



# HAMPTON ROADS TRANSIT

November 8, 2018

Hon. John J. McGlennon  
Chairman, Transit Service Delivery  
Advisory Committee  
PO Box 8784  
Williamsburg, VA 23187

Jennifer Mitchell  
Director, Virginia Department of Rail  
and Public Transportation  
600 E Main Street  
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**Subject: Scenarios and policy development for future state operating allocations**

Director Mitchell and Chairman McGlennon,

We are following closely the ongoing work of TSDAC and DRPT as you undertake the challenging work of determining how future allocations of state transit operating assistance will be made. We realize how important this work is and thank you and everyone involved for your efforts.

Following on TDCHR committee discussions that took place this month, I write to elevate some concerns.

Based on a review of the most recent TSDAC materials, it is our understanding that, based on certain metrics applied solely to VRE (Passenger Miles Traveled, Revenue Vehicle Hours, and Revenue Vehicle Miles) there could be approximately 11 percent of total statewide funding set aside as an exclusive funding pool for VRE. Meanwhile, remaining funds would be distributed to all other agencies. Preliminary, it appears that this proposed special consideration for VRE would result in maintaining VRE funding levels at about the same as FY19 allocations, while reducing funding available to the TDCHR and others.

These policy considerations were precipitated by a letter to Chairman McGlennon in which Marty Nohe, VRE Operations Board Chairman, noted, "as the only commuter rail service in Virginia, we believe VRE may be unfairly impacted by an allocation process that compares us to bus services based on passenger trips without considering trip length . . . we believe it may be necessary to separate VRE from the bus services in the evaluation and place VRE in a separate commuter rail category" (August 30, 2018).

Subsequently, DRPT and TSDAC have shown willingness to consider unique costs and performance characteristics among different modes, as specifically called for in VRE's letter. This has been clearly demonstrated in the development of the "Scenario 2+ - Separate funding pool for Commuter Rail" (TSDAC presentation, November 3, 2018) that would set aside approximately 11 percent exclusive to VRE, as noted above.

Captioned below is noteworthy information contained in the VRE letter, citing FY16 National Transit Database information:

**Figure 1: NTD Data (FY16) table from VRE letter**

Agency	Mode(s)	Avg. Trip Length	Cost/ Trip	Pass. Cost/ Mile	Trips/ Hour	Rev. Trips/ Mile
Hampton Roads Transit	Bus & Light Rail	4.7	\$5.99	\$1.26	17.2	1.3
Fairfax Connector	Bus	4.6	\$9.06	\$1.97	12.5	1.0
GRTC (Richmond)	Bus	3.9	\$4.34	\$1.12	22.0	2.0
Virginia Railway Express	Commuter Rail	33.5	\$16.05	\$0.48	407.0	12.3
DASH (Alexandria)	Bus	2.3	\$3.93	\$1.75	20.0	2.4

Please take special notice that the information shown in Figure 1 aggregates “Bus & Light Rail” in the case of Hampton Roads Transit. However, for your reference, Table 1 below shows disaggregated data for HRT bus and light rail modes, in addition to a column showing Average Cost per Revenue Hour:

**Table 1: NTD Data (FY16) by mode (HRT)**

Mode	Average Trip Length (Miles)	Average Cost per Passenger Trip	Average Cost per Passenger Mile	Average Trips / Revenue Hour	Average Trips / Revenue Mile	Average Cost per Revenue Hour
Bus	4.85	\$ 5.69	\$ 1.17	16.19	1.25	\$ 92.20
LRT	3.78	\$ 8.83	\$ 2.34	45.72	3.48	\$ 403.80
Combined:	4.75	\$ 5.99	\$ 1.26	17.23	1.33	\$ 103.21

As shown, as one might suspect, there are significant differences between costs and performance characteristics of bus and light rail modes. This point has been made at each of the most recent TSDAC meetings when discussions centered mostly on the uniqueness of VRE and special funding by mode.

We believe such differences (light rail versus other modes) warrant further due diligence as TSDAC and DRPT continue deliberations over forthcoming changes to allocations of operating assistance.



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To that end, your favorable consideration is requested to evaluate issues and feasibility and appropriateness for separating light rail from bus services and placing funding for light rail in a separate funding pool. Such due diligence, as has occurred in the case of VRE, should take into consideration different service characteristics and markets served by different modes.

Respectfully,

Doug Fuller  
Chairman, Transportation District  
Commission of Hampton Roads

Copy: TDCHR Commissioners  
William Harrell, President and CEO, HRT  
Jennifer DeBruhl, Chief of Public Transportation, DRPT