

MINUTES
NVTC COMMISSION MEETING –SEPTEMBER 7, 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 7:07 p.m.

Members Present

Walter Alcorn
Sarah Bagley
Matt de Ferranti
Jennifer DeBruhl (Alternate, Commonwealth of Virginia) *(via electronic participation)*
Adam Ebbin
John Foust
Libby Garvey
Takis Karantonis *(via electronic participation)*
Dalia Palchik
David Snyder
Jon Stehle (Alternate, City of Fairfax)
Dan Storck (Alternate, Fairfax County)
James Walkinshaw

Members Not Present

Canek Aguirre
John J. Bell
Nick Clemente
Aimee S. Gilroy
Matt Letourneau
Jeff McKay
Catherine Read
M. David Skiles
Paul Smedberg
John C. Tuck III
Mike Turner

Staff Present

Kate Mattice, Executive Director
Genoveva Cutrell
Matt Friedman
Allan Fye
Rhonda Gilchrest
Adam Hager
Xavier Harmony
Tenley O'Hara
Melissa Walker
Ronnetta Zack-Williams

Aimee Perron Siebert *(via electronic participation)*
Rich Dalton (VRE)
Steve MacIsaac (VRE)
Mark Schofield (VRE)
Joe Swartz (VRE)

Opening Remarks

Chair Palchik welcomed everyone to the September 7, 2023 NVTC meeting and noted that the meeting is being livestreamed for the public on YouTube.

Chair Palchik welcomed Fairfax City Council Member Jon Stehle, who is serving as Ms. Read's Alternate. She also noted Dan Storck is serving as an Alternate for Mr. McKay.

Chair Palchik stated that Mr. Karantonis requested electronic participation for a personal reason as he is out of the country on travel. Ms. DeBruhl requested electronic participation from Richmond as she lives over 60 miles from the meeting location. Board Administrator Rhonda Gilchrest confirmed an in-person quorum was present.

Ms. Bagley moved, with a second by Mr. Ebbin, to approve Mr. Karantonis and Ms. DeBruhl's request for electronic participation. The vote in favor was cast by Commissioners Alcorn, Bagley, de Ferranti, Ebbin, Foust, Garvey, Palchik, Snyder, Stehle, Storck and Walkinshaw.

Chair Palchik asked the executive director to provide a Look Ahead to some of the major things NVTC has going on through the end of the year. The chair also asked if any public comments were received for this month's meeting.

Ms. Mattice stated that NVTC received one public comment from Stewart Schwartz of the Coalition for Smarter Growth regarding Consent Agenda #3D "Endorsement of Fairfax County's Application to NVTA for the Seven Corners Ring Road Project." The comment was provided to Commissioners prior to the meeting. To summarize the comment, they have significant concerns and urge removing the two-car lanes on each of the arms of the proposed Ring Road. They strongly support the Envision Route 7 BRT and the transit-oriented development plans for Seven Corners but are concerned that the proposed wide cross section will undermine the opportunity for a liveable and walkable community. Chair Palchik stated that she will pull #3D from the Consent Agenda to allow discussion.

Ms. Mattice stated that NVTC has a number of activities this fall, and she highlighted the work being done on the Annual Report on the Performance and Condition of WMATA, which will be accompanied by a technical report from NVTC's Metro Operating and Reform Working Group. NVTC is wrapping up the successful "Ride with Us" marketing campaign, with a staff update scheduled for the October meeting. The 2024 Legislative and Policy Agenda and strategy for the upcoming General Assembly Session and 2024 Congressional activities are also underway, with action to approve both NVTC and VRE Legislative Agendas at the December meeting.

Ms. Mattice also announced that NVTC, along with PRTC and VRE, will be hosting the annual Joint Legislative Forum. This year it is on a new day of the week and a new location: morning of Friday, December 1 at the Schar School at the George Mason University Arlington Campus. More information will be provided later in tonight's agenda. For Commuter Choice, action will be requested at the October meeting to approve the I-66 call for projects, as well as the Commuter Choice Annual Report.

Ms. Mattice noted that action is being requested in tonight's agenda regarding a key study for the Envision Route 7 BRT project, but there is still a lot of work to advance the project. Staff are working diligently with all the stakeholders to keep this project moving forward and plan to update the Commission on the Strategic Implementation Framework at the January 2024 meeting. She also announced that next month she will introduce the new Envision Route 7 senior program manager who will be managing all the work associated with the Congressional earmark NVTC received. As part of the Transit Technology Program, draft recommendations for the Northern Virginia Regional Zero-Emission Bus Strategic Plan will be presented at the October Commission meeting with action requested in January.

Ms. Mattice stated that the FY 2025 General and Administrative Budget is being developed as well as next year's Work Plan, which both will be presented to the Commission at the December meeting, with action the following month. Regarding the Transit Resource Center, the Commission will hear more about the Northern Virginia Regional Bus Analysis and NVTC's Strategic Research Plan at the December Commission meeting.

Ms. Mattice stated that staff are already working on two major events for next year as 2024 is NVTC's 60th anniversary year. Those events include a 60th Anniversary Research Symposium in June and a 60th Anniversary Celebration with a documentary premiere in September. More details about NVTC's 60th Anniversary year will be rolled out in the coming months.

Ms. Mattice stated that through the fall, NVTC committees will continue to meet. She reviewed the meeting dates, which include the Program Advisory Committee on September 21 at 4:00 p.m. with the WMATA Committee following at 6:00 p.m. There will also be a joint meeting of the Legislative and Policy Committee and the WMATA Committee on October 19 at 6:00 p.m.

Minutes of the July 6, 2023 NVTC Meeting

Ms. Garvey moved, with a second by Mr. Snyder, to approve the Minutes of the July 6, 2023 NVTC Meeting. The vote in favor was cast by Commissioners Alcorn, Bagley, de Ferranti, Ebbin, Foust, Garvey, Palchik, Snyder, Stehle and Walkinshaw. Mr. Storck abstained. A roll call vote followed for Commissioners participating electronically and Ms. DeBruhl and Mr. Karantonis voted in the affirmative. The motion passed.

Consent Agenda

Chair Palchik stated that there are now three actions on the Consent Agenda, as she is removing Item #3D "Authorize the Chair to Send a Letter of Endorsement of Fairfax County's Application for Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA) Funding for the Seven Corners Ring Road Project" for separate consideration. The updated Consent Agenda includes:

- A. Authorize the Executive Director to Award the Contract for the NVTC Strategic Policy Research Roadmap

- B. Authorize the Executive Director to Solicit and Accept Sponsorships in General Accordance with the Sponsorship Terms and Conditions for NVTC's 60th Anniversary Events
- C. Authorize the Executive Director to Execute Photo and Video Licensing Agreements

Mr. de Ferranti moved, with a second by Ms. Bagley, to approve the Consent Agenda.

In response to a question from Mr. Snyder, Ms. Mattice confirmed legal counsel has reviewed the sponsorship terms and conditions.

The Commission then vote on the motion and it passed. The vote in favor was cast by Commissioners Alcorn, Bagley, de Ferranti, Ebbin, Foust, Garvey, Palchik, Snyder, Stehle, Storck and Walkinshaw. A roll call vote followed for Commissioners participating electronically and Ms. DeBruhl and Mr. Karantonis voted in the affirmative. The motion passed.

Letter of Endorsement of Fairfax County's Application for Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA) Funding for the Seven Corners Ring Road Project

Ms. Mattice repeated the comments from the Coalition of Smarter Growth. To summarize the comments, they have significant concerns and urge removing the two-car lanes on each of the arms of the proposed Seven Corners Ring Road. They strongly support the Envision Route 7 BRT and the transit-oriented development plans for Seven Corners but are concerned that the wide cross section that is being proposed will undermine the opportunity for a liveable and walkable community.

Chair Palchik provided more information about the background of this long-term project, which hopefully will improve Seven Corners and make it better for everyone – those who travel through on the way and from work as well as those that live there. For Fairfax County, this project is important to improve this area for Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) in the future as well as other multi-modal improvements. Fairfax County's next steps are to seek grant funding to begin the design work. Mr. Alcorn observed that most of the Coalition's concerns are targeted at design issues, and Fairfax County won't get into project design decisions until later on in the process. Chair Palchik stated that the county values the advocacy and the role of other organizations, such as the Coalition for Smarter Growth, to ensure focus continues on the multi-modal aspects.

In response to a question from Ms. Garvey, Chair Palchik stated that this is not an NVTC project. Ms. Mattice explained that the action is to approve an endorsement letter that will go along with Fairfax County's funding application. Mr. Snyder stated that Falls Church has a great interest in this project and will continue to work with Fairfax County staff to improve Seven Corners and shares the concerns of moving pedestrians, bikes and BRT safely and efficiently through that corridor. He sees NVTC's action as endorsing the transit part of the project, which helps make sure the transit elements of the project remain.

Mr. Alcorn moved, with a second by Mr. Snyder, to authorize the chair to send a letter of endorsement of Fairfax County's application for NVTA funding for the Seven Corners Ring Road Project. The vote in favor was cast by Commissioners Alcorn, Bagley, de Ferranti, Ebbin, Foust, Garvey, Palchik, Snyder, Stehle, Storck and Walkinshaw. A roll call vote followed for Commissioners participating electronically and Ms. DeBruhl and Mr. Karantonis voted in the affirmative. The motion passed.

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA)

Chair Palchik noted that both Mr. Smedberg and Mr. Letourneau were unable to attend this meeting. She asked Ms. Mattice to give the WMATA Report.

Report from the Virginia WMATA Board Members. Ms. Mattice reported that in July, the WMATA Board received an update on the Blue/Orange/Silver Capacity and Reliability Study (BOS). The study, which started in 2019, seeks to identify a project or a package of projects that could be addressed by WMATA in the future to address constraints, crowding, reliability and operational flexibility in the project corridor. WMATA staff reviewed the public engagement and potential alternatives that have been developed to date and laid out the next steps and engagement process for the fall that will lead to the WMATA Board's anticipated selection of a locally preferred alternative. Also in July, the WMATA Board received an update on the Better Bus Initiative, which includes various efforts like zero-emission bus implementation, the bus network redesign, and bus priority.

Ms. Mattice stated that WMATA was recently awarded a \$104 million Federal Transit Administration (FTA) grant to convert the Cinder Bed Bus Garage in Lorton, Virginia to a fully battery electric bus facility, purchase battery electric buses and develop a workforce training program. Fairfax Connector will also benefit from this grant as they intend to use the Cinder Bed Bus Garage for future Richmond Highway buses. She also provided updates on new rear door SmarTrip targets, fare program updates and new faregates to stop fare evasion, as well as several student transit programs.

Ms. Mattice stated that the WMATA Board authorized the issuance of dedicated capital funding revenue bonds. The \$797.8 million bond sale, which settled on August 17, will fund capital projects across WMATA's capital improvement plan. Dedicated capital funding is essential to advancing the capital program, and dedicated capital funding's debt capacity is projected to be exhausted in FY 2029.

Finally, Ms. Mattice announced that more rail service is coming to Metrorail starting on September 11. Metro will boost peak service on the Red, Blue, Silver, Green and Yellow Lines to meet demand and ridership growth. The service increases will add more than 6% more train trips than today and represents Metro delivering 94% of budgeted FY 2024 service levels.

Report from the WMATA Committee Chair. Mr. Alcorn stated that the WMATA Committee has a full schedule of committee meetings coming up this fall. The committee will get

an update on the work staff have been doing to examine some potential future revenue sources that could help get WMATA on the path to long-term financial sustainability. In addition, the 2023 Annual Report on the Performance and Condition of WMATA report is being prepared to submit to the governor and General Assembly in December. The next WMATA Committee is scheduled for September 21 at 6:00 p.m. and then on October 19, the WMATA Committee will meet jointly with the Legislative and Policy Committee to discuss how these important topics inform NVTC's 2024 Legislative Agenda.

In response to a question from Mr. de Ferranti, Greg Potts of WMATA explained that the WMATA Board will be asked to approve in the near future a locally preferred alternative for the BOS Study but it does not imply funding commitments or agreements. It is just the next step.

Mr. de Ferranti noted that NVTC staff briefed him personally on zero-emission bus, which was so helpful and informative. Ms. Mattice stated that later this fall, staff will be presenting to the Commission the recommendations of the Zero-Emissions Bus Strategic Plan. Staff are happy to provide individual briefings for Commissioners.

In response to a question from Mr. Foust, Ms. Mattice stated that the consultants for the working group will be providing Metro operating funding reform recommendations. The WMATA Committee will receive a presentation, as will the Commission later this fall.

Transit Resource Center – Findings of the Envision Route 7 Phase 4-1 Mobility Study

Chair Palchik stated that the Commission is being asked to accept the findings of the Envision Route 7 Phase 4-1 Mobility Study related to the proposed bus rapid transit route (BRT) from Tysons to Alexandria. She asked NVTC's Transit Resource Center Senior Program Manager Xavier Harmony to give his presentation.

Mr. Harmony stated that this Phase 4-1 focused on the City of Falls Church segment of the corridor and does not make any recommendations on a preferred scenario. Rather, the study was conducted to provide the Falls Church City Council with the technical analysis and initial public input needed for them to make the final decision about how the BRT will operate in Falls Church and the infrastructure that will be needed. Phase 4-2 will start later this year and focus on the segment from Falls Church to Alexandria. He reviewed the extensive public outreach efforts and survey results for this phase and then summarized the different scenarios that were tested, as well as infrastructure treatments.

In response to a question from Ms. Garvey, Mr. Harmony stated that the draft Final Report goes into more detail and there is a section that describes traffic that gets displaced through some of the scenarios to improve bus service. When there is more build-out, there is more displaced traffic. He also noted that the data reflects that there is intense traffic during certain times during the p.m. timeframe. He then summarizes the results of the survey.

Mr. Harmony explained that the Falls Church City Council will be acting on a preferred alternative. The Commission is being asked to accept the findings of the Envision Route 7 Phase 4-1 Mobility Study. NVTC staff will continue to work on the Strategic implementation Plan as well as issuing a Request for Proposals for Phase 4-2 analysis. The new senior program manager for this project will be onboard starting in October.

Chair Palchik thanked Mr. Harmony for his work on this project.

In response to a question from Mr. de Ferranti, Mr. Harmony explained that the Commission is being asked to accept the findings of the work that has been done for Phase 4-1. He also acknowledged that making decisions around transportation is not just about traffic models and this study looks at what might be predicted based on these models. Other things come into consideration when making transportation decisions.

Mr. Snyder noted that for Presentation Slide #9, it is important to go back and look at the data and the assumptions. At the very least there needs to be some explanation about traffic volumes at different times of day. The time-of-day matters. The goal is to get people out of their cars and onto transit. If this data is taken out of context, it can create a very different story. Mr. Harmony stated that there is detailed, comprehensive information in the report. Ms. Mattice clarified that the chart actually shows faster traffic times with certain scenarios, but this can be better explained. Mr. Harmony stated that the chart is just a summary and not actually in the report and staff can add “peak hour” and update the staff presentation for additional context and clarity.

Chair Palchik asked that the executive summary provide visuals and more in-depth discussion of the findings in layperson language. She asked that this information be provided to Commissioners as a follow-up.

Ms. Bagley asked if the full report looked at reliability of arrival and departure times. She stated that it would be a nice data point in support of BRT. Mr. Harmony stated that staff can provide some additional information and although it is not explicit in the report, it is captured. Ms. Bagley stated that having a percentage of reliability would be a good data point.

Mr. Snyder moved, with a second by Ms. Bagley, to accept the findings of the Envision Route 7 Phase 4-1 Mobility Study. The vote in favor was cast by Commissioners Alcorn, Bagley, de Ferranti, Ebbin, Foust, Garvey, Palchik, Snyder, Stehle, Storck and Walkinshaw. A roll call vote followed for Commissioners participating electronically and Mr. Karantonis voted in the affirmative (Ms. DeBruhl did not participate in the vote). The motion passed.

Commuter Choice

Chair Palchik stated that here is no action being requested this month, but at the October meeting the Commission will be asked to authorize a call for projects for I-66 Commuter Choice FY 2025-2026 funding and authorize the submission of the Commuter Choice FY 2023 Annual

Report to the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB). She introduced NVTC Commuter Choice Senior Program Analyst Adam Hager to give the presentation on the call for projects.

Mr. Hager gave a quick recap of the Commuter Choice program. He reported that staff expect at least \$40 million to be available for transit and other transportation improvements that benefit I-66 Inside the Beltway toll payers, which is the largest amount available for the I-66 program to-date. Of that amount, it is anticipated that up to 50% could be allocated for transit operations (given the 50% cap on the share of funds that can be allocated to transit operations over any nine-year period). Staff are continuing to work with VDOT to get updated toll revenues, which was requested by the Program Advisory Committee (PAC) at their July meeting.

Mr. Hager stated that staff reviewed with the PAC the plan to open the application window in October rather than November, allowing staff extra time during the program development process in the spring. Staff are not proposing any substantive changes to the Commuter Choice technical evaluation process, last updated in 2022. Staff plan to make minor technical clarifications in the Commuter Choice Recipient Handbook regarding the timing of the application window and descriptions of technical evaluation measures, among other administrative items.

Mr. Hager stated that after Commission action in October, the call for projects notice, which will include information about how to apply for funds, will be issued to eligible applicants. Online applications will be accepted via the NVTC website from October 6, 2023 until December 18, 2023. NVTC staff will hold an overview webinar for all eligible applicants about the program and call for projects on September 27. Staff will thereafter request more information from potential applicants about their project ideas and will review these in terms of alignment with program eligibility and goals with each eligible applicant at one-on-one workshop sessions. The one-on-one workshops will also provide an opportunity for NVTC and applicant staff to review the application form and other required materials in detail. Staff will continue to provide updates to the Commission, concluding with requested action on a Program of Projects in June 2024.

Chair Palchik asked about the level of funding in the last two rounds. Mr. Hager responded that for the last two funding rounds staff were conservative in their toll revenue projections due to the pandemic. Two years ago, for the FY 2022-2023 period, the Commission approved just over \$15 million for a two-year program, and for the previous round (FY 2021), the two-tiered program allocated \$4 million initially and the second tier approved \$5 million for a supplemental program.

Report from the Chair of the Legislative and Policy Committee

Chair Palchik stated that Mr. Aguirre, chair of the Legislative and Policy Committee, could not attend the meeting since he is out of town. She asked Ms. Mattice to give the report.

Ms. Mattice reported that the Legislative and Policy Committee met on August 31 to discuss important state and federal legislative priorities and begin work on NVTC's 2024 Legislative Agenda. NVTC's Legislative Liaison Aimee Perron Seibert provided the committee with an update on the General Assembly. Next year is going to be a unique legislative year due to the amount of

changeover in the General Assembly, with as many as 55 new members in Richmond come January. With the many retirements among the General Assembly members, NVTC staff are working hard behind the scenes to reach out and foster relationships with many elected officials to share knowledge about transit in this region and its vital role in supporting the economic engine that is Northern Virginia.

Ms. Mattice noted that the committee also discussed NVTC's 2024 Legislative and Policy Agenda which will be presented at the November Commission meeting. This document governs the state and federal issues that NVTC can actively support at the Virginia General Assembly as well as the U.S. Congress. The committee reviewed draft topics for consideration which include advocating for long-term and sustainable funding for the transit systems; supporting federal policies that recognize the importance of public transit in keeping the National Capital Region efficiently functioning; and protecting existing NVTC autonomy, programs, and funding sources. The committee will work with the WMATA Committee on any legislative "asks" and will continue to refine the Legislative and Policy Agenda.

Ms. Mattice reported that at the Special Session earlier this week, the General Assembly passed budget amendments. In general, there are no provisions within the budget related to transportation. One of the items NVTC fought against last Session -- the diversion of \$200 million (House) or \$100 million (Senate) off the top of the Commonwealth Transportation Fund (CTF) to the Governor's Transportation Partnership Opportunity Fund (TPOF) -- was completely removed from the compromise budget. For context, \$200 million off the top of the CTF would have reduced the Virginia Mass Transit Fund by \$22.5 million.

Ms. Mattice also reported that she has been reaching out to staff of the Northern Virginia Congressional delegation to provide them with updates on NVTC efforts and potential federal funding opportunities for the regional transit systems.

Ms. Mattice stated that the committee was also updated on NVTC's future legislative events, including the joint meeting with the Legislative and Policy Committee and the WMATA Committee on October 19 and the annual joint NVTC-PRTC-VRE Legislative Forum which will be held this year on Friday, December 1 at GMU Schar School in Arlington. She emphasized that this is a new date and location for this event. This event will bring together transit leaders and special guests for an in-person overview of federal and state issues affecting transit in Northern Virginia. Save the Dates were sent out yesterday and 70 people have already RSVP'd.

Mr. Stehle stated that one area that this region should start paying attention to is autonomous vehicles, especially last mile aerial deliveries, and what that could mean for traffic. He stated that this would be a good forum topic.

Virginia Railway Express (VRE)

Chair Palchik welcomed VRE CEO Rich Dalton and asked him to give his report, to be followed by Mr. Schofield to present the key budget issues.

VRE CEO Report. Mr. Dalton reported that overall, on-time performance for the months of July and August were not the best with multiple operational issues. An Amtrak derailment impacted VRE service for several days, as well as heat orders on the Norfolk Southern Manassas Line, which is out of the ordinary. Ridership continues to slowly increase.

VRE Key Budget Issues. VRE Chief Financial Officer Mark Schofield provided an overview of VRE's FY 2025 key budget issues and the budget process. He highlighted three key issues. Based on survey results, VRE has received positive feedback about weekend service, which staff are working to include in the budget. As there hasn't been a fare increase for five years, a fare increase and other fare changes are also being considered. Then there is the issue of balancing the sources of funding.

Mr. Walkinshaw observed that the service issues are mostly not in VRE's control, but are caused by host railroads, partners, weather, service disruptions, etc. VRE has done a good job of communicating with riders. The Operations Board would like to see VRE accelerate weekend service. He also spoke about the jurisdictional subsidy and it is his personal perspective that VRE should return to the pre-pandemic subsidy level.

Chair Palchik stated that as a potential Saturday rider, she is excited to hear VRE is considering weekend service. Mr. Dalton also stated that VRE staff are still gathering data on the free fares on Friday during the summer.

Ms. Bagley announced that VRE is holding the annual Tour de VRE bicycle ride on October 13. This event will raise money for breast cancer research. She asked staff to provide more information to Commissioners and encouraged all to participate.

Mr. Dalton also gave information about VRE activities during Rail Safety Week starting September 18. In response to a question from Ms. Garvey, Mr. Dalton provided more information about heat restrictions.

Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT)

Chair Palchik explained that DRPT Director DeBruhl, who is participating virtually, is having audio problems and asked the executive director to highlight a few things from the DRPT Report. Ms. Mattice encouraged Commissioners to read the written DRPT Report. The Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) will be meeting in Crystal City in October in conjunction with the Governor's Transportation Conference.

Executive Director Report

Ms. Mattice encouraged Commissioners to read her Executive Director Newsletter, which highlights some of NVTC's recent efforts and events. She congratulated Senior Grants and

Procurement Manager Brittany Sumpter, who has been selected to the first Virginia Transit Association (VTA) Leadership Institute, where she will be joining transit agency professionals from across Virginia in a one-year program leadership program.

Ms. Mattice then reviewed upcoming meetings including the Program Advisory Committee meeting at 4:00 p.m. on September 21, which will be followed by the WMATA Committee meeting at 6:00 p.m. There will be a joint Legislative and Policy Committee and WMATA Committee meeting on October 19 at 6:00 p.m. The next Commission meeting is October 5 at 7:00 p.m., with the Executive Committee meeting prior at 6:15 p.m. At the October meeting the Commission will acknowledge WMATA Board Chair Paul Smedberg for being awarded the 2023 Outstanding Public Transportation Board Member Award by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) for his vision, leadership and commitment to transit.

Ms. Mattice noted that the June and July Financial Reports were provided in the written meeting materials. There were no questions from Commissioners.

Adjournment

Without objection, Chair Palchik adjourned the meeting at 8:56 p.m.

Approved this 5th day of October 2023.

Dalia Palchik
Chair

David F. Snyder
Secretary-Treasurer