



Infrastructure – the underpinnings of an organization or system – has dominated the headlines of late. While rails and roads serve as the framework for our local transit network, it is partnerships that help fortify the foundation upon which NVTC is built. Our organization’s recent focus on increasing partnerships and building coalitions allows us to share our message with new audiences and expand our geographic reach. Partnerships also provide us with new insights and ways of approaching concerns on a regional basis. And, they give NVTC an opportunity to share its expertise more broadly, contributing to a greater understanding of transit’s challenges and opportunities here in Northern Virginia.

In meeting with organizations – such as the [Federal City Council](#), [Northern Virginia Transportation Alliance](#) and [Virginia Transit Association](#) – NVTC is positioning itself to provide greater value, especially to the business community, in finding solutions to pressing topics, such as the need for dedicated and sustainable transit funding.

Billed as a candid discussion of transportation issues across modes, a mid-February brainstorming session sponsored by the [Greater Washington Partnership](#) (GWP) explored existing challenges and potential solutions. I and a handful of other transportation executives – including [WMATA's](#) GM/CEO Paul Wiedefeld and [MWCOC's](#) Executive Director Chuck Bean – shared our thoughts with GWP staff. Similar roundtables were held in Richmond and Baltimore. The GWP, a self-described team of civic-minded CEOs, has “advancing infrastructure solutions that strengthen regional mobility and improve quality of life” as one of its four goals.

With both MWCOC and NVTC examining the value that transit brings to the region, Chuck Bean and I have been meeting to coordinate work, avoid duplication of effort, and develop consistent messaging. [MWCOC's study is regional in scope](#), whereas NVTC's focuses on Northern Virginia. Results of the two studies, due out later this year, will demonstrate the importance of identifying new long-term sources of revenue for transit.

These partnerships are beginning to bear fruit. In the coming months and years, the sharing of resources, knowledge and expertise among these business, nonprofit and government organizations will harvest support for a stronger transportation network, one in which transit plays a key role. NVTC’s participation is essential to ensuring that the interests of Northern Virginia are well represented.

~ **Kate Mattice**
Executive Director

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Key Dates

Mar. 2	NVTC Monthly Meeting
Mar. 7-16	VRE Public Hearings on Proposed Fare Increases
Mar. 7	Transit Capital Project Revenue Advisory Board Meeting
Mar. 9	NVTA Monthly Meeting
Mar. 15	TPB Monthly Meeting
Mar. 14-15	CTB Monthly Meeting
Mar. 17	VRE Monthly Meeting
Mar. 31	TSDAC Meeting
Apr. 5	General Assembly Reconvenes

Transform 66 March Update

A communications package that will brand NVTC's Transform 66 Multimodal Project is under design. The package will include a new name, tagline and logo, all compatible with VDOT's rebranding of I-66 Inside the Beltway. NVTC expects to launch the brand in April.

Public information staff representing [the initial Transform 66 Multimodal grantees](#) are collaborating with NVTC on a June kick-off event. Designed to highlight these new commuter choices, the event will feature informational displays and hands-on activities. Look for an invitation later this spring.



Transform 66 Multimodal will be the topic of a roundtable discussion at the [Virginia Transit Association's annual conference](#). NVTC is coordinating the session, which will spotlight TDM, express bus service, bus stop improvements and park-and-ride lot construction. The May 24-25 conference is at The Hilton Crystal City.

To date, eight of the 10 Standard Component Agreements, which authorize funding and stipulate obligations under Transform 66 Multimodal, have been signed. The remaining agreements are awaiting jurisdictional review, approval by jurisdictional boards, or final execution.

Fare Collection Technology Improvements Move Ahead

A visit to WMATA's fare collection lab gave NVTC a firsthand look at how new Driver Control Units (DCU) will integrate with existing bus fareboxes. Because it is essential that the DCUs being developed by Cubic be compatible with fareboxes now in use by ART, Fairfax Connector, CUE, DASH and Loudoun County Transit, NVTC is working closely with WMATA. NVTC plans to visit each transit agency to survey bus fleets for potential mounting and installation issues with the proposed equipment.

In order to purchase equipment for the farebox upgrades, NVTC is working to secure capital assistance funds from the Department of Rail and Public Transportation. WMATA's DCU contracts will include a rider giving regional partners the same pricing, terms and conditions as WMATA.

While the focus of the fare payment project has been on the DCU, given the immediate need for functional fareboxes, off-board payment remains of interest to the City of Alexandria and Arlington County. To identify

opportunities for the joint procurement of off-board payment technologies, NVTC is monitoring MTA's Purple Line and WMATA's off-board fare collection plans.



Patricia Happ (left), NVTC's transit planning and programs manager, visits the WMATA fare collection lab with members of the technical consultant team.



Save the Date!

VTA 2017 Conference and Expo

May 23-24

The Hilton Crystal City

FTA Withholds Funds Pending Certification of Metro Safety Commission

The Federal Transit Administration is holding back 5 percent, or about \$8.9 million, of transit funding for D.C., Maryland and Virginia until a new Metro Safety Commission (MSC) is certified. [WMATA, VRE and transit systems in Richmond, Roanoke and Hampton Roads](#) are among those affected. The states and D.C. had been given until Feb. 9 to create the new safety oversight

agency. [That date was called unreasonable in a letter](#) sent by Virginia Del. Jim LeMunyon ([HB2136](#) sponsor) and Sen. George Barker ([SB1251](#) sponsor) to U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao asking her to suspend the FTA's decision. MSC legislation, which has been signed by D.C., continues to move through the two state legislatures.

WMATA Implements Cost-Cutting Measures

In advance of the WMATA Board's anticipated March FY2018 budget discussions, the transit agency announced changes designed to cut costs. Metro expects to save \$1 million annually by reducing its call center's hours and \$2 million through controls on absenteeism.

New call center hours were triggered by a five-year decline in call volume as customers moved to electronic channels for information. As of March 1, 2017, the call center will operate weekdays from 7 a.m.-8 p.m and weekends from 8 a.m.-6:30 p.m.

A six percent rise in absenteeism - from 171,019 days of sick and unpaid leave in FY2015 to 181,422 days in FY2016 - led to an internal review that identified more

than 100 employees who were on extended leave beyond the time limits required by collective bargaining agreements, policy, or law. Among the changes also effective March 1:

- Supervisors can approve no more than two days of unexcused absences without pay
- Within a one-year period, progressive discipline up to and including termination applies to excessive absences
- Supervisors and Managers are now "at will" employees who may be terminated for abuse of policy
- Metro's internal Office of Medical Services will provide reviews and approval by medical professionals of sick leave and doctors' notes.

Safetrack Surge 13 to Begin March 4

[SafeTrack's final Virginia surge](#) will run from March 4 through April 9. Blue and Yellow line trains will continuously single track between Braddock Road and Huntington/Van Dorn Street significantly reducing service. Surge 13 will be completed in three phases.

NVTC is coordinating NoVa's SafeTrack response, holding calls so that stakeholders can gain clarity on issues and provide feedback. These calls allow transit providers to modify service to ensure that residents have travel options as Metro works to repair its tracks.

2017 SafeTrack Surges

Date	Stations Affected	Lines Affected	Service Status
Thru February 28	Rosslyn-Pentagon		Line segment shutdown
March 4 - April 1	Braddock Road-Huntington/Van Dorn St.	 	Continuous single tracking
April 2-9			Continuous single tracking
April-May TBA	Greenbelt – College Park		Continuous single tracking
May-June TBA	Minnesota Ave – New Carrollton		Continuous single tracking
June TBA	Shady Grove – Twinbrook		Continuous single tracking

Vanpools Provide Funding for WMATA

The [Vanpool Alliance](#) was created to increase vanpool ridership in Northern Virginia, while generating additional transportation funds for the region. Those funds come from the Federal Transit Administration when vanpool operators submit data for the National Transit Database. NVTC receives approximately half of these funds – projected to be about \$1.4 million in FY2018 and over \$2.0 million in FY2019 – which is earmarked for Metro. The George Washington Regional Commission (GWRC) and the Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission (PRTC) share the remaining funds. The Vanpool Alliance is a public-private partnership between NVTC, GWRC, PRTC, the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation and vanpool operators.

In a February 21 briefing to NVTC’s Management Advisory Committee (MAC) about the program, Vanpool Program Manager Joe Stainsby spoke of the benefits of the program and addressed an amendment to clarify language in the Memorandum of Understanding that is on the Commission’s consent agenda. In addition to bringing more federal funds to the region, the Vanpool Alliance reduces traffic congestion, lowers commuting costs and improves air quality. It matches commuters who live and work in the same general region with vanpool operators. Because vanpools can use express, HOT and HOV lanes, commutes are faster and more predictable.



NVTC Among 221 Arlington “Champions” Offering Commuting Options

Noting that Arlington County has one of the lowest drive-alone commuter rates in Virginia, Larry Filler recognized NVTC and 220 other organizations as Champions at a breakfast in early February. Filler, bureau chief of the county’s Commuter Services, noted that the low rate is a product of employers and property managers creating an environment that encourages transit, carpooling, biking and walking.

[Arlington Transportation Partners](#) (ATP) recognizes Champions in a tiered system, awarding bronze, silver, gold or platinum status based on a participant’s offerings. ATP ensures that each employer and property continues, year after year, to promote and support alternatives, which include teleworking, to single-occupancy commuting in order to receive IRS transit benefits.



Karen Finucan Clarkson (left), communications and outreach manager and Patricia Happ (right), transit planning and programs manager, accept NVTC’s Bronze Champion award.

Keynote speaker Robert Thomson, The Washington Post’s Dr. Gridlock, light-heartedly lamented the success of the ATP Champions program, calling it a threat to his continued employment. Thomson, the self-described “Dear Abby” of traffic, proceeded to share his frustration in responding to commuter questions. “Tell them that the nuclear summit is in D.C. or the Pope is in town, and they don’t ask for the best method of travel. They ask for a detour.” Far too many people in the National Capital Region, he said, have little if any experience riding Metro.

Thomson’s comments underscore the challenges that transportation demand management (TDM) organizations, such as ATP, face in convincing commuters to try transit. ATP, as well as Loudoun County’s TDM program, will soon have additional resources to help in that effort through NVTC’s [Transform 66 Multimodal Project](#).

Legislative Round Up

Federal

In a move designed to signal the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) that the region takes Metrorail's safety issues seriously, U.S. Sen. Tim Kaine (D-VA) and Rep. Steny Hoyer (D-MD) introduced a joint resolution ([S.J. Res. 22](#) and [H.J. Res. 76](#)) granting their states and Washington, D.C. "the consent and approval of Congress" to establish a Metro Safety Commission (MSC). The legislation was introduced six days after FTA withheld millions in transit funding from Richmond to Baltimore because the jurisdictions missed the deadline to create the federally mandated safety oversight panel. Congress was to have given its approval after identical legislation had been passed by all three jurisdictions but instead expedited action, in part to pressure Virginia and Maryland lawmakers. D.C. to pass and sign MSC legislation.

Metro would get an additional \$750 million in federal funds under a bill ([H.R. 1140](#)) mandating changes to the transit agency's governance structure and labor contracts. Introduced by U.S. Rep. John Delaney (D-MD), the legislation cuts the Metro Board from 16 to nine members, each of whom must have specific professional skills or experience. It also mandates unspecified changes to Metro's collective bargaining agreements. Such changes would require legislative action by Virginia, Maryland and D.C. Were the jurisdictions not to act, the bill requires that Congress withdraw its approval of the Metro Compact. In order for Metro to qualify for \$75 million annually over 10 years, which is in addition to the current \$150 million annually provided by the federal government, each of the three jurisdictions would have to contribute an additional \$25 million a year.

State

All bills have now crossed over and committee action is complete. Action is now on the floor. Remaining before the General Assembly is finalization of the budget and reconciliation of bills that are in dispute.

NVTC did not initiate the introduction of any bills this session but did follow some closely, such as those establishing a regional gas tax floor and a Metro Safety Commission (MSC). Both the House ([HB 2136](#)) and Senate ([SB 1251](#)) MSC bills now contain enactment language directing the Secretary of Transportation and NVTC to jointly review the 1966 WMATA Compact and consider potential changes. Both bills await floor action. Neither will be signed by the Governor until April to allow time to make changes if Maryland amends its bill. The Virginia bills are designed to become law immediately upon signing by the Governor.

A floor on the regional gas tax will wait until next year. [HB2130](#) (Levine) was defeated in a House Finance Subcommittee. [SB1092](#) (Petersen) was rolled into [SB1456](#) (Wagner), which passed the Senate floor 26-12 before being tabled in the House Finance Committee. As it was a voice vote, no delegates went on the record against the bill, which received broad support from road builders and chambers of commerce.

One House budget item [names NVTC as part of the WMATA Compact review team](#). Another [budget item calls upon VDOT to work with Fairfax County](#) on a replacement of the bridge over Route 1 included in the [Atlantic Gateway project](#). Twelve House and Senate members will reconcile all budget differences and present a final conference report to be voted on before Sine Die on February 25.

Around Town: Headlines about NVTC Jurisdictions & Partners



[Vision Zero: Alexandria Working to Eliminate Traffic-Related Deaths](#)



[New commuter bus options from Loudoun County to DC](#)

[Loudoun Supervisors Briefed on Projected Metrorail Costs](#)



[Plan set for badly needed Arlington Memorial Bridge repairs](#)



[Redesign Coming to Clarendon Circle](#)

[Ground Broken on Lee and Glebe Intersection Upgrade](#)

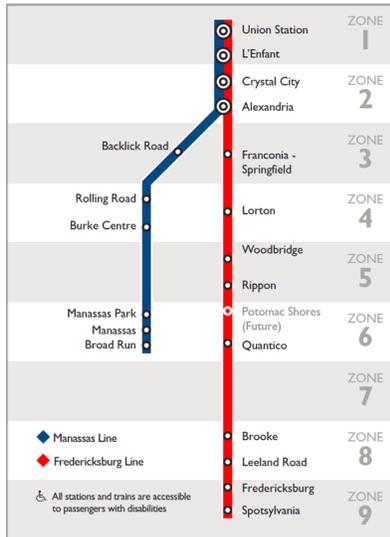
[Nestle to move HQ to Rosslyn, relocate hundreds of jobs](#)

Virginia Railway Express Fare Increase



A proposed 3 percent fare increase for VRE riders will be the focus of eight public hearings in March. The cost of an Amtrak Step-up ticket is also slated to rise from \$5 to \$7. Revenue generated by the new fares would help cover increased

operating costs. If adopted, the fares would take effect in July. Written comments will be accepted through March 17. Comments may be mailed to VRE Public Comment, 1500 King Street, Suite 202, Alexandria, VA 22314; emailed to public-comment@vre.org; or faxed to 703-684-1313.



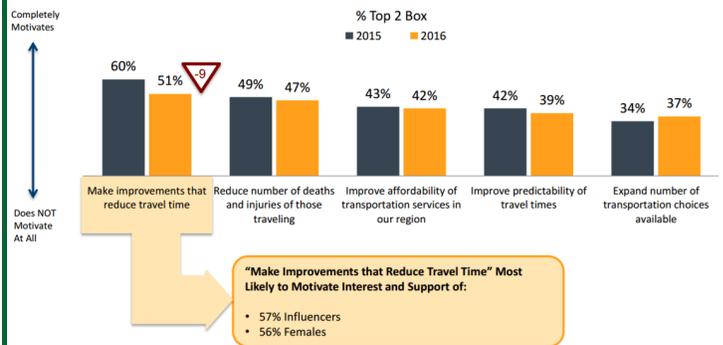
Northern Virginia Transportation Authority



Northern Virginians are more positive about the region's transportation infrastructure than they were in 2015, according to a survey by the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTa). Nearly 70 percent of Northern Virginians believe the region is doing a "good job" maintaining the quality of transportation infrastructure, up from 43 percent.

The increase is notable because Northern Virginians view gridlock as the factor that most degrades their quality of life. A third of respondents said reducing traffic congestion was their top concern, followed by affordable housing, job creation and crime.

Transportation Improvements that Motivate Residents' Interest & Support



Transportation Planning Board Grants



NVTC jurisdictions are eligible to apply for technical assistance to jump-start transit, pedestrian and biking projects under the Transportation/Land-Use Connections Program. Technical assistance is available in amounts up to \$60,000 for planning and \$80,000 for design. Among the projects that TPB is encouraging are those supporting Metrorail, bus rapid transit, streetcar/light rail, and commuter rail stations. Applications are due April 3.



4000-Series Rail Cars Removed from Service



Metro began retiring its 4000-series rail cars in mid-February. They are the agency's least reliable, traveling an average of only 27,259 miles between delays. By contrast, the 6000-series, are nearly four times more reliable, traveling more than 103,000 miles between delays. Metro has been in the process of retiring its oldest railcars, the 1000-series, since February 2016, as new 7000-railcars arrive. More than half of the 1000-series fleet has been retired to date.

