



External Legislative Affairs Committee Meeting
Wednesday, March 16, 2022
1:30 PM

Commissioners in Attendance

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

Attendees

Janice Taylor, League of Woman Voters

HRT Staff

Ray Amoruso, Chief of Planning and Development
Marie Arnt, Marketing/Communications
Gene Cavazos, Director, Marketing and Communications
Brian Smith, Deputy Chief Executive Officer
Noelle Pinkard, Organizational Advancement Officer
John Powell, Technology
Michael Price, Chief Technology Officer

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

The minutes of the February 16, 2022 minutes were approved by Committee members.

Agenda Items

Federal Update – Noelle Pinkard

Yesterday, President Biden signed a \$1.5 trillion FY22 Omnibus Appropriations bill that will fund all defense and non-defense programs for the remainder of the fiscal year through September 30th.

Passage of this legislation ensures the investments made in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law are fully realized and includes:

- \$16.3 Billion for public transportation – an increase of \$3.3 Billion from the FY21 Transportation Appropriations Act.
 - \$13.4 billion for transit formula grants
 - \$2.25 billion for Capital Investment Grants
 - \$504.3 million for Transit Infrastructure Grants and projects
 - \$175 million for Buses and Bus Facilities grants, **An additional plus-up of \$250 million**



- \$75 million for Low or No Emission grants
- \$19.5 million for Ferry Boat service grants
- \$200.8 million for community project funding (i.e., earmarks)

In addition, HRT received a Congressionally Directed Spending earmarks sponsored by Congresswoman Luria of \$5 million for the Southside Bus Maintenance Facility to replace the old Parks Avenue facility.

State Update – Noelle Pinkard

General Assembly adjourned on Saturday, March without passing the biennial budget. There is no timeline right now as to when this budget would be approved – is up to the Governor to call a special session.

Delegate Simonds noted that there are some reasons in terms of the tax code to bring members back together to discuss this. Members of House and Senate are eager to get back so they can complete this work.

Grocery Tax elimination – according to the Virginia Transit Association there would be about \$15M reduction in transit – which is lower than what was projected. HRT could lose \$5M between 2023-2028. Will have some impacts, but there are other monies available on the federal level – some of which requires a local match percentage.

One success we can be proud of is that the elimination of some of the recordation tax that is being used for transit funding will happen – Noelle thanked those who assisted with campaigning to make sure this was not approved in either Chamber this year.

Noelle reported on legislation related to the Transit Ridership Incentive Program (TRIP)– reduced fare – regional connectivity projects. HRT received a TRIP grant for circulator system on Naval Station Norfolk.

Also, there was legislation to make it easier to obtain a CDL.

HRT received \$52M in supplemental American Rescue Plan money to help with COVID relief. Funds are to help with more cleaning, to help get more operators hire and train operators. Cannot be used for capital funds as they are dedicated to operating funding.

Brian Smith – wanted to commend and recognize Noelle and the lobby team for their work in Richmond this year. We had a great year and a lot of successes.

Chair Kanoyton stated that we need to start working now to look at next year's session and to continue the work that was started and make sure we continue to support state and local initiatives that can be introduced again in the General Assembly.

Commissioner McClellan – did anyone talk about the need to move from the recordation tax to the Commonwealth Transportation Fund (CTF)? Noelle noted that there have been some conversations



about this and would be good for HRT to look at before the next General Assembly session. Commissioner McClellan feels that we will be fighting this every year if HRT is not moved into the CTF. Would prioritize this on the list for next year.

Marketing Update – Gene Cavasos, Director of Marketing & Communications

DRPT is introducing a new campaign that is called “Rediscover your Ride” it will be a combination of billboards, commercials, TV, and digital ads. Promoting to rediscover your ride – getting back on, that we are clean, and safe to ride.

Ad will be running for some time – Committee was able to view the commercial that was created and available on YouTube - https://youtu.be/ZC1s_BAvmuA

Gene noted that he would like to take this video and use with HRT information....

Earth Day will be on April 22, 2022 and we will be providing free fare for all modes of transit that day. Facilities is introducing a new app that was developed by technology department. It is called “Am I Clean”. This will be a series of signs that have a QR code going up at every one of our shelters, facilities and boarding areas. The QR code can be used and ask a few questions about the trash. That information will go out to facilities and the area(s) will be cleaned up if necessary. Will also be able to track any problem areas.

Traffic team will be at Mount Trashmore for the Earth Day event for outreach program there.

Continuing to do our recruitment push and staying with advertising and outreach as well.

Gene asked for Marie Arnt to let the committee know about the upcoming Transit Operator Appreciation Day. Marie noted that this day is celebrated nationwide on Friday, March 18th. The HERO Committee will be distributing lunch to all Operators – HERO members and volunteers will be doing this on the Northside on Thursday, March 17th and on the Southside on Friday, March 18th. Also will be including the Mechanics and Service Workers. Mr. Harrell will also participate in this program.

Chair Kanoyton asked if there is a communication that Commissioners can receive to know where the volunteers will be so that they can participate as well and thank the Operators, too. Marie noted that she would send out the list/schedule to Commissioners by COB today.

Chair Kanyoton thank Gene for his report and then asked how many more operators do we need – Ray Amoruso expanded on operator need as follows:

- 395 Operators as of this week
- 37 in training – 14 will go to VB service
- 11 – new class on Monday
- Need 424 – getting close to that



- May service Board (May 15th) – will bring back on Northside the span of service – so you will see service that runs till 11Pm – October service board will bring back frequency of service for all routes – 30 minute service.

Commissioner Bullock – questions about commercial – how much of our fleet is compatible with WiFi – only the MAX and light rail have this now.

Local Coalition Building

Chair Kanoyton had asked for this to be a part of agenda because of the price of gas is very high, and food is high – we know people are having a hard time and so she had sent a request to Mr. Harrell and the Commission Chair to see about free rides or something to help alleviate the pressure on our riders and people in the community.

Mr. Harrell is having an analysis being done and will present at the Commission meeting next week. Commissioner McClelland said this is very good and is wondering if other agencies are doing this – free rides.

Brian Smith noted that some agencies are doing this – including GRTC in Richmond, Charlottesville Transit. There is a mix of things that are out there – some doing free/some subsidized.

There was some discussion about how HRT has partnered in the past with various local agencies when residents were needing to get to vaccine sights and how we worked with them to get passes and/or free rides to these locations. Paratransit was one that customers were able to book a ride to and from the vaccine sights at no charge to them.

Commissioner Bullock asked about the student passes – Gene noted that we had started going back to local high schools – also looking to increase our outreach staff. Going to start looking at some other possibilities -such as a preprinted sticker that can be used.

Procurement Update – Report by Jennifer Dove, Civil Rights and Grants Program Coordinator

Noelle Pinkard had the information that Jennifer sent to report out to committee since she could not attend meeting.

1. The following agencies have been contacted about partnering/referring clients to a procurement fair:
 - Virginia Department of Small Business and Supplier Diversity
 - Black Brand
 - The Asian Chamber of Commerce
 - The Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
 - Virginia Department of Transportation
 - The Kroc Center
 - Hampton Roads Connector Partners
 - Conference of Minority Transportation Officials



- Economic Development Offices for Chesapeake, Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, and Portsmouth
- Hampton Roads Community Action Program
- STOP, Inc.
- The Planning Council
- Connect 757
- United Way of South Hampton Roads
- Woman In Transportation
- YWCA
- YMCA
- Norfolk State University
- Tidewater Community College
- Thomas Nelson Community College

2. Possible Venue – I have had conversations with the Kroc Center and NSU. I have an appointment to speak with someone at Military Circle Mall on March 22nd.

Still looking at the month of June to hold the Procurement Fair.

Delegate Simonds noted that she was at Newport News Shipbuilding for a meeting and that they are looking to hire thousands of people. Would be great if we could offer a free pass for them to see how transit can be a part of their daily commute.

Commissioner McClellan reported about the Engage Norfolk program and hoped HRT staff will be there. There are about 125 vendors who will be a part of this. She is asking that we make sure to have information on the Student Freedom Pass available for people to get this information.

Meeting adjourned at 2:05 pm