MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 30, 2025
GRTC BOARD OF DIRECTORS
BOARD MEETING/BOARD RETREAT

Members Present:	Tyrone E. Nelson, Chair, Henrico County Jim Ingle, Vice Chair, Chesterfield County Ellen Robertson, Secretary/Treasurer, City of Richmond (Virtual) Dave Anderson, Chesterfield County Sharon Ebert, City of Richmond Terrell Hughes, Henrico County Nicole Jones, City of Richmond Dan Schmitt, Henrico County Barb Smith, Chesterfield County
Others Present:	Neil Gibson, General Counsel Sheryl Adams, Chief Executive Officer Adrienne Torres, Chief of Staff John Zinzarella, Chief Administrative Financial Officer Kevin Hernandez, Chief Operating Officer Joe Dillard, Director of Government & External Affairs Dexter Hurt, Director of Information Systems Ashley Potter, Communications Manager Janice Witt, Executive Assistant Odie Donald – City of Richmond CAO Benjamin Allen, New Virginia Majority Maurice Carter, Union President Dironna Clarke, City of Richmond Noah Dalbey Rasheed Parker, New Virginia Majority Xavier Stokes, Former Employee Yolanda Stokes, Citizen Katy Thomas, Citizen Faith Walker, RVA Rapid Transit Scudder Wagg, Jarrett Walker Margaret Woodberry, Citizen

I. Call to Order & Introductions
This meeting of the Board of Directors of the GRTC, Old Dominion Transit Management Company (ODTMC), and RideFinders was called to order on September 30, 2025, by Vice- Chairman Jim Ingle at 9:30AM at GRTC, 3rd Floor Conference Room, 301 East Belt Boulevard, Richmond, Virginia. Video and audio of the meeting will be streamed live online and recorded for later viewing at the following web address: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DfU26gJDIv8&t=1556s.

II. Public Comments
The public notice, meeting agenda, and agenda attachments for this September 30, 2025 meeting of the Boards of GRTC, RideFinders, and Old Dominion Transit Management Company were posted at rideGRTC.com. There were two written public comments.

Abbey
I’m not a usual bus rider but I would love it if we all supported covered bus stops. Personally, I live off of Robinson St in the 5th district in Richmond. There are three bus stops within walking distance of my apartment and all three of them don’t have adequate coverage from severe weather. When it rains, folks waiting for the bus have waited on my porch in the past, because that’s the only place they can get out of the rain. So I hope that people across the region support covered bus stops going forward.

Katy Thomas (Written and In-Person)
I am a long-time Church Hill resident, daily walker, and committed supporter of public transit in our neighborhood and region. I also own a small property at the corner of Venable and Pink Streets, where bus stop #3703 is currently located. Because the current site creates ongoing challenges for both riders and the property, I am requesting that the stop be relocated one block to the corner of Venable and Russell, where a wider sidewalk and church frontage provide a safer and more accommodating location.

When I bought the building, it was abandoned and in poor condition, and there was no bus stop at the corner. After significant restoration, I am preparing to lease the property to a new small business that will contribute to our community. Unfortunately, the limited space between the stop and the building leaves almost no space for riders to wait without blocking the sidewalk or entrance, which makes it difficult for pedestrians and future customers.

The current corner creates four main problems:

Sidewalk space is too narrow, forcing riders to block entrances and pedestrian flow.
No safe capacity for benches or trash receptacles without further crowding.
Riders gather directly outside storefront windows, creating privacy and security concerns that threaten business viability.

Riders often come from 25th street, littering en-route to the bus stop.

Relocating the stop to Venable and Russell would be a true win-win. Riders coming from 25th and Venable would gain a safer, more convenient and comfortable waiting area, and the unobstructed sidewalk in front of Shiloh Baptist Church provides space for transit amenities the current site cannot accommodate. At the same time, a thriving small business could welcome customers without conflict, strengthening the vitality of Union Hill. Neighbors I’ve spoken with agree this change reflects both common sense and genuine community spirit.

I have shared this idea with my council representative, Cynthia Newbille, and welcome her input. I am planning to attend the GRTC board meeting on 9.30.25 to deliver these comments in person and share pictures of the site. However, I do have a medical appointment that day, which may prevent me from attending. Thank you for your attention to this matter and for your ongoing commitment to public transit and community progress in Richmond.

Xavier Stokes (In-Person)
Good morning, members of the board. My name is Xavier Stokes, I’m an operator for GRTC and otherwise disabled operator at GRTC, under the equal employment rights also covered under ADA. I have been subjected to a hostile work environment, a toxic work

environment and retaliation. Events have occurred where I was out in the field and events were continuously reported. There was nothing done by upper management and staff here in the building while I was out there basically taking abuse. My rights my civil rights as a disabled employee under ADA was violated and with that being said I was completely ignored and when this was reported by a passenger, I was thrown out like trash. This was not fair. It was done in my absence. It was done in the union's absence who also is here to represent and protect me as an employee here at GRTC. The severity of this, I am bringing before the Board for possible Board review for the violation where this was very great to the point that it was just unbelievable. As an employee here I am otherwise disabled but my performance with my tenure here at GRTC of eight years is not in question. Also, my experience of 15 years, my performance is not in question; however, my support from staff here at GRTC headquarters is in question. Well, again, I was treated unfairly, ignored, and thrown out like trash. Thank you.

Yolanda Stokes (In-Person)
My name is Yolanda Stokes. I represent the Ward 6 Area of Hopewell but not the members of the Hopewell City Council. What brings me here is twofold, this is probably my second time with you that I'm asking for privilege, political privilege. Mr. Xavier Stokes lives in my Ward. So any complaint he has or any constituent of Ward 6 comes to me so I end up having to advocate. My lifelong work has been Equal Employment Opportunity. I sat under Governor Allen Administration as the investigator for the United States Department of Equal Employment Opportunity. Also, I did Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity for the City of Petersburg and a lot of training as a paralegal. I worked under the Commonwealth Attorney's Office which was Cassandra back then in Petersburg and I'm well trained. I was disappointed when I saw what had happened. Virginia and most states we hire and we fire at will but we do not discriminate. What Xavier was explaining is he has an active FMLA under you that protects him with his disability. When he requested long and before you take any adverse action against an employee, you would listen to that particular employees request for an accommodation. And that's what he's requesting from this Board for is a reasonable accommodation to wave the rules and regulations under the Americans with Disabilities Act to allow him a fair opportunity to present his complaint that he filed prior to any adverse action. Former Supervisor Shawn Modesty already filed a complaint against the issues not getting into the issues but a complaint had been filed to remove a person off of a bus that would cause this type of problem and to ignore an ADA is unfounded. And because these persons have done this before, it puts them in the line of retaliation. So if you would go back, weigh the rules on the ADA and review what actually happened, not necessarily the merit, but what happened. Did you give him proper due process? Nobody's trying to make money. Nobody's trying to get into a lawsuit. This gentleman's disability depends on his job and his disability – he could draw a disability check but we found this niche and he's been driving the bus. But he's driven over eight years and I will promise you within six years of employment he's fought harassment from three staff people. Your CEO, your Director of Human Resources, and now your head of supervision that got an award. Each of them have violated ADA and I'm not saying that they may have violated, I'm telling you as a professional is violated. You cannot ignore and he's met all requirements and he's covered under your FMLA program and you deny him the right then that person should not be CEO of a company that has a logo that says we adhere to the rules and regulations of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and particularly disabled persons. You can't ignore that. And it doesn't stop because you decide to terminate. And I've trained with many employees, including one well because you fired them. You still obligated under ADA to follow through and in all fairness to this Board and as a public figure myself and of course you've seen all over the news what has happened at Hopewell and I'm probably the one

council that stood out um because I will not discriminate against anybody for any reason because you don't know at what point you may be in that place. So Miss Sheryl, you owe him an audience. All right. And you owe him the right under ADA to hear his complaint. You knew it was coming. And we reached out to you to talk to you. And you have returned no phone calls and no emails. That does not negate your responsibility and more importantly, your responsibility to this Board. That's for us to come here and bring this board to the table then you have failed this Board. Thank you.

Benjamin Allen
Hello everyone. My name is Benjamin and I'm a resident and a member of the New Virginia Majority. I want to start out with highlighting a few Richmond attractions that I'm unable to reach with the current bus route. Currently I am unable to go to Pony Pasture, Lewis Botanical Gardens on the bus without additional less than safe walking after the closest stop. I would love to see both of these amazing nature locations more accessible via GRTC for people like myself who depend on the bus for getting around the region. And also at the stops there could be a heating and cooling system and also at the stops it could be more aesthetically pleasing with local artists. Second, I want to highlight a few items that will be discussed in the Board Retreat meeting and my hopes for the conversation. As a part of the NVM, I heard many bus riders share their concerns about fares returning for GRTC. I, myself, would be really impacted by this happening too. When fare free started in 2020, we all knew the trip grant funding would only be there for four years. From the public perspective, now it feels like GRTC is scrambling to find the funds when we should have been planning and saving for this necessary line item on the budget. And some suggestions we could explore is congestive pricing taxes, federal grants, more advertisements, asking schools like U of R, Virginia Union, CarMax, Dominion Energy, and also looking at a premium bus service like a subscription plan. I strongly encourage the counties to consider how much economic development is coming into your area and carry more of your weight when the GRTC budget to help pay for fare free orders are imaginary lines on a map and as a bus rider the bus doesn't stop and change services when we enter the County and yet the City of Richmond is contributing double the amount of Henrico at \$9.3M and \$4.5M respectively, Chesterfield while being a partial owner is contributing less than at \$2.5M. I remind everyone that the fare free is \$6.8M. Many of us work and live in several localities cook our food in one locality and the grocery stores another. We need to have a strong investment from the entire region to make the bus system work efficiently, effectively for a strong regional economy where residents are able to live, work, and spend more money to host their communities and upward mobility. Thank you.

Rasheed Parker
Good Morning y'all, appreciate y'all and this opportunity for public comment. I just have three quick things, quick having trouble getting my words out. Three quick things. Slow coming out hard to say. Anyway, firstly I would like to support everything that Ben said, I stand in solidarity with him. As an organizer of New Virginia Majority, particularly we need better access to the parks and they need better access to grocery stores and food markets in particular. Also one thing quick to note before y'all approve last meeting minutes. While as a black man I am a minority of Virginia, I am with New Virginia Majority so please make sure that is reflected on the agenda. Right now it says Rasheed Parker, Virginia Minority. Please make sure it says New Virginia Majority as it says on my shirt. Last thing just a suggestion for these meetings, while folks are attending online, see this small little square here sometimes it's hard to see who exactly is speaking. So we suggest when speaking before you speak or you just notify and say who you are so we are aware or have folks attending virtually. That's all I got. Thank you.

Ms. Robertson requested to participate remotely. Mr. Nelson motioned to approve remote participation. Mr. Schmitt seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

III. Approval of August 19, 2025 Board Meeting Minutes
Mr. Ingle motioned to approve the August 19, 2025 Board Meeting minutes with a correction of Rasheed Parker, New Virginia Majority. Mr. Schmitt seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

IV. Consent Agenda
A. October Schedule Change Service Equity Analysis (Title VI)
B. Performance Analysis Software – Swiftly Contract
C. Bus Fleet Infotainment System Retrofit
D. Fleet Technology Upgrade – Destination Sign Retrofit
E. DBE Goal FY26 – FY28
Mr. Anderson motioned to approve the Consent Agenda. Ms. Jones seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

V. Action Items
A. Ingersoll Rand Air Compressor Maintenance Agreement
Mr. Ingle motioned to approve the Ingersoll Rand Air Compressor Maintenance Agreement. Mr. Hughes seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.
B. Change Request #2 – ERP Implementation Preparation Support Services
Mr. Schmitt motioned to approve the Change Request #2 – ERP Implementation Preparation Support Services. Ms. Jones seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Board Retreat

Ms. Adams stated that the FY26 budget is complete and it is now time to plan for FY27. This retreat marks the kickoff for the budget planning process, aiming to start much earlier than last year when the budget was not approved until June. By beginning now, the team hopes to get early direction from the Board to stay on track. In September, staff focused on grant project submissions and FY27 projections. Departments will submit their initial budget needs in October, with a draft budget request going to jurisdictions in November. Grant submissions begin in December, and a review draft will be shared with the Board in January. Final steps include submitting grants in February, updating the Board in March, and finalizing the budget by May. Today's meeting is key to staying on schedule and meeting the November deadline.

Below are some of the FY25 accomplishments and celebrations:

- Route 1 Expansion and Block Party
- New Advertising Program
- Pulse Station Modifications
- New Employee Gym
- Christmas Parade
- New Safety Initiatives PSO's and PSA's
- ETI 24 Bus Stops Improved
- New Articulated Buses Arrived & Operators Began Training
- BRT Expansion Outreach
- LINK EV Charging Station Ribbon Cutting
- 325 East Belt Blvd Demo
- VTA Awards & M.E.E.T. Discussion
- Ridership over 12M in one Fiscal Year is a Record for GRTC
- Route 1 Expansion – Virginia Center Commons
- Routes 7A & 7B Increased Frequency to Airport

- Route 19 Expansion to Sheltering Arms
- Western & North-South Expansion Projects in NEPA
- LINK – All Five Pilot Zones
- DTS MOU
- New Badges
- Connectors Outreach Group Launch
- DTS Restrooms
- RISE Newsletter (Recognizing the Impact & Success of Employees)
- VTA Awards – Transit Marketing Award, Exceptional Safety Award, and Unsung Hero Award (Roymone Harris)
- New Website
- Performance Data Dashboard

Scudder Wagg with Jarrett Walker started by providing an overview of the current system design and revisited the key concepts like coverage versus ridership, which were central to our past network redesign. As we plan for future BRT routes, we may need to reassess our network based on changes in population density, and area development to ensure effective future connectivity. We have an interactive mapping tool to explore ridership by stop, productivity by route, and other data. This tool was developed to help visualize and better understand the existing transit network. It allows users to explore fixed-route services, highlighting why frequency matters for rider convenience. It also includes Microtransit zones and overlays showing data like population density, job centers, poverty levels, and ridership patterns. Users can zoom in to see stop-level boarding data, view system-wide productivity (measured by riders per service hour), and analyze how service aligns with activity centers. This interactive tool can be used during the meeting or accessed later for deeper exploration.

The presentation covered transit service types and rider demographics. Microtransit zones act as first/last mile links or replacements for underperforming routes, with some updated for better connectivity. Demographic data shows local routes serve more low-income, transit-dependent, and predominantly African American riders, while Pulse and Microtransit have more income and racial diversity. Rider age ranges vary by service, and while student status is noted, schools are not specified. Paratransit is free but costly, funded through multiple sources, and has not faced cuts yet. Gender, income, and education levels also vary by transit mode.

The current transit system, focused on fixed-route service, operates about 575,000 bus hours annually across five areas, mainly Richmond, Chesterfield, and Henrico with Microtransit adding 24,000 hours for less dense regions. The system aims to balance two goals: ridership—focusing service in dense, walkable areas—and coverage—ensuring access in lower-ridership zones, with Richmond currently operating at a 70% ridership and 30% coverage split. Frequent service (every 15 minutes) is prioritized to improve usefulness and attract more riders. Since 2018, ridership has increased by 47%, service hours by 25%, and productivity by 17%, thanks to improvements like more frequent and extended routes. Operating costs have risen 72%, largely due to higher wages to address a driver shortage, raising the hourly cost from $100 to $133. Staffing has improved, with driver numbers growing from 250 to 321. Meanwhile, the cost per rider has increased from $5 to just over $6, stabilizing post-COVID as ridership rebounds.

Paratransit services include three types: CARE, which is legally required within ¾ mile of fixed bus routes; CARE Plus, a voluntary service offered in broader areas like all of Henrico; and CARE On-Demand, a premium, rider-paid option with a $7 base fare plus $1.15 per mile after six miles. As the fixed-route network has expanded, so has the paratransit service area, allowing longer trips—such as from Chesterfield to Hanover—that were not previously possible. Annual trips have grown by about 50,000 since 2019, now totaling around 370,000. However, the cost per trip has increased significantly, from about $45 pre-COVID to $74 today, and total annual costs have risen from $7 million to roughly $10 million, with efforts underway to reduce it to around $9 million. Fare policies require that CARE fares match the fixed-route fare (currently $0), while CARE Plus fares can be adjusted and are currently under review. A previous zone-based pricing model, which added fees for crossing certain areas, is no longer in use.

Microtransit began as a pilot program 1–2 years ago to replace or supplement fixed-route service in select areas. It currently operates fare-free, though that may change, and serves both urban areas like Azalea and Ashland and rural ones like Powhatan and Cloverdale. Costs per trip vary widely based on demand and density. While Microtransit offers flexible service, it is significantly more expensive than fixed-route transit, especially in low-density areas. Some zones replaced existing bus routes, while others introduced entirely new service. GRTC is still evaluating the effectiveness and value of Microtransit as a replacement for fixed routes. The program remains in a three-year pilot phase, with increasing interest from jurisdictions in expanding service types. Outreach and education efforts are ongoing to support new service areas.

Fixed-route services which include local, express, and BRT (Bus Rapid Transit) make up 76% of service hours, account for 84% of total costs, and deliver 97% of total ridership. The average cost per boarding is approximately $6.30. These services provide the highest ridership and best value per dollar, especially on high-frequency routes in dense, high-need areas. The Pulse BRT line leads in productivity with about 35–50 boardings per hour, followed by strong performers like Routes 5, 19, 1A/1B/1C (particularly in core sections), and 7A/7B. In contrast, lower-performing routes such as 88, 1C, and 3A average fewer than five boardings per hour.

Microtransit accounts for 3% of service hours, 4% of total costs, and just 1% of total ridership. The average cost per boarding is around $35, with costs ranging from about $30 in Azalea to $70–$80 in low-density areas like Powhatan and Cloverdale. Productivity typically falls between 3–5 boardings per hour, which meets industry standards, but routes averaging fewer than 2 boardings per hour may offer poor value and could warrant reevaluation. Microtransit is designed to prioritize coverage rather than productivity, making it most suitable for areas where traditional fixed-route service is not feasible.

Paratransit makes up 21% of service hours, 12% of total costs (kept lower due to contracting), and serves about 2% of total ridership. The cost per boarding is approximately $40, with inherently low productivity due to the individualized nature of the service, which is designed to accommodate riders with special needs. While expensive on a per-ride basis, paratransit fulfills an essential legal and ethical responsibility to provide accessible transportation.

Policy and strategic decisions should consider both performance data and community values. Microtransit performance varies significantly by zone, with some areas underperforming and requiring re-evaluation. Similarly, fixed-route productivity is uneven, and routes with fewer than five boardings per hour may be better served by Microtransit. The balance between coverage and productivity is a value-based decision; Richmond previously shifted from a 60/40 to a 70/30 ridership-to-coverage model, and any future changes should reflect intentional, community-driven priorities. Industry benchmarks suggest acceptable Microtransit productivity is 3–5 boardings per hour, while fixed routes performing below five are considered low-value. Average cost per boarding is around $6 for fixed routes, $30–$80 for Microtransit, and $40 for paratransit.

The board is encouraged to consider whether the current balance between high-ridership services and lower-productivity coverage services is appropriate. Key questions include whether Microtransit zones should be restructured or relocated to improve performance, and whether certain low-performing fixed routes still justify their operational costs. These considerations are central to aligning service delivery with both efficiency and community needs.

Microtransit service costs varies per trip, depending on the specific zone and its characteristics. Because each zone differs—such as rural Powhatan versus urban Azalea—performance expectations are tailored accordingly. However, Powhatan is currently underperforming, even relative to its lower rural benchmarks. To support evaluation, staff offered to provide a comparison of fixed-route, Microtransit, and paratransit performance. As population and development patterns shift, especially in rural areas, service frequency and coverage may need to be reassessed. Future changes could involve reallocating resources from low-productivity, coverage-focused services to higher-ridership models. This discussion aims to build a clear understanding of the system's current performance and lay the groundwork for informed service decisions ahead.

The discussion has shifted to fiscal years 2026–2031, focusing on a detailed review of all revenue sources, their collection methods, any associated restrictions, and their strategic use. The team will also present revenue projections through 2031 before moving on to other budget components.

GRTC is facing growing financial challenges as operating costs are expected to rise about 5% annually, outpacing local revenue growth tied to inflation. Key projects like the North-South and Western BRT lines will add budget pressures. While 84% of revenue comes from stable, formula-based sources, 14% depends on one-time or expiring funds such as grants and reserves, which are not guaranteed long-term. Capital needs and the shift to zero-fare service, eliminating a revenue source that previously covered 10–12% of the budget and further strain finances. Overall, GRTC's current funding model is becoming unsustainable, requiring new recurring revenue sources to sustain and expand services.

GRTC is anticipating declines in several revenue sources over the coming years due to expiring grants and shifting federal funding priorities. Key temporary grants supporting routes and Microtransit will phase out by 2029, resulting in a $5–$8M annual loss. Preventive maintenance funding will also decrease as more federal funds are diverted to bus replacements. Local jurisdiction contributions, tied to CPI, have already been reduced, limiting flexibility, and interest earnings from reserves have dropped significantly. To cover budget shortfalls, GRTC plans to rely heavily on reserve funds between 2027 and 2029, but these reserves are expected to be depleted by 2030. Meanwhile, capital needs and bus replacements will drain federal formula funds, reducing unallocated balances from $58M in 2026 to just $4M by 2031. Although GRTC will continue pursuing grants, many are temporary and tied to new services, not ongoing operations. Without new, sustainable revenue sources, GRTC faces a structural deficit by 2031.

Currently, time-limited grant-funded services are expected to be absorbed into the base budget once grants expire, but there is insufficient long-term funding to sustain these expansions. Board members expressed concern about continuing service growth without secure funding and suggested jurisdictions might need to increase contributions or reconsider expansions unless funding is secured upfront. Discussions included exploring new revenue sources, such as reinstating fares or improving system efficiencies, to ease pressure on local budgets. The consensus was clear: without a solid long-term funding plan, expanding services now risks creating deeper financial deficits in the future.

Board members asked about efforts to find new revenue sources, citing examples from cities like Louisville and Atlanta during fare-free pilots. Staff shared that GRTC has explored options such as new taxes and advertising partnerships but has not yet generated significant revenue to close the projected $7M gap, though even partial gains could ease pressure on local budgets. Rising service costs are also driven by inflation and wage increases, with major past expansions funded by local investments, such as Henrico's 2019 night and weekend service boost. GRTC's reserves, currently $22M, are projected to decline to a minimum acceptable level of $5M by 2029, highlighting the challenge of balancing necessary service with financial sustainability.

A board member stressed the need for formal policies on the use of one-time funds and reserve levels to avoid long-term instability, suggesting clear guidelines on funding use and future revenue strategies. Staff acknowledged these concerns and noted that while current forecasts assume ongoing operations and expansions, these assumptions could be revisited. Additional service requests beyond current plans would require more funding, with new revenue options to be discussed later.

Staff outlined major capital priorities, including the North-South BRT ($380M), Western BRT ($60M), and Downtown Transfer Hub ($50M), which are mostly reliant on discretionary and federal funds. Operating costs are expected to rise from $95M today to over $130M by 2031, potentially creating a $40M budget gap even without expansions. Modest revenue ideas like advertising and Care Plus adjustments will not close the gap; major new sources, such as sales, fuel, or hotel taxes, would need state approval and regional coordination. Board members emphasized the need for a clear, shared funding strategy before investing more in projects, recognizing the economic benefits but stressing the risk of planning for unfunded priorities. The discussion also highlighted that stopping the North BRT study only addresses about 25% of the funding gap, leaving potential service cuts of 20–30% if unresolved. The group debated whether to engage local governments and communities in decisions to close the gap or prepare for cuts. Investing in the North-South BRT could reduce city infrastructure costs, but uncertainties remain without regional revenue-sharing agreements. Council members called for predictable, sustainable regional funding before relying on local revenue increases. The Board agreed to pause and revisit the BRT discussion with more detailed information at the next meeting, acknowledging the importance of this moment for the future of transit.

VI. Board Chair's Report

The Chair requested that the Board members form a Nominating Committee to discuss the upcoming election of officers and report back to the Board with recommendations at the October 28, 2025 Board Meeting. The Nominating Committee will consist of Barb Smith, Terrell Hughes and Nicole Jones.

VII. Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:42PM.

APPROVED:

Tyrone E. Nelson, Chair
GRTC Board of Directors

October 28, 2025
Date