

MINUTES
NVTC COMMISSION MEETING – NOVEMBER 3, 2011
NVTC CONFERENCE ROOM – ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA

The meeting of the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission was called to order by Chairman Euille at 8:12 P.M.

Members Present

Sharon Bulova
James Dyke
Adam Ebbin
William D. Euille
Jay Fisette
John Foust
Mark R. Herring
Catherine Hudgins
Mary Hynes
Jeffrey McKay
Thomas Rust
Paul Smedberg
David F. Snyder
Mary Margaret Whipple
Christopher Zimmerman

Members Absent

Kelly Burk
Barbara Comstock
John Cook
Jeffrey Greenfield
Joe May

Staff Present

Mariela Garcia-Colberg
Rhonda Gilchrest
Claire Gron
Scott Kalkwarf
Jennifer Mouchantaf (VRE)
Kala Quintana
Mark Roeber (VRE)
Rick Taube

Minutes of October 6, 2011 NVTC Meeting

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

Mr. Fisette introduced a wording change request from Mrs. Drake on page 9, paragraph 3 to read:

Mrs. Drake stated that according to a Virginia Senate Finance Committee study Northern Virginia contributes 27 percent of the taxes and gets back 32 percent. She added that Northern Virginia receives 72% of DRPT's operating assistance and 89% of DRPT's capital funds. It is unfair that the state is characterized as never providing funding to the region. The commonwealth contributes \$102.5 million and Northern Virginia taxpayers contribute \$54.5 million of Northern Virginia's WMATA obligations, which Mrs. Drake stated is shown in NVTC's graph distributed at this meeting.

Mrs. Bulova and Mr. Fisette, as the maker and seconder of the motion, agreed to include this as a friendly amendment. The commission then voted on the amended motion and it passed. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Bulova, Dyke, Ebbin, Euille, Fisette, Foust, Herring, Hudgins, Hynes, McKay, Rust, Snyder, Whipple and Zimmerman. Mr. Smedberg abstained.

WMATA Items

Mrs. Hudgins noted that the Vital Signs Report shows that performance is up, except for fleet reliability and escalators, which reflects improvements being made throughout the system. Bus ridership is increasing while rail ridership is slightly declining. She discussed some of the possible factors including that many customers of Metrobus must find lower-cost travel alternatives. Sometimes they choose not to stay with rail, even if it brings inconveniences. Mrs. Hynes stated that it is interesting to note that rail ridership on the weekends has not declined and actually is up slightly, despite full station closures and bus bridges during construction and repairs. These riders are making transit choices for their lifestyles and sticking with Metrorail. In regards to escalators, it is her understanding that WMATA is taking a new approach so when there is a problem, instead of fixing only one little thing, the entire escalator is being assessed. This is causing longer delays initially but in the long run the time between break downs will be greater with this preventative maintenance. Mrs. Hudgins stated that escalator replacement needs to be a priority.

Mr. Zimmerman observed that the Vital Signs Report includes only data through June 2011. He is especially interested in current data dealing with rail fleet reliability. Mr. McKay stated that updated data was provided at today's WMATA Board meeting and it can be provided to NVTC commissioners.

VRE Items

Mrs. Bulova stated that Mr. Zehner was not able to attend the meeting and she introduced VRE's Deputy CEO, Jennifer Mouchantaf. Ms. Mouchantaf stated that the VRE Operations Board did not meet in October. However, the month of October was an historic month for VRE. VRE reached its highest on-time performance (OTP) ever in VRE's history with 98.17 percent OTP (97.8 percent for the Fredericksburg line and 98.4 percent for the Manassas line). For October, VRE operated 600 trains with only 11 delays. VRE is seeing the results of all the investments that have been made over the last few years, including new locomotives, railcars, track improvements and second platforms. She also reported that on-time performance was slightly lower in September (88 percent systemwide) because of significant delays due to heavy rains and flooding, including a track wash-out.

Ms. Mouchantaf reported that VRE ridership continues to increase. For October, average daily ridership was 19,316, which is nine percent higher compared to the same time last year. VRE also had two more top ten ridership days. She also gave some details about VRE's Annual Master Agreement Survey which was conducted on October 5th. The data are being entered and analyzed and will be introduced to the Operations Board as part of the FY 2013 budget process in the next few months.

Ms. Mouchantaf announced that on November 11th VRE will conduct its annual full scale emergency drill, which is required by the federal government. It will be the first time VRE has conducted one inside the Beltway. It will occur in the city of Alexandria and VRE is looking for volunteers to participate. Mr. McKay stated that he went last year and it is well worth it to watch it happen. It is also a valuable learning opportunity for local law enforcement and public safety crews.

Mrs. Bulova reported that all of VRE's new locomotives are now in service. Also, there are no action items for the commission to consider at this meeting.

Virginia Vanpool Incentive Program

Mr. Taube introduced Frank Spielberg of VHB to present the findings of an extensive consulting study sponsored by NVTC, PRTC and GWRC (Greater Washington Regional Commission) with project management assistance from DRPT. Many regional and local staff members have been involved in the development of the proposed program. Staff received a briefing on November 1st.

Mr. Spielberg reported that there are almost 400 existing vanpools estimated by GWRC in this region, most of which are in the I-95 corridor. These vanpools transport over 4,000 persons daily (1.1 million annually); reduce 1.9 million annual daily auto trips; reduce 400,000 daily vehicle miles (100 million annually); save over 20,000 gallons of gasoline daily; and reduce CO₂ emissions per passenger mile by 75 percent. The purpose of the program is to support existing vanpools in Northern Virginia,

promote further growth of vanpooling, and to capture additional federal transit funds available to areas with vanpool programs. The Federal Transit Act Section 5307 defines vanpools as “transit” and sponsors can receive funds distributed to metropolitan areas based on transit revenue miles, passenger miles and other factors. There are over 50 areas that are currently reporting vanpool data and receiving additional funds.

Mr. Spielberg provided estimates of potential revenue generated for this region through this program. Northern Virginia would earn approximately \$3.4 million of additional Section 5307 funds in FY 2013 and that would continue to increase over the years with the region earning approximately \$6.7 million by FY 2017. However, federal funds are not received until at least two years after data are reported. Therefore, other funding sources would be required to cover the first 2 - 2 ½ years of operation. The funds would be allocated, based on recent data: WMATA – 50 percent; PRTC – 25 percent and GWRC – 25 percent. The 5307 funds could be used for program management and operation (but probably not financial support payments to van operators); any transit capital expense; mobility management; and some ability to “flex” funds to other transportation needs.

Mr. Spielberg stated that there are two different scenarios depending on the outcome of the potential transit benefits changes. Scenario 1A (Federal Employee SmartBenefits remain) would pay participating vans \$200 per month for data collection and non-subsidized participants would receive \$50 per month to help induce others to use vanpools. Scenario 2A (Federal Employee SmartBenefits end) would pay participating vans \$200 per month for data collection but no passenger subsidy. The fate of SmartBenefits should be decided this year.

Mr. Spielberg explained that the program would run as a joint project of NVTC, PRTC and GWRC. PRTC would act as the lead agency with costs to be reimbursed by the program. A Memorandum of Understanding between these parties would need to be reached, as well as agreement with WMATA regarding allocation of the 5307 funding.

Mr Spielberg stated that the recommendation is that if the SmartBenefits is not continued, the program should be started under Scenario 2A. Passenger subsidy could be added later if the transit benefit is restored. Also, the vanpool program is contingent on the continuation of current federal transit formula funding programs. Reauthorization may not be achieved before March, 2012. It is likely that the Section 5307 program will continue but there could be changes. It is suggested that the program proceed with development but delay launch until resolution of the federal transportation program is known. He also reviewed the program schedule, which calls for the program to be in operation by January 2, 2013.

Mr. Spielberg reminded commissioners that startup funding is required for the first 2-2 ½ years until 5307 funds are generated. It will take \$300,000 for costs up to September 30, 2012 to set up the program. At least \$200,000 has been reserved with CMAQ funding and GWRC is expected to come up with another \$100,000. After that, the bridge funding until 5307 funds are received would be \$7.4 million for Scenario 1A

and \$5.2 million for Scenario 2A. Possible sources of funding are state grants and loans from sponsoring agencies.

Mr. Spielberg reviewed the outstanding issues, including sources of funding, how to pay for program expenses not eligible for Section 5307 funding; source of local match (20 percent) for program expenses eligible for 5307 funding; and the mechanics of net Section 5307 revenue sharing.

In response to a question from Mr. Fisetto, Mr. Spielberg stated that GWRC is a planning commission for the southern portion of Stafford County, the city of Fredericksburg, Spotsylvania County, Caroline County and King Georges County. Mr. Rust asked if there are other areas in the state with existing vanpool programs and, if so, would they impact the funding that comes to Northern Virginia. Mr. Spielberg replied that Hampton Roads and Richmond both have programs operated by transit agencies. This area is different because vanpool operations grew organically. In reference to funding, there would be very minor impact to any other vanpool program if Northern Virginia began this program because the pool of nationwide funding is so large.

Mr. McKay observed that with some strict Homeowners Association (HOA) requirements, many vanpool drivers cannot park their vehicles at their homes or in their neighborhoods. He asked if Mr. Spielberg has any recommendations for local governments to help these vanpool drivers to find places to park their vans close to their homes. Mr. Spielberg stated that the best solution is to provide a public park-and-ride lot. Also, many vanpool drivers have been able to negotiate agreements with churches, and some retail stores, to use their parking lots.

Legislative Items

Chairman Euille reported that NVTC's Legislative Committee will meet on November 14, 2011 at 4:00 P.M. to prepare a legislative agenda for 2012. He asked commissioners to propose legislative items for consideration by the committee. They can submit them to staff over the next several days.

Mr. Taube stated that, as discussed during the Vanpool Incentive Program presentation, the federal transit benefit will drop to \$125 per month unless Congress acts by the end of 2011. A draft letter to Congressman Connolly has been prepared urging Congress to continue the current transit benefit level. In response to Mr. Zimmerman, Mr. Taube explained that it will also be sent to all members of the Northern Virginia congressional delegation.

Mr. Zimmerman moved, with a second by Mr. McKay, to authorize NVTC's chairman to sign and send the letters.

Mr. Fisetto noted that the priority is that the benefits not be reduced but he suggested that the letter should also include the guiding principle that parking and

transit benefits should be equal. Mrs. Hynes stated that she heard that the parking benefit is expected to increase by \$10.

Mr. Zimmerman accepted Mr. Fisettes suggestion as a friendly amendment. Mr. McKay concurred.

Mrs. Hudgins stated that the language needs to reflect that the transit piece is a critical part of it. Mr. Zimmerman suggested language: "In no case should the transit benefit fall below the parking subsidy." There were no objections.

The commission then voted on the motion and it passed. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Bulova, Dyke, Ebbin, Euille, Fisettes, Foust, Herring, Hudgins, Hynes, McKay, Rust, Smedberg, Snyder, Whipple and Zimmerman.

Mrs. Hynes stated that the Legislative Committee will discuss WMATA Compact amendments that NVTC may wish to pursue. She encouraged commissioners to provide comments or concerns before the Legislative Committee meeting. For her, the size of the WMATA Board is an important issue. Chairman Euille stated that the governors' working group will be making its report soon. Mr. Dyke agreed with Mrs. Hynes and urged commissioners to get comments in quickly so they can be communicated to the working group.

NVTC Financial Items for September, 2011

The financial reports were provided to commissioners and they had no questions.

Closed Session

Mr. Zimmerman moved, with a second by Mr. Smedberg, the following motion:

Pursuant to the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (Sections 2.2-3711A(1) of the Code of Virginia), the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission authorizes discussion in Closed Session concerning a personnel matter regarding the annual performance review of NVTC's Executive Director.

The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Bulova, Dyke, Ebbin, Euille, Fisettes, Foust, Herring, Hudgins, Hynes, McKay, Rust, Smedberg, Snyder, Whipple and Zimmerman.

The commission entered into Closed Session at 8:48 P.M. and returned to Open Session at 9:35 P.M.

Mrs. Hynes moved, with a second by Mr. Foust, 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, Dyke, Ebbin, Euille, Fisette, Foust, Herring, Hudgins, Hynes, McKay, Rust, Smedberg, Snyder, Whipple and Zimmerman.

Mr. Fisette moved, with a second by Mr. McKay, to endorse the Executive Director's performance review and the recommendations contained in a November 4th memorandum from the NVTC Executive Committee. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Bulova, Dyke, Ebbin, Euille, Fisette, Foust, Herring, Hudgins, Hynes, McKay, Rust, Smedberg, Snyder, Whipple and Zimmerman. Mr. Fisette was appointed to meet with Mr. Taube to communicate the results of the review.

Adjournment

Without objection, Chairman Euille adjourned the meeting at 9:36 P.M.

Approved this 1st day of December, 2011.

William D. Euille
Chairman

Jeffrey McKay
Secretary-Treasurer