

NOVEMBER 2022

Annual Report FY 2022

Overview of Virginia's
Transit and Rail Activities

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Department of Rail and Public Transportation

Pursuant to Virginia Code § 33.2-106, § 33.2-1526.3, and Chapter 2, Item 1, Subsection I of the 2022 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 the Commonwealth Rail Fund, respectively. DRPT is combining these reports to produce a DRPT annual report for Fiscal Year (FY) 2022.

Background

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

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.

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

Staff

Pursuant to Chapter 2, Item 449, of the 2022 Acts of Assembly, DRPT had a maximum employee level of 72 in FY22. The agency maintains offices in Richmond and Alexandria.

Jennifer DeBruhl was named the agency's Acting Director in March 2022 after Jennifer Mitchell stepped down from the position to join the Federal Railroad Administration as its Deputy Administrator. DeBruhl previously served as the agency's Chief of Public Transportation, a role she held since joining DRPT in 2016. In June 2022, Governor Glenn Youngkin appointed DeBruhl as Director of DRPT. DeBruhl also serves as a member of the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB), chair of the



Virginia Passenger Rail Authority (VPRA) board, and as a board member for several transportation organizations around the Commonwealth.

DeBruhl has over 20 years of distinguished public service to the transportation community at the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration.

As of July 1, 2022, DRPT's **leadership** also included Tanyea Darrisaw, Chief Financial Officer; Grant Sparks, Acting Chief of Public Transportation; Jennifer Mayton, Chief of Administration; Emily Stock, Chief of Rail Transportation; and Andrew Wright, Director of Policy, Communications, and Legislative Affairs.

DRPT reports to Secretary of Transportation W. Sheppard Miller III, who also chairs the CTB. The CTB is comprised of 17 members located throughout Virginia who are appointed by the Governor. The board oversees transportation projects and initiatives and meets monthly.

DRPT staff works 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 analyses;
- Planning and programming new services and capital improvement projects using a data-driven methodology; and
- Providing leadership, technical assistance, and funding.

To accomplish these tasks, 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.

Staff also works with representatives from the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority (VPRA), the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP), and the Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment (OIPI). In addition to regular attendance at the monthly CTB meetings, DRPT staffs the CTB Rail and Transit Subcommittee.



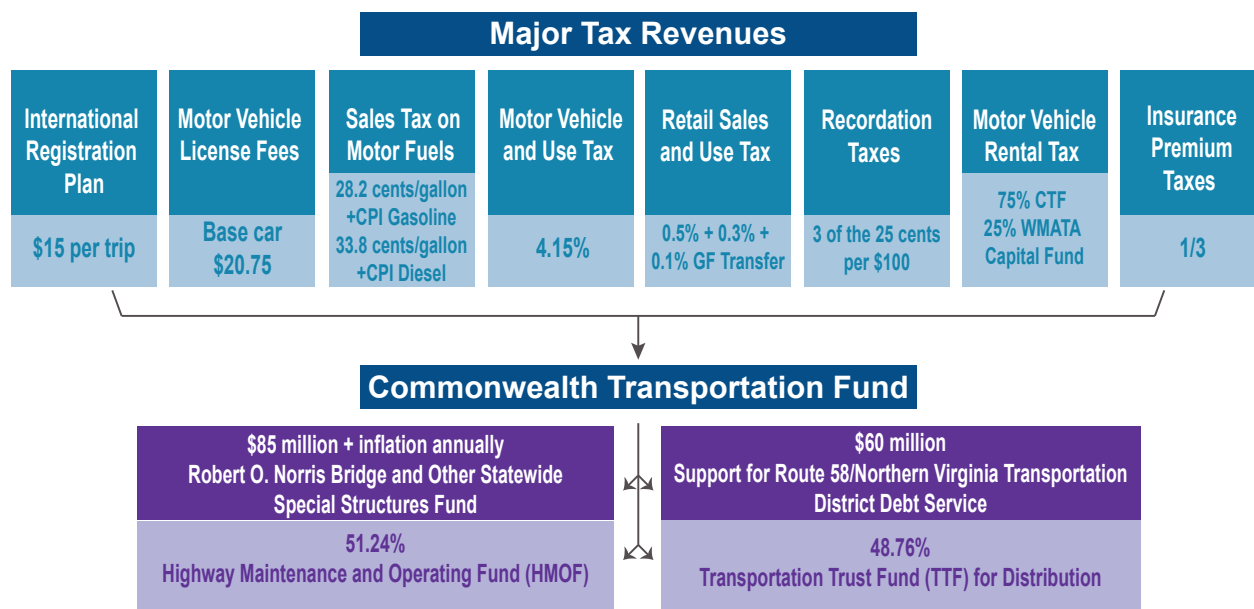
“Jennifer DeBruhl is an outstanding professional with a strong record of success. I cannot think of anyone better suited to build upon the great foundation at DRPT.”

— SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION
W. SHEPPARD MILLER III

Funding

The **Six-Year Improvement Program (SYIP)** is the CTB's joint annual funding allocation program for the programs and initiatives that DRPT and VDOT administer. 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 and ends on June 30.

Figure 1: Fiscal Year 2022 Distribution of Transportation Revenues



All statewide transportation revenues are deposited into the Commonwealth Transportation Fund (CTF). From the Commonwealth Transportation Fund, 49% are disbursed to the Transportation Trust Fund (TTF) and then distributed to meet the varying needs of different modes of transportation, and 51% are distributed to the Highway Maintenance and Operating Fund (HMOF). Of the TTF, DRPT distributes the 23% that the Commonwealth Mass Transit Fund (CMTF) receives and a portion of the 7.5% the Commonwealth Rail Fund (CRF) receives.

In FY22, DRPT invested \$1.04 billion in state, federal, and local resources toward improving rail and public transportation capacity and service across the Commonwealth. The overwhelming majority of these funds were directed to a variety of recipients, including public transportation providers, local and regional government entities, freight railroads, and VPRA.

Expenditures for FY22 were approximately \$33.2 million less than in FY21, primarily due to the one-time cash transfer of \$302.7 million in the Commonwealth Rail Fund to VPRA in the prior year for its establishment as directed by the General Assembly. Excluding the one-time budgeted cash transfer to VPRA in the prior year, FY22 expenditures were \$185.5 million higher than in FY21. This

is primarily due to the mid-year increase in revenues and the resumption of capital spending after the reduction in FY21 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This increase includes 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, as well as increased support for rail programs.

**DRPT Budgeted Expenditures
FY 2022 \$1,043 million**

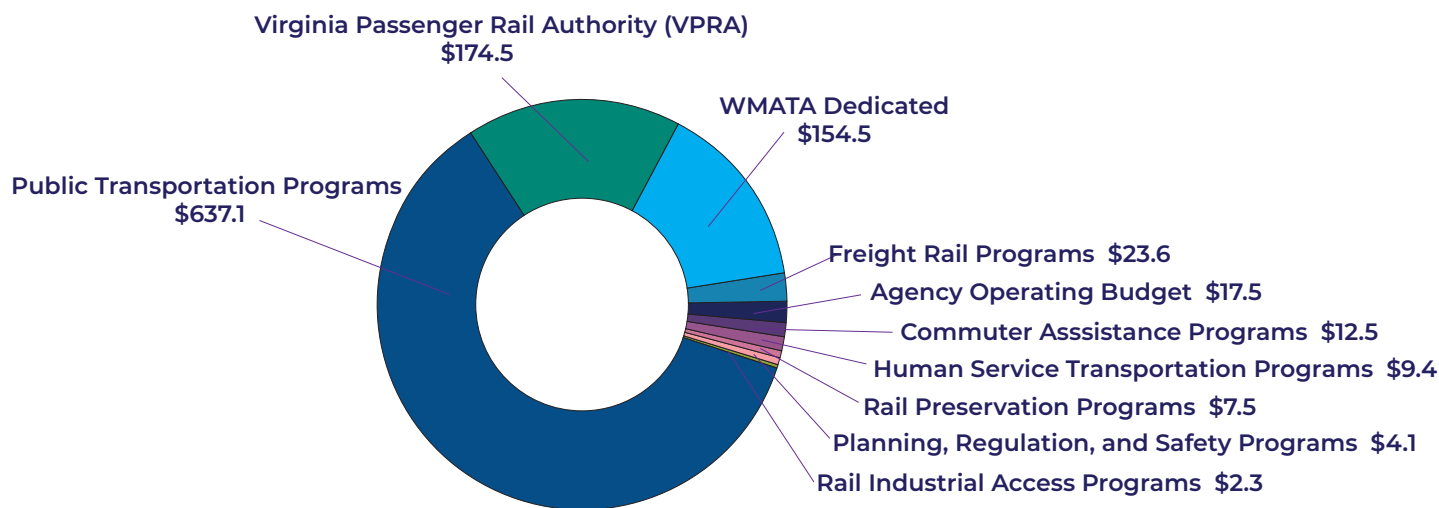


Figure 2 : Fiscal Year 2022 Budgeted Expenditures: \$1.043M

Rail Investments

DRPT receives 7% of the Commonwealth Rail Fund, while the remaining 93% goes to VPRA, which oversees passenger rail projects, including intercity passenger service. DRPT, which previously oversaw passenger rail service, completed its work mobilizing VPRA during the past year. Rail responsibilities in the Commonwealth are split between DRPT and VPRA. DRPT continues to do statewide planning for both freight and passenger rail.

Funding for DRPT’s rail programs is supported through federal, state, and local funding sources. DRPT’s budget for all rail services was \$33.4 million of funding to freight and rail planning, shortline preservation, and rail industrial access programs.

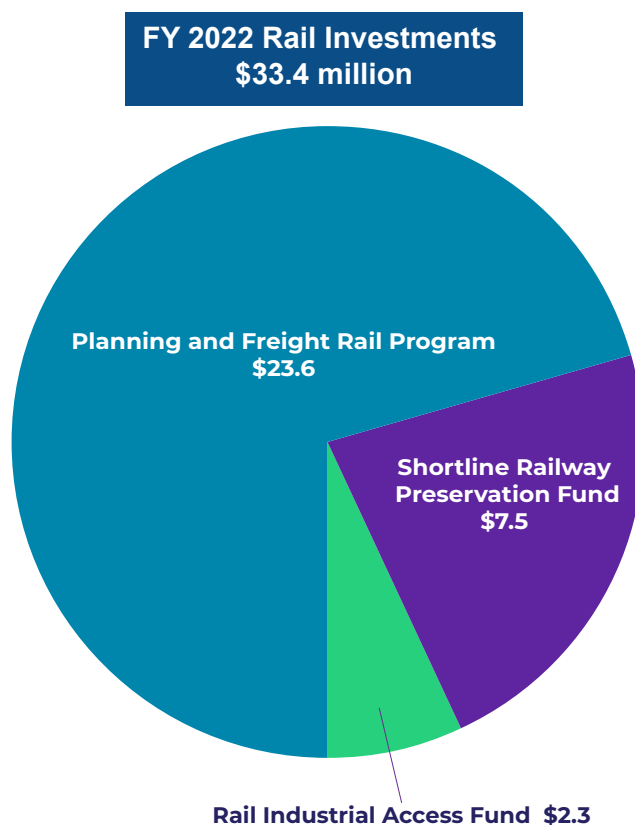
Shortline Railway Preservation Fund (\$7.5 million in FY22): This program targets state-of-good-repair and capacity improvement projects on the shortline network. The goal is to maintain Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) Class 2 Track Safety Standards, which have implications for the speed, service, 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 enhancements, and tie and rail replacements. The program receives \$4 million annually from the Highway Construction Fund and can receive additional funds — up to \$4 million of DRPT’s unobligated Commonwealth Rail Funds — each year.

Rail Industrial Access Fund (\$2.3 million in FY22): The Rail Industrial Access Fund 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. The fund promotes truck diversion by providing grant assistance to connect new or expanding businesses to the freight rail network. The program shares about \$5.5 million in funds from the Transportation Trust Fund with VDOT, which administers a similar grant program called the Economic Development Access Program. Applicants can apply for up to \$450,000 with a requirement of a 30% match from the applicant.

Planning and Freight Rail Program (\$23.6 million in FY22): DRPT is the state agency responsible for rail planning and the freight rail program in the Commonwealth. Every four years, the FRA requires states to submit an updated State Rail Plan. This is required for Virginia to be eligible for federal rail funding. DRPT also works closely with the two major Class I railroads operating in Virginia concerning freight projects and shortline railroads. DRPT developed the program guidance for these new areas during FY22. Virginia’s Class I railroads, shortline railroads, and the Port of Virginia are typical recipients of grants.

Figure 3 : Fiscal Year 2022 Rail Investments



Transit Investments

DRPT works with public transportation systems in Virginia to 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 FY22 SYIP includes funding allocations from the CMTF for public transportation capital purchases, operating assistance, and transportation demand management (TDM) programs and projects.

Funds through the statewide operating assistance program and statewide capital assistance grants are distributed through the Making Efficient and Responsible Investments in Transit (MERIT) program. DRPT also sets aside 5% of the CMTF to support DRPT project development, administration, project oversight, and compliance.

The agency also provides \$2 million for state safety oversight and \$1.5 million for paratransit capital projects and enhanced transportation services for the elderly and disabled, as required by the state budget.

§ 33.2-1526.1.B of the Code of Virginia allocates up to \$50 million off the top of the CMTF starting in FY22 for the WMATA State of Good Repair program. This \$50 million is to match identical contributions from Maryland and the District of Columbia and a \$150 million contribution from the federal government to WMATA as directed in the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 and subsequently in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. Previously, Virginia contributed its \$50 million annually using bonds.

For FY22, DRPT allocated \$852.1 million in state transit and TDM initiatives. That funding is broken down into seven categories: WMATA assistance, WMATA dedicated, statewide capital, statewide operating, Transit Ridership Incentive Program, special, and paratransit.

WMATA Dedicated Capital Fund (\$154.5 million in FY22): Chapters 854 and 856 of the 2018 Acts of Assembly established the WMATA Capital Fund, providing \$154.5 million in annual funding to the transit agency. This amounts to Virginia’s proportional regional share (30.9%) of \$500 million in annual additional capital needs for critical state of good repairs. There are also two accounts within the WMATA Capital Fund. The restricted account (local recordation taxes and statewide motor vehicle rental tax) may be used for capital purposes other than for the payment of, security for, and debt service on bonds or other indebtedness of WMATA. The non-restricted account (Northern Virginia Transportation Commission regional grantor’s tax, NVTC regional gas taxes,

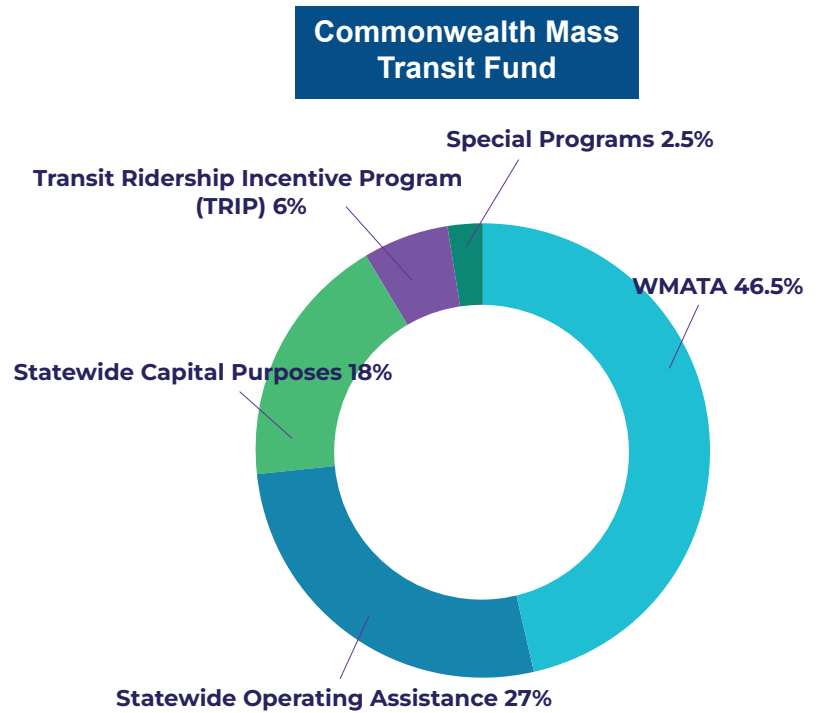


Figure 4: Commonwealth Mass Transit Fund FY2022

NVTC 2% transient occupancy tax, and the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority 30% 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 established the Commuter Rail Operating and Capital Fund (CROC), which is used to fund the cost of operating commuter rail service as well as acquiring, leasing or improving railways or railroad equipment, rolling stock, rights of way, or facilities. It can also be used to assist other appropriate entities with acquiring, leasing, or improving railways or railroad equipment, rolling stock, rights of way, or facilities for commuter rail transportation purposes. 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 the CROC Fund. The Commonwealth deposits monies amounting to about \$15 million annually into the fund from a regional gas tax in Northern Virginia.

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 needs. Since 1982, 20% of the federal excise tax on gasoline has been set aside each year into the Mass Transit Account of the Highway Trust Fund.

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 Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement, Regional Surface Transportation, and Surface Transportation Block Grant programs for use on public transportation projects.

Federal formula transit programs tapped into by DRPT and other public transportation agencies in the Commonwealth include Urbanized Area Formula Grants (Section 5307), Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and People with Disabilities (Section 5310), Formula Grants for Rural Areas (Section 5311),

FY 2022 SYIP State Transit Allocations \$852.1 million

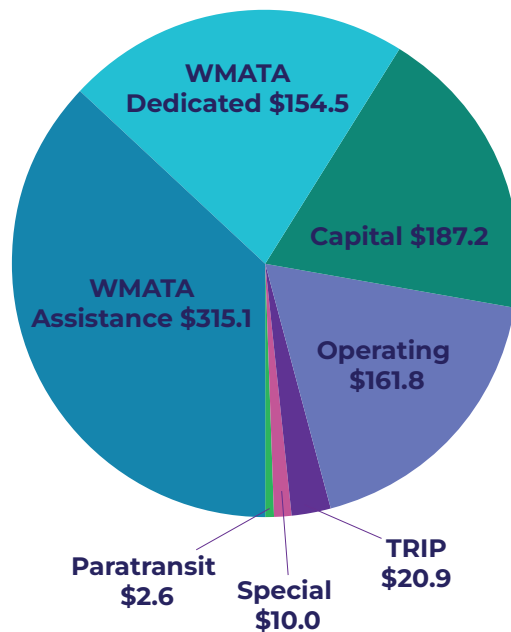


Figure 5: Fiscal Year 2022 SYIP State Transit Allocations

and Buses and Bus Facilities (Section 5339).

For many statewide transit capital projects, this blend of federal funding as well as the statewide capital program often means the local community is able to deliver projects by only meeting the required 4% match.

Transportation Demand Management (TDM)

DRPT uses a portion of the special projects allocation from the CMTF to provide grants to qualifying agencies to operate TDM programs in their region or locality. In FY22, DRPT programmed \$4.9 million in state funds (not including local match) for commuter assistance/transportation demand management programs and projects. 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's budget also includes Federal Highway Administration funds of \$5.5 million and the related state match of \$1.7 million for projects included in the VDOT SYIP that DRPT will administer, such as the Arlington County Commuter Services program, Hampton Roads Transit TRAFFIX program, RideFinders, and various transportation management plans.

Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act

In November 2021, President Joe Biden signed into law the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). In total, the new investments and reauthorization provide \$89.9 billion in guaranteed funding for public transit over the next five years — the largest federal investment in public transit in history.

Based on formula funding alone, Virginia will receive approximately \$1.2 billion over five years under the IIJA to improve public transportation across the Commonwealth. In the first year, this represents about a 31% increase from 2021 levels to formula transit funding. The law authorizes \$3 billion each year for transit and \$1.6 billion from the FTA in FY22 for low- and no-emission bus and bus facilities grants. To improve freight rail safety, Virginia is also eligible to compete for \$10 billion for rail improvement and safety grants and \$5.5 billion for grade crossing safety improvements.

The IIJA's investments so far include discretionary awards of \$11 million for the Greater Richmond Transit Company to replace aging diesel buses with natural gas buses as well as to construct a vehicle storage facility. The City of Suffolk is receiving \$565,000 to purchase new electric buses and charging stations. Also, \$20 million from the IIJA will support the creation of a new bicycle-pedestrian bridge that crosses the Potomac River between Long Bridge Park in Arlington County and West Potomac Park in Washington, D.C. Additionally, more than \$25 million in IIJA funds will be invested in other multimodal improvements across Virginia.

Serving the Entire Commonwealth

DRPT’s rail and public transportation stakeholders include 40 transit systems, 79 human service operators, 17 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 (VPRA).

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 (in 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. The nine shortline railroads are: Buckingham Branch Railroad, Chesapeake and Albemarle Railroad, Chesapeake Western Railway, Commonwealth Railway, Delmarva Central Railroad, North Carolina and Virginia Railroad, Winchester and Western Railroad, Norfolk and Portsmouth Belt Line Railroad, and Shenandoah Valley Railroad.

Figure 6: Freight Railroads in Virginia



Freight Routes in Virginia

- Norfolk Southern Railway
- CSX Transportation
- Shortline
- Cities/Towns

Shortline Railroads

- | | | | |
|------|---------------------------------|------|---|
| BB | Buckingham Branch Railroad | NPBL | Norfolk & Portsmouth Belt Line Railroad |
| BCR | Bay Coast Railroad | NCVA | North Carolina & Virginia Railroad |
| CA | Chesapeake & Albemarle Railroad | SV | Shenandoah Valley Railroad |
| CHW | Chesapeake Western Railway | WW | Winchester & Western Railroad |
| CWRY | Commonwealth Railway | | |

Passenger Rail

VPRA oversees passenger rail service in the Commonwealth. The 2020 General Assembly established VPRA as a political subdivision of the state to promote, sustain, and expand the availability of passenger and commuter rail service as well as to increase ridership by connecting population centers in Virginia with service and increase the availability of such service.

VPRA has the following authorities:

- Assign to outside parties the right to design, build, finance, operate, and/or maintain rail facilities;
- Fix, alter, change, and collect rates for use of rail facilities; and
- Issue bonds and accept federal loans (debt may not be supported by tax-supported revenues).

VPRA owns all rail assets and right of way. However, it may not directly operate passenger, commuter, or freight service.

Figure 7: DRPT and VRPA Duties

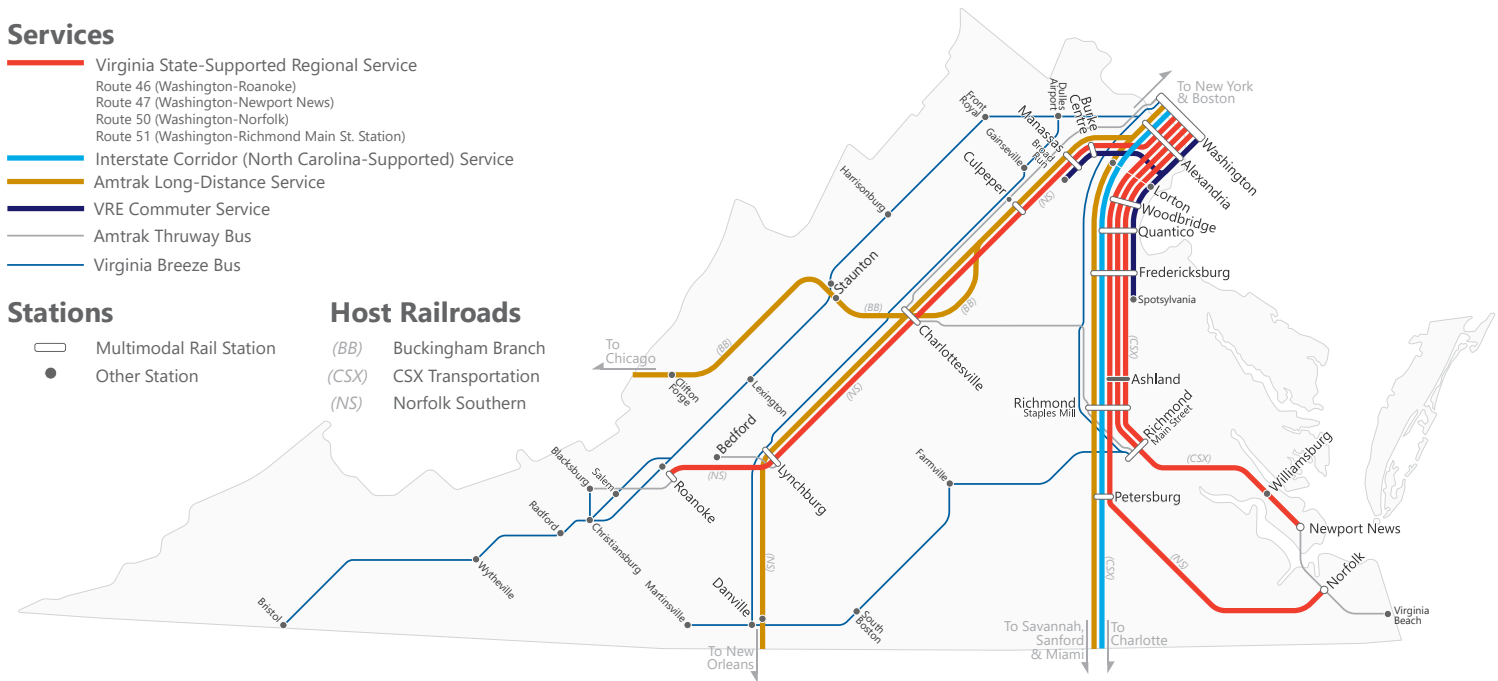
	RAIL		TRANSIT	COMMUTER PROGRAMS
	FREIGHT	PASSENGER		
Funding Administration	DRPT	VPRA	DRPT	DRPT
Corridor Planning	DRPT	VPRA	DRPT	DRPT
Statewide Planning	DRPT			DRPT
Programming/SYIP	DRPT	VPRA	DRPT	DRPT
Policy Setting	DRPT	VPRA	DRPT	DRPT
Design/Construction		VPRA		
ROW/3 rd Party		VPRA		
Operations Oversight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

VPRA's goals are to:

- Increase passenger rail capacity;
- Improve passenger rail services;
- Ameliorate current and future traffic congestion; and
- Promote industrial and economic development.

VPRA provides grant funds for four intercity passenger routes with a total of eight daily roundtrip trains on the Northeast Regional line through grant agreements with Amtrak. The two newest daily roundtrips — a second between Washington, D.C., and Roanoke and a third between Washington, D.C., and Norfolk — launched in July 2022.

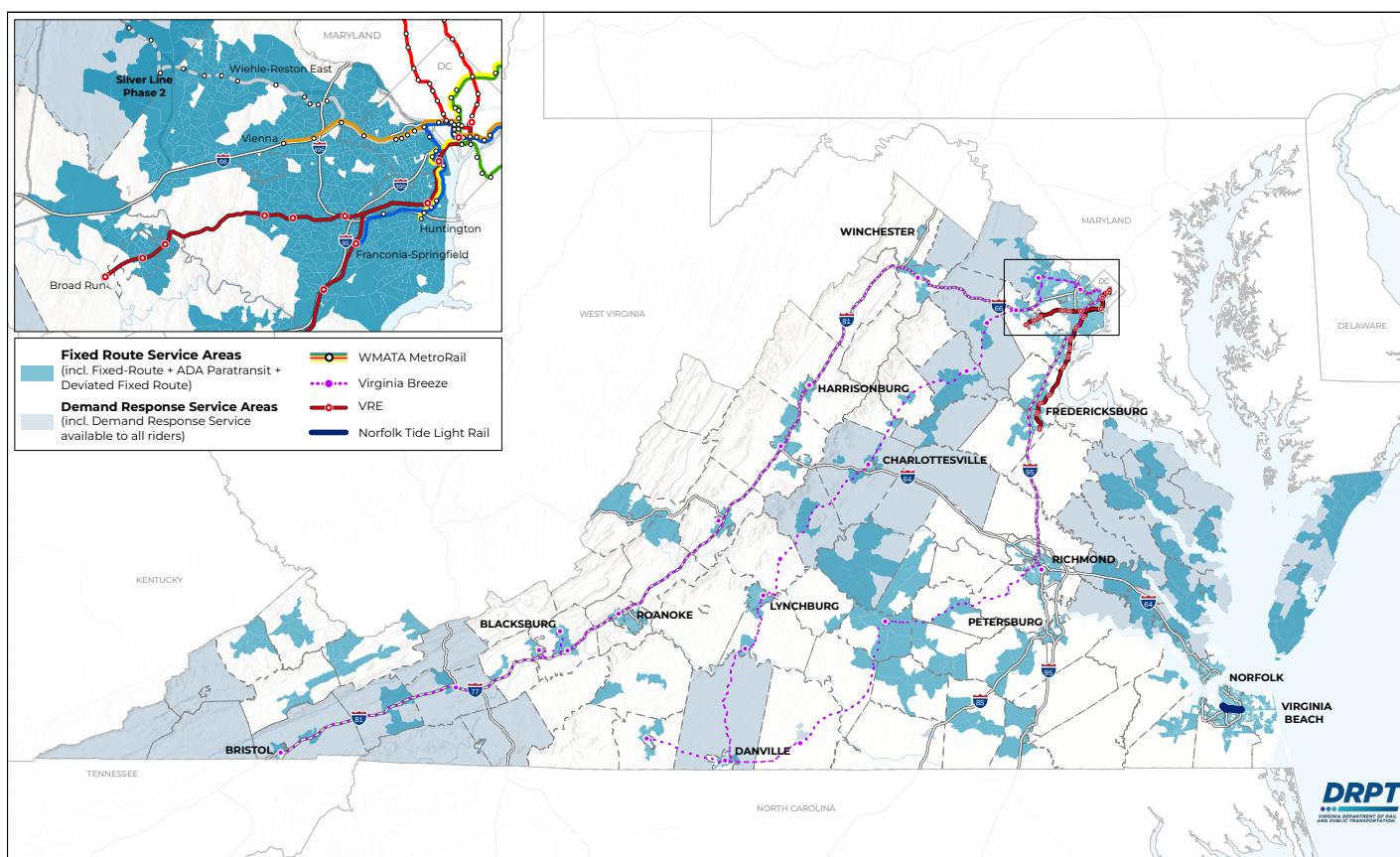
Figure 8: Intercity Bus and Rail Connections



Public Transportation

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, 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 the Code of Virginia § 33.2-285, DRPT is the state agency responsible for public transportation funding in the Commonwealth.

Figure 9: Public Transportation in Virginia



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 Public Transportation (HDPT)
Bay Transit	JAUNT
Blacksburg Transit (BT)	Lake County 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)	Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission (OmniRide)
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 Authority (WATA)
Greater Roanoke Transit Company (Valley Metro)	Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA)

Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and People with Disabilities

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

In FY22, DRPT awarded the following human services transportation support: \$4.15 million (80% federal and 20% local) for 68 accessible vehicles to 28 agencies as well as \$2.64 million to support 14 operating projects and nine mobility management projects across the state. All of these projects are funded as 5310 projects. Three of the mobility management projects also received 5311 funding.

The below table is a list of human service transportation providers that received an operating or mobility management grant from DRPT between FY22-FY23 or currently own or operate a vehicle that was purchased with Section 5310 funds and for which DRPT has oversight and is listed as the lienholder.

Human Service Providers in Virginia

Alleghany Highlands Community Services	Louise W. Eggleston Center, Inc.
Bay Aging	Lutheran Family Services of Virginia, Inc. dba enCircle
Beth Sholom Home	Mount Rogers Community Services
Black & White Cabs of Virginia Beach, Inc.	Mountain Empire Older Citizens
Black & White Cars, Inc.	New River Valley Community Services
Capitol Area Partnership Uplifting People (CAPUP)	New River Valley Senior Services
Central Virginia Alliance for Community Living	Norfolk Redevelopment & Housing Authority
Charity Transport, LLC	Northwestern Community Services
Checker Cab Company, Inc.	Peninsula Agency on Aging
Chesterfield Community Services Board	Piedmont Senior Resources Area Agency on Aging

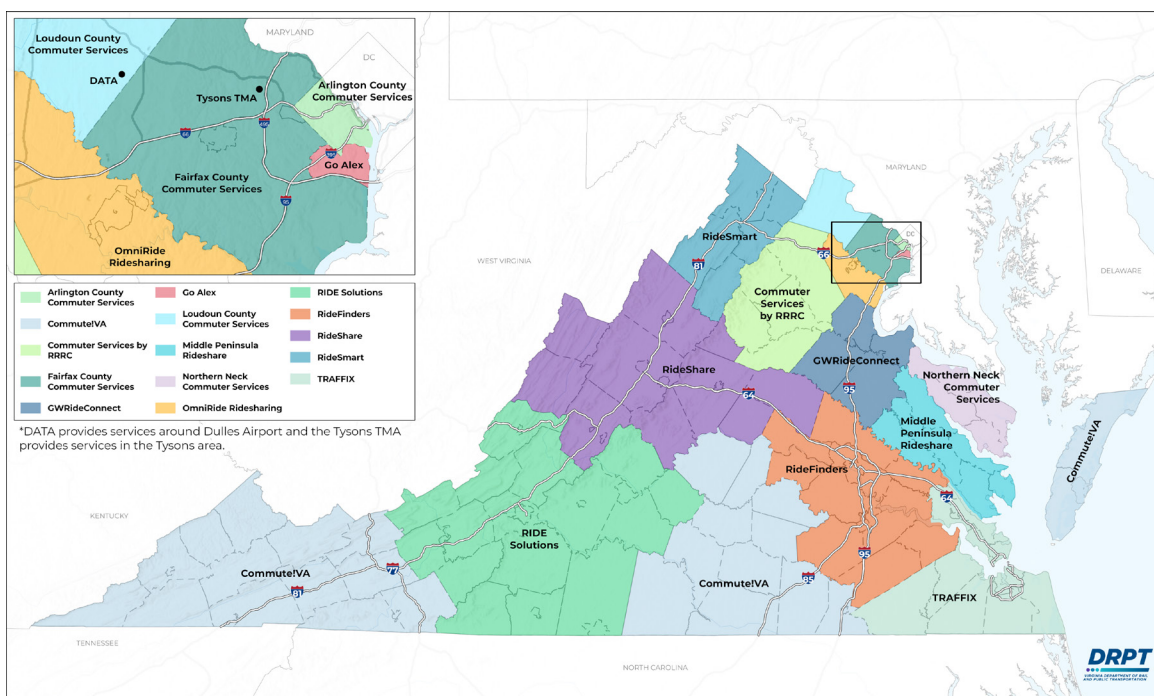
Crossroads Community Services	Region Ten Community Services Board
Danville-Pittsylvania Community Services	Rockbridge Area Transportation System, Inc.
Eastern Shore Area Agency on Aging	Senior Connections, The Capital Area Agency on Aging
Eastern Shore Community Services Board	Senior Services of Southeastern Virginia
Edwards Adult Day Center	Serenity, Inc
Friends 4 Recovery Whole Health Center	Shen-Paco Industries
Friendship Industries, Inc.	SOAR365
Giles Health & Family Center	Southern Area Agency on Aging
Goochland Powhatan Community Services	St. Joseph's Villa
GoochlandCares	Stepping Stones, Inc.
Grafton School, Inc.	STEPS, Inc.
Greater Richmond Transit Company	Suffolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority
Hampton-Newport News Community Services Board	The Arc of Greater Williamsburg
Hanover County	The Arc of Harrisonburg and Rockingham
Heart Havens, Inc.	Valley Community Services Board
Henry County	Valley Program for Aging Services
Horizon Behavioral Health	VersAbility Resources, Inc.
JAUNT, Inc.	Western Tidewater Community Services Board
Junction Center for Independent Living	Yellow Cab of Newport News, Inc.
Lake Country Area Agency on Aging	

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, other routes, or other modes. TDM includes ridesharing arrangements such as carpools, vanpools, and bus pools.

Governor James Gilmore issued an executive order in 1999 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 10: Transportation Demand Management in Virginia



Commuter Assistance Program	Operating Agency
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
Loudoun County Commuter Services	Loudoun County Department of Transportation
MidPenRideShare	Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission
Northern Neck Commuter 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 Planning District Commission
TRAFFIX	Hampton Roads Transit
Tysons TMA	Tysons Partnership, Inc.

Ridership Numbers and Program Performance

The COVID-19 pandemic that broke out in the United States in spring 2020 threw transportation into a state of uncertainty after the virus disrupted industries and upended norms. Virginia, like most states, issued orders for people to stay at home in an effort to limit social interactions and prevent the spread of the virus. People who usually commuted to offices instead worked from home. They ordered food and services online to be shipped to their homes instead of traveling to businesses. Rather than visiting doctors in person for basic healthcare services, they spoke over the phone or computer.

The public transportation and rail industries were hit particularly hard by the pandemic, forcing them to adapt and demonstrate resilience and reliability while still prioritizing the health of the public and their employees.

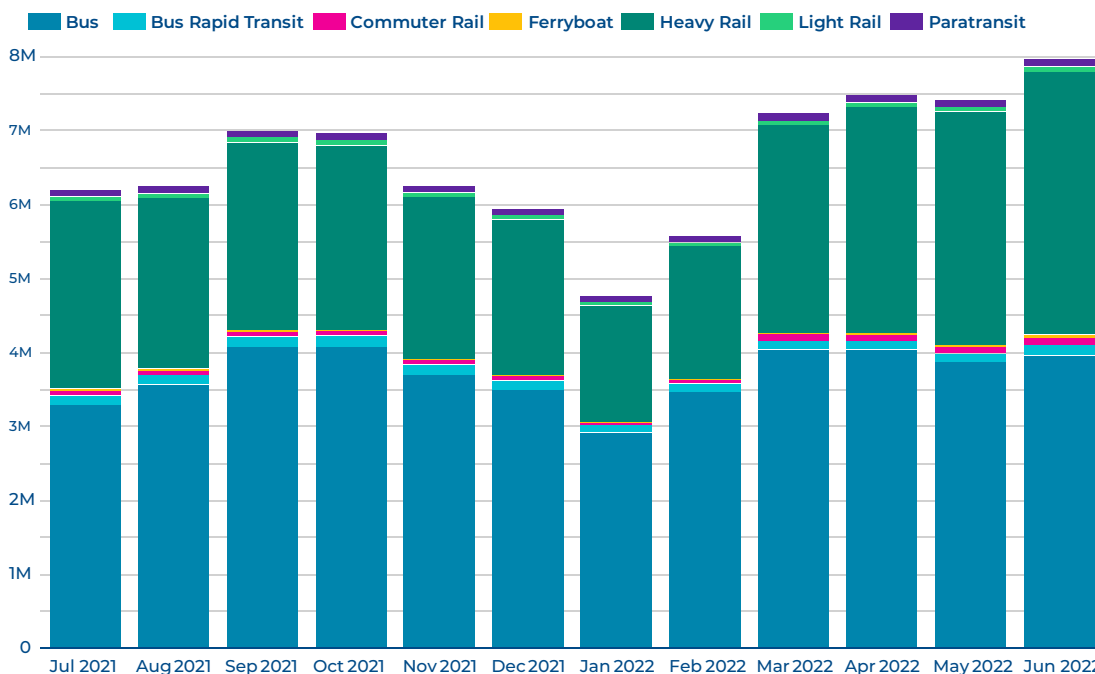
COVID-19 vaccinations first became available in December 2020, and as more and more people became vaccinated, Virginia lifted its remaining pandemic restrictions in spring 2021. Virginians were eager to reengage in their communities, and transit ridership began to slowly increase.

Meanwhile, freight rail was able to keep goods moving as consumers made the sudden jump from in-person shopping to online purchasing, causing a surge in buying. While facing supply chain disruptions, the freight industry remained nimble, highlighting the value of railroads to American households. With online shopping likely to continue into the future, intermodal rail service will hold an important role in the e-commerce supply chain to ensure the nation’s supply chains keep moving. The Port of Virginia continues to see record-setting volumes of cargo moving through the Port by both truck and rail, despite struggles of many of its competing ports.

Statewide Transit Ridership

Ridership in Virginia declined 61% between FY20 and F21. While ridership has not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels, it has rebounded — a 56% increase in FY22 compared to the prior fiscal year. Transit agencies also dealt with serious labor challenges that resulted in a shortage of drivers and maintenance staff. Transit providers made difficult decisions during the pandemic to reduce or remove service, and now they’re working to restore and improve service to attract transit riders back.

Figure 11: Fiscal Year 2022 Statewide Transit Ridership



Transit agencies are also rethinking their models around commuters. With the rollout of vaccines, companies began developing policies for employees to return to the office. Employees who work a hybrid schedule of one or more days in the office and the other days remotely from home will consider what is the most cost- and time-effective way to commute. Recent transit agency decisions reflect this shift in commuter needs. For example, OmniRide in Northern Virginia broke from its commuter-based model of trips during peak service to doing all-day, localized service.

Transit industries had to come up with new strategies and show innovation to meet the needs of people who still relied on them to get services or to jobs that could not be performed from home. At the beginning of the pandemic, there was a lot of fear of riding transit because people would be sitting in a small enclosed space with other passengers. To assuage those fears, transit agencies adopted regular cleanings and sanitizations — a practice they have maintained. Transit agencies have also maintained some Plexiglass barriers for operators. Even though a federal mask mandate for public transportation is no longer in place as of April 2022, wearing masks remains optional for transit riders.

At the beginning of the pandemic, about two-thirds of the transit agencies in Virginia went zero fare in an effort to reduce human bottlenecks on buses. Over time, many agencies began collecting fare again. However, several agencies still maintain zero-fare operations, which has contributed to a rebound in ridership. For example, by the end of FY22, Greater Richmond Transit Company, Petersburg Area Transit, and Mountain Empire Older Citizens Inc. had higher ridership than before the pandemic. Agencies have mainly supported zero-fare operations through federal assistance, DRPT's Transit Ridership Incentive Program, and local revenues.

DRPT Assists in Ridership Recovery

DRPT launched a marketing campaign in spring 2022 to rebuild confidence in public transportation and improve ridership. Using a mix of media to expand reach, the Rediscover Your Ride campaign aimed to increase awareness of safe travel and encourage residents to return to transit services used prior to the pandemic. FTA awarded \$247,500 in COVID-19 Research Demonstration funds to DRPT in early 2021 to assist with this effort as well as to develop an agency-focused comprehensive strategies handbook aimed at supporting transit partners looking to recover ridership and regain operations in a safe and effective manner.



Advertisements ran between April 1 and June 30 to coincide with businesses and governments

encouraging employees to return to the office. Advertisements included a video spot, print ads, a radio spot, digital banner ads, and social media posts featuring local transit systems.

Ad placement was statewide and customized by cross referencing between DRPT’s transportation districts and traditional media markets. By estimating which areas might benefit the most from a larger media campaign, the campaign focused efforts on regions with ridership at reduced levels.

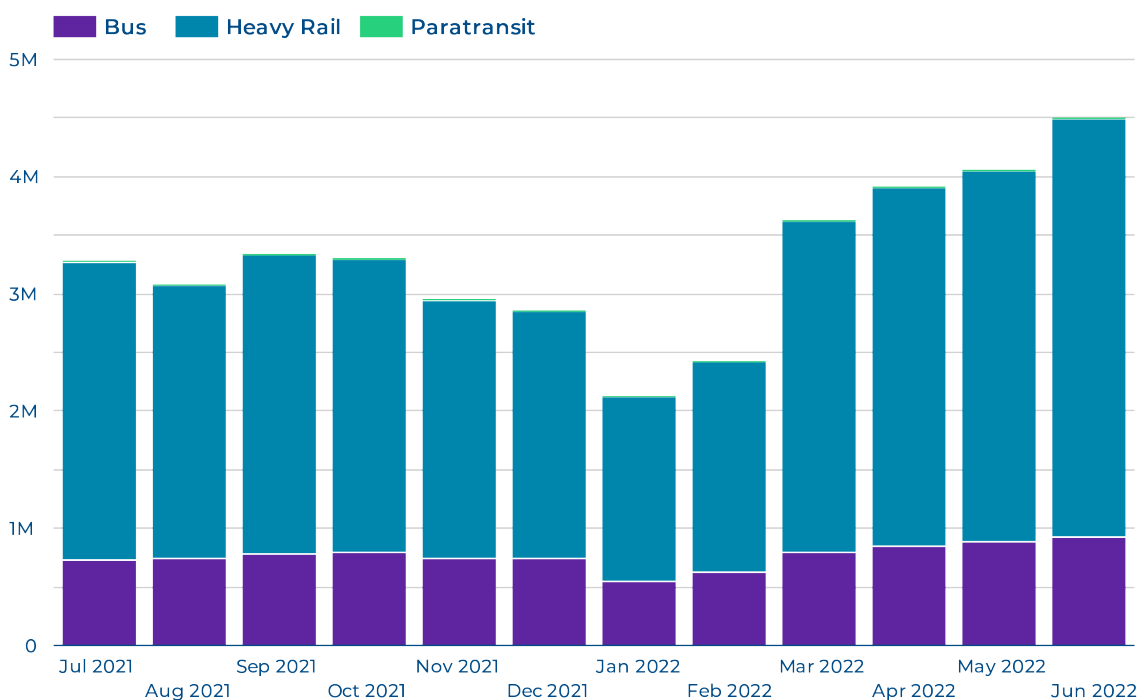
The handbook covered an array of topics, including modifying operations, navigating staffing shortages, developing community partnerships, and working toward long-term resiliency. DRPT developed the handbook through a comprehensive research process that consisted of reviewing local, state, and national guidance from industry leaders, combined with interviews with Virginia transit agencies.

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority Ridership

The Northern Virginia Transportation Commission reports 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.

Continued telework and a slow return to physical offices has significantly reduced office workers and federal employees — Metro’s largest customer base — using transit. Additionally, setbacks, including a rail car defect discovered during a National Transportation Safety Board probe into an October 2021 derailment that forced the system to run at a reduced level, affected ridership.

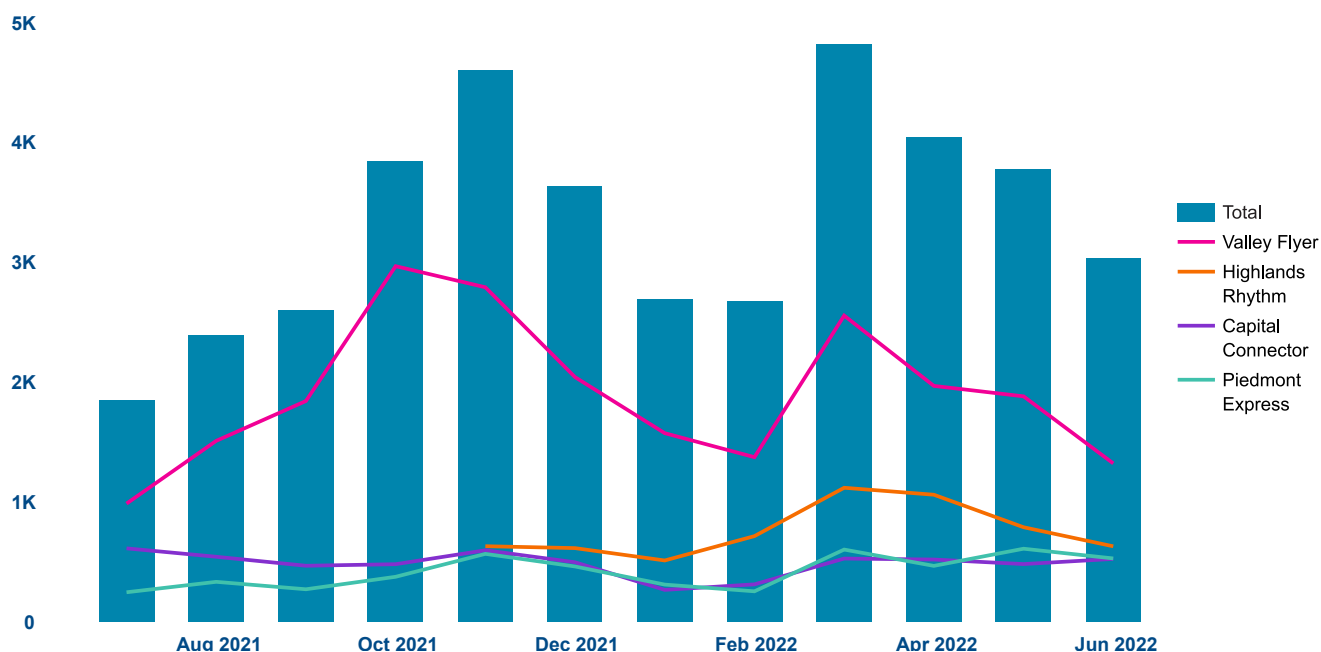
Figure 12: Fiscal Year 2022 WMATA Ridership



Virginia Breeze Ridership

DRPT manages the **Virginia Breeze**, which provides regularly scheduled fixed route service in Western and Central Virginia. Ridership for the Virginia Breeze intercity bus program sharply declined during the COVID-19 pandemic. Ridership began to steadily climb again in summer 2021, and it returned to pre-pandemic levels by spring 2022.

Figure 13: Fiscal Year 2022 Virginia Breeze Ridership



The Valley Flyer began operations in 2017, and the Piedmont Express and Capital Connector both began service in 2020. The Highlands Rhythm launched in November 2021.

TDM Program Performance

DRPT collects data from vanpool providers and commuter assistance programs operated by transit agencies on the number of trips and vehicle miles traveled reduced through its programs. The COVID-19 pandemic contributed to a sharp decline in people needing TDM programs, such as vanpools, since they were teleworking. However, ridership continued to gradually increase in FY22 as more people returned to offices to work. These programs continue to be valuable in reducing congestion on roads.

Trips and Miles Reduced by Virginia TDM Programs

Virginia TDM programs	FY20	FY21	FY22
Trips reduced	718,883	1,017,252	1,148,140
Vehicle miles traveled reduced	31,113,908	37,090,596	43,259,206

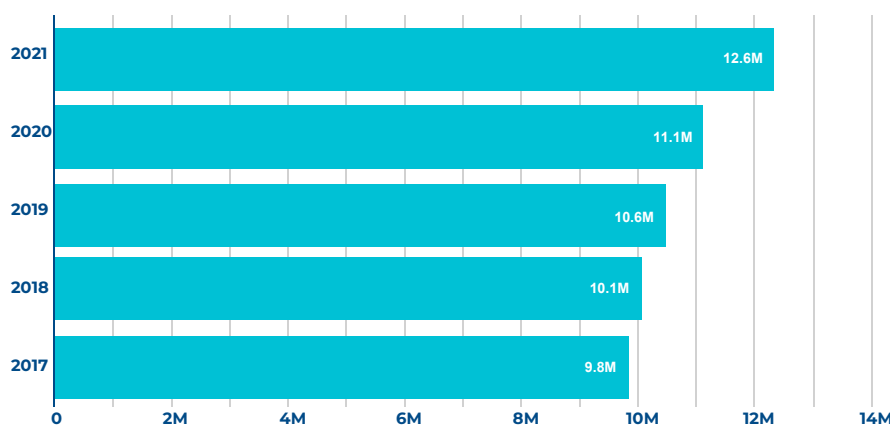
As of June 2022, there were 435 vanpools operating in the Commonwealth: 338 in Northern Virginia, 58 in the Greater Richmond area, 21 in Hampton Roads, and 18 in all other regions.

Commuter assistance programs report data to DRPT for ridematch requests, which are requests from the public seeking commute options for carpooling, vanpooling, or transit. These requests are made through one of Virginia’s 17 commuter assistance programs, mostly online through program websites or mobile apps. There were 27,701 ridematch requests made in FY22.

Rail Program Performance

To gauge the performance of its rail programs, DRPT calculates the number of trucks diverted from Virginia’s highways through funded projects. This measure is calculated using program agreement performance reported by the agency’s rail partners annually. On average, one train carload removes the equivalent of 3.4 truckloads from the highway.

Figure 14: Trucks Diverted from Virginia Highways Through DRPT-funded Projects (Calendar Years 2017-2021)



The programs include the Rail Enhancement Fund, the Shortline Railway Preservation Fund, the Commonwealth Rail Fund, and the Rail Industrial Access Fund.

Metrics and Transparency

Creating the Open Data Portal

DRPT is committed to having a data-driven approach to allocating resources to improve outcomes of investments. A new way the agency is doing that is with its **Open Data Portal**, which launched in fall 2021 and gives the public an unprecedented insight into DRPT’s operations.

The Open Data Portal is a public repository for key data. It houses archives of DRPT’s Six-Year Improvement Plans, budgets, and financial information. Users can also peruse geospatial data,

a dashboard of multi-year projects, and performance metrics such as transit ridership numbers and truck diversion as a result of rail projects.

Designed with the public in mind, its clear structure and organized files make it easy to find data on the Commonwealth's rail and public transportation grants, ongoing projects, performance tracking, and more. The Open Data Portal achieves the goal set out by the Commonwealth and by the agency to provide for greater accountability and maintain a superior level of transparency with the public.

Making Efficient and Responsible Investments in Transit

Making Efficient and Responsible Investments

in Transit (MERIT) is a statewide grants program that provides financial assistance to support public transportation services throughout Virginia. DRPT created MERIT to address reforms to the agency's statewide public transportation grant programs made by Chapters 854 and 856 of the 2018 Acts of Assembly. The MERIT program has the following components: operating assistance, capital assistance, demonstration project assistance, technical assistance, and public transportation intern program.



Statewide Capital and Operating Assistance

DRPT uses a prioritization process to allocate and assign resources to capital projects and investments identified as the most critical. The 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. Under the capital assistance program, projects are prioritized under three categories: state of good repair, minor enhancements, and major expansions.

DRPT provides funding for operating expenses for eligible public transportation services, including local bus, commuter bus, commuter

CAPITAL ASSISTANCE PROJECTS FY20 TO FY23

722 REPLACEMENT VEHICLES

68 EXPANSION VEHICLES

175 REVENUE VEHICLE REHABILITATIONS

383 MINOR ENHANCEMENT PROJECTS

11 MAJOR EXPANSION PROJECTS:

- ARLINGTON (4)
- ALEXANDRIA (2)
- VIRGINIA RAILWAY EXPRESS - SYSTEMWIDE (2)
- HAMPTON ROADS (2)
- BLACKSBURG (1)

rail, light rail, bus rapid transit, demand response, paratransit, and ferry services. DRPT follows a performance-based methodology to determine the allocation of operating assistance funds to each agency. The program funds no more than 30% of all operating expenses borne by public transportation operators.

The Transit Service Delivery Advisory Committee (TSDAC) advises DRPT and CTB in the refinement of transit program formulas and prioritization methods and in the development of transit planning requirements. TSDAC met throughout FY22 to conduct the required triennial review of the MERIT program.

The eight TSDAC members include: two Virginia Transit Association appointees, a Community Transportation Association of Virginia appointee, a Virginia Municipal League appointee, a Virginia Association of Counties appointee, and three DRPT appointees.

TSDAC voted unanimously to recommend the MERIT Capital Assistance policy changes for public comment and CTB approval. Those changes include:

1. Providing incentives for transit agencies to seek federal discretionary funding:
 - i. Establishment of a state capital discretionary support set-aside
 - ii. Reduce local match requirements for projects awarded FTA discretionary funding
2. Update scoring methodology to allow for just-in-time delivery of replacement vehicles and other assets
3. Update scoring methodology to include more project categories which will allow DRPT to differentiate more between certain project types
4. Add an “Incentive Scoring” category which will reward projects that achieve statewide priority goals
5. Update scoring methodology for major expansion projects to simplify and streamline the scoring process

TSDAC also discussed making changes to the MERIT Operating Assistance Formula for FY24. By June 2022, TSDAC did not take any action on the formula and decided to return to the matter in spring 2023. The committee reached a general consensus that the MERIT Operating Assistance formula is functioning as intended. There are some transit agencies that could see a decrease in FY24 Operating Assistance funding compared to their FY21 funding levels, but as of June 2022, DRPT recommended no changes to the CTB Operating Assistance policy.

Partnership with WMATA

In the 1960s, Virginia, Maryland, the District of Columbia, and the United States Congress jointly established an interstate compact creating the Washington Metropolitan Area Transportation Authority (WMATA or Metro). The compact members include the District of Columbia and

Maryland as well as the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission 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 also become a full jurisdictional funding partner like the other Virginia compact members. With almost 100 million riders in Virginia annually pre-pandemic, Metro is the largest transit provider in the Commonwealth.



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 Council of the District of Columbia followed Virginia's lead by passing their own funding packages later in 2018. WMATA received funding from this dedicated revenue stream from Virginia for its fourth year in FY22. During FY22, WMATA utilized dedicated capital funding to continue state of good repair work on Metrorail system facilities and infrastructure and to initiate planning for the procurement of its next generation of rail cars (8000 Series).

The average total annual operating and capital subsidies for FY18-23 is \$2.5 billion. By jurisdiction that is: 19% from the federal government, 29% from the District of Columbia, 29% from Maryland, 14% from Virginia, and 9% from the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC) jurisdictions.

State Oversight

Chapters 854 and 856 of the 2018 Acts of Assembly increased oversight of WMATA's actions and implemented financial penalties should the agency not meet certain requirements. In July, WMATA supplied its annual certification to the Commonwealth Transportation Board that it had complied with these requirements for FY22. The requirements are related to:

- **Board Governance**
 - Alternates cannot participate at a WMATA Board meeting when a director is present
 - WMATA must approve bylaws prohibiting the participation of alternates
- **Operating Assistance Cap**
 - The total Virginia operating subsidy in the approved WMATA budget cannot increase by more than 3% from the operating subsidy in the prior year's budget, subject to certain legislative exceptions

- **Capital Improvement Plan**

- The WMATA board must adopt a detailed capital improvement plan covering the current fiscal year and the next five fiscal years and hold a public hearing in a locality embraced by NVTC

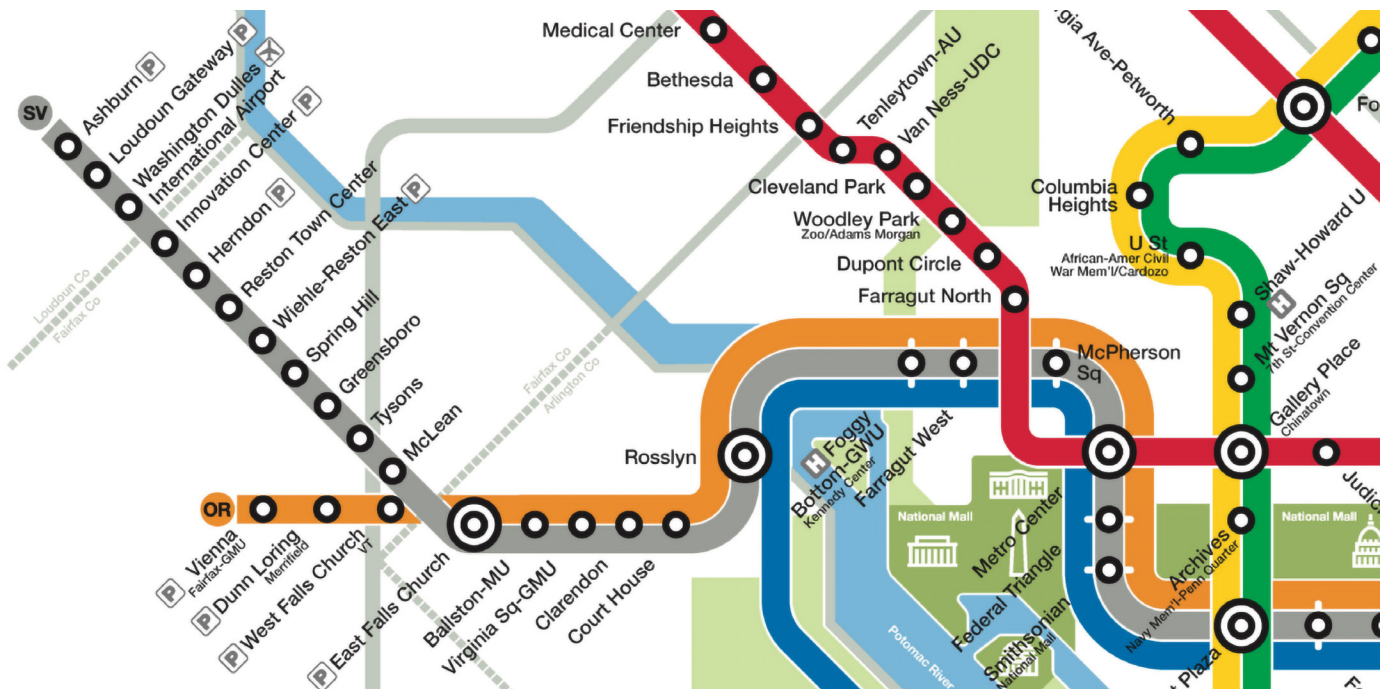
- **Strategic Plan**

- WMATA is required to adopt a strategic plan every three years and hold a public hearing in a locality embraced by NVTC

DRPT reported to the CTB in September 2022 that WMATA was in compliance with the statutory requirements and CTB policy for FY22.

Silver Line Phase 2 Extension Project

The Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA) completed Phase 1 of the Metrorail Silver Line in 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 construction is complete and will extend the Silver Line by six stations to Reston Town Center, Herndon, Washington Dulles International Airport, and Ashburn in Loudoun County. In November 2021, MWAA announced that the main line rail infrastructure for the Silver Line Phase 2 Extension Project had reached substantial completion. The rail yard subsequently reached substantial completion in December. WMATA began operational testing of the rail line in

December, which lasted six months. In June 2022, WMATA began operational readiness testing of the rail extension from MWAA. WMATA started passenger service in November 2022.

Potomac Yard Metro Station Project

The Potomac Yard Metro Station Project broke ground in Alexandria in December 2019, and the station is slated to open in 2023. The Potomac Yard Station will be located in the southern end of National Landing on Metro's Yellow and Blue lines between the existing Braddock Road and Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport stations.

Yellow Line Tunnel and Bridge Rehabilitation Project

In September 2022, WMATA began a planned rehabilitation of the Yellow Line tunnel and bridge that connect its Virginia and D.C. stations. Both the tunnel and bridge are nearing their life expectancy, and WMATA has identified the steel-lined tunnel as the agency's top repair priority. WMATA plans to strengthen the tunnel lining to stop water intrusion and subsequently replace miles of communications cables that are used by multiple jurisdictions.

10-Year Strategic Plan for Joint Development

In an effort to diversify its income streams and boost ridership, WMATA unveiled a 10-year plan in April 2022 to build housing and commercial space on 20 properties that it owns. WMATA projects that developing the properties will generate thousands of new customers, up to \$40 million in annual fare revenues, and \$50 million in annual lease revenues. At the same time, WMATA hopes to help the region grow businesses and housing that generate tax revenue.

WMATA owns more than 550 buildable acres near 40 of its rail stations. Since 1975, it has built 55 projects covering 17 million square feet at 30 stations through public-private development agreements. WMATA's remaining buildable property includes land at or around 40 stations with the potential for 31 million square feet of development and 26,000 homes. Six of the sites are in Northern Virginia.

7000 Series Railcars

On October 12, 2021, a Metrorail Blue Line train derailed in a tunnel between Rosslyn and Arlington Cemetery with 187 passengers on board. There were no serious injuries reported. The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) initiated an investigation — joined by WMATA, the Washington Metrorail Safety Commission (WMSC), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) — that found that an axle on one of the 7000 Series railcars in the derailment was out of compliance with specifications for the wheel and axle assembly. Additional 7000 Series railcar inspections conducted after the derailment found similar defects

in 7000 Series railcars not involved in the derailment. On October 17, the WMSC issued an order removing all 7000 Series railcars from service until WMATA could implement a plan providing for their safe return.

On May 19, 2022, WMATA submitted a plan to return 64 of 748 railcars to service with daily inspections to the WMSC, which had no objections. WMATA has been successful in completing daily inspections on the railcars. WMATA returned the railcars to service in June 2022. In August, WMATA submitted a revised plan requesting all 7000 Series railcars be allowed in service except the 56 that have failed inspections since 2017. In October, WMSC approved the return of all 7000 series railcars.

Costs of COVID-19 Recovery

Like other public transportation agencies, COVID-19 significantly affected WMATA's finances. Ridership decreased, particularly from commuters who switched to teleworking, as did fare revenue.

The WMATA board approved a \$2.1 billion operating budget and a \$2.6 billion capital budget for FY22. The budget included final federal Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act distribution amounts. The agency projected a balance of \$865 million in available federal COVID relief funding for Fiscal Years 2023 and 2024.

In March 2022, the WMATA Board approved the FY23 operating and capital budgets and a \$12.4 billion six-year Capital Improvement Program. The \$2.3 billion operating budget complies with the statutory 3% cap on the annual growth of the Virginia operating subsidy. WMATA plans to utilize \$673 million in federal relief funds during FY23, leaving a small available balance remaining for use in FY24. The FY23 budget maintains current bus service levels, and rail would operate at 10-minute headways during peak hours, 12-minutes during midday hours, and 15-minutes in the evening.

WMATA projects it will have a deficit of approximately \$185 million in FY24 after using its remaining federal pandemic relief funding, which was supplemented by an additional \$120 million in American Rescue Plan funding awarded in March 2022.

Implementing the Transit Ridership Incentive Program

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

DRPT implemented the program in FY22. For FY22 and FY23, DRPT allocated TRIP funding to a total of 12 projects



that support zero fare/low income or regional connectivity. So far, DRPT has allocated \$24.5 million to multi-year zero-fare/low-income projects and \$6.2 million to multi-year regional connectivity projects. TRIP grant recipients launched their projects in summer 2022.

DRPT conducted an outreach process between fall 2020 and winter 2021 to gauge the needs of transit providers at a time when the role of transit changed because of the COVID-19 pandemic. It became apparent that there would be a higher demand for zero-fare and low-income projects.

General Assembly Funding Action

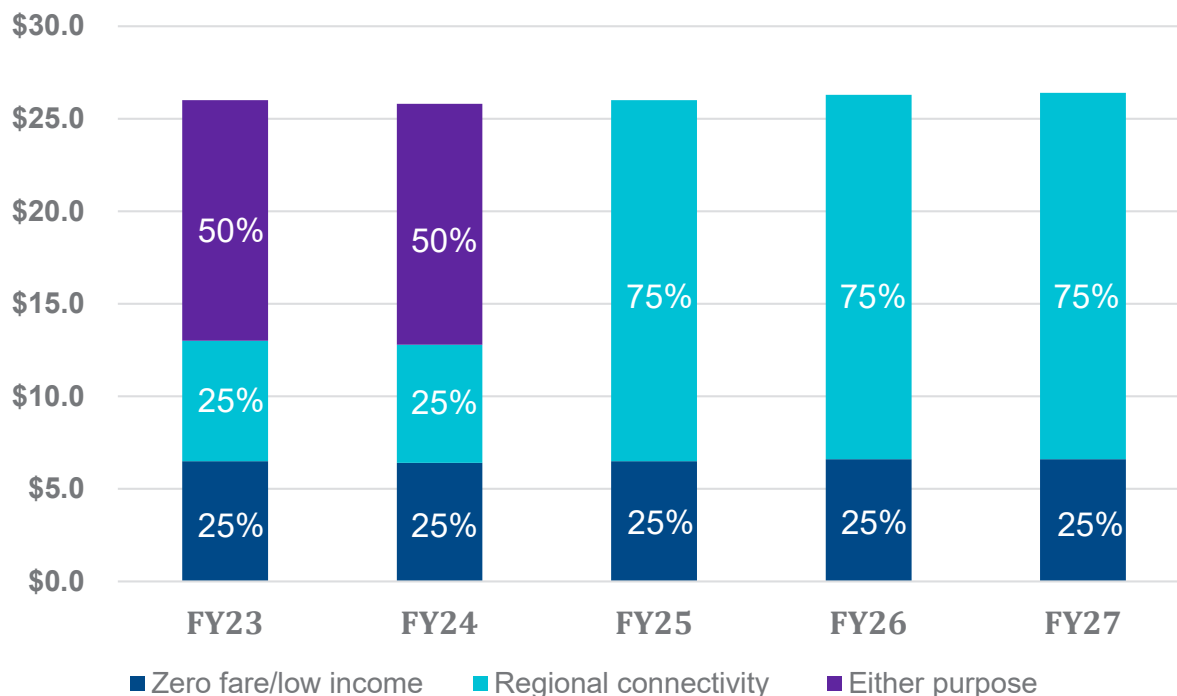
Virginia Code § 33.2-1526.3 initially stated that a maximum of 25% of TRIP funding could be allocated to programs to reduce barriers to transit use for low-income riders, requiring a minimum of 75% of the funds be allocated to regional connectivity projects. Due to the increased interest in programs for zero-fare and low-income riders, the 2021 General Assembly allocated an additional \$10 million in 2021 Transportation Initiative Funding toward those projects in FY22. This additional funding allowed DRPT to fund more zero-fare and low-income projects during TRIP’s pilot year. This additional zero-fare and low-income funding was only allocated for FY22.

Due to the increased demand for zero-fare and low-income TRIP projects compared to the regional connectivity applications as well as transit agencies’ focus on attracting riders to return to the systems, the 2022 General Assembly approved changes to the funding allocations to provide more flexibility to the zero-fare projects. A minimum of 25% of funds are allocated to each type of project, and the remaining 50% can be used on either zero-fare or regional connectivity projects. This change to the funding distribution will sunset on July 1, 2024. Additionally, the General Assembly provided \$5 million in general funds from the Appropriations Act into TRIP to be used for regional connectivity programs aimed at congestion reduction and mitigation through the provision of long-distance commuter routes.

Figure 15: Fiscal Years 2022-2027 TRIP Funding (in Millions)

	FY22	FY23*	FY24*	FY25	FY26	FY27	Total
Total	\$20.0	\$25.9	\$25.6	\$26.0	\$26.2	\$26.4	\$150.0

Figure 16: Funding Split for TRIP Regional Connectivity and Zero Fare/Low Income (FY23-FY27)



*FY23 and FY24 funding: Minimum funding is shown because the remaining 50% of funds can be flexed between the two project types corresponding with HB 142/SB 342.

For the zero-fare and low-income projects, the policy provides for three-year pilots with a funding step-down over the life of the pilot project. Funding is provided for three years, but it is anticipated the pilots will run for four years, with the agencies fully funding the fourth year.

For the regional routes projects, the policy provides for up to five-year pilots, with a funding step-down over the life of the project. While each grantee has the flexibility to determine a funding step-down that suits the agency, it is required that the state share will decrease each year, never exceeding 80% of eligible costs. Additionally, for the entire duration of the project, the state share should not exceed 50% of total project costs.

TRIP Projects

There are seven regions that are eligible for TRIP regional connectivity funding: Blacksburg, Charlottesville, Hampton Roads, Lynchburg, Northern Virginia, Richmond, and Roanoke. Funding is required to be distributed to each eligible region proportionally within a five-year period, based on their regional population. DRPT prioritized reviewing each application through the lens of congestion mitigation.

DRPT received 14 applications in FY22: three regional connectivity applications totaling \$2.2 million, and 11 zero-fare/low-income applications totaling \$11.9 million. Using its scoring criteria,

DRPT recommended funding for nine projects: six zero-fare/low-income and all three regional connectivity projects.

DRPT received three TRIP applications for FY23: two zero-fare and low-income projects totaling \$927,400, and one regional connectivity project totaling \$477,773.

The TRIP grantees are geographically diverse, and the sizes of grantees vary, including large urban, small urban, and rural transit agencies.

Fiscal Years 2022 and 2023 TRIP Projects

Regional Connectivity Projects FY22

- Increase frequencies on Greater Lynchburg Transit Company route 4, which operates on a major commercial corridor in the City of Lynchburg. Route 4 accesses the regional airport, train station, Liberty University, and other locations of interest.
- Deploy a Petersburg Area Transit express route that connects the City of Petersburg and Emporia. This project will also serve Prince George County, Sussex County, and Greenville County.
- Provide last-mile accessibility to employees within the Hampton Roads naval base. This project will incentivize employees to arrive at the base on foot, bicycle, or transit, and then a circulator will provide them with mobility options within the base.

Regional Connectivity Projects FY23

- Implement mid-day and off-peak service for OmniRide Manassas Metro Express Bus. This route services key destinations, including Tysons Corner, the Metro Silver Line, and the Manassas Campus of the Northern Virginia Community College.

Zero-Fare and Low-Income Projects FY22

- Deploy system-wide zero-fare operations for all DASH services in the City of Alexandria.
- Deploy zero-fare operations on all Greater Richmond Transit Company local routes, express routes, and GRTC Care services (paratransit).
- Provide half-fare SmartTrip cards for Fairfax riders with annual income that meet the 225% federal poverty levels by threshold.
- Deploy system-wide zero-fare operations for all Mountain Empire Older Citizens services.
- Deploy system-wide zero-fare operations for all Fredericksburg Regional Transit (FRED) services.
- Deploy system-wide zero-fare operations for all Charlottesville Area Transit (CAT) services.

Zero-Fare and Low-Income Projects FY22

- Deploy system-wide zero-fare operations for all City of Fairfax (CUE) services.
- Deploy system-wide zero-fare operations for Petersburg Area Transit services.

Program Challenges and Opportunities

At the end of the FY23 application period, DRPT had \$5 million remaining for regional connectivity projects designated and approved by the 2022 General Assembly. DRPT reopened the TRIP application period in September 2022 to accept applications for regional connectivity projects aimed at supporting commuter populations.

As anticipated, TRIP's pilot year (FY22) had more applicants than its second year. Of the 39 transit systems eligible to apply for TRIP funding, a quarter of them applied in the first round. The several transit agencies that have continued to halt their fare collection at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic are now receiving TRIP funding to maintain that practice. With ridership still below pre-pandemic levels for many transit agencies, most agencies are focused on regaining their ridership and not introducing new routes.

An additional obstacle for introducing new regional service is the nationwide shortage of bus operators and maintenance employees. Agencies are already struggling with staffing their current operations, so finding employees to support new services is not a priority. According to an American Public Transportation Association survey, 71% of transit agencies have either had to cut service or delay frequencies due to a lack of staffing. Lastly, supply and demand issues caused by COVID-19 led to longer wait times for vehicles. Manufacturers are behind schedule and struggling with on-time delivery, contributing to the concerns around increasing service.

Prior to the opening of the FY24 application period, DRPT is performing targeted outreach to transit partners with potential regional connectivity projects. Through both in-person and virtual communications, DRPT is promoting the opportunities for partnership and TRIP funding. The agency will also work to streamline application materials before the next application cycle. This updated process will improve the application materials and increase the accessibility and usability of the TRIP application. DRPT will also continue outreach to FY22 and FY23 TRIP partners to capture feedback, evaluate project outcomes, and seek to continuously improve the TRIP program.

Reducing Single-Occupant Vehicle Travel on Highways

As a complement to the many transit agencies throughout Virginia, transportation demand management (TDM) also provides many benefits to Virginians by relieving congestion and lowering the number of single occupant vehicles on highways by educating and encouraging the public to change travel patterns.

As the Commonwealth's population continues to grow and more people need transportation options, transit, vanpooling, carpooling, telework, and other TDM services play a key role in moving people efficiently.

Northern Virginia Projects

There are several ongoing projects to expand the Northern Virginia Express lanes to improve commutes, save people time and money, create jobs, and generate economic activity in the **region**.

495 Next

Construction commenced in fall 2022 on a two-mile extension of the I-495 Express Lanes toward the American Legion Bridge. This extension will allow for connections to the Dulles Corridor and George Washington Memorial Parkway. This project includes a \$2.2 million investment in a new Virginia-Maryland bus service.

American Legion Bridge

A new bridge constructed with modern traffic concerns in mind will replace the American Legion Bridge. The new bridge will include four express lanes and cyclist/pedestrian access. It is expected to increase capacity by 40%, cut commute times in half, and support improved transit connections. DRPT led the I-495/American Legion Bridge Transit/TDM Study to identify a range of current and future multimodal solutions that could be implemented to reduce congestion, improve trip reliability and regional connections, and enhance existing and planned multimodal mobility and connectivity.

I-395/I-95

The I-95 Express Lanes will extend to Fredericksburg by the end of 2023, creating a 50-mile connected corridor. Capacity on I-95 during rush hour is expected to increase by two thirds as a result. A portion of toll revenues from the I-395/95 express lanes gets invested in necessary transit services, transit access, and transportation demand management **efforts**. These investments in multimodal services enhance safety and reliability in the region.

Each year, the I-395/95 Express Lanes give \$15 million to transit services and other multimodal transportation services as part of the Commuter Choice Program. This program is managed by the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission. The transit agencies that benefit are able to offer new and enhanced services as a result of the funds. The contributions have helped create or improve bus routes, expand park-and-ride lots, incentivize new vanpools, and move thousands more people through the **I-395/95 corridor**.

The following **I-395/95 Commuter Choice projects** received Commonwealth Transportation Board approval for FY22-23.

- Six OmniRide projects will renew bus service from Dale City to Ballston, Staffordboro to the Pentagon, Staffordboro to downtown D.C., and on Route 1 Local (Quantico to Woodbridge VRE), and on Prince William Metro Express (OmniRide Transit Center to Franconia-Springfield Metro). These service renewals mainly involve providing the financial support to keep the routes in operation, especially during peak periods of travel. The sixth OmniRide project will incentivize the creation or return of vanpools through incentives.
- Fredericksburg Area Transit (FRED) will create a new bus service from the Route 208 park-and-ride lot to the Fredericksburg VRE station. This project includes the purchase of two new buses, bus stop improvements, and better mobility options.
- Two Alexandria Transit Company (DASH) bus projects will enhance bus service from the Van Dorn Street Metro station to the Pentagon and from Mark Center to Potomac Yard. These projects will also improve infrastructure, including bus stops, and increase service frequency.
- Four projects in Fairfax, Spotsylvania, and Prince William Counties will renew Route 396 express bus service (Backlick North park-and-ride lot to Pentagon), enhance bus service for Route 371 (Lorton to Franconia-Springfield Metro station), create a new park-and-ride lot in Massaponax, and expand the Horner Road park-and-ride lot. These projects support carpooling, vanpooling, biking, and public transit use.



Interstate 66 Inside the Beltway

I-66 Express Lane use declined at the start of the pandemic, but traffic volumes recovered over the past year, getting closer to pre-pandemic levels. According to the **2021 performance report**,

by the end of 2021, the average daily trips eastbound on I-66 were down 10.9% and the average daily trips westbound were down by only 0.8% compared to pre-pandemic trips. The average round trip toll cost at the end of 2021 was \$6.04 compared to \$11.88 at the end of 2019. Between 2019 and 2021, eastbound average travel time on I-66 decreased by 2.5 minutes and average speed increased by 12.8 mph. Westbound average travel time on I-66 decreased by 1.1 minutes and average speed increased by 5.6 mph.

There are three aspects of the I-66 Inside the Beltway project: the I-66 Eastbound Widening Project, the I-66 Eastbound Direct Access to Metro Project, and the Washington & Old Dominion (W&OD) Trail Bridge Project. These projects add travel lanes, ramps, noise walls, and bridges, as well as make other improvements to protect pedestrians, enhance the flow of people, and improve busy intersections. All toll revenue is used to support multimodal transportation services.

The following I-66 Commuter Choice projects received Commonwealth Transportation Board approval for FY22-23. As of a **June 2022 publication**, these projects led to 16 million fewer annual vehicle miles, 83,000 hours of delay saved each year, an 84% GHG emissions reduction, and \$2 million of annual savings in commuter fuel costs.

- Two OmniRide projects will renew bus service from Gainesville to Pentagon and Navy Yard, and from Haymarket to Rosslyn.
- The City of Manassas Park, Arlington County, Fairfax County, and Prince William County will construct a Manassas Park VRE station parking garage, construct a second Ballston-MU Metrorail entrance, renew bus service from Vienna Metrorail station to Pentagon, implement a fare buy-down on I-66 commuter bus service, and create trail access to the Vienna Metrorail station.

Interstate 66 Outside the Beltway

There are a variety of projects planned and ongoing for **I-66 Outside the Beltway**.

These projects aim to provide travel options, reduce congestion, and improve infrastructure. Changes are being made throughout a 22.5-mile stretch of I-66.



Projects on Gallows Road Bridge, Nutley Street interchange, the Vienna/Fairfax-GMU Metrorail station area, the Route 123 interchange, Jermantown Road Bridge, Waples Mill Road Bridge, the Route 50 interchange, Stringfellow Road, the Balls Ford Road park-and-ride lot, the University Boulevard park-and-ride lot, and various trails prioritize multimodal initiatives to improve mobility. Project elements include new or improved bike lanes, sidewalks, shared-use paths, trails, park-and-ride lots, and other multimodal transit infrastructure.

DRPT directs the expenditure of the I-66 Outside the **Beltway Annual Transit Payment**. These funds are not part of the Commuter Choice programs administered by NVTC. The first Annual Transit Payment was transferred to DRPT for programming in FY22, and Annual Transit Payments will continue through 2066.

FY22 and FY23 funding from the Annual Transit Payments will be allocated to OmniRide and Fairfax Connector for new Commuter Bus services that will directly utilize the new Express Lanes, and to VRE to support a future expansion on VRE's Manassas Line.

All of the new commuter bus services funded by the Annual Transit Payments will directly utilize the I-66 Express Lanes and all are scheduled to begin service after the Express Lanes become fully operational in December 2022.



- In FY22, DRPT provided \$5.1 million to Fairfax County for the purchase of eight new commuter coaches. In FY23, DRPT will provide \$4.6 million to Fairfax County for the start-up and operation of new commuter bus services between Centreville and Tysons and between Chantilly and Franconia-Springfield, as well as for the extension of an existing Vienna to Pentagon service to become Centreville to Pentagon.
- In FY22, DRPT provided \$2.5 million to OmniRide for the purchase of four new commuter coaches. In FY23, DRPT will provide \$2.6 million to OmniRide for the start-up and operation of a new commuter bus service between Gainesville and Reston.

- In FY22, DRPT programmed \$8.6 million to support the creation of a VRE daily round trip on the Manassas Line. In FY23, DRPT will program an additional \$7 million for the daily round trip.

Regional Multi-Modal Mobility Program

The **Regional Multi-Modal Mobility Program** (RM3P) improves travel conditions in Northern Virginia. VDOT, DRPT and NVTA are partners in this initiative, which addresses both public and private transportation. The program has three main goals: optimize transportation systems, enhance reliability, and allow for traveler choice. The project began in 2019. The technology created as part of this initiative will continue to be used after the program completion.

RM3P has five program technology elements intended to help travelers make smarter decisions and to help service providers resolve issues more easily. The technology includes real-time data on multimodal travel conditions and commuter parking availability as well as a support system to predict transportation disruptions and possible response options.

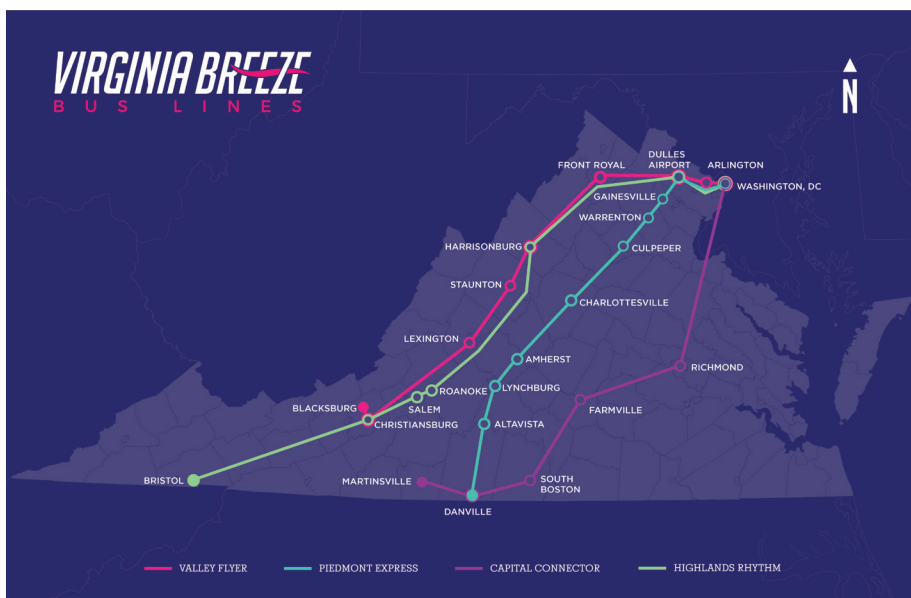
This project will continue to roll out technology elements until its completion in fall 2023.

Virginia Breeze

Intercity bus service provides limited service between two or more urban areas not in close proximity and operates on a regularly scheduled fixed-route service. The goal of intercity bus service is to connect underserved communities, such as households without vehicles, students, the elderly, and people with disabilities, to interregional bus, rail, and air travel. It also provides travel options in corridors where alternatives to personal vehicle use are limited or do not exist.

The Virginia Breeze intercity bus program launched in 2017, providing a vital transportation connection between rural Virginia communities and the national bus network. DRPT manages the service, and Dillon’s Bus Service operates it, providing vehicles, drivers, maintenance, and ticketing systems. There are

Figure 17: Virginia Breeze Intercity Bus Service Routes



four routes, and buses operate 365 days a year. The Virginia Breeze program is funded through the Federal Transit Administration’s Intercity Bus Program and ticket sales.

Ridership sharply declined during the COVID-19 pandemic. Ridership began to steadily climb in summer 2021, and it returned to pre-pandemic levels by spring 2022. All the routes posted record ridership in FY22, demonstrating the confidence in the safety of traveling and the need for the service.

Valley Flyer

The Valley Flyer launched in December 2017, providing daily service between Blacksburg and Washington, D.C., and connecting a crucial transportation artery in the Commonwealth. The route travels along the highly trafficked and congested Interstate 81 highway. The bus stops in Christiansburg, Lexington, Staunton, Harrisonburg, Front Royal, Dulles International Airport, and West Falls Church.

The Valley Flyer has surpassed expectations on every level, from on-time performance, total ridership, and operating costs expenses being met by passenger fares. Due to COVID-19, the Valley Flyer shut down service from April 5 to July 24, 2020. Since then, ridership has rebounded to levels higher than before the pandemic.

In FY22, 22,893 people rode the Valley Flyer. In October 2021, the Valley Flyer had its highest ridership to date, with 2,973 passengers. The route’s on-time performance during FY22 averaged 83%.

Highlands Rhythm

The Highlands Rhythm launched in November 2021, expanding service in Western Virginia. The bus travels along a similar route as the Valley Flyer, so given the popularity of the Valley Flyer, DRPT has high expectations for the success of the newest route.

The Highlands Rhythm connects Bristol with Washington, D.C., with stops in Wytheville, Radford, Christiansburg, Salem, Harrisonburg, Dulles International Airport, and West Falls Church. Some of the stops are the same as the Valley Flyer and will provide travelers with another departure time later in the day.

DRPT celebrated the launch of the new route in Bristol at The Birthplace of Country Music museum, where the agency’s Director delivered remarks to a crowd of local officials.



“The Virginia Breeze opens the doors for people who don’t have cars or don’t drive, who have limited means, to connect to other parts of Virginia and beyond. Intercity bus services are essential transportation infrastructure because they operate in areas that lack transportation options for Virginians.”

— DRPT DIRECTOR JENNIFER DEBRUHL

Between November 2021 and June 2022, 6,134 people traveled on the Highlands Rhythm. The route's on-time performance during that time averaged 79%.

The Highlands Rhythm was among the first multimodal projects to receive funding through the Interstate 81 Corridor Improvement Program. The program aims to make infrastructure and safety improvements to Interstate 81 and supports alternative modes of transportation to get more cars off the crowded highway and reduce the number of incidents. I-81 funding offsets a portion of the Highlands Rhythm operating costs and will fund improvements at some stop locations.



Piedmont Express and Capital Connector

The Piedmont Express and Capital Connector both began service in August 2020.

The Piedmont Express helps residents in the underserved U.S. 29 corridor and runs between Danville and Washington, D.C., with stops in Altavista, Lynchburg, Amherst, Charlottesville, Culpeper, Warrenton, Gainesville, and Dulles International Airport. Ridership has steadily increased since the route launched. In FY22, the Piedmont Express carried 5,129 passengers. In May 2022, the Piedmont Express had its highest ridership since beginning service in August 2020. The route's on-time performance for FY22 was 90%.

The Capital Connector connects Martinsville and Washington, D.C., with stops in Danville, South Boston, Farmville, and Richmond. The Capital Connector saw year-over-year growth and has met its projected ridership. The route served 5,930 riders in FY22. The route's on-time performance was 81%.

Fifth Route Study

DRPT completed a study in summer 2022 examining the possibility of adding a fifth route along the U.S. 17 corridor between Hampton Roads and Washington, D.C. While there is intercity connectivity between the regions at the endpoints of this corridor, there is no current intercity bus service operating between Hampton Roads and the Washington region on the eastern side of I-95. At this point in time, demand estimation for transit is very difficult, because it is not yet clear how travel behavior may change in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The study concluded there would be low end-to-end ridership and low farebox recovery, with high

operating costs. At this time, DRPT is not pursuing plans to add a fifth route between Hampton Roads and Washington, D.C.

Telework!VA

DRPT's Telework!VA program helps Virginia's employers and employees make their telework programs successful and productive. Telework!VA can help employers of any size develop hybrid workplace plans, provide customized training for managers and employees to maximize productivity and communication, assess technology needs, and develop telework policies.

Telework!VA has resources for employers online at www.commuteva.org, including a guide for returning to the worksite, implementing a hybrid work arrangement, using virtual meetings at the office to include at-home employees, tips for teleworkers and managers, and tips for an ergonomic and productive home office or workspace.

DRPT launched Telework!VA in 2001 to help reduce the number of commuters on Virginia's roadways by encouraging telework one or two days a week. In 2019, an estimated 134,250 trips were removed due to the policies of businesses in Northern Virginia that were assisted by Telework!VA.

At first, the program was limited to Northern Virginia, Hampton Roads, and Richmond, but it expanded to every part of Virginia in 2020 when employers needed assistance establishing telework practices during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the pandemic, Telework!VA provided technical assistance to 29 employers representing about 8,000 employees.

Vanpool!VA

A vanpool is a group of people who share a similar commute and schedule and join together to travel to and from work in a single vehicle. The vanpool group can be made up of people who live near each other or near a convenient pick up location like a park-and-ride lot, and can be co-workers or neighbors who work or live near each other. The whole group enjoys the economy of sharing their commuting expenses and the convenience of sharing the ride to work.

Vanpool groups rent or lease vans from a vanpool company and then vanpool riders



pay a monthly fee based on the lease and commuting costs (e.g. fuel and parking). Insurance, vehicle maintenance, repairs, and a backup vehicle are all covered by the vanpool company.

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 is a public-private partnership. Riders pay for the vanpool operations, and public funds are used to help start the vanpool, assist a vanpool when it loses riders, and provide a monthly stipend to collect operating data from the private vanpool company.

FTA considers vanpools a transit mode if the vanpool service provided meets the definition of public transportation. If the vanpool meets the criteria for public transportation, the service can be reported to the National Transit Database (NTD). Reporting vanpool data leads to additional FTA formula funds for the Commonwealth.

DRPT's vanpool assistance is provided through its statewide Vanpool!VA program. DRPT encourages vanpooling as an option for long commutes where transit is not available and as a way to reduce the number of vehicles on the roads. There is information about Vanpool!VA on www.commuteva.org.

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, and then enter the data into the NTD, which would increase Virginia's FTA funding. However, because of the impact COVID-19 had on vanpooling and commuting, that effort stalled and is being reinstated currently.

DRPT worked with the Central Virginia Planning District Commission and the Greater Lynchburg Transit Company to develop vanpool programs. DRPT also partnered with a vanpool provider to start vanpools in the Shenandoah Valley and Southwest Virginia regions.

Transit Technology and Innovation

Virginia Transportation Navigator

DRPT launched the **Virginia Transportation Navigator** in October 2021 to bridge the information gap that keeps too many Virginians from accessing safe and reliable public transit options. The Transportation Navigator is Virginia's most thorough database of public transit, human service, and specialized transportation providers, programs, and services. The tool is a one-call, one-click directory of public and human service transportation, as well as mobility management and travel training services.

The initiative was funded through the FTA's Mobility for All grant program and the Commonwealth Transportation Board's Innovation and Technology Transportation Fund. It aims to improve mobility through innovative coordination of transportation options and by enhancing

access to vital community services.

The free Transportation Finder widget is located on the homepage of DRPT's website and can be placed on any website — hosted by a state agency, transportation provider, nonprofit, community partner, business, or other organization — that wants to connect residents to transportation providers in the Commonwealth.

DRPT partnered with Kimley-Horn, VirginiaNavigator, and Trillium Transit to improve access to transportation information on a free and easy-to-use website. DRPT leveraged the existing structure of VirginiaNavigator and the industry standard General Transit Feed Specification (GTFS) to deliver two types of information: resource listings on the VirginiaNavigator platform as well as transit route, schedule, and stop information to help riders plan their trips through a variety of trip planning platforms, including Google Maps and other mobile apps.

Trillium Transit developed GTFS feeds on behalf of 13 Virginia transit agencies, many of which had no GTFS data prior to this project. Trillium is also assisting DRPT with maintaining the new GTFS clearinghouse, which provides access to a comprehensive list of GTFS data for all transit operators in the Commonwealth. DRPT has made additional resources available through its Open Data Portal.

DRPT received \$100,000 from the FTA in June 2022 to expand and enhance the Transportation Navigator. DRPT was one of 17 projects that received \$8.4 million in federal funding for projects aimed at improving public transportation for underserved groups, with a focus on health and wellness. The FTA's Innovative Coordinated Access & Mobility Pilot Program — which received millions more in funding from the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act — increases access for people all over the country by building partnerships among health, transportation, and other service providers.

The Transportation Navigator has received recognition since it launched. WTS, an international organization dedicated to the professional advancement of women in transportation, honored it with the Innovative Transportation Solution award. The Richmond Technology Council awarded it the Technology Innovator Public Sector Award.

Microtransit

On-demand public transit, also called microtransit, allows people to book rides in real time through a mobile app or by phone. Transit agencies send an available vehicle, usually a small van or shuttle, to pick up and drop off riders at their desired destination within a designated boundary.

Microtransit is becoming increasingly popular across the United States, particularly in small cities and rural areas, where it is cost prohibitive to operate extensive fixed-route systems. Transit agencies are using microtransit to augment their regular service to be more flexible and responsive to residents who would otherwise have to face long bus waits and transfers or who

may not live near a bus route.

DRPT is supporting four microtransit projects or studies with funding: Virginia Rural Microtransit Deployment Initiative, Hampton Roads Transit Regional Microtransit Demonstration Project, Albermarle County Transit Expansion, and Harrisonburg Microtransit Feasibility Study.

Virginia Rural Microtransit Deployment Initiative

DRPT collaborated with Bay Transit, Mountain Empire Older Citizens, and Via Transportation on the Virginia Rural Microtransit Deployment Initiative, a demonstration project that is testing the feasibility of microtransit and a service delivery model for rural on-demand transit service. This project is funded in part through the FTA Integrated Mobility Innovation Grant and the Commonwealth's Innovation

Technology Transportation Fund.

Customers can book trips on demand or in advance with a mobile app or phone number. The technology allows efficient real-time routing, trip sharing, mobile payment, and flexible scheduling within a defined service zone. The demonstration projects — Bay Transit Express in Gloucester County and METGo! in Wise County — went live in June 2021 and will run for 18 months. A report on these microtransit services will be compiled at the end of the project.



Since the launch of the initiative, both METGo! and Bay Transit Express have seen continued growth. METGo! has had over 20,000 rides, averaging 4.2 trips per rider, per week. The service had 684 active riders (i.e. riders who have booked subsequent rides with the service) as of August 2022. Bay Transit Express has had over 5,000 rides since its launch, with 199 total unique riders (i.e. new rider accounts booking trips). The project will continue to the end of 2022 with an independent FTA evaluation and plans to expand service through the use of DRPT's Demonstration Grant Program.

Hampton Roads Transit Regional Microtransit Demonstration Project

The Hampton Roads Transit Regional Microtransit Demonstration Project has four elements: planning, deploying, comparatively evaluating performance, and sharing lessons learned for on-demand microtransit services. The project requires two unique-use microtransit services during a six-month period. The two service zones are in the Cities of Newport News and Virginia Beach. The new service provides shared rides in small vehicles for short-distance trips and allows the Hampton Roads region to determine if microtransit is a feasible alternative and complement to

existing fixed-route transit. The project will help enhance organizational capacities, explore new markets for transit, and determine how these on-demand services can be used to expand the region's access to transportation by making it easier for residents to connect with existing public transit options.

Hampton Roads Transit launched its on-demand service in July 2022. HRT OnDemand enable residents to request a shared ride using a mobile app. HRT selected Via as the microtransit operator.

Albemarle County Transit Expansion

Albemarle County and Charlottesville Area Transit (CAT) will implement microtransit services in the Route 29 North and Pantops service area as part of a 12-month demonstration project. This project is based on the Albemarle County Transit Expansion Study developed by the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission. The microtransit services would remove an estimated total of 100 single-occupancy vehicle trips per day between the two service areas. CAT will be the transit operator for the microtransit services, procuring four 20-passenger transit vehicles and current transit operators. This project has a tentative start date for service in January 2023.

Harrisonburg Microtransit Feasibility Study

The Harrisonburg Department of Public Transportation is working on a microtransit feasibility study to analyze the visibility, cost considerations, and benefits of implementing on-demand microtransit service in the City of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County. The microtransit service would augment the existing fixed-route system by filling transportation gaps, such as providing late-night and weekend service coverage.

Battery-Electric Buses

Demand continues to increase for battery-electric buses (BEBs) in the Commonwealth. As of August 2022, Virginia has 26 battery-electric buses in use statewide — representing 1% of the statewide transit vehicle fleet — and 41 ordered or waiting to be ordered. The technology advancements in battery capacity and charging infrastructure, including faster charging, are reducing concerns on the range and route scheduling of these buses.

Figure 18: BEBs in Virginia Transit Fleets

Agency	Vehicle Type	Number In-Service	Number Funded	Total In-Service and Funded
Alexandria Transit Company (DASH)	Heavy duty, large bus	14		14
Blacksburg Transit	Heavy duty, articulated bus	2	2	4
Blacksburg Transit	Heavy duty, large bus	3	15	18
JAUNT Inc.	Van	1		1
Hampton Roads Transit (HRT)	Heavy duty, large bus	6		6
Fairfax County (Fairfax Connector)	Heavy duty, large bus		18	18
Greater Roanoke Transit Company (Valley Metro)	Heavy duty, large bus		3	3
Loudoun County Transit (LC Transit)	Heavy duty, large bus		3	3
Total		26	41	67
Percentage of Virginia transit fleet*		1.00%	1.58%	2.57%

*All fleet percentage calculations are based on 8/16/22 transit fleet size: 2,603

The IIJA federal legislation significantly increased the amount of funding available for the transition to battery-electric vehicles through discretionary grant opportunities. With this in mind, DRPT has been working to make sure statewide policies and planning efforts are aligned to put Virginia transit agencies in a strong position to access these funds whenever possible. Through the Technical Assistance Program, DRPT allocates funding for transit service providers to explore what it would take to transition to electric vehicles. In addition, DRPT staff supports the development of federal grant requests to guarantee that all applications coming from Virginia agencies are as competitive as possible.

To ensure the Commonwealth is taking the appropriate steps with BEBs, DRPT is conducting a comprehensive statewide low- and no-emissions vehicle study. This study is a DRPT-led project to investigate the financial and operational challenges associated with conversion to low- or no-emissions vehicle fleets, to understand where and when certain propulsion types are feasible and appropriate, and to provide process-oriented guidelines on how transit service providers can transition successfully. This study will also help transit agencies fulfill the FTA planning requirements necessary to compete for federal discretionary funding.

The long-term impacts of BEBs on MERIT Capital and MERIT Operating programs are also being taken into consideration as all research and planning occur. In addition, DRPT is continuing to coordinate with the Commonwealth's utility providers, whose partnership will be key to future BEB infrastructure, route options, and travel capabilities.

Transforming Freight in Virginia

Virginia's economic prosperity and quality of life are directly dependent on its 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. It is a valuable asset that provides an efficient means of moving freight within Virginia. The Commonwealth recognizes the privately owned rail network as part of a multimodal system with public benefits and growing economic impacts. Continued investment in rail infrastructure will ensure the mission and vision of the Commonwealth's transportation network is achieved.



Moving Goods through the Port of Virginia

Investments from the Commonwealth Rail Fund improve rail throughput to the various ports operated by the Virginia Port Authority. In the FY22 SYIP, the fund committed nearly \$45 million, with nearly \$20 million in matching funds.

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

Working with Class I Railroads

The Commonwealth has long-term working relationships with both Class I providers in Virginia, CSX and Norfolk Southern. Through major investments with the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority, Virginia is providing a pathway for the separation of freight and passenger rail in the future. The program of projects will improve passenger rail service and strengthen the freight rail network by eliminating conflict between freight and passenger rail services.

Improving the Shortline Network

The Shortline Railway Preservation Fund benefits the shortline railroads operating in Virginia by supporting a state of good repair, maintaining or raising the class of track to Federal Railroad Administration Class 2 Track Safety Standards, supporting 286,000 load capacity, and improving reliability.

The program focuses on program goals, state initiatives, cost effectiveness, and applicant priority when determining allocations. In FY22, DRPT awarded \$5.4 million (\$3.8 million state funds and \$1.6 million matching funds) in grants for eight new projects.

DRPT has diverted an increasing number of trucks from Virginia's highways to rail through its programs. In 2021, over 12.5 million truckloads were diverted from Virginia highways, a 28% increase since 2017. To gauge the performance of its rail programs, DRPT calculates the number of trucks diverted from Virginia's highways through funded projects. On average, one train carload removes the equivalent of 3.4 truckloads from the highway.



Virginia's economic prosperity and quality of life are directly dependent on its rail network...Continued investment in rail infrastructure will ensure the mission and vision of the Commonwealth's transportation network is achieved.

Expanding Rail Network with the Freight Fund

DRPT's freight program is designed to support rail infrastructure investments that expand the Virginia freight rail network. DRPT supports projects that improve, for example, railways, railroad equipment, rolling stock, rights of way, rail facilities, and engineering and design.

The freight program accepted its first round of applications in advance of the adoption of the FY23 SYIP. In total, the program includes nine rail infrastructure development projects for a total investment of approximately \$128 million. This funding includes a nearly \$62 million commitment of Commonwealth Rail Funding and over \$65 million in matching funds.

Moving Freight with the Rail Industrial Access Fund

DRPT works closely with the Virginia Economic Development Partnership and local economic development departments to ensure that businesses are aware of the Rail Industrial Access Grant Program as a potential incentive to locate or expand operations through access to the rail transportation network.

In FY22, DRPT awarded grants to six businesses:

- **Norfolk Terminal** is a multi-customer terminal which, during phase one of its expansion, will move polymers through storage, handling, packaging, and shipping in the City of Norfolk. The grant will be used to construct a new rail spur. Norfolk Terminal utilizes the Port of Virginia to receive, store, package, and ship products.
- **North Branch Resources** in Hanover County deals in calciment, a soil stabilization by-product of cement. The grant will be used to construct a new rail spur at its facility as part of its initiative to resurrect the calciment market in the southeastern United States.
- **Recycling Management Resources Richmond** in Henrico County is a supplier-focused, full-service recycler. The grant is being used to rehabilitate an existing rail spur as part of the company's initiative to expand its footprint in the Richmond market by opening new markets for inbound volume as well as allowing new outbound marketing and shipping opportunities.
- Wythe County is using the grant to build a new rail spur at its Progress Park Industrial Park facility to serve **Blue Star**, a nitrile rubber manufacturing plant which will manufacture medical/PPE and gloves as well as produce liquid nitrile rubber to ship to other domestic manufacturers.
- **Mondelez International** is a bakery which produces a variety of cookies and snacks, including Chips Ahoy, Wheat Thins, and Ritz Crackers. The company is using the grant to build a new rail spur at its Henrico County facility to support the expansion of its Oreo cookie operations.
- **Staunton River Plastics** in Pittsylvania County specializes in plastic-injected molded parts for the beauty, food and beverage, healthcare, and construction industries. The company is using the grant to reconstruct an existing rail spur to support its expansion and allow for incoming plastic pellets via rail.



During Fiscal Years 2018 through 2022, DRPT allocated over \$6 million to 16 projects, resulting in the diversion of nearly 142,300 trucks from Virginia highways and creation of over 3,000 new jobs. The private companies that received DRPT funding have invested a total of more than \$1 billion in these projects.

Figure 19: Rail Industrial Access Fund Projects (FY18-FY22)

FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Houff Corporation Steel Dynamics Roanoke Bar Division Buckingham Branch Railroad Doswell 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Superb Solutions for You, Inc. InterChange Cold Storage LLC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ARREFF Terminals Phoenix Packaging Operations LLC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ARREFF Terminals Eastern Engineered Wood Products Tucker Timber 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Norfolk Terminal LP North Branch Resources Recycling Management Resources Wythe County Mondelez International Staunton River Plastics

Providing Oversight of Public Transportation Safety

Rail State Safety Oversight

According to federal law, each state is required to have a State Safety Oversight Agency (SSOA) to oversee its public transportation rail safety. DRPT is Virginia’s designated SSOA. The state safety oversight program is funded by Federal Transit Administration (FTA) dedicated formula grants that are matched with DRPT administrative funds. DRPT’s SSO program is overseen by the Transit Rail Safety and Emergency Management Administrator with support from contracted consultant staff who are experts in fields such as train signaling, civil engineering, and rail operations.



DRPT previously provided support for the safety oversight of WMATA. On March 18, 2019, the FTA

announced the certification of the Washington Metrorail Safety Commission. With certification, independent responsibility for direct safety oversight of the WMATA Metrorail system immediately transferred from the FTA to the Commission.

As the SSOA, DRPT oversees the Hampton Roads Transit (HRT) Tide light rail system in Norfolk. DRPT's mission as the SSOA is to continuously verify that HRT is carrying out its programs to ensure the safety of its passengers and employees. DRPT has three main responsibilities in this role. First, it conducts audits and inspections — both announced and unannounced — of the Tide system. Second, it reviews and adopts accident, incident, and hazard investigations. Third, it tracks and verifies HRT's progress in correcting safety and security gaps on its light rail system.

The FTA issued its **triennial report** of the DRPT SSO program in February 2022. The report contained three areas for improvement: process for investigating allegations of noncompliance with the RTA's Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP); staffing level for the current SSO Program; and documentation of qualifications to perform SSO functions. DRPT has addressed all three areas, and FTA has concurred with those improvements.

In FY22, DRPT approved HRT's PTASP, conducted successful audits and inspections, and adopted all accident investigations and reports.

Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan

Tier I agencies are defined as 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 Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP). In the Commonwealth, Greater Richmond Transit Company, Hampton Roads Transit, and Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission have developed their own Tier I PTASPs. Hampton Roads 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 defined as small transit agencies not operating fixed rail guideways and running 100 or fewer vehicles in total during peak revenue service. DRPT sponsors the PTASP for Tier II Small Public Transportation Providers in the Commonwealth. The Statewide Tier II PTASP plan includes safety performance targets and describes safety management systems in place at the 15 agencies that participated in the Statewide Plan. DRPT formally approved the Tier II PTASP on November 4, 2021.

Looking to Fiscal Year 2023 and Beyond

DRPT leads and participates in various transit and rail planning initiatives at the state, regional, local, and operator level 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 goal — increasing the efficiency of Virginia's existing transit system and helping plan future expansions to meet the anticipated increase in demand.

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 Railway ran a future scenario model to determine the scale of improvements that may be necessary to preserve the freight network in this area if passenger trains stop at Bedford. Norfolk Southern's analysis concluded that the addition of a Bedford passenger rail stop creates non-material new delay to freight operations, assuming that Amtrak schedules adhere to the agreed-upon schedule and that Amtrak does not add service on any part of the study area above what is included in this study. DRPT presented the findings of this study to the public in fall 2021.

Bristol Passenger Rail Expansion Study

DRPT completed the **Bristol Passenger Rail Expansion Study** with ridership, cost, and revenue estimates for expanding the passenger rail service currently operating between Roanoke and Washington, D.C., to Bristol. DRPT concluded the costs to extend passenger rail service from the New River Valley to Bristol based on a single round-trip per weekday and a Saturday/Sunday round trip and on forecasted annual one-way net new riders of between 9,700 and 15,500. Capital costs range between \$535 million and \$1,541 million in 2030 dollars, and operating and maintenance costs range between \$5.01 million and \$5.56 million annually. Forecasts of operating and maintenance costs and revenue for 2030 indicate that between \$4.5 million and \$4.9 million will be required annually to provide service to Bristol. DRPT presented the findings of this study to the public in spring 2022. Discussions are ongoing about bringing Amtrak service through Bristol, including meetings with officials in Tennessee about connecting Bristol to an Amtrak route from the south.

Commonwealth Corridor Study

DRPT completed the **Commonwealth Corridor Feasibility Study** to assess the feasibility, desirability, and possibility of expanding intercity passenger rail service on an east-west, cross-state corridor linking Hampton Roads, Richmond, and the New River Valley. The study concluded that it is possible to provide passenger rail service on this corridor, albeit with substantial annual operating and capital investments for track and signals, train equipment, additional capacity, and

Commuter Tax Benefit Study

During its 2020 session, the General Assembly considered Senate Bill 277, which would establish an individual and corporate income tax deduction for commuter benefits provided by a private employer to its employees for the taxable years 2021 through 2025. DRPT completed a **study** of the impacts of this legislative language. When an employer provides a benefit to cover an employee's cost of using public transportation, DRPT estimates that 5 to 10% more employees will use these services than without the benefit.

Coordinated Human Services Mobility Plan

DRPT is in the process of completing an update to the **2019 Coordinated Human Service Mobility (CHSM) Plan**. DRPT's goal in developing the CHSM plan is to enhance access to, and the efficiency of, transportation for people with disabilities, older adults, low-income people, and veterans.

The CHSM plan identifies gaps and challenges related to its target populations. The plan was developed with significant public input received through meetings, ride-alongs, surveys, and interviews over a period of several months. The plan presents statewide and regional gaps as well as strategies to improve human services transportation in Virginia.

DRPT is working with a team of master's-eligible students from the L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs at Virginia Commonwealth University in support of this update. The team conducted a literature review of best practices in CHSM planning and needs around human services

transportation, and evaluated the 2019 CHSM plan to make recommendations for updates. The team also developed and conducted a provider survey, analyzed the results of the survey, and utilized that information to make recommendations to DRPT about additional updates. Lastly, the team developed a rider survey that DRPT will conduct and analyze to further update the plan.



DRPT expects the CHSM plan to receive public comment in fall 2022 and be completed in winter 2022/2023.

I-495 Southside Capital Beltway Transit and TDM Study

DRPT is conducting a **transit and transportation demand management study** for I-495 Southside to identify a range of solutions that can be implemented to reduce congestion, improve trip reliability and regional connections, and enhance existing and planned multimodal mobility and connectivity. The study area extends for 11 miles of I-495, or the Capital Beltway, from the Springfield Interchange (I-95/I-395/I-495) in Fairfax County, Virginia, to Maryland Route 210 in Prince George's County, Maryland. It also includes the Metrorail and Virginia Railway Express Lines between Springfield and Alexandria.

This study aims to evaluate existing transportation and future mobility solutions. The study will consider potential mobility options for travel along the I-495 Southside, including — but not limited to — carpool, rideshare, local bus, express bus, bus rapid transit, Metrorail, regional rail, and intercity rail service.

The study will help inform the Environmental Assessment underway by VDOT through the I-495 Southside Express Lanes Study that is looking at potentially extending the express lanes system on the southern section of the Capital Beltway. DRPT and VDOT are working in close coordination on these two studies.

The study began in May 2022, and DRPT expects a final report in December 2022.

Roanoke-Clifton Forge Enhanced Transportation Study

DRPT completed a **study** examining public transportation options connecting Roanoke — which Amtrak's Northeast Corridor serves — and Clifton Forge — which the Amtrak Cardinal route serves. DRPT analyzed existing and possible travel options, including direct passenger rail and public transportation alternatives. Forecasts project very low ridership for the transit corridor between Roanoke and Clifton Forge; therefore, the ridership projected does not justify the high capital, operating, and maintenance costs of enhanced transit.

Springfield-to-Quantico Transit Study

DRPT completed 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 service, bus rapid transit, or an extension of Metrorail. The study confirmed there are significant transportation needs and issues in the corridor and identified the costs and constraints of the transit options. Throughout the study, DRPT sought input from the public, including local organizations and communities along the corridor, to identify important transit improvements.

Statewide Rail Plan

DRPT updated the **Virginia Statewide Rail Plan**, which provides 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 safe, economical, and environmentally friendly.

The Statewide Rail Plan publicizes Virginia's vision for railroad transportation and lists the strategies necessary to achieve that vision. Virginia's rail network is a valuable asset that drives the economy, reduces congestion, improves safety, and saves taxpayer money. Continued investment in rail infrastructure ensures that the vision and goals for the Commonwealth's transportation network are achieved.

DRPT spent 2022 developing a rail story map, digitizing rail projects and rail performance, completing a study on the possibility of expanding intercity passenger rail service on an east-west corridor that crosses the state, and hosting public meetings to share information about the Statewide Rail Plan.

DRPT expects to complete the project by the end of 2022.

Transit Electrification Study

In FY23, DRPT will begin a year-long process to create a resource guide for Virginia's transit agencies to transition their fleets to low- and zero-emission vehicles. The guide will provide technical guidance for fleet and facilities transition planning, while also assisting agencies in taking advantage of new federal funding through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and Inflation Reduction Act, and tackling challenges in workforce recruitment, retention, and training.



Virginia Transit Equity and Modernization Study

The 2021 General Assembly passed House Joint Resolution 542 with a wide range of support. This legislation directed DRPT to conduct a needs assessment that focuses on the equitable delivery of transit services and the modernization of transit in Virginia. The legislation also called for emphasis to be placed on transit services and engagement opportunities for underserved and underrepresented communities. The study took place over two years.

There has been a renewed focus in recent years on the advancement of equity, accessibility, and technology. The **Virginia Transit Equity and Modernization Study** identified opportunities to advance equitable transit within the Commonwealth. The study team explored a wide variety of topics and engaged heavily with the public to create a proactive plan for the equitable advancement and modernization of transit in the Commonwealth.

DRPT completed an interim report in January 2022 and the final report in August 2022.