MEETING SUMMARY
NVTC PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEE
NVTC Suite #230 Conference Room
2300 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, Virginia
Public Streaming via YouTube
April 16, 2026

Program Advisory Committee Members Present:
- Juli Briskman, Vice-Chair
- Sarah Bagley
- Justine Underhill

Program Advisory Committee Members Absent:
- Dalia Palchik, Chair
- Takis Karantonis

Other Commissioners Present:
- Allan Fye (Alternate, Commonwealth)

NVTC Staff and Others Present:
- Kate Mattice, Executive Director
- Jason Adle
- Shannon Bacon
- Rhonda Gilchrest
- Sarah Godfrey
- Adam Hager
- Scott Kalkwarf
- Hwajung Kim
- Daniel Knickelbein
- Ann McGrane
- Tenley O'Hara
- Amanda Sink
- Sophie Spiliotopoulos
- Melissa Walker
- Owen Williams
- Amy Garbarini (DRPT)
- Sarah Husain (DRPT)
- Kirk Dand (Arlington County)
- Brent Riddle (Fairfax County)

Program Advisory Committee Vice-Chair Juli Briskman called the meeting to order at 4:42 p.m. She stated that the meeting was being streamed live via NVTC's YouTube channel and noted that she was filling in for PAC Chair Palchik. Staff confirmed that a quorum was present. Vice-Chair Briskman also welcomed Deputy Director of Programs and Policy Amanda Sink, who will be leading and supporting much of NVTC's technical work.

Vice-Chair Briskman stated that the summary of the February 19, 2026 Program Advisory Committee meeting was provided in the meeting materials. Committee members had no changes.

I-66 Commuter Choice Draft Program of Projects

Vice-Chair Briskman introduced NVTC Commuter Choice and Policy Manager Daniel Knickelbein and Program Analyst Jason Adle to provide an overview of the I-66 Commuter Choice Draft Program of Projects.

Mr. Adle provided an overview of the most recent Call for Projects, which closed in December 2025. NVTC received 16 applications totaling $69.8 million dollars in requested funding. After an eligibility review, one project, Fairfax County's Route 400X, was deemed ineligible for Commuter Choice funding for not having a sufficient nexus to the I-66 corridor and was removed from consideration. Another project, VRE's Broad Run Lead Track, was referred to the Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) I-66 Outside the Beltway (OTB) grant program. This left 14 eligible projects totaling $60.5 million in requested funding.

Mr. Adle explained that the remaining eligible projects were scored using NVTC's established scoring criteria for Commuter Choice projects. The heaviest weighted metric in the technical merit score measures person throughput, which is the measure of how efficiently a project moves people through the corridor. The technical merit score also looks at travel time savings, connections between transportation modes, whether a project's origins or destinations are in a Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG) activity center or equity emphasis area and the impact of a project on diversion mitigation. The scoring criteria also measures cost effectiveness by dividing the technical merit score with the amount of the funding request. Projects can also receive five points if they have been identified by grantees as their highest priority project.

Mr. Adle then presented the staff-recommended Program of Projects. The list of projects includes all 14 eligible applications. Scores for this round ranged from a score of 88 to a score of 45. The proposed Program of Projects totals $60,492,945, which is the largest amount of Commuter Choice funding awarded in a single Program of Projects since the program's inception. Proposed projects by grantee are as follows:

- Three projects from Loudoun County
- Three projects from OmniRide
- Two projects from Arlington County
- Four projects from Fairfax County
- Two projects from WMATA

Mr. Adle then introduced Mr. Knickelbein to provide an overview of the public comment period for this Call for Projects, an overview of project benefits and next steps for the

Program of Projects. Mr. Knickelbein stated that the public comment period ran from March 4 to April 3 and included an online survey, emails, social media outreach and a public hearing. Public comment materials were made available in both English and Spanish. During the public comment period, NVTC received 500 submissions, which is also the highest amount of engagement in the history of the I-66 Commuter Choice program. Most comments were supportive of both the individual projects and the program itself.

Mr. Knickelbein also shared an overview of the benefits from this Program of Projects. With each project round, NVTC staff run an analysis to estimate the benefits that projects are expected to bring to the region in terms of travel time savings, lowered fuel costs, reduced greenhouse gas emissions, and other metrics. Staff estimate that this year's Program of Projects, when fully implemented, will provide over 6,500 weekday project trips. This will result in a savings of $3 million in fuel expenditures and 128,000 hours of travel time annually for Northern Virginia commuters.

Mr. Knickelbein noted that the Program of Projects will be presented in briefings to the Commission and the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) Rail and Transit Subcommittee in May, followed by final action by the Commission and the CTB. The CTB will then approve the FY 2027-2032 Six-Year Improvement Plan (SYIP) in June and funding for new projects will be made available by July 1, 2026.

Vice-Chair Briskman asked when the program began. Mr. Knickelbein confirmed that the program started in 2016 and the first funding awards were for projects in FY 2017-2018. Vice-Chair Briskman also asked if the high number of public comments received was due to education about the Commuter Choice program. Mr. Knickelbein responded that it is due in part to both education and the approach taken by the communications team – in particular their targeting of social media advertising for outreach.

Ms. Underhill asked a question about how scores compare to previous years. Mr. Knickelbein stated that the scoring "band" is wide and this year's scoring range is average. All projects must go through the eligibility process to ensure benefits to toll-payers, so while projects may score higher or lower, all eligible projects do provide benefits to toll-payers. A question was asked about if it was possible to calculate how the environmental measures for Commuter Choice projects relate to the region's goals. Staff will review this request.

<u>I-66 Needs Assessment Update</u>

Vice-Chair Briskman asked Mr. Knickelbein to present an update on the I-66 Needs Assessment study. Mr. Knickelbein provided an overview of the Commuter Choice program, noting that the program covers both the I-395/95 corridor and the I-66 Inside the Beltway (ITB) corridor and that it provides funding for bus service enhancements, new bus service, bus and rail capital enhancements, access to transit improvements and TDM and commuter incentive programs. Funding for I-66 ITB became available in 2017, following the signing of the Memoranda of Agreement (MOA) in 2016. Mr. Knickelbein then introduced Amy Garbarini, the NOVA Transit Planning Manager for the Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT), who provided an overview of the I-66 Outside the Beltway (OTB) program, which supports transit improvements in the I-66 corridor between Haymarket and the Beltway. The first round of funding for this program became available in 2023, following the signing of an MOA in 2022.

Mr. Knickelbein reminded the committee of the purpose and scope of the Needs Assessment, which is to broadly conduct a strategic look-back and look ahead of the I-66 Commuter Choice program.. The corridor was last studied in 2016 (for I-66 ITB) or 2020 (for OTB) and there have been many changes in travel patterns resulting from the pandemic. Programming challenges during the pandemic resulted in less demand compared to availability of funds and the Needs Assessment seeks to ensure that current momentum towards more balanced demand for projects and funding is sustained into the future. The study includes a travel demand analysis, a project scan, and a financial scenario analysis.

Mr. Knickelbein noted that the study has identified 89 projects totaling $16.8 billion in potential investment across both programs. Ms. Garbarini then showed a graph identifying that the funding demand is higher than the available funding for both programs (which totals about $1 billion over the life of both MOAs). As part of the I-66 Needs Assessment, a financial scenario analysis was undertaken.

Ms. Garbarini provided an overview of the key takeaways for the investment pipeline and the financial scenarios. Demand for both capital and operations exceed available funding for both projects. Debt issuance would provide the programs with an ability to quickly fund larger capital projects but results in less overall funding. In the context of limited funding and continued demand for transit operations projects, providing significant funding for large capital projects would constrain both programs' ability to continue to fund transit operations.

Ms. Garbarini then provided an overview of policy change analysis. Potential policy changes can help to leverage future revenue to support the most impactful projects and to fund projects that best meet the program's goals. Policy changes could also help support the implementation of different financial scenarios.

To conclude, Mr. Knickelbein asked committee members a series of questions to help inform the discussion of potential policy changes to be included in the final report:

- What does the Commuter Choice program currently do well?
- What could be tweaked to better support funding projects in their jurisdictions?
- What mix of project types did they see the program supporting in the future?

Ms. Bagley asked a question about the presentation of the financial figures and why they vary over time. Mr. Knickelbein clarified that the values were indexed to 2026 dollars, so the value of money decreases over time.

Ms. Underhill asked for clarification on the debt financing mechanism and how it would work. Ms. Mattice explained that the mechanism has not been used on this program before, but there are many ways that the mechanism could take form. The Commonwealth has used toll revenues before to issue debt. Mr. Fye added that while there are two separate revenue streams, DRPT sought to work jointly with NVTC to ensure any future changes would be implemented strategically.

Vice-Chair Briskman asked if both ITB and OTB toll revenues end up in the "Commuter Choice" program. Ms. Mattice clarified that Commuter Choice receives a portion of OTB funds, but the I-66 OTB program is separately managed by DRPT. Debt and bond issuance, as with other concepts in the financial scenario analysis, could apply to both programs.

In response to the discussion questions, Vice-Chair Briskman stated that the program and its scoring criteria seemed reasonable. Ms. Bagley stated that she likes that Commuter Choice incentivized projects to be "close to ready" and likes the speed of fund availability. Ms. Bagley asked about the viability of funding zero-fare programs. Mr. Knickelbein clarified that Commuter Choice has funded fare buy-down programs, but those programs are limited in their duration. Ms. Underhill asked for bus rapid transit (BRT) projects to be included in the project mix.

Mr. Fye asked if there was going to be a recommendation on the financial scenarios. Mr. Knickelbein clarified that the final report will note benefits and trade-offs of each scenario, rather than making a formal recommendation.

<u>Zero Emission Bus Working Group</u>

Vice-Chair Briskman introduced NVTC Director of Programs and Policy Ann McGrane and Program Analyst Owen Williams to provide an update on NVTC's current work with the Zero-Emission Bus Working Group and the current state of zero-emission bus (ZEB) fleets in Northern Virginia.

Mr. Williams first provided an overview of the national state of ZEB adoption, including the challenges facing agencies. Year-over-year, there has been a 16% increase in the deployment of ZEBs nationwide. Most agencies are procuring battery electric buses (BEB) for their ZEB deployments. Some agencies have chosen to procure fuel cell buses, which have increased in deployments 49% year-over-year, primarily due to their operational flexibility and endurance compared to BEBs. Virginia and the Southeast are earlier in their adoption of ZEBs. Procurement and operational challenges are the current limiting factors to scaling. Procurement challenges included limited domestic manufacturing capacity and long delivery times and a reliance on competitive funding. Operational challenges include energy limitations both onboard vehicles and at facilities and supporting infrastructural upgrades.

Ms. McGrane gave an overview of the current state of battery electric bus (BEB) adoption in Northern Virginia. Four agencies (ART, DASH, Fairfax Connector and Loudoun County Transit) currently operate BEBs in the NVTC district. 36 buses are currently in service, with another 36 on order.

Ms. McGrane gave an overview of NVTC's ZEB program. NVTC's ZEB program started with the release of the Northern Virginia Zero-Emission Bus Strategic Plan in January 2024, which established six strategies to support a regional ZEB transition. Since the release of the plan, NVTC has supported these strategies by facilitating regional ZEB Working Group meetings from 2022 to today, conducting the On-Route Charging Feasibility Study in 2025, and is now moving forward with a ZEB Working Group Technical Assistance contract with AECOM.

Ms. McGrane provided more detail on the ZEB Woking Group Technical Assistance Contract. AECOM is under contract with NVTC to provide support to the ZEB Working Group. Their scope of work includes providing subject-matter expertise during working group meetings, presentations on emerging trends and timely research on topics of interest to the group. As part of the contract, they will also be conducting research on three topics identified based on the needs of NVTC agencies. More information on the chosen research topics will be provided at future PAC meetings. Ms. McGrane also noted that Ms. Sink would be transitioning to lead the ZEB Working Group.

Ms. Bagley provided a comment that agencies have had to pivot from a BEB procurement to a diesel bus procurement. Mr. Fye provided another comment noting that changes at the federal level are also having an impact on transit agencies.

Other Business

Vice-Chair Briskman announced that the next PAC meeting has been scheduled for June 18 at 4:30 p.m. in the NVTC Suite #230 conference room.

Vice-Chair Briskman adjourned the meeting at 5:42 p.m.