

**NVTC PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING SUMMARY
Via Electronic Participation
Public Streaming via YouTube
April 20, 2023**

NVTC Program Advisory Committee Members Present:

Sarah Bagley, Chair
John Foust
Libby Garvey
Mike Turner
David Snyder

Other Commissioners Present:

Walter Alcorn (NVTC)

Staff and Others Present:

Kate Mattice, NVTC Executive Director
Allan Fye
Adam Hager
Xavier Harmony
Ann McGrane
Ben Owen
Melissa Walker
Ronnetta Zack-Williams

Program Advisory Committee Chair Bagley called the meeting to order at 4:23 p.m. She noted that staff followed procedures and guidelines to give notice to committee members, the Commission, staff and the public about today's meeting. She explained that the meeting is an all-virtual public meeting as permitted under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act and NVTC's Electronic Participation Policy and is being streamed live via NVTC's YouTube channel.

Mr. Fye called the roll and indicated a quorum was present. He then introduced staff.

Chair Bagley asked for any changes to the summary of the September 15, 2022 Program Advisory Committee meeting. Committee members accepted the summary with no changes. Chair Bagley then outlined the meeting agenda's topics: Envision Route 7 BRT work, the Northern Virginia Regional Bus Analysis and the Northern Virginia Regional Zero-Emission Bus Strategic Plan.

Envision Route 7 BRT

Mr. Harmony provided an update on the Envision Route 7 Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project. He stated that staff is currently in the Phase IV Mobility Study but concurrently managing the Strategic Implementation Plan. He explained that the consultant team is currently modeling four future-year scenarios, one that is no-build and three build scenarios examining various types of BRT infrastructure.

Mr. Harmony called the Committee's attention to the project's next public meeting which will be held on May 16, 2023 at the Mary 16, 2023 in the City of Falls Church. He shared that the results of modeling scenarios would be presented and encouraged Committee members to help spread the word ahead of time. Mr. Harmony also said there would be upcoming pop-up events and bus stop chats in May in and around the Falls Church segment of the project corridor.

He noted the Strategic Implementation Plan would be concluding shortly and the Phase IV Mobility Study would conclude this summer. Mr. Harmony said the project team would continue engaging with the Federal Transit Administration regarding planned environmental work under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) through the summer and fall.

Ms. Bagley asked for more detail regarding the planned environmental work. Mr. Harmony noted staff is still scoping the effort and there are various levels to it. The work will assess project impacts on issues like traffic, noise, cultural environment and physical environment. That step will have a more fleshed out version of what operations and ridership will look like.

Ms. Garvey asked whether staff has considered riding the bus along the corridor as a way to engage the community and educate the public. Mr. Harmony shared that part of the overall stakeholder engagement effort does include outreach at bus stops, but not actually riding the bus. He said the public tends to be more candid while they wait for a bus.

Mr. Snyder thanked staff for their work and asked whether there was coordination with staff in the City of Falls Church and Fairfax County. He also noted that outreach at Eden Center in particular should include Vietnamese materials and that throughout the corridor there should be Spanish materials. Mr. Harmony thanked Mr. Snyder for his recommendations and noted that there is routine coordination with staff counterparts in the City of Falls Church and Fairfax County.

Northern Virginia Regional Bus Analysis

Mr. Harmony started by noting that each of the six transit service agencies in Northern Virginia must develop Transit Strategic Plans (TSP) and that there is currently no regional strategic planning resource. He said this effort would provide a macro-level review of agency TSPs looking at existing and planned services and capital needs in order to find opportunities for regional collaborations and efficiencies. He shared that staff would be coordinating with both the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) and the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTa) as they are working on similar efforts. Mr. Harmony noted that the bus gap analysis component of the study would be completed in the summer before priority

corridors are identified alongside a bus infrastructure analysis in the fall, culminating in a final report later in the winter.

Ms. Bagley asked how the WMATA Bus Network Redesign effort ties into this project. Mr. Harmony explained some of the key differences between the efforts, namely that the NVTC effort includes OmniRide directly, assesses bus service and capital needs in Loudoun County and the WMATA study is looking at a nearer-term implementation timeframe. He added that a great deal of coordination is taking place across agencies.

Ms. Garvey thanked staff for the map in the presentation and asked about the planned functionality in the interactive maps that will be produced from this effort and whether they would allow users to filter by time and day of the week. Mr. Harmony said staff is still working through which exact features would be available and thanked Ms. Garvey for her suggestions.

Ms. Garvey asked whether school bus routes would be added to the map with public transit routes. Mr. Harmony noted that school bus routes are a little bit outside NVTC's purview, so they have not been included.

Mr. Turner asked whether this effort extends beyond inventorying the needs and identifying potential solutions. Mr. Harmony said this is more of a forward look that will identify gaps in service and infrastructure than a real-time bus or routing information tool.

Ms. Bagley asked whether costs to passengers are considered in this project. Mr. Harmony said the project team has not looked extensively into this yet, but the financial analysis component of the effort would look at potential fare revenues so there could be a limited element of assessing cost to passengers relative to costs of driving.

Northern Virginia Regional Zero-Emission Bus Strategic Plan

Ms. McGrane highlighted the two main components of the plan, the first being the development of a set of regional recommendations that can advance zero-emission buses (ZEB) throughout Northern Virginia and the second a way to provide additional support to regional partners to advance fleet transition plans. She noted that within both phases, the project team is trying to take an expansive look at multiple considerations, from shared charging infrastructure to advocating for better interoperability standards and coordinating on workforce training.

Ms. McGrane said the project team is currently in the discovery phase of the plan and has interviewed the seven transit agencies serving Northern Virginia and collected data including infrastructure and fleet composition. She said this phase would wrap up in the summer with three technical memos detailing findings. She said that a preliminary set of regional recommendations would be developed in the summer followed by individual agency transition assistance in the fall and winter.

Ms. McGrane then shared numerous challenges and opportunities with the committee. Common themes from agency interviews included funding, manufacturer recalls, utility coordination, space constraints and the ongoing debate between battery electric buses and fuel cell electric

buses. She also highlighted some of the opportunities including strong regional partnerships, the ZEB working group that could lead to joint procurements and grant applications and new funding in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA).

Ms. Garvey noted her concern about going all-in with electric buses and then realizing later that hydrogen fuel cell buses would have been a better long-term option. Ms. McGrane said the project team is very aware of that concern and is open to the idea that there may be a suite of options for the region.

Ms. Bagley asked whether shifting to all-electric too soon is a concern, noting the source of the electricity to power buses may not be clean in the first place. Ms. McGrane said staff is assessing this topic and that the federal government provides some tools to assess those kinds of questions.

Mr. Foust noted that the region needs to develop a sense of urgency when it comes to dealing with the impacts of climate change. He said there might not be a perfect solution and that the overall shift to zero-emission is too slow in terms of how we deal with the climate challenge.

Mr. Snyder noted his appreciation for this kind of forum for having thoughtful conversations around the concerns with shifting to all-electric and urgency in dealing with climate change.

Mr. Turner highlighted some of the issues Dominion is facing regarding constrained power in Loudoun County especially as it relates to new data centers. He noted it is important to get away from fossil fuels as fast as possible.

Mr. Alcorn reminded the committee about the local impacts of not moving quickly toward ZEBs, including air quality, particulate matter ingestion and noise pollution.

Other Business

Chair Bagley asked if there is there any other discussion for the committee. There was no further discussion.

Mr. Snyder requested that the materials for the Envision Route 7 BRT project be clear that no travel lane will be taken in order for the project to be implemented. Thanked Ms. Bagley for her leadership and thanked staff for their presentations.

Future Meetings

Chair Bagley stated that staff would follow up regarding the timing of the next committee meeting and he adjourned the meeting at 5:22 p.m.