



External Legislative Advisory Committee Minutes  
Wednesday, May 17, 2023  
Hampton, VA  
1:30 PM

Commissioners in Attendance:

August Bullock, Chair, ELAC

Attendees:

Janice Taylor, League of Women Voters

Maddy Busse, Two Capitols Consulting

HRT Staff:

Alexis Majied, Chief Communications Officer

Noelle Pinkard, Organizational Advancement Officer

Amy Jordan, Director of Communications and Business Development

John Powell, Telecommunications Specialist, Technology

The meeting commenced at 1:30 pm with a call to order by Commissioner August Bullock, Chair.

Chair Bullock asked for a motion to approve minutes from March 15, 2023 ELAC meeting. Lacking a quorum, the minutes will be approved at the next meeting.

**Legislative Update** – Noelle Pinkard

**Federal Update**

Noelle gave an update on the Debt Ceiling. Different parties on each side of the aisle are saying either “they’re making progress” or “no, they’re not.” Both sides have said they are open to discussing budget caps, permitting reform, and rescission of unspent COVID relief funds (including transit dollars).

The hold-ups now seem to be around three major things:

- (1) How long should budget caps be in place (the White House is looking for roughly two years while McCarthy is looking for 10 years);
- (2) Possible adjustments to the work requirements currently in place on several welfare programs, including SNAP (food stamps) and TANF (cash assistance for families in need); and
- (3) The timing of the debt limit extension, with the President wanting to ensure it goes beyond the 2024 election.



The President has indicated that, aside from Medicaid, he is open to discussing increasing work requirements and House Speaker McCarthy has said they must be included in any deal, in addition to the rescission of the COVID funds.

### **Appropriations**

The House is starting the appropriations process this week, marking up its first two bills—Military Construction and Veterans Affairs and Legislative Branch appropriations. While they will continue to markup other bills in the coming weeks, since top line numbers are imaginary at this point – and since they will likely change with the debt limit agreement – these numbers are not indicative of what we’ll see later in the year. The Senate has yet to take any action, and with the Senate leaving for Memorial Day Recess at the end of this week, any action from the upper chamber is not expected for a few weeks.

### **State Update**

Since the politically divided General Assembly’s regular session ended in February without an agreement on adjustments to the two-year spending plan,

budget negotiators have been meeting sporadically to continue talks. But, at odds over how to best allocate a revenue surplus, they have continually pushed back the target for reaching a deal, citing concerns about instability in the banking sector, the possibility of a recession and, more recently, the debt limit standoff.

After the Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee heard Tuesday morning’s presentation about the risks of a potential debt limit breach, the panel’s co-chair George Barker said negotiators still believe the best course is to wait to see what transpires in Washington.

Tuesday’s presentation warned that a short breach, resolved within a week, would disrupt markets and consumer confidence and increase unemployment. A prolonged breach could trigger a downturn comparable to the 2008 crisis.

The April revenue report showed that general funds collections declined compared to the same month in 2022 but year-to-date collections have surpassed what was expected in the December forecast.

### **Marketing & Strategic Communications Department Update – Alexis Majied**

Alexis Majied gave highlights of the Marketing & Strategic Communication April report. HRT celebrated Earth Day on April 21<sup>st</sup> with free fare for all services including bus, light rail, and paratransit. In addition to Fare free Day Marketing and Communications team hosted a community clean-up. There were over 100 internal and community volunteers who went to various bus stops and transfer centers across all 6 cities that HRT serves.

Transit Advocacy Day took place on May 4<sup>th</sup>. HRT hosted number of business and community leaders experienced “a day in life of a transit rider”, learning about the importance of public transportation. Congressman Bobby Scott as well as HRT chairman Dr. Amelia Ross-Hammond together with several other speakers gave speeches on the importance of transit and its critical role in the community.



On May 5<sup>th</sup> HRT hosted the Hampton Transit Center ribbon cutting event. This was an opportunity to celebrate all the improvements that were made to the exterior of the building together with launch of 757 Express 114 route. Interior improvements are coming later this year. Congressman Bobby Scott together with Mayor and Vice Mayor of Hampton Donnie Tuck and Jimmy Gray joined HRT that day also.

In May, HRT attended number of events across region in honor of Bike Month.

### **Upcoming events – Commissioner Bullock, Alexis Majied**

After General Assembly in Fall of 2023, HRT is looking to host an event. The purpose of this event would be for HRT to continue to develop relations with re-elected and newly elected officials. The goal would be achieving a deeper understanding of HRT as organization that provides quality public transportation services.

HRT is hosting a Fam Tour (familiarization tour) for the VB Wave Trolley service. This year is the 39<sup>th</sup> season of the VB Wave Trolley running at the Virginia Beach Oceanfront. For this event, HRT invited media, city officials, business located near the Oceanfront as well as Convention and Visitors Bureau employees as a goal to promote the VB Wave Trolley services.

May 23<sup>rd</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> HRT will be participating in the VTA Conference at Oceanfront. HRT will use this opportunity to encourage visitors to take the trolley and explore its services.

HRT will celebrate Juneteenth with free fares on Monday June 19<sup>th</sup>. Also, we will be participating in Pride Fest in Norfolk on June 24<sup>th</sup> as part of our recruitment efforts.

Chair Bullock reflected on March Reading Month events. He together with other HRT employees had a chance to read to young school kids about transportation. He concluded that that was excellent opportunity for HRT to familiarize youngest population with public transportation.

The meeting adjourned at 2pm.