



“It’s a new day for NVTC.” Those words, spoken by Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Chairman Sharon Bulova at NVTC’s strategic retreat on June 22, resonated with virtually everyone in the room and reminded us of

how far we, as a Commission, have come in the last few years. From administering I-66 Commuter Choice and a future transit program on I-95/I-395 to new responsibilities pertaining to WMATA funding and governance, NVTC’s role in the region has expanded almost exponentially.

Precisely what that role should entail and what resources are necessary to support our organization’s additional responsibilities was at the heart of last week’s discussions. The principles we adopted at the retreat to guide the creation of a NVTC committee focused on WMATA issues and selection of NVTC’s principal representative to the WMATA Board of Directors demonstrated our commitment to thinking and acting as a region. We recognize that speaking with a unified voice, to the extent possible, will make NVTC and its WMATA board member more effective.

Our work in this area is far from complete. We will need to translate these adopted principles into policies that are fair and inclusive but also allow some level of flexibility. For instance, the composition, structure and staffing of the WMATA Committee are key to ensuring that all NVTC jurisdictions have a voice when it comes to Metro.



“There’s real energy within NVTC right now,” said Fairfax Supervisor Cathy Hudgins at the retreat. “We need to build on it and figure out how to sustain it.” That energy, which was almost palpable in the meeting room, will help carry us forward as we

tackle important issues, both internal and external to our Commission. The enthusiasm that staff bring to their jobs and Commissioners bring to their deliberations will undoubtedly sustain that energy.



**Executive Director**

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## Key Dates

July 5	<a href="#">NVTC Monthly Meeting</a>
July 10	<a href="#">TSDAC Meeting</a>
July 12	<a href="#">WMATA Board Meeting</a>
July 17-18	<a href="#">CTB Monthly Meeting</a>
July 18	<a href="#">TPB Monthly Meeting</a>
July 20	<a href="#">VRE Operations Board Meeting</a>
July 26	<a href="#">WMATA Board Meeting</a>

## I-66 Commuter and Express Bus Ridership Climbs

Commuter and express bus routes in the Interstate 66 corridor are showing increases in ridership due to tolling and new service funded by the I-66 Commuter Choice program, [according to a June NVTC report](#). From February 2017 to February 2018, express bus ridership grew by 8 percent. Fairfax Connector and the PRTC's OmniRide experienced average weekday ridership increases of 32 percent and 58 percent respectively, while Loudoun County Transit's I-66 corridor routes decreased by 12 percent.



Bus travel times have become more reliable as traffic conditions on I-66 have improved. "Vehicular speed on I-66 inside the Beltway increased by 15 percent from February 2017 to February 2018.

Available data and anecdotal evidence strongly suggest that running times of express bus services using I-66 have also improved," notes the report. It points to PRTC's OmniRide as an example. "Prior to tolling, OmniRide was using I-495 express lanes and I-395 HOV lanes for services from western Prince William County to the Pentagon, instead of I-66 and Route 110, because they offered comparable travel time and greater reliabil-

ity. After tolling started, OmniRide switched these services to I-66 and Route 110 due to improved run-time reliability and time savings."

Metrorail ridership also was up, though the report indicates that it is "difficult to discern the influence of I-66 tolling from these statistics." Metrorail's average weekday ridership in the corridor in February 2018, the third month of tolling, was 4 percent higher than February 2017. During the same period, however, Virginia Railway Express' average weekday ridership dropped by 5 percent.

Consistent with national and regional trends, local bus service experienced a decline. Average weekday ridership on Metrobus and Arlington Transit (ART) I-66 corridor routes was down 10 percent and 12 percent respectively from February 2017 to February 2018, continuing a pattern that extends to July 2016. "These declines persist before and after the I-66 tolling, and the impact of tolling is unclear with available statistics," notes the report.

The NVTC report highlights the need for more information to evaluate the impact of tolling on the I-66 Commuter Choice program and, more broadly, public transportation services along the I-66 corridor.

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## CTB Endorses NVTC's Expenditure of \$12 Million to Improve I-66 Commutes



The Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) voted June 20 to allow NVTC to

fund 15 projects using \$12 million in toll revenues in order to benefit commuters in the I-66 corridor. [The Commission had approved the projects in May.](#)

About 60 percent of the funds, or \$7.2 million, will support new or enhanced bus service; 22 percent, or \$2.6 million, will improve access to park-and-ride lots, bus stops, and Metrorail and Virginia Railway Express stations; 7 percent, or \$0.8 million, will improve incident response in the I-66 corridor; and 6 percent, or \$0.7 million, will support transit incentives, carpools and vanpools.

Grant recipients include Arlington, Fairfax and Loudoun counties; the cities of Fairfax, Falls Church, and Manas-

sas; and the Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission/OmniRide in Prince William County. The grants also support NVTC's project oversight and program administration and will allow for targeted outreach to promote transit and other transportation options to help those who commute through the I-66 corridor.

NVTC previously funded 10 projects, totaling \$9.8 million, in the I-66 corridor, including popular bus service between Gainesville and the Pentagon; Fairfax County Government Center and downtown Washington, D.C.; and Loudoun County's Stone Ridge II park-and-ride lot and the District. I-66 Commuter Choice, a 40-year partnership between the Commonwealth and NVTC, is designed to move more people, enhance transportation connectivity, improve transit service, reduce roadway congestion, and increase travel options for commuters in the corridor.

## Dorsey to Serve as NOVA Region’s Voting Member on WMATA Board

NVTC last Friday appointed Arlington County Board Member Christian Dorsey as its principal member on the WMATA Board of Directors. Dorsey, who has served as an alternate on the WMATA board since 2016, assumes the term of Fairfax County Supervisor Cathy Hudgins, which expires in 2021.

Dorsey was elected to the Arlington County Board in November 2015 and appointed a NVTC Commissioner two months later. He became an alternate member of the WMATA board shortly after joining NVTC.

The Commission also appointed Hudgins to serve as an alternate to WMATA Board Member Jim Corcoran, Virginia’s gubernatorial appointee. Hudgins has served on the WMATA board since 2004. The Commission’s vote came in anticipation of a new Virginia law that takes effect July 1, 2018, providing dedicated funding for

WMATA and governance reforms. Alexandria Council Member Paul Smedberg will continue to serve as an alternate to the seat now held by Dorsey.



## New Rosslyn Bus Tunnel to Improve Bus On-time Performance

WMATA officially opened [the Rosslyn bus tunnel](#) between North Moore and North Lynn streets on June 24, a move that is expected to ease traffic and improve its buses’ on-time performance. The opening was tied to a number of route changes across the Metrobus system. The tunnel is also being used by Arlington’s ART buses.

“For bus riders alone, it could save five minutes or more each trip for bus routes like the 5A to Dulles Airport that uses Interstate 66, the 38B that goes over the Key Bridge and through Georgetown or a number of routes that go down Lee Highway,” noted WTOP radio. Separate work is underway to upgrade traffic lights and widen sidewalks and trails in the area.



## WMATA Begins Cash-Free Bus Fare Pilot

Metrobus’ Route 79, the MetroExtra in the District of Columbia, is [piloting cash-free fares](#) as a way to improve trip speed. Customers boarding the bus must pay with a SmarTrip card. Cash and coins are not accepted. Passengers may not add money to their SmarTrip card on the bus. The rationale behind the change is that the elimination of cash and coins will make boarding faster, thereby improving travel times. The cash-free program could be extended to other limited-stop routes across the region as soon as this fall, including Metroway in Arlington and Alexandria and the REX Richmond Highway Express in Fairfax County.



## Legislation Introduced to Repeal Penalty for Transportation Benefits

Congressman Mike Conaway has introduced [legislation that would repeal the penalty on nonprofit organizations that offer transportation benefits](#). Last year's tax reform legislation, while maintaining pre-tax benefits for individuals, made it more expensive for nonprofits and universities to offer the transportation fringe benefit. Under the law, nonprofits and universities offering transportation benefits must pay a 21 percent Unrelated Business Income Tax on the amounts deducted by employees on a pre-tax basis or provided by employers as a subsidy. Conaway's bill would eliminate what many see as a barrier to nonprofits and universities offering parking and transit benefits.



## FTA Accepting Grant Applications for Buses and Bus Facilities

More than \$366 million is available for transit bus projects nationwide in fiscal year 2018 through the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). The Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities Infrastructure Investment Program is authorized by Congress to improve the condition of bus infrastructure nationwide by funding the replacement and rehabilitation of buses and related facilities. Eligible projects include those that replace, rehabilitate, lease, or purchase buses and related equipment as well as those allowing for the purchase, rehabilitation, construction, or leasing of bus-related facilities, such as buildings for bus storage and maintenance.

FTA will award the grants to designated recipients, states and local governmental entities that operate fixed route bus service as well as Indian tribes. Projects will be evaluated by criteria outlined in the [Notice of Funding Opportunity](#). The program allocates a minimum of 10 percent – \$36.6 million – to rural bus needs. The application period closes August 6.

Federal public transportation law (49 USC § 5339(b)) authorizes FTA's competitive Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities Infrastructure Investment Program through FY 2020. Funding for the program was increased by 76 percent, or \$161 million in Fiscal Year 2018, by the FY 2018 Consolidated Appropriations Act.

## NVTC Celebrates Fairfax

NVTC staff members joined their colleagues from Fairfax Connector, WMATA, VDOT, and the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority in early June to share the benefits of public transportation with visitors to Celebrate Fairfax! Hundreds of people stopped by our table at the Transportation Station to watch our I-66 Commuter Choice video, engage with staff, or pick up an I-66 Commuter Choice beach ball or cell phone wallet. The photo booth, replete with transportation-related props and hats, was a hit, attracting fairgoers to the Commuter Choice table.



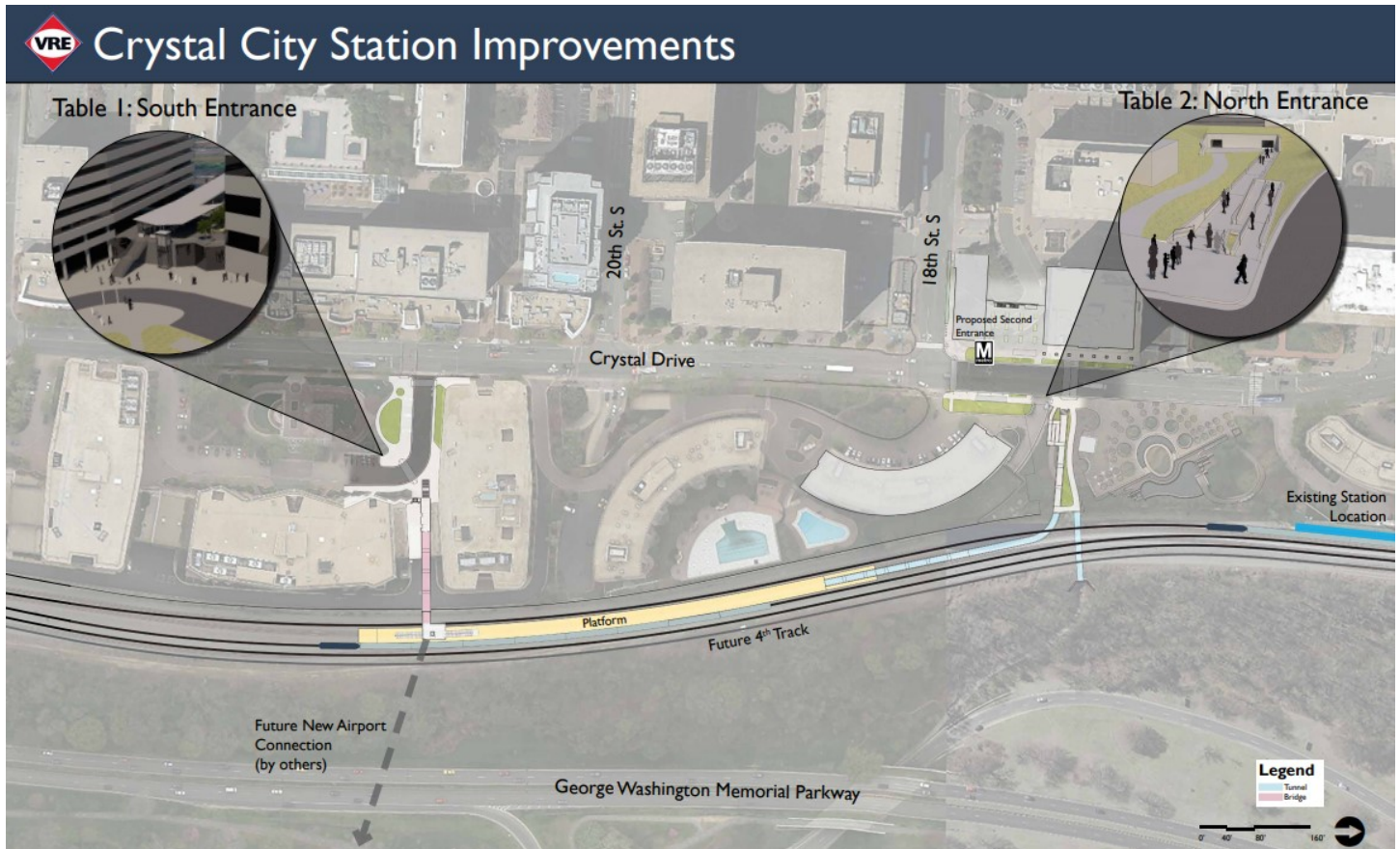
Patricia Happ, NVTC's transit program manager, and her daughter staff the I-66 Commuter Choice table at the Celebrate Fairfax! Transportation Station.



## VRE Seeks Input on Its Proposed Crystal City Station Improvements

[July 1 is the deadline for comments](#) on Virginia Railway Express' plan to improve its Crystal City Station. The proposed island platform would be able to accommodate 10-car trains and serve two trains simultaneously. Riders would be able to board using all train doors. Redesigned entrances would allow for pedestrian connections to

Crystal City's Underground, Metrorail, and Reagan National Airport. The project also would provide room for a future fourth track for DC2RVA high-speed rail. VRE has produced [two animated videos](#) that walk viewers through the north and south entrances.



## WMATA to Eliminate Free Metro Option for VRE & MARC Riders

To reduce fare-payment disputes, improve safety, and ensure that every rider is counted toward WMATA's funding grants, Metro is changing the use of its station-entrance emergency gates. Effective July 1, every rider must tap a SmarTrip® card for every ride. That means VRE and MARC customers may no longer ride Metro for free when either commuter rail system encounters service disruptions. The "Metro Option" had been an informal courtesy extended by WMATA that was carried forward over time. There was, however, no process for Metro to properly track or seek reimbursement for the cost of these trips, nor any agreement between MARC/VRE and Metro to govern the program.



**IMPORTANT  
SERVICE  
ANNOUNCEMENT**  
EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2018  
**CHANGE IN  
METRO OPTION**

Starting July 1, 2018, the Metro Option will no longer be available for VRE riders.

## Loudoun County



The Loudoun County Library is teaming up with the county's Commuter Services this summer to bring residents a Commuter ePick each Monday, featuring specially selected eBooks and audiobooks.

This week's  
COMMUTER ePICK

Loudoun County Commuter Services  
Travel Options • Information • Advice • Solutions



Find thousands of free eBooks at [library.loudoun.gov/eBooks](http://library.loudoun.gov/eBooks)

## Northern Virginia Transportation Authority



The Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA) recently adopted its [FY2018-2023 Six Year Program](#), which includes 44 regionally significant, multimodal transportation projects totaling nearly \$1.3 billion. The action marks the first time NVTA has funded a six-year transportation program. Three earlier NVTA programs funded 78 transportation projects, valued at more than \$690 million.



## Transportation Planning Board

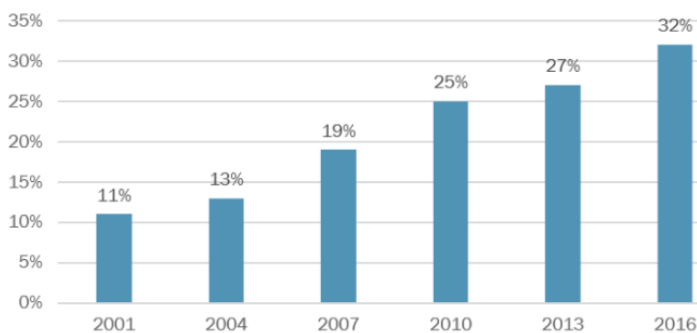


A [recent TPB analysis](#) looked at trends in how people in the region travel. The research found that changing demographics, population growth, expanding non-auto travel options, and good planning are impacting how people get around the region.

Here are the top seven regional travel trends:

- The region added more people, but driving remained flat
- Fewer people are riding Metrorail
- More aging Baby Boomers are choosing to remain in our region
- More people live in Activity Centers
- Telework continues to grow
- The car is still king, but fewer people are driving to work
- Congestion remains about the same during the morning and evening rush

Percentage of Commuters Teleworking



## WMATA



Metro is honoring the Washington Capitals with a limited-edition commemorative SmarTrip card for winning the Stanley Cup, the first in the Caps' 44-year history.

Metro committed to the Caps and right wing T.J. Oshie, who along with defenseman Matt Niskanen rode Metro to both home games in the Stanley Cup finals, that Metro would issue a commemorative Capitals card if the team brought home the Stanley Cup. Usually reserved for Presidential Inaugurations and events of national significance, this is the first time a commemorative SmarTrip card has marked a DC sports championship.

The cards are being sold for the standard \$10- \$8 in Metro fare value plus \$2 for the cost of the card and [must be ordered online](#).

