Washington Suburban Transit Commission

Maryland MetroAccess Strategy Study

October 28, 2025

Presented at the COG TPB
Regional Public Transportation Subcommittee

Background

WSTC is the liaison between the State of Maryland, WMATA, and Montgomery County and Prince George's County.

- Coordinates public transit services with the two Maryland counties, the Maryland Department of Transportation, and WMATA.
- Acts as the financial conduit for funding public transit on behalf of Montgomery and Prince George's Counties.

State of Maryland provides the funding for MetroAccess in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties.

- Maryland's funding represents disproportionate amount of total MetroAccess costs compared to D.C. and the Northern Virginia jurisdictions.

Why is the Study Needed?

Federal ADA Mandate

MetroAccess – the region's ADA paratransit service mandated by Federal ADA law is required to meet all demand from eligible individuals with disabilities. "No capacity constraints."

Maryland's Cost Burden

Maryland's costs for MetroAccess are the highest of the region's jurisdictions because ridership in the two Maryland counties, which corresponds to cost, is the highest.
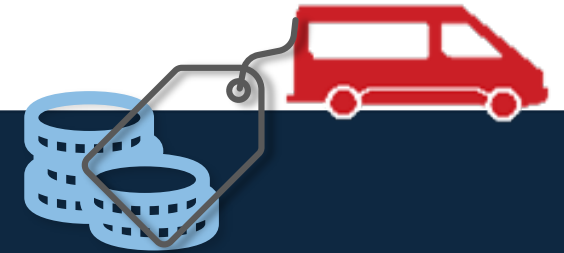
In FY24, Maryland's cost was 61% of the total cost of $199 M.

Rising Costs

Maryland's costs for MetroAccess are increasing, from $117 M in FY22 to $121 M in FY24.

Maryland Pays for All Trips

Maryland pays the cost for all MetroAccess trips in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties.

Understanding how to provide MetroAccess while managing the long-term cost curve is a critical need for the State of Maryland.

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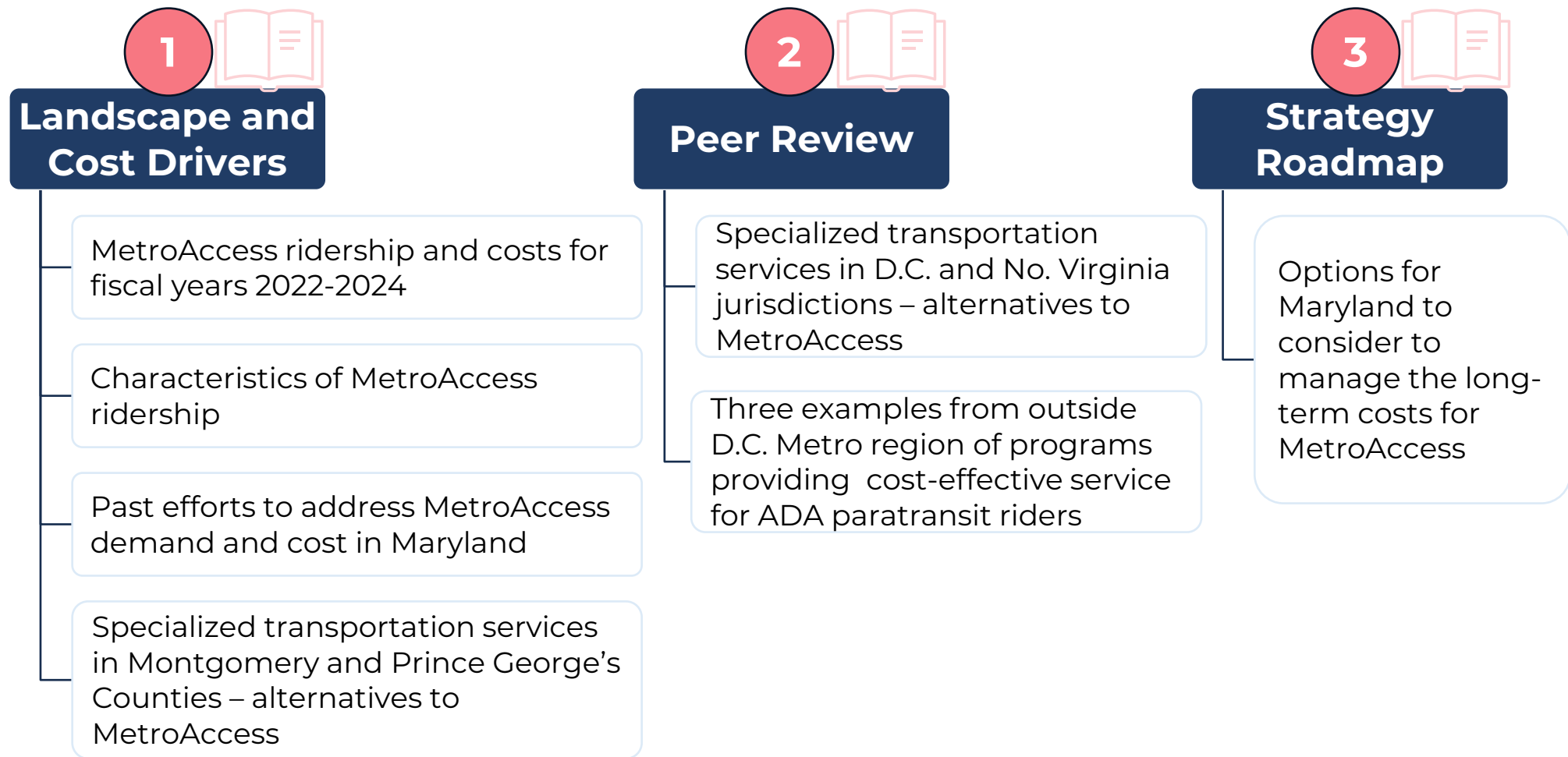WASHINGTON SUBURBAN TRANSIT COMMISSION

Study Objective

To provide a strategy **"roadmap"** to the State of Maryland for managing the long-term costs for MetroAccess while ensuring the provision of quality paratransit.
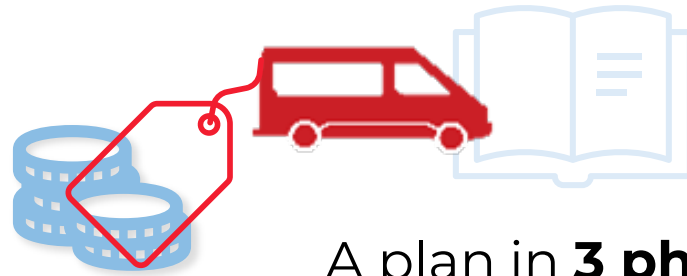
Study Tasks

1 — Landscape and Cost Drivers

- MetroAccess ridership and costs for fiscal years 2022-2024
- Characteristics of MetroAccess ridership
- Past efforts to address MetroAccess demand and cost in Maryland
- Specialized transportation services in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties – alternatives to MetroAccess

2 — Peer Review

- Specialized transportation services in D.C. and No. Virginia jurisdictions – alternatives to MetroAccess
- Three examples from outside D.C. Metro region of programs providing cost-effective service for ADA paratransit riders

3 — Strategy Roadmap

- Options for Maryland to consider to manage the long-term costs for MetroAccess

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The Strategy Roadmap

A plan in **3 phases**

to facilitate discussions between the State of Maryland, Montgomery and Prince George's Counties, WMATA, and other stakeholders

to determine preferred **strategy** approaches **to manage Maryland's costs for MetroAccess** that will also ensure quality service for the riders.

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MetroAccess
– ADA Paratransit Provided by WMATA

Complies with **Federal ADA law**.

Required to serve ¾-mile corridors of fixed routes, including WMATA's Metrobus and Metrorail and local jurisdictions' fixed routes, e.g. Ride On in Montgomery Co. and TheBus in Prince George's Co.

Includes Ride On and TheBus routes within the service area required for WMATA's service and Ride On and TheBus routes that extend beyond what is required for WMATA's service.

Next-day, shared ride, door-to-door service for eligible people with disabilities.

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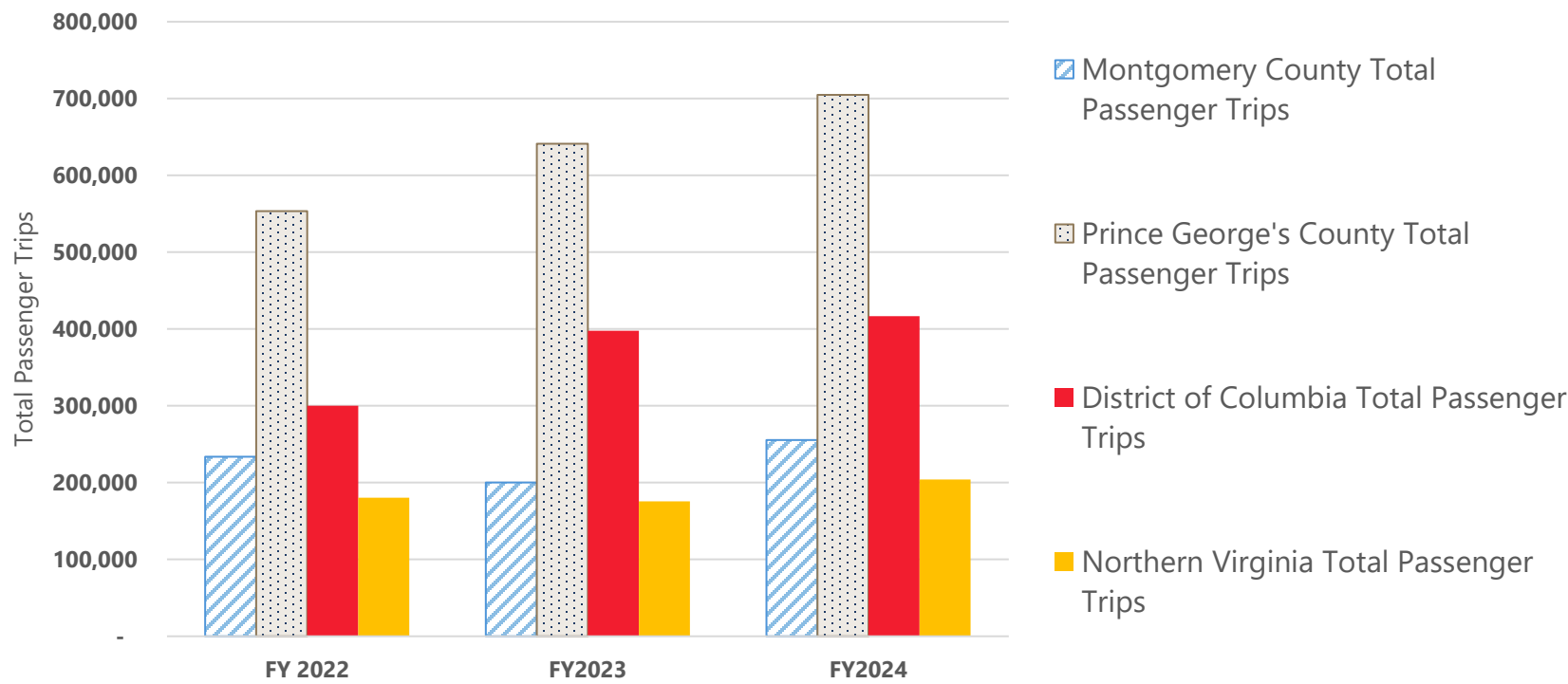
Abilities-Ride
– an alternative service

WMATA shifts MetroAccess trips to lower cost providers (Uber, taxis, van companies).

Generates **significant savings distributed** proportionally to all jurisdictions.

Cost per trip: $33 vs. $106 for MetroAccess (averaged over FYs 22-24)

MetroAccess Ridership

Total MetroAccess Ridership by Jurisdictions

Legend:
- Montgomery County Total Passenger Trips
- Prince George's County Total Passenger Trips
- District of Columbia Total Passenger Trips
- Northern Virginia Total Passenger Trips

MetroAccess: Annual Subsidy Shares by Jurisdiction

Total MetroAccess Subsidies from Jurisdictions
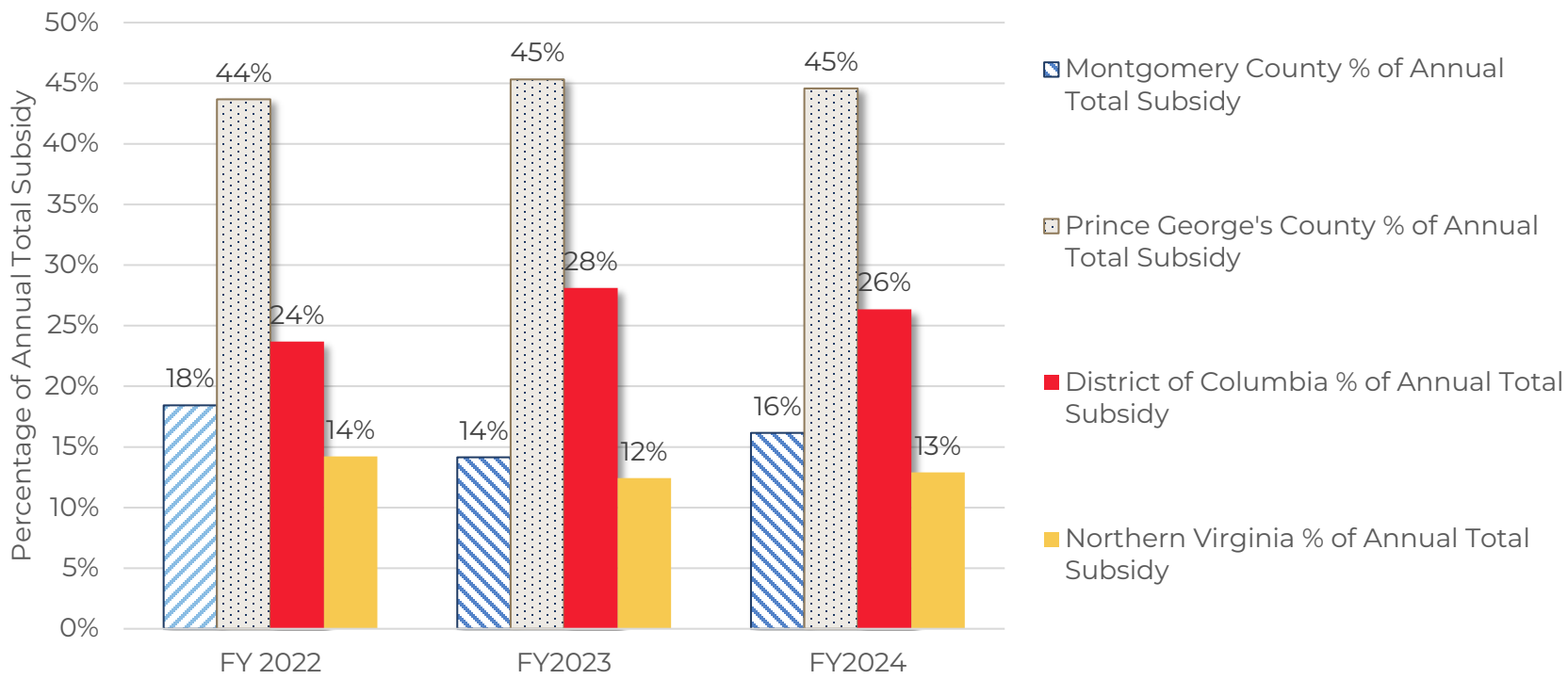
Maryland's Cost for MetroAccess

	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024	Change from FY2022- 2024	
Maryland	$117,285,911	$114,529,827	$120,878,532	$3,592,622	3%
Montgomery County	$34,810,889	$27,257,992	$32,164,204	-$2,646,685	-8%
Prince George's County	$82,475,022	$87,271,835	$88,714,328	$6,239,307	8%

Total Ridership – MetroAccess + Abilities-Ride

Total ridership on MetroAccess plus Abilities-Ride **increased 52%** from FY 22 to FY 24.

Compare to increase of 48% on Metrobus and 89% on Metrorail over same three years.

■ Abilities Ride   ■ MetroAccess

Total Paratransit Trips

Year	Total	Abilities Ride	MetroAccess
2022	1,518,023	250,469	1,267,554
2023	1,963,807	549,076	1,414,732
2024	2,300,605	719,895	1,580,797

Total Costs

Year	Total	Abilities Ride	MetroAccess
2022	$141.6 M	$8.10 M	$133.50 M
2023	$173.1 M	$16.60 M	$156.50 M
2024	$185.1 M	$25.90 M	$159.20 M

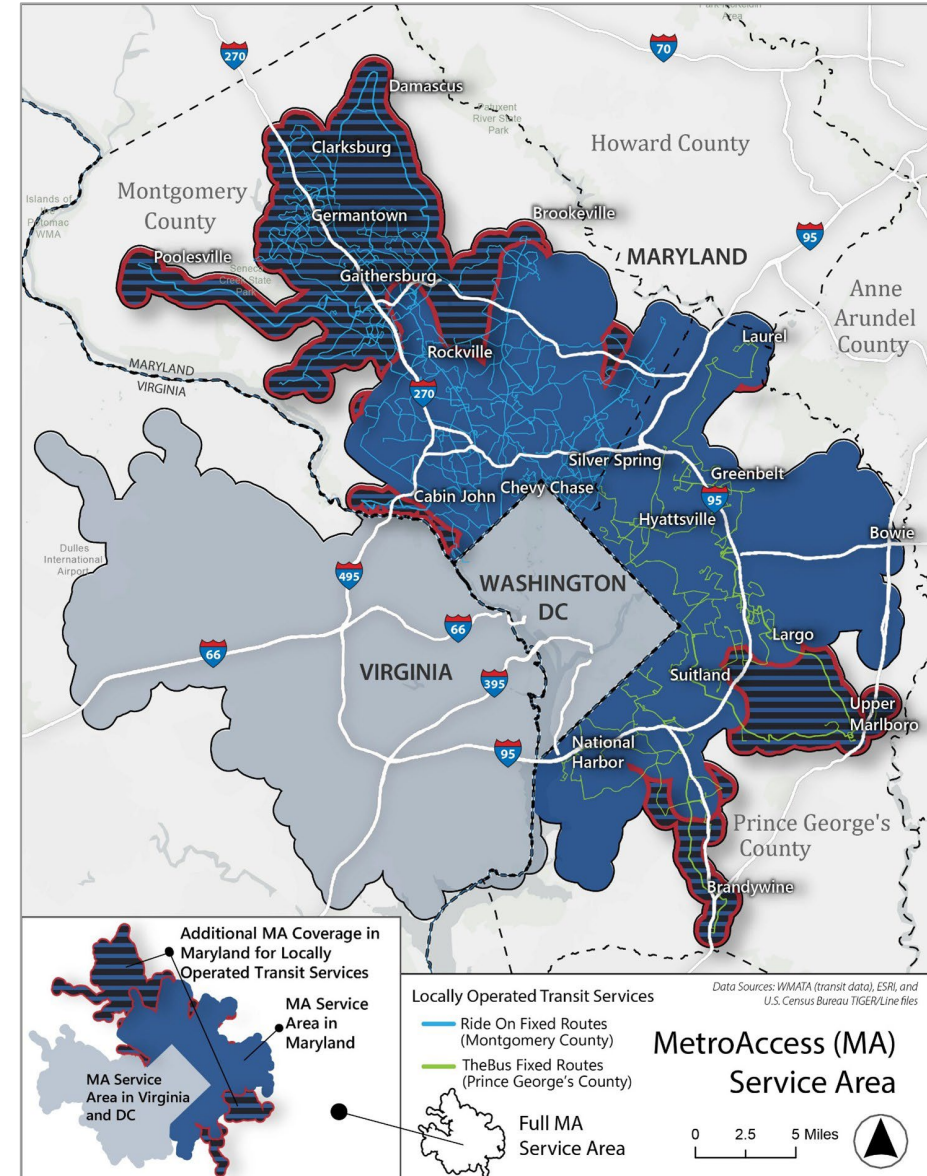WSTC WASHINGTON SUBURBAN TRANSIT COMMISSION
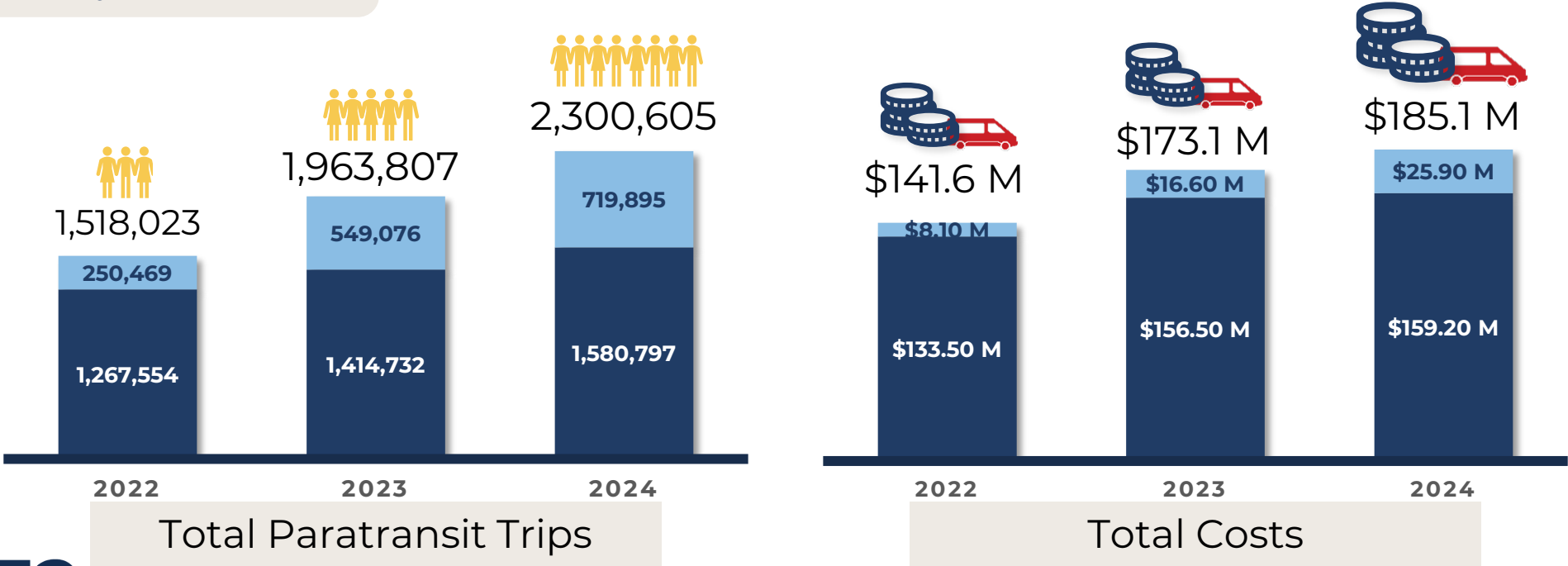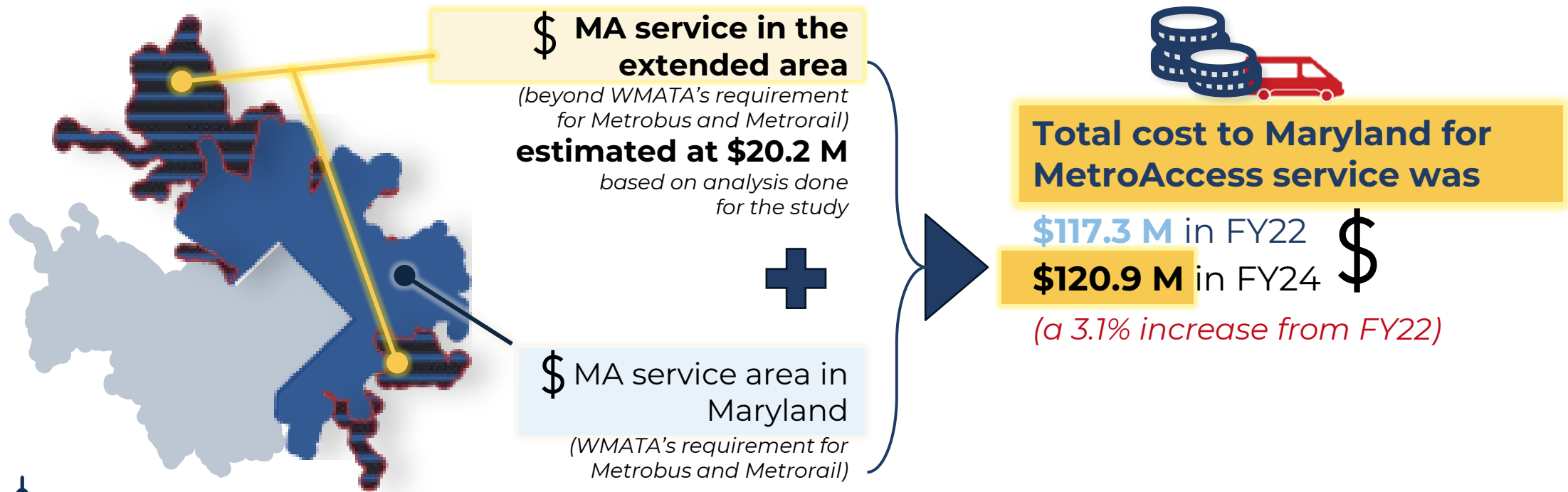
Who Pays for MetroAccess?

State of Maryland pays all costs for MetroAccess service in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties.

Includes costs for MetroAccess required for Ride On and TheBus services **within** the service area required for WMATA's Metrobus and Metrorail.

Also includes costs for MetroAccess required for Ride On and TheBus services that **extend beyond** the service area required for WMATA's Metrobus and Metrorail.

MetroAccess (MA) Service Area

Additional MA Coverage in Maryland for Locally Operated Transit Services

MA Service Area in Maryland

MA Service Area in Virginia and DC

Locally Operated Transit Services
- Ride On Fixed Routes (Montgomery County)
- TheBus Fixed Routes (Prince George's County)
- Full MA Service Area

Data Sources: WMATA (transit data), ESRI, and U.S. Census Bureau TIGER/Line files

0   2.5   5 Miles

Maryland pays for MetroAccess (MA)
in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties

$ **MA service in the extended area**
(beyond WMATA's requirement for Metrobus and Metrorail)
estimated at $20.2 M
based on analysis done for the study

+

$ MA service area in Maryland
(WMATA's requirement for Metrobus and Metrorail)

Total cost to Maryland for MetroAccess service was

$117.3 M in FY22
$120.9 M in FY24

(a 3.1% increase from FY22)

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Trips Driving Demand for MetroAccess

Montgomery County

Support Services for People with Disabilities
45%

Medical Facilities
20%

Dialysis
14%

Prince George's County

Adult Day Care
44%

Dialysis
37%

Support Services for People with Disabilities
10%

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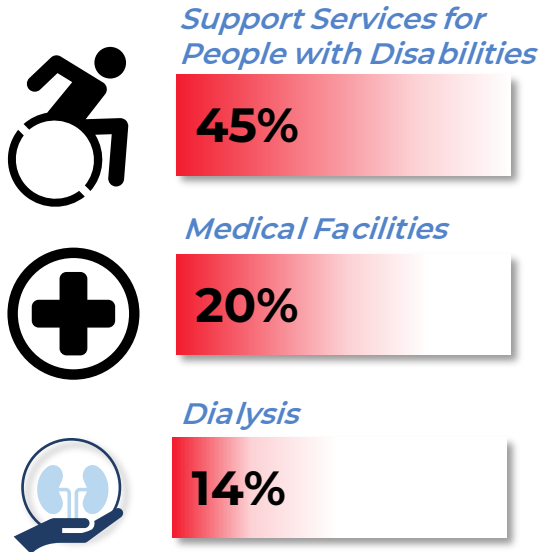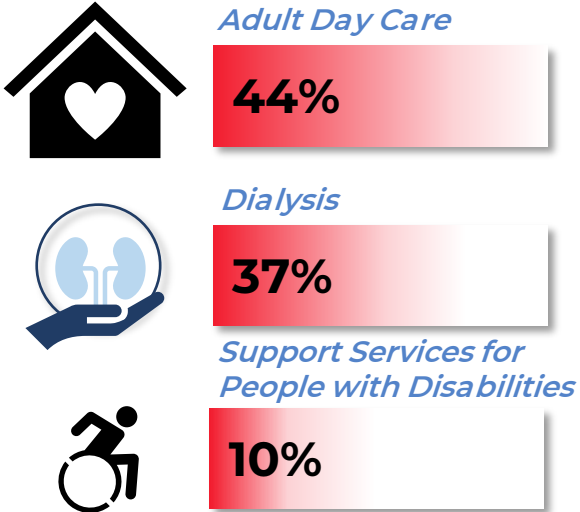
County-Funded Specialized Transportation Services:
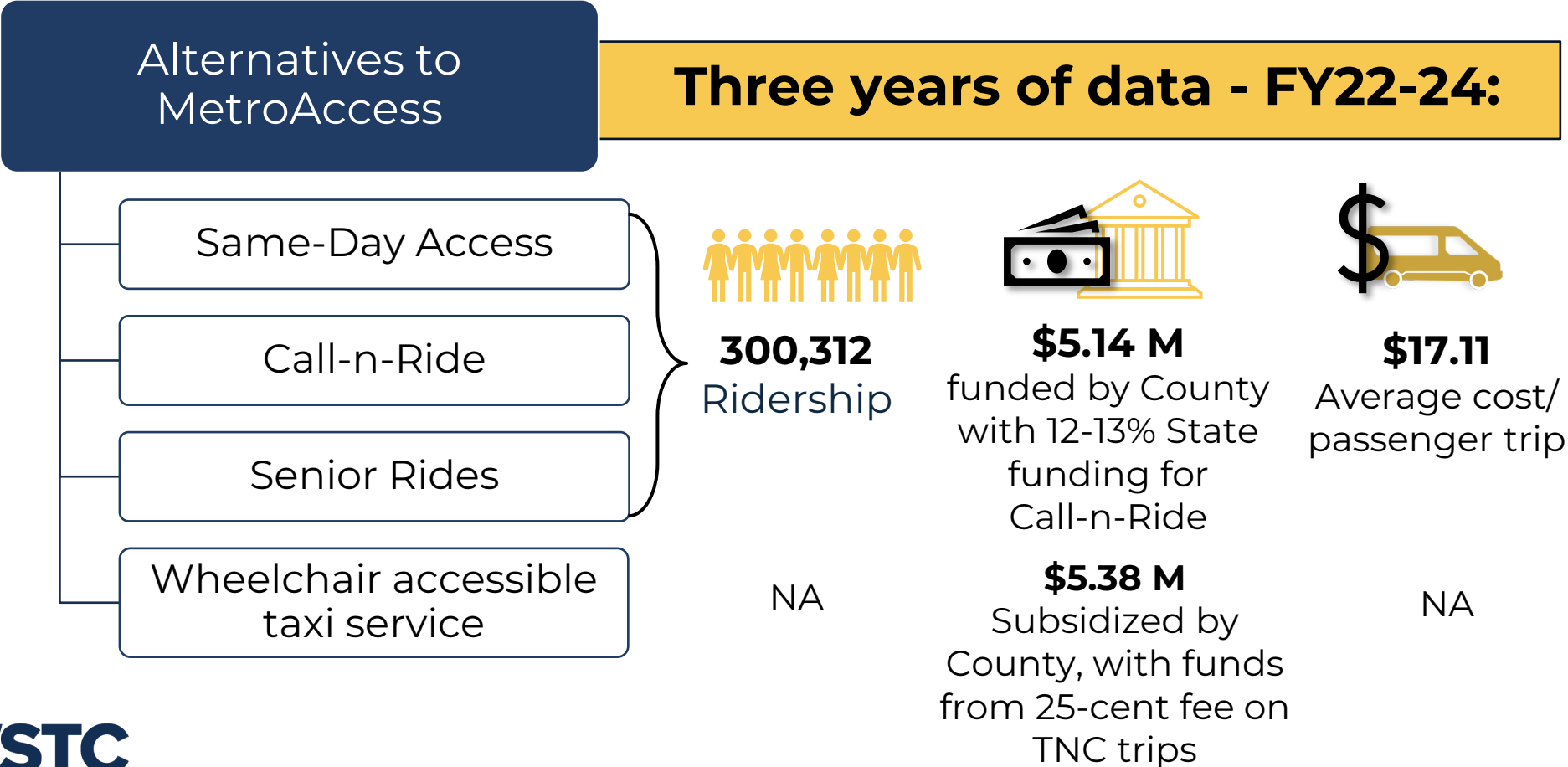## Lower Cost Alternatives to MetroAccess

Higher level of support for specialized transportation in Montgomery Co. vs. Prince George's Co.

Contributes to lower MetroAccess ridership in Montgomery vs. Prince George's Counties.
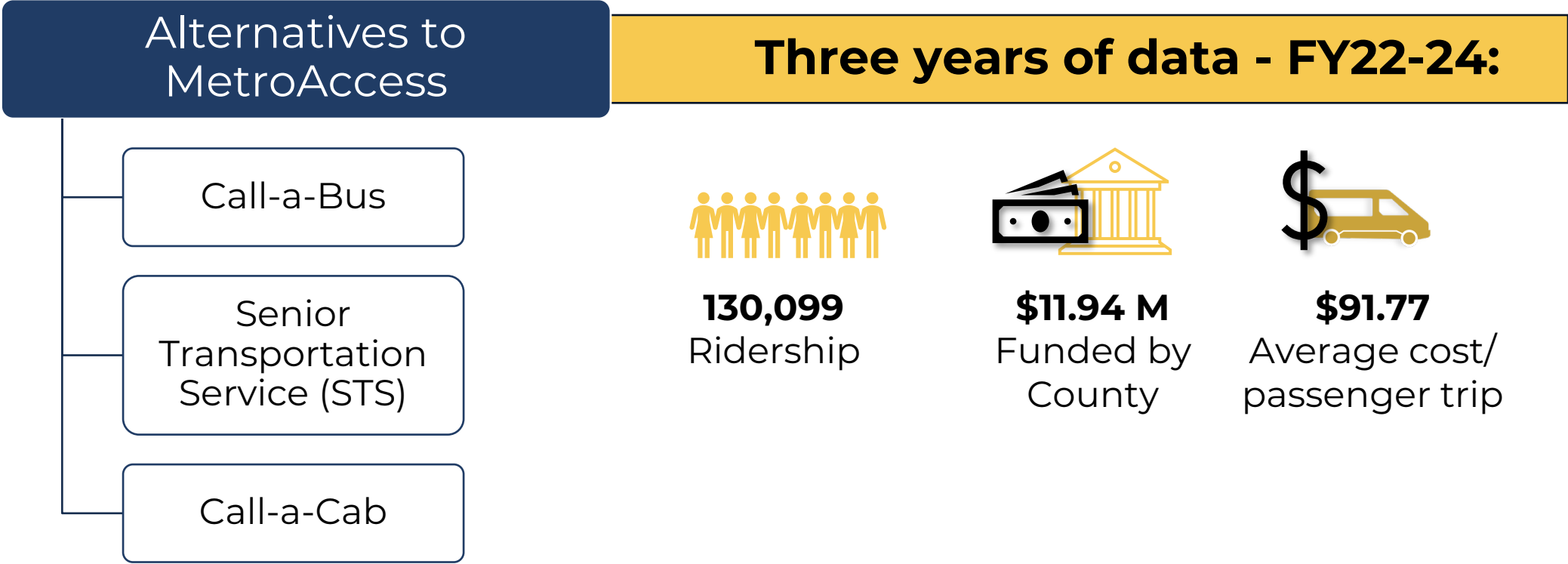
Specialized Transportation
Montgomery County

Alternatives to MetroAccess

- Same-Day Access
- Call-n-Ride
- Senior Rides
- Wheelchair accessible taxi service

300,312 Ridership

$5.14 M funded by County with 12-13% State funding for Call-n-Ride

$17.11 Average cost/ passenger trip

NA

$5.38 M Subsidized by County, with funds from 25-cent fee on TNC trips

NA

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Specialized Transportation
Prince George's County

Alternatives to MetroAccess

- Call-a-Bus
- Senior Transportation Service (STS)
- Call-a-Cab

Three years of data - FY22-24:

130,099
Ridership

$11.94 M
Funded by County

$91.77
Average cost/ passenger trip

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Efforts to Address Maryland's Costs

Past Effort

CAPS
(Coordinated Alternative to Paratransit Services)

» Pilot in Montgomery Co. with a human service agency (HSA) sponsored by Maryland DOT from 2013-2015
» HSA managed its client transportation day-to-day with designated provider
» Per trip cost was 40% less than a MetroAccess trip

Current Efforts

Abilities-Ride
Partnerships

» WMATA developed, evolved from CAPS pilot
» Current partnerships with 3 HSAs, 2 in Montgomery Co. and 1 in Prince George's Co.
» Each HSA has a designated provider; HSA manages its client transportation
» Savings do not go directly to Maryland, but commingled with all Abilities-Ride savings

STRATEGY ROADMAP

Phase ②

Engaging on Strategy Approaches

Phase 2: Engaging on Strategy Approaches

State, two Maryland Counties, WMATA, and other stakeholders

Three strategy approaches *(complementary and not mutually exclusive), each with options:*

Support and enhance current efforts
to address costs, specifically Abilities-Ride

3 options

Expand local coordination and participation
from Montgomery and Prince George's Counties

4 options

Develop partnerships to serve recurring trips
that would contribute to reducing demand for MetroAccess

2 options

Support and Enhance Current Efforts

Focuses on Abilities-Ride and its significant role in reducing costs for MetroAccess, with savings shared proportionally across the jurisdictions.
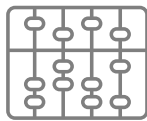*(No direct savings to Maryland)*

1 Update Paratransit Subsidy Allocation Formula to formalize and make clear the process by which the savings from Abilities-Ride are calculated in the formula.

2 Change Paratransit Subsidy Allocation Formula to allocate cost-saving measures to the jurisdiction where the cost savings are generated, particularly human service agency partnerships.

3 Consider charging a fare for Abilities-Ride trips

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Expand Local Coordination and Participation

Expand coordination and participation from Montgomery and Prince George's Counties to improve decision-making about costs and payment for MetroAccess.

1 Improve local fixed route planning and coordination with the State to recognize impacts on MetroAccess costs.

2 Continue and consider expanding local county-based specialized transportation services that provide lower-cost alternatives to MetroAccess.

3 ADA paratransit service for Montgomery and Prince George's Counties

4 Cost sharing for MetroAccess trips beyond the ADA paratransit service area required for WMATA's Metrobus and Metrorail.

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STRATEGY APPROACH #3

2 options

Develop Partnerships to Serve Recurring Trips

Focus on recurring trips that drive demand for MetroAccess.

1 Alternative Transportation for Dialysis Trips.

2 Alternative Transportation for Adult Day Care Trips.

STRATEGY ROADMAP

Phase **3**

Action

Phase 3: Action

Coordinate decision-making
with the State, the two counties and other stakeholders to determine preferred strategy approaches

Evaluate opportunities and constraints based on feasibility of finances, politics, and operations.

Outreach and dialogue
with MetroAccess riders and broader disability communities in the two counties for feedback.

After consensus, focus on **implementation of preferred strategy** approaches and options.

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