



External Legislative Advisory Committee Minutes
Wednesday, February 15, 2023
Norfolk, VA
1:30 PM

Commissioners in Attendance:

August Bullock, Chair, ELAC
Commissioner Andria McClellan, Norfolk
Alt. Commissioner Megan Gribble, Virginia Beach

Attendees:

Janice Taylor, League of Woman Voters
Gretchen Heal, Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce
Carl Jackson, City of Portsmouth

HRT Staff:

Alexis Majied, Chief Communications Officer
Gene Cavazos, Director of Marketing
Noelle Pinkard, Organizational Advancement Officer
Petra Jovanovic, Executive Assistant, Marketing and Strategic Communications
Michael Price, Chief Information Officer

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

Chair Bullock asked for motion to approve minutes from January 18, 2023 ELAC meeting. Janice Taylor asked for corrections in minutes, the motion was seconded by Carl Jackson. Ms. Taylor stated her corrections for ELAC January 18, 2023, minutes. Commissioner McClellan amended her motion to approve the minutes with corrections as provided. Commissioner Bullock called for a vote.

Minutes were approved by the committee.

Legislative Update – Noelle Pinkard

Federal Update

- Delayed organization of House and Senate Committees means little substantive legislating has taken place in the first month of the 118th Congress.
 - In transportation, the major multi-year bill expected to move this year is Federal Aviation Administration reauthorization.
 - In terms of surface transportation programs, we expect oversight hearings in the coming months by House Republicans on how Secretary Buttigieg is awarding the many billions of dollars in discretionary grants made available under the IJA.



- Posturing on the FY 2024 budget from both political parties will continue to dominate the federal dialogue for the foreseeable future:
 - House Republicans are standing firm that the debt limit should not be increased or suspended in the absence of dramatic spending cuts.
 - President Biden will submit his FY 2024 Budget Request to Congress on March 9.
 - This is a messaging piece on Biden's priorities. Biden does not expect House Republicans to adopt any of his budget proposals.
- House Republicans will continue Community Project Funding (earmarks) in the FY 2024 budget process and committee staff are currently working on guidelines for transit projects.

State Update

After last week's crossover, two bills that were put forth by the Virginia Transit Association remain active. These bills would expand the Transit Rider Incentive Program to allow electrification studies, transit and bus shelters and other infrastructure improvements. Those bills passed their respective Chambers. The Senate Bill passed the House Transportation Committee earlier this week and has been referred to the Finance committee. The House Bill is pending consideration by the Senate Transportation Committee.

Also, legislation was introduced in both the House and Senate to remove Virginia Railway Express (VRE) funding out of Mass Transit Fund, and instead allocate 3.5% of the Commonwealth Mass Transit Fund to VRE. The bill was reported to the Finance Committee unanimously. The House version is pending consideration by the Senate Transportation Committee.

A bill to authorize the Governor to direct funds from the Transportation Opportunity Fund to the Commonwealth Transportation Board for transportation projects determined necessary to support economic development initiatives is also under consideration by the legislature. The legislation that is currently being considered by both Chambers has oversight provisions that the original bill did not have. Ms. Pinkard stated that we will continue to monitor this bill as it moves through the process.

Lastly, Delegate McQuinn introduced legislation to make it a class one misdemeanor for a person to commit assault and battery against bus operator. The bill includes confinement of 15-days in jail with a 2-day mandatory minimum. This bill passed the House, and it was referred to Senate Judiciary Committee. Staff will continue to monitor this bill as it moves through the process.

Marketing & Communications Department update

Chief Communications Officer Alexis Majied gave an update for Transit Equity Day that was celebrated by HRT on Friday February 3rd. The reserved seats on the buses were in honor of Rosa Parks and her courageous act that made transit equitable for all.



The bus recruitment campaign is underway with print and digital advertising with the goal of recruiting operators needed for an additional 757 Express routes. For this purpose, Marcom team filmed promotional videos with HRT bus operators.

There is an ongoing promotion for Base Express that was launched in December as well.

Commissioner Bullock gave an update on Transit Advocacy Day in Richmond that happened on January 23, 2023. He noted that DC Advocacy Day is coming up.

Upcoming Events

Commissioner McClellan announced her annual event called Engage Norfolk is going to be on March 19th, 2023. It is free and open to the public. The Commissioner also stated that it would be a good opportunity for HRT to promote Student Freedom pass and Base Express.

Alexis Majied welcomed Amy Jordan as new Director of Business Development.

The meeting adjourned at 2 pm.