

MEETING SUMMARY
PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEE
NVTC Suite #230 Conference Room
2300 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, Virginia
Public Streaming via YouTube
February 20, 2025

Program Advisory Committee Members Present:

Dalia Palchik, Chair
Sarah Bagley
Juli Briskman
Maureen Coffey
David Snyder

Other NVTC Commissioners Present:

Walter Alcorn

Staff and Others Present:

Kate Mattice, Executive Director
Andrew D’huyvetter
Rhonda Gilchrest
Xavier Harmony
Daniel Knickelbein
Ann McGrane
Tenley O’Hara
Vikram Sinha
Melissa Walker
Kirk Dand (Arlington County)
Brent Riddle (Fairfax County)

PAC Chair Palchik called the meeting to order at 4:33 p.m. She stated that the meeting is being streamed live via NVTC’s YouTube channel. Staff confirmed an in-person quorum.

Chair Palchik noted that the Meeting Summary of the September 19, 2024 Joint Program Advisory Committee/Joint Commission Working Group meeting was provided in the meeting materials and PAC committee members had no changes.

PAC Overview and 2025 Workplan

Chair Palchik introduced Ann McGrane, who provided an overview of the scope and responsibilities of the Commission, the Program Advisory Committee (PAC), and the

coordination with regional staff on selected projects. Ms. McGrane then reviewed the 2025 PAC Workplan, including timelines for Commuter Choice, Route 7 BRT and Zero-Emission Bus as well as the items that will require Commission engagement and action.

Ms. Bagley stated that with possible changes to federal funding structures and partnerships, it would be useful for staff to provide the Commission with an impact update in light of any federal changes. Ms. Mattice explained that legislative updates are typically provided to the Legislative and Policy Committee and are then rolled into Commission updates. Staff are very mindful especially in terms of projects that have been previously funded, about to be funded, or to be funded in the future. Currently, NVTC has one project (Route 7 BRT) waiting for federal grant funding and then oversees some jurisdictional grants, but they are small amounts. She confirmed that the Commuter Choice program is not affected by what's happening on the federal level. Ms. Bagley observed that some Commuter Choice projects may have multiple funding sources, including federal funds. Ms. Mattice stated that staff can do an assessment of current Commuter Choice projects.

Mr. Snyder joined the meeting at 4:42 PM.

I-395/95 Commuter Choice Update

Chair Palchik introduced Daniel Knickelbein, who provided an update on the I-395/95 Commuter Choice program. He noted that \$25-30 million is expected to be available for new projects, after fulfilling a \$10 million off-the-top award to Fairfax County's Richmond Highway BRT project that was approved in the prior I-395/95 Program of Projects. Project applications in this round included 12 bus service enhancements, one new bus route, one commuter rail station improvement project and one multi-use trail project. After an eligibility screening by NVTC and DRPT staff, one project was deemed ineligible for Commuter Choice funding. Arlington County's Cross Potomac Trail: Northern Virginia Approach application was deemed ineligible as it did not benefit toll payers by increasing person throughput in the corridor and did not directly connect to a major transit facility, as is required by the Commuter Choice program regulations.

Mr. Knickelbein provided an overview of the timeline for the FY 2026-2027 Program of Projects, running from February to June:

- March: Staff will develop a recommended Program of Projects and the public comment period will open
- April: The public comment period will close and the Joint Commission Working Group will be briefed on recommended projects
- May/June: NVTC, PRTC and CTB Rail and Transit Subcommittee briefings (May); NVTC, PRTC and CTB final approvals (June)

Committee members had no additional questions or comments.

Zero-Emission Bus (ZEB) Shared On-Route Charging Update

Ms. McGrane presented the results of the *Zero-Emission Bus (ZEB) Shared On-Route Feasibility Report*, including ZEB progress in Northern Virginia. She noted that Arlington County's new ART Operations and Maintenance Facility has opened, which includes charging infrastructure for battery-electric buses (BEBs). Also, with Loudoun County acquiring two BEBs in its fleet, now the City of Alexandria, Fairfax County and Loudoun County all have BEBs in their respective fleets. She then provided an overview of barriers to progress, including delays in acquiring new buses, often lasting 18 to 24 months, and uncertainty in the availability of funding for ZEBs from federal grants.

Ms. McGrane noted that NVTC released the Northern Virginia ZEB Strategic Plan in January 2024 and one of the strategies in the plan supports the development of shared BEB charging infrastructure, particularly on-route charging. She provided an overview of on-route charging, also called opportunity charging, which is a charging method where BEBs get charged along the route, typically at a layover point or another stopping point. Shared on-route charging is a variant of this concept where if multiple transit agencies have overlapping service, they can use that as an opportunity to share the charging infrastructure. She noted that DASH is in the process of setting up an on-route charging location.

Ms. McGrane noted that *the Zero-Emission Bus (ZEB) Shared On-Route Feasibility Study* was conducted by the National Renewable Energy Laboratory at no cost to NVTC. The study assessed the potential for shared charging between WMATA, ART, DASH and Fairfax Connector. She explained the concept of a "block," which is a term used in transit scheduling and referenced in the study. As part of the study, 18 sites were identified for analysis. In August 2024, NVTC held a workshop with participating agencies to identify challenges and opportunities and identify key criteria for each site, including the number of blocks served, the number of failing blocks, the amount of space and high-level costs. In response to a question, Ms. McCrane explained that a "failing block" is a block that can't be reliably served by a BEB due to limitations in range over the course of a service day. On-route charging provides an opportunity to reduce the number of failing blocks. She then showed the list of sites and the scoring criteria in the study, noting that the table is best thought of as "buckets" of feasibility and providing a caveat that the results are still at a high level.

Ms. McGrane stated that the study concludes that shared on-route charging is feasible, but several questions still need to be answered before moving to implementation, and that there are other ways to share resources without sharing chargers. The Commission will be asked to accept the study findings at the March 3 meeting. Additionally, DRPT has provided NVTC with a technical assistance grant to conduct further analysis. NVTC staff are working with jurisdiction staff to refine the scope of this assistance and expect to return to the Commission in the spring to seek action to issue a RFP. Finally, NVTC staff continues to host a ZEB Working Group and provide information on ZEBs.

In response to several questions, Ms. McGrane clarified that the WMATA working group also includes Maryland agencies and serves as a broader resource, while NVTC's working group focuses specifically on issues in Virginia. She also explained the various types of charging and the uncertainties around charging duration, battery technology, and charging

infrastructure. Regarding getting “buy-in” from agencies, Ms. McGrane explained that this work is at the early stages and “buy-in” for specific sites is still a work-in-progress.

Transit Data and Analysis: Integrating Transit, Cycling and Micromobility in Northern Virginia Report

Chair Palchik introduced Xavier Harmony to present the results of the *Integrating Transit, Cycling and Micromobility in Northern Virginia Report*. Dr. Harmony stated that the definition of micromobility is a broad term for smaller, lower-speed vehicles that can be electric or human-powered and shared or privately-owned. Examples include bicycles, bikeshare and scooters. The study evaluated transit and micromobility connections in five ways:

- Bicycle parking at transit stops and stations
- Bike rental (e.g. bikeshare and scooter share) at transit stops
- Bikes on transit vehicles
- Safe routes to transit
- Customer education and communication

These five methods were explored through the lenses of existing plans and policies, spatial and statistical analysis of various data sources and case studies across the United States. On the topic of bicycle parking at transit, Dr. Harmony provided an overview that identified that 63% of stations have bike parking and urbanized areas are more likely to have parking, but not all jurisdictions track bike parking at transit stops. Regarding shared micromobility near transit stops, the study notes that almost all Capital Bikeshare stations are within a ½ mile of a bus stop and 40% of Metrorail stops – with more usage of these types of services near Metrorail. For bikes on transit vehicles themselves, all transit agencies in Northern Virginia allow bikes on transit, but most agencies do not track this data. One exception is VRE, which started allowing bikes on trains in 2022 and currently averages about 1,200 bikes per month or 1% of all riders, with significant increases in utilization from 2022 to 2024.

Dr. Harmony stated that policy reviews were conducted looking specifically at topics like bikes in bus lanes, bikes at bus stops, and floating bus stops – bus stops that integrate a cycling lane between the stop and the sidewalk. He noted the presence of a number of these in Northern Virginia and that a significant amount of work has been conducted by WMATA, Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG) and Montgomery County, Maryland. The study found that 2% of people use micromobility to access Metrorail stations, with exact percentages varying throughout the region.

Dr. Harmony noted that the study reviewed multiple ways communication and education take place including education on the alternative ways to get to transit, demonstrations of how to use transit with bikes and other micromobility tools, real-time information and wayfinding at transit stations.

Dr. Harmony reviewed the key conclusions of the study:

- Transit and bicycling integration is an important regional goal;
- bicycle infrastructure provides large increases in access to transit;
- Metrorail is associated with increases in bikeshare and scooter usage; and
- Northern Virginia does well but there are more options to learn from peers.

Dr. Harmony stated that the key recommendations of the study include continued coordination, increased transit and bicycling integration in suburban areas, packaging of transit and bicycling improvements together into larger funding requests and projects, increased clarity in policies, and increased collection and sharing of data focused on this topic.

Dr. Harmony answered general questions about dockless micromobility and the availability of data and information on these services, and data availability on bicycle parking at transit stops. Mr. Snyder asked about other forms of micromobility and what technology is available and where it might be applicable. Dr. Harmony stated that the report goes into more detail on these topics. He provided clarification between the terms of microtransit and micromobility. Mr. Snyder stated that whatever the terminology, he would like to “expand the universe” of alternatives to get more people to use transit. Ms. McGrane noted that some jurisdictions are requiring micromobility providers to provide alternatives for individuals who can’t use traditional micromobility devices. Dr. Harmony stated that e-bikes have been a game changer in this region.

Other Business

Chair Palchik announced that the next PAC meeting has been scheduled for April 24 and will be a virtual joint meeting with the Joint Commission Working Group.

Chair Palchik adjourned the meeting at 5:41 p.m.