

Regional Bus Agenda

October 2015



The Regional Bus Agenda is a cornerstone of [NVTC's Strategic Framework](#), which envisions a Northern Virginia where a high capacity, high quality network of transit systems serve businesses, allowing this diverse region to thrive economically. Successful implementation of the Regional Bus Agenda will provide residents and visitors with high quality bus transit service in Northern Virginia and improve transportation for all. High quality bus service connects people to activity centers and fixed rail transit systems. With the planning and implementation of projects like the Metrobus Priority Corridor Network, the Crystal City-Potomac Yard Transitway, bus rapid transit (BRT) on Route 1 in Fairfax and Prince William Counties, expanded commuter bus transit on I-66, and the transit alternatives study exploring options on Route 7, the region is poised to capitalize on bus service as a core component of an efficient and effective transportation network.

By providing technical assistance and coordination over the next five years, NVTC will bring the region together to:

- Support Northern Virginia jurisdictions in meeting the investment needs for bus operations and infrastructure in the region through a regional strategy that leverages increased, dedicated and diverse regional revenue sources;
- Increase transit usage by promoting projects that improve bus frequencies that meet demand, a user-friendly bus system, and reliable bus service;
- Enhance access to activity centers – where people live, work and play – through support of efforts that improve bus coverage that aligns transit services at jurisdictional borders and connects transit services through the development of dedicated transit ways and high priority corridors;
- Provide technical analysis and tools to help maximize the use of existing transportation infrastructure and transit vehicles by reducing congestion, developing dedicated transit ways to connect activity centers, identifying and deploying technology;
- Provide safe evacuation of Metrorail customers in the event of an emergency through the effective use of the bus network in coordination with the region's first responders; and
- Establish baseline assessment of and monitor capacity, as well as gaps in service and infrastructure of bus service in the region.

The Regional Bus Agenda identifies strategies and activities – including proposed performance metrics for each of five overarching outcomes and a description of a baseline assessment – and sets milestones for key initiatives. Local jurisdictions are responsible for operational and service planning decisions and implementation. This agenda will be updated annually and the Commission will monitor the region's progress toward milestones.

Outcomes

[NVTC's Strategic Framework](#) identifies quality, accessibility, efficiency, safety, and financial performance as keys to success for transit in the region. The outcome statements below define these as they relate specifically to the aims of the Regional Bus Agenda.

- **Quality:** Increase transit use through bus frequencies that meet demand, a user-friendly bus system and reliable bus service.
- **Accessibility:** Enhance access to activity centers – where people live, work and play – through improved bus coverage.
- **Efficiency:** Maximize the use of existing infrastructure.
- **Safety:** Ensure the effective use of the bus network to provide safe evacuation of Metrorail customers.
- **Financial Performance:** Meet investment needs for bus operations and infrastructure through increased, dedicated and diverse revenue sources and a strategy for regional investment in bus through regional and statewide long range plans.

Strategies

Quality

As articulated in the [NVTC Implementation Plan](#), NVTC pursues the following strategies to encourage increased transit usage through a user-friendly bus system and reliable bus service:

- Leading, participating in and convening stakeholders for discussions of regional planning initiatives:
 - Coordinating with jurisdictions and other stakeholders to ensure a regional, cost-effective approach to issues affecting bus transit; and
 - Participating in the planning of dedicated bus infrastructure to improve service reliability.

NVTC's efforts in this area are realized through the following programs, projects and policy initiatives:

- ✓ Next generation fare payment system - Coordinating Northern Virginia jurisdictions' planning and implementation of a next generation of fare payment

system to improve the ease with which riders can use transit and navigate across systems;

- ✓ Transit Signal Priority - Monitoring implementation of transit signal priority across the region;
- ✓ Envision Route 7 - Leading the Route 7 Transit Alternatives Study to identify alternatives that allow for more frequent and reliable service;
- ✓ I-66 Inside the Beltway Multimodal Project - Establishing an I-66 Inside the Beltway partnership with VDOT to manage toll revenues; implementing a project selection process that adheres to threshold and evaluation criteria, establishing and monitoring measures of effectiveness (MOE's); and ensuring project effectiveness through project monitoring, reporting, and technical assistance through appropriate project coordination.
- ✓ Participation in regional planning efforts, such as:
 - Route 1 Multimodal Alternatives Analysis (completed)
 - TPB's Regional Bus Staging, Layover, and Parking Location Study (completed)
 - Metrobus Service Guidelines Study
 - I-66 Outside the Beltway
 - Metrobus Network Strategy Analysis
 - VTrans2040
 - TransAction 2040 Update
- ✓ Participating previously in the implementation of real-time passenger information. (There may be opportunities for NVTC to play a role in coordinating regional efforts in this area in the future.)

Accessibility

NVTC pursues the following strategies to enhance access to activity centers – where people live, work and play – through improved bus coverage:

- Leading, participating in and convening stakeholders for discussions of regional planning initiatives; and
- Supporting regional programs and research to promote access to and the use of alternative modes of transportation.

NVTC's efforts include the following programs, projects and policy initiatives:

- ✓ Leading the Route 7 Transit Alternatives Study to ensure connectivity to key activity centers and existing and planned transit infrastructure (e.g., Metrorail, West End Transitway);
- ✓ Advancing accessibility as a criteria for project selection and prioritization; and
- ✓ Promoting methodologies for regional long-range planning efforts that lead to a balance of modes and improved connectivity among activity centers (e.g., VTrans2040, TransAction 2040 Update, HB2).

Efficiency

NVTC pursues the following strategies to maximize the use of existing infrastructure:

- Participate in state, regional and local planning efforts, including identifying opportunities for dedicated bus infrastructure, to improve service reliability; and
- Provide research and technical expertise to promote investments and initiatives that maximize the use of existing infrastructure.

NVTC's efforts to improve regional bus efficiency include the following programs, projects and policy initiatives:

- ✓ Ensuring coordination among regional planning efforts, in particular I-66 Multimodal Corridor projects;
- ✓ Monitoring and participating in the bus-on-shoulder pilot and evaluating future bus-on-shoulder possibilities;
- ✓ Leading the Route 7 Transit Alternatives Study to take advantage of existing infrastructure; and
- ✓ Evaluating or applying urban design standards across the region.

Safety

NVTC's efforts related to safety focus on emergency preparedness. As such, NVTC implements the following strategy to ensure the region has the plans, communication systems and incident-response capabilities in place to facilitate the safe transportation of riders in the event of an emergency:

- Leading, participating in and convening stakeholders for discussions with and planning, exercises and training for local and regional transit agencies.

NVTC's efforts in this area include the following programs, projects and policy initiatives:

- ✓ Assessing all previously developed, transit emergency preparedness plans for Northern Virginia Metrorail stations;
- ✓ Developing and monitoring emergency preparedness plans for all Northern Virginia Metrorail stations in coordination with WMATA and local transit agencies; and
- ✓ Leading planning, exercises and training for local and regional transit agencies.

Financial Management

NVTC pursues the following strategies to meet investment needs for bus operations and infrastructure through increased, dedicated and diverse revenue sources:

- Providing financial management expertise and support for member jurisdictions;

- Providing research and analysis demonstrating the value of investment in transit infrastructure and operations;
- Providing technical expertise on potential funding mechanisms to support state of good repair, capacity improvements and system expansion; and
- Ensuring that a regional bus investment strategy is incorporated into the update of Transaction 2040, the Constrained Long Range Plan, VTRANS and other long-range plans by providing technical support and coordination of regional partners.

NVTC's efforts to support financial management of regional bus systems include the following programs, projects and policy initiatives:

- ✓ Providing state and federal grant-management expertise and oversight for member jurisdictions;
- ✓ Serving as the grantee for member jurisdictions' share of WMATA subsidies;
- ✓ Developing sustainable funding strategies and providing New Starts expertise for major transit projects, including Route 7;
- ✓ Identifying, quantifying, demonstrating and communicating the demand for transit investment to policymakers;
- ✓ Developing proposals to address shortfalls in state capital funding resources, including Capital Projects Revenue bond funding;
- ✓ Assessing ways to expand funding sources for operating support of all modes of transit;
- ✓ Analyzing data to establish the base level of bus accessibility and connectivity in the region; and
- ✓ Leading and providing technical expertise to ensure that bus needs and projects are incorporated in the update of Transaction 2040 so that future NVTA investment continues to be a fair balance between roads and transit projects.

Baseline Analysis / Performance Management

NVTC will analyze regional bus service and infrastructure to establish the benchmarks and gaps that should be addressed by a regional investment strategy. This work will provide a baseline understanding of the bus network in Northern Virginia by looking at all transit services within the NVTC jurisdictional boundaries. Using readily available data, NVTC will track the region's progress toward achieving the outcomes outlined above. This summer, NVTC staff began identifying appropriate measures and targets based on industry best practices, collecting data and developing a user-friendly performance report. In 2016, staff will provide an analysis of the data, identify gaps in connectivity and quality, and offer additional strategies for advancing the region towards its desired outcomes. NVTC staff will work with the staff member jurisdictions to confirm a set of performance metrics for the outcomes identified.

In addition to examining existing conditions, NVTC will analyze gaps and untapped capacity in the regional network in terms of accessibility and connections between systems and across jurisdictional borders. The analysis will:

1. Identify bus capacity now that could be used to cover service needs, e.g. commuter service where excess bus capacity could provide reverse service or could be used for other needs. How much capacity is available and where is it based? How much commuter bus storage requirements could be reduced by reverse or alternate service with commuter bus?
2. Quantify lane miles of bus on shoulder in the pilot and map its location. Quantify and map additional capacity that could be gained through bus on shoulder expansion.
3. Map gaps in service.
4. Highlight “last mile” gaps, especially with respect to connecting the workforce to Metrorail. How many miles? How many vehicles required? How many potential riders/workers?
5. Identify the opportunities to establish dedicated lanes for transit as new facilities are built including additional express lanes. Where are they? How many miles are there? How much money could be saved?

Milestones

Milestones set the course for achieving the targets of the Regional Bus Agenda and provide a means for monitoring progress. NVTC will monitor progress and make adjustments in strategies to ensure progress and to reflect changed conditions. Appendix A, which sets out milestones for 2015-2020, shall be refreshed and amended as needed. (Note milestones reflect key dates for NVTC action as well as key regional project and planning milestones.)