



TSDAC Meeting

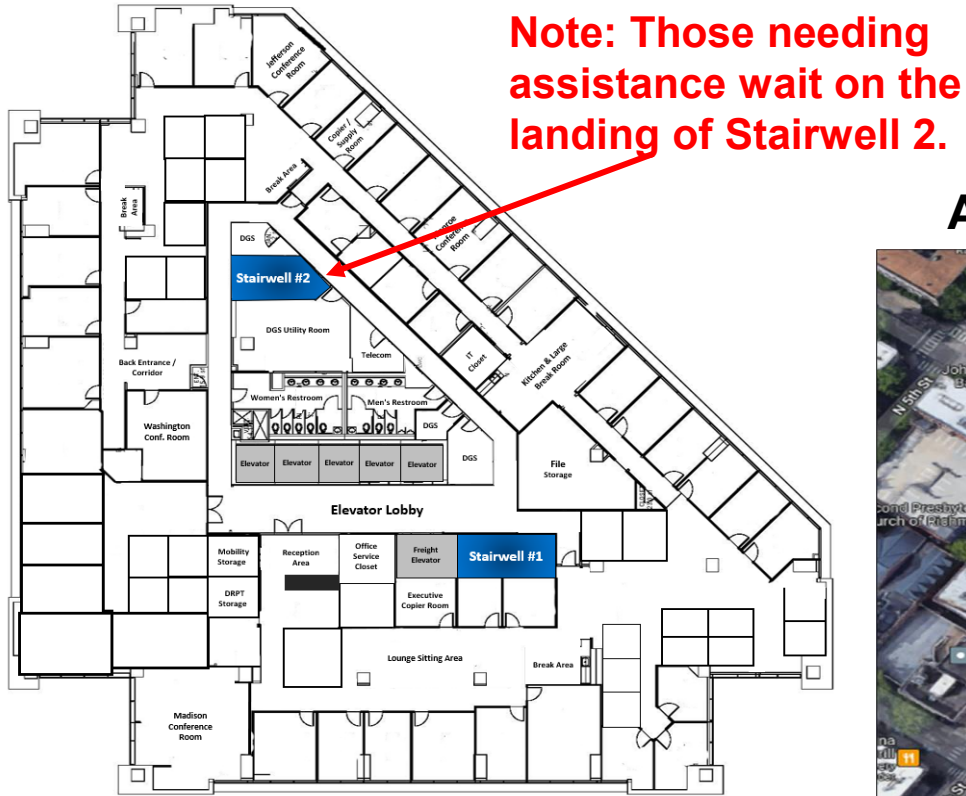
April 14, 2026



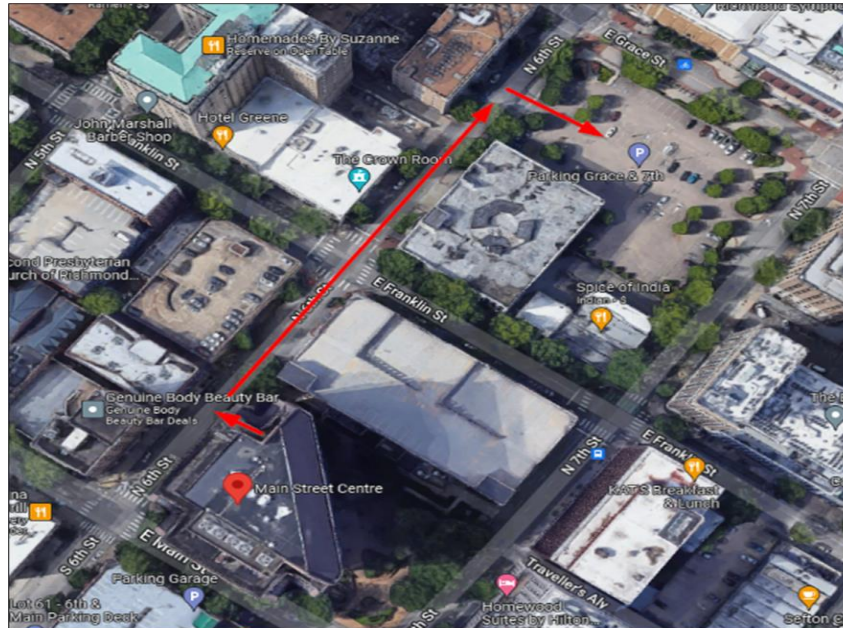
Today's Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions (Chair)
- Safety Briefing
- Approval of Minutes from March 10, 2026 Meeting
- Comments from DRPT Director
- Legislative Update
- Recap from March Meeting
- TRIP Policy Review
- Policy Decision #1: Finalize Cohorts and Revenue Distribution
- Policy Decision #2: Introduce Sizing Metrics by Cohort
- Policy Decision #3: Performance and Stability Fund Preview
- Next Meeting

DRPT Safety Briefing (600 East Main Street, 21st Floor)



Assemble at 6th & Grace Street



In Case of Evacuation

AED & First Aid Kit



AEDs – outside Madison conference room and in Main Kitchen
First Aid Kit – Located in kitchen areas.

Fire Extinguishers & Alarms



Fire Extinguishers – Located in the Kitchen, and near Stairwells.

Security & Active Shooter



If you See something, Say something
Flee. Hide. Fight.

Remote Participation



Be aware of phishing emails and scams.
Know your medical emergency and evacuation strategies.

Approval of the Minutes from March 10, 2026

Comments from the DRPT Director

Administration Priorities: MERIT Operating

PREDICTABLE

Minimize year-over-year fluctuations in allocations in an effort to allow for better planning and budgeting at the local level. Wherever possible, lock-in inputs and measures to be revisited by TSDAC every 3-years.

TAILORED OBJECTIVES

Policy objectives and their associated measures should be different by area type, not by the size of the agency. Align the measures used for each area type/cohort with the type of service provided in those areas.

SIMPLE AND TRANSPARENT

The math behind the formula should be easy to understand for transit agency staff and decision-makers alike. Data associated with the formula should be simple enough to be posted for public consumption.

Administration Priorities: MERIT Operating

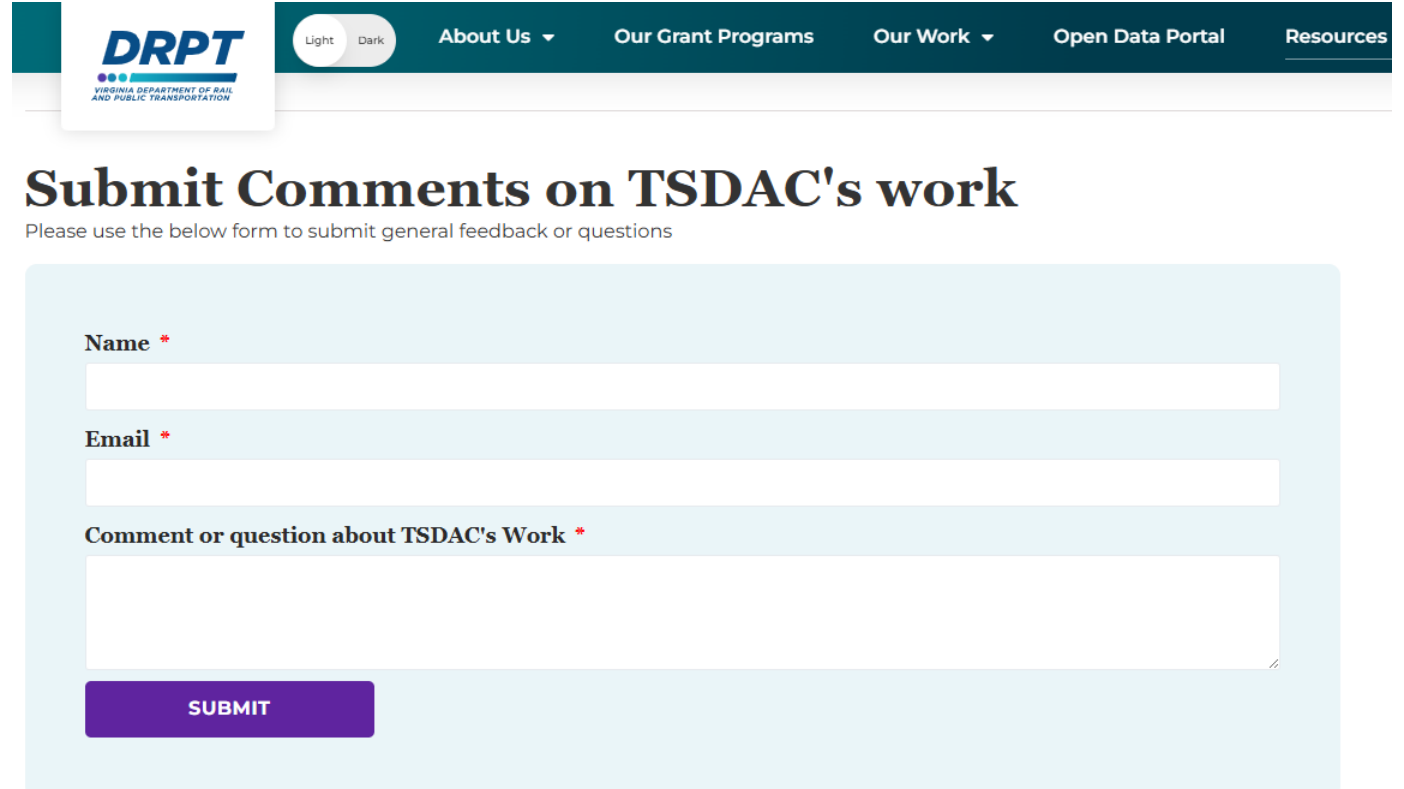
The administration envisions “good performance” as...

- Achieving ridership growth
- Delivering operationally efficient and effective service
- Sustaining and growing local contributions
- Attaining high customer satisfaction/experience

However, all of these indicators of “good performance” are context-sensitive.

Public Comments for TSDAC Review

DRPT has developed an online public comment form to help advise DRPT and TSDAC on CTB policy recommendations



The screenshot shows the DRPT (Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation) website header with a dark teal background. The header includes the DRPT logo, a light/dark theme toggle, and navigation links: About Us, Our Grant Programs, Our Work, Open Data Portal, and Resources. Below the header, the main heading is "Submit Comments on TSDAC's work" in a bold, dark font. Underneath this heading is a subtext: "Please use the below form to submit general feedback or questions". The form itself is a light blue box containing three input fields: "Name *", "Email *", and "Comment or question about TSDAC's Work *". Each field has a corresponding label and a red asterisk indicating it is required. The "Comment" field is a larger text area. At the bottom of the form is a purple "SUBMIT" button.

<https://drpt.virginia.gov/transit-service-delivery-advisory-committee-tdac/>

Legislative Update

Recap from March Meeting

TSDAC Timeline and Schedule



MERIT Operating

- Finalize Capital Policy Recommendations
- Introduce Cohort Concept

- Finalize Cohorts
- Introduce Sizing Metric Concept

- FY27 Draft SYIP Review
- Finalize Sizing Metric
- Introduce Performance & Stability Fund Concept

- Finalize Performance & Stability Fund

- Finalize MERIT Operating Policy Recommendations
- Begin CTB briefings for MERIT Operating Policy Changes

Transit Ridership Incentive Program (TRIP)

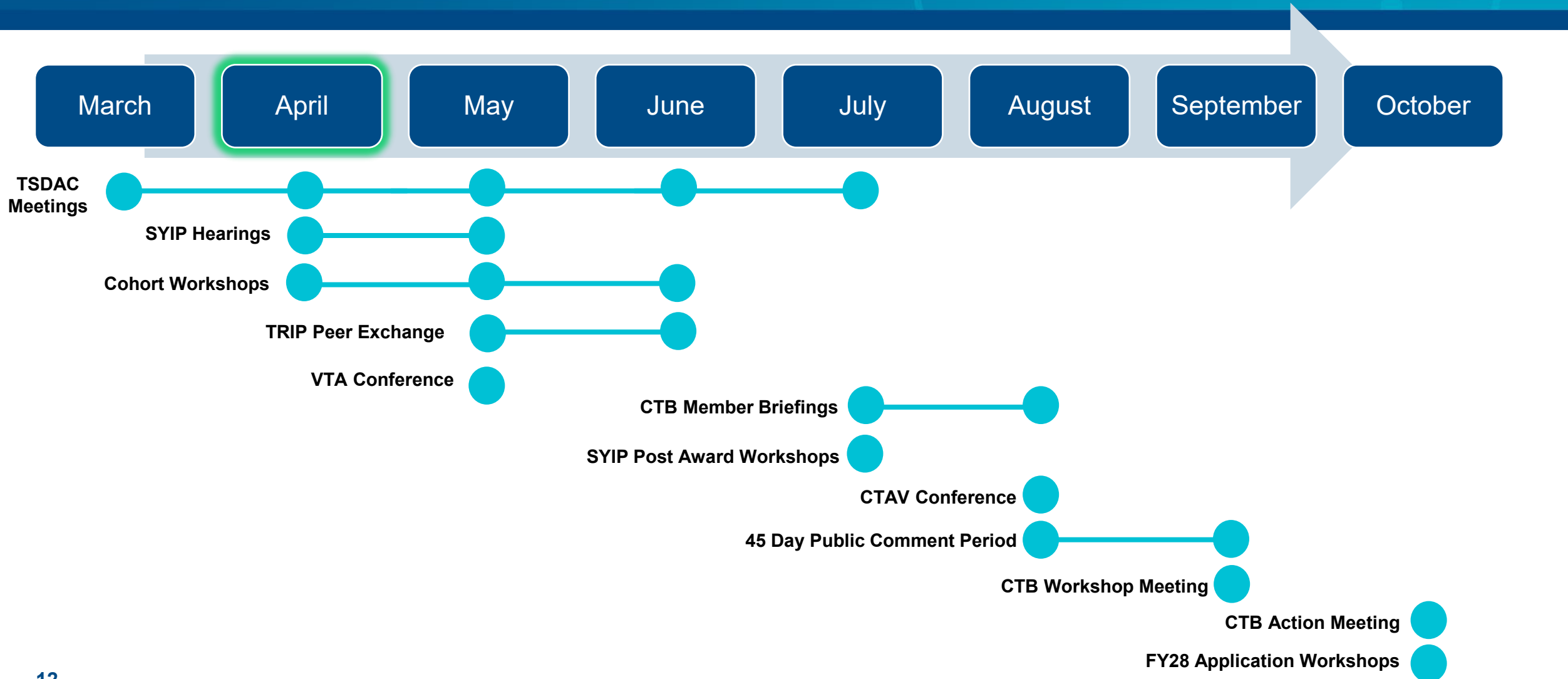
- Review Current TRIP Policy and Legislative Changes

- Introduce Proposed TRIP Policy Changes and Definitions

- Refine Proposed TRIP Policy Changes

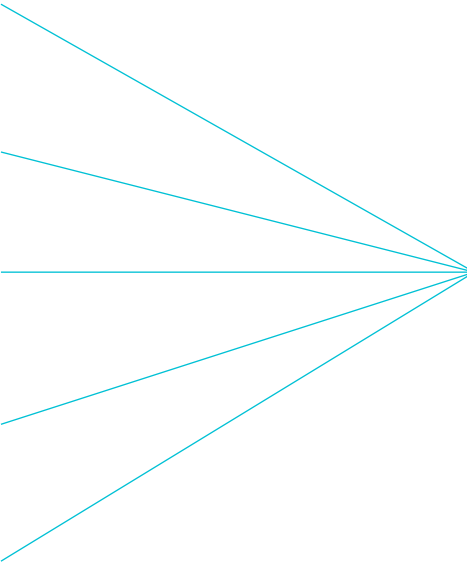
- Finalize TRIP Policy Recommendations
- Begin CTB briefings for TRIP Policy Changes

Outreach Schedule



Observations from 2025 Review

Need	Why?
Simplification	The current formula is difficult to understand for transit partners and decision-makers (i.e. performance adjustments, trends, reiterations)
Transparency	The process for developing formula concepts and making refinements needs more clarity
Predictability	Year-over-year variations in Operating Assistance allocations makes it difficult to plan and budget
Collaborative	Need for dedicated time to discuss formula concepts and desired outcomes in an effort to reduce unintended consequences
Rewarding	The formula should reward agencies that meet criteria deemed as important to the industry and the Commonwealth



**Cohort
Concept**

TRIP Policy Review

TRIP Legislative History

2020: Program Established

- ~ \$30M each year
- Promote improved transit service in urbanized areas of the Commonwealth
- Reduce barriers to transit use for low-income individuals

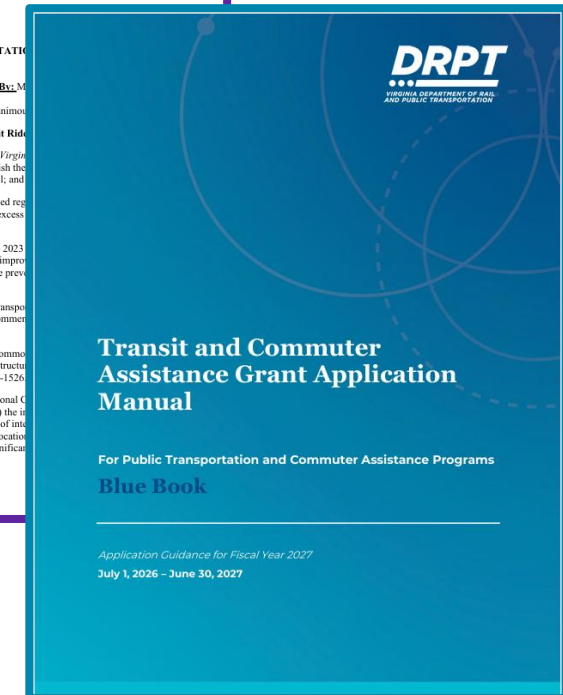
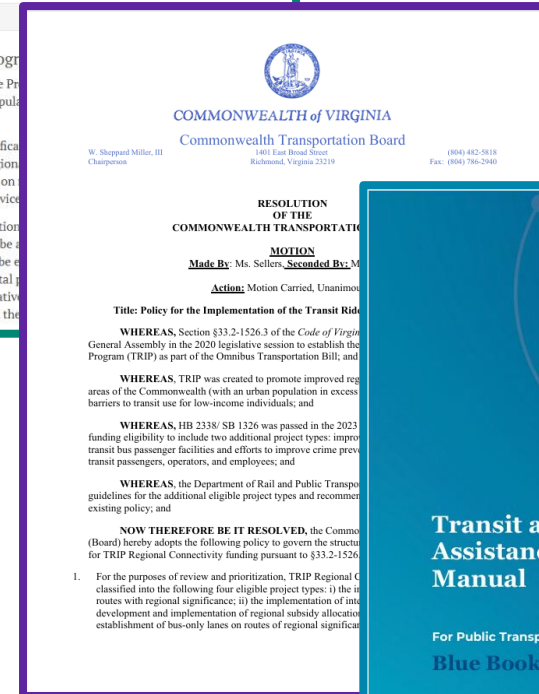
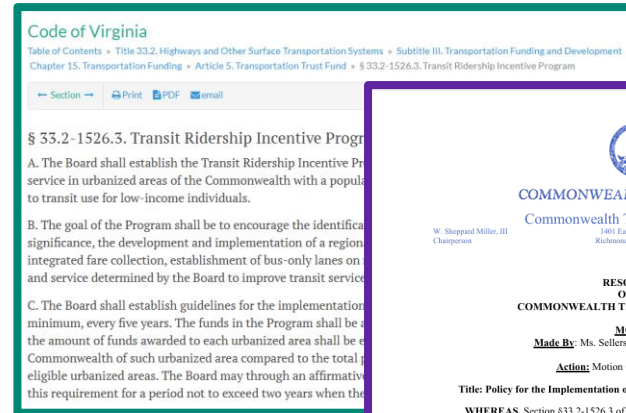
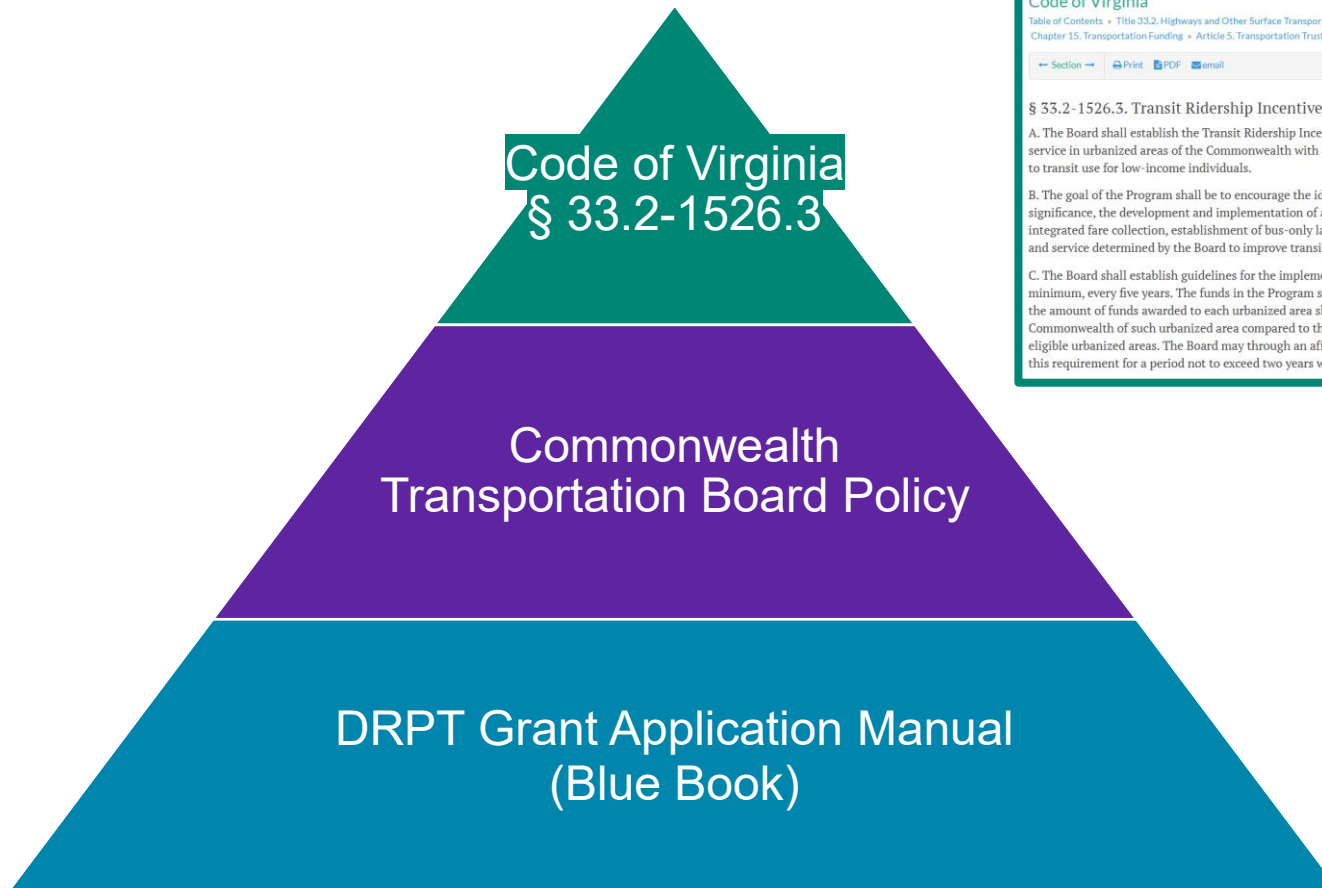
2022/3: Program Revisions

- Added passenger facility and public safety project categories.
- Set spending ceilings and floors for each category

2026: HB 200 (Signing TBD)

- Routes of regional significance in rural areas now eligible
- Added micromobility, paratransit, and specialized transport
- TSDAC to support development of program guidelines

DRPT Policy Pyramid



TRIP Today

TRIP Project Categories - Current



Regional Connectivity: Encouraging the identification and establishment of routes of regional significance



Zero and Reduced Fare: Supporting the establishment of programs to reduce the impact of fares on low-income individuals



Passenger Amenities: Supporting local, regional, and state entities in improving the accessibility of transit bus passenger facilities



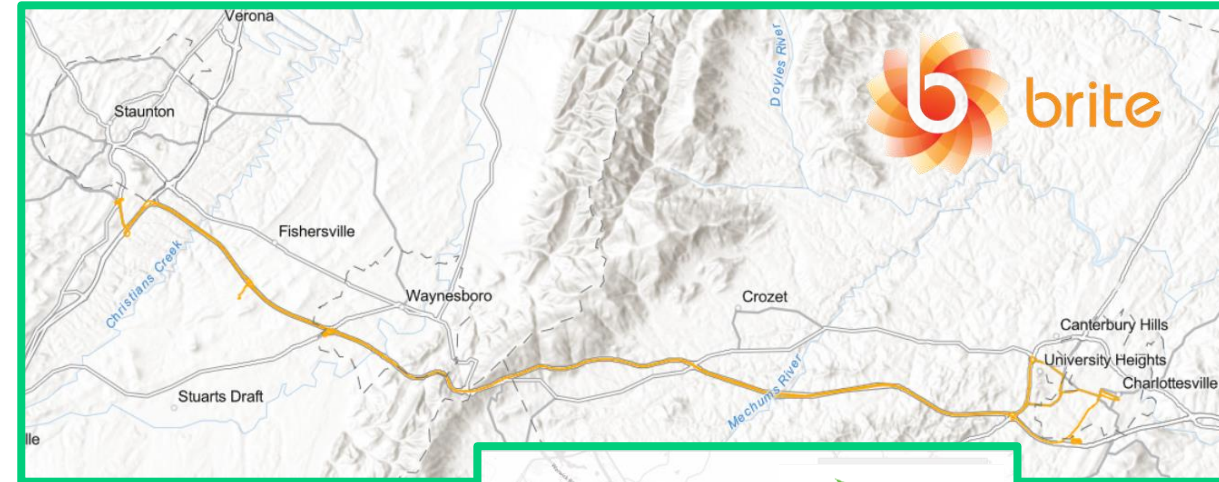
Public Safety: Supporting local, regional, and state entities in improving the safety of transit bus passenger facilities

Funded Projects – Regional Connectivity

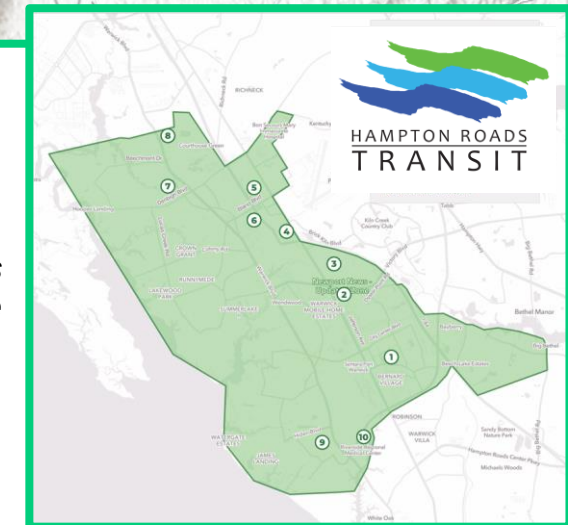
Only eligible in metro areas with more than 100,000 people

Eligible Projects

- Improving/expanding routes with regional significance
- Developing/implementing regionally integrated fare collection
- Developing/implementing regional subsidy allocation models



Afton Express



*Newport News
Microtransit Zone*

Funded Projects – Zero and Reduced Fare

Eligible Projects

- Provision of subsidized or free passes to low-income populations
- Elimination of fares on high-capacity corridors or zones
- Systemwide zero fare
- Fare policy planning



*GRTC systemwide
fare elimination*

*Mountain Lynx Transit
systemwide fare elimination*



Funded Projects – Passenger Amenities

Eligible Projects

- Improving Bus Stops
- Adding New Bus Stops
- Improving Other Passenger Facilities
- Passenger Facility Planning

*Arlington County
stop improvements*



*Danville Transit shelters
(illustrative, project is currently active)*



Funded Projects – Public Safety

Eligible Projects

- Safety Equipment
- Safety Programming & Training
- Safety Planning

GRTC safety officers



VRT rural vehicle camera upgrades



TRIP Tomorrow

HB 200 (McQuinn)

Transit Entities, certain; funding and administration

§ 33.2-1526.3. Transit Ridership Incentive Program

- A. The Board shall establish the Transit Ridership Incentive Program (the Program) to promote improved transit service across the Commonwealth by encouraging the identification and establishment of routes of regional significance; supporting the establishment of programs to reduce the impact of fares on low-income individuals; encouraging innovative approaches to micromobility, paratransit, and other specialized transportation; and supporting local, regional, and state entities in improving the accessibility and safety of transit bus passenger facilities.
- B. The Board shall, in conjunction with the Transit Service Delivery Advisory Committee, establish guidelines for the implementation of the Program and review such guidelines, at a minimum, every three years.
- &c.

TRIP Project Categories – Post-HB 200



Regional Connectivity: Encouraging the identification and establishment of routes of regional significance



Zero and Reduced Fare: Supporting the establishment of programs to reduce the impact of fares on low-income individuals



Accessibility and Safety: Supporting local, regional, and state entities in improving the accessibility and safety of transit bus passenger facilities



NEW! Encouraging innovative approaches to micromobility, paratransit, or other specialized transportation

Reviewing TRIP guidance this Summer

Through engagement with TSDAC, peer-exchanges with prior TRIP grantees, and sessions at the Virginia Transit Association conference, we will:

Review Existing Guidelines

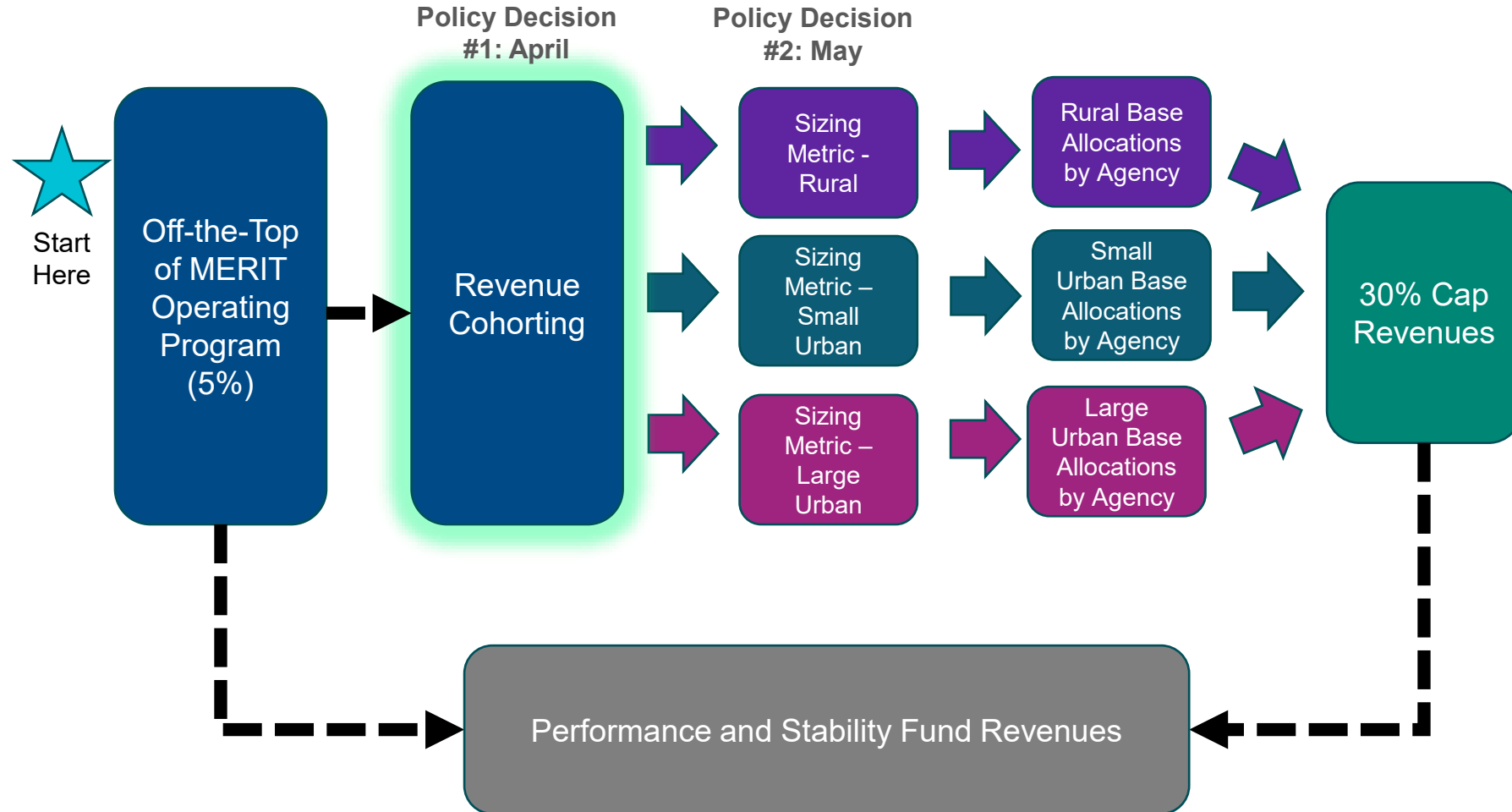
- Project eligibility
- Definitions
- Program utilization
- Alignment with other programs

Consider New Concepts

- Micromobility
- Paratransit
- Specialized Transportation

Cohorting Scenarios

Full Cohorting Conceptual Process



Feedback Received: Revenue Cohorting

- General consensus that revenue cohorting is a step in the right direction (i.e. moving away from the current “one size fits all” approach)
- Interest in exploring alternative methods for cohorting revenues, such as cohorting by mode, size of the agency, or service characteristics
- Proposed cohorts (rural, small urban, and large urban) include outlier agencies that have different service models and operational contexts.
- Predictability and stability continue to be a primary concern among transit agencies and stakeholders.

Policy Decision #1a: How do we define cohorts?

Key Considerations:

- The purpose of cohorting is to identify natural groupings where the Commonwealth can and should set customized goals and metrics.
- There will always be outliers, regardless of how cohorts are defined.
- Data availability limits our options for defining cohorts (i.e. operating cost by mode).
- DRPT provides operating funds in other programs, as well (i.e. FTA 5311), thus we need to be mindful of potential impacts to those programs
- Leveraging pre-defined industry cohorts could offer a simple and objective method for defining the Commonwealth's cohorts.

Agency Designations by FTA Urban/Rural Area

*Serves Urban Areas with
Populations Over 200K*

Large Urban (LU) (10)

- Alexandria DASH
- ART
- FFX Connector
- Fairfax CUE
- LC Transit
- GRTC
- HRT
- PAT
- Valley Metro
- PRTC/OmniRide

*Serves Urban Areas with Populations
Between 50K and 200K*

Small Urban (SU) (9)

- WinTran
- FXBGO
- Bristol Transit
- Blacksburg Transit
- CAT
- HDPT
- WATA
- GLTC
- BRITE*

*Serves Areas with Populations Less
than 50K*

Rural (19)

- Chincoteague
- GET
- BABS
- Lake Country
- Farmville
- Alta Vista
- DTS
- Pulaski
- Four County
- MET Go
- Bluefield
- RADAR
- STAR
- VRT
- Jaunt
- Suffolk
- Radford
- Bay Transit
- District III*

Notes:

- BRITE and District III serve multiple areas*
- Cohort designations are based on the area served not the size of the agency

DRPT Recommendation: Policy Decision #1a

- DRPT recommends defining cohorts as follows:
 - Rural
 - Small Urban (SU)
 - Large Urban (LU)
- Each transit agency in Virginia would be placed in one of these cohorts, consistent with FTA guidelines.
- For agencies that serve multiple areas, DRPT recommends using the predominant area served by the agency.
- Additionally, DRPT recommends revisiting the list of agencies by cohort every 3-years or following a decennial census, whichever comes first.

Policy Decision #1b: How do we split total available MERIT Operating revenues among each cohort?

Key Considerations:

- Percentages can be defined in CTB policy that split total available revenues among cohorts in an effort to provide more stability and predictability. Defining these percentages in policy, rather than adjusting year-over-year, would also simplify the formula.
- Identification of cohort percentages does not need to be based on a single factor but could be based on a set of factors and their associated trends.
- Future reviews can consider additional factors such as cost-of living, service expansion, local revenue generation, population/jobs expansion, etc.

Historical Data by Cohort

Proportional Share of Allocations/Metrics by Cohort

SYIP
Year →

	Allocations				Sizing Metric				Operating Cost				Ridership				Revenue Hours				Revenue Miles			
	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25
Rural	8%	7%	6%	6%	7%	7%	7%	6%	8%	7%	7%	6%	4%	4%	3%	3%	11%	11%	11%	10%	13%	14%	13%	12%
Small Urban	10%	11%	13%	12%	14%	13%	13%	14%	10%	10%	11%	11%	22%	19%	19%	19%	12%	12%	12%	12%	11%	11%	11%	11%
Large Urban	82%	81%	81%	82%	79%	80%	80%	80%	82%	82%	83%	83%	75%	77%	78%	78%	77%	77%	77%	78%	76%	76%	76%	77%

Notes:

- May not add up to 100% due to rounding
- SYIP data is on a 2-year lag (i.e. Operating Cost data for the FY27 SYIP comes from FY25)

DRPT Recommendation: Policy Decision #1b

- DRPT recommends the following distribution of revenues among cohorts:
 - Rural: 8%
 - Small Urban: 12%
 - Large Urban: 80%
- In an effort to enhance predictability and simplify the formula, DRPT recommends locking in these revenue distribution percentages in CTB policy, to be revisited at least every 3 years

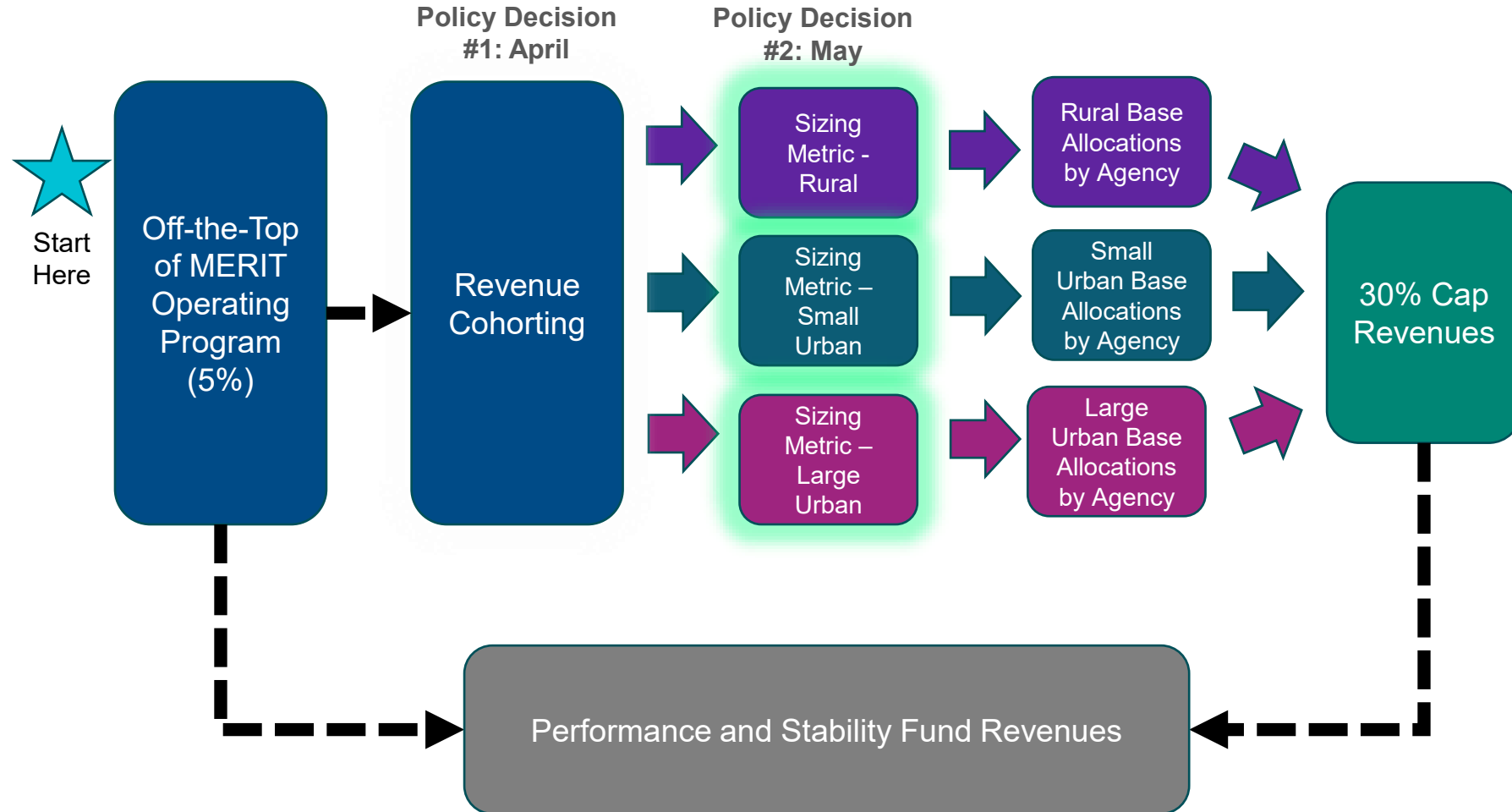
Recap of DRPT Policy Recommendations

#	Policy Recommendations	Status
0	Add new subcategories to MERIT Capital and develop new scoring methodology for MAJ-SGR	✓
0	Remove 5 vehicle or 5% fleet threshold for MAJ projects in MERIT Capital policy and score all vehicle expansion projects as MIN	✓
0	Remove underutilized incentive categories and add good grants management incentive category in MERIT Capital policy	✓
1a	Cohorts will be defined as Rural, Small Urban, and Large Urban. The list of agencies by cohort will be revisited every 3 years or following a decennial census, whichever comes first.	
1b	Total MERIT Operating revenues will be apportioned as follows: Rural (8%), Small Urban (12%), Large Urban (80%). These apportionment percentages will be reviewed at least every 3 years.	
2a		
2b		
2c		

Discussion

Cohorting Scenarios

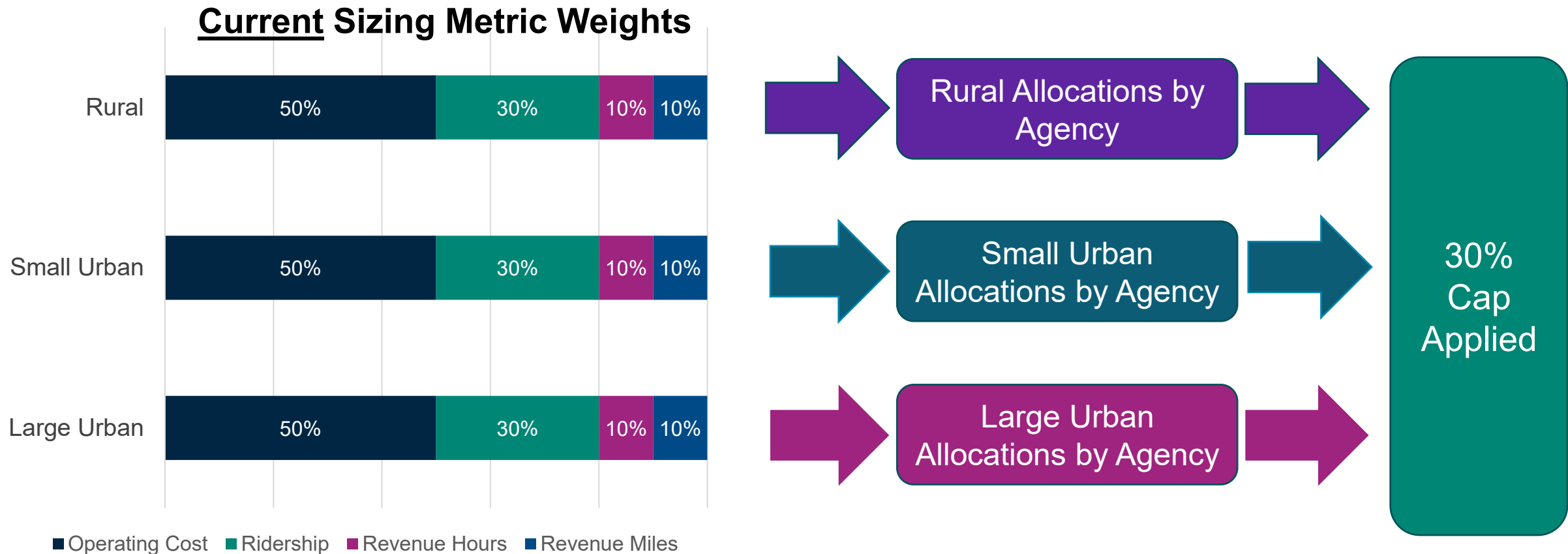
Full Cohorting Conceptual Process



Policy Decision #3: June

Policy Decision #2: Define Sizing Metrics Within Each Cohort

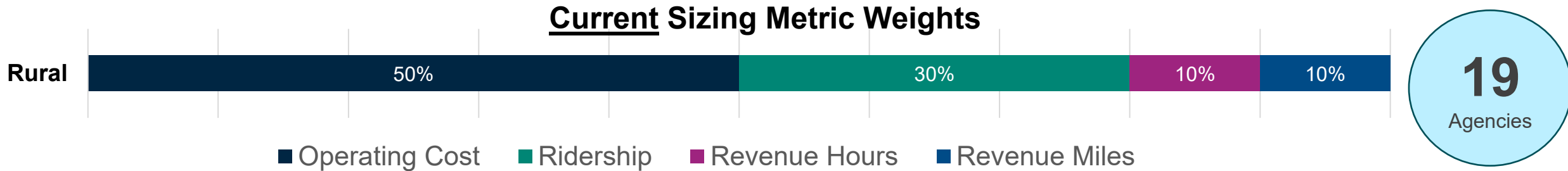
- In this Step, unique sizing metrics will be applied to each cohort. These metrics and the associated agency-level data will be applied to the available revenues within the cohort to determine base agency allocations.



Rural Cohort: Key Observations

- Rural agencies tend to have low operating costs and travel long distances for service delivery.
- Maximizing ridership is not always a top priority for these agencies but rather getting individuals to medical appointments and other essential services is most critical.
- The ability to enhance service efficiency metrics is limited.
- DRPT acts as the designated recipient of Section 5311 funding for these agencies (i.e. federal operating assistance to each rural agency is administered by DRPT).
- Modes of service operated include fixed route, demand-response/paratransit, and commuter bus.

Rural Cohort: Questions to Consider

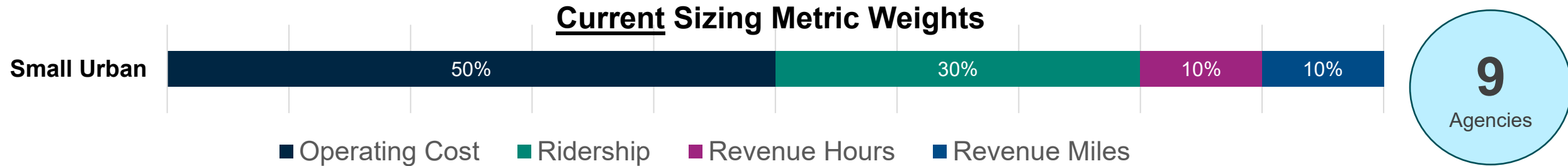


- What should be the sizing weights for rural public transit?
- Do we want to keep all four (4) sizing metrics (Cost, Ridership, Revenue Miles and Revenue Hours)?
- Should we reduce the weight of Ridership in favor of service delivery metrics such as Revenue Hours and Revenue Miles?
- Should Cost remain the driving metric for sizing in this cohort?

Small Urban (SU) Cohort: Key Observations

- Small urban transit agencies have a wide variety of service models and characteristics.
- Some agencies serve large Universities and thus have high performance metrics while others tend to be more rural in nature with longer trips and relatively low ridership.
- This cohort has a broad range of different communities and service models.
 - Two (2) agencies are unionized
 - One (1) agency is a full turnkey operation (operations and maintenance are contracted)
 - One (1) agency has less annual ridership than the average rural agency
- FTA provides financial incentives to agencies in this cohort that meet any of their six (6) service efficiency/productivity measures (i.e. STIC funding).
- Modes of service operated include fixed route, demand-response/paratransit, and commuter bus.

Small Urban (SU) Cohort: Questions to Consider

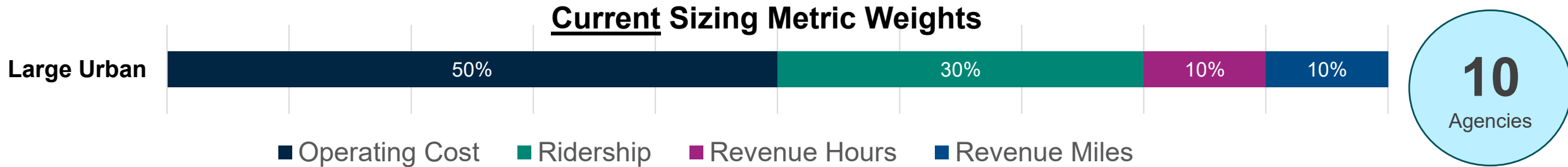


- What should be the sizing weights for small urban public transit?
- What emphasis should we place on the Cost metric given that there are a wide variety of service models (unionized, turnkey, etc.)? Should cost of living be considered?
- Roughly half of the transit agencies in this cohort serve large universities and thus have greater ridership opportunities than the other agencies. How do we consider that in the weighting?
- Are current metric weights appropriate?

Large Urban (LU) Cohort: Key Observations

- Large urban transit agencies operate in areas with high populations, jobs, and congestion.
- Generally, agencies in this cohort have more opportunities to influence ridership increases through schedule and route changes.
- These agencies tend to have high ridership, cost, revenue hours and revenue miles.
- Most agencies in this cohort have access to regional funding sources.
- Multiple agencies in this cohort are unionized.
- Modes of service operated in this cohort include fixed route, demand-response/paratransit, commuter bus, bus rapid transit (BRT), light rail, and ferry.

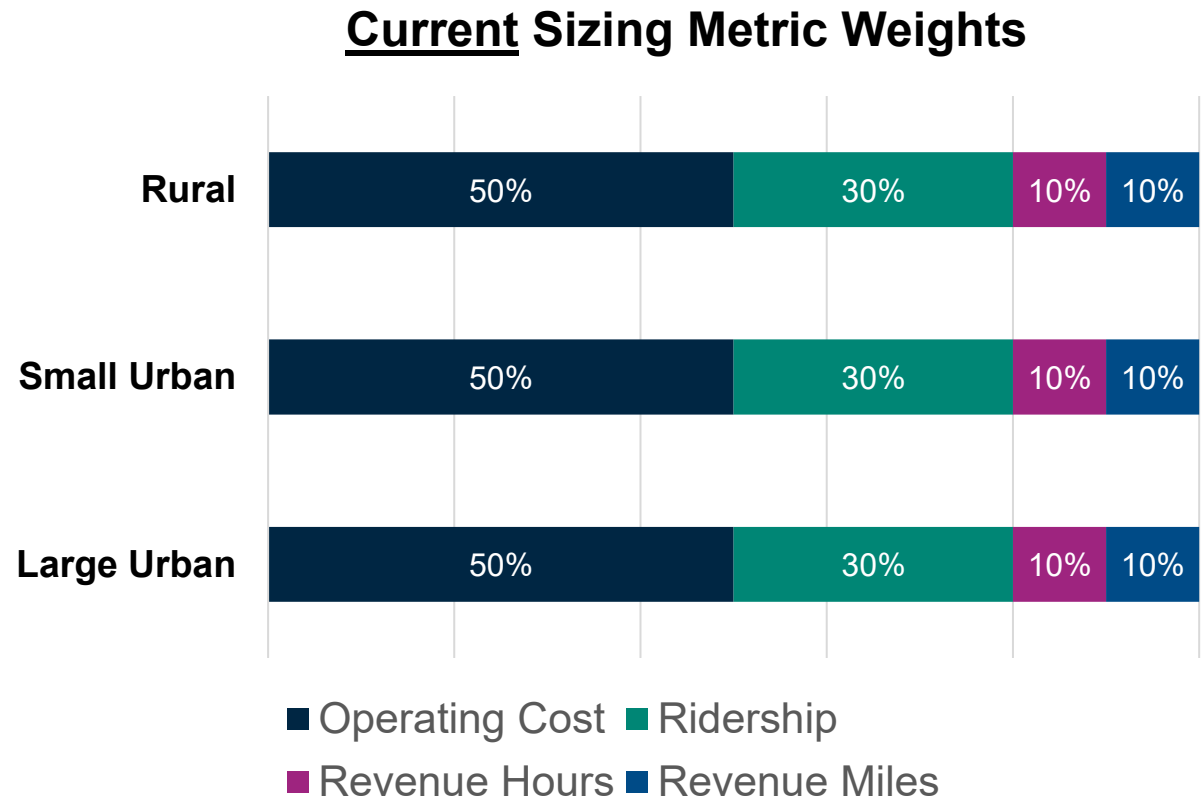
Large Urban (LU) Cohort: Questions to Consider



- What should be the sizing weights for large urban public transit?
- How do we incorporate the variety of modes provided in this cohort given that some (ex: commuter bus) have high miles while others (ex: light rail) have low miles but a much higher cost?
- Should ridership be more heavily emphasized given the higher population, jobs, and congestion levels? If so, would we want to decrease the weight of service output metrics (revenue hours and miles) or operating cost, which can be used as a proxy for changes in cost of living and collective bargaining agreements.

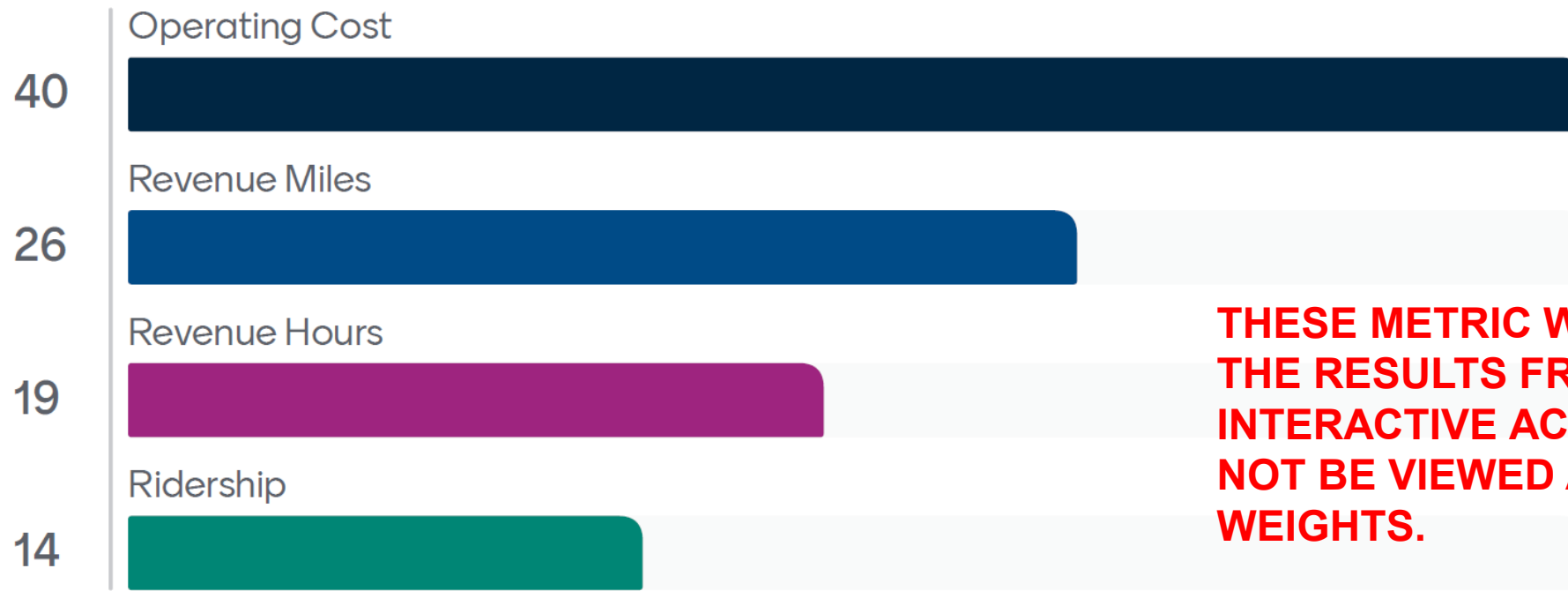
ACTIVITY: Define Sizing Metrics Within Each Cohort

- Taking into account all of these considerations, as well as the data provided in the handouts, please take a few minutes to develop what you would recommend as the metric weights by cohort.
- Key Question: What should the weights be for **Operating Cost**, **Ridership**, **Revenue Hours**, and **Revenue Miles** for each cohort?
- Staff will collect your responses and average them. Responses will be anonymous.



ACTIVITY: Define Sizing Metrics Within Each Cohort

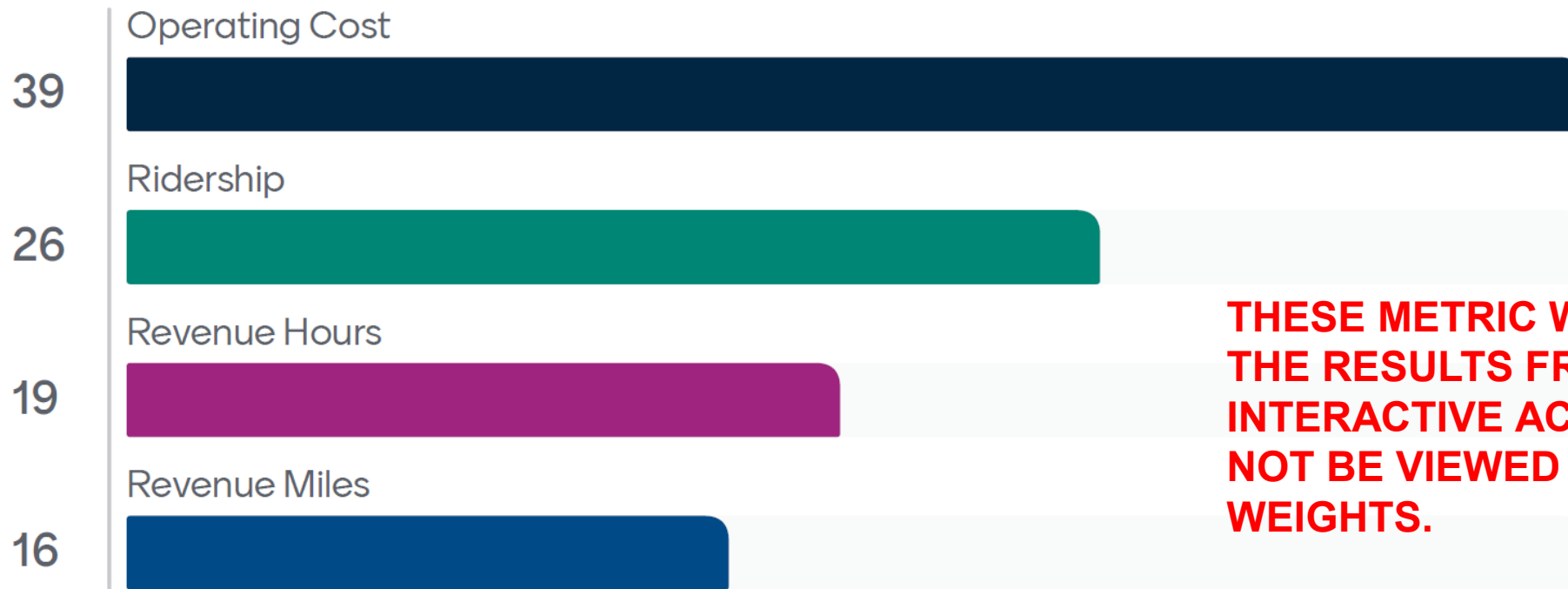
ACTIVITY: Define Sizing Metrics for Rural Cohort



THESE METRIC WEIGHTS REPRESENT THE RESULTS FROM OUR LIVE INTERACTIVE ACTIVITY. THEY SHOULD NOT BE VIEWED AS PROPOSED WEIGHTS.

ACTIVITY: Define Sizing Metrics Within Each Cohort

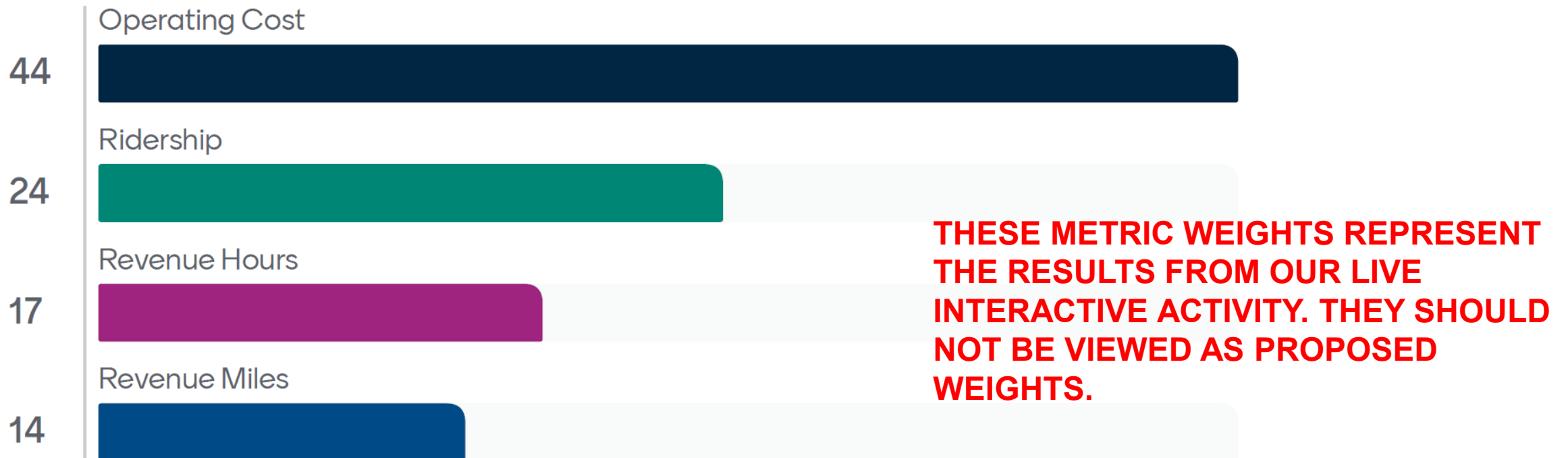
ACTIVITY: Define Sizing Metrics for Small Urban (SU) Cohort



THESE METRIC WEIGHTS REPRESENT THE RESULTS FROM OUR LIVE INTERACTIVE ACTIVITY. THEY SHOULD NOT BE VIEWED AS PROPOSED WEIGHTS.

ACTIVITY: Define Sizing Metrics Within Each Cohort

ACTIVITY: Define Sizing Metrics for Large Urban (LU) Cohort



Cohort Workshops Preview

Beginning in April, DRPT staff will organize virtual cohort workshops with the agencies in those cohorts to share data and solicit feedback on sizing metric weights

Draft Agenda:

- Overview of the Cohort
- Key Considerations and Questions
- Data Analysis Review
- Activity
- Policy Decision #3 Preview: Performance & Stability Fund
- Q&A
- Next Steps

Cohort Workshops Dates

Large Urban (Roanoke – Richmond - Hampton Roads)

- Thursday, April 23rd at 10AM

Large Urban (Northern Virginia)

- Thursday, April 23rd at 3PM

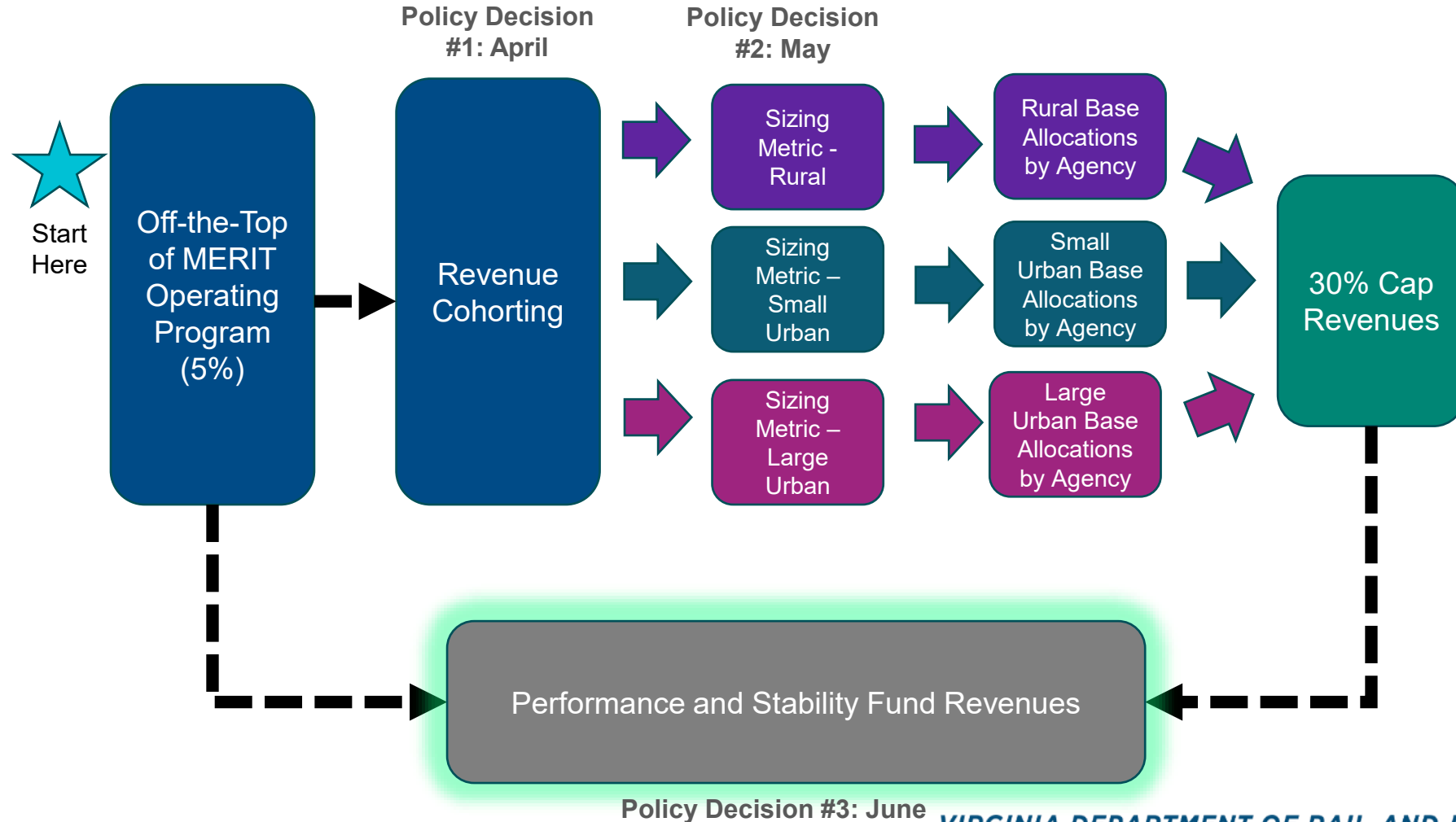
Small Urban

- Tuesday, April 28th at 10AM

Rural

- Tuesday, April 28th at 11AM

Full Cohorting Conceptual Process



Policy Decision #3: Defining Performance and Stability Fund

- Funding provided from Policy Decisions #1 and #2 will offer a base allocation for each agency.
- Policy Decision #3 will develop a “Performance and Stability Fund” that will help address concerns about funding predictability, while also rewarding agencies for good performance.

Key Consideration:

- There is an opportunity to follow FTA’s established model for rewarding small urban agencies in their 5307 apportionments (i.e. [STIC funding](#))

Discussion

Next Steps

Next Steps

Action Items for TSDAC Members:

Meet with agencies/partners you represent to get feedback on what was discussed at today's meeting and prepare to help DRPT answer the following questions at the next meeting:

TRIP

1. *How does TRIP support your agency's goals? Does existing guidance promote or discourage these?*
2. *How should DRPT define the new concepts presented in HB 200 (TRIP)? What are examples of projects that could be funded under these?*

MERIT

1. *How should DRPT reflect goals in the sizing metrics for each cohort?*

Rural Questions:

- *Do we want to keep all four (4) sizing metrics (Cost, Ridership, Revenue Miles and Revenue Hours)?*
- *Should we reduce the weight of Ridership in favor of service delivery metrics such as Revenue Hours and Revenue Miles?*
- *Should Cost remain the driving metric for sizing?*

Next Steps (continued)

Small Urban Questions:

- *How do we balance metric weights in a cohort that has two distinct groups of agencies: agencies with very high metrics and agencies with relatively low metrics?*
- *What emphasis should we place on the Cost metric given that there are a wide variety of service models (unionized, turnkey, university service, etc.)? How should cost of living be considered?*
- *Should service output metrics (hours and miles) be weighted more heavily?*

Large Urban Questions:

- *How do we incorporate the wide variety of modes provided in this cohort given that some (ex: commuter bus) have high miles while others (ex: light rail) have low miles but a much higher cost?*
 - *Should ridership be more heavily emphasized given the higher population, jobs, and congestion levels? If so, would we want to decrease the weight of service output metrics (revenue hours and miles) or operating cost, which can be used as a proxy for changes in cost of living and collective bargaining agreements*
- Send DRPT list of questions prior to May meeting no later than April 24th

Action Items for DRPT:

- Develop and schedule cohort workshops (virtual)

Wrap Up