



# 2019/2020 Initiatives and Milestones

A new fiscal year is upon us and it brings the best news we have seen in many years. After lengthy efforts, HRT finally has achieved dedicated funding with the work of the Virginia General Assembly.

This major milestone in the agency's brief 20-year history means that for the first time it can plan, deploy and operate a core network of buses operating regionally on a consistent schedule outside of the municipally-driven budget cycles that have for so long limited efforts to build true regional transit services. It is thrilling to report it, but we have a great deal of work to do preparing for the new services.

I cannot present the FY20 accomplishments without also remarking on the excellent response staff provided to the COVID-19 crisis. Early in March when the pandemic was taking hold in New York, staff stepped up with initiatives that provided reduced service to reflect stay-at-home orders from Commonwealth authorities, and the distribution of personal protective equipment as soon as it became available to all front-line personnel.

The challenges of the pandemic will remain through this fiscal year, but I remain confident that we have a great year ahead of us. Throughout the year, we will continue to invest in our core business to make quality transit services possible.

Let's take a moment to reflect on where we've come over the past 12 months. Here's a snapshot of just a few successes:

## Strategic Direction & Innovation

- Achieved an historic first: \$31 million in annual dedicated funding for the Transit Transformation Project. Engaged thousands of customers and key regional stakeholders to embrace HRT's Transit Strategic Plan and provided the foundation to convince the General Assembly to approve dedicated funding.
- The success triggered a new challenge: to help city partners offset their pending loss of state recordation tax assistance. By providing collaborative leadership, helped city managers and the Commission identify a funding solution embraced by each city council to offset pending losses of state recordation proceeds in FY21.
- Completed first Transit Asset Management Plan to inventory and rate condition of assets, set State of Good Repair performance targets, and prioritize investments to improve asset quality.
- Advanced an industry-leading new business model for paratransit operations, partnering with a new vendor to better leverage technologies that allow dynamic scheduling, route optimization, and more efficient use of assets.
- Led HRT workforce to effectively adapt to COVID-19 pandemic impacts, deploying an Essential Service Plan and implementing a comprehensive program to protect employee and public health to include daily system-wide cleaning of property and vehicles, distribution of personal protective equipment and hand sanitizer to front-line employees.
- Achieved another successful FTA Triennial Review, demonstrating effective management and agency responsiveness.
- Developed solid FY21-FY26 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) to effectively prioritize capital needs and optimize the use of available resources.
- Partnered with Proterra and successfully won competitive federal grant funding as well as VW Environmental Mitigation Trust and leveraging of DRPT state funding, for HRT to deploy six full-sized, all-electric buses in a first-of-its-kind project in Virginia.
- Engaged external stakeholders in a variety of efforts, including hosting Virginia Organizing for briefings and tours. Supported Regional Advisory Panel, co-chaired by Peninsula and Southside mayors, to collaborate with regional leaders on evaluating regional transit services, funding models, and supporting improved services with long term operational sustainability.
- Served as board member of HRTPO; Rail-Volution; Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce; Virginia Transit Association, including Executive Committee and service as Treasurer.
- Ensured full support of all TDCHR committees, including special work efforts by Management and Finance Advisory Committee.

## **Operational & Technology Improvements**

- Advanced mission-critical procurements for 73 buses as part of ongoing bus replacement program. In total, led HRT to successfully encumber federal and state grants to advance more than \$57 million in mission-critical capital projects.
- Completed upgrades of core technology hardware and software systems, including CAD/AVL, Hastus and Paratransit map system upgrades, Fleetwatch software upgrade, and upgraded mobile software on buses to bolster GPS and real-time data.
- Deployed a range of new technology tools to increase productivity, including a staff developed bus stop app to enable real-time, street-level inventory, reporting, and responsiveness to maintenance concerns.
- Achieved FTA certification of Automated Passenger Counters on light rail.
- Deployed new route schedule highlighting feature on gohrt.com to provide customers advanced notice on delayed and cancelled trips and continued technical refinements to the Call Center's Interactive Voice Response system to improve customer experience.
- Continued enhancements to new agency website with mobile-friendly agile configurations, including performance tracking and reporting through new online Accountability Center.

## **Facilities & Engineering**

- Fully reconstructed ferry docks to achieve improved ADA-compliant access and provide better amenities.
- Completed Phase II renovations at 3400 Victoria Boulevard in Hampton, focused on state of good repair and efficiency and achieving significant modernization of the facility, representing a \$4.5 million investment.
- Installed 100 new bus stops and repaired or replaced bus stop signs at 350 locations.
- Installed 12 new bus shelters, new solar lighting at 15 bus stops, and new benches and trash cans at 10 locations.
- Repainted all light rail stations and park-and-rides.
- Submitted annually required facility condition assessment on over 5,000 HRT facility assets. This data was recorded for MAP-21 State of Good Repair compliance, maintenance prioritization and future data-based capital planning of facility assets.
- Opened Liberty Street bus transfer station in the City of Chesapeake.
- Began Facility Enterprise Asset Management (EAM) System used for capturing and maintaining facility asset data, managing facility work orders, and reporting to NTD under new MAP- 21 SGR requirements.
- Received HRSD Platinum Award for 6 consecutive years of perfect environmental compliance for Norfolk Tide Facility.
- Completed The Tide light rail aerial structural replacement of all deficient or missing bolt assemblies to maintain a state of good repair on all five bridges on the system. The bi-annual inspection on these structures was also completed.
- Coordinated with the City of Norfolk to remove the existing pedestrian bridge over The Tide tracks in conjunction with the demolition of the City's parking garage south of Civic Plaza Station; completed critical repairs to bridges on The Tide light rail, in accordance with NBIS requirements; and coordinated with the VDOT to minimize impact to The Tide tracks as part of the I-64/I-264 Interchange Project.
- Completed enhanced ADA bus stop project in Hampton near Langley Air Force Base, with reconstructed parking lot area at West Gate providing significantly better pedestrian accessibility, included approximately 500' of new sidewalk, fixing of three deficient sidewalk ramps, a new handicap unloading pad, benches, and wayfinding solar bollard lighting.
- Installed new pin pads on all 31 Ticket Vending Machine (TVMs), replacing units that were non-compliant with security standards, had high failure rates, and no longer had vendor support.

## **Administration & Human Resources**

- Successfully negotiated health insurance renewal, maintaining competitive employee coverages with only a 2 percent increase in premium (provider's originally planned increase was 7.7%).
- Mitigated critical staffing shortages through a variety of strategies and tactics, achieving a 20% increase in Bus Operator hires within a tight labor market and pandemic, a 45% decrease in voluntary separations, resulting in a 7% increase in the total number of operators and trainees at year end.
- Successfully expanded the DriveNow training program, with 2 classes of graduates this year and a third class scheduled in Norfolk, an inaugural class starting in Hampton, and a pending MOU with the City of Newport News.
- Achieved a 7% reduction in turnover. Filled mission-critical positions, including in technology with a new Chief Information Officer/Chief Technology Officer, PS Financial Data Conversion Developer, Microsoft Dynamics Developer, and ERP Support Specialist, and operational support including four Transportation Supervisors, Safety Manager, Sr. Manager of Bus Transportation.
- Conducted 11 HRT-directed hiring events and participated in more than 15 external events, resulting in a 25% increase in hiring. Deployed a cloud-based Applicant Tracking System (ATS) to significantly increase the talent pool and recruitment of qualified candidates and enhance the quality of each new employee hiring.

## Strategic Transit Planning

- Kicked-off the Naval Station Norfolk Transit Corridor Project, which will run through mid-2021 and aims to establish high-capacity transit on the east side of the City of Norfolk between the existing Tide Light Rail system and Naval Station Norfolk.
- Collaborated with Hampton and Newport News to document a Categorical Exclusion (NEPA document) that will enable future fast-tracking for a Peninsula Bus Rapid Transit project.
- Implemented new Route 24 with direct connections between Virginia Beach and Chesapeake; adjusted schedules to match shift changes at NN Shipyard; provided special vanpools to Virginia Beach city employees relocated due to the mass shooting incident.
- Updated HRT's Title VI Program.
- Helped reduce 2.1 million Vehicle Miles Traveled through TRAFFIX programs, administered 88 vanpools, and added subscribers for a total of 14,356 users of the TRAFFIX app. Held of 250 outreach events and meetings with employers to promote and expand use of TDM strategies.

## Marketing and Communications

- HRT's "How to Ride" travel training campaign was named Outstanding Community Program for 2019-2020 by the Virginia Transit Association. This campaign included videos, pamphlets, a children's activity book, and information cards to help residents and businesses learn about and ride HRT services.
- Public Relations Society of America's 2019 Pinnacle Award winner from the "Park Less. Text More" campaign.
- Regularly engaged employees at all levels to advance agency mission and goals in day-to-day operations, using tactics like Townhall meetings, video messaging, and small groups. Utilize the "Presidents Corner" in the monthly employee newsletter and other internal communications to promote mission accomplishment and deliver important messages to the workforce.
- Achieved new milestones in non-traditional communications and marketing, growing social media to nearly 12,500 Facebook followers (more than 600 year-over-year increase), 5,816 Twitter followers, and 1,170 Instagram followers.
- Consistently provided communications to Commission on key topics including advance communications in cases of pending TV/news media coverage on key issues.

## Safety and Security

- Established Security as a stand-alone department.
- Increased fare checks and lowered evasion rate on light rail through deployment of Fare Enforcement Aides, Developed Security plan for DNTC to address the increasing number of criminal issues being reported at this location, and worked with Fleet Support with all new camera installs, camera repair, and adjustment
- Continued high performance track record on light rail, with OTP exceeding 98%, with no cancelled trips due to manpower, no train versus car or train versus pedestrian fatalities.
- Completed agency's first Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan per federal mandates. Proactive safety activities included 46 facility inspections.
- Enhanced cybersecurity activities, including deployment of a Security Awareness Email system that has reduced potential for damaging "phishing" attacks from 16% to 4% (industry standard).
- Deployed enhanced physical security access control and camera systems at Hampton and Norfolk Tide Facility gate.

## Financial Sustainability & Mission Impact

- Implemented new financial system with Microsoft Dynamics 365.
- Enacted diligent operational and financial management to achieve a fourth consecutive year of budget surpluses.
- Significant collaboration with MFAC on a number of key issues including the early delivery of operating budget projections, and creative options to address the loss of recordation tax revenues to member cities.

