



Our 2020 federal and state legislative and policy agenda laid out an aggressive set of goals for what we wanted to see happen in Richmond and Washington this year. We knew we had a unique opportunity in the Commonwealth as the leadership of the General Assembly switched hands for the first time in a generation. With both the

Senate and House led by transit-friendly elected officials from Northern Virginia NVTC now has friends in high places. Friends who understand the importance of sustaining and expanding transit in our region, as well as the rest of Virginia.

Even before the session began in January, members filed key transportation bills that addressed many of our agenda items. Those who follow the legislative action in Richmond know that the 60-day session can often seem chaotic, but our champions in the legislature, as well as our partner organizations, such as the Virginia Transit Association, made sure the relevant bills got their due in committees and tracked their progress as they made their way to the floors of the Senate and House.

On the federal level, we're monitoring legislation that appropriates dedicated federal funding for WMATA, which is critical to funding necessary safety and capital improvements. President Donald Trump's initial budget calls for continued support of federal funding for WMATA, but it will ultimately be up to Congress to codify the spending. We know it has the backing of Senators Mark Warner and Tim Kaine and all our region's House members. We'll be watching closely as lawmakers refine the next federal budget.

Of course, none of these bills at the state or federal level are complete until they actually pass either the General Assembly or Congress and are then signed by Gov. Ralph Northam or the president, but we have reason to hope and believe that many of our priorities will become realities this year.



Katherine A. McGhee
Executive Director

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Key Dates

- March 5 - Commission Meeting
- March 17 - 18 CTB Meeting
- March 18 - Program Advisory Committee Meeting
- March 20 - VRE Operations Board
- March 26 - WMATA Board Meeting
- April 2 - Commission Meeting
- April 8 - 9 CTB Meeting
- April 17 - VRE Operations Board
- April 23 - WMATA Board Meeting

Transportation and transit bills highlight active legislative session

It's been a very active session for the General Assembly, one which addressed key priorities in NVTC's 2020 Legislative and Policy Agenda including the establishment of a business income tax deduction for employers to provide commuter transit benefits to their employees. Meanwhile, Sen. Adam Ebbin led the passage of legislation to change the due date of NVTC's Annual Report on the Performance and Condition of WMATA.

Major transportation legislation from Speaker Eileen Filler-Corn and Senate Majority Leader Dick Saslaw ([HB1414/SB890](#)) made its way through both chambers. The transportation omnibus bill streamlines how the Commonwealth distributes transportation revenues through a new Commonwealth Transportation Fund. Funds from the Commonwealth Transportation Fund are disbursed to different subaccounts for transit, passenger rail and other modes of transportation based on legislative formulas.

The transportation bill makes changes to the gas tax, restores some NVTA funding, establishes a new transit incentive program, and imposes new traffic safety initiatives. The legislation also supports improvements to passenger and commuter rail with a new Virginia Passenger Rail Authority and acknowledges the essential role of the Long Bridge Corridor in the economic development of Virginia and throughout the country.

The General Assembly introduced several bills related to WMATA. The House passed a bill adding an additional exception to WMATA's 3% operating cap to allow service increases approved by the WMATA Board.

Several bills were introduced regarding changes to the taxation rate of peer-to-peer vehicles, which allow people to rent their personal vehicles to others through an app. Under current law, a portion of the tax is distributed among the WMATA Capital Fund, Rail Enhancement Fund and Transportation Trust Fund.

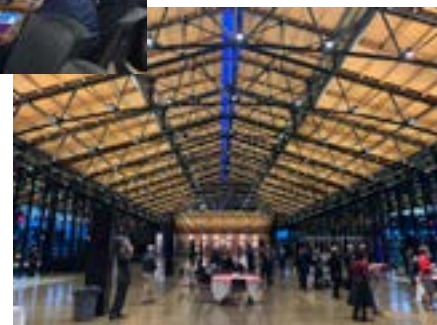
NVTC staffers take part in VTA Day in Richmond

Several NVTC staff members joined Kate Mattice in Richmond to take part in the Virginia Transit Association's Legislative Advocacy Day 2020. It started early with a news conference hosted by Gov. Ralph Northam. He joined Speaker of the House Eileen Filler-Corn, Senate Majority Leader Dick Saslaw and Secretary of Transportation Shannon Valentine to talk about his vision for transportation, including transit, in the Commonwealth. Next up was a legislative briefing held at the offices of the Virginia Association of Counties. During the day we attended several committee and sub-committee hearings where transit and transportation-related bills were being debated. We also sat in as WMATA General Manager Paul Wiedefeld briefed lawmakers on Phase 2 of the Silver Line and other timely matters. The day wrapped up with a reception inside Richmond's historic Main Street Station. The team saw a new energy in Richmond around transit issues, demonstrated by the number of bills working their way through the General Assembly and the leadership willing to go to bat to enact forward-thinking changes.



WMATA GM Paul Wiedefeld talks to elected officials (above)

Richmond Main Street Station (right)



Jurisdictions vie for Commuter Choice funding



NVTC received 16 proposals totaling nearly \$39 million in response to its recent Round Four call for projects for Commuter Choice on the I-66 corridor. A total of eight jurisdictions and public transit agencies in the I-66 corridor submitted proposals. The proposals showed a shift toward capital projects relative to prior funding rounds, potentially due in part to NVTC's recent changes to the Commuter Choice evaluation process to capture the long-term benefits of projects with long-lived assets. Staff will present a list of eligible applicants to the Commission in March.

The call for projects, which closed on January 31, sought proposals for funding in either fiscal year 2021 or 2022. Our staff, led by Ben Owen, aims to advance a proposed program of projects covering both years of funding to the Commission and the Commonwealth Transportation Board for approval this June. NVTC anticipates a minimum of \$25 million in available funding over the two fiscal years, per pending revisions to the Memorandum of Agreement with the Commonwealth that governs Commuter Choice on the I-66 corridor.

NVTC hosts off-board fare collection working group

As part of the Regional Fare Collection Program, NVTC's Patricia Happ continues to coordinate quarterly meetings between regional partners planning or operating off-board and/or multi-door fare collection systems (e.g., for bus rapid transit (BRT), light rail, streetcar). The objective of the meetings is to exchange information and lessons learned from recent regional partner activity and to coordinate future plans. Planned BRT systems in the region include Montgomery County's US 29 BRT, Arlington's extension of the Crystal City-Potomac Yard Transitway, Alexandria's West End Transitway, and the Richmond Highway BRT in Fairfax County. At the January 28th meeting, led by Patricia Happ, Alexandria/DASH, Arlington



An off-board fare payment system utilized by the New York MTA's Select Bus BRT system. Photo by Flickr user Phil Davis NY. Licensed under Creative Commons

County, Fairfax County, Montgomery County, and WMATA shared updates on their planned BRT lines. Discussion topics shared included BRT station design and communication technologies, ticket vending machines, policy issues and fare enforcement, ticket inspection/validation, mobile ticketing, and grant funding.

WUSA9 highlights Envision Route 7

Kate Mattice spoke with WUSA9 reporter Pete Muntean about our efforts in planning a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) connecting Tysons and Alexandria. NVTC Transit Resource Center Manager Dan Goldfarb has been instrumental in the planning process. We recently wrapped up Phase III and started working on Phase IV of the project. Kate said, "We need to have more options to move more people and not sit in traffic." The WUSA9 story gave NVTC a chance to highlight the work that we are doing largely under the radar to advance this important project.



NVTC swears in new officers and Commissioners

Outgoing Chair Matt Letourneau swore in NVTC's new officers and Commissioners in January. Katie Cristol of Arlington County now serves as Chair. Canek Aquirre of Alexandria serves as Vice-Chair and Jeff McKay of Fairfax County as Secretary-Treasurer. Mr. Letourneau also swore-in five new Commissioners: Walter Alcorn, Dalia Palchik, James Walkinshaw and Daniel Storck (alternate) of Fairfax County and Mike Turner of Loudoun County. The General Assembly will appoint one member of the Senate and four members of the House of Delegates in the coming months.



(L-R) Matt Letourneau, Katie Cristol, Canek Aquirre, Jeff McKay



(L-R) Matt Letourneau, Walter Alcorn, James Walkinshaw, Mike Turner, Dalia Palchik, Daniel Storck



Commuter Choice funded AT-1 Plus bus gets a new look

Specially-branded buses celebrating the diversity of the City of Alexandria's West End neighborhood launched recently and Kate Mattice and Jae Watkins joined Commissioners Elizabeth Bennett-Parker and Canek Aguirre for a ride and mini-tour of the enhanced service. The branded buses showcase local landmarks and bus destinations as well as signage in multiple languages, including English, Spanish and Amharic. DASH, in partnership with the City of Alexandria, received grant support during the inaugural round of Commuter Choice on the I-395/95 corridor to increase service and provide real-time information displays for the AT-1 Plus route. The improvements, including 10-minute headways during peak period and less waiting time during off-peak hours, are 100% funded through NVTC's Commuter Choice program. The enhanced service boosts connectivity to vital areas in Alexandria, including the Van Dorn Metro Station, Mark Center and Seminary Plaza.

When comparing the ridership on the AT-1 in November 2018 and AT-1 Plus in November 2019, the number of riders has increased by 26%. DASH staff attributed part of the ridership increase to the solar-powered, real-time informational displays that provide a better bus stop experience and encourage passengers to use the service.



Bus Transformation Project team returns to MAC

Representatives from the Bus Transformation Project (BTP) met with members of MAC (Management Advisory Committee) at NVTC's offices to share updates on the program's strategies. Allison Davis from WMATA and Dalia



Leven from AECOM outlined the history of the BTP, along with detailed explanations of public outreach efforts. In the fall, the BTP outlined four key strategies:

- Frequent and convenient bus service
- Bus priority on roadways
- Customer experience
- Task Force to implement the strategy

Since that time, the project team's made changes to the recommendations based on NVTC feedback. The BTP removed a recommendation to transfer some bus service from WMATA to regional agencies without regional input. It added a recommendation for the WMATA Board to revisit the definition of "regional" and "non-regional" service. The BTP also delayed the start of the proposed Task Force to enable further discussion in the region. The WMATA Board gave its endorsement to the first three revised strategies in January, setting aside the recommendation for a Task Force. NVTC staff will continue to press for jurisdictional input in advance of BTP representatives' return to the Commission at our March meeting. BTP representatives are seeking an NVTC endorsement for the overall project and some immediate next steps.

2020 Metrorail shutdown coordination underway

NVTC hosted the first coordination call of the year to prepare for the summer Orange Line shutdown. Program Analyst Matt Cheng leads the group. It includes representatives from WMATA and all Northern Virginia jurisdictions, as well

as agencies ranging from VDOT to the federal Office of Personnel Management. WMATA told participants that it plans to release alternate summer service plans by early March, giving three months notice for commuters. The agency also plans to produce brochures outlining travel alternatives and host open houses in several communities affected by the shutdown. Impacted commuters will be encouraged to telework during the construction period. Regional agencies are also looking into modifying existing bus service to provide additional transit coverage. This coordination also helps make WMATA and jurisdictions aware of other construction projects planned along the shutdown corridor so they can work together on mitigation efforts.

On the road with Envision Route 7

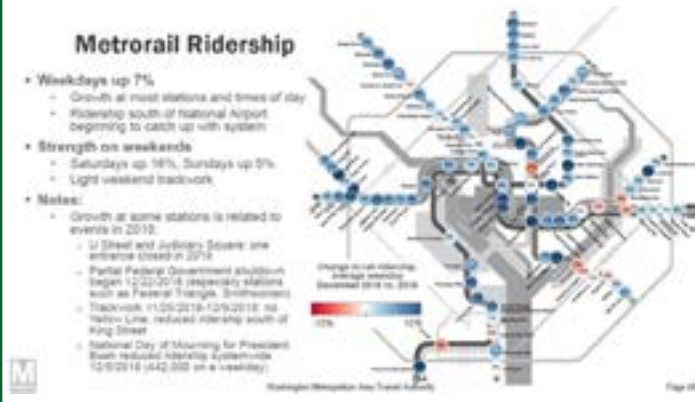
NVTC's Dan Goldfarb recently briefed the City of Falls Church City Council and Mayor David Tarter on The Envision Route 7 Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project. The Envision Route 7 BRT is planned as a high performing service that connects key locations along Route 7 in Northern Virginia. The project is part of a network of BRT routes being planned, designed, and implemented to better link the region. The Envision Route 7 project study started in 2012 and will soon initiate Phase



IV. The recently completed Phase III developed a conceptual design for the corridor, laying out exclusive median and curb lane options, as well as shared and Business Access and Transit (BAT) lanes for each segment of the corridor. The conceptual design also outlined station areas and presented a set of templates for the stations. The goal of the next phase, Envision Route 7 BRT Phase IV Mobility Analysis Study, is to evaluate and determine the mobility benefits and impacts resulting from the proposed BRT and build understanding and public support for the project.

WMATA

WMATA recently introduced a [data portal](#) that provides a trove of ridership data on both Metrorail and Metrobus. The online site also reports on parking usage. Users can find bus and rail statistics dating back to 2010 and parking data from 2012 to the present. Soon after the portal opened, WMATA noted in a news release that Metrorail posted a 4% increase in riders in 2019, with total ridership at 182 million trips for the calendar year. Two Silver Line stations in Virginia posted the highest gains in the system with passenger trips up 28% at McLean and 22% at Greensboro. NVTC staff are excited with this move toward ridership data transparency and are exploring the portal to identify ridership trends.



VRE

The Virginia Railway Express (VRE) has joined a U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) effort to combat human trafficking. VRE becomes the second commuter railroad in the nation to participate in the Transportation Leaders Against Human Trafficking initiative. During an event at USDOT headquarters, VRE Acting CEO Rich Dalton joined Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao and committed VRE to this important initiative. VRE will use materials developed jointly by USDOT and the Department of Homeland Security to train both its staff and Keolis crew members, who work on board VRE trains, to spot common indicators of human trafficking and report suspected activity. The initiative includes an outreach component, which VRE will employ to increase awareness among passengers.

WMATA

Metro will dramatically expand its digital advertising network under a new 10-year contract that will provide an infusion of revenue to support rail and bus services for Metro riders. The ten-year contract for Metro’s advertising concession, awarded to OUTFRONT Media, Inc., is valued at more than \$336 million over the next decade. In the deal, Metro locked in a 25% increase in guaranteed revenue that can be used to fund Metro service.

Fairfax Connector

Fairfax Connector has added a new bus route. [Route 396](#) – Backlick North Park-and-Ride to the Pentagon – provides express service in the I-95/395 corridor giving commuters a shorter trip by eliminating the stop at Gambrill Park and Ride. This service will feature 12 inbound morning and 14 outbound afternoon trips. Route 396 is funded by the NVTC Commuter Choice Program.



Amtrak

Amtrak offers 15% off trips in Virginia and D.C. with the [Virginia Anytime Fare](#), valid through April 30, 2020. The fare applies to trips starting or finishing at stations in Virginia or at Washington Union Station. Blackout dates apply.

