

# Citizens Oversight Committee

## Agenda Item 09: Free Fare Pilot Program

March 25, 2026



# Youth & Senior Free Fare Pilot Program

- Free Fare Pilot Program Overview
- Ridership Demographics
- Program Performance
  - Ridership
  - Passenger Miles Traveled (PMT)
  - Fare Revenue
  - Investment Per Passenger Mile (IPPM)
- FY27 Options
- Questions

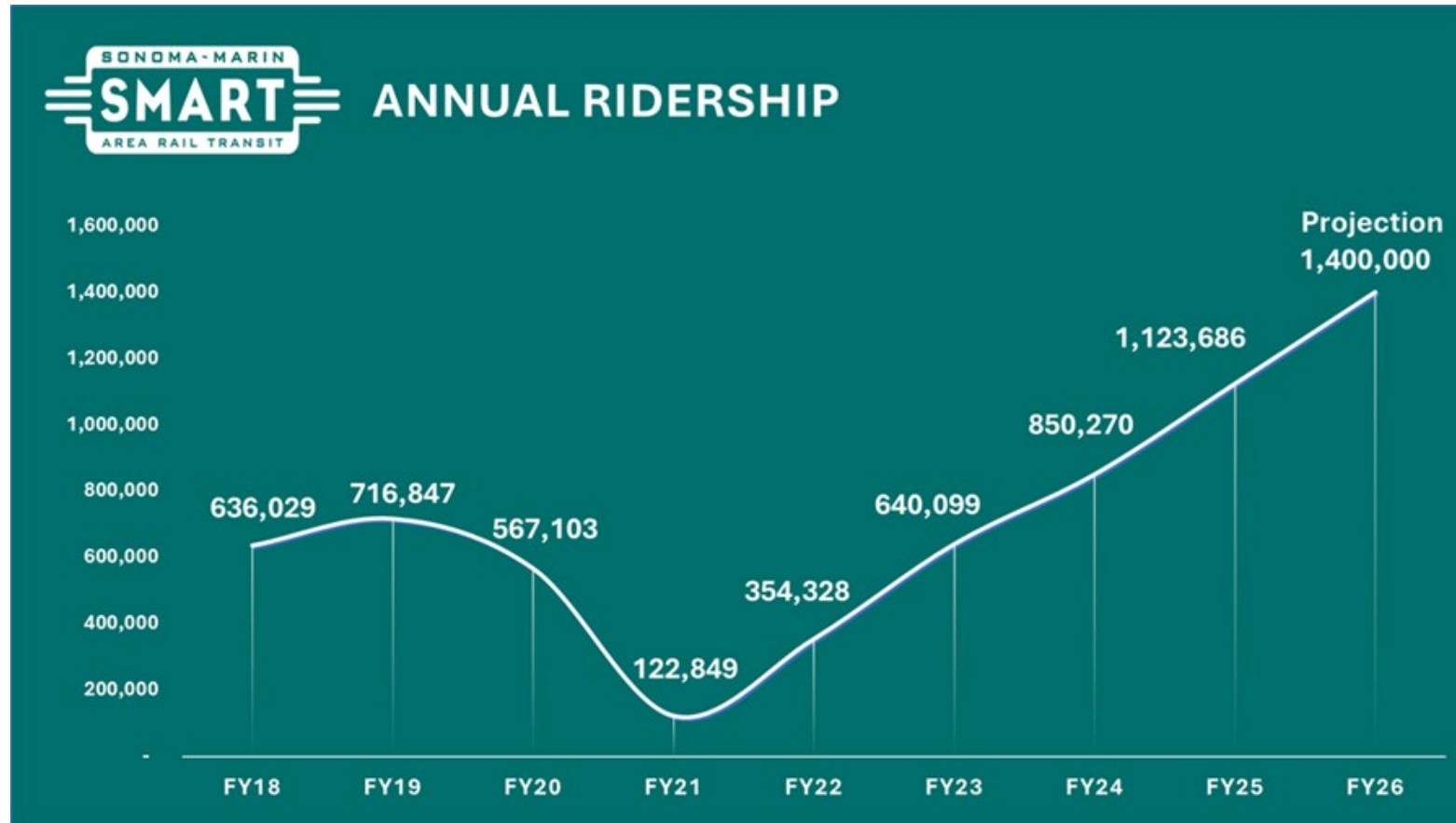


# Free Fare Pilot Program

- Program Intent
  - Remove barriers for youth and senior riders
  - Introduce new riders to the system
  - Increase youth/senior ridership to reflect demographics
  - Lower Investment Per Passenger Mile (IPPM)
- Program Expectations (April 2024)
  - Increase overall ridership 25%
  - Decrease fare revenue 16%
  - Decrease farebox recovery rate by 1%
  - Improve investment per passenger mile (IPPM) by 19%
- Results (FY26 Projection vs FY24)
  - Increased overall ridership 65%
    - Youth and Senior ridership increased 195%
    - Adult ridership increased 23%
  - Fare revenue increased 16%
  - Farebox recovery rate remained consistent
  - Improved Investment Per Passenger Mile (IPPM) by 23%



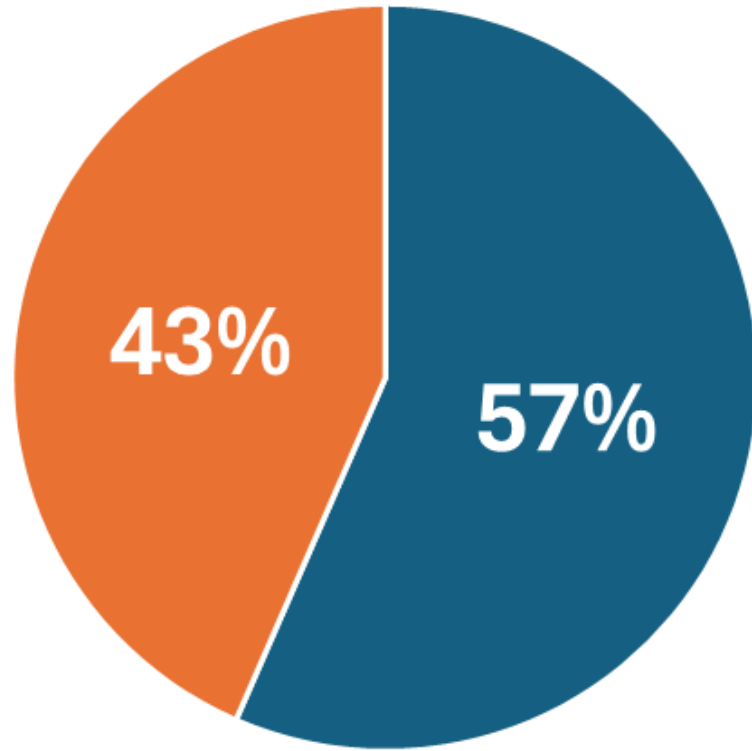
# Ridership



- **FY26 projection vs FY24 = +65%**

# Current Ridership

Ridership

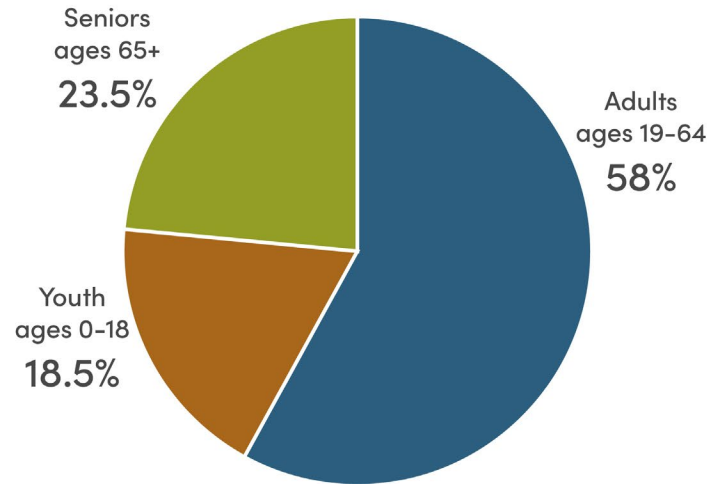


■ Adult   ■ Youth & Senior

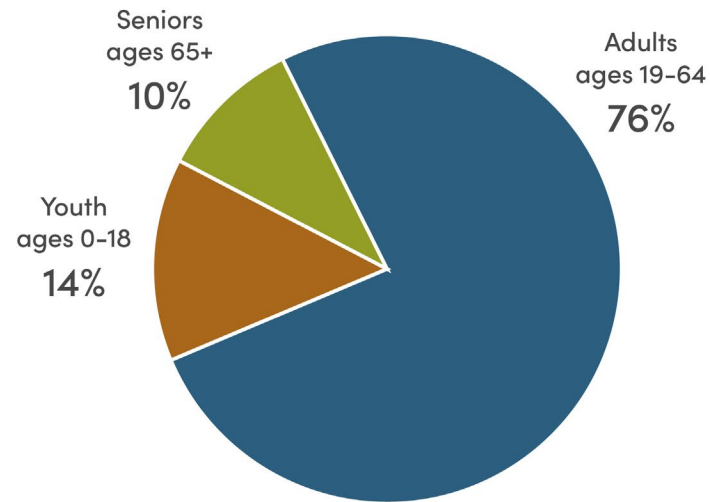


# Ridership Demographics

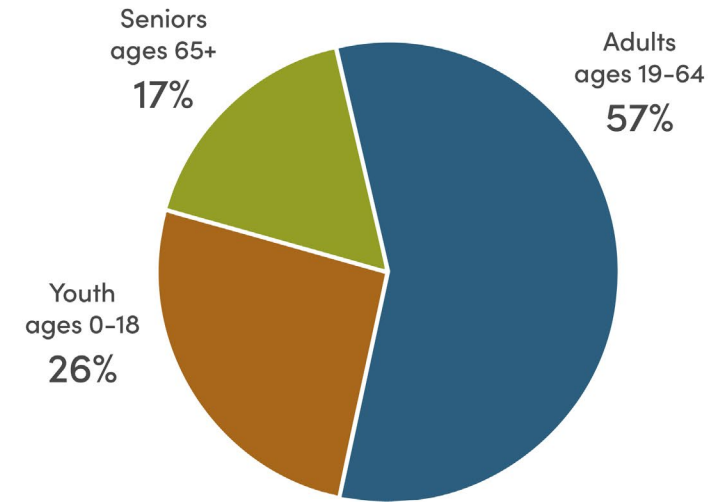
Demographics of Marin & Sonoma counties in 2023  
*Youth & Seniors combined are 42% of population*



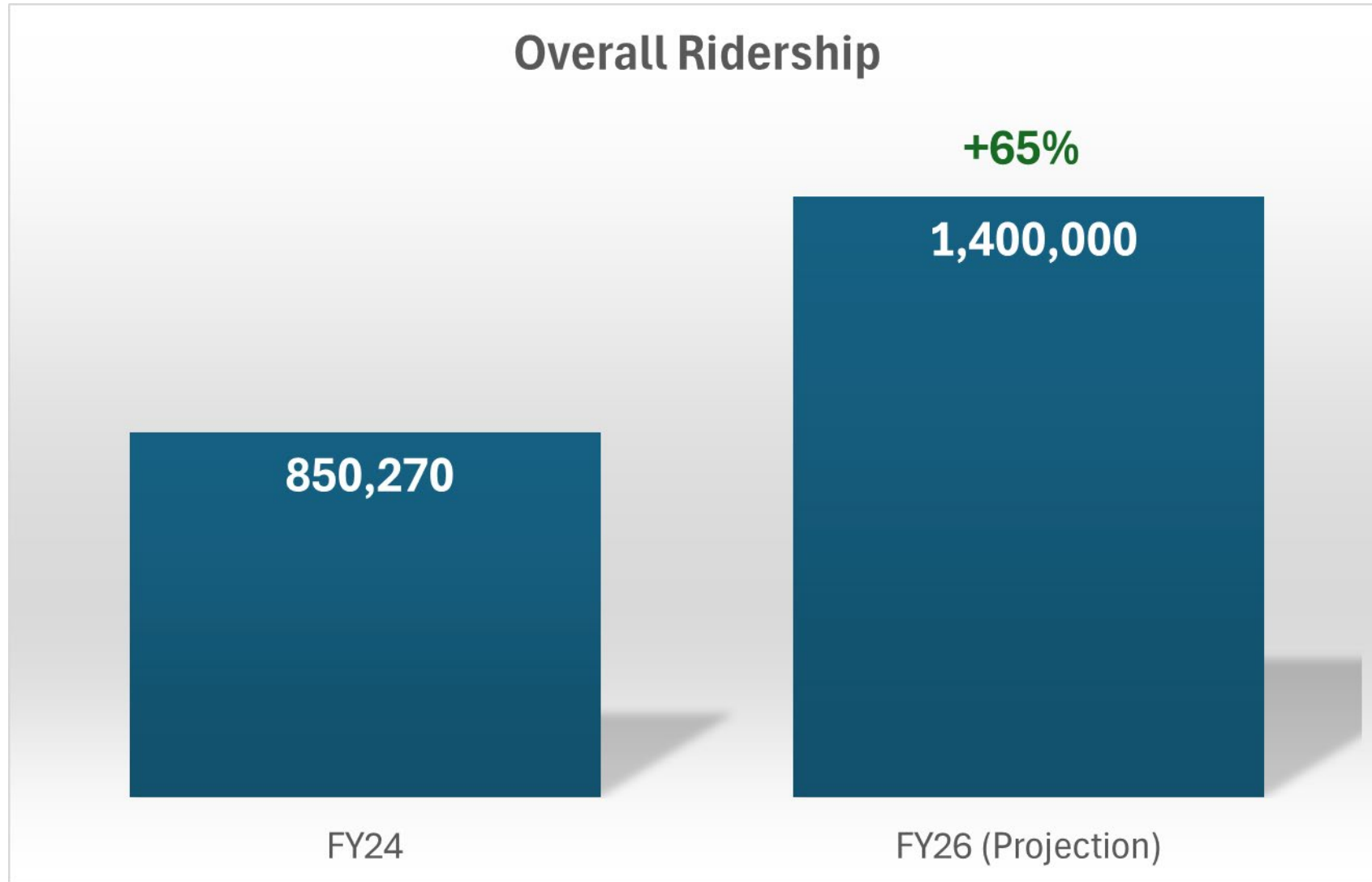
SMART Ridership in FY2023  
prior to Free Fare Program  
*Youth & Seniors combined are 24% of ridership*



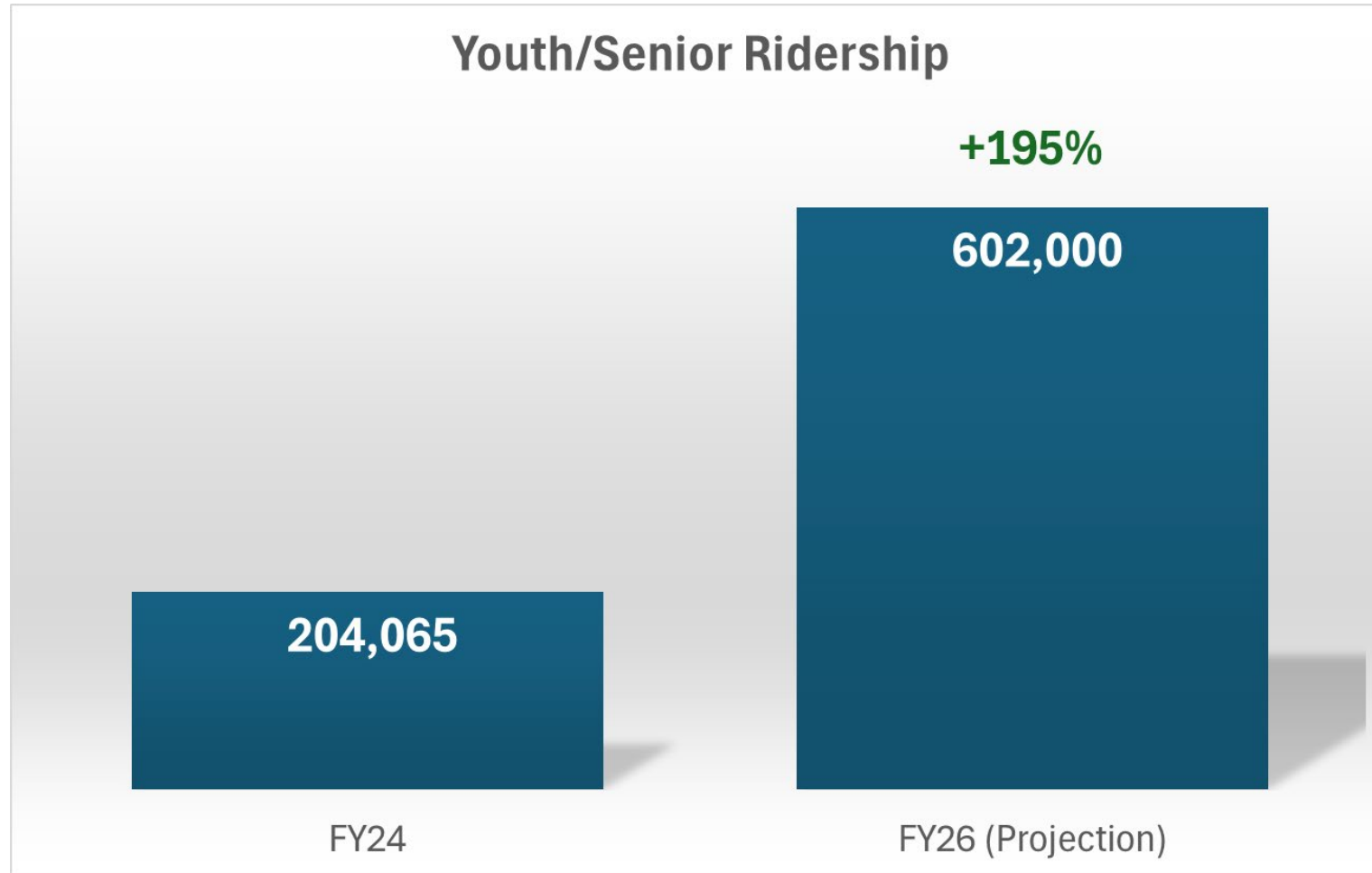
SMART Ridership in FY2025  
two years post Free Fare Program  
*Youth & Seniors combined are 43% of ridership*



# Ridership Performance



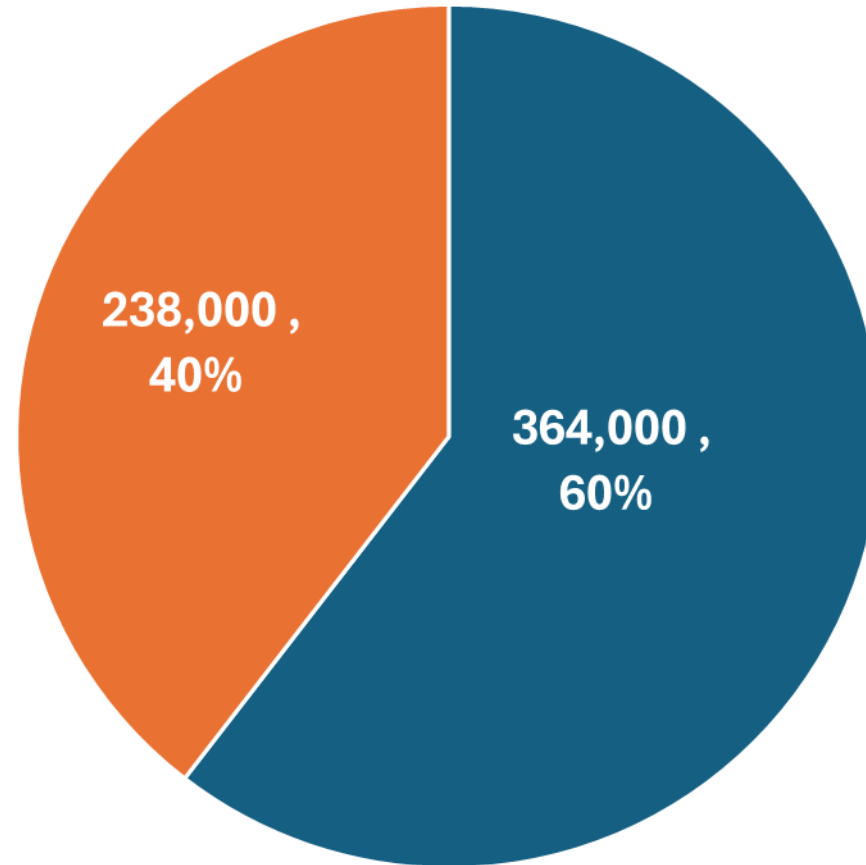
# Ridership Performance



- Youth Ridership = +206%
- Senior Ridership = +180%

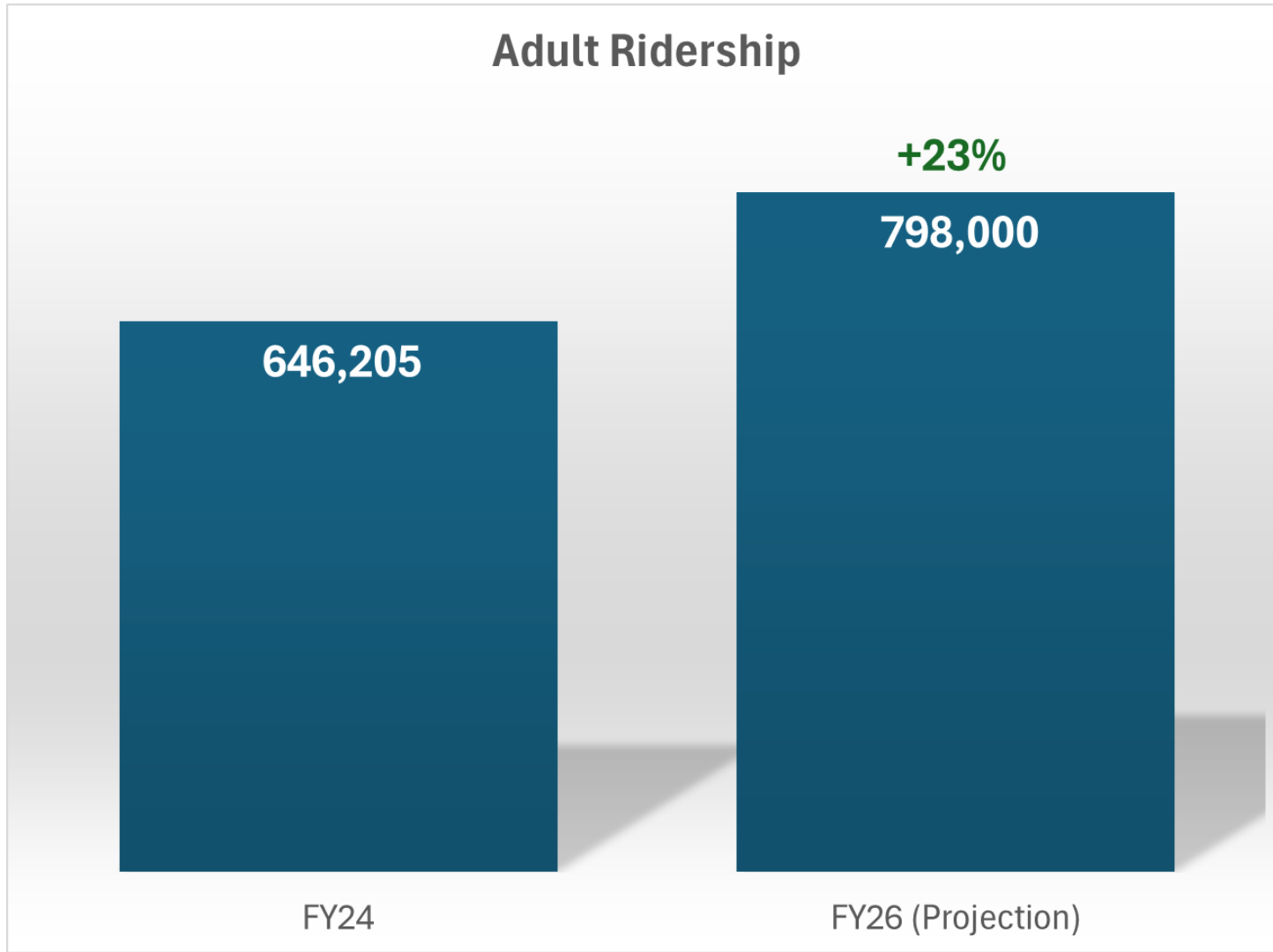
# Ridership Performance

Free Fare Ridership (FY26 Projection)



■ Youth ■ Senior

# Ridership Performance



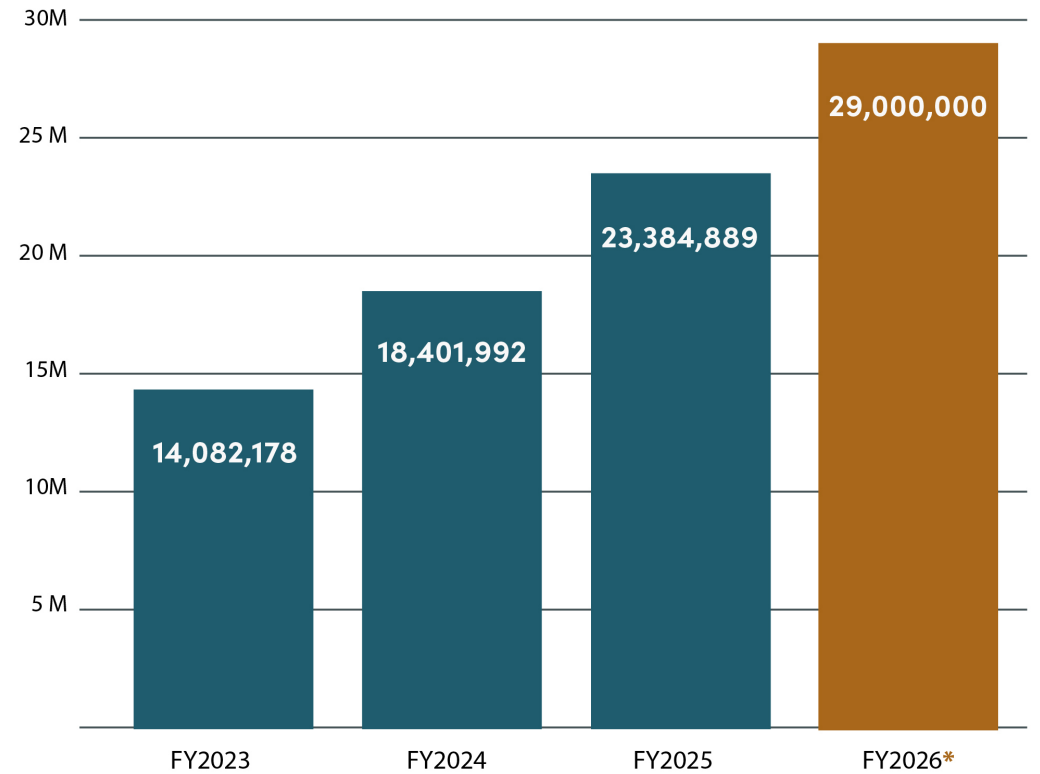
# PMT Performance

## Increased Passenger Miles Traveled

- FY26 projection vs FY24 = +58%



### Passenger Miles Traveled



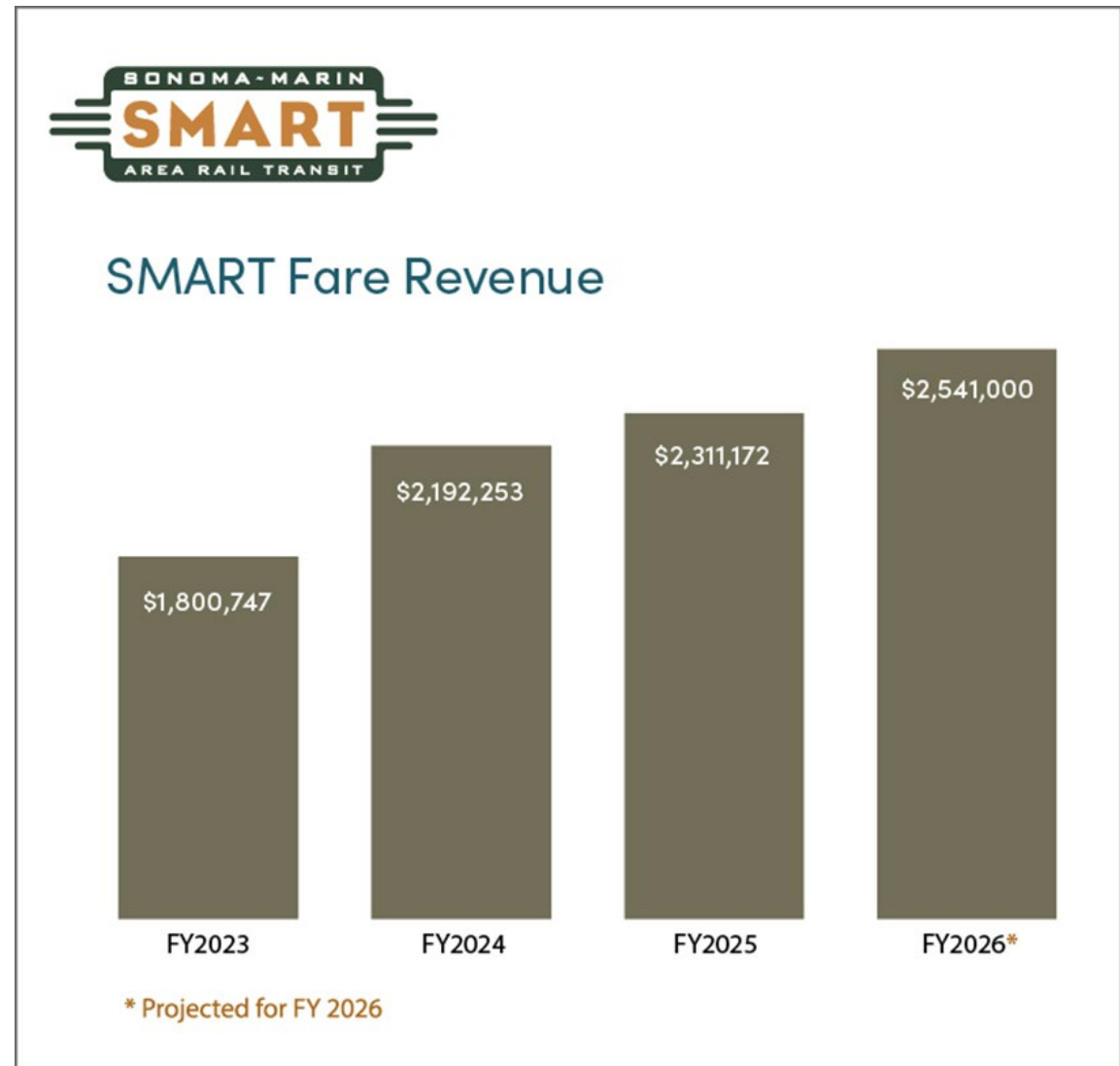
\*Projected for FY26.



# Fare Revenue Performance

## Increased Fare Revenue

- FY26 projection vs FY24 = +16%



# IPPM Performance

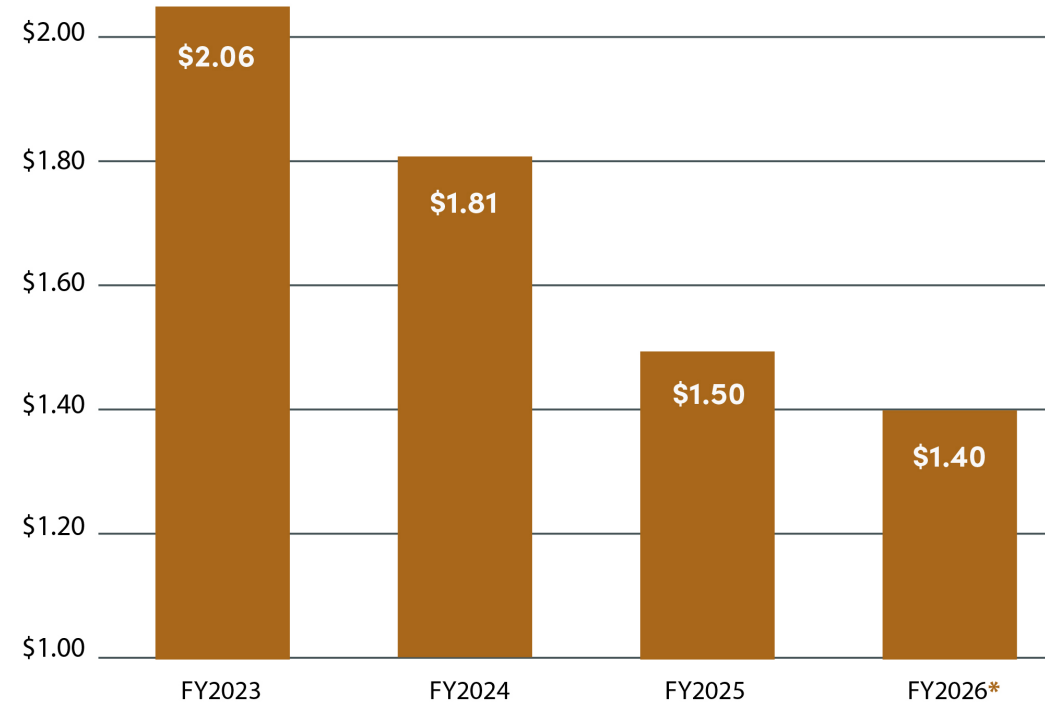
## Improved IPPM

- FY26 projection vs FY24 = 23%
  - Lowest IPPM in North Bay
    - 5<sup>th</sup> lowest in Bay Area



## Investment Per Passenger Mile (IPPM)

Operating Cost - Fare Revenue / Passenger Mile



\*Projected for FY26.



# Free Fare Pilot Program

## Achieved Program Intent

- ✓ Removed barriers for youth and senior riders
- ✓ Introduced new riders to the system
- ✓ Increased youth/senior ridership to reflect demographics
- ✓ Lowered Investment Per Passenger Mile (IPPM)



# FY27 Options

- Option 1: Extend Free Fare Program
  - Maintain current youth/senior ridership trajectory
  - Maintain current farebox recovery rate
  - Foregone Revenue = \$565K – \$1.35M
- Option 2: Eliminate Free Fare Program
  - Likely reduce ridership
  - Increase farebox recovery rate
  - Increase fare revenue \$565K to -\$1.35M

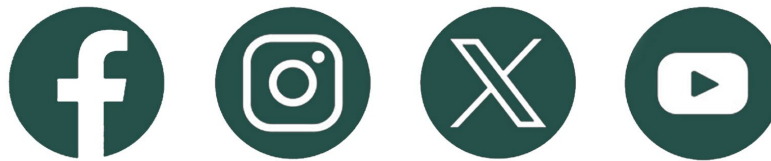


	Scenario 1	Scenario 2
Scenario Parameters	Lower ridership growth consistent with adult ridership growth	Ridership consistent with FY26 projection
Youth/senior ridership increase	23% above FY24	195% above FY24
Fare	Half price	Half price
Revenue impact	\$564,750	\$1,354,500

# Questions?



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