

MEETING SUMMARY
NVTC PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEE
NVTC Suite #230 Conference Room
2300 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, Virginia
Public Streaming via YouTube
February 19, 2026

Program Advisory Committee

Members Present:

Juli Briskman, Vice-Chair
Sarah Bagley
Takis Karantonis

Program Advisory Committee

Members Absent:

Dalia Palchik, Chair
David Snyder

Other NVTC Commissioners Present:

Justine Underhill

NVTC Staff and Others Present:

Kate Mattice, Executive Director
Jason Adle
Shannon Bacon
Rhonda Gilchrest
Sarah Godfrey
Daniel Knickelbein
Ann McGrane
Tenley O'Hara
Sophie Spiliotopoulos
Owen Williams
Amy Garbarini (DRPT)
Sarah Husain (DRPT)
Kirk Dand (Arlington County)
Lucas Muller (Kimley-Horn)
Sally Kidalov (Fairfax County)

Program Advisory Committee Vice-Chair Juli Briskman called the meeting to order at 4:42 p.m. She stated that the meeting is 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 welcomed Takis Karantonis as a new member of the PAC

representing Arlington County, replacing Maureen Coffey. Vice-Chair Briskman also introduced Justine Underhill, who will be inducted as the new Falls Church PAC member following Commission action at the March Commission meeting, replacing David Snyder.

Vice-Chair Briskman stated that summaries of the April 24, 2025 Joint Program Advisory Committee/Joint Commission Working Group meeting and the September 18, 2025 Program Advisory Committee meeting were provided in the meeting materials. Committee members had no changes.

Program Advisory Committee Overview and 2026 Work Plan

Vice-Chair Briskman introduced NVTC Director of Programs and Policy Ann McGrane to provide an introduction. Ms. McGrane then introduced NVTC Data Visualization Program Manager Sophie Spiliotopoulos to provide the Program Advisory Committee Overview and 2026 Work Plan.

Ms. Spiliotopoulos stated that the Commission is responsible for taking formal action on NVTC programs and studies, as well as providing approval for the Commuter Choice program (along with the CTB and in conjunction with PRTC for I-395/95). Commissioners discuss topics relevant to the PAC during the PAC chair's report portion of the Commission meeting.

Ms. Spiliotopoulos explained that the Program Advisory Committee provides guidance on NVTC's program areas including Commute Choice, Route 7, fare collection, zero-emission bus, and transit data and analysis. NVTC staff also work regularly with other regional, jurisdictional and agency staff both in formal working groups and in informal coordination activities.

Ms. Spiliotopoulos reviewed the meeting schedule, with four scheduled PAC meetings in 2026. The February meeting includes an overview of the work plan, updates on I-66 Commuter Choice, the I-66 Needs Assessment and Envision Route 7. The April 16 meeting will include request for endorsement of the I-66 Commuter Choice Program of Projects and a final update on the I-66 Needs Assessment. The June 18 meeting will have an update on Zero-Emission Bus and another update on Envision Route 7. Finally, the September 17 meeting will include a request to authorize opening of the next I-395/95 Call for Projects, another Envision Route 7 update, and a ridership report.

Ms. Bagley asked a question regarding the ridership report. Ms. Spiliotopoulos clarified that the ridership report is an initiative that was restarted last year to provide a narrative overview of ridership trends to the PAC. Previously these reports provided more granular reports on ridership, but that has largely been replaced by the NoVa Transit Dashboard. Ridership reporting analysis, as with most of NVTC's policy and data analysis, is done in-house.

Committee members Bagley and Karantonis shared their interest in understanding if there is data available on transit use and access by people with disabilities, including providing a narrative around this data. Executive Director Kate Mattice responded that the PAC provides

an ideal venue to ask about questions like this. Ms. Underhill followed up by asking about the appropriate venue for ideation, to which Ms. Mattice noted that this can be formal or informal but ultimately the PAC is the forum for ideation. Ms. Mattice also wanted to highlight opportunities for partnership with the Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) and NVTC's research framework for identifying which research questions are best suited for NVTC and which are best suited for other agencies.

I-66 Commuter Choice Call for Projects Update

Vice-Chair Briskman introduced NVTC Commuter Choice and Policy Manager Daniel Knickelbein, who provided an overview of the I-66 Commuter Choice program for FY 2027-2028. He provided a summary of the I-66 Commuter Choice program to date, which includes six prior rounds of funding totaling over \$88 million. Mr. Knickelbein highlighted some of the benefits the program has provided to Northern Virginia since 2016, including reductions in vehicle miles traveled, avoided automobile crashes and reduced fuel costs.

Mr. Knickelbein provided an overview of the most recent Call for Projects, which closed in December 2025. NVTC received 16 applications totaling \$68.9 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 \$60.4 million in requested funding. The projects include bus service enhancements, new bus routes, and a Metrorail station improvement. Staff anticipate bringing the 14 remaining eligible projects forward as part of a staff-recommended Program of Projects. Any unprogrammed funds from this cycle will remain with the program and will be carried forward.

Mr. Knickelbein reviewed the timeline as these projects will go out for public comment on March 4 and closing on April 3. Staff will then form a staff-recommended Program of Projects, which will then be presented to the PAC in April. 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.

Vice-Chair Briskman asked a question about the remaining balance of funding. Mr. Knickelbein stated that the program will have \$40 million in unprogrammed funding from this cycle plus \$5 million in previous funding, totaling \$45 million, which will then be supplemented by two years of payments. Mr. Karantonis asked a question about the total amount received from tolling. Mr. Knickelbein stated that the payout schedule for I-66 is available in the Memoranda of Agreement.

I-66 Needs Assessment Update

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 corridor and that it provides funding for bus service enhancements, new bus service, rail station enhancements and TDM and commuter incentive projects, among others across the region. 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. Ms. Garbarini noted that approximately \$1 billion is available in funding between FY 2025 and FY 2028, and past grantees for the I-66 OTB program have included Fairfax Connector and OmniRide, with VRE becoming an applicant in this application cycle.

Ms. Garbarini provided an overview of previous studies conducted along the corridor. The last study conducted on I-66 Inside the Beltway (ITB) was in June 2012 and recommended a series of multimodal projects, including enhanced transit service, bike/pedestrian improvements, and TDM strategies, among other items. The last study conducted on I-66 Outside the Beltway was in February 2020 and recommended a series of improvements that included additional commuter bus service, enhanced VRE service, and TDM strategies prior to the opening of the I-66 OTB Express Lanes. The purpose of the current needs assessment is to identify a menu of eligible short- and long-term multimodal investments that the I-66 programs could support. Ms. Garbarini noted that both Commuter Choice and DRPT programs have many years of funding remaining and that the assumptions from the most recent studies need to be refreshed. The assessment does not aim to identify specific routes or detailed projects, nor does it conduct the analysis needed for applicants to submit future funding applications to either I-66 funding program.

Ms. Garbarini stated that since the last update to the PAC, the project team re-analyzed transit and traffic trends for Spring 2025 to account for significant changes in travel demand due to return-to-office mandates by the federal government. In Spring 2025, compared to pre-pandemic levels, Metrorail ridership was up 34%, commuter bus was up 58%, and commuter rail was up 51%. Traffic volumes on the ITB segment returned to pre-pandemic levels in 2022 but with more single-occupancy vehicle volume compared to pre-pandemic. This shift may have been caused by many reasons, including but not limited to the shift in ITB tolling from HOV-2 to HOV-3 in 2022.

Ms. Garbarini explained that the Needs Assessment identified 90 potential projects totaling \$16.3 billion in investment across four distinct categories: minor capital projects, major capital projects, mega capital projects and transit service. Next steps for the Needs Assessment are as follows:

- A review of the financial scenarios and their tie-in with the investment pipeline and potential policy changes at the April 16 PAC
- A briefing on the draft report at the May 7 Commission meeting

- Request for final report adoption at the June 4 Commission meeting
- Any potential policy changes for Commuter Choice will be considered over summer 2026
- The next DRPT I-66 OTB Call for Projects will open in Fall 2026
- The next I-66 Commuter Choice Call for Projects will open in Fall 2027

Ms. Bagley asked a question about the East Falls Church Metro second entrance project and the context behind how that project was chosen as a representative mega project. Ms. Mattice responded that this project had been one of the first applications when the I-66 Inside the Beltway program was first initiated, but the application did not move forward. The goal of the I-66 Needs Assessment is to connect with cities and agencies directly, which resulted in the re-surfacing of projects that may have been previously referenced in comprehensive plans or other long-term planning documents. Mr. Karantonis commented that he anticipates more second entrance projects like these to crop up as many Metro stations west of Ballston were only fitted with single entrances and jurisdictions seek to promote more transit-oriented development near their Metro stations.

Ms. Underhill asked if there was a local match required for either I-66 ITB or I-66 OTB, and staff clarified that there is no local match requirement for either program.

Envision Route 7 Update

Vice-Chair Briskman introduced Sarah Godfrey, Director of Strategic Communications, who provided an update on the first phase of engagement for phase 4-2 of Envision Route 7. Ms. Godfrey reported that the project's goals for public outreach were:

- To increase awareness and understanding of the project and BRT in general.
- Collect feedback to inform decisions near Southern Towers and Mark Center.
- Empower stakeholders to become advocates and champions for the project.

Ms. Godfrey stated that a variety of tactics were used during the outreach process. To reach people via events and activities, the project team held a series of bus stop chats and pop-up events at grocery stores, transit hubs, houses of worship, and other destinations along the corridor. The team also held an open house at the Culmore Library to share more information about the project. At these events and in other locations along the corridor, the project team distributed flyers and hand cards to invite people to engage with the project. The team also established a digital presence with a story map and a newsletter for the project. To gather feedback and perspectives from riders and non-riders alike, the project team used an online and in-person feedback form (in addition to one-on-one conversations). Links to the feedback form were distributed on flyers and hand cards. The project team provided materials in English, Spanish, Korean, Amharic and Vietnamese and had staff at events that could speak those languages.

Ms. Godfrey stated that in addition to the physical and digital informational materials, the project team also had a variety of giveaway “swag” items (i.e., hand sanitizers, microfiber cloths, and bubble popper toys) at pop-ups and the open house. These items helped promote brand recognition of NVTC and the project.

Ms. Godfrey noted that throughout this engagement phase, the project team heard important information about the community along Route 7 and bus service on Route 7:

- Most respondents (70%) to the feedback form rode the bus on Route 7, with ¾ of respondents riding the bus two times or more a week.
 - The F20 was the most used bus service on the corridor by respondents
 - 40% of respondents transferred to another bus, while 35% transferred to Metro
- Sixty-four percent (64%) of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with bus service.
- Respondents cited frequency, bus priority, and extended hours of operation as their top priorities in ways to improve bus service.
- The zip code with the most responses was 22311 (West Alexandria).

Ms. Godfrey stated that the engagement phase brought about significant quantitative and qualitative data from riders and non-riders alike for bus service along Route 7, with recurring themes of affordability, accessibility and efficiency. Through the outreach process, the project team gathered several key takeaways about the corridor and about bus service along Route 7:

- Bus service is essential and well used along Route 7.
- The community around Route 7 and bus riders are diverse.
- Bus service as it stands is good, but there is room for improvement.
- Key areas for improvement on bus service on the corridor are frequency, bus priority and hours of operation.

Ms. Bagley inquired about the priorities asked in the feedback form, more specifically asking about if there was a question on safety and if so, how that was ranked in the list of areas of improvement. Ms. Godfrey responded that in the list of areas of improvement, safety was listed as a topic, but it did not rank as high as other priorities. Staff will review the feedback form responses and provide more information specifically on the safety aspect. Mr. Karantonis followed up by noting that in his personal experience and his experience with his constituents, safety concerns along this corridor come more from user experience at stops and traffic safety. He also expressed a desire for decals at stops along Route 7, inviting people to engage with the project and potential future improvements. Ms. Mattice followed up by stating that Route 7 and its bus service is a high priority for WMATA and that WMATA has been a key part of this partnership. NVTC staff have also been working closely with Supervisor Jimenez and other legislators along the corridor to advance local champions for the project.

Vice-Chair Briskman asked if there will be a “big report” specific to the engagement process. Ms. Godfrey clarified that there will not be a dedicated one but that the main project report will have a dedicated engagement section which will cover the results of both engagement phases. She also noted her own challenges with safety at bus stops, particularly at night.

Mr. Karantonis asked staff to provide demographics and other details for Route 7 whenever it is shown at presentations.

Other Business

Vice-Chair Briskman announced that the next PAC meeting has been scheduled for April 16 at 4:30 p.m. in the NVTC Suite #230 conference room.

Vice-Chair Briskman adjourned the meeting at 5:38 p.m.