



Executive Director Newsletter

A large background photograph shows a group of people at an event. In the foreground, a woman's hand is raised, wearing a blue ring and several bracelets. In the background, a man in a dark suit and a blue face mask waves while holding a document. To the right, three people are smiling for a photo: a man with glasses and a beard, a woman in a maroon dress with a gold necklace, and a woman in a blue blazer.

April
2022

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

NoVaTransit.org
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A Message from Kate Mattice

Each April the Washington region celebrates the return of the cherry blossoms. Their flowering signals a time of renewal and growth. This may also be the month where transit ridership blooms as we finally see a significant increase in the number workers returning to offices. In his State of the Union Address, President Joe Biden called on [federal agencies](#) to “lead by example,” which includes increasing the hours that public-facing federal offices are open for in-person appointments and services. Before the pandemic, federal workers made up about 40% of Metro riders. Their return, even if not five-days-a-week, could bring much-needed revenue for the agency, which faces a major budget shortfall in coming fiscal years. We also know that many federal contractors and other public and private companies closely follow the government’s lead.

The Washington Post [editorial board](#) agrees with the president, writing “The return of federal workers . . . would be a true signal that the nation is finally heading toward a new normal.” While the continued absence of Metro’s 7000-series railcars has led to longer wait times and more crowded conditions, we also recently learned that the agency is on track to bring back more older railcars and increase service in May.

We are also fortunate in Northern Virginia to have a robust network of other transit providers, including Virginia Railway Express, which has been running full service to provide flexibility for riders. On the bus side, all NoVa providers are running service at or near pre-pandemic level, giving riders even more options. We know that data show vehicle traffic in our region returning to normal and hope that encourages people to opt out of driving alone while returning to transit.

And we are setting our own expectations here at NVTC. While many staff members have been working in the office for months, we plan to make two-days-a-week mandatory starting in May. Similar to the president’s call, we are leading with our own example.

Executive Director

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Save the Date

April 14
Program Advisory Committee

April 19-20
Commonwealth Transportation Board

April 21
WMATA Committee

April 22
VRE Operations Board

May 5
Commission Meeting

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(Commissioners Gilroy, Tuck, Skiles, Clemente (L-R))



welcomes new Commissioners, thanks departing members

NVTC Chair Canek Aguirre swore in four new Commissioners at the March Commission meeting. House Speaker Todd Gilbert appointed Nick Clemente, Aimee Gilroy, David Skiles and John C. Tuck III. Commissioner Skiles previously served

from 2018 to 2020. He's a partner at the Vector Corporation, a Richmond-based government affairs firm. Commissioner Clemente works for the Associated Builders and Contractors of Virginia, Commissioner Gilroy works for the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy and Commissioner Tuck serves as Managing Director at Marsh USA.

The Commission also thanked four departing Commissioners for their service including former House Speaker and current House Democratic Leader Eileen Filler-Corn, along with Dels. Paul Krizek, David Reid and Richard "Rip" Sullivan. Each served from 2020 to 2022.



Program Advisory Committee reviews Commuter Choice I-66 applications



NVTC's Program Advisory Committee (PAC) met February 23 and reviewed eligible applications for [Commuter Choice on the I-66 Corridor](#). A total of six eligible applicants submitted nine applications with a total funding request of \$23.1 million. The total funding request decreased to \$22.3 million as staff confirmed details of the proposed projects with applicants, with further changes still possible. Staff conservatively anticipate a total of about \$12 million to be available to fund the two-year program. PAC Chair David Snyder presented the committee's discussion at the March Commission meeting. Meanwhile, staff scored eligible applications in March, prior to the next PAC meeting on April 14 and the expected opening of the public comment period the following day.

Committee members also heard an update on the timeline for the Envision Route 7 Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) study, which includes a public meeting and outreach in the fall of this year.

Finally, committee members strongly endorsed applying for grants from the Department of Rail and Public Transportation for development of a Northern Virginia Regional Zero-Emission Bus Strategic Plan and a Northern Virginia Regional Bus Analysis. The latter would update a review of bus coverage, gaps and opportunities conducted by NVTC in 2015 and 2016.

NVTC urges replacement of state transportation funding

NVTC [sent a letter](#) February 21 to key members of the Virginia Senate asking them to protect funding for public transit. [Senate Bill 451](#) would have a significant and recurring negative impact on Virginia's public roadways and transit systems by reducing transportation funding in the Commonwealth by \$135 million dollars a year. NVTC urges senators to continue working to identify a replacement, dedicated revenue source.

The tax on food and hygiene products targeted in the bill accounts for 20% of all transportation revenues in Virginia. In addition to funds for highway repaving and maintenance, these revenues directly fund the operations and maintenance of public transit systems, including the operations of Northern Virginia's bus systems we closely work with: Arlington Transit, DASH, Fairfax Connector, City of Fairfax-CUE, Loudoun County Transit and OmniRide. The money also supports Virginia Railway Express and contributions to Metro for Metrorail, Metrobus and Metroaccess.

NVTC celebrated the 2020 [omnibus transportation bill](#), which shored up the Commonwealth Transportation Fund and gave a promise of reliable and sustainable transportation funding to allow our roadways and transit systems to support continued economic growth in Virginia. As Chair Canek Aguirre noted in the letter, eliminating \$135 million each year in funding breaks that promise, taking us backwards in our ability to operate and maintain our transportation network and posing a long-term threat to the growth of Virginia's economy.

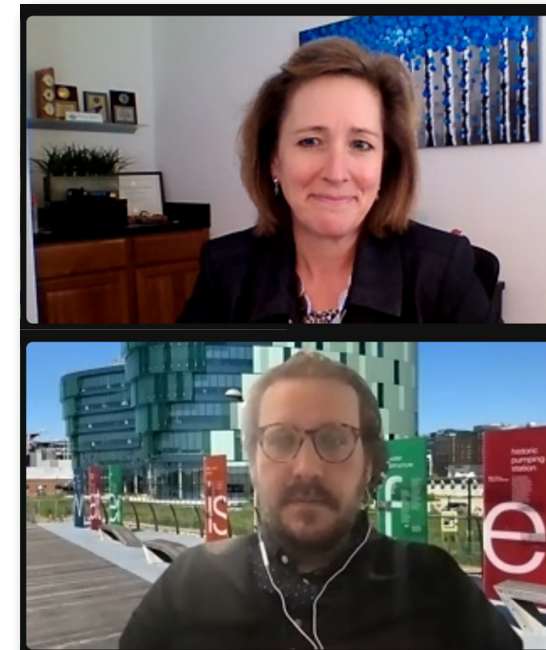
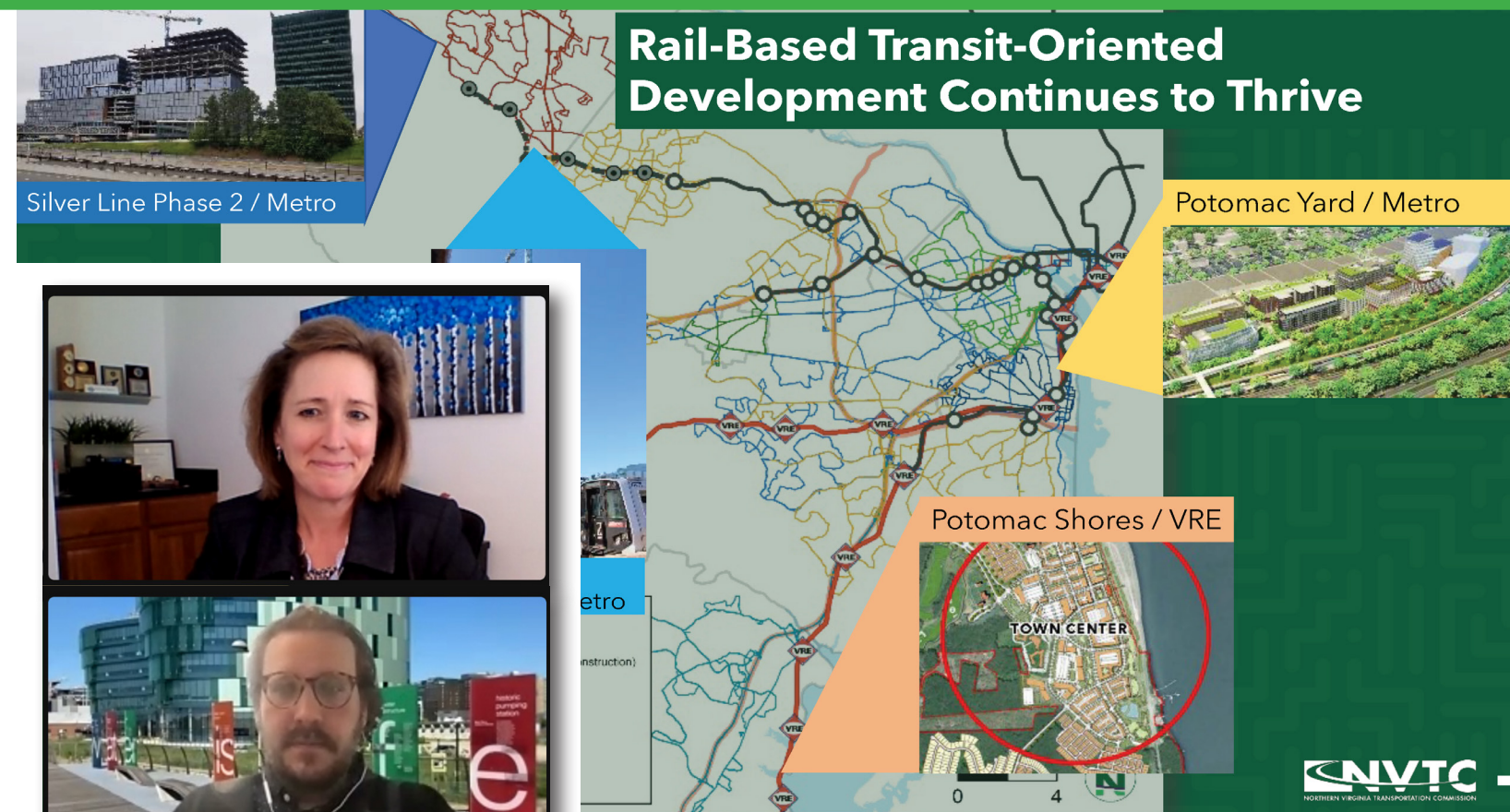
SmartTransit Conference highlights emerging trends

Director of Programs and Policy Allan Fye attended the [2022 SmartTransit East Conference](#) in Boston the week of March 14. The event brought together transit industry experts from across North America and Europe and touched on key topics in which NVTC is engaged, including the transit industry in a post-pandemic world, the future of fare collection, the importance of the transit customer experience as we try to get riders back on transit and new metrics for measuring successful transit rather than a singular focus on ridership.

Committee discusses Commonwealth transportation funding

Executive Director Kate Mattice attended the first meeting of the Department of Rail and Public Transportation's (DRPT) Transit Service Delivery Advisory Committee ([TSDAC](#)) March 11. She serves as a representative of the Virginia Transit Association. This triennial meeting reviews the capital and operating allocation approach for the Commonwealth. The group will be working throughout the year to examine different prioritization methods and offer our recommendations to DRPT.

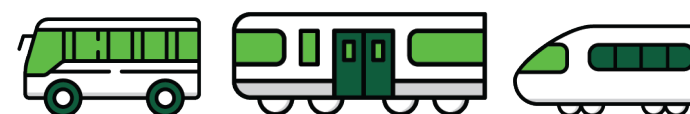
The meeting included discussions of the work plan, the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) [Transportation Infrastructure Funding](#) report and the interim findings of DRPT's [Transit Equity and Modernization Study](#).



Rail-Based Transit-Oriented Development Continues to Thrive

NoVa transit-oriented development highlighted at panel

Executive Director Kate Mattice took part in a lunchtime panel presented by [ULI Washington](#) February 23. The topic, Prioritizing Effective Infrastructure-Led Development, gave Kate an opportunity to talk about how ongoing development around transit hubs in Northern Virginia is vital to the continued economic growth of the Commonwealth. Other speakers noted the need for more transit in the Washington region as a way to increase access to housing and jobs. The panel also discussed how provisions of the Infrastructure [Investment and Jobs Act](#) could be implemented across the region.





Biden signs federal spending bill that includes first year funding for infrastructure bill

President Joe Biden [signed](#) the \$1.5 trillion omnibus appropriations bill March 15 that had passed the Senate [passed](#) and [House](#) the week before. The FY 2022 spending package sets the U.S. Department of Transportation budget at \$104 billion. When an additional \$37 billion in

one-time funding for FY 2022 provided by the bipartisan infrastructure bill is added, total gross funding for the Department in the fiscal year rises to almost \$141 billion. The final omnibus bill does include earmarks, but there is just one Virginia-based transit earmark--a \$5 million investment in a Hampton Roads bus facility.

Of special note, the Federal Transit Administration will host a series of webinars to provide more information to potential applicants for the FY 2022 Low or No Emission Grant (Low-No) Program and Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities Competitive Program. The first informational [webinar](#) will be at 1 p.m. on Thursday, March 17. Additional webinars will be hosted throughout March. Please see the Notice

of Funding Opportunity [webpage](#) for additional dates and times. Applicants are encouraged to join one or more sessions based on interest. Each webinar will cover project eligibility, evaluation criteria and program requirements.

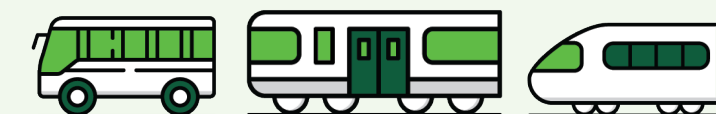
The highlights of what is included within the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2022 (H.R. 2471):

- \$775 million for National Infrastructure Investments ([RAISE](#) grants, formerly BUILD/TIGER) where at least \$20 million is awarded to assist areas of persistent poverty and historically disadvantaged communities; and an additional \$25 million has been included for USDOT's Thriving Communities initiative (Note: the deadline for 2022 RAISE planning and capital applications is 5 p.m. EST on April 14, 2022)

[Federal Railroad Administration](#) - \$3.3 billion, which includes :

- \$625 million for Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements grants; with at least \$150 million awarded to new intercity passenger rail routes; \$25 million awarded to counties with the most pedestrian trespasser casualties and \$120.9 million for community project funding/ congressionally directed spending
- \$100 million for intercity passenger rail grants
- \$2.3 billion for Amtrak, consisting of \$874.5 million for the Northeast Corridor and \$1.45 billion for the National Network
- [Federal Transit Administration](#) - \$16.3 billion, which includes \$13.4 billion for transit formula grants (including funding for Mero, VRE, and OmniRide)

- \$2.25 billion (plus previous approved funding = \$3.8 billion) for Capital Investment Grants Program (for New Starts, Core Capacity and Small Starts rail and BRT projects)
- \$504.3 million for Transit Infrastructure Grants and projects
- \$175 million for Buses and Bus Facilities grants (competitive program)
- \$75 million (plus previous approved funding = \$1.5 billion) for Low or No Emission bus and bus facility grants (competitive program)
- \$6.5 million for Ferry Boat grants with at least \$3.25 million awarded for low or zero-emission ferries (competitive program)
- \$12.97 million for ferry service for rural communities (competitive program)
- \$200.8 million for community project funding/ Congressionally directed spending





Metro Board approves budget that includes discounted late-night fare, pass discounts



The Metro Board [approved](#) the FY 2023 operating budget and FY 2023-2028 Capital Improvement Program March 24. The FY 2023 operating budget maintains current budgeted service levels and introduces several new fare and service initiatives meant to drive ridership. This operating budget includes \$680.8 million in federal aid, which allows Metro to maintain operations and avoid layoffs while ridership recovers from the pandemic. The \$2.4 billion FY 2023 Capital Budget and \$12.4 billion six-year capital improvement program focus investments in ongoing safety and state of good repair programs and projects. This CIP includes reauthorization of federal funding, which was recently included in Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021. New service and fare changes approved in this budget include:

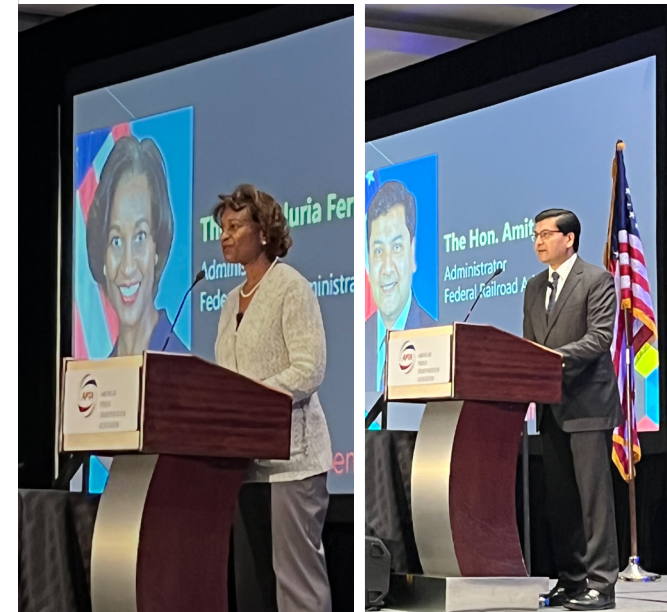
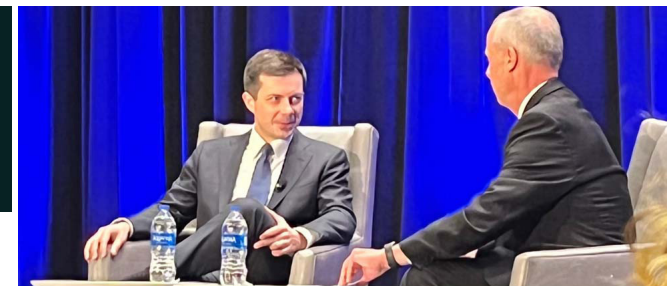
- Revenue service for the opening of the Silver Phase 2 and Potomac Yard Stations
- A \$2 late night rail fare
- Discounted monthly passes
- Discounting the 7-day unlimited pass for a six-month promotional period

This budget also makes permanent several piloted or previously approved service and fare initiatives that were implemented or approved in 2021.

“The service and fare changes in this budget will be helpful to our system, make it more equitable, better equipped to serve our riders needs and their travel patterns,” said Metro Board member [Matt Letourneau](#). “I’d also like to mention that I think this is a fiscally responsible budget. It’s one that actually reduced the general manager’s original request by over \$40 million during the course of the Board’s work, in recognition of the challenging fiscal times transit systems around the country and ours specifically have.”

Letourneau also noted the financial challenges ahead for the next fiscal year budget. “We still do have a significant fiscal issue in FY 24 in the order of several hundred million dollars. That’s something the Board will have to grapple with throughout the rest of this fiscal year as we head into FY 24.” Metro will exhaust federal COVID aid in the FY 2024 budget, which starts on July 1, 2023. The FY 2023 budget process will kick-off this fall. As additional information becomes available on the FY 2024 budget, NVTC staff will inform and engage Commissioners on the topic through the NVTC WMATA Committee.

Meanwhile, Metro GM/CEO Paul J. Wiedefeld announced that the [Silver Line Phase 2](#) would not open during FY 2022 and discussed plans to [increase rail service](#) and begin the return of the 7000-series railcars.



APTA Legislative Conference features top administration officials

The American Public Transportation Association (APTA) held its annual [Legislative Conference](#) in Washington March 13 through 14 and Executive Director Kate Mattice was on hand to hear from key administration officials and members of Congress. The conference helps educate APTA members on important federal legislation and policy initiatives. Transit CEOs and government affairs professionals heard loud and clear from members of Congress and the Biden Administration that it’s time to move quickly to implement the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). Featured speakers included Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg, Federal Transit Administrator Nuria Fernandez, Federal Railroad Administrator Amit Bose and many members of Congress. Kate also had the opportunity to meet officials one-on-one to discuss future competitive funding opportunities.

Ms. Mattice also co-chaired her first Federal Regulations and Procedures Legislative Subcommittee where the agenda focused on the potential new changes to Buy America and FTA’s reporting on transit operator assaults. Future work on the committee will look to grant oversight and requirements that will likely be of interest to NVTC jurisdictions if they seek federal funding for future bus expansions.

Commissioner/Metro Board Chair Paul Smedberg also attended conference sessions and we had the pleasure of connecting with Chair Canek Aguirre to celebrate Latinos in Transit at a reception with Administrator Fernandez.



Celebrating WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH



Throughout March we have been highlighting the women who have served in Commission leadership roles. Marketing and Engagement Manager Monique Blyther worked with Commission Secretary Rhonda Gilchrest to research Commission history and produce a series of [social media graphics](#) featuring women who worked to grow and strengthen public

transportation in Northern Virginia. The series, tied to Women's History Month, reaches back to Beverly Bidler, one of the first women elected to office in Alexandria. She served as Commission chair in 1977. The other leaders featured include Ellen Bozman, Elaine McConnell, Mary Margaret Whipple, Mary Hynes, Cathy Hudgins, Katie Cristol and Dalia Palchik and more.

WELCOME Xavier Harmony



We welcomed Xavier Harmony who joined our staff March 21 as a Senior Program Manager. Xavier may be a familiar face, having most recently served as a Senior Planner in Metro's Strategic Service and Facilities Planning team after three years working as a transit programs manager at the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT). Xavier will be managing day-to-day operations of the Transit Resource Center including leading NVTC's data collection, research and analysis efforts as well as managing the Envision Route 7 BRT project.



Richmond Highway BRT branding unveiled

Fairfax County unveiled the branding for its planned Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system February 25 and Executive Director Kate Mattice represented NVTC at the news conference, along with Marketing and Engagement Manager Monique Blyther. The proposed Richmond Highway BRT, to be known as the One, will be built in two sections eventually running from the Huntington Metro Station to Fort Belvoir and is one of several operating or planned BRT systems for Northern Virginia including the Metroway, which currently runs from Braddock Road Metro Station to Crystal City, with a planned extension to Pentagon City.

Meanwhile, planning work continues on the NVTC-led Envision Route 7 BRT which would run from Tysons to the Mark Center in Alexandria by way of Seven Corners and Falls Church. In addition, the West End Transitway in Alexandria would connect the Van Dorn Metro Station with the Pentagon Transit Center and other major transit facilities, including the Mark Center.





I-495 toll lanes extension will establish new Virginia-Maryland bus service

Commuter Choice Senior Program Manager Ben Owen and Marketing and Engagement Manager Monique Blyther were on hand March 14 as Gov. Glenn Youngkin lead a groundbreaking for the [495 NEXT](#) toll lanes project, which will extend managed lanes to the American Legion Bridge and include new bus service connecting Northern Virginia and Maryland.

The ceremony marked the start of construction activities and final design on the project that will improve travel, support transit services and boost economic growth. The partnership between the Virginia Department of Transportation and Transurban includes \$5.2 million to launch [bus service](#) connecting Virginia and Maryland over the replacement American Legion Bridge with Transurban's [VA Express Lanes](#) providing \$2.2

million annually to VDOT to support continued service. The new service is projected to move more than 170,000 riders each year and remove 4.7 million passenger miles from the road.

The event took place in view of the McLean Metro Station, which will gain a new northside entrance, thanks in part to \$1 million in funding from NVTC's Commuter Choice program, which uses toll money from I-66 Inside the Beltway and I-95/395 to improve the reliability and efficiency of commuting along some of the most congested interstate corridors in the nation in partnership. Commuter Choice has awarded \$92.7 million to date to move more people, support diverse travel choices and enhance transportation safety and travel reliability.



#TDAD Transit Driver Appreciation Day!

NVTC marked Transit Driver Appreciation Day March 18 with a series of [social media posts](#), giving thanks to the folks who get us where we're going, safely.



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