



HAMPTON ROADS TRANSIT

External Legislative Advisory Committee Minutes

Wednesday, September 17, 2025

1:30 PM

Hampton, VA

Commissioners in Attendance:

Commissioner Anthony Goodwin, Chair ELAC
Commissioner Roland White, Hampton
Commissioner Hope Harper, Hampton

Attendees:

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

HRT Staff:

Amy Jordan, Director of Business Development
Noelle Pinkard, Organizational Advancement Officer
Gene Cavazos, Director of Marketing
Petra Jovanovic, Executive Assistant
Thomas Becher, Communications Manager
John Powell, Telecommunications Specialist
Caleb Smith, Military and Government Outreach Liaison

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 16th and August 20th, 2025, External and Legislative Advisory Committee (ELAC) meetings. Commissioner Hope Harper made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Roland White. The minutes were approved by the committee.



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Federal Legislative Update:

Megan Rowley of Squire Patton Boggs provided the federal legislative report reporting that Congress has just under two weeks to pass a short-term continuing resolution (CR) to fund the government and avoid a government shutdown before the September 30 federal funding deadline. The duration of the CR is likely to be less than 3 months.

Ms. Rowley noted that the House and Senate Appropriations Committees advanced their Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 THUD appropriations bills on July 17th and July 24th, respectively. Both bills are awaiting floor action. Further negotiations on individual FY 2026 spending bills are likely to continue after the passage of a CR.

State Legislative Update:

Ms. Mindy Carlin of Access Point provided the state legislative update reporting on proposed changes to the state's Making Efficient and Responsible Investments in Transit (MERIT) capital and operating funding program. Program evaluations goals include an emphasis on outcome focused metrics, performance-based allocations, formula simplification, and funding predictability. The proposed changes are currently under consideration by the Transit Service Delivery Advisory Committee (TSDAC) and are expected to be voted on by the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) at its December 9th meeting.

Legislative Agenda

Noelle Pinkard presented the Draft 2026 Legislative Agenda. This year's agenda is centered around policy consideration and not separated by state and federal priorities. The categories include:

- Promoting economic growth,
- Supporting military communities,
- Building community connections,
- Enhancing quality of life for our residents, and
- Attracting and retaining a diverse workforce.

The ELAC Committee will make a recommendation to the TDCHR for adoption. Voting for this recommendation is scheduled to happen in the November TDCHR meeting after a 30-day commission review. Chair Goodwin suggested adding cleanliness to the legislative agenda to reflect HRT's effort to keep its vehicles clean and safe.

Local Advocacy City Council Presentations

Noelle Pinkard provided an update regarding local city council advocacy meetings. HRT has already presented its System Optimization Plan (SOP) to Virginia Beach, Portsmouth and Chesapeake City Councils. The same presentation will be given on October 28th to the Norfolk City Council, as well as on October 14th to the Newport News City Council. HRT is currently working with City of Hampton to schedule this meeting with them as well.



Marketing & Strategic Communications Department update

Thomas Becher provided the Marketing & Communications update. The Marketing and Communications team produced a video as an addition to the paper version of HRT's annual report.

Link for the video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X0s1kLDcE8Y>



The marketing team is also completing the goCommute Annual report, which is the first one under the new name.

The Student Freedom Pass campaign has been in progress since the start of the school season; to date, the Marketing team has issued 294 passes to students across Hampton Roads. This includes 137 passes issued at both palooza events hosted by HRT, 56 at Heritage High School, and 201 passes issued at Maury High School.

Military Outreach update

Caleb Smith provided the committee with a military outreach update. Caleb's outreach includes bi-weekly new employee orientations at Norfolk Naval Shipyard and Naval Station Norfolk, aimed at onboarding new staff at these key installations. Caleb also attends the NAVSUP FLC Norfolk Navy Food Management Team monthly indoctrination (INDOC) sessions at Naval Station Norfolk to orient new



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team members and the bi-weekly Fort Eustis New Soldier Information Fair to support incoming service members.

Caleb further reported that several councils and committees meet regularly to address military affairs across the region: the Peninsula Military Affairs Council meets monthly, as does the Portsmouth Mayor's Military Affairs Committee. The Virginia Beach Military Economic Development Advisory Committee (MEDAC) meets bi-monthly to discuss military-related economic development. Caleb Smith participates in as many of these meetings as possible for the opportunity to familiarize military personnel with the variety of services that HRT offers.

New and Old Business

Chair Goodwin reminded the committee that Safety Town in Portsmouth will celebrate its 50th anniversary this October. HRT will provide bus signage and other items that can help children to familiarize themselves with public transportation.

Caleb Smith provided update regarding Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation. The city of Portsmouth will apply in spring for additional funding to implement strategies regarding flooding that have been affecting neighborhoods that lead to military installations.

The meeting adjourned at 2:30pm.

The next ELAC meeting is scheduled for October 15th, 2025, in the Norfolk Boardroom.