

Transit Service Delivery Advisory Committee
VIRTUAL MEETING
October 6, 2025
1:30 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

TSDAC Members Present

Chair McGlennon, Ms. Mester, Dr. Smoot, Mr. Both, Ms. Pinkard, Ms. Mattice, Ms. Jackson, Mr. Dyke

DRPT Consultants Present

Nate Macek, Sarah Sciarrino, Sonika Sethi, Sam Sink

Staff and Others Present

Director Robinson, Ms. Mayton, Mr. Trogon, Thomas Bailey, Jordan Chapman, Tiffany Dubinsky, Sarah Husain, Daniel Sonenklar, Grant Sparks, Evan Price, Raquel Aguirre, Alison Stinette, Andrew D'huyvetter, Ann McGrane, Annika Eng, Bob Schneider, Nick Britton, Aaron Clark, Clinton Edwards, Danny Plaucher, Avery Daugherty, David Fols, David Taylor, Dina Cunningham, Noelle Dominguez, Edward Ryder, Michael Felschow, Amy Garbarini, Scott Gross, Mitch Huber, James Hutzler, Josh Baker, Josh Moore, Bethel Kefyalew, Kevin Price, Kirk Dand, Lauren Gilbert, Paige Lazar, LeaAnn Holloway, Jess Maffey, Maria *[last name not provided]*, Matthew Scalia, McKenzie Byrd, Melanie Fleenor, Michael Duncan, Michaela McCain, Mitchell Elliot, Mitchell Smiley, Jennifer Monaco, Mike Mucha, Nathan Sanford, Natoya Nelson, Deanna Oware, Owen Williams, Paula Melester, Phillip Parella, Kristine Prentice, Queenie Byrd, Raymond Mui, Richard Roismab, Ron Parker, Grace Stankus, Taylor Jenkins, Mike Todd, Kyle Trissel, Evan Tutan, Francis Vance, Will Wright.

Call to Order/Introductions (Chair McGlennon)

At 1:30pm on October 6, Chair McGlennon called the meeting to order.

Approval of July 29, 2025 and August 27, 2025 Meeting Minutes

Ms. Mester thanked DRPT for incorporating her edits and comments to the July 2025 meeting minutes. Ms. Mester requested that, moving forward, the consultants are listed separately on the attendance list. Mr. Booth requested the vote to approve the prior two meetings' minutes are separated into two votes.

On motion of Ms. Mester, seconded by Ms. Pinkard, the Revised July 2025 TSDAC meeting minutes were approved. Mr. Booth abstained, citing his absence from the July meeting. Motion passed, with only Mr. Booth abstaining.

On motion of Ms. Pinkard, seconded by Ms. Mester, the August 2025 TSDAC meeting minutes were approved. Motion passed, unanimously.

MERIT Review Updates (DRPT and Consultant Staff)

Director Robinson began the MERIT Review presentation. Director Robinson began with a review of the agenda. Director Robinson covered the policy goals of the MERIT Review Updates, which include simplification and transparency of the MERIT Program, outcomes focused results, and operational efficiency. Director Robinson emphasized that funding levels in the MERIT Program are not controlled by DRPT. Director Robinson informed the TSDAC members that they will defer a vote on any MERIT policy updates at this meeting and instead begin the public comment period instead, with a final review later. Director Robinson shared how past MERIT Reviews worked.

Director Robinson reviewed the responsibilities between the CTB, TSDAC, and DRPT. Ms. Mester inquired about the January 2026 CTB adoption date for the MERIT Review. Ms. Mester emphasized that difference between an advisory council and the role of TSDAC, particularly noting that the Chair of TSDAC represents TSDAC to the full CTB. Director Robinson noted the Code of Virginia specified the role of TSDAC during the original creation of the MERIT Program. Ms. Mester believed that the language in the presentation somewhat understates the important role of TSDAC in providing recommendations to the CTB on policy changes. Director Robinson noted that the Code seemed to be more specific about when the formula was created but is not as clear about revising the formula. Director Robinson also summarized the reasoning for the timeline in terms of staff time and tasks for preparing grantees. Mr. Trogon provided additional information about activities conducted during the timeline.

Director Robinson reviewed how DRPT incorporated feedback from preceding TSDAC meetings for potential MERIT Capital Program updates . Ms. Sciarrino reviewed the specific feedback received from TSDAC on proposed MERIT Capital Assistance changes. Ms. Sciarrino shared the response to the TSDAC members' feedback.

Director Robinson discussed how DRPT incorporated feedback from TSDAC for the potential MERIT Operating Program updates, including data, commuter bus operators, and data limitations.

Mr. Macek began the presentation on the different MERIT funding scenario alternatives that were conducted in response to TSDAC feedback. Mr. Macek said there are four alternatives that were studied. Alternative A included a 3-Year average of performance data to establish performance adjustment. Ms. Mattice asked how many transit systems would potentially reach the 30% cap on state operating assistance and would not potentially receive any performance adjustment. Mr. Macek shared that three or four agencies reach the 30% cap from just the sizing metric allocation. Mr. Macek shared the relative change under Alternative A using single-year performance compared to the 3-year average performance and noted that the changes are relatively small. He explained that the fact that only 5% of allocations are run through the performance adjustment it does not significantly impact the overall allocation. Ms. Mester requested clarification that this change did not change whether an agency is proposed to gain or lose funding versus the single-year scenario and Mr. Macek confirmed that is correct. Chair McGlennon inquired about the changes and Mr. Macek noted transit agencies

that performed well under Alternative A with single-year data performed even better under a three-year average. Mr. Macek shared a table of the comparison between the one-year and three-year performance average results. Mr. Macek first noted that the sizing metric would continue to use one year of data and this is the part of the formula that is most impacted by large changes in data that may occur due to significant events. One benefit of the use of 3-year average performance data is the it can smooth out impacts of catastrophic events in the allocation of the 5% performance adjustment. Two negative impacts of the use of 3 years of data is that negative events can impact allocations for three years versus a single year and that improvements in performance will take three years to be fully rewarded in the performance adjustment.

Mr. Macek moved on to the administrative policy alternatives tested with certain formulas. Mr. Macek shared the three Alternatives - B, C, and D, and their impacts. Alternative B proposes to include deadhead miles for commuter bus service in the data for the sizing metric, but exclude those miles from the data used in the performance adjustment. Alternative C proposes to change the cost calculation used to compute sizing to utilize the data used for performance cost, which is the total cost of operations. Mr. Macek noted that currently, some costs are backed out of data for the sizing metric and this would change and those costs would be left in. Ms. Mattice commented on the different ways in which various transit providers may raise revenue and asked if revenue will be treated equally since agencies can get creative in raising it. Mr. Macek clarified that this policy only applies to state funding that is currently excluded from the sizing metric as it is may be considered “double dipping”. Ms. Mattice requested clarification regarding toll funding that NVTC receives and whether systems are penalized for receiving those funds. Mr. Sonenklar responded to Ms. Mattice’s and noted that State-funded projects, including the program she inquired about, is reduced from the sizing metrics.

Mr. Booth requested clarification if performance data such as passenger miles and hours were also excluded from transit projects that received other state funding. Mr. Sonenklar clarified that none of the performance data is removed from the calculations. Director Robinson shared that this proposal clarifies the funding formula, making it easier to explain and administer, and noted it incentives transit providers to receive additional funding. Ms. Mattice shared that as this is a policy that many are not familiar with, it shows the complexity of the operating allocation process and how the time taken to explain the process is important.

Mr. Macek noted that Alternative D is a combination of Alternatives A, B, and C applied all at once. Mr. Macek moved on to show the specific funding impact of Alternative B in detail. A table presented explains the single-year performance proposed allocations versus results if the policy changes for deadhead miles are implemented. He noted that the statewide impacts of this change are relatively minor, but there are larger impacts to a couple of agencies that provide commuter service.

Mr. Macek moved on to illustrate the funding impacts of Alternative C, which changes the calculation of costs by incorporating the total cost of operations consistently in both

sizing and performance. The results do not cause significant changes statewide, but a couple of agencies do see an increase in proposed funding.

Mr. Macek continued on to illustrate changes under Alternative D, which includes all of the changes proposed in Alternatives A, B, and C. Mr. Macek described specific changes at the agency level relative to proposed single-year performance formula allocations. Ms. Mattice reminded the group that recent ridership surges are not incorporated into the current scenario examples and the results illustrated here and so this information will to be reexamined in that context. Mr. Macek agreed and noted that during this process it has been stressed that actual allocations when the changes are implemented in FY28 will be based on FY26 data. Mr. Macek further stated that it is best to view the proposed changes as an overarching policy versus how they affect any one agency in any one year as agency data can shift from year to year for a variety of reasons. Chair McGlennon inquired about one of the outliers that saw a large increase in operating costs in one year due to the policy change including additional state funding. Mr. Macek shared that increases in operating costs can have an impact on the formula outcomes and in this case it was a small agency that had a one-time cost funded by the state to complete a planning study. Chair McGlennon confirmed that we could expect that sudden increase in relative position to decline in succeeding years.

Mr. Macek summarized the alternative approaches and noted that none of the alternatives tested deviated significantly from the funding scenario currently proposed. Ms. Mattice inquired if planning funding counts towards operating costs. Mr. Macek noted that in a specific case an agency received state funding to complete a plan and under one of the policy changes this funding would no longer be excluded from operating costs for that agency. Ms. Mattice suggested that there may need to be a conversation around whether that is appropriate. Mr. Macek noted that during policy discussions among staff it was noted that this was a data outlier but during alternative scenario development it was agreed to include all operating costs, even if they were not directly for service provision. Ms. Jackson agreed that we needed to analyze whether all grants, including for planning, are incorporated or removed from operating costs since larger agencies can pay perhaps a million dollars for a plan using state funding and that would take money away from smaller agencies potentially. Chair McGlennon noted that one of the challenges with the scenario is that if all transit agencies are performing well, they are still competing for a limited pool of funding. Director Robinson wanted to ensure it was clarified that Alternatives B, C, and D are not part of the MERIT formula per se but are administrative items within departmental purview. Ms. Mester said she appreciated that clarification and asked if DRPT staff has any indication of which way staff is leaning on the administrative changes. Director Robinson said that DRPT is leaning towards implementing these administrative changes but welcomes feedback on those definitions. Ms. Mester said she would find it helpful to know as a decision is being reached on the formula proposals, what changes DRPT will be recommending on administrative items since these will all impact funding allocations. Director Robinson shared that public comments will address the proposed formula changes, not the administrative definitions. Chair McGlennon pointed out that the exact administrative definitions used by DRPT are of interest to TSDAC, especially when

applied to a new funding formula and Director Robinson stated that was understood and that these items are still a work in progress at the current time. Ms. Mester noted that this conversation reflects a prior discussion on transparency and simplicity and she appreciates how this contributes to that. Ms. Mester shared that she believes that TSDAC has a critical role in this process as Code speaks to TSDAC's involvement in redefining the service delivery factors within the MERIT formula. She reiterated that she believes it is appropriate for TSDAC to reach consensus and provide a recommendation to the CTB on changes to the formula.

Open Discussion

None.

Wrap Up/Next Steps

Chair McGlennon moved on to the next steps. Director Robinson reviewed the next steps, covering upcoming dates, meetings, and a public webinar. Director Robinson shared that future events would give the public opportunities to give feedback and provide comments. Director Robinson shared that TSDAC will need to meet to take a specific position on MERIT, and work around holiday times and individual schedules.

Ms. Mattice asked if a CTB meeting date has been scheduled. Director Robinson and Dr. Smoot shared that the date is tentatively scheduled for December 9. Ms. Mattice asked for clarification of what will be presented to the CTB on that date. Ms. Mattice inquired about what will be posted for public comment. Director Robinson said that public comment will be sought on the alternative incorporating the single-year performance proposed formula as presented at previous meeting and Alternative A presented today with a 3-year average of performance data. She also stated that public comment is not being sought for the administrative changes presented today. Ms. Mattice asked if the ability to control the administrative definitions are still with DRPT as there are impacts on funding and Director Robinson confirmed that is correct. Ms. Mester shared that many of the organizations represented on TSDAC may need time to review the TSDAC recommendations and have their organizations vote on them. Chair McGlennon noted that some in public may wish to comment on the administrative definitions and their could be some benefit in allowing that to happen. Director Robinson confirmed that presenting the administrative changes to the public to comment can certainly happen.

Public Comment

Chair McGlennon opened the meeting to public comment.

Bob Schneider provided public comments. Bob Schneider stated he appreciated the effort from staff on these proposals and shared how he has seen how funding policy changes can have unintended consequences. He encouraged giving additional space and time for this MERIT process review for the staff and consultants to continue to consider outcomes.

Adjourn

Chair McGlennon asked Director Robinson if she had any closing comments and she stated that staff will very soon send out a poll to get members availability for the next meeting. Chair McGlennon again thanked the staff and consultants for their work responding to questions and comments. On motion of Ms. Mester, seconded by Ms. Mattice, and with no objections, Chair McGlennon adjourned the October 2025 TSDAC meeting.