

**Regional Connectors Study  
Working Group Meeting Minutes  
October 8, 2020, 9:30 am**

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.

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

Troy Eisenberger (Chesapeake) (left the meeting at 2:47pm)  
Brian Fowler (Norfolk)  
Carl Jackson (Portsmouth)  
Ric Lowman (VB)  
Lynne Keenan (Hampton)  
Bryan Stilley (NN)

The following voting members were absent (alphabetically by last name):

Jason Souders (Suffolk)  
James Wright (Portsmouth) [Carl Jackson represented Portsmouth]  
Jason Mitchell (Hampton) [Lynne Keenan represented Hampton]

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

Rob Case (HRTPO)	Lorna Parkins (Michael Baker Intl.)
Anthony Donald (Michael Baker Intl.)	Pamela Phillips (VDOT)
Craig Eddy (Michael Baker Intl.)	Camelia Ravanbakht (RCS Coordinator)
Cole Fisher (Va. Beach)	Angela Rico (NN)
George Janek (US Army COE)	Evandro Santos (Norfolk)
Steve Jones (Navy) (came late)	Dale Stith (HRTPO)
Barbara Nelson (POV)	Eric Stringfield (VDOT) (came late)
Keith Nichols (HRTPO)	Bill Thomas (Michael Baker Intl.)

## **1. Call to Order**

Bryan Stilley (Chair, Newport News) called the meeting to order shortly after 1:30pm. Keith Nichols (HRTPO) read a COVID-19 notice.

## **2. Welcome and Introductions**

Camelia Ravanbakht (RCS Coordinator) called the roll.

## **3. Public Comment Period**

There were no public comments.

## **4. Minutes**

The Working Group approved the minutes of the August 27, 2020 Working Group meeting.

## **5. RCS: Modeling Update on Congestion Measures**

Bill Thomas (MBI) said that he made model fixes to correct earlier counter-intuitive results and substandard differences (in screenline volumes) between counts and model. He presented volume data showing a better relationship between counts and the model. Then he presented measures (vehicle-miles traveled, delay, speed, etc.) comparing the three 2045 Greater Growth scenarios (Water, Urban, and Suburban).

Bryan Stilley asked whether the group was satisfied with the fixes. The group made no objections. Mr. Stilley indicated that this satisfaction recommends to the Steering Committee approval of Phase 2. Dale Stith thanked MBI for fixing the model (which is also used by HRTPO for long-range planning).

## **6. Mandated and Other Potential Segments**

[To understand this discussion, a clarification of terminology is necessary: This study's "alternatives" (e.g. the Patriots Crossing) will be comprised of highway "segments" (e.g. the 564 Connector and 664 Connector, which together comprise the Patriots Crossing), including perhaps "modifications" to the five original segments.] Craig Eddy (MBI) presented slides showing the five segments from the Hampton Roads Crossing Study (HRCS) Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS). Due to conflict with the Navy fuel depot, Brian Fowler (Norfolk) suggested that the 164 Connector (as drawn) be dropped as an alternative. Barb Nelson (VPA) suggested that the 164 Connector is still feasible, and should be retained. George Janek (COE) said that the useful life span of the Craney Island Dredged Material Management Area (CIDMMA) is 2049-2050. Steve Jones (Navy) said he would try to get approval to send the group a drawing showing the location of Navy depot tanks proposed west of the current tanks. Barb Nelson stated that the Port's eastward expansion of Craney Island has received significant funding, and that she sees the possibility of finding a usable alignment for the 164 Connector by working with the Navy on conflict

with the fuel depot, and with Portsmouth on conflict with the landfill. George Janek (COE) said that the Corps is not going to give a blessing to a project at this early point; that the Corps will not permit something that affects the ability to operate the CIDMMA, including the re-handling basin; that the Corps will provide input on alternatives. Carl Jackson (Portsmouth) said that the Working Group has orders to evaluate the five segments, and therefore none should be removed. Brian Fowler said that if operation of the CIDMMA requires the 664 Connector to be 100 feet high, assuming that the 564 Connector is a tunnel, the resulting change in elevation between the two would be unpassable by trucks, requiring a modification to the original 664 Connector. He is concerned that, without modification, neither the 664 Connector nor the 164 Connector are buildable. Eric Stringfield wondered about the utility of a project comprised only of the 564 Connector and the 164 Connector. Brian Fowler said the "LEDPA" (of the HRCS SEIS) indicated that the HRBT was the only permissible alternative. George Janek said that the HRBT was the least environmentally damaging practicable alternative (the definition of LEDPA). Brian Fowler indicated that the HRBT was more practical, not that the other alternatives were un-permittable. Barb Nelson said that a possible recommendation for the Steering Committee (to meet on October 27) is to simply look at the five SEIS segments. Bryan Stille (chair, Newport News) said he sees merit in these additional segments: Segment 2 (improving US 17 in Suffolk) and Segment 3 (extension of 664 C westward to IW). He asked for confirmation of looking at 2 and 3. Brian Fowler suggested looking briefly at the two, and then in depth only if merited. Craig Eddy said that neither Segment 2 nor Segment 3 provide cross-harbor capacity. Carl Jackson suggested asking the Steering Committee whether they want the study to examine, as an alternative, a widening of the James River Bridge (JRB) or improvements at either end of the bridge. Brian Fowler said that the RCS budget is limited, recommending looking only at the five SEIS segments. Craig Eddy said that the RCS scope covers looking at ten alternatives (i.e. combinations of segments). Bryan Stilly asked whether the group could let Segment 2 and Segment 3 go, and simply examine the five SEIS segments. Lynne Keenan (Hampton) proposed a (smaller) meeting of the stakeholders before the Working Group forwards a recommendation to the Steering Committee. Brian Fowler made a motion that the RCS move forward studying alternatives comprised of the five SEIS segments and modifications of the five. Ric Lowman (Va. Beach) seconded the motion. The Working Group approved the motion (4 to 1).

## **7. For Your Information**

Craig Eddy (MBI) presented slides showing the status of Phase 2 deliverables, the status of Phase 3 deliverables, and a draft schedule for Phase 3.

## **8. Next Meeting**

The proposed next meetings:

- Joint Working Group and Steering Committee: October 27, 2020 at 9:30am
- Working Group: Nov 12, 1:30pm
- Working Group: Dec 10, 9:30am
- Joint Working Group and Steering Committee: (tentative) week of December 7

## **9. Other Items of Interest**

No other items were discussed.

## **10. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned approximately at 4:00 pm.