

**Summary Minutes of the
HRTPO Regional Transportation Advisory Panel (RTAP) Meeting
October 18, 2021**

The HRTPO Regional Transit Advisory Panel (RTAP) Meeting was called to order at 12:09 p.m. in the Regional Building Boardroom, 723 Woodlake Drive, Chesapeake, Virginia, with the following in attendance:

RTAP Members:

Chris Neikirk	Jason Inge
Ben Goodill	Garry Harris
Brad Martin	Sarah Jane Kirkland
Martha McClees	Michael Giardino
Captain David Dees	Janet Green
Verlaine Quinniey	Michael Walker
Barry Bishop	Zakkiyya Anderson
Scott Silsdorf	Susan Gaston
Keith Darrow	

HRTPO/HRPDC Staff:

Robert A. Crum, Jr.	Jeff Raliski
Chris Vaigneur	Rob Case
Rob Cofield	

Others Recorded Attending:

Brian Smith, Steve Jones, Linda Peck, Amy Inman, Zach Trogdon, Lauren Jones, Noelle Pinkard

Welcome and Introductions

Mr. Barry Bishop of the Greater Norfolk Corporation (GNC) announced that he is retiring and therefore that this would be his last RTAP meeting. He introduced Ms. Linda Peck who will be replacing him on the panel going forward representing GNC.

Minutes

Mr. Robert Crum, HRTPO Executive Director asked if there were any changes or corrections to the minutes of the July 14, 2021 RTAP meeting which were circulated previously. Hearing none, Mr. Jason Inge moved approval of the July 14, 2021 minutes as submitted, and Ms. Sarah Jane Kirkland seconded the motion. The minutes were approved.

General Assembly and Transit Advocacy

Mr. Crum began by highlighting the important role RTAP has to play in enhancing regional competitiveness through supporting and advancing the development of a fully interconnected, regional transit system that is properly funded. Towards this end, the RTAP

had previously endorsed the idea of hosting a “Hampton Roads Transit Day” in Richmond during the next General Assembly session.

Mr. Crum then asked Ms. Susan Gaston to share some of her thoughts and work in preparing for the upcoming Virginia General Assembly session.

Ms. Gaston stated that the Virginia General Election in 15 days will clarify the important players for the upcoming legislative session, including any changes to committee chairs and membership. Therefore, a specific date and plan to travel to Richmond would be locked after the election.

Ms. Gaston also recommended that the RTAP members travel to Richmond together on a Hampton Roads Transit (HRT) bus if possible. A second bus leaving from Williamsburg Area Transit Authority (WATA) should also be considered if feasible. Once in Richmond, permission will be obtained to park the buses on Bank Street at a location that is very visible to legislators, staff and all others entering and exiting the State Capitol Building.

Ms. Gaston added that the audience for the region’s transit message should not be just the Hampton Roads caucus members, but also include all other parts of the state and local government.

Mr. Crum indicated that part of the RTAP message to be emphasized in Richmond will be a statement of thanks for the new regional transit funding source enacted last year. Mr. Crum then invited the transit agency representatives to add comments on other possible legislative issues the RTAP effort should consider.

Mr. Brian Smith indicated that HRT has a listing of high level, draft legislative priorities on its website that can be viewed. He also stated that the agency always monitors the General Assembly session very closely in order to be ready to respond to any potential issues with regard to transit funding in the Commonwealth. Mr. Smith added that a future issue for the region that is growing in importance will be gaining additional State funding support for expanding fixed guideway transit to multiple locations in Hampton Roads.

Mr. Zach Trogdon stated that WATA similarly does not have a specific project ask to advance in Richmond. Rather, thanking the legislators for their previous efforts and also educating them on the current challenges transit agencies are having in maintaining and operating services would be the primary message.

Mr. Smith called attention to the new Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) Transportation Equity and Modernization Study which is scheduled to be completed by next August. Since the analysis is expected to help set future transit funding patterns in Virginia, it will need to be monitored closely.

Ms. Amy Inman stated that thanking the legislators for the new regional funding source should be a key RTAP message. She also supported the need to start thinking regionally about the expansion of fixed guideway system. Ms. Inman added that the Virginia Transit Association (VTA) hosts a transit day in Richmond annually. Finally, Ms. Inman recommended that local funding support for projects and facilities that improve access to transit, especially in support of Vision Zero goals, should be considered.

Mr. Bishop asked what would be the impact to transit if the 3 percent gas tax is rolled back as has been mentioned? Also, Mr. Bishop added that meeting with legislators one on one before the session as well would be beneficial.

Mr. Smith stated that any potential reduction to the gas tax would impact state transportation funding for all modes and systems.

Ms. Gaston noted that there would be two options related to the VTA Transit Day, with the RTAP members either tagging onto the Statewide initiative or holding a separate day for transit in Hampton Roads while also supporting the VTA effort when it occurs.

Mr. Crum noted that Ms. Andria McClellan currently serves as the Chair for both the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission and the HRT Board which presents another opportunity to lobby regional legislators on transit issues.

Mr. Brad Martin stated that the message and outreach to legislators needs to be very focused and clear.

Ms. Gaston stated that a one-pager for RTAP members highlighting the new initiatives and issues related to transit in Hampton Roads will be developed for all to use. A key part of the message will be to emphasize that the RTAP, which was created in State code, is very active and fulfilling its defined mission.

Mr. Jason Inge asked what is the project cost of the current TIDE extension project. Ms. Inman stated that the extension of the TIDE from Newtown Road to Military Circle is estimated to cost \$250M.

Mr. Gary Harris recommended that outreach to Conservation and Green groups could be beneficial in advancing the region's message as well.

Ms. Sarah Jane Kirkland added that a similar approach to student and youth group to help cultivate the next generation of leadership should be made.

Mr. Harris stated that it is important that the outreach program be a sustained effort and not a one off event in order to build increase grass roots support for transit.

Review of Recommendations from RTAP Work Groups

Mr. Crum summarized the compilation of all the recommendations from the nine individual RTAP work groups which had met and reported over the last several months. This information was also provided as a handout to all RTAP members at the meeting.

Mr. Crum outlined that the next step will be to put together a report that summarizes this information and overall process and also develop one page summary that can be shared broadly.

In support of these efforts, Mr. Crum asked for the assistance of the RTAP in two ways. First, it was asked that RTAP members review the list of recommendations and provide any

comments and corrections. Secondly, Mr. Crum stated that the RTAP group would be asked to provide their top priority under each category.

Mr. Bishop reminded the group that the recommendations should be actionable, focusing on short term success, and can be advanced in the next 2-3 years.

Mr. Crum stated that an email would be sent to the group after the meeting asking for their feedback on the recommendations as discussed and then asked if a one week turnaround would be sufficient.

Mr. Martin noted that the development checklist recommendation for the Transit Oriented Development category is broader involving more parties and actions than what is currently written.

Mr. Crum reemphasized that the RTAP group has standing in the Code of Virginia, and therefore once the group's report and one page summary are finalized and formally approved, informational presentations of the findings and recommendations should be shared broadly including with all the transit agencies and the Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization Board.

Mr. Bishop suggested that the follow-up email to the RTAP employ a two-step process, first asking for input on any changes and corrections to the list of recommendations. Then, once this information is received and incorporated into a final summary, direction on the top priorities within each category should be requested.

Other Business

Mr. Crum asked if RTAP members had items to share related to transit in the region.

Ms. Zakkiyya Anderson shared a recent client case of an individual whose job was just a 6 minute drive from their home but instead had to walk 50 minutes each way or take a 23 minute transit ride to help highlight to the RTAP group some of the people they are serving.

Ms. Janet Green echoed that the lack of transportation limits and complicates employment opportunities for many in the region greatly.

Captain David Dees stated that the current redevelopment initiative at Military Circle is a unique opportunity and therefore construction of affordable housing, creation of a major transportation hub, and support of sustainability issues all need to be leading parts of the proposals since it is truly a chance to change the discussion and paradigm of integrating development and transportation in the region.

Mr. Jason Inge stated that Senior Services is back to full operations and has recently implemented an expanded western tidewater route connecting to the Windsor area and is also in larger discussions with Southampton County, Isle of Wight County and the City of Franklin on future transit needs options.

Ms. Inman stated that the City of Norfolk is conducting both in-person and virtual meetings in the coming weeks on the new Draft Multi-Modal Transportation Master Plan. Over 800 comments on transportation needs have been received to date.

Mr. Michael Giardino reported that Newport News International Airport just recently secured its largest private investment totaling \$15M for a new hanger which will ultimately create 200 permanent jobs, many of which may need transportation. Mr. Giardino also noted that the new Amtrak station currently under construction is only 1 mile away from the airport, so research on a possible connection between the two facilities is starting.

Ms. Gaston distributed an Association of Realtors report entitled “The 15-Minute City” which highlights the need for multi-modal transportation investments in communities.

Ms. Green asked why scooter riders are not required to wear a helmet. Ms. Inman replied that State law does not mandate helmets for people on scooters.

Mr. Martin noted that Boush Street in Downtown Norfolk was narrowed to one lane which is representative of the conversations currently underway related around the emerging new normal which has many businesses reexamining work options and other issues such as reduced parking and vehicles.

Mr. Inge noted that the Hampton Roads Urban League Young Professionals organization has recently lost ten members to other regions with better opportunities.

Adjournment

There being no more business before the Regional Transit Advisory Panel, the meeting was adjourned at 1:54 p.m.