

**Transit Service Delivery Advisory Committee (TSDAC)
March 10, 2026 - 10:00 a.m.
600 East Main Street, 21st Floor
Richmond, VA 23219**

Meeting Minutes

TSDAC Members Present

Chair McGlennon, Ms. Mester, Mr. Booth, Ms. Mattice, Ms. Pinkard, Ms. Melester, Mr. Dyke (departed at lunch time), Director Zimmerman, Dr. Smoot (Virtually at first, then arrived later)

Staff Present

Zach Trogdon, Tiffany Dubinsky, Dan Sonenklar, Allan Fye, Thomas Bailey, Jayla Parker, Raquel Aguirre, Aaron Clark, Avery Daugherty, Jacob Hotinger, Sarah Husain, Beth Levermore, Jess Maffey, Katy Miller, Gabriel Ortiz, Deanna Oware, Jayla Parker, Grace Stankus, Kyle Trissel, Evan Tuten, Andrew Wright

Consultants Present

Nathan Macek, Sarah Sciarrino, Sonika Sethi,

Others Present

Danny Plaughner, Ann McGrane, Bob Schneider, Bruce Simms, Billie Darlington, Devon Thompson, Genoveva Cutrell, James Hampton, Jeff Ralliski, Joe Stainsby, Julie Koontz, Maria Ptawkowski, Owen Williams, Scott Patchan, Phillip Parella, Ron Parker, Sarah Crawford, Scott Kalkwarf, Francis Vance

Call to Order/Introductions (Chair McGlennon)

At 10:16 AM on March 10th, 2026, Chair McGlennon called the meeting to order. TSDAC members and DRPT staff introduced themselves.

Approval of January 20, 2026 Minutes (Chair McGlennon)

On motion of Mr. Dyke, seconded by Ms. Mester, the January 20, 2026 meeting minutes were approved, unanimously, with only Dr Smoot not voting as he was not present at the time.

Comments from DRPT Director (Director Zimmerman)

Director Zimmerman delivered her comments, noting the direction and goals of the MERIT Review process. Director Zimmerman noted that the CTB has voted to delay the adoption of the MERIT resolution, giving TSDAC more time for input, but the timeline is still short. Director Zimmerman noted the goals of this administration in the MERIT process, including the prior discussions about “cohorting” in the MERIT system.

Legislative Update (Evan Price)

Mr. Price began his presentation, reviewing the General Assembly session so far. Mr. Price presented on House legislation and Senate legislation. Ms. Mattice commented on a labor compensation bill, noting that the fiscal impact of such legislation is unknown and significant. Mr. Price presented on House Bill 200, which would add new duties for TSDAC. Mr. Price presented the House and Senate adopted budgets, noting the specific budget items in each. Ms. Mattice inquired about a budget proposal regarding short-term loans during shutdowns, noting that the FTA does not shut down. Mr. Trogdon noted that government shutdowns still impact the FTA and cause funding delays. Mr. Booth noted that every application is required to go through the federal Department of Labor. Ms. Mattice inquired about a Senate budget proposal that conflicted with a House budget proposal. Mr. Trogdon answered that the loan program would be similar to advanced appropriations. Mr. Price presented about ongoing transportation funding proposed in the budget. Ms. Pinkard inquired about the fiscal impact of the data center sales and use tax budget proposal. Mr. Price answered with an estimate. Ms. Pinkard inquired about receiving an updated copy of the slides. Director Zimmerman confirmed the slides will be distributed. Mr. Fye noted that legislative process is ongoing and changing quickly, so these slides were created late to have the most up to date information.

MERIT Presentation (Allan Fye)

Mr. Fye began his presentation, reviewing the new TSDAC time and schedule. Mr. Fye reviewed the ongoing and continuing outreach schedule. Ms. Mattice thanked Mr. Fye for the briefing on the schedule, and acknowledged the schedule would provide for more time to receive feedback. Chair McGlennon concurred. Director Zimmerman noted that DRPT will work to have materials to the TSDAC earlier to keep the discussion moving forward.

Mr. Fye continued, noting the survey responses from TSDAC. Mr. Fye reviewed the Administrative Changes Recap. Mr. Fye recapped the proposed improvements to the capital changes. Mr. Fye reviewed the observations from the 2025 TSDAC meetings, noting the MERIT program needs as noted by TSDAC. Mr. Fye previewed the “cohorting” concept, and shared the advantages of cohorting, noting that one-size fits all approach creates complicated comparisons. Mr. Fye noted that under cohorting, transit agencies will compete with similar transit agencies, rather than in a large formula that compares all transit agencies. Mr. Fye noted that DRPT will model the cohorts after the FTA definition of rural, small urban, and large urban. Mr. Fye previewed the agency designations, as defined by the FTA. Ms. Mattice noted that TSDAC members have brought up the concept of cohorting in the past. Mr. Fye noted that has been discussed, as has cohorting my transit mode.

Mr. Booth commented that at a high level, using the FTA definition for cohorting makes sense. Mr. Booth noted that not including rural providers for the advanced data collection eases the burden on those smaller rural providers. Mr. Fye noted that as the data study moves forward, DRPT is behooved to ensure that new data requests from DRPT do not become a burden. Ms. Mattice noted that even in large urban areas, there

are small providers, and the collection of data may have that impact. Chair McGlennon asked about the case of CUE. Ms. Mattice clarified that CUE is a smaller university-focused provider. Mr. Booth noted that many of the Northern Virginia providers do not receive federal funding. Ms. Mattice noted that Northern Virginia providers still report data to NTD, regardless of funding. Mr. Sonenklar noted that the FTA definitions are determined by urban area, not agency size, so a small provider in a large urban area is a large urban provider. Director Zimmerman noted that there is need to look at outliers, such as large urban providers without regional funding, or smaller providers in large areas.

Ms. Pinkard inquired about modal differences, noting that transit agencies often have numerous transit modes. Mr. Fye noted that discussing part of these discussions around cohorting is to avoid a one-size fits all approach and discuss grouping transit agencies. Ms. Mester commented that the starting point of this review is simplification, and ensuring this approach maintains that simplification is key. Dr. Smoot noted that the cohort approach will help recognize the different goals and needs of transit providers, and may need more refinement, but it is a step in the right direction.

Mr. Fye presented on the full cohorting conceptual process. Mr. Fye walked through the cohorting thought process, noting that the process would require several policy decisions and different sizing metrics. Mr. Fye noted that the cohorting process would include performance and stability fund revenue. Mr. Fye noted that the revenue stability fund would help provide funding stability. Mr. Fye noted that this proposal should meet the goals of the TSDAC process. Ms. Mattice asked for clarification about the cohorts sizing metrics. Mr. Fye noted that this would be a policy decision. Mr. Fye noted that how the revenue cohorting and sizing metrics would be a policy decision, and how frequently each would be revisited would be to be determined. Ms. Mattice noted that the FTA has not changed its funding formula in 20 years. Director Zimmerman noted that following a federal process and locking the funding in would provide that stability. Director Zimmerman also noted this process allows every three-year review process, and changes may not always be needed. Ms. Melester noted a concern about small urban transit providers with universities having skewed ridership numbers. Mr. Sonenklar noted that two factors would address that concern, the first being the 30% cap, and the second being the determined sizing metrics. Mr. Booth expressed support for the concept, and the customization of the sizing metric. Mr. Booth expressed concerns about the specific revenue cohorting, and how that is defined could have unintended consequences. Ms. Mester commented on the stability funds, and expressed support for the smoothing over of funding changes. Mr. Fye noted that there are many ways to utilize the revenue funding changes. Ms. Mattice noted that the outcomes of running the cohorting funding system could have major implications, especially as the policy decisions could be made after data are provided. Director Zimmerman noted that the goal of this policy is to minimize creating winners and losers, including what policies can help make the formula more performance-driven. Director Zimmerman noted that the goal is to come into the discussions with those policy goals in mind. Ms. Mattice noted that TSDAC should be mindful about the direction it goes, so that the desired outcome comes to fruition. Director Zimmerman concurred, noting that

it would not be beneficial to have demonstration data revealed too late in the process to evaluate if this policy is the right policy. Ms. Mester noted that comments reinforces the TSDAC observations, and asked what the goal of the issue that needs to be solved is. Mr. Fye noted that if there are any questions or a desire for a walk through, DRPT staff can provide that.

Mr. Fye continued the presentation on the cohorting process. Mr. Fye began by presenting what the cohorts are, and how funding would be divided. Mr. Fye noted that how the operating costs are divided by cohort would be a policy decision.

At 11:45 am, Chair McGlennon recessed the meeting for lunch.

At 12:23 pm, Chair McGlennon called the meeting back into order.

Mr. Fye continued the presentation, previewing the revenue cohorting process. Mr. Fye presented the MERIT Operating Allocations using the cohort and sizing metrics example, utilizing previous MERIT Operating Allocations from the previous three fiscal years as the example. Ms. Mattice commented that cost has been used as a proxy for size, and noted that costs can change quickly over time. Mr. Fye noted that a stabilization fund could address changing costs. Mr. Trogon reminded the group that DRPT still only would provide up to 30% of operating costs. Director Zimmerman noted that the presentation is for analysis and not a final approach, but provides clarity and simplicity. Mr. Booth noted a concern for utilizing 100% cost, referencing how pending legislation can drive up costs and impact that metric. Ms. Mattice noted that understanding the impact and time of this legislation is needed first. Director Zimmerman noted the role of revenue stabilization. Mr. Fye noted that the impact of timing the policies. Mr. Booth noted that moving towards embracing predictability is a mentality shift. Director Zimmerman noted that using this system would allow for more stable projections with conservative forecasting. Ms. Mattice noted that at the Federal Level, funding is predictable because it is set in law. Ms. Mester inquired about the reaction from transit operators based upon the cohort model with the sizing metric. Ms. Melester responded that CSPDC can project operating costs down the pipeline, but it is harder to know if there are other metrics, and noted that the revenue stabilization reserve can help with that projection. Mr. Fye noted that locking in sizing metrics would help stability. Mr. Trogon noted that the sizing metrics rewarded agencies that provided more service. Director Zimmerman noted that in the cohort model, that the amount of funding is not necessarily determined by costs only, and the cohort funding sizes would be determined by costs provided. Mr. Fye responded that part of the discussion is identifying the data that will determine the funding levels provided to each cohort. Mr. Fye noted that total operating costs is used as a proxy for determining the "slice of the pie" for each cohort. Mr. Booth noted that using sizing metrics provides the most stability in the "slices", noting the swing in share of funding when using operating costs. Ms. Mester requested knowing the methodology to justify the share of each "slice" in order to justify the decision. Ms. Mattice noted that there will be a time where a higher-level policy decision will need to be made, as there is a potential for operating formulas to have winners and losers no matter what. Ms. Melester noted that

organizations project expenses out into future years, and that can be factored into funding projections, and are more predictable than revenue miles and performance metrics. Mr. Booth noted that transit agencies may switch from urban to rural or vice versa, depending on census estimates, and that could have a serious impact on transit revenues. Ms. Mattice inquired if the example was total operating cost or the DRPT-screened operating cost. Mr. Sonenklar confirmed, but noted that the funding levels use data from two fiscal years prior due to data collection. Director Zimmerman noted that DRPT will soon have the FY27 funding numbers. Mr. Trogdon noted that any decision now may be to use a snapshot of the data. Mr. Sonenklar noted that the comparisons of costs are used as a comparison point, not as an evaluation of quality. Mr. Fye noted that simplicity of the formula may be desirable for revenue projections. Chair McGlennon asked if this formula would be impacted by increased revenue for transit. Mr. Fye noted that if there was more funding, there would be a bigger pie, and the 30% cap may need to be revisited, as more funding would mean more agencies could hit that 30%. Chair McGlennon inquired about the impact of a major expansion of service.

Mr. Fye moved on to the conclusion, noting how the cohorting model can simplify funding, provide stability and predictability, and focus on collaborative conversations. Director Zimmerman encouraged TSDAC to share questions or concerns to advance the timeline. Mr. Plaughter of the Virginia Transit Association inquired which proposed cohort would most likely hit the 30% cap.

Ms. Mester inquired about the revenue stabilization funding and how that would be allocated. Mr. Fye discussed what the MERIT formula seeks to reward, including how the funds in the stabilization fund could be used as a reward. Ms. Mester noted that the scale of funding for the cohorts needs to be determined, and suggested TSDAC needs to understand what impact the revenue stabilization funding would have. Ms. Mattice noted that determining DRPT's goals for its programs is key, as is identifying what good performance looks like. Director Zimmerman supported identifying a goal, and noted that good metrics are growing ridership, improving service quality, improving cost efficiencies, and serving the people who need transit. Ms. Mester emphasized support for adopting a formula for three years, to maintain stability. Director Zimmerman asked if there is general support for the cohort method, or if there is support for locking the formula in for a three-year period or an annual formula.

Mr. Fye reviewed the next steps and processes.

Ms. Mester inquired about information for the policies for the Transit Ridership Incentive Program. Mr. Fye noted providing a TRIP 101, and what has changed in the program.

Next Meeting (Allan Fye)

TSDAC members discussed scheduling the next meeting TSDAC meeting.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Adjourn

At 1:16pm on March 10th 2026, Chair McGlennon adjourned the meeting.