

**Summary Minutes of the  
HRTPO Regional Transportation Advisory Panel (RTAP) Meeting  
January 3, 2025**

The meeting of the HRTPO Regional Transit Advisory Panel (RTAP) was called to order at 12:05 p.m. in the Regional Building Boardroom, 723 Woodlake Drive, Chesapeake, Virginia, with the following in attendance:

**RTAP Members in Attendance:**

Garry Harris	Dr. Claudean Kizart
Janice Taylor	Jim Wofford
Steve Djunaedi	John Wiley
Brian Smith	Steve Sims
Ray Amoruso	Ben Goodill
Ellen Ruane	Matt Scalia
Steve Zollos	Amy Braziel
Mary Kate Andris	Noelle Pinkard
Todd Nichols	Peter Shaw
Rick Dwyer	Greg Lewis
Brad Martin	Brandi Mansma

**HRTPO/HRPDC Staff:**

Robert A. Crum, Jr.	Matthew Harrington
Rob Case	Quan McLaurin
Rob Cofield	Pavithra Parthasarathi
Jeff Raliski	Markay Hall
Jeffrey DiScala	Greg Grootendorst
Matt Klepeisz	Whitney Katchmark

**Others Recorded Attending:**

Mark Geduldig-Yatrofsky, John Paul, Diane Kaufman, Sandra Brandt, Charlie O'Brien, Maleah Amos, Dr. Amelia Ross-Hammond, Bryan Pennington, Mayor Shannon Glover, Todd Nichols, Kindra Green, and Casey Roberts

**Approval/Modification of Agenda**

The meeting agenda was accepted as distributed with no changes or amendments.

**Public Comments**

There were no public comments.

**Minutes**

Mr. Robert Crum, HRTPO Executive Director, noted that the RTAP minutes of the September 30, 2024 meeting which were included in the Agenda packet distributed in advance of the session had been updated. Specifically Mr. Geduldig-Yatrofsky's participation in the

September meeting is now listed as an attendee and not as an RTAP member. Copies of the amended minutes with the above detailed change were distributed to the RTAP members at the meeting. The amended minutes were then unanimously approved with no additional changes.

## **Upcoming 2025 General Assembly Session**

Dr. Brian Smith of Hampton Roads Transit (HRT) provided an update on the current maintenance needs of the Norfolk TIDE Light Rail system which will be a priority initiative for the agency during the next Virginia General Assembly session. In support of this effort, HRT has created a brief video summarizing the primary issues related to the growing funding needs of the TIDE system. HRT estimates that it needs approximately 13.5M annually through 2031 in order to address the ongoing maintenance requirements of the TIDE light rail.

Dr. Smith emphasized the unique funding requirements of rail systems in contrast to other modes of public transportation. Items such as electrical catenary systems and track maintenance are unique to rail and not a concern for rubber tire operations.

In recognition of this reality, Mr. Smith highlighted that the Virginia General Assembly in 2023 directed that portions of Commonwealth Mass Transit Fund are set aside off the top for the two other rail public transportation systems currently operating in Virginia – Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) and Virginia Rail Express (VRE). Accordingly, these two rail operators are now receiving 46.5% and 3.5% of the State funds, respectively for the maintenance of their rail operations.

However, since the TIDE system was not included in the 2023 legislation, it is the only Virginia rail public transit system that must compete against bus systems for funding, using the established State cost effectiveness metrics that place rail systems at a great disadvantage. Consequently, Dr. Smith stated that HRT will be requesting parity for the TIDE with the other Virginia rail systems during the upcoming General Assembly session.

The detailed ask of the General Assembly will be to allocate 2.5% of the Commonwealth Mass Transit Fund for maintenance of the TIDE system, in line with what is already in place for the other Virginia rail transportation systems. Local patrons for the HRT bill are Senator Rouse and Delegate Askew (HB 1982 – copy attached). The draft will also include a Hold Harmless provision so that other transit systems in the Commonwealth would not be negatively impacted by this additional setaside.

HRT staff will provide RTAP with draft letters of support for this initiative and also supply talking points for use in meetings with legislators. Ms. Pinkard noted that Transit Advocacy Day in Richmond is scheduled for January 27<sup>th</sup> but added that HRT would be happy to host meetings between RTAP members and legislators at other times as well.

Dr. Smith also noted that HRT will be advancing a budget amendment during the General Assembly session to offset a decrease in operating assistance in the current fiscal year. The decrease was approximately \$2M for HRT. Suffolk Transit was also impacted by this reduction to a lesser extent.

Mr. Crum received approval from the RTAP to write letters to the Hampton Roads General Assembly delegation in support of the HRT funding equity request for the TIDE light rail system.

## **Overview of Paratransit Services and Coverage Zones**

Ms. Braziel provided a summary of HRT's paratransit service operation. Main points included:

- The Americans with Disabilities Act (1990) created the requirement to offer complementary paratransit ride service for people for individuals unable to utilize the fixed route transit system.
- Paratransit eligibility determinations after application, based upon criteria set forth in the law – all individuals have a right to appeal eligibility determinations.
- HRT Paratransit is a shared ride service, and rides must be scheduled in advance.
- Paratransit pick-up times occur within a 30 minute window.
- Service is provided from origins and to destinations within  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile of the fixed route system during the regular operating hours of the transit system.
- HRT employs both a smartphone app and a web portal to help individuals schedule and manage trips.
- The HRT paratransit system uses 116 vehicles, supplemented by taxis and transportation network company vehicles as appropriate.
- Over 40,000 people rode HRT paratransit services in November 2024.
- The paratransit system has the highest costs on a per ride basis across the HRT network.

Mr. Scalia stated that Williamsburg Area Transit (WATA) has experienced an 80% growth in paratransit ridership since 2016. Mr. Zollos added that Senior Services is also experiencing an increase in requests for its services.

Additional discussion centered on the potential of autonomous vehicles to be employed in the future to assist with the growing paratransit service needs in the region. Mr. Amoruso stated that HRT is continuously monitoring the technology developments in this area which are changing rapidly.

## **Other Business**

“Around the Table” updates and general comments from RTAP members are noted as follows:

1. Ms. Parthasarathi noted that Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) staff members will attend a future RTAP meeting to provide a briefing on the upcoming expansion of the Virginia Breeze bus service from Virginia Beach to universities and destinations in the western part of the state.
2. Mr. Djunaedi reported Norfolk International Airport is nearing 5 million passengers annually but continues to lack a transit service connection. An airport transit link is especially important for the approximately 1,000 people who work at the airport. Mr. Amoruso reported that HRT is currently coordinating with the City of Norfolk on an airport transit connection service option and hopes to have news to report soon.

3. Mr. Scalia stated that WATA has just awarded a contract for a new Northern Area Transfer Point, which will be a significant enhancement for transit riders in that area. Mr. Goodill added that the major contract for the construction and rehabilitation of WATA's primary office and bus operations facility will be awarded by the end of the current month.
4. Dr. Kizart indicated that recent surveys at Tidewater Community College continue to show that transportation is among the top concerns for students at the college.
5. Ms. Greene reported that new counters along the Elizabeth River Trail show that approximately 672,000 people used the trail in 2024.
6. Mr. McLaurin stated that HRTPO currently has public notices for both the list of draft candidate projects for consideration during the development of the next Long Range Transportation Plan in the region and also the update to the HRTPO Public Participation Plan.
7. Mr. Crum stated that the next RTAP meeting will be scheduled in the February timeframe. Additional information will be forthcoming.

### **Next Meeting**

### **Adjournment**

There being no more business before the group, the meeting was adjourned at 1:59 p.m.

## 2025 SESSION

## INTRODUCED

25104640D

**HOUSE BILL NO. 1982**

Offered January 8, 2025

Prefiled January 7, 2025

*A BILL to amend and reenact § 33.2-1526.1 of the Code of Virginia, relating to Commonwealth Mass Transit Fund; Hampton Roads Transportation Accountability Commission.*

Patron—Askew

**Committee Referral Pending**

**Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**

**1. That § 33.2-1526.1 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:**

## § 33.2-1526.1. Use of the Commonwealth Mass Transit Fund.

A. All funds deposited pursuant to § 33.2-1524.1 into the Commonwealth Mass Transit Fund (the Fund), established pursuant to § 33.2-1526, shall be allocated as set forth in this section.

B. From funds available pursuant to subsection D, up to \$50 million shall be allocated to the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority as matching funds to federal and other funds provided by the Federal Transit Administration, the District of Columbia, and the State of Maryland. However, such funds shall only be provided if the District of Columbia and the State of Maryland each provide an amount equal to one-third of the funding provided by the Federal Transit Administration to the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority. The funds provided by the Commonwealth shall not exceed the funds provided by the District of Columbia or the State of Maryland.

C. The Board may establish policies for the implementation of this section, including the determination of the state share of operating, capital, and administrative costs related to mass transit. For purposes of this section, capital costs may include debt service payments on local or agency transit bonds. Funds may be paid to any local governing body, transportation district commission, or public service corporation for the purposes as set forth in this section. No funds from the Fund shall be allocated without a local match from the recipient.

D. Each year the Director of the Department of Rail and Public Transportation shall make recommendations to the Board for the allocation of funds from the Fund. Such recommendations, and the final allocations approved by the Board, shall adhere to the following, except as provided in subsection E:

1. ~~Twenty-four and one-half~~ Twenty-three and one-half percent of the funds shall be allocated to support operating costs of transit providers and shall be distributed by the Board on the basis of service delivery factors, based on effectiveness and efficiency as established by the Board. Such measures and their relative weight shall be evaluated every three years and shall be finalized ~~6~~ six months prior to the fiscal year of implementation. The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) ~~and~~, the commuter rail system jointly operated by the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC) and the Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission (PRTC), established pursuant to Chapter 19 (§ 33.2-1900 et seq.), and the light rail system operated by the Transportation District Commission of Hampton Roads (TDCHR) shall not be eligible for an allocation of funds pursuant to this subdivision.

**2. Seventeen** Fifteen and one-half percent of the funds shall be allocated for capital purposes and distributed utilizing the transit capital prioritization process established by the Board pursuant to § 33.2-214.4. WMATA and the commuter rail system jointly operated by NVTC and PRTC, established pursuant to Chapter 19 (§ 33.2-1900 et seq.), and the light rail system operated by the TDCHR shall not be eligible for an allocation of funds pursuant to this subdivision.

3. Three and one-half percent of funds may be allocated to NVTC for distribution to the commuter rail system jointly operated by NVTC and PRTC, established pursuant to Chapter 19 (§ 33.2-1900 et seq.), for operating and capital purposes. The amount of funds distributed pursuant to this subdivision and the selection of systems receiving funds pursuant to this subdivision shall be based on service delivery factors including effectiveness and efficiency as established by the Board. Such measures and their relative weight shall be evaluated every three years and shall be finalized six months prior to the fiscal year of implementation. Any funds remaining after such distribution shall be redistributed to subdivision 2.

4. Two and one-half percent of funds may be allocated to the Hampton Roads Transportation Accountability Commission and distributed to the light rail system operated by a transportation district established pursuant to Chapter 19 (§ 33.2-1900 et seq.) for operating and capital purposes. The amount of funds distributed pursuant to this subdivision shall be based on performance factors including safety, effectiveness, and efficiency as established by the Board. Such measures and their relative weight shall be evaluated every three years and shall be finalized six months prior to the fiscal year of implementation. Any funds remaining after such distribution shall be redistributed pursuant to subdivision 2.

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59       5. Forty-six and one-half percent of the funds shall be allocated to the NVTC for distribution to WMATA  
60 for capital purposes and operating assistance, as determined by the Commission. All allocations pursuant to  
61 this subdivision shall not exceed 50 percent of the total operating and capital assistance required to be  
62 provided by NVTC or other Virginia entities in the approved WMATA budget. If the default allocation  
63 pursuant to this subdivision exceeds an amount equal to 50 percent of the total operating and capital  
64 assistance required to be provided by NVTC or other Virginia entities in the approved WMATA budget, the  
65 remaining funds shall be redistributed to subdivision 2. No contributions made to WMATA pursuant to §  
66 33.2-3401 by the Commonwealth or NVTC shall be relevant for the purposes of administering this  
67 subdivision.

68       6. Six percent of the funds shall be allocated by the Board for the Transit Ridership Incentive Program  
69 established pursuant to § 33.2-1526.3.

70       7. Two and one-half percent of the funds shall be allocated for special programs, including ridesharing,  
71 transportation demand management programs, experimental transit, public transportation promotion,  
72 operation studies, and technical assistance, and may be allocated to any local governing body, planning  
73 district commission, transportation district commission, or public transit corporation. Remaining funds may  
74 also be used directly by the Department of Rail and Public Transportation to (i) finance a program  
75 administered by the Department of Rail and Public Transportation designed to promote the use of public  
76 transportation and ridesharing throughout the Commonwealth or (ii) finance up to 80 percent of the cost of  
77 development and implementation of projects with a purpose of enhancing the provision and use of public  
78 transportation services.

79       E. The Board may consider the transfer of funds from subdivisions D 2 and 6 7 to subdivision D 1 in  
80 times of statewide economic distress or statewide special need.

81       F. The Department of Rail and Public Transportation may reserve a balance of up to five percent of the  
82 Fund revenues in order to ensure stability in providing operating and capital funding to transit entities from  
83 year to year, provided that such balance shall not exceed five percent of revenues in a given biennium.

84       G. The Board may allocate up to 3.5 percent of the funds set aside for the Fund to support costs of project  
85 development, project administration, and project compliance incurred by the Department of Rail and Public  
86 Transportation in implementing rail, public transportation, and congestion management grants and programs.

87       H. Funds allocated to the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC) for WMATA pursuant  
88 to subdivision D 4 5 shall be credited to the Counties of Arlington, Fairfax, and Loudoun and the Cities of  
89 Alexandria, Fairfax, and Falls Church. Funds allocated pursuant to this subsection shall be credited as  
90 follows:

91       1. Local obligations for debt service for WMATA rail transit bonds apportioned to each locality using  
92 WMATA's capital formula shall be paid first by NVTC, which shall use 95 percent state aid for these  
93 payments.

94       2. The remaining funds shall be apportioned to reflect WMATA's allocation formulas by using the related  
95 WMATA-allocated subsidies and relative shares of local transit subsidies. Capital costs shall include 20  
96 percent of annual local bus capital expenses. Local transit subsidies and local capital costs of Loudoun  
97 County shall not be included. Hold harmless protections and obligations for NVTC's jurisdictions agreed to  
98 by NVTC on November 5, 1998, shall remain in effect.

99       I. Appropriations from the Fund are intended to provide a stable and reliable source of revenue, as defined  
100 by P.L. 96-184.

101       J. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, funds allocated to WMATA may be disbursed by the  
102 Department of Rail and Public Transportation directly to WMATA or to any other transportation entity that  
103 has an agreement to provide funding to WMATA.

104       K. In any year that the total Virginia operating assistance in the approved WMATA budget increases by  
105 more than three percent from the total operating assistance in the prior year's approved WMATA budget, the  
106 Board shall withhold an amount equal to 35 percent of the funds available under subdivision D 4 5. The  
107 following items shall not be included in the calculation of any WMATA budget increase: (i) any service,  
108 equipment, or facility that is required by any applicable law, rule, or regulation; (ii) any capital project  
109 approved by the WMATA Board before or after the effective date of this provision; (iii) any payments or  
110 obligations of any kind arising from or related to legal disputes or proceedings between or among WMATA  
111 and any other person or entity; and (iv) any service increases approved by the WMATA Board.

112       L. The Board shall withhold 20 percent of the funds available pursuant to subdivision D 4 5 if (i) any  
113 alternate directors participate or take action at an official WMATA Board meeting or committee meeting as  
114 Board directors for a WMATA compact member when both directors appointed by that same WMATA  
115 compact member are present at the WMATA Board meeting or committee meeting or (ii) the WMATA  
116 Board of Directors has not adopted bylaws that would prohibit such participation by alternate directors.

117       M. The Board shall withhold 20 percent of the funds available pursuant to subdivision D 4 5 unless (i)  
118 WMATA has adopted a detailed capital improvement program covering the current fiscal year and, at a  
119 minimum, the next five fiscal years, and at least one public hearing on such capital improvement program has

120 been held in a locality embraced by the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC), and (ii)  
 121 WMATA has adopted or updated a strategic plan within the preceding 36 months, and at least one public  
 122 hearing on such plan or updated plan has been held in a locality embraced by NVTC.

123 The strategic plan shall require (a) an assessment of state of good repair needs; (b) a review of the  
 124 performance of fixed-route bus service, including schedules, route design, connectivity, and vehicle sizes; (c)  
 125 an evaluation of opportunities to improve operating efficiency of the transit network, including reliability of  
 126 trips and travel speed; (d) an examination and identification of opportunities to share services where multiple  
 127 transit providers' services overlap; and (e) an examination of opportunities to improve service in underserved  
 128 areas.

129 N. The Board shall withhold 20 percent of the funds available pursuant to subdivision D 4 5 unless  
 130 WMATA prepares and submits a proposed detailed annual operating budget and any proposed capital  
 131 expenditures and projects for the following fiscal year to the Board by April 1 of each year. The budget shall  
 132 include information on expenditures, indebtedness, pensions and other liabilities, and other information as  
 133 prescribed by the Board. Additionally such funds shall be withheld if the Commonwealth's and Northern  
 134 Virginia Transportation Commission's representatives to the WMATA Board of Directors and the WMATA  
 135 General Manager fail to annually address the Commonwealth Transportation Board regarding the WMATA  
 136 budget, system performance, and utilization of the Commonwealth's investment in the WMATA system.

137 O. The Board shall withhold 20 percent of the funds available pursuant to subdivision D 3 unless the  
 138 commuter rail system jointly operated by Northern Virginia Transportation Commission and the Potomac and  
 139 Rappahannock Transportation Commission, established pursuant to Chapter 19 (§ 33.2-1900 et seq.), submits  
 140 a detailed annual operating budget and any proposed capital expenditures and projects for the following fiscal  
 141 year to the Board by February 1 of each year. The operating plan and budget shall include information on  
 142 expenditures, indebtedness, and other information as prescribed by the Board.

143 *P. The Board shall withhold 20 percent of the funds available pursuant to subdivision D 4 unless the  
 144 Transportation District Commission of Hampton Roads submits a detailed annual operating budget and any  
 145 proposed capital expenditures and projects for the following fiscal year to the Board by February 1 of each  
 146 year.*

147 **2. That the provisions of this act shall become effective on July 1, 2026.**

148 **3. That, for fiscal year 2027, the Department of Rail and Public Transportation shall reserve funds  
 149 pursuant to subsection F of § 33.2-1526.1 of the Code of Virginia, as amended by this act, in amounts  
 150 necessary and utilize such reserved funds to provide supplemental operating assistance to any transit  
 151 provider that would experience a reduction in allocable funds pursuant to subdivision D 1 of § 33.2-  
 152 1526.1 of the Code of Virginia, as amended by this act, in order to hold harmless transit providers in  
 153 distributions of statewide operating assistance associated with the first \$118 million allocable under  
 154 subdivision D 1 of § 33.2-1526.1 of the Code of Virginia, as amended by this act.**

INTRODUCED

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