



NORTHERN VIRGINIA TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

# Executive Director Newsletter



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

# November 2023





## A Message from Kate Mattice

The November 7 election promises to be one to watch—one that will signal the path forward for public transit funding in the Commonwealth. Statewide redistricting and more than two dozen retirements in the House and Senate mean that there will be a lot of new faces in Richmond when the General Assembly convenes in January. All 100 seats in the House and 40 seats in the Senate are up for election this cycle.

Many of the retiring members have long service records and chair key committees, including those that decide budget matters. That means those committees will have new, and possibly less familiar, leadership come next Session. A change in party control of either chamber would further change the political dynamic.

This wave of new members makes our annual [Legislative Forum](#) on December 1 even more important. Sponsored in partnership with the [Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission \(PRTC\)](#) and [Virginia Railway Express \(VRE\)](#), it's an opportunity for new and current elected officials and their representatives to learn about public transit in Northern Virginia and the legislative agendas of each of our organizations.

Local races in Arlington, Fairfax and Loudoun also present the possibility of change, as board elections take place in each of the counties.

We know that future Metro funding tops the list of concerns for our region, but other topics like VRE's adaptation to new travel patterns, the transition to Zero-Emission buses and the development of Bus Rapid Transit systems remain important.

No matter the outcomes on election day, I can promise you that we will work hard to educate our elected representatives on the importance of public transportation to the economy and quality of life for everyone who lives, works and visits Northern Virginia.

*Kate A. Mattice*  
Executive Director

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**November 17**  
VRE Operations Board

**December 1**  
NVTC-PRTC-VRE Joint Legislative Forum

**December 4-5**  
Commonwealth Transportation Board

**December 6**  
Virginia Passenger Rail Authority

**December 7**  
Commission Meeting

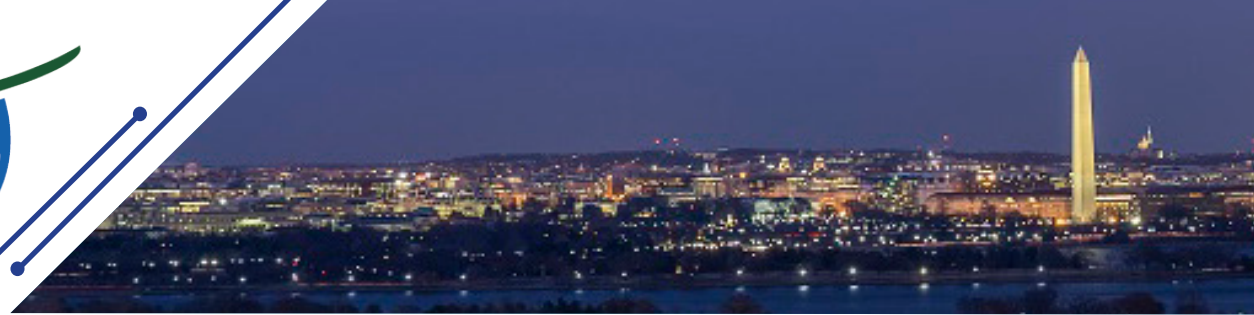
**December 15**  
VRE Operations Board

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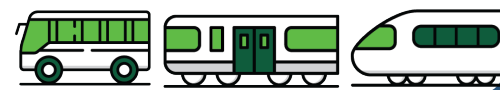
## Commission approves Commuter Choice Annual Report, opens I-66 call for projects



The Commission took two actions on NVTC's [Commuter Choice](#) program at its October meeting, one looking back and one forward. Members of the Commonwealth Transportation Board will soon receive copies of the 2023 Commuter Choice [Annual Report](#) now that the report has been approved by the Commission and the Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission, which maintains a co-approval role for I-395/95 Commuter Choice. The 2023 report highlights program milestones over the last fiscal year. Projects supported by the program achieved their highest ridership levels in program history in spring 2023, each weekday supporting 6,000 trips that saved travelers 1,000 hours of travel time, 84,000 miles of vehicle travel and \$11,000 in fuel expenditures. The \$48 million I-395/95 Commuter Choice FY 2024-2025 Program of

Projects approved in June, which included the program's first-ever funding awards for a Bus Rapid Transit line, new rail station construction and electric buses, was the largest total award in any funding round to date and garnered the most public involvement, with over 600 comment submissions.

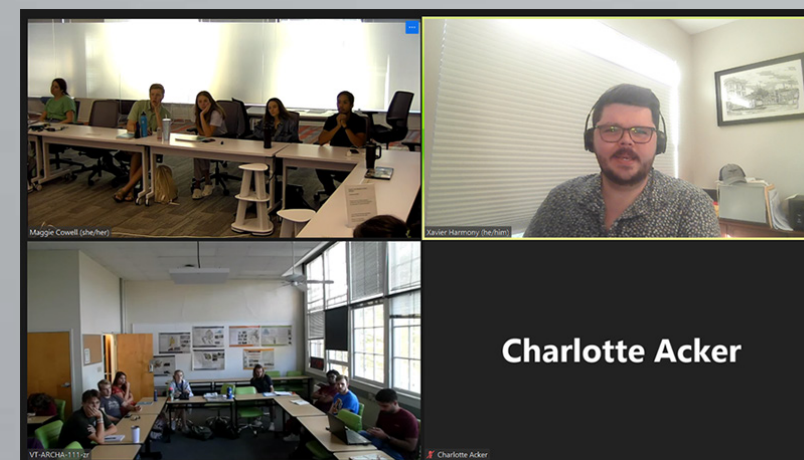
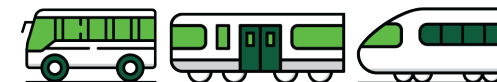
NVTC looks ahead to an impactful \$40 to \$50 million I-66 Commuter Choice FY 2025-2026 funding cycle under the call for projects approved by the Commission. Virginia Planning District 8 jurisdictions, which comprise NVTC member jurisdictions plus Prince William County and towns within, and transit operators in those jurisdictions may submit applications through December 18. Eligible transit and other transportation improvements must benefit I-66 toll payers by moving more people and establishing effective additional travel options. The Commuter Choice team continues to encourage capital proposals for funding and is scheduling one-on-one workshops this month with eligible applicants to discuss project ideas and review the application materials in detail.



## Staff kick off strategic roadmap

NVTC staff, led by Senior Program Manager Xavier Harmony, kicked off the Northern Virginia Strategic Transit Policy Research Roadmap with their consulting team partners in October. The study will help develop a strategic vision to guide NVTC transit policy research over the next

4-6 years and find ways to support future work including research partnerships and funding. The study is expected to be completed by June 2024, just in time to share the work with attendees at NVTC's 60th Anniversary Symposium.



## Sharing NVTC's work with future planners

Transit Resource Center Senior Program Manager Xavier Harmony spoke to a Virginia Tech Master of Urban and Regional Planning class called "Gateway to Planning" in October. Xavier shared his experiences in transportation planning while talking about the work of NVTC.

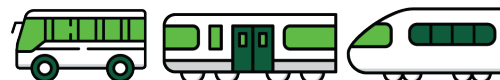


Matt Letourneau, Paul Smedberg, Randy Clarke (left to right) via CTB livestream

### Metro GM/CEO and Board Members

The Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) received a [briefing](#) from Metro Board Members Paul Smedberg and Matt Letourneau and General Manager Randy Clarke at its workshop meeting at Ronald Reagan National Airport October 17. Mr. Smedberg and Mr. Letourneau highlighted recent successes of the Metro system including the opening of the Silver Line Extension and Potomac Yard-VT Metrorail Station before Mr. Clarke provided an overview of how the agency is approaching its anticipated budget shortfall for fiscal year 2025. Along with other CTB members,

Secretary of Transportation Shep Miller spoke of the critical role Metro plays in Northern Virginia and noted the Commonwealth’s commitment to ensuring its future success by working together at all levels of government. At its action meeting the following day, the CTB adopted findings that Metro had met its fiscal year 2023 compliance requirements under Virginia state code related to the 3% cap on operating assistance, participation by alternate directors of the Metro Board, adoption of a capital improvement program and adoption or update of a strategic plan.



### SMART SCALE

The CTB also received a briefing from the Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment (OIPI) on several [SMART SCALE](#) program changes. Secretary of Transportation Miller tasked OIPI earlier this year to conduct a review of SMART SCALE, the Commonwealth’s primary transportation investment program for major projects, to identify policy and process changes to enhance program outcomes. The OIPI staff-recommended slate of changes was presented

to the CTB and included redefining the types of projects eligible for funding, adjusting project scoring factors and reducing the number of applications each eligible applicant may submit in each two-year program cycle. NVTC, working with the Virginia Transit Association, will continue to monitor how these policy changes might affect future transit project applications in Northern Virginia and provide input to the CTB during its forthcoming public comment process prior to the anticipated adoption of any changes in December.





## WMATA and Legislative Committees discuss Metro funding, legislative agenda

NVTC's Legislative and Policy Committee [met jointly](#) with NVTC's WMATA Committee October 19 to review NVTC's 2024 Legislative and Policy Agenda and hear updates from WMATA Committee members and staff.

Following a robust conversation on Metro budget considerations, revenues and reform, the committee turned their attention to NVTC's 2024 Legislative and Policy Agenda. New items being proposed at the state level include preserving the SMART SCALE processes so that transit projects remain competitive as well as advocating for opportunities to permit Metro to

re-baseline their annual operating subsidy in FY 2025 in a way that does not financially penalize NVTC jurisdictions. Committee members are also considering an addition to the federal portion of the legislative agenda: recognizing the essential role of public transit in accessing federal agencies and facilities, and securing a replacement for the region's post-pandemic fare losses resulting from riders using fewer federal transit benefits. The Commission will be asked to approve the 2024 Legislative and Policy Agenda at the December meeting.



## Senate and House Transportation Committees meet in Crystal City

The Transportation Committees of the Virginia Senate and House of Delegates met in Crystal City October 19 as part of the Governor's Transportation Conference. Committee members got a chance to hear about major transit agencies and projects in Northern Virginia. Metro GM/CEO Randy Clarke and Board Chair Paul Smedberg

presented an update on the system, while Department of Rail and Public Transportation Director Jen DeBruhl briefed the committees on transit across the Commonwealth, as well as progress on the new Long Bridge.





# APTA EXPO brings transit professionals together

Executive Director Kate Mattice joined Allan Fye, Director of Programs and Policy, at the [APTA EXPO](#) in Florida in October, where he presented our "[Value of Northern Virginia Transit to the Commonwealth](#)" study and Kate had the privilege to moderate a panel on equity in fare payments. Kate and Allan also cheered on Commissioner Paul Smedberg as he accepted an award for Outstanding Public Transportation Board Member, honoring his work as chair of the Metro Board of Directors.





# Metro Board hears potential scenarios to close funding gap

The Metro Board's Finance and Operations Committee [received an update](#) from staff on Metro's FY 2025 [Future Financial Planning](#) October 26. The update covers potential fare changes, service impacts, capital budget considerations and provides several FY 2025 budget scenarios to illustrate tradeoffs as the Board advances the budget conversation prior to the general manager's FY 2025 budget proposal in December. Metro is beginning to plan for scenarios where no additional jurisdictional subsidies are available and for scenarios where some level of additional jurisdictional subsidies are available assuming a one-time change to the 3% operating caps.

the ridership and revenue impacts around fare increases. A general 5% increase in fares would result in an additional \$12.9 million in revenue and a 50% increase would result in approximately \$86.9 million in revenue, with significant impacts to ridership at higher fares.

"I think people, when they see your presentation like this, their immediate reaction was oh, this is like you're just throwing this out there to like scare people," said Metro Board Chair Paul Smedberg. "One thing I said to these folks is like, no, listen, this is the harsh reality of things right now."

The Metro Board will continue to discuss budget concepts and GM/CEO Randy Clarke will present a proposed budget in December. NVTC staff will coordinate with Board members and the NVTC WMATA Committee in the development of budget comments.

"All of this that we're talking about, it's not really up to us, because we only collect what we collect on there and it's just a piece of our revenue, most of it is coming from other sources. So it isn't Metro that's going to really make this decision," said Finance and Capital Committee Chair Matt Letourneau. "It's our jurisdictional partners or subsidy partners. So that's why it's really important that we're clear on what the impacts are and then those elected officials, appointed officials and those constituents will have to make that decision about the level of investment. Obviously, I think we all hope that they're going to decide to let us continue to grow momentum that we have, but it's really up to them."

FY2025 Scenarios

### Customer Impacts of FY2025 Scenarios

Operational Reduction: Illustrative Service Concepts

	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3	Scenario 4	Scenario 5
	Standard PM No service cuts Most add'l subsidy	Max PM No service cuts Some add'l subsidy	Max PM Targeted service cuts Least add'l subsidy	Max PM Major (~30%) service cuts No add'l subsidy	Standard PM Severe (~60%) service cuts No add'l subsidy
<b>Metrorail</b>	124 trains 5 to 12 minutes Midnight or 1 am closing	124 trains 5 to 12 minutes Midnight or 1 am closing	112 to 120 trains Targeted service cuts Shorter peak periods Turnbacks Six-car trains	75 to 90 trains 10-15 min peak 20-30 min off-peak Early closing ~33% cut	50 to 60 trains 20-30 mins all day 9:30 PM closing ~60% cut
<b>Metrobus</b>	134 bus lines 21 lines: 12 min or better all day Systemwide: varies	134 bus lines 21 lines: 12 min or better all day Systemwide: varies	Cut 10 bus lines	Cut 90 bus lines Cut frequency on busy lines ~33% cut	Cut 80 to 95 bus lines 20 to 30 minutes 9:30 PM closing ~60% cut
<b>MetroAccess</b>	Full service	Full service	Full service	No service beyond regulatory requirements	No service beyond regulatory requirements
<b>Fares</b>	No fare increase	No fare increase	Higher fares	Higher fares	Higher fares

In scenarios where no additional funding is available, the level of service cuts required to balance the budget would potentially devastate the region and undo Metro's ridership recovery. If there is additional funding available, Metro has projected an option of targeted service reductions that are estimated to save between \$25 and \$30 million dollars. These include options around Metrorail turnbacks, closing some station entrances, small decreases in peak Metrorail service and eliminating the least productive bus routes, as well as additional concepts. Metro staff also produced an illustrative concept of



## Welcome Vikram Sinha

We welcomed Vikram Sinha to the NVTC family in October and he's serving as a Senior Program Manager for our [Envision Route 7 BRT program](#). Prior to joining NVTC, Vikram worked at Austin Transit Partnership as the Public Involvement Manager for the Orange Line light rail project. He is proud to have worked as part of multiple teams at NYCDOT, supporting projects spanning operations and engineering to the implementation of bus rapid transit, roadway repaving and markings, bike lanes, pedestrian and accessibility improvements. Vikram has

earned a Master of Public Administration from NYU and a BA in Political Science from Brandeis University. A recently established resident of the area, he is enjoying exploring the region by mass transit and bike, including its incredible outdoor spaces with his wife and their trusty rescue dog, Galaxy.

As we prepare for the next phase of work for the Envision Route 7 BRT program, I hope you all get a chance to meet Vikram and experience his passion and enthusiasm for high capacity transit.

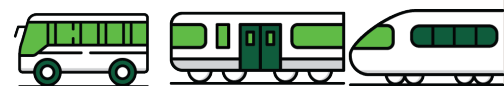


all the best

## Goodbye Ronnetta Zack-Williams

It's always a sad day when a member of the NVTC family leaves. Ronnetta Zack-Williams has been with NVTC for over two years and played a key role in the success of our work with Metro and Zero-Emission Buses. We wish Ronnetta the best of luck on the next stage of her promising career as she moves across the river to work in the Planning Department in Montgomery County, Maryland.

*Photo front row (L-R): Andrew D'huyvetter, Ann McGrane, Allan Fye, Ronnetta Zack-Williams, Kate Mattice, Tenley O'Hara, Sophie Spiliotopoulos. Back Row (L-R): Matt Friedman, Vikram Sinha, Ben Owen*



## 2023 Commissioners

(F-B): Chair Dalia Palchik, Libby Garvey, Immediate Past Chair Canek Aguirre, Vice Chair, Matt de Ferranti, Aimee Gilroy, Sarah Bagley, Adam Ebbin, Secretary-Treasurer David Snyder, Jeffrey McKay, John Foust, Walter Alcorn, M. David Skiles, John C. Tuck III, Paul Smedberg, Katie Cristol, (not pictured) James R. Walkinshaw, Michael R. Turner, Daniel Storck, Jon R. Stehle, Jr., Catherine S. Read, R. Kirk McPike, Matthew Letourneau, Takis Karantonis, Phil Duncan, John J. Bell, Jennifer DeBruhl



NVTC, PRTC AND VRE PRESENT:

# ANNUAL LEGISLATIVE FORUM

Join transit leaders and special guests for an in-person overview of federal and state issues affecting transit in Northern Virginia.

Featuring Our Transit  
Leader Panel:

**RSVP**  
— Today —

8:30 - 11 a.m.  
Friday, December 1, 2023

 **New Location!**

George Mason University  
Schar School/Van Metre Hall  
Multipurpose Room 125/126  
3351 Fairfax Drive  
Arlington, VA 22201



Katie Cristol, CEO, Tysons Community Alliance, Randy Clarke, GM/CEO, Metro, Rich Dalton, CEO, Virginia Railway Express, Kate Mattice, Executive Director, Northern Virginia Transportation Commission, Bob Schneider, Executive Director, OmniRide



★ Moderated by:  
Katie Cristol



Randy Clarke



Rich Dalton



Kate Mattice



Bob Schneider

**RSVP Today!**



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