

**MEETING SUMMARY  
NVTC WMATA COMMITTEE  
NVTC Conference Room, Suite #230 – Arlington, Virginia  
Public Streaming via YouTube  
September 16, 2021**

**NVTC WMATA Committee Members Present**

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

**NVTC Commissioners Present via Electronic Participation:**

Matt Letourneau

**Staff and Others Present**

Kate Mattice, Executive Director  
Matthew Friedman  
Sophie Spiliotopoulos  
Ronnetta Zack-Williams  
Tenley O'Hara

**Staff and Others Present via Electronic Participation:**

Andrew D'huyvetter  
Greg Potts

Chair Aguirre called the WMATA Committee meeting to order at 6:06 p.m. He explained that the committee is back to in-person meetings with a few modifications due to the rise of the Delta variant. Chair Aguirre reviewed the procedures and instructions for electronic meetings based on the updated NVTC Electronic Participation Policy. He noted that Mr. Letourneau was participating electronically due to a medical reason. Chair Aguirre asked for any changes to the May 20, 2021 WMATA Committee meeting summary. Committee members accepted the summary of the May 20, 2021 meeting with no changes.

**Update on the 2021 Annual Report on the Performance and Condition of WMATA**

Chair Aguirre reminded the committee of the 2018 dedicated funding legislation and the legislative requirement to produce an annual report on the state of WMATA. Mr. D'huyvetter provided a brief overview on the status and structure of the annual report. He reviewed the strategies chapter of the report, which provides NVTC recommendations to WMATA on

strategies to reduce the growth in operating costs and improve operational efficiency. These strategies are included into four main categories:

- Rebuild Metrorail & Metrobus Ridership
- Improve the Operational Efficiency of Metrorail & Metrobus
- Increase Non-Fare Revenues
- Control Cost Escalation and Enhance the Efficiency of the Workforce and Contracted Services

Mr. D’huyvetter explained that these strategies have been carried over and consolidated from last year’s report. Mr. D’huyvetter noted that at the last meeting there was a large discussion around the *Rebuild Metrorail & Metrobus Ridership* strategy, and themes from that discussion have been added to the report. Furthermore, he noted that this report has been streamlined from previous years to be more digestible for the audience and the recommendations for each strategy is accompanied by major recent accomplishments at WMATA.

Mr. Smedberg asked about the placement of *Explore and evaluate opportunities to improve bus efficiency through zero or low emission technologies* recommendation being listed as part of the *Improve the Operational Efficiency of Metrorail and Metrobus* strategy. Mr. D’huyvetter noted although there are capital costs associated with zero and low-emission technologies, this intention was to stay current as this topic has received great attention. Mr. Smedberg agrees on the importance of the topic, but questions if this may be premature. Mr. Letourneau stated that the capital costs for zero and low-emission buses are enormous and while there are benefits to zero/low-emission buses, reducing costs and improving efficiency may not be one of them at this time. Mr. Snyder noted that this topic should be listed in the report, and Mr. D’huyvetter proposed it can be appropriately consolidated into the *Pursue Capital Investments that increase the reliability and efficiency of the system* recommendation. Mr. Alcorn agreed and encouraged the addition of text regarding energy and maintenance costs.

Mr. D’huyvetter informed the committee that a draft of the strategies chapter will be available for review at the next committee meeting on October 21 and the final report is due to the Governor and General Assembly on December 15.

#### WMATA Fare Discussion Policy

Mr. D’huyvetter began the discussion with the WMATA Board’s desire to update fare policy and structure based on the current conditions due to the pandemic. Mr. D’huyvetter gave a review of the current fare policy and potential fare structure concepts offered by WMATA staff.

Mr. Letourneau noted that the WMATA Finance and Capital Committee will have an upcoming discussion on fare policy, and that as fare concepts are explored it is important to remember the revenue situation at WMATA will eventually be at a point when the federal aid will run out. Given current patterns of a dramatically reduced peak hour ridership, Mr. Smedberg revisited the relevance of fare policy around the old AM/PM rush. Chair Aguirre asked if any companies are tracking all the business and new potential return to the office schedules and Mr. Smedberg noted that he and WMATA staff are in constant contact with major regional employers and

related groups. Mr. Smedberg also noted that previous return to the office plans have been consistently pushed back.

Mr. Meyer, Mr. Letourneau and Mr. Smedberg discussed the relationship and tradeoffs between fares, ridership, service and revenue. Mr. Letourneau noted that service is a bigger driver of ridership than fares, and Mr. Smedberg noted the concern of riders over safety during the pandemic. Mr. Alcorn noted that the return of ridership and fare revenue will be a gradual multi-year process and that the financial sustainability of the system is of the utmost importance. Mr. Smedberg highlighted that old financial model of a reliance on peak hour fares is obsolete. Mr. Alcorn agreed with this observation and encouraged the committee to think about what new financial and revenue models could look like. He advocated for fare policies that targeted subsidized passes or discounts at specific groups through jurisdictionally funded fare subsidy agreements and asked for WMATA staff to provide the Board with further information on where fare reductions might lead to both ridership and revenue gains overall.

Mr. Meyer noted that the delay in returning to the office has resulted in a high loss in SmartBenefits revenue for Metro. Mr. Snyder asked how long WMATA can utilize federal aid to offset declines in fare revenue. Mr. Letourneau replied that federal aid would be exhausted sometime in Calendar Year 2023 or Fiscal Year 2024 and that additional information from WMATA would be forthcoming.

Mr. de Ferranti asked if the infrastructure proposal has any capital relief, to which Ms. Mattice responded that it contains a great deal of capital funding for the region but that it does not contain any operating funding for a large system like WMATA. She explained the role of federal transit benefits and the federal workforce in providing operating fare revenue.

Chair Aguirre brought the discussion back to recommendations for fare policy changes. Mr. Smedberg and Mr. Letourneau suggested engaging the committee again after the WMATA Board receives more information on fare concepts and adopts fare policy principles.

#### WMATA's Blue/Orange/Silver Reliability & Capacity Study

Chair Aguirre introduced the Blue/Orange/Silver Reliability & Capacity (BOS) study. Mr. Letourneau noted that several scenarios have been presented in this study, which started as a need to address capacity constraints at the Rosslyn tunnel. He expressed concerns about the scenarios proposed in the study given current conditions and the potential price tag of these projects. Mr. Smedberg noted that this study is still in the beginning stages and a final decision has not been made. Mr. Alcorn stated that he would like to see this study take into consideration population and employment growth in the region, as the price tags for these scenarios are large. Ms. Mattice noted that WMATA staff were invited to attend the next meeting to brief the committee and discuss the BOS study in further detail.

### Other NVTC Program Updates

Ms. Mattice provided updates on other NVTC programs including a regional marketing campaign for transit, zero emission bus activities, legislative agenda development and the three percent cap working group efforts from the summer.

The meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.