

Northern Virginia Transportation Authority
Comments on
Draft FY 2016 – 2021 Six-Year Improvement Program
April 28, 2015

Good Evening Secretary Layne, Commissioner Kilpatrick, Director Mitchell, and members of the Commonwealth Transportation Board. My name is Martin Nohe and I am Chairman of the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority. I am here to present the Authority's comments on the Draft FY 2016 – 2021 Six-Year Improvement Program as well as comment on several other matters. The Authority's comments are as follows:

- **The Authority is working diligently to implement the regional components of HB 2313 (2013). VDOT and DRPT are continuing to work on the congestion-related evaluation process required by Virginia law and VDOT is also implementing several projects the Authority has funded. Continued coordination and cooperation with the Commonwealth is essential to ensuring that we are able to fully utilize the resources provided to implement the necessary improvements to Northern Virginia's transportation infrastructure.**
- **We would like to thank Deputy Secretary Donohue for meeting with the Authority last week to discuss HB 2 (2014) and HB 1887 (2015) implementation. It will be essential to continue the collaboration between the Commonwealth and the Authority, as projects may need to be evaluated by both HB 2 and the Northern Virginia congestion-related evaluation process (HB 599/SB 531, 2012) to receive the local and regional funding they may need to move forward. We stand ready to work with you on the implementation of HB 2 and are willing to provide any assistance we can.**
- **Due to the large role that VDOT and DRPT have in the implementation of HB 2, HB 1887, HB 2313, HB 599/SB 531, as well as project implementation, it is essential that VDOT has sufficient resources needed to participate in this effort.**
- **As the HB 2 process continues, please be mindful of the language in HB 2313 that states that Northern Virginia's regional funds cannot be used to calculate or reduce the share of local, federal, or state revenues otherwise available to participating jurisdictions.**
- **In addition, we request that VDOT engage the Authority and our local governments earlier in the six-year program process. Local, regional, state-wide, and federal funds are all a part of the solution for addressing the long-term transportation needs of the Commonwealth, and it is essential that we all work together to ensure these needs are met. In relation to this point, the Authority requests that in the future, the CTB try to coordinate these meeting with our localities and agencies, to ensure that they do not conflict with our regularly-scheduled board and council meetings.**
- **The Authority is concerned that Northern Virginia is only expected to receive 10.6 percent (\$36.1 million) of State of Good Repair funds. According to VDOT's**

Dashboard, 79 percent of roads in Northern Virginia are in Fair or Better Condition. We are one of only three transportation districts below the 82 percent target, and only Richmond’s pavement conditions are worse. Secondary pavement conditions are even worse, with only 30 percent of these roads in Northern Virginia in Fair or Better Condition, far less than the Commonwealth’s average of 60 percent. Millions of people drive on our roads every day and these deteriorated pavements will only get worse until something is done to address them.

- **The Authority is also concerned that the Draft SYIP includes a substantial decrease in funding for the Revenue Sharing program over the next six years. This program significantly leverages state transportation funds by encouraging local governments to spend their own money on transportation projects. This program has been a success in Northern Virginia, where our localities regularly apply for these funds, several for the maximum amount allowed. By design, the Revenue Sharing program has allowed more projects throughout the Commonwealth to move forward through the leveraging of funds from local sources. Reducing this funding will only slow the efforts to improve our transportation system.**
- **The Administration has also begun updating VTrans, which will include a comprehensive review of statewide transportation needs. We thank the Administration for including Authority staff amongst the stakeholders during this process and look forward to continuing to work with the Administration and provide input throughout the process.**
- **We are concerned that the VTrans Vision Statement discusses “improving goods movement and supporting strategic placemaking,” but does not address the need to improve moving people. We do ask you ensure that there is coordination between local and regional plans in regard to VTrans. The Authority, many localities, and regional agencies have incorporated performance measures into their own plans and programs. Coordination will be necessary to ensure consistency in measures across these plans.**
- **In regards to the VTrans Guiding Principles, the Authority generally concurs with the principles but has the following comments:**
 - **Guiding Principle 1 (Optimize Return on Investment) must embrace all modes.**
 - **Guiding Principle 4 (Consider Operational Improvements and Demand Management First) speaks to the increasingly important role of transportation technology, as well as innovative options to influence travel behavior. Attention to the role and impact (good and bad) of driverless vehicles over the life of the plan may be appropriate.**
 - **Guiding Principle 5 (Provide Transparency and Accountability through Performance Management) could require the development of region wide monitoring systems. If this is necessary, we request that the Commonwealth work with the Authority and other stakeholders on this important topic.**
 - **Guiding Principle 6 (Improving Coordination between Transportation and Land Use) notes that this will include “providing incentives” to local governments for**

this purpose. The Authority and jurisdictions stand ready to coordinate with the Commonwealth in ensuring congruence between local land use plans and the Commonwealth’s transportation plans, but would like additional information on what this and the incentives may include.

- **With regard to the Plan’s Goals and Objectives, the Authority has the following comments:**
 - **Goal A (Economic Competitiveness and Prosperity) should consider increasing person throughput as another Objective**
 - **Goal B (Accessible and Connected Places): Regional activity centers are defined in Northern Virginia and improved accessibility to, between, and within these activity centers is important for the region. Regional activity centers should be used when measuring the outcome of this Goal’s objectives.**
 - **Goal C (Safety for All Users) should incorporate all modes, including roadways, transit, and bicycle/pedestrian facilities.**

- **In addition to addressing the foregoing major issues, the Authority also wishes to comment on the following:**
 - **Thank you for continuing to include the Virginia match for Federal dedicated funding for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority and we ask that the Commonwealth continue to provide these vital funds. We appreciate this significant commitment to help WMATA bring its system into a state of good repair and restore safe and reliable operations. Additionally, WMATA's strategic plan (Momentum) provides direction for critical system capacity investments to meet the region's anticipated population and economic growth, and WMATA is requesting its funding partners to increase contributions over the next decade to fully utilize the system.**

 - **Work continues on the statewide transit formula, through the Transit Service Delivery Advisory Committee (TSDAC). We are pleased that work is being done on pilot programs to address congestion mitigation and transit dependent riders. We are thankful that the Administration addressed the counting of Metrorail ridership, which is essential to the new operations formula for transit. However, concerns remain over the change to how state transit capital assistance participation is calculated, i.e. “net” versus “gross” costs, which results in an outcome where Northern Virginia is the only region that must increase local support for its capital projects. We stand ready to continue to work on this issue and ask that you remember the importance of transit in the region and the impact any change in funding may have in the region.**

 - **The Authority continues to be concerned by provisions in the State Code that provide VDOT and the CTB the ability to decide whether a local transportation plan is consistent with the Commonwealth’s priorities. If VDOT and the CTB decide that a local plan is not consistent, the CTB can withhold funding for projects. While efforts to better coordinate local and state transportation planning are appreciated, these provisions essentially transfer the responsibility**

for land use planning, as it relates to transportation, from local governments to the Commonwealth. Our localities work diligently with our residents, property owners, and the local business communities on our land use and transportation plans. These provisions could inhibit development and redevelopment efforts throughout Virginia.

- **The Authority remains opposed to any policy that would require the transfer of secondary road construction and maintenance responsibilities to counties and specifically, Northern Virginia jurisdictions. Unfunded mandates of this magnitude would result in dire consequences to localities.**
- **The federal government requires that a portion of CMAQ funds be spent on projects that reduce certain particulate matter (PM 2.5), which restricts what type of projects can receive this federal funding. As such, we ask the CTB to reconsider its decision regarding hybrid vehicle purchases using CMAQ funds since these vehicles qualify for this purpose while many other projects may not.**
- **The Authority thanks the Commonwealth for its continued partnership in funding VRE's track leases and requests the CTB continue to assist with funding necessary capacity improvements to the system.**
- **The Authority requests that the CTB, DRPT and VDOT support, promote, and encourage walking and bicycling as more viable modes of transportation and look for opportunities to enhance pedestrian and bicycle connectivity in the Northern Virginia.**
- **The Authority supports the policy that major transportation corridor studies related to facilities wholly within one VDOT construction district, should be managed by that construction district rather than the VDOT Central Office. Regional VDOT staff is better equipped to address the concern of the affected citizens and local governments.**
- **The Authority believes the CTB should adopt policies that simplify and shorten environmental reviews for locally administered projects and streamline transportation project review by further delegating the design review process from VDOT to the local governments and by adopting a uniform timeframe for plan reviews that remain under VDOT jurisdiction. These efforts would save Virginia taxpayers money and simultaneously result in timely approvals of contextually appropriate projects.**
- **We request that this testimony be made part of the Draft Six-Year Improvement Program public hearing record, and that full consideration be given to these comments in preparing the FY 2016 – 2021 Six-Year Improvement Program. Thank you again for the opportunity to speak today. Please let me know if I can provide any clarification regarding the Authority's testimony.**