



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Virginia Passenger Rail Authority Board

Jennifer L. Mitchell
Chairperson

600 East Main Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

(804) 786-4440 (DRPT)
Fax: (804) 786-3725 (DRPT)

MINUTES

Meeting of the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority Monday, January 25, 2021 - 10:00 am Electronic Board Meeting

In light of the continuing state of emergency declared by Governor Northam, where it is impracticable or unsafe to assemble a quorum in a single location, and as allowed by the General Assembly during the continuing state of emergency, this meeting to take action to discuss or transact the business statutorily required or necessary to continue operation, the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority held an electronic meeting on January 25, 2021.

All board members participated remotely using a GotoMeeting platform. Members of the public were able to witness the meeting online via live-streaming and were provided with the opportunity to provide public comment telephonically at the outset of the meeting using a dial in number provided in the online meeting public notice. The online internet public notice for the meeting noted that this meeting would be conducted using an electronic process due to the COVID-19 state of emergency and as a precaution to reduce the risk and spread of the novel coronavirus. The online meeting public notice also furnished the Agenda and Board materials as well as information regarding the availability of online live-streaming of the meeting at the noted link. Online viewers were furnished a telephone number to call to notify staff of any interruption of the live streaming of the meeting in accordance with Item 4-0.01.g. of Chapter 1289 and Section 2.2- 3708.2 of the Code of Virginia.

The audio and meeting documents and presentation materials are on the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation's website, <http://www.drpt.virginia.gov/vpra/board-meetings/>

MEMBERS PRESENT

Sharon Bulova, Deborah Bulter Painter, Victor Cardwell, Patricia Doersch, Jay Fisette, Roderick Hall, Wick Moorman, Cynthia Moses-Nedd, Paul Nichols, Hossein Sadid, James Spore, Mariia Zimmerman, Rich Dalton (Ex-Officio), Bruno Maestri (Ex-Officio), and Jennifer Mitchell (Chair).

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF RAIL AND PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION STAFF PRESENT

Linda Balderson, Bridget Davis, Suzanne Ellison, Haley Glynn, Jeremy Latimer, Michael McLaughlin, Steve Pittard, Ashwini Tamhane, and Katherine Youngbluth.

GUESTS/OTHERS PRESENT

Corey Hill (Kimley-Horn), Oscar Gonzalez (WSP), Ray Lang (Amtrak), John Lawson (Governor's Office), Nathan Macek (WSP), Dustin Rinehart (Port of Virginia), and Lisa Wright (Office of the Attorney General).

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

The Chair, Jennifer Mitchell, presided and called the meeting to order at 10:04 a.m. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and reviewed the procedures and instructions for the electronic meeting, including all votes will be conducted by roll call vote. The following statement was made:

"On November 19th, Governor Ralph Northam signed House Bill 5005, Virginia's revised biennial budget, which includes new language for meeting electronically. In light of the continuing state of emergency declared by Governor Northam, we are conducting this meeting in a remote setting, keeping safety top of mind and mitigating the impacts and spread of COVID-19."

Executive Assistant Bridget Davis then called the roll and confirmed a quorum was present.

MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER 14, 2020 MEETING

Ms. Bulova moved, with a second by Ms. Butler Painter to approve the minutes of the December 14, 2020 meeting. The vote was conducted by a roll call vote and the motion passed.

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WORKSHOP PRESENTATIONS

The following items were presented for information:

1. Board Chair Update

Presented by: Jennifer Mitchell, Chair

Chair Mitchell provided the following updates:

- **Long Bridge Act of 2020:** The Long Bridge Act of 2020 was passed as a part of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, signed into law on December 27, 2020. The act allows the Secretary of Interior to convey to Virginia or D.C., as applicable, all right, title, and interest of the United States in and to any portion of the approximately 4.4 acres of National Park Service land that is identified by the State or the District of Columbia for the construction of the Long Bridge Project.
- **Rail Plan:** DRPT will be developing the Virginia Statewide Rail Plan update in 2021 to address changes in the rail industry and prioritize Virginia's long term investments in freight and passenger rail services and infrastructure across the Commonwealth. This State

Rail Plan will guide Virginia's vision for railroad transportation to the horizon year of 2045, and will be coordinated with the VTrans effort. The State Rail Plan will meet the federal requirements of the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008, as amended by the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act of 2015. In addition, this State Rail Plan also meets the requirements of the State Rail Plan Guidance provided by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) in September 2013.

- **Gainesville VRE Extension Study:** DRPT is kicking off the Gainesville VRE Extension study. The General Assembly's latest Budget Bill directed DRPT to evaluate the operating and capital costs associated with an extension of the Virginia Railway Express (VRE) commuter rail service from Manassas to Gainesville and submit by June 30, 2021.
- **Federal Stimulus:** The states that sponsor Amtrak intercity passenger rail service under PRIIA 209 will receive (via Amtrak) \$174.9M in the second stimulus funding package related to COVID to assist in state payments for service. Virginia will receive a portion of this funding, the amount of which is being determined. This will help offset Virginia's payments to Amtrak for passenger service.
- **Amtrak Service:** All routes are back in operation except Washington D.C.-Richmond route, which still remains suspended. Richmond route stations are being served by Newport News and Norfolk route trains, as well as by long distance Amtrak service. Capacity restriction is still in effect on all Amtrak trains. Ridership demand and COVID infection rate will dictate termination of this capacity restriction. Virginia and other state partners are participating in Amtrak's Valentine's Day National sale. Sale Dates: 2/11 – 2/16; Travel Dates: 2/22 – 8/27; (BOGO) Buy One Get One Free in coach. State-sponsored Amtrak service was canceled January 19 and 20 due to security concerns around the Presidential Inauguration. VRE service was similarly canceled.
- **Amtrak Ridership Impact:** Ridership on Virginia sponsored service for the month of December 2020 was 24.3% of December 2019 ridership (down -75.7%). M-o-M ridership change for Virginia sponsored service from November to December 2020 was -5.6% (-1,365).
- **VRE Service:** Trains are operating on an 'S' Schedule Plus (special schedule for holidays and snow days, supplemented with Train 300 for the northbound commute and Train 307 for the southbound commute on the Fredericksburg line). VRE step-up program for Amtrak trains stands suspended. The duration of this suspension is unknown at this time. VRE's Average daily ridership (ADR) in December 2020 was 1,057. VRE system wide on-time performance rate for December 2020 was 96%.

2. Executive Director Search Committee Update

Presented by: Wick Moorman

Mr. Moorman shared that the committee met on January 5 to discuss the recruitment timeline and process for the Executive Director position that was advertised by Krauthamer & Associates (K&A) on January 11. K&A will conduct research, identify, recruit and interview prospective candidates. K&A will present a list of candidates for the Search Committee to review and consider for interviews. The Search Committee will select approximately 4-6 candidates for a first round of interviews and then select approximately 2-3 finalist candidates for a second/final round interview with the Search Committee and/or Board. The Search Committee and/or Board

will select a candidate to enter into contract negotiations. The goal is to have the Executive Director in place by June or earlier.

3. Finance and Audit Committee Update

Presented by: Hossein Sadid

Mr. Sadid shared that the committee met on January 14 to discuss the recommended FY2022 operational, capital projects and capital grants budget. The committee recommended the budget to the full Board for approval with minor changes. The committee discussed logistical matters which included the Authority's financial banking and investment solicitation, enterprise resource planning (ERP), audit firm selection, payroll processing services and the Authority's quarterly financial reporting model. He noted that certain decisions were critical to be made once the Executive Director is hired.

4. Recommended FY2022 VPRA Budget

Presented by: Steve Pittard, Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation

Mr. Pittard gave an overview of the recommended budget and next steps. Mr. Pittard noted that the Code of Virginia stipulates the parameters for the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority's operating and capital budget, which requires the Authority to submit its budgets to the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) by February 1, annually.

Mr. Sadid expressed gratitude to Mr. Pittard for shepherding the budget process.

Ms. Zimmerman desired to know if the Authority had any intention to seek federal core capacity grant funding for the Long Bridge project. Chair Mitchell responded that the Authority will apply for the funding in spring 2021.

Mr. Sadid moved, with a second by Mr. Moorman to approve the Recommended FY2022 budget for submission to the Commonwealth Transportation Board. The vote was conducted by a roll call vote and the motion passed unanimously.

5. Amtrak 101 Presentation

Presented by: Ray Lang, Vice President of State Supported Services, Amtrak

Mr. Lang's presentation included an overview about Amtrak's structure, access rights, types of service, Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act (PRIIA), SAIPRC, pandemic funding and partnership.

6. VPRA Human Resources Policies and Procedures

Presented by: Jeremy Latimer, Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation

Chair Mitchell acknowledged the extensive work that Jeremy Latimer, Mike Todd and other DRPT staff had contributed to drafting the manual.

Mr. Latimer gave an overview of how the manual was developed. He noted that staff from DRPT, the Office of the Attorney General (OAG), Department of Human Resources Management (DHRM) and private sectors had assisted to develop the manual. It was important to include best practices, professional consultation as well as mirroring the policies and procedures from the Virginia Port Authority and DHRM.

Mr. Fisette was impressed with thoroughness of the telework policy. He noted that the community service hours were generous. He desired to know if the severance policy was aligned with other organizations.

Mr. Bulova expressed her appreciation for the wellness policies and desired to know the type of wellness programs that would be offered.

Mr. Cardwell desired to know if there would be a severance release clause referenced in the policy. He offered to share some language with the Board for consideration in the policy.

Mr. Moorman suggested that the severance package amount be at the discretion of the Authority's management.

Mr. Sadid desired to know if the draft severance policy followed the Commonwealth's policy.

Mr. Spore thanked Mr. Latimer for reviewing and adjusting the PTO amounts.

Mr. Fisette moved, with a second by Mr. Cardwell to approve the VPRA Human Resources Policies and Procedures. The vote was conducted by a roll call vote and the motion passed.

7. Transforming Rail in Virginia: Major Procurements Update

Presented by: Michael McLaughlin, Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation

Mr. McLaughlin gave an overview of the Long Bridge expansion project. He highlighted the current status, next steps, project phases and activities. His overview included the corridor survey maps, schedule and deliverables for I-95 CSXT, Buckingham Branch and the S-line.

Mr. Spore desired to know if any concern had been expressed for the maintenance on the existing bridge.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Mitchell opened the meeting to the public for comment. No public comments were offered.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Mitchell adjourned the meeting at 12:21 p.m. All presentations to the Board and meeting video can be found at www.drpt.virginia.gov/vpra/board-meetings/

Respectfully Submitted:

Bridget Davis, Executive Assistant

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