

MINUTES  
NVTC COMMISSION MEETING – APRIL 5, 2012  
NVTC CONFERENCE ROOM – ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA

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

Members Present

Sharon Bulova  
Barbara Comstock  
John Cook  
James Dyke  
William D. Euille  
Jay Fisette  
John Foust  
Catherine Hudgins  
Mary Hynes  
Joe May  
Jeffrey McKay  
Ken Reid  
Thomas Rust  
Paul Smedberg  
David F. Snyder  
Christopher Zimmerman

Members Absent

Jeffrey Greenfield  
Mark R. Herring

Staff Present

Rich Dalton (VRE)  
Rhonda Gilchrest  
Claire Gron  
Scott Kalkwarf  
Stephen MacIsaac (VRE)  
Kala Quintana  
Rick Taube  
Dale Zehner (VRE)

Minutes of the March 1, 2012 Meeting

Mrs. Hynes moved, with a second by Mr. Smedberg, to approve the minutes. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Comstock, Cook, Dyke, Euille, Fisette, Foust, Hudgins, Hynes, May, McKay, Reid, Smedberg and Zimmerman. Mrs. Bulova and Delegate Rust abstained.

VRE Items

Report from the VRE Operations Board and Chief Executive Officer. Mrs. Bulova announced that there were no action items. Mr. Zehner gave an overview of an emergency situation that occurred on April 4<sup>th</sup> when a VRE train had to make an emergency stop on the Broad Run trestle bridge because three individuals were on the bridge. Two of the three were able to get off the bridge but the third jumped off the bridge and was injured. VRE crews received help in assisting the injured person from an EMT riding the train and from four other passengers. Fairfax County and Prince William County Rescue responded to the 911 call. A Fairfax County helicopter arrived within twenty minutes and the injured person was airlifted out. VRE crews did their job well.

Mr. Zehner reported that VRE ridership may be dropping slightly and staff should be able to make a determination by next month whether it is a trend caused by the reduction of the federal transit benefit. He also reported that the VRE Operations Board hired a search firm, Krauthamer and Associates, to assist in the search for a new VRE CEO. The search firm will give a briefing at the next Operations Board meeting. Mr. Cook urged commissioners to provide their input into what qualities and qualifications the Operations Board should be looking for in a new CEO. Mr. McKay noted that the WMATA CEO search committee found that technical experience was important, especially in light of the challenges WMATA was facing. VRE is in a different situation so it may give more latitude to be able to do a more unconventional search.

Mr. McKay stated that Senator Puller's fare evasion bill passed and he asked for more information about it. Mr. Zehner stated that the bill is directed at fraudulent tickets. Most VRE summons are non-fraudulent. VRE has begun a major advertising campaign to remind riders that it is their responsibility to validate their tickets before boarding the train. In response to a question from Delegate Comstock, Mr. Zehner explained that VRE conductors give out about 140 summons a month, which averages to seven per day. Mr. Zimmerman noted that the Operations Board discussed this issue at length at its last meeting. He expressed his concern that seven a day is not a small number. He stated that it is important to crack down on riders trying to "game" the system; however, there are riders who innocently forget to validate. Zero tolerance is not necessarily the best way to treat customers. It is important for VRE to make the policy very clear to riders.

Mr. Snyder arrived at 8:29 P.M.

Delegate May expressed his concern about counterfeit tickets because there are stiff laws against counterfeit paper money and in many respects tickets can be considered paper money. Chairman Fisetle urged VRE staff, along with counsel, to look into existing statutes. Mrs. Bulova explained that part of the confusion is there is a two-step process of purchasing the ticket and then validating it. Delegate Comstock asked if VRE could use existing technology such as hand-held credit card machines for conductors to use if someone forgets to validate. Mr. Zehner stated that staff will take these comments under consideration. Mr. McKay asked if there is a way to identify repeat offenders and Mr. Zehner replied that VRE tracks this information and there are not many repeat offenders. Delegate Comstock offered the assistance of NVTC's General Assembly members for any legislative solutions.

### Briefing on the SuperNova Plan

Chairman Fisetle introduced Amy Inman of DRPT, who gave a presentation on the SuperNova Plan. Mrs. Hynes asked about the plan's definition of "core capacity" and Ms. Inman explained that the "core" is the region inside the Beltway and beyond including Fairfax, Prince William and Loudoun counties, as well as the District of Columbia. Mrs. Hynes stated that it is important to define the geography of the "core" since it is different from other definitions of "core." She also suggested defining "activity centers." Chairman Fisetle noted that the term "activity center" is also used elsewhere by other agencies that may define it differently. In response to a question from Mr. Smedberg, Ms. Inman stated that "activity center" is a broad term describing where people want to be, both existing and future.

Delegate Rust asked if any cost analysis or economic feasibility has been included in this plan. Ms. Inman replied that it is not part of this effort of creating the vision of a long-range plan for 2040. The financial component would be the next step. Delegate Rust expressed his opinion that cost analysis is very important.

Mr. Reid stated that without new road capacity in the future, it will be difficult for buses to travel without dedicated bus lanes. Ms. Inman stated that DRPT will also be looking at the Constrained Long Range Plan for adding roadway capacity and will work with VDOT as a partner. However, this plan will not make road recommendations.

In response to a question from Mrs. Hudgins, Ms. Inman stated that DRPT has received good participation from West Virginia and Maryland. People traveling from this region to West Virginia or Maryland for recreation are impacting their roadways. Tourists also need better transportation options. Mr. Smedberg suggested shading West Virginia, Maryland and the District of Columbia on the SuperNova Plan map to distinguish them from Virginia. Mr. Zimmerman stated that it is not entirely clear what are the goals of the plan, such as the role of transit.

Chairman Fisetle asked for commissioner input on the draft letter to DRPT commenting on the SuperNova Plan. Mrs. Hynes suggested that the letter request clarification of the definitions of "core capacity" and "activity center" and that it should

reference the Region Forward document, which demonstrates how these terms are used in this region. Mrs. Bulova also suggested synchronization between definitions used by different organizations, including MWCOG. Mr. Reid suggested providing other examples of chokepoints outside the Beltway under comment #6 of the letter. Delegate Rust suggested including language about how fiscal analysis is also critical and should be done simultaneously. Mr. McKay agreed and stated that the rest of the Commonwealth is banking on this region for economic development. He suggested tying the economic development needs directly to the financial needs.

Delegate Comstock asked if private sector initiatives are being discussed and if comparisons are being made between public costs versus other solutions. Chairman Fisette noted that this would require line iteming. Delegate May agreed with Delegate Rust that there needs to be a financial component. It is important to show projects that have a high return for a small investment. Mr. Euille expressed his opinion that if this is going to be another study without funding commitments, then it won't work. Mr. McKay stated that core capacity cannot be ignored and stated that it should be referenced in comment #1. Mrs. Hynes suggested comment #4 should state that money spent on transit should be referred to as an "investment" and not an "expense." Mr. Reid also asked that the letter make reference to slugging and carpooling. Chairman Fisette stated that it is important to emphasize that this plan should not start from scratch but that the existing regional plans should be used as the foundation. The theme should be economic growth and prosperity.

On a motion by Mr. Reid and a second by Mr. Dyke, the commission moved approval of the letter with the recommended changes. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Bulova, Comstock, Cook, Dyke, Euille, Fisette, Foust, Hudgins, Hynes, May, McKay, Reid, Rust, Smedberg, Snyder and Zimmerman.

#### NVTC By-Laws Amendments

Mr. Taube explained that NVTC's current By-Laws require action at two meetings of NVTC before any changes are adopted. The commission considered the proposed By-Laws changes at its January and March meetings.

Mrs. Hynes moved, with a second by Mr. McKay, to approve the changes to the By-Laws.

Mr. Reid asked if Loudoun County opts into Metro will the county get more votes on NVTC. Mr. Taube replied that this would require future discussion and action to change the By-Laws.

The commission then voted on the motion and it passed. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Bulova, Comstock, Cook, Dyke, Euille, Fisette, Foust, Hudgins, Hynes, May, McKay, Reid, Rust, Smedberg, Snyder and Zimmerman.

## NVTC Communications Plan

Mr. Taube asked for commissioner comments about the draft outline, especially the draft goals. Mrs. Hynes suggested reducing the seven goals down to four using goals A3, B, D and E as the main goals. The rest of the draft language could be used to support these strategic goals. Her suggested goals would be:

- (Goal A3) Create NVTC as a regional forum for determining effective policies for transit and transportation demand management.
- (Goal B) Deliver cost effective public information and marketing.
- (Goal D) Increase awareness of the benefits of transit investments and expansion of transportation options throughout the region.
- (Goal E) Advocate effectively for adequate, long-term, dedicated and sustainable funding for transit in Northern Virginia.

Mr. Zimmerman stated that Goal C “Increase public awareness of NVTC’s role as the primary “data agency” for transit in Northern Virginia” is a core function and should also be included. NVTC is a repository of information and it is important to communicate this to the public. Mrs. Bulova agreed and stated that she is impressed by the useful information available on NVTC’s website. Mr. Smedberg expressed his opinion that Goal G either needs to be deleted or reworded.

Delegate May stated that it would be helpful to rank the goals. He suggested Goal D should be ranked first. There were no objections. Delegate Rust stated that Goal E should be ranked second. Delegate May observed that Goal D and Goal E could be combined together. He also suggested “awareness” be changed to “educate” for Goal D. Chairman Fisette suggested that Goal C be changed to “Increase NVTC’s role...” Mr. Zimmerman observed that Goal C does not need to stand alone and could be folded into Goal B. Mrs. Hynes agreed. Mr. Zimmerman stated Goal A3 should be ranked fourth. Mr. Reid stated that Goal E’s main focus should be on elected officials. He also stated that NVTC should conduct a seminar for elected officials.

In response to a question from Mr. Reid, Mr. Taube stated that at last month’s meeting the commission discussed in more detail the Target Audience of the communications plan. Mr. Reid suggested adding the Greater Washington Board of Trade and other agencies representing the disabled and elderly.

Chairman Fisette observed that a motion is not needed.

## Legislative Items

State Legislative Update. Delegate Rust stated that he sponsored the bill (HB876/SB503) transferring responsibility for collecting the NVTC and PRTC motor fuels taxes to the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) from the Virginia Department of Taxation (TAX). It will create some efficiencies and save money as well as save some positions. He was not aware of the problem with audits. He stated that he would be happy to talk with DMV Commissioner Holcomb about these audit concerns. Delegate May stated that he believes he has the authority as the Transportation Committee Chairman to direct DMV to conduct the audits.

In response to a question by Mr. Foust, Mr. Taube explained that NVTC staff was told by staff of TAX and DVM that the McDonnell administration favored a simple and clean bill and that the audit problems could be addressed during the next General Assembly session. A draft joint letter has been prepared for action by NVTC addressed to Commissioner Burns of the Virginia Department of Taxation and Commissioner Holcomb of the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles concerning the audit issue.

Mrs. Bulova asked about the status of the additional \$300 million in funding for the Dulles Rail project. Noelle Dominguez of Fairfax County staff replied that the Washington Post has reported that no additional funding for the Dulles Rail project or Hampton Roads is included in the conference version of the budget. However, Delegate Rust noted that the original \$150 million for the Dulles project is still in the budget.

Chairman Fisette reported that the language pertaining to the potential consolidation of NVTC, NVTA and NVRC was removed from HB1291. Instead, the Northern Virginia General Assembly Delegation wrote to several organizations to request an examination of planning and transportation issues with a response due by October 1, 2012. NVTC, PRTC, NVRC and NVTA have sent a joint letter back to the delegation confirming that they will begin to meet and will make recommendations by the requested deadline.

Federal Legislative Update. Mr. Taube reported that the Senate passed a three-year surface transportation reauthorization bill, including increased funding and restoration of the \$240 commuter benefit for transit. The House passed a three-month extension to allow more time to consider its own proposal.

Mrs. Hynes moved, with a second by Mr. Dyke, to authorize NVTC's chairman to sign and send the joint letter to Commissioners Burns and Holcomb. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Bulova, Comstock, Cook, Dyke, Euille, Fisette, Foust, Hudgins, Hynes, May, McKay, Reid, Rust, Smedberg, Snyder and Zimmerman.

### Local Match for Transit Alternatives Analysis in the Route 7 Corridor (Alexandria to Tysons Corner)

Mr. Taube stated that staff recommends that this item be deferred until the next meeting. Mr. Snyder asked why it is being deferred. Mr. Taube replied that more information is needed on the terms DRPT might require if there are state matching funds.

### WMATA Items

Mrs. Hudgins stated that the magnitude of repairs to the Metro system can be disruptive to commuters, but the end product is bringing the system into a state of good repair. The Vital Signs Report reflects that progress is being made. Overall ridership is up because Metrobus ridership continues to increase. The WMATA Board is working with Loudoun County and should be submitting a report to NVTC in May of what action would be required for the county to opt into Metro.

Mr. McKay observed that MetroAccess ridership is down. Mrs. Hudgins replied that there are two factors impacting ridership. WMATA has been successful in moving people from paratransit to the fixed system. Also, cost is a factor for paratransit users and can discourage use. Mr. McKay noted that it is the biggest variance in the budget.

Chairman Fisette stated that as a Metro rider, he has observed that the repairs are going well and WMATA is being as unobtrusive as possible. There is no other option and the repairs must be done. WMATA is doing a good job of communicating to the public.

Delegate Comstock suggested that in light of the human trafficking problem reported around Metro stations and bus stops, WMATA should post information about the issue and where to find assistance (i.e., HOT line telephone numbers). Mrs. Hudgins stated that this is a good idea.

Mr. Reid referred to a Washington Times article stating that the Silver Line will be delayed because of escalator replacement. Mrs. Hudgins replied that it is hoped that the newspaper will print the WMATA General Manager's response. The WMATA Board has not heard of any delays. Mr. Reid also asked about another Washington Times article about WMATA transit police and overtime pay. Mrs. Hudgins stated that this is old news. WMATA has also responded. Chairman Fisette asked Mrs. Hudgins to provide these response letters to NVTC so that they can be distributed to commissioners.

### Regional Transportation Items

TransAction 2040 Open House. An open house is scheduled for April 18, 2012 at Mary Ellen Henderson Middle School in Falls Church. Public comments will be accepted to help NVTA determine project priorities and ultimately prioritize regional transportation investments.

Virginia Transit Association Conference. VTA's annual conference will be held on May 17-18, 2012 in Tysons Corner.

VTRANS 2035 Update. A regional forum was held on March 29, 2012 "...to present an updated framework for performance based planning with investment priorities and strategies."

### NVTC's Public Outreach

Commissioners had no questions on the report provided.

### NVTC Financial Items for February, 2012

The financial reports were provided to commissioners and there were no questions.

### Adjournment

Without objection, Chairman Fisette adjourned the meeting at 10:03 P.M.

Approved this 3<sup>rd</sup> day of May, 2012.

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Jay Fisette  
Chairman

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Paul C. Smedberg  
Secretary-Treasurer