

MEETING SUMMARY
JOINT NVTC-PRTC-VRE LEGISLATIVE BRIEFING
DECEMBER 1, 2023

George Mason University, Mason Square 3351 Fairfax Drive Arlington, Virginia
9:00 A.M.

NVTC Members Present

Canek Aguirre
Walter Alcorn
Matt de Ferranti
Jennifer DeBruhl (Alternate)
Libby Garvey
Takis Karantonis
Jeff McKay
Dalia Palchik
Catherine Read
Paul Smedberg
James Walkinshaw

PRTC Members Present

Victor Angry
George Barker
Kenny Boddye
Meg Bohmke (Alternate)
Jennifer DeBruhl
Todd Horsley (Alternate)
Pamela Sebesky

VRE Operations Board Members Present

Canek Aguirre (Alternate)
Victor Angry (Alternate)
Meg Bohmke
Libby Garvey (Alternate)
Takis Karantonis
Jeff McKay (Alternate)
Pamela Sebesky (Alternate)
James Walkinshaw

NVTC Members Absent

Sarah Bagley
John Bell
Adam Ebbin
John Foust
Aimee Gilroy
Joe Kornhoff
Matt Letourneau
M. David Skiles
David Snyder
John C. Tuck III
Mike Turner

PRTC Members Absent

Tinesha Allen
Andrea Bailey
Margaret Franklin
Deborah Frazier
Monica Gary
Elizabeth Guzman
Lori Hayes
Matthew Kelly
Jeanine Lawson
Jeanette Rishell
Bob Weir

VRE Operations Board Members Absent

Sarah Bagley
Andrea Baily
Margaret Franklin
Monica Gary
Lori Hayes
Matthew Kelly
Jeanine Lawson
Michael McLaughlin
Alanna Mensing
Ralph Smith
Dan Storck

NVTC Staff Present

Kate Mattice, Executive Director
Monique Blyther
Genoveva Cutrell
Matt Friedman
Allan Fye
Rhonda Gilchrest
Adam Hager
Scott Kalkwarf
Ann McGrane
Becky Merriner
Tenley O'Hara
Ben Owen
Aimee Perron-Seibert
Vikram Sinha
Sophie Spiliotopoulos
Brittany Sumpter
Colethia Quarles
Melissa Walker

PRTC Staff Present

Bob Schneider, Executive Director
Althea Evans
Declan Goslen
Becky Merriner
Holly Morello
Jeffrey Morfit
Philip Parella, Jr.
Perrin Palistrant
Cynthia Porter-Johnson
Christine Rodrigo
Joe Stainsby
Russell Carter (Keolis)

VRE Staff Present

Rich Dalton, CEO
Karen Finucan Clarkson
Steve MacIsaac
Mark Schofield
Joe Swartz

Opening Remarks: Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC) Executive Director Kate Mattice

Ms. Mattice welcomed attendees into the George Mason University Van Metre Hall Multipurpose Room at approximately 9:00 a.m. She stated that this is the 8th Annual NVTC-PRTC-VRE Legislative Forum and is an opportunity to dive into public transit issues in Northern Virginia and hear directly from the heads of some of the area's largest public transit systems about what is happening now and what they need in the future. Ms. Mattice thanked event partners Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission (PRTC) and the Virginia Railway Express (VRE). After a few housekeeping items, Ms. Mattice welcomed NVTC Chair Dalia Palchik to the stage to provide welcoming remarks.

Welcoming Remarks: Northern Virginia Transportation Commission Chair Dalia Palchik

In her welcoming remarks, Chair Palchik noted the many accomplishments in transit and at NVTC over the past year. She stated that over the past year NVTC released the Value of Transit Study, which found that the vast transit network in the Washington Metropolitan region generates \$1.5 billion in revenue to the Commonwealth; launched the Zero-Emission Bus Strategic Plan; awarded another round of Commuter Choice projects; dove into tough WMATA funding issues; and worked toward the next phase of the Envision Route 7 Bus Rapid Transit project.

Chair Palchik then introduced VRE Chair James Walkinshaw to provide remarks and introduce the special guest speaker.

Introduction of Special Guest Speaker

VRE Chair James Walkinshaw spoke briefly about new developments at Virginia Railway Express over the past year, including a study that found approximately 50% of all riders are new to the service following the COVID-19 pandemic. To meet shifting demands from riders, VRE will be rolling out Saturday service in 2024 if the FY 2025 budget is approved. Chair Walkinshaw emphasized that VRE continues to grow and adapt to new travel needs and demand.

Chair Walkinshaw then introduced Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) Director Jennifer DeBruhl to provide her remarks.

Special Guest Remarks: Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation Director Jennifer DeBruhl

DRPT Director DeBruhl spoke about how transit in the region continues its post pandemic recovery, stating that statewide ridership is now at 90% of pre-pandemic levels. Ms. DeBruhl also called for a broader return of in-office federal workers which will help VRE and WMATA's return to pre-pandemic ridership. Ms. DeBruhl added that Transforming Rail in Virginia has and will

continue to have a large impact on reducing traffic congestion in the region versus expanding freeways. Transit is also more economical. Ms. DeBruhl shared that Amtrak in Virginia had 1.8 million riders in the last fiscal year and ridership numbers continue to set new records every month.

Introduction of Keynote Speaker

PRTC Chair Victor Angry began by lauding the progress the region has made to improve public transportation systems. He stated that OmniRide will continue to contribute to that progress later in December when it launches three new commuter routes to the D.C. area originating in Stafford, Falmouth and Spotsylvania. The expanded service will provide OmniRide with a chance to use the recently completed extension of the I-95 Express Lanes.

Mr. Angry then introduced Greater Washington Partnership CEO Kathy Hollinger to provide the Keynote Address.

Keynote Address: Greater Washington Partnership CEO, Kathy Hollinger

Ms. Hollinger spoke about the interconnectedness of the region and how transit supports more than just the movement of people but also facilitates the exchange of ideas, business, goods, services and more. Ms. Hollinger drove this idea home by touching on the financial hurdles WMATA is facing in their FY 2025 budget and stating that “failure to fund Metro is not an option,” and that “world class regions have world class transit.”

Transit Panel: Moderated by Tysons Community Alliance CEO Katie Cristol

Ms. Cristol welcomed the regional transit operators to the stage and provided some general transit information about the region. Ms. Cristol stated transit is integral to the people, economy and vibrancy of Northern Virginia and that 1.5 million people ride transit in Northern Virginia every week. She shared that the region’s vast transit network provides access to nearly 80% of Northern Virginia households.

Ms. Cristol then introduced the transit panel, including Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) General Manager/CEO Randy Clarke, VRE CEO Rich Dalton, PRTC/OmniRide Executive Director Bob Schneider, and NVTC Executive Director Kate Mattice.

The transit panel then spoke about who their typical system riders are, exciting new developments at their transit agencies, what their agencies are doing to attract new riders, the impact of their respective transit agencies to Northern Virginia and the Commonwealth as a whole, what challenges their agencies are facing and what they need to overcome these challenges.

Closing Remarks: NVTC Executive Director Kate Mattice

Ms. Mattice closed out the forum by thanking those in attendance for coming and reminding people about upcoming NVTC events in 2024, including celebrating NVTC's 60th anniversary. Ms. Mattice encouraged attendees to visit the vendor tables to learn more about the region's transit systems and to check out the Public Transit in Northern Virginia legislative maps which NVTC's transit technology team produced. Vendor tables were located along the back wall of the multipurpose room and included Arlington Transit, WMATA, DRPT, VRE, the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority, OmniRide, NVTC's Commuter Choice program and NVTC's Value of Transit study.

The 2023 Legislative and Policy Forum concluded at approximately 11:00 a.m.

Approved this 4th day of January 2024.

Matt de Ferranti
Chair

Sarah Bagley
Secretary-Treasurer