



Northern Virginia Transportation Authority
The Authority for Transportation in Northern Virginia

PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE

Monday, May 6, 2024, at 5:00 p.m.

Northern Virginia Transportation Authority

Hosted in-person at NVTA offices, 2600 Park Tower Drive, Vienna, Virginia

Live-streamed on YouTube.

MEETING SUMMARY

I. Call to Order/Welcome:

- Chairman Wilson called the meeting to order at 5:04 p.m.
- Attendees: This meeting was conducted in-person and virtually via Zoom and streamed online via YouTube.
 - **PPC Members:** Mayor Wilson (City of Alexandria); Board Member de Ferranti (Arlington County), Mayor Olem (Town of Herndon) and Ms. Hynes (CTB Representative).
 - **NVTA Staff:** Monica Backmon (CEO), remotely; Keith Jasper (Principal); Sree Nampoothiri (Senior Transportation Planner), Ian Newman (Regional Transportation Planner)
 - **Jurisdiction/Agency Staff:** None.
 - **Others:** None.

II. Action Items:

- A. Summary Notes of April 8, 2024, Meeting:** The April 8, 2024, Planning and Programming Committee meeting summary was unanimously approved.

III. Discussion Items:

A. FY2024 Six Year Program Update:

- Dr. Nampoothiri presented an overview of the Six Year Program process focusing on the following topics:
 1. Qualitative Considerations
 2. NVTA's Core Values (Equity, Safety and Sustainability)
 3. Guidelines for Applicants
 4. Evaluation Method
 5. FY2024 – 2029 Six Year Program (SYP) Schedule.
- Dr. Nampoothiri discussed in detail NVTA's Core Values, with specific examples, in response to the request by the Committee members at the April 8 meeting. Dr. Nampoothiri emphasized that this is a pilot evaluation, and the results will not be considered for this Six Year Program funding recommendation. Dr. Nampoothiri suggested that when jurisdictions and agencies are developing applications for funding for the SYP, , they should consider incorporating these values into their projects to gain more points in the review process.
- Ms. Hynes discussed Equity Emphasis Areas (EEAs) established by the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB). These EEAs are based on

an average. However, there are EEAs within the region that fall below TPB's average. Ms. Hynes suggested that NVTA should look at all areas of EEAs. Dr. Nampoothiri clarified that NVTA modified the TPB thresholds to include additional areas specific to Northern Virginia. Ms. Hynes suggested that clarification should be made regarding this.

- Board Member de Ferranti noted that there is some overlap between Equity and Sustainability, especially the social pillar of Sustainability. Ms. Hynes responded and explained that this is the first time NVTA has used this process. Dr. Nampoothiri affirmed that there is an overlap between the Core Values. He also added that this is the first time NVTA is using these the Core Values when evaluating projects for the Six Year Program and it is a learning curve for this information to be integrated, for both NVTA staff and jurisdictions and agency staff.
- Following the discussion of the evaluation method, Mayor Wilson asked why there was not a granular set of criteria to differentiate between the projects. Dr. Nampoothiri explained that the evaluation method related to the Core Values is based on a five-point scale. NVTA staff ranked projects with Core Value application submissions to evaluate how they match the specific guidelines. The maximum number of points per Core Value is 25. Three different reviewers scored the project separately, and the average of the scores was taken for the final score of each Core Value.
- Dr. Nampoothiri showed the results of the Core Value evaluation which displayed a color-coded average ranking table of all projects applied for the FY2024-2029 Six Year Program. Ms. Hynes asked if the results were surprising to NVTA staff since no projects were ranked low. Dr. Nampoothiri explained that there was an internal NVTA staff discussion regarding the results where reviewers differed in scores, there were meaningful conversations among internal staff on how they arrived at the results for each project. Dr. Nampoothiri explained that subjectivity was a part of the evaluation since there was not enough data for a more robust evaluation.
- Mayor Wilson expressed his concern that none of the projects were ranked low. He discussed that the goal of the Core Value evaluation is to differentiate projects and there is a meaningful way to differentiate these projects and they should not be in the same group. Dr. Nampoothiri reiterated that this was a pilot noting that NVTA staff are looking forward to feedback on how to improve the process for accuracy so that it can be modified in the future.
- Mayor Wilson suggested that the goals are how to differentiate between projects and encourage better submissions in the future. He explained that in order to do so, NVTA needs to show how they have evaluated projects, and within this evaluation, there does not seem to be enough differentiation among projects.
- Ms. Hynes discussed her experience going through the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) evaluation process with TPB. TPB struggled with the evaluation of equity. She explained that Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) used a ranking system that was based on the impact of the project. She explained that she was more inclined to fund projects that ranked higher with the evaluation of equity versus those with lower equity scores.
- Ms. Hynes explained that she was hoping to see a variety of rankings within the Core Values so a similar process could be conducted on how priorities could be

met better. She explained that the data set does not show enough information to allow her to better understand project priorities and how they would better our region. Board Member de Ferranti inquired if Ms. Hynes is suggesting to look into only two Core Values. Ms. Hynes explained that Equity and Safety would be easy to evaluate and rank, but Sustainability does not have a true concrete definition which makes it difficult to rank and evaluate.

- Mayor Wilson explained that within the graphic, those projects ranked high for Sustainability are Bicycle and Pedestrian projects. Mr. Jasper shared that for NVTA there is a challenge within ranking and evaluating projects because of the overarching factors with the state of Virginia Code, and there is nothing within the guidelines that state to include these Core Values. NVTA cannot change anything during this current cycle but could review this process for a potential update to the next Six Year Program. NVTA will look to see how this evaluation sways and determines the next steps in the process.
- Ms. Hynes suggested that when NVTA adopts the program, there could be language indicating how many underserved populations are now served, how many safety hotspots are addressed, etc.
- Mr. Jasper expressed that NVTA will draw attention to those projects with strong alignment with the Core Values.
- Ms. Hynes suggested adding the ranking numbers to the chart to determine the weight of the scores and which has a relatively higher ranking.
- Ms. Hynes inquired what the message to the Authority about this ranking will be. Mr. Jasper suggested that NVTA wants to acknowledge the differences between projects.
- Dr. Nampoothiri emphasized that these Core Value statements were not required for this cycle and can be made mandatory in the future. Some of the additional documents were very detailed, and others were vague.
- Board Member de Ferranti suggested if the mandatory Core Value ranking is required in the future, updates such as adding numbers within the rankings and engagement regarding the content should be made to the process. Mr. Jasper expressed that there will be a review following this Six Year Program, which will allow internal staff to evaluate and enhance the process for the next call-for-projects in May 2025.
- Ms. Hynes suggested using the values from the TransAction rating evaluation when comparing the performance measures and Core Values of the Six Year Program.
- Mayor Olem asked how influential the public comment is when it comes to the Six Year Program evaluation. Mr. Jasper explained that the comments can sway projects either way. In the past, projects were partially funded by NVTA depending on the public comments.
- Dr. Nampoothiri finished the discussion by reviewing the FY2024–2029 Six Year Program schedule, emphasizing the June 2024 committee meeting cycle where project recommendations will be presented and committee endorsement anticipated.
- Ms. Hynes noted that the new CTB appointment can be made by the Virginia Governor on June 17th. Ms. Backmon replied that NVTA is allowed to work with the current members until the official notification of appointment regarding the new member is received. .

B. Preliminary Deployment Plan for a Regional Bus Rapid Transit System (PDP-BRT):

- Mr. Jasper, Principal, Transportation Planning and Programming, briefed the Committee on the opening of the online survey for the PDP-BRT. This will open the day after the Six Year Program public comment period closes and will run for about six weeks. Mr. Jasper explained that NVTA is currently in Phase 1 of the PDP-BRT. Phase 2 will begin around July 2024 and will be a deeper analysis of data. Mr. Jasper explained that NVTA staff are hoping to have a joint work session with the Authority members in June and July. This will be a two-part session where a brief summary of the key takeaways from the Focus Groups, Peer Review, and outline of the Phase 2 approach will be shared. The staff is hoping to gain feedback from the Authority members regarding the Phase 2 approach during the June portion of the work session. In the July portion of the work session, the staff will provide the Authority with the preliminary results of the online survey and seek feedback from the Authority in terms of priorities. NVTA staff are currently awaiting the report from the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC) on their regional transit analysis and Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) on their Better Bus Network study. Mr. Jasper noted that there will be a further round of public engagement in Spring 2025, when analysis from previous phases will be complete.
- Ms. Hynes posed if following the peer review of the PDP-BRT, is NVTA exploring what makes BRT successful within the region. Mr. Jasper replied that NVTA wants to understand densities within the corridors NVTA looks at compared to densities in corridors with existing BRT systems across the country. Ms. Hynes suggested that NVTA should also look at the destinations and hubs for larger employers when implementing BRT within the Northern Virginia Region. Ms. Hynes suggested that NVTA is trying to build the next generation of inter-jurisdictional travel, which is a different analysis than evaluating how people can get into a city center or the District of Columbia better. Mr. Jasper affirmed that such evaluations are being carried out. Ms. Backmon added that NVTA is looking to implement interconnectivity with the five BRT systems within the region and with jurisdictions outside Northern Virginia.

IV. NVTA Update:

- Ms. Backmon reminded members that NVTA's Public Hearing for the Six Year Program is on Thursday, May 9, 2024. The Authority meeting will be held following the Public Hearing. Currently, there is one person signed up to speak virtually. The staff will be sharing the comments from the public engagement at the June Authority meeting. .

V. Adjourn:

- The next meeting will be on Tuesday, June 25, 2024, at 5:00 p.m. in person at NVTA Offices, 2600 Park Tower Drive, Vienna, VA.
- The meeting was adjourned at 6:15 p.m..