

Transportation in Norfolk

Types of Transportation, Problems and Future Prospects in Hampton Roads

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I. Introduction: Population and Number of Vehicles in Hampton Roads

When the twentieth century was over and the twenty-first century started, the population of Virginia reached 7,000,000. According to the organization, Negative Population Growth or NPG (2002) Norfolk alone has 234,403 people in the city. NPG (2002) states that the population of Virginia will easily rise to and go beyond 9,000,000 in 2050 as long as the birth rate of Virginia keeps its pace. It is easily predicted that the population of Norfolk will grow as that of Virginia does.

Now Virginia has about 5,000,000 licensed drivers who travel on its roads which extended 66,000 miles. Negative Population Growth (2002) shows that around 64,000,000 cars annually use the Virginia Beach-Norfolk Expressway while 10,000,000 vehicles passed through the expressway in the first year after its opening. This clearly shows that the number of vehicles increase as the population grows.

I am interested in public transportation systems in Norfolk because they are very important for people, like me, who don't have cars. According to the Internet site for the City of Norfolk (2002), 11,882 civilians residing in Norfolk have jobs related to transportation. They are 8.1 percent of the people of the city who have a job. Furthermore, I noticed that private cars are useful when people go long distances. I'd like to present transportation systems in Norfolk today and new ones that are going to be developed. I'd also like to present what effects this has on people.

II. Types of Transportation

First of all, I'd like to introduce main and popular transportation systems in Norfolk. It has an airport which is called Norfolk International Airport. According to Norfolk International Airport (2002), around 200 airplanes arrive and leave daily from this point. This airport is ranked 75th in the country in terms of the number of

passengers. In addition, the airport estimates that 3,000,000 people will use it in the year 2002.

Another popular transportation in Norfolk is buses. As for Old Dominion University, shuttle buses are operated. Those routes connect the campus, its parking lots and apartments. Furthermore, shuttle buses that go to downtown are operated on weekends. Norfolk City has buses, too. The Hampton Road Transit (HRT) has served people since 1973. Its buses run from Sunday to Saturday, seven days a week. HRT has another service called the Norfolk Electric Transit or NET. According to NET (2002), its buses offer fast and convenient rides to residents of Norfolk and visitors, serving 1,800 passengers a day Monday through Friday.

One more convenient transportation system is taxis. Taxis are familiar almost all over the world. This also applies in Norfolk. There are taxi companies and There are people who drive a taxi individually.

III. Problems in Hampton Roads

As I mentioned before, the number of vehicles has been increasing as the population has been growing. That causes traffic jams and roads congested with vehicles. That also leads to destruction of the environment because cars introduce pollution. It is bad not only for the environment, but also for the human body. People may get diseases if they continue to breathe pollution. Hampton Roads has traffic jam problems, too, without exception.

Here's an analysis of transportation data which was conducted by the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission. According to the Commission (2002), the region of Hampton Roads which includes Norfolk, Virginia Beach and Newport News had vehicle registration which increased from 410,923 to 1,101,242 in 25 years, from 1970 to 1995. The Commission estimates that private vehicle ownership

will increase from 205,768 to more than 1.2 million.

Recently, a public opinion survey was conducted by Continental Research, Inc. (2002). The following question was asked. "What do you think is the one most important problem or issue facing Hampton Roads today...the one that most concerns you and your family?" 30 percent of the responses to the question were "traffic congestion." Judging from this survey, it can be seen that residents of Norfolk take the traffic problems very seriously.

According to Hampton Roads Transit (2002), Hampton Roads will decline soon if significant improvements to the traffic jams and the public transportation system are not taken. HRS also insists that Hampton Roads continue to keep a well-organized transportation system.

IV. New Transportation Systems

Norfolk has been trying to improve the situation of its roads. Now Hampton Roads has six transportation projects which has been planned (See the APPENDIX). 1: The Third Crossing Road is going to be constructed and the road is supposed to connect Newport News and Norfolk. 2: I-64, which goes from Newport News to James City, is supposed to be widened. 3: Southeastern Parkway, which will connect Chesapeake and Virginia Beach, is going to be built. 4: U.S. Route 460, which goes from Suffolk to Isle of Wight, is supposed to be improved. 5: The Midtown Tunnel is going to be constructed and MLK Freeway is supposed to be extended. The tunnel and the freeway are going to connect Norfolk and Portsmouth. Furthermore, regional rails and buses will be enhanced in the entire region of Hampton Roads.

However, it costs a lot of money to carry out and finish those projects. The following are estimated prices which will be needed for the projects. According to Virginia Secretary of Transportation (2002), it will cost 2.975 billion dollars for the

Third Crossing, 760 million dollars for the I-64 widening, 710 million dollars for the Southeastern Parkway, 705 million dollars for the U.S. Route 460 Improvement, 640 million dollars for the Midtown Tunnel and MLK freeway extension and 200 million dollars for the rail and transit.

V. Referendum

In Hampton Roads, a vote is going to be held in November 2002. In this vote, voters will be asked to increase the sales tax by one percent, from 4.5 percent to 5.5 percent. This increase in the tax is supposed to carry out the six projects for the road improvements which I mentioned before. The Virginia Secretary of Transportation or VST (2002) states that the increase will not apply to food or drugs. It says that significant developments in Hampton Roads will be seen and traffic congestion will be reduced if the referendum is approved by the voters. VST also believes that the Third Crossing will provide good connections to ports and military facilities which are very essential to the Hampton Roads economy. VST insists that every dollar collected for transportation will stay in Hampton Roads and will not be used for other things.

The following will be the good results of the six road improvements according to VST (2002). For one thing, families will be able to spend more time together if they can move smoothly and arrive at their destinations by using the roads on weekends or holidays. Secondly, construction of the new roads and improvements of the roads being used now will build a strong economy. Thirdly, the new roads will contribute to air quality. Finally, vehicles will be able to move with safety and security on the Hampton Roads region.

VI. Conclusion

Traffic congestion happens not only in Norfolk, but also almost all over the

world. I think that it is a common problem in countries which have cars. It will be hard for people who have low income to pay the new tax, but I think that they should pay. This is because we have to save the earth. People have sought comfortable and convenient things. That is not a bad thing, but what I feel now is that we cannot achieve or gain something without pain. I understand some people will have harder lives by paying this tax, but we can save the earth if we reduce pollution by improving the transportation systems. In addition, I insist that the government should take responsibility and act quickly and carefully because it is the government that will use money from its people if the referendum is approved. People who work for the government should contribute to the citizens. However, I think that it is very important for everyone to take care of not only themselves but also things around them.

REFERENCES

Hampton Roads Partnership (<http://www.hrp.org>)

Hampton Roads Transit (<http://www.hrtransit.org>)

Negative Population Growth (<http://www.npg.org>)

Norfolk Electric Transit (<http://www.norfolk.gov/news%20release/net.html>)

Norfolk International Airport (<http://www.norfolkairport.com>)

Virginia Secretary of Transportation (<http://www.transportation.state.va.us>)

APPENDIX