

Virginia Transit



Equity and



Modernization



Detailed Action Planning Summary

Final Report

June 29th, 2022

•DRPT•

Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation

Detailed Action Plan

Contents

Introduction.....	3
Implementation Considerations.....	4
Tracking Benefits.....	4
Study Outcomes	5
Transit Planning and Implementation Guidebook	5
Funding Opportunities Support	6
Data Needs and Organization	6
Partnership Leveraging	7
Incorporating Equity and Modernization Criteria into Decision-Making Processes.....	7
Transit Accessibility Actions	8
Action 1: Develop resources to assist agencies with the evaluation of their fare collection policy and practices	8
Action 2: Provide transit agency staff, local decision-makers, and the public with information about trade-offs to make decisions that provide the greatest economic and societal benefits	9
Action 3: Develop suggested best practices for coordination between land use planning and transit planning.....	11
Action 4: Identify areas with unmet demand for transit service and provide new or enhanced service.....	12
Action 5: Allocate funding to prioritize expansion or enhancements of transit service to underserved areas and populations.....	13
Action 6: Develop qualitative and quantitative metrics to measure reliable and efficient transit service that promotes access to opportunity and lifeline services.....	14
Adequacy of Infrastructure Actions.....	15
Action 1: Develop technical guidance or policy on bus stop design elements and development.....	15
Action 2: Provide technical guidance or best practices for monitoring and reporting infrastructure performance	16
Action 3: Provide guidance or best practices for more effective stakeholder coordination when prioritizing improvements around bus stops	17
Action 4: Update MERIT – Capital Assistance scoring criteria to provide incentive for accessibility improvements to transit infrastructure.....	18
Action 5: Develop statewide unconstrained funding needs list.....	20
Electrification Actions	21
Action 1: Establish statewide goals for zero-emission transit vehicles and a transition plan to convert transit agency fleets.....	21

- Action 2: Conduct recurring assessments of innovation in the zero-emission transit vehicle industry..... 22
- Action 3: Develop implementation resources for agencies to assist with fleet transition planning 23
- Action 4: Align MERIT program funding with zero-emission goals 24
- Emerging Technology Actions 25
 - Action 1: Implement recurring assessments of technology use and plans across the Commonwealth..... 25
 - Action 2: Conduct recurring technology planning at the agency level..... 26
 - Action 3: Establish guidance for negotiating technology contracts 27
 - Action 4: Expand opportunities for technology funding and implementation assistance..... 28
 - Action 5: Expand use of national or international data standards such as GTFS Realtime and GTFS-Flex.... 29
- Transit Safety Actions..... 30
 - Action 1: Identify and share inclusive transit safety training opportunities for agency staff..... 30
 - Action 2: Research and compile best practices for transit agencies involvement with local public safety.... 31
 - Action 3: Develop best practices for safety-related roles to engage with community partners 32
 - Action 4: Provide guidance on (1) crime prevention through design and (2) rider safety and etiquette..... 33
 - Action 5: Pursue the completion of a study of safety measures that have worked to protect transit operators..... 34
 - Action 6: Share guidance regarding more inclusive performance measures (e.g., PTASP updates) 35
- System Engagement and Governance Actions 36
 - Action 1: Develop public engagement handbook that outlines expectations and guiding techniques for more inclusive public engagement at the local level 36
 - Action 2: Create rider advisory councils within local transit agencies statewide..... 37
 - Action 3: Provide stronger public engagement guidance for local transit agencies within DRPT external guidance documents, such as Transit Development Plan (TDP) and Transit Strategic Plan (TSP) guidelines 38

INTRODUCTION

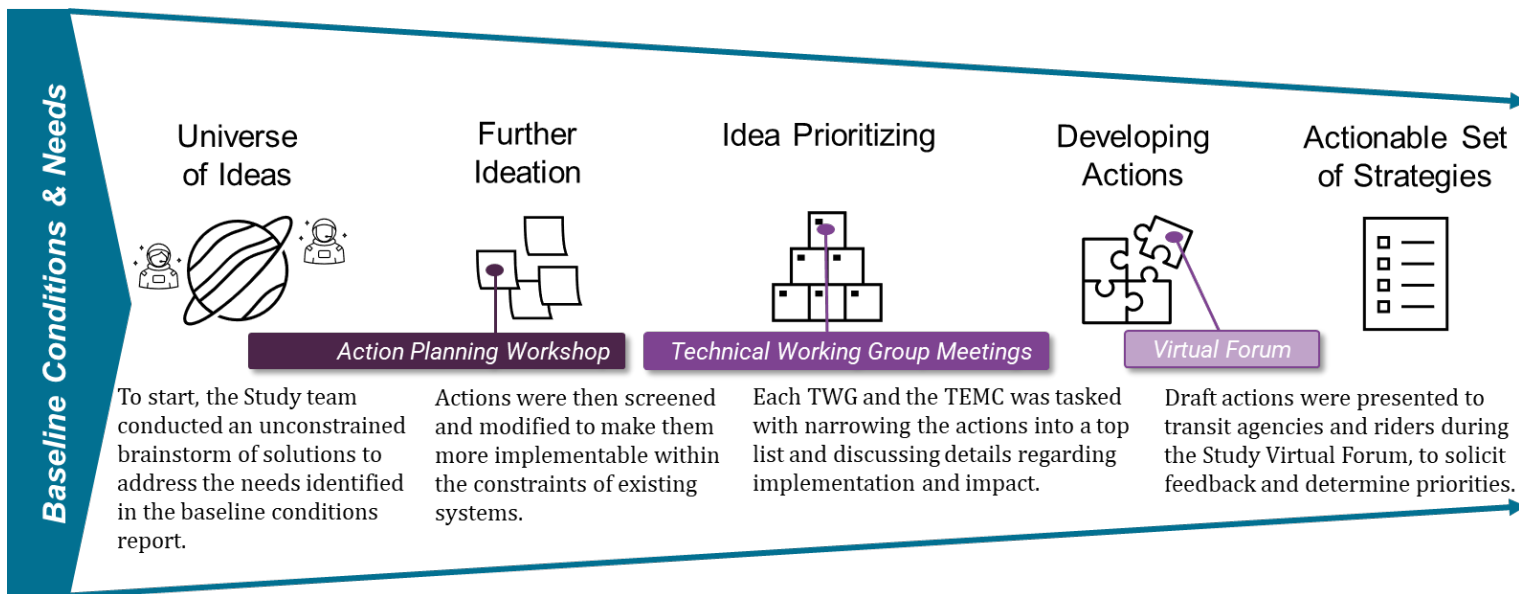
This *Detailed Action Plan* documents the programmatic outcomes from the technical analysis and public/stakeholder engagement of the Virginia Transit Equity and Modernization Study. It also includes a list of individual actions with details regarding implementation and impact, sorted by technical area.

- **Study Outcomes** are the programmatic actions that the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) will prioritize following the completion of the Study.
- **Technical Area Actions** are individual action items that include details regarding implementation and impact.

Serving as the executive summary for this technical memo, the online [Action Plan Summary](#) is a public-facing document that highlights key elements of this study to the date of posting including a summary of the action plan development process and potential actions.



Building on the opportunities assessment and understanding of current conditions, actions were developed through an iterative process that began with collecting data and soliciting feedback from transit riders and transit agency staff on the current state of transit in the Commonwealth. Technical analysis and industry research also were conducted to further understand issues and challenges facing Virginia agencies and supplement the input received from the public and stakeholders. Potential actions were developed to address these needs and focus the Commonwealth’s planning activities and investment decision-making.

As shown in the figure below, action planning began with a universe of ideas that was pared down into the set of actionable strategies summarized in this report.



Implementation Considerations

Each set of technical area actions includes implementation timeframes and level of effort. Lead, supporting, and partner agencies are identified for each action to support implementation. These considerations are included in a summary table for each action. Note that if the lead agency box is *blue* it means that another agency (not DRPT) is leading it.

Implementation Considerations	
Timeframe:  Mid-Term	Level of Effort:  Medium
Lead Agency: Local Transit Agencies	Supporting Agency: DRPT
Other Partners: Other Government Agencies, Data Partners	

● ○ ○ Implementation Timeframes

Each set of technical area actions are organized by their anticipated timeline for implementation and are grouped into three distinct implementation timeframes following the completion of the study:

- *Near-Term* timeframe actions can be implemented within one to three years
- *Mid-Term* timeframe actions can be implemented within four to six years
- *Long-Term* timeframe actions will require six or more years before being fully implemented

These implementation timeframes generally align with the Commonwealth of Virginia’s Six-Year Improvement Program (SYIP), which is updated annually and allocates public funding over a period of six years. In general, DRPT is leading the implementation of many of these actions but will require the support and cooperation of local transit agencies to effectively execute these actions and ensure they are meeting Commonwealth transportation objectives.

Level of Effort

Actions are assigned a relative level of effort that would be required to implement: *Low*, *Medium*, or *High*. DRPT is committed to continuously monitoring, evaluating, and updating actions outlined in the plan. For some actions, denoted as ‘*iterative updates*’, updates are highly suggested at specific intervals (e.g. annually, bi-annually, etc.) and also necessitate more significant effort than maintenance at those benchmarks.

Tracking Benefits

Agency and rider benefits have been drafted to showcase the direct ways in which the action plan will meet the needs identified during the study’s technical analysis and public/stakeholder engagement. The standard set of benefits shown below streamline and track the impacts that can be expected from implementing each of the technical area actions.

Expected Agency Benefits

- More informed decision-making
- More efficient allocation of resources
- Increased coordination with partner agencies
- Shared knowledge of industry best practices
- New or improved metrics and measures to track performance
- Additional funding opportunities
- Improved requirements to ensure better transit outcomes

Expected Rider Benefits

- Higher-quality transit infrastructure
- Improved processes that center rider needs
- Increased use of state-of-the-art technologies that improve rider experience
- Enhanced customer experience
- Expanded involvement in decision-making
- New or enhanced transit service

STUDY OUTCOMES

The actions in this study were developed with assistance from transit agency staff, industry experts, and the public. They were framed by an initial set of needs and opportunities, with key outcomes in mind to modernize the Commonwealth’s transit systems and do so by providing new and better opportunities to its citizens. Public transit has been and continues to be a lifeline for low-income residents, and this study validates that need and the potential for public transit services to enhance the lives of many more Virginians.

Through the study team’s process of establishing baseline conditions and needs, programmatic themes were identified that span multiple technical areas. Statewide, there is a need to:

- Improve **data collection, management, and sharing** standards
- Provide **technical support and guidance** to local transit agencies
- Provide guidance that includes **best practices** for fair and modern transit
- Increase **coordination and collaboration** between transit agencies, community organizations, institutions, localities, employers, and regional planning bodies
- Incorporate **modernization** into fair and just decision-making processes

The following are five categories of cross-cutting themes that represent needs and potential actions across each of the technical areas. These common themes were developed into “programmatic” actions that would address multiple needs with a coordinated approach to achieve better outcomes. DRPT will implement the following actions as a result of the study.

Transit Planning and Implementation Guidebook

The *Transit Planning and Implementation Guidebook* would be a Virginia-specific resource, with specific consideration of agency size, that would be complementary to the Transit Strategic Plan (TSP) and Transit Development Plan (TDP) Guidelines and can be used to inform local decision-making. The guidebook will require coordination with the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and other Virginia entities to provide best practices and processes for both DRPT and local transit agencies across the state. The guidebook may include the following topics and sections:

Transit service planning guidelines and metrics

- Guidance for common transit planning topics such as service design standards, performance measurements, and service evaluations

Coordinating land use and transit planning

- Guidance for early coordination of planning for higher-density land uses with local transit agencies plans for stops and hub stations

Fare policy decision-making

- An overview of different fare policy opportunities and considerations for each

Transit safety and security

- Strategies for coordination between transit providers and law enforcement and emergency response personnel

Public and stakeholder engagement

- Guidance for stakeholder coordination when implementing bus improvements and acquiring additional right-of-way
- Guidance for public engagement, specifically to engage riders and potential riders who do not typically participate due to lack of time, lack of understanding of transit systems, speaking English as a second language, and not knowing about agency projects, initiatives, and investments and their ability to influence decision-making

Bus stop design and development

- Guidelines for bus stop design and development, and best practices for coordinating with stakeholders around bus stop improvements and incorporating experience and lessons learned from local agencies and VDOT for developing improvements on state-owned right-of-way

Zero-emission transit vehicle transition planning

- An overview of different zero-emission transit vehicle types including guidance for planning, procurement, deployment, and maintenance

Funding Opportunities Support

This includes providing technical support and guidance to local transit agencies with regards to identifying and applying for grant programs:

- Tracking of state, regional, and federal funding opportunities in a database that is accessible to local transit agencies and includes details related to each funding opportunity, including cost sharing, eligible projects, etc.
- Providing resources for transit agencies to advocate for funding and prioritization of projects with local decision-making bodies
- Assisting local agencies with preparing and applying for discretionary federal funding opportunities:
 - Identifying candidate projects that DRPT can partner with agencies on and assist with grant application development when discretionary federal funding opportunities are advertised
 - Setting funds aside, separate from the traditional MERIT program schedule, that can be used for discretionary federal funding programs on an on-demand basis as opportunities are advertised

Data Needs and Organization

This includes developing standards and guidance for the consistent collection, management, and reporting of data. Reporting could be compiled annually by each transit agency and added to open data platforms hosted by DRPT:

- Standardized survey template that can be sent to agencies to track transit data reporting annually
- Guidelines for consistent tracking and reporting of transit data to the National Transit Database (NTD) and TransAM (a transit asset management software)
- Guidelines for the collection and classification of infrastructure, bus stop amenities, and critical transit support systems
- Facilitation of the sharing of data that supports service planning between transit agencies and other public entities
 - Data may include transit-related attributes and community-related attributes such as jobs, food deserts, people with disabilities, retail locations, and human and social services
- Standards for open data (e.g., GIS and GTFS data) that can be publicly available and can be shared with other agencies and stored on DRPT's Open Data Portal
 - Adding performance data into DRPT's Open Data Portal
- Designation of a point of contact (POC) for each transit agency, who serves as the transit agency's liaison for coordination with DRPT, other agencies, metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), and regional planning entities
- Tracking of progress against service guidelines and priorities
- Technical assistance to agencies instructing them on how to extract/integrate data into existing agency systems, and education on how to leverage and share the data

Partnership Leveraging

This includes providing coordination and collaboration between transit agencies and a variety of community decision-makers regularly (e.g., roundtables) and at critical decision-making points. Developing structured roles within partnerships can solidify existing relationships and provide avenues to explore new ways to leverage partners to create mutually beneficial outcomes such as sharing knowledge, pursuing new opportunities, and resolving obstacles to implementation.

- **Community organizations and advocacy groups** – Advocacy groups can assist with elevating community needs and perspectives, planning public participation events, distributing informational materials, and supporting key capital improvement projects.
- **Large employers and local chambers of commerce** – Private sector employers can be effective partners for implementing and promoting transit service to their employees and customers. Consistent support from private sector partners also can help destigmatize public transit and market transit service as a reliable and efficient mode of transportation that supports economic development and access to jobs.
- **Research institutions and private entities** – The Commonwealth can partner with research institutions and private companies to pilot new and innovative technologies. There is a precedent for this in Virginia with autonomous shuttle pilot programs.
- **Regional planning bodies** – Coordination between transit agencies and regional planning organizations, such as MPOs, can resolve overlapping transit service between multiple providers, help to facilitate coordination for transfers between services at jurisdictional or service boundaries, consider land use with transportation decision-making, and allow for prioritization of funding for specific projects.
- **Localities** – Increased coordination with localities allows transit agencies to identify and prioritize improvements that are most needed to support efficient transit service and improve the customer experience (e.g., sidewalks, bus stop shelters, crosswalks, signage). This includes VDOT coordination for localities that do not maintain their own roadway infrastructure.

Incorporating Equity and Modernization Criteria into Decision-Making Processes



This includes developing criteria in new or existing programs that promote and enhance modernization goals such as lifeline services and community connections through revised guidance, incentives, or technical assistance. These criteria can be included as additional measures when evaluating projects applying for funding.

- Including modernization criteria into scoring used to evaluate projects applying for state grant funding. This could be accomplished by adding new metrics related to modernization, or by increasing the value or weight of existing criteria that promote these goals. For example:
 - Increasing the weight of the existing MERIT points awarded for LEED-certified buildings and electric or hybrid vehicles would support the state’s goals of modernizing transit facilities and fleets
 - Adding criteria for assessing the impacts of expansion plans on underserved populations or improving Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility of existing stations and bus stops would promote enhanced equity in transit
- Providing bonus points to projects that expand or enhance service in areas with state or locally identified transit gaps and that provide service to underserved populations
- Establishing statewide standards for measures that can be used to monitor and report on infrastructure performance, reliability, and ADA compliance
- Developing guidance for transit infrastructure performance and incentivizing compliance with standards using DRPT-provided tools and assistance

TRANSIT ACCESSIBILITY ACTIONS

Action 1: Develop resources to assist agencies with the evaluation of their fare collection policy and practices

Develop a three-step decision-making and cost-benefit analysis guide (steps for the guide are shown below in **Figure 1**) to assist agencies with assessing whether zero-fare transit is an appropriate policy option and provide potential technologies should they choose to collect fares. DRPT would provide an initial statewide assessment and prepare the analysis for smaller agencies that may not have the resources to conduct the analysis. As a part of Step 2, DRPT can develop data and research that contribute to agency and public discussions (e.g. the cost of driving versus an annual pass around the Commonwealth).

Implementation Considerations	
Timeframe:  Near-term	Level of Effort:  Low
Lead Agency: DRPT	Supporting Agency: Local Transit Agencies

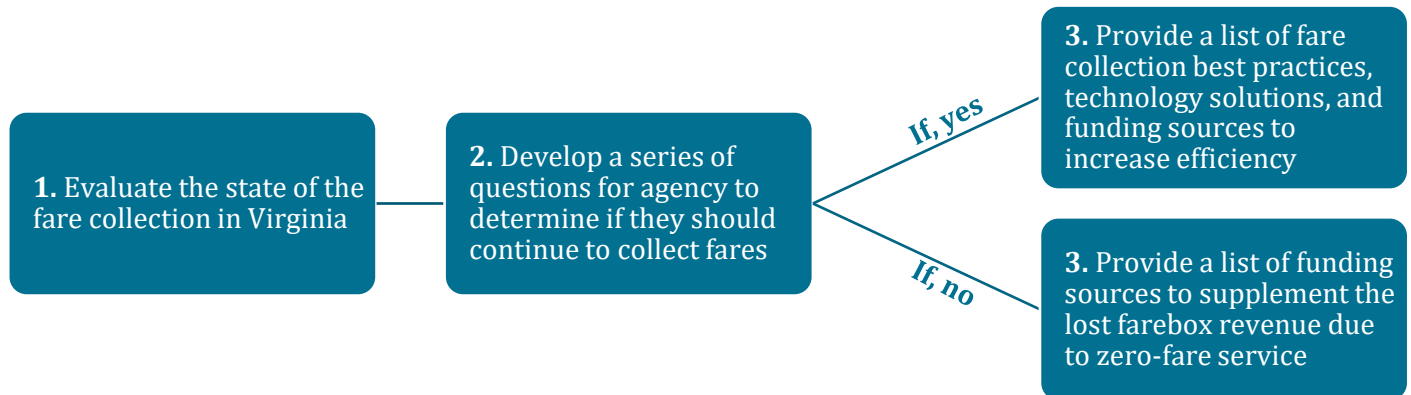


Figure 1: Decision-making guide steps (Accessibility – Action 1)

Expected Agency Benefits

More informed decision-making

- Agencies can use cost-benefit analyses to make informed budgeting decisions that best serve each agency. This analysis also can be used to apply for Transit Ridership Incentive Program (TRIP) or other state grants. Technology decisions will be informed by a pre-vetted set of options, rather than starting from the beginning.

More efficient allocation of resources

- Agencies that choose to collect fares can streamline the technology acquisition and maintenance process. Should zero-fare service be implemented, it may allow for some agencies to devote transportation spending to other expenditures that promote quality of life.

Expected Rider Benefits

Enhanced customer experience



- Riders can experience more user-friendly fare collection technologies. Depending on the agency, riders may experience zero-fare service.

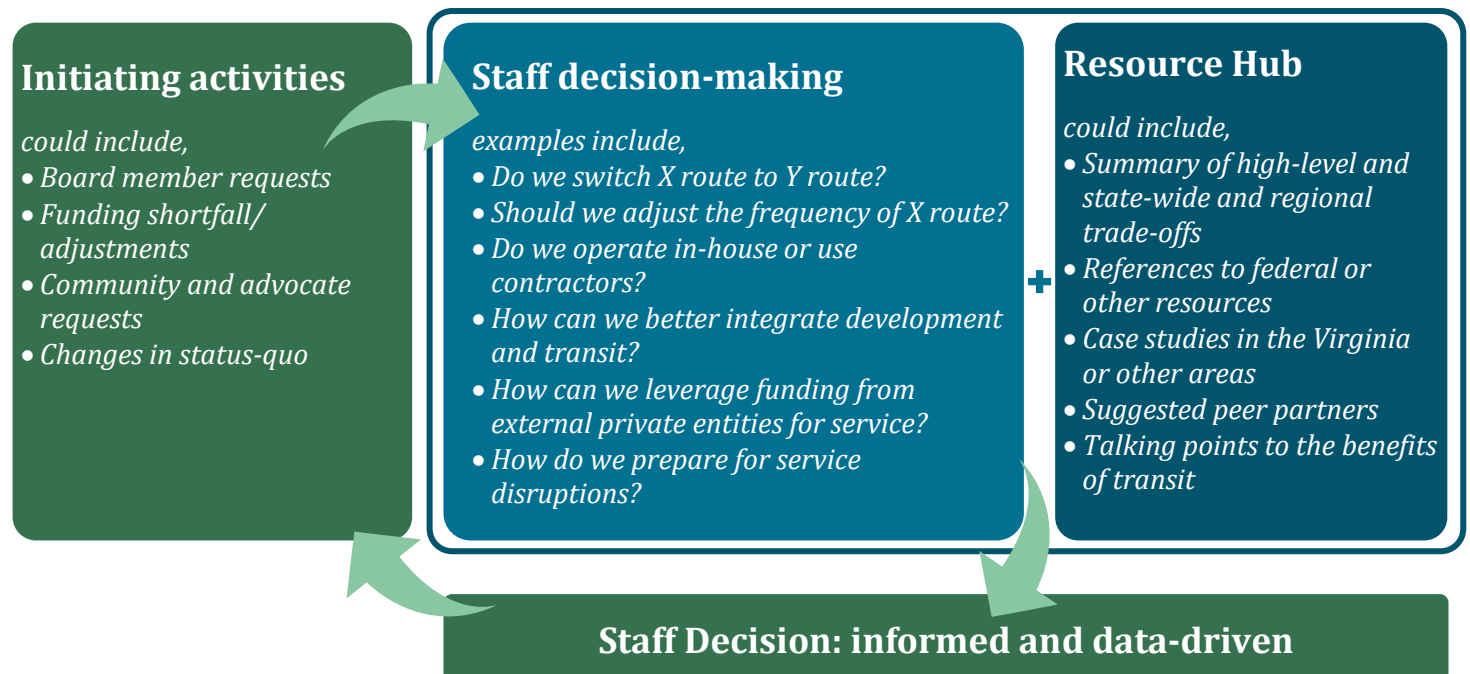
Increased use of state-of-the-art technologies that improve rider experience

- Riders may experience the most up-to-date technology, including new releases and updates, that may improve useability and repair glitches.

Action 2: Provide transit agency staff, local decision-makers, and the public with information about trade-offs to make decisions that provide the greatest economic and societal benefits

Develop an online hub to share strategies, implementation stories, and best practices from agencies across Virginia that have received funding from or are seeking funding from DRPT. Representatives from the technical working groups and agency survey respondents emphasized the desire to learn from each other. This hub, managed by DRPT and with contributions from agencies within Virginia, can be a central location to share knowledge and success of transit related investments. Agencies could submit a variety of materials including case studies, potential partners, funding sources, and questions to consider that can be utilized to support decision-makers evaluation of trade-offs in transit investments. The hub would be external facing, available to the public, to enhance transparency by providing information on the types of projects DRPT has funded in recent years and the success stories of DRPT funded projects and programs. This hub can be considered in the *Transit Planning and Implementation Guidebook* (see page 5) and *Funding Opportunities Support* (see page 5) study outcomes.

Implementation Considerations	
Timeframe:  Near-Term	Level of Effort:  Medium
Lead Agency: DRPT	Supporting Agency: Local Transit Agencies
Other Partners: VTA, Advocacy Organizations	





Expected Agency Benefits

More informed decision-making

- Agencies can utilize experiences from peer agencies and industry best practices to help decision-making at all levels make well-informed investment decisions that best support their communities. Using real-world, implemented examples can increase confidence for elected officials and decision-makers.

Shared knowledge of industry best practices

- Agencies can share and utilize best practice resources to identify solutions more efficiently, including potentially identifying less expensive strategies that may have a greater impact on vulnerable populations than other strategies.



Expected Rider Benefits

Enhanced processes that center rider needs

- Riders can more quickly experience improvements if the decision-making process is streamlined with additional information.

Action 3: Develop suggested best practices for coordination between land use planning and transit planning

Develop suggested best practices for coordination between local land use planning and transit agencies. This should include considerations for different governance structures, agency sizes, and geographies and guidance for how to coordinate development review with new and existing transit services (including policy and coordination strategies). These best practices could be housed in the *Transit Planning and Implementation Guidebook* (see page 5).

Implementation Considerations	
Timeframe:  Near-Term	Level of Effort:  Medium
Lead Agency: DRPT	Supporting Agency: Local Transit Agencies
Other Partners: MPOs, PDCs, Local Jurisdictions, DHCD (Department of Housing and Community Development), Virginia Housing Development Authority	

Expected Agency Benefits

Increased coordination with partner agencies

- Agencies proactively coordinating land uses and transit can result in better-informed long-term solutions that will benefit current and future land-use contexts and reduce potential costs to retrofit infrastructure for transit.

Shared knowledge of industry best practices

- Agencies can utilize best practices to foster valuable relationships between land-use and transit planners (and processes) to best support land-use changes and economic growth.



Expected Rider Benefits

Improved processes that center rider needs

- Riders may experience better-coordinated access between transit stops and destinations/land uses. Informed land-use planning and policies also can minimize the displacement of existing populations and increase the ability of current residents to utilize the service.

Action 4: Identify areas with unmet demand for transit service and provide new or enhanced service

Using the study's Tableau dashboard and Access to Opportunity tool, DRPT could provide annual data updates and trend changes. Agencies will be able to supplement this analysis with local data to make informed decisions about planning and prioritizing opportunities to fill service gaps. This can result in the agencies regularly assessing gaps and implementing service changes and/or applying for specific capital project funding. DRPT may choose to apply scoring criteria to certain grant programs to prioritize projects that fill service gaps.

Implementation Considerations	
Timeframe:  Mid-Term	Level of Effort:  Medium
Lead Agency: Local Transit Agencies	Supporting Agency: DRPT
Other Partners: Other Government Agencies, Data Partners	

Potential Process Flowchart



Figure 2: Potential process flowchart (Accessibility – Action 4)

Expected Agency Benefits

More informed decision-making

- Agencies and jurisdictions can make data-driven and context-sensitive decisions that best serve individuals and communities in the area.

More efficient allocation of resources

- Agencies can better understand service gaps for vulnerable populations and address specific community needs. Documentation of these opportunities can be used to feed into the justification for funding.

Expected Rider Benefits

New or enhanced transit service



- Riders may experience increased consistency of service levels across their communities and broader service coverage, enabling them to utilize transit to connect to key destinations.

Action 5: Allocate funding to prioritize expansion or enhancements of transit service to underserved areas and populations

This action involves specifically allocating funding to prioritize service expansion or enhancement to underserved populations. There are many potential options for how this would work, including adjusting existing funding programs.

Implementation Considerations

- Criteria would need to be developed to evaluate potential projects or services that further the study’s goals, regardless of the selected funding source.

Implementation Considerations	
Timeframe:  Mid-Term	Level of Effort:  High
Lead Agency: DRPT	Other Partners: General Assembly, TSDAC, VTA, Advocacy Organizations

Expected Agency Benefits

Additional funding opportunities

- Agencies can apply for funding opportunities that focus on metrics beyond ridership to enhance or expand service that provides key connections to jobs and destinations and better serve populations who need it most.

Improved requirements to ensure better transit outcomes

- Agencies can utilize a variety of metrics to evaluate that their transit service aligns with their desired outcomes and also is competitive for funding.



Expected Rider Benefits

New or enhanced transit service

- Riders in areas with relatively lower demand (and/or ridership) than urban cities could experience new or enhanced transit service that serves the local demand.

Action 6: Develop qualitative and quantitative metrics to measure reliable and efficient transit service that promotes access to opportunity and lifeline services

These metrics will consider the variations between agencies such as fleet size, population served, etc. DRPT would provide potential metrics and strategies that could be implemented by local transit agencies in existing service adjustments and service planning. These would be incorporated into the *Transit Planning and Implementation Guidebook* (see page 5) or into TDP/TSP process guidelines.

Key Characteristics	
Timeframe:  Mid-Term	Level of Effort:  Medium
Lead Agency: DRPT	Supporting Agency: Local Transit Agencies

Potential Process Flowchart

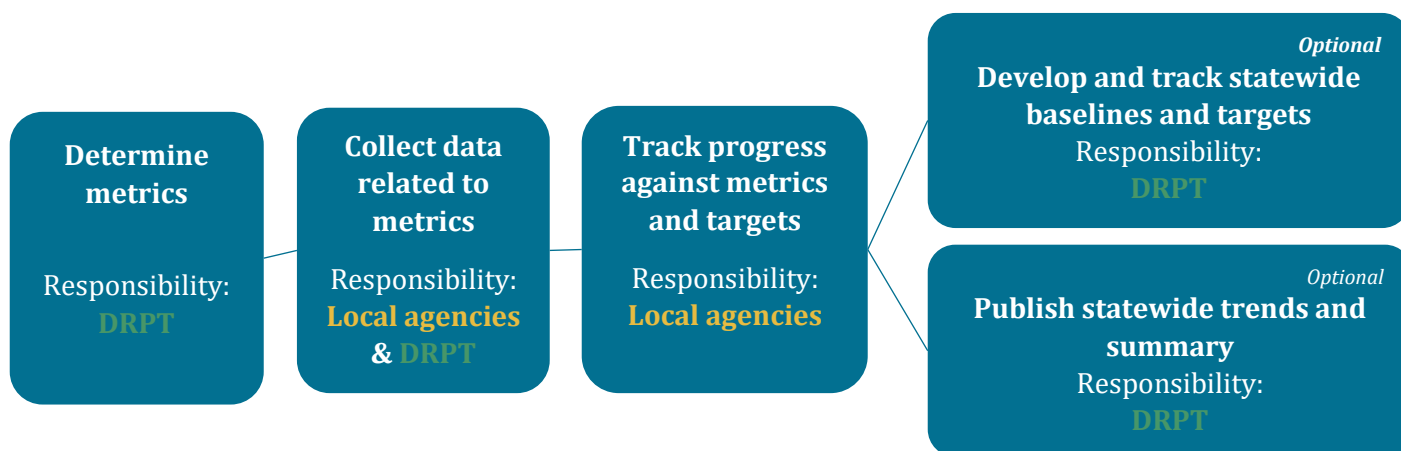


Figure 3: Potential process flowchart (Accessibility – Action 6)

Expected Agency Benefits

More informed decision-making

- Agencies can utilize improved metrics to make data-driven and context-sensitive decisions to best serve individuals and communities.

New or improved metrics and measures to track performance

- Agencies can utilize a diverse set of metrics to track performance and impacts to the community.

Expected Rider Benefits

Improved processes that center rider needs



- Diversifying the metrics used to evaluate transit enables agencies to identify and minimize compounding impacts for vulnerable populations with a lack of access to opportunity (e.g., family-sustaining jobs, healthcare) by providing meaningful transit connections.

ADEQUACY OF INFRASTRUCTURE ACTIONS

Action 1: Develop technical guidance or policy on bus stop design elements and development

This action involves developing a more detailed policy or guidance on bus stop or transit center design and development that can be adopted or leveraged by transit agencies serving different types of communities. Coordination efforts from Action #1 also can be incorporated into this guidance. This should include guidelines on ADA compliance and wayfinding. This guidance should:

- Define minimum bus stop requirements based on context-specific information (e.g., type of service, geographic context)
- Incorporate incentives for agencies to follow the guidance
- Provide best practices and safe operation practices for flag stop operators
- Include key considerations for future development of metrics or standards that will help agencies continue to monitor and report status and performance of bus stops

Implementation Considerations	
Timeframe:  Near-Term	Level of Effort:  Low
Lead Agency: DRPT	Supporting Agency: Local Transit Agencies
Other Partners: VDOT	

These standards or policies would be incorporated into the *Transit Planning and Implementation Guidebook* (see page 5).

Expected Agency Benefits

More efficient allocation of resources

- Agencies can utilize technical guidance to evaluate the current state of their infrastructure and make well-informed investment decisions to best support their communities.

Expected Rider Benefits

Higher-quality transit infrastructure



- Riders may experience safety and accessibility improvements that align with best practices and fit within the local context of the bus stop (not a one-size-fits-all approach).

Improved processes that center rider needs

- Riders may experience infrastructure investments to ensure stops meet minimum standards and increase the consistency of infrastructure across the Commonwealth.

Action 2: Provide technical guidance or best practices for monitoring and reporting infrastructure performance

To provide insight into the various metrics and performance approaches utilized regularly in transit, this action starts with a literature review of national best practices. DRPT can then collaborate with agencies to determine what topics and methods will best support DRPT and agencies in Virginia to achieve their goals. This includes providing technical guidance and developing statewide minimum standards on measures that should be used to monitor and report on infrastructure performance, including reliability (on-time performance) and ADA compliance. This could include the expanded use of TransAM (a transit asset management system) for data collection.

Implementation Considerations	
Timeframe:  Near-Term	Level of Effort:  Low
Lead Agency: DRPT	Supporting Agency: Local Transit Agencies

Expected Agency Benefits

New or improved metrics and measures to track performance

- Agencies can be more consistent and standardized in reporting performance and reliability measures, improving DRPT’s understanding of the public transportation system performance in vulnerable or underserved areas.

Expected Rider Benefits



Improved processes that center rider needs

- Riders may experience improved infrastructure conditions or faster response times to fix infrastructure. Riders may also experience more targeted infrastructure improvements to address locations that are not currently best-serving communities.

Action 3: Provide guidance or best practices for more effective stakeholder coordination when prioritizing improvements around bus stops

This includes providing guidance on prioritizing improvements around bus stops and best practices on how to streamline stakeholder coordination. This guidance would be based on local and national best practices and could include checklists, right-of-way (ROW) ownership maps, or guidance on how to place or move bus stops in areas that already have accessible infrastructure.

This guidance should be developed and implemented prior to developing any additional guidance on bus stop design or performance monitoring. The first step in this process would be for DRPT to initiate engagement with VDOT on ADA compliance and permitting requirements on state-owned ROW. The guidance should include methods to streamline improvements when working on state-owned ROW and other ROW, as the processes will vary.

Implementation Considerations	
Timeframe:  Near-Term	Level of Effort:  Medium
Lead Agency: DRPT	Supporting Agency: Local Transit Agencies
Other Partners: VDOT, Private Property Owners	

Expected Agency Benefits

Increased coordination with partner agencies

- Agencies can use more accessible data sets and best practices to increase the efficiency of discussions with stakeholders.

More informed decision-making

- Agencies can approach infrastructure improvements with more confidence and clarity on how to manage the process and how long the steps should take.

Expected Rider Benefits

Improved processes that center rider needs

- Riders may experience filled pedestrian gaps and more consistent, accessible infrastructure around bus stops in locations that currently have gaps.

Higher-quality transit infrastructure



- Riders may experience increased connectivity of sidewalks and improved access around bus stops, making transit more accessible and enjoyable.

Action 4: Update MERIT – Capital Assistance scoring criteria to provide incentive for accessibility improvements to transit infrastructure

This action involves reevaluating current project scoring methodology to help prioritize projects that modernize transit systems and their infrastructure. DRPT can make changes to increase the weight of existing criteria that support accessible infrastructure in the near-term, but a more thorough update to the scoring process will require input and approval from the Transit Service Delivery Advisory Committee (TSDAC) and Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB). Modification to scoring methodology could:

- Consider the various benefits that projects provide to people and communities as well as the fair distribution of those benefits, and then consider adding explicit scoring criteria related to those benefits. Scoring criteria may include incentive points for inclusive community engagement and capacity building, or more general criteria for targeted community benefits.
- Add new criteria or increase value/weight of existing criteria that promotes modernization of the system (e.g., service reliability, customer impact, environmental impact). For example, the current MERIT service impact score could incorporate additional points (e.g., extra 5 points) for projects that transition infrastructure to more modern technologies, such as zero-emissions vehicles or integrated, contactless fare payments
- Add new criteria or increase value/weight of existing criteria that promote ADA compliance or accessibility improvements, including connected sidewalks and other basic infrastructure

DRPT is currently undertaking this action and is in the process of updating MERIT criteria to incentivise infrastructure improvements. Through this process, DRPT will continue to monitor the outcomes of the capital grants to ensure that more agencies are implementing infrastructure improvements and will continuously improve the scoring as necessary to provide effective incentives.

Implementation Considerations	
Timeframe:  Near-Term	Level of Effort:  Medium (Iterative updates)
Lead Agency: DRPT	Supporting Agency: Local Transit Agencies



Expected Agency Benefits

New or improved metrics and measures to track performance

- Agencies can adopt a more data-driven and transparent prioritization process where needs will be driven by data and metrics that support improved transit infrastructure

Improved requirements to ensure better transit outcomes

- Agencies can utilize a more transparent process where transit investments explicitly consider the transportation needs of underserved areas.

More informed decision-making

- Agencies can make informed decisions and investments that align with the Commonwealth's goals for modernization and improved transit services.



Expected Rider Benefits

Improved processes that center rider needs

- Riders may experience infrastructure improvements that increase the accessibility to transit, including ADA-compliant infrastructure, improve reliability and comfort of services, make transit easier to use, and mitigate the potential negative impacts of local transit emissions.

Action 5: Develop statewide unconstrained funding needs list

This action includes developing a statewide unconstrained needs list to better understand and communicate the true level of transit needs (and understanding of overall prioritization of these needs) and associated funding levels. This information can be compiled using existing data on assets and expected service lives (e.g., TransAM) and through encouraging regular reporting of unconstrained needs by agencies.

Implementation Considerations	
Timeframe:  Long-Term	Level of Effort:  Medium/High
Lead Agency: DRPT	Supporting Agency: Local Transit Agencies

Unconstrained needs should be categorized as state of good repair (SGR) reinvestments, to maintain the current infrastructure, or enhancements that will expand services or improve functionality of infrastructure. Unconstrained enhancements needs, including expansion, could be compiled from regional and/or MPO plans and agency’s transit strategic plans (TSP). SGR needs can be found in the DRPT group transit asset management (TAM) Plan, though this plan is currently focused on fleet and facilities only and will not reflect all capital reinvestment needs. DRPT’s current 5-year capital plan combines SGR and enhancement needs but is constrained by funding availability, eligible agency submissions, and its short-term outlook. Combined these data sources may provide a relatively good picture of unconstrained transit needs, however there are still some major data gaps to compile a comprehensive list of unconstrained SGR needs. For instance, regional and/or MPO plans have very limited data on SGR needs and the group TAM Plan only has data on fleet and facility’s needs. Ideally, these sources could be combined and improved with longer-term reporting of needs and inclusion of more asset categories for reinvestment.

Typically, transit agencies do not currently report all capital needs to DRPT and only submit high-priority needs that qualify for grants, unconstrained reporting would require a change to existing process and new requirements of local agencies. Many local agencies do not create their own unconstrained needs list for internal purposes, due to historical limitations on grants and local match, which consistently constrain capital expenditures. Working with local agencies to develop a repeatable unconstrained needs reporting process will be an iterative exercise.

Expected Agency Benefits

More informed decision-making

- Agencies can better understand the complete funding needs for transit assets and provide the state decision-makers with a more data-driven and organized idea of the necessary funding to maintain a safe and reliable stock of transit infrastructure.

More efficient allocation of resources

- Agencies also can utilize the funding needs list to prioritize improvements, identify and secure additional funding, and ensure that they can maintain a high quality of transit infrastructure and service long-term.

Expected Rider Benefits



Higher-quality of transit infrastructure

- Riders may experience a higher quantity of improvements due to the foresight and planning of future needs.

ELECTRIFICATION ACTIONS

Action 1: Establish statewide goals for zero-emission transit vehicles and a transition plan to convert transit agency fleets

Goals for transit vehicles across the Commonwealth have not been established yet, and the establishment of these goals will require discussions and collaboration between state agencies. DRPT should incorporate metrics into zero-emission goals to ensure the benefits are fairly shared across all populations. When goals are identified, these metrics should be focused on transition planning efforts. Data availability should be considered, and methodologies will need to be defined to accurately measure transit agencies of different scales and service types. Planning metrics such as the VPI can be effective for measuring impacts to underserved populations. For example, percent of fleet electrified by transit agency coverage and VPI.

Implementation Considerations	
Timeframe:  Near-Term	Level of Effort:  Medium
Lead Agency: DRPT	Supporting Agency: Local Transit Agencies
Other Partners: Consultants, Other Stakeholder Agencies	

Additionally, identifying emissions targets when establishing zero-emission goals is important. There should be a consistent, standardized language, and a methodology to track and evaluate emission metrics for transit vehicles. Virginia’s Ozone Advance Action Plans and federal guidelines should be considered when establishing emissions targets. The process for identifying emissions targets and aligning with transit vehicle zero-emission goals could include the following steps:

- Conduct a statewide electrification study
- Identify baseline emission levels on which to track progress over time
- Establish a target emissions reduction goal. This goal could be measured in several different ways, for example, the percentage of emissions reduced by a certain date, or number of higher-polluting vehicles taken off the road
- Understand the metrics needed to measure progress toward achieving this goal

Expected Agency Benefits

New or improved metrics and measures to track performance

- Agencies can better track progress against electrification goals and develop an idea of where needs are the greatest. Understanding where the greatest needs are allows for more effective planning and prioritization.

Expected Rider Benefits



Increased use of state-of-the-art technologies that improve rider experience

- Riders can experience lower emission levels as agencies work toward their electrification goals.

Action 2: Conduct recurring assessments of innovation in the zero-emission transit vehicle industry

This action includes understanding the current and future state of technology readiness and impact on transition planning by conducting surveys that assess the state of technology in the industry. Annual information sharing back to transit agencies is important after the initial assessment to ensure that agencies are aware of the newest technologies. The following are metrics that can be used to measure the state of technology, which is inclusive of all technology related to the zero-emission vehicle industry:

- Energy storage (bus by size)
- Interoperability of buses and chargers
- Progress on deployments of hydrogen fuel cell
- Cost of hydrogen
- Utilities having special rates that are beneficial to transit
- Pricing of battery electric buses
- Listing of in-service zero-emission buses (ZEBs) by transit agency, including information on the ZEB manufacturer

Implementation Considerations	
Timeframe:  Near-Term	Level of Effort:  High (Iterative updates)
Lead Agency: DRPT	Other Partners: Original Equipment Manufacturers, Consultants

Expected Agency Benefits

New or improved metrics and measures to track performance

- Agencies can stay informed about fast-changing technology and metrics that improve their ability to track and improve the performance of their fleets (e.g., increasing the range of electric vehicles, allowing them to serve more riders between charges).

More efficient allocation of resources

- Agencies can improve their technology readiness to increase the percentage of their fleet that can be electrified at any given time and the associated benefits.



Expected Rider Benefits

Increased use of state-of-the-art technologies that improve rider experience

- Riders can expect that agencies are continuously evaluating new technologies and implementing them where applicable to continuously improve the riders' experience.

Action 3: Develop implementation resources for agencies to assist with fleet transition planning

These implementation resources may take the form of virtual webinars or workshops and will cover the process for the development of agency-specific transition educational materials that outline the process for transitioning to electric fleets, implementation steps and strategies, staff training options, and nationwide case studies to utilize as reference. Solutions to potential obstacles such as funding, infrastructure, and new technology, will also be outlined. For example, including potential funding sources and education about electric vehicle operations. Partnering with industry partners and leveraging peer agencies that have already implemented electric vehicles can make workshops more effective.

Implementation Considerations	
Timeframe:  Near-Term	Level of Effort:  High
Lead Agency: DRPT	Supporting Agency: Local Transit Agencies that have Deployed ZEVs
Other Partners: Consultants, Federal/State Funding Agencies	

Expected Agency Benefits

More informed decision-making

- Agencies can better identify and prioritize electrification for specific underserved populations by opening communication channels and discussing challenges.

More efficient allocation of resources

- Agencies can discuss and better understand transition requirements, improving operations and planning by optimizing resources on multiple dimensions affecting capital and operating expenses.



Expected Rider Benefits

Increased use of state-of-the-art technologies that improve rider experience

- Riders may experience smooth transitions and minimized disruptions as agencies transition to electric fleets and new technologies.

Action 4: Align MERIT program funding with zero-emission goals

This action involves understanding capital funding requirements and aligning funding to set and meet the goals that are established. Providing new incentives may help transit agencies make the decision to transition their vehicles. Cost analysis completed as part of this study and data from agencies that have deployed electric vehicles can be used to support this action. One possible consideration is to require the MERIT program to have an electrification plan or zero-emissions goals. This would be an additional requirement that would be used to evaluate candidate applications. Currently, the MERIT program focuses on age of fleet and not propulsion type.

Implementation Considerations	
Timeframe:  Long-Term	Level of Effort:  Medium/High
Lead Agency: DRPT	Supporting Agency: Local Transit Agencies that have Deployed ZEVs
Other Partners: Consultants, Federal/State Funding Agencies	

Expected Agency Benefits

Additional funding opportunities

- Agencies' projects may be more competitive and have greater opportunities to support the transition to electric fleets if the MERIT program is modified to also account for propulsion type.

Improved requirements to ensure better transit outcomes

- Agencies can more effectively budget and take on lower levels of financial risk for future deployments in an evolving industry. This will increase the likelihood of effective grant programs that are appropriately funded for effective electrification efforts.

Expected Rider Benefits

Increased use of state-of-the-art technologies that improve rider experience

- Riders may experience continued investment in state-of-the-art technologies that improve the rider experience and minimize impacts on the environment.



EMERGING TECHNOLOGY ACTIONS

Action 1: Implement recurring assessments of technology use and plans across the Commonwealth

This action involves conducting a recurring (approximately every two years) inventory and survey of Virginia transit agencies' use of and plans for technology and establishing state priorities for pilot deployments and sharing findings with agencies.

Collect the following information:

- Products that are in use and versions
- Purchase dates
- Vendors that are in use
- Quality of vendor support
- Contracts that are available to other agencies and terms of contracts
- Pricing
- Transit agency successes and difficulties with technology

Implementation Considerations	
Timeframe:  Near-Term	Level of Effort:  Medium (Iterative updates)
Lead Agency: DRPT	Supporting Agency: Local Transit Agencies
Other Partners: Consultant, VDOT, VITA, VTA, Vendor Community	

Expected Agency Benefits

Shared knowledge of industry best practices

- Agencies can utilize best practices to ensure they get the solutions they need and prevent a bad technology system or system on the decline from spreading throughout Virginia. Agencies also can access information regarding the types of technology used across the state and directly contact their peers.

More informed decision-making

- Information gathering and sharing can inform investment decisions and improve DRPT's understanding of transit technology use and adoption among transit agencies. Based on the state of the industry, DRPT would take a more proactive role in establishing Virginia's priorities and guiding the implementation of emerging technology deployments that have direct impacts on quality of service.



Expected Rider Benefits

Increased use of state-of-the-art technologies that improve rider experience

- Riders can experience a more coordinated transit system that utilizes state-of-art technology that improves reliability, safety, ease of use, real-time information, and minimizes service disruptions.

Action 2: Conduct recurring technology planning at the agency level

This includes conducting recurring transit agency-specific planning to define technology needs, required solutions, and guide successful technology deployment. The exact nature and frequency of planning will depend on local needs, but this could range from feasibility studies for a particular technology to broader strategic planning for a transit agency’s overall technology use. DRPT provides guidance on what should be considered in planning processes, and provides technical assistance for completing transit agency technology plans. Transit agencies applying for MERIT funding demonstrate that planning has occurred.

Implementation Considerations	
Timeframe:  Near-Term	Level of Effort:  High (Iterative updates)
Lead Agency: Local Transit Agencies	Supporting Agency: DRPT

Expected Agency Benefits

More informed decision-making

- Agencies can better understand their current state and future needs and acquire technology solutions to address their needs and meet requirements identified through planning efforts. Recurring planning also will inform DRPT of upcoming funding needs for technology and common purchase needs among multiple transit agencies.

Expected Rider Benefits

Increased use of state-of-the-art technologies that improve rider experience



- Riders may experience the deployment of more reliable, easier to use, safer, and more accurate real-time technologies.

Enhanced customer experience

- Riders will benefit from the recurring assessment of what is and is not working with the agency’s technology. Riders also may experience the smoother deployment of new technologies, including customer service support.

Action 3: Establish guidance for negotiating technology contracts

This action involves developing technology contract guidance for Virginia transit agencies that identifies acquisition approaches, best practices and lessons learned, basic minimum contract agreement language, and opportunities for group purchases among multiple agencies. As part of this action, the information compiled by DRPT and local transit agencies may also be useful guidance to vendors on the standards that should be met in Virginia.

Implementation Considerations	
Timeframe:  Mid-Term	Level of Effort:  Low
Lead Agency: DRPT	Supporting Agency: Local Transit Agencies
Other Partners: Consultants, VITA, VDOT, MPOs/PDCs, Other State DOTs, Vendor Community	

Expected Agency Benefits

More informed decision-making

- Agencies can utilize guidance to negotiate contracts that best serve the local context.

Share knowledge of industry best practices

- Agencies can get the most out of their technology deployments, set them up for success, streamline deployment, and realize the full benefits of the technology.

Expected Rider Benefits



Enhanced customer experience

- Riders may experience increased effectiveness and reliability of technologies and more consistent use and adoption of technology among all transit agencies.

Action 4: Expand opportunities for technology funding and implementation assistance

This action involves expanding opportunities for technology funding and implementation assistance by:

- Modifying the Demonstration Project Assistance Program (Type 2) to be a distinct Technology and Innovation program within MERIT Special Projects
- Identifying opportunities for funding technology through discretionary grants outside of MERIT
- Expanding the existing bench contract or forming a new contract to provide transit agencies with on-demand access to technology consultants for planning and implementation support

Implementation Considerations	
Timeframe:  Long-Term	Level of Effort:  Medium
Lead Agency: DRPT	Supporting Agency: Local Transit Agencies
Other Partners: Consultants, Technology Vendors	

Expected Agency Benefits

Additional funding opportunities

- Agencies' access to funding opportunities enables them to prepare for future needs and implement new technologies.

Improved requirements to ensure better transit outcomes

- Agencies can more quickly respond to technology needs, resulting in the use of technology that improves operational efficiency, reliability, user experience, and access to customer-facing information.



Expected Rider Benefits

Increased use of state-of-the-art technologies that improve rider experience

- Riders may experience implementation and maintenance of technologies that improve reliability, safety, minimized service disruptions, ease of use, and accurate and reliable real-time information. They also may experience more consistent use and adoption of technology among all transit agencies.

Action 5: Expand use of national or international data standards such as GTFS Realtime and GTFS-Flex

This action includes expanding the use of existing and emerging data standards such as GTFS Realtime and GTFS-Flex. It also involves assessing the current state, providing educational resources, establishing best practices, and providing technical assistance to transit agencies for generating and maintaining data feeds.

Implementation Considerations	
Timeframe:  Long-Term	Level of Effort:  Medium
Lead Agency: DRPT	Supporting Agency: Local Transit Agencies
Other Partners: Consultants, Vendor Community	

Expected Agency Benefits

New or improved metrics and measures to track performance

- Agencies can utilize data standards to improve data quality, better evaluate and track performance, and be more transparent with the public through the sharing of information.

More informed decision-making

- Agencies using data standards may have greater opportunities for improved planning process, as there are several tools and analyses that rely on common data standards

Expected Rider Benefits

Increased use of state-of-the-art technologies that improve rider experience

- Riders may experience more consistency of metrics reported by agencies across the Commonwealth, and availability of applications and tools that rely on data standards.



Enhanced customer experience

- Riders may experience better and standardized data disseminated by the transit agencies to customers through multiple accessible, user-friendly channels. (For example, all agencies providing accurate and reliable real-time arrival information to customers.)

TRANSIT SAFETY ACTIONS

Action 1: Identify and share inclusive transit safety training opportunities for agency staff

This action involves developing a transit safety training curriculum for transit agency employees with instructions and resources to access implicit bias training, mental health and de-escalation training, National Transit Institute (NTI) training, and Community Transportation Association of Virginia (CTAV) training, and Virginia Transit Agency (VTA) training. These opportunities could be shared through DRPT’s website, newsletter, or other publications.

Implementation Considerations	
Timeframe:  Near-Term	Level of Effort:  Low
Lead Agency: DRPT	Other Partners: VTA, CTAV, Local Transit Agencies
Other Partners: PDCs	

Expected Agency Benefits

Shared knowledge of industry best practices

- Agencies can utilize training opportunities to create a more inclusive work environment for employees and riders, provide employees with resources to better address conflicts, and increase employee retention and morale.

Expected Rider Benefits

Enhanced customer experience



- Riders may experience a friendlier and more inclusive environment for both staff and riders.

Improved processes that center rider needs

- Riders may experience better de-escalation and conflict resolution.

Action 2: Research and compile best practices for transit agencies involvement with local public safety

This action includes providing guidelines for how transit agencies can be increasingly involved in public safety decision-making, including coordination with other public services such as law enforcement and emergency services. A component of this could include completing a best practices study regarding public service coordination efforts of other transit agencies across the country.

Implementation Considerations	
Timeframe:  Near-Term	Level of Effort:  Medium
Lead Agency: DRPT	Supporting Agency: Local Transit Agencies, State Police, Sherriff's Association
Other Partners: State Police, Sherriff's Association	

Expected Agency Benefits

Increased coordination with partner agencies

- Agencies can utilize best practices to improve coordination among public services, leading to more efficient use of public resources and more efficient transit services.



Expected Rider Benefits

Enhanced customer experience

- Riders may experience more coordination between transit agencies and public safety (for example, minimizing service disruptions due to police or community activities and coordinating responses to transit safety issues).

Action 3: Develop best practices for safety-related roles to engage with community partners

This includes providing guidelines for safety-related jobs to channel transit equity into their safety role, such as creating “community service officers” that are more transit-related officers than law enforcement officers. This could include collecting best practices from transit agencies across the nation as well as potential collaboration with the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT).

Implementation Considerations	
Timeframe:  Near-Term	Level of Effort:  Medium
Lead Agency: DRPT	Supporting Agency: VDOT
Other Partners: PDCs, MPOs	

Expected Agency Benefits

Shared knowledge of industry best practices

- Agencies can reframe "safety and security" to a safe and welcoming committee, shifting the dialogue from an enforcement perspective to rider assistance and system safety perspective.



Expected Rider Benefits

Enhanced customer experience

- Riders may see safety personnel as a helpful resource instead of a law enforcement entity that may be related to social injustice issues or fear of law enforcement.

Action 4: Provide guidance on (1) crime prevention through design and (2) rider safety and etiquette

This action involves developing transit infrastructure and operations safety guidelines to reduce crime and improve physical and psychological safety. Guidelines may include travel trainings and rider guidelines for new and existing riders, ideally available in multiple languages to encourage riders of all backgrounds and to ensure riders feel confident and safe while utilizing transit services. This also could include encouraging the use of design studies for transit stop amenities to promote safe environments for riders and surrounding communities.

Implementation Considerations	
Timeframe:  Near-Term	Level of Effort:  High
Lead Agency: Local Transit Agencies	Supporting Agency: Local Transit Agencies
Other Partners: PDCs, MPOs	

Expected Agency Benefits

More informed decision-making

- Agencies can utilize best practices to invest in alterations that improve transit's physical and perceived safety to improve use and ridership. Specifically, encouraging physical and psychologically safe designs in areas with VPI will create a more equitable system.

Shared knowledge of industry best practices

- Agencies can integrate best practices into their design standards and studies and develop resources for riders.



Expected Rider Benefits

Enhanced customer experience

- Riders may experience design alterations that provide a safer feeling at stops and on transit.
- Riders may also experience additional travel training and rider guidelines in multiple languages that are accessible to all riders and staff to promote safety in and around transit systems.

Action 5: Pursue the completion of a study of safety measures that have worked to protect transit operators

This action involves reviewing industry best practices and incorporating the latest Federal guidance regarding the success of safety measures that have been installed with the goal of protecting transit operators. This may include barriers between drivers and riders to protect from hazards such as illnesses or physical confrontation.

Implementation Considerations	
Timeframe:  Mid-Term	Level of Effort:  Medium/High
Lead Agency: DRPT	Other Partners: Academic Entity (TBD)

Expected Agency Benefits

Shared knowledge of industry best practices

- Agencies can utilize best practices to integrate measures to best improve the workplace experience and employee morale, safety, and retention



Expected Rider Benefits

Enhanced customer service

- Riders may experience safer interactions with transit operators and have less interrupted services if drivers are able to miss less work due to fewer days of illnesses.

Action 6: Share guidance regarding more inclusive performance measures (e.g., PTASP updates)

This involves identifying and developing baseline performance measures and policies that can be incorporated into Public Transportation Agency Safety Plans (PTASPs). This guidance could include metrics such as the locations of transit-related incidents that could be investigated by the surrounding demographics such as income and race/ethnicity. These metrics could guide transit providers decisions and designs. These guidelines could be incorporated into the *Transit Planning and Implementation Guidebook* (see page 5).

Implementation Considerations	
Timeframe:  Long-Term	Level of Effort:  High
Lead Agency: DRPT (for smaller agencies) Local Transit Agencies (for larger agencies)	Supporting Agency: Federal Transit Administration

Expected Agency Benefits

Shared knowledge of industry best practices

- Agencies can utilize best practices to determine what performance measures fit within the local context and help them to best serve their communities.

New or improved metrics and measures to track performance

- Agencies can include measures that ensure all riders are considered in policy making and that service is being provided to those who need it most.

Expected Rider Benefits

Improved processes that center rider needs



- Riders may experience benefits of agencies developing policies that enable them to continuously evaluate and adapt incidents and service to best serve their communities.

SYSTEM ENGAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ACTIONS

Action 1: Develop public engagement handbook that outlines expectations and guiding techniques for more inclusive public engagement at the local level

This action includes developing a transit public engagement handbook that outlines expectations and guiding techniques for more inclusive public engagement at the local level. This handbook can be updated over time as new public engagement strategies are developed.

Local transit agencies will be able to refer to this handbook for guidance and as a resource as they conduct public engagement activities as a part of transit planning, service changes, network redesigns, and more. This handbook will be consistent with existing federal Title VI requirements for public outreach while providing guidance for additional optional engagement activities for local transit agencies that wish to pursue them; this handbook can be included in the *Transit Planning and Implementation Guidebook* (see page 5).

Key Characteristics	
Timeframe:  Near-Term	Level of Effort:  Medium
Lead Agency: DRPT	Supporting Agency: Local Transit Agencies

The content of this handbook will be scalable and context-sensitive to the wide range of transit agency sizes and types across Virginia. Techniques and elements featured in the guidebook may include, but are not limited to:

- Definitions of “public engagement” and other key terms
- Guidance for how to establish goals for and achieve inclusivity in public engagement
- Strategies for informing the public of engagement opportunities
- Strategies for reaching traditionally hard-to-reach populations (i.e., people who are not native English speakers, youths and the elderly, people with disabilities, etc.)
- Various public engagement tools to deploy such as surveys, public meetings, open houses, focus groups, pop-up events, and virtual engagement (websites, emails, social media, virtual public meetings)

The handbook may also include guidance for the creation of rider advisory councils or other similar internal bodies to advance an agency’s strategic goals and serve as a forum for further engaging the transit-riding community and soliciting direct rider feedback. See System Engagement and Governance Action 2 for more on the topic of rider advisory councils

Expected Agency Benefits

More informed decision-making

- Agencies may benefit from a handbook that outlines techniques and guidance for inclusive public engagement that are more robust than those found in existing required procedures, such as federal Title VI requirements.

Shared knowledge of industry best practices

- Agencies may benefit from engagement guidance that outlines a range of tactics and is scalable to an agency’s type, size, and geography; its service area; and community.

Expected Rider Benefits

Improved processes that center rider needs



- Riders may experience and benefit from more meaningful engagement with their local transit agencies, especially those from underserved, under-represented, and vulnerable populations.

Expanded involvement in decision-making

- Riders may experience a broader range of engagement opportunities that are more directly tied to their local transit agency’s decision-making processes.

Action 2: Create rider advisory councils within local transit agencies statewide

This action, to be led by local transit agencies, is to create rider advisory councils comprised of transit riders, including residents, workers, students, seniors, persons with disabilities, and other members of the community to engage directly with transit agency leadership, management, and partners. A key tool to be outlined in the proposed public engagement handbook (see System Engagement and Governance Action 1), rider advisory councils have the potential to assist with bringing rider concerns and feedback directly to transit agency leaders and Boards of Directors, increasing the level of rider involvement in transit agency decision-making.

Key Characteristics	
Timeframe:  Near-Term	Level of Effort:  Medium
Lead Agency: Local Transit Agencies	Supporting Agency: DRPT

- Transit agencies across Virginia recognize and value the importance of engagement with their communities. Transit agencies are required to have public engagement plans; however, riders currently have a limited voice in decision-making processes with only 36% of transit agencies having rider advisory councils
- Local transit agencies can work with local community-based organizations and advocacy groups to recruit rider advisory committee members directly from the communities that need it most, strengthening and expanding relationships between transit agencies and these key community partners
- While this action will be led by individual local transit agencies that choose to pursue it, DRPT will support agencies that determine that rider advisory councils are an appropriate tool for elevating rider input into the decision-making process enhancing their overall public engagement processes. DRPT will work to engage with and provide technical assistance to local transit agencies seeking to create a rider advisory council
- Rider advisory councils require intentionality, structure, and consistency to be successful and may not be the right solution for every local transit agency. However, they present a unique opportunity to elevate rider involvement in the transit agency decision-making process, to address the needs and opportunities identified through the study’s technical assessments, and to meet the overall goals of this study

Expected Agency Benefits

More informed decision-making

Agencies can create and utilize rider advisory councils to advance their strategic goals and serve as a forum for information sharing and the generation of ideas for service improvements and new program elements. Agencies may benefit from:

- Feedback on operational or service issues facing customers and recommendations for improving service
- Input into planned agency outreach and engagement activities
- More widespread sharing of information between rider advisory council members and the community at-large about agency services, programs, and initiatives
- Stronger partnerships with the community through the establishment and routine management of the rider advisory councils



Expected Rider Benefits

Expanded involvement in decision-making

- Riders may benefit from the open forum nature of the rider advisory council (either directly as a council member or as an general public attendee at council meetings) and the opportunity to voice their feedback, recommendations, concerns, and other input directly to transit agency staff and leadership – anywhere from issues such as missing bus stop signs to route changes to planned public engagement opportunities

Action 3: Provide stronger public engagement guidance for local transit agencies within DRPT external guidance documents, such as Transit Development Plan (TDP) and Transit Strategic Plan (TSP) guidelines

This action involves updating and enhancing existing DRPT guidance documents, including but not limited to TDP and TSP guidelines, to promote more robust public engagement activities at the local level during local transit planning processes. TDP and TSP guidance is updated by DRPT roughly every four years, but this action may warrant a nearer-term update.

Implementation Considerations	
Timeframe:  Mid-Term	Level of Effort:  Low
Lead Agency: DRPT	Supporting Agency: N/A

This enhanced guidance could utilize strategies found in the new statewide public engagement handbook (see System Engagement and Governance – Action 1)

Expected Agency Benefits

More informed decision-making

- Agencies can utilize clear, consistent, and detailed guidance on how they can conduct public engagement to allow transit riders and the community to have a seat at the table in the development of these guiding plans.

More efficient allocation of resources

- Agencies can utilize a more robust and holistic public engagement processes to understand better and allocate resources to address community needs via their TDPs and TSPs.

Shared knowledge of industry best practices

- Agencies may benefit from engagement guidance that is used by peer transit agencies across the country, as DRPT typically conducts research on best practices and guidance from other states when updating its external guidance documents such as TDP and TSP guidelines.

Expected Rider Benefits

Improved processes that center rider needs

- Riders may experience and benefit from more meaningful engagement with their local transit agencies, especially those from underserved, under-represented, and vulnerable populations.

Expanded involvement in decision-making

- Riders may experience more continuous and meaningful dialogue with agencies through decision-making processes.