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LEGISLATURE FINALLY ADOPTS A BUDGET – BUT ADEQUATE TRANSPORTATION FUNDING IS NOT INCLUDED

**Budget Approved
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100 days late and a dollar short is an accurate assessment of final action by state legislators to adopt a two-year state budget. Since the 2006 session adjourned in early March, House and Senate members have been haggling over whether or not to include long term, sustainable transportation funding. The House said no, the Senate said yes, and the House won! Earlier this month senior Virginia lawmakers finally agreed to a new two-year spending plan for the state, which ends the possibility of a government shut-down.

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There are some new transportation dollars included in the newly adopted budget, just not anywhere near enough. The plan provides \$227 million from the tax on automobile insurance premiums to fund the Virginia Department of Transportation's (VDOT) construction bond debt. This is a funding commitment that the General Assembly originally made in year 2000. Additionally, the compromise budget provides \$339 million in general fund money for roads, rail and public transportation this year, but only if the General Assembly can adopt additional legislation for transportation by Nov. 1.

The adoption of a state budget, and its meager support for much needed increases in transportation funding, comes in the wake of the Commonwealth Transportation Board's approval of the Six-Year Improvement Program, which significantly cut funding for highway, rail, public transportation and commuter services programs.

This plan allocates \$6.9 billion to highway construction and other VDOT projects, compared to the \$7 billion program adopted last year, according to a June 15th VDOT news release. Because the General Assembly has failed to provide an increase in sustainable transportation funding for the past 20 years, VDOT must now rely on federal dollars for 70 percent of its construction program.

Without a transportation funding resolution this fall, road construction cuts will reach all areas of the Commonwealth. According to the news release, money for the state's primary, secondary and urban road construction will be cut by 47 percent. Funding for major state roads is down \$318 million; funding for rural and subdivision roads is down \$238.5 million; and funding for town and city streets is down \$238.5 million. A large chunk, 40 percent, of the approved \$6.9 billion is planned for road maintenance, which by law takes precedence over new construction projects. The Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation will also see a significant decline in funding from last year's plan.

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LEGISLATURE FINALLY ADOPTS A BUDGET – BUT ADEQUATE TRANSPORTATION FUNDING IS NOT INCLUDED (Cont.)

Hope springs eternal however, as the General Assembly has also agreed to meet again in “Special Session” before year’s end to focus solely on transportation funding. Most observers believe, however, that the tax/no tax philosophies that separated the House and Senate since early January will not change, and that no substantive transportation funding relief will evolve.

Finally, frustrated northern Virginia legislators (who are also worried about their re-election prospects) are moving forward with plans for regional transportation funding options that include a broad array of increased fees and new taxes for that region. This local funding approach, if it were to be approved by the legislature, would substantially help northern Virginia but will not solve the large state-wide transportation funding problem.

RAMCA will keep you posted on future actions taken at the upcoming Special Session of the legislature. As of this time, no date for that session has been determined

RAMCA REQUESTS ASPHALT INDEXING

Anyone involved in road building or development projects of any type that involve roads or parking facilities will quote you the frightening numbers associated with the steep rise and rapid price fluctuations of liquid asphalt. Fortunately, for contractors working on VDOT projects and most local government work there is a fair and time-tested option that provides relief.

For over 30 years VDOT has permitted a price adjustment for the cost of liquid asphalt by establishing a price index for this product. The index changes monthly based on averaging the three lowest prices of liquid asphalt bid on VDOT projects statewide each month. This index is published online by VDOT and is used by most local governments for price indexing of asphalt on their projects. Henrico County however, has neither adopted the VDOT indexing system nor currently allows for price adjustments on asphalt after the bid date. The result is that RAMCA members, depending on the length and size of their contracts with the County, are having to guesstimate the cost of asphalt. The result is rarely fair for either party, as in most instances either the contractor underestimates his cost, or overcharges the County.

In an effort to address these concerns, RAMCA met with senior purchasing representatives from Henrico County last month to share the VDOT program and request relief. Contractor representatives from Sovereign Paving, Shoosmith Bros., Slurry Pavers, Blakemore Construction, and Branscome/Richmond, along with RAMCA staff, attended the meeting.

The outcome appears positive as County officials understood both the problem and the need for a solution. As a result, all county long-term contracts up for renewal have been extended 90 days, and the County is researching the changes that need to be made by adopting the VDOT indexing system. RAMCA expects to meet again with County representatives in the coming weeks to review their proposal to incorporate a liquid asphalt indexing program, and it is hoped that such a program will be in effect by September 1st. RAMCA will provide members with that program once it is finalized.

RAMCA MEETS WITH GEOTECHS

The RAMCA office has fielded a number of calls over the last few months from contractor members who have expressed frustration in many of their professional dealings with the area's geotech firms. In most instances, geotechnical engineers are engaged by project owners, developers and general contractors to conduct various VDOT-required testing procedures associated with paving operations. The problem arises when some in the geotech community either are not fully schooled in the application of these VDOT specs, or apply these standards inconsistently on jobs, often times causing the owner or his representative to come back to the paving contractor demanding changes, redos, or other costly fixes to problems which may, or may not, exist.

In an effort to begin to address member concerns at the source, a meeting was called by RAMCA of interested contractor members and representatives of all of the major geotech firms in the area. For a couple of hours, a candid and informative discussion ensued in an effort to specifically flesh out and better understand the problems created by both sides. As is usually the case in these types of circumstances, solutions centered around improving training of some in the geotech community and enhancing communications among all parties. At the meeting's end, all participants indicated that they would take the lessons learned at this meeting and endeavor to incorporate what solutions they could into their field practices.

RAMCA will continue to monitor this situation and is hopeful that measurable improvements will occur. If not, our next meeting will move up the food chain to talk with the owners themselves. We hope that will not be necessary.

MEMBERS IN THE NEWS

Welcome new RAMCA members:

Branscome/Richmond (formerly Interstate Construction)

East River Construction, Inc, RAMCA Rep – Jay White

Stafford Equipment, RAMCA Reps - Wally Jones and Rusty Timmons

Virginia Utility and Protection Services, RAMCA Rep – Rick Pevarski

AT THE NEXT RAMCA EVENT BE SURE AND INTRODUCE YOURSELVES TO THESE LATEST ADDITIONS TO THE RAMCA FAMILY.

Johnny Glazebrook, formerly with Tidewater Quarries, has moved to Branscome/Richmond as the Marketing Manager for the Richmond region. All of us at RAMCA wish Johnny well in this new endeavor.

WHAT'S NEW WITH MISS U?

Cost Recovery – For years RAMCA members have complained about fees assessed against them by underground utility operators attempting to recover costs associated with damage to their facilities. RAMCA believes that often times these fees are baseless, inflated, and inaccurate. In addition, RAMCA has been suggesting some third party arbitration panel might serve all stakeholders well by hearing and resolving disputes under a certain dollar value involving damage to underground facilities. As a result of our efforts, the State Corporation Commission (SCC) will shortly host a meeting of utility contractors and senior utility company representatives to further discuss this issue. It would be a significant accomplishment to find a mutually beneficial way to handle these matters. We will keep you posted on our progress, if any, as these discussions move forward.

Pilot Project – RAMCA has previously informed members of our work with the SCC in developing a pilot project to study the use of GPS technology to mark excavation sites. The process would work like this:

Excavator visits proposed excavation site;

Excavator captures latitude and longitude points for the exact area to be excavated;

Excavator completes internet location request at the job site or office;

The One Call Center receives and process the information;

The One Call Center notifies utility locators;

Locators perform the field locates using GPS to find the exact area of excavation;

Locators, using mobile computer technology respond back to the One Call Center providing positive response codes, and a copy of the field manifest;

Excavator receives response directly to a PC/Phone with line locate information to complete the notification/marketing process.

The Commission is now in the process of selecting a representative group of contractors to participate in this study which is scheduled to begin sometime in September. Firms that agree to participate will be furnished with GPS capable hand-held devices allowing them to determine the exact area to be excavated, and training as to how to use the new equipment and participate in the study.

A number of RAMCA members may be contacted by the SCC and asked to participate in this study. If you are contacted, RAMCA urges you to do so. It is our hope that the pilot program proves successful and that Virginia adopts this program in the future for all notifications of intended excavation. Your participation in the study will give you a head-start over other firms who were not selected should the program prove successful.

Hand Digging Best Practices – Many excavators believe that if they are hand digging and cut an underground utility line, they are absolved from any liability, including civil penalties and cost of repairs. Maybe, maybe not!

In effort to bring some clarity to this situation, and provide guidance to excavators, the SCC has developed a Hand Digging Best Practice Manual. RAMCA members are urged to become familiar with its contents and include this information in all training materials provided to underground utility excavation crews. To obtain a copy of these Best Practices go to the RAMCA website (www.ramca.info) then click on the *Industry Links* button. Page down to the *Miss Utility of Virginia* website and click on *What's New*.

GEORGE BICKERSTAFF GOLF EVENT A BIG SUCCESS

Once again this year the George Bickerstaff Memorial Golf Event brought out the big sticks. The May outing, held at the always challenging Royal New Kent Golf Course, was a highly competitive and most enjoyable event.

But most importantly, here are the winners!

First Place

First Flight

Team - Shoosmith Bros., Inc

Players - John Childress, Wilhelm Sanders, Danny Barrett, Charles Dehison

Second Flight

Team - Whitehurst Paving Co., Inc.

Players - Wilson Whitehurst, Don Skinner, Ted Armstrong, Jack Jones

Third Flight

Team - R.J. Smith Construction

Players - Kurt Mollnow, Terry Earnest, Ryan Sedwick, Jay Gammon

Fourth Flight

Team - Southers Concrete

Players - Fonzy Southers, Jr., Tony Southers, Kevin Pruitt, Al Bingham

Second Place

First Flight

Team - Sovereign Paving

Players - Kenny Tyree, Don Boyd, Red Gardner,
Monty Gatewood

Second Flight

Team - Carter Machinery Co., Inc.

Players - Mike Harcum, Topper Davis, Glenn
Mitchell, Jim Buchannen

Third Flight

Team - Americast

Players - Dave Brinser, Aaron Hardin, Wes Partin,
Jim Richmond

Fourth Flight

Team - Blakemore Construction Company

Players - Stan Parcell, Wayne Bennett, Hardy
Josephson, Jay Rose

CLOSEST TO PIN WINNERS

First Flight - Sanders Wilhelm

Second Flight - Wayne Banty

Third Flight - Ryan Sedwick

Fourth Flight - Dave Creasy

LONGEST DRIVE WINNERS

First Flight - John Childress

Second Flight - Pat Brewer

Third Flight - Jim Richmond

Fourth Flight - Frank Sisk

RAMCA Officers

President
David Cosby
Sovereign Paving, Inc.

Vice President
James H. Martin, Jr.
J.H. Martin & Sons Contractors,
Inc.

Secretary/Treasurer
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Shreaves

Immediate Past President
Jim Patterson
F.G. Pruitt, Inc.

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F.G. Pruitt, Inc

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Lee Hy Paving Corp.

McLane Construction Company

Rhyne Contractors, Inc.

Shelton Corporation

Shoosmith Bros., Inc.

Slurry Pavers, Inc.

Southers Concrete, Inc.

Sovereign Paving, Inc.

Superior Excavating & Construction, Inc.

Talley & Armstrong, Inc.

Ward & Stancil, Inc.

Whitehurst Paving Co., Inc.

William T. Cantrell, Inc.

Mark Your Calendars

September 21st – the date of annual Jack Bargamin Fall RAMCA Golf Tournament which will be held this year at the newly-opened Mattaponi Springs Golf Course.