

One predictable feature of the COVID-19 pandemic has been its unpredictability. Since the first closures of offices, schools and other businesses, we've been trying to predict when life will get back to some state of normal. With COVID cases declining again, there are fresh hopes that more people will return to work in person and ride transit to get there. We are fortunate to have data examining these questions. The Greater Washington Partnership has been surveying employers since last year to better understand current and future levels of teleworking. The Partnership found in December of last year that employers listed the availability of a vaccine, employee health concerns and state or local mandates



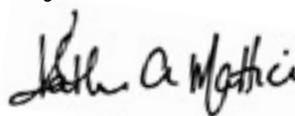
On average, survey respondents expect 68% of employees will be onsite on a typical workday by summer 2022.

as major factors in deciding when to bring employees back to worksites. The most recent survey, conducted in September, finds that most employees are still teleworking all or most of the time. However, employers expect that picture to change significantly by the middle of 2022.

The Partnership also highlights the safety of riding transit as part of return-to-work strategies, noting "with widespread

adoption of vaccines and mask-wearing, we know that using transit is just as safe as many other daily activities."

We're also putting this into practice at NVTC. The majority of our staff works in the office at least two days a week and many of them get here on transit. It's a small step toward demonstrating that returning to work in person can be done safely.



Executive Director

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Key Dates

- Nov. 12 - NVTC Legislative & Policy Committee
- Nov. 19 - VRE Operations Board
- Dec. 2. - Commission Meeting
- Dec. 6 - NVTC-PRTC Legislative Briefing
- Dec. 15 - Regional Public Meeting
- Dec. 16 - NVTC WMATA Committee

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

NoVaTransit.org
NoVaRides.org
[@NoVaTransit](https://twitter.com/NoVaTransit)
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NVTC symposium covers fast-changing zero-emission bus technology and implementation

Nearly 50 people attended NVTC’s first-ever Zero-Emission Bus Symposium online October 23. Transit Technology Program Manager Patricia Happ put together the program which featured local and national experts. Representatives from Metro and DASH talked about how the region’s bus systems are putting electric and other zero-emission buses into daily service and the challenges of adapting to these newer technologies. Other speakers covered topics like the infrastructure needed, including charging facilities and uninterruptable power sources, and the resources available to pay for the transition away from fossil-fuel burning buses. Symposium speakers also answered detailed questions about emerging best practices in the field.



Amy Mersobian, Metro (top left); Patricia Happ, NVTC (top right); Raymond Mui, DASH (bottom left); Allyn Harned, Virginia Clean Cities (top left); Allan Fye, NVTC (top right); Doug Parker, IBI Group (bottom left)

NVTC WMATA Committee receives Blue/Orange/Silver Lines study update

At the October 23 NVTC WMATA Committee Meeting, Commissioners received a briefing on the Blue/Orange/Silver Corridor Capacity & Reliability Study from Mark Phillips and Shyam Kannan with Metro’s Office of Planning. Metro staff provided an overview of the study purpose and scope, explained the need for improvements in the corridor and described the various alternatives developed by the study team. Metro staff are conducting elected official outreach across the region, and will seek Metro Board selection of a locally preferred alternative in early 2022. Committee members also received an update from NVTC staff on the 2021 Annual Report on the Performance and Condition of WMATA and on recent Metro Board discussions regarding fare policy and structure.



Commonwealth Transportation Board approves Commuter Choice projects for I-66 Corridor

The Virginia Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) gave [final approval](#) October 22 to three projects designed to move an additional 500 people through the I-66 Corridor each day. The projects, part of the NVTC’s Commuter Choice program, total \$5.8 million dollars and include new transit services and new commuter incentives.

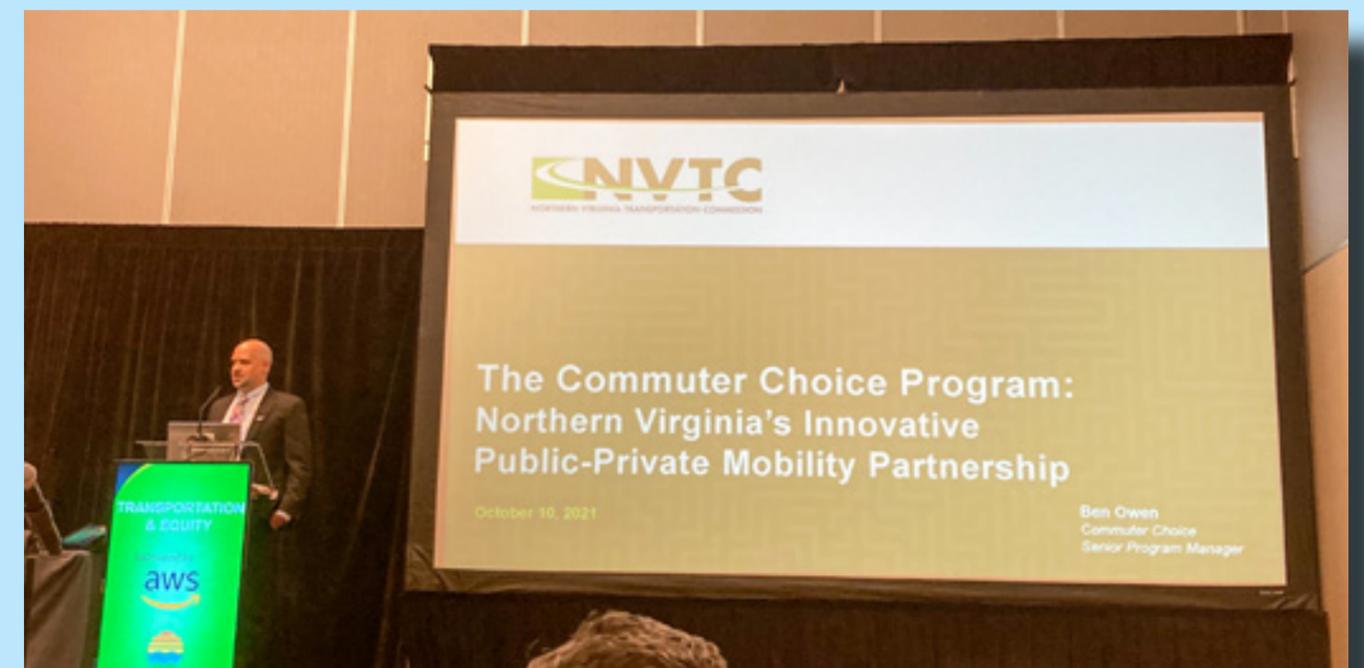
The projects improve connections between five activity centers in Virginia and the District of Columbia and expand the options and incentives for commuters into and through the I-66 Inside the Beltway Corridor to return to transit and vanpooling. They were selected through a competitive application process and include:

- I-66 Corridor vanpool parking benefit | OmniRide | \$85,000
- New bus service from Reston South to Crystal City | Fairfax County | \$5,110,800
- Fare buy down on bus service from Reston North - Crystal City | Fairfax County | \$154,500

Staff will ask the Commission to authorize the next call for projects on the I-66 Corridor at the November meeting. We anticipate having a minimum of about \$12 million in funding available over the two-year period.

Commuter Choice lessons presented at tolling conference

Senior Program Manager Ben Owen presented on the Commuter Choice Program at the International Bridge, Tunnel and Turnpike Association ([IBTTA](#)) Conference in Anaheim, California on October 10. He provided the audience with an overview of the program and NVTC’s partnership with two private concessionaires and the Commonwealth and described how the program supports Northern Virginia’s equity efforts and how the program will evolve post-pandemic. Ben did an outstanding job representing NVTC to the tolling industry while making connections with transportation agencies across the country that could benefit from the lessons learned and opportunities of the Commuter Choice program.



Virginia Transit Association hosts conference in Tysons

The Virginia Transit Association (VTA) held its two-day [conference](#) at the Marriott in Tysons Corner September 28 and 29. The event brought together transit operators and policy makers from across the Commonwealth to talk about the latest trends in the industry. Across two days of speakers and panels we heard several key themes, including post-pandemic recovery strategies and being mindful of equity considerations when planning transit services or changes to service. It was the first in-person VTA conference since 2019, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The association held a virtual awards ceremony in 2020.

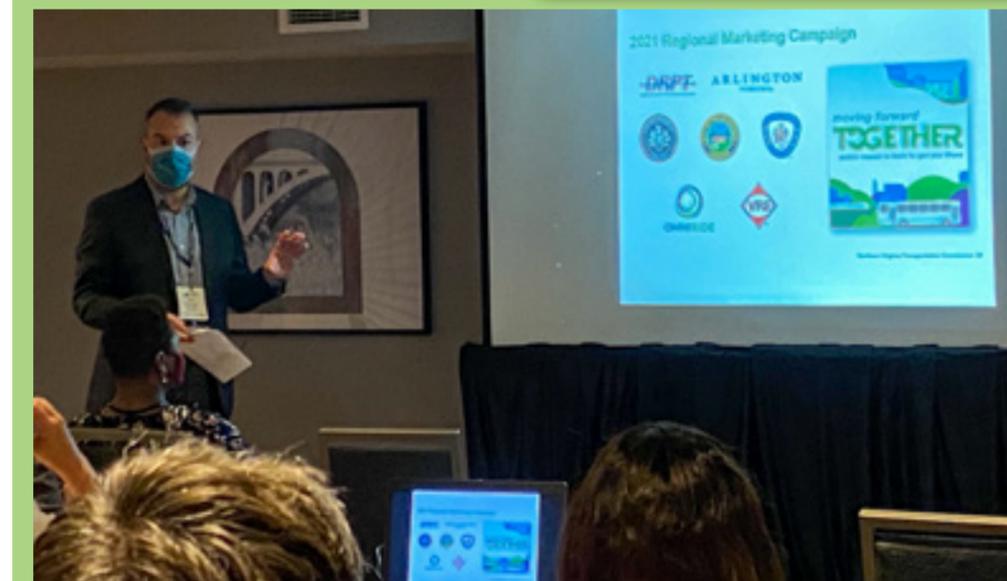
Commissioners and staff played an active role in the gathering: Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Chair Jeff McKay helped lead off the conference by welcoming attendees to the county; Metro Board Chair Paul Smedberg moderated the opening panel discussion Transit Equity -- Central to Our Success; NVTC Director of Programs & Policy Allan Fye moderated a panel on Delivering Innovation for Transit and Mobility; and Communications and Public Affairs Manager Matt Friedman served as a panelist for Post-COVID Transit -- Lessons Learned -- Ridership Recovery & Marketing. In her role as a VTA board member, Kate Mattice attended presentations on the Virginia Equity and Modernization Study and the Transit Ridership Incentive Program and Moving Forward in Virginia. Department of Rail and Public Transportation Director Jennifer Mitchell hosted the latter.

VTA welcomed Gov. Ralph Northam and [presented](#) him with the "Distinguished Leadership for the Commonwealth," noting his leadership on increasing transit funding in the Commonwealth by 50% and creating a dedicated funding stream for Metro.

The conference wrapped up with a bus tour of Phase 2 of the [Silver Line](#), led by officials from Metro and the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority, which is in charge of construction of the project.



Gov. Ralph Northam (left); Metro Board Chair Paul Smedberg (top); NVTC Director of Programs & Policy (middle); NVTC Communications & Public Affairs Manager Matt Friedman (bottom)





The future Herndon Station (top); Dulles Rail Yard & Maintenance Facility (left); An aerial track structure at Dulles International Airport (bottom)



Chair Cristol, Arlington Transit awarded for environmental efforts

The Greater Washington Region Clean Cities Coalition ([GWRCCC](#)) recognized Chair Katie Cristol and Arlington Transit at its annual luncheon on October 14. GWRCCC honored Chair Cristol with one of its Visionary Awards for her work with NVTC, the Arlington County Board and Virginia Railway Express, calling her “an outspoken and effective transportation leader for Northern Virginia. The coalition noted “her strong advocacy to address climate change and congestion mitigation by encouraging greater utilization of a safe, dependable and interconnected transit system and to secure essential funding for capital improvements to our region’s transportation infrastructure.”

Arlington Transit took home the Fleet Leadership Award for natural gas. GWRCCC noted that ART’s 78 compressed natural gas buses provided a greenhouse gas reduction of more than 362 tons in 2020. The organization also cited ART’s continued study of electric and renewable-gas buses.



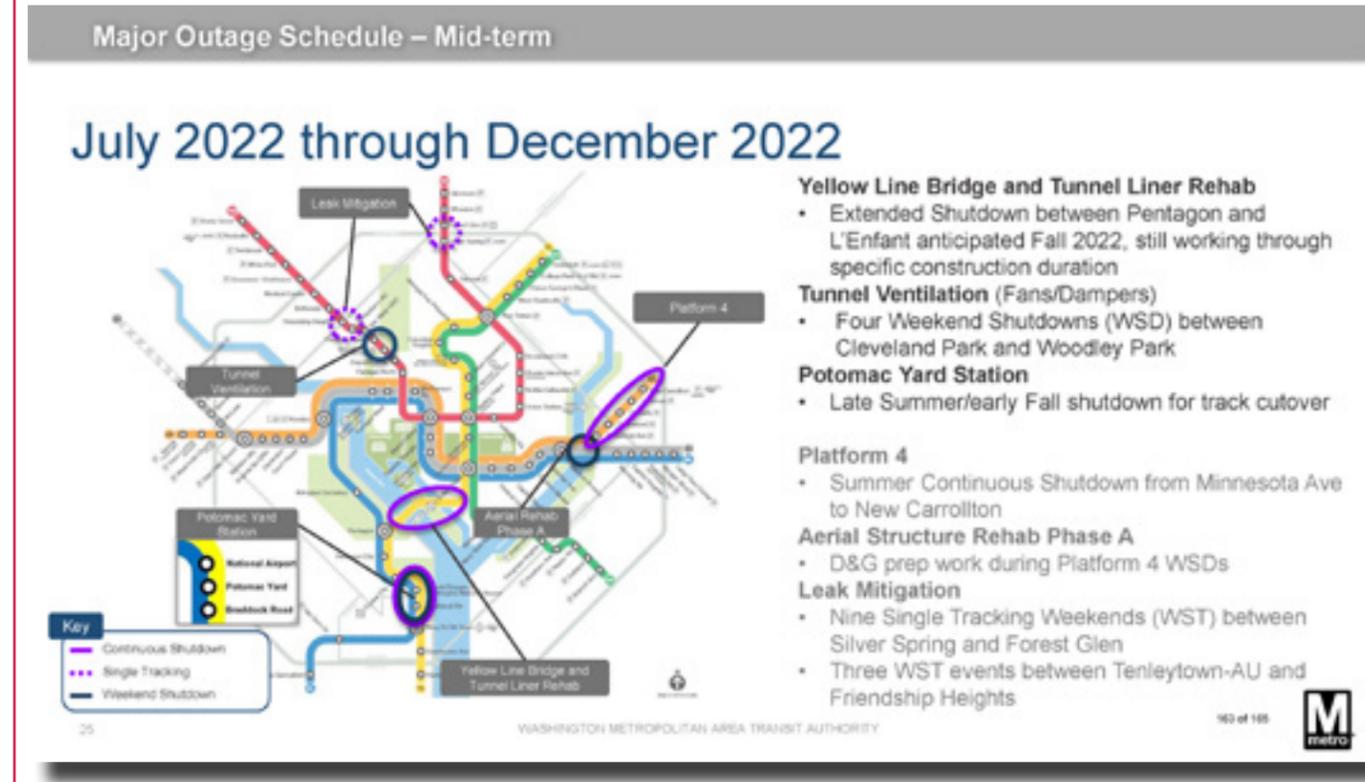
NVTC Chair Katie Cristol (2nd from right) with managers and staff of Arlington Transit.

Metro Board reviews system investments

Metro Board members received an update on the [capital program](#) on October 14. The capital program invested \$1.84 billion in FY 2021, which is Metro’s largest annual capital investment. Metro continues its progress in addressing overdue capital needs while simultaneously investing in ongoing programs and maintenance to keep assets safe and in a state of good repair.

“The mission we had when we received that money was to go out and use it to address the needs of the system and I think Metro has done a very good job of that and has deployed and utilized funds in a more effective and efficient manner than had been done perhaps in the past,” said [Matt Letourneau](#), Chair of the Finance and Capital Committee.

Staff provided an overview of upcoming major projects for FY 2022, which includes the Yellow Line Tunnel and Bridge Rehabilitation, the final phase of the Platform Improvement Project, construction of the replacement for the Northern Bus Garage, and a tunnel ventilation pilot. Staff also provided a schedule of major outages planned through to December 2022. Board members also received updates on the Silver Line [Phase 2](#) and draft Metrorail [Fleet Plan and Rail Service Standards](#).



Metro inspecting 7000-series railcars in wake of Arlington derailment

Metro continues working to finalize plans in cooperation with safety officials to return the 7000-series railcars to passenger service and fully restore its rail system. As a result, Metrorail service will remain at the current reduced service levels through at least October 31, 2021.

Trains have been operating basic service following the October 12 derailment of a Blue Line train near Arlington Cemetery Station. To help alleviate the railcar shortage caused by the absence of all 748 railcars in the 7000-series fleet, Metro is making every effort to put additional trains into service, including some 2000-series railcars from storage, and 6000-series railcars which are undergoing maintenance repairs.

Metro is working with the Washington Metrorail Safety Commission and 7000-series railcar manufacturer, Kawasaki, to complete the inspection process. The agency also has a dedicated [web page](#) for updates on the derailment and investigation.

Save the Date!
NVTC-PRTC Annual Legislative Briefing
Monday, December 6
8:30 a.m.
Embassy Suites by Hilton Springfield



Photo by [Skip Plitt](#) - C'ville Photography. Licensed under Creative Commons.

Virginia launches expanded train service from downtown Richmond to Washington, on to New York and Boston

Gov. Ralph Northam [announced](#) on September 27 the launch of expanded rail service from Richmond to the Northeast Corridor. The Amtrak Northeast Regional Route 51 will now offer early morning service from Main Street Station, getting travelers from Downtown Richmond to Washington D.C., when the workday begins or to New York for a lunchtime meeting. The new train is the first expansion of service under Gov. Northam's Transforming Rail in Virginia Program to significantly expand rail infrastructure throughout the Commonwealth.

NVTC Executive Director Kate Mattice was on hand as the governor celebrated the milestone from the tracks at Main Street Station as the first train departed at 5:35 a.m.

“If you’ve ever been stuck on I-95, you know we can’t pave our way out of congestion,”

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said Gov. Northam. “This new train offers quick, reliable service from the Commonwealth’s capital to Washington, D.C., connecting our two cities and making it easier for thousands of Virginians to get to work in the morning. Virginia is leading the nation in expanded access to high-performance rail — and I look forward to many more milestones ahead.” The newly expanded service has stops at a variety of destinations in the Northeast Corridor. Travelers can choose from three daily departure times, two in the morning and one in the evening.

“Originating more trains from Main Street Station will connect our vibrant capital city to Washington D.C., and population centers along the East Coast,” said Secretary of Transportation Shannon Valentine. “This extension will bring trains closer to where people live and work, expanding access and economic opportunity.”

Transforming Rail in Virginia is a \$3.7 billion program to expand and improve passenger, commuter and freight rail in Virginia. It will connect the Northeast and Southeast corridors in America’s national rail network. In partnership with CSX, Amtrak, and Virginia Railway Express (VRE), Virginia is constructing a new Long Bridge over the Potomac dedicated to passenger and commuter rail. In addition, 386 miles of rail right-of-way and 223 miles of track were acquired, and more than \$1 billion was invested for additional rail infrastructure.

Over the next 10 years, these investments will result in nearly hourly Amtrak service between Richmond and Washington, D.C. Amtrak service will also be enhanced for Newport News and Norfolk. VRE services will increase by 75% along the I-95 Corridor and weekend service will be added.

