

## NORTHERN VIRGINIA TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Chairman Martin E. Nohe and Members  
Northern Virginia Transportation Authority

**FROM:** Monica Backmon, Executive Director

**DATE:** May 5, 2017

**SUBJECT:** Comments on the Commonwealth Transportation Board's Draft Six-Year Improvement Program (FY2018-2023)

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**Recommendation:** To seek Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA) approval of comments on the Commonwealth Transportation Board's (CTB) draft Six-Year Improvement Program (SYIP) (FY2018 – 2023).

**Suggested motion:** *I move Authority approval of the comments on the Commonwealth Transportation Board's draft Six-Year Improvement Program (FY2018 – 2023).*

**Background:** As was done in previous years, the Secretary of Transportation and the Commonwealth Transportation Board conducted public hearings throughout Virginia to solicit public comment on the draft FY2018-2023 SYIP.

A total of 436 applications were submitted across the Commonwealth, and 404 were scored using the Smart Scale methodology, for a total funding request of \$8.6 billion. The state estimates that approximately \$659 million will be available for this round of funding for High Priority Projects and \$359 million for the District Grants Program, with approximately \$80 million of the District Grants Program provided to Northern Virginia. In January 2017, the Virginia Secretary of Transportation's Office released the scores, along with a recommended scenario for funded projects. The FY2018 – 2023 SYIP is expected to be adopted in July 2017.

The DRAFT comments include updates to requests previously made by the Authority, as well as comments pertaining to Smart Scale. Specifically, changes from the testimony approved by the Authority in 2016 include:

- Updating the language regarding coordination between the Commonwealth and the Authority, to include references to the Authority developing its Six Year Program.
- Updating the State of Good Repair and Highway Maintenance and Operations Fund language to reflect updated road condition information.
- Adding language noting the projected decline in state transit funding and the work being undertaken by the Transit Capital Project Revenue Advisory Board; and noting the hope that this effort will provide sufficient and reliable funding from the Commonwealth for transit systems.

- Adding language pertaining to the need for funding for the Virginia Railway Express to maintain and expand its service.
- Removing language pertaining to funding of the Transform I-66 Outside the Beltway I project, as the project is not expected to utilize Authority or Commonwealth funds.

The public hearing for Northern Virginia was held Wednesday, May 3, 2017, at VDOT's Northern Virginia District Office. Comments will be received through May 16, 2017.

**Attachment:** DRAFT comment letter on the CTB's Draft FY 2018 – 2023 Six-Year Improvement Program.



**Northern Virginia Transportation Authority**  
*The Authority for Transportation in Northern Virginia*

May 11, 2017

The Honorable Aubrey L. Layne, Jr.  
Secretary of Transportation  
Patrick Henry Building  
1111 East Broad Street, Third Floor  
Richmond, Virginia 23218

Reference: Northern Virginia Transportation Authority Comments on the Commonwealth Transportation Board's Draft Six-Year Improvement Program (FY2018 – 2023)

Dear Secretary Layne,

The Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA) respectfully submits these comments on the Commonwealth Transportation Board's (CTB) draft Six-Year Improvement Program (FY2018 – 2023), as well as comments on several other matters.

- The Authority continues to work diligently to implement the Northern Virginia components of HB 2313 (2013). The NVTA has adopted three funding programs covering each fiscal year since FY2014. HB 2313 funding has been deployed on 79 projects throughout the region. These projects are multimodal investments that increase capacity and reduce congestion. The NVTA and the Commonwealth are funding partners on several of these projects. Further, the NVTA is fulfilling its regional transportation planning responsibility through the update of TransAction. TransAction, Northern Virginia's long range multimodal transportation plan, is the catalyst for HB 2313 eligibility and will guide funding decisions for the NVTA's first Six Year Program (SYP) for FY2018 through 2023. As the NVTA updates TransAction and establishes its first SYP, continued collaboration between the Commonwealth and the Authority will be essential as local, regional, state-wide, and federal funds are all part of the solution for addressing the critical transportation needs of the Commonwealth. It is essential that we continue to work together to ensure these needs are met.
- It is important that Northern Virginia continues to receive its fair share of statewide revenues. As stated in HB 2313, Northern Virginia's regional funds cannot be used to calculate or reduce the share of local, federal, or state revenues otherwise available to participating jurisdictions. This is especially important as the Smart Scale process continues and as various formulas and processes for transportation funding are being established and/or modified.
- As the Smart Scale process evolves, the Authority also believes that the impacts on funding for multimodal projects should continue to be studied to ensure the process is effectively rating projects of all modes.

- The Authority requests that the Commonwealth consider the condition of our region's secondary roads as State of Good Repair and Highway Maintenance and Operations Funds (HMOF) funds are allocated. While 89 percent of roads in Northern Virginia are in Fair or Better Condition, our secondary pavement conditions are the worst in the Commonwealth, according to VDOT's dashboard. Only 36 percent of the secondary roads are in Fair or Better Condition. This is far less than the Commonwealth's average of 60 percent and far from the 63 percent target. Millions of people drive on these roads every day and the deteriorated pavements will only get worse until something is done to address them.
- The Authority also remains concerned about the substantial decrease in funding for the Revenue Sharing program. This program significantly leverages state transportation funds by encouraging local governments to spend their own money on transportation projects. This program has been a success in Northern Virginia, where our localities regularly apply for these funds, with several applying for the maximum amount allowed. While many of the projects may be eligible for Smart Scale, Smart Scale funding is extremely oversubscribed and many applications will not receive funding. Further, many other projects that are submitted through Revenue Sharing may not necessarily be suitable for the Smart Scale prioritization process. All these projects are extremely important to the localities that submit applications. By design, the Revenue Sharing program has allowed more projects throughout the Commonwealth to move forward. Reducing this funding will only slow our mutual efforts to improve our transportation system.
- While these comments are based on the information provided as part of the Smart Scale process and other information that has been released, the Authority believes that it may also be important to have the opportunity to comment on the DRAFT SYIP once it is released.

In addition to addressing the foregoing major issues, the Authority also wishes to comment on the following:

- We thank you for continuing to include the Virginia match for Federal dedicated funding for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) and ask that the Commonwealth continue to provide these vital funds. We appreciate this significant commitment to help WMATA bring its system into a state of good repair and restore safe and reliable operations. Support of WMATA's rebuilding efforts is vital, as the system is critical to meeting the region's needs today and in the future.
- While the General Assembly has helped address the significant decline in state transit funding expected to occur in 2018, the Commonwealth's projected funding for transit capital projects is still expected to drop significantly. These funds support our region's local bus systems, as well as capital needs of WMATA and the Virginia Railway Express (VRE). Later this year, the Transit Capital Project Revenue Advisory Board will report to the General Assembly on potential new sources of revenue to meet these transit needs, as well as methods for prioritizing the use of those funds. The Revenue Advisory Board's recommendations will lay the groundwork for possible legislative action, which

we hope will provide sufficient and reliable funding from the Commonwealth for transit systems in our region and throughout Virginia.

- The Authority continues to be concerned by provisions in the State Code that provide VDOT and the CTB the ability to decide whether a local transportation plan is consistent with the Commonwealth's priorities. If VDOT and the CTB decide that a local plan is not consistent, the CTB can withhold funding for projects. While efforts to better coordinate local and state transportation planning are appreciated, these provisions essentially transfer the responsibility for land use planning, as it relates to transportation, from local governments to the Commonwealth. Our localities work diligently with our residents, property owners, and the local business communities on land use and transportation plans. These provisions could inhibit development and redevelopment efforts throughout Virginia.
- The Authority remains opposed to any policy which requires the transfer of secondary road construction and maintenance responsibilities to counties, and specifically, Northern Virginia jurisdictions. Unfunded mandates of this magnitude would result in dire consequences to localities.
- The VRE, like other transit systems in the Commonwealth, needs resources to meet its growing demand. Earlier this year, the CTB's Rail Committee confirmed that over the next 20 years VRE will need an average increased annual investment of \$45 million per year to maintain the current level of service, with additional funds being necessary for VRE to expand its system to meet growing ridership demands. The Authority believes the partnership between the region and the Commonwealth is vital to ensure the long-term viability of this system.
- The Authority requests that the CTB, DRPT and VDOT support, promote, and encourage walking and bicycling as viable modes of transportation and look for opportunities to enhance pedestrian and bicycle connectivity in Northern Virginia.
- The Authority supports the policy that major transportation corridor studies, related to facilities wholly within one VDOT construction district, should be managed by that construction district rather than the VDOT Central Office. Regional VDOT staff is better equipped to address the concerns of the affected citizens and local governments.

We request that this testimony be made part of the CTB's Draft Six-Year Improvement Program public hearing record, and full consideration be given to these comments in preparing the FY2018 - 2023 Six-Year Improvement Program. Thank you again for the opportunity to provide these comments.

Please let me know if you have any questions or if I can provide any clarification regarding the Authority's comments.

Sincerely,

Martin E. Nohe  
Chairman

CC: Nick Donohue, Deputy Secretary of Transportation  
Mary Hughes Hynes, CTB & NVTA Member  
NVTA Members

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