

Summary Minutes of the HRTPO Regional Transportation Advisory Panel (RTAP) Meeting October 20, 2025

The meeting of the HRTPO Regional Transit Advisory Panel (RTAP) was called to order at 12:06 p.m. in the Regional Building Boardroom, 723 Woodlake Drive, Chesapeake, Virginia, with the following in attendance:

RTAP Members in Attendance:

Keith Moore	Dr. Claudean Kizart
Janice Taylor	John Wiley
Sandra Brandt	Mark Perryman
Ellen Ruane	Garry Harris
Linda Peck	Matt Scalia
Harvey Waters	Peter Shaw
Maria Ptakowski	

HRTPO/HRPDC/HRTAC Staff:

Robert A. Crum, Jr.	Greg Grootendorst
John Mihaly	Quan McLaurin
Rob Cofield	Pavithra Parthasarathi
Jeff Raliski	Eric Walberg
Todd Halacy	Sam Belfield
Husain Alegimenlen	Jennifer Hodnett
Rob Case	Whitney Katchmark
Matt Klepeisz	

Others Recorded Attending:

John Lauterbach, Commander Mike Avallone, Tracy Wright, Steve Zollos, Avery Daugherty, Megan Gribble, Karen Kitsis, Ben Goodill, Steve Florian, Diane Kaufman, Andrew Pease, Jo Ann Short, Marcellus Nixon, and Mark Geduldig-Yatrofsky.

Approval/Modification of Agenda

The meeting agenda was approved 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 June 16, 2025, meeting were included in the Agenda packet distributed in advance of the session. The minutes were then unanimously approved.

Williamsburg Area Transit Authority (WATA) Update

Mr. Matthew Scalia and Mr. Ben Goodill provided an overview of both current WATA operations and upcoming service enhancements and capital improvement projects at the agency. It was reported that WATA ridership has now returned to FY 2019 pre-COVID levels, with the transit system carrying more than 1.5M passengers last year across 12 routes.

WATA's FY 2025 Operating Budget totaled \$9.8M, with federal funding providing almost 42% of the total. Partnership with both the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation and the College of William and Mary are important contributors to the system as well.

WATA operates a low-emission fleet made up of a combination of both clean diesel and Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) vehicles. The agency is fully staffed with drivers and also operates the system's complimentary Paratranit service in-house.

As funding is identified, ongoing enhancements to the WATA system include the implementation of service frequency enhancements across selected major routes in line with the recommendations outlined in the agency's Strategic Plan. WATA has also recently invested more than \$1M on onboard vehicle technology improvements, including the launch of a mobile ticketing option, which is generating \$10K a month in revenue.

Current major facility construction activities include a \$25M upgrade and expansion of WATA's Operations and Maintenance Facility and the creation of a new Northern Transfer Center which will serve four routes at a cost of \$11M. Both projects are on schedule to be completed in FY 2027.

Dr. Kizart inquired about WATA's public input approach for the strategic plan. It was reported that onboard surveys of current riders was the most effective outreach tool.

Mr. Crum complimented WATA staff on being able to hire sufficient numbers of drivers and asked if there were specific approaches and strategies the agency could share. Mr. Scalia stated that no single factor is assisting the agency in its recruitment efforts, but being a smaller community and agency, and the familiarity among the staff team are among the factors that appear to help. Ms. Ptakowski reported that Suffolk Transit can cite those same reasons related to its hiring successes. Ms. Kitsis noted that recent revisions to HRT's mandatory overtime policies have enticed 18 former operators to return to the agency.

Mr. Scalia noted that WATA is also seeking funding to support special routes and services in connection with the upcoming Virginia 250 celebrations next summer, which are expected to attract approximately three million visitors.

Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) Update: *Virginia Breeze* – Tidewater Current Route Finalization

Mr. Avery Daugherty from the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) provided an update on the proposed extension of the *Virginia Breeze* intercity bus service to the Hampton Roads region. The first *Virginia Breeze* route began operations in 2017, and

since that time, the service has proven to be an important travel option connecting regions across the Commonwealth.

For the Hampton Roads extension, it was reported that procurement negotiations are underway with two potential operators. Six bus stop locations have been secured between Harrisonburg and New Kent County, and work is underway to secure approvals for new stop locations in Hampton Roads, including the Williamsburg Transportation Center, Newport News Transportation Center, a Norfolk site to be determined, and the Virginia Beach Oceanfront Visitor's Center.

DRPT is also presently advancing multiple stakeholder coordination activities with local governments, businesses, and community organizations to create partnerships in support of the new transit service. Other remaining tasks include the placement of bus stop signage and other infrastructure, implementing marketing and public awareness campaigns, finalizing the route schedule, and planning service launch events.

Questions from the RTAP further detailed that fares will be finalized once the operator is selected, but something in the range of \$40 for a full-length trip from end to end would be comparable to existing routes. Further, the service would be bidirectional year-round, taking about six hours to travel from end to end. Mr. Daugherty stated that ridership estimates for the Hampton Roads connection have recently been updated from the original figures from several years ago, and he would forward this information to the RTAP

Hampton Roads Transit (HRT) Unified Fare System Study

Mr. Andrew Pease of the Arcadis team presented an overview of the current Unified Fare System Study for Hampton Roads, an ongoing effort to identify strategies for better connecting the region's three transit providers through unified fare structures, policies, payment media, and systems to create a more seamless travel experience.

The work completed to date on the study includes the overall project needs assessment and industry scan of peer transit systems. The project team is now developing alternatives, which includes a modeling phase to assist with the quantitative and qualitative analysis of options. The technology analysis will review issues such as system compatibility, interoperability, and payment media impacts. Mr. Pease noted that RTAP will be briefed at a later meeting before the study makes its final recommendations and conclusions around the end of the year.

Discussion points highlighted that analysis must also strongly consider the impacts of recommended fare system changes on the Paratransit system and not just focus on the fixed route network. Furthermore, it was stated that equity issues related to varying access, across both the region and the agencies, to technology, banking systems, and other similar potential obstacles must be fully considered as well in the analysis.

Regional Legislative Priorities

Mr. Crum indicated that this topic would be deferred to a later date. A meeting time, in December, in advance of the start of the next Virginia General Assembly session, will be identified for this discussion.

Other Business

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

1. HRT reported that the State of Transit Event in Hampton tomorrow is sold out.
2. HRTPO staff confirmed that all of the presentations from today will be posted on the website after the meeting.
3. Suffolk Transit is receiving artist submissions for their bus stop artwork project.
4. Step Up Incorporated is celebrating 50 years of service to the community.
5. Mr. Zellos reported that Senior Services has initiated a feasibility study with the State reviewing options to transition its operations to alternative fuel vehicles.
6. Todd Halacy was introduced as the new incoming Deputy Director of the Hampton Roads Transportation Accountability Commission (HRTAC).
7. Mr. Harris promoted Adopt a Bus Stop opportunities.
8. Mr. Marcellus Nixon indicated that the Southside Network Authority is available to meet with groups to discuss the opportunities being created by the new fiber ring under construction in the region.

Adjournment

There being no more business before the group, the meeting was adjourned at 1:37 p.m.