Richmond Highway Bus Rapid Transit Project
Fairfax, Virginia
New Starts Engineering
Information Prepared May 2024

The information reflected in this profile was based on the information provided by the Fairfax County Department of Transportation (FCDOT) with its Engineering request submitted to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) in March 2024. The Engineering approval letter notified FCDOT that the maximum amount of Capital Investment Grants (CIG) funding FTA will provide to the project should a Full Funding Grant Agreement (FFGA) be awarded is $346,707,411 (37 percent) rather than the amount requested and shown in the rating information below.

Summary Description	
Proposed Project:	Bus Rapid Transit 7.4 Miles, 9 Stations
Total Capital Cost ($YOE):	$937.05 Million
Section 5309 CIG Share ($YOE):	$459.15 Million (49.0%) requested
Annual Operating Cost (opening year 2031):	$9.33 Million
Current Year Ridership Forecast (2019):	6,500 Daily Linked Trips 2,021,800 Annual Linked Trips
Horizon Year Ridership Forecast (2040):	17,400 Daily Linked Trips 5,385,600 Annual Linked Trips
Overall Project Rating:	Medium-High
Project Justification Rating:	Medium
Local Financial Commitment Rating:	Medium-High

Project Description: The Fairfax County Department of Transportation (FCDOT) proposes to implement a new bus rapid transit (BRT) line on the Richmond Highway (US 1) corridor, from the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority's (WMATA) end Yellow Line Huntington Station, to Ft. Belvoir, a major US Army installation, with more than 90 percent of that length in dedicated transit lanes. The proposed project also includes nine branded stations, a dedicated fleet of 21 new, 60-foot articulated electric buses with level boarding, roadway widening, upgrades to existing sidewalks and construction of new sidewalks, and bicycle facilities. Service is planned to operate from 5:00 AM to 12:00 AM during weekdays, every six minutes during peak periods, and then every 12 minutes for the rest of the day. On weekends, from 7:00 AM to 3:00 AM, service is planned to operate every 20 minutes.

Project Purpose: The existing transit service in the corridor is slow and unreliable due to congestion and the lack of dedicated right-of-way, particularly during peak hours. Existing transit, including the limited stop express service, is disadvantaged by heavy traffic conditions yet despite this, the Richmond Highway is one of the highest bus transit ridership corridors in the County. The corridor has a high concentration of lower income households as compared with other areas of the County, and there is a high proportion of market-rate affordable housing. The project is intended to provide highly reliable, fast and frequent, direct transit service with enhanced amenities, linking neighborhoods to key regional activity centers and other transportation options. It also is expected to reduce congestion, improve air quality, and support the region's land use vision and growth plans.

Project Development History, Status and Next Steps: FCDOT selected the locally preferred alternative (LPA) in May 2015. The LPA was adopted in the region's fiscally constrained long-range transportation plan in October 2018. The project entered New Starts Project Development in March 2020 and completed the environmental review process with a Documented Categorical Exclusion in January 2022. FCDOT anticipates receipt of a construction grant in late 2026, and the start of revenue service in 2031.

Locally Proposed Financial Plan		
Source of Funds	**Total Funds ($million)**	**Percent of Total**
Federal:		
Section 5309 CIG Funds	$459.15	49.0%
FHWA Flexible Funds (Surface Transportation Block Grant)	$40.58	4.3%
FHWA Flexible Funds (Congestion, Mitigation, and Air Quality Program)	$22.78	2.4%
State:		
Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) Smart Scale Funds	$50.00	5.3%
VDOT Six-Year Improvement Program (State RSTP Match Funds)	$10.14	1.1%
VDOT Six-Year Improvement Program (State CMAQ Match Funds)	$5.35	0.6%
Local:		
Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA) - Regional 70% 2018-2023 Program	$242.10	25.8%
NVTA - Regional 70% 2022-2027 Program	$80.00	8.5%
NVTA - Regional 30% tax	$26.95	2.9%
Total:	**$937.05**	**100.0%**

NOTE: The financial plan reflected in this table has been developed by the project sponsor and does not reflect a commitment by DOT or FTA. The sum of the figures may differ from the total as listed due to rounding.

VA, Fairfax County, Richmond Highway Bus Rapid Transit
(Rating Assigned March 2024)

Factor	Rating	Comments
Local Financial Commitment Rating	**Medium-High**	
Non-Section 5309 CIG Share	**+1 level**	• The CIG share of the project is 49.0 percent.
Summary Financial Plan Rating	**Medium**	
Current Capital and Operating Condition (25% of local financial commitment rating)	Medium-High	• The average age of the bus fleet is 9.7 years, which is older than the industry average. • The most recent bond ratings for Fairfax County, issued in 2022 are as follows: Moody's Investors Service Aaa, S&P AAA, and Fitch's AAA. • Fairfax County's current ratio of assets to liabilities as reported in its most recent audited financial statement is 1.8 (FY2022). • There have been no cash flow shortfalls in recent years. • There have been no service cutbacks in recent history.
Commitment of Capital and Operating Funds (25% of local financial commitment rating)	Medium-High	• Approximately 78 percent of the non-Section 5309 CIG capital funds are committed or budgeted, and the rest are considered planned. Sources of funds include the Department of Transportation's Congestion Management and Air Quality Improvement program (CMAQ), the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority's (NVTA) Regional Surface Transportation Program (RSTP), Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) Smart Scale Funds, VDOT Six-Year Improvement RSTP funds, VDOT Six-Year Improvement CMAQ funds, and NVTA regional funding generated from regional transportation fees, hotel and real estate taxes. • Approximately 23 percent of the funds needed to operate and maintain the transit system in the first full year of operation are committed or budgeted, and the rest are considered planned. Sources of funds include Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC) state aid, State of Virginia I-66 managed lane toll revenue, farebox revenues, bus advertising, and annual transfers and reimbursements from both the Fairfax County General Fund (used to balance the project's operations annually) and the Fairfax County Transit Systems Fund.

Factor	Rating	Comments
Reasonableness of Capital and Operating Cost Estimates and Planning Assumptions/Capital Funding Capacity (50% of local financial commitment rating)	Medium-Low	• Assumed growth in capital revenues is optimistic compared to recent historical experience for the anticipated Interstate-66 Toll funding. The revenue forecasted for the Department of Transportation CMAQ, State of Virginia Matching funds for CMAQ, RSTP, and Smart Scale Funds are considered reasonable compared to historical experience. The Regional programs funded by NVTA are considered conservative compared to historical experience. • The capital cost estimate is reasonable. • Growth in operating revenue assumptions compared to recent historical experience for farebox collections and bus advertising revenues are conservative. Assumed growth in Fairfax County General Fund transfers and reimbursements from Fairfax County Transit Systems Fund are reasonable compared to historical experience. Future revenue from the North County Bus Service and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) are optimistic compared to historical experience. • Operating cost estimates are optimistic compared to recent historical experience. • Fairfax County has access to funds via additional debt capacity, cash reserves, or other committed funds to cover unexpected cost increases or funding shortfalls equal to at least 35.0 percent of the estimated CIG capital cost and 134.9 percent of annual system wide operating expenses or 16.2 months of operations.

Richmond Highway Bus Rapid Transit

Fairfax County, Virginia
New Starts Project Development
(Rating Assigned February 2024)

LAND USE RATING: Medium

The land use rating reflects population density within one-half mile of proposed stations, employment served by the line, and the share of legally binding affordability restricted (LBAR) housing in the station areas compared to the share in the surrounding county.

- The project's station areas have an average population density of 6,700 persons per square mile, which corresponds to a "Medium" rating. An estimated 20,400 jobs would be served by the project, corresponding to a "Low" rating. The ratio of the affordable housing in the corridor to the affordable housing in the county is 4.79, which corresponds to a "High" rating.
- The corridor has nine station areas and includes suburban and urban land use. Most of the corridor is flanked by commercial department stores and strip malls with residential neighborhoods. Pedestrian facilities are present but inconsistent within the project corridor.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RATING: Medium

Transit-Supportive Plans and Policies: Medium

- *Growth Management:* Strategic and comprehensive plans support concentrating new and infill development around regional activity centers and transit corridors. However, there are not many details on how these policies are implemented besides the ability to designate land as agricultural, open space, or historic.
- *Transit-Supportive Corridor Policies:* The *Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan* supports concentrating new and infill development around regional activity centers and transit corridors. Some of the objectives encourage density and mixed-use developments throughout the corridor. No neighborhood plans were provided. Parking policies are moderately transit-supportive with opportunities to reduce or parking minimums near transit stations.
- *Supportive Zoning Near Transit Stations:* Zoning density is varied and ranges from one to 40 dwelling units per acre. Pedestrian-oriented design requirements are limited. Parking requirements are reduced within a quarter mile of transit stations.
- *Tools to Implement Land Use Policies:* While public outreach was described, it does not clearly relate to land use planning in the station areas. The Economic Incentives Program (EIP) provides development incentives in commercial areas that include reductions of site plan fees and partial tax abatements. Density bonuses are offered for the provision of affordable housing. Developers are offered proffered incentives and remedy funds for establishing a Transportation Demand Management program.

Performance and Impacts of Policies: Medium

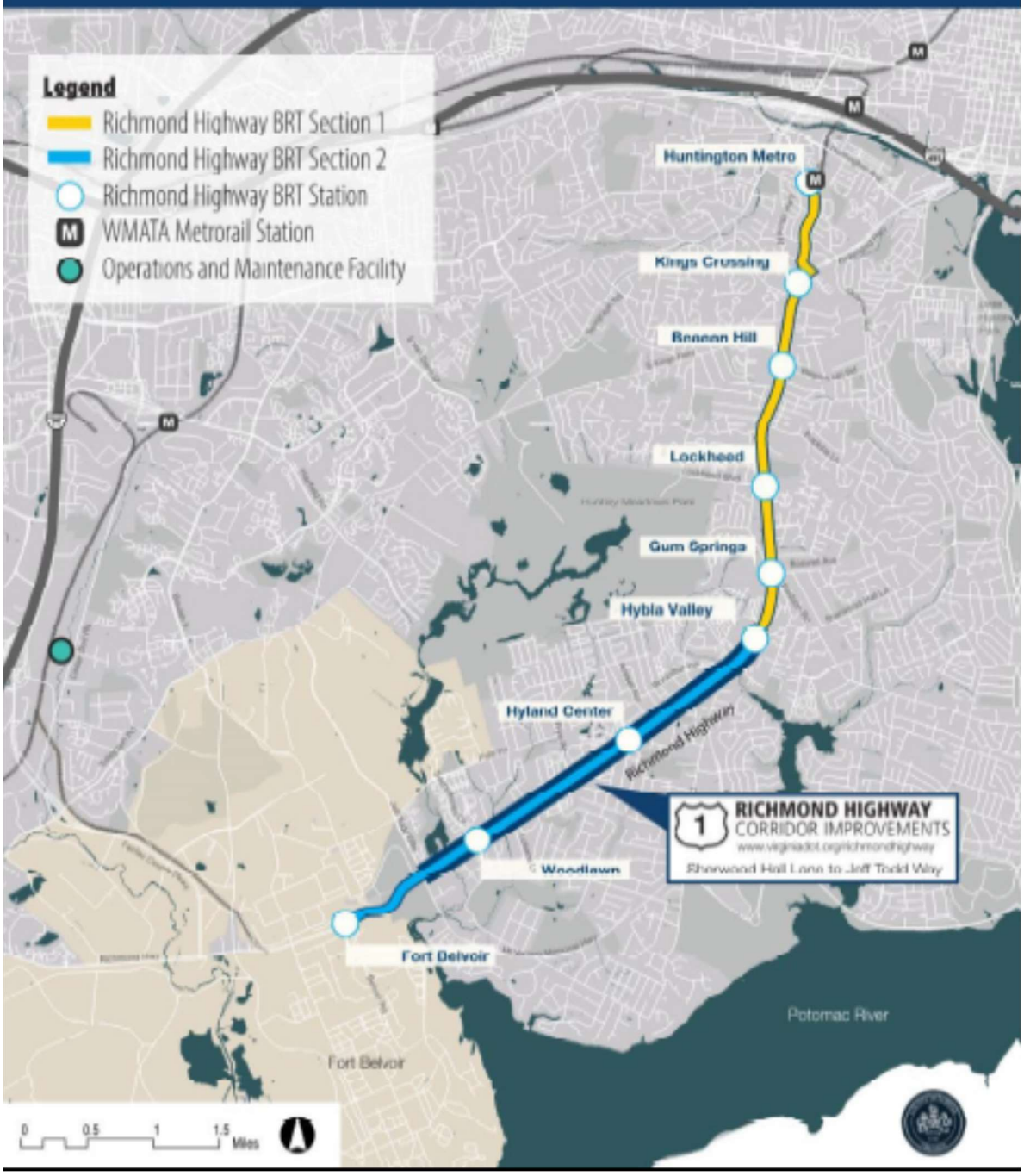
- *Performance of Land Use Policies:* There are several recent and proposed residential and commercial developments in the corridor identified. Some examples could be considered transit-supportive, but it is unclear how existing policies affected these developments. Other, existing transit corridors and station areas in the region with examples of transit-supportive development include the Mosaic District and the Metrorail Silver Line.
- *Potential Impact of Transit Investment on Regional Land Use:* Existing plans do not specify how many acres of vacant or underutilized land there are for potential infill and

development. However, throughout the corridor and in station areas there are large surface level parking lots that could be redeveloped at transit-supportive densities.

Tools to Maintain or Increase Share of Affordable Housing: Medium

- There is limited information on demand for affordable housing within the project corridor.
- Fairfax County has several studies, plans, and initiatives that identify supply and demand on a County-wide scale, identify potential strategies to encourage housing production, and set housing production targets.
- The County has a variety of affordable housing tools available. The Redevelopment and Housing Authority has an exclusive right to purchase up to one-third of the for-sale affordable dwelling units within a development. The Housing Blueprint Loan helps nonprofits buy properties to convert into affordable housing for 60 percent AMI or less for at least 30 years. Density bonuses are available for the provision of affordable housing. The Preservation Partner Pool program allows housing providers to react quickly to preservation opportunities.
- Most affordable housing development examples did not include construction years, so it is difficult to assess the amount of current developer activity, but there is high ratio of existing affordable housing development and tools in place to help preserve those units.
- No information was provided on addressing the needs of very- and extremely low-income households in the corridor.

PROJECT AREA MAP

RICHMOND HIGHWAY BUS RAPID TRANSIT (BRT)

Fairfax County, Virginia