

## **September 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>, 2009 Public Meeting Questions and Answers**

On September 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>, 2009, Hampton Roads Transit and the City of Virginia Beach hosted initial public information meetings about the Virginia Beach Transit Extension Study (VBTES). Over 250 citizens attended these meetings and learned from the project management team about the year-long study process, the transit alternatives under consideration, and opportunities for public input. At the meetings, attendees were given the option of either filling out a comment card or submitting comments electronically at one of the project laptop set-ups.

We appreciate each of the more than 100 comments that were received. All of the comments received are available for review at [www.gohrt.com/vbtes](http://www.gohrt.com/vbtes). These comments will help to guide the project management team throughout the study. In some instances, citizen comments included questions, which can be found below, for the project management team to answer. Formal public hearings will be held at the end of the study before any municipal decision is made on whether to move to the next stage of project development. All comments from these hearings will be included in the Final Environmental Impact Statement.

The following questions are those we have provided with a direct response:

### **Alignment**

**Question 1:** Ok, what about the EAST TO WEST? Nothing goes NORTH TO SOUTH – buses, etc. Not everyone works off the boulevard – no bus goes to Chesapeake Mall at all – We are a car society

**Answer:** The Norfolk TIDE is seen as the starter line for a regional transit system. Hampton Roads Transit (HRT) has hired HDR Inc. to provide services for the study of two potential extensions to The Tide, HRT's Light Rail Transit (LRT) system. The first extension currently under study is the VBTES, which is examining a potential transit connection from the eastern end of The Tide in Norfolk at Newtown Road to the Virginia Beach Oceanfront along the Norfolk Southern Corporation's inactive right of way. The second study will examine a potential extension to Naval Station Norfolk. Both studies will include studying and identifying feeder bus system options to provide connections to the transit extensions.

**Question 2:** Has elevated trains been considered?

**Answer:** The technical analysis that will be completed as part of the AA/SDEIS will examine where elevated crossings may be necessary.

### **Economic Development**

**Question 3:** Wondering if there will be a part in the study that talks to job creation from this building of light rail. Creating job opportunities, the maintenance, construction and operation? How will it impact neighborhood in job creation?

**Answer:** The project consultant will assess the potential for joint development opportunities by; analyzing the overall market potential for general types of projects suited to joint development; identifying stations with joint development potential and evaluating secondary or multiplier impacts of joint development (e.g. jobs, payroll, materials, purchases, etc.)

**Question 4:** There are plans for development in the oceanfront corridor – especially multi use buildings for commercial and residential needs. How will the HRT study import those plans?

**Answer:** The project team is working closely with the City of Virginia Beach to identify proposed and planned development along the study corridor, especially within the City's Strategic Growth Areas. As a part of the Alternatives Analysis (AA)/ Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) analysis, the VBTES will include identifying and documenting existing development trends within the project corridor, and evaluating existing and proposed implementation of redevelopment or development incentives within the corridor, particularly those related to transit supportive development.

### **Environmental**

**Question 5:** What's involved in the environmental impact evaluation regarding the human factor: e.c. low-income people? (sic)

**Answer:** The SDEIS will address potential impacts on the human and natural environment, addressing social and community impacts and benefits affecting residents, workers and visitors within the study area. For example, the potential for impacts to minority and low-income populations will be addressed in Section 3.8 of the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) on Environmental Justice, in accordance with Executive Order 11593. U.S. census and other socioeconomic data will be used to determine the presence and location of minority and low income populations within the study. The SDEIS will assess the potential for disproportionate impacts to those populations and the potential for the proposed project to benefit those populations.

### **Funding**

**Question 6:** Where's the \$ coming from?

**Answer:** The VBTES analysis currently underway will be funded through federal and state sources.

**Question 7:** What is the current cost estimate for the project?

**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 a 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.

**Question 8:** Any chance it will be self supporting?

**Answer:** All forms of public transportation require public subsidy to cover the full cost of operation. That is true for buses in Virginia Beach or the subway system in New York City. Like our road network and other public assets, such as local libraries, public

transportation requires ongoing public investment to provide the service at a high quality. Typically, the fare that passengers pay typically covers 20-30% of the cost to provide the service, and the balance is often covered by a mix of local, state and federal sources of funds.

### **Land Use**

**Question 9:** Sufficient satellite parking – especially for outlying areas?

**Answer:** As a part the VBTES analysis, stations will be studied to determine the appropriate capacity, based on projected system ridership, and appropriate locations for park-and-ride facilities.

### **Right of Way Issues**

**Question 10:** At the Birdneck Rd Station, I noticed on the map that is goes yellow over my neighborhood. I'm interested in your plans because I do not want my home value to decrease further. Worse yet, I'm I going to lose my existing home?

**Answer:** Generally, the closer property is to transit, the more valuable the property becomes. Single-family residences located in communities that have a high-capacity transit station have a market value that is approximately 7 percent greater than that of residences in other communities. For example, in Dallas, a recent study by the University of North Texas found that the jump in values for LRT-served properties was about 25% greater than areas not served by LRT. The VBTES is focusing on the existing Norfolk-Southern Right of Way and is seeking to minimize impacts to private property.

### **Transit Technology and Ridership**

**Question 11a:** I really would like to know the relative costs (capital and maint) of BRT vs LRT. Are the daily costs of using either of the above systems going to be reasonable? Enough to attract daily riders?

**Question 11b:** Wouldn't bus rapid transit suffice, instead of spending all that money, time and inconveniences with LRT? There would be more accessibility to BRT than LRT.

**Answer to Question 11a and 11b:** The VBTES will include the evaluation of LRT and BRT for fixed guideway alternatives as an extension to the Tide. Improved bus service will also be included and evaluated for cost effectiveness as compared to the LRT and BRT options. The evaluation methodology is based on the prescribed Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) New Starts process and is focused on the cost effectiveness of potential transit alternatives. This study will develop forecasts of ridership and mobility benefits in accordance with FTA guidelines, which require that a reasonable and consistent fare policy be applied across all alternatives being examined. Estimates of capital, operating, and maintenance costs are estimated independently from ridership but are based on the same service and fare policy assumptions.

## **Stations**

**Question 12:** Will the DEIS analyze feeder bus routes or alternate methods to get VB resident to the proposed stations?

**Answer:** Yes, the VBTES include identifying feeder bus system options to provide connections to the transit extensions under consideration.

## **Traffic Issues**

**Question 13:** Exactly how does this create less traffic when the proposed station is at the busiest intersection in the city?

**Answer:** A detailed traffic impact analysis will be conducted to determine the effect of proposed transit station locations located along the corridor, including at high volume intersections. The analysis will also examine current and future traffic conditions and pedestrian activity along with proposed transit operations, schedules, and ridership estimates. The analysis will estimate whether the higher level of service and accessibility provided by fixed guideway transit will enable more people to reach the area by transit. Passengers will also use multiple means to arrive at the station areas-- walking, biking, transit and by auto.

**Question 14a:** Has the HRT or the City thought about the traffic backups this will cause on Lynnhaven Pkwy, Witchduck Rd., Rosemont Rd., etc...while commuters (in vehicles) wait for the trains to pass?

**Question 14b:** We all know that these locations are overcrowded during rush hour and now you are planning to stop traffic for a train that runs every 10-20 minutes? The city can't synchronize the lights on Virginia Beach Blvd. so traffic flows smoothly, how are HRT and the city going to resolve this?

**Answer to Question 14a and 14b:** A detailed traffic impact analysis will be conducted to determine the effect of at-grade BRT/LRT crossings on arterial streets. A grade-separation analysis will also be conducted. Grade separation is one of many potential traffic mitigation measures that can be applied, if needed. Signals for BRT/LRT at-grade crossing and traffic signals on either side of the transit guideway can be synchronized to minimize the potential for traffic delay.

**Question 15:** How much input will the local citizens have concerning traffic issues?

**Answer:** The Public Involvement Plan contains specific ways that the public can receive information regarding the study, as well as provide information to the project team. There will be several public meetings at which citizens can provide written comments. Input can also be shared by email and telephone. The project webpage, [www.gohrt.com/vbtcs](http://www.gohrt.com/vbtcs), contains contact information for project team members who can receive input/address questions from the public or the media. The webpage will be updated often with downloadable documents and the project schedule. Comments can be given directly via the webpage as well as HRT's Facebook page and using Twitter. Comments received

from the public will be documented throughout the study and will be used to help guide the study process.

**General Comments:**

**Question 16:** Does Virginia participate in minority & women set-aside's for work development and employment? At what percentage rate?

**Answer:** The FTA does not recognize or establish 'set-asides' for the purpose of promoting minority & women participation. As a part of the U.S. Department of Transportation, FTA regulates participation in the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise ("DBE") Program in order to promote a level-playing field for all firms identified as minorities. HRT participates in the federal DBE program and utilizes the requirements set forth in 49 CFR Part 26, which details the requirements as they relate to DBE certification and guidance. The Virginia Department of Minority Business Enterprise is the state agency dedicated to enhancing the participation of our small, women- and minority-owned businesses in Virginia's procurement opportunities, including certifying the business as DBE's under the federal U.S. Department of Transportation's Program (Please see <http://www.dmb.e.virginia.gov/> for more information). The other certifying agency for DBE firms used by HRT is the Metropolitan Washington Airport Authority.

**Question 17:** How global is the future planning? Is a plan in the works for a corridor to the airport being considered down the road?

**Answer:** As part of the Naval Station extension study, possible feeder connections will be evaluated as part of the transit fixed guideway analysis to serve major activity centers such as the airport.

**Question 18:** We are interested in providing public art for the system. Can you tell us what to do to connect with you?

**Answer:** The extent of public art within station design is not yet determined at this early stage of project development. HRT will work with the City of Virginia Beach to coordinate the potential application of public art as the study phases progress.