

## AS EXPECTED, SPECIAL TRANSPORTATION SESSION PRODUCES NOTHING

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Richmond Area Municipal Contractors Association

1108 E. Main Street

Suite 1200

Richmond, VA 23219

804-346-0522 PHONE

804-346-8287 FAX

www.ramca.info

The 2006 Special Transportation Session was, as expected, a dismal failure. The specially-called session, held in the final days of September for the specific purpose of addressing Virginia's transportation needs not only failed to agree on a single piece of meaningful legislation, but senators and delegates called it quits before the session's scheduled adjournment date and left town. The two chambers couldn't even agree on which transportation projects to underwrite with an extra \$339 million in cash produced by a booming economy. Wow, that's encouraging!

To be absolutely accurate, the General Assembly did pass a few bills -four to be exact.

After debate and discussion over regional proposals, bonding packages, and land-use reforms, legislators did increase the penalty for vehicles that exceed the height limits on the westbound tube of the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel; require the Virginia Department of Transportation Commissioner to provide an annual report on outsourcing initiatives at the agency; promote additional use of private investment (PPTAs) in transportation infrastructure; and clarify the definition of road "maintenance" to include traffic signal synchronization, incident management, and other intelligent transportation system functions. Wow again!!

After the Special Session, Governor Kaine announced the creation of the Transportation Accountability Commission. The Commission will work to ensure "that the Commonwealth's transportation agencies deliver maximum value for taxpayers, implement rigorous management standards, adhere to appropriate free market principles, and promote wise investments." While this commission may serve to increase public accountability of transportation agencies and professionals, it can do little to address the real issue facing Virginia – adequate funding for its transportation infrastructure.

Not to be outdone, the General Assembly has established a joint subcommittee to study the role of the Commonwealth and its agencies in meeting Virginia's future transportation needs. The joint committee, led by Transportation Committee Co-Chairmen Sen. Marty Williams and Del. Leo Wardrup, has held a series of meetings this fall to assess Virginia's future transportation needs. The joint committee's study will consider redefining the role of the Commonwealth, regional entities, and local governments in the devolution of a unified state road system; revising and restructuring functions of state agencies to concentrate on planning and contract management instead of direct facility construction, operation, and service delivery; and changes in the number of employees and the appropriations required for state administration.

## 2006 Transportation Session, Continued

The joint subcommittee will meet for two years and will submit reports to the General Assembly by the start of the legislative sessions in 2007 and 2008. Again, interesting stuff but the subcommittee offers no chance of producing a solution to the real issue facing Virginia - adequate funding for its transportation infrastructure.

Transportation funding will again be a high visibility issue when the General Assembly reconvenes again in January. However, given that 2007 is an election year for all 140 members of the General Assembly few lobbyists (yours included) believe that any substantive funding legislation will emerge next year. RAMCA and its lobbying partners will continue to urge our political leaders to work toward finding a solution to Virginia's longstanding and worsening transportation problems. But the cold, hard facts are that the first window of opportunity for achieving solutions is now the January 2008 session of the Virginia General Assembly. In the meantime, the ramifications of this failure by state legislators to address this issue will impact all RAMCA members negatively in the coming months.

### **BLANKET PERMIT CONCERNS CONTINUE – INTERIM SOLUTION REACHED**

At the request of heavy and utility contractors, heavy equipment dealers, and crane contractors from around the state, the Virginia Utility & Heavy Contractors Council (RAMCA's lobbying arm) brought together a large number of representatives from these groups, and senior VDOT and DMV staff to discuss recent changes to the issuance of overweight/oversized blanket hauling permits. The net effect of these changes was the denial of renewing blanket permits which had been previously issued, and a substantially larger list of restricted structures that greatly restricted routing under the permit.

A lengthy and somewhat contentious meeting held last month in the RAMCA conference room did yield some positive results. VDOT has agreed to increase the current allowable load limits by 5% on an interim basis, until April 2007. In addition, the restricted structure exclusion list will be similarly updated. While this interim proposal does increase the blanket permit's threshold, it does not allow vehicles to exceed the safe load capacity of bridges in the Commonwealth.

A subsequent meeting of the affected parties is scheduled for this month, to be sure that there is a clear understanding of the interim agreement, and to outline remaining issues of dispute and works towards mutually acceptable solutions. Enclosed with this newsletter is a copy of the interim agreement letter.

## **ASPHALT INDEXING MOVES FORWARD**

RAMCA continues to meet with Henrico County purchasing officials in an effort to encourage the County to adopt some form of indexing for liquid asphalt. RAMCA initially proposed adopting the VDOT indexing program some months ago. The county came back with an alternate proposal using the federal Consumer Price Index as a guide. As a result of a follow-up meeting held in late October, Both RAMCA and the County are now taking a further look at each other's proposals before meeting again. Both sides, however, have expressed confidence that a mutually agreeable solution can be reached by year's end.

## **RAMCA TO MEET WITH HENRICO COUNTY PUBLIC UTILITY OFFICIALS**

On a periodic basis, RAMCA's Technical Cooperative Committee schedules meetings with representatives of local government to exchange ideas and stay abreast of changes impacting both the flow and cost of construction. The next such meeting is with officials from Henrico County's Department of Public Utilities and is scheduled for November 15<sup>th</sup>. RAMCA members who have an agenda item for this meeting are urged to contact the RAMCA office in advance of the meeting date. We encourage your input as these meetings are designed to assist RAMCA members, and have traditionally yielded positive results.

## **DAMAGE COST RECOVERY – RAMCA CONTINUES TO PUSH**

RAMCA continues to lead the charge, however uphill it may be, to develop an Alternate Dispute Resolution process (ADR) to assist both excavators and utilities in reaching resolution on claims associated with damage to underground utilities. In many instances, contentious claims either end up in an expensive civil court proceeding, or are turned over to collections agencies by utilities creating a contentious collection procedure that bears little resemblance to a fair allocation of costs associated with the damage.

RAMCA has researched New Jersey's recent legislation creating an ADR process for underground damage claims, which by all accounts is working well for all stakeholders. RAMCA, working in conjunction with senior staff at the State Corporation Commission, continues to press Virginia utilities for some ADR option. We should know by year's end if that effort has been successful.

## **WELCOME NEW MEMBER**

RAMCA is proud to announce that a former RAMCA member, J.W. Burress, Inc. has rejoined the association as an Associate Member. We welcome back the Burress team, represented by James Bulebush, Tom Cunningham, and Mike Bloebaum. Check out the RAMCA website for more info and contact numbers for RAMCA's newest member.

## RAMCA SUMMER GOLF AT MATTAPONI SPRINGS PRAISED

RAMCA members who participated in the Annual Jack Bargamin Summer Golf Outing were pretty impressed with the quality of the facilities at Mattaponi Springs Golf Course. It was a picture perfect day and participation and sponsorships helped ensure the success of this event. RAMCA would like to thank our Grand Prize Sponsor – R.M.C. Contractors, Inc., and J.L. Gomer Equipment Co., Inc. for sponsoring both beverage carts. In addition, RAMCA appreciates the support of each and every hole and raffle sponsor and tCarter Machinery for managing signage at this event. A list of sponsors is included with this newsletter. And the winners were:

### 1st Place/First Flight

Team of J.H. Martin & Sons  
Gary Walker  
Liston Laine  
Matt Hill  
Forest Hill

Closest to the Pin-First Flight-Chuck Pitslar

### 1st Place/Second Flight

Team of Griffin Pipe  
Wes Sheffield  
Bryan Higgens  
Jeff Tyler  
Mark Collins

Closest to the Pin-Second Flight-Gary Hollowell

### 1st Place/Third Flight

Team of RSC Equipment Rental  
Don Martin  
Kelly Williams  
Stuart Montjoy  
Joe Schleigh

Closest to the Pin-Third Flight-Wayne Banty

### 1st Place/Fourth Flight

Team of Southers Concrete  
Fonzy Southers, Jr.  
Tony Southers  
Kevin Pruitt  
David Richardson

Longest Drive-Fourth Flight-Tony Southers

### 2nd Place/First Flight

Team of National Waterworks  
Keith Young  
Joe Sanders  
John Hurran  
Preston Mitchell

Longest Drive-First Flight– Liston Laine

### 2nd Place/Second Flight

Team of BB&T DeJarnette & Paul  
Brandon Pulliam  
Rusty Smith  
Chris Evans  
Brent Davis

Longest Drive-Second Flight-Jeff Tyler

### 2nd Place/Third Flight

Team of Vulcan Materials  
Wayne Banty  
Dick Reese  
Jay Gammon  
Todd Miller

Longest Drive-Third Flight-Kelly Williams

### 2nd Place/Fourth Flight

Team of Hanson Pipe  
Mason Ayers  
David Allen  
Don Wagner  
Charlie Bennett

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**RAMCA's FIRST PIGEON SHOOT SCHEDULED FOR NEXT SPRING**

RAMCA is in the process of planning a new activity for members to enjoy, while providing much needed support for an essential RAMCA service. Each year, the RAMCA Political Action Committee (the RAMCA PAC) contributes thousands of dollars to state legislators who are supportive of our industry. Every so often, the RAMCA PAC needs to be replenished in order to sustain this effort. State law requires that only PAC dollars be used by the association to support candidates for office, and that those funds be segregated from all other association funds.

RAMCA is planning to host a day of sporting clays next April, which will be used as the primary PAC fundraising event in 2007. Five man teams will compete for trophies and prizes that will be presented at an awards dinner immediately following the event. The tentative date for this event is April 29<sup>th</sup>. So RAMCA shooters, be thinking of putting together your five-man team for what promises to be an annual event in support of your association's political action activities.

**ANNUAL MEETING & SLATE OF OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS FOR 2007**

The Annual Meeting of the association is scheduled for November 16<sup>th</sup> at the Sheraton South Hotel. All RAMCA committee chairmen, as well as the Treasurer, President, and Executive Director, will present reports. In addition, the membership will vote on a slate of nominees for the 2007 RAMCA Board of Directors. The 2007 slate of nominees is enclosed with this newsletter. Additional nominations may be made from the floor at the Annual Meeting.