

**Summary Minutes of the
HRTPO Regional Transportation Advisory Panel (RTAP) Meeting
January 25, 2022**

The HRTPO Regional Transit Advisory Panel (RTAP) Meeting was called to order at 12:10 p.m. in the Regional Building Boardroom, 723 Woodlake Drive, Chesapeake, Virginia, with the following in attendance:

RTAP Members:

Zakkiyya Anderson	Jason Inge
Ben Goodill	Martino DeStefano
Brad Martin	Sarah Jane Kirkland
William Harrell	Capt. Chris Horgan
Julie Summs	Linda Peck
Stephanie Gorham	Jim Wofford

HRTPO/HRPDC Staff:

Robert A. Crum, Jr.	Jeff Raliski
Pavithra Parthasarathi	Rob Cofield
Rob Case	Joe Turner
Chris Vaigneur	

Others Recorded Attending:

Zach Trogdon, Megan Gribble, and Amy Inman

Minutes

Mr. Robert Crum, HRTPO Executive Director, asked if there were any changes or corrections to the minutes of the November 30, 2021, RTAP meeting, which were circulated previously. Hearing none, Mr. Brad Martin moved approval of the November 30, 2021 minutes as submitted, and Mr. Jason Inge seconded the motion. The minutes were approved.

Review of RTAP Summary Report

Mr. Crum briefly reviewed the printed synopsis of the work of the RTAP that was distributed for comment in advance of the meeting. The draft document covers both the formal formation and charge given to the RTAP by the General Assembly and also summarizes the process the RTAP followed to create work groups around nine key topic areas. Each group then developed an initial set of action recommendations to support transit in Hampton Roads, which were reviewed and edited by the full RTAP committee before being finalized.

Mr. Crum outlined that the report provides a consistent set of talking points the RTAP can use both in meeting with elected leaders as well as in conversations with the community. In particular, the highlighted statement on Page 5 provides a brief summation of the RTAP and their vision for transit in the Hampton Roads region.

Mr. Crum then asked the group if there were any questions or comments on the draft document.

Ms. Zakkiyya Anderson complemented the report and asked if a smaller, more concise version would also be developed for use by the committee. Mr. Crum stated that a one-page summary version would be printed as well.

Mr. Brad Martin recommended two typographical changes and suggested changing the phase “nearly 60” to “over 50” in the committee summary.

Mr. Martin also stated that he thought the wording of “cannot complete” in the RTAP summary statement was too strong.

Ms. Linda Peck, following on to Mr. Martin’s comment, suggested some qualifying language to help restate the importance of an integrated transit system to regional economic development efforts.

Mr. Martino DeStefano indicated that he believed that the 757Express name for the new transit network helps to identify and brand the region.

Mr. Jim Wofford asked if the report was being targeted to both internal and external audiences in the region. Mr. Crum confirmed that the report was developed for use in all settings.

Ms. Amy Inman suggested the local governments which are part of Hampton Roads Transit (HRT) also be noted in the listing of RTAP members.

Ms. Anderson recommended both a typographical and spacing change to the text.

Mr. William Harrell moved approval of the report as amended by the RTAP discussion. Mr. Wofford seconded the motion. The report was approved.

General Assembly Session Transit Advocacy Day

Mr. Crum outlined the plans for the upcoming Hampton Roads Transit Day at the Virginia General Assembly in Richmond. RTAP member Susan Gaston has taken the lead in planning for the event on Thursday, February 3, 2022.

Mr. Crum stated the emerging plans call for a small group audience with Hampton Roads General Assembly Caucus members at 8 AM. The TPO is reserving a meeting room near the Capitol Building where RTAP can assemble and meet with individual legislators from 9 AM - 12. PM

Mr. Crum noted that due to driver shortages, HRT is not able to provide a bus for the event, so RTAP members will need to drive to Richmond. TPO staff distributed a map of public parking locations near the Capitol.

Mr. Crum also stated that TPO staff members will photograph and videotape for social media pages during the event. For people unable to attend the Transit Day gathering next week,

recordings can also be done in advance so that all can have a chance for their voices to be heard.

Mr. Crum then circulated a sign-in sheet for individuals interested in attending the Transit Advocacy Day.

Mr. Crum next outlined the proposed bills that have been introduced this General Assembly session and are threatening a significant portion of the funding for the new Hampton Roads Regional Transit Fund. Specifically, three separate bills seek to remove the \$20M annually generated from the statewide recordation tax from the regional transit fund. Loss of the Recordation tax income without a replacement would reduce annual funding to the regional transit fund by two-thirds from current levels.

Mr. Harrell emphasized the importance of transit to Hampton Roads, with the critical military, shipbuilding, health care, and tourism sectors all being served. Further, plans are in place to connect the new Amazon facilities in Chesapeake and Suffolk with transit once opened. Currently, sixty percent of HRT's riders are traveling to and from work.

Mr. Harrell also added that HRT has already ordered twenty-four buses using revenues from the new regional transit fund to support the first phase of implementation of the proposed regional transit backbone system, which is scheduled to begin service on the Peninsula in October.

Ms. Anderson asked if there were available statistics on the number of people who would be impacted if this funding is removed. She added that developing a brief set of talking points on the issue to assist RTAP members in making contacts with legislators would be helpful.

Mr. Harrell indicated that blurbs on the impacts of the potential funding loss would be developed, showing how the reductions would impact all parts of the plan, including service subsidies, vehicle purchases, shelters, and technology enhancements.

Mr. Inge noted that Northern Virginia has had dedicated transit funding for decades and asked what was the genesis for these current initiatives directed solely at Hampton Roads.

Mr. Crum replied that localities all across Virginia have taken a financial hit from the statewide recordation tax earmark for Hampton Roads.

Mr. DeStefano asked about the position of the Hampton Roads General Assembly on the proposed legislation.

Mr. Martin noted that the Hampton Roads region does not have a great deal of representation on the Finance Committee where these bills are originating.

Mr. Wofford inquired about the position of the Realtor association on the proposed legislation.

Ms. Megan Gribble recommended enlisting other voices such as universities to help carry the message of the importance of transit to the region.

Mr. Crum reported that eight RTAP members at the meeting had signed up today to go up to Richmond and that three other RTAP members are already working daily in the capital.

Mr. Crum indicated that a follow-up email will be sent to those RTAP members not present at the meeting to provide them an opportunity to sign up as well.

Ms. Inman stated that RTAP members could use the Pulse Bus Rapid Transit system as a park and ride option while in Richmond.

Mr. DeStefano recommended to the RTAP membership that personal riding experiences on transit can be very beneficial to inform their conversations on regional mobility and connection issues.

Other RTAP Advocacy Opportunities

Mr. Crum listed the following upcoming opportunities to brief other regional organizations on the work and recommendations of the RTAP:

- Community Advisory Committee – February 10th
- Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization – February 17th
- Hampton Roads Transit Board – February 24th
- Williamsburg Area Transit Authority and Suffolk Transit Board Meetings – TBD
- Hampton Roads Chambers of Commerce Board Meetings – TBD

Mr. Crum stated that the list was just a start, and input on other potential groups and venues for briefings by the RTAP are welcomed.

Mr. Crum indicated that he would be sending an email requesting volunteers from the RTAP for these sessions.

Other Business

Mr. Crum asked if RTAP members had any additional items to share related to transit in the region.

Mr. Zach Trogdon stated that attention would also need to be paid to other bills in the legislature, which are proposing to suspend the regional gas tax, which makes up about 25% of the annual revenue stream of the Hampton Roads Transportation Accountability Commission (HRTAC). Mr. Trogdon noted that the new High Occupancy Toll (HOT) lane network being constructed by HRTAC in the region, including the expansion of the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel, will be open and free to transit thereby helping to make transit a more competitive travel option. Therefore, any slowdown in these projects due to a revenue loss will also negatively impact transit operations.

Ms. Gribble stated that the City of Virginia Beach would be adding another trolley route at the oceanfront this summer to help make up for the loss of parking at the dome site.

Mr. Harrell indicated the HRTAC Executive Director Kevin Page was following the meeting online and had texted to clarify that the \$20 million annually that Northern Virginia has been receiving for transit comes directly from existing State transportation revenues and not the Recordation tax like the Hampton Roads transit fund.

Adjournment

There being no more business before the Regional Transit Advisory Panel, the meeting was adjourned at 1:40 p.m.

DRAFT