

Northern Virginia Transportation Authority
Comments for
FY 2015 to FY 2020 Six-Year Improvement Program
October 22, 2013

Good Evening Secretary Connaughton, Commissioner Whirley, Director Drake, and members of the Commonwealth Transportation Board. My name is Martin Nohe and I am Chairman of the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority. I am here to present the Authority's comments on the FY 2015 to FY 2020 Six-Year Improvement Program as well as comment on several other matters. NVTA's comments are as follows:

- We would like to thank the Administration and the General Assembly for their actions during the 2013 Session to pass HB 2313. The Governor and many members of the Northern Virginia General Assembly Delegation worked together and passed a transportation funding bill that will provide substantial resources to begin addressing the transportation needs of the Commonwealth and the Northern Virginia region.
- The NVTA is working diligently to implement the regional components of HB 2313, by approving an FY 2014 project list and initiating a bond validation proceeding to test the validity of the bonds, processes, and authorizing statutes. Continued coordination and cooperation with this Administration is essential to ensuring that NVTA is able to fully utilize the resources it has been given to implement the necessary improvements to Northern Virginia's transportation infrastructure. Due to the large role that VDOT has in this process, it is essential that VDOT also has sufficient resources needed to help implement the projects created through the new statewide and regional funds. This is especially true as VDOT begins working on the evaluation and rating of at least 25 significant projects, which is required by HB 599/SB 531 (2012) and will impact NVTA's future funding decisions. Understanding that VDOT has budgetary and time constraints for this evaluation, we are still concerned that rating only 25-30 projects will provide neither the CTB nor the NVTA with sufficient projects to select from when making allocation decisions.
- In addition to the ongoing cooperation with the Commonwealth that we anticipate when allocating the regional funds, we appreciate that HB 2313 specifically includes language providing that these regional funds may not be used to reduce the region's share of statewide funds distributed through allocation formulas. Local, regional, state-wide, and federal funds are all part of the solution for addressing the long-term transportation funding needs of the Commonwealth.
- While we are appreciative of the new revenues, we are concerned that no new urban and secondary funds are allocated in the plan until 2017. As provided in the Code, the CTB has the authority to allocate up to \$500 million to priority projects before funds are provided to the construction fund. We ask that Northern Virginia receive its share of funding from this funding. Additionally, due to this

provision, the secondary and urban road programs are not expected to receive new funds until FY 2017, even with the new transportation funds. This is concerning, as our localities have not received funds for this program since FY 2010. Improvements to secondary and urban road are vital. If not addressed, the lack of improvements to these roads will seriously impact our economy and compromise the movement of people and goods to and from Northern Virginia and other parts of the Commonwealth.

- The Authority also remains opposed to any legislation that would require the transfer of secondary road construction and maintenance responsibilities to counties and specifically, Northern Virginia jurisdictions. We understand that the maintenance of secondary roads is a huge expenditure for the state; however, unfunded mandates of this nature, resulting in the shift of an expenditure of this magnitude to local jurisdictions, would result in dire consequences.
- The Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) has been discussing issues related to street maintenance payments for localities that maintain their own roads. The Authority remains opposed of changes to maintenance allocation formulas detrimental to localities maintaining their own roads. Urban Construction Funds are far below what is needed and these localities spend a significant amount of their local funds on maintenance and construction. Further, the Authority believes that the Commonwealth should not enact any further restrictions on how localities may spend this money.
- We would like to thank you for continuing to include the Virginia match for Federal dedicated funding for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority. We appreciate this significant commitment to maintaining Metro's assets and ensuring that Metro can continue to safely and efficiently meet the region's transportation needs. Please continue to provide these funds, even if the Federal government does not provide their match, as long as Maryland and the District of Columbia provide their \$50 million each. If the Federal government does not provide its \$150 million, these non-Federal funds will be even more critical to Metro.
- As part of SB 1140, the Administration is currently working on efforts to modify statewide transit formulas. The proposed operations formula includes ridership data as part of its transit system sizing. We believe that discussions about how to count passenger trips on WMATA's Metrorail must continue to take place and we believe that the methodology used must appropriately reflect those transit trips taken in Virginia. This should be based on boardings and alightings within the Commonwealth, rather than residency or other methodologies not based specifically on ridership. Further, SB 1140 requires that service delivery factors be based on effectiveness and efficiency, and focused on efficiency. It is imperative that the Transit Service Delivery Advisory Committee (TSDAC), DRPT, and the CTB work with transit providers to ensure economic and congestion mitigation benefits are included.

- Additionally, TSDAC has also been considering capital assistance prioritization. TSDAC and DRPT have carefully worked through this process. However, in addition to what is called for in the legislation, DRPT has proposed overhauling the way the state's share of a capital project is calculated from the current system of using non-federal share to total cost a project. This proposed change will penalize our local jurisdictions, which already invest significant local and regional resources to these services. Further, this proposal could also negate the purpose of SB 1140's requirement to establish a new tiering structure.
- Northern Virginia serves the most transit riders and provides the most transit options in the Commonwealth, and, as such, receives the majority of available transit funding. However, as stated above, our local governments also provide significant local and regional resources for these services. We ask that, as this process moves forward, you remember the importance of transit to the Northern Virginia region and the impacts that any change to funding could impact the metropolitan area.
- I would also like to discuss provisions in the 2012 transportation bill, HB 1248/SB 639, which remain a concern to many of our jurisdictions. The 2012 bill provided VDOT and the CTB the ability to decide whether a local transportation plan is consistent with the Commonwealth's priorities. If VDOT and the CTB decide this is not the case, the CTB can withhold funding for projects in that locality. While efforts to better coordinate local and state transportation planning are appreciated, these provisions essentially transfer the responsibility for land use planning, as it relates to transportation, from local governments to the Commonwealth. Our localities work diligently with our residents, property owners, and the local business communities on our land use and transportation plans and these provisions could inhibit development and redevelopment efforts throughout Virginia.
- The federal government now requires that a quarter of all CMAQ funds be spent on projects that reduce PM 2.5. This new requirement restricts projects this federal funding can be used for. As such, we ask the CTB to reconsider its decision regarding hybrid vehicle purchases using CMAQ funds since these vehicles qualify for this purpose while many other projects may not.
- In addition to addressing the foregoing major issues, NVTa requests that:
 - the CTB, continue funding VRE's track leases with federal funds and assist with funding necessary capacity improvements to the system;
 - the CTB, simplify and shorten environmental reviews for locally administered projects;
 - the CTB, DRPT and VDOT support, promote, and encourage walking and bicycling as more viable modes of transportation and look for opportunities to enhance pedestrian and bicycle connectivity in the

Northern Virginia;

- the CTB, support the policy that major transportation corridor studies related to facilities wholly within one VDOT construction district, should be managed by that construction district rather than the VDOT Central Office. Regional VDOT staff is better equipped to address the concern of the affected citizens and local governments; and
 - the CTB, adopt policies that streamline transportation project review by further delegating the design review process from VDOT to the local governments and by adopting a uniform timeframe for plan reviews that remain under VDOT jurisdiction. These efforts would save Virginia taxpayers money and simultaneously result in timely approvals of contextually appropriate projects.
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- We request that this testimony be made part of the Draft Six-Year Improvement Program public hearing record, and that full consideration be given to these comments in preparing the final FY 2014-FY 2019 SYIP. Thank you, again, for the opportunity to speak today. Please let me know if I can provide any clarification regarding the Authority's testimony.