

**Commonwealth Transportation Board
Draft Rail and Transit Subcommittee Meeting Minutes
VDOT Conference Room, 1221 East Broad Street, Richmond, Virginia
March 19th, 2024, 8:30 a.m.**

CTB Members Present

Jennifer DeBruhl (Chair), Dr. Raymond Smoot, Jr., Tom Fowlkes, Mark Merrill, Wayne Coleman, E. Scott Kasprowicz, Linda Green, Frederick Stant III, Mary Hynes

Staff and Others Present

Andrew Wright (DRPT), Jayla Parker (DRPT), Miriam Foster (DRPT), Emily Stock (DRPT), Grant Sparks (DRPT), Avery Daughtery (DRPT), Linda Balderson (DRPT), Evan Price (DRPT), Zach Trogdon (DRPT), Mike Todd (DRPT),

Agenda

1. Approval of June 20, 2023 Meeting Minutes
2. Public Comment
3. Director's Report
Jennifer DeBruhl, DRPT Director
4. Fiscal Year 2025 Public Transportation Update
Zach Trogdon, Chief of Public Transportation
5. Fiscal Year 2025 Rail Update
Emily Stock, Chief of Rail Transportation
6. Virginia Breeze Expansion
Avery Daughtery, Statewide Programs Manager

Call to Order

Chair DeBruhl called the meeting to order at 8:31 am and welcomed the subcommittee members.

Approval of the June 20, 2023 Minutes

On motion of Mr. Fowlkes, seconded by Mr. Coleman, the June 20th, 2023 Rail and Transit meeting minutes were approved.

Public Comments

None.

Director's Report

Presented by DRPT Director DeBruhl

Chair DeBruhl informed the subcommittee of the presentation and delivered her Director's Report.

Chair DeBruhl informed the subcommittee of DRPT's strategic plan and new Director's Report template.

Chair DeBruhl presented on DRPT's efforts to create a positive impact on the Commonwealth, including moving a VA Breeze stop, increasing overall statewide ridership, and throughput of rail freight.

Mr. Stant inquired about the Commonwealth's contingent interest in CWRV, and the ownership structure of that shortline railroad.

Chair DeBruhl informed the subcommittee on DRPT's efforts to foster innovative practical solutions. These included working with WMATA, planning for rail crossing elimination, and planning for PAT.

Mr. Merrill inquired about DRPT staff responsibilities on WMATA's boards.

Chair DeBruhl informed the subcommittee on DRPT's efforts to convene with partners and stakeholders. This included working with FRA on their long-distance passenger rail study, and its review of the State Management Plan.

Chair DeBruhl informed the subcommittee on DRPT's efforts to cultivate a sustainable well-managed organization. This includes partnering with VCU's Master of Public Administration program, updating and modernizing its Open Data Portal, and preparing for its triennial federal review.

Chair DeBruhl updated the subcommittee on DRPT's performance metrics. Statewide ridership was 116 million.

Mr. Merrill inquired about ridership declines in the last quarter of the calendar year. Chair DeBruhl answered.

Mr. Kasprovicz and Mr. Merrill inquired about VRE ridership, particularly regarding declines post-pandemic. Chair DeBruhl addressed those questions.

Dr. Smoot inquired about ridership compared to pre-pandemic levels. Chair DeBruhl provided an update on the comparison.

Mr. Coleman inquired about WMATA ridership and its recovery. Chair DeBruhl answered these questions.

Chair DeBruhl provided an update on the Virginia Breeze's ridership.

Mr. Kasprowicz inquired about the Virginia Breeze's farebox recovery. Mr. Daughtery answered that it ranged from 33% to 50%. Chair DeBruhl added further information.

Chair DeBruhl provided an update on Amtrak Virginia ridership. Ms. DeBruhl noted that Amtrak Ridership year over year set new records.

Dr. Smoot asked about a national bus network and long-haul bus services. Chair DeBruhl noted that Virginia Breeze connects with the national bus network.

Fiscal Year 2025 Public Transportation Update

Presented by DRPT Chief of Public Transportation Zach Trogdon

Mr. Trogdon began his presentation at 8:56 am. Mr. Trogdon provided an update to DRPT's MERIT program for prioritizing public transit funding. Mr. Trogdon updated the subcommittee on available transit funding. Mr. Trogdon provided an update on the funding and prioritization model for public transit operating and capital support.

Mr. Kasprowicz inquired about DRPT's state-of-good repair scoring methodology, particularly an example of how zero emissions technology may impact scoring. Mr. Trogdon provided an answer.

Mr. Merrill inquired about DRPT's MERIT major capital scoring program. Mr. Trogdon and Chair DeBruhl provided an answer.

Mr. Trogdon presented an update on the number of requests DRPT received for capital support and special programs. Mr. Trogdon provided an update on the Transit Ridership Incentive Program's requests by program area. Mr. Trogdon provided an update on DRPT's coordination the FTA 5310 Enhanced Mobility program.

Dr. Smoot inquired about the use of funding to support vehicle purchasing.

Mr. Kasprowicz inquired about MERIT-Operating Assistance, particularly using operating cost per passenger mile. Chair DeBruhl provided an answer.

Fiscal Year 2025 Rail Update

Presented by DRPT Chief of Rail Transportation Emily Stock

Mrs. Stock began her presentation at 9:11 am. Mrs. Stock presented a summary of DRPT's FY25 rail applications and the operations of DRPT's rail team. Mrs. Stock provided an update on DRPT's FREIGHT program.

Mr. Stant inquired about the number of applications for the FREIGHT program that came from Class I Railroads. Mrs. Stock and Mr. Todd provided an answer.

Dr. Smoot inquired about what type of projects fall under the FREIGHT program. Mrs. Stock and Mr. Todd provided an answer. Dr. Smoot inquired about who benefitted from these programs. Chair DeBruhl and Mrs. Stock provided further information.

Mrs. Stock provided updates on the Rail Preservation Programs. Mrs. Stock presented a map of the applications received for the FREIGHT and Rail Preservation programs. Mrs. Stock noted the gap between the funding available vs. the funding requested for both the FREIGHT and Rail Preservation programs.

Mr. Kasprowicz inquired about capturing data on originating and terminating rail carloads in Virginia. Mr. Kasprowicz noted that identifying increases in originating and terminating rail carloads in Virginia would illustrate the performance of DRPT's rail programs. Mr. Kasprowicz requested an update on these data.

Virginia Breeze Expansion

Presented by DRPT Statewide Programs Manager Avery Daughtery

Mr. Daughtery began his presentation at 9:29 am. Mr. Daughtery presented the study of an east-west Virginia Breeze bus service expansion along the I-64 corridor. Mr. Daughtery explained the operations and purpose of the Virginia Breeze. Mr. Daughtery noted that the Virginia Breeze currently only serves north-south corridors. Mr. Daughtery noted that the FTA requires an analysis to determine whether intercity bus needs have been made. Mr. Daughtery explained DRPT's study of the need for a new east-west VA Breeze expansion, including stakeholder engagements.

Mr. Daughtery noted the two alternative routes for the east-west Virginia Breeze.

Dr. Smoot inquired about the net cost to operate. Mr. Daughtery provided an answer.

Mr. Kasprowicz inquired about the cost per passenger mile. Mr. Kasprowicz requested that information and noted his surprise at the low cost of operating.

Mrs. Hynes inquired about the frequency of service. Mr. Daughtery provided an answer.

Mr. Merrill inquired about the time and schedule of the service. Mr. Daughtery said he would provide an answer.

Mrs. Hynes inquired about which route would take longer.

Mr. Kasprowicz noted he would be interested in the amount of CO2 emissions reductions.

Chair DeBruhl noted that this service would receive state funds through the TRIP program.

Mr. Coleman commented on the previous rail program. He noted his support for the FREIGHT program, particularly for supporting the Port of Virginia.

Other Business

None.

Adjournment

Chair DeBruhl adjourned the meeting at 9:46 am.