

CTB Rail and Transit Subcommittee Meeting Minutes  
VDOT Central Office-HR Training Room  
1221 East Broad Street  
Richmond, VA 23219  
8:30 am  
June 18, 2019

The Meeting began at 8:43 am

CTB Rail Subcommittee Members Present: DRPT Director Jennifer Mitchell, Ray Smoot, Mary Hynes, Stephen Johnsen and John Malbon.

1. Approval of May 14<sup>th</sup> Minutes-Stephen Johnsen moved to approve the minutes, Mary Hynes seconded, and the minutes were unanimously approved.
2. Director's Report-Director Mitchell gave her report. The following statements were noted.
  - The Final Environmental Impact Statement for DC2RVA was released on May 31<sup>st</sup> and is in the public comment period until July 1<sup>st</sup>. The timing is bumping up against the grant deadline for the FASTLANE grant.
  - Director Mitchell said that the Bedford and Charlottesville station studies were underway.
  - Atlantic Gateway is moving forward.
  - Ridership numbers on the Virginia Sponsored Amtrak routes are up 10% year over year. Total Virginia sponsored route ridership is up 5.1% year-to-date. Routes 46 (Roanoke) and 47 (Newport News) each also saw increases of over 7%. Net ridership on the routes affected by the schedule optimization, or the 'Urban Crescent' (routes 47, 50, & 51), is up 6.2% year-to-date. John Malbon asked when the second Norfolk service began. Director Mitchell said that it began on March 4<sup>th</sup>.
  - There were hiccups during the WMATA Blue and Yellow line shutdowns which will be lessons learned for the Orange line shutdown. The orange line shutdown will affect I66 so lots of mitigation will be needed.
  - There will be an update on potential new Virginia Breeze routes in July.

- There will be an event on June 25<sup>th</sup> hosted by the Greater Washington Partnership to celebrate the success of transit in Richmond. DRPT, GRTC and the City of Richmond will receive an award for the Pulse.
- Mary Hynes reported that she took Train 125 to the CTB meeting and that she did not have wifi. Director Mitchell said that a presentation on efforts to fix that issue was on the day's meeting agenda.
- Ray Smoot asked about the Potomac Yard metro issue. Director Mitchell said that this project had been going on for nearly 10 years and that the design process had changed to create a south entrance that was originally eliminated. The state has committed 50 million dollars and the project is being designed to fit that budget. There is no VRE service at that station.

### 3. Amtrak Wifi Update-Colin Burch

Colin gave an update on the state's effort to approve the wifi capabilities of Virginia Sponsored trains as outlined in the Service Improvement plan that the state developed with Amtrak last year. Amtrak determined that it is a hardware issue and is working to update all trains with new hardware. They anticipate this project will be completed in September. The following discussion points were noted:

- Ray Smoot pointed out that the data seemed to show that the Roanoke line was the best performer. Colin Burch said that his inference was correct. Ray Smoot said that he would like to see the line extended on to Christiansburg.

### 4. Rail Industrial Access Application—AAREFF Terminals-Jeremy Latimer

Jeremy Latimer said that this item would be reviewed during the CTB's workshop agenda. The Rail Industrial Access Application from the previous month for Interchange Cold Storage was on the Action Agenda. The following discussion points were noted:

- John Malbon pointed out that the project had a score of 60 points out of 100 which doesn't seem very strong given the amount of carloads. Jeremy said that 60 was a strong score and that it is very hard to get 100. The site area has low levels of unemployment which affected the score.
- Stephen Johnson asked what the commodity was and if it was a pass through commodity or one that originated in Virginia. Linda Balderson said that the commodity transported is soybeans. Jeremy Latimer said that he would check on the origination of the goods.
- Mary Hynes said that she would like to do a look back on previous applications to see how people have scored on these applications. Director Mitchell said that the

comment was timely because DRPT is about to begin a review of all of its rail programs that will be retrospective, but will also be looking at how best to utilize the programs moving forward. She said the review would be done by Entrant, a nonprofit think tank. She anticipates the review taking about 3 months. DRPT will bring the results back to the subcommittee.

- Mary Hynes said that she would like to see the programs promoted instead of just waiting for applications.
- Stephen Johnsen asked what projects were in the pipeline. Jeremy Latimer said that the program is very application driven but that DRPT does work with VEDP and Norfolk Southern and CSX's industrial development teams.
- John Malbon said that it was impressive what AAREFF terminals were going to do at their site.
- Director Mitchell said that the Rail Industrial Access grants are small but very impactful.

#### 5. Rail Preservation Evaluation Criteria Updates-Jeremy Latimer

Jeremy Latimer gave updates on the agency's process to update the scoring criteria for this program. The following discussion points were noted:

- Director Mitchell asked Jeremy to remind the committee of the size of the program. He said that there is 3.9 million dollars funding from the Highway Construction Fund, and supplemented with bond funds. Additional funding is available with the ability to transfer money from the Rail Enhancement Fund. This year 2.5 million is recommended for transfer from the Rail Enhancement Fund.
- Jeremy Latimer said that DRPT is playing with the weights on the scoring measures. He said that State of Good Repair (SGR) needs would be weighted more heavily. DRPT is going to use past projects to look at scoring and will bring results to the subcommittee in July. The application period opens on December 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Director Mitchell said that DRPT is working with the Virginia Railroad Association to get better forecasting of their long term needs.
- Ray Smoot asked if any of the categories related to traffic density. Jeremy Latimer said that DRPT could take a look at how to measure that. Director Mitchell said that the transit scoring system looks at service impact and that DRPT could look at replicating that, as well as looking at the impact of failure.
- Mary Hynes said that the SGR and Resiliency measures belong together. She said there are a lot of measures to quantify which opens up the process for criticism. She asked how geographic differences would be captures.
- Director Mitchell said that the program has limitations because the grants are so small and that DRPT is missing an opportunity to fund "lumpy" larger SGR

projects. Jeremy Latimer said that if we understand the long term capital needs DRPT can help get Federal funds.

- Mary Hynes said that on the highway side there is a vital structures program. She suggested that the program become more flexible so that some of the rail projects could be eligible.

## 6. Public Comment

- Stewart Schwartz, Coalition for Smarter Growth
  - i. Steward said that he rode the Pulse and that it was great. He looks forward to it being run every 6 minutes and think it should receive a dedicated lane on Main Street.
  - ii. He asked about the share of state transportation funds that go to transit. He estimated that it is 16% and said that it should be more.
  - iii. He thanked DRPT for staying on CSX about Train 174.
  - iv. He said that in addition to Long Bridge the state should be working with CSX on the Southern end.
  - v. During storm season he suggested that trucks with chain saws be available to remove storm debris from the tracks.
- Director Mitchell asked Jeremy Latimer to quickly brief on the SAIPRC (State-Amtrak Intercity Passenger Rail Committee) meeting he attended in Sacramento. Jeremy mentioned that there were 18 states that participate in the organization. A new working group was created to deal with on time performance. Amtrak is replacing their whole fleet, so the states are trying to determine what portion of this the states will have to pay.

## 7. The meeting adjourned at 9:37.