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**Minutes
Rail Advisory Board Meeting
Science Museum of Virginia
September 8, 2005
10:00 a.m.**

Welcome and Introduction of the Rail Advisory Board – Secretary Homer

Members present: Richard L. Beadles, David A. Brown II, Sharon Bulova, Trenton G. Crewe, Jr., Dwight L. Farmer, Wiley F. Mitchell, Jr., Honorable Jack Quinn, Peter J. Shultz, and Hunter R. Watson.

The meeting was called to order at 10:08 a.m. by Secretary Homer. Secretary Homer announced the appointment of the Rail Advisory Board (RAB) by the Governor and that this meeting marked a historic event in the history of the Commonwealth. Each member of the RAB was asked to give a short statement about his/her interest in rail enhancement and background related to rail. Secretary Homer gave a historical perspective of the financial challenges of the past and the fiscal responsibility that the Warner administration has put into place to bring the Transportation Trust Fund expenditures and prior debt retirement in line with existing revenues. He further discussed the main provisions of the legislation, *VTrans 2025*, and rail planning initiatives that have led to the creation of the Rail Enhancement Fund (REF) and the Rail Advisory Board. Secretary Homer then concluded by suggesting that the RAB nominate Ms. Sharon Bulova as interim Chairman of the RAB; she will serve for three meetings.

Nomination of the Interim Chairman – Pierce Homer

RAB Action: Ms. Bulova agreed to accept the nomination of Mr. Homer. The motion to nominate Sharon Bulova as interim chair was made by Wiley Mitchell, seconded by David Brown and Ms. Bulova was unanimously elected as the interim Chairman of the RAB.

Opening Remarks – Karen Rae

Ms. Rae recognized the DRPT Executive Team and Rail Staff. Following a brief history of passenger related activities in the Richmond area, she introduced David Gunn, President and CEO, Amtrak.

National Rail Status Overview – David Gunn, President and CEO, Amtrak

Mr. Gunn gave an overview of the general condition of Amtrak and gave examples of states that have participated in joint partnerships to improve or enhance Amtrak service. He explained that for years Amtrak's corporate/fiscal structure has not been in crisis, is under control, deficit stable, and is maintaining an aggressive capital program. He stated that our country's transportation system was based on cheap oil and that the rail freight infrastructure is not in good shape. He added that Amtrak needs

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reform but what is missing is the federal piece. Mr. Gunn commented that Amtrak does not represent localized rail needs like the Richmond to Washington DC Corridor and that the development of another passenger rail operator to create competition might be a viable option. Mr. Gunn answered questions from the RAB members and the general public in attendance.

Update on the Rail Enhancement Fund – Karen Rae

Ms. Rae gave a presentation on the draft Fund Implementation Guidelines which was followed by an open conversation concerning the Rail Enhancement Fund. Ms. Rae has made the current version of the draft Implementation Guidelines available on the DRPT website. The RAB will be asked to formally adopt this document at its next meeting. The discussion focused on use of the Virginia State Rail Plan to prioritize projects, explanation of qualified applicants, and a description of the minimum policy criteria and draft policy goals. The final Guidelines will be approved by the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) in November. The RAB will schedule a workshop (full-day) to further discuss the possible modifications to the Guidelines and program process for future years. Even though the initial program will focus on high-impact projects, there will be a chance to revisit the policies and guidelines throughout the process. The members also discussed the ability of the Commonwealth, through the Fund, to acquire corridors for improvement. Questions were also raised about the evaluation of the projects and the relationship with other adopted plans. It was noted that the projects should neither be inconsistent with other plans nor constrained by them.

DRPT staff is continuing to revise the draft Benefit/Cost Measures. A synopsis of the draft Measures was included in the presentation.

Rick Walton, Chief Counsel-Transportation, Office of the Attorney General will review the need for Conflict of Interest training and documentation for the RAB members. If needed, this can be included during the workshop or at the October meeting. Without dissent, the members agreed.

The motion to go forward with the general approach on the Policy Goals and Implementation guidelines developed by DRPT was made by Jack Quinn, and seconded by Wiley Mitchell and was unanimously approved by the RAB members.

RAB Organizational Discussion

Meetings

Chairman Bulova suggested meetings in October and November, then every other month after the first of the year. The day of the week that looked best for the members was Thursday. Tentative dates were set for 10/13 and 11/3. Mr. Mitchell reminded the Board that with the new budget, the opportunity to increase funding should be explored.

In looking at possible dates for the full day workshop, dates later in November or early December should be considered.

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Public Comment

As this is an advisory board, there is no requirement for public comment at meetings. However, the members of the RAB thought it important that the public have input. Chairman Bulova suggested that the beginning of each meeting be set aside for a comment period. Each speaker would need to sign up in advance through an advance sign up mechanism and there would be a three minute limit per speaker. Since this is an advisory board, public hearings are not required. Comments could also be e-mailed to the DRPT website, where they would be collected and distributed to the Board. The DRPT staff would not respond directly to RAB e-mails.

Meeting Minutes

Ms. Rae suggested that summary minutes be prepared and distributed to the RAB. Rick Walton agreed, as long as motions are reflected and noted in the minutes.

Interface with DRPT

DRPT will collect and do the technical analysis on the REF applications. The applications for the initial program will be accepted by DRPT from September 19 to October 21, 2005. Next years' dates will be decided later. It was suggested that DRPT hold a question and answer event for the public. Due to the nature of the projects it was requested that part of the meeting in October be set aside for Conflict of Interest and Ethics training.

Addresses, Reimbursement

The members were requested to confirm, during the next week, with Christina Thompson at DRPT the address they wished to use for their email, public address and mailing address. Ms. Thompson will provide each member with the documents they need for travel reimbursement.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:20pm.