

Transcribed Public Comments from the
March 19, 2015 HRTPO Board Meeting

Three people requested to address the HRTPO Board at the March 19, 2015 meeting. Chair Price asked them to limit their comments to three minutes.

Mr. Mark Geduldig-Yatrofsky
Portsmouth Citizen

Good morning, sir. Mr. Chair, Honorable Commissioners, and fellow citizens. I'm here to speak about the High Rise Bridge expansion. My reading of your agenda materials led me to the conclusion that the Commonwealth Transportation Board members were interested in your view of certain significant issues – one of them being the height of the bridge and the other being funding mechanisms including managed lanes. I am in favor of the HOT proposal for several reasons. First of all, the HOT lanes respect the “paid for” status of the existing structure so that anybody who chooses to use the existing lanes will not be assessed a fee for their use. The HOT model, as it's used in Northern Virginia today on Interstates 495 and 395, also carries forward the concept of high occupancy vehicles. So if you buddy up, if you put three or more people in a vehicle, you won't be charged for using the new lanes, but it provides a buy-in provision so that if you are not in a position to ride with other people, you can pay the freight to use the new lanes. This to me is a viable funding model for new construction. The problem in the Midtown/Downtown project has been that nobody gets the advantage of having paid for the existing tunnel infrastructure; everybody is tolled to use it. Tolled, not told, but tolled, charged the use it. The price of infrastructure continues to rise and the funding for it continues to rise at a much slower rate. Those of you who think the federal government is going to be the savior haven't been paying attention to what's been going on in Congress, and this is not just the current Congress but this is over a couple of decades. There has been a decided shift in philosophy about infrastructure that the federal government's resources are more and more allocated to a continuing state of war and domestic priorities get pushed lower and lower in the scale. I would like to see our involvement in global war reduced and get a peacetime bonus, but I don't see that happening in the immediate future. So if you're looking to the feds to come through with large quantities of money, I think you're wearing rose colored glasses. So we have had to rely more and more on state and local resources to leverage those resources. The HOT approach seems to me the most feasible and most equitable. Thank you.

Mr. John Gergely
Newport News Citizen

My name is John Gergely. I'm from Newport News. I'm going to comment on the presentation earlier about the 2040 Long-Range Transportation Plan. I am totally confused of what the purpose of this is. In there, it says that any regionally significant project must be included in this plan, but then it goes on later says the committed project are not evaluated and HRTAC projects are not evaluated. Are they not significant, are they not regionally significant? Now, I realize the best explanation I've been given about the why the HRTAC was developed in the General Assembly was to keep the federal government out of your hair so you could do what you wanted to do without Mr. Rucker's people bothering you. And that's the explanation I got from a General Assembly member. But in here you don't mention the Third Crossing at all that I know a large significant group of you want to build. You say any regionally significant project must be included. Are you ignoring it so no one looks at it or what? The Third Crossing, the Patriots Crossing, you've pushed that under the HRTAC projects, but you've taken

the federal government out of your hair, but you haven't taken the General Assembly, and the General Assembly when they wrote the bill that made the HRTAC real, they said the Accountability Commission shall give priority to those projects that are expected to provide the greatest impact on reducing congestion for the greatest number of citizens residing within this planning district and shall ensure that the money shall be used for such construction projects. Now, there ain't no way, no way at all you're ever going to prove that the Third Crossing or Patriots Crossing is going to provide the greatest impact at reducing congestion. Every study you've ever done out of this group or this group has ever commissioned has shown that's not real. So many of you are members of the HRTAC also. So I'm totally confused on what this thing does and what you're doing at HRTAC. You cannot legally build the Third Crossing and you've totally ignored it in this project. I think you're trying to hide something. Thank you very much. By the way, I'm counting on my Delegate David Yancey, who is the only General Assembly member who bothered to show up today to help on this to make you guys realize that you are not allowed to build the Third Crossing because you cannot prioritize it. You cannot show that it helps congestion at all. Thank you, sir.

Mr. Will Christopher
Norfolk Citizen

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. On January 26th of this year, mobility advocacy groups from around the state came together in Richmond for Legislative Transit Day. Collaborating with the Chamber of Commerce, community organizations, businesses and volunteers, Hampton Roads by far had the largest contingency from anywhere in the state and left a lasting impression. This Thursday, on March 26th, Mr. Tom Frantz and Mr. Robbyn Gayer are furthering this message in the effort by presenting two of the many options for connecting our region's economies and infrastructure. The luncheon will be held at the beautiful new Slover library in downtown Norfolk, and it's garnered multi-state and cross-state support with over 30 leaders, organizations, and stakeholders locking arms for a coalition of action. Combined with our many regional studies, the voice of our economic drivers, record high ridership with rail and transit, neighboring MSAs building a future together, we have a consensus to act. A special thank you to the TPO for its vision and leadership. Thank you.