

MINUTES OF WORK SESSION
OF THE NEWPORT NEWS CITY COUNCIL
HELD IN THE 10th FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM
2400 Washington Avenue
December 14, 2010
4:00 p.m.

PRESENT: McKinley L. Price, DDS; Sharon P. Scott (arrived at 5:00 p.m.); Tina L. Vick;
Joseph C. Whitaker; Dr. Patricia P. Woodbury; Herbert H. Bateman, Jr.; and
Madeline McMillan ----- 7

ABSENT: None ----- 0

OTHERS PRESENT: Neil Morgan; Stuart Katz; Mabel Washington Jenkins; Cynthia Rohlf;
Alan Archer; Collins Owens; Nicole Montalto; Wanda Pierre; Florence Kingston; Lisa Cipriano;
Dwight Farmer; Joe Lawlor; and Jennifer Walker

I. Regional Boards/Commissions/Committees Update

Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization (HRTPO)

Mr. Neil Morgan, City Manager, introduced Mr. Dwight Farmer, Executive Director/Secretary, Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization (HRTPO), to report on transportation issues facing the Hampton Roads region, with emphasis on the prioritization process and high-speed rail.

Prioritization of Transportation Projects

Mr. Farmer stated prioritization of transportation projects began in 2008 because of frustration felt by local elected officials on the Hampton Roads Transportation Policy Organization (HRTPO), who had seen little advancement and/or completion of regional transportation projects. The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) agreed to lend a consultant to the region to help the HRTPO begin the process of prioritization.

Mr. Farmer reported that a project prioritization scoring tool was developed to assist the HRTPO in the advancement of regional transportation projects in light of scarce financial resources. The scoring tool ranked and rated projects utilizing three components: 1) Project Utility Component – Whether the project was effective in solving and fixing transportation problems; 2) Project Viability Component – Whether the project was financially feasible, with a funding mechanism for completion in 20 years, and whether the project was environmentally sound; and 3) Economic Vitality Component – Whether there was potential for economic gain in completing the project. Each component was rated using a 100 point scoring system, making the total of 300 possible points.

Mr. Farmer indicated a set of project categories had been established to evaluate similar projects separately. The categories are as follows:

- Highways
- Bridge/Tunnel
- Transit
- Intermodal
- Systems Management/Transportation Demand Management/Operational Improvements
- Bicycle and Pedestrian

City Manager Morgan inquired whether traffic signal timing systems and rationing timing tolls were examples of Systems Management/Transportation Demand Management/Operational Improvements. Mr. Farmer replied examples of Systems Management/Transportation Demand Management/Operational Improvements were signal timing and smart traffic systems. He stated the HRTPO planned to discuss Value or Congestion Pricing, which was an example of a smart traffic system. The Federal Highway Administration (FHA) implemented Value Pricing on various, severely congested tunnels and bridges. The FHA and the HRTPO found that rush-hour congestion was reduced by 10% through the implementation of Value or Congestion Pricing. Value or Congestion Pricing imposed a premium charge upon consumers, for traveling over a bridge or through a tunnel during rush-hour. Value or Congestion Pricing encouraged consumers to make smart decisions. Mr. Farmer mentioned that Value or Congestion Pricing was, politically, tough to sell. The cost to service infrastructure debt, over 50 years, was five to ten times more without the implementation of Value or Congestion Pricing. Value or Congestion Pricing was a cheaper way to handle rush-hour congestion.

Councilwoman Woodbury inquired whether Value or Congestion Pricing had been implemented in other jurisdictions. Mr. Farmer stated 20 pilot programs were underway throughout the United States. He stated the City of Chesapeake, Virginia, was considering a modified form of Value Pricing, by increasing toll rates from \$2 to \$5 during summer months, and \$2.50 to \$3.00 during the off-peak season.

Councilwoman Woodbury inquired whether there was sufficient data that noted Value or Congestion Pricing worked to eliminate traffic congestion. Mr. Farmer replied there was sufficient data to reveal Value or Congestion Pricing worked to eliminate traffic congestion. He stated a locality could eliminate traffic congestion without spending billions of dollars and encumbering citizens to pay debt service for 50 to 75 years.

Mr. Farmer reiterated that the Project Prioritization tool was developed to assist the HRTPO with advancement of regional transportation projects; however, he noted a high computer scoring for a particular project did not mean that the HRTPO had to endorse such

project. The Project Prioritization tool analyzed candidate transportation projects, using various criteria, within each project category. The tool output and project scoring provided a guide for the HRTPO to develop regional transportation priorities.

Mr. Farmer shared some of the criteria under project categories for Project Utility, Project Viability and Economic Vitality included: 1) Congestion Level; 2) System Continuity and Connectivity; 3) Cost Effectiveness; 4) Safety and Security; 5) Additional Funding; 6) Project/Process Readiness; 7) Total Reduction in Travel Time; 8) Labor Market Access; and 9) Increased Opportunity.

Mr. Farmer stated the 2034 Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) was under development with completion expected by June 2011. He stated the LRTP was updated every four years and had to be fiscally constrained by demonstrating how project costs would be paid. There were approximately 150 candidate projects totaling \$30 billion; however, there was only \$2 billion in available funding for transportation projects.

Mr. Farmer noted the 2034 LRTP's notable projects, to be approved by the FHA:

- Midtown Tunnel/MLK Extension;
- Dominion Boulevard;
- Third Crossing;
- Hampton Roads Bridge-Tunnel;
- I-64 Widening (Peninsula);
- I-64 Widening (Southside);
- Route 460 Corridor Improvements;
- Southeastern Parkway and Greenbelt;
- I-64/Norview Avenue Interchange;
- Route 17 Corridor Widening; and
- Richmond/Hampton Roads Passenger Rail.

City Manager Morgan inquired whether the Southeastern Parkway had been deleted from the 2034 LRTP, due to an environmental review. Mr. Farmer replied the FHA pulled the plug on the project on November 17, 2010, and terminated the environmental process. He stated the HRTPO had been working on the Southeastern Parkway project since 1984, and suspected VDOT had spent \$10 million on environmental work.

Councilwoman Woodbury inquired about the Dominion Boulevard project. Mr. Farmer stated Dominion Boulevard, along the Route 17 corridor, was an extension of the Southeastern Parkway, between the Cities of Virginia Beach and Chesapeake. He stated Dominion Boulevard was the second highest scoring project.

Mr. Farmer commented about the scoring for Bridge and Tunnel Projects, Highway Projects, Highway Interchange Projects, Intermodal Projects, and Transit Projects. He stated the Midtown Tunnel/MLK Freeway extension received the highest score (242) under Bridge and Tunnel Projects. The Midtown Tunnel, along with the I-64 Peninsula Widening project, should have been completed ten years ago; however, funding was not available. I-64 widening on the Peninsula received a score totaling 178. (A copy of the presentation, "Prioritization of Transportation Projects," is attached and made a part of these minutes.)

City Manager Morgan stated the Viability score (75) for the widening of I-64 on the Peninsula was misleading because the score would increase if funding was found. Mr. Farmer agreed that the score would increase if the FHA and VDOT could agree on funding.

Mayor Price inquired why funding had not been allocated for the I-64 Peninsula Widening project, since the project was needed. He felt the bottleneck would only readjust if other projects were done without widening I-64. Mr. Farmer agreed that the bottleneck would readjust; however, Interstate construction funds were discretionary and were not allocated by district. The Secretary of Transportation and the Commonwealth Transportation Board of the State of Virginia had full discretion on where funding was allocated for Interstate projects.

Vice Mayor McMillan indicated that the I-64 Peninsula Widening project was a continuum of the Lower Peninsula's eight-to-ten lane interstate highway and inquired whether the interstate could get much wider. Mr. Farmer replied that the present width of Interstate-64 on the Lower Peninsula was sufficient; however, double-decking might be a future consideration.

Vice Mayor McMillan inquired about the solution put forth to appease Norfolk from recommending the Hampton Roads Bridge-Tunnel (HRBT) project. Mr. Farmer replied the environmental impacts were substantial and the HRBT project routed into Wards Corner, which caused another problem of where the road went from there.

Councilwoman Woodbury inquired whether the trucking industry had been approached to help fund transportation projects. Mr. Farmer replied yes, the trucking industry had been approached for funding. The Virginia Port Authority (VPA) stated they would commit approximately \$230 million for a two-lane truck dedicated facility, toward the Craney Island connection, which was a \$700 million project.

Councilwoman Woodbury inquired about assistance from the VPA to help fund the widening of Interstate-64, since truck traffic caused many of the Peninsula's road problems. Mr. Farmer stated trucks accounted for 5% of traffic, and caused 10% of the problems on the region's interstates.

Vice Mayor McMillan recalled plans to make Route 460 an expressway from Richmond, to include a toll. Mr. Farmer replied there were plans to make Route 460 an expressway from Richmond. He was one of the people given the dubious task to sit on an independent panel to review the proposal.

Vice Mayor McMillan recalled the Route 460 expressway project was brought up during the transportation referendum issue. She attended a meeting in the vicinity of the project, and noticed an array of unused blighted land, which made it easier for land acquisition. Mr. Farmer agreed and stated land for road projects did not come easy. Land acquisition, from a construction and environmental perspective, did not come much easier; however, financial feasibility was everything. It was a \$1 to \$2.5 billion dollar project.

City Manager Morgan questioned how much of the \$2.5 billion would be allocated by the State for the project. Mr. Farmer replied that information was confidential, but felt the subsidy would be substantial. City Manager Morgan suggested \$200 million from the State would be the amount needed to widen I-64 from the Peninsula to Richmond. Mr. Farmer replied that was a good estimate and indicated 50,000 to 60,000 vehicles travelled I-64 daily.

Vice Mayor McMillan understood what the City Manager was saying; however, she thought one of the solutions to the problem of congestion was to get truck traffic off of I-64. Mr. Farmer replied that was a misconception that had been played out, particularly, in the press. The suggested solution was dismissed during the 1990's because it could not remove 10% of traffic off of the HRBT.

City Manager Morgan indicated he was not against rerouting Route 460 or the HRBT project, but the question was what projects, in the next 20 years, would make a difference in eliminating the region's bottleneck. The three proposals suggested including a one-way toll on Route 460 of \$11 per car, \$25 per light truck, and a flat fee of \$75 for a tractor-trailer truck traveling one-way. He stated citizens on the Peninsula would feel the repercussions if such tolls were implemented.

Mr. Farmer noted the schedule for the development of the 2034 Long-Range Transportation Plan:

- December 15, 2010 - HRTPO Board approval of the Hampton Roads Regional Transportation Prioritization Report: Project Evaluation and Scoring;
- December 2010/January 2011 -- Present results to the HRTPO Board Advisory Committees;
- February 2011 -- (Special HRTPO Board Meeting) -- HRTPO Board discussion; Project Prioritization; and
- June 2011 -- Completion and approval of fiscally-constrained list of projects by HRTPO Board.

Hampton Roads High-Speed and Intercity Passenger Rail

Mr. Farmer reported, on October 30, 2009, the HRTPO Board endorsed a resolution that provided the following:

- Designation of a “High-Speed Rail” corridor along the Norfolk Southern/Route 460 corridor;
- Enhancement of the Intercity Passenger Rail service, along the CSXT/I-64 corridor;
- Hire a consultant to guide the HRTPO Board through the development of a long-term vision plan for passenger rail in Hampton Roads; and
- Establish a HRTPO Regional High-Speed Rail Task Force.

The hired consultant would provide the HRTPO with a long-range vision plan for passenger rail. The HRTPO would provide City Council with a briefing on the results of the necessary steps to accomplish a 20-year implementation of high-speed rail and enhanced inter-city passenger rail in January 2011. (A copy of the presentation, “Hampton Roads High-Speed and Intercity Passenger Rail,” is attached and made a part of these minutes.)

Mr. Farmer reported the purpose of the consultant study was to create a plan (“blueprint” or “roadmap”), which subsequently could be used to help guide future long-term public and private investments in Hampton Roads. The preliminary assessment indicated that the CSXT/I-64 and the Norfolk Southern/Route 460 corridors were economically and financially feasible, over the long-term, as they met the thresholds established by the Federal Railroad Administration for a public/private partnership to build and operate passenger rail in Hampton Roads.

Mr. Farmer shared the consultant study findings for ridership, revenue, capital cost, economical and financial feasibility and funding approach options. The ridership estimates were 1 to 1.4 million per year, along the CSXT/I-64 corridor, and 1.8 million to 2.5 million per year, along the Norfolk Southern/Route 460 corridor.

Vice Mayor McMillan questioned how ridership numbers were projected. Mr. Farmer replied ridership numbers were based on a mathematical gravity model, which were dependent on two basic variables: 1) the number of people and their income strata; and 2) how far people were located from their jobs and economic activity centers. The model looked at all the demographics, i.e., employment, population, and socio-economic background.

Councilwoman Vick observed that many Hampton Roads residents compared owning a vehicle to one’s status. She stated many felt public transportation was for those who could not afford an automobile. She inquired whether people would acquaint high-speed rail transportation to low-income residents. Mr. Farmer stated this was resolved in the

“stated preference survey” mathematical model, and was based on who people were, what they did every day, how they did it, and value of time. The stated preference survey delved into issues such as the time of day a person traveled, income, and the number of cars a person owned.


Councilwoman Woodbury inquired whether the rail systems of Amtrak, and Norfolk Southern could be utilized for high-speed or intercity passenger rail. Mr. Farmer replied Amtrak and Norfolk Southern were very clear that they would not share a track with a rail line that travelled in excess of 79 miles per hour.

Mayor Price felt the Peninsula supported the 2034 LRTP project to widen I-64 from Jefferson Avenue to Richmond. He felt the Third Crossing project was esoteric until an income stream to finance the project was realized. The I-64 Widening (Peninsula) project was doable, would benefit the entire region, was not political, and was needed.

Mr. Farmer stated 50% of traffic on I-64, at the James City/New Kent City line, involved trips that had origins and destinations to the Peninsula and 50% had origins and destinations on the Southside. One-half of traffic coming down the I-64 corridor was for business purposes on the Southside. The widening of I-64 (Peninsula) would be beneficial to the entire region of Hampton Roads.

Councilwoman Woodbury felt all of the transportation projects were political, and indicated it was time that the Southside gave a little. Mr. Farmer recommended that members of City Council begin dialogue with members of Congress for an earmark, and the State Secretary of Transportation and the Highway Commissioner to secure discretionary allocations that come to the State, for the widening of I-64.

THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS,
ON MOTION, COUNCIL ADJOURNED AT 5:09 P.M.


Jennifer D. Walker, CMC
Chief Deputy City Clerk

McKinley Price, DDS
Mayor
Presiding Officer