

**JOINT SUBCOMMITTEE TO STUDY
CREATING A REGIONAL RAPID TRANSIT NETWORK.**

(SJR 357, 2009)

<http://dls.virginia.gov/transit.htm>

June 17, 2009

10:00 a.m.

Prince William County Development Services Building
Woodbridge, Virginia

Meeting Summary

The meeting was called to order by the Chairman, Sen. Barker, at 10:17 a.m. The day's first presentation was by Virginia Secretary of Transportation, Pierce R. Homer, who briefed the members on the state of Virginia's transportation finances, including the impact of federal stimulus funding on mass transit. He pointed out that traffic at the ports of Hampton Roads had declined 22.1 percent over the last year, that diesel fuel tax collections had declined 14.5 percent over the same period, that motor vehicle sales tax collections had fallen 28.2 percent, that state recordation tax revenue estimates for fiscal year 2010 were lower than fiscal year 2007 by 47 percent, that original vehicle registrations were down by 11.4 percent, that Virginia's air carrier capacity had slipped 12 percent, and that the Congressional Budget Office has predicted a \$13.5 billion (33 percent) reduction in federal funds. On a more positive note, the Secretary pointed out that Virginia will receive \$810.6 million federal ARRA (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act) funds, of which \$116.1 million would be used for transit projects. In discussing investments in public transportation and travel demand management, Sec. Homer drew the members' attention to major transit projects (the Dulles Corridor Metrorail project, Richmond bus rapid transit alternatives analysis, and the Norfolk light rail project) in large urban areas that will improve mobility, generate jobs, and promote economic development. On the subject of projects involving the Rail Enhancement Fund and demonstration project, he told the members that \$217 million would be spent in the next six years for 14 projects aimed at meeting both freight and passenger rail needs. He urged the members to be aware of the need to identify a reliable and sustainable source of revenue to inter-city passenger rail service. On the subject of bus rapid transit (BRT), the Secretary pointed to on-going BRT studies along both the Interstate Route 66 corridor (from Prince William County to the Potomac) and the Interstate Route 95 corridor (from Stafford County to the District of Columbia and around the Capital Beltway). In concluding, he pointed out that the Commonwealth has \$1 billion in deficient highway pavement needs, that, at least for this year, there would be essentially no money flowing through the statutory

allocation formula for any construction in the state primary, urban, and secondary highway systems, and that it was unlikely that there would be sufficient revenue to permit the issuance of the transportation bonds provided for in House Bill 3202 until at least 2010 or even 2011.

In a following discussion among the members, Sen. Colgan suggested that it might be appropriate for the General Assembly to consider repeal of the Workforce Transition Act.

The day's second presentation was by Arlington County's Transit Bureau Chief, Mr. Steve Del Giudice, on the Columbia Pike Streetcar project. He explained that the project (which is a cooperative effort involving both Arlington and Fairfax Counties) aims to develop an advanced transit system that will increase mobility and serve the emerging transit market between the Pentagon/Pentagon City area and Bailey's Crossroads, as well as support Arlington and Fairfax County land use and redevelopment initiatives for the corridor. This coordination between transportation and land use planning has been a distinguishing feature of the project from the outset. He explained that environmental studies and preliminary engineering for the project would begin soon, that actual construction would probably begin in about two years, with regular service to start in 2014 or 2015.

Following Mr. Del Giudice's presentation, the Chairman offered members of the audience a chance to make comments. Mr. Tom Hirst briefly took the floor to urge the Joint Subcommittee to take action to increase the capacity of existing highway infrastructure by using bus rapid transit and other forms of mass transit.

Chairman Barker announced his intention to hold three more meetings of the Joint Subcommittee before the end of the year: one in early September, one in early October, and the last in November, following the elections. He said he hoped, at those meetings, to hear from the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation and from the Northern Virginia metropolitan planning organization before considering findings and recommendations to be presented to the Governor and the 2010 Session of the General Assembly. Senator Stuart said he would like to know more about how Virginia's transportation and transit planning affects military installations in the Commonwealth and the businesses dependent upon those installations from the perspective of making these places into mass transit hubs. The Chairman invited members to share with him and with staff any other suggestions they might have for the agendas of future meetings.

