

**Summary Minutes of the
HRTPO Regional Transportation Advisory Panel (RTAP) and Housing
Assessment Working Group Joint Meeting
March 14, 2023**

The joint meeting of the HRTPO Regional Transit Advisory Panel (RTAP) and Housing Assessment Working Group was called to order at 12:03 p.m. in the Regional Building Boardroom, 723 Woodlake Drive, Chesapeake, Virginia, with the following in attendance:

RTAP Members in Attendance:

Shawn Avery	Janet V. Green
Keith Darrow	Chris Neikirk
Rick Dwyer	Sarah Jane Kirkland
Ben Goodill	Martha McClees
Bill Crow	Jim Wofford
Shannon Glover	Horace Wade

Housing Group in Attendance:

Brian Solis	Randy Keaton
Brian Thrower	Chris Taylor
Donnie Tuck	Steve Brown
Mary Bunting	Andria McClellan
Cleon Long	

HRTPO/HRPDC Staff:

Robert A. Crum, Jr.	Matthew Harrington
Rob Case	Quan McLaurin
Rob Cofield	Pavithra Parthasarathi
Jeff Raliski	Dmitry Rekhter
Greg Grootendorst	Deidre Garrett
Shernita L. Bethea	Chris Vaigneur

Others Recorded Attending:

Carl Jackson, Todd Nichols, Ray Amoruso, Brian Smith, Steve Jones, and Angela Bezik.

Minutes

Mr. Robert Crum, HRTPO Executive Director, asked if there were any changes or corrections to the either the RTAP minutes of the August 31, 2022, meeting or the Housing Assessment Work Group minutes of the January 31, 2023 meeting, which were both included in the Agenda packet. Hearing none, the minutes were unanimously approved by consent.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Opportunities for Coordination – Housing and Public Transit Efforts

Mr. Crum welcomed both groups to the joint meeting. He noted that the Housing Work Group is a relatively new body that has only been meeting for a few months. Yet early in its discussions, the close relationship and intersection of housing to available, safe and affordable transportation options was recognized as a key component of the issue. Accordingly, this joint meeting with the region’s transit advisory panel was sought as an early action item.

Ms. Bethea and Ms. Garrett then provided a brief overview of the core housing programs currently supported at the Planning District Commission, including the administration of HOME funds, the largest federal block grant to state and local governments designed exclusively to create affordable housing for low-income households. The overarching goal of all existing programs and efforts is the provision of adequate housing for all.

It was noted that the most pressing concerns related to housing are affordability, concentration of poverty, special needs populations, locational mismatch, and homelessness. While overcoming the stigma of affordable housing is a significant challenge to progress on many of these factors, transit and transportation access clearly have an important role in addressing many of these issues.

The presentation highlighted that Hampton Roads is not unique and that many of the primary housing issues in the region mirror many ongoing national trends, including:

- Evictions and foreclosures
- Rental conditions (affordability, fair housing, vouchers)
- Rising values
- Housing for the military
- Homelessness
- Crime and violence

The discussion emphasized the need to work and connect across sectors, recognizing the intersection of housing with many other issues such as health care, transportation, poverty/wealth, quality of life, education, and safety/well-being. Messaging that breaks out of the silos and embraces multi-dimensional solutions will be critical.

Mr. Grootendorst added that many factors, such as the type, cost, and location, influence housing choices, with multiple additional layers underneath each. Planning District Commission staff members have prepared a series of maps that provided a snapshot of housing in the region, which help to detail these issues.

Mr. Crum summarized that the RTAP subgroups met extensively to develop a series of recommendations to support the new regional transit backbone system being implemented. Affordable housing opportunities was one of the focus priorities of the group. Additional discussion at the RTAP identified how housing issues cross-connect with other priority areas such as Transit Oriented Development and Technology.

Mr. Amoruso of Hampton Roads Transit (HRT) provided an overview of the new regional transit backbone system, which has been named the 757 Express. HRT currently operates 69 routes serving six cities. The new funding opportunity created by General Assembly in 2020 allows the creation of 13 new regional backbone bus routes with 15-minute service with a consistent span of operations across jurisdictional boundaries for the first time.

Mr. Amoruso added that the region's new transit funding also supports the purchase of additional rolling stock and significant improvements related to facilities, technology, communications, and marketing. When fully implemented, the 757 Express system will increase the total population in Hampton Roads with access to high-performance transit services by 169%.

The first implementation phase of the 757 Express started in October 2022 with a route serving the Jefferson Avenue corridor in the Peninsula. Two more 757 Express routes will begin service in 2023, including Route 20 on Virginia Beach Boulevard in Norfolk and Virginia Beach, the already busiest route in the entire Commonwealth of Virginia. Two routes in Portsmouth are targeted to begin operations in 2024. The remaining eight routes in the 757 Express network will then be brought online as quickly as sufficient new operators can be hired and brought online.

A primary benefit of the 757 Express investments that will extend to the entire HRT network is the introduction of both real-time bus information and widespread mobile ticketing options. Further, 620 new shelters are being added across the HRT system, and construction of a completely new bus maintenance and operations facility in Virginia Beach on a 12-acre site is being planned to assist with the agency's transition to an all-electric fleet.

Discussion of the next steps for the groups centered on advancing conversations with all the meaningful players, initiation of a first-of-its-kind housing assessment in the entire region assessing the programs and services, and providing localities with an ala carte menu of options and strategies to consider in addressing the housing needs of the region. It was promoted that the need to be intentional with locational investments, considering issues such as the affordability index, walkability, and mobility, will be critical in the future. Also, outreach to other non-TPO locations will be should occur to include our entire region at the table.

Mr. Crum outlined upcoming meetings for both committees. As requested by the Housing Work Group, its next meeting will bring the private sector into the conversation, with two developers joining the discussion. An April meeting date will be scheduled for the RTAP group to plan for the Hampton Roads Transit Advocacy Day, which is calendared for May 4th from 11:30 am to 4:00 pm and will include train and bus rides and a media event.

Old/New Business

There was no old or new business for discussion.

Adjournment

There being no more business before the groups, the meeting was adjourned at 2:13 p.m.