
Mary Hynes
Jeffrey McKay
Thomas Rust
Paul Smedberg
Lawrence Webb (alternate, City of Falls Church)
Christopher Zimmerman

Members Absent

Kelly Burk
Thelma Drake
Mark R. Herring
Joe May
David F. Snyder
Mary Margaret Whipple

Staff Present

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

Minutes of the March 3, 2011 NVTC Meeting

On a motion by Mr. Fisette and a second by Mr. Webb, the commission unanimously approved the minutes. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Cook, Fisette, Foust, Greenfield, Harris, Hudgins, Hynes, McKay, Smedberg, Webb and Zimmerman. Chairman Euille abstained.

VRE Items

Amendment to RailWorld Purchase Agreement. Mr. Smedberg stated that VRE staff requests that NVTC approve Resolution #2168. In order to sell the remaining F40 locomotive, RailWorld wishes to assign ownership to another entity and consequently VRE's purchase agreement with RailWorld must be amended. Resolution #2168 would accomplish this.

Mr. Smedberg moved, with a second by Mr. Zimmerman, to approve Resolution #2168 (copy attached). The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Cook, Euille, Fisette, Foust, Greenfield, Harris, Hudgins, Hynes, McKay, Smedberg, Webb and Zimmerman.

Mrs. Bulova and Delegate Ebbin arrived at 8:12 P.M.

Report from the VRE Operations Board and VRE CEO. Mr. Zehner reported that March daily ridership has reached over 19,300 trips each day, which is about 3,000 more trips a day compared to the same time last year. Ridership continues to climb. He stated that the Operations Board has approved the buy down of the Amtrak step-up fare, which should help with the capacity issue. It is estimated that it will open up 150 more seats daily. A turn back train will be put into the schedule which will also add more capacity. He reported that nine new locomotives have been delivered, with six in service, two being currently tested, and one with bad wheels that need to be replaced before it can be put into service. The annual Meet the Management events have started and will continue over a period of months.

NVTC Rail-Volution Proposals

Mr. Taube stated that after polling jurisdiction and regional staffs, a list of topic ideas has been prepared to submit for the annual conference to be held in Washington, D.C. on October 15-19, 2011. This conference spotlights livable and workable communities and transit oriented development in addition to rail. It will include presentations, as well as 15-20 mobile workshops. The proposed topics are as follows:

1. BRAC mandates, time pressure and transit solutions.
2. National Harbor water taxi connections to Alexandria Old Town.
3. Alexandria's study of three potential streetcar lines.
4. WMATA cooperative security arrangements with MARC and VRE at Union Station.

5. WMATA's anti-terrorism efforts, including a possible debate on the new bag search policy.
6. VRE's mobile workshop.

Mrs. Bulova stated that she thinks the BRAC mandates would be an interesting topic since it is a real challenge for this region to address these issues. Mr. Smedberg also noted that regional cooperation among the jurisdictions is an important component. Mrs. Hynes asked if there should be a policy question raised since there are issues working with the military to collaborate on transportation issues. Mr. McKay stated that it comes down to security issues and only Department of Defense shuttle buses can be used to get personnel close the military buildings.

Mr. Fisette asked if the BRAC issues would be of national interest to other conference attendees. Ms. Quintana stated that there is some relevance. In the future, other regions may experience the same issues. There can also be a comparison made to big corporations moving into an area which can result in challenges of moving large numbers of people. Chairman Euille stated that the Metropolitan Washington region is going through this on a large scale, but there could be other regions that will go through it on a smaller scale.

Mr. McKay stated that the Alexandria streetcar study is not completed and asked what would be the "take away" goal as a conference topic. Ms. Quintana replied that this very question was discussed at the staff level and it was concluded that there is an importance to looking at the process that goes into identifying corridors; what needs to be done in order to accomplish this kind of change to a corridor like Route 1; and sharing best practices. Jim Maslanka (Alexandria staff) stated that there is also an appeal because it is a large project for a small city. Mr. Smedberg stated that these three corridors are ripe for redevelopment. Chairman Euille noted that one of the three corridors is ready for action.

Delegates Comstock and Rust arrived at 8:20 P.M.

NVTC Managing Route 7 Multi-Modal Project

Mr. Taube stated that Falls Church has asked NVTC to take over management of this project and obtain the federal grant funds. The commission is asked to amend NVTC's FY 2011 work program to include this project. A total of \$350,000 in federal funds is earmarked for a multi-modal alternatives study of the Route 7 corridor from King Street Metrorail to Tysons Corner. NVTC supported the initial application by Falls Church back in April of 2009. Identifying the availability of local matching funds will be the first required activity.

In response to a question from Mr. Zimmerman, Mr. Taube stated that it is a 80/20 project match. Mr. Webb explained that the city of Falls Church has contact DRPT to request state funding for the match. Ms. Wendy Block-Sanford (Falls Church staff) explained that the city originally asked for a \$100,000 federal grant to study the city's section of Route 7. Congressman Moran believed that the corridor needed to be

looked at in a regional context and obtained the additional funding (which increased to \$350,000) to make it a regional study. She stated that the city of Falls Church is not in a position to fund the increased match amount. Mr. Smedberg stated that it would be helpful to know if the Falls Church city manager has discussed this project with the managers of Arlington and Fairfax counties. Chairman Euille suggested deferring this action to the next meeting to wait for DRPT's response. Mr. Zimmerman stated that the action could be taken subject to approval of a match by DRPT. Mrs. Bulova suggested that in order to move this forward, NVTC could ask staff to work towards identifying the match and then bring it back to the commission for action.

Mr. Smedberg asked if there is a deadline. Mr. Webb explained that there is a three year window. Mr. Smedberg also asked what it means for NVTC to manage the project. Mr. Taube explained that NVTC as project manager would assemble the technical team, define the scope of work, go through the consultant procurement process, and bring jurisdictions and WMATA together to work regionally. Mr. Fisetto observed that these are not unusual tasks for NVTC so he does not see a reason to bring it back. He suggested providing the authority contingent upon receiving the match. Mr. Smedberg stated that he does not have a problem with the process or NVTC managing the project, but he has concerns since this is a sensitive and important project and the city of Alexandria may have a different view of the makeup of the project compared to Falls Church and Fairfax County. He would like to hear more from his staff.

Chairman Euille noted that with no immediate deadline, another month would not hurt the project. Mr. Webb stated that the match must be identified before anything else can be done. Ms. Block-Sanford stated that it is important to apply for this match in the next funding cycle.

After further discussion about the motion, Mrs. Bulova moved to direct staff to come back at the next meeting with details of the project and matching funding mechanisms that can be identified. Mr. Greenfield seconded. Mr. McKay asked if this motion authorizes staff to go out and find a match. Mrs. Bulova responded yes. Mr. McKay stated that it is important that NVTC not send a message that there is some problem when the region has been given funds for this project. The message needs to be that we are moving forward. Mr. Smedberg stated that a key component is to have further staff-to-staff discussions.

The commission then voted on the motion and it passed. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Bulova, Comstock, Cook, Ebbin, Euille, Fisetto, Foust, Greenfield, Harris, Hudgins, Hynes, McKay, Rust, Smedberg, Webb and Zimmerman.

Metro Items

WMATA Governance Issues. Mrs. Hynes gave an update on the work being done by the Governance Committee. The first draft of the WMATA By-Laws should be completed in the next few weeks, with the goal to have them in place by May, 2011. Strategic workshops are also being planned for the summer.

FY 2012 WMATA Budget. Mrs. Hudgins stated that no fare increase has been proposed and hopefully no service reductions will be introduced for the budget. Currently the budget includes a \$72 million deficit. Mrs. Hynes observed that this is following the General Manager identifying \$75 million in reductions. Chairman Euille stated that he has been impressed with the budget process and the WMATA staff is doing an outstanding job. He stated that for the sake of the system, Compact members need to show their commitment to safety and the future of the system by stepping up to the plate and increasing subsidy amounts.

Delegate Rust asked why a fare increase is not being considered. Chairman Euille stated that there was a substantial fare increase last year. Delegate Rust asked how Metro's fares compare to other transit systems. Mrs. Hudgins stated that WMATA has one of the highest recovery ratios.

Vital Signs. Mr. Taube reminded commissioners that staff was asked by the NVTC Board to propose an abbreviated version of the Vital Sign's report that would capture the most important measures. After consultation with local and regional staff, NVTC staff drafted a two-sided page summarizing systemwide ridership and other measures on one side and Northern Virginia ridership on the other. He asked for commissioner feedback.

Mr. McKay stated that it would be helpful in the safety section to show whether injuries are caused by WMATA or the customer. WMATA is not responsible for all the injuries so it would be helpful to clarify this.

Regional Benefits of Transit Study. Mr. McGavock stated that the WMATA study is underway that seeks to quantify the benefits of transit. To help guide the study, WMATA is seeking local elected officials' views on their top ten choices of performance measures. NVTC commissioners were asked to review a list of 39 possible measures to indicate which would be most helpful in advocating increased transit funding. Commissioner comments should be submitted by April 14th. In response to a question from Mr. McKay, Mr. McGavock explained that the asterisks signify the projects selected by WMATA staff as their top 10 priorities.

Public Hearing on the Commonwealth Transportation Board's Six-Year Transportation Program

Mr. Taube stated that the CTB public hearing will be held on May 4, 2011. A proposed NVTC statement has been prepared for Chairman Euille or his designee to give at the hearing. It will be reviewed again by jurisdictional staff before the presentation.

Mr. Zimmerman moved, with a second by Mrs. Hynes, to authorize Chairman Euille or his designee to give the testimony at the CTB hearing. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Bulova, Cook, Comstock, Ebbin, Euille, Fiset, Foust, Greenfield, Harris, Hudgins, Hynes, McKay, Rust, Smedberg, Webb and Zimmerman.

Virginia Department of Taxation's Administration of NVTC's Motor Fuels Tax

Mr. Taube reported that NVTC and PRTC wrote to TAX Commissioner Burns to inform him about the commissions' approval of TAX's recommended personnel changes and to emphasize ongoing concerns with misallocations. Commissioner Burns and his top staff members contacted PRTC's Executive Director by telephone for further discussion; however, NVTC was not part of that discussion. TAX did not provide the first promised report nor have they responded to NVTC's last letter. Chairman Euille directed staff to keep monitoring this situation.

Legislative Items

Mr. Taube reported that NVTC received a letter from Senator Warner regarding his efforts to urge continuing federal appropriations for Metro. Mr. Taube also stated that the region is waiting to see if the federal government will shut down if agreement cannot be reached on the budget. Mr. McKay noted that for every day the Metro system is shut down, WMATA will lose \$500,000 in revenue. Other transit systems in the region will also be impacted. Mrs. Hudgins stated that it is her understanding that Metro will not make service adjustments if this happens.

Mr. Zimmerman stated that regarding BRAC issues with the Department of Defense and its cooperation with transit, he asked if it would be helpful to formally communicate to see if this is a procedural problem that can be resolved. He suggested staff return at the next meeting with information on which organization(s) NVTC should contact regarding this issue.

Review of Northern Virginia Response to Higher Gas Prices

Ms. Quintana stated that each transit system operating in NVTC's district was asked to explain what approaches are being employed to cope with likely ridership increases as the price of gasoline soars toward \$4 per gallon and above. Systems providing longer transit trips are already experiencing significant ridership gains, such as Loudoun County Transit, OmniRide and VRE. DASH and Cue also report gains. The problem is that the jurisdictions do not have funding to address increased ridership. Mr. McKay stated that he does not want it misinterpreted that Fairfax County has a ghost fleet of buses waiting to meet capacity needs. The county has a handful of old buses on standby in case of mechanical failures to its revenue buses. Ms. Quintana stated that PRTC and OmniRide have put every one of their buses into service and still have capacity issues.

Ms. Quintana stated that in the future it may be difficult to maintain the recent market share gains when fuel prices go down because of the reduced quality of the current commuting experience (due to overcrowding conditions on these transit systems).

Regional Transportation Items

Bike/Pedestrian Access Projects. NVTC's jurisdictions, in cooperation with WMATA, are undertaking new projects to implement the recommendations of WMATA's Bike/Pedestrian Access Study in order to triple the bike access mode share to 3.5 percent by 2030. Several initiatives include improving bike storage with key card access lockers at the King street Metrorail station; adding more bike lockers at Fairfax County stations; continuing Capital Bikeshare in Arlington and elsewhere; adding covered bike parking at the new Weihle Avenue Metrorail station; and including bike access, storage and repair in Falls Church's new intermodal facility.

NVTC's Financial Items for February, 2010

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

Adjournment

On a motion by Mr. Fisette and a second by Mr. McKay, the commission unanimously agreed to adjourn. Vice-Chairman Fisette adjourned the meeting at 9:06 P.M.

Approved this 5th day of May, 2011.

William D. Euille
Chairman

Jeffrey McKay
Secretary-Treasurer