

# Joint Subcommittee to Study Creating a Regional Rapid Transit Network

(SJR 357, 2009)

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

October 27, 2009

10:00 a.m.

Prince William County Development Services Building  
Woodbridge, Virginia

## Meeting Summary

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Barker. The other members in attendance were Senator Puller and Delegates Watts, Frederick, and Scott.

The first presentation was by Michael Harris, Project Manager for BRT Studies in Northern Virginia, Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT). Mr. Harris provided status updates on several projects: (i) the Unified Planning Approach for Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) in Northern Virginia, (ii) I-66 status, and (iii) I-95/395 status. Regarding the BRT project, key benefits include the following items:

- Reduced travel times
- Faster service and better marketing to improve transit's image and increase ridership
- Higher quality transit encourages transit-oriented development
- BRT service can generally be developed at a lower capital cost than rail
- BRT offers greater flexibility in blending BRT and local transit service delivery to better respond to market demand

Mr. Harris presented two typical operating plans for corridor BRT service as well as direct and indirect access to station areas. Considerations for BRT in Northern Virginia include the following:

- Operating flexibility
- Branding/Marketing
- Cost sharing
- Design guidelines for stations
- Common vehicle specifications
- Planning policy from region and state

Mr. Harris next provided an update on the I-66 study, which should conclude in December 2009. The preliminary findings for that study are as follows:

- D.C., Rosslyn-Ballston, and Tysons Corner are major transit destinations.
- Express services are most attractive.
- Improved convenience and comfort amenities help attract more riders.
- Reliable travel time performance of the HOV lanes would enhance the transit ridership potential in the corridor.
- Expanding park and ride is important to growing transit ridership.
- Land use plays a critical role in determining transit usage.

The key market research findings showed that the most important factors in choosing transit modes are time savings, cost savings, and service reliability. Of those responding to the survey, 66% of those who drive alone expressed an interest in shifting to transit IF attractive option existed. The I-66 study recommendations were as follows:

- Proposed infrastructure does not preclude future rail transit service
- Proposed station locations will be selected with consideration of potential future rail service
- Enhance park and ride facilities
- Implement recommendations from forthcoming VDOT I-66 HOV Lane Operation Study
- Construct direct access ramps from certain HOV lanes
- Dulles Corridor Metrorail
- Increased service level for bus
- Expanded transit destinations served
- Technology (including traveler information system upgrades and customer comfort amenities)
- Enhanced transit-supportive transportation demand management (TDM) strategies

The final project update by Mr. Harris involved the I-95/395 HOV/Bus/HOT Lane Project. The analysis to date on that project shows that, in terms of infrastructure, there is a trending away from in-line stations because of right-of-way and infrastructure costs and towards creating more park and ride stations with direct and indirect station access.

A copy of Mr. Harris's presentation can be found at:  
<http://dls.virginia.gov/GROUPS/transit/meetings/102709/DRPT.pdf>.

The next presentation was by Tom Biesiadny, Chairman, Jurisdiction and Agency Coordinating Committee of the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA). Mr. Biesiadny provided information on NVTA's TransAction 2030. TransAction 2030 included a number of significant transit projects, such as those involving priority bus corridors, express bus corridors, metrorail expansions, light rail, VRE (Virginia Railway Express) extensions, and parking. NVTA's statutory authority requires that it update its long-range transportation plan every five years. As the process takes approximately two years, the next update (TransAction 2040) will need to be completed by FY12. The Jurisdiction and Agency Coordination Committee (JACC) has started discussions on the scope of work for the study. In preparing for TransAction 2040, NVTA staff action includes the following: (i) reviewing and revising projects in TransAction 2030 to reflect planning study work and construction that have been done since 2006, (ii) deleting completed projects, (iii) recalculating cost estimates for all projects, (iv) revising highway and transit levels of service, and (v) addressing inconsistencies between the projects in TransAction 2030 and current construction projects.

Mr. Biesiadny also looked at what is needed to implement the transit plans included in the TransAction documents for the long term. The actions include the following:

- Preparing a final list of transit projects and priorities developed by TransAction 2040 and approved by local governments and NVTA
- Developing a conceptual study of each transit project, either in priority order or as part of a regional effort to look at all of the transit corridors
- Preparing formal alternatives analysis and environmental work that will likely be required for each project to verify recommended transit mode, assuming federal funds will be used to implement the projects
- Addressing funding issues - currently there is not enough funding to implement the transit and highway projects that have been designed to this point
- Developing marketing strategies

A copy of Mr. Biesiadny's presentation can be found at:  
<http://dls.virginia.gov/GROUPS/transit/meetings/102709/2030.pdf>.

The final presentation was by Ronald Kirby, Director, Department of Transportation Planning, National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB), Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG). Mr. Kirby explained that the TPB is the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and is housed within COG. He discussed various scenarios designed to promote concentrated mixed-use development in activity centers and to connect activity centers with high quality BRT and other transit.

Mr. Kirby talked about regional priority corridors involving enhanced bus transit service along 12 existing bus corridors, including dedicated bus lanes, skip-stop service, enhanced pedestrian access, real-time passenger information, and enhanced bus stops. A copy of Mr. Kirby's presentation can be found at:  
<http://dls.virginia.gov/GROUPS/transit/meetings/102709/bus.pdf>.

The next meeting of the subcommittee will be November 16, 2009.