

MEETING SUMMARY
NVTC LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY COMMITTEE
NVTC Suite #230 Conference Room
2300 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, Virginia
Public Livestreaming via YouTube
August 31, 2023

NVTC Legislative and Policy Committee Members Present:

Canek Aguirre, Chair
Adam Ebbin
Libby Garvey
Catherine Read
David Snyder
James Walkinshaw

NVTC Legislative and Policy Committee Members Absent:

Matt Letourneau

NVTC Staff and Others Present:

Kate Mattice, Executive Director
Genoveva Cutrell
Allan Fye (*via electronic participation*)
Rhonda Gilchrest
Tenley O'Hara
Melissa Walker
Trevor Moncure (Commonwealth Strategy Group)
Aimee Perron Seibert (Commonwealth Strategy Group)
Greg Potts (WMATA)
Joe Schwartz (VRE)
Ilana Creinin (Arlington County)

Legislative and Policy Committee Chair Canek Aguirre called the meeting to order at 6:09 p.m. Chair Aguirre stated the meeting is being live-streamed and can be viewed on NVTC's YouTube link. Executive Director, Kate Mattice confirmed a quorum.

Chair Aguirre asked for any changes to the May 17, 2023 Legislative and Policy Committee Meeting Summary. Committee members accepted the previous meeting summary with no changes.

General Assembly Outlook

NVTC Legislative Liaison Aimee Perron Seibert provided a General Assembly update. The most recent development is that there is a budget and it will be voted on next Wednesday. This marks

the end of a nearly six month delay in passing 2023 budget amendments. She added that she doesn't expect any big things in the transportation space.

Senator Ebbin arrived at 6:12 p.m.

Ms. Perron Seibert then spoke to the upcoming elections and reminded the committee that this year there will be new districts for everyone running. Because of these changes, there could be as many as 55 new members in the General Assembly in January. She emphasized that in Northern Virginia there will be several new legislators and there will be a dramatic learning curve for those new members. There has been a lot of work going on behind the scenes to meet new candidates and incumbents to build relationships and educate them on transit and NVTC's role in the region.

In response to a question from Ms. Garvey, Ms. Perron Seibert stated that typically the General Assembly legislative staff doesn't change, but that committee composition can change at the direction of the party in charge. Senator Ebbin added that sometimes staff for individual members will retire with those members but some stay on as well.

Senator Ebbin stated that there also had been a discussion to change Smart Scale and eliminate land use from scoring methodology project recommendations. Senator Ebbin noted that the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) plans to potentially adopt Smart Scale changes in December, and this leaves out NVTC and other agencies from having a meaningful say in the matter. Ms. Mattice informed the committee that NVTC staff will follow up with more information and that there should be an opportunity to provide comments at future CTB meetings.

Chair Aguirre asked how long it takes to assign incoming senators and delegates to committees after they have been sworn in. Ms. Perron Seibert stated it depends on which party holds power in each chamber following the elections. If nothing changes, the process generally goes quickly; however, if there's a shake up, this usually takes longer due to percentage and chair changeover. Typically, this takes a day or two after members are sworn in.

NVTC Policy and Legislative Topics

Chair Aguirre reminded the committee that each year the committee produces the annual legislative and policy agenda. This document governs the state and federal issues that NVTC can actively support during the Virginia General Assembly Session as well as in the U.S. Congress.

Chair Aguirre stated that there is no updated information from WMATA yet but staff are actively engaged in discussions on what FY 2025 will look like – and what strategies are needed to collectively work to be successful across all parts of the government. He stated that at the next meeting in October, the committee will refine any specific legislative asks regarding WMATA funding.

Ms. Mattice shared the legislative and policy topics NVTC is focusing on. She stated that staff have been busy showcasing NVTC's Value of Transit Study findings and sharing knowledge with members of the General Assembly and Congress. Ms. Mattice then reviewed the draft 2024 NVTC Legislative and Policy Agenda which is included in the meeting materials.

Mr. Walkinshaw joined the meeting at 6:33 p.m.

The committee discussed transit benefits and capturing back federal employees as an important policy talking point. Ms. Mattice shared that prior to the pandemic the federal government budgeted \$150 million for transit benefits, but last year this number was only \$50 million. Spreading out the return to work throughout the work week is also important in helping the transit systems run more efficiently. Ms. Mattice added that there is also an opportunity for the private sector to be leveraging transit benefits.

NVTC Legislative Events

Ms. Mattice highlighted upcoming NVTC legislative events and shared a draft calendar through June of 2024. She pointed out that the annual Joint Legislative Forum will take place on Friday, December 1 and that NVTC plans to hold its February 2024 Commission meeting in Richmond. This also presents an opportunity to have a meet-and-greet with members of the General Assembly.

Other Items

Ms. Garvey asked what the business community's take is on the current public transit climate and challenges. Ms. Mattice responded that several members are engaged in discussions through their involvement on the Greater Washington Board of Trade and the many regional Chambers of Commerce and that the health of Metro and the local transit systems is on their radar. Ms. Mattice said this is something NVTC will continue to strategize.

Mr. Walkinshaw brought up potential changes to Smart Scale and discussions that were happening at jurisdictional levels about changing the funding formula. Mr. Snyder said that perhaps transit advocates in Northern Virginia need to be more involved in Smart Scale discussions at the state level. Ms. Mattice stated that staff will investigate the proposed changes and will update the committee with more information.

The meeting adjourned at 6:57 p.m.