

MINUTES
NVTC COMMISSION MEETING – MARCH 6, 2014
NVTC CONFERENCE ROOM – ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA

The meeting of the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission was called to order by Chairman Smedberg at 8:10 P.M.

Members Present

Sharon Bulova
John Cook
James Dyke
Jay Fisette
John Foust
Catherine Hudgins
Mary Hynes
Jeff McKay
Jennifer Mitchell (alternate, DRPT)
Paul Smedberg
David F. Snyder
J. Walter Tejada

Members Absent

William Euille
Jeff Greenfield
Ken Reid

**Attending General Assembly
Session (Excused Absence)**

Richard Black
Barbara Comstock
David Ramadan
Thomas Rust

Staff Present

Kelley Coyner
Rhonda Gilchrest
Claire Gron
Scott Kalkwarf
Jillian Linnell
Kala Quintana
Doug Allen (VRE)

Changes to the Agenda

Chairman Smedberg asked that Agenda Item #2B "Authorization to Issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) for Consulting Services" be removed from the Consent Agenda and put on the regular Agenda as an action item. There were no objections.

Chairman Smedberg also announced that WMATA General Manager Richard Sarles was scheduled to give a presentation at this meeting but is now unable to attend. Ms. Coyner stated that Mr. Sarles will attend to the April meeting.

Approval of the Minutes

Mrs. Bulova moved, with a second by Mrs. Hynes, to approve the minutes of the February 6, 2014 NVTC Meeting. The vote in favor was cast by Commissioners Bulova, Cook, Dyke, Fisette, Hudgins, Hynes, McKay, Smedberg and Tejada. Mr. Snyder abstained.

Consent Agenda

On a motion by Mrs. Bulova and a second by Mr. McKay, the Commission unanimously approved the Consent Agenda, which includes the following item:

- Approve Initiation of the Fellows Program in the 4th Quarter FY 2014 and Expenditure of Funds from the FY 2014 Budget as Approved.

The vote in favor was cast by Commissioners Bulova, Cook, Dyke, Fisette, Hudgins, Hynes, McKay, Smedberg, Snyder and Tejada.

Authorization to Issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) for Consulting Services

Ms. Coyner stated that as discussed at the December Planning Session, NVTC plans to conduct an analysis of economic and fiscal impact of the transit network in Northern Virginia, the region and the Commonwealth. As part of this effort, Ms. Coyner explained that NVTC has been asked to explore the possibility of adding a task to the scope of work. Funding is available from TDM grants funds for Arlington County to look at the benefits of bike and pedestrian infrastructure investments not only in Arlington County but also in the rest of the NVTC jurisdictions, with a specific component of providing transit access. She explained that NVTC staff is in the formative phase of putting together a scope of work. Since the total amount exceeds \$50,000, authorization is being requested from the Commission to issue the RFP.

Mr. Fisette moved, with a second by Mrs. Bulova, to authorize the Executive Director to issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) for Consulting Services. The vote in

favor was cast by Commissioners Bulova, Cook, Dyke, Fisette, Hudgins, Hynes, McKay, Smedberg, Snyder and Tejada.

WMATA

Mrs. Hudgins announced that Governor McAuliffe, Governor O'Malley and Mayor Gray have agreed to an increased commitment of \$75 million divided by the three jurisdictions to help fund WMATA's Momentum strategic plan. She stated that this is a critical step toward developing a long-term regional strategy to implement and fund Momentum. Securing the funding of the Momentum will include reaching out to WMATA's business partners and customers. Mr. Dyke reported that Governor McAuliffe, Virginia Secretary of Transportation Layne and DRPT Director Mitchell were instrumental over the last few days in making this happen. DRPT will work with the localities to discuss the state's role and to look for creative ways to fund Momentum. He is optimistic that this is moving in the right direction.

Chairman Smedberg stated that personally and on behalf of NVTC, he expressed appreciation to DRPT Director Mitchell for reaching out and briefing NVTC on this issue. Although this is only a funding commitment for one year, a long term funding solution is being sought.

Mrs. Hynes stated that an important next step is to renegotiate the regional capital funding agreement. WMATA has decided that it is better to renegotiate this now and it is anticipated that by April 2015 a new funding agreement will be in place which will coincide with Momentum. This is another piece of the puzzle of the regional work that needs to be done and hopefully NVTC will work as an agent of the jurisdictions. She observed that this will not be an insignificant task.

Mr. McKay noted that the Vital Signs Report under bus reliability shows a dramatic increase in miles without service interruption for clean diesel buses. Mrs. Hudgins stated that WMATA has significantly reduced the age of the bus fleet with new replacement buses. Mr. McKay observed that this is important to note as to how it relates to the customer service component.

NVTC's 2014 Work Program

Ms. Coyner explained that the 2014 Work Program embodies a "working celebration" of NVTC's 50th Anniversary year and a recommitment to build, expand, and improve the region's transit network. The Work Program includes a new Goal #9 "Designing and Building for the Future" which focuses on the actions NVTC will do this year to improve regional connectivity, core capacity of Metro, and regional commuter rail. In Goal #1 NVTC has developed and now implemented NVTC's Legislative and Policy Agenda, which is embedded in the Work Program. Ms. Coyner announced that the 2015 Work Program will transition to more outcome based goals and strategies and activities.

Ms. Coyner stated that NVTC will produce a tracking tool once the Work Program is adopted and will revise the Work Program based on refinement of the goals identified at the Planning Session and work sessions with the Commissions over the course of this year. The Management Advisory Committee (MAC) has had several opportunities to review and discuss the Planning Session report, the priorities set by the Commission last summer, as well as the Work Program. Members of the MAC provided written comments on the draft Work Program, which have been addressed.

Mrs. Bulova observed that the Work Program truly reflects the discussion that occurred at the Planning Session. Chairman Smedberg stated that the level of activity over the last calendar year is remarkable and reflects well on the NVTC staff, the cooperation at the regional and state level, and the increased importance of transit in the region. As NVTC strives to become the “go to” place for transit, Mrs. Bulova expressed interest in setting a goal to have the NVTC website come up first on internet search results.

Chairman Smedberg opened the meeting for public comment. Ed Tennyson, a Fairfax County resident, congratulated NVTC on its 50 years of work in the region. In regards to the Metro Vital Signs Report, Mr. Tennyson stated that it is important for WMATA to also publish cost per passenger mile and passenger miles per vehicle miles in the statistics it publishes in the report.

Mr. Tennyson also stated that the insurance costs for VRE are far too high. VRE must find a way to reduce these costs to make them more comparable to other commuter rail systems. Also, VRE’s original agreements with the host railroads included a four percent inflation rate. He observed that the inflation rate over recent years has only been about 1-2 percent. Four percent increases compounded over many years becomes a significant amount and VRE needs to find a way to reduce that amount.

There were no other public comments and Chairman Smedberg closed the public comment period.

Mr. Snyder underscored Ms. Coyner’s earlier remarks about the Work Program and stated that it is ultimately about increasing and improving transit service to the region. While all the goals and actions are expressed in different ways in the Work Program, the reality is that NVTC is working to improve transit service to the region.

Mr. McKay moved, with a second by Mrs. Bulova, to approve the 2014 Work Program. The vote in favor was cast by Commissioners Bulova, Cook, Dyke, Fisette, Hudgins, Hynes, McKay, Smedberg, Snyder and Tejada.

NVTC Annual Transit Performance Update

Ms. Coyner reported that for the past 12 years, NVTC has compiled transit information directly from local and regional transit service providers operating in Northern Virginia, including data submitted to the Federal Transit Administration’s (FTA) National Transit Database (NTD). She asked Claire Gron to brief the Commission on

this report. Ms. Gron explained that on an annual basis NVTC collects this data, including ridership, vehicle miles and hours, operating costs, and other common operating statistics and performance indicators. This report is published annually on the NVTC website, providing a consolidated, one-stop resource for performance data for Northern Virginia's transit providers. Ms. Coyner stated that NVTC staff is looking at also providing this information on a quarterly basis.

Ms. Gron reviewed the major trends for the FY 2013 update. She reported that there was a total of 156 million unlinked passenger trips. There was a 4.3 percent overall ridership loss across all systems in Northern Virginia, except ART ridership grew 4.2 percent for the year and Loudoun County Transit (LCT) ridership grew 0.7 percent. Overall Metrorail ridership was down 5.1 percent. Metrorail weekday ridership was down across all jurisdictions in Northern Virginia, except Clarendon, Courthouse and National Airport stations which experienced slight ridership gains. Ms. Gron stated that Metrorail's Orange Line (above ground) experienced significant weekend ridership losses. In contrast, the Orange Line (below ground) saw moderate growth, and Franconia-Springfield and Van Dorn station registered slight ridership gains on Sundays. Metrobus ridership decreased three percent for the year. Weekday Metrobus ridership was down, but there were weekend ridership gains, and especially strong growth on Saturdays.

Mrs. Hynes noted that ridership numbers for the King Street Trolley appear to have increased, but the briefing materials still shows a decrease in transit use for Alexandria. Ms. Gron explained that this is the first year that there has been full year of ridership data for the trolley. For FY 2012 there was less than two months of data provided. She explained that using an "apples to apples" comparison, when the full year of trolley ridership is added in FY 2012 there is only a one percent decrease in ridership for FY 2013.

Mr. Tejada asked if the decline in transit ridership is a trend and if there are any common denominators that could explain the decrease. Ms. Gron replied that transit use has slightly declined over the last few years and numbers haven't recovered to FY 2009 Metrorail numbers. For other modes, growth appears to have been flat.

Mrs. Bulova observed that Figures 14 and 16 show CUE Bus has had a downward trend over the last five years, and the Connector Bus is also down slightly. It would be helpful to know why there is a decrease especially since service was added. Ms. Gron stated that NVTC can work with Fairfax County staff to look at this issue. Mrs. Hynes stated that it would be beneficial for NVTC staff to have a discussion with jurisdictional staff at the MAC level to look at factors that could be contributing to lower ridership numbers. She is aware that ART Bus took over some Metrobus routes, which explains some of loss of Metrobus ridership. Some of the reasons ridership is down could be that congestion is reduced, the impact from sequestration and furloughs, changes in the transit benefit, and increased teleworking. Mr. Fisette noted that vehicle miles traveled is also down in the region, so it's not just transit.

DRPT Director Mitchell arrived at 8:43 P.M.

Mr. McKay observed that Figure 4A shows that Franconia-Springfield has the second highest decline in Metrorail in Virginia. He stated that it would be helpful to know how the Blue/Yellow Line split has impacted ridership.

Mr. Cook cautioned the Commission to not overreact because these numbers need to be looked at in the bigger context. He suspects that jobs have also been down over the last few years. Therefore, it is important to put it into context and analyze in detail such things as the number of federal and non-federal jobs, car trips, and the number of federal agencies that have moved out of the District away from Metrorail and/or other transit oriented areas. Mrs. Hudgins stated that changes to the transit benefit are also a factor. Ms. Coyner observed that this time period does not cover sequestration. Ms. Gron stated that the data covers the period from July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2013.

Oath of Office for New Commissioner

Chairman Smedberg welcomed Jennifer Mitchell. He administered the oath of office to Director Mitchell and the Commission welcomed her to NVTC.

Executive Director's Report

Ms. Coyner announced that Claire Gron has been promoted into a new position that recognizes her role in research and analysis. She will be taking the lead in the next phase of the Route 7 Alternatives Analysis Study. Ms. Coyner also introduced a new staff member, Jillian Linnell, Transit Projects and Policy Manager, who will be the NVTC liaison for NEPP, VRE and NVTA.

Mr. Foust arrived at 8:48 P.M.

Ms. Coyner briefed the Commission on recent legislative activity during the General Assembly Session which is included in more detail in the updated bill tracking chart.

Ms. Coyner reminded Commissioners that an outcome of the Planning Session was the importance of NVTC working collaboratively with other agencies across the Commonwealth on transit and rail issues. To that end, she recently travelled to Williamsburg, Chesapeake and Norfolk and met with John McGlennon, Chair of TSDAC, and Dwight Farmer and his deputy from Hampton Roads TPO, as well as took a tour of the Hampton Roads Transit (HRT).

Ms. Coyner stated that a major item to focus on for future Commission discussion is future challenges and opportunities for transit funding. This includes bond funding at the state level which will end in 2018, implementation of HB2313, and new sources of transit funding.

Ms. Coyner announced that the Executive Director's Report will be converted over the next several months into an e-newsletter format both to provide more timely information, broaden the audience, and to maximize time at Commission meetings in order to focus on key topics of discussion.

Chairman Smedberg announced that Mrs. Hudgins will be recognized by the Conference of Minority Transportation Officials (COMTO) on March 12th for her work in public transportation.

NVTC Financial Items

The Financial Reports for January 2014 were provided to commissioners. There were no questions.

VRE

Mr. Allen introduced two new VRE staff members: Tom Hickey, Chief Development Officer, and Bryan Jungwirth, Director of Public Affairs and Government Relations. Mr. Allen also reported that VRE ridership remains strong with over 18,000 daily trips. VRE recently experienced its second highest ridership day with it exceeding over 21,300 daily trips. He also reported that on-time performance (OTP) for February was 95 percent, even with two days of suspended service. One day was caused by severe winter weather and another day was caused by a fatality on the railroad. In response to a question from Mr. Tejada, Mr. Allen stated that a final report has not been released from the Medical Examiner regarding the fatality. Signage and security do not seem to be an issue.

Mr. Allen reported that Delegate Filler-Corn's HB957 legislation delaying implementation on the VRE weighted voting has passed and is awaiting the Governor's signature. There is also a Senate budget amendment that would provide \$2 million for VRE to begin work on a core capacity study. The House version of the budget does not include similar language so it has been sent to the budget conference committee.

Mr. Allen reported that VRE is working with DRPT on a funding plan using Rail Enhancement Funds to build second platforms on the CSX rail line in exchange for the CSX to allow the Potomac Shores VRE station to be built with private funds. VRE also continues to work with DRPT on the multi-year track access grant agreement.

Mr. Allen stated that work is beginning on the third track extending the Fredericksburg line into Spotsylvania County. VDOT and Spotsylvania County are working to acquire land for the parking lot and once this is completed, construction can begin on the new Spotsylvania VRE Station and parking lot. He also reported that VRE's delivery of four replacement railcars is anticipated in the next few months, which will allow VRE to begin to retire the Legacy railcars. Chicago's Metra system has expressed interest in acquiring the Legacy railcars.

In response to a question from Mr. Fisette about the railroad access agreements, Mr. Allen explained that VRE has multi-year agreements with the three host railroads (Amtrak, Norfolk Southern and CSX). Mr. Fisette gave kudos to the Administration and VRE for getting these agreements finalized. Chairman Smedberg observed that Mr. Allen and his team have been very proactive. Mr. Allen noted that the renewed relationship between VRE and DRPT has been very beneficial.

Ms. Coyner gave a brief update on the Management Audit RFP process. NVTC and PRTC Executive Directors are serving as the selection team and are currently evaluating the six proposals that were received. Interviews will be conducted next week.

Mrs. Bulova noted that there are no VRE action items.

Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT)

DRPT Director Mitchell reported that DRPT is in the process of reviewing the FY 2015 grant applications and the aim is to have the draft Six-Year Improvement Program (SYIP) completed by the end of March to present to the Governor and then receive public comment at the public hearings beginning in mid-April. The Northern Virginia hearing will be in mid-May at the Northern Virginia VDOT office. Ms. Mitchell also explained that DRPT plans to use multi-year (funding) agreements in the future for major capital projects. She noted that these will be a valuable tool especially for major projects, such as VRE track access agreements.

Ms. Mitchell reported that the TSDAC Working Group continues to meet and is almost finished with its work on operating assistance issues. The capital formula will be evaluated in June. There are still a few issues that need to be resolved, which includes how WMATA ridership is counted. (This is not a topic for the TSDAC Working Group.) Ms. Mitchell stated that she is confident that an agreement can be reached, which can be incorporated in the FY 2015 operating funding allocations. The second priority is revisiting the SAM allocation model and how grant funds are distributed through NVTC. She is hopeful that this too can be resolved before the FY 2015 grants are in place.

Ms. Mitchell stated that the final SuperNoVa Action Plan is being updated based on comments received. DRPT is evaluating the next steps on how to wrap up the study and transition further activities to NVTC or other regional partners. There may be several findings that are worthy of pursuit outside of this framework. DRPT will be coordinating closely with NVTC on this issue. She also reported that WMATA General Manager Richard Sarles has been invited to speak to the Commonwealth Transportation Board on March 16th to discuss the Momentum Plan.

Chairman Smedberg stated that DRPT's recognition of the issues and its proactive approach is impressive and appreciated. Ms. Mitchell stated that there may not always be agreement and there will be difficult issues to resolve in the future, but DRPT is committed to working to resolve the issues. Ms. Coyner observed that DRPT and NVTC are off to a good partnership and both are focused on clearing the issues that stand in the way of advancing transit. Ms. Mitchell stated that DRPT will be asking

for help on funding issues and to stand united with partners around the state to discuss the importance of transit and rail funding to replace the bonds that will lapse in 2018.

Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTa)

Chairman Smedberg noted that there is a new blue item, which is a copy of the NVTa letter sent to members of the Committee of Conference on the Budget opposing Budget Item 427 #1h, which affects future actions of NVTa.

Mrs. Bulova announced that interviews are scheduled for the top three candidates for the NVTa Executive Director position. It is anticipated that the new Executive Director will be in place by May 1, 2014.

Information Items

There was no discussion of these information items:

- DRPT Proposes Pilot Program on Congestion Mitigation and Transit Dependent Outcomes
- Administration Announced MAP-21 Reauthorization Proposal
- \$600 Million on TIGER Funding: Applications Due April 28
- Route 7 Alternatives Analysis Phase 1 Complete; Phase 2 Pending NVTa MOU
- Route 1 Multimodal Alternatives Analysis : March 6th TAC Meeting to Develop Detailed Multimodal Alternatives
- I-66 Corridor Study: 10 Improvement Concepts Eligible to Advance to Tier 2
- Transit Innovation: Inserting Light Rail Transit in Urban Areas
- JITI Mobility Lecture Highlights Trip Planning Tools Including RideScout™ and OpenTrip Planner
- Washington Post Article: Washington Region's Fabled Traffic Jams Eased a Little Last Year

Adjournment

Mrs. Hynes moved, with a second by Mrs. Bulova, to adjourn the meeting. Without objection, Chairman Smedberg adjourned the meeting at 9:20 P.M.

Approved this 3rd day of April, 2014.

Paul C. Smedberg
Chairman

Jay Fisette
Secretary-Treasurer