

CTB Rail Subcommittee Meeting Minutes  
VDOT Central Office Training Room  
1221 East Broad Street  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

The Meeting began at 8:30 am

CTB Rail Subcommittee Members Present: Secretary Shannon Valentine, DRPT Director Jennifer Mitchell, Scott Kasprowicz, Court Rosen, Mary Hughes-Hynes, Stephen Johnsen and John Malbon.

1. Approval of May 15<sup>th</sup> Meeting Minutes-The May meeting minutes were reviewed and unanimously approved.
2. Director's Update-DRPT Director Jennifer Mitchell opened up the meeting and reviewed the agenda. She said that there would be a presentation to discuss the decrease in Amtrak ridership numbers, as well as presentations to review recommended policy changes to the Rail Industrial Access (RIA) and Rail Enhancement Fund (REF) programs.
3. RIA Policy Changes-Jeremy Latimer  
Jeremy Latimer presented the revisions of the policy to the subcommittee members. He said that the changes reflected discussions that DRPT had had with the subcommittee members. Jennifer Mitchell said that if the subcommittee was ok with the changes that DRPT would like to bring the revised policy to the workshop in July.
  - a. Secretary Valentine asked that the appropriate code citation be included in section 1 of the document.
  - b. Section 19 of the policy is discussed. Scott Kasprowicz said that the previous policy is not applicable to people relocating in Virginia. That section should be more nuanced. Scott suggested removing the word "substantial from the section".
  - c. Mary Hynes asked that Joann Maxwell from VDOT be consulted regarding the third "Whereas" clause to make sure the language is correct for what they are trying to do which is combine two previous policies and replace them with a new one.
  - d. Jennifer Mitchell said that the policy would go to the workshop in July and then to the action meeting in September. DRPT will send out a draft version to the subcommittee members.

#### 4. Review of RIA Application for Superb Solutions for You

Jeremy Latimer presented this application. Director Mitchell said that the application would be reviewed during the full CTB workshop meeting and then brought back for action in July.

- a. Scott Kasprovicz asked if the company would be transporting hazardous content. He said that rail is a safer mode for transporting materials so that would be an increased benefit to the project. Scott asked if a modification should be made to the program application so that the state knows what is being transported.
- b. Secretary Valentine asked DRPT if the state is following the guidelines from the Lynchburg accident task force. Director Mitchell said that the state is. She said that DRPT can provide the subcommittee members with the report from the task force. She said that the inspection authority for rail roads in Virginia belongs to the State Corporation Commission.
- c. Jeremy Latimer said that the state does not indicate where and when hazardous materials are being transported for safety reasons.

#### 5. Amtrak Trends-Jeremy Latimer

Jeremy Latimer gave a presentation on recent Amtrak ridership trends. Overall ridership is down. Jeremy reviewed information on changes in Amtrak discount codes and construction at ACCA Yard as possible reasons.

- a. Jennifer Mitchell said that the downturn is a recent phenomenon and that the state has seen steady ridership gains over the last ten years. Director Mitchell said that from the state's standpoint ridership is more important than revenue.
- b. John Malbon said that DRPT should be maximizing ridership over revenue to promote transportation options.
- c. Jeremy Latimer said that DRPT tries to seek a balance between the two, however Amtrak is currently trying to maximize revenue over ridership.
- d. John Malbon asked if DRPT knew why riders were leaving and if we know what mode they are using if not rail.
- e. Shannon Valentine requested that a meeting be set up with the state and Amtrak to understand their business model.
- f. Chris Smith from DRPT said that data is needed from Amtrak to measure the effect of the discount codes pm agency operating subsidies. He said that the state can offer discount codes on the state supported routes and will assess their impact to subsidies as they related to the availability of IPROC funds.
- g. Scott Kasprovicz asked if DRPT knew the current capacity by route of available seats. He said that we should be looking to fill cars and may need to increase discounts and look at price elasticity.
- h. Secretary Valentine said that the state needs to do customer research.
- i. Mary Hynes said that more information needs to be provided to riders about the last mile connection from Staples Mill into the city. Jeremy Latimer said the

parking lot improvements at Staples Mill will also help with ride sharing and the last mile connections.

- j. Chris Smith said many trips were cancelled this Spring without alternatives due to construction at ACCA yard and this likely had an effect on ridership.
- k. Director Mitchell said that the state may need to look at a different system of payments to Amtrak with incentives.
- l. Scott Kasprovicz said that consumers do not want to pay much for something that is unreliable.
- m. Director Mitchell said DRPT will conduct more sophisticated market research on consumers and find a way to provide better communication about options for the last mile of service.
- n. Chief of Rail Michael McLaughlin said that DRPT is working on improving transit options to and from the station.
- o. Director Mitchell said the June 28<sup>th</sup> ribbon cutting ceremony for the new parking lot at the Staples Mill station is a great opportunity to promote the train.
- p. Mary Hynes encouraged CTB members to take the train to the July meeting.

#### 6. REF Policy Changes-Mike Todd

Mike Todd said that at the next meeting DRPT would be bringing forth suggested changes to the REF policy. He said that potential changes to the program may require legislative changes. Director Mitchell said that interest in the program is dropping. The program funded a lot of projects but there may be concerns with the claw back and car load requirements that are preventing applications. She suggested that DRPT and the CTB target where these funds will go and make investments without applications.

- 7. Public Comment-No one was signed up for public comment. The meeting adjourned at 9:50.