

While the 2020 presidential election process was far from calm, we now have a sense of affirmation that it will be a Biden-Harris administration, one that could be the most transit-friendly in American history. We learned from President-Elect Biden’s time in the Senate and as vice-president that he’s an ardent supporter of Amtrak, earning the nickname “Amtrak Joe” and has been a champion for investments in public transportation throughout his career. Biden will take office as the Commonwealth’s game-changing Transforming Rail in Virginia project moves forward. The multi-billion-dollar deal will enable a doubling of Amtrak state-supported service and VRE Fredericksburg Line service by 2030.

The president-elect’s transition website outlines a bold vision for public transit as part of his plans to combat climate change: “Provide every American city with 100,000 or more residents with high-quality, zero-emissions public transportation options through flexible federal investments with strong labor protections that create good, union jobs and meet the needs of these cities – ranging from light rail networks to improving existing transit and bus lines to installing infrastructure for pedestrians and bicyclists.”

The Biden Transition’s Agency Review Teams include a couple of regional names that should be familiar. Current and former District Department of Transportation Directors Jeff Marootian and Gabe Klein are helping the incoming Biden Administration’s efforts at the federal Department of Transportation. I also had the pleasure of working closely with Therese MacMillan, Polly Trottenberg, Vinn White and others who served at the USDOT and FTA during the Obama Administration. I can assure you that public transit needs will be well served by the Biden Transportation Transition team.

While the leadership of the Administration will be key to move a transit-friendly agenda, the role of the U.S. Senate is still uncertain. That balance of power will be decided by two runoff elections in Georgia in early January. Both seats are currently held by Republicans.

In the meantime, the clock does tick on Congressional action to provide additional relief funding to transit agencies across the country, including our own WMATA, VRE, and Omniride. The U.S. House of Representatives in October passed a revised HEROES Act, H.R. 925. \$2.2 trillion COVID-19 bill. The bill includes \$32 billion of COVID-19 emergency transit funding, more than double the transit funding provided in the May version of the bill. Alas, that legislation will expire if the U.S. Senate does not take action before January 3, 2021.

We’ll be watching closely to see what happens.



Jeff Marootian
Executive Director

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Key Dates

- Dec. 7 - NVTC-PRTC Joint Legislative Briefing
- Dec. 8 - Joint Regional Public Meeting
- Dec. 8 - 9 -CTB Meetings
- Dec. 16 - NVTC WMATA Committee
- Dec. 18 - VRE Operations Board
- Jan. 7 - NVTC Executive Committee
- Jan. 7 - Commission Meeting

NVTC releases report on Virginia's cap on Metro's budget

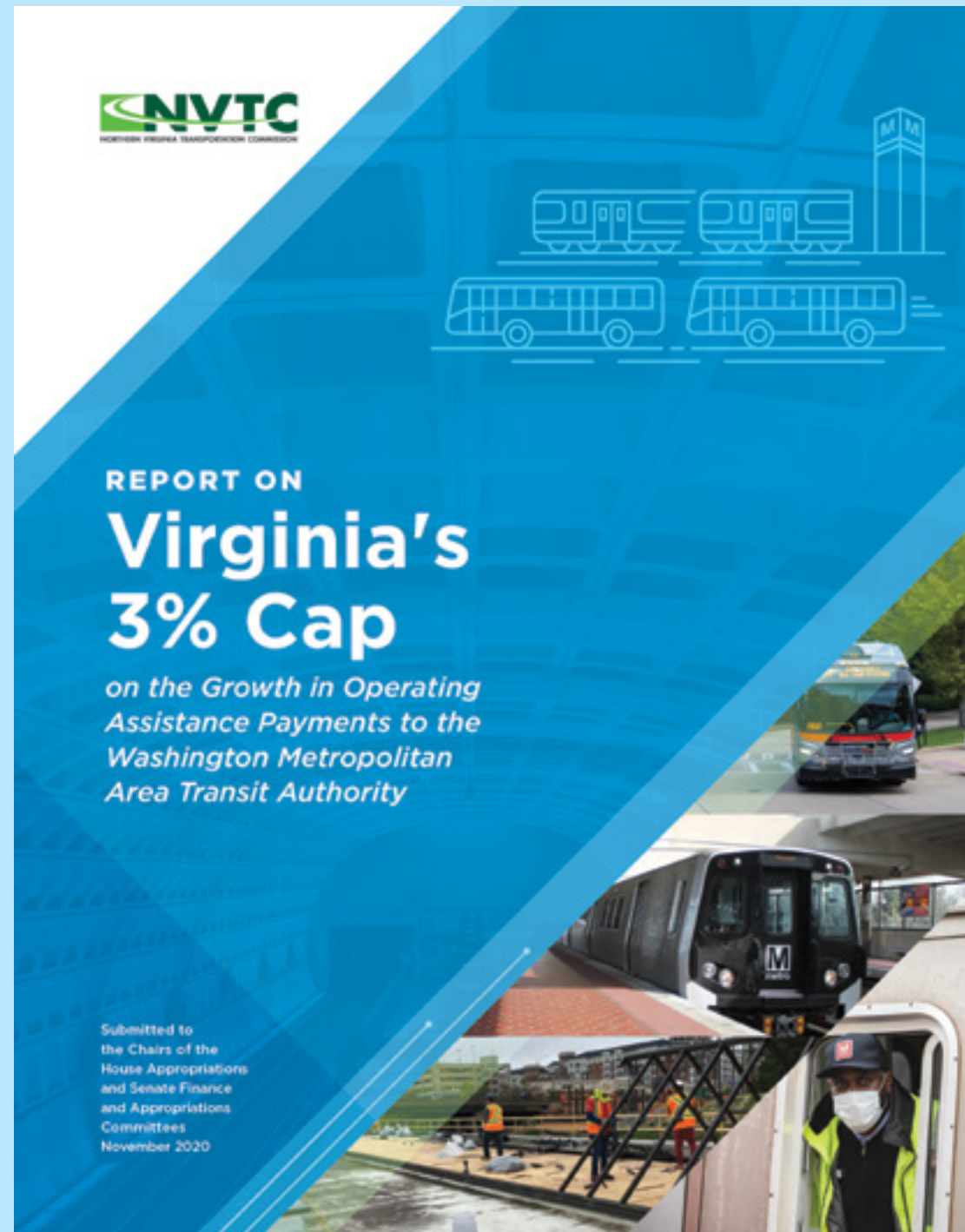
NVTC approved release of the [Report](#) on Virginia's 3% Cap on the Growth in Operating Assistance Payments to the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) to the Virginia General Assembly. The General Assembly directed NVTC to spearhead this report during its regular session this year. We convened a working group made up of representatives from NVTC jurisdictions, private sector stakeholders and the Director of the Department of Rail and Public Transportation and interviewed key leaders at Metro.

In 2018, the General Assembly imposed a 3% cap on growth on Virginia's annual operating subsidy to WMATA as a part of its commitment to a dedicated source of capital funding. In any year where the annual increase in the approved WMATA operating subsidy approved by Virginia exceeds 3% (apart from legislative exemptions), the legislation directs the Commonwealth

Transportation Board (CTB) to withhold 35% of state funding allocated to NVTC as capital and operating assistance to help its local jurisdictions meet their financial obligations to WMATA. In 2020, the General Assembly directed the formation of NVTC's 3% Cap Working Group to examine the 3% cap and assess its usefulness and whether additional exemptions to the cap should be considered.

NVTC's 3% Cap Working Group found that Virginia's 3% cap appears to be a useful tool to manage the growth in Virginia's operating subsidy. With only two years of WMATA budget development since the passage and implementation of the 3% cap, the working group recommends:

- No changes be made to the existing 3% cap legislation at this time
- No additional exclusions should be considered
- NVTC work with the Department of Rail and Public Transportation to clarify existing state policy guidance regarding the current legislative exclusions to the cap
- NVTC continue to explore potential modifications to Virginia's 3% cap legislation, with the scope and timing of such an effort to be determined by the Commission



Metro Board approves budget changes



Metro's Board of Directors approved [budget](#) changes in November that reflect ongoing financial constraints presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. General Manager Paul Wiedefeld noted that federal assistance from the CARES Act will last longer than anticipated and is now expected to run out in March. That reduced the FY 2021 operating budget gap from \$212 million to \$176.5 million. The amended FY 2021 calls for closing the Metrorail system at 11 p.m. Sunday through Thursday, two hours later than first proposed, increasing Metrorail headways, and opening the Silver Line Phase 2 on July 1, 2021. The budget also calls for retaining and making slight improvements to the current level of Metrobus service. Front-door boarding and fare collection will resume on Metrobus starting January 1st.

"No board in recent history has faced the challenges this board has faced, for sure. Unfortunately, without additional federal funds the board will be further challenged in the development of the Fiscal Year 2022 budget, with the process starting next month," said Wiedefeld.

Metro Board Chair Paul Smedberg said, "We are getting a sense of what the jurisdictions can afford, and support for Fiscal Year 22, but the outlook is grim. While we must be practical about the economic realities, we are committed to Metro being a strong partner in our region's recovery, which means providing safe, reliable and equitable service."

TSDAC reconvenes after long break, reviews state transit funding

After a nine month break, NVTC Executive Director Kate Mattice joined colleagues on the Transit Service Delivery Advisory Committee (TSDAC) to hear an overview of the current and projected revenues affecting transit capital and operating throughout the Commonwealth. The online [meeting](#) included a review of the FY 2021 Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) funding process and recommendations for FY 2022 as well as DPRT's Six Year Improvement Program and other DPRT program updates.

WMATA Committee reviews key report on Metro

NVTC's WMATA Committee reviewed the 2020 Update to NVTC's Annual Report on the Performance and Condition of WMATA, our annual report set forth in the Virginia legislation that created the dedicated capital fund for Metro. This year's report describes the impacts of COVID-19 on Metro and the dire financial conditions that Metro faces without additional federal aid. The report also updates NVTC's recommended strategies to reduce cost growth and improve efficiency, as required by the legislation, and provides examples where Metro has made progress in their ongoing efforts in these areas. New or highlighted strategies from the 2020 report recommend that Metro:

- Communicate and encourage a safe return to transit
- Adapt rail service to match demand during the pandemic and subsequent recovery period
- Leverage the expertise of local regional partners to improve the efficiency of the bus network

In addition, the report presents key financial, operating and service performance data on Metro and shows the annual expenditures from Virginia's dedicated capital funding. During the meeting, committee members discussed public concerns about maintaining key Northern Virginia bus routes and ensuring equity in access to transit. At the direction of the committee, the draft document will continue to evolve and highlight opportunities to continually improve bus service as well as include additional context on the performance data elements. The Commission received a briefing on the report at the November meeting and Commissioners will be asked at the December meeting to send the report to the Governor and General Assembly by the December 15 deadline.

Virginia Passenger Rail Authority starts work

The [Virginia Passenger Rail Authority \(VPR\)](#), which is responsible for promoting, sustaining and expanding the availability of passenger and commuter rail service in the Commonwealth, met for the first time in November. Once fully operational, the new authority will assume all administrative and fiduciary responsibilities for Virginia's state-supported passenger rail services, including the current six daily round trip Amtrak Northeast Regional. Moving forward, the VPR will also administer all capital

Purpose of the VPR

- Promote new approaches to economic development through an increase in passenger rail capacity.
- Promote, sustain, and expand the availability of passenger and commuter rail service to increase ridership by connecting population centers.
- Own rail right-of-way and infrastructure assets.
- Oversee passenger rail operations statewide (not an operator).
- Operate independently of some state requirements to provide flexibility in delivering the TRV Program.



Operations

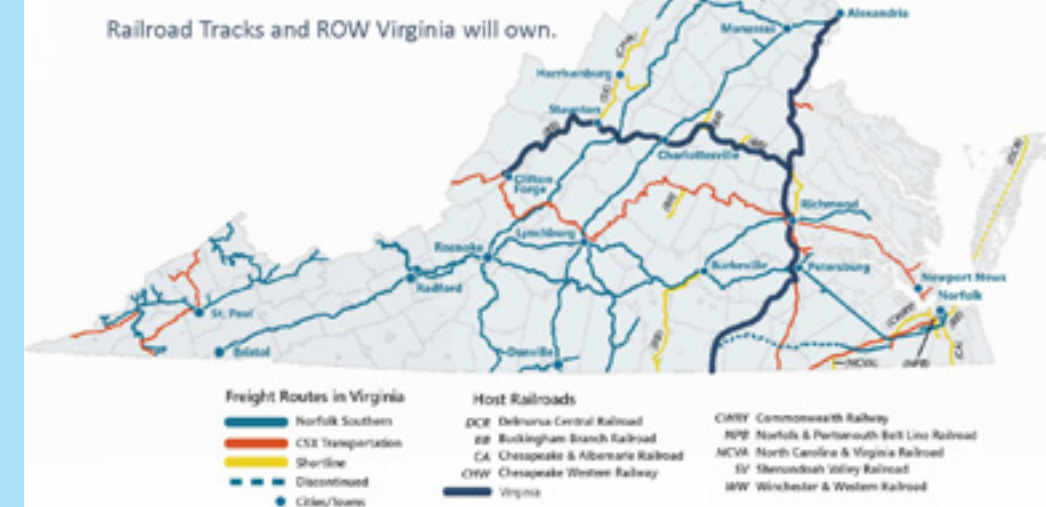
- VPR will acquire right-of-way and some rail facilities in the VRE service area
- This agreement will apply to the VPR acquired right-of-way and rail facilities
- CSX will continue to dispatch and provide track maintenance
- VRE will continue to have Operating Access agreement with CSX
- As improvements are completed, VRE will operate more on VPR vs. CSX track
- VRE/VPR to mutually develop criteria for selection of Operator

expansion projects, infrastructure and land acquisitions related to Gov. Ralph Northam's \$3.7 billion Transforming Rail in Virginia initiative, which will double Amtrak and VRE service in Virginia over the next decade. The initial meeting included an overview of the VPR's duties and the need for more rail capacity.

The Virginia Railway Express (VRE) Operations Board met later in the month to consider two agreements - one for operating/access and another for funding - with the VPR. VRE CEO Rich Dalton shared an overview of these agreements with commissioners at the November Commission meeting. A more detailed presentation is available for viewing on VRE's YouTube channel.

Jennifer Mitchell, Director of the Department of Rail and Public Transportation chairs the authority. The board includes former Commissioners Sharon Bulova and Jay Fissette.

Railroad Network in Virginia



Metro accelerates Blue Line capital work in Northern Virginia

Metro says it will start work to modernize the signal system in the Alexandria Rail Yard the day after Thanksgiving. The agency says it will consolidate the project into a shorter series of outages that will close two stations - Franconia-Springfield and Van Dorn Street.

The work will take place over 10 weekends, beginning November 27, 2020 and ending Sunday, March 14, 2021. In addition, a two-week shutdown will take place during the winter holiday period when ridership typically drops even further than the current levels driven by the COVID-19 pandemic. Shuttle bus service will replace train service at Franconia-Springfield and Van Dorn Street. Blue Line trains will operate between Huntington and Largo Town Center. The schedule includes several breaks in work for major events.

During construction, Metro will replace all of the major components of the signal system in the Alexandria Rail Yard where it connects to the Blue Line, including switches, signals, track circuits and signal control rooms. The signal upgrades are necessary to modernize Metro's Automatic Train Control System (ATC) which is more than 40 years old. This work cannot be done safely with trains in service and is best done with a shutdown.

Metro says it decided on the series of shutdowns because completing the same work with weekend single tracking could more than double the time for completion, while providing severely limited rail service with waits up to 36 minutes between trains.



NVTC AND PRTC PRESENT

ANNUAL LEGISLATIVE BRIEFING

Join transit leaders and special guests for a virtual overview of federal and state issues affecting transit in Northern Virginia

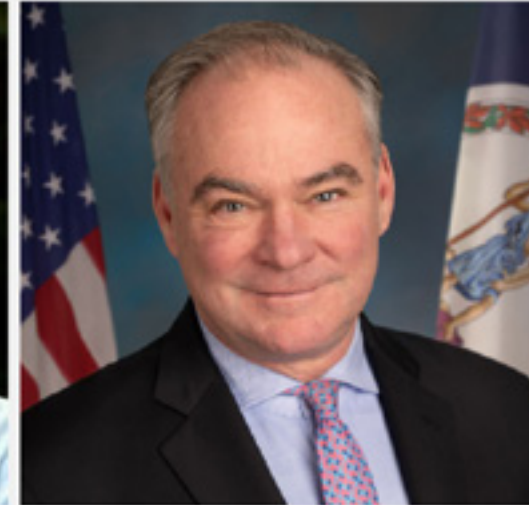
RSVP NOW!

Monday, December 7, 2020
9:00 AM-11:30 AM | Online Meeting



SPECIAL GUEST SPEAKERS

Senator Mark Warner
Senator Tim Kaine



KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Virginia Secretary of Transportation
Shannon Valentine

REGIONAL TRANSIT LEADERS

Paul Wiedefeld,
WMATA General Manager/CEO
Richard Dalton,
VRE Chief Executive Officer
Bob Schneider,
PRTC Executive Director
Kate Mattice,
NVTC Executive Director
Monica Backmon,
NVRTA Executive Director

Valentine: Virginia committed to maintaining transportation priorities

Virginia Secretary of Transportation Shannon Valentine joined her counterparts from Maryland and the District for 2020 Capital Region Transportation Forum. The annual event, hosted by the Greater Washington Board of Trade and Greater Washington Partnership, brought the DMV's transportation leaders together to discuss the region-wide efforts to sustain and improve transit and transportation systems. Secretary Valentine noted the groundbreaking transportation omnibus bill passed by the General Assembly early this year, which includes the creation of the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority. She noted that the Commonwealth is committed to keeping the \$3.7 billion Transforming Rail in Virginia project on schedule and that Virginia remains committed to maintaining transportation priorities, despite challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. A number of NVTC staff members joined me in taking part in this year's virtual event.



Moderator Tanya Snyder, Politico (top left); Virginia Secretary of Transportation Shannon Valentine (top right); Maryland Secretary of Transportation Greg Slater (bottom left); Jeff Marootian, District Director of Transportation (bottom right)

RM3P efforts begin to take shape

NVTC staff joined stakeholders from across Northern Virginia at the Regional Multi-Modal Mobility Program (RM3P) Stakeholder Summit and in technical focus groups to gather comments on their proposed initiative. RM3P, administered jointly by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA), is focused on improving commuter travel by providing dynamic information that can be used by travelers to help manage congestion along the road and transit networks in Northern Virginia. The center of the RM3P effort is a data exchange platform where NVTC will be able to both provide data inputs and expertise, as well as use the results of these efforts to help NVTC's regional transit analysis as well as our Commuter Choice programmatic efforts.

Data-Exchange Platform
Viewing Aafiya Shah's screen

The Data-Exchange Platform (DEP) will be a reliable, continuously updated, cloud-based data storage and exchange system. It will be used by regional partners and third-party providers to capture, process, and exchange information on real-time and historic multi-modal travel conditions. This platform will feed necessary data to other RM3P program elements and disseminate value-added and full-grown data produced by these elements.

AI-Based Decision Support System
The AI-Based Decision Support System (AI-DSS) will help predict the impact of disruptions to the transportation network and provide coordinated response options to agencies. The automated tool for operators will use travel data to monitor emerging conditions and recommend plans for coordinated, multi-agency responses to congestion, incidents, and events.

Multi-Modal Analytical Planner
The Multi-Modal Analytical Planner (MMAP) will be a collaboration tool for transportation service providers to pinpoint unmet needs in the transportation network. This highly interactive tool will enable mobility providers to study the impacts of "what-if" scenarios and better plan for travel demand by identifying underserved areas, especially during disruptive events.

Commuter Parking Information System
The Commuter Parking Information System (CPIS) will entail a real-time, app-based parking availability information system that provides reliable information about parking space availability at lots serving bus, vanpool, and carpool commuters.

Dynamic Incentivization
Dynamic incentivization (DI) will be a data driven system offering the public incentives to modify their travel choices and behaviors in response to real-time travel conditions. The incentives will be offered by regional agencies and third-party providers.

Presenting: Amy McElwain, RM3P Program Manager
Regional Multi-Modal Mobility Program

Regional bus ridership trends and pandemic recovery discussed

NVTC staff participated in the WMATA Regional Bus Ridership Workshop as WMATA staff discussed the challenges that Metrobus has faced due to the COVID-19 pandemic and provided updates on ridership trends, the ongoing recovery marketing campaign, and survey data from regional partners. WMATA staff reinforced that social distancing is an important safety strategy that has been implemented, alongside operational operation and service changes such as rear door boarding and providing more capacity on high volume routes. As Metrobus continues to navigate providing safe, efficient and clean service, the next steps include preparing for eventual increased ridership and adjusting service to meet demand safely.

In-System Signage

Your smile lights up a room. Please keep it covered.

Be wise. Sanitize.

Keep hands clean. Know what we mean?

Under the weather? Don't overthink it. Stay home.

Stay clean. Stay healthy. There are hand sanitizing stations at every Metro stop.

Stay home when you can. When you must travel, please wear your mask and a face mask.

WASHINGTON METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSIT AUTHORITY

Ride the rails virtually with VRE

Thanks to Google Street View, you can now ride VRE from the comfort of your couch -- or home office. The service, available in Google Maps, provides 3D walk-throughs of station platforms and rail cars. Check out the [Crystal City](#) station on Google Maps for the full, immersive experience.

