

ON THE MOVE

HAMPTON ROADS TRANSIT'S QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER • SUMMER 2025



HRT Unveils New Ferry Dock Shelters in Nod to Working Waterfront

Hampton Roads Transit (HRT) celebrated the installation of three new shelters during a ribbon-cutting at High Street ferry dock in Portsmouth on June 5. The brightly colored shelters, located at High Street and North Landing in Portsmouth and Waterside in Norfolk, arrived just in time for the start of the busy summer season.

“Whether you’re commuting, sightseeing, or just enjoying the ride, these new ferry shelters are a fresh and modern addition to your journey across the water,” said William E. Harrell, HRT’s President and CEO.

The ferry shelters were designed and constructed to resemble cargo ship containers, reflecting the working waterfront along the Elizabeth River. Each shelter is painted a different color reflecting HRT’s blue and green brand colors.

“Our new ferry shelters are a bold new waterfront landmark. The eye-catching design includes corrugated metal cladding that nods to our region’s rich shipping and maritime heritage,” said Sibyl Pappas, HRT’s Chief Engineering and Facilities Officer.

The shelters feature solar-powered lighting to enhance safety and security, digital display panels to provide real-time service information, and integrated speakers ensuring riders stay informed and connected.

“For more than 40 years, Hampton Roads Transit has served the cities of Portsmouth and Norfolk with dedication and innovation,” Portsmouth Mayor Shannon Glover said. “As we head into a busy summer season, we expect our two ferry docks in Portsmouth to be bustling with passengers. This year, those riders will not only benefit from the comfort and shade of these new shelters, but they’ll also enjoy a design that complements and elevates our beautiful waterfront – a waterfront that continues to thrive thanks in large part to the Elizabeth River Ferry.”

The project was \$825,000 and the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) provided 68 percent of the funding costs. ■



HRT Completes Installation of Smart Bus Stops

Hampton Roads Transit unveiled its new “smart stop” technology at an event in Portsmouth on Wednesday, July 23. Dozens of people attended, including community partners, elected officials, HRT staff and Commissioners.

Over the last 18 months, more than 2,600 “smart stop” bus signs have been installed across the service area. Each sign features a unique QR code, enabling customers to access real-time bus information, view route maps and schedules, report bus stop cleanliness and safety issues, and more.

The technology was demonstrated at the Children’s Museum of Virginia, which features an interactive HRT bus exhibit to teach kids about transit. The refreshed exhibit was also unveiled with branding representing HRT’s 757 Express service, along with a new bus stop sign.

“HRT’s smart stops usher in a new era of convenience, innovation, and mobility,” William E. Harrell, HRT’s President and CEO, said during the demonstration. “This innovative, location-based technology, paired with visible and reflective signage, is designed to enhance the rider experience.”

The designs and technology were developed in-house by HRT staff, with signs installed in batches starting in October 2023 and completed in June 2025. These changes, which require less material and maintenance, have saved HRT more than \$600,000 since the new signs were installed.

The technology is also available for all modes of fixed route service, including the Elizabeth River Ferry, the Tide Light Rail, and the Base Express service. ■



Paratransit Provider Making Progress

Hampton Roads Transit's Paratransit provides an invaluable service to more than 7,000 customers, helping them access work, school, doctor's appointments, the grocery store, and spend time with friends and families. Paratransit riders are among our most vulnerable customers and deserve to be treated with dignity and respect.



Since July of last year, when Easton Coach was awarded a \$151 million contract, it has been a valuable partner in making that possible. Easton Coach operates paratransit services in 24 locations across three states, transporting approximately 4.1 million riders annually. The company is operating in Hampton Roads with a fleet of 116 vehicles, including 32 new Ford Transits added last fall.

Improvements have been made to its operating facility at 420 E. 20th Street in Norfolk – just a few blocks from HRT's Southside offices and garage. In addition to giving the facility a fresh coat of paint, Easton replaced the flooring and windows, added a break room, and upgraded the dispatch center. They also established a call center and training facility, located directly behind HRT's Norfolk office, as well as an office on the Peninsula, situated on West Mercury Boulevard, which features a break area for operators.

Other strategic improvements have been made, including doubling the size of the dispatch team, adding a full-time recruiter, and establishing maintenance and safety teams, training staff, and road supervisors.

On April 2, a record-setting 1,523 rides were provided with an on-time performance rate of nearly 97 percent. The company's average on-time performance is 93 percent, compared to the previous provider's 88 percent. The call center is also busy with a steady stream of customers. The number of calls has increased by 1,500 to approximately 22,000 per month, while the average call wait time has decreased significantly, from over a minute to roughly 39 seconds.

These enhancements and improvements help HRT in meeting its mission to connect Hampton Roads with transportation solutions that are reliable, safe, efficient, and sustainable. ■

757 Express Ridership Shows Continued Growth

Hampton Roads Transit's 757 Express continues to show growth following an increase to 15-minute peak-period service.

- **Route 112**, which runs from Lee Hall to Newport News Shipbuilding via Jefferson Avenue in Newport News, saw ridership grow by an average of 74 percent between October 2022 and June 2025, with 45,000 passengers carried per month.
- **Route 114**, serving Mercury Boulevard and Downtown Hampton, was up 56 percent between May 2023 and June 2025, averaging 29,000 riders per month.
- **Route 20**, connecting downtown Norfolk with the Virginia Beach Oceanfront via Virginia Beach Boulevard, saw a 35 percent monthly average ridership increase between November 2023 and June 2025 with a total average of 71,000 passengers.

Routes that share stops with 757 Express buses also are seeing ridership increases.

"Once again, our customers are responding to frequent, reliable service in key corridors throughout Hampton Roads," said William E. Harrell, HRT's President and CEO.

The 757 Express is envisioned as a regional transit system, including a mix of high-frequency, express, and limited-stop bus service connecting commuters to major employment destinations. The 757 Express will eventually consist of 13 bus routes connecting the highest densities of people and jobs in the region. Buses arrive every 15 minutes during the weekday peak hours of 6-9 a.m. and 3-6 p.m. Further implementation of the system will depend on hiring additional bus operators. ■



Student Transit Riders Commission Holds Inaugural Meeting

The newly formed Student Transit Riders Commission (STRC) held its inaugural meeting on July 10 in the Hampton boardroom. Eight students have been selected to serve on the commission. Student representatives are still needed for Virginia Beach and Chesapeake. The STRC aims to better connect HRT with young riders.

“The Commission is transforming the next generation of transit riders through information, access, and outreach,” Public Outreach Coordinator Gus Maxwell said following the meeting. “We’re talking about transit-related topics that are relevant to them.”

The Commission is made up of Student Freedom Pass riders and will mirror the Transportation District Commission of Hampton Roads (TDCHR), HRT’s governing board. The Commission meets once a month, and students are asked to commit to a one-year term. ■



Staff Celebrate Completion of Hampton HQ Roof Repair

This summer marked the end of a year-long construction project at Hampton Headquarters. Work to replace the building’s aging roof began in June 2024 and included the installation of 64 new skylights, atrium windows, and updated exterior lighting. The \$2.5 million project was made possible through grants from the Federal Transit Administration and the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation. On June 3, staff at Hampton HQ celebrated the completion of the project with a “Roof Beer Float.” ■



VTA Recognizes HRT for Excellence in Transit Marketing

The Virginia Transit Association (VTA) held its annual conference May 28-29 in Richmond. HRT President and CEO William Harrell spoke at a roundtable on the future funding of public transit. Sherri Dawson, Director of Transit Development, and Amy Jordan, Director of Business Development, also represented HRT in panel discussions. HRT was honored to receive an award for excellence in transit marketing for the VB Wave Trolley’s record-setting 2024 season. The VTA also recognized the U.S. Navy and former HRT Commissioner August Bullock for outstanding contributions to transit. ■

