

MINUTES
NVTC COMMISSION MEETING – APRIL 7, 2005
NVTC CONFERENCE ROOM – ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA

The meeting of the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission was called to order by Chairman Ferguson at 8:01 P.M.

Members Present

David Albo
Sharon Bulova
Gerald Connolly
William D. Euille
Eugene Delgaudio
Paul Ferguson
Ludwig Gaines
Catherine M. Hudgins
Dana Kauffman
Elaine McConnell
Karen Rae
Scott Silverthorne
Mary Margaret Whipple
Christopher Zimmerman

Members Absent

Jeannemarie Devolites Davis
Adam Ebbin
Jay Fiset
Timothy Hugo
Gary A. Reese
David F. Snyder

Staff Present

Rhonda Gilchrest
Scott Kalkwarf
Jana Lynott
Adam McGavock
Stephen MacIsaac (VRE)
Kala Quintana
Elizabeth Rodgers
Jennifer Straub (VRE)
Richard K. Taube
Dale Zehner (VRE)

Public Comment

Chairman Ferguson stated that there has been a request from a citizen to comment on NVTC's mission. Ken Reid, executive director of LOWER, (Landowners Workgroup for Economic Rapidtransit and also Landowners Opposing Wasteful Expenditures on Rail), handed out copies of his statement to commissioners. He explained that his organization supports market-based transportation solutions in the Dulles Corridor and Northern Virginia, specifically express toll lanes, on which rapid express buses and carpools can operate in addition to single-occupant vehicles. They oppose the extension of Metrorail to Tysons Corner and beyond because it necessitates \$700 million or more in taxes and higher tolls from Northern Virginia residents and it will not alleviate congestion.

Mr. Reid expressed his concern that NVTC and its mission has become more of an advocacy group—specifically for WMATA—instead of being an overseer of the public's money. He stated that the Commonwealth of Virginia's stated purpose of establishing NVTC in 1964 was to facilitate "planning and developing a transportation system for Northern Virginia and for the safety, comfort and convenience of its citizens and for the economical utilization of public funds." The commission should be focusing on the last part of that purpose.

Mr. Silverthorne arrived at 8:05 P.M.

Mr. Reid stated that LOWER was unaware of what NVTC staff was doing until Mr. Taube wrote a diatribe about a report LOWER released in October. NVTC's goals also include "distribute periodic transit nuggets with information about transit's success in a catchy format that can be posted on websites and used by transit advocates in educating the public," as well as a goal to "provide draft letters on NVTC's website for the use of citizens wishing to support NVTC's legislative and policy positions. Provide links to other groups supporting these positions." Mr. Reid stated that he is not aware of any other agency that engages in this kind of propagandizing and the commission is not exercising proper oversight.

Mr. Reid urged NVTC to focus more energy on WMATA's bloated budget and its inability to control its union costs. NVTC seems to do some very good oversight of VRE expenditures. It would be helpful for NVTC to spend more time seeing where the region's money is being spent at WMATA, especially since four cents on the gallon is going into mass transit.

Oath of Office for a New Commissioner

Chairman Ferguson administered the oath of office to Eugene Delgaudio, who was appointed to NVTC by the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors. Commissioners welcomed him to NVTC.

Minutes of NVTC Meeting of March 3, 2004

Mr. Zimmerman moved, with a second by Mr. Gaines, to approve the minutes. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Delgaudio, Euille, Ferguson, Gaines, Hudgins, Kauffman, McConnell, Rae, Silverthorne, Whipple and Zimmerman.

VRE Items

Report from the VRE Operations Board. The minutes of the March 18th Operations Board meeting were provided. Mrs. McConnell explained that it seems that Stafford County is not going to contribute its VRE subsidy increase. Mr. Zehner stated that Stafford County has not yet voted on its budget. Mrs. McConnell reported that Fauquier and Spotsylvania counties are considering joining PRTC and VRE.

VRE Subsidies Versus Ridership by Jurisdiction. The report shows that 821 Spotsylvania County residents ride VRE based on the October, 2004 survey, making this the fourth largest jurisdiction in terms of ridership. Spotsylvania County pays no subsidy. The report also shows ridership for the other jurisdictions.

Manassas Park Platform Extension. Mrs. McConnell stated that Resolution #1070 would authorize VRE's CEO to award a contract to NV Enterprises, Inc. to construct a platform extension at the Manassas Park VRE station. The total contract value would not exceed \$859,848, which includes a 15 percent contingency. Grant funds are available in VRE's approved CIP.

Mrs. McConnell moved, with a second by Mr. Zimmerman, to approve the resolution (copy attached). The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Delgaudio, Euille, Ferguson, Gaines, Hudgins, Kauffman, McConnell, Rae, Silverthorne, Whipple and Zimmerman.

Mr. Albo arrived at 8:11 P.M.

Performance Budgeting at NVTC

Mr. Taube gave a presentation on NVTC performance measures. He stated that the process includes a survey of commissioners, incorporating additional measures into the NVTC budget for FY 2007 and a year-end review. He stated that NVTC already has measures in place to some extent with its annual workprogram, which includes goals and objectives. Twice a year, staff formally reports to the commission on the progress that has been made. Mr. Taube then reviewed performance measures NVTC could implement.

Mrs. Bulova joined the discussion at 8:16 P.M.

Mrs. Whipple stated that staff's work is a good start for a topic that has some merit. She suggested staff continue to work on these documents and include limited performance measures by starting simply. As NVTC gains experience and sees how useful the measures can be, then more performance measures can be added.

Senator Whipple moved, with a second by Mr. Euille, to generally approve the direction staff is taking to move forward on performance measures. Delegate Albo suggested picking one part of the budget to do first that is more easily measured. Mr. Taube suggested financial management. Senator Whipple agreed to include Delegate Albo's suggestion as a friendly amendment to her motion. Mr. Delgaudio agreed that it is important to start with small bites.

The commission then voted on the motion and it passed. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Albo, Bulova, Delgaudio, Euille, Ferguson, Gaines, Hudgins, Kauffman, McConnell, Rae, Silverthorne, Whipple and Zimmerman.

NVTC By-Laws Change to Permit Alternates

Chairman Ferguson stated that this proposal was discussed at the March 3rd NVTC meeting. He explained that this came about because NVTC has had a quorum issue in the past, not necessarily the number of commissioners but having a majority of jurisdictions present. There are three jurisdictions that have only one commissioner appointed to NVTC. By changing the By-laws, it would give the jurisdictions an option to name an alternate from their Board of Supervisors or City Council. In response to a question from Mr. Euille, Chairman Ferguson stated that an alternate must be an elected official.

Mr. Euille moved, with a second by Mr. Gaines, to approve the changes to NVTC's By-Laws. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Albo, Bulova, Euille, Ferguson, Gaines, Hudgins, Kauffman, McConnell, Rae, Silverthorne, Whipple and Zimmerman. Mr. Delgaudio voted in opposition to the motion.

Public Information Strategy to Promote Sustainable Funding for WMATA

Mr. Taube reported that at its March 3rd meeting, NVTC discussed the need for an effective strategy to educate the public about WMATA's strong performance and need for sustainable funding. He gave a presentation on ten different ideas on how to do this. He stated that it is important to agree on a central message, such as:

Metro is a success. It is a great investment. It may have some problems, but it remains the best system in the country. Fix the problems, don't destroy the system. Let's not ruin a good thing by pinching pennies while legitimate needs go unfunded.

Chairman Ferguson noted that an important statistic is that 64 percent of WMATA funding shares come from the local/regional/fares. Mr. Kauffman stated Metro has found that of those people in Northern Virginia commuting to the core area, about one-third use transit.

Mr. Connolly arrived at 8:37 P.M.

Mr. Euille stated that NVTC should move in this direction as presented by staff, but commissioners should take some time and review it. Therefore, he suggested not taking any action until the next commission meeting.

Mr. Kauffman stated that he provided this report to WMATA communications staff and they will add their comments. He passed out a synopsis of what Metro has been doing over the last few months and he encouraged commissioners to use this information when they are dealing with the public. Mr. Connolly observed that WMATA has added 12 new rail stations in nine years and completed the last 13.5 miles of the original 103-mile Metrorail system ten months ahead of schedule and \$330 million under budget.

Mr. Delgaudio asked staff to report back to the commission on how much it would cost to implement these NVTC initiatives outlined in the report.

Legislative Items

State Legislation. Mr. Taube reported that for FY 2005 NVTC should expect \$81.4 million from the state for WMATA, VRE and local bus systems. These state formula programs for FY 2006 would increase almost \$10 million for a total of \$91.2 million. There are some other FY 2006 programs that will provide substantial funding, including \$40 million for Metrorail railcar purchases, \$2 million in local bus capital, \$20 million for VRE railcars and \$5.9 million for track leases. Approximately \$20 million of FY 2006 Metro Matters program costs are to be funded by the VTA 2000 Metro Railcar program previously contracted with DRPT.

Mr. Connolly asked if the \$20 million for VRE railcars and \$40 million for Metrorail cars from the state free up capital otherwise would have been spent for these purchases. Ms. Rae answered that it is additional funding. Mr. Connolly observed that these procurements will enhance capacity but will not free up additional capital for ongoing funding commitments. Mr. Euille acknowledged the work of the General Assembly and VDRPT for this funding. Senator Whipple stated one of the compelling arguments for funding for Metro railcars was that there is so much demand for Metro and the current railcars are full. As soon as the new railcars are put into service, they will be utilized. Mrs. Hudgins stated that it's not just peak hours that railcars are crowded, especially on the Orange Line.

Delegate Albo suggested that NVTC should try to get the House Appropriations Committee members to tour Northern Virginia and experience congestion firsthand. Mr. Connolly stated that in the past when legislators have experienced congestion in this region, it has made a difference.

Federal Legislation. Mr. Taube announced that the House has acted on its TEA-21 reauthorization. VRE has a \$100 million earmark (\$50 million federal share). One problem with the House's reauthorization (HR3) is a prohibition on additional value pricing projects that would appear to threaten public-private transportation proposals in this region. Since this region is looking to use HOT lanes and other capacity enhancements, it would be a shame to rule this out. The commission is asked to authorize its chairman to write to NVTC's U.S. Senators to express concern about this provision in HR3 and to urge them not to enact the same clause in the Senate version. The Senate is expected to vote soon on its version of TEA-21.

Mr. Connolly moved, with a second by Mr. Zimmerman, to authorize Chairman Ferguson to send the letter.

Mr. Delgaudio stated that he is in favor of HOT lanes. He asked what was the intent of the House to include this provision. Mr. Taube stated that he can't speak definitively to the intent but speculated that it was those that believe that toll lanes in general are not a good idea for federally funded facilities, including the trucking industry. Mr. Connolly offered to hand deliver Senator Warner's letter, since he will be meeting with him on Friday.

The commission then voted on the motion and it passed. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Albo, Bulova, Connolly, Delgaudio, Euille, Ferguson, Gaines, Hudgins, Kauffman, McConnell, Rae, Silverthorne, Whipple and Zimmerman.

Ms. Rae stated that there are upcoming issues with Amtrak. She offered to funnel information to NVTC concerning this issue.

CTB Testimony. Mr. Taube stated that CTB will conduct a statewide public hearing on the proposed six-year transportation program on April 19th. Updated comments were provided for commission review. Ms. Rae suggested staff check with Chip Badger concerning the FY 2006 62 percent match, which will drop back below 30 percent in FY 2007. Senator Whipple stated that an important statistic is that since FY 2001, payments for transit in Northern Virginia using local funds have grown by 41 percent while state aid grew by only 15 percent. She stated that local governments are making an extraordinary effort.

On a motion by Mr. Connolly and a second by Mr. Zimmerman, the commission unanimously authorized Chairman Ferguson to present the testimony before the Commonwealth Transportation Board. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Albo, Bulova, Connolly, Delgaudio, Euille, Ferguson, Gaines, Hudgins, Kauffman, McConnell, Rae, Silverthorne, Whipple and Zimmerman.

WMATA Items

Research on Railcar Seating Configurations. The WMATA Board has approved the installation of video cameras to study how passengers move around in Metrorail cars. This information will be studied before WMATA experiments with various seating configurations to expand passenger capacity and improve passenger comfort.

Financial Performance as of January, 2005. WMATA's cost recovery was 53 percent for January, bringing the fiscal year to date percentage to 58.6 percent versus a budget target of 56.5 percent. Rail recovered 71.5 percent in January and bus recovered 30.6 percent. WMATA's revenue trend suggests a favorable \$8 million variance by the end of the year.

Regional Transportation Items

Federal Subsidies to Passenger Transportation. Mr. Taube reported that the Bureau of Transportation Statistics of the USDOT has published a report that compares federal subsidies to various modes and concludes that public transit received the greatest amount of net federal subsidy from 1990 (\$5.09 billion annually) to 2002 (\$7.31 billion annually). However, the report only focuses on the federal side of spending. Also, the use of each mode is expressed in thousands of passenger miles. Transit in general is used for short-distance trips and is at a disadvantage when passenger-miles are used for comparisons. Airlines are just the opposite. In response to a question from Senator Whipple, Mr. Taube stated that the definition of modes is suspect since school buses are lumped with transit. Mr. Zimmerman observed that school buses don't charge fares.

Mr. Connolly stated that it might be useful for staff to catalog the methodology concerns and send those concerns to Northern Virginia's congressional delegation. Chairman Ferguson directed staff to draft a letter for his signature. There were no objections.

Traffic Congestion and Reliability. Cambridge Systematics has prepared a report for the Federal Highway Administration that summarizes recent trends in congestion and highlights the role of unreliable travel times. When the report was written in 2002, the I-495 intersection with I-95 at the Springfield Interchange was ranked as the 15th worst in the U.S. with 15,035,000 annual persons hours of delay.

Performance-Based Measures in Transit Funding Allocation. Mr. Taube reported that the Transportation Research Board's TCRP Synthesis 56 was released in late 2004. The research was performed by Cambridge Systematics and examined changes since the last report in 1994. The report shows that only four states use performance measures to allocate transit funds.

Fairfax County Transportation Summit. Mrs. McConnell stated that the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors convened a transportation summit on March 11th. It was a success with over 200 people attending. Ms. Rae expressed her opinion that it was an excellent forum. Mr. Connolly agreed and thanked Mrs. McConnell for taking the lead in organizing the summit. He stated that one of the most dramatic charts handed out was a simple bar chart that showed by 2014, Virginia--without an infusion of new revenues--will no longer have the capacity to match federal funds. By 2018, no money is left for any new construction and it will all go to maintenance. This is information that needs to be shared with the General Assembly. Mr. Connolly asked Ms. Rae to provide copies of Mary Lynne Tischer's summit presentation for NVTC's next meeting.

Healthy Returns: The Economic Impact of Public Investment in Surface Transportation. Mr. Taube stated that APTA has released this March, 2005 report by Robert J. Shapiro and Kevin A. Hassett. The report concludes that surface transportation produces \$4 in direct benefits for each \$1 in direct costs.

Update on NVTC Correspondence

Corridor Traffic Counting to Determine Mode Shares. Mr. Taube reported that \$67,000 is included in TPB's draft FY 2006 workprogram for this pilot project. In response to a question from Senator Whipple, Mr. Taube stated that these funds will provide for counting on one screen-line in one corridor. If it is successful, NVTC will go after more funding for additional work.

Mr. Taube stated that NVTC wants to do additional counting to provide a more accurate look at the entire corridor and include Metrorail as well as parallel facilities. The I-66 corridor would be a good example. Mr. Taube went on to give a PowerPoint presentation on the results of recent VDOT counts on HOV facilities.

Concern for CMAQ/RSTP Rescissions. NVTC received a response from VDOT stating that they did not rescind any CMAQ or Regional STP funds. Back in November VDOT received advance notification of a possible increase in federal funds for the current fiscal year. The decision was made not to budget these additional funds because it seemed uncertain. The \$31 million comes from this unbudgeted amount and reductions were made to the largest categories of Interstate Maintenance, National Highway System, Surface Transportation Program, and Minimum Guarantee.

Teleworking

Mr. Connolly asked if NVTC has addressed any issues involving telework. Mr. Taube stated that he can't recall addressing this issue but it is within NVTC's mission. Mr. Connolly stated that he and Delegate Jim Scott had been meeting with Whitt Clement, the former Secretary of Transportation, to encourage the Governor to implement measures to promote telework. They have received surprising resistance. The state has been urged to form a statewide telework council. It may not matter in more rural areas of the state, but it matters enormously in Northern Virginia. He stated that he would appreciate NVTC's assistance in sending a letter to the Governor and the new Secretary of Transportation to encourage them to implement this legislation.

Mr. Connolly moved, with a second by Mrs. Hudgins, to authorize its chairman to send a letter to the Governor and the new Secretary of Transportation.

Chairman Ferguson suggested inviting the new Secretary of Transportation to meet with the commission. Mr. Connolly stated that both an invitation and letter would be good. Senator Whipple observed that some thought on planning an agenda would need to be looked at if the Secretary is invited. There were no objections to inviting the Secretary to a future meeting. Mr. Connolly urged commissioners to submit agenda ideas for this meeting.

The commission then voted on the motion, including the suggestions made, and it passed. The vote in favor was cast by commissioners Albo, Bulova, Connolly, Delgaudio, Euille, Ferguson, Gaines, Hudgins, Kauffman, McConnell, Rae, Silverthorne, Whipple and Zimmerman.

FY 2004 Northern Virginia Transit Performance Data

NVTC staff completed updates of performance information collected from Northern Virginia's nine transit systems. These tables are available on NVTC's website. On-time performance remains strong and ridership is up on every system except PRTC's OmniLink and Metrobus, which is plagued with some questionable data during the changeover to new fareboxes. There were no questions.

FY 2005 Budget Funding Sources for Northern Virginia Transit

These tables show funding shares for WMATA, local bus systems and VRE as of FY 2005. For FY 2005, \$468.1 million is budgeted for transit, with state funds providing 20.4 percent, federal funds providing 15.5 percent and local/regional/fares covering the remaining 64 percent. There were no questions from commissioners.

NVTC Financial Reports for February, 2005

Commissioners were provided with the financial reports and there were no questions.

Adjournment

Without objection, Chairman Ferguson adjourned the meeting at 9:27 P.M.

Approved this 5th day of May, 2005.

Paul Ferguson
Chairman

David F. Snyder
Secretary-Treasurer