

MINUTES
NVTC COMMISSION MEETING – MAY 2, 2002
NVTC CONFERENCE ROOM - ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA

The meeting of the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission was called to order by Chairman Zimmerman at 8:10 P.M.

Members Present

James F. Almand
Leo J. Bevon
William Bogard
Sharon Bulova
Gerald Connolly
Kerry J. Donley
William D. Euille
Jay Fiset
Katherine K. Hanley
Elaine McConnell
William C. Mims
Scott Silverthorne
David F. Snyder
Mary Margaret Whipple
Christopher Zimmerman

Members Absent

Richard H. Black
Paul Ferguson
Dana Kauffman

Staff Present

Rhonda Gilchrest
Scott Kalkwarf
Stephen MacIsaac (VRE)
Kala Quintana
Sharmila Samarasinghe
Pete Sklannik (VRE)
Jennifer Straub (VRE)
Alfred Titus-Glover
Richard K. Taube

Minutes of NVTC's Meeting of April 4, 2001

Mrs. Whipple moved, with a second by Mr. Silverthorne, to approve the minutes. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Almand, Bevon, Bogard, Bulova, Connolly, Donley, Fiset, McConnell, Mims, Silverthorne, Whipple and Zimmerman.

Report on NVTC Gas Tax Audit Issues

Mr. Taube explained that at its April meeting the commission was advised about several substantial adjustments in gas tax revenues resulting from misidentified reports by gas station owners. At the direction of the commission, staff recommends a course of action to improve the reliability and accuracy of collections through improved audits and other means. During the past month, NVTC and jurisdictional staff met with the Virginia Department of Taxation's two Northern Virginia auditors. It is recommended that NVTC's chairman be authorized to write to the new commissioner of the Virginia Department of Taxation to request a meeting to review problems and potential solutions affecting the collection of the two percent motor fuels tax in NVTC and PRTC districts. Other senior Warner Administration staff would also be invited to the meeting. Mr. Taube stated that staff would verify the name of the new commissioner before the letter is sent.

Mr. Connolly moved, with a second by Mrs. Bulova, to approve the above recommendation.

In response to a question from Chairman Zimmerman, Mr. Taube stated that for routine checks to determine if there may be a reporting problem, perhaps someone besides an auditor could visit the gas station. Chairman Zimmerman suggested that the letter and attachment be refined to clarify that point.

Mrs. Hanley joined the discussion at 8:12 P.M.

The commission then voted on the motion and it passed. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Almand, Bevon, Bogard, Bulova, Connolly, Donley, Fiset, Hanley, McConnell, Mims, Silverthorne, Whipple and Zimmerman.

Report on Northern Virginia Transit Ridership

Mr. Taube stated that commissioners requested more details about how NVTC and jurisdiction staff compile transit ridership for Northern Virginia. The conservative method usually used by staff involves collecting estimates on

boardings for each transit operator. This approach is consistent with federal data collection requirements. Using the data provided by each transit system for FY 2001, the compilation shows unlinked trips per weekday. An unlinked trip counts separately each leg of a multi-transit provider trip (e.g. boarding Metrobus and transferring to Metrorail is two unlinked trips).

Mr. Taube explained that NVTC uses reported Metrorail boardings in Virginia, plus Metrobus Virginia boardings and total VRE and local bus boardings to arrive at a conservative average total weekday Northern Virginia transit ridership estimate of about 273,000 trips for FY 2001.

Mr. Taube stated that another way to calculate Northern Virginia transit ridership is by using estimates of total unlinked Metrorail trips originating or terminating in Virginia by doubling boardings (available by station from faregate counts) but subtracting Virginia-only rail trips to avoid double-counting. With this approach, the combined result for transit systems serving Northern Virginia is almost 410,000 average weekday trips for FY 2001. In combination, the two methods provide a range that bounds actual ridership. Mr. Taube stated that NVTC staff has been using the conservative method for its reports. The second type requires more manipulation of the raw data, but provides a more optimistic picture of the extent of transit use in Northern Virginia.

In response to a question from Mr. Connolly, Mr. Taube stated that either method does not affect how transit funds are allocated. Mrs. Hanley stated that NVTC should continue to use the conservative method, otherwise it may result in reverse commute issues and double counting. She stated that there may be a way to describe how the 273,000 is calculated and distinguish unlinked boarding versus riders coming home on return trips.

Mr. Euille arrived at 8:21 P.M.

Legislative Items

Mr. Taube explained that the commission has an opportunity to comment on VTA's draft Recommendation for Balanced Transportation Policies and Programs in Virginia. Mr. Connolly observed that #5 states that VDOT recently refused to use funds allocated for the I-66 EIS to pay for engineering design costs for transit alternatives. Mr. Bevon explained that the issue is that VDOT has asked WMATA to provide certain data for the I-66 NEPA Study. WMATA requested reimbursement and VDOT said no since they don't pay for other groups to participate in NEPA studies. Mr. Bevon expressed his opinion that WMATA's request is legitimate since it is providing specific design information. Shiva Pant of WMATA staff stated that after the first policy meeting, VDOT agreed that WMATA would be reimbursed \$270,000, but no progress has been

made. WMATA is waiting to hear back from the commonwealth's Secretary of Transportation.

Mrs. Hanley questioned the need for #3 regarding TERM's, since she is unaware of any existing problem of VDOT overriding the region's desires for the use of TERM's. Mr. Bevon stated that funds for TERM's are taken off the top of Northern Virginia's Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality program. Mrs. Whipple stated that funds for TERM's could come from other sources of funds so that all of the CMAQ funds could be used for other projects. Chairman Zimmerman stated that it would be helpful to understand what the basis was for VTA's recommendation. Mr. Taube agreed to recommend to VTA that this item be modified to reflect the concerns expressed by commissioners.

In response to a question from Mrs. Bulova, Mr. Taube announced that NVTC just heard from VDRPT that the formula assistance that NVTC expected to receive for FY 2003 is \$3.8 million less than what was received last year, due to lower revenue estimates and a slightly lower Northern Virginia share of total Virginia transit costs.

WMATA Items

FY 2003 WMATA Budget. The WMATA Budget Committee forwarded the budget to the local jurisdictions on April 18th for review and comments. Comments are due by May 24th. NVTC's Management Advisory Committee has not identified any issues on which NVTC should submit comments.

FY 2003-2004 Bus Procurement. The WMATA Board voted to recommend procurement of 250 CNG powered buses and to undertake conversion of the Four-Mile Metrobus Garage in Arlington so that in the future the buses could be placed in service in Northern Virginia. A financial plan will be required since this action is not fully funded.

Metrobus 5A. In response to a WMATA staff proposal to convert this service to regional status and to share the subsidy costs using a special formula, a WMATA Board committee deferred action and asked for additional details on ridership.

Dulles Corridor Draft EIS. The WMATA Board approved the draft EIS in April, 2002. It will be forwarded to FTA and following approval, public hearings will commence in the summer. A revised financial plan is being developed to reflect an anticipated slower rate of receipt of federal aid.

Regional Bus Study. Mr. Taube reported that the WMATA Board Operations Committee received a briefing on facility and equipment needs and the integrated development program. Among the highlights are the need for

more bus garages and the need to integrate the local bus systems and VRE and MARC into WMATA's strategic planning.

WMATA Ridership. Chairman Zimmerman announced that WMATA continues to see increased ridership, including three record-breaking ridership days. Weekend and non-work related ridership are also on the rise.

NVTC Products and Communications

Public Outreach. Kala Quintana reported that staff continues to look for ways to expand NVTC's media campaign. Two radio interviews were recorded, including a discussion with Dave Snyder regarding the General Assembly and budget shortage issues, and Pete Sklannik regarding the VRE strategic plan and the integral role that VRE plays in the region's public transportation system. The NVTC brochure is in the process of being printed.

Farebox/Clearinghouse Procurements. NVTC staff has been deeply involved in these ongoing regional efforts. NVTC's MAC considered alternative structures for the clearinghouse in April, 2002. Oral interviews for the clearinghouse procurement were held during the week of April 8th with NVTC staff participating. Factory testing of the fareboxes at Cubic's San Diego facility has not been restarted after being discontinued last month. NVTC staff is accomplishing Loudoun's farebox purchase with Cubic/GFI through an accepted contract change order and an amended grant contract with VDRPT.

Mr. Taube announced that this would be Sharmila Samarasinghe's last NVTC meeting since she has taken a position at VDRPT. She has been instrumental in the farebox/clearinghouse procurement.

Code Red. On April 8th NVTC sent out MOU's to all participating local jurisdictions in the Code Red program including WMATA. A total of 1,500 additional Code Red farebox bags were requested by jurisdictions. NVTC contacted Southwest Ohio Regional Transit Authority (Cincinnati Transit) regarding the city's Summer Clean Air Fare Program. The city has a flat fee of 50-cents per ride from June to August. The program increases ridership and reduces congestion and emissions. The subsidy on the fares ranging from 65-cents to \$2.00 is approved annually by the transit board contingent upon availability of funds from Ohio DOT. The expected subsidy for Summer, 2002 is \$1.1 million for lost fare revenue and \$218,000 for marketing and programs.

Transit Systems Emergency Response, Coordination and Communication. Transit operators met at WMATA on April 17th and agreed to ask MWCOG/TPB for funds to pursue the bus bridge scope of work prepared initially by NVTC staff in response to requests from commissioners. TPB's Maintenance and Operations/ITS Committee met with the transit operators on April 24th to continue

these discussions. VDOT's Freeway Incident Management Task Force met again on April 22nd and reviewed the proposed language to be included in VDOT's manual to implement staff recommendations pertaining to lifting HOV restrictions in emergencies.

Revised CTB Presentation. Chairman Zimmerman presented testimony on behalf of NVTC at the April 15th CTB hearing. Commissioners' comments from the previous meeting were incorporated into the presentation.

Falls Church Bus Project. Settlement occurred with AVS on April 11, 2002 and title to the four hybrid-electric buses was transferred to AVS from WMATA and AVS provided a certified partial refund check. Following a visit to the Thomas-Built factory by WMATA staff, the four new clean diesel buses with exhaust gas recirculation filters will be ordered.

Mr. Snyder arrived at 8:44 P.M.

Regional Transportation Items

Smart Growth Alliance. Chairman Zimmerman noted that the SGA workshop on the smart growth recognition program is scheduled for May 7, 2002. Mr. Fisette noted that SGA consists of the Urban Land Institute, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Greater Washington Board of Trade, Coalition for Smarter Growth and the Metropolitan Washington Builders' Council. This new program will recognize development projects that foster smart growth. SGA hopes the recognition will facilitate the approval of such projects.

APTA Ridership Report. Mr. Taube reported that new transit data released on April 17, 2002 confirm that transit ridership is up in Northern Virginia and throughout the Metropolitan Washington region. Over the past three years, the region has seen a dramatic increase in ridership experiencing the third highest ridership growth in the country. With traffic congestion and major construction projects at their peak and with public transit more reliable and more convenient than ever, residents are looking to public transit to get them to work and home safely and efficiently. Locally, transit ridership is up by six percent, while the national average is at about two percent. VRE and OmniRide experienced the largest ridership increase in the region, up 16.9 percent and 28.8 percent, respectively. The Washington, D.C. metropolitan region maintains its rank as the fourth largest system in the country with an average of 424 million transit trips annually.

APTA 2002 Public Transportation Fact Book. Mr. Taube stated that APTA has released the latest in its set of annual compilations of national transit statistics. The 53rd edition of the fact book relies extensively on National Transit Database reports filed by U.S. transit systems, as augmented with special APTA

surveys of the transit industry. An interesting statistic included in the fact book is that in the largest U.S. cities, 21 percent of the public (28 million people) use public transit at least once in a typical two-month period.

Northern Virginia Transportation Alliance E-mail Alert. Mr. Taube reported that NVTC received an e-mail alert from the Northern Virginia Transportation Alliance (NVTA) stating that transit captures a very small percentage of total trips. It looked at all time periods across the entire region, whether there is transit available or not. In contrast, NVTC's position continues to be that to accurately measure the success of transit it is important to look at the times that people want to be traveling in high-density corridors where investments have been made in transit. Chairman Zimmerman agreed and stated that shares need to be measured where there is a choice of using transit. Mrs. Hanley stated that a recent NVTA newsletter also included incorrect information and brought up old issues about failure to invest in roads in the past. Mrs. Whipple suggested that NVTC should respond factually to these types of newsletters/alerts with correct information.

Mrs. Hanley stated that this type of inaccurate information endangers the upcoming tax referendum. Mr. Connolly stated that he hopes that NVTC will point out that NVTA has a road transportation agenda that is hostile to transit. Mrs. Whipple expressed her opinion that it is wiser for NVTC not to ascribe motives and only put out factual information. Chairman Zimmerman stated that NVTC can be mistaken for NVTA, so it's important for NVTC to respond factually (other agencies could point out motives). Mr. Connolly expressed his opinion that NVTC ignores NVTA's political agenda at its own peril and NVTC should make a strong response.

Mr. Mims stated that although it's fine to set the record straight, he encouraged the commission not to make a mountain out of a molehill. Those people that are in favor of transit and ridesharing will vote for the referendum, as well as those that favor highways and roads. Mrs. Whipple stated that NVTC should not let factually incorrect statement stand without a reply. Mr. Donley suggested that it is also an opportunity to talk about the benefits of transit. Mrs. Bulova suggested doing this through a press release.

Chairman Zimmerman directed staff to do some analysis and develop materials to set the record straight. Shiva Pant of WMATA staff stated that NVTA's information doesn't take into account that in some corridors (i.e., I-66 inside the Beltway, Dulles Corridor) the highway rights-of-way are used to capacity. Mr. Bevon stated that the Springfield Mixing Bowl project is a safety project and wasn't designed to carry more vehicles. NVTA doesn't point out that not just road projects, but a lot of proposed transit projects didn't get funded and built.

Mr. Donley stated that it is important that NVTC broadly responds to as many organizations as possible.

Mr. Fisette stated the referendum is a short-term issue and the long-term issues still remain. It is important to look at the role of NVTC and how much of an advocacy role it should play to promote transit. Mrs. Whipple stated that commissioners, on an individual basis, need to contact business associates and provide them with the facts. Mr. Snyder stated that it may be time to update the economic analysis of the benefits of transit that NVTC did in the past.

NVTC Financial Items for March, 2002

The financial report was provided to commissioners and there were no questions.

Mr. Snyder left the meeting at 9:01 P.M. and did not return.

VRE Items

Report from the VRE Operations Board. The minutes of the VRE Operations Board's April 19th meeting were provided to commissioners. Mr. Sklannik reported that in April VRE had 95% on-time performance with over 12,300 daily trips.

Mr. Sklannik announced that Mrs. McConnell has been named VTA's Outstanding Public Transit Official for 2002. She will be presented an award at VTA's Annual meeting on May 30, 2002 in Virginia Beach.

Acquisition of Land for the Woodbridge Project. Mrs. Bulova reported that the VRE Operations Board has asked NVTC to approve Resolution #919, which would authorize VRE's Chief Operating Officer to execute a purchase agreement for one of several parcels needed to complete the second platform project at Woodbridge, together with a pedestrian crossover and kiss-and-ride lot. Since the negotiated price exceeds the appraisal by more than 10 percent, commission action is needed. The resolution also includes a change in the current policy for this project. The FTA requirements for separate consideration of subsequent land purchases for this project would apply in the future (\$50,000 above appraised value) and the additional 10 percent requirement adopted earlier by the commissions would be eliminated.

Mrs. Bulova moved, with a second by Mrs. McConnell, to approve the resolution (copy attached). The vote in favor was cast by commissioners

Almand, Bevon, Bogard, Bulova, Connolly, Donley, Euille, Fisetta, Hanley, McConnell, Mims, Silverthorne, Whipple and Zimmerman.

Extension of Amendment to CSXT Operating Access Agreement. Mrs. Bulova stated that the VRE Operations Board recommends commission approval of Resolution #920, which would extend for six months to November 8, 2002 the expiration date of the amended CSXT operating access agreement. The current agreement was entered into in 1994 and after several extensions, currently expires May 3, 2002. CSXT concurs with this request.

Mrs. Bulova moved, with a second by Mrs. McConnell, to approve Resolution #920 (copy attached). The commission voted on the motion and it passed. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Almand, Bevon, Bogard, Bulova, Connolly, Donley, Euille, Fisetta, Hanley, McConnell, Mims, Silverthorne, Whipple and Zimmerman.

Adjournment

Mrs. Hanley moved, with a second by Mr. Donley, to adjourn the meeting. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Almand, Bevon, Bogard, Bulova, Connolly, Donley, Fisetta, Hanley, McConnell, Mims, Silverthorne, Whipple and Zimmerman. Chairman Zimmerman adjourned the meeting at 9:07 P.M.

Approved this 6th day of June, 2002.

Christopher Zimmerman
Chairman

William Euille
Secretary-Treasurer