DRAFT

THE COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

RURAL TRANSPORTATION CONSULTATION PROCESSES

January 2011

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Virginia Department of Transportation (**VDOT**) and the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (**DRPT**) play major roles in transportation planning, programming, and the project development and delivery processes in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The responsibilities include improving and maintaining the third largest state-maintained highway system, just behind North Carolina and Texas, and supporting several of the largest public transportation systems and high-occupancy vehicle networks in the nation. In Virginia, regional and local officials also play important roles in helping to understand and meet the transportation needs of the public.

VDOT and DRPT have had longstanding practices, as summarized in the February, 2006 Rural Consultation Processes document, for consulting with Virginia's non-metropolitan regional and local officials, interested parties and the public during the transportation planning and programming decision-making process. Consistent with the U.S. Department of Transportation's (**USDOT**) Final Rule on Statewide and Metropolitan Planning, this December, 2010 document summarizes the latest VDOT and DRPT practices proposed for consultation with non-metropolitan local officials in planning and programming. Other additional public involvement opportunities exist for providing inputs on specific projects in their project development stage with the procedures identified in the VDOT Policy Manual for Public Participation in Transportation Projects.

As in the February, 2006 Rural Consultation Processes document, this document uses the term "rural" as a synonym for "non-metropolitan" which refers to locations *outside* any urbanized planning area associated with 50,000 or more census population. The state is taking advantage of the federal planning directives for updating rural transportation consultation as an opportunity not only to summarize and review the latest processes but also to identify ways to enhance interaction and consultation with rural officials in planning and programming processes. Based on comments received on this December, 2010 draft document, VDOT and DRPT expect to modify and update the rural consultation process in a March or April, 2011 final document. The process is to be repeated at least every five years consistent with federal regulations, although an interim review and update of consultation methods may occur if conditions warrant.

Comments on this draft document are to be received in writing by no later than **March 25, 2011,** at the e-mail address at statewideplan@VDOT.Virginia.gov or, for delivery by standard mail, at:

State Transportation Planning Administrator
VDOT TMPD ATTN RE**: Rural Transportation Consultation Processes**
1401 East Broad Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

1.1 The Federal Planning Rule on Rural Consultation

On February 14, 2007, the USDOT's Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration released a final rule addressing the role of rural officials in the statewide transportation planning process. The rule amended the joint planning regulations and requires that states create and document a process, separate from the Public Involvement process, to consult with non-metropolitan local officials and provide for their participation in statewide transportation planning and programming. The rule implements provisions of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU, PL 109-59) regarding state consultation with non-metropolitan local officials. Provisions of the final rule include the following sections from within Title 23 Section 450 of the Code of Federal Regulations (23 CFR 450):

- *Section 450.104 Definitions:*

  Consultation means that one party confers with another identified party in accordance with an established process and, prior to taking action(s), considers that party's views and periodically informs that party about action(s) taken.

  Non-metropolitan area means the geographic area outside designated metropolitan planning areas (with the urbanized areas of 50,000 census population or more being designated as metropolitan planning areas under 23 U.S.C. 134 and 49 U.S.C. 5303).

  Non-metropolitan local official means elected and appointed officials of general-purpose local government in non-metropolitan areas with jurisdiction/responsibility for transportation.

- *Section 450.208 Coordination of Planning Process Activities*

  Requires states to consider related planning activities being conducted outside of metropolitan planning areas and between States;

  Also under this section, states shall consider the concerns of local elected and appointed officials with responsibilities for transportation in non-metropolitan areas;

- *Section 450.210 Interested Parties, Public Involvement, and consultation*

  With regard to non-metropolitan local officials, each state shall have a documented process(es) for consulting with non-metropolitan local officials representing units of general purpose local government and/or local officials with responsibility for transportation that is separate and discrete from the public involvement process, and provides an opportunity for their participation in the development of the long-range statewide transportation plan and the transportation improvement program. Although the FHWA and the FTA shall not review or

approve this consultation process(es), copies of the process document(s) are to be provided to the FHWA and the FTA for informational purposes.

Requires states to review and solicit comments at least once every five years (as of February 24, 2006) from non-metropolitan local officials and other interested parties for a period of not less than 60 days regarding the effectiveness of the consultation process and any proposed changes. A specific request for comments shall be directed to the State association of counties, State municipal league, regional planning agencies, or directly to nonmetropolitan local officials.

The state, at its discretion, shall be responsible for determining whether to adopt any proposed changes. If a proposed modification is not adopted, the state shall make publicly available its reasons for not accepting the proposed change, including notification to non-metropolitan local officials or their associations.

- *Section 450.214 Development and Content of the Long-Range Statewide Transportation Plan*

  The non-metropolitan portions of the long-range statewide transportation plan shall be developed in consultation with the affected non-metropolitan officials with responsibility for transportation utilizing the State's established consultation process(es). (Virginia's current statewide transportation plan is formally known as Virginia's statewide multimodal long-range transportation plan, VTrans2035. The statewide highway and transit mode recommendations and strategies are presented in more detail in one document, the 2035 Virginia Surface Transportation Plan. VTrans2035, the Surface Transportation Plan, and other state, regional and local plans and programs are discussed later in this document.)

- *Section 450.216 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (**STIP**)*

  For each non-metropolitan area in the State, the STIP shall be developed in consultation with affected nonmetropolitan local officials with responsibility for transportation utilizing the State's established consultation process(es). (Important state-local official consultations and allocation decisions made in the development of Virginia's Six Year Improvement Program (**SYIP**) affect the development of Virginia's STIP updates and/or amendments. Both the SYIP and the STIP are discussed later in this document).

1.2 An Overview of Virginia's Transportation System

The state's transportation facilities and services are vital factors in the economy for Virginia, as well as for the eastern region of the United States. The surface transportation system negotiates mountain, valley, piedmont, and coastal lands and waterways; interconnects significant commercial, government and private facilities; and provides for the safe and efficient movement of people and products throughout urbanized and rural areas of the state.

Virginia Rural Transportation Consultation

VDOT is responsible for constructing, maintaining and operating the vast majority of the roads, and road bridges and tunnels throughout the Commonwealth. Virginia's highway system includes approximately 57,867 miles of state-maintained roadways. VDOT's 2007 Mileage Tables document that the vast majority of Virginia's highway mileage is rural, with over 80 percent of the primary and secondary highway systems consisting of rural mileage. Approximately 60 percent of the Virginia interstate highway system is rural mileage.

VDRPT oversees rail, public transportation and Transportation Demand Management (**TDM**) services throughout the Commonwealth. Virginia benefits from having about 3,400 miles of rail track. Virginia also benefits from having 60 public transportation operators; of the existing 60 public transportation operators there are 19 rural public transportation providers, many of which provides service to several different rural areas. Please visit DRPT's website at: http://www.drpt.virginia.gov/locator/allproviders.aspx?type=3 for a current listing of the public transportation providers throughout the Commonwealth. In addition, the Commonwealth benefits from having 49 human service operators and 18 commuter assistance agencies. DRPT is the lead agency for Telework in the Commonwealth and administers a program known as **Telework!VA. Telework!VA** is the primary resource for businesses, individuals and government agencies to start or expand a telework program in Virginia.

The features of the state transportation system (hyperlink to a detailed map or to a less detailed map) can be summarized using the following categories:

Roadways

- About 70,950 miles of roadways, as noted approximately 57,867 are state maintained
- 20,879 structures (tunnels, bridges and culverts)
- 9 toll roads/bridges
- 137 miles of High Occupancy Vehicle (**HOV**) lanes
- 330 Park and Ride facilities with 114 operated by VDOT
- 41 safety rest area sites (19 were closed in 2009 but then reopened in 2010)
- 3,250 miles of Scenic Byways
- Bicycle routes and trails with two U.S. Bicycle Routes, Routes 1 and 76 (state map available)

Ferries

- 7 ferry services, 3 operated by VDOT (Jamestown, Sunny Bank, Merry Point)

Rail, Public Transportation and Transportation Demand Management

- Approximately 3,400 miles of rail track with 2 Class I railroads of 3,200 track-miles, 10 Class III railroads, 1 non-FRA classified railroad, and 2 passenger railroads
- 60 public transportation providers
- 49 human service providers
- 18 regional commuter assistance programs throughout the Commonwealth that provide assistance with carpooling and vanpooling. In addition to the commuter assistance programs, DRPT is the leading Telework agency for the private sector.
- Telework!VA currently has 177 business participants, however the program has experienced a continuous increase over the past two years. For current information about Telework Virginia, please visit http://www.teleworkva.org/.

Airports
- 66 public-use airports
- 9 commercial service airports
- 8 reliever airports
- 19 regional airports
- 16 community airports
- 14 local service airports

Marine and Inland Transfer Ports
- 4 state-operated port terminals (with an additional terminal under 20-year lease)

1.3 The Key State Transportation Oversight Boards

Virginia's transportation agencies, facilities and/or services are supported by five key state boards. Each board serves much like an executive board of directors. These key boards in turn report to Virginia's Secretary of Transportation:
- **Virginia Aviation Board**
- **Virginia Port Authority Board**
- **Motor Vehicle Dealers Board**
- **Board of Transportation Safety**
- **Commonwealth Transportation Board**

These rural consultation procedures have been developed to comply with the requirements of 23 CFR 450. **While the methods and means described herein may be used to consult on issues that have relation to airports and ports, the primary focus is on consultation with non-metropolitan local officials in VDOT and DRPT planning and programming of highway, transit, and passenger rail improvements in state long range transportation plans and short range transportation programs.**

The Virginia Aviation Board and Virginia Department of Aviation (VDOAV)

The Aviation Board is authorized by the Code of Virginia at Title 5.1-2.1. The Board oversees the VDOAV (authorized at Title 5.1-1 et sequel). The VDOAV has regulations, including some regarding public participation, in Virginia Administrative Code at Title 24 VAC Agency 5 et sequel. Long-range planning, typically for a 20-year horizon, is conducted through development of individual airport master and layout plans in coordination with periodic updates of the overall Virginia Air Transportation Systems Plan. A six-year Airport Capital Improvement Plan (**ACIP**) is identifies and prioritizes funds for near–term airport projects. The ACIP is vital to securing project funding for sponsors of Virginia's public-use airports, whether with federal, state, or local funding. Proposals to revise the ACIP plan are usually submitted to VDOAV prior to the beginning of each fiscal year. Additional information on the six-year ACIPs is provided in the Airport Program Manual in Chapter 6 on the Airport Capital Program.

The Virginia Port Authority Board and Virginia International Terminals, Inc., (VIT)

Virginia Port Authority is authorized under the Code of Virginia at Title 62.1 Chapter 10, and is governed by its Board of Commissioners. The strategic plan is available at http://www.portofvirginia.com/media/441/strategic_plan_2009.pdf. It generally guides their capital outlay program. The Authority owns and is responsible for the operations and security of three marine terminals: Norfolk International Terminals, Portsmouth Marine Terminal, and Newport News Marine Terminal, and an inland intermodal facility, the Virginia Inland Port in Front Royal, Virginia. These facilities primarily handle import and export containerized and break-bulk cargoes. The VIT was incorporated as a non-stock, nonprofit corporation in 1981, for operating the marine terminals owned by the Authority. VIT operates the state-owned ports through a Service Agreement with the Virginia Port Authority. In June 2010, VIT obtained a 20 year lease for operating an additional port facility, the APM terminal in Portsmouth, Virginia.

The Motor Vehicle Dealers Board (MVDB)

The Motor Vehicle Dealers Board is authorized by the Code of Virginia at Title 46.2, Chapter 15. This state law provides for the regulation and oversight of the new and used motor vehicle dealer industry. (Oversight and regulation of motorcycle, trailer and recreational dealers continues to be performed by DMV under the Board of Transportation Safety). The MVDB's numerous responsibilities include processing initial and renewal applications of licensees (dealers and salespersons, plates and decals), and investigating consumer and dealership concerns.

The Board of Transportation Safety and Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV)

The Board of Transportation Safety is authorized under the Code of Virginia at 46.2-224 and it advises the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles, the Secretary of Transportation, and the Governor on transportation safety matters. The associated Virginia DMV has many responsibilities including, but not limited to, administration of programs regarding motor vehicle license plates, registration and title laws; pedestrian, bicycle and motor vehicle safety, vehicle operator license(s), fuel tax and other laws.

The Commonwealth Transportation Board , The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and the Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT)

The Commonwealth Transportation Board (**CTB**) is the executive board that oversees VDOT and DRPT, and state highway, rail and public transit actions. The 17 CTB members (see hyperlink for contact information) are appointed by the Governor and approved by the General Assembly. Membership includes the Secretary of Transportation, the Commonwealth Transportation Commissioner, the Director of DRPT, and fourteen citizen members with nine of the citizens from each VDOT Construction District (Appendix A), and the other five citizens from Virginia at-large with at least two as urban at-large and two as rural at-large. Virginia's Secretary of Transportation serves as chairman of the CTB, and the Commonwealth Transportation Commissioner as vice-chairman. The Director of the DRPT serves as a non-

voting member of the CTB. CTB business meetings are usually held monthly. The meetings are announced in advance and, as with other regular state government meetings, are open to the public. Virginia is encouraging regional transportation officials and authorities to attend CTB meetings and provide inputs on their priorities.

VDOT has about 7,000 employees at the time of this update, making it one of the three largest state agencies in Virginia. To organizationally facilitate long and short range planning, constructing, operating and maintaining the vast network of state and interstate highways, bridges and tunnels, Virginia is divided into nine VDOT districts: Bristol, Culpeper, Fredericksburg, Hampton Roads, Lynchburg, Northern Virginia, Richmond, Salem, and Staunton (see Appendix A for a district map). VDOT, however, also has other responsibilities that include state bicycle planning, commuter parking lots, safe routes to school programs, roadside advertising, access management, special use permits, and traffic impact assessment and review. Useful VDOT contact information is available to rural officials and the public by calling 1-800-FOR-ROAD (1-800-367-7623) or by visiting the VDOT website at: http://www.virginiadot.org/info/contactus.asp#work.

A number of organizational and procedural changes at VDOT are expected to strengthen the planning and programming processes and customer service. For the past several years, VDOT has reduced staff and decentralized authority by moving certain personnel and functions from the central office to the districts. This has allowed staff and appropriate functions to be closer to the customers they serve. VDOT is also moving to a more closely linked planning and programming process with emphasis on early public-stakeholder involvement, performance goals and prioritization during the planning phase. VDOT also sponsors rural transportation planning activities, and holds conferences and related events to coordinate with planners of Virginia's Planning District Commissions (**PDCs**) and other organizations. VDOT also attends bi-annual (winter and summer) meetings of the Virginia Association of Planning District Commissions.

The DRPT is a relatively small agency that currently consists of 41 employees and is also guided by the CTB. DRPT has an emphasis on the movement of people and goods yet their focus is in providing guidance and funding grants in three transportation disciplines: rail, public transportation (both urbanized and rural transit), and Transportation Demand Management (**TDM**), including Telework. DRPT also acts as the state guidance and funding agency for coordinated human service providers (Coordinated human service mobility plans {scroll down the web-page} offering special service solutions such as transporting elderly and/or disabled persons). Also in conjunction with the Virginia Department of Social Services, citizens can access a Virginia 2-1-1 telephone operator or printed information to learn about specialized transportation available in various communities. VDOT and DRPT planners work together in developing state transportation plans, and coordinate with other state agencies responsible for other modes of transportation, including aviation and nautical travel modes.

DRPT activities and projects are essential components in long and short range state transportation planning. DRPT provides planning, financial, and technical advice and assistance to Virginia's local governments and regional agencies to support Virginia's freight and passenger rail projects, public transit transportation programs, transportation demand management

programs and human service agency transportation coordination. DRPT administers federal and state capital and operating financial assistance programs to support planning, technical studies, operations, and capital improvement programs for public transportation systems and transportation demand management agencies.

Several DRPT programs should be of interest to rural communities. The DRPT follows a general Grant Program Calendar, a grant schedule common to most grant programs administered by DRPT (summarized in Exhibit 4-1, page 11 of the Public Transportation and Commuter Assistance Grant Program Application Guidance, Department of Rail and Public Transportation November 2009). These include federal law grant-match programs identified by their section numbers in Title 49, Chapter 53 of the United States Code such as

- FTA Section 5307 - Small Urban Areas Program, DRPT Program Application Guidance 5 Date Issued: November 2008, (NOTE: rural transit providers do not receive Section 5307 funding)
- FTA Section 5310 - Transportation for Elderly Persons and Persons with Disabilities provides capital assistance to human service agencies,
- FTA Section 5311 - Rural Areas,
- FTA Section 5316 - Jobs Access and Reverse Commute Program (**JARC**),
- FTA Section 5317 - New Freedom Program

The formula grant program for non urbanized areas is known as the Section 5311 program. It provides financial assistance for capital, operating, administrative, planning and technical assistance to rural areas for public transportation services. The Section 5311 State Management Plan is intended to facilitate both state management and FTA oversight by documenting the state's procedures and policies for administering the Section 5311 program in a single reference. The State Management Plan is a document, which is useful to the state as well as to sub recipients and FTA. Its primary purposes are to serve as the basis for FTA's review of the state's program, and to provide public information on the state's administration of the Section 5311 program. The State Management Plan is required by the FTA for all state programs.

State financial assistance programs are administered by DRPT also to support rail industrial access projects requested by localities, and rail capital improvements for short line railroads. Staff from DRPT meets regularly with local officials in rural areas of the state that operate public transportation programs and with local officials who are interested in starting public transportation or transportation demand management programs. In addition, staff meets with local officials that have expressed interest in rail industrial access projects and with officials of the short-line railroads to discuss needs and projects.

DRPT participates in a statewide coordinating council that focuses on coordinating transportation and developing inter-agency cooperation as it relates to coordinating human services and public transportation services. This council includes representatives of other state agencies including, but not limited to, education, social services, aging, and mental health.

DRPT also conducts studies and administers contracts to support rail passenger improvements across the Commonwealth. Local governments are consulted routinely and included in advisory committees for the study processes.

DRPT uses a program application guidance document to delineate the public transportation and commuter services grants that they administer. Information is provided for each of the various categories of grants that are awarded each year and about who can apply for the grants and what expenses are eligible for each category. The agency uses an Online Grant Administration (**OLGA**) system. The forms that must be completed in order to submit a grant applications and instructions for submitting the form(s) are available online by DRPT. Useful DRPT information is available to rural officials at the website at http://www.drpt.virginia.gov/default.aspx, with main contacts at http://www.drpt.virginia.gov/contact/default.aspx or (804) 786-4440.

2.0 THE RURAL CONSULTATION METHODS USED BY VIRGINIA

VDOT and DRPT use a variety of methods to consult with local officials in rural areas, encompassing informal and formal techniques that range from simple daily communication between rural officials and VDOT's District personnel, to preparing and holding public hearings on proposals to allocate funds to update a state Six-Year Transportation Program (**SYIP**). These represent sets of opportunities available for consultation between VDOT and rural officials. Specifically the following methods are used:

- General consultation activities include:
  - Local government public forums
  - Use of the internet to provide information
  - Informal communication activities (such as e-mails, phone calls or meetings with contact persons)
- Rural regional consultation includes:
  - The Rural Transportation Planning Program (**RTTP**)
  - Transportation technical committees
- Consultation during programming involves rail, transit and highways. It includes opportunities for the exchange of thoughts and information in several steps in the development of updates or amendments to short range programs, under the SYIP, including:
  - The urban system
  - The secondary system
  - Specialized programs
- Systems' planning offers additional opportunities for rural consultation. It (also) involves rail, transit and highways, and provides for consultation at steps in the development of updates or amendments to long range plans.

Virginia Rural Transportation Consultation

- The Statewide Transportation Plan (**VTrans**- the long range plan for all modes- air, marine, rail, transit and highways)
- The Virginia Surface Transportation Plan (highways, public transportation, and passenger and freight rail)
- Regional (PDC Rural) Long-Range Plans for Transportation
- Transit Development Plans
- Metropolitan Planning Organization (**MPO**) transportation plans and programs

Appendix C summarizes how such methods and opportunities relate to development of CTB's important SYIP, affecting Virginia's transportation investments in the next few years.

2.1 General Consultation Activities

Local Public Forums

VDOT and DRPT officials attend county board of supervisors meetings and town council meetings, when requested, to inform local officials about roadway, transit or rail issues or projects.

Use of the Internet

The Internet has become a valuable tool for sharing information with local officials and the general public. VDOT's website (www.virginiadot.org) includes links to small urban area studies, corridor studies, the SYIP, the STIP, rural Regional Long Range Plans (as the RLRPs become available from the Planning District Commissions), the Statewide Transportation Plans and the Virginia Surface Transportation Plan, a Board of Supervisors Manual, and other local assistance VDOT information. To find information regarding small urban area studies, citizens and local public officials can access the plan summaries and interactive maps depicting recommendations and can submit comments for each study. The SYIP provides an overview of projects in the preliminary engineering, right-of-way, and construction stages and allows external customers to view details (e.g., location, estimates, funding) for any of the thousands of projects scheduled for construction or currently being constructed. In addition, interested stakeholders can contact a State representative through various e-mail link or toll-free telephone number. DRPT also maintains a website (www.drpt.virginia.gov) which provides links to information on major public transportation projects, critical DRPT rail and public transportation programs, information on key DRPT contacts and the Online Grant Administration system (**OLGA**). Internet hyperlinks to these and other websites are provided in the following pages.

Informal Activities

VDOT and DRPT carry out a number of informal, undocumented rural consultation processes. For example, VDOT and DRPT staff is available to meet with local officials regarding transportation issues and projects in their respective jurisdictions. In addition, transportation planners at VDOT and DRPT regularly answer inquiries and provide information to their

counterparts in rural and urbanized jurisdictions, by email and phone. Information for reaching key staff at DRPT is available by calling 804-786-4440; to reach someone in the VDOT District offices please reference VDOT District Offices, or call 1-800-FOR-ROAD (800-367-7623) for customer service.

2.2 Rural Regional Consultation

Rural Transportation Planning Program (RTPP)

The RTPP is funded with State Planning and Research (**SPR**) program funds, which are federally provided to Virginia for conducting transportation planning and research. The RTPP is not a state or federally mandated program and is carried out at VDOT's discretion. The associated Rural Transportation Planning Assistance Program (Assistance Program) provides funding to certain PDCs to carry out transportation planning activities in rural areas. A PDC is eligible to receive these funds if it encompasses rural areas, defined as areas "outside the metropolitan study area boundaries approved by the metropolitan planning organizations" under Section 134 of Title 23 of the United States Code. A map depicting the geographical boundaries for Virginia's 21 PDCs is provided in Appendix B. At the time of this update, each eligible PDC receives $72,500 to carry out transportation planning activities annually in its rural areas. VDOT provides $58,000 in SPR funds and the PDCs provide the remainder (20 percent of the total).

Under the RTPP Assistance Program, PDCs develop, in consultation with VDOT , DRPT, transit providers and localities, Regional Long Range Plans (**RLRPs**) for transportation. These plans conform to requirements similar to the program federally mandated for the metropolitan planning process. These regional plans contain a 20-year planning horizon and five year update cycle, undergo public review and serve as a tool for providing a regional perspective on transportation issues and strategies for local governments in rural areas. The plans, which are discussed later in this document, identify recommended improvements and provide an opportunity for local officials to identify priorities for programming.

Transportation Technical Committees

VDOT staff regularly attends and participates in transportation technical committee meetings coordinated by regional PDCs. In the urbanized areas, Metropolitan Planning Organizations (**MPOs**) have similar committees which VDOT staff also participate in. Currently, all of the PDCs receiving RTPP funds in Virginia have established a rural transportation technical committee. The PDC technical committees are composed of rural local officials and planning staff. Their meetings serve as a forum in which regional transportation issues are discussed and provide an opportunity for VDOT to present information and get feedback on statewide, regional, and local transportation plans.

2.3 Consultation During Programming

The CTB seeks rural official's inputs to guide the CTB's decisions on interstate and primary highway, and rail and transit project selections. However, rural officials have a specific, stronger role in cooperatively selecting locality components of the Six-Year Improvement Program (**SYIP**) with respect to the Urban Program or the Secondary Six-Year Plan. Rural localities are formally consulted during the annual development of the SYIP with respect to these urban and secondary road programs. Of additional interest, rural officials can and should apply for other federal and/or state transportation grant programs which also need to be coordinated with the SYIP.

Programming focuses on where to invest funding for transportation in the next few years. To the extent that revenues are available, city and town councils normally determine the Urban Program improvements scheduled for their jurisdictions (with the improvements managed and improved by the municipal public works department). Each county's board of supervisors in conjunction with VDOT determines the secondary road improvements that are funded with formula distributed funds and that are to be scheduled in their county's portion of the Secondary Six-Year Plan. The transportation interstate, primary, rail and public transit system(s) improvements scheduled for rural areas are determined by the CTB using SYIP development process. Rural areas can apply for grants and also qualify for other funding with certain programs, such as certain highway safety, bridge and other statewide discretionary funds, as determined by the CTB. When a new project recommendation is to be selected or approved for funding by the CTB for implementation, one or more phases of the project would typically be proposed for initial inclusion in the sixth year of the next SYIP update.

2.3.1 The Six-Year Improvement Program-VDOT

The SYIP is a document that is updated annually and allocates funding to state highway, rail and transit projects in the next six years. The exchange of information and decisions made in the SYIP process directly and/or indirectly affect the highway and transit federal funding actions that subsequently update or amend the Virginia STIP (discussed later). The latest SYIP is accessible at VDOT's Website at http://syip.virginiadot.org/. General information about the SYIP is also available online at http://www.virginiadot.org/projects/syp-default.asp, and a helpful frequently asked questions section is available for review on how and when to provide input for the SYIP at http://www.virginiadot.org/projects/syp-faq.asp. The CTB reviews the SYIP for update at least each year and coordinates with regional and metropolitan planning groups, localities, various transportation stakeholders, interested parties, and the public in deciding how to allocate funds for rail, public transportation, and highway projects; including the funding of Virginia's surface transportation network system's connections to support airports and ports. The programming process acts to refine and coordinate short range transportation projects based on financial plans, project estimates and schedules for construction, development or implementation. The creation of the SYIP can be summarized through several steps:

1. *Forecasting Revenue*. Anticipated revenues are determined based on the current federal authorization program (typically in December or January).
2. *Developing Planning and Engineering Estimates*. Cost estimates and schedules are developed and/or updated for each project in the SYIP (typically in December).
3. *Developing the Six-Year Financial Plan (**SYFP**)*. The amount of funding available for allocations to the SYIP is determined (typically in January).
4. *Drafting the SYIP*. The current SYIP along with the latest SYFP, schedules and estimates are used to develop the initial draft for the new SYIP. The draft SYIP is reviewed by each VDOT district administrator and his or her respective CTB member. DRPT leaders and other transportation leaders also review the draft program (typically from January to June).
5. *Developing the draft SYIP and Soliciting Public Comment via Internet.* After revisions based on agency and CTB review are incorporated into the draft SYIP, the draft SYIP is made available for public comment via the Internet at www.virginiadot.org (typically from April to May).
6. *Holding Final Public Hearings.* Final allocation hearings are held in various locations throughout the state using the draft SYIP (typically from April to May, in time for adoption of a final SYIP by CTB in June). Note that, besides these hearings, other events and opportunities exist for local officials to provide feedback to VDOT, DRPT, CTB or other transportation contacts, as noted in the sections and links of this document.
7. *Obtaining CTB Approval*. The CTB formally approves the SYIP, which is then posted on the Internet at www.virginiadot.org, (typically in a June CTB meeting).

SYIP Public Hearings

At least annually, the CTB issues public notices and media announcements, and holds public hearings for the SYIP at different accessible locations covering urbanized as well as rural areas of the state. Copies of the review draft SYIP are available at the public hearings and on VDOT and DRPT's websites prior to the hearings. VDOT and DRPT contact information are provided for questions or comments. The latest VDOT web information on the SYIP usually is posted at http://www.virginiadot.org/projects/syp-default.asp. The hearings provide opportunity for the general public and local and state officials to provide input regarding a draft SYIP. Advice and input are solicited from members of the General Assembly, County Boards of Supervisors, City and Town Council Members, Planning Districts, Metropolitan Planning Organizations, other public officials, and the general public. Rural local officials will use these hearings to provide input on proposed transportation improvements and critical needs on the primary and interstate highway systems and on rail, public transit, and bicycle and pedestrian facilities. In the typical annual cycle, based on input received from early communications and meetings, the state transportation staff prepares a draft of the SYIP. The work needs to be consistent with directives that include placing a priority on maintenance needs, paying off deficits on completed projects and not creating new deficits, ensuring use of available federal funds, fully funding construction projects within twelve months of completion, bringing phased projects or programs to a reasonable stage of completion, and requiring that new projects added to the program be eligible

for federal funds or consistent with priorities as determined by the CTB. The draft of the SYIP is created and issued for public review, usually in spring, and then several meetings are subsequently held across areas of the state to accept input and consider comments on the draft. Subsequently, a final SYIP must be adopted by July 1st of each year, when the state begins its new fiscal year. For further information such as how public hearing notice is provided, where notices are published and the availability of review material prior to the hearings, the SYIP procedures are similar (with exception of willingness notices and special mailings that are sent regarding particular projects) to the public hearing procedures posted in VDOT's Public Participation Manual at: http://www.extranet.vdot.state.va.us/locdes/electronic%20pubs/Public%20Involvement%20Manual/Public-Involvement-Manual.pdf.

Department of Rail and Public Transportation Components for the SYIP

The process of developing the rail and public transportation components of the SYIP involves grant based funding and timely reviews of new or revised grant applications. This is distinct from VDOT processes for specialized program project requests (discussed later). The DRPT process is a partnership among CTB, VDOT, DRPT, local governments, rail and public transportation interests, public transportation officials, transportation demand management program operators, and human service agencies. Each year usually in December, DRPT advertises in newspapers across the state the availability of state and federal grant funds for public transportation, transportation demand management, and human service agency programs. Local officials for existing programs and prospective new programs apply via DRPT's On-line Grant Administration (**OLGA)** system, accessible at http://olga.drpt.virginia.gov/. DRPT staff members are available to answer questions and to assist applicants with the on-line application process. Grants are awarded for the fiscal year beginning in July of the following year (federal grants are awarded beginning in October 1). Similarly, rail related grants generally are available such as for short-line railroads under the Rail Preservation Program at http://www.drpt.virginia.gov/activities/railfunding.aspx and Class I railroads under the Rail Enhancement Program. Local officials for existing public transportation programs also are asked for estimates of capital projects to be undertaken in each of the following six years. Tentative allocations (not "grants" per se) of federal and state funds to help support future rail and public transit projects are included in the SYIP. All rail and public transportation grants and the tentative allocations of future revenues are included in the CTB's draft SYIP and then are approved in June of each year.

2.3.2 Specific Roles for Rural Local Officials – Rural SYIP Components

In association with the SYIP, Virginia provides certain specific decision-making roles for rural local officials in annually, cooperatively selecting transportation improvement projects for urban and secondary roadway systems under the Urban Programs and the Secondary Six-Year Plan, respectively. In addition to the Urban and Secondary programs, rural areas of Virginia are eligible to receive funding as applicants for several VDOT programs including, but not limited to, the following specialized programs:

- Revenue Sharing Program
- Recreational Access Program
- Industrial, Airport, and Rail Access Program (Roadway Portion)
- Safe Routes to School
- Transportation Enhancements

Rural areas can qualify for other funding for certain programs, such as certain highway safety, bridge and other statewide discretionary funds, as determined by the CTB.

The predictability and amount of funding for these is greatly dictated by the financial climate of the times, and changes of funding levels by the state and/or federal government. In dealing with future allocations for these systems, the Department is dealing with approximations or projections. Annual updates allow the participants to update schedules and estimates of current projects. The process gives citizens a chance to identify or request new improvements annually; allows City and Town Councils, and County Board of Supervisors to evaluate their program and update it for any changes in priorities annually; and it helps the VDOT or other designated local project managers manage to ensure the effective obligation and use of federal funds.

2.3.2.1 The Urban Program

Currently 81 municipalities participate in VDOT's urban system transportation program, and many of these include rural cities and towns. (Many Virginia cities and towns have a population of 3,500 or more and thus are urban but, nevertheless, are situated outside of a metropolitan area. Farmville is an example of a rural, but non-metropolitan, town that participates in VDOT's urban programs). Guidance is available on the Urban Maintenance and Urban Construction Programs. The Urban Maintenance Program is based on statutes in the Code of Virginia. Section 33.1-41.1 of the Code authorizes the CTB to make payments to the cities and towns in the urban system for maintenance, construction and reconstruction of roads and streets meeting specific criteria and under certain conditions. Annually, the CTB approves mileage additions and deletions and approves the payments to municipalities in the urban system for maintenance purposes. Payments are made to these localities on a quarterly basis. The Urban Construction Program is based on Sections 33.1-23.1 and 33.1-23.3 of the Code of Virginia. Thirty percent of the combined federal and state funds available for urban construction are apportioned to qualifying municipalities based on population. The second section provides that the governing body of any city or town may, with the consent of the CTB, expend urban system highway construction funds allocated annually to the city or town by the CTB for the design, land acquisition, and construction of transportation projects that have been included in the CTB's SYIP and for the resurfacing, restoration, rehabilitation, reconstruction, and improvement of streets within the city or town for which the city receives maintenance payments under § 33.1-41.1.

VDOT has assigned a VDOT District representative to serve as the primary liaison with urban municipalities. VDOT coordinates the development of the Urban Programs (both for non-metropolitan and metropolitan areas) with the CTB Six-Year Improvement Program. The urban

programs thereby become a component of the SYIP and the STIP. Urban program VDOT contacts, the participating localities, and other information on these programs is available from the VDOT website at: http://www.virginiadot.org/business/local-assistance-programs.asp

2.3.2.2 The Secondary Six-Year Plan

The Secondary Six-Year Plan shows the road improvements funded using secondary formula funds proposed for the next six years on the secondary road system. The federal and state funds available for secondary roads construction is distributed based on Section 33.1-23.4, of the Code of Virginia which establishes a 20% area and 80% population factor. The development of the Secondary Six-Year Plan is a partnership between VDOT and county governments, including non-metropolitan officials. Although the Department of Transportation has authority for the construction and maintenance of the secondary road system, the county board of supervisors and a VDOT official in the VDOT District jointly should prioritize and consider projects on the secondary road system for each county based on funding projections provided by the state.

The process begins with a meeting between VDOT and the county. The VDOT official representative in the VDOT District usually provides recommendations for projects to be included in the Secondary Six-Year Plan. The projects may come from current VDOT improvement programs, requests of citizen or by the county, and/or new needs identified by a VDOT or county representative. The board of supervisors and the VDOT representative jointly establishes draft project priorities, and VDOT staff prepares a draft Secondary Six-Year Plan. At that time, the draft plan is available for public review at the VDOT District office, and a public hearing is held for input on the plan and budget for the upcoming year. Following the hearing, the board of supervisors establishes project priorities by adopting a resolution approving the plan and/or budget priority list for the upcoming year, with concurrence of the VDOT representative. Once each county has an approved Secondary Six-Year Plan in accordance with the Code of Virginia and determinations are made on the type of funding applicable to each project, VDOT includes these priorities (both for non-metropolitan and metropolitan areas) along with the priorities that are set by the CTB in the SYIP. The secondary six-year plan becomes a component of the SYIP and the STIP. Further Secondary Six-Year Plan information is in the VDOT Board of Supervisors Manual at:
http://www.virginiadot.org/business/resources/local_assistance/2010BOS_Manual_final.pdf.

2.3.2.3 Specialized Programs

Rural Rustic Roads Program

Under this program, a county has the option of designating particular low-volume roads with low-density development as a “rural rustic road” where the county agrees to limit growth along the road through zoning and planning. In addition to having no more than 1500 vehicles per day, the road should be within the VDOT secondary system, should be a priority in the Secondary

Six-Year Plan, and should serve the local population. The Rural Rustic Road Program is a practical approach to paving Virginia's unpaved low-volume roads. It aims to keep traditional rural lane ambience, while improving the road surface within the current right-of-way. While there are no funds associated with the program at the time of this update, it does allow a low cost alternative for paving qualifying roads. Information on this and certain other related rural programs is available at http://www.virginiadot.org/business/local-assistance-programs.asp#Rural%20Rustic.

Revenue Sharing Program

This program is authorized by §33.1-23.05 of the Code of Virginia and provides additional funding for use by a county, city, or town to construct, reconstruct, or improve qualifying highway projects. Locality funds are matched with state funds, with statutory limitations on the amount of state funds authorized per locality. Funds are allocated annually by the Commonwealth Transportation Board based on existing statute and policies. Application for program funding must be made by resolution of the governing body of the jurisdiction requesting the funds. Construction may be accomplished by VDOT or by the locality under an agreement with VDOT

Recreational Access Program

The program is authorized by § 33.1-223 of the Code of Virginia and provides funds for recreational access roads or bikeways that make a "publicly developed recreational area or historic site" accessible, provided such a site is not private or federally maintained. The purpose is to make these recreational or historic sites accessible as opposed to creating solely a new transportation facility; e.g., a bikeway funded under this program might connect an area having heavy bicycle traffic to a park that presently is not accessible to cyclists.

Economic Development Sites and Airport Access Program (Roadway Portion)

Section 33.1-221 of the Code of Virginia authorizes this program, which provides access to certain qualifying business operations or employment centers and licensed public use airports. Adequate access, in consideration of the type and volume of traffic anticipated to be generated by the subject site, may require the construction of a new roadway, improvement of an existing roadway, or both to serve the designated site. More information on this access program, as well as the recreational access program and the revenue sharing program is at http://www.virginiadot.org/business/local-assistance-access-programs.asp.

Safe Routes to School

The Safe Routes to School **(SRTS)** program began in 2005 from provisions in SAFETEA-LU. The program is housed in the FHWA's Office of Safety and is administered by each state. Funds are available for infrastructure and non-infrastructure projects, and to administer Safe Routes to School programs that benefit elementary and middle school children in grades K-8. Its purposes are:

- to enable and encourage children, including those with disabilities, to walk and bicycle to school;
- to make bicycling and walking to school a safer and more appealing transportation alternative, thereby encouraging a healthy and active lifestyle from an early age; and
- to facilitate the planning, development, and implementation of projects and activities that will improve safety and reduce traffic, fuel consumption, and air pollution in the vicinity of schools.

Applying for SRTS funds is a competitive process. VDOT administers two types of funds:

- Non-infrastructure program funds are for education, encouragement, and enforcement (law) activities which further the stated purposes of SRTS
- Infrastructure project funds are for improvements that provide bike and pedestrian accommodations or safety enhancements.

SRTS is a Federal-aid reimbursement program. The project sponsor is responsible for paying the project costs and submitting reimbursement requests to VDOT, who then submits the requests to FHWA. The Federal government reimburses 100% of the project cost with no local match required or permitted. All infrastructure projects require formal endorsement by a local jurisdiction or public agency.

The Virginia SRTS Program assists localities in the creation of a School Travel Plan for a chosen area, which could be a single school or several schools in a division or region. The plan is a written document stating the community's intentions for making walking and bicycling to school(s) sustainable and safe. The plan must be submitted to VDOT and approved in advance of the submittal of an application for funding. Any projects or programs for which a locality applies for SRTS funding must be included in the plan.

VDOT awards SRTS funds on an annual basis. Information about the Virginia SRTS Program, including the application process and deadlines, can be found on the VDOT website at: http://www.virginiadot.org/saferoutes .

Transportation Enhancements

Congress first established the Transportation Enhancement (EN) Program in 1991. The program supports funding for bicycle and pedestrian improvements including sidewalks, bike lanes, and conversion of abandoned railroad corridors into trails. Communities may use the program to revitalize local and regional economies by restoring eligible historic buildings, renovating streetscapes, or providing transportation museums and visitor centers. Communities also use it to acquire, restore and preserve scenic or historic transportation sites. EN projects must demonstrate a relationship to surface transportation by function, impact, or proximity; and fall within one of the 12 eligible activities:

1. Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities
2. Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety and Educational Activities
3. Acquisition of Scenic or Historic Easements and Sites

4. Scenic or Historic Highway Programs including Tourist and Welcome Centers
5. Landscaping and Scenic Beautification
6. Historic Preservation
7. Rehabilitation and Operation of Historic Transportation Structures or Facilities
8. Preservation of Abandoned Railway Corridors
9. Control and Removal of Outdoor Advertising
10. Archaeological Planning and Research
11. Mitigation of Highway Runoff and Provision of Wildlife Under/Over-crossings
12. Establishment of Transportation Museums

Transportation Enhancement is also a Federal-aid reimbursement program, not a grant program. The project sponsor is responsible for paying the project costs and submitting reimbursement requests to VDOT, which submits to FHWA. The Federal government reimburses up to 80% of the project cost. The project sponsor is responsible for the balance, also called the matching funds, and any amount exceeding the amount granted by the CTB. Further information on the EN program is available at http://www.virginiadot.org/business/prenhancegrants.asp.

Applying for EN funds is a competitive process. Any local government, state, federal agency, or group may initiate an EN project. Prior to submission, all projects require a resolution of support from the local sponsoring agency, and a duly advertised public hearing. Projects that are within a Metropolitan Planning Organization (**MPO**) area also require the endorsement of the appropriate MPO. The Department schedules "Applicant Workshops" held at various locations throughout the state typically in the summer to assist with the preparation of applications. Applications are normally due on December 1st annually.

The Department schedules "Sponsor Workshops" at various locations throughout the state annually to acquaint Enhancement sponsors and project managers with the federal and state requirements for project development. All sponsors and project managers are expected to attend one of these workshops.

2.3.3 The STIP and Its Update or Amendment

The STIP is a federally required programming document that, in Virginia, is based on the SYIP. The STIP identifies planned obligations for the preliminary engineering, right-of-way, and construction phases of project development. It also identifies planned obligations for maintenance and operational improvements. At the beginning of each fiscal year, the FHWA determines Virginia's federal obligation authority, from which VDOT requests obligation amounts for preliminary engineering, right of way, and construction. The FTA is the cognizant agency for DRPT and provides similar information for transit projects. Rural officials, PDCs, and the general public are able to use the internet to access both the STIP and the SYIP.

Virginia's STIP is composed of all highway, rail, and transit projects anticipated to receive federal funding obligation in the next four years. Federally funded projects are identified from the Virginia Transportation Six-Year Program for Construction and Development (i.e., the

SYIP), each MPO's Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP), and nonmetropolitan Urban Programs and Secondary Six-Year Plans. As discussed is the prior sections, rural local officials are consulted in the process of the development of the SYIP, which forms the basis for updates and/or amendments of the STIP.

2.4 Consultation During Planning

2.4.1 Statewide Transportation Plans

The Statewide Transportation Plan (VTrans)

During the development of VTrans, Virginia's strategic long range multimodal statewide transportation plan, rural local officials are provided a number of opportunities to participate in the process and provide input. Meetings with citizens, local officials, and business representatives are held across the state to solicit input and reach consensus on a long-range vision for guiding transportation in Virginia. Participants are asked to complete a survey, which ascertains the respondent's vision and priorities for transportation in the future and solicits feedback on transportation programs and policies. Based on these meetings, a supplemental survey may be developed to target specific stakeholder groups, including local elected officials. Existing forums, such as conferences for the Virginia Association of Counties and the Virginia Municipal League, are used to present information on the multimodal plan effort, solicit input, and distribute the supplemental surveys. Although specific future outreach activities have not been formalized, PDCs have been asked to assist with the development and implementation of outreach activities that can be targeted to receive input from local elected officials. An update to VTrans (VTrans2035) was recently completed and submitted to the CTB in December 2009. Activities for the VTrans 2035 update included:

- A stakeholder listening session that included special interest groups;
- A regional planning forum where all Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), Planning District Commissions (PDCs), state transportation agencies, and representative transportation providers (e.g., major transit agencies, railroads, etc.) were invited to discuss issues and critical corridor needs;
- Public open house meetings in Northern Virginia, Hampton Roads, Richmond, and Roanoke to discuss modal needs (i.e., highway, transit, rail, pedestrian/bicycle, port, and airport), corridor needs, and regional accessibility;
- A virtual open house on the web that contained the same information and same opportunities to comment as the public open house meetings;
- E-notes sent to major organizations (Virginia Association of Planning District Commissions, Virginia Municipal League, Virginia Association of Counties) as well as to other stakeholders to inform them of new information on the web and upcoming meetings;
- A final VTrans2035 Forum with invitees from the previous Stakeholder Listening Session and Regional Planning Forum to review findings; and

- The draft Final Report and supporting documents on the web for review and comment

The update cycle for the VTrans is dictated by the Code of Virginia (§33.1-23.03).

The Virginia Surface Transportation Plan (VSTP)

The Virginia Surface Transportation Plan (VSTP), a 20-year long-range plan that is updated at least every five years by VDOT's Transportation & Mobility Planning Division and the Department of Rail and Public Transportation, outlines needed highway, transit and rail improvements. The highway improvements focus on the Statewide Mobility System, which is comprised of Interstate and key primary routes in Virginia. The plan provides information for potential long-term project development and investment based on the goals identified in VTrans2035, Virginia's statewide multimodal transportation policy plan.

The purpose of the VSTP is to recommend highway, transit and freight improvements that are needed to accommodate existing and future capacity and to address geometric and safety deficiencies. The VSTP, at the time of this update, is used to inform VTrans. The highway transportation needs identified in the plan also are used to help determine highway projects for the Six-Year Improvement Program. The 2035 VSTP, including the summary map and plan report, is accessible at http://www.vtrans.org/2035_surface_plan.asp. A number of elements are combined in developing the plan, including MPO plans from urbanized areas, Regional Transit Plans, ITS plans and Regional Long-Range Plan recommendations. Local officials were given the opportunity to comment on the draft recommendations outlined in the plan. The draft highway recommendations in the 2035 VSTP were provided to all PDCs and MPOs in Virginia for review prior to public comment. The 2035 VSTP was presented at four public meetings across the state alongside VTrans2035 where citizens and local officials provided input. In addition to on-site meetings, a virtual open house was made available through the VTrans website from Monday, June 22 through Tuesday, July 21, 2009. The virtual site included all materials available at the on-site meetings and included supplemental explanation to guide participants through the site. A total of 130 people submitted their comments through the virtual open house site during this time period. On January 27, 2010 the draft 2035 VSTP was presented to rural planning officials at the annual VDOT Rural Workshop. In addition, the VSTP was available for public comment from June 16 to July 31, 2010. Over 360 comments were received during this 45 day period. In addition, individual meetings were held with each CTB member across the state. PDCs and MPOs throughout the state were notified of all public comment opportunities.

The 2035 VSTP was completed in November 2010, and the 2040 plan process is anticipated to begin April 2011. At least once every five years the VSTP is revisited and available for comment on-line and is presented during planning and programming meetings across the state prior to its completion. Prior to the next update, the consultation procedures used for the most recent VSTP will be reviewed to identify areas where the consultation process may be improved or enhanced.

2.4.2 Regional (PDC Rural) Long-Range Plans (RLRPs) and Transit Development Plans

The RLRPs are developed in coordination with VDOT, PDCs, and localities and contain highway, transit, bicycle, pedestrian, operational, and freight recommendations for areas of the state not covered by an MPO. They are developed in association with the RTPP, discussed earlier. The RLRPs are accessible online (as they become available) at: http://www.virginiadot.org/projects/rural_regional_long-range_plans.asp. The roadway improvements identified and officially documented in these plans feed into the Surface Transportation Plan. The Regional Long-Range Plans:

- Cover roadways functionally classified major collectors and above
- Identify operational improvements (intersection improvements, access management strategies, signalization, turning lanes, roundabouts, etc.)
- Determine the location and potential impact of high growth areas (residential, retail and distribution) using local comprehensive land use plans
- Identify critical freight infrastructure and routes, and associated improvements
- Target facilities for bicycle and pedestrian improvements
- Identify corridors to preserve right-of-way for future transportation improvements
- Identify potential setback requirements for corridors for local enforcement
- Determine potential zoning or corridor overlay tools for local use
- Outline the need for on-demand transit services and
- Allow for local and regional discussion of planned projects and further the rural consultation efforts of VDOT.

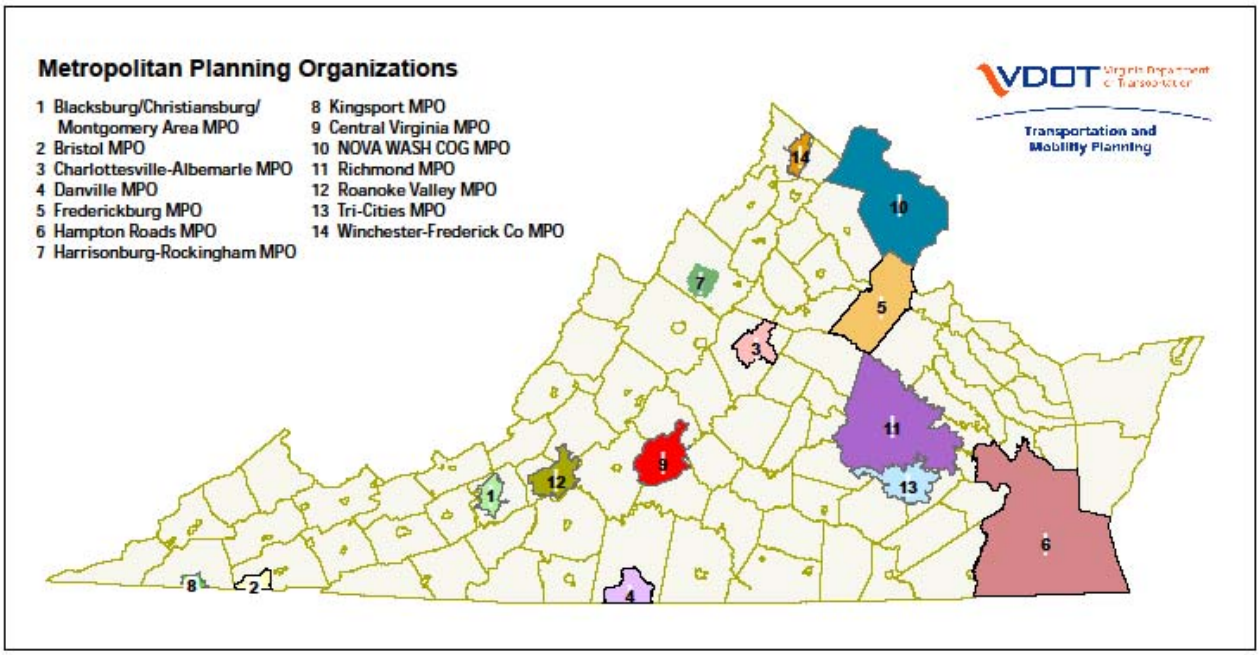
With regard to the public transportation component of rural long range planning efforts, DRPT has implemented a requirement that all transit agencies, including rural providers, have a current Transit Development Plan (**TDP**) in place by December 1, 2011. As part of the TDP planning process, the transit agency or provider is required to assemble a stakeholder group that may consist of local elected officials, planning staff, members of the public, etc. through the development of the TDP. Each TDP contains a constrained six-year financial element that identifies the agency's capital and operating revenues and expenses for the six-year planning horizon. The TDP contains recommendations for improvements that may be identified in the constrained element of the plan. DRPT requires an update of the TDP on a yearly basis in order to refine the TDP by modifying recommendations and extending the constrained six-year financial element out an additional year. The TDP is expected to provide a basis for the near-term transit recommendations that are identified in the RLRPs.

2.5 Metropolitan (MPO) Long Range Transportation Plans and Transportation Improvement Programs

Although MPO activities are by definition not part of the rural planning process, MPO long range plans and MPO Transportation Improvement Program (**TIP**) discussions are included in this document because with some counties having both MPO and rural areas, there may be opportunities for coordination between MPO and rural activities within a given county. The

roadway, public transit and rail improvements identified and officially documented in these MPO plans and programs feed into the Surface Transportation Plan.

At the time of this update, there are 14 MPOs with transportation decision-making roles for these "non-rural" areas of Virginia:



The primary functions of the MPO are to:

1. Approve an annual Unified Planning Work Program **(UPWP)** and budget.
2. Prepare and adopt a Constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan (**CLRP)**.
3. Recommend projects for implementation through the adoption of the Transportation Improvement Program **(TIP).**
4. Approve an air quality conformity determination, if applicable, to support a CLRP and TIP.

VDOT's general role is to participate as a voting member representing the state, and provide policy guidance and technical assistance to the MPOs in cooperatively developing the urbanized areas' plans and programs. DRPT participates as a voting member on many of the MPO Technical Advisory Committees and is a voting member of the Hampton Roads TPO Board and non-voting member of the Fredericksburg Area MPO and Richmond Area MPO.

MPO Long Range Plans and Short Range Programs

Virginia Rural Transportation Consultation

The *United State Code's of Federal Regulations* Title 23 Part 450 (23 CFR 450) requires that a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive transportation planning process (3C) be conducted for each urbanized area with a population greater than 50,000, as well as for each state. In the urbanized areas, long range plans and short range programs must be developed and updated by each area's designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (**MPO**) in cooperation with the state and applicable public transportation operators, and with the input of the public and affected entities. These requirements must be complied with in order for a state department of transportation or other transportation authority to be eligible for federal transportation funds and approvals.

MPO Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs)

Unlike the SYIP which the CTB must update at least annually, an MPO short range program, or TIP, must be updated at least once every four years. The MPO's TIP must be consistent with the MPO's long range plan. The state and MPO, nevertheless, must appropriately coordinate project planning and programming actions that affect an MPO area.

VDOT provides state information, such as financial forecasts and costs, consistent with the current and/or draft SYIP to an MPO for use in preparing a draft MPO TIP update or amendment. An MPO, in consultation with VDOT and DRPT staff, will make any changes necessary, and the draft TIP is reviewed and approved by the MPO technical committee. Following approval by the MPO technical committee, the MPO policy committee is provided with the draft MPO TIP. If the MPO policy committee approves the draft TIP, it is released for public review in accordance with each MPO's adopted public involvement procedures. Subsequently, if applicable, air quality conformity testing is initiated in MPOs designated as air quality non-attainment or maintenance areas. Conformity testing takes approximately six to eight weeks to complete, at which time the conformity analysis must be approved by the technical committee and MPO. Public review of the air conformity analysis lasts for two weeks (30 days in Northern Virginia), and public comments are considered in the MPO's approval of the final TIP. Once the TIP is finalized, it is forwarded to VDOT, which submits it to Governor's designee for approval. Approved metropolitan TIPs are subsequently included in the state's STIP submittal.

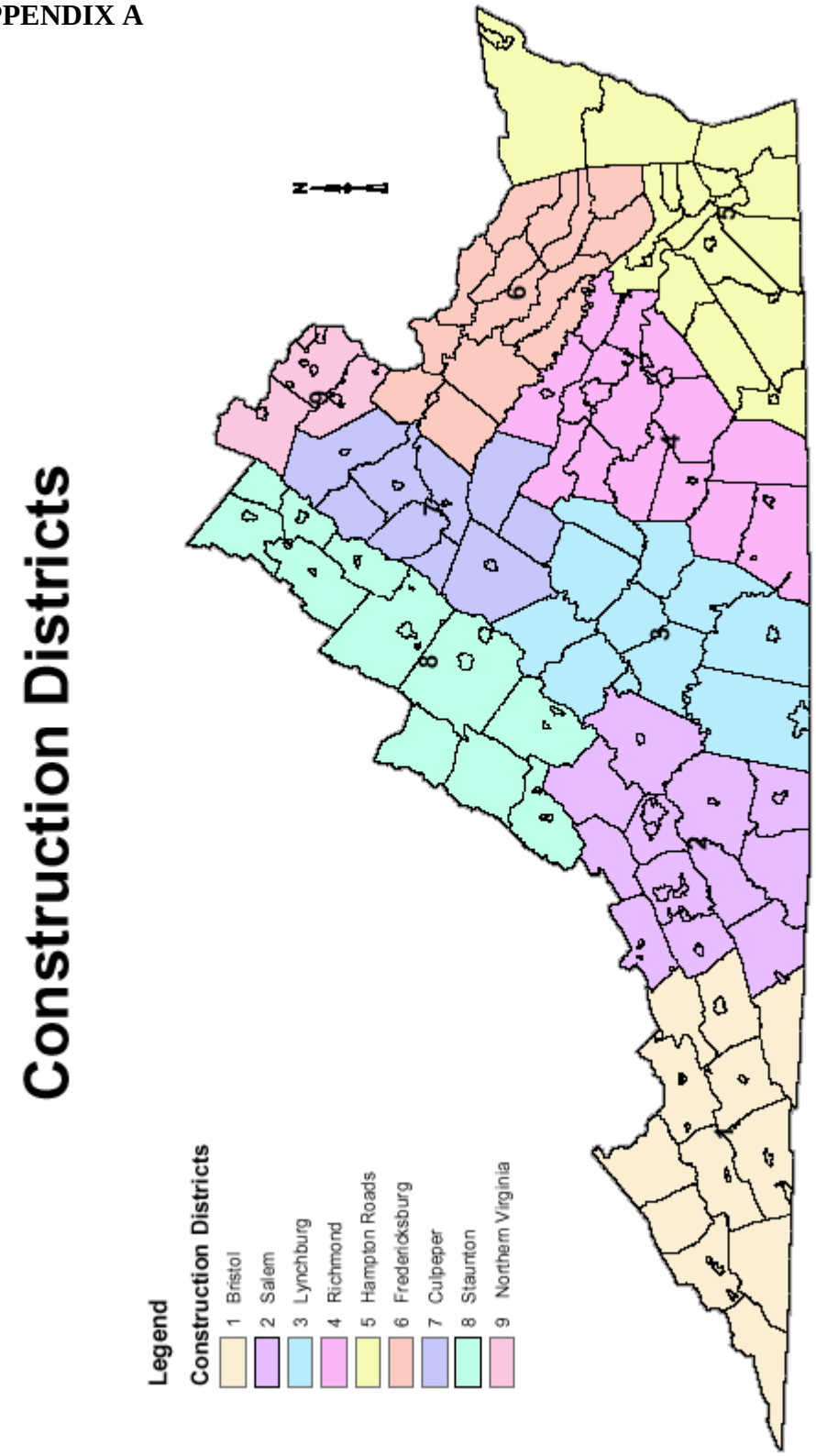
3.0 RURAL CONSULTATION IN VIRGINIA—LOOKING AHEAD

Virginia recognizes that consultation with rural local officials is paramount to the success of our transportation plans and programs. VDOT and DRPT will continue to work with rural local governments and other partners to continue to enhance opportunities for access and input to the transportation planning and programming processes.

Federal regulations direct that at least once every five years, the State shall review and solicit comments from non-metropolitan local officials and other interested parties for a period of not less than 60 calendar days regarding the effectiveness of the consultation process and any proposed changes. In September 2005, the Virginia Department of Transportation conducted a

60-day review period and sought the feedback of officials in counties, cities and towns across the Commonwealth of Virginia. Based on comments received on this January, 2011 draft document VDOT and DRPT expect to modify and update the rural consultation process in a March or April, 2011 final document. The process will be repeated at least every five years in accordance with federal regulations, although an interim review and update of consultation methods may occur if conditions warrant.

APPENDIX A


Construction Districts
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6 Fredericksburg
7 Culpeper
8 Staunton
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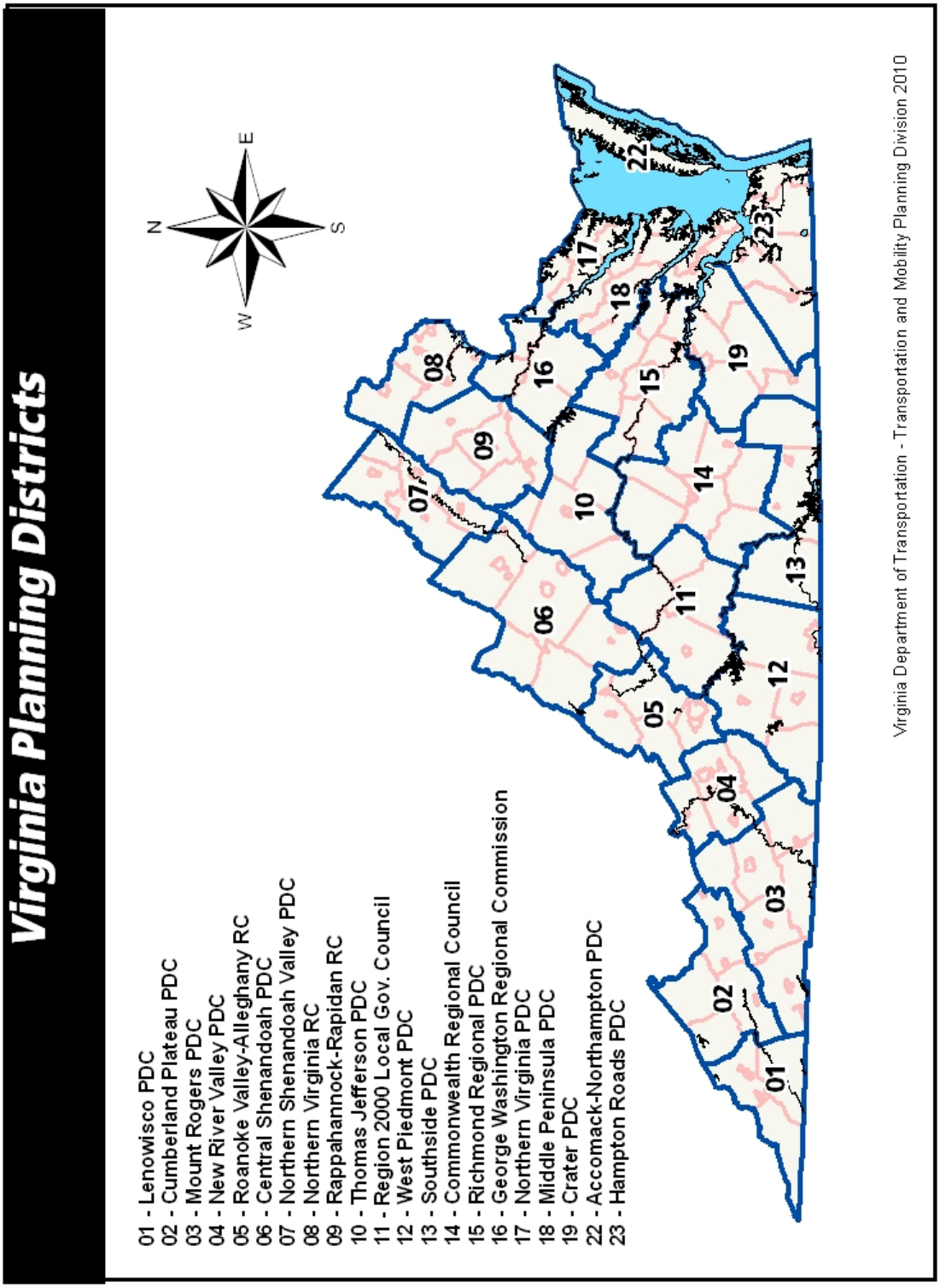
APPENDIX B


Virginia Planning Districts
01 - Lenowisco PDC
02 - Cumberland Plateau PDC
03 - Mount Rogers PDC
04 - New River Valley PDC
05 - Roanoke Valley-Alleghany RC
06 - Central Shenandoah PDC
07 - Northern Shenandoah Valley PDC
08 - Northern Virginia RC
09 - Rappahannock-Rapidan RC
10 - Thomas Jefferson PDC
11 - Region 2000 Local Gov. Council
12 - West Piedmont PDC
13 - Southside PDC
14 - Commonwealth Regional Council
15 - Richmond Regional PDC
16 - George Washington Regional Commission
17 - Northern Virginia PDC
18 - Middle Peninsula PDC
19 - Crater PDC
22 - Accomack-Northampton PDC
23 - Hampton Roads PDC
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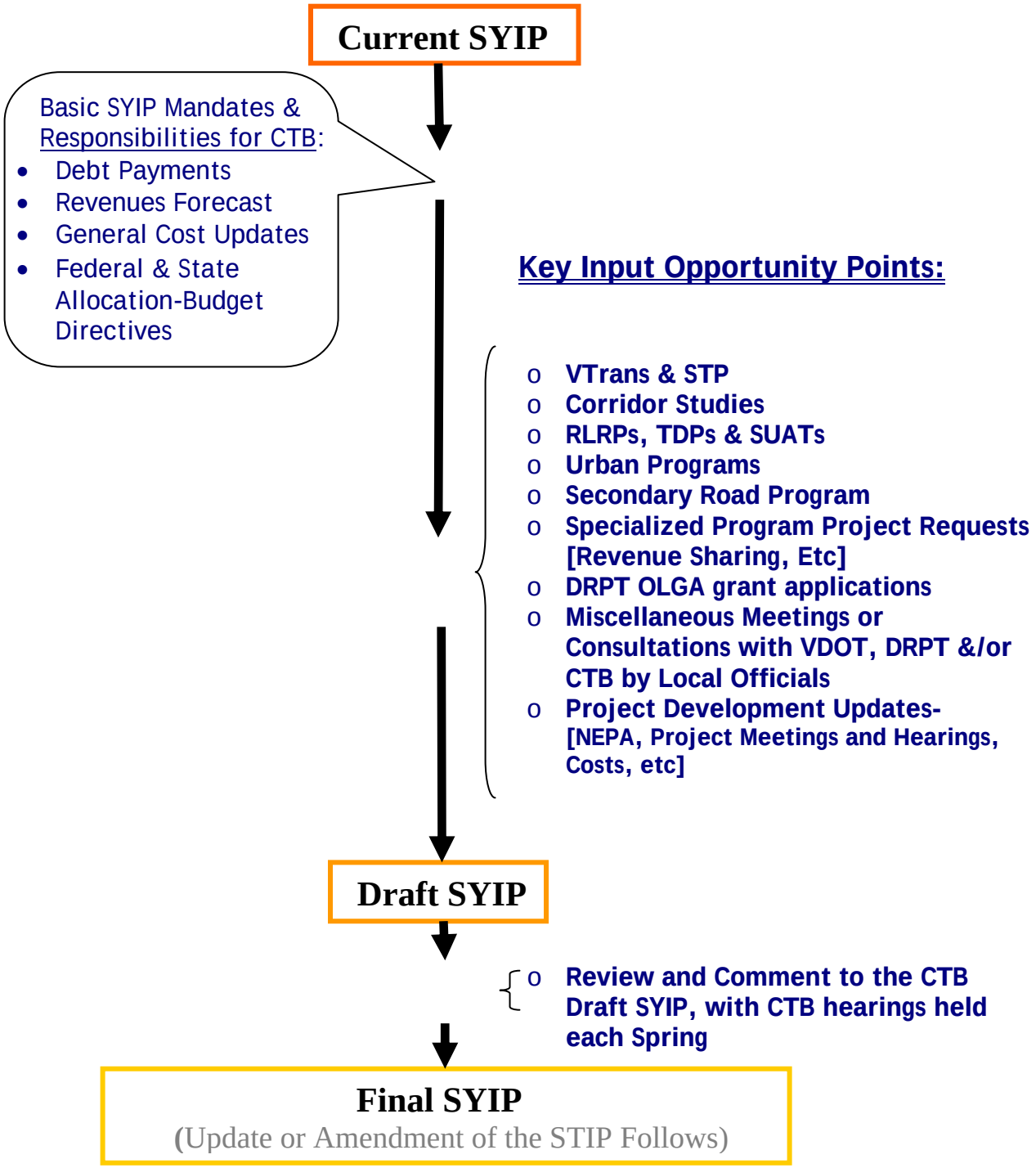
Virginia Department of Transportation - Transportation and Mobility Planning Division 2010

APPENDIX C

Rural Officials' Consultation

Key Input Opportunities in Relation to SYIP Development