

Minutes  
Commonwealth Transportation Board  
Rail Subcommittee Meeting  
Virginia Department of Transportation  
1401 E. Broad Street  
Richmond, VA 23219

Wednesday, April 18, 2012

**Members in Attendance:** James Keen, Chair, Aubrey Layne, Dr. James Davis

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m.

DRPT Director, Thelma Drake, presented a rail update. She informed members that DRPT is planning to send letters to Grantees advising that we need their operation schedules no later than May 1 in case we shut down on July 1. DRPT will ask its grantees to also submit vouchers to DRPT for payment by June 15. With no adopted budget, as of July 1, DRPT will have no ability to operate. Ms. Drake also stated this is the first time DRPT has been in this position, i.e., without a budget.

Ms. Drake also spoke about two property issues in Norfolk relating to the Norfolk Intercity Passenger Rail Project. One property owner is working on providing a clear title. Another property owner wants more money for the small triangle of land needed. The second issue may require court intervention.

Ms. Drake stated that the \$75 Million ARRA Arkendale to Powell's Creek project award must be obligated by September 30 or DRPT will lose the funds. A letter has been sent to FRA and FTA requesting that the funds be flexed from FRA to FTA if FRA cannot reach agreement. DRPT has not received a response to the letter from either agency.

Ms. Drake also reported that the naming of the Norfolk train cannot be done. Amtrak brands its trains as Northeast Corridor Regional Service trains.

Kevin Page, DRPT Chief Operating Officer, updated the Subcommittee about the 6-year plan, as well as the Rail Preservation Program. Mr. Page also updated the group on the issues at the Buckingham Branch's Virginia Southern Railroad and that the power plant at the end of the 56-mile line had stopped shipping coal. The Rail Preservation projects at Virginia Southern will take a one-year break to see if the power plant comes back on line. Mr. Page noted that Director Drake and he had been in conversation with both the Buckingham Branch Railroad and Dominion Power.

Mr. Page also spoke about the Roanoke Randolph Street Interlocking Project. He explained how the project was a Rail Enhancement fund freight project for the Norfolk Southern Crescent Corridor and that the project design now incorporates the track improvements necessary for both freight and passenger trains to use the line improvements. The design also denotes a proposed station track and platform location.

During the public comment section, Dick Beadles, Virginia Rail Policy Institute, spoke about the need for better dissemination of information to the public. In particular, he addressed information that is found on the DRPT website. He asked that the Department review the website's content and determine if there is a way for the public to have easier access to information.

He stated that he has been following rail projects for 20 years, and that there has been a lot to celebrate. The public is concerned about where the money is going and the performance of both passenger and freight projects. Ms. Drake agreed that there has been a lot of progress and, indeed, there is a lot to celebrate that the public is not aware of.