



NORTHERN VIRGINIA TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Executive Director Newsletter



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

June 2022



A Message from Kate Mattice

June marks 30 years since Virginia Railway Express (VRE) trains started rolling down the tracks of the Manassas line. The start of service was the result of a vision members of the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC) had for a commuter railroad serving the fast-growing region. Three decades later, NVTC retains shared ownership of the railroad with the Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission, as well as the responsibility to vote on key financial matters.

At their June meeting, Commissioners will be asked to approve a series of bonds backed by the Commuter Rail Operating and Capital (CROC) fund for the benefit of VRE and the Commonwealth's [Transforming Rail in Virginia](#) program. The bonds, estimated at approximately \$120 million, will assist the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority (VPRA) with the purchase of rail right-of-way from CSX Transportation.

Along with the new Long Bridge over the Potomac River, this investment will support a 75% increase in VRE service in the Interstate95/Fredericksburg Line corridor, including off-peak, weekend and reverse-flow service in addition to more peak period service. It will also mean that passenger and freight trains will no longer have to share the same tracks, mitigating the freight train interference that has become an increasing source of delay for VRE.

We're also about to embark on a refreshed study of the value of VRE and the region's other transit agencies to better understand and communicate the outsized benefits these agencies bring to the Commonwealth, not just in mobility, but also as drivers of the region's economy.

Executive Director

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Save the Date

June 16
WMATA Committee

June 17
Virginia Railway Express
Operations Board

June 21-22
Commonwealth
Transportation Board

July 7
Commission Meeting

July 15
Virginia Railway Express
Operations Board

July 19-20
Commonwealth
Transportation Board

July 21
Virginia Passenger Rail
Authority Board

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Jennifer DeBruhl sworn in as Commissioner

Chair Canek Aguirre administered the ceremonial [oath of office](#) to Jennifer DeBruhl, Acting Director the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT), during the May Commission meeting. Ms. DeBruhl has served as DRPT's chief of public transportation for more than five years and has over 25 years of public service to the transportation community.

The Commission also approved a resolution of commendation for former DRPT Director Jennifer Mitchell, recognizing her eight years of service on NVTC. We're excited to have Jen on the Commission and will miss Jennifer's dedication to improving transit in Virginia.



I-66 Commuter Choice Program of Projects moving toward June approval

The [I-66 Commuter Choice](#) FY 2023-2024 Program of Projects development process reached two milestones in late May. Public comment on the nine projects eligible for funding closed Monday, May 16 with 118 comment submissions – the most received in any Commuter Choice funding round to date – that primarily expressed support for particular projects or Commuter Choice in general. NVTC's public comment materials reached many Northern Virginia commuters beyond those who commented:

- Both the English and Spanish versions of Chair Aguirre's video greeting introducing the comment period garnered over 1,600 full views
- Overall, 57% of the 15,000 people that saw NVTC's Facebook posts about the comment period engaged with them, for instance by liking or clicking
- Over 500 people browsed NVTC's public comment web pages, which provided information about the projects and ways to comment

The Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) Rail and Transit Subcommittee received a briefing on the recommended Program of Projects on Tuesday, May 17 where board members appreciated that the set of projects would mitigate congestion in the I-66 corridor

and thanked the Commuter Choice team for identifying the benefits that the projects would provide to corridor commuters and the environment relative to drive-alone commuting.

And thanks to additional funding available from a pending project closeout, the recommended Program of Projects now includes full funding for seven transit and access to transit improvements. The newly added project, Fairfax County's Trail Access to Vienna Metrorail Station project, would fill a critical one-mile gap in the new Outside the Beltway I-66 Trail to provide a safe, comfortable means for cyclists and pedestrians to access the station. The Commission will be asked to adopt the Program of Projects at its June meeting, with CTB approval anticipated later in the month.

Recommended Program of Projects To be presented to the NVTC Commission for adoption in June

Applicant	I-66 Commuter Choice FY 2023-2024 Application	Score (100 Points)	Funding Request
City of Manassas Park	Manassas Park VRE Station Parking Garage	97	\$2,500,000
Arlington County	Ballston-MU Metrorail West Entrance	90	\$4,500,000
OmniRide	Renewal of Bus Service from Gainesville to Pentagon and Navy Yard	83	\$2,560,449
Fairfax County	Renewal of Bus Service from Vienna Metrorail Station to Pentagon	69	\$1,232,850
OmniRide	Renewal of Bus Service from Haymarket to Rosslyn	64	\$947,554
Prince William County	TDM Strategy - Fare Buy-Down on I-66 Commuter Bus Service	60	\$650,000
Fairfax County	Trail Access to Vienna Metrorail Station	57	\$2,200,000
Total			\$14,590,853

+ program administration costs (TBD)

4,000
daily trips

16M
fewer annual vehicle miles

83K
hours of delay saved each year

84%
GHG emissions reduction over driving alone

\$2M
annual savings for commuters in fuel costs



NVTC resumes in-person regional public meeting

After two years of virtual meetings, we resumed our legally-mandated joint regional public meeting the night of May 4. The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) hosted the open house and listening session at their Northern Virginia headquarters in Fairfax County. The Commuter Choice and communications teams provided information about the current round of projects up for

consideration in the I-66 corridor. Virginia Secretary of Transportation then led a public comment session where I participated, along with representatives of VDOT, the Department of Rail and Public Transportation, Virginia Railway Express and the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority.





Metro Board introduces next GM/CEO



Metro Board Chairman Paul Smedberg announced the selection [Randy Clarke](#) as its new General Manager/CEO during a [news conference](#) May 10. Mr Clarke is the current President and CEO of Capital Metro in Austin, Texas, a position he's held since 2018. At Capital Metro, Clarke led the successful effort of securing one of the county's largest financial voter approved referendums in history for transit expansion. He previously worked at the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) for six years in several roles, including deputy chief operating

officer, chief safety officer and director of security and emergency management. Executive Director Kate Mattice was honored to be one of the first to congratulate the talented Randy Clarke on his selection during a virtual meeting with Commissioners Paul Smedberg and Matt Letoureau, who represent Virginia on the Metro Board.

Metro's General Manager/CEO, Paul Wiedefeld retired May 16 and was replaced by Interim General Manager and CEO Andy Off. Wiedefeld joined Metro in November 2015. Under his leadership, Metro secured regional dedicated capital funding and stabilized the system after decades of deferred maintenance.



Chair Aguirre helps launch transportation report


Chair Canek Aguirre joined a [panel](#) hosted by the American Enterprise Institute May 18 to launch a new [report](#) on the "State of the Capital Region 2022." AEI says a well-functioning transportation systems allow people and goods to move across space safely and efficiently. Poorly designed transportation systems create noise, pollution, crashes and frustration. The report focuses on the region's transport infrastructure and usage, connecting the themes of previous reports on the geography of new housing and the spatial patterns of employment. WTOP [reported](#) on the panel, quoting Chair Aguirre, "We need to make sure there's consistent all-day service that is reliable because it has been shown that whenever it's reliable and consistent, people are more likely to utilize it."



Lessons from OmniRide's adoption of zero-emission buses

Technology Overview –What we know

- Zero-Emissions Vehicle:
 - Battery-electric or Hydrogen Fuel Cell Buses
 - No carbon emissions “at the tailpipe”
 - Does not account for the process to generate vehicle including electrical charge or hydrogen fuel
- The following are **not** zero-emissions:
 - Electric Hybrid
 - Plug-in Electric Hybrid
 - “Clean” Diesel
 - Compressed Natural Gas



NVTC’s Transit Technology team hosted a zero-emission bus (ZEB) working group meeting April 27 where Program Analyst Ronnetta Zack-Williams provided a presentation and overview of member feedback and plans for future meetings. The group discussed the workplan for the year, recapped working group goals and heard a presentation from [OmniRide](#) on their ZEB study update.

The presentation gave an overview of OmniRide’s project scope and timeline including researching and evaluating technologies, establishing fleet baseline requirements, selecting a preferred solution, and conceptual design and implementation strategy.

Following the presentation, the Q&A provided a fruitful discussion on various topics including transitioning small and medium duty vehicles to zero-emission vs. heavy duty vehicles, opportunities to share charging infrastructure with electric school buses as well as local jurisdictions in the process or exploring opportunities for federal funding. The meeting end with updates from jurisdictions on their ZEB planning progress.

RFP opens for Envision Route 7 BRT

We are soliciting proposals as part of an [RFP](#) we opened for an Envision Route 7 Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Strategic Implementation Roadmap. This roadmap has three key objectives:

- Develop a Strategic Implementation Roadmap that will serve as a guide for NVTC staff and the Commission in the implementation of the BRT project
- Identify and prioritize the key funding sources for each stage of the BRT project and the applicable timeline for each funding source
- Develop an interjurisdictional governance approach to guide the planning, implementation and operation of the BRT project

The BRT system would connect Tysons and Alexandria by way of Falls Church and Arlington. The work outlined in the RFP is expected to take approximately six months from award to project completion. Proposals for the RFP are due at 5 p.m. June 3 with the contract expected to be awarded in July.



Ground broken for Arlington Transitway extension

Several staff members were on hand May 9 as Arlington celebrated a groundbreaking for the extension of the [Transitway](#) to Pentagon City. The project will add additional dedicated bus lanes and five new transit stations with associated station amenities. The Transitway improves speed and reliability for the corridor and currently connects Crystal City, Potomac Yard and Braddock Road Station. It also connects to other key transit facilities like the Crystal City Metro and Virginia Railway Express stations and job and learning centers like Amazon’s HQ2 and the future Virginia Tech Innovation Campus.



495 Southside Express Lanes Study begins

Commuter Choice Senior Program Manager Ben Owen and Senior Program Analyst Adam Hager participated in the first Stakeholder Technical Advisory Group meeting for the 495 Southside Express Lanes (SEL) Study April 27 with federal, state and local partners. The study will evaluate the proposed extension of Northern Virginia's Express Lanes network along the southern section of the I-495 Capital Beltway. The study area extends from just west of the Springfield interchange (I-95/I-395/I-495) in Fairfax County, across the Woodrow Wilson Bridge, to just east of the Maryland 210 interchange in Prince George's County, Maryland. A complementary effort led by the Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) will identify new transit and transportation demand management (TDM) enhancements. A first round of [public meetings](#) on the 495 SEL Study has been scheduled for mid- to late May, online and in person around Northern Virginia. NVTC will help get the word out about future engagement opportunities and will work to coordinate any proposed transit improvements and TDM efforts that result from the studies.



Patricia Happ earns Project Management Professional Certificate

Congratulations go out to Transit Technology Senior Program Manager Patricia Happ for completing her Project Management Professional (PMP) certification. Patricia said, "It was a long but gratifying experience, and I got the chance to sharpen my skills and pick up a few new ones along the way," adding, "Even though I've been managing projects for eons, I'm enjoying the added value that the certification process brings to my work." Patricia has done an amazing job leading our Transit Technology Program, including recent efforts on zero-emission buses zero and reduced-fare transit.



Conferences teaches government communications best practice

Marketing and Engagement Manager Monique Blyther and Communication and Public Affairs Manager Matt Friedman spent several days the week of May 9 hearing from experts in communications for government agencies at the annual [conference](#) of the National Association of Government Communicators. Highlights of the conference, held in Louisville, Kentucky, included learning how to best engage diverse communities and how to break through the noise of the barrage of messages we see each day.



WELCOME Genoveva Cutrell



NVTC Executive Director Kate Mattice gained some much needed help with the addition of Genoveva Cutrell to NVTC's staff this week. Genoveva will work closely with Kate as an executive assistant, helping to manage our growing portfolio of work and enabling Kate to further focus on key policy matters. Genoveva previously served as the secretary to the Omaha City Council before relocating to Northern Virginia last year. There she worked with seven elected council members to provide logistical, administrative and policy support. She's also looking forward to volunteering at the Trust for the National Mall this summer.





Rep. Connolly talks Bipartisan Infrastructure Law at VRE station

Chair Canek Aguirre and Executive Director Kate Mattice joined Rep. Gerry Connolly at the Burke Center Virginia Railway Express (VRE) station May 6 as the Congressman hosted a roundtable to discuss how critical investments from the bipartisan infrastructure law are supporting the region, specifically in passenger rail and public transit. Rep. Connolly says federal funding will be used to expand transit options for millions of Americans, reducing congestion and greenhouse gas emissions. The gathering also included Commissioners Jeff McKay and James Walkinshaw, as well as representatives from VRE.





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