

December 10, 2025

Memorandum #2025-163

TO: Regional Transit Advisory Panel Members

BY: Pavithra Parthasarathi, Deputy Executive Director

RE: Regional Transit Advisory Panel Meeting Agenda – December 17, 2025

The next meeting of the Regional Transit Advisory Panel (RTAP) has been scheduled for Wednesday, December 17, 2025, from Noon to 2:00 PM. Lunch will be provided. The agenda is attached. Discussion items will include the following:

- Suffolk Transit Update
- HRTPO's Multimodal Connectivity Toolbox
- Hampton Roads Transit (HRT) Sustainability Study Overview and Update
- U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) Proposed Changes to Public Transit Funding

This meeting will be held in person in Board Room A/B of the Regional Building located at [723 Woodlake Drive, Chesapeake, VA 23320](#).

Additionally, the meeting will be live-streamed and available for viewing on [YouTube](#) and [Facebook](#).

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Attachments

**Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization
Regional Transit Advisory Panel
Meeting Agenda**

**Wednesday, December 17, 2025
12:00 Noon**

**Board Room A/B
The Regional Building
723 Woodlake Drive, Chesapeake**

1. Call to Order and Introductions

2. Approval/Modification of Agenda

The Regional Transit Advisory Panel (RTAP) members are provided with an opportunity to add or delete items from the agenda. Any item for which a member desires consideration by the RTAP should be submitted at this time, as opposed to under “Other Business.”

Recommended Action: Approve the agenda.

3. Public Comment

Members of the public will be provided with an opportunity to address the RTAP. Comments will be limited to three minutes per speaker.

4. Minutes

Minutes from the RTAP meeting held on October 20, 2025 are attached.

Attachment 4

Recommended Action: Approve the minutes.

5. Suffolk Transit Update

Suffolk Transit will provide updates on its efforts to improve the transit user experience, including upgrades to its bus camera systems and the addition of onboard announcements. The briefing will also cover the Transit Route naming contest and showcase the public art project that is underway and currently installed at two bus shelters.

Ms. Maria Ptakowski, Transit Manager, Suffolk Transit, will brief RTAP on this item.

6. U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) Proposed Changes to Public Transit Funding

Draft internal proposals from the US Department of Transportation (USDOT) seek to curb federal spending and limit state flexibility in using their highway funds for public transit (Attachment 8A). If implemented, these changes could have significant impacts on transit funding across the region.

HRT staff have drafted a letter (Attachment 8B) for RTAP members to convey to the Federal delegation on the impacts of these proposed changes and the need to protect mass transit funding.

Ms. Noelle Pinkard, Organizational Advancement Officer, will be available to clarify the proposed changes and address questions from RTAP members.

Attachment 6A

Attachment 6B

7. Multimodal Connectivity Toolbox – Transit Stops

This item was presented to the RTAP in September 2024. HRTPO staff have been working on a Multimodal Connectivity Tool to evaluate bus stops within the Hampton Road Transit (HRT), Williamsburg Area Transit Authority (WATA), and Suffolk Transit service areas. The focus of this effort is to assist transit agencies and localities in identifying the highest priority for additional bus stop infrastructure.

The tool development centered on identifying bus stops and the population served within a half-mile radius that provided access to essential services. Staff utilized surveys to help determine a list of essential services (shown below) to address in the analysis.

- Hospitals
- Urgent Care
- Colleges and Universities
- Libraries
- Military bases
- Major Grocery Stores
- Municipal Centers
- Major Employment Centers
- Airports

The next phases of the study determined transit stop proximity to essential services as well as route frequency. A few scenarios will be shared to illustrate some of the potential uses of the tool.

Mr. Matthew Harrington, Transportation Planner, HRTPO, will brief RTAP on this item.

8. Hampton Roads Transit (HRT) Sustainability Study Overview and Update

Hampton Roads Transit (HRT) will provide an overview and update on the Sustainability Study currently under development. Once completed in late December, the study will document regional transit capital and operating funding needs for the next decade and identify public policy challenges, opportunities, and strategies to support cost-containment and long-term operating and fiscal sustainability.

Ms. Noelle Pinkard, Organizational Advancement Officer, will brief RTAP on this item.

9. Other Business

- **Round the Room**

RTAP members will be provided with an opportunity to share any information related to public transit in the Hampton Roads/757 region.

10. Next Meeting

11. Adjournment

Summary Minutes of the HRTPO Regional Transportation Advisory Panel (RTAP) Meeting October 20, 2025

The meeting of the HRTPO Regional Transit Advisory Panel (RTAP) was called to order at 12:06 p.m. in the Regional Building Boardroom, 723 Woodlake Drive, Chesapeake, Virginia, with the following in attendance:

RTAP Members in Attendance:

Keith Moore	Dr. Claudean Kizart
Janice Taylor	John Wiley
Sandra Brandt	Mark Perryman
Ellen Ruane	Garry Harris
Linda Peck	Matt Scalia
Harvey Waters	Peter Shaw
Maria Ptakowski	

HRTPO/HRPDC/HRTAC Staff:

Robert A. Crum, Jr.	Greg Grootendorst
John Mihaly	Quan McLaurin
Rob Cofield	Pavithra Parthasarathi
Jeff Raliski	Eric Walberg
Todd Halacy	Sam Belfield
Husain Alegimenlen	Jennifer Hodnett
Rob Case	Whitney Katchmark
Matt Klepeisz	

Others Recorded Attending:

John Lauterbach, Commander Mike Avallone, Tracy Wright, Steve Zollos, Avery Daugherty, Megan Gribble, Karen Kitsis, Ben Goodill, Steve Florian, Diane Kaufman, Andrew Pease, Jo Ann Short, Marcellus Nixon, and Mark Geduldig-Yatrofsky.

Approval/Modification of Agenda

The meeting agenda was approved as distributed with no changes or amendments.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Minutes

Mr. Robert Crum, HRTPO Executive Director, noted that the RTAP minutes of the June 16, 2025, meeting were included in the Agenda packet distributed in advance of the session. The minutes were then unanimously approved.

Williamsburg Area Transit Authority (WATA) Update

Mr. Matthew Scalia and Mr. Ben Goodill provided an overview of both current WATA operations and upcoming service enhancements and capital improvement projects at the agency. It was reported that WATA ridership has now returned to FY 2019 pre-COVID levels, with the transit system carrying more than 1.5M passengers last year across 12 routes.

WATA's FY 2025 Operating Budget totaled \$9.8M, with federal funding providing almost 42% of the total. Partnership with both the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation and the College of William and Mary are important contributors to the system as well.

WATA operates a low-emission fleet made up of a combination of both clean diesel and Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) vehicles. The agency is fully staffed with drivers and also operates the system's complimentary Paratranit service in-house.

As funding is identified, ongoing enhancements to the WATA system include the implementation of service frequency enhancements across selected major routes in line with the recommendations outlined in the agency's Strategic Plan. WATA has also recently invested more than \$1M on onboard vehicle technology improvements, including the launch of a mobile ticketing option, which is generating \$10K a month in revenue.

Current major facility construction activities include a \$25M upgrade and expansion of WATA's Operations and Maintenance Facility and the creation of a new Northern Transfer Center which will serve four routes at a cost of \$11M. Both projects are on schedule to be completed in FY 2027.

Dr. Kizart inquired about WATA's public input approach for the strategic plan. It was reported that onboard surveys of current riders was the most effective outreach tool.

Mr. Crum complimented WATA staff on being able to hire sufficient numbers of drivers and asked if there were specific approaches and strategies the agency could share. Mr. Scalia stated that no single factor is assisting the agency in its recruitment efforts, but being a smaller community and agency, and the familiarity among the staff team are among the factors that appear to help. Ms. Ptakowski reported that Suffolk Transit can cite those same reasons related to its hiring successes. Ms. Kitsis noted that recent revisions to HRT's mandatory overtime policies have enticed 18 former operators to return to the agency.

Mr. Scalia noted that WATA is also seeking funding to support special routes and services in connection with the upcoming Virginia 250 celebrations next summer, which are expected to attract approximately three million visitors.

Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) Update: *Virginia Breeze* – Tidewater Current Route Finalization

Mr. Avery Daugherty from the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) provided an update on the proposed extension of the *Virginia Breeze* intercity bus service to the Hampton Roads region. The first *Virginia Breeze* route began operations in 2017, and

since that time, the service has proven to be an important travel option connecting regions across the Commonwealth.

For the Hampton Roads extension, it was reported that procurement negotiations are underway with two potential operators. Six bus stop locations have been secured between Harrisonburg and New Kent County, and work is underway to secure approvals for new stop locations in Hampton Roads, including the Williamsburg Transportation Center, Newport News Transportation Center, a Norfolk site to be determined, and the Virginia Beach Oceanfront Visitor's Center.

DRPT is also presently advancing multiple stakeholder coordination activities with local governments, businesses, and community organizations to create partnerships in support of the new transit service. Other remaining tasks include the placement of bus stop signage and other infrastructure, implementing marketing and public awareness campaigns, finalizing the route schedule, and planning service launch events.

Questions from the RTAP further detailed that fares will be finalized once the operator is selected, but something in the range of \$40 for a full-length trip from end to end would be comparable to existing routes. Further, the service would be bidirectional year-round, taking about six hours to travel from end to end. Mr. Daugherty stated that ridership estimates for the Hampton Roads connection have recently been updated from the original figures from several years ago, and he would forward this information to the RTAP

Hampton Roads Transit (HRT) Unified Fare System Study

Mr. Andrew Pease of the Arcadis team presented an overview of the current Unified Fare System Study for Hampton Roads, an ongoing effort to identify strategies for better connecting the region's three transit providers through unified fare structures, policies, payment media, and systems to create a more seamless travel experience.

The work completed to date on the study includes the overall project needs assessment and industry scan of peer transit systems. The project team is now developing alternatives, which includes a modeling phase to assist with the quantitative and qualitative analysis of options. The technology analysis will review issues such as system compatibility, interoperability, and payment media impacts. Mr. Pease noted that RTAP will be briefed at a later meeting before the study makes its final recommendations and conclusions around the end of the year.

Discussion points highlighted that analysis must also strongly consider the impacts of recommended fare system changes on the Paratransit system and not just focus on the fixed route network. Furthermore, it was stated that equity issues related to varying access, across both the region and the agencies, to technology, banking systems, and other similar potential obstacles must be fully considered as well in the analysis.

Regional Legislative Priorities

Mr. Crum indicated that this topic would be deferred to a later date. A meeting time, in December, in advance of the start of the next Virginia General Assembly session, will be identified for this discussion.

Other Business

“Around the Table” updates and general comments from RTAP members are noted as follows:

1. HRT reported that the State of Transit Event in Hampton tomorrow is sold out.
2. HRTPO staff confirmed that all of the presentations from today will be posted on the website after the meeting.
3. Suffolk Transit is receiving artist submissions for their bus stop artwork project.
4. Step Up Incorporated is celebrating 50 years of service to the community.
5. Mr. Zellos reported that Senior Services has initiated a feasibility study with the State reviewing options to transition its operations to alternative fuel vehicles.
6. Todd Halacy was introduced as the new incoming Deputy Director of the Hampton Roads Transportation Accountability Commission (HRTAC).
7. Mr. Harris promoted Adopt a Bus Stop opportunities.
8. Mr. Marcellus Nixon indicated that the Southside Network Authority is available to meet with groups to discuss the opportunities being created by the new fiber ring under construction in the region.

Adjournment

There being no more business before the group, the meeting was adjourned at 1:37 p.m.

Trump administration proposals seek to eliminate transit funding

DOT recently sent two proposals to the White House budget office seeking to pare back transit money.

By Chris Marquette | 11/14/2025 06:11 PM EST

The Trump administration is seeking to significantly curb federal spending on mass transit, according to two internal proposals obtained by POLITICO.

The actions fall in line with a flurry of Trump-led efforts targeting Democratic-run states and cities.

In the first proposal, the administration is considering killing an account within the Highway Trust Fund that provides billions of dollars for mass transit and wants to divert that money into an account that funds highway construction, a move that would be a devastating blow to mass transit systems across the U.S.

In a second proposal, the DOT is looking to eliminate the Federal Highway Administration's eligibility to fund transit projects and wants to prohibit states from using highway formula dollars for transit projects. The proposal notes that in fiscal 2024 about \$1.6 billion was flexed from the FHWA's highway account to the Federal Transit Administration for that purpose.

Both proposals were sent to the White House's Office of Management and Budget earlier this month, according to two DOT employees familiar with the effort who were granted anonymity to discuss internal operations.

"As a general policy matter, highway funds should be spent on highway projects. The current combination of broad eligibility to use highway formula funding on transit projects and to transfer that funding to FTA conflicts with that policy principle," the FHWA proposal reads.

DOT did not respond to a request for comment. The White House did not respond to a request for comment.

The administration is hoping the proposals get incorporated into the upcoming surface transportation bill, the people said. The effort comes as Congress is looking for a way to address the Highway Trust Fund's imminent insolvency issue — the fund is derived from federal fuel taxes — and are trying to find a way not to have to pull more money from the Treasury Department.

In the proposal that seeks to cull the mass transit account, DOT makes the case that it should be cut to ensure a direct user pay model rather than extracting money from highway users and sending it to transit. For the period covered by the 2021 bipartisan infrastructure law, the highway account is projected to spend an average of 33 percent more than it brings in: \$55.3 billion a year compared with average annual revenues of \$41.6 billion, according to the proposal.

The Congressional Budget Office in early 2025 [estimated the next five-year surface bill](#) would need approximately \$150 billion to keep the fund going.

Currently, the highway and mass transit accounts receive revenue from federal fuel taxes and other federal taxes on truck users. While the majority of Highway Trust Fund revenues go to the highway account, the mass transit account gets a portion. From the 18.3 cent per gallon gas tax, the highway account gets 15.44 cents and the mass transit account gets 2.86 cents, [according to the Congressional Research Service](#).

Decimating the mass transit account would “significantly reduce the projected deficit of the HTF, improve alignment of expenditures with dedicated revenues, and restore long-term fiscal discipline,” according to the proposal.

And the effort to stop states from being able to flex FHWA formula to FTA takes aim at particular states, including California, Hawaii, Ohio, Maryland and Vermont, which flexed more than five percent of their federal aid highway formula funding to FTA in fiscal 2024. DOT further notes that if the proposal was currently in place none of that money would go to transit and instead “presumably would have led to more of that money going toward highway projects.”

Gutting mass transit funding could create major headaches in bipartisan surface bill talks. On the House side, Transportation Chair [Sam Graves](#) (R-Mo.) and ranking member [Rick Larsen](#) (D-Wa.) typically work in a bipartisan fashion, most notably evidenced by their work in the 2024 FAA reauthorization law.

Larsen, a staunch proponent of transit funding, slammed the DOT proposal.

“Where do these harebrained ideas come from? Millions of people travel everyday using transit. Most states rely on transit to provide another option for people to move around. Transit investments create and support jobs. Need I go on?” said Larsen in a statement. “These heavy-handed, top-down, egghead think tank ideas need to die.”

Spokespeople for Graves and Larsen did not immediately respond to requests for comment, nor did spokespeople for Senate Environment and Public Works Chair [Shelley Moore Capito](#) (R-W.Va.) and ranking member [Sheldon Whitehouse](#) (D-R.I.).

Organization/Personal Letterhead

December XX, 2025

The Honorable Mark Warner
United States Senate
703 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tim Kaine
United States Senate
231 Russell House Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Robert C. Scott
United States House of Representatives
2328 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jen Kiggans
United States House of Representatives
152 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator/Representative Last Name,

As you may be aware, the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) has reportedly submitted two proposals to the Office of Management and Budget that would fundamentally reshape longstanding federal transit funding structures. The DOT changes, which could potentially be incorporated into the upcoming surface transportation reauthorization bill, include:

1. **Eliminating the Highway Trust Fund's Mass Transit Account** and redirecting those funds exclusively to highway construction; and
2. **Prohibiting the use of Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) funds for transit projects**, including longstanding flexibilities that allow state DOTs and MPOs to transfer FHWA formula dollars to the Federal Transit Administration for eligible transit investments.

As a member of the Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization (HRTPO) Regional Transit Advisory Panel (RTAP), I/we strongly reject the proposals as the Mass Transit Account has been the foundation of bi-partisan federal support for public transportation since 1982. Like other transit agencies across the nation, transit providers in Hampton Roads rely heavily on Mass Transit Account-funded Federal Transit Administration formula programs and FHWA flexibilities to maintain their systems in a state of good repair and advance capital needs. Limiting or eliminating these federal tools would severely hinder their ability to deliver safe, reliable, and efficient mobility options.

As I/we support continued and robust federal funding for public transportation, I/we encourage you to reject these proposals should they be considered by Congress during debate on the reauthorization of the surface transportation bill. Thank you for your continued partnership and leadership.

Respectfully,

Signature

Name