



**Northern Virginia Transportation Authority**  
*The Authority for Transportation in Northern Virginia*

**TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**Wednesday, January 21, 2015, 7:00pm**

**NVTA Office**

**3040 Williams Drive, Suite 200**

**Fairfax, Virginia 22031**

**SUMMARY NOTES**

**I. Call to Order/Welcome** Chairman Boice

- Chairman Boice called the meeting to order at 7:05pm.
- Attendees:
  - Members: Chairman Randy Boice; Pat Turner; Agnes Artemel; Meredith Judy; Shanjiang Zhu; Bob Dunphy; Armand Ciccarelli.
  - NVTA Staff: Monica Backmon (Executive Director); Denise Harris (Program Coordinator); Keith Jasper (Program Coordinator).
  - Other Staff: James Davenport (Prince William County); Brent Riddle (Fairfax County).
  - Other: Maria Sinner, Valerie Pardo (VDOT); David Roden (AECOM); Denise Nugent (Travesky and Associates).

**II. Meeting Summary of December 17, 2014, Meeting**

- Dr. Zhu moved to approve the minutes of December 17, 2014; seconded by Ms. Artemel. Motion carried unanimously (with an abstention from Mr. Boice who was not present at the December 17, 2014 meeting.)

**Discussion/Information**

**III. Presentation of HB599 Evaluation and Rating Study** VDOT

- Ms. Pardo introduced Mr. Roden, who gave the presentation on the HB599 Evaluation and Ratings study.
- Ms. Artemel asked whether project impact areas overlapped and, if so, had synergistic benefits been taken into account. Mr. Roden indicated that projects had been evaluated independently of each other, and that some projects could have been grouped for this analysis. He added that impact areas vary in size for each project.
- Mr. Dunphy asked if any impacts beyond the impact areas are taken into account. Mr. Roden stated such impacts are not counted.

- Dr. Zhu asked how the accessibility measure is calculated. Mr. Roden confirmed that, unlike other measures, accessibility is calculated across the entire region, not just the project impact area. Each zone has a path to other zones. Mr. Roden noted that accessibility is calculated separately for transit and auto modes.
- Mr. Roden noted that a primary assumption for the evaluation is that there are no changes in land use and the trip table is fixed.
- Mr. Dunphy asked whether reduced transit congestion resulted from traffic congestion relief. Mr. Roden confirmed that travel time savings for transit passengers were included in the measures. However, most transit crowding is on Metrorail, not buses.
- It was noted that, overall, the HB599 project ratings indicate the scale of each project's impact relative to the top performing project. Ratings can change for different assessment years, and if the mix of projects changes.

#### **IV. Presentation of NVTA FY2015-16 Two Year Program Initial Results**

- Mr. Jasper presented a summary of the initial NVTA staff recommendation for the FY15-16 Two Year Program. The purpose of the presentation is to get feedback from TAC members on the staff recommendation. The Project Implementation Working Group (PIWG) will ask the Authority to release the draft program for public hearing at its February meeting. It is anticipated that the public hearing will be held in March. The PIWG will seek the Authority's approval on the final draft program at the April NVTA meeting.
- The draft Two Year Program divides 52 projects into 27 recommended for funding, 9 not recommended for funding, and 16 which require further consideration. Projects will be taken to public hearing to solicit feedback on the draft Two Year Program. This feedback will provide additional inputs in order to create a comprehensive short list.
- HB599 ratings represent one criterion in the calculation of NVTA project scores, however it is the highest weighted in that it represents 35% of the total score. NVTA project scores only use the HB599 ratings for 2040 (instead of 2020) because the corresponding criterion for transit projects is based on TransAction 2040 which didn't include an analysis of 2020.
- HB599 ratings were calculated assuming each project was operational regardless of whether the project was a study or construction project. HB599 evaluates the congestion reduction impacts of a project. It does not consider other impacts, such as cost benefit, safety, and the environment. However, NVTA is taking such factors into account in its project selection process.
- Larger projects score better which is why congestion reduction relative to cost is important to consider.
- Some projects recommended for funding are previously approved FY2014 projects that are requesting continued funding, despite being lower on the ranked project list. Transit and highway projects are separated in the analysis because the congestion criterion was scored separately.

- Project selection recommendations are fluid, although some of the projects highlighted in red are ineligible for funding due to them not being in TransAction 2040 or the 2010 CLRP – a pass/fail criterion.
- In response to a question regarding why there is a narrow spread in the NVTA scores and a wide spread in HB 599 ratings, Mr. Jasper stated that rather than focus on individual project scores, it was more important to consider the relative scores across the projects. Selection of the recommended projects is based on a 20 point spread from the top scoring highway and transit projects respectively.
- Table 5 includes the actual dollars broken out by transit and highway by jurisdiction for the initial recommendations.
- Projects highlighted in green are assumed to be funded at the full amount requested. However some project sponsors sense it may be better to request smaller amounts over a multi-year period and are willing to take less if their project will get funding in subsequent years.
- Project readiness is addressed by two criteria. Appendix B of NVTA’s Standard Project Agreement (SPA) also lays out how and when NVTA funds will be spent.
- For future funding programs, it is anticipated that highway and transit project funding requests will be considered on a similar basis. This will entail applying the HB599 process to both types of project. To enable comparison of the congestion impacts of both highway and transit projects, a pilot test is planned in the coming months to assess how well TRANSIMS can model transit projects. NVTA will coordinate with VDOT and DRPT regarding this pilot test. If successful, this offers the potential to compare the congestion impact of highway and transit projects on a more consistent basis.
- The requirement to consider Long Term Benefit may eventually influence the evaluation and selection of projects. However, this will not occur until the first ten-year estimate of benefit distribution.
- Mr. Jasper requested two types of comments from TAC members:
  - Tier one comments may potentially affect project selection decisions.
  - Tier two comments relate to process issues that may affect future Calls for Projects. One such comment is that top rated projects are studies that do not yet have a fully defined project. This needs to be addressed as a study can out-score a project with a more defined scope. If a project is funded as a study it should have to go back through the process before future phases are funded.
- TAC members were invited to send comments to Chairman Boice by January 30, 2015.
- Chairman Boice asked if the Columbia Pike Improvements Project (NVTA 1) ranking was still valid after Arlington County removed the streetcar project from the corridor. Ms. Backmon and Mr. Jasper replied that the streetcar did not impact the project ranking.
- Chairman Boice raised the issue that the projects identified as “studies” were being ranked with established projects which may not provide a true picture for the rankings. The rankings assume that the improvements envisioned in the

studies will actually be done; however, “studies” are to ascertain what improvements, if any, are to be advanced to a true project. Theoretically, some or all of the improvements outlined in a study may be found to be unwarranted. Thus, the ranking of the study project higher than an established improvement project that has been studied and warranted can unfavorably skew the application of dollars away from projects that will achieve the goals of the NVTA funds, i.e. reducing congestion, enhancing safety, etc. Studies also tend to account for corridor areas where improvement projects are typically pieces of overall corridor improvements identified in past studies. For example the Fairfax County Parkway study will be assessing grade separating current at-grade intersections as well as widening the parkway over its length. It is likely that such improvements will be phased over time due to the nature and costs of the improvements. Ranking studies with actual projects appears to be an “apple to orange” comparison in the overall rankings. This is not to diminish the importance of studies in the region. However, through this process it should be noted that studies appear to garner points in a way that may not be the way that was intended.

**V. NVTA Update**

Ms. Backmon

- Ms. Backmon reported that VDOT is presenting the HB599 results at tomorrow’s NVTA meeting.
- The Authority will be electing a new chair and vice chair and appointing a new town representative. It will also make a recommendation on whether TransAction 2040 should be amended..
- March 25 is the tentative public hearing date for the FY2015-16 Two Year Program. It is important to have the benefit of the TAC comments in this process.

**Adjournment**

**VI. Adjourn**

- Meeting adjourned at 8:45pm.