

## NORTHERN VIRGINIA TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

MEMORANDUM

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

**FROM:** Harun Rashid, Regional Transportation Modeler

**DATE:** September 1, 2022

**SUBJECT:** Travel Trends Update

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- 1. Purpose:** To inform the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA) on recent travel trends since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 2. Background:** NVTA staff is monitoring travel trends in Northern Virginia, comparing highway and transit travel metrics from 2020, 2021, and 2022 with corresponding weeks and months in 2019. NVTA staff has so far presented six of these snapshot analyses, at the June, July, September, November (2021), and March and June of 2022 Authority meetings.

This update features staff analyses with Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) crash data for pedestrian fatalities in Northern Virginia, in addition to regular updates on Northern Virginia highway travels (afternoon peak periods) and transit ridership (average monthly). In our last update at the June Authority meeting, we presented data analysis through March 2022. This report updates the analysis through June 2022.

The objective of these analyses is to gain a better understanding of such trends, and to identify whether they are temporary or may be more permanent. This knowledge will enhance NVTA's ongoing long-range transportation planning efforts and may influence project-funding recommendations in future Six Year Program update cycles.

- 3. Crash data trends in Northern Virginia:** In the June report, we referred to a USDOT-NHTSA report on national trends for crashes due to pandemic-induced travel conditions and behavior (<https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813298>). While nationwide analyses definitively show upward trends in all types of vehicular crashes in 2020 and 2021 as compared to 2019, Virginia was among a few states with no increases in pedestrian traffic fatalities in the same period (<https://www.ghsa.org/resources/Pedestrians22>). In Northern Virginia, number of vehicle-to-pedestrian/bike crash rates (events per 1 million annual VMT) are statistically same between 2019 and 2020. Utilizing geo-spatial crash data locations from VDOT Traffic Engineering Division, we have identified the Rte. 1/I-95/I-395 corridor to report highest number of fatalities in 2020 (14 events out of a regional total of 24).

- 4. Highway travel trends:** In the April – June 2022 period, using VDOT data, traffic volumes on freeways and major arterials in Northern Virginia were on average 8% below pre-pandemic condition (see Chart 1). Travel speeds were about 11% faster than pre-pandemic conditions (RITIS-INRIX data). In our last update, we reported highway volumes at 10% below, and speeds to be 9% faster.
- 5. Transit ridership:** All transit providers reported positive upward trends in second quarter (see Chart 2). In May/June of this year, among ‘Other Bus Services’, DASH and CUE ridership surpassed the pre-pandemic level, for the first time since Governor’s stay-at-home executive order #55 on March 12, 2020. Among commuter services, Omniride experienced highest growth of about 13%.
- 6. Next steps:** NVTA staff will continue this trend analysis to track emerging travel patterns as the region’s travelers continue to adjust their travel choices/behaviors. We will be monitoring transit usage as more systems are offering incentives, and highway volumes with high gas prices and office occupancy rates.

Chart 1. Highway volumes.

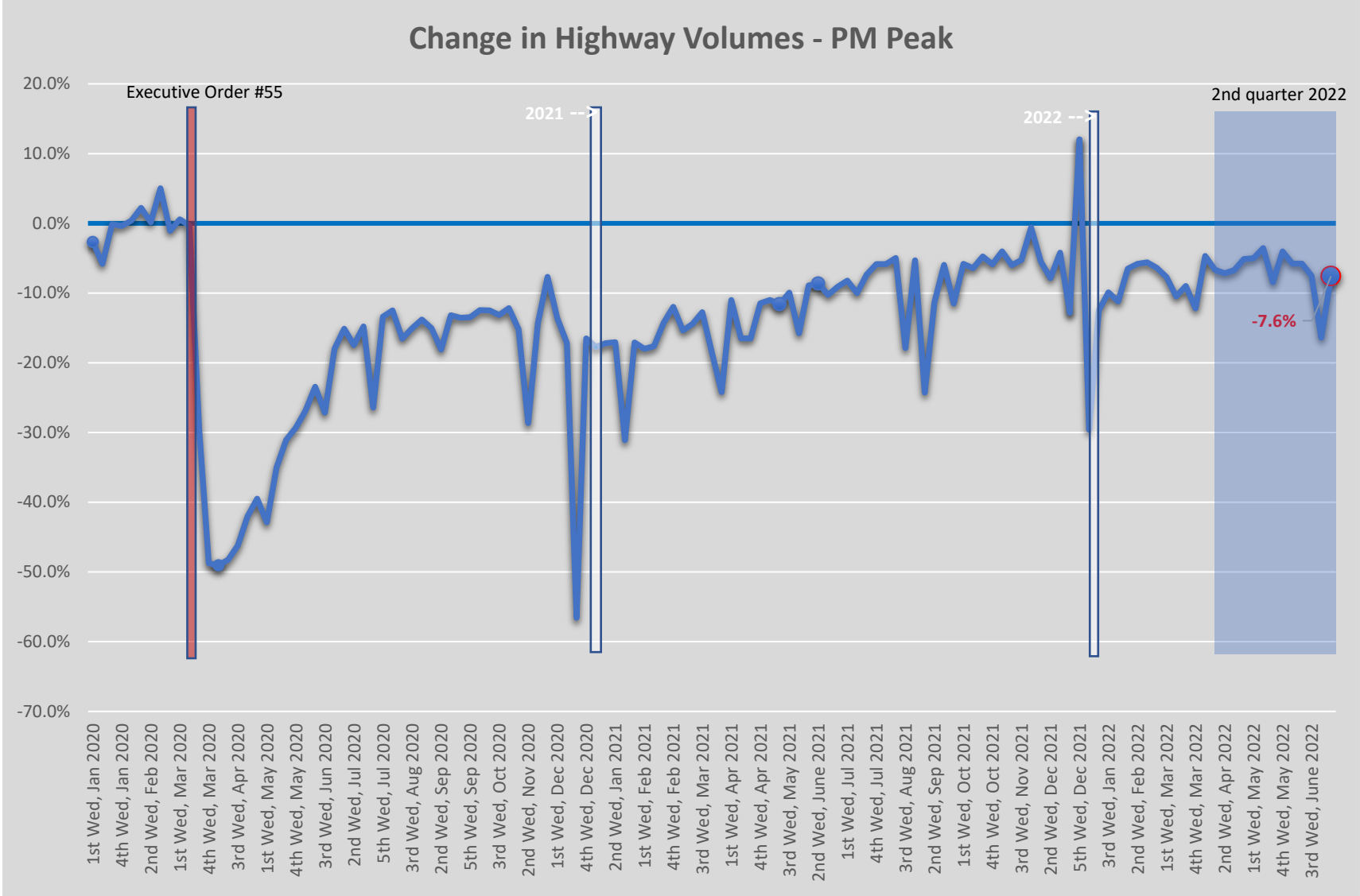


Chart 2. Transit ridership.

