

**Transcribed Public Comments from the
September 21, 2017 HRTPO Board Meeting**

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

Four people requested to address the HRTPO Board at the September 21, 2017 Meeting.
Chair Johnson asked them to limit their comments to three minutes.

***Donna Sayegh
Portsmouth Citizen***

Good morning, my name is Donna Sayegh and I live in Portsmouth. I would like to know how can the Commonwealth Transportation Board change the SMART SCALE HB2 law without it going back to the General Assembly to be changed. For the year 2015-2018 TIP Revision- RSTP Transfer Request for the remaining \$57,583 in 2012 funds in the RSTP Reserve Account be allocated to the following project: Purchase 40-foot replacement buses for Hampton Roads Transit. The project is not fully funded and could obligate the funding quickly and HRT concurs with the recommendation. How come there is this much money left over from 2012? This money is taxpayer's money. These 40 foot buses that I see traveling on Portsmouth roads infuriates me every time I see one or two people sitting in them. If this organization wants to get money from the federal government, which by the way, is our hard earned money given to people to ride the bus because they can't afford to buy a car. We don't need 40 foot buses. We need short buses that have some personality not looking like the Tide train. HRT has increased the fare because not enough people are riding the bus to take care of expenses. That's where the money needs to go, to pay for what we already have. There is no statistics with this report to say what the need is. It's all about wants, not needs. There is no accountability anywhere up and down this system of government. What we have today is people making decisions who have not presented any information to the citizens. We the people have local boards and commissions that need to obtain information to present to the people before it comes here to be voted on. I'll continue to say we have taxation without representation. Also in Item D, Turnpike Road you talk about the need for more money because they didn't assess that there were some environmental issues. Who in the world is looking out for the people? We need to know in Portsmouth what is going on. I'm tired of feeling like we are second class citizens in Portsmouth when we have all this money making Port and Shipyard in our City. Somebody is not representing the people. Thanks for listening.

***John Gergley,
Newport News Citizen***

Good morning. I would like to address four aspects of the HOT lanes which are major topics around here lately. Basically, the aspects are Economic benefit, congestion relief, control of them and most importantly regressive taxes. The HOT lanes are really regressive taxes. They impact your most vulnerable citizens. The young sailor, because ships are moving back and forth to Newport News and NOB and families are disrupted. The ODU, Norfolk

State, Hampton University, and Thomas Nelson students, who go back and forth; the shipyard apprentices; even McDonald employees. Basically the working poor. Mayor Price, 49% of your constituents are the working poor; Hampton 47%. They won't be able to afford the mandatory ez pass. The HOT lanes will result in express lanes the well to do or on expense accounts. Most of you will be able to afford them, most of you will be on an expense account or have the money, but your constituents won't. There will be nothing but Lexus lanes or Audi lanes for lawyers and mayors. Economic benefits. HOT lanes have very little economic benefit. Some don't even pay for the incremental cost to implement them. Their main benefit is traffic control. That's not my statement, that's a statement from David Zimmer of PFM group who you paid their company money to analyze how to spend our money. Mr. Utterback, in July this year, you commented the HOT lanes will increase traffic capacity by 10% to eventually 18%, that's 43 minutes into the July tape. Why not have increases of 33%? You've got a third lane increase traffic capacity by 33%. It really doesn't give congestion relief. By the way HB 2313 HB2 requires that our money for the regional taxes be spent on projects that have congestion relief. If you are going to spend our money lanes should be wide open, we should be able to take full advantage of the all lanes you put in, not just rich people. Control. I just found out last night that an Australian company, TransUrban, operates the beltway HOT lanes. If there is any profit ever who's going to get the profit? Is it going to be us or is some foreign company going to get it? Look at what happened to the downtown tunnels. You guys give control to another company to another outfit and we will lose control of our roads that are paid for with our regional taxes. Any questions?

Ellis James
Norfolk Citizen

Thank you madam chair. My name is Ellis W. James and I reside in the City of Norfolk and have done so for a couple of years. I'd like to be sure that each of the communities in this room are paying close attention to what's happening. The current administration is cutting funding left and right, and we may be exposed in terms of our port security because of that cut. It makes no sense to me personally as a lifelong resident of Norfolk, Virginia, and as a person who has paid attention to what's going on here in Hampton Roads as well as the Commonwealth of Virginia, to cut the funds that guarantee our security by checking each one of the large containers. Did I mention they are getting bigger and bigger, and the ships are greater and greater? Along with the cut in the funding for examining those containers, we are now finding out there will be a cut in funding for our Coast Guard again. We fought this battle about 12 years ago. These important checks and actions that we need to take as a TPO are extremely important, and need to examine closely because this is not the time to cut our port security when we're sitting in Norfolk on top of the largest naval base in the world. Thank you madam chairman.

Mark Geduldig-Yatrofsky
Portsmouth Citizen

Good morning madam chair, honorable commissioners and fellow interested parties. I read with interest about the search by Amazon for a second hub for their corporate entity. That

search has occasioned a lot of excitement in various places in our country, including here in Hampton Roads. I was interested to note that one of the requirements, that one of the prerequisites that Amazon was public transportation access. I would say that should dampen the prospects for us in Hampton Roads. It's a shame because Hampton Roads transit does its best with the limited resources it has to provide transportation services here, but without a dedicated source of funding and a dedicated source of revenue, it struggles. As do the other transit systems within our commonwealth. So, these fifty thousand jobs may slip thru our fingers because of something we have not had the will to remedy. I would ask you all to continue with your legislative packet to put this before the General Assembly. If we have to use the loss of this opportunity to attract a major employer to our region as a poster child for that proposition, do so. Thank you very much.