



# HAMPTON ROADS TRANSIT

External Legislative Advisory Committee Minutes  
Wednesday, August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2025  
1:30 PM Norfolk, VA

Commissioners in Attendance:

Commissioner Anthony Goodwin, ELAC Chair  
Commissioner Roland White, Hampton

Attendees:

Caren Street, Squire Patton Boggs  
Mindy Carlin, Access Point Public Affairs  
Cassidy Taylor, Access Point Public Affairs  
Megan Gribble, Manager of Transportation Planning, City of Portsmouth  
Janice Taylor, Paratransit Advisory Committee  
Ed Reed, Two Capitols Consulting, representing the City of Hampton  
David Westcott, Jr., City of Chesapeake

HRT Staff:

Alexis Majied, Chief Communications Officer  
Noelle Pinkard, Organizational Advancement Officer  
Caleb Smith, Military Outreach Liaison  
Monique Lynch, TDM Program Specialist  
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 July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2025, External and Legislative Advisory Committee (ELAC) meeting. Lacking a quorum, the vote was postponed until the September ELAC meeting.

**Federal Legislative Update:**

Caren Street, Squire Patton Boggs, provided the federal legislative update. Congress remains behind schedule on appropriations, making it likely that lawmakers will pass a short-term continuing resolution after September to avoid a federal shutdown.

In terms of funding, the House and Senate have taken different approaches: the House bill reduced overall transit funding but did include an \$850,000 earmark for HRT's paratransit vehicles, while the Senate bill provided a slight increase for transit programs, particularly bus initiatives, though it did not include any earmarks for HRT.

At the federal level, Mark Molinaro has been confirmed as the new FTA Administrator and is expected to prioritize transit safety, aligning with the broader focus of the U.S. Department of Transportation.



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Looking ahead, work has already begun on the Surface Transportation Reauthorization, which expires in September 2026. A central issue in this process will be maintaining the traditional 80/20 funding split between highways and transit, with potential new revenue sources such as fees on electric and hybrid vehicles being considered.

As next steps, HRT is preparing a letter to the Virginia congressional delegation to express support for the Senate's higher overall transit funding levels while also advocating for the House's inclusion of the paratransit earmark.

## **State Legislative Update:**

Mindy Carlin of Access Point provided a state legislative update. Reporting that at the state level, Governor Youngkin recently reported strong fiscal performance for Virginia. Fiscal Year 2025 revenues exceeded forecasts by \$2.1 million, leaving a \$1.7 billion cash cushion and a \$4.7 billion balance in the state's rainy day fund.

General fund revenues grew more than 6% last year, and July revenues for Fiscal Year 2026 were already up by 7.3% compared to the prior year. Despite these positive numbers, policymakers remain cautious given potential federal impacts.

Concerns were raised about reductions in the federal workforce—Virginia has already seen 11,200 federal jobs cut—as well as the risk of millions losing Medicaid coverage and the effects of paused federal grants totaling \$461 million. The governor also vetoed over \$900 million in capital projects earlier this year, reflecting a conservative approach in anticipation of reduced federal support, which could indirectly affect transit funding.

Another factor to watch is the push in Northern Virginia, where agencies are seeking more than \$300 million in new state revenue or taxing authority to support WMATA and other systems. These efforts, along with Richmond and Charlottesville's transit needs, could influence how Hampton Roads positions its own System Optimization Plan and sustainability study.

Looking ahead, several important dates will shape the policy environment: the statewide elections on November 4, which will bring in a new governor and full General Assembly; December 17, when the outgoing administration will present its proposed budget; and January 7, 2026, when the legislature convenes with new leadership.

## **Local Advocacy City Council Presentations**

As part of the ongoing System Optimization Plan (SOP) outreach, presentations have been scheduled with several member cities. The team will meet with Portsmouth on August 26, Virginia Beach on September 2, Chesapeake on September 9, Norfolk on September 23, and Newport News on October 14.

In addition, staff are working closely with the City of Hampton to hold a staff-level meeting in September to finalize proposed changes before presenting to the City Council. Commissioner Roland White has



agreed to represent HRT at both the Hampton and Newport News meetings to ensure strong commissioner engagement in the discussions.

#### **Marketing & Strategic Communications Department update**

Alexis Majied gave the Marketing & Communications update. In July, HRT officially launched its new Smart Stops initiative at the Portsmouth Children's Museum, where updated bus stop signs with QR codes now provide riders with real-time bus information, safety reporting options, and details on nearby ticketing locations.

Building on this momentum, HRT also partnered with Norfolk State University and the City of Norfolk to offer free Tide Light Rail rides to and from NSU home football games, with Park & Ride options available for attendees.

Additionally, two Student Freedom Pass events were held in August—one at Hampton High School and another at the Norfolk YMCA—where more than 150 passes were distributed. These events also gave staff the opportunity to promote HRT's new digital trip-planning app and help students become more confident in using the transit system.

#### **Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation (OLDCC) – Resiliency Study**

The Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation (OLDCC) recently completed a resiliency study in partnership with the City of Portsmouth. The study focused on reducing flooding along key transportation corridors to strengthen military readiness and identified five priority corridors with proposed solutions and cost estimates. While the city was not able to apply for grant funding this year, officials plan to pursue funding opportunities beginning in 2026.

Although no transit-specific projects were included in the study's recommendations, Portsmouth has committed to informing HRT if any improvements affect bus routes or stops. HRT staff also continue to highlight transit's role in supporting military access, drawing on successful examples such as the Norfolk Naval Station shuttle and services to Newport News Shipbuilding.

#### **New and Old Business**

##### **a. Safety Town**

HRT is partnering with Commissioner Goodwin to support the 50th anniversary of Safety Town, a long-standing educational program where children learn about road, bike, and pedestrian safety. While no surplus buses are currently available for donation, staff expect to have one available next year. In the meantime, HRT will install one of its new Smart Stop bus signs on-site as a way to contribute immediately. Community partners, including the Rotary Club and Churchland High School's Interact Club, are also enhancing the site with new features such as a bicycle repair shop and a tunnel exhibit, making the upcoming rededication ceremony in October a unique opportunity to showcase regional collaboration and safety education.

##### **b. HRT Legislative Agenda Review**

The committee reviewed a draft of HRT's 2026 Legislative Agenda, which outlines both federal and state priorities. At the federal level, the agency is advocating to maintain and expand transit funding levels



established under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, preserve the traditional 80/20 Highway Trust Fund split between highways and transit, and continue congressionally directed spending opportunities such as earmarks.

Other priorities include supporting the Capital Investment Grants program for future projects like light rail extensions and emphasizing enhanced safety initiatives, including surveillance technology and operator protections.

At the state level, the draft agenda highlights the need for fair and equitable allocation of funding across regions and transit modes, support for regional revenue initiatives aligned with the System Optimization Plan and sustainability study, expanded workforce development and training partnerships, and continued investment in safety and security.

Members were also reminded to mark their calendars for Virginia Transit Advocacy Day on January 26, 2026, in Richmond.

The meeting adjourned at 2:30pm.

The next ELAC meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2025, in the Hampton Boardroom.