

MINUTES
NVTC COMMISSION MEETING –OCTOBER 5, 2023
FIRST FLOOR LARGE CONFERENCE ROOM – 2300 WILSON BLVD.
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA

The meeting of the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission was called to order by Chair Palchik at 7:20 p.m.

Members Present

Canek Aguirre
Walter Alcorn
Sarah Bagley
Nick Clemente (*via electronic participation*)
Matt de Ferranti
Jennifer DeBruhl (Alternate, Commonwealth of Virginia) (*via electronic participation*)
Phil Duncan (Alternate, City of Falls Church)
Adam Ebbin
John Foust
Libby Garvey
Takis Karantonis
Matt Letourneau
Jeff McKay
Dalia Palchik
M. David Skiles
Paul Smedberg
John C. Tuck III
Mike Turner
James Walkinshaw

Members Not Present

John J. Bell
Aimee S. Gilroy
Catherine Read
David Snyder

Staff Present

Kate Mattice, Executive Director
Monique Blyther
Genoveva Cutrell
Matt Friedman
Allan Fye
Rhonda Gilchrest
Adam Hager
Xavier Harmony
Scott Kalkwarf
Ann McGrane
Tenley O'Hara

Ben Owen
Noman Sayed
Vikram Sinha
Sophie Spiliotopoulos
Melissa Walker
Ronnetta Zack-Williams
Aimee Perron Siebert (*via electronic participation*)
Steve MacIsaac (VRE)
Mark Schofield (VRE)
Joe Swartz (VRE)

Opening Remarks

Chair Palchik welcomed everyone to the October 5, 2023 NVTC meeting and noted that the meeting is being livestreamed for the public on YouTube.

Chair Palchik welcomed Falls Church City Council Member Phil Duncan, who is serving as Mr. Snyder's Alternate.

Chair Palchik stated that Ms. DeBruhl requested electronic participation for a personal reason as she is in Florida for a conference. Mr. Clemente also requested electronic participation for a personal reason as he is on out-of-state travel. Board Administrator Rhonda Gilchrest confirmed an in-person quorum was present.

Mr. Alcorn moved, with a second by Mr. Karantonis, to approve Commissioners DeBruhl and Clemente's request for electronic participation. The vote in favor was cast by Commissioners Aguirre, Alcorn, Bagley, de Ferranti, Duncan, Ebbin, Foust, Garvey, Karantonis, Letourneau, McKay, Palchik, Skiles, Smedberg, Tuck, Turner and Walkinshaw.

Chair Palchik noted that Mr. Smedberg will need to leave early tonight and requested that the WMATA Agenda Item be moved up in the agenda. There were no objections to moving the WMATA discussion to after the VDOT/DRPT Presentation.

Ms. Mattice stated that NVTC received one public comment from the Coalition for Smarter Growth sharing concerns about the VDOT's process and approach to the 495 Southside Express Lanes study noting that VDOT has not appropriately looked at alternatives to highway expansion and are moving ahead on their study in advance of the completion of WMATA's Blue Orange and Silver Line study. It also states that DRPT in its study failed to look at how transit-oriented land use and housing plans could address the traffic issues on the corridor. The full comment was provided to Commissioners prior to the meeting.

Minutes of the September 7, 2023 NVTC Meeting

Mr. Karantonis moved, with a second by Mr. de Ferranti, to approve the Minutes of the September 7, 2023 NVTC Meeting. The vote in favor was cast by Commissioners Alcorn, Bagley, de Ferranti, Ebbin, Foust, Garvey, Karantonis, McKay, Palchik, Skiles, Smedberg, Tuck, Turner and Walkinshaw. Commissioners Aguirre, Duncan, Letourneau, McKay and Skiles abstained. (Mr. Clemente did not participate in the vote.) The motion passed.

Consent Agenda

Chair Palchik stated that there are two actions on the Consent Agenda:

- A. Approve the Notice of Direct Contributions to the Jurisdictions
- B. Authorize the Chair to Send a Letter of Endorsement for the City of Alexandria's US DOT Transit Oriented Development Planning Grant Application

Mr. McKay moved, with a second by Mr. Aguirre, to approve the Consent Agenda. The vote in favor was cast by Commissioners Aguirre, Alcorn, Bagley, de Ferranti, Duncan, Ebbin, Foust, Garvey, Karantonis, Letourneau, McKay, Palchik, Skiles, Smedberg, Tuck, Turner and Walkinshaw. (Mr. Clemente did not participate in the vote.)

VDOT and DRPT Presentations on I-495 Southside Express Lanes

Chair Palchik welcomed Michelle Shropshire, Acting Director, Northern Virginia Megaprojects, and Michelle Holland, Communications Manager, Northern Virginia Megaprojects, from VDOT to give their presentation on the I-495 Southside Express Lanes. DRPT Director Jennifer DeBruhl will follow with a presentation on DRPT's companion study. VDOT's I-495 Southside Express Lanes Study identifies preliminary alternative concepts for 11 miles of I-495 between the Springfield interchange in Fairfax County and the Maryland Highway 210 interchange in Prince George's County, Maryland. DRPT's study is a separate effort that looked at transit and other strategies that could benefit the corridor.

Ms. Shropshire stated that the I-495 Southside Express Lanes Study (495 Southside Study) is an environmental study to potentially extend the Express Lanes system to the southern section of I-495 (Capital Beltway). VDOT is coordinating the study with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration (MDOT SHA), Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) and other federal, state, regional and local agencies in Virginia and Maryland. The study area is the last section of I-495 where express lanes have not been implemented and includes 11 miles of the southern section of I-495 (Capital Beltway) which stretches from the Springfield interchange (I-95/I-395/I-495) in Fairfax County to the MD 210 interchange in Prince George's County, Maryland. She gave an overview of the current traffic trends, study process and purpose and needs.

Ms. Shropshire reviewed the preliminary alternative concepts, which include no-build, Transportation System Management/Transportation Demand Management (TSM/TDM), part-time shoulder use, standalone transit, transit TSM/TDM, one general purpose lane, two general purpose lanes, one express lane, two express lanes, and two reversible express lanes. She also reviewed the public comment phase, with comments due by October 10.

Ms. DeBruhl stated that DRPT's study was a parallel study to VDOT's and covers the same study area. DRPT's study was completed in April 2023 to provide input into VDOT's study. DRPT held two rounds of public outreach in July and December 2022, two virtual public meetings, two public surveys, pop up events, public meetings and four stakeholder group meetings. There were common themes in the comments from the public, including interest in more transportation options, need for more reliable travel times, need for more connections to multi-modal facilities, and interest in bus and rail, improved bike and pedestrian connections, new and enhanced transit options, and more frequent transit service.

Ms. DeBruhl reviewed the baseline conditions, which show that there is limited bus service along I-495 and over the Woodrow Wilson Bridge; there is parallel and Metrorail feeder bus service in Alexandria and Fairfax County as well as bus service in Prince George's County in the vicinity of

National Harbor with Metrorail connections; VRE, Metrorail and Amtrak run parallel service to the corridor in Virginia; and there are existing state, regional and local commuter assistance programs.

Ms. DeBruhl noted that this study was started after the WMATA Blue Orange Silver Study, which is looking at a much broader study area and future Metrorail expansion options. This DRPT study looked at transit options that are bus focused. Rail was considered and tested as an option but would not be as cost-effective compared to bus options for moving a similar number of people in the corridor. Improvements in the I-495 Southside corridor should not preclude future rail. She reviewed the study recommendations:

- New or enhanced transit services that could benefit from the reliability of an expanded express lanes network in the I-495 Southside corridor
- Technology to encourage use of transit and alternative transportation modes, support a modern travel experience, and assist with travel decision-making
- Programs to encourage use of alternative transportation modes besides single-occupancy vehicles (SOV)

Potential transit modes:

- Express bus for services that would operate all-day with fewer stops
- Commuter bus for services that would operate during peak commuting times with fewer stops
- Local bus for services that would operate all-day with more stops

Ms. DeBruhl reviewed the potential transit alternatives for the study area (Near-Term Package/prior to 2030, Mid-Term Package/2030-2045, and Long-Term Package/beyond 2045).

Mr. Ebbin asked a question about VDOT Slide 11 long-term preservation of future transit options and asked if there is consideration of making sure these dedicated lanes stay dedicated for future rail. Ms. Shropshire stated that the slide depicts how there could be short-term express lanes which could be converted in the future for dedicated transit or rail. There is not a prescribed timeline for when this would happen. The project is only in the study phase. Mr. Ebbin expressed his concern that the region ends up with automobile lanes that could make it hard to switch to transit lanes. He hopes the study will indicate an option to preserve these lanes for transit. Mr. Alcorn thanked Mr. Ebbin for raising this issue and noted that P-3 (public private partnership) contracts are long-term contracts. Several Commissioners also expressed support for preserving the lanes for transit. Ms. Bagley stated that she hopes that the outcome isn't presupposed as it is important to get people out of their cars. She asked if the study includes an environmental analysis. Ms. Shropshire stated that the next study phase will focus on environmental analysis. Mr. Aguirre expressed concern about the spacing for shoulders and he would like to see more about the design.

Mr. McKay stated the current configuration is an example of one of the worst inequities in Northern Virginia as this is the only segment of the interstate system in Fairfax County that provides zero transit benefit today. The fact that these lanes end at Springfield while the rest of the Beltway express lane work was being done, did transit a major disservice. He asked if for some reasons this project does not move forward, is there something between the no-build,

TSM/TDM and part-time shoulder use that is also looking at other infrastructure improvements that could improve safety and through-put in this section. Ms. Shropshire stated that if the project were not to move forward, there would be other avenues that could be explored regarding safety. Mr. McKay also stated that this segment is also situated between the Woodrow Wilson Bridge and Springfield Interchange projects and those neighborhoods didn't get sound analysis or noise wall analysis. Ms. Shropshire stated that there will be a high-level noise analysis for this study and if the project moved forward a more detailed analysis would occur.

Mr. Skiles stated express lanes don't induce traffic and they help incentivize transit. Transit is a critical component to the regional transportation system which is ultimately enhanced because there is a vibrant express lanes network and reminds people of the choices they have. In response to a question from Mr. Smedberg, Ms. Shropshire and Ms. Holland gave more details about Maryland's input into the study.

Chair Palchik stated that regarding Slide 6 "Purpose and Needs" of the VDOT study, reducing congestion and improving travel reliability, as well as improving safety are both critical. Reliability is needed across all lanes and not just the express lanes. Ms. Shropshire stated that based on other express lanes in the region, express lanes do help reduce congestion in the general-purpose lanes. This results in crash reductions. Ms. Holland stated that the I-495 data has some of this analysis. Chair Palchik also asked VDOT to provide real-time data for I-66 and I-495 specifically as it relates to congestion.

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA)

On behalf of the Commission, Chair Palchik congratulated WMATA Board Chair Paul Smedberg as he has been awarded the 2023 Outstanding Public Transportation Board Member Award by the American Public Transportation Association for his vision, leadership and commitment to transit.

Chair Palchik asked WMATA Board Members Smedberg and Letourneau to give their report, which will be followed by WMATA Committee Chair Alcorn.

Report from the VA WMATA Board Members. Mr. Letourneau stated that Mr. Smedberg is well deserving of this recognition. Mr. Letourneau then gave a budget forecast update. Metro staff have worked hard to dig deep and find additional savings, including one-time savings of \$95 million in FY 2023 and FY 2024 and an additional savings of \$50 million recurring savings to start in FY 2025. The revenue forecast for FY 2024 is being adjusted upwards by \$45 million. So far, a federal government shutdown has been avoided, but if one occurs, it could impact this forecast. The WMATA Board is also discussing what level of Preventive Maintenance (PM) expenses could be transferred from the operating budget to the capital budget and paid for with capital dollars to help further close the budget. WMATA will still do all the maintenance it needs to do to keep the system running safely. Transferring these expenses requires Board approval, but the transferring a higher amount of PM to close the operating gap means an earlier exhaustion point of the dedicated capital funding debt capacity. This was previously estimated to be reached in FY 2029 but could now be moved to FY 2028 depending on what the Board decides. FY 2028 is within the life of the six-year capital improvement program, so the impacts will start to be felt

now in terms of how to plan the capital program. There are three scenarios of amount of PM flex (\$60 million, \$199 million or \$345 million) and if using the maximum amount, it would reduce the budget gap to \$365 million.

Mr. Letourneau also noted that WMATA will also be looking at service reductions but cautioned that it would not be equal among the jurisdictions because of the required Title VI equity analysis. Virginia service would be degraded. The 3% operating cap is still an issue. There needs to be a reset, because of the money WMATA did not collect from the jurisdictions during the pandemic. Ultimately, it does not change the fact that a long-term solution is needed. WMATA must have a balanced budget by July 1, 2024 and the timing of Metro's budget process and the legislative calendars in Virginia and Maryland are not aligned. Because of this, Metro will embark on a dual track budget process. The jurisdictions cannot provide additional subsidy to Metro without legislative action on the 3% operating cap that is in state code in Virginia and Maryland. One budget scenario is in the event of no legislative action on the 3% cap next legislative session, then WMATA will advertise and prepare for catastrophic service cuts and layoffs to balance the budget. The second scenario is if some legislative action on the cap is possible, then the Board can deliberate on less significant fare and service changes but as a consequence the jurisdictions will need to shoulder a significant subsidy increase in FY 2025. Jurisdictions should be prepared for a significant subsidy increase.

Mr. Smedberg stated that he, along with WMATA CEO Randy Clarke, met with Secretary of Transportation Miller. They also expect to testify at the October 17 Commonwealth Transportation Board meeting. Mr. Letourneau announced that Metro has celebrated its one millionth rider at the Dulles Airport Station on the Silver Line. Mr. Smedberg also provided some information about the recent derailment.

Report from the Chair of the WMATA Committee. WMATA Committee Chair Alcorn reported that the committee met on September 21 to discuss the NVTC's Metro Operating Funding and Reform Working Group, which is a working group led by NVTC staff to examine the structural funding challenges at WMATA, identify opportunities for reform and identify some potential funding sources for future consideration in Virginia as the region tackles WMATA's long-standing need for dedicated operating and additional dedicated capital funding. The findings from the working group will be developed into a technical report and will also inform the recommendations in the Annual Report on the Performance and Condition of WMATA. The findings and recommendations have been structured into five categories Structural Growth Cost, Operational and Financial Accountability, Oversight, Structural Funding Deficit, and Capital and Other. The Commission will be briefed on the Annual Report recommendations in November.

Mr. Alcorn announced that the next NVTC WMATA Committee meeting is scheduled for October 19 at 6:00 p.m. and will be a joint meeting with the Legislative and Policy Committee. The committees will discuss the WMATA's FY 2025 financial outlook, how the 3% cap plays into the FY 2025 budget, draft recommendations for the Annual Report on WMATA, and some revenue options for long-term, sustainable funding for WMATA, as well as the 2024 Legislative Agenda. As always, all Commissioners are welcome to attend.

Mr. Skiles left the meeting at 8:27 p.m. and did not return.

Chair Palchik thanked Mr. Smedberg and Mr. Letourneau for their leadership in pressing WMATA to reduce management costs and identify other funding that can reduce the subsidy bill that all the jurisdictions will need to pay. The updated financial plan is much more promising and palatable. She stated that it is good that the temporary shift in preventative maintenance funding will in no way affect Metro's state of good repair but recognized that this would accelerate the depletion of the capital funding by several years. She also thanked WMATA Committee Chair Alcorn and Legislative and Policy Committee Chair Aguirre for diving into these issues as a part of NVTC's annual report on WMATA and the 2024 Legislative Agenda that will be previewed next month.

Mr. McKay stated that there may be a short-term bridge solution that the jurisdictions can work on, but there is still the "elephant in the room" that there still needs to be dedicated long-term funding solution. He is concerned that a short-term solution could create a step back to finding a more permanent solution. Mr. Smedberg agreed that the challenge will be to stay focused on a long-term solution.

Mr. de Ferranti stated that regarding re-baselining, the jurisdictions are facing budget difficulties so there needs to be a state role. He asked staff to provide some fiscal context. Ms. Mattice stated that NVTC staff are working with jurisdictional staff. It will be helpful to have the information that will be coming from WMATA on what the FY 2025 budget looks like. NVTC's feedback on WMATA's budget will be important. In response to Chair Palchik, Ms. Mattice explained that if the 3% cap is exceeded (with some exceptions), the Commonwealth will withhold 35% of state aid that comes to the jurisdictions to help pay for Metro.

Mr. Letourneau stated that WMATA is trying to be as transparent as possible with the budget numbers. Mr. Turner stated that there can be unperceivable indicators when changing preventative maintenance schedules, etc. that can have long-term impacts. Ms. Garvey wondered if Metro reaches the "warn notice" of lay-offs, will this be a teachable moment for the public to understand how important Metro is. Mr. Letourneau stated that it will create a reaction from labor. Mr. Foust stated that WMATA needs to provide multi-year budget projections. Mr. Alcorn asked NVTC staff to help with looking at the baseline subsidies.

Ms. Garvey expressed her opinion that the Virginia WMATA Board members should receive a salary for all the work they do for Metro.

Mr. Tuck left the meeting at 8:48 p.m. followed by Commissioners Letourneau and Smedberg at 8:50 p.m. They did not return.

Report from the Chair of the Program Advisory Committee

Chair Palchik asked Ms. Bagley as chair of the Program Advisory Committee, to make introductory remarks. Ms. Bagley reported that the Program Advisory Committee (PAC) met back in July and was briefed on the Commuter Choice program. The PAC met again in September and focused on the NVTC Zero Emission Bus (ZEB) Regional Strategic Plan. She asked Mr. Owen to present the two Commuter Choice action items.

FY 2023 Commuter Choice Annual Report. Mr. Owen stated that the Commission is being asked to authorize the submission of the FY 2023 Commuter Choice Annual Report to the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB). The report highlights the performance of Commuter Choice projects this year and other program activities in support of the reporting requirements of the two corridors' memoranda of agreement. Mr. Owen highlighted three superlatives:

- The highest daily (weekday) ridership on Commuter Choice projects – about 6,000 weekday passenger trips on average across the two corridors, a 50% increase over last year. NVTC also estimated broader, regional benefits of Commuter Choice funding to the region's economy and quality of life since the program began in 2017.
- The largest funding award in program history – a total of \$48 million to 13 I-395/95 Commuter Choice projects, including the first awards for a BRT line, new rail station construction and electric bus purchases.
- The most public engagement in any funding round to date, with over 600 comment submissions in the I-395/95 funding round.

Mr. Owen then introduced a short promotional video. Chair Palchik congratulated staff and PAC Chair Bagley for their work on the video.

Ms. Bagley moved, with a second by Mr. Ebbin, to authorize the executive director to submit the Commuter Choice FY 2023 Annual Report to the Commonwealth Transportation Board. The vote in favor was cast by Commissioners Aguirre, Alcorn, Bagley, de Ferranti, Duncan, Ebbin, Foust, Garvey, Karantonis, McKay, Palchik, Turner and Walkinshaw. The roll call vote for Commissioners participating electronically had Ms. Debruhl voting yes as Mr. Smedberg's Alternate (Mr. Clemente dropped off the connection earlier and was no longer participating). The motion passed.

I-66 Commuter Choice FY 2025-2026 Call for Projects. Mr. Owen stated that staff reasonably expect \$40-50 million available for new projects in this round. This is a range intended to provide the Program Advisory Committee and Commission with short- and medium-term programming flexibility. He stated that there are no policy changes recommended for this round. The call for projects is opening a month earlier than usual to allow more time for program development in the spring. The application period is from October 6 – December 18. Staff have begun engaging with eligible applicants about project ideas, to provide feedback on alignment with program requirements and goals, and the application materials. The one-month public comment period will be in April 2024. In May, staff will brief the Commission on the PAC-endorsed Program of Projects and close public comment. In June, the Commission will act to adopt a program and refer it to the CTB, which will approve the projects as part of its Six Year Improvement Program adoption.

Mr. McKay moved, with a second by Mr. Karantonis, to authorize the executive director to issue the I-66 Commuter Choice FY 2025-2026 Call for Projects. The vote in favor was cast by Commissioners Aguirre, Alcorn, Bagley, de Ferranti, Duncan, Ebbin, Foust, Garvey, Karantonis, McKay, Palchik, Turner and Walkinshaw. There was also a roll call vote for Commissioners participating electronically and Ms. DeBruhl voted yes. The motion passed.

Transit Technology Program – Draft Zero Emission Bus Regional Strategic Plan Recommendations. PAC Chair Bagley reported that at the September 21 PAC meeting, Transit Technology Senior Program Manager Ann McGrane briefed the committee on the draft recommendations for NVTC’s Northern Virginia Zero-Emission Bus Strategic Plan. Ms. Bagley stated that with so many transit providers and a transit industry rapidly evolving on so many fronts, it only makes sense to bring everyone together and figure out how to move the region forward together on the topic of zero-emission buses. So, earlier this year, NVTC embarked on a zero-emission bus strategic plan for several reasons. The regional transit agencies are exploring zero-emission buses in some way, and some have electric buses in service already. Others are using and/or exploring compressed natural gas and the transit industry is starting to explore hydrogen. At the same time, technology is rapidly advancing with all these fuel types and the federal government is investing an unprecedented amount of money into zero-emission buses and infrastructure. The recommendations will provide the foundation for how NVTC supports all the work of the transit agencies are doing to advance zero-emission buses which directly support the region’s climate goals.

Ms. McGrane explained that the purpose of her presentation is to discuss the draft regional zero-emission bus strategies and actions that have been developed as part of the zero-emission bus strategic planning process. She provided some background about what is happening at the local and state levels. At the local level, transit agencies are developing individual ZEB fleet transition plans that focus on understanding how existing routes and facilities can accommodate the new technologies and the costs associated with these changes. At the state level, DRPT is working on a toolkit that will help agencies work through their transition to either low-emission or zero-emission fleets, and they’re doing some really great work looking at how to leverage different statewide resources to do that. NVTC’s Strategic Plan fits in the middle of these two efforts with a focus on areas of regional collaboration and coordination that will help advance the efforts of each agency and potentially avoid pitfalls that others further along in the process have encountered. A lot of this is driven by unprecedented levels of federal funding available for clean transportation technologies.

Mc. McGrane noted that for the term “zero-emission bus,” she is referring to both battery-electric buses (BEBs), which use electric chargers, and fuel cell electric buses (FCEBs), which are powered by hydrogen. This is the industry standard for what is considered a ZEB. She then provided a timeline of what’s been happening in this space in 2023. NVTC kicked off the Strategic Planning process in February – since then, staff held one-on-one conversations with each transit agency in Northern Virginia and convened two technical advisory committee meetings with NVTC’s regional partners, DRPT and WMATA. NVTC’s consultant team has also evaluated the existing conditions of each agency’s ZEB fleets, industry trends, and opportunities for the region.

Throughout the year, NVTC has held regular working group meetings for Northern Virginia transit staff engaged in ZEB work, and staff has attended working groups hosted by others, including WMATA, the American Public Transportation Association, and DRPT.

Ms. McGrane stated that this work has culminated in the draft regional strategies. The goal is to get feedback on these recommendations. Staff will return to the Commission in January with a finalized plan. She then reviewed the six regional strategies:

1. Serve as Regional ZEB Forum
2. Advocate for Consistent and Supportive ZEB Standards and Policies
3. Coordinate Among Regional Partners on Funding and Procurement Opportunities
4. Support Development of Shared Charging Infrastructure in Northern Virginia
5. Evaluate Opportunities for Private Sector Partnerships
6. Support ZEB-Related Workforce Training Programs

Chair Palchik stated that she appreciates staff's work in this space as the local bus systems are trying to be smart about how to deploy these new technologies. She noted that Fairfax County just launched its first electric bus pilot this week. The ability to share best practices – and ideally – partner with other bus systems in the region to create a strong charging (or fueling) network, training resource or even technology incubator – would be a fantastic outcome.

Ms. Bagley stated that the PAC had a good conversation about ZEBs and all the potential renewable fuel sources. Chair Palchik asked if coordinating with school buses was discussed. Ms. McGrane stated that school buses have quite different operational situations and a completely different federal funding stream. Mr. de Ferranti asked if any jurisdiction (besides Montgomery County) is looking at or investing in hydrogen fuel cells. Arlington County may be the only jurisdiction looking in this direction. Ms. McGrane stated that the region will see more development in the near future and there could be some interest in pilot projects.

Mr. Aguirre asked if there is any standardization for buses, such as charging plugs. Ms. McGrane stated that there are standards for bus plugs and top chargers. She stated that there are still things to verify regarding bus standards, so advocacy on this topic is important.

Ms. Garvey left at 9:25 p.m. and did not return.

Marketing Campaign Update

Chair Palchik stated that NVTC's "Ride With Us" marketing campaign finished in mid-September and set several new records. The campaign covered most of the region and staff expanded the reach of the campaign to a broad range of outlets including Spanish language radio and a complete Spanish language website. She invited Marketing and Engagement Manager Monique Blyther to share some key highlights from the campaign.

Ms. Blyther stated that the eight-week "Ride With Us" campaign kicked off June 1st in support of the opening of the Potomac Yard-Virginia Tech Station and the reopening of the Yellow Line bridge and tunnel. Phase One launched with geo-targeted digital ads targeting riders along the Blue and Yellow Line corridors, encouraging them to plan their trip via transit by way of the NovaRides.org webpage. This was available in English and Spanish. Phase Two of the campaign launched mid-July, with radio, streaming, email and continued social media advertisements. New this year, NVTC dramatically expanded the number of radio stations for advertisement, from three to a dozen, which dramatically expanded and diversified NVTC's audience with greater visibility in minority and Spanish speaking communities. Also new this year was sponsored pre-season events for the Washington Commanders on iHeart radio.

Ms. Blyther reviewed some of the highlights from the campaign -- as of mid-August, the campaign delivered over 16 million impressions, which translated to nearly 60,000 clicks to the NoVaRides.org English and Spanish landing pages. Spanish ad clicks are up 60% from last year and accounted for nearly half of the total clicks from social media, with a higher click through rate, than English ads. More than 6,000 users clicked to plan their trip via transit using the Moovit app or Waze.

Ms. Blyther thanked DRPT and NVTC's regional partners (Arlington, Alexandria, Fairfax, PRTC and VRE) for funding and contributing to this year's campaign. She also thanked Chair Palchik and her staff for assisting with the Spanish language translations. She noted that Matt Friedman and Nathan Varnell also worked on the campaign.

Mr. Aguirre commended staff for expanding the audience of the campaign to more Spanish-speaking markets.

Virginia Railway Express (VRE)

Chair Palchik noted that VRE Chief Financial Officer Mark Schofield will fill in for the VRE CEO this month for the CEO Report, followed by VRE Operations Board Chair Walkinshaw to present the action item.

VRE CEO Report. Mr. Schofield announced that on several Tuesdays and Wednesdays VRE broke the 1,000-ridership level. On-time performance also improved last month. VRE conducted the annual Master Agreement survey yesterday. He also noted that VRE will be running excursion trains on October 8 at the annual Clifton Days.

VRE FY 2025 Key Budget Issues. Mr. Walkinshaw stated that the VRE Operations Board recommends Commission approval of Resolution #2505, which will refer the preliminary FY 2025 VRE Operating and Capital Budget to the jurisdictions for review and comment.

VRE's preliminary FY 2025 operating budget totals \$119.9 million, which includes operations, maintenance and existing debt service. In addition to continuing VRE's existing weekday rail service, the proposed budget provides for the first-ever operation of VRE weekend service.

The preliminary operating budget includes a total jurisdictional subsidy of \$18.3 million and a proposed 5% fare increase as well as other changes to simplify fares. VRE's preliminary FY 2025 capital budget includes commitments of \$70.2 million from federal, state, regional and local funding sources towards the Capital Improvement Program (CIP).

Mr. Walkinshaw then turned it over to VRE Chief Financial Officer Mark Schofield to give some more information about the preliminary budget. Mr. Schofield stated that the original expansion concepts for both weekday and weekend are included in agreements with VPRA. All changes are subject to final approval of host railroads and other key stakeholders. The Saturday service concept is three round-trip trains on each line with service northbound in the morning and southbound in the afternoon/evening, with a total increase in service (train miles) of about 8%.

VRE is looking at repositioning existing resources to make weekday trains (7 or 8 cars) become 6-car consists, which require one less conductor. Those conductor hours would be shifted to Saturday service. He also reviewed the proposed fare changes and associated public hearings, as well as FY 2025 expense drivers.

Mr. Walkinshaw moved, with a second by Mr. Alcorn, to approve Resolution #2505 (copy attached). The vote in favor was cast by Commissioners Aguirre, Alcorn, Bagley, de Ferranti, Duncan, Ebbin, Foust, Karantonis, McKay, Palchik, Turner and Walkinshaw. There was also a roll call vote for Commissioners participating electronically and Ms. DeBruhl voted yes. The motion passed.

Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT)

DRPT Director DeBruhl encouraged Commissioners to read the written DRPT Report. The Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) will be meeting in Crystal City on October 17-18 in conjunction with the Governor's Transportation Conference.

Mr. Alcorn left the meeting at 9:49 p.m. and did not return.

Executive Director Report

Ms. Mattice encouraged Commissioners to read her Executive Director Newsletter, which highlights some of NVTC's recent efforts and events. She introduced Vikram Sinha – NVTC's new Envision Route 7 BRT Senior Program Manager. He comes to NVTC from the Austin Transit Partnership where he served as Public Involvement Manager for the Orange Line light rail project. She also gave a huge thanks to Xavier Harmony for all his work on the Envision Route 7 project to get us to get Route 7 to this point. Xavier jumped right in while the Mobility Study for Falls Church was about ½ way through and did an amazing job managing the technical team as well as overseeing the strategic framework efforts that will be presented to the Commission early next year.

Ms. Mattice announced that several staff will be out presenting NVTC's work at some national conferences. This coming January, NVTC will have two presentations included in the Transportation Research Board's annual conference program. The Transportation Research Board annual meeting is the largest transportation conference in the world. It is held every January in Washington, DC, attracting more than 13,000 transportation professionals from government, industry, and academia. Both the Advancing Bus Priority paper, written by Xavier Harmony and Sophie Spiliotopoulos, and a bus stop study led by NVTC's summer Transit Fellow, Rachel Inman, and supported by Xavier and Sophie were accepted for presentation. Xavier will also be moderating a session on public transportation planning and development.

Ms. Mattice also noted that she and Mr. Fye will be attending this weekend's American Public Transportation Association annual conference. Allan will showcase the Value of Transit Study at a session on Tuesday. Ms. Mattice stated that she will be moderating a session on how transit

fare technologies can work with people who are “unbanked” as well as lead and participate in several legislative and policy committees.

Ms. Mattice stated that the Joint meeting of the Legislative and Policy Committee and the WMATA Committee will be held on October 19 at 6:00 p.m. The Annual Joint Legislative Forum is December 1 at 8:30 a.m. at George Mason University’s Arlington Campus. The Next Commission meeting is November 2.

Ms. Mattice stated that the August Financial Report was provided in the meeting materials.

Adjournment

Without objection, Chair Palchik adjourned the meeting at 9:52 p.m.

Approved this 2nd day of November 2023.

Dalia Palchik
Chair

David F. Snyder
Secretary-Treasurer



RESOLUTION #2505

SUBJECT: Authorize the Referral of the Preliminary FY 2025 VRE Operating and Capital Budget to the Participating and Contributing Jurisdictions

WHEREAS: The Virginia Railway Express (VRE) Master Agreement requires the VRE Operations Board submit to the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC) and the Potomac Rappahannock Transportation Commission (PRTC) (the “Commissions”) a preliminary fiscal year budget by September 30 each year;

WHEREAS: The VRE Chief Executive Officer has provided the VRE Operations Board with the preliminary FY 2025 Operating and Capital Budget;

WHEREAS: The preliminary FY 2025 budget proposes a total jurisdictional subsidy of \$18,300,780 and proposes a 5% increase in passenger fares effective the first week of July 2024 along with other changes to improve and simplify the fare structure;

WHEREAS: In accordance with VRE’s Public Participation Policy, VRE must hold public hearings to solicit comments from riders and the public on the proposed fare changes included in the preliminary FY 2025 budget;

WHEREAS: The VRE Operations Board has referred the preliminary FY 2025 Operating and Capital Budget to the Commissions for their consideration;

WHEREAS: The VRE Operations Board recommends the Commission forward the budget to the participating and contributing jurisdictions for further formal review and comment;

WHEREAS: The VRE Operations Board has authorized the VRE CEO to solicit comment through public hearings related to the proposed 5% fare increase and other associated fare changes and to report the public comments received back to the Operations Board for consideration;

WHEREAS: The VRE Operations Board has directed the VRE CEO to consider and address comments by the jurisdictions and to present a final recommended budget to the VRE Operations Board at the December 2023 meeting for consideration and referral to the Commissions for adoption in January 2024; and

WHEREAS: The VRE Operations Board recommends the following action.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission hereby authorizes the preliminary FY 2025 VRE Operating and Capital Budget be forwarded to the participating and contributing jurisdictions for their formal review and comment.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that NVTC directs the VRE Operations Board to forward a final recommended budget to the Commissions for consideration for adoption in January 2024.

Approved this 5th day of October 2023.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'DS', written over a faint, large, light-colored watermark that reads 'DAVID F. SNYDER'.

David F. Snyder
Secretary-Treasurer

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads 'Dalia Palchik'.

Dalia Palchik
Chair