



Have you seen the latest [census data](#) that were released in August? Northern Virginia's population exploded between 2010 and 2020. Fairfax County's population grew 6.3%, Arlington grew by 14.9% and Loudoun led the pack with a whopping 38.4% increase. We've all seen it. New homes, offices and shops keep going up across the region and all the people that come with them put more pressure on our transportation systems. Now think about how much more growth Northern Virginia will experience by 2030.

That's where the work of NVTC comes in. We often measure our planning efforts in years and decades to prepare for the sustained growth and vitality of our region. Our work in the coming months reflects this forward thinking. Staff will recommend a slate of projects for Commuter Choice on the I-66 corridor and open the next call for projects in the corridor. NVTC's Transit Resource Center will be launching the next study phase and public engagement for Envision Route 7, the planned Bus Rapid Transit system connecting Tysons, Falls Church and Alexandria. NVTC will develop our legislative agenda outlining priorities at the state and federal level and host our annual Legislative Briefing for lawmakers.

We'll also take a deep look at key policy issues emerging in public transit – publishing our zero-fare/reduced-fare white paper and hosting a symposium on zero emissions buses. It's all part of NVTC's continued focus on the future to keep Northern Virginia moving.

Executive Director

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Key Dates

- Sept. 13 - Program Advisory Committee
- Sept. 14-15 - Commonwealth Transportation Board
- Sept. 16 - WMATA Committee
- Sept. 17 - VRE Operations Board
- Sept. 28-29 - Virginia Transit Association Annual Conference

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Commission resumes in-person meetings

Commissioners filled the first floor conference room at 2300 Wilson Boulevard for the first time since March 2020 on the evening of [July 1](#). The resumption of in-person Commission meetings marked a new era in the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and coincided with the news that 70% of eligible adults in Virginia had been vaccinated. The meeting also featured the first use of video technology to allow some Commissioners to participate remotely, though the June 30 expiration of Gov. Ralph Northam's emergency declaration means the law again requires an in-person quorum.



Commissioners welcomed special guest [speaker](#) Rep. Don Beyer. He noted that he was speaking on the same day that the [INVEST in America](#) bill passed the U.S. House and recalled his support of the three emergency relief bills passed by Congress, which provided money for Metro and other transit agencies. "My hope is that all those cuts that the general manager had to announce last year can go by the boards. We put in enough money to bring Metro back and it's really fun going now that the Capitol's opened back up to see the people pouring out of Capitol South now that all our staffers are coming back to Metro," said Beyer.

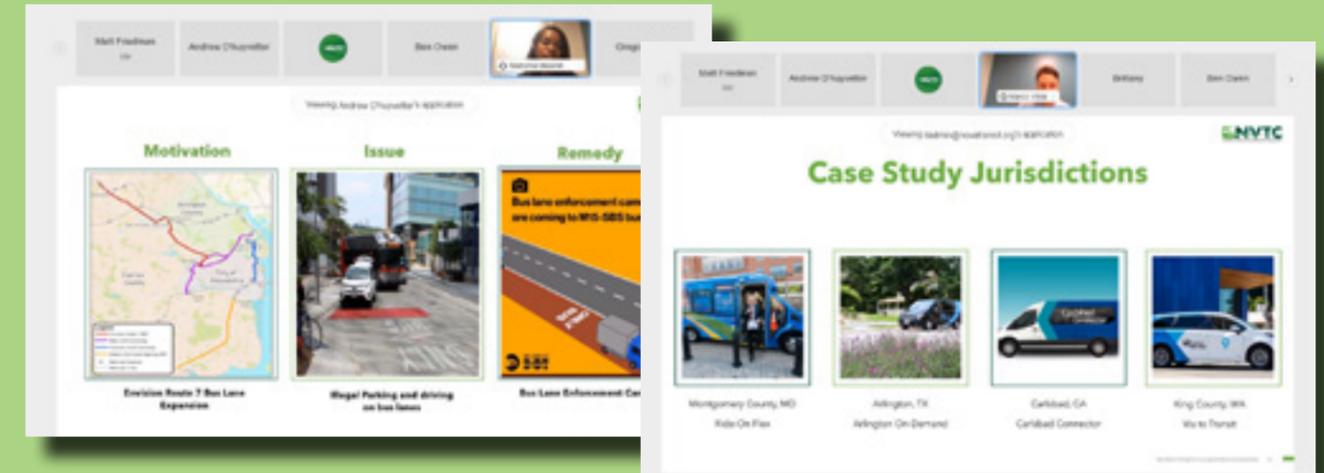
The meeting also included a three-part [discussion](#) of zero and reduced-fare transit. Director of Programs and Policy Allan Fye lead the panel, which included DASH General Manager/CEO Josh Baker and Department of Rail and Public Transportation Chief of Public Transportation Jennifer DeBruhl.

Mother Nature provided a dramatic end to the meeting as emergency alerts sounded and a [tornado](#) passed through Arlington, within blocks of NVTC. Commissioners, staff and members of the public quickly exited the glass-walled conference room as a precaution. The storm rapidly passed through the region and everyone was able to safely venture home.

Transit Fellows research bus lane enforcement, microtransit

NVTC's summer Transit Fellows Nneoma Ugwu and Marco Viola presented the results of their research projects for the Management Advisory Committee (MAC) in August. Their topics focused on several emerging trends in public transit that include strategies starting to be implemented in the greater Washington region.

Nneoma provided an overview of bus lane [enforcement](#), which is a tool where transit agencies and local governments use automated cameras to fine vehicles illegally parked or driving in a bus lane. She provided a summary of the experience and best practices of peer agencies in New York City and the San Francisco Bay Area and provided a legislative context for camera enforcement in Virginia.



Marco identified several considerations for a successful microtransit service based on the experiences of five [local](#) case-study agencies around the country. Microtransit typically involves using minibuses or vans to provide a smaller-scale, on-demand service, either to complement fixed-route transit or to serve areas that fixed-route transit cannot effectively serve. NVTC is looking into ways that we can be a resource for Northern Virginia jurisdictions and transit operators that wish to deploy microtransit. NVTC's Transit Fellow program is made possible through the generous support of the Virginia Department of Rail of Public Transportation.

Metro, Arlington Transit announce September service increases

Metro and Arlington Transit announced in August that they plan to increase service around Labor Day. Metro's changes take effect Sunday, September 5. Metro will add more buses on the busiest lines to better serve customers throughout the day, reduce average wait times for buses during the day, restore more service that had been suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic and provide free bus transfers between rail and discounted passes.

On Metrorail, more trains will run during off-peak hours with average wait times ranging between two and seven minutes any time of day. Trains will also run longer, closing later on weekends and opening earlier on Sundays.

"This is a time of change for Metro and our customers and it's an opportunity to make our service work better for all riders whether they take Metro to work, the grocery store, visit family or friends or just get around town," said Metro Board Chair Paul C. Smedberg in a [news release](#).



[Arlington Transit](#) will return to full bus service Tuesday, September 7. ART routes 53, 61, 62 and 74 will resume operating for the first time since going out of service due to the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. Once the four rush-hour-only routes are reinstated, Arlington Transit will be operating full service with no restrictions on seating capacity.

Riders are required to wear face masks when riding all ART buses. The ART 72 route will continue to operate on a modified weekday schedule.

Infrastructure deal includes money for public transit and rail

Senate passage of a \$1 trillion Bipartisan Infrastructure Framework (BIF) has the potential to mean big money for public transit and railroads. The [White House](#) says \$39 billion “is the largest federal investment in public transit in history.” The deal calls for repairing and upgrading infrastructure, modernizing bus and rail fleets, improving transit station accessibility and expanding service. While that figure is lower than negotiators initially [proposed](#), the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) called it a “positive step.” “While we are greatly appreciative of the efforts of the White House and the group of Senate negotiators, we need to address the needs of the transit industry in the context of the imperatives of a 21st Century America,” said APTA President and CEO Paul P. Skoutelas in a statement.

The agreement also provides \$66 billion for passenger and freight rail, noting “the largest investment in passenger rail since the creation of Amtrak 50 years ago.” Money would help Amtrak eliminate its maintenance backlog, modernize the Northeast Corridor and bring rail service to areas outside of the northeast and mid-Atlantic. [Sen. Mark Warner](#), part of the negotiating team, called the agreement an “historic step.”

We’ll be keeping a close eye on Congress as members continue negotiations and reconciliation on a final bill, with particular interest in how our region could benefit. With Congress in recess for the summer, final passage won’t come before the fall.

NVTC’s staff departures

NVTC’s Commuter Choice team wishes Jae Watkins a fond farewell after leaving in July. Jae departed NVTC after nearly three years, but not leaving the region. She joined the Capital Bikeshare team as the Regional Marketing Manager for the system. NVTC is immensely grateful for Jae’s contributions in her nearly three years with the organization. We’ll miss her keen eye for graphics, overall creativity and penchant for events and we are incredibly excited about her next steps and wish her much success.



Program Analyst Zach Smith left NVTC in August to join the DC Department of Transportation to develop and support the District’s efforts related to transportation equity. Zach joined NVTC in 2019 and spent the last two years supporting NVTC’s WMATA Program and the development of NVTC’s annual legislative agenda. Zach also led the General Assembly-mandated report on the 3% cap on WMATA, which was completed within a very tight timeframe and delivered on time. We will greatly miss Zach’s excellent writing and we wish him luck in the next step of his very promising career.



Metro Board committee reviews fare policy

The Metro Board's [Finance and Capital Committee](#) received an overview of the agency's current [fare policy](#) principles and fare structure July 29. For Metro, fare revenue supports service and reduces operating subsidy, while fare structure and fare levels affect rider behavior on bus and rail. Metrorail historically has had a distance-based fare structure with higher rates during peak periods, while Metrobus has a flat fare per trip with higher fares for express or airport lines. Metrorail's distance-based fare structure aligns with about half of international systems and had a higher cost recovery than many domestic agencies prior to the pandemic.

"I think we have a real opportunity here to think innovatively and really pose a lot of questions. It's going to challenge what you know and what it is we do given this new environment," said Metro Board Chair Paul Smedberg. "People are clearly going to be commuting differently, using the system differently, younger folks are going to be dealing with transit differently. We see development around the region being concentrated within a quarter mile of the Metro. How is that going to affect ridership? And what are we going to do as a board and as an organization to drive ridership?" he added.

As the NVTC WMATA Committee meets in the fall, NVTC staff will work with Committee Chair Caneck Aguirre and the Virginia Metro Board members to organize and facilitate an NVTC discussion and feedback on fare policy proposals.

Metro Board receives Silver Line Phase 2 update

The Metro Board Safety and Operations Committee received an update on the Silver Line Phase 2 project from Andy Off, executive vice president for capital delivery, during a [meeting](#) July 15. Construction of Phase 2 is led by the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA) and Metro won't take control of the project until substantial completion has been reached. Recent media reports noted that additional work was needed on the testing and integration of the Phase 2 project and suggested that this would likely cause delays in the opening of the project. As discussed at the Safety and Operations Committee, MWAA has not formally announced any changes in the timing of the project, and Metro is working with MWAA staff to schedule additional testing and integration activities.

"What this has shown is that putting out a date there is very difficult when you have a complex project, particularly one that has had several severe issues," said Metro GM/CEOPaul J. Wiedefeld. He added, "What we all hope that it is operating as designed, but if we run into something, we have to deal with it."

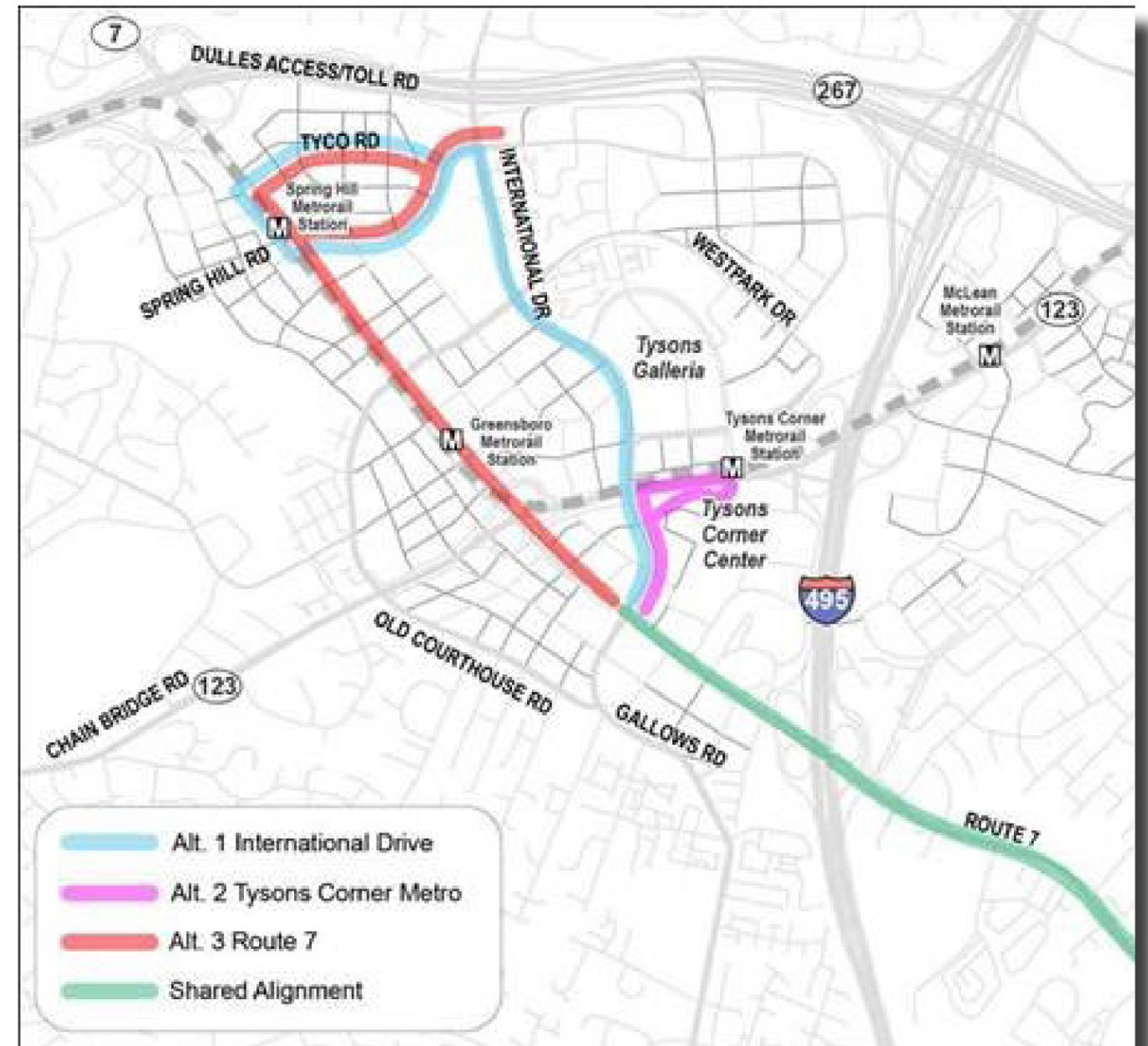


Dulles Airport Station. Courtesy: Dulles Corridor Metrorail Project

Fairfax advances 2 Bus Rapid Transit efforts

The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors voted July 27 to approve preliminary design plans (30% complete) for the [Richmond Highway](#) Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) from the Huntington Metrorail Station to Fort Belvoir. Supervisors also endorsed a project to define lanes along Route 7 for dedicated BRT service. The [Route 7](#) plan builds on conceptual engineering work completed as part of NVTC's [Envision Route 7](#) effort led by Dan Goldfarb and the Transit Resource Center. It defined sections for median and curb running lanes, station locations and identified right-of-way needs.

Board of Supervisors Chairman Jeffrey C. McKay says the purpose of both improvements is to provide higher quality bus transit service along Richmond Highway and Route 7. The designs will provide improved transit reliability, speed, choice, user experience and community connectivity.



Map showing the proposed alignment. Courtesy: Fairfax County

Fairfax Connector assumes several Metrobus routes

Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Chair/NVTC Commissioner Jeff McKay hosted a [news conference](#) to remind riders that five Metrobus routes became [Fairfax Connector](#) routes on Saturday, July 10. Four of the routes had not been running during the COVID-19 pandemic. Officials say the routes serve key areas in Fairfax County with connections to the McLean, East Falls Church, West Falls Church and Pentagon Metrorail Stations. These routes serve approximately 69,000 residents and provide access to more than 36,000 jobs within the county. Minor adjustments on five other routes also took effect.



OmniRide dedicates new facility in Manassas

OmniRide hosted a [ribbon cutting](#) for its Western Bus Maintenance and Storage Facility August 11. The new facility allows OmniRide to improve and expand transit services for western Prince William County, Manassas and Manassas Park residents and the Northern Virginia business community and will help to reduce congestion along the I-66 corridor, as part of the Transform 66 Outside the Beltway Project. The project will provide new travel choices and congestion relief across a 22.5 mile stretch of I-66 from I-495 near Route 29 in Gainesville. The facility includes eight bays for 100 buses to eliminate driving empty buses from eastern Prince William County, resulting in more efficient service.



Additional benefits of the new facility include, improved on-time performance; the ability to introduce new commuting options; the ability to dispatch buses serving western routes directly from the facility; and additional maintenance bays and parking for the OmniRide bus fleet.

Members of the Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission (PRTC) Board of Commissioners and distinguished guests were in attendance and gave remarks.

OmniRide is also getting ready to [celebrate](#) 35 years of service and planning public hearings and a town hall focused on proposed [route changes](#) including the potential adoption of demand-responsive microtransit on one route.



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