



RTAP

Regional Transit Advisory Panel Recommendations

January 2022

Introduction

During the 2020 General Assembly session, the legislature passed House Bill 1726 and Senate Bill 1038 which created the Hampton Roads Regional Transit Fund (HRRTF). The HRRTF is the first dedicated source of transit funding for the Hampton Roads region, and is to be used to create an interconnected network of regional backbone transit routes referred to as the 757 Express. This fund is supported by monies from the statewide recordation tax, as well as an additional grantor's tax and hotel tax that will be applied in the six Hampton Roads Transit (HRT) localities (the cities of Chesapeake, Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, Portsmouth and Virginia Beach).

In total, the HRRTF is projected to provide Hampton Roads Transit approximately \$30 million annually to support this regional backbone system. The HRRTF funds will be managed by the Hampton Roads Transportation Accountability Commission and will be used by HRT to develop a regional backbone network consisting of 13 bus routes, each with consistent 15 minute service intervals, bus stop amenities and technology to provide an interconnected transit network across the HRT localities.

As part of this action, the General Assembly enacted the following provision creating the Regional Transit Advisory Panel (RTAP):

That the Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization shall establish a regional transit advisory panel composed of representatives of major business and industry groups, employers, shopping destinations, institutions of higher education, military installations, hospitals and health care centers, public transit entities, and any other groups identified as necessary to provide ongoing advice to the regional planning process required pursuant to §33.2-286 of the Code of Virginia on the long-term vision for a multimodal regional public transit network in Hampton Roads.



RTAP Recommendations

As follow up to this legislation, the HRTPO staff worked with Hampton Roads Transit staff to develop a Membership Roster for the Regional Transit Advisory Panel. This membership roster included those sectors required by the Code of Virginia while also ensuring diversity and inclusiveness across this Panel. In July 2020, the HRTPO Board took action to formally appoint the RTAP membership, which is listed on pages four and five of this brochure.



The RTAP held its first meeting on November 18, 2020, and met eight times between November 2020 and November 2021. To begin its work, the RTAP received information briefings from the three transit agencies serving the Hampton Roads region: Hampton Roads Transit, Williamsburg Area Transit Authority (WATA) and Suffolk Transit. The RTAP also reviewed the legislation approved by the Virginia General Assembly and discussed the importance of a regional transit network to the economic health and competitiveness of the Hampton Roads region.





The RTAP membership also held an extensive roundtable discussion on issues, challenges and opportunities related to transit in the Hampton Roads region. Based on the input received from the RTAP membership, the RTAP formed nine work groups around the following topic areas:

- Transit Oriented Development
- Affordable Housing
- Bus Stop Amenities
- Transit Advocacy/Ambassadors
- Transit and the Military
- Serving Major Employment Centers
- Transit for the Williamsburg/Virginia Beach Tourism Corridor
- Technology
- Universities/Colleges

The RTAP members proceeded to select their preferred work groups/topics and endorsed memberships and assignments to these work groups at the RTAP's March 31, 2021 meeting. Each work group was assigned with identifying a short list of action steps that could be taken in each topic area in the near term to advance/strengthen transit in the Hampton Roads/757 Region.

The RTAP work groups each met several times over a three month period and reported their recommendations under each topic area back to the full RTAP membership. The RTAP membership discussed and reached consensus on additions/ revisions to the recommendations. The full RTAP membership then endorsed a full list of recommendations for advancing/strengthening transit in the Hampton Roads region.

The top recommendations identified by the RTAP under each category are highlighted on Pages 6-8 of this document.

RTAP Membership Roster

(Current Members and Appointed Representatives-January 2022)

Major Business and Group Members

Greater Norfolk Corporation
Greater Williamsburg Business Council
Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce
Hampton Roads Community Foundation
Hampton Roads Workforce Council
Peninsula Chamber of Commerce
Virginia Beach Vision (1 of 2)
Virginia Beach Vision (2 of 2)
Virginia Ship Repair Association (VSRA)

Linda Peck, Interim Executive Vice President
Terry Banez, CEO
Bryan Stephens, President & CEO
Deborah DiCroce, President & CEO
Shawn Avery, President & CEO
Bob McKenna, President & CEO
Martha McClees, Executive Director
Tony Nero
Bill Crow, President

Major Employers Members

Dollar Tree
Newport News Shipbuilding

Kristin Hatchett, Director of Transportation Services
Michele Walker, Parking & Transportation Manager

Shopping Destinations Members

MacArthur Center

Jim Wofford, General Manager

Tourist Destination Members

Atlantic Avenue Association
Colonial Williamsburg Foundation
Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation

Chris Neikirk, Board Member
Cliff Fleet, President & CEO
Joan Heikens, Senior Sales and Promotions Manager

Institutions of Higher Education Members

Old Dominion University
Tidewater Community College
Thomas Nelson Community College
Virginia Wesleyan

Scott Silsdorf, Director of Transportation and Parking Services
Dr. Marcia Conston, President
Dr. Towuanna Porter Brannon, President
Dr. Keith Moore, Vice President for Campus Life and Operational Management
Julie Summs, Director for Economic Development and Business Innovation

William and Mary

Military Installations Members

Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Langley Air Force Base
HRMFFA
Navy Region Mid-Atlantic (1 of 2)
Navy Region Mid-Atlantic (2 of 2)

Colonel Harry Hung, Vice Wing Commander, 633rd Air Base Wing
Rick Dwyer, Deputy Executive Director
Captain David Dees, Commanding Officer, Naval Station Norfolk
Captain Christopher Horgan, Commanding Officer, Naval Weapons Station Yorktown

Hospitals and Health Care Centers Members

Children's Hospital of The King's Daughters
Sentara

Bryant Thomas, Director Government Relations
Kurt Hofelich, VP Ambulatory Services

Real Estate Members

Urban Land Institute (ULI)
Virginia Peninsula Association of Realtors
Virginia Beach Hotel Association (VBHA)

Chip Land, Member
Susan Gaston
Tino DeStefano, Representative

RTAP Membership Roster

(Current Members and Appointed Representatives)

Public Transit Entity Members

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| DRPT | Jennifer Mitchell, Director Alternate: Jennifer DeBruhl, Chief of Public Transportation William Harrell, President & CEO Jason Souders, City of Suffolk Transportation Planning Manager Ben Goodill, Transit Planner |
| HRT | |
| Suffolk Transit | |
| WATA | |

Air Travel Members

| | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| Newport News/Williamsburg Int'l. Airport | Michael Giardino, Executive Director |
| Norfolk Int'l. Airport | Robert Bowen, Executive Director |

Community Representative Members

| | |
|---|--|
| Black BRAND | Blair Durham, Co-Founder, President |
| City of Norfolk | Amy Inman, Director of Transit |
| CIVIC Leadership Institute | Sarah Jane Kirkland, President & CEO |
| Downtown100 | Monica Meyer, Board Chair |
| Faith Inclusion Network | Mary Mathena |
| Future of Hampton Roads | Robbyn Gayer |
| Generation MOCA | Jesse Welsch |
| Habitat for Humanity of South Hampton Roads | Frank Hruska, Executive Director |
| Habitat for Humanity Peninsula and Greater Williamsburg | Janet Green, CEO |
| Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Coastal VA | Johnny Garcia, President & CEO |
| HRTPO Community Advisory Committee (1 of 2) | Brad Martin, CAC Member (Virginia Beach) |
| HRTPO Community Advisory Committee (2 of 2) | Garry Harris, CAC Member (Portsmouth) |
| LGBT Life Center | Stacie Walls, CEO |
| M. Foscue Brock Institute for Community and Global Health | Kela Cowan-Gant, Outreach Programs Coordinator |
| Salvation Army Hampton Roads | Major Donald Dohmann |
| Senior Services of Southeastern Virginia (SSSEVA) | Jason Inge, Transportation Mobility Manager |
| Small Business Development Center (SBDC) | Jim Carroll, Executive Director |
| The Connect 757 | Verlaine Quinniey, Founder & CEO |
| Urban League of Hampton Roads (ULHR) | Zakkiyya Anderson |
| VOLUNTEER Hampton Roads | Stephanie Gorham, President and CEO |
| WHRO Emerging Leaders Board | Keith Darrow, Board Member |

The Regional Transit Advisory Panel (RTAP) consists of over 50 representatives from all segments of our region. We collectively believe that an effective, appropriately resourced and strong performing regional transit system is key to the economic and social well-being of the Hampton Roads region. The 757 region must have a strong regional transit system to compete for jobs and ensure an attractive quality of life for all. The Hampton Roads Regional Transit Fund and the advancement of the 757 Express Regional Backbone Network is an exciting step toward our goals. The RTAP membership asks for the assistance of our General Assembly members and local and federal government officials to support measures to continue to strengthen public transit service in our Hampton Roads/757 region.

RTAP Recommended Priorities (Key Recommendations shaded)

Advocacy/Ambassadors

- Develop a transit advocacy group to promote the importance of transit in our region.
- Meet with state legislators and local elected officials to discuss the importance of transit to the region.
- Develop an education campaign on the importance of transit.
- Create a *transit awareness event* in Richmond for all Hampton Roads transit agencies.

Affordable Housing

- Assemble a team of stakeholders such as urban planners, human service organizations and realtors to develop resources and checklists for city and county planning departments. Consider approaches such as inclusionary zoning, incentive approaches, density/transit-oriented development. Become a go-to resource for the regional community.
- Explore opportunities for workforce housing near regional backbone routes.
- Educate on transit access to affordable housing and how it relates to a living wage.

Bus Stop Amenities

- Engage private sector businesses and community partners to *Adopt-A-Stop*.
- Investigate the real-time bus app called *Transit*.
- Place display tablets at bus shelters and stops that allow passengers to use mobile devices to determine next bus arrivals.
- Coordinate efforts between transit agencies and localities to develop multi-year plans to improve sidewalk accessibility to bus stops.
- WATA - Investigate Simme Seat/Eco Seats at bus stops.
- Determine level of Smart Phone ownership among regular users of transit.
- Display route maps at bus shelters.
- Enhance transit agency websites for information related to *Adopt-A-Stop* programs.
- Establish a transit agency marketing team to engage sponsorships for *Adopt-A-Stop*.
- Utilize locality webpages to advertise *Adopt-A-Stop* opportunities.

Military And Transit

- Consider implementing an internal base circulator at Naval Station Norfolk as a pilot project – pursue funding as a potential pilot project.
- Survey personnel on Naval Station Norfolk to determine level of interest from base personnel for using public transit. Include military spouses in this survey effort.
- Develop more park-and ride facilities serving military installations.
- Consider partnerships with Uber and Lyft to defray costs and challenges for our military personnel.

RTAP Recommended Priorities (continued)

Serving Major Employment Centers

- Add more park-and-ride facilities along 13 regional backbone routes. Utilize parking lots of big-box commercial establishments. Collaborate with Virginia Peninsula Chamber and Hampton Roads Chamber to convene a roundtable with property representatives to explore park-and-ride opportunities. Potential for win/win opportunities.
- Consider transit connections to our International Airports.
- Provide enhanced transit service to emerging epicenter for Healthcare (Eastern Virginia Medical School/Children's Hospital of The King's Daughters/Sentara and Old Dominion University Health Care Center in Norfolk).
- Southside shipyards have major parking challenges. Initiate discussions with Virginia Ship Repair Association to explore transit for shipyard employees.
- Engage in additional discussions with Newport News Shipbuilding to explore approaches to encourage increased transit usage.

Technology

- Develop a combined regional transit app.
- Provide live GPS data into existing real-time apps.
- Create an app for fare payment and mobile ticketing for all three transit providers.
- Expand app capabilities with additional services like traffic conditions and last mile availability.
- Expand capabilities of existing HRT app to include real time data, fare payment and mobile ticketing.

Tourism

- Expand routes to accommodate workforce to tourism and hospitality jobs.
- Focus on immediate and ongoing needs of hospitality and tourism employment.
- Opportunity for Tourism Transit Corridor between regional tourism sites – potential for Williamsburg to Oceanfront connector.
- HRT/WATA - create park-and-rides at shopping centers, government buildings and schools.
- Connect job seekers and job providers through dialogue.
- Identify a pilot project and related funding that will address workforce deficits.
- Identify funding partners for improvements to service.
- Implement MAX Route service improvements to MAX 960 and MAX 121.
- WATA - consider peak period frequencies to Lee Hall and coordinate with HRT to match route frequencies and span of service.
- WATA - consider service frequency changes for routes serving Historic Triangle.

RTAP Recommended Priorities (continued)

Transit Oriented Development

- Study other regions with similar sized markets that have successfully implemented Transit Oriented Development policies and strategies.
 - Consider micro-transit connections to regional backbone routes.
 - Evaluate options to provide public transportation at no cost to our residents.
- Create and implement public relations campaign to expand ridership base.
 - Expand transit access for workers during peak hours.
 - Incentivize developers to develop transit oriented centers near regional backbone routes.

Universities and Colleges

- Enhance transit service(s) to colleges/universities with improved direct connections.
 - Encourage HRT to apply for *TRIP* Program funds for zero-fares for the Tide and annual passes.
- Better integrate micro-mobility services like electric scooters and electric bikes with transit services.
 - Collaborate with campuses to promote transit to student base – i.e., student orientation, etc.
 - Develop options for autonomous transit vehicles. Implement a pilot project on a college campus or along Granby Street between Brambleton Avenue and Main Street.

The Hampton Roads Regional Transit Advisory Panel would like to thank the staff of the region's localities who also participated in this effort.



For More Information about RTAP:

*Robert Crum
HRTPO Executive Director
723 Woodlake Drive
Chesapeake, VA 23320
757-420-8300 - rcrum@hrpdeva.gov
www.hrtpo.org*