

**MINUTES**  
**NVTC COMMISSION MEETING – SEPTEMBER 5, 2019**  
**FIRST FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM – 2300 WILSON BLVD.**  
**ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA**

The meeting of the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission was called to order by Chairman Letourneau at 7:16 P.M.

**Members Present**

Canek Aguirre  
Elizabeth Bennett-Parker  
Richard Black  
Sharon Bulova  
Katie Cristol  
John Cook  
Christian Dorsey  
Adam Ebbin  
John Foust  
Libby Garvey  
David LaRock  
Matt Letourneau  
Jeff McKay  
David Meyer  
Jennifer Mitchell (Alternate, Commonwealth of Virginia)  
M. David Skiles  
David Snyder  
Raul "Danny" Vargas

**Members Absent**

Catherine Hudgins  
James M. LeMunyon  
Ron A. Meyer  
Paul Smedberg

**Staff Present**

Kate Mattice, Executive Director  
Matt Cheng  
Andrew D'huyvetter  
Matt Friedman  
Allan Fye  
Rhonda Gilcrest  
Dan Goldfarb  
Patricia Happ  
Scott Kalkwarf  
Tenley O'Hara  
Zach Smith  
Alex Thorup  
Jae Watkins

Doug Allen (VRE)  
Karen Finucan Clarkson (VRE)  
Joe Swartz (VRE)

### Opening Remarks

Chairman Letourneau welcomed everyone to the September 5<sup>th</sup> NVTC meeting. He thanked Commissioners for attending the just concluded Open House and Public Hearing for the I-395/95 Commuter Choice program.

Chairman Letourneau noted that the meeting is being streamed on YouTube Live and the public can also access the feed through a link on NVTC's Facebook page. He reviewed highlights and the action items for the meeting.

### Minutes of the July 11, 2019 NVTC Commission Meeting

Senator Black moved, with a second by Ms. Bulova, to approve the Minutes of the July 11, 2019 meeting. The vote in favor was cast by Commissioners Aguirre, Black, Bulova, Cook, Dorsey, Ebbin, Foust, Garvey, LaRock, Letourneau, Mitchell, Skiles and Snyder. Commissioners Bennett-Parker, Cristol, McKay, Meyer and Vargas abstained.

### Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

Report from the Chair of the WMATA Committee. Chairman Letourneau stated that since NVTC's WMATA Committee Chair Cathy Hudgins could not attend the meeting, he would provide a brief update on committee activities. The WMATA Committee has met twice to work on the development of the *2019 Report on the Performance and Condition of WMATA*. The committee provided staff with guidance on strategies regarding the WMATA Board, parking, fare policy, fare pass products and the role of Metrobus in the region. He explained that NVTC is responsible for reporting on the performance and condition of WMATA annually by November 1<sup>st</sup> to the Governor and General Assembly. He stated that the Commission will be asked to take action on the 2019 Report at the October meeting. Chairman Letourneau asked Mr. D'huyvetter to give a staff presentation on the 2019 Report.

Mr. D'huyvetter reviewed the work that has been accomplished for the 2019 Report. He acknowledged the hard work of Dinah Girma and Zach Smith of NVTC staff, who were instrumental in the research and peer system benchmarking of fare policies for children, low-income fare pass, parking utilization and policy and complementary paratransit service in Northern Virginia.

Mr. D'huyvetter stated that the 2019 Report includes new strategies as well as strategies carried over from the 2018 Report. The Strategies Chapter of the report provides policy recommendations developed by staff with direction from the NVTC WMATA Committee. Strategies include:

- 1) Maximize Use of Eight-Car Trains
- 2) Improve Weekend Rail Service

- 3) Develop Parking Pass Products
- 4) Optimize Parking Facilities
- 5) Expand and Enhance Fare Products
- 6) Rebuild Ridership and Improve Efficiency of Metrorail and Metrobus
- 7) Increase Non-Fare Revenues
- 8) Control Cost Escalation and Enhance Efficiency of the Workforce and Contracted Services

Mr. Skiles asked about the status of WMATA's development of a mobile ticketing app. Ms. Mattice replied that NVTC has requested WMATA staff brief the Commission on WMATA's progress on its regional fare collection program. Mr. Skiles observed that if WMATA does not do something soon, the local governments will start making decisions about mobile ticketing.

Mr. Cook asked why on-time performance is worse on the weekends. Mr. Dorsey explained that WMATA often single tracks service on the weekends for maintenance, which impacts on-time performance.

Mr. McKay stated that he would like to see the strategies in "4) Optimize Parking Facilities" be applied to all the parking facilities, regardless if they are WMATA-owned or where local governments control the policies. Ms. Garvey asked if there is data showing a pattern of when parking prices drop then ridership and demand goes up. She stated that it would be helpful to share this information, if available, with the jurisdictions, especially with those that control the parking policies. Mr. McKay agreed that the goal is to grow ridership.

Chairman Letourneau stated that he advocated for the recommendation of a family pass product, which is included in the 2019 Report.

Mr. D'huyvetter then reviewed the last four strategies, which were repackaged from the 2018 Report. He stated that at the September 18<sup>th</sup> NVTC WMATA Committee meeting, staff will present a full draft of the Strategies and Uses of the Fund chapters, as well as data tables of available reliability, safety and performance data. The full report will be provided for Commission action at the October 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting.

In response to Mr. Aguirre, Mr. D'huyvetter provided more information about Strategy #8 and "Additional Strategies." WMATA has a capital project underway to secure emergency gates at Metrorail stations to address fare evasion. Mr. Dorsey stated that the WMATA Board has discussed whether there needs to be a new gate design element integrated into any future fare gate procurement.

Mr. Skiles asked for information on cost savings from the public-private partnership for the Cinder Bed Bus Garage facility. Mr. D'Huyvetter stated that staff will request this information from WMATA. Mr. Vargas asked about low-income fare passes. Mr. D'huyvetter stated that the WMATA Committee did discuss this when they looked at industry and peer examples but determined that staff should keep monitoring this issue but not include it in the report at this time.

Mr. Snyder observed that the 2019 Report makes more recommendations related to Metrorail and he asked the WMATA Committee to look at some recent studies and to incorporate more recommendations on Metrobus, including how to expand service and at the same time make it more efficient, and how to integrate first mile/last mile issues, etc.

Chairman Letourneau stated that the 2019 Report is currently being reviewed by jurisdictional staff and will come back for Commission approval at the October meeting.

Report from the Virginia WMATA Board Members. Mr. Dorsey reported that the WMATA Board has three new Board members. In September the WMATA Board will take a close look at the status of the Silver Line Phase 2 project, including the process of turning service over to WMATA. There still is a great deal of work to be done before an opening date can be determined. He also reported that WMATA and local staff have worked hard over the summer on negotiating a one-year extension of the Capital Fund Agreement (CFA) for FY2020. The intent is to approve a six-year CFA commencing in FY2021.

Mr. Dorsey was happy to report that the Blue and Yellow Lines will resume service on Monday, September 9<sup>th</sup> following the summer-long shutdown. He reviewed the improvements to the stations. He also reported that the WMATA Board approved an extension of the Fairfax County Free Student Bus Program Pilot which generated 32,000 Metrobus trips in FY2019.

Mr. Dorsey also noted that the WMATA Board has discussed fare evasion. Most fare evasion (75 percent) occurs on the bus side mostly on Maryland and District bus routes, resulting in \$36 million in estimated revenue loss. One out of every eight bus riders are not paying the fare. Only about two percent of fare evasion occurs in Virginia, but Virginia is still impacted since it collectively funds the system. Senator Ebbin asked if one in eight people don't pay their fare, has WMATA considered undercover police officers on the bus. Mr. Dorsey stated that this already occurs.

Mr. McKay asked if there is any data showing the percentage of juveniles evading fares. If this is the case, he stated that it is important to encourage future transit riders to use transit and providing student free fares, like what Fairfax County does, could be the answer. He asked if it is just a matter of educating them about the free fares. Mr. Dorsey stated that rail fare evaders are largely connected to the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS), who are already eligible for free bus and rail service. It is harder to determine on bus side. Mr. Potts stated that WMATA partners with DCPS on various programs to educate students about the pass. Ms. Cristol noted that this is not an insignificant amount of money, especially in light of NVTC making cost savings recommendations in its *Annual Report on the Performance and Condition of WMATA*. She asked if there is something NVTC can do to help. Following further discussion, Mr. Dorsey stated that ultimately the other WMATA jurisdictions don't see it as a problem and don't recognize that others are bearing the cost of fare evaders.

Mr. Dorsey announced that the Bus Transformation Study has issued its strategy recommendations, which includes key goals of frequent and convenient bus service; greater bus priority on roads; enhancing the customer experience; and a new task force to guide implementation.

Mr. Dorsey stated that the Washington Metrorail Safety Commission (WMSC) has closed over 40 Corrective Action Plans (CAPs) over the last six months. Of the 289 original CAPs, nearly 80 percent have been closed.

In response to a question from Chairman Letourneau, Mr. Dorsey stated that there will a shutdown on the Orange Line next summer for maintenance work. Mr. Potts stated that WMATA will be making an announcement on the summer 2020 shutdown in the near future. Chairman Letourneau expressed his concern about the impact to riders if the Silver Line Phase 2 opens and then there is a shutdown of the East Falls Church Metrorail Station. Mr. Potts stated that WMATA is aware of the issue. Mr. Dorsey noted that next year's Orange Line shutdown is not expected to be as severe as this summer's Blue and Yellow Line shutdown.

Mr. Vargas noted that parking at the Wiehle-Reston Station is already bursting at the seams, which is discouraging ridership. He asked about the status of the opening of the Silver Line Phase 2. Mr. Dorsey stated that the WMATA Board will be updated at its September 12<sup>th</sup> meeting. There are significant issues with the project, which will affect the transition to revenue service. In response to a question from Delegate LaRock, Mr. Dorsey stated that the WMATA Board and the General Manager/CEO have made assurances that the process of accepting the project will be rigorous because WMATA will not accept a system that will require more shutdowns in 10 years. There is a hierarchy of what is important, which includes the rail system as the being the most important; and cosmetic issues at the rail yard could be dealt with the escrow account. Chairman Letourneau explained that Loudoun County and Fairfax County are project funding partners, so they are at the table for these types of discussions. Ms. Bulova stated that the review already is vigorous.

Mr. Snyder expressed interest in what NVTC will be doing to coordinate with the local governments on next summer's shutdown. Mr. Aguirre offered to provide "lessons learned" by the City of Alexandria and DASH on the recent shutdown. Ms. Mattice stated that similar to this recent shutdown, NVTC will be actively coordinating communication between the jurisdictions and transit agencies before, during and after the shutdown. Planning for the next shutdown has already started. DRPT plays a big role too.

Mr. Meyer left the room.

#### Post Shutdown Marketing Campaign

Chairman Letourneau stated that when the shutdown of the Blue and Yellow Lines ends on September 9<sup>th</sup> NVTC is ready to launch a radio and digital marketing campaign to encourage Northern Virginia commuters to take transit. This campaign was requested by the Commission earlier this spring and made possible from a DRPT grant and local funding. The campaign will promote all forms of transit in Northern Virginia, including the use of the reopened Metro stations and other local transit services. The campaign's undertone will emphasize the message that taking transit allows for an easier, less stressful commute. To meet commuters where they are most open to hearing our message – stuck in traffic – the campaign relies heavily on radio. Geo-targeted social media ads, website banner ads, and on-screen cinema advertising will

reinforce the drive-time messages throughout the day. NVTC jurisdictions and transit agencies will amplify the messaging via their websites and social media. He stated that the campaign branded “NoVa Rides” is scheduled to launch on Monday, September 16<sup>th</sup>, a week after WMATA’s planned resumption of rail service.

NVTC’s Manager of Outreach and Communications Matt Friedman presented one of the video ads that will be shown at local theatres and online. In response to a question from Mr. Vargas, Mr. Friedman stated that staff has a robust plan to track data from the campaign.

In response to a question from Senator Ebbin, Mr. Friedman assured him that staff plans to send out social media packets to state and local elected officials prior to the launch, so they can provide information to their constituents.

Senator Ebbin asked if passengers still can receive free rides on Code Red Days. Commissioners discussed that there used to be a program that provided free rides. Mr. Snyder stated that he is a member of the Washington Metropolitan Council of Governments Air Quality Committee and he offered to have the committee look at this issue. Senator Ebbin noted that the best way for WMATA to get people back to riding the system is to provide free rides. Chairman Letourneau stated that it will be helpful to look at the data to see if riders come back to the Metro system.

#### Commuter Choice Program

Mr. Fye provided an overview of progress being made for the I-395/95 Commuter Choice program. Similar to how the I-66 program is handled, staff is working closely with DRPT to prepare a briefing for the Commonwealth Transportation Board on September 17<sup>th</sup> to provide an overview of the program, a summary of the applications received, and an overview of the selection and approval process. It is important to note that the CTB will not be taking any action on the I-395 program in September. The CTB is scheduled to adopt this initial round of I-395 projects at their October meeting, but only after NVTC and PRTC jointly approve a program of projects at their respective October meetings. The action being requested at this meeting is to authorize the executive director to brief the CTB on the projects being considered for selection.

Mr. Fye stated that the projects were presented to the Commission in July and are currently part of the public hearing process. The Joint Commission Working Group, which is composed of members from both NVTC and PRTC, will be meeting on September 12<sup>th</sup> to discuss which projects should be selected for the I-395/95 Inaugural Program and then presented back to NVTC and PRTC for approval in October.

Mr. Fye reviewed the potential changes to the technical evaluation process to account for the useful life of capital projects, as requested by the PAC earlier this year, as well as to improve transparency and to encourage applicants to collaborate on projects. Staff is also considering a transition to the call for projects process that covers two years of funding rather than just one, which would allow calls for the I-66 and I-395/95 programs to take place in alternating years. The proposed changes will be brought back to the Commission for approval at a future meeting.

Mr. Skiles asked for information on the HOV enforcement program on I-66 Inside the Beltway. Ms. Mattice stated that staff will request this information from VDOT and the Virginia State Police. Chairman Letourneau stated that the federal government has ended hybrid vehicle free access on toll roads as of September 30, 2019. He expressed his concern about the impact on the Dulles Toll Road, where many hybrids travel on that facility and now may switch to the non-toll roads. He expects, however, from an enforcement perspective that this will make it easier to identify HOV violators.

Ms. Cristol stated that it makes sense to move the Commuter Choice programs (I-66 and I-395/95) to two-year programs and asked if staff is envisioning alternating the programs. Mr. Fye explained that staff is currently looking at this issue and will hold an internal work session in the next few weeks to discuss it. NVTC staff will also be meeting with jurisdictional staff to get their feedback and answer questions.

Ms. Bulova moved, with a second by Ms. Garvey, to authorize the executive director to present to the Commonwealth Transportation Board the projects considered for funding under the FY2020 I-395/95 Commuter Choice Inaugural Program. The vote in favor was cast by Commissioners Aguirre, Bennett-Parker, Black, Bulova, Cook, Cristol, Dorsey, Ebbin, Foust, Garvey, LaRock, Letourneau, McKay, Mitchell, Snyder and Vargas. Mr. Skiles abstained. Mr. Meyer was not present for the vote.

#### Virginia Railway Express

Chairman Letourneau noted that there are no action items this month. He asked Mr. Allen to give his report.

Mr. Allen gave his report on VRE activities, which includes an upcoming full-scale emergency training event with the City of Manassas. On-time performance (OTP) has rebounded and is just under 90 percent, largely because of fewer heat restriction days. Ridership has been strong this summer at an average 20,000 daily trips. He reported that the increase may be attributable to the Metro shutdown. VRE staff continues to monitor Hurricane Dorian and possible impacts to the VRE service area.

Mr. Allen reported that the Long Bridge Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) has been published and the public comment period is underway through the end of October 2019. This is a major milestone for the project. The final EIS should take about eight months.

There were no questions from Commissioners.

#### Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT)

DRPT Director Mitchell encouraged Commissioners to read her written report. She stated that the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) is planning to meet next week in Richmond,

which will include NVTC's presentation of the I-395/95 Inaugural Program (with no action taken) and DRPT's recommendations concerning CTB's role on the condition of WMATA.

Mr. Meyer returned to the meeting.

As previously mentioned, Ms. Mitchell stated that the Long Bridge Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) was released. There will be a public meeting on October 22, 2019. She also announced that the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) signed the Record of Decision for the DC to Richmond Southeast High-Speed Rail project (DC2RVA).

Ms. Mitchell also announced that DRPT is working on an update to the I-66 Outside the Beltway transit plan, with results expected mid-November. VDOT, DRPT and the Department of Intermodal Planning are also doing an I-95 study as well. Final recommendations will be released in November with a public comment period to follow.

Ms. Cristol observed that the Long Bridge DEIS seems a little weak on bike and pedestrian bridge recommendations. She asked for insights for future inclusion. Ms. Mitchell explained that the bike/ped bridge is being considered as a mitigation measure that would be related to impacts on the federal parks and land in the vicinity to the Long Bridge. Ms. Cristol asked DRPT to keep NVTC updated on this issue as the Commission may want to weigh in since the bike/ped bridge would be a major transportation connection for the jurisdictions. Mr. Dorsey also noted that it would be a "relief valve" for emergency evacuation planning. Ms. Mitchell stated that the Commonwealth is looking for funding partners for that project as well.

In response to a question from Mr. Snyder, Ms. Mitchell stated that DRPT plans to share more information on identifying funding partners and sources of funding for the Long Bridge project at the October meeting. Mr. Snyder stated that he is particularly interested in preserving the I-66 corridor funds for use in the I-66 Inside the Beltway corridor.

Mr. Snyder asked if operators of VRE, WMATA, OmniRide, etc. have looked at extreme weather events and how they are impacting costs to their capital and operating budgets. He asked if this type of data has been documented. Ms. Mitchell stated that the CTB has discussed looking at resiliency efforts, especially for vulnerable areas. Mr. Allen stated that VRE has been significantly impacted this summer from weather related events.

Delegate LaRock asked staff to circulate to Commissioners the Enactment Clause #4 from the WMATA Funding Agreement. He believes this provision has not been met and he has not seen a report from the Commonwealth or NVTC. He then read the first part of the Enactment Clause. Ms. Mattice noted that a link to the Commonwealth's report was included in NVTC's meeting materials.

Ms. Mitchell left the meeting at 8:44 P.M.



### Executive Director Report

Chairman Letourneau stated that the Commission will be conducting the executive director's annual performance review and Commissioners will be receiving an email with a link to a survey. The hope is to have a discussion at the October 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting, with the process wrapped up in November. The Executive Committee also has engaged Arlington County's Human Resource Department to conduct a 360 review of NVTC as a whole. He assured Commissioners that this is not being done due to any concerns by the Executive Committee. It is just a good time to do such a review with many new staff and the work NVTC is now doing.

Ms. Mattice encouraged Commissioners to read her Executive Director Newsletter. She introduced NVTC's new Administrative Assistant Tenley O'Hara. Ms. Mattice also updated the Commission on upcoming meetings and events.

Ms. Mattice stated that following the summer break, the Commission has a number of actions planned for the fall including:

- First round of I-395/95 Commuter Choice projects
- Annual Report to the Governor and General Assembly on WMATA's Performance and Condition
- Next round of I-66 Commuter Choice Call for Projects
- 2020 Legislative and Policy Agenda; and
- 2020 Work Plan and FY2020 Budget.

Ms. Mattice reminded Commissioners that as was announced last month the November meeting date has been changed to November 14, 2019. Save the dates have already been sent for the annual NVTC-PRTC Legislative Briefing on December 9<sup>th</sup> in Springfield. NVTC has invited Secretary of Transportation Shannon Valentine, VRE CEO Doug Allen and WMATA General Manager/CEO Paul Weidefeld to come and share their priorities for transit in this region.

Ms. Mattice noted that the Financial Report for June 2019 was provided to Commissioners and there were no questions.

### Adjournment

Without objection, Chairman Letourneau adjourned the meeting at 8:47 P.M.

Approved this 3<sup>rd</sup> day of October 2019.

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Matthew F. Letourneau  
Chairman

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Sharon Bulova  
Secretary-Treasurer