

## Regionalist Paper No. 3

# Contemporary Regionalism and Hampton Roads: Where We Stand in the Process and What Might Be Next

Preface—What We Have and Where We Fit in the Process

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### Preface

What we have: Important structures for regional cooperation and regional governance already exist in Hampton Roads<sup>1</sup>. These include both government and non-government regional organizations. Government organizations include Regional Authorities, Districts, and Commissions. Non-government organizations include regional public-private and non-profit organizations. In addition, there are many examples of working level, voluntary forms of regional coordination that routinely transpire between two or more city and county functional departments<sup>2</sup>. We shall describe this existing layer of regional management, identify the key organizations, assess the overall structure, and then suggest how the current regional structure can be improved.

Where we fit in: Nationwide, even worldwide, there is a pattern to the ways that local governments are dealing with population and economic growth and associated fiscal pressures. Informally, that pattern is voluntary cooperation between communities. More formally and hardly noticed by the public, there is another, creative, statutorily-based, and quite varied process that is ongoing as well. We will call that process ‘contemporary regionalism’, a three-phase concept, and then determine where we stand in the process (at phase-one) and where (??) we should be going.

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<sup>1</sup> Future of Hampton Roads, Inc., Regional Structure Project, *Improving the Competitiveness of Hampton Roads*, Report No. 1: *How the Region Works*, June 2005

<sup>2</sup> See Regionalist Paper No. 2: *The Regional Structure: The History of Regional Cooperation in Hampton Roads*.

## **I. Regional Government Organizations:**

Over the years, the Virginia General Assembly has approved a series of statutory Acts that established Regional Government bodies for metropolitan Hampton Roads. These Acts and their descriptions of the respective organizations that they created have been added to the Code of Virginia. The Regional Government entities are called Regional Authorities, Districts, or Commissions. They are described in legislation as being “legally separate, distinct and empowered entities, apart from cities, counties or towns”<sup>3</sup>. In the Code of Virginia, the terms used to define and empower these organizations are important and warrant close examination. Although the terms differ for different organizations, the Regional Government entities are described as “political subdivisions body corporate and politic”, and/or as “instrumentalities exercising public and essential government functions”<sup>4</sup>. In some cases, their charters required approval by local public referenda, or approval by the elected governments of the two or more municipalities that would in turn relinquish authority of a certain government function over to the new Regional Authority. The Authority, thereafter, would perform and be responsible for its assigned government function, for example, sanitation. It is the state level of government that creates and empowers these regional government organizations. In almost all cases, municipal participation is voluntary.

Examples of Regional Government organizations authorized in Virginia general or statutory law for metropolitan Hampton Roads include the:

- a) Hampton Roads Sanitation District (HRSD) – regional, serving 17 communities.
- b) Southeast Public Service Authority (SPSA) – regional, serving eight communities.
- c) Hampton Roads Metropolitan Planning Office (MPO) – regional, federally mandated and non-voluntary, state-designated, serving 14 communities.
- d) Hampton Roads Planning District Commission (HRPDC) – regional, serving 16 communities.
- e) Hampton Roads Regional Jail Authority – regional, three Authorities with different types of facilities exist serving designated communities.
- f) Transportation District Commission of Hampton Roads – regional, serving 16 communities.
- g) Hampton Roads Air Quality Committee (HRAQC) – regional, serving 14 communities
- h) Hampton Roads Sports Facility Authority – regional, serving Southside.
- i) Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Board – single city, state-authorized, optional elsewhere.
- j) Virginia Port Authority – State and regional, state directed and state salaried.

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<sup>3</sup> Virginia Commission on Local Government, *Principal Characteristics of Authorities and Districts in Virginia*, December 2003

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

## **II. Regional Non-government Organizations: Private-Public and Non-Profit<sup>5</sup>**

Citizens, professionals, and local governments in varying combinations have coordinated actions through public-private partnerships or non-profit organizations in order to gain region-wide efficiencies, to generate a common agenda, to conduct better long range planning, and to advance the economic vitality and quality-of-life in Hampton Roads. Examples of regional non-government organizations include the:

- a) Future of Hampton Roads, Inc. (FHR) – non-profit visioning organization.
- b) Hampton Roads Partnership (HRP) – public-private and citizen partnership.
- c) Hampton Roads Maritime Association (HRMA) – member-based.
- d) Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce (HRCOC) – Southside, member-based.
- e) Virginia Peninsula Chamber of Commerce (VPCOC) – Peninsula, member-based.
- f) Hampton Roads Economic Development Alliance (HREDA), and the Virginia Peninsula Economic Development Alliance (VPEDA) – once two organizations, but recently merged, and still a public-private partnership.
- g) The United Way – non-profit, three units in Southside, the Peninsula, and Williamsburg
- h) The Hampton Roads Association for Commercial Real Estate (HRACRE) – member-based
- i) The Cultural Alliance of Greater Hampton Roads – non-profit organization.
- j) And many more.

## **III. Merits and Limitations of Local Regional Organizations:**

### Merits of individual regional organizations—each organization:

- a) Definitely solves problems,
- b) Was responsive when other efforts were stalled,
- c) Definitely increases regional coordination,
- d) Elevates inter-city, working level dialogue,
- e) Results, almost always, in improved services,
- f) Results in a stronger and more knowledgeable staff structure,
- g) Is flexible enough to have either single or multi-purpose objectives,
- h) Is flexible enough to be expanded to include additional municipal participants,
- i) Definitely achieves economies-of-scale, cost savings for the public,
- j) Every time one deletes a particular functional department in several different cities and replaces them with one regional department, the resultant net government staffing and administration costs are decreased.

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<sup>5</sup> See Regionalist Paper No. 2: *The Regional Structure: The History of Regional Cooperation in Hampton Roads*.

Limitations of the network of multiple regional organizations:

- a) Results in a patchwork government management structure<sup>6</sup>,
- b) May actually complicate regional governance (Virginia Hahn Commission finding),
- c) Leads to fragmentation of government powers,
- d) Results in reduced coordination. Having several services (or government functions) managed by one City Council, that can coordinate the issues and resources of each of its service departments, contrasts sharply with having several services managed by disparate Regional Authorities, each one uniquely aligned with its respective state office. On the other hand, the direct coordination, for example, of the Hampton Roads Sanitation District with other Sanitation Districts in Virginia, which might not occur under city tutelage has to be beneficial,
- e) May reflect a lack of confidence or capability in local governments, an undesired result that grows as the number and range of regional entities grows,
- f) Evokes questions of legitimacy; with board members not being elected by the public, either at-large, or by represented districts, there is less depth of legitimacy,
- g) Results in possible stovepipe management system with limited ranges of influence, especially for single issue Authorities. An Authority dealing with both drinking water and water treatment, for example, is more likely to contribute more effectively than an Authority dealing with just one of these government functions, or examining a pressing issue of our day, transportation, an organization authorized to address regional transportation, mass transit and land-use would be more effective than one limited to transportation issues alone,
- h) Suffers from inconsistent or insufficient State support for the creation of regional organizations and then, once created, their funding resources are limited, slow to develop, or decreased<sup>7</sup>.

#### **IV. Assessing the Current Matrix of Regional Organizations**

Their great value: Necessity is the mother of invention. Unquestionably, every one of these regional organizations has served the general public admirably, often in situations where there was no other recourse. The Virginia Port Authority can be credited with ensuring that Virginia's ports and foreign trade enterprises are successfully competitive with other East Coast ports. Planning District Commissions around the state are powerful motivators and clearing houses for information and ideas that bear on regional issues. Regional Jail Authorities have elevated management standards and are

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<sup>6</sup> Marshall Hahn, Jr., *The Report of the Virginia Metropolitan Areas Study Commission* (Senate Document No. 14, 1967), p. 13-14.

<sup>7</sup> Virginia provided financial incentives that led to the creation of the Hampton Roads Partnership in 1996, and then stopped that support six years later.

clearly cost-effective. Elsewhere, Regional Housing Authorities effectively force attention on issues such as affordable housing and the commuting needs of low income workers. Intractable regional drinking water, water treatment, sanitation and other regional issues have been resolved, because of the existence and effort of dedicated Regional Authorities, Districts, or Commissions committed to these issues.

Many in the public do not realize the extent of these regional organizations and the amount of regional coordination that already takes place in Hampton Roads. In effect, we already have a very useful layer of regional management in place, carrying out individually assigned government functions, developing long term strategies, and conducting regional planning.

Their patchwork structure of government: On the other hand, many analysts consider that continued expansion of the number of independent regional government organizations reaches a point of diminishing returns. The matrix of regional entities begins to look (and act) like a team with no coach. Let's examine the merits of this worry.

The complexities of regional development and day-to-day regional management are enormous. Issues are always interconnected with other issues. There really are no single-topic problems. In nearly all cases, the panoply of regional organizations cited above was created to address single topic or narrow issues. Drawing on lessons learned nationwide, sometimes regional sanitation issues were improved, but not solid waste disposal, or sometimes, regional drinking water issues were resolved, but not water treatment. Single, squeaky-wheel issues were addressed rather than generating a broader cooperative organization with authority that would flow from an elected local government structure, one that could coordinate the activities of two or more regional government organizations.

In Hampton Roads, these regional entities may have 3, 4, or 13, or more city and county participants (not always including the ten cities of Hampton Roads). These entities differ in other important ways as well (leadership structures, decision making procedures, level of legal authority, affiliations with state government, etc.). Indeed, it is a patchwork structure that does not age well.

Assessment: At some point, the continued creation of new regional bodies ceases to be beneficial and may become troublesome. Diminishing returns start to be noticed. At this point, new regional approaches will be necessary to contend with forthcoming

regional challenges that will inevitably arise as a result of continued population and economic growth pressures.

In 1967, the *Report of the Virginia Metropolitan Areas Study Commission* (the Hahn Commission) rightfully praised the value and accomplishments of Regional Authorities on the one hand, while it strongly warned<sup>8</sup> about the risk of eroding local and metropolitan governmental powers in the long run. He declared that “The fragmentation of governmental units and powers is one of the most difficult problems facing metropolitan areas throughout the nation and often results in expensive duplications of services and facilities, uneconomical operating levels, and problems of coordination”<sup>9</sup>, and that “The principle difficulty of [the Public Service Authorities] approach is that it complicates rather than simplifies governmental coordination in a metropolitan area. ... The tendency to rely on single purpose authorities may indicate a lack of governmental leadership and foresight, leading ultimately to serious aggravation of metropolitan problems. ... Such authorities contribute to fragmentation of governmental powers in metropolitan areas. Their effectiveness is limited”<sup>10</sup>.

Regionalists today continue to share this worry. Now, thirty years later, these issues need to be reviewed once again. The need to adjust government management practices is a never-ending task of leadership.

## **V. The Three Primary Regional Organizations in Hampton Roads**

Of all the regional organizations in Hampton Roads, three stand out as having the broadest range of responsibilities. These are (1) the Hampton Roads Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO); (2) the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission (PDC), both government agencies; and (3) the Hampton Roads Partnership (HRP), a private-public-partnership.

The **Metropolitan Planning Organization** (MPO) is a federally mandated<sup>11</sup> organization responsible for metropolitan level planning and programming of transportation investments. Hampton Roads created its MPO in 1973. The overarching importance of transportation to the local economy and its impact on land use, community

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<sup>8</sup> Marshall Hahn, Jr., *The Report of the Virginia Metropolitan Areas Study Commission*, (Senate Document No. 14, 1967), p.11.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p.11

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p.13-14

<sup>11</sup> See U.S. Code Title 23 (Transportation) Chapter 1-134 and Title 49 (Public Transit) Chapter 53-5303 for guidance on MPO organizations.

development, the environment, and much else make this an exceptionally important regional government organization. The MPO organization, however, is the least well known of these three organizations in Hampton Roads. There are important and complex state level factors that have curtailed its ability to fulfill its full promise. For these reasons, a separate Regionalist Paper<sup>12</sup> has been devoted to further discussion of the Hampton Roads MPO.

The **Hampton Roads Planning District Commission** (HRPDC), one of 21 Planning District Commissions in the Commonwealth of Virginia, is a regional planning organization that supports our region's sixteen local governments. Planning District Commissions are voluntary associations and were created in 1969 pursuant to the *Virginia Area Development Act* and a regionally executed Charter Agreement. The HRPDC was formed in 1990 by the merger of the Southeastern Virginia Planning District Commission and the Peninsula Planning District Commission.

The purpose of planning district commissions, as set out in the Code of Virginia<sup>13</sup>, is "...to encourage and facilitate local government cooperation and state-local cooperation in addressing on a regional basis problems of greater than local significance." The HRPDC's mission<sup>14</sup> is: "to serve as a forum for local and elected officials and chief administrators; to deliberate and decide issues of regional importance; to provide the local governments and citizens of Hampton Roads credible and timely planning, research and analysis on matters of mutual concern; and to provide leadership and offer strategies and support services to other public and private, local and regional agencies, in their efforts to improve the region's quality of life".

The HRPDC serves as a resource of technical expertise for its member local governments. It provides assistance on local and regional issues pertaining to economics, physical and environmental planning, and transportation. As a Virginia Planning District, the HRPDC is also the Affiliate Data Center for our region, providing economic, socio-economic, environmental, transportation, census, and other relevant information to businesses, organizations and citizens. Of the three key organizations being discussed, the HRPDC produces the best and most comprehensive reports; has hired the largest and most capable staff; has been identified often as the model PDC organization in Virginia; and seems to fulfill its assigned missions exceptionally well. At the same time, there could and should be a broader public awareness of its activities and contributions than is

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<sup>12</sup> See Regionalist Paper No. 5, *Coming of Age: The Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and Regionalism*.

<sup>13</sup> Code of Virginia, Section §15.2-4207

<sup>14</sup> See HRPDC website, [www.hrpdc.org](http://www.hrpdc.org)

the case; the PDC needs to augment its public information program, or risk not gaining public support in the future when such support is needed.

The **Hampton Roads Partnership** (HRP) is a public-private organization. Responding to economic pressures in the mid-90s, the Virginia General Assembly passed the Regional Competitiveness Act with the goal of strengthening the competitiveness of Virginia's regional economies. This legislation<sup>15</sup> encouraged the local (as opposed to State) creation of broad membership, public-private organizations to promote local governmental collaboration and to advance regional economic development. Thus, locally, the Hampton Roads Partnership (HRP) was created in May 1996<sup>16</sup>. The legislation provided incentives in the form of grant awards for HRP-inspired or managed joint activities accomplished in the region in accordance with a points-based formula that gave preference to job creation, economic development and work force education activities.

Recent HRP accomplishments include the release of five-year Regional Strategic Economic Development Plans in 1999 and 2004; the formation of the Hampton Roads Research Institute (HRRI) to coordinate region-wide requests for technology grants; the creation of uniform tourist signage for national media; and the initiation of important business cluster projects in such areas as maritime transportation and modeling-and-simulation.

For whatever reason, the HRP is not well known in the public arena, either due to a desire to work behind the scenes, or the absence of any noteworthy public relations activity. This has been a serious shortcoming, and HRP has taken new steps<sup>17</sup> to correct this deficiency. Some observers feel that its large board membership is unwieldy and not conducive to clear planning. In any case, one must realize that the HRP is a private-public partnership and as such, it does not have authority to make political decisions or to expense appropriated funds.

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<sup>15</sup> Code of Virginia, Sections §15.2-1306 through 1310

<sup>16</sup> Earlier important work in Hampton Roads designed to deal with recessionary pressures had created a regional "Plan 2007" and the initial Hampton Roads Partnership organization. This organization then readily became and fulfilled legislative requirements for a regional organization to manage state incentive funding, and it assumed its increased legislative authorities. In fact, the Hampton Roads Partnership organization was declared the model for the rest of the state.

<sup>17</sup> One such HRP effort involves skilled moderators holding town meetings all across the region "Seeking consensus on regional cooperation in Hampton Roads" to capture and share ideas. See details on the web at <http://www.listenandlearntour.com/>

After six years of funding support, Virginia terminated its annual incentive funding for HRP-like organizations statewide which sharply reduced our once promising prospects of the HRP. Organizations like the HRP, however, are essential and invaluable. The Denver Metro organization, the Greater Austin consortium, Chicagoland in Chicago and many others were the trail blazers for their metropolitan areas that both inspired collective regional activities and managed private business venture, business cluster, and other economic development activities with great success. With its broad and professional membership base, HRP can and should be the “go to” organization for advice, sponsorship, and marketing of new problem-solving or revenue-generating ideas. In any future regional governance structure in Hampton Roads, HRP is not the answer, but it is, without question, an essential ingredient of the answer.

## **VI. Contemporary Regionalism, a Three Step Process**

Earlier methods of regionalism: Over the past century and with hundreds of examples around the country, when urban centers or metro areas needed to expand in order to remain abreast of population and economic growth pressures, they followed one of two different paths, (1) annexation of surrounding areas, or (2) consolidation of government structures, in this case, usually a city and county merger. Except in the rarest of situations, annexation and consolidation no longer occur in the United States, either because the strength of suburban and rural areas has grown, and they object to sharing their wealth, or because, inner city governments fear losing their authorities, or for any number of other reasons.

Nonetheless, there is still the need to manage issues that arise because of population and economic growth, issues that are increasingly beyond the capacity of any one municipality to manage. Myron Orfield, one of the nation’s leading authors on matters of local government, explains that “Most critics of regional governance argue that it would violate the principle of local autonomy and unnecessarily add another layer of government. However, effective, efficient regional governance strikes a balance that allows local control over issues best addressed by smaller local governments (such as public safety, licensing, street maintenance, garbage collection, and purely local land-use or zoning issues), while promoting cooperation among local governments on larger issues affecting the entire region (such as highway and sewer investments, affordable housing, transit, land-use planning, air and water quality, and economic development)”<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Myron Orfield, *American Metropolitcs: The New Suburban Reality*, (The Brookings Institution Press, Washington, D.C., 2002), p. 148-149

Contemporary Regionalism: We describe contemporary regionalism as a concept and a three-phase process. Let's identify these phases:

Phase-one: Phase-one accepts that annexation and consolidation are no longer practical, and it acknowledges the deep American yearn for government-close-to-the-people. Contemporary regionalism retains the structure of multiple city, county, and town governments. For government issues that arise and that are deemed to be best and most efficiently handled at a regional level, these local governments agree to the state-creation of a regional body (Authority, Commission, or District) to be given that particular responsibility. The creation of numerous such regional bodies constitutes the phase-one step of contemporary regionalism—providing regional governance for selected government functions, but not creating a regional government. Obviously, Hampton Roads with its previously listed matrix of regional government organizations is a solid example of this phase-one level of contemporary regionalism in place.

Phase-two: Again, these regional government organizations perform admirably. But as the structure grows, they themselves become a fragmented group of governing entities in parallel with the matrix of multiple city and county governments. In addition, there is some tendency over time for some of these regional bodies to become insular, or distant to the communities they serve; often, they report to a state technical department or to a state board. To deal with this fragmentation and to regain coherence, regional oversight boards or the like have been developed to better integrate their efforts and to give city and county governments an increased and real-time awareness of their activities. Additional benefits result as well. Unintentionally, single function regional authorities sometimes get engaged in matters that go beyond their charter, and they need a place to turn to that is outside of their technical discipline and outside of their technical chain of command, such as a regional oversight board.

In short, they need a viable local (regional) phone number to call for assistance. The recent involvement of the Southeastern Public Service Authority (SPSA) with land use questions serves as an example. Seeking only to improve its annual budgeting plans, SPSA became involved with land fill sites in North Carolina and with the idea of handling waste from New York. Quickly, it was seen that these topics heavily impacted roads and truck traffic as well as land-use and port-use questions, topics well beyond those of sanitation management. SPSA needed a competent local, regional entity to go to for assistance.

The idea of a regional oversight or review board fulfills this need and constitutes the phase-two step of contemporary regionalism. In selected cases nationwide, it was this

need and this resultant organization that was formed only to become the progenitor of broader regional coordination and the forerunner of phase-three levels of regionalism.

Phase-three: This last phase of contemporary regionalism goes one important step further. When a metropolitan area creates a regional governance body, for example, a state-empowered metropolitan commission, one that is responsible for certain major government functions at the regional level, an entity that is not just a single function agency, and one that handles controversial topics, not just straight-forward technical topics, then they have entered the phase-three realm of contemporary regionalism.

In our post-annexation and post-consolidation era, this formation of a two-tier structure, one that retains the multiple city and county governments, and that simultaneously constructs a “limited function” Metro government (a Metro Council or a Metro Commission) is the phase-three model of regionalism. This is by no means a simple thing to do, and the myriad possible descriptions of such a regional governance body are endless<sup>19</sup>. The Twin Cities Metro and the Portland (Oregon) Metro government bodies are very different, and they are now experienced models of phase-three regionalism that we need to study. Indeed, any such structure in Hampton Roads will be different than other; in every case, each Metro solution must fit its metropolitan area’s unique history, traditions, and needs.

Phase-three, itself, may have many sub-phases that develop one-by-one on the path toward a metropolitan council or commission. For Hampton Roads, these sub-phases may include test projects, or test organizations<sup>20</sup>; or they may include the formal (legal) strengthening of the Mayors and Chairs Caucus (MACC), or the state re-chartering and strengthening of the Hampton Roads MPO, or the local revitalization of the Hampton Roads Partnership organization, and several of these activities could occur in parallel.

Other Regionalist Papers discuss elements of such regional bodies including metropolitan funding, regional citizenship, the selection of regional leaders, examples adopted around the country, social impacts of regionalism, Dillon Rule impacts, and relevance to the global economy. From his research, Anthony Downs suggests that “The most powerful form of metropolitan area governance would be the “pure” metropolitan

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<sup>19</sup> See Regionalist Paper No. 8, *The Spectrum of Regional Structures in North America: What are Our Options?*

<sup>20</sup> Following a process that took many years including public involvement and monitoring of regional test projects as one element of the total effort (a step that helped an uncertain public and many uncertain leaders to see the merits of collective effort), Louisville regionalized in 1996.

government .... A second possible form of governance ... would be a regional government with limited functions<sup>21</sup>

## **VII. Conclusions, Near-Term: How improve the current structure?**

The regional organizations we have created in Hampton Roads have been successful. If sufficient research was done and an opportunity arose to create a new regional authority tomorrow—jump on it, do it. Certainly, we would benefit from having a genuine Hampton Roads Transportation Authority, for example, and certainly a Hampton Roads Regional Homeland Security Commission<sup>22</sup>, and perhaps a regional library association.

To improve the current phase-one matrix of regional organizations, one must first fully understand what we have. Notice that nearly all of our regional government organizations are single purpose entities, and notice that their participating community members vary widely. Yes, by all means, add new regional organizations, but also find ways to reduce the fragmentation, and find ways to strengthen the existing regional organizations.

### Where prudent, improvements to the current phase-one structure may include:

- 1) The merging of existing regional organizations,
- 2) Elevating the seniority of municipal representatives participating and making decisions on the boards of these regional organizations, and in selected cases, requiring publicly-elected persons to be the responsible municipal representatives, or in the case of the MPO, perhaps the Mayors and Chairs themselves,
- 3) Studying all existing organization charters and update them as appropriate to strengthen the pursuit of regional goals,
- 4) The merging of Southside and Peninsular organizations such as the two workforce development agencies, and as was done recently with the two economic development alliances,
- 5) The inclusion of more municipalities into existing structures, and
- 6) The expansion of single-function organizations into ones with multiple-function responsibilities.

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<sup>21</sup> Anthony Downs, *“New Visions for Metropolitan America”*, (Lincoln Institute for Land Policy for the Brookings Institution Press, Washington, D.C., 1994), p. 162

<sup>22</sup> Joseph F. Bouchard, *Assessment of Changes to the Urban Area Security Initiative Grant Program and Implications for Hampton Roads*, January 4, 2006, asserts that Hampton Roads has not won an estimated \$80 million in homeland security grants due to not being identified as a region.

These actions amount to continuing the phase-one path of contemporary regionalism that we have followed for the last three decades. The process of ensuring we have a healthy, existing layer of regional structures will continue to provide efficiencies and will advance regionalism. Of course, these actions are not easy. They may require General Assembly approval in cases where charters are modified. They may also require local leaders to involve the general public early and often with such vigor that, seeing the cost saving, efficiency and effectiveness gains, they become the sponsors of the state legislation or agreements required to advance these regional initiatives.

### **VIII. Conclusions, Mid and Long-Term: Where do we go from here?**

In going beyond the current phase-one matrix of regional organizations, Hampton Roads must consider advancing into the second (create a regional oversight board) and the third (create a regional council of governance) phases of contemporary regionalism. Given the steady and widespread national trend toward regional approaches to government issues, it seems that this is not a question of whether, but rather a question of when, Hampton Roads will take these next two steps?

Simply continuing with the current phase-one level of contemporary regionalism, no matter how much improvement is achieved, will not be enough to cope with the foreseeable level of regional challenges. There will come a time when the issues are no longer straight-forward and finite, and a time when the absence of assured regional coordination leads to indecision, waning confidence, and delayed personal and financial investment for the future.

Indianapolis, Toronto, and Louisville, to name a few<sup>23</sup>, were driven by impending financial crises to adopt regional structures and regional solutions. Locally, we have observed our own warning signs in the areas of transportation (inadequate support from Richmond), land-use (BRAC and other encroachment threats), emergency evacuation and response (insufficient homeland security funding for Hampton Roads), the environment (classified as a non-attainment region), and wage scales that remain below the national average. Most citizens consider that traffic congestion and transportation in particular need improved regional attention. The Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC) revealed the absence of a macro, regional land-use plan that had the benefit of prior debate and the resultant unhesitating support of all cities for some level of non-encroachment policies to protect any community's most valuable resources, be they military bases, port complexes, or historic sites.

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<sup>23</sup> See Regionalist Paper No. 8, *The Spectrum of Regional Structures in North America: What are Our Options?*

What next? By most measures, Hampton Roads, overall, scores well among the large metropolitan areas of the United States. Our current phase-one construct of regionalism is impressive, but also worn, and time moves on. We believe, and we argue that Hampton Roads needs to move deliberately and soon into the phase-two (regional oversight board) and the phase-three (a duly empowered metropolitan council) modes of regionalism.

Contributors: Ray Taylor, James F. Babcock, and Byron E. Tobin, Future Hampton Roads, April 2006