

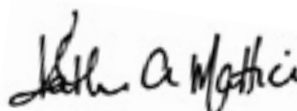
We've reached the six-month milestone since the COVID-19 pandemic began to radically alter life as we know it. While a lot of uncertainty lies ahead, we have a clearer understanding of how the virus has impacted our region's transit systems. Metro, VRE and others rely on fare revenues to keep the trains and buses running, but continued low ridership has slowed that money to a trickle. We see that in Metro's proposed budget changes as the agency works to close a \$200 million budget gap.

Metro, VRE and transit systems across the country received \$25 billion from the CARES Act, but it's not enough. The American Public Transportation Association and others are asking Congress for additional relief. Virginia's Congressional delegation supports this effort, but Congress as a whole doesn't appear ready to act before Election Day.

At the same time, working from home has taken many cars off the roads. That has led to lower toll revenues, which help support our Commuter Choice program. In this month's Executive Director Newsletter, you'll read about proposed changes to adapt to this new reality.

We're also starting to think about what transit will look like as the pandemic eases. We know from other parts of the world that transit remains a safe way to travel when people take the right precautions, like wearing masks. We may see more workplaces reopening in the coming months, which should lead to more commuting. Our region's transit providers are working with the motto, "we're ready when you're ready," while maintaining high cleaning standards and providing train and a bus service at a level where riders can comfortably keep their distance.

Finally, mark your calendars for our annual NVTC-PRTC Joint Legislative briefing on Monday, December 7. The event will be online this year from 9 - 11 a.m. Our panel of experts will bring you up to date on the latest happenings at Metro, VRE and the state of transportation across Virginia. As always, you'll also have a chance to ask questions.



*Executive Director*

## Inside This Issue

Commuter Choice on the I-66 Corridor projects on track	2
Virginia transportation revenues expected to drop significantly	3
Metro Board advances budget changes due to COVID-19 pandemic	3
2020 Platform Improvement Project wraps up	4
Rich Dalton tapped to lead VRE	6
NVTC examines telework and transit demand during the pandemic	6
Regional surveys find cautious approach to returning to work	7
Long Bridge Project Reaches Critical Milestone	8
NVTC's legislative agenda for 2021 taking shape	9
NVTC remembers founding commissioner Joe Alexander	10

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

[NoVaTransit.org](http://NoVaTransit.org)

[NoVaRides.org](http://NoVaRides.org)

[@NoVaTransit](https://www.facebook.com/NoVaTransit)

[@NoVaTransit](https://www.facebook.com/NoVaTransit)



## Key Dates

- Oct. 16 - VRE Operations Board
- Oct. 29 - NVTC WMATA Committee
- Nov. 5 - NVTC Executive Committee
- Nov. 5 - Commission meeting
- Nov. 20 - VRE Operations Board
- Dec. 4 - NVTC Executive Committee
- Dec. 3 - Commission Meeting
- Dec. 7 - NVTC-PRTC Joint Legislative Briefingw

**Commuter Choice on the I-66 Corridor projects on track**



NVTC is on track for approval of an initial (FY 2021) [Commuter Choice](#) on the I-66 Corridor Round Four program of projects by the Commonwealth Transportation Board by the end of the year. The proposed \$4 million program includes three low-cost, low-risk capital projects that would enhance transit and access to transit in the I-66 Inside the Beltway corridor, as well as continued Commuter Choice funding for three express bus routes to provide predictability for corridor commuters as they begin to return to worksites.

Ben Owen of the Commuter Choice team recently led a virtual town hall meeting that provided members of the public with an overview of Commuter Choice and the six projects under consideration for funding. NVTC's Program Advisory Committee unanimously endorsed this proposed program in September. The full Commission will consider it on October 1 for adoption and referral to the Commonwealth Transportation Board for their subsequent consideration and final action later this year.

When the Round Four call for projects closed in January, NVTC anticipated a total of \$25 million to support new projects over the FY 2021-2022 period. However, the COVID-19 public health emergency forced the Commuter Choice team to find a creative way to handle Round Four programming: The I-66 Inside the Beltway toll revenues collected by the Virginia Department of Transportation that fund the I-66 corridor program dropped sharply this spring and have remained well below budgeted figures. Besides the \$4 million initial program, NVTC intends to fund an additional set of projects next spring with further revenue that may become available over the two-year period. This set of projects would include new transit services, new commuter incentives and larger capital projects that were submitted under the Round Four call for projects and remain under consideration for funding.

**Round Four (FY 2021-2022) Applications: Project Scores and Funding**

#	Applicant	Application Title	Application Score	Funding Request
1	Arlington County	Ballston-MU Metrorail Station West Entrance	97	\$10,000,000
2	Fairfax County	McLean Metrorail Station North Entrance	85	\$1,000,000
3	Loudoun County	Renewal of Metro Connection Route 88X Dulles South Extension	81	\$649,819
4	OmniRide	Renewal of Bus Service from Gainesville to Pentagon/Navy Yard	80	\$461,100
5	City of Falls Church	Restoration of Peak-Period Metrobus Route 28X, Tysons Corner to Mark Center	73	\$3,305,967
6	OmniRide	Renewal of Bus Service from Haymarket to Rosslyn	71	\$137,100
7	OmniRide	New Bus Service from Gainesville to Noma	63	\$3,006,200
8	OmniRide	TDM Strategy - I-66 Corridor Vanpool Parking Benefit	62	\$85,000
9	Fairfax County	New Bus Service from Reston South to Crystal City	59	\$5,110,800
10	City of Fairfax	City of Fairfax Bike Share Implementation	59	\$460,000
11	Arlington County	Lee Highway HOV and Bus-Only Lane in Rosslyn	57	\$710,000
12	Town of Vienna	New Park and Ride at Patrick Henry Library	56	\$5,050,000
13	Loudoun County	Renewal of Purcellville Metro Connection Bus Service	52	\$709,030
14	Fairfax County	TDM Strategy - Fare Buy-Down on Bus Service from Reston North to Crystal City	44	\$154,500
<b>TOTAL FUNDING REQUEST</b>				<b>\$ 17,183,497</b>

NVTC's Ben Owen leads the Commuter Choice virtual town hall

**Virginia transportation revenues expected to drop significantly**

Members of the General Assembly resumed work on legislation to deal with budget shortfalls and offer amendments to the Commonwealth's FY 2020 - FY 2022 biennial budget in September. Gov. Ralph Northam offered budget amendments to minimize the impact of lower transportation revenues and provide funding for transit. Deputy Secretary of Transportation Nick Donohue recently told members of the Commonwealth Transportation Board that the COVID-19 pandemic will lead to a projected revenue drop in state transportation funds of \$870 million through June 2022. The Virginia Department of Transportation has proposed budget amendments that give the CTB more flexibility in addressing revenue reductions. One measure would maintain funding for planned projects, but shift the spending to the later years of six-year projects.

"We want to preserve those six year windows, preserve our projects, keep everything moving, preserving infrastructure," said Virginia Secretary of Transportation Shannon Valentine, adding, "I also believe contributing in the most profound way to economic recovery by stabilizing our investments and stabilizing our workforce."

Another change would allow the CTB to use money allocated for transit capital or special projects to be used for transit operating expenses during FY 2021. NVTC will continue to monitor efforts to secure transit funding for our local transit operators including our jurisdiction's payments to WMATA. Additionally, NVTC is seeking flexibility in holding a required joint in-person meeting with CTB, NVTA and VRE during the special session.

**Metro Board advances budget changes due to COVID-19 pandemic**

Metro's Board of Directors [voted](#) on potential service cuts, schedule changes, and other cost-cutting measures, including layoffs, that the authority says will be necessary to balance the budget if federal relief money runs out. Metro estimates that money provided under the CARES Act will be depleted at the end of the year. The agency says it needs cuts of about \$200 million to balance its budget, noting that ridership has dropped as much as 90% on some lines.

The Board previously authorized a return to front-door boarding and fare collection on Metrobus starting in January, and affirmed that the new extension of the Silver Line would not open during the current budget year - meaning July 2021 is the earliest possible opening date once the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority completes construction.

The Board action follows September's NVTC WMATA Committee meeting where Virginia's Board members discussed the proposed budget changes. Chair Paul Smedberg said, "We are looking at some difficult financial decisions coming up to adjust the budget, not only for fiscal year 21, but looking ahead to fiscal year 22." Mr. Smedberg also noted that Metro does not anticipate receiving any more financial relief from Congress.

Board member Matt Letourneau added, "As difficult as these cuts will be, 1700 WMATA employees are potentially looking at layoffs and that is potentially a very painful thing for the organization, and as difficult as it is to have to make cuts, if you look at this chart, I think this is still a very reasonable level of service."



Photo courtesy: Metro

# 2020 Platform Improvement Project wraps up

The final two Metrorail stations closed for rebuilding reopened the day after Labor Day as Metro's [Platform Improvement Project](#) hit a milestone. The agency says the multi-year project has reached 50% completion. Ten Metrorail stations in Northern Virginia have been rebuilt over the past two summers on the Blue/Yellow and Orange/Silver Lines. Metro says the new stations include slip-resistant tiles on the platforms and in the mezzanine areas, stainless-steel platform shelters with charging outlets/ports, additional Passenger Information Display (PIDS) screens, energy-efficient LED lighting throughout the stations and improved speakers for clearer public announcements and emergency notifications. Additional work will limit some sidewalk and parking at stations until next month. Rebuilding work at Reagan National Airport Station continues, but does not impact service.




East Falls Church (top); Vienna (bottom left); Dunn Loring (bottom right). Courtesy: Metro




# PLATFORM IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

## SUMMER 2020 HIGHLIGHTS



**118,000 FT<sup>2</sup>**  
OF SLIP-RESISTANT TILES  
Enough to cover  
42 tennis courts




**73,000 FT**  
OF ELECTRICAL CONDUIT  
Equal to the distance between the  
US Capitol & Tysons Corner Mall



**6,000 FT**  
OF PLATFORM EDGE REPAIRED  
Long enough for most airplanes to  
take off at Reagan National Airport



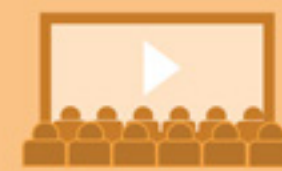
**381,600 LBS**  
OF GRANITE EDGE PLACED  
Heavier than the granite  
used for the Lincoln  
Memorial statue



**57 SHUTTLE BUSES**  
USED IN RUSH HOUR  
OPERATIONS  
Equal to seating for  
as many people as  
the Kennedy Center  
Concert Hall



**210,000**  
SHUTTLE BUS DEPARTURES  
More than all departing flights at  
Dulles International Airport in 2019



**1,400 FT<sup>2</sup>**  
OF SCREENS INSTALLED  
Equal to the size of a  
movie theatre screen



**4,540 LIGHTBULBS**  
INSTALLED  
Enough to shine a light on every  
seat at Wolf Trap National Park  
for the Performing Arts in Virginia



Graphic courtesy: Metro

**Rich Dalton tapped to lead VRE**

NVTC and sister Commission PRTC voted to appoint Rich Dalton as the CEO of Virginia Railway Express (VRE) at their separate meetings in September. Dalton had been serving as Acting CEO and has been with VRE since 2012, previously serving as deputy CEO, chief operating officer and other roles.

“The search for the next VRE CEO drew interest from rail professionals from across the United States,” said Katie Cristol, NVTC Chair, who also chaired the CEO Search Committee. “In this national search, Rich stood out on the basis of his unparalleled expertise in the operations of VRE and its partner agencies and his vision for the future of the system.”

The railroad noted in a news release that Dalton, “will lead VRE, navigating the current pandemic and ensuring future growth.”



**NVTC examines telework and transit demand during the pandemic**

A new analysis by NVTC seeks to better understand the relationship between teleworking and the demand for riding transit in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. Transit Resource Center Program Manager Dan Goldfarb presented his findings to the Management Advisory Committee (MAC) in September. Dan compared bus and rail ridership in April and May of this year and found a sharp

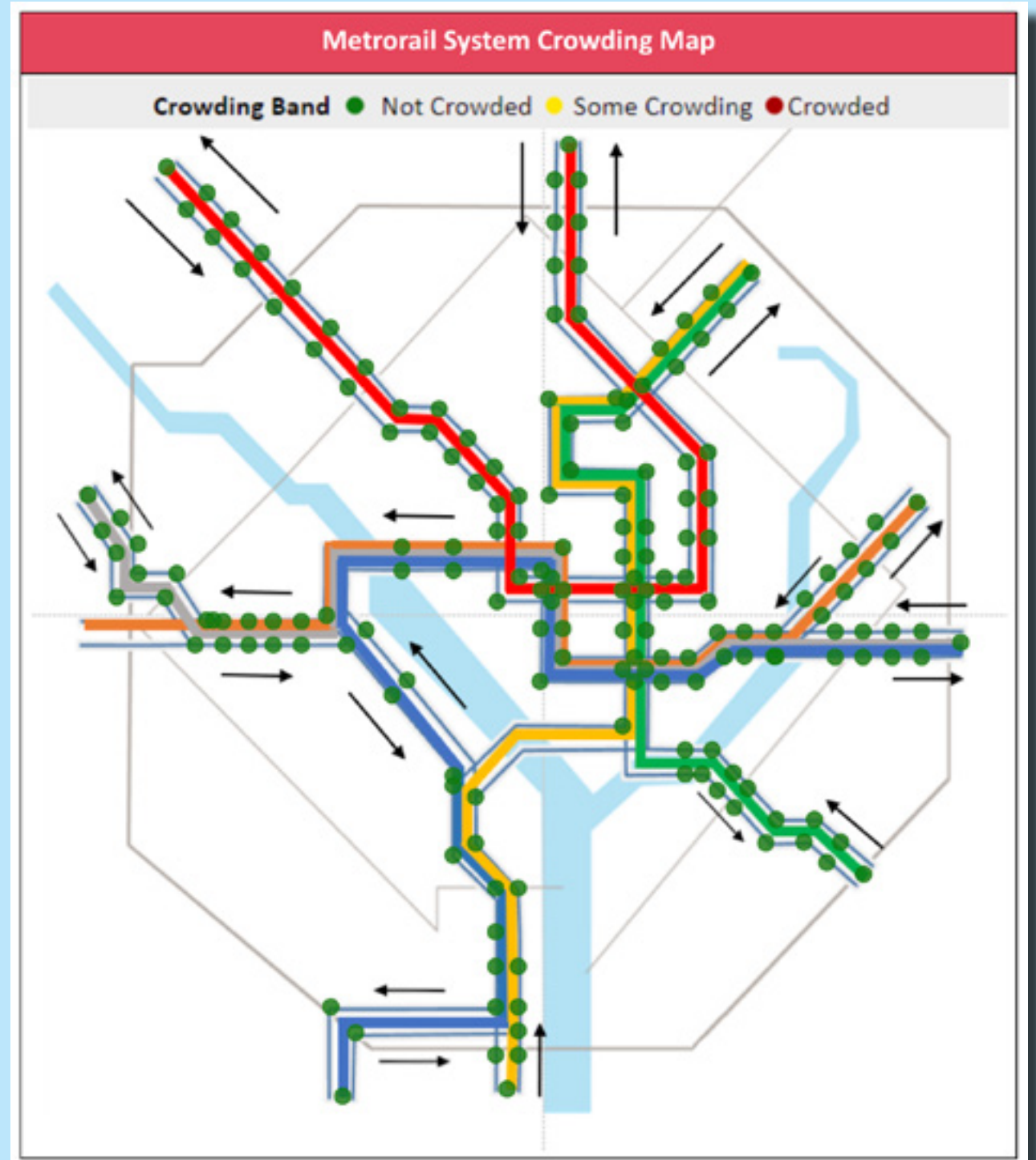


drop-off compared to last year. He also looked at the number of people working from home during key months of 2020. The analysis also considers the reopening of the region as service providers restore transit service and more people return to area roads. Will the rate of telework remain higher than normal and what factors do people consider when choosing to remain at home, drive to work or take transit to work?

**Regional surveys find cautious approach to returning to work**

Two surveys released in September show that employers remain cautious about bringing people back to work and that working from home may remain the norm well into next year, due to continued uncertainty about the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Greater Washington Partnership reports that more than 60% of employers planned for less than one third of employees returning to worksites post-Labor Day. Nearly 20% expected no employees returning. Of the employers with plans, just 72% of their employees are expected to return to the office by summer 2021. In conjunction with the survey results, the partnership also released a [Transit Tracker](#), which provides information on Metrorail crowd levels, enabling riders to gain a sense of how much space they'll have if they use the system.



Separately, Commuter Connections found that 97% of worksites had at least some telework since the COVID-19 pandemic began. All employees were teleworking full-time at 55% of worksites. This survey also found that the average share of employees who teleworked grew from 36% to 82% at sites with telework.

Both surveys asked employers what measures they planned to take to bring people back on-site. Continued telework, staggered working hours and strategies to ensure distancing ranked high. We'll be watching these return to work trends closely as they have significant implications for transit ridership and toll road usage.

### Long Bridge Project Reaches Critical Milestone

The Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) and the District of Columbia Department of Transportation (DDOT) announced the conclusion of the environmental planning process for the [Long Bridge](#) rail project in September. This marks a major milestone in the planning process for the new rail bridge and independent pedestrian/bicycle bridge that will span the Potomac River and opens the door for the final engineering design, financing, and construction of Long Bridge.

"A new bridge across the Potomac River represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to make the rail system work better for everyone along the entire East Coast," said Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam. "The project has passed an important milestone, thanks to close collaboration between Virginia, D.C., and the private sector. We are all excited about bringing easier and faster mobility to commuters and travelers."

Owned and operated by CSX, the existing Long Bridge is the only railroad bridge connecting Virginia to the District of Columbia and is one of the most significant passenger and freight rail choke points along the east coast. The bridge operates at 98% capacity during peak periods, preventing the District, Virginia, and Maryland from increasing passenger and commuter rail service for their communities.



Photo: LongBridgeProject.com

The expanded Long Bridge will enable Virginia to double its state-supported Amtrak passenger rail service, significantly increase Virginia Railway Express (VRE) commuter rail service by 2030, and make way for potential future run-through commuter rail service connecting Virginia and Maryland.

"The Long Bridge project, made possible through collaboration with private, state, and federal partners, will transform passenger and freight rail operations for generations to come," said Virginia Secretary of Transportation Shannon Valentine.

The new, Virginia-owned, two-track bridge will be built across the Potomac River adjacent to the CSX freight bridge and will be dedicated exclusively to passenger and commuter rail. Through the separation of passenger and freight rail, the new bridge will also reduce congestion and improve fluidity for CSX and its customers. In addition to rail congestion relief, the Long Bridge project will create a new, independent pedestrian and bicycle bridge crossing of the Potomac River between the Mount Vernon Trail, Crystal City, and the monumental core of the District of Columbia.

## NVTC-PRTC Joint Legislative Briefing



**Monday, December 7**  
**9 - 11 a.m.**  
**Online Only**

*Watch your inbox for registration information*

### NVTC's legislative agenda for 2021 taking shape

The Legislative and Policy Committee met September 10 to discuss the General Assembly's Special Session and develop the Commission's priorities for the 2021 Legislative and Policy Agenda. NVTC Legislative Liaison Aimee Perron Seibert and Sen. Adam Ebbin provided insight into the work the General Assembly is doing to support local transit operators while dealing with lower transportation revenues. NVTC Program Analyst Zach Smith also provided an overview of the proposed 2021 Legislative and Policy Agenda. This year, NVTC's proposed state and federal legislative priorities are focused on protecting existing transit programs and revenues and making it easier to access transit. Following the Commission's approval, NVTC will share the 2021 Legislative and Policy Agenda and other federal and state issues affecting transit in Northern Virginia at the annual joint NVTC-PRTC Virtual Legislative Briefing on Monday, December 7.

## NVTC remembers founding commissioner Joe Alexander

Members of the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission honored one of their own at the September Commission meeting. Joseph Alexander, a founding member of NVTC, died August 30 at age 90.

Mr. Alexander served on NVTC from its inception in 1964 until 1995, serving as chair for a three-year period from 1970 through 1972. He served as the Lee District Supervisor on the Fairfax County Board for 32 years and he represented Fairfax County on NVTC for 31 of those years. He also represented NVTC on the WMATA Board of Directors for over 20 years, from 1971 - 1995, serving as chair four times. He was also a founding member of the VRE Operations Board and served from 1988 -1995. VRE named one of its locomotives after him, honoring him for his service to VRE.



“Joe was just a remarkable individual, a transformative character, really, in Fairfax County. I never met anyone in my life who loved transit more than Joe did,” said Commissioner and Fairfax County Chair Jeff McKay, adding that Alexander was, “Someone who was so proud of Northern Virginia and all that we’ve been able to do for transit.”

Throughout his long tenure on NVTC, Mr. Alexander was instrumental in helping establish the 90-mile Metro system and the Franconia/Springfield Transportation Center, the VRE commuter rail project, and many other transit related projects. Even after he retired from political service in 1995, he continued to be active in the Virginia Transit Association and the American Public Transportation Association. Joe Alexander truly was passionate about transit. As a life-long friend and supporter of NVTC, we would see him at many of our events, including last year’s December Legislative Briefing.



*An artist's rendering of Joe Alexander from a 1971 NVTC publication (left); A 1965 photo of the Commission (below)*

