



FREIGHT TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

OF THE HAMPTON ROADS TPO

Annual FTAC Progress Report

The Freight Transportation Advisory Committee (FTAC) is a subcommittee of the Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization (HRTPO). The Committee was created December 2009 under the sponsorship of The Virginia Port Authority. Nine meetings have been held since the Committee was formed.

FTAC consists of nine voting members from different sectors of the region's freight industry. Representatives from the Virginia Maritime Association (VMA), Newport News Shipbuilding, Norfolk Southern (NS), The CrossGlobe Group, Givens Transportation, K-Line America, Target Corp., and Walmart and an elected official who also holds a seat on the HRTPO Board, per Committee Bylaws, form the current makeup of the committee.

The FTAC mission is to advocate for the transportation needs of freight in this region. Freight equals commerce and employment as it moves in and out of Hampton Roads. This advocacy is intended to provide guidance and awareness on efforts that assist the growth of existing businesses and also attract new business to the region. The Committee's focus is aimed at the economic well-being of the region and its citizens. Economic benefits result from free-flowing commerce, which is based on the predictability of on-time deliveries at reasonable costs made possible by effective transportation infrastructure.

During its inaugural year, the FTAC has found their "voice" within the Hampton Roads transportation community and participated in the funding process.

FTAC has had an impact on:

1. The HRTPO project prioritization process
2. The view that our transportation network is an interconnected system
3. That tolls may be a necessary and viable funding mechanism but need balance to draw business to the region rather than drive business away

FTAC actions supported the prioritization tool by making economic vitality an important consideration in funding decisions.

Through its work and interaction with other committees, a common theme has become that transportation infrastructure is viewed as "systems" that move freight along corridors in the region, rather than as projects divided up by locality.

If only one part of the system is improved, the bottleneck will just be moved to a different location, paralyzing both commuters and commerce moving intra- and inter-regionally. The FTAC identified the major systems that benefit freight movement as I-64, US 460, US 58, US 13, and US 17.



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The FTAC has also had an impact in regards to the mindset for tolling transportation improvement projects. The probability of tolling the bridges and tunnels that make up the region's infrastructure is quite high due to the lack of available funds; in addition to the fact that it costs 15 times more to build over or under water than it does on land. As such, toll rates for trucks will most likely be higher than those for cars. FTAC has received comments of support from other committees and HRTPO on its statements that the tipping point between tolls on freight paying for beneficial projects and where commerce suffers needs to be better understood.

The FTAC has made it known to the Board that setting tolling rates for trucks will require extensive research and analysis to determine the costs and benefits that will occur from tolls either bringing business into the region or pushing it away. Every business can be impacted differently from transportation improvements funded through tolls. Although FTAC is structured to identify these issues and advocate that they be considered, it does not have the resources to perform the in-depth study needed. Therefore, FTAC plans to request that the HRTPO Board identify funds for this study to be conducted, in order to evaluate the tipping points between tolled facilities either promoting or curtailing economic growth. The FTAC has received input from the U.S. Navy on these matters and plans to continue discussions with them as a major player in the region's freight movement business.

The FTAC has plans to conduct a more extensive public outreach campaign going forward, as its message continues to be defined. Pyramid Studios has been hired to develop a video that will emphasize the need for funding for transportation projects that will support the freight business and thus the Hampton Roads economy, jobs, and potential for growth. This video will have a positive message, highlighting the benefits of living in such a unique region, while also gently warning audiences that without more transportation funding, business and jobs will be lost and the price of goods will go up. The video will be able to be shown either separate from or in addition to presentations by FTAC members and staff.

The Committee will continue to be a voice for balance between commerce and tolling while the Long Range Transportation Plan is being finalized. It will also continue to provide advice and support for the HRTPO as they work on projects such as the Inland Intermodal Facility and other projects that relate to freight movement.