

RTA SUBCOMMITTEE **DRAFT** MEETING MINUTES

February 29, 2024 – 6:00 p.m.

406 Princess Anne Street, Fredericksburg, VA 22401

Video Recording: https://youtu.be/GItMHIG6_vk?si=UsuWowFVjGgneDtx

Committee Members Present: *(V) indicates voting member*

Ms. Lori Hayes, First Vice-Chair Spotsylvania County (V)
Mr. Drew Mullins, Spotsylvania County (V)
Mr. Chris Yakabouski, Spotsylvania County (V) (online)
Ms. Meg Bohmke, Chair, Stafford County (V) (online)
Ms. Monica Gary, Stafford County (V)
Mr. Deuntay Diggs, alternate Stafford County (V)
Dr. Pamela Yeung, alternate Stafford County (V)
Mr. Jason Graham, Second Vice-Chair, City of Fredericksburg (V)
Ms. Jannan Holmes, City of Fredericksburg (V)
Mr. Will Mackintosh, City of Fredericksburg (V)
Dr. Robert Schneider, PRTC (V) (remote)
Ms. Cathy Binder, King George County
Mr. David “Sully” Sullins, alternate King George County
Mr. Steven Minor, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) (online)
Mr. Timothy Welsh, Vice Chair CTAC

Committee Members Absent:

Ms. Crystal Vanuch, Stafford County (V)
Mr. Gerald Childress, alternate Spotsylvania County (V)
Mr. Jacob Lane, alternate Spotsylvania County (V)
Mr. Jeffery Black, Caroline County
Ms. Nancy Long, alternate Caroline County
Mr. David Brown, alternate City of Fredericksburg (V)
Ms. Marcie Parker, Representative from the Secretary of Transportation (V)
Ms. Cathie Coffey, alternate Representative from the Secretary of Transportation (V)
Mr. Joe Stainsby, alternate PRTC (V)
Mr. Daniel Koenig, Federal Highway Administration (FTA)
Ms. Chelsea Beytas, alternate Federal Transit Administration (FTA)
Ms. Laura Sellers, Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB)
Ms. Susan Gardner, Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT)
Ms. Casandra Lord, alternate Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT)
Ms. Amy Garbarini, Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT)
Mr. Todd Horsley, alternate Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT)
Ms. Jamie Jackson, Fredericksburg Go! (FXBGO!)
Ms. Melody Fowler, alternate Fredericksburg Go! (FXBGO!)
Mr. Matthew Lehane, Chair BPAC
Mr. Chris Clarke, Vice Chair BPAC

Others Present:

Paige DeBold, FHWA

Staff Present:

Mr. Ian Ollis, FAMPO Administrator

Ms. Becky Golden, Transportation Planning Manager

Dr. John Ridout, Transportation Planner II

Ms. Kari Eaves, Transportation Planner III

Mr. Connor Anderson, Transportation Planner/GIS Technician

1. Call RTA Subcommittee Meeting to Order

Vice Chair Hayes called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

2. Roll Call

Mr. Anderson conducted roll call.

3. Presentation on Northern Virginia Transportation Authority – Ms. Monica Backmon

Ms. Backmon provided an overview of the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA) for the RTA subcommittee. She reviewed the membership of the authority, its legal history, responsibilities, and revenue sources. There are three sources of revenue that include: sales tax, grantors/recordation tax, and transient occupancy tax. The state collects this revenue and separates the funds into 70% Regional Revenue and 30% Local Distribution Fund Revenue. Ms. Backmon clarified how project funding eligibility is determined for the region, and what projects localities may fund with their 30%. She covered additional revenue sources that included: HB 2718/SB 1716 (2019) I-81 Corridor Improvement Fund and HB 1414/SB 890 (2020) OmniBus Transportation Bill. She also reviewed revenue that is diverted from NVTA to the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA). Ms. Backmon also discussed the region's SMART SCALE scoring while having a transportation authority. She commented that the region had recently scored poorly in SMART SCALE.

Ms. Backmon also reviewed the core values, goals, and performance measures of the NVTA. Goals of the NVTA are mobility, accessibility, and resiliency while core values are equity, sustainability, and safety. The priority of the transportation authority is congestion reduction relative to project cost. She emphasized the multimodal nature of NVTA projects and mentioned the process of payment on a reimbursement basis. She reviewed the requirement that data driven processes be used for project performance measures.

Ms. Backmon discussed the schedule of NVTA. NVTA funding cycles avoid overlap with state and federal funding processes. She clarified that NVTA does not implement any projects and leaves that responsibility to project sponsors. She described other NVTA responsibilities including the responsibility to provide CMAQ recommendations to the CTB, general oversight of regional mass transit/congestion management programs, issue bonds or debt, act as a responsible public entity under Public-Private Transportation Act of 1995, and serve as an advocate for transportation needs of Northern Virginia before state and federal governments.

Ms. Backmon reviewed NVTA investments over a ten-year period and the economic impact analysis conducted every funding cycle. She also went over the Transportation Technology

Strategic Plan adopted in May 2021 and innovation in transportation initiatives that prioritize multi-modal transportation.

Mr. Graham asked how funds are apportioned between jurisdictions of varying sizes. Ms. Backmon answered by describing the collaboration and conversation that is necessary between different regional entities, including representation for towns that are not distinct voting members in the transportation authority. She described the statutory committees that inform the transportation authority's recommendations.

Dr. Yeung asked about the 9 jurisdictions and 5 towns with a population of 3500 or more. Ms. Backmon described how the legislation considers these towns in the NVTa.

Dr. Schneider asked Ms. Backmon to describe how localities in the NVTa have, since its creation, grown more favorable of the entity. Ms. Backmon shared a personal story where traffic caused by an accident in one locality had impacted her commute in another. She addressed the importance of smooth travel between jurisdictions which is especially important in areas with high commuter populations between jurisdictions.

Ms. Binder asked how a transportation authority would benefit a smaller locality that is opposed to more taxes. Ms. Backmon describes how smaller localities within the NVTa receive a greater investment from the transportation authority than they put into it. Additionally, she spoke to how congestion management and traffic reduction improves quality of life and benefits members of all localities.

Mr. Mullins asked about NVTa membership. Ms. Backmon answered that all members of the authority are elected except two citizen members appointed by the Governor. One of these members is a representative of the CTB. Non-voting members include a VDOT representative and a DRPT (Department of Rail and Public Transportation) representative.

Mr. Sullins commented on King George's characteristics, having no interstate within the jurisdiction and citizen's skepticism that they will receive any benefits from being part of a transportation authority. Ms. Backmon compared King George to Loudoun County, which also does not have an interstate, and explained how the county still benefits from the NVTa and the 70% regional fund. She clarified the legal restrictions that NVTa funds must benefit the region where the taxes are being raised.

Dr. Yeung expressed her concern that a transportation authority is a complicated process for funding projects. She predicted that the process may dissolve into fights between members before the authority can satisfy everyone. Ms. Backmon addressed consensus within the NVTa and, specifically, the point raised by Dr. Yeung that people are moving out of Northern Virginia to avoid increased taxes. She described how the long-term benefit analysis every funding cycle promotes understanding of NVTa's impact for each locality. Additionally, she spoke to the importance of having strong leaders advocating for the NVTa. She spoke to the power a transportation authority has in bolstering regional independence. She also acknowledged the difficulty members have looking at the long-term, big picture, and prioritizing the region over the locality.

Vice Chair Hayes commented on other taxes officials have to consider and how more taxes might pile up and overwhelm citizens. Ms. Backmon replied that strong leadership is important, and she acknowledged the risk of losing one's elected position in doing the right thing and serving the region.

4. Questions received from Policy Committee Members for discussion

Mr. Ollis reviewed the questions received from Policy Committee Members, which were addressed later in the meeting. These included inquiries concerning the costs of three I-95 bridges (5a), the breakdown of funds for the Central Virginia Transportation Authority per jurisdiction (5b), and how other transportation authorities calculate their funding splits between regional projects, local allocations and transit (5c).

5. Staff presentations and responses

a. Costs for three I-95 Bridges – Mr. Ian Ollis

Mr. Ollis reviewed the costs of three new I-95 bridges. Over the Rappahannock River, the northbound bridge cost \$127 million while the southbound bridge cost \$116 million. Finally, the cost estimate for a third bridge over US 17, is \$107 million. Mr. Ollis emphasizes that this last cost has undergone some back-and-forth deliberation with VDOT because the bundle cost nature of the design-build contract.

b. Funding allocations for all CVTA jurisdictions – Mr. Connor Anderson

Mr. Anderson provided an overview of the Central Virginia Transportation Authority (CVTA) and how it allocates funds to its nine jurisdictions. He summarized the tax revenue that funds the CVTA, consisting of a sales tax and a wholesale gas tax. He shared the revenue collected from both taxes for FY23. He reviewed the three transfers of funds from the CVTA which includes the operating fund, 35% to the regional fund, and 15% in payments to the Greater Richmond Transit Company. Mr. Anderson also reviewed the local distribution of funds, which accounts for 50% of CVTA's revenue (after setting aside CVTA administrative and operating costs). The local funds are allocated to the different jurisdictions proportionate to their contribution in tax revenue.

Mr. Ollis clarified for the subcommittee that the state of Virginia already has a statewide wholesale gas tax to fund VRE. Having a transportation authority, in the case of CVTA, allows for the revenue from that tax to come directly back to the jurisdictions within the transportation authority. Caroline and King George counties do not receive that tax directly without having successful SMART SCALE projects. Mr. Ollis points out that having a transportation authority would be a way to bring the revenue from that statewide gas tax back into the region directly. Mr. Ollis clarified that the wholesale gas tax fluctuates with inflation, and the documented amount is taken from the tax's implementation. Mr. Anderson summarized that the authority distributes local funds to jurisdictions based on the proportionate share of each jurisdiction's sales and gas tax each month.

The committee compared the political structure (counties surrounding one city) and jurisdiction characteristics (spanning across rural and urban, liberal and conservative localities) of the CVTA with GWRC. Several members and staff likened individual counties to each other between the CVTA and GWRC, and made illustrative comparisons in terms of population, political leaning, and standing within the broader region.

c. Funding splits for existing Virginia Transportation Authorities – Dr. John Ridout

Dr. Ridout compared the revenue sources and funding splits for Virginia Transportation Authorities. The NVTA has a split of 30% local funds and 70% regional funds. The CVTA splits funding into 15% transit, 35% regional, and 50% local. The Hampton Roads Transportation Authority Commission (HRTAC) contributes 100% of its revenue to regional funding. The I-81 regional corridor similarly receives 100% of the transportation authority's revenue. He summarized how the I-81 Transportation Authority and the HRTAC are primarily interstate focused, with HRTAC having a more concentrated regional focus.

Mr. Ollis started a discussion among the committee to consider the different potential funding splits for the RTA. Mr. Graham commented on the increased importance of local matching funds for success in SMART SCALE for High Priority Projects (HPP). Considering this, he advocated for a higher proportion of regional funding to make projects more competitive and successful in SMART SCALE. The split he proposed was 70% of the revenue allocated to regional funds and 30% returned to the jurisdictions. Transit funding was also discussed, and the differences were analyzed between exclusively allocating funds to transit in the funding split, or merely using local or regional funds to support transit. The committee discussed the possibilities for funding transit operating costs. Mr. Yakabouski argued that transit is more of a locality-based operation than a regional one. While considering project size and potential for SMART SCALE funding, he agreed with Mr. Graham (on an occasion that happens once every four years) that regional funds should be favored in a 70/30 split.

Vice Chair Hayes advocated for a more equal split (50/50) to fund projects in smaller areas that need funding and can be limited in funding due to their smaller populations.

Dr. Yeung asked whether the committee could first evaluate the projects that would receive funding from the RTA before determining a split. Mr. Mackintosh suggested the committee work with a figure derived from the CVTA proportioned to GWRC's population.

Chair Bohmke agreed with a 70/30 split, claiming that the region should prioritize addressing congestion in the area. Ms. Holmes also shared her favor for a larger regional share.

Mr. Diggs asked whether smaller jurisdictions within the RTA would see a benefit out of the regional funds. Mr. Graham recalled Ms. Backmon's presentation, speaking to the benefits all localities would see in regional funds as the return is greater for any given jurisdiction and the region has a greater chance of receiving funds from SMART SCALE for HPP. Addressing concern that no regionally significant projects would be identified and receive funding in King George, Mr. Graham identified the 301 corridor, emphasizing its regional importance. Mr. Ollis also spoke to the project opportunities in King George. Responding to VDOT's evaluation of 301, he proposed that the RTA could fund King George's own study of the corridor and the resulting projects.

Mr. Ollis and Mr. Graham also responded to the concern over SMART SCALE funding. They addressed how the changes to SMART SCALE (elimination step 2 and the creation of HPP) would make projects within transportation authorities very competitive in future SMART SCALE scoring.

Vice Chair Hayes tallied the support for different funding splits.

- d. What the RTA would actually be funding: Scenario A – Changes/Additions/Subtractions – Mr. Ian Ollis

Mr. Ollis reviewed the possible projects for RTA funding listed in Scenario A. He concluded by summarizing what the subcommittee will need to decide prior to the creation of an RTA. These decisions included: the project package, the funding split, board membership, and tax revenue sources.

6. Discussion of funding split etc.

See item 5c above.

7. Future Subcommittee Meeting dates:

- a. March 21, 2024, at 6 p.m.
- b. April At 6 p.m.
- c. May At 6 p.m.

8. Adjourn/Next RTA Subcommittee Meeting March 21, 2024, at 6:00pm.

Vice Chair Hayes adjourned the meeting at 8:44pm.