

URBAN TRANSIT IN VIRGINIA

**REPORT OF THE
VIRGINIA METROPOLITAN AREAS TRANSPORTATION
STUDY COMMISSION**

To

THE GOVERNOR

And

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA



SENATE DOCUMENT NO. 17

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

Richmond

1970

**VIRGINIA METROPOLITAN AREAS TRANSPORTATION
STUDY COMMISSION
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA**

January 22, 1970

TO: HONORABLE LINWOOD HOLTON, *Governor of Virginia*

and

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA

The Commission Report which follows does not purport to give any final solution to the complex problems inherent in developing adequate metropolitan, mass transportation. We submit our Report to provide information on the scope of the problems involved and to propose steps to begin meeting the need for mass transportation.

A wealth of background material has been gathered for the Commission by its most competent staff. The Staff Report will be forwarded to you separately. It shows in some detail the status of the transit business in Virginia today which can be summarized as marginal and in need of definite improvement and assistance. Lack of funds for capital improvement, declining ridership and increasing fares create an unhealthy transit picture.

Our primary recommendation for action at this time is to continue this study on an expanded basis with adequate financing and staffing to execute a complete study and examine in depth the potential solutions to urban transportation needs which this Report can only put forward for further analysis.

In addition we suggest the freeing of a limited amount of highway funds to initiate a program of transit-related highway construction for such projects as fringe parking facilities and exclusive bus lanes. These are construction projects which will permit the State to assist transit and simultaneously benefit highway travel by relieving motor vehicle congestion on our roads.

The report which follows is submitted by the entire Commission and I commend it to you.

Respectfully submitted.

JOHN R. SEARS, JR.
Chairman

REPORT OF THE VIRGINIA METROPOLITAN AREAS
TRANSPORTATION STUDY COMMISSION

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I

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 21

*CREATING THE VIRGINIA METROPOLITAN AREAS
TRANSPORTATION STUDY COMMISSION*

Offered January 25, 1968

Patrons—MESSRS. FENWICK, FITZGERALD, HIRST AND BRAULT

Referred to the Committee on Rules

Whereas, the General Assembly, declaring that the orderly growth and development of the urban areas of the Commonwealth require the development of transportation systems composed of transit facilities, public highways and other modes of transport, enacted the Transportation District Act of 1964 authorizing the creation of transit districts; and

Whereas, the welfare of the Commonwealth is and increasingly will be affected by the present and future concentration of population, industry and commerce in the urban areas of the Commonwealth and, accordingly, the orderly growth and development of the urban areas are of general concern to the entire Commonwealth; and

Whereas, there is a functional interrelationship and interdependence between public highways to move vehicles and transit facilities to move people; and

Whereas, the providing of public highways and transit facilities and service involve large expenditures of public funds, and the economical utilization of public funds requires the achievement of a modal balance in the urban transportation systems; and

Whereas, the entire Commonwealth as well as the counties and cities located in urban areas are concerned with or affected by the large expenditures of public funds for the development of urban transportation systems; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate of Virginia, the House of Delegates concurring, That there is hereby created a Virginia Metropolitan Areas Transportation Study Commission which shall consist of eleven members, two of whom are to be appointed by the President of the Senate from among the members of that body, three of whom are to be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Delegates from the members of that body and six of whom are to be appointed by the Governor from the State at large. In addition, the State Highway Commissioner and the Director of the Division of State Planning shall be members of the Commission ex-officio.

The Commission shall make a comprehensive study of methods for financing the transit portion of urban transportation systems, revenue sources appropriate for financing such facilities, suitable organizational structures for carrying out transit projects in urban areas and the role of the Commonwealth in such matters. The Commission shall examine relevant provisions of the Virginia law to determine whether existing laws are adequate to meet the present and future needs for urban areas for transit facilities and shall recommend such changes in existing laws as it shall deem appropriate.

The members of the Commission shall be paid any necessary expenses incurred in the performance of their duties but shall receive no other compensation.

All agencies of the Commonwealth and the governing bodies and agencies of all political subdivisions of the Commonwealth shall cooperate with and assist the Commission in its study.

The Commission may accept and expend gifts, grants and donations from any and all sources and persons for the purpose of carrying out its study.

For the purposes of this resolution and the expenses of the Commission, there is hereby appropriated the sum of five thousand dollars from the contingent fund of the General Assembly.

The Commission shall make a report to the Governor and General Assembly not later than October one, nineteen hundred sixty-nine.

II

DUTIES OF THE COMMISSION

Senate Joint Resolution No. 21 designated five specific areas to which the Commission addressed itself:

1. METHODS FOR FINANCING THE TRANSIT PORTION OF URBAN TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS.

Transit in Virginia is composed primarily of privately owned and operated carriers financed by their users through the fare box. The Commission endorses this concept of private enterprise, but realizes that it must be supported by positive state action if it is to offer Virginians the mobility required by contemporary urban society. The alternative is some form of direct public commitment to transit's ownership, operation, or both. The Commission has examined the transit situation and its problems and has set the direction for further action.

2. REVENUE SOURCES APPROPRIATE FOR FINANCING SUCH FACILITIES.

The Commission believes that the prime sources of revenue for transit facilities should originate from the private sector, from the communities which receive a particular transit service, and from the federal government. During the course of the study, however, it became evident that the Commonwealth also has a responsibility to all its urban areas and should investigate carefully the best manner in which to employ its revenue producing powers to insure that transit throughout Virginia will be viable.

The demand for state funds is great and the sources limited. In its study the Commission has recognized various revenue producing methods which could be utilized for transit but is recommending only limited action prior to the determination of priorities, programs, and proper administrative structure to insure responsible fiscal results.

3. SUITABLE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE FOR CARRYING OUT TRANSIT PROJECTS IN URBAN AREAS.

Transit is a metropolitan problem and as such should be dealt with on a regional basis. During the Commission's study, many difficulties were found within the present transit configuration in the six existing and five emerging metropolitan areas of the State. Investigation revealed that the lack of a proper organizational structure for carrying out transit projects was a prime reason for many of the problems which were cited. The Commission recommends a form of public transit body, organized on a regional basis, which could be charged with a full range of responsibilities that are now vested at either the state or local level or which are presently being neglected.

THE ROLE OF THE COMMONWEALTH IN TRANSIT MATTERS.

Virginia should provide leadership in the determination of broad policy goals and objectives for transit. The Commonwealth should begin to take more positive steps to provide the atmosphere for the gradual development of a statewide program for transit, implemented through regional bodies. By proper regulation, extensive data collection, administrative studies and assistance, taxing policy, and selective distribution of state revenue, Virginia can develop such a program to assist transit.

5. EXAMINATION OF RELEVANT PROVISIONS OF VIRGINIA LAW TO DETERMINE WHETHER EXISTING LAWS ARE ADEQUATE TO MEET THE PRESENT AND FUTURE NEEDS OF URBAN AREAS FOR TRANSIT FACILITIES. RECOMMENDATION OF CHANGES IN EXISTING LAWS AS DEEMED APPROPRIATE.

Existing law was investigated and commented upon; however, the Commission did not address itself to explicit legislative recommendations during the course of its study. Prior to legislative recommendations directed specifically at transit, the Commission suggests that, due to the number and complexity of the problems discussed and the lack of adequate time and staff to formulate comprehensive solutions, the General Assembly provide for continued study as outlined.

III

URBAN TRANSIT IN VIRGINIA

Urban transit in the eleven study areas of Virginia is provided by 28 bus operations. The study areas contain more than 2.5 million people, 58 per cent of the state's population.

Transit ridership in the three largest study areas, Northern Virginia, Southeastern and Richmond, accounted for 74 per cent of the passengers and 86.3 per cent of the revenue in 1968. Total ridership in 1968 for the 28 bus operations amounted to almost 108 million. In 1948 annual ridership for six of these companies was 180 million. Over a period of the past twenty years their annual ridership has declined over 59 per cent while the population of the study areas has increased from 1.65 million to 2.5 million.

Most of Virginia's population growth has occurred in or around cities. By 1980 it is projected that 78 per cent of the people will live in urban areas, yet it now appears only one area will have sufficient corridor demand to support a rapid rail transit system. The Virginia suburbs of Washington, D. C., the largest and fastest growing area of the State, have approved and are participating in the construction of a planned regional rail network for the nation's capital. The 97 mile system is to be built by the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

DEVELOPMENT OF REGIONAL TRANSIT IN NORTHERN VIRGINIA

Northern Virginia is the only area in the State which has adopted a regional approach to urban transit. Cooperation with Maryland and the District of Columbia resulted in regional regulation of urban transit in the Washington area by the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Commission.

To enable Virginia to participate with Maryland and the District of Columbia in the creation of a regional rapid rail transit system, the Virginia General Assembly passed the Transportation District Act of 1964 under which the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission was established. This commission is represented along with the Washington Suburban Transit Commission (Maryland) and

the District of Columbia government on the Board of Directors of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority. The authority has overall responsibility for developing a regional rapid rail transit system for metropolitan Washington, D. C.

THE FINANCIAL CONDITION OF URBAN TRANSIT

The major portion of transit income is composed of fares collected from daily adult ridership. Between 1966 and 1968 regular passenger revenue amounted to 87 per cent of all income for urban transit operations in the eleven study areas. The remaining revenue was obtained as follows: school revenue 5 per cent, charter revenue 7 per cent and all other revenue 1 per cent.

While fewer fares have been collected in recent years, successive fare increases by most carriers prevented total revenues from decreasing. Regular passenger revenue increased 7 per cent during the past three years, while ridership declined 3.3 per cent. Although school revenue was comparatively small (5 per cent), it was an important revenue source for some carriers. Charter revenue at 7 per cent was larger than school revenue but was not considered to be directly relevant to the basic financial problems of urban transit because charter operations are designed to provide an adequate profit margin. Non-operating revenue was less than one per cent of total revenue.

Total operating expenses for all transit companies supplying data increased 11 per cent between 1966 and 1968. Rising expenses can be attributed to higher wages and salaries where a 13 per cent increase was registered in this three year period.

Factors which reflect the financial stability of transit include operating ratios and net income after income taxes measured against net worth. Examination revealed that most operators failed to show adequate earnings during the three year (1966-1968) period, while several companies operated at a loss. Many operators in marginal or deficit positions used depreciation accruals as a source of operating revenue.

The overall financial posture of the urban transit industry in Virginia indicates that service will be difficult to maintain with little possibility of improvement. In addition, transit companies cannot attract the capital required for modernization.

URBAN TRANSIT PROBLEMS

Equipment

The desirable average age of rolling stock for transit operations is 7.5 years with 10 years the normal useful life and 15 years the maximum useful life. The rolling stock (1481 buses) for 27 transit operations in Virginia far exceeds these figures; 64 per cent of the buses are more than 10 years old, 41 per cent are more than 15 years old, and 18 per cent are more than 20 years old.

As far as the eleven study areas are concerned no urban area has transit equipment in service which averages less than 11.3 years of age.

The poor condition of urban transit rolling stock reduces the efficiency of operation. It reduces comfort, aesthetics, reliability, safety and finally transit patronage. Few bus fleets are air conditioned and individual fleets range from well maintained to poorly maintained. Since operators can seldom afford to purchase new buses, there is a general policy of used bus purchasing.

Wages and Salaries

Wages and salaries constitute an increasing percentage of total operating expenses, closely following the national trend (65.1 per cent in 1961 and 68.9 per cent in 1967) for the transit industry. Higher wages and salaries coupled with

declining ridership and declining revenues have resulted in lower profits. In order to increase revenue (while ridership declines) and offset the effects of increasing wages and salaries, fares have periodically been increased.

Return on Net Worth

Data were limited to 9 of 28 operations but it is apparent that the return on net worth is insufficient for most urban transit operations in Virginia. The low rate of return creates substantial instability and may induce private investors to seek more profitable business ventures.

Taxes

Transit operations in Virginia over the years have received successive tax relief from federal and state (exemption from state gross receipts tax) and local government (reduction or elimination of city gross receipts tax). Presently most taxes are levied by localities. The five largest transit operations pay 94 per cent of the \$2 million annually paid by the transit operations under study for operating taxes and licenses. General tax relief would at best help only a few of the operations in financial trouble because under the present tax structure the greatest share of taxes are being paid by operations which can best afford to pay. While tax relief may not be a cure-all, however, it may be a useful way of supplementing other forms of assistance.

Ridership

Since passenger revenue accounts for more than 85 per cent of total operating revenue for transit operations in Virginia, a decline in passenger ridership represents a serious problem. In 1948-58, six operations which currently account for 78 per cent of total ridership, experienced a decline in ridership of almost 59 per cent (180.3 million to 84.6 million). In order to overcome increased operating costs, occasional fare increases have been necessary over the years. Without such fare increases operating revenues decrease as the number of revenue passengers decrease, resulting in financial deterioration.

While declining ridership is a problem, there is no simple solution to reversing the trend. A modest increase in ridership would provide sufficient revenue to permit many operations to gain financial stability, but there is no way to easily insure added ridership on a continuing basis.

Insufficient Data

The lack of sufficient data, with which to perform detailed analysis of the 28 transit operations in the eleven study areas, not only restricted the depth of analysis, but if the matter is left unattended, the proper evaluation of future transit programs will be in jeopardy.

School Transportation

The limited school fares provided urban school children by both publicly and privately owned bus systems creates a financial burden for most transit operations. In the past, when transit ridership was high, limited school fares may have been reasonable, but with more transit operations experiencing financial instability it appears that the matter of limited school fares should be evaluated.

The state pupil transportation program while oriented to rural areas provides for aid to urban areas for transporting city school children, but regulations require that standard yellow school buses must be used before funds are made available. Since most city school children have been transported for years by private transit operators using various types of transit buses, it means that cities must enter into

the bus business themselves in order to meet the requirements for state funds; and yet, it appears that city school children ride just as safely on regular transit bus as rural school children ride on standard yellow buses. Aid for the transportation of city school children, the merit of the yellow school bus requirements for state aid, and the effect the state regulation has on urban transit operation and local citizen school bus costs should all be studied.

Adequacy of Service

Measurement of the adequacy of transit service in Virginia was beyond the scope of the Commission's study, but it is evident that with declining ridership the level of service for both publicly and privately owned and operated bus systems has diminished accordingly. Bus companies have not only reduced bus service during off-peak hours, evenings and Sundays, but have increased headways which also decreases the frequency of service. In addition, bus routes have been eliminated and rearranged.

It appears that if the frequency of service were increased, more people would ride buses but there would not be enough riders to meet the costs associated with the improved level of service.

Annexation

The annexation process in Virginia has a detrimental effect on urban transit affairs in two ways.

Whenever an annexation occurs in an urban area, suburban transit operations lose territorial rights in the annexed portion of the county and the city based transit operation automatically assumes all operating rights in the newly acquired area. While present legislation requires compensation for the suburban operators, it does not sufficiently cover all aspects of the problem. The Bon Air Transit Company situation in the Richmond annexation represents a typical example of apparent inequities for suburban transit operations.

The second way in which annexation affects urban transit affairs concerns the transportation of city school children. Prior to annexation county residents receive extensive free school bus service. Once county residents become citizens of the city through annexation, they must pay to have their children transported to school—by either private or public bus systems. This not only adds a new annual cost to new citizens of the city but if the city based transit operation does not wish to serve an area, it means that children must be driven to school by automobile—only adding to present highway congestion. For low income families without an automobile, this presents a special problem.

Comprehensive Area-Wide Planning

Comprehensive area-wide planning has received added emphasis in urban transit affairs because it means the difference between one half and two thirds federal aid funds.

The reluctance of a city or county to meet Urban Mass Transportation Administration area-wide planning requirements can cause other local jurisdictions to lose federal aid monies by requiring 50 per cent participation instead of 33.3 per cent of the project costs.

The advocacy of comprehensive area-wide planning by local as well as state agencies could aid transit affairs directly and indirectly.

Transportation District Act of 1964

This act is essentially permissive legislation which in view of a possible over-all statewide urban transit program may not be properly oriented. Such matters as the State Corporation Commission's (SCC) responsibility, lack of an identity for

urban transit, the role of the State Highway Commission in transit matters, the interrelationship between the SCC and transportation, planning and service districts, the expansion of districts and the effects of mergers should receive further study.

Transportation Administration

Responsibility for programs affecting transportation and urban transit in particular are divided among several agencies.

At the state level urban transit affairs are handled by the State Corporation Commission, the Department of Highways, the Division of State Planning and Community Affairs and the Department of Education.

At the local level various city governments are responsible for all transit operations within their jurisdictions.

This lack of unified control is highly undesirable. Such governmental and administrative restraints disrupt efficient and innovative transit service, especially in complex urban areas. Separation of control also jeopardizes urban transit's identity. Transit demands are independent and unrelated to political jurisdictions so the unification of control over urban transit operations is of utmost importance.

GOALS FOR URBAN TRANSIT

The influence of transportation services and, in particular, transit services on everyday life is both subtle and pervasive. They affect, to some extent, the actions and accomplishments of each individual. Therefore, the first and most important goal for transit in Virginia is to assume that the influence of transit is being employed to help bring about conditions in urban areas which are felt to be most desirable.

In a more detailed fashion, "desirable urban conditions" can be divided into several subcategories of importance. Those transit goals considered to have the highest priority for Virginia are:

1. User related goals:
 - A. Better service for "captive" riders
 - B. Greater access to various urban areas
 - C. Lower travel times
 - D. Greater dependability
 - E. Lower travel cost
2. Non-User related goals:
 - A. Greater diversion of highway traffic
 - B. Greater cross socio-economic group contact
 - C. Greater opportunity for education of experiences
 - D. Better development of urban land

To insure that such goals for urban transit are met it is necessary that (1) transit organizations be financially stable, (2) planning be made for future transit affairs, and (3) transit offers a flexible and adaptable service.

All solutions posed for urban transit in Virginia should be studied in light of the previously discussed goals or other sets of goals developed for specific situations.

METHODS FOR IMPROVING URBAN TRANSIT

The urban transit situation can be improved in a variety of ways. Some measures can best be obtained through legislation while others require considerable technical assistance in the form of engineering and planning studies and surveys.

A few measures may include: increased cooperation between carriers, through routing of present radial bus lines, improvements to bus fleets and improved service.

Improved service offers a broad range of improvements which can best be categorized as immediate, intermediate and futuristic.

Immediate changes are low in cost and can usually be implemented in a year. Such changes would be based predominately on higher speed or decreased travel time, express bus service, additional use of freeways and improved bus flow, for example. Intermediate changes require more extensive planning and design and involve such changes as bus trains, and improved coordination of modes. Futuristic changes are long range improvements and include such new concepts as demand scheduling for buses, and quick change buses.

A few immediate type changes have been adopted in Virginia but there is no specific program for statewide transit improvements. It is apparent that (1) selected improvements can improve service and attract more riders, and (2) transit can play a more significant role in urban transport systems with stronger funding and planning.

A state administered program regarding research planning, demonstration projects, capital grants and training would insure federal and state participation and provide the proper development and coordination of various improvements. Such a program would also permit state financial participation in improvement projects and allow for technical assistance to localities and transit operators.

FEDERAL ASSISTANCE FOR URBAN TRANSIT

The Housing Act of 1961 established programs which were designed to assist communities in improving transportation systems. The programs included grants for demonstration projects, loans for facilities and equipment, and grants for urban transportation planning. The Urban Mass Transportation Act of 1964 authorized \$375 million in grants over a three year period to revitalize and expand commuter transportation systems.

The major programs for transit currently are administered by the U. S. Department of Transportation through the office of the Urban Mass Transportation Administrator. In addition, the Federal Highway Administrator through the Bureau of Public Roads assists transit through roadway improvements under the federal aid highway program. The U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the National Science Foundation also aid transit by sponsoring selected projects.

It appears that with increasing federal emphasis on urban transit affairs it is important for Virginia to have a strong transit program of its own if the state is to profit from the federal aid available for urban transit.

Expanded federal involvement in urban transit affairs in the future, as indicated by budget appropriations for 1971 and 1972 and proposed legislation, may encourage active state participation in transit assistance programs. State aid for urban transit in the nation amounted to \$47.8 million in 1967 with eleven states supplementing local contributions to the federal mass transportation program.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING STATEWIDE URBAN TRANSIT ASSISTANCE

Unless private transit operations are able to improve earnings, many companies, especially in the smaller emerging metropolitan areas, are likely to go out of business. When an existing transit operation fails and no other company will

assume responsibility for the routes, people in the affected area are deprived of transit service—unless the service is publicly operated.

There are various methods for financially assisting private transit operations, or more specifically, how to alter relative prices of transit and private automobile travel to favor transit. Tax relief and/or subsidies represent ways of assisting transit so that fares can either be lowered or held constant in the face of rising expenses. Increased taxes on highway users represent ways of assisting transit by raising the cost of driving private automobiles.

Tax relief would be virtually meaningless for most of the small companies, while subsidies are not likely to solve the problem over the long-term because of inefficiencies subsidies are likely to encourage. Increased taxes on highway users are probably the most effective way of encouraging greater use of transit, however, from a political standpoint, it is also the most difficult method to employ.

Alternate sources of funds could also be made available to assist transit. At the state level increases in motor fuel tax and the motor vehicle license tax offer potential. At the local level a parking tax or a household tax offer potential.

RECOMMENDATION STATE ASSISTANCE TO BUS TRANSIT

It has been demonstrated in Virginia that improved bus transit will attract riders. For example, to improve transit service, highway lanes of Route 95 in Northern Virginia were reserved during the two-hour morning peak for the exclusive use of buses. During a two month period, ridership increased thirty-five per cent.

Where transit service can be improved in heavily traveled corridors by the cooperative efforts of the Highway Department and the transit industry, motor vehicle drivers would be encouraged to use the faster, more economical mode of travel to and from work. Increasing bus ridership during the peak hours would lessen the demand for more highways.

To accelerate the Highway Department's efforts in this direction, this Commission recommends that the State Highway Commission be authorized to expend not more than five million dollars each biennium to provide fringe parking facilities, exclusive bus lanes, off-street parking facilities to free streets of parking so that curb lanes may be used by buses, bus turnouts and bus passengers shelters.

The funds so used by the State Highway Commission would be expended from the funds allocated to the system served by the bus transit operation. For example, where bus turnouts are provided on the Urban Highway System, the funds would be provided from the allocation to the Urban System.

LEGAL ASPECTS OF TRANSIT

To the extent that law leads societal development, consideration of due process and equal protection would seem to demand a certain degree of change in the present approach to transit, especially in school bussing and annexation.

To the extent that law follows the effective implementation of societal goals, the basic structure of the law, in the broad authority given municipalities to regulate transit and in the comprehensive framework established to permit localities to engage in planning, is adequate to meet the needs. Procedural changes are needed, however, to alleviate the impact of purely political considerations and to guide transit decision making along technological considerations.

Some statewide centralization of urban transit management is needed but since initiative must be retained at the local level the state should adopt a policy of guidance, encouragement and coordination.

RECOMMENDATION COURSE FOR FURTHER ACTION

Urban transit in Virginia is beset with problems which range from limited revenue to regulation and control. Since transit is a major mode of travel, its problems cannot be aided by simple programs that are not properly administered.

In densely populated areas where thousands of people live and work, lack of easy access to major activity centers adds a frustrating dimension to intra-urban travel which cannot be resolved without the efficient use of urban transit. Yet the cost of keeping and increasing ridership implies heavy investment in equipment that transit operators cannot now afford with present ridership and fare levels.

At the federal level of government there has been increasing emphasis on urban transit affairs. In addition to money now available, it is proposed to greatly increase the long-term financing for expanded urban public transportation programs and other related purposes.

Virginia should address itself to a total program of improved transit prior to the time when the situation will have reached the crisis level as has happened in the more urbanized states of the Union. A simplistic approach cannot be advocated, for in addition to the basic problems uncovered during the course of the Commission's study, there are other distinct areas of concern for urban transit: the interrelationship of highways and transit, the concern for the efficient expenditure of public funds for urban transport system development, and the need to achieve a modal balance in urban transport systems as well as in statewide transportation systems.

The transit industry in Virginia lacks identity and is restricted by fragmented state and local control. With the development of a transit program the State can provide much needed assistance through the determination of suitable goals supported by a legislative program for state involvement. The only form of government assistance previously employed has been fragmented tax relief at both the state and local level in times of financial crises.

Under a total program effort, transit would receive much needed recognition as well as having the State take a positive role to insure that transit will best serve the needs of urban Virginians.

In view of the complex nature of urban transit and limited time, staff, resources and data, a comprehensive program for legislative consideration could not be prepared at this time. The Commission's findings, however, indicate significant problems regarding urban transit affairs in Virginia. Since transit is not only an important element in urban transport systems but is also vital to the health of the state's urban society, it is felt that continued study is warranted.

The Commission is of the opinion that a new study group should be appointed in the same manner as the present Commission to consist of eleven members and two ex officio members.

Representatives of the transit industry, existing regional transit authorities, local government, the General Assembly and appropriate state agencies, would constitute a body of broad-based interests necessary to seek actively and develop the program required to assist transit. To support this new study group, the Commission proposes that the General Assembly appropriate \$150,000 per annum to be utilized for the acquisition of full-time staff personnel and for expenses incidental to the accomplishment of the tasks charged to them.

Upon its creation, the newly appointed body would employ its staff and set forth the limits of the work effort. The program may attack any problems and questions which this Commission's efforts have uncovered; however, it is felt that special consideration should be given to the following tasks:

Transportation District Act of 1964

Evaluate the Transportation District Act of 1964 in relation to the establishment of Regional Transit Authorities.

Regional Transit Authorities

Number?

Locations?

Powers and Duties?

Should establishment be voluntary or mandatory?

Composition?

Franchises

In-depth study of franchises and their relation to the State Constitution, State Corporation Commission and local governing bodies.

Financial Assistance for Transit

Should the State make a financial commitment to transit?

If so, what form should assistance take?

- a. Match portions of federal grant projects?
- b. Loans?
- c. State level grants?
- d. Special projects?
- e. Additional tax relief?

Public Ownership Vs. Private Ownership

Investigate the feasibility and the economic desirability of acquiring privately owned transit with the objective of improving overall transit service and ridership.

School Bus Service

Study the possibility of aid for the transportation of city school children, the merit of the yellow school bus requirements for state aid, and the effect state regulations have on urban transit operation and local citizen school bus costs.

Federal Programs

How can present and future federal aid programs for transit be most effectively used in Virginia?

Highway Program and Mass Transit

How can the Highway Program be directed to complement and support urban transit operation?

Upon the completion of its work in two years, the entire effort of the new study group should result in a comprehensive state program for transit. As part of its charge, the study group should solidify its efforts by making an objective determination of the best statewide organization suitable for implementing its transit program and for eventually coordinating all transportation activities in Virginia.

Transit is a single element of a total transport system; however, with the growth and change that is now taking place in our metropolitan areas, it is becoming more important to recognize its necessity in our urban society. Virginia is fortunate to be able to experience from the fate of others. The State has yet to reach the level of urbanization characteristic of other areas of the nation, but the trend is already established. The efforts of the Virginia Metropolitan Areas Transportation Study Commission have resulted in the compilation of valuable information regarding the present status of transit in the Commonwealth. The problems and thoughts that have been developed during the course of the Commission's study should not be discarded without the further development of a program for positive State action for the betterment of transit in Virginia.

IV CONCLUSION

We wish to emphasize the value of the background work done for the Commission by the Staff. The Staff Report is being made available to the General Assembly and interested parties and copies may be obtained through K. M. Wilkinson at the Department of Highways.

The entire Staff worked diligently and has prepared much valuable ground-work for the comprehensive study we are recommending in this Report. We wish to express our appreciation to them for their fine efforts.

Respectfully submitted,

JOHN R. SEARS, JR., *Chairman*
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*See additional statements which follow.

STATEMENT OF MR. ANDERSON

Although I approve of the substance of the Report, I would hope that it may be possible for the objectives sought to be accomplished for less expense than that which is projected in the Report, and, therefore, I reserve the right to amend legislation which would implement the recommendations of the Report.

STATEMENT OF MR. RICKS

I concur in the recommendations of the Commission concerning the creation of a well financed transit study commission and a program to initiate transit-related highway construction.

However, I am deeply disappointed that the Commission report contained no affirmative recommendations for immediate financial assistance to current mass transit programs such as the development of a subway system in Northern Virginia. Rather than repeat my suggestions in this regard, I am attaching hereto my letter of December 10, 1969 to Chairman Sears.

ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA
OFFICE OF THE COUNTY BOARD
COURT HOUSE
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA 22201

December 10, 1969

The Honorable John R. Sears, Jr.
Chairman
Virginia Metropolitan Areas
Transportation Study Commission
State Capital
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Dear Delegate Sears:

I regret that a business trip will prevent my attendance at the December 18th meeting of the Virginia Metropolitan Areas Transportation Study Commission.

However, I do wish to suggest two areas of legislative action for the Commission's consideration that are not mentioned in the draft report.

This Commission should deal more specifically with the problem of financing a mass transit project such as the currently proposed subway system for the Washington Metropolitan area. As presently contemplated, the counties and cities which comprise the Northern Virginia Transit District are contributing to the capital costs of the subway through the sale of general obligation bonds. The amount of these bonds was determined on the basis of initial engineering estimates, and there already are indications that the actual costs of the construction of the subway will significantly exceed the original estimates. Also, the Northern Virginia jurisdictions are being asked to sign a service agreement which will obligate them to pay a portion of the operating costs of the subway system in the event that revenues from fares do not cover such costs.

The revenues to repay the general obligation bonds for subway construction and the subway service deficits must be raised under current laws from the traditional sources available to Virginia counties and cities such as property and business license taxes. Because of ever increasing costs of public education and governmental services, Virginia municipalities desperately need an alternative source of revenue for mass transit systems. It is conceivable that the construction costs

of the subway system will not exceed original estimates and that fare revenues will meet operating expenses. But if not, there is a serious question as to whether Arlington and other Northern Virginia jurisdictions can withstand additional bond indebtedness for mass transit.

The Northern Virginia Transportation District was authorized by the 1968 Virginia legislature to fund mass transit projects, but the body was not given any taxing power to raise such funds. I believe that the jurisdictions in Northern Virginia, acting jointly through the Northern Virginia Transit Commission or separately, should be authorized to tax some activity that is related to transportation for the purpose of creating a transit trust fund. Preliminary studies have shown that a special transit tax on new car sales or a registration tax on cars located in the Northern Virginia Transit District would produce substantial revenues even at relatively low rates. I, therefore, suggest that this Commission recommend legislation that will authorize the raising of funds for transit purposes as described above.

My second suggestion relates to the development of new or expanded highway systems in Metropolitan areas. We have recently experienced in Arlington County a rather unfortunate problem of credibility with respect to highway planning. Citizens typically have been learning of plans for future highways in their neighborhoods through chance encounters with highway survey crews or real estate appraisers. When these citizens call their local highway department for information regarding the highway project they apparently are told that it is a state project and that the local highway department is not authorized to release the plans or proposals. This circumstance inevitably leads to the conclusion that there is a conspiracy between state and local officials to withhold information regarding future highway routes to prevent effective citizen opposition.

Whether this is true or not, I strongly believe that additional procedures must be adopted to acquaint the public with future highway projects that are likely to require the taking of private property.

In areas such as Arlington which experience a high rate of turnover of private residences, it is not sufficient to publicize a highway project at any one particular time. Rather, access to such information must be continuous. All initial highway proposals, tentative plans, final plans, amendments and revision to such plans should be on public file in the jurisdiction where the taking of private property will occur. Thus, a citizen should be able to conduct a review of all highway proposals which may affect his property at his local highway department. In my judgment, the requirement to maintain a public file of all state highway plans at county and city levels should be included in the legislative recommendations of this Commission.

Very truly yours,

JAY E. RICKS

JER:rjr

cc: Northern Virginia Transportation Commission
Arlington County Board

APPENDIX

A BILL to establish a second Virginia Metropolitan Areas Transportation Study Commission.

Whereas, the General Assembly in 1968 created the Virginia Metropolitan Areas Transportation Study Commission by Senate Joint Resolution No. 21; and

Whereas, that Commission submitted a report to the Governor and General Assembly fully outlining the scope of the matters which must be studied further to develop proper programs and plans to deal effectively with the problems of mass transportation in our urban areas; and

Whereas, the areas outlined by that Commission are complex and will require an adequate staff to evaluate them and assist in the preparation of a total program for improved transit; now, therefore,

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. § 1. This act establishes the second Virginia Metropolitan Areas Transportation Study Commission which shall consist of eleven members to be appointed as follows: two by the President of the Senate, three by the Speaker of the House and six by the Governor. Members shall be appointed to serve for the life of the Commission to July 1, 1972. In addition, the State Highway Commissioner and the Director of the Division of State Planning and Community Affairs shall be members of the Commission ex-officio. The Commission shall elect its Chairman from the membership.

§ 2. The Commission shall proceed to conduct a thorough study of transportation needs in the metropolitan areas of the Commonwealth, utilizing the work prepared by and for the Virginia Metropolitan Areas Transportation Study Commission of 1968-1970 and shall examine the following areas, in addition to such other matters which it deems relevant: the Transportation District Act of 1964, regional transit authorities, franchises, financial assistance for transit, public versus private transit facility ownership, school bus service, relevant federal programs, the State's highway program in relations to mass transit, and the proper State organization to implement transit programs and transportation activities in the Commonwealth.

§ 3. The members of the Commission shall be paid their necessary expenses incurred in the performance of their duties but shall receive no other compensation. In the conduct of its study, the Commission shall be authorized to employ full-time or part-time staff personnel including, without limitation, such professional aides as a staff director, research and operating engineers, attorney, economist and draftsmen and such clerical and stenographic assistance as required.

§ 4. The Commission may accept and expend gifts, grants and donations from any or all sources or persons for the purpose of carrying out its study, including appropriations made to it by law.

§ 5. All agencies of the State and the governing bodies and agencies of all political subdivisions of the State shall cooperate with and assist the Commission in its study.

§ 6. The Commission shall submit its final report to the Governor and the General Assembly not later than October 1, 1971, and may submit interim reports in advance of such date.

2. There is hereby appropriated to the Virginia Metropolitan Areas Transportation Study Commission from the general fund of the State treasury the sum of three hundred thousand dollars for the purposes of this act.

A BILL to authorize the State Highway Commission to allocate from funds for highway purposes certain funds for purposes of constructing transit-related facilities.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. § 1. The State Highway Commission is authorized to expend each fiscal year from funds made available for highway purposes a sum not to exceed two and one-half million dollars to construct transit-related facilities, such as exclusive bus lanes, bus turnouts, bus passenger shelters, fringe parking facilities to promote transit use and relieve highway congestion, and off-street parking facilities to permit exclusive use of curb lanes by buses, to the end that highway traffic may be relieved through the development of more efficient mass transit.

Expenditures of funds under the authority of this act shall be made so that funds of the system benefited by the transit-related facility being constructed are utilized in its construction.