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Transit Ridership Incentive Program

FY2024 Report

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Transit Ridership Incentive Program

The Transit Ridership Incentive Program (TRIP) is a statewide grants program funding transit agencies and governing bodies to create more accessible, safe, and regionally significant transit networks. TRIP funds four project categories: Zero and Reduced Fare, Regional Connectivity, Public Safety, and Passenger Amenities. For Fiscal Year (FY) 2024, TRIP awarded approximately \$27 million to over 30 projects across all four project categories.

Background

The 2020 General Assembly established the Transit Ridership Incentive Program (TRIP) with the passage (and signature of the Governor) of the Omnibus Transportation Act (House Bill 1414/Senate Bill 890). The creation of TRIP had two distinct goals: to improve regional connectivity of urban areas with a population of more than 100,000 and to reduce barriers to transit use for low-income riders by supporting Zero or Reduced-Fare programs. TRIP is established in § 33.2-1526.3 of the Code of Virginia, which spells out the program and requires the Commonwealth Transportation Board to report annually on the projects and services funded by TRIP.

TRIP has undergone several changes since its establishment. In 2022, the General Assembly passed, and the Governor signed House Bill 142 to amend the Code of Virginia to increase the percentage of funding available for TRIP Zero and Reduced Fare Programs. That legislation included a “sunset clause” reverting the changes, effective July 1, 2024.

In 2023, the Governor signed House Bill 2338/Senate Bill 1326, which added the final two project categories to TRIP: Passenger Amenities and Public Safety. FY 2024 was the first year in which all four project categories were available. The table below lists each TRIP project category and provides examples of projects eligible to be funded under each category:

Table 1. TRIP Project Categories

Project Category	Eligible Projects
Passenger Amenities (PA)	Improvements or additions of new bus stops, shelters, or other passenger facilities, transit facility planning
Public Safety (PS)	Public safety equipment, planning, programming, training
Regional Connectivity (RC)	Expanding routes of regional significance, implementation of integrated fare collection, development of regional subsidy allocation models, establishment of bus-only lanes on routes of regional significance
Zero and Reduced-Fare (ZRF)	The provision of subsidized or fully free passes to low-income populations, elimination of fares on certain corridors, establishment of zero-fare zones, deployment of an entirely zero-fare system, fare policy planning

Funding/Financing

TRIP receives six percent of the Commonwealth Mass Transit Fund, translating to approximately \$27 million in FY 2024.

Per § 33.2-1526.3 of the Code of Virginia, TRIP assigns a specific percentage of funding to each project category. For FY2024, a minimum of 25% of TRIP funds were made available for Regional Connectivity, a minimum of 25% for Zero and Reduced-Fare, and at most 30% of funds for both Passenger Amenities and Public Safety. The remaining 20% of funds can be split between Regional Connectivity or Zero and Reduced-Fare projects. Effective July 1, 2024, a

“sunset clause” will change TRIP once more, capping funding for Zero and Reduced-Fare at 25%, instead of a minimum of 25%, from FY 2025 and beyond.

For FY 2024, 34 individual TRIP projects received state funding. Out of these, 15 are multi-year projects awarded in prior fiscal years, the CTB approved four as part of the approval of the full SYIP, and the CTB approved another 15 in December 2023 as an addendum to the SYIP. This mid-cycle grant allowed transit providers and local governments to apply for funding for Passenger Amenities and Public Safety projects for the first time. The table below shows all projects funded by TRIP in FY 2024:

Table 2. FY 2024 TRIP Projects

TRIP Project Category	Recipient	Project	Previous Funding	FY 24 DRPT TRIP Funding
PA	Arlington Regional Transit (ART)	ART bus stop improvements	NEW - FY 24 Mid-Cycle Grant	367,200
PA	Bristol Transit	Bristol bus shelter improvements	NEW - FY 24 Mid-Cycle Grant	81,600
PA	Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission (CSPDC)	CSPDC Lewis Street Hub improvements	NEW - FY 24 Mid-Cycle Grant	805,150
PA	City of Alexandria	Alexandria Landmark transit center amenities	NEW - FY 24 Mid-Cycle Grant	544,000
PA	Greater Richmond Transit Company (GRTC)	GRTC Richmond bus stop improvements	NEW - FY 24 Mid-Cycle Grant	394,054
PA	Greater Richmond Transit Company (GRTC)	GRTC Chesterfield bus stop improvements	NEW - FY 24 Mid-Cycle Grant	54,991
PA	Hampton Roads Transit (HRT)	HRT ferry shelter improvements	NEW - FY 24 Mid-Cycle Grant	561,000
PA	Hampton Roads Transit (HRT)	HRT bus stop improvements	NEW - FY 24 Mid-Cycle Grant	189,720
PA	Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission (RVARC)	Roanoke County bus shelter project	NEW - FY 24 Mid-Cycle Grant	20,400
PS	Bristol Transit	Bristol Transit vehicle security cameras	NEW - FY 24 Mid-Cycle Grant	21,563
PS	Hampton Roads Transit (HRT)	HRT operator safety barriers on buses	NEW - FY 24 Mid-Cycle Grant	982,789
PS	Petersburg Area Transit (PAT)	PAT Multimodal Center security guards	NEW - FY 24 Mid-Cycle Grant	120,197
PS	Petersburg Area Transit (PAT)	PAT Multimodal Center security cameras	NEW - FY 24 Mid-Cycle Grant	201,599
PS	Williamsburg Area Transit Authority (WATA)	WATA transit vehicle security cameras	NEW - FY 24 Mid-Cycle Grant	23,612

RC	City of Petersburg	Petersburg Area Transit Southern Express	832,192	150,949
RC	City of Radford	Regional Connector Service	177,057	129,793
RC	County of Loudoun	Fare Equipment (Integrated Fare Collection)	NEW - FY 24	3,680,330
RC	County of Loudoun	Silver Line Service	2,343,115	1,794,489
RC	Greater Lynchburg Transit Company	Route 4 Regional Connectivity Improvement	1,141,280	244,560
RC	Greater Richmond Transit Company	Regional Microtransit Service	2,325,760	1,143,238
RC	Hampton Roads Transit	Naval Station Norfolk Internal Circulator	1,925,506	462,692
RC	Hampton Roads Transit	On-Demand Microtransit Service	NEW - FY 24	2,800,000
RC	Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission	RideSmart Service	NEW - FY 24	195,200
RC	NVTC - Fairfax County	Fare Equipment (Integrated Fare Collection)	NEW - FY 24	11,200,000
RC	PRTC	Regional Connectivity - Manassas Metro Express Bus	477,773	371,391
ZRF	Charlottesville Area Transit	Zero Fare Project	878,393	188,227
ZRF	City of Alexandria	Zero Fare Project	5,453,594	1,782,577
ZRF	City of Petersburg	PAT Zero Fare and Low Income	627,403	470,552
ZRF	District Three Governmental Cooperative	District Three systemwide zero-fare program	NEW - FY 24 Mid-Cycle Grant	56,000
ZRF	Fredericksburg Regional Transit	Zero Fare Project	483,884	78,076
ZRF	Greater Richmond Transit Company	Zero Fare Project	7,000,000	1,000,000
ZRF	Mountain Empire Older Citizens	Zero Fare Project	84,000	18,000
ZRF	NVTC - City of Fairfax	CUE Bus Zero Fare Project	300,000	231,000
ZRF	NVTC - Fairfax County	Subsidized SmarTrip Cards	4,525,080	969,660

Analysis of Funded Projects

TRIP funded 34 individual projects across all four project categories during FY 2024. Because of advancements made thanks to TRIP Zero and Reduced Fare projects, transit operators have been able to rebound their ridership levels post-pandemic more quickly than their counterparts. TRIP projects have supported the establishment of new services such as microtransit in rural areas or increased route frequency through TRIP Regional Connectivity, increasing access to

transit for those who need it most and attracting new riders. The newest TRIP grants have furthered projects that build new bus shelters and provide safety equipment for bus drivers through TRIP Passenger Amenities and Public Safety.

Zero and Reduced Fare Performance

TRIP funded nine Zero and Reduced Fare projects during FY 2024, with all but one grant awarded in prior years. Numerous transit providers elected to go fare-free because of the COVID-19 pandemic and continued to do so post-pandemic through the TRIP Zero and Reduced Fare program. Most recipients went completely zero-fare systemwide. All TRIP Zero and Reduced Fare grants are multi-year projects. The table below shows the individual TRIP Zero and Reduced Fare grant and its impact on a public transit agency's ridership.

Table 3. TRIP Zero and Reduced Fare Project Performance

Recipient	Project	FY grant received	Pre-grant annual ridership	Ridership FY24	% Change in ridership Post-TRIP Zero-Fare Grant
METGo! (Mountain Empire Older Citizens)	Zero Fare Project	2022	47,469	130,896	176%
Charlottesville Area Transit	Zero Fare Project	2022	617,010	1,353,059	119%
FXBGO! (Fredericksburg Regional Transit)	Zero Fare Project	2022	142,040	332,441	134%
DASH (Alexandria)	Zero Fare Project	2022	1,530,851	5,351,634	250%
Fairfax Connector (Fairfax County)	Subsidized SmarTrip Cards	2022	4,566,013	8,716,249	91%
Greater Richmond Transit Company	Zero Fare Project	2022	7,694,498	10,839,638	41%
CUE (Fairfax City)	CUE Bus Zero Fare Project	2023	471,899	982,981	108%
Petersburg Area Transit	PAT Zero Fare and Low-Income	2023	404,081	471,466	17%
Mountain Lynx Transit (District Three Govt. Cooperative)	District Three systemwide zero-fare program	2024	162,649	177,659	9%

Regional Connectivity Performance

In FY 2024, there were 11 active TRIP Regional Connectivity grants. Some TRIP grants are multi-year projects, while others are single-year projects funding capital purchases. These projects range from enhancing additional services along routes of regional significance, creating new services to connect and integrate regional transportation networks, adding new services such as microtransit in areas where fixed-route service is not feasible, and integrating fare collection equipment for seamless purchasing of fares. The table below lists the Regional Connectivity projects funded and their description:

Table 4. FY 2024 TRIP Regional Connectivity Projects

Recipient	Project Description
Hampton Roads Transit	Naval Station Norfolk Internal Circulator
Hampton Roads Transit	On-Demand Microtransit Service
Greater Lynchburg Transit Company	Route 4 Regional Connectivity Improvement
NVTC - Fairfax County	Fare Equipment (Integrated Fare Collection)
Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission	OmniRide Manassas Metro Express Bus
County of Loudoun	Fare Equipment (Integrated Fare Collection)
County of Loudoun	Silver Line Service
City of Petersburg	Petersburg Area Transit Southern Express
Greater Richmond Transit Company	Regional Microtransit Service
City of Radford	Regional Connector Service
Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission	RideSmart Service

TRIP Regional Connectivity is a broad category that makes flexible funding available to transit providers to meet different goals, needs, and objectives. Below are some highlights from a select range of TRIP Regional Connectivity projects:

Ridership impacts

Not all TRIP Regional Connectivity projects have reported ridership for FY 2024. This can be because a project is not adding new or expanded services (such as the two integrated fare collection projects). Other reasons include that there may be a lag in specific route performance data availability or because a project started late in FY 2024 and has not hit a performance data reporting deadline. Three TRIP Regional Connectivity projects have reported ridership numbers:

Hampton Roads Transit – Naval Station Norfolk Internal Circulator

The Naval Station Norfolk Internal Circulator supports two routes – the blue and gold routes – that promote transit access within Naval Station Norfolk, the world’s largest naval base. From July 1, 2023, to April 1, 2024, about 37,000 trips were provided. The final quarter of FY 2024 has not yet been recorded.

Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission – OmniRide Manassas Metro Express Bus

OmniRide’s Manassas Metro Express Bus TRIP program supports mid-day and off-peak service for a route that serves major destinations in Northern Virginia, from Tysons Corner and the Northern Virginia Community College’s campus at Manassas to Metro Silver Line Stations. During the first half of FY 2024, 22,000 trips were provided. Ridership during the second half of FY 2024 has not been separated from system-wide ridership at the time of writing.

County of Loudoun Silver Line Service

Loudoun County Transit’s Silver Line Service supports the operations of four routes (LCT 321, 351, 381, and 382) that connect parts of Loudoun County to the recently completed Silver Line extension at the Ashburn and Loudoun Gateway stations. Over FY 2024, Loudoun County Transit provided 34,000 trips on the four routes. Ridership for the entire fiscal year has not been reported.

Expanded Service

RideSmart Service – Commuter Bus

RideSmart is the regional commuter assistance service operated by the Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission (NSVRC). RideSmart providers promote ridesharing and commuter options for residents, workers, commuters, and tourists in Clarke, Frederick, Page, Shenandoah, and Warren Counties and the City of Winchester.

The NSVRC applied for and received a multi-year TRIP Regional Connectivity grant to fund a new commuter bus service from the Waterloo Park and Ride lot in Clarke County to Washington, D.C. This new service can save commuters money on gas and car maintenance, as well as taking cars off the extremely congested I-66 corridor. According to [a news article](#) released following a ribbon cutting of the new service, around 30% of Clarke County residents work in the D.C. area. These residents now have the option of commuting via bus instead of driving alone.

Greater Lynchburg Transportation Company – Route 4 Regional Connectivity Improvement

The Greater Lynchburg Transportation Company maintains fixed-route bus services for the City of Lynchburg and into surrounding Campbell and Amherst Counties.

GLTC's Route 4 links prime connections in the Lynchburg region – from transportation hubs like Lynchburg Regional Airport and the Kemper Street Amtrak Station to shopping destinations and Liberty University. GLTC's Route 4 thus is an essential service in the network. TRIP's Regional Connectivity grant allows GLTC to double Route 4 services.

GRTC Richmond Regional Microtransit Service

The Greater Richmond Transportation Company manages fixed-route bus and bus-rapid transit in the Richmond region. GRTC applied for a TRIP Regional Connectivity grant in FY 2024 to launch three microtransit services (two additional microtransit services were funded by MERIT Demonstration funds) in Richmond's service area which has a demand for public transportation but limited capacity for fixed-route bus service.

With funding from the TRIP Regional Connectivity program, GRTC's LINK Microtransit was able to launch three new microtransit zones: Azalea, Cloverdale, and Sandston-Elko. These zones join the Powhatan zone and Ashland zone in GRTC's Microtransit network. The areas served by GRTC's Microtransit have never had reliable public transit access. Each microtransit zone was phased in throughout FY 2024, with the Sandston/Elko being the last service to launch on June 27th, 2024. Between zones funded by TRIP and MERIT's Demonstration grant, GRTC's microtransit service transported over 20,000 people in FY 2024.

Passenger Amenities and Public Safety Performance

FY 2024 was the first year DRPT awarded TRIP Passenger Amenities and Public Safety grants. DRPT disbursed nine Passenger Amenities grants and five Public Safety grants, with a total of 4.4 million in TRIP funds distributed in this category. These projects will accelerate the construction of bus shelters, the development of transit hubs, and the installation of security cameras. The table below lists the Passenger Amenity and Public Safety projects funded and their description:

Table 5. FY 2024 TRIP Passenger Amenities and Public Safety Projects

Recipient	Project Description	Project Category
Bristol Transit	Bristol bus shelter improvements	Passenger Amenities
Hampton Roads Transit (HRT)	HRT ferry shelter improvements	Passenger Amenities
Hampton Roads Transit (HRT)	HRT bus stop improvements	Passenger Amenities
City of Alexandria	Alexandria Landmark Transit Center amenities	Passenger Amenities
Arlington Regional Transit (ART)	ART bus stop improvements	Passenger Amenities
Greater Richmond Transit Company (GRTC)	GRTC Richmond bus stop improvements	Passenger Amenities
Greater Richmond Transit Company (GRTC)	GRTC Chesterfield bus stop improvements	Passenger Amenities
Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission (RVARC)	Roanoke County bus shelter project	Passenger Amenities
Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission (CSPDC)	CSPDC Lewis Street Hub improvements	Passenger Amenities
Bristol Transit	Bristol transit vehicle security cameras	Public Safety
Hampton Roads Transit (HRT)	HRT operator safety barriers on buses	Public Safety
Williamsburg Area Transit Authority (WATA)	WATA transit vehicle security cameras	Public Safety
Petersburg Area Transit (PAT)	PAT Multimodal Center security guards	Public Safety
Petersburg Area Transit (PAT)	PAT Multimodal Center security cameras	Public Safety

The CTB approved TRIP's FY 2024 Passenger Amenities and Public Safety grants in December 2023 following a mid-cycle grant period. As a result, many TRIP Passenger Amenities or Public Safety projects have not yet been completed at the time of writing. However, many are in the works and should make significant progress in the coming months. Below is a description of several TRIP Passenger Amenities and Public Safety projects and their expected outcomes:

Arlington Regional Transit (ART)

ART will construct a new bus stop and make Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant site improvements to three bus stops. This grant will allow the county to use on-call contractors to immediately address accessibility issues to improve rider experience.

Bristol Virginia Transit

Bristol Transit will install security cameras on six transit buses and one passenger van to improve transit driver and rider safety. Currently, none of these transit vehicles are outfitted with security cameras. Bristol Transit will also construct a new bus shelter at an existing transit stop, improving passenger comfort and safety as well as traffic flow.

Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission (CSPDC)

CSPDC will rehabilitate the BRITE Transit Hub. The project will define a separate bus lane and vehicle parking, assure ADA-compliant access to bus loading areas, relocate bus shelters adjacent to bus parking, and outfit each with safety lighting and bike racks.

City of Alexandria

Alexandria will now have shelters, benches, and real-time signage at the planned transit center in the West End development (formerly Landmark Transit Center). The transit center is a high-ridership transfer hub for local and regional bus service and will act as a major hub for two planned bus rapid transit networks in the center of a significant new development.

Greater Richmond Transit Company (GRTC)

GRTC will make bus stop improvements in Richmond and Chesterfield County to enhance ADA accessibility and to test new text-to-speech technology sharing real-time transit information with riders.

Hampton Roads Transit (HRT)

HRT will improve shelters and amenities at three existing ferry stops. The new amenities will include lighting and security features to improve accessibility for customers during the evening and enhance the existing ADA amenities. HRT will also receive funding to improve rider amenities at 22 stops across the system with benches, shelters, and trash cans. HRT will additionally purchase and install driver safety barriers on 155.

Petersburg Area Transit (PAT)

PAT will hire three security officers and install a new security camera system to monitor PAT's downtown multimodal center.

Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission (RVARC)

Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission will build a new bus shelter at an existing Roanoke County bus stop, providing an enhanced experience for riders with shelter from the weather, a place to sit and rest, and improved solar-powered lighting.

Williamsburg Area Transit Authority (WATA)

WATA will outfit six buses with new security cameras, improving safety for both the passengers and operations staff by having live camera feeds.

Conclusion

TRIP regional connectivity projects create vital touchpoints in community transit systems by allowing historically isolated areas to have access to larger transportation networks. This increases the throughput of people to places they need to go in an equitable style that drives economic vitality and development, as these places often are commercial centers and places of business. TRIP projects also improve geographic, demographic, and economic accessibility to transit, empowering localities and operators to develop programs that accommodate the nuances and niches specific to the communities they serve. The program fosters the exploration of ingenious approaches to reducing financial barriers to transit, increasing ridership, and reducing costs associated with fare collection and enforcement. DRPT has made its presence felt at an abundance of events related to the program and is honored to be invited to celebrate all that grantees have been able to achieve thanks to this program. The projects funded under TRIP advance customer service and experience when it comes to safety and amenities in a responsive, adaptive, and pioneering fashion.