

**MEETING SUMMARY
NVTC JOINT WMATA COMMITTEE / LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY COMMITTEE
NVTC Suite #230 Conference Room
2300 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, Virginia
Public Livestreaming via YouTube
September 18, 2025**

WMATA Committee Members Present:

Walter Alcorn
Canek Aguirre
Matt Letourneau
Paul Smedberg
David Snyder (*via electronic participation*)

Legislative and Policy Committee Members Present:

Canek Aguirre, Chair
Maureen Coffey
Adam Ebbin
Matt Letourneau
David Snyder (*via electronic participation*)

WMATA Committee Members Absent:

Matt de Ferranti, Chair

Legislative and Policy Committee Members Absent:

Catherine Read

Staff and Others Present:

Kate Mattice, Executive Director
Jason Adle
Shannon Bacon
Andrew D’huyvetter
Sarah Godfrey
Adam Hager
Scott Kalkwarf
Daniel Knickelbein
Ann McGrane
Tenley O’Hara

Melissa Walker
Henry Watkins (*via electronic participation*)
Randy Minchew (CTB)
Zach Trogdon (DRPT) (*via electronic participation*)
Grant Sparks (DRPT) (*via electronic participation*)
Sarah Husain (DRPT)
Greg Potts (WMATA)
Brent Riddle (Fairfax County)
Kirk Dand (Arlington County)
Neil Jain (Guidehouse Consulting)

Legislative and Policy Committee Chair Aguirre called the joint meeting of the WMATA Committee and the Legislative and Policy Committee to order at 6:05 p.m. He explained that the meeting is being streamed live via NVTC’s YouTube channel. He noted that WMATA Committee Chair Matt de Ferranti sent his regrets for not being able to attend the meeting.

Chair Aguirre stated that neither committee had reached quorum yet. When Mr. Letourneau arrived at 6:06 p.m. quorum was reached for the Legislative and Policy Committee. Chair Aguirre then noted that Mr. Snyder, who serves on both committees, requested to participate electronically from Falls Church due to a medical reason. Mr. Ebbin moved, with a second by Ms. Coffey, to approved Mr. Snyder’s request for electronic participation. The vote in favor was cast by Legislative and Policy Committee Members Aguirre, Coffey, Ebbin and Letourneau. The motion passed. WMATA Committee members did not vote since they did not have a quorum. (A quorum was reached upon Mr. Smedberg’s arrival later in the meeting.)

Chair Aguirre also welcomed a former NVTC Commissioner to the table, Randy Minchew, who is now an urban at-large member of the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB).

Chair Aguirre noted that the Meeting Summary of the May 29, 2025 Joint WMATA Committee/Legislative and Policy Committee meeting was included in the meeting materials. There were no changes requested from committee members.

DRPT Presentation on MERIT Grant Program Changes

Chair Aguirre briefly introduced the DRPT presentation with background on the Making Efficient and Responsible Investments in Transit, or MERIT, grant program. He explained that the Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) is proposing substantive changes to both the capital and operating grant program formulas, and DRPT staff, who are participating virtually, will present those changes. He also clarified that the CTB will be the approving body for such changes.

Chair Aguirre turned it over to DRPT Chief of Public Transportation Zach Trogdon, DRPT Director of Statewide Transit Programs Grant Sparks, and Director of Northern Virginia Transit Programs Sarah Husain. Mr. Trogdon and Mr. Sparks explained that DRPT evaluated the MERIT grant program and found several potential improvements to both capital and operating assistance. They also outlined program challenges and policy goals, and how these improvements could play a role. After presenting the proposed changes, Mr. Trogdon opened up the discussion for questions.

Mr. Alcorn asked for clarity on how these changes, many significant, would be phased in, to which Mr. Trogdon explained they would take effect in the FY 2028 grant cycle to allow agencies to adjust project proposals and maintain positive outcomes. Chair Aguirre also asked about the timeline for assessment and feedback, considering such large changes for the first time since 2018. Mr. Letourneau and Ms. Coffey agreed that more time for staff analysis would be helpful. Mr. Trogdon clarified that DRPT would need to discuss such timelines with the CTB and added that public comment is occurring in October as well.

Ms. Mattice added that the Commission has already authorized her to provide comments on behalf of the Commission regarding the MERIT formula changes and appreciates the feedback from committee members. In response to Ms. Mattice, Mr. Trogdon noted that it is unclear whether the CTB will take action on these changes in October and can follow up on this question. Ms. Coffey then commented that the MERIT program changes came up in discussions at the Virginia Association of Counties Transportation Policy Committee meeting, and members in that discussion were concerned more about the timeline than the content of the changes. She noted that they were concerned that they would not be able to review content with adequate time to provide thoughtful comments in October. She additionally noted that, due to uncertainty with future budgets, she wants to ensure adequate time for review to avoid detrimental out-year budget effects or harm to transit agencies.

Mr. Smedberg joined the meeting at 6:18 p.m. which resulted in a quorum for the WMATA Committee.

NVTC Work Towards Long-Term Sustainable Dedicated Funding

Chair Aguirre then turned to a series of items related to the Commission's work establishing long-term, sustainable funding for Northern Virginia public transit. He asked Director of Programs and Policy Andrew D'huyvetter, Deputy Director of Programs and Policy Ann McGrane, and WMATA Program Manager Adam Hager to give their presentations.

DMVMoves. Mr. D'huyvetter provided an update on DMVMoves, reporting that the next Task Force meeting will be on October 29. At that meeting, the Task Force will discuss WMATA investment concepts, a regional bus priority approach, and a Regional Integration Action Plan. He noted that outcomes of that meeting will be presented at the WMATA and Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOC) Boards in November.

SJ 28: Northern Virginia Public Transit Joint Subcommittee. Mr. D'huyvetter then updated the committees on progress of the SJ 28 Joint Subcommittee. He stated that the next meeting will be on October 21 at the WMATA Eisenhower Building and the group will have a discussion on cost containment strategies as well as WMATA, VRE and local bus agency needs. He also reminded committee members that revenue estimates for multiple funding strategies at the subcommittee's June 2025 meeting, and their final meeting will take place in mid- to late-November where final recommendations will be presented.

Mr. D'huyvetter also presented a short refresher on Virginia revenues supporting WMATA Capital and Operating Budgets. This presentation highlighted that the temporary funding solution through FY 2026 will end in FY 2027 and future revenues to support Virginia's share of WMATA's operating budget have not yet been identified. The SJ28 Joint Subcommittee's work is intended to identify such funding to continue Virginia's ability to fully fund WMATA's operating budget. He also commented that, without funding identified with this rebaselining, annual subsidies for local jurisdictions would be affected dramatically. Mr. Smedberg added that WMATA itself also stepped up in recent years to find strategies and savings to maximize cost efficiencies.

2025 Report on the Performance and Condition of WMATA Update. Mr. Hager provided an update on the *2025 Annual Report on the Performance and Condition of WMATA*. He stated that the 2025 report will focus on a long-term, sustainable funding solution for WMATA, reactions to DMVMoves, support for SJ 28's work and continued focus on previous issues of importance to the Commission regarding WMATA. He shared the anticipated timeline for the report including committee discussion in October and Commission approval in December.

In response to topics covered in the report, Mr. Smedberg clarified that jurisdictional audit improvements refer to separate, redundant audits completed by multiple agencies, to which Mr. Hager confirmed and added there are opportunities for improvement. Mr.

Smedberg also asked about any lessons learned from the Better Bus Network redesign and its success thus far. Mr. Hager noted that it is a bit early for lessons learned, but the report will highlight ridership growth. Mr. Letourneau added that the Washington Metrorail Safety Commission (WMSC) priorities should include an independent arbiter to resolve disputes between WMATA and WMSC more effectively.

Key Funding and Policy Issues. Ms. McGrane presented key information in the NVTC Transit Funding Guide, including a brief reminder of how state and local funds flow through the Commonwealth Transportation Fund (CTF) and Commonwealth Mass Transit Fund (CMTF). She clarified that MERIT adjustments will not affect direct funds for VRE or WMATA due to the structure of funding for these systems. Ms. McGrane then discussed how operating revenues are not keeping up with inflation, and one-time supporting funds are running out. She noted that the regional gas tax is a major source of funding for jurisdictions to pay their WMATA subsidies and local transit, but its purchasing power has diminished over time, and that a regional Highway Use Fee may be beneficial. Ms. McGrane then presented a selection of local tools to fund transit and risks to those strategies' effectiveness or long-term salience.

Mr. Alcorn drew attention to the operating and capital funding levels and noted that what could look like small adjustments for localities, could be large increases in transit funding. Mr. Smedberg then asked about federal Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act (PRIIA) funding and uncertainty regarding federal transportation funds. Ms. Mattice clarified PRIIA matching programs are still included in state Code and are currently included in federal appropriations bills. Ms. McGrane closed by restating key takeaways about Northern Virginia's transit funding needs and the necessity of state-local collaboration.

2026 General Assembly Look-Ahead

Chair Aguirre introduced the 2026 General Assembly look-ahead by predicting a busy legislative Session, including a new governor and House of Delegates members. NVTC Legislative Liaison Henry Watkins, who was participating virtually, provided a more detailed look at the 2026 General Assembly Session. He began by noting that many are expecting Democrats to continue holding a slim majority in the House of Delegates. Changes in federal funding streams and fewer federal relief funds will affect the amount of discretionary funds available to state governments across the country. Pressures coming to the state from H.R. 1 and other changes to federal funding streams will have particularly potent effects on healthcare costs for the Commonwealth to balance with other priorities. Mr. Watkins also stated that discussions with money committee staff are building strong support in Richmond for the primary goals coming out of SJ 28 and broad funding solutions.

Mr. Watkins projected that filling major holes in funding streams will be top of mind for legislators during the 60-day Session. Chair Aguirre asked to be updated on the transportation chairs as well as leadership for the Majority and Minority parties, as this information becomes available. Mr. Watkins closed by noting that if Democrats hold over 55

seats, the Transportation Committee in the House of Delegates will grow, and that changes in the Senate makeup may change leadership of the Senate Transportation Committee.

Preliminary 2026 NVTC Legislative and Policy Agenda

Chair Aguirre turned to Commuter Choice and Policy Program Manager, Daniel Knickelbein, to provide information on the 2026 Legislative and Policy Agenda. Ms. Mattice chimed in first to introduce the goals of the Commission to be responsive and flexible to both state and federal policy shifts.

Mr. Knickelbein presented NVTC's state priorities, with themes of long-term sustainable funding that supports Northern Virginia's transit needs, sound financial management and good governance, and future transit innovation and improvements. He added that these priorities are also informed by NVTC Resolution #2552, Guiding Principles for Future Transit Funding, and Resolution #2571, Principles in Response to DMVMoves Funding Concepts.

Mr. Smedberg asked about the Washington Metrorail Safety Commission (WMSC) and if there would need to be statutory changes to adjust its oversight role. WMATA Government Relations Officer Greg Potts clarified from the audience that the WMSC Compact requirements would require the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia to all agree on conditions for any legislative changes. Mr. Smedberg and Mr. Alcorn discussed potential WMSC reforms. They also discussed reforming Virginia's 3% annual cap on subsidy increases. Mr. Alcorn asked NVTC staff to look for examples in Virginia law which use inflation as a primary factor in issues related to cost growth. Mr. Alcorn also mentioned local and commuter transit services, and whether a 3% cap or similar should be considered for them. Mr. D'huyvetter noted that Maryland also has a 3% cap on WMATA subsidy increases, which will be reinstated in FY 2028, whereas Virginia's annual cap will return for the FY 2027 budget cycle subject to any legislative changes.

Mr. Knickelbein then discussed federal legislative priorities with themes of surface transportation reauthorization that supports transit, grant funding programs that enhance transit's future, and policy and regulations that strengthen transit. He also mentioned supporting reauthorization legislation that maximizes funding for public transit and is consistent with reauthorization principles supported by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), preserving funding for the Capital Investment Grants program, streamlining statutory and regulatory requirements for transit projects, and support for commuter tax benefits.

Mr. Knickelbein closed with key dates between this meeting and the beginning of the 2026 General Assembly Session on January 14, 2026, including the NVTC/PRTC/VRE Legislative Forum on December 15, 2025.

Other Items

With no further discussion from committee members, Chair Aguirre reminded members that the next Joint WMATA Committee/Legislative and Policy Committee meeting will be in person at NVTC on Thursday October 16 at 7:00 p.m.

Chair Aguirre adjourned the meeting at 7:21 p.m.