

MINUTES
NVTC COMMISSION MEETING – FEBRUARY 7, 2002
NVTC CONFERENCE ROOM - ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA

The meeting of the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission was called to order by Chairman Zimmerman at 8:06 P.M.

Members Present

Leo J. Bevon
William Bogard
Sharon Bulova
Kerry J. Donley
Paul Ferguson
Katherine K. Hanley
Dana Kauffman
Elaine McConnell
David F. Snyder
Christopher Zimmerman

Members Absent

James F. Almand
Richard H. Black
Gerald Connolly
William D. Euille
Jay Fisette
William C. Mims
Scott Silverthorne
Mary Margaret Whipple

Staff Present

Tamara Ashby
Rhonda W. Gilcrest
Stephen MacIsaac (VRE)
Mark Roeber (VRE)
Sharmila Samarasinghe
Pete Sklannik (VRE)
Alfred Titus-Glover
Richard K. Taube
Dale Zehner (VRE)

Minutes of NVTC's Meeting of January 3, 2002

On a motion by Mrs. Bulova and a second by Mr. Ferguson, the commission unanimously approved the minutes. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Bevon, Bogard, Bulova, Donley, Ferguson, Hanley, Kauffman, McConnell, Snyder and Zimmerman.

NVTC's FY 2003 Administrative Budget

Mr. Taube reminded commissioners that at the September and October meetings, they discussed and recommended the preliminary FY 2003 administrative budget. The budget was again presented for discussion at the January 3, 2002 meeting and since that time, NVTC's Management Advisory Committee again considered it and recommends it for approval.

In response to a question from Mrs. Hanley, Mr. Taube stated that the recommended budget would keep local contributions constant at the FY 2002 level.

Mr. Donley moved, with a second by Mrs. Bulova, to approve the FY 2003 administrative budget. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Bevon, Bogard, Bulova, Donley, Ferguson, Hanley, Kauffman, McConnell, Snyder and Zimmerman.

NVTC's FY 2003 State Aid Application

Mr. Taube reported that VDRPT requires FY 2003 state aid applications to be filed by March 1, 2002. The needed data are not yet available to permit NVTC staff to propose a completed application. Accordingly, NVTC is being asked to authorize its staff, in consultation with the Management Advisory Committee (MAC), to submit the commission's application by the deadline. At its March 7, 2002 meeting, NVTC will be asked to review the submission and formally approve it by adopting a resolution.

Mr. Taube stated that NVTC's MAC group supports the submission of requests to fund two additional NVTC projects from demonstration and technical assistance funds available to VDRPT. The first is the third year of a three-year marketing grant. The second is an evaluation of the performance of transit ITS projects in the region (the same application submitted by NVTC last year that was not funded).

Chairman Zimmerman asked why the data are not available. Mr. Taube responded that the local governments and WMATA are still working on their budget submissions.

Mrs. Hanley stated that MWAQC has asked for data to be evaluated for Code Red days that may result in changes to the program so NVTC should not yet commit to a marketing campaign based on the current program.

Mr. Donley observed that the region is eligible for more funding than it actually receives. He asked if, at this stage with the General Assembly in session, what the effects might be on how much funding the region receives. Mr. Taube stated that Delegate Almand's bill, which was passed last year, increased the eligible matching ratios, which would result in a bigger shortfall, even if total state transit funding stayed the same. Mr. Bevon stated that the projected revenues are lower than previous years, which means that there will be less money to distribute.

Mrs. McConnell moved, with a second by Mr. Snyder, to authorize NVTC's executive director to submit to VDRPT by March 1st the most accurate application possible at that time, subject to formal action by the commission at its March 7th meeting. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Bevon, Bogard, Bulova, Donley, Ferguson, Hanley, Kauffman, McConnell, Snyder and Zimmerman.

Legislative Items

Mrs. Hanley stated that a letter has been prepared to the Northern Virginia General Assembly delegation that would urge them not to divert high-speed rail project funds for other uses, such as unproven maglev systems. Chairman Zimmerman stated that he has requested staff make a few minor grammatical changes to the letter.

Mrs. Hanley moved, with a second by Mrs. Bulova, to authorize NVTC's chairman to send the letter. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Bevon, Bogard, Bulova, Donley, Ferguson, Hanley, Kauffman, McConnell, Snyder and Zimmerman.

Mrs. Hanley announced that Delegate Hull's transportation authority bill was killed by committee. In response to a question from Mr. Kauffman, Mr. Biesiadny, of Fairfax County staff, reported that HB 771 was reported out of the Transportation Committee, with amendments that would strengthen the idea of a statewide transportation plan as opposed to a collection of regional plans.

Mr. Snyder asked for an update on legislation regarding the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority. Mrs. Hanley stated that SB 576 is the Barry Subcommittee recommendation. She explained the proposed voting and membership of the authority under SB 576. A proposed amendment would detail the membership of the technical committee.

WMATA Items

Ridership Details on Metrobus 5A Service. NVTC and its MAC group reviewed ridership data for the experimental 5A route provided by WMATA staff. The data were from May, 2001 and showed heavy peak flow ridership from Fairfax County origins. WMATA staff began a week-long manual ridership count in mid-January. Mrs. Hanley stated that the data show that 5A service is duplicative of existing service and many of the riders are Virginia riders moving in the peak flow direction.

Proposed Tysons Corner Metrobus Service Plan. The WMATA Operations Committee approved for board consideration a proposal to conduct a public hearing on the Tysons Corner Plan.

Bike-on-Rail Expanded Hours. The WMATA Operations Committee heard a report on the success of the trial program to allow cyclists to bring their bikes aboard trains on weekdays anytime except 7:00 to 10:00 A.M. and 4:00 to 7:00 P.M. During the six-month trial, which began May, 2001, there were no customer complaints and no bike-related accidents. WMATA's General Manager has made the program permanent.

WMATA's Public Perceptions Tracking Study. QS&A Research and Strategy completed this study in October, 2001. It was based on 1,215 telephone interviews conducted between July 15 and 31, 2001. The report tracked the results of two prior studies in 1997 and 1999. Among the demographic characteristics of survey respondents, 25 percent had household incomes over \$100,000 annually, 60 percent had college degrees, 60 percent lived in their current residence for 20 years or more, and 37 percent were 55 years of age or older. Among the increased incentives for transit ridership, Metrochek availability grew from 10 percent of employed service area adults in 1997 to 30 percent in 2001. Metrorail's share of total trips grew to 15 percent in 2001, compared to eight percent in 1997. Metrobus grew to eight percent from five percent.

NVTC Products and Communications

Media Campaign. Mr. Taube reported that NVTC's state-funded media campaign will begin airing on radio stations in mid-February. Among the purposes of the campaign is to reassure transit customers that transit systems are taking steps to remain safe and secure. The ads will refer listeners to a website for more information. He stated that the website will be monitored to know how many people are using it, which will help gauge the success of the media campaign.

Falls Church Bus Project. Mr. Taube reported that FTA has approved NVTC's request to spend remaining grant funds on four clean fuel diesel buses.

The commission would be able to purchase the buses using an option on an Arlington County contract. A financial plan is being developed.

SmarTrip Farebox and Clearinghouse Procurements. WMATA has received clearinghouse proposals and NVTC staff is assisting WMATA in evaluating the proposals. Loudoun County has expressed interest in procuring fareboxes. Staff is working with Loudoun County, Cubic and VDRPT to facilitate this procurement.

Transit Systems Emergency Response and Security Initiatives. VDOT's Freeway Incident Management Team met on January 23rd to review workplans of its task groups. A meeting on February 19th has been scheduled to discuss HOV policies for emergencies. State police representatives are expected to attend.

Mr. Kauffman asked if any planning has been done on an emergency bus bridge plan. Mr. Taube replied that it is being considered by a group at WMATA. The first step has been to set up a communications network, so that all the transit systems can communicate during an emergency. The next step is to develop a playbook that would respond to different scenarios and how to respond to them, which is where a bus bridge plan would fit into the process. Chairman Zimmerman asked staff to report on the progress being made at the next commission meeting.

Mrs. Hanley expressed her opinion that it is technically possible for the region to implement emergency plans, but it wouldn't be successful without a public education component. The public needs to be educated on emergency plans and how they should respond.

2002 NVTC Handbook. Mr. Taube stated that NVTC's reference handbook has been updated to include NVTC's new officers and workprogram, up-to-date financial information, and revisions to commissioner's biographical sketches. The MAC group has reviewed the handbook. Without objection, the new version would be posted on NVTC's website and limited paper copies would be provided to citizens, researchers, libraries and others who request a copy. There were no objections from commissioners.

Rail-Volution Conference. This annual conference will be held in Washington, D.C. on October 3-6, 2002. WMATA staff invited NVTC to participate on the conference steering committee and VRE is one of the sponsors. NVTC staff will help plan the mobile workshops.

Regional Transportation Items

Local Option Transportation Taxes in the U.S. This March, 2001 research report examines the extent to which each state has provided powers to local and regional governments to use taxation to fund transportation. Commissioners had no questions.

DASH-About Service Extended. Mr. Donley reported that Alexandria's free DASH-About shuttle service between King Street Metrorail and City Hall has been successful. The service has been extended through June 30, the end of the fiscal year, using federal funds.

NVTC Financial Items for December, 2001

Commissioners were provided with the financial reports. There were no questions.

VRE Items

Report from the VRE Operations Board. The minutes of the VRE Operations Board's January 18, 2001 meeting were provided to commissioners.

Update on VRE Strategic Planning Process. The work on the strategic planning is proceeding. A draft final report on the short-term strategic plan will be prepared documenting the findings, conclusions, and recommendations and outlining the best alternatives to satisfy the potential short-term ridership demand expected by VRE over the next three to five years. The report should be completed in the next two months. Preliminary work has begun to identify the subsequent strategic planning effort with a longer-term horizon to 2020 or 2025 which is to be linked with the processes underway at WMATA, COG, and MARC.

Update on VRE's Agreements with CSXT. Mr. Taube reported that the MOU was signed by CSXT on January 31, 2002 and CSXT is making progress on the pre-conditions for commencement of monthly installment payments of retroactive access fees that the commissions required for the amended operating agreement.

Future of Amtrak. Mrs. McConnell asked for an update on the future of Amtrak. Mr. Sklannik stated that the Reform Council's report recommends that Amtrak be broken up into three agencies. There will be congressional hearings, including hearings scheduled in the House for February 27, 2002. In response to a question from Mrs. McConnell, Mr. Sklannik offered to find out who chairs the subcommittee. The Senate Commerce Committee has postponed its hearing to a future date. VRE is monitoring this very closely and there is some concern as to how the Council's recommendations could impact VRE, including its cross honoring agreement with Amtrak. In response to a question from Chairman

Zimmerman, Mr. Sklannik stated that Amtrak has assured VRE that Amtrak's contract with VRE won't change. The current contract expires March, 2003. Another concern is the quality of Amtrak's management team.

In response to a question from Mrs. McConnell, Mr. Sklannik stated that CSXT has presented a real estate sales proposal to Amtrak for property for VRE mid-day storage in Ivy City. Negotiations are underway between Amtrak and CSXT and are expected to be completed this spring and should not be adversely affected by the Council's recommendations.

Other VRE News. Mr. Sklannik announced that VRE service for January was 96 percent on-time and no free-ride certificates were handed out during the month. He stated that the excellent on-time performance is a direct benefit from the AF Interlocking work that was completed last year. Peak daily ridership hit 12,100.

Adjournment

Mrs. Hanley moved, with a second by Mrs. McConnell, to adjourn the meeting. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Bevon, Bogard, Bulova, Donley, Ferguson, Hanley, Kauffman, McConnell, Snyder and Zimmerman. Chairman Zimmerman adjourned the meeting at 8:45 P.M.

Approved this 7th day of March, 2002.

Christopher Zimmerman
Chairman

William Euille
Secretary-Treasurer