



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NEWS RELEASE

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

Jana Lynott 703/ 524-3322 ext. 102

703/ 328-4289 (cell)

Kala Quintana 703/524-3322 ext. 104

NVTC COMPLETES STUDY OF SENIOR TRANSPORTATION NEEDS AND RECOMMENDS LEGISLATIVE ACTION

Efforts to Link Land Use and Transportation Could Improve Seniors' Quality of Life

ARLINGTON, VA – The Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC) announced today a set of recommendations for consideration by the Governor and the General Assembly as they act on transportation funding and planning packages in the remaining days of the ongoing General Assembly session. These recommendations evolve from a year-long planning effort to understand the transportation needs of Northern Virginia's seniors now and in the coming decades. To arrive at this set of recommendations, NVTC interviewed more than 1,600 Northern Virginia residents age 75 and older and conducted focus groups with seniors and professionals who serve them.

NVTC Chairman Gerald Connolly stated, "this is a significant report that outlines the growing needs of a growing population; namely, our seniors. In the past 30 years, Northern Virginia's population age 65 and older has more than tripled. For many of our seniors, access to transportation is essential to staying in one's home and living an independent life."

The NVTC study recommendations include measures that encourage and support seniors' use of fixed-route public transportation (centralized information and referral services, travel training, low floor buses, and service routes), supplemental transportation services for seniors who cannot use fixed-route services (volunteer transportation services, taxi subsidy programs), and measures that would increase seniors' travel options through attention to the built environment (transit-oriented, mixed-use development and pedestrian friendly streets).

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The mobility of the aging population is a growing transportation policy issue. In Northern Virginia, the number of residents age 65 and older is expected to more than double by 2030, from one in every 13 residents to one in every seven residents. Most of this growth is expected to occur in suburban and exurban areas that are not well served by public transportation and often lack safe sidewalk facilities for pedestrians.

NVTC Board member and Arlington County Board Chairman Chris Zimmerman stated, “This is an issue for today that will only become larger in importance tomorrow. America is aging, and so is Arlington. What many seniors are looking for is a place that’s walkable, with services like libraries, the post office, a grocery, the doctor’s office easily reachable. With access to transit, so you’re not dependent on being able to drive. The goal is to ensure that our commitment to inclusion effectively extends across the life-cycle. To be true to our vision, our community must be livable for people of all ages.”

Governor Kaine demonstrated in his January 16, 2006 State of the Commonwealth address to the General Assembly his concern for the same issues identified in NVTC’s study. He said he “heard from seniors, people with disabilities and others who are denied self-sufficiency by our lack of transportation options.” He went on to say that, “we must recognize that the lack of coordination between land use and transportation decisions is a threat to our quality of life.”

NVTC, meeting on February 9th in Richmond in the General Assembly building, re-emphasized its support for Governor Kaine’s proposals to give more tools to local governments to shape future growth and thereby relieve traffic congestion through environments that encourage walking and public transit use by all age groups. Again at its meeting in Arlington on March 2nd, NVTC noted, based on its study, that the implications of better growth policies are especially important for seniors over 75 years of age.

As an example of the types of bills that were introduced and are favored by NVTC, are those that would afford localities the opportunity to offer transfer of development rights between landowners—a tool that can be used in the creation of transit oriented development. Other bills introduced in the House and Senate call for better linkages between transportation and land use planning through the addition of smart growth policies in local comprehensive plans and a joint subcommittee to study the integration of land use and transportation planning.

In addition, the Governor’s and the Senate’s funding proposals would raise about a billion dollars annually for transportation, in particular needed capital for the expansion of public transportation systems in general and significant improvements in senior transportation in particular.

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This NVTC study was done in cooperation with Area Agencies on Aging and transportation service providers, and received funding support from the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation.

WB&A Market Research, of Crofton, Maryland conducted the telephone survey for the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission between April 26 and May 31, 2005, with 1,636 respondents age 75 years and older from Northern Virginia. The statistical margin of error is +/- 2.4 percentage points at the 95% confidence level for the sample as a whole.

During 2006, NVTC will test the effectiveness of instruction to seniors on how to use the region's trains and buses, focusing on attracting seniors to public transportation and meeting their mobility needs. Funding for Phase II of the study is provided by the Virginia Department of Transportation.

For more details on NVTC's study and to see NVTC's entire legislative agenda for 2006, go to www.thinkoutsidethecar.org.

NVTC is the leading source of information about public transportation issues in

Northern Virginia. NVTC is a regional agency with the mission of managing traffic congestion, restoring clean air, boosting the economy and improving the quality of life for all of Northern Virginia's citizens through effective public transit, ridesharing networks, and other transportation solutions. NVTC includes the counties of Arlington, Fairfax and Loudoun and the cities of Alexandria, Fairfax, and Falls Church covering over 1,000 square miles with a population of more than 1.5 million. The agency manages over \$100 million of state and federal grant funds each year for public transit and serves as a forum for its board of 20 state and local elected officials to resolve issues involving public transit and ridesharing.

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The Northern Virginia Transportation Commission

4350 North Fairfax Drive, Suite 720, Arlington, VA 22203 (703) 524-3322 (p) (703) 524-1756

www.thinkoutsidethecar.org

NVTC Membership Attached

NORTHERN VIRGINIA TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Northern Virginia Transportation Commission
4350 North Fairfax Drive, Suite 720
Arlington, Virginia 22203
(703) 524-3322
(703) 524-1756

E-mail: nvtc@nvtdc.org

Website: www.thinkoutsidethecar.org

Richard K. Taube, Executive Director

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