



# Executive Director Newsletter



March  
2022

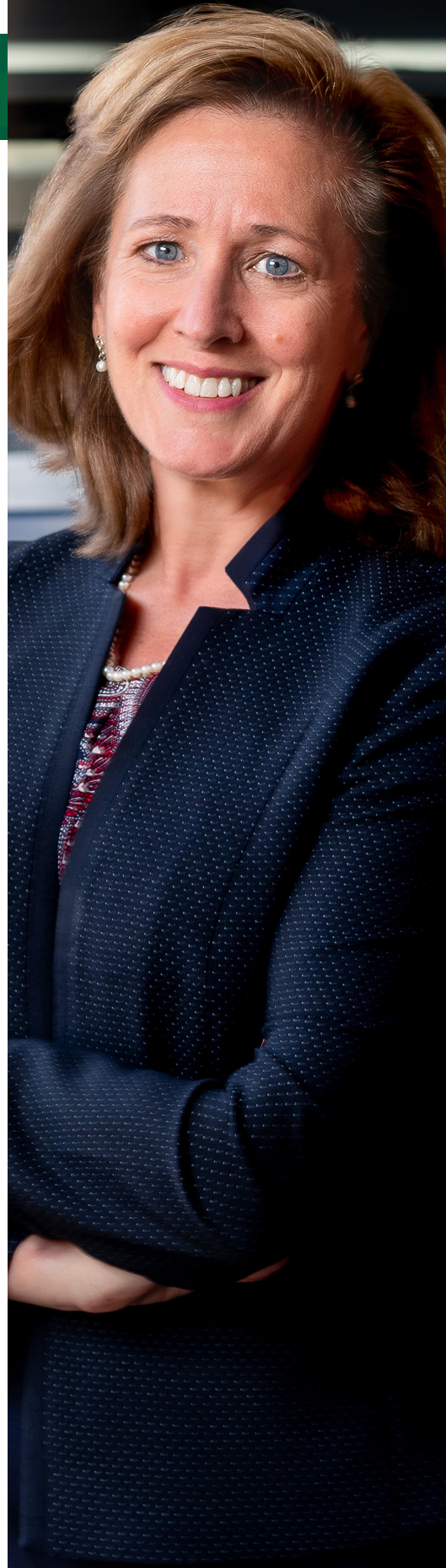
Northern Virginia  
Transportation Commission  
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## A Message from Kate Mattice

We often say that NVTC enjoys a special relationship with Metro. It's one that dates back to the establishment of the Commission in 1964 to facilitate "planning and developing a transportation system for Northern Virginia and for the safety, comfort and convenience of its citizens and for the economical utilization of public funds." Nearly six decades later, the Commission retains an active role in guiding policy for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transportation Authority through its appointments to the board of directors and the management of regional and state funding for Metro on behalf of NVTC's local jurisdictions.

As a part of that relationship, NVTC routinely invites Metro leaders to address Commissioners on pressing matters of the day throughout the history of the two organizations. Our upcoming meeting with Metro's current General Manager/CEO Paul J. Wiedefeld will likely be his last. Mr. Wiedefeld announced earlier this year that he planned to retire in June, after more than six years leading the agency. We thank him for his leadership to rebuild the physical infrastructure of Metro, through SafeTrack and the Platform Improvement Project.

Alas, we also recognize that the Metro faces new challenges, including the safe return of 7000-series railcars and rebuilding ridership after two years of the COVID-19 pandemic. We know that the years ahead will be difficult ones for Metro as it addresses major budget challenges amidst evolving commuter and traveling behaviors. (You can read more about the NVTC WMATA Committees budget recommendations inside this newsletter.)

NVTC will continue to keep its eyes on Metro to help guide its policy and investment decisions and we look forward to working with the Metro Board and the next GM/CEO, whoever they may be, to ensure that Metro remains a vital resource for Northern Virginia.

*Kate A. Mattice*  
Executive Director

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Save the Date

**March 15-16**  
Commonwealth Transportation Board

**March 18**  
VRE Operations Board

**April 14**  
Program Advisory Committee

**April 15**  
VRE Operations Board

**April 19-20**  
Commonwealth Transportation Board

**April 21**  
WMATA Committee

**May 5**  
Commission Meeting

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## NVTC encourages Metro to reduce future budget gap

The NVTC WMATA Committee [submitted a letter](#) February 15 providing formal comment on Metro's proposed FY 2023 budget and FY 2023-2028 Capital Improvement Program. The committee's comments are mindful of the agency's projected operating budget gap in FY 2024 and encourage Metro to find budget savings in FY 2023 where possible. NVTC WMATA Program Manager Andrew D'huyvetter worked closely with committee chair Walter Alcorn and other members to craft the letter which includes these priorities:

- Identify opportunities, where possible, to right-size bus and rail service to match demand and seek opportunities for savings in FY 2023 that will reduce the projected operating funding gap in FY 2024.
- Implement fare policy changes to balance ridership and revenue while recognizing the change in ridership behaviors from telework.

- Encourage a swift but safe opening of the Silver Line Phase 2 and Potomac Yard Stations.
- Urge the safe and timely return of the 7000-series railcars to service, improvements in safety culture, improved collaboration with safety oversight bodies and efforts to rebuild customer confidence.
- Accelerate Metro's Capital Improvement Program to advance goals of safety, reliability and state of good repair.
- Members of the WMATA Committee and Virginia's Metro Board members will continue to engage Metro on future budget concerns in the coming months.



## Review of applications for next round Commuter Choice on the I-66 Corridor funding underway

NVTC's call for projects for Commuter Choice on the I-66 Corridor FY 2023-2024 (Round Five) funding received 11 applications. Six applicants requested a total of \$23.1 million from the program for better bus service, rail capital upgrades, strategies to improve access to transit stations and stops for bicyclists and pedestrians, and commuter incentives in the I-66 Corridor. NVTC conservatively anticipates that \$12 million will be available for new projects over the FY 2023-2024 period. More funding may become available later depending on the rebound of I-66 Inside the Beltway toll revenues.

The process to develop a FY 2023-2024 Program of Projects will culminate in expected approvals by the Commission and Commonwealth Transportation Board in June. The Commuter Choice team was expected to send eligibility, completeness and clarification questions to applicants and notify applicants of any ineligible applications by the end of February. The team will then develop and finalize scores for all eligible applications during March, before opening a one-month, fully online public comment period in mid-April. NVTC's Program Advisory Committee met February 23 to identify a guiding programming strategy for the FY 2023-2024 program given the revenue complexities and will gather again April 14 to endorse a draft Program of Projects for the Commission and Commonwealth Transportation Board to consider, subject also to the public comment that NVTC receives. The Commuter Choice team will inform and engage applicants throughout to keep the process on schedule and help to curry public involvement during the online comment period.





# NVTC's digital annual report recaps year of adaptation for transit

We published our [digital annual report](#) online February 17 which highlights the work of each major program managed by NVTC, financial summaries and staff engagement with partner organizations and the public. As Executive Director Kate Mattice noted in the executive summary, we may look back on 2021 as the year we understood the importance of transit in new ways. We continued to see commuting patterns

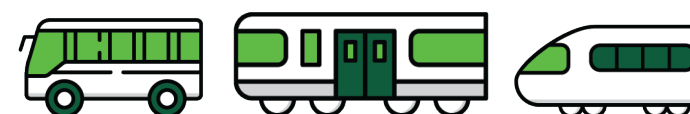
change during the second year of the pandemic and saw continued strength for transit services that provide essential connections for riders who need them most. The digital annual report is in addition to the [annual report video](#) we published earlier, which can be seen on our YouTube page. While you're at it, please take a moment to like the video and [subscribe to our channel](#).



## Regional Fare Working Group reviews new bus farebox progress

NVTC's Regional Fare Collection Working Group met February 9 to review progress in advancing the region's fare collection technology and emerging fare policy considerations. NVTC Transit Technology Senior Program Manager Patricia Happ leads the group, with assistance from Program Analyst Sophie Spiliotopoulos. NVTC is working with Metro, Fairfax Connector and ART to purchase, install and activate new bus fareboxes, replacing ones that are past their functional lifetimes. As we've seen across many industries, supply chain issues involving

computer chips required for the fareboxes have slowed manufacturing by about three months. Patricia also provided updates on efforts to develop a zero-emission bus regional fleet transition strategic plan. If approved, a grant from the Department of Rail and Public Transportation would support that work in the next fiscal year.



## Metro Board members review capital program

The Metro Board's Finance and Capital Committee, chaired by Matt Letourneau, conducted a [work session](#) on the capital program and received a quarterly [fare evasion](#) update February 10. Metro staff provided a preliminary outlook in the impacts of the Infrastructure, Investment, and Jobs Act on the capital program and showed a video which showcased Metro's 2021 Capital Projects that invested in system

safety, reliability, and the region's economy. Metro Board Chair Paul Smedberg and Alternate Director Bryna Helfer presided over a [Virginia-focused public hearing](#) to take comments and testimony on the agency's proposed FY 2023 operating budget and FY 2023-2028 Capital Improvement Program February 7. The Metro Board is expected to approve the budget in late March.



## Bus Transformation Project progress report launch

Executive Director Kate Mattice served as the special guest speaker for the MetroNow coalition's Bus Transformation Project (BTP) [progress report](#) launch event February 2. The report looks at progress compared to the BTP's twenty-six recommendations for improving the region's bus service, which were first developed in 2019. The coalition says prioritizing better bus service can improve the lives of hundreds of thousands of people who use the bus today and create a regionally coordinated bus network that can grow ridership long-term.

in Northern Virginia. There are more than 530-thousand households, 1.4 million people, who live within a ¼ mile of a bus stop in Northern Virginia and there are more than 2 million jobs located within a ¼ mile of a bus stop. The health and vibrancy of our bus network matters to Northern Virginia and local bus providers, from Fairfax Connector and DASH, to ART, CUE and Loudoun County Transit, are committed to providing the connections that matter, working alongside Metro to provide a network of bus options that best serve our communities.

Kate reminded participants that the bus is also an important part of the transportation network







## NVTC Legislative and Policy Committee receives GA 'crossover' update

NVTC's Legislative and Policy Committee met February 17 to discuss recent activity at the state and federal levels that will impact transportation and transit in Northern Virginia. NVTC Legislative Liaison Aimee Perron Seibert provided an overview of the bills we are tracking in the Virginia 2022 Legislative Session that have passed crossover. Any bills that have not crossed chambers at this point, except the budget bill, will no longer be considered for legislation and amendments. Ms. Perron Seibert highlighted that several bills that impact transit funding through grocery and the state fuel tax pause are still in play, most notably HB 90 (McNamara) and SB 451 (Boysko) which will eliminate the grocery tax. The grocery tax is a key revenue source for the Commonwealth Transportation Fund that is estimated to provide more than \$135 million per year for roadway maintenance, transit operations and other transportation activities that are not covered by federal funding. As a result of committee discussions, NVTC sent a [letter](#) on February 21 to key senators urging the identification of a replacement revenue source that will ensure a sustainable and reliable source of transportation funding. Staff continue to monitor these bills and budget amendments

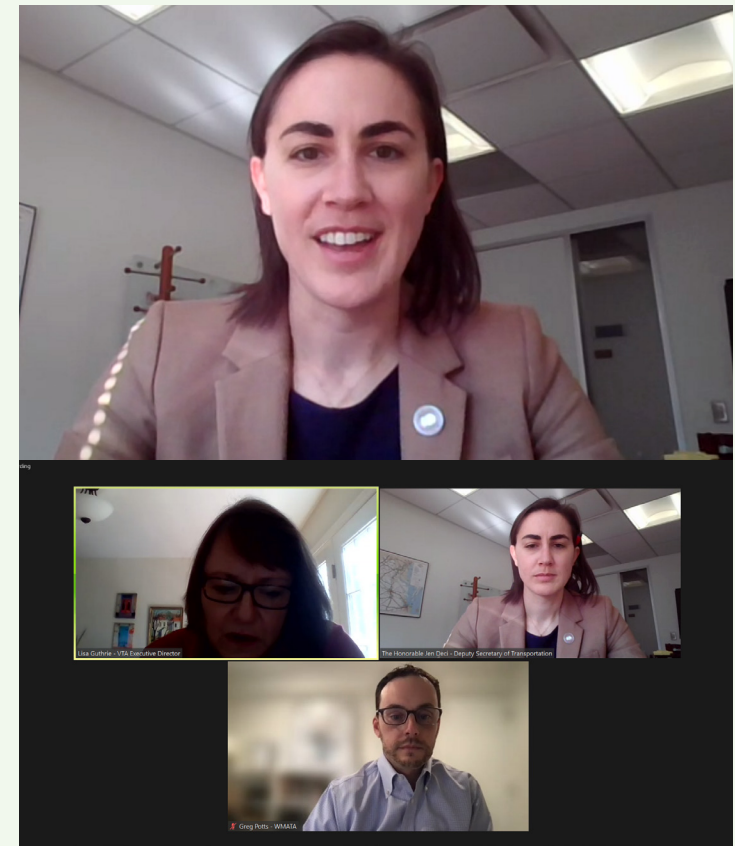
as the General Assembly heads into Budget Sunday, where committees responsible for the budget bill(s) are to complete work before they head into the amendment process.

Executive Director Kate Mattice presented a federal outlook, from an update provided by Cardinal Infrastructure, noting that the House passed a continuing resolution (CR) February 8 to fund the government through March 11. (The Senate passed the CR February 17.) Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said the Senate will take up the measure before the current CR expires. House and Senate Appropriations leaders agreed to a spending framework for FY 2022, though the details are not yet available. USDOT Undersecretary for Policy, Carlos Monje highlighted this past week that because the federal government is still operating under FY 2021 funding levels in the current CR that increased program authorization levels cannot yet be fully realized until a full year appropriations bill is enacted. The White House also appears to be in discussions for a new version of the Build Back Better Act. In addition, The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) announced \$615 million in FY 2022 funding for the new National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) Formula Program authorized by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). Finally, there is proposal for a gas tax holiday through the end of the year by several Senate Democrats, but it does not appear to have bipartisan support.

## VTA Briefing features new deputy secretary of transportation

The [Virginia Transit Association](#) (VTA) hosted a virtual briefing with Virginia's new Deputy Secretary of Transportation Jen Deci February 11. Ms. Deci worked with NVTC before heading back to Capitol Hill to work on transportation and other issues in the Senate. Gov. Glenn Younkin appointed Ms. Deci to her new post in January and this was an early opportunity to understand his administration's view of transit priorities. Metro Virginia Government Relations

Officer Greg Potts helped kick off the discussion. We look forward to other opportunities to have Ms. Deci brief Commissioners and staff.



## WELCOME to our new transit fellow



Please welcome our newest transit fellow Silas Sullivan who joined NVTC January 31. Silas is a student in the Master of Urban and Regional Planning program at the Virginia Tech Graduate School where he's working toward a concentration in Transportation Planning and Policy. He has a Bachelor of Science in City and Regional Studies from Catholic University. A lifelong resident of our region, Silas tells us he grew up riding VRE and I-95 HOV/Express lanes and as a result has always been enthused by transport and multimodal movement. He's working with our Commuter Choice program team where he will make the most of his interests in transportation demand management (TDM), active transportation and educating others about the transport options available in a community.



## VRE Fredericksburg Station rehabilitation project progresses

Rehabilitation of the Virginia Railway Express' (VRE) Fredericksburg station took a step forward on January 21, 2022 when the commuter rail service's Operations Board approved a task order for construction management services. Construction on the \$5 million project is expected to begin this summer, following the selection of a construction contractor. "This project, which will lengthen the station's platform, is designed

to improve passenger safety and convenience," said Councilor Matt Kelly, who represents the city on VRE's Operations Board. "New stairs will allow passengers to move between the platform and parking lot without crossing Princess Anne Street at grade level. Other improvements include new signage, sidewalks, lighting and paint. It's truly a transformational project."





## DASH seeks public feedback on proposed Title VI policies

DASH is seeking [feedback](#) on new Title VI policies, which prohibit discrimination based on race, skin color or nation of origin. Title VI policies are required by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) as outlined by Title VI in the Civil Rights Act of 1964. These policies are designed to ensure that DASH bus service is provided in a fair and equitable manner, and that any major changes to DASH service or fare policies are evaluated to ensure that any impacts borne from the changes are distributed equitably.

## Prince William Chamber of Commerce and OmniRide develop a transportation initiative strengthening student-workforce

The Prince William Chamber of Commerce's Education and Workforce Committee and OmniRide have [partnered](#) to develop a transportation initiative geared toward students in the Chamber's Workforce Development programs. The Education and Workforce Committee builds partnerships intended to enhance the educational experience for students in the Prince William County region by providing a connection between the business community and educators. The transportation initiative is intended to provide transportation resources for students between the ages of 16-24 enrolled in both the Prince William school system and Northern Virginia Community College's (NOVA) Manassas and Woodbridge campuses.



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