



Executive Director Newsletter



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Northern Virginia
Transportation Commission
2300 Wilson Blvd., Ste. 230
Arlington, VA 22201

October 2022





A Message from Kate Mattice

Waiting for the completion of big projects often requires having patience. We know that all too well as we anticipate the opening of several major transit projects in Northern Virginia. The biggest of those appears to be near – Phase 2 of the Silver Line. After delays caused by construction woes, simulated passenger service is underway. We don't yet have an official opening date, but Metro's release of a [new map](#) that includes the six new stations gives us hope that it will open this year, as the agency has suggested.

Unfortunately, that map also hinted at another issue – the delayed opening of the Potomac Yard Station. Alexandrians are understandably disappointed that the opening of the infill station between Ronald Reagan National Airport and Braddock Road will be delayed until 2023 due to [soil conditions](#) on the site.

Speaking of Metrorail, we are encouraged to see GM/CEO Randy Clarke actively engaged in the process to bring back more 7000-series railcars. As we mark one year since the derailment that led to the removal of those trainsets from service, we know the frustration passengers feel from experiencing less-than-ideal wait times and crowding.

Paradoxically, that crowding hints at progress. The American Public Transportation Association (APTA) recently [reported](#) that public transit ridership nationwide has risen to more than 70% of pre-pandemic levels. APTA cites return to school and work and travel to community destinations as key to that recovery. We don't know when ridership will fully recover, but we do know that Metro and our region's other transit agencies are working hard to reimagine how they serve all riders. Knowing what the future holds for ridership patterns requires yet another dose of patience.

Executive Director

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October 20
WMATA Committee Meeting

October 21
VRE Operations Board

November 3
Commission Meeting

December 1
Commission Meeting

December 5
NVTC – PRTC Legislative Forum

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New Metro GM/CEO Randy Clarke attends Commission meeting



Metro GM/CEO Randy Clarke made his first appearance before the Commission in September, after joining Metro in late July. He spent [45 minutes](#) talking about his goals for Metro and taking questions from Commissioners. Mr. Clarke [told Commissioners](#) that, "The region deserves a Metro that works for the region and I think it's fair to say right now Metro is not working the way the region expects," while promising to work "to get Metro back to be the pride of this region."

Discussion topics included the opening of the Phase 2 of the Silver Line, integration of the future Potomac Yard Station into the Metrorail system, the construction that will close the Yellow Line, changing ridership patterns and the future fiscal cliff. We look forward to a productive relationship between NVTC and Mr. Clarke.

Clarke has been busy touring the system and meeting local and federal officials in his first months on the job. He's also been active on [Twitter](#), highlighting his meetings and

destinations. Randy joined Commissioner and Loudoun County Supervisor Matt Letourneau at the Dulles rail yard, which is part of Phase 2 of the Silver Line project. He later visited Metro facilities in Alexandria, including the King Street-Old Town Station.



Valuable tour of @wmata's new facility in @AlexandriaVAGov. Excited as this will consolidate our control centers into one Metro integrated command & communications center; a big improvement to operations, incident mgmt & customer communications. + tour of King Street Station.



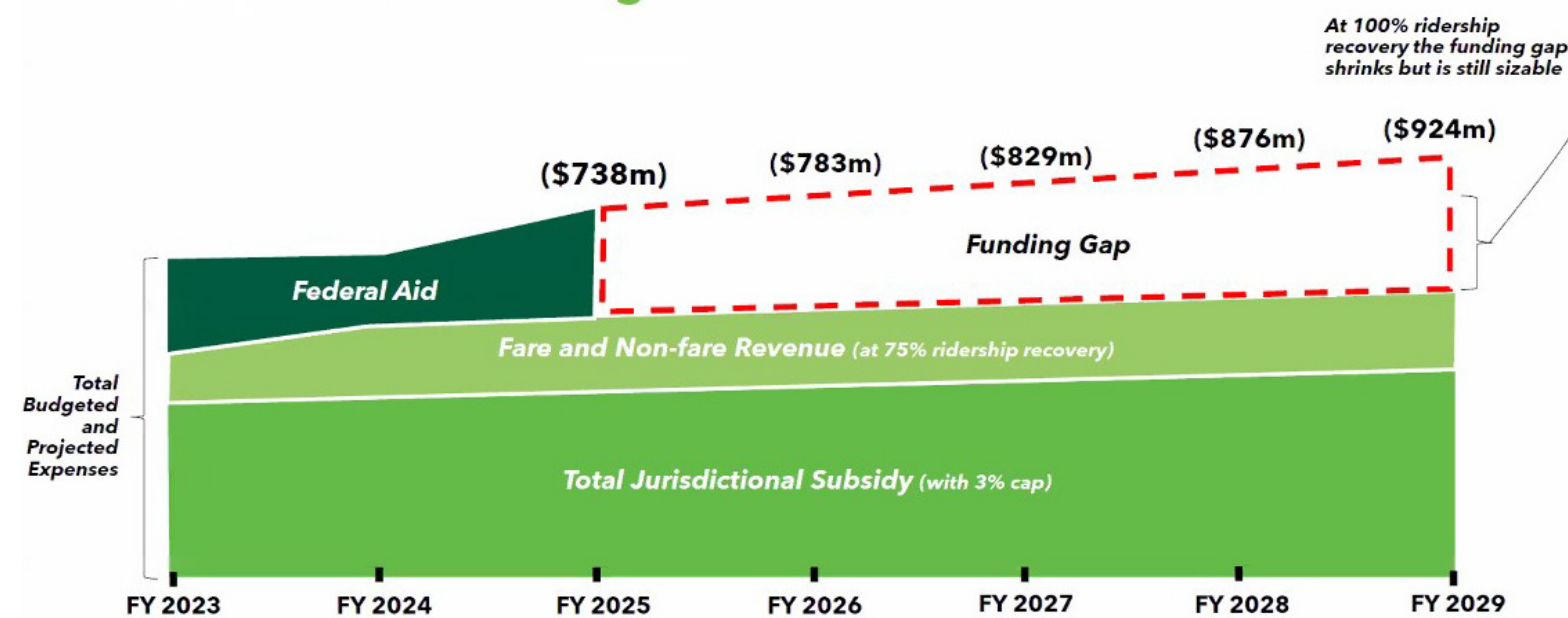
WMATA Committee hears Bus Network Redesign update, considers annual report strategies

The NVTC WMATA Committee [met virtually](#) September 29 to receive updates on Metro's Bus Network Redesign, NVTC's 2022 Annual Report and Metro's FY 2024 operating budget. Metro staff presented on the [Bus Network Redesign](#) and reviewed the project's scope, purpose, goals and outreach. WMATA Senior Program Manager Andrew D'huyvetter provided an update on the 2022 Annual Report on the Performance and Condition of WMATA strategies chapter. The

committee will have the opportunity to review the first draft of the introduction, strategies and dedicated capital funding chapters and provide feedback at the October 20 committee meeting. Andrew, along with Commissioner Matt Letourneau, previewed the outlook for Metro's [FY 2024](#) operating budget. They shared the structural challenges of the budget as well as key discussion points and options under consideration to close the \$187.4 million budget gap.

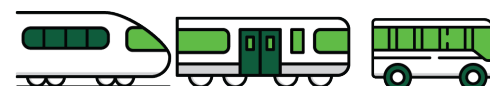
In its work with the NVTC WMATA Committee, NVTC staff have proposed establishing a WMATA Operating Funding and Reform Working Group to start a Virginia-focused conversation on these longer term, structural budget issues. Conversations on this working group proposal will continue through the WMATA Committee this fall.

WMATA's FY 2024 Budget Outlook



Source: [WMATA Finance and Capital Committee Meeting](#), September 22, 2022

Northern Virginia Transportation Commission 30



Yellow Line shutdown underway

Major construction on Metro's Blue and Yellow Lines [shut down](#) the entire Yellow Line starting September 10. In addition, the integration of the Potomac Yard Station required shutting down rail service south of Ronald Reagan National Airport Station, and Metro recently announced that due to unexpected site conditions the closure would be extended until Saturday, November 5. Once that work is complete the Blue Line will serve all stations while Metro rehabilitates the Yellow Line Bridge over the Potomac River. That work is scheduled to last until May 2023. In response to the shutdown, the Virginia Railway Express (VRE) Operations Board approved a plan to make all rides on [VRE free](#) in September and from some stations through to October 31. NVTC staff also prepared a map showing travel alternatives in Northern Virginia. Meanwhile, Program Analyst Ronnetta Zack-Williams helped coordinate the massive effort to prepare for the shutdown and related mitigation efforts.



Northern Virginia Service

Plan your trip at [NoVaRides.org](#)

- Metro Station Closed Sept 10 - Oct 22
- DASH (Alexandria) Fare-Free
- 103 & 104 (Weekday Rush Hour Service Only)
- 35 (7 Days/Week)
- Fairfax Connector
- 393/394 & 395/396 (Weekday Rush Hour Service Only)
- OmniRide
- D-100, D-200, D-300, L-100, L-200, RS South Route 1, MC Montclair (Weekdays Only)
- Virginia Railway Express (VRE)
- Trains to L'Enfant Plaza and Union Station (Weekday Rush Hour Service Only)



Board previews FY 2024 budget gap

The Metro Board's Finance and Capital Committee [discussed](#) the FY 2024 [budget](#) outlook during their meeting September 22. The presentation included an update on revenue and ridership trends and the projected FY 2024 budget operating gap of \$184.7 million. Metro staff also provided updated fare and service optimization concepts as a continuation to the Board's prior year discussion.

After certain actions and other assumptions by management, the operating gap can be reduced to \$146.2 million, which will then need to be closed through a series of policy decisions by the Board. These could include fare and service optimization, increasing the transfer of preventive maintenance funds and increasing current subsidy.

"I just want to caution that I think we still have hard choices that we may have to make about service and personnel and about potential cuts, said committee chair/NVTC Commissioner [Matt Letourneau](#). "It's not as big as gap as it could have been and we were concerned about, but it's still a pretty sizable gap and most of the

things we are talking about are not necessarily going to close it."

The budget presentation gives the Board an opportunity to provide early guidance to staff before GM/CEO Randy Clarke presents his formal budget proposal later in the Fall. The committee also looked ahead to the projected operating gap of \$738 million in FY 2025, when federal aid is exhausted. Projections show a continued operating budget gap of \$783 million to \$924 million between FY 2026 and FY 2029.

Metro Board Chairman [Paul Smedberg](#) said, "It's becoming clearer and clearer that the financial structure is simply not sustainable into the future." adding, "We don't know exactly how people are going to be using the system in the future. It won't be the Monday to Friday nine to five. It will be very different."

In its work with the NVTC WMATA Committee, NVTC staff have proposed establishing a WMATA Operating Funding and Reform Working Group to start a Virginia-focused conversation on these longer term, structural budget issues.



NVTC-PRTC Joint Commission Working Group and Program Advisory Committee receive program updates

The Joint Commission Working Group (JCWG), which consists of three Commissioners apiece from NVTC and the Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission (PRTC), met virtually September 15 to receive an overview of the [I-395/95](#) Commuter Choice FY 2024-2025 call for projects. Commuter Choice Senior Program Manager Ben Owen covered key steps in the process and special considerations for this funding round, including approximately \$45-48 million available for new projects. He also described minor proposed modifications to the program's technical evaluation process. Both Commissions

– NVTC and PRTC – will hear more about the Call for Projects and proposed technical evaluation modifications at their respective October meetings. NVTC will also receive a presentation on the FY 2022 Commuter Choice annual report, which for the first time will present Commuter Choice's benefits to Northern Virginia's economy and quality of life to date.

Following the JCWG, the NVTC Program Advisory Committee (PAC) convened to hear about the minor proposed changes to the Commuter Choice technical evaluation process, [Envision Route 7](#) Bus Rapid Transit project and Transit Technology program. Senior Program Manager Xavier Harmony updated the committee on the Envision Route 7 Strategic Implementation Plan as well as planned public engagement activities in the study corridor including a public meeting at Meridian High School on October 11. Director of Programs and Policy Allan Fye highlighted the forthcoming Regional Zero-Emission Bus Strategic Plan and ongoing work related to NVTC's fare collection efforts.

**Agenda Item #3:
2023 Key State and Federal Legislative Priorities**

- 1. Federal updates and outlook - Anja Graves**
- 2. State updates and outlook - Aimee Perron Seibert**
- 3. Proposed priorities**



Connecting Tysons to Alexandria

- Bus Rapid Transit...
- connects Tysons and Mark Center...
- and serves East Falls Church

I-395/95 FY 2024-2025 Funding Cycle

\$45-48M
available for new projects

How could this funding:

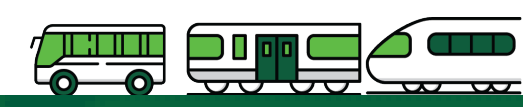
- Leverage the 95 Express Lanes Fredericksburg extension?
- Support Commonwealth rail plans?
- Make transit more attractive to help rebuild ridership?



Legislative Committee discusses 2023 state and federal legislative priorities

NVTC's [Legislative and Policy Committee](#) met September 29 to discuss key state and federal legislative priorities and agree on the NVTC Legislative Agenda for 2023, which will be approved by the Commission in December. Carter McCoy from Cardinal Infrastructure provided the committee with federal updates which included information about the Infrastructure Investment and Job's Act (IIJA), stating that the Department of Transportation (DOT) has experienced a record

amount of grant applications and that staffing to manage the programs is currently a main priority. Aimee Perron Seibert, NVTC's state legislative liaison, provided an update on proposed 2023 state legislative priorities, noting that a main objective will be to continue to protect existing transit funding programs and working with Virginia Railway Express (VRE) to remove their operating funding from a bus-based state formula model.





I-66 Express Lanes extension to aid Commuter Choice routes

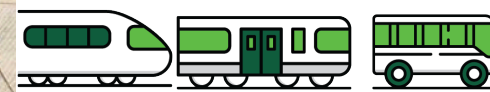
Executive Director Kate Mattice joined Secretary of Transportation Shep Miller, Commissioner Jeff McKay and many others for the ceremonial opening of the western segment of new [I-66 Express Lanes](#) September 12. The nine-mile, outside the Beltway, segment spans Route 29 in Gainesville to Route 28 in Centreville and opened ahead of schedule.

The new segment will contribute to quicker and more reliable travel for I-66 Commuter Choice-supported OmniRide express routes that begin in western Prince William County. When construction is complete on the full Outside the Beltway Express Lanes project those routes will see additional travel time improvement, as will I-66 Commuter Choice-supported Fairfax Connector express routes. The remaining 13 miles of lanes are expected to open in December.



ENVISION ROUTE 7 outreach begins

Public outreach for the next phase of planning for the [Envision Route 7](#) Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system kicked off September 17 with pop-up events. NVTC's outreach contractor has been handing out flyers letting people know about an upcoming public meeting. The October 11 public meeting at Meridian High School (formerly George Mason) will provide information about the mobility study for the BRT system that is planned to connect Tysons and the Mark Center in Alexandria by way of Seven Corners and East Falls Church. The study will consider factors like how the planned buses will move in traffic and how extending dedicated bus lanes could improve bus service.





Representing NVTC on Capitol Hill

Executive Director Kate Mattice spent two days meeting with key staff for members of our Northern Virginia Congressional delegation the week of September 12. She discussed NVTC and NoVa priorities for transit in the region. Kate met in person with staff from Sen. Mark Warner and Reps. Don Beyer and Gerry Connolly and met virtually with Sen. Tim Kaine's office. We are grateful for all of their recent support for infrastructure and transportation initiatives.

ART tests electric bus

Marketing and Engagement Manager Monique Blyther joined Arlington Transit for a test ride on Gillig's battery electric bus September 19. The 40-foot "giant Tesla" is one of many models Arlington is testing as part of their Zero Emission Bus (ZEB) pilot. The pilot will evaluate vehicle performance from four manufacturers, Gillig, BYD, Proterra and New Flyer and is set to run during fall 2022 and winter 2023.



Upcoming NVTC work previewed at ZEB Con

Director of Programs and Policy Allan Fye presented NVTC's upcoming Zero-Emission Bus (ZEB) Strategic Plan at the 2022 [ZEB Conference](#) in Anaheim, California in September. His presentation focused on Northern Virginia's need for early, comprehensive planning and extensive regional coordination in order to achieve success with both implementation and with reaching our region's climate changes goals. Program Analyst Ronnetta Zack-Williams joined Allan for the conference and they both were able to make great contacts with ZEB industry experts and transit colleagues from across North America and beyond.

Meanwhile, staff are reviewing [proposals](#) to develop the strategic plan, which were due by the close of business September 23. The plan will assist Northern Virginia transit providers in implementing zero-emission buses, associated technology and infrastructure.



Board adopts 'Better Bus' guidelines

The Metro Board of Directors heard an update on the [Bus Network Redesign](#) and approved guiding principles for the project, known as "Better Bus" at their meeting September 22. The project seeks to redesign the bus network for Metrobus, City of Fairfax-CUE and TheBus in Prince George's County, while coordinating with other local service providers in the region on their existing or planned local transit networks. This effort was a key recommendation of the Bus Transformation Project, which was endorsed by the Metro Board and the Commission.

Redesigning the bus network provides an opportunity to meet customer and the region's needs:

- Access to frequent transit
- Existing and planned bus priority

infrastructure to create a more reliable network

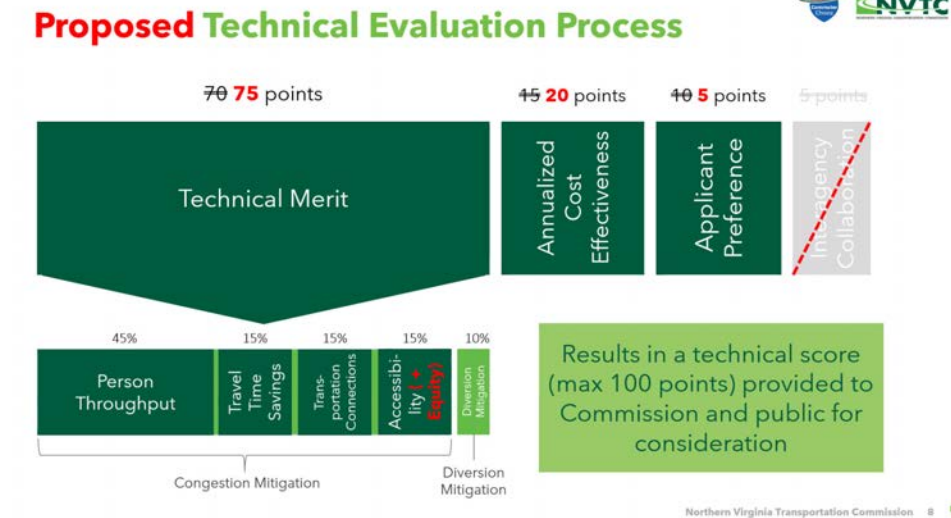
- Easier to use and understand
- Development and travel patterns
- Payment systems and fare structures, such as the adoption of the transfer discount
- Access to opportunity for customers to create a more inclusive region and
- A long-term sustainable, predictable funding model for bus service

The effort will include extensive stakeholder engagement to customers, jurisdictional staff, elected officials, the Metro workforce, advocacy and advisory groups, and others. NVTC staff will continue to work with jurisdictional staff, Virginia Metro Board members and Commissioners over the next year and half.



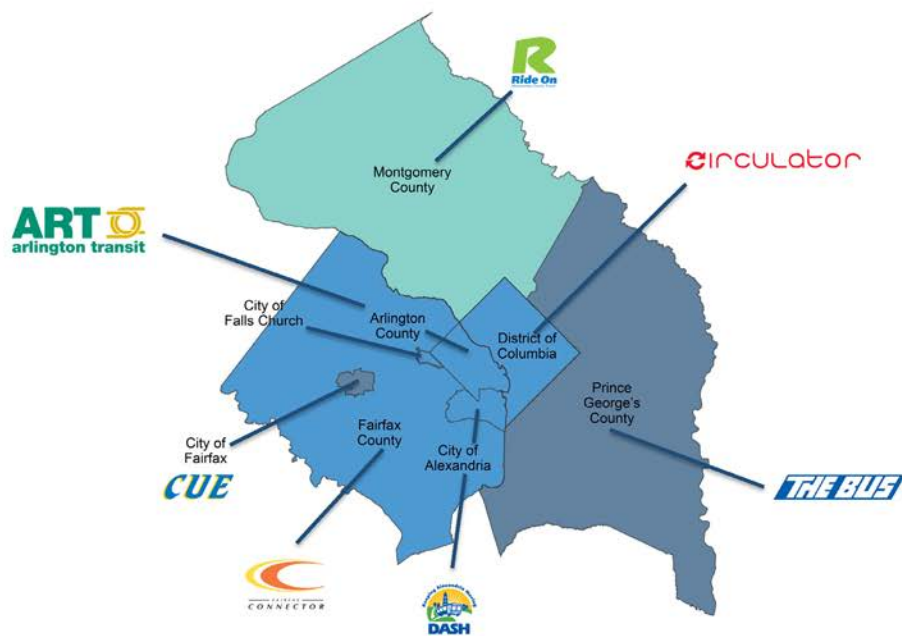
Commuter Choice team reviews proposed policy changes with eligible applicants

The Commuter Choice team hosted a policy webinar for eligible applicants to review proposed changes to the program's technical evaluation process and other minor policy clarifications in August. The proposed evaluation process changes would emphasize the quantitative aspects of the current process, introduce equity considerations into the process and simplify the needed application materials by removing one minor criterion. Led by Commuter Choice Senior Program Analyst Adam Hager, the team also introduced the schedule for the forthcoming [I-395/95](#) Commuter Choice FY 2024-2025 call for projects cycle. Adam and Commuter Choice Senior Program Manager Ben Owen fielded questions from eligible applicants as they also work to develop project ideas for this fall.

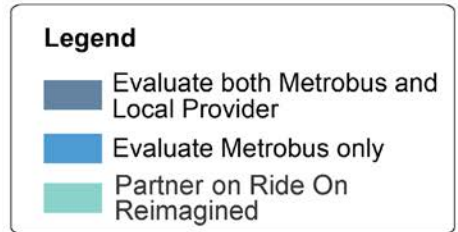


Better Bus: Network Redesign

Partnering with Local Bus Providers



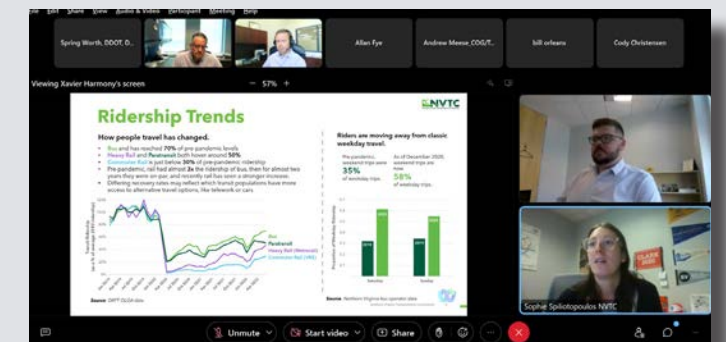
Metro will work collaboratively with each jurisdiction to design or enhance effectiveness of local bus service



Presentation highlights NoVa transit changes

Senior Program Manager Xavier Harmony and Program Analyst Sophie Spiliotopoulos [presented](#) to the Transportation Planning Board Regional Public Transportation Subcommittee in August. It focused on their recent work evaluating how the region's transit has changed through the pandemic. Xavier and Sophie highlighted key findings, including the changed relationship between transit service provision and transit ridership and the different recovery patterns of different types of transit, as well as what the region's transit operators are doing to address the negative impacts to transit.

For example, Xavier and Sophie highlighted various bus network redesign projects in the region, transit marketing efforts and the upcoming NVTC Regional Bus Plan. In addition to presenting their recent work evaluating how the region's transit has changed through the pandemic, Xavier and Sophie shared some of their current work and planned pipeline of projects.





VRE celebrates Rolling Road Station improvements

Executive Director Kate Mattice and Marketing and Engagement Manager Monique Blyther were on hand for the ribbon cutting for a \$5 million platform extension project at Virginia Railway Express' (VRE) [Rolling Road](#) Station September 28. They heard from Rep. Gerry Connolly, Chair Jeff McKay from Fairfax County, VRE Operations Board Chair Margaret Franklin and Vice Chair James Walkinshaw. Department of Rail and Public Transportation Director Jennifer DeBruhl and Deputy Secretary of Transportation Jen Deci also attended.

The extended platform accommodates eight-car trains, eliminating the need for passengers near the rear to move to a different railcar when

disembarking, enhanced passenger safety and reduced station dwell times. The project also included rehabilitation and repair of the existing platform, replacement of stairs and the existing canopy roof and an upgrade in lighting.



Mass Transit recognizes NVTC's Xavier Harmony

We are delighted to share that Mass Transit magazine recognized one of our own in its annual "40 Under 40" issue. Xavier Harmony,

who serves as Senior Program Manager for our Transit Resource Center received the honor that highlights outstanding young individuals making a name in the public transit industry. It's a great recognition for one of our amazingly talented team members.

“Taking the time to understand local and regional politics, learning how to navigate the politics and building strong relationships can go a long way to helping achieve transportation policy and project goals.”



XAVIER HARMONY
SENIOR PROGRAM MANAGER
TRANSIT RESOURCE CENTER, NORTHERN VIRGINIA
TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION



Ann McGrane



We are excited to announce that Ann McGrane has joined NVTC as a Senior Program Manager to lead our Transit Technology Program, which includes our upcoming work with the Northern Virginia Regional Zero-Emission Bus Strategic Plan as well as our ongoing work with fare collection and zero and reduced-fare policy research.

Ann brings over 13 years of public and private sector experience, most recently having worked at Stantec and the New York City Department of Transportation. Originally from Fairfax County, Ann is passionate about bringing sustainable, efficient transit and transportation options to communities across Northern Virginia.

NVTC AND PRTC PRESENT:

ANNUAL LEGISLATIVE FORUM

Join transit leaders and special guests for an in-person overview of federal and state issues affecting transit in Northern Virginia.

SAVE
— THE —
DATE

8:30 a.m. - 11 a.m.
Monday, December 5, 2022

Embassy Suites by Hilton
8100 Loisdale Rd. Springfield, VA



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