



Commuter Assistance Program Grant Workshop

FY 27 CAP Grant Opportunities
Overview

November 20, 2025

DRPT

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF RAIL
AND PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION



Agenda

- Commuter Assistance Program (CAP)
- CAP Operating Assistance
- MERIT Special Programs Grants for TDM
- CAP Project Assistance
- Recap and Resources

Commuter Assistance Program (CAP)

CAP Funding Opportunities Overview

CAP consists of two funding opportunities

- *CAP Operating Assistance*
- *CAP Project Assistance*

Funding & Match Ratios: State 80%; Local Match: 20%



CAP Grant Program Purpose

To make sound investments in programs and projects that are both efficient and effective at **achieving the following results:**



Engage the public to encourage and increase the use of transit, vanpool, and carpool.

Application Updates for FY27

- Conferences
- Training
- Eligible and Required Staff Work Tasks
- Grant Administration Expenses
- Challenges and Contests
- Justification of Memberships & Systems/Software Licenses
- Application Title
- Project Description
- Project Scope
- Application Scoring

Conferences and Training

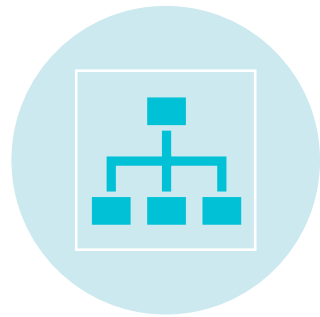
- Use **MERIT Special Programs** Funding Opportunities for conferences and training.
- CAP Operating Assistance – Conferences should be limited to one and attendance limited to a maximum of two project staff – only full-time – 50% of their annual job duties.
- DRPT may consider additional conferences and staff attendees on a case-by-case basis.
- Conferences and training are ineligible for CAP Project Assistance



Grant Staff – Work Details



Enter details on each staff and work performed that is intended to be charged to the grant.



Be specific and do not rely on the use of general terms such as "oversight" and "supervise."



Tasks that do not get listed in the contract will not be allowed to be charged to the grant.



DRPT reserves the right to remove ineligible tasks and tasks that do not directly increase the use of transit, carpool, and vanpool.

Grant Administration Expenses

Grant administration tasks charged to the project should be limited to direct costs for:

- Preparation and submission of project claims
- Review and signing of grant contract
- Processing and paying vendor or contractor invoices
- Ordering of project supplies
- Project budget set up in financial system and tracking of line-item budget expenses versus grant contract budget

Grant administration costs should be a small percentage of the total project expenses and much less than the costs to implement activities that get people to request a ridematch and use transit, carpool and vanpool.

Challenges and Contests

Describe challenges and contests to be implemented in the Project Scope and marketing of them in the Marketing and Promotions section of the application.

ConnectingVA app **must** be used, and costs must be budgeted in the Budget Details section of the application per the following pricing.

There are three (3) ConnectingVA App event types, each has different pricing and features:

- Basic (\$2,500) - For informational events and simply tells the ConnectingVA users about the event.
- Results (\$5,000) - Basic plus results (i.e., total VMT reduced, etc.), pre-event content (i.e., "Coming Soon"), post-event content (i.e., "Winners are...") and additional messages during the event.
- Races (\$10,000) - Results plus races and leaderboards with categories, participating organizations, and selection of prize winners.

Justification of Memberships, Systems, Software Licenses

- Describe how project staff uses the memberships to improve and get results – increase in ridematch requests.
- Does other agency staff use the membership(s)?
- Describe how systems and software are used. Include examples of use.
- Prorate the expense of a membership, system, and software when used by others in the agency.
 - For example, if Canva is \$1,000/year and there are 3 other departments that use it, only \$250/year should be charged to the CAP grant.

No memberships and conferences are required by DRPT.

CAP Operating Assistance

CAP Operating Assistance

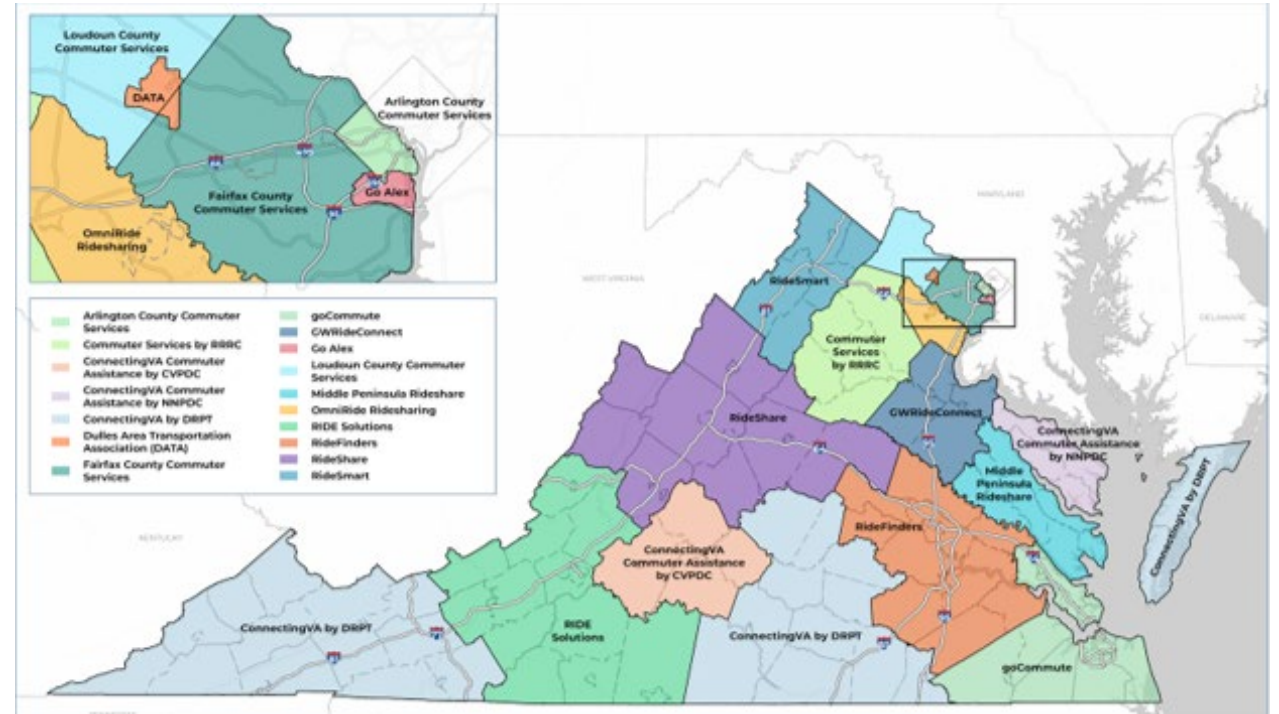


To achieve a measurable increase in the use of DRPT approved ridematching services, leading to an increase ridematch requests and increase in the use of transit, carpools, vanpools and/or bicycle commuting.



Eligible Applicants

- Agencies that operate existing commuter assistance programs.
- Organizations seeking to establish a new commuter assistance program should contact a DRPT Program Manager to discuss the requirements of establishing a commuter assistance program before applying for grant funding.



Application Guidance – Title and Project Description

- **Title:** Enter the name of the program as promoted to the public.
- **Project Description:** Enter a description using the following format and text.

“[Your commuter assistance program name] which promotes transit, carpool, vanpool, and bicycle commuting to the public, and provides free ridematching and trip planning services through [enter either “the ConnectingVA app” or “the ConnectingVA app and other approved service”] in the [enter your program service region/area (e.g. Central Shenandoah region, Fairfax County)].

Application Guidance – Project Scope

- Tasks and activities in the Project Scope must be included from the applicant agency's approved Commuter Assistance Program Strategic Plan
- Include all work and activities performed in the Project Scope
- Do not create and attach as separate scope document



Eligible and Required Staff Work Tasks

Required tasks must be included in the application and must be performed if the grant is awarded.

- Providing direct assistance to the public – commute options information and convincing the public to use transit, carpool, vanpool, commute to work by bicycle, and use the DRPT approved ridematching systems.
- Follow-up with the public who requested ridematching and commute options information.
- Reporting of DRPT required performance data, program activities and results.

CAP Operating Assistance Application Scoring

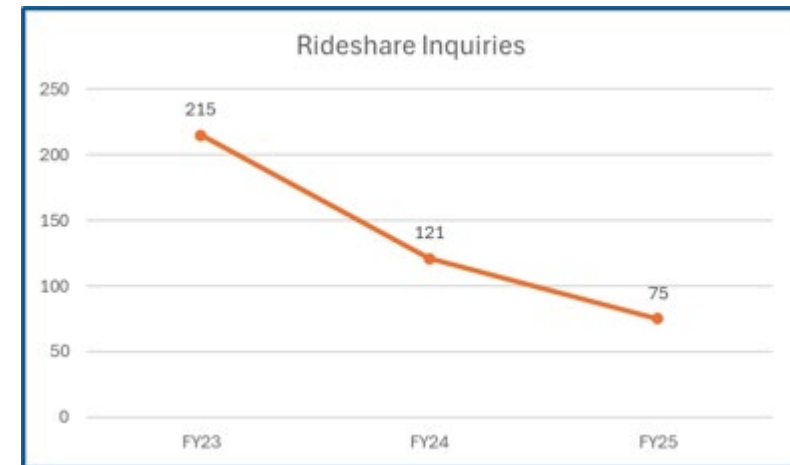
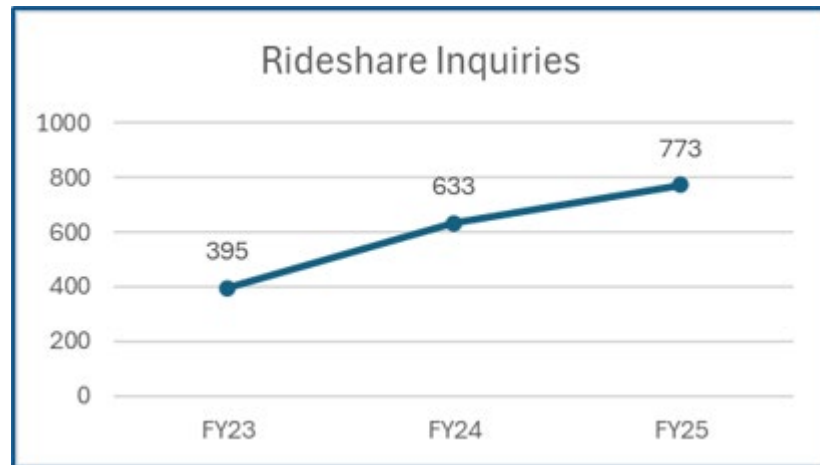
Application Scoring

- Budget Details – use of the appropriate budget categories, the listing of each expense within the expense categories, and the appropriateness of the line-item budget amounts and total project amount.
- Cost Effectiveness – reflects if the project is efficient in achieving maximum results with minimum costs – the # of ridematch requests received the prior year and the cost to achieve it.
- Ridematch Requests Trend – scoring based on the # of ridematch requests received over the past three (3) years

Category	Points
Project Description	5
Project Scope	10
Budget Details	15
Justification of Memberships & Systems	5
Staff and Contractor Work	10
Marketing and Promotions	10
Milestones/Events	5
Cost Effectiveness	15
Ridematch Requests Trend	25
Total Points Possible	100

Ridematch Requests Trend – SAMPLE

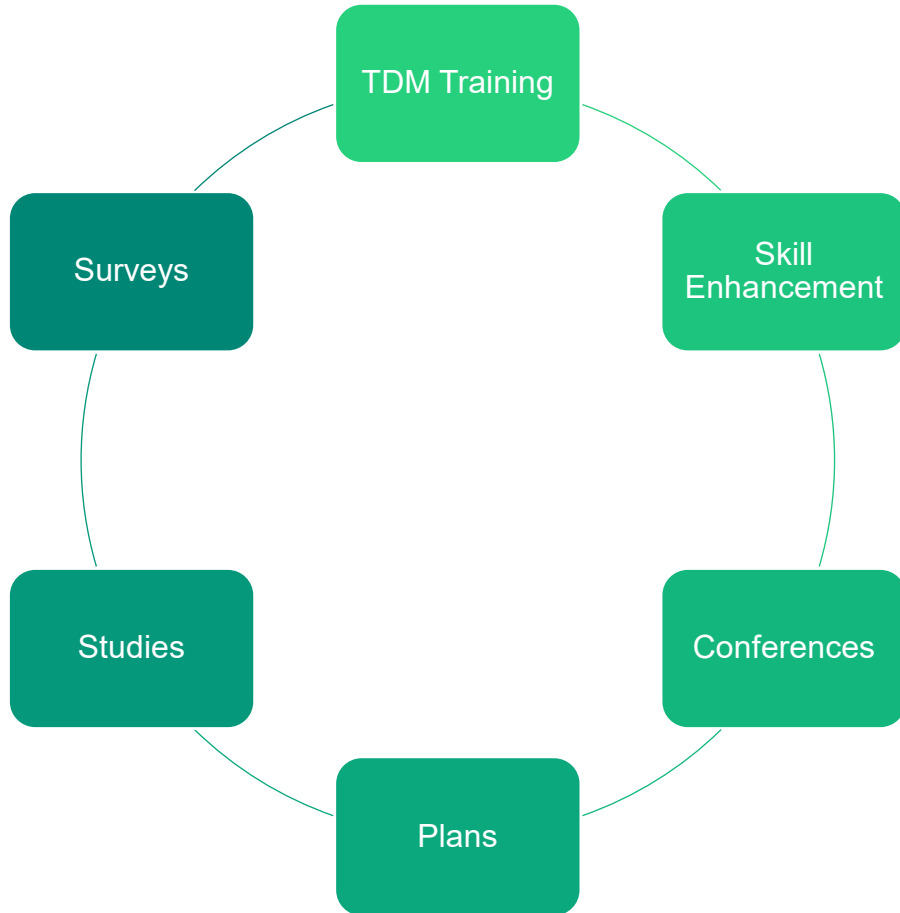
- This is 25% (25 points) of your overall score.
- This score will impact the grant award.



Questions – CAP Operating Assistance

MERIT Special Programs Grants for TDM (Training, Conferences, Plans, Research)

MERIT Special Programs Funding



1. Workforce Development
2. Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP)
3. Workforce Development – Small Urban Training
4. Technical Assistance

NOTE: Applicants should first explore other funding programs such as Workforce Development, RTAP or Small Urban Training grant programs prior to including training and conference expenses in the CAP application.

Workforce Development

Goal – to promote and develop careers in public transportation and TDM/commuter assistance.

This is an opportunity to increase your skills and grow your knowledge by any of the following:

- Center for Urban Transportation Research –Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Professional Learning Series and Social Marketing
- Association for Commuter Transportation – TDM – Certified Professional (CP) certification and maintenance
- Customer Service Training
- Sales Training

Match Rates: 80% State 20% Local Match

TDM training may be combined with other agency staff training into one application.

If there are other training opportunities not listed, please reach out to your PM to discuss.

Rural Transit Assistance Program & Small Urban Training

Rural Transit Assistance Program & Small Urban Training

- Assist agencies in rural areas to further the development of staff skills and encourage the development of professional networks by attending transit training, seminars, workshops and conferences. (e.g., ACT Annual Conference, TDM Forum, VTA Conference)
- 100% reimbursement

Workforce Development - Small Urban Training

- Available to reimburse eligible organizations for courses, workshops, seminars, and conferences with subject matter applicable to public transportation, paratransit, human services transportation, and TDM.
- Up to 80% reimbursement, 20% local match



Open all year!

TDM training may be combined with other agency staff training into one application. (e.g., Virginia Transit Association)

Technical Assistance



Supports a variety of planning related activities

- Studies, plans, research, surveys, data collection, and evaluation projects
- Commuter Assistance Program Strategic Plan and updates

Goal: Improve, justify, and evaluate public transportation or commuter assistance services

Match Rates: 50% State and 50% Local match

Questions –MERIT Special Programs Grants for TDM

CAP Project Assistance



CAP Project Assistance Purpose

To make sound investments in programs and projects that are both efficient and effective at **achieving the following results:**



Increase the use of transit, vanpool, carpool, and/or bicycle commuting

CAP Project Assistance – Eligible Applicants

Eligible Applicants

- Local governments
- Planning District Commissions
- Regional Commissions
- Metropolitan Planning Organizations
- Transportation Management Associations
- **Public transit agencies**
- **Vanpool providers**

Eligible Project Types

Eligible projects are not limited to the following:



Employer Trip
Reduction



Vanpool



Transit
Marketing



Innovative TDM

Application Guidance

There are different WebGrant applications for each type of project. Be sure to use the correct application.

Projects must be well thought out with details - not just an idea, but a fully scoped project.



Employer Trip Reduction Projects



Supports projects that actively work with private sector employers.

Employer Trip Reduction Project Objectives



Increase the number of private sector employers providing commuter benefits for employees that use transit and vanpool to get to work



Increase the number of private sector employers providing assistance to employees for carpool and vanpool



A measurable increase the number of private sector employees using transit, carpool, and vanpool



Agencies receiving funding from VDOT for Employer Outreach **must** include that funding amount and details of how those funds will be spent in the application

Points of Emphasis

- This is a sales focused project
- Proactive outreach to employers and their contacts required
- Primary objective is to convince employers to implement some kind of transit and/or vanpool benefit
- Promote the utilization of existing transit benefits at employer sites
- Must use an approved Customer Relations Management (CRM) system to track employer activities
- Report on activity metrics must be submitted regularly. Full listing of metrics can be found in our Purple Book



Vanpool Projects



Supports vanpool projects that increase vanpooling.

Vanpool Project Objectives

- Form new vanpools leading to the increase in the total number of vanpools in Virginia
- Increase vanpool ridership
- Provide direct assistance to start new vanpools
- Aid existing vanpools when riders leave the vanpool creating a financial strain on the existing riders
- Vanpool data collection and NTD reporting

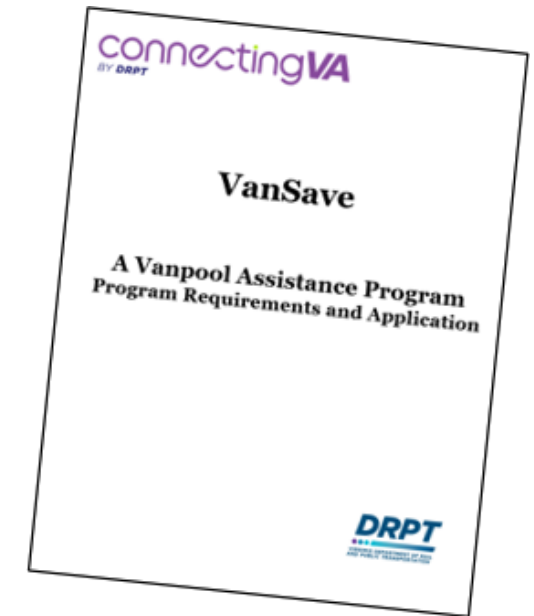
Eligible/Ineligible

Eligible

- VanSave - short-term financial assistance to the Vanpool Provider to help existing vanpools continue operation after a loss of riders while searching for new riders
- Monthly stipends in return for vanpool data that is entered in NTD
- Short-term incentives for new riders
- Pay for Performance projects

Ineligible

- Vanpool operations costs (fuel, tires, maintenance, office supplies, rent, capital, etc.)



Transit Marketing Projects



Supports marketing of transit service for the purpose of increasing ridership.



Transit Marketing Project Objectives



Marketing may be used to increase ridership on a single route, multiple routes, specific service areas, or an entire bus system



Ridership ***must be*** measured on the routes promoted and ridership must be reported to the DRPT Program Manager to show before and after marketing results



Clearly demonstrate marketing impact on ridership



The focus of the project must be to increase ridership

Expenses

Eligible Expenses

- Staff or consultant work
- Advertisement placement
- Marketing through social media postings
- Incentives or rewards

Ineligible Expenses

- Printing and posting of schedules
- Mandated or required public notices
- Advertising transit notices and or changes
- Fare buy-downs

Innovative TDM Projects

Other innovative TDM projects may qualify for CAP Project Assistance as long as they are designed to increase transit ridership, increase vanpool ridership, or increase carpooling, and bicycle commuting, and the results can be measured.



Purpose of the Project

- What is the purpose and why?
 - Explain the purpose of the project and what result(s) the project will have
- Qualitative/quantitative evidence needs to be used to help illustrate the problem
- Referencing local and/or regional plans, studies, or mandates calling for solution to the problem is ideal
- Unique Solutions to the problem
 - Due diligence should be done to make sure no duplicative efforts are being done

CAP Project Application Scoring

Application Evaluation

- Is program an efficient, effective investment for the Commonwealth?
- Does the proposed project satisfy the goal of the grant
- Innovative TDM tops out at 100, all other CAP Project grants at 125

Category	Points
Project Description	5
Project Scope	10
Project Purpose	10
Expected Results	10
Measurement of Expected Results	10
Financial Assistance & Incentives	5
Budget Details	10
Justification of Memberships and Systems	5
Staff and Contractor Work	10
Marketing and Promotions	10
Milestones/Events	5
Cost Effectiveness	10
Prior Results	25
Total Points Possible	100 - 125

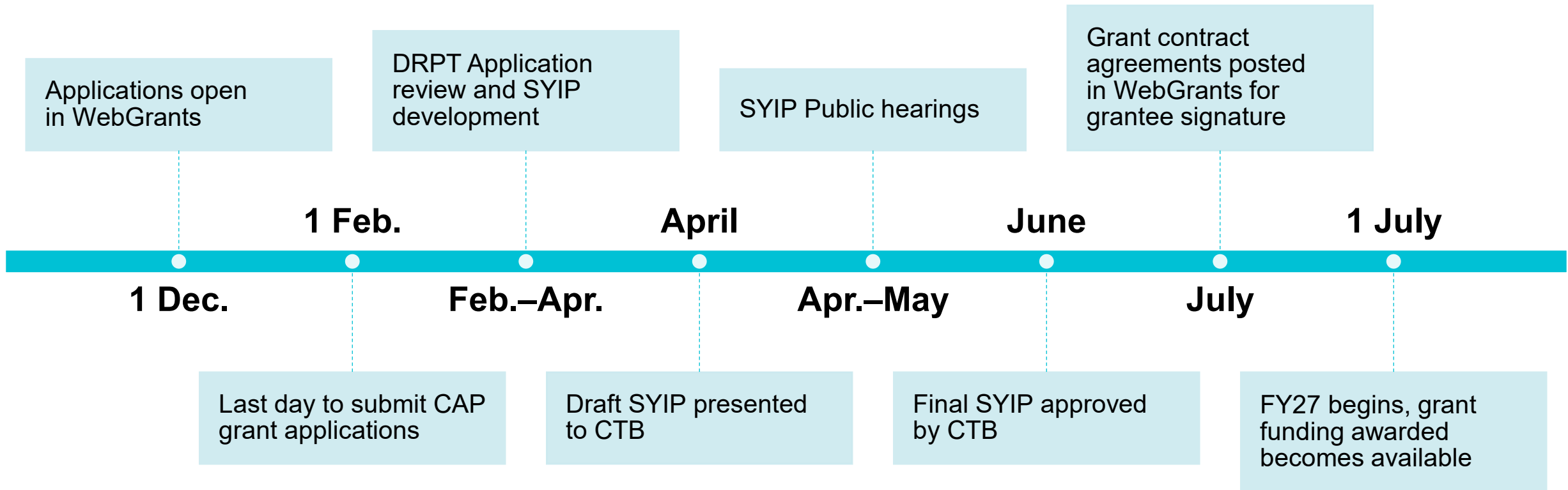
Questions - CAP Project Assistance

Recap and Resources

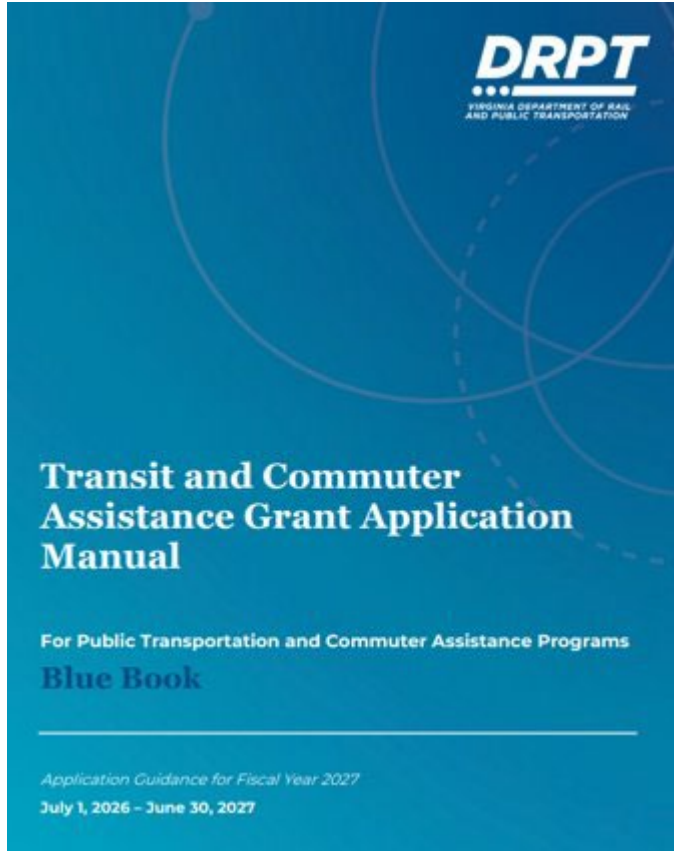
Recap of a Good Application

- **DO NOT** attach a Word Doc of your application in WebGrants. It does not take the place of your application information and will not be included in application scoring.
- Create a good and detailed Project Scope detailing on what/how the grant funds will be spent.
- Include budget details.
- Low administration costs.
- Salaries/staff are focused on getting more ridematch requests
- (CAP Operating) and increase in use of transit, carpool and vanpool.
- Include a lot of Milestones.
- Efficiency of costs to results.
- FOCUS ON RESULTS – increase transit ridership, carpooling and vanpooling!
- High score!

Key Dates



More Details on Funding Opportunities



More detailed information is provided in the *Transit and Commuter Assistance Grant Application Manual* (Blue Book) located on the DRPT website.

All DRPT Grant Opportunities, Descriptions, Eligibility, Requirements, Application Procedures, and More.

Resources and Guidance



FY 27 Transit and Commuter Assistance Grant Application Manual (Blue Book) – read this!



Your DRPT Program Manager.



drpt.virginia.gov/Our-Grant-Programs/CAP/

DRPT Staff Resources

- **Gabe Ortiz:** Commuter Programs Manager – Northern Virginia
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- **Kathy Molin:** Commuter Programs Manager – Central, Hampton Roads, Middle Peninsula, Northern Neck, Southwest,
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