

# DRPT Transportation Study Committee

June 16, 2011 Meeting

## 1. DPRT Welcome and Introduction.

DRPT Director Thelma Drake welcomed the DRPT Transportation Study Committee and made introductory comments about the increasing role of transit in Virginia, and the importance of providing choices for transportation. She acknowledged the fluctuation in revenues for transit and the need for stability in transit funding. Director Drake also acknowledged the significance of funding to support growth in transit and the importance of transit in supporting the Governor's earth day challenge to reduce greenhouse gasses by reducing the number of vehicle miles traveled (VMT) in Virginia.

Chief of Public Transportation, Bob Wilson and Chief Financial Officer, Steve Pittard, also welcomed and addressed the Committee. They expressed DRPT's interest in playing the role of funding partner with transit providers in Virginia. In terms of this study, DPRT is looking for local input and ideas from providers and other stakeholders.

## 2. Objectives of the Meeting

Facilitator Liz Sanford of Cambridge Systematics presented the agenda for the meeting and addressed the operating understandings for the committee, as well as the meeting format. The discussion resulted in the following:

- The Public Transportation Study Committee agreed that substitutes will be accepted for Committee Members in the case a Committee Member cannot attend.
- Any communications from Committee Members about ideas or input for the study should be emailed to: Steve Pittard, Bob Wilson, and Susan Binder
- Open Meetings: the meetings will be open to the public, and there will be a limited time period set aside at the beginning of each meeting to allow comments from non-committee members. Following the public comment period, non-committee members will be welcomed to stay for the duration of the meeting, but will be asked to not participate/comment.
- DRPT will consider developing a web page where all information relevant to the study and meetings will be posted. There will be an introductory public comment period prior to and during option development. Committee members' contact information will be posted on the website, so that the public may provide input directly to DRPT or to a particular Committee Member.
- DRPT is considering hosting a webinar in September to provide public information on the Study.
- The date of the next meeting was set for Wednesday, August 3rd. 9am-3pm at DRPT headquarters in Richmond, VA.

### **3) Flow of funding:**

An overview presentation on the current State funding process to transit providers in Virginia was conducted by Stacy Cook of Cambridge Systematics, Inc. It concentrated on the financial flow of funding from the source trust funds to grantees. This information in greater detail can be found in the DRPT Public Transportation Funding Technical Memo. The memo and presentation slides will be made available on the DRPT website.

### **4) Work Plan Development and Guidance from SJR297**

Project Manager Susan Binder of Cambridge Systematics, Inc., presented the four areas identified in the legislation and how they will be approached in terms of the Study. They included:

- 1. Performance**
- 2. Prioritization**
- 3. Stability**
- 4. Allocation**

The opportunity was also presented for raising any additional elements beyond the four identified in legislation that the Committee would like to see addressed.

### **Committee Discussion:**

- The DRPT recommends that the report provides not just one option but several, so that multiple options may be considered.
- The Study Team was asked to consider developing a menu of options.
- The Committee discussed the benefit of determining what level of consensus and specificity are needed.
- The observation was made that this study may be the opportunity to justify additional funds to support transportation in general, including transit specifically, for Virginia. This raised the question as to whether VDOT is undertaking any comparable study to this one. DRPT is unaware of any such study.
- Some discussion as to establishing the appropriate modal split for funding in Virginia was pursued. The consultants explained that there is no single best practice but that those states which have recently approached the issue at their DOTs from a policy perspective (e.g. Oregon, Washington, and Utah) have done so by utilizing a mode-neutral approach, and have considered distributing funds based at least in part on performance measures.

### **5) Goals of the study as defined by the DRPT Public Transportation Committee.**

Members of the Committee approached the study from a variety of perspectives: as individuals, as part of the broader transit industry, as representatives of their specific constituencies and

from a Commonwealth-wide vantage point. The general consensus was that the study would be framed in terms of achieving goals in the following 5 areas:

- 1) To achieve a degree of predictability and stability for transit funding over time.
- 2) To improve the understanding by decision makers of the implications of various levels of resources on transit. With improved education, consideration would be given to the following areas of impact:

- Economics (e.g., state economic health and development),
- Equity (e.g., opportunities and access by communities and individuals throughout the Commonwealth)
- Energy/emissions
- Assets (e.g. quality and quantity of transportation facilities and vehicles)
- Transportation modes (e.g., availability and choice)

Prioritization and funding allocation would likely take the above issues into consideration.

- 3) To assure accountability for public expenditures. To this goal, a performance management approach may be useful. Care should be taken in relation to performance measurement, including:

- “Keep it simple, stupid” (KISS): administration that is associated with performance measures should be straightforward.
- Comparisons should be fair and appropriate, taking into consideration the variation among transit agencies (rural, urban, large, small, etc).
- The full range of performance indicators must be considered, including safety and customer satisfaction.
- Innovation should not be stifled.

- 4) To consider the cross-cutting relationships that are an important context for transit services and to potentially better integrate them. This could include the areas of:

- Intergovernmental relationships and authority (state, local, and regional levels) and interagency relationships, (e.g., DRPT andVDOT)
- Capital grants vs. operating assistance
- Flexible grantsmanship (meaning the ability to tailor generic programs and structures to fit the needs as they relate to a particular grantee situation)
- The impact of land use and the highway system on transit use, both of which having a strong impact on the effectiveness of transit investments.

- 5) To ensure sensitivity to equity and fairness in the distribution and use of transit resources. Examples of the need for balance include:

- New and continuing services

- Geographic distribution
- Population densities (rural, urban, suburban)
- Demographics (age, income)
- Transit mode
- Bike and pedestrian mode

Committee Discussion:

- Need to define the transportation problem and have a common understanding of transit’s potential contribution to solving it.
- Considering the implications of the statutory 14.7% share for transit and the challenge of increasing the resource “pie.” Is this share for transit still appropriate?
- Define the State’s role in transit.
- Importance of good transit planning and the role that the transit plan has defining status quo and building consensus as to the future.
- Variability in future revenues, including from Federal transportation funding sources.
- Optimizing the efficiency of existing systems.
- Challenge of dealing with the growth in the number of transit systems under the current statutory funding distribution method.
- Operating and capital funds address different goals and are not fungible. Defining flexibility in terms of achieving goals at different governmental levels will be a challenge.

**6) Next Steps:**

- Cambridge Systematics will provide a summary of meeting notes to the Committee.
- Cambridge Systematics will identify data needed from DRPT and other agencies.
- Cambridge Systematics will conduct a literature review to provide background information, examples of other allocation formulas, and best practices around the United States.
- Cambridge Systematics will present at the August 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting what has been accomplished by that time. The team may present 10-15 options that they have developed for the Committee to consider, relating to the goals and objectives that the committee contributed at the June 16<sup>th</sup> meeting. The formula option will ultimately be run using existing/available data to provide insight on the possible outcomes of options. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting those options will be refined down to about five options. Each of these will then be considered more depth. These will be reflected in a draft report.