As discussions continue in many circles about how to fund transit – particularly Metrorail – I have been sharing the sobering reality of the transit funding shortfalls facing our local jurisdictions with business and other interest groups. In meetings with the Northern Virginia Association of Realtors, Committee for Dulles and several chambers of commerce, I am making the case for sustainable and dedicated transit funding in advance of the 2018 General Assembly session.

In October, WMATA's Allison Davis, Metropolitan Council of Governments' Chuck Bean and I participated in "METRO Fund It - Fix It! A Call to Action." Sponsored by the League of Women Voters and the Coalition for Smarter Growth, the event served as a platform for discussion of dedicated funding for WMATA. NVTC's messages struck a chord with many in the audience, who Tweeted the information. Delegate Vivian Watts and I also participated in an afternoon session where we focused on the specific challenges confronting Virginia.

A WMATA-focused breakout session at the Governor's Transportation Conference this week, allowed me to share the results of NVTC’s study on the value of rail transit to the Commonwealth with transit professionals from across Virginia. I was joined by WMATA's Greg Potts and DRPT's Jennifer DeBruhl, who spoke from their perspectives as to the value of Metrorail in the state and region and the challenges that must be overcome to ensure WMATA has the resources required to operate a safe and reliable system.

While garnering support for transit, particularly from the business community, is not a tough sell, I’ve found it is important to remind these groups of the critical need for them to go to bat for our transit agencies. They appreciate the vital role transit plays in moving our workforce, fueling our economy, and enhancing our quality of life, but there are competing priorities. That said, many of the groups with which I’ve met have embraced our position and are adding new or strengthening existing language in their legislative agendas on the need for dedicated and reliable funding.

The next few months are critical to transit. A report by former U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood, due to the Governor in mid-November, may include recommendations on funding WMATA. The Governor’s budget, due out in December, may provide some insight into how he proposes to close the transit fiscal gap and get Metro back on track. The General Assembly will need to digest these various reports, including one from August by the Transit Capital Revenue Projects Advisory Board, to develop a funding solution. NVTC stands ready to provide resources and information to senators and delegates as they work on this critical, time-sensitive issue.

Key Dates

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NVTC Extends Application Deadline for I-66 Commuter Choice Funding

At a well-attended VDOT-sponsored briefing on Oct. 16, NVTC’s Patricia Happ updated jurisdictional staff on the I-66 Commuter Choice call for projects. The program supports capital improvements, operations, and mobility initiatives that improve the efficiency and reliability of travel along the I-66 corridor inside the Beltway. The application deadline for the fiscal year 2018 call for projects has been extended to December 22, 2017. The rest of the program schedule remains the same. NVTC continues to meet with jurisdictions and agencies to answer questions and provide detailed information. Staff has received excellent feedback on the program and expects a robust set of applications.

I-66 Commuter Choice Timeline

I-66 Commuter Choice Program Goals

Move More People
Reduce Roadway Congestion
Increase Travel Options
Enhance Transportation Connectivity
Improve Transit Service

Learn more about I-66 Commuter Choice at www.novatransit.org/i66commuterchoice
Regional Fare Collection Program

NVTC continues to represent Northern Virginia transit operators on the Farebox/Driver Control Unit (DCU) project. Later next month, WMATA plans to upgrade and test fareboxes on 15 buses. Once WMATA’s upgrades are complete, Fairfax and Loudoun counties will upgrade and test fareboxes on six buses. Northern Virginia transit operators are also purchasing equipment so that they can begin farebox upgrades on their entire fleets by late fiscal year 2018. On November 1, NVTC will host a workshop to provide information to the jurisdictions on current and emerging fare collection technology. The workshop will serve as a forum to develop a collective vision for a next generation fare collection system for Northern Virginia.

Commissioners Encouraged to Attend Legislative/Policy Meeting

Given the numerous transit-related issues that must be addressed in the 2018 legislative session, development of NVTC’s legislative agenda takes on heightened importance. Committee co-chairs Katie Cristol and Jeff Greenfield are encouraging all Commissioners to attend next month’s Legislative and Policy Committee meeting. This is an opportunity to shape NVTC’s legislative agenda before it goes before the Commission in December. The meeting begins at 6 p.m., prior to the November 2 Commission meeting.

Save the Date!

Monday, December 4, 2017 from 9-11 a.m.
Hilton Springfield, 6550 Loisdale Road, Springfield, VA

Join NVTC & PRTC Commissioners for an overview of federal and state issues affecting transit in Northern Virginia

Featuring speakers from the Commonwealth of Virginia and regional transit providers
Commuter Transit Tax Benefit Widely Used in Northern Virginia

As Congress considers comprehensive tax reform, the conversation has moved beyond just lowering tax rates to eliminating deductions and pretax benefits, placing the commuter transit benefit at risk. Recent figures show that nearly 90 percent of Virginia Railway Express passengers and 65 percent of Virginians riding Metro rely on the tax benefit.

The **transit benefit** allows commuters to spend up to $255 per month on a pretax basis. Employers save on payroll-related taxes and employees save on federal income taxes. Commuters may use pretax dollars to pay for transit passes and vanpool fares and parking. Bicyclists may receive reimbursement from employers, up to $20 per month, for reasonable expenses related to their commutes. In 2016, Congress passed and the President signed legislation establishing permanent parity between the commuter transit and parking benefits.

The **Association for Commuter Transportation** has initiated a campaign to protect the transit benefit and is urging its members to let Congress know that continuation of pre-tax commuter benefits is essential.

Virginia Telework Tax Credit Returns

**Virginia’s telework tax credit** offers up to $50,000 for telework-tax related expenses and up to $1,200 spent on each teleworking employee. **Businesses must apply by October 31** to take advantage of the 2018 credit. Applicants will receive tentative approval from the Department of Taxation by December 1.

Eligible telework-related expenses may include:

- Computer equipment
- Networking equipment and software
- Security and antivirus systems
- Internet access and service
- Communications equipment and services
- Telework center fees

To be eligible, businesses must develop a formal telework policy and sign a telework agreement with each employee.

Around Town: Headlines from/about NVTC Jurisdictions and Partners

- **Alexandria Launches “Back 2 Blue” Campaign to Promote Metrorail**
- **County Board Sets Public Hearing on Parking Policy in Metro Corridors**
- **DRPT Welcomes New Chief of Rail**
- **VDOT Announces Transit Initiatives For I-66, Chestnut St. & Pimmit Hills**
- **Vienna Council inks agreement of managing I-66 traffic**
- **VRE CEO Named to APTA Executive Committee**
Silver Line Phase 2 Construction on Track

Construction of Silver Line Phase 2 is now about two-thirds done, with more than half of the budget spent, according to an October briefing of the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA) Board of Directors. MWAA is overseeing construction of the project, which eventually will be operated and maintained by the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA). Phase 2, which is scheduled to open for passenger service in 2020, remains within its $2.7 billion budget.

Of the $1.4 billion spent through the end of August on Phase 2, $186 million came from the contingency fund. Another $364 million in contingency funds remain for changes or unexpected costs. Currently 107 identified changes are being reviewed.

More than 6,200 workers have spent in excess of 5 million hours working on the project. The bulk of the workers (58.3 percent) are from Virginia and a quarter (25.2 percent) are from Maryland. Just 3.4 percent of workers are from the District of Columbia. The rest (13.2 percent) are from other states. Almost half of the workers are Hispanic.

Rail design and construction is 67 percent complete, while overall construction is 61 percent complete as of the end of August. Phase 2 includes six new stations between Reston Town Center and Ashburn.

Join Virginia’s WMATA Board Members for a Discussion of the Challenges & Opportunities in Getting Metro Back on Track

Forum is open to the public and accessible via Metrorail

Thursday, November 16, 2017 at 7 p.m.
Navy League Building
2300 Wilson Boulevard
Arlington, VA

This forum, which includes a presentation and question/answer session, is sponsored by the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission. Learn more about NVTC and the upcoming forum at www.novatransit.org.
Executive Director Newsletter

November 2017

VTrans 2040 Seeks Public Comment

Technological advances provide tremendous opportunities and concerns in planning for the future of transportation in Virginia. The Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment (OIPI) seeks public input as it prepares for this brave new world. Tell OIPI what excites you, what concerns you, and how it should spend tax dollars.

The Northern Virginia Transportation Authority adopted the TransAction Plan Update in October. This long-range, multimodal transportation plan addresses regional transportation needs through 2040. After the adoption of TransAction, the Authority issued a call for regional transportation projects to be funded through NVTA’s fiscal year 2018-2023 six-year program. The deadline for applications is noon on December 15, 2017.

TPB Kicks Off Regional Travel Survey

By this time next year, approximately 15,000 randomly selected households across the National Capital Region and neighboring jurisdictions will have participated in the Transportation Planning Board’s once-in-a-decade Regional Travel Survey, helping to paint a detailed picture of the daily travel patterns of people who call this region home. It provides a comprehensive, regional look at travel patterns and how and why those patterns change over time. It also provides critical inputs into the models the TPB uses to forecast future travel patterns and vehicle emissions. These models aid regional planning and decision making by showing how current plans are likely to affect travel patterns and travel conditions and whether they support the region’s long-term air quality goals. The survey also will look at the effects of technology on commuting choices. Results will be available in 2019.

VDOT Launches New Website

Changes are coming to I-66 Inside the Beltway to improve your rush hour trip

Soon, anyone will be able to choose a faster trip during rush hours on Northern Virginia’s Interstate 66 Inside the Beltway, between Interstate 495 and Route 29 in Rosslyn. If driving alone, you’ll need to pay a toll and will need an E-ZPass. If you carpool, you can travel free and will need an E-ZPass Flex.

Use this website to learn more, and get your E-ZPass or E-ZPass Flex!

www.66expresslanes.org