



External Legislative Advisory Committee Minutes
Wednesday July 17th, 2024
Hampton, VA
1:30 PM

Commissioners in Attendance:

August Bullock, Chair, ELAC
Commissioner Andria McClellan, Norfolk

Attendees:

Ed Reed, Two Capitols Consulting
Janice Taylor, League of Women Voters
Sherril Neil, City of Portsmouth
Philip Bianchi, Squire Patton Boggs

HRT Staff:

Noelle Pinkard, Organizational Advancement Officer
Amy Jordan, Director of Business Development
John Powell, Telecommunications Specialist, Technology
Thomas Becher, Communications Manager
Petra Jovanovic, Executive Assistant, Marketing & Communications

The meeting began at 1:30 pm with Commissioner August Bullock, Chair, calling the meeting to order. Chairman Bullock asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the June 20th, 2024, External and Legislative Advisory Committee (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 Legislative Update:

Congress continues work on the Fiscal Year 2025 Transportation, Housing & Urban Development (THUD) Appropriations bill. In the House of Representatives there was a party line vote to report the THUD bill out of committee on July 10. Democrats objected to cuts to affordable housing and inclusion of poison pill policy riders. The Committee version of the legislation includes \$850,000 for HRT to purchase additional paratransit vehicles. Full floor consideration expected on July 30 – 31.

Meanwhile, the Senate has reached agreement on overall spending levels, but the schedule for individual appropriations bills is uncertain. The Senate has marked up some bills, but no additional markups are scheduled, so timing for THUD remains unclear, and delayed until after August recess.

The timeline for final passage of all 12 annual appropriations bills is murky. It is doubtful that they will all become law before the end of the Fiscal Year (Sept. 30), so a short-term Continuing Resolution (CR) will be required to extend funding. Depending on the outcome of the Presidential election, Republicans may try to push the CR into 2025 when a new Congress and potentially new President take office.



State Legislative Update:

The Northern Virginia Growing Needs of Public Transit Joint Subcommittee of the Virginia General Assembly held its initial meeting on July 15, 2024. The committee will study long-term, sustainable, dedicated operations and capital funding as well as cost-containment controls and strategies to ensure the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority and Northern Virginia transit agencies meet the growing needs of public transit in the region. HRT has embarked on its own Funding Sustainability Study this summer; an interim report is expected prior to the 2025 General Assembly Session.

Marketing & Strategic Communications Department update

Amy Jordan gave the Marketing & Communications update.

HRT Marketing team participated in the Pride Festival in Town Point Park, Norfolk on June 22nd, 2024. HRT annually takes part in this event as a recruitment effort to send a message to our customers and potential employees that we are a welcoming and diverse environment.

HRT partnered with Old Towne Portsmouth and Downtown Norfolk Council in hosting a floating saxophone performance on Saturday, July 6th on The Elizabeth River Ferry as a musical link between two back-to-back events in both Portsmouth and Norfolk. Downtown Norfolk Council (DNC) purchased 50 one-day passes for unlimited rides on Hampton Roads Transit services including the ferry, Tide light rail and buses, for the first 50 people to board the ferry for the ride to Waterside in Norfolk.

Earlier in May HRT has been recognized by Virginia Transit Association for excellence in community engagement and outreach, including a unique partnership with the Norfolk Tides baseball team and the City of Norfolk that provides fans with free rides on light rail on game days. Amy Jordan and Thomas Becher representing HRT presented this award to The Tides in recognition of this partnership.

HRT will be hosting an event to mark the 40th anniversary of the seasonal VB Wave Trolley service on July 23rd, 2024. HRT President and CEO William Harrell, Virginia Beach Mayor Robert "Bobby" Dyer, Virginia Beach City Councilwoman and HRT Commissioner Dr. Amelia Ross-Hammond, and other elected officials and business leaders will be among attendees.

Local Advocacy City Council Presentations

HRT's efforts to engage with local city councils continues. Commissioners are encouraged to work with their respective city representatives to schedule future presentations. Presentations have been made to Virginia Beach and Chesapeake councils with Newport News scheduled in August.

Student Freedom Pass (SFP)

In the past month HRT's Public Outreach team issued more than 100 Student Freedom Passes at various events:



- June 27th, 2024, collaborating with the Youth Career program at Brooks Crossing in Newport News, 40 passes were issued to students.
- June 28th, 2024, SFP event was held with Portsmouth Parks and Recreation, 27 passes were issued that day.
- July 11th, 2024, HRT's Public Outreach team participated at an event with Hampton City Schools- High School Business Leadership Program and issued 44 more passes.

The meeting adjourned at 2pm.

The ELAC meeting for August is cancelled, the next ELAC meeting is scheduled for September 18th, 2024, in Hampton Boardroom.