



Northern Virginia Transportation Authority
The Authority for Transportation in Northern Virginia

TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, February 15, 2017, 7:00pm

NVTA Office

3040 Williams Drive, Suite 200

Fairfax, Virginia 22031

SUMMARY NOTES

I. Call to Order/Welcome Mr. Boice

- Mr. Boice called the meeting to order at 7:05pm.
- Attendees:
 - Members: Agnes Artemel; Randy Boice; Armand Ciccarelli; Doug Fahl; Meredith Judy; Kathy Ichter; Pat Turner.
 - NVTA Staff: Monica Backmon (Executive Director, NVTA); Michael Longhi (CFO, NVTA); Keith Jasper (Principal, Transportation Planning and Programming); Sree Nampoothiri (Transportation Planner).
 - Other: Kristin Calkins (Fairfax County); James Davenport (Prince William County).

Action

II. Meeting Summary of January 18, 2017 Mr. Boice

- Mr. Fahl moved approval of the January 18, 2017 meeting summary; seconded by Ms. Ichter. The motion carried unanimously with abstentions from those who were not present at the January meeting.

Discussion/Information

III. NVTA Update Ms. Backmon

- Ms. Backmon informed the Committee members that the Authority met on February 9, 2017, and approved the weightings of TransAction performance measures. Further, she informed that there was a media event earlier in the day to provide to announce the follow up tracking survey carried out in Fall 2016, which showed an upbeat mood among the public about transportation in the region. She added that a link to the survey results can be send to the Committee.

IV. Development of Six Year Program Framework

Mr. Jasper

- Mr. Jasper introduced seven topics with a number of questions for the Committee to consider in the context of moving from preparing a plan to programming the funds.

TOPIC 1: Call for projects

TransAction will identify the best performing multimodal packages at the corridor segment level, not individual projects on a standalone basis. Programming will consider projects/smaller groups of projects for funding in the 2018-2023 Six Year Program (SYP). In the past, programming has been preceded by a Call for Projects. Is there an appropriate role for a Call for Projects for the SYP, perhaps with an emphasis on project readiness? If a Call for Projects approach is used, how frequently should it be made? Alternatively, would a collaborative approach to identify candidate regional projects for inclusion in the SYP based on the corridor-based analysis in TransAction be preferable? If a collaborative approach is utilized instead of a Call for Projects, how will jurisdictional and agency buy-in be ensured?

- Ms. Backmon noted that the technical analysis needs to be balanced with ownership, e.g. Expansion of the American Legion Bridge might be a great project for reducing congestion in the region, but the State of Maryland will have to take the lead.
- Mr. Boice opined that a combination of a collaborative approach of technical analysis and call for projects will be the best solution.
- Ms. Artemel enquired about the downside of having no Call for Projects. Mr. Jasper informed that many projects that will require a collaborative effort will need to be pushed out to the outer years.
- Ms. Ichter suggested the need to work with agencies and jurisdictions to come up with regional priority projects instead of equally distributing funds geographically. She agreed with Mr. Boice that a combination is the best option.
- Both Ms. Ichter and Mr. Fahl argued that the NVTA should not spend regional funds on interstates even though facilities such as I-66 might be performing as a regional connection within the NOVA region, as that should be the responsibility of federal and state agencies.
- Ms. Backmon reminded that the NVTA cannot fund projects such as the American Legion Bridge that are outside the NOVA region.
- Mr. Fahl agreed that a combination of a collaborative approach and a call for projects would be the best. However, he noted that the selection process should be driven by the NVTA staff and not jurisdictional Capital Improvement Plans (CIP).

TOPIC 2: Focus on corridors performance vs project performance

Future travel conditions on corridors and corridor segments will vary across the region. To what extent should programming focus be on the corridors and corridor segments with the worst forecasted congestion, versus the highest performing projects? How will geographic and modal balance be ensured?

- Ms. Judy opined that the top ranking projects must be selected since those rankings are based on comprehensive analysis of the entire region.
- Mr. Boice and Mr. Fahl suggested that the process is comprehensive and therefore, let the process flush out the best projects and/or combination of projects.

TOPIC 3: Performance Targets

Targets can be used as a policy tool to set an expectation of how the regional transportation system will perform in the future. Such a policy may require the Authority to set targets. Alternatively, targets can be used as an internal mechanism to prioritize and/or help to manage expectations of what can be achieved. NVTA's recent Tracking Survey has indicated that a Travel Time Index of 1.5 is the maximum level for commuting that is acceptable to Northern Virginians who drive to work. Should TransAction incorporate targets and, if so, how should they be used? What are appropriate targets for the region? What happens when targets are not met?

- Ms. Ichter opined that developing targets for performance measures will require a large amount of time and effort, which may not be the most critical and appropriate use of resources.
- Ms. Turner suggested that the targets may not be realistic depending on the changing levels of population and employment in the region.

TOPIC 4: Funding of Studies

NVTA has funded studies in the past using regional revenues, although NVTA staff preference is to only fund studies with a regional scope. Under what circumstances should TransAction include studies and how should they be evaluated given studies alone do not result in congestion reduction? Connected/Automated Vehicle technologies offer the potential to reduce non-recurrent congestion caused by crashes. Should TransAction include pilot CAV deployments and how should they be evaluated?

- Mr. Boice opined that studies should not be funded as it is the burden of the jurisdiction/agency to come up with a solution that can be funded.
- Ms. Judy and Ms. Artemel suggested that studies could be funded if they are truly regional in nature.
- Mr. Boice elaborated that studies are viewed as fully implementing the potential solutions and, therefore, analyzed as such during the scoring process. However, the study may come up with a solution that was not analyzed or the study could conclude that none of the alternatives are feasible.
- The Committee agreed that in general studies should not be funded unless they are truly regional in nature.

TOPIC 5: Leveraging NVTA funds for federal funds

NVTA has previously taken non-NVTA funding sources into account in its project selection process. External funding sources increase the likelihood that such projects will be allocated regional revenues. However, NVTA has never applied for federal grants using regional revenues as matching funds. Is this an opportunity worth exploring? How would projects be identified for federal grant applications?

- In reply to Mr. Boice's query on the legality of the NVTA applying for federal funds, Ms. Backmon responded that it is legally allowed.

- Mr. Ciccarelli and Ms. Ichter raised concerns regarding the NVTa applying for federal money for projects for one jurisdiction over other and allocating funds in anticipation of receiving federal money before securing it.
- The Committee recommended not to pursue this avenue.

TOPIC 6: Debt Capacity

NVTa's Finance Committee will make a recommendation on a not to exceed amount for the SYP and if/when the Authority should use debt capacity. What planning and programming considerations should be factored into the recommendation for use of debt capacity?

- Ms. Ichter opined that debt can queue projects quickly, as well as fund projects that are ready to begin but lack funds.
- The Committee agreed that debt can be used to move projects quickly, but when to use debt capacity must be decided, if such situation arises, by the Finance Committee.

TOPIC 7: Synchronizing with Smart Scale

The next Smart Scale cycle will likely commence in fall 2018. Should the SYP update cycle be synchronized with Smart Scale? What is the optimal update cycle for the SYP? What is the best time of the year for the SYP to be implemented and updated?

- Mr. Fahl suggested waiting until both Smart Scale and TransAction schedules are clearer.
- Ms. Ichter suggested that having NVTa funding decisions lag behind Smart Scale decisions might be advantageous since that will give a clear idea of what projects in the region are funded already.

Adjournment

V. **Adjourn**

Mr. Boice

- Meeting adjourned at 8:35pm.