

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

Meeting of MARCH 18, 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 (sub for Bill Franks)

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Brien Craft
Keith Helton
Michael Vanderhoof

STAFF

Jeff Florin
Andy Hecker
Allison Mall

OTHERS:

Camelia Ravanbakht
Rob Case
Sam Belfield
Jeff Raliski

1. PUBLIC COMMENTS AND ADOPTION OF LAST MEETING'S MINUTES

Co-Chair Doug Smith opened the public comment period and asked if anyone from the public wished to speak. There being none, he declared the public comment period closed. Mr. Smith then noted the minutes of December 18, 2009 and asked for corrections. There being none, Mr. Bell moved the minutes be approved as submitted. The motion was seconded and the minutes were approved.

2. OLD BUSINESS

A. Appointment of Co-Chair

Mr. Smith announced that he and Chairman Will Sessoms had selected Bill Bell from Northrop Grumman as the other Co-Chair of FTAC. This appointment makes Mr. Bell a non-voting member of the HRTPO board.

B. HRTPO Overview

Camelia Ravanbakht of the HRPDC provided an overview of the HRTPO information packet that each committee member received. The packet includes the following documents: an overview of HRTPO, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) about HRTPO, DOT's Guide to Transportation Decision Making, a list of HRTPO board members and the latest newsletter, and the FTAC Bylaws, which were approved on Jan. 20, 2010.

The HRTPO is the federally-mandated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for Hampton Roads. MPOs are mandated for regions with populations greater than 50,000, and there are 14 in Virginia. In 1990, the Southside and Peninsula TPOs were combined. HRTPO funding is split, with 80% coming from the federal government and 20% divided between the state and the region. Any project that is going to be funded has to go through the TPO process and be included in the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP). VDOT's guide describes the process of developing the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) that encompasses a compilation of each region's TIP.

The HRTPO develops a Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) that addresses planning for at least 20 years into the future. This plan includes strategies and actions that lead to an integrated multi-modal transportation system and a fiscally-constrained financial plan. It is predicted that approximately \$2 billion will be allocated to Hampton Roads for the next 20 years. Committee agrees that this is depressing and bad news for the region. A final list of projects that need to be funded will be approved by the TPO by the summer of 2011.

The HRTPO also allocates \$40 million through the Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) fund. Projects are considered that reduce congestion and air emissions. The fund does not have enough money to build big projects, but does have enough to fund small ones (e.g. traffic signals, turn lanes, etc.) that can have economic benefits for regional businesses, commuters, and freight.

C. HRTPO Prioritization Tool

The HRTPO is developing a tool for prioritizing projects for the LRTP. More than 200 projects have been sent in for consideration in the plan. The tool has three components – project utility (technical aspects of project); economic vitality; and benefits. Mr. Rob Case from the HRPDC will give an overview of the economic vitality tool at the next FTAC meeting in order to gain input on freight needs for the Board's approval in June.

D. Committee Discussion

The Committee commented that the new TPO Board represents the first time that Virginia General Assembly members are serving on the TPO Board. In the past there has been a disconnect between what Hampton Roads needs and the General Assembly's understanding of those needs. Since they have been added to the TPO Board, and regularly attend meetings, their understanding of Hampton Roads transportation needs is improving. The committee expressed excitement about this progress. In order to stay informed about TPO happenings, the Committee requested to be put on the e-mail distribution list. Recipients will get a press release every Wednesday, e-mail alerts stating that Board and subcommittee agendas or reports are online, and the quarterly newsletter.

3. NEW BUSINESS

A. Staff Comments

Andy Hecker from Moffatt & Nichol gave a brief overview of funding streams for freight-related projects, as noted on the funding handout. In addition to TPO sources noted by Ms. Ravanbakht, there are also many state, federal, and rail funding streams available.

Mr. Hecker stated that projects that will help freight movement needs to be identified; especially smaller projects that help freight as well as regional business, economic development and employment get prioritization. Because FTAC committee members have information about organizations and contacts that staff may not have; Mr. Hecker requested that Committee members send staff information about their mailing list in order for staff to inquire about freight-related needs. Reminders will be sent to the Committee requesting this information. After the sources are identified, staff will deliver a document to the Committee with an official statement on freight needs; and a template for soliciting feedback that will be sent to the freight community.

FTAC also needs 5 or 10 minutes at the next Board meeting to introduce the Committee's purpose and positions on freight and to give a status report of the Committee's activities and deliverables. This will heighten awareness that FTAC exists and help raise awareness about freight to the Board.

B. Round table Discussion on Freight Funding Sources

Jeff Florin brought up that there are many ways to fund projects. He said that in his experience, combining funding sources is important and is how most projects get funded. Although it tends to be a tedious process, the Committee agreed that it is the best way to get projects funded.

The Committee then discussed the benefits of including a Coast Guard representative on the FTAC because Lieutenant Wade Russell has expressed interest in being on the Committee. As Chief of the Coast Guard's Port Security Branch, he deals with maritime freight transportation on a daily basis. The Committee agreed to invite him to the next meeting.

The Committee discussed that its next step is to work towards recommending projects to the Board. It is important that the Committee does not appear to be opposed to commuter traffic; rather, projects need to be identified that help both freight movement and commuter traffic. The Committee also discussed how important the military is to the region. They agreed that the Board needs to get the Virginia General Assembly to understand that traffic congestion impedes military functionality, and that freight needs funding in order to improve traffic congestion that impedes military operations.

4. ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEXT MEETING DATE, PLACE, TIME

The next meeting will take place on Thursday, May 20th, from 10:00 – 11:30 a.m., in the VPA Board Room. At the meeting, HRPDC staff will provide a briefing and demonstration of the prioritization tool, and FTAC staff will provide input on freight needs and a template for soliciting feedback that will be sent to the freight community. Today's funding memo and agenda will be posted to HRTPO website. The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 a.m.