



NORTHERN VIRGINIA TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

# Executive Director Newsletter



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



# July 2023





## A Message from Kate Mattice

There was a time when summertime was considered the slow season. While many students enjoy time away from the classroom and families look forward to beach escapes, the days of totally unplugging from work are long gone. That's true here at NVTC. I always encourage our folks to take time off to relax and recharge, but between dipping our toes in the ocean or hiking through the trails of the Blue Ridge Mountains, we are keeping major projects moving. That includes hosting several meetings for our WMATA Operating Funding and Reform Working Group, imagining the future funding landscape for Metro as it faces historic budget deficits.

At the same time, our Transit Resource Center team is nearing the finish line for an important report analyzing how adding new infrastructure could speed buses in Northern Virginia, making them more reliable and a more attractive travel option.

We're also in hiring mode as we work to recruit a new person to fill a critical role for our Envision Route 7 Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project and a new program analyst to support our team. The new Route 7 hire will oversee the remaining planning and environmental work on the BRT project, planned to connect Tysons and Alexandria by way of Seven Corners and Falls Church, to put it in a strong place to proceed to engineering and design in partnership with our jurisdictions along the corridor. The program analyst will add to our amazing cadre of early career professionals who play an integral role in supporting all of our NVTC programs. You can always find [current openings](#) on our website.

The Commuter Choice team is laying the groundwork for the next call for projects for I-66, looking for new or continuing ways to move more people through that congested corridor, hot on the heels of the Commonwealth Transportation Board's approval of \$48 million for projects in the I-395/95 corridor.

Finally, you'll be hearing and seeing a lot more about [novarides.org](#), as our fourth regional transit marketing campaign kicks into high gear this summer, encouraging people to ride all of our trains and buses, making the critical public transit connections that we all work so hard to enable.

  
Executive Director

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Save the Date

**July 18-19**  
Commonwealth Transportation Board

**July 20**  
WMATA Committee

**July 21**  
VRE Operations Board

**July 26**  
Program Advisory Committee

**August 31**  
Legislative and Policy Committee

**September 7**  
Commission Meeting

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## Commission thanks Katie Cristol, welcomes Takis Karantonis

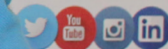
Commissioners commended outgoing Commissioner Katie Cristol and welcomed Arlington County Board member Takis Karantonis as her replacement at the [June 1 Commission meeting](#). Ms. Cristol announced she is leaving the Arlington Board, effective July 4, to become the chief executive officer of Tysons Community Alliance. It is bittersweet to see such an enduring advocate for public transit in Northern Virginia leave the Commission, but we are confident she will do great things with [Tysons Community Alliance](#). Ms. Cristol skillfully led the Commission as chair during the first years of the pandemic as transit faced budget and ridership challenges and has been a champion of long-term, sustainable funding.



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## Commission accepts Value of Transit report which finds \$1.5 billion benefit to Commonwealth

Those of us in transit-rich communities know the value goes beyond our immediate neighborhoods. Transit Technology Senior Program Manager Ann McGrane [presented](#) the findings of a study on "[The Value of Northern Virginia Transit to the Commonwealth](#)," which found that Northern Virginia's transit network generates \$1.5 billion in annual personal income and sales tax revenue for Virginia. Of this, the

study estimates that at least \$1 billion can be attributed to the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority's Metrorail system. These revenues equal 5% of the entire Virginia general fund. The current study confirms the importance of this region's transit system to the economic vitality of not only Northern Virginia but to that of the entirety of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Supports **128,000** households



Supports **311,000** jobs



Avoids **70,000** metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions



Avoids over **400** serious injuries



Saves commuters **\$130M** in vehicle operating costs



**\$1.5B** Revenue from Personal Income and Sales Tax (\$ 2021)

**\$693M** (Indirect & Induced Impacts)

**\$828M** (Direct Impacts)

**\$600M** (Direct Impacts)



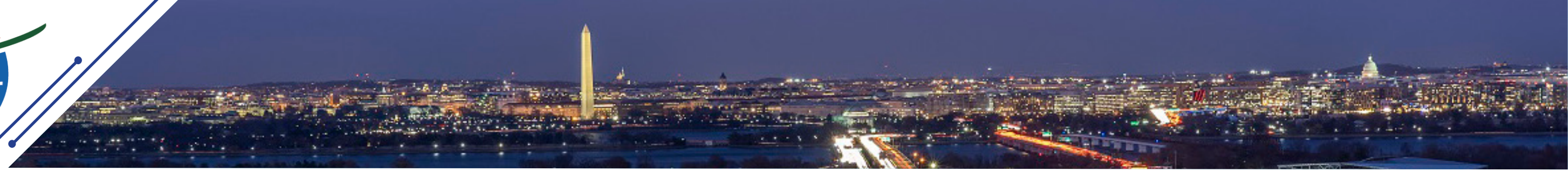
2018

2025

Incoming Commissioner [Takis Karantonis](#) brings 25 years of experience in urban and regional planning and currently represents Arlington as the elected chair of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG) Climate, Energy and Environment Policy Committee.







## Commonwealth Transportation Board approves 13 projects to ease traffic congestion in Northern Virginia

The \$48 million I-395/95 Commuter Choice [FY 2024-2025 Program of Projects](#) received its final green light June 21 from the [Commonwealth Transportation Board \(CTB\)](#) as part of its FY 2024-2029 Six-Year Improvement Program. After months of a competitive application and selection process led by the Commuter Choice team and resounding support during our most successful public comment period yet, we are excited to see these funds go to 13 projects that will make a difference for commuters across the I-395/95 corridor.

The anticipated benefits from the approved projects are wide-reaching. Besides supporting 11,000 additional weekday transit trips in the corridor, the projects are anticipated to reduce

greenhouse gas emissions by three-quarters and save commuters \$4 million in annual fuel expenses relative to drive-alone travel. The 13 projects in the approved Program of Projects include transit improvements put forth by Arlington County, DASH, Fairfax County, OmniRide and Virginia Railway Express, with Commuter Choice's first-ever investments in construction of a bus rapid transit line and a new commuter rail station as well as purchases of electric buses. Commuter Choice Senior Program Analyst Adam Hager, Department of Rail and Public Transportation Director Jen DeBruhl and Chief of Public Transportation Zach Trogon briefed the CTB's [Rail and Public Transportation Subcommittee](#) the day before the final vote.



## Commuter Choice funded Park & Ride opens in Spotsylvania County

Executive Director Kate Mattice, Senior Program Manager Ben Owen and Senior Program Analyst Adam Hager helped cut the ribbon June 5 on a 700-space [Park & Ride commuter lot](#) at the intersection of Route 1 and Commonwealth Drive in Spotsylvania County. Ms. Mattice spoke on the value of the I-395/95 Commuter Choice program, which provided \$1.1 million toward the project. Without Commuter Choice, the lot would have been scaled down by about 200 spaces—almost 1/3rd of its capacity. Kate, Ben and Adam

then took ceremonial first rides around the lot, courtesy of OmniRide and GWRideConnect's vanpooling service.

The Commuter Choice funded project will make a difference for commuters along I-95 in Fredericksburg providing vital carpooling, vanpooling and soon-to-be bus services along this congested corridor.





## Talking shop at APTA's 2023 Rail Conference

Public transit professionals from across the nation rallied at the [American Public Transportation Association's](#) 2023 Rail Conference the week of June 11 to catch up, talk shop and learn from the best in the industry. Executive Director Kate Mattice moderated an energizing panel of inspiring women to talk about how those in the transit industry can support the next generation of women engineers.

The conference also included a critical discussion

led by Kammy Horn, of VIA Metropolitan Transit in San Antonio, Texas on creating thriving communities by linking transit investments to attainable housing. It's no easy task—many of our transit agencies are perpetually chasing where we need to be with the housing displacement that can follow transit investments. At NVTC, we are mindful of how the future Bus Rapid Transit needs to be coordinated with land use and housing—not just along the Route 7 corridor but throughout our region.



Kate Mattice, Unwana Dabney, Ni Lee, Katy Thorpe, Jodi Godfrey, Sara Stickler (R-L)

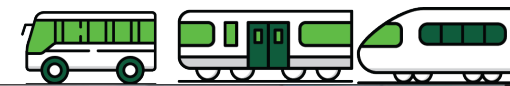
## NVTC leads roundtable to support Disadvantaged Business Enterprises

As a direct recipient of [Federal Transit Administration](#) (FTA) funding, NVTC is not only committed to ensuring that small businesses and disadvantaged individuals have a fair opportunity to compete for our federally funded transportation contracts, but we also support our member jurisdictions in their efforts as well!

Senior Grants and Procurement Manager, Brittany Sumpter, hosted NVTC's first-ever "NOVA DBE Roundtable" on June 15. This unique network is the product of Brittany's vision to bring program managers for Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) programs in Northern Virginia together to share challenges in administering their respective programs, provide solutions and best practices, and discuss ways we can collaborate

to attract DBEs to the exciting work we are all doing in Northern Virginia. Jurisdictional staff who attended the kickoff meeting included DBE program and procurement managers from the City of Alexandria, Arlington County, Fairfax County, PRTC and Virginia Railway Express.

During this introductory meeting, Greta Malone from the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) shared information about the supportive services [VDOT's Business Opportunity and Workforce Development Center](#) (BOWD) provides to DBEs and discussed the possibility of partnering on future initiatives.



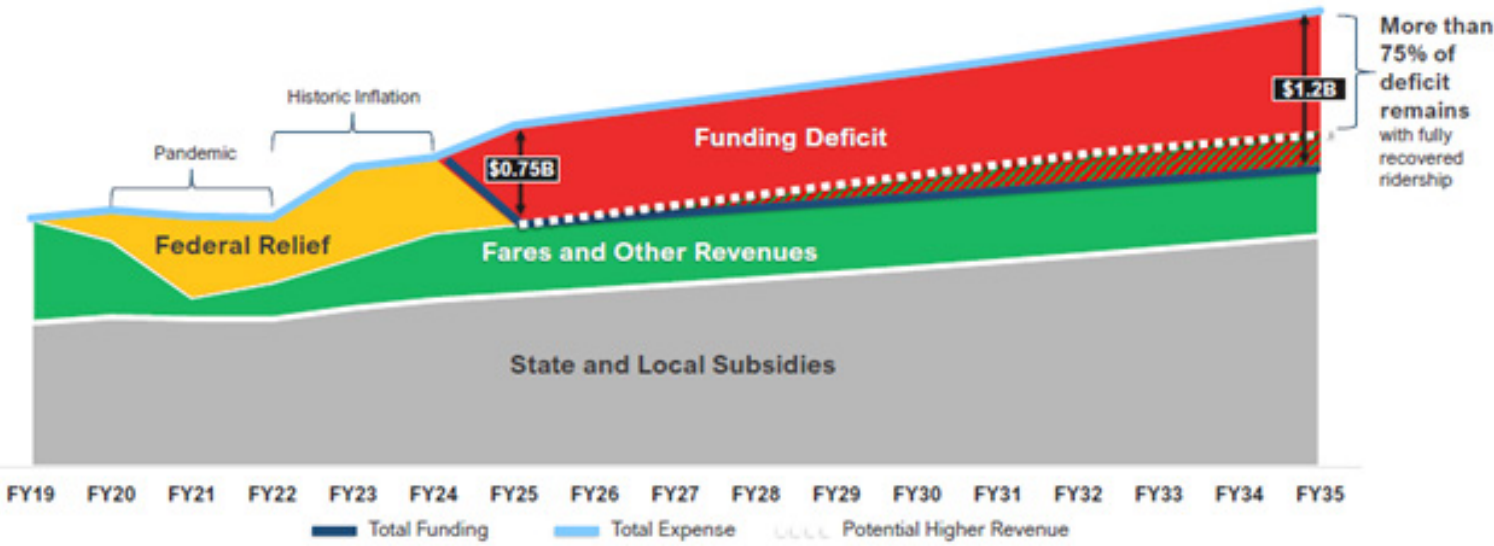




# Metro Board looks ahead to fiscal cliff and structural budget deficits

The Metro Board's Finance and Operations Committee received a [presentation on the financial outlook of Metro](#) on June 22. In FY 2025, Metro will face a \$750 million operating budget funding deficit that will continue to grow through FY 2035. Once federal aid is exhausted,

Metro will face service cuts that could trigger a "death spiral." Although Metro is not the only U.S. transit agency facing a large pandemic-induced operating budget deficit after FY 2024, it is the only transit agency among its peers with no dedicated revenue sources for operations.



Courtesy: Metro

## Future capital budget investments

The \$750 million operating gap has three driving factors:

**Jurisdictional Subsidy Credit (\$196 million)** — Metro provided support to jurisdictions in the form of a subsidy reduction and waiving 3% increases at the beginning of pandemic.

**Decreased Revenue Since Pandemic (\$288 million)** — Metro also saw decreased revenue since the pandemic with ridership forecasted to be 25% below pre-pandemic levels in FY 2025.

**Inflation & Collective Bargaining Agreements**

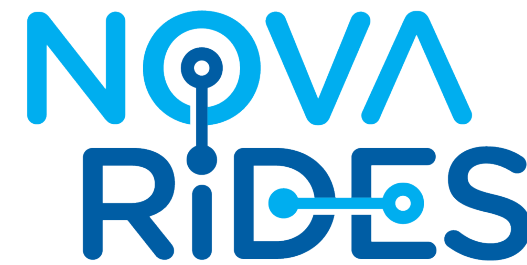
(\$266 million) — The majority of Metro's workforce, which operates and maintains the system, participates in collective bargaining. Metro must comply with mandated annual increases under the terms of the respective collective bargaining agreements, which indexes compensation levels to inflation.

## FY 2025 operating deficit drivers in detail

Direct service cuts could include a 67% cut of rail and bus service with no service after 9:30pm, 20-30 minute wait times on bus and rail and elimination of 98 of 135 bus lines.



# Ride With Us!



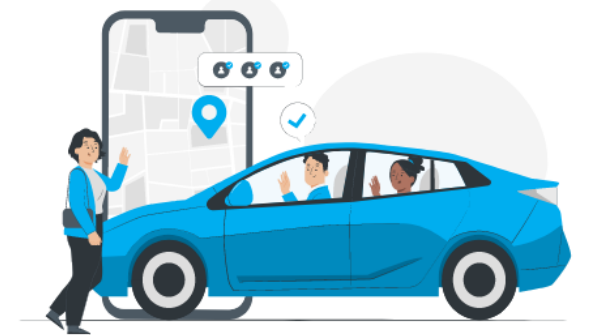
[NoVaRides](#) is here to help you get there. Whether you're traveling across Northern Virginia or into the District, find your best route via transit and/or connect with others who share similar routes and work hours.



## PLAN YOUR TRIP

Find your best route via transit!

[Get Started](#)



## RIDE-SHARING

Find others who share similar routes and work hours.

[Learn More](#)







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 or call 888-SMARTRIP.

Courtesy: Metro



Courtesy: Metro



## Metro launches income-qualified reduced fare program

The Metro Board's [Finance and Capital Committee meeting](#) received a presentation on the upcoming launch of the [Metro Lift Program on June 8](#). Metro Lift is an income-based fare program that will provide 50% off Metrorail and Metrobus trips for customers in DC, Maryland and Virginia who qualify for the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP).

The new program is comparable to the reduced fares Metro offers for people with disabilities

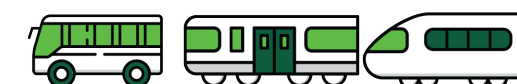
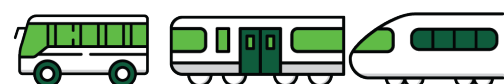
and senior citizens, but Metro Lift is distributed as a pass instead of a separate card. This new fare program is anticipated to cost \$4 million, and program funding was included in Metro's Approved FY 2024 Operating Budget. Approximately 5 million trips are expected to be taken with Metro Lift, a big step forward to making Metro more accessible for commuters of all backgrounds. Find more information about the program and how to qualify [here](#).



## Metro talks 800-Series rail cars

The Metro Board's Safety and Operations Committee received a [presentation](#) on June 22 on the next generation of rail cars. The 8k's will be built by Hitachi and replace the oldest trains in its fleet, which are 40 years old. The newly designed 8K rail cars will update the 7000-series to accommodate all customers with several design improvements including car pairs with open gangways, reconfigured seating, expanded

security camera coverage, LED red/green lights at doors to indicate opening/closing and design space for wheelchairs, bicycles, luggage and strollers. The new rail cars will also generate energy savings of approximately \$25 million from in-floor heating and a return to aluminum train bodies. Hitachi will provide an initial mock-up of an 8k rail car next year with the first pilot cars expected to be delivered to Metro in 2025.







## Commuter Choice investment boosts new Arlington-Fairfax bus route

Executive Director Kate Mattice joined local leaders at the Arlington Mill Community Center June 26 to celebrate the launch of the new Metrobus **16M** Columbia Pike-National Landing route. The route replaces two others and provides a “one-seat” ride and premium rush-hour service to commuters, improving connectivity from the Skyline neighborhood in Fairfax County through

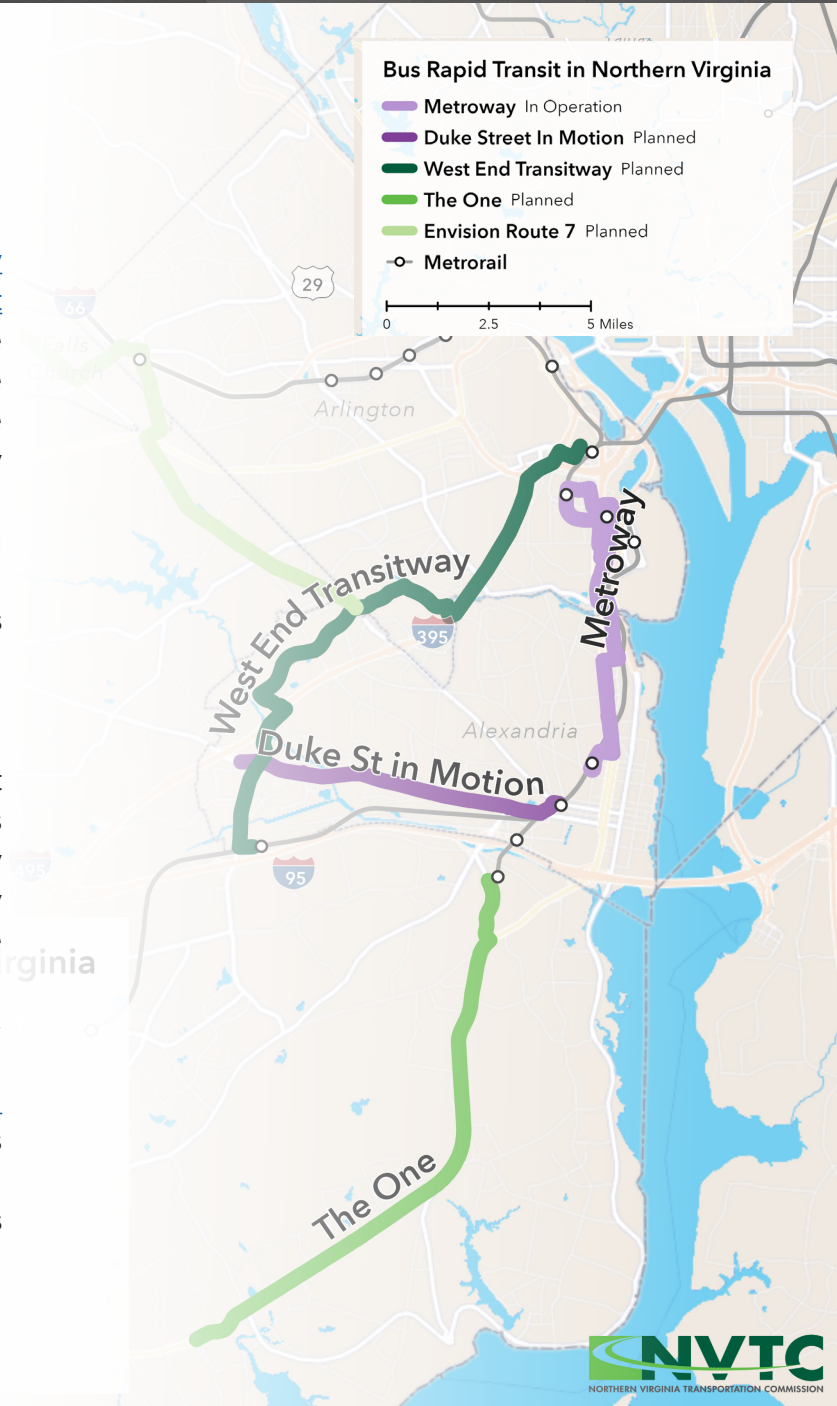
Columbia Pike and extending to the Crystal City Metrorail station. The 16M represents the growth of Columbia Pike as a **Premium Transit Corridor**. Thanks, in part, to \$5 million in Commuter Choice funding to Arlington County, riders will see buses arrive as quickly as every six minutes in the near future, reducing wait times and drive-alone travel.



## Alexandria approves Duke Street Transitway

The Alexandria City Council [voted unanimously](#) in favor of a plan to create a **Duke Street Transitway** at their [meeting](#) June 27 night. The vote capped off a 15-year effort to improve the corridor that has the highest bus ridership in the city. City planners say buses could shave nearly ten minutes off the current end-to-end travel times once the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system opens. The BRT is planned to have upgraded bus stations, transit signal priority, dedicated bus lanes and queue jumps—all measures designed to improve the bus riding experience.

We are excited to see this project advance and it will be part of a growing network of BRT systems in Northern Virginia. The Duke Street Transitway will connect with the planned **West End** Transitway in Alexandria, which in turn, will connect to the NVTC-led **Envision Route 7** (ER7) BRT. ER7 will run from the Mark Center in Alexandria to Tysons, by way of Falls Church and Seven Corners. Fairfax County's planning commission [approved](#) the Tysons segment last week. The county is currently developing another route, "**The One**" for Richmond Highway. Meanwhile, the region's first BRT, the Metroway between Arlington and Alexandria, is undergoing expansion.





## Federal grants bolster region's low- and no-emission buses

Metro, the City of Alexandria and DASH, and Loudoun County Transit received Federal Transit Administration (FTA) low- and no-emission grants June 26. FTA [awarded](#) 130 grants nationwide, totaling nearly \$1.7 billion.

- With a grant award of \$104 million, Metro received the largest amount in this funding cycle. The grant will help Metro convert its Cinder Bed Road Bus facility in Lorton to electric, including purchasing about 100 battery-electric buses (BEBs) and developing workforce training.
- The City of Alexandria received \$23,984,700 to expand DASH's electric bus fleet and upgrade its facility. DASH will use the funding to buy 13 BEBs and associated charging equipment, as well as undertake utility upgrades.
- Loudoun County received \$13,880,910 to aid in its transit fleet's transition from diesel to low-emission Compressed Natural Gas (CNG). It will use the funding to buy 37 CNG buses and build a fueling station.

As NVTC develops its Regional Zero Emission Bus Strategic Plan, we will continue to explore ways to help our regional partners transition to zero-emission fleets in a coordinated and cost-effective manner.

## NVTC senior manager addresses Disadvantaged Business Enterprise firms

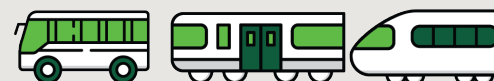
Senior Grants and Procurement Manager Brittany Sumpter presented at VDOT's Transportation DBE Advisory Committee (TDAC) 2023 2nd quarter meeting June 28. TDAC was formed to serve as a forum through which concerns of DBE firms, non-minority contractors and others are addressed and to provide recommendations for operational and administrative improvements to the commissioner and the appropriate departments at VDOT. The meeting objective was to provide insight to Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) firms on how to do business with transportation agencies.

Brittany gave an overview of the DBE goal-setting process and shared with DBE firms tips on how to stay abreast of upcoming contract opportunities, build relationships with prime contractors and better position themselves to do business with transportation agencies.



### 2023 Commissioners

Chair Dalia Palchik, Libby Garvey, Canek Aguirre, Vice-Chair, Matt de Ferranti, Aimee Gilroy, Sarah Bagley, Adam Ebbin, Secretary-Treasurer, David Snyder, Jeffrey McKay, John Foust, Walter Alcorn, M. David Skiles, John C. Tuck III, Paul Smedberg, Katie Cristol, (not pictured) James R. Walkinshaw, Michael R. Turner, Daniel Storck, Jon R. Stehle, Jr., Catherine S. Read, R. Kirk McPike, Matthew Letourneau, Takis Karantonis, Phil Duncan, Nick Clemente, John J. Bell, Jennifer DeBruhl (F-B)







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