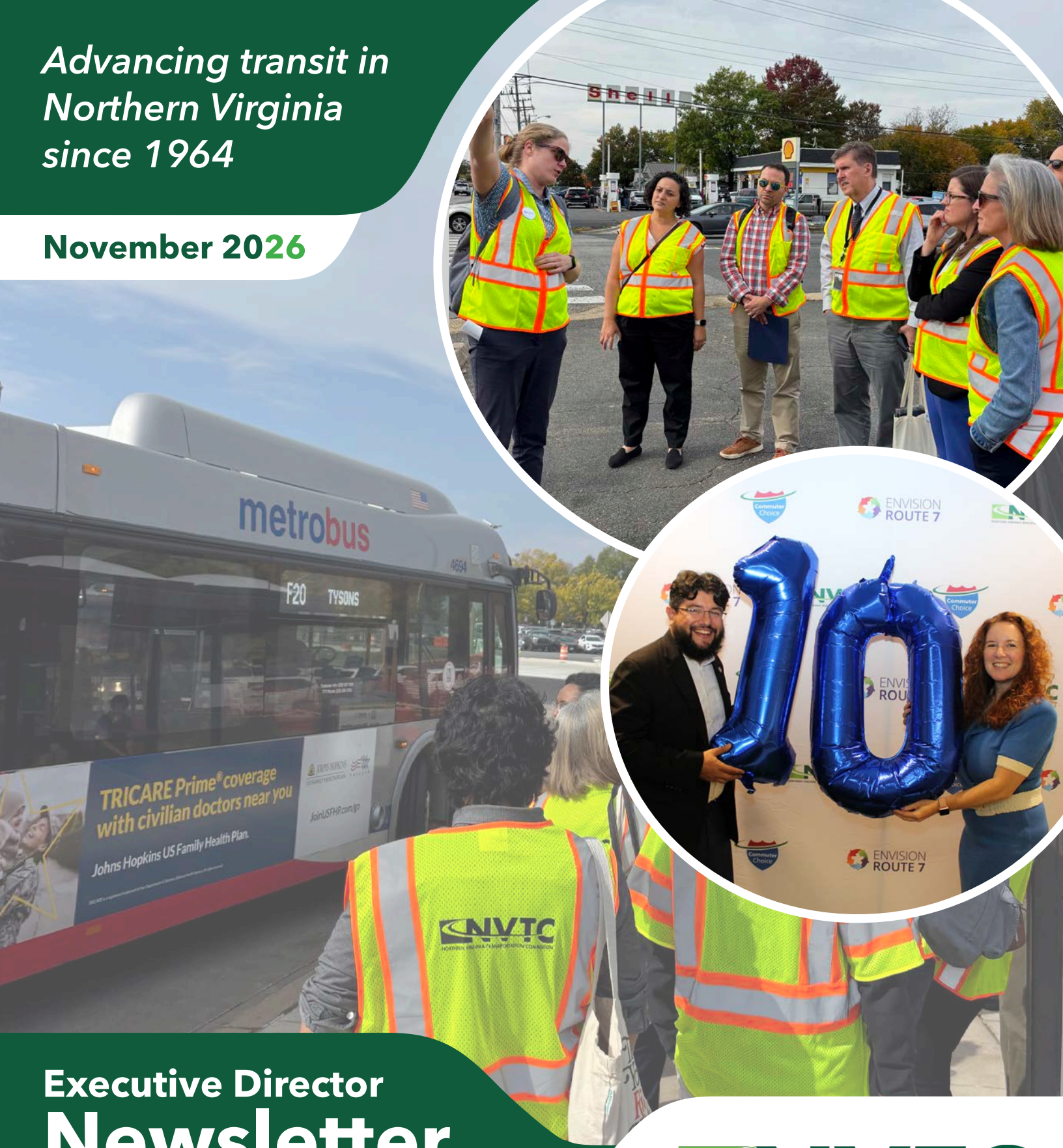
Advancing transit in Northern Virginia since 1964

November 2026



Executive Director Newsletter

NORTHERN VIRGINIA TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

NoVaTransit.org | NoVaRides.org | @NoVaTransit

A Message From

Kate Mattice



So much of our work at NVTC is about connections. Whether it's the physical connections like tracks, train stations or bus stops, or the personal connections, both matter when it comes to sustaining and expanding Northern Virginia's public transit network. We have had countless examples of fostering these connections this fall. We've worked across jurisdictional and organizational lines to show the work we're doing, see the work others are doing and to find more opportunities where we can work together.

The public transit network exists in the real world, not just in transit service plans or on route maps. That's why it's valuable to ride the region's buses and trains regularly, to experience them as all riders do, and understand the ways we can make the rides even better. That was one aim behind a pair of tours we recently hosted along the Route 7 corridor. Commissioners and staff from many of our local government partners joined us to ride the Metro Bus F20, one of the busiest routes in Northern Virginia. They heard about ongoing work to upgrade the physical corridor, as well as coming transit improvements, like the Metro Bus F2X limited-stop route, debuting this winter.

Many of NVTC's staff members joined another tour a few days later—the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority's Long Bridge construction project. The new bridge across the Potomac River is a key part of Virginia Railway Express growing into a full-fledged regional rail system.

I also had the opportunity to participate in important regional discussions, from the DMV*Moves* efforts to upgrade regional bus service to the use of public transit to improve Arlington's climate to the work of Gov. Abigail Spanberger's administration on transportation issues.

Our staff continues their own outreach, including participating in multiple open house events where they shared about the work of NVTC's Envision Route 7 and Commuter Choice programs.

We'll have many more opportunities to collaborate before the end of the year. We are hosting another Envision Route 7 open house, in partnership with Fairfax County, later this month, and I hope to connect with many of you at our Legislative Forum in December.



Executive Director

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Save the Date

November 18
Virginia Passenger Rail Authority

November 20
VRE Operations Board

December 2
Northern Virginia Joint Transportation meeting

December 3
Commission meeting
and
Annual Public Hearing

December 8-9
Commonwealth Transportation Board

December 14
Legislative Forum

December 18
VRE Operations Board





Commission celebrates 10 years of Commuter Choice

NVTC Commissioners and staff celebrated the 10th anniversary of the Commuter Choice program at the October Commission meeting. We rolled out the green carpet, blew up balloons and ordered custom cookies to mark the milestone.

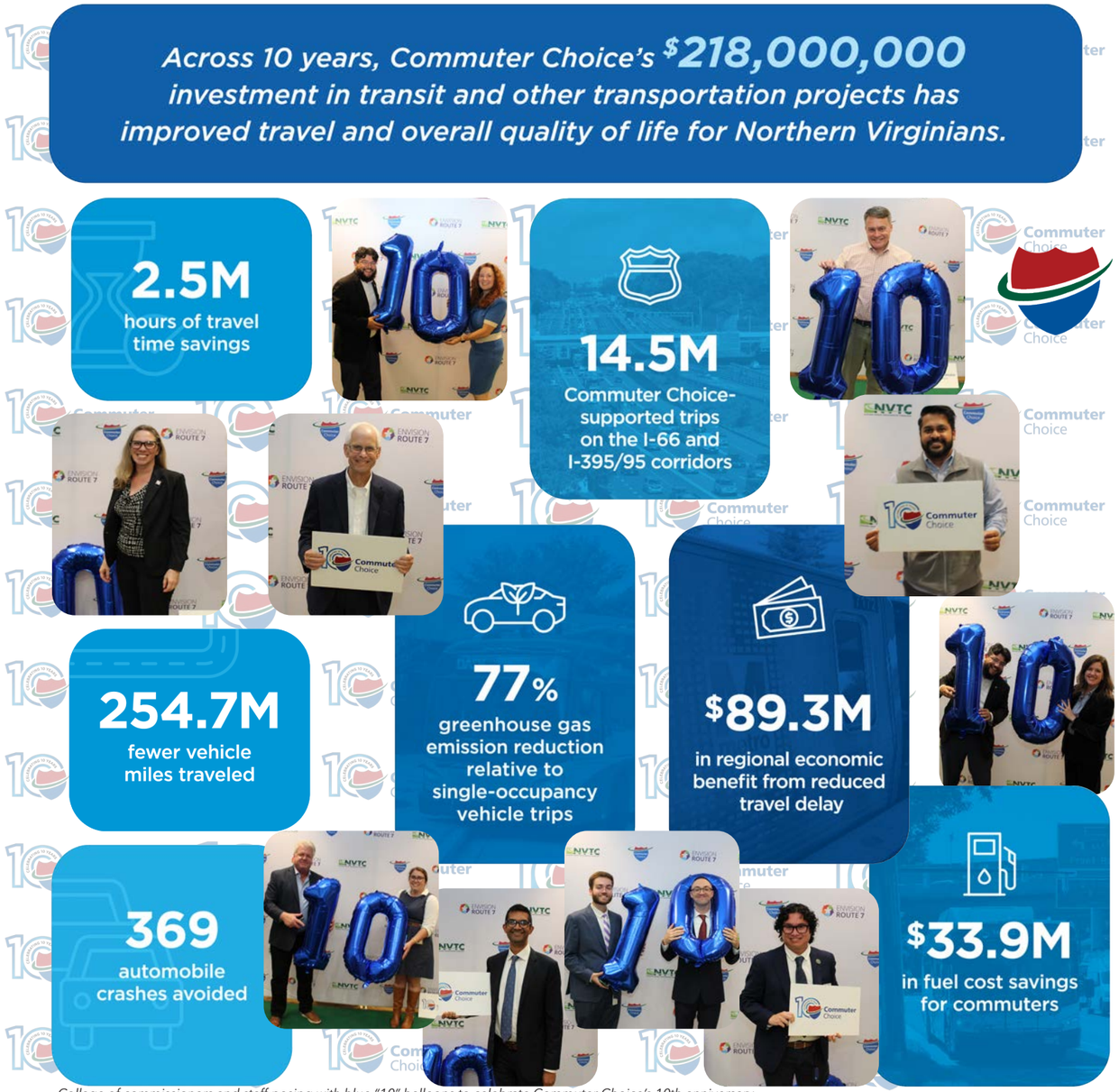
Commissioners then heard from Program Analyst Jason Adle, who presented a summary of this year's Commuter Choice Annual Report, outlining $218 million in investments in the last decade for projects that move more people through the I-66 and I-395/95 corridors. The Commission then formally accepted the report, which was also submitted to the Commonwealth Transportation Board and shared with key administrative and elected officials.

The Commission also approved policy changes and the opening of the next call for projects for I-395/95 Commuter Choice. Staff expect a competitive funding round and estimate there will be $45 to $50 million available for eligible projects.

NVTC's communications team followed up with a video promoting the report. Chair Sarah Bagley voiced the video, shot by Senior Public Affairs Manager Matt Friedman, with help from Director of Strategic Communications Sarah Godfrey, and edited by Communications and Design Specialist Colie Touzel. It's posted on our social media platforms. The communications team also used the video for a limited advertising campaign on Facebook and Instagram. Additionally, the team distributed a news release touting report highlights.



NVTC Commissioners at the October Commission meeting celebrating 10 years of Commuter Choice



Collage of commissioners and staff posing with blue "10" balloons to celebrate Commuter Choice's 10th anniversary.

Commissioners tour Envision Route 7 bus corridor

NVTC hosted a bus tour October 28, giving participants a firsthand look at the corridor being studied for Envision Route 7, a project to improve bus service along Route 7, between Tysons and Alexandria. Riding in-service F20 Metro Buses, the tour made several stops along the corridor between Southern Towers in Alexandria and the East Falls Church Metro Station while highlighting issues for everyday riders.

Commissioners, NVTC staff and staff from partner agencies discussed the challenges and opportunities in shaping faster, safer and more reliable transit connections for the diverse communities that travel Route 7 every day. Participants heard about improvements underway in the corridor and future Metrobus F2X limited-stop service. Funded by Commuter Choice, the F2X will increase bus frequency along one of Northern Virginia's busiest corridors, benefiting riders, businesses and even people who do not ride transit but will benefit from less traffic congestion.

Thanks to NVTC Chair Sarah Bagley and Commissioners Canek Aguirre, Walter Alcorn, Kate Garman Burns, Takis Karantonis and Dalia Palchik for joining us. We also thank our project partners, the City of Alexandria, Fairfax County, the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT), Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and Metro, for their participation.

And finally, special thanks to Events and Communications Specialist Tenley O'Hara for organizing the tour, and to Senior Program Manager Envision Route 7 BRT Vikram Sinha and Director of Programs and Policy Ann McGrane for presenting along the route.











Commissioners, staff and partners on the Envision Route 7 tour.

Bus Priority on the Agenda: Envision Route 7 hits the road

Envision Route 7 Senior Program Manager Vikram Sinha joined City of Falls Church staff October 5 to present the results of an updated analysis of business access and transit (BAT) lanes through Falls Church to the City Council. NVTC Executive Director Kate Mattice, NVTC Director of Programs and Policy Ann McGrane and staff from Metro also attended.

The discussion centered around the traffic tradeoffs that come with prioritizing bus movement, as well as the need to focus on person throughput when measuring the impact of a project.

A week earlier, Vikram spoke at the American Planning Association's National Capital Area Chapter Conference on a panel titled "Making Bus Priority the Priority Across the DC Region." The panel pondered the question of how to make buses faster, more reliable, and more competitive with driving, especially given that there are no major rail expansions on the horizon for the region.

As the region shifts its focus toward improving surface transit, panelists shared how their agencies are advancing dedicated bus lanes, transit signal priority, corridor redesign, regional coordination and other initiatives designed to deliver faster, more dependable service.

Ann McGrane and Vikram also participated in the Mason District Transportation Fair, hosted by Alternate Commissioner Andrés F. Jimenez, on October 10. They had the opportunity to discuss Envision Route 7 and the potential benefits it will bring to the Mason District as well as the region.

On October 29, Deputy Director of Programs and Policy Amanda sink joined Vikram for joined Alexandria's West End Transportation Improvements Projects Open House. Hosted by the City of Alexandria Department of Transportation & Environmental Services, the event gave NVTC the opportunity to discuss both Envision Route 7 and Commuter Choice and the benefits these NVTC programs bring to Alexandria. The open house focused on current and upcoming West End transportation projects, giving residents the opportunity to learn more about them.



Ann McGrane and Vikram Sinha



Vikram Sinha and Amanda Sink



WMATA Committee discusses Metro funding, legislative priorities

NVTC's WMATA Committee met on October 15 to discuss Metro's long-term funding outlook and the Commission's priorities for the 2027 General Assembly Session and beyond. Commissioners reviewed the outcomes of the 2026 General Assembly Session, including progress toward addressing Metro's operating and capital funding needs, and discussed the remaining challenges to securing a sustainable, long-term funding solution. The discussion also focused on NVTC's draft 2027 Legislative and Policy Agenda and broader legislative strategy for advancing Northern Virginia's transit priorities during the upcoming General Assembly Session.

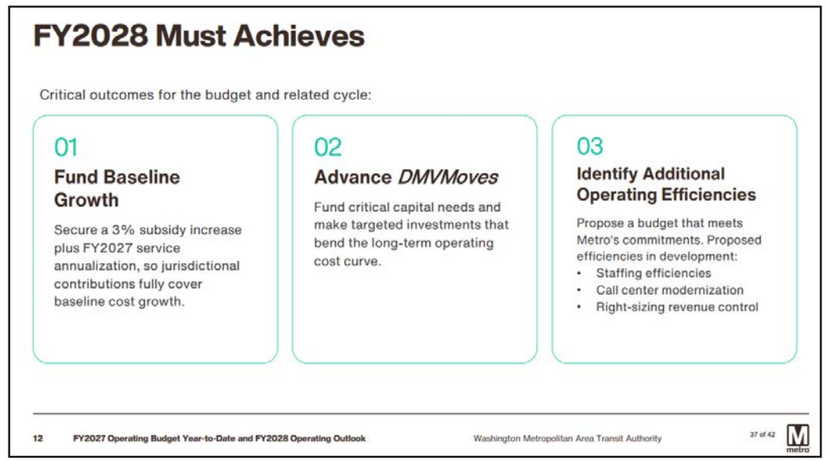
Commissioners also received an update on NVTC's draft 2026 "Report on the Performance and Condition of WMATA," including system performance, the status of a long-term funding solution and proposed recommendations from the Commission. The Commission will receive a briefing on the draft report at its November 5 meeting.



Metro Board reviews operating budget update and future outlook

The Metro Board Finance and Capital Committee received an update on the FY 2027 operating budget and a preliminary outlook for FY 2028 during its meeting October 22. Metro expects to bring forward an FY 2027 budget amendment in November to address several emerging cost pressures, including $14 million in higher than budgeted wage and pension costs and rising paratransit expenses.

Looking ahead to FY 2028, Metro projects a $79 million to $114 million operating budget gap, even with an assumed fare increase. The preliminary subsidy outlook assumes 3% growth over FY 2027, plus funding to annualize service improvements implemented this year, while proposed new service investments and the universal youth fare program are not included. Major cost pressures facing Metro include labor, fuel and propulsion costs and continued growth in paratransit expenses. Metro is continuing to identify operating efficiencies and will provide an additional budget update to the Board in November before GM/CEO Randy Clarke releases the proposed FY 2028 budget in December.



Rail Modernization

During its October 8 meeting, the Board received its quarterly update on the Rail Modernization Program. Metro's Red Line Modernization Project was accepted into the federal Capital Investment Grants (CIG) program this summer and is now advancing through project development, including environmental review and additional design work. Staff also outlined workforce planning efforts, including early engagement with employees and labor unions, benchmarking of other automated rail systems and development of a workforce transition plan. Metro emphasized that the effort is focused on preparing the workforce for a gradual transition to a new automated operating model rather than near-term workforce reductions.

TSDAC hears proposal for MERIT capital formula

Executive Director Kate Mattice participated in an October 19 meeting of the Transit Service Delivery Advisory Committee (TSDAC), where DRPT presented a proposed framework and pilot program for transitioning portions of MERIT Capital funding from competitive grants to formula-based allocations. The proposed framework would provide formula-based capital funding to urban transit agencies while retaining discretionary funding for rural agencies and construction projects, with the goal of improving funding predictability and flexibility. DRPT has engaged eight transit agencies, including DASH and OmniRide, in a pilot to test grant application and administration processes beginning in late 2026 or early 2027. DRPT will use feedback from participating agencies to refine the proposed framework and report back to TSDAC.

DRPT presents findings of NoVa bus consolidation study

DRPT held its NoVa Leadership Roundtable at the NVTC offices to gather feedback from elected officials and senior staff about transit agency consolidation October 21. DRPT staff provided an overview of the study findings, which indicated that a consolidated transit agency would not necessarily be more cost efficient and could potentially cost more than the existing systems, especially during the transition period. Representatives from ART, CUE, DASH and Fairfax Connector provided real-world insights into why each agency provides a benefit to the community and what could be lost in a larger system. They also emphasized the importance of continued coordination among each other to ensure that the systems provide the best experience to their users. It was wonderful hearing NVTC Commissioners Walter Alcorn, Maureen Coffey, Takis Karantonis, Catherine Read and Canek Aguirre speak about the impact transit has on their constituents and themselves. DRPT staff will now incorporate this feedback into its final report to the General Assembly, which is due in December.



Commissioner Catherine Read



Commissioners Takis Karantonis and Maureen Coffey

DMV*Moves* executives review action on transit improvements

Executive Director Kate Mattice attended the DMV*Moves* Transportation Executives Meeting October 29 to discuss progress made in 2026 on the Regional Transit Integration Action Plan. Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments/Transportation Planning Board (COG/TPB) and Metro staff provided updates on the work underway to advance six focus areas, including regional bus priority, service guidelines and performance, fare integration, joint procurement, wayfinding and training. Feedback from the discussion will help guide work in 2027 and be incorporated into the DMVMoves Action Plan Progress Report, which will be presented to TPB at its December 16 meeting.



Kate Mattice speaking

Sharing our story with the next wave of Virginia transit leaders

Executive Director Kate Mattice spoke with this year's cohort of the Virginia Transit Leadership Institute (VTLI), whose October session was hosted by Metro at its Eisenhower building the week of October 19. VTLI is a program of the Virginia Transit Association (VTA) that seeks to cultivate the next generation of public transportation leadership in Virginia. On Wednesday, October 21, Kate joined Virginia Government Relations Officer Greg Potts from Metro to discuss the agency's political landscape and how it navigates it to provide quality transit service across the region. Kate returned the next day, with NVTC Director of Programs and Policy Ann McGrane, to talk about SJ 28, the General Assembly's Joint Subcommittee to Study the Growing Needs of Public Transit in Northern Virginia, and the importance of long-term sustainable transit funding in Virginia.



Ann McGrane presenting at VTLI

Governor's Transportation Conference fosters statewide connections

Executive Director Kate Mattice and Director of Programs and Policy Ann McGrane attended the Virginia Governor's Transportation Conference in Richmond the week of October 13. During the event they connected with transportation professionals from across the Commonwealth. They heard from Gov. Abigail Spanberger, who shared her thoughts on how transportation fits within her administration's priority of fostering safe and affordable communities. NVTC "friends and family" were also involved in a variety of panels. DRPT Director Mariia Zimmerman moderated a transit-oriented development panel that included Metro GM/CEO Randy Clarke, and later she led a conversation with transit general managers, including CUE's Charles Koonce.



Moderator DRPT Director Mariia Zimmerman with panelists including Transportation Secretary Nick Donohue and Metro GM Randy Clarke.

Commissioners, staff attend flagship APTA conference

Commissioners Kate Burns and Canek Aguirre and Deputy Director of Programs and Policy Amanda Sink attended the American Public Transportation Association (ATPA) TRANSform conference October 4-7 in Chicago. APTA TRANSform is the organization's flagship event, bringing together over 12,000 industry professionals to engage in workshops and technical tours and learn about innovations in transit.

In addition to connecting with transit professionals across the country, Amanda participated in tours highlighting Chicago Transit Authority's Red Line Extension project and Pace Suburban Bus' I-55 Bus on the Shoulder program and maintenance facility, providing an opportunity to learn firsthand about major transit expansion projects and bus priority operations.




Amanda Sink and Canek Aguirre

NVTC hosts WTS-DC mentorship cohort

NVTC hosted the WTS-DC mentorship cohort's monthly meeting October 20 as an in-kind sponsor of the organization. Members participated in a presentation and discussion on negotiation and advocacy strategies, exploring how to use empowering language and a positive mindset to advocate for career advancements. NVTC's Deputy Director of Programs and Policy Amanda Sink and Data Visualization Program Manager Sophie Spiliotopoulos are participants in this year's cohort.


WTS-DC members

Arlington climate planning includes benefits of public transit

Executive Director Kate Mattice joined community members and professionals with expertise in buildings, energy, waste management and public health to provide a regional public transit perspective to Arlington County's Climate Action Plan October 26. The half-day workshop dove into the Plan's goals and policy direction with a lens of cross-sector benefits and challenges, recognizing that climate solutions can often impact industry sectors and community populations in conflicting ways. Kate appreciated speaking to the importance of reliable public transit as a key element of Arlington's desire for quality of life as well as affordability. Arlington County will continue to refine the plan with additional stakeholders in advance of its release in 2027.


Participants during the workshop



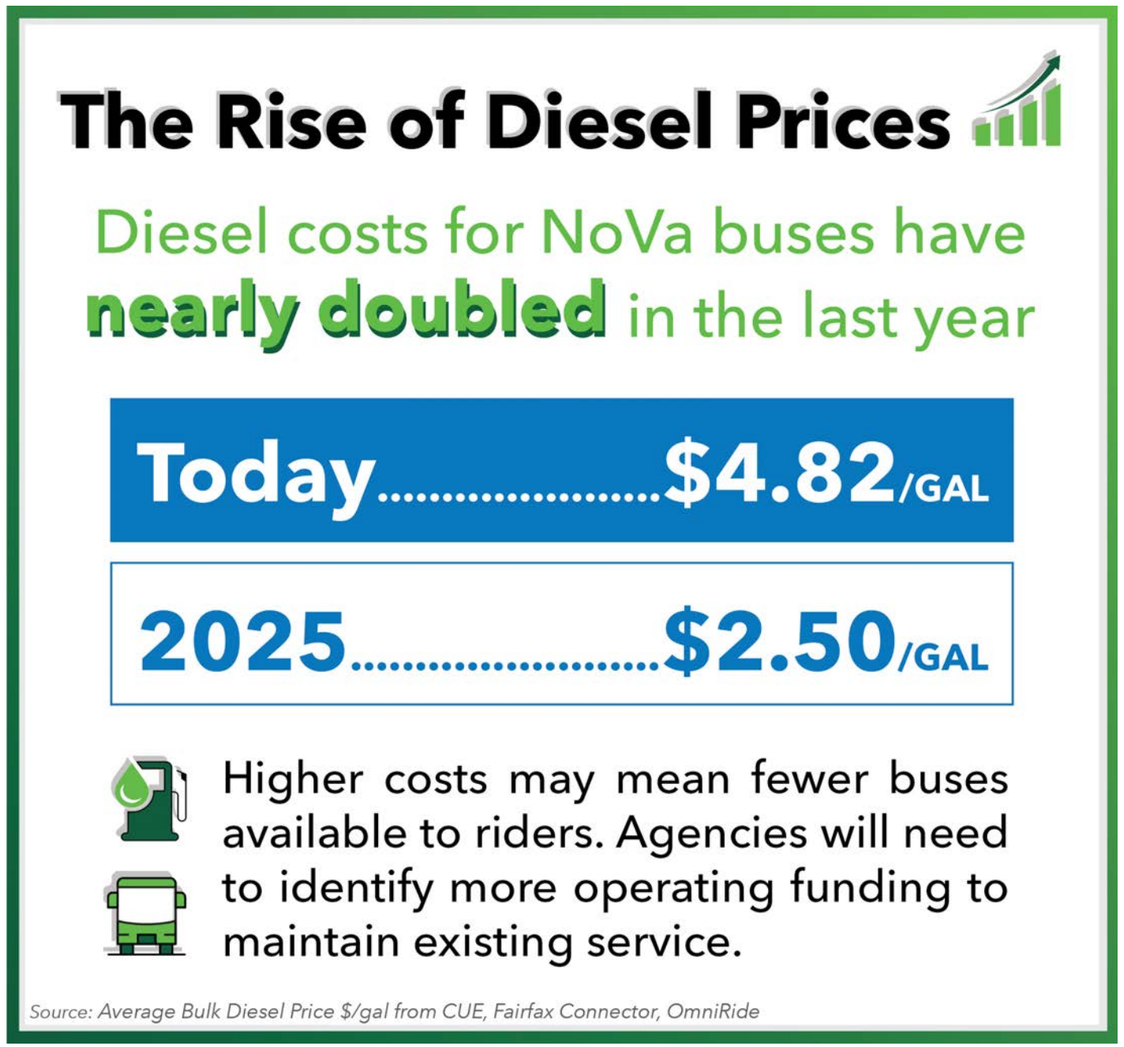
Speaker presenting

ChartingTransit

Diesel prices strain NoVa bus budgets

As diesel prices climb, transit agencies are paying more just to keep buses on the road. Northern Virginia bus operators have seen the average bulk diesel price nearly double in the past year, from $2.50 per gallon in 2025 to the current $4.82 per gallon.

Because fuel is a major operating expense, higher costs mean less room in already tight budgets. Agencies will need additional operating funding to avoid cuts and maintain the existing bus service that Northern Virginians rely on.







8:30 - 11:30 a.m.
Monday, December 14, 2026

George Mason University
Mason Square Campus
3351 Fairfax Drive
Arlington, VA 22201

RSVP TODAY

novatransit.org/2026-legislative-forum/



PLUS: A SECOND PANEL ON TRANSIT & VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

Speakers to be announced soon

Advancing transit in Northern Virginia since 1964



NVTC

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