

**MEETING SUMMARY
NVTC WMATA COMMITTEE
Via Electronic Participation
Public Streaming via YouTube
MAY 20, 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:

Michael Turner

Staff and Others Present via Electronic Participation:

Kate Mattice, Executive Director
Andrew D’huyvetter
Allan Fye
Scott Kalkwarf
Zach Smith
Greg Potts

Chairman Aguirre called the WMATA Committee meeting to order at 6:07 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 three public comments received prior to the meeting. Two comments were about single tracking on the Orange Line and one comment was about improving frequencies on Metrorail and Metrobus lines.

Chairman Aguirre asked for any changes to the January 21, 2021 WMATA Committee meeting summary. Committee members accepted the summary of the January 21, 2021 meeting with no changes.

Annual Report on the Performance and Condition of WMATA

Mr. D'huyvetter presented staff's recommended approach to develop the 2021 Annual Report on the Performance and Condition of WMATA. He proposed that the chapter to reduce the growth in costs and improve efficiencies at WMATA focus on recommendations to rebuild ridership. In addition, the chapter would provide streamlined updates on WMATA's progress on previous recommendations. He presented the following staff-proposed themes of the 2021 report to the committee:

- Utilize American Rescue Plan Act aid to prevent layoffs, sustain and improve service levels throughout a multi-year recovery period, and position WMATA for a sustainable long-term ridership and revenue recovery when the aid expires
- Adapt Rail & Bus Service to reflect new travel patterns and attract riders during the recovery period
- Implement Fare Policy changes that improve revenue and ridership, remove barriers to access, and retain newly returning riders
- Communicate and encourage a safe return to transit

Chair Aguirre asked the Principal VA WMATA Board members to provide additional framing for the committee's discussion. Mr. Smedberg stated that it is important for the report to differentiate between fare policy and fare structure because that is what WMATA will have to reconcile very shortly. He said it's important for the committee to think beyond the traditional "9 to 5" format and how the system can grow ridership in both the short and long-term.

Mr. Letourneau asked the committee to also distinguish between actions and activities that can either increase ridership but decrease revenue or vice versa. In addition, a portion of the federal relief funding is unallocated after FY 2022. The committee should also consider whether WMATA should use the money to fill any potential budget gaps because the WMATA Board is having a series of work sessions on potential service changes that may be implemented by Labor Day.

Chair Aguirre supported the comments made about the trade-offs between strategies to increase ridership or revenue. Mr. de Ferranti agreed with the direction of the report and added that the proposed theme to communicate and encourage a safe return to transit depends on ridership in the fall. He also said that this theme could move up in the report.

Mr. Snyder agreed with the staff recommendation to increase subscription passes. He also discussed balancing the level of service with ridership demand in response to the concept of increasing frequencies without accompanying demand. He added there are untapped groups like non-profits or churches who could potentially purchase passes.

Mr. Snyder asked if WMATA had explored partnering with hotels to provide guests with transit passes. Mr. Letourneau responded that WMATA has investigated the connection, but there were many challenges. Mr. Letourneau stated that partnerships with conventions should be explored. Mr. Alcorn said that a fundamental shift in thinking about transit service delivery is needed and making transit ridership more attractive compared to other modes is important. He said that the committee should continue to push the system to be better.

Mr. de Ferranti asked if the report is the right place to propose strategies to make WMATA more competitive and discuss a different mindset around transit service. Mr. Smedberg responded that the audience for this report is the General Assembly and the governor. Mr. D'huyvetter also responded that there is some flexibility to incorporate these types of discussions into this report but there may be other avenues to discuss these subjects with the WMATA Committee.

3% Cap Working Group

Mr. Smith presented an overview of the scope of work for the 3% Cap Working Group's companion report to the Commission. He reviewed the Working Group's November 10 report to the General Assembly and the Working Group's recommendations. He provided an overview of the companion report and stated that the report will provide the Commission with additional details on the impact of the 3% cap using research and data from previous working group meetings that was not included in the November 10 report to the General Assembly.

Other NVTC Program Updates

Scott Kalkwarf briefed the committee on how WMATA is funded in Virginia and NVTC's subsidy allocation model (SAM). Mr. Letourneau asked when Loudoun County would begin participating in the SAM formula. Mr. Kalkwarf responded that Loudoun County would begin participating in the SAM formula for operating and capital when revenue service starts for the Silver Line Phase 2.

Allan Fye provided the committee with an update on the NVTC white paper on reduced-fare and zero- free transit. He said that the paper will explore the range of options for reduced-fare and zero-fare transit and what the implementation opportunities are for local transit operators.

Mr. Meyer discussed CUE's experience as a zero-fare system and that the Fairfax City Council will discuss at a June 2021 meeting whether to continue with a zero-fare system. Mr. Alcorn suggested providing more details on why systems should examine the issue and understanding the objectives of these programs.

Mr. Letourneau discussed the challenges of Metrobus service in Virginia. Chair Aguirre agreed that we should look at all possible options. Mr. Alcorn added that Fairfax County has had discussions about the service that Metrobus should run compared to the routes that would be better served by Fairfax Connector. Mr. Snyder suggested exploring the trade-offs and

alternatives before making substantial changes to the level of Metrobus service provided in Virginia.

Mr. Smedberg asked if the white paper would look beyond fares and include any discussion on sustainability and bus electrification and associated costs. Mr. Fye responded that the paper would be focused on the fares and the cost of collecting fares.

Other Items of Jurisdictional Importance

Mr. Meyer discussed the recent accident on the Mexico City subway system and that it underscores the importance of WMATA's investments in safety and good repair. He also thanked the VA WMATA Board members for monitoring this space.

The meeting adjourned at 7:58 p.m.