

The following item was handed out at  
the June 6, 2019 NVTC Meeting.

# BUS TRANSFORMATION PROJECT

Draft strategy briefing

May 2019





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# I. Introduction

**Congestion, affordability, and mobility** are major problems in the DC region that will only continue to grow

## What can we do?

Limits to the effectiveness of Metrorail

- Currently only reaches about 25% of the region
- Expansions require decades and billions of dollars to build

Meanwhile, the world of transportation is innovating rapidly, and our bus system has not kept pace

- Many technology-driven mobility options threaten to make congestion worse
- Ridership is declining and operators are feeling the pinch

# It is past time for this region to transform its bus system.

A transformed bus system will meet these challenges and provide real results for the region:

- Reduced congestion and emissions
- Increased transit ridership
- Better and faster transportation
- Affordable transportation for more people
- More efficient use of resources
- Better travel experience for riders

The alternative is unaffordable, and harms regional competitiveness and livability.

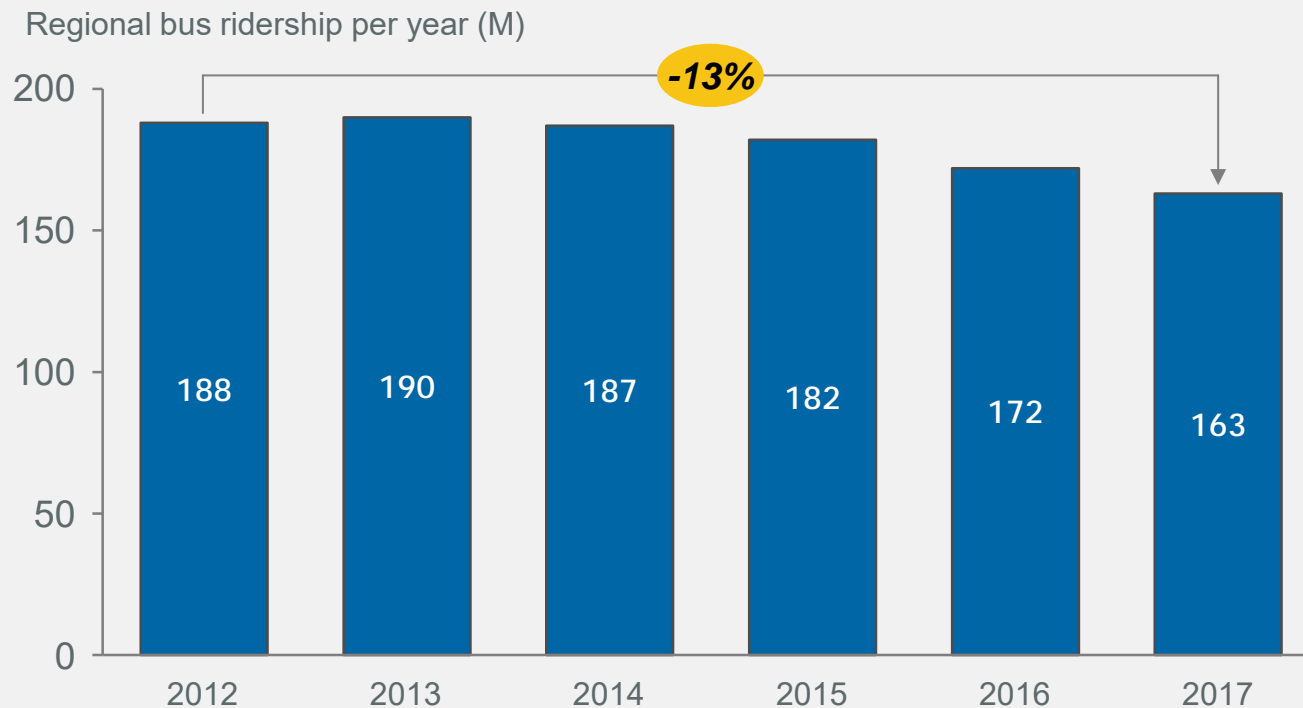
There is a better way to get there.



## The Challenge:

Customers are turning to other travel options. Traditional definitions of bus service are not keeping pace with rapid technology and social change.

Since 2012, bus ridership has fallen by 13 percent across the region.



Bus faces several **core challenges** that will continue to grow unless changes are made today:



Meet changing **customer needs**



Keep up with **changing technology**



**Coordinating** across region



Maintain **sustainable** cost structure



**Deciding** how service is paid for



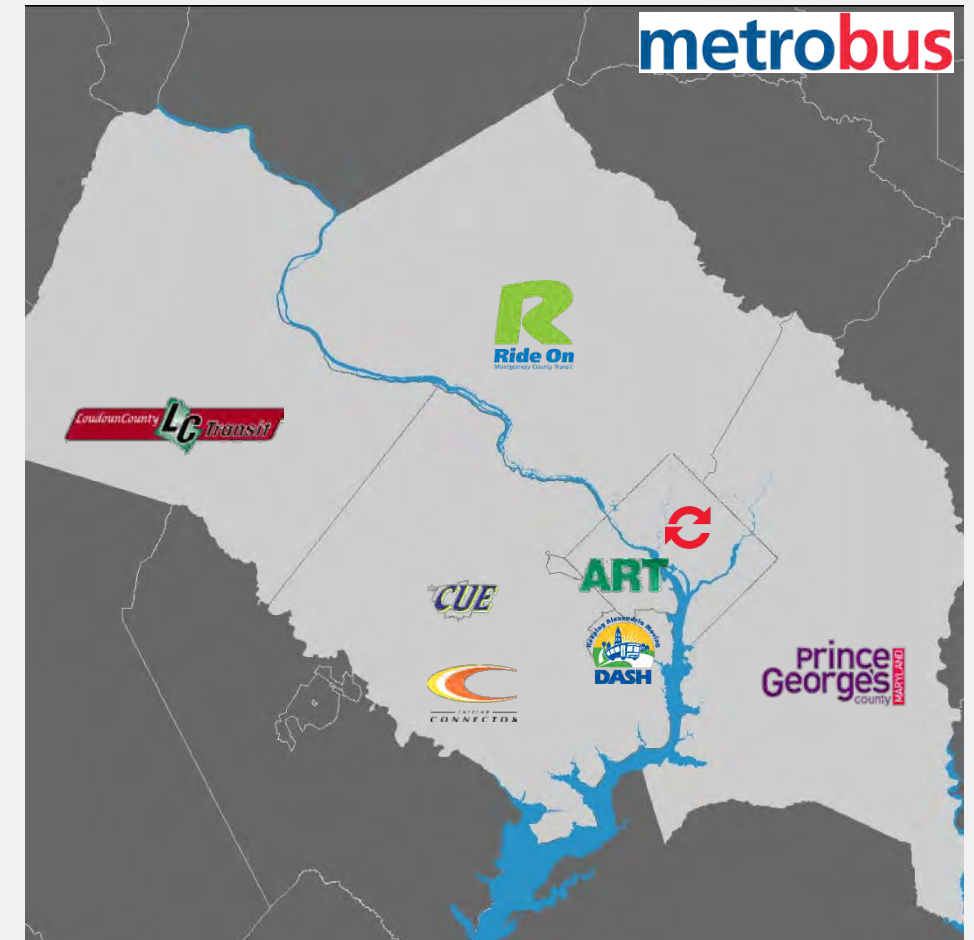
To solve these problems, the region must **transform its approach to bus**

Priority ▼
Technology
Ease of Use
Coordination
Organization
Affordability
Service Provision

## Underlying Principles

- References to “bus” mean any vehicle that makes efficient use of roadways by transporting a large number of riders including:
  - Large buses on fixed routes and on-demand shuttle buses;
  - Vehicles with drivers and automated vehicles;
  - Publicly-owned and private commercial operations
- Focus on local bus, as distinct from commuter bus services
- Strategy does not address paratransit service, however none of the recommendations should impact how MetroAccess service is provided or funded
- A strategic framework for transforming the regional bus system may not fit every need perfectly. Local exceptions will still be possible.

Bus service providers included:





# The Draft Strategy is the result of **collective effort**

Since the project began in September 2018, elected officials, transit agencies, transit advocates, bus operators, bus riders, and many other stakeholders helped to develop the recommendations in the Draft Strategy.

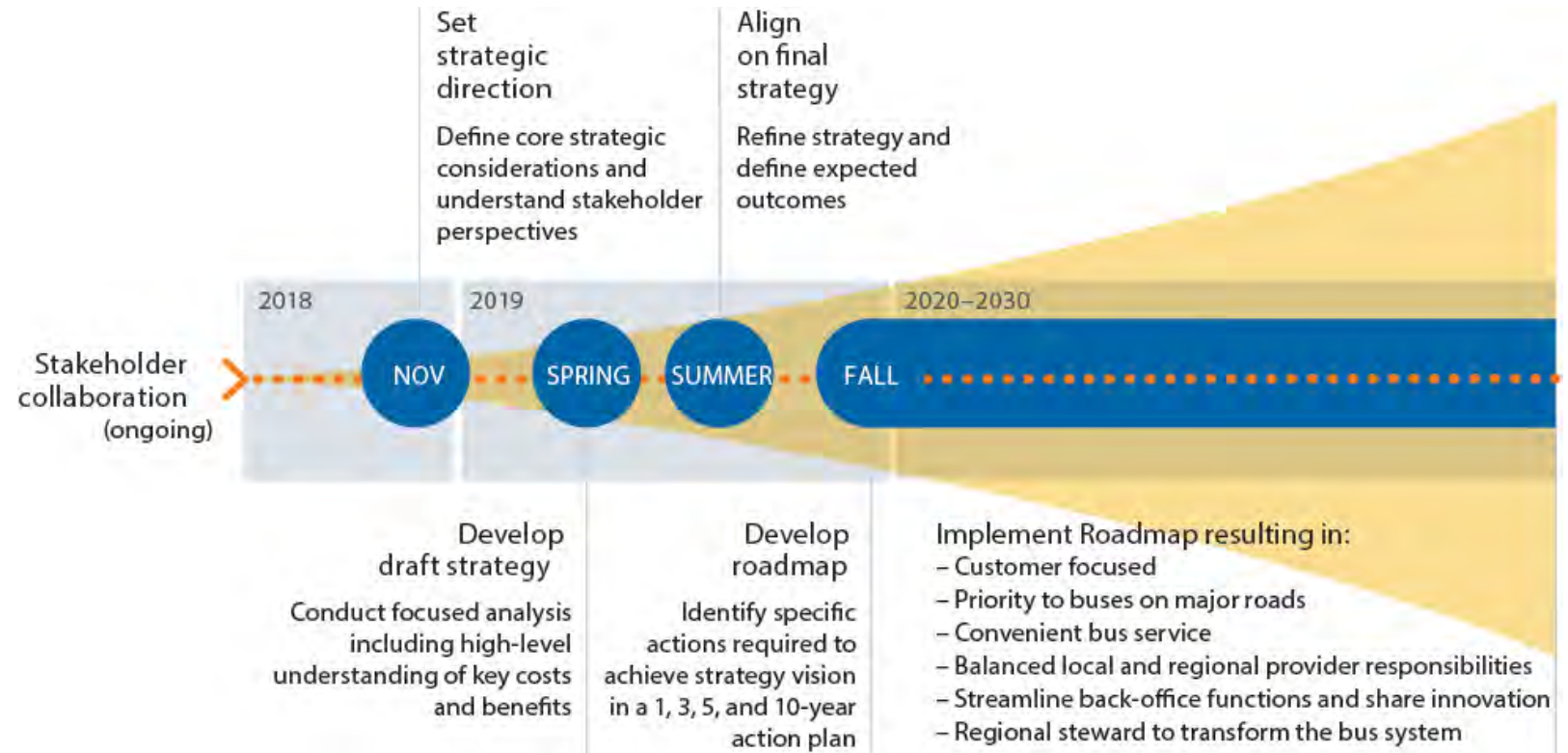
- 5,679 survey responses
- 20 regional pop-up events
- 25 project committee meetings
- 13 Metrobus operator listening sessions
- 40 interviews with local jurisdictions and transit agencies
- 33 project briefings/meetings with elected officials
- 10,056 people reached by the project Facebook page

This Draft Strategy lays out the desired **direction for the regional bus system**, and is not a detailed implementation guide.

The proposed recommendations will be revised, and will be analyzed further.

Once finalized, a **10-year Roadmap** will be developed that lays out a series of specific implementation steps that will help the Bus Transformation gain momentum over time.

The Transformation starts immediately, while tactical solutions will continue to be developed as we move through implementation





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## II. Vision & goals as voiced by stakeholders

## ■ *Project Vision:*

Bus will be the **mode of choice** on the region's roads by 2030, serving as the backbone of a **strong and inclusive** regional mobility system.



## Goals for bus in the region as voiced by stakeholders

1	Regional connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide <b>reliable on-street transit</b> options that <b>efficiently connect</b> people to places and improve mobility</li></ul>
2	Rider experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure a <b>convenient, easy-to-use, user-centered</b> mobility option</li></ul>
3	Financial stewardship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Maintain a transit mode that is <b>financially sustainable</b> in the long term</li></ul>
4	Sustainable economic health & access to opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Encourage <b>vibrant, economically-thriving</b> and sustainable communities</li></ul>
5	Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Create a bus system that is <b>affordable and equitable</b></li></ul>



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## III. Overview of draft strategy

# Strategy Elements

The strategy to achieve the vision and goals is built around six elements - with a set of recommendations underlying each:

	1	Customer Focused	The bus system should be customer-focused and an easy-to-use option that people want to ride
	2	Priority to Buses on Major Roads	Prioritizing buses on major roads is the fiscally responsible way to move the most people quickly and reliably
	3	Convenient Bus Service	Frequent and convenient bus service is fundamental to accessing opportunity, building an equitable region, and ensuring high quality of life
	4	Balanced local and regional provider responsibilities	Balance local and regional provider responsibilities by positioning local bus systems to meet their jurisdictional needs and the regional bus system to meet regional needs and deliver regional benefits
	5	Streamline Back-Office Functions and Share Innovation	Optimize back-office functions through sharing, streamlining and shared innovation by consolidating regional resources and devoting more resources to operating bus service
	6	Regional Steward to Transform the Bus System	Customers in a region with multiple bus providers need a regional steward to transform the bus system

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## IV. Draft Strategy: elements and detailed recommendations

**Element:** The bus system should be customer-focused and an easy-to-use option that people want to ride

Recommendations to drive strategy:

- (A) Expand **marketing** efforts related to bus to enhance visibility of bus options and benefits
- (B) Make buses easy to understand with **legible maps and consistent route naming** conventions
- (C) Create a **mobile solution** that allows riders to plan and pay for trips and access real-time service information
- (D) Make **bus fares** clear and consistent across the region
- (E) Introduce pass products that work across **all bus systems**
- (F) Enhance **reduced fare products** for low-income residents
- (G) Allow customers to **transfer for free** between bus and rail
- (H) Incentivize more employers to offer **transit benefits**
- (I) Make **bus stops** safe, convenient, and accessible across the region
- (J) Modernize the region's **bus fleet** with advanced technologies that improve the environment, safety, and the rider experience



What the strategy will achieve:

If bus agencies deliver outstanding end-to-end trip experiences for all riders, the region will see:

- Increased **customer satisfaction**
- Reduced **safety incident rates** at bus stops and on buses
- Reduced **environmental impact** of transportation
- Increased **transit ridership**
- More **affordable transportation** for residents that need it most
- Less **congestion** on our region's roads

**Element:** Prioritizing buses on major roads is the fiscally responsible way to move the most people quickly and reliably.

Recommendations to drive strategy:

- A** Obtain commitments from each local and state jurisdiction to prioritize bus on major corridors within their boundaries
- B** Adopt consistent priority guidelines for corridors across the region
- C** Develop enforcement programs that maximize the effectiveness of bus priority efforts
- D** Offer incentives to jurisdictions to encourage implementation of the regional priority guidelines
- E** Coordinate with regional congestion mitigation efforts, including congestion pricing, curb access management, and parking limitations to move more people more efficiently

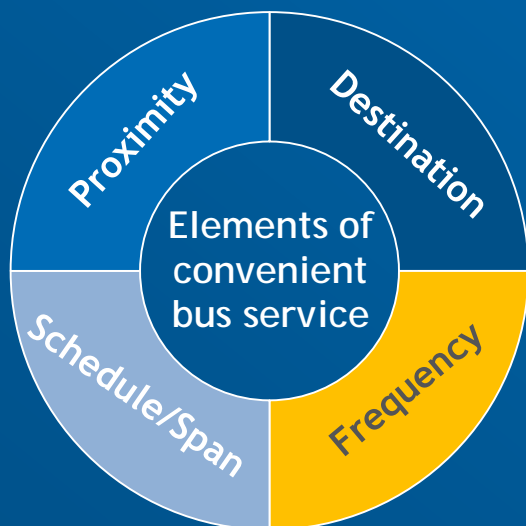


What the strategy will achieve:

If the region commits to priority treatment of bus, it will experience:

- Reduced **journey time** for bus riders
- Increased **ridership**
- Greater **on-time performance** for bus
- Decreased **bus operating costs**
- Improved **traffic conditions** across modes
- Improved **regional productivity and competitiveness**

**Element:** Frequent and convenient bus service is fundamental to accessing opportunity, building an equitable region, and ensuring high quality of life



#### Recommendations to drive strategy:

- A** Develop a regional bus network plan that realigns routes to create the most efficient and customer focused bus system
- B** Adopt consistent guidelines across the region to provide customers with the right amount of bus service by location and time of day
- C** Provide flexible, on-demand transit services to markets where customers are not well-served by conventional bus service



#### What the strategy will achieve:

Strategic investment in enhancing access to bus will result in:

- Increased responsiveness to customer demand for service
- Increased access to transit (frequency, schedule, span)
- Increased bus ridership
- More efficient use of resources

**Element:** Balance local and regional provider responsibilities by positioning local bus systems to meet their jurisdictional needs and the regional bus system to meet regional needs and deliver regional benefits

Recommendations to drive strategy:

- A** Position the regional bus system to provide the services that meet regional needs
- B** Revise the cost local jurisdictions pay WMATA for local service to better match the actual cost to provide service
- C** Develop a 10-year plan to optimally allocate services between bus systems for applicable routes



What the strategy will achieve:

Balancing local and regional provider responsibilities will:

- Better **align bus service** with regional needs
- **Reduce cost** of bus service regionally
- Improve **regional coordination** of bus service delivery
- Improve responsiveness of bus service to **rider needs**



**Element:** Streamline back-office functions and share innovation by consolidating regional resources and devoting more resources to operating bus service

Recommendations to drive strategy:

- A** Consolidate **back-office support functions** to realize shared benefits of scale for bus systems that choose to participate
- B** Establish a Regional Mobility **Innovation Lab** to drive continuous improvement in customer experience
- C** Develop **regional standards for bus data** collection, formatting, sharing, and analysis



What the strategy will achieve:

If the region pursues centralization of select business functions and shared innovation across bus operators, it will experience:

- Annual **Cost saving** potential of ~\$11.7 million due to economies of scale, which can be redirected into improving service
- Greater **consistency in service** for customers
- Greater understanding of bus system usage, which will enable additional **cost savings** and efficiencies
- Improved customer experience, leading to **ridership growth**

**Element:** Customers in a region with multiple bus providers need a regional steward to transform the bus system

Action recommendations to drive strategy:

- A** Form a **task force** responsible for Bus Transformation Project execution; after a three-year period, transfer responsibilities to a formal **Coalition of jurisdictional representatives** with authority for implementation
- B** Hold transportation and transit agencies accountable for prioritizing bus as a **primary mode of transportation** within their organizations
- C** Publish an annual Bus Transformation and **bus performance scorecard** to drive accountability for results

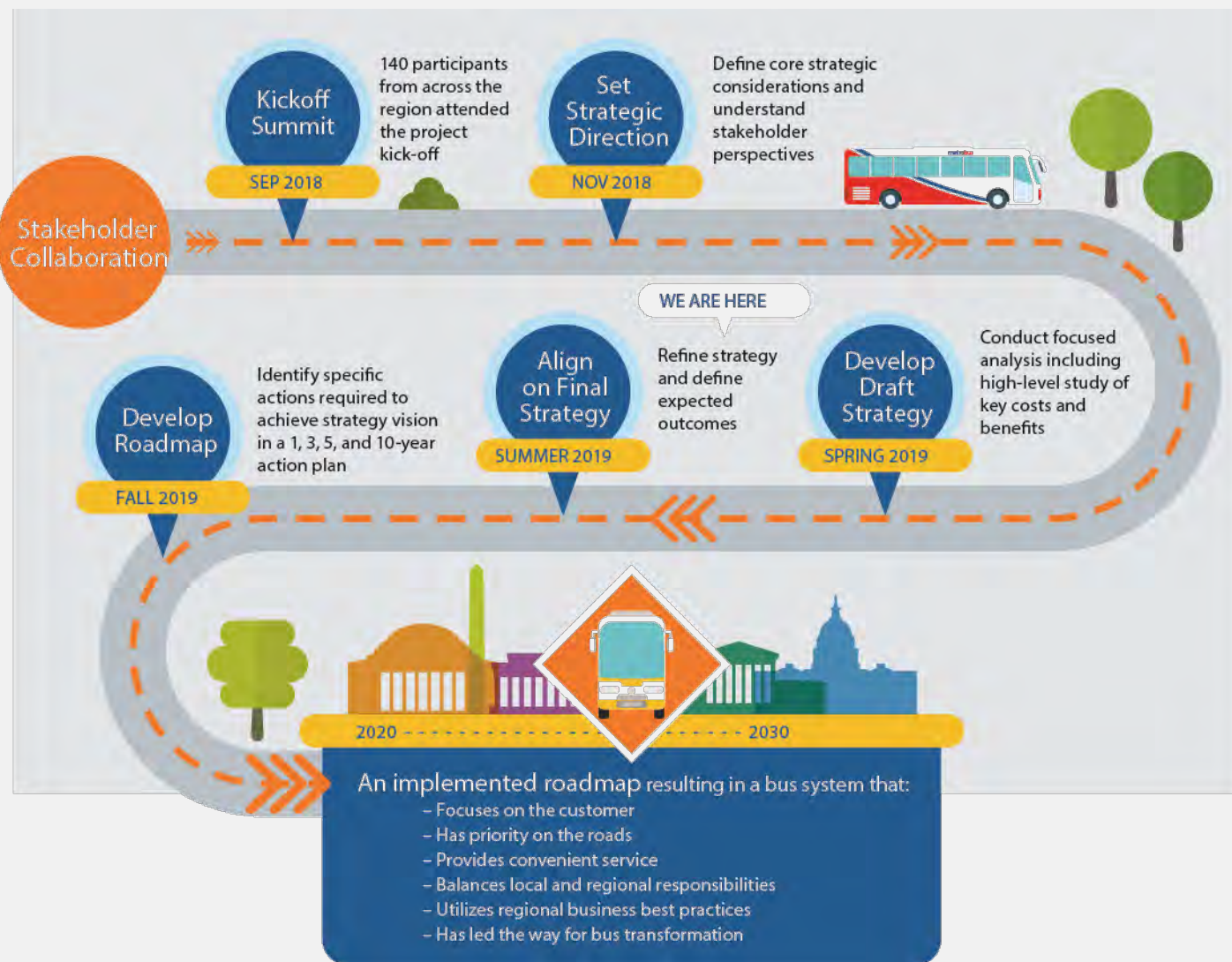


What the strategy will achieve:

If the region commits to strengthening coordination and governance, it will experience:

- Increased **customer focused** decision making
- More **cost efficient** use of resources
- Improved **coordination** among bus operators and across mobility modes

# Strategy Development Process



## We Want to Hear From You!

- Briefings:
  - NVTC: June 6
  - TPB and TPB Tech: June or July
- Public
  - Open Houses: May 20-23
  - Online at [BusTransformationProject.com](http://BusTransformationProject.com)
- Written comments from elected officials
- Listening sessions for SAP and Tech Team
  - May 31
  - June 3
- WMATA Board: July
- Stakeholders can also submit written comments to:

*[BusTransformationProject@neonichestrategies.com](mailto:BusTransformationProject@neonichestrategies.com)*

More Information

Additional information, case studies, and analysis are available on the project website. Including:

White Paper #1	Project Overview, including key challenges	<a href="https://bustransformationproject.com/resources/#documents">https://bustransformationproject.com/resources/#documents</a>
White Paper #2	Strategic considerations and supporting analysis to help set the strategic direction for the Strategy	<a href="https://bustransformationproject.com/resources/#documents">https://bustransformationproject.com/resources/#documents</a>
Bus System Today	Summary of key information about the regional bus system	<a href="https://bustransformationproject.com/resources/the-bus-system-and-its-riders-today/">https://bustransformationproject.com/resources/the-bus-system-and-its-riders-today/</a>
Public Input Survey Report	Summary of the results of the public survey on regional bus priorities conducted in Fall 2018	<a href="https://bustransformationproject.com/resources/public-survey-results/">https://bustransformationproject.com/resources/public-survey-results/</a>

[BusTransformationProject.com/Resources/#documents](https://bustransformationproject.com/resources/#documents)

June 7, 2019

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Mr. M. David Skiles  
Mr. Raul "Danny" Vargas

**Executive Director**  
Katherine A. Mattice

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

Re: Comments on Draft Bus Transformation Project Recommendations

Dear Bus Transformation Project Team:

The Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC) appreciates the seriousness with which the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) has tasked the Bus Transformation Project Team to transform the region's bus system and create a strategic framework to combat declining ridership and slower bus speeds. With over 150,000 riders on Northern Virginia's buses every weekday, we cannot underscore the importance of a bus network to transportation in Northern Virginia. As a regional entity tasked with coordinating transit policy and funding in Northern Virginia, NVTC is supportive of the project's effort but does share some words of caution on the strategies prepared to date.

We strongly support the study elements that seek to **prioritize buses** to make the bus system more customer focused and welcome the opportunity to support **ongoing coordination** between WMATA and jurisdictions to improve bus service in Northern Virginia. We also recommend that the project team and WMATA consider the development of a Virginia-specific roadmap for the implementation of the study.

We broadly support the study elements that seek to make the bus system more **customer focused**, provide **convenient bus service**, **streamline back-office functions** and **sharing innovation**. Many of these elements are consistent with NVTC's [2018 Regional Fare Collection Strategic Plan](#) and policy recommendations contained in NVTC's [2018 Annual Report on the Performance and Condition of WMATA](#). In addition, NVTC and several Northern Virginia jurisdictions are already moving forward on components of these recommendations through such projects as [Envision Route 7](#), the [transitway extension to Pentagon City](#), [Richmond Highway BRT](#), and the [Alexandria Transit Vision Plan](#).

NVTC agrees that local transit operators are better equipped to respond to local needs when **balancing the responsibilities of local and regional providers**. However, we do not see a problem with the current balance of local and regional transit providers in Northern Virginia.

Local transit service across the region intentionally serves multiple purposes, whether it is to serve as a catalyst for economic development, to connect the most vulnerable to services and opportunities, or to efficiently move commuters to work every day. Essentially, bus service across the entire Washington, DC region is not a one-size-fits-all endeavor.

Northern Virginia localities have already voluntarily and gradually established bus services that reflect the priorities of their communities and rebalanced the responsibilities of local and regional providers over the last two decades. While we do respect the desire of individual jurisdictions to engage with WMATA on jurisdiction-specific delivery of service, given our experience, we do not see the need to significantly alter the policy framework around the role of Metrobus in Virginia.

We are also concerned that WMATA may see the rebalancing of local and regional provision of transit as a means to satisfy the three percent operating cap (imposed by the Virginia dedicated funding legislation) by simply moving the cost of service from one side of the ledger to the other instead of making fundamental changes to WMATA's unsustainable cost structure. We urge WMATA to engage with NVTC, the jurisdictions, and transit operators to ensure that any changes to how bus service is provided does no harm to our localities and ensures that jurisdictions' investment in WMATA-provided service is commensurate with the level of service being provided.

NVTC is the voice of transit in Northern Virginia and works closely with member jurisdictions and transit providers. We encourage the region's leaders to empower existing organizations and structures, including NVTC, in transforming or incorporating changes in bus service in the region and in Northern Virginia.

NVTC shares the goal of an affordable, reliable, equitable, and financially sustainable bus system that connects the region. Thank you for the opportunity to comment and we look forward to additional engagement in the study process.

Best regards,



Matthew F. Letourneau  
Chairman

cc: Shyam Kannan, WMATA  
Allison Davis, WMATA

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Hon. Matthew F. Letourneau

June 7, 2019

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Mr. Raul "Danny" Vargas

**Executive Director**  
Katherine A. Mattice

Board of Directors  
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority  
600 5<sup>th</sup> Street NW  
Washington, DC 20001

RE: Request for Disclosure of Ethics Investigation Findings

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority Board of Directors:

As publicly reported in the [Washington Post](#), the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority's (WMATA) Ethics Committee—a subset of the Board of Directors—recently closed an investigation into a Board member, the results of which have not been disclosed. The conduct that necessitated the ethics investigation raises concerns about the behavior of a Board member. Further, the lack of disclosure of the results of the investigation raises concerns about WMATA's transparency. The Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC) requests that the Ethics Committee make public information related to the investigation's findings, outcomes, recommendations, and actions, including but not limited to relevant documentation, records, meeting minutes and supporting materials.

Over the past several years, WMATA has asked a lot of the region and has also been a contributor to our success. NVTC fought for, and, with the support of Virginia's General Assembly, helped WMATA secure regional dedicated funding. We continue to work to achieve the same success with the renewal of federal dedicated funding.

In return for the investment that Virginia's local and state government and taxpayers are making to WMATA, there must be accountability and transparency. When serious allegations are made and an investigation conducted, the results must be disclosed to the greatest extent possible and the public must be assured that appropriate action has been taken. The stakes are high, and WMATA is under great scrutiny. The failure to act transparently in this matter to date is not consistent with our expectations nor those of our funding partners and the public.

Releasing a report on the findings of the Ethics Committee's recently closed investigation will demonstrate WMATA's commitment to accountability and transparency and help the agency bolster the public's confidence as the region embarks on critical capital projects and funding requests.

On behalf of the Commission, I request that the WMATA Board take swift action to rectify this situation and demonstrate its commitment to transparency, accountability, and sound governance of one of our region's most important assets.

Sincerely,

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

Matthew F. Letourneau  
Chairman

CC: Governor Ralph Northam, Commonwealth of Virginia  
Governor Larry Hogan, State of Maryland  
Mayor Muriel Bowser, District of Columbia  
Chairman Phil Mendelsohn, Council of the District of Columbia



# Commuter Choice Program

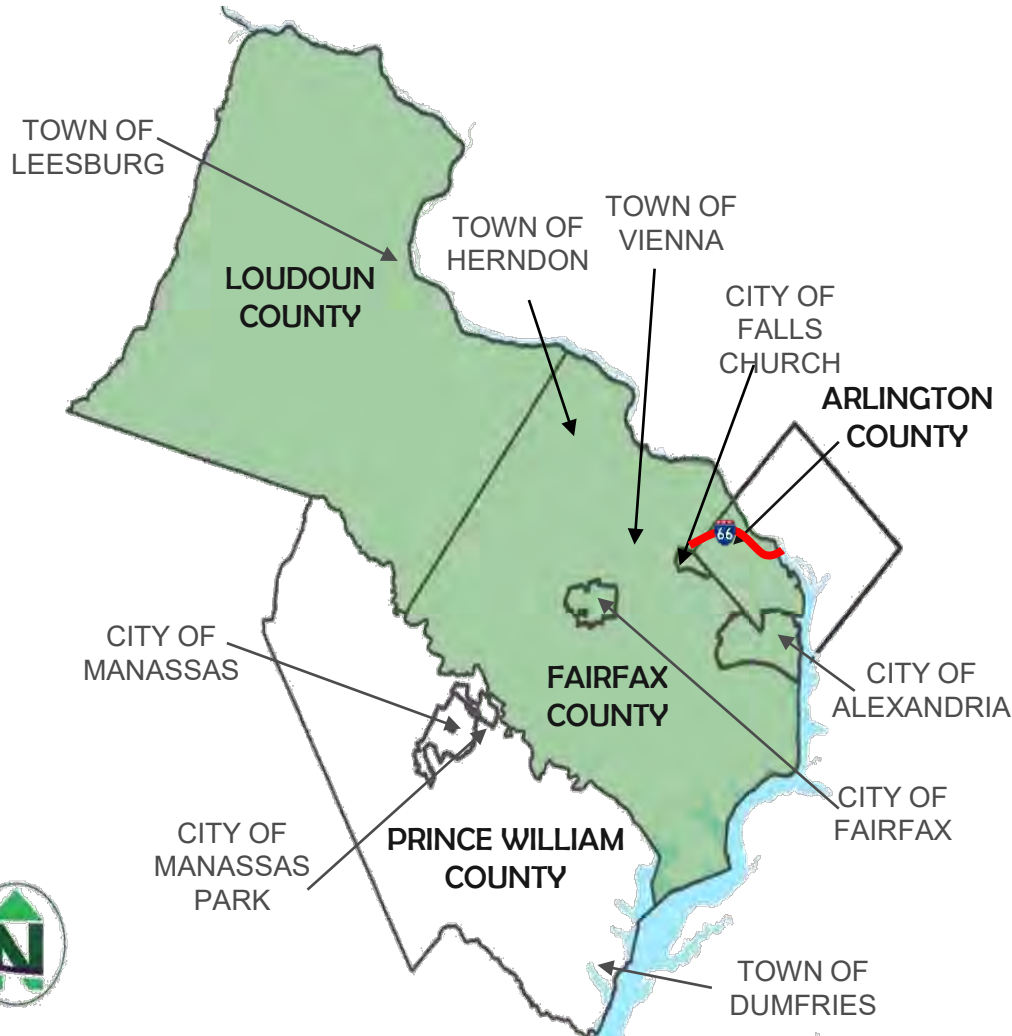
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NORTHERN VIRGINIA  
TRANSPORTATION  
COMMISSION

JUNE 6, 2019



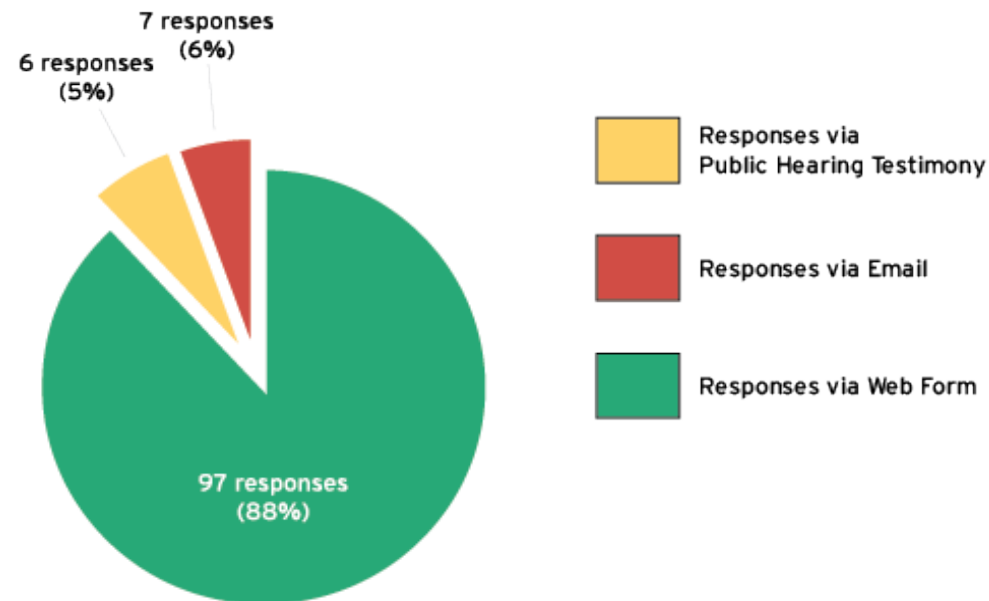
# I-66: Commuter Choice Program



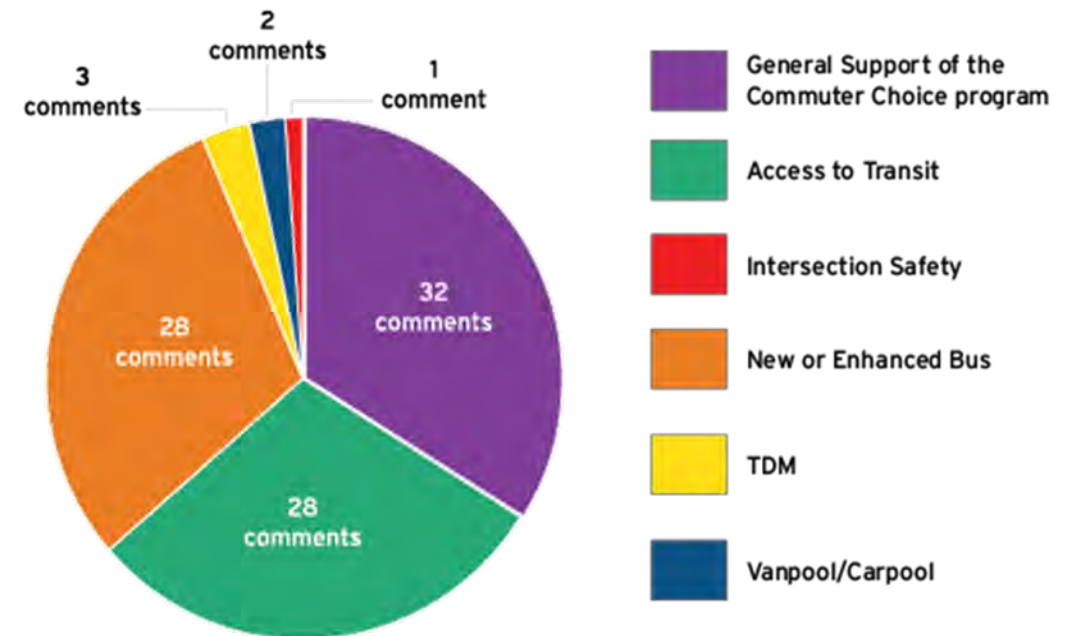
- Projects must benefit the toll payers of I-66 inside the Beltway
- All applications are scored for how well they
  - move people through the corridor,
  - help reduce congestion, and
  - help address diversion
- Eligible applicants include the jurisdictions and transit agencies in Planning District 8 (includes VRE, WMATA, PRTC/OmniRide)
- Program Funding History
  - Initial (Dec 2017): \$10M
  - FY2018: \$12M
  - FY2020: \$20M

# I-66: Overview of Public Outreach

Public Comment Period Responses by Mode



Breakdown of Public Comments by Project Type





# I-66: FY2020 Program Benefits

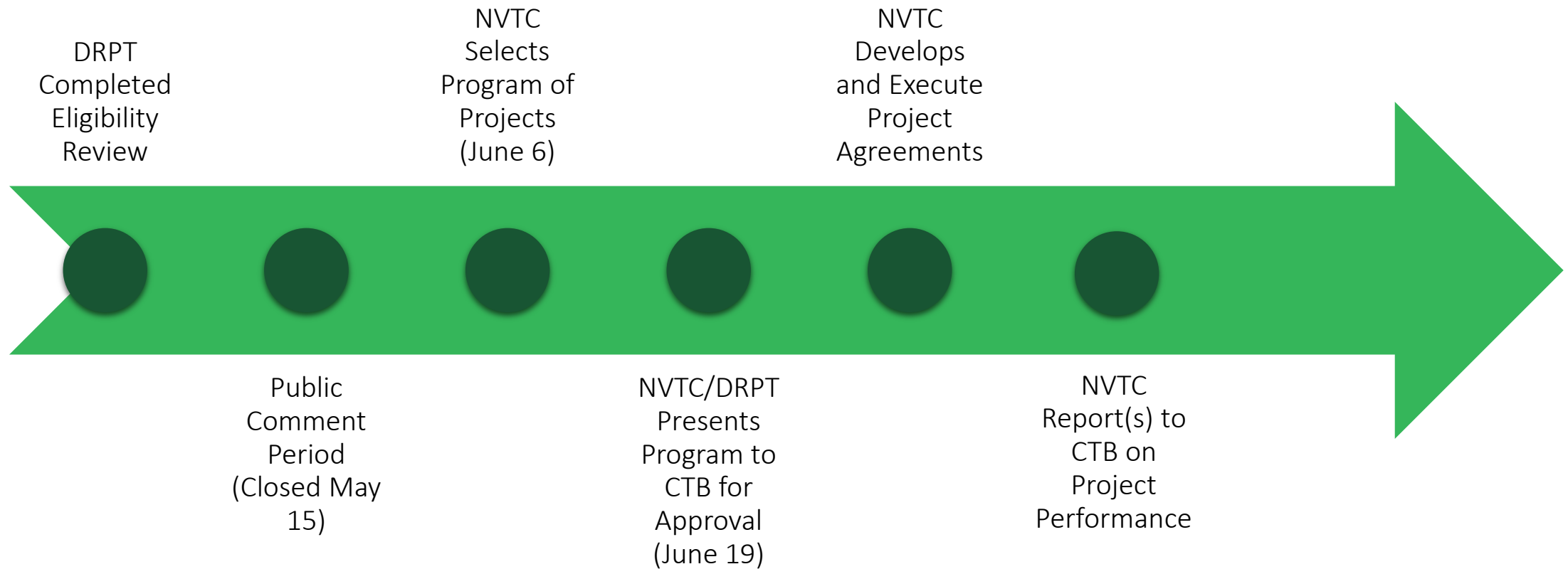
- Moves an additional **3,170** people through the corridor during the morning peak period
- Saves approximately **485,000** hours of travel delay per year during the commuter peak periods
- Connects people to more than **nine** activity centers in Virginia and the District of Columbia
- Provides **four** new bus routes and enhances service on **five** existing bus routes
- Encourages the use of transit, carpool, and vanpool through awareness and marketing campaigns and commuter incentives
- **87%** of the program (\$17.0 million) will fund new or enhanced bus service
- **13%** of the program (\$2.6 million) will support transit incentives and alternate ways to travel such as carpool and vanpool, and program administration



# I-66: FY2020 Program of Projects

Applicant	Project Title	Score (Max 100 Points)	Funding Award
NVTC	Program Administration/Oversight, Marketing/Outreach	-	\$ 800,000
Arlington County	Enhanced Bus Service on Metrobus 3Y: Lee Highway-Farragut Square	95	\$ 1,040,000
Fairfax County	Enhanced Bus Service from Government Center to D.C.	95	\$ 1,939,500
Loudoun County	Enhanced Bus Service from Stone Ridge to D.C.	94	\$ 532,031
PRTC (OmniRide)	Enhanced Bus Service from Gainesville to D.C.	85	\$ 1,519,100
PRTC (OmniRide)	Enhanced Bus Service from Gainesville to Pentagon	84	\$ 4,671,700
PRTC (OmniRide)	New Bus Service from Haymarket to Rosslyn	78	\$ 776,700
Prince William County	New TDM Outreach to the I-66 Corridor	76	\$ 200,000
Fairfax County	New Bus Service from Stringfellow to Constitution Center	73	\$ 4,326,000
PRTC (OmniRide)	I-66 Slug Line Campaign	73	\$ 287,800
Loudoun County	New Bus Service from Stone Ridge to Pentagon	72	\$ 1,257,226
Loudoun County	New Bus Service from Purcellville to D.C.	69	\$ 949,482
Arlington County	Expanded TDM Outreach to the I-66 Corridor	64	\$ 1,350,000
<b>TOTAL FUNDING REQUEST</b>			<b>\$19,649,539</b>

# I-66: Schedule



# I-66: Next Steps

- Develop and Execute Standard Project Agreements (SPAs)
- Program Advisory Committee (August 1)
  - Program Update
  - Modifications to Scoring Based on Committee Feedback in Spring
- Preparation for Anticipated Next Call for Projects (Fall 2019)

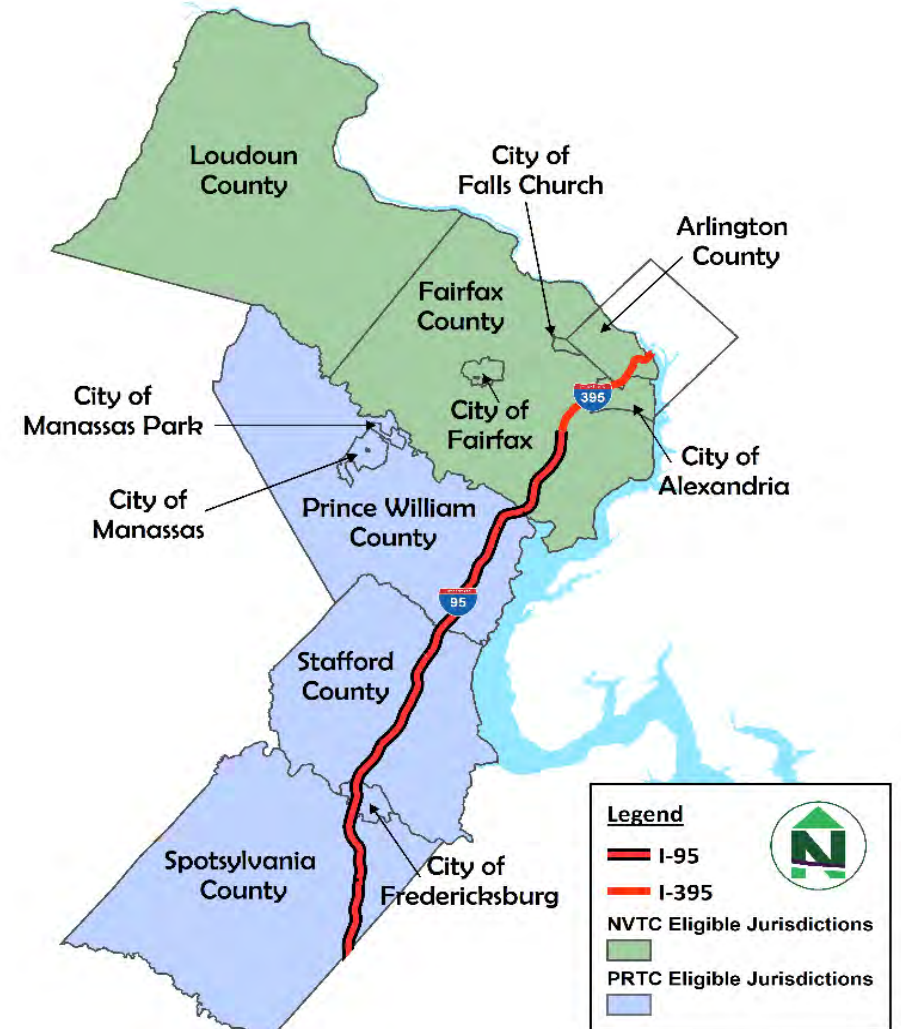
# I-66: Commission Actions

- Approve Resolution #2384: Approve the FY2020 I-66 Commuter Choice Program of Projects and Forward to the Commonwealth Transportation Board and Authorize the Executive Director to Execute the Standard Project Agreements
- Authorize the Executive Director to Award a Contract for I-66 Commuter Choice Market Research and Marketing Communication Strategy

# I-395/95: Commuter Choice Program



- Projects must benefit the toll payers of I-395 Express Lanes
- All applications are scored for how well they
  - move people through the corridor,
  - help reduce congestion, and
  - help address diversion
- Eligible applicants include the jurisdictions and transit agencies in NVTC and PRTC
- Annual Program Funding = \$15 million/year, escalated 2.5%



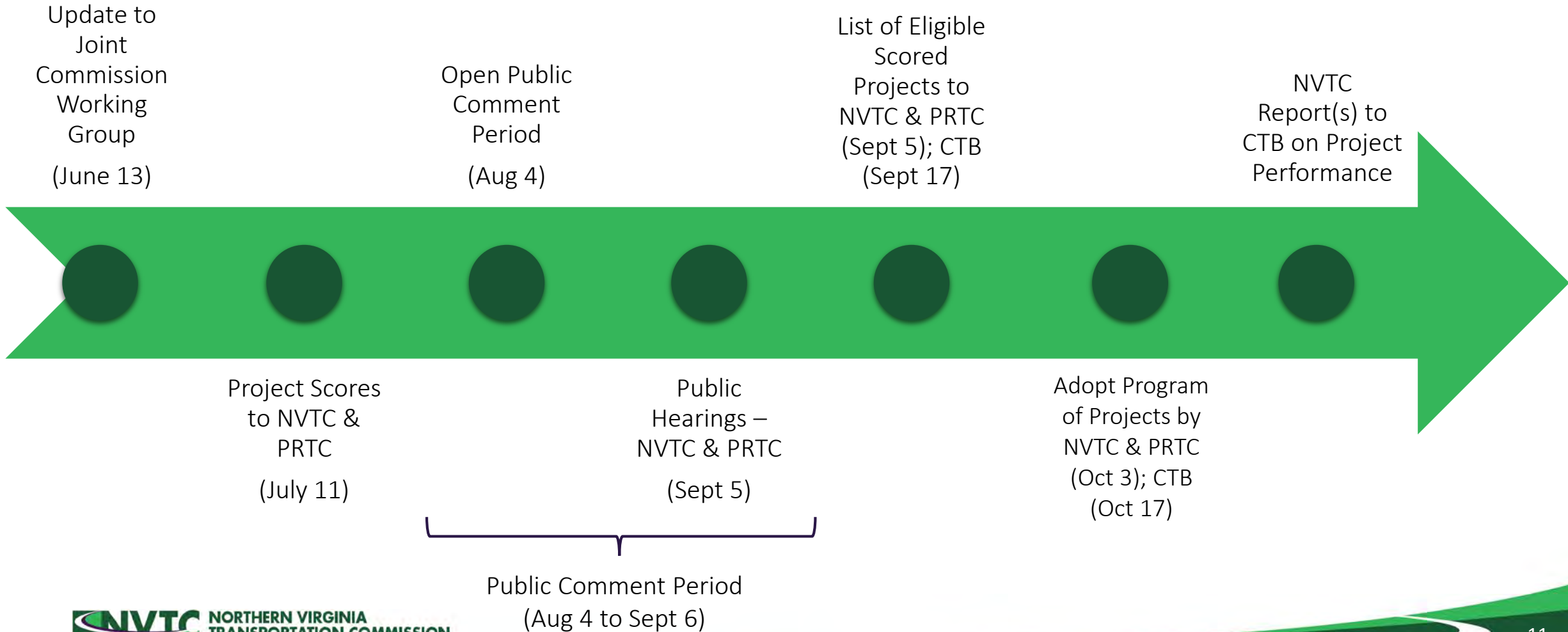
# I-395/95: Inaugural Program



- Application period: April 5, 2019 - May 15, 2019
- NVTC received 17 applications for a total of \$31.3 million in funding requested
- Variety of Projects:
  - New bus service
  - Enhanced bus service
  - Access to transit
  - Intersection / roadway improvements
  - TDM

Applicant	Applications
Arlington County	4
City of Fredericksburg / Fredericksburg Regional Transit	1
DASH / City of Alexandria	2
Fairfax County	2
Prince William County	1
OmniRide / PRTC	5
Stafford County	1
Northern Virginia Regional Commission (NVRC)	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17</b>

# I-395/95: FY2020 Program Schedule



# I-395/95: Next Steps

- Technical Review
  - Eligibility
  - Project Scoring
  - Coordination with Applicants
- Joint Commission Working Group (June 13)
  - Program Update
  - July Action Item – both NVTC and PRTC
- Preparation for Public Outreach
  - Coordination with PRTC

# *Thank You*

# *QUESTIONS*

