

NORTHERN VIRGINIA TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

MEMORANDUM

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

FROM: Monica Backmon, Chief Executive Officer

DATE: June 2, 2022

SUBJECT: FY2022-2027 Six Year Program Public Comment Report

1. **Purpose:** To update the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTa) on the status of the FY2022-2027 Six Year Program (SYP) including public comments and testimony received during the public comment period.

2. **Background:** At the March 10, 2022 Authority meeting, the Authority approved the public comment period for the FY2022-2027 Six Year Program and the May 12th Public Hearing date. The public comment period started on Friday, April 15, 2022, and concluded at 11:59pm on Sunday, May 22, 2022. All SYP materials including the application summary, evaluation summary, map, and individual project description forms were available on the Authority's website during the public comment period at: <https://thenovaauthority.org/fy2022-2027-six-year-program/>. In keeping with normal practice, citizens were able to provide comments online, by email, by voicemail, and through the United States Postal Service.
During the public comment period, an Open House was held on May 4th at the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) District offices as part of the Joint Transportation Meeting, as well as the Authority hosted a Public Hearing on May 12, 2022. Given the continuing concerns regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, modifications were made to the Authority's traditional approach to Public Hearings, introducing the option for pre-registered citizens to provide testimony remotely as well as in person. NVTa staff livestreamed the Public Hearing via YouTube.

3. **Summary of Public Comments:** A summary of approximately 1,600 public comments from close to 450 members of the public is provided as an attachment to this memo. A complete list of public comments submitted during the Public Comment Period can be accessed on our website or by following the link: [FY2022/FY2027 SYP Public Comments](#). The three candidate projects that received the highest number of responses are:
 - a. Ballston-MU Metrorail Station West Entrance (ARL-021) – overwhelmingly supportive of the application;
 - b. North Washington Street Multimodal Improvements Project: Great Falls Street to Gresham Place (CFC-008) – overwhelmingly supportive of the application; and

- c. Van Buren Road North Extension: Route 234 to Cardinal Drive (PWC-027) – both opposition and support, in a two to one ratio.

All comments are treated with equal weight regardless of the method by which they are received. Identical comments made in duplicate, e.g., via verbal testimony and by email, are considered as a single comment. The summary of public comments will be posted on the Authority's website together with a list of all comments received.

- 4. **Other Comments:** Approximately 121 comments were received from 13 individuals after the May 22nd 11:59 pm deadline. These were not included in the summary report, although generally consistent with the results in the summary report.
- 5. **Recent Activities:** At its meeting following the Public Hearing on May 12, 2022, the Authority approved \$626,290,870 as the amount of funding for the FY2022-2027 Six Year Program (PayGo).
NVTa staff has briefed the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), Planning Coordination Advisory Committee (PCAC), and Planning and Programming Committee (PPC) on the status of the Six Year Program update during the April meeting cycle. Briefings at these meetings were to prepare the Committees for required actions at their respective June cycle meetings.
- 6. **Next steps:** NVTa staff will release its recommendations for the Six Year Program, and associated project funding levels, by June 7th, for review, comment, and action by the TAC, PCAC, and PPC during the June meeting cycle:
 - a. TAC: Tuesday, June 14, 2022, at 6:30 PM
 - b. PCAC: Wednesday, June 22, 2022, at 6:30 PM
 - c. PPC: Thursday, June 23, 2022, at 7:30 PM

All three Committee meetings will be livestreamed on NVTa's YouTube channel. The PPC will develop a final set of recommendations (to be posted on the Authority's website by June 29, 2022) for anticipated adoption by the Authority at its meeting on July 14, 2022.

Attachment:

7A. FY2022-2027 Six Year Program Summary Report of Public Comments

NORTHERN VIRGINIA TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY FY2022-2027 Six Year Program: Summary of Public Comments

I. Background

The public comment period for the FY2022-2027 Six Year Program (SYP) opened on April 15th, 2022, and closed on May 22nd, 2022. The public was able to submit comments through several channels including NVTA's dedicated email account for the SYP, comment form on the NVTA webpage, USPS mail, voicemail to the dedicated phone number, or at the Public Hearing either in-person or by phone. The Public Hearing was held on May 12th, 2022. Remote testimony required pre-registration. The Public Hearing was livestreamed, and a recording can be viewed on the NVTA's YouTube channel. NVTA accepted one comment submitted via NVTA's general email as well as 35 hard copy comments that were hand delivered at NVTA offices prior to the May 22nd deadline.

II. Total Responses Received

Public Hearing testimony was provided by 9 speakers, 2 in person and 7 remotely. Most responses were submitted through one of the other channels mentioned above. 255 individuals submitted comments by email, 150 through NVTA's website, and 35 comments were hand delivered at the NVTA offices.

Testimony and comments submitted prior to the May 22nd deadline were combined into a single database. Duplicate responses from the same individual were not counted. NVTA staff reviewed and categorized responses and converted responses into project-specific comments including whether they expressed support or opposition. Responses that were not project-specific, were classified as 'other'.

Collectively, the responses from 448 individuals and organizations represent 1609 comments in the database. Some responses addressed multiple projects. Table 1 summarizes the number of individuals responding, comment channel, and related projects mentioned.

Table 1: Comment Channels

Comment channels	Individuals responding	Projects mentioned
Email	255*	1105
Website	150*	442
Hand delivered	35	35
USPS	1	1
Voicemail	1	1
Public Hearing: In Person	2	9
Public Hearing: By Phone	7	16
Total:	448*	1609

* The total number does not add up since three people used email or the website form to send separate comments in addition to providing testimony during the Public Hearing, which were classified as duplicate comments.

III. Overview of Comments

Table 2 provides a summary of the 1609 comments for individual candidate projects, including a categorization of each. Comments more often voiced support for a specific project (72 percent of all comments received) rather than opposition (26 percent). Figure 1 shows this information graphically.

Nine individuals provided testimony at the Public Hearing held on May 12th, 2022. While three of them were representing themselves as residents, others represented organizations such as the Virginia Sierra Club, the Loudon County Chamber of Commerce, the Virginia Bicycling Federation, Active Prince William, Northern Virginia Transportation Alliance, and Van Buren Road Interest Group.

When projects received a multitude of comments, the comments tended to be either overwhelmingly supportive or overwhelmingly opposed. For instance, Ballston-MU West Entrance (ARL-021), which received the most comments (180), had 35 times as many comments in support than in opposition. Richmond Highway Bus Rapid Transit (FFX-128) received 99 comments all in support of the project.

Van Buren Road North Extension (PWC-027) is an exception with 36 comments in support and 85 in opposition, which represents a ratio of more than 1 to 2 in opposition of the project. Route 1 at Route 123 Interchange (PWC-030) similarly had a slightly larger ratio of comments around 1 to 2.5 in support.

While many projects received mostly supportive comments, projects with a smaller number of comments tended to be opposed. Examples of this include Fairfax County Parkway Widening (FFX-126), Richmond Highway Widening (FFX-131), Old Bridge Road Widening (PWC-036), Ryan Road Widening-Phase 2 (LDN-024), Neabsco Road Improvements (PWC-037), Route 7 Improvements (LDN-025), Loudoun County Parkway Interchange at US 50 (LDN-028), and University Boulevard Extension (PWC-028).

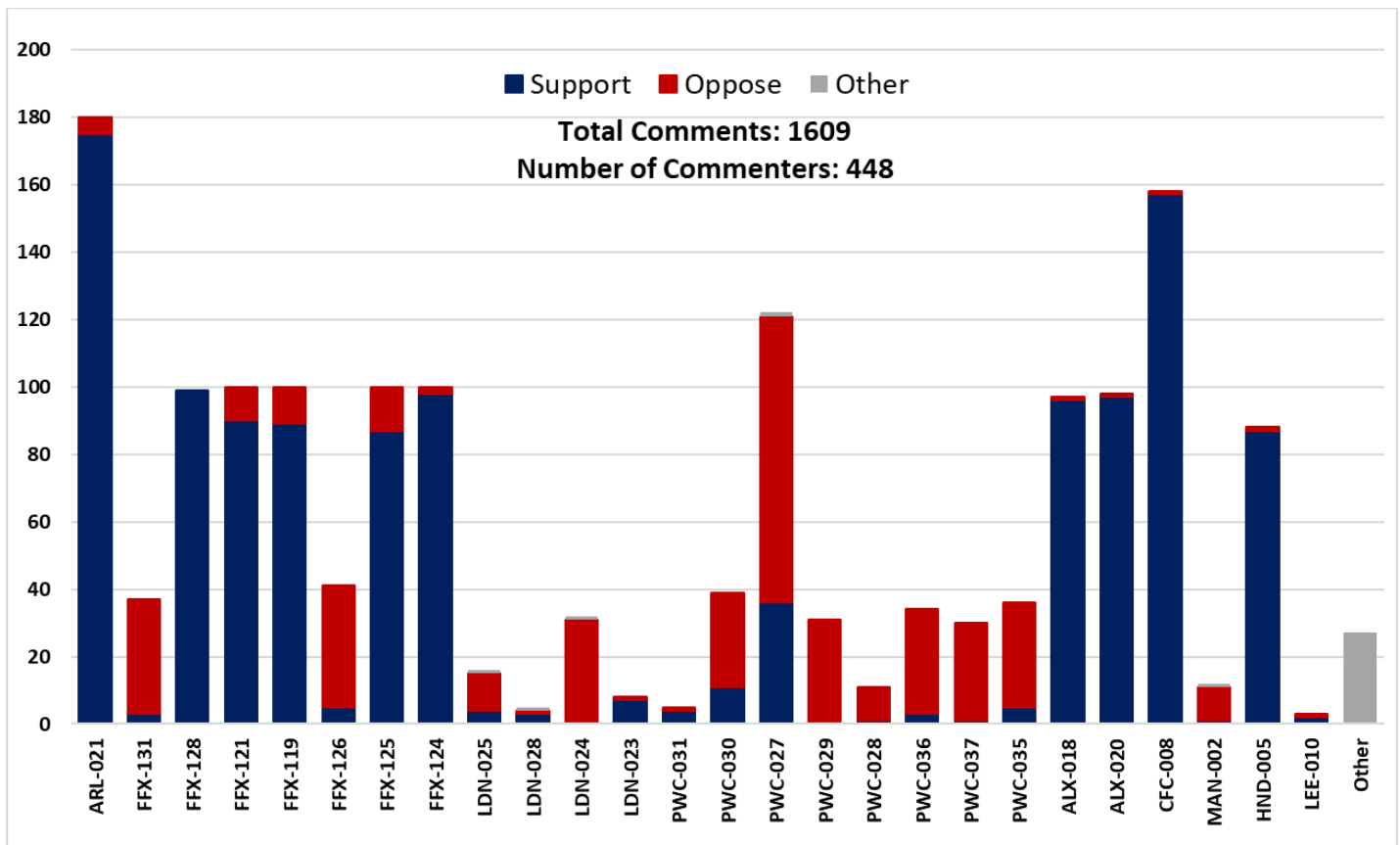
Table 2: Comment Overview

Application ID	Jurisdiction / Agency	Project	Total	Support	Oppose	Other
ARL-021	Arlington Co	Ballston-MU Metrorail Station West Entrance	180	175	5	0
FFX-131	Fairfax Co	Richmond Highway Widening From Mt. Vernon Memorial Highway/Jeff Todd Way to Sherwood Hall Lane	37	3	34	0
FFX-128	Fairfax Co	Richmond Highway (Route 1) BRT	99	99	0	0
FFX-121	Fairfax Co	Soapstone Drive Extension: Sunset Hills Road to Sunrise Valley Drive	100	90	10	0
FFX-119	Fairfax Co	Frontier Drive Extension and Intersection Improvements	100	89	11	0

Application ID	Jurisdiction / Agency	Project	Total	Support	Oppose	Other
FFX-126	Fairfax Co	Fairfax County Parkway Widening: Nomes Court to Route 123	41	5	36	0
FFX-125	Fairfax Co	Seven Corners Ring Road Improvements: Arlington Boulevard (Route 50) Westbound Ramp to Castle Place/Sleepy Hollow Road	100	87	13	0
FFX-124	Fairfax Co	8 New Battery Electric Buses - Fairfax Connector Buses for Tysons to Franconia Service	100	98	2	0
LDN-025	Loudoun Co	Route 7 Improvements: Route 9 to Dulles Greenway	16	4	11	1
LDN-028	Loudoun Co	Loudoun County Parkway Interchange at US 50	5	3	1	1
LDN-024	Loudoun Co	Ryan Road Widening (Phase 2): Evergreen Mills Road to Beaverdam Drive	32	0	31	1
LDN-023	Loudoun Co	Route 7 Corridor ITS Implementation Program	8	7	1	0
PWC-031	Prince William Co	Construct Interchange at Prince William Parkway and Minnieville Road	5	4	1	0
PWC-030	Prince William Co	Route 1 at Route 123 Interchange	39	11	28	0
PWC-027	Prince William Co	Van Buren Road North Extension: Route 234 to Cardinal Drive	122	36	85	1
PWC-029	Prince William Co	Devlin Road (South) Widening: Linton Hall Road to University Boulevard	31	0	31	0
PWC-028	Prince William Co	University Boulevard Extension: Devlin Road to Wellington Road	11	1	10	0
PWC-036	Prince William Co	Old Bridge Road Widening: Colby Drive to Minnieville Road	34	3	31	0
PWC-037	Prince William Co	Neabsco Road Improvements - Neabsco Road Widening: Route 1 to Daniel Ludwig Drive	30	1	29	0
PWC-035	Prince William Co	Old Centreville Road Widening: Fairfax County Line to Route 28	36	5	31	0
ALX-018	City of Alexandria	West End Transitway Phase 1b: South Van Dorn Street and Bridge Design	97	96	1	0
ALX-020	City of Alexandria	Alexandria Bike and Pedestrian Trails Construction and	98	97	1	0

Application ID	Jurisdiction / Agency	Project	Total	Support	Oppose	Other
		Reconstruction: Holmes Run Trail - Dora Kelly Fair-weather Crossing Bridge				
CFC-008	City of Falls Church	North Washington Street Multimodal Improvements Project: Great Falls Street to Gresham Place	158	157	1	0
MAN-002	City of Manassas	Liberia Avenue 3rd Lane Eastbound: Route 28 to Euclid Avenue	12	1	10	1
HND-005	Town of Herndon	Herndon Parkway Improvements at Worldgate Drive Extension	88	87	1	0
LEE-010	Town of Leesburg	Interchange Improvements at Route 15 Leesburg Bypass and Edwards Ferry Road	3	2	1	0
Other	N/A	Unrelated to any specific project	27	0	0	27
			1609	1161	416	32

Figure 1: Project Support and Opposition



A few comments received had similar language, likely provided by an advocacy organization. These comments often mentioned multiple projects expressing support for transit and multimodal projects, while voicing environmental concerns and opposition to expanding highway capacity.

The following comment example mentions 10 projects (FFX-128, FFX-124, CFC-008, ARL-021, ALX-018, ALX-020, HND-005, FFX-121, FFX-119, FFX-125) and was submitted approximately 85 times. This represents 19 percent of all responding individuals and 53 percent of all comments. Though the comments are spatially dispersed, representing more than 35 different ZIP Codes (for perspective, 72 ZIP Codes are represented in the total comment pool), a large number were concentrated in Arlington, Alexandria, Falls Church, and central parts of Fairfax County near City of Fairfax and I-66.

*Dear NVRT Officials,
Dear NVRT board members and local elected officials,*

The Northern Virginia Transportation Authority needs to better prioritize projects that support a sustainable, equitable and livable future rather than devoting most of its funding to bigger roads and more car dependence. I'm asking you to shift funding to projects that are consistent with adopted regional goals for walkable, bikeable, transit-oriented communities in Northern Virginia.

The proposed FY2022-27 Six-Year Funding Program prioritizes spending over \$600 million for road widening and highway interchange projects compared to only \$17 million for everything else. This is unacceptable. In a time of climate change, high costs of car ownership, and more demand for walkable communities, NVRT needs to shift its priorities.

Fortunately, there are ten worthwhile candidate projects that take us in an alternative direction from simply funding bigger high-speed roads through our communities:

- * Richmond Highway Bus Rapid Transit*
- * Fairfax Connector - 8 electric buses*
- * Improvements to make N. Washington St in Falls Church safer*
- * Second entrance for the Ballston Metro to make access more convenient*
- * West End Transitway improvements in Alexandria*
- * Holmes Run walking and biking trail reconstruction in Alexandria*
- * Three local street connection projects to improve Metro station access: Herndon (Worldgate Dr), Wiehle-Reston (Soapstone Dr), and Franconia-Springfield (Frontier Dr)*
- * Seven Corners ring road to improve the local street network and provide ped/bike connectivity*

As shown in the Coalition for Smarter Growth's "On the Wrong Road" report (smartergrowth.net), NVRT's focus on short-term congestion relief through road widening takes Northern Virginia in the wrong direction. Too many of the candidate projects would make people drive more miles, create more emissions, and undermine NVRT member jurisdiction investments in transit-oriented communities and walkable activity centers.

Please select and shift funding to projects listed above that give Northern Virginia a more sustainable and livable future.

The following comment example similarly mentions 8 projects (supporting one project and opposing seven projects) and was submitted by approximately 10 residents:

I support funding for ARL-021, the Ballston West Entrance which will improve access to the Ballston Metro, an important regional metro station served by many regional bus routes. This project would help us achieve our climate goals. The Ballston neighborhood is one of the highest-density residential areas in the region, and it deserves to have an additional entrance for people going West from the Metro.

I do not support funding for the numerous highway widenings (FFX-126, PWC-035, PWC-036, PWC-029, FFX-131, LDN-024, and PWC-037) which would increase car dependency, increase vehicle miles traveled and make our climate goals even more difficult to achieve. Data has shown that highway widening does NOT improve congestion, and may even increase costs.

These highway projects score well only because of NVRT's failure to model induced demand and failure to include climate outcomes in the scoring process.

NVRT must fix its scoring before the next round of funding.

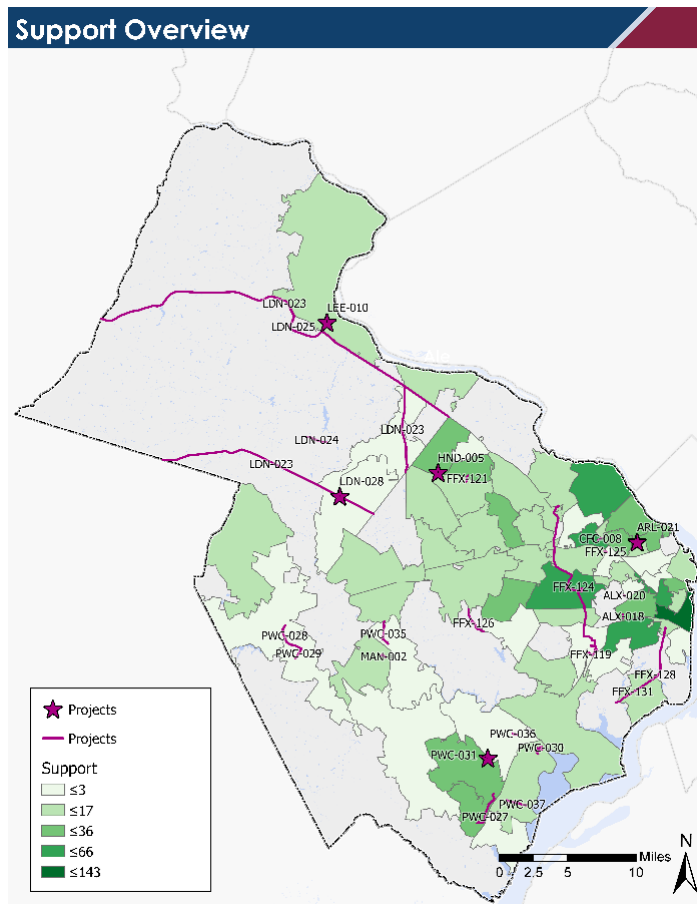
This form letter, received approximately 25 times, only mentioned support for CFC-008.

I'm writing in support of the North Washington Street Multimodal Improvements Project (application # CFC-008). This much needed improvement project will greatly benefit all modes of transportation. Please help save lives by approving the application!

IV. Spatial Distribution of Comments for Selected Projects

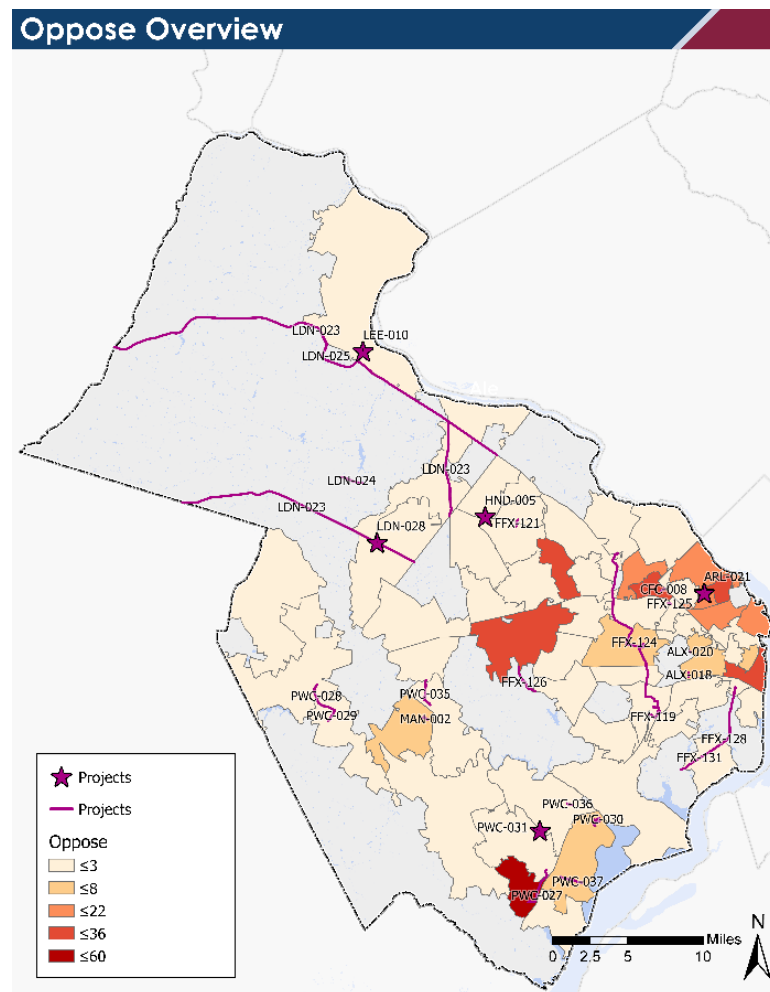
Comments were received from 72 ZIP Codes. Figures 2 and 3 respectively show the total comments by ZIP Code expressing support or opposition for any project. 152 comments had no ZIP Code mentioned and are not included in either map. Comments were not received from all ZIP Codes within Northern Virginia, such as western Loudoun County. Two members of the public provided ZIP Codes that were in Washington, DC while one commenter's ZIP Code was in Florida. One commenter's ZIP Code could not be verified. Comments are generally concentrated in more urbanized areas such as Arlington, Falls Church, Fairfax, and Alexandria. Supportive comments were most concentrated in Arlington, related to the Ballston-MU Metrorail Station West Entrance project, or Falls Church, related to the North Washington Street Multimodal Improvements project.

Figure 2. Support Comments by ZIP Code



Oppositional comments were concentrated in central Fairfax County, Arlington, Alexandria, and Falls Church (mostly opposition to road projects and support for transit and bike-pedestrian projects) and Montclair/Four Seasons neighborhoods in Prince William County (Van Buren Road North Extension).

Figure 3. Oppose Comments by ZIP Code



Comment ZIP Codes for the three most mentioned projects (ARL-021, CFC-008, and PWC-027) are mapped in Figures 4-6.

Figure 4. ARL-021 Ballston-MU Metrorail Station West Entrance

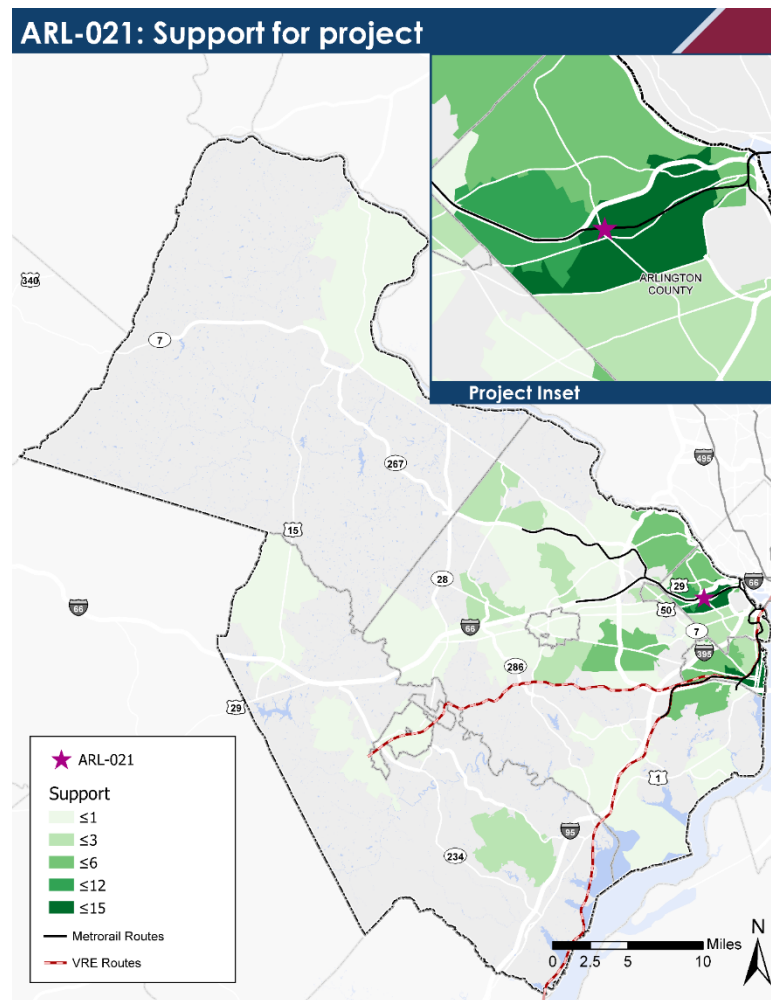


Figure 5. CFC-008 North Washington Street Multimodal Improvements

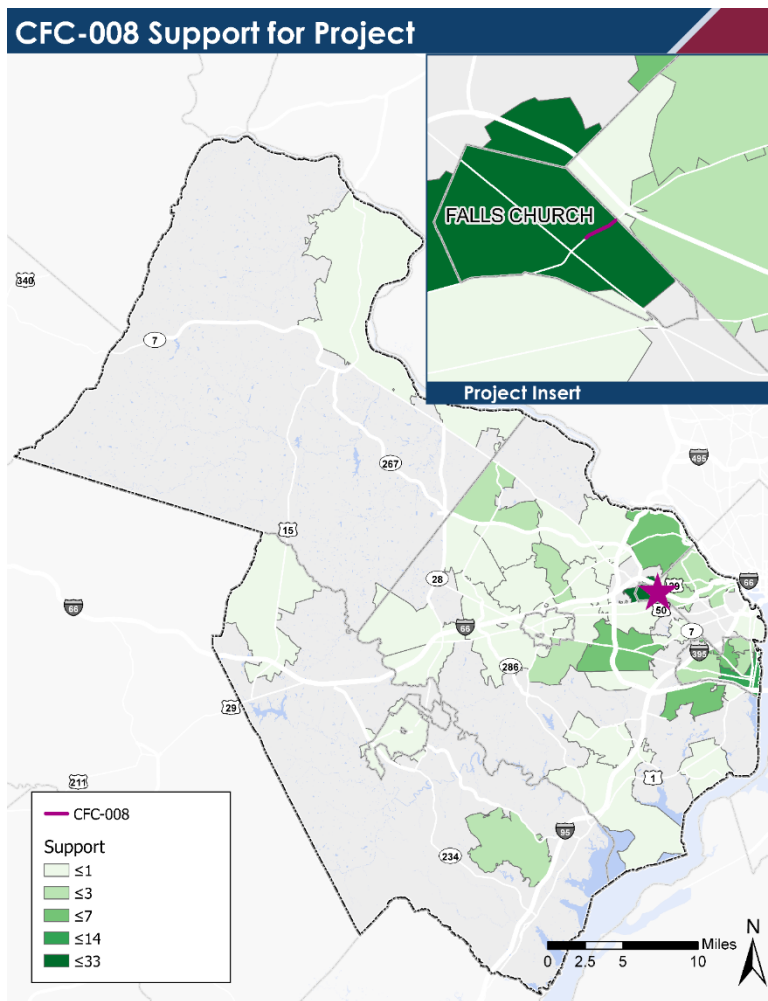


Figure 6. PWC-027 Van Buren Road North Extension

