

CTB Rail and Transit Subcommittee Meeting Minutes  
VDOT Central Office-HR Training Room  
1221 East Broad Street  
Richmond, VA 23219  
8:30 am  
September 17, 2019

The Meeting began at 8:30 am

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

1. Director's Report-Director Mitchell gave her report. The following statements were noted.
  - The week of September 16<sup>th</sup> is Try Transit week. There are many promotions going on around the state.
  - Director Mitchell said that there had been several big milestones for DRPT over the past couple of weeks. The Record of Decision (ROD) for the DC2RVA Tier II EIS was signed by the FRA, thereby finalizing the federal environmental approval process for DC2RVA giving the environmental clearance needed for improvements in the rail corridor between the Potomac River and Centralia, VA.
  - The Draft EIS came out for Long Bridge and is in the public comment period. There will be a public hearing on October 2<sup>nd</sup>. The finalization of the DC2RVA ROD gives the agency the ability to obligate the federal FASTLANE grant funding.
  - Director Mitchell said that there will be additional thruway bus service in the Hampton Roads area starting on October 1<sup>st</sup>.
  - August 2019 had one the highest levels of ridership in the last ten years. She mentioned that they would be celebrating ten years of passenger rail service that day.
  - Director Mitchell reviewed the day's agenda.
  
2. Rail Preservation Fund Evaluation Criteria-Jeremy Latimer

Jeremy began his presentation and reminded members that DRPT was looking at new criteria because they had been receiving more requests for funding for this program than it could fund. He said that they heard from the subcommittee in July that they wanted

more emphasis on critical infrastructure and they have addressed that. The following discussion points were noted:

- Ray Smoot asked for the definition of rail roads that were eligible to receive this funding. Jeremy Latimer said that they are railroads that are classified as a short line railroad by the Surface Transportation Board (STB). Jeremy Latimer said that he would get Mr. Smoot the exact definition. Ray Smoot asked if the fact that a short line could be owned by a long line railroad came into play. He used the example that the Norfolk Portsmouth Beltline was owned by Norfolk Southern. Jeremy Latimer asked if he was asking if a short line should qualify for the program based on revenues and resources. He said he was asking if large railroads should be permitted to access this funding. Jeremy Latimer said that the program uses a Federal definition that is referenced in the state legislature.
- Jennifer mentioned that this would be brought to the full CTB with hopes of being in place for the December grant cycle. She commended the work of DRPT staff and the Virginia Railroad association.
- Mary Hynes asked if critical infrastructure needs should be incorporated into what VDOT is doing on the highway side. She asked how these things could be communicated to the General Assembly strategically. Jennifer Mitchell said that there are a number of critical structures and there is not a good pot of funding for a large project. Ray Smoot asked how large the program was and Jennifer said it was a minimum of 4 million a year with up to an additional 4 million a year available from the Rail Enhancement Fund.
- Stephen Johnsen said that we need to identify those critical assets. Jennifer Mitchell said that DRPT is working with the railroads to identify those critical structures. They are privately owned assets.
- Stephen Johnsen asked if repairs of critical infrastructure would be the responsibility of the state or of the railroad. Jennifer said that the railroad would be responsible but a state program could help advance those repairs. Jennifer said that DRPT would bring back information on those critical assets.

### 3. 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of State Sponsored Amtrak Service-Michael McLaughlin

Michael McLaughlin reviewed the history of state sponsored Amtrak service in Virginia. The following discussion points were noted.

- Ray Smoot asked how many unique trains there were between Richmond and Washington (not including the auto train). Mike said that there are 9 trains daily in each direction to and from Richmond. Ray Smoot pointed out how important Long Bridge will be to clear service at that choke point.
- Jennifer Mitchell said that there will be a field trip to Main Street Station during lunch that day to celebrate ten years of passenger rail service and that there will be a special announcement.

#### 4. I-81 Intermodal Funding-Emily Stock

Emily Stock said that the I-81 Advisory Committee had been established to provide advice and recommendations to the CTB regarding the development of the I-81 Corridor Improvement Plan. The plan identified a need to invest in multimodal improvements in the corridor. The following discussion points were noted:

- Ray Smoot, a member of the commission, said that there was a report due to the General Assembly on December 1<sup>st</sup>. He said that the largest effort will be to three-lane much of the highway.
- Jennifer said there was a big attendance at the first meeting and that 3 of the 4 public comments were about rail.
- Ray Smoot said that Truck parking accommodations and signage are also components.

#### 5. Approval of the Minutes

Director Mitchell said that the group needed to approve the minutes from the July 16<sup>th</sup> meeting. She said that they had been emailed to members electronically. Stephen Johnsen moved to approve the minutes, Mary Hynes seconded and the minutes were unanimously approved.

#### 6. Virginians for High Speed Rail Presentation of I-95 Petitions-Danny Plaughter

Director Mitchell said that there was a study underway by OIPI with support from DRPT and VDOT that is looking at improvements in the I-95 Corridor. Director Mitchell said that Danny Plaughter was there to talk about the petition, and that he is one of the most active rail advocates in the state.

Danny Plaughter said that a survey was sent out where intercity rail was forgotten as a long distance mode. He said that this was not DRPT's fault and that DRPT tried to get it fixed. Virginians for High Speed Rail launched a petition so comments in support of rail were heard. The petition has 1200 signatures in support of rail in the 95 corridor. Danny presented the signatures to the CTB members.

#### 7. Public Comment

Trip Pollard from the Southern Environmental Law Center gave a public comment. He mentioned all of the huge milestones of the last week. He mentioned a piece that was released by the Southern Environmental Law Center encouraging service from the West to the East, or from the "Blue Ridge to the Beach". He distributed this handout to CTB members.

Mary Hynes asked if in the future DRPT could share the building blocks of funding for Long Bridge. She said there is a lot of speculation in Northern Virginia about where the money is coming from and should come from funding other than just the Northern Virginia pot. Director Mitchell said the project will need a partner and will need Federal, Local and State Support. She said that VRE will yield the biggest benefit. Director Mitchell said the state is working to nail down moving pieces and that it will be a partnership with localities that will benefit from the investment. Mary Hynes mentioned that there is major turnover on Boards in Northern Virginia and that will be a great opportunity to come in and tell a story. Jennifer Mitchell said that CSX would be the major rail beneficiary from improvements to Long Bridge. She said that she would be giving a presentation at VRE about overall state support for VRE. Mary Hynes said that she would like a copy of the VRE presentation. Jennifer said that she would send that to her. Director Mitchell said DRPT is trying to nail down the biggest pieces of this funding plan before talking about the funding plan.

8. The Meeting Adjourned at 9:30.