

**New River Valley
Metropolitan Planning Organization
755 Roanoke Street
Christiansburg, VA 24073**

Minutes

March 7, 2019

MEMBERS

PRESENT:

Craig Meadows	-Montgomery County
Randy Wingfield	-Town of Christiansburg
Melissa Skelton	-City of Radford
Tom Fox	-Blacksburg Transit
Michael Sutphin	-Town of Blacksburg
Anne McClung	-Town of Blacksburg
Mike Dunn	-Virginia Tech
Jeri Baker	-VA Tech
James Perkins	-Radford University
Kevin Byrd	-NRVRC
David Clarke	-VDoT
Dan Brugh	-NRV MPO
Randal Gwinn	-Recording Secretary

ABSENT:

Mary Biggs	-Montgomery County
Becca Askey	-DRPT
Kevin Jones	-FHWA
Joe Guthrie	-Pulaski County
Tony Cho	-Federal Transit Administration-Region 111
Michael St. Jean	-VA Tech/Montgomery Regional Airport Authority
Fritz Streff	-New River Community College
Trevor Sakry	-Radford Transit
Monica Musick	-Pulaski Transit
Ken King	-VDoT
Michael Barber	-Town of Christiansburg
Jonathan Sweet	-Pulaski County

OTHERS

PRESENT:

Erik Olsen	-NRV MPO
Eli Sharp	-NRVRC
Wayne Wilcox	-NRVRC

DECLARATION OF A QUORUM AND CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Craig Meadows declared a quorum, and called the meeting to order at 2:00 P.M.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Craig next asked for comments on or changes to the proposed agenda and hearing none, he asked to hear a motion for approval of the agenda.

On a motion by Melissa Skelton seconded by Randy Wingfield and carried unanimously, the proposed meeting agenda was approved.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 1, 2018 MEETING

Craig then asked for discussion of or corrections to the meeting Minutes from the November 1, 2018 Policy Board meeting which were included in the agenda packet. Hearing none he called for a motion to approve the Minutes.

On a motion by Anne McClung seconded by Michael Sutphin and carried unanimously, the Minutes dated November 1, 2018 were approved.

PUBLIC ADDRESS

There were no citizens from the public seeking to address the Policy Board.

OLD BUSINESS

Approval of the final report of the Passenger Rail Study

Dan Brugh offered opening remarks on the Passenger Rail Study conducted under contract to the MPO by the staff of the NRVRC with the assistance of a MPO subcommittee consisting of representatives of the five NRV localities, two universities and members of the NRV Passenger Rail 2020 Committee. Nick Ruiz from DRPT also provided a great deal of assistance on the study.

Dan placed emphasis on the fact that this study was done for planning purposes only and there are no commitments for any locality contained within it. The TAC has reviewed the report and recommends acceptance by the Policy Board for possible future use by the localities. A suggested resolution is included in the meeting materials along with the copy of the final report.

Following Dan's remarks Eli Sharp presented the group with a slideshow that summarized the methodology used to conduct the study and the logic behind the recommendations contained within the final report. Eli emphasized that the station, if it becomes a reality, will be a local expense since there are few ways to generate any revenue.

Once Eli completed his presentation there was a brief discussion with Anne and Kevin complementing the design work done by the Hurt & Proffitt for the station concepts contained in the study.

Wayne Wilcox commented on the status of Norfolk and Southern's lack of participation in discussions concerning the need for them to conduct a rail traffic control modeling study to determine operational improvements needed for passenger rail expansion to the NRV and Bristol. DRPT has allocated \$350,000 to the MPO to fund this study which is the next step in bringing Amtrak to Christiansburg, however due to Norfolk Southern's desire to focus on other aspects of their business at this time little progress is being made.

Craig asked Eli what the next steps will be for the NRV Rail 2020 Committee in order to continue efforts to be as prepared as possible to move ahead on the station when and if the feasibility study is completed. Eli replied that work on enabling legislation to create a Transportation Authority to operate the station will come next and then be followed by further discussions on funding the station.

Discussion having ended on the topic Craig asked to hear a motion on the suggested resolution included in the meeting materials.

On a motion by Anne McClung seconded by Randy Wingfield and carried unanimously, the suggested resolution approving the Passenger Rail Station Ownership and Maintenance Strategy Report was accepted and follows in its entirety:

***New River Valley
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Resolution to approve the Passenger Rail Station Ownership and Maintenance Strategy Report.

On a motion by Anne McClung seconded by Randy Wingfield and carried unanimously,

WHEREAS, the New River Valley Regional Commission (NRVRC) conducted a study for the MPO to determine the best ownership and maintenance model as well as a funding strategy; and

WHEREAS, this study was conducted by the NRVRC with a special subcommittee appointed by the MPO made up of representatives of the 5 MPO localities, the 2 universities, and the NRV Rail 2020 Committee, and

WHEREAS, the NRVRC has completed work on the report and the subcommittee has concurred in the report and submitted it to the TAC, and

WHEREAS, the TAC has reviewed and recommends approval.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

The New River Valley MPO Policy Board accepts the final report of the New River Valley Passenger Rail Passenger Rail Ownership and Maintenance Strategy.

F. Craig Meadows, Chairman

NEW BUSINESS

Approval of updated Safety Performance Measures for the MPO

Dan explained that in accordance with federal requirements the targets for the Safety Performance Measures that the MPO adopted from the State in November of 2017 are required to be updated annually. The State has updated these targets and the TAC has reviewed them and recommends that the Policy Board approve their adoption. Adoption of a resolution approving the updated targets for the Safety Performance Measurements provided by the State and authorization for the Executive Director to send a letter to VDOT with the NRV MPO updates.

Dan also pointed out that a negative value in the Future Target Annual Percent Reduction Values chart on page two of the attached letter to the State Traffic Engineer at VDOT, Mr. Raymond Khoury, P.E., is based on a rolling average over the last five years and actually indicates a rise in fatalities. Dan completed his comments and there was no discussion on the topic. Craig then asked to hear a motion on the suggested resolution in the meeting materials.

On a motion by Mike Dunn seconded by Melissa Skelton and carried unanimously, the suggested resolution approving Safety Performance Measures for the NRV MPO passed and follows in its entirety:

***New River Valley
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Resolution Approving Safety Performance Measures for the NRV MPO

On a motion by Mike Dunn seconded by Melissa Skelton and carried unanimously,

WHEREAS, all MPOs are required to set performance measures by FhWA, and

WHEREAS, MPOs can either set their own measures or adopt the performance measures set by the State, and

WHEREAS, the NRV MPO elected to adopt the Performance Measures developed for the State, and

WHEREAS, the NRV MPO adopted Safety Performance Measures for the MPO in November, 2017, and

WHEREAS, the targets need to be updated annually, and

WHEREAS, the State has updated the targets for the Safety Performance Measures, and

WHEREAS, the TAC recommends approval.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the New River Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization adopts the updated Safety Performance Measures and targets set by the State.

AND FURTHER, that the NRV MPO Executive Director is authorized to send a letter to VDOT with the NRV MPO updates.

F. Craig Meadows, Chairman

Approval to Request that VDOT conduct a Study for the Valley to Valley Trail using State Planning and Research Funds (SPR)

Dan reported that last year Montgomery County proposed a “Valley to Valley Trail” to connect the Roanoke River Greenway in Salem to the New River Trail in Pulaski. In November, Montgomery County hosted a meeting of the localities along the path of the proposed trail and one of the presenters in attendance, John Bolecek from VDOT, stated that VDOT has already done two similar studies funded by State Planning and Research (SPR) funds. These were the Birthplace of America Trail and The Capital Trail. Since the proposed Valley to Valley Trail would involve a number of localities it would seem appropriate to request that VDOT also conduct a study for it. In order for the MPO to submit a request to VDOT support would also be needed from both the Roanoke Transportation Planning Organization and the New River Valley Regional Commission. The TAC has reviewed this concept and recommends that the Policy Board proceed with making this request and a suggested resolution is included in the meeting materials. There was a brief discussion after Dan completed his comments. Wayne Wilcox, a Landscape Architect and Roanoke County’s Parks and Greenway Planner, was in attendance at the meeting and was familiar with the people and processes used by VDOT to conduct the previous two studies. Wayne explained that John Bolecek with VDOT’s central office is their state wide bike and pedestrian planning professional so he is almost always deeply involved in projects of this nature. John and his supervisor Shane Sawyer, formerly with the Roanoke Valley Regional Commission, approve and manage the SPR funds so they would be the ones to receive, evaluate, approve, disapprove or adjust a request for funding of a study of this nature. John and Shane would manage a study of this type, however the MPO would be expected to do the bulk of the work on the study with the assistance of a consultant. Overall it is a fairly simple process for the MPO to get involved in.

Kevin Byrd commented that the Appalachian Regional Commission is another option to approach for funding however they would require a 50% match on funding for a similar study so requesting that VDOT utilize SPR funds instead is a more logical first step.

Dan added that there are only two possible answers to the request if we submit it; either yes or no. If yes then we proceed and if no then we move on to try other options. Dan also outlined the next steps to be taken if the Policy Board passes the resolution to file a request with VDOT for funding. This would be the MPO reaching out to the Regional Commission and the Roanoke Valley TPO to get confirmation of their support for making the request.

Discussion on the topic having ended, Craig then asked to hear a motion on the suggested resolution in the meeting materials.

On a motion by Mike Dunn seconded by Michael Sutphin and carried unanimously, the suggested resolution Requesting that VDOT fund and conduct a Study of the Valley to Valley Trail using State Planning and Research (SPR) funds was accepted and follows in its entirety.

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Resolution to approve requesting VDOT to fund and conduct a Study of the Valley to Valley Trail using State Planning and Research (SPR) funds.

On a motion by Mike Dunn seconded by Michael Sutphin and carried unanimously,

WHEREAS, Montgomery County has proposed a “Valley to Valley Trail” to connect the Roanoke River Greenway in Salem to the New River Trail in Pulaski; and

WHEREAS, many localities along the corridor have supported this concept, and

WHEREAS, this study involves many localities and can best be accomplished by VDOT, and

WHEREAS, support from the Roanoke Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) and the New River Valley Regional Commission (RC) would also be needed, and

WHEREAS, the TAC has reviewed and recommends approval.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that:

The New River Valley MPO supports this connection and requesting VDOT to fund this study using State SPR funding and authorizes the NRV MPO Executive Director to work with the Roanoke TPO and the New River Valley RC to secure their support and to submit an application to VDOT.

F. Craig Meadows, Chairman

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

VDOT update

David Clarke gave a brief update on the status of VDOT project starting or already ongoing in our area. Included were the I-81 Bridge replacements near Christiansburg and Radford, work on replacing the Route 100 over Route 11 in Dublin and the Route 460 Ramp coming into Christiansburg.

Update on MPO Traffic Model for the Long Range Plan

Dan reported that VDOT and a consultant that they hired had been working on a traffic model for use in the update to the Long Range Plan which we are required to have done by 2020 in order to extend the plan out to 2045. The consultant thought that the work on the update was completed however it was discovered that the update did not use the correct numbers for students living off campus in Blacksburg. They show only 3,000 to 4,000 students living off campus which is inaccurate and will have a negative influence on traffic projections and transit ridership in Blacksburg. There are currently approximately 23,000 students out of a total of 32,000 living off campus. To complicate matters, the employee who did this work for the consultant has since left their employ. The MPO has sent the consultant the correct information for the traffic model and we hope to soon hear that the traffic model has been completed. There will be more to follow on this once we hear from the consultant.

Update on MPO Smart Scale Projects

Dan spoke briefly of the MPO's Smart Scale Projects, primarily about the Exit 114 Park & Ride request which didn't score high enough for funding and part of it may have been due to not getting any credit for transit ridership since there currently is no official parking or transit service at the proposed site. Rebecca Askey at DRPT said that she may be able to do some transit modelling to include with the next Smart Scale application for funding of this project. Erik Olsen will be assisting Rebecca with this effort going forward. They will be utilizing an application named TBEST (Transit Boardings Estimation and Simulation Tool) developed by the Florida Department of Transportation to model the transit demand at the site.

Bikeshare Update

Erik Olsen reported that the Bikeshare system which was launched July 21st has been doing well with over 1300 people having signed up for memberships and to date there have been over 6000

uses of the current bikes. Discussions have been ongoing with the contractor, Gotcha, concerning replacing the current bikes with a new model of electric assist bike and expanding on the services being offered. The new bikes have been tested and their proposal is being reviewed; meanwhile the current contract has been extended for another six months while a decision is made on how to move forward.

OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business to discuss.

NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING

The next scheduled meeting is April 4, 2019 at 2:00 PM in the Montgomery County Government Center.

AJOURNMENT

There being no further agenda items to discuss, Craig adjourned the meeting at 2:45 PM.

Attest: _____
F. Craig Meadows, Chairman