A quick search on Spotify finds over 30 playlists with “missing you” in the title. That’s how we’ve felt about the last year-and-a-quarter without in-person Commission meetings. While we effectively conducted virtual meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic, we’ve been looking forward to remaking personal connections and enabling more spontaneous interactions. In recent weeks, NVTC staff have put a lot of effort into making sure upcoming meetings run smoothly. Even with Commissioners meeting in-person, we’ll continue to produce our detailed presentation materials, giving richer information for those attending or viewing at home. We also encourage staff and members of the public to continue watching meetings online.

While the Commission meeting will take its traditional break in August, be assured that staff will be focused on important matters for when we gather again in September. Those will include critical steps forward for Commuter Choice. The team will evaluate opportunities for a Round 4 supplemental program for the I-66 corridor and open the next call for projects for Round 5 on the I-66 corridor.

Other milestones include the next iteration of the Report on the Performance and Condition of WMATA, the crafting of our state and federal legislative agenda for 2022 and the expected signing of a contract for the next phase of study for the Envision Route 7 Bus Rapid Transit system.

We’ll also be watching the federal government and private employers to see what decisions they make this summer about reopening offices across the region. Those announcements will potentially bring a lot of riders back to Metro, VRE and Northern Virginia’s local and commuter buses. More familiar rush hours could be back, at least some days of the week, post-Labor Day.

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Metro Board votes to reduce fares and increase service

The Metro Board of Directors approved fare changes and service improvements June 10 which will support the region’s recovery and encourage more customers to return to transit. These improvements were made possible by American Rescue Plan Act funds which have enabled Metro to offset revenue losses associated with the pandemic.

Metrorail improvements
• More frequent all day service, including weekends
• Better peak service
• Improved late night service and hours

Metrobus improvements
• 20 Metrobus lines will operate every 12 minutes or better
• 16 bus lines will operate every 20 minutes or better
• Restoration and/or improved service on additional Metrobus routes

Fare changes
• Flat weekend Metrorail fare of $2
• Free bus transfer to and from Metrorail
• 7-day regional bus price is lowered in price to $12
• Short-term promotional discounts on Metro's combination rail/bus passes

Most of these improvements will start in September and are in addition to recent Metrobus improvements that went into effect June 6. NVTC and jurisdictional staff worked closely with our Virginia Metro Board members to include the restoration of four Metrobus routes in Virginia which were strong jurisdictional priorities.

3% Working Group charts path for companion report

The 3% Cap Working Group convened for the first time this year in June to develop the companion report to the 2020 Report to the General Assembly on the Virginia’s 3% Cap on the Growth in Operating Assistance Payments to WMATA. The 2020 General Assembly directed NVTC to report on the usefulness of the 3% cap and whether there should be any additional legislative exemptions from the cap.

Prior to the report’s submission to the General Assembly, the Working Group recommended providing a companion report to the Commission detailing items that went beyond the General Assembly’s directive. The companion report will provide the Commission with additional details on the impact of the cap and document NVTC jurisdictions’ experiences with the cap since its implementation in 2018. The working group will reconvene in July before the Commission is anticipated to receive a presentation and be asked to accept the companion report in the fall.

NVTC hosts discussion on zero and reduced-fare transit

Director of Programs and Policy Allan Fye facilitated a workshop June 9 with local jurisdictions and transit operators on “Options for Reduced-Fare/Zero-Fare Transit in Northern Virginia” as part of NVTC’s development of a white paper on the continuum of policy and technical options for partners. At the workshop, NVTC shared findings from its initial research on strategies and implementation options and the business case for reduced-fare/zero-fare transit. Workshop attendees provided input on the subject, including interest and motivations, lessons learned from zero-fare operations during the pandemic and opportunities and challenges for consideration. NVTC will host a round table discussion on the topic at the July Commission meeting, including presentations from the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation and DASH, which is moving toward zero-fare in the fall. The white paper is slated for completion in early fall.
Transit Resource Center answers RFP questions

Transit Resource Center Program Manager Dan Goldfarb hosted a pre-proposal conference June 17 as NVTC seeks firms to submit proposals for the next phase for the Envision Route 7 Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) study. The conference gave potential offerors an opportunity to ask questions about the solicitation. Over a dozen firms showed interest in the request for proposals, which was approved at the June Commission meeting. NVTC expects to award a contract this fall.

The consultant will be required to evaluate and determine the mobility benefits and impacts resulting from the proposed BRT in the segment from Tysons to Seven Corners. This effort will require the development of a traffic micro-simulation model to simulate vehicles, buses, bicycle and pedestrian traffic along the study corridor. The Request for Proposal (RFP) for the Phase IV-1 Envision Route 7 Mobility Study can be found here.

Communications and Outreach Manager Matt Friedman participated in the National Association of Government Communicators Communications School. The conference attracts public affairs officials from across the country, including many from jurisdictions across Northern Virginia. The Communications School teaches communications officials the latest best practices in telling stories of the important work done by government agencies of all sizes. Session topics included How to Build Trust with Social Media, The Neuroscience of Once Upon a Time; or Why Storytelling Works in Government Communications and Applying and Communicating JEDI Principles.

Communications School teaches latest techniques

NVTC welcomes two summer transit fellows

NVTC welcomed two transit fellows in June who will spend time over the summer learning about our programs and projects while working alongside our professional staff.

Nneoma Ugwu is finishing her Master’s in Civil Engineering with a focus on Transportation Policy and Planning at the University of Maryland and will continue on to a Ph.D. program in the fall. Nneoma grew up in Nigeria and says she’s always had an interest in transportation and wants to learn more about equity issues in transportation. She also hopes to gain more insight into the development of transportation policy.

Marco Viola is working on his Master’s in Urban and Regional Planning with a concentration in transportation at Virginia Tech. Marco grew up in our back yard of Arlington and says that helped shaped his interest in transportation as he would bike to school or take Metro into the District. He wants to learn more about how public transit and other transportation modes fit into urban environments.

NVTC’s Transit Fellow program is supported by the Department of Rail and Public Transportation.

Wishing the best of luck to our Program Analyst Matt Cheng

Program Analyst Matt Cheng left NVTC at the end of May to go to graduate school in Boston. Matt joined NVTC as a Transit Fellow in 2017 and was promoted to a Program Analyst in 2018. In addition to his tireless efforts to support all of our transit agencies behind the scenes with his TBEST work, Matt really shined during the 2019 and 2020 Metrorail shutdowns along the Yellow, Blue and Orange Lines. Matt led NVTC’s efforts to coordinate the shutdown mitigation measures and troubleshoot day to day issues that arose during an unprecedented Metrorail system closure for Northern Virginia. He’s also the creator of many of our maps and GIS presentations.

We are sad to see Matt leave NVTC but based on his time here, he has an amazing career ahead of him and we wish him the best of luck and success in his studies.
Executive Director Newsletter
July 2021

Metro adds SmarTrip on Android devices

Metro extended its mobile SmarTrip and SmarTrip app to Google Pay on Android-based mobile phones in June. The move follows last year’s launch of SmarTrip on Apple devices. Users can now use their phones and smart watches to ride Metrorail and Metrobus, as well as DASH, ART, City of Fairfax-CUE, Fairfax Connector, Loudoun County Transit and OmniRide. Riders can transfer an existing SmarTrip card or purchase a new one, and instantly add value or passes. NVTC assisted with regional coordination for technology deployment and testing of the SmarTrip mobile app.

Get around with just your phone.
SmarTrip® on Google Pay,™
The easier way to pay on Metro.
wmata.com/googlepay

Metro ‘Doing Our Part’ campaign highlights staying connected

Metro's Doing Our Part marketing campaign continues as the agency adds more service and welcomes back more riders. Metro says, “Since the beginning of the pandemic, Metro has implemented a number of health and safety measures. In September 2020, we solidified our safety commitments by signing onto the American Public Transportation Association’s Safety & Health Commitments Program - committed to increase public confidence in Metro and Covid-19 safety.” Video ads focus on “staying connected” -- getting people where they need to go, and cleaning and safety protocols. Metro also plans to provide NVTC and local jurisdictions with social media kits in July as part of the ongoing campaign.

Fairfax Connector to take over 5 Metrobus routes in July

Fairfax Connector will assume operations of five Metrobus routes, four of which are currently not operating due to the COVID-19 pandemic on July 10. Fairfax Connector will restore and provide enhanced service on these routes serving key areas in Fairfax County with connections to the McLean, East Falls Church, West Falls Church and the Pentagon Metrorail Stations. These routes serve approximately 69,000 residents and provide access to more than 36,000 jobs within the county.

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<th>Old Metrobus Route</th>
<th>New Fairfax Connector Route</th>
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Fairfax Connector will also make minor changes to five other routes.

Alexandria solicits Duke Street in Motion feedback

The City of Alexandria kicked off Duke Street In Motion, an 18-month planning and design study. It’s focused on ensuring transit improvements along the Duke Street corridor, from the Landmark Mall area to the King Street Metro Station, will align with users’ needs, wants and expectations. To meet this goal, the city will host nearly 30 events and activities to gather feedback from those who live, work and travel along the Duke Street corridor. Provide input by completing a short feedback form by July 31. The feedback form and associated resources will be available in English, Spanish and Amharic.

Duke Street In Motion Week, June 21-25, featured a series of outreach events. A virtual project webinar on Wednesday, June 23 was recorded and made available on the project webpage. The Duke Street Corridor was identified as one of three high capacity transit corridors as part of the 2008 Transportation Master Plan. It was reaffirmed in the 2012 Transit Corridors Feasibility Study.