

MINUTES
NVTC COMMISSION MEETING – APRIL 3, 2003
NVTC CONFERENCE ROOM - ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA

The meeting of the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission was called to order by Chairman McConnell at 8:07 P.M.

Members Present

David Albo
James F. Almand
William Bogard
Sharon Bulova
Gerald Connolly
Kerry J. Donley
Paul Ferguson
Jay Fisette
Katherine K. Hanley
Elaine McConnell
William C. Mims
Karen Rae
Scott Silverthorne
David F. Snyder
Mary Margaret Whipple
Christopher Zimmerman

Members Absent

William D. Euille
Dana Kauffman
Gary A. Reese

Staff Present

Rhonda Gilchrest
Scott Kalkwarf
Jana Lynott
Adam McGavock
Stephen MacIsaac (VRE)
Kala Quintana
Mark Roeber (VRE)
Pete Skiannik (VRE)
Richard K. Taube
Alfred Titus-Glover
John Tuohy (VRE)

Minutes of the March 6, 2003 NVTC Meeting

On a motion by Mr. Zimmerman and a second by Mrs. Bulova, the commission unanimously approved the minutes. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Almand, Bulova, Hanley, McConnell, Mims, Rae, Silverthorne, Snyder, Whipple and Zimmerman.

Mr. Donley arrived at 8:08 P.M.

Award of Contract for NVTC/VRE Auditor

Mr. Taube reminded commissioners that at their February 6th meeting they authorized staff to issue a Request for Proposals for audit services for NVTC and VRE for a term of three years with a two-year additional option. An evaluation team consisting of financial staff from NVTC, VRE, PRTC, and VDRPT considered seven proposals. Following initial ranking, three firms were invited for interviews. The evaluation team believes that all seven firms are technically qualified and any of the top three firms would perform a quality audit. One firm, however, appears to provide the best fit for NVTC and VRE. Therefore, the evaluation team unanimously recommends the top-ranked firm, PBGH, LLP, Certified Public Accountants of Harrisonburg, Virginia. VRE's chief operating officer concurs with this recommendation.

Mr. Connolly joined the meeting at 8:09 P.M.

In response to a question from Mr. Zimmerman, Mr. Taube explained that staff would negotiate a contract with PBGH and if successful, the executive director would execute the contract and issue the notice to proceed. If not, negotiations would commence with the next ranked firms in order until a successful contract is negotiated and executed.

Mr. Zimmerman moved, with a second by Mr. Almand, to authorize NVTC's executive director to negotiate and sign a contract with PBGH. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Almand, Bulova, Connolly, Donley, Hanley, McConnell, Mims, Rae, Silverthorne, Snyder, Whipple and Zimmerman.

Request for Proposals for Consulting Assistance in Preparing National Transit Database Reports

Mr. Taube explained that with the cooperation of jurisdictional staff, NVTC coordinated a multi-year transit performance data collection project designed to facilitate completion of National Transit Database (NTD) reports. These NTD

reports are required by the Federal Transit Administration from recipients of federal transit assistance. The statistics included in the report (e.g. passenger miles) are used in a formula by which FTA distributes the proceeds of some of its major financial assistance programs. In our region, these formula-driven funds are shared by WMATA and Maryland's MTA. VRE and PRTC now also receive a portion of these funds through agreement with the WMATA Board.

Mr. Fisetette joined the discussion at 8:11 P.M.

Mr. Taube explained that even those regional transit systems that do not use federal assistance are eligible to submit reports and if they choose to do so, WMATA receives more formula funding. Accordingly, NVTC obtained grant funds totaling almost \$200,000 from VDRPT and elsewhere to design a sampling program and collect data needed to enable all transit systems in Northern Virginia to file annual NTD reports. Combined with the investments made by each of NVTC's local transit systems, these grant funds have generated an estimated \$3.7 million annually for WMATA. VRE has received as much as \$6 million annually from the formula funds generated by its NTD reports and now also receives several more million dollars from another formula program.

Mr. Taube stated that at this time NVTC's grant funds have been exhausted, and efforts since 1999 to interest WMATA staff in a regionwide data collection program (including Maryland) have not been successful. In response to a question from Mr. Bogard, Mr. Taube stated that at some point all the transit systems have filed NTD reports in the past using NVTC's grant funds. The central problem with continuing to rely on individual bus systems to file NTD reports is that several of the smaller transit systems are not required to file (since they do not use federal funds) and do not receive sufficient financial returns to cover their individual costs of collecting, compiling and filing data, even though the region as a whole is far better off if all systems file NTD reports. Ms. Rae stated that it is a win-win situation if all the transit systems file NTD reports because it brings more money to the region. The region won't receive additional funding if the jurisdictions discontinue filing NTD reports.

In response to a question from Mr. Donley, Mr. Taube stated that staff estimates that for all six local bus systems in Northern Virginia annual costs of consulting assistance to supplement current transit system expenditures for completing and filing NTD reports might be about \$150,000. The benefit to WMATA would be as much as \$4.2 million with Northern Virginia's share about \$1.1 million. NVTC's Management Advisory Committee recommends that NVTC's allocation formula be changed to permit funds to be taken off the top of state aid each year to pay for consulting assistance to complete these NTD reports for the six local bus systems. In effect, NVTC's jurisdictions would share in the costs in proportion to each jurisdiction's share of state aid received through NVTC. Loudoun County receives no state aid through NVTC but also does not benefit directly from federal formula funds flowing to WMATA.

Mr. Taube stated that staff recommends that the commission authorize the release of RFP #03-05, which would seek consulting assistance for revisiting sampling plans, collecting transit performance data, and completing NTD reports on behalf of six local bus systems in Northern Virginia. The commission would be asked to authorize the award of a contract at its June 5, 2003 meeting along with a resolution authorizing funds for the consulting assistance to be taken off the top of NVTC's state aid each year.

In response to a question from Mr. Donley, Mr. Taube stated that staff expects to receive proposals from at least two firms.

Mrs. Hanley moved, with a second by Mr. Bogard, to authorize NVTC's executive director to issue the RFP. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Almand, Bulova, Connolly, Donley, Fisette, Hanley, McConnell, Mims, Rae, Silverthorne, Snyder, Whipple and Zimmerman.

WMATA Items

Staff Report on Fare Increase Hearings. WMATA conducted nine public hearings in February and March on a proposed fare increase and the MetroAccess proposal. If the WMATA Board decides to extend Metro hours of operation and include improvements to elevators/escalators, another \$10 million may be needed, in addition to the \$24 million target for FY 2004 revenues from fare increases.

WMATA Submission for the MWCOG/TPB 2003 Constrained Long-Range Plan. The new CLRP will cover 2003 through 2030. The total operating and capital expenses are anticipated to exceed \$70 billion, with operating revenues of almost \$24 billion.

West Falls Church Parking Structure. The WMATA Board approved the award of a design-build contract for the new 1200-space facility and authorized payment with funds from Fairfax County's Parking Surcharge Reserve Account (\$1.8 million), Transit Infrastructure Investment Funds (\$2 million) and DRPT (\$13 million).

Greyhound Kiosk at Vienna. The WMATA Board gave approval to negotiate and execute a lease agreement with Greyhound Lines, Inc. for installation of a kiosk of approximately 200 square feet at the Vienna-Fairfax/GMU Metrorail station. The Greyhound kiosk would offer for sale bus tickets and package express, Western Union and phone cards, as well as dispensing travel information.

Regional Transportation Items

Northern Virginia Transportation Authority's Congestion Relief Project Recommendations. Mr. Taube reported that NVTA met on March 13th and approved a list of projects to be recommended for Governor Warner's congestion relief program. The action was contingent on funds being from sources other than Northern Virginia's current allotment and if less than \$20 million is provided, NVTA will revisit the list. Many of the projects feature transit and ridesharing.

A bare bones NVTA administrative budget of \$30,000 annually was discussed with funding to be sought from VDOT and to be considered at the Northern Virginia Regional Commission (since NVRC is now hosting NVTA, NVTA jurisdictions are members of NVRC and NVRC assessments are made on the same population basis as those defined in the statute for NVTA).

NVTC History – November, 1965 Newsletter. Mr. Taube stated that in gathering materials for presentation and archiving on NVTC's new website, staff has discovered some interesting historical highlights of the commission's activities. Commissioners were provided with a copy of a 1965 newsletter that describes and pictures the commission's early efforts to promote commuter rail service. NVTC borrowed a pair of self-propelled commuter rail cars from Philadelphia for a one-day demonstration. This provided a preview of VRE service that began a quarter century later. Mr. Taube explained that staff will periodically provide the commission with historical materials as NVTC's 40th anniversary draws closer.

CIVIS Bus Demonstrations. Mr. Taube reported that the CIVIS bus is manufactured by Irisbus of France and employs several unique features as well as a number of innovative technological applications. CIVIS buses have become a popular choice for BRT applications in Europe, and are being considered for several BRT applications in the United States. A very interesting feature of the CIVIS bus is its use of an optical guidance system that allows the vehicle to drive itself. A sensor on the front of the vehicle reads markings embedded in the roadway and automatically steers the vehicle, a feature that has proven to be especially useful for "docking" the bus in crowded BRT applications. The driver can take over the steering of the vehicle at any time.

American Public Transportation Association Survey. Mr. Taube stated that a recent survey commissioned by APTA, found that four in five (81 percent) Americans believe that increased investment in public transportation strengthens the economy, creates jobs, reduces traffic congestion and air pollution, and saves energy. The survey found that almost three-quarters (72 percent) of the respondents support the use of public funds for the expansion and improvement of public transportation. Wirthlin Worldwide conducted this telephone survey February 12-16 and polled a random sample of 1,003 adults, 18 years of age or older, living in the continental United States.

Reprise of 2000 Census Results Regarding Transit Commuting Shares.

Mr. Taube stated that several months ago 2000 census results were reported that generated headlines about reduced transit ridership in the Metropolitan Washington region compared to 1990. NVTC responded with news releases pointing out that the census data actually showed increases in transit ridership in Northern Virginia. However, a March 7, 2003 briefing by MWCOG/TPB staff and follow-up e-mail alerts by the Northern Virginia Transportation Alliance again purport to show that jobs in the core have fallen since 1990 and consequently transit ridership is reduced. NVTC staff put together analysis reviewing why these conclusions are not warranted with respect to transit ridership in NVTC's district. Among the reasons are that the census is not designed to accurately measure changes in transit ridership and actual transit ridership counts show across the board increases in Northern Virginia.

Mr. Taube stated that the census questions were not well designed to measure mode shares. For example, the census asked about the most frequently used mode in the previous week. If a person drove to work on three days and used transit on two days in a week, that person was instructed to designate his or her mode as "automobile." If a person drove to a park-and-ride lot every day and took transit, but the auto trip was longer than the transit trip, that person was instructed to designate the mode as "automobile." While NVTC staff does not have the data to know for certain, another possibility is that non-work trips provided the greater impetus for transit growth during the decade. Mr. Connolly asked whether the census questions captured data on those persons that telework. Staff agreed to check but thought that the survey did not distinguish between "work at home" and "telework."

Mr. Taube stated that with the commission's approval, staff would distribute the analysis to the media and public to set the record straight. There were no objections.

NVTC Financial Items for February, 2003

Mr. Taube reported that gas tax receipts show a large adjustment due to previous underreporting of about \$400,000 going back to 1999. This was discovered by the Department of Taxation auditors. A significant portion of the adjustment (about \$300,000) credits Fairfax County. He stated that NVTC has received a response from the Tax Commissioner and staff will provide a report and subsequent recommendations at a future NVTC meeting.

Mr. Zimmerman noted that with recent increases in gas prices, the tax revenues should also show an increase. Mr. Taube reminded commissioners

that there is a two-month lag time in sales and reporting and an increase in gas tax receipts should be reflected in future reports.

VRE Items

Report from the VRE Operations Board and Chief Operating Officer. Commissioners were provided with a copy of the minutes of the March 21, 2003 Operations Board meeting.

Closed Session. Mr. Donley moved, with a second by Mr. Connolly, to approve the following motion:

Pursuant to the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (Section 2.2-3711A (7) of the Code of Virginia), the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission authorizes discussion in closed session regarding legal matters pertaining to litigation with Manassas Park and CSX contract negotiations.

The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Almand, Bulova, Connolly, Donley, Fisette, Hanley, McConnell, Mims, Rae, Silverthorne, Snyder, Whipple and Zimmerman.

Mr. Albo arrived as the commission entered into closed session at 8:25 P.M. Mr. Ferguson arrived as Mr. Donley moved to return to open session. Mrs. Hanley seconded. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Albo, Almand, Bulova, Connolly, Donley, Fisette, Hanley, McConnell, Mims, Rae, Silverthorne, Snyder, Whipple and Zimmerman. Mr. Ferguson abstained. The commission returned to open session at 8:45 P.M.

Mr. Donley moved, with a second by Mr. Connolly, to approve 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 Albo, Almand, Bulova, Connolly, Donley, Fisette, Hanley, McConnell, Mims, Rae, Silverthorne, Snyder, Whipple and Zimmerman. Mr. Ferguson abstained.

Mr. Donley moved, with a second by Mr. Connolly, to approve Resolution #964, which would authorize the execution of an agreement with the city of Manassas Park regarding the elimination of resident parking restrictions at VRE's Manassas Park station.

In response to a question from Mrs. Bulova, Mr. MacIsaac reported that PRTC approved the same resolution at their April 3, 2003 meeting.

The commission then voted on the motion and it passed. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Albo, Almand, Bulova, Connolly, Donley, Ferguson, Fisette, Hanley, McConnell, Mims, Rae, Silverthorne, Snyder, Whipple and Zimmerman. (A copy of the resolution is attached.)

Mrs. Hanley moved, with a second by Mr. Zimmerman, to ask Senator Warner to write a letter to CSXT on behalf of VRE to memorialize changes made by CSXT to improve its cooperation with VRE and to also include future expectations. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Albo, Almand, Bulova, Connolly, Donley, Ferguson, Fisette, Hanley, McConnell, Mims, Rae, Silverthorne, Snyder, Whipple and Zimmerman.

Other NVTC Business

Mrs. Whipple noted that there may be a conflict with next month's meeting because of James Wilding's retirement dinner. Staff was directed to poll commissioners and make any needed changes to NVTC's May meeting time and/or location.

Mr. Snyder asked that Mr. Taube work with Virginia's Emergency Management Agency to help coordinate some transportation initiatives. There were no objections.

Adjournment

On a motion by Mr. Zimmerman and a second by Mrs. Whipple, the commission unanimously agreed to adjourn. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Albo, Almand, Bulova, Connolly, Donley, Ferguson, Fisette, Hanley, McConnell, Mims, Rae, Silverthorne, Snyder, Whipple and Zimmerman. Chairman McConnell adjourned the meeting at 8:49 P.M.

Approved this first day of May, 2003.

Elaine McConnell
Chairman

Paul Ferguson
Secretary-Treasurer