

ITEM #16: PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Members of the public are invited to address the HRTPO Board. Each speaker is limited to three minutes.

ITEM #17: SUBMITTED PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no submitted public comments. Any written public comments received after the preparation of this agenda will be distributed as a handout at the meeting.

ITEM #18: TRANSCRIBED PUBLIC COMMENTS FROM PREVIOUS HRTPO MEETING

The transcribed public comments from the April 20, 2017 HRTPO Board meeting are attached.

Attachment 18

**Transcribed Public Comments from the
April 20, 2017 HRTPO Board Meeting**

*The views and opinions expressed during the public comment period
do not necessarily reflect the opinion or policy of the HRTPO.*

Two people requested to address the HRTPO Board at the April 20, 2017 Meeting. Chair Johnson asked them to limit their comments to three minutes.

***Ms. Donna Sayegh
Portsmouth Citizen***

Good morning. My name is Donna Sayegh and I live in Portsmouth. On the agenda there's a report by Mr. John Mihaly on the final draft of the HRT study. This study compares public transit agencies in Hampton Roads peer agencies across the nation. The comparison provides baseline to measure ridership, riders per revenue hour, riders per revenue mile, operating expenses per rider, fare revenue per rider, and farebox recovery ratios. Instead, Mr. Mihaly needed to do a study on the internal workings of HRT. In the Virginia news, it reported that HRT laid off employees to save \$1.94 million in salaries and benefits. In Norfolk, HRT employees were responsible for \$5.2 million overruns in its 2016 budget. Next, Virginia Beach owes \$1.6 million for HRT overruns. In April 28, 2016, I attended an HRT meeting and asked them how HRT communicates with this board. By that time, Mr. Crum had helped me create the HRTPO organizational chart. My concern was and still is: how is HRT communicating with this board, each city and the citizens? In May, Donna wrote a letter to Mr. Harrell asking the same questions. He did not respond or answer my questions. In September 2016, Donna went to another HRT meeting. In the body of her presentation she noted that there is too much overlapping of services with overspending of taxpayer's money and other issues. In January, 2017, Donna gave a presentation to the HRTPO board about the TIP revision for HRT to transfer \$4 million dollars in RSTP money for two projects. One was for the facility upgrade for \$2 million. Donna reported that HRT is spending money way ahead of its allotted time. HRT needed the two million to fix the bus garage because it bought buses too long to fit in the garage. Nothing was done about this. On April 3, 2017, Mr. Harrell came to the Portsmouth work session. He reported he needed money for HRT's operations. Here's the feedback the city council that Donna e-mailed. Portsmouth needs transportation commission to audit the needs of our city and the operation of the HRT commission since the HRTPO board is failing to do it, since many HRT employees have been released from their jobs, school bus drivers can work for HRT and provide public transit for middle and high school students and save taxpayers money and teach students how to ride public transit. Mr. Mihaly, HRT needed a study done before the one you are doing. Thanks for listening.

Mr. Ellis James
Norfolk Citizen

Thank you, Madam Chair. Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Ellis W. James. I reside in the city of Norfolk and have done so for about 78 years, give or take a decade or two. I hope that all of you in your various lives had a blessed Easter season, or were able to celebrate Passover or whatever your particular faith provided. This is a very difficult time. I really don't need to remind you of that right now, but if you listen carefully to the reports today, we are in a situation where we're going to have to fight for every dollar that we can possibly identify responsibly. The new administration has already provided us in Hampton Roads with a clear hit on housing, on water quality, on social issues, and our military is also going to take a hit because this wonderful new big mega ship that's coming is not going to be operational in my opinion for very long because of the draft that is required for the size of ship that we're talking about, and there are more to come. Now, why am it getting up here and spoiling your after-Easter season with a kettle of woe? And I want to be sure that Mayor Sessoms understands I'm not picking on Virginia Beach. I looked carefully to see if there was any mention anywhere about the new mega bus complex in Virginia Beach. I'm not opposed to it, but it cries out for light rail access. Boy, with a capital A. So I hope that you-all will include that in the overall consideration of all of these votes that you're going to take.