

MEETING MINUTES

Transit Service Delivery Advisory Committee (TSDAC)

June 2, 2026 | 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM

Location: DRPT Headquarters, 600 E. Main Street, Richmond, VA (21st Floor)

Meeting Duration: 4 hours

1. Call to Order & Welcome

Chair **John McGlennon** called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM, welcoming members, DRPT leadership, staff, and participants joining both in person and virtually.

The Chair noted the meeting was recorded and publicly archived, per standard practice.

2. Roll Call & Introductions

Members and staff introduced themselves, including representatives from:

- DRPT leadership and staff: Director Maria Zimmerman, Deputy Director Allan Fye, Director of Statewide Programs Grant Sparks, Chief of Public Transit Zach Trogdon
 - Virginia Municipal League (VML) Appointee: Vice Chair Cindy Mester
 - DRPT Appointee: Dr. Ray Smoot (virtual)
 - DRPT Appointee: Paula Melester
 - Virginia Transit Association (VTA) Appointee: Kate Mattice
 - Virginia Transit Association (VTA) Appointee: Noelle Pinkard
 - Community Transportation Association of Virginia (CTAV) Appointee: Brian Booth
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3. Safety Briefing

Deputy Director **Allan Fye** provided the standard DRPT building safety briefing.

4. Approval of Minutes

- Due to the short turnaround since the May 12 meeting, minutes were not yet prepared.

- Minutes for both May and June will be **adopted together at the July 2026 meeting**.
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5. Director's Report – DRPT Priorities and Updates

DRPT Director **Mariia Zimmerman** delivered an update focused on stakeholder engagement and major policy initiatives.

- DRPT staff have spent months directly engaging nearly every transit agency statewide—often more than once—through workshops, conferences, and one-on-one communication.
- Agencies have asked clarifying questions and raised concerns, and DRPT has made transparency and open dialogue central to the process.

Key goals were reinforced that are guiding MERIT Operating formula modernization: ensure predictability and stability via more fixed metrics; reflect structural differences between rural, small urban, and large urban systems; reward sustained performance and transparency; and avoid a “one-size-fits-all” approach given Virginia’s diversity.

Director Zimmerman emphasized that although unanimous satisfaction statewide is unlikely, the aim is to design a formula that functions effectively for the majority of agencies, particularly through consistent metrics and rational allocations.

A reminder was shared that HB200 requires TRIP restructuring, with significant interest from agencies. DRPT is phasing information delivery to avoid rushed decisions. TRIP updates aim to support evolving mobility needs statewide, including incentives for ridership, access, and innovation. Staff continue analyzing impacts and are preparing guidance for next year’s applications.

6. Recap of May TSDAC Meeting

Grant Sparks provided a summary of the previous TSDAC meeting. Mr. Sparks shared the proposed sizing metric weights by cohort and the rationale for those proposed weights:

- Consistent weighting of revenue hours and miles across all cohorts
- Increased weight on cost in rural cohorts
- Increased weight on ridership in large urban cohorts

These weightings recognize the different operating environments and service goals across communities.

A summary of the various outreach efforts since the last meeting was also provided. Overall, there was great participation in the cohort workshops and a decent number of clarifying questions.

Lastly, a summary of the Performance and Stability Fund concept was shared, including the framework, proposed revenue cohorting, and the ability for agencies to exceed the 30% cap through the Fund. For Stability Considerations, funds would only be utilized if significant anomalies were identified.

Comments were made by TSDAC members about how they appreciated the extensive outreach and engagement efforts this year.

Chair **John McGlennon** asked how DRPT intends to identify good versus bad performers in the Performance and Stability Fund and whether any comments have been received from transit agencies about this part of the proposed formula. Mr. Sparks indicated that good performance is difficult to define statewide, but a little easier when defined by cohort. **Director Zimmerman** added that good performance involves high ridership but also high customer satisfaction and other criteria.

7. TRIP Policy Recommendations

Evan Tuten provided a summary of DRPT's policy recommendations for the TRIP program. The first recommendation is to allow local governments and tribal governments (federal or state recognized) to apply for TRIP funds when projects have a clear transit nexus. This recommendation would apply to all TRIP subprograms (i.e. regional connectivity, zero/reduced fares, etc.).

For TRIP Regional Connectivity, DRPT recommends definition routes of regional significance as corridors or services documented in regional plans or studies, allowing clearer, objective eligibility.

DRPT recommended no changes to TRIP Zero/Reduced Fare project eligibility but a slight change was recommended to add transit dependent individuals to the targeted groups for this program. Continued support for zero and reduced fare projects will be considered in future reviews.

Under TRIP Enhanced Mobility and Innovation, DRPT reminded TSDAC that this was the new program under TRIP. Mr. Tuten presented DRPT's recommendations for eligible projects which include innovative approaches to microbility, paratransit, and other specialized transportation services. Both capital or operating projects will be considered.

DRPT recommends no substantive changes to TRIP Passenger Amenities and Safety other than combining these previously separate subprograms.

Several TSDAC members raised nuanced concerns:

- Risk that long-term state zero-fare support could effectively become an operating subsidy, crowding out other TRIP categories
- Potential unintended benefits to large employers who subsidize transit passes for employees
- Localities noted that fare-free decisions are often intentionally limited to local routes to preserve commuter-benefit revenues

DRPT will revisit and clarify operating funding timelines before the July meeting.

8. MERIT Operating Policy Recommendations

Grant Sparks provided a quick reminder of the full conceptual process for the proposed new MERIT Operating formula. He also shared updated, simplified graphics which represent the proposed formula for each cohort.

Mr. Sparks listed the different policy decisions that would be covered at the meeting. He also reviewed the different performance measures that were available for use in the Performance and Stability Fund.

DRPT presented the recommended performance measures for each cohort:

- Rural: Cost per hour, cost per mile, cost per passenger
- Small Urban: Passengers per hour, passengers per mile, PMT per mile
- Large Urban: Passengers per hour, passengers per mile, PMT per hour, PMT per mile

Additionally, DRPT recommended using a 60th percentile target threshold to determine whether each agency gets performance funding or does not and locking that figure into policy rather than recalculating it each year. DRPT shared that locking a figure into policy will provide simplicity, transparency, and predictability within the Performance Fund.

Discussion Highlights

- Questions about how surpassing a performance target leads to additional funding (i.e. how the additional funding is calculated)

- Conversation about the STIC model and how the Commonwealth has an interest in bringing more STIC 5307 funding to Virginia by having agencies report PMT data to NTD
- Concerns raised about agencies that narrowly miss performance thresholds.
- Debate about rewarding agencies already performing at very high levels.
- DRPT clarified that targets will be based on absolute performance, not relative trends.
- Agencies discussed the burden of collecting PMT (Passenger Miles Traveled) data; APC (Automatic Passenger Counters) installations may be needed.
- Metrics such as “passengers per mile” may appear low to the general public. **Dr. Smoot** emphasized the need for narrative framing explaining: rural systems serve critical but low-density trips and many systems exist to meet lifeline or medical needs, not mass ridership.
- General support from some members on the direction of the performance funding.
- Questions about agencies that are showing “0.0” on certain metrics. DRPT explained that those are examples of when agencies do not collect such data (ex: Petersburg does not collect PMT and thus shows “0.0” for PMT per Mile).
- Suggestion by **Noelle Pinkard** to review the 60th percentile targets a year after implementation to check for appropriateness.
- **Kate Mattice** indicated that locking in policies for longer-term adds consistency and can be a good thing (i.e. stability after a big change can be beneficial).
- **Director Zimmerman** clarified that DRPT will certainly review the outcomes of the formula in detail with TSDAC next year, but just because some agencies will ultimately miss out on Performance Funding should not necessitate DRPT and TSDAC to make a change to the formula.

9. Stability Funding Framework

DRPT analyzed historic data to test the impact of introducing a 3-year average dataset to the Sizing Metric. An example was shared for Fairfax County, which shows the variation on the agency’s sizing metric using a single year of data versus a 3-year average dataset.

Additionally, staff looked back to FY20 to identify “significant anomalies” and the financial impact of those anomalies:

- Only five significant anomalies occurred statewide over eight years
- Average financial impact: less than \$500,000 statewide
- Stability funding is expected to be needed rarely, not annually

Based on this analysis, DRPT recommended:

- Formula runs will be completed first; anomalies identified afterward
- DRPT Director may recommend limited stability funding
- Any use of Stability Funding must be transparently presented to TSDAC and CTB
- Stability funds should not raise an agency above the 30% base cap

Vice Chair **Cindy Mester** asked for clarification on the process for adding stability funding to an agency's allocation (i.e. where in the conceptual process the funding would get added and how it would be impacted by the 30% cap, if at all). DRPT staff confirmed that the 30% cap only applies to the Sizing Metric and not the Performance and Stability Fund.

Questions about how DRPT would determine the Stability allocation amount if a significant anomaly was identified. DRPT staff indicated that there are many ways to calculate that amount, but there are advantages in keeping the policy language on Stability Considerations open, which would allow DRPT to react based on the specific situation, revenue levels that year, etc. **Director Zimmerman** also reminded everyone that the DRPT's emergency reserve will cover more statewide issues and that the Stability Fund would only kick in for these very rare anomalies.

TSDAC members emphasized that stability funding must not fill gaps caused by local funding cuts.

TSDAC members discussed concerns about mixing stability and performance in the same pot; **John McGlennon** suggested that alternative naming structures may be considered.

Additional discussions included the importance of: ensuring small systems have pathways to performance success; avoiding unintentional penalties for systems experiencing short-term disruptions; keeping the formula simple enough to explain clearly to stakeholders and elected officials

10. Recap of DRPT Policy Recommendations

DRPT provided a high-level recap of all the different policy recommendations that have been presented to TSDAC for the MERIT Capital, MERIT Operating and TRIP programs.

11. Next Steps

DRPT staff asked TSDAC Members to collect stakeholder input before the July 7 meeting and prepare for formal policy recommendation votes at that July meeting. In the meantime, DRPT will conduct a final Stakeholders Workshop in late June to solicit feedback on the MERIT Operating Performance Fund/Stability Considerations and TRIP. Staff also reminded TSDAC that at the next meeting a public hearing will be held to satisfy Virginia Code requirements.

Vice Chair **Cindy Mester** asked if DRPT could share the revised MERIT operating calculator tool with TSDAC members. **Allan Fye** indicated that DRPT would share the tool with TSDAC members once it's been finalized, which would be soon.

12. Announcements

Director Zimmerman will be traveling internationally during the July meeting, but DRPT leadership and staff will proceed with all scheduled actions.

13. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at approximately **1:52 PM**.