

CTB Rail Subcommittee Meeting Minutes  
George Washington Hotel  
103 East Piccadilly St, Winchester, VA 22601

The Meeting began at 8:05 am

CTB Rail Subcommittee Members Present: Secretary Shannon Valentine, DRPT Director Jennifer Mitchell, Scott Kasprovicz, Mary Hughes-Hynes, Stephen Johnsen, and John Malbon

1. Approval of June 19<sup>th</sup> Meeting Minutes – The June meeting minutes were reviewed and unanimously approved.
2. 8:10 am, Director's Update – DRPT Director Jennifer Mitchell opened up the meeting and reviewed the agenda. She said that there would be a presentation to review Amtrak ridership update, Amtrak marketing survey and improvement strategies.
3. 8:15 am, Ridership Update – Michael McLaughlin and Jeremy Latimer
  - a. Scott Kasprovicz asked if Richmond service terminates there, if there would be any additional cancellations for Acca yard construction, and if construction fosters a positive relationship with CSX.
  - b. Michael McLaughlin explained that On-Time Performance is a topic that Secretary Valentine addressed with Amtrak's CEO Richard Anderson when they met in July.
4. 8:20 am, Amtrak Marketing Survey – Chris Smith introduced two guests for the marketing portion: Kerry McKelvey (Amtrak VP Marketing and leader of Amtrak's Marketing and Business Development Team) and Jane Broadbent (Siddall Communications who handles Amtrak Marketing account)
  - a. Chris Smith and Kelsey Webb gave a presentation on Amtrak marketing funding and ridership data. The presentation included detailed demographics of riders and the marketing tactics DRPT employs as a result of that data and also marketing data as it relates to discounts and their consumer usage. They also presented on the 3-phase research plan currently being done that will involve virtual focus groups, economic forecasting, and an updated benchmark survey. Jane Broadbent was on hand to provide more detailed information on the research. The marketing portion concluded with an Amtrak customer satisfaction index.
  - b. Kerry McKelvey discussed the strategy behind Amtrak Nationals' marketing efforts and the philosophies behind their goals to increase ridership and passenger experience.
5. Improvement Strategy – Michael McLaughlin and Jeremy Latimer
  - a. Kerry McKelvey explained that Amtrak's national ridership was also weak in April and May. Amtrak national ridership trends have been very similar to what Virginia has experienced in 2018. Amtrak suffers from even worse on-time performance with its long distance routes, notably the Crescent. Amtrak has learned that 2018

focused too much on revenue, and that the onboard customer experience needed improvements. Amtrak noticed the train cars were dirty, bad wifi, and the focus on discounts needed to be targeted. In 2019 Amtrak is focusing on discounts through flash sales, which has a shorter time period but a greater discount is offered during off-peak ridership. In 2019 Amtrak will shift focus to increasing ridership.

- b. John Malbon said that fares and on-time performance are important but so is the travel experience. If you can fix that, you can also start to fix ridership.
  - c. Mary Hughes-Hines said she rides Amtrak regularly between Washington DC and New York. Her experience at the café car was so bad that she has sworn it off entirely. A packaged snack can easily be purchased for 20% less at the station than onboard.
6. 8:47 am, CTB Questions/Comments
- a. Mary Hughes-Hines: 95 South has become increasingly unreliable. Going into the upcoming General Assembly session, are there plans to increase awareness of the train and seamless ways to get downtown through Staples Mill Station? 95 South used to be 1.5 hours to Richmond, now it is 2+ hours. We haven't marketed it that way and that's an untapped market.
  - b. Secretary Shannon Valentine: Our meeting with Amtrak in July went well. Richard Anderson's focus as the Delta CEO was on customer service, and he understands that is important for Amtrak's passengers too. We asked that improvements made onboard for the customer experience in the Northeast Corridor be extended to Virginia as well. I'd like to thank Jennifer and her team for arranging that meeting. Mary Hughes-Hines makes a good point, and that unreliability has been a deterrent.
  - c. John Malbon: There's a huge amount of construction in Arlington. How does transportation keep up with the demand for growth? Rail seems like it has the most capacity when compared to the highway network. Can we use double stack passenger rail cars?
  - d. Kerry Mckelvey: Virginia's services pull off the Northeast Corridor which are vertically limited by tunnel clearances in Baltimore and New York that only allow for single level equipment.
7. No Public Comment received.
8. The Meeting Adjourned at 8:55 am