

2. VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF RAIL AND PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

2.1. FRA Requirements

This Chapter of the Virginia Statewide Rail Plan (VSRP) presents information related to Virginia's objectives for transportation as required by 49 CFR § 266.15 (c)(1)

2.2. Background

The Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) was established in 1992 as an agency under the Secretary of Transportation. DRPT works closely with other state transportation agencies including the Virginia Department of Transportation, the Virginia Port Authority and the Department of Aviation.

DRPT has three primary areas of activity (rail, public transportation and transportation demand management - also called mobility management) all of which focus on the movement of people and goods throughout Virginia.

Rail Transportation involves the movement of people (passengers) and goods (freight) on railways owned and operated by private railroad companies. There are 14 railroad companies and services in Virginia, including Norfolk Southern, CSX, Amtrak, Virginia Railway Express, and 10 shortline railroads. Freight rail programs help ensure the economic vitality of businesses and communities through infrastructure improvements that assist railroads to provide a cost-effective and reliable way to bring goods to market. DRPT's passenger rail programs provide support and infrastructure improvements that assist the passenger rail providers as they relieve congestion on highways and offer travelers more transportation choices. DRPT supports both passenger and freight rail initiatives through funding options, expert advice, research, and advocacy. To safeguard Virginia's connections to the national rail network, DRPT represents the state's interests in interstate and national rail issues.

Public Transportation manages traffic congestion by providing transportation choices while safely transporting people to destinations across the Commonwealth. There are more than fifty public transportation systems in Virginia that range in size from two-bus programs in small towns to larger regional systems like Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) in Northern Virginia and Hampton Roads Transit (HRT) in the Tidewater Region. Some systems are fee-based, while others provide free access for the elderly and disabled. By advising, supporting and funding public transportation programs statewide, DRPT helps provide safe, reliable transportation options for everyone.

Transportation Demand Management and Commuter Services programs work to promote carpools, vanpools, telecommuting and other alternative modes of transportation to Virginia's commuters. These programs not only save people (and employers) time and money, they can also help manage traffic congestion and benefit the environment. DRPT currently partners with fifteen commuter service programs operating in the Commonwealth to provide people with information, business incentives, and ride-matching services at no charge to the public.

This Statewide Rail Plan only considers the rail transportation system for commuter and intercity rail (Amtrak and Virginia Railway Express) and freight movements (Norfolk

Southern, CSX, and Shortline Railroads) in Virginia. Separate plans will be developed by DRPT for Public Transportation and Transportation Demand Management.

2.3. DRPT Strategic Plan Goals

The Statewide Rail Plan supports the Commonwealth's core transportation mission, which is to improve the mobility of people and goods while expanding transportation choices in the state. The Department of Rail and Public Transportation have developed the following Strategic Plan Goals in order to meet the Commonwealth Transportation Goals:

- Improve access for the general public and businesses to alternative transportation (public transportation, carpools, vanpools, human service transportation, passenger rail and freight rail) and telecommuting.
- Provide access and improvements to Virginia's railways to encourage economic development and reduce truck traffic on Virginia's highways.
- Seek the highest possible return on investment to maximize limited funding.
- Increase communication to the general public, businesses and community decision-makers on alternative transportation choices and telecommuting.
- Implement best practice management tools and techniques to improve customer service and accountability.

2.4. Commonwealth Transportation Goals

Virginians can be justifiably proud of the Commonwealth's extensive transportation network that connects people, places and products both locally and globally. By providing efficient access by rail, highways, seaports, and airports to desired activities and goods, Virginia's transportation system creates the foundation for our prosperous economy and future economic development. Yet, as noted in Virginia's Transportation Performance Report (2006), prepared by the VDOT Transportation and Mobility Planning Division, transportation remains the most urgent problem facing Virginia today due to increasing costs for both new transportation improvements and maintenance of existing systems, with the result that transportation needs continue to outpace available funding.

In the development of this Statewide Rail Plan, the DRPT is committed to a comprehensive multimodal strategy which integrates passenger and freight rail needs into the overall transportation network of the Commonwealth. Rail transportation is an important component of Virginia's evolving transportation network, reducing highway congestion by diverting cargo from trucks to rail and diverting people from cars to passenger rail.

The rail system is vital for the Commonwealth's economy, connecting Virginia to the global marketplace both overseas through connections at the Ports of Hampton Roads and in North America through rail connections that extend to the nation's East and West Coasts, north to Canada, and south to Mexico.

The Commonwealth is committed to enhancing partnerships with the private sector, including railroads, local governments, and regional planning organizations, to attract private capital and to achieve its strategic goals. In accordance with the Governor's Transportation Accountability Commission guidelines, the implementation of this rail plan will be conducted with the following Commonwealth transportation goals:

- **Safety and Security**: Rail improvements will be developed to provide a safe and secure transportation system – particularly as high speed rail services are brought online. The railroads in Virginia have a strong safety records. However, constant diligence, education in rail safety and security, and improvements at highway-rail grade crossings will continue the Commonwealth’s past history of annual reductions in rail-related injuries and fatalities. Metrics include:
 - Number and rate of fatalities (grade crossings and trespassers)
 - Number and rate of injuries (grade crossings and trespassers)
 - Increase in the number of grade separation structures
 - Increase in the number of at-grade crossings closed
- **Preservation and Management**: DRPT will work with Virginia’s private railroad companies to preserve and manage the existing rail transportation system through technological improvements and more efficient operations. Metrics include:
 - Improve on-time performance for both freight and passenger rail trains
 - Percentage of Virginia’s shortline rail system in need of repair
 - Percentage of passenger trainsets that exceed replacement age
 - Encourage self-sufficiency of passenger operators by higher farebox revenues
- **Mobility, Accessibility, and Connectivity**: DRPT and our public-private partnerships with the rail industry will develop projects that facilitate the efficient movement of people and goods, and improve interconnectivity of all transportation modes. Metrics include:
 - Increase passenger rail ridership
 - Increase diversion of freight from trucks to rail
 - Expand rail services to developed markets.
- **Economic Vitality**: DRPT will develop projects that improve Virginia’s economic vitality and facilitate the coordination of rail transportation, land use, and economic development planning activities. Metrics include:
 - Use of Rail Industrial Access and Rail Enhancement Funds to retain existing businesses and attract new businesses (number of jobs created, number of jobs maintained and economic impact of projects).
- **Land Use and Quality of Life**: Diversion of trucks to freight rail and people in cars to passenger rail will provide significant environmental benefits due to decreased pollution and improvements in air quality and water quality, as well as decreased energy consumption. Metrics include:
 - Tons of transportation-related emissions saved by rail improvements
 - Number of trucks diverted from highway usage to freight rail usage
 - Fuel usage saved by diversion of trucks to freight rail, and people from cars to passenger rail.