

## Regionalist Paper No. 4

### Federal Support for Regionalism: Understanding Trends and Available Resources

Two levels of government were established by the U.S. Constitution—federal and state levels of government. In its broadest terms, general powers of authority reside with the states, except when expressly assigned to the federal government. The Constitution does not address or provide for city or county governments, or for entities of regional governance. These matters rest with and are the prerogatives of the state. Understandably, therefore, the federal government is careful and cautious when promoting the coordination of government functions at the metropolitan level.

This legal caution, however, conflicts with another reality—the growing importance of and need to plan and take actions on a regional basis. Neil Peirce, a regionalist who counsels on how to remain competitive in the global economy, declares that “When metro areas thrive, the nation thrives”<sup>1</sup>, which reveals just one reason for federal interest in metro matters. William Dodge, a lecturer on matters of regional governance, has found that “Regions are the new communities of the 21st century. They have emerged just as villages, towns, cities and counties did before them..., and now they determine our fates”<sup>2</sup>. Keenly aware of this emerging reality, the federal government seeks to distribute its federal aid for whatever purpose in a way that assists the greatest number of people; and it seeks to prevent favoring one community, unwittingly, over a neighboring community. For nearly fifty years, and in a pattern of small but continuing ways, the federal government has promoted regional cooperation, both by encouraging (and sometimes forcing) state actions thereto, and by more direct means, requiring that grant requests include regional perspectives and plans; or by requiring that regional entities be formed to manage federal grants.

This paper will describe the evolution of federal support for regionalism, examples of regional organizations created by federal mandate, and the funding incentives that have been developed to promote regional efficiencies.

---

<sup>1</sup> Neal R. Peirce, *Citistates – How Urban America Can Prosper in a Competitive World*, (1993)

<sup>2</sup> William R. Dodge, “*Regional Excellence: Governing Together To Compete Globally and Flourish Locally*”, a quote borrowed from the Hampton Roads Partnership website, [www.hrp.org](http://www.hrp.org)

## Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA)

The federal government has collected and published statistical data about local economies and local population demographics around the country for over 50 years. This is done in order to uniformly inform general planning and to aid the debate and development of public policies. Today, this program is managed by the federal Office of Management and Budget. The statistical data is collected and collated on a regional or metropolitan basis. Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA) have been defined for this purpose, and these are revised, adding to or redefining MSA boundaries as demographically warranted, every ten years after the national Census has been taken. There are times when the ground rules for grant funding, federal or otherwise, prefer or require project proposals that are expressly based on metropolitan area perspectives. MSA's are important, and being mindful of a regional view is important. Hampton Roads is one such Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), specifically, MSA No. 47260<sup>3</sup>, in southeast Virginia, consisting of 9 Cities and 7 Counties:

<u>Cities</u>	<u>Counties</u>
Chesapeake	Currituck County, NC
Hampton	Gloucester County
Newport News	Isle of Wight County
Norfolk	James City County
Poquoson	Matthews County
Portsmouth	Surry County
Suffolk	York County
Virginia Beach	
Williamsburg	

## Evolution of Federal Incentives for Regional Planning

One can trace regionalism back to the Greeks or to Europe. London, for example, organized its surrounding parishes and regionalized its structure of government in 1897. In the United States in the early 1900s, and without federal involvement, growing center cities expanded their political boundaries through annexation in order to have the tax base and authority necessary to manage government functions with greater efficiency. The first hint of federal government involvement in promoting regional cooperation dates back to the New Deal when legislation for the Public Works Administration made federal

---

<sup>3</sup> Visit the [www.census.gov/population](http://www.census.gov/population) website for a full description of MSAs

infrastructure aid contingent upon cooperative planning by local governments. In those early days, federal objectives were to prevent waste stemming from duplication; to prevent conflict between projects for neighboring communities; and to publicly recognize that broader community planning for large scale government projects had become essential.

Federal recognition of the concept of regionalism steadily advanced during the post-War years in terms of both incentives and requirements. Selecting just a few examples of post-War legislation, the trends of emerging federal support for regional management are clear<sup>4</sup>:

- The Housing Act of 1954 authorized federal funding for local and regional planning which spurred the formation of many joint, metropolitan or regional planning commissions around the country.
- The Federal Highway Act of 1962, a landmark bill, made federal capital assistance funds contingent upon “continuing, comprehensive and cooperative” (or CCC) planning by local and state governments. To be comprehensive, transportation plans had to show that regional economic factors, social impacts, land use planning, and other factors had been addressed in the development of proposed transportation projects.
- The Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Act of 1965 promoted the voluntary formation of regional Councils of Government (COG) to conduct regional planning for, and then to manage, HUD’s federal assistance funds. The legislation required that the Boards of Directors for COG organizations consist of elected public officials from the communities involved. Nationwide, many of the previously created joint or regional planning commissions became the COGs of their day for these HUD and other regional projects. The term and the function of COGs endured for nearly two decades until some of these organizations were replaced either by state-established Planning District Commissions (PDC) or by federally mandated Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO). The maturity of MPO organizations varies widely around the country, often determined by the level of state support for this federally mandated organization. Virginia provides little support for MPOs<sup>5</sup> which limits regional success in matters of transportation and public transit. The 2006 legislative

---

<sup>4</sup> Myron Orfield, *American Metropolitcs: The New Suburban Reality*, (The Brookings Institution Press, Washington, D.C., 2002), and other sources.

<sup>5</sup> See Regionalist Paper No. 5, *Coming of Age—The Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and Regionalism*, for a discussion of the complexities and the potential of MPO structures.

impasse in Richmond on transportation plans for Hampton Roads stems in part from this constrained ability to plan at the metropolitan level and thus to gain federal funding<sup>6</sup>.

- The national Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Act of 1966 required that applications to any department of the federal government for federal aid be reviewed for their consistency and conformity with regional plans developed by the duly-established, regional planning agencies cited above. The goal here was to prevent federally funded projects in one functional area from undermining the objectives of federally funded projects being pursued in another area. If not coordinated on a regional basis, transportation plans could contradict the goals of reducing sprawl, pollution abatement, or not support existing community development and economic development plans.
- The Federal Highway Act of 1973 was an important step in the long-term process of trying to institutionalize the concepts of regionalism. This legislation included a non-voluntary, federal requirement for states to designate Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), responsible for planning and programming transportation investments for their metro area<sup>7</sup>.
- The Clean Air Act of 1990 made pollution a regional issue; established regional clean air standards; required specific actions for non-attainment; and required Regional Air Quality Control Agencies to be formed in metro areas designated as “non-attainment” areas. Hampton Roads is a “non-attainment” area<sup>8</sup>, and the state Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) staffs this subject for the Hampton Roads Air Quality Committee<sup>9</sup> (HRAQC).
- The Intermodal Surface Transportation and Equity Act of 1991 raised the bar considerably by elevating the authorities of MPO organizations, specifying their membership; requiring public outreach programs; requiring consistency with regional community, economic, and transportation plans; stipulating penalties for non-adherence; and increasing the funding made directly available to respective metro areas.

---

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> The EPA designated Hampton Roads as an 8-hour ozone non-attainment area on June 15, 2004, as reported in the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) Report to the Governor and General Assembly, dated October 15, 2005. Some so-designated areas in Virginia were at levels low enough for them to engage in Early Action Compacts, delaying their effective date of non-attainment and giving them time to effect local corrections; this did not apply to Hampton Roads.

<sup>9</sup> The Hampton Roads Air Quality Committee is the MPO Policy Board.

## **Follow the Money—Federal Funds and Future Trends**

The concept of federal funding only for regional projects: The concept that applications for, and the management of, federal assistance funds must be accomplished at the regional level has become rather well established, yet not uniformly applied. In this regard, two federal agencies stand out. The U.S Department of Transportation (USDOT) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have established firm and permanent regional planning and programming requirements for expensing federal funds. Their procedures include penalties such as loss of funds or delays in funding for non-adherence. One can expect that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) will soon join this list. In testimony before the House Select Committee on Homeland Security in May 2003, Secretary Tom Ridge declared “Our consideration of a regional infrastructure is ... predicated on the notion that you cannot secure the homeland from Washington D.C.<sup>10</sup>” It may take years before the behemoth Department of Homeland Security completes its task of building this regional national structure, but it will happen<sup>11</sup>. National security, whether securing ports and tunnels from external threats, or managing response and evacuation needs from the threats of nature, is a topic of immense importance to Hampton Roads. New opportunities<sup>12</sup> to address these issues at the regional level will be a welcome opportunity for our region.

Other federal agencies, addressing such matters as urban development, housing, and veteran’s affairs, have applied this concept of “only-funding-regional-projects” intermittently. However, this trend is receiving greater attention. The reasons are predictable. Population and economic growth continues apace. The cost and complexity of an increasing number of government functions—sanitation<sup>13</sup>, transportation, watershed protection, to name a few—require a regional perspective and a management capacity that is beyond the ability of any one community to handle alone. The public is worried about the seemingly endless loss of farmland and green space. Local governments are facing fiscal stress, and they are worried about the costs of extending sewer, police and other services ever further out from their city or suburb centers. Jurisdictional

---

<sup>10</sup> Secretary Tom Ridge, in testimony before the House Select Committee on Homeland Security, May 20 2003

<sup>11</sup> Progress in this regard was delayed and is under new review as a result of Hurricane Katrina.

<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately, Hampton Roads is not yet being treated as a region and is off to a disastrous slow start in the competition for DHS grants. See page 13 later in this Paper for further information.

<sup>13</sup> In the case of sanitation, the Virginia General Assembly created the Hampton Roads Sanitation District (HRSD), deemed by the public to be a very successful organization, and an example of state-promoted regional management not unlike the federal promotion of regional management of selected government functions being discussed in this paper. Simply said, there needs to be more of both—state and federal promotion of regional management.

competition for an increased tax base often runs counter to the best interests of the region as a whole, resulting in duplicative or wasted investments, reduced cost-effectiveness of services, and unwise encroachment upon historic sites, port complexes, or military bases. Non cooperative metropolitan areas will be by-passed; cooperative, cohesive and vibrant regions will succeed.

The concept of federal funding only for integrated regional projects: In addition to using federal funds as the carrot to promote efficient regional cooperation, the federal government has introduced a second concept—“conformity”—essentially another requirement that must be met prior to receiving federal funds. Stated in other words, the federal government is seeking both “municipalities that work together” and “municipal projects that are integrated” with one another. Again, USDOT and the EPA lead the way in this regard. For example, the fact that vehicular traffic is the largest single source of regional pollution, and that traffic congestion is a major source of such pollution, reveals a problem. If not coordinated, the government risks funding roads on the one hand that cause pollution while also funding environmental projects on the other hand that curb pollution. This is a simple visual example of the need for consistency or conformity of regional plans and projects. In this case, both USDOT and the EPA have collaborated, and they provide very strong language in their legislation regarding the use of federal funds for these two regional issues—transportation and the environment. This concept of “funding only that which conforms”, however, goes much further, and one can readily project that this requirement will continue to expand. Practitioners suggest that such linkage can be beneficially applied to regional economic development<sup>14</sup>, mass transit, affordable housing, and education. Indeed, transportation legislation already requires planners to consider the commuter needs of the workforce (roads and transit), freight handling needs of the regional economy, and equitable accessibility of roads to low income neighborhoods, for example.

The concept of managing and allocating federal funds at the regional level: Given the trends cited above, more than one counselor on matters of local and regional governance has suggested that all federal funds be administered at the regional level. Myron Orfield, one of the nation’s leaders on these matters, has recommended that “Regional Allocation Agencies”<sup>15</sup> be established for this very purpose—handle, coordinate, and allocate all federal dollars. He is ahead of his time, but we must take

---

<sup>14</sup> See Regionalist Paper No. 7, *The Importance of Regionalism in the Global Economy: Why Must We Adjust?* for a discussion of the relative importance, worldwide, of regional economies compared to state or national economies.

<sup>15</sup> Myron Orfield, *American Metropolitcs: The New Suburban Reality*, (The Brookings Institution Press, Washington, D.C., 2002), and other sources.

heed. It is in this direction where the rules governing federal dollars are headed—regional management for coordinated regional projects—and, this direction will not be reversed. To participate in the years ahead, we need to foster a regional perspective among both community leaders and the general public, or we will leave dollars on the table<sup>16</sup>.

### **How can metropolitan areas participate and gain the most from federal resources?**

One thing is certain, ongoing economic and population growth in many metropolitan areas has resulted in a fair number of government functions that are beyond the capacity of individual municipalities to manage, and that such functions are most economically handled at the regional level. Hampton Roads is one such metropolitan area. Nationwide, this trend will continue. Subjects such as business efficiency, crime, pollution, transportation, workforce development, land-use, and disaster preparedness and response do not adhere to respective municipal boundaries. This means that funding from federal agencies will increasingly demand cooperative and conforming regional plans and proposals. It is essential that city and county leaders and the public recognize this inevitable situation and plan accordingly. Suggestions follow:

#### At the local level, recognize and pursue the opportunity:

Changing mindsets and changing the culture to acknowledge the merits of regional cooperation cannot be accomplished quickly. Nonetheless, we need to move forward in a determined, yet patient, way; we need to build this culture. The Hampton Roads Partnership's regional citizenship program in 2006 and its regionalist-oriented website are efforts that should continue and be magnified. The Hampton Roads Planning District Commission's superb regional reports need to be more widely disseminated; indeed its state-chartered public outreach task should be much more thoroughly fulfilled.

If at all possible and key, the Mayors and Chairs Caucus (MACC) should take a leading role in this endeavor to optimize federal recognition and funding of regional projects in Hampton Roads. Members of the MACC are the publicly-elected and truly legitimate leaders of Hampton Roads. At city council and county supervisors meetings,

---

<sup>16</sup> The *Virginian-Pilot* newspaper article *Tolls: Amendment threatens federal money for local projects*, notes that federal transportation funding that is in jeopardy would be returned and used by other states, March 9, 2006. Similar newspaper articles and news bulletins from the Hampton Roads Partnership during the months of the 2006 General Assembly debate and impasse on transportation and transit projects for Hampton Roads document the challenges (and the opportunities) ahead in aligning our planning along regional lines.

the Mayors and Chairs in coordination with their council and board members, rightfully, have a local jurisdictional mindset when assessing plans and policies for their respective constituents. When meeting as a Mayors and Chairs Caucus, it would be best if these same Mayors and Chairs carried a regional mindset (what is best for the region) when assessing plans and policies for the region. The idea here is that there is merit (and a need) to have MACC participants (or participants in some other body) not be representatives from their respective communities, but rather be empowered to decide and act on policies that affect the region as a whole.

Hampton Roads is truly a metro center of unquestioned importance to the federal government. In short, we should be a prize client for the allocation of federal funds. Some observers have noted that because our region has such a strong relationship with the military and the defense department, that we consider this to be our sufficient link with the federal government. However, our relationship with defense is a special case. It needs to be nurtured, but it does not translate into a regional relationship with other federal agencies and their non-defense issues—transportation, housing, watershed protection, social programs, homeland security, the environment, and technology and research. We need to also pay attention to federal initiatives in these areas just as strongly as we pay attention to the defense budget, and we need a MACC or other organization of leaders to do this. In any case, at every opportunity, the MACC should publicly announce and stress the merits of regional accomplishments as they occur which will serve as one local step in building public understanding and support for increasingly robust regional coordination.

This subject is so significant for the future of Hampton Roads and to all of its municipalities that it warrants new levels of MACC study, perhaps in a series of meetings, or during an off-site session. In any case, an effort which results in decisions on how best to obtain and benefit from federal assistance, including both short term and long term plans of action thereto, is sorely needed.

At the state level, awaken the need:

Awaken may be the appropriate word. At a Governor's conference, Dr. Marc A. Weiss declared that "By approaching metropolitan regions as among the state's most precious and strategic economic strengths, Governors and state government—working closely with local private, public, civic and community leadership—can greatly enhance

prosperity and quality of life within each metropolis and throughout the entire state”<sup>17</sup>. William Dodge, an author of several books on regionalism concludes that “Regions drive local, state, national and global economies”<sup>18</sup>, and as early as 1967, a Virginian, Marshall Hahn, cautioned “The metropolitan area has become the heart of Virginia’s industrializing economy. If that economy is to expand as rapidly as possible, and if Virginians are to enjoy maximum opportunities for economic advancement and the most beneficial environment, then positive, constructive [state-level] steps to deal more effectively with the problems of the metropolitan area are essential”<sup>19</sup>.

Over the past twenty years and on the plus side, Virginia has established a number of regional political subdivisions (Regional Authorities, Districts, and Commissions) in Hampton Roads that provide excellent regional management of selected government functions such as sanitation and waste management<sup>20</sup>. More recently, in 1996, the General Assembly approved a Regional Competitiveness Act with financial incentives to promote regional collaboration (two or more municipalities) for regional economic development projects<sup>21</sup>.

To put it mildly, however, the overall record of support for metropolitan efforts and for regionalism in general in Virginia is less than excellent. The Regionalist Competitiveness Act’s support for regional economic development proved to be fleeting, as the incentives program and its funding were terminated after five or six years of activity. In the areas of transportation and transit, the State has blatantly failed to support its several Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs)<sup>22</sup>, leaving these matters with a struggling VDOT organization, and not fully exploiting the markedly increasing federal funding incentives for transportation, transit, and congestion management

---

<sup>17</sup> Dr. Marc A. Weiss, in his *State Policy Approaches to Promote Metropolitan Economic Strategy*, published by the National Governors Association Center For Best Practices.

<sup>18</sup> William R. Dodge, “*Regional Excellence: Governing Together To Compete Globally and Flourish Locally*”, a quote borrowed from the Hampton Roads Partnership website, [www.hrp.org](http://www.hrp.org)

<sup>19</sup> From the *Report by the Virginia Metropolitan Areas Study Commission* (the Hahn Commission), Senate Document No. 14, 1967, p. 3.

<sup>20</sup> See Regionalist Paper No. 3, *Understanding the Regional Organizations in Hampton Roads Today: Contemporary Regionalism and Where we Stand in the Process*, for a discussion of where Hampton Roads might fit in the mosaic of contemporary regionalism

<sup>21</sup> One outgrowth of the Regional Competitiveness Act was the formation of the Hampton Roads Partnership (HRP) as a regional public-private organization to guide or manage the projects applying for the incentivization funds. See Regionalist Paper No. 7, *Understanding the Regional Organizations in Hampton Roads Today: Contemporary Regionalism, Its Value and Its Future Prospects* for a discussion of all the regional organizations in Hampton Roads.

<sup>22</sup> See Regionalist Paper No. 5, *Coming of Age—the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and Regionalism*.

It is hard to pin-point why this is the case. Some suggest it is the legacy of Thomas Jefferson and his policies strongly supporting a rural America, or the legacy of Governor Harry Flood Byrd, Sr. who took (then needed) sweeping measures in the late 1920s to centralize government functions at the state level. Some suggest that the Dillon Rule that limits local authority to only those functions expressly assigned as the reason for limited state support in Virginia for regional initiatives: most authors on this Dillon Rule subject have concluded, however, that the Dillon Rule, if it has any effect on this matter at all, is actually more supportive of regionalist endeavors<sup>23</sup>. The Hampton Roads legislative caucus often seems to act in fragmented ways, and many suggest that this is the number one root cause for not having a Hampton Roads regional mindset or regional voice in Richmond. Whatever the real reason is, it remains that Virginia is not strongly promoting and is not providing incentives for regional coordination. There have been efforts to do so, but they have not yet gained traction. Former Governor Gerald Baliles was a strong advocate of the need for the state to “prime the pump”. A few years ago, he recommended “that where two or more jurisdictions combined or consolidated major functions of government, the total appropriations to those localities would be increased by a significant percentage, perhaps 25 to 35 percent”<sup>24</sup>.

At the metro level, develop the means:

The purpose of this overall set of Regionalist Papers has been to study regionalist steps taken (successes and failures) around the United States, to conduct research, and to provide Papers with findings and suggestions to the Steering Committee of the Regional Governance Structure Project<sup>25</sup> in their endeavors to find a set of governance recommendations, or in other words—develop the means—for Hampton Roads for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Whence completed, this Governance Structure Project should aid public service practitioners, community leaders, and the public-at-large to their efforts to design and build for the future.

It is true that no region in any state can advance without state support, and the literature on public administration at the regional level shows that serious, active promotion (even coercion) at the state level is required, not just passive support. On the other hand, it is improbable to expect state, legislative caucus or other support for

---

<sup>23</sup> See Regionalist Paper No.14, *Regionalism: Does the Dillon Rule Help or Hinder Metropolitan Progress?*

<sup>24</sup> Governor Gerald L. Baliles keynote address on August 12, 2001 at the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary meeting of the Virginia Local Government Officials' Conference on Virginia's Government Structure.

<sup>25</sup> The Regional Governance Structure Project, started in the year 2002, is sponsored by the Future of Hampton Roads, Inc. (FHR), a regional non-profit organization, and the creators of Plan-2007 in the late 1980s that served local communities well for many years.

regional projects when local communities themselves have not first, in word and by their actions, strongly and clearly embraced regional initiatives and structures for regional management. It seems as if we have a Catch 22 situation. We need to generate regional advocacy at all levels, local, metro, and state.

When addressing such a challenge, it is always best to work first within one's own turf—set an example, and ensure you have done your best. One of the great Hampton Roads regional success stories was the creation and continued management of the Virginia Port Authority (VPA). This effort to consolidate four port complexes spread over three cities required some twenty years to achieve. It required the strenuous leadership of local (not state) professionals who had fist-hand, on-the-ground knowledge of the competition of other ports along the East Coast, and who were immersed in and sensitive to the future potentials and risks that would flow from coordinated or non-coordinated management actions, all insights and sensitivities that were not recognized from afar in Richmond<sup>26</sup>.

Predictably, this kind of local comprehension will be required to carry the day in the realm of homeland security and the federal funding of security, and disaster preparedness and response programs. Richmond can provide a useful clearinghouse office on these matters, but Richmond cannot provide the planning and management that will produce the best and most efficient programs for such national projects. Momentum in this regard must come first from the metro leaders of Hampton Roads, perhaps the MACC, or perhaps from the public. Make no mistake, we have more at stake, and we know more about the stresses and possibilities of our region. The ball is in our court.

At all levels, understand the essentiality and benefits of metropolitan management for selected government functions:

On the one hand, metropolitan Hampton Roads is one of the generally successful metro areas in the United States. We have tremendous natural resources, the largest natural harbor in the country, rivers and an ocean coastline, and extraordinary historic landmark sites, and we have little in the way of deep fiscal inequities and strife that frequently accompanies urban-suburban competition elsewhere.

---

<sup>26</sup> Virginia Port Authority, *History of the Virginia Port Authority*, (Norfolk: Updated, revision 1994), Inspired and pressed forward by local leaders, the Robert's (1950), Breeden (1969) and Babalas (1981) state Commissions documented the compelling case for coordinating the tasks and resources of the four port complexes of Hampton Roads, a task that was formally completed with the formation of the VPA in 1983.

On the other hand, the region's wage scales are below the national average; we have not yet been recognized as a regional entity in the federal funding of homeland security projects, which is astonishing; we are not well coordinated with regard to waste management plans; we have an intractable transportation problem that neither our local Metropolitan Planning Organization nor our region's legislative caucus can advance, although they should assist in this regard; and we were not regionally prepared in advance to respond to the surprises of BRAC, to mention a few challenges. Regionalism is not a panacea, and challenges will continue to arise. But again, make no mistake, for many tasks, to include earning the best of federal financial support, regional approaches will bring rewards.

Seize the moment: There will always be both moments and topics of opportunity, so no particular list written at this time should be viewed as a plan of action. Several topics, however, serve as suggestions for paying strong attention to available federal resources, and they illuminate what can be gained or lost.

- The 2006 General Assembly impasse on transportation planning, particularly the transportation plans for Hampton Roads, has been a bitter example of non-regionalism. For full comprehension, this story requires its own separate study. But, clearly, the Hampton Roads legislative caucus was completely splintered and unable to find the smallest common-denominator, partial solution, and the MPO's transportation plan was not prioritized or fiscally constrained as is required for their work pursuant to federal legislation. State and local leaders need to review and re-issue the MPO charter to bring it up to date, and they need to engage in the public participation processes called for in federal legislation; transportation planning opportunities (and needs) will not go away.
- The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act (SAFETEA), passed by Congress last year (August 2005) must be implemented by July 2007 (next year). Federal transportation and public transit funding was increased by 6% and 16% respectively for these two government functions. The legislation requires greater metropolitan coordination of plans-for-roads-and-public-transit with other regional plans for housing, the environment, and economic development—truly a set of region-wide issues. The legislation calls for increased coordination of statewide and metropolitan transportation plans, and requires increased state support of the metropolitan and MPO planning process. Non-adherence risks losing funds.
- The global economy continues to grow apace. Virginia's ports rank second on the East Coast in volume and value of traffic. The Virginia Port Authority has enormous

expansion plans that have been supported at every level of government, the largest expansion plans on the East Coast. This is definitely important to the economy of the Commonwealth of Virginia. It is also of interest to the federal government for both the nation's participation in the global economy and for homeland security reasons. Funding assistance for the entire community of Hampton Roads for almost any subject can be seen as part of the insurance policy guaranteeing the vitality of the region's port complexes, its associated businesses, and its workforce. This is an opportunity prone to gain federal support, if the essentials—a regional means to manage—are in place.

- The preservation of natural and economic assets was not a particularly major issue fifty years ago, but now in the 21<sup>st</sup> century it dominates the thoughts of many. Hampton Roads is a treasure trove of natural assets. On the historic side, everything having to do with the first colonists some 400 years ago (First Landing to Jamestown); scores of landmarks from both the revolutionary and civil war periods of history (Gosport to the Casemate to Williamsburg) are treasured assets. And, on the tourism and economic side, remarkable geographic treasures (with rivers everywhere, quality year round fishing, remarkable and unequaled wetlands such as the Dismal Swamp, and sights such as the roadstead of Hampton Roads to Virginia Beach and its boardwalk) and these and our economic assets (military bases and port complex areas) are assets that need protection from encroachment, but that could be lost in the halls of blind competition that marks the absence of regional cooperation. Both the state and the federal government have interests in strong metro efforts to manage these assets and the economies they support to the fullest extent. These are opportunities for wide-ranging and costly 21<sup>st</sup> century level projects that should claim attention for federal funding support.
- Protecting the nation from external threats and dealing with natural disasters are not new problems. At the dawn of this 21<sup>st</sup> century, however, both challenges demand new levels of planning, training, and administration, and as former Secretary Tom Ridge has indicated, this cannot be done from Washington, and he sought to build a regional infrastructure to help manage both the FEMA and security aspects of his charter. Unfortunately, Hampton Roads is off to a very slow start. Our region and its cities and counties have not won a single Urban Area Security Initiative grant over the first four years of this program. One local advisor opines “the inescapable conclusion is that the cities of Hampton Roads are unlikely to receive UASI grants

until the region is treated as a single urban area by DHS”<sup>27</sup>. His studies indicate that if bundled as a region, Hampton Roads would have earned over \$60 million over the first four years and over \$20 million during fiscal year 2006. In the early years, DHS saw Minneapolis and Saint Paul as two cities not large enough to be in the queue for USAI grants. There, the state and the region, both strongly believing in and managing many matters on a regional basis (rightfully) lobbied, and today the Twin Cities is one of the primary 50 large population areas receiving USAI funds. Hurricane evacuation planning, training and management cannot be done in Richmond; our state leaders in this area need to devolve these responsibilities down to the regional level, and to provide incentives and active support for cooperative programs.

In conclusion, there are a variety of ways to build upon the inevitably increasing levels of federal funding for regional projects. Leaning forward, the citizens, our community leaders, and the elected leaders of Hampton Roads should take the long view, try to get ahead of the curve, and selectively implement these ideas of building regional coherence and regional governance. Coupled with the worth that Hampton Roads has to offer, this regional alliance will attract and will be able to claim more of the federal assistance than it has in the past. Rallying successfully around federal financial support in one area of government business proved to be contagious in some metropolitan areas and became the seed corn for additional regional pursuits for federal assistance in other areas of government business. This is not a process of bypassing the state; rather there are valid federal programs that need the efficiency of metropolitan scale projects. Indeed, collectivizing our efforts and gaining broader federal recognition will also further serve to “awaken” state level planning. In time, this should lead to what, in the final analysis, is essential for this entire effort—genuine and active state promotion, and enduring and significant state incentives for successful regional projects.

Ray Taylor, *Future of Hampton Roads*, April 2006

---

<sup>27</sup> Joseph F. Bouchard, *Assessment of Changes to the Urban Area Security Initiative Grant Program and Implications for Hampton Roads*, January 4, 2006