

Regional Connectors Study
Joint Steering (Policy) Committee & Working Group Meeting Minutes
June 30, 2021, 1:00 pm

Pursuant to the declared state of emergency in the Commonwealth of Virginia in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and to protect the public health and safety of the members, staff, and general public, this meeting was held electronically via Webex. These electronic meetings are required to complete essential business on behalf of the region. A recording of the meeting will be available on the website.

Steering (Policy) Committee

The following voting members attended the web 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.

Note that these cities were represented by members of the Working Group below.

Working Group

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

Troy Eisenberger (CH)
Lynne Keenan (HA)
Bryan Stilley (NN)
Brian Fowler (NO)
Carl Jackson (PO)
Jason Souders (SU)
Ric Lowman (VB)

No voting members of the Working Group were absent.

Others

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

Olga Beltsar (NOR)	Kevin Page (HRTAC)
Rob Brown (NOR)	Pavithra Parthasarathi (HRTPO)
Thomas Cross (VPA)	Pam Phillips (VDOT)
Robert A. Crum, Jr. (HRTPO/HRPDC)	Paul Prideaux (Michael Baker Intl.)
Anthony Donald (Michael Baker Intl.)	Craig Quigley (HRMFFA)
Rick Dwyer (HRMFFA)	Camelia Ravanbakht (RCS Coordinator)
Craig Eddy (Michael Baker Intl.)	Angela Rico (NN)
Amy Inman (Norfolk)	Evandro Santos (NOR)
George Janek (USACE)	Mark Shea (VB)
Michael King (Navy)	Dale Stith (HRTPO)
Claudette Lajoie (Solstice Environmental)	Bill Thomas (Michael Baker Intl.)
Debbie Mangiaracina (Norfolk)	Cathie Vick (VPA)
Keith Nichols (HRTPO)	Ron Williams (Virginia Beach)

1. Call to Order

At 1:00 pm, Mr. Crum read a COVID-19 notice.
Mayor Price conducted the meeting.

2. Roll Call

Ms. Ravanbakht called the roll (see attendance above). She then noted that this special meeting was called since there were not enough members of the Policy committee to vote last week and the aim today was for the committee to take action on the recommendation from the Working Group.

3. Public Comment Period

There were no public comments.

4. Minutes

Mayor Tuck moved approval of the minutes of the June 22, 2021 Joint Steering (Policy) Committee and Working Group meeting, and Mayor Glover seconded. The motion was approved via roll call:

Steering (Policy) Committee

Richard West	Chesapeake	yes
Donnie Tuck	Hampton	yes
McKinley Price	Newport News	yes
Martin Thomas	Norfolk	yes
Shannon Glover	Portsmouth	yes
Michael Duman	Suffolk	-
Bobby Dyer	Virginia Beach	abstain

5. RCS: Phase 3: Preliminary Alternatives

Mayor Price initiated this item by asking for a motion to move ahead with the alternatives that were recommended by the working group that were to be voted on at the previous week's meeting. Mayor Tuck made a motion, and Mayor Glover seconded the motion.

Vice-Mayor Thomas made a substitute motion. The substitute motion is to include Alternatives 5 and 7 in the study, due to the burden of truck traffic on Hampton Boulevard, the burden that will be imposed by the future Craney Island Terminal, and the possibility that these alternatives may be cheaper. Vice-Mayor Thomas then mentioned the possibility of an additional \$3.1 million in federal earmark that was requested for a study to look at access to the future Craney Island Terminal. Mayor Dyer seconded the substitute motion.

Mayor Price asked for a member of the Working Group to explain why Alternatives 5 and 7 were not recommended for further study. Mr. Stilley noted that the Working Group had concerns about the feasibility of those two alternatives, including the impacts it would have on the Navy Fuel Depot, and that future studies would likely examine access to the future terminal.

Mayor West asked if waiting for word on the \$3.1 million study earmark or adding Alternatives 5 and 7 would delay the study. Mr. Eddy noted that there wouldn't be a significant delay to the study if Alternatives 5 and 7 were added to the study. The bigger issue is that adding Alternative 5 and 7 would result in 12 alternatives, which is more than the 10 budgeted for the study.

Mayor Dyer noted that it's important to take the time and effort to make sure we get this study right.

Mr. Jackson added that Portsmouth staff is concerned with Alternative 5 due to its impact on the Portsmouth Landfill and the Fuel Depot.

Vice-Mayor Thomas noted that these alternatives may impact the landfill, but it's too early to definitively say that. It is important to make sure we get it right since these projects won't be built in the next five or ten years. If budget is an issue, he recommended removing Alternative 8.

Mayor Glover noted that we need to do what's in the best interest of the region's future, even if it takes more time to get the best outcome.

Mayor West asked if Alternatives 5 and 7 could be reconsidered in the future if the \$3.1 million earmark becomes available. Ms. Ravanbakht noted that it's possible, and that the decision today is not for the final alternative. It is to start looking at candidate alternatives to come up with three viable alternatives to study further, while looking at permitability and constructability.

Ms. Vick stated that the Port supports continuing to consider all of the alternatives, especially since the study itself will be examining each alternative's permitability and constructability.

Mr. King noted that the Navy supports transportation improvements across the region but is concerned about impacts to the Fuel Depot and the Phase II Expansion there. The Navy would need to draw a line in the sand due to national security. If there's a way around it the Navy is not opposed, but the Navy can't support anything that will impact the Fuel Depot.

Mayor Tuck asked if the \$3.1 million being discussed is part of the original HRTAC set aside or from somewhere else. Mr. Crum reviewed the October 2016 Board Action that approved the suite of projects, and noted that as part of that action the Board agreed that the HRTAC-funded RCS would evaluate other alternatives such as the Third Crossing. The \$7 million allocated by HRTAC was to look at those additional projects, and determine which would give the most benefit to movement between the Peninsula and Southside as well as be permitable and constructable. Mr. Crum added that the \$3.1 million is an earmark appropriation request led by the Port made to our Congressional delegation to further evaluate the connection to the new Craney Island Marine Terminal. It would be additional money, not part of the original HRTAC allocation.

Ms. Vick noted that the RCS is a planning study, not an engineering study. Permitability and constructability is generally examined during alternative project design in an engineering study. The Port asked for the earmark since the RCS is a planning study. The \$3.1 million port request has been supported regionwide because of the importance of the future Craney Island Terminal. Ms. Vick added that the Port's position is that the consultant should continue to look at Alternatives 5 and 7 and not discard them prematurely.

Mayor Price asked if there was money still available to expand the study to include the additional alternatives, to which Mr. Crum replied in the negative. Mayor Price asked if we should approve something that we can't fund. Vice-Mayor Thomas noted that if the issue is the number of alternatives that Alternative 8 could be removed in order to fund Alternatives 5 and 7. He added that we should make decisions on good alternatives independent of whether federal money is available or not. It would also be reasonable to postpone this vote until we know if we receive the federal earmark.

Mayor Duman noted that the prudent thing would be to delay the vote until we know if we receive the federal earmark. Once we know about the federal earmark then decisions can be made about which alternatives to move forward with.

Vice-Mayor Thomas asked what the cost difference would be if we looked at Alternatives 5 and 7 and removed Alternative 8, and Mayor Tuck asked what the ramifications would be to delaying this decision. Ms. Ravanbakht noted that the study is 50% complete and perhaps we could move forward with the other alternatives while we put Alternatives 5 and 7 on hold. Mayor Tuck noted that a substitute motion could be to table this decision until the \$3.1 million federal earmark is decided, at which time we would consider adding Alternatives 5 and 7 to the study.

Ms. Vick asked what the impact would be of not moving all of the alternatives forward for evaluation at the same time. Ms. Ravanbakht noted that we will analyze all of the alternatives on their technical merits, and then at that point a comparison would be made to get to the final three alternatives. But the technical work could begin on the four alternatives while trying to get additional funding for the two additional alternatives.

Ms. Vick asked if we have an estimate of the difference in cost of including Alternatives 5 and 7, keeping in mind that these are original alternatives. Mr. Eddy replied that he couldn't produce that cost today, but he can get that cost estimate rather quickly. Ms. Vick asked if a reevaluation of the scope of analyzing each alternative could be done in order to look at 12 alternatives instead of 10 for the same amount of funding.

Mayor Duman asked how long it would take before we knew if the region would receive the \$3.1 million federal earmark. He noted that it is difficult determining whether to vote on Alternatives 5 and 7 without knowing whether the federal earmark will be secured. Mayor Tuck responded that it's clear that there are members of the committee that would like to see Alternatives 5 and 7 included, regardless of whether the federal earmark is obtained.

Vice-Mayor Thomas amended his substitute motion. His amended substitute motion is to defer the action today in order to determine how much additional funding would be required to analyze 12 alternatives simultaneously through Phase 3 (including Alternatives 5 and 7) and to explore what additional money is available from HRTAC to fund the additional analysis. Mayor Tuck moved approval of the amended substitute motion; Mayor Dyer seconded. A roll call vote was taken on the substitute motion:

Steering (Policy) Committee

Richard West	Chesapeake	no
Donnie Tuck	Hampton	yes
McKinley Price	Newport News	no
Martin Thomas	Norfolk	yes
Shannon Glover	Portsmouth	yes
Michael Duman	Suffolk	yes
Bobby Dyer	Virginia Beach	yes

6. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 2:02 pm.