

VAPDC Transportation Committee
Minutes
Thu, July 17, 2008 9:30-11:30am
in conjunction with 2008 Summer Conference

Attendees: Jerry Davis (Executive Director, Northern Neck PDC); Kevin Byrd (Regional Planner, New River Valley PDC); Robert Dowd (Executive Director, West Piedmont PDC); Dwight Farmer (Executive Director, Hampton Roads PDC); Ray Griffin (Executive Director, Central Shenandoah PDC); Melody Foster (Regional Planner, Commonwealth Regional Council); Dan Lysy (Director of Transportation, Richmond Regional PDC); Harriet Parcels (Transportation Planner, Rappahannock Rapidan-Regional Commission); Chris Price (Executive Director, Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission); Barbara Schwenk (Economic Development Coordinator, Accomack-Northampton PDC); Lynn McKinney (Transportation Planner, Mount Rogers PDC); Camelia Ravanbakht (Principal Transportation Engineer, Hampton Roads PDC); Bob White (Deputy Director Planning/Core Services, Regional 2000 Local Government Council); Dale Stith (Transportation Planner, Hampton Roads PDC); and Jeff Walker (*Chairman*, Executive Director, Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission).

Guests: Kimberly Spence (VDOT-TMPD); Marsha Fiol (VDOT-TMPD); Darrel Johnson (VDOT-TMPD); Kathy Graham (VDOT Multimodal Office); Herbert Pegram (VDOT Multimodal Office); Trip Pollard (Southern Environmental Law Center), Matt Schroeder (UVA-CRMES).

I. Welcome and Introductions

Mr. Walker, Committee chairman, opened the meeting at 9:30 a.m. and welcomed everyone to the 2008 Summer Conference Transportation Committee meeting. He asked everyone to introduce themselves. With a full agenda, he introduced the first speaker.

II. Regional Authority Outlook- *Dwight Farmer*, Hampton Roads PDC

Mr. Farmer said that the Hampton Roads PDC has been involved in the process of setting regional priorities since 1999. The focus in the region is trying to achieve success in getting projects implemented. In setting regional priorities, the challenge is to seek equity throughout the region in the projects that are selected. The Hampton Roads PDC contains communities that range from 15,000 to over 400,000 population. Through cooperative effort, the region identified 4-5 projects that are essential to the entire region. The next challenge was finding a way to pay for construction of the projects. In 2002, Hampton Roads PDC asked the General Assembly for assistance. A referendum for a one cent sales tax was approved by the General Assembly, but when the referendum came up for a vote, it lost by a 2:1 margin. H.B. 3202 was then enacted and included seven different taxes to raise revenues for transportation projects throughout the state. H.B. 3202 was recently declared unconstitutional by the Virginia Supreme Court. Thus, the question remains as to how priority transportation projects will be funded. The Hampton Roads area needs \$375 million per year to implement several priority transportation projects. The entire Hampton Roads budget is \$200 million per year. Thus, the transportation projects would require a doubling of the annual budget. Mr. Farmer talked about public-private partnerships. While these have gained popularity, he warned that there are downsides to the arrangement. Many public-private partnerships include a 99-year lease, non-compete clauses and tolls that are based on the regional domestic product (RDP) rather than the Gross Product Index (GPI). These can result in higher costs to the public

sector than may have been anticipated. Tolls only cover about one-third of the project costs and some transportation authority will be needed to carry the debt.

III. Land Use and Transportation Policy and Climate Change- *Trip Pollard, Southern Environmental Law Center*

Mr. Pollard said that the state of Virginia is projected to add large amounts of population and traffic in the years ahead. There has been a disconnect between transportation planning, which is largely done at the state level of government, and land use planning, which is carried out at the local level. The Planning District Commissions, as regional bodies, are an important connection between the state and local governments. Mr. Pollard said that the rise in gas prices to \$4.00 per gallon and the high cost of oil are leading to some fundamental changes. Last year, the country witnessed the first drop in Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT). Transportation is the single largest user of energy in Virginia and one of the largest and fastest growing sources of carbon dioxide. Sprawling development patterns and highway centered transportation lead to more driving, greater energy consumption and greater emissions of global greenhouse gases. H.B. 3202 had some land-use provisions included in the legislation (UDAs, secondary street standards and others). The State Energy Plan contains some language promoting more compact development patterns and reductions in VMT. Governor Kaine has formed a Commission on Global Climate Change of which Tripp Pollard is a member. The Commission has four sub-groups including one on transportation and land use, chaired by former Lt. Governor Don Beyer. As the U.S. Congress, state legislatures and others focus on global climate change, there is a growing examination of the transportation and land use connection. There is a need to look at alternative modes of transportation and ways to bring greater efficiency to the existing transportation system. Along with this is the need to preserve open space that acts as a carbon storage location. This can be pursued through use of Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs) and Purchase of Development Rights (PDRs).

IV. Regional Long Range Plan Development/TMPD Update- *Marsha Fiol and Darrel Johnson, VDOT-TMPD*

Mrs. Fiol said that VDOT is working on setting a date and location for the Fall Phase III transportation planning workshop. The dates of September 9, 10 or 11 for a workshop in Charlottesville have been proposed. She updated the committee on findings from the recently concluded TMPD listening tour, in which she, Darrel and others from the Division had met with representatives from each of the state's PDCs to solicit input experience with the Rural Transportation Planning Program to date, its strengths, and ideas for continuing to build upon past successes. Some recommendations that VDOT heard were: the need for additional opportunities for PDCs to share best practices, the ability for PDCs to bill for administrative time when administering on-call grants on behalf of member jurisdictions, and interest in expanded technology and training.

Applications for the next round of on-call grants will be issued on July 25, with proposals due by the end of August. As in past rounds, VDOT plans to award \$200,000 in such competitive, on-call consultant funding to PDC rural transportation planning programs across the state. The Transportation and Mobility Planning Division (TMPD) is also discussing the future direction of the grants and whether the grants should be eliminated and funding applied instead to the regional planning assistance grant program. If this were done, there are three prospective scenarios under which the additional funds might be distributed: based on population; based on VMT, or based on an equal distribution. Mrs. Fiol requested that VAPDC signal its preference by way of Mr. Walker as Chair of the Transportation Committee, if at all

possible, no later than August 29, whereupon VDOT is expected to make a decision on the future of the grants by the end of the year.

Lastly, Mrs. Fiol distributed a TMPD Survey on Rural Planning Equipment and Software, which she asked each PDC to complete and return to VDOT by August 1st. Mr. Walker encouraged PDC representatives to promptly return their surveys, and thanked Mrs. Fiol and Mr. Johnson for their presentation.

V. VTRAN 2035, Multimodal Program and Related Updates- *Kimberly Spence for Mary Lynn Tischer, VDOT Multimodal Office*

Ms. Spence said that Phase I of the statewide multimodal freight study was complete and posted on the VTRANS website. Phase II should be completed by the end of August. The study of the potential for freight diversion should also be completed by the end of August. The statewide freight study looks at major corridors such as the I-95 Corridor and I-81 Corridor, which Virginia works with other state on solutions to reduce congestion and choke points. The Multimodal office is about to start several major studies: the economic impacts of transportation investments, a corridor study of Route 29, consultant assistance for the VTRANS Long Range Transportation Plan and an accomplishments report. VDOT is looking at changes to the Multimodal Grant Program. Thus far, the program has awarded \$4.5 million in grants, for approximately 30 studies.

She indicated that the Multimodal office has heard PDCs express the desire for greater involvement of PDC staff in the scoping and administration of Multimodal grants, and is likewise looking at the possibility of allowing for charging of admin time.

Ms. Spence discussed the development of Transportation Performance Measures as required by the General Assembly. A key question is deciding how to aggregate the data, whether by PDC, MPO and/or other aggregation. Freight performance measures will be collected at the regional level. The VTRANS 2035 Work Plan will probably be presented as a series of reports or white papers. VDOT is looking to hold a Transportation Summit in the Fall to bring together key decision-makers to examine VTRANS visions, goals and scenarios for the best way to proceed. She also discussed the MPO survey results.

Lastly, Ms. Spence said that as part of VTRANS 2035, the state will take a more in-depth look at key corridors that have been previously identified. The UVA methodology for risk-corridor analysis, which has been tested in Fauquier County, holds excellent application to other counties to help them identify corridors at highest risk of development.

VI. PDC Round-Table

Richmond Regional PDC: In the process of completing its Long Range Transportation Plan completed. The PDC also recently concluded a regional mass transit study that looked at transit corridors in the region and is working on a transit vision plan for the future. In addition, the PDC is working on a congestion management system, and best management practice (BMP) study with regard to public participation.

Region 2000 Local Government Council: Similarly working on updating its Long Range Transportation Plan. There is strong interest in bicycle/pedestrian facilities in the region and the PDC is in the process of completing a detailed Bicycle Plan and Sidewalk Inventory.

Commonwealth Regional Council: The PDC is working on their Long Range Transportation Plan and beginning their public outreach.

West Piedmont PDC: The PDC is working with Parsons consultants to identify “hot spots”. Also working on an access management study, one in Danville and one south of Chadwick, and working on the 2035 MPO Update and TIP update.

Winchester-Frederick MPO: The PDC is working on the Long Range Transportation Plan update and looking at ways to better bridge the rural and MPO areas with the region. In addition, the PDC is doing a study of Route 522.

Accomack/Northampton PDC: The PDC is working on the Long Range Transportation Plan and a bicycle plan to link the wildlife refuge with the park.

Central Shenandoah PDC: The PDC is presently engaged in two multimodal studies. The PDC is starting on the Long Range Transportation Plan update and working on a bicycle-pedestrian plan for which 40 routes have been identified. The PDC is also looking at how to set uniform standards on Corridors that cross PDC boundaries.

New River Valley PDC: The PDC is working on its Long Range Transportation Plan and also looking at whether it can establish a fixed transit route to operate from a park-and-ride lot.

Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission: The PDC is in the process of wrapping up two area bicycle and pedestrian planning processes, in the first group working with Parsons on upcoming public outreach with respect to its Long Range Plan, and preparing to commence development of a regional multimodal freight study.

Mr. Walker thanked the speakers for their informative presentations and everyone on the committee for their participation, and adjourned the meeting at 11:30 a.m.