



**GRTC** | **CONNECTING**  
THE RICHMOND REGION

GRTC's mission is to connect people to opportunities by providing safe, sustainable, reliable, and equitable transportation.



**Greater Richmond Transit Company**  
Historic Operator pay increases and new leadership propelled GRTC toward pandemic recovery and system expansion.

# ANNUAL REPORT

## From the CEO

Welcome Aboard the Fiscal Year 2023 Annual Report. This document provides an overview of organizational improvements, service performance, and other achievements from July 2022 through June 2023.

FY 2023 was a critical year for GRTC, as we worked to restore service, improve our infrastructure, and plan for the future. Our biggest move in FY23 was the announcement of a historic pay increase for operators – starting wages rose nearly 43%, from \$17.43 to \$24.91 per hour, a move that reflects our commitment to ensuring both quality of life for our operators and reliable transportation for the region.

At the same time, GRTC implemented an unprecedented new advertising, hiring, and training program to recruit new operators, dropping the requirement that applicants be CDL certified and working to train applicants from scratch. The results have been and continue to be successful, with new trainees entering the program twice a month and graduation, retention, and new hire numbers all improving.



While we acknowledge there is still room for improvement, FY 2023 was a true leap in the right direction – and we look forward to continuing our progress in the years to come.

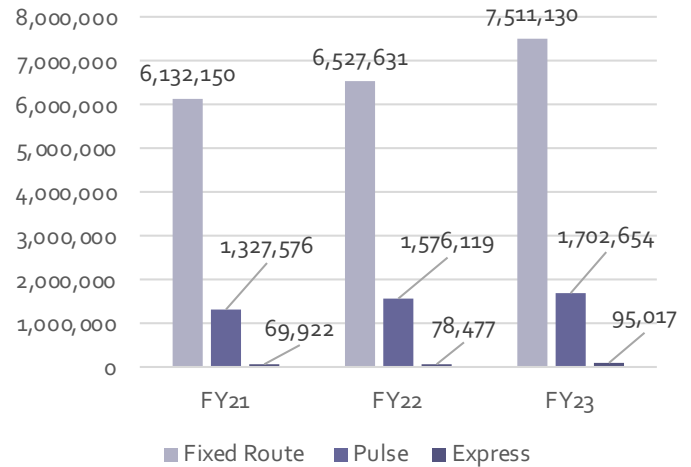
**Sheryl Adams, CEO**



## Overview

### Ridership Snapshot FY23

#### Ridership Trends Fixed Route/Pulse/Express



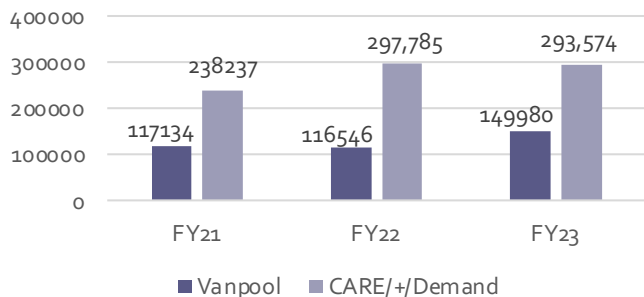
Keeping with the trend from FY22, GRTC ridership continued to grow as the region recovered from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Fixed route ridership made massive gains, with nearly a million additional riders despite continued limited service due to an operator shortage.



The Pulse BRT system also grew despite less-than-ideal weekend and off-peak service, continuing to serve as the clear highest-performing individual bus route and making strong gains despite changing work and commute habits impacting overall transit trends. Those same changing commute habits are responsible for the low but growing consolidated Express Route ridership, which made gains again in FY23.



## Specialized and Vanpool Services



GRTC saw different ridership trends in non-bus service areas – Vanpool ridership, which had fallen between FY21 and FY22, rebounded strongly in FY23. Specialized Transportation, which includes CARE, CARE Plus, and CARE On-Demand Paratransit On-Demand service saw ridership remain relatively static between FY22 and FY23. CARE service, which is contracted to a private company, also changed vendors between FY22 and FY23, and is now run by National Express.

FY23 saw unfavorable Federal Funds revenue due to lower than budgeted operating expenditures (\$4.392M) (non-ARPA funded expenditures) offset by favorable interest income (\$.555M).

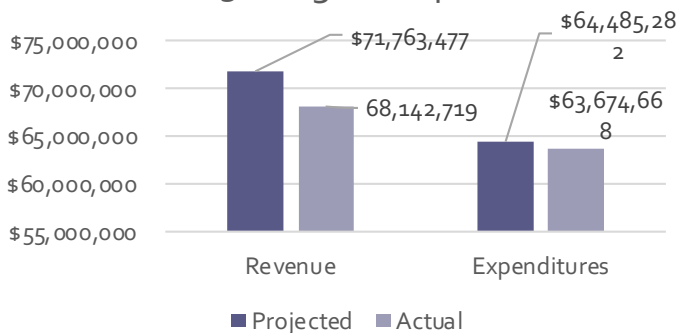
Lower than budgeted expenses are primarily attributed to lower than budgeted headcount in Transportation and Administration by \$2.003M and favorable claims experience and policy pricing \$0.224M offset by higher than budgeted materials and supplies (\$1.15M) due to COVID Funded expenses (Advertising), cost increases in parts due to supply chain impacts net of favorable budgeted fuel prices versus actual prices \$0.640M, unfavorable services (\$0.124M) due to Oracle license expenses (COVID Funded), and unfavorable purchased transportation (\$0.154M) due to higher demand for GRTC programs (CARE and CARE on demand).



## Essential Transit Infrastructure



## FY23 Budget Snapshot



In August of 2022, GRTC’s Board of Directors officially approved our landmark Essential Transit Infrastructure (ETI) Plan. This 5-year plan is designed to dramatically improve bus stop elements – which include but are not limited to benches, shelters, and trash cans, to improve the rider experience throughout the network. The ETI plan is one of several initiatives designed to address various impediments to transit access and inequality in the system.



There are three tiers established by the ETI plan for potential investments, ranging from the \$11M Attainable plan of shelter or bench at 50% of stops, as well as installing some trash cans and landing pads – to the \$28.6M Aspirational plan, which would ensure that over 75% of the network had a shelter or a bench.

Full funding for the ETI program has not yet been provided, but GRTC is committed to making these critical infrastructure improvements.

## Downtown Transfer Station Construction



FY23 is officially the last year of service for the Temporary Transfer Plaza. With the old Public Safety building that bordered the TTP scheduled for demolition, last year GRTC and the City of Richmond began a long overdue move towards a more rider-friendly transfer location. Supply chain delays pushed the open date for the new Downtown Transfer Location, located at 808 E Clay Street across from the old Transfer Plaza, into FY24, but several routes were redesigned during the May Booking to provide more service and connections for GRTC riders.

The new DTS is an off-street, transit-only facility, a landmark step towards the development of a permanent hub for transit in Downtown Richmond, and a signal to riders that GRTC and our stakeholders are committed to improving the transit experience on and off the bus.



# Historic Operator Pay Raise



In April, the GRTC announced a historic pay raise for Bus Operators, with starting pay rising from \$17.43 to \$24.91 an hour. This increase was designed to recognize and reward the key role bus operators serve, not just at GRTC, but in moving the entire region.

In addition to increased wages, GRTC announced hiring bonuses for qualified potential hires. These changes set the stage for another key element of GRTC's return to pre-pandemic service efforts: a major operator recruitment campaign.

GRTC entered the fiscal year 75 operators short of staffing goals with a goal of full staffing by the end of FY24. At the end of FY23, however, the combination of the pay raise, ad campaign, and new training programs with larger classes put the agency on track to hit hiring goals up to six months ahead of schedule, a key step in restoring service frequency and reliability and paving the way for planned route and service expansion.

## Expansions and Upgrades

Building on the overwhelming success of the Pulse, GRTC's flagship bus rapid transit system, was a key theme of FY23 and will be for the foreseeable future. GRTC finished phase one of the Western Extension, a plan to extend the existing Pulse line beyond Willow Lawn, with a new terminus along Broad at Parham Road. This moves the project into phase two, which will include federally required NEPA analysis and the beginning of the design process.

In the spring of 2023, GRTC and its partners also began phase one work on a new North/South running Pulse line. This phase, which will identify which potential corridor will be selected for further study, continued into FY24.

Expansion work also continued for GRTC Fixed Routes, most notably in Chesterfield County. Having won a DRPT demonstration grant, Chesterfield and GRTC began work on an 8-mile, 27-stop extension of the 1A along the Midlothian Turnpike. The expansion, which is planned for launch in January 2024, is part of a larger regional trend of investment in transit and transit access.

Finally, GRTC completed a phase one study and selected 5 pilot zones for our future Microtransit expansion project.