

**MEETING SUMMARY
NVTC WMATA COMMITTEE
Via Electronic Participation
Public Streaming via YouTube
JANUARY 21, 2021**

NVTC WMATA Committee Members Present via Electronic Participation:

Canek Aguirre, Chair
Walter Alcorn
Matt de Ferranti
Matt Letourneau
David Meyer
Paul Smedberg
David Snyder

Other NVTC Commissioners Present via Electronic Participation:

Libby Garvey
Paul Krizek
Michael Turner

Staff and Others Present via Electronic Participation:

Kate Mattice, Executive Director
Andrew D’huyvetter
Allan Fye
Dinah Girma
Zach Smith
Greg Potts

Chairman Aguirre called the WMATA Committee meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. He explained that given the ongoing COVID-19 public health emergency, the meeting is being conducted electronically. This is possible because the governor signed into law on April 22, 2020 a legislative amendment to the budget bill to allow public bodies to meet electronically without a physical quorum present to discuss or transact the business statutorily required or necessary to continue operations of that public body. NVTC staff followed the procedures and guidelines in the legislation to give notice to the WMATA Committee, Commission, staff and the public.

Chairman Aguirre reviewed the procedures and instructions for the electronic meeting. The only visual component of the meeting is the presentation slides shown on Webex for WMATA Committee members and on YouTube livestream for the public.

Mr. D’huyvetter then called the roll and confirmed a quorum was present. He also updated the committee on the one public comment received regarding proposed changes to Metrobus routes that was received prior to the meeting.

Chairman Aguirre asked for any changes to the October 29, 2020 WMATA Committee meeting summary. Committee members accepted the summary of the October 29, 2020 meeting with no changes.

NVTC WMATA Committee Orientation and Schedule

Mr. D’huyvetter provided a brief overview of the scope of the WMATA Committee and the NVTC WMATA Committee schedule for the upcoming year. Mr. D’huyvetter reviewed the committee’s two primary responsibilities, which are to provide a forum for consensus-based recommendations and to provide strategic guidance to staff on WMATA-related policy matters and NVTC’s legislative mandates. He also reviewed the regional staffing structure and that the jurisdictional staff calls with the Virginia WMATA Board members help facilitate multi-jurisdictional representation from NVTC.

Mr. D’huyvetter presented the WMATA Committee’s 2021 draft work plan, which includes work sessions on the annual report on the performance and condition of WMATA, the companion report on Virginia’s 3% cap on the growth in operating assistance payments to WMATA, and a letter of comments on the WMATA Budget. He also stated that there are additional items that may be placed on the work plan at a future date such as a discussion of the Blue, Orange and Silver Line Capacity and Reliability Study and a possible discussion on the FY 2022 WMATA Budget if it is amended.

Chairman Aguirre reviewed the committee’s timeline and approach to submitting a letter of comments on the FY 2022 WMATA Budget. Since the committee last met in December, President Trump signed the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2021 (CRRSAA) that provided additional federal funding to WMATA.

Mr. D’huyvetter then presented an overview of the WMATA GM/CEO’s revised FY 2022 Budget which reflects federal aid from the passage of CRSSA. He presented the remaining budget gap for FY 2022 and the service changes and management actions that are proposed to offset it. He also presented staff recommended themes to include in the letter of comments. Mr. Snyder proposed comments that express concern about the proposed station closures and increased headways in the latter half of FY 2022 (January – June 2022).

Mr. Alcorn asked about the assumptions behind the \$20 million of equity improvements for Silver Line Phase 2 because the stations along the line will serve minority and low-income communities in Fairfax and Loudoun counties. Mr. Letourneau responded that the Title VI equity analysis must be completed within six months prior to opening new service, so WMATA staff have done preliminary analysis because WMATA has not set an opening date for Silver Line Phase 2. Mr. Letourneau also stated that he has asked WMATA staff for their analysis behind the cost of equity improvements for Silver Line Phase 2.

Mr. Alcorn asked how WMATA determined the overall Metrorail ridership figures for the proposed budget. Mr. Smedberg responded that WMATA used several tools including surveys to develop ridership projections but estimating ridership is difficult because there is uncertainty about when riders will return to transit.

Mr. de Ferranti discussed how severe cuts to service would be detrimental to recovery from the pandemic. He also said that if we are not expecting additional federal funding, then we need to smooth out the levels of service throughout FY 2022 as demand for ridership continues to evolve. Mr. Smedberg added that the eligible uses of additional federal funding may potentially be different than CRRSAA or previous federal funding and that the legislative intent to avoid layoffs drives the timing and usage of these funds.

Mr. Snyder stated that he prefers a level of service that is more consistent throughout the year. Mr. Meyer supported a smoother level of service in FY 2022. He recommended an edit to the recommended theme to avoid or minimize shifting operating costs to the capital program by removing the word “minimize.” He stated that a well-funded capital program is vital. Chair Aguirre stated that he didn’t want to lose a tool to offset the budget gap. Mr. Letourneau responded that the letter should explain the committee’s position on shifting operating costs to the capital program. Mr. Turner expressed concerns about moving capital funds because of the long-term impacts it could have on the system.

Mr. Alcorn asked about ways to improve ridership and coordinate with employers. Mr. Smedberg responded that WMATA has initiated discussions with employers about their plans to return. Ms. Mattice also responded that NVTC is coordinating a marketing campaign through various media outlets aimed at increasing ridership.

Chair Aguirre asked for an overview of what was discussed. Mr. D’huyvetter responded with key messages and themes to include in the letter that were gathered from the meeting:

- Open Silver Line Phase 2 as soon as possible with full service to all stations
- Avoid or minimize shifting operating expenses to the capital program for preventative maintenance, maintain state of good repair capital program support and preserve dedicated funding debt capacity
- Preserve a sufficient level of Metrorail and Metrobus service to serve essential workers and position the region for a quick economic recovery
- Continue to seek additional federal support to avoid layoffs and close the budget gap in FY 2022 and subsequent fiscal years
- Continue to communicate and encourage a safe return to transit to rebuild ridership
- Avoid a sharp reduction in service and station closures in FY 2022

Other Items of Jurisdictional Importance

Mr. Snyder discussed the change in travel patterns since the pandemic and that WMATA should look at how demand is changing to address the demand that is there. Chairman Aguirre reminded the committee that the Commission will discuss the proposed FY 2022 WMATA Budget at the February meeting and that WMATA General Manager Paul Wiedefeld will present remarks at the March Commission meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 7:17 p.m.