

**NVTC PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**MEETING SUMMARY**  
**NVTC Suite #230 Conference Room**  
**2300 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, Virginia**  
**Public Streaming via YouTube**  
**February 15, 2024**

**NVTC Program Advisory Committee Members Present:**

Dalia Palchik, Chair (*via electronic participation*)  
Sarah Bagley  
Juli Briskman  
Libby Garvey  
David Snyder

**Other Commissioners Present:**

Takis Karantonis

**Staff and Others Present:**

Kate Mattice, Executive Director	Joshua Schank (InfraStrategies)
Allan Fye	Sophie Guiny (InfraStrategies)
Rhonda Gilchrest	Andi Hamre (ENO Transportation)
Xavier Harmony	Kirk Dand (Arlington County)
Ann McGrane	Amy Garbarini (DRPT)
Tenley O'Hara	
Ben Owen	
Vikram Sinha	
Sophie Spiliotopoulos ( <i>via electronic participation</i> )	
Melissa Walker	

PAC Chair Dalia Palchik joined virtually due to a family medical reason and at her request, Ms. Bagley is chairing the meeting as she is immediate-past chair. Ms. Bagley called the meeting to order at 4:45 p.m. She noted that the meeting is being streamed live via NVTC's YouTube page and that there is a quorum.

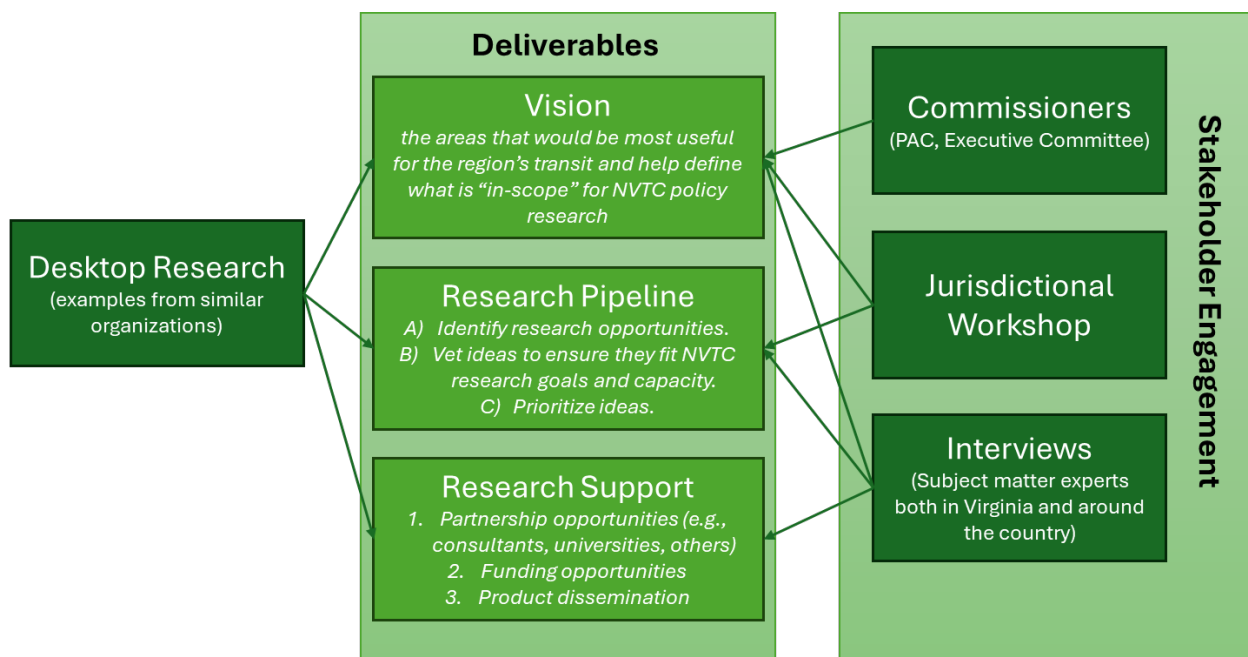
Ms. Garvey moved, with a second by Mr. Snyder, to approve Chair Palchik's request to participate virtually. The vote in favor was cast by Committee Members Bagley, Briskman, Garvey and Snyder.

Ms. Bagley asked for any changes to the summary of the September 21, 2023 Program Advisory Committee meeting. Committee members accepted the summary with no changes.

## Facilitated Discussion: NVTC's Research Strategic Plan

Ms. Bagley stated that over the years, NVTC has done an amazing job providing valuable, timely research and analysis on a variety of topics, such as the recently updated Value of Transit study. Last year, the Commission decided to step back and take a more strategic approach to the research NVTC should conduct while still maintaining the ability to react quickly to issues and opportunities that pop up. Before the facilitated discussion, she asked Mr. Harmony to provide some context on the Research Strategic Plan and introduce the facilitators.

Mr. Harmony stated the study being undertaken will support staff in developing a strategy for regional transit policy research over the next 4-6 years. Specifically, the study will define a vision for future research, develop a research pipeline, identify opportunities for strategic research and funding partnerships, and explore new ways to disseminate research findings. The findings of this report will be presented to the full Commission in May and will help inform the policy symposium in June. The study is being completed with the help of a consultant team including InfraStrategies and the Eno Center for Transportation. He introduced members of the consultant team, including Joshua Schank and Sophie Guiny from InfraStrategies and Andi Hamre from ENO Transportation.



Mr. Schank from then facilitated a strategic planning exercise with the committee to get their input on the strategic vision of NVTC's research priorities. These inputs will be used to help develop a refined vision and research priorities to help develop NVTC's policy research agenda moving forward. The facilitators and the committee members discussed a variety of research ideas such as growing transit ridership, the different needs of different types of transit users, transit costs and making transit easier to understand and use.

## Preview of Current Research Efforts

Ms. Bagley asked Mr. Harmony and Ms. Spiliotopoulos to give a sneak preview of their current research efforts, which will be presented to the full Commission in April and June respectively.

Mr. Harmony provided an overview of a newly developed report called “Climate Benefits of Transit in Northern Virginia.” This report evaluated regional transit ridership, travel patterns, and policies to provide an understanding of how regional transit benefits produces climate benefits. Specifically, the study estimates annual reductions in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions due to transit, evaluates transit fuel types against cars, and identifies opportunities for jurisdictions to learn from each other. The report concludes with several recommendations for improving transit’s climate benefits. More details of the report will be shared when it is presented at the April Commission meeting.

Ms. Spiliotopoulos provided a preview of the Northern Virginia Transit Trends report that will be presented in full at the June Commission meeting. The report analyzed trends over time to review how transit ridership and service has changed in the last 15 years. The three primary takeaways from the report are:

- There is an overemphasis on the classic peak/off-peak, Monday-Friday commuter-oriented scheduling.
- The region’s bus speeds have slowed down over time. There are opportunities to speed buses up with a variety of bus priority treatments.
- More transit connections are needed within Virginia. Movement in the region is complex, and implementations of BRT and high-capacity transit corridors help connect the region beyond just Virginia to DC connections.

### Commuter Choice Update

Ms. Bagley stated that NVTC is well into the FY 2025-2026 funding cycle for I-66 Commuter Choice and asked Mr. Owen to provide an update. Mr. Owen indicated that NVTC staff expect to advance 11 applications with a total funding request of \$13.5 million from the eligibility review into scoring and for eventual funding consideration, pending concurrence from the Commonwealth Office of the Attorney General. Most projects are for continued funding to support successful transit services and commuter incentive campaigns. Three further applications for new bus services remain in the Commuter Choice process for now, though have also been referred for funding consideration to the Department of Rail and Public Transportation’s (DRPT) I-66 Outside the Beltway funding program based on the nature of their anticipated benefits; and one application that would not have been eligible was withdrawn by the applicant.

Mr. Owen acknowledged that the total funding request is well below the available \$40 to \$50 million that NVTC advertised for the FY 2025-2026 funding cycle. He then introduced staff’s proposal to program \$8 million for VRE’s Crystal City station expansion project, which received an initial installment of funding in the I-395/95 Commuter Choice FY 2024-2025 Program of Projects, in the current I-66 funding round rather than the next I-395/95 round. The project uniquely would benefit toll payers in both the I-395/95 and I-66 corridors as it will be served by

both the VRE Manassas (paralleling I-66) and Fredericksburg (paralleling I-395/95) Lines. Mr. Owen indicated that DRPT and VRE both support the proposal and that NVTC's counsel did not identify any concerns. He added that, should the committee and full Commission support the proposal, staff would carefully document the methodology and decision process in a memo that would be included with the materials sent to the Office of the Attorney General for eligibility verification. Ms. Garvey and Ms. Palchik asked if the accelerated funding could support quicker implementation or cost reductions, and Ms. Bagley indicated that she would ask at the VRE Operations Board meeting. Mr. Snyder expressed concern about the gradual recovery in VRE ridership in relation to substantial investments in the system and Ms. Bagley acknowledged that VRE will need to address ridership questions in the coming months as pandemic recovery funds are spent down.

Mr. Owen then outlined staff's proposal to conduct an I-66 corridor needs assessment in collaboration with DRPT to identify projects that could be eligible for I-66 Commuter Choice and/or DRPT's Outside the Beltway funding in future rounds. The expected product of the needs assessment would comprise a comprehensive list of transit and multimodal projects for which localities and transit agencies could pursue funding as well as approaches for NVTC to support long-term capital investments in the corridor, which could include passenger rail infrastructure improvements and Metrorail capacity expansions. Mr. Owen pointed out that prior studies to identify multimodal improvements were completed before the pandemic and are now obsolete. He added that NVTC and DRPT staff are discussing a proposed scope and budget for the effort and would anticipate providing more information to the PAC in April. Mr. Snyder asked that the assessment include smaller multimodal projects that could fit well with the program and for which localities may lack other funding.

### Other Business

Ms. Bagley asked for any other business before the committee. There were no questions or comments from committee members. She announced that the next PAC meeting is scheduled for Thursday, April 11 at 4:30 p.m. in NVTC Suite #230. The agenda will include an update on the Envision Route 7 BRT Strategic Implementation Plan and staff's recommendation for the I-66 Commuter Choice Program of Projects.

Ms. Bagley adjourned the meeting at 6:01 p.m.