

Establishing a Virginia Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (VAMPO)

**HJR 756
(2009)**

Report to the DLAS

Virginia Department of Transportation
1401 East Broad Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

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COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Office of the Governor

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January 13, 2010

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Division of Legislative Automated Systems
Attention: Ms. Laura Wilborn
Information Processing Specialist

FROM: Pierce R. Homer, Secretary of Transportation *PH*

SUBJECT: HJR 756, Establishing a Virginia Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (VAMPO)

House Joint Resolution 756 of the 2009 General Assembly directs the Secretary of Transportation to submit to the Division of Legislative Automated Systems an executive summary and report of progress achieved in the formation of a Virginia Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (VAMPO), prior to the start of the 2010 General Assembly Session. The information is to be submitted from the Secretary of Transportation no later than the first day of the 2010 General Assembly for publication as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and reports and for posting on the General Assembly's website.

The attached executive summary and report of progress responds to the legislature's request. The Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) of Virginia plan to establish, organize and operate VAMPO in the near future. A VAMPO organizational committee comprised of MPO representatives has drafted a definitive mission statement for prospective adoption. Additionally, work has begun to address the development of VAMPO bylaws, budget, staffing, and the future legislative and/or other policy concepts that VAMPO might recommend after the 2010 regular session of the General Assembly to improve transportation planning and programming in Virginia. At this time, the Virginia Metropolitan Planning Organization Executive Directors have respectfully requested that the General Assembly take no additional actions in the 2010 regular session that would affect the structure of MPOs or VAMPO during this formative period.

Approximately 100 work-hours and \$4,000 have been invested in completing this status summary and report. If you have any questions or need additional information, please let me know.

Attachments

Preface

House Joint Resolution No. 756 (Appendix A) from the 2009 Virginia General Assembly requires the establishment of a Virginia Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (VAMPO). The proposed association is to bring together the Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) that provide continuing, cooperative and comprehensive transportation planning and programming for each of the 14 urbanized areas currently in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

In response, plans and activities to establish VAMPO have been discussed among the prospective association members at several key meetings, a mission statement for VAMPO has been proposed, and two key committees have assembled and produced two formative documents: a white paper and a draft organizational paper. Both papers served as references for the preparation of this legislative report. To obtain further information and/or a copy of the papers, contact Mr. Dwight L. Farmer, VAMPO Task Force Chair, and Executive Director of the Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization at (757) 420-8300 or dfarmer@hrpdcva.gov. Collectively, approximately 50 officials and professional planners have been contributing jointly in the ongoing initiative and they merit acknowledgement here. The participants include:

- The Board officers and staff of the Virginia Association of Planning District Commissions (VAPDCs), an existing association collectively representing the urbanized and rural area planners of all 21 PDCs of Virginia;
- The Board officers (locally elected government officials), Executive Directors and staff of the 14 MPO regions in Virginia, including the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board; and
- The Virginia Secretary of Transportation with certain staff from his office and state transportation agency offices.

This report provides a status update to the General Assembly and documents the significant participation, cooperation and progress achieved in the initiatives undertaken to date to form VAMPO. The establishment of VAMPO should improve transportation planning and programming in Virginia. Work has begun work to address the development of VAMPO bylaws, budget, staffing, and the future legislative and/or other policy concepts that VAMPO might recommend after the 2010 regular session of the General Assembly. During this ongoing formative period, Virginia's MPO Executive Directors have respectfully requested that the General Assembly take no additional actions in the 2010 regular session that might affect the structure of MPOs or VAMPO.

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Executive Summary

Purpose

VAMPO is expected to be established with the continuing support and assistance of the Office of the Secretary of Transportation, the prospective association participants, and the Virginia Association of Planning District Commissions (VAPDC). The majority of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) leaders confirm that they favor formation of Virginia Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (VAMPO), and affirmative actions from their MPO Boards are anticipated. To date, several meetings have been held and two committees developed a White Paper and a Draft Organizational Structure Research Summary.

In response to the requests of the 2009 Virginia General Assembly in House Joint Resolution 756, the Secretary of Transportation hereby reports that substantial progress has been made to establish a (VAMPO), a statewide association of (MPOs).

Findings

The prospective association members foresee VAMPO operating as a stand-alone organization, independent of VAPDC. VAMPO meetings shall be scheduled, as appropriate, in conjunction with VAPDC meetings. The following draft mission statement has been prepared:

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 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 in both law and in practice.

Upcoming VAMPO-founding activities are expected to include drafting and adopting bylaws with a system for voting; development of a staffing plan, perhaps as an extension of MPO VAPDC services; and planning a VAMPO annual conference. Potential legislative subjects that prospective members have identified include MPO regional review and decision roles in the Virginia Six Year Improvement Program process, and further codification of MPOs with regard to their role in planning transportation improvements.

Recommendations

In recognition of the high level of participation and progress realized thus far, it is recommended that the ongoing plans and activities be continued to achieve the anticipated establishment of VAMPO. The Virginia MPO Executive Directors have respectfully requested that the General Assembly take no additional actions in the 2010 regular session that would affect the structure of MPOs or VAMPO during this formative period.

Introduction

House Joint Resolution 756 (HJR 756) of the 2009 General Assembly directs the Commonwealth's Secretary of Transportation (the Secretary) to support and assist the establishment of a Virginia Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (VAMPO) and the determination of the VAMPO's scope of activities and responsibilities. In consultation with the Secretary, Virginia's Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) are to organize VAMPO, define its mission, and report on any statutory changes needed "to improve the statewide planning and programming of transportation programs and projects to improve and streamline the Virginia transportation development process."

The General Assembly resolution further directs the Secretary to provide the Division of Legislative Automated Systems with an executive summary and report of progress in meeting the requests of the resolution. The information is to be submitted to the Division of Legislative Automated Systems no later than the first day of the 2010 General Assembly for publication as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and reports, and for posting on the General Assembly's website.

The Secretary has provided this executive summary and report of progress for publication, as requested by HJR 756.

Current Virginia MPO Status and Progress on Forming VAMPO

Transportation planning is performed at local, regional and statewide levels in Virginia. The planning involves the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), MPOs, Planning District Commissions (PDCs), various transportation mode agencies including the Department of Rail and Public Transportation, and local (town, city, county) planning staff. Titles 23 and 49 of the *United States Code* (23 USC and 49 USC) and the *Code of Federal Regulations* Title 23 Part 450 (23 CFR 450) mandate that a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive transportation planning process (3C) must be conducted statewide, as well as individually for each urbanized area having a census population greater than 50,000. Compliance with these federal provisions is requisite in order for a state department of transportation or other transportation authority to receive federal transportation funds and/or approvals.



To meet the federal requirements for metropolitan areas, transportation planning must be conducted by each urbanized area's own decision-making entity, their MPO. Each MPO is tasked with determining how to invest and expend millions of dollars of current and future public funds on transportation systems within their urbanized area. Currently, 14 MPOs fulfill this federal transportation planning role in Virginia. The membership of an MPO consists primarily of local elected officials representing the region's jurisdictions, yet representatives of the state and the area's lead transit operator(s) are also included. MPOs are guided by the inputs received from interagency consultation and public involvement before they adopt the region's official plans and programs. These official plans and programs identify which transportation projects are regionally approved and when the projects may be advanced. As defined by federal and state requirements, the primary functions of each MPO are to:

1. Establish the goals, objectives and policies governing transportation planning in the region.
2. Approve an annual Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) and budget.
3. Prepare and adopt an official Constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan (CLRP). The CLRP documents the project-recommendations that the MPO at least officially plans to undertake in consideration of the region's current and future surface transportation improvement needs, and current and future funds.
4. Prepare and adopt a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) that approves implementing certain higher priority, fundable transportation project-recommendations from the CLRP. The TIP serves as a region's official short-range list of transportation projects; describing and scheduling those projects or project phases that the MPO approves for using federal highway or transit funds in the immediate (four-year) time period.
5. Determine the air quality conformity of the CLRP and TIP in regions that are federally classified as air quality non-attainment or maintenance planning areas.

Each VDOT District Administrator serves on the MPO(s) located in his or her VDOT District. VDOT's general role is to reflect the interests of the state and to provide policy guidance and technical assistance to the MPOs. VDOT also provides information on essential federal and state requirements and/or procedures, various financial cost and/or revenue forecasts, programming, expenditure information, traffic analysis, and transportation data-based travel demand modeling services. Federal regulations make the state responsible for collecting all MPO TIPs, plus the

state's own short-range transportation proposals for rural areas, and assembling them into one Statewide Transportation Improvement Program. The Governor has delegated authority (Executive Order 72, 2008) to the Secretary to approve transportation planning agreements or a redesignation of an MPO if there is significant change in MPO voting membership or boundaries. The State, MPO and area transit provider(s) operate under a transportation planning agreement that outlines the roles and responsibilities for each MPO area, which is signed by the Secretary.

MPOs are granted annual federal formula planning funds from the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration to perform the key functions noted above. Upcoming MPO work tasks and planning funds are orchestrated through development, review and approval of the UPWP. The majority of the MPOs in Virginia are housed within their corresponding PDCs for staff work-support and fiscal agent purposes. Exceptions include the Transportation Planning Board (TPB) Washington urbanized area, two primarily Tennessee based MPOs that extend into portions of Virginia near Bristol and Kingsport, and the Blacksburg-Christiansburg-Montgomery MPO, housed in Montgomery County's Administration Offices. The PDCs have provided the staffing and administrative functions of the MPOs, a relationship which has generally facilitated the optimization of budgets and the communication and coordination of urbanized planning with rural planning.

For several years, the Virginia Association of Planning District Commissions (VAPDC) has used a standing Transportation Committee to discuss a variety of MPO related topics. In concert with the VAPDC and the VAPDC Transportation Committee as well as the General Assembly's request to form VAMPO, the Secretary invited regional planning contacts to attend a kick-off meeting with a presentation and discussion on "Establishing VAMPO" at the 2009 VAPDC summer conference. A copy of the presentation accompanied the Secretary's invitation. The general consensus among prospective association members was that the formation of VAMPO should proceed as a stand-alone organization. It was also decided that VAMPO should meet in conjunction with the VAPDC in order to combine travel and meeting costs. It was felt that this would assure stronger communications between VAMPO and the VAPDC. Representatives of the Transportation Secretariat and prospective members of VAMPO met again August 25, 2009 and discussed next steps to undertake. Another important meeting was held as a conference call on October 25, 2009, where MPO leaders discussed a mission statement proposed for VAMPO as well as two founding concept papers, a "White Paper" and a Draft Organizational Structure Research Summary. Subject to the approval of the various MPO Boards, VAMPO's mission statement is proposed as:

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 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.

A brief chronological overview of activities and products follows:

February 24 and 26, 2009

The 2009 Virginia General Assembly agrees to HJR 756, thereby requesting the establishment of VAMPO, the development of its mission statement by MPOs, and the Secretary of Transportation to file a summary and report of progress no later than the first day of the upcoming 2010 Regular Session, January 13, 2010.

July 30 and 31, 2009 at Virginia Beach

The VAPDC held a multi-day conference in which discussions on the formation of VAMPO were led by staff of the Office of the Secretary of Transportation. The Secretary had invited regional planning contacts to attend a kick-off meeting, presentation and discussions on “Establishing VAMPO”. An advance copy of the presentation accompanied the invitations. A positive response was received from the prospective association members that affirmed that the formation of VAMPO should proceed.

August 25, 2009 at Charlottesville

Representatives of the Office of the Secretary of Transportation and prospective members of VAMPO met and discussed the initial steps to undertake next. It was agreed that two guidance papers would be developed by two separate, preliminary committees. These papers were a “White Paper” to identify consensus thoughts and issues yet to be determined, and a Draft Organizational Structure Research Summary to examine and recommend the best organizational and bylaw features of existing MPO associations found in other states, as well as the American Association of (MPOs).

September, October, and November, 2009

Multiple meetings were held during these months to discuss, draft, review and refine the proposed association’s mission statement, a “White Paper” and a Draft Organizational Structure Research Summary. The proposed mission statement and completed papers were received in the Office of the Secretary of Transportation on November 4, 2009.

Upcoming Activities

The final organizational structure and bylaws of VAMPO will be developed within the association's first year. 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 an “Organizational Committee” will aid to:

- Further consider VAMPO structures and by-law recommendations;
- 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; and
- Hold a VAMPO annual conference.

Over the course of the year, VAMPO is anticipated to work with the Office of the Secretary and the Commonwealth's transportation agencies to discuss and develop agreements in areas such as Memoranda of Understanding, oversight, procurement, information exchange, meeting schedules and similar issues. Future statutory and/or other policy recommendations might be developed through VAMPO after the 2010 regular session of the General Assembly. Potential legislative subjects that prospective members have identified include MPO regional review and decision roles in the Virginia Six Year Improvement Program process, and further codification of MPOs with regard to their role in planning transportation improvements.

Final Recommendation and Conclusion

In recognition of the high level of participation and progress realized thus far, it is recommended that the ongoing plans and activities be continued to achieve the establishment of VAMPO. Virginia's MPOs, the Secretary of Transportation and the VAPDC are progressing in their tasks to establish VAMPO. The Virginia Metropolitan Planning Organization Executive Directors have respectfully requested that the General Assembly take no additional actions in the 2010 regular session that would affect the structure of MPOs or VAMPO during this formative period.

Appendix A – House Joint Resolution 756

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 756

Requesting the Secretary of Transportation to support and assist in the establishment of a Virginia Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 26, 2009

Agreed to by the Senate, February 24, 2009

WHEREAS, there are 14 Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) operating in the Commonwealth of Virginia, all duly established pursuant to federal transportation legislation, 23 C.F.R. 450.300 series; and

WHEREAS, these MPOs are especially important in that, pursuant to federal legislation, they are, as the lead agencies, responsible for conducting the cooperative metropolitan transportation planning and programming process in their respective regions; and

WHEREAS, the transportation planning and programming decisions made by these MPOs presage the future investment and expenditure of hundreds of millions of dollars of public moneys on an annual basis; and

WHEREAS, while these MPOs are necessarily independent, whether large or small, they have numerous common interests at both the policy and technical levels, and they seek to interpret and adhere to the requirements of the same federal legislation; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Secretary of Transportation be requested to support and assist in the establishment of a Virginia Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (VAMPO). The VAMPO will augment, not supplant, the duties of the individual MPOs in carrying out their respective metropolitan transportation planning and programming functions

The Secretary of Transportation is further requested to 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 VAMPO 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.

In consultation with the Secretary of Transportation, Virginia's Metropolitan Planning Organizations are requested to organize the VAMPO, define its mission, and report on statutory changes, if any, that are needed to improve the statewide planning and programming of transportation programs and projects to improve and streamline the Virginia transportation development process.

The Secretary of Transportation shall submit to the Division of Legislative Automated Systems an executive summary and report of its progress in meeting the requests of this resolution no later than the first day of the 2010 Regular Session of the General Assembly. The executive

summary and report shall be submitted for publication as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and reports and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.

