September 15 Breakout Session Notes

Sarah Jane Kirkland & Ted Chandler

1. **GIH:**

<u>Question #1</u>: What are your biggest take-aways from today – The I-64 Innovation Corridor Becoming a Global Internet Hub?

- Becoming a Global Internet Hub (GIH) has the potential to diversify our economy beyond government subsidies. This is exciting an achievable.
- Demonstrating growth in this area will bring more opportunities to get behind more specific projects like never before.
- The GIH requires focus on improving new infrastructure (broadband), not just the old infrastructure (I-64) with collaborative intentionality. The megaregion's geography holds our growth potential: infrastructure ecosystem, education, job creation, matching of talent pipeline. Everyone in the geography will benefit.
- Site readiness is critical. Prepare for the GIH by identifying site readiness properties, ensuring gas supply, and utilizing education/crime/transportation taxes. Henrico's site readiness, preparation, and incentivization are a model to follow. However, Hampton Roads, Virginia Beach, Suffolk, and Chesapeake should consider where land is available and where efforts will be best focused.
- One of the challenges for datacenters is weather – Henrico is halfway between Virginia Beach and Ashburn, with a propensity for hurricanes.
- Attracting and constructing data centers are the tip of the iceberg. This will benefit the infrastructure for the entire business community, because every business is immersed in technology.
- It's not fully understood how important site readiness is given the nature of some of the tech companies' SAAS. Tech companies may need a smaller physical space given the remote working world.
- We need to increase net migration to the Commonwealth. Look at the whole picture: Relocating folks can work from anywhere in the world. The I-64 Innovation Corridor can provide a great quality of life ecosystem, because of its value proposition as an area that's pro-business with low taxes and has geographic assets, such as beaches.
- This opportunity helps us to go beyond competitive nature. We are not competing but uplifting each region and locality.

<u>Question #2</u>: How should RVA757 Connects (our organization) help advance this cause – Making the I-64 Innovation Corridor a Global Internet Hub?

- Struck by the importance of pre-planning for the sites. Need to make sure that we bring together business and government to expedite these, so we do not miss out on this opportunity.

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- The pipeline of the technical talent technical from college is positive. Paint the opportunity – take the studies and what we need.
- Direct flights are needed and that should be a focus area for the megaregion.
- Learn quickly how we get scored for site readiness, and start putting together a matrix for what score each locality would receive for road infrastructure, site development, tax rates, education, crime, etc. Take a look at different tiered sites for the work that they are already doing which could be used for the matrix.

Question #3: What additional information do we need on Making the I-64 Innovation Corridor a Global Internet Hub? What would make our story even more compelling as we spread the word?

- What will make it attractive to move here and competitive for students to get positions?
- How do we plan for an increase in businesses looking to relocate?
- How do we get the people along the corridor educated so that they understand the opportunities?

2. **Comments / suggestions on this meeting.**

- N/A

3. **Format of future meetings.**

- Prefer mainly virtual for ease of participation, but suggest some in-person opportunities, perhaps for committee meetings and some specific networking opportunities. Some of the concern is that online it is hard to make connections, so having opportunities for people to intentionally make connections would be beneficial. The main consensus was that virtual is best for these meetings to get the participation we are looking for.

Peggy Lane & Cliff Fleet

1. **GIH:**

Question #1: What are your biggest take-aways from today – The I-64 Innovation Corridor Becoming a Global Internet Hub?

- In order to become a GIH, we must build out the infrastructure, and make sure the fiber ring starting on the Southside continues to the Peninsula (possibly through the new tunnel).
- Make sure that we maintain the quality of life that would be attractive to those who consider living here.
- Take advantage of sectors that the area has as a natural advantage. (Ex: Jefferson Lab, NASA Langley, VCU labs.)
- Eco-systems will evolve around the infrastructure (as has happened historically... towns/work emerged around agricultural region, transportation hubs, etc.).

- Need to commercialize the technology. Allow research sites to bridge collaboration between public, government, and education. Define what this looks like. RVA757 can be the catalyst to help this happen.
- Need workforce + workforce training: "Produce" a workforce to stay local or "seduce" a workforce to come here. We don't have enough people to fill vacancies or potential vacancies, much less enough trained people.
- If having an airport that has more direct flights is a main criterion for consideration, then we have a lot of work to do!

Question #2: How should RVA757 Connects (our organization) help advance this cause – Making the I-64 Innovation Corridor a Global Internet Hub?

- "Live here/work anywhere" could be a marketing/recruiting line.

Question #3: What additional information do we need on Making the I-64 Innovation Corridor a Global Internet Hub? What would make our story even more compelling as we spread the word?

- N/A

2. **Comments / suggestions on this meeting.**

- N/A

3. **Format of future meetings.**

- Current format with presentation and small breakout sessions well liked.

Jim Spore & Moses Foster

1. **GHI:**

Question #1: What are your biggest take-aways from today – The I-64 Innovation Corridor Becoming a Global Internet Hub?

- There's a great platform coming together in the Megaregion, and we need to capitalize from it.
- Data Analytics is the money play, but as a compliment to Ashburn, not competition.

Additional Needs:
- Differentiate our offerings by partnering with Ashburn/Fairfax County and Public/Private Partnerships where possible. Build a well thought out and prioritized strategy. Refine our message to appeal to all stakeholders.

- Conduct an economic impact study—not just on data centers but on the total benefits of the ecosystem if we are successful in achieving a Global Internet Hub status as described in the white paper. Have a site overlay to augment the inventory work already done to specifically target the needs of data centers (power, water, sewer, 50 to 250 acres).
- Conduct a Talent Pipeline Analysis—focused on needs now and 10 years in the future for tech workers (essentially have that done already via the GO VA Grant).
- Examine the policies and incentives present in governmental jurisdictions in the megaregion for data Centers and all other components of the Global Internet Hub—tax rates, permitting times, zoning on sites appropriate for Data Center hosting. Need a small group of 8-9 people who know what tech developers/investors are looking for to build a strategy and achieve the Global Internet Hub ecosystem—give them a deadline to prepare i.e., 90 days.

Question #2: How should RVA757 Connects (our organization) help advance this cause – Making the I-64 Innovation Corridor a Global Internet Hub?

- Had no idea how developed the Megaregion already is—need to socialize/market.
- Use the collective power of our organization to invite other individuals and organizations to assist in conducting new studies and analyses of data.

Question #3: What additional information do we need on Making the I-64 Innovation Corridor a Global Internet Hub? What would make our story even more compelling as we spread the word?

- N/A

2. **Comments / suggestions on this meeting.**

- N/A

3. **Format of future meetings.**

- N/A

Tom Frantz & John Martin

1. **GHI:**

Question #1: What are your biggest take-aways from today – The I-64 Innovation Corridor Becoming a Global Internet Hub?

The discussion started with breakout session members expressing their excitement about this topic and our focus on what is truly a huge megaregion opportunity. Two quotes that capture this sentiment:
- "This was the best presentation ever on this topic. For the first time, it pulls this subject together in an understandable way."

- "For the first time, this presentation shifts the conversation from tech to economic development."

Key points offered:
- Becoming a Global Internet Hub is the foundation for everything we are trying to do in connecting our regions.
- This ties directly into workforce development, talent attraction and retention, new industry growth, etc.
- One phrase heard in the presentation really captured this concept so well: "This is bigger than the construction of I-95 and I-64." For context, this short phrase was advancing this sentiment: Becoming a Global Internet Hub with the continued development of our internet infrastructure and ecosystem will transform our megaregion in the 21st century much like the construction of I-95 and I-64 did in the 20th century.

Question #2: How should RVA757 Connects (our organization) help advance this cause – Making the I-64 Innovation Corridor a Global Internet Hub?

- Identify and include early examples of businesses who are locating here because of our growing internet infrastructure – show the model in action that John presented.
- Show how our data centers are attracting data analytics.
- Connect this topic to workforce development.
- Create a PowerPoint (to simplify and complement the white paper)

Question #3: What additional information do we need on Making the I-64 Innovation Corridor a Global Internet Hub? What would make our story even more compelling as we spread the word?

- Make this our new priority (Note: Building awareness of our "digital connections" was one of our board's approved priorities for 2021).
- We should be the information facilitators – sharing this story.
- Create and make one-on-one presentations. Develop a set of speakers to deliver this information.
- Educate the localities in the megaregion about this topic. Let county/city boards know the players in this category move at the speed of light.
- Ask the appropriate organizations to inventory land (economic development orgs.) and energy availability (Dominion). Add this to the story.
- Work with the appropriate parties to create materials that can help jurisdictions and others understand and support this topic:
  o Template on fast-track permitting
  o Template on tax structures
  o Template on energy and water
- Advance the argument to reduce sales and use tax exemption for data centers down to 25 employees from 50 to encourage investment.
- Ask VDOT to be sure to install conduit on I-64 Gap Project – when the 29 miles are widened.

- Connect the data center partners to our community colleges – data-related training education.
- Partner with NOVA, don't compete with them.
- Keep pushing quality of life, improving air access, talent retention and attraction – help attract and retain the tech talent / workforce needed.

2. **Comments / suggestions on this meeting.**

- The singular focus on one topic (Global Internet Hub) was appreciated by all. It was agreed that the meeting's format was ideal - having advance materials, experts on the call, followed by our facilitated small group discussion.

3. **Format of future meetings.**

- There was a consensus that short board meetings like this one should be virtual. In person meetings should be reserved for committees' brainstorming occasions or big events. We should not mix virtual and in-person.

Wilson Flohr & John Reinhart

1. **GHI:**

Question #1: What are your **biggest take-aways from today** – *The I-64 Innovation Corridor Becoming a Global Internet Hub*?

- Build awareness of the opportunities by recruiting EDOs, landowners, and politicians to advance the importance and opportunities the Internet cable presents for both regions.
- Community College participation is necessary to build a talent pool of IT and facility operators.
- Create a plan to attract other companies that can benefit from the speed of a millisecond's savings.
- Focus on the medical industry. High speed connectivity can benefit research and diagnostics.
- Recognize that the speed to build centers is required to attract a data facility: permit processes, land clearing, et al…are needed to have sites business ready. In order to succeed, it's necessary to build out timetable one year.

Needs:
- Lower taxes as Henrico demonstrated.
- Do not attract crypto currency operations.
- Ensure that utilities water, sewer, and power are available to potential sites.
- Be a compliment to Ashburn not competitor.
- Improve direct flight service from the three airports.

Question #2: **How should RVA757 Connects (our organization) help advance this cause** – *Making the I-64 Innovation Corridor a Global Internet Hub*?

- Translate and communicate to entrepreneurs.
- Communicate the whole story to the business community, EDOs, and the political arena.
- Encourage Northern Virginia companies to diversify and use data centers in the megaregion as a backup to their operation with cyber threats.

Question #3: What **additional information** do we need on *Making the I-64 Innovation Corridor a Global Internet Hub*? **What would make our story even more compelling** as we spread the word?

- N/A

2. Comments / suggestions on this meeting.

- N/A

3. Format of future meetings.

- N/A

General Consensus:

Becoming a GIH is foundational for connecting Richmond and Hampton Roads. It ties into every facet of the megaregion – infrastructure ecosystem, education, job creation, and matching of talent pipeline. Everyone in the geography will benefit.

It requires a great deal of infrastructural development, including site preparation and readiness. Need to ensure that utilities water, sewer, and power are available to potential sites. Need to examine the policies and incentives present in governmental jurisdictions in the megaregion for data Centers and all other components of the Global Internet Hub—tax rates, permitting times, zoning on sites appropriate for Data Center hosting.

This is an opportunity to partner with Northern Virginia, rather than compete.

Marketing communications and messaging will be key for gaining momentum to become a GIH. Marketing materials and RVA757 Connects' delegated speakers can spread the word via presentations to localities. Can build awareness of the opportunities by recruiting EDOs, landowners, and politicians to advance the importance and opportunities the Internet cable presents for both regions.

Need workforce + workforce training: "Produce" a workforce to stay local or "seduce" a workforce to come here. We don't have enough people to fill vacancies or potential vacancies, much less enough trained people. The pipeline of the technical talent technical from college is positive. Paint the opportunity – take the studies and what we need.

Direct flights are needed and that should be a focus area for the megaregion.