



Commuter Choice

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

NoVaTransit.org/CC



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Annual Report Fiscal Year 2023

July 1, 2022 — June 30, 2023



Commuter Choice, a trailblazing, innovative and competitive grant program, reinvests Express Lanes toll revenues in public transit and other transportation improvements along the I-66 and I-395/95 corridors in Northern Virginia.

A partnership between the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC) and the Commonwealth of Virginia, Commuter Choice improves commuters' travel in two of the most congested corridors in the nation. NVTC selects projects for funding through a competitive process that considers each project's ability to support the program's goals: moving more people, supporting diverse travel choices and enhancing mobility, transportation safety and travel reliability.

Commuter Choice projects benefit Express Lanes toll payers in two main ways:

1. By offering more options, toll road users and transit riders can choose the means of travel that gets them to the places that they want to go; and
2. By moving people more efficiently, Commuter Choice projects lessen congestion and support more consistent travel speeds for Express Lanes users.

Letter from the Executive Director

Fiscal Year 2023 proved to be a record year for NVTC's Commuter Choice program. Not only did Commuter Choice-funded projects provide 6,000 passenger trips in the I-66 Inside the Beltway and I-395/95 corridors each weekday, the most in any year in the program's history, we also allocated over \$48 million to new projects and received a record level of public input in our project selection process.

It's no secret that traffic volumes have surged over the last year across Northern Virginia, leading to pre-pandemic levels of congestion. Our Commuter Choice program played as important a role as ever for the region and its quality of life by supporting a broad range of transit options that offer commuters faster and more reliable ways to travel through our expressway corridors. The return of traffic congestion also meant more people chose to use Express Lanes for speedier travel and that has meant full funding for Commuter Choice in both the I-395/95 and I-66 Inside the Beltway corridors, giving us the ability to fund more projects now and in the future.

The region's Express Lanes network also continued to expand. I-66 Outside the Beltway Express Lanes opened in late 2022 and the first portion of the I-95 Express Lanes Fredericksburg Extension opened in summer 2023. These megaprojects add up to faster, more reliable trips for our region's longest-distance commuters.

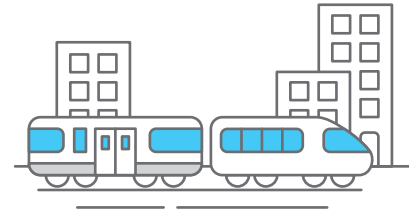
Commuter Choice began supporting major capital investments that will provide benefits to toll payers for decades to come, including funding for the Richmond Highway Bus Rapid Transit system in Fairfax County and the relocation and expansion of the Virginia Railway Express station in Crystal City.

All told, Commuter Choice funded \$48 million of new projects in the I-395/95 corridor in the FY 2024-2025 Program of Projects. We anticipate \$40 million available for projects for I-66 Commuter Choice in this upcoming year, continuing to provide new ways for people to get where they need to go for work, school, shopping and recreation — all without having to sit in traffic.

I also want to thank members of the public for their overwhelming engagement in the Commuter Choice project selection process. We heard from a record number of people — 646 in total — during the public comment period earlier this year, highlights of which can be found in this report. Voices from across the region loudly said they support public transit and relief from traffic congestion. This vital feedback from those who benefit directly from our funded projects keeps us excited to continue playing an integral role in shaping Northern Virginia's transit future.



Kate Mattice
Executive Director



6,000

passenger trips each weekday on
Commuter Choice-funded projects

**First funding awards
in program history for**



A BRT line



A new rail station



Electric buses

\$48 MILLION

for new I-395/95 Commuter
Choice projects

I-66 CORRIDOR SUMMARY AND PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

New Express Lanes & Exciting Future

FY 2023 marked several important milestones for I-66 Commuter Choice and provided plenty to look forward to in the near future. The I-66 Outside the Beltway Express Lanes opened in November 2022 and immediately afforded substantial travel time savings for longer-distance corridor commuters. OmniRide and Fairfax Connector services benefitted from more reliable travel and saved up to 15-minutes compared to their prior travel times, a level of savings that plays a significant factor in attracting new transit riders.

Elsewhere in the corridor, the City of Manassas Park broke ground on its Park Central VRE Parking Garage, a Commuter Choice-supported project that is poised to attract new VRE riders looking to avoid congestion and anchor the City's downtown redevelopment.



The City of Fairfax is putting the finishing touches on its CUE transit access and technology improvements and its bikeshare implementation, both of which will offer more choices to corridor commuters later this year.

Fairfax County generated significantly higher levels of ridership on its Connector services in FY 2023, including its Route 599 where Commuter Choice funded a fare buy-down, and is soon slated to implement a new Commuter Choice-funded service from Reston to Crystal City in early 2024. Prince William County enjoyed a successful launch to its fare buy-down on five OmniRide routes originating in the County coupled with a marketing campaign geared toward I-66 corridor commuters.

As the program gears up for its sixth funding cycle, we expect a fully-funded program — at least \$40 million — thanks in large part to I-66 toll revenues continuing their upward trend throughout FY 2023. NVTC looks forward to supporting new, creative project applications that will benefit corridor toll payers for years to come.

A blue-tinted background image showing a construction site. In the foreground, several construction workers wearing hard hats are visible. In the background, a large Volvo excavator is working. The text '\$40 million' is overlaid in large white font.

\$40 million

anticipated for the I-66 FY 2025-2026 call for projects, opening in fall 2023



OmniRide and Fairfax Connector riders now save up to 15 minutes per trip on I-66 routes thanks to the Outside the Beltway Express Lanes

I-395/95 CORRIDOR SUMMARY AND PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

Record Ridership & Awards in FY 2023



I-395/95 Commuter Choice had a banner year both in terms of ridership and funding awards. Beyond supporting 50% more daily trips each weekday than in spring 2022, NVTC approved a further \$48 million across 13 I-395/95 Commuter Choice projects in FY 2023 — the largest collective award to date.

DASH Routes 35 and 36A/B continue to shine as Commuter Choice supports enhanced levels of service all day in the City of Alexandria. Local and express OmniRide routes in the I-395/95 corridor, also strong performers in prior years, experienced record levels of ridership. A Commuter Choice-funded incentive program also helped rebuild the corridor's vanpool market in FY 2023. Whether supporting local transit trips that offer alternatives to driving on I-395/95 or serving some of the region's longest-distance commuters, I-395/95 Commuter Choice continues to support strong performers.

The \$48 million awarded to 13 projects in FY 2023 includes just under \$20 million toward the program's first larger capital projects — Fairfax County's Richmond Highway Bus Rapid Transit and VRE's Crystal City Station Expansion projects. These will provide decades of benefits to corridor toll payers and are primed to be staples in the region's transit landscape.

DASH, OmniRide and Arlington County also had projects funded while VRE is set to reinstate its Amtrak Step-Up program on its Fredericksburg Line thanks to Commuter Choice. With the recent opening of the I-95 Express Lanes Fredericksburg Extension, projects even further south — including a brand-new park and ride lot in Spotsylvania County supported by Commuter Choice and likely to soon see OmniRide service — will benefit from the growing Express Lanes network and commuters will benefit from the options afforded by the Commuter Choice program.

\$48 million

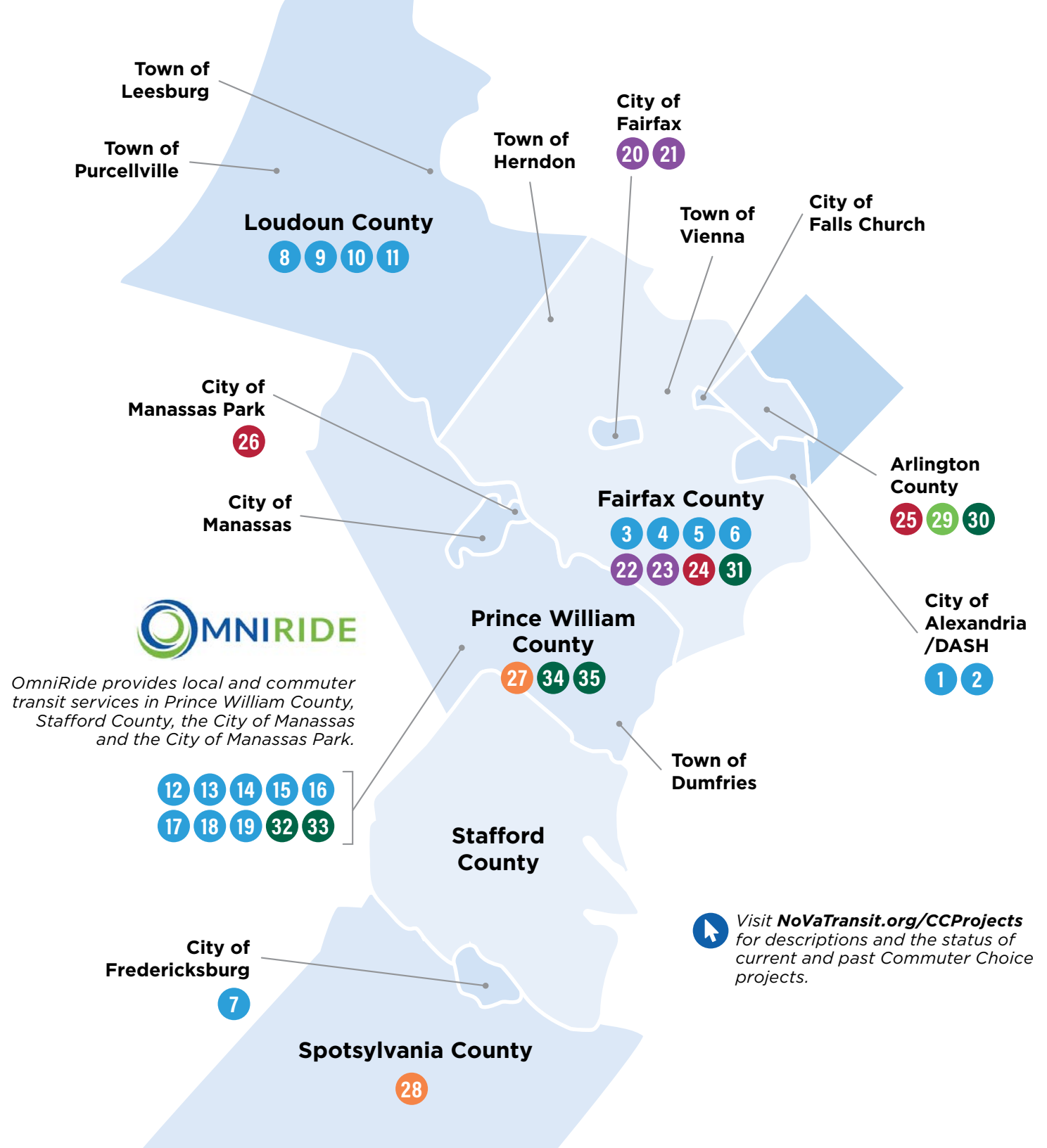
approved for 13 I-395/95 Commuter Choice projects in FY 2023 — the largest collective award to date.

Current Projects

as of June 30, 2023

Project Type

- Bus Service
- Access to Transit
- Rail Capital
- Park-and-Ride
- Roadway Operations
- TDM



BUS SERVICE

- 1 **DASH - Enhanced Bus Service from Van Dorn Metro to the Pentagon** I-395
Funding: \$5,734,000
- 2 **DASH - Enhanced Bus Service from Mark Center to Potomac Yard** I-395
Funding: \$3,650,000
- 3 **Fairfax County - New Bus Service to the Pentagon with Gambrill and Backlick North Park and Ride Improvements** I-395
Funding: \$4,926,903*
- 4 **Fairfax County - Fairfax Connector Express Bus Service between Vienna/ Fairfax-GMU and Pentagon Metrorail Stations** I-66
Funding: \$4,685,468*
- 5 **Fairfax County - Enhanced Bus Service for Route 371: Lorton to Franconia-Springfield Metro Station** I-395
Funding: \$2,496,529
- 6 **Fairfax County - New Bus Service from Reston South to Crystal City** I-66
Funding: \$5,110,800
- 7 **City of Fredericksburg - New Bus Service from Route 208 Park and Ride Lot to Fredericksburg VRE** I-395
Funding: \$1,218,800
- 8 **Loudoun County - Loudoun County Transit Metro Connection from New Purcellville Park and Ride** I-66
Funding: \$1,774,990*
- 9 **Loudoun County - Stone Ridge Enhanced Transit** I-66
Funding: \$2,472,970*
- 10 **Loudoun County - New Bus Service from Purcellville to DC** I-66
Funding: \$949,482
- 11 **Loudoun County - New Bus Service from Stone Ridge to Pentagon** I-66
Funding: \$1,257,226
- 12 **OmniRide - Gainesville to Pentagon Commuter Service** I-66
Funding: \$8,581,149*
- 13 **OmniRide - Enhanced Bus Service from Gainesville to DC** I-66
Funding: \$1,519,100
- 14 **OmniRide - New Bus Service from Haymarket to Rosslyn** I-66
Funding: \$1,861,354*
- 15 **OmniRide - Enhanced Bus Service from Dale City to Ballston** I-395
Funding: \$543,431*
- 16 **OmniRide - Enhanced Bus Service on Prince William Metro Express** I-395
Funding: \$997,176*
- 17 **OmniRide - Enhanced Bus Service on Route 1 Local** I-395
Funding: \$1,674,669*
- 18 **OmniRide - New Bus Service from Staffordboro to Downtown D.C.** I-395
Funding: \$4,537,508*
- 19 **OmniRide - New Bus Service from Staffordboro to the Pentagon** I-395
Funding: \$4,200,073*

ACCESS TO TRANSIT

- 20 **City of Fairfax - Bike Share Implementation** I-66
Funding: \$460,000
- 21 **City of Fairfax - CUE Access and Technology Improvements** I-66
Funding: \$965,000
- 22 **Fairfax County - I-66 Corridor Vienna/Merrifield Bike Share Expansion** I-66
Funding: \$497,100
- 23 **Fairfax County - Trail Access to Vienna Metrorail Station** I-66
Funding: \$2,200,000

RAIL CAPITAL

- 24 **Fairfax County - McLean Metro Station North Entrance** I-66
Funding: \$1,000,000
- 25 **Arlington County - Ballston-MU Metrorail West Entrance** I-66
Funding: \$4,500,000
- 26 **City of Manassas Park - Manassas Park VRE Station Parking Garage** I-66
Funding: \$2,500,000

PARK-AND-RIDE

- 27 **Prince William County - Horner Road Park and Ride Lot Expansion** I-395
Funding: \$2,800,000
- 28 **Spotsylvania County - New Park and Ride Lot in Massaponax** I-395
Funding: \$1,100,000

ROADWAY OPERATIONS

- 29 **Arlington County - U.S. 29 HOV and Bus-Only Lane in Rosslyn** I-66
Funding: \$710,000

TDM

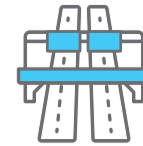
- 30 **Arlington County - Expanded TDM Outreach to the I-66 Corridor** I-66
Funding: \$2,050,000*
- 31 **Fairfax County - TDM Strategy - Fare Buy-Down on Bus Service from Reston North to Crystal City** I-66
Funding: \$154,500
- 32 **OmniRide - TDM Strategy - I-395/95 Corridor Vanpool Monthly Incentive** I-395
Funding: \$604,800
- 33 **OmniRide - TDM Strategy - I-66 Corridor Vanpool Parking Benefit** I-66
Funding: \$85,000
- 34 **Prince William County - New TDM Outreach to the I-66 Corridor** I-66
Funding: \$200,000
- 35 **Prince William County - TDM Strategy - Fare Buy-Down on I-66 Commuter Bus Service** I-66
Funding: \$650,000

**denotes the total funded amount for projects funded in multiple rounds*

Commuter Choice by the Numbers

Bolstering Northern Virginia's Mobility with Record Ridership

Commuter Choice projects produced record levels of ridership and usage in FY 2023. Active projects in spring 2023 supported 6,000 passenger trips through the two corridors each weekday — the highest figure in program history and a 50% increase over FY 2022. With more investments underway, future ridership growth will be supported by new capital projects coming online.



20

projects in operation in
spring 2023

Each weekday in FY 2023, Commuter Choice projects saved travelers a total of



1,000 hours
of travel time



84,000 miles
of vehicle travel




\$11,000
in fuel expenditures



Since 2017, Commuter Choice's \$108 million investment in transit and other transportation projects has improved travel and overall quality of life for Northern Virginians.

104M
fewer vehicle miles
traveled


69%
greenhouse gas
emission reduction
relative to
single-occupancy
vehicle trips




\$31M
in regional
economic benefit
from reduced
travel delay


\$14.5M
in fuel cost savings
for commuters


130
automobile crashes
avoided


5M
Commuter Choice-
supported trips
on the I-66 and
I-395/95 corridors


1.1M
hours of travel
time savings



Commuters Speak Up for More Transit Options

Public input reflects how Commuter Choice projects will benefit Northern Virginians

Each spring, NVTC holds a one-month public comment period to gather input on projects under consideration for Commuter Choice funding. NVTC received a record 646 comment submissions this spring, on the projects under consideration for funding in the I-395/95 FY 2024-2025 Program of Projects — a function of effective efforts by applicants to get the word out to their communities, a local TV

news segment on the projects under consideration and easy-to-use materials produced by NVTC, all available both in English and Spanish. The overwhelming response from the public — highlights of which are included — reinforced the critical role Commuter Choice continues to play for those who live, work and play in the region.

“

I support all expansions of public transportation service. Public transportation is exceedingly important for economic diversity and the environment. I use public transportation exclusively ... and I want it to be conveniently accessible to as many people as possible.

“

It is amazing to see the huge projects that we are able to fund through just toll revenue. It is an amazing example of transportation justice and equity; providing free, reduced fare, and expanded services to all members of the community paid for by those that can afford to pay.

“

As an Arlington County resident who switches between use of car, Metro, and walking to get around I value the ability to have different options. The traffic on highways like 66 and 95 at times causes me to avoid those routes. This program is a great way to fund transit/pedestrian projects that can work to reduce that traffic and pollution.

“

The Program is a great initiative that supports many transit alternatives that would have been not possible otherwise. I support this Program and what it brings to local communities.

“

The diversification of options is really grand, highly support the investment in choice overall. Most of these proposals indirectly affect me, but anything to remove cars from the road and congestion from the 95 corridor is a good investment.



“

Metrobus 16M Service Enhancement: Skyline to Crystal City

Increasing frequency of bus service on Columbia Pike is hugely valuable.

“

DASH Line 35 Service Enhancement: Van Dorn Street Station to the Pentagon (Continuation)

I use this line to take my daughter to and from daycare several times a week. Because my trip includes a transfer, high frequency service is very important to ensuring I can get to daycare and then on to work on time on a consistent basis.

This line helps me keep a paycheck going. And the frequency of how it runs has saved the day a couple of times.

“

DASH Line 36A/B Service Enhancement: Mark Center to Potomac Yard-VT Station (Continuation)

Si esta línea es MUY IMPORTANTE! La necesitamos, los que vivimos aquí y trabajamos y no tenemos coche.

English translation: Yes, this line is VERY IMPORTANT! All of us with no cars that work and live here need it.

I am blind and depend heavily on the 36A bus to go from my home to the shopping center at the King Street and Quaker Lane intersection, as well as to the metro. This service is essential for me.

“

Ballston-MU Metrorail West Entrance

I live near this Metro Station and use it several times a week. Rebuilding the entrance is an important project that serves thousands of commuters and energizes the public/commercial area around the station.

This is the most impactful upgrade we can make in the area.

“

Renewal of Bus Service from Haymarket to Rosslyn

This has been an enormous quality-of-life improvement.



Eligible Applicants

Localities

 NVTC Jurisdiction

 PRTC Jurisdiction

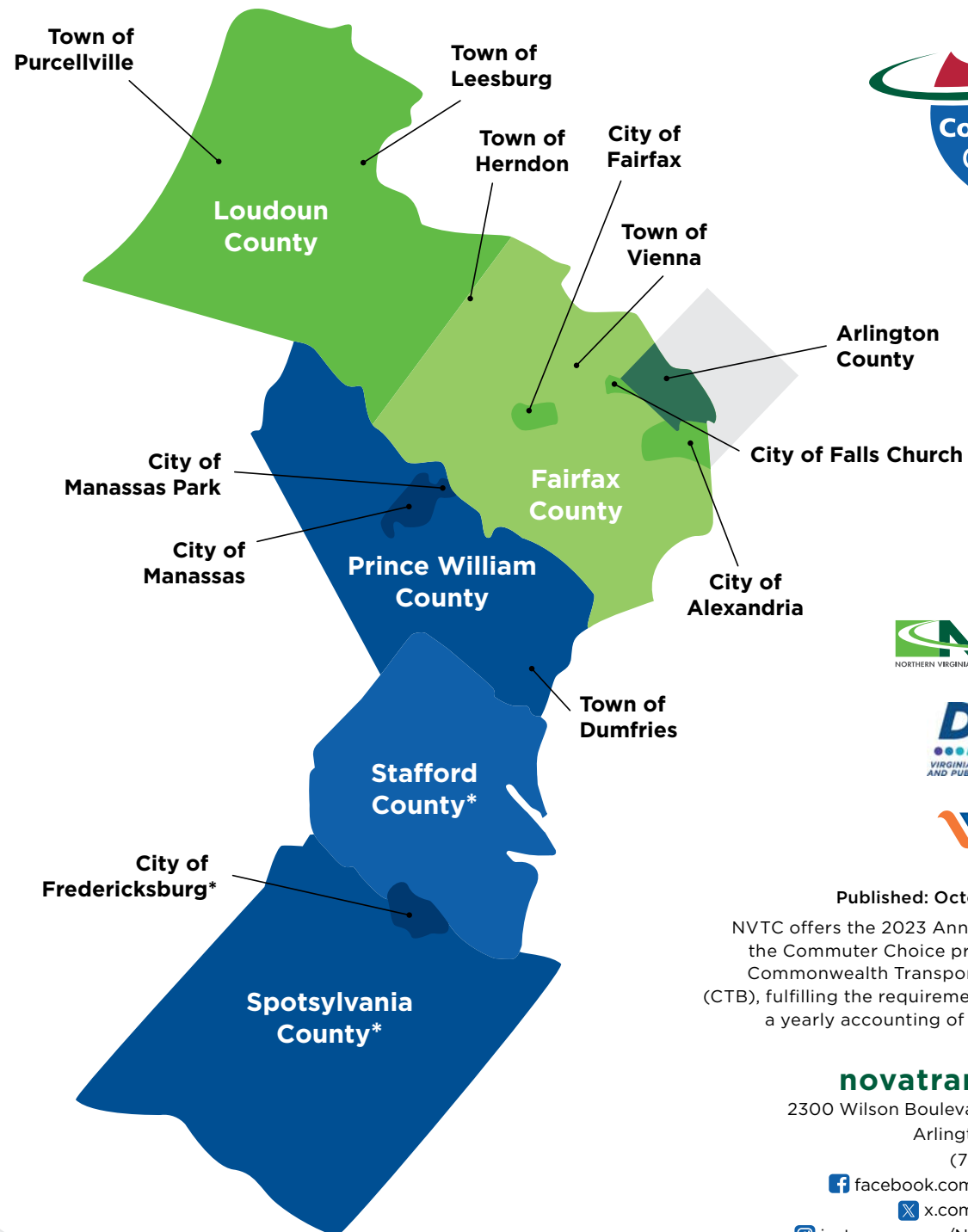
**Only eligible for I-395/95 Commuter Choice*

Transit Agencies

 OmniRide

 Virginia Railway Express

 Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority



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NVTC offers the 2023 Annual Report of the Commuter Choice program to the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB), fulfilling the requirement to provide a yearly accounting of the program.

novatransit.org

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