

House Appropriations and Senate Budget Committees

Regional Budget Hearings

George Mason University – Arlington Campus

Testimony of : David F. Snyder
Chairman
Northern Virginia Transportation
Commission

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CHAIRMEN AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEES:

GOOD AFTERNOON. I AM DAVID F. SNYDER, CHAIRMAN OF THE
NORTHERN VIRGINIA TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION (NVTC). THE
COMMISSION CONSISTS OF THREE NORTHERN VIRGINIA COUNTIES
(ARLINGTON, FAIRFAX AND LOUDOUN) AND THREE CITIES (ALEXANDRIA,
FAIRFAX AND FALLS CHURCH) WITH COMBINED POPULATIONS OVER 1.3
MILLION COVERING OVER A THOUSAND SQUARE MILES. WE ARE
GOVERNED BY A 19-MEMBER BOARD OF ELECTED OFFICIALS,
INCLUDING FIVE MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

AMONG NVTC'S RESPONSIBILITIES IS PROMOTION OF EFFECTIVE
PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION. WE HAVE AN EXCELLENT PUBLIC TRANSIT
SYSTEM IN OUR REGION THAT IS PERFORMING EXCEPTIONALLY WELL.

FOR EXAMPLE, IN THE MOST RECENT TRAFFIC COUNT, TRANSIT CARRIED OVER A THIRD OF PERSONS CROSSING INBOUND AN IMAGINARY LINE EACH WEEKDAY MORNING NEAR THE PENTAGON AND CRYSTAL CITY ON I-395 AND ROUTE 1. ON INBOUND I-66, THE TRANSIT SHARE WAS ALMOST TWO-THIRDS. I AM ATTACHING A SHORT DESCRIPTION OF NVTC'S COMPLETE FINDINGS ON TRANSIT AND RIDESHARING USE. THE SUMMARY SHOWS TRANSIT AND RIDESHARING CARRYING WELL OVER HALF OF ALL PERSONS TRAVELING IN PEAK PERIODS IN ALL OF THE MAJOR COMMUTING CORRIDORS IN NORTHERN VIRGINIA AS FAR OUT AS THE BELTWAY.

ANOTHER STRONG INDICATION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE COMMONWEALTH'S INVESTMENTS IN PUBLIC TRANSIT IN NORTHERN VIRGINIA IS THE STUNNING ECONOMIC SUCCESS OF METRORAIL. A STUDY PERFORMED FOR NVTC BY KPMG PEAT MARWICK SHOWED CONCLUSIVELY THAT METRORAIL HAS PRODUCED AN ANNUAL RATE OF

RETURN FOR VIRGINIA OF 12.4 PERCENT FROM 1977 THROUGH 1994,
WITH CONSERVATIVE PROJECTIONS OF 19.2 PERCENT ANNUALLY
THROUGH 2010. THE COMMONWEALTH GAINS FROM TAXES COLLECTED
ON THE INDUCED ECONOMIC ACTIVITY AMOUNTING TO THREE TIMES
THE COMMONWEALTH'S ANNUAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO METRORAIL.

FOR THE UPCOMING SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, NVTC
HAS ADOPTED A DETAILED LEGISLATIVE AGENDA, WHICH I HAVE
ATTACHED TO MY WRITTEN REMARKS THAT I AM SUBMITTING FOR THE
RECORD. THE NVTC AGENDA CONTAINS A NUMBER OF RECOMMENDED
BUDGET AMENDMENTS TO HELP CORRECT SOME TECHNICAL
PROBLEMS WITH THE EXCELLENT WORK YOU DID LAST YEAR. IN THE
COURSE OF IDENTIFYING AS MUCH NEW FUNDING FOR PUBLIC TRANSIT
AS YOU COULD, WE BELIEVE THAT A FEW INEQUITIES WERE INCLUDED
INADVERTENTLY. IN OUR LEGISLATIVE AGENDA, WE HAVE SUGGESTED
SOME WAYS TO IMPROVE THOSE PROGRAMS THROUGH AMENDMENTS

THAT WILL CAREFULLY DEFINE YOUR INTENT. THIS WILL ENCOURAGE THE COMMONWEALTH TRANSPORTATION BOARD AND VDOT TO PROPERLY BALANCE HIGHWAY AND TRANSIT FUNDING AS THEY MAKE ALLOCATIONS FOR THEIR SIX-YEAR VIRGINIA TRANSPORTATION DEVELOPMENT PLAN.

IN THE LIMITED TIME AVAILABLE TO ME TODAY, I WISH TO EMPHASIZE TWO KEY POINTS.

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY SHOULD:

- 1.) ENCOURAGE VDOT TO SELL TRANSIT BONDS NOW THAT WERE AUTHORIZED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN 1999.
- 2.) FULLY FUND EXISTING STATE TRANSIT PROGRAMS.

WITH RESPECT TO THE FIRST POINT, THE 1999 GENERAL ASSEMBLY AUTHORIZED ADDITIONAL NORTHERN VIRGINIA TRANSPORTATION DISTRICT BONDS FOR SEVERAL VITAL TRANSIT

PROJECTS, INCLUDING \$16 MILLION FOR METRO RAILCARS, \$4.2 MILLION FOR KING STREET METRORAIL STATION IMPROVEMENTS AND \$6.2 MILLION FOR ARLINGTON BALLSTON METRORAIL STATION IMPROVEMENTS. THE 2000 GENERAL ASSEMBLY APPROPRIATED SUFFICIENT FUNDS FOR THE COMMONWEALTH'S SHARE OF DEBT SERVICE ON THESE BONDS. EACH OF THESE TRANSIT PROJECTS IS VITAL TO THE SUCCESS OF OUR REGIONAL TRANSIT SYSTEM AND OUR CITIZENS ARE COUNTING ON TIMELY COMPLETION TO HELP RELIEVE THEIR COMMUTING STRESS. YET, VDOT HAS NOT ISSUED THE BONDS AND IT SHOULD BE TOLD TO DO SO IMMEDIATELY.

SHIFTING TO MY SECOND POINT, NVTC'S TOP LEGISLATIVE PRIORITY IS TO SECURE ADEQUATE FUNDING (THE FUNDING THAT WAS INTENDED) FOR EXISTING STATE TRANSIT PROGRAMS. AS OF FY 2001, \$35 MILLION MORE IS NEEDED TO MEET THE STATUTORY MATCHING RATIOS ESTABLISHED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY FOR THE STATE'S

TRANSIT FORMULA AND CAPITAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS. OF THIS SHORTFALL, \$26 MILLION WOULD GO TO NORTHERN VIRGINIA. THIS \$26 MILLION, IF IT WERE AVAILABLE, WOULD SUPPORT 264,000 DAILY RIDERS OF PUBLIC TRANSIT IN NVTC'S DISTRICT.

WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET AMENDMENTS CONTAIN A REVISION TO THE MATCHING RATIOS OF THE STATE TRANSIT FORMULA PROGRAM. WHILE NVTC HAS NOT YET TAKEN A POSITION ON THIS PARTICULAR CHANGE, WE DO NOTE THAT IT WOULD NOT REDUCE NVTC'S ABSOLUTE AMOUNT OF AID BUT WOULD INCREASE OUR SHORTFALL BY ABOUT 50 PERCENT BY BOOSTING OUR ELIGIBLE EXPENSES. THIS ILLUSTRATES THAT MORE MONEY IS NEEDED NOW TO ADDRESS THE SHORTAGES IN PREVIOUSLY ESTABLISHED TRANSIT ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS, RATHER THAN COSMETIC CHANGES.

WE RECOGNIZE THE VERY REAL FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS UNDER WHICH YOU MUST APPROACH YOUR BUDGET WORK IN THIS SESSION.

WE ARE ALSO APPRECIATIVE OF YOUR EFFECTIVE EFFORTS IN PREVIOUS SESSIONS TO BOOST TRANSIT FUNDING AND HELP ESTABLISH A BALANCED APPROACH TO STATE HIGHWAY AND TRANSIT PROGRAMS. BUT WE HOPE YOU WILL AGREE THAT SERVICE TO THE PUBLIC, JOB CREATION AND BUSINESS SUPPORT ARE THE UNDERLYING OBJECTIVES OF NVTC'S LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM AND THAT YOU WILL DO EVERYTHING IN YOUR POWER TO HELP US ACHIEVE THESE OBJECTIVES.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION. I WILL BE PLEASED TO RESPOND TO ANY QUESTIONS.