



“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.” Partnerships, as Helen Keller rightly pointed out, are key to overcoming obstacles and achieving goals. NVTC’s partnership with the Commonwealth, now stronger than ever, has allowed both entities to move forward with initiatives that reinforce our complimentary missions. From the Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) to the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) to the Governor’s office, there is a high level of engagement and support that adds value to the work we do at NVTC.

Our efforts to expand travel options in the I-66 and I-395 corridors under the [Commuter Choice](#) brand is a prime example. Recognizing the need to move more people more efficiently through the corridors, the Commonwealth tapped NVTC to implement a program that would achieve that objective. Commuter Choice has invested in new bus service and park-and-ride lots, among other transit-related enhancements, that are improving the commutes of thousands of toll payers, as well as those who choose to take transit.

With the [summer shutdown of six Metrorail stations](#) on the Blue and Yellow lines south of National Airport looming, DRPT and the CTB stepped up to [fund mitigation strategies](#) proposed by the City of Alexandria, Fairfax County, OmniRide, Virginia Railway Express (VRE)/Amtrak, and Virginia Department of Transportation. The \$3.6 million approved in March will fund supplemental bus service, vanpools, promotion of park-and-ride lots for slugging, and the subsidizing of a VRE step-up ticket cost to expand Amtrak usage, among other things.

When the General Assembly last year mandated that state transit capital and operating funding be prioritized, DRPT turned to the Transit Service Delivery Advisory Committee (TSDAC), on which NVTC has a seat, for assistance. Over the course of many months, the two organizations worked to establish methods for evaluating and allocating funds. DRPT listened carefully when objections were raised and worked earnestly to come up with alternatives. While the result may not have been perfect, it was far improved due to DRPT’s engagement with TSDAC.

As [DRPT implements the prioritization process](#) for capital funding, several major projects supporting Amazon’s second headquarters stand a strong chance of receiving funds. The evaluation and scoring are not yet complete but projects such as the Crystal City Metro Station East Entrance and the Potomac Yard Metrorail Station South Entry initially appear to have been rated well. The Commonwealth appreciates the value of rail to economic development and quality of life and supports our efforts here in Northern Virginia to maintain and enhance it.



Executive Director

Inside this Issue

- [DASH Mobile Ticketing Pilot](#)..... 2
- [Review of Commuter Choice Market](#)
- [Research Proposals Underway](#)..... 2
- [Art on the ART bus](#) 2
- [Changes Coming to Way State Allocates](#)
- [Operating Assistance](#)..... 3
- [DRPT Reviews Transit Capital Requests](#) 3
- [Virginia Explores Hyperloop Technology](#) 3
- [Metrorail Safety Commission Certified](#)..... 4
- [WMATA Explores Late-Night On-Demand Rideshare Pilot](#) 4
- [Automatic Door Opening to Speed Metro](#) .. 4
- [CTB to Fund Metrorail Summer Shutdown Mitigation Projects](#)..... 5
- [WMATA Web Page to Help Riders Navigate Metrorail Summer Shutdown](#) 5
- [NVTC Welcomes New Staff](#) 6
- [Metrorail Track Work on Hold in April](#) 7
- [DC Suburbs Rank High in Commute Costs](#)... 7
- [VRE Releases New RIDE Magazine](#) 8
- [DASH Turns 35](#)..... 8
- [Registration Open for VTA Conference](#) 8
- [Registration Open for Bike to Work Day](#) 8



Northern Virginia Transportation Commission
2300 Wilson Blvd., Ste. 230
Arlington, VA 22201
www.novaltransit.org



Key Dates

Apr 4	NVTC Monthly Meeting
Apr 11	NVTA Monthly Meeting
Apr 11	WMATA Board Meeting
Apr 9-10	CTB Monthly Meeting
Apr 12	VRE Operations Board Meeting
Apr 17	TPB Monthly Meeting
Apr 25	WMATA Board Meeting
May 2	NVTC Monthly Meeting

NVTC Assists DASH in Selecting Vendor for Mobile Ticketing Pilot



With NVTC’s assistance, DASH plans to implement a mobile ticketing pilot program, prior to Metrorail’s summer station shutdown, to demonstrate the viability of such a product in this region. NVTC staff and consultants helped the bus system select a vendor to implement the mobile application following the issu-

ance of a request for proposals. DASH was to announce its selection in late March. The transit agency applied for a Department of Rail and Public Transportation demonstration grant, for which NVTC provided a letter of support. The pilot program follows publication of the 2018 Northern Virginia Regional Fare Collection Strategic Plan which recommended, among other things, deployment of both a regional mobile app and platform.

Review of Commuter Choice Market Research Proposals Underway

NVTC staff is evaluating eight proposals submitted in response to the request for assistance with market research and marketing communications strategy for the I-66 Commuter Choice program. An evaluation committee, comprised of four marketing and communications staff from several member jurisdictions, will score

each proposal independently. Later in April, the group will meet with NVTC staff to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each proposal and put forth a recommendation for a contractor. NVTC staff will bring the recommendation and score details to the Commission in May.

New “Art on the ART Bus” Exhibit Tells Arlingtonians’ Migration Stories

ART riders are in for a novel commute experience as the next iteration of [Art on the ART Bus](#) rolls out. The ART bus is unique in Arlington Transit’s fleet, featuring original works of art in place of advertisements. Rotating between different ART transit routes, the bus has been sharing a variety of art exhibitions since December of 2010. The program is intended to connect commuters with unique works of art as well as their destinations. The newest exhibit, “Immigration/Assimilation,” is the program’s 23rd installation. Local artist Gail Rebhan’s works tell the migration stories of six Arlington families

over several generations through historical documents, portraits and other artifacts. “Every family reflects American history in some way,” says Rebhan, whose own family fled rising anti-Semitism in Europe during the 1930s. “I want people to understand this commonality about this country, that everybody came from some country of origin at some point in their family history.” The program kicked off in March with an opening ceremony at the Bozman Government Center and will rotate throughout the ART route network to give commuters a chance to admire the exhibit.



Changes Coming to Way State Allocates Transit Operating Assistance

A new formula for allocating Virginia's transit operating assistance will take effect in fiscal year 2020. The [Commonwealth Transportation Board approved the approach](#) at its March meeting in response to a 2018 state legislative mandate. The adopted formula, while not ideal for all transit agencies serving the NVTC region,

was modified to decrease the impact on longer-haul commuter bus services. The General Assembly this year included a ["hold harmless" provision](#) to provide up to \$3 million total to transit agencies negatively affected by changes to the allocation formula.

DPRT Reviews Requests for Transit Capital Funding

The Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) has completed its [initial evaluation and scoring of capital projects](#) under its new [Making Efficient + Responsible Investments in Transit](#) (MERIT) program, which prioritizes projects for state funding. The four major capital projects are all in the vicinity of National Landing. The Crystal City Potomac Yard Transitway, Crystal City Metro Station, Potomac Yard Metrorail Station and Route 1 Metroway Expansion will help support Amazon's HQ2. Scores for the nearly 280 state of good repair projects ranged from 15 to 97, while scores for the 85 minor enhancement projects ranged from 8 to 35. Final project selections and funding levels are still being determined, as many projects also are seek-

ing SMART SCALE funding. The projects are slated to be voted on at the Commonwealth Transportation Board's June meeting.

Major Expansion Scoring

- **4 Major Expansion Projects scored**
- **Project Benefit Scores:**
 - » *Crystal City Potomac Yard Transitway - 23.5*
 - » *Crystal City Metro Station East Entrance - 37.7*
 - » *Potomac Yard Metrorail Station South Entry - 47.7*
 - » *Route 1 Metroway Expansion - 17.6*
- **MERIT scores (Benefit/Transit Capital Cost) will be developed once the transit capital share is determined**

Commonwealth Investigates Potential for Hyperloop Technology



Virginia transit officials flew to California in January to explore a tunnel dug by Elon Musk's Boring Company, according to a report in the [Virginia Mercury](#).

The trip was referenced during a presentation about a new Long Bridge and DC2RVA high-speed rail at a [Commonwealth Transportation Board \(CTB\) subcommittee meeting](#) in March.

The CTB has been discussing investments in the state's rail infrastructure, including the \$1.3 billion bridge be-

tween Virginia and the District of Columbia. Whether such improvements might be rendered obsolete by Musk's hyperloop technology, should it advance beyond the experimental stage, had raised concerns.

Virginia officials, including CTB Member Scott Kasproicz and DRPT Director Jennifer Mitchell, reportedly met with company leaders and took a drive through the tunnel, concluding that nothing they saw would lead them to change their approach to transit in the near term. Kasproicz indicated that the Boring Company is decades away from delivering usable, meaningful new transit options. "The reality is it's a great idea, but I'm not sure its time has come," he is quoted as saying.

Certification of Washington Metrorail Safety Commission Achieved



The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) [reinstated local oversight of Metrorail](#) in March when it certified the [Washington Metrorail Safety Commission](#) (WMSC). The WMSC was created in 2017 to comply with a federal law requiring state safety oversight of rail transit systems. The certification, which came a month in advance of the April 15 deadline, allowed the FTA to release \$48.5 million it had previously withheld from transit agencies in Virginia, Maryland and

the District of Columbia as a penalty for not having an approved state safety oversight body. The WMSC is legally and financially independent of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority and will act as Metrorail’s official safety watchdog with the power to implement safety policy. FTA’s action [“ensures that state safety oversight of WMATA has the appropriate professional, legal, and financial resources at its disposal at all times,”](#) said Jennifer Mitchell, director of the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation.

WMATA Seeks Proposals for Late-Night, Discounted On-Demand Rides

WMATA has issued a request for proposals for a pilot program that will provide discounted on-demand transportation for late-night employees. The service, to be offered between midnight and 4 a.m., would cover the first \$3 dollars of a ride-hailing or taxi fare, up to 10 trips per week per registered rider. The program is designed to help workers affected by the late-night closing of Metrorail for track maintenance. The pilot program’s budget will be capped at \$1 million. Responses from interested vendors are due by April 10 with a target starting date this summer. Results from the pilot will be reviewed to determine whether to extend the program beyond one year.



Automatic Door Opening Could Speed Metrorail

A seemingly small change could make Metrorail faster. [Current testing of automatic door opening](#) on a handful of trains may lead to quicker off- and on-boarding, enhanced safety, and improved reliability. The automatic system, which removes the potential for human error resulting in a “wrong side” door opening, allows doors to open as soon as the train is stopped at the proper location. Currently, Metro requires its train operators to wait five seconds before manually opening doors to confirm doors open on the correct side of the train. Metro aims to shift all trains to automatic door opening later this year if testing, training, and any required repairs proceed as anticipated.



CTB to Fund Projects Mitigating Metrorail Summer Shutdown

Potential [strategies to mitigate the effects of this summer's Metrorail shutdown](#) of six stations south of National Airport received approval from the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) in March. The strategies, which total nearly \$4.5 million, were developed by NVTC in partnership with the Department of Rail and Public Transportation, VDOT, Metro and local transit

agencies. The strategies are designed to provide travel options to impacted transit riders; educate riders on the impact to their commutes; manage demand by incentivizing the use of transit, ridesharing, flexible work schedules, and telework; and entice commuters back to Metrorail following completion of the platform reconstruction project.

	Total Cost	State Share
Bus Transit	\$1,621,137	\$1,296,910
Alternative Transportation	\$856,000	\$724,800
TDM/Marketing/Outreach	\$1,064,275	\$851,420
Highway/Operational Improvements	\$942,000	\$773,600
Total	\$4,483,412	\$3,646,730

	State Share	Local Share
City of Alexandria	\$2,182,960	\$545,740
Fairfax County	\$670,936	\$167,734
Omni Ride (PRTC)	\$176,254	\$44,063
NVTC	\$316,580	\$79,145
VRE/Amtrak (DRPT)	\$200,000	\$0
VDOT	\$100,000	\$0
Total	\$3,646,730	\$836,682

New WMATA Web Page to Help Riders Navigate Metrorail Shutdown

WMATA has [launched a web page](#) featuring a [trip planner](#) to help riders navigate this summer's [closure of six Blue and Yellow line stations](#) south of National Airport. The shutdown – from May 25 to September 2 – is needed to allow for around-the-clock platform reconstruction work. Metro plans an extensive network of free express

and local shuttle bus services during construction. The Platform Improvement Project web page includes links to local bus providers. NVTC, in partnership with WMATA, continues to coordinate the region's response to the summer shutdown.



NVTC Welcomes New Staff



Dinah Girma joins NVTC as a program analyst. She has a bachelor's degree in communication from Radford University and currently is finishing her master's degree in urban and regional planning from Virginia Tech in Alexandria. Prior to pursuing her master's, she served as an AmeriCorps VISTA - Health and Wellness Volunteer for the International Rescue Committee. As this was her second time serving, she received the U.S. President's Lifetime Achievement Award for Volunteer Service in July 2017. Dinah's five plus years of work experience have given her an array of professional and organizational skills. She enjoys photography and practices Bikram yoga on a regular basis.

Zach Smith, NVTC's new program analyst, is a researcher, advocate, and consensus builder. He comes to NVTC from the American Public Transportation Association where he worked with staff from transit agencies across the country to develop guidelines and best practices on a variety of issues related to accessibility and improving access to stations and stops. Zach is a graduate of UNC Chapel Hill with a B.A. in economics and a lifelong fan of Tarheels basketball.



Brittany Sumpter is NVTC's new grants manager. She comes to the Commission from Hampton Roads Transit where she worked as the DBE & grants coordinator. Brittany received her B.A. in business administration from the University of Florida and her J.D. from the University of Georgia School of Law. She is a native of Jacksonville, Florida and enjoys painting in her free time.



Metrorail Track Work on Hold Through End of Cherry Blossom Season

Metro is suspending most weekend track work through April 14 to accommodate residents and visitors traveling during the busy cherry blossom season. Many of Metro's highest ridership days, when weekend ridership nearly doubles, occur when the cherry trees bloom. Trains on all Metrorail lines will run at regularly scheduled intervals, departing end-of-line stations every 12 minutes on Saturdays and every 15 minutes on Sundays. At stations served by multiple lines, trains will arrive every 4-7 minutes. On the Red Line, trains will run as frequently as every 6 minutes between Shady Grove and Silver Spring during daytime hours. Metro may begin overnight track work after 10 p.m., when ridership is lighter. During cherry blossom season, weekend off-peak fares will be in effect and parking will be free at all Metro parking facilities.

In honor of the 2019 National Cherry Blossom Festival, Metro has released a limited-edition SmarTrip® card,

available in specially marked fare vending machines at all 91 stations. The cards feature an iconic image of the Jefferson Memorial surrounded by cherry blossom trees in peak bloom along the Tidal Basin.



D.C. Suburbs Top List of Nation's Most Expensive Commutes

A new study shows people driving to work from the Washington, D.C. suburbs face the most expensive commutes in the country. Half of the 20 counties in the United States with the highest commuting costs are in the region according to a [Bloomberg analysis](#) of Census Data. Charles County, Maryland tops the list, with Fauquier and Stafford counties in Virginia in the second and third

spots. In 2017 workers from Charles County spent 388 hours commuting to and from work. Commuters from Fauquier spent 352 hours in their cars, while drivers from Stafford endured 330. Almost 28 percent of commuters in Charles County leave their homes before 6 a.m. Even more from Stafford County leave that early, in most cases to battle congestion on Interstate 95.

Economic Cost of Commuting

2019 Rank	County	Metro	Opportunity Cost Score	Money Equivalent	As % Income	Total Hours Commuting	Workforce Commuting pre-6AM	Average Earnings
1	Charles MD	Washington, DC	99.3	\$14,612	19.4%	388	27.8%	\$75,254
2	Fauquier VA	Washington, DC	97.4	\$13,813	17.6%	352	20.6%	\$78,555
3	Stafford VA	Washington, DC	97.3	\$12,400	16.5%	330	28.0%	\$75,154
4	Contra Costa CA	San Francisco, CA	97.0	\$15,269	16.3%	326	17.7%	\$93,724
5	Calvert MD	Washington, DC	96.9	\$11,842	16.6%	332	28.4%	\$71,410
6	Prince William VA	Washington, DC	96.8	\$12,415	16.9%	338	22.0%	\$73,391
7	Spotsylvania VA	Washington, DC	96.1	\$11,192	16.3%	326	25.6%	\$68,698
8	Frederick MD	Washington, DC	95.2	\$11,647	15.2%	304	19.5%	\$76,580
9	Carroll MD	Baltimore, MD	94.3	\$10,976	14.6%	293	20.2%	\$75,052
10	Sussex NJ	New York, NY	93.5	\$11,585	15.5%	310	16.4%	\$74,745

Virginia Railway Express



Updates on the project to replace the Long Bridge and a recent VRE online forum can be found in the most recent edition of [RIDE magazine](#). A continuing series on the history of VRE stations highlights Fredericksburg, whose first station was built shortly after the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac Railroad was chartered in 1834 to run a line from Richmond up to the Potomac River at Aquia Creek.



The Alexandria Transit Company (DASH)



DASH celebrated its 35th anniversary in March with an open house and the unveiling of the latest addition to its fleet, the Xcelsior® by New Flyer of America. The bus features a modern, refreshed design; is lighter in weight; improves fuel economy by up to 8 percent; features ultra-low emissions; and is quieter, brighter, and more accessible to those with disabilities. DASH showcased the history of its bus service and offered a sneak peak of its fleet of the future. A staple of the Alexandria community, DASH has received numerous awards over the years including national recognition as one of the top 10 transit systems in the United States for which to work.



Virginia Transit Association



Transit industry professionals and elected leaders from across the Commonwealth will gather May 29-30 in Norfolk for the 2019 VTA Transit Conference. An Exhibitor Showcase on Wednesday kicks off the event. Highlights include the latest in technology, equipment, and best practices. NVTC has put together a Thursday morning panel discussion on *Mobile Solutions for Virginia Transit Agencies: Challenges and Opportunities*. [Register online](#).

2019 ANNUAL TRANSIT CONFERENCE



Commuter Connections



Registration for [Bike to Work Day 2019](#), organized by Commuter Connections and the Washington Area Bicyclist Association, is open. Thousands are expected to participate in the May 17 event. Bike to Work Day features 115 pit stops across the region with refreshment, giveaways, and the chance to win a new bicycle as part of a free raffle. The first 20,000 registrants receive a free T-shirt. The annual event celebrates bicycling as a fun, eco-friendly, low-cost commuting option. [Register online](#) or call 800-745-7433.

