

Document #5

June 28, 2022 Board/MIC Meeting Minutes – Part B:

The Future of RVA757 Connects and the I-64 Innovation Corridor

Background:

The generative discussion period of the June 28, 2022 RVA757 Connects' Board / Megaregion Institutional Council meeting focused on the future of RVA757 Connects and the I-64 Innovation Corridor.

The discussion expanded on the themes introduced in the I-64 Innovation Corridor Opportunity Study (Link to this report: <https://media.graphassets.com/Udm5cMXTxWlvvb302z5g>)

- Are megaregions real?
- Why are we calling ourselves a megaregion?
- Should we include an expanded perspective of the I-64 Innovation Corridor?
- What do megaregions focus on?
- If we are a megaregion, what is our future?

This document captures the highlights of the robust discussion that ensued.

It is important to note that this topic was brought up as philosophical discussion, not a recommendation by RVA757 Connects' Executive Committee, Board of Directors, or Megaregional Institutional Council.

Key Facts to Consider:

John W. Martin, President & CEO of RVA757 Connects, set the stage for the discussion with an overview of the major transcendent trends shaping the U.S. Highlights included:

- **Population Growth:** U.S. population growth between 2020 and 2060 will increase from 330 million to 400 million (assuming current trajectories of fertility, mortality, and immigration).
- **Concentration of Economic Output:** 88% of that growth will be concentrated in the 12 U.S. megaregions.
- **Age Wave:** By 2050, 22% of our country's population will be people 65-plus (14% today).
- **Diversity:** By 2045, the U.S. population will be predominantly non-white, requiring attention to growing racial and economic inequality.
- **Environmental Threats:** Climate change and sea level rise will become major environmental threats.
- **Health Threats:** Global pandemic of antimicrobial resistance.

Mr. Martin’s preamble ended with references to the growing body of research – recent books, articles, whitepapers (see the I-64 Innovation Corridor Opportunity Study for these resources) – that suggests a broader, megaregion approach may be the most effective way to address these mega issues.

The megaregion concept is more than half a century old (Silicon Valley, Boston’s Route 128, and Research Triangle). These early models advanced the idea that nearby cities shouldn’t compete, but rather, collaborate to help grow both economies. COVID-19 woke everyone up to this winning formula. The pandemic couldn’t be addressed by city or state governments alone. America mobilized at a megaregion scale to address this health crisis. Governors, mayors, and businesses from different regions and even states worked together to solve a life-threatening challenge.

Harnessing the power of interregional collaboration is precisely what RVA757 Connects is attempting to do for the mutual benefit of the Richmond and Hampton Roads regions. We are starting to gain traction. What’s in store for us in the future?

Future Considerations for RVA757 Connects and the I-64 Innovation Corridor:

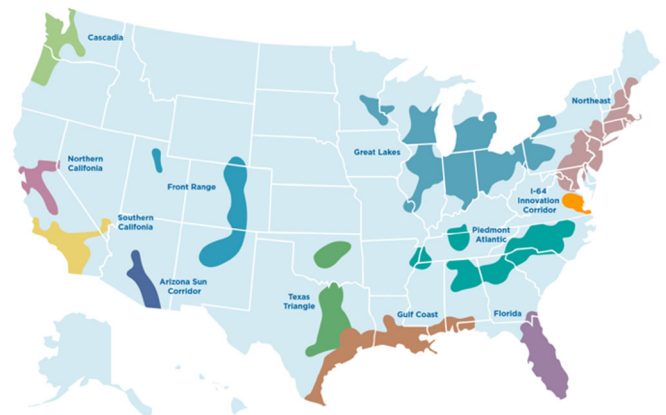
Based on this background information, the Board of Directors and MIC members engaged in a robust discussion. The conversation addressed “what if” questions, exploring the many possibilities ahead for RVA757 Connects and the I-64 Innovation Corridor. Highlights included:

- **Geographic Reach within Virginia:** Should the I-64 Innovation Corridor’s reach (and RVA757 Connects’ membership) be extended to include:
 - The Eastern Shore – Wallops Island and the new Rocket Lab
 - Charlottesville – the life sciences industry cluster
 - Lynchburg – the work of BWXT (nuclear solutions company that supports national security, clean energy, environmental remediation, nuclear medicine, and space exploration)

If so, when is the right time to do so?

- **Geographic Reach Outside of Virginia:** The I-64 Innovation Corridor sits between the large Northeast megaregion (Washington Metro area running North to Maine) and the Piedmont Atlantic megaregion (Raleigh, Charlotte, Nashville, Atlanta). See above map.

2022 U.S. Megaregions Map



Jonathan Barnett, author of *Designing the Megaregions* and RVA757 Connects' keynote speaker at Convergence 2020 in Jamestown, predicted that one of our biggest long-term issues will center on which megaregion we want to align with or become part of.



- Do we join the Northeast or the Piedmont Atlantic megaregion?
- Do we join up with the Greater Washington Partnership and become a new megaregion? Would we then use the demographic term “The Golden Crescent?”
- Do we create better connections to Raleigh and become an expanded VA-NC Research Triangle – a new megaregion?
- Do we just stay on our current trajectory and become a major innovation hub as the I-64 Innovation Corridor (with or without Charlottesville, Eastern Shore, and/or Lynchburg)?

There are opportunities and challenges with all of these long-term “what if” alternatives. What factors and considerations should guide this type of discussion?

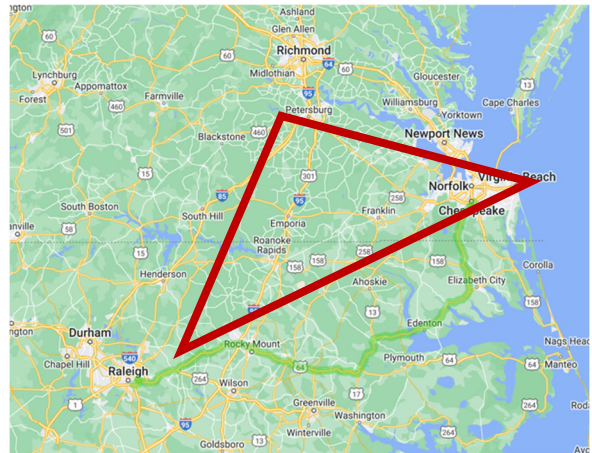
- **Official Federal Designation:** Related to any geographic coverage discussion is the need to fully understand the federal benefits that come with being viewed and even classified as a larger region. The U.S. Department of Transportation is determining future transportation needs and related policies and investments using a megaregion lens. Are we on the U.S. DOT’s map?

(An important perspective on this topic: RVA757 Connects' core purpose is to identify ways the Richmond and Hampton Roads regions can collaborate to help each other's economies. I-64 Gap Project and the Global Internet Hub are two perfect examples. We have NEVER envisioned becoming a 3-million-sized population center under one brand. Thus, being designated a larger population center for federal funding purposes would only work if both Richmond and Hampton Roads always maintain their respective states of independence, governments, and separate brands).

- **Transportation Connections:** Transportation put the Charlotte region on the map. A related question was raised – are we thinking strategically about our megaregion’s transportation assets?

For example, do our regional airports present an opportunity to provide the I-64 Innovation Corridor a competitive advantage over other regions? Is it realistic to assume we could move toward a “system” where each airport is specializing and, through cooperation, creating an integrated international hub? Related to this question, how will a future with autonomous passenger vehicles affect America’s airport hub system? Are we getting ready?

On a highway infrastructure front, would I-87 as a super-highway connecting Hampton Roads and Raleigh accelerate a positive psychological triangulation between the Richmond-Hampton Roads-Raleigh regions? The Texas Triangle consists of three metropolitan areas: Dallas–Fort Worth, Houston–Galveston, and Austin–San Antonio that are defined by three highways.



- Social Equity:** The Greater Washington Partnership is now centering its megaregion’s priorities on early childhood education, affordable housing, and other social issues. Should RVA757 Connects consider social equity issues when identifying and prioritizing future focus areas?

One suggestion was to explore interest in RVA757 Connects’ companies and organizations embracing a common set of Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity (DEI) goals and to incorporate this DEI position into RVA757 Connects’ purpose and mission.

- Sharing Our Story:** ChamberRVA’s and Hampton Roads Chamber’s recent intercity visits to Charlotte (in 2021 and 2022 respectively) revealed many insights on what’s driving Charlotte’s success. Among them are a “can-do” corporate city-building attitude and investment and regional story-telling prowess. These insights led some meeting attendees to ask if RVA757 Connects should market the I-64 Innovation Corridor outside of the region? As noted, there’s so much to share.

(An important perspective on this topic: RVA’s and 757’s economic development and tourism agencies are charged with this external marketing responsibility. All are underfunded for this task. Since the inception of RVA757 Connects, as an organization, we have acknowledged that marketing our megaregion outside of the area is their responsibility. Our role is to drive priorities inside the megaregion like the I-64 Gap Project. Additionally, we do not have the resources to fund marketing. The best way we can help with megaregion storytelling is to use our influence to get additional resources directed to the Hampton Roads Alliance, Greater Richmond Partnership, and Virginia Economic Development Partnership for their respective marketing purposes.)

Overall Discussion Take-Away

In Virginia, RVA757 Connects is becoming known as an organization of Richmond and Hampton Roads business and higher education leaders who can make things happen.

Over time, especially given the existential threats facing metropolitan regions, we need to harness our broad, interregional perspective and demonstrated ability. Based on this June 28, 2022 Board/MIC conversation, this may include evolving beyond advancing physical infrastructure connections (highway, rail, and trail) and digital infrastructure connections (Global Internet Hub) into driving



sustainable community-building connections that help create a place where everyone wants to be and, ultimately, thrives. This evolutionary or deliberate shift merits future discussion and debate.

The Board/MIC conversation ended with the clear recognition that no matter how we geographically define the I-64 Innovation Corridor's footprint and prioritize focus areas, RVA757 Connects can become one of the most effective collaborative structures of our time, one that can drive economic synergies between participating jurisdictions in a way that enhances the prosperity and quality of life for all.

Next Steps:

- First, RVA757 Connects' will continue work on its board-approved 2022 priority focus areas:
 - Accelerate the I-64 Innovation Corridor status as a Global Internet Hub
 - Support the completion of the Virginia Capital Trail
 - Remove barriers to increase passenger rail service
 - Advocate for I-64 widening (29-mile gap from RIC to Williamsburg)
 - Drive and showcase greater collaboration and innovation
 - Support directors' and members' initiatives
 - Advance our megaregion's brand internally – the I-64 Innovation Corridor
- Second, RVA757 Connects will continue to advance Board/MIC conversations on this long-term topic – *where and how to evolve RVA757 Connects/I-64 Innovation Corridor over time* (not in 2023, but toward 2030, 2040, and beyond). To this end, we will:
 - Invite the Greater Washington Partnership and Cascadia Megaregion representatives, as well as megaregion authors and scholars to future Board/MIC meetings to learn more about their respective efforts in designing megaregions. Insights learned will inspire RVA757 Connects' future planning possibilities.
 - Continue to report on the competitiveness of the I-64 Innovation Corridor against other megaregions. This includes how we look on traditional economic measures and explore new accountability measures like social equity.
 - Craft short white papers on key issues raised in this Board/MIC meeting. A series of well-researched, short, thought papers will help focus future discussions on these planning topics at upcoming Board/MIC meetings.
- Third, and most importantly, RVA757 Connects will continue to build on its proven model of interregional collaboration. Our work is breaking new ground on how to connect, convene, and collaborate in ways that clearly benefit our two regions and, in turn, our Commonwealth. We will engage more community leaders in helping us advance our collaborative platform, one that will help everyone better address the existential threats and seize the opportunities for the I-64 Innovation Corridor for generations to come.