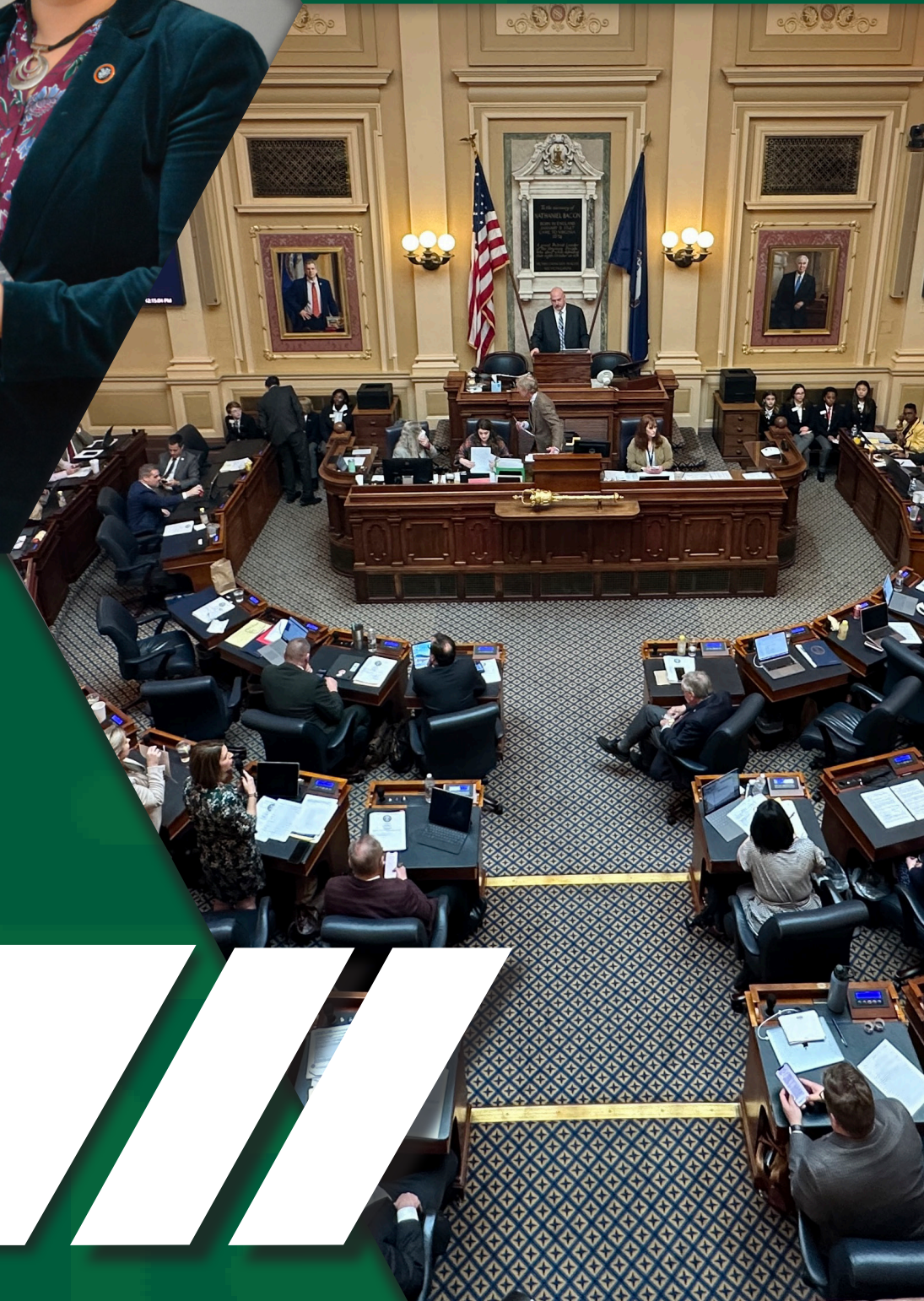




Executive Director Newsletter



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

February 2023



A Message from Kate Mattice

Like the arrival of the four seasons, the Virginia General Assembly Session comes each January, ushering in fresh debate over the policies and priorities of the Commonwealth. For NVTC, our partner jurisdictions and transit agencies, this means an active period of ensuring that we advocate for our legislative agendas and watch out for any bills that might have a negative impact on operations or funding.

We also work to make our presence known. I joined a number of NVTC staff and transit leaders from across Virginia in Richmond for Transit Advocacy Day in January. It was a time to meet key lawmakers on both sides of the aisle and remind them of the importance of public transit and the economic benefits it brings to the Commonwealth. Staff also had the opportunity to visit and ride Richmond's signature bus rapid transit system, The Pulse, which gave our staff a sneak peek at a highly successful BRT system.

Unlike some recent years, this has been a relatively quiet session regarding matters of importance to the work we do. However, there is one key bill that would make a beneficial change in the funding formula for Virginia Railway Express, making it similar to the approach used for Metro. This bill passed out of both chambers in January and we anticipate Gov. Glenn Youngkin will sign it into law. We also saw some legislative threats that would decrease the revenues in the overall Commonwealth Transportation Fund. As of this writing, all of those appear to have been voted down in committee.

As always, we give tremendous thanks to our Northern Virginia delegations in the House and Senate. These members have a deep understanding of the importance of public transit to our region and are faithful advocates in Richmond. We are lucky to have them on our side.


Executive Director

In This Issue

- 4 Commission swears in new Chair, officers for 2023
- 5 NVTC publishes 2023 annual report and video
- 6 Virginia Transit Advocacy Day returns in full force
- 9 Welcome to our newest Transit Fellow
- 10 WMATA Committee reviews proposed Metro budgets in light of future budget gaps
- 12 Staff attend Transportation Research Board annual meeting
- 13 Webinar asks, "What's up with the bus in Nova?"
- 14 Aloha from Hawaii

Save
the
Date

February 17

VRE Operations Board

February 21-22

Commonwealth
Transportation Board

March 2

Commission Meeting

March 17

VRE Operations Board

March 28-29

Commonwealth
Transportation Board

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Commission swears in new Chair, officers for 2023

The Commission welcomed NVTC's first Latina chair, Dalia Palchik of Fairfax County, at its first [meeting](#) of the year. Immediate Past Chair Caneke Aguirre swore in his successor as well as new officers for the 2023 term. They are Vice-Chair Matt de Ferranti from Arlington County and Secretary-Treasurer David Snyder from the City of Falls Church.

In addition, the Commission renewed the appointment of Supervisor Matt Letourneau from Loudoun County to the Metro Board of Directors for a four-year term and appointed Sarah Bagley from the City of Alexandria as chair of the NVTC Program Advisory Committee. The Commission also passed a resolution thanking Mr. Aguirre for his dedicated service as chair.



NVTC publishes 2023 annual report and video

NVTC published its annual report, [Advancing Transit: 2022 Year in Review](#), and a companion [video](#) in January, highlighting NVTC's financial management and accomplishments for the year. The report covers the major work of each of our programs: Commuter Choice, Transit Resource Center, Transit Technology and WMATA, as well as our co-ownership of Virginia Railway Express, our leadership on legislative and policy issues, communications efforts and awards.



Virginia Transit Advocacy Day returns in full force

Executive Director Kate Mattice joined Commissioners and many NVTC staff members in Richmond January 23 for the return of the in-person Virginia Transit Advocacy Day, sponsored by the Virginia Transit Association (VTA). It's a day to remind legislators about the importance of investing in public transit to keep Virginia an inviting place to live, work, study and play. Representatives of NVTC and transit agencies from across the Commonwealth filled the galleries of the House and [Senate](#) as they were gaveled into session at noon.

Throughout the day, Kate met with key lawmakers while staff took the opportunity to ride [GRTC's Pulse](#), the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system that provides high quality bus service with enhanced bus shelters and dedicated bus lanes in parts of the city. That tour was especially useful for members of our team working on planning the [Envision Route 7](#) BRT here in Northern Virginia.

The day wrapped up with Metro GM/CEO Randy Clarke briefing elected officials from NoVa and then a reception in the stunning Main Street Station.





SENATE CHAMBER







Welcome to our newest Transit Fellow

NVTC welcomed Nathan Varnell as our newest Transit Fellow in January. Hailing from Dallas, Texas, Nathan is pursuing a Master of Public Administration degree and certification in Budget and Public Finance at George Washington University. At NVTC, Nathan is supporting marketing campaigns and digital strategy on the Communications team to expand the Commission's public presence. This

work will advance ongoing efforts to increase the reach of NVTC's research and convey the successes of investment in the region to local audiences. NVTC thanks the Department of Rail and Public Transportation for its ongoing support of NVTC's Transit Fellow program, which seeks to prepare the next generation of transportation professionals.





WMATA Committee reviews proposed Metro budgets in light of future budget gaps



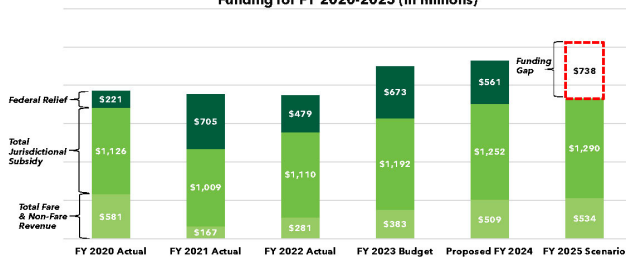
NVTC'S WMATA Committee met [January 25](#) to set its agenda for 2023 and discussed Northern Virginia's approach to Metro's [FY 2024](#) operations and capital budgets and the FY 2024-2029 Capital Improvement Program (CIP). While Metro GM/CEO Randy Clarke has proposed a balanced budget for FY 2024, the agency faces a projected deficit of \$738 million in FY 2025. The shortfall reflects structural challenges to the operating budget that were accelerated by declines in ridership due to the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the exhaustion of federal relief funds.

Committee members discussed Metro's plan to simplify and optimize the rail fare structure, which includes the elimination of peak and off-peak fares and consideration of the base fare, maximum fare and per-mile cost to ride Metrorail. As part of Metro's public comment process, the Committee will draft and authorize a letter to submit to Metro outlining our jurisdictions' priorities for the budget.

Committee members also reviewed the CIP, which includes acquisition of the next generation of railcars and reducing the state of good repair backlog.

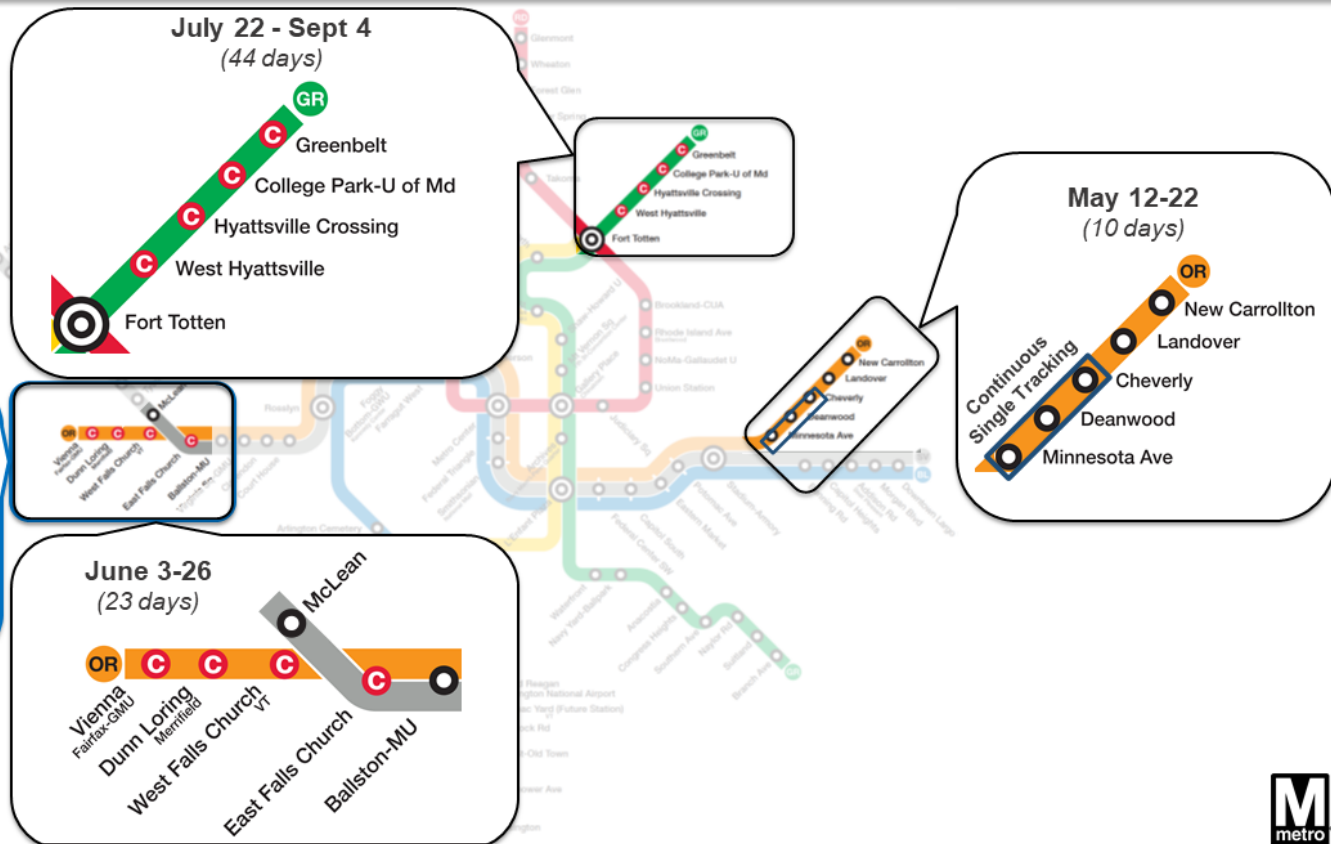
Background

WMATA's Actual, Budgeted and Projected Operating Sources of Funding for FY 2020-2025 (in millions)



Public Hearings

Metro's Board of Directors met the following day and authorized the public hearing process for the budgets and CIP. We'll share details about how to share your comments and the anticipated Virginia public meeting when Metro makes them public.



Meanwhile, Virginia Board member [Matt Letourneau](#) noted that NVTC will be developing an updated Value of Northern Virginia's Transit Network to the Commonwealth study. This effort will quantify and visualize the overall economic benefits and revenue that bolster the Commonwealth due to investments in Northern Virginia's transit systems and will build on the [previous report](#) which we released in 2017.

Metro Enhanced Maintenance Work

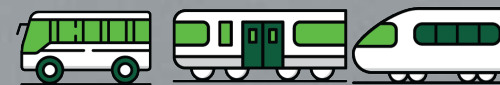
The same week, Metro announced a host of enhanced maintenance work projects that will shut Metrorail stations across the system this summer. That includes impacts to the Orange and Silver Lines in Northern Virginia. The NoVa impacts start June 3 and finish July 17. The first phase includes a 23-day shutdown from Ballston to McLean and Vienna stations and the second phase shuts down the Orange Line from West Falls Church to Vienna stations for an additional 21 days. Metro says, "The Infrastructure team will focus on replacing 40-year-old steel rail that

has become significantly more susceptible to rail breaks than rail in any other part of the system. Metro has been tracking rail breaks in the system to identify priority locations for replacement and has determined the rail in this stretch of track to be a top priority."

At January's WMATA Committee meeting, Board members Paul Smedberg and Matt Letourneau noted that the rails date back to the opening of the Metro system and that a continuous shutdown will allow Metro to complete the work much faster than trying to do it during nights or weekends.

Increased Train Frequency

Metro GM/CEO Clarke announced increased Metrorail service that includes reduced headways on the Blue, Blue+ and Orange Lines starting February 7. Trains will run every 12 minutes during peak hours on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.





Staff attend Transportation Research Board annual meeting

Transit Resource Center Senior Program Manager Xavier Harmony and Commuter Choice Senior Program Analyst Adam Hager attended the Transportation Research Board's (TRB) 102nd [Annual Meeting](#) the week of January 9 at the Washington Convention Center where they heard the latest in cutting edge transit, technology, and transportation policy research. In addition to dozens of engaging presentations from academics and professionals around the

world, Xavier and Adam attended a fireside chat with U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg and U.S. Secretary of Energy Jennifer Granholm to learn about the Joint Office of Energy and Transportation, a newly established office to coordinate the implementation of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

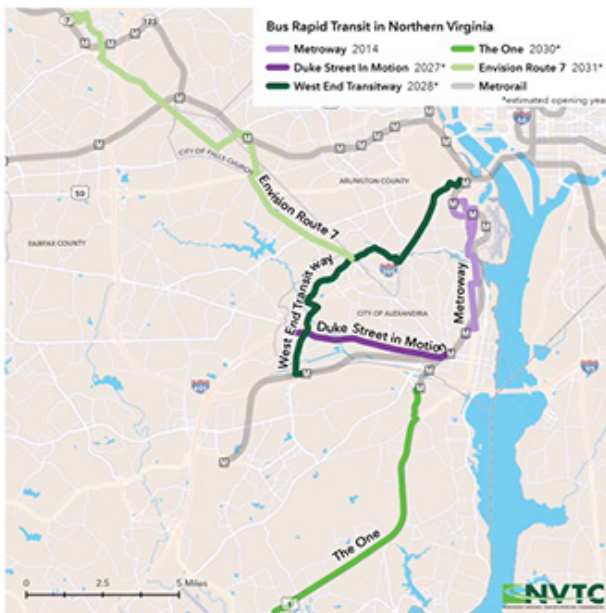


Webinar asks, "What's up with the bus in NoVa?"

NVTC co-hosted a webinar January 20 with the [Coalition for Smarter Growth](#) (CSG) entitled "What's up with the bus in NoVa?" It was an opportunity to look at recent accomplishments by our Northern Virginia bus systems and to preview future bus service and analytical work. NVTC Director of Programs and Policy Allan Fye helped kick off the event by providing an overview of NVTC's work to improve and expand bus service.

Transit Resource Senior Program Manager Xavier Harmony then pulled double duty discussing

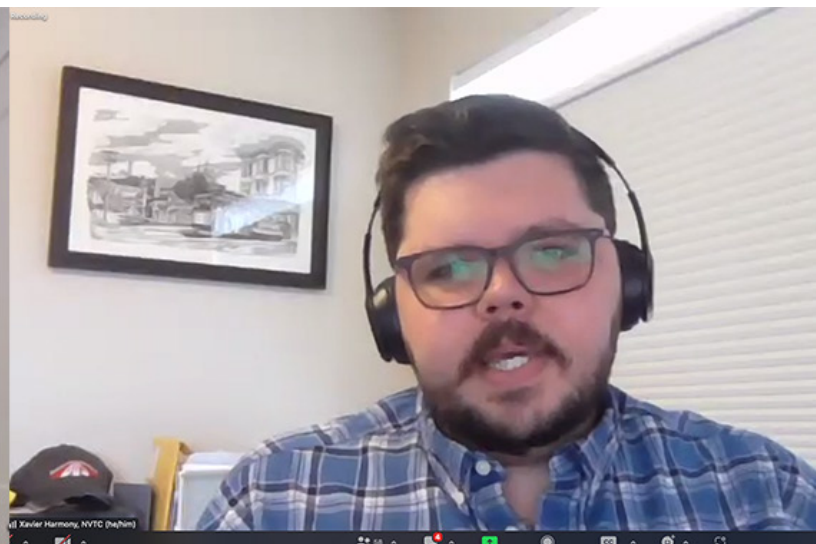
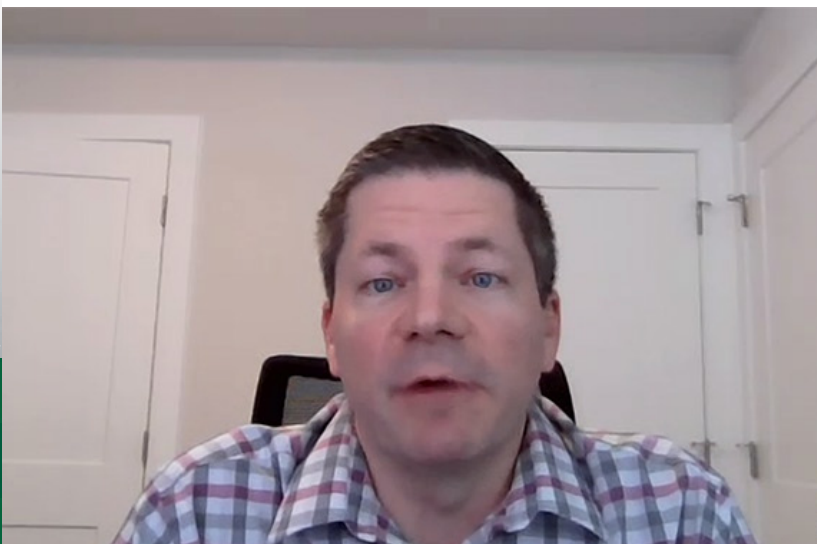
Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) plans in NoVa, including the NVTC-led [Envision Route 7](#) project, which will connect Tysons and Alexandria, by way of Falls Church and Seven Corners. Xavier then gave a preview of NVTC's planned Regional Bus Analysis looking at how our bus systems can collectively create a network to best serve Northern Virginia. The webinar also included an overview of Metro's [Bus Network Redesign](#) and updates from [DASH](#) and [Fairfax Connector](#). NVTC thanks CSG Executive Director Stewart Schwartz for his efforts in putting together the program.



What is the region working towards?



- **The end goal is a network of high-capacity transit that helps people move around the region**
 - More reliably;
 - More efficiently;
 - More equitably, and;
 - In a more environmentally friendly way





Executive Director Kate Mattice travelled to Hawaii in January, where she enjoyed the sights and continued to take calls, despite the five hour time difference. Even though Kate was 5,000 miles from Northern Virginia, she was never far away from transit, as you can see in these pictures from her trip. Kate also checked out the under-construction Honolulu Authority for Rapid Transportation (HART), a 20-mile, automated fixed-guideway rail system with 21 stations that she says reminded her very much of Metro's Silver Line.







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