

Transit Service Delivery Advisory Committee
VIRTUAL MEETING
August 27, 2025
10:00 a.m.

Meeting Minutes

1. Members and Staff Present

TSDAC members present: Chair McGlennon, Dr. Smoot, Ms. Mattice, Ms. Pinkard, Ms. Jackson, Ms. Mester, Mr. Booth.

DRPT Staff Present: Director Robinson, Mr. Bailey, Ms. Dubinsky, Ms. Foster, Ms. Mayton, Ms. Parker, Mr. Sonenklar, Mr. Sparks, Mr. Trogdon.

2. Call to Order/Introductions (Chair McGlennon)

At 10:00 AM on August 27th, Mr. McGlennon called the TSDAC meeting to order.

3. Approval of July 29, 2025 Meeting Minutes (Chair McGlennon)

With no objection, and on the motion of Ms. Mattice¹, seconded by Ms. Mester, the approval of the meeting minutes was deferred to the next meeting, pending amendments. Motion passed unanimously.

4. MERIT Review Findings (Consultant Staff)

Director Robinson began the MERIT Review presentation with an introduction. Mr. Macek began the MERIT Review Finding presentation, beginning with the MERIT Operating Assistance Program.

Mr. Macek reviewed the goals of the MERIT Operating Formula evaluation. Mr. Macek reviewed the annual variation in MERIT operating allocations by construction

¹ It is not clear who made the motion, but Ms. Mattice's voice box indicated speaking during this time.

district. Ms. Mattice inquired about volatility in funding allocations pre and post-pandemic. Mr. Macek provided an answer.

Mr. Macek presented what a new potential formula could look like and its impacts on allocations by construction district. Mr. Macek reviewed the potential formula.

Ms. Mattice inquired about which transit services may benefit from the new services. Mr. Macek provided an answer, noting the scenarios that perform best in the scenario, and that all transit services are included in the formula.

Mr. Macek previewed the potential approaches and scenarios tested under the MERIT Operating Review. Mr. Macek previewed the 4 other scenarios for adjusting a new formula, including sizing adjustments only, removing cost from sizing, adding an additional performance allocation, and capping funding growth.

Mr. Macek presented a potential funding formula adjustment with the sizing adjustment only adjustment, and its impact on allocations. Mr. Macek noted that this scenario is more outcomes focused but does not address many of the goals of the review.

Mr. Macek presented a potential funding formula adjustment with the transit costs removed from the sizing metric. Mr. Macek noted that it is an outcomes based sizing approach, but does not account for higher costs of certain services and is a major change from the current approach. The scenario would see a significant shift in allocations away from systems serving major urban centers.

Mr. Macek presented a potential funding formula adjustment with an additional performance allocation. Mr. Macek noted that the impacts are small, and it does not simplify the funding approach and adds complexity.

Mr. Macek presented the final potential funding formula adjustment with a capped funding growth adjustment. Mr. Macek noted that a growth ceiling disconnects the formula from the sizing metrics and performance artificially. Mr. Macek noted that this scenario does not account for external factors.

Mr. Macek presented on the performance trend adjustment vs a direct performance measurement. Ms. Mester asked for clarification on the trend adjustment. Mr. Macek provided an answer. Ms. Mester asked for further details about the test agencies used in the trend adjustment scenario. Mr. Macek provided an answer. Chair McGlennon also provided an answer. Ms. Mattice inquired if new potential trend metrics makes a significant difference to funding. Mr. Macek provided an answer. Ms. Mester inquired about the impact of extending performance trends to include pre-pandemic years on the trend adjustment. Mr. Macek answered that certain data were not considered in those years. Mr. Booth inquired if the trend metric would benefit urban agencies over rural agencies due to the riders per hour metric. Mr. Macek answered that metrics in the numerator and denominator would adjust.

Mr. Macek presented on a new performance-based formula applied to a set aside, instead of a performance trend adjustment. Mr. Macek noted it is based on a reduced number of metrics, uses a single year of data, easier to communicate, and more.

Mr. Macek presented on performance set-aside sensitivity. Mr. Macek noted that an increased set-aside would begin to skew outcomes. Ms. Mester inquired about the trend impacts. Mr. Macek provided an answer. Ms. Mattice inquired about the data presentation. Mr. Macek provided an answer. Ms. Mattice suggested a percentage-based presentation. Ms. Jackson concurred with Ms. Mattice's suggestion.

Mr. Macek presented the average FY 2024-2026 estimated allocations by district under the sizing + performance approach compared to the current approach. Ms. Mester asked for clarification about the chart being a three-year average. Mr. Macek provided an answer.

Mr. Macek presented agency level allocations comparison between the sizing + performance metric compared to the current approach. Mr. Macek presented the comparison of funding changes under the sizing + performance adjustment scenario.

Mr. Macek summarized the key findings of the sizing and performance adjustment scenario.

Mr. Macek noted the alignment of each scenario with the goals of the MERIT Operating funding review.

Mr. Macek noted the potential alternatives approaches and limitations, noting many alternatives would require better and more specific data from transit agencies.

Mr. Macek concluded the presentation. Ms. Matice requested the information used to develop the proposed scenarios be shared with the TSDAC members. Director Robinson concurred with Ms. Mattice, and shared that the background data will be shared. Director Robinson extended the offer for follow-up meetings or one on one meetings. Mr. Booth inquired about allocations over a three-year average, and specifically about the volatility within the three-year average. Mr. Macek provided an answer. Dr. Smoot shared that dollars should be spent to benefit the greatest need, and Dr. Smoot shared that a metric that could be considered but cannot be collected would be greatest need. Dr. Smoot provided an example of a passenger using transit for medical appointments versus for recreational travel. Chair McGlennon provided a comment. Dr. Smoot commented on the observation of empty buses, noting that oftentimes those observations are anecdotal and that bus could be repositioning, and noting that these situations create an adverse expectation. Chair McGlennon commented that it is important to note that transit is utilized and its benefits on congestion. Ms. Jackson inquired if the funding update is making a major difference or if it is not making a significant change. Ms. Jackson commented that she is unsure if moving away from a trend is productive, noting that zero-fare impacts on ridership may be negatively or positively impacted during the one-year trend. Chair McGlennon moved the presentation along to the Capital Program Review.

Ms. Sciarrino began the presentation on the MERIT Capital Assistance review. Ms. Sciarrino reviewed the current MERIT Program.

Ms. Sciarrino presented the potential new MERIT Capital program subcategories. Ms. Sciarrino presented on the proposed incentive scoring. Ms. Mattice inquired about the new MERIT Capital Subcategories, and asked for an example of project types. Mr. Sonenklar provided an answer. Mr. Trogon provided an example of HVAC or maintenance equipment. Ms. Mester inquired about whether the changes to the

subcategories is for benefiting the scoring process. Mr. Sonenklar notes it ensures greater transparency and addresses current practices. Chair McGlennon inquired if incentive scores would apply to major expansions. Ms. Sciarrino noted that incentive scores do not apply to major expansion capital projects. Chair McGlennon inquired if incentive scores for quickly completing projects is due to transit agencies capacity. Mr. Sparks provided an answer. Mr. Booth inquired about major expansions and the new category breakouts. Ms. Sciarrino provided an answer. Mr. Sonenklar noted that SGR projects are for all vehicle replacements, and that fleet expansions will all be moved under minor enhancements.

Ms. Sciarrino turned the presentation over to Mr. Trogdon. Mr. Trogdon discussed the agency survey. Ms. Mester inquired about whether multi-year projects would need to be applied for each year. Mr. Trogdon provided an answer. Ms. Mester expressed concern about local budget commitments during a two-year MERIT Capital cycle. Dr. Smoot inquired about the funding for major expansion projects. Mr. Trogdon and Mr. Sonenklar provided an answer.

5. Open Discussion

Chair McGlennon opened the meeting to open discussion. Ms. Mester inquired about the impact on localities. Ms. Mester expressed concern about the process, noting in previous iterations there was a longer period to review the data and findings. Ms. Mester inquired about getting a refresher of the MERIT Review Process. Ms. Mester expressed concerns for the proposed MERIT Operating changes, and comments on the MERIT Capital proposed changes.

Director Robinson noted that DRPT can share a history of the TSDAC process. Director Robinson informed TSDAC of the voting and adoption process, noting that the MERIT process is under a statutory process. Director Robinson noted that further meetings will be scheduled. Director Robinson noted that the MERIT Operating process requires a 45-day public comment period, but MERIT Capital changes can be made internally and/or with a policy proposal to the Commonwealth Transportation Board. Director Robinson noted how the changes improve performance outcomes for the MERIT Operating program.

Ms. Mester commented that a 95/5 split does not appear performance-driven to her. Ms. Mester commented that a previous review had seven TSDAC meetings. Ms. Mester commented that she feels there is a need for at least one more meeting. Ms. Mester recalled that in the past, TSDAC has often had a recommendation and has either presented a consensus opinion, or presented a majority-minority/dissenter recommendation for the CTB. Chair McGlennon expressed agreement with presenting a recommendation for the CTB. Ms. Mattice noted that each TSDAC member represents an entity, but making recommendations on behalf of an entity often requires a Board authorization, which can be tricky during off-months. Ms. Mattice expressed support for giving a public recommendation, once each has received Board authorization. Ms. Pinkard expressed support for Ms. Mester's and Ms. Mattice's comments. Dr. Smoot had no comments.

Director Robinson noted that a meeting with VTA has been agreed to, and the offer for meeting with every agency is on the table. Director Robinson then reviewed the timeline for the MERIT review program. Ms. Mester asked if there will be a time for a TSDAC meeting to come back and make a recommendation. Chair McGlennon stated that everyone in the process has the same goals to promote and sustain public transit. Chair McGlennon noted that TSDAC has an unofficial role in advocacy and informing the public of the process. Ms. Mester concurred. Director Robinson expressed thanks to TSDAC and noted that the goal is for no transit agency will be blindsided by the process.

Chair. McGlennon moved the presentation on to public comments.

6. Public Comment

Chair McGlennon requested that public comments be followed up by an email to TSDAC so they can be kept in order.

Dr. Bob Schneider of PRTC informed the TSDAC board that he will email the TSDAC board and DRPT staff with his comment. Dr. Schneider criticized the short turn-around time for the current MERIT Review Process. Dr. Schneider criticized the lack of data consistency, and notes it appears to be a repeat of a process in 2018. Dr. Schneider notes a FOIA request was fulfilled, but not with enough time to analyze the

information. Dr. Schneider criticized that the State may be undermining the Commuter Choice toll-program. Dr. Schneider criticizes that the State funding process has benefitted transit agencies that are not able to fully sustain themselves. Dr. Schneider requested more transparency in data and processes in the TSDAC process.

Mr. Mitchell Smiley of VML expressed that it would be appropriate to have additional meetings or webinars with VML/VACO or TSDAC/MTA and others to dive deeper into metrics and data used in the MERIT Review Process. Mr. Smiley expressed that it would be helpful to get into how the metrics work. Mr. Smiley expressed that it is important to get these metrics correct, to maximize the most transit riders. Mr. Smiley expressed hope to get more public engagement in the process.

Mr. James Hutzler of VACO echoed the sentiments of VML. Mr. Hutzler expressed concerns that VACO has about any winners or losers in the MERIT Process, and if there is a way to hold harmless any transit agencies. Mr. Hutzler passed along the concerns of communities.

With no more public comments, Chair McGlennon closed public comments.

7. Wrap Up/Next Steps

Director Robinson provided a response to some public comments. Director Robinson comments that DRPT does not and has not denied access to data, and noted that meetings reviewing the data have been consistently offered. Director Robinson commented that the data was provided within the FOIA period. Director Robinson addressed the hold harmless proposal, and noted that the potential proposed MERIT changes would not go into effect until FY 2028.

8. Adjourn

On motion of Dr. Smoot, seconded by Ms. Mattice, the August 27th TSDAC meeting adjourned at 12:36pm. Motion passed, unanimously.