

**Commonwealth Transportation Board
Rail and Transit Subcommittee
1221 East Broad Street
HR Training Room
Richmond, Virginia 23219
March 18, 2025
9:00 a.m.**

AGENDA

1. Approval of May 14, 2024 Meeting Minutes
2. Introduction of Transit and Rail Program Scoring
3. Public Comment

VDOT Central Office – HR Training Room
1221 East Broad Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219
Tuesday, May 14th, 2024, 9:00 am

CTB MEMBERS PRESENT

Jennifer DeBruhl (Chair), Mr. Kasprowicz, Dr. Smoot, Ms. Hynes, Ms. Sellers, Mr. Merrill, Mr. Fowlkes, Mr. Laird, Mr. Stant

STAFF AND OTHERS PRESENT

Andrew Wright (DRPT), Evan Price (DRPT), Todd Horsley (DRPT), Kate Mattice (NVTC), Emily Stock (DRPT), Zach Trogdon (DRPT), Johnathan Arnold (DRPT)

CALL TO ORDER:

At 9 am, Director DeBruhl called the CTB Rail and Transit Subcommittee to order

APPROVAL OF THE March 19th, 2024 MEETING MINUTES

Motion by Mr. Fowlkes, seconded by Ms Hynes, the March 19th, 2024 meeting minutes were approved.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No one spoke for public comment.

DIRECTORS REPORT

Presented by Chair Jennifer DeBruhl

Director DeBruhl delivered her May 2024 Director's Report.

Mr. Kasprowicz inquired about the performance of MetGo! Dr. Smoot commented on the service of on-demand microtransit. Director DeBruhl provided further information about microtransit service. Mr. Merrill commented on microtransit in the Winchester area. Mr. Laird inquired about the technology used for transit. Mr. Stant commented on the comparisons between fixed-route and microtransit. Ms. Sellers commented on the development of transit service. Dr. Smoot inquired about the service of microtransit. Director DeBruhl provided an answer.

I-66 COMMUTER CHOICE

Presented by Kate Mattice and Todd Horsley

Mr. Horsley delivered his May 2024 I-66 Commuter Choice presentation.

Mr. Merrill added context to the I-66 program. Mr. Merrill inquired about the I-66 tolls going through DRPT SYIP. Director DeBruhl and Ms. Mattice provided an answer. Ms. Hynes added to the answer.

Ms. Mattice delivered her May 2024 I-66 Commuter Choice presentation.

Mr. Merrill inquired about the jurisdictions within NVTC. Ms. Mattice provided an answer. Mr. Merrill inquired about the routes included in the program. Ms. Mattice provided an answer. Ms. Hynes added further context. Mr. Kasproicz inquired further about the applications to the I-66 Commuter Choice Program.

Mr. Merrill inquired about the frequency of OmniRide services and when tolls are in effect. Ms. Mattice provided an answer. Ms. Sellers added further context about OmniRide services. Ms. Mattice provided additional information. Ms. Hynes added additional context on I-66 tolling. Director DeBruhl noted the history of the I-66 Commuter Choice program. Ms. Sellers inquired about the usage of the toll lanes. Ms. Mattice and Director DeBruhl provided an answer. Ms. Hynes added additional information regarding the I-66 concession payments.

Ms. Mattice informed the subcommittee of the next steps in getting the I-66 Commuter Choice program approval. Mr. Kasproicz praised the I-66 Commuter Choice program. Dr. Smoot inquired about toll concessionaires and who sets the tolls. Ms. Hynes and Director DeBruhl provided an answer. Several members provided additional information. Mr. Merrill inquires about how NVTC is funded. Ms. Mattice provided an answer.

ADJOURNMENT

At 9:52 am, the Rail and Transit subcommittee adjourned.



Rail and Transit Program Scoring: Overview and Evaluation

Tiffany Robinson, Director

Mike Todd, Director of Rail Programs

Grant Sparks, Director of Statewide Transit Programs



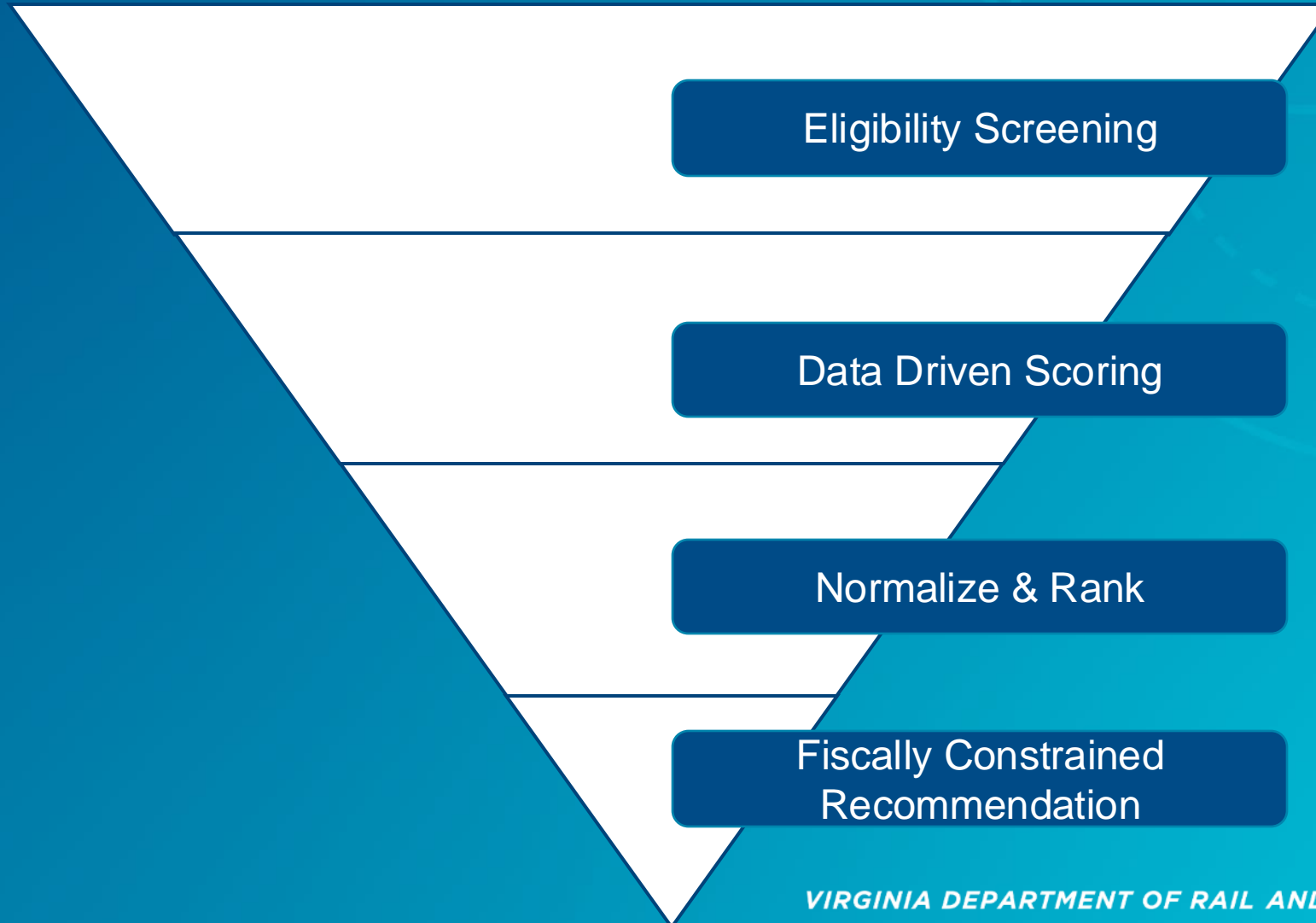
Purpose and Key Topics for Today's Discussion

1. Provide an overview of DRPT's current scoring/prioritization process for Rail and Transit Programs funding projects in the SYIP
2. Introduce the process and timeline for evaluating and implementing potential changes and improvements to the MERIT Program
3. Request feedback and input from Rail and Transit Subcommittee members

Rail Program Scoring for SYIP

Application Evaluation Process

(Similar to the MERIT process, DRPT Rail Programs uses the following steps to evaluate and recommend projects)



FREIGHT Program

FREIGHT Eligibility Screening

- Meet at least 1 goal of the Statewide Rail Plan

Align with
State Goals

1

- Increase carload throughput through physical capacity expansion or improved operational capacity

Network
Expansion

2

- Minimum 30% engineering plans complete and submitted with application

30%
Design

3

FREIGHT Scoring



BENEFIT-COST ANALYSIS

- 3 points = BCA score below 50th percentile of applications
- 6 points = BCA score 50th percentile, or above
- 7 points = project with highest BCA score



MATCHING FUNDS

- 2 points = 30% match
- 3 points = 40% match
- 6 points = 50% match



STATEWIDE GOAL ALIGNMENT

- 1 point awarded for each goal met in Statewide Rail Plan (up to 3 points).



PROJECT READINESS

- 2 points = 60% design complete
- 4 points = 90% design complete

POINT VALUES

BENEFIT-COST ANALYSIS

7

MATCHING FUNDS

6

STATEWIDE GOALS

3

PROJECT READINESS

4

TOTAL

20

Rail Preservation Program

Rail Preservation Eligibility Screening

- Must be a shortline (Class III) railroad operating in Virginia to apply

Shortline

1

- Raise the Class of Track Safety Standards, and/or maintain Class 2 Track Safety Standards (Class 3 where passenger service exists)

Track Safety Standard

2

- Support 286K load capacity on bridges

Bridge Weight Capacity

3



Rail Preservation Scoring

- Code Alignment
- Statewide Goal Alignment
- Past Investment Performance
- Normalize

Scoring Summary (RPF Scoring)

Category	Measure	Maximum Score
Code Alignment	State of Good Repair	25
	Operational Efficiency	10
	Critical Infrastructure	5
Statewide Goal Alignment	Statewide Goal Alignment	3
Past Investment Performance	Regional Economic Benefit	3
	Systemic Approach	3
	Supports RIA Investment	3
Normalize	Cost Effectiveness	10
	Applicant Priority	10
Total		72

Winter

- Dec. 1: Application Opens
- Review Applications
- OAG Reviews Agreement Template

Spring

- Recommend Applications
- Draft SYIP
- Draft Project Agreements

Application / Contracting Cycle

Fall

- Review / Update Guidance
- Review / Update Admin Process

Summer

- CTB Adopts SYIP
- July 1: Provide Agreement for Grantee Signature

MERIT:

Making Efficient and Responsible Investments in Transit

DRPT's statewide grant program that provides financial assistance – both capital and operating - to support public transportation services throughout Virginia.

MERIT Capital Assistance

MERIT Capital Assistance Program History

- **Development of the MERIT – Capital Assistance program CTB policy**
 - In 2018 – DRPT worked with TSDAC and consultants to develop a project prioritization method
 - The prioritization policy was designed to favor projects that:
 1. Achieve the statewide policy objective of maintaining a state of good repair (SGR) of existing assets
 2. Have the greatest impact on the delivery of public transit services
 - Introduced program sub-categories and new maximum state match rates:
 - **State of Good Repair (SGR)** – 68% of total cost
 - **Minor Enhancements (MIN)** – 68% of total cost
 - **Major Expansions (MAJ)** – 50% of total cost
 - Eligible recipients: all public transit service providers
 - No WMATA as of FY17, and no VRE as of FY25
 - 2022: Program review and update
 - Changed project categorization and scoring parameters slightly

MERIT Capital Assistance Prioritization Process

- 1. DRPT solicits project applications from December 1 – February 1**
- 2. Projects are screened for eligibility and readiness**
- 3. Eligible projects are filtered into 3 categories, by project type:**
 - State of Good Repair (SGR), Minor Enhancements (MIN), and Major Expansions (MAJ)
- 4. Consistent with CTB policy, projects are scored according to the methodology outlined in the [FY26 Transit Capital Assistance Technical Documentation](#) posted on the DRPT website**
- 5. Projects are ranked according to scoring**
- 6. Funding is allocated to those that meet or exceed the scoring threshold for each category**
 - NOTE: Recommendations are proposed to the CTB in April with action in June

MERIT Capital Assistance: Eligibility/Readiness Reviews

- DRPT Staff review capital applications for eligibility, readiness, and need prior to applying scoring criteria.
 - Eligibility, Readiness, and Needs reviews include the following for all projects:
 1. Project includes eligible capital expense(s)
 2. Total cost and individual replacement costs are reasonable
 3. Cost estimates are provided and match the cost estimates provided
 4. Federal and other funding source that will be used to support the project are clear
 5. All other needed supporting documents are provided (studies, engineering & design documents, etc.)
 6. Executed/open grants reviewed
 7. Milestones are realistic and reasonable
 8. SGR Vehicles: Valid VINs are included
 9. MIN/MAJ Construction: 30% design plans, NEPA, property acquisition plans, engineering cost estimates, etc.

MERIT - Capital Assistance Project Types

State of Good Repair (SGR)

[up to 68% state match]

Projects that replace or rehabilitate an existing asset, excluding major capital construction projects with a total cost over \$3 million

- Replacement/ Rehabilitation of a specific existing asset

Example SGR Projects:

- Replacement Revenue Vehicles
- Replacement Support Vehicles

Minor Enhancements (MIN)

[up to 68% state match]

Projects that add capacity or include the purchase of new assets meeting the following criteria:

- Total project cost is \$3 million or less
- All Projects for engineering and design of infrastructure or facilities

Example MIN Projects:

- New On-board Camera System
- New Facility Security Gates

Major Expansions (MAJ)

[up to 50% state match]

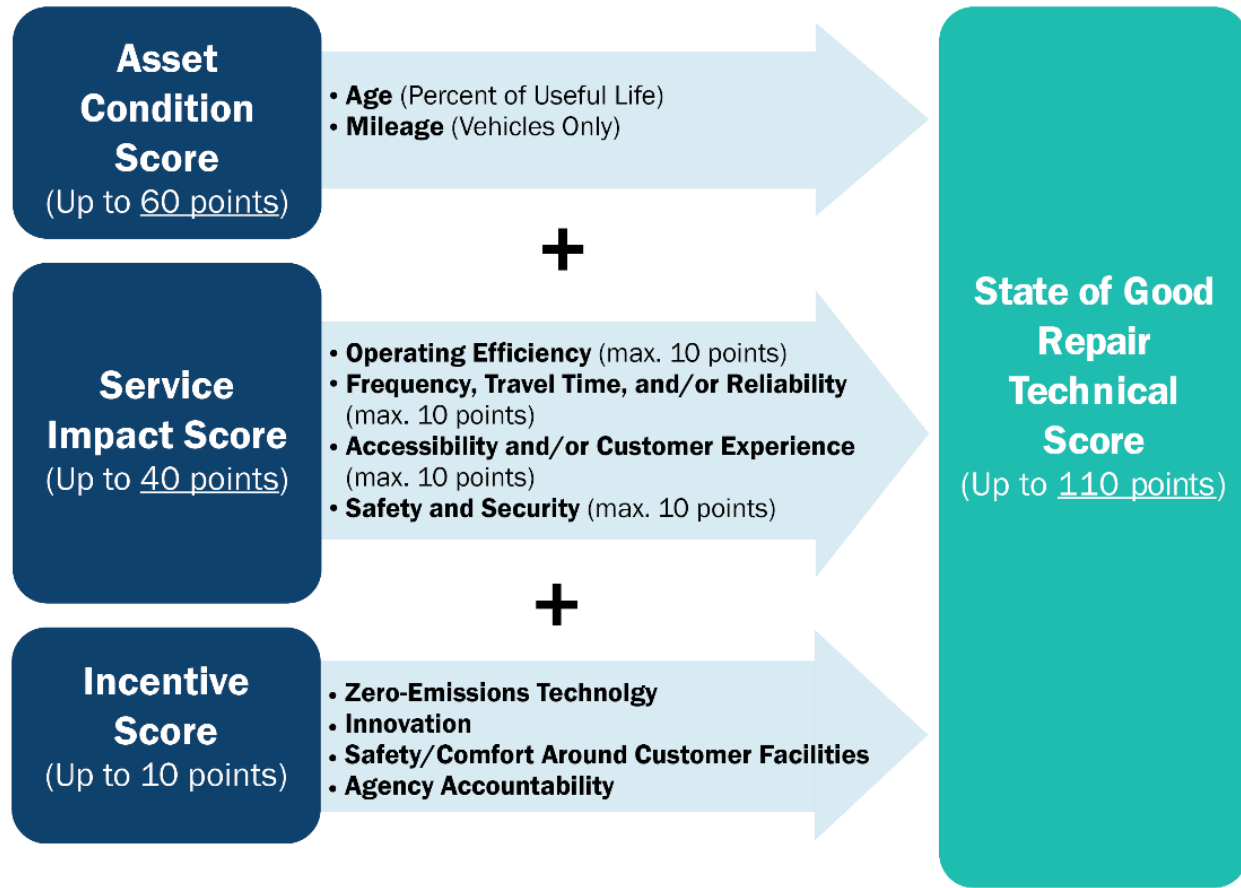
Projects to add, expand, or improve transit services or facilities, with:

- Total project cost exceeding \$3 million
- All projects that include the replacement of an entire existing facility

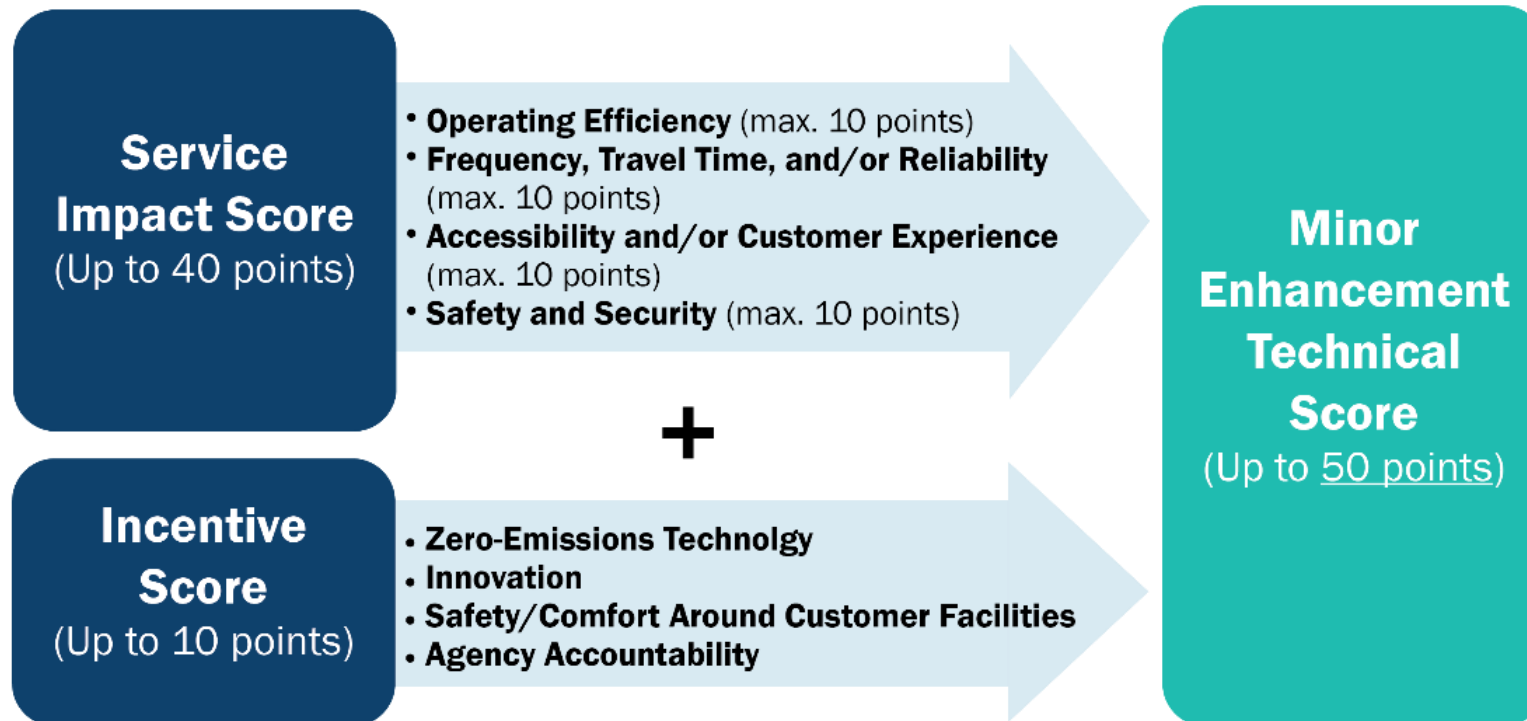
Example MAJ Projects:

- New Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Infrastructure
- New Maintenance/ Operations Facility

State of Good Repair (SGR) Scoring



Minor Enhancement (MIN) Scoring



Major Expansion (MAJ) Scoring

- Six prioritization criteria are utilized to prioritize projects, in line with SMART SCALE
- DRPT has designated quantifiable and objective measure to analyze each project's projected performance benefits relative to its cost to the state

Criteria	Objective	Measure
Congestion Mitigation	Reduce delay, improve transportation system reliability, and encourage transit use	Change in peak-period transit ridership attributed to the project
Economic Development	Support existing economies and enhance opportunity for economic development	Project consistency with regional and local economic development plans and policies, and support for local development activity
Accessibility	Enhance worker and overall household access to jobs and other opportunities, and provide multiple and connected modal choices	Project improvement in accessibility to jobs
		Disadvantaged population (low-income, minority, or limited English proficiency) within walking distance of project
Safety	Address multimodal safety concerns and improve transit safety and security	Project contribution to improving safety and security, reducing risk of fatalities or injuries
Environmental Quality	Reduce emissions and energy consumption by providing modal choices, and minimize natural resources impacts	Reduction in CO2 resulting from project
Land Use	Improve consistency of the connection between local comprehensive plans and land use policies with transit investments	Transit supportive land use served by the project

MERIT – Capital Assistance Program Challenges

- Short Review Period
 - All reviews, QCs, setting funding thresholds, and updates must be done within about 4 weeks
 - This does not allow enough time for an in-depth review once applications are submitted
- Project Eligibility – Very Broad
 - Codifying categories of ineligible capital projects could be helpful
- Construction projects need more comprehensive process
 - SGR Construction – Minor and Major
 - Expansion Construction – Minor and Major

MERIT – Operating Assistance

MERIT Operating Assistance Program History

- **Development of the MERIT – Operating Assistance program CTB policy**
 - Prior to 2015, state operating assistance was allocated solely based on operating expenses. Changes were made in FY15 to incorporate performance metrics.
 - In 2018 – DRPT worked with TSDAC, consultants, and stakeholders to develop a methodology for implementing a performance-based state transit operating allocation formula.
 - The methodology attempted to balance the need for reliable annual funding as well as the availability and reliability of performance data to support the six policy goals TSDAC identified:
 1. Promote Fiscal Responsibility
 2. Support Robust Transit Service
 3. Improve Transit Patronage
 4. Incentivize Efficient Operations
 5. Promote Mobility
 6. Support Social Safety Net

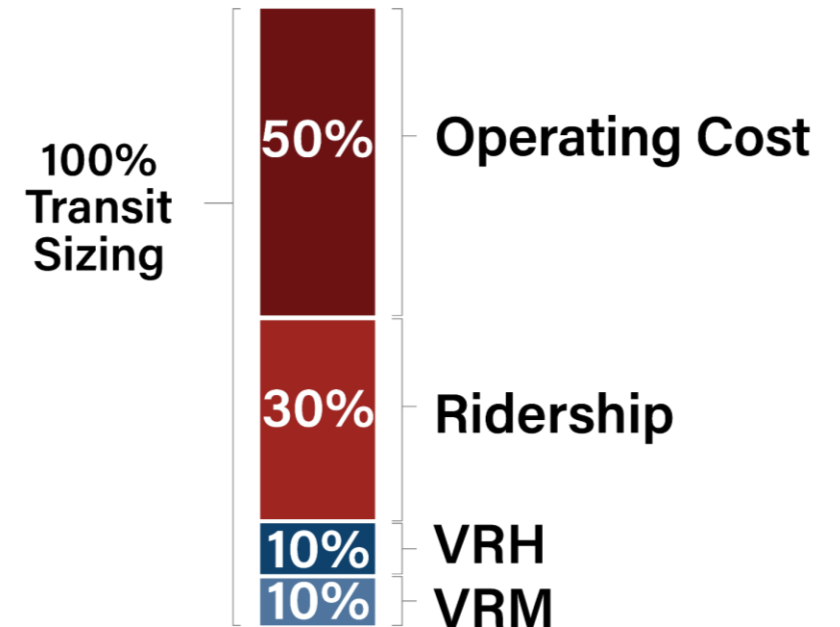
MERIT Operating Assistance Formula Process

- 1. DRPT solicits operating applications from December 1 – February 1**
- 2. Staff review audited financials/GL, as well as agency budgets, and make necessary adjustments**
- 3. Transit staff validate performance metrics submitted by transit agencies.**
- 4. Consistent with CTB policy, agency expenses and performance metrics are incorporated into the performance-based formula outlined in the [FY26 Transit Operating Assistance Technical Documentation](#) posted on the DRPT website**
- 5. MERIT Operating Assistance funding is allocated to each transit agency in the SYIP**

MERIT Operating Assistance Formula: Sizing Metric

- **Step 1: Sizing Metric**

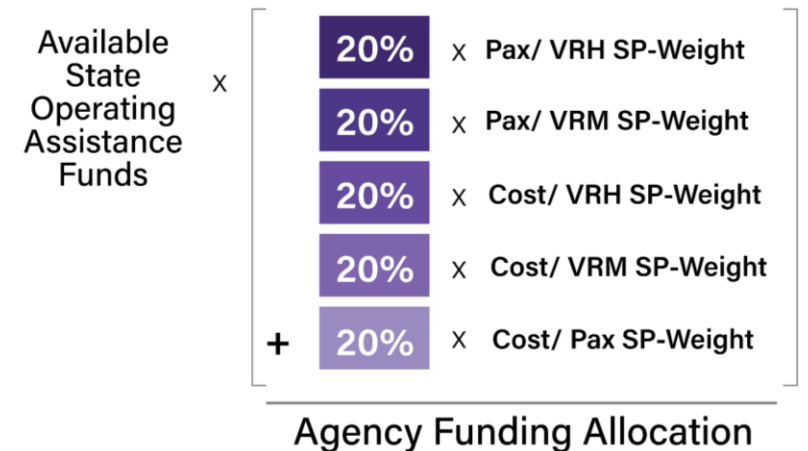
- A size-weight factor is calculated with a combination of metrics set at specific weights
- This metric was introduced to account for the relative size of a transit agency
- If the statewide sum of agency size-weights does not equal 100%, then the ratios are normalized such that the statewide sum of size-weights for all agencies totals 100%



MERIT Operating Assistance Formula: Performance Adjustments

- **Step 2: Performance Adjustments**

- The size-weight is adjusted by five performance metrics – Creates “Size-Performance Weights”
 - Using 3 years of historic data + most recent year (4 years total)
 - Compares performance trends of each agency to the statewide trend
- Performance Metrics in CTB policy:
 1. **Passengers per Vehicle Revenue Hour (Pax/ VRH)**
 2. **Passengers per Vehicle Revenue Mile (Pax/ VRM)**
 3. **Operating Cost per Vehicle Revenue Hour (Cost/ VRH)**
 4. **Operating Cost per Vehicle Revenue Mile (Cost/ VRM)**
 5. **Operating Cost per Passenger (Cost/Pax)**

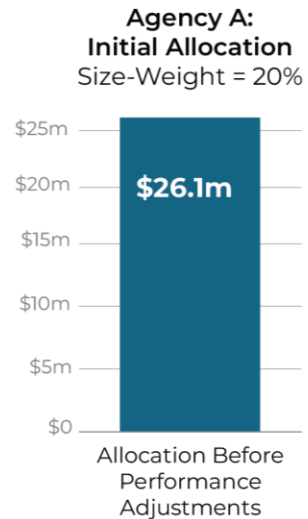


MERIT Operating Assistance Formula: Funding Cap

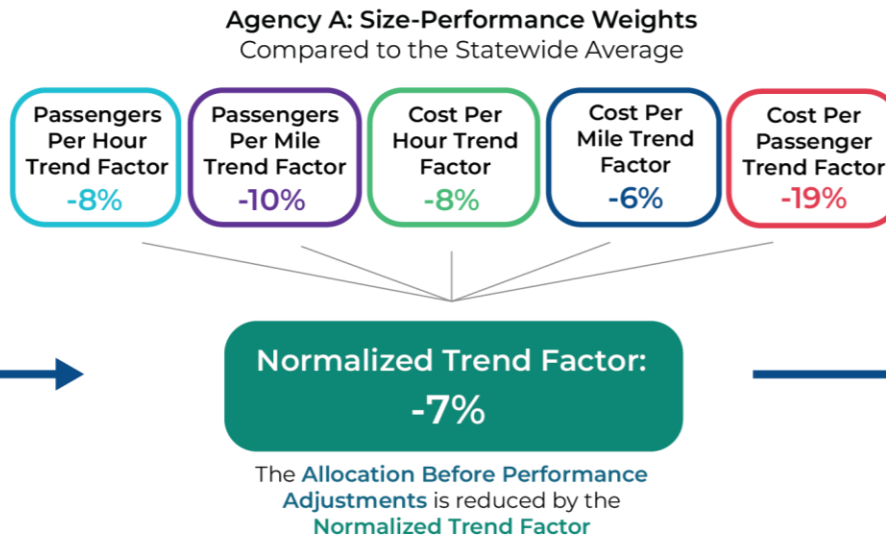
- **Step 3: Funding Cap**
 - **A 30% cap is set on the operating assistance allocations to each agency**
 - The cap was based on FY18 audited expense information and was reviewed as part of the 2022 program review with TSDAC
 - This 30% threshold was informed by the highest operating assistance grant received under the FY19 allocation methodology
 - **Funds remaining after the cap are redistributed to agencies below their cap**
 - After applying this cap to the operating assistance allocation, an unallocated funding pool remains
 - These funds are redistributed to agencies below this cap proportional to their Agency Funding Allocation ensuring that all available funds are distributed annually

Illustration of 3-Step Operating Formula Process

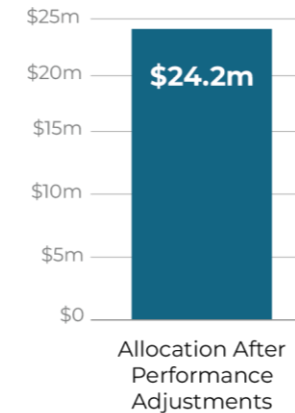
Step 1: Transit Sizing



Step 2: Performance Adjustments



Agency A: Performance Adjusted Allocation



Step 3: 30% Cap Redistribution

Agency A: Performance Adjusted + Redistributed Allocation

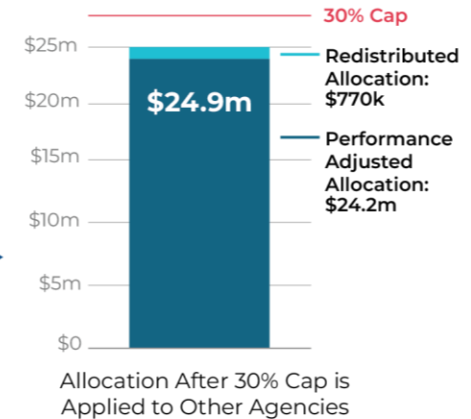
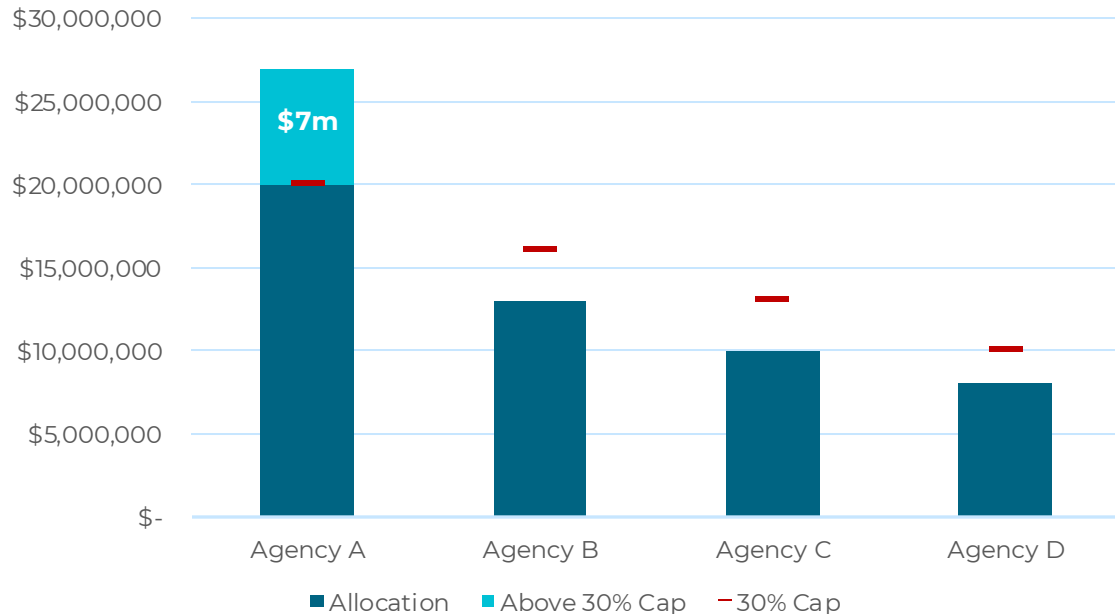


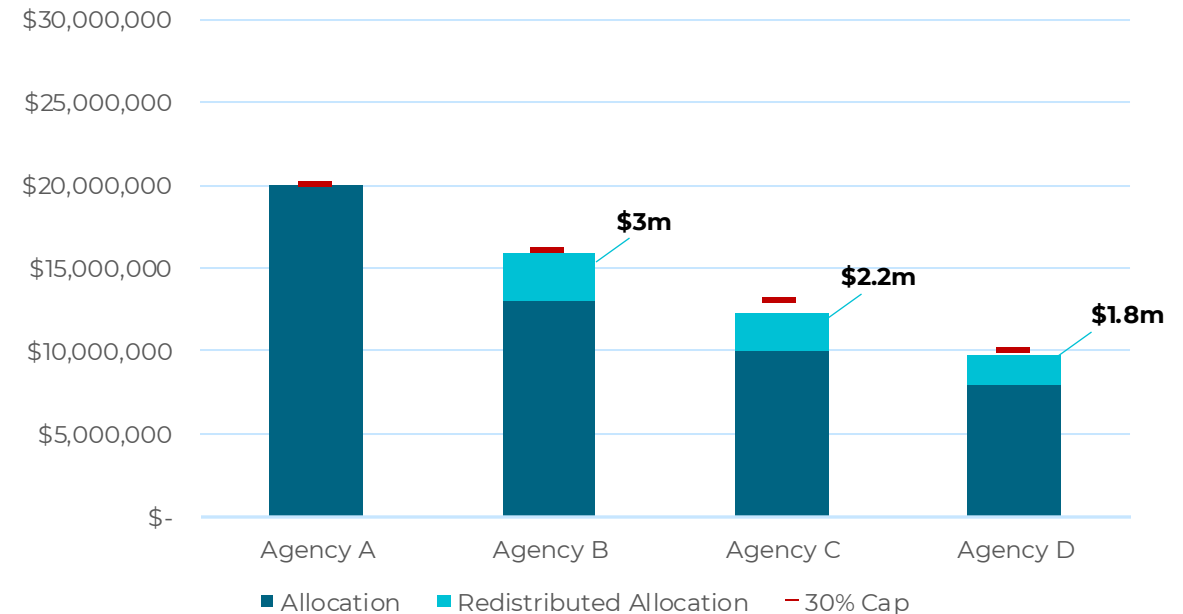
Illustration of Impacts of the 30% Cap on Allocations

- Funds exceeding the 30% in the initial run are distributed to other agencies that have not hit their cap

Scenario 1: Allocation Before 30% Cap Applied



Scenario 1: Redistributed Allocation after 30% Cap



MERIT – Operating Assistance Program Challenges

- Formula complexities make the program difficult for grantees and decision makers to understand
- Required data inputs change annually, making it difficult for staff and transit agencies to run predictive models
- The use of performance measures must accommodate all agencies
 - Very large and very small agencies with different operational goals must compete in the same space
 - It would be interesting to test scenarios that include different formulas for urban and rural providers

Potential MERIT Improvement Areas for Consideration

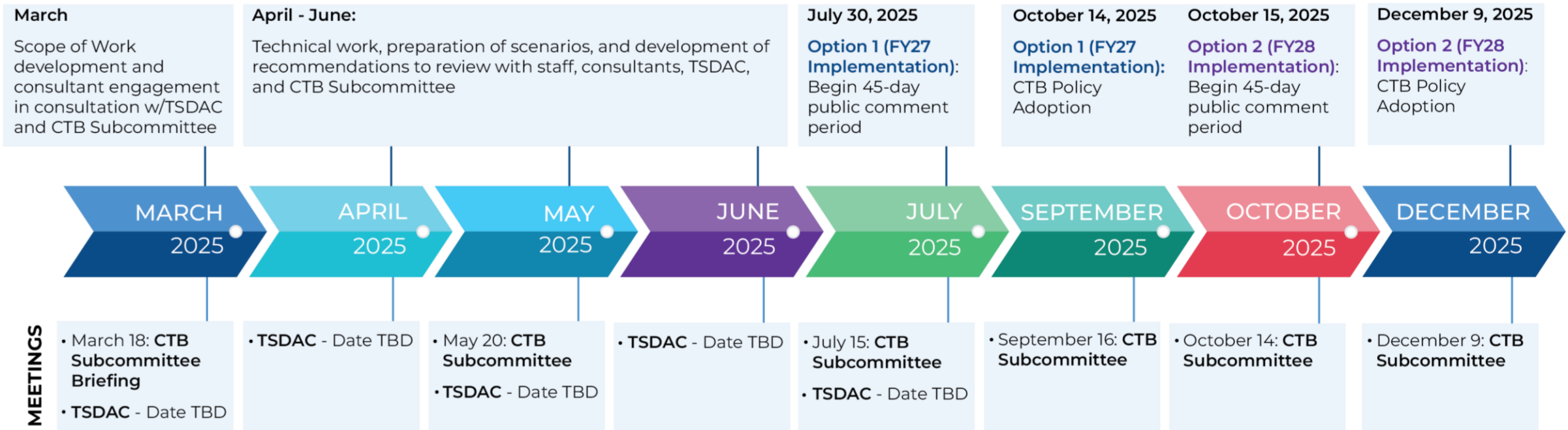
- Stronger, more meaningful emphasis on performance-based metrics
- Standardized verification of effective agency asset utilization and need
- Increased focus on the right-sizing of agency requests
- Additional incentives to promote operational efficiency, route optimization/innovation, and good grants management practices
- Develop metrics to evaluate the return on investment

Goals:

1. Strive to remain best in class in our review/scoring/award of grant funds.
2. Deliver the most value and the best outcomes for our customers as efficiently as possible.

Timeline for MERIT Evaluation and Recommendations to CTB

WORK/ ADOPTION





Questions, Comments, Feedback?