



External Legislative Advisory Committee Minutes
Wednesday, October 18th, 2023
Norfolk, VA
1:30 PM

Commissioners in Attendance:

August Bullock, Chair, ELAC
Commissioner Adriana McClellan, Norfolk
Alt-Commissioner Brian Swets, Portsmouth

Attendees:

Gretchen Heal, Hampton Roads Chamber
Edward Reed, Two Capitols Consulting
Jessica Dennis, City of Norfolk

HRT Staff:

Alexis Majied, Chief Communications Officer
Noelle Pinkard, Organizational Advancement Officer
Amy Jordan, Director of Business Development
Ray Amoruso, Chief Planning & Development Officer
John Powell, Telecommunications Specialist, Technology
Gene Cavazos, Director of Marketing and Sales
Petra Jovanovic, Executive Assistant, Marketing & Communications

The meeting began at 1:30 pm with Commissioner August Bullock, Chair, calling to order.

Chairman Bullock asked for a motion to approve minutes from September 20th, 2023, ELAC meeting. Commissioner Andria McClellan made a motion to approve minutes, seconded by Chairman Bullock. The minutes were approved by the committee.

Legislative Update

Federal Update- Noelle Pinkard

Since Congressman Jordan failed to gain the votes he needed to secure the Speaker position, the House is still without one. It is likely that more power will be given to interim speaker McHenry so operations in the House can carry on. The current continuing resolution expires on November 17th, 2023.

State Update- Noelle Pinkard

Changes to the Virginia Smart Scale Program are being proposed by the Administration. The Commonwealth Transportation Board will vote on several recommendations in December. These changes could potentially harm transit statewide. HRT has been working with the Virginia Transit Association on comments to submit to CTB members to let them know how detrimental any funding reduction would be for transit, not only in the Commonwealth, but specifically in Hampton Roads.



Marketing & Strategic Communications Department update

Alexis Majied presented Marketing and Communications updates. HRT'S Marketing and Strategic Communications department is the Pinnacle award winner for 2023. The Pinnacle award is given by the Public Relations Society of America, also known as PRSA.

HRT received awards in 2 categories. The first one is the Shoestring Budget Category, for Earth Day campaign. The second award is for Content Marketing Category for the recruitment campaign. "My Hampton Roads Transit," which included our operators talking about why they enjoy working for HRT, has been the focus of the recruitment campaign.

Alexis noted that Katie Fenimore, Marketing & Communications Strategist, on our team has been recognized by Inside Business as a Top 40 under 40.

Starting October 1st, 2023, we formally launched our "Why I ride" campaign, this is an opportunity for us to highlight the reasons why people ride and use HRT. The marketing team went out into the community and talked to the people about why they ride transit. Reasons were to reach employment destinations, education facilities, essential appointments, and entertainment.

Alexis also noted that HRT's recruitment campaign is ongoing until we have all the bus operators and mechanics needed to restore service and to add additional expanded service as part of the 757 Express. HRT is also promoting Rideshare Month through the TRAFFIX program.

An important upcoming reminder is that HRT will have fare free Election Day on November 7th.

Noelle presented a draft version of HRT's Federal and State priorities for 2024. Regarding Federal priorities, HRT encourages funding at the IIJA levels. IIJA is the bipartisan infrastructure law that increased transit funding significantly over past years.

HRT is supporting the continuation of congressionally directed spending programs otherwise known as earmarks, as well as full funding of the Capital Investment Grant (CIG) Programs which is the source of funding that supports major fixed guideway capital projects.

The second area of the Federal agenda deals with innovation. This includes first support for electric non-diesel sources of propulsion for our transit system, especially the south side operating facility. HRT will continue collaborative relationships with U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration and other stakeholder groups that have similar missions like the Conference of Minority Transportation Officials, and Women in Transportation Seminar.

On the state level, HRT will encourage the Commonwealth to have appropriate essential and consistent funding for our capital and operating needs, including innovative transit options such as microtransit, as well as oppose any effort to reduce Transit's share of the Transportation Trust Fund.



Noelle also gave an update on the Rosa Parks resolution that would designate the first Monday following February 4th of each subsequent year as Transit Equity Day. It would encourage all citizens of Hampton Roads to recognize Rosa Parks' accomplishments. Hampton Roads Transit would honor Rosa Parks by reserving the front seat of every bus in her honor and offer free rides to all HRT customers on Transit Equity Day.

Chairman Bullock reminded the committee about upcoming State of Transit event on November 28th, 2023. The goal for this event is to have the newly elected or and newly re-elected legislators familiar with HRT and our mission.

Noelle informed the committee that Virginia Transit Legislative day is scheduled for January 22nd, 2024; more details will follow.

ELAC November meeting is canceled because of event schedules. Next meeting will be on December 6th, 2023.

The meeting adjourned at 2pm.