

**Summary Minutes of the
HRTPO Regional Transportation Advisory Panel (RTAP) Meeting
November 30, 2021**

The HRTPO Regional Transit Advisory Panel (RTAP) Meeting was called to order at 12:04 p.m. in the Regional Building Boardroom, 723 Woodlake Drive, Chesapeake, Virginia, with the following in attendance:

RTAP Members:

Kristin Hatchett	Jason Inge
Ben Goodill	Garry Harris
Brad Martin	Sarah Jane Kirkland
Martha McClees	Michael Giardino
Bob McKenna	Jason Souders
Bryan Stephens	Linda Peck
Col. Harry Hung	Marcia Conston
Bill Crow	Susan Gaston
Keith Darrow	Shawn Avery
Kurt Hofelich	Stephanie Gorham
Julie Summs	Jim Wofford
Michele Walker	

HRTPO/HRPDC Staff:

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

Others Recorded Attending:

Steve Jones, Zach Trogdon, Megan Gribble, and Noelle Pinkard

Minutes

Mr. Robert Crum, HRTPO Executive Director, asked if there were any changes or corrections to the minutes of the October 18, 2021, RTAP meeting, which were circulated previously. Hearing none, Mr. Jason Inge moved approval of the October 18, 2021 minutes as submitted, and Ms. Martha McClees seconded the motion. The minutes were approved.

Mr. Crum then requested that the meeting agenda be altered slightly to defer the General Assembly and Transit Advocacy discussion temporarily in order to allow Ms. Susan Gaston to arrive. The RTAP committee concurred with the change.

Review of Priority Recommendations Identified by the RTAP Membership

Mr. Crum briefly recapped the Committee's work over the past half year to develop nine priority topic areas to focus on in order to help support and advance transit in Hampton Roads. The RTAP formed nine individual work groups centered around identified topic areas. Each of the work groups then met individually and was tasked with developing 1 – 3

action steps that could be taken in the near term to advance and strengthen transit in the Hampton Roads/757 Region. The groups presented and refined their recommendations across a series of RTAP meetings in the fall.

Following the October 21, 2021, RTAP meeting, a two-step process was undertaken. First, committee members were asked to make any final changes and corrections to the draft list of recommendations. Once this information was received and incorporated into a final summary, the RTAP membership was directed to select the top priorities within each category. A printed result of this poll of the RTAP membership on priorities was distributed at the meeting.

Mr. Crum outlined that the next step will be to put together a report that memorializes both this process and also the final recommendations of the group. Mr. Crum added that a related summary document that can be shared broadly will also be developed.

Mr. Brad Martin commented that the recommendation of the Affordable Housing group related to developing a comprehensive resource for local governments would be a useful tool for landowners and developers as well.

Mr. Martin also asked if the checkmarks denoting the relative priority ranking of each of the recommendations would be included in the final report document. Mr. Crum stated that the voting totals for each recommendation will not be included in the final report.

Ms. Gaston asked if the recommendations not receiving any votes would still be retained in the final report. Mr. Crum replied that all the recommendations from the nine RTAP subgroups would be included in the report document.

Ms. Gaston supported Mr. Martin's point that the Affordable Housing resource guide recommendation should be viewed in a larger context also including realtors and other related professionals.

Ms. Gaston also distributed copies of the current edition of the Realtor magazine, *On Common Ground*, focusing on issues such as affordable housing, in-fill development, and Transit Oriented Development.

Mr. Crum suggested that the issue of creating activity and development around the 13 backbone routes might be an appropriate subject for an Urban Land Institute (ULI) study panel. Ms. Gaston recommended that if implemented, any such study group should be sure to also include representatives from the business side in addition to planning professionals.

Mr. Bill Crow stated that the top tier recommended actions within each topic should be highlighted in some way in the report.

Mr. Ben Goodill suggested that any overlapping recommendations be combined so that the full list is not so overwhelming.

Mr. Gary Harris proposed applying some additional filters such as cost to be sure that all of the proposals are implementable.

Mr. Jim Wofford stated that keeping in mind the difference between the 30,000-foot view of issues versus the street level perspective of the transit user is important and that future steps are needed to help facilitate outreach efforts to this group.

Dr. Marcia Conston asked about the status of current collaboration efforts between the three transit agencies and the cities on the implementation of the new regional network.

Mr. Zach Trogdon replied that even though Williamsburg Area Transit Authority and Suffolk Transit are not part of the new regional revenue raising program for transit, both systems are working to link and connect to the new backbone routes as much as feasible.

Ms. Noelle Pinkard indicated that Hampton Roads Transit (HRT) would be happy to make a presentation on the 13 regional backbone route systems that will be implemented over the next few years at a future RTAP meeting.

Ms. Kristen Hatchet advised that selection of comparable markets to help identify best practices in Transit Oriented Development will have to be done carefully to ensure that the areas match well to Hampton Roads.

Mr. Crum stated that buses will be able to use the new Hampton Roads Express Lane Network when complete for free which will greatly improve both transit competitiveness and on-time performance for cross harbor trips.

Ms. Michele Walker stated that surveys at Newport News Shipbuilding have detailed that the issues of areas served and time availability are the greatest hindrances to increased transit use by employees.

Mr. Kurt Hofelich stated that the recommendations for the Medical Center area need to properly name all the entities in the complex. Also, Mr. Hofelich indicated that while development of a new transfer location within the Center is supported, a specific location for the facility should not be identified until there has been full coordination among all parties.

Mr. Crow asked if the Advocacy and Ambassadors recommendation also includes education and outreach efforts. Mr. Crum responded that creating a consistent presence at the grassroots level is clearly supported going forward.

Mr. Crum stated that the broad contact lists maintained by the organizations on the RTAP could help ensure wide distribution of the report, which would serve to advance and enhance collaboration around these issues.

General Assembly Session and Transit Advocacy

Mr. Crum highlighted the important role RTAP has in enhancing regional competitiveness through supporting and advancing the development of a fully interconnected, regional transportation 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 there are many changes underway at the State level as a result of the election. There are a lot of unknowns at present especially with most Cabinet slots yet to be filled. As a plus, all the new statewide officials have ties to the Hampton Roads region. Also, with the recent approval of the new federal transportation infrastructure bill, additional revenues will be coming to the Commonwealth that may offer a chance to speed up some projects and initiatives.

Ms. Gaston reported that she has already met with the new leadership in the House of Delegates. Once new committee chairs are named, meeting dates and schedules for the relevant committees should become clearer.

Ms. Gaston noted that the Virginia Transit Association Day at the capital has not yet been scheduled.

Once a date for the Hampton Roads Day is finalized, Ms. Gaston indicated that about two weeks of lead time is needed to set up the logistics of a large group visit.

Mr. Bryan Stephens asked if there are restrictions on the number of visitors due to COVID. Ms. Gaston responded that the situation is dynamic and changing and therefore, RTAP members will need to be mindful of any potential restrictions and follow all protocols as they evolve.

Mr. Crum indicated that he would look to identify a meeting date for the RTAP in January to finalize planning for the event once Ms. Gaston has identified an appropriate date to travel to Richmond.

Ms. Sarah Jane Kirkland asked what kind of support will be needed once the calendar is set.

Mr. Crum responded that getting the RTAP message together is the first step followed by working to get the right people in the room together.

Mr. Crum added that Advocacy Day will only be a one day event and that ongoing communication and follow-up with legislators will also be needed.

Other Business

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

Ms. Pinkard stated that HRT would be holding a Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for the first new bus shelters being installed as part of the new regional network at Orcutt Avenue and 81st Street in Newport News on December 3, 2021.

Mr. Jason Inge stated that Senior Services has recently started new routes in the Windsor and Franklin/Smithfield areas.

Mr. Stephens noted that a recent conference trip to Denver highlighted the benefits of an efficient multimodal transit system, especially around the airport.

Mr. Michael Giardino indicated that Newport News Airport would like to do a proof of concept of the feasibility of possible connections to the new Amtrak station that is currently under construction.

Adjournment

There being no more business before the Regional Transit Advisory Panel, the meeting was adjourned at 1:28 p.m.