

**REPORT OF
THE VIRGINIA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP**

**STUDY OF THE NEED FOR A
VISITOR'S CENTER IN THE
DULLES CORRIDOR**

**TO THE GOVERNOR AND
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA**



HOUSE DOCUMENT NO. 26

**COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
RICHMOND
1999**



P. O. Box 798 ■ 901 East Byrd Street
Richmond, Virginia 23218-0798
804-371-8100

January 6, 1999

To the Governor and Members of the Virginia General Assembly:

It is a pleasure to present to you the attached report which studies the need for a visitor's center in the Dulles Corridor of Fairfax County. This report is being submitted in response to the request of the 1998 General Assembly under House Joint Resolution 184.

Thank you for your continued support of Virginia's tourism industry.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Wayne L. Sterling'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Wayne L. Sterling
Executive Director

**HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 184
STUDY OF NEED FOR A VISITOR'S CENTER
IN THE DULLES CORRIDOR**

**Prepared by
The Virginia Tourism Corporation
An Affiliate of the Virginia Economic Development Partnership**

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**Prepared by
The Virginia Tourism Corporation
An Affiliate of the Virginia Economic Development Partnership**

BACKGROUND

The 1998 session of the General Assembly requested the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP) to study the need for a visitor's center in the Dulles corridor of Fairfax County. A copy of House Joint Resolution 184 is provided in **Attachment 1**. In passing the joint resolution, the General Assembly noted the following factors:

- Fairfax County is the fifth largest business district in the nation; larger than San Diego, New Orleans, and St. Louis;
- The towns of Reston and Herndon combined have 20 million square feet of office space with vacancy rates under four percent;
- The largest number of new corporations, relocations, and expansions in Fairfax County are in the Dulles corridor;
- The Dulles Corridor has been recognized as the "Netplex" and the "Silicon Valley of the East" with the second largest concentration of information technology companies;
- Washington Dulles International Airport serves 30,000 passengers each day, with 50 percent of these passengers having the Dulles corridor as their final destination;
- Washington Dulles International Airport is the second largest transatlantic gateway on the East Coast and the third largest gateway to the Pacific Rim countries;
- The Commonwealth of Virginia needs a continued long-term presence in one of its fastest-growing and economically prosperous regions.

WELCOME CENTERS AND LOCAL/REGIONAL VISITOR CENTERS

There are two types of staff travel information distribution centers in Virginia: State Welcome Centers and State-Certified Local/Regional Visitor Centers. There is also a visitor center operated by the Virginia Tourism Corporation located on K Street in Washington, DC. Staff members distribute travel information on Virginia and operate a reservation center for bed and breakfasts located in the Commonwealth.

State Welcome Centers

The Virginia Tourism Corporation has responsibility for staffing and operating ten Welcome Centers, which are located primarily at interstate highway points of entry into the state. The exception is the New Church Welcome Center located on U.S. 13, which is the main travel route through the Eastern Shore. All welcome centers, which are owned and maintained by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), include rest areas, vending machines, and rest rooms. Each center is open from 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. daily, closing only on Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day. Separate rest room facilities with outside entrances at the rest areas are open to the public 24 hours daily. **Attachment 2** provides a list of the ten welcome centers and **Attachment 3** shows the location of the centers.

The General Assembly authorized establishment of the State Welcome Center Network in 1960 by statute in the *Code of Virginia*. Using federal guidelines, VDOT developed a master plan for rest areas and welcome centers to be included in their master plan for Virginia's interstate system. Construction of the welcome centers was paid for through a federal/state partnership, with the federal government covering 90 percent of the costs and the state covering the remaining 10 percent. Three of the centers opened in 1968, four in 1970, and one each in 1972, 1980 and 1982. Costs associated with staffing the centers are shared between VDOT and the VTC through the rental of brochure pockets and translites located in each center. From January through November 1998, staff of the ten welcome centers have provided one-on-one travel counseling to an estimated 4.36 million visitors.

Local/Regional Visitor Centers

There are currently 43 State-Certified Local/Regional Visitor Centers located throughout the Commonwealth. With all but two exceptions, the local/regional centers have been constructed, funded, staffed and operated by local tourism offices, convention and visitor's bureaus, chambers of commerce, and regional tourism marketing organizations. The first of the two exceptions is the local/regional center located in King George County. In 1992, the General Assembly provided \$250,000 towards construction of the center, which is situated on U.S. 301 across the Potomac River Bridge from Maryland. The King George County Department of Parks and Recreation administers the center, and operational and staffing costs are funded by a combination of nine counties and seven towns in the region. The second exception is a center to be located on the U.S. 29 corridor in Danville, just across the North Carolina/Virginia line. In 1995, the General Assembly appropriated \$200,000 to the City of Danville in the form of a matching grant for development of the center. The facility is still in the planning stages.

In providing financial support for these two local/regional visitor centers, the General Assembly recognized the need to serve the traveling public as they enter the state via major non-Interstate corridors. As such, the existing center on U.S. Route 301 and the proposed Danville center on U.S. Route 29 serve as "mini" welcome centers for

travelers coming into Virginia. To date, the General Assembly has limited providing state support to visitor centers located at such primary highway entrances. Should the General Assembly, as a potential public partner, decide to allocate funds for establishment of a visitor center in the Dulles Corridor, it would be expanding that precedent, which could result in similar requests for financial support from other areas within the state.

All of the local/regional visitor centers must meet the Virginia Tourism Corporation's "*Criteria for State-Certified Local Regional Visitor Centers*," in order to be certified for operation. These criteria are included in **Attachment 4**. The criteria require that each facility be open and staffed eight hours a day, seven days a week, on a year-round basis. The centers must provide men's and women's rest rooms, maintain adequate designated parking, and provide statewide tourism information, including information on area attractions, events, and lodging establishments. The primary benefit of being a "state-certified" center is that VDOT interstate and/or primary arterial signing is authorized at the facility's expense.

A list of the local/regional visitor centers is provided in **Attachment 5**, and shown on the map in while **Attachment 3**.

Northern Virginia Welcome and Visitor Centers

As the map indicates, there is one Welcome Center located in Northern Virginia. The Manassas Welcome Center was constructed in 1968 on what was then primarily rural I-66 eastbound in Prince William County near Manassas. Through November of 1998, staff at the Manassas Welcome Center has provided travel counseling to approximately 313,000 visitors. In addition to the Manassas Welcome Center, there are six local/regional visitor centers serving the Northern Virginia region.

The following table shows the location of the six local/regional centers.

Location	Name	Operated & Funded By
Alexandria	Alexandria Visitors Center	Alexandria Convention and Visitor Association
Arlington	Arlington County Visitors Center	Arlington Convention and Visitor Service
Fairfax City	Fairfax City Visitors Center	Fairfax City
Fairfax County/Lorton	Fairfax County Visitors Center	Fairfax County Convention and Visitors Bureau
Loudoun County/Leesburg	Loudoun County Visitors Center	Loudoun Tourism Council
Manassas	Historic Manassas Visitors Center	Historic Manassas, Inc.
Prince William County/Occoquan	Prince William County Tourist Information Center	Prince William County Conference & Visitors Bureau

None of these centers serves the “Dulles Corridor,” which is defined as the area extending from Washington Dulles International Airport to I-495 (the Capital Beltway) and on either side from Herndon to Centreville.

STUDY RATIONALE

When the VEDP was requested via HJR 184 to study the need for a visitor center serving the Dulles Corridor, no area of the corridor was specified for the location of the proposed center. However, letters from Delegate Kenneth Plum and Senator Janet Howell, co-patrons of the bill, along with Senator Vincent Callahan, to Patrick A. McMahon, President and CEO of the Virginia Tourism Corporation, indicated strong interest from the Greater Reston Chamber of Commerce to have the proposed visitor center located in Reston. According to a letter from Tracey M. White, Executive Director of the Greater Richmond Chamber of Commerce, the Chamber is prepared to “lead this great project and to pursue the funding needed through public/private partnerships.”

In order to determine the need for and feasibility of locating a visitor center in the Dulles Corridor, the VTC obtained information from the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority. The Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority is an independent interstate agency governed by a Board of Directors with members from Virginia, the District of Columbia, and the State of Maryland. In addition, the President of the United States appoints three members to the Board. The mission of the Authority dictates that the regional interests of all three jurisdictions are to be promoted at the Authority’s airports.

The VTC examined data from the 1997 “Virginia Visitor Study,” conducted by NFO Research, Inc. on behalf of the VTC. The survey, which has been continued into 1998, is the largest travel-related survey conducted by a state travel office. Results are obtained from a national survey of 10,000 households per month. From this survey, the VTC is able to determine the characteristics of all Virginia visitors, those traveling to, through, or within Virginia for business, pleasure, family business, or other purposes, and nearly 300 profiles of specific traveler segments. Since HJR 184 focuses on the need for visitor information based on travel volume generated by Washington Dulles International Airport, the VTC analyzed data from the 1997 Virginia Visitor Study on persons who traveled to Virginia by air.

The purpose of analyzing visitors to Virginia traveling by air was to determine whether a visitor center located along the Dulles Corridor was justified based solely on air traffic volume. Washington Dulles International Airport accounts for a significant number of arrivals and departures occurring each day and is the primary source of visitors who might require travel information in the Dulles Corridor. The category of “air traveler” includes individuals who traveled to Virginia by air to any one of the state’s airports, and is not limited to travelers who deplaned at Washington Dulles International.

However, it is assumed that, since Washington Dulles International Airport accounts for a significant volume of air travel to the Commonwealth and information needs of air travelers do not vary significantly depending on the location of the airport, the findings are able to be applied to persons arriving at Washington Dulles International for the purposes of this study.

FINDINGS OF THE ANALYSIS

The following graphs depict various characteristics of Air Travel Visitors coming to Virginia during 1997. Like other travel segments, air travelers have characteristics that differ from all Virginia pleasure visitors in general. The information presented in the graphs will be used to validate or invalidate the need for a visitor center in the Dulles Corridor.

Data from the 1997 survey indicates that “visiting friends and relatives” is the primary purpose for Air Travel Visitors coming to Virginia, followed by vacation, and attending events and festivals (Figure 1). The data further shows that 74 percent of Air Travel Visitors to Virginia had visited Virginia within the past three years and had made an average of 4.5 pleasure trips to Virginia during this period.

Figure 1.
Primary Purpose of Trip to Virginia, 1997
Air Travel Visitors

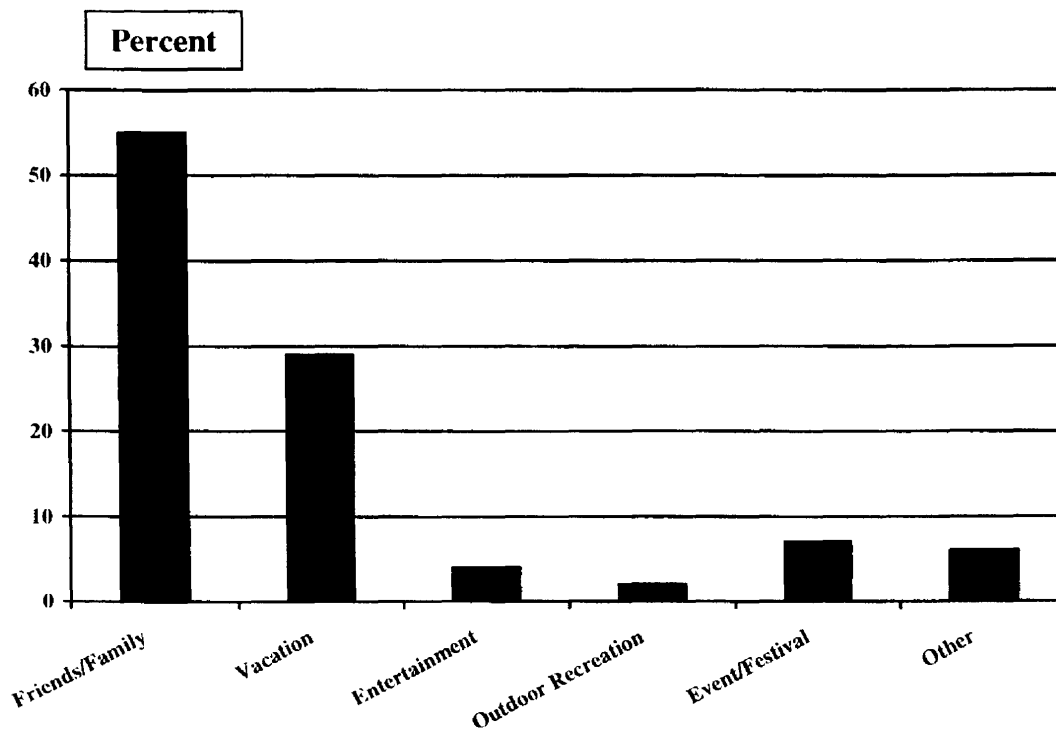


Figure 2 shows the sources of information accessed by Air Travel Visitors in planning their trip to Virginia. Given that a majority of air travelers came to Virginia to visit or travel with friends or family, it is not surprising that the primary source of information (60 percent) was friends and family members themselves. Also not surprisingly, 41 percent based their travel planning on previous experience. Other resources used to plan their trips, in order of frequency, includes travel agents, the AAA, and travel books. According to the survey, only 7 percent of Air Travel Visitors coming to Virginia in 1997 accessed information from visitor centers.

Figure 2.
Sources of Information Used to Plan
Trip to Virginia, 1997
Air Travel Visitors

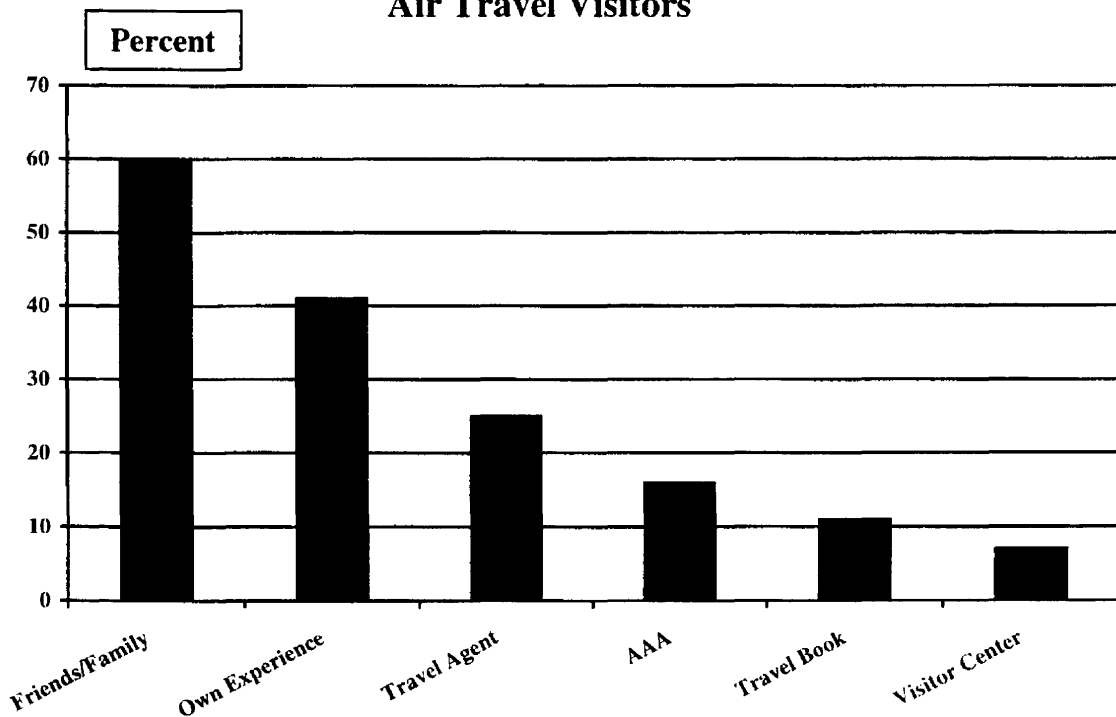
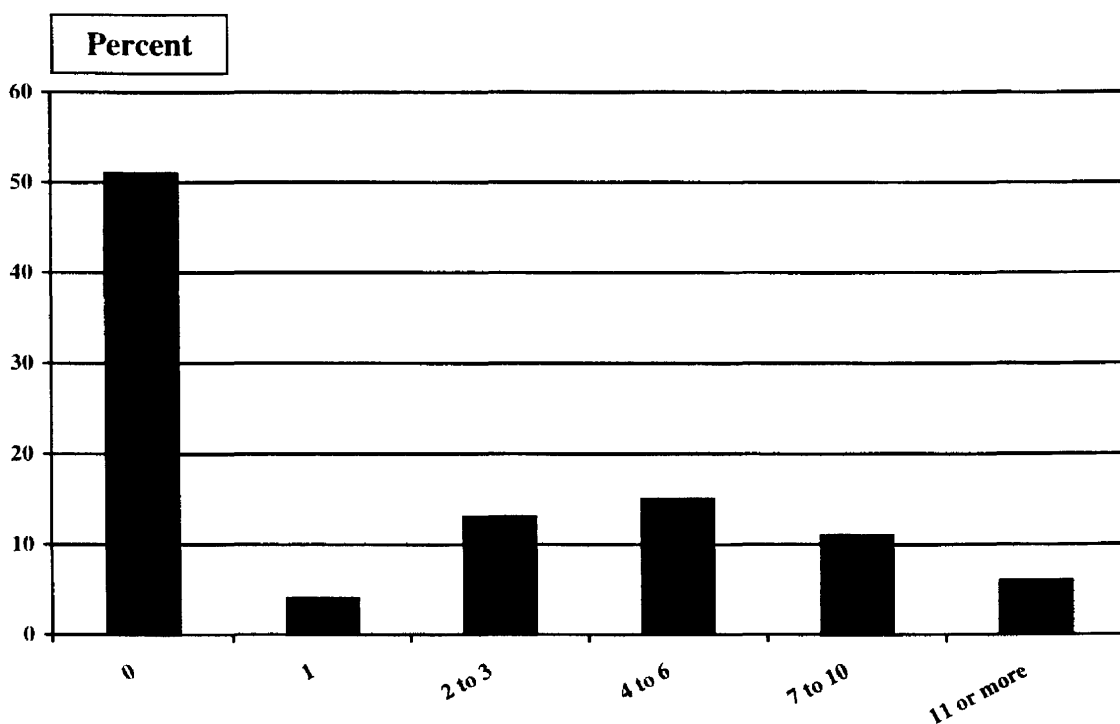


Figure 3 shows the number of nights Air Travel Visitors coming to the Commonwealth spent in Virginia. A majority of the air travelers (51 percent) reported spending no nights in Virginia while on their trip and only 4 percent said they spent one night. Therefore, it appears that most Air Travel Visitors flew to Virginia as a means of getting to a non-Virginia destination. Being located on major north-south transportation corridors, a significant number of Virginia visitors pass through the state on their way to their ultimate travel destinations. The data seem to indicate similar characteristics for Air Travel Visitors.

Figure 3.
Number of Nights Spent in Virginia, 1997
Air Travel Visitors



Given that most a majority of air travelers came to Virginia to visit friends and family, it is not surprising to find that most air travelers (61 percent) stayed with relatives or friends while in Virginia (Figure 4). According to the research, about a third stayed in hotels or motels. The remainder stayed in other paid accommodations, including bed and breakfasts, campgrounds, timeshare units, or other types of lodging.

Figure 4.
Types of Accommodations Used, 1997
Air Travel Visitors

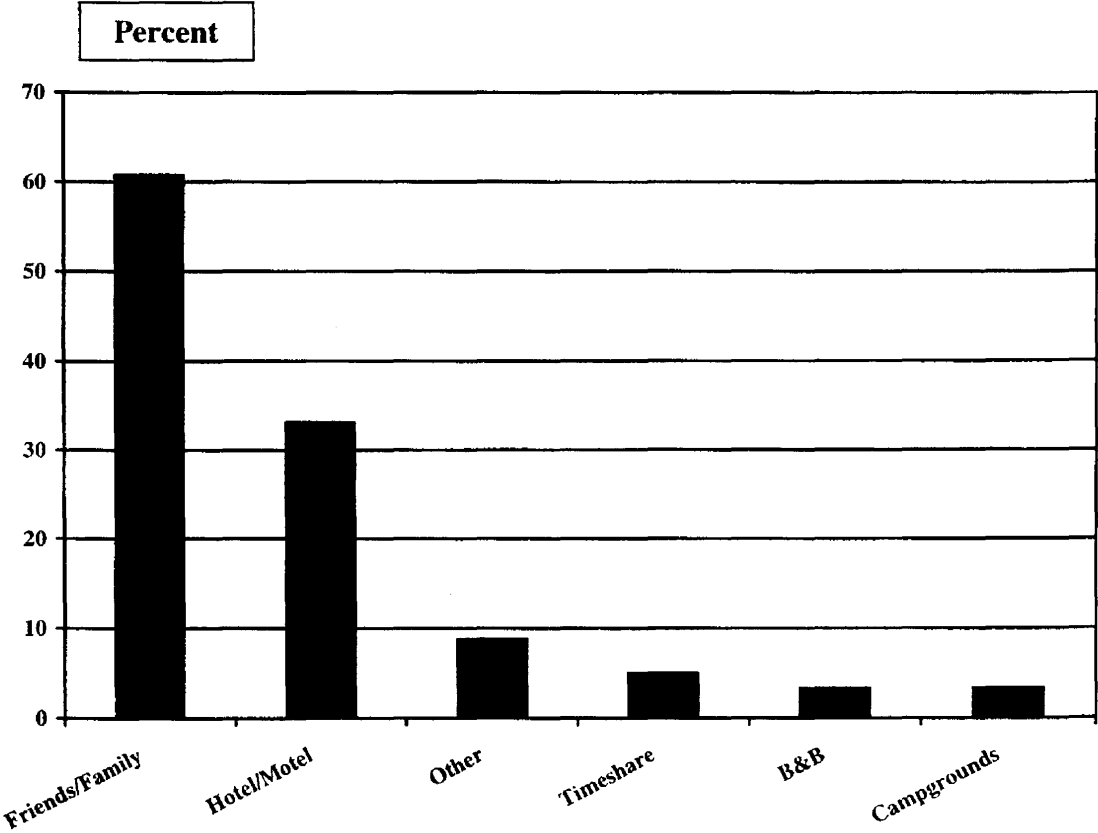


Figure 5 shows that most air travelers planned their Virginia trip well in advance. A total of 32 percent planned their trip four or more months before taking the trip, while only 9 percent took what could be considered “spur of the moment” trips (those planned six days or less in advance).

Figure 5.
Time Between Decision to Take Trip
And When Trip was Taken, 1997
Air Travel Visitors

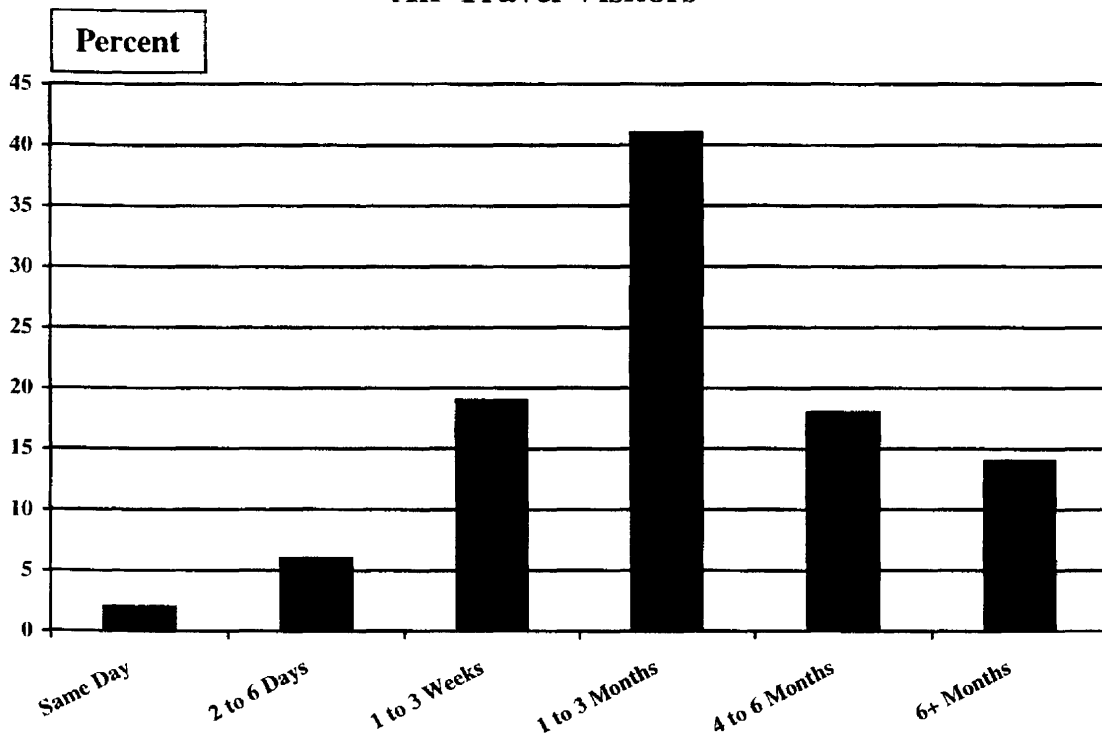
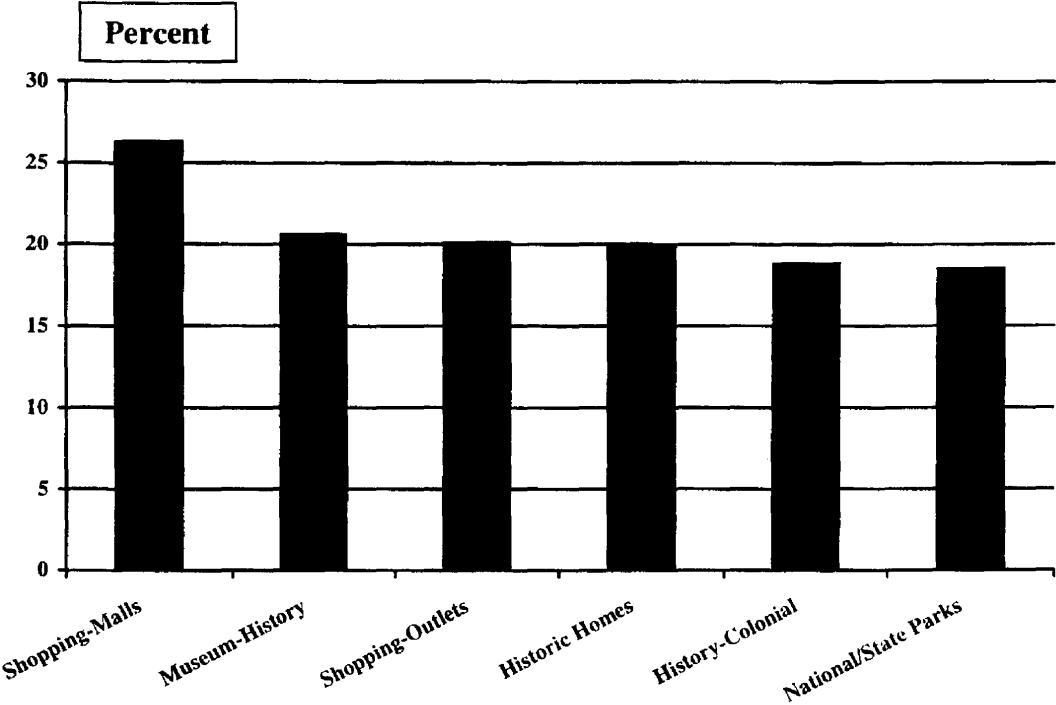


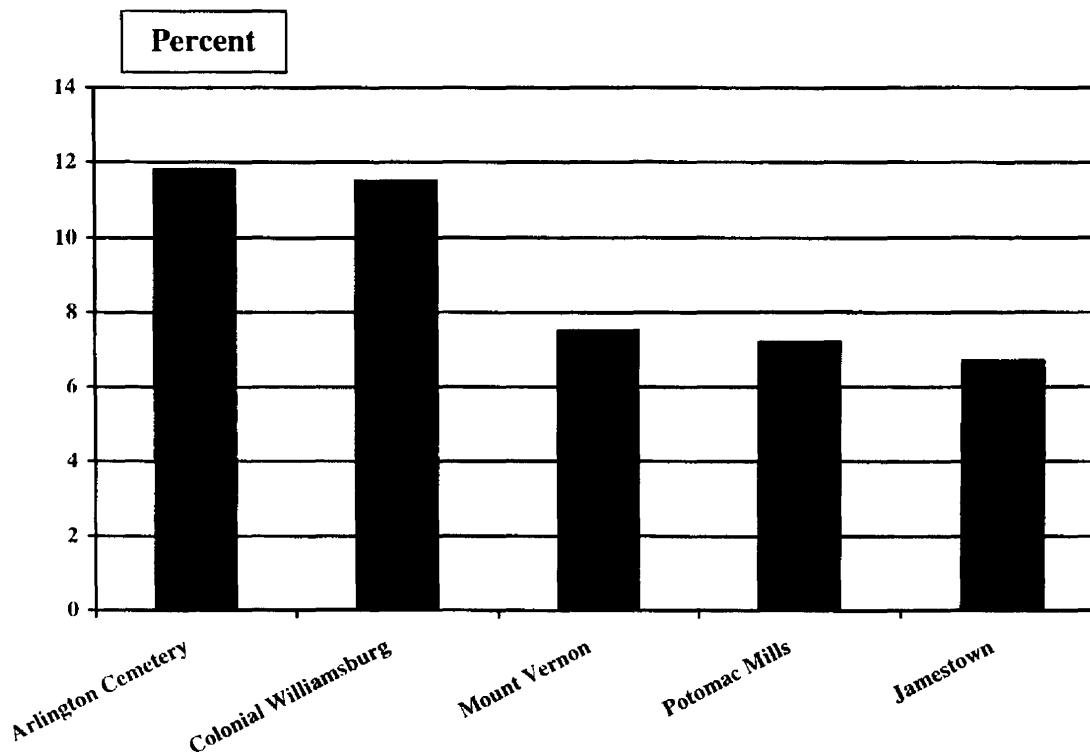
Figure 6 shows that Air Travel Visitors listed shopping at malls and shopping at outlets as two of the top three activities experienced on their trip. Visiting historical museums, historic homes, Colonial history attractions, and state and national parks rounded out the top six. For all Virginia pleasure visitors, going to a shopping mall is the number one activity enjoyed while visiting Virginia. Similarly, national data from the Travel Industry Association of America indicates that shopping is the top ranked activity while traveling.

Figure 6.
Activities “Experienced” While Visiting Virginia, 1997
Air Travel Visitors



Arlington Cemetery (11.8 percent) was the most popular attraction for Air Travel Visitors, followed in order of frequency by Colonial Williamsburg, Mount Vernon, Potomac Mills, and Jamestown Settlement (Figure 7). According to data provided by the Mills Corporation, Potomac Mills, which is located in Dale City north of Fredericksburg, hosts an estimated 20 million guests each year, making it one of the top attractions in the state in terms of annual visitation. Potomac Mills is also one of the top attractions in Virginia for Virginia Pleasure Visitors.

Figure 7.
Specific Sites “Experienced” 1997
Air Travel Visitors



The VTC also contacted the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority seeking information regarding availability of travel information, the amount of time passengers spend in the airport, the need for travel-related information while at the airport, and related data. Although the request crossed several operational areas within the Authority, Keith Meurlin, Manager of Washington Dulles International, provided helpful information regarding the current distribution of travel information at the Airport and factors to be addressed should the study suggest placement of a visitor center within the Airport.

Mr. Meurlin discussed the establishment of a visitor center in Washington Dulles International Airport as a means of reaching a large number of persons upon arrival. He indicated that, as the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority represents the Commonwealth of Virginia, District of Columbia, and the State of Maryland, any visitor

center located in the Airport would have to promote the entire region. Therefore, while information on Northern Virginia and Fairfax County could be available at the airport, Washington DC and Maryland would also be required.

Mr. Meurlin noted that volunteers at Travelers Aid and Meridian International information desks currently distribute travel information at Washington Dulles International. He offered to distribute travel information on Virginia as the existing desks.

Information is also available through an "Arrivals On-line" kiosk touch screen system located in key passenger corridors within the Airport. The systems are used by travelers to arrange for ground transportation, make restaurant and hotel inquiries and reservations, and discover what there is to see and do while visiting the region. Based on a "typical" day, most inquiries are lodging related, with a much smaller number related to restaurants and tourism attractions. It is not possible to determine from the On-line system whether users of the kiosks are requesting hotel information for the purposes of making reservations, contacting specific hotels to determine if ground transportation is provided, or for some other purpose.

The Authority does not collect information on deplaning passengers who arrive at Washington Dulles International Airport as their final destination. Mr. Meurlin noted that, "as you might expect, [passengers] are generally in a major rush to get their bags and be on their way."

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

There are other factors that need to be taken into consideration when addressing the need for and potential location of a visitor center in the Dulles Corridor. First, plans are on track for completion of the first phase of the long-awaited National Air and Space Museum Dulles Center. When opened in 2002, the Center is expected to attract a projected four million visitors in its first year of operation, increasing with the project's completion and increased awareness of this significant new tourism attraction. Given its location and land adjacent to Washington Dulles International Airport and within the Dulles Corridor as defined for this study, a visitor center located within the National Air and Space Museum Dulles Center would fulfill the need for a heavily utilized travel information center in eastern Fairfax County.

Second, on December 10, 1998, Governor Gilmore announced several tourism-related initiatives that will be presented to the General Assembly during its 1999 session. One of the initiatives involves the establishment of regional visitor centers around Virginia, with a focus on the use of high technology as a means of disseminating travel information. If approved by the General Assembly, the Governor has requested \$1 million for the creation of the first such center, to be located in Colonial Williamsburg. As noted in House Joint Resolution 184, the Dulles Corridor is home to a significant number of high-tech firms and is recognized as the "Silicon Valley of the East." Given these characteristics of businesses in the Dulles Corridor, it follows that the area could be

a strong contender for development of another high-tech center within the Commonwealth. Such a center could be either a freestanding structure, a facility located within the National Air and Space Museum Dulles Center, or at another site within the Dulles Corridor.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

The major findings from the analysis are as follows:

- Based on the distribution of existing local/regional visitor centers in the Northern Virginia, a visitor center located in eastern Fairfax County along the Dulles Corridor may be warranted;
- Because most Virginia visitors traveling to Virginia by air (1) visit or travel with friends or family, (2) have visited Virginia on previous occasions, (3) rely on friends and family and previous personal experience for most travel-related information, (4) tend not to stay in Virginia upon arrival by air, (5) have a non-Virginia location as their ultimate destination, (6) generally stay with friends and family while in Virginia, and (7) plan their trips well in advance, the Specific characteristics of Air Travel Visitors to Washington Dulles International Airport would not support the establishment of a new local/regional center in the Dulles Corridor;
- Since shopping is the number one activity not only for air travelers, but also for all pleasure visitors, it follows that locating a visitor center in a major shopping facility within the Dulles Corridor would provide the best means for “capturing” visitors and distributing travel-related information as a means of enticing them to stay in Virginia and enjoy the state’s other tourism attributes;
- The development of the National Air and Space Museum Dulles Center may provide a significant opportunity to coordinate the establishment of a visitor center in the Dulles Corridor and the state’s newest major attraction;
- Since the research shows that Air Travel Visitors and all Pleasure Visitors experience a wide range of site and activities while in Virginia, any proposed visitor center located in the Dulles Corridor should provide not only regional travel information, but also information on other attractions and destinations throughout Virginia;
- Given the mission of the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority, it is not recommended that a visitor center for the Dulles Corridor be located in the airport, as Maryland and the District of Columbia would have to be given equal exposure. However, attractions, lodging establishments, restaurants, and other tourism entities should take advantage of the existing kiosk system and traveler information desks to distribute information on the area;
- It should be recognized that travelers arriving at Washington Dulles International Airport, as well as other airports, are interested primarily in obtaining their luggage as

quickly as possible and departing the airport for their planned destinations. Therefore, attempting to “capture” passengers as they depart from the airport by private vehicle or other ground transportation and enticing them to stop at a local/regional visitor center is not the most viable means of reaching this segment of the traveling public; and

RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of this analysis, the Virginia Tourism Corporation recommends the following:

1. The VTC be requested to work directly with local and regional tourism organizations to determine the most viable location for a new local/regional visitor center to serve the Dulles Corridor;
2. The VTC work with local and regional tourism organizations (and specifically the Greater Reston Chamber of Commerce) and businesses to determine the feasibility of forming a public/private partnership to fund the proposed visitor center;
3. The VTC facilitate discussions (and any subsequent negotiations) with management of Tyson’s Corner Shopping Center, Fair Oaks Mall, and other major shopping destinations in the Dulles Corridor, to determine the feasibility of establishing a local/regional visitor center in a shopping facility as a means of capturing visitors enjoying the state’s number one tourism activity; and
4. The VTC conduct discussions with representatives of the Smithsonian Institute to determine the feasibility of including a local/regional visitor center within the National Air and Space Museum Dulles Center.

ATTACHMENT 1summary**HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 184**

Requesting the Virginia Economic Development Partnership to study the need for a visitor's center in the Dulles Corridor of Fairfax County.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, March 12, 1998

Agreed to by the Senate, March 12, 1998

WHEREAS, Fairfax County is the fifth largest business district in the nation, larger than San Diego, New Orleans, and St. Louis; and

WHEREAS, Reston and Herndon combined currently have 20 million square feet of office space with vacancy rates under four percent; and

WHEREAS, the largest number of new corporations, relocations, and expansions in Fairfax County are in the Dulles Corridor; and

WHEREAS, the Dulles Corridor has been recognized as the "Netplex" and the "Silicon Valley of the East" with the second largest concentration of information technology companies; and

WHEREAS, the Washington Dulles International Airport serves 30,000 passengers each day, with 50 percent of these passengers having the Dulles Corridor as their final destination; and

WHEREAS, the Washington Dulles International Airport is the second largest transatlantic gateway on the East Coast and the third largest gateway to the Pacific Rim; and

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth needs a continued long-term presence in one of its fastest-growing and economically prosperous regions; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Virginia Economic Development Partnership be requested to study the need for a visitor's center in the Dulles Corridor of Fairfax County. As part of the study, the Partnership shall examine the feasibility of financing the visitor's center in the Dulles Corridor through a public-private partnership.

All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Partnership for this study, upon request.

The Partnership shall complete its work in time to submit its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the 1999 Session of the General Assembly as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents.

 **Go to (General Assembly Home)**

ATTACHMENT 2

VIRGINIA WELCOME CENTERS

BRACEY

Ms. Sandra F. Tanner, Manager
Bracey Welcome Center
Virginia Tourism Corporation
Interstate 85, P.O. Box 7
Bracey, VA 23919
Tel: 804/689-2295
Fax: 804/689-2224

BRISTOL

Ms. Patsy B. Mikeal, Manager
Bristol Welcome Center
Virginia Tourism Corporation
Interstate 81, 66 Island Road
Bristol, VA 24201
Tel: 540/466-2932
Fax: 540/466-4653

CLEAR BROOK

Ms. Judith D. Kirby, Manager
Clear Brook Welcome Center
Virginia Tourism Corporation
Interstate 81, P.O. Box 38
Clear Brook, VA 22624
Tel: 540/722-3448
Fax: 540/722-3449

COVINGTON

Ms. Mavis S. Kitzmiller, Manager
Covington Welcome Center
Virginia Tourism Corporation
Interstate 64, One Welcome Center Drive
Covington, VA 24426
Tel: 540/559-3010
Fax: 540/559-3028

FREDERICKSBURG

Ms. Peggy J. Hall, Manager
Fredericksburg Welcome Center
Virginia Tourism Corporation
Interstate 95, P.O. Box 683
Fredericksburg, VA 22404
Tel: 540/786-8344
Fax: 540/786-0778

LAMBSBURG

Mr. Roger G. Carpenter, Manager
Lambsburg Welcome Center
Virginia Tourism Corporation
Interstate 77, P.O. Box 60
Lambsburg, VA 24351
Tel: 540/755-3931
Fax: 540/755-4672

MANASSAS

Ms. Patricia A. Amro, Manager
Manassas Welcome Center
Virginia Tourism Corporation
Interstate 66, 9915 Vandor Lane
Manassas, VA 20109
Tel: 703/361-2134
Fax: 703/361-4800

NEW CHURCH

Ms. Jeanne S. Burton, Manager
New Church Welcome Center
Virginia Tourism Corporation
U.S. 13, Box 215
New Church, VA 23415
Tel: 757/824-5000
Fax: 757/824-0294

ROCKY GAP

Ms. Gwen A. Thompson, Manager
Rocky Gap Welcome Center
Virginia Tourism Corporation
Interstate 77, P.O. Box 96
Rocky Gap, VA 24366
Tel: 540/928-1873
Fax: 540/928-1685

SKIPPERS

Ms. Marie G. Taylor, Manager
Skippers Welcome Center
Virginia Tourism Corporation
Interstate 95, P.O. Box 38
Skippers, VA 23879
Tel: 804/634-4113
Fax: 804/348-3324

IN-CITY OFFICE / WASHINGTON

Ms. Lynn Bostain, Manager
Virginia Tourism Corporation
1629 K Street, NW
Washington, DC 20006
Tel: 202/659-5523, 5524, 5529
Fax: 202/659-8646
Reservations: 800/934-9184

Revised: June 1, 1997

VIRGINIA IS FOR LOVERS

CRITERIA FOR STATE-CERTIFIED LOCAL/REGIONAL VISITOR CENTERS

This criteria provides for the recognition and support of the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) to local/regional tourist information centers in the state.

A. Facility Requirements

1. Must be a self-contained, free-standing structure with adequate rest rooms to meet "normal" visitor volumes.
2. Must be operated and staffed on a non-profit basis by one or a combination of the following:
 - a. one or more local governmental units
 - b. chamber(s) of commerce
 - c. designated non-profit local/regional tourism promotion organization(s)
3. Must be open and staffed at least eight hours a day, seven days a week, year around, closing only on major holidays.
4. Must have men's and women's rest rooms, which must be kept clean and well supplied at all times.
5. Must maintain, display and provide to visitors a representative variety of brochures on attractions, localities, events, shopping and accommodations on the **entire** state. A minimum of 75 different brochures must be displayed, including at least one brochure designated by each state-certified local/regional tourist information center.
6. Must be located in a convenient and accessible location for the ease of travelers. The Virginia Department of Transportation and the local government must erect appropriate blue and white interstate and/or other highway signing. Similar blue and white trailblazing signs (minimum size 26" x 26") must clearly lead to the facility, and there must be a clearly visible exterior sign. All signing is to be paid for by the facility.

Any signs required on city or county roads must be erected (with a written agreement for installation and maintenance with the local government) **before** VDOT signs are erected.
7. Adequate staffing is required to handle anticipated visitor traffic.
8. Adequate and designated parking areas must be provided directly adjacent to the facility.
9. Must have a telephone with a dedicated telephone number and fax machine.
10. Center manager and appropriate staff must attend initial orientation training session conducted by VDT staff.

B. Virginia Tourism Corporation Services

1. Authorization of appropriate state highway signing in conjunction with the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT). All state signing content, fabrication, erection, location and cost decisions are made by VDOT.
2. Free annual distribution of one 4" x 9" brochure at all 10 state welcome centers and the Washington, DC Sales Office (1997-98 value - \$700.00). The brochure must represent the visitor center's community and/or region.
3. VTC will also provide state publications, in limited bulk quantities, if available. Desk reference copies will be provided for:

Technical Tour Directory	Virginia Outdoors Guide
Virginia Facts and Figures	Virginia Travel Guide
Virginia Group Tour & Meeting Planners Directory	State Calendar of Events
4. Annual bulk supply of VDOT state highway maps. All local/regional visitor centers are marked on the official state highway map.
5. A prominent listing as a primary contact in the **Virginia is for Lovers Travel Guide**. (650,000 printed in 1997)
6. Contacts with appropriate organizations and persons instrumental in developing local/regional tourist information centers.
7. Sample tourism brochures for display, and guidance for developing and maintaining a brochure ordering system.
8. Annual visitor center seminar and fam tour designed by the VTC for both center managers and travel counselors.
9. Recommendations for hospitality training for the travel counseling staff.
10. Sample reference copies of state welcome center and other local/regional visitor center operations manuals.

All facilities will be periodically visited and inspected by state personnel. If these criteria are not being met, the state-certified facility designation will be revoked and state signing removed.

August 1998

VIRGINIA STATE CERTIFIED LOCAL/REGIONAL VISITOR CENTERS

*Interstate Signing

°Primary Arterial Signing

*ABINGDON

Abingdon Visitor Center
Ms. April Eskridge, Manager
335 Cummings Street
Abingdon, VA 24210
TOLL FREE: (800) 435-3440
TEL: (540) 676-2282
FAX: (540) 676-3076
E-mail: acvb@naxs.com
Website: www.abingdon.com/tourism

*ALEXANDRIA

Alexandria Visitors Center
Ms. Jo Anne Mitchell, Executive Director
221 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314-3209
TEL: (703) 838-4200
FAX: (703) 838-4683
E-mail: acva@erols.com

*APPALACHIAN MOUNTAIN REGION

Heart of Appalachia Visitor Information Center
Ms. Caroline Sword, Manager
17507 Lee Highway, Suite 2
Abingdon, VA 24210
TOLL FREE: (888) 827-6867 (888-VAS MTNS)
TEL: (540) 623-2209
FAX: (540) 623-2320

°APPOMATTOX

Appomattox Visitor Information Center
Jon Montgomery, Coordinator
5 Main Street/P.O. Box 704
Appomattox, VA 24522
TEL: (804) 352-2621
FAX: (804) 352-2621
E-mail: appomattoxcc@earthlink.net
Website: www.appomattox.com

*ARLINGTON

Arlington County Visitors Center
Mr. Bill Arey, Marketing Manager
735 18th Street South
Arlington, VA 22202
TOLL FREE: (800) 677-6267
TEL: (703) 228-5720 info center
TEL: (703) 228-3988 admin ofc
FAX: (703) 228-3667 admin ofc.

*ASHLAND-HANOVER COUNTY

Ashland/Hanover Visitor Information Center
Ms. Barbara Franklin, Director
112 N. Railroad Avenue
Ashland, VA 23005
TEL: (804) 752-6766
FAX: (804) 798-0014

BUENA VISTA

Buena Vista Regional Visitor Center
Ms. Sonya H. Balsler, Director
595 East 29th Street
Buena Vista, Va 24416
TEL: 540-261-2880
FAX: 540-261-1810

*CHARLOTTESVILLE-ALBERMARLE CO.

Charlottesville-Albemarle County
Visitors Center
Ms. Barbara Cochran, Director
600 College Drive/P.O. Box 178
Charlottesville, VA 22902
TEL: (804) 293-6789
FAX: (804) 295-2176
E-mail: visitorcenter@ci.charlottesville.va.us

CHINCOTEAGUE

Chincoteague Chamber of Commerce
Ms. Jacklyn Russell, Executive Secretary
6733 Maddox Boulevard/P.O. Box 258
Chincoteague, VA 23336
TEL: (757) 336-6161
FAX: (757) 336-1242
E-mail: pony@shore.intercom.net

*FAIRFAX CITY

Fairfax City Museum/Visitor Center
Ms. Stacy Clark, Director
10209 Main Street
Fairfax, VA 22030
TOLL FREE: (800) 545-7950
TEL: (703) 385-8414
FAX: (703) 385-7811

*FAIRFAX COUNTY

Fairfax County Visitors Center
Ms. Jean Hall, Manager
8180-A Silverbrook Road
Lorton, VA 22079
TEL: (703) 550-2450
FAX: (703) 550-9418
Website: www.cvb.co.fairfax.va.us/fceda

*FREDERICKSBURG

Fredericksburg Visitor Center
Ms. Gail Boswell, Supervisor
706 Caroline Street
Fredericksburg, VA 22401
TOLL FREE: (800) 678-4748
TEL: (540) 373-1776
FAX: (540) 372-6587
E-mail: fburg@illuminet.net

***FRONT ROYAL-WARREN COUNTY**

Front Royal-Warren County Visitor Center
Mr. Don Lafever, Manager
414 E. Main Street
Front Royal, VA 22630
TOLL FREE: (800) 338-2576
TEL: (540) 635-3185
FAX: (540) 635-9758
E-mail: coc@rma.edu
Website: www.frontroyalchamber.com

***HAMPTON**

Hampton Visitor Center
Visitor Center Coordinator
710 Settlers Landing Road
Hampton, VA 23669
TOLL FREE: (800) 800-2202
TEL: (757) 727-1102
FAX: (757) 727-1310

***HARRISONBURG-ROCKINGHAM CO.**

Harrisonburg-Rockingham County
Visitors Center
Ms. Ruth Deskins, Director
10 East Gay Street
Harrisonburg, VA 22801
TEL: (540) 434-2319
FAX: (540) 433-2293
E-mail: info@harrisonburgrockingham.com
Website: www.harrisonburgrockingham.com

***HOPEWELL**

Hopewell Visitor Center
Ms. Mary M. Calos
Director of Promotion and Tourism
Colonial Corner Shopping Center
4100 Oaklawn Boulevard
Hopewell, VA 23860
TEL: (804) 541-2461
FAX: (804) 541-2459
E-mail: hopewell@ctg.net/hopewell

***LEXINGTON-ROCKBRIDGE CO.**

Lexington-Rockbridge County Visitors Center
Ms. Jean Clark, Director
106 E. Washington Street
Lexington, VA 24450
TEL: (540) 463-3777
FAX: (540) 463-1105
E-mail: lexington@rockbridge.net

°LOUDOUN COUNTY

Loudoun County Visitors Center
Ms. Nancy Philips, Manager
108-D South Street, S.E.
Leesburg, VA 22075-3703
TOLL FREE: (800) 752-6118
TEL: (703) 777-0518
FAX: (703) 777-0516
E-mail: cyktourism@prodigy.net

°LYNCHBURG

Lynchburg Chamber Visitors Center
Ms. Augusta Thompson, Manager
216 12th Street at Church
Lynchburg, VA 24504
TOLL FREE: (800) 732-5821
TEL: (804) 847-1811
FAX: (804) 847-1811

***MANASSAS**

Historic Manassas Visitors Center
Ms. Tricia Davis, Director
9431 West Street
Manassas, VA 20110
TEL: (703) 361-6599
FAX: (703) 361-6942

°NELSON COUNTY

Nelson County Visitors Center
Ms. Frankee Love, Director
8519 Thomas Nelson Highway (US Hwy 29)
Lovingston, VA 22949
TOLL FREE: (800) 282-8223
TEL: (804) 263-5239
FAX: (804) 263-6823
E-mail: tournelson@aol.com
Website: www.comet.net/nelsoncty

*** NEWPORT NEWS**

Newport News Visitor Center
Ms. Michelle Clawson, Visitor Center Supervisor
13560 Jefferson Avenue
Newport News, VA 23603
TOLL FREE: 888-4-WE-R-FUN
TEL: (757) 886-7777
FAX: (757) 886-7981

***NORFOLK**

Norfolk Visitor Information Center
Ms. Lynne Lochen, Manager
4th View Street
Norfolk, VA 23503
TOLL FREE: (800) 368-3097
TEL: (757) 441-1852
FAX: (757) 441-1746
Website: www.norfolk.va.us

°NORTHERN NECK

Potomac Gateway Travel Center
Mr. Francis Volante, Manager
3540 James Madison Parkway
King George, VA 22485
TEL: (540) 663-3205
FAX: same as phone
Website: www.3n.net/nntc

°ORANGE COUNTY

Orange County Visitors Center
Ms. Joan Bergstrom, Manager
122 East Main Street/P.O. Box 133
Orange, VA 22960
TEL: (540) 672-1653
FAX: (540) 672-1746
E-mail: ocvb@ns.gemlink.com

***PETERSBURG**

Petersburg Visitors Center
Ms. Darleen Morano-Brown
Visitors Services & Tour Coordinator
425 Cockade Alley
Petersburg, VA 23803
TOLL FREE: (800) 368-3595
TEL: (804) 733-2400
FAX: (804) 861-0883
E-mail: tourptsbg@aol.com
Website: www.petersburg-va.com

AND

I-95 Petersburg Visitors Center
Ms. Darleen Morano-Brown
c/o Petersburg Department of Tourism
425 Cockade Alley
Petersburg, VA 23803
TEL: (804) 246-2226 info. center
TEL: (804) 733-2400 admin.
FAX: (804) 861-0883
E-mail: tourptsbg@aol.com

***PORTSMOUTH**

Portside Visitor Information Center
Frances Rea, Coordinator
6 Crawford Parkway
Portsmouth, VA 23704
TEL: (757) 393-5111
FAX: (757) 393-5330
Website: www.ci.portsmouth.va.us

***PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY**

Prince William County
Tourist Information Center
Mr. Rene Cardenas, Supervisor
200 Mill Street/P.O. Box 123
Occoquan, VA 22125
TEL: (703) 491-4045
FAX: (703) 491-4057
E-mail: rcardenas@co.prince-william.va.us

***RICHMOND**

Metro Richmond Visitors Center
Ms. Betsy Langhorne, Manager
1710 Robin Hood Road
Richmond, VA 23220
TEL: (804) 358-5511
FAX: (804) 257-5571
Website: www.erols.com/richmond

***ROANOKE**

Roanoke Valley Visitor Information Center
Ms. Kristin Saunders, Coordinator
114 Market Street
Roanoke, VA 24011-1402
TOLL FREE: 800-635-5535
TEL: (540) 342-6025 admin.
TEL: (540) 345-8622 info. center
FAX: (540) 342-7119

***SALEM**

Salem Visitors Center
Mr. Carey Harvey Cutter, Director of Civic Facilities
Salem Civic Center
1001 Boulevard
Salem, VA 24153
TOLL FREE: (888) VA SALEM
TEL: (540) 375-4044
FAX: (540) 375-4011

***SHENANDOAH VALLEY**

Shenandoah Valley Travel Association
Mr. Andrew Dawson, Executive Director
P.O. Box 1040
New Market, VA 22844-1040
TEL: (540) 740-3132
FAX: (540) 740-3100
E-mail: svta@shentel.net

°SMITH MOUNTAIN LAKE

Smith Mountain Lake Welcome Center
Executive Director
2 Bridgewater Plaza
Moneta, VA 24121
TOLL FREE: (800) 676-8203
TEL: (540) 721-1203
FAX: (540) 721-7796

***SOUTH HILL**

South Hill Tourist Information Center
Executive Director
South Hill Chamber of Commerce
201 S. Mecklenburg Avenue
South Hill, VA 23970
TEL: (804) 447-4547
FAX: (804) 447-4461

***SOUTHWEST HIGHLANDS**

Highlands Gateway Visitor Center
Mr. Brad Williams, Manager
Factory Merchants of Fort Chiswell
Drawer B-12
Max Meadows, VA 24360
TOLL FREE: (800) 446-9670
TEL: (540) 637-6766 info. center
TEL: (540) 228-5551 admin.
FAX: (540) 637-6328

***SPOTSYLVANIA COUNTY**

Spotsylvania County Visitors Center
Ms. Bonnie D. Smith, Director
4704 Southpoint Parkway
Fredericksburg, VA 22407
TOLL FREE: (800) 654-4118
TEL: (540) 891-8687
FAX: (540) 891-0693

***STAUNTON-AUGUSTA COUNTY**

Ms. Debbie Cole, Supervisor
Staunton-Augusta County Travel Information Center
1250 Richmond Avenue
P.O. Box 810
Staunton, VA 24401
TOLL FREE: (800) 332-5219
TEL: (540) 332-3972
FAX: (540) 332-9989

***VIRGINIA BEACH**

Virginia Beach Visitors Information Center
Ms. Lynn Schwergaard-Olsen, Supervisor
2100 Parks Avenue
Virginia Beach, VA 23451
TOLL FREE: (800) 446-8038
TEL: (757) 437-4919
FAX: (757) 437-4918
E-mail: bwheeler@city.virginia-beach.va.us
Website: www.vabeach.com

***WARRENTON-FAUQUIER COUNTY**

Warrenton-Fauquier County Visitor Center
Ms. Becky Crouch, Manager
183A Keith Street
Warrenton, VA 20186
TEL: (540) 347-4414
FAX: (540) 347-7510
E-mail: visctr@crosslink.net

***WAYNESBORO -AUGUSTA COUNTY**

Rockfish Gap Regional Visitor Center
TEL: (540) 943-5187
Send mail and brochures to:
Waynesboro - Augusta Chamber of Commerce
Ms. Maureen A. Kelley
301 West Main Street
Waynesboro, VA 22980
TEL: (540) 949-8203
FAX: (540) 949-7740
E-mail: chamber@cfw.com

WILLIAMSBURG

Williamsburg Visitor Center
"May I Help You" Desk
Mr. Gary Brumfield, Supervisor
Colonial Williamsburg Foundation
P.O. Box 1776
Williamsburg, VA 23187
TEL: (757) 220-7644
FAX: (757)-565-8965
E-mail: gbrumfield@cwfb.org

*** WINCHESTER-FREDERICK COUNTY**

Winchester-Frederick County Visitor Center
Ms. Judy Sue Huyett-Kempf, Manager
1360 S. Pleasant Valley Road
Winchester, VA 22601
TEL: (540) 662-4135
FAX: (540) 722-6365
E-mail: wfcdec@globalcom.net
Website: www.shentel.net/wfcdec

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