



External Legislative Affairs Committee Meeting  
Wednesday, February 16, 2022  
1:30 PM (Virtual Meeting)

**Commissioners in Attendance**

Gaylene Kanoyton, Chair, ELAC  
Andria McClellan, City of Norfolk  
August B. Bullock, City of Newport News  
Delegate Shelley Simonds, General Assembly  
Carl Jackson (Alternate), City of Portsmouth

**Attendees**

Janice Taylor, League of Women Voters

**HRT Staff**

Marie Arnt, Marketing/Communications  
Gene Cavazos, Director, Marketing and Communications  
Jennifer Dove, Civil Rights and Grants Coordinator  
Tiffany McClain, Marketing/Communications  
Noelle Pinkard, Organizational Advancement Officer  
John Powell, Technology

Meeting commenced at 1:30 pm with a call to order by Commissioner Gaylene Kanoyton, Chair

**Agenda Items**

**Federal Update – Noelle Pinkard**

Noelle provided an update on the federal transportation appropriations bill reporting that the federal government is not working as quickly as state and still working on 2022 appropriations process. Congress is currently operating under continuing resolution which expires at end of week and is working on an omnibus funding bill that will include transportation appropriations.

It is likely that the omnibus bill will have earmarks in it – HRT received an earmark in the House version of the transportation appropriations bill for Parks Avenue replacement – it may or may not make it into the final omnibus bill.

Noelle is keeping in contact with our federal elected officials to make sure our request for funding remains active and will update committee and staff when more is known.

Chair Kanoyton thanked Noelle for the Federal Update.



### **State Update – Noelle Pinkard**

Noelle noted that yesterday was “Crossover” day in the General Assembly, which means that bills have to leave their chamber of origin and be passed to other side.

The Durant Bill - HB978 – legislation concerning HRT’s recordation tax allocation did not crossover. Noelle thanked Janice Taylor for the work she did with her group to help HRT with defeating this bill – she also thanked all who came to Richmond.

Noelle noted that the budget comes out on Sunday – updated versions of house and senate budget– and so it is not completely over, but HB978 is dead, but still need to be vigilant with the budget.

Will keep committee members updated on the budget and what comes out this weekend.

Andria McClelland – still concerned about the grocery tax and its implications for transportation funding.

Noelle outlined Governor Youngkins initiative to reduce the grocery tax and how it would affect funding for localities and transportation. Most recent efforts will keep localities whole, but still impact transportation. This equates for HRT about a \$5M impact for fiscal years between 2023 and 2028. Noelle noted that she has sent correspondence to Appropriations and Finance Committees and the Hampton Roads delegation about this concern. Focus was primarily on the Durant bill, but will be focusing on the grocery tax reduction now.

Brian Smith met with Jennifer DeBruhl today to discuss our concerns about the grocery tax reduction and to inquire if DRPT is working on this. At this time DRPT is not focusing on this since the projected lost funds is getting more “modest” as time goes by.

Chair Kanoyton asked if there is anything that committee members can do to help. Noelle noted that letters can be sent and that she would be glad to draft one that can be used by anyone wanting to send to their elected officials.

Commission McClelland asked about the particular appropriations – the House passed the full repeal – 2 ½ cents and the Senate also passed 1 ½ cent as well. Both chambers have completed this. Very concerned of the loss of \$1M per year in funding.

Chair Kanoyton asked about who the conferees are. Need to know who they are so we can reach out to them. Noelle will find this out and send to Committee members.

This issue should be a statewide push since this impacts other agencies. Noelle noted that she can reach out to Lisa Guthrie with VTA and follow up with her about they feel about budget.

Commissioner Bullock – Govenor to sign mask mandate for schools. How does that affect our buses? Is this still a federal rule for mask requirements? This could be challenges for the operators. He noted that he has spoken with some drivers at Transit Equity Day and they expressed their concerns about



people taking this as an excuse not to wear the masks when on the buses. We know this still a federal mandate for public transportation and students still have to wear masks when riding the school buses.

HRT Training has been working on descalating training and that our operators have done a great job with requiring masks when riding the bus.

Gene will check to see if we need to update onboard announcements and to make sure all signage is updated on buses, transit centers, etc.

### **Marketing/Recruitment Campaign – Update**

Chair Kanoyton called on Gene Cavasos for the update on Recruitment campaign.

Launching into new campaign called “Driven” – focusing on the Peninsula with the digital billboard campaigns. The campaign also notes that we are looking for more than just Operators.

516,000 impressions – being driven by mobile devices

Recruitment- Upcoming Job Fairs:

- 2/16-Workforce Wednesday Virtual Job Fair
- 2/16 -CNU Onsite Job Fair
- 2/18- HRT Job Fair
- 2/24- Live, Love, Work in Virginia Virtual Hiring Event
- 3/24- Joint Ft. Eustis-Langley Onsite Job Fair
- 3/29- Regent University Virtual Job Fair

Will have HR staff and outreach staff at some of these fairs.

Gene shared information on the current amount of Operators we have (current full time and trainees)

FT Operators – 392

FT Operator Trainees – 35

PT Retirees – 8

Still needing - 55

Kim Wolcott will be reporting this at the next Commission meeting.

Boosted Facebook campaign between January 20<sup>th</sup> and Monday(February 14<sup>th</sup>) and reach over 14,000 people, almost 400 clicks, and about 25 shares of this posting. Will be redoing some and expanding into Instagram.

Highlights of social media for month of February 2022:

- February 14 – Commuter Love, Wedding on Milwaukee transit
- February 15 – DRPT, VA Transit Equity & Modernization Study
- February 16 – George Washington’s Birthday Service
- February 17 – Recruitment, BI Developer in Technology Department



- February 18 – Career Fair at 18<sup>th</sup> Street
- February 21 – Black History in Transportation
- February 22 – MEAC Tournament Extension of Light Rail Service
- February 23 – Recruitment, Track Maintainer
- February 24 – Student Freedom Pass
- February 25 – Light Rail Safety/Elizabeth River Trail

Chair Kanoyton noted that March is Woman’s History Month – would like to see some postings on this celebration for March.

Commission Bullock – MEAC tournament will be in March. Is HRT going to extend the hours of light rail for these events. Gene noted that working with City of Norfolk, extended hours of light rail service will still be running until games are over.

### **Old Business**

#### **Transit Equity Day**

Chair Kanoyton stated that we had a great Transit Equity Day and was pleased it was included into the lobby day on February 3<sup>rd</sup>. Was pleased that Senate and House recognized Transit Equity Day when they introduced those attending during this time.

Commissioner Jackson asked if there were any more pictures taken that we can use. Commissioner McClelland noted that HRPDC took the pictures and we should look to get some of these pictures from them. She also talked about the group HRTAC and the advocacy piece they had and see if we can get a copy of this for Commission meeting.

#### **Diversity Procurement Fair – Update – Jennifer Dove**

Chair Kanoyton called on Jennifer Dove to give an update on the upcoming plans for the Diversity Procurement Fair that HRT is planning.

Jennifer reported that she is still in planning stages and looking for a venue to host the event. Looking at holding this event in June. She had a conversation with Virginia Department of Supplier Diversity. They do all the certifications for DBE and SWAM. They are willing to help in any that they can. Also Janice Taylor has volunteer to help Jennifer with planning for Fair.

Need more small businesses to get engaged and to get certified so they can look at have more opportunities to work with HRT and learn how to get a “piece of the pie”. We need more small businesses to get these certifications.

Jennifer will continue to update the committee on the planning for the event.

Chair Kanoyton stated that she spoke with Matthew James with Supplier Diversity and noted that there is a financing program that nobody is aware of. There is additional funding available that can be used to assist with this program.



### **Outreach Tool**

Noelle spoke about this item. She noted that in the past we have spoken about having a more robust local advocacy group. The Chair wanted to talk more about this – citing the Durant bill as an example where HRT needs local advocates.

Using an advocacy tool is something that will grow our group – look into “Every Action” as a tool to use for this. Using this tool sends information right to their legislator.

Chair Kaynoton noted that Dr. Smith was going to look into this tool. Noelle will follow up with Dr. Smith to see if he has any information yet.

Chair Kaynoton recognized Delegate Simonds and asked her if she wanted to add anything to the meeting. She spoke about all the work that is being done in the General Assembly and suggested that this was a good time to reach out to elected officials as things were slowing down in Richmond.

Commissioner McClelland asked Delegate Simonds about the repeal of the grocery sales tax – She noted that with this bill that HRT would lose about \$1M of their state budget per year for 5 years. Is there a chance to get a budget amendment in to help with this?

There have been discussion about not making localities whole on this – the Senate version does, but the House does not.

Commissioner McClelland gave a brief understanding of what this means for transportation with the repeal of this tax.

Delegate Simonds noted that we need a clearer understanding of what this means and possibly have a fact sheet with information available.

Chair thanked all for being a part of this meeting – meeting adjourned at 2:08 pm.