

**Where There's the Will, There's a Way  
Statement of Robert O. Chase  
To Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization  
June 17, 2009**

The Alliance was founded more than 20 years ago and is the only Northern Virginia private sector group focused solely on making better transportation a reality for northern Virginia citizens and businesses.

I'm here to address recent media reports that Northern Virginia's transportation grass is much greener than Hampton Roads'.

Northern Virginia has a regional authority and is part of the Washington DC, tri-state MPO. However, neither is the "powerhouse" suggested by your media.

Both these entities involve largely a bottom up processes whereby local projects are plotted on what then becomes a regional map. Linking jurisdictions, particularly across water, is unheard of and our MPO makes no effort to build consensus on regional funding.

While Hampton Roads takes improving evacuation routes seriously, our official policy is "shelter-in-place," which isn't real reassuring.

Among our public officials consensus exists on some transportation matters, but certainly not funding or many projects of substance.

Our MPO has public comment periods, but seldom acknowledges or responds to comments received, has a citizens' advisory committee that is not representative of the citizenry and has a public outreach program that reaches relatively few people.

Transportation policy in our region is based too much on political input and too little on that from transportation professionals. You have some of the best transportation professionals anywhere. You need to listen to them.

Structural changes are meaningful only to the extent they are accompanied by the political will to fund and do what needs to be done.

A decade ago Hampton Roads had the political will to achieve something neither Northern Virginia nor the Commonwealth have been able to do, which is to adopt a short list of core transportation priorities.

It's telling that our region with the nation's second worst traffic congestion and our state with the nation's third largest state operated highway network have no over-riding transportation priorities.

Hampton Roads does.

Mick Jagger says that time is on our side. In Northern Virginia that is no longer true. In Hampton Roads it is, but not for long. Hampton Roads' ability to realize its vision of a well-connected region with a diversified economy and high paying jobs rests, to a large degree, in the hands of this organization. The challenge is not to develop a new list of priorities but to summon the political will to implement those you already have.