FAIRFAX COUNTY
VIRGINIA



Smart Scale Analysis Review and Recommendations

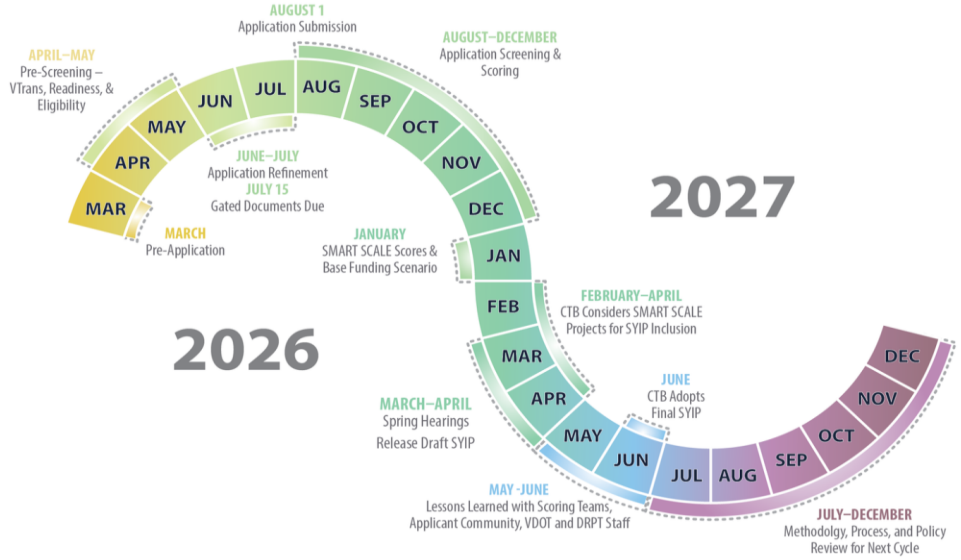
Board Transportation Committee
February 24, 2026

Gregg Steverson, Director
Noelle Dominguez, Coordination and Funding Division Chief
Fairfax County Department of Transportation

Background Recap

- Smart Scale – Prioritization Process for allocating transportation revenues in Virginia.
  - Evaluates based on congestion mitigation, safety, accessibility, environmental quality, economic development, and land use
  - Factors weighted differently based on area type

Application Timeline



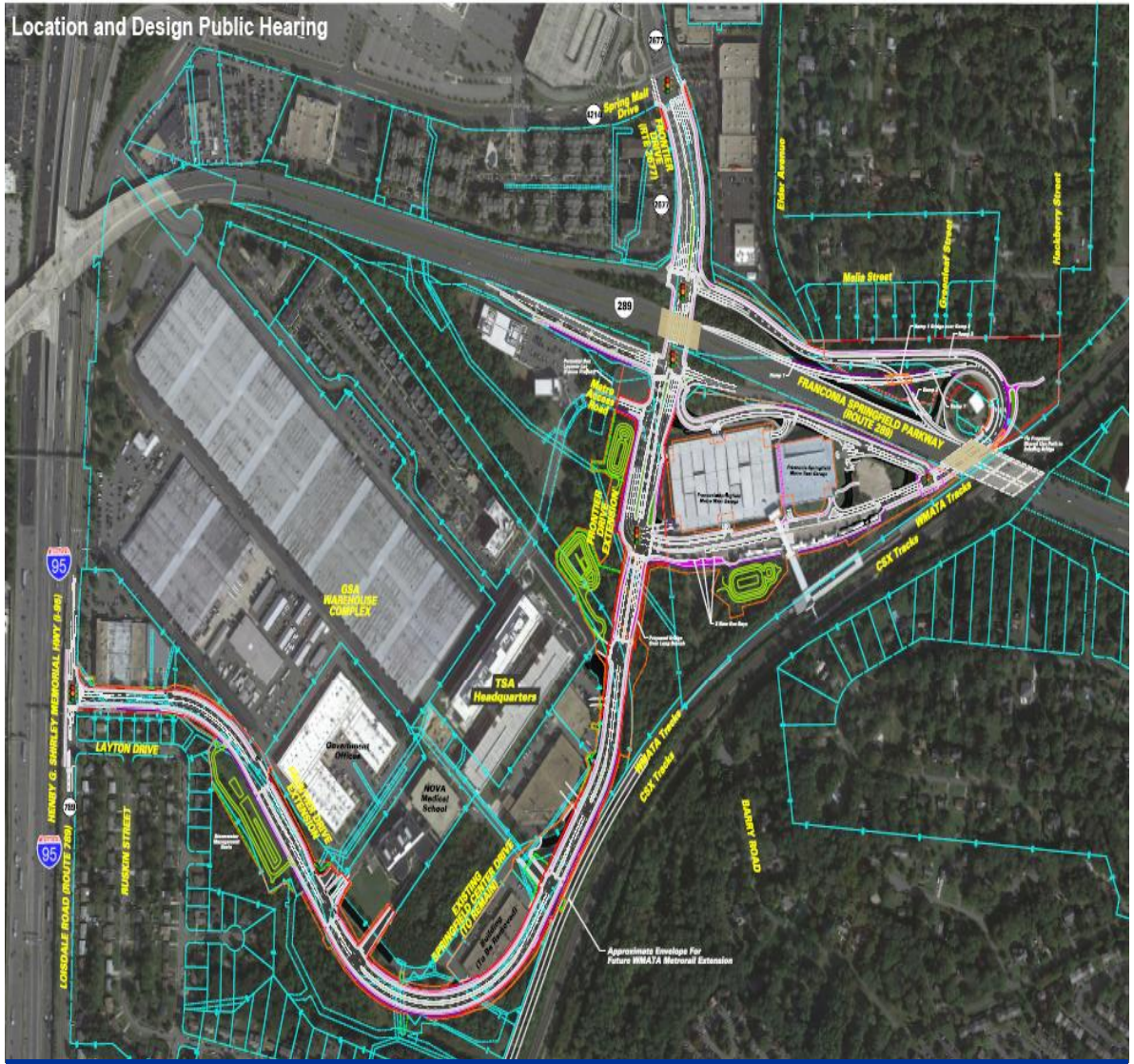
https://smartscale.virginia.gov/how-it-works/

- June 3, 2025 – BTC updated on Smart Scale process
- Round 6 did not include any Fairfax County projects
- Staff analysis resulted in concerns with costs, communications, full funding policy, and readiness
- Recommendations included NVTA submissions, smaller projects, improved communications, and policy changes
- BTC directed staff to further review the Smart Scale process

Smart Scale Analysis

- Consultant Rummel, Klepper & Kahl, LLP (RK&K) was tasked with:
- Reviewing previous County submissions
  - Comparing rounds 1 - 6 requests with similar, awarded requests
- Reviewing statewide, funded projects
  - Focusing on similarities with funded projects
- Recommending potential round 7 projects

Goal: Develop process recommendations to better align submissions (based on analysis results)



Frontier Drive Extension

Fairfax County's Application History

Rounds 1 (FY2017) through 6 (FY2026)*

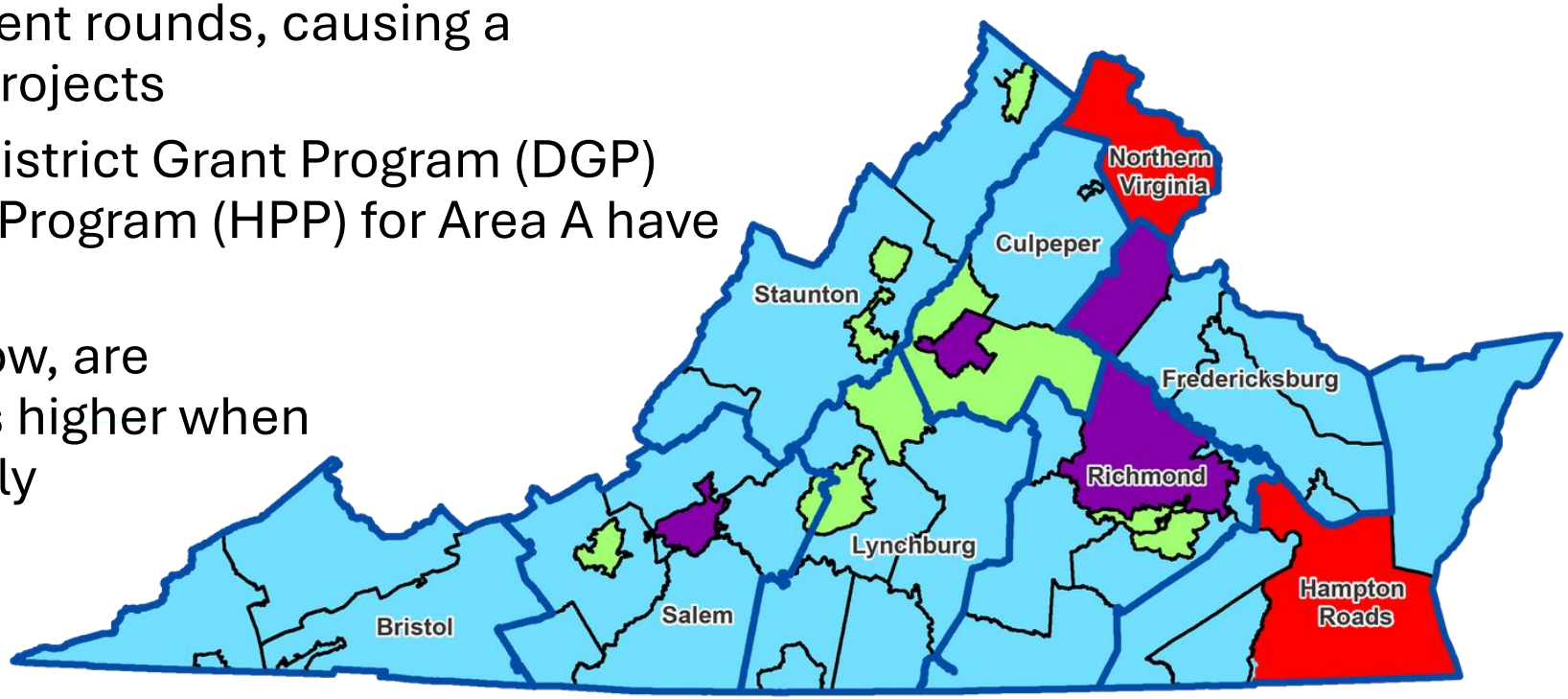
- 40 total applications submitted
- 8 projects successfully funded

Awarded Projects	Number of Submissions	Fiscal Year Awarded	Funded Amount
Route 7 Widening Phase 1	1	2017	$77,307,000
Route 7 Widening Phase 2	1	2017	$42,329,678
Route 28 Widening (Prince William County Line to I-66)	1	2017	$32,830,000
Route 29 (Union Mill Road to Buckleys Gate Drive	1	2018	$53,766,370
Popes Head Road Interchange	2	2018	$50,558,370
Richmond Highway BRT	2	2020	$50,000,000
Braddock Road Multimodal Improvements Phase 1	2	2022	$54,292,419
Route 7 Widening (Route 123 to I-495)	2	2024	$38,545,960

*After 2018 (Round 2), the process switched to a biennial process

Funding Across the Commonwealth
Smart Scale Rounds 1 - 6

- Funding availability per round varied ($859M to $1.76B)
- Requests increased in recent rounds, causing a decrease in total funded projects
- Funding awards through District Grant Program (DGP) and High-Priority Projects Program (HPP) for Area A have sharply diminished
- Awards for Area A, while low, are approximately 3 to 4 times higher when applying for DGP funds only
- In round 6, the County's minimum request was $70M, maximum awarded to any project was $57M

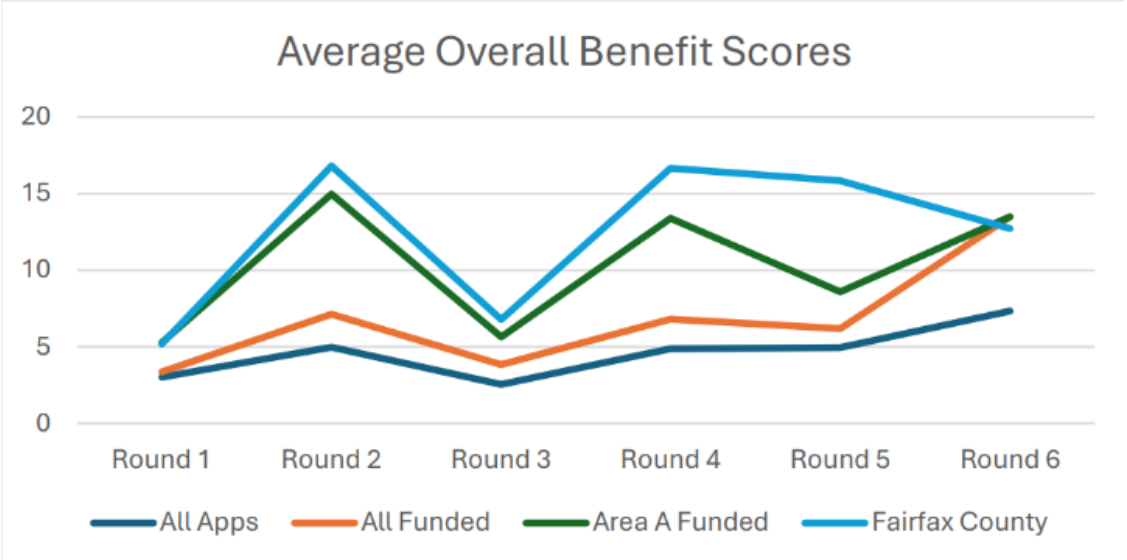


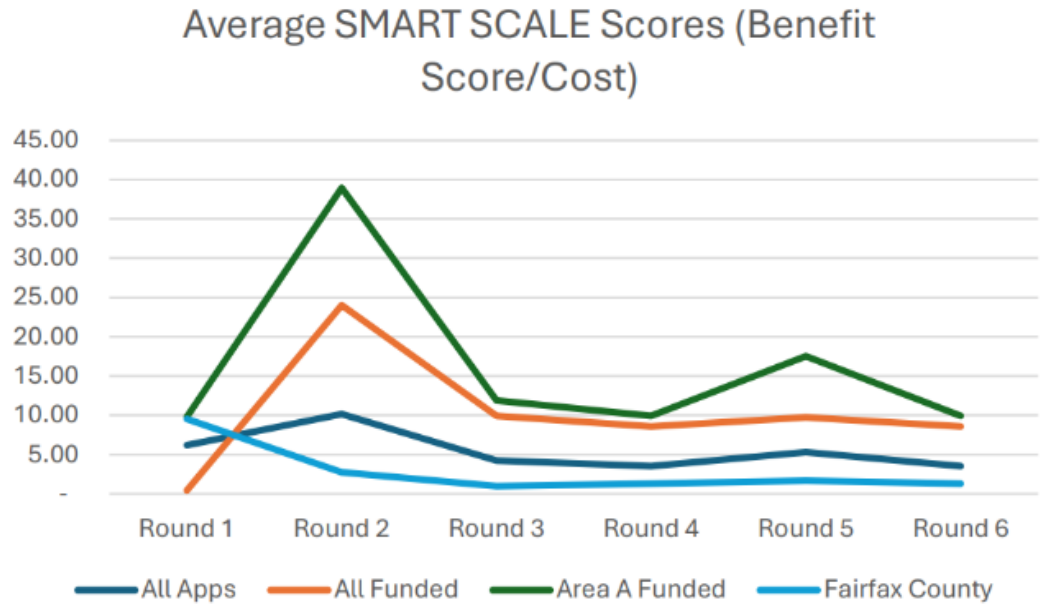
Area A is represented in **RED**

Scoring Across the Commonwealth

Smart Scale Rounds 1 - 6

- Overall, County's average scores are higher than all projects, until Round 6
- The County scores competitively in all areas except for safety and economic development
- In all rounds, the County's benefit scores are very competitive, however, higher costs have led to lower Smart Scale scores





Analysis of Project Type

- Smart Scale categories: Bike/Ped, Bus Transit, Rail Transit, Highway, and TDM
- Approximately 70% of all funded projects were highway projects:
  - 35% of total requests were funded

Route 28 / Compton Road Intersection



- Approximately 20% of all funded projects were Bike/Ped projects:
  - 45% of total requests were funded
  - Note: changes in round 6 resulted in significant reduction in awards (statewide)
- Bus and Rail transit, and TDM very low submission rates, but high award rates
- Approximately 57% success rate if project came from STARS/Pipeline

Richmond Highway BRT Bus – The One



Other Considerations

Cost Factors:

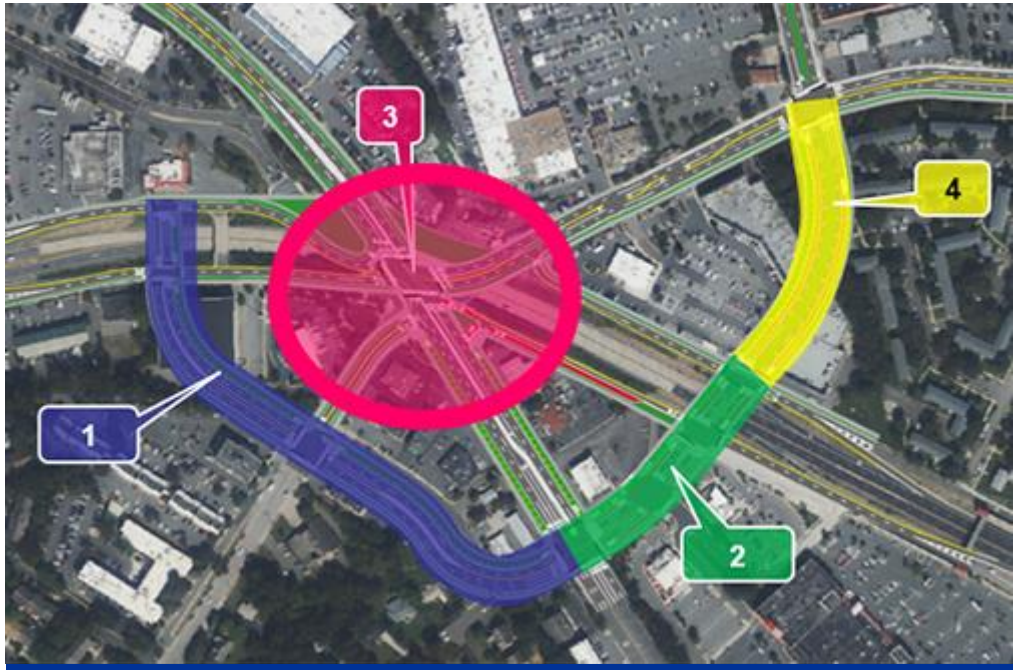
- High land acquisition, utility relocation, contingency, etc., have inflated total project estimates for most of our projects
- Most beyond our control

Project Readiness and Documentation Requirements

- Excessive readiness requirements considering funding is not available for five years
- Documentation (signal justifications reports, warrant analysis, etc.) required before needed, which can lead to work needing to be updated/repeated

Regional entities in other parts of Virginia submit several applications

- Northern Virginia has done so to a lesser extent
- Northern Virginia regional agencies can submit up to 10 applications each



Seven Corners Phasing Study

Recommendations

- Cap funding requests at $30M, focus on smaller projects
- Align submissions/priorities with STARS and Pipeline projects
- Submit larger number of different types of projects (12 Pre-applications and 10 Full applications allowed for jurisdictions with 200,000+ population)
- Coordinate with regional partners on joint applications
- Ensure projects meet readiness requirements but advocate for flexibility
- Continue to encourage project cost normalization
- Coordinate with regional partners on advocacy efforts to advance transportation projects in Northern Virginia



Questions for the Board of Supervisors and Next Steps

- Does the Board have any questions about the analysis, its outcomes or any of the staff recommendations?

- Summer 2026, staff will return to the Board for Smart Scale Round 7 endorsement prior to submission.

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