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in Northern Virginia
since 1964



Executive Director Newsletter



January 2024

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A Message from Kate Mattice

Welcome to 2024, a year that marks a significant milestone for the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC). This year we'll celebrate 60 years as Northern Virginia's regional body focused on public transportation. Back then, the vision was to recreate a rapid mass transit system for the Greater Washington region. That vision later became Metro. Along the way we've done an astounding amount of work. From creating Virginia Railway Express to establishing the Commuter Choice program to providing technical assistance and analysis for our partners in Northern Virginia and the Commonwealth, we've firmly established ourselves as a vital resource for public transit.

While we'll take time to celebrate our anniversary, our work never ends. The General Assembly Session begins this month with a record 51 new members of the House and Senate, new leadership in both chambers and new chairs of key committees that manage the legislation relevant to transportation and transit.

A major focus this session will be finding ways to stabilize Metro's funding crisis in the near-term and laying the groundwork for long-term financial stability for the agency.

Other work this year includes selecting the next round of I-66 Commuter Choice projects, moving into the next phase of planning for the Envision Route 7 Bus Rapid Transit system, developing a strategic framework for our regional transit research efforts and publishing a Zero-Emission Bus Strategic Plan to guide our jurisdictions in their approach to cleaner transit.

In terms of our 60th anniversary, we are planning a year of events. In February, we will hold our Commission meeting in Richmond followed by a meet-and-greet with many of the new and returning members of the General Assembly. We're hosting a policy symposium in June to highlight the transit research activities that are key to improving public transit in Northern Virginia. In September, we'll hold a formal evening celebration, where we'll premiere a documentary on NVTC's history and celebrate past and current commissioners. Finally, we'll wrap up the year with our annual legislative and policy forum again co-hosted by VRE and PRTC in early December.

It promises to be another busy year, but one that will take stock of how much we've accomplished over the decades.

Kate A. Mattice
Executive Director

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January 10
General Assembly Session begins

January 16
Commonwealth Transportation Board

January 18
WMATA Committee

January 19
VRE Operations Board

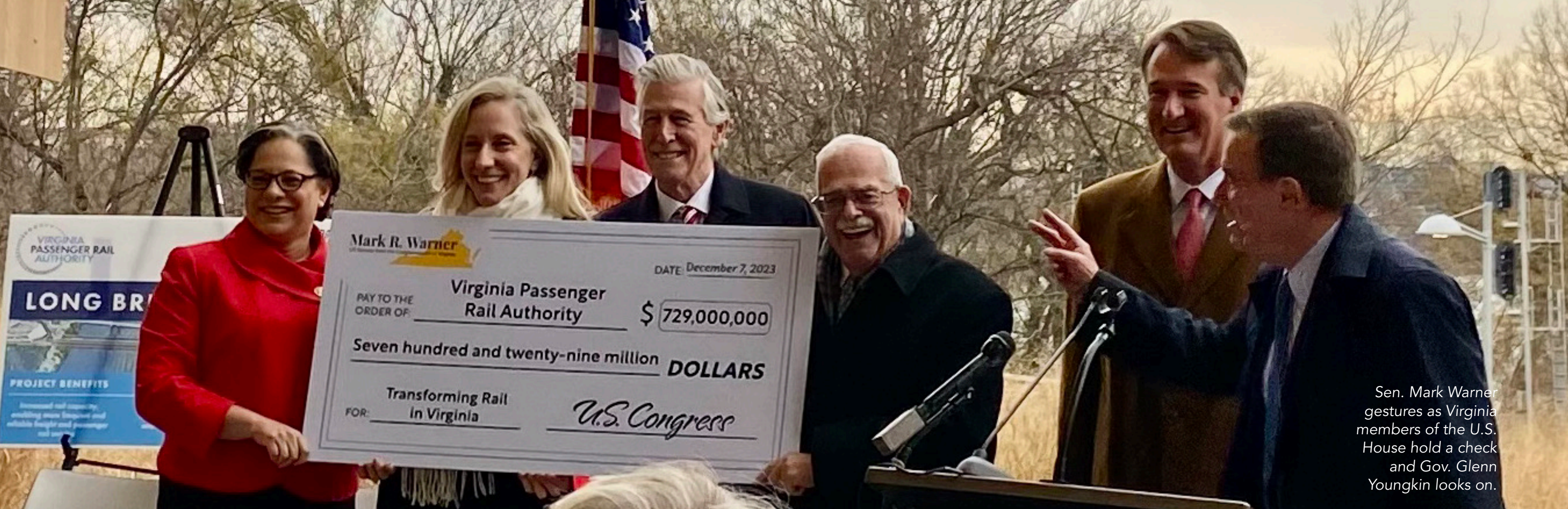
January 22
Virginia Transit Association Advocacy Day

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Sen. Mark Warner gestures as Virginia members of the U.S. House and Gov. Glenn Youngkin look on.

Feds provide \$729 million to complete Long Bridge

Sens. Tim Kaine and Mark Warner, joined by Gov. Glenn Youngkin and Reps. Don Beyer, Gerry Connolly, Abigail Spanberger and Jennifer McClellan, [announced](#) a major federal grant for the Long Bridge project December 7. The \$729 million in funding from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act will support completion of the bridge between the District and Virginia, improvements to L'Enfant Station and the addition of a third railroad track in Prince William, Stafford and Spotsylvania Counties. The combined projects will enable faster and more frequent service for Amtrak and Virginia Railway Express. The current bridge serves passenger and freight trains. The new bridge will allow the separation of passenger and freight traffic. It's expected to be completed by 2030.

Executive Director Kate Mattice and a number of NVTC Commissioners attended the announcement, which was held at Long Bridge Park. It came the same week that the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority (VPR) [signed an agreement](#) with construction partners Long Bridge-North Package, which covers work from the northern banks of the Potomac River to just south of L'Enfant Station. VPR signed a separate agreement for the Franconia-Springfield Bypass, a nearly one-mile long project to alleviate train interference in one of the most congested points in Virginia. We're excited to see these projects to enhance passenger train travel in the Commonwealth, which are part of the state's [Transforming Rail in Virginia](#) initiative.

Executive Director Kate Mattice with Virginia Railway Express CEO Rich Dalton, DRPT Director Jen DeBruhl and Commissioners Takis Karantonis, Adam Ebbin, James Walkinshaw, Matt de Ferranti and Catherine Read.

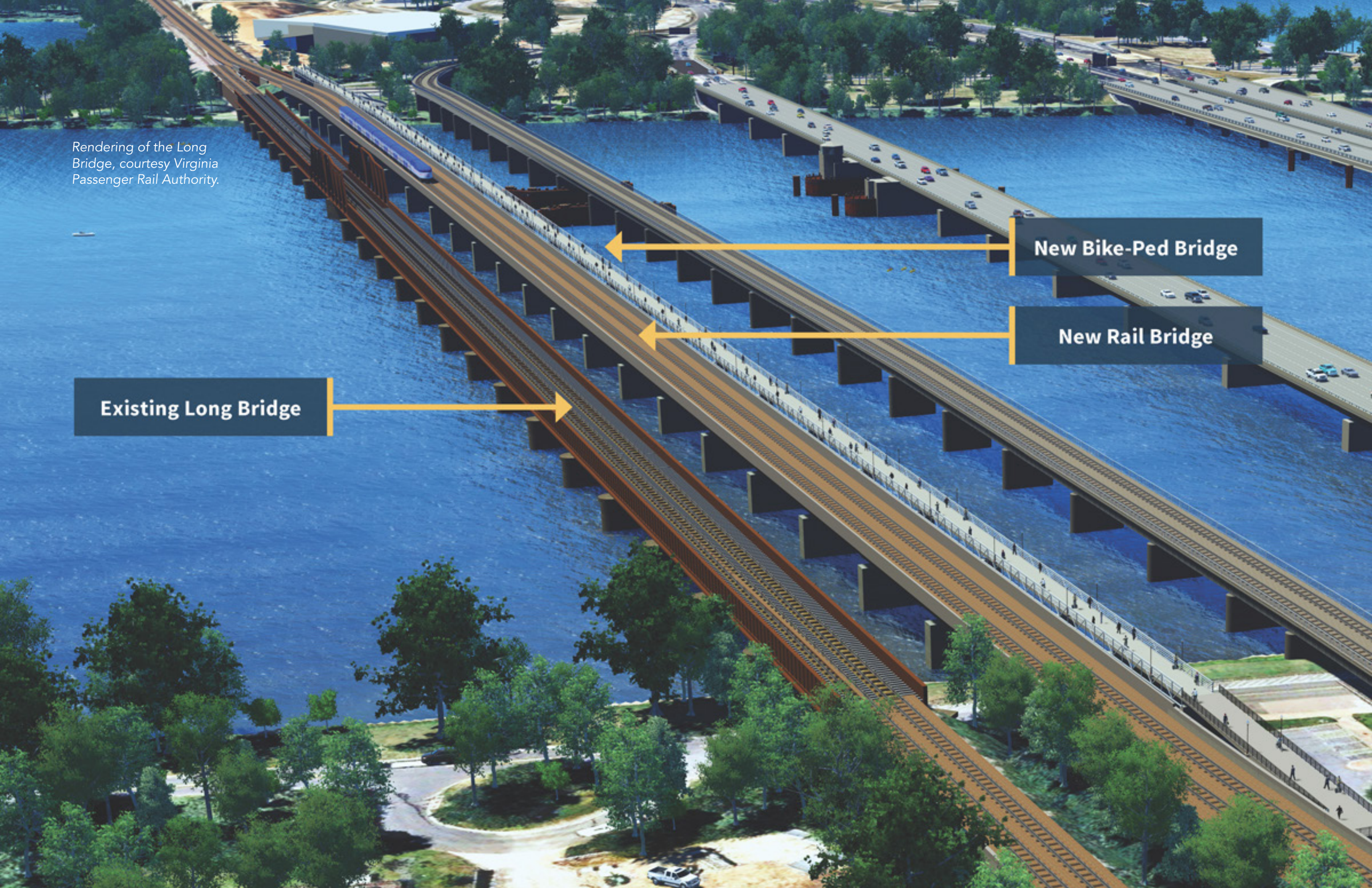


Rendering of the Long Bridge, courtesy Virginia Passenger Rail Authority.

Existing Long Bridge

New Bike-Ped Bridge

New Rail Bridge






NVTC makes recommendations for Metro as agency braces for potential cuts without new funding

Metro staff [presented](#) the agency's proposed [operating and capital budgets](#) to the Metro Board's Finance and Capital Committee in December which include significant system-wide service cuts and fare increases, in addition to delayed or potentially forgone capital investments. The primary drivers behind the projected \$750 million FY 2025 deficit are jurisdiction subsidy credits, inflation, collective bargaining agreements and decreased revenue.

Staff noted that the proposed budget presents a worst-case scenario as legislators in Virginia, Maryland and the District of Columbia work to identify additional funding that would reduce or prevent drastic service cuts and fare increases from being realized. We also recognize that Metro GM/CEO Randy Clarke has a legal duty to present a balanced budget, based on the current availability of funding.

Major Service Cut and Fare Increase Proposal

Major service cuts and a fare increase reduce usefulness of network for customers

 Metrobus	 Metrorail	 Fares
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Eliminate Metrobus service on 67 of 135 lines ▪ Reduce service on 41 of 135 lines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Major frequency reduction ▪ 10pm system closure ▪ 10 stations closed ▪ Red Line and Silver Line turnbacks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 20% general increase in fares and parking rates expected to result in net revenue increase with some ridership loss
<p>MetroAccess: Service area reduced with reductions to the fixed route network</p>		

WMATA's Projected Operating Funding Gap as of June 2023:



Through inflation and reduced ridership, the pandemic disrupted the financial operating model of transit agencies across the United States. All major transit systems, including WMATA, are facing massive operating budget shortfalls as they exhaust their remaining federal pandemic aid. As a result, NVTC developed a series of recommendations to WMATA and federal, state and local funding partners to ensure the long-term viability of WMATA and sustain the critical role the system plays in the region and as an economic asset for the Commonwealth.

NVTC's Near-Term Priorities:



Directed to: VA, MD and WMATA Board

Seek administrative or legislative opportunities to permit WMATA to re-baseline its FY 2025 operating subsidy bill to reflect the impact of COVID-19 pandemic.



Directed to: VA General Assembly

Advocate for additional state aid in FY 2025 to match local funding for WMATA.



Directed to: NVTC and the VA General Assembly

Seek a commitment from federal, state, regional and local funding partners to develop long-term, sustainable, dedicated funding to meet WMATA's capital and operating needs.

The proposed FY 2025 budget includes service reductions across Metrobus, Metrorail and MetroAccess, a 20% increase to fares and parking rates, a salary and wage freeze, and using preventive maintenance funding to cover operating expenses.

Metro's budget proposal came the same week that we published this year's edition of the "Report on the Performance and Condition of WMATA" which [makes recommendations](#) to Metro to help the transit agency solve its structural funding deficit. The report makes near-term recommendations that can provide immediate relief to Metro and the Virginia localities that provide funding to Metro, as well as critical actions that must be taken in the coming months.

1. Seek administrative or legislative opportunities to permit Metro to re-baseline its FY 2025 operating subsidy bill to reflect the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic
2. Advocate for additional state aid in FY 2025 to match local funding for Metro

3. Seek a commitment from federal, state, regional and local funding partners to develop long-term, sustainable, dedicated funding to meet Metro's capital and operating needs
4. Return federal workers to the office and secure a replacement for the region's losses in fares from riders using federal transit benefits

While the Greater Washington region pursues temporary actions to stabilize Metro, the region must develop longer term solutions. [These recommendations](#) offer the region a framework to guide long-term regional funding and reform discussions.

The publication of the report also garnered several media mentions. Chair Dalia Palchik spoke with WMAL radio and appeared on [WJLA-TV](#). [Metro Magazine](#) also published an item. NVTC staff will work with the NVTC WMATA Committee to share information as the budget process develops and facilitate comments early next year.



Governor's budget includes Metro budget "re-baseline"

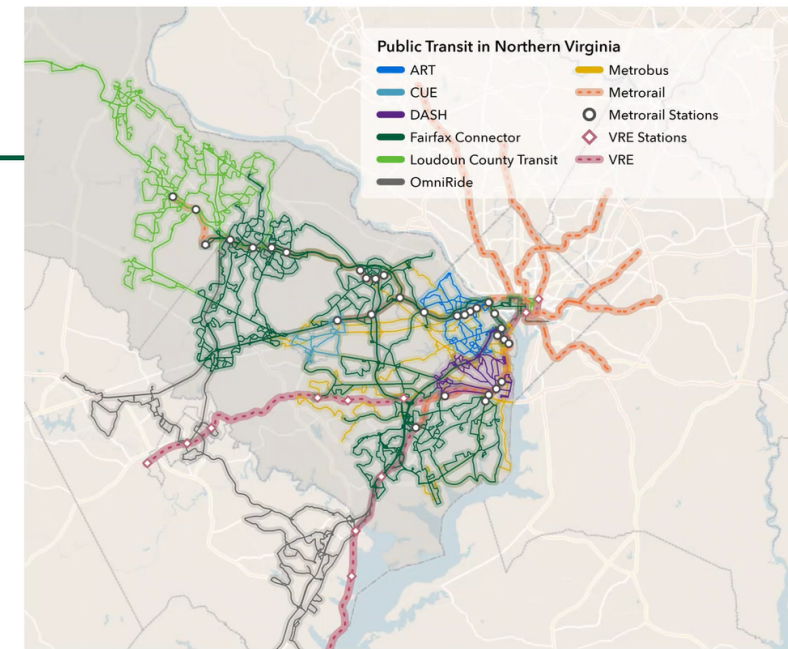
Gov. Glenn Youngkin released his [budget proposal](#) December 20 that includes language related to NVTC and Metro, as we have expected. The proposal includes a provision for re-baselining [Metro's budget](#) in terms of the current 3% cap on growth, a move we advocated for in our recent "[Report on the Performance and Condition of WMATA](#)." It also adds a requirement that Metro submit a corrective action plan to the Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) and says the DRPT director must approve the value of Virginia's portion of the re-baselined budget to avoid withholding of state aid.

Gov. Youngkin's budget proposal provides no additional state funding for jurisdictional payments to Metro and does not include any measures requiring jurisdictions to use previously allocated state aid for Metro. We recognize that this budget proposal is just the start of the process. The General Assembly will take its own approach once it convenes January 10. We'll continue to consult with our jurisdictions and members of the Northern Virginia delegation as they work toward a final budget.

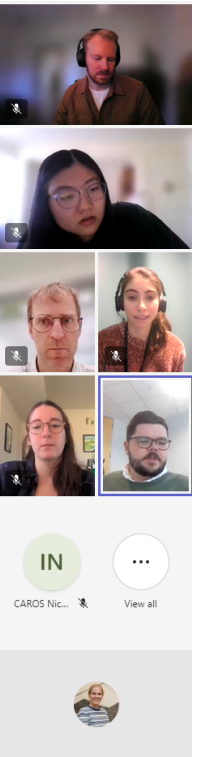
On the federal side, Executive Director Kate Mattice has taken part in meetings with federal officials to explore ways to provide additional federal money to support Metro. We also expect several major agencies to beef up their in-person requirements in the new year, which should boost Metro and Virginia Railway Express ridership, which is another recommendation we made in this year's NVTC WMATA report.



- Regional transit policy, governance, and funding organization
- 3 cities and 3 counties
 - ~2m people
 - ~62% within ¼ mile of a bus stop
- Area includes 7* bus providers (plus heavy rail and commuter rail)
 - ~600k weekly bus riders



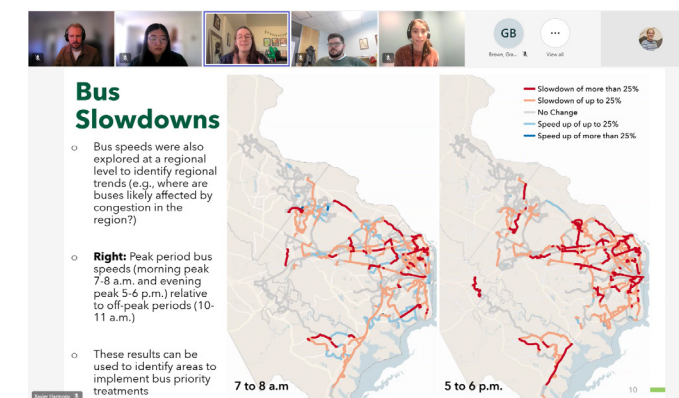
*Only 6 agencies were included in evaluation as a lack of data meant the City of Fairfax City-University Energysaver could not be included



NVTC report on bus priority shared with data experts

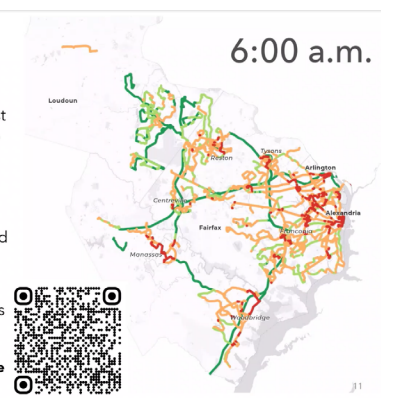
Senior Program Manager Xavier Harmony and Senior Program Analyst Sophie Spiliotopoulos presented to the Transportation Research Board (TRB) Transit Data committee December 20. Xavier and Sophie discussed some of the bus speed mapping they used in their [Advancing Bus Priority](#) report, which outlines ways to get

buses unstuck from traffic congestion. About 200 attendees working with transit data in the U.S. and Canada attended. Xavier and Sophie will also present their work to an international audience at the [TRB Annual Meeting](#) in January, along with their report on [bus stops](#), joined by former Transit Fellow Rachel Inman.



Takeaways

- **Evaluation**
 - Using just GTFS, R, and Python meant process was very low cost
 - Simple method makes it easy to understand and repeat
 - Useful for agencies with fewer resources
- **Interpretation**
 - Easy to interpret and understand for a non-technical audience
 - Still useful for the region's bus planners to understand shared congestion challenges and ways to help prioritize solutions





Remembering

Commissioner Carol DeLong

Former Commissioner Carol DeLong died in December at the age of 93. Ms. DeLong was the first woman mayor of the City of Falls Church and served as a Commissioner from 1976 to 1990, and chair in 1982. She joined the same year that the first Metro stations opened in the District and told the story of donning shoes with orange laces to celebrate the opening of the East Falls Church Station on the Orange Line in 1986. Ms. DeLong sat down with our communications team last summer to be interviewed for a documentary on NVTC's 60th anniversary in 2024 and you'll hear more from her when it premieres later in the year.



Thank you Commissioner John Foust

The Commission passed a resolution thanking Commissioner John Foust for his long service at their December meeting. Mr. Foust had been an NVTC Commissioner since 2009, representing Fairfax County. He's also served as a member of the Program Advisory Committee and provided thoughtful insights and support for many NVTC initiatives, including the Envision Route 7 Bus

Rapid Transit (BRT) project and the opening of both phases of Metro's Silver Line. We wish Mr. Foust the best in his retirement.

Photo: Chair Dalia Palchik presents a resolution and trophy to Commissioner John Foust at the December Commission meeting



2023 Commissioners

(F-B): Chair Dalia Palchik, Libby Garvey, Immediate Past Chair Canek Aguirre, Vice-Chair, Matt de Ferranti, Aimee Gilroy, Sarah Bagley, Adam Ebbin, Secretary-Treasurer David Snyder, Jeffrey McKay, John Foust, Walter Alcorn, M. David Skiles, John C. Tuck III, Paul Smedberg, Katie Cristol, (not pictured) Joseph Kornhoff, James R. Walkinshaw, Michael R. Turner, Daniel Storck, Jon R. Stehle, Jr., Catherine S. Read, R. Kirk McPike, Matthew Letourneau, Takis Karantonis, Phil Duncan, John J. Bell, Jennifer DeBruhl





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