



Board/MIC Meeting Minutes September 20, 2022: 10:00 a.m. – Noon Virtual via Zoom

Call to Order

Theodore L. Chandler, Jr., co-chair of RVA757 Connects, called the September 20, 2022 Board of Directors / Megaregion Institutional Council (MIC) meeting to order at 10 a.m.

Mr. Chandler said the primary focus of the Board/MIC meeting is to review the board-approved priorities, noting that 10 months ago the board approved a “very bold and audacious” set of priorities. Many of the board’s priorities are based on the fundamental idea that we are better when the two regions work together.

For example, Mr. Chandler said RVA757 Connects advocated at the right time and to the right people to make a difference – getting the General Assembly and the governor to approve funding for the I-64 Gap project. That was a great success, he said. He also talked about how the Board/MIC will get an update on our efforts to get a Global Internet Hub designation for the megaregion.

The Board/MIC today also will take a deep dive into the extension of the Virginia Capital Trail (currently known as the BoAT trail) from Williamsburg to the Virginia Beach ocean front.

Updates on RVA757 Connects

John W. Martin, President and CEO of RVA757 Connects, reminded board members that they can see minutes from the Executive Committee and other key documents (such as the monthly financial flash reports) by utilizing the Documents Portal on the website’s homepage.

He also welcomed a new board member: Hans VonKruger, Senior Vice President and Hampton Roads Market Executive for Bank of America. Hans replaces Brian Rountree.

He also provided an update on our Virtual Innovation Spotlight webinar programs that started earlier this year. Attendance is growing. The database continues to grow with more than 2,600 individuals. Mr. Martin asked each board/MIC member to send five names and email addresses to Greg Gilligan, the Communications Director, to add to the database.

I-64 Gap Project

Mr. Martin thanked those who had made phone calls and wrote letters seeking support to widen Interstate 64 from New Kent to the Williamsburg area. State lawmakers approved a state budget, which Governor Glenn Youngkin signed into law, providing the bulk of the funding (\$470 million of the estimated \$750 project) with additional funding coming from the Central Virginia Transportation Authority (\$100 million).



The last piece is the Virginia Department of Transportation's application for a \$150 million federal grant. VDOT has received two inquiries from USDOT on the I-64 application and the agency is still in the running for the federal grant. VDOT expects to hear a decision in early December.

Global Internet Hub

Mr. Martin provided an update on RVA757 Connects' Global Internet Hub (GIH) initiative – creating a Strategic Plan to accelerate the I-64 Innovation Corridor's ascendency as an internationally recognized Global Internet Hub.

The strategic planning Steering Committee has been recruited. More than 60 leaders from 10 different industry and business categories are now serving on the Steering Committee. The committee has met twice – in July and August – and the third meeting is slated for September 29.

RVA757 Connects has created a project website (www.globalinternethub.org) that includes all meeting documents and inventories all relevant articles, white papers, and research reports. RVA757 Connects prepared and presented a comprehensive Situation Review report for the Steering Committee's review in August.

The next step is to hire international consultants to support the Steering Committee's work in formulating a strategic plan.

Jefferson Lab Update

Jim Spore, an RVA757 Connects' Executive Committee member (former President and CEO of Reinvent Hampton Roads) provided the Board/MIC with an update on plans by the U.S. Department of Energy to issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a High-Performance Data Facility that could bring one of the world's most powerful super computers to Virginia. He said this is a critically important project that will bring high-paying jobs to the megaregion.

A regional group has been formed to help Jefferson Lab coordinate the support for the initiative once the RFP is issued. Reinvent Hampton Roads is leading this group. The Department of Energy's RFP release date is still pending.

Competing locations are expected to offer incentives with their proposed bids.

Mr. Martin said that RVA757 Connects will continue to monitor this initiative and act quickly when requested to support Jefferson Lab in landing this high-performance data facility.



Government Relations

Greg Gilligan provided a quick update on government relations as Ross Grogg and Christopher Lloyd, the co-chairs of RVA757 Connects' Government Relations Committee, were unavailable to attend this Board/MIC meeting.

It was noted that Virginia has a healthy budget with revenues exceeding the year-ago period, but concerns exist about an impending recession and the impact of inflation that could limit the availability of money for new initiatives.

RVA757 Connects' Government Relations Committee has developed a legislative agenda timetable. In September and October, the committee will gather suggested agenda items from board and MIC members and identify potential megaregion priorities from adopted agendas by regional organizations. In November, the committee will present a draft legislative agenda to RVA757 Connects' Executive Committee. The full board will vote on a proposed legislative agenda at the December board meeting.

Convergence 2022

Bryan Stephens (with Brian Anderson standing by to assist) provided an update for Convergence 2022.

There's been a change in the initial plan: Convergence 2022 switched from a two-day bus tour to a one-day, all-day meeting in Williamsburg with a lunch, reception, and dinner on Thursday, October 13.

Here's the Convergence 2022 agenda:

- 10:00 a.m.: Welcome
- 10:15 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.: Hampton Roads leaders showcase the hottest economic development initiatives in the 757
- 12:15 p.m. – 12:45 p.m.: Lunch
- 12:45 p.m. – 2:45 p.m.: Richmond leaders showcase the hottest economic development initiatives in RVA
- 3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.: RVA757 Connects showcases the collaboration that's happening to leverage all of this (such as the I-64 Gap and Global Internet Hub)
- 5:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.: Reception
- 6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.: Dinner with keynote speaker

The cost is \$95 per person for the meeting, lunch, reception, and dinner. Rooms are available at the Williamsburg Lodge for those wanting to stay overnight. All Board and MIC members are encouraged to attend Convergence 2022.

Advancing the BoAT Trail

RVA757 Connects created a 99-page PowerPoint deck and an eight-page Executive Summary on the topic. These documents were shared with the Board/MIC in advance of this meeting. Mr. Martin provided highlights.

- There has been a long-term trend of increased outdoor activities, including biking.
- Cities have been investing in bike-walk infrastructure and these trails provide economic development benefits.
- Trails also advance equity, serving underserved communities.
- National trails have reached Virginia and seek local tie-ins.
- Virginia has three big trail initiatives currently underway – The Fall Line Trail in the Richmond region, Shenandoah Rail Trail, and the Eastern Shore Rail Trail.
- The conversation on Virginia’s Big Three trails needs to become the Big Four trails and include the BoAT (or Birthplace of America Trail).
- RVA757 Connects support all trails as their ultimate utility is achieved when there is a hyper-connected trail system.

The board heard from Cat Anthony, the Executive Director of the Virginia Capital Trail Foundation, who provided an overview and reported on the popularity of the Capital Trail since it opened in 2015.

She discussed the Capital Trail’s factors of success which included:

- Having initial champions – elected officials and business leaders;
- Hiring a staff person to work on advancing the concept every day;
- Having most of the trail property already owned by VDOT;
- Building the trail in sections with gaps as starting at both ends would ensure the middle would have to be built;
- Having VDOT actively engaged in handling most of the trail maintenance; and
- Having active, ongoing marketing and engagement, including events, promotions, PR, trail cleanup, trail ambassadors, and advocacy.

Bob Crum, Executive Director of the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission and the Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization, provided an overview of plans for the

BoAT trail that will run from Williamsburg to Fort Monroe on the Peninsula and from Williamsburg across the Surry Ferry to the ocean front on the Southside. The region's 17 local governments have unanimously endorsed this vision/plan.

Most of the trail on the Peninsula must be designed, funded, and built. The estimate to complete the entire trail network on the Peninsula is approximately \$125 million.

The board heard from Andrew Trivette, City Manager for Williamsburg; Scott Stevens, County Manager for James City County; and Alan Archer, Assistant City Manager for Newport News.

- Mr. Trivette said Williamsburg has taken bike tourism to heart as an economic component. He talked about the plans for bike trails in Williamsburg and getting them connected to the Virginia Capital Trail.
- Mr. Stevens said there has been a real effort in pushing more momentum for the BoAT and in trying to connect it to the Virginia Capital Trail.
- Mr. Archer said Newport News is excited to be part of a dynamic project going through the city and for the tremendous impact it will have. City officials have embraced the project and look forward to charging ahead to be part of this trail network.
- Newport News estimates that its portion of the trail will cost about \$50 million, and the city has funding applications pending for \$32 million.

Representatives from the Tidewater Trails Alliance, who became an early advocate for the BoAT concept, also made brief comments.

Breakout Session

The board was divided into smaller groups to discuss possible ways RVA757 Connects could help advance the BoAT trail. The breakout session discussion was two-fold:

1. Overall, what additional input and suggestions do you have for RVA757 Connects? Are we working on the right priorities? Are there any other topics or focus areas we are missing?
2. On the BoAT trail topic:
 - a. The BoAT trail is one of RVA757 Connects' Board-approved priorities (like the I-64 Gap and Global Internet Hub). Now that you know more about the trail, should it remain a priority of RVA757 Connects?
 - b. Is there any missing information on the BoAT trail – things you would like to know that were not covered today or are not in the PowerPoint or Executive Summary?



- c. What do you think about the list of six possible ways RVA757 Connects could help advance the BoAT trail? Is there something on this list we not should do? Please prioritize these suggestions.
- d. What's not on this list? Please suggest other ways RVA757 Connects could help advance the BoAT trail.

A summary of the feedback and input from the breakout sessions is presented as an appendix to these meeting minutes.

Thank You and Wrap Up

Thomas R. Frantz, Co-Chair of RVA757 Connects, thanked board directors and MIC members for their continued support and attendance at Board/MIC meetings.

Mr. Frantz reminded everyone that at the organization's core is the idea of connectivity. Together, he said, we can enhance connectivity quicker, more efficiently, and more effectively; this is showing in every topic we discussed today.

He reminded board/MIC members of several upcoming key dates:

- **The fourth and final 2022 Board/MIC Meeting in Williamsburg:** December 13: 10 a.m. to noon in Williamsburg (in-person)
- **Convergence 2022:** Thursday, October 13 at the Williamsburg Lodge
- **Virtual Innovation Spotlights via Zoom:** First Tuesday of every month from noon to 1 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:53 a.m.