

City of Alexandria, Virginia
FY 2026 Proposed Operating Budget & CIP
Budget Questions & Answers

March 27, 2025

Question:

What are the estimated costs of a program to fund free Metrobus and Metro rail rides for middle and high school students that attend ACPS schools. What grant opportunities are being pursued to provide this funding and what local match would be required if the grant were awarded?

Response:

The City estimates that fares covering WMATA buses for middle and high school student trips could cost up to \$150,000 per year. The City applied to the state's Transit Ridership Incentive Program (TRIP) in February 2025 to fund this pilot program. The City will receive funding approval details from the Commonwealth Transportation Board in June 2025, when the Six-Year Improvement Program is adopted, with funds available for execution between July and October 2025. Should the program be funded, the City would evaluate usage and estimate necessary funding to continue the program. The application requires a 32% local match (\$48,000), which the City anticipates covering through the City's Go Alex fund.

The cost of funding free Metrorail rides for ACPS middle and high school students would require conducting a pilot program to gather data on student usage. Without existing data, any cost estimate is based on assumptions. Staff estimates that Metrorail usage could increase by approximately **15%**, resulting in an estimated additional cost of **\$20,000**. However, this estimate is not based on actual City data. Additionally, it is likely that Metrorail usage would not be limited to school-related trips. A pilot program would be necessary to develop a more accurate cost projection.