



Northern Virginia is on the move again. As Virginia and neighboring jurisdictions drop pandemic restrictions, people are returning to in-person work, schools, shops, bars and restaurants. The transit systems that serve our region are responding by returning service to pre-pandemic levels to meet the demand and increase the opportunities for continued social distancing on board trains and buses. We see this with the full restoration of VRE's schedule this month and a significant ramp-up of [Metrobus](#) service. We're also encouraged by the steady toll collections from the Express Lanes on I-395/95. Revenue from those tolls enables us to put forward a strong slate of proposed Commuter Choice projects for the corridor that will move an additional 1,000 people each morning.

We can't predict what the future of commuting will look like, but we can expect that Northern Virginia will continue to outpace much of the country in growth of job opportunities and the number of people living here. Our continued planning for future needs didn't pause for the pandemic and we will always strive to make traveling across our region easier and to make transit accessible to more people.

Kathleen A. McGhee
Executive Director

Key Dates

- June 22-23 - Commonwealth Transportation Board
- June 25 - VRE Operations Board
- June 30 - NVTC WMATA Committee
- July 1 - Commission meeting
- July 16 - VRE Operations Board
- July 20-21 - Commonwealth Transportation Board

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

[NoVaTransit.org](https://www.NoVaTransit.org)
[NoVaRides.org](https://www.NoVaRides.org)
[@NoVaTransit](https://twitter.com/NoVaTransit)
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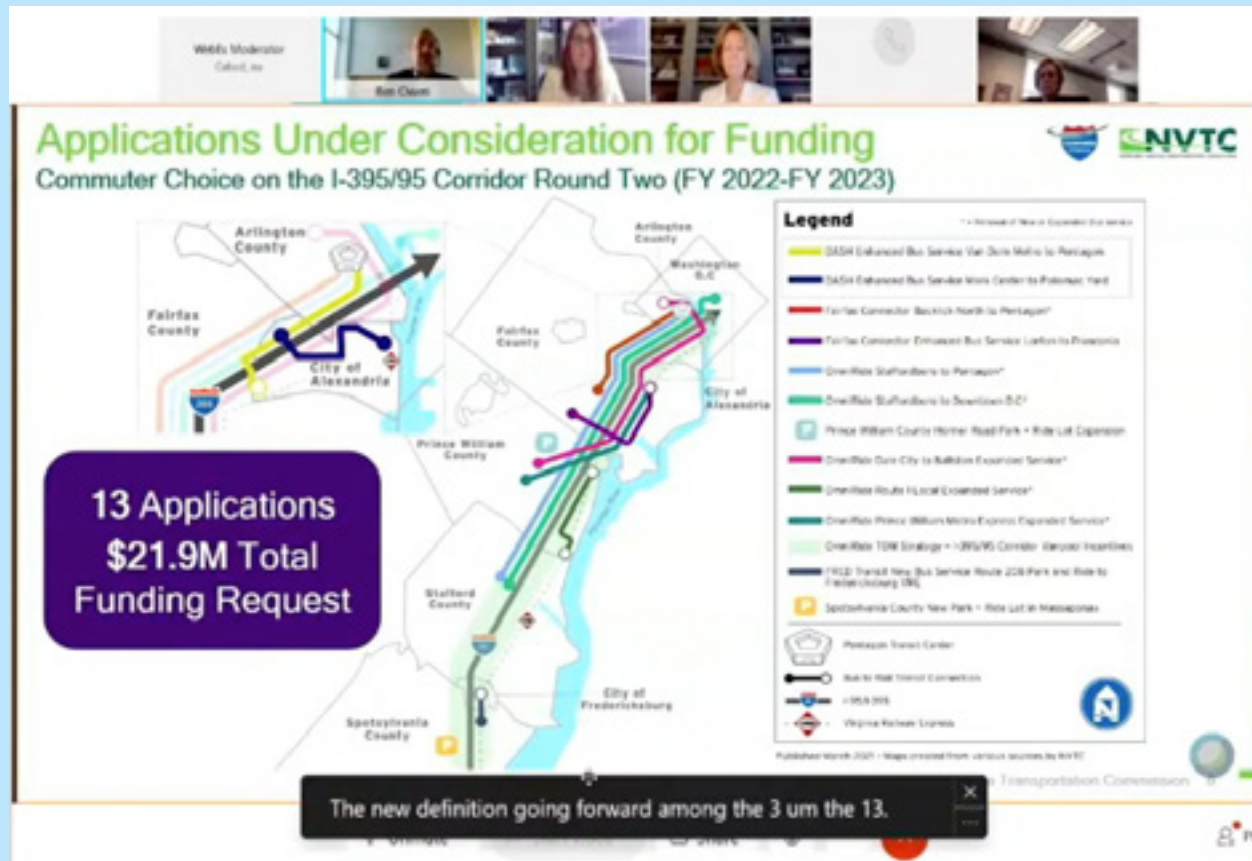
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Commuter Choice on the I-395/95 Corridor Round Two program moving into approvals

The Commuter Choice on the I-395/95 Corridor Round Two (FY 2022-FY 2023) program development process reached two important milestones in May. Public comment on the 13 proposals under consideration for funding closed May 17 with 40 survey responses received. The comments, which overall were supportive of Commuter Choice and specific projects, will be shared with the full Commissions – NVTC and the Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission (PRTC) – at their meetings in June. Then on May 18, Jennifer DeBruhl, Chief of Public Transportation for the Department of Rail and Public Transportation, and Ben Owen, NVTC’s Commuter Choice Senior Program Manager, briefed the [Commonwealth Transportation Board](#) (CTB) on the proposals and the NVTC Commuter Choice team’s recommendation to fund all of them. CTB members asked several questions about the Round Two proposals and Commuter Choice’s rigorous performance management framework.



With the public comment period and all briefings on the proposed Round Two program of projects now complete, NVTC anticipates approval of the program by the Commissions and CTB in June. The 13 multi-modal [transportation improvements](#) in the proposed \$22.7 million Round Two program would move about 1,000 more people inbound through the I-395/95 corridor each morning upon full implementation and as traffic patterns revert to more typical conditions. Commuters along the full length of the corridor between Spotsylvania County and the D.C. line would benefit from additional transportation options. Approximately \$30 million is expected to be available over the FY 2022-FY 2023 period from the annual transit investment payments by Transurban, the concessionaire for the [I-95 and 395 Express Lanes](#). Any leftover funding will be applied to the next call for projects in the corridor in fall 2022, at which point demand for funds is expected to be greater as post-pandemic travel patterns become clearer.

OmniRide unveils new Commuter Choice buses

The Commuter Choice team joined PRTC Commissioners and staff May 12 to celebrate the [arrival](#) of new Motor Coach Industries commuter buses that feature a redesigned, OmniRide-branded interior with passenger-friendly amenities, including comfortable reclining seats, charging ports for electronic devices and air ionizers to maintain clean and healthy air on-board. NVTC’s Commuter Choice program on the I-66 corridor funded four of the buses. Executive Director Kate Mattice delivered remarks at the event and commended OmniRide for continuing to improve their customers’ riding experience and safety, which will help to attract commuters away from driving alone as traffic volumes pick back up across the region.

I-66 corridor commuters will soon experience the Commuter Choice-funded buses on OmniRide’s Route 612 connecting the University Boulevard commuter lot in Gainesville with the Pentagon and the L’Enfant Plaza and Navy Yard areas in D.C. The route is one of Commuter Choice’s most established and successful services. The new buses will allow OmniRide to maintain expanded service levels while retiring buses that have reached the



NVTC Staff Dinah Girma and Ben Owen (above); NVTC Staff Dinah Girma, Ben Owen, Allan Fye, Jae Watkins, Kate Mattice (right)

WMATA Committee starts discussions on annual report

The WMATA Committee [convened](#) May 20 for the first of two work sessions on the 2021 Annual Report on the Performance and Condition of WMATA and presentations on other NVTC programs and initiatives. As the region recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic, staff recommended that the 2021 report focus on strategies to rebuild Metrobus and Metrorail ridership and provide streamlined updates on Metro’s progress of ongoing recommendations from previous reports. WMATA Program Manager Andrew D’huyvetter presented proposed themes for the committee to consider in the annual report:

- Utilize the American Rescue Plan Act aid to prevent layoffs, sustain and improve service levels throughout a multi-year recovery period and position Metro for a sustainable long-term ridership and revenue recovery when the aid expires
- Adapt rail and bus service to reflect new travel patterns and attract riders during the recovery period
- Implement fare policy changes that improve revenue and ridership, remove barriers to access and retain newly returning riders
- Communicate and encourage a safe return to transit

After the presentation, the committee had a robust discussion about the need to balance service levels with ridership demand in a way that supports the region’s recovery. While the committee agreed with staff’s recommended overall direction for the report, the committee directed staff to continue to explore policies that encourage riders to return to transit and keep Commissioners updated on the Metro Board’s discussions on service, fare policy and fare structure.

Via Cisco Webex

Structure of the Report

Andrew D’huyvetter

Chapter	Title	Data Source or Content
	Preface & Introduction	Information on COVID-19 related impacts & recovery
1	Strategies to Reduce the Growth in Costs and Improve Operational Efficiency	Policy Recommendations by the Commission
2	Use of Dedicated Capital Funds	WMATA
3	Safety & Reliability	
4	Metrorail Financial Performance	National Transit Database (NTD) and Metro Performance Reports
5	Metrobus Financial Performance	
6	Metrorail & Metrobus Ridership	

Northern Virginia Transportation Commission

NVTC May 2021 WMATA Committee

VRE returns to full service June 1

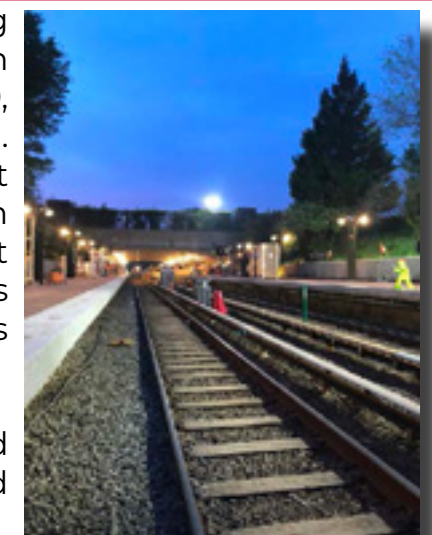
Virginia Railway Express [announced](#) in May that it will return to its full schedule June 1. VRE had been running on a reduced schedule since March of last year, but has been seeing a rise in the number of daily riders in recent weeks. “As people return to the office, we recognize the reduced-service schedule may not be a good fit for their commutes. Convenience is important to our riders and we are pleased to be able to accommodate them,” said VRE Chief Executive Officer Rich Dalton in a news release. “A return to full service will also allow us to maintain social distancing on platforms and railcars, even as ridership begins to increase.”

VRE will operate 32 daily trains on its two lines and will implement a seasonal schedule on the Fredericksburg Line. This schedule adjusts the arrival times on select trains at certain stations in the afternoon to mitigate the effects of heat-related speed restrictions that occur in summer.



Blue Line service returns as platform rebuilding finishes in Virginia

Arlington Cemetery Station [reopened](#) Sunday, May 23, marking the end of Metro’s [Platform Improvement Project](#) at Northern Virginia Metrorail stations. The program which started in 2019, has rebuilt 12 outdoor stations in Virginia and one in Maryland. This latest work, which started in February, also temporarily shut down the Blue Line. Throughout the three years of the platform rebuilding effort, NVTC’s Matt Cheng has played an important role in coordinating a vast number agencies and jurisdictions to make sure the closure of Metro Stations happened with as little disruption as possible.



The Platform Improvement Project moved its focus to Maryland next, with four stations on the northern end of the Green and Yellow Lines closing for work May 29.

Congress unveils more than 2,000 project requests for transportation

The House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee unveiled the full list of Congressional project requests for consideration under a transportation infrastructure bill this week. Among the more than 2,000 requests, representatives from Virginia, Maryland and the District of Columbia included project requests for the Richmond Highway Bus Rapid Transit, replacement cars and station improvements for VRE and funding toward the Long Bridge. Details on each request can be found on member’s websites and the full list of all 2,000+ Congressional requests can be found [here](#).



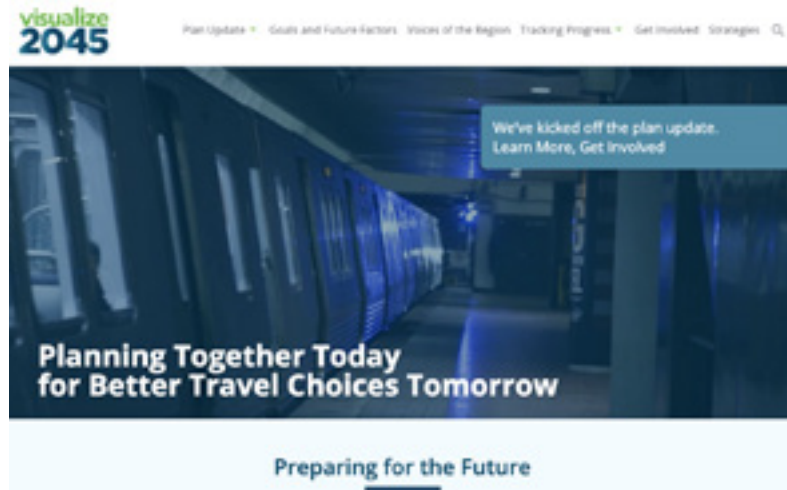
Photo by [DawitTibebu on Pixabay](#). Licensed under Creative Commons.

New website features region’s long-range transportation plan

The National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) [launched](#) a new website for Visualize 2045, the region’s long-range transportation plan as [visualize2045.org](#).

The federal government requires that the TPB, as the region’s Metropolitan Planning Organization, updates the plan every four years and the plan’s 2022 update is underway.

The plan joins the region’s aspirations for its transportation future and identifies all regionally significant projects and programs for which funding is expected to be available over the next 20 years. It must also demonstrate that the plan meets federal requirements in areas including air quality, performance and congestion mitigation.



It’s a nearly two-year long process to meet the requirements to update the region’s federally mandated long-range transportation plan. The new site describes the plan requirements and uses graphics and videos to help explain the timeline, break down different components of the plan and lay out strategies for addressing our region’s transportation challenges.

Program boosts walking, biking connections to transit

The [Transit Within Reach Program](#) funds design and preliminary engineering projects to help improve bike and walk connections to existing high-capacity transit stations or stations that will be open to riders by 2030. The program places special emphasis on projects that improve access in TPB Transit Access Focus Areas (TAFAs), which have been identified as prime locations for small capital improvements— such as sidewalks, trails, crosswalks—that will make it safer and easier to walk or bike to train stations and bus stops.

Moving beyond conceptual planning, Transit Within Reach funds can help projects achieve up to 30% design and otherwise make progress toward construction/implementation. Local governments that are members of the TPB are eligible to apply. Services are provided by consultants on a short-term basis— typically one year or less. To be eligible, projects must have already undergone a local planning process and be ready to move toward implementation. Project categories may include (but are not limited to):

- Cost estimates of improvements
- Engineering systems description and analysis
- Preliminary or schematic drawings with site plans and elevations
- Renderings of site massing, elevation, or facility interior/exterior spaces
- Site surveys
- The Transit Within Reach program advances a regional policy priority to improve walk and bike access to transit

This solicitation will be conducted every two years between FY 2021 and FY 2026. Approximately \$80,000 will be available per project; for each biennial solicitation approximately \$250,000 will be allocated to three projects. The current application period closes July 2, 2021.



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