DRPT

Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation

Transit Ridership Incentive Program Application Guidelines

Fiscal Year 2023

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Transit Ridership Incentive Program, Introduction

The Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation's (DRPT) Transit Ridership Incentive Program (TRIP) provides funding to transit agencies for the purpose of improving the regional connectivity of urbanized areas and increasing statewide ridership by supporting the deployment of zero and subsidized fare pilot programs. For FY 22, the General Assembly dedicated $20M to TRIP projects, including $12.5M being allocated towards Zero-Fare Pilots. Please review this document and visit the [TRIP webpage](#) for more information on this program.

This set of application guidelines provides a general overview of TRIP, identifies potential applicants, describes projects that qualify for funding, and specifies terms and requirements. To provide heightened clarity and detail, this set of guidelines is divided into two (2) sections to accompany the two (2) distinct goals of TRIP:

Program Goals:

I. Heightening regional connectivity in urban areas with population excess of 100,000 (X.I)
II. Supporting the creation and improvement of zero fare and low income pilot programs (X.2)

Transit Ridership Incentive Program, Regional Connectivity

Program Description

These guidelines are designed to support applicants interested in regional connectivity funds. TRIP supports the regional connectivity of urbanized areas by designating state funding to a variety of strategies aimed at mitigating congestion, reducing emissions, and decreasing single vehicle trips.

The following terms and metrics should guide applicants and will be utilized in project prioritization and selection:

Useful service: Regional transit provides opportunities for commuting, accessing regional employment centers, and connecting riders with other modes of transportation. For regional connectivity projects, useful service will connect riders to regional needs in a quick and efficient manner that deters community members from relying on single vehicle trips.

Regional Significance: For the purpose of this program, to be considered regionally significant, transit routes must facilitate intra-regional travel within urbanized areas with populations over 100,000. Regionally significant routes fill a gap between corridors of statewide significance that serve statewide objectives and urban development authorities (UDAs) which serve local objectives. To be considered regional, a route must serve at least two political jurisdictions. Projects developed through regional collaboration, or through partnership with the urbanized area's metropolitan planning organization (MPO), will receive additional consideration in project evaluation.

Eligible Applicants

TRIP assistance is awarded to existing providers of public transportation service in Virginia. Eligible recipients includes but is not limited to public transportation services operated by:

- Large Urban or Small Urban public service corporations that serve localities with populations in excess of 100,000 – see below figure 1 of eligible regions.

- Transportation District Commissions
- Public Service Corporations
- Local governments
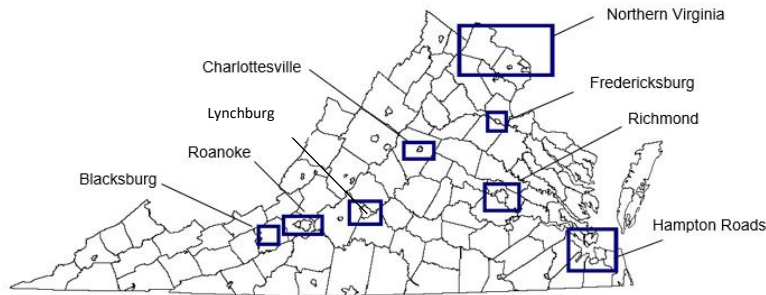- Private nonprofit transit providers

Figure 1: Eligible Regions for Regional Connectivity Funds

Eligible Projects

Prospective applicants are required to submit project summaries for funding. Priority will be given to quickly implementable projects included in locally administered or statewide corridor studies that have fully considered financial capacity for project continuation after grant expiration. The following project types can be considered for funding:
- The improvement and expansion of routes with regional significance
- The development and implementation of regional subsidy financing models
- The creation of bus-only lanes on routes of regional significance
- The implementation of integrated fare collection

Ineligible Projects

- Regional routes that are not included in either statewide corridor plans or overarching statewide initiatives, regional transportation plans, and/or a specific agency's transit development or transit strategic plan
- Projects that are already in service, where the application seeks to supplement existing funding commitments with TRIP funds
- Projects that are currently receiving state funding and/or have expired state funding that was allocated to the same project

Application Requirements

For FY 23, all applications will be submitted through the **Demonstration Grant application** in OLGA. Applicants are required to attach a TRIP application pdf (provided in OLGA) to all TRIP applications. The TRIP PDF application will touch on the following components:

- **Project Description:** a brief yet informative summary of the project that includes:
  - Reasonable and explanatory project scope that reflects the project details needed to meet the identified project objective. If applicable, scope must provide evidence of the transit route's 'appropriate coverage' and 'regional significance'.
  - Brief project schedule, implementation timeline, etc.

- Project objective which may include: Increase in ridership/ridership projections, emissions reduction, and decrease in single occupancy vehicle (SOV) trips/congestion mitigation.
- Confirmation of ability to provide data and evidence of project's success on a quarterly basis

- **Project Justification:** Prior to applying for TRIP funds, applicants will have conducted a study or performed research to develop project justification and prepare an implementation plan. The project justification must provide a clear and demonstrable unmet need that will be met by the project and a thorough description on the mitigation of the implementation plan. This identified need should outline the project's purpose and the proposal's vision. The applicant should also provide justification to the regional significance of the transit route being considered. Conducting a TBEST Title VI analysis or identifying potential benefits to equity emphasis areas will be beneficial in application scoring.

- **Project Objective:** The following objectives are applicable to regional connectivity projects: ridership projection, emissions reduction, decrease in SOV trips and congestion mitigation. These objectives should be paired with a measurable target which yields available data that speaks to the project's success in meeting the defined objective on a quarterly basis.

- **Required Data:** TRIP applications will be evaluated using a technical scoring process. The following data points will be required for scoring: Current route ridership (if applicable), projected route ridership after project implementation (2025), current route peak period ridership (if applicable), and projected route peak period ridership after project implementation (2025).

- **Project Schedule and Readiness:** What, if anything, needs to be done prior to project deployment (e.g. vehicle purchase, bus stop improvement, road or signal enhancement, software/hardware installation, etc.) This section should further outline a tentative project schedule.

- **Financial Detail and Maintenance of Effort**: Provide details on project cost, financial duration, and plans to continue service funding after TRIP funding phases out.

- **Local and Regional Support:** For bus lanes and traffic signal projects, applicants must get a letter of support/approval from the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) or the local government that is responsible for maintenance (Cities, Towns). For routes of regional significance, transit agencies or sponsoring jurisdiction must get board approval from all jurisdictions in which route operates prior to application submission.

- **Congestion Mitigation:** Applicants must provide explanation on how this project will reduce traffic congestion through heightening the investment in transit.[1]

- **Technical Capacity/Oversight**: Enter the name, title, phone number, email address and qualifications of the person responsible for the completion of this project, who will also serve as DRPT's point of contact for the project.

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[1] Per state regulations, at least $3,600,000 of TRIP funds must be annually allocated to operating cost assistance to reduce congestion in urban areas

Recipient Responsibilities

The approved applicant is responsible for the following:
- Conducting sufficient level of planning and research to identify project need, project purpose, performance measures, and thresholds of success.
- Developing clear and measurable goals and objectives.
- Demonstrating financial commitment to continue successful projects beyond the expiration of state funds.
- Providing continuous administrative direction and project management, as well as communicating with DRPT program manager on important updates.
- Efficiently implementing projects on a timely basis.
- Providing quarterly updates and data on project's performance, these updates should include rider and community feedback.
- Conducting before-and-after analysis on regional ridership.

Grant Match Requirements and Funding Model

The Commonwealth recognizes the need for both state and local funding commitments to establish transit services. Therefore, TRIP regional connectivity funding can be applied to a project for a maximum of five years. TRIP funding can be attributed at a maximum of an 80% share of eligible project costs. For multi-year projects, it is anticipated that the state's contribution would decrease and the local share would increase as the project progresses

If an applicant is interested in applying for a longer term funding model, they must confirm that the project will be in operation for the full duration of funding. For multi-year projects, it is anticipated that the state's contribution would decrease and the local share would increase as the project progresses. See Table 1 for example state funding awards for each year of the funding duration. In specific circumstances, previously allocated federal relief dollars can subsidize local match requirements for FY 23 projects, as long as a minimum 4% local match is provided. Projects may be eligible for funding beyond the initial grant period based upon availability of funds and project performance.

Table 1: Maximum State funding for each year of funding duration

First Year	Second Year	Third Year	Fourth Year	Fifth Year
Up to 80% of eligible project costs	*Up to 60% of eligible project costs*	*Up to 30% of eligible project costs*	*Up to 20% of eligible project costs*	*Up to 10% of eligible project costs*

Per subdivision C of *Section 33.2-1526.3* of the *Code of Virginia*, the regional connectivity funds will be distributed based on a five-year rolling average, ensuring that each region receives their proportional share over the five-year period. Proportional shares will be evaluated based on census data.

Application Evaluation

Proposed projects will be evaluated and prioritized through a technical scoring analysis. After each project is scored based on the below score breakdowns, the scores will be compared and ranked, signifying priority projects that are most appropriate for funding. Regional connectivity funds will be distributed based on a five-year rolling average, ensuring that each region receives their

proportionate share over the five-year period. Projects will be evaluated in consideration of the regional allocation of funds. The scoring for regional connectivity projects and zero fare and low income projects are unique to the project's assigned goals and objectives. Because of the diversity of projects that are eligible for TRIP regional connectivity funding, scoring will be unique to project type.

The improvement and expansion of routes with regional significance
Regional connectivity projects are scored in the following categories: congestion mitigation, regional connectivity and regional collaboration, and cost per passenger. Table 2 depicts the point association with each of these scoring categories.

The implementation of integrated fare collection
TRIP funds can be allocated towards increasing the efficiency of fare collection for public transportation and implementing new strategies to most appropriately meet the demands of existing riders and attract new riders. Table 2 depicts the point association with each of these scoring categories.

The creation of bus-only lanes on routes of regional significance
These projects will be scored using the categories and point associations listed in Table 2.

Table 2: Project Evaluation Categories and Points for Regional Routes, Integrated Fare Collection, and Bus Only Lane Projects

Category	Points
Congestion Mitigation and Ridership	60
Projected Impact on Ridership	*30*
Projected Peak Period Ridership	*30*
Regional Connectivity and Regional Collaboration	30
Cost per passenger	10
Total Possible Points	**100**

To expand on project scoring criteria, Table 3 provides further explanation on the purpose of the scoring categories. Additionally, Table 3 provides a detailed breakdown of scoring, further organizing proposed projects in priority classes. Projects will be ranked based on overall project score (Table 2); however, if two or more projects receive the same score, priority classes of each individual category will be considered to determine the most ripe project out of the tied applications. The projects will be ranked within each class on a relative scale based on FY 23 application pool. Applications that most appropriately meet the project's evaluation criteria will receive more points than other projects within their designated class. Furthermore, project readiness and proposed implementation timeline will be considered when ranking similarly scored projects.

Table 3: Detailed Breakdown of Evaluation Criteria and Priority Classes

Evaluation Criteria		Purpose of Criteria	Detailed Breakdown of Scoring
Congestion Mitigation	*Projected Impact on Ridership*	All applicants applying for TRIP funding must consider the project's impact on transit ridership by 2025. The predicted increase in ridership will be vital in project evaluation. Applicants should provide detail on how they arrived at their projected ridership increase, either through modeling, surveying, or other means. When necessary, impact on ridership will be evaluated proportionally in a manner	• Explanation on how applicant arrived at projected ridership (4 points) *High Priority (20-26 points)* 20% or more predicted increase in ridership *Mid Priority (10-19 points)* 10%-19% predicted increase in ridership *Low Priority (0-9 points)* Less than 10% predicted increase in ridership

		that considers current ridership and community population.	
	Projected Proportion of Peak Period Ridership	This criteria will measure the concentration of projected ridership during peak period travel times. Peak periods of ridership represents the time of greatest congestion and commuter needs. A project will be scored based on its ability to mitigate congestion during these peak times. Applicants should provide an hourly breakdown of their ridership to further show the potential for mitigation during times of congestion.	• DRPT will be calculating the percent of ridership that falls within the established peak period of congestion (6:00 AM-9:00 AM) *High Priority (21-30 points)* 50% or more of daily ridership attributed to peak periods of congestion *Mid Priority (10-20 points)* 40%-49% of daily ridership attributed to peak periods of congestion *Low Priority (0-9 points)* 39% or less of daily ridership attributed to peak periods of congestion
Regional Connectivity and Regional Collaboration		The component of regional connectivity and regional collaboration will speak to the regional access of the project and the regional development of the application. Because regional projects are aimed at increasing regional connectivity, projects should be developed through collaboration of involved localities and their MPO when appropriate. This component will not only speak to regional involvement but will also speak to appropriate coverage for all localities included. Regional routes should provide access to vital services, commuter needs, and other transit essentials.	● Applicant shows that route will connect to existing transit and other mode options (12 points) ● Applicant shows that route will access major activity centers and large employers (8 points) ● Applicant submits letters of support from **_all_** involved localities *(5 points)* ● Applicant submits letter of support from appropriate MPO *(5 points)* *High Priority (21-30 points)* All or great majority of components are satisfied *Mid Priority (10-20 points)* *Majority of components are satisfied* *Low Priority (0-9 points)* *None or few of the components are satisfied*
Cost Per Passenger		To ensure the most efficient use of TRIP funds, cost per passenger will be used to gauge the benefit of the project's use of funds. Research should be performed prior to the submission of an application that speaks to the affordability of the project in regards to the anticipated ridership. This component will allow DRPT to further evaluate applications ability to benefit the community with consideration of limited funding. $$\frac{Total\ Project\ Cost}{Anticipated\ 2025\ Project\ Ridership} = Cost\ per\ Passenger$$	• The cost per passenger factor is scored relative to other applications. After all projects are scored they will be divided into the following categories: *High Priority (8-10 points)* *Lowest cost per passengers relative to all applications* *Mid Priority (4-7 points)* *Median cost per passengers relative to all applications* *Low Priority (0-3 points)* *High cost per passengers relative to all applications* **DRPT recognizes that costs of operations differ throughout the Commonwealth. DRPT will consider these differences during the project scoring.*

The development of implementation of regional subsidy financing models
These projects, and other non-service projects, will be considered for funding as needed and will be evaluated on a situational basis. All applicants should provide detail on local support and

commitment, implementation timelines, and previous planning efforts that identified the need for regional subsidy models.

Monitoring and Reporting

DRPT is strongly committed to supporting and monitoring the progress of selected TRIP projects. Selected grantees will be required to submit data on a quarterly basis that speak to the project's progress in meeting its established objectives. For regional connectivity projects, the following can be chosen as project objectives: increase in ridership, emissions reduction, decrease in SOV trips, and congestion mitigation. For the application, applicants will be required to define an objective and a data provision. Before the final project agreement, DRPT will work with the selected grantees to help refine these components. DRPT will also have a 6 month interim meeting with grantees to discuss project progress.

Table 4 below outlines possible project objectives and their associated relevant data:

Table 4: Project Objectives and their Associated Reporting Requirements

Project Objective	Quarterly Data Provisions
Impact on Ridership	- Ridership counts - Percent of ridership change - Rider and community feedback
Emissions Reduction	Ridership counts X emissions reduction formula (DRPT will work with selected grantees on meeting this provision)
Decrease in SOV trips/ Congestion Mitigation	- Ridership counts - Hourly Ridership breakdown - Average Auto Occupancy of Vehicles

It is important to note that the quarterly provision of this data will be included in the required reporting to the General Assembly. Additionally, the ability to reach established targets will be used to make determinants of future funding.

Transit Ridership Incentive Program, Application Instructions

Applications for the Transit Ridership Incentive Program (TRIP) are submitted online using DRPT's Online Grant Administration website (OLGA) at: https://olga.drpt.virginia.gov. The application will open December 1, 2021 and will close February 1, 2021, late applications will not be considered for funding. DRPT will not accept applications in any other manner than through OLGA. For FY 23, TRIP applications will be submitted under the **Demonstration Grant platform in OLGA**. See the below key steps for the application process:

Grantee Information

Inventory Management

Grant Applications

Previously Submitted Applications

Rail Applications
Public Transportation/CAP Applications
Mid-Cycle Grant Applications
Rural Transportation Assistance (RTAP) Applications
Small Urban Training Applications

Five Year Capital Budget

Grant Management

Performance Data

Application Steps:

1. Access agency OLGA account
2. Navigate to Grant Application > Public Transportation/ CAP Applications
3. Navigate to "Demonstration Project Assistance"
4. Make sure to title project: *"[Locality Name] – Transit Ridership Incentive Program"*
5. Complete all required milestones to the best of your ability
6. Attach all required attachments (see list below)
7. Provide any additional information or expand on any provided details in the 'additional information' text box at the end of the application

The required Budget Detail must include the following:
- **Expense Categories** (e.g. Advertising Placement, Media Buy, Professional Services/Contractor Staff Time, Agency Staff Wages)
- **Budget Amount** for each Expense Category
- A **detailed explanation** of how the budget will be spent in each Expense Category

The following attachments should be included in the OLGA application:
- **Required:** Completed Fillable PDF application- provided in OLGA and the DRPT TRIP Webpage
- Relevant planning documents
- Ridership Reports
- Letters of support

Contact your DRPT Program Manager if you have questions regarding the information needed for the application and the application process.