



Commonwealth Transportation Board Environmental Subcommittee

April 19, 2022
Draft Minutes

The meeting was called to order at 10:17 a.m.

Members of the Subcommittee in attendance: Angel Deem (Chair), Mary Hynes, Stephen Johnsen, Mark Merrill

Welcome

Angel Deem, Chief of Policy, VDOT

Approval of March 2022 minutes

Sustainability Office – Staff Update

Ms. Angel Deem announced that two recruitments have recently been completed since the March Subcommittee meeting. Mr. Chris Berg will serve as the Director of the Office of Transportation Sustainability and Mr. Chris Swanson will serve as the Environmental Division Director. Mr. Mark Merrill recommended that Mr. Berg sit in on a CTB Rail Subcommittee meeting, as there is some cross-over in resiliency efforts.

Resiliency

The Program Plan, as it was formerly presented, is now referred to simply as the Resiliency Plan. A comparison was done between the Resiliency Plan and the strategic actions related to the risk of flooding that were listed in the [December 2021 CTB resolution](#). Ms. Deem and Mr. Swanson advised that this presentation is matched to the items specifically listed in the resolution. However, in the Resiliency Plan, other hazards are addressed as well.

The presentation described how the three strategic actions of the CTB resolution as well as other efforts (e.g. evaluation of feasibility, risk-based assessments, and cost effectiveness) would work together as a comprehensive approach to ensuring a more resilient network.

Mr. Merrill inquired about the apparent focus on flooding, noting that Virginia is experiencing other events as well, such as extreme wind events and falling trees due to ground saturation.

Ms. Hynes commented (and seconded by Mr. Johnsen) that there should be a CTB Resiliency Plan, not just a VDOT Resiliency Plan. Ms. Deem mentioned Ms. DeBruhl's comments last month that DRPT's updated rail plan would include a resiliency component. Likewise, VDOT's strategies focus on the assets VDOT is responsible for, such as roads, bridges, and tunnels.

Mr. Merrill asked if the team has started to identify measures. Mr. Swanson said that the team is evaluating adaptive measures, enhanced maintenance measures and nature-based measures that might be necessary, and that work over the next 1-2 years will help determine which measures are most appropriate.

Mr. Merrill asked if varying levels of the impact of sea level rise are being considered (for example, what percentage of roads can withstand one foot of sea level rise?). Mr. Fitch assured him that VIMS has looked at that in their ongoing work. Because there are many different ways to present this information depending on the ultimate use of the information (e.g., a bridge engineer, VDOT planner, and planner in a locality each looks at information differently), the VIMS and VDOT teams are coordinating on what that should look like. Mr. Johnsen asked what action VIMS has been instructed to take next. Mr. Fitch said that the VIMS team is primarily considering how they will present the data they have collected noting the study parameters set out in the MOU are broad in nature.

Ms. Hynes commented on concern over whether money is being spent in a place so endangered by climate change that the money would not be considered well spent. As part of its work, the Subcommittee must consider what position the CTB should be in regarding knowing where the risks and opportunities are in two years' time. Ms. Hynes further commented that counting backwards in SMART SCALE cycles, by March 2023, the Board would need to have had a conversation about how they are going to think about resiliency in the context of SMART SCALE Round 6. That's the moment when the CTB has to have a game plan, including conversations with jurisdictions. Ms. Deem assured Ms. Hynes that VDOT's resiliency team has that same urgency.

Ms. Hynes asked if the VIMS study covers the whole state. Mr. Fitch said that, in the MOU, the study area is listed as "Tidewater." While it was intended to cover just the coastal portions, VDOT did request an add-on to cover Planning District 8. That work is complete, and the report was published.

Ms. Hynes asked about incorporating maps and other information regarding the resiliency mega-trend listed in VTrans. Ms. Deem added that the team is considering what authoritative data sets are available. The VTrans work is broadly based. This is specific, locally relevant data that can be used for a particular purpose.

Ms. Hynes asked if, when the July update from VIMS is given, the information on Planning District 8 and the shoreline can also be provided. If the CTB is going to think about resiliency as a factor in SMART SCALE or even as a new data point to be included in applications, we have to have some sense about how we want to ask that question. As an example, the Transportation Alternatives Program application asks applicants to identify equity areas. But because the question is so broad – and no definition is provided – the responses are wide ranging. If we want localities to start thinking about resiliency, we have to add a question about something they have to do.

Mr. Swanson discussed that OIPI will provide an update on the 16 strategic actions from the December Board resolution. The three related to flooding will be part of that update. Moving forward, VDOT will continue to provide updates on the status of the Resiliency plan and the strategies within the plan. Ms. Deem acknowledged that the team learned recently that OIPI's intent is to provide the full Board an email update on all 16 actions, with no workshop presentation planned.

Ms. Hynes suggested that there might be a combined Rail Subcommittee and Environmental Subcommittee meeting to talk about resiliency. A longer, combined meeting would allow for an integrated conversation.

Public comment

There was no public comment.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:54 a.m.