



STAY SAFE
STOP THE SPREAD
STAY AT HOME

Travel Trends in Northern Virginia – Impacts of COVID-19 Pandemic

June 10, 2021

Presented by:

Harun Rashid
Transportation Planner, Northern Virginia Transportation Authority



National Highlights

- FHWA reported the lowest vehicle miles of travel in the United States in 2020, since 2002.
- Compared to other large metropolitan areas, the Washington D.C. area had the highest percentage of telecommuting during the pandemic (**59.5%**).
- INRIX, a 'Big Data' traffic analytics company, reported that the Washington D.C. area experienced the largest decline in highway congestion (**77%** decline in traffic delay).



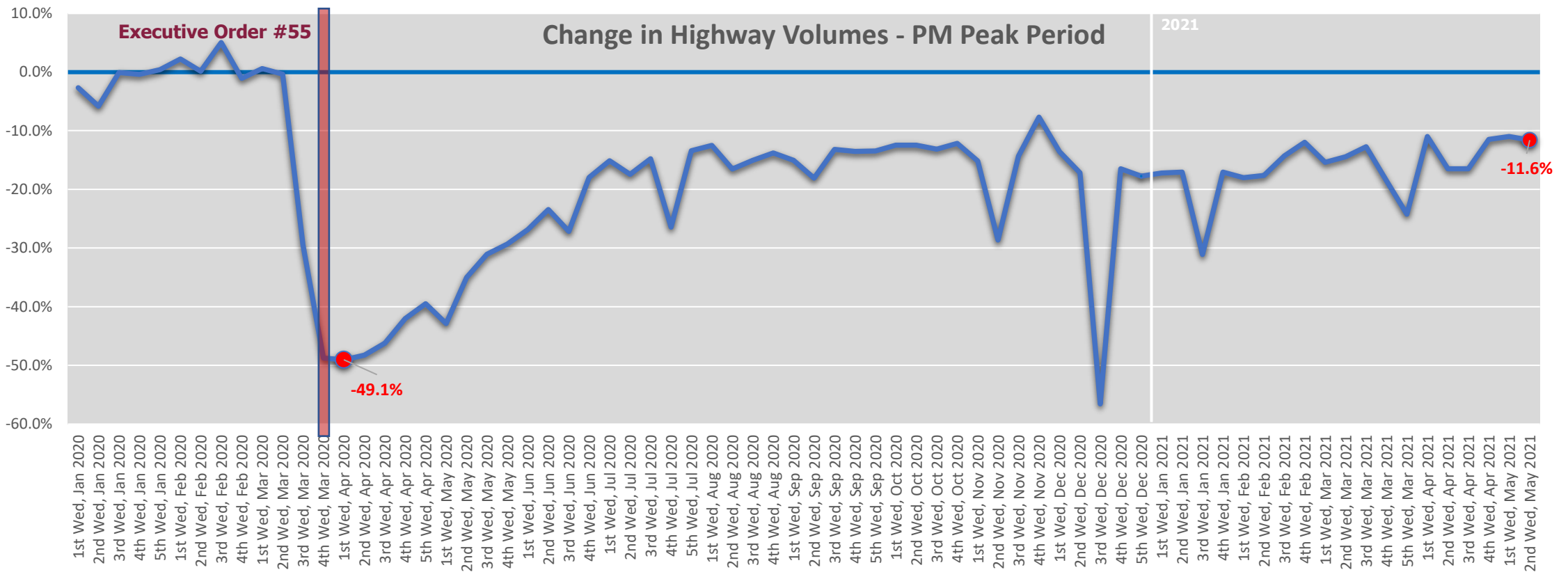
Context

- **Objectives:** To analyze travel impacts caused by the pandemic specific to Northern Virginia, and to inform the TransAction planning process.
- **Data Comparison:** January 2020 - May 2021 metrics compared with corresponding weeks/months in 2019.
- **Data Sources:** Highway traffic volumes (VDOT), Highway travel speeds (RITIS-INRIX), and Transit ridership (NVTC).



Highway Travel Volumes in Northern Virginia

- After the Governor’s stay-at-home order on March 30, 2020, there were significant reductions in traffic volumes.
- In the first week of April 2020, there was a region-wide average **volume reduction of 49%** (PM Peak period).
- In May 2021, travel volumes have stabilized to a level **about 12% lower** than pre-COVID conditions (PM Peak period).

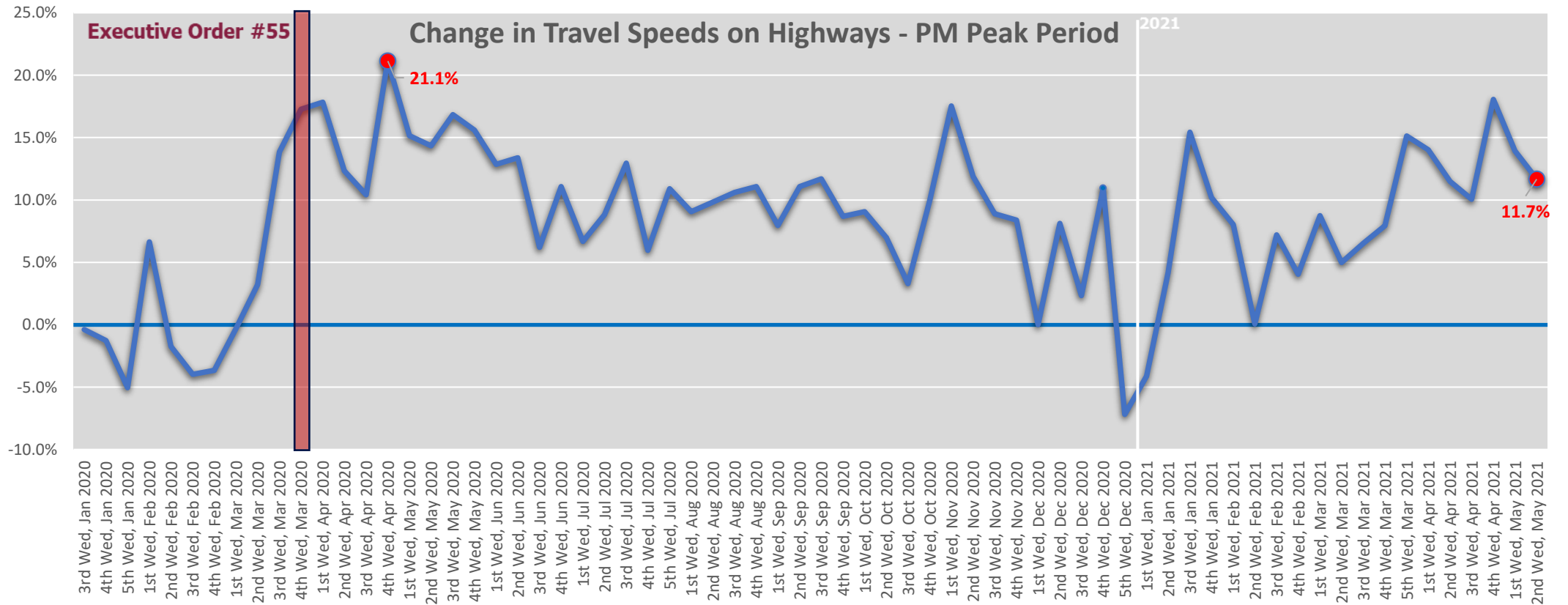


Data Source: VDOT traffic count program – COVID-19 Tableau application.



Highway Travel Speeds in Northern Virginia

- In the last week of April 2020, there was an **21% increase** in average travel speeds (PM Peak period).
- As highway travel is trending back to pre-COVID levels in May 2021, there was an average speed **increase of 12%**.
- Travel speeds are still faster than pre-COVID conditions.

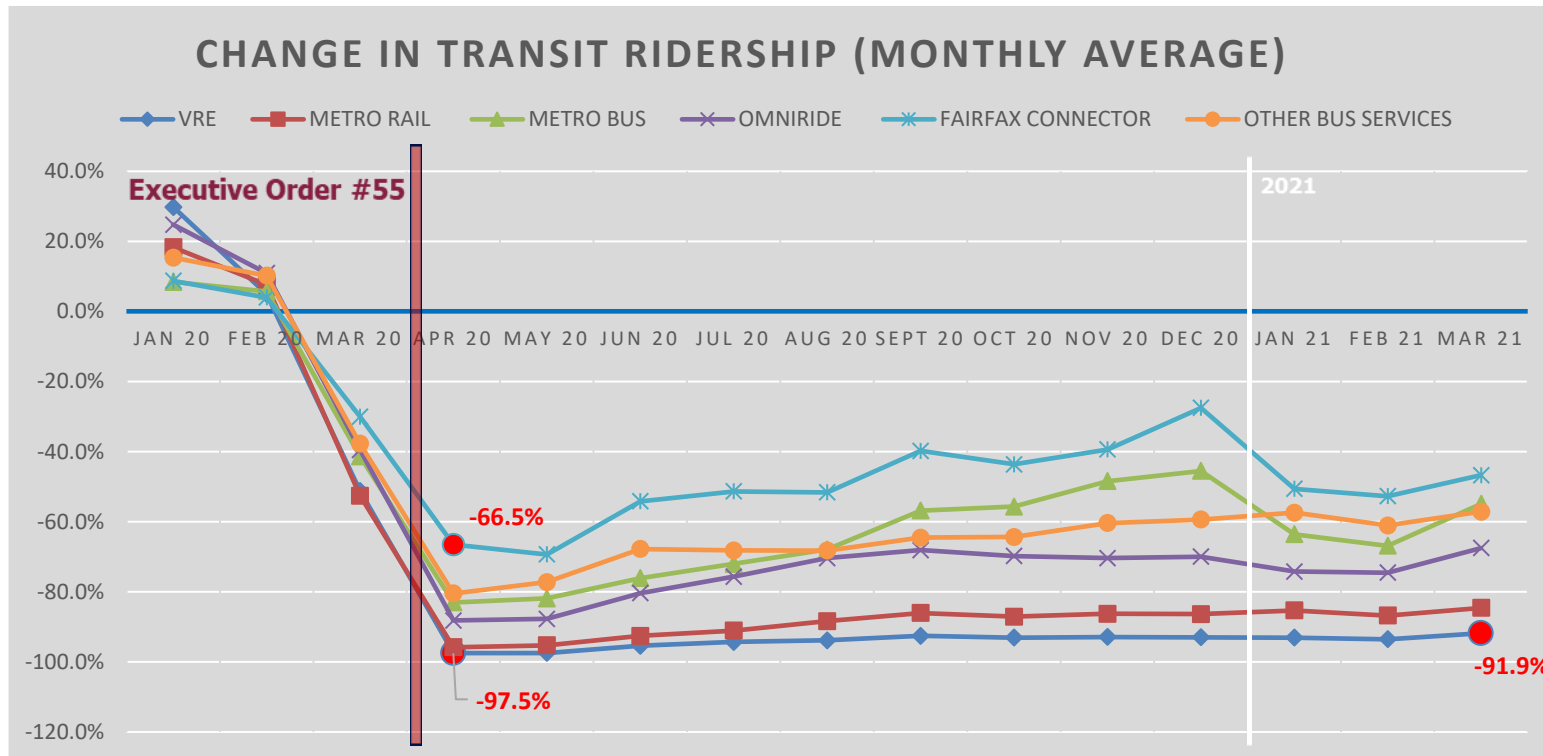


Data Source: INRIX data extracted from UMD CATT Lab RITIS platform



Transit Ridership in Northern Virginia

- In mid-April 2020, most local buses experienced at least a **66% reduction** in ridership.
- Rail ridership experienced an even greater decline – **VRE : 97%**; **Metrorail: 96%**
- Local bus ridership is recovering slightly faster than VRE and Metrorail services. VRE and Metrorail remain 85% - 92% lower than pre-COVID levels.



Data Source: Monthly ridership reports from NVTC.



Other Recent Trends

- **Coronavirus cases/vaccination rates ([NVRC dashboard](#)):**
 - 7-day moving average, cases daily per 100,000: On January 20, 2021 - **64.3** → On June 1, 2021: **1.7**
 - Population fully vaccinated (12 years and older): June 1, 2021 – **53.0%**
- **VRE resumed its full-service schedule** on Tuesday, June 1, increasing commuting options for passengers - under the full-service schedule, VRE will operate 32 daily trains on its two lines.
- **June 2 WMATA Finance and Capital Committee** meeting agenda: Potential service improvements: 12 minutes or better service on six rail and 20 bus lines; additional improvements to base service levels on other bus lines; rail service to midnight seven days a week.
- Other transit agencies that have **resumed regular/full services**: Fairfax Connector, CUE.

Next Steps



STAY SAFE
STOP THE SPREAD
STAY AT HOME

Continue trend monitoring:

- To inform TransAction scenario/sensitivity analyses.
- To research on-going travel impacts related to COVID-19 pandemic.