

MEETING SUMMARY

NVTC JOINT WMATA COMMITTEE / LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY COMMITTEE

**NVTC Suite #230 Conference Room
2300 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, Virginia
Public Livestreaming via YouTube
May 16, 2024**

NVTC WMATA Committee Members Present:

Walter Alcorn, Chair
Caneq Aguirre
Matt de Ferranti
David Snyder

Legislative and Policy Committee Members Present:

Caneq Aguirre, Chair
Adam Ebbin (*non-voting member*)
Libby Garvey
David Snyder
James Walkinshaw

NVTC WMATA Committee Members Absent:

Matt Letourneau
Paul Smedberg

Legislative and Policy Committee Members Absent:

Matt Letourneau
Catherine Read

Other NVTC Commissioners Present:

Mark Sickles (*via electronic participation*)

Staff and Others Present:

Kate Mattice, Executive Director
Andrew D’huyvetter
Adam Hager
Xavier Harmony
Rhonda Gilchrest
Scott Kalkwarf
Daniel Knickelbein
Ann McGrane
Tenley O’Hara
Aimee Perron Seibert
Sophie Spiliotopoulos

Kirk Dand (Arlington County)
Noelle Dominguez (Fairfax County)
Jordan Exantus (City of Alexandria)
Jennifer Monaco (DRPT)
Greg Potts (WMATA)
Wendy Sanford (City of Fairfax)

Legislative and Policy Committee Chair Aguirre called the joint meeting of the WMATA Committee/Legislative and Policy Committee to order at 6:05 p.m. He stated that the meeting is being livestreamed for the public and that he is co-chairing the meeting with WMATA Committee Chair Alcorn. Legislative and Policy Committee Chair Aguirre noted that Commissioner Mark Sickles requested to participate electronically from the City of Alexandria due to a conflicting meeting schedule. Legislative and Policy Committee Chair Aguirre confirmed an in-person quorum was present.

Ms. Garvey moved with a second by Mr. de Ferranti to approve Mr. Sickles' request to participate remotely. The vote in favor was cast by Commissioners Aguirre, Alcorn, de Ferranti, Garvey and Snyder. The motion passed unanimously. (Mr. Sickles did not join the meeting virtually until 6:14 p.m.)

WMATA Committee Chair Alcorn offered opening remarks about the critical work before the two committees related to establishing long-term, dedicated funding for public transit in Northern Virginia.

Legislative and Policy Committee Chair Aguirre asked if there were any changes to the Meeting Summary of the October 19, 2023 Legislative and Policy Committee meeting. Similarly, WMATA Committee Chair Alcorn asked for any changes to the Meeting Summary of the February 29, 2024 WMATA Committee meeting. Both committees accepted their meeting summaries with no changes.

WMATA Committee Chair Alcorn introduced the discussion of WMATA's FY 2025 budget and future options for establishing WMATA a long-term, sustainable revenue stream for dedicated funding, while Legislative and Policy Committee Chair Aguirre added that one of the most important tasks for the next General Assembly Session will be to help legislators understand how important WMATA and all transit systems in Northern Virginia are to the entire Commonwealth.

Updates

Legislative and Policy Committee Chair Aguirre then introduced NVTC's Legislative Liaison Aimee Perron Seibert.

General Assembly. Ms. Perron Seibert reported that the state budget was approved by the General Assembly and signed by Governor Youngkin on May 13. All WMATA funding that was requested was included in the budget and Virginia's 3% cap on operating assistance was also temporarily lifted for two years. The budget includes \$60.2 million in FY 2025 and \$84.5 million in FY 2026. She added that she is working with House Appropriations staff and Senate Finance staff to determine if the extra \$500,000 included in FY 2025 is intended for a consultant for the SJ 28 study. Ms. Perron-Seibert thanked advocates in Northern Virginia for their hard work in helping to get the budget passed. Ms. Mattice added that the House appointments for the SJ 28 study have not yet been made.

WMATA/MWCOG: Unified Vision for Public Transit in the DMV Region. Ms. Mattice provided an update on DMVMoves, a joint WMATA and Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG) initiative that began earlier in the month with the goal of creating a unified vision for transit across the greater metropolitan region. She stated there are several committees that will report to and inform the work of a 20-member Regional Task Force. Ms. Mattice added that the Regional Task Force kickoff meeting will be held on Monday, June 10 in Arlington County.

WMATA Committee Chair Alcorn asked if there have been any discussions on whether the WMATA funding jurisdictions plan to develop their own funding source, or if a single, regional model will be pursued. Ms. Mattice responded that this question has not yet been discussed and NVTC is waiting for additional information from the DMVMoves Regional Task Force.

Ms. Garvey asked whether other regions that cover multiple states implement a regional sales tax or something similar as a means to fund transit. Mr. D’huyvetter stated there are several, but that St. Louis has a regional framework although taxation is not uniform across each jurisdiction that receives service. Chair Alcorn noted that in his view, each jurisdiction in the metropolitan Washington region would need to come up with its own funding solution.

NVTC Work Towards Long-Term Sustainable Dedicated Funding

WMATA Committee Chair Alcorn asked staff to proceed with the next three presentation items all related to long-term, dedicated funding. He also asked if Washington D.C. had any efforts underway to address long-term funding for WMATA like those in Virginia and Maryland. Mr. D’huyvetter responded that D.C. may be looking to address the issue through its budget process. Ms. Garvey asked whether Maryland is in a similar position to Virginia regarding funding needs for public transit. Mr. D’huyvetter stated that Maryland has a significant revenue shortage across its transportation needs, not just for WMATA, and that they have an ongoing effort to examine this issue through their Commission on Transportation Revenue and Infrastructure Needs.

Mr. Walkinshaw arrived at 6:24 p.m.

SJ 28: Northern Virginia Public Transit Joint Subcommittee. Mr. D’huyvetter provided an update on the forthcoming Joint Subcommittee on Northern Virginia Public Transit (SJ 28) and how NVTC will play a vital role in supporting the General Assembly with the study.

Mr. de Ferranti stated that it is unlikely that there will be any major WMATA funding legislation in the next 2025 General Assembly Session and asked whether the various study initiatives underway will address how much transit service the region wants before addressing funding needs. Ms. Mattice stated that NVTC staff is currently conducting research into local bus system service and funding needs; Virginia Railway Express is conducting its own long-range system plan; and WMATA is in the middle of its Better Bus Network Redesign. She added that all of these efforts are helping answer the questions around what the region wants transit to look like before trying to fund it.

Mr. de Ferranti asked specifically about rail costs and whether those had been identified on a unit basis, such as per jurisdiction or per person. Adding to Mr. de Ferranti’s question, WMATA Committee Chair Alcorn indicated that on the bus side, there are processes underway to address long-term needs, but asked if something similar might be taking place for rail. Mr. Potts responded that WMATA is looking at long-term rail fleet needs, a factor of which is long-term rail service planning. Mr. D’huyvetter pointed out that the WMATA subsidy formulas are set by WMATA Board policy, not the WMATA Compact, and that the Board would be discussing formulas over the summer and fall.

Mr. Walkinshaw expressed his concern about the idea of creating a process that develops an unconstrained vision plan that does not first address financial realities. He stated that it might be more effective to develop tiered plans within some kind of fiscal constraint rather than addressing financial needs after the fact. WMATA Committee Chair Alcorn added that there is also a land use component to consider as a transit vision plan is developed. He and Legislative and Policy Committee Chair Aguirre both agreed that the scope the study initiatives will need to be well defined and address whether services like paratransit will be included. Ms. Garvey stated that the DMVMoves Regional Task Force will need to balance the needs of the participating jurisdictions.

Mr. de Ferranti, Ms. Garvey and Legislative and Policy Committee Chair Aguirre spoke about the lack of Inside-the-Beltway Virginia jurisdictions as part of the membership of the DMVMoves Regional Task Force. Mr. Sickles stated that as a member of the task force, he will advocate for and represent the interests of the local jurisdictions who are not on the Regional Task Force.

NVTC Regional Bus Analysis Overview. Dr. Harmony presented an overview of NVTC's Regional Bus Analysis, a key effort in outlining the funding needs for local bus systems in the region.

Ms. Garvey asked about the dip in capital financial needs over the next five-year period. Dr. Harmony stated that capital needs tend to fluctuate over time depending on when operators plan for higher-cost projects.

Mr. Walkinshaw asked about the difference between geographic gaps and level of service gaps. Dr. Harmony explained that a geographic gap is a place that does not have bus service and a level-of-service gap has bus service but not very much.

WMATA Committee Chair Aguirre asked whether Northern Virginia priority transit corridors have already been identified in previous study efforts. Dr. Harmony stated that the high-priority transit corridors in this analysis are those that might be identified elsewhere but may need additional investment.

Mr. Snyder asked about whether the Route 7 BRT project is included in any local plans and thus reflected in this research. Dr. Harmony responded that Fairfax County's Transit Strategic Plan includes the Route 7 BRT project but that the funding need for the project is not included in the five-year chart in the presentation because the funds are anticipated to be needed at a later date.

NVTC 2024 Annual Report on the Performance and Condition of WMATA. Mr. Hager provided a preview of NVTC's 2024 Annual Report on the Performance and Condition of WMATA, noting that for this year staff will be focused on supporting the myriad efforts advancing the local, regional and statewide conversations around long-term funding for public transit.

WMATA Committee Chair Alcorn observed that this report offers a way for NVTC to amplify its messaging around long-term, dedicated funding for WMATA. He reminded committee members to work closely with their respective budget offices to make sure they are all planning for

increases in their WMATA bills over the next two years. Mr. de Ferranti stated that it will be important for NVTC to continue to encourage more federal workforce ridership.

Mr. Walkinshaw observed that there is some overlap between NVTC's Legislative Agenda and the 2023 Annual Report of the Performance and Condition of WMATA recommendations. He added that a major item that needs rebaselining is the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act (PRIIA) funding, indicating that due to inflation, the value is now worth about half of what it was when first implemented. Mr. Walkinshaw stated that it might be more compelling to advocate for arbiters being required to consider WMATA's fiscal condition as opposed to the funding jurisdictions' ability to pay.

WMATA Committee Chair Alcorn asked about the scope and scale of a potential rainy-day reserve fund at WMATA. Mr. D'huyvetter stated there is more to come on this topic from the WMATA Board this summer. WMATA Committee Chair Alcorn then asked to make sure no priorities are overlooked as conversations advance around long-term funding.

Ms. Garvey asked NVTC staff to send out the DMVMoves materials on the task force membership, and Ms. Mattice agreed to disseminate the materials after the meeting. WMATA Committee Chair Alcorn asked when the next DMVMoves meeting is scheduled and Ms. Mattice replied that the meeting is on June 10 in Arlington.

WMATA Committee Chair Alcorn and Legislative and Policy Committee Chair Aguirre adjourned the meeting at 7:32 p.m.