

MINUTES

CTB Rail and Transit Subcommittee Meeting
VDOT Central Office-HR Training Room
1221 East Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23219
September 14, 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 8:33 am on September 14, 2021.

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

CTB Members Present: Frederick Stant

CALL TO ORDER: DRPT Director Jennifer Mitchell opened up the meeting with welcoming remarks and introduced the agenda.

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1. Approval of July 20, 2021 Minutes

Mr. 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 the following updates:

- **DC2RVA, Section 106 Process:** The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) is re-opening the National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 consultation process for the DC to Richmond High Speed Rail (DC2RVA) due to inclusion of additional federal agencies and other groups taking the lead on a few small project segments; and the presence of a new National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)-eligible resource in the area of potential effects (APE), the Shockoe Hill Burying Ground Historic District (127-7231), and one resource with expanded boundaries, the Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground (44HE1203). DRPT will be sending out notices of Consulting Party meetings and potential public meetings to discuss these changes.
- **2022 Statewide Rail Plan:** DRPT continues to develop the 2022 Statewide Rail Plan. Coordinating with OIPI for consistency with VTrans Freight Element and other aspects of VTrans. Developing policy updates, and projects in the 4 and 20 year future horizon. The next public involvement push will be in January 2022.
- **General Assembly Studies:** DRPT is developing General Assembly Studies to understand the feasibility of the following service expansions: VRE to Gainesville, Amtrak to Bristol, Amtrak to Bedford, and Amtrak service for the Commonwealth Corridor from Hampton Roads to the New River Valley.
- **Washington-Richmond Amtrak Service Resumption and Extension to Main Street Station:** The Amtrak Richmond route will once again resume service on September 27, 2021 after it was put on hiatus due to the COVID pandemic in April 2020. Ridership has been increasing, with July having the highest percentage in the fiscal year.

- **Virginia Breeze:** August represented the highest Virginia Breeze ridership since the pandemic. Service to Bristol is anticipated to launch in November on the new “Highlands Rhythm” route.
- **Springfield to Quantico Enhanced Public Transportation Study:** DRPT continues to work with regional stakeholders on the evaluation of high-capacity transit alternatives in the study corridor. Alternatives under consideration include: extensions of the blue or yellow metrorail lines, bus rapid transit, enhanced VRE service (beyond TRV), and express bus. DRPT will host a virtual public information meetings on September 21st and 23rd.
- **Virginia Transit Equity and Modernization Study (VTEAM):** DRPT continues to work on data collection and outreach for VTEAM. DRPT is working towards completion of an interim report due to the General Assembly in December and will brief the CTB on the interim report later this fall.

3. Transit Equity and Modernization Study - Grant Sparks

Grant Sparks gave an overview of the Transit Equity and Modernization Study. DRPT continues to work on data collection and outreach for VTEAM. The study team conducted seven virtual focus groups in September, gathering input and observations from small groups of frequent and infrequent transit riders, paratransit riders, and agency stakeholders. The study team convened an Equity Committee comprised of transit leaders to provide strategic input on the study. The Equity Committee met on September 9. DRPT is working towards completion of an interim report due to the General Assembly in December and will brief the CTB on the interim report later this fall. The following points from the presentation were noted:

- Mr. Johnsen desired to know the parameters for an outcome in terms of time. Mr. Sparks noted that the action plan would include short-term, mid-term and long-term solutions.
- Ms. Hynes desired to know the working definition of equitable transportation. She noted that local governments have often struggled with the terms equity and modernization. She believed that useful definitions would be a huge step forward. Ms. Hynes suggested that a presentation be given to the full board since there is an important connection between VTrans and the study. Mr. Sparks noted that the transit equity committee created loose working definitions and will continue to flesh out the definitions as they move forward in the study. Mr. Sparks will provide broader definitions for the next presentation to the subcommittee. Jennifer DeBruhl shared that participants in the focus group were asked ‘What is equity?’ and “What does equitable and modern transit mean?’ DRPT is waiting on the outcome of the report from the consultants which will help revise the definitions.
- Ms. Hynes shared that one of the challenges is determining why people in the underserved communities do not ride transit. She suggested partnering with organizations such as NAACP, LULAC and Catholic Charities. Mr. Sparks welcomed additional suggestions from the subcommittee.
- In response to Mr. Stant’s question whether the General Assembly’s appropriated funding was being used, Jennifer DeBruhl confirmed that \$900,000 in funding was being used.

4. Overview of Safety Responsibilities - Jeremy Latimer

Jeremy Latimer gave an overview of the various agencies that collaborate safety responsibilities on the railroad and highlighted their specific mandates. An overview of the agencies included the Federal Railroad Administration, Virginia State Corporation Commission, National Transportation Safety Board, Federal Highway Administration, Host Railroads and Virginia-owned Right of Way, Operators (Amtrak, Virginia Railway Express), Department of Rail and Public Transportation and Virginia Passenger Rail Authority. The following points from the presentation were noted:

- Ms. Hynes desired to know if DRPT possessed a report to show the state of safety on Virginia’s railroads. She noted that as more freight enters the rail system, there should be a way to track the increase in traffic and incidents. Director Mitchell expressed that she appreciated Ms. Hynes’s feedback. Mr. Latimer commented that the State Corporation Commission and Federal Railroad Administration may potentially retain such reports.

- Mr. Johnsen desired to know if DRPT had any data to track hazardous cargo. Mr. Latimer noted that the Federal Railroad Association would be a good source for that type of data, however some reports of that nature are not typically shared with the public. Director Mitchell mentioned that the freight railroads are required to notify law enforcement whenever certain hazardous cargo is traversing through a jurisdiction.

5. Rail Plan Update - Emily Stock

Emily Stock presented the Rail Plan Update. The update included the plan's development process and structure, executive summary, policy recommendations, and initial freight findings. She noted that the rail plan monitored safety every four years and that DRPT collaborates with OIPI to transmit the safety data they receive from the FRA and other sources. The data measures the number of incidents and compares the differences with other modes of travel. The following points from the presentation were noted:

- Ms. Hynes noted that safety is very important. She requested that the CTB receive updates on the safety data and suggested adding two major measures for each area for the annual hearing to gain a sense for the large arc of the work.
- Ms. Hynes asked if the equity and modernization study aligned with the service gap analysis. Ms. Stock shared that the rail plan's equity component aligned with VTrans. DRPT will review their transit team's research findings to see how it relates to the rail service gap analysis.
- Ms. Stock discussed the freight rail dashboard of potential trip generators map which indicated business within .5 miles of a rail spur. Ms. Hynes suggested that DRPT take the initial step to promote adding potential rail spurs instead of waiting for businesses to make an inquiry. Ms. Stock stated that the goal was promote outreach with the economic development community to analyze the economic activity at production centers and transportation hubs and identify industry-related factors impacting future demand for freight rail services.
- Ms. Stock referenced two the webpages from her presentation: (OIPI VTrans Freight Element website) <https://vtrans.org/mid-term-planning/freight-plan> and (DRPT Virginia Statewide Rail Plan website) <https://drpt-srp-2022-hdr.hub.arcgis.com/>

6. Public Comment

No public comments were offered.

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ADJOURNMENT: The meeting adjourned at 9:56 a.m. on September 14, 2021.