



NORTHERN VIRGINIA TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Executive Director Newsletter



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

November 2022



A Message from Kate Mattice

The COVID-19 pandemic pushed us apart in many ways and two-and-a-half years later we are still working on coming back together. The widespread availability of vaccines allowed us to resume seeing each other in person more safely, but lingering health fears and major shifts in how we work made the process slower than we might have initially imagined.

NVTC's position as a regional forum has long meant that we have been a place for officials and jurisdictional staff from across Northern Virginia to gather to discuss matters of mutual importance and to set policy for the future. While we did our best to keep those conversations going as the world moved through the virtual and hybrid eras, I've been excited to reconnect with folks in the real world in recent weeks and months. As you will see in this month's newsletter, in-person events are back in a big way. From The American Public Transportation Association's (APTA) annual conference in Seattle to the Virginia Governor's Transportation Conference in Virginia Beach and many stops in between, I've been traveling with Commissioners and staff seeking valuable face-to-face time with transportation leaders at the federal, state and local levels.

We also held our first public meeting for the next phase of the Envision Route 7 Bus Rapid Transit system, inviting citizens to learn more about the planned project.

NVTC staff members have been engaging as well. Director of Programs and Policy Allan Fye and Program Analyst Ronnetta Zack-Williams presented at and attended a zero-emission bus conference in California, Senior Program Manager Xavier Harmony and Program Analyst Sophie Spiliotopoulos presented to the Transportation Planning Board and Marketing and Engagement Manager Monique Blyther attended a Women in Transportation annual event at VDOT Northern Virginia headquarters.

Building and maintaining relationships has helped Northern Virginia create one of the most robust transit networks in the country and keeping those relationships fresh will help keep it growing and ensure its place as an economic engine for the region.

Executive Director

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December 1
Commission Meeting

December 5
NVTC – PRTC
Legislative Forum

December 6-7
Commonwealth
Transportation Board

December 16
VRE Operations Board

January 5
Commission Meeting

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WMATA Committee hears staff research on peer transit agency operating funding

The NVTC WMATA Committee met [October 20](#) to receive updates on NVTC staff's research into Metro peer transit agency operating funding and advance NVTC's draft 2022 Report on the Performance and Condition of WMATA. WMATA Senior Program Manager Andrew D'huyvetter and Program Analyst Ronnetta Zack-Williams provided the committee with an overview of staff's research on how transit agencies similar to Metro fund their operating budgets.

Staff found:

- All large peer transit agencies, except Metro, have dedicated operating revenues for transit operations
- The most common form of dedicated operating revenue is a sales tax, which often funds both capital and operating budgets
- Larger transit agencies tend to have more than one source of dedicated operating revenue
- No other transit agency has Metro's unique governance, consisting of three parties in an interstate compact, and funding structure

The staff [presentation](#) provides additional background information on these funding sources. NVTC staff will present the findings to the proposed WMATA Operating Funding and Reform Working Group, which would start a Virginia-focused conversation on the longer-term, structural operating budget issues at Metro and develop options for a new financial operating model.

The committee also reviewed the [first draft](#) of the introduction, strategies and dedicated capital funding chapters of the draft 2022

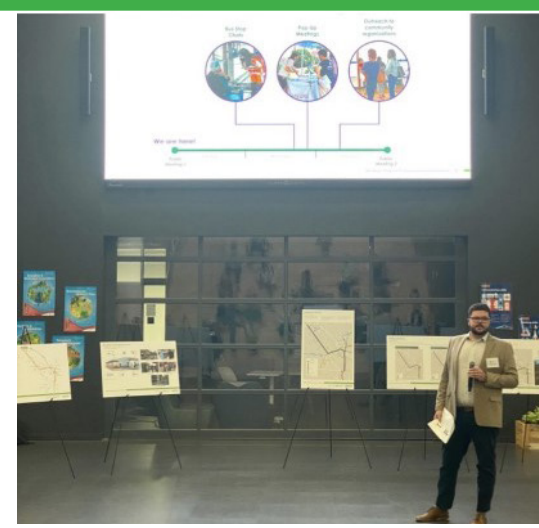
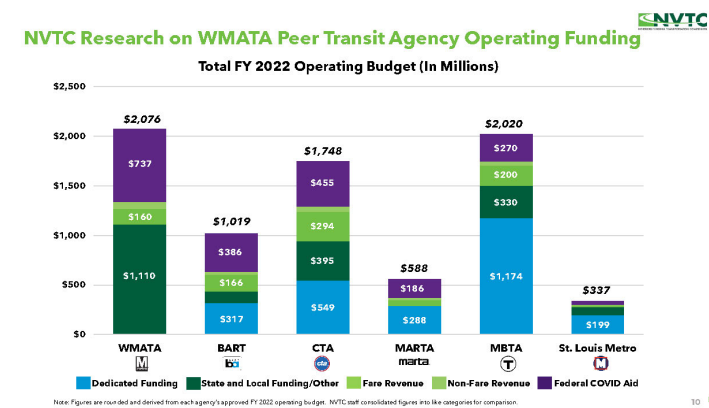
Report on the Performance and Condition of WMATA. The introduction provides context on Metro's structural operating challenges, which were accelerated by the pandemic, and the agency's short and long-term operating budget gaps. The proposed strategies for Metro are to:

- Rebuild customer confidence
- Enforce fare payment uniformly across the system
- Implement a simple and convenient Metrorail fare structure
- Continue to increase non-fare revenues from real estate and advertising
- Seek to manage labor costs

This year's report includes strategies for NVTC to:

- Explore the implications of local transit agencies assuming the operation of Metrobus services in Northern Virginia
- Examine and develop options for a new financial operating model for Metro

The Commission will receive an update on the report at their November meeting and is scheduled to adopt the report at the December meeting.



NVTC hosts BRT community chat in Falls Church

NVTC's Transit Resource Center team, led by Senior Program Manager Xavier Harmony, and our contracting partners hosted a community chat on the future [Envision Route 7](#) Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system at Meridian High School in Falls Church October 11. It was an opportunity to highlight the mobility study work being done in the Falls Church segment of the corridor and to hear feedback and answer questions from residents.

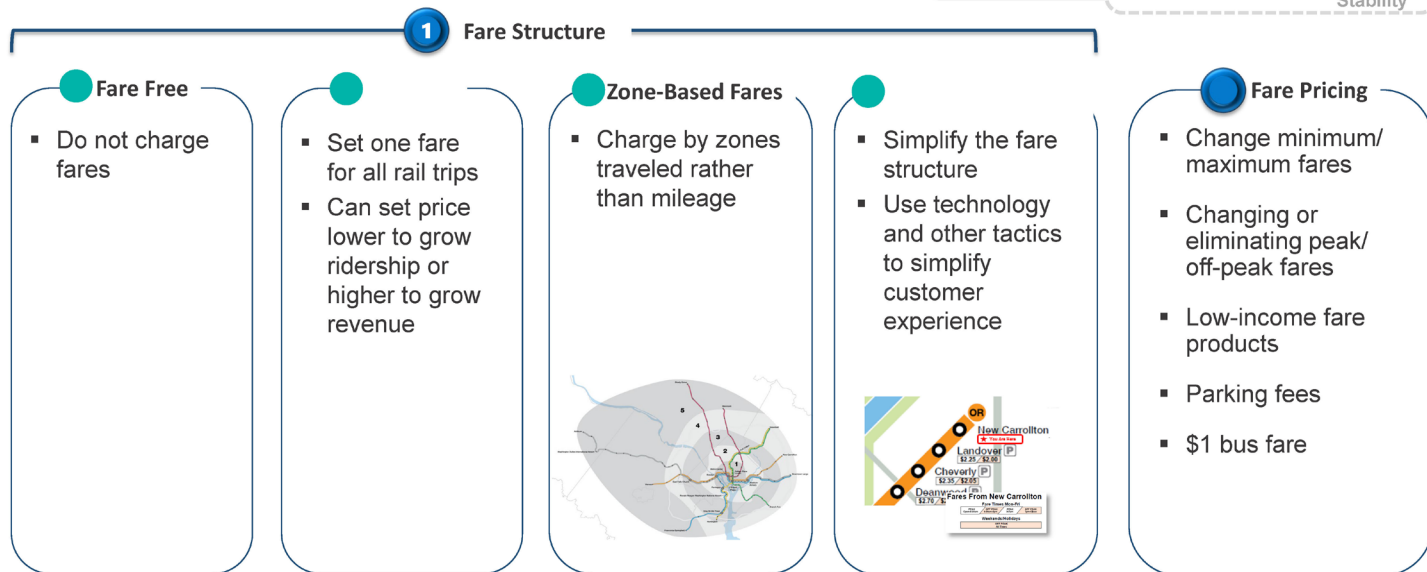
Envision Route 7 is a BRT system designed to connect the Mark Center in Alexandria to Tysons via Bailey's Crossroads, Seven Corners and Falls Church along the Route 7 corridor. Route 7 is the second busiest corridor in Northern Virginia, and ridership remained strong during the COVID-19 pandemic due to the essential workers who rely on this service. BRT would upgrade transit quality through the 14-mile corridor, connect major job centers, connect one Metrorail station and one BRT service, serve more than 7,500 transit dependent riders weekly and increase pedestrian access to transit.

The Transit Resource Center team will oversee another round of public outreach for Envision Route 7 in the spring of 2023.



Fare Optimization Concepts

Evaluate through these lenses:



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WASHINGTON METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSIT AUTHORITY



Evaluating options to close the FY 2024 budget gap

The Metro Board Finance and Capital Committee, chaired by Commissioner Matt Letourneau, received an update on the FY 2024 [Operating Budget](#) at its [meeting](#) October 27. The potential operating budget gap has been reduced to \$184.7 million and Metro staff have presented options to further reduce it to \$146 million. Metro staff provided the Board with additional information about each option.

- Service Reductions:** If the Board were to attempt to solve the \$146 million operating budget gap with service reductions, it would require a 20% reduction in total revenue hours to Metrobus and a 25% reduction in total revenue hours to Metrorail. These kinds of major service reductions would risk a cycle low ridership and also conflict with Federal COVID relief funding requirements to avoid laying off personnel.

- Fare Increases:** Metro staff informed the Board that a 5% fare increase would result in an additional \$9 million and a 25% increase would result in an additional \$44 million.
- Preventive Maintenance Transfer:** While maintaining the same amount of preventive maintenance work, Metro could increase the transfer of preventive maintenance expenses from the operating budget to the capital budget, which would result in savings to the operating budget. Staff provided additional information how Metro's capital funding situation has changed with increased federal formula capital funds from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) and the level at which several peer agencies utilize preventive maintenance transfers. Increasing the transfer of preventive maintenance funds could solve some or all of the FY 2024 operating budget gap.

Mr. Letourneau, noting that Metro hasn't increased fares in five years, said, "I do think it will be important for WMATA to show that we are

trying to reduce the gap ourselves, so to me, a fare increase, even a modest one, should be part of the package that moves forward for greater discussion." Over the next month, the Metro Board will provide staff with guidance on what options or combination of options to formally propose to close the remaining operating budget gap.

Potential future service and fares concepts

The Finance and Capital Committee also received an update on potential future service and fare [concepts](#) that could change the way Metro provides service and collects fares. The agency says optimizing fares and the way it provides service would better meet customer needs and expectations. Staff provided revenue, subsidy and ridership estimates as well as other policy considerations for a variety of fare and service concepts. It is important to note that these fare and service concepts are intended to facilitate policy guidance from the Board and region and are not formal proposals.

Fare Concepts:

- Adopt a fare-free, flat fare or zone-based fare structure
- Simplify the existing distance-based rail fare structure and the customer interface
- Additional fare optimization concepts including changes to fare levels, changing or eliminating time of day price differences, offering discounts for low-income customers, reducing parking fees to increase utilization and ridership, reducing bus fares and considering options to MetroAccess fares to increase predictability

Service Concepts:

- Increase service on the Green and Yellow Lines with Yellow Line short turns
- Improve Red Line transfers with additional

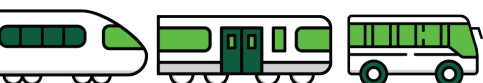
service between Grosvenor-Strathmore and Silver Spring

- Optimize Blue, Orange and Silver Line service, including improving Orange Line service and potential Silver Line express trains
- Improve maintenance efficiency and effectiveness to ensure system safety and potentially allow for later closings and earlier openings on weekends and exploring concepts for improved overnight and early morning bus service as part of the Better Bus Initiative
- Over the next month, the Metro Board will provide guidance to staff to determine which fare and service concepts will be included as concrete proposals for the upcoming FY 2024 budget and which concepts require additional evaluation and regional consideration for longer-term implementation. We expect Metro GM/CEO Randy Clarke to release a proposed budget in December. NVTC staff will discuss budget comments at an upcoming NVTC WMATA Committee meeting

7000-series railcars and Silver Line Phase 2

Metro GM/CEO Randy Clarke thanked the Washington Metropolitan Safety Commission for its [approval](#) October 25 to allow more 7000-series railcars to return to service. Clarke also thanked Sens. Mark Warner and Tim Kaine for their contributions to the process. Clarke said the return of part of the railcar fleet will allow Metro to open Phase 2 of the Silver Line by Thanksgiving. The agency [later announced](#) that it would open November 15.

The return of the 7000-series railcars is one of the key strategies outlined in the [draft version](#) of NVTC's 2022 Report on the Performance and Condition of WMATA, which will be finalized by the Commission in December.





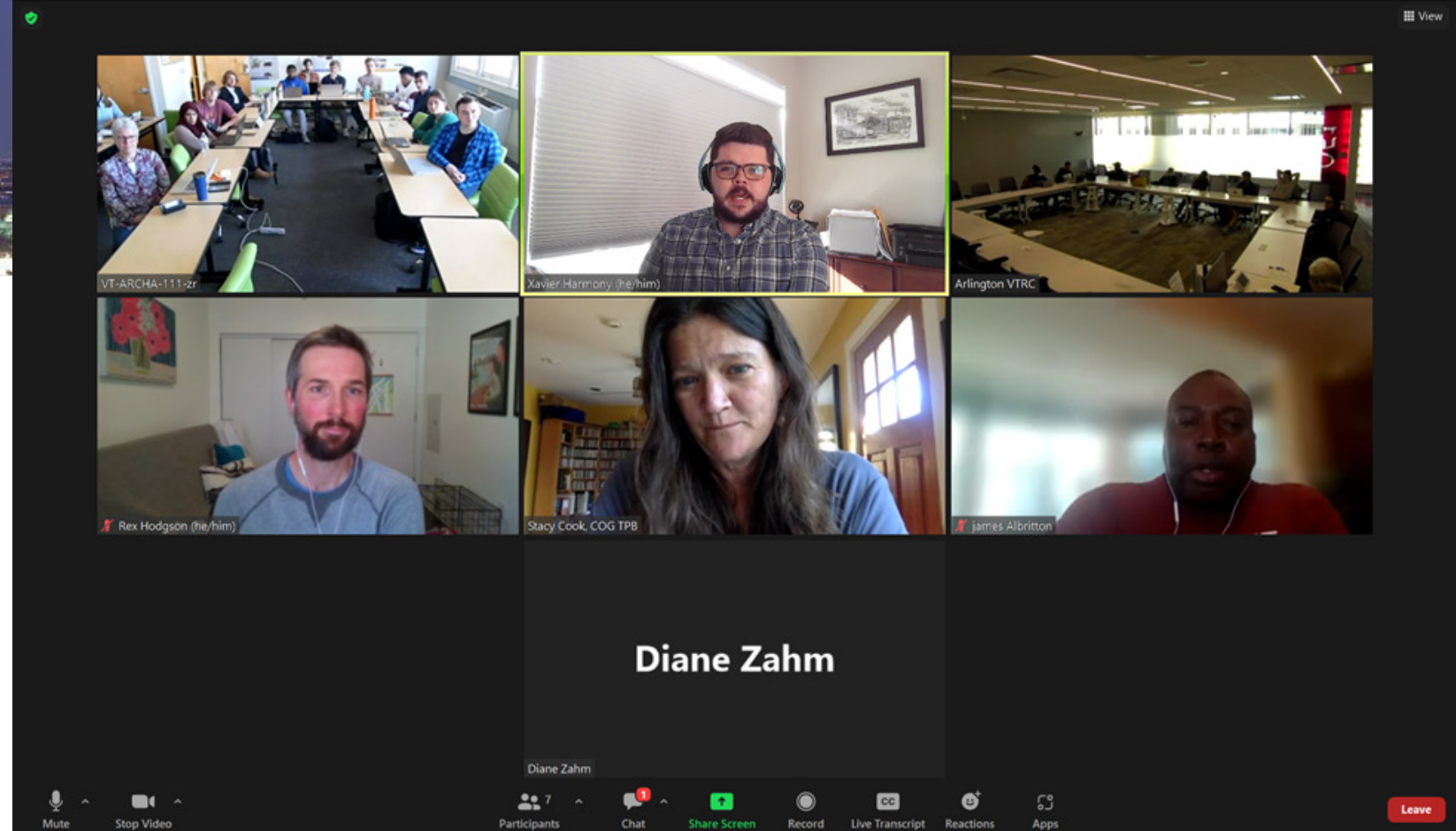
Commuter Choice annual report tallies 5 years of successes

The 2022 Commuter Choice [Annual Report](#) includes a first-ever look back at the achievements of the program since its inception in 2017. The program has supported 3.5 million trips in the I-66 and I-395/95 corridors, amounting to 82 million fewer vehicle miles traveled over the last five years.

Commuter Choice uses toll money from the I-66 and I-395/95 corridors to support alternatives to people driving alone. Since the program began five years ago, Commuter Choice has funded \$92.7 million in projects that also:

- Saved commuters 900,000 hours of travel time, commensurate to \$24 million in economic benefits to the region
- Saved commuters \$12 million in fuel costs and reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 69% relative to driving alone for comparable trips
- Avoided 100 automobile crashes

Commissioners approved the report at their October meeting and authorized sending it to the Commonwealth Transportation Board.



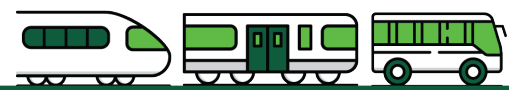
Educating future planners

Transit Resource Center Senior Program Manager Xavier Harmony spoke to a [Virginia Tech](#) Master of Urban and Regional Planning class called "Gateway to Planning" October 10. Xavier shared his experiences in transportation planning while talking about the work of NVTC and the Envision Route 7 BRT project.

NVTC transit data research presented at 'Bus Champions'

Director of Programs and Policy Allan Fye was a panelist on the latest MetroNow [Bus Champions](#) Webinar Series which focused on how transit organizations use data to improve bus service, planning and the customer experience. Allan highlighted our [Transit Resource Center's](#) ongoing work to collect and analyze a broad and growing variety of data sources, how we use data to support our ongoing Transit in a Post-COVID World research as well as how we will leverage data in our upcoming Northern Virginia Regional Bus Analysis Study. In the coming months, we plan to launch a web-based data portal that will allow users to explore many fascinating data elements of transit in Northern Virginia.





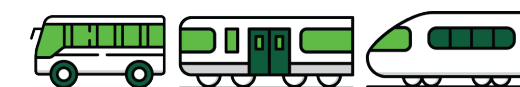
Executive Director Kate Mattice attended the [APTA TRANSform](#) conference in Seattle, along with Grants Manager Brittany Sumpter. It was an opportunity to connect with transit professionals from across the country and from our region. Photos: (left) Kate, Chair Canek Aguirre; (top) PRTC Executive Director

Bob Schneider, former NVTC staff member Patricia Happ, Kate, Chair Canek Aguirre; (right) Kate, former NVTC staff member Jillian Linnell; (bottom) Chair Canek Aguirre, FTA Administrator Nuria Fernandez, FTA Associate Administrator Jamie Pfister.



On October 3, Executive Director Kate Mattice discussed NVTC's role as an authority at the Virginia Municipal League in Richmond where Kate was joined by Commissioner David Meyer and Chair Canek Aguirre. (top); On October 7, WMATA Senior Program Manager Andrew D'huyvetter and Kate met with Sen. George Barker in Clifton. (left); Sen. Mark Warner held

an event at Long Bridge Park on September 30 to talk about [\\$20 million](#) in funding for a pedestrian and bicycle crossing. The event also drew Washington, DC Mayor Muriel Bowser and many others, including Chair Canek Aguirre, Commissioners Libby Garvey and Sarah Bagley and Kate. (bottom, right)



DRPT

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF RAIL AND PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION



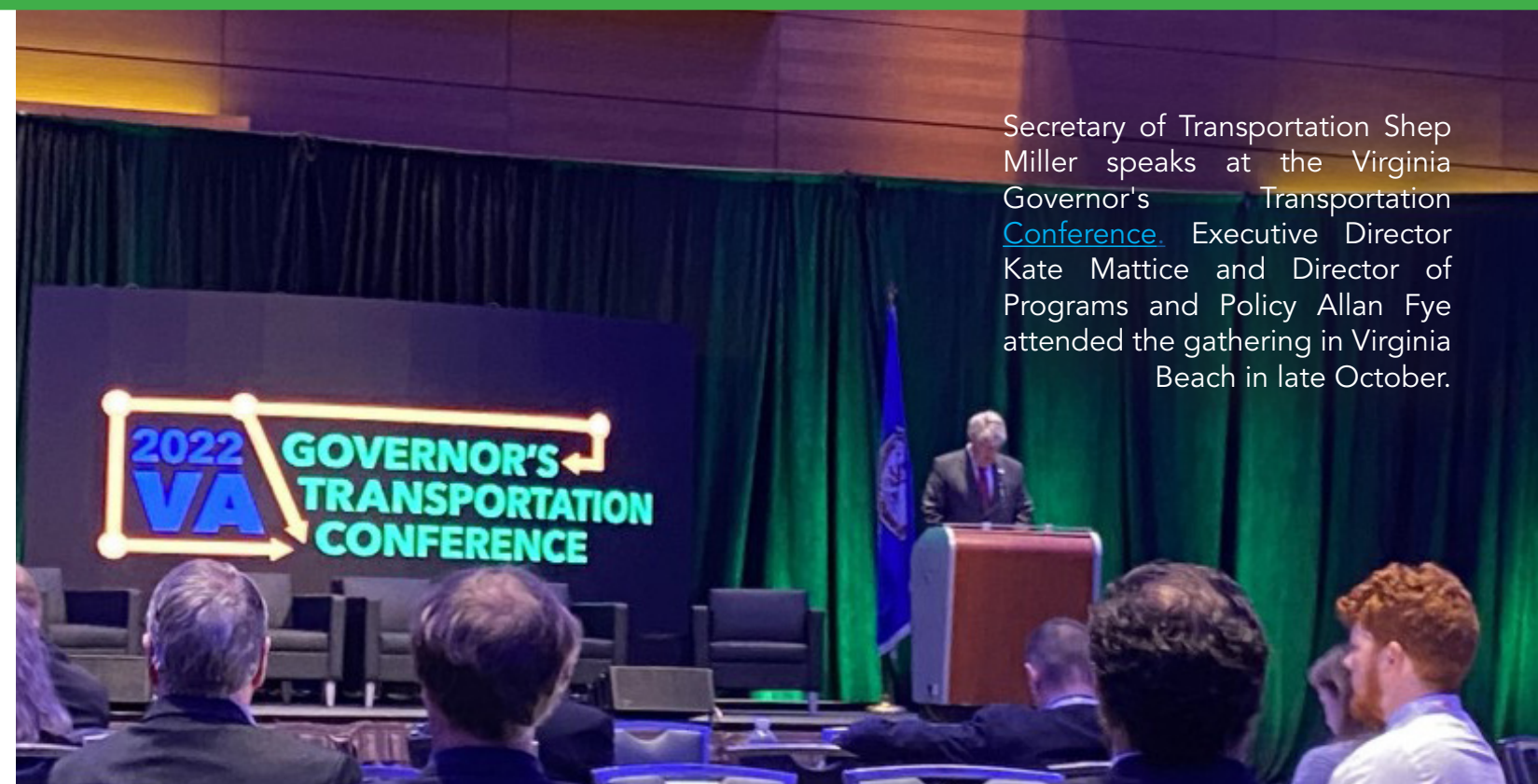
DRPT hires new Chief of Public Transportation

The Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) [announced](#) October 18 that Zach Trogon has joined the agency as its next Chief of Public Transportation to provide leadership to Virginia's public transportation programs. Trogon, who comes to DRPT from the Williamsburg Area Transit Authority, begins his new position next week.

Trogon will lead the evaluation, assistance and execution of a \$4.7 billion portfolio of public transportation, commuter assistance and congestion management programs throughout the Commonwealth. He replaces Jen DeBruhl, who was named the agency's director in June 2022 after serving in an acting capacity since March. We look forward to working with Zach as he settles into his new role.

Gathering highlights tech fluency to adapt, innovate, evolve

Marketing and Engagement Manager Monique Blyther attended the Women in Transportation (WTS-DC) annual event at the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) NoVa District office on October 18. The event featured a panel discussion with VDOT leaders on the organization's efforts to modernize its methods, inspire its workforce and plan for the future.



Secretary of Transportation Shep Miller speaks at the Virginia Governor's Transportation Conference. Executive Director Kate Mattice and Director of Programs and Policy Allan Fye attended the gathering in Virginia Beach in late October.



Rep. Don Beyer

NVTC AND PRTC PRESENT:

ANNUAL LEGISLATIVE FORUM

Join transit leaders and special guests for an in-person overview of federal and state issues affecting transit in Northern Virginia.

Welcome to the district:
The Honorable Don Beyer

Click to **RSVP** Today

8:30 a.m. - 11 a.m.
Monday, December 5, 2022

Embassy Suites by Hilton
8100 Loisdale Rd. Springfield, VA



Canek Aguirre



Victor Angry



Randy Clarke



Rich Dalton



Bob Schneider



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