

**Regional Connectors Study  
Joint Steering (Policy) Committee & Working Group Meeting Minutes  
October 12, 2021, 9:30 am**

Steering (Policy) Committee

The following voting members attended the meeting (alphabetically by city):

Rick West (CH)  
Donnie Tuck (HA)  
McKinley Price, Chair (NN)  
Martin Thomas (NO)  
Shannon Glover (PO)  
Michael Duman (SU)  
Robert Dyer (VB)

No voting members of the Steering (Policy) Committee were absent.

Working Group

The following voting members attended the meeting (alphabetically by city):

Troy Eisenberger (CH)  
Lynne Keenan (HA)  
Bryan Stilley (NN)  
Amy Inman (NO)  
Carl Jackson (PO)  
Mark Shea (VB)

Others

The following others attended the meeting (alphabetically by last name):

Robert A. Crum, Jr. (HRTPO/HRPDC)	Pavithra Parthasarathi (HRTPO)
Lesley Dobbins-Noble (USACE)	Paul Prideaux (Michael Baker Intl.)
George Janek (USACE)	Camelia Ravanbakht (RCS Coordinator)
Carl Jackson (Portsmouth)	Dale Stith (HRTPO)
Barbara Nelson (VPA)	Eric Stringfield (VDOT)
Keith Nichols (HRTPO)	Cathie Vick (VPA)
Kevin Page (HRTAC)	
Lorna Parkins (Michael Baker Intl.)	

## **1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 am. Mayor Price conducted the meeting.

## **2. Welcome and Introductions**

The meeting started with attendees introducing themselves.

## **3. Public Comment Period**

There were no public comments.

## **4. Minutes**

Mayor Dyer moved approval of the minutes of the June 30, 2021 Joint Steering (Policy) Committee and Working Group meeting, and Mayor Glover seconded. The motion was approved.

## **5. RCS: Background and Recommended Path Forward**

Mr. Crum made a presentation on the path forward for the RCS. He began his presentation by introducing the consultant's new project leadership – Lorna Parkins and Paul Prideaux – and by highlighting the mandated segments and the past philosophy of the study.

Mr. Crum noted that he met with members of the Steering (Policy) Group after the June meeting. In these discussions he heard that some of the options in the RCS may not be constructed for decades; technology, community growth, and needs will evolve over time; there are questions and concerns about some segments but it's too early to eliminate them at this stage, the RCS should determine each segment's advantages and disadvantages, and ready-to-go projects shouldn't be slowed down.

Mr. Crum stated that HRTPO staff and the consultant team believe that retaining certain segments through the next stage of analysis can be accomplished without the need for additional funding. He added that each of these segments would be advanced to the next phase of this study, where an analysis would be completed on the degree to which each segment addresses the needs of the region.

Mr. Crum added that the cost, constructability, permitability and congestion relief of the various segments will be evaluated, and the various segments will be ranked using this evaluation and staged based on project readiness.

Mr. Crum ended his presentation by noting that potential category groupings might include the following:

- Those segments that are ready for advancement and should be recommended for consideration in the fiscally-constrained portion of the Hampton Roads 2050 Long-Range Transportation Plan.
- Those segments which require further refinement and maturation, and will be recommended for consideration in the 2050 Vision Plan as projects requiring further evaluation for permitability and constructability.
- Those segments that due to technical issues or other items will be retained but will warrant further consideration by the community at the appropriate time.

Vice-Mayor Thomas thanked Mr. Crum for working to get consensus on this issue and he added that he thinks that this will be a good path forward for the study.

Mayor West added that this seems like a reasonable path moving forward. He noted that other projects may not move forward due to those plans that are on the table. We need to see what other problems might be caused by having this plan on the table and be ready to revisit in the future as necessary. Mr. Crum replied that we will need to make sure that we are smart about the project groupings.

Mayor Glover noted that Portsmouth will support what the region supports, but he still has concerns about the impacts some of these projects could have on the residents of Portsmouth, especially Route 164. He added that unresolved issues with the study could still cause impacts to Portsmouth residents and other groups such as the Navy.

Mayor Dyer noted that the region is going to benefit from wind turbines and transatlantic cables moving forward. Connectivity is important to attracting corporations, based on where land available for development is located. He added that coming up with a plan will ultimately benefit all of us, so that we have answers for companies looking to move into the region.

Mayor Tuck asked if all of these projects meet the standard for congestion relief, since that is what is required to use HRTAC funds. Mr. Crum replied that HRTAC supports this study, and the study will look at congestion relief for each alternative for both today and the planning horizon under different scenarios. Mr. Crum added that the study will be looking at the long term, since what may not be critical today may be critical 30 years from now.

Mr. Page mentioned the \$2.5 billion TIFIA loan that was recently procured for HRTAC projects. Mr. Page added that when he started at HRTAC, widening the HRBT was not considered an absolute high-priority project. He added that projects can rise in terms of readiness, such as the I-664/Bowers Hill interchange. He encouraged the committee to continue to move forward with projects that are ready to go.

Mr. Page noted that this study came up with federal officials during the TIFIA loan discussions. He added that by the 2050 LRTP development, we will hopefully have less debt

and loan obligations, and that the study outcomes will also line up with next Plan of Finance for HRTAC.

Mr. Price noted that the region comes together for projects – for example the Peninsula came together with the Southside for the High Rise Bridge project – and hopefully will continue to do so.

Mr. Page added that technology is changing. For example, the two tunnels under construction in the region are being bored rather than submerged. This new technology requires tunnels to be deeper in the ground and necessitates a bigger footprint for the roadway, which can impact project alignments.

Mayor Dyer made a motion to approve the recommended path forward and Mayor Duman seconded. The motion was approved.

## **6. RCS: Proposed Approach to Study Completion**

Ms. Parkins made a presentation on the proposed approach to support the completion of the project.

Ms. Parkins noted that the mandated study segments have not changed. The updated methodology will simply sort the segments into chronological tiers based on readiness and known challenges associated with construction and permitting. She added that the updated Phase 3 Process will establish a tiering framework, apply the framework to tier the segments, evaluate congestion relief and finalize segments tiers, and provide the information for the 2050 LRTP and prioritization process.

Ms. Parkins added that there will be three tiers. Tier 1 will have favorable constructability, permitting and readiness; Tier 2 will have favorable or mixed constructability and permitting but less favorable readiness; and Tier 3 will be challenged for constructability and permitting and a higher degree of uncertainty.

Ms. Parkins noted that individual segments will be organized into bundles for analysis, and the congestion relief evaluation will include as many as three logical bundles for evaluation. The consultant will evaluate congestion relief and other system effects of the bundles, and the evaluation results will finalize the tiering of the segments.

Ms. Parkins wrapped up the presentation by noting that the next steps include revising the Phase 3 scope of work, seeking scope endorsement from the Steering (Policy) Committee, and scheduling future meetings to review progress.

Mr. Jackson mentioned that the Working Group has had a strong role in the study to this point, and asked if the Working Group will continue to have this role moving forward. Mr. Crum replied that the Working Group will continue to be key in the technical work of the study. Mr. Crum also noted that committee members indicated a preference for more Joint Steering (Policy) and Working Group meetings moving forward.

## **7. For Your Information**

Mr. Crum noted that the agenda includes a timeline and a summary of key decision points in the RCS so far.

## **8. RCS Next Meeting**

Mr. Crum noted that HRTPO staff will be working with the consultant to determine when the next meeting will be. Ms. Parkins added that they will need to work with the Working Group on scoping changes, but that the next decision point that will require Steering (Policy) Group action will likely be within a month.

## **9. Other Items of Interest**

Ms. Ravanbakht, Project Coordinator, was asked to make a few comments and she noted that she was very excited with the new study approach.

## **10. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 10:15 am.