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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 28

Offered January 14, 2026

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Establishing a joint subcommittee to study options for providing long-term, sustainable, and dedicated operations and capital funding with cost-containment controls to ensure that the public transit systems that serve Hampton Roads meet the growing public transit needs of the region. Report.

Patron—Askew

Committee Referral Pending

WHEREAS, Hampton Roads is served by Hampton Roads Transit (HRT), Suffolk Transit, and the Williamsburg Area Transit Authority (WATA), which move more than 25,000 customers per day; and

WHEREAS, HRT is the Commonwealth's largest public transportation agency outside of Northern Virginia and metropolitan Washington D.C., serving six of the top 10 largest cities in the Commonwealth and the second largest metropolitan area, including Chesapeake, Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, Portsmouth, and Virginia Beach; and

WHEREAS, WATA operates 12 fixed routes that serve citizens and visitors of James City County, the City of Williamsburg, and York County; and

WHEREAS, Suffolk Transit provides safe, cost-efficient fixed route transit services to Suffolk's core downtown service area and northern Suffolk, and a connection to HRT; and

WHEREAS, a successful regional public transit system is critical to the economic prosperity of Hampton Roads; it connects riders to jobs, reduces traffic congestion by removing single-occupancy vehicles from the roadways, and helps residents and visitors attain an education, receive health care, connect with family and friends, and attend places of worship, recreational and community activities, and sporting events; and

WHEREAS, the metropolitan area of Hampton Roads, which includes 1.7 million people, must continue to have a robust and efficient regional public transit system if it is to effectively compete with other urban and metropolitan areas, grow, and provide the quality of life and services that residents of the region deserve; and

WHEREAS, transit operators in Hampton Roads continue to face significant financial challenges following the COVID-19 pandemic, with ridership numbers slowly increasing but not yet returning to pre-pandemic levels due to shifting community habits and an increase in the number of individuals working from home; and

WHEREAS, state and federal transit funding is stagnant with threats of significant future decreases, while at the same time operating and capital costs are rising faster than new funding sources are becoming available; and

WHEREAS, just as other infrastructure such as roadways and bridges needs ongoing maintenance and an investment in repairs, public transportation requires an ongoing investment to maintain and expand options for residents and visitors; and

WHEREAS, Hampton Roads public transit agencies have identified a need of approximately \$20 million annually to enable them to meet the growing transit needs of the region they serve; and

WHEREAS, it is in the public interest to manage ongoing and vital investments in public transportation in an accountable and transparent manner, and to make every effort to ensure reasonable and effective cost-control measures are in place for such investments; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That a joint subcommittee be established to study options for providing long-term, sustainable, and dedicated operations and capital funding with cost-containment controls to ensure that the public transit systems that serve Hampton Roads meet the growing public transit needs of the region. The joint subcommittee shall have a total membership of 13 members that shall consist of seven legislative members, two nonlegislative citizen members, and four ex officio members. Members shall be appointed as follows: four members of the House of Delegates, two of whom shall be members of the House Committee on Appropriations, and two of whom shall be members of the House Committee on Transportation, to be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Delegates in accordance with the principles of proportional representation contained in the Rules of the House of Delegates; three members of the Senate, all of whom shall be members of the Senate Committee on Finance and Appropriations, to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules; one nonlegislative citizen member, who shall be a member of the Transportation District Commission of Hampton Roads, to be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Delegates; and one nonlegislative citizen member, who shall be a member of the Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization (HRTPO), to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules. The Executive Directors of the HRT, WATA, and Suffolk Transit, and the Secretary of Transportation, or their designees, shall serve ex officio with voting privileges. Nonlegislative citizen members of the joint

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subcommittee shall be citizens of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Unless otherwise approved in writing by the chairman of the joint subcommittee and the respective Clerk, nonlegislative citizen members shall only be reimbursed for travel originating and ending within the Commonwealth of Virginia for the purpose of attending meetings. If a companion joint resolution of the other chamber is agreed to, written authorization of both Clerks shall be required. The joint subcommittee shall elect a chairman and vice-chairman from among its membership, who shall be members of the General Assembly.

In conducting its study, the joint subcommittee shall (i) establish a work group consisting of representatives from HRT, WATA, Suffolk Transit, the Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT), the Hampton Roads Transportation Accountability Commission (HRTAC), and the HRTPO, a representative from the Amalgamated Transit Union #1177, and a representative from the Hampton Roads business community, as selected by the Speaker of the House of Delegates, to further examine potential regional revenue sources that would contribute to a fund or set of funds for new dedicated operating or capital funding, or both, for Hampton Roads transit agencies that leverages and exists in addition to current state and local funding commitments; (ii) examine industry-wide cost-saving and cost-containment strategies to ensure the long-term fiscal sustainability of the Commonwealth's only light rail system, The Tide; (iii) to the extent feasible, evaluate projected revenue growth from each funding source identified and current projected annual cost growth through 2037; (iv) analyze future land use plans for high-capacity transit corridors in Hampton Roads to support continued transit ridership growth; (v) identify telework impacts on regional transit ridership; (vi) determine, to the extent feasible, long-term capital funding needs for maintenance, improvements, or expansion of public transit in the region; (vii) evaluate the use of local bus services and their fixed routes and the impacts on residents and visitors in the region, and consider whether routes should be expanded or altered to best meet ridership needs; and (viii) evaluate HRT's governance and organizational structure and identify current structural challenges and possible solutions.

Administrative staff support shall be provided by the Office of the Clerk of the chairman of the joint subcommittee. Legal, research, policy analysis, and other services as requested by the joint subcommittee shall be provided by the Division of Legislative Services. Technical assistance shall be provided by Hampton Roads Transit, the Williamsburg Area Transit Authority, Suffolk Transit, the Hampton Roads Transportation Accountability Commission, the Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization, and the Department of Rail and Public Transportation. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the joint subcommittee for this study, upon request.

The joint subcommittee shall be limited to six meetings for the 2026 interim, and the direct costs of this study shall not exceed \$40,000 without approval as set out in this resolution. Approval for unbudgeted nonmember-related expenses shall require the written authorization of the chairman of the joint subcommittee and the respective Clerk. If a companion joint resolution of the other chamber is agreed to, written authorization of both Clerks shall be required.

No recommendation of the joint subcommittee shall be adopted if a majority of the House members or a majority of the Senate members appointed to the joint subcommittee (i) vote against the recommendation and (ii) vote for the recommendation to fail notwithstanding the majority vote of the joint subcommittee.

The joint subcommittee shall complete its meetings by November 30, 2026, and the chairman shall submit to the Division of Legislative Automated Systems an executive summary of its findings and recommendations no later than the first day of the 2027 Regular Session of the General Assembly. The executive summary shall state whether the joint subcommittee intends to submit to the General Assembly and the Governor a report of its findings and recommendations for publication as a House or Senate document. The executive summary and the report shall be submitted as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and reports and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.

Implementation of this resolution is subject to subsequent approval and certification by the Joint Rules Committee. The Committee may approve or disapprove expenditures for this study, extend or delay the period for the conduct of the study, or authorize additional meetings during the 2026 interim.