



# FY 2024 Annual Report

Williamsburg Area Transit Authority



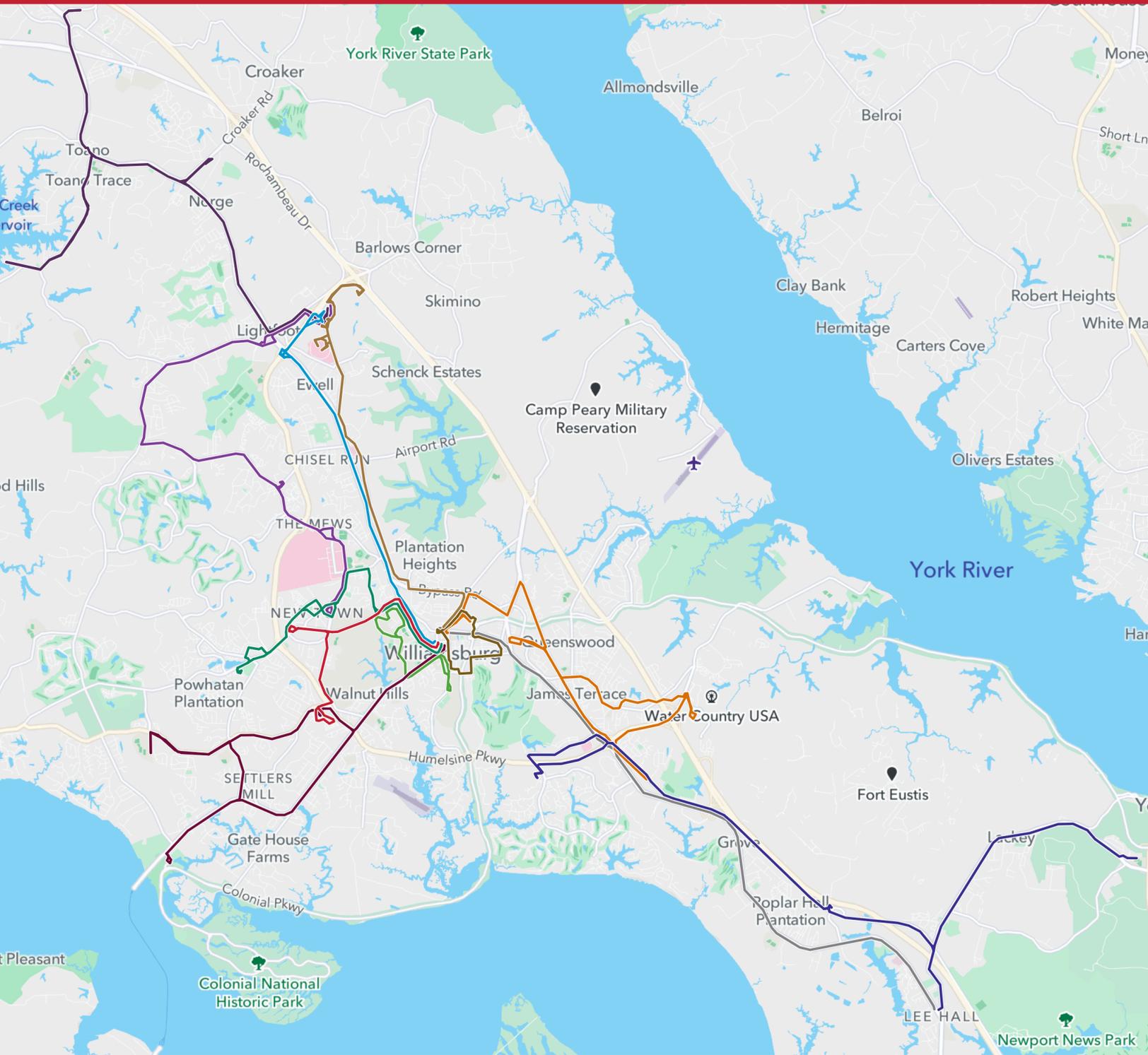
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***“The buses are quick, the drivers are nice,  
and the buses are clean.”***

*Lucy*

# WATA Transit System



## Routes

Route 1: Lee Hall

Route 2: Richmond Rd

Route 3: Merrimac

Route 4: Longhill Rd

Route 5: Monticello

Route 6: Jamestown

Route 7: Mooretown Rd

Route 8: William & Mary

Route 9: Toano

Route 11: Lackey

Route 12: Ironbound

Route 15: Colonial

# Letter From The Executive Director

**Dear WATA Stakeholders,**

As we reflect on the past year, it is with immense pride that I share the accomplishments, challenges, and progress that have defined our work at the Williamsburg Area Transit Authority (WATA) in Fiscal Year 2024. It has been another year of growth and modernization, as we remain committed to providing safe, reliable, and accessible public transportation services to the residents, businesses, and visitors of our growing community.

Over the last year, we've continued to evolve and enhance our services. Whether through the addition of routes, return of frequency routes, or adoption of new technologies aimed at improving the rider experience, our vision remains to meet the evolving goals of our region. In doing so, we've not only helped improve mobility, but have also contributed to the vision of building a connected greater Williamsburg area.

The work we've undertaken would not have been possible without the continued support of our dedicated staff, valued community partners, and the individuals who rely on our services every day. I am grateful for the team we have and the support we receive from the community. We remain committed to actively seeking input from the community and our stakeholders so we maintain our upward trajectory. As we look to the future, we remain focused on leveraging the lessons of the past year to create even more opportunities for improvement. Whether it's through enhancing accessibility, expanding digital tools for ease of use, or improving passenger amenities, WATA is dedicated to ensuring the best possible service for our community.

Thank you for your continued trust in us. Together, we are building a future where safe, reliable, and accessible public transportation is a cornerstone of the Historic Triangle's success.

Sincerely,

Matthew Scalia  
Executive Director

## **WATA Board of Directors**

Michele Mixner DeWitt, City of Williamsburg  
Denise Kirschbaum, James City County  
Paul Holt, James City County  
Brian Fuller, York County  
Sarah Jones, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation  
Bill Horacio III, William & Mary  
Avery Daughtry, Virginia Department of Rail  
and Public Transportation

## **WATA Administration Staff**

Matthew Scalia, Executive Director  
Ben Goodill, Director of Planning and Administration  
Nathaniel Rock, Director of Operations  
Hank Lewis, IT Administrator  
Tim Sullivan, Budget Management Specialist  
Steve Simms, Transit Planner  
Iyanla XO, Marketing and Administrative Specialist

# Mission, Vision, and Values >

In FY 2024, as part of completing WATA’s transit strategic plan, *Evolving WATA*, the team took the opportunity to refine its mission, vision, and values to better align with the evolving needs of its riders, employees, and community. This effort was collaborative, and incorporated input from WATA’s bus operators, who are the backbone of the service.

## OUR MISSION

**WATA provides safe, reliable, and accessible transit services to the diverse population of residents and tourists of the Historic Triangle.**

## OUR VISION

**Evolving public transit to meet the goals of our community, connect people, grow our economy, and improve our quality of life.**

## OUR VALUES

- SAFETY**
- FRIENDLY SERVICE**
- RELIABILITY**
- TEAMWORK**
- COMMUNICATION**



**James Winslow**  
Bus Operator

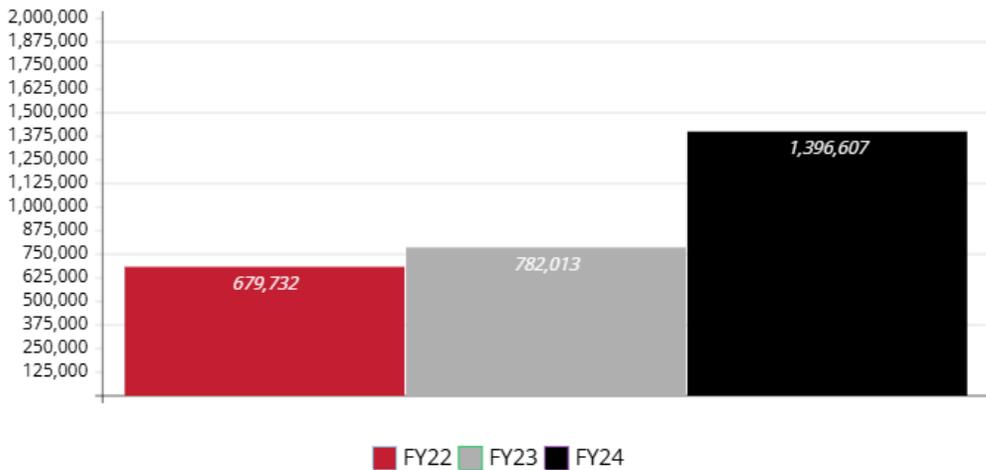
“I have been here at WATA for a little over a year and its been a great experience. I’ve enjoyed working with my coworkers and the passengers who I have met throughout the world. Everyday brings a new adventure because no two days are alike in transit. When I come in, I have a proper attitude to do what I’m supposed to do. Safety is the number one priority among the drivers and taking care of your passengers.”

WATA made significant achievements during FY 2024 in upholding its mission, vision, and values. WATA experienced a notable increase in ridership on its fixed routes, driven by several key factors. In September 2023, WATA took over operations of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation’s shuttle service, integrating it as a new route within the WATA system, Route 15: Colonial. One change made to the original route was the addition of a stop at the Williamsburg Transportation Center, WATA’s main transfer center. With the high volume of tourists visiting the Colonial Williamsburg area, this stop will allow them easier access to the entire WATA system, facilitating movement to other tourist destinations in the Greater Williamsburg area, such as Busch Gardens Williamsburg and Historic Jamestown, as well as more hotel and dining options.

Additionally, in May 2024, WATA extended its Sunday service hours from 4 PM to 6 PM and reinstated peak-hour frequency, 6:30 AM to 9:30 AM and 3:30 PM to 6:30 PM, on Routes 1 and 2, returning to most pre-pandemic services. WATA quickly saw an increase in ridership from these additions, indicating overall WATA system growth.

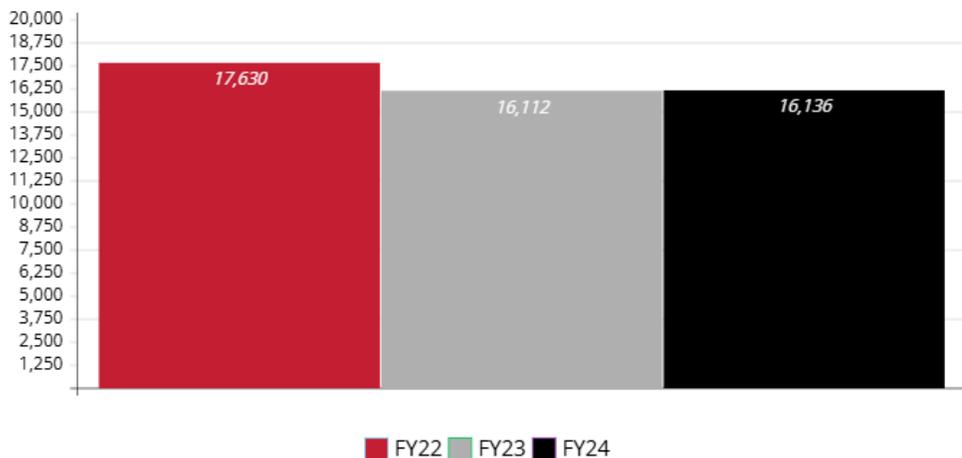
## Ridership

### Fixed Route



During FY 2024, WATA provided over **1 million passenger trips**, reaching this milestone for the first time since FY 2013.

### Paratransit



Additionally, WATA completed 16,136 paratransit trips, maintaining steady service levels from previous years.

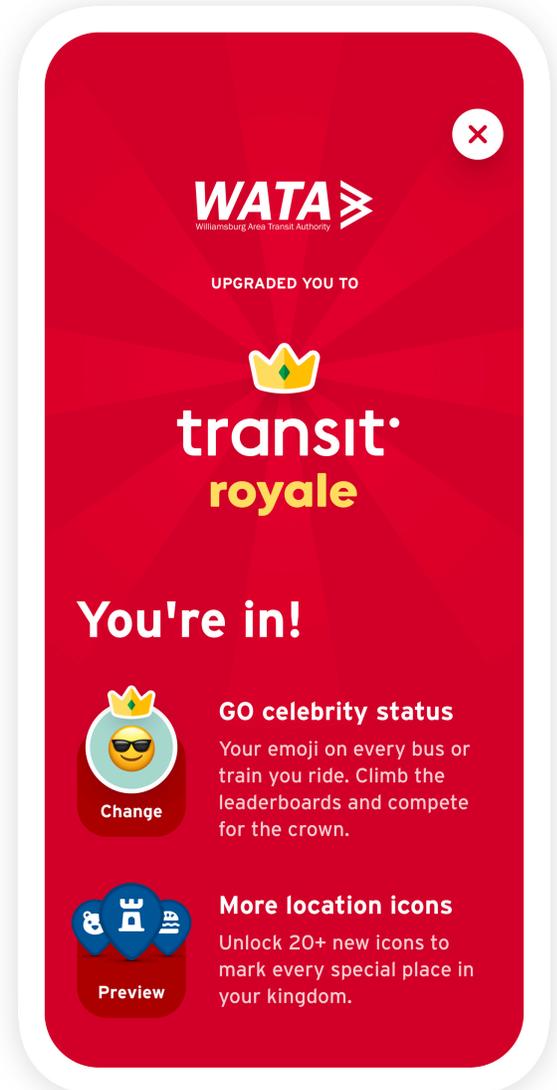
## Transit App

Since 2019, WATA has partnered with *Transit* as its official trip-planning app. The app gives riders real-time visibility of bus locations on routes, service alerts, and step-by-step destination guidance.

In FY 2024, riders used *Transit* 729,147 times and planned 146,893 trips. Usage has grown tremendously in the past two years. For example, in March 2024, riders planned 13,726 trips, which is an increase of 112% compared to March 2023, which had 6,449 planned trips.

*Transit* gained 2,708 new downloads within WATA's service area. On average, WATA had 1,624 monthly active users planning trips. Additionally, 196 riders subscribed to service alerts, ensuring they received real-time notifications about route disruptions.

In June 2024, WATA riders were automatically upgraded in the app with a free Transit Royale subscription, which unlocks additional features within the app, such as special WATA branding, fun customization options, and complete access to the app across the more than 300 cities *Transit* supports worldwide.



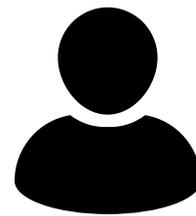
***"The Transit app is great! It provides more travel options compared to other mapping apps when navigating around town. I love that I can figure out how long it will take me to get somewhere by combining biking, walking, and bus travel. The app even lets you adjust your walking or biking speed to reflect how fast you will get to a bus stop. I also like being able to see a live indicator of where the bus is in the map while waiting at a stop."***

**Nick**

## Fleet

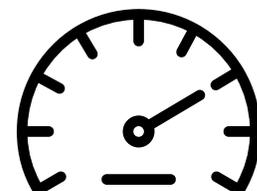
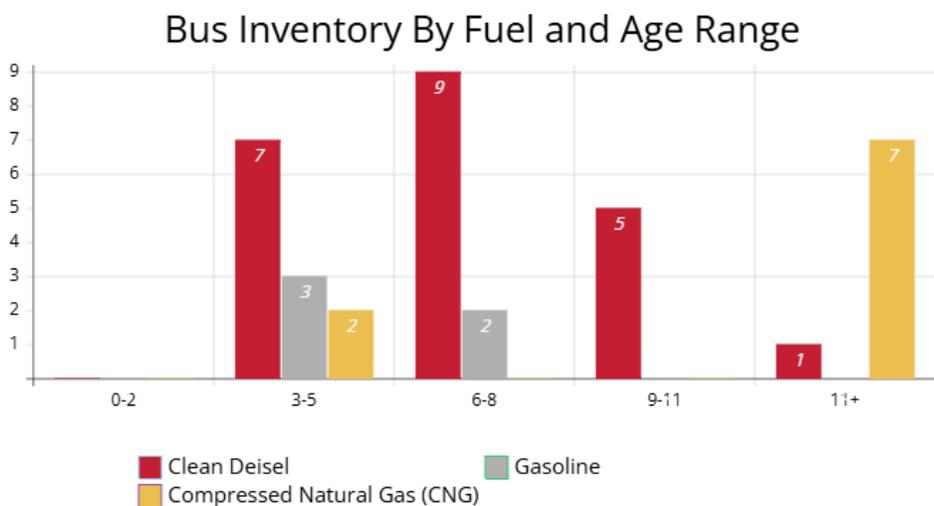
By the end of FY 2024, WATA maintained a diverse bus fleet to support its 75 square mile service area. The fleet included 20 buses for fixed routes, 9 compressed natural gas (CNG) buses specifically used for Route 15: Colonial, 2 trolley buses, and 4 Body-on-Chassis (BOC) buses for paratransit services. The average age for a WATA vehicle is 9 years.

In alignment with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) guidelines, which establish a 12-year minimum useful life for standard heavy transit buses, WATA has begun the process of replacing its older CNG buses, which have a 15.5 year age average.



**51/61**

Bus Operators



**4,231,267**

Miles Driven

## Recruitment

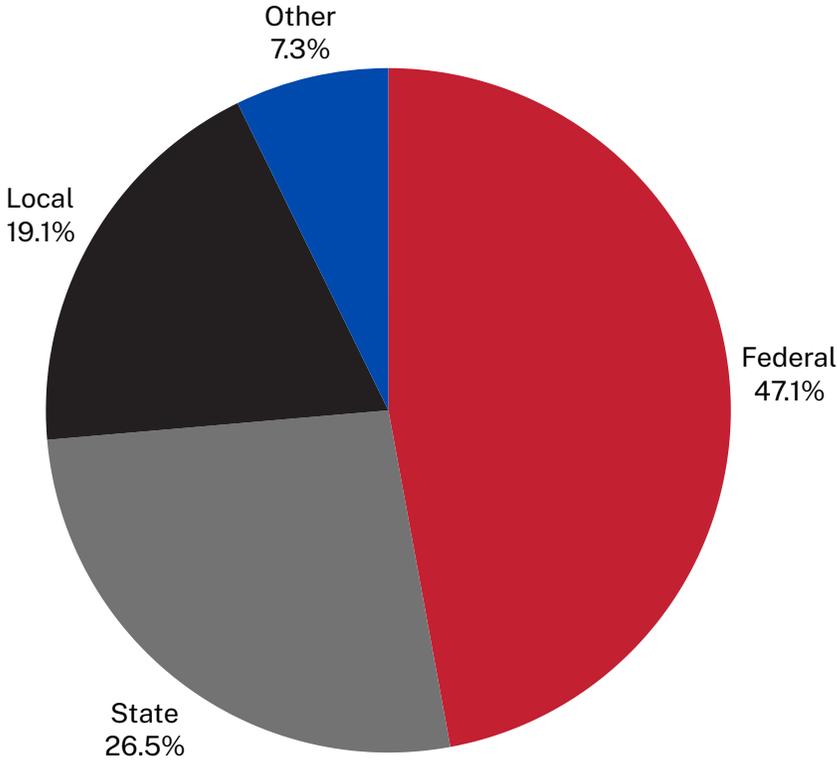
Bus operators are the backbone of WATA’s success, making recruitment and retention a top priority. Because of the CDL Class B license requirement to be an operator, WATA partnered with the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to streamline the commercial driver’s license (CDL) testing process, allowing trainees to complete all necessary CDL requirements while training to be a WATA operator.

Competitive wages play a key role in recruitment. In FY24, WATA received a 5% pay increase, making the starting pay for new bus operators \$17.98 per hour. To remain competitive in the job market, WATA collaborated with James City County (JCC), which provides WATA’s human resources services, to update its compensation plan. In June 2024, the WATA Board of Directors approved an increased compensation plan, which will increase wages for all employees by 5% on July 1st, 2025 and lay the groundwork for a new pay scale to be implemented in early FY 2025.

WATA continues its recruitment efforts by participating in job fairs across the Hampton Roads area, including the Hampton Roads Workforce Council and the House of Mercy’s inaugural Job Fair, to attract new talent.

## WATA Operating Budget FY24

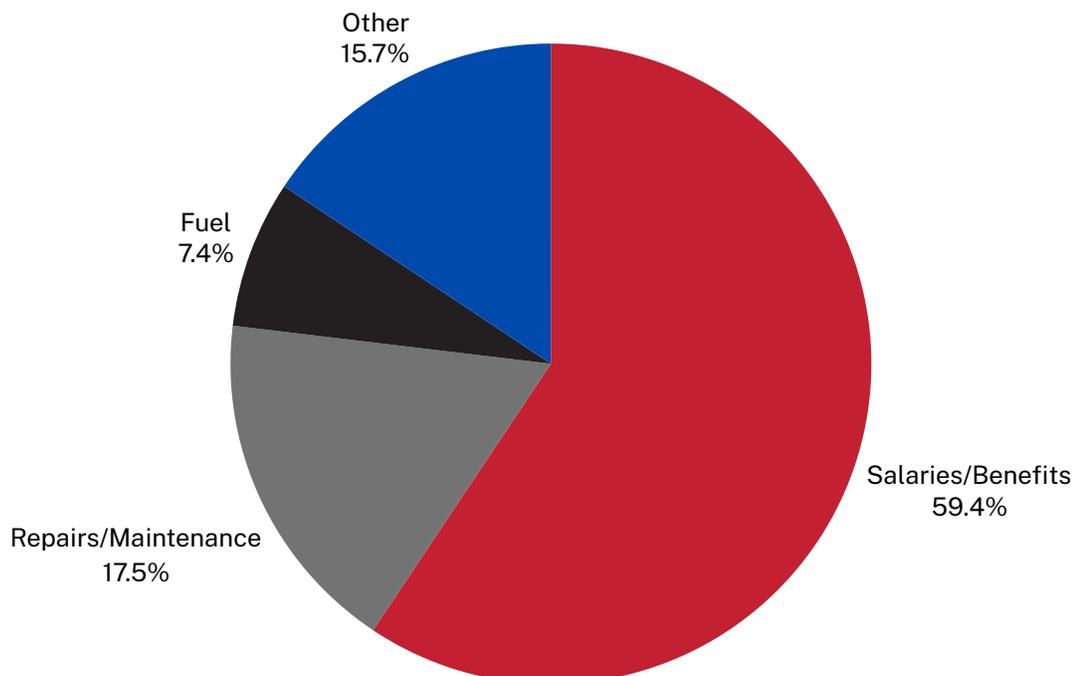
### Revenues



WATA's total revenue for FY 2024 amounted to \$7,719,604.03. 47.1% came from federal funding, 26.5% from state funding, 19.1% sourced from the City of Williamsburg, James City County, and York County, and 7.3% from other sources such as William & Mary, the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, and fares.

### Expenditures

WATA's total expenditures for FY 2024 also amounted to \$7,719,604.03. 59.4% was allocated to WATA's salaries and benefits, 17.5% to repairs and maintenance of WATA's bus fleet, 7.4% to fuel costs, and 15.7% to other expenses such as uniforms and administrative purchases.



In FY 2024, WATA continued to strengthen connections within the Williamsburg area and beyond:

- We actively participated in community events such as the City of Williamsburg's National Night Out and the Greater Williamsburg Chamber of Commerce's Christmas Parade.
- At William & Mary, alongside the College's Department of Transportation and Parking, we tabled at their New Student Orientation, to provide students with information about how they can utilize our services. We also participated in their Homecoming Parade and Earth Day Bash.
- We participated in the 9th Annual Great Williamsburg Adventure Race by offering transportation for participants during the event and educating them on how to use public transportation.
- We partnered with Lafayette High School in its Independent Living classes to educate students about the benefits of public transportation and how to use it.
- WATA provided four free fare days to all riders: Virginia's Election Day, Earth Day, Transit Equity (which celebrates Rosa Parks' birthday and legacy and promotes equity in public transit), and Bike to Work day for riders traveling with bicycles.
- We joined the Virginia Transit Association during its annual Advocacy Day during Virginia's General Assembly, where we discussed local legislative priorities with our representatives.
- In May 2024, now former WATA Director of Operations, Karen Davis, won the Transit Unsung Hero Award at the 2024 Virginia Transit Association Annual Awards.



Transit Planner, Steve Simms and Bus Operator, Gerard Swann II teaching students at Lafayette High School how to use the bike rack on a WATA bus



Now former Director of Operations, Karen Davis, being highlighted for receiving the Transit Unsung Hero Award at the 2024 Virginia Transit Association Annual Awards



Executive Director, Matthew Scalia, Transit Planner, Steve Simms, and Marketing and Administrative Specialist, Iyanla XO, at the *State of Transit: Transit Means Business* event

## Transit Means Business

In November 2023, WATA collaborated with Hampton Roads Transit and Suffolk Transit on the *State of Transit: Transit Means Business*, an event allowing government officials and community leaders to hear about the future of public transportation in the Hampton Roads area and its important connection to workforce development.

## WATA Advisory Committee

In January 2024, the WATA Board of Directors reinstated the WATA Advisory Committee, which had been inactive for nearly four years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The committee now includes six members representing York County, James City County, the City of Williamsburg, individuals with disabilities, William & Mary students, regular riders, and seniors aged 65 and older. Additional positions and representation opportunities remain open as the committee continues its work.

## Transit Strategic Plan Public Engagement

Between March and April 2024, WATA engaged the public to gather feedback on the draft of its transit strategic plan, *Evolving WATA*. This included releasing a public survey and hosting two virtual meetings to explain the planning process and details of the draft. The majority of participants expressed support for the plan. The public's input played a significant role in shaping the final report, completed in June 2024.

## Construction Projects

In FY 2024, WATA continued advancing the design process for two critical infrastructure projects: the Operations & Maintenance Facility and a new transfer center in the northern Williamsburg area.

The Operations and Maintenance Facility project includes a full renovation of the existing structure. Some highlights of the new facility include new maintenance bays with fall protection and the ability to expand further in the future, expanded administrative space with new conference rooms and a training/meeting space, preliminary infrastructure and preparations for electric vehicle charging (both light and heavy-duty vehicles), and better amenities for operations staff including a small gym as well as indoor/ outdoor break areas.

Historically, WATA has partnered with the Walmart Supercenter and Lowes on East Rochambeau Drive as a transfer location. The new transfer center will enhance the rider and operator experience by providing an indoor/outdoor waiting area, real-time rider information displays, a ticketing and information office, and administrative and operation break space.

Both facilities are currently on track for procurement in early FY 2025, with anticipated completion in early FY27.



## Mobile Ticketing

In FY 2024, WATA finalized its contract with Masabi, Transit, and Equans to integrate mobile fare payment within the Transit app. This new feature will allow riders to purchase tickets and all-day passes directly from their smartphones. At the time of this report's publication, the feature officially launched in early February 2025.

## ADA Eligibility Screening

In FY 2024, WATA initiated the process of issuing a Request for Proposal (RFP) for an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) eligibility screening contract to enhance its paratransit services. The goal of this initiative is to ensure that individuals with disabilities have access to public transportation that meet their specific needs.

Paratransit services are a vital component to WATA's transit system, providing accessible transportation for individuals who cannot use standard public transit due to a disability within 3/4 of a mile of a WATA route. Currently, WATA determines eligibility based on an ADA application and supporting information from a healthcare professional. The introduction of an external eligibility screening process will add an extra layer of verification, improving accuracy and consistency in eligibility determinations while ensuring that services are provided to those who need them most. **12**

## Transit Strategic Plan Completion

In June 2024, the WATA Board of Directors approved the final draft of its transit strategic plan, *Evolving WATA*, a long-term document designed to guide its transit service development over the next 10 years. Shaped by Jarrett Walker and Associates transit consulting agency, public input and Board recommendations, the plan prioritizes frequency improvements, with a commitment to investing 50% more resources into enhancing existing routes. The plan will be implemented in three phases:

### Phase 1

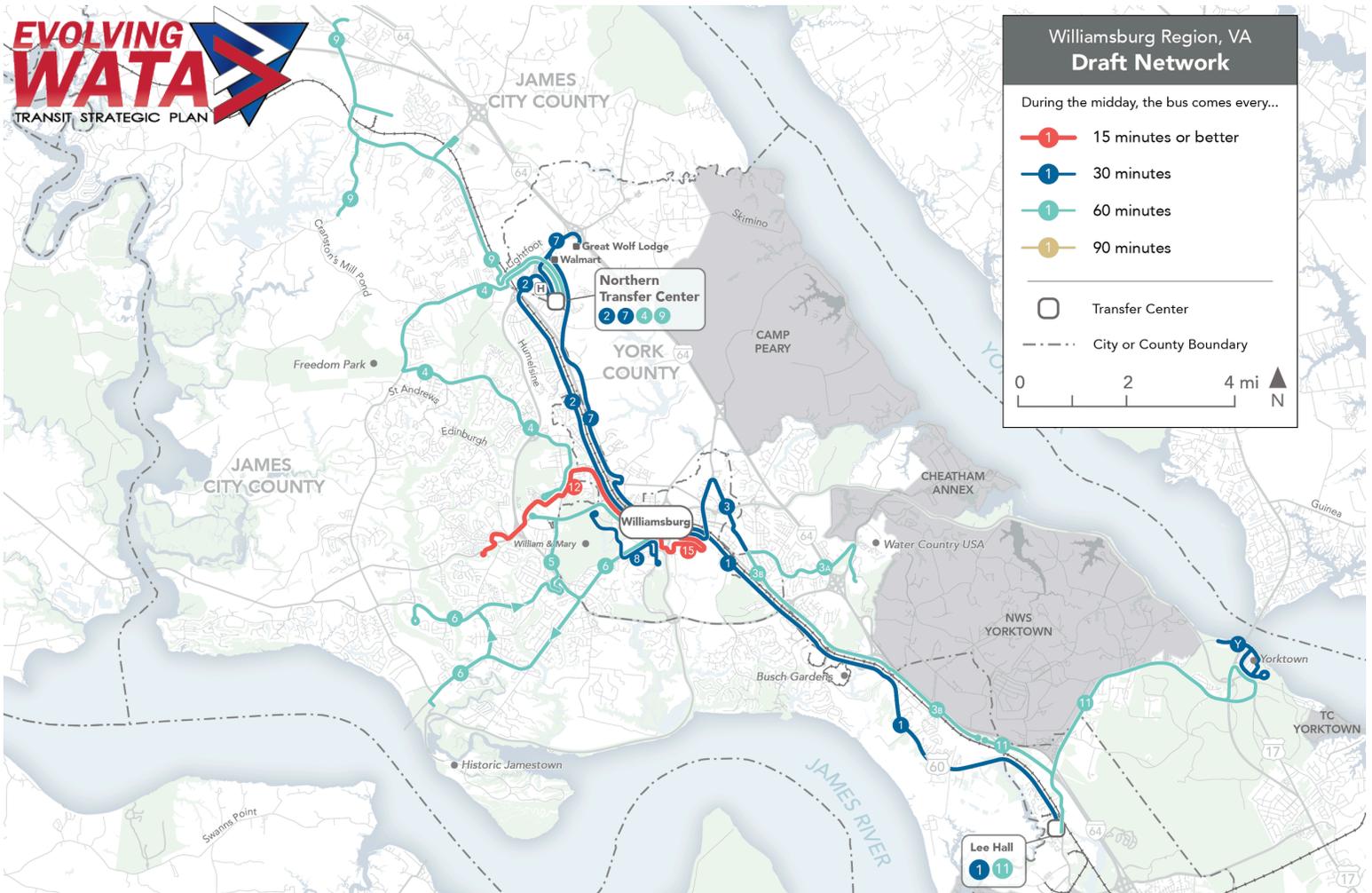
- Improved frequency to Routes 1 and 2, to 30-minute frequency all day.
- A realignment of routes around the new transfer center once construction is complete.

### Phase 2

- Improved frequency to Routes 3 and 7, to 30-minute frequency all day
  - Route 3 will restructure to offer hourly service both to the Marquis Shopping Center and to Tam-O-Shanter for a connection with Route 11.
- Route 11 will restructure to a consistent hourly frequency all day and be able to reach down to Historic Yorktown.

### Phase 3

- Increase frequency of Route 12 to 15 minutes all day.







***Thank you for your continued support!***



**goWATA**



**goWATA\_VA**



**goWATA\_VA**



**Williamsburg Area Transit Authority**