

Local Government CEO Forum

There continues to be a dynamic shift in the role localities are playing in the transportation arena. In recent years, local administration of projects has become more commonplace across the Commonwealth. The establishment of the Urban Construction Initiative has shifted management of the entire construction program to willing municipalities and devolution offers counties opportunities to assume additional responsibility for the secondary system. Additionally, many localities have incurred debt through referenda and general obligation bonds for transportation purposes. In addition, legislative changes over the last few years have promoted integration of land use and transportation. These shifts have provided significant opportunities for VDOT and localities to partner to improve overall transportation services.

Currently, Commissioner Ekern meets periodically with CEO's from the contracting and consulting industry. These meetings provide a forum to discuss issues and concerns as well as an opportunity to focus on the future relationships between the industry and the Department. There had been no similar venue with local governments. In 2008, this concept has been expanded to our local government partners.

The initial meeting of the Local Government CEO forum was held on July 11, 2008 in Charlottesville. The minutes of this meeting follow.

Local Government CEO Forum

July 11, 2008

Final Meeting Minutes

Summary:

- After much discussion, the group decided to focus on 5 key areas. Initially, priority will be given to issues raised during the forum that fall under Project Development. The 5 key areas include:
 1. Project Development – focus on speed, flexibility and predictability
 - a. Project “ownership”
 - b. Design standards
 - c. Plan reviews
 - d. Design exceptions
 - e. Procurement
 2. Financial Processes – focus on getting available funds to projects faster
 - a. Financing
 - b. Local/State agreements
 - c. Project closeout
 - d. Transparency
 3. Operations and Maintenance – focus on impact if fail to maintain system
 - a. Delineation between Operations and Maintenance (definitions, funds, etc.)
 - b. Incident Management
 - c. Responsibility over the system
 4. VDOT Systems – focus on cutting processes that are not legally required
 - a. Accommodate true local/state partnership – introduce flexibility
 - b. Incorporation of willingness to take risks (e.g. parallel processes)
 - c. Review of policies with unintended results and do not recognize local government fit
 - d. Outreach and education
 5. Funding – focus on efficient use of
 - a. Predictability
 - b. Regional cooperation
 - c. Partnership with economic development activity

Next Steps/Meeting Outcomes:

- The group agreed to meet again to review what actions both local governments and VDOT take to address issues raised.
- ***CEOs are to review the 5 key areas outlined above and provide specific examples to Mike Estes that highlight an area in need of attention***
- ***CEOs to provide Mike their first priority (with specific examples of what concerns you have with this aspect) under project development that they'd like to see addressed by the group***
- VDOT will focus attention on prioritized issues raised under project development and report back on areas that both parties can help address.
- Local CEOs will provide a review of the meeting minutes and proactively engage their peers on these issues. One suggestion to accomplish this was to provide a brief summary at an upcoming PDC/MPO meeting.
- Suggestions on format, topics, etc. to be covered at future meetings should be provided to Mike
- The next meeting will be held before the end of the calendar year.

Commissioner Ekern's summary of Issues

- Overarching Issues
 - Funding generation
 - Responsibility for the system
- Focus Areas
 - Plan Review (sign and traffic signal example)
 - Risk in R/W
 - Design Standards
 - Who's responsible
 - Flexibility
 - Policies with unintended results without recognizing local fit
 - Incident Management and use of maintenance funds
 - How maintenance funding is defined and used

Detailed discussion:

1. Identify one item from your perspective that defines success for this forum:
 - Plan of action (outcomes)
 - Blueprint – How to do more with less
 - Commitments for ways to accelerate projects if locals put up funding
 - Understanding of VDOT priorities (maintenance specifically highlighted)
 - Addressing Development
 - How VDOT plans to enhance use of electronics
 - Ways to expedite approval process
 - Some kind of consensus going forward
 - True Partnership between VDOT and local governments – comes with an attitude of ownership
 - Blueprint of changes
 - VDOT local authority in residencies
 - How to address maintenance of bridges
 - How to improve timeliness of approvals
 - Identify mechanisms for cooperation – VDOT, Cities, Counties

2. What are the biggest issues facing you in transportation?
 - Funding Predictability
 - Creation of Realistic Expectations - Defining what we can deliver
 - Public Support
 - Speed of Delivery
 - Enhancement & Revenue Sharing projects are ready to go – waiting on agreements (Fredericksburg examples)
 - Issues w/ procurement (Fredericksburg examples)
 - Approvals of construction packages, etc. (Norge Depot – James City County)
 - True Local/VDOT Partnership – a “sense” of Partnership
 - The VDOT “System”
 - Incident Management - Quick Clearance
 - Regional Cooperation

- Strategic Look at transportation - Economic Development and Transportation Gap
- The system has created unrealistic expectations - need to create realistic expectations
- Responsibility of system (Devolution) – issue is/will be fragmentation of the system
- Citizen Expectations
- If locals take on more control, is State a trusted partner (financially)?
- Local funding options – monies locally generated – limitations by state law (*Note: VRA funding type now allowed due to legislation by Senator Colgan 2 years ago*).
- Keeping monies – not timely release of - when is a project over – how long will keep money, when do you release funding for other projects?
- Economic development and transportation now looked at jointly
- Disconnect: “grow VA”, but not prepared to support when new business arrives - Doesn’t make sense to offer economic development, when do not have capability to support it - Economic developers need to pony up - look at Maryland
- Growth Management
- Procurement rules handicap delivery
- Tell me the rules, then let me go
- Same problem applies to locally administered urban projects
- PPTA proposals can shave years off projects – should we look at this and ask what are we doing wrong
- Willingness to take risks – parallel processes (i.e. waiting until all R/W is secured before authorizing projects to move forward)
- Transit
- Transparency in decision making (better understanding of definition of maintenance)
- Good understanding of things like resource allocation and having discussions like this
- Design decisions – arbitration between District/Residency decisions and local desires (James City County – ended up dropping project)
- Flexibility in design
- Doctrine of perverse incentive: good ideas for development, but then.... (examples given were Secondary Street Acceptance, Access Management regulations, etc.)

Other Discussion Notes

- Communication
 - Can CEOs help to get the word out?
 - Clear that attention is needed to more extensive communication of the complexities of the various programs VDOT oversees.
 - Evaluate use other information channels (example: GRTC's use of local cable channels – also discussed use of local government channels)
- VDOT processes - Get staff to ask are we required to do this, and if not why are we doing it
- If issues revolve around unrealistic federal regulations, locals and state should partner in discussion with federal representatives
- Need for agency-wide encouragement of VDOT staff (Residency Administrators and others) to take more ownership over decisions and their subsequent impact on the local community. VDOT should be perceived as a partner with the community in these matters.
- Funding
 - Although may not be able to influence, should not abandon quest for funding
 - Must demonstrate that you are doing a good job with the money you have, then can have more allies and can demonstrate need for funding
 - Partnership means: Localities and VDOT seeking funding together (saying the same things)

Attendance:

		July 11, 2008
Alexandria	Jim Hartmann	X
Albemarle	Bob Tucker	X
Augusta	Pat Coffield	X
Bristol	W.A. Dennison	X
Chesapeake	Amar Dwarkanath	X
Chesterfield	Jay Stegmaier	X
Town of Culpeper	Tom Huggard	
Danville		
Fairfax County	Anthony Griffin	
Frederick	John Riley	
Fredericksburg	Phillip Rodenberg	X
Harrisonburg	Kurt Hodgen	X
Henrico	Virgil Hazelett	X
James City	Sanford Wanner	X
Leesburg	John Wells	
Montgomery	Clay Goodman	X
Newport News	Randy Hildebrandt	
Prince William	Craig Gerhart	X
Roanoke City	Darlene Burcham	X
Stafford	Anthony J. Romanello	X
Virginia Beach	James Spore	
Wythe	Cellell Dalton	X
	Subtotal	15

VDOT staff

Allen, Gary R.		
Busher, Reta;	X	
Ekern, David S.	X	
Johnson, Grindly	X	
Kerley, Malcolm T.	X	
Moore, Garrett,	X	
Sorrell, Constance S.	X	
Tischer, Mary Lynn		
Walton, Rick		
Estes, Mike	X	
Mullery, Brooke (facilitator)	X	
	Subtotal	8
	Total	23