

HILLWOOD AVENUE



NORTHERN VIRGINIA TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Executive Director Newsletter



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NoVaTransit.org
NoVaRides.org

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

May 2023



A Message from Kate Mattice

May will be a momentous month for public transit in Northern Virginia. Just five months after the opening of the Silver Line Extension, we will celebrate the start of service for the [Potomac Yard](#) Metro Station. The station, located between Reagan National Airport and Braddock Road Stations, will serve a fast-growing section of the City of Alexandria. The 98th station in the Metrorail system, Potomac Yard will also be only the second infill station, meaning one built between existing stations. We are proud to support the construction of the station, through the management of a \$20 million federal grant on behalf of the city for the construction of enhancements to the southwest pedestrian access to the station.

May will also see the reopening of Metrorail’s Yellow Line following a monthslong shutdown to rehabilitate the Yellow Line Bridge/Tunnel over the Potomac River. The return of service will speed trips from Arlington, Alexandria and Fairfax County to L’Enfant Plaza and other destinations in the district. Soon after the reopening, we will kick off our newest regional marketing campaign to encourage riders to return to Metro and all of our NoVa transit systems. The campaign, funded by the Department of Rail and Public Transportation, along with local matches from Arlington, Alexandria, Fairfax County, OmniRide and Virginia Railway Express will encourage people to “Ride With Us” and visit our trip-planning website at [novarides.org](#).

NVTC’s Commuter Choice program will wrap up its [public comment](#) period for the latest round of funding for the I-395/95 corridor during the month. We are asking the public to weigh in on 16 proposed projects, competing for \$48 million in available funding. The recommended Program of Projects would support additional weekday trips, reduce travel delays and greenhouse gas emissions, and create fuel cost savings for commuters.

It’s evident that more and more people are using our public roads for commuting, visiting and simply having fun--and with more drivers, comes more congestion. I’m looking forward to continued investment in transit projects like the one at Potomac Yard and the Silver Line, so that people who live, work and play in our region can continue to have access to reliable public transit options.

Kate A. Mattice
Executive Director

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Save the Date

May 16
Envision Route 7
Public Meeting

May 17
Legislative and Policy
Committee

May 19
VRE Operations Board

May 23-24
Commonwealth
Transportation Board

May 23-24
Virginia Transit Association
2023 Annual Conference &
Expo

May 25
Virginia Passenger Rail
Authority

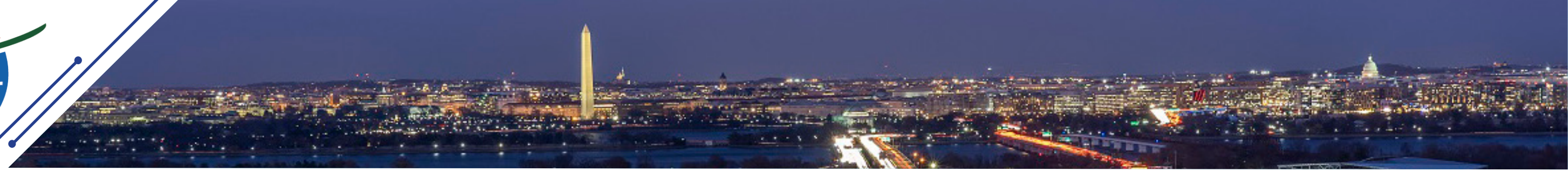
June 1
Commission Meeting

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I-95/395 Commuter Choice public comment opens

\$48 million in funding available

Public comment on the 16 projects under consideration for I-395/95 Commuter Choice FY 2024-2025 funding opened April 14. All public comment materials, including an easy-to-use input form, are available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

The Commuter Choice team, led by Senior Program Manager Ben Owen and Senior Program Analyst Adam Hager, is eager to hear from corridor commuters about which of the 16 proposed projects most merit funding with the \$48 million available. The team strongly encourages corridor jurisdictions and agencies, particularly those with projects under

consideration for funding, to help spread the word to residents and riders. A [messaging guide](#), graphics and videos are available to make getting the word out as easy as possible.

NVTC will also begin targeted advertising to I-395/95 corridor commuters over [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) next week. Posts will feature greetings from Chair Dalia Palchik in [English](#) and [Spanish](#) encouraging viewers to learn about the projects and provide feedback. Marketing and Engagement Manager Monique Blyther led the production of these videos.

The comment period is open until 5 p.m. on Monday, May 15.



We want to hear from you!

We're accepting comments on proposed I-395/95 corridor transportation improvements through May 15, 2023.



Falls Church celebrates new multimodal plaza

Chair Dalia Palchik and Commissioner David Snyder helped [cut the ribbon](#) on the City of Falls Church's South Washington Transportation and History Plaza and South Maple Intersection Improvements April 19. NVTC helped the city realize the vision of this project as the first partner to secure and administer the important federal funding provided under Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users by former Rep. Jim Moran. This initial grant, totaling just over \$2 million, has been carefully managed and administered by NVTC, allowed the city to acquire the land and launch the engineering and construction activities. I was delighted to attend with NVTC Grants Manager and DBE Officer Brittany Sumpter.



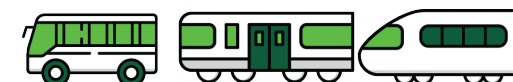
NVTC-PRTC Joint Commission Working Group endorses I-395/95 Commuter Choice recommendations

Joint Commission Working Group

The NVTC-PRTC Joint Commission Working Group (JCWG) [met April 20](#) to review NVTC staff's recommendations for an I-395/95 Commuter Choice FY 2024-2025 Program of Projects. Commuter Choice Senior Program Manager Ben Owen and Senior Program Analyst Adam Hager highlighted the 13 projects, totaling \$48 million, recommended for funding. The projects include expansion of the Crystal City commuter rail station, implementation of bus rapid transit along Richmond Highway in Fairfax County, the purchase of two 60-foot electric buses for a busy DASH bus route, continuations of funding support for a total of eight OmniRide, DASH and Fairfax Connector bus service improvements, expanded local bus service along Columbia Pike in Arlington and Fairfax Counties and the reinstatement and enhancement of Virginia Railway Express' Amtrak Step-Up program. The JCWG indicated its support for this draft Program of Projects which, upon full implementation, would represent 11,000 additional weekday trips in the corridor, 138,000 hours of delay saved each year, over \$4M in annual fuel cost savings for commuters and a 76% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions relative to driving alone. Staff will brief the full Commissions at their May 4 meetings on the proposed Program of Projects. The Commissions will then be asked to adopt a Program of Projects in June, taking public comment received into account as well. NVTC is [collecting comments](#) on all 16 eligible proposals through May 15.

Program Advisory Committee

NVTC's Program Advisory Committee (PAC) met shortly after the JCWG and heard updates from Senior Program Manager Xavier Harmony and Senior Program Manager Ann McGrane on Envision Route 7 BRT, Regional Bus Analysis and Regional Zero-Emission Bus Strategic Plan. Xavier shared details on the mobility study currently underway and upcoming community engagement activities in May for the Envision Route 7 Bus Rapid Transit project. He also provided an overview of NVTC's Regional Bus Analysis which will provide a regional context and analysis of existing and planned services by Northern Virginia's six bus transit providers. Ann updated the PAC on the Regional Zero-Emission Bus Strategic Plan, noting the challenges and opportunities in developing a set of regional recommendations that can help advance zero-emission buses from shared infrastructure to policies and coordination needs. The plan is currently in its discovery phase before moving into regional recommendations in the summer followed by individual fleet transition assistance in the fall and winter.





WMATA Committee reviews visionary bus network, future of Metro funding

The NVTC WMATA Committee met [April 19](#) and received presentations from Metro staff on the [Better Bus Network](#) redesign and from NVTC staff on an overview of NVTC's WMATA Operating Funding and Reform Working Group.

Metro draft visionary bus network

Peter Cafiero, Managing Director of Intermodal Planning, and Allison Davis, Acting Senior Vice President of Planning and Sustainability, gave the committee an overview on the Better Bus Network redesign process and the introduction of the draft visionary network maps for [Virginia](#) and the [region](#). The draft visionary network includes an expanded frequent service network with more routes with 12-minute or better all-day service, more routes with 12 to 20-minute all-day service and all remaining service with no less than 30-minute frequency. It also includes a regional [24-hour network](#) and increases crosstown and cross-county connections.

The visionary network could generate 40,000–45,000 more bus trips on weekdays, representing

a 9% increase compared to pre-pandemic ridership, across all bus providers in the region. The draft network does not specify which bus provider will operate the service nor does it identify stops or route patterns, like limited stop service. The draft visionary network represents a 35% increase in resources devoted to bus in the region overall. Metro seeks public input on the draft visionary network which will be used to refine the visionary network and develop a network that Metro can implement in the near-term.

NVTC's WMATA Operating Funding and Reform Working Group

Andrew D'huyvetter, NVTC's WMATA Senior Program Manager, presented an overview of the WMATA Operating Funding and Reform Working Group to the Committee. The purpose of the working group is to examine and develop options for a new financial operating model for Metro with a focus on creating new stable funding streams. The formation of the working group is in response to the direction given by

the WMATA Committee and the Commission last year to address the structural operating funding challenges at Metro that will result in a projected operating funding gap of over \$700 million in FY 2025. Given the complicated governance and funding relationship Virginia has with Metro, NVTC is uniquely positioned to explore solutions. NVTC's effort is strategically intended to integrate into a broader conversation in the region regarding dedicated operating funding for Metro.

The approach will be similar to the dedicated capital funding solution the regional developed in 2018, with this process aiming to solve Virginia's share of Metro's operating budget gap and integrate into any regional efforts. The working group will examine 1) revenue sources, 2) revenue structures and 3) their associated policy considerations and deliver a report to the Commission in the fall with a menu of revenue options for consideration. The working group will meet three times and there will be staff level strategic touchpoints with stakeholders in the district, Maryland and at Metro. NVTC Staff will seek policy and legislative guidance on the working group through the NVTC WMATA Committee and the Legislative and Policy Committee for inclusion of any recommendations into the NVTC Legislative Agenda.

Potomac Yard- VT Station opening date

Metro and the City of Alexandria [announced](#) that the Potomac Yard-VT Station will open on Friday, May 19. The station will be Metro's 98th station and is Metro's second infill station. The station was initiated by the City of Alexandria and funded by tax revenues and developer contributions generated by planned new development in the Potomac Yard neighborhood, as well as state grants, loans and regional sources. NVTC manages a \$20 million federal grant on behalf of the City of Alexandria for the construction of new enhancements to the southwest pedestrian access to the station.

Metro summer construction work

Metro [announced](#) travel alternatives for construction work that will impact the Orange and Silver Lines in Northern Virginia. Starting Friday, May 12, Metro will begin a four-part construction effort focusing on system maintenance and modernization- including rail replacement, fiber optic cable installation, and improved station facilities. Free shuttle bus service will be available for customers during all station closures. NVTC Program Analyst Ronnetta Zack-Williams plays an active role in coordination meetings with Metro and our local jurisdictions and transit systems.



Photo courtesy of Metro

FY 2024 Budget approval

The [Metro Board approved](#) the FY 2024 Budget and FY 2024–2029 Capital Improvement Program April 14. The FY 2024 budget “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 operating and capital budget is intended to grow ridership and includes measures to: increase service on Metrorail and Metrobus, launch the Better Bus Network Redesign and simplify Metrorail pricing. At its budget work session in March, the Metro Board opted to maintain the maximum Metrorail fare at \$6.00, rather than the proposed \$6.50, which was supported by [NVTC’s budget comments](#).

New fare changes approved in this budget include:

- Consolidating the weekday peak and off-peak rail fare structure into one weekday distance-based fare structure that ranges from \$2.00 to \$6.00
- Reducing the maximum fare on MetroAccess to \$4.00 per trip
- Introducing a regional low-income fare program

New bus and rail service changes include:

- Optimizing rail frequency by increasing Green and Yellow Line train frequency to six minutes all day and 7.5 minutes at late night, with all Yellow Line trains turning around at Mt. Vernon Square Station
- Increasing Orange line train frequency to every 7.5 minutes on average during peak service and every 10 minutes during off-peak service
- Improvements to several bus lines including the restructuring of existing routes into the 16M connecting Skyline to Crystal City and

restoring the 11Y between Mt. Vernon and Potomac Park

The FY 2024 budget will begin July 1. With the approval of this budget, Metro staff, the Board and greater regional partners must swiftly begin to focus on the FY 2025 Operating Budget which is projected to have an operating budget deficit of \$738 million that will continue to grow to \$924 million by FY 2029. This long-term operating funding gap is the result of many factors related to the structural challenges of Metro’s operating budget, which have been accelerated by the pandemic. NVTC is establishing a [WMATA Operating Funding and Reform Working group](#) which will examine and develop options for a new financial operating model at Metro.

Metro Board approves an on-bus camera enforcement program with the district

The Metro Board also approved and launched its Clear Lanes program, which is a partnership with the District of Columbia to use automated cameras on Metrobuses to capture unauthorized vehicles in bus-only lanes and bus stop zones. Metro will fund the capital and preventive maintenance costs of the equipment installed onboard Metrobus vehicles and the District will fund expenses associated with operating the system. Last year, the NVTC WMATA Committee received an update on Metro’s [Bus Priority Program](#). Expansion of the program into Maryland and Virginia would require legislation.

Metro Board welcomes new Maryland board member

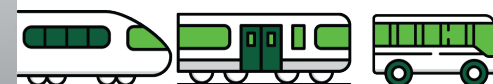
Finally, the Metro Board welcomed Joe McAndrew, Assistant Secretary of Transportation at the Maryland Department of Transportation, as a Principal Director from Maryland, replacing Secretary of Transportation Paul Wiedefeld. Joe previously served as the Vice President for Government Affairs & Infrastructure with the Greater Washington Partnership.



Kate Mattice moderates zero-fare vs. fare enforcement debate

Executive Director Kate Mattice moderated a debate on zero-fare vs. fare enforcement at the [Think Transit Executive Summit](#) in Nashville in April. It was a lively discussion between Noah Berger, Administrator & CEO of [Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority](#) and Rich Sampson, Executive Director of the [South West Transit Association](#).

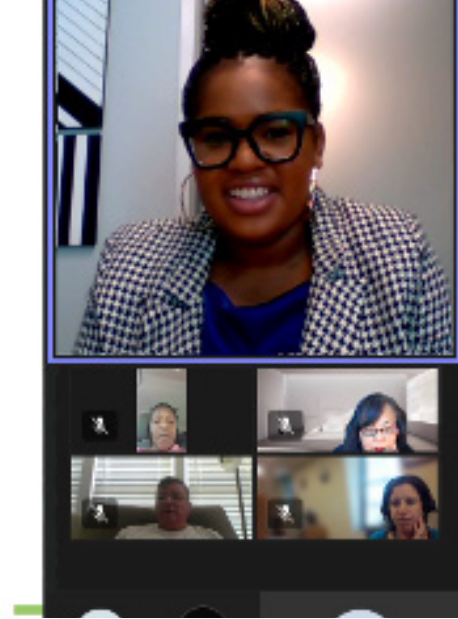
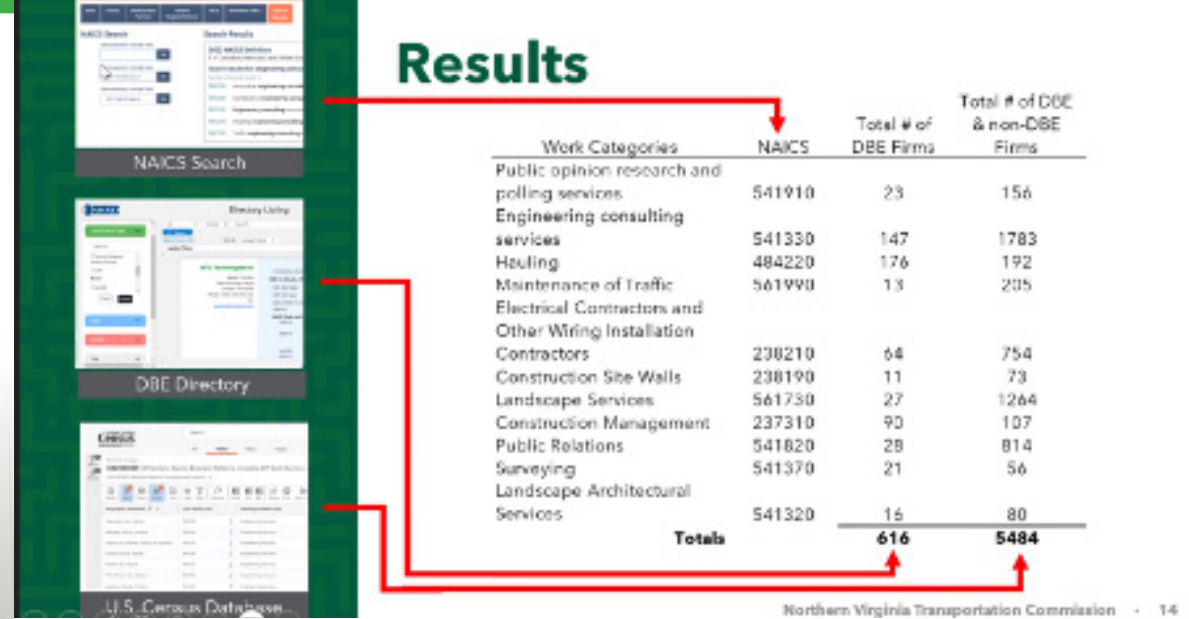
At NVTC, we've done extensive work helping our local transit systems navigate the policy and funding dynamics that need to be at play to successfully launch and sustain different transit fare products. It's not an easy decision to make. Kate also thanks [Paul Comfort](#) of Transit Unplugged for the invitation to moderate.



Transit agencies from around the country learn about Commuter Choice

Commuter Choice Senior Program Manager Ben Owen presented the program's model for reinvesting expressway toll revenues into transit improvements at the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) Mobility [conference](#) in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Ben highlighted the framework, partnerships and results that have made Commuter Choice successful, as well as lessons that the Commuter Choice team has learned over the program's history, as part of a panel discussion

on innovative funding and finance. The annual conference provides a forum to share experiences addressing the challenges that bus and paratransit operators around the country face. This year's conference included sessions on first and last-mile access strategy solutions, zero-emission bus deployment, lessons learned on bus rapid transit and bus-only lane deployment and how agencies are rethinking their networks to meet changing travel needs post-pandemic.



NVTC hosts DBE event with NoVa organizations

As a direct recipient of Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funding, NVTC is committed to ensuring that we continue to level the playing field by providing small businesses owned and controlled by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals a fair opportunity to compete for our federally funded transportation contracts. As part of that mission, Grants Manager and DBE Officer Brittany Sumpter, hosted a virtual "DBE Goal Public Consultation" event April 20 to solicit feedback and criticism of NVTC's FFY (federal fiscal year) 2024–2026 Proposed DBE Goal and Methodology from representatives of minority,

women's and community organizations, which is required by FTA. Among those in attendance were DBE firms and representatives from the Virginia Department of Small Business and Diversity, Northern Virginia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Northern Virginia Black Chamber of Commerce and VDOT Business Opportunity Development Center. The feedback received from this consultation will be taken into consideration and used to support NVTC's FFY 2024–2026 DBE Goal, which NVTC will bring before the Commission in July for Consent to submit to FTA.

Learning the latest government communications techniques

Marketing and Engagement Manager Monique Blyther spent the week of April 17 in Portland Oregon, advancing her marketing skills at the National Association of Government Communicators ([NAGC](#)) School. The annual conference is an opportunity for local and federal government communicators to network and expand their communications techniques through innovative workshops. Monique heard from leading experts on a variety of topics, including cross-cultural/generational communication, strategic storytelling, influencing awareness into action and more. She was even [featured](#) on NAGC's social media channel discussing the benefits of the conference and is eager to apply lessons learned to NVTC's regional marketing campaign kicking off in June.



OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

CHALLENGES with BEB

- E-bus range Variations
- Operation parameters (Run time, layover, speed..)
- Charging time (variable)
- Maintenance Team Training
- Finding qualified EV techs
- Weather condition
- Employees adjustment-New Technology
- Infrastructure



IndyGoSM

Team Transit runs Parkway Classic

Senior Program Manager Ann McGrane, Transit Fellow Silas Sullivan and others joined Executive Director Kate Mattice for for the ten mile race as part of the [Parkway Classic](#) April 23. The race, founded as the George Washington Parkway Classic in 1984, started at Mt. Vernon Estate and

finished at Oronoco Bay Park with a scenic point to point course down the George Washington Memorial Parkway and through historic Old Town, Alexandria. As you can see in the photo, we also wore custom-made "Team Transit" shirts during the race.

Ann McGrane (second from left); Kate Mattice (second from right) joined by spouses and Greg Potts, Metro Northern Virginia Government Relations Manager (right)

NVTC hosts zero-emission bus working group

Senior Program Manager Ann McGrane hosted NVTC's Zero-Emission Bus (ZEB) Working Group meeting, on March 31. Aaron Vogel, COO of IndyGo in Indianapolis, will be joining the call to discuss [IndyGo's](#) experiences and lessons learned while testing battery electric and fuel cell electric buses. Following question-and-answer period, the meeting will shift to a roundtable discussion of ZEB updates from NVTC and regional partners. These discussions help inform the work of the Northern Virginia Regional ZEB Strategic Plan that NVTC is currently developing with its consultant team.

Learning from experts in urban issues

Transit Resource Center Senior Program Manager Xavier Harmony attended the [Urban Affairs Association Conference](#) in Nashville. This annual conference increases knowledge about urban places and promotes an advanced understanding of urban issues, institutions and policies. Xavier heard from leading experts on a variety of topics including planning public transit infrastructure, challenges and conflicts with involving different tiers of government in city planning and collaboration and cooperation of regional partners in urban governance. Xavier is excited to apply what he has learned in future research and analyses produced by the [Transit Resource Center](#).



Upcoming...

ENVISION ROUTE 7

NVTC leads the planning process for Envision Route 7, a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system designed to connect the Mark Center in Alexandria to Tysons via Bailey's Crossroads, Seven Corners and Falls Church along the Route 7 corridor.

We want to talk! Meet us at the events below

	Location	Date	Time
Bus Stop Chat	W. Broad St. & S. Maple Ave	May 3, Wednesday	3-7pm
Pop-Up	Good Fortune Supermarket	May 7, Sunday	11am-3pm
Bus Stop Chat	E. Falls Church Metro Station	May 10, Wednesday	3-7pm
Pop-Up	West Falls Church Metro Station	May 11, Thursday	3-7pm
Pop-Up	Falls Church Farmers Market	May 13, Saturday	11am-3pm
Public Meeting	Mary Styles Riley Public Library	May 16, Tuesday	6:30-8pm



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