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Update on Hampton Roads Transit (HRT) Transit Strategic Plan

PURPOSE/BACKGROUND:

This briefing is to update Council on the HRT Transit Strategic Plan.

Discussion:

Over the last year, HRT staff has been working with the staffs of its member communities and receiving public input on their Transit Strategic Plan (TSP). This Plan is intended to transform the regional transit system and attract new riders by increasing the effectiveness of the service it provides. At their May 28, 2020 meeting, the HRT Board was briefed on the Draft Transit Strategic Plan that could impact route frequency and route design in the City. The Transit Strategic Plan is required by the state under legislation passed by the 2018 General Assembly. The plan is scheduled to be adopted by the HRT Board at their June 25, 2020 Board Meeting to meet state requirements. The plan includes changes to the design, frequency and run time of routes throughout the Hampton Roads Region. No changes proposed in the plan will be implemented in FY2021. Changes will only be implemented with the approval of the annual Transportation Service Plans by each locality. The plan will be updated annually with a major update planned for every 5 years. The inaugural TSP does not contemplate the new dedicated regional transit funding approved by the 2020 General Assembly, so that is likely to change some of the plan recommendations as the availability of those funds is considered over the coming year, with updates to the TSP are made accordingly.

Overall in Hampton, the service area remains largely the same with the primary changes being increased frequency, streamlining of routes, reducing route overlap and merging some routes to improve their efficiency and effectiveness. Probably the biggest proposed changes relate to increases the frequency of Route 114 that runs along Mercury Boulevard to 15 minute peak service and the potential elimination of Route 118. Route 118 has marginal ridership and the parts that do have the most riders are covered by other routes. While it eliminates fixed route bus service around Langley, staff has been working with HRT to identify alternative service options for this part of the City, such as microtransit, shuttle from Coliseum Central to this area and other options. Staff has

communicated to HRT that we would need to delay the implementation of the elimination of Route 118 until after we resolve this issue. Additionally, the dedicated funding for the regional backbone could free up some funding to retain this service in some form. The plan also recommends the elimination of Route 102. Route 102 is one of the lowest performing routes in the HRT system and the lowest performing route in Hampton. This route provides 60 minute service connecting Downtown to Coliseum Central, and overlaps with Route 114, 111 and 109, so service on this route is largely duplicative. With Route 114 moving to 15 minute peak service, it will provide a much better connection between Downtown and Coliseum Central, than the 102 does today. Route 117 will also be merged with Route 115. 117 is one of the strongest routes in the HRT system, and the analysis conducted by HRT indicates merging it with Route 115 will strengthen both routes. Merging Routes 115 and 117 will connect Phoebus, the VA Medical Center, Hampton University, Downtown, Fox Hill and Buckroe with 60 minute service. Currently, the 117 serves Phoebus, the VA, Hampton University and Downtown, while the 115 serves Buckroe, Fox Hill and Downtown.

Two Hampton routes have been identified as regional backbone routes that are proposed to have more frequent service (Route 101 Kecoughtan Road and Route 114 Mercury Boulevard). The regional backbone routes will be eligible for the new state transit funds that are being administered by the Hampton Roads Transportation Accountability Commission (HRTAC). Several Commuter Routes that serve the Shipyard such as the 403 and 405, which originate in Buckroe, will also be proposed from the regional transit funds.

As noted above, implementation of services outlined in the plan will be subject to approval of the Transportation Service Plans that are approved annually by the member cities.

Recommendation:

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