

MINUTES
NVTC COMMISSION MEETING – NOVEMBER 2, 2000
SPRINGFIELD HILTON - SPRINGFIELD, VIRGINIA

The meeting of the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission was called to order by Chairman Snyder at 8:55 P.M.

Members Present

James F. Almand
Leo J. Bevon
William Bogard
Richard H. Black
Sharon Bulova
Gerald Connolly
Kerry J. Donley
William D. Euille
Katherine Hanley
Dana Kauffman
Roger L. McClure
Elaine McConnell
William C. Mims
Scott Silverthorne
David F. Snyder

Members Absent

Paul Ferguson
Jay Fiset
Mary Margaret Whipple
Christopher Zimmerman

Staff Present

Tamara Ashby
Rhonda W. Gilcrest
Sharmila Samarasighe
Jennifer Straub
Richard K. Taube

Minutes of NVTC's Meeting of October 5, 2000

On a motion by Mr. Connolly and a second by Mr. Almand, the commission unanimously approved the minutes. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Almand, Bevon, Bogard, Black, Bulova, Connolly, Donley, Euille, Hanley, Kauffman, McClure, McConnell, Mims, Silverthorne, and Snyder.

NVTC's Updated Transit Mode Share Report

A presentation on the final draft report was given at the joint meeting. Mrs. Bulova expressed her opinion that the report can be very useful to show that if mass transit is available, people will use it. Mr. Euille stated that it is important to emphasize that investments in transit pay off. Mrs. Hanley stated that the report is excellent. She asked that the Dulles Corridor numbers be updated as soon as the information is available.

Mrs. Bulova moved, with a second by Mr. Donley, to authorize publication of the report, together with a media release based on the short summary. Mr. Donley stated that the summary should emphasize the benefits of transit. He stated that he was pleasantly surprised to read that 60 percent of people crossing the core cordon are using transit or ridesharing. Mr. Black expressed his opinion that the percentage may not accurately reflect ridesharing, since some of the high occupancy vehicles have a husband, wife or children in the vehicle. Mr. Donley stated that it may not be technically ridesharing, but its getting more than one person in the vehicle. He also suggested that the media release not use transit jargon, such as "cordon."

Mr. Connolly stated that the report demonstrates that "if you build it, they will use it." Mr. McClure suggested that a one-page press release should be included with several hard-hitting facts for the press.

Mr. Black observed that he has read that the region is spending 50 percent of its money on transit for five percent of its population. He stated that there must be more to the story. Chairman Snyder stated that where transit is available, people use it. Mrs. Hanley stated that inside the Beltway road systems are built-out and new roads are difficult to build, so increasing the capacity of roads to carry more people is important, and transit and ridesharing can help to accomplish this.

Mrs. Hanley stated that in the future counts also need to be done for reverse commuting.

The commission then voted on the motion and it passed unanimously. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Almand, Bevon, Bogard, Black, Bulova, Connolly, Donley, Euille, Hanley, Kauffman, McClure, McConnell, Mims, Silverthorne, and Snyder.

Woodrow Wilson Bridge Congestion Mitigation Plan

Mr. Taube stated that at the October 17th NVTC Management Advisory Committee (MAC) meeting, Jeff Arch of PB Paradyne/Potomac Crossing Consultants was present to discuss the issues raised in recent correspondence. Based on that discussion, MAC recommended that NVTC authorize a letter to Secretary Ybarra asking for help in improving this CMP process. The letter would express NVTC's concerns, emphasizing that the local governments have no role in the decision-making process.

Mrs. McConnell stated that the consultant should have a copy of the Springfield Interchange CMP. Mr. Donley stated that when NVTC adopted its Congestion Mitigation Policy, it used the Springfield Interchange CMP as a guideline. The major problem is that VDOT, MDOT and the federal government are involved. Mr. Kauffman stated that the congestion mitigation for the Springfield Interchange is working.

Mr. Donley moved, with a second by Mr. McClure, to send the letter to Secretary Ybarra. Mr. Connolly asked if assistance has been asked from Northern Virginia's congressional delegation and he suggested that NVTC send them a copy of the letter.

The commission then voted on the motion and it passed. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Almand, Bevon, Bogard, Black, Bulova, Connolly, Donley, Euille, Hanley, Kauffman, McClure, McConnell, Mims, Silverthorne, and Snyder.

Regional Transportation Items

SJR 121 Joint Subcommittee Studying the Creation of a Northern Virginia Regional Transportation Authority. The subcommittee, chaired by Senator Warren Barry, met on October 11, 2000 to consider an agenda and discussion guide. In response to a question from Mr. Connolly, Mr. Taube stated that the subcommittee agreed that the next meeting should cover the mission and look at other examples of transportation authorities across the country.

Mr. Mims stated that the chances are slim that the 2001 legislative session would move to create an authority and that it will be a multi-year process. He stated that he was surprised that the majority of the subcommittee is in favor of some kind of change as opposed to continuing the status quo.

Chairman Snyder stated that he asked NVTC staff to put together a report summarizing the role of NVTC in achieving enhanced mobility for the region's citizens. He asked that a copy be sent to subcommittee members. There were no objections.

CLRP Update. Mrs. Hanley reported that on October 18th TPB adopted the 2000 CLRP update with a vote of 14-11. A proposed amendment to the CLRP favored by Virginia's members to add TPB studies linked to the Vision Plan ultimately failed on a weighted vote. The FY 2001-2006 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) was adopted unanimously at the same meeting. She stated that at the next meeting, it is hoped that a motion to reconsider the amendments will be passed. Mr. Connolly stated that weighted voting at TPB needs to be addressed. Chairman Snyder stated that it should be clarified that Virginia was not voting at TPB to superimpose projects over and above the 2020 Plan. Mrs. Hanley stated that the region agreed to the 2020 Plan and should stick with it.

In response to a question by Mr. Black, Mrs. Hanley explained that the difference in the votes was due to opposition to another river crossing. Mr. Black stated that he is a member of a commission involving legislators from Virginia, Maryland and the District of Columbia to look at ways to get across the Potomac. He stated that he believes people in Maryland want to build a river crossing as soon as possible.

Mrs. Hanley stated that the CLRP has many shortfalls. Chairman Snyder stated that these concerns should continue to be brought before the TPB.

Northern Virginia 2020 Transportation Plan Transit Project Progress Report. Jennifer Straub of NVTC staff, stated that the progress report has been completed based on available information from the CLRP and jurisdictional staff. The chart will be updated following the release of major budget documents and specific study projects identified for funding.

Mr. McClure stated that it is his understanding that "Metrorail Centreville-Vienna" has not been identified for full funding. He expressed his concern that land for a station won't be available if the region waits too long. The NEPA studies need to be completed soon since stations can't be designated until NEPA is completed. Chairman Snyder suggested that a footnote be included in the written report to help clarify this.

Potomac Ferry Project. Funds for this project have been earmarked by Congress and the project has been included in the TIP. Mr. Kauffman noted that PRTC has requested that VDOT insure that the state's ferry financial assistance does not unintentionally burden local governments and asked that VDOT pledge to offset any revenue loss to existing transit systems. Mr. Bevon stated that VDOT's feasibility study found that commuter ferry users would be principally existing transit riders and HOV travelers rather than people now traveling in single occupant vehicles. Mrs. Hanley stated that NVTC needs to monitor this request from PRTC closely. In response to a question from Mr. Black, Mr. Bevon explained that the ferry service could not run without subsidy assistance.

Mr. Connolly suggested that the commission send a letter to VDOT. Chairman Snyder asked if there was consensus of the commission to send the letter. Mr. Mims

stated that he disagrees with sending a letter at this time because it seems premature without having more facts. He stated that it is his understanding that a boat is already being built. Mr. Connolly expressed his concern that the state would subsidize each ferry passenger (\$19) three times the subsidy for VRE subsidy (\$6) and the ferry service would primarily take ridership away from existing transit.

Mr. Bevon suggested that NVTC request that VDOT make a presentation at NVTC's next meeting. Mr. Connolly requested that commissioners be provided with a copy of the VDOT study and other information prior to that meeting.

WMATA Items

Mrs. Hanley observed that WMATA's fare technology program has been very successful, with 110,000 SmarTrip cards issued, 700 First Union shared cards in circulation as a demonstration, and SmarBenefits offering a test of electronic collection and distribution of Metrochek benefits.

Mr. Taube reported that a recent Washington Post story revealed that Metrorail riders are accessing the system earlier each morning in an effort to avoid peak hour crowds (and to a lesser extent just after the peak each morning), thereby expanding the "shoulders of the peak." Metrorail ridership grew by 22 percent between June, 1999 and June, 2000 in its earliest time period. VRE's ridership is also experiencing the greatest growth in ridership in earliest trains. Mr. Taube distributed graphs showing these effects for both VRE and WMATA.

Financial Items

In response to a question from Mr. Black, Mr. Taube explained that the rising local gas tax revenues are a result of increased gas prices at the pump.

Adjournment

On a motion by Mr. Donley and a second by Mrs. McConnell, the commission unanimously agreed to adjourn. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Almand, Bevon, Bogard, Black, Bulova, Connolly, Donley, Euille, Hanley, Kauffman, McClure, McConnell, Mims, Silverthorne, and Snyder. Chairman Snyder adjourned the meeting at 10:03 P.M.

Approved this 7th day of December, 2000.

David F. Snyder
Chairman

Christopher Zimmerman
Secretary-Treasurer