

MINUTES

CTB Rail and Transit Subcommittee Meeting
VDOT Central Office-HR Training Room
1221 East Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23219
July 20, 2021
8:30 a.m.

The meeting of the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) Rail and Transit Subcommittee was held in the HR Training Room of the Virginia Department of Transportation Central Office Old Highway Building located at 1221 East Broad Street, Richmond, Virginia 23219. The meeting was called to at 8:34 a.m. on July 20, 2021.

CTB Rail Subcommittee Members Present: DRPT Director Jennifer Mitchell, Mary Hynes, Stephen Johnsen, John Malbon and Ray Smoot.

CTB Members Present: Scott Kasprowicz

CALL TO ORDER: DRPT Director Jennifer Mitchell opened up the meeting with welcoming remarks and introduced the agenda.

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1. Approval of June 22, 2021 Minutes

Stephen Johnsen moved to approve the minutes. Ms. Hynes seconded the motion and the minutes were unanimously approved.

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2. Director's Update (Jennifer Mitchell)

Director Mitchell provided the subcommittee with the following updates:

- **Amtrak:** On July 7, Amtrak announced the procurement of its new dual-mode (electro-diesel) train fleet.
- **VPRA:** The Amtrak and VRE agreements were assigned from DRPT to VPRA at the June 28 VPRA board meeting.
- **Transforming Rail in Virginia:** The Architectural/Engineering Consulting Services RPF for the Franconia-Springfield Bypass Project closed on July 14. Negotiations for the S-Line corridor survey award is underway and is expected to be completed in 2023.
- **Amtrak Ridership:** There continues to be an upward trend in ridership for Virginia sponsored Amtrak service in FY21.

3. Springfield to Quantico Enhanced Public Transportation Feasibility Study (Jennifer DeBruhl)

Jennifer DeBruhl shared that DRPT was conducting a feasibility study of enhanced public transportation services between the Franconia-Springfield Metro station in Fairfax County and the Quantico Marine Base in Prince William County. Enhanced transit could include options such as extending the Blue Line and other multimodal options such as bus rapid transit along Interstate 95 and U.S. Route 1. This study will provide a comprehensive, objective evaluation of a range of potential future enhanced transit alternatives that compares the cost, benefits, and impacts of each option to

inform recommendations about future investment in the study area. Key steps in the study process include defining the transportation needs within the study area, developing and testing a set of transit alternatives, and documenting feasible alternatives. A parallel task will include an assessment of the planned land use in the corridor to identify potential station areas and development opportunities. Throughout the study, DRPT will continue to seek input from the public, including local organizations and communities along the corridor to identify important transit improvements. Funding and next steps for implementation will be determined after the final report and recommendations are submitted and reviewed by the General Assembly. DRPT will submit the final report and recommendation to the General Assembly by December 1, 2021. The following points from the presentation were noted:

- Director Mitchell shared that based upon the study's evaluation, DRPT will not make any specific recommendations regarding a mode or technology.
- Mr. Malbon desired to know if land use scenarios will be included in the scope of all future planning initiatives. Jennifer DeBruhl responded that the land use scenarios were applicable to the specific study due to the partnership with local governments.
- Director Mitchell noted that the land use information would be helpful to jurisdictions as they move forward with their planning efforts and update their comprehensive plan.
- Ms. Hynes questioned if a tax component was being considered in the study. Jennifer DeBruhl noted that DRPT would not rise to that level of specific detail, but it would include scenarios that would be helpful as jurisdictions move forward.
- Mr. Kasprovicz desired to know the planning horizon for the study and if automated bus lanes would be a factor in the corridor. Jennifer DeBruhl noted that the typical planning horizon is 20 to 25 years. She added that DRPT will continue to look at feasibility, however one should remain open to the continued advances in technology over the next 20 years.
- In response to Mr. Johnsen's question, Jennifer DeBruhl affirmed that Fort Belvoir had staggered arrival and departure times.
- Ms. Hynes expressed her concern regarding consistency in the planning process. She desired to know if DRPT had any best practices to help manage expectations in the interim period.
- In response to Mr. Smoot's question regarding how many MPOs were involved, Ms. Hynes replied that NVTA and TPB were involved.

4. FREIGHT Program (Michael Todd)

Michael Todd abbreviated his presentation since the full presentation would be given at the CTB workshop meeting. Mr. Todd discussed the specific updates based upon the subcommittee's recommendations at the June 22 subcommittee meeting. The following points from the presentation were noted:

- Mr. Kasprovicz desired to know if any consideration had been given to improving safety in the corridors where passenger rail would be increased. Mr. Todd noted that safety measures were built in the model. Mr. Kasprovicz suggested including a planning tool, such as a graphic representation of the major rail corridors to identify the capacity, current ton miles and passenger miles.
- Mr. Smoot asked who the potential applicants were. Mr. Todd replied that an applicant could be a locality, MPO, or a port, however they must coordinate with the rail owner and operator.
- Ms. Hynes offered the suggestion to receive a baseline before the completion of Long Bridge to examine the possibilities prior to the passenger train being moved to the new track. She noted the importance of being strategic with the government's funding. Director Mitchell concurred with Ms. Hynes's suggestion. Mr. Todd noted that the train search data previously purchased for the rail plan would allow DRPT to compare, contrast and see data trends.

5. TRIP Policy (Jennifer DeBruhl)

Jennifer DeBruhl shared that the CTB was briefed on the draft TRIP Policy at the May meeting and DRPT will be recommending the board to approve the policy at the July action meeting. She highlighted some of the significant changes to the policy based upon the feedback received through the public comment period. In parallel to working on the TRIP policy, DRPT developed a guidance document. Additional language was added to the policy to provide flexibility to the systems that had committed to remain zero-fare for FY22. Systems such as GRTC continue to work toward building community support for long-term zero-fare. The following points from the presentation were noted:

- Mr. Kasprovicz commented that zero-fare has great potential to address the equity issues.
- Director Mitchell noted that it is exciting for Richmond to have the potential to remain zero-fare. GRTC didn't experience the same loss of ridership throughout the state during the pandemic. Director Mitchell concurred with Ms. Hynes's suggestion to invite a transit system to a future subcommittee to hear about their zero-fare components and metrics. Director Mitchell noted that she will continue to keep the subcommittee apprised with updates.

6. Public Comment

No public comments were offered.

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ADJOURNMENT: The meeting adjourned at 9:45 a.m. on July 20, 2021.