



External Legislative Advisory Committee Minutes
Wednesday, September 20th, 2023
Hampton, VA
1:30 PM

Commissioners in Attendance:

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

Attendees:

Maddy Busse, Two Capitols Consulting
Adisa Muse, Hunton Andrews Kurth
Gretchen Heal, Hampton Roads Chamber
Phil Bianchi, Squire Patton Boggs

HRT Staff:

Alexis Majied, Chief Communications Officer
Noelle Pinkard, Organizational Advancement Officer
Amy Jordan, Director of Business Development
John Powell, Telecommunications Specialist, Technology

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 March 15, May 17th, and July 19th, 2023 ELAC meetings. Alternate Commissioner Brian Swets made a motion to approve minutes, seconded by Commissioner McClellan. The minutes were approved by the committee.

Legislative Update

Federal Update- Phil Bianchi

The government shutdown is now the main concern as well as how long long the shutdown would last. The House Freedom Caucus's concessions include significant spending cuts. Republican leadership over the weekend released a draft of a continuing resolution which would extend government funding beyond the end of this month. It would include an 8% cut across the board in all government spending except for defense and veterans affairs. Regarding transportation, while the government is shut down, the Department of Transportation will be unlikely to release any additional programs.



State Update- Noelle Pinkard

The General Assembly passed the budget this month.

Marketing & Strategic Communications Department update

Alexis Majied presented Marketing and Communications updates. Marketing and Communications has created and printed an annual report. It is the first time in the last 10 years since Hampton Roads Transit has created an annual report. Copies will be available at the Commission meeting for all of our commissioners.

This week is Rail Safety Week, a week observed by Operation Lifesaver, Incorporated. It is a chance for HRT to reiterate safety messages related to The Tide light rail. HRT will have public outreach representatives along the alignment and social media campaigns with some additional safety messages. As you may recall, HRT received a \$20,000 grant from Operation Lifesaver to promote light rail safety earlier this year, and we kicked off our campaign in June. We continue with those efforts, hoping to finish that campaign by the end of October.

HRT had two successful Student Freedom Pass Back to School Kickoff events. One was held on August 24th at our 18th Street headquarters. The second event was on September 14th, at a community center in downtown Newport News. It was a chance for us to welcome parents who otherwise cannot make it during the transit center operating hours to get Student Freedom Passes for their children. We distributed 20 passes between the two events.

HRT is partnering with Suffolk Transit and Williamsburg Area Transit Authority to hold a legislative post-election State of Transit event. We are pleased that we have a keynote address from Mr. Maurice Jones, who was former Deputy Secretary of HUD at the federal level, and the former Secretary of Commerce and Trade in Virginia. We also will be hosting panels from the business community expressing their support for transit operations in Hampton Roads and the important connection between public transportation and workforce development. We also are going to have a panel with the three transit agencies talking about the future of transit in Hampton Roads.

Alexis Majied gave update on dates when HRT will offer free fares.

Tuesday, November 7, 2023 (Election Day)
Monday, February 5, 2024 (Transit Equity Day)
Monday, April 22, 2024 (Earth Day)
Wednesday, June 19, 2024 (Juneteenth)

Noelle presented the Legislative Agenda as part of New and Old Business. Federal priorities have not changed. There are two items that we have under State priorities. The first item is to protect and enhance transit programs and funding. The second bullet is consistent with an item that we had last year, which is to oppose any effort to reduce transit's share of the Transportation Trust Fund. Commonwealth Mass Transit Fund receives 23% of the Transportation Trust Fund. These funds are vital to the continued operation and expansion of HRT's multimodal infrastructure and services.



Chairman Bullock gave update on the Rosa Parks initiative. Resolution states that the Transportation District Commission of Hampton Roads will reserve the first Monday following February 4th of each subsequent year as Transit Equity Day and urges all to recognize the accomplishments of this great woman. And be it further resolved that Hampton Roads Transit will honor Rosa Parks by reserving the front seat of every bus and offering free rides on all HRT services to customers on Transit Equity Day.

The meeting adjourned at 2pm.