

Subject: Transit Questions
Related Department: DES

FY 2025 Proposed Budget Budget Work Session Follow-up

4/84/8/2024

The following information is provided in response to a request made by Mr. de Ferranti and Mr. Karantonis at the work session on March 12, 2024, regarding the following question:

How can micro-transit be used to make up for demand along eliminated routes, and how are ridership numbers on ART Route 72 in the context of the micro-transit pilot?

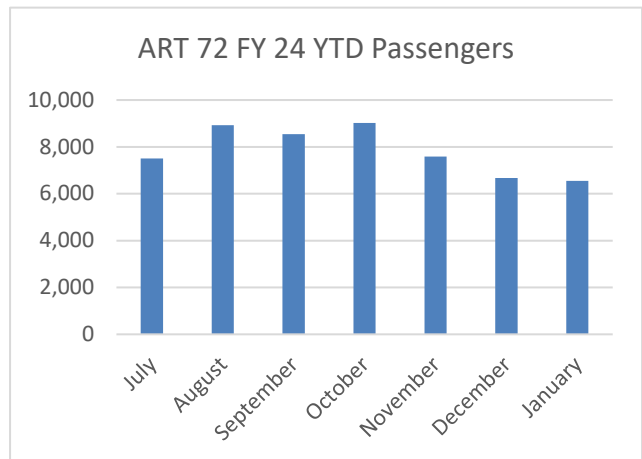
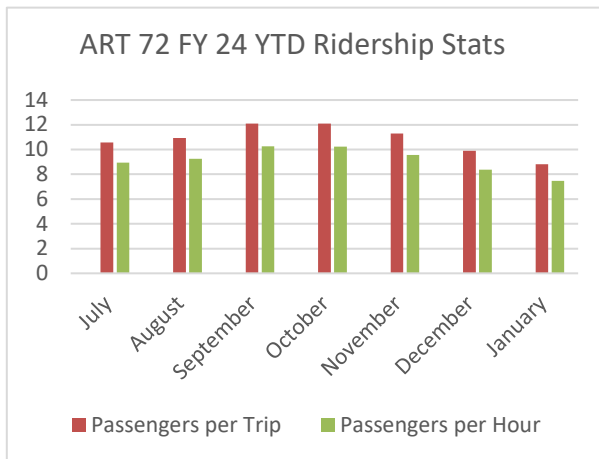
Arlington Microtransit Plan

On-demand microtransit is a transportation service that complies with regulations similar to traditional public transit but with a more flexible and dynamic route structure. Unlike fixed-route buses or trains, on-demand microtransit allows passengers to request rides from specific pick-up and drop-off locations using a mobile app or other booking method. To optimize efficiency and reduce costs, microtransit services combine rides with multiple passengers heading in the same direction grouped together. For this reason, routes with low ridership, like the proposed reductions, could be good contenders for microtransit options instead of fixed routes.

While DES would prefer to implement a microtransit pilot option in conjunction with the proposed reductions, that will not be feasible given the additional planning and implementation work that must be completed to implement a pilot. The earliest pilot start date is fall of CY 2025; additional details on the planning effort and timeline are provided in Attachment A.

ART 72 & Microtransit

The recently adopted Arlington Transit Strategic Plan (TSP) recommended microtransit in areas where demand and access to service is low. DES does not recommend microtransit along ART Route 72 at this time due to the importance the route plays as a north/south connecting route linking Marymount, Ballston and Shirlington. Currently the ART 72 meets performance standards, which were revised with the adoption of the TSP, with monthly averages of 7,829 passengers, 10 passengers per trip and 9 passengers per hour for the first six months of the fiscal year. The ART service standard for “connector” routes, like the 72, is 10 passengers per trip and 9 passenger per hour. While the ART 72 is meeting our performance standard, DES will continue to monitor performance.



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Attachment A

FY 2025 Microtransit Plan

The [Arlington Transit Strategic Plan 2023-2032 \(ATSP\)](#) (see Chapter 3, page 4) recommends the implementation of the on-demand microtransit project in FY 2026 in conjunction with a handful of other service recommendations. The recommendation in the ATSP for on-demand microtransit is a single-zone pilot area that encompasses the north/western part of the County bound by N Glebe Rd to the east, Route 29/Langston Blvd to the south and the County line to the west and north. The service recommendation is a “curb-to-hub” model where customers can schedule trips from defined pick-up locations for transport to defined drop-off locations at Metrorail stations or bus stops with multiple transit services where they can connect to the high-frequency transit network.

The County is undertaking a project in FY 2025 to study on-demand microtransit in the County. The study will address the logistics of pilot implementation and program operation. Following the study, a pilot would begin in the fall of calendar year 2025. Issues addressed by the study include:

- Cost: Start-up implementation; ongoing operation cost
- Zones: Confirm geographic pilot zone and define potential expansion zones
- Operation: Verify “curb-to-hub” operation or suggest alternative
- Operational Hours: All day, midday, evening, late night, weekends
- Contracting Model: Turnkey; service provider contract; partnerships with Transportation Network Companies
- Vehicles: Fleet size, type, propulsion, storage, maintenance, ADA accessibility
- Technology: Mobile apps; web-based app; call center; fare payment
- Branding
- Fare/Price Structure and Elasticity

Vehicle Demonstration

Demonstrations with cutaway buses, passenger vans, and shared cars are crucial for assessing the optimal transportation solutions based on versatility, capacity, maneuverability, and specific service demands, considering the propulsion type's impact on efficiency and environmental footprint.

Cutaway buses, which are smaller buses that seat approximately 20, offer unparalleled flexibility, suitable for flex-route services and ADA-compliant transit due to their seating capacity and adaptability. However, their higher operating costs and inefficiency in low-demand periods suggest a need for alternative solutions during off-peak hours or in low-density areas.

Passenger vans, offering lower capacity but increased maneuverability, can enhance service efficiency by reducing the risk of damage in tight spaces and are preferable for areas where larger vehicles like cutaway buses are less practical. Yet, their limited capacity poses challenges during peak demand periods, underscoring the need for a balanced fleet that includes higher-capacity vehicles for such times.

Taxis, or partnership with transportation network companies like Uber, Lyft, or Via, present a flexible, on-demand solution that complements the existing fleet by catering to specific needs such as

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accessibility and direct transportation to critical destinations. Evaluating these three vehicle types in conjunction with considering propulsion types—such as electric or hybrid engines—can lead to a more sustainable, efficient, and tailored transit service that meets varied mobility needs.

Implementation Timeline

Feasibility Plan & Recommendations (Now - December 2024)

- Existing Service analysis
- Literature review
- Evaluation of existing models/best practices
- Technology analysis
- Contracting models/Service provider analysis (turnkey; operations contract; County provided; TAC partnerships)
- Budget
- Capital set-up (Vehicles; Operations facility)
- Operations and maintenance
- Insurance
- Driver training
- Public engagement
- Vehicle Demonstrations
- Branding/Marketing

Microtransit Implementation (Eight months; January 2025 - October 2025)

- Contract Procurement
- Vehicle acquisition (depending on contract model)
- Facility Identification and acquisition (depending on contract model)
- Operator hiring and training (depending on contract model)
- Service implementation