

**SUMMARY MINUTES**  
**FREIGHT TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**OF THE HAMPTON ROADS TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ORGANIZATION**

Meeting of MAY 20, 2010

Co-Chair Doug Smith called the Hampton Roads Freight Transportation Advisory Committee to order at 10:00 am in the Virginia Port Authority (VPA) Board Room with the following in attendance:

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Doug Smith  
Bill Bell  
Homer Crane  
Chris Luebbers  
David White (sub for Art Moye)  
Ron Drogan  
Keith Helton  
Jeff Frye

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Brien Craft

**STAFF:**

Jeff Florin  
Andy Hecker  
Allison Mall

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

Lieutenant Commander Wade Russell, U.S. Coast Guard  
Camelia Ravanbakht  
Rob Case  
Greg Grootendorst  
Ray Taylor  
Terri Boothe

**1. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Everyone in attendance introduced themselves and Co-Chair Doug Smith opened the public comment period. Hearing no request for public comments, Co-Chair Smith declared the public comment period closed.

## 2. OLD BUSINESS

### A. Appointment of Co-Chair

Co-Chair Smith announced that because he was not re-elected to the Portsmouth City Council, this will be his last FTAC meeting. He noted that Chairman Sessoms will appoint a new co-chair to represent the HRTPO. Mr. Smith then turned the meeting over to co-chair Bill Bell.

### B. Adoption of last meeting's minutes

The Co-Chair noted the minutes of March 18, 2009 and asked for any revisions. There being none, Mr. Smith moved the minutes be approved as submitted. David White seconded the motion and the minutes were approved.

### C. Overview of HRPDC's Transportation Prioritization Processes

Camelia Ravanbakht, Deputy Executive Director of the HRPDC, presented a PowerPoint that outlined the HRTPO's selection process for including projects in the 2034 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). It was noted that inclusion of projects must be fiscally constrained in total, meaning that funding must be available.

For the current 2030 LRTP, 145 projects totaling \$19.2 billion were considered for inclusion. Of these projects, 111 were included in the plan, totaling \$5.8 billion plus the cost of the Virginia Beach Transit Extension project.

HRTPO is in the process of developing the 2034 LRTP, with 200 projects up for consideration. These projects are submitted by the public as well as by HRTPO technical committees. HRTPO stated that the challenge for the board is to figure out the best projects that will serve the transportation needs and economic growth of the region. In order to do this, HRTPO has developed a Prioritization Tool, endorsed by the HRTPO Board, to evaluate a project's priorities—utility, viability and economic vitality—which are defined as:

*Project Utility:* Considers the project's ability to solve an existing transportation issue, which could be correlated to congestion, safety, infrastructure, condition, or ridership.

*Project Viability:* Indicates the readiness of the project to be constructed based on available funding and completion of required documentation.

*Economic Vitality:* Provides additional insight for a project's ability to support regional plans for future development and economic growth of the region.

Camelia explained that there are six project categories within the prioritization tool in order to compare related transportation modes. The categories are: highways; bridges/tunnels; bicycle and pedestrian; systems management/transportation demand management/operational improvements; transit; and intermodal.

Although exact scoring methods are not finalized yet, projects will be compared and scored within each category. The categories are each scored independently on a 100-point scale; there is not one composite score.

HRTPO has done extensive research to determine how TPOs around the country prioritize potential projects. Most organizations use one scoring base, but having three category scores (utility, viability, vitality) is better for the Hampton Roads region.

Each project is scored equally. For each category there is a set of criteria that is scored for each project, which Greg will describe in the next presentation. There are four different criteria applicable to all transportation modes for the viability category: additional funding, prior commitment, federal mandates, and project readiness.

Camelia then outlined the 2034 Long Range Plan development schedule. A list of projects needs to be approved by the Board by July 2011. The HRPDC has already begun collecting data and after approval of the prioritization tool at the June 16 Board meeting, they will start running the tool. While considered substantially complete it was stated that if FTAC or some other source identified a project that warranted consideration time still existed to include new projects in the 2034 LRTP process.

#### **D. Overview of HRPDC's Economic Vitality Model**

Greg Grootendorst, Chief Economist of the HRPDC, then presented a PowerPoint to the Committee that outlined the methodology for scoring the Economic Vitality process of the Prioritization Tool.

Greg described the extensive literature review process that was done to find patterns within other MPO's prioritization processes. A lot of consistency was found amongst the organizations as well as from professional and academic journals. It was determined that transportation improvements are necessary but not sufficient for economic development—transportation projects allow for the prospect of economic development, they do not create economic development. Because existing transportation infrastructure is already well-developed, it results in diminishing marginal returns. The literature review also revealed that most MPO's economic models are based primarily by how transportation improvements impact savings in travel time, and how they affect economic growth.

Since prioritization processes are specifically tailored to specific regions, HRPDC also held discussions with local economic developers to make sure nothing was left out of the Vitality Model. It was determined that “super sector” industries are the predominant driver of the Hampton Roads economy. These super sectors are: tourism, defense, and the Port. The economic benefits derived from each of these industries are one of the criteria in determining a project's economic vitality score. The other criteria include the project's ability to provide new capability, increased reliability, decreased travel time, labor market access and productivity gains, all of which will result in increased regional competitiveness, and thus, economic growth.

The following modes of transportation—highway, bridge/tunnel, transit, and intermodal—are the categories for scoring the economic vitality of projects.

The Highways, Bridges and Tunnels sectors use the following criteria to weigh the vitality score: total reduction in travel time across whole system, labor market access, if it addresses the needs of super sector industries, and if it increases opportunity for current and future access.

The Transit sector uses the following criteria to weigh the vitality score: labor market access, if it addresses the needs of super sector industries (excluding the Port), if it increases opportunity for current and future access, and economic distress factors (access to low income areas).

The Intermodal sector uses the following criteria to weigh the vitality score: labor market access, impact on truck movement, if it improves interaction between modes of travel (access to Port & airports, improves rail freight movement), and if it increases opportunity for current and future access.

#### **E. Discussion of Economic Vitality Model**

In response to questions by Doug Smith and Chris Leubbers about rail airport and port access all having equal scores, Greg explained that access to the Port and the airport are not weighted equally because there is not a lot of air freight in the region. Greg explained that additional points go to the Port and rail that does not count for the airport scoring from other line items within this scoring section help prioritize based on different economic contributions.

Greg explained that HRPDC is still working on developing thresholds for the Vitality Model, and that what he just presented is the methodology for scoring, not actual scoring. Andy Pickard from HRPDC would be the person to talk to about scoring; but the Model has not been run through yet.

The Committee then had a long conversation about the widening of U.S. Highway 58, which the Target distribution center is located on as an example to discuss much of the theory behind the model. Jeff Frye from Target asked if that project would fall under the intermodal sector and Greg said no, it would fall under the highway sector. He also said that future companies and intermodal parks that are planned for Route 58 in Suffolk and Isle of Wight are included in the model through the Designated Growth Area criteria. When the Committee asked Greg to run through the model for Route 58, he said that that couldn't be done yet because only the methodology has been set up.

David White then asked if the model only scored projects, or if it also scored systematic improvements. Greg said that that is a great question and idea but it's not something that can be included in this model yet because HRTPO does not have the

resources to do so, and that it would take “an incredible amount of time to run all those scenarios.”

Ray Taylor, representing the HRTPO Citizen Transportation Advisory Committee (CTAC), said that the model is “excellent” and he is glad that freight mobility is getting a lot more attention. He agreed that it is important to look at all three project priorities—utility, viability and economic vitality. However, he expressed concern that having three lists of projects instead of one could cause confusion; he said that it is inevitable that the three lists will have to be boiled down to one list. He discussed how the competitive nature of funding all these projects is “extreme,” and very political. Using a football analogy, he said “we are going to beat anyone getting to 20 yard line but difficulty getting to the goal line with the complications of the model.”

Camelia then responded to Ray by agreeing that there will be one list of projects in the 2034 Long Range Transportation, and that the purpose of this tool is to guide the board to make the decision and make one list. The Board will select projects by using this tool it will help them make final decision.

Final discussion was held on the importance of the inputs to the model. Determining what is and isn’t critical to a super sector segment or is and isn’t a high growth geographical location can affect the ranking and ultimate funding choices.

### **3. NEW BUSINESS**

#### **A. Staff overview of deliverables to freight community**

Since the scheduled time for the meeting had passed, Bill Bell asked the Committee whether they could all stay longer, and all agreed.

Andy Hecker of Moffatt & Nichol then went over the handouts that staff created and the Committee received via email and at the meeting. These included a paper describing FTAC’s position on freight; an organizational chart describing the FTAC communication process, a list of freight organizations in the region which would benefit from outreach and may provide insight into needed projects; and a form for these organizations to send to their members, who can then submit it to FTAC. The form gives businesses the opportunity to describe their thoughts on transportation projects that they believe are needed to enhance their ability to move freight efficiently.

Andy asked the Committee if they were okay with the list of organizations and all agreed that they were. Doug Smith said that the materials were “pretty straightforward,” and that subject to a few edits to the position paper—in addition to a condensed, one paragraph executive summary of the paper—made a motion to approve the paper. The motion was carried. In regards to the form, Bill Bell pointed out that it was a good way to establish two-way communication with the freight community and Andy Hecker agreed, saying that the goal of the form is to compile

and ongoing list of possible small projects that can be funded. All agreed that being proactive and sending out the form was a good plan of action.

Ron Drogan asked who will manage the returned forms and Andy Hecker said that staff will collect the forms and then bring them to the committee to discuss the projects and means of funding. Camelia noted that the logo on the form should be for HRTPO, not HRPDC. Staff noted this and agreed to revise the form prior to sending it to the organizations.

Andy Hecker then discussed how staff will review and monitor HRTPO's TTAC (Technical Transportation Advisory Committee) agendas, meetings and progress for freight-related items, because FTAC and TTAC need to work together for the good of freight. Staff will report back to Committee about TTAC progress on freight-related issues.

## **B. Round table discussion of projects to recommend and FTAC's next steps**

- June 6: HRTPO agenda posted; FTAC statement included
- June 16: HRTPO board meeting; FTAC statement presented; Board will approve Economic Vitality Tool
- July 7: TTAC Board will view entire Prioritization Tool
- July 21: HRTPO Board will view and approve entire Prioritization Tool

Butch Crane started out the discussion by saying that FTAC needs to start recommending projects for the HRTPO to include in the 2034 LRTP as soon as possible, saying, "The more we dilly-dally, we're not going to get any of these projects into the plan." He said that since FTAC is coming into the project selection process two years after it started, so the Committee should meet more regularly and have a greater sense of urgency.

Currently, there are 200 projects up for consideration. Camelia agreed to send the Committee the list after the meeting. She said that the door is not shut for submitting projects, that she will take them at any time. All projects need to be submitted and evaluated by HRPDC through the Prioritization Tool by July 2011, for the Board's approval and inclusion in the 2034 LRTP.

Doug Smith said that we fought hard to have this Committee, and Bill Bell discussed how the TPO Board Meeting was pushed back so that FTAC could review the Economic Vitality Tool, so the Committee must provide feedback to the Board. The June 16 meeting is the perfect time for the Board to hear FTAC's message, so staff will craft a message for Bill Bell to present at the meeting which reflects FTAC's thoughts on the vitality tool.

The statement will include that intermodal weighting factors in the tool are most important to FTAC. The Committee thinks that the tool should be able to be modified as "real world factors" are realized.

The Committee then requested that HRPDC staff provide updates as the testing of the Prioritization Tool continues. Greg stated that at the next meeting, they will know better how the scoring will work.

**4. ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEXT MEETING DATE, PLACE, TIME**

The next meeting will take place on Wednesday, July 14th, from 10:00 – 11:30 a.m., in the VPA Board Room. The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 noon.