



**Meeting of the External Legislative Advisory Committee  
Hampton Roads Transit**

Wednesday, January 14<sup>th</sup> at 1:30 p.m.

3400 Victoria Boulevard, Hampton – In Person - Zoom

Chair Goodwin called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

**Commissioners in attendance:**

Commissioner Anthony Goodwin, ELAC Chair, Portsmouth

Commissioner Roland White, Hampton

**Hampton Roads Transit (HRT) staff in attendance:**

Alexis Majied, Chief Communications Officer

Noelle Pinkard, Organizational Advancement Officer

Luis Ramos, Executive Assistant to the President & CEO

Thomas Becher, Communications Manager

John Powell, Telecommunications Specialist

Caleb Smith, Military and Government Affairs Outreach Liaison

Jayda Aldegon, Hampton Roads Transit

**Others in attendance via phone/(Zoom)/In-Person:**

Mike Miller, The Ferguson Group

Jeremiah Van Auken, The Ferguson Group

Jeffrey Burke, The Ferguson Group

Sheri Neil, City of Portsmouth

Annika Eng, Access Point Public Affairs

Cassidy Taylor, Access Point Public Affairs

Mindy Carlin, Access Point Public Affairs

Janice Taylor, League of Women Voters

Gretchen Heal, Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce

**Approval of December 3rd, 2025, Meeting Minutes**

Chairman Goodwin asked for a motion to approve the minutes from September 2025, October 2025, November and December 2025 External and Legislative Advisory Committee (ELAC). Lacking a quorum, the vote was postponed until the February ELAC meeting.

**Federal Legislative Report**

Mike Miller and Jeremiah Van Auken from the Ferguson Group provided the federal legislative update noting that the House and Senate returned to Washington on January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2026. The House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure continues to work on the Surface Transportation Reauthorization bill. No text has been reported or released to date. On the Senate side, the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs has not held any markups or considered any legislation pertinent to HRT's public

transit interests. The House and Senate Committees on Appropriations steadily work through the remaining nine full-year FY2026 spending bills.

The House passed a three bill “minibus” appropriations package on January 8, 2026. The legislation is expected to be considered by the Senate next week. Appropriations leadership has released the bill text for their next spending package, which should receive a House vote this week. Remaining bills include those from the Subcommittees on Homeland Security; Defense; Labor; Health and Human Services; and Transportation, Housing and Urban Development. The current stopgap spending bill expires on January 30.

The Department of Transportation (DOT) announced the opening of the Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Grants for Fiscal Year 2036 that will make \$1.5 billion available for infrastructure projects. Applications are due February 24, 2026. DOT also announced \$1 billion in Safe Streets and Roads for All competitive Grant awards, 11 projects in Virginia was selected.

As part of the Freedom 250 celebrations, DOT announced the “Paint the Plane, Train, and Automobile project to drape all modes of transportation in patriotic design for America’s 25th anniversary.

Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Administrator Marcus Molinaro will be in Charlotte, North Carolina, on February 16, 2026, and participate in a roundtable discussion with local officials and business leaders, as FTA continues their efforts to address public transit system safety nationwide.

Jeremiah Van Auken further reported that the House of Representatives version of the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development Appropriations bill includes \$850,000 earmark for new paratransit vehicles for HRT. We will continue to monitor the appropriations process and remain hopeful that the final version of the transportation funding bill will include this earmark. Ms. Janice Taylor inquired if we could appeal to ask for additional funding. Jeremiah Van Auken explained that there is no appeal process for appropriations bills.

### **State Legislative Update**

Caleb Smith delivered the state legislative update. The 2026 Virginia General Assembly session convened on Wednesday, January 14<sup>th</sup>. Governor-Elect Abigail Spanberger will be inaugurated on Saturday, January 17<sup>th</sup>.

During the General Assembly session, HRT staff will be meeting with legislators, attending committee and subcommittee meetings, and tracking all transportation bills or other legislation impacting HRT. There are a number of bills from the Northern Virginia delegation that address taxes and transit funding that HRT is currently reviewing.

Delegate Alex Askew has introduced two bills regarding HRT. HJ26 requests DRPT and HRT to conduct a two-year study on extending light rail to the Virginia Beach Oceanfront. HJ28 forms a joint subcommittee to study for providing long-term,

sustainable, and dedicated operations and capital funding transit in Hampton Roads. This is modeled after the joint study that Northern Virginia conducted over the past two years. The General Assembly is also voting this week to introduce a constitutional amendment that would change Virginia's congressional districts.

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

Alexis Majied presented the Committee with a Marketing and Communications update.

HRT's Winter Wonderland campaign continued in December with a Children's Read and Ride event. Dozens of children boarded the Winter Wonderland train at Newtown Road Station, enjoyed a trip to the EVMC/Fort Norfolk Station and back while volunteers from the Norfolk Public Library read books and led Christmas carols. Our next Winter Wonderland event "Tracks on Tracks" will be held on January 28<sup>th</sup>. We will be partnering with Hot 91 (NSU's radio station), who will be playing disco-soul train type music onboard the train. Our final event, Galentine's Day Silent Read, will be held on February 12<sup>th</sup>.

Also in December, HRT's Marketing and Strategic Communications team introduced HRT-V. Several monitors have been installed in lobbies and breakrooms throughout the agency, and they have begun displaying a rotation of general announcements, reminders, news and events. We envision this tool to help engage and inform employees no matter where they are located in the organization and keep them current on important activities and initiatives.

Lastly, we hosted HRT's annual Bus and Maintenance ROADEO last month at Todd Stadium and Hampton HQ. Operator Shawn Johnson and Mechanic Vincent Biggs claimed top honors, and they, along with the next top three operators and top two mechanics, will go on to compete at the Virginia State Bus and Maintenance Rodeo – hosted by HRT in Hampton this March.

### **New and Old Business**

There was no old or new business discussed.

### **Adjournment**

With no further business to conduct, the meeting was adjourned at 2:35 pm.