

**Meeting Minutes**  
**Freight Transportation Advisory Committee of the HRTPO**  
**March 25, 2015**

The Virginia Port Authority Board Room  
600 World Trade Center, Norfolk, VA 23510  
2:00 pm - 3:30 pm

**ITEM #1: CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Art Moye, FTAC co-chair, called the HRTPO Freight Transportation Advisory Committee (FTAC) March 25, 2015 meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. in the Board Room at the Virginia Port Authority, with the following in attendance:

**MEMBERS**

Art Moye (Virginia Maritime Association)  
Bobby Norris (Walmart)  
Cindi Wolfe (Newport News Shipbuilding)  
Keith Helton (Givens Transportation)  
Mike Abbott (COSCO Container Lines, Inc.)  
Rick Morris (Canon Virginia Inc.)

**STAFF**

Allison Mall (Moffatt & Nichol)  
Dale Stith (HRTPO)  
Jeff Florin (Port of Virginia)  
Karen McPherson (McPherson Consulting)  
Keith Nichols (HRTPO)  
Rob Case (HRTPO)  
Sam Belfield (HRTPO)

**PUBLIC**

Nita Mensia-Joseph (City of Portsmouth)

**ITEM #2: PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

There were no public comments. Nita Mensia-Joseph, Deputy City Manager of the City of Portsmouth, introduced herself to the group and said she is there to observe the work that the Committee's is doing.

**ITEM #3: APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING'S MINUTES**

Mr. Moye indicated that the minutes of the December 18, 2014 FTAC meeting were included in the meeting agenda packet. He asked for corrections or amendments, and hearing none, Mr. Morris moved to approve the minutes as written; seconded by Mr. Helton. The motion carried and the minutes were approved unanimously.

#### **ITEM #4: FOR YOUR INFORMATION**

Mr. Florin followed up on the December FTAC meeting's discussion of the I-44 Hampton Roads to Raleigh Connector. Long-term plans by the North Carolina Raleigh-Durham area's Regional Transportation Alliance (RTA) call for extension of the interstate east of I-95 toward Elizabeth City, then northeastward to Hampton Roads. RTA's plan envisions the entire corridor from Raleigh to Norfolk receiving a new two-digit interstate designation, connecting two of the nation's largest metropolitan areas still lacking direct interstate access between each other. Mr. David White presented an FTAC resolution supporting the project at the January HRTPO meeting.

Mr. Florin mentioned that ongoing discussion will be occurring with the Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment (OIPI), the HRTPO staff, and the City of Chesapeake regarding further study of this highway segment via the Corridor Master Planning process.

#### **ITEM #5: ANALYZING AND MITIGATING THE IMPACT OF TOLLS AT THE MIDTOWN AND DOWNTOWN TUNNELS: DRAFT FINDINGS**

On December 5, 2011, the Virginia Department of Transportation signed a comprehensive agreement with Elizabeth River Crossings for construction of an additional two-lane tube at the Midtown Tunnel, rehabilitation of the Downtown Tunnel, and extension of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Freeway to I-264. Tolling began on February 1, 2014 at \$1 during peak hours for passenger cars and \$4 for trucks with E-Z Pass.

In FY 2013, HRTPO staff began a multi-year study comparing the before and after traffic conditions to assess the impact of tolling. Goals of this study were to analyze before and after traffic and transit conditions resulting from tolling at the Midtown and Downtown Tunnels, gain insight to toll sensitivity in the region, and develop congestion mitigation strategies for impacted corridors. Mr. Keith Nichols briefed the FTAC on Part II of the study, focusing on the impact to freight movements.

Part II of the study included a before and after analysis of traffic volumes and INRIX segment travel time/speed data, as well as study recommendations. The before and after traffic volume analysis looked at weekday volumes, peak vs. off peak volumes, weekend volumes, and truck volumes, using VDOT traffic count stations at 13 different locations in the region.

The study found that since tolls were implemented, average weekday volumes decreased 20% at the Downtown Tunnel and decreased 8% at the Midtown Tunnel. Volumes were already decreasing at the Downtown Tunnel before tolls were in place, possibly due to bad weather and nightly closures. Notably, there has been a small increase in volumes as tolls have continued.

Vehicles diverting from the Downtown and Midtown Tunnels have been using the Jordan, Gilmerton, and High Rise Bridges. 10,000 vehicles per day have been using the Gilmerton, and the Gilmerton is being used much more than the High Rise Bridge. The significant increase in the Gilmerton may be attributed to the available capacity along the route as

opposed to the High Rise Bridge, which operates near capacity during peak community hours. Interestingly, the total volume of traffic crossing the river has increased since tolls have been implemented.

When comparing weekday peak and off peak hours, the study found that, as expected, there was a decrease in volumes at both tunnels during peak hours, between 7 and 12 percent. During mid-day, off peak hours, there was a very large decrease in volume (22% Downtown, 15% Midtown). Most route choices during mid-day hours are discretionary and people are more likely to divert to a non-tolled bridge at those times.

For weekend volumes, the dates that the Downtown Tunnel was closed were not included in the study data. The study found that volumes in both tunnels decreased after tolls were implemented, and increased 100% on the Jordan Bridge.

Obtaining truck data (by definition a FedEx-sized truck and larger) is difficult since not all of the VDOT count station have sensors with vehicle classification capabilities. The Downtown Tunnel and High Rise Bridge do not have the ability to count trucks, and there is not enough funding to install and maintain new truck sensors. However, from the data that can be gathered, it was found that there very little impacts on trucks volumes between before and after tolling – only 52 trucks less. Mr. Helton said that is most likely due to truckers being reimbursed for their tolls.

In summary, the study concluded that there is a decrease in volumes at both the Midtown and Downtown Tunnels regardless of the time of day. The decrease is much larger at the Downtown Tunnel than the Midtown Tunnel. It is also notable that the Gilmerton Bridge has seen the highest increase in volume since tolls have been in place.

Mr. Abbott noted that it is interesting that traffic has increased so much on the Jordan Bridge even though it has a higher toll than other crossings.

#### **ITEM #6: TRUCK DELAY IMPACTS OF KEY PLANNED HIGHWAY PROJECTS: DRAFT FINDINGS**

Mr. Sam Belfield presented the preliminary findings of this study, which is being completed by the HRTPO to forecast future truck delay for the next 20 years for planned highway projects, as identified in *Existing and Future Truck Delay in Hampton Roads* [HRTPO, 2013], or that have been identified by the FTAC as strategic freight routes.

Data was gathered using the new truck component and time-of-day capability of the regional travel demand model on 22 high-traffic corridors. Seven 20-year forecast scenarios were tested to determine future truck delay impacts:

1. Base Scenario – current roadways & fully funded 2040 LRTP projects
  - 11,538 hours
2. Base Scenario & Third Crossing

- 10,213 (11.5% reduction vs. base scenario)
- 3. Base Scenario & I-64 Peninsula Widening
  - 10,396 (9.9% reduction vs. base scenario)
- 4. Base Scenario & US 13/58/460 Connector
  - 10,910 (5.4% reduction vs. base scenario)
- 5. Base Scenario & I-64 Southside Widening
  - 10,944 (5.1% reduction vs. base scenario)
- 6. Base Scenario & Route 58 (Holland Rd)
  - 11,455 (0.7% reduction vs. base scenario)
- 7. Base Scenario & I-64/I-264 Interchange
  - 11,515 (0.2% reduction vs. base scenario)

Mr. Belfield presented maps of the region for each scenario which showed the truck counts on all 22 corridors – the red numbers showed increased truck delay and green showed decreased delay. Overall, the data showed that the Third Crossing would result in the most significant decrease in truck delay. From a regional perspective, the Route 58 Widening, the US 13/58/460 Connector, or the I-64/I-264 Interchange projects had minimal benefits but resulted in local decreases in truck delay.

Mr. Moye asked if it would be possible to analyze the data with projects being done chronologically, so that after each project has been done that project is included in the base case scenario. Mr. Case said doing that would be difficult because deciding on the order would get ahead of HRTAC's decision-making process. However, Mr. Belfield said that the study, which is unlike any that have been done before, has the possibility of showing system-wide improvements, where completing one project will have an effect on the rest of the system.

Mr. Morris commented that it would be interesting to see the average delay per truck in addition to total hours of delay, in order to illustrate the change in patterns. Mr. Belfield agreed and said he would add that to the study.

#### **ITEM #7: 2040 LRTP: UPDATE OF KEY FTAC PROJECTS**

The HRTPO staff has evaluated the 2040 Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) Candidate Projects via the Project Prioritization Tool, which examines transportation projects based on three components: Project Utility (project effectiveness), Economic Vitality (potential for economic gain), and Project Viability (project readiness).

The 2040 LRTP covers a 20 year horizon period and is updated every four years to reflect changing conditions such as population and regional priorities. The Prioritization Tool has evaluated 190 projects (not including HRTAC projects and those with committed funding).

Draft Prioritization Scores have been presented to the HRTPO Advisory Committees (TTAC, FTAC, and CTAC), the LRTP Subcommittee, and the regional Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Committee (PABAC). Feedback received has been addressed and/or incorporated into the

Project Prioritization Tool. HRTPO staff has also developed a public outreach campaign to provide interested citizens an opportunity to review draft scores.

Ms. Dale Stith provided the FTAC with an update on the draft project prioritization scores and a preliminary summary of the status of the six candidate projects highlighted by FTAC. The projects identified by the FTAC for inclusion in the 2040 LRTP to support the freight needs throughout Hampton Roads are:

- Dominion Boulevard (2040-23/Highway)
- J Clyde Morris Boulevard/GW Highway (US17) (2040-98/Highway)
- GW Memorial Highway (US 17) (2040-199/Highway)
- Triple Decker Bridge (2040-38/Bridge)
- Hampton Boulevard at Terminal Boulevard (2040-114/Intermodal)
- I-64 at Northampton Boulevard Interchange Improvement (2040-116/Interchange)

Based on the prioritization scores, these projects are very likely to be included in the draft 2040 LRTP. The FTAC's participation in the process provided additional data to the HRTPO staff that allowed the Hampton/Terminal Blvd. project to rise from #3 to #1.

With \$4.4 billion available for construction over the next 20 years, HRTPO staff is in the early working stages of developing the fiscally-constrained plan, and hopes to have a draft list complete in May. It is very likely that the six FTAC projects will make it into fiscally-constrained LRTP, but the HRTPO Board will make the final decision. HRTPO staff is on track to have a Board-approved plan by this summer.

#### **ITEM #8: HRTAC PROJECTS AND FREIGHT IMPACTS**

Ms. McPherson asked for the Committee's input on a graphic entitled "HRTF Projects and Regional Freight Data" that is being developed by FTAC staff to show where freight is moving in the region based on HRTPO study data. Ms. McPherson inquired whether the industry would be responsive if sent a survey to requesting data on freight metrics, to show how freight movement affects the regional economy. Mr. Morris responded that he thinks companies would be willing to provide data as long as it is not directly related to revenue. FTAC will continue to coordinate with the HRTPO on how best to share freight data on regional projects.

#### **ITEM #9: Talking Freight Webinar**

Before the meeting was adjourned, Mr. Florin informed the Committee of two more presentations in their information packets. He and Mr. Case each presented at a March 18<sup>th</sup> Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) *Talking Freight* webinar about MARAD's Strong Ports Program. Their presentations focused on how the HRTPO and the Port of Virginia have been able to work together to enhance the region's transportation planning efforts and implement the initiatives of the StrongPorts Program.

## **ITEM #10: ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 3:30 p.m. The next meeting was tentatively set for June 2<sup>nd</sup> or June 4<sup>th</sup>. FTAC staff will circulate a Doodle poll to confirm the date and time.

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