

MINUTES
NVTC COMMISSION MEETING – MAY 3, 2001
NVTC CONFERENCE ROOM - ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA

The meeting of the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission was called to order by Chairman Donley at 8:04 P.M.

Members Present

James F. Almand
Leo J. Bevon
William Bogard
Sharon Bulova
Kerry J. Donley
William D. Euille
Paul Ferguson
Jay Fiset
Katherine Hanley
Elaine McConnell
Scott Silverthorne
David F. Snyder
Christopher Zimmerman

Members Absent

Richard H. Black
Gerald Connolly
Dana Kauffman
Roger J. McClure
William C. Mims
Mary Margaret Whipple

Staff Present

Tamara Ashby
Julie Bourbon
Don Chism (VRE)
Rhonda W. Gilcrest
Scott Kalkwarf
Wendy Lemieux (VRE)
Steve MacIsaac (VRE)
Sharmila Samarasinghe
Pete Sklannik, Jr. (VRE)
Richard K. Taube
Dale Zehner (VRE)

Minutes of NVTC's Meeting of April 5, 2001

Mr. Ferguson requested that the minutes be amended to reflect the correct time he arrived at the last meeting. On a motion by Mr. Silverthorne and a second by Mr. Zimmerman, the commission unanimously approved the amended minutes. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Bevon, Bogard, Bulova, Donley, Ferguson, Fisette, McConnell, Silverthorne, Snyder, and Zimmerman.

NVTC's Route 1 Corridor Bus Study

The final report of the Route 1 Corridor Bus Study reflects extensive public hearings, staff input and commissioner comments. The recommended alternatives have been modified to reflect commissioners' concerns with trip length and possible duplicate service. The report also includes a brief summary of transit amenity performance measures in response to previous questions by the commission.

Mrs. Bulova moved, with a second by Mr. Silverthorne, to authorize the release of the final report. The motion also authorizes staff to initiate discussions with affected agencies to determine which recommendations should be implemented and by whom.

In response to a question from Chairman Donley, Tamara Ashby stated that the cost of transit improvements and pedestrian enhancements are estimated at \$7 million. NVTC staff will work with local staff to identify funding sources.

Mr. Euille joined the meeting at 8:10 P.M. Commissioners wished him a happy birthday.

The commission then voted on the motion and it passed. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Bevon, Bogard, Bulova, Donley, Euille, Ferguson, Fisette, McConnell, Silverthorne, Snyder, and Zimmerman.

VDRPT Contract for SmarTrip Compatible Fareboxes

Chairman Donley reported that NVTC is serving as the contracting agency for procuring SmarTrip compatible fareboxes for local bus systems in Northern Virginia. VDRPT has offered a standard contract to provide \$3.8 million of funding for fareboxes to be purchased for Arlington Transit, CUE, DASH, and the Fairfax Connector.

Mr. Zimmerman moved, with a second by Mrs. Bulova, to authorize NVTC's executive director to sign the contract on behalf of the commission.

Chairman Donley asked when the fareboxes would be installed and operational in the local bus systems. Mr. Taube responded that WMATA's procurement is expected

to be in service by the end of 2002 or the beginning of 2003. For local systems it would be about the same time since there would be less testing.

Commissioners Almand and Hanley arrived at 8:12 P.M. and joined the discussion.

Mr. Silverthorne stated that although the city of Fairfax approved \$100,000 in its CIP for this item, it is the only jurisdiction expected to contribute to this procurement. He asked that VDRPT consider relieving the city of this obligation. Mr. Bevon stated that it's the state's intent, to the extent permitted by available funds, not to charge any jurisdiction for the fareboxes.

Mr. Taube explained that this contract with VDRPT states that NVTC is receiving the funds that the state is providing, but doesn't obligate NVTC to spend the money. This will require a separate commission action later.

The commission then voted on the motion and it passed unanimously. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Almand, Bevon, Bogard, Bulova, Donley, Euille, Ferguson, Fisette, Hanley, McConnell, Silverthorne, Snyder, and Zimmerman.

Legislative Items

Barry Subcommittee. Chairman Donley stated that the Barry Subcommittee is scheduled to meet on May 9, 2001. He reviewed the legislation regarding a new transportation authority that passed and was signed by Governor Gilmore (HB 2606) and other legislation that failed. He recommended that a letter be sent to the Barry Subcommittee requesting that they include the provisions of the Rollison substitute (HB 1355) that was supported by the local jurisdictions and is more favorable to NVTC. The letter should also include the legal and financial implications of abolishing NVTC. Mr. Taube calculated that it would cost \$2 million to dissolve NVTC, as well as take two to three years, including revision to the WMATA Compact. Chairman Donley stated that it is important that NVTC take a position early on in the process.

Mr. Snyder moved that the commission send the letter. Mr. Fisette seconded.

Mrs. Hanley stated that it is important to remain consistent with NVTC's position stated in its March 2, 2001 letter to Governor Gilmore. She reminded commissioners that local governments, mayors and chairs, and NVTC all agreed to support the Rollison substitute legislation, which did not specifically mention NVTC. She stated that the letter could then continue why NVTC should not be included in the authority and the reasons why. Mr. Fisette stated that it is important to be as clear as possible about the reasons and the complications and costs associated with dissolving NVTC. He stated that he personally feels that there is a real threat to transit. When there is an authority that includes roads and transit, there is a risk that road interests would dominate the transit interests. Mrs. McConnell stated that Jacksonville, Florida has an authority that has roads and transit function separately and it has worked very well.

Mrs. Hanley observed that the most compelling argument for not folding NVTC into an authority is the WMATA Compact amendments. She asked that the letter stick to the facts and not make assertions. She cautioned against making the roads versus transit argument. She expressed her concern that NVTC not set up a conflict between the two, especially on the Barry Subcommittee. Mrs. Bulova observed that TCC has been able to strike a balance with roads and transit. Mr. Zimmerman observed that NVTC works; it's not broken, so don't try to fix it.

Mr. Snyder agreed to amend his motion to include these suggestions from commissioners. Mr. Fisetto concurred. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Almand, Bevon, Bogard, Bulova, Donley, Euille, Ferguson, Fisetto, Hanley, McConnell, Silverthorne, Snyder, and Zimmerman.

Other State Legislative Issues. Delegate Almand stated that the General Assembly is having a pro forma session tonight and budget proposals will be debated and voted on Friday, May 4th.

Mrs. McConnell stated that she met with Fairfax County's General Assembly delegation to discuss reintroducing the sales tax in the fall. She observed that there is a large group of supporters for this legislation. One proposal would be to ask the jurisdictions that receive that tax to dedicate a portion to the regional transportation authority so that money would be available for bonding authority to allow regional projects to be funded. Mr. Ferguson stated that residents in Arlington County fear that regional projects all would be outside Arlington. Mrs. McConnell stated that the jurisdiction would be able to use the bulk of the funds for internal projects. She asked staff to analyze this and report back to NVTC at a future meeting. Mrs. Hanley stated that funding for WMATA is a top priority for the region.

Federal Issues. The Bush administration has proposed that, beginning in FY 2004 with the successor authorization bill to TEA-21, the maximum federal matching ratio for new starts (such as the Dulles Corridor project) should be reduced to 50 percent from 80 percent. Mr. Fisetto asked if this is to discourage transit. Mr. Taube stated that it would require greater non-federal effort, but it is only a recommendation at this time and would have to be approved by Congress.

WMATA Items

Joint Development Proposal for Arlington Bus Garage. Chairman Donley reported that the WMATA Board approved the plan, which will include a 50-bus facility. Mr. Zimmerman explained that the garage will be located in the existing bus yard, but will have a reduced capacity.

Joint Development in Huntington. Mrs. Hanley reported that an important joint development proposal was approved by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, but received very little media coverage.

SmarTrip Regional Customer Service Center. Mr. Taube reported that the WMATA Board authorized staff to initiate a contract for development and deployment of the Center, which will serve as a clearinghouse for SmarTrip transactions as well as expanding the point of sale network, processing card orders and developing partnership relationships. For FY 2001/02, \$5 million was authorized, subject to approval of the FY 2002 budget.

Experimental Volume Incentive Bus Service. THE WMATA Board authorized an amendment to the WMATA tariff to permit an agreement with private building owners to purchase blocks of service on regularly scheduled Metrobus routes (in this case the N-22 serving the Navy Yard—a route used by some VRE patrons). The building owners can use the purchased Metrobus service in lieu of providing separate proffered shuttle buses. Total trips by tenants will be estimated and priced at the standard fares, and the building owners will pay the fees quarterly in advance. WMATA will provide coupons to the building owners for the use of the tenants.

Regional Items

Falls Church's Electrek Bus System. Mr. Snyder announced that all four hybrid-electric buses have arrived and driver training is underway at WMATA and a pre-acceptance testing program of no more than 45-days will occur. The buses are located at the Arlington bus garage and will be on display on May 8, 2001. Commissioners were invited to come look at the buses.

NVTC's Quarterly Transit Service Change Report. The report for February–April, 2001 was provided. It will also be posted on NVTC's website.

I-66 Inside the Beltway Study. In response to concerns about the implementation of study efforts focused on I-66 inside the Beltway, the TCC passed a resolution on March 15, 2001 outlining study expectations. The study components were included in VDOT's amendment to the TIP/CLRP and approved by TPB on April 18, 2001.

Location/Environmental Study for I-66 Outside the Beltway. This multi-modal study is the next step in developing and implementing transportation improvements in the I-66 corridor outside the Beltway. Efforts will build on the results of the Major Investment Study (MIS) that was completed in January, 1999. Improvements in the MIS included Metrorail, barrier-separate HOV, general-propose lanes and bus and VRE service improvements. A team led by Dewberry and Davis has been selected as the consultant.

VTA Conference. NVTC's June 7th meeting will occur jointly with PRTC at the VTA conference at the Springfield Hilton.

Western Corridor Transportation Study. On April 3, 2001, the Loudoun County Planning Commission removed the Western Transportation Corridor (WTC) from its

county-wide transportation plan. Factors motivating this action included the lack of dedicated funding, no agreement between Maryland and Virginia on the location of a Potomac River crossing and the absence of evidence that such a facility would alleviate congestion on US 15.

Fourth Quarter 2000 APTA Transit Ridership Report. The report reveals continuing good news for public transit in the United States. In the fourth quarter of calendar 2000, nationwide rail ridership was especially strong. For all of 2000, total transit ridership grew 3.5 percent compared to 1999. During that period, Metrorail grew almost eight percent, VRE grew almost 20 percent, Metrobus grew over eight percent (the fastest growing large bus system) and PRTC's OmniRide grew over 12 percent.

USDOT Pocket Guide to Transportation. Copies of pocket guides published by US DOT's Bureau of Transportation Statistics were provided to commissioners.

I-66 Bus Fare Buy Down Mailer. Commissioners also received copies of a marketing brochure mailed recently to 99,000 households promoting free bus fares through the end of this fiscal year. Next fiscal year, rates on selected bus routes in the vicinity of Franconia/Springfield will be reduced. VDOT funds the bus fare buy down each year to help compensate for reduced transit revenues due to relaxed HOV requirements on I-66.

NVTC Financial Items

The financial report for March, 2001 was provided to commissioners and there were no questions.

VRE Items

Report from the VRE Operations Board. Commissioners were urged to read the minutes of the April 20, 2001 VRE Operations Board meeting. The minutes are now included on VRE's website.

Presentation: Structure and Governance of US and Canadian Existing and Proposed Commuter Rail Systems. Mr. Taube reviewed the presentation he gave at the APTA Commuter Rail Conference held April 1-3 in Seattle, Washington. He catalogued commuter rail properties in Northern America, including how their boards of directors function. Chairman Donley noted that more than half of the commuter rail properties listed have a dedicated funding source. Mr. Taube stated that at least 33 areas in the United States and Canada are studying or actively implementing new commuter rail systems.

Commissioners agreed to take up the action items before the presentation on the VRE Train Brain. There were no objections.

Changes to the Delegation of Contractual Authority to the VRE Operations Board. Mrs. Bulova stated that the VRE Operations Board recommends approval of Resolution #878, which would authorize an amendment to the plan of delegation of the contractual authority for the VRE Operations Board. The original plan was approved in November, 1991. Since that time, service levels, ridership, and the amount of contractual activity have increased significantly, while the consumer price index increased by 32 percent. This change will not only reduce the number of board items referred to the commissions, but also allow for a more expeditious approval process for VRE projects. The recommended changes are an increase in the VRE Operations Board's contract authority from \$100,000 to \$200,000 and an increase in the Chief Operating Officer's contract authority from \$15,000 to \$30,000. There is no fiscal impact with this item.

In response to a question from Mr. Snyder, Mrs. Bulova stated that this has been reviewed by legal counsel and local staff.

Mrs. Bulova moved, with a second by Mr. Zimmerman, to approve Resolution #878 (copy attached). The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Almand, Bevon, Bogard, Bulova, Donley, Euille, Ferguson, Fisette, Hanley, McConnell, Silverthorne, Snyder, and Zimmerman.

Award of Contract for Construction of Manassas Park Parking Lot Expansion. Chairman Donley stated that there is no need for a closed session. Resolution #879 would authorize PRTC's Executive Director to award a construction contract to Basham and Garcia for \$1,415,771, including a 10 percent contingency, for the construction of the Manassas Park parking lot expansion.

Mr. Euille moved, with a second by Mrs. McConnell, to approve Resolution #879 (copy attached). The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Almand, Bevon, Bogard, Bulova, Donley, Euille, Ferguson, Fisette, Hanley, McConnell, Silverthorne, Snyder, and Zimmerman.

Easement Encroachment Agreement with Virginia Power. Mrs. Bulova reported that Resolution #880 would authorize VRE's Chief Operating Officer to execute on behalf of the commissions an easement encroachment agreement with Virginia Power related to the Manassas Park parking lot expansion project in a form approved by VRE legal counsel. It would also approve payment of a \$500 processing fee to Virginia Power.

Mrs. Bulova moved, with a second by Mr. Euille, to approve Resolution #880 (copy attached). The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Almand, Bevon, Bogard, Bulova, Donley, Euille, Ferguson, Fisette, Hanley, McConnell, Silverthorne, Snyder, and Zimmerman.

Mr. Silverthorne left the meeting at 9:05 P.M. and did not return.

Presentation: VRE's Innovative Train Brain. Wendy Lemieux and Don Chism of VRE gave a presentation on VRE's Train Brain, which allows passengers to get real-time schedule information on any VRE train, using a GPS locator system and the Train Information Provider (TRIP).

Other VRE Business. Pete Sklannik announced that VRE has signed off on the first two refurbished gallery railcars. Three more are expected by the end of the month, with the railcars in revenue service by June. Also, VRE on-time performance for the month has been at an average of 95 percent.

Adjournment

On a motion by Mrs. Hanley and a second by Mr. Zimmerman, the commission unanimously agreed to adjourn. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Almand, Bevon, Bogard, Bulova, Donley, Euille, Ferguson, Fisette, Hanley, McConnell, Snyder, and Zimmerman. Chairman Donley adjourned the meeting at 9:17 P.M.

Approved this 12th day of July, 2001.

Kerry J. Donley
Chairman

Elaine McConnell
Secretary-Treasurer