

Public Outreach Working Group Northern Virginia Transportation Authority

MEMORANDUM

TO: Christopher Zimmerman, Chairman
Northern Virginia Transportation Authority

Members
Northern Virginia Transportation Authority

FROM: Marty Nohe, Chairman
Public Outreach Working Group
Northern Virginia Transportation Authority

SUBJECT: Report of Public Outreach Working Group

DATE: June 1, 2007

Recommendations of the Public Outreach Working Group:

The Public Outreach Working Group recommends the NVTA take the following actions on June 6, 2007:

- 1) Accept the initial draft outline of the Strategic Communications Plan and Public Outreach Sub-Groups report.
- 2) Appoint an official spokesperson for NVTA.
- 3) Approve initial budget of \$2,000 to establish an independent domain name* and begin building an independent web site for NVTA. Include consideration of additional web site budget of \$20,000 as part of the initial start-up budget being prepared by the financial working group for the July 12, 2007 meeting. (**The identified domain name and its designations are being withheld from publication until after they are purchased to avoid encroachment*)
- 4) Approve NVTA "tag line": *"Delivering real transportation solutions and value with Northern Virginia's dollars."*

- 5) Direct the Public Outreach Working Group to develop potential alternatives or enhancements to the existing NVTA logo design.
- 6) Approve a series of town hall meetings to be held prior to the July 12, 2007 Public Hearing, if the NVTA intends to move forward with adoption of the taxes and fees authorized by the General Assembly -- and if desired by the local jurisdictions.
- 7) Direct Public Outreach Working Group and/or the newly appointed spokesperson to establish and build relationships with Northern Virginia residents, stakeholder groups, businesses, media, transportation agencies, special interest groups, and critics as outlined in the Strategic Communications plan and as noted in Attachment A. **(see Attachment A)**
- 8) Direct Public Outreach Working Group and/or the newly appointed spokesperson to further develop short-term, mid-term and long term communications objectives for NVTA's consideration, included as Attachment B. **(see Attachment B)**

Executive Summary

This outline for a Strategic Communications Plan for the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA) is a tactical road map to promote NVTA's critical role as an advocate for the transportation needs of Northern Virginia through effective methods and tools to communicate with and to educate target audiences.

The primary mission of the NVTA's proposed Public Outreach efforts are to:

“Establish transparency and trust with the public it serves through the effective management of public funds for the identification and completion of transportation projects and improvements.”

The initial goals of the NVTA's proposed Public Outreach efforts are to:

- Educate the public about NVTA and its role in delivering transportation solutions.
- Educate the public on the various options available to the NVTA to generate new funds for transportation improvements and to seek input on those options.
- Educate the public on the actions the NVTA will take and reinforce the benefits of those actions on the region.
- Position NVTA at the center of transportation dialogue in Northern Virginia.
- Reinforce messages that the public has a say in shaping the regions transportation network through input and participation.
- Set realistic expectations among NVTA's constituencies, as related to its ability to improve Northern Virginia's transportation network.
- Guard against and correct misinformation.

The finalization, adoption and implementation of the recommendations set forth in the Recommendations, the Executive Summary, the Sub-Group outlines, and Attachments A-E is critical to achieving NVTA's Public Outreach mission.

Public Outreach Working Group Recommendations

The Public Outreach working group subdivided into four specialty groups (Marketing, Media Relations, Messaging and Public Outreach) to tackle the three overarching questions:

- Question #1.** What should be included in the NVTA Communication Plan?
- Question #2.** How should NVTA address the need for formal outreach to Northern Virginia Residents, the business community, the media, and other transportation agencies?
- Question #3.** What outreach should be undertaken before, during and after the implementation of new taxes and fees?

The result is a list of recommendations and a draft outline of a Strategic Communications Plan and attachments which can be expanded and molded to achieve the Public Outreach objectives established by the NVTA.

The following points provide additional information as to why the NVTA should immediately:

- 1) Establish a spokesperson/public outreach specialist as “one-stop shopping” to coordinate outreach objectives (media relations, message development, public meetings, finalize communications plan, etc.). This individual would act in coordination with the NVTA Chair and members and with their support. This individual should be invited and present at the table for all other working group discussions and should be kept apprised of legal and all other issues that affect the NVTA and its functions;
- 2) Establish an independent and separate identity in order to get away from the “Alphabet Soup” issue of regional bodies and organizations with similar names and acronyms. In order to begin establishing the public identity and branding of NVTA all members and jurisdictions should refer to the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA) publicly as “*The Authority*” or “*The NoVA Authority*.”
- 3) Establish an independent NVTA web site as Northern Virginia’s central source of information on transportation-related policy, news, research and service.
 - a) Purchase the approved domain name(s) as well as all of the appropriate designations (.com, .org, .net, etc.) for at least 10 years, to avoid confusion.
 - b) NVTA’s domain name may also qualify for a .gov designation, this is still being researched.

- c) Please note: www.nvta.org is owned by the Northern Virginia Transportation Alliance and www.nvta.com is privately-owned and being held by an independent organization.
- 4) Approve NVTA “tag line”: *“Delivering real transportation solutions and value for Northern Virginia’s dollars.”*
- 5) Change/update the NVTA logo so that it helps to establish The NoVA Authority’s brand and conveys its message more clearly. While the current logo does demonstrate an image of multi-modal balance, it can be improved. The multimodal aspects should still be included.
- 6) Educate public about the NVTA and its new expanded role as well as the new taxes, fees and proposed transportation improvements immediately, BEFORE the public hearing to consider adoption of the taxes and fees authorized by the General Assembly with a series of town hall style meetings throughout Northern Virginia. At each town hall meeting, local officials will deliver a general presentation customized for their jurisdiction and residents. This will allow the public to better respond and comment at the larger, official public hearing currently scheduled for July 12, 2007. This effort will also promote transparency.
- 7) Establish and build relationships with Northern Virginia residents, stakeholder groups, businesses, media, transportation agencies, special interest groups as well as critics. Bring these groups to the table as soon as possible. Some of these groups have indicated that they don’t want to be part of the development of the outreach effort. **(see Attachment A)**
- 8) Direct the Public Outreach Working group and/or the appointed spokesperson to establish short-term, mid-term and long term objectives for the NVTA’s consideration as outlined in Attachment B. **(see Attachment B)**

Background, Challenges and Opportunities

Despite the work of NVTA over the past five years to develop TransAction 2030, most Northern Virginia residents, stakeholders, interest groups and the media are either unfamiliar with or unclear about what the NVTA is, what its mission is and what power and authority it has to impact the transportation network within its jurisdictional authority: The Counties of Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun and Prince William; as well as the cities of Alexandria, Fairfax, Falls Church, Manassas, and Manassas Park.

The public and stakeholders need to be educated about NVTA's expanded role, and currently lack reliable and consistent information about NVTA's charge to implement the Northern Virginia transportation taxes and fees recently authorized by the General Assembly with the passage of HB 3202.

With the assistance of public information officers and communications professionals representing all of NVTA's member jurisdictions and other regional transportation and planning agencies, the Public Outreach working group has assembled and outlined strategies and tools and assembled them into the beginnings of a Strategic Communication plan.

The following outlines represent many ideas, tools and tactics that can be part of the final Strategic Communications Plan. These outlines are broken into four categories: Marketing, Media, Messaging, and Public Outreach. They are not prioritized. However, they can help to position NVTA as a regional body of high integrity and transparency committed to directing revenues to support critical transportation projects and services in Northern Virginia and to keep the public updated on the Authority's progress.

Marketing Sub-Group Outline

- 1) Create a reasonable marketing and outreach budget
- 2) Direct Mail Campaigns, explaining taxes and fees and outlining upcoming projects.
- 3) Marketing through established local government channels
- 4) Advertising
 - a. Print
 - b. Radio
 - c. TV (including Comcast on demand, and local cable access)
 - d. Internet
- 5) Regional Town Hall Meetings
- 6) Market to Commuters
 - a. Bus
 - b. Rail
 - c. Commuter lots
 - d. Transit agency communications
- 7) Signage
 - a. Bus
 - b. Rail
 - c. Billboards
 - d. Posters (interior and exterior)
- 8) Businesses/Employers
- 9) Multicultural Communities/Marketing
 - a. Latino
 - b. Korean
 - c. Vietnamese
 - d. Indian
 - e. Middle Eastern
- 10) Summer Festivals
- 11) "Coffee Talk" – small, informal audience-specific transportation dialogues

Media Relations Sub-Group Outline

- 1) Establish Spokesperson who is responsible for:
 - a. Author and edit messages of the NVTA
 - b. Educating local and regional media about NVTA
 - c. Creating and sending out news releases, writing magazine articles/op-ed and story placement
 - d. Arranging media interviews and escorting elected officials to interviews
 - e. Preparing talking points/FAQ's/Fact Sheets (**see Attachment C**)
- 2) Develop and maintain press list
- 3) Identify non-traditional media outlets/blogs (including, but not limited to)
 - a. DCist www.dcist.com
 - b. Live from the Third Rail <http://thirdrail.smorgasblog.com/>
 - c. Commuter Page:<http://commuter.typepad.com/commuterpageblog/>
 - d. WashCycle: <http://washcycle.typepad.com/home/>
- 4) Audit all existing articles, web references, etc. to determine any and all positive/negative information that exists about NVTA
 - a. Address ALL negative press
 - b. Correct misconceptions immediately
- 5) Establish objectives and goals for media relations efforts with associated timelines (i.e. 6 months, 9 months and 1 year)
- 6) Identify target audience (within media, i.e. transportation reporters, editorial boards, Sprawl & Crawl, WTOP)
 - a. Create new opportunities for regular segments like: "Ask the NVTA" on Washington Post radio, WAMU or WTOP.
- 7) Key message and story angle development (repetition, repetition, repetition)
- 8) Evaluation & Media Tracking
- 9) Provide weekly/monthly reports to elected officials

Messaging Sub-Group Outline

- 1) Establish NVTA's Identity
 - a. Who is NVTA?
 - i. Accomplishments
 - ii. Transaction 2030
 - iii. Exists to serve transportation agencies and the region
 - iv. Educator
 - v. Advocate
 - b. What is NVTA doing?
 - i. Identify the problem.
 - ii. Identify the allocation of funds.
 - iii. NVTA as "the problem solver" – Northern Virginia solving Northern Virginia's problems.
 - c. How did we get here?
 - i. Background of how transportation funding is handled.
 - ii. Outline General Assembly action.
 - d. Here's how NVTA is going to solve the problems.
 - i. Outline short, mid and long-term goals.
 - ii. Identify projects on short, mid and long-term scale.
- 2) Establish History Timeline of NVTA.
 - a. Report on past success.
 - b. Forecast future goals.
- 3) Address economic impacts of taxes and fees.
 - a. Break down by jurisdiction and region – additional investment of transportation dollars on quality of life and business.
 - b. Assess individual costs to residents – real cost per taxpayer.
- 4) Outline Taxes and Fees – explain in real terms and create talking Points/FAQ's one pager (**see Attachment C**).
 - a. How much does each tax/fee vehicle raise for improvements?
 - b. What will it actually cost the average tax payer?
- 5) Establish independent NVTA identity.
- 6) Create a Northern Virginia Transportation 101 presentation which can be posted to web site/delivered to stakeholder groups.
 - a. Why is funding transportation a challenge?
 - b. How NVTA meets this challenge.
- 7) Address common misconceptions about transportation funding.
- 8) Cite growth data for NoVA and its impact on the regions transportation system (population, employment and household growth).
- 9) Inform public of the tax/funding/project timelines.
- 10) How much will the new taxes/fees actually generate? What percentage of these new dollars represent?
- 11) NVTA delivers value for the tax dollar, address return on investment.
- 12) Be the first to tell our story; don't let others tell it for us.
- 13) Call on local opinion leaders, economic scholars and transportation experts to validate NVTA and its efforts.

- 14) Speak to the public directly with messages using web site and e-mail blasts.
- 15) Make sure every NVTAs member is on the same page/delivering the same message.
- 16) Maintain strong internal and external communications.

Public Outreach Sub-Group Outline

- 1) Establish transparency and trust with community and stakeholders
- 2) Keep community and stakeholders constantly informed through web site and media
 - a. Big and small milestones
 - b. Use Springfield Interchange project as a communications model
- 3) Create a unique, independent and informative web site
 - a. Include interactive tools like maps that identify project areas and that can be personalized.
 - b. Set up e-mail distribution list; allow community and stakeholders to sign up.
 - c. Establish NVTA blog for Chairman and/or NVTA Executive Director.
 - d. Identify additional social media tools (pod casting, etc.).
 - e. Links to key stakeholders and resources
 - f. News releases, public hearing and meeting schedules/calendar
 - g. Photos of events
 - h. Regional transportation resources
 - i. Link for Spanish speaking public initially and expand over time to Limited English Proficient (LEP) residents
 - j. Virtual public meetings, include presentations, information stations, and a way to provide feedback
 - k. Clear, consumer-friendly descriptions of fees
 - l. Outline, flow chart of NVTA's processes – how decisions are made, who makes them, who prioritizes projects, role of local bodies?
 - m. Guide to public participation
 - n. Special employer/interest groups section – how to get their employees and members involved
 - o. Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds of news alert to individuals and partner web sites.
 - p. Provide progress reports of on-going projects (add photos where applicable)
- 4) Create a speakers bureau.
- 5) Build relationships with stakeholder and interest groups (**see Attachment A**)
- 6) Hold locally focused town hall meetings to educate public at grassroots level.

Responses to Other Questions Submitted to the Working Group – Not Applicable

Additional Questions Asked by the Public Outreach Working Group -- (see Attachment D)

Background and Discussion -- (see Attachment E)

Activities that the Working Group is Still Undertaking

The Working Group is still working on the following outstanding items:

- Finalize Strategic Communications Plan
- Finalize Public Outreach Budget
- Finalize Messaging
- Determine the need for Public Outreach Research and Possibilities – need to understand what the public perception of NVTA is before finalizing a communications plan
- Finalizing Press/Media Contact List

Members of the Working Group

Staff Leads

Kala Leggett Quintana (NVTC)
Barbara Gordon (NVRC)
Nicole Brown (Prince William County)
Toni Copeland* (Arlington County)

*(*Served as working group scribe)*

Sub-Group Leads

(in alphabetical order)

Nicole Brown Marketing (Prince William County)
Chris Fow Public Outreach (City of Fairfax)
Barbara Gordon Messaging (NVRC)
Yon Lambert Media Relations (City of Alexandria)

Participating Staff

(in alphabetical order)

Jennifer Aument (Transurban US)
Liz Bahrns (Prince William County)
Tom Biesiadny (Fairfax County)
Tom Blaser (Prince William County)
Ricardo Canizales (Prince William County)
Althea Evans (PRTC)
Laura Fitzpatrick (City of Manassas Park)
Lorie Flading (Loudoun County)
Beth Francis (Fairfax County)
Nicole Gobbo (City of Falls Church)
Bobbi Greenberg (Arlington County)
Cindy Mester (City of Falls Church)
Mary Mulrenan (Fairfax County)
Jennifer Pickett (DRPT)
Mark Roeber (VRE)
Wendy Block Sanford (City of Falls Church)

Attachment A

NVTA Audiences, Stakeholders and Special Interest groups (*including, but not limited to*):

Local Commissions, Governments, State Agencies and Programs

- Local Towns
- Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC)
- Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission (PRTC)
- Northern Virginia Regional Commission (NVRC)
- Northern Virginia Transportation Alliance (NVTA)
- Commuter Connections
- NuRide
- Telework!VA
- VDOT/ VDOT Commuter Stores
- TYTRAN
- Virginia HOT Lanes project
- DRPT
- Regional Transit Providers
- Colleges & Universities

Business Community and Special Interest Groups

- Local Chambers of Commerce
- Dulles Corridor Rail Association (DCRA)
- Coalition for Smarter Growth
- Sierra Club
- Piedmont Environmental Council
- League of Women Voters
- Local Home Owner's Associations (HOA's)
- Republican and Democratic Party Organizations
- Northern Virginia Association of Realtors (NVAR)
- Greater Washington Board of Trade (GWBOT)
- Washington Regional Network for Livable Communities (WRN)
- Washington Area Bicyclists Association (WABA)
- Arlington Coalition for Sensible Transportation
- Southern Environmental Law Center
- Dulles Corridor Metrorail Project
- Rotary Clubs

Cultural/Ethnic Communities

- Latino Community
- Korean Community
- Vietnamese Community
- Indian Community
- Middle Eastern Community
- Other Ethnic Communities
- Limited English Proficient (LEP) groups

Attachment B

Objectives

This public outreach plan recommends the following outline for short, mid and long-term objectives:

Short-term Objectives (1- 3 months)

1. Initiate branding through the development or enhancement of NVTA logo to be more readable and understandable; develop tag line, mission statement
2. Secure URLs for new NVTA web site
3. Design a new, interactive, independent, informative web site that will raise and maintain NVTA's visibility and provide information, NVTA actions, and citizen participation opportunities (include a Spanish parallel site – possible use of auto-translator).
4. Create process for transferring existing information from site currently hosted by NVRC to the new independent NVTA web site and assign web administration responsibilities. Identify a contractor to build and populate site with information (e-newsletter, project lists, interactive map tools, NVTA board materials, meeting announcements.
5. Begin drafting a comprehensive NVTA marketing/communications plan using the outline proposed by the Public Outreach Working Group.
6. Create an NVTA information kit to include a fact sheet, FAQ, membership details and contact information. Include information that directly addresses the taxation issue.
 - a. Make sure that the public understands in real terms what it will actual cost per person (Big Mac or Starbucks equivalent)
 - b. Tell public when info will be available
 - c. Tell public when a final decision will be made (60 day period before taxes and fees will be implemented. Launch media campaign to educate.
7. Establish long term subcommittees for
 - a. Message mapping – “one message, many voices” calculated education campaign with benchmark information, interactive maps, power point presentations, etc.
 - b. Public outreach – education campaigns and tools i.e., dynamic web site, email alerts, email newsletter, pod casts, speakers bureau, public hearings, etc.)
 - c. Media relations – spokesperson for NVTA; educate local, regional and state media as well as topical media about NVTA; responsible for news releases, magazine articles, op/ed and story placement; radio and TV interviews and shows, etc.
 - d. Marketing – develop plan to include “branding” NVTA, enhanced logo, non-traditional media, etc.

Mid-term objectives (3-6 months)

1. Launch marketing plan, introduce logo, etc.
2. Launch web site
3. Launch e-newsletter and e-mail list serve with NVTA board actions, meeting information and other updates
4. Distribute news releases with periodic updates about NVTA's progress
5. Coordinate/schedule "op-ed" pieces for print media and radio/TV interviews for broadcast media to update public on NVTA's progress
6. Prepare "road show" multi-media display/presentation for public outreach to community meetings and events
7. Begin speakers bureau
8. Prepare power point presentations on NVTA progress for NVRC board, NVTC board, CAOs, local and regional elected bodies and community groups
9. Schedule meeting(s) with editorial boards
10. Consider magazine articles for VML and VACo magazines/newsletters as well as *Governing*, *Virginia Review* and possibly *Virginia Business* magazines.

Long-term objectives (6-12 months)

1. Report on progress of transportation projects to the public and stakeholder groups.

Ongoing objectives

1. Web site updates as needed
2. Media relations
3. Positioning of NVTA as "The Authority"
4. Prepare reports to General Assembly: Return on Investment (ROI) for taxpayer dollars.

NVTA FAQ's

Frequently Asked Questions

about the

Northern Virginia Transportation Authority and HB3202

Q: When will construction begin on transportation projects financed by the new legislation?

A: NVTA will be considering recommendations from its five working groups on June 6, 2007. Pending action on June 6: NVTA has scheduled a public hearing for July 12, 2007, regarding the imposing of the taxes and fees authority by the General Assembly. If approved, NVTA is planning a small initial bond issue to fund several priority projects that are ready to go and only require funding.

Q: Who will decide which projects will be constructed first?

A: Pending action on June 6: NVTA's Interim Technical Committee (may be renamed the Jurisdictional and Agency Coordinating Committee) has been asked to prepare a list of initial projects for NVTA's consideration on July 12, 2007.

Q: What are the new or higher taxes and fees authorized by the General Assembly?

A:

Congestion Relief Fee (Grantor's Tax):	\$0.40/\$100 valuation
Motor Vehicle Rental Tax	2%
Transient Occupancy Tax	2%
Safety Inspection Fee	\$10
Initial Vehicle Registration Fee	1%
Sales Tax on Auto Repairs	5%
Regional Registration Fee	\$10

Q: Will taxes go up in all Northern Virginia jurisdictions?

A: Nine local governments are included in the legislation: Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun and Prince William Counties and the cities of Alexandria, Falls Church, Fairfax, Manassas and Manassas Park. There are two aspects of the approval process: Quorum and Voting. A quorum is required to conduct an NVTA meeting. It is established using two tests:

- 1) a simple majority (9) of the 16 NVTA members (comprised of 9 jurisdiction representatives, 3 General Assembly representatives, 2 Gubernatorial Appointees and 2 non-voting members, VDOT & DRPT); and
- 2) A simple majority (5) of the 9 local government members of NVTA.

For Voting, approval of actions by NVTA requires that three tests be met:

- 1) 2/3 of the voting members present; (i.e. 10 of 14, if all voting members are present); and
- 2) 2/3 of the local government members present, i.e. 6 of 9, if all jurisdictions are represented; and
- 3) The local government members voting in favor must represent 2/3 of the population of jurisdictions embraced by NVTA as of 2005.

If these conditions for voting and quorum are met and the NVTA adopts any of the taxes or fees, then the fees adopted will be imposed in all nine jurisdictions as authorized to do so by the General Assembly.

Q: When will the new taxes and fees be collected?

A: The legislation goes into effect July 1, 2007. The legislation requires that NVTA allow a 60 comment period prior to the implementation of the taxes. With the exception of the Initial Vehicle Registration Fee, all of the other taxes could be implemented following the 60 day comment period.

Q: Is the NVTA a new organization or is it part of NVRC or NVTC?

A: NVTA is a completely separate organization. However, the Authority will work closely with all regional transportation partners, jurisdictions and stakeholders.

Q: What is the difference between Northern Virginia Transportation Authority and the Northern Virginia Transportation Alliance?

A: The Authority has been established by the General Assembly to coordinate Northern Virginia's transportation resources and has been given additional authority to establish taxes and fees to pay for transportation in Northern Virginia. The Alliance is a private organization of citizens and businesses and is not a government agency.

Q: When will decisions be made regarding the management and operations of NVTA?

A: NVTA established five working group to provide recommendation on these matters. The working groups' initial recommendations are due on June 1, 2007, and will be discussed by the NVTA on June 6, 2007.

Q: How can I learn more about NVTA and decisions regarding transportation funding?

A: Visit the NVTA web site at www.novaregion.org/novatrans or send an email to info@novaregion.org. Stay tuned though because NVTA will soon be establishing its own independent web site.

Attachment D

Public Outreach Group Outstanding Questions*

*(*Some draft responses provided below in italics – additional work needs to be done in order to secure a complete response)*

1. In the short and long-term, who will author/edit the messages about NVTA?
(Based on approach being considered by other working groups). In the short term NVTA should designate a person, either existing local government or regional agency employee or contractor to provide leadership on this issue with support of other PIO's. After one year, NVTA should reevaluate its long term needs.
2. Will the messages be primarily educational news releases, fact sheets and announcements or will the text advocate positions and actions?
3. What will be the approval process for messages? *Should be approved in general by NVTA; specific documents should be approved by Chairman.*
4. Which messages will be translated into which languages? How will that be done?
5. What is the budget for outreach?
6. In the short-term, who will distribute the messages and how?
 - a. News releases / fact sheets / calendar items / web postings before/after NVTA meetings? *Existing PIO's, revamped NVTA website.*
 - b. Email lists? *Single point of contact established in 1*
 - c. NVTA/NVRC/NVTC and other web sites? *Links*
7. Who will respond to general public inquiries via the web site or information number (such as at NVRC)? *See 1. Can refer to technical staff or future Executive Director as appropriate.*
8. Who will be the spokesperson for NVTA? *See 1.*
9. Recommending securing a web site exclusive to NVTA ASAP. *Yes.*

Attachment E

MINUTES OF MAY 10, 2007 NORTHERN VIRGINIA TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY PUBLIC OUTREACH WORKING GROUP

PRESENT:

Martin Nohe, Chair
Margie Vanderhye, Vice Chair

Fatemek Allahdoust, VDOT-No. Va.; Jennifer Aument, Virginia Hot Lanes;
Tom Biesiadny, Fairfax County; Nikki Brown, Prince William;
Rick Canizales, Prince William DOT; Toni Copeland, Arlington; Laura Fitzpatrick,
Manassas Park;
Lorie Flading, Loudoun; Chris Fow, Fairfax City; Nicole Gobbo, Falls Church;
Barbara Gordon, NVRC; Bobbi Greenberg, Arlington; Yon Lambert, Alexandria;
Mary Mulrenan, Fairfax County; Mark Roeber, Virginia Railway Express

Call to Order

- At 1:40 p.m., the meeting was called to order by Chair Nohe, with introductions around the room of those present above.

Agenda Materials

- Mr. Biesiadny gave a briefing on the materials included as part of the agenda packet, and explained the role of the Public Outreach Working Group.
- A Group member inquired on the number of new taxes/fees in the legislation. Mr. Biesiadny stated that 7 new taxes/fees have been authorized by the Virginia General Assembly with the transportation bill, with a 40% of revenue return to localities, and the remaining 60% to the NVTA -- earmarked for debt service on outstanding bonds, Metro capital, and VRE operating capital.
- Some jurisdictions may get more revenue than others in certain years to fulfill projects.
- The requirement for taking over secondary roads was removed. Toll roads funded by NVTA could be considered.
- Chair Nohe asked who would collect the vehicle registration fee. Mr. Biesiadny responded it could be existing agencies like the DMV, Virginia Department of Taxation, or localities. MoUs would be needed for implementation.
- Chair Nohe stated that the Group should establish realistic expectations and fully educate the public. Issues of constitutionality and practicality are still being debated. The consensus of the NVTA is to move forward. A legal committee has been established.

- Chair Nohe stated that these are tax increases and the public relations component needs to be addressed.
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MINUTES OF MAY 24, 2007
NORTHERN VIRGINIA TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY
PUBLIC OUTREACH WORKING GROUP
NVTC Office, 4350 North Fairfax Drive, Suite 720, Arlington, Virginia

PRESENT:

Martin Nohe, Chair

Jennifer Aument, Virginia Hot Lanes; Tom Biesiadny, Fairfax County; Nikki Brown, Prince William; Rick Canizales, Prince William DOT; Toni Copeland, Arlington; Althea Evans, PRTC; Laura Fitzpatrick, Manassas Park; Lorie Flading, Loudoun; Chris Fow, Fairfax City; Nicole Gobbo, Falls Church; Barbara Gordon, NVRC; Yon Lambert, Alexandria;
Mary Mulrenan, Fairfax County; Mark Roeber, Virginia Railway Express;
Kala Quintana, NVTC

Call to Order, Welcome & Introductions

- At 10:30 a.m., Chair Nohe welcomed all members present and introductions were made around the room.

Sub-committee Reports & Feedback

Messaging Subcommittee

- With Ms. Gordon as lead, the discussion centered around the following:
 - The importance of the general message, history and how transportation has changed. Exactly what NVTA is. Who is the audience and what is the message.
 - Clarify which jurisdictions are most impacted.
 - Internal polling shows that not many know what NVTA is.
- Chair Nohe stated that the marketing message needs to be broad-reaching like NVTC's "Think Outside the Car" message. Needs to reach every single person who lives in a house. Message should be what we are, what we are going to do, and the timeline, how we got where we are and what we're going to provide. In the short-term, there is a need for education and public hearings. The linkage may be the TransAction 2030 Plan.
- Ms. Aument cautioned that there is danger if the NVTA is known as a "taxer". The message should be that we are the center for input and combined resources around the region. **Chair Nohe said that NVTA should be known as the problem solver.**

- Ms. Mulrenan stated that it would help make the message clear if people understood what problem this organization is going to be solved. Sounds like we are handling transportation issues regionally – Northern Virginia. What are we doing for them.
- Mr. Lambert encouraged the Group to look at the document “Message 1: NVTA Mission and Goals”. The NVTA is an Authority – a framework for what we do.
- Ms. Quintana stated that there are concerns from the public that this is another level of bureaucracy. **NVTA needs to establish that it is doing something different than other agencies without dismissing work of other agencies.**
- A member stated that branding is an important piece. Who are these people who are taxing us and why is Authority doing this. NVTA can have more than one key message.
- Chair Nohe said that the nature of NVTA is to be low profile – a smaller level of bureaucracy – the center and balance. Likes the idea of an umbrella group. We exist to serve the transit agencies and others.
- Ms. Quintana said that NVTA has to know how core things are going to be. Chair Nohe stated that NVTA will consider a strategic plan at the June 6th meeting. Ms. Quintana further commented that NVTA has a plan and money to do it -- that is what was said to the General Assembly. Is the goal to fulfill 2030?
- Chair Nohe responded that funding is not sufficient to fulfill 2030 but the goal is to begin to process. This is about Northern Virginia as a region solving a Northern Virginia problem.
- Ms. Evans stated that the message can change over time. The initial message should be an introduction. Who we are and what we are trying to accomplish as part of the funding.
- Chair Nohe commented that maybe part of it is that the name will always be NVTA. From a marketing perspective, we may need another name.
- **Ms. Quintana summarized the discussions:**
 - **Establish who NVTA is**
 - **Explain the problem that needs to be and will be resolved**
 - **How do you go about doing that – Northern Virginia solving Northern Virginia’s problems.**
- Ms. Gordon believes this group will be turning out a different message.
 - 1) Education/marketing
 - 2) Will also have response to media and General Assembly
 - 3) Posting of website meetings; keeping it up to date; when and where it goes up.
 - 4) Also question of when NVTA is an educator versus an advocate.
- Chair Nohe responded that advocacy and education are tools and the third piece is funding and administration. Part of education is the advocacy piece -
 - not really a function of public outreach. Should be with another group like the General Assembly or local governments. Ms. Quintana stated that if we educate the public, elected officials and others will become the advocates.

- Ms. Aument questioned what angle NVTA takes with the audience – channel or facilitator or soliciting input.
- **Ms. Quintana summarized further statements:**
 - **What should be included in the communications plan.**
 - **Address final outreach plan; what outreach should be taken before and after implementation of taxes and fees.**
 - **Assess results.**
- A member stated that NVTA should capture what already has been allocated in federal funds so that they know there is some experience.
- Mr. Canizales stated that the message should include multi-modal – ride-on, bus, bike paths – looking at everything.
- Chair Nohe stated that jurisdictions don't have the same needs.

Marketing

- Ms. Brown went over the document entitled “Draft NVTA Marketing Plan, Public Outreach Committee, May 2007”.
- She stated that what is missing is research of what the public perception is right now. This could make marketing worthwhile and create the identity. The SWOT piece is blank but think that comes from more involved analysis. Also budget.
- Chair Nohe stated that he believes it comes from a strategic plan.
- **Ms. Quintana stated that the website will be the fastest, cheapest, and best way to get off the ground. Pod-casts, email blasts, newsletters. Should push hard to see those are the first dollars developed.**
- **Chair Nohe stated that recommendations should be compiled in the report.**
- **Ms. Quintana stated that recommendations will be included in the report which is due to the Public Outreach Group members by June 1. It will include short- and long-term goals. The short-term includes public hearings and creating a marketing plan and message. Other NVTA groups will also submit recommendations in their reports.**
- Chair Nohe stated the concerns of some Authority members about the expense of the short- and long-term plans. There may be an additional funding stream to get through the next General Assembly session. **The Group should include in the report what these plans will cost in the next six months.**
- A member stated that he heard that the staffing piece is being debated. Chair Nohe responded that he will recommend as a long-term goal that a Public Information Officer be hired. Could also be the Executive Director in same position.
- Ms. Aument commented that research on other organizations will be a valuable piece. Perhaps a separate focus group or survey can be created.

- **Ms. Quintana mentioned changing the name and logo.** The existing logo does not represent the group well.
- Ms. Brown recommending changing the logo to match the brand and identity.
- Ms. Gordon stated that the existing logo is positive because it does represent multi-modal systems but it is not a quick thought or does not grab the tongue.
- Chair Nohe stated that everything NVTa does has to go back to the multi-modal message and the 2030 plan.
- Ms. Aument pointed out that the NVTa website should not be confused with the "Alliance" website.
- **Ms. Quintana summarized discussions as follows:**
 - **The website needs to be up as soon as possible.**
 - **Populate with marketing tools.**
 - **Logo will not change yet but should be married with identity of brand and name.**
- Discussions on possible website addresses continued: NVTa.gov, The Authority, NoVaTrans, NoVaAuthority, TransAuthority, GetNoVaMoving, GetVirginiaMoving, NoVaTransAuthority, MyAuthority. Others were mentioned. Think of stature and credibility.
- Ms. Brown stated that it may be easier to start with an overarching website and then try to incorporate that into an identity. Something with a catchy line is difficult to create in this timeframe. Think it would be easier to start with "The Authority" or something else then building into identity.
- **Ms. Quintana will look for available URLs.**

Public Outreach

- Message should be simplified. Try to have outsiders become insiders.
- Ms. Gordon questioned the participation of jurisdictions, including towns. Chair Nohe responded that the Authority is discussing that.
- **Ms. Gordon stated that she will send future press releases and information to the PIOs in other jurisdictions for posting on their websites, with copies to the transportation staff.**
- Mr. Canizales suggested a kick-off event similar to the 2030 plan launch.
- Ms. Aument went over the document entitled "NVTa Public Outreach Brainstorming Notes".
- Ms. Quintana suggested that Tom crunch some #s so we understand what tax and fees look like – the Big Mac or Starbucks cup of coffee equivalent – for each jurisdiction.
- Mr. Biesiadny responded that the NVTa formula will remain the same but local jurisdictions will adopt different tax rates and fees. The average person will pay \$10 more on registration and \$10 on inspection, with 5% more on labor on vehicles. It is structured so that the average person does not pay a lot more money.
- Ms. Gordon stated that this means different things for different jurisdictions. The bottom line is that this will help you drive around Northern Virginia. You do want and need this because you will get home sooner.

- Chair Nohe stated that a lot of this has to be agency-driven within jurisdictions. They know what opportunities are. Another greater opportunity is the elected leadership. When out at meetings, elected officials are talking about it or should discuss it.
- Ms. Aument stated that a priority should be placed on transportation organizations. Also, focus on where people are getting their information now – commuter stores, PRTC, Springfield Interchange, Hotlanes, etc.
- **Chair Nohe stated that the beginning is a challenge. Members of the Authority want a public hearing in the short-term. This will be discussed at the Authority's June 6th meeting. Mr. Biesiadny shared that the proposed hearing date is July 12th.**
- Chair Nohe stated that the Authority will discuss the taxes and fees and lists of projects to be considered. Question remains whether the Authority will vote on something after the hearing. Mr. Biesiadny stated that will be decided by the Authority on June 6th.
- Chair Nohe commented that when you hold a public hearing you have to understand what you want to know from the public but also have to educate them.
- Mr. Biesiadny suggested scheduling another meeting of this Group in anticipation of actions that may occur at the June 6th Authority meeting or the July 12th proposed public hearing.
- Chair Nohe stated that some Authority members have talked about hosting public hearings in their own jurisdictions before NVTA's proposed July public hearing. Some jurisdictions may want to pass resolutions directing the NVTA on matters that impact their localities. Combinations of jurisdictions have been developed for such possible hearings in the future.
- Ms. Quintana suggested a common package of materials for each jurisdiction, although the projects will be different. Mr. Canizales stated that jurisdictions need the same foundation with a different focus. Make sure everyone has the facts right.
- **Chair Nohe directed that this be part of the report to the NVTA from this Group. Also include in the report the possible inclusion of towns as voting members which should be decided by the General Assembly. In addition, the role of the NVTA and a plan.**
- Mr. Biesiadny stated that the appointment of an advisory committee will be discussed at NVTA's June 6th meeting and will include towns. The members have to be elected officials.
- **Ms. Quintana suggested that the website be interactive so individuals can put in their zip codes and get information specific to them.**

Media Relations

- Mr. Lambert reviewed the document entitled "Media Relations Subcommittee Report".
- Ms. Quintana said she felt there needs to be a very core group or one individual that handles media relations for NVTA. **Ms. Quintana asked that each**

jurisdiction send their press list to her for compilation of one central list.

- Mr. Lambert commented there is a question on whether there is a hard release or soft roll-out of information. Mr. Roeber stated that this will be determined as part of NVTA's June 6th actions.
- Mr. Lambert also discussed the role of blogs. There was question as to whether to treat as the media or a member of the public. The point is to get correct information to them.

Report Schedule/Timeline

- Chair Nohe stated that Ms. Quintana will compile the draft report and distribute it to the Group by Wednesday, May 31st. Comments should be submitted quickly so the report can be forwarded to the NVTA by June 1st in anticipation of its June 6th meeting.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 2:25 p.m.

Draft Strategic Communications Plan

- Barbara Gordon of NVRC presented the document titled "D R A F T ----D R A F T, Northern Virginia Transportation Authority Strategic Communications Plan prepared by herself and Kala Quintana of NVTC. The Group discussed some of the points of the draft as follows:
 - One point of contact should be established for all member jurisdictions and organizations involved. County Board Member Chris Zimmerman of Arlington has been the unofficial designated spokesman because of his role as Chair of NVTA. ***Chair Nohe stated that the NVTA members would discuss and decide this issue with the input of localities.***
 - NVRC now hosts the NVTA website which should be expanded to include new information and to distinguish the Authority from the Northern Virginia Transportation "Alliance". ***A new logo should be considered that is more readable with a memorable message*** (example of NVTC's "Think Outside the Car"). Chair Nohe said the logo should have a positive public face. A member stated that any new product should be similar to the existing logo to which Ms. Gordon and the Working Group agreed.
 - A member questioned translation of documents to other languages. Ms. Gordon stated, and the Group agreed, that that translation of communications into Spanish should occur first with other languages to follow. ***Chair Nohe suggested that staff check with other jurisdictions on the most frequently used languages.***
 - A Group member asked about the budget for the effort. Mr. Biesiadny responded that he would look at the initial cost of implementation of the transportation bill. Chair Nohe stated that this is a bad budget year for localities and that all staffing now comes from NVRC and staff in Fairfax, Prince William and Arlington, and others. The Finance Committee will address the issue of funding to carry out public outreach.
 - ***Chair Nohe asked members to review and continue to provide feedback on the Draft Strategic Communications Plan and indicated that a conference call of the staff coordinators will be called next week to strategize on what must, should and can be done. Staff could check with other jurisdictions on how they are handling their communications piece. A member suggested that regional organizations also be included.***

General Discussion:

- Vice Chair Vanderhye stated that there will be anxiety centered around the taxation piece and how it impacts "the individual". People will want to know:

- 1) when will information be available; 2) when will NVTA make a decision;
 - 3) when the various pieces go into effect; and 4) how it impacts them.
- A member asked about the effective date of taxes/fees and stated that the public should know the timeline. Mr. Biesiadny stated that there would be a 60 day period before implementation of associated taxes/fees.
 - Chair Nohe stated that NVTA does not have the authority in the area of commercial property taxation and how localities deal with this issue.
 - ***Ms. Gordon stated that a FAQ sheet should be established for the public.***
 - Chair Nohe stated that the Public Outreach Working Group is to report by NVTA's next meeting on June 6th. Mr. Biesiadny referenced the report format in today's agenda materials. NVTA Chair Zimmerman hopes to have the report by June 1st so that members have time to review before their meeting.
 - Vice Chair Vanderhye asked about future staffing for the NVTA. Mr. Biesiadny stated that a recommendation on staffing should be included in the report to the NVTA. Under consideration are a contract body or engineering agency that does design for project and bus service or something similar.

Next Steps

- Chair Nohe called for a meeting before the end of this month. ***The Group agreed to Thursday, May 24, at 10 a.m. at the same location.***
- ***A conference call of the staff coordinators group will be called next week. This includes Barbara Gordon, Nikki Brown, Kala Quintana, Toni Copeland, and other interested parties.***
- ***The final draft strategic plan will be circulated among the greater Group before the May 24th meeting.***
- ***A clear mechanism for sharing information among the Working Group should be established. Perhaps information on the NVTC or NVRC websites. All information is public.***

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 2:40 p.m.