



NEWS RELEASE

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**FOR FURTHER
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NORTHERN VIRGINIA TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION ENDORSES TRANSPORTATION REFERENDUM

At its evening business meeting on October 3, 2002, the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC) joined a growing number of local and regional agencies and organizations by endorsing the November 5th transportation sales tax referendum. NVTC's board consists of 19 state and local elected officials (and the director of the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation) from six jurisdictions (the cities of Alexandria, Fairfax and Falls Church and the counties of Arlington, Fairfax and Loudoun). NVTC is chaired by Chris Zimmerman, who also chairs the boards of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority and Arlington County.

The commission cited three reasons for urging voters to approve the half-percent increase in the sales tax:

- First, all of the money raised by the sales tax will be spent in Northern Virginia. The newly created Northern Virginia Transportation Authority will decide how to spend the \$5 billion proceeds over the next 20 years.
- Second, over 40 percent of the costs for the projects listed in the referendum are for transit. For example, the Virginia Railway Express (VRE) which is co-owned by NVTC, has been experiencing annual growth in ridership of almost 20 percent. VRE will receive \$100 million for new railcars if the voters approve the referendum.
- Third, the new sales tax revenues will make a real difference in the lives of Northern Virginia's citizens. Each new transit rider saves almost five pounds of NOx emissions in a year, which is vitally important for a region struggling to achieve clean air targets and avoid losing

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federal transportation assistance. Costs of traffic delay are about \$1,500 per person per year while the estimated cost of the sales tax increase is less than \$100 per family.

The commission concluded that the costs of failing to act to solve traffic problems far exceed the costs of the proposed sales tax increase. Other transit agencies that have acted to endorse the referendum include WMATA, VRE and the Potomac & Rappahannock Transportation Commission, among others.

NVTC is a public transit funding and advocacy agency created by the General Assembly in 1964. It appoints Virginia's members of the WMATA board and serves as trustee for its member jurisdictions for about \$100 million annually in transit funds. More information about the commission and its workprogram is available at www.thinkoutsidethecar.org.