

**MEETING SUMMARY
NVTC WMATA COMMITTEE
NVTC Suite #230 Conference Room
2300 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, Virginia
April 21, 2022**

NVTC WMATA Committee Members Present:

Walter Alcorn, Chair
Canek Aguirre
Matt de Ferranti
Matt Letourneau (*via electronic participation*)
David Meyer
Paul Smedberg
David Snyder

Other Commissioners Present:

Aimee Gilroy

Staff and Others Present:

Kate Mattice, Executive Director
Andrew D'huyvetter
Allan Fye
Rhonda Gilchrest
Scott Kalkwarf
Tenley O'Hara
Sophie Spiliotopoulos
Melissa Walker
Ronnetta Zack-Williams
Brent Riddle (Fairfax County)
Raka Choudhury (WMATA)
Greg Potts (WMATA)

WMATA Chair Alcorn called the WMATA Committee meeting to order at 5:06 p.m. He explained the meeting is being livestreamed to allow the listening audience the opportunity to watch through YouTube Live. He noted that Mr. Letourneau is participating electronically for a personal reason. Mr. D'huyvetter confirmed an in-person quorum was present.

Chair Alcorn asked for any changes to the January 20, 2022 WMATA Committee Meeting Summary. Committee members accepted the summary of the January 20, 2022 meeting with no changes.

Aimee Gilroy joined the meeting at 5:09 p.m.

WMATA's Bus Transformation Project and Bus Priority Program

Chair Alcorn introduced WMATA's Bus Priority Program, which aims to transform the bus system across the region and was endorsed by NVTC in early 2020. He welcomed Raka Choudhury, Director of Bus Priority at WMATA, to present this program to the committee. Ms. Choudhury reviewed the project's scope, purpose, goals and outreach. She explained the challenges buses face on the roadway as a result of the built environment and the need to make improvements for riders who depend on bus service the most in the region.

Ms. Choudhury reviewed each of the strategies of the Bus Transformation Project and focused her presentation on WMATA's bus priority program. Ms. Choudhury explained the different factors affecting speed and reliability of buses and provided an overview of active projects in the region to improve bus priority including transit signal priority, queue jumps, violation detection systems and an all-door boarding pilot. Ms. Choudhury closed her presentation by expressing the importance of regional coordination and the next steps of the program including expanding bus priority initiatives with local and state departments of transportation and redesigning the bus network. Chair Alcorn opened this item for discussion.

Committee members raised several discussion topics to Ms. Choudhury which included the metrics for improved median speeds, dedicated bus lanes and the most effective bus priority treatments in less urban areas.

Mr. Aguirre joined the meeting at about 5:30 p.m.

How WMATA is Funded in Virginia

Chair Alcorn introduced Mr. D'huyvetter who provided an overview of how WMATA is funded and how that funding operates in Virginia. The chair acknowledged the importance of this topic as discussions will begin on the FY 2024 operating budget gap later this year. Mr. D'huyvetter provided an overview of WMATA's Capital and Operating Budget. This consisted of expenses and funding sources for the Capital and Operating Budget, as well as the projected state of good repair backlog. Furthermore, Mr. D'huyvetter explained how the funding for WMATA flows in Virginia between Virginia's funding jurisdictions, the Department of Rail of Public Transportation and NVTC.

Chair Alcorn asked if the recent gas tax holiday in Maryland affected the regional gas tax discussion in Virginia to which Ms. Mattice replied that the regional gas tax is solely NVTC districts and has no relation to the Maryland gas tax or discussions of the state gas tax currently taking place in Richmond.

Update on WMATA's FY 2024 Operating Budget Gap

Mr. D'huyvetter provided an update on WMATA's FY 2024 operating budget gap. The update provided background on WMATA's ridership recovery projections, which is expected to be gradual and have a significant impact on operating revenue. In general, expense growth exceeds revenue growth, 3% operating caps in Virginia and Maryland constrain the amount jurisdictional

operating subsidy can be increased, so when federal aid becomes exhausted in FY 2024 there is an operating funding gap.

Mr. D’huyvetter shared that at the direction of the WMATA Board, WMATA staff found \$43 million in additional savings in the Approved FY 2023 Operating Budget when compared to the Proposed FY 2023 Operating Budget, and \$120 million was received from the American Rescue Plan Additional assistance funding. This reduces the preliminary FY 2024 funding gap from \$519 million to \$356 million, but Mr. D’huyvetter cautioned that this number would likely change as WMATA updates its budget assumptions throughout the year.

Mr. Smedberg added that bus and rail ridership is increasing and, in meeting with business leaders in the region, there is uncertainty surrounding future commute patterns. Mr. Letourneau noted that this operating funding gap issue goes beyond FY 2024 and expenses have been outpacing revenue for some time. Chair Alcorn asked if inflation has been included in the FY 2024 Budget in relation to labor costs to which Mr. Smedberg and Mr. Potts confirm the labor costs are included through FY 2023 and there were assumptions made for FY 2024 that will be reevaluated as more information becomes available. Mr. D’huyvetter mentioned WMATA staff had previously stated inflation was a risk in upcoming budget considerations and these assumptions could change.

Mr. de Ferranti asked if there is an opportunity for additional savings related to delays in opening the Silver Line Phase 2 to which Mr. Letourneau replied it is possible that there could be minor savings but that it is uncertain since personnel are already being hired.

Mr. Smedberg mentioned the need to start thinking about a new funding model for WMATA as the current model is not sustainable. Mr. Meyer asked how soon discussions should start about a new funding model for Metro as the search for a new general manager is still ongoing and his or her input on this matter will be important. Mr. Smedberg responded that the new general manager along with the business community, elected officials and stakeholders will have a prevalent role in what a new funding model for the system will encompass. Chair Alcorn recommended that jurisdictions begin to examine the amount of local funds going to WMATA and the need for further research on how other regions provided sustainable funding for large transit systems.

Regarding the FY 2024 Budget, Mr. Snyder asked about the role of NVTC in the discussions on the FY 2024 operating gap. Mr. Smedberg responded that NVTC plays a role and Maryland is beginning to discuss the issue on the capital side. Mr. Letourneau suggested that committee members go back to the appropriate staff in their respective jurisdiction to review their ability to pay and relevant budgetary tradeoffs to inform the upcoming budget season. Mr. de Ferranti expressed that there is a board member role and chair role in these discussions. Ms. Mattice advised on NVTC’s role in gathering jurisdictional staff together for discussions and added that NVTC is updating the value of Metrorail in Northern Virginia study. She also added that NVTC staff would work with the committee and Committee Chair Alcorn to advance this conversation throughout the year.

Updates from the Virginia WMATA Board Members

Mr. Smedberg provided an update on the 7000-series trains and the recent appointment of the Acting Inspector General, René Fables. Mr. Letourneau provided an update on the Blue/Orange/Silver Capacity & Reliability Study and the need to focus these discussions on the bottleneck at the Rosslyn tunnel to which Chair Alcorn agreed. Chair Alcorn added that as WMATA works on this project in phases the first phase should focus on the Rosslyn tunnel, and it should be addressed exclusively as opposed to the option of system expansion. Mr. Snyder proposed the committee send a letter to WMATA on this issue to which committee members and NVTC staff agreed.

Mr. Meyer and Mr. Snyder left the meeting at 6:35 p.m.

Additional NVTC Program Updates

Ms. Zack-Williams provided on brief overview and update on Metro's project coordination of the Yellow Line bridge and tunnel rehabilitation, Potomac Yard track tie-in and regional mitigation and coordination efforts. She explained NVTC's role in supporting regional coordination in Northern Virginia and the plan to present the final mitigation service plan to the Commission in July 2022.

Chair Alcorn adjourned the meeting at 6:40 p.m.