



**Northern Virginia Transportation Commission
Comments to the Commonwealth Transportation Board**

on the Draft Fiscal Year 2019-2024 Six-Year Improvement Program

April 30, 2018

Delivered by Paul Smedberg
NVTC Chairman and City of Alexandria Council Member

On behalf of the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission, I appreciate the opportunity to come before you tonight and share NVTC's regional perspective on the value of transit to the Commonwealth and the opportunities and challenges that we must face together. Before doing so, I would like to thank each of you – Secretary Valentine, Director Mitchell and members of the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) – for your ongoing commitment to investments in high-quality, high-capacity transit infrastructure and service throughout Northern Virginia. That commitment has never been more evident than during the 2018 session of the General Assembly.

As dust from that session settles, NVTC has begun sifting through and evaluating the omnibus transit bill. Metro funding may have grabbed the headlines but, as you know, this legislation contains numerous provisions with implications for NVTC and the commuter rail and bus systems that serve Northern Virginia.

Chief among them is the requirement that the Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) develop a prioritization process for allocating transit capital funds and that it base state operating assistance on service factors. Given transit's importance to economic development and the quality of life in our region, a fair and equitable process is imperative. We feel strongly that transit agencies with a history of poor maintenance not be rewarded with additional funds for bus replacement. We trust that when it comes time for the CTB to adopt new processes to award these funds, you will consider how vital transit is to our region and the limited resources available to the well-managed transit systems in Northern Virginia.

Each day, more than 450,000 people take transit in Northern Virginia. Some rely on it to commute, while others depend on it to get to school, medical appointments or grocery stores. Metrorail is, of course, the heart of Northern Virginia's transit network, providing two-and-a-half times as many trips each day as VRE and our six bus systems combined. Locations close to Metrorail stations are coveted by employers. The Council of Governments recently reported that 4.8 million square feet of new office space opened near Metrorail stations last year, roughly half of which was in Virginia.

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That's partly why the Commonwealth's leadership of this year's historic effort to fund Metro is to be applauded. That said, NVTC will continue to seek different revenue sources to support this dedicated capital fund. We do, however, appreciate your recognition of the vital role Metro plays in the region and the trust you have placed in NVTC to provide increased oversight of Metro. We look forward to working in partnership with the Commonwealth to ensure the safety and reliability of this critical transportation asset.

As co-owners of Virginia Railway Express (VRE), we would be remiss if we didn't thank members of the General Assembly and the Northam administration for establishing the Commuter Rail Operating and Capital Fund. While VRE's needs are great, the \$15 million to be set aside annually will help the railroad increase capacity through longer trains and platform extensions.

Next month, you will again hear from NVTC – this time about new projects to be funded through our I-66 Commuter Choice program. These 15 projects, totaling \$12 million, will move an additional 2,000 people through the corridor each rush hour, saving about 120,000 hours of delay for commuters each year. These projects will connect people to more than 15 activity centers in Virginia and the District of Columbia, minimize back-ups due to traffic incidents, and improve access to park and ride lots and transit with the help of technology.

Finally, I would turn your attention to Northern Virginia's SmartScale submissions, which include bicycle and pedestrian, bus and rail transit, and transportation demand management projects. When you consider the growing demand for transit and the record of NVTC jurisdictions in providing quality transit service, the need for your continued support is clear. The economic health of the region and the Commonwealth depends on it. Thank you.

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