



NORTHERN VIRGINIA TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Executive Director Newsletter



  @NoVaTransit

NoVaTransit.org
NoVaRides.org

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

March 2023



A Message from Kate Mattice

As a regional body, NVTC has a bird's-eye view of all the transit happenings across Northern Virginia. We can step back and see the interconnections between Metrorail, Metrobus, Virginia Railway Express (VRE) and all the local and commuter bus routes that serve Northern Virginia. This perspective puts NVTC in a unique position to tell the story of public transit in our region. We are telling that story in new ways. For example, the launch late last year of the [NoVa Transit Data Dashboard](#). The dashboard features regularly updating data on ridership, service, access to transit and other key metrics for Metrorail, Metrobus, VRE, DASH, Fairfax Connector, City of Fairfax-CUE, Loudoun County Transit and OmniRide. Our staff continue to look for ways to use the data, recently providing analysis of how well Northern Virginia is served by high-frequency, late-night and weekend bus service.

Meanwhile, work is underway to publish an updated and broader report on The Value of Northern Virginia's Transit Network to the Commonwealth. We seek to demonstrate that continued investment in transit by our state government is vital to the long-term economic growth and health of the entire Commonwealth. If you recall our 2017 research in this area, the presence of just Metrorail and VRE enabled economic activity that provided more than \$600 million a year in sales and income tax revenue to Virginia. We look forward to seeing updated figures measuring the statewide benefits of our transit network.

Additionally, we plan to produce a Northern Virginia Regional Bus Transit Analysis. This effort will provide a regional context and analysis of existing and planned services by Northern Virginia's six bus transit providers and serve as an additional strategic planning resource. This work intends to dovetail with work currently underway by Metro for their Better Bus Network Redesign. NVTC and Metro's work will help create a more comprehensive snapshot of opportunities and challenges in how bus transit can serve our communities.

All of this work helps us better understand the current transit landscape and more effectively plan for the future, ensuring informed decision making to manage and grow our transit network.


Executive Director

In This Issue

- 4 Welcome Commissioner Catherine Read
- 5 Review of applications for I-395/95 Commuter Choice funding underway
- 5 Value of Transit study due this summer
- 6 Metro begins budget comment period
- 7 Staff development day
- 8 Planning for regional transit marketing campaign underway
- 9 Envision Route 7 study on track for spring public outreach
- 9 Transit Technology Working Group reviews NoVa zero-fare programs
- 10 Transit Unplugged podcast interviews Kate Mattice
- 11 Do you follow NVTC on social media?



Save
the
Date

March 17

VRE Operations Board

March 28-29

Commonwealth
Transportation Board

April 6

No Commission Meeting

April 18-29

Commonwealth
Transportation Board

April 21

VRE Operations Board

May 4

Commission Meeting

NoVaTransit.org
NoVaRides.org



@NoVaTransit



Welcome Commissioner Catherine Read

Chair Dalia Palchik swore in the newest Commissioner from the City of Fairfax at the [February 2](#) meeting. Mayor Catherine Read joins the Commission following her election last November and the retirement of former Mayor and longtime Commissioner David Meyer. We welcome Mayor Read to NVTC!



Celebrating **Black History**




Catherine Hudgins

Catherine Hudgins of Fairfax County served on NVTC from 2004-2019, served as Chair of the Commission in 2010 and was appointed by NVTC to the Metro Board of Directors where she served as Board Chair in 2011 and 2012.




Celebrating **Black History**




Ludwig P. Gaines

Ludwig P. Gaines of Alexandria served on NVTC from 2003-2006.




Celebrating **Black History**




Christian Dorsey

Christian Dorsey of Arlington served on NVTC from 2016-2020 and was appointed by NVTC to the Metro Board of Directors.




Celebrating **Black History**




James Dyke

James Dyke served on NVTC from 2011-2015 and was the Commonwealth of Virginia's appointee to the Metro Board of Directors from 2012-2015.




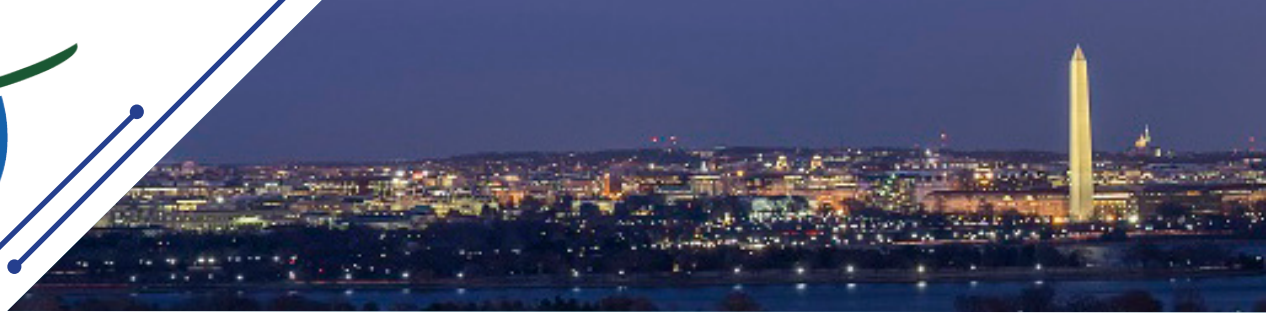
Celebrating **Black History**



Bill Euille

Bill Euille, former Alexandria mayor, served on NVTC from 2000-2015 and served as chair three times: 2004, 2008 & 2011.





Review of applications for I-395/95 Commuter Choice funding underway

NVTC's call for projects for I-395/95 Commuter Choice FY 2024-2025 funding received 18 applications by the January 27 deadline. Seven applicants requested a total of \$110 million – the largest ask of any Commuter Choice program to date – for bus and rail capital upgrades, better transit service, a park and ride lot construction and a transportation demand management strategy. NVTC anticipates \$45-48 million will be available for new projects during FY 2024-2025, approximately \$16 million of which can go toward transit operations.

The process to develop a FY 2024-2025 Program of Projects will move quickly in the coming weeks, culminating in expected

approvals by the Commission (and Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission per [I-395/95 corridor](#) agreements) followed by the Commonwealth Transportation Board in June. The Commuter Choice team is in the process of sending eligibility, completeness and clarification questions to applicants and will notify applicants of any ineligible applications by the end of the month. The team will then develop and finalize scores for all eligible applications during March, before opening a one-month, primarily online public comment period in mid-April. The team will produce English and Spanish versions of all materials and conduct targeted advertising in both languages.

Value of Transit study due this summer

NVTC and its consultant team from AECOM are hard at work modeling and estimating the value of transit in Northern Virginia. This study is an update to NVTC's [2017 report](#), which found that Metrorail and Virginia Railway Express (VRE) are vital to the economic health of the region and commonwealth, generating \$600 million annually in sales and income tax revenue. The current study expands the scope

to look at the value of Northern Virginia's entire transit network, evaluating the impact of the region's bus systems in addition to Metrorail and VRE. It will quantify how congestion would increase and job and household growth would change if the transit network did not exist. NVTC Transit Technology Senior Program Manager Ann McGrane plans to share the results of the analysis this summer.





Metro begins budget comment period

Metro opened the [public comment](#) period for its FY 2024 budget in late February, which the agency says "seeks to expand service on Metrorail and Metrobus, provide more equitable fares, implement a low-income fare program, enhance public safety and maintain a safe and reliable system through capital investments." The \$4.8 billion capital and operating budget is intended to grow ridership and includes measures to:

- Increase service on Metrorail and Metrobus
- Launch Better Bus Network Redesign
- Open the new Potomac Yard station
- Simplify Metrorail pricing

The proposed budget increases Orange and Silver Line service, creates a new 16M Metrobus service with connections to Crystal City station and reinstates the 11Y Metrobus express route from Mt. Vernon and Potomac Park. Metro accepts comments [online](#) and will host a series of public meetings, including one at Meridian High School in Falls Church on Tuesday, March 7 at 6 p.m. Metro staff will be available to answer questions starting at 5 p.m. Meanwhile, Program Analyst Ronnetta Zack-Williams is working with

WMATA Committee Chair Walter Alcorn and committee members to draft a letter from NVTC to be submitted as part of the public comment process.

Separately, the Metro Board met [February 23](#) and adopted a five-year [Strategic Transformation Plan](#) intended to guide the agency to "meet the evolving needs of its customers and employees." In addition, the Board marked the [50th anniversary](#) of Metrobus, noting that the "milestone coincides with Metro's Better Bus Initiative to redesign the bus network and improve the Metrobus system for decades to come including new bus facilities, zero-emission buses, more bus lanes and signal priority."

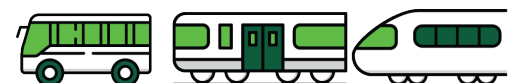
Did you know that NVTC was there at the beginning with our Shirley Express Bus service, operated by AB&W Transit Company? Initiated as a demonstration project for the U.S. Department of Transportation, the Shirley Express service provided much-needed transit service along dedicated bus lanes of what's now known as I-395. Acquired by Metro in February 1973, many of the NVTC routes are still operating today! Learn more [here](#).





Staff development day

NVTC held an all-staff development day February 6, focused on improving our already stellar working relationships and identifying areas for greater collaboration. We also examined the timeline of major NVTC events as we prepare to celebrate our 60th anniversary in 2024. Chair Dalia Palchik for joining us for lunch and had the opportunity to get to know our dynamic staff a little better.





Planning for regional transit marketing campaign underway

NVTC's communications team assembled staff from Arlington, Alexandria, Fairfax County, OmniRide and Virginia Railway Express (VRE) February 21 to kick off the creative planning process for this year's regional transit marketing campaign. The Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) will provide a grant to encourage public transit ridership once [reconstruction](#) work on Metro's Yellow Line bridge and tunnel wraps up and full Yellow Line service resumes in May. The jurisdictional and agency partners will provide a local match to the DRPT grant and are an integral part of the marketing effort.

Marketing and Engagement Manager Monique Blyther has taken on leadership of this campaign, with assistance from Communications and Public Affairs Manager Matt Friedman and Transit Fellow Nathan Varnell. During the week's meeting, participants discussed potential themes and messages for the campaign. The communications team has also been busy meeting with media outlets to scope out details

of the advertising, which will be seen and heard on radio, streaming audio and video, online display ads, social media and in email blasts. This campaign will continue to encourage viewers and listeners to visit [novarides.org](https://www.novarides.org) to plan their transit trips and learn more about transit options in Northern Virginia.





Study on track for spring public outreach

There is a lot going on for [Envision Route 7](#) Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project. Our current mobility study, covering I-66 to Seven Corners, is modeling three different BRT scenarios for the study corridor to understand impacts to traffic and bus operations. We will be sharing these findings in our next public outreach phase this spring, with our next public meeting tentatively planned for mid-May. The final report will wrap up this summer. Concurrently, NVTC staff, under the direction of Senior Program Manager Xavier Harmony, have been working with regional transportation leaders to develop a strategic implementation plan that will take us from our current work through construction and implementation. Finally, thanks to the \$2 million [awarded](#) for this

project in the December federal omnibus bill, later this year we will be starting work on the final planning and environmental work needed for this project before we can begin final engineering design and construction.

Transit Technology Working Group reviews NoVa zero-fare programs

[Transit Technology](#) Senior Program Manager Ann McGrane and Program Analyst Sophie Spiliotopoulos hosted a Transit Technology Working Group meeting February 7. The meeting served as a regional forum to discuss innovative fare programs, identify key transit technology issues for discussion in 2023 and share lessons learned among transit agencies. Ryan Visci from [CUE](#) and Martin Barna from [DASH](#) presented takeaways from each agency's zero-fare programs, with a focus on technologies and policies that facilitated the change. The Transit Technology Working Group meets quarterly, with the next meeting scheduled for May 2.



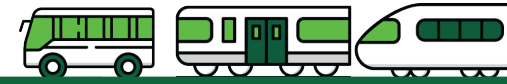
Transit Unplugged podcast interviews Kate Mattice

The Transit Unplugged podcast published Executive Director Kate Mattice's [discussion](#) with host Paul Comfort in February. Kate talked about NVTC'S complex work on public transit in Northern Virginia, including relationships with Metro, Virginia Railway Express (VRE), use

of toll revenues to support traffic congestion-relief measures through our Commuter Choice program and efforts to support NoVa's bus systems with the transition to zero-emission buses and zero-fare research.



[LISTEN NOW](#)



In-Depth
WITH PAUL COMFORT



 **TRANSIT**
UNPLUGGED



Special Guest:
Kate Mattice

Executive Director
Northern Virginia
Transportation Commission

Celebrating

Black History Month



The Northern Virginia Transportation Commission salutes the Black leaders who helped reshape public transit in NoVa.



Do you follow NVTC on social media?

Have you checked out NVTC's social media channels lately? Transit Fellow Nathan Varnell created several fun posts for [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) celebrating Valentines Day. We also ran a series of posts created by Marketing and Engagement Manager Monique Blyther highlighting Black NVTC Chairs and Commissioners as part of Black History Month.

There's also a new and easier-to-read YouTube handle. Find us at youtube.com/@NoVaTransit. Don't forget to subscribe to our channel while you're there! Finally, follow NVTC on [LinkedIn](#) where we post more in-depth items, job listings and other happenings in the public transit industry.



Ride public transit to your heart's desire ❤️ #ValentinesDay



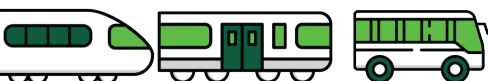
3:10 PM · Feb 14, 2023 · 461 Views



#TransitEquityDay

"I had no idea history was being made. I was just tired of giving up."

-Rosa Parks





2300 Wilson Blvd., Ste. 230
Arlington, VA 22201

NoVaTransit.org
NoVaRides.org



@NoVaTransit