



# Meeting Minutes of the Smart Cities & Innovation Committee

Wednesday, March 10, 2021 ▪ 12:00 PM  
Zoom webinar session

The Smart Cities and Innovations Committee (SCIC) convened at 12:03 pm on Wednesday, March 10, 2021.

## Commissioners in attendance

Chairperson, Commissioner Andria McClellan (Norfolk)  
Alt. Commissioner Carl Jackson (Portsmouth)  
Alt. Commissioner Tara Reel (Virginia Beach)

## Hampton Roads Transit Staff in attendance

William Harrell, President & Chief Executive Officer  
Brian Smith, Chief of Staff  
Ray Amoruso, Chief Planning & Development Officer  
Michael A. Price, Chief Information Officer & Chief Technology Officer  
Kamlesh Chowdhary, Director of Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS)  
Tracy Moore, Transit Operations, Training  
Bobby Edwards, Transit Operations  
Shelia Gullede, Technology Project Manager

## Additional Attendees

Janice Taylor, PAC  
Denise Johnson, TRAC  
Cole S. Fisher, City of Virginia Beach

The SCIC meeting package containing the Agenda and March and May 2020 Meeting Minutes was distributed electronically to all Commissioners in advance of the meeting and posted to Hampton Roads Transit's [SCIC website](#).

## AGENDA

1. Smart City Updates
  - a. Mobile Fare Updates
  - b. Electric Buses
2. New Business
3. Open Discussion
4. Adjournment

## **Opening Remarks**

Commissioner McClellan convened the meeting with an introduction of the HRT mobile fare program and RFP (request for proposal) by the HRT Chief Information/Technology Officer, Michael A. Price.

### **1. Old Business**

#### **a. Mobile Fare System**

- Mr. Price presented the timeline estimate of the mobile fare system through the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter 2021 when the implementation phase is scheduled to begin. He reported that we are on track in developing the functional requirements and would begin the next phase in second quarter
- He advised that mobile ticketing is a part of a total mobile fare solution, recognizing there will be a several tools that will be brought together towards that end. Elements of the statement of work were addressed
- A culmination of HRT work teams (Executive, Operations, Safety, Finance & Revenue, Customer Service & Planning, Marketing and Technology) is coordinating and making progress on the various components
- The first draft of a SCIC feedback portal was developed and displayed to solicit member input
  - Suggestions to reconfigure the feedback portal for public access were suggested to change from a set of primarily text fields to more targeted multiple-choice questions and having general comments at the end
  - Comm. McClellan requested that both paper copies and customer/civic engagement also be solicited as well as opening up to each city via the Commissioner meetings
  - Ms. Taylor advised that if public comment is solicited, that the community of those without internet or with disability
  - Larger exposure also considered for public comment determined that development, implementation, review and communication to general public would likely extend the implementation of the fare solution timeline as a campaign around this public input would need to be developed
- A requirements discussion ensued with suggestion to review other transit agencies' approach to mobile ticketing as well, and Alt. Comm Jackson noted that DRPT should also be included for review

#### **b. GTFS-Real Time**

- Comm. McClellan inquired about the use of the Google maps/real-time application by customers and Mr. Price noted that it is currently being used. S. Gulledge added that the information is being data mined that shows an uptick in the number of access points. Mr. Price will send statistical information on use
- Comm. McClellan noted that this real-time data being available is a real win for HRT and for customers knowing they now have access to reliable data
- Mr. Fisher noted that he has used this through Google maps successfully and asked about how the soft launch works (Mr. Price responded that a "soft launch" does not have a public campaign)

- Comm. McClellan suggested that since the soft launch has been successful, we should begin advertising its existence through various means (posters, website, etc.). Mr. Price will review with SET
- Alt. Comm. Jackson also asked if Service Alerts via Google can be accessed because some riders may not know how to navigate bus delays. Mr. Price addressed this concern advising that Customer Service (Rodney Davis) is aware and actively working on all customer alerts
- Ms. Taylor asked if real-time data will be updated when a bus route is canceled (due to operator absence or other cause) on the Google display as well
- S. Gullledge added that the customer-focused alert capability is on the Technology radar and attached to a current Passenger Information Display project

## 2. New Business

### a. Electric Buses

- Tracy Moore, Director of Training, Transit Operations, provided an update on the Proterra Electric Bus status and the training from a maintenance perspective to ensure that the buses remain operational while in service by understanding electrical diagnostics
  - Successful testing conducted on battery declination and charging
  - Over half of the operators have been trained on pre-trip inspections which differ from other buses, the dynamic braking system to save battery energy and road testing
  - November 15 revenue service began, and since then, over 20,000 miles have been expended using these buses on Route 20 with no significant issues
  - Route 47 expected to be completed within the next two weeks as well
  - ERC routes and traversing tunnels will be next testing units
  - Feedback provided on the operator experience driving these buses that were productive and positive after initial nervousness on new technology
- Ray addressed potential impact of the new Administration's focus on infrastructure in funding opportunities, noting that there are a number of grants that will be pursued to support charging stations and other electric bus components and the Southside Operating Division. The Transportation Secretary has expressed interest in funding projects that are ready to go and we are looking at Capital infrastructure for bus facilities
  - Comm. McClellan noted that this is exciting and that she is interested in speaking with Mr. Amoruso to solicit Federal delegation support for projects that would be ready in 2022

### b. Paratransit Rider Application Feedback

- Questions noted on the methodology behind the existing survey efforts by VIA and how they source respondents
- Discussed ways to diversify respondents' medium (not just using Internet but using phone and other ways of communicating). Plan to carve out time at next PAC

meeting. Janice expressed concern that in some areas, Title VI to include economically challenged community as well

c. **Autonomous Bus Pilot**

- Carl Jackson asked for an update on the autonomous bus program. Comm. McClellan noted that the first phase revealed that the amount of money required vs. the feasibility of implementation and that this will be addressed more as information made available

### **3. New Business**

a. **Road/Weather Condition Sensors & Bus Routing**

- HRPDC approved money for a pilot project last month for Hampton Roads on real-time road conditions in the Waze application. Comm. McClellan suggested that if HRT not currently a part of that process, it should be considered along with a plan for flooding information provided to operators and this information being integrated with that program. Comm. McClellan noted that Whitney from HRPDC may be added as a future speaker to provide updates
- S. Gullege noted that Dr. Cetin previously mentioned that road sensors for road sensors tied into bus routing, and he may have updates about this area

### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 12:53 pm

The next quarterly meeting will be via Zoom webinar on June 10, 2021