

**Joint Subcommittee to Study Regional Rapid Transit Networks
(SJR 122, 2008)**

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

December 4, 2008

10:00 a.m.

**Prince William County Development Services Building
Woodbridge, Virginia**

Meeting Summary

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Barker on December 4, 2008. Following brief opening remarks by Chairman Barker, the Honorable Pierce R. Homer, Secretary of Transportation, Mr. Dale Zehner, Chief Executive Officer, Virginia Railway Express (VRE), and Mr. Tom Harrington, Director of Long Range Planning, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), addressed the committee.

Secretary Homer began by expressing the Governor's interest in and support of this study. He then discussed the notion of travel choices in Northern Virginia, focusing on the Interstate 95, Interstate 66, Interstate 495 and Dulles Toll Road corridors. For instance, travelers on Interstate 95 and Interstate 66 have choices which include Metro, HOV, bus, and VRE service. On the other hand, Interstate 495 is the busiest road with the least number of options. Secretary Homer explained that the keys to successful regional transit service in Northern Virginia include: time advantage, reliability of service, frequency of service, connectivity between regional activity centers, and dedicated operational funding. The keys to successful HOV service in the region include: time advantage, reliability of location, safe parking, and nearby bus service. Secretary Homer explained that it is important to create credible, reliable options in these travel corridors so that there are as many travel choices as possible.

Mr. Zehner provided a brief overview of VRE, which began service in 1992 and operates two lines: Manassas and Fredericksburg. VRE runs 29 trains at 18 stations and connects to Metro in five locations and Amtrak in seven locations. VRE operates on 90 miles of track and averages 16,500 daily riders. Mr. Zehner explained that VRE leases track access from CSX for the Fredericksburg line and Norfolk Southern for the Manassas line. VRE has an annual budget of \$79 million for fiscal year 2009 and employs 37 full time staff. In terms of who rides VRE, Mr. Zehner stated that over 70% of riders have a household income greater than \$100,000 per year. Commuter rail is characterized by multi-trip tickets, station to station fares, 20-30 minute headways, and is usually a long-haul commute (i.e. 50-60 miles from a central business district). Mr. Zehner explained that commuter rail is not a subway, light rail or trolley system and it does not carry heavy volume. Mr. Zehner looked at VRE's impact on the region, including reducing congestion and lowering emissions. Possible growth opportunities for VRE include the Gainesville/Haymarket and Spotsylvania County extensions. Mr. Zehner closed his remarks by commenting on challenges for VRE growth: VRE has no dedicated funding source; there is a shortage of both mid-day train storage in DC and

auto parking at key VRE stations; the governance structure does not allow for growth outside of existing jurisdictions without membership additions.

For the day's final presentation, Mr. Harrington provided information on the Metro system. It is the second largest rail transit system and the fifth largest bus network in the nation. Metro provided over 347 million passenger trips in fiscal year 2008. Mr. Harrington explained that Metro serves an area of 1,500 square miles and a population of over 3.5 million. Metro has no dedicated source of funding. Metrorail ridership is expected to increase from 800,000 daily trips in 2008 to 950,000 daily trips in 2020. In addition, Metrobus ridership is predicted to grow from 475,000 daily trips in 2008 to 550,000 daily trips in 2020. Mr. Harrington stated that Metro's planning approach is to maximize the capacity of the existing system, balance system maintenance needs with system expansion, and develop an integrated multimodal transit system. Mr. Harrington looked at some options for serving the Interstate 95 and Interstate 66 corridors, including extensions of the Orange, Blue, or Yellow lines.

Prior to adjournment, Chairman Barker asked the committee members to think about possible recommendations for the final meeting, to be held at 9:30 am on December 18, 2008 at the Potomac-Rappahannock Transportation District Transit Center in Woodbridge, Virginia.