

Rappahannock Rapidan Regional Commission
Rural Transportation Technical Committee
Minutes of February 6, 2008

Attendees: Fritz Alderman (Town of Culpeper); Mike Collins (Town of Orange); John Cooley (Culpeper County); John Egertson, *Vice Chairman* (Culpeper County, Planning Director); John Giometti (VDOT, Culpeper District, Planning & Land Development); Debbie Kendall (Orange County, Strategic Planning); Patrick Mauney (RRRC); Peggy Miles (Orange County Airport); Chris Mothersead, *Chairman* (Town of Warrenton, Planning Director); Harriet Parcels (RRRC); Cynthia Porter-Johnson (Fauquier County); John Shelburne (VDOT, TMPD, Richmond); Jeffrey Walker (RRRC); Tanya Woodward (Culpeper Regional Airport, Assistant Manager)

1. Welcome, Agenda, Minutes, Matters from the Public

Committee Chairman Chris Mothersead called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. Mr. Mothersead asked if there were any changes to the agenda. Hearing none, he asked for a motion to approve the minutes. A motion was made to approve the minutes, seconded and approved. Mr. Mothersead asked if there were any changes to the minutes of the January 9, 2008 meeting. Hearing none, he asked for a motion to approve the minutes. A motion was made and seconded and the minutes were approved. There were no matters from the public to consider.

2. Guest Speaker Erik Johnson, VDOT, TMPD, Richmond: Overview of the Statewide Multimodal Freight Study

Chairman Mothersead introduced guest speaker Erik Johnson with the VDOT, Transportation Mobility and Planning Division, in attendance from Central Office to present the Committee with a Powerpoint presentation on Phase I of the Statewide Multimodal Freight Study. Mr. Johnson also distributed a handout of his presentation to Committee members. He began by explaining that the VDOT Multimodal Office initiated its statewide freight study in October 2006 to take a comprehensive look at Virginia's freight issues (all modes), and adopt a multimodal approach in assessing the current status of freight transit, identifying and projecting trends. Phase I involved outreach interviews with freight stakeholders in the state, data collection, profiles of the economy and transportation, forecasts to 2035, multimodal system condition and performance, analytical and data needs, I-81 truck-rail diversion analysis, and next steps. Recently completed, Phase II is now underway.

Mr. Johnson stated that Virginia is one of the nation's leading states for freight movement and that much of the economy depends on efficient freight movement. He said that 50% of Virginia's output, 28% of its gross state product and 34% of employment is from industries that depend heavily on the movement of raw materials and goods. Tonnage moving into, out of, and within Virginia will roughly double by the year 2035. While the highest tonnage commodities are minerals, coal and "secondary traffic" (mixed freight shipments, higher value finished goods), secondary traffic will become the tonnage leader and remain the value leader in the future. Freight uses all elements of the state's transportation system (ports, highways, rail, air). Trade is greatest with the Mid-Atlantic region but extends throughout the nation and the world. Mr. Johnson displayed maps that show how freight uses Virginia's highways (I-81, I-95, I-66, I-64 are major routes as well as Route 29), the railroad infrastructure, the ports and warehouse/distribution facilities and the state's airports. Chairman Mothersead noted that there

has been a drastic change in the role of rail and that the PD9 region has important rail infrastructure traversing the region and an “inland port” distribution center on the border at Front Royal that are of vital importance to the region’s economic vitality. He underscored that Virginia is one of the largest states for freight movement by all modes. Mr. Johnson stated that nearly 200 freight shippers, receivers and carriers were interviewed by Virginia MPOs, the state and the consultant. Highway congestion is the top freight concern, especially in Northern Virginia, Hampton Roads, I-81 and I-95 Corridors. The study showed that congestion adds \$7 billion per year to shipper inventory costs. One of the charts showed “Recommendations” of those interviewed on ways to improve the freight situation and showed added highway capacity as the lead recommendation. Mr. Collins inquired whether the relatively small number that recommended “Shift More Freight to Rail” was a reflection of the number of trucking and other highway-oriented shippers that were interviewed. He asked Mr. Johnson about the potential for communities in regions like PD9 that have rail branch lines and other rail infrastructure to work with the freight rail industry to better utilize these resources and bring economic benefit to the region. Mr. Mothersead agreed that this was an important issue for the PD9 to explore. Mr. Johnson then went on to indicate that many state, regional and public-private initiatives are underway to help improve freight movement. Studies include the I-81 safety improvements, I-95 safety improvements; rail studies include the Heartland Corridor, Crescent Corridor and other rail projects; port studies Craney Island development and the Maersk Terminal and air studies include airport CIPs and Dulles Rail. He said that the I81 Truck-Rail Diversion study had been incorporated into the state study. Mr. Johnson concluded by stating that the next step is to develop freight policy and infrastructure recommendations.

After Mr. Johnson concluded, there was further discussion among the Committee members about the potential economic benefit to communities in the region that have or are adjacent to rail infrastructure that is currently underutilized. Mr. Mothersead asked Mrs. Parcels to contact Norfolk Southern Railroad and see if a meeting might be set up with representatives of communities in the region to discuss this issue.

3. Phase II Long Range Transportation Plan Development

Mrs. Parcels gave a brief overview of the regional “hot spots” map that had been distributed to the Committee. She indicated that the map represented the “hot spots” identified by the counties and towns in response to the survey asking them to identify highway segments and intersections that have safety deficiencies and capacity issues. Approximately 31 “hot spots” were identified throughout the region. Mr. Giometti said that the “hot spots” that VDOT is seeking are spot locations that have notable safety and congestion issues that the VDOT consultant could study and make recommendations for “quick fix” improvements. He recommended that the counties and towns take another look at their submittals and prioritize them, focusing on those projects that are of regional significance and that haven’t already been studied through other state or local studies. Mr. Mothersead agreed that the counties and towns should do this and send their prioritized lists to Mrs. Parcels so that the Committee can then, at the next meeting, prioritize the entire list from a regional perspective.

Mrs. Parcels then gave a brief discussion of the draft chapter for the Long Range Transportation Plan on “Existing Transportation Infrastructure” that had been distributed to the Committee. She said that the chapter is a presentation of the highway, rail, transit, air, bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure that currently exists in the region. This is a fundamental chapter that is needed for the Long Range Transportation Plan and part of RRRC staff’s ongoing effort to provide draft chapters to Committee members for their review over the coming months, leading to preparation of the regional long range transportation plan. Mr. Parcels asked

Committee members to review the information, especially for their respective jurisdictions, for accuracy and to get back to her with edits and/or additions they would like to see incorporated.

A draft Survey of Transit Providers in the region was distributed to the Committee members also for their review. The survey of transit providers, to elicit their input on service expansions they have planned and future service they believe is needed, is likewise a Phase II Deliverable.

4. FY 2009 RRRRC Rural Transportation Planning Program: Project Ideas and Needs

Mr. Walker announced that planning project and technical assistance requests were now being received for consideration by the Commission, for inclusion in the upcoming FY'09 proposed Scope of Work due in to VDOT by March 15. He asked the Committee members to give thought over the next few weeks to any special studies or projects on which they might need the Commission's assistance in the year ahead. This could involve assistance with a transportation-related study, data collection effort, or other technical assistance. Chairman Mothersead stated that this is an excellent opportunity for counties and towns to get the Commission's assistance with projects of importance to their locality and the region. Mr. Walker asked Committee members to submit ideas to him or Harriet by email or phone before the next March 5 RTC meeting, if at all possible.

5. Travel Time Survey Segment Identification

Mr. Walker stated that each year the Committee selects a regional thoroughfare corridor for which they would like the Commission collect benchmark travel time data. Over time, this information provides a baseline of historic travel data that can help to further document evolving trends. As there is no travel demand model for rural regions like PD 9, this information is vital to establishing travel time trend lines. He asked the Committee to consider which route(s) they would like studied this year. Chairman Mothersead noted that the Commission had studied three segments of Route 29 last year. He said that Routes 15, 17, 29 and 20 are routes of regional significance through the region. After some discussion, the Committee agreed that segments of Route 15 should be studied this year, from its point of entry in Orange County to its point of departure from the region in Fauquier County.

6. Announcements and Other Business

--Report on VAPDC Transportation Committee meeting of 1/20/08: Mr. Walker, who chairs the Transportation Committee of the VAPDC, said that the committee had a full and productive meeting in Richmond. Among other topics, there was a presentation from the Roanoke Valley MPO on the method they are using to develop a fiscally-constrained list of prioritized projects for the region. Given funding limitations, MPOs are seeking creative ways to maintain needed projects on their lists, either through identification of other funding sources, or by identifying alternative means of entering their projects onto the Six Year Improvement Program list. Mr. Walker added that there was a comprehensive legislative update given by Ted McCormack about transportation bills that have been introduced this session, including a bill (HJ 178- Athey) to study development and land use tools; in particular, HB3202-mandated Urban Development Area (UDA) designation; and (SB 768- Watkins) on proposed replacement of proffers by localities in favor of capped impact fees; each of which, would appear to hold significant implications for localities.

--Pending Applications for Transportation Funding: Mr. Walker said that an application had been submitted for the region for the New Freedom funds to carry out the development of Coordinated Human Services Mobility (CHSM) plan.

--Proposed Phase II-UVA CRMES Risk Corridors Study: Mr. Walker said that Phase I of the UVA CRMES Risk Corridor Study, which had demonstrated for Fauquier County a GIS-based methodology to identify and prioritize highway sections that are relatively more vulnerable to development, had been broadened in a recent Phase II proposal to include adjoining jurisdictions. He indicated that it represented an important opportunity for other PD9 member jurisdictions, as with Fauquier, to not only collaborate with UVA and benefit from their study findings, but further enhance area capacity to anticipate change.

With no further business, Chairman Mothersead adjourned the meeting at 3:45 p.m.