The meeting of the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission was called to order by Chairman Fisette at 7:55 P.M.

**Members Present**
Richard Black  
Sharon Bulova  
John Cook  
Jim Corcoran  
Katie Cristol  
Christian Dorsey  
Adam Ebbin  
Jay Fisette  
John Foust  
Catherine Hudgins  
David LaRock  
Jeff McKay  
James LeMunyon  
Matt Letourneau  
Tim Lovain  
J. Randall Minchew  
Jennifer Mitchell (Alternate, Commonwealth of Virginia)  
Karen Oliver (Alternate, City of Falls Church)  
Paul Smedberg  
Jennifer Wexton

**Members Absent**
Jeff Greenfield  
David F. Snyder

**Staff Present**
Karen Finucan Clarkson  
Kelley Coyner  
Jen Deci  
Rhonda Gilchrest  
Dan Goldfarb  
Laurel Hammig  
Patricia Happ  
Scott Kalkwarf  
Jeong Yun Kweun  
Kate Mattice  
Daito Nobuhiko  
Aimee Perron Siebert  
Colethia Quarles  
Melissa Walker  
Steve Maclsaac (Counsel)  
Doug Allen (VRE)  
Joe Swartz (VRE)
Opening Remarks

Chairman Fisette recognized several distinguished guests, including Delegate Vivian Watts (General Assembly), Chairman Marty Nohe (Northern Virginia Transportation Authority), Chuck Bean and Stuart Freudberg (Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments), and Kanti Srikanth (Transportation Planning Board).

Chairman Fisette thanked Commissioners for attending the just concluded Open House and Public Hearing on the Transform 66 Multimodal Project. He announced NVTC is holding a second Open House and Public Hearing at the Wiehle-Reston Metro Station on May 18th starting at 4:30 P.M.

Chairman Fisette also reported that the opening of the Crystal City Potomac Yard Transitway was held on April 17th. This is a joint project between Arlington County and the City of Alexandria and is the first regional VRT system in the metropolitan area.

Recognition of New and Departing Commissioners

Chairman Fisette announced this is Senator Black’s last meeting as a Commissioner of NVTC. Chairman Fisette recognized Senator Black for his service to NVTC for the past three years and presented him with a letter of recognition and a VRE model train. Ms. Coyner observed that the VRE model train is fitting as we look to extend VRE service to the Gainesville-Haymarket area. Senator Black noted that he serves on the Gainesville-Haymarket Extension Policy Advisory Committee and has been appointed to NVTA.

Chairman Fisette welcomed Senator Adam Ebbin, who is replacing Senator Black. Chairman Fisette administered the oath of office to Senator Ebbin and Commissioners welcomed him to NVTC.

Minutes of the April 7, 2016 NVTC Meeting

Mr. Smedberg moved, with a second by Mr. Corcoran, to approve the minutes. The vote in favor was cast by Commissioners Corcoran, Cristol, Dorsey, Fisette, Foust, LeMunyon, Letourneau, Lovain, Smedberg, Snyder and Wexton. Commissioners Bulova, Cook, Ebbin, Hudgins, LaRock, McKay, Minchew and Oliver abstained.

Executive Director Report

Ms. Coyner announced that David Snyder is expected to be appointed President of the Virginia Transit Administration at its Annual Conference on May 24-25. NVTC staff is also participating in the conference and Commissioners are encouraged to attend.
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA)

On behalf of the Virginia Members of the WMATA Board, Mr. Corcoran introduced WMATA Board Chairman Jack Evans. Mr. Corcoran noted that Chairman Evans was instrumental in getting Paul Wiedefeld hired as General Manager/CEO and both are working well as a team to provide strong leadership at WMATA. It is expected that the General Manager will make a major announcement tomorrow on a maintenance plan to address safety concerns.

Mr. Evans thanked the Commission for giving him an opportunity to talk about the state of WMATA. It is important to understand where WMATA is today and the challenges it faces going forward. He stated WMATA belongs to all of us and if it fails or succeeds, it affects all of us. We have to all join together as a region to make it work.

Mr. Evans stated that on the operations side the system has badly deteriorated. Over the last 15 years, maintenance was done at the convenience of the riders. There are 168 hours in a week but currently there are only 19 hours that WMATA can actually work on track maintenance and repair. Bottom line: WMATA needs more track time for maintenance. The system needs to be rebuilt from the ground up and it is no longer feasible to fix the system in a piecemeal fashion.

Mr. Evans stated that WMATA was designed with two fundamental flaws. The first flaw—which cannot be fixed—is that it was designed as a two-track system, which doesn’t allow maintenance during service hours because there is no third track. Every other major transit system has three or more tracks. The second flaw is lack of a dedicated funding source.

Mr. Evans stated on the financial side, it is even worse. WMATA has a $2.5 billion unfunded pension liability. Looking ahead to next year’s budget, it is $150 million out of balance. This year’s budget was balanced by using $100 million of capital funds. He observed that raising fares is a tough thing to do when parts of the system are shut down for repairs. Mr. Evans cautioned that he may need to come back to the jurisdictions to ask for more funding. The federal government provides funding for WMATA capital costs, but pays nothing for operating. The three jurisdictions (MD, VA, DC) each pay approximately $300 million annually in operating subsidies. He stated that he is reaching out to members of Congress to seek federal operating assistance of $300 million annually, which would go a long way to help balance the budget. He asked for NVTC’s support and assistance on this issue.

On the operating side, Mr. Evans stated that WMATA needs a dedicated regional funding source. All other major transit systems in the United States have a dedicated funding source. In 2005, then WMATA General Manager Dick White testified before Congress that if the operating and maintenance problems at WMATA were not addressed, it would hit a wall in 10 years. WMATA has now hit this wall.

Mr. Evans stated that in 2005, the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG), the Federal City Council and the Greater Washington Board of Trade released a report on Metro funding outlining potential sources of dedicated funding. Mr.
Evans noted that 11 years have passed and nothing has been done, but the time has come for action. He understands the complexities of the challenges facing WMATA jurisdictions, but it is no longer an option to do nothing. WMATA needs a dedicated funding source that will raise $1 billion annually. On the capital side, WMATA needs $18 billion over the next ten years (railcars $2.8 billion; a second Rosslyn tunnel $3-5 billion; rehabilitation $1 billion annually/$10 billion over ten years).

Delegate LeMunyon asked about the upcoming WMATA labor negotiations and asked if this is an opportunity to fix some of the problems. Mr. Evans responded that generally what happens is that WMATA asks for a zero increase and the union asks for a significant increase. History shows it usually goes to binding arbitration and at best is split down the middle. With the process of binding arbitration, it makes it almost impossible to get the kind of relief Metro needs. Mr. Dorsey stated a detailed briefing on the collective bargaining issue is scheduled for later in the agenda.

Mr. McKay noted regarding federal PRIIA funding, it is important to not send the wrong message to Congress. The jurisdictions need to support it and uphold their commitment to fund the required match. In response to a question from Senator Ebbin, Mr. Evans stated the PRIIA funding expires in two years and needs to be renewed.

Delegate LaRock asked about Chairman Evans’ thoughts about personnel at WMATA. Mr. Evans stated 13,000 people work for WMATA of which approximately 75 percent are a part of a union. He is a firm believer that employees respond to leadership from the top.

As Chairman of the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA), Mr. Nohe stated NVTA cannot help with operating assistance but there is capital funding available. He stated to be clear, NVTA doesn’t have the amount WMATA needs and there are other competing needs from other important projects, but WMATA should convey its long-term capital funding needs as NVTA is in the process of updating its TransAction plan. He stated that it is important to understand WMATA’s prioritization of needs and it would also be helpful to have large projects broken down into smaller funding pieces.

In response to a question from Delegate Minchew regarding the Rosslyn Tunnel, Mr. Evans stated that a second tunnel is the only viable option and there are no bridge options. Chairman Fisette stated that it is his understanding that there was a study that looked at the feasibility of running trains under the Key Bridge and it was deemed architecturally feasible to suspend tracks under the bridge. Mr. Corcoran stated that if Virginia wants trains to go from Virginia to the District, the only way is by tunnel. However, if the Rosslyn Station was expanded and a separate colored line added to link the Blue Line to the Silver/Orange Line, service could run north-south within Virginia.

Mr. Evans stated that the 2005 report on Metro funding is being updated as well as draft legislation to begin the discussions. The target is to have something drafted by the end of the summer to be able to be ready for the legislative sessions in 2017. He also had a discussion with US Transportation Secretary Foxx and asked him for his support on reinstating the automatic drawdowns. Currently, WMATA has to borrow money at a high rate to cover the drawdowns. Secretary Foxx agreed that if a bill is introduced on the
Metro Safety Commission before end of July, he will help WMATA get off draw down restrictions. Mr. Evans asked for Virginia’s help to resolve these issues.

Chairman Fisette asked Chuck Bean, Executive Director of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, to provide his point of view of these various dedicated funding options. Mr. Bean agreed the 2005 study is the benchmark study, which studied nine different revenue options. Technical analysis of these nine options is attainable. It’s the political process which will be the challenge. The revenue option that produces the most revenue is a sales tax. Property tax or value added tax would also have some benefit. Mr. Bean stated he has proposed MWCOG do an in-depth study of three of the revenue options over the summer. On June 13th MWCOG and the Greater Washington Board of Trade are holding a symposium to learn from the other large transit systems and discuss the future of WMATA. Dedicated revenue streams and governance issues will be discussed.

Chairman Fisette thanked Mr. Evans for coming and for providing a candid look at the challenges WMATA is facing. Mr. Evans reviewed the three things he needs help from Virginia to work together to seek: 1) $300 million in federal operating assistance; 2) reinstatement of automatic drawdown; and 3) a dedicated funding source.

Mr. Dorsey reminded the Commission that at the last meeting Delegate LeMunyon requested a briefing on the collective bargaining agreement. Mr. Dorsey stated WMATA will begin labor negotiations with Local Amalgamated 689 on May 19th. The current contract expires the end of June 2016. If an agreement can’t be reached, it goes into binding arbitration. Mr. Dorsey stated that for probably the first time in WMATA’s history, the labor negotiations are going to take place in the context of WMATA’s fiscal reality, which will guide WMATA’s proposal and response. Mr. Cook asked if WMATA will try to change the grievance process to make it easier to terminate bad employees. He also asked if WMATA has done a salary comparison of other transit systems. Mr. Evans replied that salaries are not out of line with other transit systems. Mr. Corcoran agreed but noted benefits are higher than other systems.

In response to a question from Mr. Letourneau, Mr. Evans stated the federal government can’t just come in and take over the Metro system. WMATA is made up by a Compact between the three jurisdictions (Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia). There is no bankruptcy or receivership option if it fails. It can’t cease to exist, but it could cease to operate if it becomes unsafe.

Mr. Letourneau stated that when WMATA enters into labor negotiations, the focus shouldn’t be on salary comparisons of other transit systems but on the fundamental difference between WMATA and the other transit systems is that they have a dedicated funding source and WMATA does not. Mr. Dorsey cautioned that he doesn’t want anyone to think that if WMATA has successful labor negotiations, that WMATA will be fixed.

In regards to the labor negotiations, Delegate Minchew asked if amending the Compact could be coupled with a dedicated funding source. Mr. Evans stated that organized labor from across the country would work to make sure that it never passed.
Ms. Coyner reported that General Manager Wiedefeld announced that WMATA is not proceeding with the large-scale NEPP fare technology. NVTC is continuing to investigate alternative near-term farebox solutions with the Northern Virginia transit providers. While these solutions advance, the transit providers will maintain their SmarTrip fare collection capabilities. In response to a question from Mr. McKay, Mrs. Hudgins explained that the new NEPP technology is not currently being used by other transit systems. WMATA needs to have a well thought-out plan and do it well. The cost of the NEPP system was going to be significant. Mr. Corcoran stated that there will be upgrades to the current system. Chairman Fisette asked about the implications to the local transit systems. Ms. Coyner stated staff is working with the local transit providers on upgrades to their existing systems. She suggested staff provide a detailed update at the next meeting.

Legislative and Policy Committee Report

Mr. McKay gave an update on legislative and policy issues since the General Assembly Veto Session in April. He stated the next Legislative and Policy Committee meeting is tentatively scheduled for 5:45 P.M. on June 2, 2016. Mr. McKay reported that the Transit Service Delivery Advisory Committee (TSDAC) reconvene and met in Richmond earlier today and the Transit Capital Project Revenue Advisory Board (TCP-RAB) will begin meeting in June. Mr. McKay stated that he has been appointed by the Virginia Association of Counties and Tom Rust has been appointed by the Virginia Transit Association to serve on this Board.

Transform 66 Multimodal Project

Chairman Fisette observed that Ms. Coyner already gave a detailed presentation during the Public Hearing prior to the Commission meeting and suggested using this time to answer Commissioner’s questions.

Delegate LeMunyon thanked the Commission for scheduling a second public hearing at Wiehle-Reston on May 18th. Chairman Fisette stated that after that hearing, staff will present a recommendation at the June 2nd meeting for Commission action. Ms. Coyner stated it will be a prioritized list, which will be vetted by the Multimodal Working Group. The list will be developed based on scoring and how projects fit into the budget. Ms. Coyner stated that the Commonwealth Transportation Board has allocated $5 million to fund projects to be implemented by Toll Day One. Thirteen of the projects can be implemented by Toll Day One with four more projects implemented by the end of 2017. Mrs. Bulova stated that should additional funding become available, NVTC should be prepared to have a list of additional projects.

Virginia Railway Express

VRE CEO Report, Mr. Allen reported on safety and security activities for the month of March, including Passenger Emergency Preparedness Training by the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) for VRE crews. Topics covered included unattended
packages, behavior recognition techniques, handling emergency situations, and managing violence on trains. He reported overall on-time performance for the month of March was 93 percent and Average Daily Ridership for March was 18,160. VRE held its first Meet the Management event last week at Union Station and events will continue through May at various stations. He also reported that the VRE Operations Board is expected to recommend Commission approval of an extension to the CSXT Operating and Access Agreement at NVTC’s and PRTC’s June meetings.

Mr. Allen stated that he and Joe Swartz attended the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) meeting on April 19th in Lynchburg to meet with the CTB Rail Committee. The General Assembly approved budget language for a VRE impact analysis where the Commonwealth Transportation Board will look at VRE’s long-range Strategic Plan and Financial Plan. VRE service parallels I-95, I-395 and I-66, which are considered Corridors of Statewide Significance. VRE will give a presentation to the full Commonwealth Transportation Board in June.

Gainesville-Haymarket Extension Study Presentation. Mr. Allen gave a presentation on the Gainesville-Haymarket Extension Study, which is a two-year planning and design study for a potential 11-mile extension of the Manassas Line along the Norfolk Southern B-Line. The study is being funded with NVTA funds.

Mr. Nohe noted that this will be a very expensive project and Prince William County would carry the lion share of net operating revenue. He expressed caution that VRE not create a public expectation of the project if VRE can’t get the capital funding to do this project. Mr. Allen stated that the reason VRE emphasizes that this projects supports a Corridor of Statewide Significance because extending service to Gainesville-Haymarket will add capacity to the I-66 corridor. That’s why VRE is beginning discussions with the CTB in June and why the project needs to be funded.

Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) Report

Mr. Horsley reported that the kick-off meeting of the I-95/I-395 Transit and Transportation Demand Management (TDM) study was held on April 13th at NVTC with the Key Stakeholders Group. It is anticipated that the group will meet every three weeks during the project. A draft plan is expected by November and a final plan by December with public outreach anticipated to start this summer. He stated DRPT should be able to provide a progress report to NVTC at its July meeting.

In response to a question from Chairman Fisette, Mr. Horsley stated that information on the multimodal contribution for the I-395 project will be provided by September prior to the Transportation Planning Board vote in November.

NVTC Financial Items

The Financial Report for March 2016 was provided to Commissioners and there were no questions. Ms. Coyner reported that the Trustees of NVTC’s Target Benefit Pension Plan
met and signed restated pension plan documents. The restatement is an Internal Revenue Service mandate.

Adjournment

Without objection, Chairman Fisette adjourned the meeting at 9:40 P.M.

Approved this 2nd day of June 2016.

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Jay Fisette
Chairman

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Paul Smedberg
Secretary-Treasurer