### Mission

To provide safe, reliable, clean, and effective public transportation service that complements the other elements of the multi-modal transportation system in Fairfax County and provides a cost-saving alternative to Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Metrobus service. To fund the County's share of operating costs for the Virginia Railway Express (VRE).

# **Focus** Fund 40000, County Transit Systems, provides funding for operating and capital expenses for the Fairfax Connector bus system. The Fairfax County Department of Transportation (FCDOT) manages, oversees, and coordinates the activities of the Fairfax Connector bus system, which in FY 2022 operated 100 routes providing primarily intra-county service and access to Metrorail stations serving County residents. The system includes an authorized fleet of 346 buses.

Fairfax Connector bus service is operated by a private contractor from three operating facilities.

The Huntington Division provides local service to the Huntington, Van Dorn Street and Franconia-Springfield Metrorail stations and in the Mount Vernon and Lorton areas and express service to the Pentagon Metrorail station.

The Reston-Herndon Division includes service in the Reston, Herndon, McLean and Tysons areas to the Wiehle-Reston East, McLean, Spring Hill, and Tysons Corner Metrorail stations; express service between Reston, the Pentagon Metrorail station, and Crystal City; local service between Herndon, Reston, and Tysons, and cross-county service between Fair Oaks and Reston.

The West Ox Division provides service primarily in the I-66 Corridor between the Vienna Metrorail station and the Centreville, Chantilly, Fair Oaks, Oakton, and Fairfax Center areas; and 495 Express



service between Tysons, Burke Centre, and Springfield.

The most recent Comprehensive Transit Plan (CTP) was completed in the spring of 2016 and the companion Transit Development Plan (TDP) was adopted by the Board of Supervisors in March 2016. The fiscally constrained TDP guides future investments and changes to the Fairfax Connector system. The TDP goals and objectives focused on expanding and improving access and mobility. To that end, FCDOT has made investments in a student pass program, express services, cross-county linkages, transit route improvements, an Intelligent

Transportation System (ITS), the bus fleet, infrastructure, and improvements to transit facilities.

The TDP is scheduled for a full update in FY 2022 and will have a planning horizon of ten years, at which point the document will be the 2022 Transit Strategic Plan. FCDOT has developed a route optimization planning process to update the TDP/TSP incrementally over a three-year timeframe. This process involves reviewing the Fairfax Connector network in five regional sections. Each section is based on one or two Metrorail Stations and/or an activity center. These include the Franconia-Springfield, Reston-Herndon, Vienna, Tysons, and Huntington Metrorail Stations. In FY 2019, FCDOT began working on the Franconia-Springfield and Reston-Herndon sections, which contain over 51 routes.

In FY 2020, FCDOT started the planning process for optimizing routes in Vienna and Tysons. As part of the planning for Richmond Highway Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), FCDOT will also complete route optimization for the Huntington routes. The Vienna, Tysons, and Huntington planning efforts are estimated to be completed by the end of FY 2022.

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In FY 2016, Fairfax Connector, in partnership with Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS), initiated the Student Free Fare Pilot Program (SFFPP), which provides free bus rides to the County's middle and high school population. Since program inception in September 2015, the program has provided over 1.9 million student passenger trips. In FY 2021, approximately 12,500 student SmarTrip cards were distributed to schools. Building on prior success, the program is now offering access to Metrobus service to Justice High School students. The Board of Supervisors has also approved expanding the program to Marshall High School, Annandale High School, Falls Church High School and the Davis Center in FY 2023. Prior to COVID-19, the average monthly student ridership was



approximately 42,800 passenger trips. For the 2020-2021 school year, average monthly use was approximately 10,000 passenger trips, with the decline attributable to the pandemic. However, from January to June of 2021, there was a continuous increase in ridership.

Since FY 2017, FCDOT has received four grant awards from the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC) for implementation of express bus service along I-66 and I-395 using the managed High Occupancy Toll (HOT) lanes. Funding for these express bus services is generated from the HOT lanes' toll revenue. The goal of the routes is to reduce congestion within the I-66 corridor inside the Beltway and along I-395. Route 699 began

operating in December 2017, providing a direct link between the Fairfax County Government Center and Washington D.C. As of November 2021, Route 699 provided over 267,350 passenger trips since route inception. In January 2019, Route 698 began passenger service, providing a direct link from the Vienna Metrorail Station to the Pentagon. As of November 2021, Route 698 provided over 97,610 passenger trips since route inception. In January 2020, Fairfax Connector implemented an additional route, Route 396, along the 1-395 corridor that improves connectivity from Springfield to the Pentagon. As of November 2021, Route 396 provided over 29,330 passenger trips since route inception. Subsequently, in August 2020, the Fairfax Connector implemented Route 697 along the 1-66 corridor with service to the L'Enfant Plaza area. As of November 2021, this route has provided 7,940 passenger trips since route inception.

The above information reflects a significant decrease in express route ridership due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, operations on these routes were suspended from April 2020 to August 2020. However, since January 2021, ridership has been increasing and has recovered to approximately 60 to 65 percent of the pre-COVID ridership levels on weekdays and approximately 95 percent of the pre-COVID levels on weekends. Weekend ridership has experienced a decline when fare collection was re-instituted.

The Connector will complete conversion of the legacy radio system in FY 2022, will deploy mobile supervisor technology to assist station and field supervisors with providing enhanced customer service and will upgrade the website and bus tracker to improve the customer experience.

FCDOT continues its commitment to environmental protection practices. FCDOT's pledge to reducing its carbon footprint includes a zero-emission bus demonstration. In FY 2022, eight electric buses and associated infrastructure were ordered. To further reduce emissions, Fairfax Connector adheres to federal and county requirements to lower emissions with a strict idling policy and preventive maintenance program to ensure compliance with emission standards. For stormwater management FCDOT adheres to best practices at all operating facilities to meet the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (VDEQ) standards for monitoring and testing.

#### **County and Regional Transportation Projects**

Commercial and Industrial (C&I) real estate tax revenue and Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA) local 30 percent funds are collected in Fund 40010, County and Regional Transportation Projects, and then a portion is transferred to the County Transit Systems budget. In FY 2023, this amount totals \$38.5 million. This amount will be used to:

- Support West Ox Division rush hour and midday service
- Increase frequencies on overcrowded priority bus routes (Routes 171, 401/402, 950)
  - Support Route 981 from Wiehle-Reston East to Dulles Airport
  - Improve the frequency of Richmond Highway corridor routes and Route 310 servicing Franconia Road to Rolling Valley

#### **General Fund Support / Use of Balances**

General Fund support is provided to Fund 40000 for Fairfax Connector requirements and for the County share of the subsidy for commuter rail services operated by the Virginia Railway Express (VRE). The FY 2023 General Fund transfer to Fund 40000 is \$43.0 million, an increase of \$2.3 million over the FY 2022 Adopted Budget Plan level.

#### Fairfax Connector Bus Replacement Reserve

A significant long-term issue in transportation concerns the bus replacement needs for the Fairfax Connector fleet. To help minimize the fiscal impact of future bus replacement needs, funding is being reserved at the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC) in addition to begin utilizing the County's Master Lease Program. Between FY 2022 and FY 2025, 149 buses are expected to be replaced. The Board of Supervisors has directed that, beginning in FY 2025, all new buses purchased will be electric.

#### Virginia Railway Express (VRE)

Fund 40000, County Transit Systems, includes the County's share of the subsidy for commuter rail services operated by VRE. The service is a joint effort among NVTC, the Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission, the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation, and the participating jurisdictions of Fairfax County, City of Manassas, City of Manassas Park, Fredericksburg, Prince William County, Spotsylvania County, and Stafford County. The City of Alexandria and Arlington County are also contributing jurisdictions.

The operation and maintenance costs associated with the commuter rail system are funded from a combination of ridership revenues, state contributions and contributions from the participating and contributing local jurisdictions. According to the VRE Master Agreement, at least 50 percent of the operating costs must be paid by passenger fares, with the remainder funded by the participating jurisdictions according to a funding formula. The FY 2023 Fairfax County subsidy is estimated at \$6.4 million, an increase of approximately \$21,000 over the FY 2022 Adopted Budget Plan level.



## Pandemic Response and Impact

In response to COVID-19, Fairfax Connector adjusted service to continue to provide essential trips while mitigating public health concerns while experiencing an expected significant drop in ridership. From March 2020 through August 2020, Fairfax Connector operated at a reduced level of service and suspended fare collection and front door boarding from March 2020 until January 2021 to minimize contact between drivers and passengers. Since January 2021, the Connector has continued to provide full-service levels and passengers are required to wear a mask or face covering, as federally mandated, when taking public transit in Fairfax County. As of September 2021, Fairfax Connector ridership has returned to approximately 65 percent and nearly 80 percent of pre-pandemic levels on weekdays and weekends, respectively. Despite high vaccination rates in the service area and federally mandated safety measures implemented on Fairfax Connector buses, FCDOT anticipates reduced ridership through FY 2023, in part due to continued telework well above prepandemic levels.

Fairfax Connector received relief under the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and will continue to serve passengers and options to return to a typical level of service will be evaluated as the situation evolves and restrictions are changed or lifted. Additionally, the economic impacts of the pandemic have adversely affected both state transportation revenues, such as gas tax, and local transportation revenues. County staff continue to monitor these revenues to meet its ongoing regional transit requirements.

## FY 2023 Funding Adjustments

The following funding adjustments from the <u>FY 2022 Adopted Budget Plan</u> are necessary to support the FY 2023 program:

#### **Increased Operating Expenditure Requirements**

An increase of \$5,990,509 in expenditures is reflected. This includes a net increase of \$5,869,526 in operating requirements for the Connector system associated with a contract rate increase included in the five-year operating contract; 20,700 hours of additional service and the requirement to supplement fare revenues as ridership recovers from the pandemic. Reimbursements from WMATA for use of the West Ox Bus Facility are estimated to increase by \$100,000 for bus operations and maintenance costs. In addition, an increase of \$20,983 is included for the County's annual contribution to VRE.

#### **Capital Requirements**

#### (\$13,521,474)

\$5.990.509

Capital project funding of \$10,828,526 is included, a decrease of \$13,521,474 when compared with the <u>FY 2022 Adopted Budget Plan</u>. Fairfax Connector has significant bus replacement needs and this change is largely attributable to transitioning from Paygo funding to master lease financing to provide a more manageable fleet replacement schedule.

## Changes to <u>FY 2022</u> <u>Adopted</u> <u>Budget Plan</u>

The following funding adjustments reflect all approved changes in the FY 2022 Revised Budget Plan since passage of the <u>FY 2022 Adopted Budget Plan</u>. Included are all adjustments made as part of the FY 2021 Carryover Review, FY 2022 Mid-Year Review, and all other approved changes through December 31, 2021:

#### **Carryover Adjustments**

#### \$4,026,494

As part of the *FY 2021 Carryover Review*, the Board of Supervisors approved funding of \$4,026,494, primarily due to the carryover of balances from FY 2021, including \$7,746,967 in encumbered operating expenses and capital project balances. An additional \$1,000,000 was included to provide a local match for grants supporting the purchase of electric buses and charging infrastructure. These increases are partially offset by a \$4,720,473 decrease in the County operating subsidy for VRE due to their use of federal stimulus funding for FY 2022 operating requirements. It should also be noted that, as part of the *FY 2021 Carryover Review*, a Student Bus Program Coordinator position was established in Agency 40, Department of Transportation. The cost for this position is being absorbed by Fund 40000, County Transit Systems, with a partial year cost of \$91,596 expected in FY 2022 and recurring costs of \$121,627 beginning in FY 2023. Funds available in Fund 40000 will also be used to cover the cost of additional student passes to support the expansion of the Metrobus pilot.

#### Metro CARES Funding - Transit Systems

In addition to reducing operating subsidy requirements to local jurisdictions in FY 2021, the Metro Board on April 23, 2020, agreed to provide a portion of their CARES funding to support regional transit systems. As a result, the County received \$26.26 million in CARES Act credits allocated by Metro to support the County's transit system. These credits can be used toward capital, operating, and other transit-related expenses to prevent, prepare for, and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, including the loss of passenger fare revenues. The CARES credits are held at the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC) until spent. During FY 2021, \$8.61 million of these credits were utilized leaving a balance of \$17.65 million. In FY 2022, \$2.83 million of the CARES credits will support operations and offset anticipated reduction in Fairfax Connector fare revenue, and results in an estimated ending balance of \$14.82 million.

### Performance Measurement Results

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, ridership for FY 2021 has been significantly impacted. Total Fairfax Connector ridership in FY 2021 was 4,566,003, which is a decrease of 33 percent from the FY 2020 ridership level 6,783,112. After operating on a limited schedule from March 2020 to August 2020. Fairfax Connector resumed full service on all routes starting Saturday, August 29, 2020, with service enhancements including a new commuter route from the Stringfellow Road Park-and-Ride Lot to Southwest Washington, D.C. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Fairfax Connector maintained approximately 70 percent of its service to ensure customers dependent on transit had access to essential jobs and vital services and could practice social distancing on Fairfax Connector buses.

Many commuters in the region have expressed interest in new technologies that allow more interaction with bus services. Fairfax Connector has implemented advanced ITS technology on the bus fleet. New technology includes near real-time bus arrival information to enhance the travel experience of Fairfax Connector riders.

Due to continuing health and safety concerns stemming from the pandemic, the VRE ridership surveys used to gather the data needed to report on change in ridership were not conducted per standard practice. As a result, the percent change in VRE passenger boardings is not available for FY 2020 or FY 2021 and cannot be estimated for FY 2022 and FY 2023. DOT will work with VRE to develop a new indicator based on data available from VRE for FY 2024.

Indicator	FY 2019 Actual	FY 2020 Actual	FY 2021 Estimate	FY 2021 Actual	FY 2022 Estimate	FY 2023 Estimate
Fairfax Connector						
Percent change in FAIRFAX CONNECTOR passenger trips	0.26%	(18.62%)	4.67%	(32.69%)	17.05%	32.86%
Percent change in service provided for platform miles	1.78%	(6.22%)	14.00%	7.55%	9.55%	5.94%
Percent change in service provided for platform hours	0.49%	(4.26%)	8.36%	5.28%	7.50%	3.99%
Commuter Rail						
Percent change in VRE passengers boarding at stations in Fairfax County	(3.6%)	0.0%	NA	NA	NA	NA

A complete list of performance measures can be viewed at https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/budget/fy-2023-advertised-performance-measures-pm

#### **FUND STATEMENT**

	FY 2021	FY 2022 Adopted	FY 2022 Revised	FY 2023 Advertised
Category	Actual	Budget Plan	Budget Plan	Budget Plan
Beginning Balance	\$10,118,656	\$18,300,000	\$25,149,725	\$14,822,000
Revenue:				
Miscellaneous Revenue <sup>1</sup>	\$7,341	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000
SmarTrip Revenue <sup>2</sup>	903,862	4,737,702	5,074,153	3,008,916
Bus Advertising	161,345	250,000	175,000	250,000
Bus Shelter Program	148,219	156,750	156,750	183,750
WMATA Reimbursements, West Ox Bus Operations Center <sup>3</sup>	666,792	500,000	500,000	600,000
State Aid (NVTC) Operating <sup>4</sup>	7,556,287	23,323,250	18,671,543	25,907,267
State Aid (NVTC) Capital <sup>5</sup>	0	19,416,000	20,416,000	2,193,526
State Aid (CARES Credit) <sup>6</sup>	26,262,080	0	0	0
Tolls Revenues (NVTC) Operating	3,317,865	3,487,122	3,487,122	5,010,984
North County Bus Service - CIA <sup>7</sup>	1,098,758	1,254,052	1,254,052	1,201,295
VA Dept. of Rail and Public Transportation (VDRPT) Operating for I-95 Express Service <sup>8</sup>	340,271	300,000	300,000	0
Total Revenue	\$40,462,820	\$53,524,876	\$50,134,620	\$38,455,738
Transfers In:			. , ,	. , ,
General Fund (10001)	\$40,633,472	\$40,633,472	\$40,633,472	\$42,965,059
Metro Operations & Construction (30000)	3,153,437	3,279,574	3,279,574	3,410,757
Contributed Roadway Improvements (30040) <sup>9</sup>	0	181,732	181,732	134,000
County and Regional Transportation Projects (40010) <sup>10</sup>	38,430,481	37,400,000	37,400,000	38,522,000
Total Transfers In	\$82,217,390	\$81,494,778	\$81,494,778	\$85,031,816
Total Available	\$132,798,866	\$153,319,654	\$156,779,123	\$138,309,554
Expenditures:				
Fairfax Connector				
Fairfax Connector Operating Expenses				
Transit Administration	\$1,885,400	\$4,067,685	\$5,404,988	\$3,698,832
Huntington Division	38,196,123	40,229,259	39,660,396	41,358,885
Reston-Herndon Division	31,114,874	34,627,868	34,150,439	36,410,301
West Ox Division, County Connector	24,041,340	27,776,300	27,200,514	31,102,620
Subtotal - Connector Operating Expenses	\$95,237,737	\$106,701,112	\$106,416,337	\$112,570,638
Capital Equipment	\$28,312	\$0	\$0	\$0
Capital Projects	5,337,283	24,350,500	33,382,242	10,828,526
Total Connector Service	\$100,603,332	\$131,051,612	\$139,798,579	\$123,399,164
Total WMATA Service	\$666,792	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$600,000
Total Bus Services, Connector & WMATA	\$101,270,124	\$131,551,612	\$140,298,579	\$123,999,164
Commuter Rail <sup>11</sup>	\$6,379,017	\$6,379,017	\$1,658,544	\$6,400,000
Total Expenditures	\$107,649,141	\$137,930,629	\$141,957,123	\$130,399,164
Total Disbursements	\$107,649,141	\$137,930,629	\$141,957,123	\$130,399,164

#### **FUND STATEMENT**

Category	FY 2021 Actual	FY 2022 Adopted Budget Plan	FY 2022 Revised Budget Plan	FY 2023 Advertised Budget Plan
Ending Balance	\$25,149,725	\$15,389,025	\$14,822,000	\$7,910,390
State Aid CARES Credit Reserve <sup>6</sup>	\$17,650,000	\$15,389,025	\$14,822,000	\$7,910,390
Transportation-Related Requirements	7,499,725	0	0	0
Unreserved Balance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

<sup>1</sup> Miscellaneous revenue includes such items as reimbursement from the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) for the value of WMATA tokens collected on Fairfax Connector routes, insurance recoveries, and miscellaneous developer contributions.

<sup>2</sup> Fare revenue is received either directly by the County as SmarTrip fare payments, or indirectly through contractor billings.

<sup>3</sup> WMATA reimburses the County for its share of space at the West Ox Bus Operations Center, a joint use facility for WMATA and the County Connector. WMATA initiated operations from this site in Spring 2009. Funding is reduced in FY 2022 and FY 2023 because of lower operations and maintenance costs due to decreased utilization by WMATA.

<sup>4</sup> State Aid for mass transit is disbursed to NVTC, where it is made available to the County.

<sup>5</sup> State Aid to support the Fairfax Connector Bus Replacement Program. Funds will be transferred to the County and appropriated for the purchase of replacement buses as scheduled in the multi-year replacement cycle.

<sup>6</sup> As a result of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) regional transit services support included in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act, Fairfax County received \$26.3 million in credits allocated by WMATA to support the loss of passenger fare revenue, capital, operating and other County transit-related expenses to prevent, prepare for and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. This credit is reflected in Fund 30000, Metro Operations and Construction, reducing the annual state aid contribution for Fairfax County's share of its WMATA subsidy for FY 2021. These credits will be held at NVTC. During FY 2021, \$8.6 million of these credits were utilized, leaving a balance of \$17.7 million. In FY 2022, \$2.8 million of the CARES credits is utilized to offset anticipated reductions in Fairfax Connector SmarTrip and cash fare revenue and an additional \$6.9 million will be used for the same purpose in FY 2023. The remaining \$7.9 million will be held in reserve for future years or unanticipated issues.

<sup>7</sup> North County Bus Service to provide public transit services between the George Bush Center for Intelligence (CIA) and McLean Metrorail Station, as well as McLean Community Business Center for CIA riders. Funding in the amount of \$1,201,295 is included to support bus acquisition and operations in FY 2023. The purchase price of the buses will be reimbursed over five years.

<sup>8</sup> Reimbursement from the state and toll-funded public-private partnerships for operating and capital assistance in implementing express bus service on I-66, I-395, and I-495.

<sup>9</sup> FY 2023 reflects a transfer of \$134,000 from Fund 30040, Contributed Roadway Improvements, to support shuttle bus service in the Franconia-Springfield area. The transfer is based on actual receipts in the previous fiscal year and may fluctuate as proffer revenue changes. This service was previously provided as a WMATA route and these funds were transferred to Fund 30000, Metro Operations and Construction. Beginning in FY 2022, Fairfax Connector will operate the service and receive the contributions.

<sup>10</sup> The FY 2022 transfer of \$38.5 million from Fund 40010, County and Regional Transportation Projects, is consistent with a transportation funding list periodically updated and approved by the Board of Supervisors. Of this total, \$26.6 million is from Commercial and Industrial (C&I) real estate revenue and \$11.9 million is from HB 2313 local revenues.

<sup>11</sup> Fairfax County participates in the Virginia Railway Express (VRE) Master Agreement and provides an annual subsidy to VRE operations and construction.

#### SUMMARY OF CAPITAL PROJECTS

Project	Total Project Estimate	FY 2021 Actual Expenditures	FY 2022 Revised Budget	FY 2023 Advertised Budget Plan
ADA Remediation (TF-000037)	\$921,646	\$70,462.64	\$0.00	\$0
Backlick Rd North Park-N-Ride Bike Improvement (TS-000027)	121,760	583.29	121,176.71	0
Bus Shelter Replacement (TS-000022)	987,466	94,429.77	194,123.36	150,000
Clean Air Communities Program Local (TF-000056)	1,194,261	0.00	1,194,261.25	0
Connector Intelligent Transportation Sys (3G40-003-000)	11,115,580	1,144,279.76	2,164,336.38	790,000
Fairfax Connector Buses - Capital (TF-000048)	31,583,180	379,753.28	23,177,741.67	2,193,526
Fairfax Connector Electric Buses (TF-000057)	925,000	0.00	0.00	925,000
Fairfax Connector Support Vehicles (TF-000053)	300,000	0.00	300,000.00	0
Farebox Upgrade/Replacement (TF-000039)	4,620,244	0.00	2,088,039.23	2,000,000
Hunting Operating Facility (TF-000014)	1,279,678	1,224.44	31,399.17	0
Mid-Life Overhaul (TF-000040)	16,427,676	3,438,816.71	3,202,897.84	3,850,000
Shop Equipment (TF-000051)	1,424,597	57,679.46	706,917.50	660,000
Silver Line Snow Removal Equipment (TF-000050)	141,403	141,403.04	0.00	0
West Ox Maintenance Renovation (TF-000049)	470,000	8,651.00	201,349.00	260,000
Total	\$71,512,491	\$5,337,283.39	\$33,382,242.11	\$10,828,526