



External Legislative Advisory Committee Minutes

Wednesday, April 16th, 2025

1:30 PM Norfolk, VA

Commissioners in Attendance:

Commissioner Anthony Goodwin, Chair ELAC
Commissioner Roland White, Hampton
Commissioner Amelia Ross-Hammond, Virginia Beach
Commissioner Marcellus Harris, Newport News
Commissioner Hope Harper, Hampton

Attendees:

Michael D. Hawthorne, Squire Patton Boggs
Sheri Neil, City of Portsmouth
Janice Taylor, League of Women Voters
Cassidy Taylor, Access Point Public Affairs
David Westcott, City of Chesapeake
Gretchen Heal, Hampton Roads Chamber
Jerri Wilson, Newport News
Megan Gribble, Manager of Transportation Planning, City of Portsmouth

HRT Staff:

Alexis Majied, Chief Communications Officer
Amy Jordan, Director of Business Development
Noelle Pinkard, Organizational Advancement Officer
Petra Jovanovic, Executive Assistant
Thomas Becher, Communications Manager
Michael Price, Chief Information Officer
John Powell, Telecommunications Specialist



The meeting began at 1:30 pm with Commissioner Anthony Goodwin, Chair, calling the meeting to order.

Chairman Goodwin asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the February 19th and March 19th, 2025, External and Legislative Advisory Committee (ELAC) meetings. Commissioner Amelia Ross-Hammond made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Roland White. The minutes were approved by the committee.

Federal Legislative Update:

Michael Hawthorne, Squire Patton Boggs, provided the federal legislative update.

On April 3, the Senate Banking Committee advanced the nomination of former Congressman Marc Molinaro (R-NY) to be FTA Administrator by a bipartisan vote of 20 to 4. Molinaro is a noncontroversial nominee, and he is expected to be confirmed by the Senate in the coming weeks.

The Department of Transportation (DOT) has launched a department-wide deregulatory effort to comply with President Trump's recent Executive Orders (Eos) on deregulation and government efficiency. US DOT issued a request for information (RFI) seeking public comments on how existing regulations can be modified or repealed. Comments are due Monday, May 5.

The Trump Administration is expected to release the annual President's Budget Request (PBR) in the coming days or weeks. The request is expected to contain significant spending cuts for federal programs. Congress is not bound to follow the spending recommendations in the PBR.

On April 9th, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee held a transit hearing in preparation for drafting the reauthorization of the surface transportation bill which is set to expire in September of 2026. Republicans sought improvements in transit safety and security and pledged increased oversight. Democrats credited record-high IJA and COVID relief funding for carrying transit agencies through and past the impacts of the pandemic. General support for streamlining NEPA approvals and simplifying discretionary grant application processes.

Work on FY26 appropriations bills is ongoing. House and Senate Republicans face tremendous pressure to cut spending and codify "DOGE savings," but transit formula funding from the HTF is outside the reach of appropriators' cuts. The bill will likely include earmarks.

Congress has officially adopted a framework to consider Republican-led tax, spending, and debt limit legislation this year. The reconciliation process is unlikely to impact most transportation programs.

State Legislative Update:

During the General Assembly's reconvened session held on April 2nd, the legislature rejected more than 100 of the Governor's proposed budget amendments, including two key priorities for Hampton Roads Transit (HRT):



- [Item 443 #2c](#): Provides \$200,000.00 from the general fund the first year to Hampton Roads Transit to provide support for a one-time transit investment.
- [Item 441 #1c](#): Directs the Commissioner of Highways to work with the Department of Rail and Public Transportation and toll operators to mitigate the charging of tolls for public transit buses.

DC Advocacy Day

The DC Advocacy trip is scheduled for May 18th, 2025, to discuss appropriations requests for FY26 which coincides with the American Public Transit Association legislative conference. The conference and hill visits will provide an opportunity to discuss pending issues and meet with the Congressional delegation on earmark request submitted by HRT regarding paratransit vehicles, and issues related to reauthorization of the Surface Transportation bill.

Local Advocacy City Council Presentations

Noelle Pinkard provided Committee with updates regarding Local Advocacy City Council presentations.

HRT is still working on scheduling meetings with all six member cities to provide updates on projects and service levels that will be recommended for the next fiscal year. Right now, the city councils are engaged in their budget deliberations that are scheduled for May 2025. More information regarding this will be provided at the next ELAC meeting.

Earth Day Commissioner Ride Along

HRT is providing free fares on Earth Day, April 22nd, 2025, on all bus, light rail, ferry, paratransit and OnDemand ridesharing services. In addition, once again HRT's Commissioners will be hosting round-trip rides to meet the public in their cities.

- **Chesapeake:** Councilman Les Smith will meet riders at 10:40 a.m. at Robert Hall Transfer Center on Robert Hall Boulevard for an 11 a.m. departure, returning to Robert Hall at 11:36 a.m. on Route 6.
- **Hampton:** Councilwoman Hope Harper will meet riders at 10:20 a.m. at the Hampton Transit Center, 2 W. Pembroke Ave. for a 10:47 a.m. departure on Route 109, returning to the transit center at 11:26 a.m.
- **Newport News:** Councilman Marcellus Harris III will meet riders at 10:20 a.m. at the Newport News Transit Center, 150 35th St., for a 10:45 a.m. departure on the Route 106, returning to the transit center at 11:35 a.m.



- **Norfolk:** Councilwoman Mamie Johnson will meet riders at 10:15 a.m. at the Downtown Norfolk Transit Center, 434 St Paul's Blvd., to board Route 4 for a round-trip ride coming back to the transit center at 11:30 a.m.
- **Portsmouth:** HRT Commissioner Tony Goodwin will meet riders at 10:10 a.m. at County and Crawford, 601 Crawford St., to board Route 45, returning to the stop at 11:34 a.m.
- **Virginia Beach:** Councilwoman Dr. Amelia Ross-Hammond will meet riders at 10:20 a.m. at Tidewater Community College's Virginia Beach campus at the corner of Student Avenue and Michael Labouve Boulevard. Riding Route 26, the group will return to the stop at 11:24 a.m.

Marketing & Strategic Communications Department update

Alexis Majied gave the Marketing & Communications update.

As part of Earth Day initiative, on April 22nd, 2025, HRT is encouraging groups across the region to sign up to do an annual community cleanup. This is a yearly event when HRT invites the public to come and clean one of our bus stops.

The goCommute team will organize the Hampton Roads Bike Expo Event, that was previously managed by the Downtown Norfolk Council. goCommute is excited to extend this into a region-wide program and it will host events on the Peninsula on April 30th, 2025, in Hampton Main Public Library and on the Southside on May 1st, 2025 at the Slover Public Library.

Alexis Majied presented the Committee with the new HRT's 25th Anniversary video that is available on the official HRT YouTube channel

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ts2LdftYJlg>

The new VB Wave Trolley season is scheduled to start on May 1st, in addition, HRT is excited to launch the mobile ticketing function "GoMobile", which is a new mobile fare collection system that would be accessible on all VB Wave routes.

HRT partnered with Max Media, a company that owns 4 radio stations in the Hampton Roads area, to promote onDemand rideshare service last month.

The meeting adjourned at 2:30pm.

The next ELAC meeting is scheduled for May 21st, 2025, in the Hampton Boardroom.