

*Transit Service Delivery Advisory Committee (TSDAC)  
Meeting Minutes  
March 28, 2024  
9:00 a.m.*

**Members Participating (All Virtual):**

Chair John McGlennon  
Vice Chair Cindy Mester  
Jamie Jackson  
Jim Dyke

Noelle Pinkard  
Brian Booth  
Kate Mattice

**I. Call to Order/Introductions**

Chair John McGlennon welcomed all in attendance for the virtual meeting.

**II. Approval of August 29, 2023 Minutes**

Vice Chair Mester made a motion to approve the minutes of the August 29, 2023, TSDAC meeting and Ms. Mattice seconded. All were in favor.

**III. 2024 General Assembly Update**

Andy Wright provided an update of legislation that is impacting DRPT. Mr. McGlennon said he is looking forward to progress that will be enabled by reducing barriers to installing bus shelters. Mr. Dyke asked Ms. Mattice if she had thoughts about the transit study proposed for Northern Virginia. Ms. Mattice said that NVTC and the region are pleased that efforts are being put towards determining what the needs are in the Northern Virginia region, not just for WMATA, but for all regional transit providers.

**IV. FY24 Six-Year Improvement Program Recap**

Zach Trogdon, Chief of Public Transportation, recapped briefly the overall program allocations from the FY24 SYIP and what staff had listed as items of note in the upcoming FY25 SYIP. Mr. McGlennon asked if there was any sense of what type of reductions may be coming as pandemic relief goes away and Mr. Trogdon said they will be addressing that a bit later in the presentation.

**V. Statewide Transit Performance**

Dan Sonenklar, Statewide Transit Planning Manager, presented information about Calendar Year 2023 Statewide Transit Performance. Mr. Sonenklar noted that total transit ridership in the Commonwealth for CY2023 was over 115 million passenger trips. Of that total about 64 million trips were on WMATA, 1.5 million on VRE, and 49 million at all other Virginia transit agencies. Mr. Sonenklar next noted that ridership has been steadily increasing over the last four years with Virginia agencies are at about 86% of

pre-pandemic levels, VRE ridership is at about 32% of pre-pandemic, and WMATA about 61% of pre-pandemic levels. Mr. McGlennon remarked that the data is showing that there is substantial growth over the last several years in Virginia agencies outside of Northern Virginia but that Northern Virginia is also seeing steady growth. Ms. Mattice commented that recent data demonstrates that WMATA is setting records for ridership on many days and that ridership may continue to increase as federal employees continue to return to the office.

Mr. McGlennon asked if systems that have gone fare-free have seen greater increases. Mr. Sonenklar said that an evaluation shows that over the long-term it may not make as big of a difference as thought, but that ridership has returned more quickly to pre-pandemic levels on fare-free systems. Ms. Debruhl commented that GRTC and DASH in particular are fare-free and have seen significant ridership gains, but they have also been making service changes that could impact that as well. Ms. Mester noted that fare-free can be a complex issue and that WMATA is facing issues with fare evasion and seeing that they are raising revenues to continue to support service goals.

## **VI. FY25 Operating and Capital Program Projections**

Mr. Trogdon said that staff is finalizing a draft SYIP and so some of the information will be refined. Mr. Trogdon first talked about the revenues in the Capital program from FY19 to FY25 and then the Operating program revenues for that same period. Mr. Trogdon said that staff would talk more specifically about decreases in both programs at the next meeting once the draft SYIP is completed. Ms. Mattice confirmed that the FY25 figure is showing any VRE allocation removed from the Operating program since they now have a separate allocation per Code. Ms. Mattice also commented that future conversations will be needed due to recent labor negotiations and rising costs that will impact the operating program. Mr. Trogdon said that DRPT staff were aware of this cost trend and asked Mr. Sonenklar for any comments about the impact on the allocation formula and process. Mr. Sonenklar noted that the FY25 allocation figures are based on FY23 audited operating budgets and so he anticipates that upcoming fiscal years will see operating costs used in determining allocations will reflect these increases. Ms. Mattice noted that this issue will have to be watched closely if the available revenues are not increasing enough to keep pace with these costs increases.

Ms. Debruhl commented that DRPT has attempted to mitigate the increasing gap between available revenues and increasing costs by identifying all eligible revenues to put towards the program such as carryover funds and deobligated project funds. DRPT staff is continuing this process as the FY25 SYIP draft is finalized.

Mr. Sonenklar provided a review of the metrics that are used in determining performance-based allocations for the Operating program. He next provided a review of the criteria that has been used since FY2020 to prioritize and score capital projects.

Grant Sparks, Director of Statewide Programs, provided an overview of the FY25 grant application cycle. Mr. Sparks noted that it was a typical year in terms of the number of applications – 430 applications for Capital Assistance totaling \$113.8 million in state

funding requested. Mr. Sparks also quickly reviewed applications that were received for other Programs (Technical Assistance, Demonstration, Commuter Assistance, FTA 5310) and the Transit Ridership Incentive Program (TRIP). He noted that some of the TRIP categories now allow for some projects to be eligible for both the MERIT Capital program and TRIP. DRPT staff are able to be flexible on which funding source to use according to available funding.

Ms. Jackson asked whether DRPT staff provides debriefings to agencies when an application is not funded. Mr. Sparks said that staff does meet with grantees to have these debriefs when requested and that agencies are encouraged to ask for those debriefs. Ms. Mattice noted that she did not see in the Capital Assistance summary how much funding was available to fund the \$113.8 million in requests. Mr. Sparks noted that there was about \$91 million in available revenues. It was then noted that a number of projects requested under MERIT Capital were able to be moved to TRIP as passenger amenities and public safety projects. Mr. Sonenklar clarified that the \$113.8 million in MERIT Capital projects was the requested total after a number had been moved to TRIP.

Brian Booth asked whether applications that were transferred from Capital to TRIP, was the state-controlled federal able to be transferred with it. Mr. Sparks noted that the goal with any dual eligibility project was to keep any local match needed at the same level. Mr. Booth said that addressed his concern since local match amounts are a significant concern to small agencies.

Mr. Trogdon summarized next steps in the process of getting the SYIP draft to the Commonwealth Transportation Board at its April meeting in order to provide time for comments and changes for adoption at the June CTB meeting. Mr. Trogdon also said that DRPT staff would like TSDAC to have an in-person meeting after presentation of the SYIP if possible to go over Operating Assistance and Capital Assistance figures included in the document.

## **VII. Public Comment**

No members of the public asked to make comments.

Mr. McGlennon asked if DRPT staff was asking the Committee to get together again soon. Mr. Trogdon said that staff would like to meet with the Committee again soon after the draft SYIP is presented in April. After some discussion it was agreed that staff would send out a poll to members to determine an agreeable meeting time. With no other business, the meeting adjourned.