



External Legislative Advisory Committee Minutes  
Wednesday, November 6, 2024  
Hampton, VA  
1:30 PM

Commissioners in Attendance:

August Bullock, Chair, ELAC  
Commissioner Roland White, Hampton  
Commissioner Anthony “Tony” Goodwin, Portsmouth  
Commissioner Andria McClellan, Norfolk  
Commissioner Dr. A. Ross-Hammond, Virginia Beach

Attendees:

Ed Reed, Two Capitols Consulting  
Michael D. Hawthorne, Squire Patton Boggs  
Jessica Dennis, City of Norfolk  
David Westcott, City of Chesapeake  
Jeri Wilson, City of Newport News

HRT Staff:

Dr. Brian Smith, Deputy CEO Hampton Roads Transit  
Amy Jordan, Director of Business Development  
Noelle Pinkard, Organizational Advancement Officer  
John Powell, Telecommunications Specialist  
Monique Lynch, TRAFFIX TDM Program Specialist  
Lawrence Mason, Emergency Preparedness Specialist  
Shane Kelly, Sr. Manager Security & Emergency Preparedness

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 September 18, and October 16, 2024, External and Legislative Advisory Committee (ELAC) meetings. Commissioner Roland White made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Commissioner Tony Goodwin. The minutes were approved by the committee.

Federal Legislative Update:

Michael Hawthorne, Squire Patton Boggs, reported on the November 5<sup>th</sup> federal elections as follows. Majorities in both chambers will be slim. Current government funding for fiscal year 2025 expires on December 20<sup>th</sup>. Lawmakers are increasingly pessimistic about passage of individual funding bills before the end of 2024, including FY25 Transportation Housing and Urban Development (THUD) appropriations. Congressionally Directed Spending will not be included in the anticipated year-end Continuing Resolution but may remain in spending bills considered in an omnibus/minibus



package. Congress will begin to consider a surface transportation reauthorization bill prior to its expiration in 2026, with hearings likely beginning in 2025.

### **State Legislative Update:**

Noelle Pinkard reported that the Northern Virginia Growing Needs of Public Transit Joint Subcommittee will meet on November 12<sup>th</sup> and the Virginia Transit Association Board will meet on November 22<sup>nd</sup> to adopt its legislative agenda. An update on both meetings will be provided at the December ELAC meeting.

### **Security Cameras at Selected Bus Stop Shelters:**

Shane Kelly introduced a relatively new security program involving mobile telescoping surveillance units acquired through a capital improvement process. Shane outlined the current security framework for the transit system to establish context.

### **Current Security Framework:**

#### **1. Law Enforcement Partnerships:**

- The transit system relies on extra-duty police officers working overtime. These officers enforce municipal, state, and federal laws across bus, rail, and ferry systems.
- Local police participation depends on memorandums of understanding (MOUs) or formal agreements with cities, which allow enforcement on transit property.
- Cities like Hampton and Newport News are active participants, while agreements with others are being developed.

#### **2. Transit Security Officers (TSOs):**

- Initiated three years ago, TSOs serve as an internal detection and deterrence force.
- They are recruited from private security, military, or law enforcement backgrounds and patrol the vast service area of Hampton Roads Transit (HRT).
- Currently, several officers are employed, covering a large geographic footprint, though this number is acknowledged as insufficient.

#### **3. Private Security Contractors:**

- HRT employs dozens of private security officers who primarily work at fixed posts, including building lobbies and transit hubs, and conduct fare enforcement on light rail systems.
- Private contractors account for the majority of HRT's uniformed security presence.

### **Challenges with Current Security Measures:**

- The regional and multi-jurisdictional nature of the transit system creates enforcement challenges, as police authority typically ends at city boundaries.



# HAMPTON ROADS TRANSIT

- With limited staff and vast coverage areas, gaps in security monitoring are inevitable.

## **Introduction of Mobile Telescoping Surveillance Units:**

### **1. Capabilities:**

- These trailer-mounted, solar-powered, and cellular-connected units provide real-time surveillance without requiring physical infrastructure (e.g., internet or power lines).
- They feature strobing red, blue, and white lights to mimic police presence and include a speaker for live or automated announcements.
- The units can be programmed to detect and deter specific behaviors, such as trespassing, by creating geofenced zones and triggering automated responses.

### **2. Deployment and Impact:**

- Two units are currently in operation and have been moved to high-priority locations, such as Newtown Road Station and other high-traffic or problem areas.
- These units fill security gaps in areas where physical officers cannot consistently patrol.

## **Collaboration with Law Enforcement:**

- HRT actively collaborates with local police, providing video footage for investigations when requested.
- The organization is exploring integration with local Real-Time Crime Centers through a program called "Fuses," which would allow law enforcement to access live camera feeds for operational needs.
- A beta test of this integration is planned with Norfolk.

## **Future Aspirations and Challenges:**

- The possibility of HRT establishing its own police department was mentioned as a long-term goal to enhance security and collaboration capabilities.
- Technical barriers exist, such as the licensing and costs associated with integrating HRT systems with external law enforcement systems.
- Additionally, reciprocal access to police surveillance systems, though beneficial, is currently unattainable due to legal and operational constraints.

## **Conclusion:**

- The mobile telescoping surveillance units represent a significant advancement in HRT's security strategy, enabling a more proactive and adaptive approach to safety across the transit system.
- Continued development of partnerships, technology integration, and internal capabilities will be crucial to addressing the growing security needs of the region.

## **General Assembly Advocacy Day:**

The Virginia Transit Association (VTA) and Virginia's for High-Speed Rail Association are organizing a legislative advocacy day on Monday, January 27. Last year's event was well-attended, with over 15 participants from HRT, including commissioners. The day includes a VTA update session, meetings with legislators, lunch, and a reception at Main Street Station.

**Key Points:**

- RSVP deadline will be set by the end of the year.
- Interest will be gauged during December commission meetings.
- Participation is encouraged to ensure another successful event.

The planning process is underway to schedule appointments with legislators from relevant localities.

**Local Advocacy City Council Presentations**

Noelle Pinkard shared that at the encouragement of the ELAC Committee, HRT staff has successfully conducted advocacy presentations for all localities, except the City of Hampton. The delay in Hampton was to allow time after the election. Efforts are now underway to schedule the presentation with the city staff. Commissioner Gray suggested reaching out to Brian DeProfio to assist in getting on Hampton's agenda. The presentations have been a valuable opportunity for HRT to inform localities about upcoming initiatives and projects.

**Marketing & Strategic Communications Department update**

Amy Jordan gave the Marketing & Communications update.

Hampton Roads Transit (HRT) recently launched an on-demand micro-transit pilot in two zones: Midtown Newport News and Virginia Beach Town Center. This rideshare service offers affordable transportation at \$2 per ride and is designed to fill gaps in areas with limited traditional transit. Users can request rides via an app, similar to Uber or Lyft, but may share rides with others heading in the same direction. The service has seen early success, and while initial free fares have ended, it remains free for Paratransit customers and Student Freedom Pass holders.

Additionally, HRT is rebranding its commuter options program from "Traffix" to "goCommute" to better connect with the community and reflect its mission. This initiative supports commuters, including those traveling from northeastern North Carolina to Hampton Roads.

HRT is actively engaging in workforce development and promoting transit through platforms like the new *Going Places* podcast, highlighting efforts to advocate for public transit funding and collaboration with local employers.

Hampton Roads Transit recently offered free rides to the polls, providing the public with accessible transportation for Election Day. Community engagement was strong, with local groups like those in Hampton actively promoting the initiative. Data on the program's impact is not yet available but may be shared in a future commission update.

The meeting adjourned at 2:30pm.

The next ELAC meeting is scheduled for December 4, 2024, in the Norfolk Boardroom.