

**City of Alexandria, Virginia
FY 2025 Proposed Operating Budget & CIP
Budget Questions & Answers**

April 2, 2024

Question:

Can I get a budget memo addressing the following questions regarding DASH operations?

1. What is the status of any grants currently funding operating or capital investments in DASH (those covering FY24 operating/capital) and those expected in FY 25 operating/capital. What commitments, if any, are there for the City to match or contribute funds to DASH based on these grant awards?
2. What are the ridership figures for FY23, FY24 and anticipated for FY25? Can we get a break-down by demographics, income, geography, age, etc?
3. What is the revenue collected by DASH in the last five years that fares were charged and corresponding ridership during those years. Did seniors, youth or students receive free or reduced fares during those years and what costs were associated with processing those reduced fares programs?
4. What number of injuries for passengers and/or operators occurred in FY 24, FY 23 and how many crashes involved a DASH-operated vehicle?
5. Do we have any data on the average number of miles traveled by a DASH rider per trip (or other metric that can help indicate how many miles each rider uses the system)?

Response:

1- Status of grants and commitments

Below is a summary of the status of grants and commitments funding operating or capital investments in DASH for fiscal years 2024 and 2025.

Commuter Choice Operations Funding: \$11,064,000 for operational service enhancements on lines 35 and 36 through September 2025. There is no local match.

Commuter Choice Fleet Expansion Capital Grant: \$3,452,000 to acquire two 60' electric buses to expand capacity on line 35. There is no local match.

Transit Ridership Incentive Program (TRIP): DASH received TRIP funding to go fare-free. The funding covers 4 years and totals \$7,236,171 in State Funding. Each year, the City of Alexandria is required to increase its subsidy to accommodate the state funding decrease. The final year has 0% state funding and a 100% grantee contribution. The total grantee contribution is \$11,365,235 across the 4 years of the grant. Grant expires on 12/31/2025. The fare-free cannot end before this date.

Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Low-No Emissions Grant: The City of Alexandria received FTA funding totaling \$23,984,700 for DASH to purchase 13 electric buses, depot chargers, training, and other auxiliary items associated with a new bus purchase. The local match amount for this is \$4,798,300.

Department of Rail & Public Transportation (DRPT) Awarded Grants for FY24: DASH was awarded the following DRPT grants for the FY24 cycle.

- FY24 Intern: \$55,000 total; \$11,000 local match
- Wheelchair Securement Pilot: \$80,000 total; \$16,000 local match
- Charge Management System Pilot: \$235,000 total; \$47,000 local match

DRPT Grants Applied for in FY25: DASH applied for the following DRPT grants for the FY25 cycle. These applications were supported by our Board of Directors and were further supported by City Council.

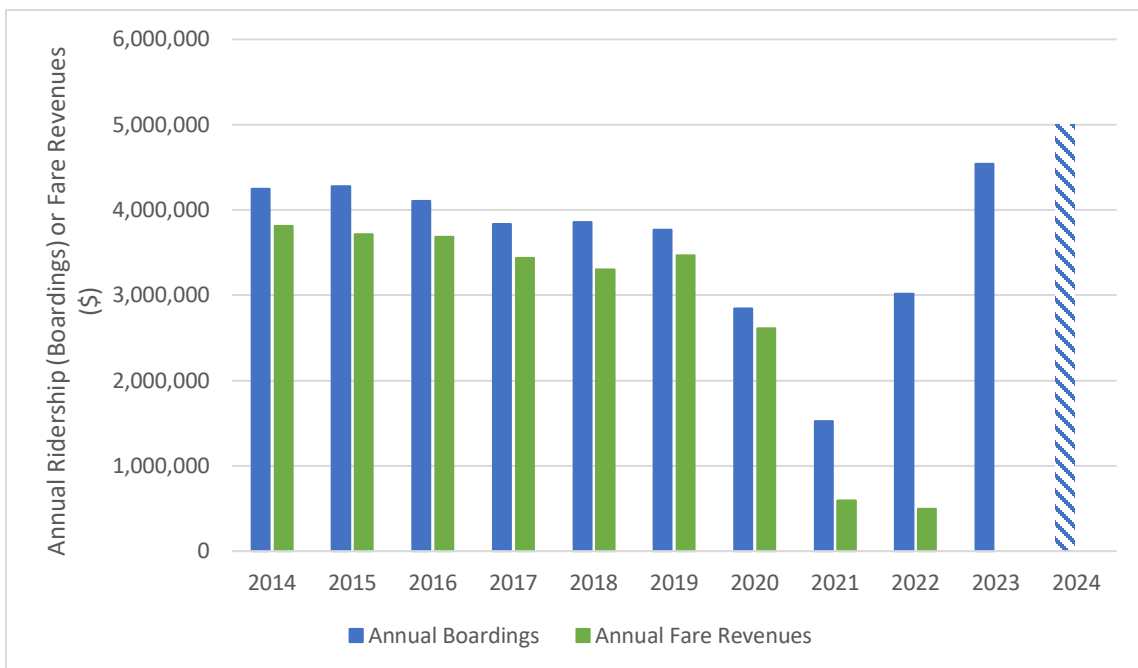
- Two FY25 Interns: \$110,000 total; \$22,000 local match
- DASH Thru Vision Blindspot Camera Pilot: Up to \$100,000 total; \$20,000 local match.
- DASH Passenger Information Screen Pilot: Up to \$125,000 total; \$40,000 local match.

2. Ridership figures

Annual Ridership Totals for recent years are provided below and in Table 1.

- FY 2023 – 4.54 million annual boardings
- FY 2024 – 5.0 million annual boardings (Projected)
- FY 2025 – 5.1 million annual boardings (Projected)

Table 1 – Annual DASH Ridership & Fare Revenues (FY 2014 – FY 2024)



Staff memo summarizing Rider Survey findings is provided in ATC Board Packet for the March 13, 2024 meeting starting with Item 6.1 on page 15 (https://www.dashbus.com/wp-content/uploads/ATC-Board-Packet-03_13_2024.pdf).

3. Revenue collected by DASH and free or reduced fares

Table 1 above shows annual DASH ridership totals and passenger revenues for the last decade. The DASH “Free Student Rides” program began in the 2017-2018 school year for ACHS (then TC Williams) students. It was expanded in subsequent years to include all public and private high schools within the City of Alexandria. DASH has provided a discount for riders using the senior/disabled SmarTrip card since roughly 2008 up until the start of the free fares program in 2021. Data on revenues lost due to Senior/Disabled SmarTrip or “Free Student Rides” Program is not currently available.

4. Injuries and events involving DASH vehicles

The following table provides a summary of the total number of injuries and events involving DASH vehicles in the last two fiscal years. Events can include minor contacts with immovable objects such as tree branches, curbs and storm drains. The statistics below equate to about one event per every 20,000 miles of service, and one injury for every 100,000 miles of service.

Table 2 – Annual DASH Injuries & Events (FY 2023 – FY 2024)

	FY23	FY24
Injuries (employee)	22	11
Injuries (passenger)	10	5
Events	155	113

5. Miles traveled by a DASH rider per trip

Based on passenger survey data from FY 2023, the average DASH passenger trip length is just over 2.3 miles. This is based on-boarding/alighting data collected by survey teams and National Transit Database (NTD) data reporting requirements. This does not include additional non-DASH trip segments (e.g. riders transferring to Metrorail).