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October 9, 2019

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Bus Transformation Project Team
c/o NeoNiche Strategies
4501 Ford Avenue, Suite #501
Alexandria, Virginia 22302

Dear Bus Transformation Project Team:

The Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC) appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on the September 2019 *Final Strategy for the Bus Transformation Project*. We applaud the team's effort to prioritize the region's bus network in order to retain and attract riders. However, we write to express our strong concern that the process moving forward is excluding those actually responsible for providing transit services in Virginia – local transit providers and their funding jurisdictions – and excluding the expertise and innovation of our Northern Virginia transit professionals.

As the regional body whose focus is on improving public transportation that serves Northern Virginians, NVTC shares the Project's goal to create an affordable, reliable, equitable, and financially sustainable bus system. As our region grows, we – and the six bus systems that serve Northern Virginia – have made huge strides to ensure the bus network will play an even greater role in serving the needs of transit riders who travel to destinations not served by Metrorail.

NVTC supports the report's recommendations to **provide frequent and convenient bus service, prioritize buses on roadways and create an excellent customer experience**. In June 2019, NVTC [sent a letter to the Bus Transformation Project Team](#) stating our support for the three strategies listed above. As we stated in our letter, each one of these strategies are actively being implemented by our NVTC jurisdictional bus systems, both independently and through NVTC's coordination efforts.

In Northern Virginia, we *get* it.

However, NVTC and our member jurisdictions are greatly concerned about the governance structure that is proposed for the **publicly appointed task force to transform bus**. The strategy report, as prepared, appears to clearly miss two integral participants to ensure implementation success: the local transit providers that manage our bus systems and the local jurisdictions who fund the bus systems (including Metrobus). This will jeopardize the ability of the region to meet this project's initial intent to find an inclusive, regional approach to improve the bus network.

Unlike the District of Columbia and Maryland, it is both the localities of Northern Virginia and the Commonwealth who are responsible for the funding of the WMATA system in Virginia. We are also the home to six bus systems that actively coordinate services with Metrobus and Metrorail. It is also important to note that any potential task force decisions related to how service is delivered will have notable fiscal impacts to both local and Commonwealth funding partners, reinforcing the importance of having appropriate representation for Northern Virginia.

For over 55 years, NVTC has provided the venue and governance structure that supports regional coordination of these bus systems and WMATA. We represent the Virginia jurisdictions that hold ultimate responsibility in Virginia to fund WMATA and those that operate their own bus systems. We are also the co-owners of the Virginia Railway Express and have formalized cooperative agreements with OmniRide on transit funding programs. We actively facilitate coordinated transit efforts across our bus systems, and between our bus systems and WMATA.

NVTC is the body in Virginia that brings all of these elements together to coordinate regionally. We provide a proven structure and engagement model that facilitates regional operational and funding coordination. To exclude us from a task force charged with an implementation strategy is short-sighted and questions the likelihood of implementation success.

NVTC recognizes that reimagining the region's bus network will not be an easy undertaking but believes the region can work together to propel the bus from the "last choice" to a better choice for riders. NVTC urges the Bus Transformation Project team to engage with NVTC, our jurisdictions, and our transit operators on the future of bus in the region and ensure that all voices are heard in the implementation process of the final recommendations.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matthew Letourneau". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Matthew F. Letourneau
Chairman