PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

IN VIRGINIA'S TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING PROCESS

Your views help VDOT and DRPT determine solutions to respond to transportation needs, and to establish funding priorities.

VDOT
Virginia Department of Transportation

DRPT
Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation

Participating in Virginia's Transportation Planning and Programming Process

PARTICIPATING IN VIRGINIA'S TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING PROCESS

Virginia is committed to providing reasonable notice and opportunity for the public to review, comment and participate in transportation planning and programming of highways, rail and public transportation projects consistent with requirements for transportation in federal regulations at 23 CFR 450, and state laws and policies. Members of the public, representatives of the users of the highway system, public transportation, and bicycle and pedestrian facilities; freight shippers and freight transportation services providers; public agencies; transportation service providers for the elderly and disabled; and other interested parties are fully encouraged to participate at public hearings and meetings, to take advantage of other public involvement opportunities afforded them, and to review and comment on transportation planning and programming documents.

IMPORTANT ABBREVIATIONS:

CTB Virginia Commonwealth Transportation Board
DRPT Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation
MPO Metropolitan Planning Organization
PDC Planning District Commission
STIP Statewide Transportation Improvement Program
SYIP Six-Year Improvement Program
TDM Transportation Demand Management
TIP MPO Transportation Improvement Program
VDOT Virginia Department of Transportation

WHO:

The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) perform lead roles in transportation planning and programming for the Commonwealth. VDOT improves and maintains the nation's third largest state-maintained highway system, just behind Texas and North Carolina. DRPT supports several of the largest public transportation and rail systems and high-occupancy vehicle networks in the United States. As with other public agencies, VDOT and DRPT transportation decisions are informed by the public.

State, regional and local officials also play important roles in helping the state to understand and meet the transportation needs of the public. The list of transportation champions include the Governor, the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB), federal and state legislators, VDOT and DRPT officials, Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) members, Planning District Commission (PDC) members, City or Town Councils, County Boards of Supervisors, planners and researchers of various government offices. Other advocates may include transportation related associations such as the Virginia Municipal League, Virginia Association of Counties, Virginia Association of Planning District Commissions, Virginia Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations, Virginia Transit Association, Virginia Trucking Association, Rails-to-Trails, and BikeWalk Virginia. Federal transportation agencies act as key partners with the state, particularly the Federal Highway Administration, the Federal Transit Administration and the Federal Railroad Administration. Interested community leaders and members of the general public especially warrant recognition.

WHAT:

Transportation planning identifies transportation system needs and, to the extent that funds will be available, cooperatively and officially produces a plan to respond to the long- and short-range needs with appropriate projects. Programming cooperatively and officially identifies funding for the planned projects that are to be implemented as short-range priorities over the next six years. This produces the Six-Year Improvement Program (SYIP). Recent CTB programming priorities include:

- Fund deficits on underway project phases
- Maximize use of federal funds
- Fund project phases that are underway or scheduled to be underway
- Fund deficient bridges and paving projects
- Increase funding for preliminary engineering
- Support development of public-private partnership projects
- Accelerate existing projects using additional funds
- Allocate funds consistent with how they will be obligated and expended
- Redirect inactive balances on projects

Key transportation planning and programming decisions are made and documented during the development of the multimodal long-range statewide transportation plan (VTrans), the Virginia Surface Transportation Plan (VSTP), the Statewide Rail Plan, the Statewide Transit and TDM Plan, the SYIP, the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), the rural Regional Long-Range Plans, and each urbanized region's Constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Program.

HOW, WHEN AND WHERE:

Informal and formal public participation methods range from simple daily communication with VDOT's or DRPT's personnel, to preparing and holding public hearings on proposals to allocate state and other funds to update the CTB SYIP. The CTB reviews the SYIP for update at least every year, coordinating with regional and metropolitan planning groups, localities, interested parties, stakeholders and the public. Fall meetings are held to discuss transportation improvement priorities for prospectively updating the SYIP. A draft SYIP is made available for public review and comment during public hearings that are held in the spring, and the SYIP is adopted by the CTB before July. The purpose is to coordinate the planning for financing of transportation needs and to allocate funds for these needs. The adopted SYIP ultimately guides the update and/or amendment of the metropolitan Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs) and the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). The following methods represent sets of opportunities available for involvement between VDOT, DRPT and the public:

- **General communication** activities include:
  - Local government/community public forums
  - Transportation presentations and updates with visualization techniques at various meetings or events
  - Use of the internet to provide information to the public
  - Informal communication activities (such as e-mails, phone calls or meetings with contact persons)
- **Rural regional transportation planning** involves the rural PDC Transportation Technical Committees and work to update transportation Regional Long-Range Plans including a Transit Development Plan component that feed into the Virginia Surface Transportation Plan.
- **Transit and TDM Development Plans** identify needs and required resources for modifying/enhancing services and provide a basis for funding requests that feed into the programming process. DRPT works with transit operators and TDM service providers to develop Transit Development Plans.
- **Metropolitan transportation planning** for each Virginia urbanized area involves a MPO. MPO and state approvals jointly determine those major projects that may advance in an urbanized area. The MPO serves in a lead cooperative role working together with state officials and the region's public transportation operator(s) to develop the metropolitan area's Public Participation Plan, work program, regional transportation studies, and/or updates or amendments of the:
  - Constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan
  - Transportation Improvement Program (identifying which of the priorities of the Constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan to implement)

- **Statewide programming** involves consultation and cooperative support for rail, public transportation, highways, bicycle, pedestrian and transportation demand measures (park and ride lots, car pools, etc.). It includes opportunities for the exchange of thoughts and information in several steps in the development of updates or amendments to the SYIP. The SYIP document ultimately guides the update and/or amendment of transportation priorities to the metropolitan TIPs and STIP.

  VDOT funds operations, maintenance and/or construction activities needed for:
  - The state highway system (interstates and primary highways)
  - A locality's urban road system
  - A locality's secondary road system
  - Specialized programs (bridges, special local transportation funding requests for rural rustic roads, recreational access, transportation alternatives, etc.).

  DRPT provides grant-based funding that necessitates timely advance reviews of new or revised grant applications. Typically, each December, DRPT announces the availability of state and federal funds for rail, public transportation, transportation demand management and human service agency grants. Applicants apply via DRPT's On-line Grant Administration (OLGA) system at https://olga.drpt.virginia.gov/news.aspx. DRPT staff is available to answer questions and assist with the on-line application process. Tentative allocations (not "grants" per se) of federal and state funds support future rail, public transportation, and TDM projects and are included in the SYIP.

- **Statewide system planning** also offers additional opportunities for public participation. It involves both rural and metropolitan rail, public transportation and highways, and provides for public and interagency consultation at steps in the development of updates or amendments to statewide long-range plans (VTrans, the Virginia Surface Transportation Plan for highways, rail and public transportation, the Statewide Transit and TDM Plan, and the Statewide Rail Plan).

Opportunities to comment on Virginia transportation planning and/or programming documents are available using the contact(s) and other resources presented in this brochure. Policies, as well as other requirements, dictate that the public be provided reasonable opportunity for review and comment on draft documents at key decision points. Typically, a public notice is published in applicable general circulation and minority newspapers and available at VDOT's and/or DRPT's website 30 days prior to a public hearing, and in general papers and VDOT's and/or DRPT's website 15 days prior to a public meeting, where key decisions would be made. At formal public hearings held by the state, public comments are documented and summarized for consideration in decision making.

At the state level, the most frequent transportation planning and programming events that provide opportunity for public comment are the meetings or hearings held by the CTB. Check your region's general circulation and/or regional community newspaper, as well as the websites on the following page for a schedule and issues to be addressed at these and other upcoming meetings. The public may sign up to speak or simply observe at a public meeting or hearing. Written comments are also accepted. Other means exist for public participation. For example, in many urbanized areas, citizen advisory committees exist that regularly advise the MPO on transportation issues.

SPECIAL ASSISTANCE:

VDOT and DRPT encourage full citizen participation and provide accommodations for persons with disabilities by:

- Holding meetings in a fully accessible facility
- Providing documents in alternate formats upon request
- Considering accessible presentation alternatives such as videos with real-time captioning, use of interpreters or provision of documents in Braille
- VDOT and DRPT also have separate Title VI compliance plans for purposes of ensuring access to public involvement opportunities by persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP), low income and minority populations.

For more information or special assistance for persons with disabilities or LEP, you may contact:

VDOT Civil Rights Division

1401 East Broad Street, Richmond, Virginia 23219
Telephone 804-786-2730
TTY/TTD statewide 711 (for hearing impaired)
Toll Free Voice 888-508-3737

DRPT

600 East Main Street, Suite 2102, Richmond, Virginia 23219
Telephone 804-786-4440

Low-income or minority communities can learn of specialized transportation and other service availability using Virginia's 2-1-1 service. Typically, prior to a public hearing a notice is provided to minority newspapers, with information or special assistance available on request for assisting persons with disabilities or LEP. Contacts are provided above and on the last page.

WAYS TO LEARN MORE:

To learn about the transportation planning process, access information or provide input on transportation plans and programs; to contact VDOT and/or DRPT; to review and comment on particular draft transportation documents; and/or to participate in organized public meeting or hearing events, the public is invited to use the following information:

CTB	
Meeting information	http://www.virginia.gov/connect/commonwealth-calendar
	http://www.ctb.virginia.gov/meetingschedule.asp
	Newspaper announcements
Board member information	http://www.ctb.virginia.gov/members.asp
VDOT	
Contact information	1-800-FOR-ROAD (1-800-367-7623)
	http://www.virginiadot.org/info/contactus.asp
Meeting information	http://www.virginiadot.org/projects/publicinvolvement.asp
	Area newspaper announcements
Project information	http://www.virginiadot.org/business/resources/LocDes/Public_Involvement_Manual.pdf
VDOT transportation planners and/or programmers email	statewideplans@governor.virginia.gov
	six-yearprogram@vdot.virginia.gov
DRPT	
Contact information	http://www.drpt.virginia.gov/contact/default.aspx
	804-786-4440
Meeting information	http://www.drpt.virginia.gov/events/default.aspx
Project information	http://www.drpt.virginia.gov/activities/Transit_ref_materials.aspx
DRPT transportation planners and/or programmers email	drptpr@drpt.virginia.gov

OTHER SERVICES

VDOT and DRPT ensure nondiscrimination and equal employment opportunity in all programs, services and activities in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and other nondiscrimination authorities. For more information or assistance for persons with disabilities or Limited English Proficiency, contact the VDOT Civil Rights Division, DRPT, or call 711 for TTY/TDD.

The Virginia Department of Social Services offers Virginia 2-1-1 telephone operator and/or printed information to learn about specialized transportation and other services available in various communities, including low-income and/or minority communities.

PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING RELATIVE TO PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

Transportation planning and programming provide the foundation for all future project development activities (including environmental, design, right of way, construction or maintenance phases). The public involvement, review and comment sought with the development of transportation plans and/or the programming of funds represent some of the best opportunities to influence transportation decisions. Transportation planning identifies the needs that require financing through transportation programs. Once funding is identified and programmed, project development can begin with environmental and design phases. Project development then would normally advance to right of way acquisition, and ultimately conclude with construction and maintenance activities. Whether to program funds to initiate project development (to initiate the environmental and design phases for transportation improvements) is one of many important questions considered during the development of updates or amendments proposed for the SYIP, and TIPs and/or STIP.

GENERAL STAGES OF ROAD BUILDING

1. **Planning Phase:** 6-24 months or more
2. **Environmental and Design Phase:** up to 72 months
3. **Right of Way Phase:** up to 30 months
4. **Construction Phase:** up to 36 months

For more detailed information on the road building process, please visit http://www.virginiadot.org/projects/pr-howroadblt.asp.

We seek the people's voice in forming transportation decisions. This document informs of Virginia's planning and programming process, with special focus on public participation opportunities in the process.

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www.virginiadot.org
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info@vdot.virginia.gov

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