



---

# CHAPTER 6

## PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND COORDINATION

**December 6, 2017**

# CONTENTS

6 Introduction .....	2
6.1 Stakeholder Engagement.....	2
6.1.1 State Rail Plan Stakeholder Committee.....	3
6.1.2 Virginia State Rail Plan Web Page .....	3
6.1.3 Online Survey.....	3
6.1.4 Passenger Rail Shipper Interviews .....	4
6.1.5 Freight Rail Shipper Interviews .....	4
6.1.6 Railroad Interviews .....	5
6.1.7 Coordination with Neighboring States.....	5
6.1.8 Public Meetings .....	5
6.1.9 Public and Stakeholder Written Comments.....	6
6.2 Input Received from the Stakeholder Engagement Process .....	6
6.3 Consideration of Recommendations Identified During the Rail Plan Process.....	7
6.4 State Rail Planning Coordination .....	8

# TABLES

Table 6-1: Themes from Stakeholder Input.....	6
---	---



## 6 Introduction

DRPT actively engaged stakeholders at the earliest stages of the State Rail Plan. Stakeholders are identified as individuals, organizations, and groups affected by or having an interest in particular projects or actions. For the rail and freight plans, stakeholders included:

- shippers
- modal operators
- transportation academics
- logistics organizations and service providers
- current and potential rail passenger users
- various industrial and manufacturing sectors
- state, regional, county and city government agencies
- elected and appointed public officials
- economic development and business interests
- special interest and advocacy groups
- general public.

Stakeholder involvement included participation in freight and rail planning activities, identifying the rail and freight priorities and goals for Virginia, identifying issues, needs and potential investments for freight and rail, and helping to define policies and performance metrics for freight and rail to ensure improved freight and rail service into the future.

Specific, targeted outreach efforts were undertaken by DRPT to include participation from key rail and freight stakeholder groups. Stakeholders received email invitations and phone calls that corresponded with each outreach activity. Stakeholder committee attendees received an email invitation from DRPT. Stakeholders were asked to recommend individuals for shipper interviews. Those who participated in the shipper interviews received notification through phone calls and emails.

### 6.1 Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement activities informed DRPT's understanding of current passenger and freight rail movements and issues throughout the state. Outreach efforts included the creation of the State Rail Plan Stakeholder Committee, hosting web-based surveys and facilitating shipper interviews.



### 6.1.1 State Rail Plan Stakeholder Committee

The State Rail Plan Stakeholder Committee was formed early in the project, through invitation by DRPT. The committee was organized to help in the identification of passenger and freight rail needs, short and long term goals and strategies for improvements, and location-specific improvement projects relative to each goal once defined. Committee members included representatives from DRPT, industries related to freight and rail transportation, MPOs/TPOs, and special interest groups. **Appendix P, Appendix Q,** and **Appendix R** contain the State Rail Plan Stakeholder Committee meeting summaries and invitee lists.

The first committee meeting was held on Tuesday, November 22, 2016, in Richmond, Virginia. The November meeting focused on three interactive exercises that consisted of identifying passenger and freight rail bottlenecks and related opportunities for economic development in Virginia, prioritizing the types of passenger and freight rail projects needed in Virginia, and determining the level of effort and impact of the State Rail Plan strategies.

The second committee meeting was held Thursday, April 13, 2017, in Richmond, Virginia. This meeting's purpose was to identify the objectives in the State Rail Plan, review the economic development impact of rail, and prioritize the types of passenger and freight rail projects needed in Virginia.

The third committee meeting was held Tuesday, October 17, 2017, in Richmond, Virginia. This final meeting with stakeholders provided an overview of the Draft State Rail Plan and focused on reviewing the annotated version of the executive summary and discussing thoughts and perspective from the group on the draft plan.

### 6.1.2 Virginia State Rail Plan Web Page

A project webpage, [www.varailplan.org](http://www.varailplan.org), was established to serve as an online information center for all potential stakeholders providing information about the Plan. The webpage provides general information regarding the plan and includes workshop summaries, workshop presentations, and survey results.

### 6.1.3 Online Survey

DRPT launched three public State Rail Plan online surveys through DRPT's Facebook page. DRPT's intention is to launch a fourth survey at completion of the Virginia State Rail Plan. The surveys were organized by the following topics:

1. Virginia State Rail Plan: Introduction
  - a. November 11, 2016 – January 9, 2017



- b. Total respondents: 107
2. Economic Development
  - a. January 24, 2017 – March 8, 2017
  - b. Total respondents: 41
3. Passenger Rail
  - a. March 10, 2017 – May 4, 2017
  - b. Total respondents: 36

The surveys served as an additional platform for stakeholders to offer their feedback on the State’s rail network. A summary of the survey results appear in **Appendix S**.

#### **6.1.4 Passenger Rail Shipper Interviews**

DRPT conducted seven interviews of passenger rail user groups in Virginia by phone during March 2017. The interview subjects consisted of four regional MPOs/TPOs representing many of the largest population centers in the Commonwealth, two local transit providers, and two passenger rail advocacy groups based in Virginia. Each interview was confidential and lasted less than one hour, and each participant was asked the same questions. Notes prepared during the interview were provided to the interviewee with the opportunity to clarify or correct information he/she had provided. The revised notes were used as the basis for this summary report. One of the seven organizations declined to have their interview responses shared; therefore, the report summarizes the responses from the six remaining interview participants. The information provided in the interviews is located in **Appendix S**.

#### **6.1.5 Freight Rail Shipper Interviews**

Freight rail shippers are typically described as cargo owners that originate or receive freight shipped by rail. Private sector freight rail shippers in Virginia served by Class I and shortline railroads were contacted by DRPT during development of the State Rail Plan via a telephone interview process in May and June 2017. Shippers interviewed used Class I and shortline railroads, trucks, barges, and oceangoing vessels to transport their freight. Respondents included a port, an agricultural processor, an aggregate shipper, bulk transloaders, and a chemical manufacturer.

A structured interview document was sent to each respondent in advance of the phone interview. Questions were developed to learn current usage, attitudes, and opinions about current rail service, rail access, and the freight system, as well as what could potentially be done to improve it. General interview themes included:

- Type of Business



- Reasons for Utilization of Rail Shipping
- Access to Competition
- Rail Service Satisfaction
- Potential Rail Service Improvement Projects
- State Programs and Regulations
- Future Outlook

After each interview, DRPT provided the completed draft interview document to the respondent for his/her review and comments before finalizing. The information provided in the freight rail shipper interviews is located in **Appendix T**.

### 6.1.6 Railroad Interviews

Virginia's Class I and shortline railroads were contacted during development of the State Rail Plan to solicit input. Topics addressed included:

- Descriptions of physical and operating characteristics and operations of each railroad's network within Virginia;
- Past and potential future capital projects aimed at improving operational efficiency, capacity, and safety, and providing enhanced service to rail shippers; and,
- A list of improvement and infrastructure needs for shortline railroads, which often do not possess the financial and technical resources of the Class I railroads.

Specific needs identified by the shortline railroads are presented in **Chapter 2**, and potential projects to address these needs are included in the Rail Service Investment Plan presented in **Chapter 5**.

### 6.1.7 Coordination with Neighboring States

DRPT routinely interacts with neighboring states through involvement in national and regional transportation organizations to address specific transportation service and facility issues and planning initiatives. Specifically, these include such groups as the I-81 Corridor Coalition, I-95 Corridor Coalition, Standing Committee on Rail Transportation, FRA's Southeast Regional Rail Stakeholder Committee, and others. In addition, during stakeholder workshops and interviews, DRPT learned more about the trends, best practices, and lessons learned of multi-state planning.

### 6.1.8 Public Meetings

DRPT hosted an online public meeting at the completion of the Draft State Rail Plan, at <http://vastaterailplanonlinemeeting.com>. The online meeting was available between October 2 and November 3, 2017 and was utilized by 54 total users. The online meeting included the Draft State Rail



Plan document and a summary presentation of the plan development process. A link to provide comments on the State Rail Plan was also included.

### 6.1.9 Public and Stakeholder Written Comments

DRPT received several comments by e-mail and web comment forms during the course of the State Rail Plan’s development. Comments were received from members of the public, railroads, the FRA, and public transportation planners, among others.

## 6.2 Input Received from the Stakeholder Engagement Process

Information gathered from stakeholder engagement was used to inform DRPT’s development of a number of the State Rail Plan components including the plan’s vision, goals, and objectives. The following chapters include summaries of the themes raised during the outreach process regarding existing rail issues at the local, regional, and/or state levels. Suggestions and/or actions possible in the future are also included. Input received is organized into the themes summarized in **Table 6-1**:

**Table 6-1: Themes from Stakeholder Input**

Theme	Issues Identified	Reference Chapters
<b>General benefits, opportunities, and threats</b>	<p>Participants indicated that the following areas have heavy road congestion, and additional rail transportation options could help alleviate that issue: Alexandria, Richmond, Interstate 66 through Manassas, and City of Norfolk and the Port of Virginia.</p> <p>Participants indicated the need to describe the role of multi-state cooperatives in improving rail transportation in Virginia.</p> <p>Participants provided input on the drivers for rail transportation in Virginia.</p> <p>Participants indicated the following projects had potential economic development opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A new passenger rail station in Richmond</li> <li>• A new passenger rail station in Petersburg</li> <li>• Grade separation projects in the Norfolk area</li> <li>• Increased passenger rail routes from Bristol, Roanoke, and Charlottesville</li> </ul>	---
<b>Financing</b>	Additional funding sources for Virginia rail projects in the state based on importance and economic value to Virginia.	Chapter 2
<b>Commuter rail passenger service</b>	<p>Opportunity for short trips, intra-state, commuting to and from work, and focusing on timetables so that travelers can set a return trip the same day.</p> <p>Prioritizing more frequent passenger rail service on existing routes,</p>	Chapter 3

Theme	Issues Identified	Reference Chapters
	improving stations, and creating additional transit connections to improve multi-modal access.	
<b>Freight</b>	Alleviating rail network bottlenecks.	Chapter 4
<b>Safety and Security</b>	Make infrastructure investments to extend or construct new sidings, multiple main tracks, track and bridge upgrades, and wayside signal system upgrades. These upgrades were requested to allow the rail network to fully accommodate 286,000 lb. rail cars.	Chapter 5
<b>Economic Development</b>	New or enhanced intermodal facilities, multimodal connections, and transload facilities. Regional transload facilities act as a collection facility for predominantly bulk commodities, and typically involve a combination of rail and truck freight movement.	Chapter 5
<b>Environmental Protection</b>	<p>Long and medium distance passenger and freight movements by rail generally have less impact to the environment than similar movements by motor vehicle, notably through reduced air emissions and energy use.</p> <p>General belief that green initiatives have not worked in the past. Potential future initiatives to promote technology advances in this sector could include the operations of additional low-emissions locomotives on the state’s railroads.</p> <p>Offer education and incentives for the State’s current and future rail shippers and receivers to re-evaluate their transportation choices.</p>	Chapter 5

The role of public agencies in Virginia surfaced in focus group discussions and survey results when discussing economic development, as many state agencies support economic development through various policies, programs, and initiatives. Further details about the existing role of public agencies in Virginia can be found in **Chapter 1**.

### 6.3 Consideration of Recommendations Identified During the Rail Plan Process

The comments and recommendations received through all aspects of the public outreach process conducted during development of the State Rail Plan have been reviewed and incorporated appropriately into the State Rail Plan. Input from the stakeholder groups and comments obtained through the outreach process identified several actions that DRPT could take to address rail-related issues in the state. These recommended actions include:





- Utilizing REF programs to increase return on investment.
- Identifying short-term and long-term passenger projects.
- Opening up the Rail Industrial Access Program to potential customers in the rail business.
- Assisting businesses who want to upgrade a private track.
- Creating awareness of the opportunities available for potential rail shippers who are interested in switching from truck to rail.
- Identifying the way the Industrial Access Program budget can be spent.
- Working with the states that surround Virginia to ensure the rail lines beyond Virginia's borders are improving in tandem with Virginia's rail lines.

## 6.4 State Rail Planning Coordination

At the regional, state, and local level, DRPT works with the CTB, MPOs, cities and counties to coordinate rail transportation planning and development efforts. Some of these agencies participated in the Virginia State Rail Plan development process and had the opportunity to provide further input through review and comment on the Draft State Rail Plan. Additional information on Virginia's coordination at the regional, state, and local levels is described in Chapter 1.3.4 and 1.3.5.

Virginia coordinates its state transportation planning and associated processes with other transportation planning programs and activities of the state and metropolitan areas in accordance with federal law<sup>1</sup>. Federal planning code:

- requires coordination of transportation planning and processes between state departments of transportation, MPOs, and public transit operators;
- encourages economic development and environmental sustainability for transportation; and,
- promotes integration of the management and operation of transportation systems and facilities to ensure an intermodal transportation system for the U.S. and the states establishes requirements for long-range transportation planning.

---

<sup>1</sup> Title 23 of U.S. Code Sections 134 and 135; Title 49 of U.S. Code Sections 5303 and 5304