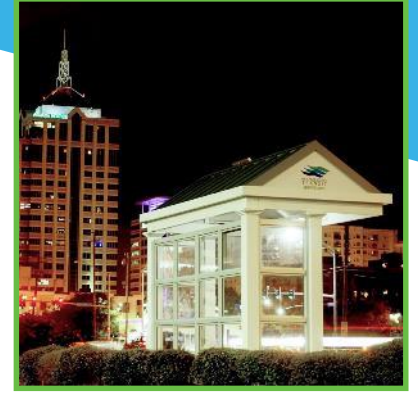


# System Optimization Plan Update

Hampton City Council Briefing

December 10, 2025



# SOP Purpose

# SOP Purpose and Need Statement

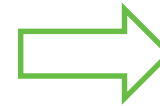
The System Optimization Plan explores how HRT can put its limited resources to their best use by reducing low-ridership local bus service and reinvesting those savings in routes with high ridership demand.



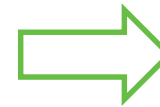
# Why is the SOP Needed?

## The SOP Will:

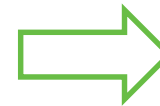
- **Increase ridership** by putting service where it is most needed
- **Improve reliability** by better matching schedules to bus operator and vehicle availability
- **Will result in an overall more cost-effective bus network**



HRT is in the **bottom quartile** of mid and large transit agencies by passengers carried per revenue hour



**1,200** trips were missed in June 2025 due to operator unavailability.



SOP-impacted local routes **cost \$6.43 more per passenger trip** to operate than regional backbone service.

# Context for SOP

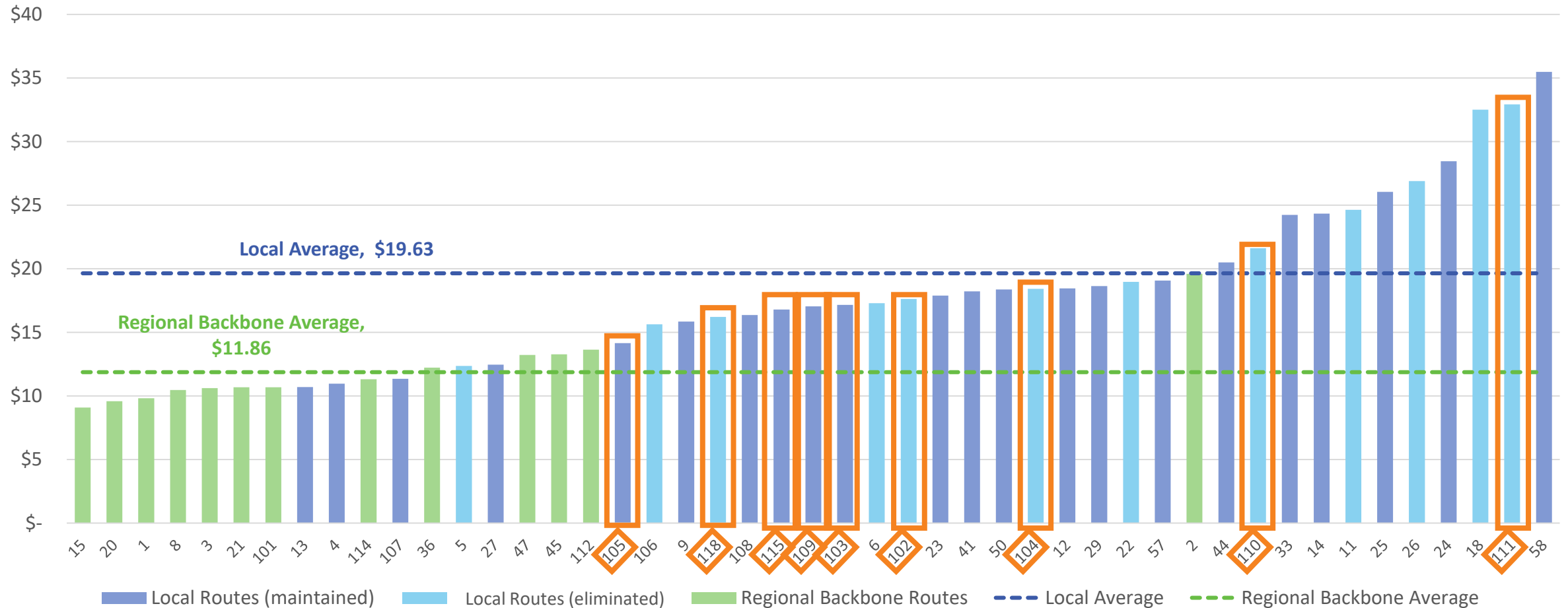
- **Bus operator shortages** makes it difficult to return service to pre-pandemic levels and provide a consistent and reliable travel option for customers.
  - HRT is short approximately 50 operators to return to pre-pandemic service levels on Southside routes. To fully implement the RTS network, an additional 45 operators are needed.
  - Operators are required to work overtime to meet scheduled service.
- **HRT needs to match its service to its resources.** The lack of operators means HRT cannot reliably operate the network it has today. Right-sizing the network means HRT can be reliable and not miss trips due to lack of bus operators.
  - In June 2025, HRT missed approximately 1,200 trips.
- **Microtransit gives HRT new options for serving lower demand markets.** HRT can use microtransit to fill gaps in the network where the demand just doesn't exist for fixed-route service.
  - Microtransit is a new mode that can complement fixed-route services.
- **To fully implement the remaining high frequency service on the RTS routes requires freeing up bus operators.** Without freeing up operators, it could take another decade to fully implement 15-minute service.
  - RTS routes are, on average, have a higher ridership productivity than HRT's local routes.

# Service Planning Guiding Principles

- Eliminate service on low-performing local routes
- Streamline or consolidate routes to remove duplication in the network
- Realign moderate and high-performing routes to maintain fixed-route coverage
- Adjust level of service and service type based on land use and employment density and demand

# Operating Cost per Passenger (FY23 & FY24)

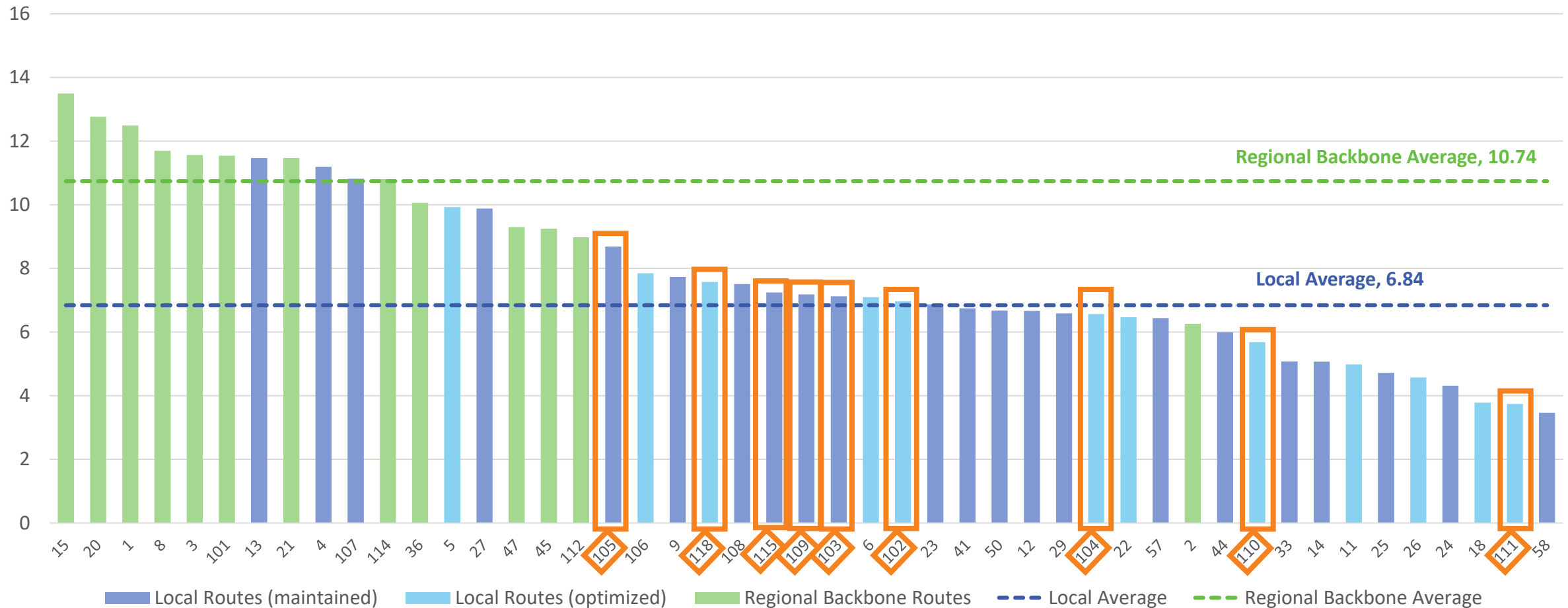
Regional Backbone and all Local Routes Local Hampton routes



# Passengers per Hour (FY23 & FY24)

Regional Backbone and all Local Routes

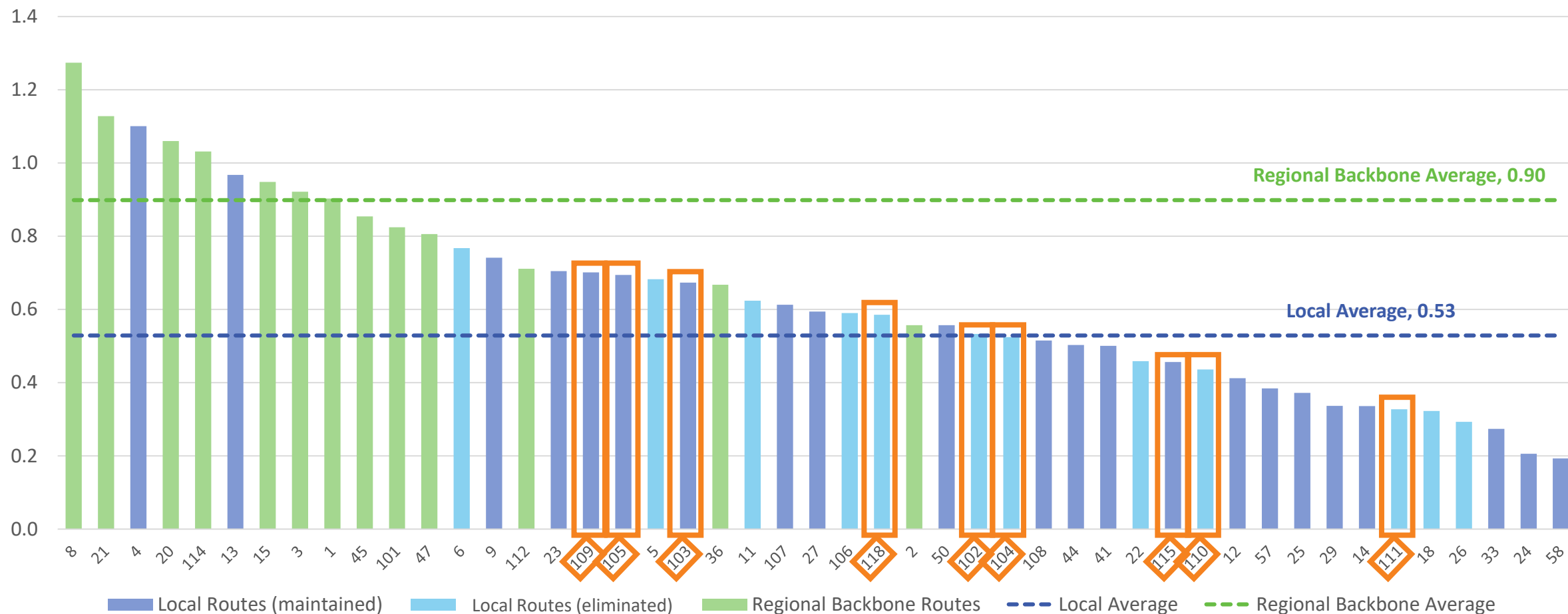
Local Hampton routes



# Passengers per Mile (FY23 & FY24)

Regional Backbone and all Local Routes

Local Hampton routes



# SOP Recommendations and Outcomes

# SOP Recommendations Summary

- Eliminate **12 under-performing local routes** across the six cities.
  - Systemwide reduction of approximately 90,000 local service hours, 14 peak vehicles, and 65 operators.
- These resources will be redeployed for implementation of 15-minute peak period service and new microtransit service.
- SOP/RTS implementation requires **242 peak vehicles** and **461 operators** (including extra board).

*These outcomes of the SOP are subject to change pending the completion of the Northside study. The results of that study will be incorporated into the final SOP.*

# SOP Customer Impacts

- **Increase regional backbone service:** Over 300,000 Hampton Roads residents will be within walking distance of routes operating with 15-minute
- **Limited loss of service:** Bus stops losing service under the SOP account for 3% of all boardings and alightings in the HRT system.
- **Lower wait times for almost all customers:** SOP will replace some hourly service with microtransit with a target max wait time of 15-minutes. SOP resources will be invested into 15-minute bus service in the regional backbone network.
- **Improved Reliability:** Matching service with operator availability will reduce or eliminate missed trips due to operator unavailability.

# Operational Impacts

- **Improve Operator Retention:** Addresses operator burnout and reduces the need for mandatory overtime.
- **Help Manage Operating Costs:** Frees up local financial resources to be re-invested into new microtransit services to address coverage service and low-density areas.
- **Speeds up RTS Implementation:** Enables HRT to expeditiously implement high-frequency service on the remaining 10 Regional Backbone routes, funded through Regional Transit Fund.

# Schedule and Next Steps

# Project Schedule

- **October-December 2025:** SOP Plan Refinements\*
- **Quarter 1 2026:** Public open houses on draft SOP recommendations
- **Quarter 2 2026:** City Council briefings on final SOP recommendations
- **April - May 2026:** Commission adoption of the SOP
- **Beginnning May 2027:** SOP Implementation

\*Feedback and findings from the on-going Peninsula review of the draft SOP recommendations will be evaluated during this phase of the study.