



# HAMPTON ROADS TRANSIT

## External Legislative Advisory Committee Minutes

Wednesday, June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2025

1:30 PM Norfolk, VA

### Commissioners in Attendance:

Commissioner Anthony Goodwin, ELAC Chair

Commissioner Roland White, Hampton

Commissioner Hope Harper, Hampton City Council

### Attendees:

Michael D. Hawthorne, Squire Patton Boggs

Cassidy Taylor, Access Point Public Affairs

Mindy Carlin, Access Point Public Affairs

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

Shawn Tasch, Commuter Outreach Specialist

Caleb Smith, Military Outreach Liaison

Thomas Becher, Communications Manager

John Powell, Telecommunications Specialist

The meeting began at 1:30 pm with Commissioner Anthony Goodwin, Chair, calling the meeting to order. There were no minutes for approval by the committee as the May 2025 meeting did not take place.

### **Federal Legislative Update:**

Michael Hawthorne, Squire Patton Boggs, provided the federal legislative update. The White House released its “skinny” Budget Request which includes \$25.6 billion in requested discretionary funding for US DOT, a 6% increase over FY 2025 levels. The FY 2026 proposal is consistent with authorized funding levels and includes a proposed 2.5% funding increase for transit formula funds. However, Congress is not bound to follow the spending recommendations in the PBR.

Federal Transit Administration Administrator nominee Marc Molinaro is still awaiting a confirmation vote by the full Senate.

On the budget front, work on FY 2026 appropriations bills is ongoing. However, a short-term continuing resolution (CR) to fund the government past September 30th is increasingly likely as Congress continues to prioritize the budget reconciliation process and as appropriators await key budget documents from the Administration.



# HAMPTON ROADS TRANSIT

Lastly, Congress is continuing to consider tax, spending, and debt limit legislation in a reconciliation process. This legislation is unlikely to impact most transportation programs.

## **State Legislative Update:**

Mindy Carlin of Access Point provided a state legislative update reporting that Democrat, Abigail Spanberger, former congresswoman, and the current Lieutenant Governor, Republican, Winsome Sears, who will face off in the race for Governor this November.

Ms. Carlin reported that there was a hotly contested Lieutenant Governor primary race on the Democratic side on June 17th. There were a total of 6 candidates competing in the primary and the winner was State Senator Gazala Hashmi from the Richmond area.

For Attorney General on the Republican side the incumbent Jason Miyares is running again. There was no Republican primary, so he will move forward to the general election. On the Democratic side, former state delegate from Norfolk, Jay Jones, won that primary, so he will be facing Miyares in November.

Ms. Carlin noted that she is in the process of working on a detailed summary of the primaries that she will share with Noelle Pinkard who can forward that information to ELAC. Carlin concluded that she is also working on a matrix that will evaluate the November House of Delegates races in those seats where a change could happen.

## **DC Advocacy Day**

Noelle Pinkard provided the Committee with updates from the DC Advocacy visit and APTA Legislative Conference debriefing.

We attended the American Public Transit Association Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C. from May 18<sup>th</sup> to May 20<sup>th</sup> and received great briefings from the FTA and had some panel meetings and presentations on ways to better communicate the transit story.

HRT attendees met with legislative staff from the entire Hampton Roads delegation and were thrilled to be able to meet directly with Congresswoman Kiggins. We promoted our \$3M earmark request for paratransit fleet expansion.

Additionally, we talked about safety initiatives that Commissioner White took the lead on. We explored partnerships, including potential ones with the Department of Defense that Commissioner Goodwin has spearheaded. Caleb Smith discussed the Norfolk Naval Station shuttle, which has seen incredible ridership increases.

## **Local Advocacy City Council Presentations**

Noelle Pinkard provided the Committee with updates regarding Local Advocacy City Council presentations. Ray Amoruso and the Planning and Development department is scheduling meetings with all six member cities to provide updates on projects and service levels that will be recommended for the next fiscal year. Hopefully, we can come together by the end of the summer to brief them on



# HAMPTON ROADS TRANSIT

sustainability study, the SOP, and any other initiatives that will impact their respective cities. As those meetings are scheduled, we will share with ELAC.

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

Alexis Majied gave the Marketing & Communications update. HRT has officially launched the Summer 2025 VB Wave Trolley Campaign with a fresh new brochure. A total of 65,000 copies have been printed and distributed regionwide to promote the service and build on last year's momentum, which saw significant growth in ridership. As part of the campaign, three promotional videos have been produced and are currently circulating on social media.

On June 5th, HRT held a ribbon cutting ceremony to celebrate the installation of three new ferry shelters at High Street, North Landing, and Waterside ferry docks. These modern shelters will be equipped with digital signage, solar lighting, and speaker systems that will allow staff to deliver real-time announcements directly from headquarters. This project, led by Sybil Pappas and her team, reflects HRT's continued investment in rider comfort and communication.

At the recent Virginia Transit Association (VTA) Conference, held May 28–29, the marketing and communications team was honored with the Transit Marketing Award in the Tourism Category. The award recognized the success of the 2024 VB Wave Trolley 40th Anniversary Campaign, which resulted in a 40% increase in ridership and elevated the visibility of transit services in the tourism space.

In a show of community pride, HRT also participated for the first time in the Portsmouth Memorial Day Parade. A specially decorated bus with red, white, and blue bunting made its way through the parade route, and staff members reported a great time connecting with attendees. Alexis thanked Commissioner Tony Goodwin for the invitation to participate and for his attendance. HRT looks forward to future participation.

## **New and Old Business**

Commissioner Goodwin emphasized promoting the SOP to city councils and community in preparation for potential 2026 implementation. Caleb Smith shared the DoD Partnership discussions where HRT recently met with representatives from the Norfolk Naval Shipyard to discuss launching a shuttle service—similar to the Base Express at Naval Station Norfolk. However, instead of an internal loop, the shipyard is interested in a service that connects various external sites in Portsmouth, such as the hospital and child development centers.

HRT is waiting to receive a detailed map from the shipyard outlining desired shuttle stop locations. Once received, HRT will assess feasibility and potentially apply for a TRIP grant through the Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) to support the service. In the meantime, shipyard representatives have been invited to ride the current Base Express shuttle to better understand its operations. Further updates will be shared once additional information is provided.

The meeting adjourned at 2:30pm.

The next ELAC meeting is scheduled for July 16<sup>th</sup>, 2025, in the Hampton Boardroom.