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TO: HRPDC/HRTPO Boards

BY: Robert Crum, Executive Director

RE: Executive Director's Report – October 2020

On October 5, the HRPDC issued a press release announcing that the 17 localities that comprise the Hampton Roads region have come together to produce and launch a regional public information campaign, "It's in Our Hands," to promote behaviors to stop the spread of COVID-19 in Hampton Roads. The print media and social media campaign includes a 1:13 minute video and several social-media ready graphics. The video outlines the behaviors necessary to help prevent the spread of coronavirus as well as highlights popular activities/events from each of the 17 HRPDC localities. "The campaign reminds residents and visitors to follow essential behaviors such as wearing a mask, keeping six feet apart, washing hands and sanitizing high-touch areas to help reduce the risk of COVID-19 infection," said Danielle Spach, HRPDC All-Hazards Emergency Planner. By following CDC guidelines, we all can help get back to the things we love within the region such as attending amusement parks, local festivals, concerts and sporting events.

The timing for the release of this information has been coordinated by the region's public information officers. Residents will see these graphics and the video on local government web sites, local information stations, social media platforms and locally-owned billboards. A link to the *It's In Our Hands Tool Box* is provided below, which includes graphics, logos and the video for sharing and use throughout the region.

<https://www.hrpdcva.gov/departments/emergency-management/its-in-our-hands-tool-box/>



The HRPDC/HRTPO staff continues to work in a “hybrid work environment” at the Regional Building. Approximately 12 – 15 staff have worked in person at the Regional Building every day since early March, including management and key administrative and building services staff, with the remaining staff teleworking from home. I am pleased to report that staff has responded exceptionally well to this remote work environment, and your Regional Team has maintained or exceeded productivity and project advancement during this difficult time. To facilitate this telework environment, our Agency has worked with Cox Communications to install a dedicated 1 GB fiber line to the Regional Building.

For those staff working on-site, public safety precautions have been established, and staff must adhere to these requirements. All staff must wear masks when in common areas and requirements have been established related to social distancing, hand washing, use of hand sanitizer, etc. In addition, hand sanitizer stations, protective screening and signage outlining operational policies have been installed at key locations throughout the Building. The Regional Building has been deep cleaned and is also disinfected every Friday night.

The HRPDC continues to maintain the COVID-19 dashboard to provide data, information, maps and resources concerning the COVID-19 pandemic impact in the Hampton Roads region.

The Southside Network Authority (Authority) has entered into an agreement with Columbia Telecommunications Corporation and Energy (CTC) to advance the design of the Southside fiber ring to provide construction cost estimates by the end of December. This effort will include making determinations on the final routing for this fiber ring, as well as the advantages and disadvantages of a public sector or public/private partnership funding approach. This work will allow the Authority Board to make these final determinations for the Southside fiber ring by the end of January. Construction of the Southside fiber ring is expected to begin in the 2021 calendar year, with a goal for completion by the end of 2022.

The Southside fiber ring is Phase I of a regional effort to construct an interconnected fiber network that will connect to the subsea cables that have come ashore in Virginia Beach and distribute this ultrafast broadband service throughout the Hampton Roads region. The second phase of this project will extend to the Peninsula, creating a similar ring interconnecting key resources on the Peninsula. The third phase of this effort will then extend westward into the rural areas of our region.

On September 30, the Executive Director moderated a virtual meeting in cooperation with the Hampton Roads Alliance that discussed the regional broadband initiative. He was joined by Broadband Authority Chair Susan Vitale (Chesapeake), Vice Chair Andria McClellan (Norfolk), Steven DeBerry (Authority Executive Director) and local IT consultant Mark Klett.

The HRPDC Coastal Resilience Subcommittee met on October 6. Discussion items included Coastal Resilience Legislative Priorities, Proposed Building Code Changes, and a Draft Resolution in support of the Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy (C-PACE) program.

The HRPDC Chief Administrative Officer Committee held its regularly scheduled meetings in a virtual environment on September 2 and October 7. Agenda items were as follows:

September 2

- Discussion of Senate Bill 5118 – Utility Debt Repayment Plan
- Status of locality plans for holiday parades
- President's Memoranda regarding payroll taxes
- Bills under consideration at the General Assembly of interest to localities

October 7

- Sheltering strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Other COVID related discussion items
- Review of October 15 HRPDC Agenda

The HRPDC Nominating Committee met on October 5 and the HRTPO Nominating Committee met on October 8 to recommend officers for consideration by both Boards at the upcoming October 15 HRPDC and HRTPO meetings.

The Executive Director continues to participate on the Old Dominion University Offshore Wind Executive Committee.

The Executive Director is working with community stakeholders on appointments to the Regional Transit Advisory Panel.

HRTPO staff continues to advance work on the update of the Long Range Transportation Plan.

HRTPO staff continues to provide project management and staff support services to the Regional Connectors Study.

The Executive Director will provide a presentation on the work of the HRTPO to the Hampton Roads/Richmond Mega Region Collaborative on October 13.

The Executive Director is convening a meeting of Chief Administrative Officers on the Peninsula to discuss strategies for extending the Virginia Capital Trail into the Hampton Roads region (Birthplace of America Trail).

The HRPDC/HRTPO Management Team continues to advance work on the following initiatives:

- COVID-19 Building and Operations Planning
- Annual Audit
- Annual Budget and Work Program
- IT management
- Human resource management
- Financial management support for the HRPDC, HRTPO, HRTAC, HRMFFA and Southside Network Authority