



Northern Virginia Transportation Authority
The Authority for Transportation in Northern Virginia

SUMMARY MINUTES

Thursday, September 14, 2023

7PM, EST.

3040 Williams Drive, Suite 200

Fairfax, VA 22031

This meeting was conducted in person and livestreamed via [NVTA's YouTube Channel](#)

- 1. Call to Order** Chair Randall
 - ✓ Chair Randall called the meeting to order at 7:10PM.

- 2. Roll Call** Mr. Davis, Board Secretary
 - ✓ **Membership: Attendees** Chair Phyllis J. Randall, Vice Chair David Snyder, Chairman Jeff McKay, Chair Ann Wheeler, Board Member Matt de Ferranti, Mayor Justin Wilson, Mayor Michelle Davis-Younger, Mayor Jeanette Rishell, Mayor Catherine Read, Senator Jennifer Boysko, Supervisor Pat Herrity, Mayor Derrick Wood, Mr. Anthony Bedell (Remote-Richmond-Personal), Ms. Mary Hynes, Mr. Jim Kolb, Mr. John Lynch, and Ms. Jennifer DeBruhl (Remote-Richmond-Distance).
 - ✓ **Staff Attendees:** Chief Executive Officer Monica Backmon, Chief Financial Officer Michael Longhi, Principal, Transportation Planning and Programming Keith Jasper, Executive Assistant to the CEO Amanda Sink, Communications and Public Affairs Manager Abigail Hillerich, Assistant Finance Officer Peggy Teal, Investment & Debt Manager Dev Priya Sen, Senior Accountant Adnan Malik, Accounting Assistant Margaret Duker, Senior Manager, Transportation Planning and Programming Dr. Sree Nampoothiri, Planning Analytics Manager Harun Rashid, Regional Transportation Planners Ian Newman, Griffin Frank and Hannah Pajewski, and Board Secretary Jonathan Davis.
 - ✓ **Council of Counsel Attendees:** Mr. Daniel Robinson-Fairfax County, Ms. MinhChau Corr-Arlington County, and Ms. Christina Brown Zechman-City of Alexandria.
 - ✓ **Other Attendees:** Michelle Shropshire, P.E., Acting Director, Northern Virginia Megaprojects, Nick Nies, AICP, 495 Southside NEPA Project Manager, and Ms. Michelle Holland, Communications Manager, NoVA Megaprojects, VDOT.

Members of the public, jurisdiction and agency staff were in person and were able to watch the meeting livestreamed via [NVTA's YouTube Channel](#).

- 3. Approval of June 8, 2023, Meeting Summary Minutes** Chair Randall
 - ✓ Mayor Wilson moved Authority approval of the June 8, 2023, Meeting Summary Minutes, seconded by Senator Boysko. The motion was unanimously approved with an abstention from Board Member de Ferranti.

PRESENTATIONS

4. I-495 Southside Express Lanes Study

Ms. Michelle Shropshire, P.E., Acting Director, Northern Virginia Megaprojects, VDOT

Mr. Nick Nies, AICP, 495 Southside NEPA Project Manager, VDOT

- ✓ Ms. Shropshire presented Virginia Department of Transportation's (VDOT) I-495 Southside Express Lane Study. She stated that the study is an environmental study to potentially extend the Express Lanes system on the southern section of I-495 (Capital Beltway).
- ✓ VDOT has developed ten proposed preliminary alternative concepts to address identified transportation needs within the study area, which are to extend and provide continuity of the Express Lanes system on I-495, provide additional travel choices, reduce congestion, and improve travel reliability, improve safety, and provide consistency with local and regional plans. Currently, VDOT is in the Preliminary Alternative Concept phase with ongoing Public Outreach this fall.
- ✓ VDOT is also coordinating with state and local agencies to identify planned pedestrian/bike facilities and potential gaps within the study area's existing network. Additionally, the Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) conducted a separate transit and Transportation Demand Management (TDM) study which will inform VDOT's study. The presentation concluded with ways for the public to provide comments and information on upcoming public information meetings.
- ✓ Chairman McKay asked what proposed preliminary alternative concept would consider continuing all lanes through on I-495. Ms. Shropshire stated that at this point in the study, the alternative concepts do not detail the engineering design to the degree of lane specifics. She noted that would come later in the study once the preferred recommended alternatives were identified.
- ✓ Chairman McKay asked if it was required to consider reversible express lanes as a concept as they've been shown to be ineffective on I-95. Mr. Nies answered that this study is following the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process which involves considering a full range of alternatives.
- ✓ Chairman McKay then referred to slide 12 in the presentation noting the preservation of transit as a presented option and inquired what concepts would ensure inclusion of transit, specifically a dedicated transit lane. Mr. Nies responded that the graphics on slide 12 were only renderings of potential options and for illustration purposes. Mr. Nies then explained in the illustration the minimum requirements to have a through lane and a transit lane.
- ✓ Mayor Wood asked for clarification on the study area of the express lanes and Mr. Nies clarified that the gap in express lanes east of the Springfield interchange is what the study is considering. Mayor Wood then asked for clarification on the three independent operators of Northern Virginia's express lane network identified in the presentation and Ms. Shropshire answered TransUrban, Express Mobility Partners, and VDOT.

- ✓ Senator Boysko asked if VDOT was coordinating with Maryland. Ms. Shropshire confirmed they were involved in a number of study meetings. Senator Boysko then asked if Maryland was considering extending the express lanes and Mr. Nies responded that currently Maryland does not have planned program improvements for that area.
- ✓ Chair Wheeler continued on the illustration presented on slide 12 and asked if the transit through lane presented was just for the bridge or the entire system and Ms. Shropshire responded that it was just for the bridge.
- ✓ Supervisor Herrity echoed Chairman McKay's concerns about considering reversible express lanes and then asked if the illustration on slide 12 showed a concept for a near-term solution that precludes rail, and then a long-term solution that will convert a through lane for rail usage and Ms. Shropshire confirmed. Supervisor Herrity then asked what year the study looked out to, and Mr. Nies responded the year 2050, the same outyear the DRPT study considered. Supervisory Herrity noted that with an outyear of 2050, that the near-term solutions would be in place for several years before rail could even be considered.
- ✓ Mayor Wilson noted the City of Alexandria's interest in the preservation of transit capacity on the bridge and expressed concern to not create a situation that transit is precluded due to existing infrastructure.
- ✓ Board Member Matt de Ferranti asked about the likelihood that the reversible express lane concept would fall out of consideration and Ms. Shropshire confirmed that it could. Board Member Matt de Ferranti then asked for clarification of the concepts that could include the possibility of transit and Ms. Shropshire stated that both the one and two express lane concepts leaves room for transit.
- ✓ Vice Chair Snyder expressed his interest in safety implications of the preliminary concepts and then asked how greenhouse gas emissions were being considered in this study and if this information would be presented again before it was considered for funding. Mr. Nies stated part of the environmental assessment will consider air quality analysis that includes greenhouse gases, and safety will be considered as part of the safety and operations and traffic analysis. He concluded by stating that before VDOT moves forward with public comment on the preferred alternatives currently scheduled for summer of 2024, that VDOT will present to partner agencies and elected officials.
- ✓ Chairman McKay asked if there was any detail provided on the interchange, entrance, and exit points of the express lanes and Mr. Nies noted that the study has not investigated that level of detail yet and would be in the traffic analysis.
- ✓ Chair Randall asked how travel trends were being considered in this study with changes since COVID and Ms. Shopshire stated that current trends along the corridor are showing near pre-pandemic levels and that as the study continues more detailed analysis is current traffic trends will be considered.

5. Virginia Transit Equity and Modernization Study

Ms. Jennifer DeBruhl, DRPT Director & Authority Member

- ✓ Ms. DeBruhl then presented DRPT's Virginia Transit Equity and Modernization Study. This study was prompted by the passage of House Joint Resolution 542 during the 2021 General Assembly Session, which required DRPT to complete a needs assessment that

focuses on the equitable delivery of transit services, and the modernization of transit in Virginia. The results of the study include two main deliverables, an Interim Report with the study's findings and a Final Report that will provide recommendations and actions for Virginia's transit agencies and communities.

- ✓ Several technical transit topics explored included accessibility, emerging technologies, safety, adequacy of infrastructure, electrification, and engagement and governance. Study finding included:
 - Many bus stops were ill-placed and not ADA-accessible
 - Basic transit infrastructure like shelters and lighting were inconsistent
 - The availability of transit in Virginia is high, but gaps exist
 - Some transit riders have limited opportunities to the decision making process
 - Most transit agencies do not have rider advisory boards or committees
 - Transit is among the safest way to travel, but there is room to improve both perceived and actual safety for transit riders, operators, and employees
 - More data with better precision is needed to make informed decisions
- ✓ The study was also designed to create an Action Plan that can provide real change in transit in Virginia. Ms. DeBruhl presented a few action items DRPT is implementing including
 - Develop technical guidance or policies on bus stop design elements and development.
 - Develop a public engagement handbook.
 - Developing toolsets to gather data on bus stops to drive decision making.
 - Develop best practices for safety-related roles to engage with community partners.
 - Identify areas with unmet demand for transit service and provide new or enhanced service.
- ✓ Ms. DeBruhl concluded by highlighting the steps DRPT is taking to move forward with the study. She stated DRPT is coordinating with supporting agencies and other partners to implement the actions listed and DRPT will continue to monitor and evaluate the progress being made.
- ✓ Chairman McKay asked about DRPT's coordination with VDOT, especially considering the long permitting process, and if there is a way to streamline and prioritize the process. Ms. DeBruhl stated that DRPT has a good relationship with VDOT. DRPT and VDOT have been in discussions over the past 18 months particularly regarding bus shelters and bus stops and how the process can work better. Mr. Lynch added that any engineering design must go through the Department of General Services to get permits and that can also be a source of the delay.
- ✓ Senator Boysko noted that as a co-patron of the bill, she is appreciative of the work Ms. DeBruhl and DRPT have done to complete the study and the long-term work to implement the actions of the study.
- ✓ Chair Randall noted the valid concern of both real and perceived safety, and the importance of improving employee safety if the goal is to get more people to take transit. She explained that in discussions with transit workers the top request from the

workers was training in de-escalation techniques. Ms. DeBruhl echoed Chair Randall's sentiments and how perceived safety has real consequences in people determining whether to take transit.

ACTION ITEM

6. Approval of Letter of Endorsement for the City of Alexandria's Transit Oriented Development Planning Grant Program Application

Ms. Backmon, Chief Executive Officer

- ✓ Mayor Wilson moved Authority approval of Letter of Endorsement for the City of Alexandria's Transit Oriented Development Planning Grant Program Application, seconded by Board Member de Ferranti. The motion was unanimously approved with Mayor Wood and Mr. Lynch not in the room.

DISCUSSION/INFORMATION ITEMS

7. Travel Trends Update

Mr. Rashid, Planning Analytics Manager

- ✓ As an update on analysis through June 2023, Mr. Rashid presented trends in office utilization, highway travel, and transit ridership.
- ✓ Mr. Rashid shared that Metrobus ridership trends have always outperformed office utilization and this aligns with NVTA's observation that local buses catered more to workers during pandemic.
- ✓ Mr. Rashid then presented that highway travel demands are still below pre-pandemic. This trend will be monitored as changes are expected with back-to-school and potentially higher rate of office returns in the next quarter (July-September).
- ✓ Mr. Rashid concluded with transit ridership noting local bus systems continued their close-to or above pre-pandemic level ridership. Among the heavy rail systems, Metrorail showed a strong upward trend while Virginia Railway Express (VRE) remained steady despite the Friday fare-free program.

8. Finance Committee Report

Mayor Rishell, Finance Committee Chair

- ✓ Mayor Rishell discussed the Finance Committee Report as presented in the packet.

9. Legislative Update

Ms. Baynard, Sr. VP, McGuireWoods Consulting LLC

- ✓ The legislative update was presented as provided in the packet.

10. Chief Executive Officer's Report

Ms. Backmon, Chief Executive Officer

- ✓ Ms. Backmon noted that as of the July 28th deadline, 32 applications were received from 11 applicants for a total request of \$1.5 billion for the FY2024-2029 Six Year Program. The deadline for submitting Governing Body and supporting resolutions is 5 p.m., October 27th, 2023. Currently, NVTA staff are reviewing the applications for completeness and eligibility based on TransAction and location.
- ✓ Ms. Backmon informed that NVTA has three monthly newsletters: NVTA Update, Authority Recap, and Driven By InNoVAtion.

- ✓ Lastly, Ms. Backmon noted September 22, 2023, is Car Free Day and NVTA will be participating.

11. Chair's Comments

Chair Randall

- ✓ Chair Randall recognized Ms. Backmon as one of Virginia's Top 500 Power List. Ms. Backmon noted that it is a team effort.
- ✓ Chair Randall stated NVTA had a milestone to celebrate and turned it to Ms. Backmon to discuss. Ms. Backmon announced that in just one decade, NVTA has distributed \$1 billion through its Local Distribution Fund to its nine member jurisdictions and five towns.
- ✓ To date, nearly half of the reported Local Distribution Funds have been allocated to transit projects, including investments in bus, rail, and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), and 74 out of the 272 reported projects are bike/pedestrian projects.
- ✓ The Authority then cut a ribbon to commemorate the milestone.

CLOSED SESSION

(Office Lease Negotiations and CEO Annual Performance Review)

Motions to Convene Closed Meeting

- ✓ At 8:30pm Chair Randall moved NVTA convene a closed meeting, as authorized by Virginia Code section 2.2-3711.A.1, for the purpose of discussing a personnel matter involving the CEO's annual performance review, seconded by Vice Chair Snyder. Motion was unanimously approved.
- ✓ Chair Randall moved NVTA convene a closed meeting, as authorized by Virginia Code section 2.2-3711 (A) (3) and (A)(29) for the purpose of discussing potential contractual agreements by NVTA with third parties regarding the leasing of real estate necessary for the performance of the NVTA 's statutory missions. seconded by Vice Chair Snyder. Motion was unanimously approved with an abstention from Board Member de Ferranti.

Motion to Reconvene in an Open Meeting

- ✓ At 9:23pm Chair Randall moved that the members of the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority certify: (1) that only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements under Chapter 37, Title 2.2 of the Code of Virginia; and (2) only such public business matters as were identified in the motion by which the closed meeting was convened were heard, discussed, or considered; seconded by Vice Chair Snyder. Motion passed unanimously.
- ✓ Chair Randall moved Authority approval of the attached short-term lease with the NVRC and authorization for the Chief Executive Officer to sign the lease documents reviewed by NVTA's Council of Counsel, seconded by Vice Chair Snyder. The motion was approved with abstentions from Board Member de Ferranti, Mayor Rishell, and Mayor Read.

- ✓ Chair Randall moved Authority approval of the attached term sheet and authorize the Chief Executive Officer to sign a term sheet consistent or with superior economic terms as the attached, and resultant lease documents as reviewed by NVTA's Council of Counsel, seconded by Vice Chair Snyder. The motion was unanimously approved.
- ✓ Chair Randall moved Authority approval of the change to the CEO's compensation as discussed in the recent closed session and communication of same to the CFO, seconded by Vice Chair Snyder. Chair Randall noted that there was unanimous agreement that Ms. Backmon is doing an excellent job during a difficult time. Ms. Backmon thanked her team in response. The motion was unanimously approved.

13. Adjournment

Chair Randall

- ✓ Chair Randall adjourned the meeting at 9:27PM.

NEXT MEETING: October 12, 2023, at 7PM, EST
3040 Williams Drive, Suite 200 Fairfax, VA 22031