

August 27, 2008

Memorandum #2008-144

TO: MPO Committee

BY: Joe S. Frank, Chairman

RE: Meeting with Local Legislative Liaisons

I met with some of the local legislative liaisons on Monday, August 25th to discuss the need for both a Director of Communications and Public Outreach and a Legislative Liaison who would work specifically for the HRMPO. Much of our discussion centered on the Legislative Liaison position.

As has been discussed in our MPO Committee meetings, there is a need to involve the Hampton Roads General Assembly delegation in the MPO planning process, especially during the development of the Long Range Transportation Plans. In order to accomplish this, the issue of whether the MPO needs its own Legislative Liaison or if existing local Legislative Liaisons can be better utilized was discussed at great length.

The Liaisons expressed their concerns that the MPO could run the risk of miscommunication and competing interests if a single staffer is tasked with meeting and informing all local members of the General Assembly. It was their opinion that the MPO may be able to better utilize the local liaisons that are currently in place and have developed working relationships with the legislators and their staffs. It was suggested that MPO staff use the current Legislative Liaisons as a staff resource. For the near term, I agree with this approach.

I have asked Dwight Farmer to start this process by inviting the CAOs and applicable stakeholders (VDOT, VPA, HRT, WAT, etc.) to allow their respective liaisons to create a standing committee for the MPO and/or PDC. They will meet monthly and staff will present them with relevant issues for discussion with General Assembly members. The Legislative Liaisons will then provide feedback to the MPO from the General Assembly.

With regard to the possibility of adding additional staff to perform communications and public outreach, Dwight Farmer has offered to refocus existing human and financial resources. As I see it, we have two options. The first would be to see if the "refocused" efforts and funding are effective. The second would be to hire an additional staffer in the \$65,000 - \$85,000 per year range to perform communication and public outreach. In all likelihood, this staff person would be dedicated to the MPO process.

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We will see how this works over the coming months. By better utilizing our liaisons, we can begin a more inclusive approach to the MPO planning process with our local General Assembly members. In addition, as we have already agreed, the MPO Chair will invite the Hampton Roads Legislative Caucus Chair to name one member of the Senate and one member of the House to serve as liaisons from the Caucus to the MPO.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

/kp

MPO Committee:

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