



## 757 Recovery & Resilience Action Plan Committee Members' Insights Regarding Regionalism

August 17, 2020

### Background:

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The **757 Recovery & Resilience Action Plan** is a dynamic planning resource and implementation framework being led by a coalition of Hampton Roads' lead business organizations. The primary goal of this initiative is to accelerate our region's economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

This work is being inspired by regional thought leaders and subject matter experts, advanced by 10 active committees, supported by a virtual planning platform, and informed by the latest research to facilitate regional collaboration and coordination.

Over 20 thought leaders and subject matter experts have shared their perspectives and inspirations for this planning process through a series of videos being shared with the region's business community and media. Videos released to date can be accessed at <https://www.757recovery.com/blog/videos>.

The 10 active committees include the following:

- Wellness and Healthcare
- Target Industries
- Infrastructure and Connectivity
- Travel/Tourism/Hospitality/Food
- Organizational Collaboration
- Small Business/Retail
- Maritime Collaboration
- Innovation
- 757 Placemaking and Place Marketing
- Plan Integration and Economic Impact

Each committee is composed of approximately 10 to 12 members and is being led by one of our region's most senior business leaders. Talented and energetic next generation young professionals are serving as committee vice-chairs. Old Dominion University Strome College of Business' leaders and students are supporting each committee.

The entire planning process is being organized and advanced through an innovative digital basecamp and communications infrastructure housed on [www.757Recovery.com](http://www.757Recovery.com).

In addition, all committees are being informed by ongoing qualitative and quantitative research. The third wave of the 757 Business Leaders Survey orchestrated by the coalition of lead business organizations is dedicated to key issues being studied by the committees. SIR – the Alliance’s research and strategy partner – is facilitating this important research support and assisting with the plan’s development.

The **757 Recovery & Resilience Action Plan** will culminate this fall with a game plan that will be shared with the region’s business community leaders and elected officials. Immediate implementation will follow, ensuring we accelerate our region’s economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Document Purpose & Organization

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As part of the dynamic planning process, all committee members were asked to respond to a series of open-end questions about the Hampton Roads region and their committee’s specific topic area. Each committee now has a PowerPoint report on how their members answered topic area questions. All of these reports are posted on [www.757Recovery.com](http://www.757Recovery.com).

This document presents how all committee members answered the regional questions. Specifically:

- What are the challenges and opportunities of a regional approach?
- How can we build and implement a successful regional approach?
- What will it take to build confidence in a regional approach?
- What personal role could you play?

The remainder of this document is organized around each of the four regional questions, presenting the broad themes that emerged from SIR’s review of committee members’ input. Sample verbatim comments are included that capture the spirit and direction of all comments related to each theme.

This document is posted on [www.757Recovery.com](http://www.757Recovery.com) as part of the growing number of inputs supporting the **757 Recovery & Resilience Action Plan**.

## What are the challenges and opportunities of a regional approach?

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### **CHALLENGES**

This one verbatim comment sums up almost all comments regarding challenges with a regional approach:

*Challenges include time constraints; lack of shared vision or mission; lack of clear goals; lack of awareness of issues or issue clarity; asymmetric relationships for power sharing and decision-making; lack of effective leadership; pace of change and the scale of issues too great; scarcity of individuals who have the requisite KSAs, including ability to be an effective boundary crosser; turnover in persons involved; lack of skill at tapping into the diversity that is resident among participants; resource hoarding; competing demands; lack of awareness and relationships; lack of trust; partnership fatigue or saturation.*

### **Lack of Focus**

*Our challenge is not to change the “old narrative,” it is to forget it and remain laser focused on the future. We are behind the ball when it comes to a regional approach, so we need to pick up some speed in the right direction to try to make up some ground.*

## **Decision Drivers that Pit Local and Regional Interests Against Each Other**

*The regional approach sounds great in theory. The biggest challenge is and will always be the need for each municipality to generate as much revenue for themselves as possible. Take for example each cities tourism board. Norfolk and VB have worked independently forever.*

*I think the biggest challenge we all face is in overcoming political boundaries and the decision drivers that pit local vs. regional interest. Even within localities, district and ward systems encourage myopic thinking in elected officials. This impacts everyone in the community because the public policy framework creates the rules for what is possible.*

## **Political Will**

*The biggest challenge we face in a unified, regional approach is the failure of some local politicians to accept the critical need to tackle issues regionally. The failure to bring the Tide Light rail to Virginia Beach is a great example of this. Another example is the failure to properly develop the outlet mall in Norfolk. Recently, casinos have been widely discussed. Instead of one, great casino/resort, Norfolk and Portsmouth are now going to compete against each other building two casinos. These failures cause us to lose out against other cities.*

## **Partisanship in Local Elections**

*We live in polarizing times and when we let the noise of national politics creep into our local elections, we lose focus on the things we can do together to make a local impact. There are no blue streets or red streets, republican schools or democrat schools. Local elections should be non-partisan.*

## **The Dillon Rule**

*There's no major regional governance or advisory body with the power to tax. The Dillon Rule limits the free market of ideas and approaches available to localities when it comes to collaborative economic investment. With only a few exceptions, there are no regional bodies that have the authority to levy taxes or fees for major infrastructure projects or shared/critical services.*

## **Lack of Incentives for Cooperation Among Governments**

*Localities tend to compete against one another, instead of working together, at mutual cost and benefit. There needs to be more economic incentives for localities to cooperate, and mechanisms for cost/benefit sharing arrangements.*

## **Specific Needs**

### Transit:

*We need an overhaul of our public transportation to assist our most vulnerable populations.*

*Lack of desirable mass transit system that connects the entire area together.*

### Flooding/SLR:

*We need to address the coastal flooding/sea level rise concerns.*

### Air Travel:

*As long as we have two regional airports that handle commercial flights and limited direct flights, we will continue to have a hard time recruiting visitors and new residents to our area.*

### Schools:

*Underachieving school systems*

## **Marketing**

*Lack of a coordinated marketing strategy to celebrate the qualities that are across the region in an equivalent way. The entity may exist but needs to be more comprehensive and use all media available.*

*Convincing people that Hampton Roads is more than just the city/area they live in.*

*More focus should be given on how the whole adds up to more than just the sum of its parts.*

*There needs to be greater confidence that the return on investment will be greater as a whole vs. the individual parts. A second but no less significant challenge will be to convince the participating businesses, that this strategic change will result in their success.*

## **Coordination**

*We still do a very poor job of coordinating the dozens of business organizations within the 757. To name just a few. The Chamber, DNC, CBDA, Ghent Business Association, Retail Alliance, the BBB, The VIBE district, Olde Towne Association, TBA, HRRRA, etc. While the Alliance, the Chamber and SBDC are together, we've yet to bring all of these business organizations to the table together. What opportunities are we missing, by not working together?*

## **OPPORTUNITIES**

Members spoke of opportunities related to specific assets and the recent momentum regarding regionalism.

### **Specific Assets**

*We have assets through the roof – unmatched by any region in the country, truthfully.*

*We have strong anchor tenants: NASA and Jefferson Lab for federal R&D, many universities for research grants, Huntington-Ingalls for defense contracts. We need to identify ways to bring these together so that the whole is more than the sum of the parts.*

*High-speed broadband: Broadband is the critical infrastructure of the future, and the fastest high-speed internet in the world is piped into our community. We can all benefit from it if we have an off-ramp that brings it into our schools, businesses, medical facilities, etc.*

*Military Presence: Our localities all share a strong connection to our nation's military. It's a major unifier that can also serve as an ignitor for new and emerging business around science, technology and cybersecurity.*

*Military/federal assets that offer potential partnerships.*

*Skilled Workforce: Our history as a shipbuilding and repair hub means that we can excel in the skilled trades that are required for new and emerging industries, such as offshore wind and other forms of alternative energy.*

*Subsea Data Cables and the Municipal Fiber Network: As a landing site for subsea data cables delivering industrial strength data speeds, we were fortunate to have seized upon the opportunity to create a regional broadband authority.*

*Port Authority's Expansion into Richmond and James River Barge Traffic: The Port Authority's expanded presence into Richmond area brings Hampton Roads and Richmond closer together as an economic unit.*

*Quality of Life: The best opportunity we have would be to attract talent from outside of our region and promote the great quality of life and rich cultural, natural and historic resources our region has to offer.*

*Healthcare: Concentration of health assets, telehealth, center of excellence.*

### **Growing Success and Momentum for Regionalism**

*Re-Invent Hampton Roads and GoVirginia are identifying key industry areas and helping to direct capital to, and incentivize, projects where localities cooperate.*

*Hampton Roads Regional Transit Program: \$20M in dedicated funding for better bus service and connectivity throughout the region.*

*Road Funding Model Developed by HRTAC, HRTPO, VDOT and CTB: The funding model, and SMART Scale prioritization process, developed by HRTAC, HRTPO, VDOT and CTB is a best practice model for delivering large-scale highway transportation projects. Aspects of this model should be used to fund other large-scale infrastructure initiatives, such as combatting sea level rise and coastal/neighborhood flooding.*

## How can we build and implement a successful regional approach?

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### Understand, Package, and Share Our Data

*We must understand the data that's in/around our region and leverage that data to grow and be stronger. For example, Norfolk can claim that it's home to the world's largest Navy base or Hampton can claim its home to NASA Langley Research Center. The data is more than just jobs it creates or the economic impact that it provides. Where do these employees live? Where are they spending their money? Where are their children going to school? That data will quickly tell the story on how our region is weaved together in a unique way.*

*Sharing data to make a stronger case. Businesses that are expanding or relocating are doing so because they are on top of their game. They are moving or expanding to best position themselves. If they are looking for the best possible outcome, we must provide them with the best possible solution. Think about Tesla's recent decision to move build their newest gigafactory in Austin, TX. They know exactly what they need and are looking for to even consider the location. There isn't a single locality within Hampton Roads that could attract a business like Tesla. Together, there is a great potential. Access to talent with education and DoD resources, NASA, shipping ports, a retired Ford factory in Norfolk or land in western HRVA, affordable housing for its 7,000 new jobs. We can't compete without a win for one is a win for all mentality and without sharing data with one another.*

### Build Awareness of What's at Stake

*Getting people to recognize that our status quo does not set our future generations up for success.*

### Define the Core Issue

*One of the biggest hurdles then is effective dialog and communication. Clearly articulate problem statements that are agreed to and accepted as truly regional issues requiring a regional answer. And then the question to answer is how will a regional approach benefit individuals players in a way that seems fair.*

*I believe that there is a difference between Southside and the Peninsula. Southside offers nationally known beaches and music venues. Whereas, the Peninsula offers beaches that are mostly visited by residents. Out of town travelers don't visit these beaches because they are too small. The Peninsula has amusement parks with Busch Gardens, Water Country and Historical sites with Yorktown and Williamsburg. I'm not sure if we have enough input yet to really determine the challenges and opportunities. I believe a challenge will be to get everyone on the same page.*

*We have to see sea-level rise and flooding as a common threat and use it to bind together and create a new economy around sustainability and resiliency, in partnership with our university and non-profit stakeholders.*

### Change the Culture

*Change the culture to a sense that a win for one is a win for all. People today have the mindset that a win for a specific locality is only a win for that specific locality. That isn't true. How many residents of Hampton Roads actually live and work in the same locality? My guess is very few people. A win for VA Beach is likely a win for Chesapeake. We must support each other.*

### Build on Current Momentum

*HR has begun a number of initiatives to build a regional brand and direction, such as the Alliance, this Recovery/Resilience Framework underway, the 757 campaign; however, the challenge is to continue and build on this early momentum*

*Build upon and strengthen the networked collaboration that is being nurtured by the Alliance and partner organizations. This is the opportunity to leverage the current disruption to do exactly what is being undertaken through the current initiative. This is an opportunity to strengthen the "core capacity for regionalism in Hampton Roads. This will need to be stabilized and solidified, with the Alliance as a central node to continue to nurture and advance inter-organizational collaboration across many areas.*

*The opportunity lies in the well-established partnerships that already exist across the 757 that have demonstrated they can work and have resulted in large-scale projects that have brought opportunity across the region.*

### **Build More Trusting Relationships**

*Building trusting relationships with leaders across the region.*

*We need to relate to people on their level and identify the regional approach as a solution to their needs across each industry, city, and sector. This can be done by identifying brand ambassadors to help champion the region within their communities. However, the local media, businesses, and organizations need to echo this momentum and provide supporting evidence on the benefits of regionalism.*

### **Create More Public-private Partnerships**

*We need to ensure our local governments are partnering with local businesses that have invested significant resources in the region and employ our residents. It's not enough to say that the local governments are acting regionally, we need the public sector to partner with the private sector in that regionalism.*

### **Market Ourselves – Tell Our Story**

*Development of a strong communication strategy.*

*We must control the narrative. Let's be honest, we do a terrible job telling our story. We leave our success up to the local media that is often fear based narratives trying to generate clicks, eyeballs and ad revenue. If you objectively looked at our headlines for a week or a month, would you be tempted to relocate your home or business to our region? We have some of the best kept secrets in our backyard. We have a serious marketing problem in our region. We must control the narrative. Once we do, the mindset and belief in our region will follow.*

*We saw great momentum and a slew of regional achievements made as we began 2020. We need to do a better job of singing our own praises and the messaging needs to help frame our achievements in a broader regional context.*

*People are still (unfortunately) singing the same narrative that our localities do not play well together in the sandbox. Luckily, HRPDC, the Alliance, ReInvent Hampton Roads and the Chambers, amongst other regional coalitions are pushing back on this false narrative.*

*We must tell the story better and have a regional entity, such as the Alliance, to do so. Businesses should never solely promote the city they are located in but instead be promoting the entire region and our incredible assets. We should all be proud to be a part of the 757.*

*I'm not sure if it will take a Mayor of Hampton Roads or what kind of political figure or body but something drastic must change to ensure we're telling the same story and promoting one another and no longer competing.*

*More locally-grown celebrities taking an active and visible role helping our community.*

*More stories in the media of examples of localities working together (instead of perpetuating the same negative narrative that we don't work together – since there are lots of good recent examples otherwise.*

*There needs to be a 757 Logo. Other cities (notably Richmond) have a logo that builds regional pride. Logos are important, because people use them as artifacts and a source of pride. They will put the logo on T-Shirts, they will put it on stickers on the backs of their car. Stickers can be stuck onto light poles, and people driving around the area can take note of the number of people having regional pride. In effect a "757" logo can be a "flag", a symbol of a new era in Hampton Roads.*

### **Create Financial Incentives**

*The incentives for individual cities and counties to work in their own interest and not coordinate/deconflict with other cities.*

*We must make sure that the regional approach is supported financially in order to be successful.*

### **Develop New Leaders**

*We've seen tremendous growth as a region over the last 40 years, however many of the same people who grew our region are still in positions of power. New leaders with a regional worldview are needed to help encourage their localities to cooperate.*

### **Explore New Approaches and Think Big**

*The idea of attracting the corporate worker rather than the corporate entity is an interesting one — talent attraction rather than business attraction. This is an idea that can benefit from a regional marketing approach as the attributes of our smaller cities will be increasingly in demand post-COVID.*

*Some of our regional organizations need to be restructured to be able to get the work done that they are committed to doing.*

*Let's use the \$5.2 billion dollars we regionally, collectively secured for highways, roads, tunnels and bridges as a model and do the same for public transit, as well as resiliency efforts, to start.*

### **Have Early, Visible Wins**

*Funding from all the local jurisdictions for specific targeted efforts. Visible projects that make the goals manifest.*

*We need to identify any low hanging fruit (tasks and strategies that are low/no cost and easily implemented) and accomplish as many as possible by the end of the year. Ex: Do we have a letter of support signed by all localities that can be included in economic development proposals sent out by those individual localities?*

*Big ticket items paid for by I:I investment, such as roads and transportation-related improvements, or a regional sports/entertainment arena.*

### **Create a Plan to Make this Happen**

*A plan that has priorities with the backing of all of the cities in Hampton Roads.*

*We need a plan with goals, objectives, approach.*

*Unification of need(s), goals, objectives, and expectations.*

## **What will it take to build confidence in a regional approach?**

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### **Leadership**

*Leadership buy in and participation. Community events.*

*Selection of 3-5 key leaders that are seen across the region.*

*We've seen tremendous growth as a region over the last 40 years, however many of the same people who grew our region are still in positions of power. New leaders with a regional worldview are needed to help encourage their localities to cooperate.*

*Current regional organizations must take an even more visible role — Reinvent, Alliance, etc*

*Entities already regional (such as ODU, other universities) must take leadership roles*

*Business has to force municipalities to work together. Get it together or off we go (PRA faced this with certain taxes and moved a lot of jobs to NC as a result — it got changed). I think something like the Alleghany Conference is needed. How do we get CEOs to own this region, especially if they came from somewhere else and don't care where they are located? We have to make it a grassroots driven effort so that constituents and employees say if you want us, you have to figure this out.*

## Quick Wins

*Quick wins. Leverage quick wins and build upon those wins. The wins will multiply, and the support will follow.*

*Results, results, results.*

*Having some tangible progress to point to instead of another initiative or another working group.*

*We need out of the box examples of collaborative efforts. It does not have to be the entire region and could possibly be only two localities. The tourism recovery advertising campaign currently with Norfolk and Virginia Beach is one example of a small effort. Success is evident. From this one effort can a conversation begin to combine the two DMOs?*

## Culture

*People must adopt a "win for one, is a win for all" mentality or else those wins may not get shared.*

*Something drastic must change to ensure we're telling the same story and promoting one another and no longer competing.*

## Messaging and Communications

*Communicate, promote and communicate some more.*

*Common and consistent messaging across the regional materials, sites, digital and social.*

*If there is already momentum or tangible accomplishments, we need to better market them.*

*We must tell the story better and have a regional entity, such as the Alliance, to do so. Businesses should*

*Be Better Cheerleaders: We saw great momentum and a slew of regional achievements made as we began 2020. We need to do a better job of singing our own praises and the messaging needs to help frame our achievements in a broader regional context.*

*A good strategy that benefits all must be marketed to the localities in a convincing manner. They must all see benefits clearly.*

*Each city needs to dedicate a portion of their budget for regional marketing.*

## Have a Vision and Plan

*A vision needs to be produced that illustrates how the various parts of the region work together.*

*Communicate to all stake holders the vision and plan. To engage multiple solutions that can be integrated together*

*We must find simple, common goals that all businesses and governments can rally around.*

## Build Broad Support

*Build broad community commitment for regional initiatives. We need to develop our goals with broad public input across socioeconomic levels and then build support through an education campaign that is widely disseminated. Our best initiatives can die in a civic league, city council or church meeting.*

## Organizational Structure

*Some of our regional organizations need to be restructured to be able to get the work done that they are committed to doing.*

*Unified Plan*

*There needs to be a unified plan with regional, overarching goals that will allow everyone to be successful through a symbiotic approach. Brings to mind John Nash's theory on Governing Dynamics for which he won a Nobel Prize*

*Refine the complexity down to three or four principles on which all components of our regional economy rely.*

### **Go Big**

*This may be extreme but the moratorium on municipal annexation needs to be lifted in Virginia. Hampton Roads is balkanized, and cannot become one, unified city/metro because of the inability for cities to annex each other. The simple, brutal math of it is, is that if there were less localities, then there are less policy makes with less competing visions for how to develop the region. This moratorium has crippled Hampton Roads for 60 years. Despite our best efforts here, it will remain divided until annexations can happen again. We can only lighten the effects of this division.*

### **This Process**

*THIS! What we are doing right now, facilitating a movement with regional leaders that are regionally minded and that are willing to spend the time and energy to come up with a workable plan that will benefit our community.*

## **What personal role could you play?**

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### **Provide Personal Support**

*Donating my time and treasure to worthwhile causes that have a regional impact.*

*Inspiring others by words and deeds.*

*Personally, celebrating the wins of our communities.*

*Being vocal, at the appropriate time, and in the appropriate way, to push for lasting change.*

*Maintaining and improving my relationships with key decision makers in my community and pressing for change.*

### **Advancing a shared story / message**

*Using regional language and identifiers in our own business.*

*Creating the template, identifying the brand ambassadors, and igniting the regional momentum.*

*Sharing important information with those businesses who aren't always privy to resources that can help them remain viable.*

### **Supporting new, young and emerging leaders**

*Finding ways for new, young and emerging leaders to find their voice and give back to the community.*

## **Summary**

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Committee members' input answering the four regional questions point to 10 unassailable conclusions:

1. Regionalism is viewed as a critical component of the **757 Recovery & Resilience Action Plan** (The Action Plan).
2. There is recent success and momentum with the 757's regionalism movement.
3. However, there is still an enormous amount of work to do in order to realize the full potential of the 757 as a vital region.
4. People see the Action Plan as a promising pathway forward.

5. Everyone sees many of the challenges that must be overcome, opportunities to leverage, and strategies to move forward.
6. Perhaps given conclusion number five, people see the need to focus the Action Plan in order to get everyone on board and deliver results.
7. The Action Plan needs to include a vision, focused priorities, action steps, internal and external market communications and impact measurement.
8. Most point to the need to tell our region's story in a more thoughtful and deliberate manner.
9. The Action Plan must have early wins that can demonstrate its immediate value and long-term promise.
10. Committee members are willing to remain engaged to help execute the Action Plan, especially as ambassadors.

These conclusions have inspired the addition of regional-related questions to the third wave of the 757 Business Leaders Survey. This survey is now underway.

757 Business Leaders Survey research findings and the insights in this document will be added to every committee plan, when finalized, as key inputs for the Plan Integration & Economic Impact Committee's work. This integration work will take place in late August through September, creating the **757 Recovery & Resilience Action Plan**, a plan that will ensure we accelerate our region's economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

On behalf of the coalition of 757 business organizations, we are so grateful that so many people are volunteering to make our region stronger, together.

For additional information on this report, please contact Steve Harrison, VP of Business Intelligence, at the Alliance by email at [sharrison@757alliance.com](mailto:sharrison@757alliance.com), or by phone at (757) 893-2023