



NVTC NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 26, 2004

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

Kala Quintana (703) 524-3322 x104

Who says that no one is riding transit?

NVTC reports annual ridership is up by nearly 4.5 million trips!

But more state and federal funding is needed.

Drum roll please.... The Northern Virginia Transportation Commission has compiled a comprehensive analysis of average weekday and annual public transportation trips for FY 2002-2003 in Northern Virginia. And the numbers look good, REAL good.

The fact is that in FY2003 passenger trips on public transit in Northern Virginia increased by nearly 4.6 million trips compared to FY2002, or 3.9 percent.

Throughout FY2003 Metrorail broke one record after another carrying an ever increasing load of passengers. The Virginia Railway Express (VRE), which has more than doubled its ridership since FY 1998, is virtually at capacity carrying nearly 16,000 passengers daily. And six local and express bus systems also are showing solid gains.

For FY2003, the transit systems serving Northern Virginia carried over 121 million annual trips in Virginia. Many of these trips occur in the most heavily congested commuting corridors during peak commuting hours, which is why transit makes such significant contributions to air quality, energy conservation and traffic relief while creating economic value around key station locations.

On a typical weekday in FY2003, Northern Virginia transit systems carried over 417,000 trips in Virginia, up 2.4 percent from 407,000 in FY 2002. Nationwide, the American Public Transportation Commission reports that transit was not as successful overall as were Northern Virginia's transit systems, with a nationwide decline of about one percent reflecting the tough economy and the need for significant fare increases and, in some cases, service reductions.

The Texas Transportation Institute learned in a recent survey that “if not for transit in the DC Metro area, congestion would be 33% worse than it is today.” According to the same study, transit saves \$1 billion in time and fuel savings for non-transit users.

Despite the increasing popularity of transit and the benefits to citizens in Northern Virginia, the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission and its jurisdictions must struggle to obtain sufficient funding from its state and federal partners.

State and federal governments are counting on transit to reduce air quality by getting more cars off the road and more passengers into transit, but are not providing enough funding to keep up with demand and compete successfully against single-occupant automobiles.

This is a very critical time for Northern Virginia’s transit systems. While the commonwealth has failed to meet its statutory objectives to help fund transit (Virginia fell \$83 million short of meeting its own standards for payments to NVTC in FY2004 alone), the General Assembly is currently considering various tax restructuring and budget proposals, some of which could significantly improve the transit funding outlook.

At the federal level, WMATA has alerted Congress that it needs \$1.5 billion more over the next few years just to rebuild existing facilities and acquire more railcars and buses. Congress is currently considering reauthorization proposals that could help meet this funding shortfall.

For more information about how to contact the General Assembly and Congress to urge more funding for public transit, or to review NVTC’s transit ridership report in more detail, go to www.thinkoutsidethecar.org.

Transit is fulfilling its promise to Northern Virginia’s residents — isn’t it time for the state and federal funding partners to meet their obligations to transit customers?

The time is **now** to do something about transit funding.

NVTC is the leading source of information about public transportation issues in Northern Virginia. For more information contact the commission at 703/ 524-3322 or visit our website at www.thinkoutsidethecar.org.

NVTC