

**MEETING SUMMARY
NVTC WMATA COMMITTEE
NVTC Suite #230 Conference Room
2300 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, Virginia
Public Streaming via YouTube
October 20, 2022**

NVTC WMATA Committee Members Present:

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

Staff and Others Present:

Kate Mattice, Executive Director
Andrew D'huyvetter
Rhonda Gilchrest
Ann McGrane
Melissa Walker
Ronnetta Zack-Williams (*via electronic participation*)
Kirk Dand (Arlington County)
Greg Potts (WMATA)
Tim Roseboom (DRPT)

NVTC WMATA Committee Chair Alcorn called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m. and noted that the meeting was being live streamed for the public. He mentioned that Mr. de Ferranti is participating virtually from Arlington County due to a scheduling conflict.

Chair Alcorn asked for any changes to the September 29, 2022 WMATA Committee Meeting Summary. Committee members accepted the summary with no changes.

Chair Alcorn asked Mr. Letourneau to provide an update on WMATA matters over the past week. Mr. Letourneau shared WMATA's recent announcement of the Silver Line Extension being operationally ready to open. He added that WMATA is awaiting safety certification from the Washington Metrorail Safety Commission (WMSC) but there are currently not enough trains to run the Silver Line.

At this point of his update, Mr. Letourneau noted there was breaking news involving WMATA and asked to come back to this discussion later in the meeting.

2022 Update of the Annual Report on the Performance and Condition of WMATA

Chair Alcorn introduced the update for the Annual Report on the Performance and Condition of WMATA, which is a legislative requirement for NVTC to produce annually. NVTC's By-Laws charge the NVTC WMATA Committee with providing staff guidance on updates to the Annual Report. This will be the fifth annual report produced by NVTC. He noted that a draft of the introduction, strategies and dedicated capital funding chapters are included in the meeting materials.

Mr. D'huyvetter reviewed the structure of the 2022 Annual Report, as well as the process of streamlining chapters while incorporating committee feedback from the previous work sessions. He presented the following list of strategies:

- 1) Rebuild customer confidence
- 2) Enforce fare payment uniformly across the system
- 3) Implement a simple and convenient fare structure
- 4) Increase non-fare revenues from real estate and advertising
- 5) Manage labor costs
- 6) Explore the implications of local transit agencies assuming the operation of Metrobus services in Northern Virginia
- 7) Examine and develop options for a new financial operating model for WMATA

Mr. D'huyvetter explained that the first five strategies are directed at WMATA and the funding partners, while the remaining two strategies are directed at NVTC. The sixth strategy would direct NVTC to produce a white paper on the opportunities and challenges of Northern Virginia transit agencies taking full responsibility of bus operations and the seventh strategy would direct NVTC to explore options for a new financial operating model for WMATA by convening a working group with key stakeholders in Northern Virginia. Mr. D'huyvetter shared that staff are still waiting on additional data from the National Transit Database to complete the report and staff will present this report at the November Commission meeting.

Mr. Meyer asked if the recommendations directed to WMATA and the funding partners are listed in a particular order to which Mr. D'huyvetter responded it was intentional to list "Rebuild Customer Confidence" as the first strategy, but the remaining strategies are in no particular order. Ms. Mattice added that strategies four and five had been listed in prior reports while the first three recommendations are new. Mr. Meyer added that rebuilding customer confidence is difficult to measure aside from looking at ridership, on-time performance, and crime reduction. He does not want the recommendations listed to be viewed as the WMATA Committee's top priority to least priority and mentioned they may all be equal, but some are short-term, and others are long-term. Chair Alcorn shared this is the last opportunity for the committee to discuss the report as the next draft will be discussed at the November Commission meeting. Mr. Snyder added that the rebuild customer confidence strategy should be listed in sub-sections.

NVTC Research: WMATA Peer Transit Agency Operating Funding

Chair Alcorn introduced the WMATA Peer Transit Agency Operating Funding. He mentioned that earlier this year, the committee received a refresher on how WMATA is funded and expressed the need for a new operating funding model for WMATA. As part of those discussions, the committee asked staff to research how peer transit agencies fund their operating expenses.

Mr. D’huyvetter provided background of the Peer Transit Agency Operating Funding research which consisted of examining dedicated revenue sources, reviewing FY 2022 operating budgets for comparable agencies and assessing agencies with an interstate compact governance structure. The following agencies were reviewed: BART, CTA, LA Metro, MARTA, MBTA, NY MTA, PATCO, PATH and St. Louis Metro. Mr. D’huyvetter reviewed WMATA’s operating funding model and each jurisdiction’s method to fund its share of the jurisdictional operating subsidies.

Ms. Zack-Williams reviewed the FY 2022 operating budgets of WMATA, BART, CTA, MARTA, MBTA and St. Louis Metro, which were compartmentalized into the following categories for comparison: dedicated funding, state and local funding/other, fare and non-fare revenue and federal COVID aid. She focused on dedicated funding and explained the revenue source for each agency. Ms. Zack-Williams also explained how the funding sources are implemented at each respective agency.

Mr. D’huyvetter summarized the presentation by listing the following key findings:

- All the large peer transit agencies had dedicated operating funding
- A sales tax was the most common form of dedicated funding
- Larger agencies have multiple sources of dedicated revenues
- WMATA’s unique governance structure is uncommon (even with agencies who have interstate compacts)

He also shared that this research would move forward with NVTC’s WMATA Operating Funding and Reform Working Group for further analysis and research.

Chair Alcorn asked if NVTC’s WMATA Operating Funding and Reform Working Group was a technical working group to which Mr. D’huyvetter replied it is mostly a technical working group, but staff will also be flexible in how the group is approached. Chair Alcorn added that WMATA is unique as it is the system for the Nation’s Capital and requested looking at whether other federal governments provide operating assistance for transit agencies in Asian and European cities. Mr. Letourneau asked if this research looked at bus and rail combined, to which Mr. D’huyvetter answered that this research looked at all modes. Mr. Letourneau also asked if dedicated funding referred to revenues that were a tax to which Mr. D’huyvetter confirmed and added that staff used their best judgment when reviewing budgets for the peer transit agencies.

Mr. Snyder called for NVTC’s WMATA Operating Funding and Reform Working Group to begin discussions with WMATA’s current funding system and the 3% cap as one of the alternatives. He

suggested looking into the history of successful and failed efforts to provide funding for Metro as well as creating a scientific public option survey to gauge the opinion of Virginia constituents on funding WMATA's operating expenses. He also mentioned the history of funding with WMATA and that there are dedicated funds, just not for operating. He concluded by stating that the peer transit findings need a framework.

Chair Alcorn added that this research reveals that in Virginia, particularly Fairfax County, the real estate tax is facing a burden in providing operating funding for Metro. Mr. Smedberg agreed with Mr. Snyder's sentiments on conducting a survey and added that it should be a regional effort. Ms. Mattice added the efforts of the working group should focus on Virginia and complement WMATA's efforts with Maryland and the District of Columbia. Mr. Smedberg inquired if the dedicated funding streams from the peer transit research capped at a certain amount. Mr. D'huyvetter responded that in some cases it was based on actual revenues received and in other cases there were state revenues that were matched. Mr. Smedberg responded that this unpredictability could present other challenges. Ms. Mattice added that a single revenue source can be volatile and mentioned the work to diversify the Commonwealth's Transportation Trust Fund to nine revenue sources.

Mr. Letourneau added that WMATA wants to play a bigger role in the future of determining its operating funding model and having less reliance on the jurisdictions. He also mentioned looking at how much of the Northern Virginia localities operating budgets' part of the tax rate goes to WMATA and how that would benefit the taxpayer as a future endeavor. Mr. Meyer agreed with Mr. Letourneau and added that the presence of Metro has an impact on individual residents although it's hard to quantify. Mr. Snyder reiterated checking on public opinion as the working group looks to future Metro operating funding. Mr. Meyer added that to increase the value of respondents it is important to set the stage for what we need to know. Mr. D'huyvetter added that strategies six and seven of the annual report are looking at policies that have been identified as issues such as the disconnect between Metrobus service and subsidy.

Mr. Letourneau continued his earlier update on WMATA matters over the past week. Mr. Letourneau stated that WMATA submitted a return to service plan to the WMSC that was rejected, and WMATA needs more direction from the WMSC on how to move forward. He added the Silver Line Extension will be ready to open before the Thanksgiving holiday. Furthermore, Mr. Letourneau mentioned the recent Inspector General report which stated Metro acted accordingly and was communicative regarding the 7000-series investigation. The report also mentioned the relationship between WMATA and the WMSC lacked a procedural communications method.

Mr. Snyder asked about the manufacturer's role with the wheelset issue to which Mr. Letourneau responded the National Transportation Safety Board's (NTSB) investigation on the root cause will determine if there was clear evidence the manufacturer is responsible for the derailment. However, there have been multiple analyses and tests, and a root cause has not been determined. He also mentioned that because there is no root cause yet determined, Metro is working on inspection intervals and what can be done to mitigate risk.

Mr. Aguirre asked if there was a timeline for the NTSB investigation to which Mr. Smedberg replied that the NTSB did release an initial report which included a finding that the derailment was not caused by anything Metro did or did not do. Mr. Letourneau added there is no timeline, but they may be closing the investigation soon. Chair Alcorn asked about the timeline for the automatic wayside inspection system to which Mr. Letourneau responded that is not soon because most of the efforts have gone to the return to service plan and manual inspections. Additionally, he shared the general manager would like to be conservative with rolling out the system to ensure that it is efficient and reliable.

Mr. Smedberg shared the reason that Metro is not able to run all the trains it is authorized to run is due to WMSC instruction that railcars be measured every four days, with Mr. Letourneau adding that this means that a railcar is out of service for three days. Mr. Smedberg also mentioned that the 2000-series railcars were not intended to be working 45 years later at the level they are currently running.

Mr. Snyder circled back to the WMATA operating funding conversation and recalled the 2002 transportation funding referendum where Northern Virginians rejected a sales tax that would have generated \$140 million for road and transit needs. Mr. Letourneau added that many issues with Metro need to be addressed before asking for more funding, albeit the budget gap must be solved.

Mr. Meyer asked about the average interval for testing to which Mr. Letourneau stated that he was unsure. He explained that the WMSC has a standard for how long a train can run from the time it is deployed to when it can be inspected again. Mr. Meyer asked if there are enough certified inspectors to which Mr. Letourneau and Mr. Smedberg replied they hadn't heard there was an issue with inspectors.

Mr. Meyer inquired if there should be additional investments in inspection facilities and Mr. Letourneau replied the hope is that the current inspection process is not the long-term solution. He provided some details about what kind of things are on the inspection list. Mr. Meyer added that Metro's inspection program is cost-effective considering all the variables.

Mr. Smedberg announced that there was a groundbreaking in Maryland for the facility to assemble the future 8000-series railcars.

Mr. Aguirre discussed the Kids Ride Free Program and how to ensure school children aren't stranded if they forget or misplace their SmartTrip card. Mr. Smedberg mentioned the District of Columbia is doing outreach with parents to ensure kids have their passes and added the importance of tapping their Smart Trip card at the faregate when collecting data for funding.

Chair Alcorn adjourned the meeting at 7:15 p.m.