

FTA Awards HRT \$25 Million Grant Toward Southside Bus Operating Facility

BY ANGELA GREGORY

The Federal Transit Administration has awarded Hampton Roads Transit a \$25 million grant as part of its Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities program. The money will be used to help pay for the new Southside Bus Operating Facility, which will accommodate zero-emission buses while assisting with maintenance of HRT’s current fleet.

The Southside Bus Operating Facility will replace the 39-year-old Parks Avenue Maintenance Facility. “We are ecstatic that the need for the Southside Bus Operating Facility is recognized by the federal government,” said William Harrell, President & CEO of Hampton Roads Transit. “This facility will be paramount to our regional service expansion and as we transition our fleet to electric vehicles.”



HRT is moving toward an entire fleet of zero-emissions buses by 2040. The new facility is expected to be completed in 2028.

Virginia Senators Tim Kaine and Mark Warner supported HRT’s efforts to secure funding. “This funding will help deliver state-of-the-art buses and bus facilities that are better for our environment and make Virginia’s transit systems more reliable and comfortable for riders,” stated the Senators in a joint statement.

HRT is one of only 130 award recipients nationwide and four in the Commonwealth. In all, the FTA awarded \$1.7 billion in federal funding, investing in the future of transit. It’s the second bus grant package funded by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, which has now invested more than \$3.3 billion in transit. ■

200th Bus Shelter Installed

BY ANGELA GREGORY

Hampton Roads Transit marked a major milestone. On August 23, crews installed the 200th bus shelter at Stop 3323 - Jefferson Avenue and Meadow Creek in Newport News, VA.

New shelters started going up in February 2021 in an effort to improve the transit experience by increasing passenger amenities. The agency’s goal is to have 620 new bus stops with a shelter or bench, or combination of the two within the next three years. That’s in addition to 300 existing bus shelters. Every new shelter is equipped with trash receptacles and solar powered lighting to enhance customer safety.

“Providing a well-lit, safe, protected place to wait at more than 900 of our 2,700 bus stops will make HRT a leader among transit agencies across the country,” said Sibyl Pappas, Chief Engineering & Facilities Officer at Hampton Roads Transit.

The shelters are being installed as part of HRT’s plan to improve the overall customer experience. “We are focused on meeting riders’ needs and providing excellent customer service,” said William Harrell, President and CEO of Hampton Roads Transit, “and that begins before riders ever step foot on one of our buses.”

The shelters are being paid for through the Hampton Roads Regional Transit Fund, approved by the Virginia General Assembly in 2020. The fund also provided for 24 new buses and the launch of HRT’s 757 Express Service last fall. ■



ON THE MOVE

HAMPTON ROADS TRANSIT’S QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER • FALL 2023



ELIZABETH RIVER FERRY

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Elected Officials Try Transit

BY NOELLE PINKARD

This summer, Hampton Roads Transit hosted several elected officials on ride-alongs, providing the opportunity for them to experience our bus service.

In July, Congressman Bobby Scott visited the Newport News Transit Center and rode the Route 112 from Downtown to Patrick Henry Mall. Congressman Scott was joined by Newport News Mayor Phillip Jones, Newport News City Councilman John R. Eley III, state Senator Mamie Locke, state Delegate Marcia Price, along with HRT officials and other dignitaries.



In August, Councilwoman Mamie Johnson of Norfolk also participated in a ride-along to tour transit service in Ward 3. These ride-alongs come as a result of renewed legislative interest in the 757 Express. Several other elected officials have scheduled their own ride-along events for later this fall.

Elected officials riding public transit demonstrates solidarity with their constituents and expresses their commitment to addressing critical issues facing their communities.

“I got the chance to experience HRT’s new 757 Express bus service. This enhanced service has already started boosting ridership and is helping people stay connected throughout Hampton Roads,” said Congressman Scott. “We know that expansion of public transportation provides a number of economic and health benefits to communities. I am pleased to see our communities benefitting from HRT’s efforts and these continued investments in public transit.”

Public transportation is a vital lifeline for many residents, serving as the backbone of urban mobility and a key component of sustainable urban development. When elected officials choose to utilize public transit systems, they send a powerful message about their dedication to improve transportation infrastructure, reducing traffic congestion, and addressing environmental concerns. ■

Subsidy for TRAFFIX Vanpool Program Increases to \$500

BY ANGELA GREGORY

Hampton Roads Transit’s TRAFFIX program is excited to announce an increase in its monthly stipend to a flat rate of \$500 for all new and existing vanpools. The stipend was previously \$300 for 7-10 passenger vehicles and \$325 for 12-15 passenger vehicles.

Vanpooling is a convenient, cost-effective way to get to work. Groups range from 7 to 15 commuters and costs can vary depending on the number of vacant seats. Increasing the stipend will provide greater financial relief while helping commuters make a more sustainable and positive impact on the environment.

The TRAFFIX vanpool program partners with Commute with Enterprise, allowing commuters to lease a van to share a ride to work. The total cost, including insurance, maintenance, fuel, and tolls is divided among the riders. Now, TRAFFIX will kick in the first \$500 every month.

“This adjustment reflects our commitment to ensuring that vanpooling remains an accessible and viable transportation option for everyone,” said Amy Jordan, Executive Director of TRAFFIX. “In addition to the monthly stipend, there are other benefits to starting or joining a vanpool, including decreasing your yearly commuting cost, extending the life of your personal vehicle, reducing traffic and pollution, and lowering stress.”

Commuters can also sign up for the TRAFFIX Ride Matching and Rewards Program, earning points every time they share a ride, use transit, telework, walk, or bike, redeeming them later for discounts at some of their favorite restaurants, coffee shops, or local attractions. TRAFFIX vanpool commuters are also eligible for the Guaranteed Ride Program. It’s a great resource during an emergency.

TRAFFIX is a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program operated by Hampton Roads Transit and funded through the Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization. Its mission is to decrease traffic congestion and greenhouse emissions by reducing the number of Single Occupancy Vehicles commuting to work through ridesharing. ■

Community Celebrates 40th Anniversary of The Elizabeth River Ferry

BY ANGELA GREGORY

On Friday, July 14th, Hampton Roads Transit celebrated the 40th anniversary of the Elizabeth River Ferry. More than 100 people descended upon the North Landing Dock in Portsmouth, VA for the big event. Some traveled there by car, and others took advantage of the free fare and rode the ferry. No matter how they got there, guests were greeted with smiles from fellow ferry patrons and with music, provided courtesy of Norfolk State University’s WNSB Hot 91.

William Harrell, President and CEO of Hampton Roads Transit, kicked off the event. “Ferry service has been an essential part of getting around Hampton Roads for hundreds of years. HRT is proud to play such a crucial role in continuing this time-honored tradition,” he said. “Over the last 40 years, we have moved more than 16.5 million riders back and forth across the Elizabeth River.”

Portsmouth Mayor Shannon Glover added, “The ferry service provides much more than just a quick way for people to get to work. It played a pivotal role in the redevelopment and revitalization of Olde Towne Portsmouth.” Anna Bonet, CEO of Elizabeth River Crossings, was also on hand at the event. She highlighted ERC’s \$2.6 million annual contribution, through which the ferry’s weekday hours extend 90 minutes earlier, starting at 5:30 a.m.

“I feel very humbled that so many distinguished and important people have taken the time to be here and commemorate the 40th anniversary of the ferry,” said David Jordan, owner of Norfolk by Boat. “The ferry is a labor of love for me, and it is so nice that it has been recognized for the economic stimulus that it is. Serving the cities and working with Hampton Roads Transit has been an honor and a privilege.”

To mark the occasion, on display was a commemorative 40th anniversary poster. HRT Graphic Designer, Morgan Williams, was on hand signing posters upon request. Guests were also treated to custom cookies created for the event by Sheila Morris of Sheila’s Sugar in Chesapeake. The festivities culminated with a blast of the ferry horn and the firing of blue smoke cannons from the upper deck of the ferry. ■



Hampton Roads Transit Hosts Student Freedom Pass Back-to-School Bash

BY ROYALL BRYAN

The Marketing and Strategic Communications Team hosted its first Student Freedom Pass Back-to-School Bash. The event was held on Thursday, August 24th, in the lobby of our Norfolk Headquarters. A second event was held on Thursday, September 14th, at the Brittingham-Midtown Community Center in Newport News. Altogether, 20 students showed up to get a pass.

The Student Freedom Pass is a great solution for busy parents and students. With pass in hand, parents don’t have to stress about how their child is going to get to and from after school activities, sporting events, or work. Parents and students were thankful to have the opportunity to receive their pass after working hours and before the school year started. ■

