

ITEM 7 - Action
February 17, 2010

Endorsement of the Establishment of the Virginia Association of
Metropolitan Planning Organizations (VAMPO)

Staff

Recommendation: Adopt Resolution R16-2010 endorsing the concept of the formation of VAMPO.

Background: In February 2009, Virginia's General Assembly passed HR 756, requesting that the Secretary of Transportation support and assist the 14 MPOs in the Commonwealth with the establishment of a Virginia Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (VAMPO). The Board will be briefed on the enclosed White Paper that has been developed to outline the Association's structure, mission and preliminary recommendations.

NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION TRANSPORTATION PLANNING BOARD
777 North Capitol Street, N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20002

**DRAFT RESOLUTION ENDORSING THE CONCEPT OF THE FORMATION OF A
VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATIONS (VAMPO)**

WHEREAS, The Virginia General Assembly called for the formation of an association of Virginia's Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) in HJR 756; and,

WHEREAS, HJR 756 requested that the Secretary of Transportation assist the Virginia Association of Planning District Commissions and the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board with the determination of the scope of Virginia Association of MPOs activities and responsibilities best suited to the professional needs of the Commonwealth of Virginia or adopt other measures to enhance the effectiveness, professionalism and confidence of the State's MPO organizations; and

WHEREAS, the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board is distinct from the other MPOs in the Commonwealth because of its multi-state jurisdiction; and,

WHEREAS, the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA), which was established by the Virginia General Assembly in 2002, has regional transportation planning responsibilities for the Northern Virginia area; and,

WHEREAS, the Virginia Association of Planning District Commissions has empanelled an ad hoc committee to develop a recommended organization structure for a Virginia Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (VAMPO); and,

WHEREAS, the formation of VAMPO will allow Virginia's MPOs to: 1) More effectively cooperate with state transportation agencies, 2) More effectively exchange best practices and other useful information, and 3) Recommend legislation or other policies that will allow MPOs to be more effective and efficient with the resources they have;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board:

- endorses the concept of the formation of a Virginia Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (VAMPO); and,
- encourages the Virginia Association of Planning District Commissions (VAPDC) to complete its organizational recommendations for VAMPO and report back to Virginia's MPOs once the recommendations are completed; and,
- anticipates that the TPB will be represented in VAMPO by TPB member agencies in Northern Virginia working in collaboration with the NVTA.

Virginia Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (VAMPO)
White Paper
October 2009

Purpose: In accordance with HJR756, the purpose of this White Paper is to respond to the request by the General Assembly for the Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) of Virginia to form a Statewide Association, define a mission for that Association and recommend to the General Assembly what statutory changes, if any, are needed to improve transportation planning and programming in Virginia.

As shown below, the findings and recommendations in this White Paper have been the subject of discussions and consensus among MPO Administrators and Directors in meetings and correspondence dating back to January 2008. These findings and recommendations will require concurrence from the MPO Boards.

Current Virginia MPO Status: Virginia's fourteen MPOs are little recognized in the Virginia Code but play a major role in Federal transportation law. In Federal regulations, MPOs are created in each urbanized area (population of 50,000 or more, with a density factor defined by the Census) and charged with operating a comprehensive, continuing and cooperative ("3C") transportation planning process, governed by local elected officials and other transportation interests. As a result of this "3C" process, a Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) is required to show what transportation projects are needed and fundable for the next two plus decades. The LRTP is updated every four or five years depending on the population of the MPO's urbanized area. In addition an annual Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is developed to show where identified State, Federal and local transportation funds will be spent in each of the next four years to implement the project priorities of the LRTP.

In simple terms Federal regulations require that MPOs chart out what the long term, fundable vision of transportation improvements is in the LRTP, and then move those projects from the LRTP to the TIP to apply Federal and other funds to the highest priorities. This is to be completed in close communication with the State (VDOT). VDOT is required in Federal regulations with collecting all MPO TIPs, plus its own plan for rural areas, and annually assembling them into a Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

A Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) is also developed annually to guide staff carrying out MPO activities. As a practical matter, MPOs are also involved in Bicycle Planning, Air Quality/Transportation Planning, Congestion Management Planning, Freight Transportation Planning and a host of other related planning projects.

MPOs are automatically granted annual formula Federal planning funds from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to complete the tasks described above.

The majority of MPOs in Virginia are housed within their corresponding Planning District Commissions (PDCs) for staff support and fiscal agent services. Exceptions include the Transportation Planning Board (TPB) Washington urbanized area, two primarily Tennessee based MPOs that extend into portions of Virginia near Bristol, and the Blacksburg-Christiansburg-Montgomery MPO housed in Montgomery County's Administration Offices. The choice of PDCs to deliver the staffing and administrative functions of the MPOs is generally based on the following benefits:

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- **The desire not to create redundant or duplicative agencies or levels of government.**
- **The desire to coordinate PDC regional planning processes in Economic Development, Community Development, Hazard Mitigation, Water and Air Quality Analysis, Housing and other planning areas into the Urban Transportation Planning Process.** (Recent federal transportation legislation further reinforces the requirements of MPOs to consult and consider other planning processes within the MPO process.)
- **The desire to benefit from economies of scale in building costs, staffing costs, and other organizational costs.** (Small MPOs would have a difficult time solely providing office space and other indirect costs without sharing such costs with a PDC or local government.)
- **Coordination with the Rural Transportation Planning function delivered by PDCs.** (Some MPOs housed at PDCs have already produced combined Urban/Rural Long-Range Transportation Plans.)

Formation of the Virginia Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (VAMPO): For the past several years, the Virginia Association of Planning District Commissions (VAPDC) has had a standing Transportation Committee which has hosted a variety of MPO discussions and functions. At two recent VAPDC Transportation Committee meetings, in July and August, HR 756 and the formation of a Statewide MPO Association (VAMPO) was discussed. The great majority of MPO Administrators and Directors present were in favor of forming a Statewide Association (VAMPO), although affirmative action by the MPO Boards will be required to make this a reality.

At these meetings there was a general consensus that VAMPO should be a stand-alone organization, but that VAMPO should meet in conjunction with the VAPDC, so as to combine travel and meeting costs and assure strong communications between the two organizations.

Structure: The final organizational structure of VAMPO, including By-laws, will be developed within the association's first year. Initially, the VAPDC named a "White Paper Committee" and an "Organizational Committee" at its August 25, 2009 meeting in Charlottesville. These committees are developing initial concepts to forward to the Secretary of Transportation's office, including the present White Paper. The initial administrative support during the formation of VAMPO will be provided by the staff of VAPDC. Long-term structure and staff support will be decided following the initial meeting(s) of VAMPO. At a minimum the "Organizational Committee" will:

- Investigate structures of other states which have associations of MPOs and the American Association of MPOs (AMPO);
- Develop a set of By-laws for consideration;
- Develop a voting system in which possible candidates include: weighted voting, formalized consensus voting or some other voting system;
- Develop a staffing plan either as an extension of VAPDC services, or a separate staffing plan;
- Hold a VAMPO annual conference

Mission: At these Transportation Committee meetings, the Mission for VAMPO was discussed. Participants were in agreement that the Mission Statement for VAMPO should be as follows:

It is the mission of the Virginia Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations to bring together the Commonwealth's MPOs to enhance the State of urban transportation planning and

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programming by: 1) fostering a greater spirit of partnership with the Commonwealth's transportation agencies; 2) sharing "best practices" among the MPOs, and 3) continually informing the Commonwealth's executive and legislative branches about improvements needed in Virginia transportation planning and programming, both in law and in practice.

Subject to the approval of the various MPO Boards, VAMPO's mission will be executed as follows:

More Cooperation with Commonwealth Transportation Agencies: Over the course of the next year, VAMPO will work with VDOT and other Commonwealth Transportation Agencies to discuss and develop agreements in areas such as Memoranda of Understanding, oversight, procurement, information exchange, meeting schedules and other critical issues.

Best Practices Peer Exchange: VAMPO will serve as a forum to allow Virginia MPOs to easily learn from the most successful planning and business practices of other MPOs both in Virginia and the nation. VAMPO will organize an annual meeting or event designed for just this purpose. VAMPO will also investigate the feasibility of MPO peer exchanges or staff mentoring programs between MPOs. The details of this function will be further developed within the first year of VAMPO's establishment.

Legislative Recommendations: Two potential legislative recommendations are included below. These two recommendations are "likely candidates" for initial VAMPO discussions based on the aforementioned VAPDC Transportation Committee discussions.

MPO Long-Range Transportation Planning Processes and the State Short Term Transportation Programming Process: Currently, Federal regulations task MPOs with developing LRTPs constrained by verifiable State, Federal and local funds and programming those funds to specific project priorities in the short term TIP.

The current practice in Virginia is that the VDOT Six Year Improvement Program (SYIP) is developed by VDOT staff and the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) largely independent of the MPO process. Only after the CTB adopts a SYIP are funds programmed in the TIPs. Projects selected for funding in the SYIP often differ from MPO priorities expressed in the Long Range Plans.

MPOs are then faced with either accepting the decisions in the SYIP, or challenging certain projects, with consequences such as funding on the challenged projects moving to another area in the State.

Consistent with Federal regulations, VAMPO is likely to recommend that MPOs have prior review and decision making authority in the SYIP development process for their regions. The details of this concept will be developed in discussions between the General Assembly, VDOT, VDRPT, and VAMPO during the 2011 Legislative Session.

Codification of MPO Roles in State Law: MPOs are well established in Federal Law, yet in the Virginia Code, MPOs are largely unrecognized and undefined. Some states, such as Florida, specifically codify MPOs at the state level. Benefits of this codification could include the recognition of the MPOs as "partners" with VDOT in planning for transportation improvements in the Commonwealth. After VAMPO is formed, it will investigate the various roles and responsibilities of MPOs to be defined within the Virginia Code, and work with VDOT and the General Assembly during the 2011 Legislative Session to recommend appropriate changes to the Virginia Code.

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Final Recommendations: Virginia's MPOs have listened to the General Assembly and are taking the task of forming VAMPO seriously. The MPOs will need the year 2010 to develop formalized procedures such as By-Laws and a staffing plan. Virginia's MPOs respectfully request that the General Assembly take no additional action in 2010 concerning the structure of MPOs or VAMPO, thus allowing VAMPO to be formed and address the requirements of HJR756. VAMPO will report to the Secretary of Transportation and the Secretary will report to the General Assembly concerning progress achieved in the formation of VAMPO during the 2010 General Assembly Session.

APPENDIX A – Sample MPO Resolution Supporting VAMPO Concept:

WHEREAS, The Virginia General Assembly called for the formation of an association of Virginia’s Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) in HJR 756; and,

WHEREAS, HJR 756 requested that the Secretary of Transportation assist the Virginia Association of Planning District Commissions and the Transportation Planning Board for the National Capital Area with the determination of the scope of Virginia Association of MPOs activities and responsibilities best suited to the professional needs of the Commonwealth of Virginia or adopt other measures to enhance the effectiveness, professionalism and confidence of the State’s MPO organizations; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Association of Planning District Commissions has empanelled an ad hoc committee to develop a recommended organization structure for a Virginia Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (VAMPO); and,

WHEREAS, the formation of VAMPO will allow Virginia’s MPOs to: 1) More effectively cooperate with state transportation agencies, 2) More effectively exchange best practices and other useful information, and 3) Recommend legislation or other policies that will allow MPOs to be more effective and efficient with the resources they have;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the **(fill in the blank)** MPO endorses the concept of the formation of a Virginia Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (VAMPO); and,

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the **(fill in the blank)** MPO encourages the VAPDC to complete its organizational recommendations for VAMPO and report back to Virginia’s MPOs once the recommendations are completed.

APPENDIX B– MPO Roster

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