



Executive Director Newsletter



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

September 2022



A Message from Kate Mattice

Fall is nearly here and so it seems is another season of transit construction as major work on the Blue and Yellow Lines will disrupt Metrorail service in Northern Virginia starting this month. Fortunately, we've learned a lot about how to keep people moving from our years supporting Metro's Platform Improvement Project. NVTC staff have spent months leading regional coordination efforts to make sure riders have multiple options for traveling through the work zone and ensuring that the supplemental transit options work smoothly.

Metro will close all stations south of Ronald Reagan National Airport starting September 10 to integrate the future Potomac Yard station into the Metrorail system and for major rehabilitation work on the Yellow Line bridge and tunnel crossing the Potomac River. Metro will reopen all stations, except Potomac Yard, on October 23. However, the Yellow Line bridge/tunnel work will continue until May 2023 and Yellow Line trains will not operate. Metro's Blue Line will serve all stations south of the airport until the bridge/tunnel reopens.

Metro will provide free shuttle buses during both phases of major Blue and Yellow Lines construction and Northern Virginia's transit providers operate routes that provide express connections. Additionally, Virginia Railway Express (VRE) will offer free rides to all customers in September and free rides between certain stations in October.



Our staff also created a Virginia-focused travel [alternatives map](#) to help riders visualize their options.

The map and our coordination efforts are excellent examples of how NVTC brings our diverse jurisdictions and transit providers together to make riding public transit easier and more accessible for everyone.

Kate A. Mattice
Executive Director

In This Issue

- 4 Kate testifies before Commonwealth Transportation Board
- 5 WMATA Committee reviews recommendations for annual report
- 6 Metro Board welcomes new General Manager and CEO Randy Clarke
- 7 Metro Board holds first meeting in new headquarters
- 10 NVTC Fellows present research findings
- 12 NVTC Fellows tour NoVa transit systems
- 13 Regional marketing campaign reviewed for public information officers
- 14 APA Virginia holds annual conference
- 15 Conference supports enhanced use of transit data
- 15 TSDAC reviews Commonwealth's capital and allocation operation strategy



Sept. 16
VRE Operations Board

Sept. 5
Program Advisory Committee Meeting

Sept. 20-21
Commonwealth Transportation Board

Sept. 29
Legislative and Policy Committee Meeting

Sept. 29
WMATA Committee Meeting

Oct. 6
Commission Meeting

Oct. 20
Virginia Passenger Rail Authority Board

Oct. 21
VRE Operations Board

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Kate testifies before Commonwealth Transportation Board

Executive Director Kate Mattice traveled to Blacksburg July 20 to highlight NVTC's and the Commonwealth Transportation Board's (CTB), "Shared interest in the health and sustainability of the Washington Metro System and to speak to NVTC's specific actions aimed at righting the Metro ship." [Speaking](#) to members of the CTB, Kate acknowledged frustration with developments at Metro and a desire to work together to make "Metro a more viable, efficient transit system to keep the economic engine of the region humming."

Kate reminded CTB members of NVTC's role and relationship to Metro and of Metro's importance to the region in reducing traffic congestion and as an economic engine for the entire Commonwealth of Virginia. Kate also had the opportunity to speak with Secretary of Transportation Shep Miller and Director of the Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) Jen Debruhl.

Kate's appearance followed action taken by the CTB in June when it [approved](#) the DRPT FY 2023-2028 Six-Year Improvement Plan (SYIP), reducing

the amount of funding from the Commonwealth Mass Transit Fund Account for Metro assistance in FY 2023. That assistance is state aid that is used by NVTC jurisdictions to support their capital and operating subsidy payments to Metro.

The CTB action reduced the \$273 million that was shown in the draft SYIP, which was released in April, by \$71.9 million to \$200.8 million. The 2020 Transportation Omnibus bill granted authority to CTB that allows state assistance to be flexibly allocated prior to the implementation of new formulas in FY 2024. Secretary Miller proposed to CTB that the NVTC-Metro assistance funding would align with the 2020 Transportation Omnibus bill formulas in FY 2023, which was subsequently approved by the CTB in June resulting in the funding level of \$200.8 million. Secretary Miller proposed directing the \$72 million reduced from NVTC-Metro assistance to highway maintenance and paving projects across the Commonwealth.



WMATA Committee reviews recommendations for annual report

The NVTC WMATA Committee met [July 21](#) to review staff's proposed recommendations for Metro as part of the 2022 update of NVTC's Annual Report on the Performance and Condition of WMATA. The committee supported staff's proposed strategies and endorsed their approach to further develop these recommendations over the summer for committee and Commission consideration in the Fall. Staff recommendations to reduce the growth in costs and improve efficiencies at Metro include:

Strategies directed to Metro:

- Rider Confidence
- Fare Evasion
- Fare Structure
- Non-Fare Revenue
- Labor Costs

Strategies for NVTC:

- Role of Metrobus and Local Transit Operators
- New Financial Operating Model

New for this year's report, NVTC staff recommend that NVTC conduct a study examining the policy, funding and other implications of Northern Virginia local transit agencies assuming the operation of Metrobus services in Northern Virginia. The draft strategies also call for NVTC to create a WMATA operating funding working group to develop and recommend how to align expenses with revenues at WMATA with a focus on existing and new revenue sources.

In light of the pandemic shifting transit ridership patterns across the region, the NVTC staff updated the committee on recent Metrobus service and subsidy trends. As Metrobus services have shifted in response to post-pandemic travel trends, the distribution of Metrobus service between Virginia, Maryland and DC has shifted significantly while the way Metrobus subsidy is split between these jurisdictions has not. NVTC staff will continue to explore and understand these trends and integrate their findings into current and future NVTC or Metro studies that relate metrobus service and how it is paid for.



Board welcomes new General Manager and CEO Randy Clarke



The Metro Board [convened](#) and welcomed the new General Manager and CEO Randy Clarke to his first board meeting on July 28. Before joining Metro, Randy served more than four years as President and CEO of Capital Metro in Austin, Texas. Randy also held key leadership positions with the American Public Transportation Association and Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority. Executive Director Kate Mattice and NVTC Senior WMATA Program Manager Andrew D’huyvetter attended the meeting to welcome Randy to the region.

After swearing in, Randy discussed what he heard from customers during his week on the job, with the top complaints being service frequency, fare policy and customer communications. He also announced that Metro will be operationally prepared to seek safety certification from the WMSC and Federal Transit Administration in October for Silver Line Phase 2.

The Metro Board thanked Andy Off and unanimously approved a resolution of

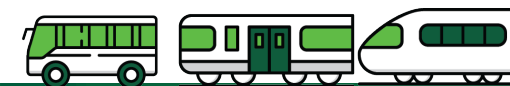
commendation for his service as interim GM and CEO. The board also approved several temporary parking and fare changes to ease the impacts on riders during the upcoming Major Blue and Yellow Line Construction. The Board approved waiving fares on the Metroway and waiving parking fees at Huntington, Van Dorn and Franconia-Springfield stations for the duration of the closure for the Potomac Yard Station cut-over construction project from September 10 to October 22.

The Board also approved waiving the non-rider fee for parking at the Franconia-Springfield station from September 10 to early summer 2023. Waiving the non-rider fee means that if you park at the Franconia-Springfield Metrorail Station parking facility and use any form of transit, including Metrorail, bus or Virginia Railway Express (VRE), you’ll pay the regular daily parking rate of \$4.95, instead of the higher non-rider rate. The change will make it cheaper for riders to park at Franconia-Springfield and ride VRE.

Board holds first meeting in new headquarters

The Metro Board returned to in person meetings June 23 following the opening and relocation of staff and Board activities to their new headquarters building. NVTC WMATA Senior Program Manager Andrew D’huyvetter and Program Analyst Ronnetta Zack-Williams were also on hand for the meeting at 300 7th Street SW, near L’Enfant Plaza. As part of an [office consolidation](#) strategy to improve working conditions and reduce administrative operating costs, Metro is consolidating 10 existing leased and owned facilities into four owned office buildings. The headquarters was moved from the

Jackson Graham Building at 600 Fifth Street NW to its current location at L’Enfant Plaza and two new office buildings on Metro-owned land in Alexandria and Prince George’s County are currently under construction. The Jackson Graham Building site is subject to a joint development [agreement](#) where Metro will retain ownership of the site and receive annual rent payments from a developer who will redevelop the site into a new mixed-use development.





NVTC Fellows present research findings

After several months of research into Northern Virginia transportation policies, funding and priorities, NVTC Fellows met virtually July 18 with staff to present key takeaways and lessons learned. The fellows described their research and the work that went into it.



Daniel Segura: Bus priority in Northern Virginia



Bus Priority Typology- Time



I started off by acquainting myself with what bus priority is and which bus priority treatments exist and are planned in Northern Virginia through research. I was then given points of contact for the various transportation departments, from which I was able to get information regarding what exists and what is planned in each department's region. After compiling this information in an ArcGIS map, I created a scorecard for regions to use for when they are seeking to implement a bus

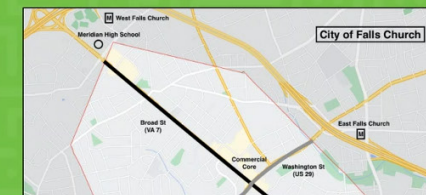
priority treatment but don't know which areas to prioritize. Finally, I tested my scorecard on four intersections near the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission office to look for areas of improvement. This was my first real experience in transportation planning, so being able to test my knowledge while learning new and relevant information was incredibly rewarding and I appreciate everyone that helped me along the way!

Silas Sullivan: Microtransit development



City of Falls Church Profile

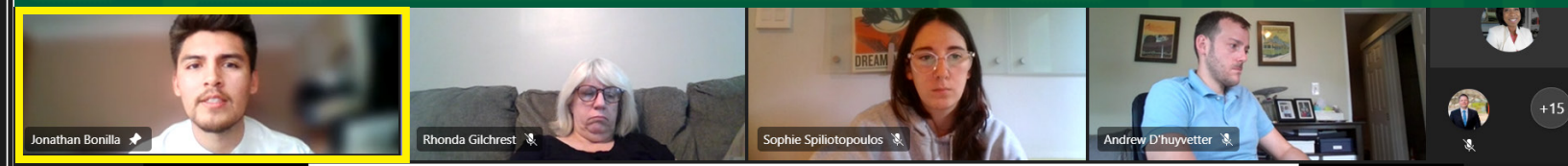
Fully developed, inner-suburban community



Over the past four months, I conducted research into microtransit deployment in Northern Virginia. Throughout this process, I facilitated interviews with peer transit agencies for lessons learned and key takeaways, determined a key set of parameters for microtransit deployment (incl. span of service, wait time, passengers per revenue hour and trip scheduling software, amongst others) and provided actionable next steps for a local jurisdiction to consider when

pursuing microtransit. I have been extremely fortunate to work with, and learn from, Commuter Choice Program Manager Ben Owen and Commuter Choice Senior Program Analyst Adam Hager in this research effort and am indebted to their leadership and guidance. Overall, this project has opened my eyes to the complexity of real-world transit projects and how much coordination is truly needed in transportation policy and planning.

Jonathan Bonilla: Peer transit agency funding research

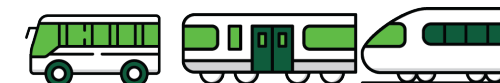


Other Interesting State-Local Findings

- **Climate related funding:** Low Carbon Transit Operating Program and Low Carbon Fuel Standard Program (BART)
- **Mixture transportation funds:** Metropolitan Mass Transportation Operating Assistance (NY MTA), State Transit Assistance Fund and

I worked on researching peer transit funding models across the United States. I had the task of examining operating budgets of nine different peer-transit agencies for Fiscal Year 2022 which included the following: MBTA, BART, NY MTA, MARTA, LA Metro, CTA, PATH, PATCO, and St

Louis Metro. I had a special focus of looking at the breakdown of their revenues and expenses, dedicated funding for transit operations, relevant modes and noting the different funding sources from regional, state and local jurisdictions.



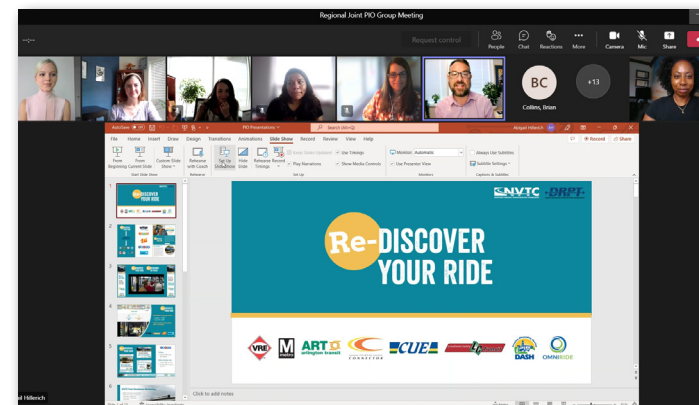
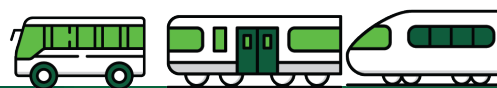


NVTC Fellows tour NoVa transit systems

Senior Program Manager Xavier Harmony led NVTC Fellows Daniel Segura, Jonathan Bonilla and Silas Sullivan on a [tour](#) of Northern Virginia transit on July 27 to allow them to experience and learn more about different types of transit in the region. The group used transit provided by three local transit operators on four different bus routes: a DASH local bus, DASH's King Street Trolley, an ART express bus, Metro's Metroway Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system. They also rode Metrorail. Along the way, Xavier and the fellows talked about transit's connection to land use and

regional economic development, transportation funding and policy as well as the development of in-progress transit projects including the Virginia Railway Express Crystal City Station improvement project, Metro's new Potomac Yard station and planned (BRT) projects by Alexandria, Fairfax County and NVTC.

We also wished two of our fellows well as they returned to campus for the fall semester. Daniel attends Virginia Tech and Jonathan attends Rutgers.



NVTC Post-Shutdown Marketing

- NVTC will seek a grant from DRPT and a local match to conduct a "return to ridership" marketing campaign
- If awarded, NVTC will lead a collaborative marketing effort on-air and online targeted to potential Northern Virginia riders
- The marketing campaign would complement efforts by Metro and NoVa providers

Re-DISCOVER YOUR RIDE

Regional marketing campaign reviewed for public information officers

Communications and Public Affairs Manager Matt Friedman gave an overview of our regional transit marketing campaign at a July 18 meeting of Northern Virginia public information officers working on transportation. The campaign encourages potential transit riders to "re-discover" their ride. The Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) provided 80% of the funding and our local partners provided a 20% match. They are the cities of Alexandria, Falls Church and Fairfax, the counties of Arlington, Fairfax and Loudoun; and OmniRide and VRE.

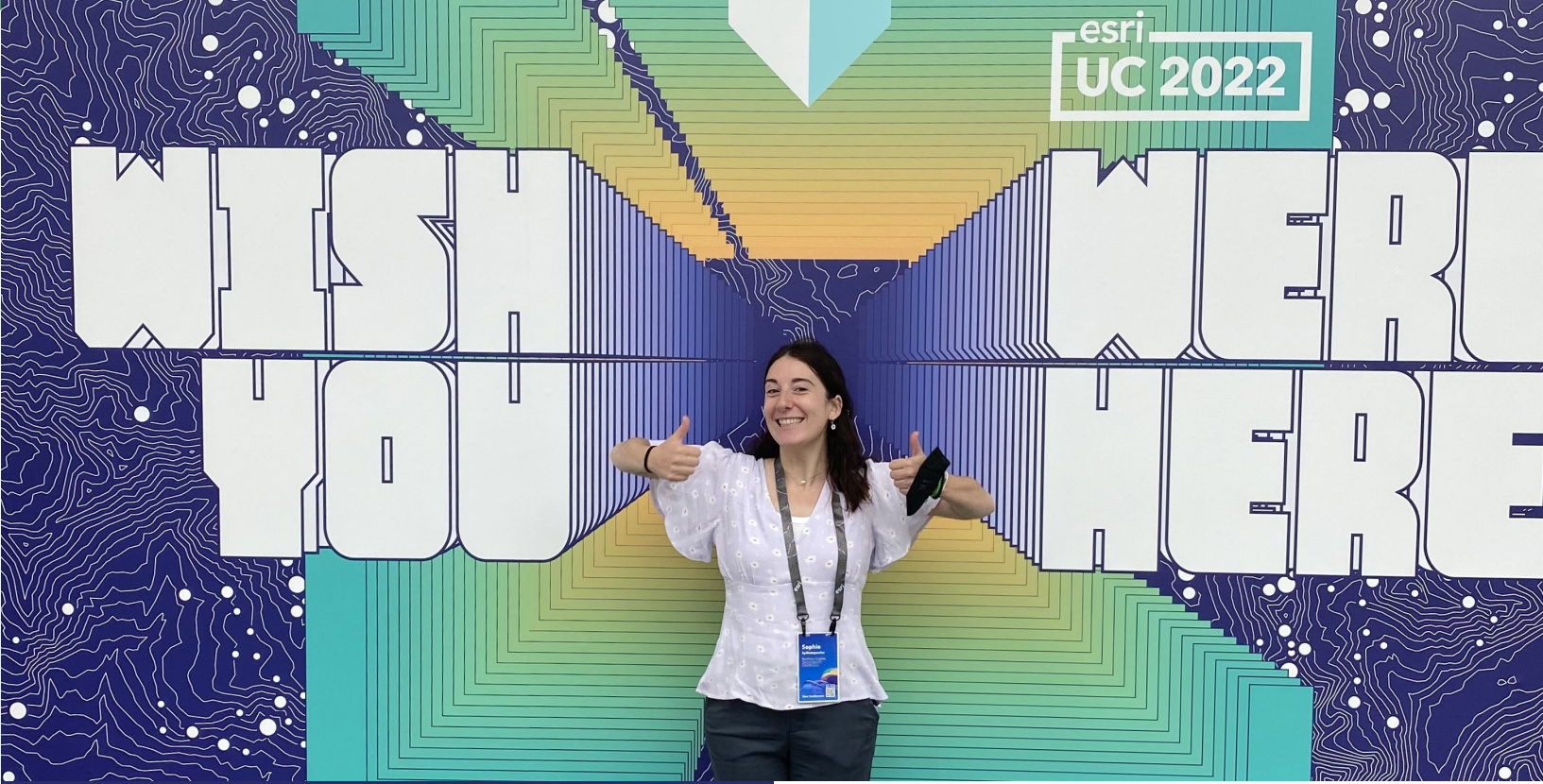
Matt and Marketing and Engagement Manager Monique Blyther also fielded questions about the campaign, which started the week of June 1 and ran through August. Viewers and listeners were encouraged to visit novarides.org.



APA Virginia holds annual conference

Senior Program Manager Xavier Harmony visited Richmond the week of July 18 to attend the American Planning Association (APA) Virginia Chapter's annual [conference](#). Xavier learned about developments in planning in Virginia, connected with old and new industry friends and peers and presented work on transportation decision-making in the

Commonwealth. While in Richmond, Xavier also took the opportunity to meet some of the Greater Richmond Transit Company (GRTC) team responsible for the implementation of their Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system, the [Pulse](#), to see what lessons and best practices could be implemented as we advance our work on the Envision Route 7 BRT project.



Conference supports enhanced use of transit data

Program Analyst Sophie Spiliotopoulos traveled to San Diego the week of July 11 for the [Esri User Conference](#). This massive annual conference is a great opportunity to discover the latest and greatest of geographic information system (GIS) technology and connect with the software users from across the world. GIS is a powerful tool for spatial analysis and visualization that we often use at NVTC to better understand transit data.

Throughout the week, Sophie attended sessions on a wide range of topics, including technical courses on map automation and workshops on creative map-making techniques.

TSDAC reviews the Commonwealth's capital and operating allocation strategy

The Department of Rail and Public Transportation's (DRPT) Transit Service Delivery Advisory Committee ([TSDAC](#)) is wrapping up its 2022 review of the Commonwealth's transit strategic plans, as well as capital and operating allocation approach. In June, TSDAC members voted unanimously to [recommend updates](#) to the MERIT Capital Assistance program and Transit Strategic Plan guidelines. It's anticipated that DRPT staff will recap the progress the committee has made over the past few months and recommend no change be made to the MERIT Operating Assistance formula. All the final findings and recommendations from the Committee will be brought to the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) later this year.



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