

# Frequently Asked Questions



*The Authority*  
for Transportation in Northern Virginia

**NORTHERN  
VIRGINIA  
TRANSPORTATION  
AUTHORITY**

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If you have questions or would like to become involved in advocating transportation relief in Northern Virginia please email us at [TheAuthority@TheNoVaAuthority.org](mailto:TheAuthority@TheNoVaAuthority.org)

These are the frequently asked questions about the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA) and the answers to those questions. This document will be updated periodically as more questions arise so that the NVTA can provide thorough and consistent responses about The Authority and its activities.

## About the Authority (NVTA)

### **Q. Who created the Authority and why was it created?**

The Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA) was created by the General Assembly in 2002 to offer a common voice for Northern Virginia on transportation and other issues that confront the region.

The Authority is tasked with preparing an unconstrained long-range regional transportation plan (the most recent is the TransAction 2040 Plan) for Planning District 8, including transportation improvements of regional significance. The Authority has significant powers granted by the General Assembly to construct or otherwise implement projects in the adopted plan. These powers include, but are not limited to, the ability to acquire land, impose tolls, and have its bonds validated by Virginia's courts.

### **Q. What jurisdictions make up the Authority?**

The Authority is made up of nine jurisdictions including: the counties of Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun and Prince William; as well as the cities of Alexandria, Fairfax, Falls Church, Manassas and Manassas Park. The Authority also has one representative for the towns of Herndon, Leesburg, Purcellville, Dumfries, and Vienna.

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## **Q. How do the Authority representatives vote? How many votes does it take to approve the projects?**

Approval of the FY2014 proposed project list requires a two step process: **quorum** and **voting**.

**Step #1** — A **quorum** is required to conduct business at any Authority meeting. A quorum is established using two tests: 1) a simple majority (9 of the 17) Authority members; comprised of 9 jurisdiction representatives, 3 General Assembly representatives, 2 Gubernatorial appointees and 3 non-voting members, one from the Virginia Department of Transportation and the other from the Department of Rail and Public Transportation plus one town representative); and 2) a simple majority (5 of the 9) of local government members of the Authority.

**Step #2** — For **voting**, approval of actions by the Authority requires that three tests be met: 1) two-thirds of the voting members present (i.e. 10 of 14, IF all voting members are present); **AND** 2) two-thirds of the local government members are present (i.e. 6 of 9 IF all jurisdictions are represented); **AND** 3) the local government members voting in favor MUST represent two-thirds of the population of jurisdictions embraced by the Authority as of 2010.

## **Q. What is the Jurisdictional Agency Coordinating Committee (JACC)?**

The Jurisdictional Agency Coordinating Committee (JACC) is an administrative body. The JACC serves as the staff for the NVTA, because the Authority does not have any employees of its own. The JACC is comprised of representatives from each NVTA jurisdiction including the towns, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), Virginia Railway Express (VRE), Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC), Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission (PRTC), Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT), and Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT).

## **Q. Does the JACC approve projects?**

No. The JACC does not have the authority to approve projects. Rather, the JACC regularly reviews project requests made by member jurisdictions and agencies, makes comments on them and shares them with the Authority in an organized, and more importantly, very public manner.

## **Q. Does the Authority have a preference for certain types of projects e.g. roads, transit, bicycle, or pedestrian?**

No. It does not. Both the Authority and the JACC recognize that in order to begin to solve the traffic gridlock in Northern Virginia that strategic investments need to be made across all modes of transportation. The Authority has consistently sought to balance its investments and is not biased toward one particular mode of transportation relative to another. Rather, the Authority is focused on congestion relief and improvements to our transportation infrastructure, and is deeply committed to funding projects of all modes that accomplish those most efficiently and effectively. The primary goal is to develop and sustain a multimodal transportation system that supports our economy and quality of life. This requires that investments be fiscally sustainable, that we promote areas of concentrated growth, manage both demand and capacity, and employ the best technology, joining rail, roadway, bus, air, water, pedestrian, and bicycle facilities into an interconnected network.

**Q. Will the NVTa have staff of its own?**

There was little need for a staff for the past several years. Despite the passage of HB2313 the Authority does not anticipate that it will develop into a large organization. NVTa intends to continue to be a lean agency with a small staff so that our funds are focused on congestion relief and improvements to our transportation system rather than administrative costs. As such, the JACC will continue to be an important part of our organization.

**Q. What is the difference between the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority and the Northern Virginia Transportation Alliance?**

The Northern Virginia Transportation Authority was created by the General Assembly in 2002 to coordinate Northern Virginia's transportation planning and resources. The Northern Virginia Transportation Alliance is a private organization of citizens and businesses that advocates for transportation and is completely separate from The Authority. [We recognize that the acronyms are confusing.]

**Q. Is the Authority a new organization? Is it affiliated with the Northern Virginia Regional Commission (NVRC) or the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC)?**

The Authority was created in 2002 and is a separate organization from both NVRC and NVTC. However, the Authority works closely with all regional transportation partners, jurisdictions and stakeholders to improve transportation funding and to facilitate transportation improvements in the region.

**Q. How can I learn more about the Authority and decisions regarding transportation funding?**

Please visit the Authority web site at:  
[www.TheNoVaAuthority.org](http://www.TheNoVaAuthority.org)

Or e-mail the Authority at:  
[TheAuthority@TheNoVaAuthority.org](mailto:TheAuthority@TheNoVaAuthority.org)

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# Transportation Projects

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## Q. How many votes does it take to approve the projects?

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## Q. Who decides what projects are started first?

The Authority makes that decision with input from the Jurisdictional and Agency Coordinating Committee (JACC), other advisory committees and the public. The NVTAA Project Implementation Working Group (PIWG), which is made up of staff and representatives from all nine Authority jurisdictions as well as state and regional transportation agencies, has proposed an initial Fiscal Year 2014 project list totaling \$186.9 million dollars for a balance of transit, multi-modal and roadway projects. They also recommended that the Authority consider a list of projects for the future Six-Year Plan. These projects were not identified on the FY 2014 initial project list.

The initial project priority list may be voted on by the Authority in July 2013. After the initial project list approval, the Project Implementation Working Group, in coordination with the advisory groups, will develop proposed standard project criteria to help guide the Authority in the future selection of projects. These criteria will be used to evaluate projects proposed for consideration of the Six-Year Plan.

## Q. When should we expect to see transportation projects funded with FY 2014 regional dollars to begin?

It will be several months before the construction of projects actually begins. Project implementation will depend, in part, on when the Authority approves the project list and when funds are made available to the implementing agency or jurisdiction. For example: Buses purchased in FY 2014 are expected to begin revenue service between FY14 and FY15. However, the Authority won't actually begin receiving funds until August 2013. In addition, the Authority may have some further delay if there are any legal issues that need to be resolved.

## **Q. How does the first year list of projects compare to the longer term Six-Year Plan for the Authority?**

The Authority is developing an initial FY 2014 project list which will represent the first year of projects and includes only those projects that are “ready to go” or can complete a phase quickly. More importantly they are only one year’s worth of projects. The projects identified on the initial project list are intended to provide congestion relief and rapid, noticeable improvements to address the region’s transportation problems. Once the Authority approves the FY2014 list of projects, it will begin to work on a Six-Year Program which will closely follow the timing and public participation of the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) Six-Year Improvement Program in order to optimize coordination with statewide funding.

## **Q. How much money does the Authority estimate will be spent on transportation improvements in the first year?**

The initial project list for fiscal year 2014 is based on the assumption that the Authority would not exceed the expected first-year revenue in approving the initial project list. Revenue expected to be realized in the first year (that is, the fiscal year beginning on July 1, 2013, and ending on June 30, 2014), is estimated at approximately \$190 million. The Authority took this to be the upper bound and therefore is proposing a total project funding package of \$186.9 million.

## **Q. Where do these projects come from?**

The projects identified and currently under review by the Authority and the public are taken directly from the TransAction 2040 regional transportation plan. The projects were derived from county comprehensive plans and were vetted by local governments and the public. They were subjected to further review on a regional level when they were incorporated into TransAction 2040.

## **Q. I keep hearing about TransAction 2040—what is this?**

TransAction 2040 was approved by the Authority in November, 2012. The Authority is charged with preparing an unconstrained, long-term, regional transportation plan for Northern Virginia, including transportation improvements of regional significance. The Authority revises and amends this plan every five years. The TransAction 2040 Northern Virginia Regional Transportation Plan represents an update of the TransAction 2030 Northern Virginia Regional Transportation Plan, which was endorsed by the Authority in 2006.

TransAction 2040 is designed to extend the planning horizon, allowing for consistency with the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) Financially Constrained Long-Range Plan (CLRP). TransAction 2040 includes new projects and introduces a revised evaluation and prioritization process, along with a benefit-cost (b/c) analysis. Like the plan that preceded it, TransAction 2040 is intended to provide a guide for funding future transportation projects in Northern Virginia. More information on TransAction 2040, including the plan summary and map, can be found on the Authority’s website at: <http://www.thenovaauthority.org/transaction2040/trans2040publications.html>.

The Authority is responsible for long-range transportation planning for regional transportation projects in Northern Virginia. In carrying out this responsibility, the Authority shall, on the basis of a regional consensus, whenever possible, set regional transportation policies and priorities for regional transportation projects. The policies and priorities shall be guided by performance-based criteria such as the ability to improve travel times, reduce delays, connect regional activity centers, improve safety, improve air quality, and move the most people in the most cost-effective manner.

The Authority shall report annually its expenditures to reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality in Northern Virginia.

## **Q. Will I have a chance to weigh in on the first year of projects?**

Yes! The Authority is holding multiple Open Houses throughout Northern Virginia with opportunities for comment, as well as two regional Open Houses and Public Hearings with an opportunity for public comment. In addition the Authority has established an e-mail address to provide feedback on the project list: **[fy14projects@thenovaauthority.org](mailto:fy14projects@thenovaauthority.org)**.

For timely updates and information please visit the Authority web site at **[www.thenovaauthority.org](http://www.thenovaauthority.org)**. You can also “like” us on Facebook!

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## Taxes and Fees

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### Q. What are the new regional taxes and fees authorized by the General Assembly as part of HB2313 and how much money will they provide for transportation projects in Northern Virginia in FY2014?

#### New Regional Taxes and Fees (Northern Virginia only)

General Sales and Use Tax (GSUT)	0.7%	\$213 million
Congestion Relief fee (Grantor's Tax)	\$0.15/\$100 valuation	\$34.6 million
Transient Occupancy Tax	2%	\$22.3 million
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$270 million</b>

#### New Statewide Taxes and Fees

Replace 17.5 cents gasoline and diesel tax with		- \$871 million
3% Wholesale Gas Tax and 6% Wholesale Diesel Tax	0.5%	\$412 million
Phase in of Motor Vehicle Sales Tax Increase	1.15%	\$184 million
General Sales and Use Tax (GSUT)	0.3%	\$265.8 million
Increase share of GSUT for Transportation	0.175%	\$49 million
Alternative Fuel Vehicle Fee	\$64	\$6.6 million
Marketplace Equity Act Share of Sales Tax	5.3%	\$144.6 million*
		for Transportation
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$405 million*</b>

\* - If enacted by Congress. If no Congressional Action by January 1, 2015, wholesale gas tax increases by 1.6%

### Q. I will be paying more taxes and fees beginning July 1, 2013. Did the Authority impose these new taxes?

The Authority does not authorize new taxes and fees. The General Assembly approved HB2313 on April 3, 2013. This new law imposes the taxes and fees on any jurisdiction in the Commonwealth that meets certain criteria. The Authority is responsible for disbursing the funds for transportation projects in Northern Virginia.

For more information on HB2313 please go to:

<http://leg1.state.va.us/cgi-bin/legp504.exe?131+sum+HB2313>

For a full summary of the bill as enacted go to:

<http://leg1.state.va.us/cgi-bin/legp504.exe?131+ful+CHAP0766>

**Q. Will the new regional taxes and fees paid by Northern Virginians go to other parts of the Commonwealth?**

No. The money that's raised here stays here. In fact, HB2313 specifically prohibits these funds from being spent on any project outside the region. It also prohibits the General Assembly, the Authority or any jurisdictional member of the Authority from spending the money on anything other than what is specifically identified in the law. Doing so will result in the loss of funding.

**Q. Where can I find out more about the new taxes and fees?**

Please visit the TAX web site at:

**<http://www.tax.virginia.gov/site.cfm?alias=changesandupdates>**

Please find the TAX Frequently Asked Questions here:

**<http://www.tax.virginia.gov/site.cfm?alias=ChangesandUpdatesFAQ>**