



# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

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Director

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## **APPROVED MINUTES CTB Rail and Transit Subcommittee Meeting**

VDOT Central Office – HR Training Room  
1221 East Broad Street  
Richmond, Virginia 23219  
Wednesday, March 29, 2023, 8:30 am

The CTB Rail and Transit Subcommittee held a meeting on March 29, 2023. The location was VDOT HR Training Room, located at 1221 East Broad Street, Richmond, Virginia, 23219.

### **CTB MEMBERS PRESENT**

Jennifer DeBruhl (Chair), Thomas Lawson, E. Scott Kasprowicz, Mary Hynes, Thomas Fowlkes, Mark Merrill, Dr. Raymond Smoot, Jr., and Wayne Coleman

### **STAFF AND OTHERS PRESENT**

Sheila Beard (VDRPT), Emily Stock (VDRPT), DJ Stadler (VPRA), Karen Harrington (HDR), Adisa Muse (HRT), Margaret Rockwell (McGuireWoods Consulting), Grant Sparks (VDRPT), Mike Todd (VDRPT), Tiffany Dubinsky (VDRPT), Zach Trogdon (VDRPT), Linda Balderson (VDRPT), Janet Mineva (VDRPT), Henry Bendon (VDRPT), Mary Olivia Rentner (VDRPT), Mike Todd (VDRPT), Mitchell Smiley (VML) and Dan Sonenklar (VDRPT).

### **CALL TO ORDER**

Chair DeBruhl called the meeting to order at 8:32 a.m. and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

### **APPROVAL OF THE December 6, 2022 MINUTES**

On a motion by Thomas Fowlkes and seconded by Wayne Coleman, the December 6, 2022, CTB Rail and Transit Subcommittee meeting minutes were approved.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no one signed up for public comment.

### **DIRECTOR'S UPDATE**

*Presented by Chair Jennifer DeBruhl*

Chair DeBruhl provided everyone with a brief overview of what to expect in the board meeting with updates on the following:

Statewide Rail Plan (SRP): Chair DeBruhl informed the subcommittee that the had been approved by the FRA. Additionally, she provided updates concerning two new DRPT applications for FRA corridor ID programs – the Commonwealth Corridor and the New River Valley through Bristol. The subcommittee discussed initial cost estimates, the technical specifications behind an emerging rail corridor, and potential timelines for the NRV to Bristol Corridor.

The Chair then led the subcommittee through an informal round robin on statewide rail projects and agencies. The subcommittee talked about proposals for rails and trails in Shenandoah, the purchase of and upgrade requirements for the CSX S line between Richmond and Raleigh, North Carolina's role in planning and spending on S line upgrades, and VRE.

The Subcommittee VRE discussion explored current ridership levels, commonwealth funding, and how VRE fits into the larger regional transportation and congestion program. Chair DeBruhl and Mary Hynes explained the state's contribution to VRE as essential for regional transit and traffic mitigation, with specific reference to how the recent Omniride strike demonstrated the interconnected nature of Northern Virginia transit agencies. The subcommittee also explored VRE funding mechanisms.

The Chair's final update touted Virginia state supported Amtrak routes again setting monthly ridership records, with high expectations of continued growth.

### **Rail Industrial Access Program Overview**

*Presented by Michael Todd, Rail Programs Director, DRPT*

Mr. Todd provided an overview of the Rail Industrial Access grant program, including a discussion of the creation of the program in the Virginia code; an overview of the program purpose; metrics regarding program budget, and past project investments and performance; development of current program policies; development of the current program application evaluation criteria; and introduce a schedule for reviewing and updating the current program guidance with the Board's input.

Mr. Todd highlighted the ways in which the current program guidance safeguards Virginia's funding and ensures that the benefits of each project are realized by Virginia businesses and residents. Some initial input from Board members included the need to ensure that Rail Industrial Access investments influence economic development decisions in Virginia, and potentially increasing the per project funding maximum. However, this input should not impact the protections and safeguards already established by the code and the current program guidance.

Next steps include best practice research and interviews with other State partners that manage similar grant programs.

### **FY 24 Rail Update**

*Presented by Emily Stock, Chief of Rail Transportation, DRPT*

Ms. Stock provided an overview of the FY2024 Rail Program, explaining the three main components of the program: Freight, Rail Preservation, and Rail Industrial Access. The subcommittee was especially interested in the amount of money available for Rail Industrial Access projects, discussing at some length the cap on the program relative to increases in the VDOT road access budget and the potential of increasing RIA funds on improving Virginia's competitiveness.

The FY24 update also included a breakdown of the funding requests and appropriations for Freight and Rail Preservation projects, and a brief discussion of some projects funded by each program. Ms. Stock also led the subcommittee through an impromptu overview fo the rail preservation program and process. also inquired about the ability of Class 1 railroads to apply to the freight funding program – they can.

## **FY 24 Transit Update**

*Presented by Zach Trogdon, Chief of Public Transportation, DRPT*

Mr. Trogdon delivered an overview of FY2024 Transit Programs Funding. The FY24 Cycle marks the fifth year of the MERIT (Making Efficient Responsible Investments in Transit) program, the funding and methodology of which was explained throughout the presentation. The MERIT program was presented by funding asks and allocations for operating, capital, TRIP, and special program budgets for the FY24 period, and covered prioritization and expansion project scoring and decision making processes.

Mr. Trogdon informed the board that the combination of MERIT funding and federal funds has “really shored up” the funding for MERIT special projects, though acknowledged that implementation of plans has been less immediate because of supply chain issues. The conversation then turned to long term planning, where Chair DeBruhl stepped in to provide context on DRPT’s long term capital forecasting and the subcommittee talked about local agency long term planning,

The subcommittee also heard more in detail about future of TRIP (transportation ridership incentive program), which will continue in it’s current form through the FY24 period but will see some changes next year thanks to updates passed in this years General Assembly.

After some conversation about the distribution of MERIT funds and the impact and importance of local agency funding, the presentation and subcommittee meeting wrapped.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Chair DeBruhl adjourned the meeting at 9:57 a.m. All presentations to the Board and meeting video can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC9uvU8vO09umEWIdES2lvow>

Respectfully Submitted: Sheila Beard, Executive Assistant assisted by Henry Bendon