



Virginia
Beach
Vision, Inc.

"Looking Toward Tomorrow's City"

Comments to the Commonwealth Transportation Board
regarding Six-Year Improvement Program
April 27, 2011

Good evening Board members. I am Mike Barrett and am here this evening representing Virginia Beach Vision, a non-partisan association comprised of 115 business and community leaders.

Virginia Beach Vision has been on record over the years supporting investment in our State's transportation system. We believe that for our communities to be competitive in attracting and growing economic investment we must have a fully integrated, well maintained transportation infrastructure that includes multimodal options for the movement of goods, services and people. Regrettably, Virginia has fallen short in recent years in meeting these expectations and that trend must be reversed.

We appreciate the steps taken by Governor McDonnell and the General Assembly to leverage federal dollars and insurance policy tax funded debt to provide bonding capacity to address a backlog of construction needs across the Commonwealth. At a time when interest rates are low and bids are competitive, projects can be built for less and more quickly.

Despite this significant step forward, even the projected debt bonding of \$4 billion will not resolve the project backlog. Maintenance funding continues to be wholly inadequate, funding for urban and primary projects has been eliminated and no funds have been set aside to address significant passenger rail infrastructure and operations in the future. We do realize that the CTB cannot increase funding, that is the role of the legislature, but we ask that you be vocal in informing the elective body of the significant needs yet unaddressed and the consequences for deferring action further.

Specific to the City of Virginia Beach, we are pleased that four of our most pressing road projects are funded in the draft six-year plan. Virginia Beach recognized earlier that state

funding is inadequate to meet the project needs of an expanding and aging city so City Council wisely dedicated local monies to help bridge the funding gap. Despite this local effort, the state's funding partnership must be enhanced. Where the city previously received about \$30 million in urban funds annually, it now receives none. Even with the funding of the four Virginia Beach projects in the draft six-year plan, total funding will still be reduced from prior levels.

In addition to the roadway improvements listed as candidate projects in the Governor's initial bonding proposal, we strongly encourage your active advocacy for a dedicated revenue source to fund operating and maintenance costs for a passenger rail system. Virginia and Hampton Roads must not be precluded from development of this public transit system because no funds exist for its operation. The time is now to compete for these funds and to build a system that will meet our needs into the future.

I thank each of you for your commitment to the Commonwealth and for your efforts to best represent the interests of the Hampton Roads region. What you do today will shape the region and its economic competitiveness well into the future.