



**Public Transit Route Performance Report**  
**Annual Report for State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2024**

January, 2025

Prepared for VTTrans by:

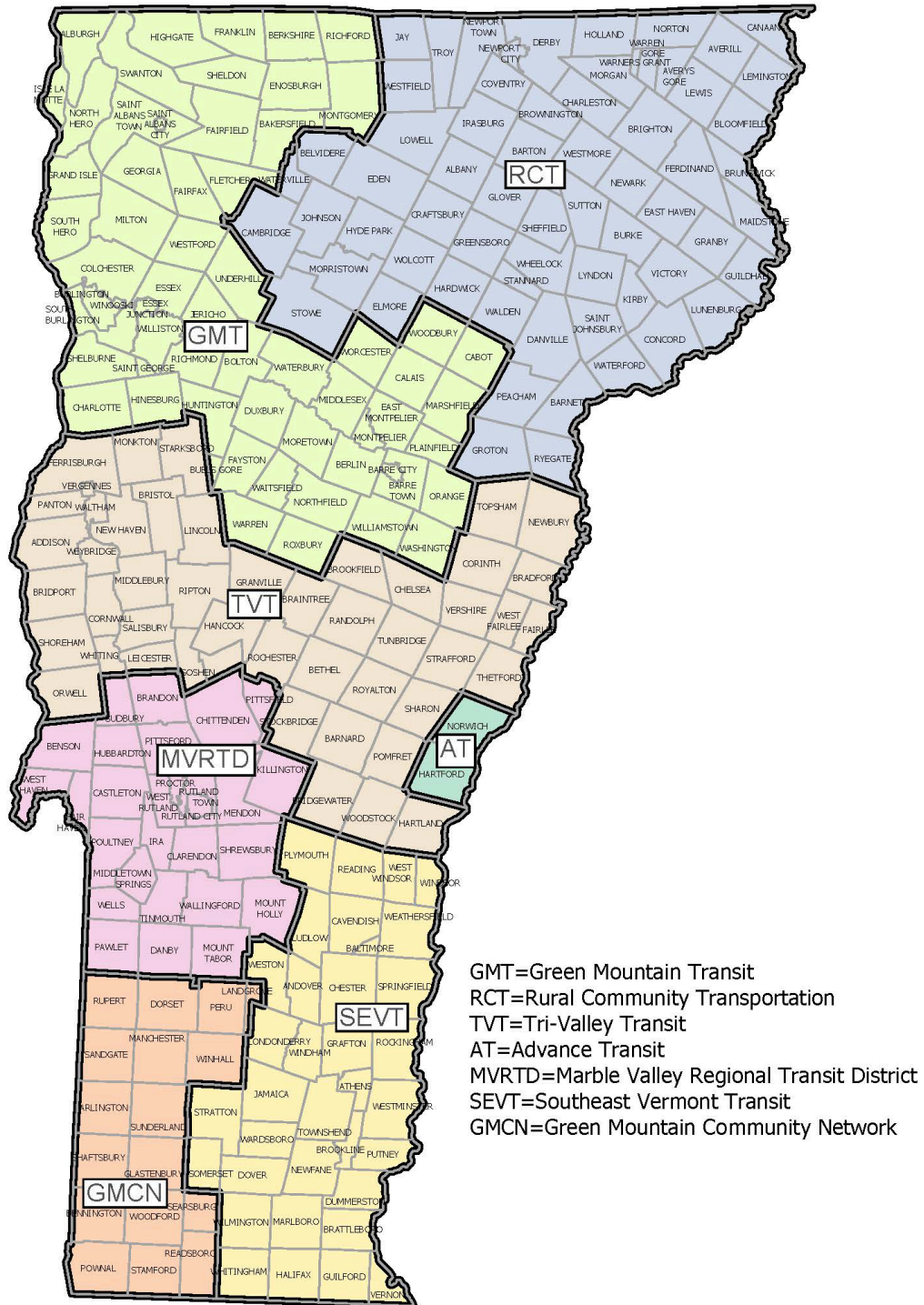


**KEY OF VERMONT TRANSIT SYSTEMS AND DIVISIONS**

<b>AT</b>	Advance Transit
<b>GMCN</b>	Green Mountain Community Network, Inc.
<b>GMT-Rural</b>	Green Mountain Transit-Rural (previously GMTA)
<b>GMT-Urban</b>	Green Mountain Transit-Urban (previously CCTA)
<b>MVRTD</b>	Marble Valley Regional Transit District
<b>RCT</b>	Rural Community Transportation, Inc.
<b>SEVT-MOOver</b>	Southeast Vermont Transit (previously DVTA and CRT)
<b>TVT-MID</b>	Tri-Valley Transit, Inc. Middlebury Division (previously ACTR)
<b>TVT-ONW</b>	Tri-Valley Transit, Inc. Orange-North Windsor Division (previously Stagecoach)
<b>VABVI</b>	Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Figure 1 illustrates the service areas of Vermont’s public transit providers.

**Figure 1: Service Areas of Vermont’s Public Transportation Providers**



Map Produced by the Vermont Agency of Transportation Public Transit Section - 10/16/2023

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

VTrans manages Vermont's public transit program, and an essential element of this management is monitoring the performance of all routes and services operated by the state's transit providers. This Public Transit Route Performance Report for state fiscal year (SFY) 2024 presents the results of this annual performance evaluation for public transit services across Vermont. This process helps to ensure that public investment in transit is well spent by comparing performance at the route level to appropriate standards and identifying routes and services that need improvement.

This is the fifth year using a new evaluation rubric recommended in the [2020 Public Transit Policy Plan](#). Rather than using two separate route evaluation measures, as reports prior to SFY 2020 did, this report focuses on one measure to determine the performance of a route: cost effectiveness. The report (Appendix A) includes analysis of both ridership and cost *efficiency*, comparing Vermont routes to sets of national peers, as has been done in the past. But the ratings of acceptable, successful or underperforming for the cost-effectiveness measure are based on the comparison of a route's performance to the average performance of Vermont routes by class, rather than the comparison to national peers.

Of course, comparisons with performance reports from prior years cannot ignore the huge impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on transit ridership. While ridership rebounded in SFY 2022 with a 45% gain from the low point in SFY 2021, with further growth of 20% in SFY 2023 and 9% in SFY 2024, overall totals are still about 9% below pre-pandemic levels. Ridership on commuter routes and demand response transportation remains about 30% below SFY 2019 levels.

In SFY 2024 Vermont's public transit systems provided 4.67 million trips. This total is 9% higher than last year's ridership, as the state continues to rebound from the pandemic.

Costs continue to increase due to the tight labor market and other factors such as health insurance and vehicle insurance. Total system cost increased by about 13% over SFY 2023. Because that increase was greater than the ridership increase, the cost per passenger trip overall edged up from \$14.03 to \$14.55.

Vermont's transit system continued to evolve in SFY 2024 as several new microtransit services came online. Some of these provided new service in areas that had none before, while others replaced poorly performing local bus routes. Toward the end of the year, SEVT began operating microtransit in Brattleboro in the evening as a complement to the fixed route service that runs during the daytime. These services were supported by funds designated by the legislature for transit innovations, as well as by funds that were reallocated from underperforming bus routes. These services are proving popular with riders, but they are relatively expensive, with a cost per passenger of nearly \$32. This is the second most expensive type of service, following traditional demand response, which costs about \$50 per passenger trip.

VTrans and its transit agency partners will continue to monitor the effectiveness of transit services to try to meet the needs of Vermont residents and visitors to the greatest extent possible.

## INTRODUCTION

The Route Performance Report is developed annually to document the performance of public transit services all over Vermont. The results are presented to the Vermont Legislature as part of VTrans' consolidated transportation system and activities report to the House and Senate Committees on Transportation. The Vermont Agency of Transportation's Policy, Planning, and Intermodal Development (PPAID) Division, specifically the Public Transit Section, is responsible for managing the state's public transit program. This report documents the Public Transit Section's monitoring efforts to ensure that public investment in transit is well spent.

Vermont has seven transit providers, though this report still refers to divisions of two agencies that merged over the prior decade. Tri-Valley Transit services in the Middlebury region are shown as TVT-MID and the services in the Orange/North Windsor region are shown as TVT-ONW. Green Mountain Transit continues to be considered as two separate divisions: GMT-Urban and GMT-Rural. This distinction reflects the urban/rural split in the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) program. VTrans authorizes GMT-Urban to be a direct recipient of funds from the FTA, whereas VTrans maintains oversight responsibility for the GMT-Rural division.

In addition to the seven transit systems in Vermont, this performance evaluation covers the volunteer driver services provided by the Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (VABVI), the Go Vermont vanpool program operated under contract by Enterprise, and the intercity bus services provided by Greyhound and Vermont Translines. Other intercity services (e.g., Megabus, Yankee Trails, and Greyhound's Montreal to Boston route) operate in Vermont and cover their costs through fare revenue. These private carriers do not provide data on these routes to VTrans and so they are not reported on here. Demand response service operated by Special Services Transportation Agency in Chittenden County, by Champlain Islanders Delivering Essential Resources in Grand Isle County and by Community Rides Vermont in Washington County are included in the figures for GMT-Urban and GMT-Rural as these agencies operate service under contract to GMT.

## METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW

VTrans conducts monitoring of transit services by evaluating statewide trends as well as route-level performance. Several data sources were used to develop this annual report:

- The transit systems provide route-level performance data to VTrans in §5311 – Rural Transit Program Monthly Service Indicator Reports (SIRs).
- VTrans collects data on all demand response programs from the transit providers annually.
- VTrans monitors operating budget data by funding source (federal, state, and local) in its grant tracking spreadsheets, and the transit systems provide their profit and loss statements to analyze local share.
- GMT-Urban's route statistics and budget data were provided directly by GMT.
- In order to calculate operating costs more precisely and consistently at the route level, the transit systems provided operating cost information broken down in such a way to allow for the development of two-point cost models (see further discussion below).

VTrans groups public transit routes and services throughout the state in nine categories, described below. Prior to SFY 2023, there had been eight categories, but a significant change was made that year to add “Vanpool” as a new class and to merge “Express Commuter” and “Rural Commuter” into a single category, “Commuter.” Vanpools had never been included in prior performance reports, but the commuters who participate in vanpools can be considered transit riders and the subsidy VTrans provides comes out of its overall budget. Note that the vanpool program does not appear in the charts at the end of the report because it is just a single statewide program and there is no standard for comparison.

The ninth category, new this year, is microtransit. The first microtransit service in Vermont, MyRide by GMT in Montpelier and Berlin, began in January 2021, but in SFY 2024, it was joined by enough other microtransit services for it to be considered a new route class. In prior years, MyRide had been considered an independent service within the broad category of demand response.

Based on recommendations in the 2020 Public Transit Policy Plan (PTPP), the primary method of evaluating route performance changed in SFY 2020 compared to prior years. Rather than using two separate route evaluation measures—productivity and cost-effectiveness—this report focuses just on the latter measure to determine the performance of a route. Basing the rating on just the net cost per passenger trip simplifies the evaluation and avoids cases where a given route might have been underperforming on one measure but satisfactory on the other measure. Ultimately, the cost borne by the taxpayer for a ride taken on a transit vehicle is the most relevant measure of the performance of that transit service.

With the sole focus of the evaluation on cost effectiveness, VTrans determined that it was worthwhile to ensure greater consistency across providers and greater precision at the route level in the estimation of operating costs. In prior years, each provider calculated costs at the route level and reported them through its monthly service indicator reports. These reports did not include details on how the costs were calculated, but some operators seemed to be using a “single-point” cost model based on vehicle hours of service. That is, the agency calculated its total bus and van operating cost, divided by the total bus and van vehicle hours to determine an hourly rate, and then used that rate to estimate the costs at the route level. Other operators used complex cost allocation worksheets that did not necessarily fairly represent the cost of service at the route level.

For this report, the analysis team requested financial information from each provider to be able to divide operating costs into three main categories: mileage-related costs, costs associated with volunteer driver or taxi service, and all other costs. Mileage-related costs include fuel, parts and other maintenance labor and expenses. Volunteer driver and taxi costs include mileage reimbursement and the administrative labor needed to schedule and dispatch volunteer and taxi trips. Other costs include all driver and administrative labor and associated fringe benefits, as well as other overhead costs. This information, in conjunction with other data on the number of revenue miles and revenue hours operated, allowed the team to estimate a “two-point” cost model for each provider with separate rates for vehicle mileage and vehicle hours.

The two-point models were then applied to each route to recalculate the total operating cost. The impact of this was generally to increase the costs for commuter and longer-distance routes relative to local routes, as the former accumulate many more miles and thus generate higher maintenance costs. SFY 2024 saw a transition from the use of revenue miles and hours to total vehicle miles and hours.

The difference between these figures is non-revenue or “deadhead” time and miles, when a vehicle is moving between the garage and the beginning or end of revenue service (when it is open to passengers). Some agencies do not track non-revenue time or have very little of it because the garage is located at or near where the routes enter revenue service. Efforts continue in SFY 2025 to ensure that these figures are calculated consistently across all agencies.

The other significant change in the evaluation method made in 2020 was that the “acceptable” and “successful” thresholds are no longer based on national peer groups, but rather on a comparison to the average of the routes or services in that class. For each class, the acceptable net cost per passenger was set equal to 1.5 times the class average, and the successful net cost per passenger was set equal to two thirds of the class average. Thus, any route with a net cost per passenger between 66% and 150% of the class average is considered acceptable, while those with costs below 66% of the average are successful and those with high costs more than 150% of the average are underperforming.

To preserve continuity with past reports, this report includes (in Appendix A) analysis of both ridership and cost *efficiency*, comparing Vermont routes to sets of national peers. Ridership efficiency is the same as productivity (riders per unit of service) and cost efficiency is the gross operating cost per unit of service. For most categories, these efficiency measures are based on the vehicle revenue hour of service, thus measuring the number of people who boarded and the cost to operate during each hour that a bus, van, or car was operating in service. The exception to this are the Urban category, in which efficiency is measured in boardings and cost per vehicle revenue mile, and the Intercity category, in which efficiency is measured in boardings and cost per vehicle trip. Routes in urban areas tend to travel slower than in rural or small town routes, due to higher levels of congestion, and so measuring based on miles does not “penalize” an operator for running a route in areas with more traffic. Intercity trips tend to have relatively less passenger turnover during the trip, and so the capacity of the vehicle limits the number of people who can board.

Peer groups were established for each category and then the peer average ridership and cost efficiency was calculated. For the Urban, Tourism, and Commuter categories, the peer groups consisted of agencies selected in prior years whose statistics were updated, while for other categories, new sets of peers were chosen based on their similarity in overall operational size to the Vermont operators. The calculated averages were based on the most recent available data from the National Transit Database (report year 2023). As stated above, the peer averages are not evaluation thresholds, but rather serve as reference points to compare the productivity and cost of Vermont services to those of similar operations around the US.

## Transit Service Categories

The service category descriptions below serve as guidelines; some routes or services may not fit every description perfectly. VTrans may also consider ridership and cost data to group similar services together.

- 1) **Urban:** Routes operating primarily in an urbanized area with all-day, year-round service. The city served by the route has a population of at least 17,500 people and high-density development. The only part of Vermont fitting this definition is the urban core of Chittenden County.

- 2) **Small Town:** Routes operating in towns with 7,500 to 17,500 people with all-day, year-round service. The route typically stays within one town or two adjoining towns and does not run through long stretches of rural areas.
- 3) **Demand Response:** Primarily service that does not operate on a fixed schedule nor on a fixed route; also includes routes that might otherwise fit in the “Rural” category but operate less than once a day (i.e., shopper service operates only once a week or a few times a month). This category includes all Medicaid transportation service in Vermont, ADA complementary paratransit service, trips brokered to taxi services, and trips operated by volunteer drivers. Volunteer drivers use their own vehicles, donate their time to transport riders, and are eligible to receive reimbursement for mileage at the IRS-approved rate.
- 4) **Microtransit:** This is a new service category in SFY 2024. In prior years, microtransit services had been part of the demand response category. Most Vermont microtransit services operate in small towns with daytime service, though future implementations could include urban service or evening-only service to complement fixed route systems.
- 5) **Rural:** Routes operating in towns with fewer than 7,500 people or connecting two small towns running through undeveloped areas. These routes operate year-round with daily service, but the frequency may be low (more than one hour between trips).
- 6) **Commuter:** Routes that operate primarily during peak commute periods and are intended to serve work trips. Rural examples of these routes usually connect several small towns or villages with intermediate stops and operate primarily on state routes in rural areas. Some routes connect outlying areas to the nearby city, with a significant portion of the mileage in rural areas. A few commuter routes operate on express highways and serve the Burlington metropolitan area or the Upper Valley.
- 7) **Tourism:** Seasonal routes that serve a specific tourist trip generator, such as a ski area.
- 8) **Vanpool:** The Go Vermont vanpool program, operated through a contract with Enterprise, covers subsidized vanpools anywhere in Vermont.
- 9) **Intercity:** Routes operating regularly scheduled, fixed route, and limited stop service that connects places not in close proximity and that make meaningful connections to the national intercity network.

The list of routes and services in each category is not identical to SFY 2023. Advance Transit made substantial changes to its Yellow Route and introduced Saturday service. This did not affect the list of routes *per se*, but it did have substantial impacts on performance. The MyRide and MicroMOO microtransit services that were listed in the demand response category last year are two members of the new Microtransit category this year. Joining them are the Manchester Express by GMCN and RCT-Rides Lamoille by RCT. Microtransit service in Middlebury began operating in May 2024, but it is not included in this category for this year due to the limited service time. RCT eliminated three routes at the beginning of SFY 2024: Littleton (Twin City) Commuter, the 15/14 Commuter and the Morrisville Loop (which was replaced by RCT-Rides Lamoille).

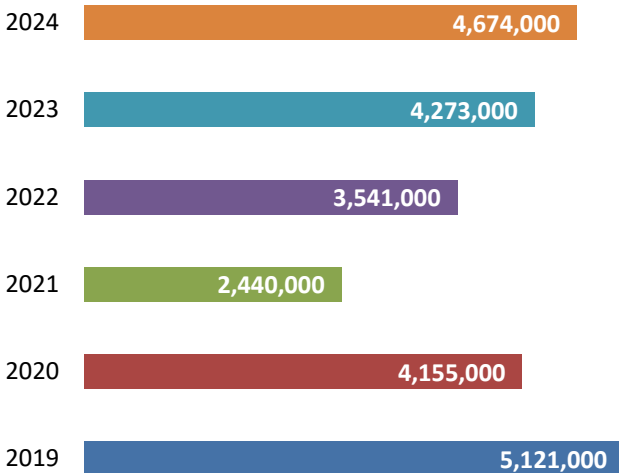


## STATEWIDE TRENDS

This section describes the trends in Vermont's transit ridership and costs in recent years, before delving into route-level performance in the next section.

### Transit Ridership

**Figure 2: Statewide Ridership**



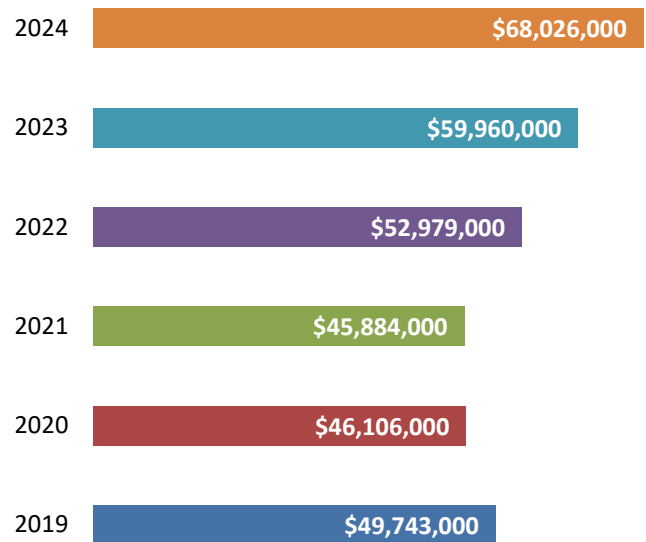
In SFY 2024 Vermont's public transit systems provided 4.67 million trips. This figure represents a 9% increase over the total from SFY 2023, but still remains about 9% below the ridership carried in SFY 2019.

As is true every year, about half of Vermont's transit trips occur in the Chittenden County region. In SFY 2024, the share is 51.5%, slightly higher than the figure last year. Even though Chittenden County has only about a quarter of Vermont's population, the density of the Burlington metropolitan area results in a much higher number of transit trips on a per capita basis.

### Transit Costs

In SFY 2024 transit operating costs totaled \$68 million, a 13.4% increase over SFY 2023 (see Figure 3). The increase is mainly due to more service being operated (especially demand response and tourism routes), as well as increasing labor and insurance costs as inflation and a driver shortage affected all of the state's transit providers. Demand response services saw an increase in cost of \$3 million, not including \$1.7 million spent on microtransit services. Most bus services saw an increase of about 10.4%. The subsidized intercity service cost \$125,000 less in SFY 2024 than the prior year because of increased ridership and fare revenue. The Chittenden County region accounted for 32.2% of the total costs, which is its typical share.

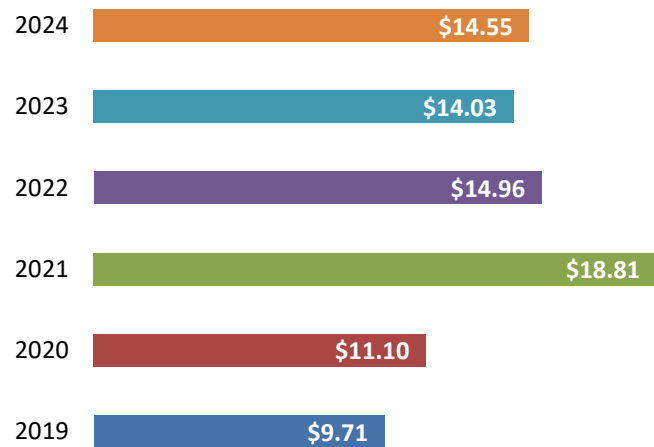
**Figure 3: Statewide Operating Costs**



## Cost per Trip

In SFY 2024 the average cost for a transit trip in Vermont was \$14.55, an increase of 4% over the prior year (see Figure 4). The increase is due to the fact that overall costs (14%) grew faster than overall ridership (9%). The substitution of microtransit service for fixed route service plays some role in this, as fixed route generally costs less per passenger than microtransit, while microtransit offers a higher quality of service to the rider. Note that this calculation involves the gross cost per trip, and so the lack of fare revenue in SFY 2024 has no impact on this statistic.

**Figure 4: Cost per Trip**



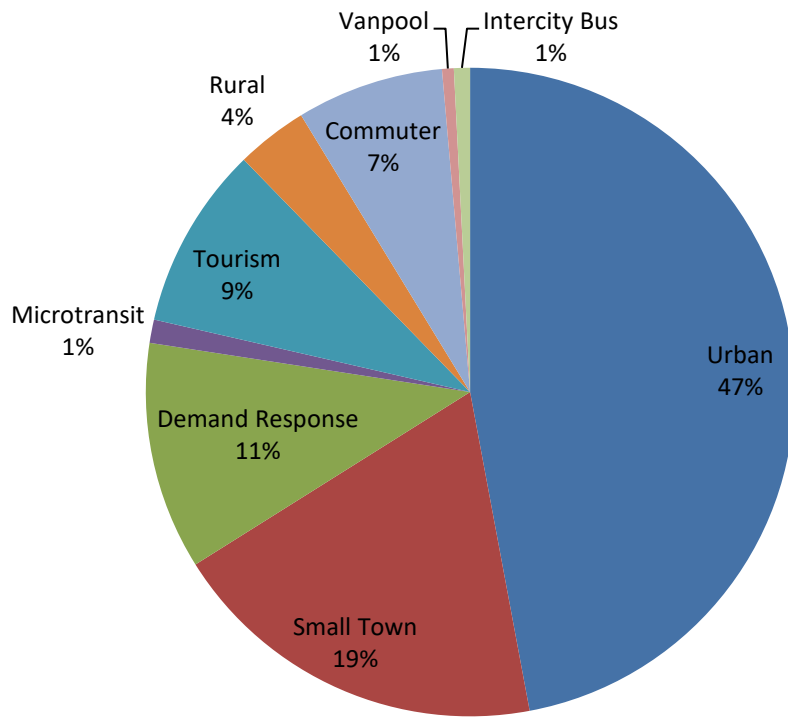
## RESULTS BY SERVICE CATEGORY

Vermont's transit systems provide an array of services to meet various markets and needs. The Urban service category generates the highest share of ridership statewide, followed by Small Town and Demand Response. Figure 5 illustrates FY 2024 ridership by service category as a share of the statewide total. Compared to years before the pandemic, the Urban category comprises a larger share, mainly because other service types, especially commuter-oriented routes, suffered steeper ridership losses during the pandemic. Prior to FY 2021, the Urban share was generally in the 41-43% range, but this share grew to 48% in SFY 2021. In following years, the share settled at 46-47% as other services (commuter and tourism routes) began to recover. The percentages for Small Town and Tourism stayed constant from last year. The share of Demand Response shrank from 15% of the total to 11%, partly due to splitting off Microtransit as a separate category but also because it grew more slowly than other categories. At its peak in 2016, commuter routes carried 17% of the total ridership in Vermont. That figure dropped to 10% during the pandemic and is down to 7% in SFY 2024 as other types of routes recover more quickly than commuter services. Adding the vanpool program to the mix did not have a significant impact on any of the percentages, as it represents less than 1% of the statewide total.

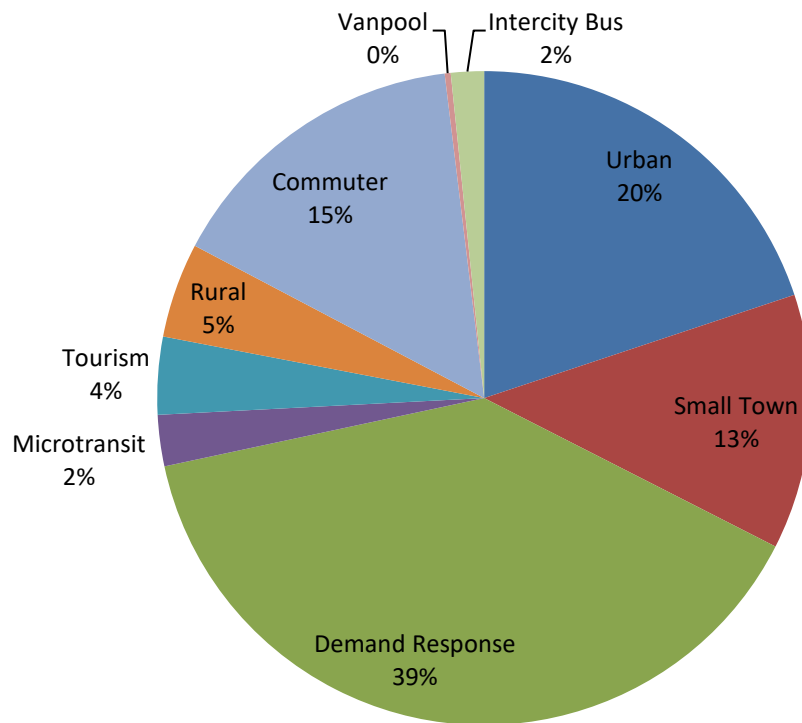
Figure 6 shows the operating costs per service category as a percentage of statewide costs in SFY 2024. The shares of total operating expense for each service category were very consistent with prior years, deviating by at most one percentage point. Microtransit, a new category, accounted for 3% of the total cost, associated with a drop of one point in the Urban, Rural, and Commuter categories compared to SFY 2023.

Not surprisingly, Urban service consumes a smaller percentage of the total cost compared to its share of the total ridership, because urban bus routes, which can carry 40 people or more on some trips, are more cost-effective on a per passenger basis. In contrast, Demand Response service consumes 39% of the total cost but only accounts for 11% of the total riders. This reflects the fact that many demand response trips are carrying one person, or at most a few people, at a time.

**Figure 5: Transit Ridership by Service Category**



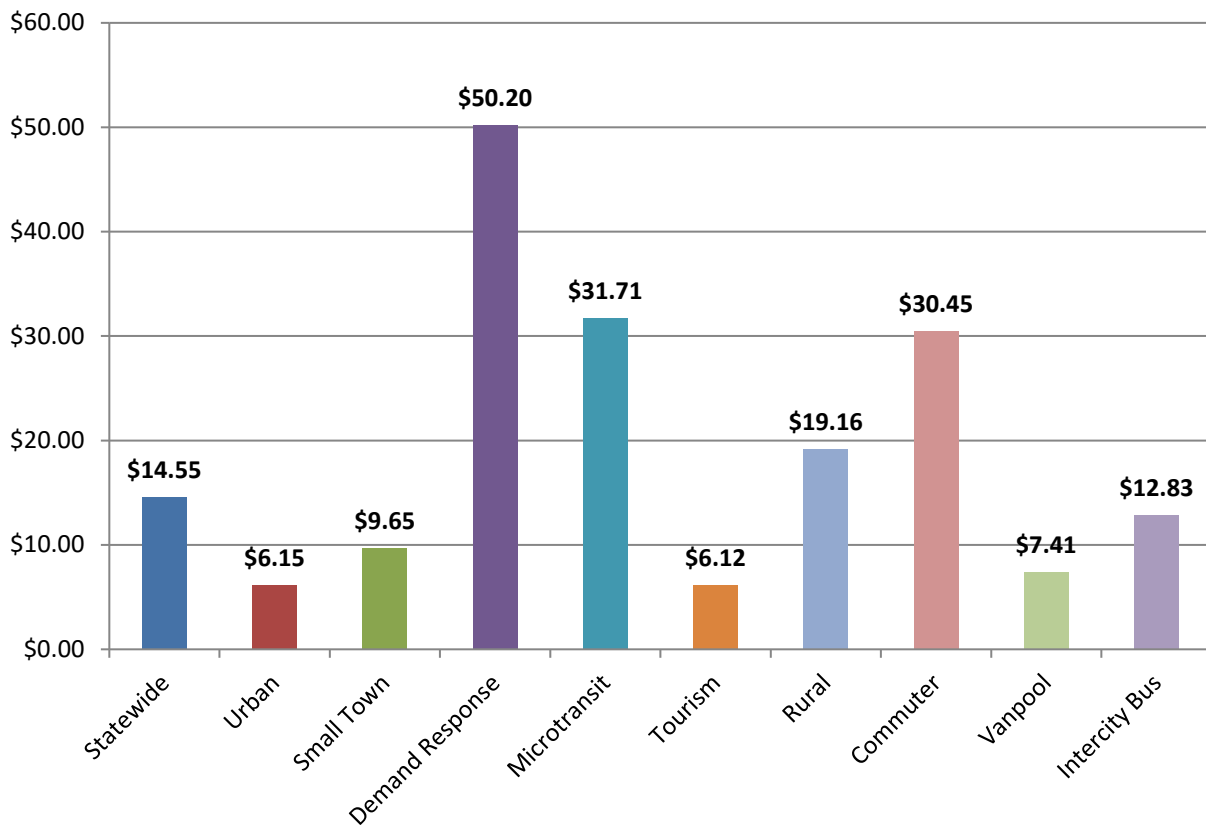
**Figure 6: Gross Operating Costs by Service Category**



Commuter and Intercity Bus consume greater shares of the cost than of the ridership because these trips are generally longer and thus more costly than local trips in an urban or small town area. Tourism services are generally short and mostly quite productive, and thus are more similar to urban routes in their performance.

These differences in the cost per trip by mode are shown more explicitly in Figure 7. It should be noted that for the statewide figure and the first seven classes, the cost per trip is the gross operating cost divided by boardings, but for vanpool and intercity, the figure shown is the subsidy per trip, net of intercity passenger fares and fees for vanpool participation. The subsidy per trip for both Vanpool and Intercity dropped significantly in SFY 2024, by more than 50% compared to last year. The drop in Intercity subsidy is surprising because it occurred despite the initiation of Amtrak service from Burlington to New York in the western corridor, which competes directly with the US 7 service operated by Vermont Translines. Higher ridership for bus routes almost always translates into higher productivity (efficiency), but this is not usually the case for demand response services, where additional demand (absent changes in policies regarding eligibility) translates into additional van and volunteer trips with no appreciable change in productivity. Demand Response, Microtransit and Commuter routes were the most expensive types of service on a per trip basis. Demand Response trips would be even more expensive were it not for the fact that 37% of all such trips were operated by volunteer drivers who were paid only for the mileage they accumulated and nothing for their time.

**Figure 7: Cost per Trip by Service Category**

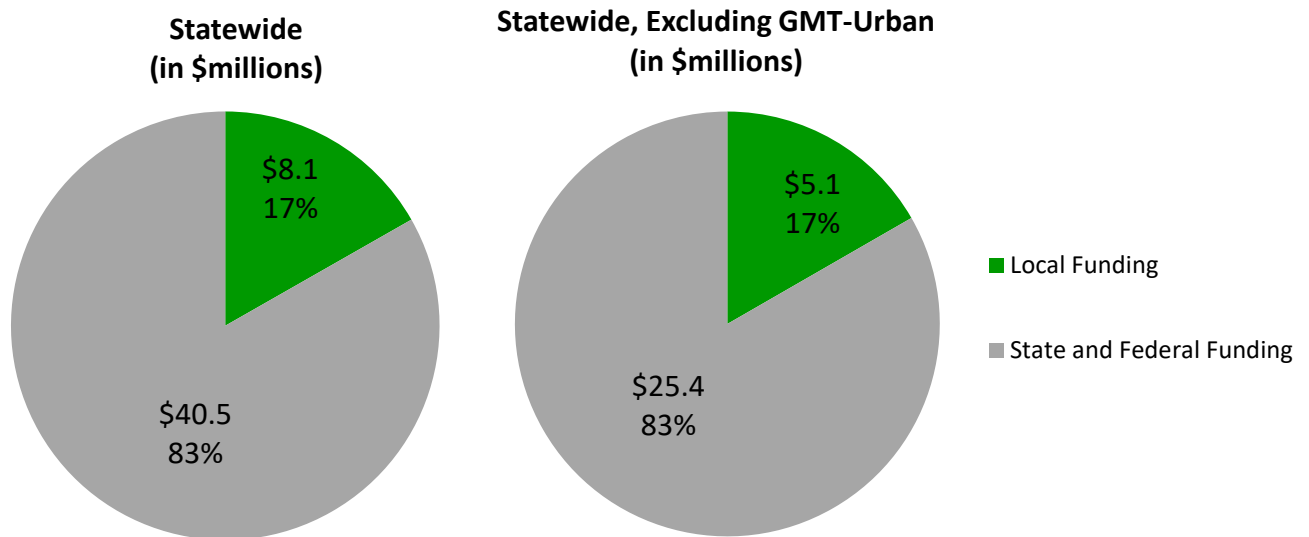


## LOCAL SHARE

The Public Transit Section also examines the transit providers' performance in generating local revenue. The Vermont Public Transit Policy Plan establishes a statewide goal that 20% of the funds for public transportation should be generated locally. This is a broad interpretation of local funding to include fare revenue, contributions from individuals, contracts with outside agencies, and payments from cities and towns.<sup>1</sup> In other words, local share refers to the percentage of transit expenses that are *not* covered by the Federal Transit Administration, the Federal Highway Administration, or the State.

Figure 8 displays the local share of transit operating budgets statewide in SFY 2024, based on actual operating expenses from VTrans' grant tracking spreadsheets. These figures exclude funding for Medicaid transportation, and thus are less than the total shown in Figure 3. The continued statewide policy of fare-free service resulted in lower-than-normal local shares. (GMT-Urban reinstated fares in May, 2024.) The local shares in SFY 2024 are higher than in the prior three years because the federal aid associated with coronavirus relief programs, which had zero local match requirements, were being exhausted and replaced by regular formula funds. The local share statewide grew from 15% to 17%. Excluding GMT-Urban, the local share of transit budgets outside of Chittenden County grew from 13% last year to 17%.

**Figure 8: Local Share**



<sup>1</sup> The federal definition of local match for FTA funds excludes fare revenue from the calculation but includes state operating assistance.

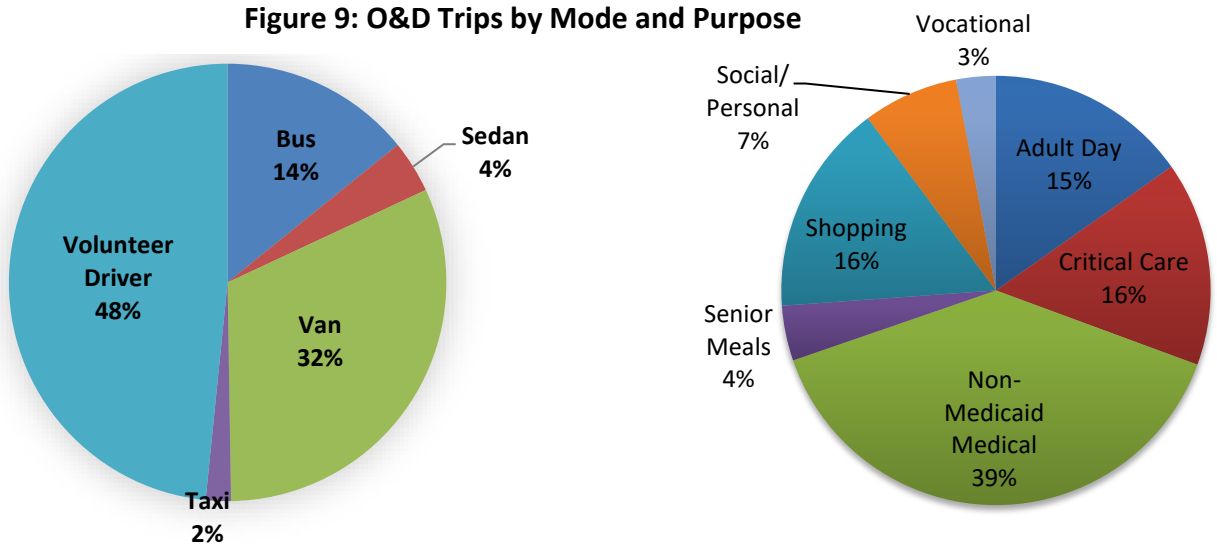
## OLDER ADULTS AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (O&D) TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM

FTA’s §5310 program is targeted toward older adults (people 60 and older) and people with disabilities. The O&D Program, formerly known as the E&D Program, is used in most parts of the country to finance the purchase of accessible vans and buses. In Vermont the scope of the O&D Program has been expanded by incorporating funds from §5311 (rural) to help pay for program costs.

In SFY24, the total amount spent on the O&D program in Vermont was \$7.1 million, 78% of which (\$5.6 million) was federal money. Some of the local match for the federal funds consists of in-kind contributions from the volunteer drivers who provide demand response service for the transit agencies. Overall, O&D ridership continued to be negatively affected by the pandemic, with about 130,000 trips carried compared to 200,000 in SFY 19. The SFY 24 figure was about 16% higher than the SFY 23 figure of 112,000 trips. Green Mountain Transit (GMT) with its partners Special Services Transportation Agency in Chittenden County and CIDER in Grand Isle County accounted for about 22% of the total. Tri-Valley Transit, including 8,713 trips provided by Elderly Services, Inc. accounted for 23% of the total. SEVT and RCT were the next largest providers, with 18-19% of the total. The cost per passenger trip ranged from about \$40 at Marble Valley in Rutland, to about \$72 at GMT-Rural (not including CIDER and SSTA).

Trips funded through the O&D Program are provided across many modes and serve many purposes as shown in Figure 9. In SFY 2024, 14% of O&D trips were provided on bus routes, 32% in vans, and, most importantly, 48% in private cars operated by volunteer drivers. (The O&D program is used to fund some scheduled bus services, such as shopping routes and TVT’s Bradford Circulator.) Some 55% of O&D trips transport people to medical appointments and critical care services such as dialysis and cancer treatments. This figure is lower than last year (62%), but still higher than the pre-pandemic percentage of 43%. Travel to adult day programs have fully recovered from the pandemic, but travel to senior meals programs (4%) is still well below the figure from SFY 2019 (23%). Shopping and social/personal trips accounted for 23% of O&D trips, up slightly from last year.

**Figure 9: O&D Trips by Mode and Purpose**



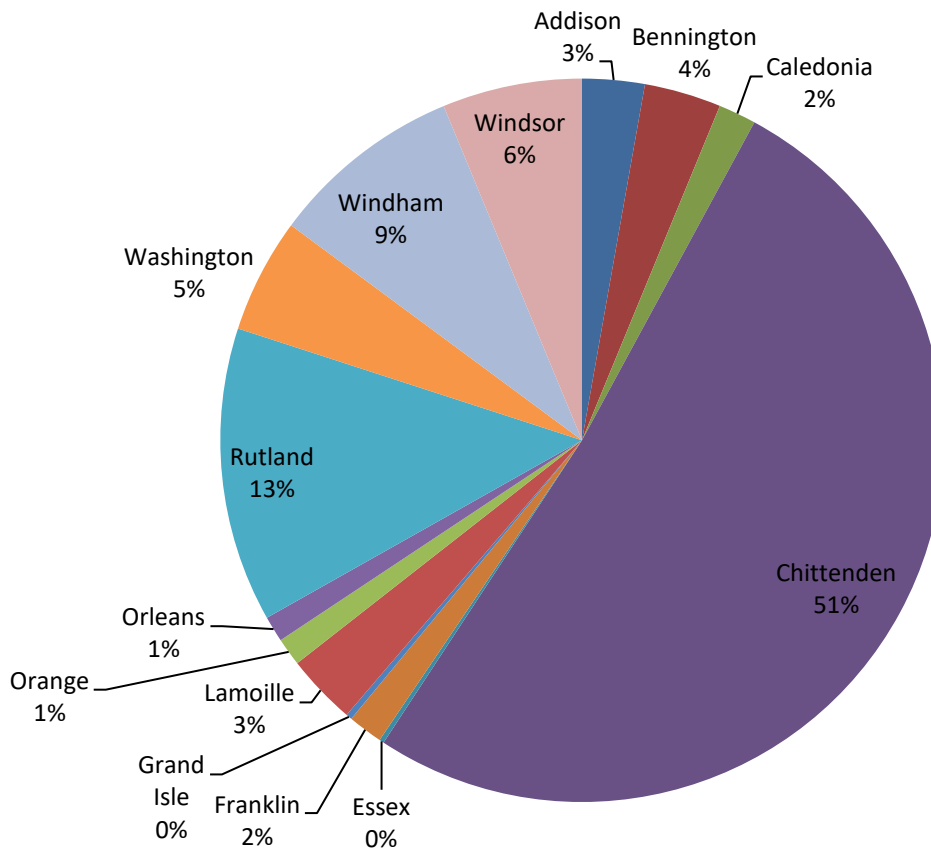
Volunteer driver trips typically cost less per passenger trip than vans and can provide a more personalized service to seniors and persons with disabilities, some of whom are traveling long distances (including to neighboring states) for medical services and other needs. Volunteer drivers are especially important to mobility in large rural areas, where the population is thinly distributed, such as the Northeast Kingdom. However, in places where bus service is available, having O&D passengers use the bus routes is the most cost-effective means of travel.

VTrans is working to expand the pool of drivers by extending the program beyond volunteers to paid contractors, similar to drivers for Uber and Lyft. Together, the contract drivers and volunteers will be considered “community drivers” and will be paid either for mileage or at an hourly rate under contract.

## COUNTY-LEVEL STATISTICS

Reflecting overall population by county, public transit boardings by county show one large county (Chittenden), accounting for half of Vermont’s transit trips, four medium-size counties accounting for between 5% and 13% of trips, seven small counties with between 1% and 4% of trips, and two tiny counties with less than 1% of the statewide total. The breakdown of public transit trips by county of origin in SFY 2024 is presented in Figure 10.

**Figure 10: Public Transit Trips by County of Origin in SFY 2024**



## ROUTE-LEVEL PERFORMANCE

Based on recommendations in the 2020 Public Transit Policy Plan, the Public Transit Section evaluates Vermont's transit services by their cost effectiveness. Prior to 2020, both productivity and cost-effectiveness were used to evaluate routes, but as described earlier, the evaluation method was changed to focus on cost effectiveness, while retaining productivity and cost efficiency as reference measures to compare to national peer groups. For the evaluation, all transit services in the state are grouped by service category and evaluated against the average performance in that category.

### Methodology for Developing Performance Standards

Since 2020, the performance evaluation has been based on comparing the net cost per passenger for each route to the average of each route class. This figure was calculated by taking the gross operating cost, subtracting out any fare revenue and then dividing by the number of boardings. As no fare revenue was collected in SFY 2024 except on intercity bus routes and one month's worth on GMT-Urban routes, the net cost per passenger is equal to the gross cost per passenger.

The "Successful" standard for each service category was 66.6% of the category average and the "Acceptable" standard was 150% of the class average. Thus, if a route or service cost two-thirds of the class average or less per passenger, it was successful, but if it cost 50% more than the class average on a per passenger basis, it was not acceptable.

Table 1 summarizes the SFY 2024 performance standards by category. The standards from SFY 2023 are shown for reference. The standards reflect averages of route-level performance, and thus do not necessarily track with the average cost per passenger for a class a whole, which is a weighted average. For example, the thresholds for the Urban class rose this year because the cost per passenger of one route—the Williston/Essex route—rose significantly, pushing up the class average. Most of the thresholds rose due to overall increasing costs, but the Small Town and Rural thresholds dropped because of increasing ridership overall and on a couple of specific routes (including TVT's Bradford Circulator) that had pushed up the average in SFY 2023. The Microtransit threshold is new this year, as the category did not exist last year.

**Table 1: SFY 2024 Performance Standards Compared to SFY 2023**

Service Category	"Successful" Cost-Effectiveness Standard		"Acceptable" Cost-Effectiveness Standard	
	2024	2023	2024	2023
Urban	\$5.51	\$4.94	\$12.39	\$11.13
Small Town	\$7.40	\$7.70	\$16.66	\$17.32
Demand Response	\$38.22	\$32.63	\$86.00	\$73.42
Microtransit	\$21.04	n/a	\$47.34	n/a
Tourism	\$5.19	\$4.66	\$11.68	\$10.49
Rural	\$18.18	\$19.30	\$40.91	\$43.43
Commuter	\$28.23	\$25.81	\$63.51	\$58.07



## Route Evaluation Results

Given the way the standards were set, the vast majority (86%) of the 102 transit services evaluated across the state met the Acceptable standards for cost-effectiveness. A sizable portion (28%) of the state's transit routes were considered Successful, thus leaving 58% in the acceptable-but-not-successful group.

### *Improved Transit Routes*

Four routes moved from underperforming to acceptable performance in cost-effectiveness since SFY 2023: the Airport route operated by GMT-Urban, the Yellow Route operated by Advance Transit, VABVI's demand response service and GMT-Rural's Waterbury Commuter. Seven other underperforming routes from last year saw improved performance which got them closer to but not quite over the acceptable threshold.

- The cost per passenger on GMT's Airport route dropped from \$11.41 to \$10.18 which was sufficient to clear the acceptable threshold. This was still the second worst-performing route in the urban system, however.
- In September 2023, Advance Transit restructured its Yellow Route so that it functions as a second bus on the very productive Orange Route. Many of the new riders on the Yellow Route formerly rode the Orange Route, but the combined ridership on the two (nearly 77,000 passengers) exceeds the SFY 2023 combined ridership by more than 16%.
- The cost per passenger on VABVI's volunteer driver service dropped by \$8.65, allowing this service to clear the acceptable threshold.
- The Waterbury Commuter improved its cost per passenger by about \$8 due to a small increase in ridership (about 2.5%) and a change in the way operating costs are calculated. Compared to many other commuter routes, the Waterbury Commuter has relatively little non-revenue mileage. In prior years, costs were based only on revenue mileage and time, and so routes with a lot of non-revenue mileage had an unfair cost advantage.

### *Underperforming Transit Services*

Statewide, 13 transit services did not meet the Acceptable thresholds for cost-effectiveness.<sup>2</sup> These are listed in Table 2 below. All but one of these were also underperforming in SFY 2023 (and some for years before that as well). Technically, TVT's 89er South was underperforming for the first time this year because it had acceptable performance last year, but it had underperformed for at least eight years prior to that. For many of those years it was part of the Express Commuter category when it probably should have been part of the Rural Commuter category. In SFY 2023, those two categories were combined into the Commuter category.

Other than the Yellow Route up until September 2023, Advance Transit's Brown Route has been its poorest performer. In its recently completed Transit Development Plan, AT intends to restructure the Brown Route within the next few years, as funding becomes available. Brattleboro's Red and

<sup>2</sup> Technically, the ADA paratransit service operated by Advance Transit also underperformed with regard to cost effectiveness. Because of the change in the scope of the Demand Response category, AT's ADA service only started being included in the Route Performance Report in SFY 19. Unlike other agencies that have a mix of demand response data, ADA paratransit is the only type of demand response service operated by AT. The regulations regarding ADA service limit the ability of AT to schedule these trips in a cost-efficient way, and AT does not have the possibility of coordinating them with other demand response service since it does not operate O&D or Medicaid service.

White Lines are among the most successful Small Town routes in Vermont, but the Blue Line has lagged behind. The Springfield In-Town route has had marginal performance for years and sometimes surpasses the threshold and other years does not. Its performance improved slightly from last year (80 cents per passenger), but it still missed the threshold by about \$4. TVT's Middlebury Shuttle failed to meet the threshold by about \$1.50. Most of what constitutes the Middlebury Shuttle was replaced by a new microtransit service in May 2024. The Hannaford route portion of the Shuttle remains as a fixed route service, and Saturday service is still operated under the old model. In the SFY 2025 report, the Middlebury Shuttle will be broken down into separate microtransit and fixed route services.

After many years of underperformance, TVT's Thetford Connector has been discontinued, replaced by new service to Strafford. GMT's Jeffersonville Commuter has been on the margins for years, similar to the Springfield route. GMT's Board of Commissioners recently voted to discontinue the route as part of a series of service cuts. SEVT's West Dover route is a very low service route operating just one trip in the morning on school days. A handful of children rode it regularly in SFY 2022 resulting in about 100 trips per month, but most of them stopped riding in SFY 2023 and overall ridership has not recovered. It should also be noted that operationally, the bus running the West Dover service continues onto the Wilmington Brattleboro route when it finishes its one morning trip. Thus the cost of operating the West Dover trip partially offsets deadhead time and mileage for the supplemental Wilmington-Brattleboro service. As mentioned above TVT's 89er South has underperformed for years. TVT has experimented with many service changes to try to improve performance.

**Table 2: Underperforming Services**

Service Category	Route	Years Underperforming
Small Town	AT: Brown Route	2
Small Town	SEVT: Brattleboro Blue Line	2
Small Town	SEVT: Springfield In-Town	2
Small Town	TVT: Middlebury	2
Commuter	TVT: Thetford Connector	4
Commuter	GMT-Urban: Jeffersonville Commuter	2
Commuter	SEVT: West Dover	2
Commuter	TVT: 89er	1 (9)
Urban	GMT-Urban: Williston/Essex	9
Rural	TVT: Randolph Circulator	1
Rural	TVT: Bradford Circulator	5
Tourism	GMT: Valley Floor Shuttle	5
Tourism	RCT: Crown Connection	3

GMT's Williston/Essex route has always been a poor performer and is currently proposed for elimination in a future route of service cuts. The Bradford Circulator has not yet generated significant ridership though its cost per passenger dropped by about 10% from last year. It is funded through the O&D program and is intended to provide lifeline service for an area with little other

transit access. The Randolph Circulator barely achieved acceptable performance last year (by one penny) but fell short this year. RCT's Crown Connection was a new service in 2023 catering to mountain bike riders. While it did not achieve acceptable performance in 2024, its cost per passenger dropped from over \$118 to \$39. It will have to make another major leap in 2025 to avoid underperformance because the thresholds in the Tourism category are relatively low since many of the ski-oriented services are very productive. The Valley Floor Shuttle usually fails to achieve acceptable performance because it is a much longer route than most of the other Tourism services, with higher costs and greater distances between trip generators.

## Performance Graphs

The next section of the report includes graphs depicting the cost effectiveness of all transit services in Vermont for SFY 2024. For each route, the graph shows the net cost per passenger as a solid color bar and the gross cost per passenger as a gray pattern bar. Because there were no fares collected (except six weeks worth on urban routes and the full year on intercity bus routes), the net cost and gross cost are equal in most cases. The standard for Successful performance, equal to the 66% of the class average, is shown on each graph as a green line, while the standard for Acceptable performance, equal to 150% of the class average, is shown as a red line. Each provider has a specific and consistent color used throughout all of the graphs. Two of the charts, for Small Town and Commuter, are split into two pages because of the large number of routes in those classes.

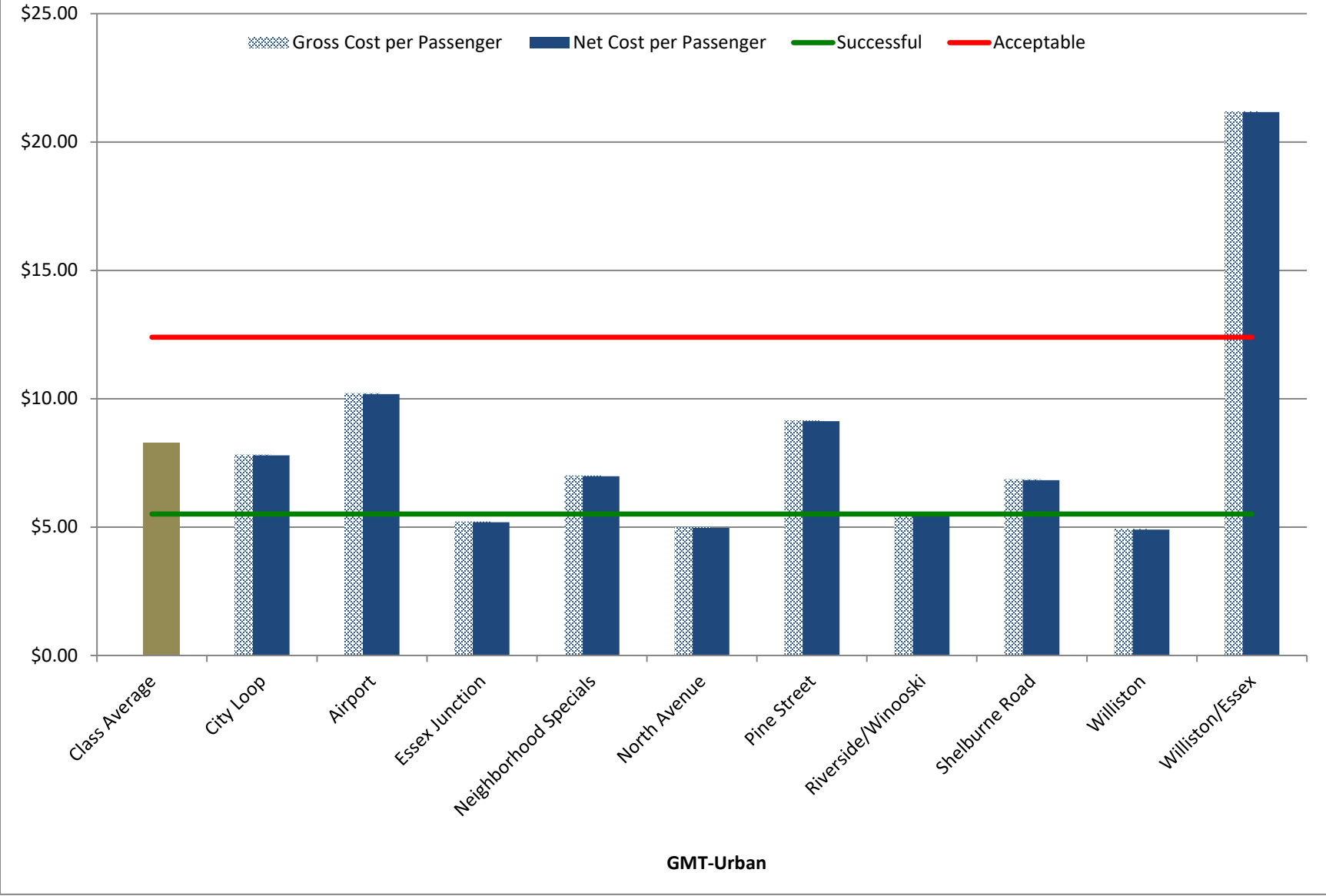
The Demand Response chart is treated a bit differently from the others. The gross cost per passenger is not shown as very few of the demand response services would have any fare revenue even when fares are collected on bus routes. Secondly, the chart also shows the percentage of demand response trips that are operated by volunteer drivers for each agency through grey dots that refer to the right-hand vertical axis. Dots that appear higher on the chart indicate a greater percentage of trips operated by volunteer drivers. In general, there is an inverse relationship between cost-effectiveness and volunteer percentage, as volunteer trips are typically less costly than those operated by agency drivers. However, there are other important factors affecting cost, such as the average length of the trips and the density of demand, which can affect how easily an agency can coordinate trips. Thus, GMT-Urban has a lower cost per passenger than GMT-Rural even though GMT-Rural uses volunteer drivers much more often. Demand response trips in the GMT-Urban area tend to be much shorter than those in other areas, and the higher population density in Chittenden County allows for more ride coordination.

Appendix A contains two additional sets of graphs showing the ridership efficiency (productivity) and cost efficiency of each route. These charts also show the average performance of the national peers on these measures. The peer performance is based on 2023 data, and therefore reflects some lingering impacts of the pandemic. This appendix also includes all of the performance data in a tabular format for easy reference. Appendix B includes charts that portray historical ridership, total operating cost, and cost per trip by transit system/division from SFY 2020 through SFY 2024. Appendix C presents the historical performance for every route or service in Vermont from SFY 2020 through SFY 2024, showing the trends in ridership efficiency, cost efficiency and cost effectiveness.

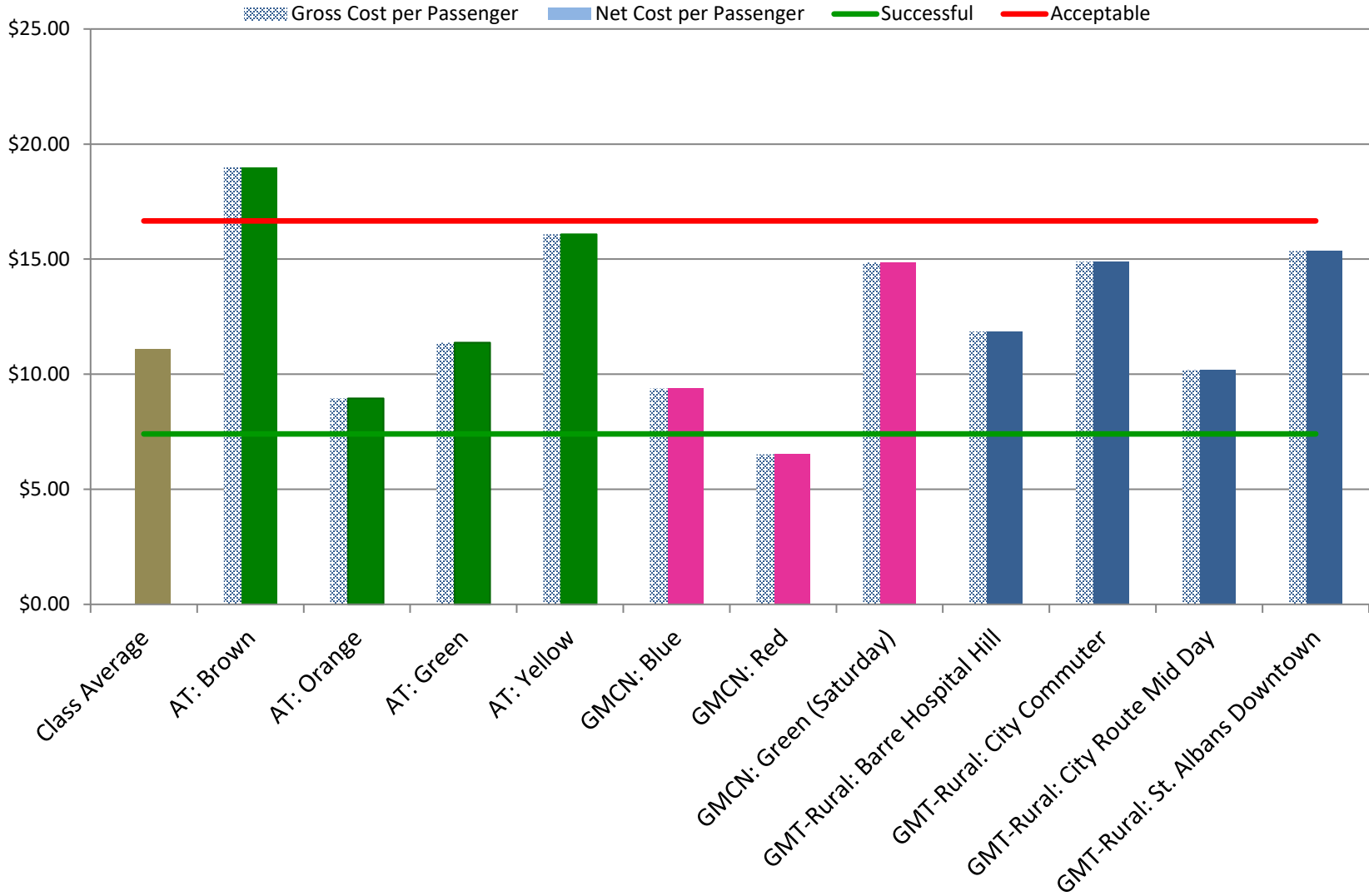
**COST-EFFECTIVENESS PERFORMANCE  
BY SERVICE CATEGORY**

**FOR THE PERIOD  
JULY 2023 THROUGH JUNE 2024**

### Graph #1: 2024 Urban Cost per Passenger

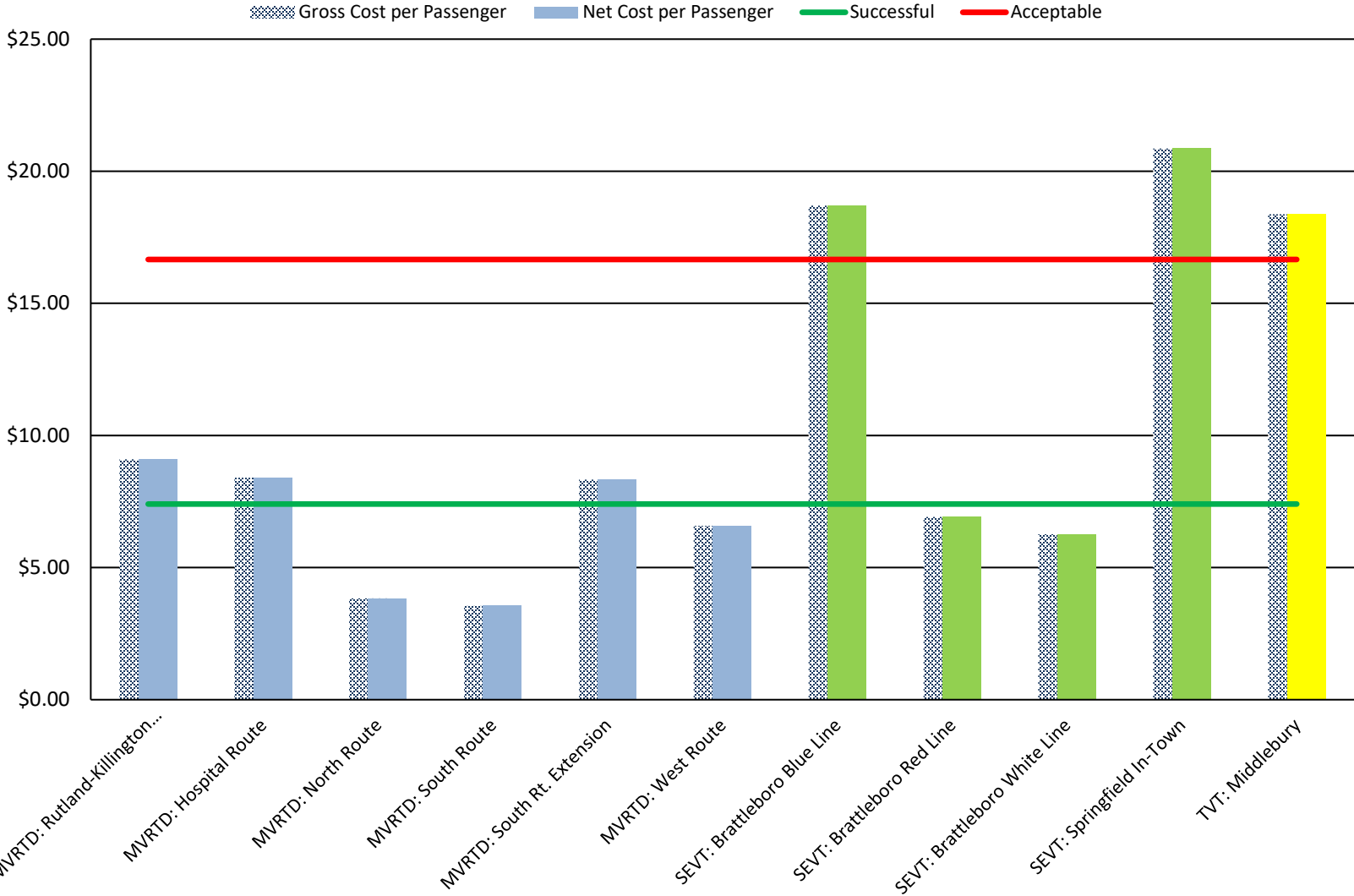


**Graph #2: 2024 Small Town Cost per Passenger (page 1)**

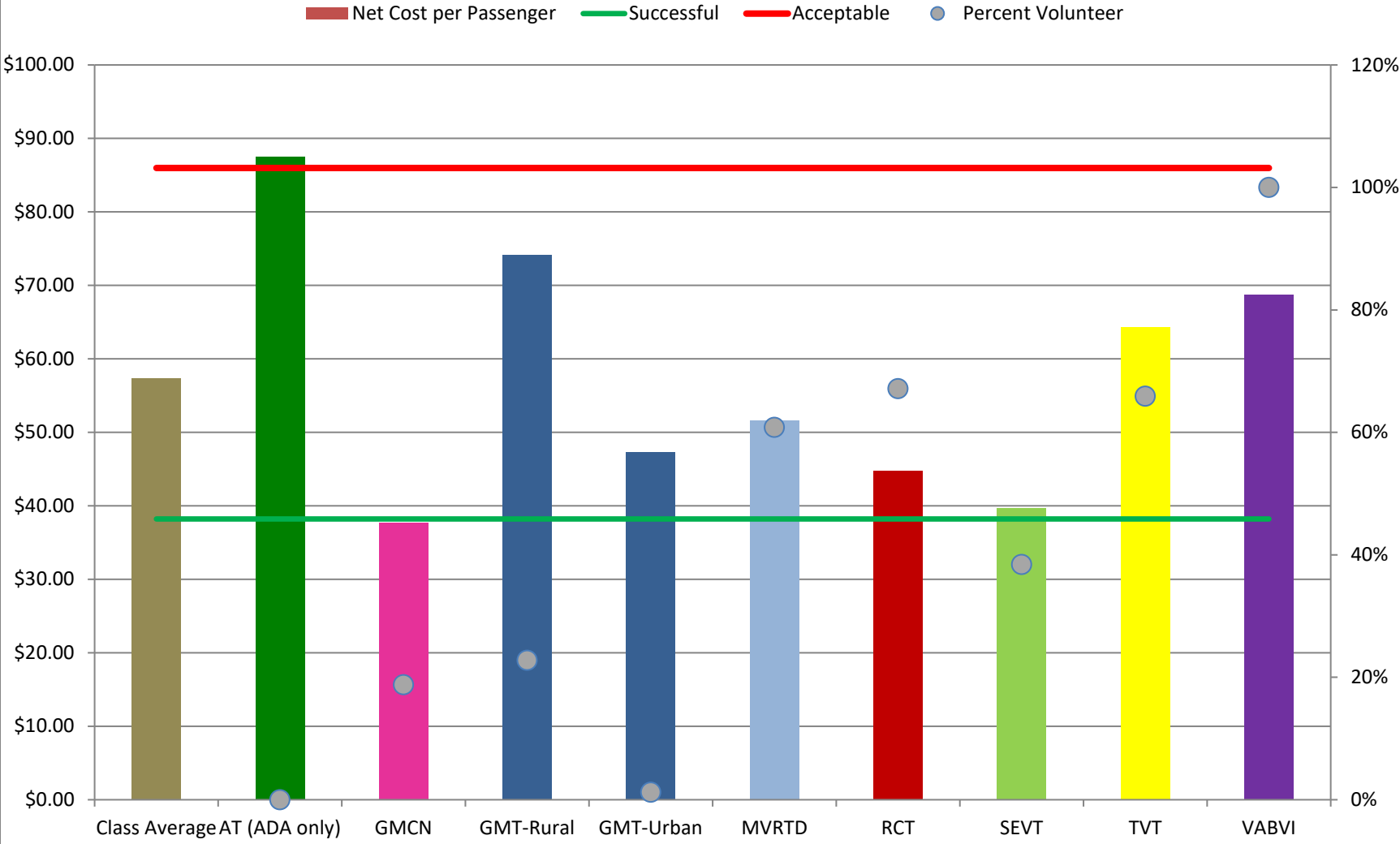


Note: Data for AT routes represent the entire route, even though a portion of the route is in New Hampshire.

### Graph #2: 2024 Small Town Cost per Passenger (page 2)

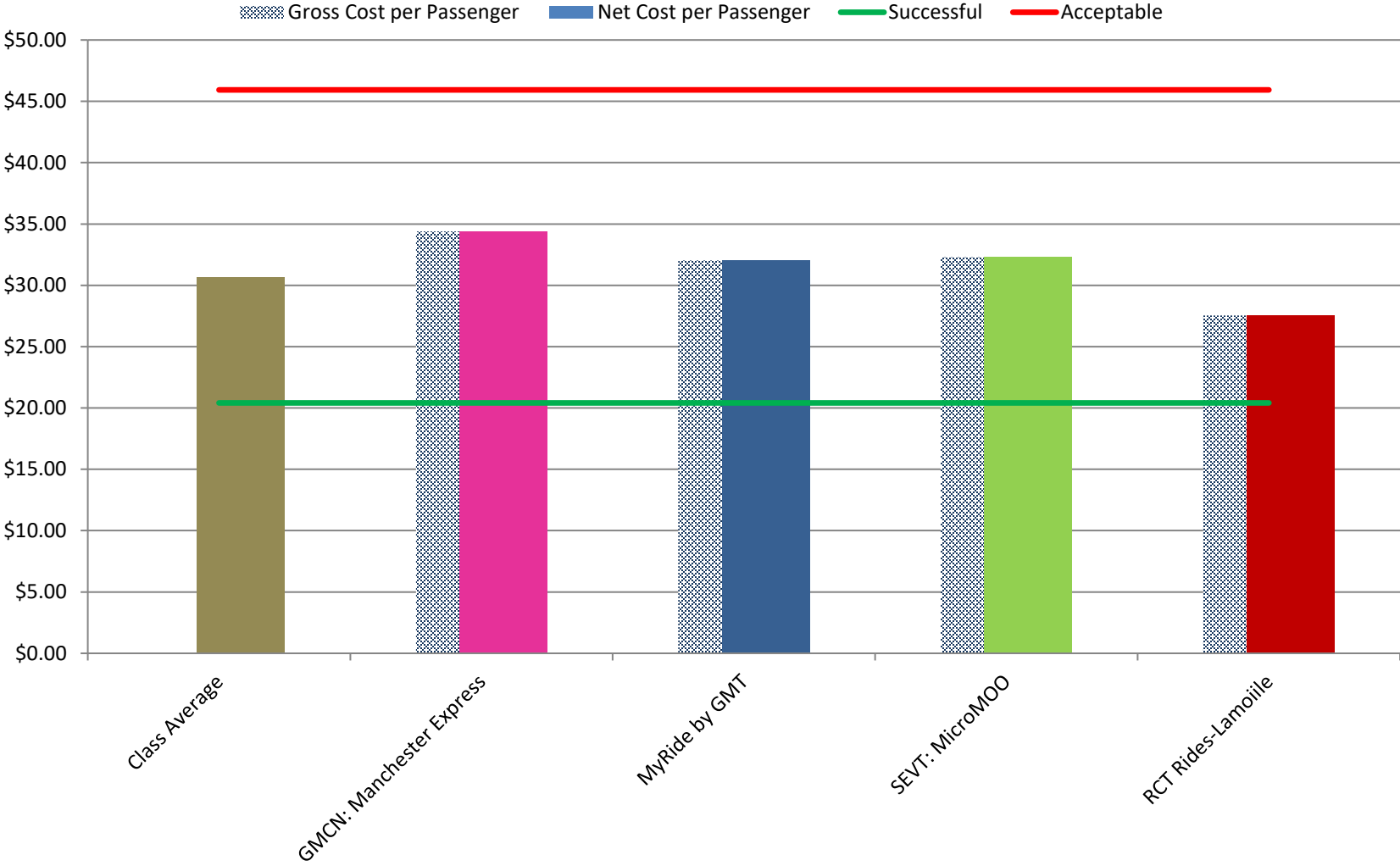


### Graph #3: 2024 Demand Response Cost per Passenger

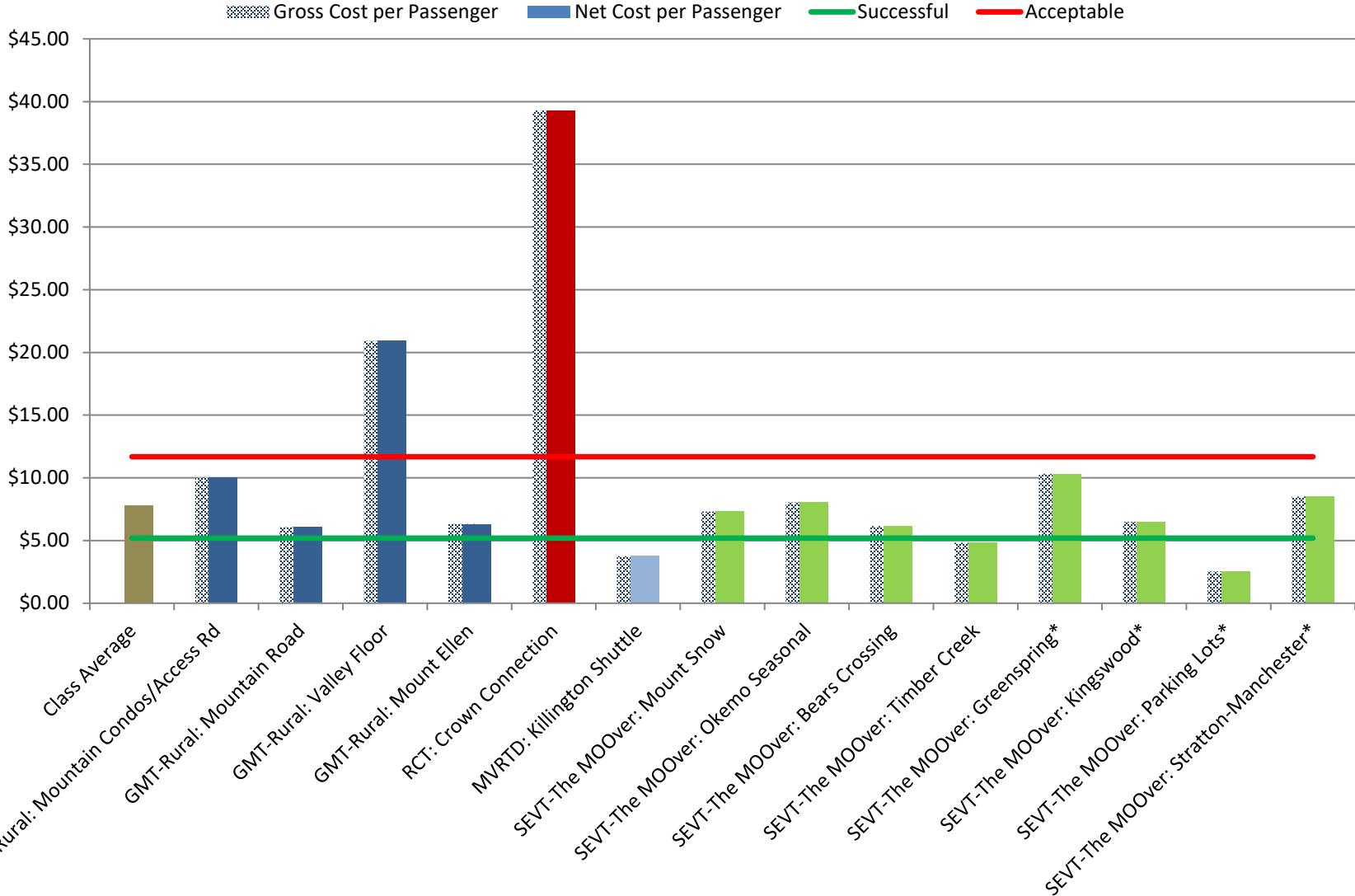




### Graph #4: 2024 Microtransit Cost per Passenger

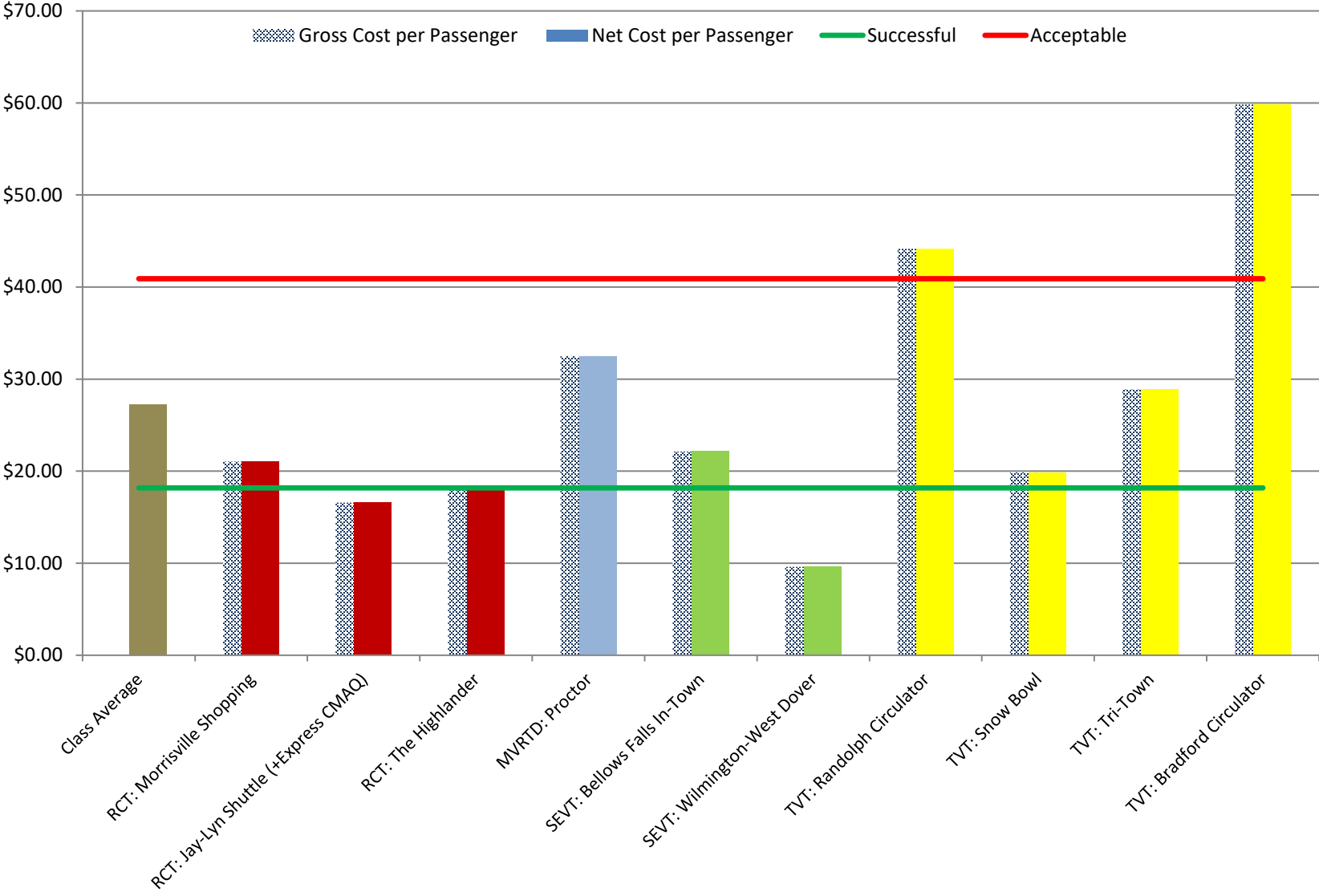


**Graph #5: 2024 Tourism Cost per Passenger**

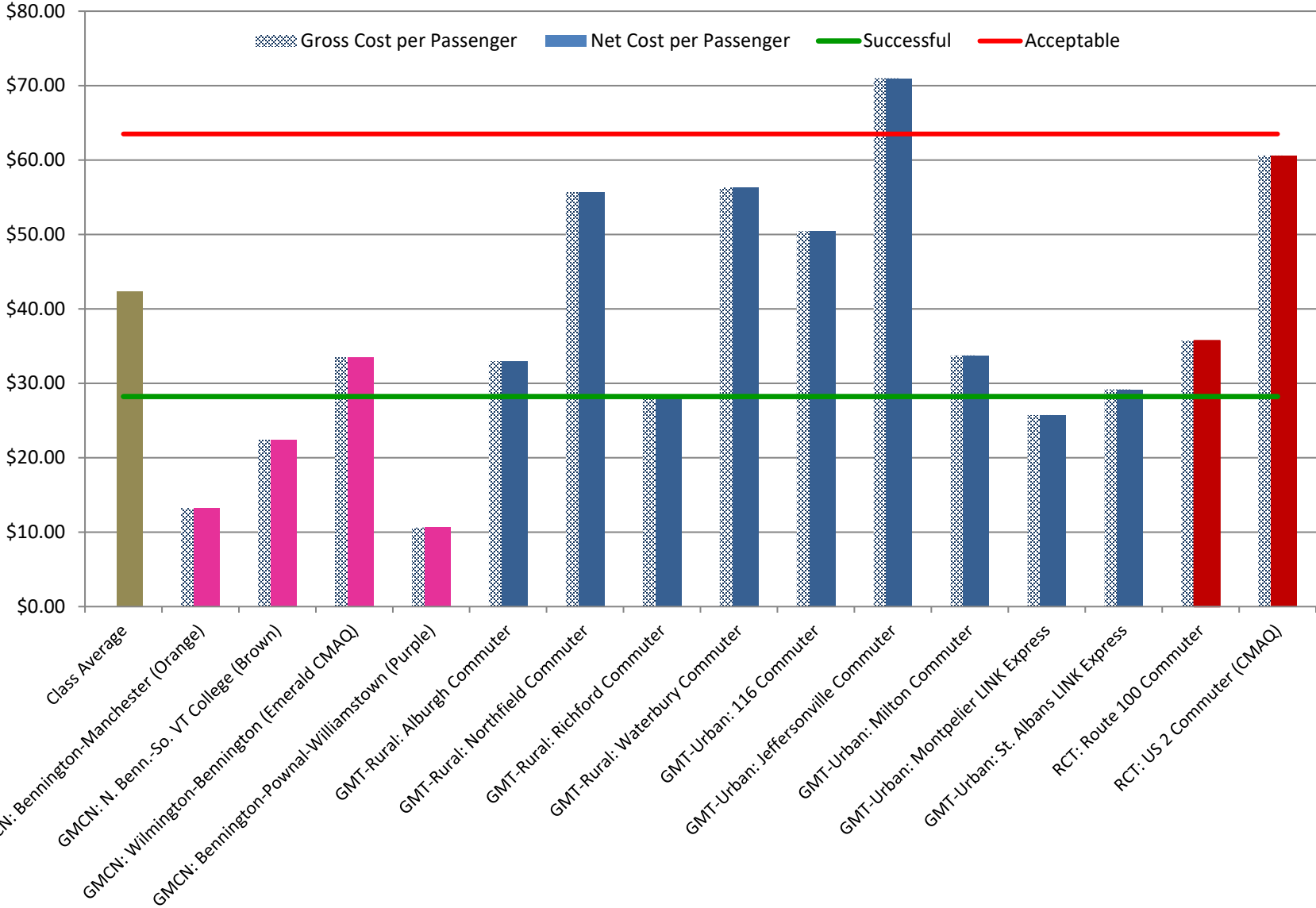


\*Privately funded operations; no state or federal funds

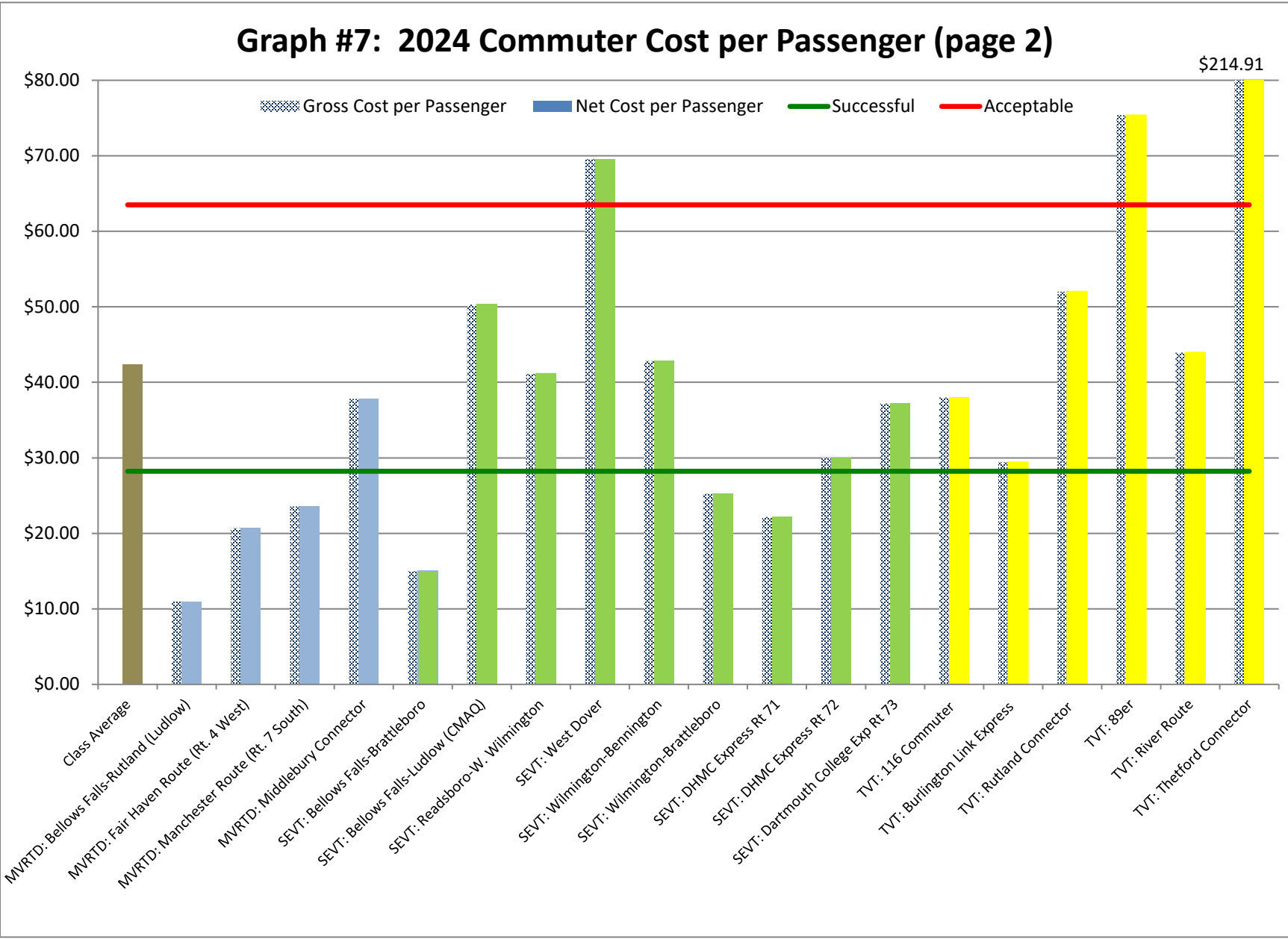
**Graph #6: 2024 Rural Cost per Passenger**



**Graph #7: 2024 Commuter Cost per Passenger (page 1)**



**Graph #7: 2024 Commuter Cost per Passenger (page 2)**



### Graph #8: 2024 Intercity Cost per Passenger

