

10 Years of Commuter Choice

Lessons Learned from a Decade of Investing Toll
Revenues into Transit Projects in Northern Virginia



Introductions



Daniel Knickelbein
*Commuter Choice
Program Manager
NVTC*



Ann McGrane
*Director of Programs
and Policy
NVTC*



Perrin Palistrant
*Director of Planning
and Service Delivery
OmniRide*

About the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission



Funds and stewards NoVa's investments in WMATA (Metrorail, Metrobus, MetroAccess) and Virginia Railway Express



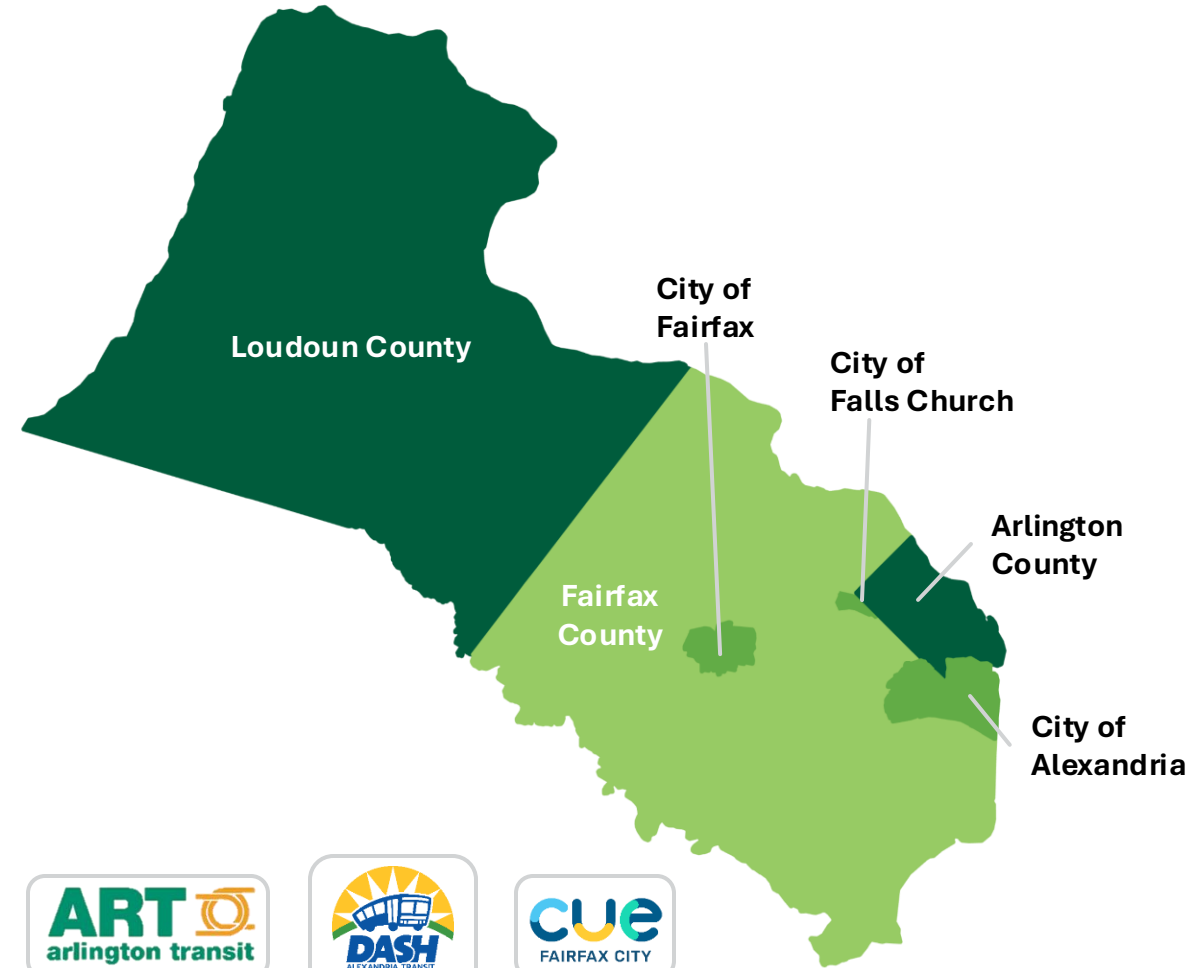
Manages state and regional funding for five jurisdictional bus systems



Works across jurisdictional boundaries to develop regional public transit strategies and policies



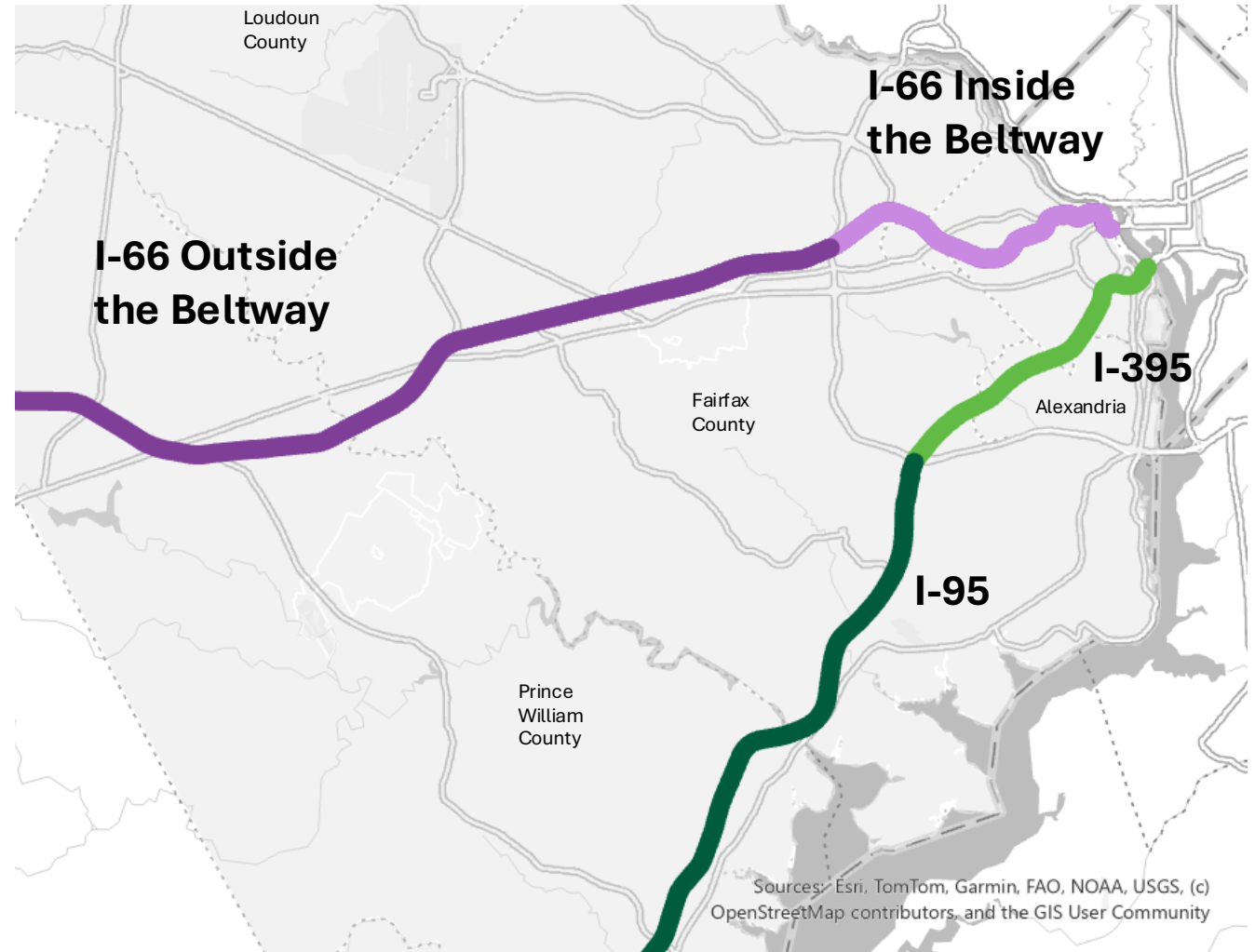
Administers Commuter Choice (I-66 and I-395/95)



About NVTC's Commuter Choice Program

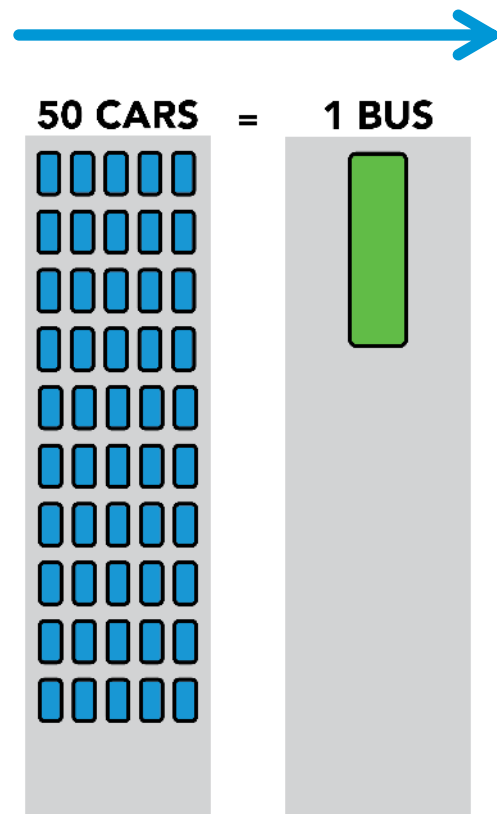


- Partnership between the Commonwealth and NVTC since 2016
- Data-driven competitive grant program
- Serves I-66 and I-95 corridors
- Invests toll revenues into transit, ITS and TDM projects
- Focuses on moving people
- Two-year funding cycle



Express Lanes + Transit = A Perfect Combination

Benefits of Express Lanes



- Improved traffic flow and travel times
- Predictable and reliable travel
- Congestion relief and spillover reduction
- Improved safety by reducing conflict points

Add Transit

Transit options mean **more** people can move with **fewer** vehicles

- Reduce traffic in general purpose lanes AND express lanes
- Improve travel times
- Support reliable travel
- Improve safety
- Lower tolls



A Regional Program with State and Local Partners

State Government
Approval & Disbursement





VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF RAIL AND PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Transportation Commissions
Policy & Oversight




POTOMAC & RAPPAHANNOCK
TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
*I-395/95 corridor only

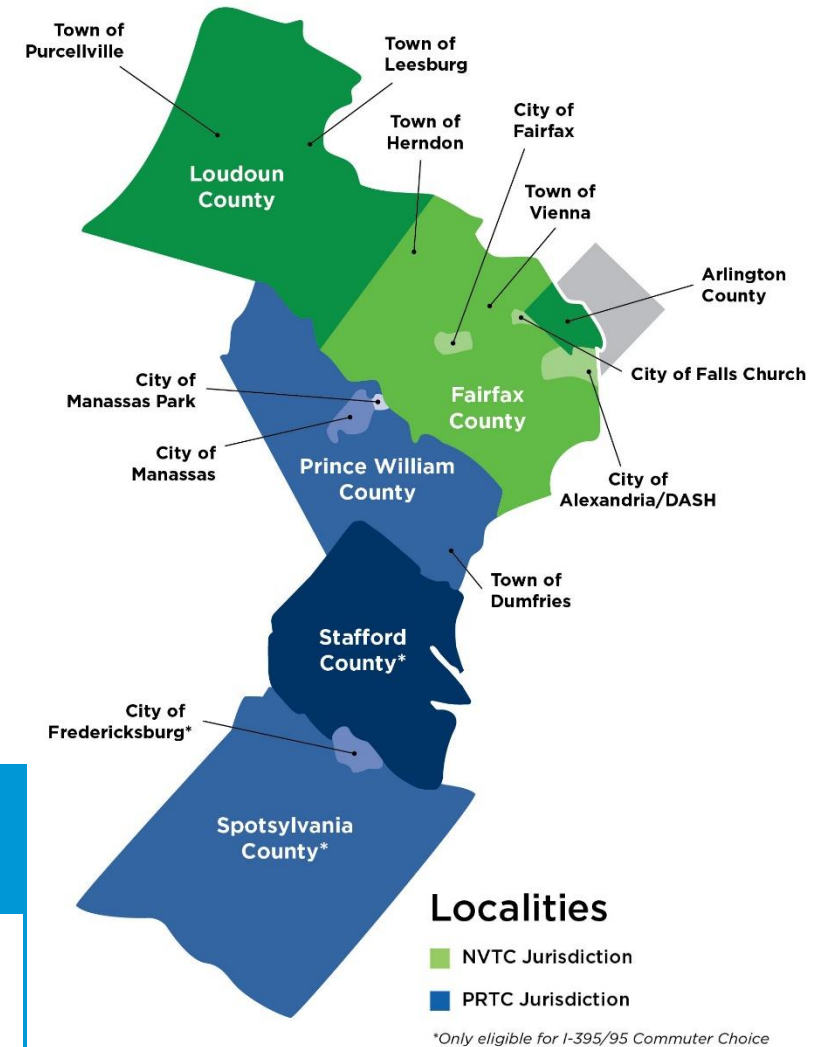
Local Jurisdictions & Transit Operators
Implementation & Reporting











Criteria and Eligibility Defined Through MOA

Eligible Project Types



Bus or Rail Service



Bus or Rail Capital Projects



Roadway Improvements



Access to Transit (bike/ped)



Transportation Demand Management (TDM)
(fare buy-down, customer outreach, etc.)



Quick Project Delivery

Funds must be obligated **within two years** of allocation and fully expended **within five years** of allocation.



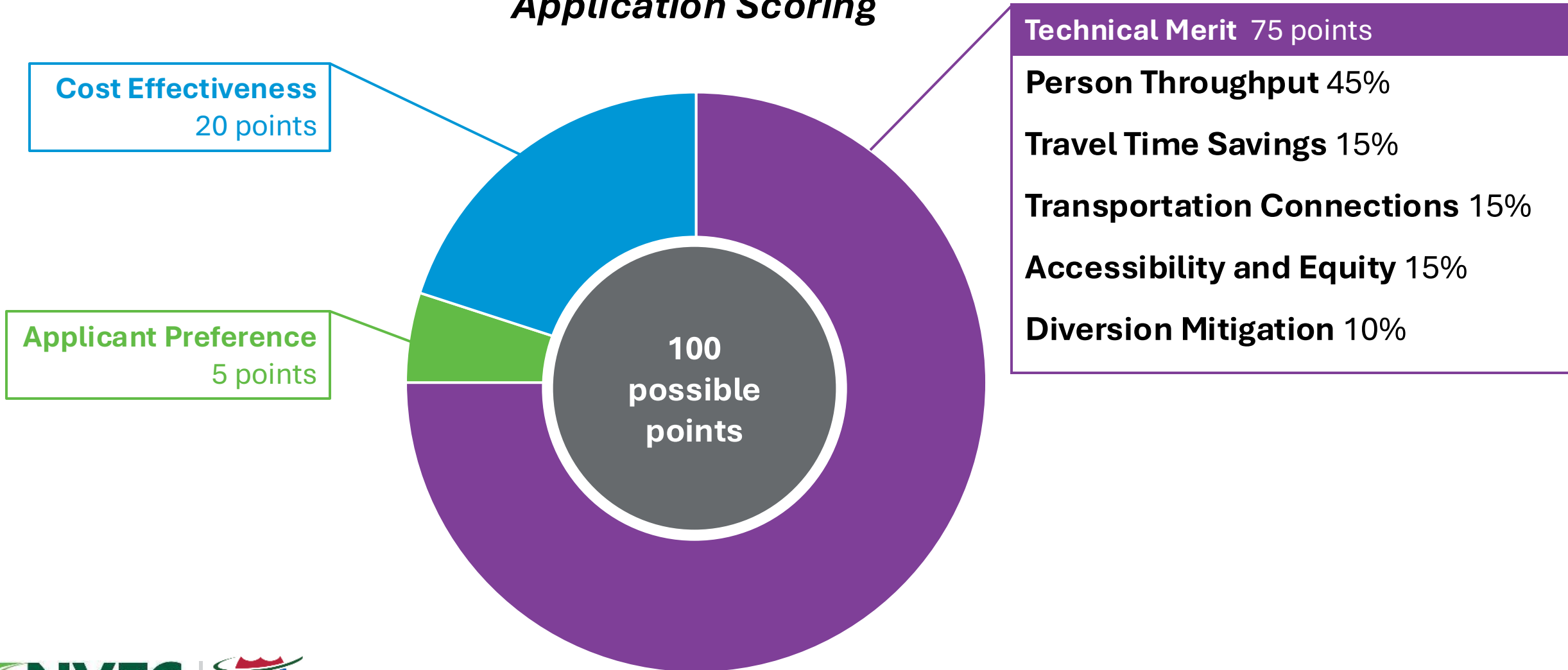
Project Requirements

Projects must meet **at least one of four** improvement goals outlined in the Memorandum of Agreement:

- ✓ **Maximize Person Throughput**
- ✓ **Improve Mobility**
- ✓ **Support New, Diverse Travel Choices**
- ✓ **Enhance Transportation Safety and Travel Reliability**

A Competitive, Data-Driven Evaluation Process

Application Scoring



Results: Strategic Investments to Help Move the Region

\$212M in capital and operations funding to support travelers along I-66 and I-395/95 Express Lanes

 **15** 

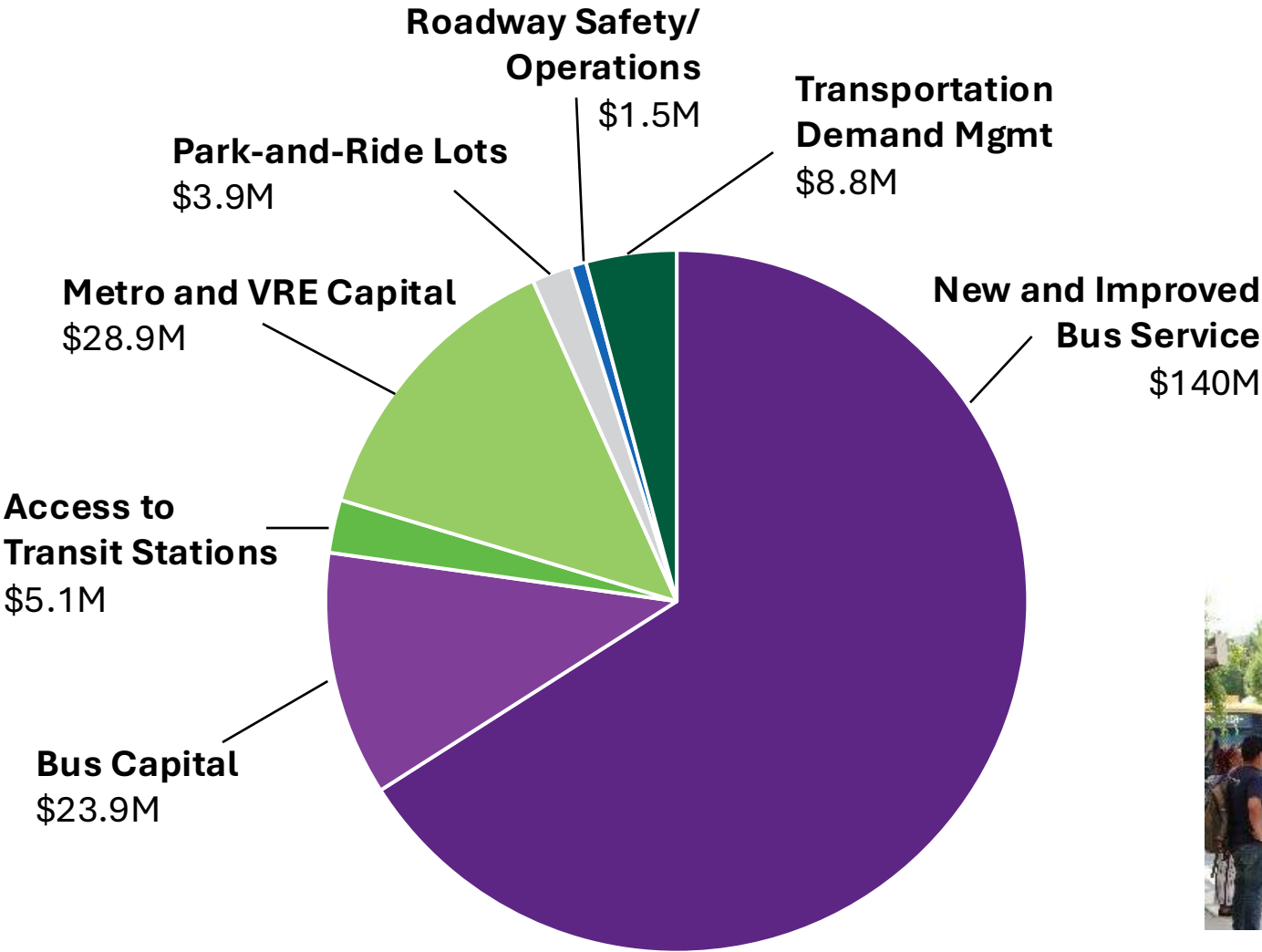
agencies, cities or counties

 **72** 

unique projects



Results: Projects that Meet Unique Needs of Communities



Results: 10 Years of Commuter Choice Impact

- ✓ Improve Commutes
- ✓ Enhance Mobility
- ✓ Improve Quality of Life

Saved
\$25.9M
fuel cost for Virginians

Avoided
293
automobile crashes

Moved more than
10.5M
People along I-66 and I-395/95

Reduced
1.9M
hours of travel delay

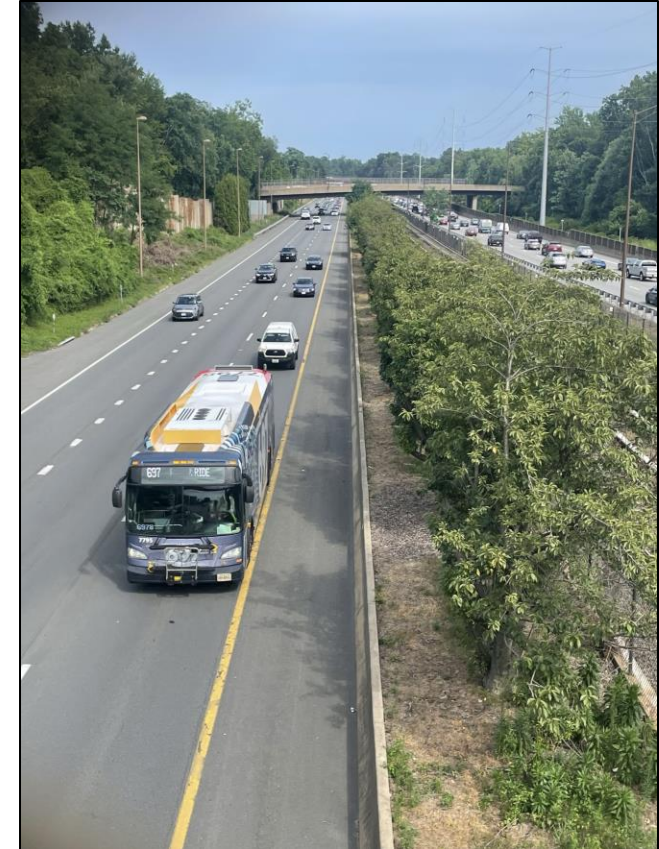
Equating to
\$67.7M
in regional economic benefit



OmniRide and Fairfax Connector routes traveling on I-66 Outside the Beltway **saved up to 15 minutes per trip** once the Express Lanes opened in 2022

Lessons Learned: Significant Demand for Transit Operating Assistance

- Over \$140 million invested in new or enhanced bus service across 34 different routes since 2016
- 24 routes sought a least one round of renewal funding for continued operations
- High demand for long haul commuter bus routes - 17 different commuter bus routes from OmniRide, Fairfax Connector and Loudoun County Transit have received funding



Lessons Learned: Not All Project Types Have the Same Impact on **Person Throughput**

- As part of reporting requirements, each project provides data on additional persons moved
- New and improved bus service and capital projects have performed better than access to transit and TDM projects
- Several rail capital projects recently completed – others are underway



Lessons Learned: Keeping Application Requirements and Evaluation Criteria **Simple** is Key

- Local governments have numerous federal, state and local grant programs that they can seek funding from, all with different application requirements and scoring metrics
- Overly burdensome applications can dissuade local governments from pursuing funding opportunities
- Quarterly and annual reporting requirements are important, but should be straightforward and understandable



Lessons Learned: Engagement with Grantees Prior to the Call for Projects Leads to Better Applications

- Vetting potential applications before the application period opens helps save time and resources for applicants
- Local governments and agencies often seek grants from a variety of sources, a pre-application meeting provides a refresher on program requirements and eligibility
- Grantor review of local and regional plans and studies can prompt discussion on helping accomplish grantee goals



Lessons Learned: Having Commissioner Champions Leads to Better Outcomes

- Elected officials who see value in the program encourage applications from their jurisdiction that fit program goals
- An engaged and supportive Commission allows the program to make funding decisions that support the best performing applications regardless of jurisdiction
- Engaged Commissioners help ‘sell’ the program to the public and stakeholders



Lessons Learned: Each Corridor Presents Unique Opportunities and Challenges

- Toll hours on I-395/95 allow Commuter Choice to think beyond the traditional 9 to 5 M-F commute
 - DASH Line 35 – 119% ridership increase
 - DASH Line 36 – 155% ridership increase
- Travel and funding demand recovered more slowly on I-66 post-pandemic allowing for strategic corridor planning with DRPT
- Both corridors are experiencing growing demand for long-haul commuter bus service



OmniRide Commuter Choice Services

- Operate on I-66 and I-95 corridors
- Four fully funded routes
- Three routes w/ frequency enhancements
- First service to Stafford County
- Connectivity to Arlington, downtown DC, Metrorail, VRE, OmniRide local/commuter routes, and regional buses
- New Buses



Successful Benefits to the Community

	FY24 Ridership	FY25 Ridership	
RT52-Route 1 Local	22,308	26,716	Peak Frequency Increase
RT95 Prince William Metro Express	25,994	36,587	Peak Frequency Increase
RT972-Dale City To Pentagon-Rosslyn-Ballston	15,083	21,531	Peak Frequency Increase
RT942 Stafford to Pentagon	61,359	79,402	
RT943 Stafford to Washington, D.C.	60,967	56,527	
RT612 Gainesville-Pentagon-Navy Yard	104,554	121,554	
RT622 Haymarket to Rosslyn-Ballston	25,814	39,343	
	316,079	381,660	

Celebrating Accomplishments



Questions?

