

Questions from June 30, 2010 Public Meeting:

1. **Question:** Has or will consideration been or be given to the provision of a public restroom at any of the light rail station sites? Even if it's only one?
 - o **Answer:** Public restrooms are not anticipated to be provided at the stations.

2. **Question:** Are we limiting ourselves by simply following the existing track? The Town Center site is perfect. The beach outlet will get a dedicated stop w/new track, but the Lynnhaven stop is no where near the mall. How do we keep tourist shoppers coming from the beach from continuing on past Lynnhaven Mall and onto the more conveniently located (track wise) MacArthur? Dedicated Lynnhaven mall buses?
 - o **Answer:** The VBTES is a supplement to the 2000 Norfolk-Virginia Beach Final Environmental Impact Study (FEIS). The 2000 FEIS examined transit options and alignments in other corridors in the City, including I-264, Virginia Beach Boulevard, as well as the Norfolk Southern corridor. Based on that work, the most suitable alignment to study further was the inactive Norfolk Southern Corridor. The VBTES will identify feeder bus options to provide connections to the transit extension under consideration, which could include Lynnhaven Mall. Currently, Lynnhaven Mall is served by HRT's bus routes, #26, #29, #37 and #32 (during summer months from the Oceanfront).

3. **Question:** The current track misses a lot of population centers. Granted they serve the Strategic Growth Areas (SGA) but how long will it be before SGA development will support light rail? How will light rail survive in the mean time? What happens to station in an SGA before SGA is developed?
 - o **Answer:** SGAs along the corridor are being planned to include the potential for multi-modal transit, including the possibility of LRT or BRT. The placement of a station in an SGA area will help spur development that is targeted for the SGA areas. The SGA plans and the project corridor are actually complementary and will help with the implementation of the SGA plans. The Virginia Beach City Council has made a conscious effort to focus growth, i.e., "population centers" in these SGAs.

4. **Question:** What is the purpose/benefit of the extension and how does that purpose/benefit fit into the larger transportation strategy? At present, I do not understand how the existing plan to connect the ocean front to EVMS will eventually be extended to Norfolk Naval Base or to the high speed rail corridor between Newport News and Richmond, Washington, New York, etc. What are the plans to make this happen, when, and at what projected cost and at what benefit? At present, the solution looks pretty much like it will require people to drive from Chesapeake, Suffolk, and surrounding areas to take a train the last several miles to a downtown destination. Access needs to be more proximate to the population centers and expected growth centers to make this economical.
 - Question:** Public feels it is train to nowhere – what are plans to connect to Naval Station and future high speed rail.
 - o **Answer:** An Alternatives Analysis (AA) study to examine the extension of the Tide to Naval Station Norfolk is planned and will commence as funding is available. The AA will examine transit mode and route options to connect to the Naval Station, including connecting from the Medical Center (EVMS) station or a future station that could connect from Virginia Beach. The study for a high speed rail corridor is being conducted by the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation. The Tide Light Rail Transit (LRT) project under construction in

Norfolk has a stop at Harbor Park. It is planned that high speed rail, The Tide, and bus service will be serviced by a multi-modal station at Harbor Park. Intercity passenger rail service to Richmond and points north from Norfolk is anticipated to begin within three years. Click on the link to get more information about the high speed rail study [<http://www.drpt.virginia.gov/projects/shsrc.aspx>].

5. **Question:** What is the cost per mile for the extension? If it is comparable to that for the Norfolk segment of the line, which I believe it to be one of the highest cost per mile rail systems of its type in the US. Has HRT benchmarked this critical metric? If so, against what projects and why do they believe these projects to be analogous?

Question: What is the cost per mile compared to equivalent projects in other similar sized cities?

- o **Answer:** Preliminary cost estimates for construction and operation will be prepared for each of the alternatives under evaluation in the AA/SDEIS and will be included in the evaluation criteria for identifying the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA). These cost estimates will be based on a limited amount of design and engineering which is sufficient for comparing the alternatives. As the project moves through each stage of FTA project development – Alternatives Analysis, Preliminary Engineering and Final Design – estimates will reflect more detailed design and engineering and reliability will increase. While every project differs, at approximately \$45.7 million per mile, The Tide LRT in Norfolk has one of the lowest cost per mile of recent LRT systems.

6. **Question:** What is the projected percentage of annual operating cost that will be captured in box receipts over the first five years of ridership? How does this compare to similar projects? If the project is expected to break even, when? What is your definition of break even; is it based on purely economic benefit or does it include soft benefits like improvement in air quality, quality of life, projected economic growth, etc. How firm are these numbers based on past projections that have been made?

- o **Answer:** Fixed guideway transit projects in the United States generally return between 15% and 50% of their operating costs through farebox revenue. Although revenue forecast have not been completed for the Virginia Beach extension it is expected to fall within this range.

7. **Question:** What is the current population density along the axis of the projected rail? What is the projected growth rate in population density and the basis for those assumptions? How does this population density projection compare with the actual population density statistics of other existing, profitable LRT systems?

- o **Answer:** Federally funded transportation projects are required to use regionally accepted socio-economic forecasts. The Virginia Beach Transit Extension Project is using the Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan [http://www.hrtpo.org/TPO_RTP.asp] as the basis for land use forecasts. The table below shows socioeconomic information within ½ mile of the project station areas.

Station	Existing (Census) 2000			HRTPO Projection 2030		
	Population	Households	Employment	Population	Households	Employment
Witchduck	1365	542	2649	1905	796	3345
Independence	987	440	2378	1989	893	4379
Lynn Shores/Thalia	4390	1696	1940	5054	1964	2382
Lynnhaven Road	2570	1065	3977	2758	1142	4083
Great Neck/London Bridge	2078	766	3588	2231	831	3063
Oceana	1479	338	6792	1253	248	5125
Birdneck	1361	583	363	1267	540	745
Pavilion/Convention Center	1454	695	706	2095	1011	996
Oceanfront	729	390	851	1427	754	1137

8. **Question:** What is being done NOW to promote public bus ridership so that a future demand for the LRT exists upon its construction completion?
 - o **Answer:** Hampton Roads Transit has recently begun a marketing campaign to promote public transportation on our buses and ferries and soon will include The Tide and our Traffic program (commuter/van pool). These consist of commercials on local TV channels, radio, gohrt.com website, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. You can go to our website at www.gohrt.com to view the first two campaigns.

9. **Question:** How will these alternatives include bicycle storage, transportation and access?
 - o **Answer:** HRT has bike racks and locker storage facilities (Silverleaf) for commuters to use as well as being able to transport bikes on the buses. With The Tide, there will be spaces on board for commuters to travel with their bikes as well.

10. **Question:** Will the Va. Beach extension hook up directly to Norfolk's Tide? Will you have to change cars? More fare?
 - o **Answer:** This will depend on the transit mode that is chosen. If the extension is LRT, the trip will be made in the same LRT vehicle on the track will be a direct link to the Norfolk LRT. No transfer will be needed. If BRT is the chosen transit mode, a transfer will be required. The fare would be the same as HRT's bus fare.

11. **Question:** Will there be commuter ticket books? Discounted fares for senior citizens?
 - o **Answer:** As with the current public transit system, we offer fare cards that can be purchased for 1 day, 7 days, or 30 days. For seniors and persons with disabilities, the discounted fare is half price. This type of fare card system will continue with The Tide and any other extensions.

12. **Question:** Percentage operating cost that comes from fare box receipts, long-term payoff project.
- **Answer:** Transit projects in the United States are considered a public service and are not profit driven. Fixed guideway transit projects in the United States generally return between 15% and 50% of their operating costs through farebox revenue. Although revenue forecast have not been completed for the Virginia Beach extension it is expected to fall within this range.
13. **Question:** Would bus route 20 remain in service when BRT/LRT is built?
- **Answer:** Route 20 would likely be adjusted to provide access to the BRT or LRT stations.
14. **Question:** Site looks like good land use. Any wetland/soil issues? (Vehicle Maintenance and Storage Facility [VMSF])
- **Answer:** No wetlands have been identified on the VSMF site. Soils/geotechnical investigations will be completed in future project development phases.
15. **Question:** Park & Ride in this area?(VMSF)
- **Answer:** There are no plans to use this facility as a public Park & Ride
16. **Question:** Traffic at Oceana? Elevated track in this area (VMSF)
- **Answer:** There are no planned elevated crossings at Oceana or the VMSF.
17. **Question:** How large is the parcel? (VMSF)
- **Answer:** The usable portion of the parcel is approximately 50 acres. The exact footprint of the site has not been determined.
18. **Question:** Will buses be here? (VMSF)
- **Answer:** It is anticipated that a bus maintenance and storage area will also be included on this site.
19. **Question:** Will there be just one system and what other forms of transit?
- **Answer:** The VBTES is examining two build transit options – BRT and LRT. HRT will continue to operate bus, ferry and shuttle services and The Tide in Norfolk beginning in May 2011.