

Advancing transit in
Northern Virginia
since 1964



January
2026

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Executive Director
Newsletter





A Message From Kate Mattice

Welcome to the new year! We expect 2026 to be a critical year for Northern Virginia transit as we engage with a potentially game-changing Virginia General Assembly Session and reach important milestones in our programs and projects.

Starting out, we expect funding recommendations from DMVMoves and the General Assembly's SJ 28 Northern Virginia Growing Needs of Public Transit Joint Subcommittee to guide new legislation in the General Assembly Session. The recommendations, if enacted into law, have the potential to provide long-term financial stability for our regional transit network, which experienced record-breaking ridership last year.

2026 will also be an important year for Commuter Choice, which will complete a needs assessment that will shape transit and transportation along I-66, adopt another round of programming along that corridor and issue its next call for projects for I-395/95. The Envision Route 7 project, which completed a planning and outreach push in the fall, will go out to the community again to update riders on project progress between Seven Corners and Southern Towers/Mark Center and gather additional input.

NVTC will also focus on zero-emission bus technical assistance through the NVTC Zero-Emission Bus (ZEB) Working Group, tell the story of Northern Virginia transit through its data visualization and analysis program and continue to manage over \$400 million in funding that supports our local jurisdictions and transit agencies, helping them meet our region's current and future transit needs.

We know we have a lot of work to complete in this new year, but I also know that NVTC leadership and staff are ready to take on these challenges to keep Northern Virginia moving in 2026.


Executive Director



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January 16
VRE Operations Board

January 26
VTA Advocacy Day
(Richmond)

January 29
Joint WMATA & Legislative
and Policy Committees

February 5
Legislative Reception
(Richmond)

February 17
Commonwealth
Transportation Board

February 19
Program Advisory
Committee

WMATA and Legislative
and Policy Committees

February 20
VRE Operations Board

March 5
Commission meeting

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Legislative Forum looks ahead to long-term transit funding

Over 200 people attended NVTC's Legislative Forum in December. The 10th anniversary edition of the Legislative Forum, held jointly with the Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission (PRTC) and Virginia Railway Express (VRE), explored the challenges and opportunities facing the transit agencies that serve the region. It also reviewed the work done by DMVMoves and the General Assembly's SJ 28 Growing Needs of Northern Virginia Public Transit Joint Subcommittee in preparation for the 2026 General Assembly Session.

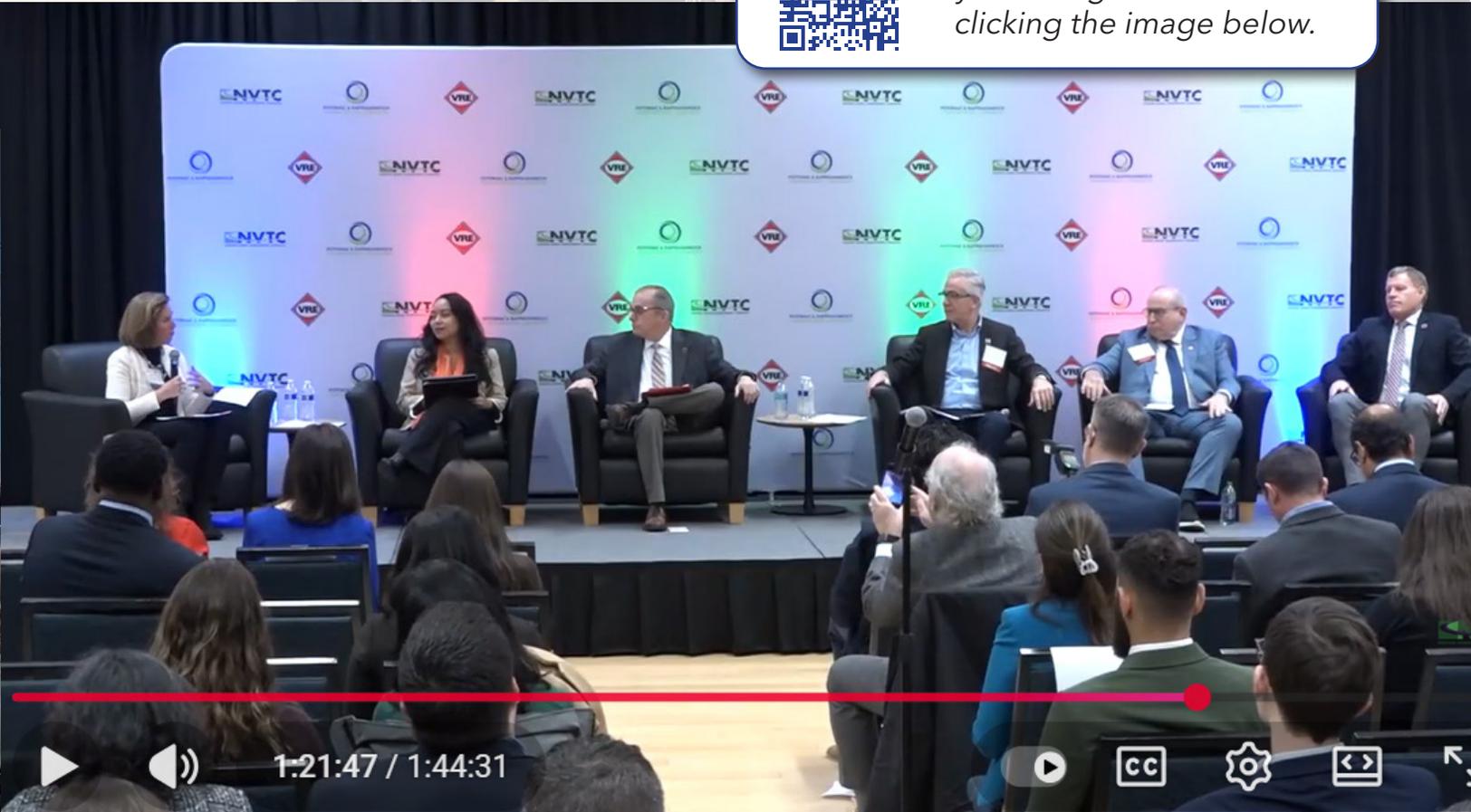
Attendees heard a lively discussion from leaders at ART, Metro, OmniRide and VRE, elected officials, appointees and community leaders. NVTC's [Legislative Agenda](#) is integral to the Legislative Forum. The 2026 Legislative Agenda reflects a drive toward long-term sustainable funding that supports Northern Virginia's transit needs. It also calls for funding to provide adequate growth to meet current operating and capital needs for Metro, VRE and local bus providers.

The Legislative Forum was the result of months of planning by NVTC staff. Thank you to Tenley O'Hara and Genoveva Cutrell for their leadership in producing this fantastic event.





Watch the Legislative Forum by scanning the QR code or clicking the image below.





ENVISION ROUTE 7

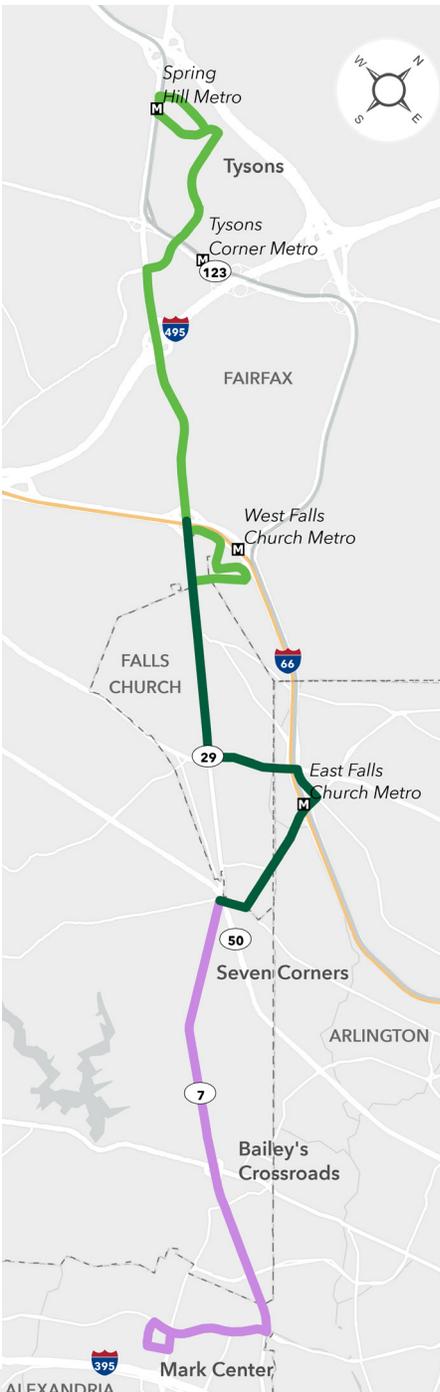


Envision Route 7 team briefs partners on latest milestones

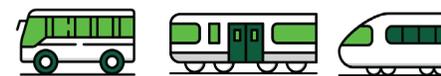
NVTC staff, led by Senior Program Manager Vikram Sinha, and the consultant team briefed members of the [Envision Route 7](#) Project Technical Advisory Committee (PTAC) on the latest updates, including data on the successful fall outreach efforts, updates on the contract and its sub-tasks as well as next steps.

Envision Route 7 is a proposed bus rapid transit (BRT) system connecting Tysons and Alexandria. The current study phase aims to both identify issues related to traffic congestion and examine infrastructure improvements that will help buses move more easily through the corridor.

The PTAC is composed of representatives of partner jurisdictions as well as project delivery partners such as Metro and the Virginia Department of Transportation. City of Falls Church staff also provided updates on projects within the city that will benefit existing bus service. NVTC staff look forward to briefing NVTC Commissioners on the details of outreach at the Program Advisory Committee meeting in February.



- Route + Study Phases**
- █ Phase 4-0 Fairfax County, Completed
 - █ Phase 4-1 NVTC, Completed
 - █ Phase 4-2 NVTC, Coming Soon





New Commuter Choice funded Metrobus route starts service

Two Commuter Choice funded Metrobus routes began new or enhanced service in mid-December. [Route A29](#) launched, connecting the Van Dorn Street Metro Station, West Alexandria Transit Center, Mark Center and Shirlington with Metro Center. Additionally, Metro enhanced service on [Route A25](#), which operates between the Landmark Transit Center and the Pentagon. It now runs every 15 minutes during rush hour, thanks to Commuter Choice. Both routes were funded through the I-395/95 Commuter Choice FY 2026-2027 Program of Projects.



I-66 Call for Projects closes, with up to \$100 million available

The I-66 [Commuter Choice](#) FY 2027-2028 Call for Projects closed December 12, with up to \$100 million in funding available for projects that improve mobility, support new travel options, enhance safety and reliability, and move more people along the I-66 corridor. In January, all applications will undergo an eligibility review to ensure proposed projects provide the requisite

benefits to toll payers, with applications deemed eligible for Commuter Choice funding carried forward to the evaluation and scoring process detailed in the Commuter Choice [Handbook](#). NVTCT will open a public comment period in March, providing an opportunity for members of the public to give feedback on the projects under consideration for funding.



Metro Board reviews FY 2027 proposed budget, rail modernization plans

The Metro Board authorized public hearings for the [FY 2027 Operating Budget and FY 2027-2032 Capital Improvement Program](#) at its [meeting](#) on December 11. The proposed budget focuses on service improvements to further increase ridership and revenue, cost control and less dependence on capital funding for preventive maintenance. Metro will obtain feedback with an online survey and public hearings, and the proposed budget and CIP will be approved by the Board in March or April of next year.

The Board also received a briefing on the vision for modernizing and automating the Metrorail system through the [Rail Modernization](#)

[Program](#). Staff presented a summary of the elements of the program and how they build upon each other as well as the business case for modernization, showing how the potential benefits to Metro and the region could exceed the costs of the program.

Members of the Board also approved submittal of applications for NVTC Commuter Choice grants to bring new limited stop bus service to Northern Virginia beginning as soon as December 2026. Additionally, the Board approved an updated Strategic Transformation Plan and authorized a new public sector employee pass product.

Program Elements

<p>Signals</p> 	<p>Fleet</p> 
<p>Stations/Platforms</p> 	<p>Operations</p> 

<p>Safety</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Safer operations: keep trespassers off tracks, reduce track fires. 	<p>Reliability</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase service reliability up to 99%. ▪ Less physical infrastructure to maintain.
<p>Capacity</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increased capacity with more trains per hour. 	<p>Efficiency</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ More productive service with lower operating costs. ▪ Grow ridership & revenue.



CTB updated on MERIT changes, affirms timeline for additional evaluation

The Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) received an [update](#) from Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) staff December 9 on the ongoing review of the [MERIT](#) operating and capital assistance formulas, including proposed changes designed to simplify the program and strengthen its performance-based structure. DRPT also shared that a request for proposals has been issued, seeking to expand statewide data collection to inform future refinements to the formulas.

The CTB received a resolution from the Transit Service Delivery Advisory Committee (TSDAC) recommending that the CTB take action on any formula changes no later than June 30, 2026, so that operating and capital revisions can be reviewed as a unified package. In the weeks leading up to TSDAC's November meeting, numerous transit providers and the Virginia Transit Association requested additional time to evaluate the proposals to better understand their impact.

The CTB ultimately supported this approach and is expected to continue discussions in early 2026, while DRPT conducts further analysis and engagement with transit agencies. NVTC will continue to follow the process closely and keep jurisdictions informed as DRPT and the CTB move toward formal consideration of MERIT updates in the new year.

Proposed Operating Assistance Formula Adjustments / Improvements

- Rebalance the sizing metrics:
 - 35% Operating Cost (proxy for service type + cost of living + service-area size)
 - 35% Ridership
 - 15% Vehicle Revenue Hours
 - 15% Vehicle Revenue Miles
- Establish a **dedicated Performance Set-Aside** using single-year absolute performance ratios:
 - 50% Passengers per Cost
 - 25% Passengers per Vehicle Revenue Hour
 - 25% Passengers per Vehicle Revenue Mile
- Eliminate trend-based calculations to create a **simpler, more transparent** method.
- Limit redistribution cycles so that performance is **not diminished** after agencies hit the 30% cap.

Advancing women Advancing transportation



Kate recognized as WTS-DC Woman of the Year

The WTS Washington, DC chapter recognized Executive Director Kate Mattice as Woman of the Year at its holiday party in December. The award honors a woman who is an outstanding role model and has contributed to the advancement of women and minorities in transportation.

Award criteria include being a leader in transportation who has made an outstanding contribution to the transportation industry,

directly contributing toward the advancement of women and minorities through programs or opportunities in the transportation field and advancing the reputation and credibility of women in transportation.

Kate extends her gratitude to Commissioner Walter Alcorn and the NVTC staff who came out to support her at the event.



Images courtesy of WTS-DC

Commission honors Letourneau for Metro Board service

The Commission honored Matthew F. Letourneau for his five years of service as a principal director of the Metro Board at its December meeting. Commissioner Letourneau was the first Board member from Loudoun County and also chaired the Safety and Operations, Elections, and Finance and Capital Committees. He played a leading role in two generational capital improvements and was involved in pivotal financial matters during his time on the Board.



Commissions appoint new VRE CEO



Welcome to Virginia Railway Express, Katie Choe! NVTC, along with the Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission, appointed Ms. Choe as the next CEO at its December meeting. She comes most recently from the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority and has 25 years of program management and safety oversight leadership in the transportation sector. Choe will start her new role January 20, 2026.



Kate emcees engineering awards gala

Executive Director Kate Mattice helped emcee the American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC) Metropolitan Washington's 2025 Engineering Excellence Awards Gala & Holiday Party December 16. The organization represents firms that employ engineers, architects, land surveyors, highly trained specialists and licensed professionals, including many who work on large-scale transportation projects.



GMU honors Paul Smedberg

George Mason University's Regional Elected Leaders Initiative (RELI) presented Commissioner Paul Smedberg with its NOVA Regional Leadership Award December 5. Thank you, Commissioner Smedberg, for your dedication to NVTC, the Metro Board and the mission to sustain public transit in Northern Virginia.



VRE Santa Trains spread holiday cheer

Virginia Railway Express' iconic Santa Trains made their annual journey from the North Pole December 6. NVTC Commuter Choice and Policy Program Manager Daniel Knickelbein reprised his role as an elf, helping spread holiday cheer to kids of all ages.



Celebrating Alexandria's Scottish heritage

Executive Director Kate Mattice joined Virginia Railway Express for the 54th Annual Alexandria Scottish Christmas Walk Parade December 6. The annual tradition harkens back to Scottish merchants who founded Alexandria in 1849 and its namesake John Alexander, who owned the land that became the city.

Happy Holidays from NVTC!





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