

## MINUTES

CTB Rail and Transit Subcommittee Meeting  
VDOT Central Office-HR Training Room  
1221 East Broad Street  
Richmond, VA 23219  
June 22, 2021  
8:30 a.m.

The meeting of the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) Rail and Transit Subcommittee was held in the HR Training Room of the Virginia Department of Transportation Central Office Old Highway Building located at 1221 East Broad Street, Richmond, Virginia 23219. The meeting was called to at 8:32 a.m. on June 22, 2021.

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

**CTB Members Present:** Scott Kasprowicz

DRPT Director Jennifer Mitchell opened up the meeting with welcoming remarks and introduced the agenda.

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### 1. Approval of January 14, 2020 Minutes

Stephen Johnsen moved to approve the minutes. Ms. Hynes seconded the motion and the minutes were unanimously approved.

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### 2. Director's Update (Jennifer Mitchell)

Director Mitchell provided the subcommittee with updates regarding the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority (VPRA), Transforming Rail in Virginia, the INVEST Act, and Amtrak ridership. The following points from the presentation were noted:

- In response to Mr. Malbon's question about electric dual-mode trains, Mr. Jeremy Latimer stated that DRPT had been pushing for dual-mode engines however, electrification was not being planned for south of DC. Mr. Latimer stated that he would be happy to bring forth the statistics on the new locomotives.

### 3. VPRA Update: Organizational Charts (DJ Stadler)

Mr. Stadler introduced himself to the subcommittee and proceeded to give an overview of the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority's organization charts. He summarized the four key direct report positions and responsibilities. The following points from the presentation were noted:

- Mr. Kasprowicz desired to know if there would be personnel assigned to safety. Mr. Stadler said a Safety Manager will report to the Chief Operating Officer, who will be responsible for all safety projects. Mr. Kasprowicz suggested that the Safety Manager report directly to the Executive Director. Ms. Hynes concurred with Mr. Kasprowicz's suggestion.

- Mr. Smoot asked if a project manager will be assigned to the Western Rail Initiative. Mr. Stadler noted that there will be at least one project manager.
- Mr. Kasproicz desired to know if the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority had considered purchasing low use or abandoned rail right of ways that could be potentially rail banked.. Director Mitchell commented that rail banking would be considered in DRPT's Statewide Rail Plan. A discussion ensued among the subcommittee members regarding rail banking and protecting the core components in the event rail service was re-established. Mr. Johnsen stated that when there's an attempt to rail bank, permission must be granted through the Surface Transportation Board.

#### **4. FREIGHT Program (Michael Todd)**

Mr. Todd provided an overview of the rail grant funding and procedures with the intent to gather feedback and direction from the subcommittee on the management of existing and future rail projects funded by the Commonwealth Rail Fund. The goal is to open a grant cycle in December 2021 upon the Commonwealth Transportation Board's approval. Mr. Todd confirmed that the grant cycle was performed annually and funding becomes available after the SYIP is adopted by the CTB. The approval of the grant is contingent upon the availability of funding, the grantee's schedule and the immediate need of the project. The following points from the presentation were noted:

- Mr. Kasproicz asked if the funding was primarily spent on the enhancement of existing infrastructure. Director Mitchell expressed that DRPT is planning to help applicants on the project development process to get projects to a place where they will be ready for design and construction and to potentially seek other sources of funding.
- Mr. Kasproicz expressed his concern for the Commonwealth's switching capacity to handle more rail traffic on an originating basis. Mr. Todd said that the short lines were not typically applicants for the Rail Enhancement Fund program, however the FREIGHT program would be tailored to their needs. Mr. Kasproicz suggested for future discussion, to consider doing an annual comparison of (1) the total existing inventory of operable rail sidings in Virginia and (2) those that are actually switching cars to determine if they are increasing or decreasing. Director Mitchell responded that DRPT will consider how projects are evaluated within the context of the scoring system.
- Ms. Hynes suggested that the scoring eligibility criteria include a safety element and address at least one of the statewide goals.
- Mr. Smoot asked if the approved siding enhancement projects such as Buckingham Branch and Shenandoah Valley would be eligible for the FREIGHT program. Mr. Todd affirmed that capacity siding projects such as Buckingham Branch would be eligible for the FREIGHT program however, they don't have to be since there are other eligible funding sources.

#### **5. Statewide Rail Plan and Station Policy Update (Emily Stock)**

Ms. Stock gave an overview of the 2022 Statewide Rail Plan. Ms. Stock explained that the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) requires that each state update its Statewide Rail Plan every four years, which enables Virginia to apply and receive federal rail funding for passenger and freight projects. The plan includes four-year and twenty-year horizons with metrics that can be compared plan to plan and state to state. DRPT coordinates with the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority and the Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment on the plan. DRPT will consider the ADA responsibilities, State of Good Repair prioritization, station

development and service expansion policies and return to the subcommittee with more information in the near future. The following points from the presentation were noted:

- Director Mitchell stated that the Virginia Ownership Station Matrix document was shared with all CTB members on Monday. She expressed the need for VPRA to have a clear policy and guidance regarding prioritizing their funding for station improvements, with great importance on ADA and safety issues.
- Ms. Stock disclosed that DRPT will develop general policies that VPRA will be able to refine as they implement their work. Mr. Smoot asked if the elevated platforms for boarding or unboarding could only be located on tracks that were not active for freight service. Ms. Stock answered yes. Mr. Smoot suggested that elevated platforms be utilized whenever possible to speed the boarding and unboarding process and to better meet the needs of those needing special assistance. Director Mitchell remarked that the FRA may require a higher platform at some stations when it's possible or feasible.
- Mr. Kasprovicz expressed that other modes of transportation were considering alternative fuels that have significant environmental benefits. He suggested tracking alternative fuels as a separate component of the Statewide Rail Plan to offset carbon emissions and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. He was hopeful that the negotiations and engagement with Norfolk Southern and CSX would lead to a more cooperative environment between the Commonwealth as a whole and private industries. Additionally, he remarked that it would be beneficial to continue to leverage the relationships that were built on sharing information, ideas, and resources, especially on sustainability and service levels.
- Ms. Hynes suggested including more tangible metrics in the plan to help the CTB track the progress and success. She noted that it would be proof of concept that people will take a multi-person vehicle instead of traveling by car.
- Mr. Johnsen asserted that is important to capture the data that is needed to make intelligent decisions.

## **6. Rail Industrial Access, Norfolk Terminals, LP -- Katoen Natie ( Jeremy Latimer)**

Mr. Latimer summarized that the application scored well and there was a tremendous increase in rail traffic at the port. The port's past investments and rail access were key to winning the site. The presentation will be considered at the CTB Workshop.

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**ADJOURNMENT:** The meeting adjourned at 9:52 a.m. on June 22, 2021.