

January 13, 2022

Re: Comments for the NVTA Annual Organizational Meeting

Dear Chair Randall and members of the NVTA,

On behalf of the Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA) and our over 7,000 members across Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia, I am writing to express our support for a transportation system that supports all users including those that walk to transit or use a bicycle.

NVTA deserves praise for increasing your investments in recent years in transportation projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and expand travel choices, such as pedestrian and bicycle connections to transit. These relatively inexpensive projects have a tremendous regional impact. Many daily trips are three miles or less, and shifting these trips from single-occupancy vehicles is an important and cost-effective solution to traffic congestion. Encouraging this shift is critical in helping the region meet its climate goals. We know that the region must reduce per capita Vehicle Miles Traveled by 15-20% by 2030 to meet stated goals.

With that said, NVTA continues to place too much emphasis on funding roadway capacity expansion projects. Of the projects and funding in the proposed FY22-27 Six-year program, 16 out of 26 projects (approximately two-thirds of the funding) focus on highway and arterial capacity expansion.

WABA is also very concerned about NVTA's long-range plan update. The current Transaction plan contains 350 projects totaling \$43 billion. The update should do a better job of identifying the most cost-effective solutions to congestion and pollution with finite transportation funds. Often, the most cost-effective solutions are smaller-scale improvements that provide more travel alternatives to single-occupancy vehicles.

The performance measures for Transaction do include reduced vehicle emissions as a relatively small weighting. However, the plan does not take into account how different scenarios will reduce, or increase vehicle miles traveled. Nor does the plan account for induced demand from adding new road capacity. Ignoring these factors in measuring scenarios and investment packages will make our region less rather than more resilient and economically competitive. We ask that NVTA and its member jurisdictions and agencies include an analysis of vehicle miles traveled and ways to reduce VMTs in TransAction.

Additionally, we would like to re-emphasize the comments we shared at the Northern VA Joint Transportation Meeting. In order for the state to meet its commitments, we ask that you:

- Address equity and prioritize high-need areas and communities disproportionately impacted by crashes and fatalities.
- Stop investing in highway expansion and increase dedicated dollars going to bike/ped projects including trails and protected bike lanes.
- Fund more standalone trail and bike/ped projects with NVTAs funds and invest in permanent trail counters in order to understand use patterns.

We hope you will take these comments into consideration.

Sincerely,

Jeremiah Lowery
Advocacy Director
Washington Area Bicyclists Association