V

NORTHERN VIRGINIA TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

M E M O R A N D U M

FOR: Members, Northern Virginia Transportation Authority

FROM: Chairman Martin E. Nohe, Planning and Programming Committee

DATE: September 8, 2017

SUBJECT: Report from the Planning and Programming Committee

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1. **Purpose.** To inform the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA) on recent activities of the NVTA's Planning and Programming Committee (PPC).

2. **Background.** The PPC met on Friday, September 8, 2017, at 10am.

   The Committee received a briefing on the public comments received on the Draft TransAction Plan and the associated Project List.

3. **Public Comments.** The public comment period for the Draft TransAction Plan started on June 9, 2017 and closed on midnight, July 23, 2017. Comments were received from 663 individual or groups. The NVTA staff grouped these comments into 11 topics, and provided an overview of each topic and corresponding NVTA staff response (see attachment).

4. **Discussion.** The Committee discussed the potential need to use NVTA's regional revenues for roadway access improvements to VRE's Manassas Line stations. The urgency for such improvements has increased given the Authority's recent project recommendations to Secretary Layne regarding the I-66 Outside the Beltway Concessionaire Payment. NVTA staff was requested to consider options to address this in TransAction.

   The Committee also requested NVTA staff review the project description associated with projects such as ID# 226 VA-234 Bypass North, I-66 to US-50 (also known as BiCounty Parkway).

5. **Next steps.** The PPC will continue to be engaged in the process to update TransAction, and the development of NVTA's FY2018-23 Six Year Program. Specifically, at its next meeting, the Committee will review the final draft version of TransAction and the associated project list. The Committee will also consider the Call for Regional Transportation Projects (CfRTP) for the Authority's FY2018-23 Six Year Program. PPC's recommendations associated with adoption of TransAction and approval of issuance of the CfRTP will be presented to the Authority at its meeting October 12, 2017.

The date for the next scheduled meeting of the PPC is Wednesday, October 4, 2017, at 10:00am.

Attachment: Draft TransAction Plan: Overview Comments

NORTHERN VIRGINIA TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

TransAction Plan Draft: Overview of Comments

I. Background

The Draft TransAction Plan and associated Project List were released for public comment at the Authority meeting on June 8, 2017. A Public Hearing was held on July 13, 2017, which was attended by 15 Authority members. Testimony was submitted for public record by 23 speakers. The Public Hearing was video-taped and can be viewed on the NVTA website.[1] The public comment period closed at midnight on July 23, 2017.

II. Comments Received

Comments could be submitted in multiple ways:

- Public Hearing testimony;
- NVTA's dedicated email account for the TransAction Plan Draft;
- TransAction project website;
- Jurisdictional Town Hall meetings;
- Regular mail; and
- Comment card.

Comments were received from 663 individuals or groups. Seven respondents sent comments twice, meaning the effective number of respondents is 656. All comments were combined into a single database – no differentiation is made in this summary between the various methods of submitting comments.

Comments will be posted on the TransAction project website.

III. Overview of Comments

Comments related to various elements of the Draft TransAction Plan and selected individual projects. In particular, numerous comments were submitted in opposition of, with limited support for, three candidate highway projects:

- Bi-County Parkway (ID# 226), between western Prince William County and eastern Loudoun County;
- Outer Potomac River Crossing (ID# 24) between eastern Loudoun County and Maryland;

[1] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PHUk5yi9gFs

- East Potomac River Crossing (ID# 87) between southern Prince William County and Maryland.

There was strong support for, and limited opposition to, the Hillsboro Traffic Calming project (ID# 323) in western Loudoun County. In addition, there was widespread support for bike and pedestrian projects with 225 comments expressing support for bike-pedestrian projects in the Draft Plan.

Comments on the two Potomac River Crossing projects were frequently combined, although the nature of the comments suggested they were mostly directed at the Northern Potomac River Crossing.

A summary of comments by topic is provided in Table 1, followed by a more detailed discussion on comments received for each of these eleven topics.

Table 1: Summary of Comments Received

	Topic	**Number of comments**
1	Plan process	16
2	Plan document	7
3	Roadways	387
a.	Bi-County Parkway	208 (Support: 12; Oppose: 196)
b.	Potomac River Crossings	160 (Support: 15; Oppose: 145)
c.	Hillsboro Traffic Calming	74 (Support: 70; Oppose: 4)
d.	Other project-specific	24
4	Transit	42
5	WMATA	22
6	VRE	13
7	Bike-Pedestrian	225
8	Travel Demand Management	9
9	Safety	3
10	Route 28 study	12
11	Other	17

1. Plan Process (16 comments)

Many comments appreciated the performance-based approach and the detailed planning process that were followed for the development of the Draft TransAction Plan. However, there were also reservations about the lack of detailed information on the analyses, project cost, project rank, and balance between number of roadway and transit projects. Comments also suggested reducing the number of performance measures, focusing on small but highly effective projects as well as accessible projects (American Disabilities Act projects), and supporting activity centers and transit-oriented development. Comments showed concern over Plan details not reaching linguistic minorities such as Korean population.

Response: TransAction is a long range multi-modal regional transportation plan with a 2040 horizon year. Consequently, the majority of projects included are at a sketch level only. The analyses for the Draft Plan were conducted at corridor and corridor segment levels, using performance measures that support the TransAction Vision and Goals, and which were developed through a comprehensive and collaborative process including extensive public engagement. More analysis will be provided in the TransAction Technical Report. Staff is exploring options for translation of the Plan.

Detailed project level analyses will be conducted during the development of NVTA's FY2018-23 Six Year Program, which will also provide an opportunity for further public comment inclusive of a Public Hearing, prior to Program adoption. Adoption of the Six Year Program is currently scheduled for spring 2018.

2. Plan Document (7 comments)

Comments expressed appreciation that the Draft Plan presented many complex analytical materials in visual format. There were comments that suggested lack of clarity in describing the planning process in the Draft Plan.

Response: Consideration will be given to enhancing the visualization of NVTA's complex planning process and analytical details in the final version of the document.

3. Roadways (387 comments)

Most of these comments related to specific roadway projects, although some were more general. While many of the comments acknowledged that road projects may have multimodal components, concerns were expressed that the focus of the Draft Plan leans more towards road solutions. Three roadway projects received strong opposition while one project received strong support.

a. <u>ID# 226 Construct VA 234 Bypass North, I-66 to US50 (also known as Bi-County Parkway)</u> received a total of 208 comments, 196 opposing it and 12 supporting it. Supporting comments related to the need for additional connections and congestion relief. Opposing comments, many which were similar, emphasized the following:
   - The project has been removed from Prince William County Comprehensive Plan;
   - The project will bring more traffic and development pressure to the less developed areas;
   - The project will close US 29 from Pageland Lane to the bridge over Bull Run and close VA 234 Sudley Road from the southern park boundary to the northern park boundary, which are pointed out as much needed connections.

Typical of the comments received is the following: "I would like to add my voice to the list of citizens opposed to an additional Potomac River bridge and the proposed Bi-County Parkway. It's time to focus on more effective solutions for residents and commuters."

Response: See concluding statement.

b. ID# 24 Outer Potomac Crossing (construct crossing of Potomac River between Route 28 in Virginia to I-270 in Maryland) received a total of 160 comments, 145 opposing it and 15 supporting it. Supporting comments related to the need for additional connections across the river, congestion relief on American Legion Bridge and approach corridors, and Homeland security concerns. It was also pointed out that the bridge could connect Route 15 instead of Route 28 and a direct connection to I-270 without any exits in between as a way to protect the agriculture preserve. Opposing comments, many which were similar, emphasized the following:
   - The project will increase traffic congestion on Route 28 and surroundings;
   - The project will destroy neighborhoods in Loudoun County;
   - The project will destroy agriculture reserves in Montgomery County;
   - The project will increase sprawl;
   - The project is a costly solution;
   - Lack of support shown in previous studies.

Typical of the comments received is the following: "I am deeply concerned that your proposal for over 350 projects at a cost of $44 billion or more is not only unaffordable but will negatively impact the quality of life in Northern Virginia for me and my family. When you surveyed Northern Virginians we allocated 68% of funds to non-road solutions. That makes sense. We need better land use, more telecommuting, and more transit, bike and pedestrian options that allow people to drive less if we are going to reduce traffic. Another round of massive highway expansion and an outer beltway would only fuel more spread out development, more traffic, and more pollution. Therefore, I oppose the outer beltway – northern and southern bridges and Bi-County Parkway. And I'd like to see more transit options and better land use to avoid having to keep widening every major road in Northern Virginia. So count me in on favoring walkable, transit-accessible communities, and Metro, light rail, bus rapid transit, commuter bus, bicycle and pedestrian investments."

There were a number of comments that opposed both Potomac River Crossing and Bi-County Parkway. A typical comment was: "I would like to add my voice to the list of citizens opposed to an additional Potomac River bridge and the proposed Bi-County Parkway. It's time to focus on more effective solutions for residents and commuters."

There were three comments that specifically opposed the southern Potomac Crossing.

Response: See concluding statement.

c. ID# 323 VA Route 9 Traffic Calming (Construct safety improvements, traffic calming, and lane widening on Route 9 including the Town of Hillsboro. Project may include roundabouts and other pedestrian safety improvements) received a total of 74 comments, 4 opposing it and 70 supporting it. Many of the supporting comments were

identical. The supporters point out that the current traffic control works well while the support was based on the following:

- The project will enable traffic calming within the Town;
- The project will make moving about in the Town safer for all users;
- Combining with other improvements will make it cost-effective and less disruptive.

Typical of the comments received is the following: "Please fund the Hillsboro community traffic congestion project so that construction may coincide with other projects and reduce overall costs. Increasingly worse congestion on Route 9 through Hillsboro dramatically impacts commutes for my family and friends daily and improving the safety of the downtown Hillsboro area would be a major improvement for our community."

Response: See concluding statement.

d. Other project-specific comments. A total of 24 comments mentioned about 70 other specific projects. While most showed support for one or more projects, there were a few comments that opposed specific projects. A summary is given below.

   Support includes:

   - Route 7 Corridor: Road and transit improvements, Park & ride lots in Loudoun County, Metro station access improvements, various road improvements in Loudoun County including Shellhorn Rd Widening;
   - I-66/US 29/US 50 Corridor: Commuter/express buses on I-66 and US 50, Metro feeder bus and access improvements, Bikeshare, Trails, Road and bike-pedestrian projects in City of Fairfax;
   - I-495 Corridor: I-495 HOT Lanes across American Legion Bridge, High capacity transit across American Legion Bridge;
   - Loudoun County Pkwy/Belmont Ridge Rd Corridor: Various road/intersection improvements;
   - Hot-spot Improvements on VA 7, VA 9, and US 15;
   - Integrated Corridor Management: East-West and I-95 operations improvements.

   Opposition includes:

   - ID# 119 Construct Northstar Boulevard from Shreveport Drive to US 50
   - ID# 165 Widen US50, Northstar Boulevard to Lenah Loop Rd
   - ID# 185 Widen Belmont Ridge Rd from VA 2401 to VA 7
   - ID# 186 Widen Belmont Ridge Rd from VA 645 to VA 659
   - ID# 187 Widen Northstar Blvd from Belmont Ridge Rd to Braddock Rd
   - ID# 212 Widen Dulles Airport Access Road from Dulles Airport to VA 123
   - ID# 232 Widen Magarity Road from 2 to 4 lanes from VA 7 to Great Falls St.

Response: See concluding statement.

4. **Transit (42 comments)**
   There were 42 comments specifically supporting transit projects. These include general transit projects, Metro bus and Metrorail projects, and VRE projects. Support was also expressed for transit options on Route 28/Route 29/I-66, BRT projects, Metrorail Blue Line realignment, Metrorail Orange Line extension to Gainesville, bike/ped/road connections to transit, multimodal projects, use of smaller buses on feeder routes, and connecting Northern Virginia to the Purple Line on the southern end. Need for affordable public transportation was also raised.

   Response: Comments acknowledged.

5. **WMATA (22 comments)**
   There was general support for WMATA projects. Out of a total of 22 comments mentioning Metro projects, one was opposed to the Metro extension south of Huntington. The supporting comments included metro improvements in general, Blue Line realignment, Metro extension to Centerville/Gainesville, circumferential rail connecting Metro lines and potentially connecting to Purple Line, access projects to Metro stations, and 8-car Metro trains.

   Response: Comments acknowledged.

6. **VRE (13 comments)**
   There was general support for VRE projects with 13 comments mentioning VRE and expressing support for general VRE capacity and service improvements, station improvements at Manassas Park, and replacing Long Bridge.

   Response: Comments acknowledged.

7. **Bike-Pedestrian (225 comments)**
   There was widespread support for bike and pedestrian projects with comments expressing support for bike-pedestrian projects in the Draft Plan, e.g., W&OD Trail, Custis Trail, US29 Trail, Gerry Connolly Cross County Trail, pedestrian connection between Crystal City and Reagan National Airport, transit/bike/ pedestrian connections to transit/metro stations, I-66 bike lanes outside the barrier, and bike improvements connecting Manassas Park, Manassas and Prince William County. Concern about pedestrian safety was also mentioned.

   Typical of the comments received is the following: “As a resident of northern Virginia who uses a bicycle to travel through the region, I am pleased to see many projects listed in the TransAction draft that will improve or add new bicycle infrastructure. Bicycling should be a substantive and integral part of any effort to improve transportation and reduce traffic congestion in Northern Virginia. All transportation projects should provide residents options for bicycling that are well-designed, safe, and accessible to riders of all ages and abilities. Please ensure that the bicycle and pedestrian projects in the plan are fully funded, designed

to industry best practices, and built with the intention that they be viable transportation options, not an afterthought."

Response: Comments acknowledged.

8. **Travel Demand Management (9 comments)**
   There were nine commenters specifically supporting transportation demand management programs such as telecommuting and carpools. This is in addition to the support for all forms of transit.

   Response: Comments acknowledged.

9. **Safety (3 comments)**
   While three comments were directly related to safety improvements, many other comments mentioned safety in relation to specific project comments. The three general comments focused on need for more safety improvements; upgrading Telegraph Road (from Jeff Todd Parkway to I-495) with sidewalks, bike lanes, and left turn pockets; and the need for safety improvement on Route 1 corridor.

   Response: Comments acknowledged.

10. **Route 28 Study (12 comments)**
    There were 12 comments regarding projects related to the ongoing Route 28 Study in Prince William County, Fairfax County, the City of Manassas, and the City of Manassas Park. Most comments opposed the inclusion of Euclid Avenue Extension due to the potential impacts on the residential neighborhoods.

    Response: These concerns will be addressed as part of the ongoing NVTA-funded Route 28 Corridor Feasibility Study, led by Prince William County.

11. **Other (17 comments)**
    In addition to all the above comments, there were 17 general comments including transportation issues that are unrelated to the Draft Plan or NVTA. These comments relate to providing sound barriers to provide relief from the noise, coordinating signals, NVTA monitoring and acknowledging future trends in future programming of projects, NVTA ensuring not spending all available funds upfront, and advancing highest performing projects irrespective of location.

    Response: Comments acknowledged.

IV. Project List

The Town of Herndon submitted comments requesting addition of two projects to the Plan – South Elden Street Reconstruction (Reconstruct South Elden Street between

Herndon Parkway and Sterling Road) and Sterling Road Reconstruction (Reconstruct Sterling Road between Elden Street and Rock Hill Road).

Some jurisdictions requested consideration be given to revised wording of selected project titles and/or project descriptions. Such changes seek to clarify, rather than modify, the information provided in the Draft Plan Project List.

In addition, the TransAction Subcommittee, comprising jurisdictional and agency staff, has made other revised wording suggestions with the intent to correct typos and to introduce greater consistency. In some cases, projects with overlapping functions can be combined to simplify the project list. This will necessitate a renumbering of projects in the final version of the Draft Project List.

None of the revisions have a meaningful impact on the technical analysis or impact of the Draft TransAction Plan Project List.

V. Concluding Statement

The context for inclusion of projects in TransAction is as follows:

- Satisfies a legal requirement for use of HB2313 (2013) regional revenues, which can only be used for projects in the current version of TransAction;
- TransAction does not commit the Authority to invest in any project.

It is important to retain all projects in the TransAction Project List for the following reasons:

- TransAction considers travel conditions for planning horizon year 2040;
- If only current fully funded and committed projects are built, travel conditions are forecast to considerably worsen by 2040 (tripling of traffic congestion);
- Northern Virginians consider the region's travel conditions to be the greatest factor influencing their quality of life;
- Inclusion of all projects in TransAction provides transportation options for the Authority until the next update of TransAction (typically every five years);
- As a long-range transportation plan with a 25-year horizon, TransAction (intentionally) includes more projects than can be funded.

NVTA's approach to funding regional projects:

- All projects considered for regional revenues are subject to a quantitative/qualitative regional evaluation process during each update cycle (typically every two years) of the Authority's Six Year Program;
- This process commences with a Call for Regional Transportation Projects – effectively a funding request from the region's jurisdictions and transportation agencies;

- Each funding request must be accompanied by a resolution of support from the governing body of the jurisdiction or agency;
- Projects that are located in multiple jurisdictions must demonstrate multi-jurisdictional support in order to advance, e.g. resolutions of support from the governing body of each affected jurisdiction;
- If jurisdictions and agencies do not submit funding requests to NVTA, or are not approved for NVTA regional revenues, projects will only advance if funding sources other than NVTA's regional revenues are secured.

Typical process for project implementation (regardless of funding source)

- Projects are subject to all applicable engineering and environmental review processes, including a comprehensive public engagement process, prior to implementation.