

MEETING MINUTES

Transit Service Delivery Advisory Committee (TSDAC)

July 7, 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 McGlennon called the meeting to order and welcomed members, DRPT staff, local transit agencies, and consulting partners.

2. Roll Call & Introductions

Members and staff introduced themselves, including representatives from:

DRPT leadership and staff:

- Deputy Director Allan Fye
- Chief of Public Transit Zach Trogdon
- Communications Director Andy Wright
- Director of Statewide Programs Grant Sparks
- Evan Tuten, Statewide Transit Planner
- Rebecca Rahmen, DRPT Fellow

TSDAC Members and Representatives:

- John McGlennon, Chair – Virginia Association of Counties / James City County
- Cindy Mester, Vice Chair – City of Falls Church, Virginia Municipal League
- Kate Mattice: Virginia Transit Association (VTA) appointee
- Noelle Pinkard: Virginia Transit Association (VTA)
- Paula Melester: DRPT Appointee; Central Shenandoah Planning Commission
- Brian Booth: Blacksburg Transit, Community Transportation Association of Virginia (CTAV) Appointee
- Ian Hollis, FAMPO
- Dr. Raymond Smoot: Commonwealth Transportation Board, DRPT Appointee

Consulting Team:

- Nate Macek, HDR
- Sonika Sethi, HDR

Public Comment Speakers

- Bob Schneider, OmniRide
 - Josh Moore, GLTC
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3. Safety Briefing

- Deputy Director **Allan Fye** provided the standard DRPT building safety briefing.
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4. Approval of Minutes

Chair McGlennon presented June minutes, motion to approve passed and previous minutes adopted.

5. DRPT Director's Report

Delivered by Deputy Director **Allan Fye**, who shared updates on behalf of Director Zimmerman.

Key Points:

- **Director Zimmerman** is on vacation.
- Appreciation was extended to TSDAC members for flexibility during the administrative transition earlier in the year.
- DRPT emphasized commitment to transparent, data-driven transit investment policy.

Public Comment Period Announcement

- A formal 45-day public comment period will occur from August through September, followed by a CTB briefing.
- Input may also be submitted through DRPT's online portal.

Merit Operating & TRIP Program Implementation

- Pending CTB approval in October, DRPT will execute rapid implementation of the new MERIT Operating framework in preparation for December grant cycles.
- DRPT intends to continue evolving the TRIP program, learning from the next call for projects and assessing whether adjustments are needed.

6. Presentation: TSDAC Action Item Summary

Grant Sparks provided an overview of policy recommendations to be voted on later in the meeting.

Notable Points:

- MERIT Capital recommendations reached consensus earlier in the year; thus no vote was required at this meeting.
- A change was highlighted for Policy Recommendation 1B, adding language specifying that cohort allocation percentages must be reviewed every three years *or following a decennial census*.
- **Dr. Smoot** raised a question regarding precise definition of *sizing*
- Allan Fye defines factors, combination of 6-7 discreet factors, less of an objective analysis and more a 'gut check'
 - **Grant Sparks** clarifies that hours, miles, historical allocation, service levels over multiple years of analysis led to recommendation.
- **Dr. Smoot** recommends that explanation be developed prior to CTB presentation with appropriate level of detail for new members.
- **Allan Fye** confirms that one-on-one briefings will take place with CTB members prior to presentation, additional details will be provided along with justification and clarification.

7. Public Comment Period

Moderated by **Andy Wright**.

Speaker 1: Bob Schneider, OmniRide

Key concerns included:

- Agencies with strong performance (such as Blacksburg Transit) may see formulaic reductions despite exemplary metrics.
- Concern about unintended consequences of agencies competing indirectly with one another.
- Emphasized belief that transit systems should compete only against their own past performance.

- Raised warning about potential “death spirals” resulting from funding reductions tied to external factors unrelated to local performance.
- Asserted that fare recovery and Passenger Miles Traveled remain essential metrics and should be reconsidered.

Speaker 2: Josh Moore, GLTC

Key points:

- GLTC has faced volatility in ridership, costs, and service levels over recent years.
- Noted recent temporary suspension of Sunday service due to operator shortages and emphasized how such changes complicate performance measurement.
- Requested recognition that smaller systems may require more stabilization due to fluctuating local conditions.
- Expressed concern that even a three-year average may not fully smooth significant

Chair McGlennon reopened the public comment period at the advertised time to ensure transparency. No further commenters came forward.

8. Stakeholder Workshop Recap & TSDAC Timeline Review

Grant Sparks summarized the June 25 workshop:

- 71 participants representing 32 agencies attended.
- Feedback remained mostly clarifying questions, not substantive objections.
- Questions included: TRIP definitions, mathematical mechanics behind performance allocations, PMT data reporting, and cohort placement.

The project schedule milestone for July 7 was noted as the “finish line” for committee review.

9. Presentation and Discussion: Final Merit Operating Recommendations

Below is a structured summary of each policy decision and TSDAC discussion.

Policy Decision 1: Cohorts and Revenue Distribution

1A – Establishes three cohorts:

- Rural
- Small Urban

- Large Urban

Cohorts are based on FTA area type definitions, not agency size.

1B – Revenue Splits After 5% Off the Top:

- 7% Rural
- 12% Small Urban
- 81% Large Urban

These percentages must be reviewed every three years or after a decennial census.

Discussion Themes:

- Importance of clear justification for cohort percentages, especially for CTB members unfamiliar with program history.
- Factors included historical allocations, ridership trends, costs, and service hours.
- DRPT committed to refining explanatory materials for CTB briefings.

Policy Decision 2: Sizing Metrics

2A – Use of a three-year average of the following:

- Operating cost
- Revenue miles
- Revenue hours
- Ridership

2B–2D – Weighting Adjustments by Cohort

Each cohort maintains:

- 15% weight for hours
- 15% weight for miles

Operating cost and ridership weights vary:

- Large Urban: 30% ridership / 40% cost
- Small Urban: 25% ridership / 45% cost
- Rural: 20% ridership / 50% cost

Discussion Themes:

- Appreciation for averaging to create stability.

- Committee noted importance of clear communication surrounding data tools and transparency.

Policy Decision 3: Performance Fund

3A – Performance fund revenues will be allocated to cohorts using the same percentages as in Policy 1B.

3B – Agencies at their 30% sizing cap remain eligible for performance funding.

Clarification: CTB policy will require amendment to reflect this.

3C–3E – Selection of Performance Metrics

- Rural: Cost effectiveness metrics (cost per hour, cost per mile, cost per passenger)
- Small Urban: Productivity and service utilization (passengers per hour, passengers per mile, passenger miles travelled per mile)
- Large Urban: All four productivity/utilization metrics (passengers per hour, passengers per mile, passenger miles travelled per mile, passengers per mile, passenger miles travelled per hour)

Performance Targets

- All cohorts will use the 60th percentile target.
- Clarification was requested and provided that performance metrics will use a single year of data, unlike sizing metrics which use a three-year average.

3F – Targets will be locked into CTB policy and reviewed at least every three years.

3G – Stability Funding

- DRPT will run the formula in full each year and identify significant anomalies.
- The DRPT Director will have discretion to allocate stability funding.
- Stability funding use will be reported to TSDAC, stakeholders, and CTB.
- Example discussed: GLTC's suspended Sunday service and how variability might or might not trigger stability assistance.

10. Committee Discussion and Member Perspectives

Members shared reflections on the process, including:

- Recognition of major improvements in clarity, transparency, and data structure over prior years.
- Acknowledgment that while the formula will not be perfect, it achieves core goals: predictability, stability, simplification, and equity across cohorts.
- Interest in DRPT continuing ongoing evaluation, particularly:
 - Effects of fare-free or reduced-fare programs.
 - Long-term performance impacts of step-down funding structures.
 - More frequent engagement with TSDAC during the three-year review cycle.

11. Motions on Merit Operating Recommendations

A motion was advanced by **Cindy Mester**:

- To approve recommendations on slides 13–17 with amendments to ensure:
 - Single-year performance metric clarification is included in 3C, 3D, and 3E.

The motion was:

- Seconded and passed unanimously, with **Dr. Smoot** abstaining due to his role on the CTB.

12. TRIP Program Final Recommendations

Presented by **Evan Tuten**.

Summary of Proposed Policy Recommendations and Discussion:

1. Expansion of eligible recipients (including local governments and federally/state-recognized tribes).
2. Routes of Regional Significance definitions and eligibility recommendations
3. Zero and Reduced Fare Eligibility definitions and eligibility recommendations
4. Enhanced Mobility Innovation definitions and eligibility recommendations
5. Passenger Amenities and Safety definitions and eligibility recommendations
6. Match rates:

- Capital projects under \$3M: up to 68%
- Capital projects over \$3M: up to 50%
- Operating projects step-down funding model

Discussion Themes:

- Importance of ensuring local governments coordinate with transit agencies via letters of support.
- Need for documentation of nexus between project sponsors and transit agencies.
- Concerns regarding NEPA implications for federal funding of bus shelters and importance of state-level flexibility.
- Recognition of research opportunities regarding fare-free step-down impacts and performance outcomes.
- Administrative flexibility for DRPT to continue studying match rates, especially for shelters and amenities.

Motion

- A motion was made to approve TRIP recommendations 1–5 (slides 20–24).
- Motion carried unanimously.

13. Next Steps & Implementation Timeline

DRPT outlined key upcoming steps:

- Drafting updated CTB policies for MERIT Operating, MERIT Capital, and TRIP.
- Onboarding five new CTB members.
- Conducting CTB briefings in August.
- Public comment period: August 3 – September 18 (45 days).
- CTB workshop presentation: September 15.
- CTB action meeting: October.

TSDAC members requested:

- Annual updates during the three-year review cycle.
- Detailed documentation of decisions in the committee letter to CTB.

14. Closing Remarks

Chair McGlennon expressed appreciation for:

- DRPT's extensive work and responsiveness.
- TSDAC members' collaboration.
- Stakeholders' constructive engagement.

Dr. Smoot thanked the Chair for his effective leadership through a complex process.

15. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned with consensus and thanks to all participants.