

MINUTES
NVTC COMMISSION MEETING – FEBRUARY 3, 2000
NVTC CONFERENCE ROOM - ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA

The monthly meeting of the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission was called to order by Chairman Snyder at 8:11 P.M.

Members Present

Leo J. Bevon
William Bogard
Sharon Bulova
Gerald Connolly
Paul Ferguson
Jay Fiset
Katherine K. Hanley
Elaine McConnell
Scott Silverthorne
David F. Snyder
Christopher Zimmerman

Members Absent

L. Karen Darner
Kerry J. Donley
Dana Kauffman
Marian Van Landingham
Lois L. Walker
Mary Margaret Whipple

Staff Present

Rhonda W. Gilcrest
DeLania Hardy
Gyles Norwood
Stephen T. Roberts (VRE)
Sharmila Samarasinghe
Jennifer Straub
Richard K. Taube

Minutes of the February 3, 2000 NVTC Meeting

Mr. Silverthorne moved, with a second by Mr. Connolly, to approve the minutes. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Bevon, Bulova, Connolly, Ferguson, Fisette, Hanley, McConnell, Silverthorne, Snyder, and Zimmerman.

New NVTC Commissioner

Chairman Snyder introduced William Bogard from Loudoun County. He replaces Mr. McWatters. Chairman Snyder then administered the oath of office to Mr. Bogard. The commission congratulated Mr. Bogard on joining NVTC.

NVTC Administrative Budget For FY 2001

Mr. Taube stated that each year the commission is asked in September to forward a preliminary NVTC administrative budget to local jurisdictions for use in their final budget planning. The following January, the commission discusses its draft final budget and acts in February to approve the budget for the upcoming fiscal year. With the exception of corrected typographical errors, the budget is identical to the one sent to the local governments in September. Local staffs were also asked to offer comments during the past month. There were no questions from commissioners.

Mr. Zimmerman moved, with a second by Mrs. Bulova, to approve the budget. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Bevon, Bogard, Bulova, Connolly, Ferguson, Fisette, Hanley, McConnell, Silverthorne, Snyder, and Zimmerman.

Contact Extension for Bus Data Collection

Mr. Taube explained that in June, 1998, the commission authorized a grant-funded contract with George Hoyt & Associates, Inc., to design a sampling plan for the Fairfax Connector to collect data for the National Transit Database (NTD). This work was completed, but since the Connector has added extensive service in the Dulles Corridor, the sampling plan needs to be updated. Staff proposes that the contract with George Hoyt & Associates be extended to accomplish this work. The commission is asked to authorize an additional \$10,000 of grant funds to be used together with the remaining contract balance of \$10,000 to cover the \$20,000 cost of the new work. Fairfax County staff supports this action and sufficient grant funds are available to complete this project.

Mr. Connolly moved, with a second by Mrs. Bulova, to authorize NVTC's executive director to extend the contract with George Hoyt & Associates to complete a revision of the NTD sampling plan for the Fairfax Connector, using existing grant funds.

The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Bevon, Bogard, Bulova, Connolly, Ferguson, Fiset, Hanley, McConnell, Silverthorne, Snyder, and Zimmerman.

FY 2001 State Grant Applications

Mr. Taube reported that the deadline for FY 2001 grant applications is March 1, 2000. Each year NVTC compiles budgeted transit expenses from its member jurisdictions, WMATA and VRE and submits the applications. Staff determined that the process for compiling local and regional data and completing the application forms could not be ready for commission approval at the February 3rd meeting. Accordingly, the commission is asked to authorize NVTC's executive director to submit the completed applications before the March 1st deadline, after review by local staff. At its March 2nd meeting, the commission would be asked to adopt a resolution confirming the applications. VDR&PT staff has agreed to accept the application and resolution on that basis.

Mr. Zimmerman moved, with a second by Mrs. Bulova, to authorize the executive director to submit the proposed state grant applications to VDR&PT before the March 1, 2000 deadline, after final review by local staffs, pending formal approval by NVTC at its March 2nd meeting. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Bevon, Bogard, Bulova, Connolly, Ferguson, Fiset, Hanley, McConnell, Silverthorne, Snyder, and Zimmerman.

Legislative Items

Mr. Taube reported that General Assembly legislation (HB 35), which would have exempted VRE from payment of fees assessed for replacing underground fuel storage tanks, has been removed from the docket. Without the knowledge of VRE staff, Delegate Parrish introduced this bill. It would have saved VRE only about \$1,800 to \$5,400 annually.

Mr. Taube reported that during the 1999 General Assembly session HJR 720 was passed that requested VDR&PT to conduct a study of the distribution of state and federal aid to mass transit programs and to recommend legislative and other changes. VDR&PT has prepared a report containing its findings and recommendations. The report recommends that the public transit formula assistance program be changed to apply fiscal stress index factors to the distribution formula. The changes would require legislative action and would take effect in FY 2001. The new method would help the rest of the jurisdictions throughout the Commonwealth, but would adversely affect Northern Virginia. Comments are being sought by VDR&PT from the transit community. Commissioners were provided with copies of this study.

Mrs. Hanley expressed her surprise with the study and stated that this is not good news for Northern Virginia. Mr. Connolly and several other commissioners also

expressed their concerns. Mr. Bevon stated that the results and recommendations of the study will not be acted on by the General Assembly during this year's session. Mrs. Hanley questioned the use of the fiscal stress index proposed by VDR&PT. Mr. Bevon offered to give a presentation on the study to the commission and commissioners agreed that this would be helpful. Mrs. Hanley suggested that the presentation be given at the April NVTC meeting so that NVTC's General Assembly members could be present.

Mr. Taube also reported that U.S. Representatives Davis and Morella sent a letter to Mr. Jacob Lew, Director of the Office of Management and Budget, encouraging federal agencies to offer Metrochek to federal employees.

Mr. Ferguson moved, with a second by Mr. Zimmerman, to send a letter of appreciation to Representatives Davis and Morella for their efforts in promoting Metrochek. Mr. Connolly suggested that NVTC instead send the letter to Mr. Lew expressing the commission's support of Metrochek, with copies sent to the representatives. Mr. Ferguson and Mr. Zimmerman accepted this as a friendly amendment to their motion. The commission then voted on the motion and it passed. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Bevon, Bogard, Bulova, Connolly, Ferguson, Fisette, Hanley, McConnell, Silverthorne, Snyder, and Zimmerman.

WMATA Items

WMATA Extended Hours Promotional Plan. The WMATA Board has approved \$148,000 of additional funding to promote the extended hours demonstration that began in November, 1999.

Greyhound Bus Facility Opens at the Franconia/Springfield Metrorail Station. On January 12, 2000, the WMATA Board inaugurated the new Greyhound facility, which includes a ticket counter, luggage tagging area, sheltered seating and restrooms. The facility will serve 14 buses daily. The WMATA Board will be asked to amend the lease agreement to permit the sale by Greyhound of VRE fare media.

WMATA's 2000-2025 Constrained Long Range Plan Submission. Mr. Rod Burfield, of WMATA staff, explained that the Transportation Planning Board is updating its Constrained Long Range Plan (CLRP) and WMATA is trying to finalize its submission before the March 3, 2000 deadline. Mr. Burfield gave a presentation on WMATA's CLRP submission, which will include Metro's entire service expansion plan. He stated that not all the projects can be funded at once, especially during the early years of the CLRP, so it is important for the region to prioritize projects. Mrs. Hanley suggested that the status chart for the transit service expansion plan provides information, including project milestones, that could be helpful to prioritize the projects.

Mrs. Hanley stated that it was her understanding that VDOT asked for a delay in the deadline until after the General Assembly session. Mr. Fisette asked if NVTC could

try to get the deadline changed. After some discussion, Mrs. Hanley moved, with a second by Mr. Zimmerman, to authorize NVTC's executive director to telephone TPB staff and express NVTC's concerns that the March 3rd deadline is too soon for Virginia to meet its requirement and request that the deadline be moved until after the General Assembly session is over. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Bevon, Bogard, Bulova, Connolly, Ferguson, Fisette, Hanley, McConnell, Silverthorne, Snyder, and Zimmerman.

Regional Transportation Items

Transportation Studies. Mr. Taube reported that two studies presented at the Transportation Research Board in January, 2000 identified automobile use induced by new roads. One study examined every county road in Maryland, Virginia and North Carolina over 26 years. In Virginia, a 10 percent expansion of road capacity resulted in a 5.1 percent increase in induced traffic. The second study, using 15 years of data from major U.S. metropolitan areas, found a 10 percent expansion of roads produced a 2.8 percent increase in traffic. Mr. Connolly asked for confirmation that not all of the new capacity was consumed by induced traffic and requested copies of these studies.

Highway Camera Website. VDOT and EyeCast.com will offer free Internet access to 25 cameras on I-66, 95, 395 and 495 at www.HighwayNet.com. By summer, all 110 VDOT cameras across the Commonwealth will be accessible there and pictures will be updated every 60 seconds.

Passenger Ferry Boat Feasibility Study. VDOT and its consultants are currently conducting a study of passenger ferry alternatives. The study is due for completion in Spring, 2000. In response to a question from Mr. Fisette, Mr. Zimmerman explained that TPB authorized funds for this study last year.

Mr. Taube stated that there is also a private ferry company, Potomac River Jet, which intends to start a commuter ferry service by Labor Day, 2000. The service would run from Woodbridge to Georgetown.

NVTC's 2000 Workprogram

Mr. Taube stated that the workprogram has been modified to include comments received from commissioners, staff and citizens. It was suggested at the January meeting that NVTC develop a strategy to promote transit options using the media. Staff has prepared a grant application for FY 2001 (to continue in FY 2002 and FY 2003) for technical and financial assistance from VDR&PT for a three-year, coordinated promotional program.

Mr. Zimmerman expressed his skepticism as to what kind of useful product could result from such an initiative. He stated that marketing is good, but there needs to be a

product to market. Therefore, before this initiative proceeds too far, he would like to see more specifics about the proposal. Mrs. Hanley agreed. Mr. Connolly stated that the themes listed in the proposal seem to be more attitudinal rather than specific products. Chairman Snyder stated that an objective should be to make sure that all the available transit options are well known by the public and that transit is represented in other public debates. He sees NVTC's role as an educational and coordinating function rather than promotion. He asked commissioners to get their comments to staff as soon as possible. Mr. Taube stated that without commission objection, after review by local staffs, the proposal would be submitted with the grant applications. At the March 2nd meeting, commissioners would have a chance for final approval.

Mr. Fisette observed that valuable and interesting data can be gleaned from the commissioners' meeting materials and he suggested that NVTC could work to publicize this data in a more effective way.

In reviewing NVTC staff's response to comments received at the commission's January, 2000 public hearing, Mr. Fisette asked if there have been discussions at WMATA on expanding bike-on-rail and if the new railcars will better accommodate bicycles. Mr. Zimmerman responded that Metrorail was made more accessible last year by making the bike-on-rail program permanent. The new railcars have already been ordered and are identical to WMATA's current railcars. Mr. Burfield explained that bicycle access is constrained because there is already overcrowding on the trains, as well as a shortage of railcars. There has been an effort to improve bike parking at the stations.

NVTC Staff Highlights

Mr. Taube gave a status report on the Falls Church Hybrid Electric Bus project. Shipping of the pilot bus has been delayed because of problems of excess smoke when starting the turbine engine.

NVTC Financial Report for December, 1999

The financial reports were provided to commissioners. In response to a question from Mr. Connolly, Mr. Norwood explained that the budget line item for contract services is at 59 percent but will be reimbursed from grant funds.

Commuter Rail Items

Report from the VRE Operations Board. Mrs. Bulova commended the minutes of the January 21, 2000 Operations Board meeting to the commission.

Defibrillators on VRE Trains. Mrs. Bulova reported that the VRE Operations Board recommends approval of Resolution #826, which would authorize the VRE Director of Operations to modify the Amtrak Operating Agreement to provide comprehensive safety training on the use of Automatic External Defibrillators (AEDs) to VRE train and engine crew members. VRE has requested that the Division of Risk Management make funds available to completely support this three-year effort at a total cost of \$150,000. The project is contingent upon the DRM providing this funding.

Mrs. Bulova moved, with a second by Mr. Connolly, to approve Resolution #826 (copy attached). The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Bevon, Bogard, Bulova, Connolly, Ferguson, Fiset, Hanley, McConnell, Silverthorne, Snyder, and Zimmerman.

Closed Session on Legal Matters Mrs. Bulova moved, with a second by Mr. Connolly, approval of the following:

Pursuant to the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (Section 2.1-344A.7 of the Code of Virginia), the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission authorizes discussion in closed session on legal matters pertaining to the VRE budget.

The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Bevon, Bogard, Bulova, Connolly, Ferguson, Fiset, Hanley, McConnell, Silverthorne, Snyder, and Zimmerman.

The commission entered into closed session at 9:22 P.M. and returned to open session at 9:45 P.M.

Mr. Zimmerman moved, with a second by Mr. Connolly, the following certification:

The Northern Virginia Transportation Commission certifies that, to the best of each member's knowledge and with no individual member dissenting, at the just concluded closed session:

1. Only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements under the Freedom of Information Act were discussed; and
2. Only such public business matters as were identified in the motion by which the closed session was convened were heard, discussed or considered.

The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Bevon, Bogard, Bulova, Connolly, Ferguson, Fiset, Hanley, McConnell, Silverthorne, Snyder, and Zimmerman.

Mr. Connolly moved, with a second by Mrs. Hanley, to authorize the executive director to sign the February 3, 2000 WMATA letter. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Bevon, Bogard, Bulova, Connolly, Ferguson, Fisette, Hanley, McConnell, Silverthorne, Snyder, and Zimmerman.

VRE's FY 2000 Reforecast and 2001 Operating and Capital Budget. Mrs. Bulova moved, with a second by Mrs. McConnell, to approve Resolution #827, which would approve the FY 2000 Reforecast and 2001 Operating and Capital Budget. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Bevon, Bogard, Bulova, Connolly, Ferguson, Fisette, McConnell, Silverthorne and Snyder. Commissioners Hanley and Zimmerman abstained.

Adjournment

Mrs. Hanley moved to adjourn. Mrs. Bulova seconded. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Bevon, Bogard, Bulova, Connolly, Ferguson, Fisette, Hanley, McConnell, Silverthorne, Snyder, and Zimmerman. Chairman Snyder adjourned the meeting at 9:46 P.M.

Approved this 2nd day of March, 2000.

David F. Snyder
Chairman

Christopher Zimmerman
Secretary-Treasurer