

# MEETING NOTES

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*Rail Enhancement Task Force  
December 1, 2015  
600 East Main Street, 12th Floor  
Richmond, VA 23219*

## Introductions/Kick-Off

- DRPT initiated the meeting by describing the purpose of the rail task force. Specifically highlighting the responsibility to continue the review of the REF legislative and policy update by discussing and determining a new way to measure project benefits.
  
- Attendees were asked to sign-in and introduce themselves. Rail task force member organizations include:
  - o CSX Transportation
  - o Norfolk Southern
  - o Virginia Railway Express
  - o Virginia Port Authority
  - o Virginia Railroad Association
  - o Virginia Railroad Policy Institute
  - o Virginian's for High Speed Rail
  - o Virginia Senate Finance
  - o Virginia House Finance

## Legislative Report Update

- DRPT outlined the purpose of the recent REF legislative/policy update and how it relates to the rail task force; specifically highlighting some of the major updates to the report since October.
  - o The main updates to the report include allowing transfer of remaining REF funds to be used for rail preservation projects without triggering BCA, making the project evaluation process more transparent, and researching other ways to evaluate project performance.
  - o DRPT highlighted section 6.3 regarding measurement of benefits; the charge to the task force is to develop ways to measure performance for REF projects.

## Legislative Constraints of REF

- DRPT introduced the concept of legislative constraints on the REF program, which limit the use of state funds to only developing state parks and roads; excluding expenditure of funds to develop rail, unless those project improvements directly benefit the roadway network.
  - o The Office of the Attorney General discussed Article X, Section 10 of the Virginia Constitution, how it applies to the REF program, previous case law, and the history of the article's development; specifically highlighting most recent *Montgomery v DRPT* case decided by the Virginia Supreme Court.

- Committee members suggested that Virginia change this constitutional section to include language that would encompass rail development as well.

## Discussion of Benefit-Cost Analysis Metrics and Data

- DRPT presented the many data sets used in the current benefit-cost analysis model to evaluate REF projects; highlighting example data measures that are currently used and potential data sources that could be used in the evaluation of the REF project benefit measurement.
- The task force openly discussed the parameters of the existing performance measurement and how the process could be updated. Discussion topics and potential measures include:
  - o Assessing the value of human life related automobile/truck crash reduction
  - o Measuring reliability or on time performance of the rail network
    - Rail usage is connected to reliability
  - o Evaluate total travel time reduction as a result of a project
  - o Congestion relief due to transfer of truck/auto travel to rail
    - VRE conducted a TTI study regarding highway congestion relief from rail
  - o Maintenance of ridership/carloads
  - o Dual (freight/passenger) benefits should be measured
  - o Highway freight tonnage runs at a deficit to cost of usage, this should be applied to increase the benefit of truck to rail diversion
- Additionally, task force members posed questions that require further research and evaluation by DRPT.
  - o Can the contingent interest of a project in years be reduced?
  - o Can reporting period be reduced if benefits are achieved?
  - o Can funding outside of Virginia that benefits Virginia
  - o Can carloads/passengers at the statewide level instead of site specific?
  - o Can DRPT use network modeling in the benefit-cost analysis?
  - o Do state of good repair projects qualify under REF as a maintenance of service project?
  - o Why is there a clawback provision specific to REF? Why not for other grants such as transit?
  - o Can jobs created be included in the benefit-cost analysis?
- Based on the discussion, the task force proposed the use of a 'project score card' to evaluate the benefits of REF projects. The concept of the score card includes the use of multiple measures across both passenger and freight benefits, as well as indirect benefits, to evaluate each project.

## Future Tasks

- Develop a draft score card evaluation process for measuring REF project benefits
- Create and distribute meeting minutes
- Distribute electronic meeting materials