

ITEM #15: PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Members of the public are invited to address the HRTPO Board. Each speaker is limited to three minutes.

ITEM #16: SUBMITTED PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no submitted public comments. Any written public comments received after the preparation of this agenda will be distributed as a handout at the meeting.

ITEM #17: TRANSCRIBED PUBLIC COMMENTS FROM PREVIOUS HRTPO MEETING

The transcribed public comments from the November 17, 2016 HRTPO Board meeting are attached.

Attachment 17

**Transcribed Public Comments from the
November 17, 2016 HRTPO Board Meeting**

*The views and opinions expressed during the public comment period
do not necessarily reflect the opinion or policy of the HRTPO.*

Three people requested to address the HRTPO Board at the November 17, 2016 Meeting. Chair Johnson asked them to limit their comments to three minutes.

**Ms. Donna Sayegh
Portsmouth Citizen**

Good afternoon. My name is Donna Sayegh and I live in Portsmouth. The 10th Principles of Liberty reads the God-given right to govern is vested in the sovereign authority of the whole people. Our God-given right to govern is not vested in the authority of the elected and/or the appointed. Public Law 90-577 destroyed the separation of powers, which is the principle of a United States Constitution. By Title IV, the United States Congress meant to yield legislative power to President Johnson. This in turn allegedly transferred that lawmaking power to his appointed directors in the grant making agencies of the federal regions per section 403 of the bill. That arrangement has grown the A-95 regional clearinghouse review system designed by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget. The resulting federal region sub-state control system binds regional governing as a way of life all over America. The law has destroyed the separation of power, which is the principle of the U.S. Constitution. This is exactly what has happened right before our eyes. The HRTPO Board meeting is addressing information that belongs in the HRPDC meeting, not in the HRTPO meeting. See the stationary. It has an example that shows the lack of separation of power. When we attend these transportation meetings, the information needs to refer only to the needs of the transportation system, not the HRPDC. The item in the Director's Report reads that there will be a Purpose-Built Communities educational meeting. This organization is from Atlanta. This is not about transportation. Finally, there is information regarding U.S. Department of Transportation FASTLANE for the year 2017 grant program with the staff providing recommendation and then the HRTPO, HRPDC continues to assist HRTAC with financial management website support and human resource activities. The HRTPO created the tolls for the Midtown Tunnel and downtown tunnels. There's nothing on the agenda that is addressing the problem it made with this taxing of the citizens because the state government doesn't have any money for transportation. The other issue is the light rail that the citizens didn't want but this body did everything it could to force it down the citizens throats. These are the issues that needed to be discussed and fixed. This body needs to take care of the issue it creates instead of moving forward with unrelated projects and wasting the city's resources.

**Mr. Ellis James
Norfolk Citizen**

Thank you, Madam Chair. My name is Ellis W. James. I reside in the city of Norfolk. I'd like to, first of all, thank Aubrey Lane for giving us an excellent important overview that was very timely. I don't know whether he hacked into my computer or phone or something. Everybody knows a dinosaur uses those devices. The key question that I have this morning that I want to call to your attention is that the promise to preserve the emancipation tree, in essence, is critical at a time when we as a region and a country need to be very, very aware of the concerns across our region. Traditionally, interstates and highways and tunnels and so on

often have been dropped on top of the African-American community without regard to the impacts to their lives. This morning, before the HRPDC, I called attention to the very important Smithsonian magazine special issue, "Black in America." I want to be sure that for those of you who were not here when I raised that issue, it is the September special issue, September 2016 Smithsonian.com is how you can reach it according to the information that I have. It is a complete historical review of black life in America from the beginning to the present. And it's also in conjunction with the opening of the very important significant museum in Washington, D.C. I hope that each of the communities and our friends from the military and so on will pay close attention, secure if you can, a copy or review this very impressive historical review and have it available in your mayor's offices, your city manager's offices, your offices in various counties. I think it will be invaluable for you being able to bring us all together and understanding where we're coming from on some of the important issues. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Mark Geduldig-Yatrofsky

Good morning, Madam Chair, honorable commissioners, and fellow citizens. Is there anybody in this room who can tell me what the index price is that's used for calculating the gasoline tax in the Commonwealth of Virginia as of today? I didn't think so. Nobody knows that figure going into the gasoline pump, and with the change of our taxation system for gasoline, from a fixed number of cents per gallon to this particular index, the consumer is once again in the dark about what he or she is paying. This is just the tip of the iceberg in terms of lack of transparency in funding and decision-making about transportation. I was surprised to see in the Sunday Virginia Pilot an advertisement from Elizabeth River Crossing announcing a toll increase on January 1 of next year. Not that there was an increase in the offering because I've gone through the comprehensive agreement and certain of its schedules, and I knew that it was coming, I knew how it was going to be calculated, but there is an aspect, an element of comprehensive agreement called substantial completion, and I was astonished to learn that a certificate of substantial completion was issued on August 26th of this year. That is the point at which the concessionaire is allowed to start putting in place annual increases in the tolling rate. But there was no fanfare. There was no announcement in the press. There was no press release from the Commonwealth that this significant milestone had been crossed. Also lacking in fanfare and announcement was the fact that Schedule J1 or Exhibit J1, which sets the tolling rates, which shows the formula, had been amended in conjunction with buy-down of the tolls at those crossings. They were dutifully posted on the ERC website, but who knew? No public announcement was made. So, in fact, even through substantial completion of the asset rehabilitation construction, et cetera, may not have occurred by January 1st, there's no language that allows ERC to raise tolls on that date. This is part of the reason why light rail failed in Virginia Beach. There is a public perception that is the late great states person Henry Howell used to say, "There's more going around in the dark than Santa Claus." This needs to change. Thank you.