



## Northern Virginia Transportation Authority

The Authority for Transportation in Northern Virginia

### MINUTES

Thursday, September 9, 2021

7:00pm

3040 Williams Drive, Suite 200

Fairfax, VA 22031

Meeting conducted in person and Live Streamed via YouTube

#### Call to Order

Chair Randall

- ✓ Chair Randall called the meeting to order at 7:02pm.

#### 2. Roll Call

Margaret Duker, Clerk

- ✓ Voting Members: Chair Randall; Councilmember Snyder; Chairman McKay; Chair Wheeler; Board Member Cristol; Mayor Wilson; Mayor Rishell; Mayor Davis-Younger; Senator Boysko; Delegate Roem; Ms. Hynes; Mr. Kolb.
- ✓ Non-Voting Members; Ms. Sinner (for Mr. Lynch); Mr. Horsley (for Ms. Mitchell)
- ✓ Staff: Monica Backmon (CEO); Michael Longhi (CFO); Erica Hawksworth (Communications and Public Affairs Manager); Margaret Duker (Board Clerk).
- ✓ Other Attendees: Rob Dickerson (Council of Counsel – Prince William County); MinhChau Corr (Council of Counsel – Arlington County); Daniel Robinson (Council of Counsel – Fairfax County); Joanna Anderson (Remote Participant; Council of Council- City of Alexandria); Tracy Baynard (McGuire Woods Consulting LLC).

#### 3. Minutes of the July 8, 2021 Meeting

*Recommended action: Approval [with abstentions from those who were not present]*

- ✓ Mayor Rishell motioned for the acceptance of the July 8, 2021, meeting minutes; seconded by Delegate Roem. Motion passed by 10-0-2 (Chair Randall and Chairman McKay abstained as they were not at the last meeting).

### Presentation

#### 4. Transit Equity and Modernization Study

Ms. Ciara Williams, DRPT

- ✓ Ms. Williams from the Department of Rail and Public Transport (DRPT) proceeded with a presentation on the Transit Equity and Modernization Study.
- ✓ She stated that this study was instituted through Resolution HJ 542 at the 2021 General Assembly Session, where DRPT was asked to create a needs assessment which focused on the equitable delivery and modernization of transit services in the Commonwealth, with emphasis on transit services and engagement opportunities for underserved and underrepresented communities.

- ✓ In addition, the resolution requires DRPT to explore a variety of topics ranging from transit accessibility, adequacy of infrastructure, transit electrification, emerging technologies, transit safety and system engagement and governance.
- ✓ The interim report for this study is due in December 2021, with the final report due in August 2022.
- ✓ Ms. Williams noted that the study will seek to identify the needs of transit agencies, riders and stakeholders and develop an action plan to address those needs.
- ✓ She highlighted that this study is not about conducting an asset inventory, nor singling out transit agencies for poor performance, conditions and so forth.
- ✓ Noting that the study only applies to transit agencies which apply for DRPT funding.
- ✓ She added that DRPT is the project administrator for the study with Kimley Horn and Associates as the prime consultant.
- ✓ Other sub-consultants include Sharpe and Company, Powerful Pathways, Virginia Transit Association among others.
- ✓ Ms. Williams noted that this study involves a pretty aggressive timeline, and the development process is as follows:
  - Data collection in Summer 2021
  - Needs and Opportunities Assessment in Fall 2021
  - Developing an Action Plan in Winter 2021-2022
  - Submitting the Final Report in Spring 2022
- ✓ The data collection phase will cover a wide range including Public Participation Plans, Bus Stop Amenities Data, Capital Improvement Programs/Plans, Census data, Transit Asset Management (TAM) plans, COVID-19 strategies, and cleaning protocols, DRPT Multimodal System Design Guidelines among others.
- ✓ She added that the transit agency and public engagement activities will help inform the development of the needs and opportunities assessment.
- ✓ The Transit Agency Engagement Activities will consist of a Transit Agency Survey, a Transit Equity Committee (TEC), Four Technical Working Groups, Transit Equity Training, Transit Agency Outreach Kit and Agency Interviews.
- ✓ On the other hand, the Public Engagement Activities will comprise of a Study Website, Stakeholder Meetings, Virtual Transit Equity and Modernization Forum, Transit Rider Focus Groups, Comment Database and Board Briefings.
- ✓ Findings from these Needs and Opportunities Assessment will further inform the development of a Study Action Plan which will include recommendations and implementation strategies which will address specific barriers.
- ✓ This Action Plan will describe specific actions, next steps, required coordination and timeline for implementation noting agencies which will be responsible.
- ✓ Worth noting that this Study is not to satisfy legislative requirements, rather DRPT anticipates the Study Action Plan will advise changes to DRPT funding programs and policies, and the development of future plans.
- ✓ The final report will be submitted to the General Assembly in August 2022, together with a summary of the study process, findings, an executive summary

and the following key questions which the General Assembly would like to have answered:

- *What will it take to make the Commonwealth's transit networks equitable and modern?*
- *What can DRPT and other partners do to achieve this goal?*
- ✓ Ms. Williams highlighted that the four topic areas which the four Technical Working Groups (TWGs) will focus on include the Accessibility and Adequacy of Infrastructure, Emerging Technologies and Electrification, Transit Safety, System Engagement and Governance.
- ✓ For example, regarding Accessibility and Adequacy of Infrastructure, the TWG will review why a bus-stop does not meet the minimum ADA requirement?
- ✓ The TWG will also look at electrification and emerging technologies, ways to bridge variances in electrification and infrastructure; what it will take to fully electrify Northern Virginia.
- ✓ With regards to Transit Safety, the TWG will review to include lessons learned from COVID-19 in terms of rider and employee safety protocols.
- ✓ On System Engagement and Governance, the TWG will analyze transit agencies engagement with the public and also seek to answer questions like 'how disadvantaged and underrepresented populations are represented on transit advisory boards or government agencies and how transit agencies define this population'?
- ✓ Delegate Roem noted that as the State transitions back to pre-COVID-19 ridership levels, it is important to keep encouraging people to have an alternative to driving on I-66. She however noted that the high cost of transit fares poses a challenge, citing that a round trip from Spotsylvania to Crystal City costs not less than \$24 and wanted to know if that could be addressed as part of the study.
- ✓ Ms. Williams responded that affordability is one of the key areas which the study seeks to address.
- ✓ Chairman McKay asked whether the resolution creating the Study provided any parameters regarding the underrepresented and the underserved in the community. He pointed out that if this is measured by income or accessibility to transit, Northern Virginia has various transit systems in place but there are still communities being underserved. He added that there are also people with high income but have no accessibility to transit so it will be helpful to know what the parameters are for the purpose of this study.
- ✓ Ms. Williams responded that the resolution did not lay out a definition of who the underserved or underrepresented are but she will be looking into it.
- ✓ Chairman McKay continued that his reason for asking is because he has seen different studies where the goal of such studies was to take money in Northern Virginia and distribute it in different parts of the State, noting that there are many underserved and underrepresented communities in Northern Virginia but when compared to other parts of the State on paper, may not appear as underserved.

- ✓ He stated that as a strong believer in transit and equity, he wants to ensure that this study does not do the opposite of what it is intended to accomplish.
- ✓ Ms. Williams responded that she would look into the issue of the parameters for the Study and update the Authority.
- ✓ Chairman McKay thanked her in advance noting that since this study is of regional significance, it will be greatly appreciated.
- ✓ Mr. Horsley also pointed out that although the legislation did not specifically denote the parameters for the Study, Northern Virginia is well represented on DRPT's Transit Equity Committee which serves as the steering committee for this study and the issue of parameters came up at their recent committee meeting.
- ✓ Senator Boysko remarked that many members of the House and Senate are from Northern Virginia and since the goal for this study is to ensure transit equity across the region, will be following the process closely.
- ✓ Board Member Cristol remarked that she has had the opportunity of seeing some of the considerations surrounding zero fare. She noted that between 40% - 50% of riders pay for their rides with subsidies. Adding that there are a lot of logistical challenges involved in trying to figure out who really needs it and has to be approached in a way which does not stigmatize riders nor leave money on the table as well.
- ✓ Chair Randall also asked if there are any action plans under the Study overview and to whom will the report be submitted to.
- ✓ Ms. Williams responded that there are no action plans at this point of the Study, and that the final report will be submitted to the General Assembly.
- ✓ Delegate Roem added that it will be expedient for the report to be submitted to the General Assembly in advance so that any necessary steps can be taken.
- ✓ Chair Randall asked Senator Boysko whether she knew which committees the final report would be presented to.
- ✓ Senator Boysko responded that she was unsure at this time.
- ✓ Chair Randall asked whether DRPT envisaged whether anything could be impacted based on the results of the gubernatorial elections.
- ✓ Mr. Horsley responded that he did not think so since the interim report due in December will mainly be a progress report for the General Assembly.
- ✓ With regards to stakeholder participation, Councilmember Snyder wanted to know how NVTAs as a body, would provide input towards the study.
- ✓ Ms. Backmon responded that NVTAs participated in the initial discussions and will continue to do so over the course of the study.

### **Action Items**

**5. Approval of Town of Leesburg Interchange Improvements at Route 15 Leesburg Bypass and Edwards Ferry Road - Regional Standard Project Agreement 2018-055-3**

Mr. Longhi, CFO

*Recommended Action: Approval of Regional Standard Project Agreement*

- ✓ Mr. Longhi noted that since this was the only Standard Project Agreement on the agenda, there was no consent agenda.

- ✓ He proceeded to inform the Authority that this project was adopted as part of the FY2018-2023 Six Year Program and received FY2022 appropriation last April for an amount of \$5.4 million.
- ✓ Prior to that, the project also received a total of \$2 million in the FY2014 and FY2015-16 programs for the study and preliminary engineering phase.
- ✓ He added that the SPA has been reviewed by NVTA's Council of Counsel and presents no legal issues.
- ✓ Chair Randall moved approval of the proposed Standard Project Agreement 2018-055-3 Town of Leesburg (Route15/Edwards Ferry Road Interchange), in accordance with NVTA's approved Project Description Sheet as appended to the Standard Project Agreement; and authorize the Chief Executive Officer to sign on behalf of the Authority; seconded by Senator Boysko. Motion passed unanimously.

**6. Approval of CMAQ Reallocation for the Town of Vienna** Ms. Backmon, CEO

*Recommended Action: Approval of Reallocation*

- ✓ Ms. Backmon informed Members of the Authority that the Town of Vienna had requested to transfer \$351,800 in Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds from UPCs 100489 and 112482 to UPC 111471, to bridge a funding gap in the construction estimate deficit of \$401,114.
- ✓ She noted that the Town of Vienna is committed to covering the remaining deficit of \$49,314.
- ✓ She added that this transfer will enable the Town of Vienna to proceed with the Right of Way (ROW) phase, noting that the RJACC recommended approval of this request at its August meeting.
- ✓ Chairman McKay moved approval of the reallocation of \$351,000 in CMAQ funds from UPC 100489 and UPC 112482 to UPC 111471, for the Town of Vienna; seconded by Board Member Cristol. Motion passed unanimously.

**7. Approval of Amendment to Bylaws – Subsequent Reading** Mr. Longhi, CFO

*Recommended Action: Approval of Amendment*

- ✓ Mr. Longhi informed the Authority Members that the GPC voted earlier today to recommend Authority approval of the attached Bylaw changes.
- ✓ He noted this is the third read of the proposed changes.
- ✓ Mr. Longhi also noted that feedback from the Commonwealth to Delegate Watt's question as well as from the Council of Counsel indicated that the proposed change was permissible but not required.
- ✓ Chair Randall noted as Boardmember Cristol infers, 'Ms. Backmon is peerless in her group' (metaphorically speaking). Adding that there are similarities with top level positions, but it is important to note that each one has specialized skillsets which are very unique to each position.
- ✓ Boardmember Cristol moved Authority adoption of the proposed Bylaws position title changes presented below; seconded by Chair Randall. Motion passed unanimously.

## Discussion/Information Items

### 8. **TransAction Update - Public Engagement Activities** Ms. Backmon, CEO

- ✓ Ms. Backmon reminded the Authority that TransAction, which is the region's long range transportation plan is updated every five years and that update is currently ongoing.
- ✓ She noted that NVTA is committed to ensuring public comment is fluid throughout this update process.
- ✓ She expressed her deep appreciation to the Authority Members and their localities for all their support and feedback with the ongoing TransAction update noting that a core part of the TransAction update is the planning and public engagement activities, which makes it possible to shape the overall approach to the update early on in the process. NVTA has reached out to all localities and appreciates all the feedback received thus far.
- ✓ Ms. Hawksworth, NVTA's Communications and Public Outreach Manager who has been the point of contact, coordinating with consultants and stakeholders continued with the update, first with a note of appreciation to all jurisdictions for their participation and contribution and proceeded to highlight several key components of the public engagement process.
- ✓ She noted that since we are still in the middle of the pandemic, a lot of the following engagement efforts are online.
  - Online Survey: One of such is the ongoing transportation priorities online survey which began August 6, 2021, and continues through September 19, 2021. She noted that for the first time, this survey is being offered in a variety of languages (English, Spanish and Korean) and requested of localities to continue to spread the word and encourage people to participate as it will help inform the process of planning towards the TransAction update. She noted that the results of these findings would be shared at the September and October Committee Meetings.
  - Pop-Up Events: Ms. Hawksworth continued that there are also a number of Pop-Up Events planned across the region. These are in-person community events stationed at different locations and aimed at reaching a diverse group of people in populated areas to provide feedback for this important update. She added that there are translators who can help people with providing their input at these events.
  - Live-Chat Sessions: In addition, there are a series of Live-Chat Sessions being hosted by NVTA staff (for the first time) on the TransAction website every Thursday between 1pm and 3pm with the last one on September 16, 2021.
  - Virtual Focus Groups: A total of eight focus groups were held during the second half of July and focused on different genders, age groups, income levels etc. Overall, 95 people in Northern Virginia participated via an online survey. She again noted that the results of these findings would be shared at the September and October Committee Meetings.

- She continued to elaborate on how NVTA is reaching out to other stakeholder groups like advocacy groups, citizen associations among others across the region, alongside ongoing social media campaigns which are aimed at driving people to NVTA and TransAction websites.
- ✓ Mayor Rishell inquired about the deadline for the online survey.
- ✓ Ms. Hawksworth responded that the survey is extended till September 19, 2021, to enable more people to provide feedback.
- ✓ Delegate Roem asked if Ms. Backmon could walk her through the process of items which could be funded and are already part of the existing TransAction, and also highlight items which are going to be added to TransAction and when those would be eligible for funding.
- ✓ Ms. Backmon responded that NVTA issued the Call for Projects starting July 1 noting that it closes on October 1, 2021. She added that this call for projects applies to projects which are in the current TransAction adopted in October 2017. Once this new cycle of TransAction is adopted in November 2022, funding of projects will be based off of the projects included in the updated TransAction.
- ✓ She further elaborated that some projects are quite broad in scale, as such, localities/project sponsors tend to apply for segments of those projects- this is allowed so long as they are in TransAction.

#### **9. RM3P Procurement Status Update**

Ms. Backmon, CEO

- ✓ Ms. Backmon proceeded to provide an update of the status of procurement activities for the Regional Multimodal Mobility Program (RM3P).
- ✓ She noted that since the Commonwealth approved the Authority funding for the RM3P through the use of funds through the ITTF program, NVTA has been working diligently in partnership with its Co-sponsors, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), the Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) and other local and regional partners and stakeholders in pursuit of its mission.
- ✓ That is to leverage the collaborative use of real-time data by Virginia's public and private sectors to improve travel safety, reliability, and mobility, and to give the public the tools to make more informed travel choices.
- ✓ She added that the RM3P is comprised of five Program Elements, namely the Data-Exchange Platform, Artificial Intelligence-Based Decision Support System, Commuter Parking Information System, Multi-Modal Analytical Planner and Dynamic Incentivization.
- ✓ These utilize technology to address certain needs and will work in collaboration to address overarching travel challenges across the region.
- ✓ Ms. Backmon noted that VDOT has released a Request for Qualifications which will pre-qualify vendors to apply for a future Request for Proposal (RFP) to implement, deploy and operate the Artificial Intelligence-Based Decision Support System Program Element.
- ✓ Ms. Backmon added that Ms. Cathy McGhee (Director of Research and Innovation, VDOT) and herself, serve as the program managers for RM3P and

they will be presenting an update at the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB), and the deployment of the AI based program is slated for 2022.

- ✓ More details regarding this procurement can be found on the Commonwealth eVA procurement platform.

#### **10. Update on Travel Trends in Northern Virginia**

Ms. Backmon, CEO

- ✓ Ms. Backmon provided an update regarding travel trends in Northern Virginia noting that travel volumes on highways continued to trend upwards in August, showing about 95% of pre-COVID levels compared to 92% in June.
- ✓ Metrorail showed an increase of 13% in ridership together with Omniride which shows an increase of 10% since March.
- ✓ She noted that for the next travel update, back-to-school and vaccine deployment data will be included to show its impact on travel trends.
- ✓ Mayor Wilson remarked that having had the transit equity discussion earlier, he would like to note that this is a very important ongoing transit study, adding that he has been following travel trends and it is interesting to see how the region is almost back to pre-pandemic levels in terms of highway travel. One thing to watch is which jobs are still being done remotely versus which ones are not as these scenarios present some very interesting trends.
- ✓ Chairman McKay also added that with regards to road travel, one thing to watch out for are tolls, are they going up or down. Also, when the pandemic began, certain local transit agencies suspended fares. However, as the region gets back to pre-pandemic levels, some localities have reinstated those fares whereas others have not. As such, it will be worth noting whether these factors made any impact on travel trends.
- ✓ Chair Randall inquired of Ms. Backmon whether there were any notable reasons for the differences between metro rail and metro bus ridership.
- ✓ Boardmember Cristol responded that Metrobus serves transit centers both in Maryland and Virginia. Chairman McKay added that this includes routes in jurisdictions which sometimes fall in the transit equity zone.
- ✓ Councilmember Snyder asked whether there is access to other granular data which could explain why highway travel is trending up compared to transit which is not.
- ✓ Ms. Backmon responded that she spoke with Mr. Schneider, Executive Director of Omniride who informed her that feedback obtained from their riders was that the truncated transit schedule did not work for their commuting needs.
- ✓ Councilmember Snyder asked that since transit data still shows low ridership, is there any way that Staff could look into more data to better inform everyone.
- ✓ Mayor Rishell commented that there maybe a complex array of factors contributing to this trend. One of such could stem from the constant negative information broadcasted by the media/news channels which could be scaring people away from transit.
- ✓ Councilmember Snyder noted that as transportation planners, it is important to get access to the necessary data for policymaking/adjustment reasons.

- ✓ Ms. Backmon responded that NVTA Staff will certainly look into it.

## **11. Governance and Personnel Committee Report 2022 Legislative Program**

Chair Randall, Chair  
Ms. Backmon, CEO

Ms. Baynard, McGuire Woods Consulting, LLC.

- ✓ Chair Randall provided an update of the Governance and Personnel Committee meeting noting that one of the topics discussed during the meeting was NVTA's remaining funding gap of \$38.5 million which needs to be restored.
- ✓ She added that this has already been added to NVTA's 2022 Legislative program and urges all members in the counties and towns to make this a priority in the legislative programs for their respective jurisdictions.
- ✓ Chair Randall also shared with Authority Members, the need to add language to the legislative program, which makes it increasingly harder for any entity to take money away from the NVTA in future.
- ✓ Another point of discussion was the fact that when one purchases a new electric vehicle, it comes with a host of benefits, whereas if the electric vehicle is purchased used, there are no benefits. As such, she noted the need to address this in order for buyers to still gain those benefits of purchasing electric vehicles, regardless of whether the vehicle is completely new or partially used.
- ✓ Ms. Baynard continued with the update, adding that a Transportation Technology Strategic Plan (TTSP) section has been added to the legislative program.
- ✓ Another item to be added to the legislative program is to look at adding some language in reference to Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC), to highlight the need for several capital and operating systems in Northern Virginia, particularly because of localities role in funding Metro.
- ✓ Looking ahead at the number of study results coming out of General Assembly initiated endeavors, there is the need to make sure that Northern Virginia has opportunity to access future funding programs created from these studies. She noted that a few of such studies include the following:
  - OIPI Multi-Use Trail Study (due October 2021)
  - DRPT's Transit Modernization and Equity Study (Interim report due December 2021)
  - JLARC Transportation Funding Study (Report due in November 2021)
  - She mentioned VDOT has an ongoing study on the Transportation Sector and that should be ready towards the end of the year.
- ✓ Ms. Hynes added that the Commonwealth is concerned about how SmartScale projects impact greenhouse gases and emissions in the region hence the study to look into it.
- ✓ Chairman McKay pointed out that one important point mentioned by Chair Randall at the GPC which he did not hear being recounted was that depending on the outcome of the gubernatorial elections, there might be a change in the order of priorities on the legislative program.
- ✓ Ms. Backmon reaffirmed this adding that there are two readings of the legislative program so by the time the second legislative reading is due, gubernatorial

results would be known and will help determine how to order the priorities in the legislative program before it is adopted.

**12. Planning and Programming Committee Report** Mayor Wilson, Chair

- ✓ Mayor Wilson informed the Authority that the PPC continued their lively discussion regarding how climate policies inform the TransAction goals during the update process.

**13. Planning Coordination Advisory Committee Report** Mayor Colbert, Chair

- ✓ No verbal report given.

**14. Technical Advisory Committee Report** Mr. Boice, Chair

- ✓ No verbal report given.

**15. Chief Executive Officer's Report** Ms. Backmon, CEO

- ✓ Ms. Backmon notified Authority Members about the upcoming groundbreaking on Route 28 the next week, noting that a 'a save the date' request was sent a while back.
- ✓ She added that this event will observe all social distancing protocols and encouraged Authority Members to let her know if they plan to attend.
- ✓ Ms. Backmon also added that there was one more item on Correspondence on the agenda and would be discussed next month.

**16. Chair's Comments**

- ✓ Mayor Rishell mentioned that she recalls that there was a JLARC Transportation Funding Study from 2019 and wanted to know what happened to it.
- ✓ Ms. Baynard informed her that this was a discussion which did not go far. She added that an advisory group was set up to advise the Governor regarding it but as of now, nothing else has come up.
- ✓ Chair Randall thanked everyone for their attendance and participation.

**17. Adjournment**

- ✓ The meeting adjourned at 8:17pm.

**Next Meeting: October 14, 2021 at 7:00pm**

**NVTA Offices**