



Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation

CTB Rail Subcommittee Meeting
Minutes
February 15, 2017

Meeting began at 9:03 am.

CTB Rail Subcommittee Members Present: Jennifer Mitchell, Scott Kasprovicz, Shannon Valentine, Mary Hughes-Hynes, and Court Rosen.

DRPT Director Jennifer Mitchell opened the meeting and reviewed the agenda.

1. DC2RVA Progress Update-Emily Stock

Emily shared that Draft EIS comments are starting to come back from the FRA. The FRA has been concerned that the edits to the Draft EIS would not be confidential. They are working through the chapters now. The FRA has not yet agreed to DRPT's proposal to extract Ashland from the EIS and do a separate alternatives analysis and NEPA process. This approach would provide more time for a community-based analysis in Ashland, and allow DC2RVA to continue on schedule. If the DEIS review continues as expected, it will be released to the public this Spring. There will be a 60 day period for comments and public hearings. These comments will be compiled for the CTB to review. In the interim the project team will be working on draft schedule and corridor modeling. The schedule shows that the Final EIS and Record of Decision (ROD) are compressed into late 2017. Pete Burrus shared that if this schedule is not maintained, it could affect the Atlantic Gateway projects, including Long Bridge, that need to be obligated by 2019 and under construction by 2021. Jennifer Mitchell said that DRPT is very concerned with FRA's unresponsiveness. She said that this is putting the entire schedule at risk so DRPT is pushing hard for a decision on Ashland. The Governor tried to get a decision out of the previous administration but was unsuccessful. It was requested in writing to the FRA that Ashland be taken out of the EIS, because a decision does not have to be made on that section of the corridor in the near-term.

Shannon Valentine asked if it is normal for the FRA to be concerned about FOIA. Jennifer Mitchell replied that typically comments in a working document tend not to be subject to FOIA. The Town of Ashland put in a FOIA request for the Draft EIS and the OAG advised DRPT to release it in an abundance of caution.

2. Status of Rail Applications for SYIP-Pete Burrus

Pete shared that 56 million dollars in applications have been received this year for IPROC, REF and RPP funds. This indicates a huge demand for rail. Funds are very restrictive in the first few years of the SYIP. Some passenger funds have been committed to Atlantic Gateway. The committee asked when they could get more information on available funds. Pete Burrus said that at the March meeting there will be more information on the revenue picture and how things are shaping up. Scott Kasproicz asked about the Ellison funds and if they were available for redistribution. Pete shared that those funds were de-obligated and went back into the program. Some of that funding was reallocated to ACCA yard. This is reflected in the SYIP. Court Rosen asked if the March meeting information would reflect the 4 million dollars in REF funds that were flexed to RPP. He said that it would be more critical to Buckingham Branch to receive funding that it would be for Norfolk Southern. He wants to see details on this in March. Scott stated that the Rail Preservation program offers a lot of bang for the buck. Mary Hynes said that the longer maintenance is deferred the more costly it becomes.

3. Rail Plan Update- Mike Todd

Pete Burrus stated that DRPT's goal is to turn the Rail Plan into a regional based economic plan. He turned the presentation over to Mike Todd who said the purpose of the presentation was to make sure that the subcommittee's comments from last month's meeting were integrated into the plan correctly and to provide updates on progress since last month.

Mike reviewed the comments on ROI. In the ROI analysis they will be looking at what is the cost of degradation of service. They will be looking at the cost offset of rail to show what the savings or cost would be if things are shifted to or away from rail. They will also be taking figures from the Lynchburg Economic study to make sure that information lines up with what is in the rail plan. Additional comments from the committee included looking into technology and connecting to rail networks outside of our state, as well as looking into how other states purchase abandoned rail lines. Mike asks if everything was captured correctly and asks for comments. Scott Kasproicz asked if we can look at the rail network to see where vulnerable lines are that could be purchased. Mike Todd replied that in the rail plan we will look at what is out of service and what lines are out of service and have the potential to become abandoned. The rail plan will also look at industry trends in an effort to see what lines may go out of service soon. In general, the committee members agreed that the notes from the January workshop captured the discussion adequately.

Mike gave a status update on progress since the last meeting. He said that the consultants have gone out to the Virginia Railroad Association to collect data. Bridges are a big issue and require a big fiscal input for shortline railroads. The rail preservation fund is

strained. The Industrial Access application rules are limiting and we could take more advantage of the program if they rules were amended. Shortline railroads produce a lot of economic impact. It will be important to show who they are and what their benefit is to the state in the rail plan.

Mike discussed the Statewide Economic Analysis part of the plan. Spending has to be looked at in comparison to the benefits of the expenditures. The plan will look at industry standard parameters to help determine the benefit of a mode shift. Shannon Valentine asked if there is a way to look at what the cost would be if we didn't spend the money towards rail. She wants to see the big picture and the overall benefit to make the case for investing in rail. She would like to see a figure that shows for every dollar invested what the return is to rail. She thinks the chart shown by Mike is hard to read. She wants evidence based facts to present. Mike said that the executive summary portion of the rail plan will be a marketing document that will help make the case for investment in rail.

Mary Hynes asked how the money we have currently available is divided between rail and highway. This needs to be clear in the rail plan. If we want to try to change the allocation we need to present evidence not presented before. Jennifer Mitchell said that there is a rail fiscal cliff that is coming. The program is too constrained and we will have to push for additional revenue.

Danny Plaughter of Virginians for High Speed Rail, a member of the audience asked Mike Todd if the number for the User Cost of Passenger Rail, a number left blank in the presentation will be coming. Mike Todd said that those numbers will be included as the economic analysis continues to develop.

Mike Todd discussed the Regional Analysis section of the plan. He said that the team will be looking at freight volume by region. The data is from 2012. They will be looking at what projects, in what corridors will have the most benefits. He then asked for questions and comments. Shannon Valentine said that in regards to Mary Hynes comment on the split between rail and highway funds that we need to make sure we have the right pot of funds. We will have to justify the increase in funding. Jennifer Mitchell said that there are new funding opportunities through SMART Scale. She also shared that CTB revenues have the ability to be flexed. Scott Kasprowicz said that there needs to be a shift in messaging to a discussion about public private partnerships. These are very cost effective partnerships that offer a great benefit to the state with moderate funding. Mary Hynes said that the public does not think that rail roads are great partners, it warrants a discussion with CSX and Norfolk Southern to talk about working together better.

4. No public Comment. The meeting was adjourned at 9:56 am.

