

**SUMMARY MINUTES
NORTHERN VIRGINIA TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY**

April 10, 2008

**Fairfax City Hall
Fairfax, Virginia 22030**

NVTA Members Present:

Voting Members:

Christopher Zimmerman, Chairman	Arlington County
Martin Nohe, Vice Chairman	Prince William County
Sharon Bulova (representing Gerry Connolly)	Fairfax County
Judy Connally	Governor's Appointee (CTB)
William Euille	Alexandria
Sharon Pandak	Governor's Appointee
Harry J. Parrish, II	City of Manassas
David F. Snyder	City of Falls Church
Mary Margaret Whipple	Virginia Senate

Non-Voting Members:

Corey Hill	DRPT
Morteza Salehi	No. Va. District, VDOT

Staff:

John Mason	Executive Director
Jurisdictional Staffs and Clerk	

Item I: Call to Order

Chairman Zimmerman called the meeting to order at 8:19. (Start was delayed while waiting for a quorum to be satisfied.)

Item II: Roll Call

The roll was called and members present or absent were noted for the record. Note: Mr. Euille was not present for roll call but arrived shortly thereafter.

Item III. Minutes for Meetings of January 10, February 7, and March 6, 2008

Mr. Nohe moved to approve the minutes for the meetings held on January 10, 2008, February 7, 2008 and March 6, 2008. The motion was seconded by Mr. Parrish. The motion was carried unanimously with Ms. Bulova and Ms. Whipple abstaining as they had not been present at those meetings.

Item IV: Statement of Principles

Mr. Nohe moved, and Ms. Bulova seconded, a motion to approve the “Statement of Principles” to guide NVTA advocacy for regional transportation funding.

Chairman Zimmerman announced that the draft of the principles had also been approved by the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission.

Mr. Snyder asked what the plan is for engagement and if the NVTA was going to support a purely Northern Virginia taxes or a state maintenance plan.

Chairman Zimmerman responded that the transportation crisis is still in the same position as before and that the Northern Virginia needs somewhere over \$400 million to get anywhere. He stressed that the State needs to be responsible. Chairman Zimmerman also noted that the NVTA was willing to work with anyone willing to work with the NVTA and that the NVTA was willing to hear ideas.

Mr. Snyder then stressed that one more day shouldn't go by without funding, let alone the weeks and months that we must now face.

Mr. Nohe then observed that the questions to be answered by the General Assembly are: Will the funding package be purely regional or will it be state-wide? Will it be linked to maintenance or separately? He also observed that any of the mentioned frameworks can easily fit within the Principles but the issue is that the revenue is needed and it is needed now, not years from now. Ms. Connally then stated that she is very pleased with Principle 8.

The motion carried unanimously.

As a related matter, Mr. Mason remarked that he had been working with the Virginia Chamber of Commerce's Transportation Roundtable with respect to its advocacy position for funding. He drew attention to a draft statement by Chamber's Ad Hoc Business Group. Mr. Mason mentioned that it might be appropriate for the NVTA to indicate appreciation for the Chamber's initiative.

Ms. Whipple pointed out that a cents per gallon tax does not have the potential that a percentage increase has. She mentioned that such previous measures are showing diminishing funds. She also stated in regards to the 1% sales tax that if a sales tax is raised for transportation purposes it is lost to other services such as as police, fire, schools, etc.

Chairman Zimmerman then reiterated that he is willing to work with anyone with the same goals as the NVTA. He is willing to support the cents per gallon tax as at least something.

Ms. Whipple stated that the General Assembly is likely to endorse revenues that are broad based state wide, sustainable and long term and that the NVTA should stress that in the letter of support.

Mr. Snyder suggested that the support of the Ad Hoc Business Coalition ideas should be in addition to a reform package and not in lieu of.

Without objection, Chairman Zimmerman requested that executive director draft a letter to the Ad Hoc Business Coalition and circulate it to members for approval.

Chairman Zimmerman observed that an opportunity exists to advocate with Governor Kaine hosting a "Town Hall" meeting on Saturday at 1:30 pm at Luther Jackson Middle School.

Item V. Amendment to Agreement with VDOT for initial start start-up costs

Mr. Biesiadny updated the Authority on the situation regarding the VDOT loan to NVTA. An extension for the pay date has been granted until June 30, 2008 in order to give the NVTA and VDOT time to work out the details for operation beyond that date.

Mr. Parrish moved to approve the amendment, which was seconded by Ms. Pandak. The motion carried unanimously.

Item VI. Letter to the Secretary of Transportation Regarding Start-up Costs

Mr. Euille moved to approve a letter to the Secretary of Transportation based on recommendation of the Finance Committee to state formally that the NVTA should not be held responsible for the start-up costs of the NVTA in the event that revenues for the NVTA are not secured. The motion was seconded by Mr. Parrish and carried unanimously.

Item VII. Letter to the Secretary of Transportation regarding the HOT Lanes Project

Mr. Biesiadny updated the Authority regarding issues with the HOT Lanes Project, specifically regarding the safety analysis as it relates to the shoulders, the shoulder widths, the average speed and the analysis of a bus only lane. The safety analysis is underway now but VDOT will not seek a NEPA finding with the project until the safety analysis project is complete. Additionally, while the federal standard for speed is a minimum of 45 mph, the facility currently operates between 55 and 60 mph and that it is envisioned that a future facility will also operate at those speeds and that would be part of the agreement that would be signed with the contractor. Finally, the bus analysis is very close to being able to be released. The letter is to document those observations and conversations and to urge the State to make good on its promises.

Mr. Nohe stated that the proposed letter is consistent with the position that PRTC and Prince William County have taken. He also stated that these are also the concerns raised by the PRTC, moving from requesting that things be this way to insistence.

A motion was made by Mr. Nohe and seconded by Mr. Euille to approve a letter to the Secretary of Transportation regarding the HOT Lanes Project. The motion carried unanimously.

Item VIII. Liability Insurance

Mr. Mason presented a proposal for liability insurance at a cost of \$600 (\$100 for membership and \$500 pro-rated to cover from mid-April to June 30) to cover the NVTA insurance requirements required by our lease.

Ms. Whipple moved approval of the insurance and the motion was seconded by Mr. Nohe. The motion carried unanimously, with Mr. Snyder abstaining.

Item IX. Outreach Campaign

Mr. Nohe stated that he was very excited about the new outreach programs but very sad that the NVTA was back in this position [of having to advocate for funding]. He stated that many look at the problems on a macro scale but at the end of the day it is about getting people home to their families. He stated that the NVTA needs to connect macro to the small scale. That it was not about getting the message home but rather getting people home.

Continuing, Mr. Nohe commented that the outreach campaign is asking people to record their commute and send to the General Assembly via YouTube. He stated that the campaign was launching on April 14, 2008 and hoping that all videos would be in by May 14, 2008. He stressed that all videos will be reviewed for content before being posted to the web. He noted that this was a chance for the public to talk to the General Assembly.

The second aspect of the campaign was a full page ad titled “Got congestion? Got Transportation Funding?” to get the idea out that we need help.

Thirdly, there is a petition for transportation funding available to be signed.

Finally, there will be black ribbon ceremonies. Mr. Nohe stated that there are projects primed and ready to go and that it was thought that in April and May there would be red-ribbon cutting ceremonies. Since most of that framework is already in place, instead of cutting red ribbons we will be cutting black ribbons to show what cannot be done now that there is no funding.

Ms. Bulova mentioned that she is already hearing stories on the radio and feels that the personal stories are the most compelling and commends the NVTA on these initiatives.

Chairman Zimmerman agreed that the personal aspect is good and stated that the projects could still happen if the Assembly approves a funding plan.

Mr. Euille stated that a conversation with a General Assembly member led to the suggestion that people take to the streets and be visible during the General Assembly meetings.

Mr. Nohe stated that a GMU [George Mason University] media class will be helping with the YouTube effort in addition to other projects.

Mr. Snyder asked if still images were also acceptable. Mr. Nohe responded in the affirmative, is yes, old media as well as new media will be acceptable.

Item X. VDOT Update

A power point presentation was given by Mr. Dittbemer (VDOT) regarding a proposal for extending the hours that the shoulder lanes are open to traffic on I-66 outside the Beltway. The result of VDOT studies regarding the safety, existing traffic patterns and geometry of the roads is a recommendation that the safety lanes remain open to drivers one hour later in the morning (inbound) and open one hour earlier in the afternoon (outbound).

After the presentation, Chairman Zimmerman posed a question stating that it is not just the rate of crashes but what about if someone needs the shoulder as a refuge?

Mr. Dittbemer agreed that it is a concern but said there is a balance and tradeoff between having that lane as a refuge and allowing more space for traffic to flow. VDOT felt that the tradeoff was worth it.

Chairman Zimmerman then questioned why VDOT had not looked into the shoulders being used for public transit only and mentioned that Minnesota had over 200 miles of just such a network. He felt that there seemed to be support to fill the shoulder lanes with more cars but not busses.

Mr. Salehi responded that that VDOT will look at the geometric design of the shoulder lanes, the width and the structural capacity of the shoulders, as well as safety related issues; following that, on a case-by-case basis, and as needed and feasible, VDOT will use the should lane for buses and/or cars.

Mr. Salehi called for further comment from Mr. Steeg (VDOT) who remarked that VDOT is also looking at video management where disabled vehicles would be identified by video and VDOT could respond more quickly. He also concurred that there are other options but that there are controls (such as pavement, routes, etc) that must be considered. He believed it was proper to think broader and not preclude bus only lanes but that this particular project was started in 2006 so it takes time. He also stated that there was limited capability for a dynamic use of the lanes and that the extended hours was a concession.

Chairman Zimmerman stated that he was glad to hear that there was openness but stressed that it would be better to look at moving people as opposed to simply moving vehicles.

Mr. Snyder then brought up the safety issue and wanted to hear that it is absolutely stated that the fire, police and rescue unequivocally agree with this plan and do not simply see it as an option of the lesser of two evils.

Mr. Steeg assured Mr. Snyder that the support from police, fire and rescue was there.

Mr. Snyder also noted that there is a link between transit use and safety with transit being the safer option. He also requested to see the data to ensure that what accidents did occur when the lanes were open weren't worse than when they were closed.

Item XI. DRPT Update

Mr. Hill stated that it was time for the State to update its transportation plan (Va Trans 2035). He also stated that there will be a NOVA team and a ROVA team (affectionate term for “Rest of Virginia”). Finally he stated that the draft of the 6 year improvement plan is almost ready for release and that there will be a hearing on May 14, 2008.

Item XII. Refund

Mr. Mason updated the Authority on the refund process, stating that it is well underway. He reported that the Grantor’s tax previously remitted to the NVTa is back with the clerks of courts, that the DMV has begun refunding the fees collected by the agency, and that the remaining four fees will be handled by the State Treasurer and should begin shortly. Finally, Mr. Mason stated that all funds submitted to the NVTa will be remitted to the proper agency within a week to 10 days.

Item XIII. TIP/CLRP Update

Mr. Biesadny updated the members regarding the TIP and CLRP developments. He presented a summary sheet showing all of the projects that will be affected if funding is not received by the NVTa. He also stated that if a funding plan is not approved the NVTa will have to go back and amend the plans approved on January 10, 2008.

In light of the uncertainty, he stated that the TPB is running two parallel studies one with the approved projects and the other without considering the NVTa projects.

Ms. Connally asked if this would put us in greater concern about the overall air quality. Mr. Biesadny responded that the TPB has to determine that the projects that are included will allow the region to be within the mobile emissions budget. The action to be taken next Wednesday [April 16] is to set up a parallel analysis and if in either case the region is above the mobile emissions budget we would have to adopt TERMS to bring the region back down. The answer won’t be known until probably the July timeframe. The purpose of the current analysis is to find out where we are now.

Chairman Zimmerman remarked that air quality may not be a problem if Northern Virginia loses jobs because of the traffic congestion problems.

Mr. Snyder then pointed out that the EPA has raised the standards for air quality and that the effect of that is there will be more red and orange days despite improvement from 5yrs ago. He recommended that we start working now to meet the new standards (to be effective in 2015). He also recommends that more attention be paid to air quality as projects go forward.

Items XIV- XIX. Information Items

These items were not discussed.

Item XX. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:36 pm.