

# Fiscal Year 2021 Report

VIRGINIA  
DEPARTMENT OF  
RAIL AND PUBLIC  
TRANSPORTATION

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## I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Pursuant to *Virginia Code* § 33.2-106, § 33.2-1526.3, and Chapter 552, Item 1, Subsection O of the 2021 Acts of Assembly, the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) is required to report on its actions to increase transit use and reduce highway congestion, its projects and services funded by the Transit Ridership Incentive Program, and its use of Commonwealth Rail Funds respectively. For the second consecutive year, DRPT is combining these reports to produce a DRPT annual report for Fiscal Year (FY) 2021.<sup>1</sup>



**DRPT's mission is to facilitate and improve the mobility of the citizens of Virginia and to promote the efficient transport of goods and people in a safe, reliable, and cost-effective manner.** The agency is the Commonwealth's advocate for promoting transportation options to the general public, businesses, and community decision makers. As an agency entrusted with public dollars, it seeks the highest possible return on investment to maximize limited funding and strives to implement best practice management tools and techniques.

DRPT staff focuses on improving the movement of people via public transportation, transportation demand management, and rail. In addition to having backgrounds in these fields, DRPT employees have experience in communications, finance, government and legislative affairs, and public relations. DRPT staff provides support for projects and programs.

For several reasons, FY21 was an unprecedented year for DRPT. First, the continuing COVID-19 pandemic had a tremendous impact on transit agencies, Amtrak, and freight providers. Two, due to the pandemic, the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) did not adopt a Six-Year Improvement Program (SYIP) for FY21 until December 2020.<sup>2</sup> Third, DRPT staff started work to establish a new state entity, the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority (VPRA), which will oversee passenger rail service in the Commonwealth moving forward.

The SYIP is the CTB's joint annual funding allocation program for the projects and initiatives DRPT and VDOT administers. **The SYIP funds public transportation facilities, commuter and public transportation programs, rail initiatives, and all interstate and primary highway projects throughout Virginia over six fiscal years.** All projects in the SYIP that are eligible for federal funding will be included in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan, which documents how Virginia will obligate its share of federal funds.<sup>3</sup>

DRPT expenditures for FY21 increased by \$345.7 million due to the VPRA. Excluding this amount, FY21 expenditures decreased by \$47.5 million compared to FY20. This is primarily due to the transfer of passenger rail projects to the VPRA and a reduction in transit capital spending due to COVID-19. This decrease is partly offset by an increase in pandemic-related funding granted by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for operating assistance for rural transit agencies and an increase in Washington

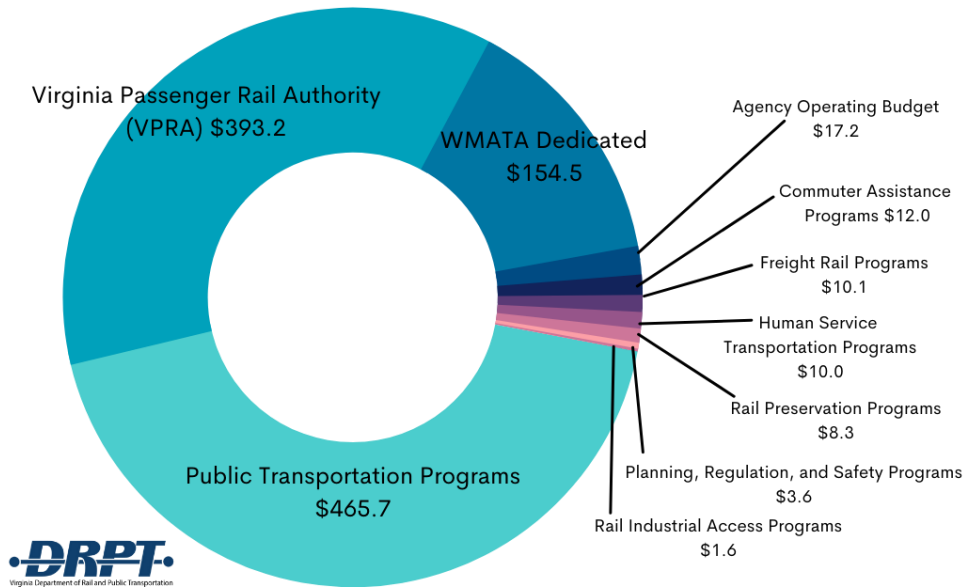
<sup>1</sup> All data in this report is generated by DRPT unless otherwise noted. Additional information is available at the DRPT's [website](#).

<sup>2</sup> The Commonwealth Transportation Board typically approves a Six-Year Improvement Program in June with an effective date of July 1. The General Assembly included language in the biennial budget allowing for a delay in FY21.

<sup>3</sup> [DRPT's Six-Year Improvement Program and Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan can be found on DRPT's website.](#)

Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) assistance used to support operating and capital expenses.

## DRPT Budgeted Expenditures FY 2021 \$1,076.2 Million

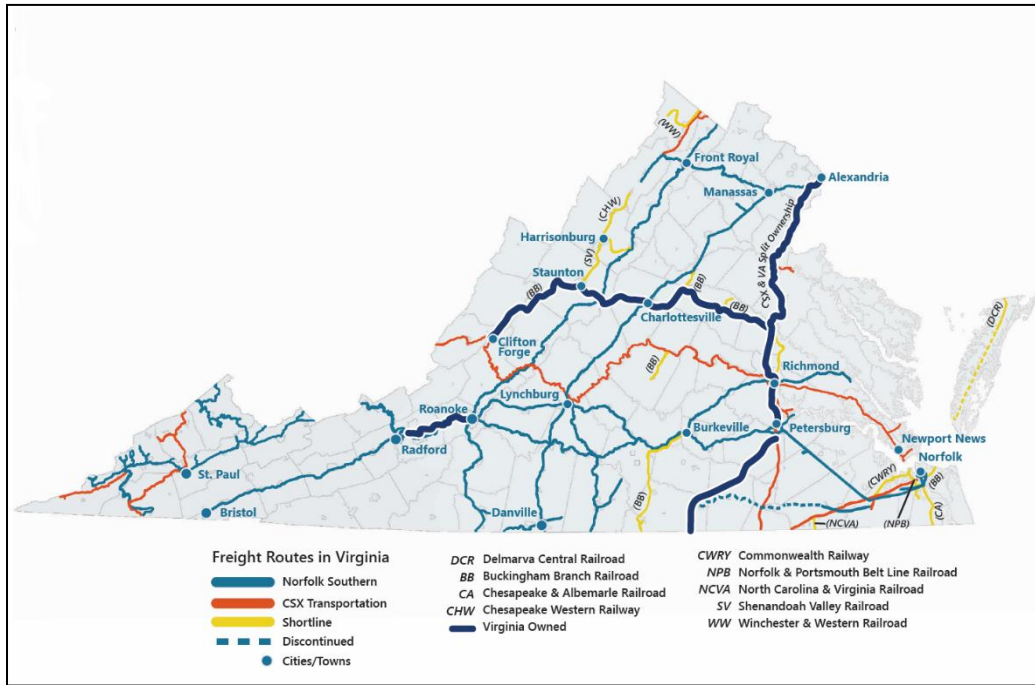


DRPT’s rail division administers freight and rail planning, shortline preservation, and rail industrial access programs. In prior years, DRPT oversaw passenger rail projects within the Commonwealth including state-sponsored Amtrak service. In FY21, VPRA began overseeing passenger rail projects, including intercity passenger service. DRPT also works with public transportation systems in Virginia to help manage traffic congestion and provide transportation choices while also safely transporting people to destinations across the Commonwealth. These projects and programs are funded primarily through the Commonwealth Mass Transit Fund.

**As the Commonwealth’s advocate, DRPT works with rail and public transportation stakeholders to provide service to citizens throughout the entire Commonwealth.** DRPT’s rail and public transportation stakeholders include 41 transit systems, 60 human service operators, a commuter rail provider, 18 transportation demand management agencies, 15 metropolitan planning organizations, nine shortline railroads, two Class I freight railroads, an intercity passenger rail operator, a DRPT-supported intercity bus operator, and the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority.

The following maps and tables highlights DRPT and its partners’ footprint in Virginia.

## Freight Rail in the Commonwealth



## Amtrak State-Sponsored Routes

Route Number	Route	Frequency
46	Roanoke-Washington	1 daily round trip
47	Newport News-Washington	2 daily round trips
50	Norfolk-Washington	2 daily round trips
51 <sup>4</sup>	Richmond-Washington	1 daily round trip

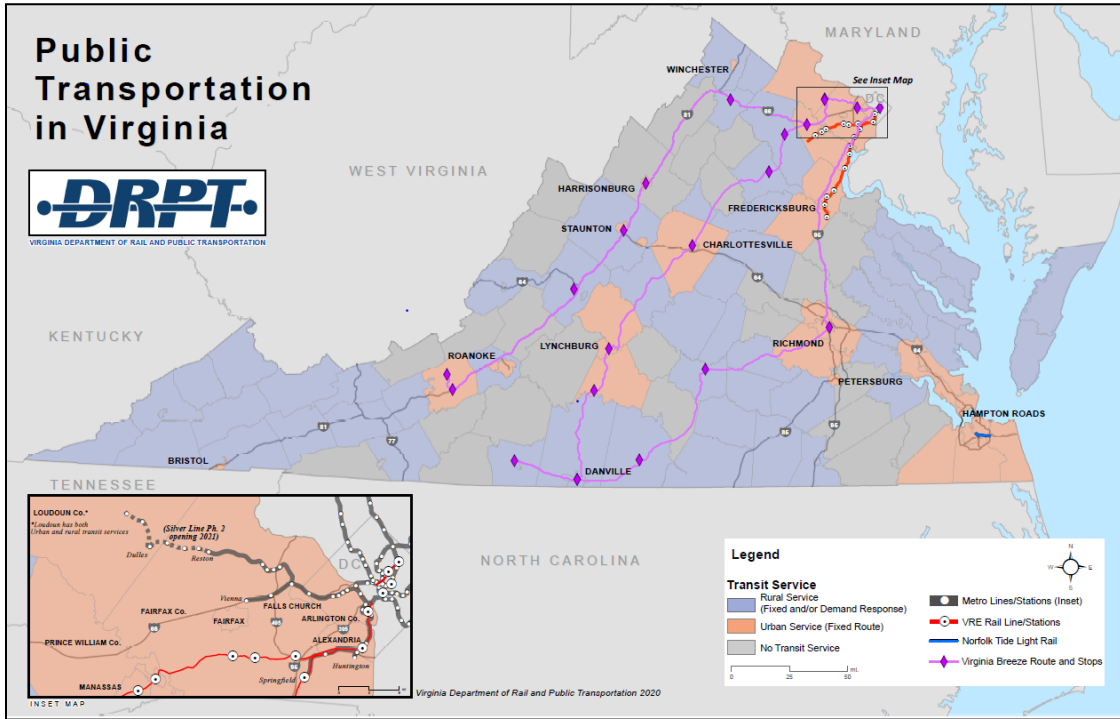
## Amtrak Long-Distance Service in Virginia

Name	Route	Frequency
Auto Train	Lorton-Sanford, FL	Daily
Cardinal	Chicago-New York City	3 days a week
Crescent	New Orleans-New York City	Daily
Palmetto	Savannah-New York City	Daily
Silver Meteor	Miami-New York City	Daily
Silver Star	Miami-New York City	Daily
Carolinian <sup>5</sup>	Charlotte-New York City	Daily

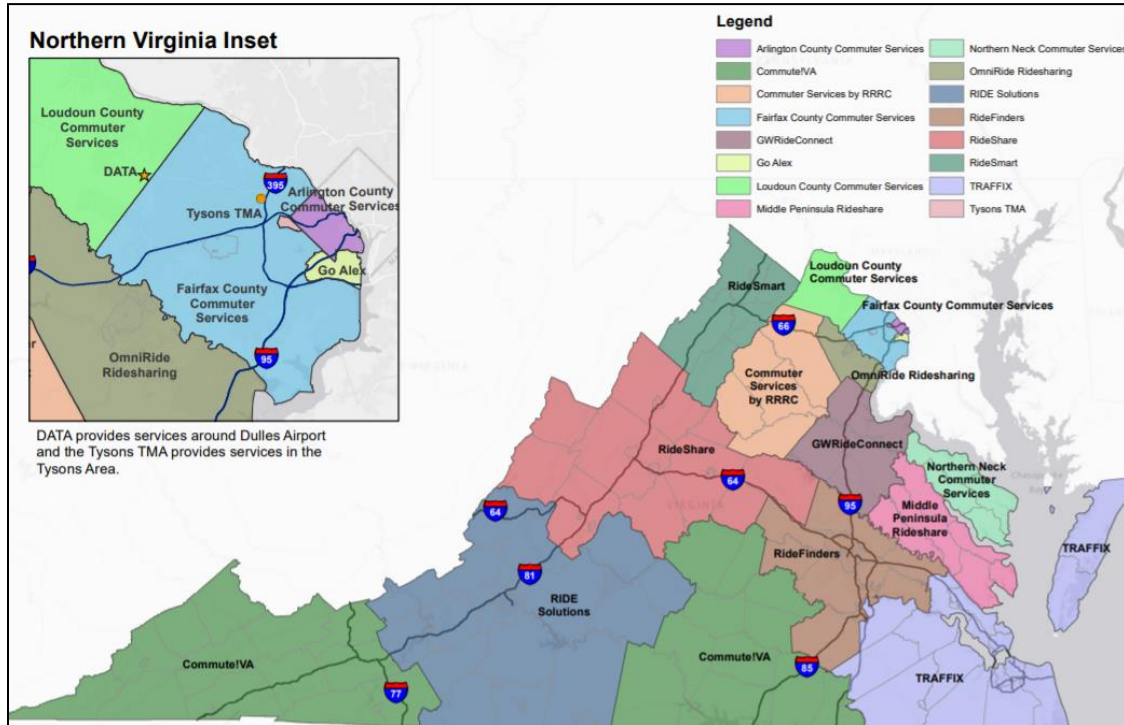
<sup>4</sup> Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, this route did not operate during FY21. Service restarted on September 27, 2021 with an extension of service from Staples Mill Station to Main Street Station in downtown Richmond.

<sup>5</sup> The Carolinian is a daily North Carolina state-sponsored service.

## Public Transportation in Virginia



## TDM in Virginia



DRPT and its partners **provide benefits to all Virginians**. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, passenger rail, transit, and vanpool ridership decreased dramatically beginning in March 2020. This decrease coincided with Governor's Northam emergency order. Once it was lifted in May 2020, ridership across all modes started to see a gradual increase in ridership. Ridership saw a slight decrease in the late fall and winter months of 2020 coinciding with the substantial increase in coronavirus cases in the Commonwealth. As cases decreased in the Spring 2021 and the number of vaccinated individuals increase, ridership rebounded even further. While ridership across all modes has not returned to pre-pandemic levels, they are still increasing in Fiscal Year 2022.

Besides removing vehicles from the highway, the presence of transit and rail as a travel option in communities throughout Virginia has a large impact on the state's economy and brings an impressive amount of additional benefit.

**Starting in FY20 and continuing in FY21, DRPT has worked with its stakeholders to provide essential services during the on-going COVID-19 pandemic.** In March 2020, the introduction of the coronavirus altered communities in an unprecedented way. Due to the high rate of contagion and the unknowns associated with the virus, social distancing policies and stay at home orders became the social normal. The public transportation and rail industries were hit specifically hard by these changes as providers were faced with unparalleled challenges as standard commuting needs dissipated and the fear of close proximity rose. Agencies were tasked with modifying operations to most appropriately meet the vital needs of the community while still prioritizing the health of the public and their front facing employees.

Over this period, the United States Congress has passed three stimulus packages in response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. This includes the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act passed in March 2020, the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA) in December 2020, and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) in March 2021. Each package allocated funding to public transportation across the country, and these funds were used to maintain service levels, provide PPE, and acquire safety equipment related to enhance cleaning.

The COVID-19 pandemic also impacted passenger rail service in the Commonwealth. Pre-pandemic, Amtrak state-sponsored ridership had grown to nearly one million riders in FY19. At the pandemic's start, Virginia decided to cease one round trip from Newport News as ridership was falling. Additionally, Amtrak waived change and cancellation fees; and train capacity was reduced. By April 2020, ridership had dropped by nearly 96 percent compared to the prior April. Amtrak implemented restrictions and began weekly update calls with states and stakeholders. Starting in May 2020, Amtrak ceased all long distance service except the Auto Train; and Virginia acted on Amtrak's recommendations to reduce service. By this report's publication, the Commonwealth has fully restored service to pre-pandemic levels as well as extending Richmond service from Staples Mill Station to Main Street Station in downtown Richmond.



Making Efficient • Responsible Investments In Transit

implement these reforms, DRPT created the MERIT (Making Efficient and Responsible Investments in Transit) program with the following components: statewide capital prioritization; statewide

**In FY21, DRPT continued to work with its partners to provide transparency to transit and TDM funding.** Chapters 854 and 856 of the 2018 Acts of Assembly created new reforms regarding DRPT's statewide public transportation grant programs. In order to

performance-based operating assistance; and urban transit strategic plans.<sup>6</sup> In FY21, DRPT expanded MERIT to include technical assistance, demonstration project assistance, the public transportation intern program, TDM operating assistance, mobility, and senior transportation. All programs will have a prioritization and scoring method.

In addition to MERIT, SMART SCALE provides transportation funding through a prioritization process that evaluates projects based on improvements to safety, congestion, accessibility, land use, economic development, and the environment. DRPT, VDOT, and the Office of Intermodal Planning Investment oversee the development and implementation of the SMART SCALE process. For Round 4, DRPT scored 52 projects with transit or rail features. Of those, six projects cited transit or rail as a primary component and all six projects were selected for funding. The total value of SMART SCALE funds awarded to these projects was \$72,775,469, which includes \$50,000,000 for an intercity rail service expansion along the US-29 and I-81 corridors.

The Multimodal Project Pipeline is a new initiative led by the Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment to identify and study high-priority needs as defined through the Commonwealth's Multimodal Transportation Plan known as VTrans. This program will assist DRPT in allocating future funds through the MERIT and SMART SCALE programs.

In the 1960s, Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia jointly established an interstate compact creating the Washington Metropolitan Area Transportation Authority (WMATA). The compact members include the District of Columbia and Maryland as well as the Virginia jurisdictions of Arlington and Fairfax Counties and the Cities of Alexandria, Fairfax, and Falls Church. Upon completion of the Metrorail Silver Line, Loudoun County will be added. With almost 100 million riders in Virginia annually pre-pandemic, Metro is the largest transit provider in the Commonwealth. During FY21, the Commonwealth worked directly with WMATA on many issues such as the distribution of \$154.5 million in WMATA Capital Funds, including for the Platform Improvement Program, and increased oversight of board governance, operating assistance, and the agency's capital improvement and strategic plans.

DRPT's biggest initiative is **Transforming Rail in Virginia**.

This initiative is a \$4 billion rail program that will

improve the reliability and frequency of passenger rail services throughout Virginia and beyond. It will make the Port of Virginia and Richmond Marine Terminal more competitive through improved freight rail transportation

while addressing congestion on Virginia's interstates and growing

Virginia's economy. Transforming Rail in Virginia components include a partnership

with Norfolk Southern along the I-81 and Route 29 corridors and a partnership with CSX Transportation in the I-95 corridor. Virginia's other partners include Amtrak and Virginia Railway Express.



In addition to the large Transforming Rail in Virginia initiative, DRPT and VPRA are financing additional projects **benefiting commuter and passenger rail throughout the Commonwealth**. At its May 2021 meeting, the VPRA Board approved numerous projects, including Ettrick Station improvements, a new

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<sup>6</sup> [Additional information about the MERIT program, including agency guidance and guidelines, can be found on DRPT's website.](#)



Newport News Station, Platform, and Train Service Facility, Quantico Station improvements, and a Bedford Amtrak Thruway Intercity Bus Connector.

The 2020 General Assembly established the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority as a political subdivision of the state. Over the last 19 months, DRPT staff has worked hard to **mobilize the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority**. The VPRA promotes, sustains, and expands the availability of passenger and commuter rail service and increases ridership by connecting population centers in Virginia with service and increasing the availability of such service. Its goals are to increase passenger rail capacity and improve passenger rail services, ameliorate current and future traffic congestion, and promote industrial and economic development. The VPRA has the following powers:

- Grant others the privilege to design, build, finance, operate, and/or maintain rail facilities
- Fix, alter, change, and collect rates for use of rail facilities
- Issue bonds and accept federal loans (debt may not be supported by tax-supported revenues)
- Use eminent domain for construction or efficient operation of rail facilities

In April 2021, the VPRA hired DJ Stadtler, a former Amtrak executive, as its Executive Director.

The 2020 General Assembly also **established the Transit Ridership Incentive Program (TRIP)** in *Va. Code* §33.2-1526.3. TRIP was created with two distinct goals: to improve the regional connectivity of urban areas with population in excess of 100,000 and to reduce barriers to transit use among low income communities. DRPT received 13 applications. Three applications were for regional connectivity projects totaling \$2.2 million in FY22. An additional ten applications were for zero fare programs totaling \$11.2 million in FY22.

DRPT and its partners also work together on several programs and projects that **reduce single occupant vehicle travel on highways**. Within the greater Northern Virginia Express Lanes network, there are three segments that currently, or will, provide funding for multimodal projects to further improve throughput in the corridors. Toll revenues from the I-66 Inside the Beltway HOT (High-Occupancy Toll) Lanes and the I-395 Express Lanes currently provide funding for multimodal projects that benefit the users of those corridors and that are selected for funding by the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC) through its Commuter Choice programs. When the I-66 Outside the Beltway Express Lanes become operational in late 2022, new commuter bus and rail services benefiting toll payers will be funded through an annual transit payment to the Commonwealth. These enhanced services will provide low-cost and reliable travel options to commuters, remove cars from congested roadways, and help to optimize the transportation network by moving more people.



Intercity bus service provides limited service between two or more urban areas not in close proximity, and it operates on a regularly scheduled fixed-route service. It is available to the general public and their luggage while providing meaningful connections to the national intercity bus network. The goal of intercity bus service is to connect underserved communities, such as households without vehicles, students, the elderly, and the disabled, to interregional bus, rail, and air travel. It also provides travel options in corridors where alternatives to the personal vehicle are limited or do not exist as well as supplement service or private providers. During FY21, the Virginia Breeze operated three

routes: i) Valley Flyer (Christiansburg-Washington); Piedmont Express (Danville-Washington); and Capital Connector (Martinsville-Richmond-Washington). In November 2021, the Virginia Breeze will originate a fourth service between Bristol and Washington.

In addition to the above programs, Telework!VA removes single occupant vehicles from Virginia's highways. Through the Telework!VA program, DRPT continued to assist Virginia's employers and employees to help make their telework programs successful and productive. Even though the COVID pandemic resulted in many employers having their office employees work from home, employers still needed assistance with teleworking.

Additionally, DRPT provides annual funding to local governments, transit agencies and other local agencies to form new vanpools and assist existing vanpools. The Commonwealth's assistance with vanpooling can be considered a public-private partnership. Vanpools are owned and operated by private entities, and the drivers are commuter volunteers. The full cost of vanpool operations are paid for by the riders. Public funds are only used to help start a vanpool, to assist a vanpool when it loses riders, and to provide a monthly stipend to collect operating data from the private vanpool company.

DRPT also works with its partners to **grow technology and integrated mobility**. Across the country, public transit is rapidly transforming due to the emergence of innovative technologies and services. New alternative transportation services continue to evolve, providing travelers with greater convenience in requesting, tracking, and paying for trips. Data is used to analyze how people move in and around our communities; and the advancement of new technologies such as electric buses, driver assistance systems, and autonomous vehicles are giving transit agencies the ability to provide cleaner, safer, and more cost-efficient service and additional mobility options. The emergence of these services and technologies is drastically changing the mobility landscape. Projects in this area include autonomous vehicle pilots, a relayed autonomous vehicle shuttle pilot, electric bus purchases, rural microtransit programs, and driver assistance systems.

DRPT also collaborates with rail partners to **strengthen Virginia's freight rail network**. Through the Rail Enhancement Program, DRPT works with the Port of Virginia, Norfolk Southern, and CSX on several projects. DRPT also provides funding to Virginia's nine shortline railroads for various projects, including track and surface improvements, bridge upgrades, tunnel upgrades, and rail and tie replacements. Through the Rail Industrial Access Fund, DRPT works with the Virginia Economic Development Partnership and the local economic development departments to award funding to industrial sites for economic development purposes and to ensure that companies are aware of the RIA program as a potential incentive to locate or expand operations. In FY21, DRPT awarded funding for three projects.

DRPT is also the state agency responsible for distributing federal and state funding allocations to **enhance human service transportation providers**. The purpose of this program is to improve mobility for seniors and individuals with disabilities by removing barriers to transportation services and expanding the transportation options. The program provides funding for the following: i) accessible vehicles for public agencies and private non-profit agencies that are transporting seniors or individuals with disabilities; and ii) operating expenditures to enhance paratransit beyond the minimum requirement of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This includes expansion of service hours, days, and areas, alternatives to public transportation, and voucher programs.

DRPT also **provides oversight of public transportation safety** and is the designated Rail State Safety Oversight Agency (SSOA) for the Commonwealth. The SSOA's core mission is to continuously verify that

a rail transit agency is executing the documented programs in place to ensure the safety of its passengers and employees. The rail fixed guideway system DRPT oversees is the Hampton Roads Transit (HRT) Tide light rail system in Norfolk.

Public Transportation Agency Safety Plans (PTASPs) are required for operators of public transportation systems that receive Federal funds under FTA's Urbanized Area Formula Grants. Agencies subject to PTASP must develop and maintain safety plans that include the processes and procedures to implement Safety Management Systems (SMS) along with a set of safety-related performance targets. The Planning requirements divide agencies into two tiers based on their fleet size and operational characteristics.

DRPT leads the Commonwealth in **promoting rail, transit, and TDM**. These promotions are designed to raise awareness and encourage the use of commuting options such as transit, biking, and telework. DRPT accomplishes this through its Celebrate Transportation Day, Telework Week, and Try Transit Week campaigns. In addition to these efforts, DRPT also oversees marketing efforts for the Amtrak statesponsored and Virginia Breeze intercity bus services.

Lastly, the agency is **looking to Fiscal Year 2022 and beyond**. DRPT leads and participates in various transit and rail planning initiatives at the state, regional, local, and operator level in order to ensure that the investment of public funds delivers the intended benefit. These planning initiatives range from statewide long-term planning and regional corridor studies, to transit operator development plans and local feasibility studies. While DRPT's planning activities range in scope, all work to the same end goal – increasing the efficiency of Virginia's existing transit system and helping plan future expansions to meet the anticipated increase in demand.

The 2020 General Assembly passed historic transportation funding legislation, which significantly impacted the existing DRPT grant programs. Specifically, the 2020 legislation created a new revenue stream for funding rail improvements. To distribute these funds, DRPT created the FREIGHT Fund (Freight Rail Enhancement to Increase Goods and Highway Throughput). This program will distribute funding beginning in FY23.

In fall 2020, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) published a notice of funding for the COVID-19 Research Demonstration Grant Program (CRDG). This competitive grant program supported strategies to develop, deploy, and demonstrate innovative solutions to improve the efficiency of transit agencies and support the changing mobility landscape<sup>7</sup>. DRPT proposed a comprehensive COVID-19 Recovery Toolkit for funding. The toolkit would consist of two parts: a comprehensive recovery strategies handbook and a statewide marketing campaign.

**Despite the on-going COVID-19 pandemic, FY21 was a productive and dynamic year for the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation and its rail, transit, and transportation demand management partners.** During this difficult time, DPRT and its partners continue to provide essential services to all the Commonwealth's citizens. From the urban areas of Northern Virginia, Richmond, and Hampton Roads to the rural parts of the state in Southside and Southwest Virginia, millions of individuals are impacted by DRPT's work.

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<sup>7</sup> Public transportation COVID-19 research Demonstration grant program. Public Transportation COVID-19 Research Demonstration Grant Program | FTA. (n.d.). <https://www.transit.dot.gov/grant-programs/public-transportation-covid-19-research-demonstration-grant-program>.

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## II. DEPARTMENT OF RAIL AND PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION



Pursuant to *Virginia Code* § 33.2-106, § 33.2-1526.3, and Chapter 552, Item 1, Subsection O of the 2021 Acts of Assembly, the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation is required to report on its actions to increase transit use and reduce highway congestion, its projects and services funded by the Transit Ridership Incentive Program, and its use of Commonwealth Rail Funds respectively. For the second consecutive year, DRPT is combining these reports to produce a DRPT annual report for Fiscal Year (FY) 2021.<sup>8</sup>

For several reasons, FY21 was an unprecedented year for DRPT. First, the continuing COVID-19 pandemic had a tremendous impact on transit agencies, Amtrak, and freight providers. One section of this report will highlight the role and importance of these transportation modes during the pandemic. Two, due to the pandemic, the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) did not adopt a Six-Year Improvement Program for FY21 until December 2020.<sup>9</sup> Third, DRPT staff started work to establish a new state entity, the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority (VPRA), which will oversee passenger rail service in the Commonwealth moving forward. This report highlights these and other activities for the fiscal year.

### BACKGROUND

On March 5, 1992, then-Governor L. Douglas Wilder signed Senate Bill 223 creating DRPT. That legislation noted that:

There is a compelling need to provide a balanced multimodal transportation system that enhances the service capabilities of passenger and freight rail, public transportation, highways, aviation, and ports. It is in the public interest to ensure that passenger and freight rail and public transportation are full participants in that multimodal system to reduce energy consumption, congestion, and air pollution; to enhance the environment; to support economic development; and to ensure the efficient movement of goods and people.



Code of Virginia §33.2-281 et. seq. defines the agency's policies, powers, and responsibilities.

### MISSION



DRPT's mission is to facilitate and improve the mobility of the citizens of Virginia and to promote the efficient transport of goods and people in a safe, reliable, and cost-effective manner.

The agency is the Commonwealth's advocate for promoting transportation options to the general public, businesses, and community decision makers. As an agency entrusted with public dollars, it seeks the highest possible return on investment to

<sup>8</sup> All data in this report is generated by DRPT unless otherwise noted. Additional information is available at the DRPT's [website](#).

<sup>9</sup> The Commonwealth Transportation Board typically approves a Six-Year Improvement Program in June with an effective date of July 1. The General Assembly included language in the biennial budget allowing for a delay in FY21.

maximize limited funding and strives to implement best practice management tools and techniques.

## STAFF

Pursuant to Chapter 552, Item 444, of the 2021 Acts of Assembly, DRPT had a maximum employee level of 72 in FY21. The agency maintains offices in Richmond and Alexandria. However, it implemented full-time teleworking for the safety of its employees starting in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. At the time of this writing, DRPT continues to implement a full-time telework policy.

Jennifer Mitchell was re-appointed in January 2018 by Governor Ralph Northam as Director of DRPT. She was previously appointed to this position in January 2014 by Governor Terry McAuliffe. Ms. Mitchell has over twenty-five years of experience in the transportation industry, where she has specialized in the planning and implementation of public transit projects, with a particular emphasis on developing strategic financial plans and advancing major projects through planning, design, and construction. At the time of this report's publication, DRPT's leadership also includes Tanyea Darrisaw, Chief Financial Officer; Jennifer DeBruhl, Chief of Public Transportation; Jennifer Mayton, Chief of Administration; Emily Stock, Chief of Rail Transportation; and Andrew Wright, Manager of Policy, Communications, and Legislative Affairs.<sup>10</sup>

DRPT saw a significant change in its staff in FY21 due to the creation of the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority (VPRA). The 2020 General Assembly passed House Bill 1414 and Senate Bill 890 establishing the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority (VPRA) as a political subdivision of the state. The VPRA promotes, sustains, and expands the availability of passenger and commuter rail service and increase ridership by connecting population centers in Virginia with service and increasing the availability of such service.<sup>11</sup>

DRPT reports to Secretary of Transportation Shannon Valentine, who also chairs the CTB. The CTB is comprised of 17 members throughout Virginia who are appointed by the Governor. The Board oversees transportation projects and initiatives and meets monthly. The DRPT Director is a member.

DRPT staff focuses on improving the movement of people via public transportation, transportation demand management, and rail. In addition to having backgrounds in these fields, DRPT employees have experience in communications, finance, government and legislative affairs, and public relations. DRPT staff provides support for projects and programs by:

- Assessing feasibility and environmental impacts of new and expanding services
- Conducting statewide rail and public transportation studies
- Planning and programming new services and capital improvement projects
- Providing leadership advocacy, technical assistance, and funding

To accomplish these goals, DRPT works with local, regional, state, and federal governments as well as private entities and associations, including the Virginia Transit Association, the Community Transportation Association of Virginia, the Virginia Railroad Association, and Virginians for High Speed Rail.

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<sup>10</sup> DRPT's Organizational Chart may be found on the DRPT website.

<sup>11</sup> For more information about the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority, please see IX.

DRPT staff also holds annual transit and rail workshops for its partners. These workshops include presentations on existing projects and programs, detailed handouts outlining grant programs and policies, and interactive workshops. Also, staff participates in spring and fall transportation meetings at which the general public can learn about initiatives. Representatives from the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and the Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment also participate.<sup>12</sup> Since March 2020, all of these events have been held virtually.

In addition to regular attendance at the monthly CTB meetings, DRPT also staffs the CTB Rail and Transit Subcommittee that meets monthly prior to the start of the full committee meeting. Due to the pandemic, this subcommittee only met once in FY21. DRPT also provides staff assistance for the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority Board meetings and its subcommittees.

## FUNDING

The Six-Year Improvement Program (SYIP) is the CTB's joint annual funding allocation program for the projects and initiatives DRPT and VDOT administers. The SYIP funds public transportation facilities, commuter and public transportation programs, rail initiatives, and all interstate and primary highway projects throughout Virginia over six fiscal years. The fiscal year starts on July 1<sup>st</sup> and ends on June 30<sup>th</sup>. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its negative impact on transportation revenues, the CTB did not approve the FY21 SYIP until December 2020.<sup>13</sup> All projects in the SYIP that are eligible for federal funding will be included in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan, which documents how Virginia will obligate its share of federal funds.<sup>14</sup>

The 2020 General Assembly passed an omnibus transportation bill, House Bill 1414 and Senate Bill 890, which increased transportation revenues beginning with FY21 revenues. The legislation made the following changes to statewide tax revenues for transportation:

- Raises the gas tax by ten cents over two years, starting on July 1, 2020
- Raises the diesel tax by 6.8 cents on July 1, 2021
- Indexes the gas and diesel tax to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) rather than the sales price of fuel
- Creates a new highway use fee on fuel-efficient, alternative fuel, and electric vehicles (a tiered fee based on fuel economy)
- Reduces most annual vehicle registration fees by \$10

All statewide transportation revenues are deposited into the Commonwealth Transportation Fund. This new streamlined approach to transportation funding means all modes, including transit and rail, are not dependent on one or two funding streams. This approach is especially important in times of economic crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, when one funding stream experiences a significant decline in funding.

From the Commonwealth Transportation Fund revenues, 48.76 percent are distributed to the Transportation Trust Fund. The Commonwealth Mass Transit Fund receives 23 percent of funds

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<sup>12</sup> Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the annual fall transportation meetings were not held.

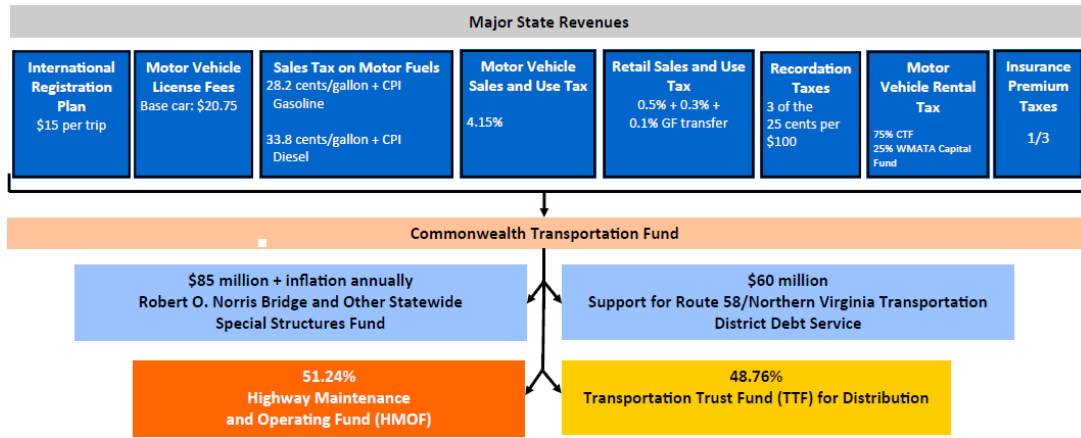
<sup>13</sup> Item 430, O, 1 allowed the FY19 Six-Year Improvement Program to remain in effect past June 30, 2020, and until the Commonwealth Transportation Board implemented a new one. The General Assembly included this language during its 2020 legislative session because of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on transportation revenues.

<sup>14</sup> DRPT's Six-Year Improvement Program and Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan can be found on DRPT's website.



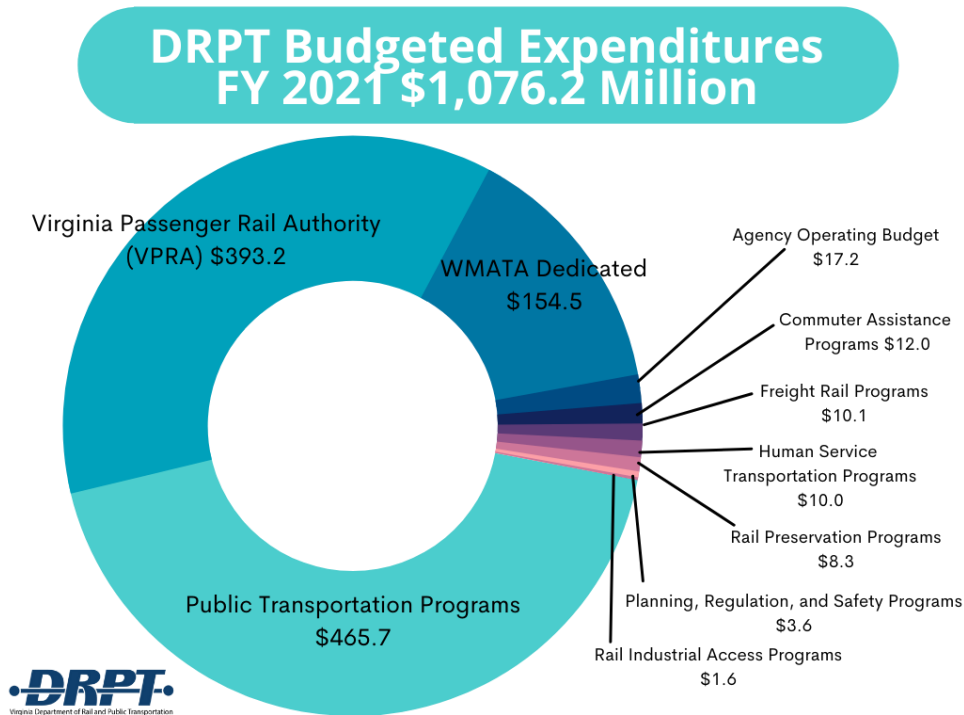
allocated to the Transportation Trust Fund, and the newly created Commonwealth Rail Fund receives seven percent.

**Figure 1: Fiscal Year 2021 Distribution of Transportation Revenues**



DRPT expenditures for FY21 increased by \$345.7 million due to the VPRA. Excluding this amount, FY21 expenditures decreased by \$47.5 million compared to FY20. This is primarily due to the transfer of passenger rail projects to the VPRA and a reduction in transit capital spending due to COVID-19. This decrease is partly offset by an increase in pandemic-related funding granted by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for operating assistance for rural transit agencies and an increase in Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) assistance used to support operating and capital expenses.

**Figure 2: Fiscal Year 2021 Budgeted Expenditures: \$1,076.2M**



Additionally, SMART SCALE provides transportation funding through a prioritization process that evaluates projects based on improvements to safety, congestion, accessibility, land use, economic development, and the environment. DRPT, VDOT, and the Office of Intermodal Planning Investment oversee the development and implementation of the SMART SCALE process, with oversight by the CTB. For SMART SCALE Round 4, DRPT scored 52 projects with transit or rail features. Of those, six projects cited transit or rail as a primary component and all six projects were selected for funding. The total value of SMART SCALE funds awarded to these projects was \$72,775,469, which includes \$50,000,000 for an intercity rail service expansion along the US-29 and I-81 corridors. The remaining 46 projects cited transit as a secondary component, which include improvements such as new bus stop amenities as part or larger roadway projects.<sup>15</sup>

## RAIL

DRPT's rail division administers freight and rail planning, shortline preservation, and rail industrial access programs. In prior years, DRPT oversaw passenger rail projects within the Commonwealth including state-sponsored Amtrak service. In FY21, VPRA began overseeing passenger rail projects, including intercity passenger service.

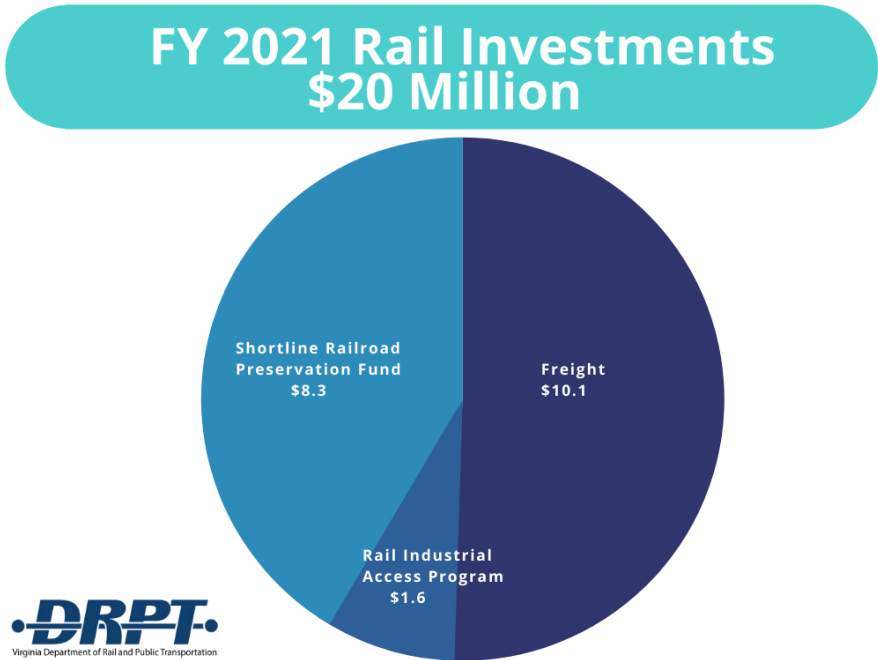
Figure 3: DRPT Fiscal Year 2021 Rail Programs



Funds are also received from private, discretionary, and federal dollars as well as other state sources.

<sup>15</sup> For more information about SMART SCALE, please see section VI.

Figure 4: Fiscal Year 2021 DRPT Rail Investments



**Commonwealth Rail Fund:** In addition to increasing transportation revenues, the 2020 General Assembly also created the Commonwealth Rail Fund. This new fund replaces the Intercity Passenger Rail Operating and Capital Fund and the Rail Enhancement Fund. Ninety-three percent of the Commonwealth Rail Funds are allocated to the VPRA, and DRPT retains the remaining seven percent. Of the funds DRPT retains, the agency may use up to \$4 million for the purposes of the Shortline Railway Preservation and Development Fund. This allocation is in addition to the \$4 million transfer from the highway construction fund.

**Shortline Railway Preservation Fund:** This grant program targets state-of-good-repair and capacity improvement projects on the shortline railroad network. The goal of the program is to maintain FRA Class 2 Track Safety Standards, which have implications for speed, service, and reliability of the network as the last mile of service to customers. Rail Preservation projects consist primarily of bridge and track upgrades, signal system upgrades, yard improvements, siding enhancement, and tie and rail replacement. The program receives \$4 million annually from the Highway Construction Fund (Transportation Trust Fund) and can receive additional funds – up to \$4 million of unobligated Rail Freight funds each year. For FY20, DRPT allocated approximately \$10 million in funding under this program.

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*Since 2014, funding across all rail programs has increased by 103 percent.*

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**Rail Industrial Access Fund:** The Rail Industrial Access Fund (RIA) provides funding for rail access to industrial sites for economic development purposes. This program supports economic development on shortline and Class 1 railroads by offering grant funding to build or rehabilitate rail spurs. RIA promotes truck diversion by providing grant assistance to connect new or expanding businesses to the freight rail network. RIA shares approximately \$5.5 million in funds from the Transportation Trust Fund with VDOT,

which administers a similar grant program (Economic Development Access Program). Applicants can apply for up to \$450,000 with a requirement of a 30 percent match from the applicant.

*Federal Funding:* The Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, Congress’ 2015 multi-year surface transportation legislation, reauthorized and created several major discretionary grant programs for which freight and passenger rail projects are eligible recipients. These annual grant programs include Infrastructure For Rebuilding America (INFRA) and Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD). In 2016, the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) awarded Virginia the largest INFRA grant for freight and passenger rail to date, \$45 million for projects that comprise the *Transforming Rail in Virginia* initiative. The FAST Act also included two new grant programs specifically for Amtrak: the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements and the Federal-State Partnership for State of Good Repair programs.

Several existing formula-based highway and transit programs are also rail eligible, including the Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) program and the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) program. DRPT works with VDOT across several joint agency agreements to allocate federal program funds to rail and transit projects such as the US 29 Improvement program, which includes CMAQ funding for a second Lynchburg to Washington Amtrak service.

The Section 130 program remains the only federal highway formula program specifically dedicated to rail. A cost-sharing agreement between state departments of transportation and freight railroads, Section 130 funds highway-rail grade crossings and is managed by VDOT.

The FAST Act also formalized the relationship between states, Amtrak, and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), first created in 2008 under the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act (PRIIA), in its creation of the State-Amtrak Intercity Passenger Rail Committee (SAIPRC). SAIPRC, of which Virginia is a member, meets regularly to advance state and Amtrak relations, especially in terms of their mutual cost-sharing agreements and the development and procurement of new rail equipment and technologies.

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## TRANSIT

DRPT works with public transportation systems in Virginia to help manage traffic congestion and provide transportation choices while also safely transporting people to destinations across the Commonwealth.

*Commonwealth Mass Transit Fund:* The majority of DRPT’s portion of the FY21 SYIP includes the funding allocations from the Commonwealth Mass Transit Fund for public

transportation capital purchases, operating assistance, and TDM programs and projects. The 2020 transportation omnibus legislation also made changes to the allocations of funds within the Commonwealth Mass Transit Fund.

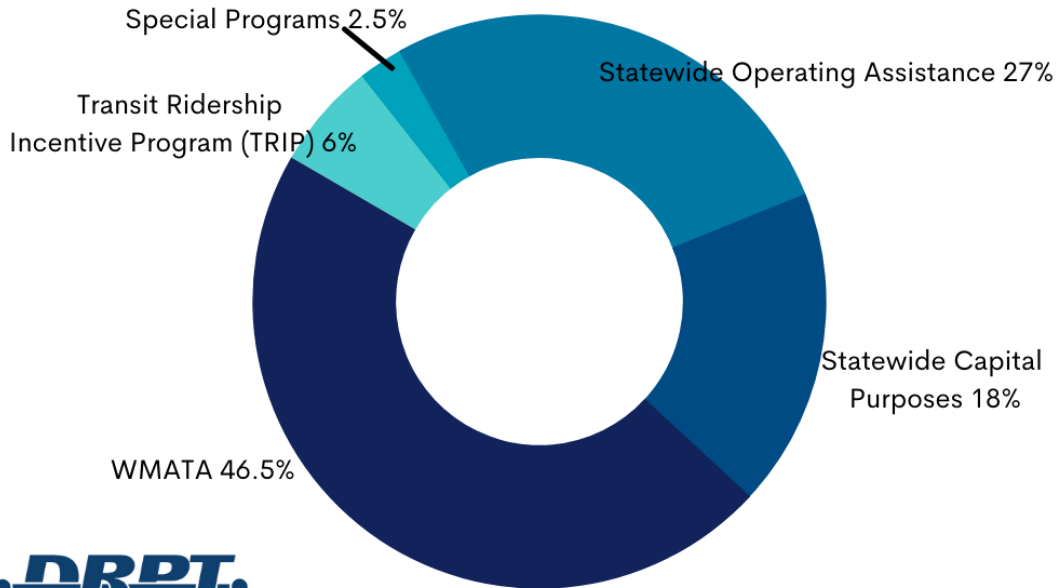
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*In 2014, DRPT predicted a major shortfall for transit capital funds due to the expiration of transportation bonds. Since then, the General Assembly has passed significant bills that have increased funding within the Commonwealth Mass Transit Fund by nearly 60 percent.*

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Figure 5: Commonwealth Mass Transit Fund Distributions

# Commonwealth Mass Transit Fund Distributions

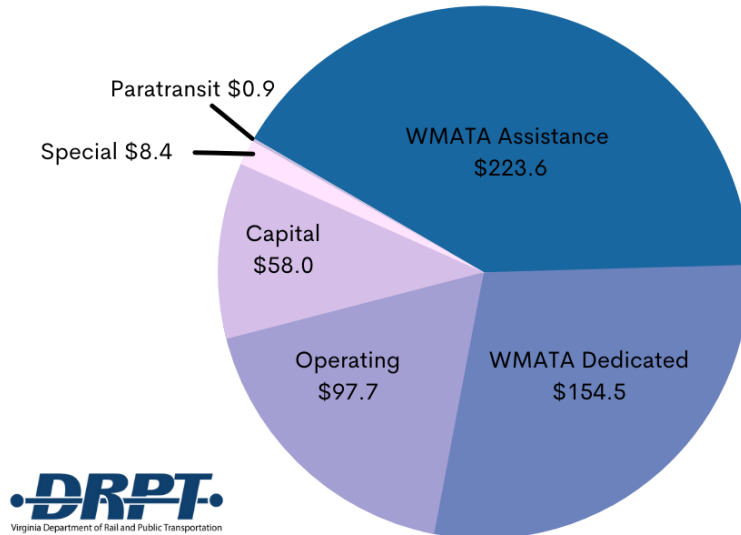


Funds through the statewide operating assistance program and statewide capital assistance grants are distributed through the MERIT program. In addition to the above, DRPT sets aside five percent of the Commonwealth Mass Transit Fund to support DRPT project development, administration, and compliance; and the agency provides \$1.2 million for state safety oversight and \$1.5 million for paratransit capital and enhanced transportation services for the elderly and disabled. Additionally, \$50 million is set aside for WMATA to match federal PRIIA funding as well as funding from the District of Columbia and Maryland.

For FY21, DRPT allocated approximately \$543 million in state transit and TDM initiatives. The chart below breaks this funding into six categories: WMATA, WMATA dedicated, statewide capital, statewide operating, paratransit, and special (which includes TDM).

Figure 6: Fiscal Year 2021 Transit Investments: \$543.1 Million

## FY 2021 SYIP Transit Allocations \$543.1 Million



*Federal Transit Funding:* Federal funding for public transportation in Virginia not only provides essential resources to local public transit agencies, but also significantly reduces the state funding burden and frees up additional resources to meet greater needs. Since 1982, 20 percent of the federal excise tax on gasoline has been set-aside into the Mass Transit Account for formula.

For many statewide transit capital projects, this blend of federal funding as well as the statewide capital program often means that the local community is able to deliver projects by only meeting their required four percent match.

DRPT is the Commonwealth's designated agency responsible for administering many FTA formula funding programs. Through an inter-agency agreement with VDOT, DRPT also administers federal-aid highway formula funding allocated for the CMAQ, Regional Surface Transportation Program (RSTP), and STBG programs for use on public transportation projects.

**Figure 7: Federal Formula and Discretionary Grant Programs**

FTA Formula Grant Programs	FTA Discretionary Grant Programs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning (5303/5304)</li> <li>• Urbanized Area Formula (5307)</li> <li>• Elderly and Disabled (5310)</li> <li>• Formula Grants for Rural Areas (5311)</li> <li>• Public Transportation Safety Program (5329)</li> <li>• State of Good Repair (5337)</li> <li>• Bus and Bus Facilities (5339 (a))</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fixed Gateway Capital Investment Grants (CIG, formerly known as New Starts)</li> <li>• Bus and Bus Facilities Discretionary Grants (5339 (b))</li> <li>• Expedited Project Delivery for CIG Pilot Program (subsection 3005 (b) of FAST)</li> <li>• Mobility for All (subsection 3005 (b) of FAST)</li> <li>• Integrated Mobility Innovation</li> <li>• Passenger Ferry</li> </ul>

*WMATA Capital Fund:* Chapters 854 and 856 of the 2018 Acts of Assembly established the WMATA Capital Fund providing \$154.5 million in annual dedicated funding for the transit agency. This amounts to Virginia’s proportional regional share (30.9 percent) of \$500 million in annual additional capital needs for critical state of good repairs.<sup>16</sup> It also established a restricted and non-restricted account within the WMATA Capital Fund. Monies in the restricted account (local recordation taxes and statewide motor vehicle rental tax) may be used for capital purposes other than for the payment of, or security for, debt service on bonds or other indebtedness of WMATA. Monies in the non-restricted account (NVTC regional grantor’s tax, NVTC regional gas taxes, NVTC two percent transient occupancy tax, and the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority 30 percent local taxes) may be used for capital purposes including the payment of debt service on bonds or other indebtedness.

*Commuter Rail Operating and Capital Fund:* Chapters 854 and 856 of the 2018 Acts of Assembly also established the Commuter Rail Operating and Capital Fund (C-ROC). Funds in C-ROC are used to fund the cost of operating commuter rail service; acquiring, leasing, or improving railways or railroad equipment, rolling stock, rights-of-way, or facilities; or assisting other appropriate entities to acquire, lease, or improve railways or railroad equipment, rolling stock, rights-of way, or facilities for commuter rail transportation purposes. Currently, the Virginia Railway Express is the only commuter rail service in Virginia.



The Department of Motor Vehicles is the state agency responsible for administering gas tax revenues collected for this fund. The Commonwealth deposits monies amounting to roughly \$15 million annually into the Fund from a regional gas tax in Northern Virginia.

<sup>16</sup> To learn more about the WMATA’s use of the funds, please see Section VIII.

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## TRANSPORTATION DEMAND MANAGEMENT (TDM)



DRPT uses a portion of the three percent Special Projects allocation from the Commonwealth Mass Transit Fund to provide grants to qualifying agencies to operate TDM programs in their region or locality. Through the TDM Operating Assistance and Mobility Programs grants, DRPT provides funding to support the operation of commuter assistance programs, employer outreach, and vanpool assistance that serve the public and employers. The goal of DRPT's TDM grant programs is to mitigate congestion by reducing single-occupant vehicle trips and increasing the use of carpool, vanpool, transit, and telework.

DRPT also administers CMAQ and RSTP federal-aid highway funding that is allocated by Metropolitan Planning Organizations for TDM programs and projects operated by Arlington County, City of Alexandria, GRTC-RideFinders, Fairfax County, Hampton Roads Transit, and PRTC. Through partnerships with VDOT and local jurisdictions, DRPT administers funding from VDOT for TDM projects developed to mitigate single-occupant vehicle trips during construction of the I-66 Express Lanes. The TDM projects are part of the federally required Transportation Management Plan for the express lanes project. Lastly, funding for DRPT's telework assistance to employers in Northern Virginia is also provided through a partnership with VDOT.



### III. SERVING THE ENTIRE COMMONWEALTH

DRPT’s rail and public transportation stakeholders include 41 transit systems, 60 human service operators, a commuter rail provider, 18 transportation demand management agencies, 15 metropolitan planning organizations, nine shortline railroads, two Class I freight railroads, an intercity passenger rail operator, a DRPT-supported intercity bus operator, and the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority.

#### FREIGHT RAIL

Virginia’s rail system includes approximately 3,000 miles of rail lines operated by 11 freight railroads – two Class I railroads and nine shortline railroads. Class I railroads are defined as those railroads that have an annual carrier operating revenue of more than \$250 million (1991 dollars). While there are seven Class I railroads operating in the United States and Canada, CSX and Norfolk Southern are the only Class I providers in the Commonwealth. Additionally, several shortline railroads operate in Virginia.

### Virginia Shortline Railroads:



Buckingham Branch



Chesapeake & Albemarle



Chesapeake Western



Commonwealth Railway



Delmarva



North Carolina & Virginia



Winchester & Western

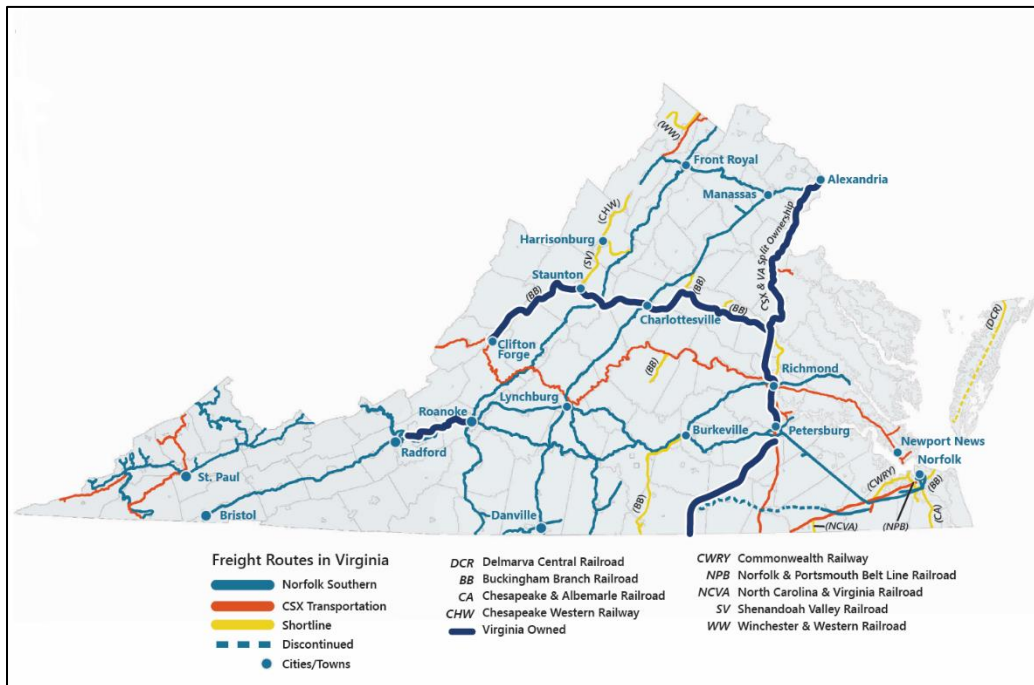


Norfolk & Portsmouth  
Belt Line



Shenandoah Valley

Figure 8: Freight Railroads in Virginia



## PASSENGER RAIL

The Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 required states with Amtrak services shorter than 750 miles and greater than 70 miles to assume a significant share of capital and operating costs for the routes, with failure to do so leading to discontinuation of the routes.<sup>17</sup> If the General Assembly had not taken action, Virginia would have lost all service originating in Newport News and Richmond. The former would have left Hampton Roads without Amtrak service.

Since state-sponsored service began in Lynchburg in 2009, DRPT has expanded its operations and now provides grant funds for four intercity passenger routes with a total of six daily roundtrip trains on the Northeast Regional line through grant agreements with Amtrak.<sup>18</sup> Service began in Norfolk in 2012 with a second train originating in the city in 2019. In 2017, Lynchburg service expanded to Roanoke.

Figure 9: Amtrak State-Sponsored Service

Route Number	Route	Frequency
46	Roanoke-Washington	1 daily round trip
47	Newport News-Washington	2 daily round trips
50	Norfolk-Washington	2 daily round trips
51 <sup>19</sup>	Richmond-Washington	1 daily round trip

<sup>17</sup> Overview, Highlights, and Summary of the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 (PRIIA) (<https://www.fra.dot.gov/eLib/details/L02692>)

<sup>18</sup> All state-sponsored Amtrak service travels into the Northeast Corridor and offers one-seat rides to destinations including Washington, DC, Philadelphia, New York City, and Boston.

<sup>19</sup> Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, this route did not operate during FY21. Service restarted on September 27, 2021 with an extension of service from Staples Mill Station to Main Street Station in downtown Richmond.

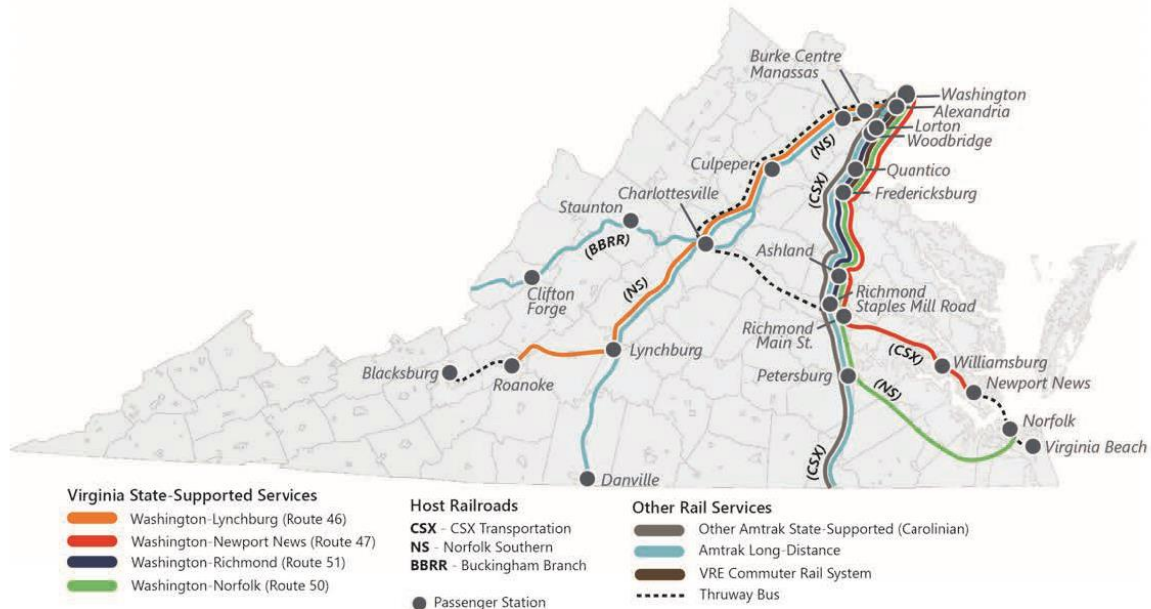
Six long-distance services and one North Carolina state-sponsored service also operate in Virginia. These services do not receive state funding but are the only intercity passenger rail services in the localities of Lorton, Staunton, Danville, and Clifton Forge.

**Figure 10: Amtrak Long-Distance Service in Virginia**

Name	Route	Frequency
Auto Train	Lorton-Sanford, FL	Daily
Cardinal	Chicago-New York City	3 days a week
Crescent	New Orleans-New York City	Daily
Palmetto	Savannah-New York City	Daily
Silver Meteor	Miami-New York City	Daily
Silver Star	Miami-New York City	Daily
Carolinian <sup>20</sup>	Charlotte-New York City	Daily

Additionally, DRPT supports thruway buses connecting riders to the Newport News, Norfolk, and Roanoke train stations. Virginia sponsors daily round-trip buses from Virginia Beach to Norfolk and Newport News. Through its transit program, DRPT sponsors a daily roundtrip bus originating at Virginia Tech that serves the Roanoke train station.

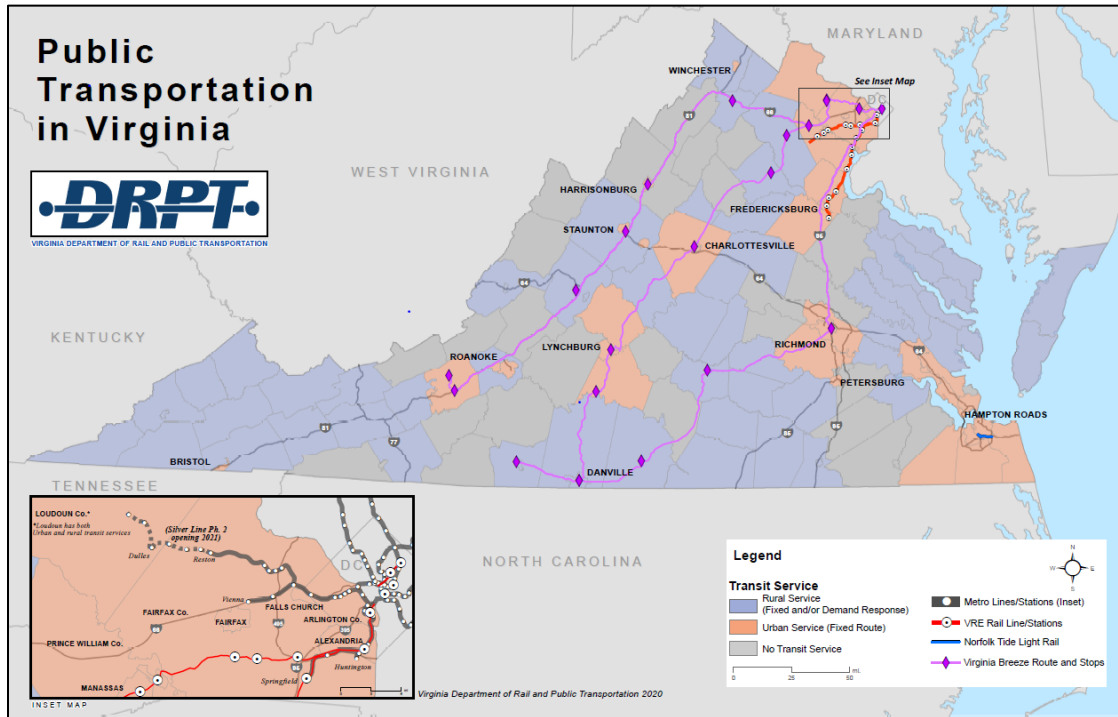
**Figure 11: Amtrak Routes Operating in Virginia**



<sup>20</sup> The Carolinian is a daily North Carolina state-sponsored service.

## PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Figure 12: Public Transportation in Virginia



49 U.S.C. §5302 defines public transportation as “regular, continuing shared-ride surface transportation services that are open to the general public or open to a segment of the general public defined by age, disability or low income.” In Virginia, this includes bus (40 transit providers), commuter rail (Virginia Railway Express), heavy rail (Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority), light rail (Hampton Roads Transit’s The Tide), paratransit, and ferryboat (Hampton Roads Transit). Pursuant to *Code of Virginia* § 33.2-285, DRPT is the state agency responsible for public transportation funding in the Commonwealth.

Figure 13: Public Transportation Agencies in Virginia

Alexandria Transit Company (DASH)	Greensville-Emporia Transit
Altavista Community Transit System	Hampton Roads Transit (HRT)
Arlington County Transit (ART)	Harrisonburg Department of Transportation (HDPT)
Bay Transit	JAUNT
Blacksburg Transit (BT)	Lake Country Area Agency on Aging
Blackstone Area Bus System (BABS)	Loudoun County Transit (LC Transit)
Bristol Virginia Transit	Mountain Empire Older Citizens (MEOC)
Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission (BRITE)	OmniRide (PRTC)
Charlottesville Area Transit (CAT)	Petersburg Area Transit (PAT)

CUE (City of Fairfax)	Pony Express (Town of Chincoteague)
Danville Transit	Pulaski Area Transit
District Three Public Transit (Mountain Lynx)	RADAR
Fairfax County (Fairfax Connector)	Radford Transit
Farmville Area Bus (FAB)	STAR Transit
Four County Transit	Suffolk Transit
Fredericksburg Regional Transit (FRED)	Virginia Railway Express (VRE)
Graham Transit	Virginia Regional Transit (VRT)
Greater Lynchburg Transit Company (GLTC)	Winchester (WinTran)
Greater Richmond Transit Company (GRTC)	Williamsburg Area Transit (WATA)
Greater Roanoke Transit Company (Valley Metro)	Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA)

As noted above, DRPT awards Federal Transit Administration Section 5310 funding for the enhanced mobility of seniors (ages 65 and older) and individuals with disabilities through a competitive, discretionary award process. Section 5310 funding can be awarded for capital projects to replace or expand vehicle fleets, mobility management projects to coordinate transportation, operating projects to provide transportation, and other capital projects to support programs serving the eligible populations.

The below table is a list of human service transportation providers that received Section 5310 funding from DRPT between FY17-FY22. To be on the list, an organization must have received Section 5310 operating or mobility management funding within the last two years (FY21 and FY22) and/or have received a vehicle in or after FY17.

**Figure 14: Human Service Providers in Virginia**

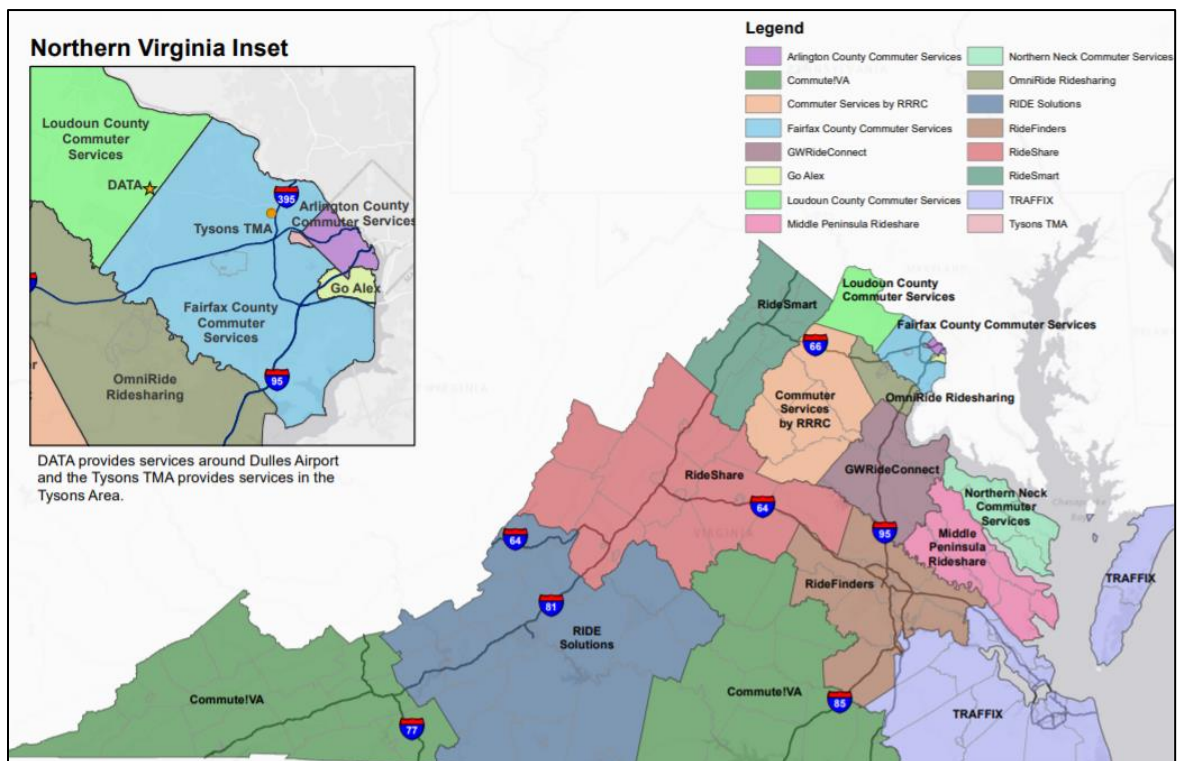
Adult Day Care of Martinsville/Henry	Lutheran Family Services
Alleghany Highlands CSB	MEOC
ARC of Greater Williamsburg	Mount Rogers Community Services Board
ARC of Harrisonburg/Rockingham	New River Valley Community Services
Bay Aging	Northwestern CSB
Beth Sholom Home	NRV Senior Services
Black & White Cabs of Virginia Beach	Peninsula AAA
Black & White Cars	Piedmont Senior Resources AAA
CAPUP	Pleasant View
Central Virginia Alliance for Community Living	Portco, Inc.
Charity Transport LLC	Pulaski Area Transit
Checker Cab Company	RADAR
Chesterfield County	Rappahannock AAA
Chesterfield CSB	Rappahannock-Rapidan Community Services
Colonial Behavioral Health	Rappahannock-Rapidan PDC
Crater District AAA	Region Ten CSB
Danville-Pittsylvania Community Services	Richmond ARC/SOAR365
ElderHomes Corporation	Rockbridge Area Transportation System, Inc.
Friends 4 Recovery	Senior Connections

Friendship Industries	Senior Services of Southeastern VA
Giles Health & Family Center	Serenity Inc
Goochland Cares	Shenandoah AAA
Goochland Free Clinic & Family Services	Shen-Paco Industries
Goochland Powhatan Community Services	Southern AAA
Grafton School Inc.	Southern Area Agency on Aging
Greater Richmond Transit Company	St. Joseph's Villa
Hampton-Newport News CSB	Stepping Stones, Inc.
Hanover Community Services	STEPS, Inc.
Heart Havens, Inc.	Suffolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority
JAUNT	Valley CSB
Junction Center for Independent Living	Valley Program for Aging Services
Lake Country AAA	VersAbility Resources
Louise W. Eggleston Center, Inc.	Yellow Cab of Newport News

## TRANSPORTATION DEMAND MANAGEMENT

Transportation demand management (TDM) encompasses a multitude of programs, services, and policies that reduce vehicle demand on the transportation network or redistribute the demand to off-peak times or other routes and modes. TDM includes ridesharing arrangements such as carpools, vanpools, and bus pools.

Figure 15: TDM in Virginia



Governor James Gilmore issued an executive order mandating all executive branch agencies with an office in Northern Virginia provide full-time employees with a tax-free qualified transportation fringe benefit. The benefit is equal to the employee’s cost of commuting to and from their workplace using vanpools or transit. The Executive Order also encouraged all agencies, regardless of location, to provide a commuter benefit. TDM agencies serving the public are also called commuter assistance programs.

**Figure 16: TDM Agencies Operating in Virginia**

<b>Commuter Assistance Program</b>	<b>Operating Agency</b>
Arlington County Commuter Services	Arlington County Department of Environmental Services
Commuter Services by RRRC	Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission
Commute!VA	Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation
DATA	Dulles Area Transportation Association
Fairfax County Commuter Services	Fairfax County Department of Transportation
GO Alex	Alexandria Department of Transportation
GWRideConnect	George Washington Regional Commission
LiveMore	Dulles Area Transportation Association
Loudoun County Commuter Services	Loudoun County Department of Transportation
Middle Peninsula Rideshare	Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission
Northern Neck Commute Services	Northern Neck Planning District Commission
OmniRide Ridesharing	Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission
RideFinders	Greater Richmond Transit Company
RideShare	Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission
RideSmart	Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission
RIDE Solutions	Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission New River Valley Regional Commission Central Virginia Planning District Commission West Piedmont Workforce Investment Board
TRAFFIX	Hampton Roads Transit
Tysons TMA	Tysons Partnership, Inc.

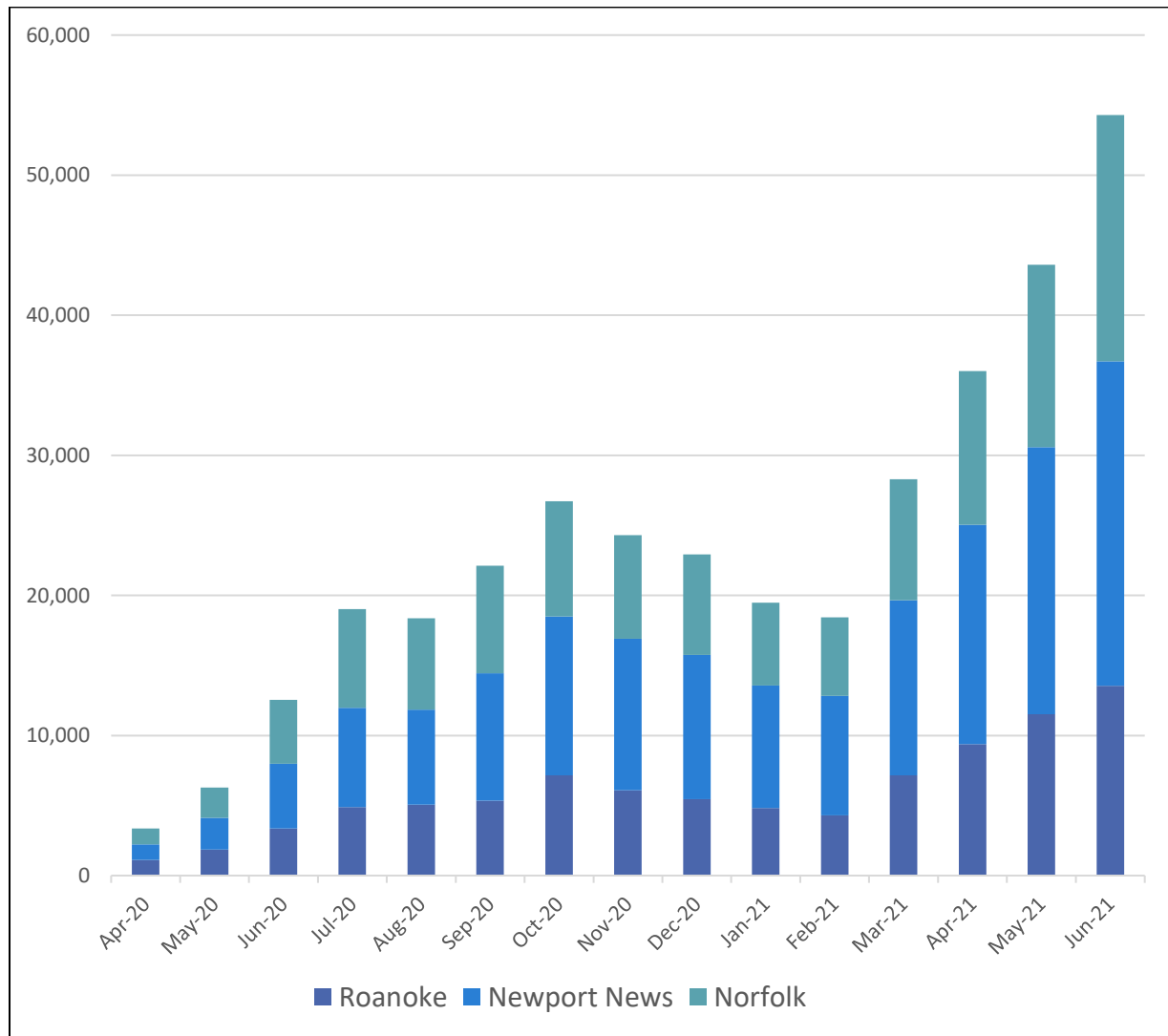
## IV. PROVIDING BENEFITS TO ALL VIRGINIANS

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, passenger rail, transit, and vanpool ridership decreased dramatically beginning in March 2020. This decrease coincided with Governor’s Northam emergency order. Once it was lifted in May 2020, ridership across all modes started to see a gradual increase in ridership. Ridership saw a slight decrease in the late fall and winter months of 2020 coinciding with the substantial increase in coronavirus cases in the Commonwealth. As cases decreased in the Spring 2021 and the number of vaccinated individuals increase, ridership rebounded even further. While ridership across all modes has not returned to pre-pandemic levels, they are still increasing in Fiscal Year 2022.

### AMTRAK STATE-SPONSORED RIDERSHIP

For the purpose of this year’s report, ridership on the Virginia state-sponsored service is defined as the number of people who purchased tickets on the following three routes: Newport News, Norfolk, and Roanoke routes with at least one end point in Virginia. It is possible for two or more end points to be in Virginia on one ticket; however, each ticket is only counted one time as one rider.

Figure 17: Amtrak State-Sponsored Ridership (April 2020-June 2021)





## STATEWIDE TRANSIT RIDERSHIP

According to the FTA, unlinked passenger trips are the number of passengers who board public transportation vehicles (i.e. ridership). Passengers are counted each time they board transit vehicles no matter how many vehicles they use to travel from their origin to their destination. All public transit agencies in the Commonwealth are required to report monthly unlinked passenger trips to DRPT.

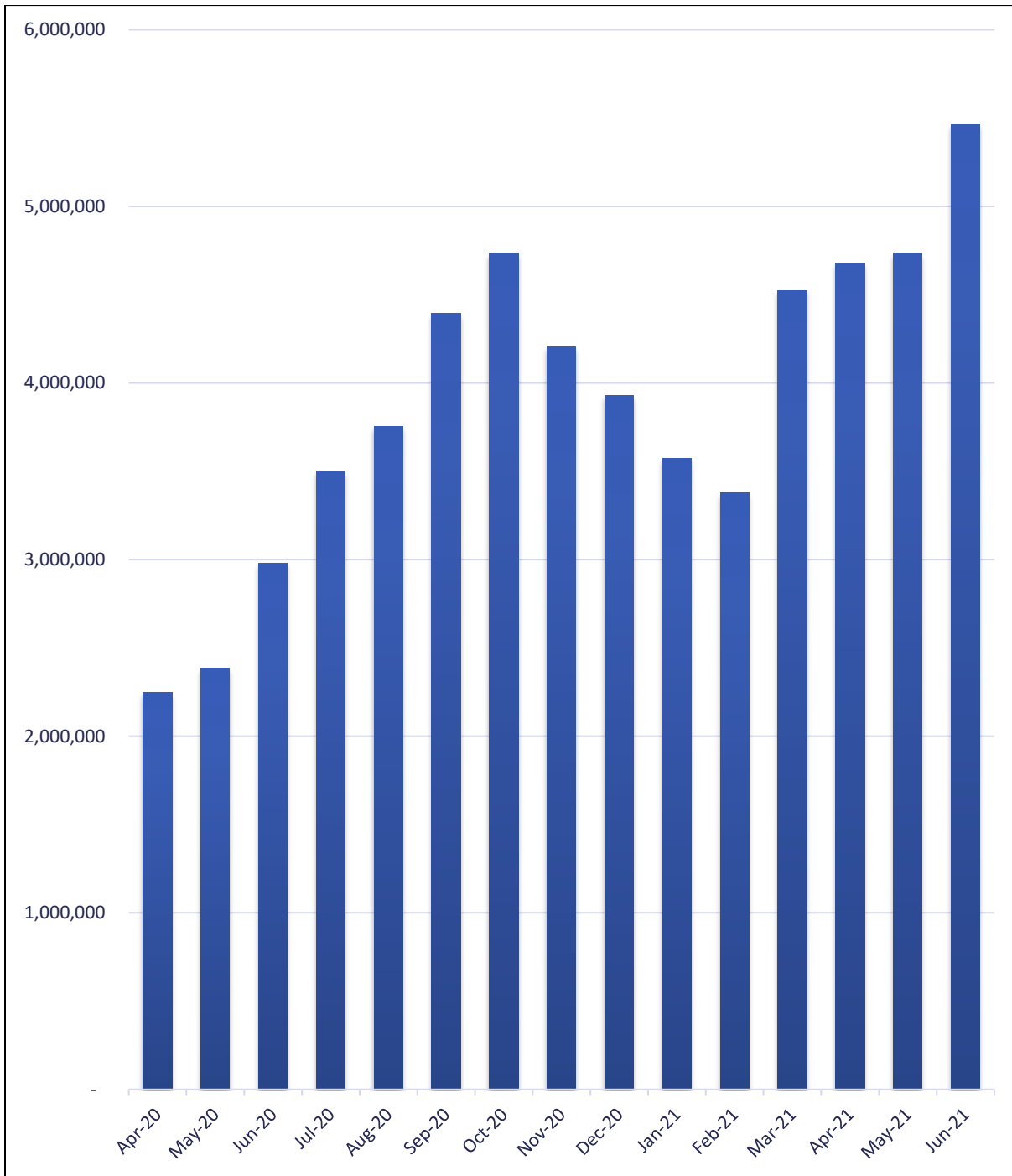
In FY21, transit agencies across the Commonwealth continued to recover from the ridership declines caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Beginning in March 2020, many transit agencies reduced their vehicle capacities and asked passengers to use transit for essential trips only in an effort to address passenger safety and comply with social distancing guidelines. Consequently, transit agencies experienced ridership declines upwards of 94 percent in the final months of FY20.

Statewide transit ridership has been slowly trending up since reaching its low point in April 2020. Ridership steadily increased in the months following the initial outbreak, but the spike in cases during the winter months caused ridership to drop. Since the winter, statewide transit ridership has continued to grow with June 2021 being the strongest post-pandemic month to-date.

The impact of COVID-19 on transit ridership has varied by agency. Transit agencies that offer commuter transit services, including both commuter rail and commuter bus, have experienced catastrophic declines in ridership due to the increase in teleworking opportunities across the Commonwealth. Additionally, many transit agencies that operate service in university towns experienced significant decreases in ridership as many schools transitioned to virtual learning.

Some agencies and services, however, have weathered the pandemic better than others. For example, complementary paratransit, which is a requirement of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and provides service to individuals with disabilities, experienced declines in ridership, but those declines were nowhere near the levels of other modes. This may be explained because many paratransit riders use transit as a lifeline and have no other means of transportation to work, medical appointments or to grocery stores. Additionally, transit agencies with high volumes of transit dependent riders and essential workers, and those that have implemented zero-fare policies, have experienced a reduced impact on ridership.

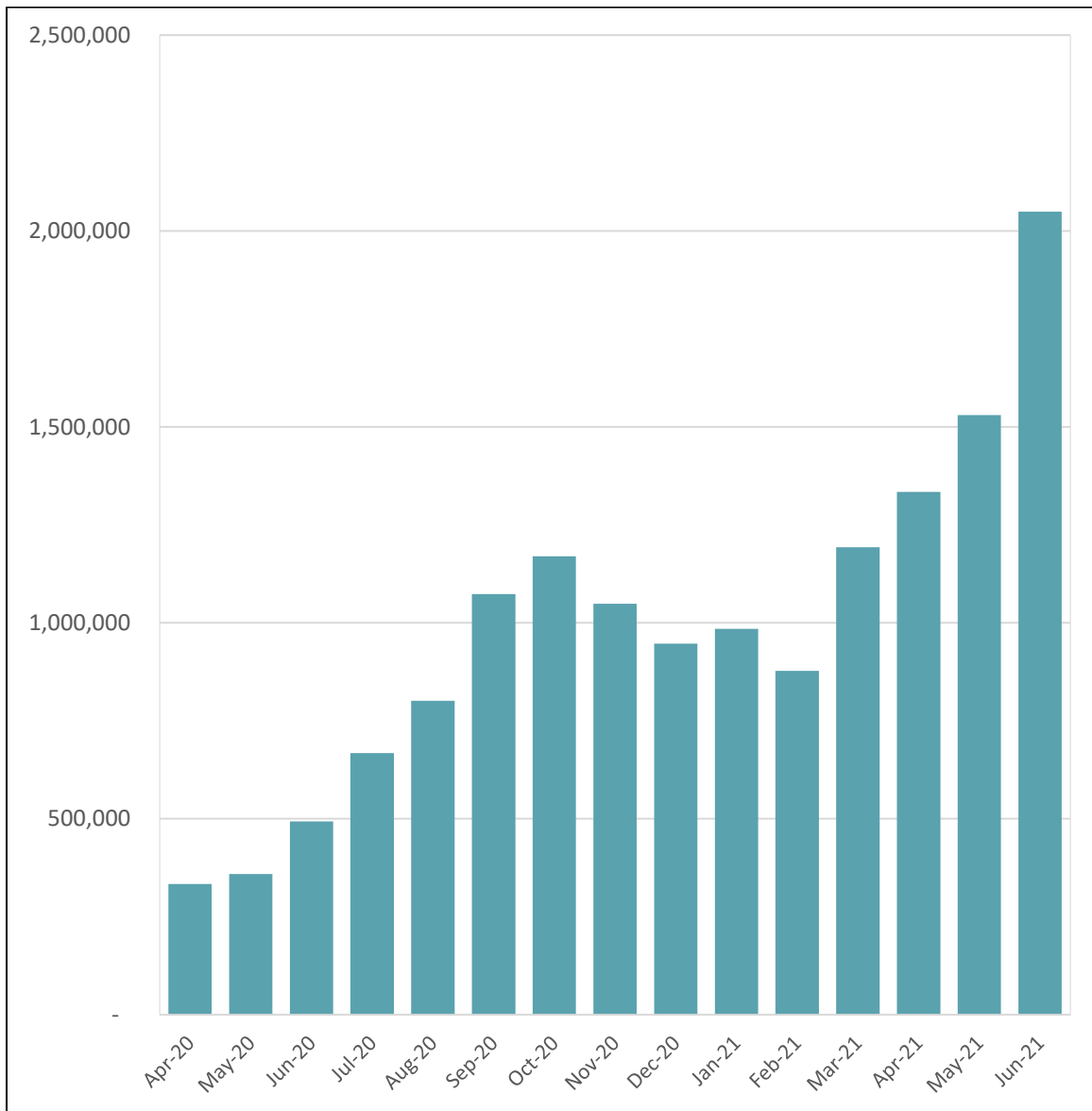
**Figure 18: Statewide Transit Ridership (April 2020-June 2021)**



**WASHINGTON METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSIT AUTHORITY (WMATA) RIDERSHIP**

The Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC) reports the Commonwealth of Virginia’s transit ridership on behalf of WMATA. To be included in WMATA’s Virginia ridership, a passenger trip must either originate or terminate in the Commonwealth.

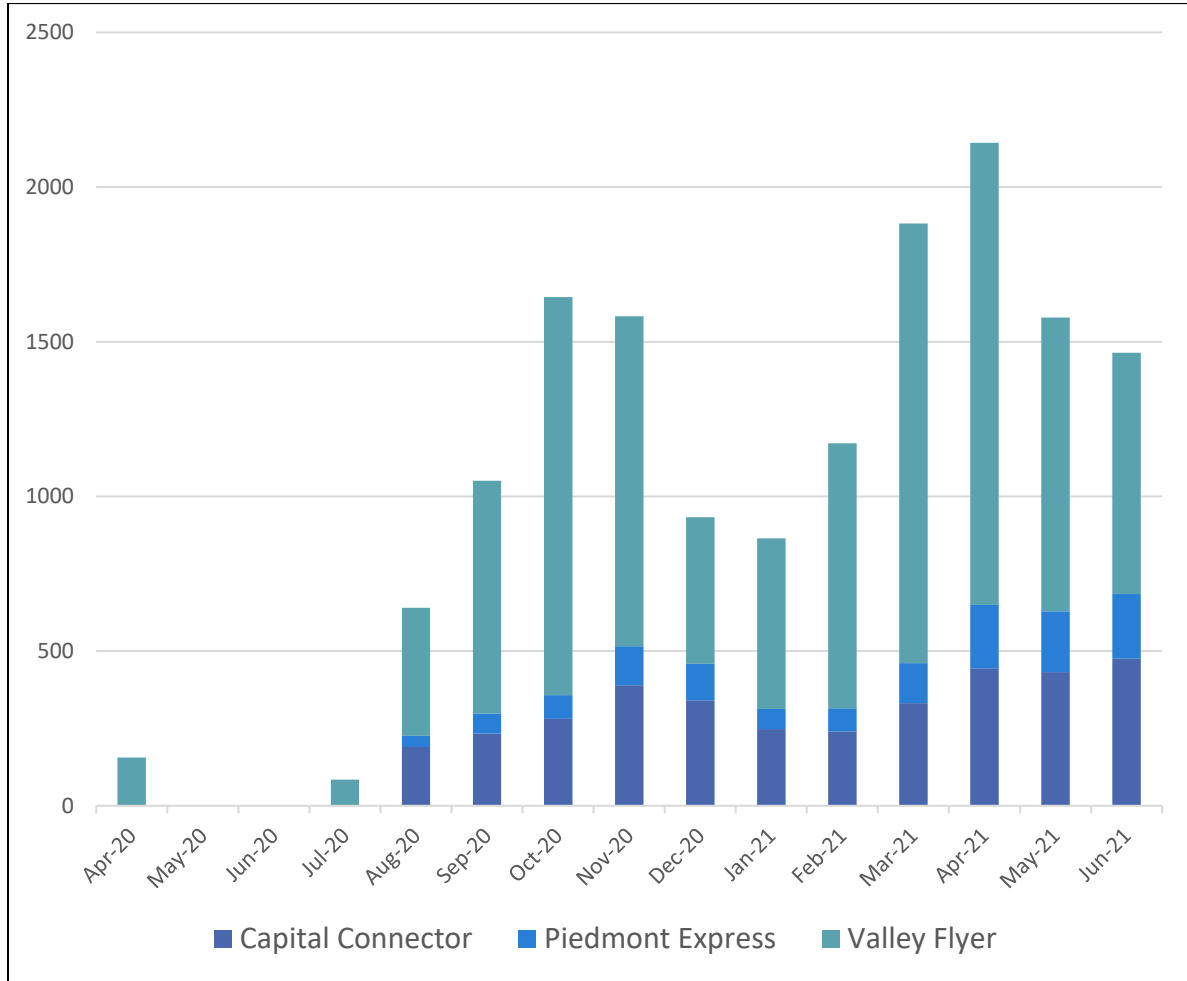
Figure 19: WMATA Ridership (April 2020-June 2021)



### VIRGINIA BREEZE RIDERSHIP

In April 2020, the Virginia Breeze paused service due to a decrease in demand because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Valley Flyer service restarted in July 2020, and the Piedmont Express and Capital Connector began operations the following month. In all three cases, the buses operated with limited capacity.

**Figure 20: Virginia Breeze Ridership (April 2020-June 2021)**



**TDM PROGRAM PERFORMANCE**

DRPT collects data from its TDM partners on the number of trips reduced and the number of vehicle miles traveled reduced through its programs. FY20 was a difficult one for these programs as many individuals started teleworking from home and no longer needed TDM programs such as vanpools. TDM programs saw a recovery in FY21 as many workers returned to the office on at least a part-time basis. Despite these difficulties, these programs continue to reduce a substantial number of trips and vehicle miles traveled.

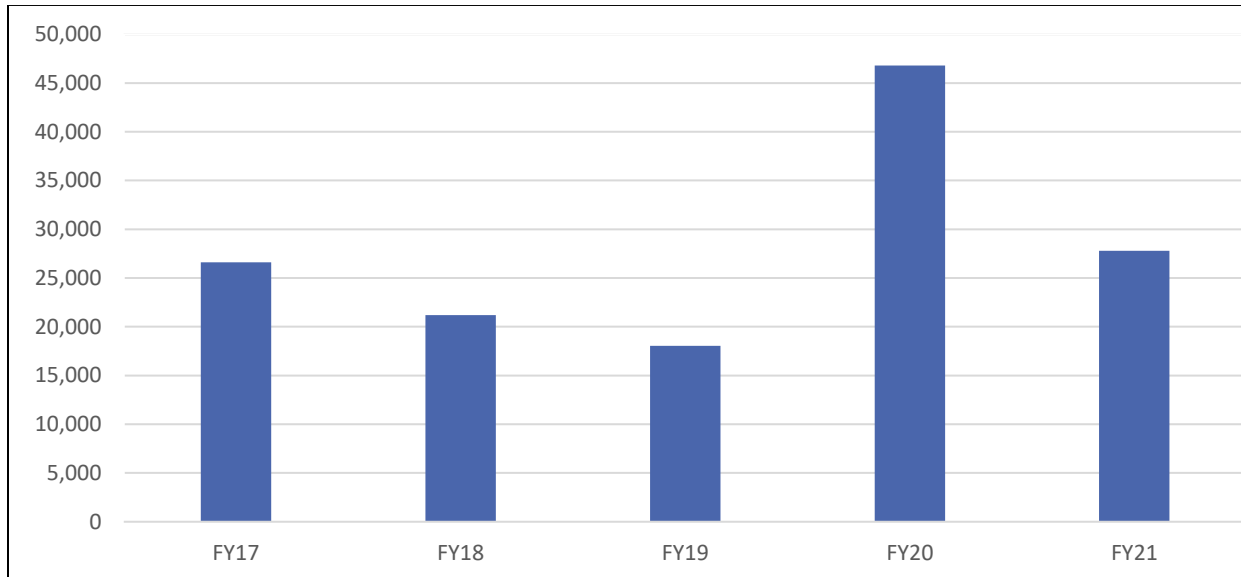
**Figure 21: Trips and Miles Reduced by Virginia TDM Programs**

Virginia TDM Programs	FY20	FY21
<b>Trips Reduced</b>	718,883	1,017,252
<b>Vehicle Miles Traveled Reduced</b>	31,113,908	37,090,596

## SHORTLINE RAILWAY PRESERVATION PROGRAM PERFORMANCE

To gauge the performance of the Rail Preservation, Rail Industrial Access, and Rail Enhancement Funds, DRPT calculates the number of trucks removed from Virginia’s highways through the funds’ projects. This measure is calculated using program agreement performance that is reported by the agency’s rail partners annually. On average, one train carload removes the equivalent of 3.4 truckloads from the highway.

**Figure 22: Truckloads Removed from VA Highways via the Shortline Railway Preservation Program**

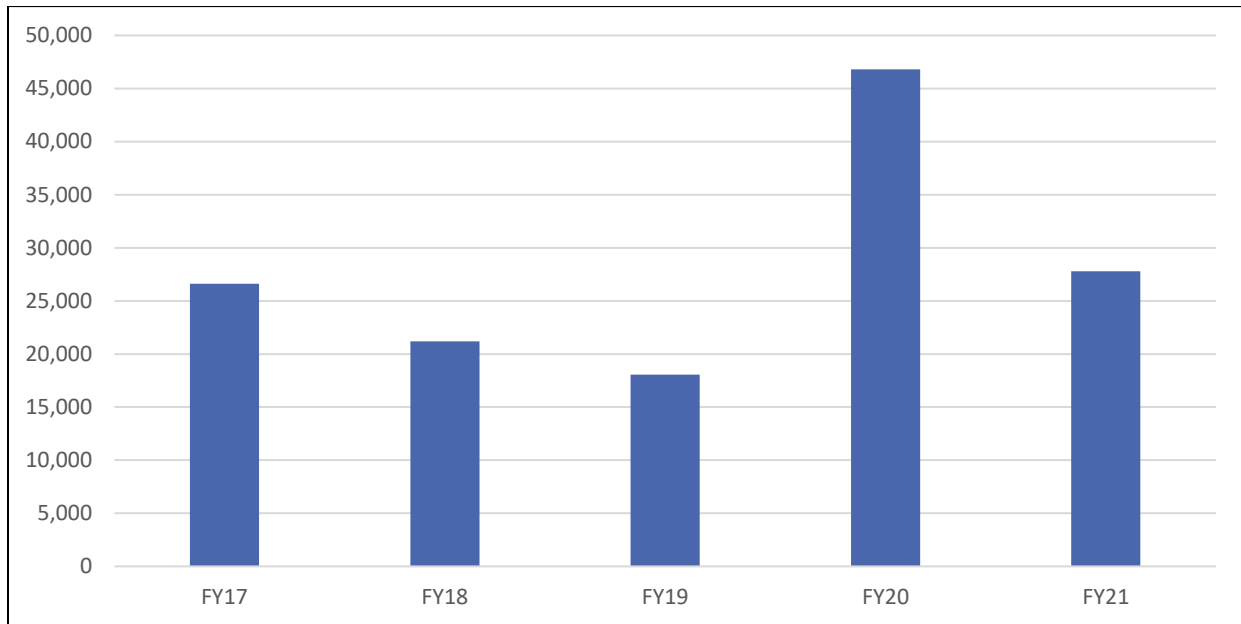


Over the past five years, projects funded through the Rail Preservation Fund have removed between approximately 2.0 million and 2.4 million trucks from Virginia highways annually. The high point was in FY19 when the number reached 2,364,435. There was a slight decline in FY20 due to a decline in grain and coal shipments, and this number rebounded slightly in FY21 due to an increase in container traffic into the Virginia International Gateway.

## RAIL INDUSTRIAL ACCESS PROGRAM PERFORMANCE

DRPT also calculates the number of truckloads removed from Virginia highways via the Rail Industrial Access program. The annual data reported for the Rail Industrial Access program is highly variable year-to-year depending on the types of industries in their reporting phases. Additionally, companies have a three-year reporting period after receiving funds. As companies move out of their reporting phase and new companies move in, the data will change because of a different mix of industries; and it will not follow a general upward trajectory every year. In FY21, DRPT had six companies in the reporting period.

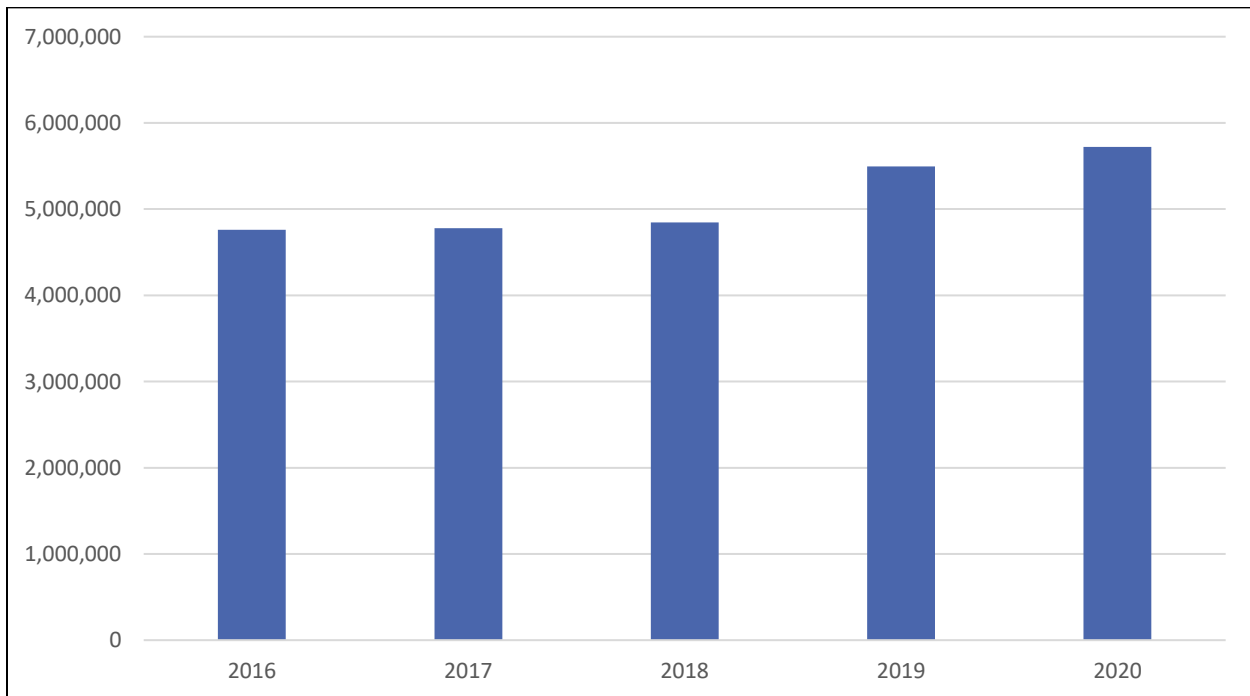
**Figure 23: Truckloads Removed from VA Highways via the Rail Industrial Access Program**



### RAIL ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM PERFORMANCE

Over the last five years, projects funded by the Rail Enhancement Fund have seen an increase in truckloads removed from Virginia’s highways. The largest increases has occurred in the last two years, reaching a high of 5,721,367 in calendar year 2020.

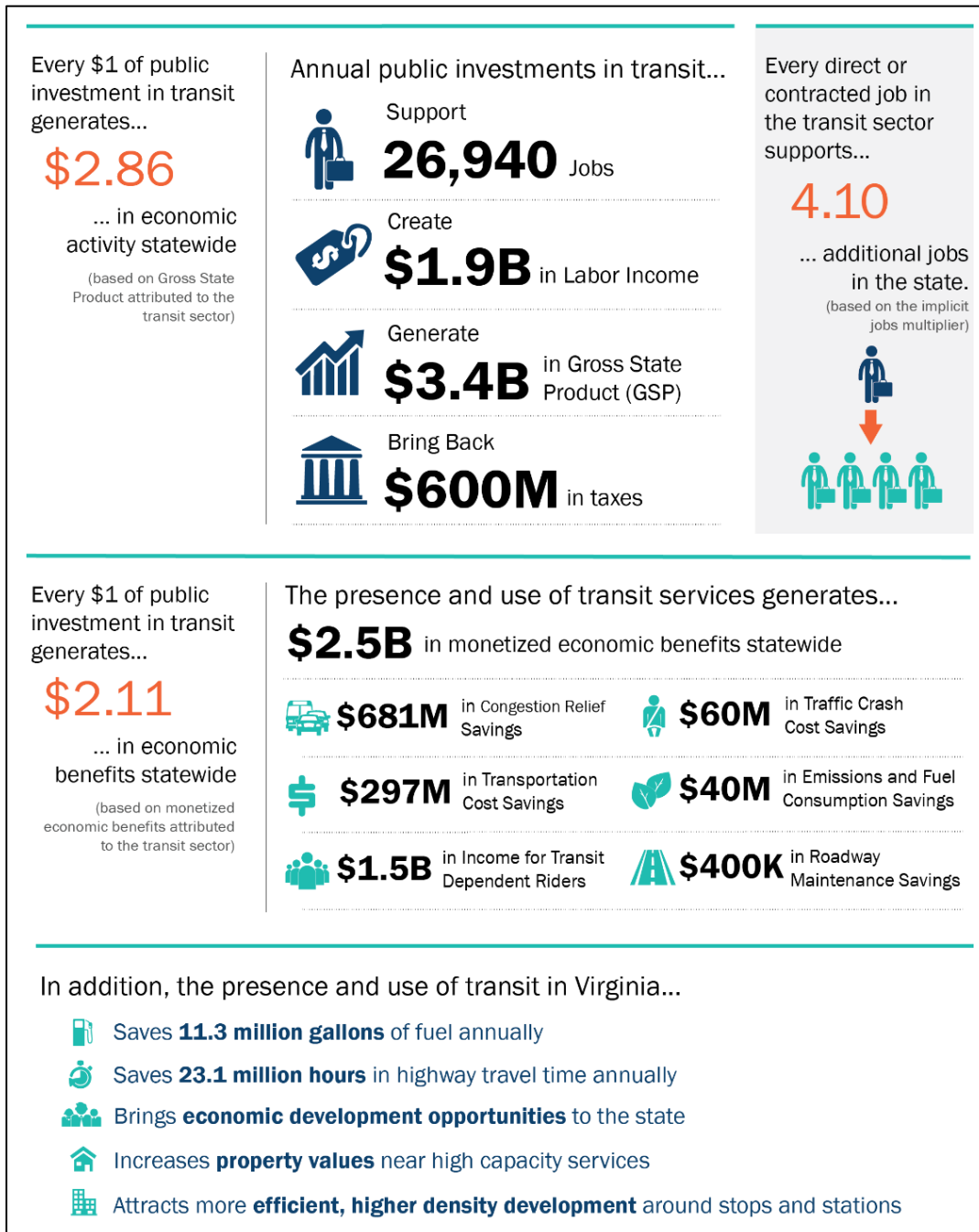
**Figure 24: Truckloads Removed from VA Highways via the Rail Enhancement Program**



## ADDITIONAL BENEFITS OF TRANSIT<sup>21</sup>

Besides removing vehicles from the highway, the presence of transit as a travel option in communities throughout Virginia has a large impact on the state's economy and brings an impressive amount of additional benefit.

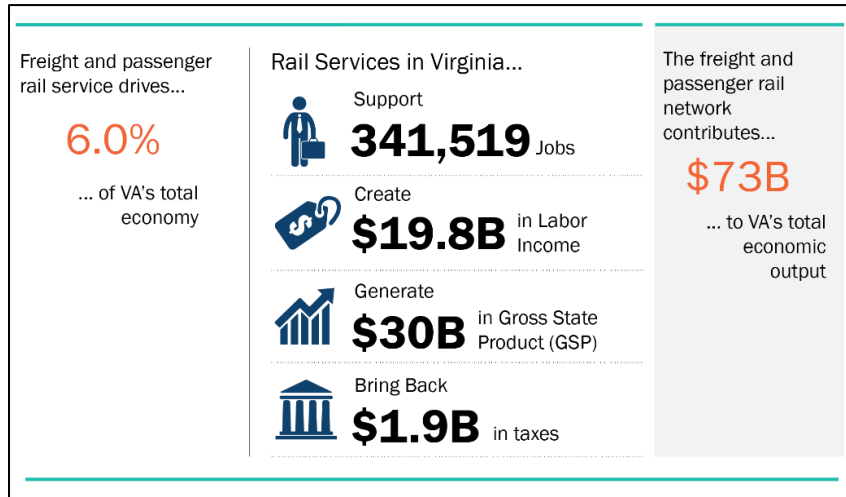
Figure 25: Economic Benefits of Transit



<sup>21</sup> For more information about the economic benefits of transit, please see DRPT's Study on the Economic Benefits of Transit.

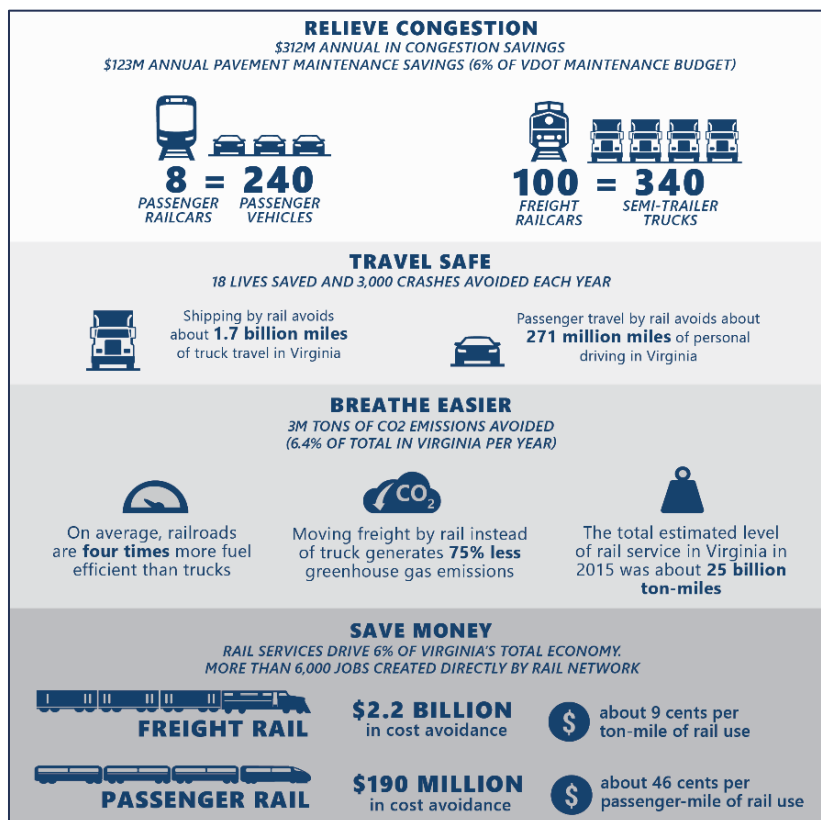
## ADDITIONAL BENEFITS OF FREIGHT & PASSENGER RAIL

Figure 26: Economic Benefits of Freight and Passenger Rail



As a complement to the highway network, transit, and transportation demand management services, passenger rail is a major part of Virginia's traffic solution.

Figure 27: Additional Benefits of Freight and Passenger Rail











## ADDITIONAL BENEFITS OF TDM

By putting more people in buses, trains, carpools, and vanpools, and increasing the use of telework, TDM plays a vital role in Virginia's transportation system.

Figure 28: Benefits of Transportation Demand Management

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### Transportation Demand Management Programs in Virginia...

-  Reduce **roadway congestion** and **increase travel options**
-  Provide **commuter information** that enables better decision making
-  Provide **contingencies for commuters** that choose to leave their cars at home
-  Improve **travel time reliability**
-  **Save commuters and the state money**
-  Contribute to **reduced emissions** from the transportation sector

## V. RESPONDING TO COVID-19



In March 2020, the introduction of the coronavirus (COVID-19) altered communities in an unprecedented way. Due to the high rate of contagion and the unknowns associated with the virus, social distancing policies and stay at home orders became the social normal. The public transportation and rail industries were hit specifically hard by these changes as providers were faced with unparalleled challenges as standard commuting needs dissipated and the fear of close proximity rose. Agencies were tasked with modifying operations to most appropriately meet the vital needs of the community while still prioritizing the health of the public and their front facing employees.

This section of the annual report will provide a brief summary of 2020 transit mitigation efforts, expand on how procedures changed in 2021, detail the present status of COVID-19, and provide context on the DRPT's role in ensuring safe and appropriate public transit throughout the Commonwealth amidst and following a public health pandemic.

In spring 2020, public transit and passenger rail ridership plummeted as social distancing and working from home policies became more prominent. Yet for those individuals unable to stay home and lacking mobility options, often the essential workers or individuals without access to a personal vehicle, public transit and rail continued to play an integral role in their day to day life. Public transit has a unique role within a community, one that is vital for a continued community function. Riders, regardless of the status of the pandemic, still often relied on transit to get to essential services such as; health care, employment, child care, and grocery stores and other indispensable locations.

In spring 2020, transit providers were urged to communicate that transit should be used only for essential trips. Additionally, mask requirements and social distancing policies became integral to the continued function of transit.

In winter 2021, as vaccinations began to be more available to the public, communities were eager to return to normal, or a new normal. Providers were then tasked with increasing operations in a safe and efficient manner that both considers existing demand and capacity of their operations. Furthermore, public transit providers had to decide which safety practices remained as COVID-19 cases decreased and ridership increased. They had to maneuver operator shortages, new fare collection methods, an increased cleaning schedule, and had to market their services to welcome back riders.

However, in summer 2021, the introduction of the Delta Variant of COVID-19, which causes more infections and spreads faster than early forms of the virus, caused pause among communities as they began to reconsider old dilemmas with a newly informed public health perspective.

## FEDERAL AND STATE

Since March 2020, the United States Congress has passed three stimulus packages in response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. This includes the \$2 trillion Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act passed in March 2020, the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA) in December 2020, and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) in March 2021. Each package allocated funding to public transportation across the country. As the table below shows, some funding was allocated directly to the region, whereas, some funding was allocated to the DRPT who then distributed it statewide to the agency’s transit partners.

**Figure 29: Stimulus Funding Directed to Public Transportation in the Commonwealth**

	DC <sup>22</sup>	Richmond	Roanoke	Rural	Statewide <sup>23</sup>	VA Beach
<b>CARES Act</b>	\$1.0B	\$35.8M	\$8.1M	\$51.4M <sup>24</sup>	\$43.0M	\$63.8M
<b>CRRSAA</b>	\$823.3M	\$3.7M	-----	-----	\$136.1K	\$10.0M
<b>ARPA</b>	\$1.4M	\$30.0M	\$3.4M	\$3.7M <sup>25</sup>	\$20.1M	\$56.2M

Overall, these funds were used to maintain service levels, provide PPE, and acquire safety equipment related to enhance cleaning. Rural agencies, like RADAR and MEOC, used the funding to support community meal delivery; and the Greater Richmond Transit Company committed to zero-fare operations through FY22. Additionally, transit agencies were able to maintain their workforces, hosted vaccination events, and employee testing events. Hampton Roads Transit supported transportation to mass vaccination sites.

In addition to significant federal assistance to public transportation agencies, the CARES Act also authorized over \$1 billion to Amtrak for intercity passenger rail operations across the United States. Included in that figure was over \$236 million set aside for state sponsors of intercity passenger rail such as Virginia. Under the terms of the legislation, Amtrak’s FY20 billing to Virginia for annual operating and capital costs cannot exceed 80 percent of its FY19 billing.

CRRSAA and ARPA also provided assistance to passenger rail. For each package, \$174.5 million was allocated for state-sponsored services. This amounts to \$12.6 million from each package for Virginia’s state-sponsored service.

At its March 2020 meeting, the CTB approved the provision of \$11 million in supplemental state operating assistance to help offset the COVID-19 pandemic response and mitigation. This dollar amount came from residual funds on completed and canceled projects. The amount allocated was equivalent to

<sup>22</sup> Funding for the DC Metro Area is distributed to WMATA, Virginia Railway Express, and the Maryland Transit Administration.

<sup>23</sup> Statewide distribution also is known as “Governor’s apportionment” and are allocated to small urban transit agencies. These agencies are located in the following areas: Blacksburg, Bristol, Charlottesville, Fredericksburg, Harrisonburg, Kingsport, TN (VA Share), Lynchburg, Staunton-Waynesboro, Williamsburg, and Winchester.

<sup>24</sup> The CARES Act funding for Rural Transit includes a 15 percent set aside for intercity bus.

<sup>25</sup> ARPA funding for rural transit included an allocation for intercity bus service.

one month of statewide transit agency operating expenses and was allocated on a proportional basis to the transit agencies.

Additionally, throughout calendar year 2020, DPRT, in cooperation with the COVID-19 Unified Command Joint Information Center, provided guidance to assist transit agencies with their responses to the pandemic.

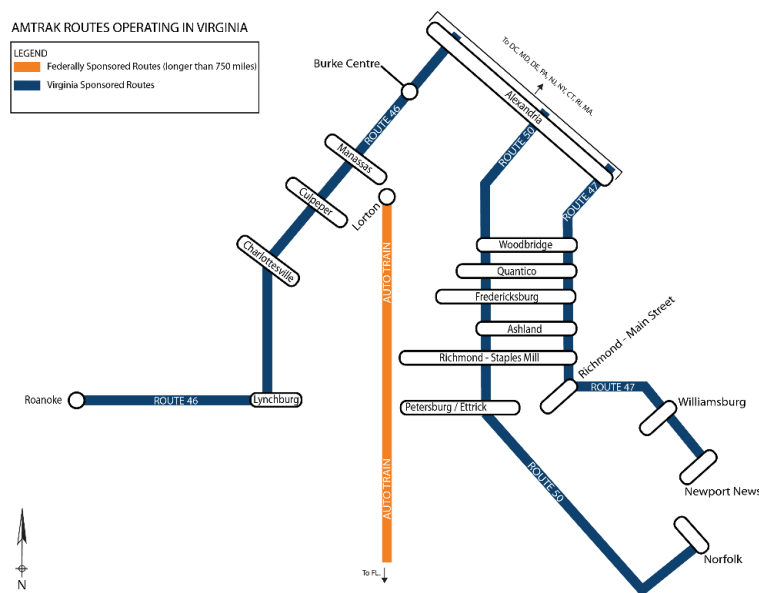
In May 2020, the USDOT announced that it would distribute approximately 15.5 million cloth face coverings to transportation personnel across the United States, 4.8 million of which had been reserved for mass transit and passenger rail workers. DRPT and VDOT distributed 10,000 face coverings statewide to transit agencies with fewer than 40 employees, and larger transit agencies received shipments directly from USDOT.

### PASSENGER RAIL

Pre-pandemic, Amtrak state-sponsored ridership had grown to nearly one million riders in FY19. Service had expanded with new service to Roanoke in 2017 and an additional train originating in Norfolk in 2019. October, November, and December 2019 were the three highest individual months ever for Amtrak state-sponsored ridership in the Commonwealth.

Starting in March 2020 with the on-set of the COVID-19 pandemic, Virginia decided to cease one round trip from Newport News as ridership was falling. Additionally, Amtrak waived change and cancellation fees; and train capacity was reduced. By April 2020, ridership had dropped by nearly 96 percent compared to the prior April. Amtrak implemented restrictions and began weekly update calls with states and stakeholders. Starting in May 2020, Amtrak ceased all long distance service except the Auto Train; and Virginia acted on Amtrak’s recommendations to reduce service.

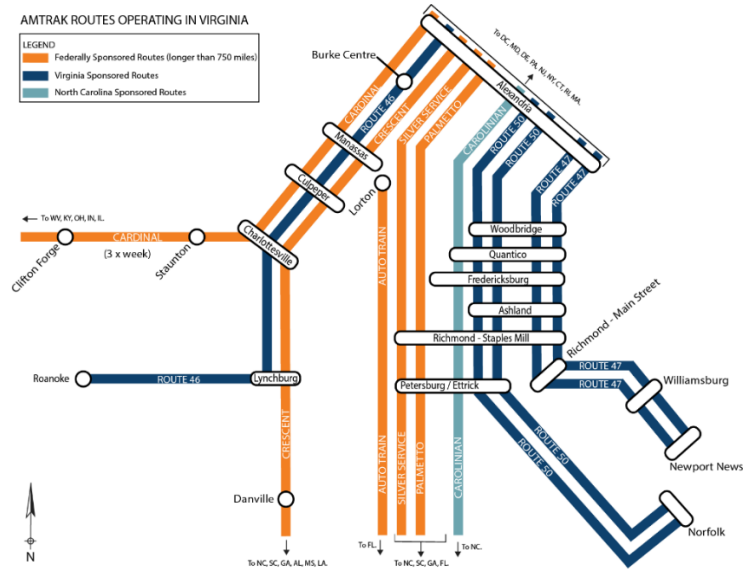
**Figure 30: May 2020 Amtrak Routes Operating in Virginia**



Starting in June 2020, Amtrak restored some long distance service with restrictions and safety protocols. Additionally, North Carolina restored its Carolinian service. Virginia remained at 50 percent service

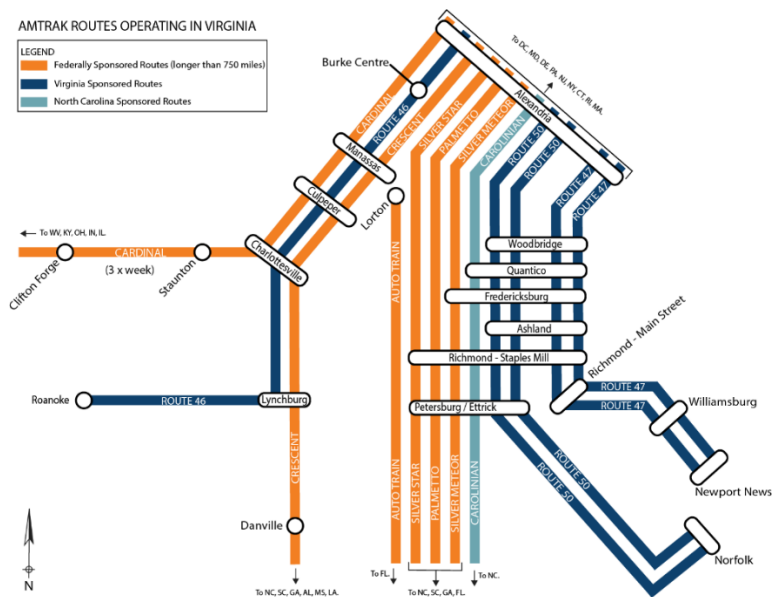
levels. By September 2020, Amtrak recommended restoration of Virginia service to 80 percent service levels with capacity restrictions and safety protocols already in place. At the same time, the second trains to Norfolk and Newport News returned.

**Figure 31: September 2020 Amtrak Routes Operating in Virginia**



In March 2021, Amtrak restored its remaining long distance service, the Silver Star and Silver Meteor services, at a reduced three days a week. By the end of the fiscal year, the only Amtrak service in Virginia that had not been restored was the Richmond service. That route restarted on September 27, 2021, with an extension of service from Staples Mill Station in Henrico County to Main Street Station in downtown Richmond. This extension is the first tangible benefit of the Transforming Rail in Virginia initiative, which is discussed in detail in Section VII.

**Figure 32: March 2021 Amtrak Routes Operating in Virginia**



## PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

In 2020, public transportation providers implemented an array of strategies that strengthened the perception of safety on transit and protected riders and staff throughout the peak of the pandemic. Largely, the strategies fell within three categories: limiting interactions, heightening sanitation and precautions, and tailoring operations. While some of these practices have been phased out as 2021 progressed and vaccination totals increased, others have persisted or been accepted as the new normal.



### LIMITING INTERACTIONS

A large concern surrounding transit use is the close proximity users have with transit staff and other riders. To alleviate these concerns, transit providers searched for ways to mitigate these human bottleneck points. Often these bottlenecks occur at ticketing stations and boarding areas. In spring 2020, to attempt to limit interactions, 61% of Virginia transit agencies deployed zero fare operations to decrease interactions associated with fare collection between riders and operators. Additionally, to ensure the safety of operators, when able, transit providers limited boarding to rear boarding only. Furthermore, transit agencies throughout the commonwealth roped off seats to ensure appropriate distancing among riders.

Thus far in 2021, transit providers are still practicing precautionary measures to limit interactions on transit. The introduction of COVID-19 has given additional attention to the benefits of deploying zero fare operations. In addition to limiting interactions, zero fare transit also benefits the community's mobility by reducing barriers to transit use. During the pandemic, Virginians dealt with newfound financial stress, and zero fare operations helped relieve that stress by providing free transit rides to the community, including the essential workers. As of August 2021, 42% of Virginia transit providers continue to provide zero fare service. Additionally, while transit providers are starting to reduce social distancing requirements and allowing for open seating, the majority are continuing to invest in Plexiglass barriers between the operators and the riders. Some agencies had already begun installing Plexiglass barriers for operators prior to the pandemic. Agencies that installed these barriers during the pandemic anticipate retaining them in the recovery period, and in some instances, continuing to proactively request them when placing orders for new rolling stock.

### HEIGHTENING SANITATION AND PRECAUTIONS

In spring 2020, transit providers searched for innovative means to ensure clean and sanitized surfaces on transit. Transit providers began to perform intermediate cleaning throughout the operation schedule, provided riders with sanitation stations, and encouraged riders to use masks. Many of these precautions have continued on in 2021 with the addition of nationwide mask requirements. In January 2021, President Biden issued Executive Order 13998, which requires masks to be worn in compliance with CDC guidelines in or on: airports; commercial aircraft; trains; public maritime vessels, including ferries; intercity bus services; and all forms of public transportation as defined in section 5302

of title 49, United States Code. This national mask requirement provided rigidity to transit providers and allowed them to more thoroughly enforce mask wearing on their system.

### TAILORING OPERATIONS

In 2020, transit providers were tasked with tailoring their operations to meet the needs of riders while considering their newly limited capacity. With ridership at a new low and the operator shortage peaking, transit providers had to make some tough cuts to their operations, specifically among commuter routes.

In 2021, many agencies that reduced or removed service because of the pandemic—whether due to lower demand from riders, bus operator shortages, proactively to reduce operator exposure, or a combination of factors—are now considering if, how, and when to resume the operations of services they offered prior to the pandemic. Throughout the pandemic, agencies adjusted fixed-route service to align with public health guidelines and transit demand by implementing rear-door boarding, zero-fare service, and masking and social distancing guidelines.



Agencies also used APC data or monitoring to measure crowding and redirect service to the busiest routes. In the recovery period, agencies will need to continue monitoring ridership, especially when the return-to-work phase of recovery ramps up or in the event of any surges. One method may involve identifying essential routes, calculating their ridership, and working backwards to determine the amount of runs that will be required to safely meet demand.

With the newfound appreciation of teleworking still present in 2021, a portion of riders have still not returned to their daily commutes. While fixed route systems are experiencing increasing use as the pandemic evolves, commuter routes are still struggling to regain ridership. These commuting trends have led providers to invest in their internal fixed route services, while the commuter and express routes have remained using COVID-19 frequencies.

### TRANSPORTATION DEMAND MANAGEMENT

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to have a profound impact on commuting and travel mode choice. However, in FY2021, there was a larger reduction in auto trips and vehicle miles traveled as a result of the efforts of Virginia’s commuter assistance programs. The larger reductions from FY20 can be attributed to more businesses opening and employees returning to the office. More employees commuting to the office meant more people seeking commute options information.

Although the number of employees working from home remained high in FY2021, more workers commuted to their jobs. Thus, there was a need to provide commute options information, including information on changing bus services. That meant Virginia’s Commuter Assistance Programs (CAPs) needed to continue to help Virginia’s commuters. However, with COVID still having a significant impact,

it was not business as usual for DRPT and the CAPs. DRPT and the CAP operators had to adapt to the changed commuting environment and needs.

DRPT kept CAPs operational in FY21 by providing grant funding for essential services to assist commuters and employers. Essential services included providing direct assistance to commuters and employers via phone and email communications, ridematching services, trip planning services, providing information on transit schedule and fare changes, and information on how to be safe when riding in a carpool, vanpool, or on transit.

CAPs adjusted the way they conduct business to adapt to COVID's impact, while maintaining program operations to be there when the public needed assistance. For example, CAPs held informational meetings with employers and commuters virtually and through webinars, rather than in-person, concentrated outreach to essential workers at hospitals, restaurants, and other healthcare and service industries where work cannot be performed at home, and provided ridematching services through websites and mobile apps.

Additionally, Bike to Work promotions were adapted to provide safety from COVID. The number of May's Bike to Work promotions were reduced and the outdoor events were conducted using the CDC protocols and Governor's Executive Orders for facial coverings, distancing and limits on the number of attendees. CAPs that did not have employer outreach programs began assisting DRPT with helping employers with the challenges of full-time telework through DRPT's Telework!VA program.

It is difficult to predict the long-term impacts the COVID-19 pandemic will have on commuting, travel choices, and telework. It is clear, however, that the changes commuters and employers have made will last in the near-term. Therefore, DRPT and its agency partners that operate Commuter Assistance Programs will continue to use the lessons learned these past two years to provide commute options information, ridematching, and trip planning services to Virginia's workers and employers.



## VI. PROVIDING TRANSPARENCY TO TRANSIT & TDM FUNDING

### MERIT: MAKING EFFICIENT + RESPONSIBLE INVESTMENTS IN TRANSIT

Chapters 854 and 856 of the 2018 Acts of Assembly created new reforms regarding DRPT's statewide public transportation grant programs. In order to implement these reforms, DRPT created the MERIT program with the following components:



- Statewide capital prioritization
- Statewide performance-based operating assistance
- Urban transit strategic plans<sup>26</sup>

In FY21, DRPT expanded MERIT to include technical assistance, demonstration project assistance, the public transportation intern program, TDM operating assistance, mobility, and senior transportation. All programs will have a prioritization and scoring method. Additionally, in preparation for including these programs as part of MERIT, DRPT staff updated its internal grant management system by making changes to its guidelines, handbook, and application process.

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#### STATEWIDE CAPITAL PRIORITIZATION<sup>27</sup>

The statewide transit capital assistance program is guided by a prioritization and scoring process that allows DRPT to allocate and assign limited resources to investments identified as the most critical. This process favors replacement and rehabilitation projects that help achieve the DRPT policy objective of maintaining existing assets in a “state of good repair,” as well as expansion projects that have the greatest impact on the provision of transit services.

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*In FY21, the CTB provided funding for 137 replacement revenue vehicles, 17 expansion vehicles, and the rehabilitation of 42 buses. In addition, the Board approved funding for the implementation of 100 minor enhancement projects throughout the state and two major expansion projects in the Hampton Roads and New River Valley regions.*

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Under the capital assistance program, projects are prioritized separately under the following categories: state of good repair, minor enhancements, and major expansions. The state of good repair category includes projects that replace or rehabilitate existing transit agency assets. The minor enhancement category includes projects that add capacity, new technology, or customer facilities with either a cost of less than \$2 million or, in the case of a vehicle expansion project, no more than five vehicles or five percent of the existing fleet size, whichever is greater. For both the state of good repair and the minor enhancements categories, the state will provide a match of up to 68 percent of a project's total cost. All projects or programs that receive state capital funding require a four percent local match.

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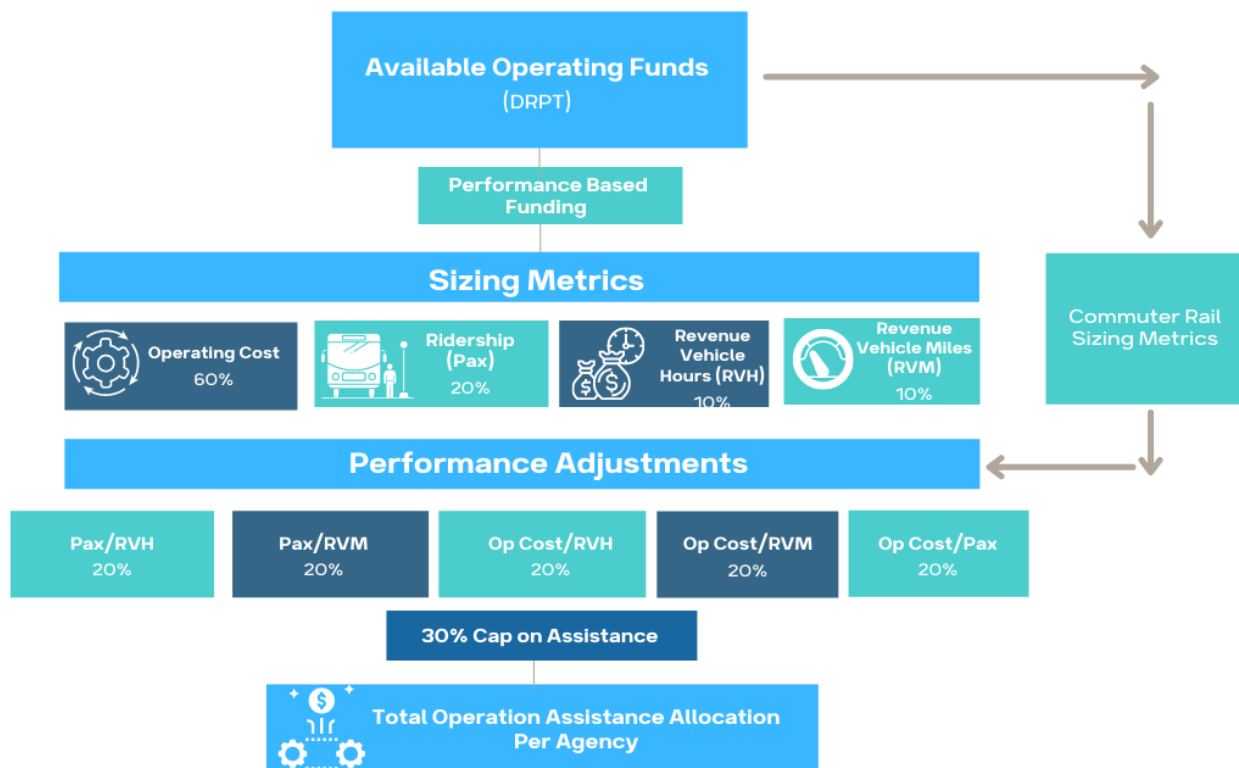
<sup>26</sup> [Additional information about the MERIT program, including agency guidance and guidelines, can be found on DRPT's website.](#)

<sup>27</sup> To learn more about the development of the MERIT program, please see the 2019 Annual Report.

## STATEWIDE OPERATING ASSISTANCE

The statewide operating assistance program provides funding for eligible operating expenses for all modes of public transportation services throughout the state, including local bus, commuter bus, commuter rail, light rail, bus rapid transit, demand response, paratransit, and ferry services. DRPT follows a performance-based methodology to determine the specific allocation of operating assistance funds to each agency throughout the state. The program funds up to 30 percent of all operating expenses borne by public operators. Overall, 32 of 40 Virginia transit agencies saw an increase in funding for FY21 compared to FY20.

**Figure 33: Fiscal Year 2021 Statewide Operating Assistance**



## URBAN TRANSIT STRATEGIC PLANS

The transit reforms legislation also implemented a requirement that all large urban transit agencies develop a Transit Strategic Plan. These plans are required for agencies that both serve an urbanized area with at least 50,000 people and that operate a fleet of at least 20 buses. These planning documents

must be updated every five years as a condition of receiving funds from the Commonwealth Mass Transit Fund.<sup>28</sup>

The TSP's goal is to create a strategic blueprint outlining desired changes that will improve the provision of transit services throughout each agency's service area within existing funding structures. This is an opportunity for each agency to look at its system as a blank slate, re-examine the priorities of stakeholders and riders, and make difficult choices concerning where and how to provide services in an efficient and cost-effective manner. The Greater Lynchburg Transit Company and Hampton Roads Transit served as pilot agencies and were the first two to complete their strategic plans.

## SCORING IN SMART SCALE



SMART SCALE provides transportation funding through a prioritization process that evaluates projects based on improvements to safety, congestion, accessibility, land use, economic development, and the environment. DRPT, VDOT, and the Office of Intermodal Planning oversee the development and implementation of the SMART SCALE process.

For SMART SCALE Round 4, DRPT scored 52 projects with transit or rail features. Of those, six projects cited transit or rail as a primary component and all six projects were selected for funding. The total value of SMART SCALE funds awarded to these projects was \$72,775,469, which includes \$50,000,000 for an intercity rail service expansion along the US-29 and I-81 corridors. The remaining 46 projects cited transit as a secondary component, which include improvements such as new bus stop amenities as part or larger roadway projects. DRPT staff focused its work on assisting transit agencies and local governments with applications. In this development phase, DRPT staff offered policy expertise on multimodal projects and provided technical assistance to localities and transit agencies that applied for funding. DRPT's SMART SCALE technical assistance includes ridership forecasting, location guidance, cost estimation, data development and analysis, engineering review, and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) assistance.

Despite an increasingly competitive grant program, transit and rail projects continue to score very well. Through four rounds of the program, DRPT has administered funding to 36 transit and rail projects. SMART SCALE does not provide funding to cover operating costs, however, and as a result, today's expansion projects will be state of good repair projects in the future. The Commonwealth Mass Transit Fund will be used to fund operating costs in the present and anticipated state of good repair projects.

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<sup>28</sup> Alexandria (DASH), Arlington Transit, Blacksburg Transit, Charlottesville Area Transit, Fairfax Connector, Fredericksburg Transit, Greater Lynchburg Transit Company, Greater Richmond Transit Company, Greater Roanoke Transit Company (Valley Metro), Hampton Roads Transit, Loudoun Transit, Petersburg Area Transit, Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission, Radford Transit, and Williamsburg Area Transit are required to complete an urban transit strategic plan. However, Item 443 of the Biennial Budget delayed these strategic plan requirements because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## IMPLEMENTING THE MULTIMODAL PROJECT PIPELINE



# PROJECT PIPELINE

The Multimodal Project Pipeline is a new initiative led by the Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment to identify and study high-priority

needs as defined through the Commonwealth's Multimodal Transportation Plan known as VTrans. This initiative will create a process for developing high-quality projects that feed into the Commonwealth's various transportation funding programs including SMART SCALE, MERIT, and other grant programs. DRPT is leading project development for rail on-time performance, transportation demand management, and transit access.

## COLLABORATING WITH WMATA

In the 1960s, Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia jointly established an interstate compact creating the Washington Metropolitan Area Transportation Authority (WMATA). The compact members include the District of Columbia and Maryland as well as the Virginia jurisdictions of Arlington and Fairfax Counties and the Cities of Alexandria, Fairfax, and Falls Church. Upon completion of the Metrorail Silver Line, Loudoun County will be added. With almost 100 million riders in Virginia annually pre-pandemic, Metro is the largest transit provider in the Commonwealth. These following sections highlight key activities by Virginia and WMATA during FY21.



## USE OF WMATA CAPITAL FUNDS

The 2018 General Assembly passed legislation providing approximately \$154.5 million in annual dedicated funding for the WMATA Capital Fund, Virginia's proportional regional share of \$500 million in annual additional capital required for critical state of good repair needs. The Maryland General Assembly and the District of Columbia City Council followed Virginia's lead by passing their own funding packages later in 2018. Fiscal Year 2021 was the third year that WMATA received funding from this dedicated revenue stream from Virginia, and the Commonwealth is continuing to see the benefits of these additional funds.

*Metrorail Platform Improvement Program:* In the summer of 2019, WMATA started its Metrorail Platform Improvement Program utilizing dedicated funding for the work. The goal of the program is to replace the concrete platforms at 20 of its 45 outdoor Metrorail stations that had significantly deteriorated over the 35-40 years since their construction due to exposure to weather and cleaning and de-icing agents. WMATA had installed temporary stabilization and safety measures at many of these station platforms over the years. Since the work required the full or partial closure of Metrorail stations, WMATA also performed other work at the stations, including needed repairs, canopy replacements, power washing and the installation of new technology and customer experience upgrades.

Overall 12 of the 20 stations included in the Metrorail Platform Improvement Program were located in Virginia. WMATA completed work on the six stations south of Reagan National Airport on the Blue and Yellow Lines (Braddock Road, King Street, Eisenhower Avenue, Huntington, Van Dorn Street and Franconia-Springfield) in FY20 and the remaining six during FY21, including four on the Orange Line (East Falls Church, West Falls Church, Dunn Loring-Merrifield and Vienna) and the stations at Arlington National Cemetery on the Blue Line and Reagan National Airport on the Blue and Yellow Lines. WMATA

also completed work on one station in Maryland in FY21 and continues the program in FY22 with work on four stations in Maryland. The program will conclude in FY23 with the remaining three stations in Maryland and Washington, DC.

*Issuance of Debt:* Additionally, WMATA leveraged dedicated revenues from the WMATA Capital Fund to issue debt in support of WMATA’s Capital Improvement Program. During FY21, the WMATA Board authorized an \$874 million bond issuance at its May 13 meeting that would leverage the \$500 million in annual dedicated funding provided by the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia. The funding, with a 25-year maturity, will be used to support over \$1 billion in projects in the FY21 and FY22 capital budgets.

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## **INCREASED STATE OVERSIGHT**

Chapters 854 and 856 of the 2018 Acts of Assembly also increased state oversight of WMATA’s actions and implemented financial penalties should the agency not meet certain requirements. On July 1, WMATA supplied its annual certification to the Commonwealth Transportation Board that it had complied with these requirements for FY21. The requirements are:

- Board Governance
  - Alternates cannot participate at a WMATA Board meeting when a director is present
  - WMATA must approve policy prohibiting the participation of alternates
- Operating Assistance Cap
  - The total Virginia operating subsidy in the approved WMATA budget cannot increase by more than three percent from the operating subsidy in the prior year’s budget, subject to certain legislative exceptions
- Capital Improvement Plan
  - WMATA must have a detailed capital improvement plan covering the current fiscal year and the next five fiscal years
- Strategic Plan
  - WMATA is required to adopt a strategic plan every three years

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*In June 2021, the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission submitted a certification letter to the Comptroller of Virginia stating that it had received documents and reports from WMATA required by Code of Virginia 33.2-3402. The four documents include WMATA’s Annual Capital Budget, Annual Independent Financial Audit, National Transit Database Annual Profile, and Single Audit Reports.*

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DRPT has reported to the CTB that WMATA is in compliance with the statutory requirements and CTB policy for FY21.

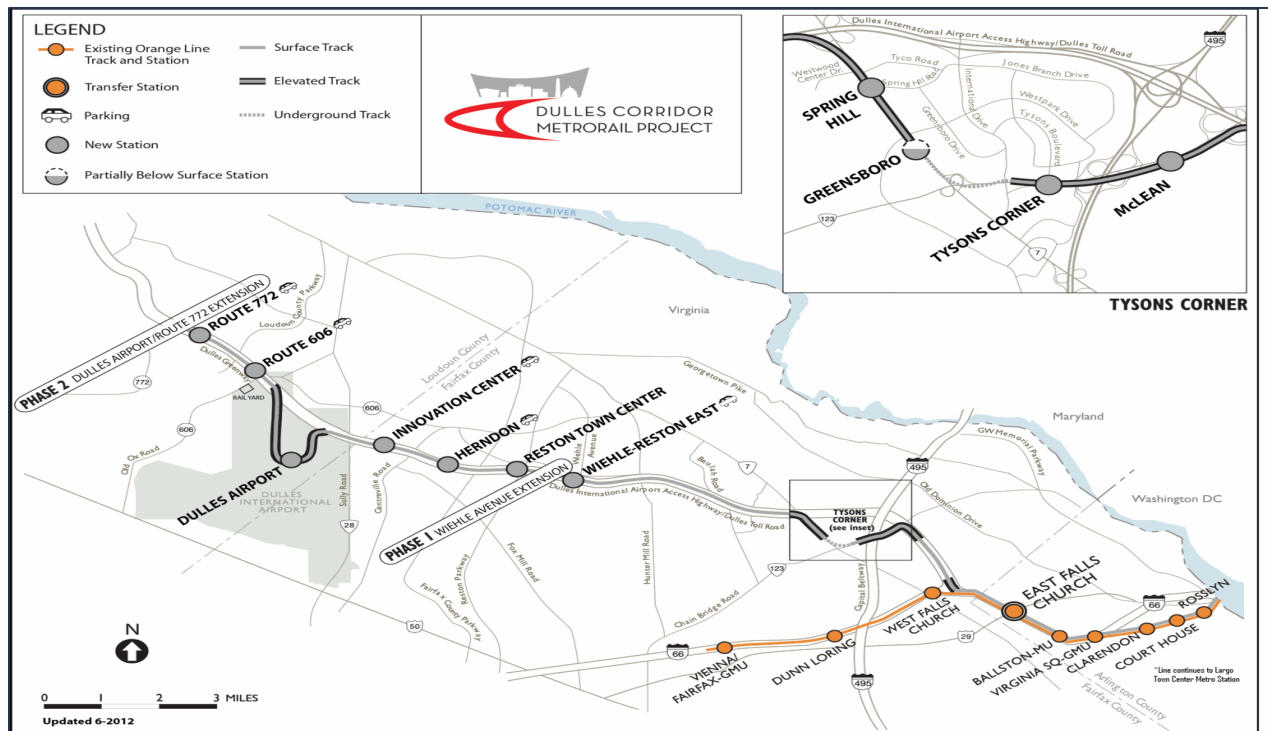
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## **SILVER LINE PHASE 2 EXPANSION**

Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA) completed Phase 1 of the Metrorail Silver Line in summer of 2014, providing new Metrorail service that connects downtown Washington with Tysons Corner and Reston. The completed Phase 1 stations are McLean, Tysons Corner, Greensboro, Spring Hill, and Wiehle-Reston East.

Phase 2 is currently under construction and will extend the Silver Line to Reston Town Center, Herndon, Washington Dulles International Airport, and Ashburn in Loudoun County. It is anticipated that Phase 2 will be operational in the first half of 2022, at which time Loudoun County will officially become a full member of the WMATA Compact. MWA is managing the funding and construction for this project, and DRPT, WMATA, Fairfax County, and Loudoun County are providing technical assistance during the construction of the 23.1-mile extension.

**Figure 34: WMATA Silver Line Expansion**



## SUSTAINABILITY AND ZERO EMISSION BUS FLEET

In June 2021 the WMATA Board unanimously approved a new Sustainability Vision and Guiding Principles and established new goals for transitioning the Metrobus fleet to zero emissions vehicles. The goals include: purchasing only lower emission and electric buses in its next bus procurement; transitioning to 100 percent zero emission bus purchases by 2030; and transitioning to a 100 percent zero emission bus fleet by 2045.

## 8000 SERIES RAILCARS

WMATA selected Hitachi Rail Washington LLC to build the Metrorail system's 8000-series railcars in the U.S. The contract, valued up to an estimated \$2.2 billion, includes a base order of 256 railcars, with options to build up to 800 in the fleet. The project is expected to create direct and indirect jobs in the region. The base order which includes state-of-the-art safety technology and mechanical design will replace Metro's aging 2000- and 3000-series railcars, which have been in service since the early 1980s, and were designed to be "backward compatible" with Metro's 1970s era design. The 8000-series railcars are funded using new dedicated revenue streams established by the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia. Hitachi is exploring sites in the region with plans to add an assembly plant for the 8000-series

railcars that will result in direct and indirect local jobs, and return Metro's investment to the local economy.

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## **IMPACT OF COVID-19**

As with other public transportation agencies, WMATA's finances were severely impacted by the pandemic. As ridership decreased, so did fare box revenues. In order to maintain safe and reliable service, WMATA has had to consider service modifications and other measures. Supporting WMATA as it continues to work through such issues to protect this vital service for our workforce and residents of the Capital region remains a top priority for the Commonwealth.

In December 2020, Congress allocated approximately \$830 million to the Washington, DC region in the \$900 billion federal Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA). WMATA retained approximately \$610 million and used the same Board-approved distribution as the 2020 CARES Act funding to distribute the remaining funds to regional transit partners. The agency used \$95.6 million of its CRRSAA funding to help close a \$176.5 million deficit for FY21. The funding allowed it to avoid layoffs, restore and save some Metrobus service, and avoid further planned cuts to Metrorail operating hours. The CRRSAA funding also reduced the projected FY22 operating deficit to \$209.8 million.

In addition, the region received \$1.4 billion from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA). WMATA retained approximately \$1 billion, and it is using \$193.4 million in ARPA funds in FY22 to maintain current service levels. Federal funding also will keep FY22 member operating subsidies flat at FY21 levels. While some individual Virginia jurisdictions will see a slight increase in their FY22 operating subsidies, the change to the overall Virginia subsidy amount is negative 0.2 percent.

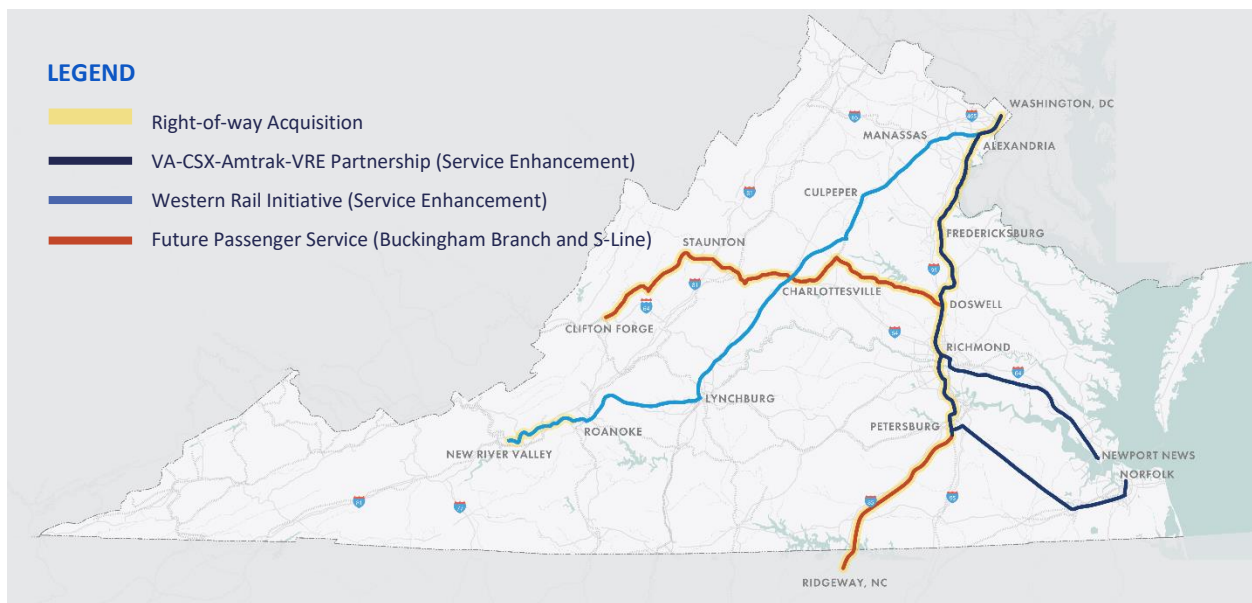
The agency is now projecting a balance of \$865 million in available federal COVID relief funding for FY23 and 24. If WMATA maintains planned service levels, it would be able to pass a budget with a three percent subsidy increase for FY23. For FY24, it is projecting a \$190-\$250 million shortfall when federal relief funding runs out.

## VII. TRANSFORMING RAIL IN VIRGINIA

Transforming Rail in Virginia is a \$4 billion rail initiative that will improve the reliability and frequency of passenger rail services throughout Virginia and beyond. It will make the Port of Virginia and Richmond Marine Terminal more competitive through improved freight rail transportation while addressing congestion on Virginia's interstates and growing Virginia's economy. Transforming Rail in Virginia components include a partnership with Norfolk Southern along the I-81 and Route 29 corridors and a partnership with CSX Transportation in the I-95 corridor. Virginia's partners include Amtrak, CSX, Norfolk Southern, and Virginia Railway Express.



Figure 35: Transforming Rail in Virginia



The Commonwealth of Virginia promotes multimodal solutions to moving people and goods efficiently through transportation corridors. Virginia's interstate capacity is continuing to decline and the demand for additional rail service continues to increase. Current conditions and increasing demand mean more throughput capacity is needed in Virginia's interstate corridors, and passenger rail provides the most cost-effective solution in the short and long term.

At the same time, passenger rail performance cannot improve, and services cannot grow, without expanding the existing infrastructure. Amtrak, Virginia Railway Express (VRE), and freight trains suffer delays repeatedly from train interference due to congestion on the railroad. The current Long Bridge over the Potomac River is one of the most significant rail bottlenecks along the entire East Coast of the United States. Long Bridge is currently at 98 percent capacity during the peak period.

Population in the Transforming Rail in Virginia corridor and adjacent urban regions continues to grow, increasing demand for reliable and safe travel options for passengers. In addition to overall population



growth, changing demographics in the corridor and adjacent urban regions are increasing the demand for passenger rail service. Population growth is forecast to be highest from Washington to Richmond to Hampton Roads and to disproportionately include young professionals and people over the age of 65.

Demand for freight movement through and within the corridor also is growing. The Port of Virginia is one of the fastest-growing ports on the East Coast. A large proportion of port cargo arrives or departs by rail. Ongoing expansion of Virginia's deep-water ports and intermodal facilities, and the planned construction of the new Craney Island Marine Terminal, further increases the need for efficient freight shipping. Infrastructure improvements are needed to both existing and growing future demand for freight rail service in the corridor to improve mobility for Virginians.

Transforming Rail in Virginia will provide a path to enhancing the Commonwealth's communities and increasing economic opportunities through strategic investments in rail. It will provide capacity by developing capital improvement projects and acquiring railroad tracks and right-of-way to provide more rail capacity. It also will provide better quality by expanding high-quality modern passenger rail service across the Commonwealth by making it more frequent, reliable, and convenient. Lastly, it will provide additional choice by moving people and goods efficiently through transportation corridors in Virginia while accommodating growing travel demand.

#### VIRGINIA-AMTRAK-CSX-VRE PARTNERSHIP



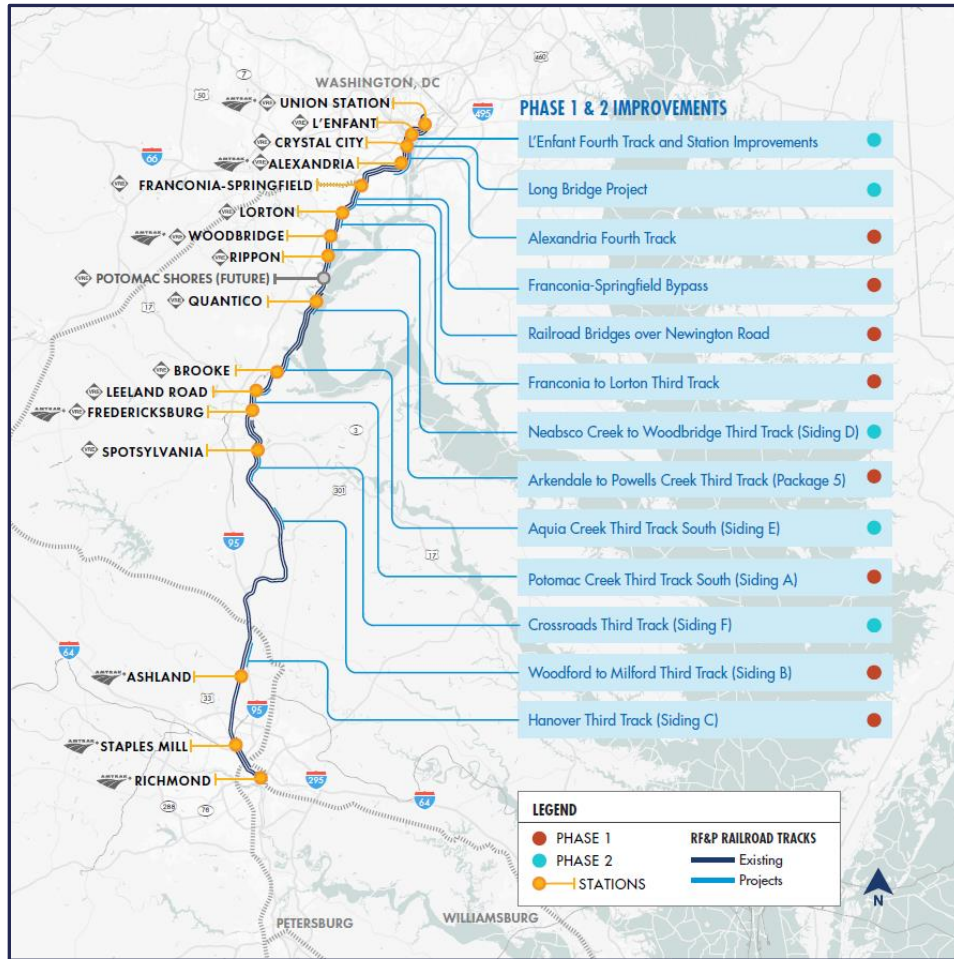
On December 19, 2019, Governor Northam, Secretary Valentine, CSX, Amtrak, and VRE announced a \$3.7 billion landmark deal that includes the purchase of over 350 miles of railroad right of way and 225 miles of track. The definitive agreements governing the partnership were signed March 30, 2021 at an event with United States Secretary of Transportation, Pete Buttigieg.

The Commonwealth will fund two-thirds of this project with state and local revenues. Amtrak is contributing approximately \$944 million over ten years for the project,

and VRE is contributing over \$200 million.

As part of this partnership, the Commonwealth is acquiring approximately half of the railroad right-of-way and existing rail infrastructure in the RF&P corridor. Additionally, Virginia will construct infrastructure projects, including 37 miles of new track and a New Long Bridge across the Potomac River between Washington and the new Long Bridge. This partnership also will develop a two-track passenger corridor from Washington to Petersburg with an exception for Ashland and downtown Richmond. Future phases of this partnership will advance the path to full separation of freight and passenger services between the two capital cities.

Figure 36: Virginia-Amtrak-CSX-VRE Partnership



### THE LONG BRIDGE PROJECT



The construction of a second two-track Long Bridge across the Potomac River in Washington will cost approximately \$1.9 billion and will unlock congestion along the East Coast. This 1.8-mile corridor includes a new two-track bridge over the river as well as a fourth track within the District to Union Station. Virginia will own the new bridge, and it will be used for passenger trains only. It is anticipated to be completed by 2030.

There is an existing bottleneck due to the current two-track Long Bridge connecting three tracks on each side of the Potomac River in the

District of Columbia and Virginia. Also, there are speed restrictions on the bridge. Pre-pandemic, the bridge was at 98 percent capacity during the peak hours; and over the course of the day, traffic is split at 70 percent passenger and 30 percent freight. This translates into approximately 34 Virginia Railway Express trains and 24 Amtrak trains daily. With no rail network redundancy, there is without question a need for a new, two-track bridge for the passenger corridor.

*DC2RVA*, which is the planning study for the Washington to Richmond segment of the Southeast High Speed Rail project, indicated there is no further capacity available for additional passenger trains in the Commonwealth beyond those currently funded in the Six-Year Improvement Program without a second Long Bridge and related improvements along the Interstate 95 rail corridor.

In addition to these benefits, a new Long Bridge will provide capacity for over 18,000 new freight and passenger train crossings annually. It is estimate that it will take up to one million trucks off the highway as well as five million vehicles. Lastly, there will be an increase in safety by reducing the number of crashes on the highways.

As noted in the above map, there are additional projects that comprise this component of the Transforming Rail in Virginia initiative.

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#### **L'ENFANT FOURTH TRACK AND STATION IMPROVEMENTS**

This project includes the planning, design, permitting, and construction for an expanded VRE L'Enfant station and an additional 4<sup>th</sup> mainline track between the Virginia (VA) and L'Enfant (LE) Interlockings in Washington. The expanded station will support simultaneous boarding of two full-length trains. The project must be coordinated with the L'Enfant train storage track -south (ms-5) and long bridge capacity improvements projects, and with other projects will provide for a four-track corridor for 8 miles, with two tracks dedicated to passenger rail.

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#### **ALEXANDRIA FOURTH TRACK**

The Alexandria Fourth Track Project will design and construct 6.0 miles of fourth track between the AF (Alexandria) and RO (Rosslyn) Interlockings. At the AF Interlocking three tracks from the VRE Fredericksburg Line and two tracks from the VRE Manassas line converge into three tracks, causing a bottleneck. The new track will be coordinated with the Crystal City Station and Alexandria Station Improvements performed by Virginia



Railway Express. This project received a \$45 million FASTLANE grant from United States Department of Transportation in 2016. Once completed, CSX will convey an existing track on the west to Virginia, giving two tracks on the west side to Virginia, and two tracks on the east side to CSX.

The construction of the Fourth Track Project will improve the efficiency and reliability of rail operations to support the planned growth of freight, passenger and commuter rail traffic in Northern Virginia and the southeastern states. The project establishes an initial four-track corridor for both freight and

passenger which, when integrated with the planned Long Bridge construction and fourth-track corridor through Washington creates the opportunity to separate freight and passenger rail service.

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### **FRANCONIA-SPRINGFIELD BYPASS**

The Franconia-Springfield Bypass project, just south of Franconia-Springfield Station, will allow passenger trains to seamlessly cross over freight traffic to serve stations on the west side of the railroad corridor when traveling north of Franconia, and on the east side of the rail corridor when traveling south of Franconia Station. Project construction involves a single track on the bypass bridge with accommodations for a future second track. This project will allow passenger trains to reduce conflict with freight trains when passenger trains cross the corridor to serve VRE stations on the west side (north of Franconia) and on the east side (south of Franconia).

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### **RAILROAD BRIDGES OVER NEWINGTON ROAD**

This initiative will construct two new two-track railroad bridges to accommodate the modified roadway configuration of Newington Road proposed in Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan. These four tracks over Newington Road are a down payment on the long-term plan to eventually construct a four-track corridor from Washington to Spotsylvania. Additionally, the project will construct 0.9 miles of third track in the area.

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### **FRANCONIA TO LORTON THIRD MAINLINE**

The Franconia to Lorton Third Mainline project is an approximately six-mile segment that will extend the existing third track between Alexandria and Franconia down to Lorton Interlocking. This segment involves new railroad bridges over Pohick Creek and Accotink Creek without impacts to existing bridge structures.

The Franconia to Lorton Third Mainline will alleviate a major bottleneck in the Commonwealth and will remove up to 26 conflicts per day between passenger and freight trains crossing tracks as they enter or exit the Long Bridge Corridor that leads from Franconia through Fairfax County, Alexandria, and Arlington to the District of Columbia. The project will add capacity and further improve the reliability of both freight and passenger rail.

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### **RICHMOND TO DC SIDINGS**



Sidings are the beginnings of what will eventually become a dedicated third track in future Phases III & IV from Alexandria to Spotsylvania. In Phase I, sidings are strategically located to allow freight and passenger trains to utilize the sidings and fluidly move traffic through the corridor between Washington, D.C. and Richmond.

These improvements will increase network fluidity and reduce delays due to passenger and freight train interference.

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## ARKENDALE TO POWELL’S CREEK THIRD TRACK CONSTRUCTION AND ISLAND PLATFORMS

Arkendale to Powell’s Creek is a third mainline track construction project in Stafford and Prince William Counties, which includes third track construction through the Quantico Station limits. Track construction runs 9.2 miles from CP Arkendale to CP North Possum Point, with design planned for a future third track to continue north through the proposed new Potomac Shores VRE station. This project is currently under construction. DRPT has contracted with CSX to construct all track work. The associated station improvements for a pedestrian overpass and island platform are funded under the Quantico Station project, which will be constructed by Virginia Railway Express.

The Arkendale to Powell’s Creek third track capacity will allow faster passenger trains to overtake and pass freight trains on the congested RF&P corridor, improving overall network fluidity between Washington and Richmond.

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## SUMMARY OF BENEFITS OF CSX PARTNERSHIP

This partnership will:

- Double Amtrak round-trip service between Washington and Richmond
- Expand VRE service along the 1-95 corridor with 15-minute intervals during peak periods and added late night/weekend service
- Increase Amtrak round-trip service to Newport News and Norfolk
- Lay the foundation to make the Southeast High-Speed Rail corridor possible through the acquisition of the out-of-state S-Line, which runs from Petersburg into North Carolina
- Preserve the existing freight corridor between Doswell and Clifton Forge for future east-west passenger service

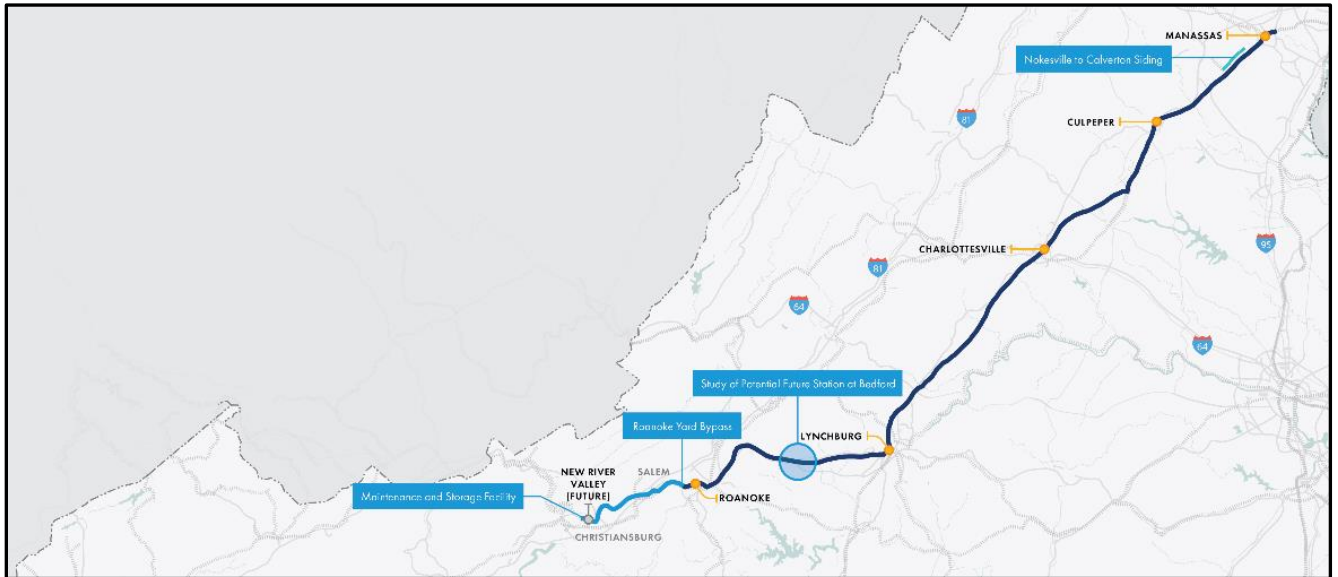
## VA-NORFOLK SOUTHERN PARTNERSHIP

On May 5, 2021, the Commonwealth announced a \$257 million agreement with Norfolk Southern to improve rail reliability and expand passenger service to Southwest Virginia. The agreement focuses on the rail corridor between the New River Valley and Alexandria and is memorialized in a binding term sheet that is subject to the Commonwealth securing funding and the future negotiation and execution of legal agreements required to implement the transaction.



Several funding streams are being used to finance this project. The 2021 General Assembly included \$83.5 million in its 2021 Transportation Funding Initiative for the program. This is in addition to \$100 million from the I-81 Corridor Commission and \$50 million in SMART SCALE funding.

**Figure 37: VA-Norfolk Southern Partnership**



As part of this partnership, the Commonwealth will acquire the 28.5-mile segment of the V-Line railroad right-of-way and infrastructure from Salem to Christiansburg. Virginia will construct capital improvement projects to accommodate passenger rail service, and it will develop a continuous 22-mile, two-track corridor from Manassas to Remington. Virginia will partner with localities to construct a new passenger rail station in the New River Valley.

This partnership will double Amtrak service from Roanoke to Washington in 2022 and extend that service to the New River Valley in 2025. It also will address bottlenecks to improve freight and passenger rail reliability, and DRPT will study the potential for a future station in Bedford subject to future funding availability.

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#### **NOKESVILLE TO CALVERTON SIDING**

Norfolk Southern will construct a 7-mile rail siding between Nokesville and Calverton. The new siding will create a continuous 22-mile, two track rail corridor between Manassas and Remington that improves the performance of passenger and freight rail operations.

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#### **TRACK IMPROVEMENTS BETWEEN SALEM AND CHRISTIANSBURG**

The Virginia Passenger Rail Authority and Norfolk Southern will upgrade tracks and train signals in the rail corridor between Salem and Christiansburg to support the extension of passenger rail service from Roanoke to Christiansburg.

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#### **BYPASS TRACK IN THE ROANOKE YARD**

Norfolk Southern will construct a bypass track through the Roanoke Yard so passenger trains can get through the Yard without interference from freight rail operations. The bypass track supports the extension of passenger rail service from Roanoke to Christiansburg.

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### **NEW PASSENGER STATION AND PLATFORM NEAR CHRISTIANSBURG**

The Virginia Passenger Rail Authority will construct a new passenger rail platform in the New River Valley near Christiansburg to support the extension of passenger rail service. The Commonwealth expects to partner with the New River Valley Passenger Rail Station Authority to fund the construction of a station building, parking, and access to the station. The New River Valley Passenger Rail Station Authority was established in 2021 by the Virginia General Assembly to assist the Commonwealth in creating and supporting passenger rail in the region.

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### **NEW MAINTENANCE AND STORAGE FACILITY**

The Virginia Passenger Rail Authority will construct a new passenger rail maintenance and storage facility in the corridor between Salem and Christiansburg.

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### **STUDY OF BEDFORD STATION**

The Virginia Passenger Rail Authority and Norfolk Southern are conducting a study to assess the rail infrastructure requirements that would be needed to support a future passenger rail station in Bedford. Construction of a potential station is subject to the findings of the study and future funding availability.

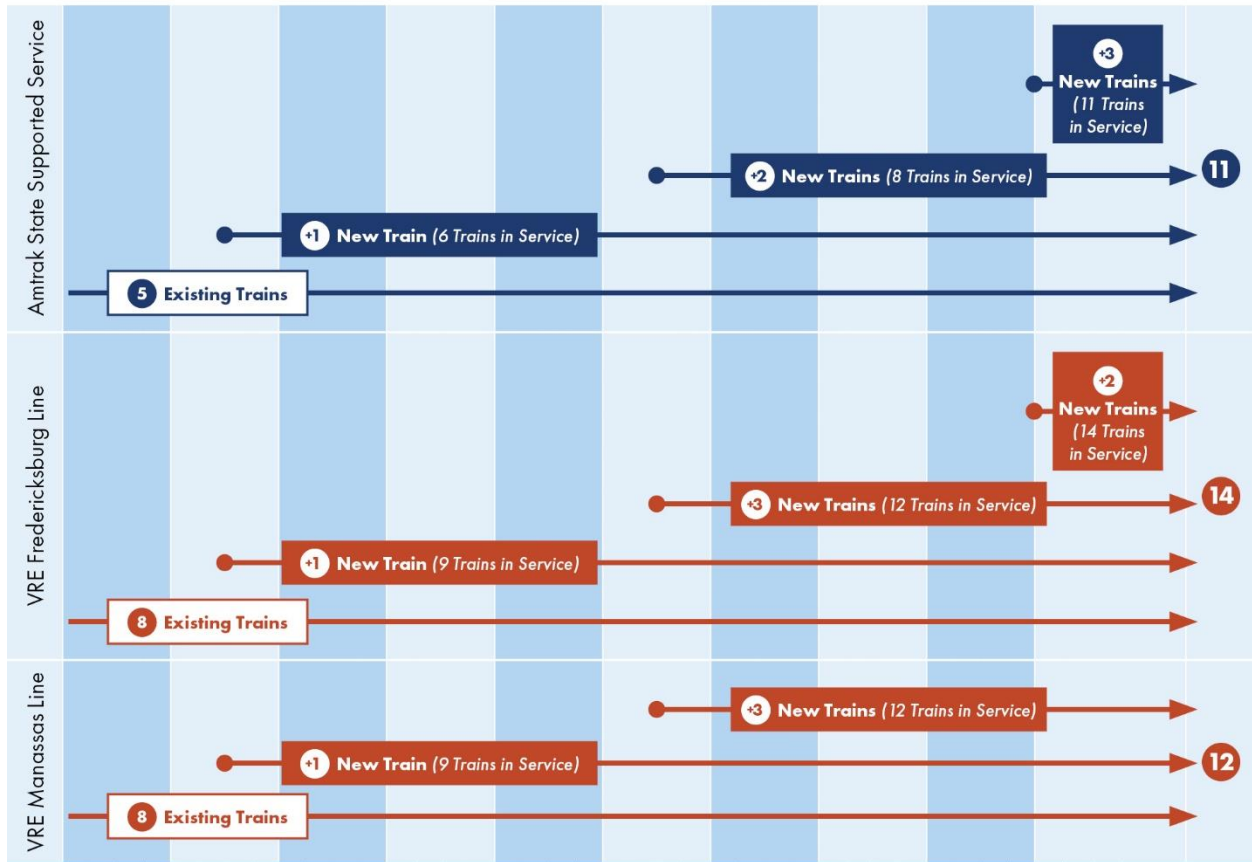
## SERVICE EXPANSION

Figure 38: Transforming Rail in Virginia Service Expansion

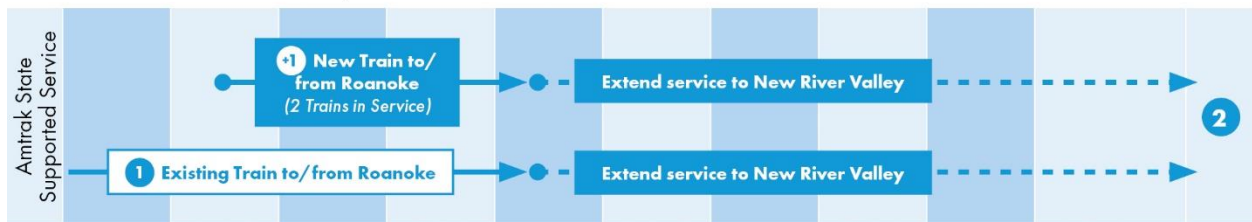
### Transforming Rail in Virginia: Passenger Rail Service Expansion

Planned Service Enhancements	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030 and Beyond	Total Trains
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#### VA-Amtrak-CSX-VRE Partnership



#### VA-Norfolk Southern Partnership





## VIII. IMPROVING COMMUTER AND PASSENGER RAIL SERVICES

In addition to the large Transforming Rail in Virginia initiative, DRPT and VPRA are financing additional projects benefiting commuter and passenger rail throughout the Commonwealth. The VPRA Board approved the following projects for funding at its May 2021 meeting.

### CENTRAL VIRGINIA

#### ETTRICK STATION IMPROVEMENTS

As part of the 2019 Station Needs Assessment conducted by the Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT), Ettrick Station was identified as an Amtrak station with the greatest need for state of good repair improvements. DRPT staff have worked with Chesterfield County and Amtrak to leverage local, state, and federal funding to address ADA deficiencies and state of good repair issues at Ettrick Station. VPRA is partnering with Chesterfield County specifically on parking lot state of good repair improvements: re-grading, re-striping, addressing storm water drainage issues, and lighting of parking lot at Ettrick station. Amtrak is working with DRPT and VPRA to assess ADA issues, including a platform rehabilitation project, and VPRA has funding in its budget to address ADA needs.

Virginia's investment in Ettrick Station leverages federal and local funds to address State of Good Repair deficiencies and Americans with Disability Act access at the station and access to trains serving Ettrick Station. This project will provide an improved customer experience as service at the station grows with the additional frequencies between Washington and Norfolk.

#### PASSENGER INFORMATION DISPLAY SYSTEM INSTALLATION

In order to improve the customer experience at Ashland and Richmond Main Street Stations – and pilot projects for similar improvements at other Virginia stations – the Department of Rail and Public Transportation initiated planning with Amtrak for installation of a Passenger Information Display Systems (PIDS) at these two stations to meet Americans with Disabilities Act requirements with audio and visual information regarding train schedules.

Ashland Station is a two-track station without an Amtrak attendant or adequate announcement system to announce which track the train is arriving on. Main Street Station in downtown Richmond is a one-track station, but also lacks an adequate announcement system to notify passengers of Amtrak trains arriving and departing.

### HAMPTON ROADS

#### NEWPORT NEWS STATION, PLATFORM, AND TRAIN SERVICE FACILITY

Newport News has designed a new Amtrak station, with plans for future multi-modal connectivity for the peninsula. Construction of the new facility has begun and will include a level boarding platform (the second in Virginia after Roanoke Station). The project will also construct storage for future Amtrak Service frequencies, remove the conflict with existing CSX coal yard facilities, and address current Amtrak station deficiencies. The site will also serve as an HRT Bus Transfer Facility.

The new station and associated improvements will provide storage for future Amtrak Service frequencies, remove the conflict with existing CSX coal yard facilities, and address current Amtrak station deficiencies.

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### **ST. JULIAN'S YARD PURCHASE**

St. Julian's Yard in Norfolk is the site on which Amtrak services its passenger trains that terminate and originate from Norfolk Station. The land and some rail assets are currently owned by Canonie Atlantic, a private company owned by the Accomack-Northampton Transportation District Commission. Purchase of Amtrak train service facility in Norfolk from Canonie Atlantic will secure the site for current and future Amtrak service to Norfolk. Purchase of this property by Virginia will secure a service facility for Norfolk Amtrak services, with enough room to accommodate the three daily round trips planned as part of the Transforming Rail in Virginia initiative.

## **NORTHERN VIRGINIA**

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### **ALEXANDRIA STATION PEDESTRIAN TUNNEL**

The project will provide an ADA-compliant, grade-separated pedestrian tunnel and elevator access between the two platforms at the VRE/Amtrak station in Alexandria and modify and extend the east platform at the station to accommodate eight-car trains and enable the platform to service two trains simultaneously, from a track on each side of the platform. The west platform adjacent to the station building will also be modified to raise its height relative to the top of rail as part of the project to achieve ADA compliance. Project funding sources include state SmartScale and Federal funds (through VDOT) to eliminate railroad grade crossings. Currently the project schedule is slightly ahead of the final year of funding allocation, which must be addressed with VRE's funding partners through either reprogramming of funds or short-term borrowing.

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### **BROAD RUN STATION & THIRD TRACK IMPROVEMENTS**

This project includes expansion of the Broad Run Maintenance and Storage Facility (MSF) and Station to support expanded Manassas Line service. Improvements include: expansion of the MSF site and construction of storage tracks for additional trains and equipment, construction of additional parking spaces to accommodate short-term (2030) demand, and platform modifications to provide access to expanded parking, and construction of about 2.75 miles of third track within the NSR right-of-way. The estimated cost also includes real estate acquisition to expand the station footprint and accommodate the third track.

The Broad Run Expansion Project provides expanded facilities to accommodate growth in passenger boardings, parking demand associated with future service, and equipment storage needs as identified in the VRE System Plan 2040. The project also provides a third main track along the existing Norfolk Southern Railway tracks to improve operational efficiency into the MSF and Station and increase rail capacity in the corridor.

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### **BROOKE/LEELAND ROAD/POTOMAC SHORES STATION IMPROVEMENTS**

The project includes design and construction funding for station and track improvements at multiple stations along the VRE Fredericksburg Line. Planned improvements include:

- BROOKE: platform extension to better accommodate up to 8-car train consists. All doors will be able to open onto the platform for more efficient boarding. Total estimated cost for this project is \$8.8M and completion is anticipated by 2030.
- LEELAND: platform extension to better accommodate up to 8-car train consists. All doors will be able to open onto the platform for more efficient boarding. Total estimated cost for this project is \$6.3M and completion is anticipated by 2026.
- POTOMAC SHORES: final design of a new station at the Potomac Shores master-planned community in Prince William County.

Improvements at Brooke and Leeland stations will improve operational efficiency and accommodate eight-car trainsets. The new Potomac Shores VRE station is part of an upcoming transit oriented development in Prince William County.

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### **CRYSTAL CITY PLATFORM**

This project includes the planning, design, permitting, and construction for an expanded and relocated station and platform for the VRE Crystal City Station and related track modifications in Arlington County. The project will construct an island platform to enable simultaneous boarding of two trains and accommodate full-length trains and the planned fourth track at the station. This project is related to and must be coordinated with the fourth-track project between AF and RO interlockings, part of the DC2RVA project, the planned CC2DCA pedestrian bridge connection to Ronald Reagan National Airport, and Long Bridge Capacity Improvements.

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### **MANASSAS PARK PARKING GARAGE AND BRIDGE**

This project will add a parking facility (approximately 560 spaces) at the Manassas Park station to increase station parking capacity for VRE riders to 1,100 spaces. The facility has the potential to be shared with other private or public uses in the vicinity.

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### **MANASSAS STATION PLATFORM EXTENSIONS**

This project includes the development, design, permitting and construction of an extension to the south side (railroad east) platform at the Manassas Station. The platform will be extended approximately 400 feet to the east (railroad north) and will include a pedestrian connection to the Prince William Street parking lot. Extension of the track will require relocation of an existing switch (Moore) on the Norfolk Southern main line.

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### **QUANTICO STATION IMPROVEMENTS**

The Quantico Station improvement project will replace the Track 3 side platform with a new island platform between the existing Track 3 and the new third track constructed as part of the Arkendale to Powell's Creek Third Track project. The Quantico Station improvements will also extend and improve the existing platform on Track 2, provide a grade-separated pedestrian crossing, and other safety improvements.

VRE is designing and constructing the station improvements and will coordinate efforts with the ongoing Arkendale to Powell's Creek third track project constructed by CSX. Both the Quantico Station improvements and the Arkendale to Powell's Creek Third track project were part of a grant from the Federal Railroad Administration, and include state Commonwealth Rail Fund and SmartScale funding.

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## **REAL TIME MULTIMODAL INFORMATION**

VRE has a system-wide program to implement automatic passenger counters in all rail cars and automatic parking counters at all VRE parking facilities. While train location information is currently provided on the internet and on screens at the stations, there are plans to provide real-time train arrival information in the future. Software upgrades will be required to provide these real-time data feeds that can then be integrated with VRE Mobile and other third party apps and websites, as well as on display screens at VRE stations and other locations along the I-66 corridor. Separate funding has been committed for implementing automatic passenger counters and automatic parking counters at existing VRE facilities.

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## **ROLLING ROAD PLATFORM EXTENSIONS**

The Rolling Road station currently has a platform which will accommodate a six -car train set for boarding and detraining. This project provides for a 250-foot platform extension to accommodate an eight-car train set. The project includes funds for equipment and cameras related to the extension.

## **SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA**

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### **BEDFORD AMTRAK THRUWAY INTERCITY BUS CONNECTOR**

The Virginia Passenger Rail Authority will sponsor an Amtrak Thruway intercity bus connecting riders to and from Bedford, VA with the Kemper Street Station in Lynchburg. The Bedford thruway bus service was initially set to begin in the summer of 2020. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the start of service has been postponed to a date to be determined. DRPT staff have been working with Amtrak and stakeholders in Bedford to establish a new start date. The Bedford Thruway Connector service offers residents of Greater Bedford a one-ticket direct connection to Virginia-sponsored Amtrak service via Kemper Street Station in Lynchburg.

## IX. MOBILIZING THE VIRGINIA PASSENGER RAIL AUTHORITY

The 2020 General Assembly established the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority (VPRA) as a political subdivision of the state. The VPRA promotes, sustains, and expands the availability of passenger and commuter rail service and increases ridership by connecting population centers in Virginia with service and increasing the availability of such service. Its goals are to increase passenger rail capacity and improve passenger rail services, ameliorate current and future traffic congestion, and promote industrial and economic development.



The VPRA has the following powers:

- Grant others the privilege to design, build, finance, operate, and/or maintain rail facilities
- Fix, alter, change, and collect rates for use of rail facilities
- Issue bonds and accept federal loans (debt may not be supported by tax-supported revenues)
- Use eminent domain for construction or efficient operation of rail facilities

The VPRA will own all rail assets and right-of-way, and it will possess sovereign immunity and manage other liabilities. However, it may not directly operate passenger, commuter, or freight service. Moving forward, rail responsibilities in the Commonwealth are split between DRPT and VPRA.

**Figure 39: DRPT and VPRA Rail Responsibilities**

	RAIL		TRANSIT	COMMUTER PROGRAMS
	FREIGHT	PASSENGER		
Funding Administration	DRPT	TO VPRA	DRPT	DRPT
Corridor Planning	DRPT	TO VPRA	DRPT	
Statewide Planning	DRPT		DRPT	DRPT
Programming / SYIP	DRPT	TO VPRA	DRPT	DRPT
Policy Setting	DRPT	TO VPRA	DRPT	
Design / Construction		NEW VPRA		
ROW / 3 <sup>rd</sup> Party		NEW VPRA		
Operations Oversight		NEW VPRA		
<b>SUPPORT FUNCTIONS NEW TO VPRA / BORROWED INITIALLY FROM DRPT</b>				
	Communications		Administration	
	Legal (AG)	Finance / Procurement	Human Resources	

## BOARD

The Governor appointed a 15-member Board with representation throughout the state to govern the Authority. The Board must meet at least quarterly.

On September 18, 2020, Governor Northam announced the following individuals to serve on the Board:

- Board Chairperson- Jennifer Mitchell, DRPT Director
- The Honorable Sharon Bulova of Fairfax County, Former Chairman, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors
- Deborah H. Butler of Norfolk, Retired Executive, Norfolk Southern Corporation



- Victor O. Cardwell of Salem, Principal, Woods Rogers PLC
- Patricia Doersch of Falls Church, Partner, Squire Patton Boggs
- The Honorable Jay Fisette of Arlington, Managing Principal, DMV Strategic Advisors, LLC
- Roderick "Rod" D. Hall of Woodbridge, Government Affairs Advisor, K&L Gates LLP
- Charles Moorman of Charlottesville, Retired Chairman and CEO, Norfolk Southern Corporation
- Cynthia Moses-Nedd of Prince William County, Chief of Staff, Office of Wildland Fire, United States Department of the Interior
- The Honorable Paul F. Nichols of Woodbridge, Principal, Nichols Zauzig
- Hossein Sadid of Richmond, CFO, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts
- Jim Spore of Virginia Beach, President and CEO, Reinvent Hampton Roads
- Mariia Zimmerman of Richmond, Principal, MZ Strategies, LLC
- Ex-Officio, Non-Voting Member- Rich Dalton, VRE CEO
- Ex-Officio, Non-Voting Member- Bruno Maestri, Vice President of Government Relations Amtrak

The Board held its first meeting in a virtual setting in October 2020 and met regularly throughout FY21.

## STAFF

In April 2021, the VPRA Board announced the hiring of its first executive director, DJ Stadtler. DJ Stadtler served as an Executive Vice President at Amtrak for the past 12 years and has extensive experience in the rail industry. He is a strategic senior executive with an exemplary record of growth, financial management, transformation, and operational excellence. Stadtler is a versatile leader trusted for taking on the complex challenges and negotiations in difficult business contexts as CFO, COO, and CAO that significantly improved financial positioning, operating performance, and organization capacity. He is a

skilled communicator with a track record of building effective relationships across a diverse portfolio of internal and external stakeholders.

Prior to Amtrak, Stadtler served at the Federal Railroad Administration where he managed formulation, justification, and execution of a \$1.5 billion budget; and oversaw accounting, procurement, and real estate.

Throughout FY21 and continuing into FY22, VPRA hired additional staff, including two members of its executive staff. VPRA hired DRPT's Chief of Rail Transportation, Michael McLaughlin, as its Chief Operating Officer and DRPT's Chief Financial Officer, Steve Pittard, to serve in the same position with the VPRA.

## X. CREATING THE TRANSIT RIDERSHIP INCENTIVE PROGRAM

The 2020 General Assembly established the Transit Ridership Incentive Program (TRIP) in *Va. Code §33.2-1526.3*. TRIP was created with two distinct goals: to improve the regional connectivity of urban areas with population in excess of 100,000 and to reduce barriers to transit use among low income communities.



In March 2020, the introduction of COVID-19 delayed program implementation by shifting the needs of transit providers and altering the role of transit throughout the Commonwealth. DRPT utilized this delay to conduct an expansive outreach process to better gauge the needs of transit providers and to appropriately refine TRIP policy materials.

### 2021 OUTREACH

Throughout Fall 2020 and Winter 2021, DRPT conducted a multifaceted outreach process to inform the program policy, evaluation, and guidance. This outreach process included working with transit partners and eligible grantees to create a program that most appropriately meets the needs of transit operators.

*In March 2020, the introduction of COVID-19 delayed program implementation by shifting the needs of transit providers and altering the role of transit throughout the Commonwealth. DRPT utilized this delay to conduct an expansive outreach process to better gauge the needs of transit providers and to appropriately refine TRIP policy materials.*

The first component of the outreach process was distributing a Request for Ideas (RFI). The RFI was coupled with a DRPT-hosted webinar on November 18, 2020 to provide a brief overview of TRIP’s goals and objectives and to discuss the role of the RFI. DRPT established that the goals of the RFI were to learn more about interest in TRIP and inquire about potential projects for funding. Twelve transit agencies throughout the Commonwealth submitted 23 project ideas.

DRPT reviewed these submissions and created two working groups with interested parties to engage in the development of the program. The working group participants were intentionally geographically diverse and from both rural and urban systems. The working groups were an opportunity for DRPT and its’ partners to discuss challenges and opportunities associated with TRIP. The table below details key tasks of the outreach process.

**Figure 40: Overview of TRIP Outreach**

Outreach Strategy	Purpose of Outreach	High Level Findings
<i>Request For Ideas (RFI)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify potential applicants and stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Confirmed statewide interest in both Regional Connectivity and Zero Fare funding</li> <li>Equal interest in both project types</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn about potential projects of interest</li> <li>• Refine key themes for project evaluation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial key themes for project evaluation: well-planned, collaborative, and quickly implementable</li> </ul>
<i>Zero Fare Working Group</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refine zero fare scoring criteria</li> <li>• Identify challenges in project implementation</li> <li>• Discuss application requirements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussed concerns surrounding the legitimacy of ridership as a scoring metric -- equity concerns</li> <li>• Refined the importance of applicant commitment- additional scoring points for letters of support and identified partnerships</li> <li>• A multiyear program with a funding step down would appropriately disburse state funds in a way that encourages increased local commitment.</li> </ul>
<i>Regional Connectivity Working Group</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refine regional connectivity scoring criteria</li> <li>• Identify challenges in project implementation</li> <li>• Discuss application requirements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revised the role of the MPO in the application process—additional points for letters of support</li> <li>• A multiyear program would promote longer term change and would allow for more time to properly measure the success of the project</li> </ul>

## 2021 TRANSPORTATION INITIATIVE LEGISLATION

After the completion of the initial outreach, it was clear that demand for zero fare and low income projects would far exceed anticipated funding. Throughout the evolution of COVID-19, transit providers halted fare collection to reduce human bottlenecks, limit interactions with riders and operators, and alleviate the financial stresses associated with transit use for essential workers in a global pandemic.

*Va. Code §33.2-1526.3* stated that a maximum of 25 percent of TRIP funding could be attributed to zero fare projects, requiring a minimum of 75 percent of the funds to be attributed to regional connectivity projects. Due to the increased emphasis on equity and accessibility, the 2021 General Assembly allocated \$10 million in 2021 Transportation Initiative Funding towards zero fare and low income TRIP projects in FY22. This additional funding will allow DRPT to fund more zero fare and low income projects during TRIP's initial year. It is important to note that this additional funding is only allocated for Fiscal Year 2022. Moving forward, there will be more funding allocated towards regional connectivity projects and less funding allocated towards zero fare and low income projects.

The table below summarizes the anticipated six-year total TRIP funding as shown in the FY22-27 Six-Year Improvement Program.

Figure 41: Six-Year TRIP Funding Overview

	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26	FY27	Total
<b>Regional Routes</b>	\$7.5	\$11.3	\$16.9	\$16.5	\$18.0	\$18.2	\$88.4
<b>Zero Fare/Low Income</b>	\$12.5	\$3.7	\$5.6	\$5.8	\$6.0	\$6.0	\$39.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$20.0</b>	<b>\$15.0</b>	<b>\$22.5</b>	<b>\$23.3</b>	<b>\$24.0</b>	<b>\$24.2</b>	<b>\$129M</b>

**PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD AND COMMONWEALTH TRANSPORTATION BOARD APPROVAL**

In spring 2021, after the conclusion of the initial outreach process, DRPT presented the draft policy materials to the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB). Following the presentation, DRPT published the draft materials for public comment. This public comment period allowed interested parties 45 days to review draft program materials and provide feedback. DRPT carefully considered each comment and a number of key changes to the program policy in consideration of the comments received. The following table outlines the most common and relevant comments for each program type.

Figure 42: Response to TRIP Outreach

Comment	DRPT Action
<i>Zero Fare and Low Income</i> <b>In some cases, ridership is not the most appropriate scoring metric to gauge the performance of equity programs. Often these types of programs do not yield a large ridership increase due to the fact that low income riders have little choice in mobility options regardless of fare collection</b>	The final scoring criteria and their weights are listed below: 1. Impact on ridership (30%) 2. Implications of equity and accessibility (30%) 3. Applicant commitment (30%) 4. Project readiness (10%)  Impact on ridership weight was decreased to have the same weight as two other vital criteria to supplement ridership’s potential misrepresentation.
<i>Regional Connectivity</i> <b>A route may serve regional needs and still fall within one jurisdiction. Routes that may not serve multiple localities but still serve a regional need by accessing large employers and other modes of transportation should still be considered a regionally significant project.</b>	Redefined “regionally significant”- while it is preferred for a route/project to cross jurisdictional boundaries, a project can still be deemed regionally significant if it meets a regional need without serving multiple localities (i.e accesses large regional employment centers, multimodal transportation, and large community centers)

**APPLICATION DETAILS**

After reviewing the feedback and considering all comments, DRPT sought and received CTB approval in July 2021. DRPT subsequently hosted an application webinar to review the policy and outline to process to apply for TRIP funding on July 28. The TRIP application period opened on August 2, 2021, and closed

on September 17, 2021. DRPT allowed applicants to provide supplemental documentation until October 1, 2021. In total, DRPT received 13 applications. Three applications were for regional connectivity projects totaling \$2.2 million in FY22. An additional ten applications were for zero fare programs totaling \$11.2 million in FY22.

DRPT anticipates presenting project funding recommendations to CTB in Fall 2021. After the recommended projects receive CTB approval, the project agreements will be executed and projects will begin implementation in early 2022.

DRPT has outlined three key themes for project evaluation. The first theme being collaborative, DRPT is looking to fund projects that demonstrate local and community support. This can be exhibited by letters of support from the appropriate jurisdictions, metropolitan planning organizations, and the identification of project partners. Examples of project partners may include nonprofits, large employers, and universities. Additionally, DRPT is searching for well-planned projects. Ideally, TRIP funded projects should already be identified as a need, and evaluated as such, prior to the TRIP application. The planning process should be completed before applying for TRIP funds. This preference allows for more thoughtful and deliberate applications. DRPT intends to fund projects that are already in a local or agency level planning document. Lastly, DRPT is interested in funding quickly implementable projects with relatively low startup costs.

Due to the reporting requirements established by the General Assembly and the desire to most appropriately use finite funds, it would be preferred for projects to be “shovel ready” prior to the application for TRIP funding. This would ensure the most appropriate use of funding and allow for more time for performance measures. For more information on the TRIP application and prioritization criteria, please refer to the [TRIP Application Guidelines](#).

## XI. REDUCING SINGLE OCCUPANT VEHICLE TRAVEL ON HIGHWAYS

### EXPRESS LANES IN NORTHERN VIRGINIA

Within the greater Northern Virginia Express Lanes network, there are three segments that currently, or will, provide funding for multimodal projects to further improve throughput in the corridors. Toll revenues from the I-66 Inside the Beltway HOT (High-Occupancy Toll) Lanes and the I-395 Express Lanes currently provide funding for multimodal projects that benefit the users of those corridors and that are selected for funding by the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC) through its Commuter Choice programs. When the I-66 Outside the Beltway Express Lanes become operational in late 2022, new commuter bus and rail services benefiting toll payers will be funded through an annual transit payment to the Commonwealth. These enhanced services will provide low-cost and reliable travel options to commuters, remove cars from congested roadways, and help to optimize the transportation network by moving more people.

Figure 43: Express Lanes in Northern Virginia



#### TRANSFORM 66-INSIDE THE BELTWAY



*Investing in Multimodal Solutions*

Since December 2017, I-66 between the I-495 Capital Beltway and Rosslyn converts to HOT lanes in the peak travel direction during peak periods.

VDOT manages the system and collects the tolls. When the HOT lanes are active, single occupant vehicles pay a variable toll, whereas vehicles with two or more occupants travel for free. In 2022, that number will increase to three or more occupants when the I-66 Outside the Beltway Express Lanes are complete. Toll prices are adjusted to manage demand for the lanes and keep traffic free flowing. When there is more traffic, prices are higher; when there is less traffic, prices are lower. The tolling period for eastbound travel is 5:30 - 9:30 a.m. on weekdays and 3:00 - 7:00 p.m. on weekdays for westbound travel.

NVTC administers the I-66 Commuter Choice program, which is a set of multi-modal programs funded with the toll revenues. Beginning in FY22, toll revenues from I-66 Inside the Beltway will be supplemented with \$5 million each year from the I-66 Outside the Beltway Annual Transit Payment to the Commonwealth. In 2017, NVTC allocated approximately \$9.8 million for ten transit and TDM projects. Those numbers increased in 2018 to approximately \$12.1 million for 15 projects. In 2019, six transit and TDM projects received roughly \$9.0 million in funding.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its negative impact on toll revenues, NVTC elected not to select projects and allocate funding for two years in June 2020 as previously scheduled. NVTC re-evaluated the timing of the approval of the 2020-2021 biannual program and approved a set of projects totaling \$4 million in fall 2020. The projects are:

- McLean Metro Station North Entrance (Fairfax County)
- Renewal of Bus Service from Gainesville to Pentagon/Navy Yard (OmniRide)
- Renewal of Bus Service from Haymarket to Rosslyn (OmniRide)
- City of Fairfax Bike Share Implementation (City of Fairfax)
- Lee Highway HOV and Bus-Only Lane in Rosslyn (Arlington County)
- Renewal of Purcellville Metro Connection Bus Service (Loudoun County)

NVTC also selected projects to receive funding in FY22, subject to availability of funding and public comment. The following additional projects totaling \$10.4 million will be presented to the CTB for approval in October 2021:

- TDM Strategy: I-66 Corridor Vanpool Parking Benefit (OmniRide)
- New Bus Service from Reston South to Crystal City (Fairfax County)
- New Park and Ride at Patrick Henry Library (Town of Vienna)
- TDM Strategy: Fare Buy Down on Bus Service from Reston North to Crystal City (Fairfax County)

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## TRANSFORM 66-OUTSIDE THE BELTWAY

The Commonwealth selected Express Mobility Partners in November 2016 to build new Express Lanes on I-66 Outside the Beltway, between the I-495 Capital Beltway and Gainesville, with the goal of increasing person throughput by highway and transit improvements in this congested corridor.



As part of the agreement, Express Mobility Providers provided an advance concession payment to the Commonwealth for use on projects that will benefit users of the corridor, including:

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*DRPT completed an update to the I-66 Transit/TDM Plan in February 2020. DRPT developed an updated program of transit/TDM services to be funded with the annual dedicated revenues that are available through the Transform 66-Outside the Beltway project concession agreement. The updated plan includes recommendation to fund additional VRE commuter rail service parallel to the corridor as well as coordination with NVTC's I-66 Commuter Choice program, which were not considered in previous planning efforts.*

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- VRE improvements to enhance commuter rail service on the Manassas Line
- Median widening to accommodate any future westward expansion of the WMATA Orange Line
- Construction of a new commuter parking structure at Fairfax Corner;
- Construction of a new western maintenance and bus storage facility for OmniRide
- Expansion of bus bays at the East Falls Church Metrorail station

Starting in FY22, Express Mobility Providers will provide annual transit payments to the Commonwealth over the next 50 years to support enhanced bus transit, transportation demand management, and commuter rail services in the corridor.

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## I-395 EXPRESS LANES



In late 2019, VDOT converted the existing eight-mile-long HOV facility on Interstate 395 (between I-95/495 and the Potomac River) into an Express Lanes facility, which Transurban operates. Vehicles with three or more occupants travel for free, and vehicles with fewer than three occupants

pay a variable toll based on congestion. The I-395 Express Lanes are reversible to allow traffic to flow in the peak direction. As part of its agreement with the Commonwealth, Transurban returns a portion of the toll revenues to Virginia as an annual transit payment to fund improvements beneficial to toll payers along the corridor.

Through an MOA with the Commonwealth, beginning in FY20, NVTC and PRTC, in consultation with DRPT, jointly developed a Commuter Choice Program on the I-395/I-95 corridor, a biannual program of multimodal improvements funded with the I-395 Annual Transit Payment that must be approved by the CTB. NVTC and PRTC are responsible for ensuring that the projects are completed and that they achieve the promised benefits and for reporting annually on the projects to the CTB. The inaugural I-395 Commuter Choice Program for FY20-21 received 17 applications totaling \$31 million with \$22 million available for funding. The CTB ultimately approved 10 projects for \$19 million.

For the FY22-23 program, NVTC recommended, and the CTB approved, the following 13 projects totaling \$21.9 million for approval:

- Renewal of Enhanced Bus Service from Dale City to Ballston (OmniRide)
- New Park and Ride Lot in Massaponax (Spotsylvania County)
- Renewal of Express Bus Service from Backlick Road North Park and Ride Lot to the Pentagon (Fairfax County)
- Renewal of Express Bus Service from Staffordboro to the Pentagon (OmniRide)
- Renewal of Express Bus Service from Staffordboro to Downtown DC (OmniRide)
- Enhanced Bus Service from Van Dorn Metro Station to the Pentagon (DASH – Alexandria)
- Renewal of Enhanced Bus Service from Quantico to Woodbridge VRE Station (OmniRide)
- Renewal of Enhanced Bus Service from Woodbridge to Franconia-Springfield Metro Station (OmniRide)
- New Bus Service from Route 208 Park and Ride Lot to Fredericksburg VRE Station (FRED Transit – Fredericksburg)
- Enhanced Bus Service from Mark Center to Potomac Yard (DASH – Alexandria)
- TDM Strategy – I-395/95 Corridor Vanpool Monthly Incentive (OmniRide)
- Enhanced Bus Service from Lorton to Franconia-Springfield Metro Station (Fairfax County)

- Expansion of Horner Road Park and Ride Lot (Prince William County)

Without question, using toll revenues to support transit has provided relief to some of the Commonwealth’s busiest corridors. However, it is important to note that these new and expansion projects will one day become state of good repair projects whose repair and/or replacement will need to be funded out of the Commonwealth Mass Transit Fund.

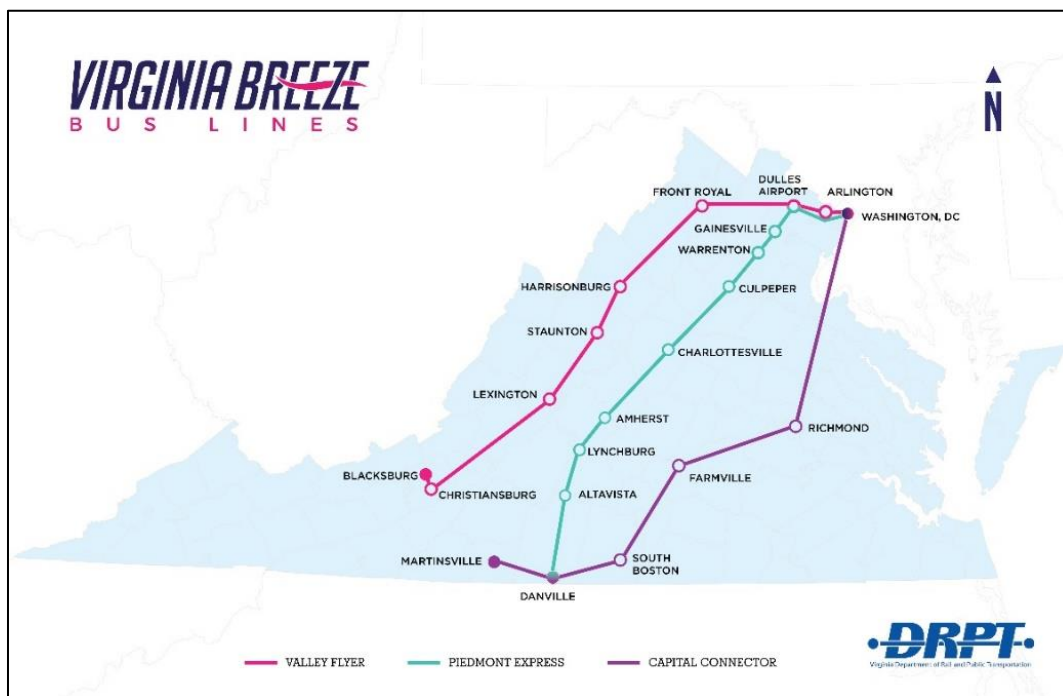
## VIRGINIA BREEZE INTERCITY BUS SERVICE

Intercity bus service provides limited service between two or more urban areas not in close proximity, and it operates on a regularly scheduled fixed-route service. It is available to the



general public and their luggage while providing meaningful connections to the national intercity bus network. The goal of intercity bus service is to connect underserved communities, such as households without vehicles, students, the elderly, and the disabled, to interregional bus, rail, and air travel. It also provides travel options in corridors where alternatives to the personal vehicle are limited or do not exist as well as supplement service or private providers.

Figure 44: Virginia Breeze FY21 Service



### THE VALLEY FLYER

The Virginia Breeze program launched on December 1, 2017, providing daily service between Blacksburg and Washington D.C., connecting a crucial transportation artery for the Commonwealth. This route has stops in Christiansburg, Lexington, Staunton, Harrisonburg, Front Royal, Dulles Airport, and Arlington. It

also provides connections to local transit service in Blacksburg, Staunton, Harrisonburg, and Arlington. In FY20, the Virginia Breeze program named this route “The Valley Flyer.”

The Valley Flyer surpassed expectations on every level from on-time performance, total ridership, and farebox recovery setting new records into the early months of 2020. In April 2020, service was suspended due to the COVID-19 public health emergency. The Valley Flyer resumed service on July 24, 2020, with new safety standards in place including a 50 percent seating capacity limit, increased daily sanitization of buses, and requirements for passengers and bus operators to wear masks at all times while onboard.

Ridership levels, although much lower than prior to the pandemic, continued to increase. This increase indicated a restored confidence in safety of traveling. Passenger usage increased over 48 percent from January to June 2021 compared to July to December 2020. The route’s on-time performance during FY 21 average 91 percent. The average farebox recovery during the fiscal year was 38.5 percent with the remainder of the service funded through FTA 5311 funds.

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### **PIEDMONT EXPRESS & CAPITAL CONNECTOR**

DRPT recognized the continued need for connecting other underserved communities and began a study in FY19 to determine the unmet intercity travel need by identifying potential routes for expansion. Once DRPT identified these rural communities, work began to determine optional placement of bus stops. Many factors were considered when selecting sites for stopping, including safety, timing, access, and parking. Shortly after, on August 7, 2020, both the Piedmont Express and the Capital Connector routes began service.

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*Continuing with its initiative of providing connecting service to underserved segments of the Commonwealth, DRPT plans to launch the Virginia Breeze Bus Line’s fourth route later this calendar year. The Highlands Rhythm will connect Bristol, Virginia to Union Station in Washington, D.C., with stops along the I-81 corridor in Wytheville, Christiansburg, Salem, Roanoke, Harrisonburg, Dulles Airport, and Arlington with daily northbound and southbound service.*

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The Piedmont Express is a solution for the underserved US 29 corridor connecting Danville to Washington, D.C. This route provides roundtrip service once daily with stops in Danville, Altavista, Lynchburg, Amherst, Charlottesville, Culpeper, Warrenton, Gainesville, Dulles Airport, and Union Station. The route’s ridership is steadily increasing. The Piedmont Express experienced a 73.6 percent jump in ridership during the third and fourth quarter of the fiscal year compared to the first and second quarter of the year. The route’s on-time performance during the fiscal year average 85.5 percent.

The Capital Connector reestablishes intercity bus service from Martinsville to Richmond. This route provides daily trips with stops in Martinsville, Danville, South Boston, Farmville, and Richmond. This route also provides express service from Richmond to Washington, D.C., stopping at Union Station. It also has experienced an increase of 26 percent in ridership during the second half of FY21 compared to the first half. The Capital Connector has continued to hit targets with ridership.



## TELEWORK AND TELEWORK!VA

Through the Telework!VA program, DRPT continued to assist Virginia's employers and employees to help make their telework programs successful and productive. Even though the COVID pandemic resulted in many employers having their office employees work from home, employers still needed assistance with teleworking. When employers had to implement a full-time telework arrangement very quickly, many employers did not have the time to conduct the proper training and instruction to staff and managers. For example, some employers did not have time to train managers on how to manage remote working employees, or train employees on how to work productively from home. Additionally, some employers did not have a formal telework policy.



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### ASSISTANCE TO EMPLOYERS

The Telework!VA program provided technical assistance to employers to address a variety of concerns. Technical assistance included the following:

- Telework Policy Assistance – 15 employers
- Position Eligibility Assessment – 13 employers
- Budget Development – 5 employers
- Office Space Allocation Review – 2 employers
- Return to Worksite Planning – 16 employers
- Teleworker Training – 8 employers
- Manager Training – 21 employers

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### OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

In addition to the technical assistance, 17 webinars and presentations were conducted with Chambers of Commerce and their members, planning organizations, and other agencies. The webinars and presentations focused on the following:

- Information on the free services Telework!VA provides
- Best practices for a productive telework program
- Telework!VA resources and tools for teleworkers and managers
- Answers to frequently asked questions employers have
- Tips on how teleworkers can be more productive
- Best ways to set up a home office or workspace
- How to manage remote workers

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### EMPLOYER FEEDBACK

To gain insight into the concerns and challenges employers and employees have with the full-time or frequent teleworking during the pandemic, DRPT reached out to employers.

The feedback revealed several common challenges. The top three challenges are:

1. Trying to unplug and avoid working all the time:
  - a. Unable to maintain healthy work and life balance when working from home

- b. Employers assume increased availability and/or access when working from home
2. Tackling Distractions:
  - a. Partner, children, pets, etc.
  - b. Noise in the home
3. Overwhelmed by change in transitioning to work from home
  - a. Increase in the number of meetings
4. Team Communication/Collaborations:
  - a. Isolation from co-workers / limited interaction
  - b. Staying motivated
  - c. Maintaining team communications and collaboration

In addition to obtaining feedback on the top challenges employers and employees are facing, DRPT also obtained testimonials from past and current employers assisted through Telework!VA who provide specific details and background about how Telework!VA services benefitted them. Employers reported that training, policy development and assistance with transitioning back to the office were the Telework!VA services that were most helpful.

Additional feedback indicates that in general, employers and employees were satisfied with teleworking arrangements and expect to continue teleworking at an increased level moving forward compared to before the pandemic. Many employers will institute a hybrid model for teleworking in the years to come.

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## **TELEWORK!VA RESOURCES**

DRPT also updated the Telework!VA resources to provide to employers and to make available through the teleworkva.org website. Updating resources and information is a continuous task as COVID continues to affect the work and office environment. The Telework!VA resources being updated include:

- A “how-to-guide” for the return to the worksite
- Implementing a hybrid work arrangement
- Creating an equitable telework policy
- Using virtual meeting technology for in office and at home participants
- Making telework part of an organization’s Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP)
- Tips for teleworkers
- Tips for managers
- Best practices for good communications between office and remote workers and managers
- Tips for an ergonomic and productive home office or workspace

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## **CONTINUING ASSISTANCE**

DRPT will continue to assist Virginia’s employers through the Telework!VA program. As employers navigate the challenges and effects of COVID-19 and its variants on their business operations, they will need assistance with their telework programs to ensure they are equitable, keep business operations going, and maintain work productivity.

## VANPOOL!VA

Each year, DRPT provides funding to local governments, transit agencies and other local agencies to form new vanpools and assist existing vanpools when needed. The Commonwealth's assistance with vanpooling can be considered a public-private partnership. Vanpools are owned and operated by private entities, and the drivers are commuter volunteers. The full cost of vanpool operations are paid for by the riders. Public funds are only used to help start a vanpool, to assist a vanpool when it loses riders, and to provide a monthly stipend to collect operating data from the private vanpool company.



The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) considers vanpools a transit mode if the vanpool service provided meets the definition of public transportation. If the vanpools meet the criteria data for public transportation vanpool service can be reported to the National Transit Database (NTD). This is significant because reporting vanpool data leads to additional FTA funds. The monthly stipends to vanpool mentioned in this report are what PRTC, HRT and GRTC provide to help vanpools and to receive the vanpool data from the vanpool providers. Prior to COVID-19 the reporting of vanpool data in the NTD brought in an additional \$6 million in FTA funding.

DRPT's vanpool assistance is provided through its statewide Vanpool!VA program. Through Vanpool!VA, vanpooling is encouraged as an option for long commutes where transit is not available. The Vanpool!VA website, <http://vanpoolva.org/>, serves as a one-stop information portal for vanpooling. The website serves the public, vanpool operators, commuter assistance program operators, and transit agencies. DRPT also developed and implemented a statewide promotional campaign to educate the public on the benefits of vanpooling and how vanpooling works. Commuter assistance programs can use the marketing and branding materials developed by DRPT for local, targeted marketing of vanpools.

## XII. GROWING TECHNOLOGY AND INTEGRATED MOBILITY

Across the country, public transit is rapidly transforming due to the emergence of innovative technologies and services. New alternative transportation services continue to evolve, providing travelers with greater convenience in requesting, tracking, and paying for trips. Data is used to analyze how people move in and around our communities; and the advancement of new technologies such as electric buses, driver assistance systems, and autonomous vehicles are giving transit agencies the ability to provide cleaner, safer, and more cost-efficient service and additional mobility options. The emergence of these services and technologies is drastically changing the mobility landscape.

### AUTONOMOUS VEHICLE PILOTS

As the shared mobility ecosystem expands, DRPT recognizes the value of supporting pilots and programs for autonomous transit vehicles and innovative technology deployments with a variety of partner agencies in Virginia. DRPT is actively engaged in pilot projects and will evaluate the performance of these pilots and programs to best identify resources and service models for implementation.

### RELAY CONNECTED AUTONOMOUS VEHICLE SHUTTLE PILOT PROJECT (FAIRFAX)

DRPT awarded Fairfax County a \$250,000 demonstration grant for testing driverless technology. This project developed proof of concept for a first/last mile connection from a WMATA metro station to a mixed-use development with potential to expand service into a medical campus in later phases. The selected vendor, EasyMile provided a self-driving autonomous shared-ride shuttle, titled Relay, between the Dunn Loring Metro station and the Mosaic District. The goal of the pilot is to learn about the various aspects of deploying autonomous vehicles as part of a large public transportation system. Major partners and stakeholders include Dominion Energy, VDOT, Fairfax County, and DRPT. The shuttle launched its service on October 22, 2020, and has been operating Monday through Thursday from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. The next phase of the project, tentatively titled Relay AMPLIFIED, is a part of a Department of Energy grant application under review.

### VOLKSWAGEN MITIGATION TRUST

In FY19, Governor Northam announced that the Commonwealth of Virginia would invest a portion of the \$93.6 million in Volkswagen Environmental Mitigation Trust (VW Trust) funding to replace older diesel transit buses with battery-powered electric transit buses through a new Clean Transportation Voucher Program. This program was implemented as part of MERIT, which prioritizes transit projects based on an objective scoring rubric. Following a comprehensive review and analysis of funding requests, DRPT has funded 39 buses:

- Alexandria DASH: 6
- Blacksburg Transit: 17
- Fairfax County: 4
- Hampton Roads Transit: 6
- Loudoun County: 3



- Valley Metro: 3

### **DRIVER ASSISTANCE SYSTEMS (DAS) PILOT**

Initiated in December 2017, DRPT executed a statewide procurement contract with Rosco Collision Avoidance Inc. to secure a pedestrian collision avoidance system that could be retrofitted to existing transit vehicles and provide operators real-time alerts on pedestrians and bicyclists in the transit vehicle's forward facing blind spots. These systems include a heads-up display that provides varying scales of audio and visual alerts to assist the operator in improving safety and operations of the vehicle. Data collected by the systems provide various reports such as hotspots for pedestrians or incidents with transit vehicles. DRPT also established a demonstration pilot for 50 transit vehicles throughout the Commonwealth to test and evaluate the effectiveness of the Mobileye Shield+ system in a variety of geographic service areas and fleet sizes. Eight transit agencies are participating in the demonstration project with testing and evaluation currently underway in partnership with the Virginia Transportation Research Council. The final report for the project is scheduled to be completed in Fall 2021.

### **REGIONAL MULTI-MODAL MOBILITY PROGRAM (RM3P)**

Titled the Northern Virginia Regional Multi-Modal Mobility Program (RM3P) initiative, this collaborative program aims to improve safety, mobility, and reliability for travelers in Northern Virginia. The program was jointly launched by the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA), the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), and DRPT and builds on prior studies involving multi-modal corridor planning on the East-West Corridor, with I-66 as its anchor, and on the North-South Corridor, with I-95/395 at its center. RM3P will implement key foundational technologies intended to optimize performance of the existing transportation infrastructure, enhance travel-time reliability for regional commuters, and support on-demand, multi-modal trip options/choices for travelers. Five program elements comprise the program – Data-Exchange Platform, AI-Based Decision Support System, Commuter Parking Information System, Multi-Modal Analytical Planner, and Dynamic Incentivization. The program has expanded its geographic scope to now include the Metropolitan Fredericksburg area and major milestones include the development of the Data-Exchange Platform is underway with the Regional Integrated Transportation Information System (RITIS) and the solicitation package for the Commuter Parking Information System.<sup>29</sup>

### **ITTF PROJECTS**

DRPT utilized its allocation of the Innovation and Technology Transportation Fund (ITTF) to support a program of projects in FY21, testing new technologies and innovation concepts such as real-time prediction for bus vehicles, microtransit pilots, and DRPT's Commute!VA Commuter Ridematching and Incentive Program. These funds were also used to provide match for our FTA grants that are mentioned below.

### **INTEGRATED MOBILITY INNOVATION (IMI) AND MOBILITY FOR ALL (M4A) GRANTS**

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) awarded DRPT two grants totaling \$239,000 in the spring 2020. The grants are designed to improve access to public transportation through the use of technology. Both

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<sup>29</sup> More information on the program may be found at its website: [www.rm3pvirginia.org](http://www.rm3pvirginia.org).

grants are part of a limited number of competitive, discretionary funding opportunities across the United States.

## INTEGRATED MOBILITY AND INNOVATION (IMI)

DRPT collaborated with Bay Transit, Mountain Empire Older Citizens, and Via Transportation on the Virginia Rural Microtransit Deployment Initiative, an 18-month long demonstration project that is testing the feasibility of microtransit and a service delivery model for rural on-demand transit service.

Microtransit technology allows customers to book trips in real time via a smart phone app or call in number. The technology then routes an available vehicle to pick up and drop off the customer at their desired destination. The technology allows efficient real time routing, trip sharing, mobile payment, and flexible scheduling within a defined service zone.



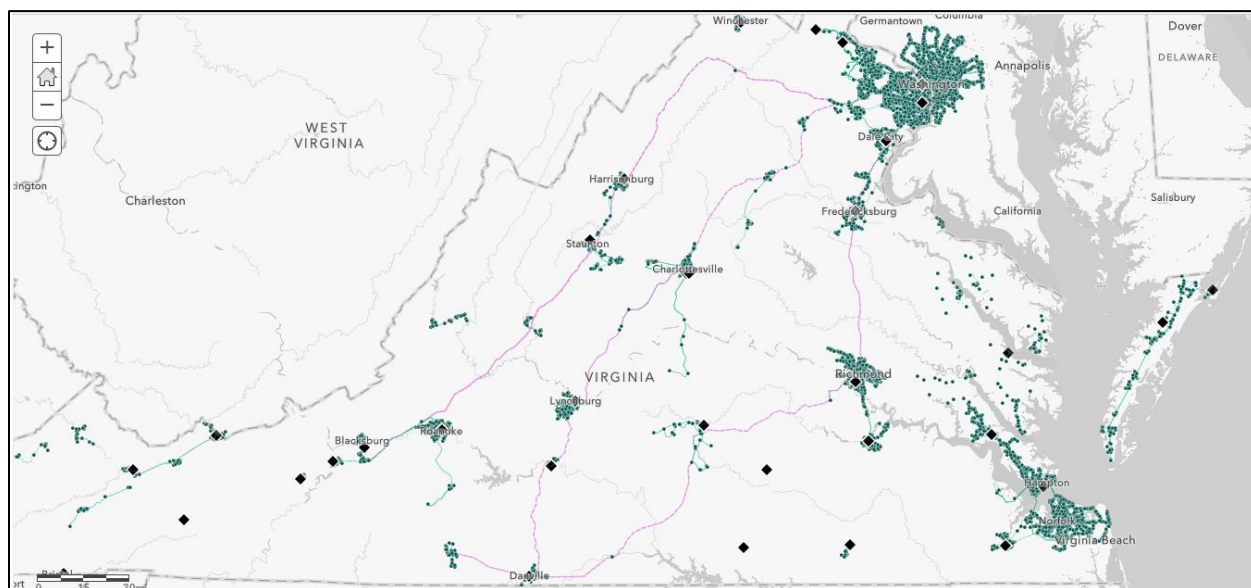
A promotional graphic for Bay Transit Express. It features a dark blue background with white and light blue text. At the top left, it says "Launching June 28". The main text reads "Introducing Bay Transit Express: \$2 rides around the Gloucester Courthouse area." To the right, a circular badge says "Your first 10 trips are FREE! (Valid through August 31, 2021)". Below the text is an illustration of a person carrying boxes next to a white van with "BAY TRANSIT EXPRESS" on its side. At the bottom left, there is a QR code and instructions to download the app or call 804-693-6977. The website "baytransit.org/express" is at the bottom left, and "Powered by VIA" is at the bottom right.

The Bay Transit Express and METGO demonstration projects went live on June 28, 2021, and will run for a total of 18 months as demonstration projects. Funding for the project is being provided by an FTA discretionary grant through the Mobility Innovation Program, with Virginia's Innovation and Technology Transportation Fun (ITTF) providing matching funds for the microtransit services.

## MOBILITY FOR ALL (M4A) GRANTS

The Mobility for All (M4A) grant is a \$79,000 award to develop a new statewide *TransportationNavigator* website. DRPT is collaborating with *VirginiaNavigator*, a Chesterfield County-based non-profit that provides free, statewide resource information associated with aging, disabilities, post-military life, and overall well-being. The online resource will be available to all Virginians as a tool to view at a glance which transportation options are available in their area. As part of this initiative, DRPT has launched the first comprehensive [General Transit Feed Specification \(GTFS\) clearinghouse](#) and a [comprehensive map of transit routes](#) and stops within the Commonwealth. Making this data available has the potential to make it easier for citizens to find transit travel options via platforms such as Google Maps and transit-focused smart phone apps.

**Figure 45: Transit Routes and Stops in Virginia**




### MICROTRANSIT FEASIBILITY STUDIES

Transit agencies throughout the Commonwealth are beginning to explore microtransit solutions to address a range of unmet needs including customer experience, underperforming fixed routes, and dynamic demand response service. In an effort to support the research and implementation of microtransit, DRPT has provided funding through our Technical Assistance grant program and statewide planning funds for microtransit feasibility studies with Greater Lynchburg Transit Company (GLTC) and Harrisonburg Department of Public Transportation (HDPT). These studies will look at the existing service network to identify areas of need and potential microtransit models for future implementation. As more studies are conducted, the recommendations and best practices for ideal corridors or service areas and microtransit models will be aggregated as a resource for grant recipients and partners to use in consideration of microtransit implementation.

### USING TECHNOLOGY TO CHANGE TRAVEL BEHAVIOR


## HOW IT WORKS

**Sign Up**




Select your local commuter assistance program below and sign up for your free account.

**Find a Ride**



Find your best commute with a carpool, vanpool, bus, train or bike.

**Get Rewards**



Earn points for logging your greener trips, which can be redeemed for rewards! Get discounts at retailers, restaurants, attractions and more!

Changing someone’s travel behavior is not easy. Once a routine or habit is formed, it is difficult to change. However, in order to mitigate congestion and increase person throughput on Virginia’s roads, more people need to shift from single occupant vehicle (SOV) drivers to transit, vanpool, and carpool. DRPT and its partner agencies are doing things to change SOVs into users of transit, vanpool, and carpool. The first step is to provide information to the public on their travel options. Without the knowledge of what options exist, little or no change will occur. Even with the knowledge of travel options, some are hesitant to try something new. For this reason, DRPT offers an incentive or reward to encourage, at a minimum, a trial of a different travel mode.

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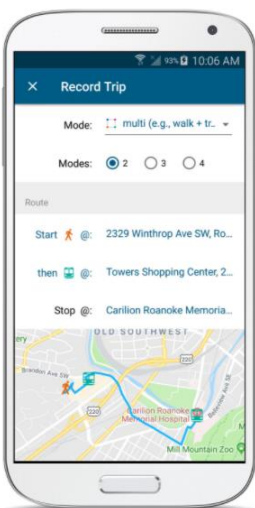
*Commute!VA technology provides rewards for using transit, vanpool, carpool, bicycle, walk or telework. Users enter their trips and earn points that can be redeemed for discounts and free items from various retailers, restaurants, entertainment venues, attractions, and more. Rewards can be redeemed electronically via email or mobile coupons.*

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Technology is an efficient and cost effective way to deliver by information and an incentive/reward. Through the technology provided by the Commute!VA program, DRPT and its partners deliver information about all travel modes available. This information is specific to the services available to the individual traveler based on their origin and destination. The Commute!VA system automatically tailors the ridematching search to the users area and preferences. Through the Commute!VA and partner agency’s websites and mobile apps, users can customize

their ridematching search to include the following:

- Trip origin and destination, including park-and-ride locations
- Trip date and time of day
- Reoccurring trip (e.g. commute to work or school)
- One-time trip (e.g. concert, amusement park, or other event)
- Matching carpool rides with anyone or just those at the work location
- Travel mode preference (i.e. transit, vanpool, carpool, bicycle, and walk)
- Locations of park-and-ride lots, bike share stations, EV charging stations, and car share vehicles



With Commute!VA’s technology, users can view their personal dashboard, which shows the money they saved, miles not driven, emissions prevented, calories burned, points earned, rewards redeemed, and fuel saved.

Not all areas of Virginia are covered by a local or regional commuter assistance program (CAP), but Commute!VA provides service everywhere in Virginia. Anyone living or working anywhere in Virginia has access to the technology that will help them make an informed travel choice. The following CAPs have partnered with DRPT to be part of the Commute!VA system.

- George Washington Regional Commission (GWRideConnect)
- Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission (Middle Peninsula Rideshare)
- Northern Neck Planning District Commission (Northern Neck Commuter Services)
- Greater Richmond Transit Company (GRTC) (RideFinders)

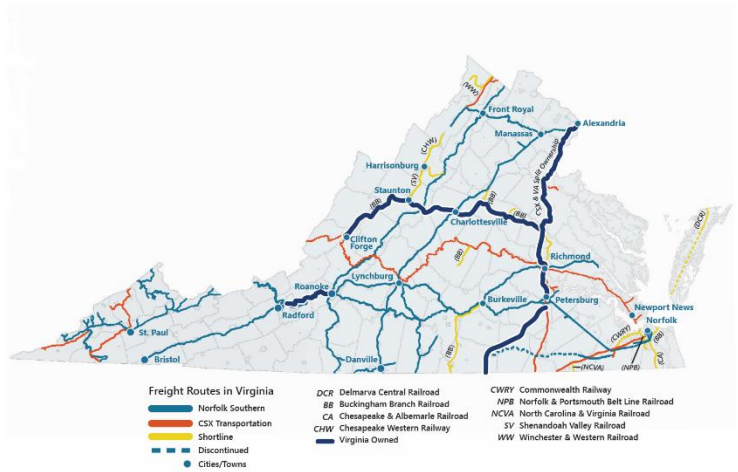


- Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission and the Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission (RideShare)
- Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission, New River Valley Regional Commission, Central Virginia Planning District Commission, and West Piedmont Planning District Commission (RIDE Solutions)
- Hampton Roads Transit (TRAFFIX)

### XIII. STRENGTHENING VIRGINIA’S FREIGHT RAIL NETWORK

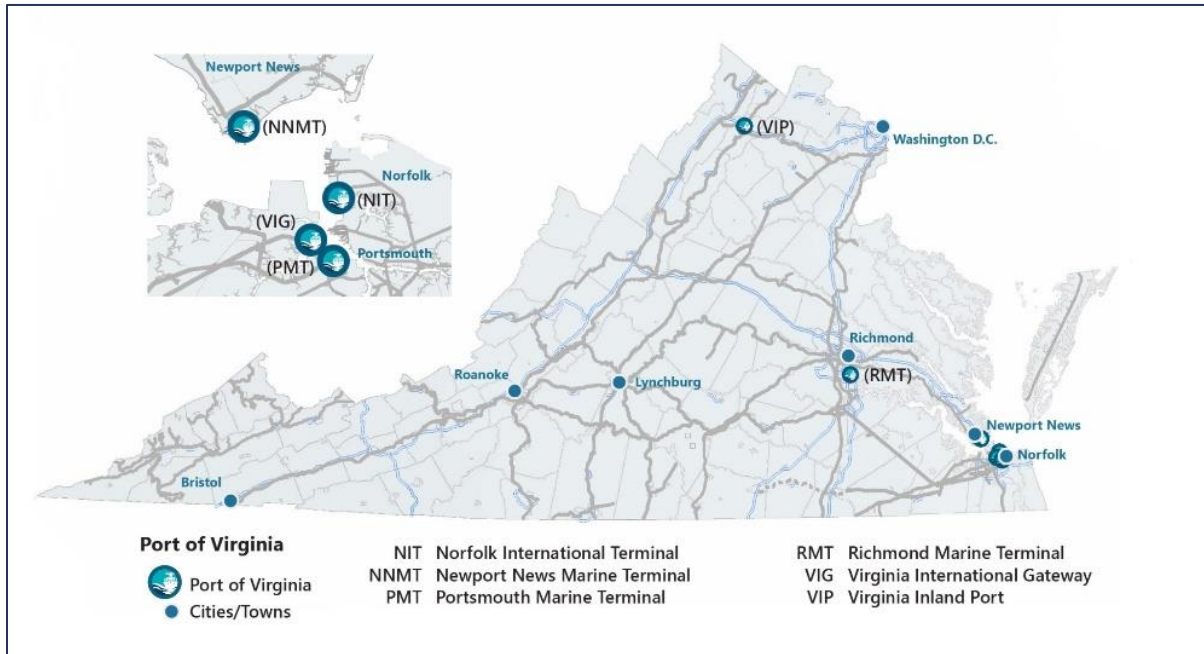
Virginia’s rail system includes approximately 3,000 miles of rail lines operated by 11 freight railroads – two Class I railroads and nine shortline railroads. Class I railroads are defined as those railroads that have an annual carrier operating revenue of more than \$250 million (1991 dollars). While there are seven Class I railroads operating in the United States and Canada, CSX and Norfolk Southern are the only Class I providers in the Commonwealth.

Additionally, several shortline railroads operate in Virginia. The next several sections highlight some of DRPT’s key activities in FY21 to strengthen the freight rail network in the Commonwealth.



### MOVING GOODS FROM THE PORT OF VIRGINIA

Figure 46: Port of Virginia Facilities throughout the Commonwealth



The Rail Enhancement Program invested significant funding to improve rail throughput to the various ports operated by the Virginia Port Authority. Within the FY21 SYIP, the REF program committed approximately \$45 million, with nearly \$20 million in matching funds.

These commitments expand rail terminal capacity at Norfolk International Terminal and the Virginia Inland Port, as well as multiple capacity improvements to the rail lines serving these ports and the Virginia International Gateway.

## WORKING WITH NORFOLK SOUTHERN

The Rail Enhancement program saw the completion of several investments in the Norfolk Southern network, including speed improvements along the passenger line serving Lynchburg, Charlottesville, and Alexandria; and multiple bridge clearance and upgrade projects that serve as strategic economic development investments to better serve Virginia business with rail service and connectivity.



In total, the Rail Enhancement program committed approximately \$8.5 million- with nearly \$4 million in matching funds- to complete multiple projects across the Norfolk Southern network in FY21.

## WORKING WITH CSX

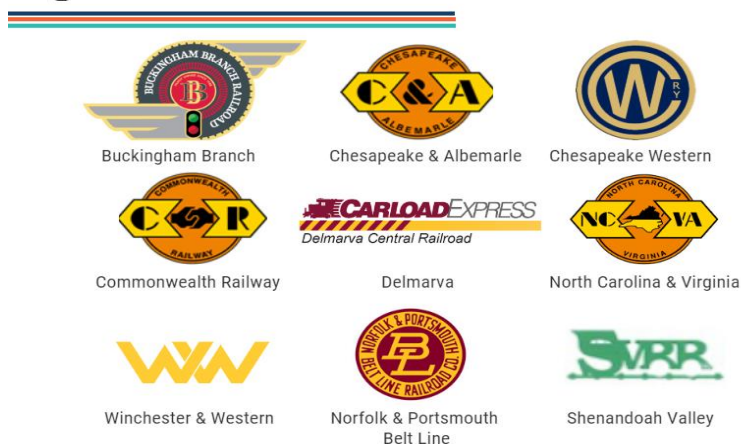
The Commonwealth has had a long-term working relationship with Class I railroad, CSX. In December 2019, Governor Northam announced a \$3.7 billion agreement with CSX that will have significant benefits for Virginia.



By providing for a pathway for the separation of freight and passenger rail in the future along the I-95 corridor, this program of projects not only will improve passenger rail service but also will strengthen the freight rail network by eliminating conflict between freight and passenger rail services.

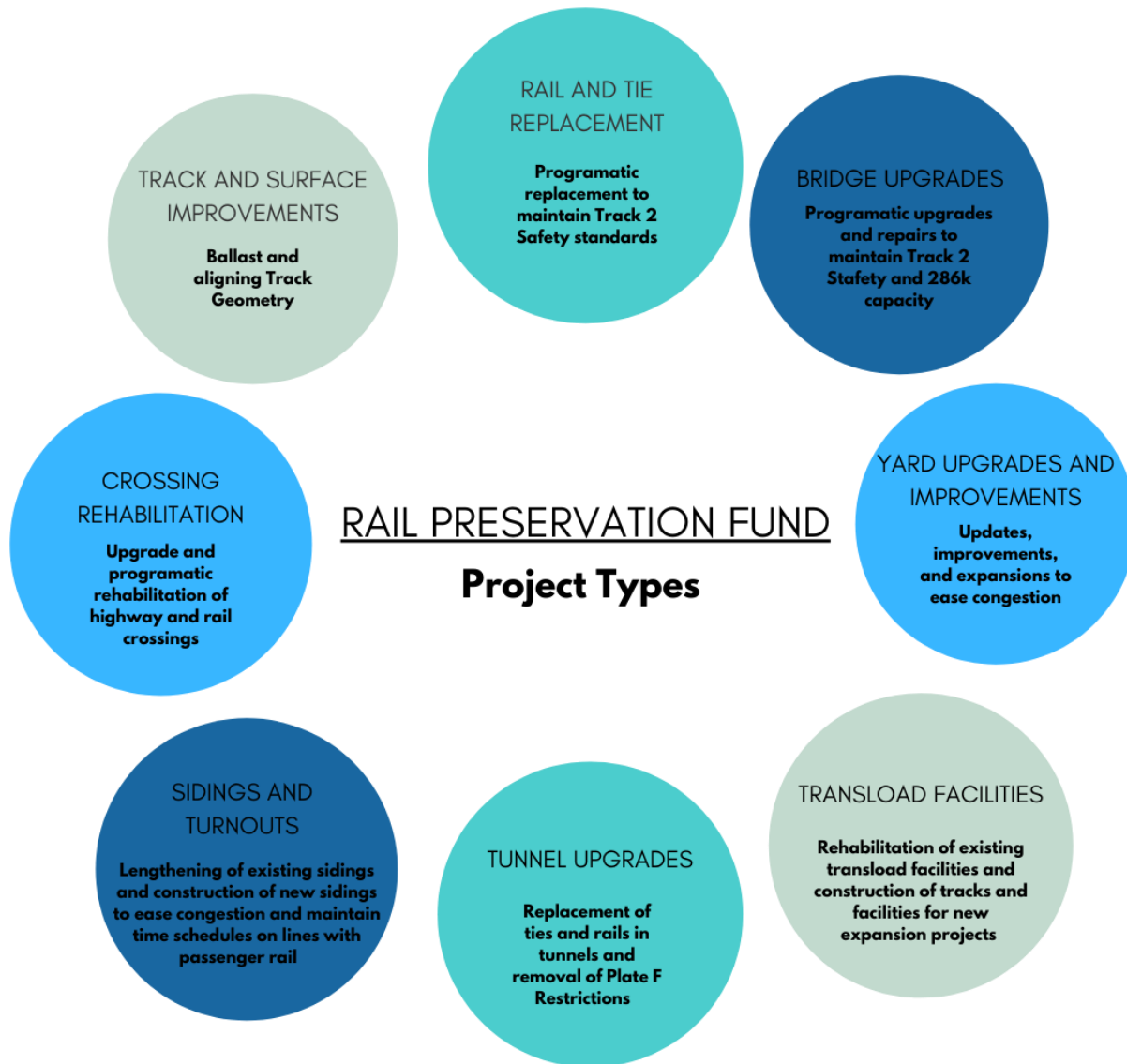
## IMPROVING THE SHORTLINE NETWORK

### Virginia Shortline Railroads:



The Rail Preservation prioritization process focuses on program goals, state initiatives, cost effectiveness, and applicant priority when determining allocations. In FY21, DRPT awarded six new projects adding an additional \$11.3 million to the FY21-26 SYIP.

Figure 47: Rail Preservation Fund Project Types



### USING THE RAIL INDUSTRIAL ACCESS FUND TO MOVE FREIGHT

Through the Rail Industrial Access Fund, DRPT works with the Virginia Economic Development Partnership and the local economic development departments to award funding to industrial sites for economic development purposes and to ensure that companies are aware of the RIA program as a potential incentive to locate or expand operations. In FY21, DRPT awarded funding for three projects.

#### ARREFF TERMINALS, INC. PHASE 2

On October 20, 2020, the CTB awarded \$310,000 in RIA funds for this project. ARREFF Terminals, Inc. is an agricultural product transloading and bagging facility located in Norfolk. This facility will serve the

Port of Virginia, Norfolk International Terminals. ARREFF Phase 2 committed to approximately 300 additional rail carloads per year. AAREFF invested \$3 million in capital, which includes a new rail spur with connection to shortline railroad Norfolk, and Portsmouth Belt Line. The facility will generate four new jobs.

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**EASTERN ENGINEERED WOOD PRODUCTS, INC.**

On November 24, 2020, the CTB awarded \$385,000 in RIA funds for this project. Eastern Engineered Wood Products, Inc. (EEWP) is a wholesale distributor and technical services provider of engineered wood products (joists, trusses, beams, etc.) in the northeast and Mid-Atlantic and is located in Charlotte County. This project is part of EEWP's expansion of their engineered wood products wholesale next-day distribution to the residential and light commercial construction industry. EEWP committed to approximately 101 rail carloads per year. The company invested \$6.5 million in capital, which includes construction of a new rail spur with connection to Buckingham Branch Railroad. The facility will generate seven new jobs.

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**TUCKER TIMBER PRODUCTS, INC.**

On March 17, 2021, the CTB awarded \$422,678 in RIA funds for this project. Tucker Timber produces railroad cross ties as well as flooring lumber and pallet cants and is located in the Town of Keyville (Charlotte County). The facility committed to approximately 260 rail carloads per year to divert inbound and outbound truck traffic from secondary roads and highways. Tucker Timber has invested approximately \$603,825 in capital, which includes a new rail spur with connection to the Buckingham Branch Railroad mainline. The business will generate two new jobs with this project and retain 40 jobs.

## XIV. ENHANCING HUMAN SERVICE TRANSPORTATION

In FY21, DRPT awarded the following human service transportation support:

- 68 accessible vehicles (\$4,060,000; 80% federal and 20% local)
- \$2.25 million in operating and mobility management support for 14 human service transportation programs across the state (\$2,250,682)
- \$204,980 in senior transportation grants for nine agencies across the state

Healthy Generations Area Agency on Aging received several grants from DRPT in FY21 totaling \$607,248: a capital grant for five accessible vehicles (\$325,000), a mobility management grant for \$87,384, an operating grant for \$180,824, and a senior transportation grant for \$14,040. The agency operates a robust transportation program, including transportation counseling, referral and information services, trip coordination, and public transit travel training. Door-to-door service is provided to seniors and individuals with disabilities who live in the Fredericksburg region for medical services, grocery shopping, and trips to the food bank.

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, Healthy Generations continued to provide these services, and modified transportation services to transport one individual at a time for social distancing purposes. Further, the agency's transportation staff were able to assist with delivering frozen meals and boxes of food to homebound seniors, and rallied support from local restaurants to meet food needs. Healthy Generations rose to meet the pandemic's challenges by moving some services, like travel training, online. Through a virtual strategy utilizing Facebook, the agency's travel trainer provided guidance online to support individuals still using public transit and help prepare others to utilize public transit after the pandemic. The Section 5310 programs operated by Healthy Generations Area Agency on Aging went above and beyond to ensure they were providing their communities with essential transportation for vulnerable populations and deliveries of food and goods despite the pandemic.



## XV. PROVIDING OVERSIGHT OF PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SAFETY

### RAIL STATE SAFETY OVERSIGHT<sup>30</sup>

DRPT is the designated Rail State Safety Oversight Agency (SSOA) for the Commonwealth of Virginia. In this role, DRPT oversees the Hampton Roads Transit (HRT) Tide light rail system in Norfolk. The state safety oversight agency's mission is the continuous verification that HRT is carrying out its documented programs to ensure the safety of its passengers and employees.

The Transit Rail Safety and Emergency Management Administrator oversees DRPT's oversight program with support from contracted consultant staff who are experts in fields such as train signaling, civil engineering, and rail operations. The budget for the state safety oversight program is funded by Federal Transit Administration (FTA) dedicated formula grants that are matched with DRPT administrative funds.

In its oversight role, DRPT conducts audits and inspections (both announced and unannounced) of the Tide system; reviews and adopts accident, incident, and hazard investigations; and tracks and verifies HRT's progress in correcting safety and security gaps on its light rail system. However, due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, all on-site safety and security oversight activities were suspended or conducted remotely starting in March 2020.

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#### 2020 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

##### Approved Documents:

- DRPT formally approved HRT's Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) on July 20, 2020

##### Triennial Audits (virtual audits):

- March – HRT's light rail signals, traction power, track, and structures maintenance programs
- September – HRT Safety Department's implementation of the PTASP

##### Inspections (Inspection suspended after March):

- Operator rule compliance, grade crossing checks, and riding observations
- HRT's Track Access and permit allocation program

##### Accident notification and investigations (all investigations and reports adopted by DRPT):

- Five collisions were with private occupancy vehicles (POV)
  - Three: Result of operating rule violations and/or human factors
  - Two: Fault of the driver in the POV
- One collision was with a cyclist that resulted in serious injury
  - Result of illegal actions by the cyclist
- Five collisions were with objects
  - Four: Result of operating rule violations and/or human factors

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<sup>30</sup> For additional information about DRPT's State Safety Oversight Program, please visit <http://www.drpt.virginia.gov/about/state-safety-oversight/>.

- One: Result of a POV colliding with a Tide asset on the right-of-way

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## **FEDERAL REGULATORY COMPLIANCE**

In response to the COVID-19 global pandemic and transit agencies response, the FTA issued a Notice of Enforcement Discretion for the implementation of The Public Transportation Safety Certification Training Program Final Rule, 49 CFR 672, which sets minimum training and certification requirements for transit safety professionals. Additionally, FTA issued a Notice of Enforcement Discretion for the implementation of the Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) Final Rule, 49 CFR 673, which requires applicable transit agencies to create an agency safety plan that incorporates Safety Management Systems to increase safety. DRPT formally approved HRT's PTASP on July 20, 2020.

## **STATEWIDE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION AGENCY SAFETY PLAN**

Public Transportation Agency Safety Plans (PTASPs) are required for operators of public transportation systems that receive Federal funds under FTA's Urbanized Area Formula Grants. Agencies subject to PTASP must develop and maintain safety plans that include the processes and procedures to implement Safety Management Systems (SMS) along with a set of safety-related performance targets. The Planning requirements divide agencies into two tiers based on their fleet size and operational characteristics.

Tier I agencies are large urban agencies with greater than 101 vehicles in peak revenue service or those that operate fixed guideway service. These agencies must develop and maintain their own agency specific PTASPs. In the Commonwealth, Greater Richmond Transit Company, Hampton Roads Transit, and Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission have developed their own Tier I PTASPs. Hampton Road Transit's PTASP includes additional components and is reviewed by DRPT annually as part of DRPT's role as the State Safety Oversight Agency for the Tide light rail system.

Tier II agencies are small urban agencies who operate fewer than 100 vehicles in peak revenue service and do not operate any fixed guideway service. In the Commonwealth, all agencies meeting the Tier II definition opted to participate in the DRPT sponsored statewide group PTASP Plan. This plan was completed and approved by the 15 participating agencies in July of 2020.<sup>31</sup> DRPT was able to complete the plan in advance of the original deadline of July 20, 2020 established by FTA. In 2021, DRPT assisted Tier II plan participants in complying with the PTASP plan annual review requirements. DRPT provided Tier II transit agencies with timelines, reminders, and template review guidance. All Tier II agencies completed their reviews prior to the July 20, 2021 deadline for self-certification established by FTA. While DRPT was responsible for developing the initial Tier II Statewide PTASP implementation and plan maintenance falls to each transit agency. Transit agencies must annually certify compliance with the PTASP requirements via FTA's Certification and Assurances process. DRPT continues to sport the Tier II agencies in this process through its oversight role.

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<sup>31</sup> The 15 agencies meeting the Tier II criteria area BRITE, Bristol Transit, Charlottesville Area Transit, Fredericksburg Regional Transit, Greater Lynchburg Transit Company, Greater Roanoke Transit Company, City of Harrisonburg Department of Public Transportation, JAUNT, District Three/Mountain Lynx Transit, Petersburg Area Transit, Radford Transit, Suffolk Transit, Williamsburg Area Transit Authority, and Winchester Transit.



## XVI. PROMOTING RAIL, TDM, AND TRANSIT

Before the public uses transit, vanpool, carpool or passenger rail, they first have to know those services exist, how to use them, and the benefits of using them. Not only does the public need to know about their travel options, but they also need to be convinced to make a behavior change from their current single occupant vehicle travel mode to the bus, vanpool, carpool or rail transit. This type of behavior change does not happen easily and requires frequent marketing and promotion of travel options and the benefits of those options.

Using the funding provided through DRPT, the operators of transit and commuter assistance programs inform the public, and promote their services and travel options throughout the year. In addition, these transportation agencies partner with DRPT on statewide marketing campaigns. DRPT's marketing campaigns raise awareness of travel options and encourage more people to use transit, carpool, vanpool and rail. DRPT's statewide marketing campaigns are described below.

### COMMUTING SAFELY AND CONFIDENTLY IN A COVID-19 PANDEMIC

DRPT developed *Commuting Safely and Confidently: Tips for Businesses and Commutes in the COVID-19 Environment* in response to the health safety concerns of using transit, vanpool, and carpool during the pandemic.<sup>32</sup> The comprehensive document provides tips and guidance for commuters and employers on how to get to and from work safely and efficiently and includes the latest CDC guidance on traveling safely. Sections of the document include tips on how to stay safe from COVID when carpooling, vanpooling, and riding bus or other public transportation modes.

The document also includes links to many of Virginia's transit agency websites showing what they are doing to clean and disinfect vehicles and keep operators and the public safe. Also included in the document are links to CDC guidance for bus operators, federal mask mandates for public transportation, Virginia's Emergency Temporary Standard Infectious Disease Prevention, and other information to help the public travel safely. DRPT announced this document is available to the public on DRPT's website, and many of Virginia's commuter assistance programs use the document as a resource and provide the information to commuters in their region.

### TRANSIT APPRECIATION MONTH

For more than a decade, DRPT conducted a statewide Try Transit Week campaign and contest in September. The campaign promoted transit, and the public could enter a contest to win free transit for a year, two Amtrak tickets, and local transit passes. Due to the unprecedented pandemic in 2020, DRPT chose to cancel the weeklong Try Transit Week promotion. With so many Virginians working from home, concerns with the health safety of riders and transit operator, and the elimination of fares on many services, the Try Transit Week promotion and prize contest was not the right thing to do. However, many essential workers continued to ride transit, and transit was and is a lifeline for many Virginians without travel options that need to visit their doctor or go to the grocery store. Therefore, to recognize transit's importance in keeping Virginia moving during the pandemic and to honor the frontline transit workers, DRPT implemented Transit Appreciation Month, a month-long marketing campaign held in October 2020.

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<sup>32</sup> [Commuting Safety and Confidently: Tips for Businesses and Commutes in the COVID-19 Environment](#)

Transit Appreciation Month highlighted the actions that transit agencies across Virginia were taking to keep passengers safe during the pandemic and recognize the transit agencies and staff for keeping the Commonwealth moving during this difficult time. DRPT developed marketing advertisements for print media, digital ads for online marketing, ads for the outside of buses, and social media messages and posts. All of these materials were included in a marketing toolkit for transit agencies and commuter assistance program operators. DRPT promote Transit Appreciation Month statewide through its transitva.org website, DRPT’s social media channel, and advertisements in fourteen print publications, eight online news websites, nearly 700 radio spots and sponsorships, and display ads across Google’s network of websites and apps, as well as targeted Facebook ads.

### TRANSIT OPERATOR APPRECIATION DAY

DRPT celebrated our frontline transportation heroes with Transit Operator Appreciation Day on March 18, 2021. Drivers and operators who have gone above and beyond the call of duty over the past year were recognized for their sacrifice to keep transit moving throughout the pandemic. Agencies across the Commonwealth nominated their “go to” operators to be recognized in a tribute video that was shared and viewed by nearly 2,000 people.



### CELEBRATE TRANSPORTATION DAY



The 2021 Celebrate Transportation Day highlighted both the shared-use trails that play a vital role in the Commonwealth's multimodal transportation system and the statewide anti-litter campaign, Virginia is for Lovers, Not Litter. On May 27, DRPT joined VDOT for a "Trail Mix" event in the Richmond District. Participants walked, ran, and cycled on a local shared-use trail around Great Shiplock Park and then assisted with a litter pick-up along the Canal Walk. Celebrate Transportation Day was established by legislation passed during the 2018 session of the Virginia General Assembly. It designates the Thursday before Memorial Day for the observance.

### TELEWORK AND TELEWORK!VA

Since 2001, when DRPT launched the Telework!VA program, DRPT has been encouraging employers to allow their employees to work from home one or more days a week as a means to mitigate traffic congestion. For the past ten years, during the first week in March, DRPT conducted Telework Week, an annual promotion of the employer and employee benefits of telework and encouraged employers without a telework program to pilot one during the week. The COVID pandemic resulted in many employers sending their office workers home to work from home. The resulting unprecedented level of telework rendered Telework Week obsolete.

However, employers and their employees still needed assistance to ensure telework was working for their company and employees were still productive. In addition, many businesses had to rush into a full-

time telework arrangement without a formal telework policy. There was no longer a need to promote telework and its benefits, but there was a need to help businesses and their employees with telework policy, the use of new virtual meeting and communications technologies, and how to set up an at home workspace or office.

Seeing the need to help business navigate the new telework environment, DRPT quickly pivoted the marketing to concentrate on the free services employers can receive through the Telework!VA program. DRPT's marketing efforts for Telework!VA shifted to direct outreach to businesses and employers with an updated digital telework brochure and development of new guidance and documents on the telework website. This year many employers relied on our free consultant services and resources available on the telework website to modify and solidify their "emergency" telework programs brought about by the ongoing global pandemic into thriving, formalized programs to carry them into the future. DRPT also created a Telework!VA brand guide for our partner agencies. The guide included the new Telework!VA logo and guidelines on promoting the services of DRPT's Telework!VA program. DRPT reviewed and created advertisements for several partner agencies that reflected the new telework environment and business needs.

### **BICYCLE TRAVEL AND BIKE!VA**

Three years ago, DRPT began promoting Bike to Work Week annually in May. Promotions of Bike to Work Week and Bike Month in May take place throughout the country. With many of these national promotions taking place and that riding a bicycle remains a safe and healthy way to travel during the COVID pandemic, DRPT promoted Bike to Work Week on May 17-21, 2021. DRPT also expanded its Bike to Work Week promotion to include Bike Month promotional messages on the agency Facebook page. The statewide campaign promoted bicycling to work and encouraged Virginians to utilize biking as an environmentally sustainable alternative to driving.

The Bike to Work Week campaign included four ads placed on Facebook and targeted Google banners. DRPT created a new Bike!VA logo and updated the bikeva.org website. The website includes an events calendar, which promotes local events throughout the state, and a marketing toolkit, which can be used by commuter assistance programs and co-branded with their logo. DRPT is in the process of redesigning the Bike!VA website to make it a one-stop resource for all things related to bicycling in Virginia and promote bicycling as a travel mode for all purposes, not just for commuting to work. The website update will be ready for the next May Bike Month and Bike to Work Week promotion.

### **AMTRAK VIRGINIA**



In FY21, DRPT faced unique challenges as we began moving toward recovery from a tumultuous year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. With ridership down and travel low, DRPT focused its efforts on generating awareness of both the services and the benefits Amtrak VA provides to Virginians.

Throughout the year, DRPT aligned with Virginians' comfort levels surrounding travel, reminding them that Amtrak VA was there when they were ready. As travel began to increase in the latter part of the

year, DRPT adjusted outreach to be more travel focused, promoting the discounts Amtrak VA provides exclusively to Virginians, such as the Student Fare and the Virginia Anytime Fare.

Amtrak VA began to recover faster than other Amtrak routes nationwide, a testament to the positive and prosperous impact Rail in Virginia has brought to the Commonwealth. With the exciting announcement of the Transforming Rail initiative and implementation of the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority, the importance of rail in Virginia continues to be elevated. Amtrak VA has proven to be a consistent, safe, and reliable method of travel before and during the pandemic. It will continue to offer excellent service for Virginians in the years to come.

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## MARKETING & OUTREACH

*Recovery Campaign + Holiday Extension (September 2020 – December 2020):* The recovery plan was centered on the pent-up demand for getting away following the months at home in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The campaign was extended during holiday travel time in November –January.



*Cell Phone Law Awareness Campaign (March 2021 – April 2021):* With the implementation of a new state law in January 2021 that bans drivers from holding their cell phone while driving a motor vehicle, DRPT sought to raise awareness of this law and to showcase this as another benefit of taking the train. Additionally, a toolkit was provided to various transit partners within DRPT's network. The toolkit included a template for social media outreach with sample posts and inspiration for content ideas. Timing was focused on April, as it is Distracted Driving Awareness Month.

*Recovery 2.0 + Summer Extension (May 2021 – August 2021):* The summer extension aimed at Leisure Travelers (people visiting family members they haven't been able to see due to COVID, senior travelers who have received the vaccine, younger travelers who may be riding on Amtrak for the first time etc.) Goal: Build back up confidence in taking the train as a safe and reliable travel option in Virginia.

*Northern Virginia Magazine, "Best of NOVA" Article and print ad (June/July 2021):* A native ad was placed in Northern Virginia Magazine's Best of NOVA issue with an audience of over 44,000 for print and 230,000 for online viewership, focused on the benefits of rail and the Transforming Rail in Virginia initiative.

*VCU Orientation Guide Ad (August 2021):* Digital ad in the VCU Orientation Guide – a digital publication disseminated to thousands of incoming Virginia Commonwealth University students and their families, including outreach via VCU's mobile app. The ad focused on promoting the Student Fare, as well as the specific benefits of taking the train to students.

*Virginia Travel Guide Ad (November 2020 – part of the 2021 issue):* A print ad was placed in the Virginia Travel Guide, a publication geared towards travel in the Commonwealth, as an additional channel to gain awareness and get in front of our target audience.

*Amtrak National 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary (2021):* This year marked an iconic time for Rail in America – Amtrak celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Our marketing efforts helped promote this momentous occasion by incorporating a 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary flash sale, showcasing 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary creative on our channels, and reminding our customers of the incredible investment Amtrak has made in transportation over the past 50 years.

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## DISCOUNTS

*Flash Sales:* Various flash sales were promoted with digital advertising throughout the year, aligned with National’s outreach efforts. Discounts ranged from 50% off discounts for National’s 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, Valentine’s Day BOGO, to the Northeast Getaway Sale.

*Virginia Anytime Fare and Virginia Student Fare:* Available exclusively in Virginia, the Virginia Anytime Fare and Virginia Student Fare provide a 15% and 25% off discount respectively for travel within the Commonwealth and DC. These discounts not only increase the value of train travel, but also support DRPT’s mission of improving the mobility of people and goods across the state.

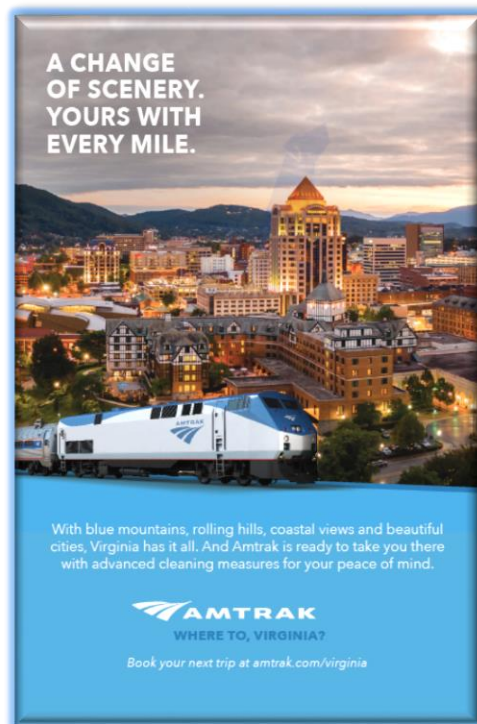
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## OWNED MEDIA

*Social Media:* Organic content, generated and refreshed monthly on Amtrak VA’s Instagram and Facebook pages, provided another touch point to stay in front of the target audience. This channel is also utilized for announcing new programs (such as the addition of the carry-on bike program), bringing awareness to new discounts/flash sales, inspiring travel to various locations in Virginia, and cross-promotes marketing messaging. This year, we had an increase in engagement from followers wherein our audience regularly submitted tagged photos and videos we incorporated on our pages.

*Amtrak National Social Media:* In May 2021, National featured the new Carry-On Bike Service available on select Virginia routes on their social pages as an additional method of cross-promotional outreach.

*Amtrak Guest Rewards E-mails:* Monthly messaging, focused on promoting Virginia’s routes through the Amtrak Guest Rewards (AGR) e-statement program which boasts an audience of 145,000 members who list Virginia as their home station.



## VIRGINIA BREEZE

### RECOGNITIONS

In 2020, DRPT received the Commonwealth Connectors Award at the annual conference of the American Planning Association’s Virginia Chapter. The award recognized the successful planning and implementation of the Virginia Breeze intercity bus service.

### REBRAND

The rebrand of Virginia Breeze Bus Lines launched in July 2020 to coincide with the return of service of the Valley Flyer route and the launch of the new Piedmont Express and Capital Connector routes. The name change reflects the expansion of the three routes and the new tagline — Connecting the Commonwealth — reflects DRPT’s mission to connecting underserved communities in Virginia.

### TRADITIONAL AND DIGITAL MEDIA

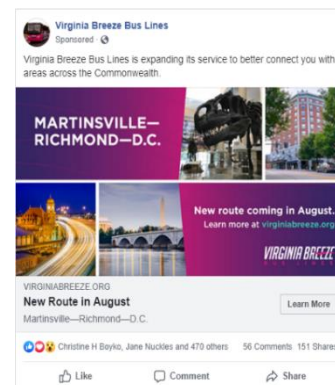
*Return of Service:* The Valley Flyer route returned to service on July 25, 2020, after two months out of operation due to the coronavirus pandemic. Social media and radio ads ran in the weeks leading up to and following the return of service to raise awareness of the Virginia Breeze Bus Lines rebrand and to encourage people to book tickets on the website.

*Awareness of New Routes:* Social media, radio, and print ads ran during the weeks leading up to the launch of the new Piedmont Express and Capital Connector route. The ads promoted the new routes and drove people to the website to learn more about the service.

### EXAMPLE OF AN AWARENESS AD

*Launch of New Routes:* A video announcing the launch of the Piedmont Express and Capital Connector bus routes was published on Virginia Breeze Bus Lines’ Facebook page on August 7, 2020.

Social media and radio ads began running the day of the launch and continued for five weeks afterward to drive people to the website to book tickets. Bus king ads, digital ads in the baggage claim area at Dulles International Airport, and digital billboards ran for two months after the launch to continue raising awareness of the new routes and Virginia Breeze Bus Lines.



### EXAMPLES OF LAUNCH ADS

*Holidays:* To capitalize on the end-of-year travel season, Virginia Breeze Bus Lines ran a marketing campaign using radio and social media ads. The campaign, which emphasized safety precautions put in place in light of the coronavirus pandemic, began November 9 and was scheduled to continue through the start of the December holidays. The goal was to increase awareness of the service and thus increase clicks to book tickets. Following an increase in COVID-19 cases and the November 19 recommendation of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that Americans not travel for Thanksgiving, the social media ads were paused. Radio ads could not be paused until after December 6 because a two-week advance cancellation notice was required. To create goodwill with audiences and promote Virginia Breeze Bus Lines without encouraging travel, new ads were created to wish Virginians a happy and

healthy holiday season.

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## **PARTNERSHIPS**

Virginia Breeze Bus Lines formed partnerships with a number of organizations and businesses along the three bus routes to promote the service. More than 2,000 rack cards were mailed to partners, and many organizations and businesses interacted with Virginia Breeze Bus Lines on social media and linked to [virginiabreeze.org](http://virginiabreeze.org) from their websites.

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## **OWNED CHANNELS**

*Social Media:* Ongoing social media efforts included organic content posts and comment monitoring on Virginia Breeze Bus Lines' Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter accounts. These channels are used to inform audiences about Virginia Breeze Bus Lines and its three routes and to inspire Virginians to travel — whether to explore the towns and cities across the Commonwealth or to make connections for travel beyond Virginia. The social media channels feature vibrant and engaging imagery to capture the audience's attention and create excitement for travel. Posts spotlighting the towns and cities along the three bus routes performed well, as did video animations featuring the bus.



*Website Redesign:* The Virginia Breeze Bus Lines website was redesigned to reflect the rebrand and the launch of the two new bus routes. The website incorporated all new branding and photography and introduced the ability to view the route schedule times and route stop maps.

## XVII. LOOKING TO FISCAL YEAR 2022 AND BEYOND

### PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

DRPT leads and participates in various transit and rail planning initiatives at the state, regional, local, and operator level in order to ensure that the investment of public funds delivers the intended benefit. These planning initiatives range from statewide long-term planning and regional corridor studies, to transit operator development plans and local feasibility studies. While DRPT's planning activities range in scope, all work to the same end goal – increasing the efficiency of Virginia's existing transit system and helping plan future expansions to meet the anticipated increase in demand.

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#### BEDFORD REGIONAL RAIL STOP STUDY

DRPT completed the Bedford Regional Rail Stop Study with cost estimates and conceptual plans for future Bedford Amtrak service. Norfolk Southern Railroad ran a future scenario model in order to determine the scale of improvements that may be necessary to preserve the freight network in this area, should passenger trains stop at Bedford. Results of this work will be presented to the public in the fall of 2021.

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#### BRISTOL PASSENGER RAIL EXPANSION STUDY

The General Assembly included language in its 2021 Transportation Initiative directing the Secretary of Transportation to provide an assessment of the total project costs and incremental costs resulting from the extension of Amtrak service to Bristol. DRPT conducted this study and will complete it in November 2021.

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#### CHARLOTTESVILLE AMTRAK STATION STUDY

The Amtrak Charlottesville Station Study examined the development potential for the station site, including future mixed use development passenger rail improvements to enhance the customer experience. Results of the study led to the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission's FRA RAISE planning grant application to develop a Charlottesville Station Master Plan. With a robust public process to optimize community connections to this uniquely-situated station that serves popular Virginia-sponsored service and Amtrak long distance service along two separate host railroads.

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#### COMMONWEALTH CORRIDOR STUDY

The 2020 General Assembly directed DRPT to study the feasibility of an east-west Commonwealth Corridor passenger rail service connecting Hampton Roads, Richmond, and the New River Valley. DRPT will complete this study by the end of calendar year 2021.

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#### COMMUTER BENEFITS STUDY

During its 2020 session, the Virginia General Assembly considered legislation that would provide an employer tax deduction for the cost of providing commuter benefits to employees. The bill, SB277 Income Tax Deduction for Commuter Benefits Provided by an Employer, would establish an individual and corporate income tax deduction for commuter benefits provided by an employer to its employees. The deduction would be available only to the employer and would be limited to \$265 per month per employee.



The intent of the bill was to restore the business deduction that was eliminated with the passage of the federal Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017. During the discussion of the bill, legislators expressed concerns with the loss of revenue from the tax deduction. As a result, the bill passed with modifications that delayed the bill's tax provision going into effect until reenacted by the General Assembly and a study was completed by DRPT. DRPT will complete its report by the end of calendar year 2021.

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### **FUTURE PASSENGER RAIL SERVICE DEVELOPMENT PLANNING**

To accompany the Statewide Rail Plan's four- and 20-year rail program analysis, DRPT is developing the Statewide Long-Term Service Development Plan, a greater than 20-year service outlook for the entire Commonwealth. The long-term plan will assess the full capacity of the infrastructure planned in Transforming Rail in Virginia based on future demand and travel patterns, and begin to establish future improvement priorities beyond Transforming Rail in Virginia.

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### **I-495/AMERICAN LEGION BRIDGE STUDY**

The purpose of the I-495/American Legion Bridge Transit/TDM Study was to identify a range of current and future multimodal solutions that can be implemented to reduce congestion, improve trip reliability and regional connections, and enhance existing and planned multimodal mobility and connectivity. DRPT and the Maryland Department of Transportation-Maryland Transit Administration (MDOT MTA) have finalized the findings and recommendations.<sup>33</sup>

The American Legion Bridge opened in 1962 as part of the I-495 Capital Beltway and carried 48,000 vehicles daily by 1965. Today, daily traffic averages 235,000 vehicles, and it is projected to increase to 280,000 by 2040. The bridge provides the only direct connection between the region's two most populous counties: Fairfax County, Virginia, and Montgomery County, Maryland.

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### **PASSENGER RAIL STATION IMPROVEMENT PLANNING**

DRPT prepared a station improvement plan to prioritize station enhancements as some Virginia Amtrak stations change ownership from host railroad CSX to the Commonwealth as a result of Transforming Rail in Virginia. The plan prioritizes ADA improvements to stations the Commonwealth is to own, and identifies next steps to achieve certification and compliance.

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### **ROANOKE-CLIFTON FORGE ENHANCED TRANSPORTATION STUDY**

The 2020 General Assembly inserted budget language directing DRPT to evaluate the possibility of public transportation services between Roanoke and Clifton Forge. The intent of this language is to connect Roanoke residents to the Amtrak Cardinal service that stops in Clifton Forge three times a week.

The study will examine the potential ridership of the service as well as the cost and feasibility, and it will look at possible service along Interstate 81 and Route 220.

This report will be complete in Summer 2022.

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<sup>33</sup> [I-495/American Legion Bridge Transit/TDM Study Final Report](#)

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## SPRINGFIELD-QUANTICO ENHANCED PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION STUDY



DRPT is conducting a feasibility study of enhanced public transportation services between the Franconia-Springfield Metro Station in Fairfax County and the Quantico Marine Base in Prince William County. Enhanced transit could include options such as additional express bus services, increased VRE commuter rail expansion, Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), or an extension of Metrorail.

This corridor is critical to Northern Virginia. Besides the Metrorail Blue Line, it is served by a range of transit services, including VRE, express bus, and local bus, as well as vanpool and carpool options that take advantage of the I-95/I-395 Express/HOT Lanes and a network of park-and-ride lots throughout the corridor. Population and job growth will continue to increase demand for multimodal commuting options, and the population in the study area is expected to grow by 24 percent by 2045.

DRPT will release a final report by the conclusion of 2021.

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## STATEWIDE RAIL PLANNING

DRPT conducts rail planning studies throughout the state to examine the feasibility and potential benefits of freight and passenger improvements. DRPT is currently partnering with the Virginia Commonwealth University's Center for Urban and Regional Analysis, L. Douglas Wilder School of Government & Public Affairs to assess potential economic impacts of expanding passenger rail service to Richmond's Main Street Station under the Transforming Rail in Virginia Initiative. Service increases will include new train frequencies as well as the extension of trains that currently terminate at Staples Mill Station in Henrico County. These additional frequencies have the potential to create significant short and long-term economic benefits to the City of Richmond and the surrounding region. DRPT expects the study to be completed in December 2021.

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## TRANSIT EQUITY AND MODERNIZATION STUDY



DRPT is conducting an important study that will inform state policies and funding for transit in the Commonwealth. This study will shed light on the various needs and develop a set of recommendations to address them.

The 2021 General Assembly passed House Joint Resolution 542 with a wide range of support. This legislation directs DRPT to conduct a needs assessment that focuses on the equitable delivery of transit services and modernization of transit in Virginia. The legislation requires that there be an emphasis on transit service and engagement opportunities for underserved and underrepresented communities. The study will also explore transit safety, accessibility, infrastructure, transit electrification, emerging technologies, and system engagement in governance.

DRPT will complete an interim report by December 2021 and the final report by August 2022.

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## **VANPOOLS**

Prior to the pandemic, DRPT was making plans to expand the collection of vanpool data in other areas of Virginia and through partnerships with transit agencies, enter the data into the NTD so Virginia can receive more FTA funding. DRPT conducted a vanpool study of the Roanoke Valley/New River Valley region, including the I-81, Route 221 and Route 220 corridors. Central Virginia Planning District Commission (CVPDC) is finishing its study of vanpooling in the Lynchburg region. Both the DRPT and CVPDC studies looked at the existing number of vanpools, of which there are few, the potential for more vanpools, and sought to

develop recommendations for how to establish a model for the administration of a vanpool program and NTD reporting. Both studies showed potential for additional vanpools, thus additional FTA funding from reporting vanpool data in the NTD. Prior to COVID-19, DRPT met with stakeholders in the region to discuss vanpooling and establishing a vanpool program with a NTD reporting component.

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*At the direction of the CTB, DPRT, VDOT, and OIPI initiated data-driven studies to identify key problem areas and develop multimodal solutions along the I-95 and I-64 corridors. The study development process identified solutions from existing local and regional studies, including dozens of new and improved transit routes from agencies' development and strategic plans. Six projects along the I-64 corridor and four projects along the I-95 corridor were identified for funding at a total of \$49 million.*

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DRPT's next step is to reach out to the stakeholder group and establish roles and responsibility for each agency, including which agency will provide financial assistance to the vanpools, collect vanpool data, and enter vanpool data into the NTD. Other considerations to work out are how the FTA funding will be distributed, and the source of long term funding to the vanpools in exchange for the data. As employees return to the office and vanpool ridership increases, DRPT will move forward with its plans to increase vanpooling in areas underserved by transit and vanpooling, collect more vanpool data and have that data entered into the NTD.

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## **VIRGINIA 2022 STATEWIDE RAIL PLAN**

DRPT is developing the Virginia Statewide Rail Plan for 2022. The plan will provide long-term guidance for Virginia's transportation leadership to ensure that the Commonwealth's rail needs for people, communities, and commerce are addressed, policies for future rail investments are consistent, the public is educated on current rail issues, and that rail transportation continues to be a safe, economical, and environmentally friendly mode choice. This project will end in Spring 2022.

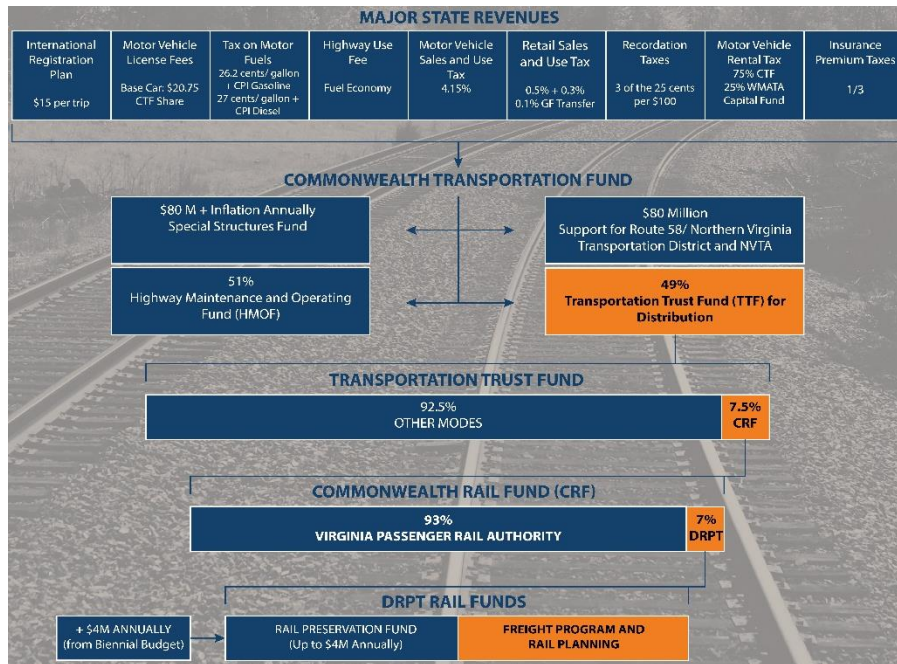
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## **VRE GAINESVILLE EXTENSION STUDY**

The 2020 General Assembly included language in the Biennial Budget directing DRPT to evaluate the operating and capital costs of extending VRE service from Manassas to Gainesville. DRPT released its evaluation in the Fall 2020.

## FUTURE FREIGHT RAIL INVESTMENTS

Figure 48: Commonwealth Rail Fund Distributions



The 2020 General Assembly passed historic transportation funding legislation, which significantly impacted the existing DRPT grant programs. Specifically, the 2020 legislation created a new revenue stream for funding rail improvements and altered the responsibilities of DRPT by creating a new Commonwealth agency responsible for implementing passenger rail projects and operations.

The new Commonwealth Rail Fund (CRF) indicates that “...the remaining seven percent shall remain in the Fund for the Department of Rail and Public Transportation for planning purposes and for grants for rail projects not administered by the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority.” With this new code language, with limited details regarding fund management, DRPT is responsible for creating new funding program guidance for freight rail funding.

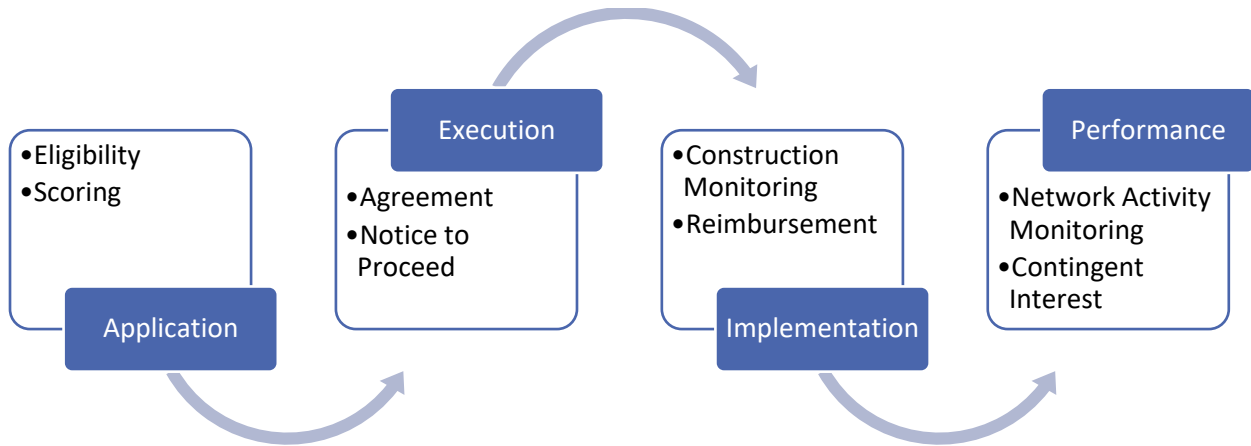
### DRPT F.R.E.I.G.H.T. FUND



Therefore, DRPT drafted guidance for a new program known as the Freight Rail Enhancement to Increase Goods and Highway Throughput (FREIGHT) Fund. The new FREIGHT program incorporates elements from multiple existing and previous DRPT grant programs; lessons learned over years of rail grant implementation; and national best practices.

As the name suggests, this new grant program focuses on investment in the freight rail network to meet statewide multimodal network goals in Virginia; as defined by VTrans and the State Rail Plan. The new program follows the traditional DRPT grant cycle, which includes an application period starting December 1 annual. In addition, each grant follows a basic four step process:

Figure 49: FREIGHT Grant Cycle



*Application:* The application process includes both an eligibility review and scoring process; an objective, data driven approach to project recommendation to the Commonwealth Transportation Board. According to the eligibility criteria includes, each grant application must:

- Meet at least one statewide goal listed in the adopted State Rail Plan.
- Focus on capacity improvements to the freight rail network (not operational or passenger related costs).
- Include at least 30% design for construction projects.

If all eligibility criteria are met, the application then moves through a scoring process. The scoring process includes four categories for a total of 20 points. Once scored, all applications will be ranked and presented to the CTB for review and approval. DRPT will make recommendations to the CTB based on the application score and available funding. However, the CTB makes the final decision on project funding that are included in the SYIP.

POINT VALUES	
BENEFIT-COST ANALYSIS	7
MATCHING FUNDS	6
PROJECT READINESS	4
STATEWIDE GOALS	3
<hr/>	
TOTAL	20

*Grant Management:* All approved projects then follow the remaining three steps in the grant management process; project execution, project implementation, and project closeout. Each of these three steps includes a two-step process to ensure adequate protection of public funding expenditures. The graphic below provides additional details on each step of the grant management process.

Figure 50: FREIGHT Grant Management Process

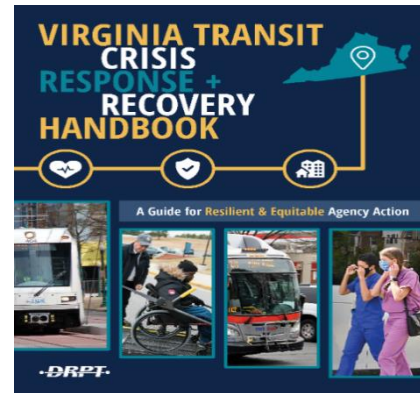


## REVIEWING AND LOOKING AHEAD: DRPT’S ROLE IN TRANSIT RECOVERY

In fall 2020, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) published a notice of funding for the COVID-19 Research Demonstration Grant Program (CRDG). This competitive grant program supported strategies to develop, deploy, and demonstrate innovative solutions to improve the efficiency of transit agencies and support the changing mobility landscape<sup>34</sup>. DRPT proposed a comprehensive COVID-19 Recovery Toolkit for funding. The toolkit would consist of two parts: a comprehensive recovery strategies handbook and a statewide marketing campaign.

On January 19, 2021, FTA announced funding decisions and that DRPT was selected as a grantee. It was announced that 37 projects in 35 states were selected for funding. After the funding decisions were finalized, DRPT worked to refine the toolkit to most appropriately meet the changing needs of transit providers.

The toolkit was presented as a comprehensive resource to Virginia transit providers to most appropriately adjust and continue to provide service to their riders. Specifically narrowing in on the strategies handbook, transit providers were asked to participate and share information on their challenges, obstacles, and solutions to providing effective and equitable transit throughout a global



<sup>34</sup> Public transportation COVID-19 research Demonstration grant program. Public Transportation COVID-19 Research Demonstration Grant Program | FTA. (n.d.). <https://www.transit.dot.gov/grant-programs/public-transportation-covid-19-research-demonstration-grant-program>.

pandemic. Transit providers were at the forefront of this development process and were reached through 10 interviews and 2 stakeholder engagement meetings.

Figure 51: COVID-19 Handbook Goals

- Provide guidance to statewide transit operators on the procedures and strategies to increase transit service levels safely and appropriately.
- Guide practitioners in navigating the post-pandemic world
- Identify lessons learned from the pandemic that could apply to future crises and help agencies be more resilient in the future.

In addition to the handbook which will be available to grantees in fall 2021, the FTA grant also funded a comprehensive marketing campaign. This marketing campaign was designed to engage and encourage previous transit and commuter program users and inspire rider confidence in returning to their commute by communicating COVID-19 related protocols. The marketing campaign will consist of customizable graphics for digital ads, printable materials, a brief advertisement video, and a web platform for providing these resources. Additionally, DRPT will create a mid-cycle grant program for agencies who wish to implement the marketing campaign but need financial support in deploying the products. After working with transit providers to create the most appropriate messaging, Rediscover Your Ride was selected as the campaign title. The marketing campaign was made available to interested parties in August 2021.



Getting out in the world again comes with worries both large and small.

Like you, Virginia public transportation has gone through a lot of changes to figure out how we can help you step out safely and with confidence.

Whether it's improving air filters or adding more hand sanitizing stations, we have the big stuff covered so you can *rediscover your ride*.

While DRPT cannot predict how the evolution of the pandemic will continue to impact transit, DRPT stays committed to supporting its transit agencies' needs as Virginia reaches recovery. Public transit is a vital service to a community and strengthens access to employment, schools, and other community resources. During this pandemic, public transit agencies have learned how to function in a public health crisis through prioritizing safety and learning to efficiently meet those essential needs. As the pandemic continues to evolve, DRPT will continue to closely and collaboratively work with its transit partners to ensure the most appropriate response and recovery efforts.

## **INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT AND JOBS ACT**

On August 10, 2021, the United States Senate passed the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) by a vote of 69-30. The legislation allocates \$944 billion over five years, with \$550 billion in new spending. The House of Representatives must still pass the legislation before President Biden can sign the act into law.

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### **FREIGHT AND PASSENGER RAIL**

The bill provides \$102.1 billion for passenger and freight rail over five years, an increase of \$86.7 billion from current levels.

Specifically, it allocates \$36 million in general fund authorizations for rail. This includes \$19.2 billion for Amtrak investment, comprising of \$6.57 billion for Northeast Corridor (NEC) grants and \$12.65 billion for National Network grants. Additionally, the bill provides \$15 billion for competitive rail grants, such as the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvement (CRISI) grants, the Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail grants, a new Railroad Crossing Elimination competitive grant, and the Restoration and Enhancement grants program.

The new Railroad Crossing Elimination competitive grant provides funds for the elimination of hazards at railway-highway crossings. Eligible projects include grade separation or closure, including through the use of a bridge, embankment or tunnel; track relocation; improvement or installation of protective devices, signals or signs provided that they are related to a separation or relocation project; other means to improve safety at crossings; or the planning, environmental review, and design of a project.

In addition, the bill provides \$66 billion of advance appropriations for NEC grants, National Network grants, the Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail grant program, the CRISI program, and the new Railroad Crossing Elimination grant program.

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### **PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION**

The bill provides \$106.9 billion for public transportation over five years, an increase of \$41.1 billion from current levels.

Specifically, it allocates \$69.9 billion for contract authority and \$21.1 billion of advance appropriations for FY22-26. This includes additional funding for 5305 planning, 5307 urbanized area formula grants, 5311 formula grants, and other yearly programs. Included in this funding is \$15.8 billion of general fund authorizations for Capital Investment Grants and for WMATA.

The legislation reauthorizes the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act funding for WMATA at an annual amount of \$150 million per year from FY22-30. The funding is contingent on WMATA providing \$5 million annually in non-federal funds to its Office of the Inspector General (OIG) and other OIG strengthening provisions. The funding will also require the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia to each contribute \$50 million annually.



## XVIII. CONCLUSION

Despite the on-going COVID-19 pandemic, FY21 was a productive and dynamic year for the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation and its rail, transit, and transportation demand management partners. During this difficult time, DPRT and its partners continue to provide essential services to all the Commonwealth's citizens. From the urban areas of Northern Virginia, Richmond, and Hampton Roads to the rural parts of the state in Southside and Southwest Virginia, millions of individuals are impacted by DRPT's work.

As our society enters a post-pandemic era, these services are needed even more. With individuals returning to the office on a part-time basis in many cases, they will rely on the service of Virginia's 40 transit agencies, transportation demand management services such as vanpool, and Amtrak state-sponsored service. This is in addition to the individuals who have relied on these services throughout the pandemic for the essentials—going to a doctor's appointment, getting groceries at a nearby supermarket, and taking courses at a local community college.

These services are reliable due to the efforts of many individuals. The General Assembly has long been a champion of these services by providing sustainable, long-term funding to DRPT programs and giving input on long-range planning studies. Private-public partnerships also have provided funding, such as toll revenues to transit in Northern Virginia. Additionally, the private-public partnership has brought innovation to the transit community with automated vehicles and microtransit pilots. Lastly, the work of DRPT employees with the thousands of transit and rail workers and local government officials continue to bring new ideas and approaches to transit and rail.

FY22 and the future will continue to bring new projects and ideas to the rail, transit, and transportation demand management in the Commonwealth. The main and most important benefactor of this will be the citizens of the Commonwealth of Virginia.