

MEETING SUMMARY
JOINT NVTC-PRTC LEGISLATIVE BRIEFING
DECEMBER 9, 2019
EMBASSY SUITES by HILTON – SPRINGFIELD, VIRGINIA
9:00 A.M.

NVTC Members Present

Canek Aguirre
Katie Cristol
Adam Ebbin
Libby Garvey
Jeff McKay
David Meyer
Jennifer Mitchell (Alternate, Commonwealth of Virginia)

NVTC Members Absent

Elizabeth Bennett-Parker
Richard Black
Sharon Bulova
John Cook
Christian Dorsey
John Foust
Catherine Hudgins
David LaRock
James M. LeMunyon
Matt Letourneau
Ron A. Meyer
M. David Skiles
Paul Smedberg
David Snyder
Raul "Danny" Vargas

NVTC Staff Present

Kate Mattice, Executive Director
Matt Cheng
Andrew D'huyvetter
Allan Fye
Rhonda Gilchrest
Dan Goldfarb
Patricia Happ
Scott Kalkwarf
Tenley O'Hara
Ben Owen
Aimee Perron Seibert
Brittany Sumpter
Colethia Quarles
Melissa Walker
Zachary Smith
Jae Watkins

PRTC Members Present

Jennifer Mitchell
Jennifer DeBruhl (Alternate, Commonwealth of Virginia)
Todd Horsley (Alternate, Commonwealth of Virginia)
Jeanette Rishell
Pamela Sebesky

PRTC Staff Present

Bob Schneider, Executive Director
Althea Evans
Doris Lookabill
Becky Merriner
Holly Morello
Perrin Palistrant
Christine Rodrigo
Joe Stainsby

Opening Remarks

Jeff McKay, Fairfax County Supervisor representing the Lee District, welcomed everyone to the annual NVTC-PRTC Joint Legislative Briefing.

Mr. McKay recognized elected officials and their staff in attendance including United States senators and representatives, current and newly-elected members of the Virginia General Assembly, and local elected officials. He also recognized NVTC and PRTC Commissioners and members of the Commonwealth Transportation Board.

Sustainability of Transportation Revenues

Mr. McKay introduced Shannon Valentine, Virginia Secretary of Transportation.

Secretary Valentine presented on the sustainability of transportation revenues. She stated that transit is vital to the economy of Northern Virginia, and the Commonwealth is supportive of multimodal transportation solutions.

Secretary Valentine stated that in FY2018 vehicle miles travelled increased and the motor fuels tax revenue decreased. If fuel tax collections had kept pace with driving in FY2018, fuel tax collections would have been \$31.3M higher. By 2030, transportation fuel tax revenues are estimated to be 30% lower than today. The current sales tax rate collected on diesel fuel is 20.3 cents and the gas rate is 16.2 cents, which is the third lowest in the United States. Since 2013, 21 states have raised their gas tax, but not many states have the scope and complexity of transportation like Virginia. Secretary Valentine then gave an overview of vehicle-miles travelled programs in other states.

Secretary Valentine stated that the CPR bonds are expiring, and the Commonwealth will need to find a way to sustain the budget. While the Commonwealth is exploring different strategies to shore up long-term transportation funding, Virginia is also engaged in identifying funding for major projects. Secretary Valentine explained the funding complexities for the Long Bridge, but that improvements will create the most opportunity. Secretary Valentine stated that adding a lane on Interstate 95 would cost \$12.5 billion, but congestion would be the same one day after its completion. Rail will help unlock congestion.

Secretary Valentine detailed the forthcoming report on the impacts of fuel-efficient vehicles on transportation revenues. Secretary Valentine highlighted additional projects and studies in the region including WMATA's Blue, Orange and Silver Line Study, the recent American Legion Bridge announcement from the Governors of Maryland and Virginia, and innovative mobility projects around the region. She then answered questions from the audience.

Transit Leader Panel

NVTC Director of Programs and Policy Allan Fye introduced the panel members, including NVTC Executive Director Kate Mattice, WMATA Managing Director of Government Relations and Policy Regina Sullivan, VRE Acting Chief Executive Officer Rich Dalton, and PRTC/OmniRide Executive Director Bob Schneider. Mr. Fye also moderated the session.

Ms. Mattice provided background on NVTC and introduced NVTC's legislative initiatives. Ms. Mattice discussed the economic impact that both WMATA and VRE have on Virginia. At the state level, NVTC has included priorities to ensure that state transit capital and operating programs continue to be adequately funded to support major investments like Long Bridge, BRT routes and more local and express bus networks.

Ms. Mattice also explained how the federal gas tax has not been raised since 1993 and is not indexed to inflation, and that NVTC's federal priorities are focused on sustainable and reliable funding for transit infrastructure.

Ms. Sullivan explained that Paul Wiedefeld, General Manager/CEO of WMATA, was unable to attend. Ms. Sullivan expressed WMATA's appreciation for the Commonwealth's dedicated funding legislation for WMATA in 2018. Ms. Sullivan stated that the funding helped support the first phase of the Platform Improvement Project in the summer of 2019 that allowed platform reconstruction at six Metrorail stations along the Blue and Yellow Lines south of Reagan National Airport.

Ms. Sullivan stated that the WMATA General Manager's proposed FY2021 budget includes \$1.8 billion for capital improvement projects and that the operating budget is within the legislatively mandated 3% operating cap. WMATA is also conducting a study on the Blue, Orange and Silver Lines to identify short and long-term fixes to crowding on those Metrorail lines. WMATA also released its final strategy and recommendations from the recent Bus Transformation Project, which is intended to improve bus service throughout the region.

Mr. Dalton explained VRE's mission to provide safe, reliable and comfortable rail service that contributes to the economy of the region. VRE operates 32 trains on two lines, but the system does not own the tracks. Mr. Dalton said that Long Bridge is important to making rail work. VRE has established partnerships with the railroads to operate on their networks, but improvements to Long Bridge are key to the long-term viability of VRE and passenger rail. Mr. Dalton stated that VRE is also supportive of action to restore funding to NVTA and proposals that increase funding for transit overall.

Mr. Schneider gave an overview of PRTC/OmniRide and the agency's role in providing transit service in the region. PRTC co-owns VRE along with NVTC. PRTC/OmniRide services include local and express buses and vanpools.

Mr. Schneider stated the largest service changes ever undertaken by PRTC/OmniRide took effect this morning. Changes included a complete restructuring of bus services in Prince William County,

as well as paratransit service in the areas of Manassas and Manassas Park. Most of the parking lots were full early this morning with riders waiting for the new service.

Mr. Schneider explained how the 2018 gas tax floor legislation benefitted PRTC/OmniRide, but there is a need to continue to focus on how to fund transit and protect existing funding. Mr. Schneider detailed proposals that negatively impact PRTC/OmniRide including the Virginia peer-to-peer rental tax and the loss of revenue due to the FTA policy on HOT lanes.

Mr. Fye asked for questions from the audience. Senator Ebbin asked Ms. Sullivan about the labor issues in Northern Virginia and how WMATA is addressing them. Ms. Sullivan responded that negotiations are ongoing and WMATA is very focused on resolving the issue.

Delegate Danica Roem discussed VRE service, Long Bridge funding issues and the near-term solutions to provide better bus service in her jurisdiction. Mr. Dalton explained VRE's positive train control implementation process in the summer of 2019 and working with host railroads, and that Long Bridge is long-term solution to challenges facing VRE. Mr. Schneider discussed submitting a project for Commuter Choice funding to benefit Northern Virginia and how the agency is working with various counties in the region on improving coordination.

Delegate Kathy Tran commented on the labor issues in Northern Virginia and WMATA bus service. Delegate Vivian Watts also asked if contractual obligations were being met during the labor dispute. Ms. Sullivan responded that WMATA could provide more information to address their concerns.

Mr. Fye asked each of the panelists to share their top concerns. Ms. Mattice discussed the need for long-term sustainability of transit funding at the state and federal levels. Ms. Sullivan discussed the importance of reauthorizing federal dedicated funding for transit and noted that there are proposals currently in both chambers of Congress. Ms. Sullivan also discussed WMATA's positive ridership and reliability metrics. Mr. Dalton highlighted continued customer satisfaction, safety and reliability of VRE. Mr. Schneider discussed a continued focus on regionalism and not having a limited perspective about transit.

Closing Remarks

Mr. Fye thanked all the speakers and highlighted NVTC's accomplishments over the past year.

Approved this 16th day of January 2020.

Katie Cristol
Chair

Jeffrey C. McKay
Secretary-Treasurer