

Transit Service Delivery Advisory Committee
VIRTUAL MEETING
November 24, 2025
9:30 a.m.

Minutes

TSDAC Members Present

Chair McGlennon, Vice-Chair Mester, Dr. Smoot, Mr. Dyke, Mr. Booth, Ms. Pinkard, Ms. Mattice, Ms. Jackson, Director Robinson

Consultants Present

Nathan Macek, Sarah Sciarrino, Sonika Sethi, Sam Sink

Staff and Others Present

Jordan Chapman, Tiffany Dubinsky, Miriam Foster, Robert Gray, Jennifer Mayton, Daniel Sonenklar, Grant Sparks, Evan Price, Raquel Aguirre, Ben Goodill, Bob Schneider, James Boudreau, Bruce Simms, Aaron Clark, Danny Plaughter, Billie Darlington, Avery Daugherty, Taylor David, Noelle Dominguez, Genoveva Cutrell, Wood Hudson, Sarah Husain, Joe Dillard, Josh Moore, Lauren Gilbert, Paige Lazar, LeaAnn Holloway, Maria [last name not provided], Melanie Fleenor, Melissa Skelton, Katy Miller, Mitchell Smiley, Natoya Nelson, Deanna Oware, Owen Williams, Pam [last name not provided], Paula Benke, Paula Melester, Grace Stankus, Taylor Jenkins, Tony Williams, Kyle Trissel, Evan Tuten, Francis Vance, Andrew D'Huyvetter, Jim M [full last name not provided]

Call to Order/Introductions (Chair McGlennon)

Chair McGlennon called the meeting to order at 9:30 and began introductions.

Approval of October 6, 2025 Minutes

Chair McGlennon requested the correction of Mr. Booth's name in the October 6 meeting minutes.

Ms. Mester moved approval of the minutes, incorporating the aforementioned correction. Ms. Mattice seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

MERIT Operating Assistance Review (DRPT and Consultant Staff)

Mr. Trogon began the presentation, noting the summary of public comments will be distributed among the members and public. Director Robinson began her presentation, first thanking TSDAC members and staff for their efforts during the MERIT Operating Assistance Review process.

Director Robinson reviewed the meeting agenda, and then the time and progress to date. Director Robinson reviewed the 2025 MERIT Program review update process and then reviewed the MERIT Operating Formula Evaluation Goals. Director Robinson noted the goals were to make the MERIT Operating Program simpler, fairer, and more predictable, producing a funding formula that supports outcomes, as opposed to inputs and spending patterns.

Director Robinson summarized the public comments and public comment process. And noted that the overall tone of the public comments was supportive and collaborative, especially rural transit providers. Director Robinson noted that many comments shared similar language, with many from Northern Virginia opposing the changes and requesting a more transparent process. Director Robinson noted that VML submitted a late comment to support the changes but requested more time for TSDAC review in future reviews. Director Robinson noted the need to collect additional data and that in future years, with better data, the MERIT Review process will be engaged earlier.

Director Robinson reviewed the proposed MERIT Operating formula alternatives. Director Robinson noted both alternatives maintain the 95% sizing metric, including ridership and cost. Director Robinson noted they differ in how they smooth the performance data over time. Director Robinson noted that Alternative 1 uses single year performance and is the most responsive and transparent, while Alternative 2 uses a three-year average performance. Director Robinson emphasized that the changes to the MERIT formula are needed because the current process is overly input driven, with operating costs being the main metric, and year to year outcomes too unpredictable. Director Robinson noted that performance improvements will take a little longer to be reflected in the allocations but softens the year-to-year fluctuations.

Director Robinson reviewed the MERIT Capital Assistance proposed improvements, noting that although TSDAC does not have a statutory responsibility to review the MERIT Capital program, it is important for transparency for TSDAC to review. Director Robinson noted the proposed changes improve clarity in how DRPT categorizes and scores projects and better aligns with Federal state of good repair standards. Director Robinson noted that the changes to MERIT Capital aim to improve the program and decrease red tape.

Director Robinson reviewed the administrative definition changes. Director Robinson explained that DRPT looked internally at its administrative functions to find ways to be more efficient internally. Director Robinson emphasized that new definitions for Passengers per Hour and Passengers per Mile will not be affected by deadhead miles for transit agencies in rural areas or commuter agencies with routes longer than 20 miles.

Director Robinson reviewed the Operating Cost Metrics. Director Robinson noted that DRPT is aiming to standardize the cost definitions used for both sizing and performance metrics.

Director Robinson wrapped up her presentation with the recommendation that Alternative 1 be adopted. Director Robinson noted that if Alternative 2 was selected, due to agencies preferring stability, DRPT would be supportive of this. Mr. Trogdon noted that the public comment document was made available in the meeting chat.

Chair McGlennon, noting that TSDAC does not have a statutory role on the MERIT Capital program, asked if there is any general consensus about the MERIT Capital Program.

Ms. Mattice voiced her concern about the speed of the MERIT review process, noting materials were first presented to TSDAC in July. Ms. Mattice noted that the speed of the overall process made providing meaningful feedback difficult. Mr. Booth asked what the harm of taking extra time to review the proposed changes is, agreeing with Ms. Mattice's concern about the speed of the MERIT review process. Mr. Booth expressed concern that it was hard to fully understand what is being changed.

Director Robinson noted that from March to July 2025, the DRPT consultants were providing briefings to the members. Director Robinson noted that the review process was a very complicated and time-constrained process. Director Robinson noted that in the past, TSDAC did not make a formal recommendation for the MERIT Capital process. Director Robinson answered Mr. Booth's question, noting that delaying the MERIT review process would have an impact on the budget development process, as the current funding cycle is already in progress. Director Robinson noted that delaying the process would add additional confusion and additionally noted that the proposed changes only result in a marginal change overall. Director Robinson stated that it is the agency's recommendation to move forward.

Ms. Mester suggested that the MERIT Capital process has more consensus. Ms. Mester shared that TSDAC has historically looked at the whole picture of Capital and Operating, even if State Code doesn't require it. Ms. Mester noted that TSDAC can make a comment on the proposed DRPT administrative changes. Ms. Mester noted that although the process briefed the members regularly, the constituents represented by the TSDAC members felt that they did not have adequate time to review the changes. Ms. Mester requested that separate votes are taken on the recommendations. Ms. Mester requested that they do not make a change to MERIT until new data is included. Ms. Mester requested grandfathering a hold-harmless provision. Ms. Mester requested that, due to the SJ28 changes coming from the General Assembly, that those changes be incorporated.

Ms. Jackson asked for clarification if the recommendation proposed was to delay making a recommendation, or if the recommendation proposed was to make a recommendation but wait for new data. Ms. Mester responded that she is suggesting a full delay and defer.

Ms. Jackson expressed concern about the number of letters received that noted concern about the shortness of time to review the process.

Ms. Pinkard echoed Ms. Jackson's concern, and expressed concern about the process, noting that VTA also expressed concern.

Mr. Booth commented on the FY28 SYIP Budget process, noting that the MERIT process is impacted by current budget development. Mr. Booth noted that the FY28 SYIP will be open for application in October 2026. Mr. Booth then asked what then the rush is, when many are struggling to understand the recommended MERIT Operating changes. Mr. Booth suggested that the area that needs more clarification is the Operating Formula, not the Capital program.

Director Robinson responded to Mr. Booth's comments. Director Robinson noted that a delay in the process could result in lost momentum. Director Robinson noted that a delay could result in an effective restart of the whole MERIT Review process. Director Robinson noted that DRPT staff would need time to prepare for the application process under the new MERIT Operating process, such as changing applications, hosting webinars, and informing grantees of the process.

Chair McGlennon requested a motion or proposed action.

Mr. Dyke, noting the concerns of the TSDAC members, expressed concern about making a decision just for the sake of making a decision. Mr. Dyke echoed the concern about giving people more time.

Ms. Mattice suggested the motion of not making a recommendation at this time. Chair McGlennon requested parameters for a motion. Ms. Mattice clarified that there should be a delay until further review.

Mr. Dyke concurred but emphasized some parameters need to be established for when a decision is made. Ms. Mattice agreed. Ms. Mester agreed, and suggested waiting until June, after the General Assembly has adjourned and the transit community will know if new funding is made available. Ms. Mester suggested that the process will not lose momentum as transit funding will be the focus of the next few months.

Ms. Mester asked if a delay until June would give DRPT the time to get the data requested. Mr. Trogdon noted DRPT uses annual audits for financial information, which operates with a two-year lag. Ms. Mester noted that audits must be posted by December for most agencies. Mr. Sparks noted that DRPT will have FY26 performance data by August 1st, 2026. Mr. Sonenklar confirmed, noting that DRPT will only have financial data through FY25.

Mr. Booth clarified his intent to delay a decision is not to delay the process, but to continue the discussion. Mr. Booth expressed concern about the meeting scheduling process, noting late scheduling for the meetings has resulted in a lack of preparation at

times. Mr. Booth noted that in the past, TSDAC meetings were held on a regular cadence and generally in person. Mr. Booth suggested a similar process to that moving forward.

Ms. Mattice noted that many members of TSDAC represent associations, which requires the TSDAC members to brief their association members for feedback. Ms. Mattice noted that a regular meeting schedule would make that process easier. Ms. Mattice clarified her opinion that she does not believe the recommendations are either good or bad, but just that the public needs more time to digest the recommendations.

Ms. Mester, noting that whatever TSDAC does is a recommendation, emphasized her support for delaying the final motion until the summer.

Chair McGlennon confirmed that the motion would be delayed making a recommendation until June 30, 2026. Ms. Mattice and Mr. Dyke supported the idea. Mr. Booth clarified that the decision would be *no later than* June 30.

Director Robinson concluded by thanking staff, consultants, TSDAC members, and the public for engaging with the process and providing feedback. Director Robinson noted about scheduling that members voiced concerns in the past about meetings in the summer. Director Robinson noted that early in the process, DRPT and consultants determined that tiering was not a viable option with current data. Mr. Dyke requested that the motion to delay is a friendly motion recognizing the effort of the staff in the process, and thanked Director Robinson. Ms. Mattice concurred. Ms. Mester requested that a letter explaining TSDAC's decision be drafted for transmittal.

Chair McGlennon confirmed that the resolution is that the TSDAC is not making a recommendation today, in order to receive further comment and provide further evaluation and will provide a recommendation prior to June 30th, 2026. An accompanying statement would express TSDAC's appreciation for the process and reasoning for the recommendation.

With the resolution on the floor, Ms. Mattice moved the motion, seconded by Mr. Booth. Ms. Jackson, citing her absence from the next meeting, abstained from voting. Ms. Jackson confirmed she will be leaving TSDAC. Notwithstanding Ms. Jackson's abstention, the motion passed unanimously.

Open Discussion

None.

Public Comment

None.

Wrap Up/Next Steps

With the vote concluded, Chair McGlennon suggested that further meetings and public meetings are scheduled. Mr. Dyke agreed, noting he is ready to vote and hopes the

other members will be ready as well. Chair McGlennon expressed his thanks to DRPT staff and consultants and noted he is looking forward to coming to a recommendation and appreciated the opportunity for the proposed MERIT changes to have its full exposure and opportunity for public comment.

With no further comments, Chair McGlennon noted that TSDAC will work towards scheduling in-person meetings in the future. Ms. Jackson confirmed that she will be leaving TSDAC. TSDAC members expressed their thanks for Ms. Jackson's service.

Ms. Mester asked when meeting materials are due to the CTB, noting she hopes to work on the resolution. Director Robinson noted that the CTB will be meeting next on December 9th, 2025. Director Robinson noted that DRPT can keep TSDAC informed on any information sent to the CTB. Director Robinson again thanked TSDAC for their comments and work.

Adjourn

On motion of Mr. Dyke, seconded by Ms. Mattice, and without objections, the November 24th, 2025 TSDAC meeting adjourned.