

**DRPT**

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF RAIL  
AND PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

February 2024

# Annual Report Fiscal Year 2023

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**Summary of Rail and Public  
Transportation Activities**

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# Executive Summary

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The Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) marked its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary in Fiscal Year (FY) 2023, and the agency celebrated not just by looking back on accomplishments but looking forward to the progress to come.

DRPT updated its mission and vision to reflect the agency's goals and priorities: to connect and improve the quality of life for all Virginians through an integrated multimodal network that serves every person, every business, and every need. The agency also completed work on its strategic plan, which will serve as a map for how to improve rail and public transportation in the Commonwealth. DRPT is committed to working with its rail and public transportation stakeholders to meet these goals.

The Commonwealth sees a return on its investments in rail and public transportation through improved connections to jobs and moving more trucks off of Virginia highways, among other benefits. In FY23 DRPT invested \$1.04 billion in state, federal, and local resources toward improving rail and public transportation capacity and service across the Commonwealth. Additionally, DRPT and transit agencies have brought back to Virginia millions of dollars in federal funding back to Virginia.

The COVID-19 pandemic's effects continue to be a factor on ridership, particularly with telework still being a common practice with companies. However, transit agencies have innovated and adapted to attract passengers. Transit ridership in Virginia has increased, with more than 105 million passengers on transit in FY23, an increase of 128 percent since FY21, when ridership hit its lowest because of the pandemic. The Virginia Breeze, the DRPT-managed intercity bus program, set record-breaking ridership on all four of its routes in FY23. Virginia's commuter assistance programs reduced 2.7 million vehicle trips and 93.4 million vehicle miles traveled in FY23, a 136 percent increase and 116 percent increase, respectively, over the previous fiscal year. And DRPT's rail programs are moving more and more trucks from Virginia's highways by diverting goods to trains, with 14 million trucks diverted in FY23.

Rail and public transportation partners have delivered improved service in FY23. The Washington Metropolitan Area Transportation Authority (WMATA) opened the Potomac Yard Metro Station, which served as a key factor in the decision to locate the new Virginia Tech Innovation campus, slated to open in 2024, in Alexandria. It also completed the final phase of the 23-mile expansion of the Silver Line to Washington Dulles International Airport, drawing 2 million trips since it opened in November 2022. DRPT's mission focuses on working toward public transportation accessible to all Virginians, no matter where they live. The agency has supported



organizations bringing public transit options to rural communities through microtransit. It has also funded and assisted with the testing of transit services in the Town of Bedford and Shenandoah County, which now have transit service for the first time.

New legislation will go into effect that will change the funding mechanism for the Virginia Railway Express as well as improve oversight to WMATA, two systems that have faced ridership challenges due to the federal workforce not returning to offices full time.

DRPT completed its update to the Statewide Rail Plan in 2022, 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. Continued investment in rail infrastructure will ensure the mission and vision of the Commonwealth's transportation network is achieved.

A record number of businesses have sought investments to move their goods on the rail network, easing the strain on highway infrastructure and reducing congestion. DRPT is also developing a bold plan to identify technology, equipment, and infrastructure enhancements to maximize the capacity and efficiency of Virginia's transportation network by increasing the percentage of goods moving in and out of the Port of Virginia by rail.

DRPT is always moving. The agency has begun a study on an east-west Virginia Breeze route. It is also in the middle of a year-long process to create a guide for Virginia's transit agencies to transition their fleets to low- and zero-emission vehicles, a document that will be most useful to smaller, rural transit agencies with limited resources that want to pursue a more cost efficient way to move people.

# Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation

The Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) works with rail and public transportation stakeholders to provide service to people throughout Virginia and promotes transportation options to the general public, businesses, and community decision makers.

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## About This Report

Pursuant to Virginia Code § 33.2-106, § 33.2-1526.3, and Chapter 2, Item 1, Subsection 1 of the 2022 Acts of Assembly, 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 combined these reports to produce an annual report for Fiscal Year (FY) 23.

## DRPT's Mission and Vision

**DRPT's mission** is to connect and improve the quality of life for all Virginians with innovative transportation solutions. Its vision is a connected Commonwealth with an integrated multimodal network that serves every person, every business, and every need.

## Agency Establishment

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

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*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.*

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

# 30 Years of Connecting the Commonwealth

While some things have changed at DRPT over the years, the mission has not: connecting the people, communities, and businesses in Virginia.



*30 years of connecting the Commonwealth*

In recognizing the importance of rail and public transportation, in 1992 Virginia created a separate state agency dedicated solely to connecting communities via rail and public transportation. To this day, Virginia continues to be the only state with a state agency that is solely dedicated to promoting rail and public transportation.

A lot has changed in 30 years, but DRPT's core purpose has remained the same: improving the lives of Virginians through an integrated multimodal network that connects people, communities, and businesses.

Transit is a lifeline for many Virginians. They rely on it to get to the doctor, go buy groceries, get to their job, go to church, and participate in their communities. In the last 10 years, Virginians have taken 1.6 billion trips with transit agencies. Virginia's economic prosperity and quality of life are directly dependent on its rail network. In the last decade, Virginia has become a national leader in passenger rail service.

Throughout FY23, DRPT celebrated its anniversary not just by looking back at what it has accomplished, but where it is headed. The agency launched a new website and new brand. The agency welcomed Governor Glenn Youngkin and Secretary of Transportation W. Sheppard Miller III to its office to **celebrate the anniversary**.



“We have made many transportation accomplishments over the last three decades, and we have set the Commonwealth up for future growth and prosperity.”

— DIRECTOR JENNIFER DEBRUHL





# Agency Administration

As an agency entrusted with public dollars, DRPT seeks the highest possible return on investment to maximize funding and strive to implement best practice management tools and techniques.

## Leadership

Pursuant to Chapter 2, Item 449, of the 2022 Acts of Assembly, DRPT had a maximum employee level of 72 in FY23. The agency maintains offices in Richmond and Alexandria.

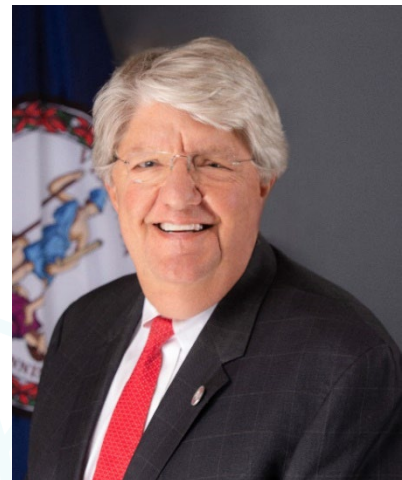
Jennifer DeBruhl, who has 30 years of distinguished public service to the transportation community, serves as the agency's Director. DeBruhl also serves as a member of the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB), chair of the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority (VPRA) board, and as a board member for several transportation organizations around the Commonwealth.

As of July 1, 2023, **DRPT's leadership** also included Deanna Oware, Chief Financial Officer; Zach Trogdon, Chief of Public Transportation; Jennifer Mayton, Chief of Administration; Emily Stock, Chief of Rail Transportation; and Andrew Wright, Chief of External Affairs and Strategic Initiatives.

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 and goods via public transportation, transportation demand management, and rail. In addition to having backgrounds in these fields, DRPT employees have experience in administration, 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;



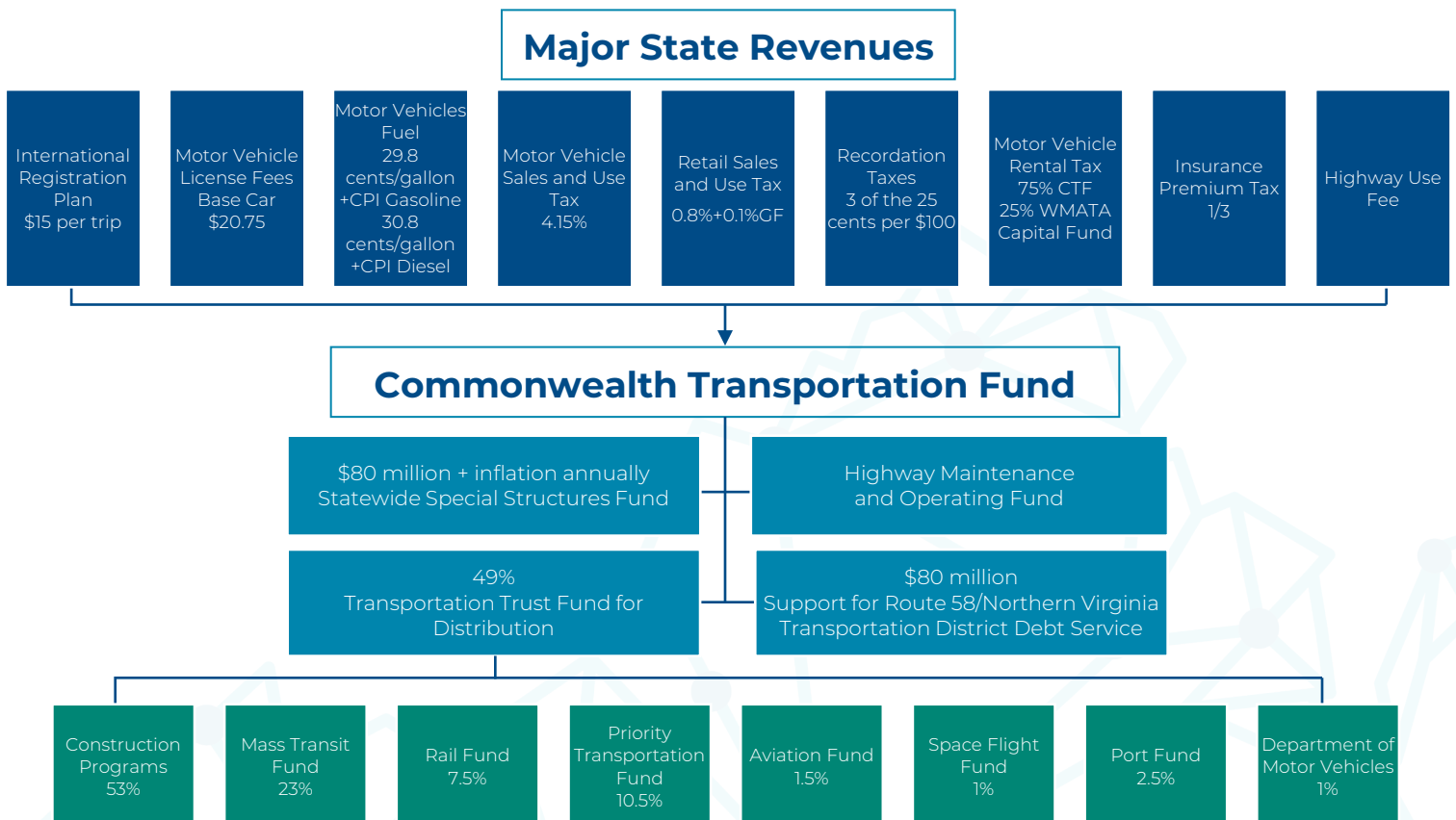
- Planning and programming new services and capital improvement projects using a data-driven methodology; and
- Providing leadership, technical assistance, and funding.

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), VPRRA, the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP), and the Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment (OIPI). In addition to attendance at the monthly CTB meetings, DRPT staffs the CTB Rail and Transit Subcommittee.

## 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 2023 Distribution of Transportation Revenues



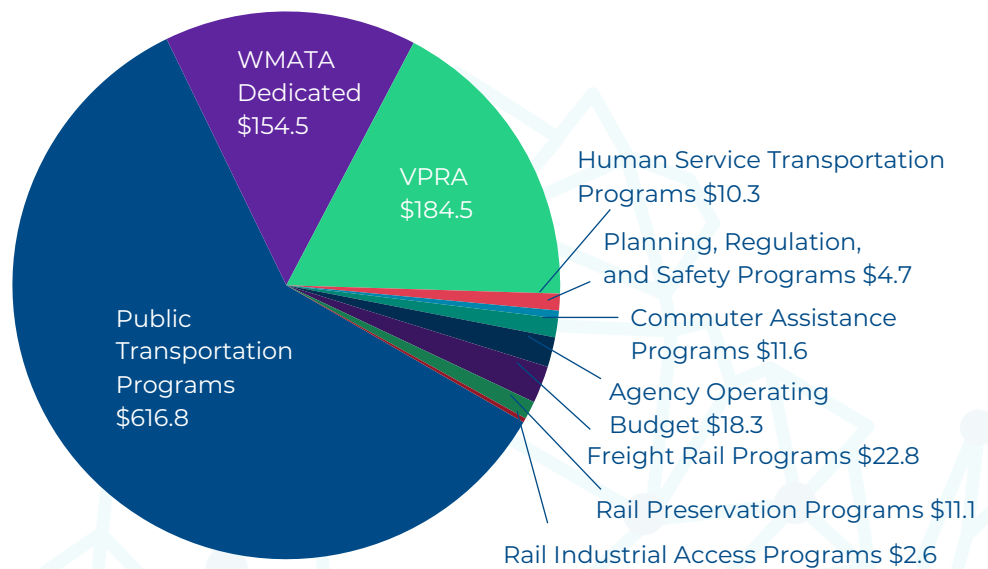
All statewide transportation revenues are deposited into the Commonwealth Transportation Fund (CTF). From the CTF, 48.76 percent are disbursed to the Transportation Trust Fund (TTF) and then distributed to meet the varying needs of different modes of transportation, and 51.4 percent are distributed to the Highway Maintenance and Operating Fund (HMOF). Within the TTF, DRPT oversees the 23 percent that the Commonwealth Mass Transit Fund (CMTF) receives. Within the Commonwealth Rail Fund, DRPT retains 7 percent of funds for rail planning and allocates the remaining 93 percent to VPRA.

In FY23, 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 FY23** were approximately \$5.8 million less than in FY22, primarily due to implementing new Code of Virginia allocation percentages in FY23 and adjusting CTB-directed funding which resulted in a \$64.3 million decrease to WMATA Assistance, offset by increases due to the mid-year FY22 uplift in revenues.

Figure 2. DRPT Budgeted Expenditures for FY23

**DRPT Budgeted Expenditures for FY23**  
 (\$1.04 billion)



## Rail Investments

DRPT retains 7 percent of the Commonwealth Rail Fund, while the remaining 93 percent goes to VPRA, which oversees passenger rail projects, including intercity passenger service. Rail responsibilities in the Commonwealth are split between DRPT and VPRA.

Funding for DRPT’s rail programs is supported through federal, state, and local funding sources. DRPT’s budget for FY23 for all rail services was \$36.5 million of funding to freight and rail planning, shortline preservation, and rail industrial access programs.

### Shortline Railway

#### Preservation Fund (\$11.1 million in FY23):

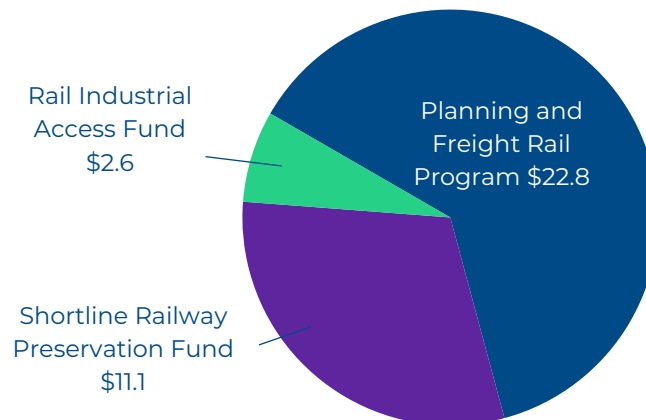
This **program** targets state-of-good repair and capacity improvement projects on the shortline network. The goal is to maintain Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) Class 2 Track Safety Standards, which have implications for the speed, service, and reliability of the network as the last mile of service 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 (\$2.6 million in FY23):

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 percent match from the applicant.

Figure 3. Rail Investments for FY23

### Rail Investments for FY23 (\$36.5 million)



**Planning and Freight Rail Program (\$22.8 million in FY23):** 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**. Virginia’s Class I railroads, shortline railroads, and the Port of Virginia are typical recipients of grants.

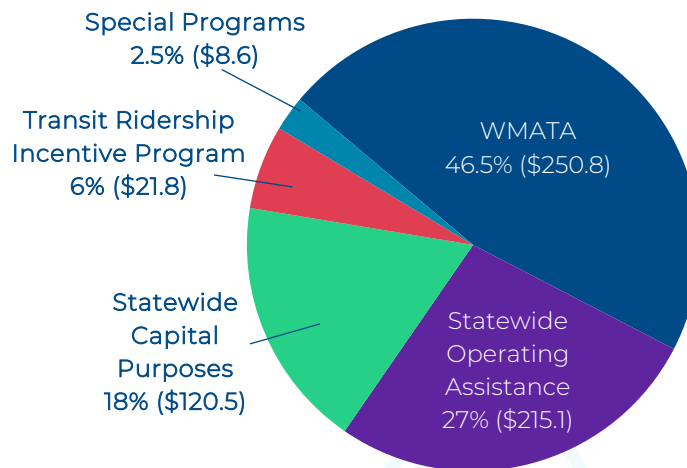
### Transit Investments

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 FY23 SYIP includes funding allocations from the CMTF for public transportation capital purchases, operating assistance, and transportation demand management (TDM) programs and projects.

**Figure 4. Commonwealth Mass Transit Fund Distribution**  
**Commonwealth Mass Transit Fund Distribution (\$616.8 million)**



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 up to 5 percent 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 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

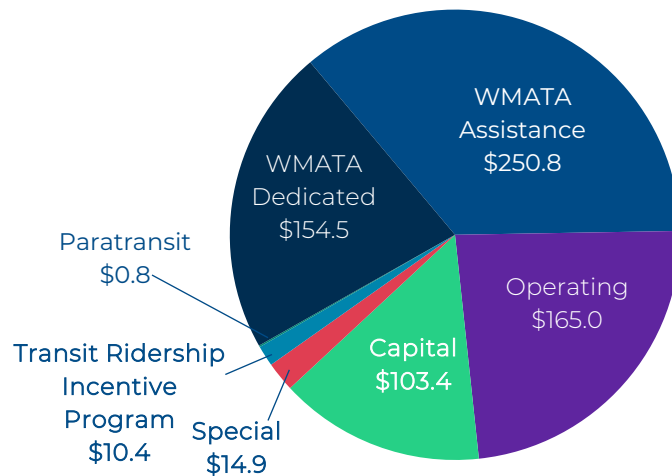
Improvement Act of 2008 and subsequently in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. Previously, Virginia contributed its \$50 million annually using bonds. For FY23, DRPT allocated \$699.8 million in state transit and TDM initiatives. That funding is broken down into seven categories: WMATA assistance, WMATA dedicated, statewide capital, statewide operating, Transit Ridership Incentive Program, special, and paratransit.

**WMATA Dedicated Capital Fund (\$154.5 million in FY23):** 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 percent) of \$500 million in annual additional capital needs for critical state of good repairs. Maryland and the District of Columbia provide the remaining funds toward the \$500 million in needs.

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

Figure 5: FY23 SYIP State Transit Allocations

**FY23 SYIP State Transit Allocations  
 (\$699.8 million)**



Commission regional grantor’s tax, NVTC regional gas taxes NVTC 2 percent transient occupancy tax, and the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority 30 percent local taxes) may be used for capital purposes, including the payment of debt service on bonds or other indebtedness.

**Commuter Rail Operating and Capital Fund:** Chapters 854 and 856 of the 2018 Acts of Assembly 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 (VRE) 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. VRE has bonded the CROC to provide over \$100 million toward Transforming Rail in Virginia.

**Federal transit funding:** Federal funding is an important resource for Virginia's transit operators, funding upgrades and service while reducing the state's funding burden. Primarily funded by the federal gas tax and other transportation-related levies, the federal Highway Trust Fund dedicates about 20% of funding to its Mass Transit Account.

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), 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 can deliver projects by only meeting the required 4 percent match.

Virginia is an ongoing recipient of funding through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) signed into law by President Joe Biden in 2021. 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. DRPT staff assists transit agencies with federal grant applications for a variety of programs. In FY23, Virginia received more than \$180 million in federal discretionary grant funding for rail and transit projects.



In FY23, Virginia transit agencies received nearly \$180 million in discretionary federal grant funds.

Of that amount, 11 rural public transit agencies received a total of \$4.7 million in federal funding to replace 39 transit vehicles that have exceeded their useful lives in both age and mileage. The Commonwealth received the funding through the Federal Transit Administration Buses and Bus Facilities program. DRPT submitted the application on behalf of the rural agencies. The replacement of these buses will help reduce the transit vehicle replacement backlog in these communities and will also help grow transit ridership.

## Transportation Demand Management Investments

DRPT uses a portion of the special allocation from the CMTF to provide **grants to qualifying agencies to operate TDM programs** in their region or locality. In FY23, DRPT programmed \$5.6 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 \$4.1 million and the related state match of \$1.9 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.



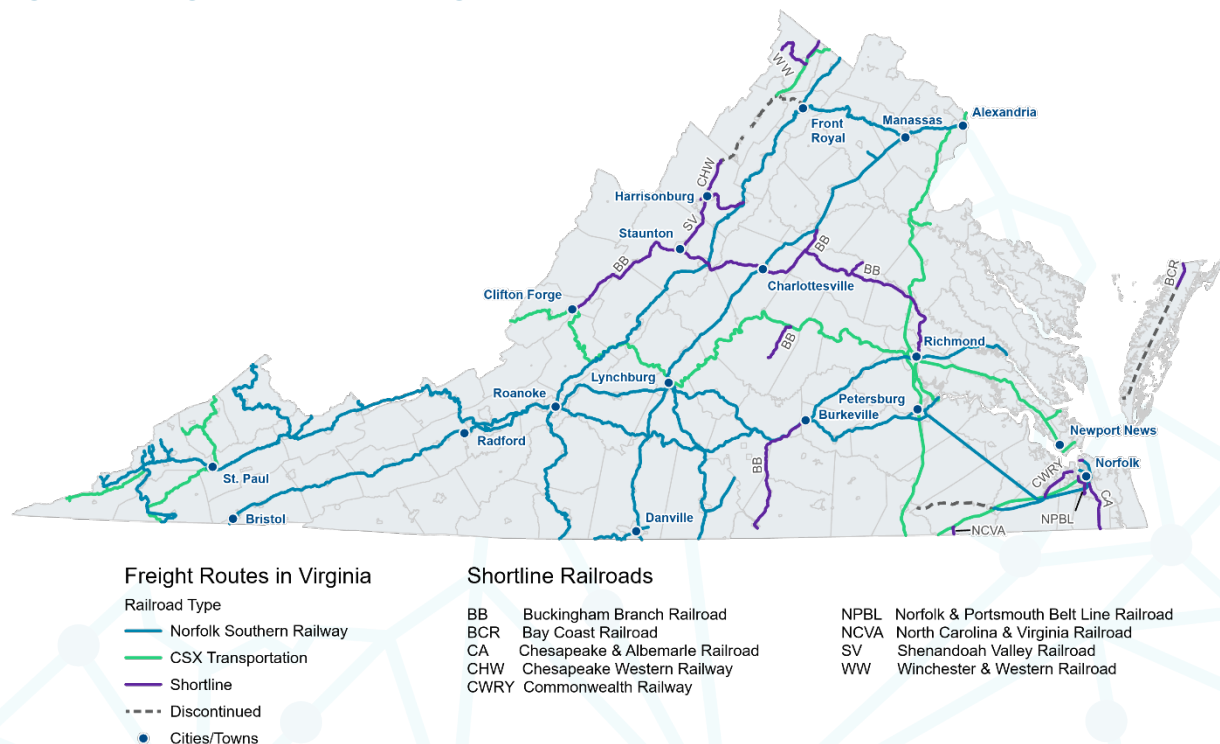
# Serving the Entire Commonwealth

DRPT’s rail and public transportation stakeholders include 40 transit systems, 79 human service transportation providers, 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 (VPRRA).

## 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



## 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. DRPT splits passenger rail responsibilities with VPRA, with DRPT conducting statewide passenger rail planning.

**Table 1. DRPT and VPRA Duties**

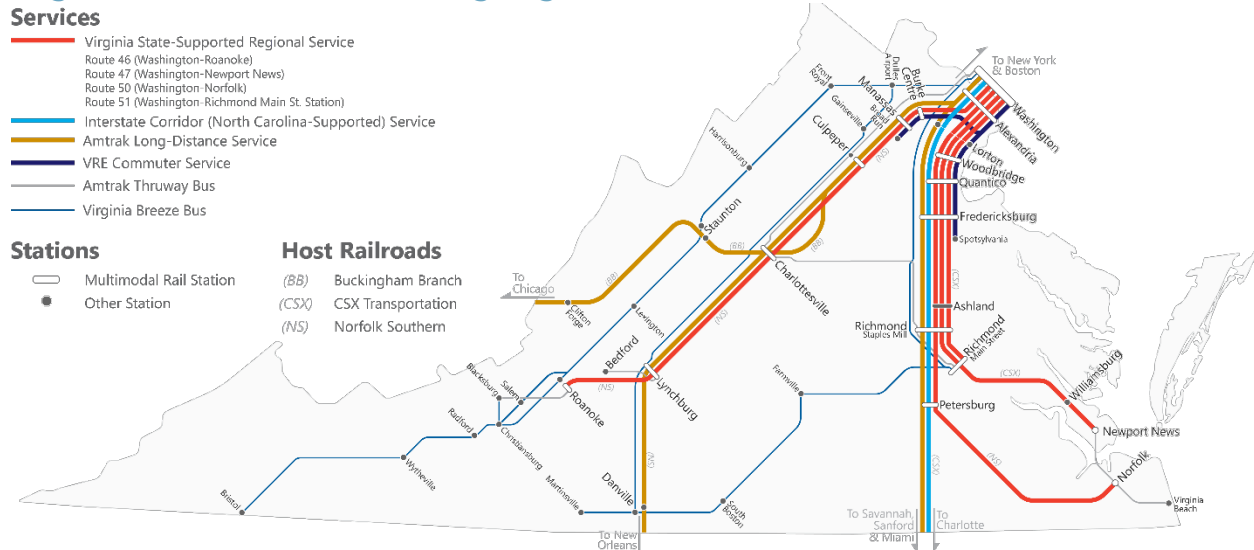
	RAIL		TRANSIT	COMMUTER PROGRAMS
	FREIGHT	PASSENGER		
Funding Administration	DRPT	VPRA	DRPT	DRPT
Corridor Planning	DRPT	VPRA	DRPT	DRPT
Statewide Planning	DRPT			DRPT
Programming/SYIP	DRPT	VPRA	DRPT	DRPT
Policy Setting	DRPT	VPRA	DRPT	DRPT
Design/Construction		VPRA		
ROW/3 <sup>rd</sup> Party		VPRA		
Operations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

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
- 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. 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.

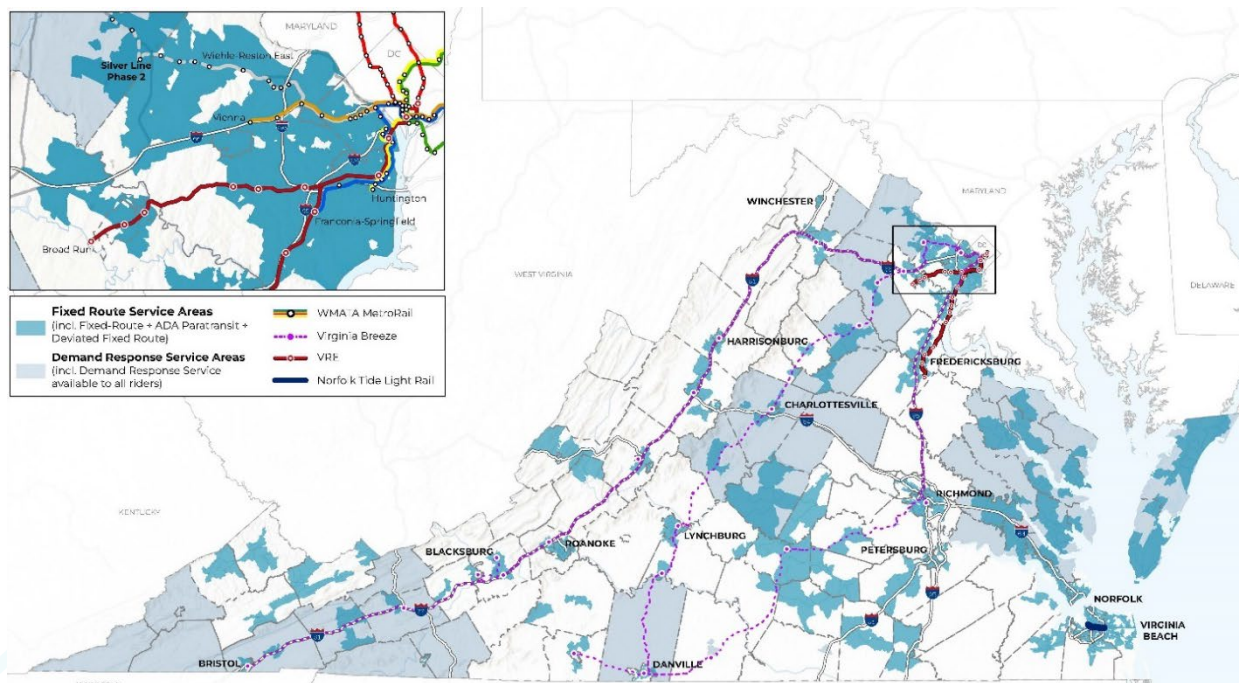
**Figure 7. Intercity passenger and commuter rail services, and Amtrak Thruway and Virginia Breeze bus routes serving Virginia**



## 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 agency responsible for public transportation funding in Virginia.

**Figure 8. Public Transportation Service 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 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)
City of Fairfax (CUE)	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 (FXBGO!)	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.

The below table is a list of human service transportation providers that received an operating or mobility management grant from DRPT between FY23-FY24 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 Board	New River Valley Community Services
Bay Aging	Norfolk Redevelopment & Housing Authority
Capital Area Partnership Uplifting People (CAPUP)	Northwestern Community Services
Central VA Alliance for Community Living, Inc. (CVACL)	Peninsula Agency on Aging
Charity Transport, LLC	Piedmont Senior Resources Area Agency on Aging
Chesterfield County	Pleasant View, Inc.
Chesterfield County Community Services Board	Portco, Inc.
City of Danville	Powhatan County
City of Martinsville	Pulaski Area Transit (New River Valley Senior Services)
City of Petersburg	RADAR UHSTS
Colonial Behavioral Health	Rappahannock Area Agency On Aging, dba Healthy Generations
Community Brain Injury Services	Rappahannock Area Community Services Board
Crater District Area Agency on Aging	Rappahannock-Rapidan Community Services
Crossroads Community Services Board	Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission
Danville-Pittsylvania Community Services	Region Ten Community Services Board
Eastern Shore Area Agency on Aging/Community Action Agency	Roanoke County
Eastern Shore Community Services Board	Rockbridge Area Transportation System, Inc.
ElderHomes Corporation	Senior Connections, The Capital Area Agency on Aging
Friends 4 Recovery Whole Health Center	Senior Services of Southeastern Virginia
Friendship Industries, Inc.	Seniors First, The Shenandoah Area Agency on Aging
Giles Health & Family Center	Serenity, Inc.
Goochland Powhatan Community Services	Shen-Paco Industries
GoochlandCares	SOAR 365
Grafton School	Southern Area Agency on Aging
Greater Richmond Transit Company	St. Joseph's Villa
Hampton-Newport News Community Services Board	Stepping Stones, Inc.
Hanover County	STEPS, Inc.
Heart Havens, Inc.	Suffolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority
Henry County	The Arc of Greater Williamsburg
Horizon Behavioral Health	The Arc of Harrisonburg and Rockingham
Junction Center for Independent Living	Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission

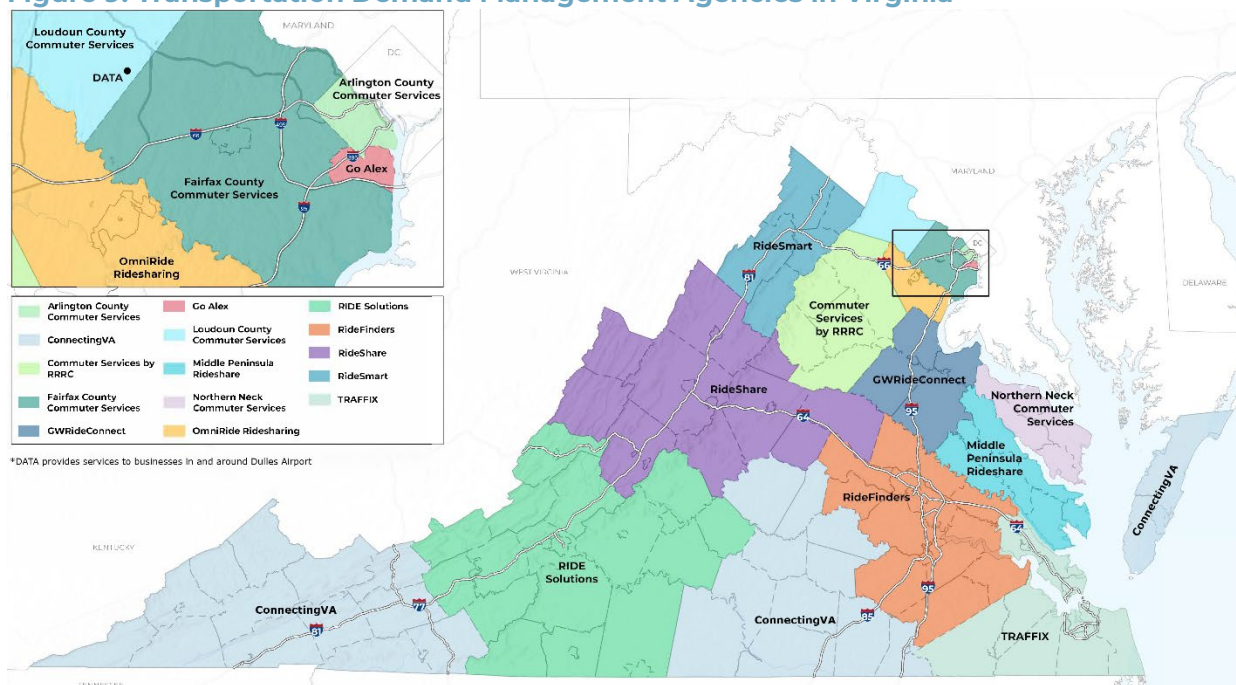
Lake Country Area Agency on Aging	Valley Community Services Board
Louise W Eggleston Center	Valley Program for Aging Services
Lutheran Family Services of Virginia dba encircle	VersAbility Resources, Inc.
Mount Rogers Community Services	Western Tidewater Community Services Board

## 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.

In 1999, then-Governor James Gilmore issued an executive order mandating all executive branch agencies with an office in Northern Virginia provide full-time employees with a tax-free qualified transportation fringe benefit. The benefit is equal to the employee’s cost of commuting to and from their workplace using vanpools or transit. The executive order also encouraged all agencies, regardless of location, to provide a commuter benefit. TDM agencies serving the public are also called commuter assistance programs.

**Figure 9. Transportation Demand Management Agencies in Virginia**



**Transportation Demand Management Agencies Operating in Virginia**

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

# Strategic Plan: Next Stop 2030

**DRPT developed a new strategic plan — Next Stop 2030 — to guide the agency’s strategy and actions over the next several years as it innovates and evolves with best-in-class options to meet the needs of Virginians.**

DRPT has made significant progress since it was created 30 years ago; however, there is more work ahead. While celebrating the agency’s accomplishments, it was important develop a plan of where agency should go and how they will get there.

DRPT completed a yearlong process of developing a **new strategic plan** to guide both long-term strategy and day-to-day decision making as the agency strives to meet the transportation needs of Virginians.

The agency developed the strategic plan with input from key stakeholders, senior leadership, and a cross-section of agency staff. The strategic plan’s purpose is to deliver what Virginians and Virginia need. The plan defines DRPT’s priorities and connects the mission, vision, and goals with initiatives that will generate progress.



**DRPT’s mission:** to connect and improve the quality of life for all Virginians with innovative transportation solutions.

**DRPT’s vision:** a connected Commonwealth with an integrated multimodal network that serves every person, every business, and every need.

The plan aligns DRPT on:

- Values and mission: What DRPT lives by and does
- Vision, goals, and objectives: What DRPT aspires to be and where it wants to go
- Initiatives: How DRPT will get there





The plan sets out clear priorities for DRPT: expanding transparency and performance metrics and promoting more collaboration with the agency's partners. DRPT has focused on four goals that relate to excellent service, opportunity and partnership, sustainability, and innovation.

## DRPT's Goals

- **Create a positive impact on the Commonwealth.** Provide support and solutions to positively impact the lives of Virginians, the economy, and the environment.
  - Objectives:**
    - Improve access to reliable transportation
    - Increase throughput of people and goods
    - Facilitate clean transportation solutions minimizing the impact on the environment
    - Promote factors driving economic vitality and development
- **Foster innovative practical solutions.** Challenge the status quo, creating solutions while sharing new ideas and innovative practices that contribute to better transportation outcomes.
  - Objectives:**
    - Be the 'go-to' organization for best practices, technical assistance, and implementation of innovative transportation solutions
    - Foster a culture of innovation

- Align program and funding criteria to support practices to revolutionize transportation
- Minimize complexities and facilitate pragmatic solutions
- **Convene with partners and stakeholders.** Bring together the right people at the right time to leverage resources, address important transportation issues, and create the best solutions collaboratively.
  - **Objectives:**
    - Clarify roles and responsibilities when engaging with our partners and stakeholders
    - Collaborate proactively with partners and stakeholders
    - Engage with our partners and stakeholders at the right time to maximize DRPT's influence
- **Cultivate a sustainable well-managed organization.** Deliver exceptional service with an engaged workforce that effectively manages public assets and promotes transparency.
  - **Objectives:**
    - Attract, develop, and retain a diverse and engaged workforce focused on customer service
    - Promote DRPT's compelling story and valuable contribution with internal and external stakeholders
    - Enhance the customer experience through well-designed processes and systems
    - Be good stewards of public resources
    - Cultivate a culture of ONE DRPT!

Each goal contains supporting objectives, which will be delivered through the implantation of detailed initiatives. Some initiatives are currently underway, while others are proposed and will be pursued across the next several months and years.

DRPT developed performance measures to provide feedback to keep the strategic plan on target. The performance measures will ensure that DRPT is operating for results. The strategic plan's goals and objectives focus performance measures on outcomes. DRPT will report on those outcomes in future annual reports.

DRPT will track metrics specific to goals and objectives and measure the success through other means. DRPT is committed to improving the way it does its work to ensure that it is providing the best service to Virginians.

# Ridership Numbers and Program Performance

DRPT relies on data and measures to gauge the performance of its rail and public transportation programs. The agency has continued to see returns on investment with increasing transit ridership and more diversion of trucks from highways to rails, which reduces congestion and wear and tear on the highways as well as grows the economy and improves the quality of life for Virginians.

## Statewide Transit Ridership

Transit ridership in Virginia has continued to increase after a decline caused by COVID-19. More than 105 million people rode transit in FY23, an increase of 128 percent since FY21, when ridership hit its lowest because of the pandemic. Ridership increased 28 percent over the last fiscal year. Ridership was 172 million in FY19.

Ridership has returned or exceeded pre-pandemic ridership levels at more than a third of Virginia's transit agencies. Ridership continues to increase for many other transit agencies. Transit agencies faced various challenges over the past fiscal year, including bus operator shortages as well as continuing remote work arrangements that reduce commuter ridership, particularly in the federal workforce. Transit agencies responded by being dynamic to conditions with a blend of different kinds of transportation services, and they are showing growth in transit ridership.

### OmniRide Breaks The Transit Service Mold

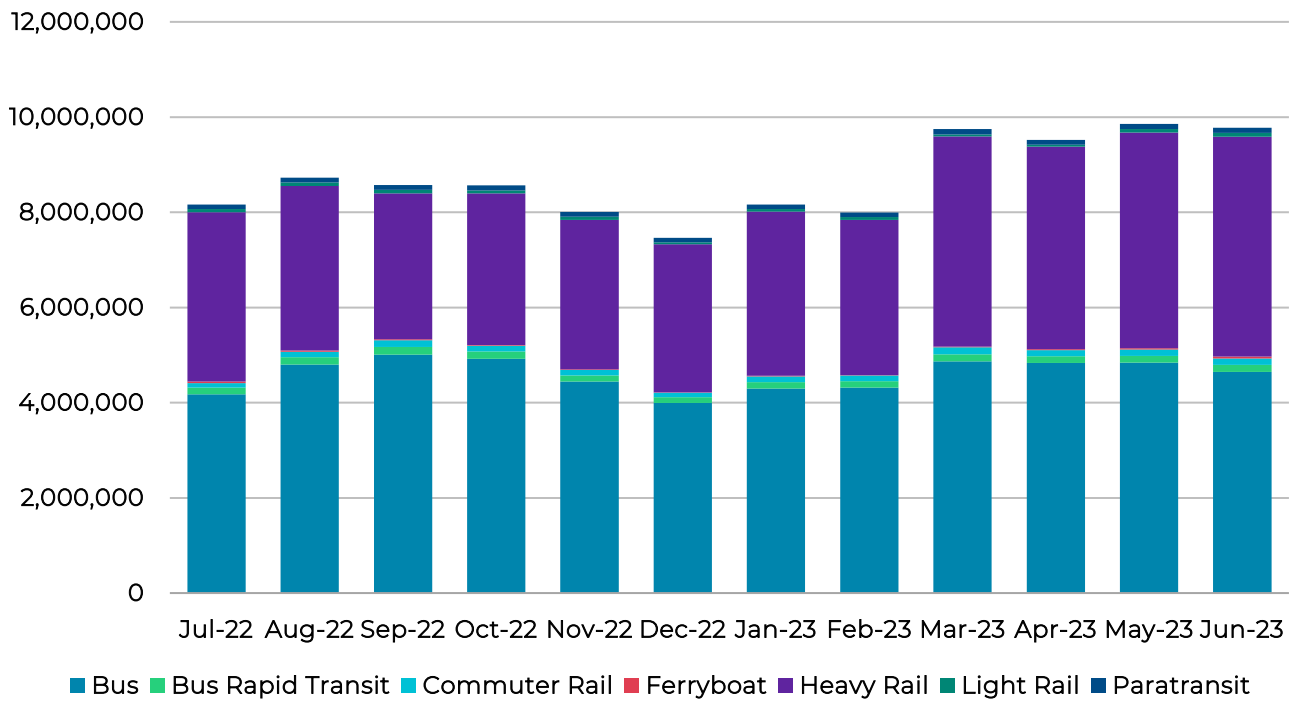
Before the pandemic, OmniRide in Northern Virginia primarily served a customer base of office commuters working regular hours. It broke from its commuter-based model of trips during peak service to doing all-day, localized service. It has also introduced new services, like microtransit, in certain areas where there were low-performing fixed buses. Ridership increased 75 percent between FY21 and FY23.



### Hampton Roads Transit Meets Rider Demands

In 2022, Hampton Roads Transit launched the 757 Express, a network of bus routes connecting the highest densities of people and jobs in the region. Buses would come every 15 minutes during peak hours. Two routes have begun service so far, with both demonstrating solid ridership growth. One has a 37 percent increase in ridership in June 2023, compared to two years prior. The other posted a 27 percent increase during the same period.

Figure 10. FY23 Virginia Transit Statewide Ridership



DRPT supports transit agencies working to build their ridership in various ways. The Transit Ridership Incentive Program provides grant funding for zero- or reduced-fare programming and regional connectivity projects. It also has grants to assist agencies in testing new kinds of transit services.

Additionally, DRPT ran various marketing campaigns throughout 2022 and 2023 encourage people to try or return to transit to boost ridership throughout the state.

DRPT conducted multiple Discover Transit campaigns. The first one, in September 2022, promoted transit services on social media, traditional media, and online

newsletters and encouraged people to enter contests to win prizes. The campaign encouraged people to take the Try Transit pledge to win free Virginia Breeze and Amtrak Northeast Regional tickets and to record their commutes on the ConnectingVA app to win gift cards. The campaign resulted in more than 23,000 visits to DRPT's [connectingva.drpt.virginia.gov](https://connectingva.drpt.virginia.gov).

More than A to B, we take you from A to Z.

**Discover Transit**  
 ▶ [ConnectingVA.org](https://ConnectingVA.org)

**DRPT**  
 VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF RAIL  
 AND PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

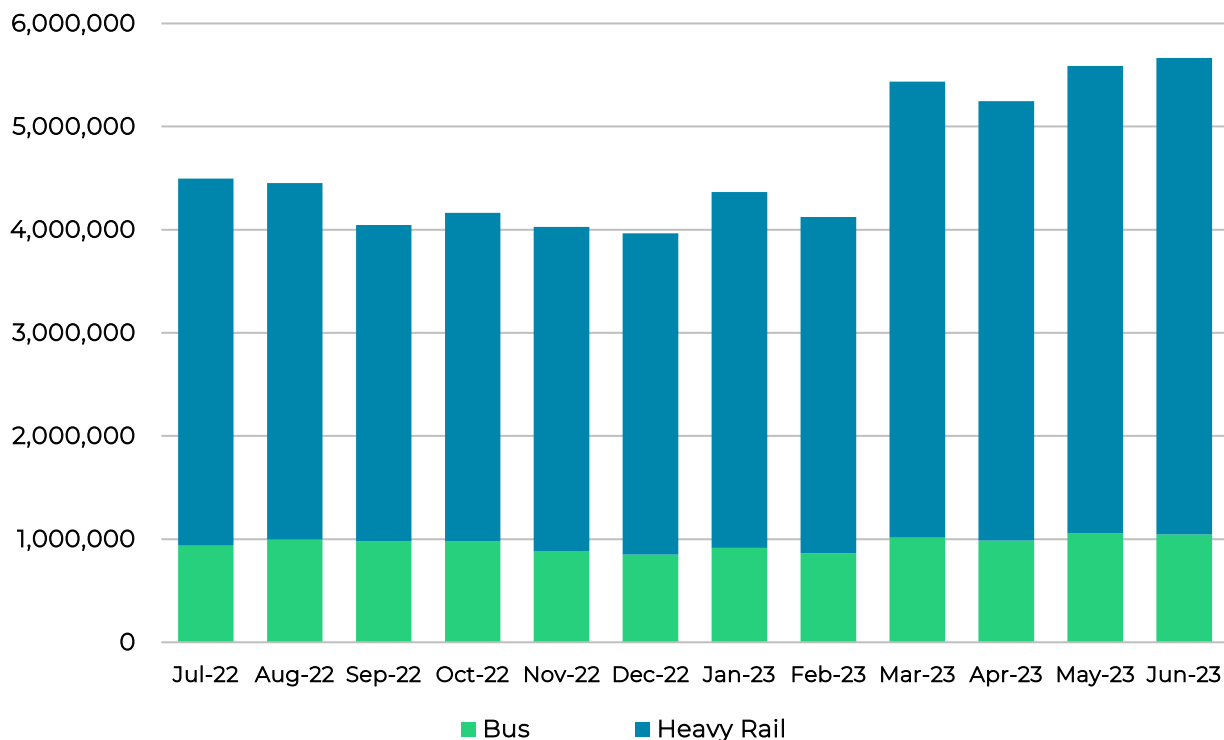
The second campaign took place between April and June 2023. The social media and advertising campaign directed people to DRPT's aimed to increase awareness of transit services. During that time period, bus ridership increased 27 percent year-over-year in May 2023. DRPT used lessons from this campaign to launch a second round of Discover Transit in the summer and fall of 2023.

## 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. However, in FY23, ridership continues to grow, and Metro had multiple days that recorded the highest ridership days since the start of the pandemic. Metro attributed the rise to more frequent trains as well as a push by employers to get more workers back into offices.

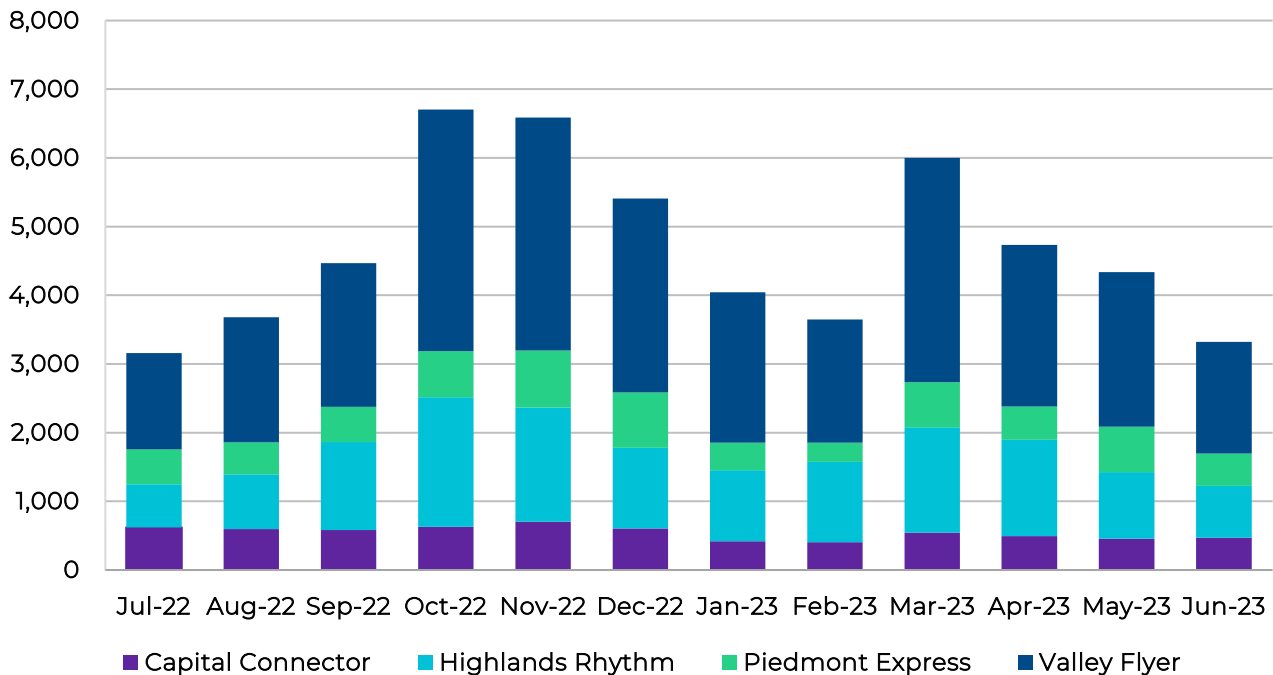
Figure 11. FY23 Washington Area Metropolitan Authority Ridership



## 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 has continued to climb since then, having returned to pre-pandemic levels in 2021. All four routes have set record-breaking ridership numbers in FY23.

Figure 12. FY23 Virginia Breeze Ridership



## Transportation Demand Management 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. These programs are valuable in reducing congestion on roads.

Virginia’s commuter assistance programs operated by transit agencies, local governments, planning district commissions, and regional commissions, and DRPT’s commuter assistance program (ConnectingVA) reduced 2.7 million vehicle trips and 93.4 million vehicle miles traveled in FY23, a 136 percent increase and 116 percent increase, respectively, over the previous fiscal year. For the ConnectingVA program, the cost per trip is 8 cents.

In FY23, there were 582,326 vanpool passengers. As of June 2023, there were 469 vanpools operating in the Commonwealth: 337 in Northern Virginia, 62 in the greater Richmond area, 30 in Hampton Roads, and 40 in all other regions. Combined, vanpools contributed to 8.5 million revenue miles reduced on Virginia’s roadways.

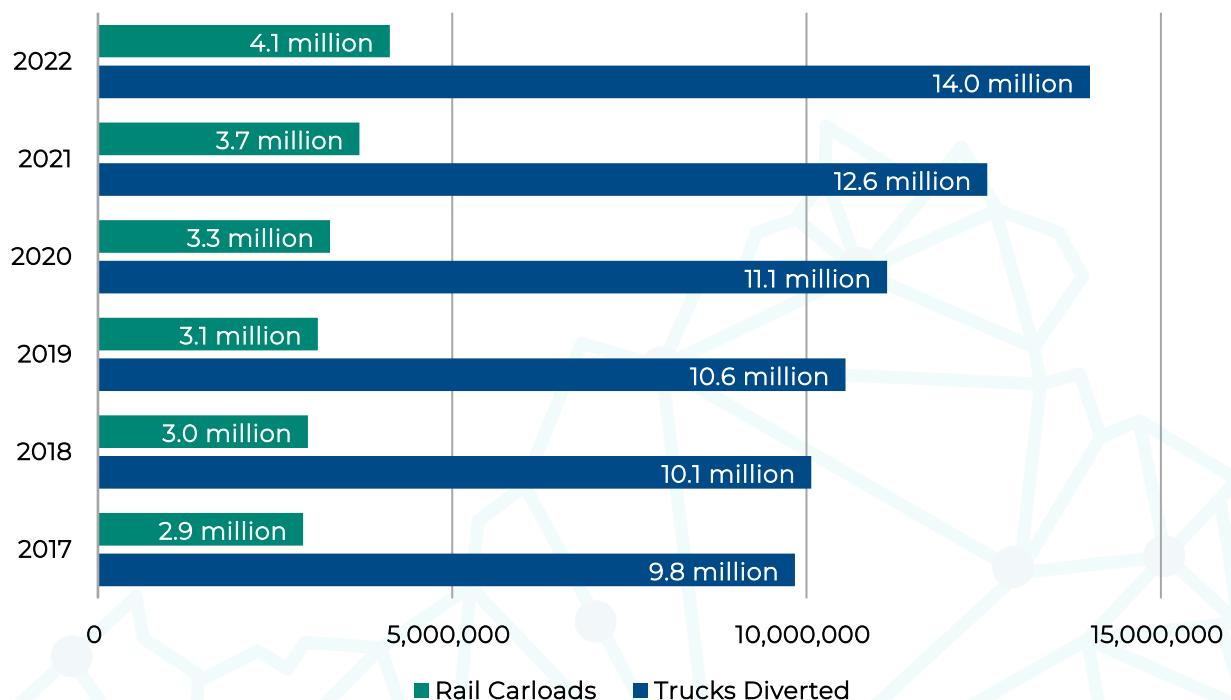
Commuter assistance programs report data to DRPT for ridematch requests, which are requests from the public seeking commute options for carpooling, vanpooling, or transit. These requests are made through one of Virginia’s 16 commuter assistance programs, mostly online through program websites or mobile apps. There were 36,868 ridematch requests made in FY23, a 33 percent increase over the previous fiscal year.

## 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.

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

**Figure 13. Trucks Diverted from Virginia Highways Through DRPT-Funded Projects**



# Metrics and Transparency

DRPT is committed to having a data-driven approach to allocating resources to improve outcomes of investments. The agency strives 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 a 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.



### Capital Assistance Investments

In FY23, DRPT invested a total of \$71,542,020 in state funds toward capital projects. Federal funds and local funds also support these projects.

The state contributed toward the purchase of 66 small-sized transit vehicles, 22 medium-sized transit vehicles, and 99 large-sized vehicles.

Funding supported the purchase of 11 bus shelters, bus stop signage for five transit agencies, and other bus stop improvements at five other transit agencies. Funding helped with the purchase of fare collection equipment at four agencies.

Nine transit agencies received funding for surveillance and security equipment. Four agencies will do renovations on customer and maintenance facilities with the assistance of state funding.



## Internship Opportunities Train New Generation of Public Transportation Employees



DRPT funds several internship and training opportunities every year. In FY23, DRPT allocated \$257,440 to support nine internships at transit companies.

In FY23, the Greater Lynchburg Transit Company (GLTC) hosted an intern, Liberty University student Jordan Romano, who developed an artificial intelligence chat tool to provide riders with 24/7 customer service with information about bus schedules and stops.

“I sought an internship where I could make a positive impact in my local community,” Romano said. “The Greater Lynchburg Transit Company offered me that opportunity.”

Romano said he came up with the idea for a chatbot after observing how the service representatives dealt with many valid but repetitive questions from riders. He also wanted riders to have the ability to ask questions outside of normal business hours.

“AskGLTC is valuable to riders because of its 24/7 customer service coverage, ability to provide accurate live bus data and answer many common questions about fares and policies,” Romano said. “GLTC’s bus service is critical to many riders and many rely on it to get to work, AskGLTC was developed to make commute easier by providing access to relevant information with a simple click of a button.”

DRPT provides funding for operating expenses for eligible public transportation services, including local bus, commuter bus, commuter rail, light rail, bus rapid transit, demand response, paratransit, and ferry services. DRPT follows a performance-based methodology to determine the allocation of operating assistance funds to each agency. The program funds no more than 30 percent

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 in March 2023 to discuss potential changes to the MERIT Operating Assistance Formula for FY24, but it did not take any action.

### **Virginia Railway Express 2023 General Assembly Legislation**

The 2023 General Assembly approved **legislation** that changes the Commonwealth Mass Transit Fund (CMTF) funding allocation for operating costs of transit providers to exclude Virginia Railway Express (VRE) and create a separate funding allocation within the CMTF for the commuter rail service. VRE can receive up to 3.5 percent of the annual CMTF revenues for capital and operating expenses. The legislation addressed the issue of VRE currently being funded using bus-specific metrics and not commuter rail-specific metrics.

DRPT worked with VRE as well as the Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission (PRTC) and the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC), which jointly own VRE, to develop performance measures to determine the appropriate funding level each fiscal year. This new funding mechanism goes into effect in FY25.

## **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, Fairfax, and Loudoun Counties and the Cities of Alexandria, Fairfax, and Falls Church. 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 fifth year in FY23. During FY23, WMATA utilized dedicated capital funding to continue state of good repair work on Metrorail system facilities and infrastructure.



“The Department of Rail and Public Transportation is proud to have WMATA as a partner. Together we have created a more connected Commonwealth...to improve the lives of people who work and live in Virginia.”

— DIRECTOR JENNIFER DEBRUHL

The average total annual operating and capital subsidies for WMATA during FY18-23 is \$2.5 billion. By jurisdiction that is: 19 percent from the federal government, 29 percent from the District of Columbia, 29 percent from Maryland, 14 percent from Virginia, and 9 percent 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 FY23. 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

DRPT reported to the CTB in September 2023 that WMATA complied with the statutory requirements and CTB policy for FY23.

The **2023 General Assembly increased oversight of WMATA**, requiring the agency to provide a proposed annual operating budget and any proposed capital expenditures and projects as well as specifying what should be included in the strategic plan. Additionally, the Commonwealth's and Northern Virginia Transportation Commission's representatives to the WMATA Board of Directors as well as the WMATA General Manager will have to address the CTB each year regarding the WMATA budget, system performance, and utilization of the Commonwealth's investment in the WMATA system.

## Projects Improving Service for Virginians

Improvements to Metro enhance the customer experience and safety of the system for Virginians keep the region's infrastructure in a state of good repair.

### Potomac Yard Metro Station Project

The Potomac Yard Metro Station, 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, opened in May 2023. The project in Alexandria began in 2019 and is one of five economic development incentives that attracted Amazon to the area. The station served as a key factor in the decision to



"The Potomac Yard-VT Metro Station will drive transformational economic growth in our city for generations to come. This station will better connect our residents and visitors to education, careers, commerce, and opportunity."

— ALEXANDRIA MAYOR JUSTIN WILSON



locate the new Virginia Tech Innovation campus, slated to open in 2024, in Alexandria.

For the project, DRPT provided direct support as well as consulting assistance. DRPT participated in collaborative inter-agency process meetings and regular site visits and provided technical assistance to review project costs and helped secure cooperation with CSX, which has active rail tracks next to the project. The agency also provided grants management assistance and oversight of the Amazon transit incentive projects.

**Silver Line Phase 2 Completion**

WMATA completed the final phase of the 23-mile expansion of the Silver Line that began construction in 2009. The first segment opened five years later. The second and final segment, which added 11.4 miles of track to the Metrorail system, opened on November 15, 2022, providing a connection to Washington Dulles International Airport. The second phase of the expansion included six new Silver Line stations: Reston Town Center, Herndon, Innovation Center, Washington Dulles International Airport, Loudoun Gateway, and Ashburn.



The Phase 2 section has provided over 2 million trips since it opened.

**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 strengthened the tunnel lining to stop water intrusion and subsequently replaced miles of communications cables that are used by multiple jurisdictions. Yellow Line tunnel and bridge improvements have been completed on-time and on-budget and Yellow Line service resumed in May 2023.

# Transit Ridership Incentive Program

The 2020 General Assembly established the Transit Ridership Incentive Program (TRIP) in Virginia Code § 33.2-1526.3 to grow and improve transit use. DRPT administers the statewide grant program.

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DRPT implemented the program in FY22 with the first round of transit projects receiving TRIP funding. So far, DRPT has allocated \$60.4 million in TRIP funding to a total of 19 projects — most of which operate over multiple years — that support zero-fare or reduced-fare programming or regional connectivity. Of those projects, \$24.4 million in TRIP funding went toward eight zero-fare and reduced-fare projects, and \$36.0 million supported 11 regional connectivity projects.

The 2020 General Assembly established TRIP with two distinct goals: to improve regional connectivity of urban areas with a population more than 100,000 and to reduce barriers to transit use for low-income riders by supporting reduced-fare and zero-fare programming.

Virginia Code § 33.2-1526.3 originally stated that no more than 25 percent of TRIP funding could be allocated to programs to reduce barriers to transit use for low-income riders, requiring a minimum of 75 percent of the funds be allocated to regional connectivity projects. In 2022, the General Assembly changed the funding structure so that at least 25 percent of funds are allocated to zero-fare or reduced-fare projects, and at least 25 percent of funds are allocated to regional connectivity projects. The remaining 50 percent could go toward either purpose. This change to the funding distribution will sunset on July 1, 2024.

The 2023 General Assembly approved additional changes to the TRIP funding distribution. According to House Bill 2338 and Senate Bill 1326, a maximum of 30 percent of TRIP funds can be used to support transit agencies with improving passenger amenities and facilities such as bus stops and addressing crime prevention and public safety. These two types of programs address target areas of concern raised by transit riders during the HJ 542 transit modernization study DRPT conducted in 2021 and 2022 at the General Assembly's request. This change to the funding distribution has no sunset. In summary, starting in FY25, no more than 25 percent can be used for zero-fare and reduced-fare programs, no more than 30 percent can be used for crime prevention and passenger amenities, and at least 45 percent must be used for regional connectivity programs. DRPT developed a revised policy to incorporate the changes from the General Assembly and how to score and allocate funding to the different projects. The Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) approved the policy in September 2023.

## Current TRIP Projects

TRIP has supported diverse, multi-year projects throughout the Commonwealth. The grant recipients are geographically diverse, and they range in sizes, from large urban transit agencies to small urban and rural transit agencies.

## Zero Fare/Reduced Fare Projects

As anticipated, TRIP's pilot year had the most applicants. This can be attributed to a high interest in zero-fare and reduced-fare programming. With ridership still below pre-pandemic levels and remote work still a prominent option for many employers, most transit agencies focused on regaining ridership before introducing new routes.

**Table 2. Fiscal Years 2022-2023 TRIP Zero-Fare/Reduced-Fare Projects**

FY	Project	Description	Funding Duration	TRIP Funding	FY19 Ridership	FY23 Ridership	% Change
22	<b>Greater Richmond Transit Company systemwide zero fare</b>	Deploy zero-fare operations on all GRTC local routes, express routes, and GRTC Care services.	4 years	\$8,000,000	8.9M	9.6M	7.9%
	<b>City of Alexandria systemwide zero fare</b>	Deploy systemwide zero-fare operations for all services.	4 years	\$7,236,171	4.0M	4.6M	15%
	<b>Fairfax subsidized pass program</b>	Provide half-fare SmartTrip cards for riders with annual income that meets the 225 percent federal poverty levels by threshold.	4 years	\$5,494,740	8.3M	8.4M	0.4%
	<b>Mountain Empire Older Citizens systemwide zero fare</b>	Deploy systemwide zero-fare operations for all services.	4 years	\$102,000	98K	131K	33.7%
	<b>FXBGO! systemwide zero fare</b>	Deploy systemwide zero-fare operations for all services.	4 years	\$561,960	297K	288K	-3.1%
	<b>Charlottesville Area Transit</b>	Deploy systemwide zero-fare operations for all services.	4 years	\$1,066,620	1.9M	1.1M	-42.1%

	systemwide zero fare <sup>1</sup>						
23	<b>City of Fairfax systemwide zero fare</b>	Deploy systemwide zero-fare operations for all services.	4 years	\$651,000	601K	848K	41.1%
	<b>Petersburg Area Transit systemwide zero fare</b>	Deploy systemwide zero-fare operations for all services.	4 years	\$1,333,231	410K	476K	16.1%

Between FY19 and FY23, ridership on these systems generally increased while statewide transit ridership, excluding Virginia Railway Express and Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, declined nearly 22 percent.

### Regional Connectivity Projects

Transit agencies have an interest not only in moving people within their communities but also in increasing regional mobility to improve their access to opportunities. With ridership growing transit agencies have been more interested in regional connectivity projects in the most recent TRIP funding round.

**Table 3. Fiscal Years 2022-2023 Regional Connectivity Projects**

FY	Project	Description	Funding Duration	TRIP Funding	Project Ridership
22	<b>Hampton Roads Naval Base Express</b>	It provides last-mile accessibility to employees within the base. The goal of the service is to encourage employees to arrive at the base by transit, foot, or bicycle, and then use the circulator to travel within the base. There are two routes that operate Monday through Friday, and one of them operates on the weekend.	3 years	\$2,388,198	14,908 12/2/22-6/30/23
	<b>Lynchburg Route 4 Expansion</b>	GLTC increased frequencies by adding a third bus on Route 4 beginning on September 19, 2022. The route operates on a commercial corridor in Lynchburg, providing access to the regional airport, train station, Liberty University, and other locations of interest. The bus runs Monday through Friday.	5 years	\$1,630,400	15,304 9/19/22-6/30/23
23	<b>Loudoun County Silver Line</b>	As part of a transit system redesign in conjunction with the opening of the Silver Line, Loudoun County created 16 new transit routes. TRIP provided funding for four of the transit routes connecting to the new Ashburn, Loudoun Gateway, and Dulles	5 years	\$7,250,811	6,178 1/1/23-6/30/23

<sup>1</sup> The Charlottesville Area is experiencing a bus driver shortage. CAT must compete with the local divisions, JAUNT, and the University of Virginia bus system for drivers. For that reason, Charlottesville Area Transit is maintaining pandemic level service which is negatively impacting ridership.



<b>Bus Routes<sup>2</sup></b>	International Airport Metrorail Silver Line stations.			
<b>OmniRide Manassas Metro Express Bus Service<sup>3</sup></b>	OmniRide began offering mid-day and off-peak service for its Manassas Metro Express Bus starting on January 30, 2023. Previously, the agency only offered peak service for this route that serves destinations including Tysons Corner, the Metro Silver Line, and the Northern Virginia Community College Manassas campus.	5 years	\$1,041,897	5,454 1/30/23-6/30/23
<b>Radford Transit Route 40/41</b>	Radford Area Transit began offering year-round service of Route 40/41, which connects Christiansburg to Radford and Blacksburg.	3 years	\$371,746	1,842 1/17/23-6/30/23

As of this writing, DRPT has only collected approximately six to nine months of ridership data for these regional connectivity routes. DRPT and its transit partners are cautiously optimistic that ridership will grow as the agencies market these routes and people become more aware of their availability.

### Upcoming Projects

The Greater Richmond Transit Company will launch microtransit—IT-enabled multi-passenger service—routes in fall 2023. Hampton Roads Transit will begin its microtransit pilot service in early 2024. The agency will be building on testing of microtransit that it started in July 2022 — but is currently paused — to allow more time for ridership to mature.

Fairfax County will distribute 50 percent discount SmarTrip cards with Fairfax Connector routes to Fairfax County, City of Fairfax, and City of Falls Church residents with an annual income that meets the 225 percent federal poverty levels by threshold in FY24. Petersburg Area Transit’s Southern Express Route and Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission’s RideSmart commuter service has not yet set launch dates. Loudoun County and Fairfax County have not yet set a date for when to begin their integrated fare collection system projects.

<sup>2</sup> Loudoun County’s transit services had several challenges since the Metrorail Silver Line opened in November 2022. First, the county faced a bus operator shortage. The routes were running one bus rather than two. Second, the bus operators went on strike between January and March 2023. In March, three of the new routes funded through TRIP were not operating. It was not until May that the new routes were fully operational with two buses. Ridership has continued to grow, and Loudoun County is going to have an advertising campaign to inform people about the new routes.

<sup>3</sup> Service faced disruption due to a strike in February and March 2023. OmniRide also faced lower ridership because of the federal workforce not fully returning to in-person working. Ridership continues to grow for the service, and OmniRide is reviewing the Express Bus for other possible route options.

# Reducing Congestion on Highways

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

As a complement to the many transit agencies throughout Virginia, TDM 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.

## Express Lanes Transform Commuting in Northern Virginia

Virginia has developed a network of more than 95 miles of dynamic tolling that in the past decade has changed traffic patterns on interstates 66, 95, 395 and 495.

While traffic congestion problems continue in Northern Virginia, the growing toll road system is delivering positive results, including improved reliability and throughput, gains in carpooling, benefits to transit users, and revenue that helps to pay for transit projects and services. Toll revenues support transit services that provide low-cost and reliable travel options to commuters, remove cars from congested roadways, and help to optimize the transportation network by moving more people.

After a decline in toll revenues on both I-66 and I-395/95 because of the COVID-19 pandemic that began in early 2020, toll revenues in the corridors have returned to 2019 levels, affording travel improvements for Northern Virginia residents and workers in both corridors.

### Express Lanes

Virginia has continued to expand its express lanes to improve congestion and support transit and transportation demand management projects.

#### 66 Express Lanes

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

Providers provided an advance concession payment to the Commonwealth for use on projects that will benefit users of the corridor.

Express Mobility Partners also provides annual transit payments through 2066 to the Commonwealth to support enhanced bus transit, transportation demand management, and commuter rail services in the corridor. DRPT directs the expenditure of those payments. FY23 funding from the payment has supported:

- **\$4.6 million** to Fairfax County for the start-up and operation of new bus service from 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.
- **\$2.6 million** to OmniRide for the start-up and operation of a new commuter bus service between Gainesville and Reston.
- **\$7 million** for further support for the creation of a daily Virginia Railway Express daily round trip on the Manassas Line.

The 22.5 miles of the 66 Express Lanes outside the Beltway opened in November 2022, bringing the largest change to the Washington region’s road infrastructure in years. Along with the toll lanes, the state changed the corridor’s high-occupancy vehicle requirements from two occupants in a vehicle to three, a major shift for carpoolers to encourage more people to carpool together.



The project also included 11 miles of bike trail along the route from Dunn Loring to Centreville, new and improved bus service and transit routes, new and expanded park and ride lots and spaces.

**95 Express Lanes**

The 10-mile extension of the 95 Express Lanes to Fredericksburg opened in August 2023. With the addition, Northern Virginia will have more than 95 miles of express lanes, including 49 miles along the Interstates 95 and 395 corridors stretching from the D.C. line to Fredericksburg.

Carpoolers will be allowed to ride free, while solo drivers can use them at a cost. Motorcycles and buses can also use the lanes at no cost.

### 495 Express Lanes

Construction is underway on the 2.5 miles of the Capital Beltway in Fairfax County, where crews are building new managed lanes to extend congestion-free travel closer to the state line. The project, from the Dulles Toll Road interchange to the George Washington Memorial Parkway, will add two express lanes in each direction in 2025. The 495 Express Lanes now stretch 14 miles from Springfield to McLean and connect to the 395, 95 and 66 express lanes.

The northern extension project will include a parallel trail along the Beltway and new bus service across the bridge into Montgomery County. The lanes will also connect to the planned express lanes on Maryland’s side of the Beltway and I-270.

### Commuter Choice

Toll revenues from the 66 Express Lanes and the 395/95 Express Lanes provide funding for multimodal projects that benefit the users of those corridors and that are selected for funding by the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC) and the Commonwealth Transportation Board through the competitive Commuter Choice grant program.

Commuter Choice projects benefit express lanes toll payers by expanding travel options and helping more people move more efficiently through the 66 and 395/95 corridors, thereby lessening congestion and supporting reliable travel speeds.



### Commuter Choice Benefits

In five years, \$107.9 million awarded to 58 projects

- 900,000 hours of travel time saved for commuters
- 82.5 million fewer vehicle miles traveled
- \$12 million in fuel costs saved
- 69 percent of greenhouse gas emissions lowered per trip
- 100 automobile crashes avoided

In the five years since Commuter Choice was created, \$107.9 million has been awarded to 58 projects. Commuter Choice funding has supported: 11 transit capital improvements, 14 new express bus routes, 28 bus service improvements, 40 buses to operated expanded services, six commuter incentive programs, and three bikeshare network expansions.

Commuter Choice projects have so far saved Northern Virginia commuters 900,000 hours of travel time, led to 82.5 million fewer vehicle miles traveled, saved commuters \$12 million in fuel costs, lowered per-trip greenhouse gas emissions by 69 percent relative to drive-alone travel, and avoided over 100 automobile crashes.

In June 2023, the CTB approved 13 I-395/95 Commuter Choice projects totaling \$47.9 million for FY24-25:

- **Arlington County Metrobus 16M service enhancement.** Commuter Choice funding will support 24 months of enhanced local bus service with buses arriving every 6 minutes during weekday peak periods on the Metrobus 16M line between Skyline and Crystal City.
- **Alexandria Transit (DASH) Line 35 service enhancement.** This project will support a further 24 months of enhanced bus service, operating every 10 minutes all day on weekdays and every 15 minutes all day on weekends, between Alexandria's West End and the Pentagon via the 395 Express Lanes.
- **DASH Line 36A/B service enhancement.** This project will support a further 24 months of enhanced bus service, operating every 15 minutes all day, seven days per week, between the Mark Center, Shirlington and Potomac Yard. DASH Line 36 provides connections to critical destinations in the region



Commuter Choice program goals include maximizing person throughput, improving mobility, supporting new and diverse travel options, and enhancing safety and reliability.

including the INOVA hospital, Virginia Tech Innovation Center, and the new Potomac Yard Metro Station.

- **DASH Line 35 bus fleet capacity expansion with electric buses.** The purchase of two additional 60-foot electric buses will be used exclusively on DASH’s Line 35, which has experienced substantial ridership growth.
- **Fairfax Connector Route 396.** This project will support 24 further months of operation of peak-period express bus service between Springfield and the Pentagon operating every 15 to 20 minutes via the 395 Express Lanes. The route will add a stop at the new Springfield Multi-Use Parking Garage on Old Keene Mill Road.
- **Fairfax County’s Richmond Highway Bus Rapid Transit implementation.** The construction of a seven-mile, nine-station bus rapid transit line operating in new median lanes along U.S. Route 1 will connect dense residential and commercial development between Fort Belvoir and Huntington Station.
- **OmniRide Route D-200 service enhancement.** This project will support 24 further months of operation of two of the morning and two of the evening trips provided by OmniRide’s D-200 commuter express route between Dale City and the Pentagon, Rosslyn, and Ballston.
- **OmniRide Prince William Metro Express service enhancement.** This project will support a further 24 months of operation of expanded peak-period, fare-free service operating approximately every 20 to 30 minutes between Woodbridge, Potomac Mills, the Horner Road Commuter Lot and Franconia-Springfield Station. The route is one of the busiest in the OmniRide system.
- **OmniRide Route 1 local service enhancement.** This project will support further 24 months of operation of a third weekday peak-period bus on OmniRide’s fare-free local bus route along U.S. Route 1 in eastern Prince William County.
- **OmniRide Route 543.** This project will support a further 24 months of



operation of weekday commuter express service between the Route 610 commuter lot in Stafford County and major employment areas in downtown Washington, D.C., with five morning inbound trips and six afternoon outbound trips.

- **OmniRide Route 942.** This project will support 24 further months of operation of weekday commuter express service between the Route 610 commuter lot in Stafford County and the Pentagon, with an expansion to eight morning inbound trips and nine afternoon outbound trips.

- Virginia Railway Express.** This project will reestablish VRE's Amtrak Step-Up program to again allow VRE multi-ride pass holders to travel between Northern Virginia and Washington, D.C., on select peak and off-peak Amtrak Northeast Regional trains. The project, which will apply to VRE's Fredericksburg Line, will allow riders to acquire and use step-up tickets through VRE's mobile app.



In June 2022, the Commonwealth Transportation Board approved seven I-66 Commuter Choice projects totaling \$14.6 million for FY23-24:

- City of Manassas Park VRE Station parking garage.** The construction of a parking garage at the Manassas Park VRE Station will primarily provide additional parking capacity to meet long-term VRE ridership demand, though it will also help to support the master-planned Village at Manassas Park mixed-use development around the station.
- Arlington County Ballston-MU Metrorail west entrance.** A second entrance to Ballston-MU Station at the intersection of North Fairfax Drive and North Vermont Street in Arlington will shorten the walk for commuters in a transit-oriented area with ongoing high-density, walkable redevelopment and add bus stops to facilitate smooth transfers.
- OmniRide renewal of bus service.** This project supports the continued operation of OmniRide's popular express bus service between the University Boulevard Park and Ride lot in Gainesville and the Pentagon and Navy Yard.
- Fairfax County renewal of bus service.** This bus service renewal will provide 24 months of continued funding support for 10 morning and 10 evening peak direction, express bus trips between Vienna Station and the Pentagon Transit Center.
- OmniRide renewal of bus service.** This project supports four morning and four evening peak direction, express bus trips between the Heathcote commuter lot in Haymarket and the Rosslyn-Ballston corridor. The 24-month extension of operations support will add a stop at the University Boulevard commuter lot with direct access to the new outside the Beltway Express Lanes.

- **Prince William County TDM strategy.** Cutting fares in half on five OmniRide routes for the first 10 months that the I-66 outside the Beltway Express Lanes are open will attract more Prince William County commuters to transit.
- **Fairfax County trail access.** The construction of a nearly one-mile segment of the I-66 bicycling and walking trail between the Nutley Street interchange at the Vienna Station and Blake Lane will parallel I-66 between Centreville and the I-495 Beltway and connect other on-and off-street paths in Fairfax County.

## Regional Multimodal Mobility Program

The **Regional Multimodal Mobility Program's** (RM3P) mission is to use collaborative real-time data from public and private sectors to improve travel safety, reliability, and mobility in Northern Virginia by providing residents with tools to make informed travel choices. The program has three main goals: optimize transportation system performance by improving the efficiency of agency responses to travel disruptions, enhancing travel time reliability through using travel prediction capabilities, and supporting on-demand and multimodal trip choices for travels. DRPT, VDOT, and the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority are partners in this initiative.

RM3P is working toward deploying four technologies so that residents, operators, and service providers can improve mobility in the region.

- **Data Exchange Platform.** This cloud-based storage and exchange system will be used by regional partners and third-party providers to capture, process, and exchange information on real-time and historic multimodal travel conditions. This platform will feed data into other technologies.
- **Artificial Intelligence-Based Decision Support System.** This system will predict the impact of disruptions to the travel network and provide response options.
- **Commuter Parking Information System.** This app will provide real-time parking availability information about lots serving bus, vanpool, and carpool commuters.
- **Dynamic Incentivization.** This data-driven system will offer incentives to people to modify their travel choices in response to current travel conditions.

The Data-Exchange Platform went live in December 2022. Serving as a central repository, the platform provides the raw data to support the other RM3P program elements. The platform's available data includes traffic events and incidents, work zones, parking, public transit, traffic signal status, road weather stations, traffic detectors, probe vehicle speeds and travel times, and others.

The platform has integrated a wide range of regional core data on roadways, incidents and events, bike sharing, parking lots, transit, and more. The platform is



making it possible to paint a real-time picture of travel conditions in the region, across all transportation modes. As additional data are made available, the system will become more comprehensive and grow increasingly robust in utility and function.

Agency partners are working toward completing the procurement cycles for the other three technologies in FY24 with deployment scheduled for 2024 and 2025.

## Virginia Breeze

The **Virginia Breeze intercity bus program** launched in 2017, providing vital transportation connections 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 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.

Intercity bus service provides limited service between two or more urban areas not in close proximity and operates on a regularly scheduled fixed-route. Intercity bus service provides can 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.

Ridership has increased over the previous fiscal year. All four routes posted record ridership in FY23, indicating strong demand for the service. DRPT promoted the service through various marketing campaigns, including social media and setting up booths at community events.

## 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.

In FY23, 28,530 people rode the Valley Flyer. In October 2022, the Valley Flyer had its highest ridership to date, with 3,519 passengers. The route's on-time performance during FY23 averaged 82 percent, and the average farebox recovery was 82 percent.

### Highlands Rhythm

The Highlands Rhythm launched in November 2021, expanding service in Western Virginia. 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.

In FY23, 14,303 people rode the Highlands Rhythm. During the first half of 2023, the route increased its passenger total by over 44 percent when compared to the first half of 2022. The route's on-time performance during FY23 averaged 75 percent and the average farebox recovery was 32 percent.



“Normally I drive, but having had a stroke and some other health issues this past year, I decided to take the bus. I hadn't ridden a bus since the 1970's, so wasn't sure what to expect. But all my expectations were exceeded!”

— VIRGINIA BREEZE PASSENGER



### Capital Connector

The Capital Connector began service in August 2020. The Capital Connector connects Martinsville and Washington, D.C., with stops in Danville, South Boston, Farmville, and Richmond.

In FY23, the Capital Connector carried 6,518 passengers. The route's on-time performance during FY23 averaged 70 percent, and the average farebox recovery was 17 percent.

### Piedmont Express

The Piedmont Express 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.

In FY23, the Piedmont Express carried 6,740 passengers. The route's on-time performance during FY23 averaged 82 percent, and the average farebox recovery was 21 percent.

## ConnectingVA

DRPT's ConnectingVA program encourages Virginians to use transit, rideshare, vanpool, or bike for commutes and assists businesses with hybrid work arrangements and commuting alternatives.

DRPT promotes these services on [connectingva.drpt.virginia.gov](https://connectingva.drpt.virginia.gov). The agency launched the ConnectingVA website in spring 2023, consolidating the commuting alternatives websites that previously existed into one website for easier use.

## Incentivizing Transit Use

There are 10 commuter assistance programs — including DRPT's ConnectingVA — across the Commonwealth to help people interested in using public transportation or commuting alternatives (the other 9 are run by regional entities).

DRPT partners with Agile Mile, which develops a platform for ride matching and rewards, to provide commuters with a rider rewards mobile app. The app assists riders with identifying transit options and ridership partners for commutes by train, bus, carpool, vanpool, or bike. App users log their trips or telework days in the app to earn points, which they can redeem for discounts for dining, shopping, leisure activities, services, and more.

By the end of FY23, there were 30,432 people with ridematch and rewards app accounts. Throughout FY23, there were 2,557 new app members. Users recorded 344,104 trips for all transportation modes. This contributed to 6,416,388 miles not driven, 287,770 gallons of gas saved, and \$4,010,243 saved. For FY23, the cost for the application was \$217,915, so the cost per user is \$7, and the cost per trip reduced is 8 cents.

## Vanpool

DRPT provides funding to local governments, transit agencies, vanpool providers, and other local agencies to form new vanpools, increase ridership, and assist existing vanpools when needed. DRPT encourages vanpooling as an option for long commutes where transit is not available and to reduce the number of vehicles on

the roads. There is information about vanpooling on [connectingva.drpt.virginia.gov](https://connectingva.drpt.virginia.gov).

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.

FTA considers vanpools a transit mode if the vanpool service provided meets the **definition of public transportation** under 49 U.S.C. § 5302. If the vanpool meets the criteria for public transportation, the service can be reported to the National Transit Database. Reporting vanpool data leads to additional FTA formula funds for the Commonwealth.

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.

## Helping Virginia Businesses and Employees

DRPT provides resources to Virginia's businesses to help them establish hybrid work arrangements and offer commuting alternatives to their employees. DRPT can help employers of any size develop hybrid work plans, provide customized training for managers and employees to maximize productivity and communication, assess technology needs, and develop telework policies. DRPT has resources for employers online at [connectingva.drpt.virginia.gov](https://connectingva.drpt.virginia.gov).

Since 2001, DRPT has been assisting Virginia businesses develop hybrid work plans to help reduce number of commuters on Virginia's roadways by encouraging employees to work remotely one or two days a week.

# Improving Transit Opportunities

DRPT is dedicated to serving all Virginians by supporting a multimodal system that includes a variety of transportation approaches that meet different community needs. Through studies, initiatives, and pilot projects, DRPT is encouraging innovative transportation solutions to develop a best-in-class transit system in Virginia.

## Virginia Transit Modernization Study Provides Roadmap for Progress

DRPT completed the **Virginia Transit Modernization Study** in fall 2022, the first study of its kind in the nation to examine a statewide public transportation network and how to develop a best-in-class transit system that works for all.

The two-year study was the result of House Joint Resolution 542, which the 2021 General Assembly passed 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 looked at topics such as accessibility, technology, electrification, safety, engagement and representation, and infrastructure. A variety of input led to findings including inadequate bus stops, inconsistent basic transit infrastructure, gaps in transit service, barriers to adopting emerging technology, actual and perceived safety concerns, and a lack of data to inform decisions.



“We chose to buy our house in part because it was near a transit stop...Taking the bus was especially convenient when I was pregnant.”

— TRANSIT RIDER

By the end, it identified opportunities to advance modern transit within the Commonwealth. The study's action plan identifies 29 recommendations that serve as a roadmap to direct subsequent efforts — by both DRPT and local transit agencies. Final recommendations are organized by their anticipated timeline for implementation — near-, mid-, and long-term.

The transit modernization study has served as a foundation for DRPT to improve public transportation across the Commonwealth. For example, DRPT is already in the process of developing guidance for transit agencies planning to transition to low- and zero-emissions fleets as well as improving the process to install bus shelters to speed up the state and local regulatory approval process.

## Testing Innovative Transportation Solutions

A diverse mobility ecosystem provides a variety of choices, including fixed-route buses, microtransit, shuttles, commuter routes, and more. DRPT wants to help organizations meet their communities' needs so they can offer better service. DRPT supports organizations **testing innovative transportations solutions** that impact operations and traveler experience by offering **demonstration project assistance**.

In FY23, DRPT provided a total of \$6.7 million in funding toward nine demonstration projects. The following is a summary of some of the project highlights.

### Afton Express

The Afton Express is a new commuter-centered bus route operated by Virginia Regional Transit as part of the Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission's BRITE Bus system. Service began in September 2021 with trips Monday through Friday on a fixed schedule.



### Afton Express By the Numbers

In the first 16 months:

12,261 trips

90 percent of passengers ride regularly

187 percent ridership increase between September 2021 and December 2022

In the first 16 months, passengers took 12,261 trips between the Staunton-Augusta Waynesboro region and the City of Charlottesville and Albemarle County. About 90 percent of passengers ride regularly, and 43 percent ride three-four days a week, while 30 percent ride every day, and 26 percent ride one-two days a week.

The Afton Express is meeting a need for people who want to live outside of the Charlottesville area and need to commute in for their jobs. Many Afton Express riders cannot work remotely because they work at the University of Virginia or its affiliated hospital system and need reliable public transportation. Since the conclusion of the pilot, the Afton Express has continued service.

### **ShenGO**

ShenGO is the first public transit system to operate in Shenandoah County. It launched in October 2021 and operates the south route from Woodstock to New Market and the north route from Woodstock to Strasburg. Virginia Regional Transit serves as the transit provider.

ShenGO had 11,194 riders in its inaugural year, with monthly ridership increasing from 454 in its first month to 1,400 as of spring 2023. Service has continued since the conclusion of the pilot.

### **Bedford Otter Bus**

The Bedford Otter Bus started operations as a six-month pilot project in September 2021, but it has been extended for three years. The service began to help address a public transit gap by connecting residents to essential stops — such as grocery stores, health care, and major housing sites. Ridership has continued to grow, demonstrated it is a valuable service for the residents. About 32 percent of riders live in subsidized housing, 43 percent visit grocery, pharmacy, and shopping areas, and 10 percent visit health and wellness facilities.

Bus service connects residents to essential stops. The Town of Bedford and the Bedford Community Health Foundation partnered to provide public transportation in the town. After the first year of service, the Bedford Otter Bus is expanding hours.

### **Chesterfield County Route 60**

The Greater Richmond Transit Company is extending a bus line westward on Route 60 to increase mobility options in Chesterfield County, improving access to jobs, shopping, education, and healthcare facilities.

The one-year pilot, set to begin in early 2024, will test the demand for transit along the Midlothian Turnpike, a well-developed arterial in the region.

## McAfee Knob Shuttle

The McAfee Knob shuttle began service in September 2022 for a one-year pilot to test the operation of a shuttle for seasonal service on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays to carry people back and forth between the McAfee Knob trailhead parking lot and the Interstate 81 Exit 140 Park and Ride lot. Over its initial 37 days of service, riders reserved 716 trips.

McAfee Knob is the most photographed location on the Appalachian Trail and receives about 50,000 visitors each year. The parking lot at the trailhead is very small, and only a couple dozen cars can park there. The lot is situated at the top of a mountain accessed by a winding road with no sidewalks. Roanoke County partnered with RideSource to operate the shuttle.

## Powering Transit by Technology

### Closing Transit Gaps with Microtransit

Just a decade ago, there were no cities deploying on-demand public transit, also called microtransit. In the past few years, interest in microtransit has grown as transit agencies use it to close transit gaps.

Microtransit allows people to book rides in real time through a mobile app or by phone call. Transit agencies use real-time dynamic routing and 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.

In spring 2023, DRPT concluded an **18-month pilot to test rural microtransit services** with Bay Transit in Gloucester County and Mountain Empire Older Citizens in Wise County and the City of Norton. DRPT conducted the pilot with the support of



“The service is the best thing that’s happened in a long time. It’s been a success to change lives. It’s elevated lives and helped people have jobs for the first time.”

— MOUNTAIN EMPIRE OLDER CITIZENS TRANSIT OPERATIONS DIRECTOR WILL WRIGHT



a \$160,930 grant from the Federal Transit Administration's Integrated Mobility Innovation Program.

Over the 18-month period, both services experienced increasing ridership, with Bay Transit Express providing 9,039 trips and METGo! providing 38,996 trips. Most of the riders used the service multiple times a week. The top destinations for riders were health care facilities, grocery stores, and workplaces. Many of the riders do not have driver's licenses for a variety of reasons, and microtransit removed the transportation barrier preventing them from getting jobs. During the pilot period, Bay Transit Express expanded its service area, which attracted new riders. Both microtransit services have continued after the conclusion of the pilot.

Several **transit agencies across the Commonwealth** have launched or shown interest in adding microtransit to their communities. Hampton Roads Transit has deployed microtransit services, Greater Richmond Transit Company and Charlottesville Area Transit are preparing to do so in FY24, and the Harrisonburg Department of Public Transportation will finish a microtransit feasibility study in FY24. DRPT is supporting these initiatives with state funding.

### Testing the Future of Autonomous Vehicles

The Relay pilot project began in 2020 as a partnership between the DRPT, Virginia Tech Transportation Institute, Fairfax County, Dominion Energy, VDOT, George Mason University, and EDENS (Mosaic developer) to deploy and evaluate the effectiveness and safety of a low-speed automated shuttle in Merrifield in Fairfax County.

DRPT provided \$200,000 in funding to support a two and a half-year pilot testing the first autonomous public transportation shuttle on public streets in Virginia. The pilot concluded in June 2023.

The Relay shuttle traveled no faster than 15 miles per hour and transported people between the Dunn Loring-Merrifield Metrorail Station and the corner of Merrifield Town Center Drive and District Avenue in the Mosaic District. A human safety operator was always onboard to monitor safety. The pilot project sought to test this driverless, public transportation option to evaluate its effectiveness and safety, and see how it can be used as a "first and last-mile" transit option while helping connect the community, activating neighborhoods and attracting businesses.

The pilot found that emergency stops initiated by the vehicle were more common during the fall, when there were leaves in the roadway, and when there were vehicles in a narrow adjacent lane. There were also instances when the vehicle was in the middle of an intersection on a yellow or red light at least once a week, likely

due to the vehicle’s slow speed and having to navigate through a large intersection. The study recommended that DRPT and VDOT test future autonomous vehicles in more lightly-trafficked areas with lower speeds and where there could be dedicated lanes for autonomous vehicles.

## Partnership for Petersburg

Governor Youngkin launched the **Partnership for Petersburg** initiative with state, local, community, and faith leaders in August 2022. According to the Governor’s Office, this partnership aims to "give the Petersburg locality full ownership of this meaningful initiative with support from Commonwealth to see it become one of the best cities to live, work, and raise a family."

DRPT worked with the City of Petersburg, Petersburg Area Transit, and VDOT to develop a new multimodal center, which includes a park-and-ride facility.

The lack of available commuter parking spaces limited Petersburg Area Transit’s ability to provide quality commuter services and connect with neighboring jurisdictions, major employers in the region, medical facilities, educational institutions, and other key destinations.

The 75,000-square-foot facility with over 215 parking spaces that will help reduce the need for using single-occupancy vehicles and will significantly improve access to transit services for all Petersburg residents.



“Our goal over the past few months has been to break down silos and provide comprehensive and sustainable solutions to the unique challenges of Petersburg.”

— GOVERNOR GLENN YOUNGKIN

## Meeting Virginia's Rail Needs

Virginia's economic prosperity and quality of life are directly dependent on its rail network. The Commonwealth recognizes the privately owned rail network as part of a multimodal system with public benefits and growing economic impacts. DRPT oversees programs and initiatives that support freight investments and delivers data-driven planning recommendations and policies for both passenger and freight rail.

## Statewide Rail Plan Marks Progress and Goals

DRPT completed its update to the Statewide Rail Plan in 2022. The agency prepares the plan every four years in accordance with Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) guidance. DRPT developed the plan in coordination with the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority (VPRA) and aligned it with the goals and objectives of VTrans, the Commonwealth's multimodal transportation plan. The FRA approved the plan in March 2023.

The **2022 Statewide Rail Plan** provides long-term guidance for Virginia's transportation leadership to ensure that the Commonwealth's rail needs for people, communities, and commerce are addressed. Continued investment in rail infrastructure will ensure the mission and vision of the Commonwealth's transportation network is achieved.

The 2022 Statewide Rail Plan is fully digital with interactive features showing the current landscape of rail and the effects of Virginia's rail investments. The plan



Virginia's rail network is a valuable asset that grows the economy, relieves congestion, and saves taxpayer money by safely and efficiently moving people and freight within and through the Commonwealth.

introduces a policy framework to guide recommendations, including short- and long-term projects with an assessment of project benefits.

The 2022 Statewide Rail Plan highlights the incredible progress Virginia has made with rail since its last statewide plan. Virginia embarked on an ambitious new program to separate freight and passenger rail in its busiest rail corridor and expand passenger rail services in Western Virginia. Known as Transforming Rail in Virginia, this effort has resulted in the newly established VPRA taking ownership of over 400 linear miles of rail right of way for passenger rail expansion.

Since its last Plan, DRPT's rail programs have generated 13 million rail carloads and diverted 44 million trucks from Virginia's roadways. By diverting freight and passenger traffic from roadways, Virginia's rail network relieves congestion, improves air quality, helps grow the economy, and complements the Virginia highway network while reducing capital and maintenance expenditures.

The Commonwealth plans to make \$5.8 billion in passenger rail investments comprising 72 projects and \$536 million in freight rail investments comprising 123 projects over the next 20 years. Passenger rail projects include constructing a new two-track span parallel to the Long Bridge to expand freight and passenger train capacity over the Potomac River and expanding passenger rail service from Roanoke to the New River Valley. These investments, which include track construction and rail crossing improvements, will advance the Commonwealth's transportation goals and ensure safety, security, and resiliency in the rail network.

The Class I railroads in Virginia have invested heavily in their networks during the last five years and continue to make capital investments to update existing track and bridges, add new track capacity, and improve facility efficiency. The nine short-line

## Rail Crossing Improvements

Virginia spends about \$4.7 million per year on highway-rail crossing improvements to enhance safety, transportation, and network fluidity. A statewide evaluation of existing rail crossings has guided DRPT in its pursuit of competitive federal grants.

In June 2023, the FRA announced it was awarding DRPT \$3.2 million to improve four railroad crossings in rural Virginia. The rail crossing upgrades in Hanover, Stafford, and Spotsylvania counties will enhance safety and rail service as well as support higher volume and higher speed rail between Richmond and Washington, D.C.

The Commonwealth received the funding through the FRA's Railroad Crossing Elimination Grant Program.

Traffic and train volumes are expected to increase over the next two decades at the four crossings, making crossing improvements critical to enhancing safety of drivers and pedestrians at the crossings and improving reliability and travel times for freight and passenger rail service.

railroads have also made a variety of infrastructure improvements and have maintenance and improvement plans.

## Diverting Trucks From Virginia's Highways

DRPT has three capital rail improvement grant programs: FREIGHT, Shortline Railway Preservation, and Rail Industrial Access. The primary benefit of these programs is to support increasing traffic on the rail network and divert trucks from Virginia's roads and highways.

In FY23, DRPT invested \$22.5 million in FREIGHT and Shortline projects and \$3 million in Rail Industrial Access projects.

## 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 VPRA, Virginia is providing a pathway for the separation of freight and passenger rail in the future. The 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-pound load capacity, and improving reliability.

The program focuses on program goals, state initiatives, cost effectiveness, and applicant priority when determining allocations. DRPT committed \$9.3 million (\$6.5 million state funds and \$2.8 million matching funds) in grants for 12 new projects as reflected in the FY23 SYIP.

## Expanding the 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, expand, or develop railways, railroad equipment, rolling stock, rights of way, rail facilities, and engineering and design. Funding awards require a performance period once the project has been completed to ensure the investment brings lasting benefits to the economy and transportation network in Virginia.

DRPT committed \$15 million (\$7.9 million state funds and \$7.1 million matching funds) in grants for five new projects as reflected in the FY23 SYIP.

## Transforming Freight in Virginia Moving Goods Through the Port of Virginia



DRPT is developing a bold plan to identify technology, equipment, and infrastructure enhancements to maximize the capacity and efficiency of Virginia's transportation network by increasing the percentage of goods moving in and out of the Port of Virginia by rail. **Transforming Freight in Virginia** builds upon existing efforts initiated by the Port of Virginia, Class I and Shortline railroads, localities, and the Virginia Economic Development Partnership, leveraging existing funding and new funding opportunities.

The plan will focus on collaboration with freight industry leaders to enhance economic development, convene agencies and private sector partners to deliver projects at strategic locations, and develop partnerships with railroads to harden infrastructure for increased environmental resiliency.

DRPT has allocated over \$48 million for infrastructure projects at the Port through FY27

- Virginia Inland Port Terminal Expansion: \$7.7 million
- CWRV Marshalling Yard: \$20 million
- Norfolk International Terminals Central Yard Expansion: \$20.7 million

## Expanding the Rail Network With the Rail Industrial Access Program

DRPT works closely with the Virginia Economic Development Partnership and local economic development authorities 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.

DRPT awarded a record number of Rail Industrial Access grants in FY23. Rail Industrial Access provides grants of up to \$450,000 to connect new or expanding businesses to the freight railroad network. Funding requires a 30 percent match by the applicant. Grants are awarded on a rolling basis depending upon project eligibility and scoring.

In FY23, DRPT awarded \$3 million (\$2.1 million state funds and \$ 900,000 matching funds) in grants for seven new projects.

In total, these projects will invest over \$222.5 million in their facilities and rail access and create approximately 312 new jobs. They have committed to diverting over 12,000 trucks from Virginia roads and highways annually.

- Ashton Creek Industrial Park LLC will construct a new 1,320-foot rail spur at its Chesterfield County facility. The spur will serve the rail needs of the park's tenant, **Commonwealth Building Materials**, which provides staff expertise and a full stock of drywall, insulation, acoustical tiles, and steel framing to builders in the region.
- **Hershey Chocolate of Virginia Inc.** will build a new 4,750-foot rail spur at its facility in Augusta County. The project will help the industry-leading snacks company continue to expand and increase capacity.
- **Houff Corporation** will build a new 4,000-foot rail spur at its Hanover County facility. The facility is a transload facility that will receive Perlite, a key ingredient in kitty litter, to support its customer Nestle Purina, which is located in King William County.
- **New Millennium Building Systems** will construct a new rail spur at its City of Salem facility. New Millennium fabricates steel building components for use in low-rise, non-residential buildings to include joists, girders, trusses, and steel decking.
- **Plasser American Corporation** will construct a new 2,740-foot rail spur at its City of Chesapeake Facility. Plasser American Corporation manufactures large rail equipment such as regulators, tampers, undercutting machines, and more.
- The Smyth County Economic Development Authority will build a 770-foot rail siding for its industrial park tenant, **Scholle IPN Corporation**. Scholle designs and manufactures packaging solutions and products for food and beverages predominantly in the U.S. market.
- **Westrock Corporation** will reconstruct an existing rail spur at its Pittsylvania County facility. Westrock Corporation's Cascade facility is a chip mill that purchases pulpwood from local logging contractors and converts it into chips, which are shipped to its Covington facility and made into packaging paper.

# Providing Safety Oversight of Public Transportation

## 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.

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 launching of the The Tide on August 19, 2011, made Norfolk the smallest city in the nation and the first city in Virginia to have a light-rail system. Since The Tide began, it has recorded more than 14 million rides.





DRPT recently completed a **report** detailing State Safety Oversight activities at the HRT Tide light rail system from January 1 through December 31, 2022. Additionally, DRPT approved HRT's Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan in FY23. It also conducted regular work sessions with HRT personnel, conducted audits and inspections of HRT's light rail operations, approved rail safety and emergency preparedness plans, conducted rail investigations, and tracked HRT's process in correcting safety gaps.

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), signed into law in November 2021, required HRT to make several updates to their safety program, including establishing and implementing a joint labor-management safety committee vested with the responsibility to formally approve the HRT PTASP. HRT successfully met these objectives. The FTA also issued a special directive to DRPT in Fall 2022 regarding the development and implementation of a Risk-Based Inspection (RBI) program. DRPT currently performs routine announced and unannounced inspections and will work closely with HRT and the FTA as we make enhancements to the inspection program to meet the RBI requirements.

## Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan

Transit Safety is a key component of the federal performance-based planning process. FTA published the Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) Final Rule in 2018 to improve public transportation safety by guiding transit agencies to manage safety risks more effectively and proactively in their systems.

The PTASP rule provides two tiers of compliance with differing requirements.

Tier I agencies are defined as large urban agencies with more than 101 vehicles in peak revenue service or those that operate fixed guideway service. These agencies must develop and maintain their own agency-specific 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.

# Planning for FY2024 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. While DRPT's planning activities range in scope, all work toward the same goal — increasing the efficiency of Virginia's existing transit system and helping plan future expansions to meet the anticipated increase in demand.

## 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 presents statewide and regional gaps as well as strategies to improve human services transportation in Virginia.



DRPT worked 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 the 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 used that information to make recommendations to DRPT about additional updates. Lastly, the team developed a rider survey that DRPT has conducted and analyzed to further update the plan.

The CHSM Plan update will be completed in FY24.

## I-495 Southside Transit and TDM Study

DRPT **completed a study in April 2023** identifying 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 on I-495 between the Springfield interchange (I-95/I-395/I-495) in Fairfax County, Virginia, and the MD 210 interchange in Prince George's County, Maryland.

DRPT conducted the study to inform the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) evaluation process underway for the I-495 Southside Express Lanes Study by VDOT.

The transit/TDM study was multifaceted and inventoried existing rail transit service, bus transit service, park-and-ride facilities, and TDM programs in the study area. The study also identified new transportation alternatives that could increase mobility; prioritized near-, mid-, and long-term transit and TDM service improvements; identified ways to maximize use of multimodal facilities; and identified opportunities to utilize technology to support new travel options.

## 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. DRPT developed a rail story map, digitizing rail projects and rail performance and hosting public meetings to share information about the plan. The Federal Railroad Administration approved the Virginia Statewide Rail Plan in March 2023.

## Transit Low- and No-Emissions Vehicles Study

In FY24, DRPT will begin a year-long process to create a **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 Breeze Fifth Route Study

DRPT **completed a study** in October 2022 examining the possibility of adding a fifth Virginia Breeze 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, D.C., 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.

## Virginia Breeze East-West Study

DRPT is undertaking another intercity bus study in FY24 to determine new route options for the **Virginia Breeze intercity bus program**, focusing on the identification of an east-west connection along the Interstate 64 corridor. The four existing routes do not provide connection to the Hampton Roads region, and they all exist within interstate highway corridors that run north and south. The analysis will focus on routes between the City of Staunton and the Hampton Roads area, such as Norfolk and Virginia Beach.