

NORTHERN VIRGINIA TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

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MEMORANDUM

FOR: Chair Phyllis J. Randall and Members,
Northern Virginia Transportation Authority

FROM: Monica Backmon, Executive Director, NVTA

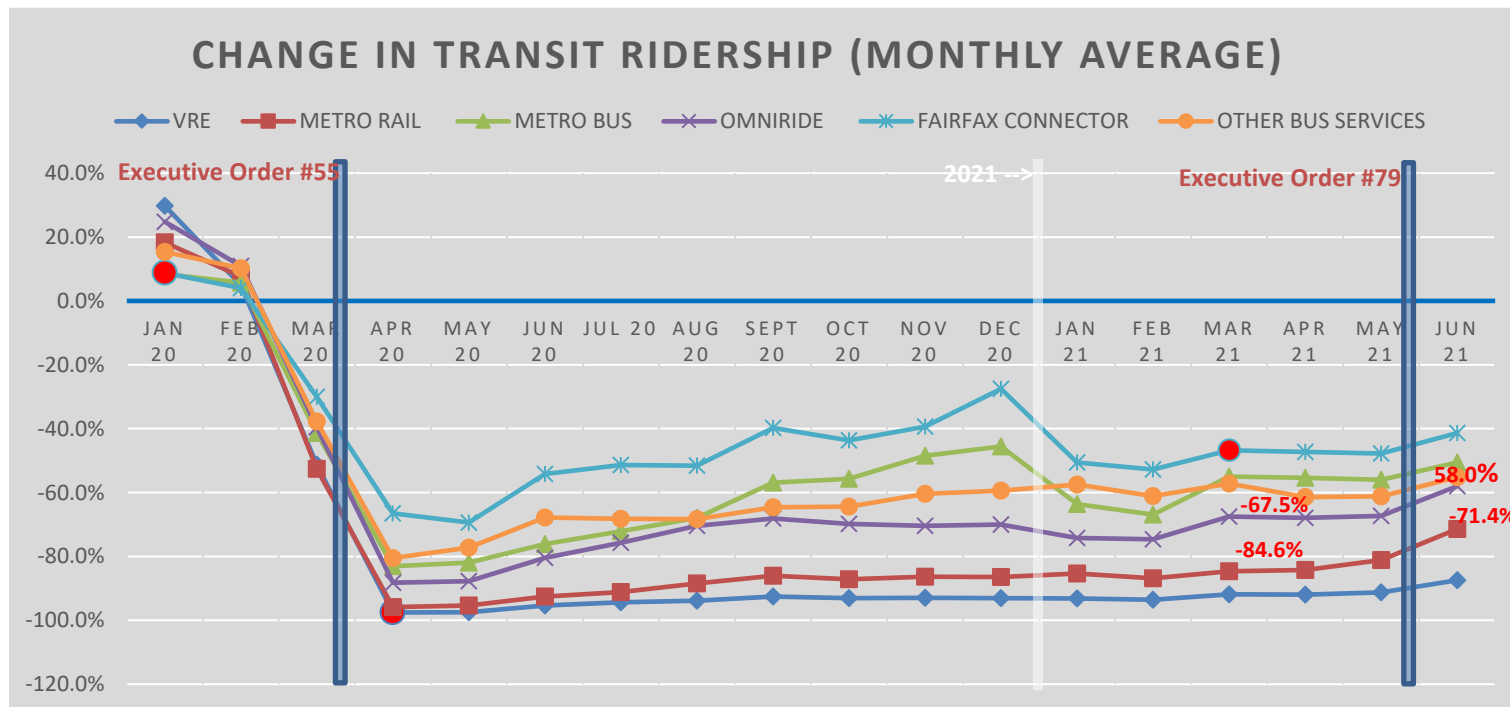
DATE: September 2, 2021

SUBJECT: Update on Travel Trends in Northern Virginia

- 1. Purpose.** To inform the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA) on recent travel trends due to COVID-19 pandemic.
- 2. Background.** At the June 10, 2021 Authority meeting, staff presented a snapshot of travel trends in Northern Virginia, comparing highway and transit travel metrics from 2020 and 2021, with corresponding weeks and months in 2019. For highway travels, traffic volumes and travel speeds were analyzed for the PM Peak periods. Staff has provided an update to most data metrics in the July meeting, except for transit ridership. Following is an update with transit ridership data in second quarter of calendar year 2021 (April – June, 2021), from all providers in Northern Virginia.
- 3. Telecommuting.** The region continues to show high percentage of workers working-from-home. According to a special Census survey (online Household Pulse Survey - <https://www.census.gov/data/experimental-data-products/household-pulse-survey.html>), about 44% of workers in Washington D.C. Metro area worked from home in July, compared to 47% in June. This is still the highest among its 14 large peer metro areas in the United States.

4. **Highway travels.** Volumes on freeways and major arterials in Northern Virginia continue to trend upward. In August, volumes are reported to be within 95% of pre-COVID conditions, compared to 92% in June. Travel speeds in August were about 7% faster, compared to 13% in June.

5. **Transit ridership.** At the June meeting, staff analyzed average monthly ridership data from all transit providers in Northern Virginia, comparing data from 2020 and 2021 to 2019 benchmark. In that analysis, data were available unto March 2021. In this update, staff extended the analysis with ridership data for the second quarter of calendar year 2021 (April--June, 2021). Below chart shows these trends. Although ridership levels are still well below 2019 benchmark, some providers have had a considerable gain since March 2021. In June 2021, Metrorail and OmniRide ridership showed increases of 13 and 10 percentage points over March ridership.



6. Next steps. Staff will continue this trend analysis to track emerging travel patterns, as the region is opening up to socio-economic activities.