



Transit Service Delivery Advisory Committee (TSDAC)
Department of Motor Vehicles
2300 West Broad Street, Richmond, Virginia
June 7th, 2018
10:00 am to 2:00 pm

Minutes

Members Present:

John McGlennon, Chair
Jim Dyke
Kate Mattice

Hap Connors
Brian Smith

Brad Sheffield
Tom Fox

1. Call to Order / Introductions (10:07 AM) – John McGlennon opened up the meeting and asked the members to introduce themselves.
2. Outline of Approach to Meeting-Major Policy Questions-Jennifer DeBruhl, Chief of Transit for DRPT, provided an outline of the key policy questions. Jennifer said that based on the discussion at the last meeting, DRPT had asked the consultants to go back and look at the split in vehicle condition score and to change it to a 50/50 split. She said this resulted in no difference to the ranked list of projects. Jennifer said that DRPT will be providing a summary document and one pager for committee members to use as requested. She said that DRPT had been doing the outreach to transit agencies and MPOs that was directed by the General Assembly in the bill. Jen said that today the group will be looking at the difference between this prioritization and Smart Scale. She said that DRPT had heard from the committee that they would like to come up with a process that is similar to Smart Scale, while acknowledging some elements of Smart Scale may not work with a transit prioritization. The following comments were made on this presentation.
 - a. Brian Smith said that at some point the TSDAC had adopted guiding policies and principles. He said that the TSDAC should be mindful of those parameters and said that those may help guide the group's work. He also said that he had questions about the eligibility criteria.
 - i. In regards to Brian's question on the eligibility criteria, Director Mitchell said that DRPT had heard from the committee that they did not want poor maintenance rewarded. DRPT did not want to create a framework that would disincentivize preventive maintenance.
 - ii. Jim Dyke agreed with that statement and said that you do not want to put money into an agency that cannot manage the assets that it has.
 - iii. Jen DeBruhl said this was just getting at maintenance and is nothing different than what DRPT is already doing.

- iv. Kate Mattice said that the Northern Virginia transportation providers had asked if that provision was new or difference and she said she was glad to hear that it is not.

3. Major Expansion Project Prioritization-Tom Harrington, Cambridge

Tom opened his presentation by reviewing the language in the bill as it related to Major Expansion. He discussed the definition of major expansion that had been used throughout the TSDAC process. He discussed the Smart Scale factor areas that the TSDAC could adopt. The following discussion points were noted.

- a. Hap Connors asked if the funding results in Smart Scale were indicative of what the localities were submitting. Director Jennifer Mitchell responded saying that Transit projects do well in Smart Scale and that localities are submitting very good small projects and incorporating multimodal elements into their applications. Hap Connors said that transit agencies submitting projects should be encouraged at the CTB level.
- b. Kate Mattice asked how Smart Scale would work with this program. Director Jennifer Mitchell said that transit capital money could leverage Smart Scale money. Jennifer said that transit projects are different than highway projects and have many different funding sources. The program is designed to leverage transit capital money with Smart Scale money. The transit agencies will still have to provide the 4% local match for transit capital funds.
- c. Jen DeBruhl said that DRPT has been working to change the application guidance for infrastructure projects. Grantees are encouraged to do a feasibility study, then engineering and design (to 30%) and then put together a financial plan. DRPT wants a financial plan to show the total for what they would be asked to invest in and wants to see the package that brings a project to fruition. Kate Mattice said that the concept of multi-year funding agreement is really positive. She asked about the definition of committed. She said if someone is applying to FTA, Smart Scale and DRPT and they need to be 100% committed then you have a chicken and an egg problem. She said that she knew this question couldn't be answered today but that it needs to be discussed because it will affect how transit agencies will apply for things. Director Jennifer Mitchell agreed and said that DRPT has the ability with the state capital funds to go in early and make sure that a project is advancing towards acquiring funding from other sources. She said that we have the ability to commit stand funds early to help.
- d. Chairman John McGlennon asked if DRPT knew of any major expansion projects coming down the pipeline. Jennifer Mitchell said that DRPT's understanding of what is coming down the pipeline is hazy. She said that the agency knew about a few possible projects in NOVA and one possible project in Hampton Roads on the peninsula. She said that some projects the agency has expected have not materialized and that DRPT wants to hear from the localities on the issues that have prevented them from putting in applications.
- e. Kate Mattice pointed out that labor and real estate vary across the commonwealth. She asked how that is addressed as we score these against cost. Director Jennifer Mitchell said that each region has a unique challenge but that at the end of the day for Smart Scale the state decided to evaluate projects in terms of their costs. Kate Mattice said that she sees that for roads but that transit is different in terms of new facilities and how that looks.
 - i. Hap Connors suggested looking at regional authorities to level the playing field. He said that the uniqueness of each region comes up over and over again.

Everyone has unique challenges and it is important to continue to make changes to the framework.

- f. Brad Sheffield said that the planning and commitment piece is very important. Projects can be vetted and discussed with DRPT staff. Once DRPT is behind a project they help to get it funded. If the state is behind the project the risk becomes less. There needs to be a commitment behind planning so locality understands.
- g. Brian Smith asked about the weighting of the factors and asked if they would be the same as Smart Scale. Brad Sheffield asked if the consultants could run the major expansion projects using the Smart Scale approach. Jen DeBruhl said that DRPT does not have the data to run the same scenario they did for the state of good repair projects (SGR).
- h. Jennifer Mitchell said that she was interested in getting the committee's input on the topic of weighting. She said there were a couple of options they could look at for weighting. She said each factor could be weighted equally. Another would be to apply a single weighting framework to everyone across the state and weigh one factor more heavily than another. She said that we could also apply the current regional weights that are used in Smart Scale. Jennifer said that if the Smart Scale is used then there is a nexus to Smart Scale and that it does take into account the regional differences. She said she would not be opposed to weighting things equally.
 - i. Jim Dyke said that he believes the program needs regional weighting.
 - ii. Brian Smith agreed and said that they may also need to give regional consideration within a region. He asked how a project in a rural part of a region would compete with a project in a more congested part of a region. He stressed the importance of looking at each project on its merit. Brian said that he thinks the weighting of factors will be very important. Director Mitchell said that in Smart Scale the weighting did not have as big of an impact as one would think. There was some impact but the weighting didn't knock projects out of consideration.
 - iii. Brian Smith stressed getting input from stakeholders. He said that input was so important for Smart Scale and there was so much regional consideration given. He pointed out that Smart Scale was not tailored for transit and that there may need to be a transit version of these factors.
- i. Chairman John McGlennon asked a question about the measures themselves. He said that for a transit project you may want to score a project based on the impact it will have on pedestrian safety or bikes which is different than roadway safety. He said that for accessibility you may look at what you access when you get off of a transit system. He asked if these are the right measures.
- j. Kate Mattice said that the Smart Scale program is a very good starting point to have for a transit capital program. Facilities and expansion have done well in Smart Scale. She said that one of the things that she wants to be cautious about is giving transit agencies flexibility with fleet expansion. Transit agencies may need to shuffle around resources. NOVA wants to make sure when you are buying something that it isn't restricted. Brad Sheffield said that buses can't be kept on certain routes because of the Title VI program. Jennifer Mitchell said that those decisions will have to come down to funding rules and programmatic rules. DRPT will need to see a project in place for a certain amount of time since funding was given based on that project's score but we don't want to be so restrictive that it leads to poor planning. Jim Dyke said that he would like to look at projects and see how they connect with one another. He suggested looking at the system

as a whole and not just a project. Jennifer Mitchell said that she thinks that idea is somewhat captured in the accessibility measure. Brad Sheffield said that there is no incentive to fund a project if a locality is not willing to commit to multimodal infrastructure.

- k. Brian Smith went back to the question of weighting. He said that in Smart Scale each district knew they were getting some funding and then the regions got to submit their projects which were scored in their region. This prioritization is different and is a single pot of money that can be applied for statewide and he thinks that is all the more reason to consider the weighting.
- l. Tom Fox said that in the context of emphasizing the factors that are most important to transit, a lot of the factors are driven by ridership changes. Some projects may not impact ridership but have other benefits.
- m. Hap Connors asked the committee if they were in agreement on the current factors and if they should be conformed to work for transit projects. Tom Fox said that from the perspective of someone who has applied for funding under Smart Scale that some of the factors were difficult to make work for a transit project. Factors more transit specific could be adopted. Jennifer Mitchell said that DRPT has heard that they should not reinvent the wheel. Jennifer asked Tom Fox what factors were difficult for him. He said Safety, Economic Development and Accessibility were difficult. Jennifer said that the higher level factors were written into the legislative mandate and that maybe they could look at different measures.
- n. Brad Sheffield said that some transit routes can help address safety by mitigating accidents. This could help provide context for projects. Brad Sheffield said that for safety, congestion mitigation, environmental and economics that the second factors are not relevant and that if those were stricken the prioritization would focus more on transit. Jennifer Mitchell asked Brad exactly which factors he would eliminate.
 - i. For safety Brad said the second one, the rate of fatalities.
 - ii. For congestion mitigation he said hours of delay.
 - iii. For environmental quality he said no transit projects with natural resource impacts.
 - iv. Kate Mattice said she agreed with pulling out those measures and that those factors wouldn't matter when you went to compare one transit project to another.
 - v. Jennifer Mitchell asked if they should be pulled out or if their rating should be reduced. Brad Sheffield said to pull them out and suggested talking to transit providers who have recently put together successful applications to get their feedback.
- o. Jen DeBruhl said that data becomes an issue with many applications as DRPT pre-screens them. She said that the strategic plan requirement will strengthen planning and feed the pipeline. Then there will be better data that can be tied back to the strategic plans and support applications for funding.
- p. Chairman John McGlennon said that the challenge is to allow for an easy transition from Smart Scale to the new prioritization while still trying to pick up transit related things that Smart Scale does not pick up. Jennifer Mitchell reminded the group that a recommendation has to be made to the General Assembly by July and that the group doesn't have the benefit of the year and a half of outreach that Smart Scale had. Jennifer confirmed that what she was hearing from the group was to get more information about

pulling out factors and on how some of the factor's measurements could be tailored for transit. Jennifer Mitchell said she heard a couple of different things from the TSDAC in regards to weighting.

- i. She said that the committee needs to make a determination about the 6 criteria and of the weighting of the factors within the criteria.
 - ii. A decision should be made as to whether or not there is a single statewide framework or if there are variations by region. Jennifer said that regions (PDC/MPO) chose their own weighting and the MPOs helped develop the framework.
 - iii. Hap Connors said that his region chose two different weightings because of the disparities within the region that was discussed earlier.
 - iv. Brad Sheffield agreed with the regional weighting and said that the regions should be asked what was important to them.
 - v. Kate Mattice said that if something is done differently from Smart Scale that will have to be communicated.
 - vi. Jennifer Mitchell said that the GA put in a huge emphasis on congestion mitigation so we will have to communicate why we would use something different for transit to the General Assembly.
 - vii. Brian Smith encouraged these types of conversations to happen at the regional level.
- q. Jen DeBruhl reminded the group that this program does not have as much money as Smart Scale. Jen said she does not see a world where major projects Pulse BRT projects will be fully funded through this program.
- r. Jennifer Mitchell said that the TSDAC still had decisions to make on weighting. She asked if the consensus was to look at things with regional variations and asked if they wanted to look at what was done for Smart Scale. Jennifer said that DRPT would bring back the weighting frameworks chosen by the region and asked the TSDAC if that would be a good starting point.
- i. Brad Sheffield said that he needed to better understand the variations and would like to see labor costs normalized.
 - ii. Jennifer said during the lunch break DRPT would find the current weighting framework to pull up.
 - iii. Jennifer said after the July meeting we need consensus on factors before going to the CTB in September. Brian Smith says the stakeholders in each region need to be consulted about what is important to them in regards to transit before a framework is picked for them.
 - iv. Tom Harrington showed the group the weighting framework for the state by category. They did not have information on the actual weighting within each category.
 - v. Jennifer said that TSDAC does not need to weigh in on a particular areas framework. DRPT is looking to have the TSDAC agree that that type of framework should be recommended to the CTB. The localities can work with DRPT to make the decisions on their category.

- s. John McGlennon read an email from Cindy Mester stating that she agreed with the regional weighting and thinks that the prioritization should stay as close to Smart Scale as possible so it is easier to administer.
 - t. Jennifer Mitchell said DRPT would work with the MPOs to select their typology for this prioritization and see if they want to stick with what they selected for Smart Scale or go with something else.
 - u. Chairman McGlennon said that Jim Dyke moved that DRPT recommend this approach, Brian Smith agreed, with the caveat that DRPT gets regional input. Brian Smith seconded the motion. All members were in favor.
 - v. Jennifer Mitchell said that DRPT would bring back recommendations on the criteria and look at how we may be able to change the factors, particularly in regards to pedestrian safety. DRPT will bring proposals back at the next meeting.
4. Lunch-At noon the meeting broke for lunch for 20 minutes. The meeting was called back to order at 12:33.
5. Strategic Plans-Jen DeBruhl

Jen began the discussion on strategic plans. She said that DRPT had been working to strengthen its planning staff and align project managers with planners. Jen DeBruhl said that Kate Mattice had sent a question on vehicle numbers for Arlington and the discrepancy between DRPT's numbers and NVTC's numbers. Jen said that the data in TransAm had to be good or there will be discrepancies. Jen DeBruhl said that DRPT will be sending out guidance this summer on what types of assets should be put into TransAM to help resolve some of the issues.

- a. Jen DeBruhl asked the TSDAC for thoughts on how to structure the state of good repair piece of the strategic plan. The following discussion points were noted.
 - i. Brian Smith asked if the majority of the operators in the commonwealth would fall under the state plan. Jen DeBruhl said that any operator with less than 100 vehicles would be participating in the states's transit asset management plan and that any transit agency with more than 100 vehicles or that is federally funded has to do their own plan.
 - ii. Kate Mattice said that even though most of the Northern Virginia systems are not federalized they are still doing transit asset management on their own. Kate said she needed to talk to transit agencies to see how what they are doing aligns with the state's plans.
- b. Jen asked about the performance of the fixed route bus service. She asked how transit providers can use the strategic plans to make sure they are connecting the right places.
 - i. Hap Connors asked how technology and innovation requirements can be incorporated into the strategic plan. He said that some regions are more innovative than others. Jen DeBruhl said that there have been opportunities to fund technology. She said many transit agencies have data but don't know exactly how to use it. Through the strategic plans DRPT can help provide structure around that. If there are gaps in the collection of data, those projects would do well in a prioritization.
 - ii. Brad Sheffield said that if a system doesn't have the resources to collect data accurately than that is a project that is a priority and should get funded. Jen DeBruhl said that the existing TDPs are theoretical when it comes to that type of

analysis. The new strategic plans will look at efficiency, data and performance in terms of numbers.

- iii. Brad Sheffield said that another aspect of data collection is staff engagement. Corrupt data is normally caused by poorly trained staff. He said this is particularly important on the rural side. Jen DeBruhl said that ridership is reported by the transit agencies and that there are inconsistencies and data quality concerns.
- iv. Jennifer Mitchell said that we need to look to the industry to help encourage systems to validate and report good data. Each system is relying on the other systems to report data correctly. Issues are normally related to staff training and turnover.
- v. Brad Sheffield said that this could help with buy in from localities. He said that some of the data is so corrupt that you can't have a conversation around it. Jen said that data issues exist in transit agencies throughout the commonwealth.
- vi. Brad Sheffield asked for DRPT planning staff's assessment of TDP's and the disconnect between the TDP's and the long range plans. Jen DeBruhl said that she sees a greater disconnect between TDPs and grant planning.
- vii. Brad Sheffield asked about the connection between comprehensive plans and TDPs. Jen DeBruhl said that really varies by location and by who is working on it. Many TDPs become DRPT managed and driven.
- viii. Kate Mattice said that what she is hearing is that the message that should be going back to transit agencies is that plans should be based on data if you want state funding.
- ix. Tom Fox said that a network assessment should not need to be done every 5 years. Jen DeBruhl said that kind of evaluation is very expensive. Jennifer Mitchell agreed but said that she did not want to de-emphasize the need to do this. A lot of systems are already doing this work. The General Assembly wants to see that there is a system wide focus driven by DRPT.
- x. Chairman John McGlennon asked about the requirements of the grant applications. Jen DeBruhl said that agencies need to build plans to inform grant applications in the future.
- xi. Jim Dyke asked what DRPT wanted from the TSDAC in regards to the strategic plans and asked if DRPT was looking for an endorsement. Jen DeBruhl said yes and that DRPT wanted guidance in helping to form the policy.
- xii. Jennifer Mitchell said guidance needs to be put together that will go into effect by law the following fiscal year. She said that DRPT has two transit agencies participating in a pilot program. HRT is the larger agency and GLTC is the smaller one. DRPT is most interested in knowing the cost and data limitations so that DRPT knows the resources they will need to provide. The program will then be rolled out to the other 20 systems. She said that any of the TSDAC's thoughts would be helpful.
- xiii. The CTB has to be briefed on the prioritization in September and then it will go to the action meeting in October.
- xiv. John McGlennon asked if there was any requirement of transit agencies to work with local planning organizations on these. Jennifer Mitchell said that the only

place that is spelled out in the legislation is that HRT (Hampton Roads Transit) has to work with HRTPO (Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization). Jennifer Mitchell said that buy in from the MPO could be part of the guidance that DRPT provides. That could address the discrepancy between the needs DRPT hears about and what is applied for.

- xv. Brad Sheffield said that these things don't get discussed with elected officials. He said there are not a lot of transit planners in the state. Smaller systems don't really have them. It would be a good idea to repeatedly expose staff to transit planning principles. Director Jennifer Mitchell agreed.
- xvi. Brian Smith said that TDPs operate in constrained scenarios. More innovation, pilot programs and less limiting parameters for funding sources is needed so that agencies have opportunities to do more of the creative things.

- c. Jen DeBruhl reviewed the phased implementation plan. Kate Mattice said she agreed with the phasing approach.
 - d. Tom Fox asked how the performance measures will be set up. Jen DeBruhl said that some measures are already in the operating formula. She said that there will be statewide and local performance measures. She said that DRPT does not want to be overly prescriptive. Jennifer Mitchell said that DRPT would not set a standard for every system, will be up to the system and board to determine. The guidance may recommend some performance records.
 - e. Kate Mattice asked that DRPT clarify what is the same and what is different from the existing TDPs in the new strategic plans. She said that will be important to communicate as transit agencies try and understand this.
 - f. Hap Connors said that we need to communicate that the program will be better than what is being done today but will still not be perfect. He said that agencies should not be punished for having deficits.
 - g. Jennifer Mitchell said that as programs are looking at long term needs and trying to incorporate new technology.
6. Summary of Key Policy Principles/Recap

Jennifer Mitchell said this document encompassed what DRPT had heard from the TSDAC. DRPT has taken those comments and turned them into guidance that will go to the CTB.

- a. Brad Sheffield suggested setting a future time frame for reassessment. He said that the CTB might appreciate a date when we will reassess.
- b. Jennifer Mitchell said we will reassess after the first year but could formally say that they will come back to the board in no less than 3 years.
- c. Brian Smith asked if under the project scoring of the document that the factors and groupings from Smart Scale will be the model and that DRPT will work with MPOs to validate their groupings. Jennifer Mitchell said that the transit systems will need to have some engagement in that process. John McGlennon said that the systems should help develop what category they will be evaluated under. Jennifer Mitchell said that DRPT would begin thinking through the logistics of that and may start with just a few MPOs.
- d. Brian Smith said that under eligibility criteria it should be edited to reflect that a transit agency is not eligible if they demonstrate poor grants management or a back log, and are performing preventative maintenance.

- e. Tom Fox asked how an asset will be handled if the age is reached before the mileage. He asked if there was a provision in this document to address these issues. Jennifer Mitchell said that she thinks it was decided that transit agencies will project the age the bus will be when the new one is delivered. People will need to apply months in advance. Brad Sheffield says this goes back to data and the accuracy of the system that is applying.
 - f. Brad Sheffield asked if mileage projections for assets are required in the TDPs. Jennifer Mitchell said that we could extrapolate miles per year. Jen DeBruhl said actual mileage will be reported twice a year.
 - g. Jen DeBruhl said that DRPT is working to build a link between OLGA and TransAM so that all you have to do is put in a VIN number and the calculation can be built in to make projections.
 - h. Brian Smith asked about paratransit vehicles. He said that those vehicles could get rolled over into major expansion because of the dollar amount. Jen DeBruhl said those vehicles have a much shorter life. She said this may be an area of the program that would be a good opportunity for innovation. Jennifer Mitchell said that she agreed with Brian and that these smartscale rules wouldn't apply to paratransit vehicles. DRPT will look into exemptions for those. She said that was likely something the GA has not considered. DRPT will come back with something about that at the next meeting.
7. Wrap Up/Next Steps-
- Jen DeBruhl said that DRPT is trying to pull together quality application tools for December 1. She said there were meetings scheduled in July and September. July's meeting will focus on major expansion.
- a. Kate Mattice asked when the discussion begins on the operating subsidies. Jen DeBruhl said hopefully we can start on that in July. Nate Macek is working on the technical work.
8. Public Comment-No one was signed up for public comment.
9. The meeting was adjourned at 1:43.