



MINUTES

VIRGINIA RAILWAY EXPRESS OPERATIONS BOARD MEETING

December 15, 2023

14700 Potomac Mills Road, Woodbridge, VA 22192

Members Present

*Sarah Bagley (NVTC)
*Andrea Bailey (PRTC)
*Meg Bohmke (PRTC)
*Margaret Franklin (PRTC)
*Monica Gary (PRTC)
*Lori Hayes (PRTC)
*Takis Karantonis (NVTC)
*Michael McLaughlin (VPRA)
*Alanna Mensing (PRTC)
*Daniel G. Storck (NVTC)
*James Walkinshaw (NVTC)

Jurisdiction

City of Alexandria
Prince William County
Stafford County
Prince William County
Stafford County
Spotsylvania County
Arlington County
Commonwealth of Virginia
City of Manassas Park
Fairfax County
Fairfax County

Members Absent

Matt Kelly (PRTC)
Jeanine Lawson (PRTC)
Ralph Smith (PRTC)

City of Fredericksburg
Prince William County
City of Manassas

Alternates Present

Alternates Absent

Canek Aguirre (NVTC)
Victor Angry (PRTC)
Deborah Frazier (PRTC)
Libby Garvey (NVTC)
Jason Graham (PRTC)
Jeffrey C. McKay (NVTC)
Darryl Moore (PRTC)
Pam Sebesky (PRTC)
Emily Stock (DRPT)
Ann Wheeler (PRTC)
Pamela Yeung (PRTC)

City of Alexandria
Prince William County
Spotsylvania County
Arlington County
City of Fredericksburg
Fairfax County
City of Manassas Park
City of Manassas
Commonwealth of Virginia
Prince William County
Stafford County

*Voting Member

**Arrived/departed following the commencement of the Operations Board Meeting. Notation of exact arrival/departure time is included in the body of the minutes.

‡ Participated remotely via Webex in accordance with the Electronic Participation Policy

Staff and General Public

Sarah Allred – Fairfax County
Alex Buchanan – VRE
Rich Dalton – VRE
Anaya Farah - VRE
Karen Finucan Clarkson – VRE
Chris Henry – VRE
Robert Hostelka – VRE
John Kerins - Keolis
Scott Kalkwarf – NVTC

Lezlie Lamb – VRE
Steve MacIsaac – VRE Chief Counsel
Kristin Nutter - VRE
Dallas Richards – VRE
Bob Schneider - PRTC
Mark Schofield – VRE
Alex Sugatan - VRE
Joe Swartz – VRE

Chair Walkinshaw called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m.; the roll call followed.

Safety Moment – 3

CEO, Rich Dalton briefed attendees on safety procedures and assigned specific tasks to qualified staff members in case of an emergency.

Approval of the Agenda - 4

Mr. Karantonis moved, with a second by Ms. Hayes, to approve the agenda as presented. There was no discussion on the motion. The vote in favor was cast by Members Bagley, Bailey, Bohmke, Gary, Hayes, Karantonis, McLaughlin, Mensing, Storck, and Walkinshaw.

Approval of the Minutes of the November 17, 2023 VRE Operations Board Meeting – 5

Ms. Bailey moved, with a second by Ms. Gary, to approve the Minutes from November 17, 2023. The vote in favor was cast by Members Bagley, Bailey, Bohmke, Gary, Hayes, Karantonis, McLaughlin, Mensing, Storck, and Walkinshaw.

[Ms. Franklin arrived at 9:08 a.m.]

Chair's Comments – 6

Chair Walkinshaw welcomed everyone to the December meeting. The Chair announced that registration for the Virginia Transit Association's annual "Transit + Rail Advocacy Day" had opened and noted there is to be a reception at Main Street Station in Richmond following the event.

Chair Walkinshaw recognized two departing Board Members, Mr. Kelly, and Ms. Lawson, and commended their years of service to VRE. Mr. Kelly and Ms. Lawson were not in attendance; however, the Chair reviewed their extensive history of accomplishments as Members of the VRE Operations Board.

Chief Executive Officer's Report – 7

Mr. Dalton briefed the Operations Board on the following items of interest:

- Safety
- Performance
- Ridership

Public Comment Time – 8

The Chair opened the floor for public comments. There were no speakers and no written comments had been submitted.

Action Items – 9

Referral of the Amended FY 2024 and Recommended FY 2025 VRE Operating and Capital Budgets to the Commissions and Jurisdictions – 9A

Ms. Bailey moved, with a second by Ms. Gary, to refer the amended FY 2024 and recommended FY 2025 VRE Operating and Capital Budgets to the commissions and jurisdictions for approval.

Following a brief presentation by VRE Chief Financial Officer, Mark Schofield, Board Members posed questions and made comments summarized below.

- Ms. Bagley asked how will SmartScale scoring changes impact VRE's CIP? Mr. Schofield indicated it wasn't expected to impact the projects VRE submits for consideration. Mr. Dalton and Mr. Swartz agreed and expanded on the topic.
- Mr. McLaughlin asked for clarification that the CIP as presented did not include VPRA access fee reimbursement, and Ms. Schofield confirmed it did not.
- The Chair asked what potential ways VRE can address unfunded aspects of capital projects? Staff responded applications would be made to various state and federal grant programs, with additional exploration of potential available options with the State for funding rolling stock.
- The Chair asked whether the 8.7% increase in the Operating Budget is driven by contractual increases or service expansion. Staff indicated that both were causes, but that contractual increases account for the majority of the budget increase.
- Mr. Karantonis asked what the basis was for the preliminary ridership projections for Saturday service, and will it drive the need for new equipment? Mr. Dalton indicated the projected need for new rolling stock is more due to equipment approaching the end of useful life. Mr. Schofield indicated the ridership projections came from work on the 2030 and 2050 system plans.
- Ms. Hayes expressed concern about VRE returning to the pre-pandemic jurisdictional subsidy when ridership has not returned to pre-pandemic levels. Ms. Hayes expressed opposition to the elimination of youth fares and indicated she was unconvinced it would result in increased ridership. The Chair responded that jurisdictional subsidy is lagging inflation, and that all costs at the jurisdictions have risen over this period. He warned of future large potential increases in subsidies in the future. There were comments from other Members in support of positioning VRE to compete economically for families' use. It was noted by some that making VRE cost-prohibitive for families would result in the loss of potential revenue collected in adults' fares.
- Ms. Hayes stated she preferred VRE use more of its federal relief funds before returning to pre-pandemic jurisdictional subsidy levels. Mr. Storck commented that he would prefer VRE keep a reserve of relief monies for future needs.
- Ms. Bohmke stated she prefers the idea of keeping a reserve of relief funds and supports returning to pre-pandemic subsidy levels.
- Ms. Bohmke asked Mr. Schofield to elaborate on the need for three new FTEs for positions in IT and Facilities. Mr. Schofield responded that VRE has made substantial improvements in technology and infrastructure, and the added employees would be utilized to support those investments.

- Speaking to Ms. Hayes' concerns, Ms. Mensing spoke of the need to return to the pre-pandemic subsidy structure and noted her discussions with constituents highlights VRE as an amenity to residents and potential residents.
- Ms. Hayes stated her objection to normalizing the subsidy for FY 2025 is based on the needs of her county.

The vote in favor was cast by Members Bagley, Bailey, Bohmke, Cristol, Franklin, Gary, McLaughlin, Mensing, Storck, and Walkinshaw. Ms. Hayes voted in opposition to the motion.

Approval of the 2024 VRE Officers – 9B

Chair Walkinshaw moved, with a second by Ms. Hayes, to approve the following nominees for 2024 VRE Officers: Ms. Bohmke for Chair, Ms. Bagley for Vice-Chair, Mr. Smith for Secretary, Mr. Storck as Treasurer, and Ms. Bailey At-Large.

The vote in favor was cast by Members Bagley, Bailey, Bohmke, Cristol, Franklin, Gary, Hayes, McLaughlin, Mensing, Storck, and Walkinshaw.

Authorization to Issue an MEC VII Task Order for Engineering Oversight for New Passenger Railcars Phase III – 9C

Mr. Karantonis moved, with a second by Ms. Bagley, to authorize the CEO to issue a task order to STV, Inc. for engineering oversight of new passenger railcars under the Mechanical Engineering Consulting Contract.

The vote in favor was cast by Members Bagley, Bailey, Bohmke, Cristol, Franklin, Gary, Hayes, McLaughlin, Mensing, Storck, and Walkinshaw.

Authorization to Execute a Contract for Locomotive Layover Battery Charging Systems – 9D

Ms. Hayes moved, with a second by Ms. Gary, to authorize the CEO to execute a contract with Dina Consulting & Design, LLC for locomotive layover battery charging systems.

The vote in favor was cast by Members Bagley, Bailey, Bohmke, Cristol, Franklin, Gary, Hayes, McLaughlin, Mensing, Storck, and Walkinshaw.

Authorization to Extend a License Agreement for the Lease of Tower Space for the VHF Radio Communications System – 9E

Vice Chair Bohmke moved, with a second by Ms. Bagley, to authorize the CEO to extend a license agreement with American Towers, Inc., for the lease of space on their cell tower located in Fairfax Station, Virginia for a period of five years. The vote in favor was cast by Members Bagley, Bailey, Bohmke, Cristol, Franklin, Gary, Hayes, McLaughlin, Mensing, Storck, and Walkinshaw.

[Ms. Bailey left the meeting at 10:35 a.m.]

Information Items – 10

Spending Authority Report – 10A

The December Spending Authority Report outlined purchases greater than \$50,000 but less than \$200,000 made in November 2023.

Crystal City Project Update – 10B

VRE Staff briefed the Operations Board on the status of the Crystal City VRE Station Improvements Project.

Members Time – 11

Members wished everyone happy holidays.

Mr. McLaughlin recapped news that Virginia has secured funding for the next phase of the Long Bridge project.

In final comments, CEO Rich Dalton announced the retirement of 20-year VRE employee Theresa Stevenson; the graduation of VRE associate accountant Alicia Lewis with her bachelor's degree; and the departure of Director of IT, Robert Hostelka after 8.5 years.

Chair Walkinshaw thanked Mr. Dalton and VRE staff for their support and hard work and congratulated staff for their accomplishments in 2023.

The meeting adjourned at 10:57 a.m.

Approved this 19th day of January 2024.

Meg Bohmke
Chair

Ralph Smith
Secretary

CERTIFICATION

This certification hereby acknowledges the minutes for the December 15, 2023 Virginia Railway Express Operations Board Meeting have been recorded to the best of my ability.



Lezlie M. Lamb