

New River Valley Passenger Rail Station Authority

Minutes

September 26, 2024

11:30 a.m.

Pulaski County Innovation Center

Attendees: Angie Hill, Mary Biggs and Steve Fijalkowski, Montgomery County; Randy Wingfield and Mike Barber, Town of Christiansburg; C.B. Andrews and Ricky McCoy, Giles County; David Ridpath and David Horton, City of Radford; Shannon Collins, Town of Pulaski; Angela Joyner and Chris Stafford, Radford University; Dwyn Taylor, Virginia Tech; Larry Spencer and Jerry Ford, Town of Blacksburg; Kevin Byrd and Chris Owens, New River Valley Regional Commission; and Reid Broughton, Sands Anderson PC.

Others Present: Ann Cassell, NRV Passenger Rail; Colin Burch, Virginia Passenger Rail Authority; John Neel, Foresight Design Services; and Chris Robinson, Wendel Engineering.

Absent: Dirk Compton and Jonathan Sweet, Pulaski County; Todd Day, Town of Pulaski; Brandon Cohen, Radford University; and Lynsay Belshe, Virginia Tech.

I. Welcome and Introductions

Mike Barber, Chair, called the meeting to order at approximately 11:54 am.

a. Oath of office for any new appointees—None present.

II. Minutes from August 29, 2024

Motion: David Horton moved for approval of the August 29th minutes.

Mary Biggs seconded the motion.

Discussion: None

Action: Motion carried unanimously.

III. Brief History of the Project—Kevin Byrd

Mr. Byrd gave a brief history of the project including the site selection and local funding strategies previously discussed during the development of the Passenger Rail Station Ownership and Maintenance Strategy Plan completed in 2018.

IV. Own versus Lease of Facilities (Station Building; Parking/Grounds)

Discuss Station Authority preferences—

Mr. Byrd presented images from a site visit conducted with VPRA and the engineering team of Wendel/Foresight Design earlier in the day. Images show the current state of the existing 6,000 sq.ft. Depot Station. There was a discussion about the pros/cons of ownership versus leasing. The members agreed owning the station makes the most sense given the capital funds each

member will likely need to contribute to complete the project. This position will be shared with VPRA to help inform the Term Sheet between VPRA and the Station Authority.

- V. Participation Agreement Concept—Reid Broughton, Legal Counsel
Introduce the concept of legislatively enabled participation agreements and how it can be applied to the project.

An excerpt from the NRVPRSA Bylaws was provided and Mr. Broughton gave a brief explanation of the responsibilities that come with the participation (or non-participation) of any Participation Agreements.

- VI. Funding Scenarios—Kevin Byrd
Review the three scenarios in greater detail

Mr. Byrd provided a copy of the three (3) funding scenarios that were included in the Passenger Rail Station Ownership and Maintenance Strategy Plan. He explained the variables used for each of the scenarios and pointed out that scenario #3 was the option members of the authority were taking into account when considering joining the organization. Chair Barber suggested scenario #3 was the most equitable since it is based on anticipated ridership, proximity to the station, and population. Through the board discussion there appeared to be consensus among members that scenario #3 would be the preferred option to explore in more detail. It was recommended that authority members have local conversations about scenario #3 and bring any questions to the next meeting.

- VII. Future Radford Service
Review language in the agreement between VPRA and NS

The following language from the agreement was shared with the board and discussed, “For the avoidance of doubt, nothing set forth in this Agreement shall guarantee or require Norfolk Southern Railway’s approval of any extension of Passenger Rail Service to Radford and in no case would any such service be initiated before 2030.”

- VIII. Grants Update

- a. Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) for preliminary Architecture/Engineering costs—Mr. Byrd reported that the Commission had been working with the ARC representative to get the contract for the planning grant. Final documentation is being provided by the engineering team to satisfy ARC pre-contract requirements.
- b. CRISI grant for construction—Mr. Byrd reported that there are match requirements that would be due next fiscal year and would be based on the funding scenario selected by the board at a future meeting.

- IX. Amtrak Operations—Colin Burch, VPRA
 - a. General overview of Amtrak involvement options

Mr. Burch presented various Amtrak Operations options and pointed out that an Amtrak staffed station provides a better experience for the riders since someone would be available to answer questions and relay arrival information. This would be an expense paid by VPRA through a lease agreement with Amtrak.

- X. NRV Passenger Rail Organization Update—Ann Cassell

Ms. Cassell reported that NRV Passenger Rail Organization is planning event for the full group in November to receive a presentation on the site location. She also pointed out the need for continued advocacy throughout the construction of the station to ensure the project has a voice in Richmond should any unforeseen challenges arise.

- XI. Administrative Items:

- a. Appointment memo for 4-year terms (2025-2029) being distributed this week.

- XII. Next Meeting Date—October 31, 2024

- XIII. Adjourn