

SUPPORT SB342/HB142

Virginia Transit Ridership Incentive Program
Bill Patrons: Barker/McQuinn

Reasons to Support SB342/HB142

- The Transit Ridership Incentive Program (TRIP) provides grants to improve regional transit connectivity and reduce barriers to transit use by supporting low-income and zero-fare programs. Current law only allows 25% of program funding to be used for low-income and zero-fare programs. Yet there has been much greater demand for these fare reduction initiatives thus far.
- SB342 and HB142 will better meet the needs of transit systems and users and more effectively allocate these funds by allowing greater flexibility to distribute funding between the two programs, while ensuring a minimum of 25% of funds are directed to low-income and zero-fare programs.

Overview

The General Assembly established the TRIP program in 2020 as part of the Transportation Omnibus Package. Under the Commonwealth Mass Transit Fund, the TRIP program provides grants to improve regional transit connectivity in urban areas and reduce barriers to transit access by supporting low-income and zero-fare programs.

Currently, the program only allows 25% of funds to be used for low-income and zero-fare initiatives, while 75% is set aside for regional connectivity. This formula is out of whack with current demand. In the first round of funding, DRPT received far more applications for reduced-fare programs than regional connectivity, in part due to changing needs during the pandemic—resulting in a surplus of program funds.

SB342 and HB142 address this problem by making TRIP funding more flexible. Both bills would set a 25% minimum on the use of funds for low-income and zero-fare initiatives. Under SB342, all remaining funds could be flexibly allocated between the two programs, whereas HB142 would also set a 25% minimum for regional connectivity and allow flexibility for the remaining 50%. Either approach helps to ensure the needs of transit providers and riders are met and that program funds are effectively used.



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