VIRGINIA TOWN & CITY

VOL. 54 NO. 3 APRIL 2019

The magazine of the
Virginia Municipal League

Navigating the new disruption economy

Insight, analysis and advice on technologies reshaping the municipal landscape.

Inside:

Disruption economy

2019 General Assembly wrap-up

Innovation Awards entry details

2019
INNOVATION
AWARDS

VMLIP Training: Partners in Risk Management

VMLIP offers a variety of no-cost training options throughout the state to provide continuing education and promote risk management. Upcoming training courses are listed below with additional trainings and dates to come. Members can register on the VMLIP website.

OSHA At A Glance:
April 17, 23; June 27; Aug. 15; Sept. 19; Nov. 13

VMLIP Annual Meeting:
May 10

Supervisor Training: Reasonable Suspicion and Emotional Intelligence:
May 21, 22; June 19; July 24, 29; Sept. 18; Nov. 21

Use of Force Assessment for Supervisors
May 23, 24; Sept. 18, 20; Oct. 3, 4

Use of Force Assessment for Supervisors
May 23, 24

Leadership Training
June 4, 6; July 16; Aug. 28

OSHA 10-Hour for General Industry
June 11

VMLIP Safe Driving Train the Trainer
July 10

Fall Workshops
Sept. 19, 20; Oct. 3, 4

To discuss training opportunities, contact Director of Education and Training Thomas Bullock at 800-963-6800.

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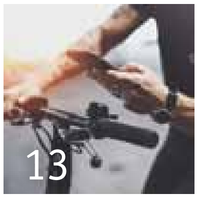
About the cover

Look out Virginians! Scooters on your streets, short-term rentals in your neighborhoods, and solar panels in the pastures on the outskirts of town. What do these and other "disruption economy" offerings mean to your locality and employment as-a-whole across the Commonwealth? We take a look.

Departments

Features



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By Michelle Gowdy, VML Executive Director

One Session is over, another is coming

THE SHORT BUT INTENSE 2019 legislative session is finally over, although I think we are all still in disbelief! We are now beginning to put together the VML Policy Committees to begin their work for the 2020 session. Since the session ended, I have visited Onancock, Norfolk, Staunton and Harrisonburg to discuss interim studies, FOIA and various other concerns that localities have. And, by the time you receive this magazine we will be departing for our regional meetings in Abingdon and Marion. Moreover, we will soon be fanning out across the state to participate in events recognizing the 7th grade winners of the "If I Were Mayor" essay contest.

We also are preparing to be involved in activities for the issues that the General Assembly will study during the summer and fall. Some examples:

- Annexation is again back on the table. VML and other stakeholders will be working with Delegate Tony Wilt on legislation that would address the issues raised in the Commission on Local Government's study on annexation that was released last year. We will be looking to you for suggestions!
- Another big study concerns the tax assessment appeals process. HJ687 directs the legislature's Small Business Commission to study models and streamlined procedures for appealing tax assessment decisions. The current legislative members of this commission include Delegates Lee Ware, Mark Cole, Danny Marshall, Tony Wilt, Chris Head and Alfonso Lopez and Senators Frank Ruff, Creigh Deeds, George Barker, and Bryce Reeves.
- The Department of Corrections will convene a workgroup to study the cost of implementing the minimum standards for behavioral health services in jails that are embodied in HB1942. The workgroup is tasked with completing its work by November 1.
- The Joint Subcommittee Studying Mental Health Services in the Commonwealth in the 21st Century (the Deeds Commission) has already held its first meeting for the interim.
- Other permanent groups will be meeting as well, including the Freedom of Information Advisory Council, the Housing Commission, Commission on Health Care, the Youth Commission and more.

To get an idea of what was accomplished at the General Assembly this year and what's being studied, please check out the "2019 General Assembly: Legislation wrap-up" included in this issue of *Virginia Town & City*. This useful summary put together by our policy team, explores the legislation and issues deemed most important to our members.

Additionally, we are working on a comprehensive report of all the legislation affecting localities which will announced in our bi-weekly *eNews* bulletin – so if you aren't a subscriber already please sign up: **www.vml.org/publications/enews.**

And again, please be aware that we are putting together our policy and legislative committees for the year. President Anita James Price is currently working on the appointment of the members of the legislative committee. The legislative committee will meet this spring and summer, followed by its final meeting on October 6 in Roanoke at the 2019 VML Annual Conference.

We have sent a letter asking for nominees to serve on our policy committees. The policy committees will meet sometime in July (exact date TBD). We rely on our local officials to set our policies for the upcoming years. Please participate!

So, as all of us roll into another busy year, please remember that VML is your organization; keep in touch and let us know what you need from us. VTC

Movers and Shakers

Do you know someone who's on the move? Send your announcements about new hires in local government, promotions, retirements, awards and honors to Rob Bullington at rbullington@vml.org.

Goldsborough appointed as finance director

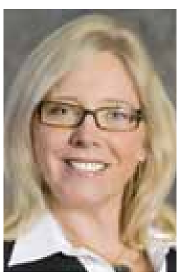
The Town of Ashland has announced that **Charles "Cliff" Goldsborough** was appointed the director of finance effective March 25. Goldsborough previously worked in the City of Richmond Finance Department, where he was the operations manager in charge of treasurer functions. Goldsborough earned his bachelor's degree from the University of Rhode Island and a master's degree in business management from Tulane University.

- Goldsborough -

Local officials appointed to state boards/ commissions

Governor Ralph S. Northam recently has appointed several local officials to various boards and commissions as follows.

Gary Critzer and **R. Bruce Edwards** have been appointed to the Virginia 9-1-1 Services Board. Critzer is the director of emergency management and emergency medical services for the City of Waynesboro. Edwards is the communications manager for the City of Franklin.

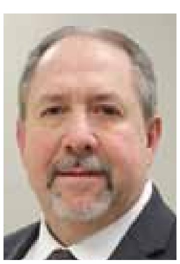


- Taylor -

Shannon L. Taylor, the commonwealth's attorney for Henrico County, was reappointed to the Virginia Criminal Sentencing Commission.

Fay appointed as director of real estate valuation

Kenneth Fay has been appointed director of real estate valuation in Roanoke County, according to a March 12 county press release. The previous director, Billy Driver, retired this past January.



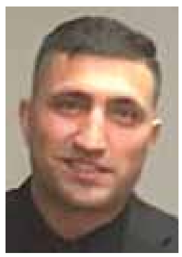
- Fay -

Fay has served as a senior appraiser in Roanoke County for the last five years. His other government experience includes serving as an appraiser in Palm Beach, FL. He holds a bachelor's degree in business management from Florida Atlantic University and is certified by the International Association of Assessing Officers as a residential evaluation specialist.

VFW honors Petersburg public safety officers

The McNair-Trueheart Veterans of Foreign Wars (Post 622) honored two Petersburg employees during the post's recent celebration of its 99th anniversary. Recognition for Deputy Sheriff of the Year was awarded to **Cpl. Deverly Perry** with the Petersburg Sheriff's Office. Cpl. Perry has served with the Petersburg's Sheriff Office for seventeen years in various capacities. Petersburg Bureau of Police Detective **David Dean** received the Officer of the Year award. Detective Dean has been with the City for 4 years and has served in several roles including Uniform Field Operations and the Criminal Investigations Division.

- Perry -



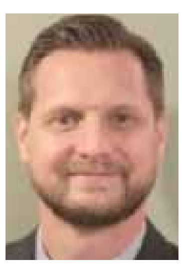
- Dean -

Vass, Dahl tapped as county administrators

Evan Vass has been named the county administrator in Shenandoah County effective this April. Vass currently serves as the assistant county administrator. He previously was the town manager in New Market and an assistant city manager in Harrisonburg. He received bachelors and master's degrees in public administration from James Madison University.

- Vass -

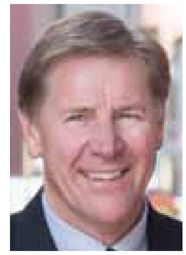
Eric Dahl, the deputy administrator and finance director in Fluvanna County, has been appointed county administrator effective July 5th. Dahl has worked for the county since 2011, starting his career there as budget analyst. He is a graduate of Florida Gulf Coast University.



- Dahl -

Owen sets retirement date

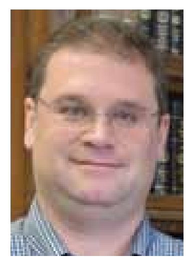
Steve Owen, city manager for Staunton since 2007, announced his retirement after 38 years in local government service, effective June 30th. Owen was appointed as manager in Staunton in 2007. He had previously served as Town Manager in Herndon, County Administrator of Powhatan, Assistant County Administrator of Frederick, Assistant Town Manager of Leesburg, Town Manager of Berryville and Town Clerk and Treasurer of Wakefield.



- Owen -

Simon resigns as manager in Lexington

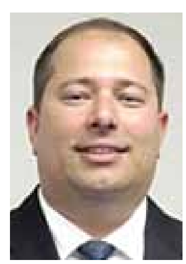
Noah A. Simon will be leaving his position as city manager in Lexington at the end of April. He is taking the position of assistant city manager in Westlake, TX, a suburb of Fort Worth. Simon has served as manager in Lexington for 4 ½ years. His prior experience includes serving as the assistant county administrator in Floyd County, GA. He also has worked in local government in Maryland, Minnesota and Texas and was an assistant city manager in Culpeper.



- Simon -

Morani tapped as Abingdon manager

James "Jimmy" Morani has been hired effective May 6 as the town manager in Abingdon. His previous experience includes serving as the city administrator in Columbia, IL; the village administrator in New Baden, IL and the city administrator in Vandalia, IL. Prior to those appointments, Morani was a policy analyst with the Illinois House of Representatives. Morani holds a bachelor's degree in political science and a master's in public administration from Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville.



- Morani -

ACROSS OUR GREAT VA

A three-way blind interview series conducted via email that seeks to remind our readers that wherever you go in the Commonwealth, you find connections that make us all Virginians.

Amy Marasco is the vice mayor of Hillsboro, VA (pop. 106). She is also the proprietor of Fieldstone Farm, a 1770 Quaker built stone manor house.

Joseph Cobb is the vice mayor of Roanoke, VA (pop. 99,660). He is also the chaplain at the Hermitage Roanoke and author of *Our Family Outing*.

VTC: What's something you get asked a lot?

Joe: What do you do?

Amy: When is a specific infrastructure project starting? Citizens hear about a project but don't realize that the time from design, to approval, to securing funding, to advertising, to building takes years!

VTC: Amy, when someone asks you what the vice-mayor does, what do you tell them?

Amy: Formally the VM has the authority to stand in for the mayor when the mayor is not available. For our town the VM operates somewhat like a corporate COO working with staff and consultants to make sure schedules are met and products are delivered on time and within budget. The VM role is a partnership role with the Mayor in setting strategy working closely with all other members of the Town Council to execute their shared vision.

VTC: Joe, how do you manage citizens' expectations of when project or initiative will be completed versus the actual time it takes to complete it?

Joe: I work to be as clear and transparent as possible about the process. Projects and initiatives, depending on the number of people involved, have different realities when it comes to involvement and completion. Working alongside citizens, the city manager and staff, and council colleagues, we seek as realistic a timeline as possible.

VTC: What is the most unusual question or request you've received as vice-mayor?

Joe: Can you turn on the fountains in Elmwood Park?

Amy: Our town hall is in an historic building where we also offer many regional theater and arts programs. One evening a woman came up to me and asked if I was the vice mayor. I told her I was and asked how I might be of service. She replied, "The bathroom is out of paper towels." Of course, I was happy to restock.

VTC: Amy, what's the most complicated plumbing project you've ever completed yourself?

Amy: I run a bed and breakfast, so I fix toilet flush valves (chain and attachment) with paper clips and baggie ties until a real plumber is available at "non-emergency" rates.

VTC: Joe, if someone asked you to restock the paper towels in City Hall, would you know where to find them?

Joe: No, I wouldn't. But I'd start looking in closets! And, I'd ask some of our amazing facility caretakers about where to locate them and how to get them restocked.

VTC: When you were new to the role, what did you find most surprising about the job?

Joe: I continue to be delighted and surprised by the number of people who randomly thank me for running for office and serving the city.

Amy: I was surprised that no matter the setting – buying groceries, at a party, etc. – residents come up to me and ask specific town questions or share concerns or problems.

VTC: Amy, what's the nicest gesture of thanks you've received from a citizen?

Amy: Once I was given a rose plant by citizens for my work on preparing grants.

VTC: Joe, do citizens approach you with specific questions or issues when you're not at work?

Joe: Yes, all the time: At events, at the grocery store, on the street, in meetings, at coffee shops…you name it. I always listen and then ask them to call or email me so I can follow up.

VTC: Imagine you had to temporarily take over as vice-mayor of a town in a completely different part of the state. What's something you'd want to know before you got there?

Joe: Where can I see and experience the pulse or energy of your city?

Amy: What are the dreams they have not even wanted to articulate because they seem so formidable —that's where the magic begins.

VTC: Amy, I've got 30 minutes to spend in Hillsboro, what should I do to experience the town?

Amy: Begin with a visit to our town offices in the 1874 Old Stone School. See if the mayor will let you ring the old school bell. Head across the street to our farm market restaurant and sit outside to enjoy the view and a delicious lunch. If you have time, walk down the street (sidewalks coming in 2020!) and enjoy the architecture dating back to the 1700s.

VTC: Joe, if you could dream big for Roanoke, what's something you'd wish for the city?

Joe: Bus transit to cover all three work shifts and service on Sundays; additional Amtrak departures during the day/week in multiple directions; increased regional partnership for economic development and transit.

VML connects you with a variety of networking and professional development events. Learn about these opportunities at vml.org/events.

April 23	**Newly Elected Officials Conference** Washington County Service Authority, 25122 Regal Drive, Abingdon, VA 24211
April 23	**Regional Dinner and 2019 General Assembly Update** Holston Hills Community Golf Course, 1000 Country Club Road, Marion, VA 24354
May 2	**VEPGA - Annual Meeting** Hampton Roads Sanitation District North Shore Operations Building 2389 G Avenue, Newport News, VA 23602
May 22 – 24	**Municipal Electric Power Association of Virginia (MEPAV) – Annual Meeting** Hilton Garden Inn, 3315 Atlantic Ave., Virginia Beach, VA
Sept. 21 – 24	**Virginia Building and Code Officials Association (VBCOA) – Annual Conference and School** Hilton Oceanfront, 3001 Atlantic Ave., Virginia Beach, VA 23451
Oct. 5 - 6	**Virginia Mayors Institute** Hotel Roanoke and Conference Center, 110 Shenandoah Ave. NW, Roanoke, VA 24016
Oct. 6 - 8	**Virginia Municipal League Annual Conference** Hotel Roanoke and Conference Center, 110 Shenandoah Ave. NW, Roanoke, VA 24016

Norfolk Utilities Department develops apprenticeship program

TAKING MATTERS INTO their own hands, staff with the Norfolk Utilities Department created a six-month paid apprenticeship program to train full-time equipment operators and utility maintenance mechanics. The intent of the program was to develop a pool of potential employees to fill an abundance of vacant positions in the department. The apprenticeship program includes classroom training and demonstrations on Mondays and Fridays, and on-the-job work experience with repair and maintenance crews the other days of the workweek. Recruiting for the program began last June and more than 150 applications were received; in the end 15 people were selected for the positions.

A crucial part of the program was outreach to the St. Paul's community, which is the focus of a city 10-year revitalization program. The program equipped the apprentices with new skills and abilities for employment and played an important role in the first steps of the St. Paul's area project. More information on St. Paul's revitalization program is in the October 2018 issue of *Virginia Town & City*, but as a synopsis, Norfolk undertook the program with the goal of breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty in the community by focusing on providing opportunities for residents around housing, education, health and wellness.

Round Hill is converting to LED streetlights

THE TOWN OF ROUND HILL has voted to replace the town's existing sodium and mercury vapor street lights with 70-watt LED lights, according to a recent article in *LoudounNow*. The article notes that Round Hill will be the first locality in the state to fully convert to LED streetlights. Project Specialist Rob Lohr has been instructed to contract with Dominion Energy on the project, which is projected to be completed by August. Dominion then becomes responsible for streetlight maintenance and repair. The cost to replace the lights is expected to pay for itself through energy savings within two years.

Dominion Energy's LED program is available for all customers and includes installation of new LED as well as conversion of existing Dominion lights to LED. Dominion is offering monthly LED rates that are lower than existing rates for other lighting technologies, as well as a low-cost flat rate conversion fee for customers who request replacing existing Dominion lights with LED. For more information about LED technology and to see the portfolio of fixtures offered by Dominion, please visit www.dominionenergy.com/outdoorlighting.

Amherst proceeds with bike trail lease

THE TOWN OF AMHERST has voted to enter into a 20-year lease with the Amherst Mountain Biking Club for $1 a year. The club will construct biking trails on about 50 acres of wooded property in the town. The property is not currently being used, but according to an article in the *Lynchburg News & Advance*, the town attorney said the town can get out of the lease if an opportunity for a business development occurs.

AMHERST MOUNTAIN BIKING CLUB

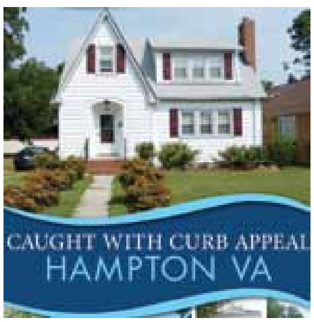
Blacksburg transit drivers receive awards

DRIVERS WITH BLACKSBURG TRANSIT received two awards at the State Bus Roadeo held at the end of March in Richmond. Transit Driver Jon Barnes was awarded first place in the 40-foot bus category and the Overall Best Operator for receiving the highest score out of all operators who competed in the 35-foot and 40-foot bus categories. Barnes will now represent Virginia at the International Roadeo in Louisville, KY in May. Driver Richard Moll was awarded Rookie of the Year for his first State Roadeo competition.

Drivers from across the state competed at the State Bus Roadeo against each other in a series of events including a written test, appearance test and a timed obstacle course. Blacksburg Transit will host the State Bus Roadeo in 2020, the first time in more than 10 years.

- Jon Barnes -

- Richard Moll -



Hampton's Curb Appeal applications open

THE CITY OF HAMPTON has opened the application process for its Curb Appeal program, which is a matching grant program from the city's Community Development Department that helps residents make exterior improvements to their homes. Curb Appeal provides up to $5,000 or 50% of the cost (whichever is less) for homes in five targeted areas of Hampton.

The grants are available to all single-family and duplex residential property owners and projects have to be completed within six months. Additional information on the program is posted at https://hampton.gov/2112/Curb-Appeal-Matching-Grant-Program.

Loudoun County launches conservation easement assistance program

TO HELP PROTECT HISTORIC, cultural and environmental resources, qualified Loudoun County landowners can now apply for financial assistance to place their land under conservation easement. According to a county news release, a conservation easement is a voluntary, legal agreement that permanently limits uses of the land in order to protect its conservation values.

For calendar year 2019, the county has established a fund of $150,000 to launch the new conservation easement assistance program. The program will help with the upfront costs of placing land under conservation easement, including the costs of stewardship, attorney's services, land appraisal and survey fees, and processing and document fees. Funding for half of these costs or $15,000, whichever is less, will be provided to land trusts working with landowners who qualify. The county will make an online application available for one month twice a year: March 1 and September 1. Half of the $150,000 funding will be reserved for each application process.

For more information about conservation easements in Loudoun County, visit www.loudoun.gov/conservationeasements.

Arlington County takes steps to improve child care access

THE ARLINGTON COUNTY BOARD in March adopted changes to the zoning ordinance and local child care codes to improve the availability, accessibility, affordability and quality of child care in Arlington. The changes arose from recommendations included in the Child Care Initiative Action Plan the Board accepted in July 2018 after a year-long community engagement process.

Some of the changes to the zoning ordinance included creating one definition for all types of center-based child care programs, instead of the existing two definitions; amending the family day care home definition to better align with current state law; allowing day (summer) camps as a by-right short-term use, rather than requiring a use permit; allowing by-right family day care homes for up to nine children, and requiring a use permit for family day care homes with 10-12 children; amending the parking requirement for child care centers from one parking space per employee to one space per eight children; and allowing parking requirements for child care centers to be reduced through the use permit process under circumstances such as proximity to a Metro station entrance or bus stop along a high-frequency bus route.

Additional information is available at https://newsroom.arlingtonva.us/release/board-adopts-zoning-local-code-changes-to-improve-child-care-access/.

#I Am Richmond 911 honors program begun

IN FEBRUARY, THE DEPARTMENT of Emergency Communications in the City of Richmond instituted an honors program that will highlight an employee each month who serves the community, both on and off the job. This program, "#I Am Richmond 911," seeks to raise awareness of the work of emergency communicators in saving lives and protecting property in the city.

- Ortorio Hymons -

De De Byrd, a senior communications officer with the department, was named the #I Am Richmond 911 honoree for February 2019. Byrd, who has worked for the city since 2006, also teaches adult learners who need help in earning their General Equivalency Diplomas and is a mentor to children through the Richmond Police Department's Mirror Me program and the Police Athletic League.

- De De Byrd -

Ortorio Hymons, a training unit assistant supervisor, was named the March honoree. She has worked with the department since September 2005. She began working with youth by volunteering as a mentor in the Richmond Public School system. After receiving training through the Virginia Mentoring Partnership Program, she started her own organization, Youth With A Destiny, which mentors girls at Henderson Middle School.

2019 VTA conference to be held in Portsmouth

CITY AND COUNTY OFFICIALS, legislators, transit agencies, and business sponsors and exhibitors will gather at the Renaissance Portsmouth-Norfolk Waterfront Hotel on May 29 and 30 for a focus on "all things transit" at the 2019 conference of the Virginia Transit Association.

Presentations from industry experts on technology innovation, ridership promotion, mobility advancements, statewide resiliency, and business connections will be at the forefront. Portsmouth Mayor John Rowe will kick off the event with his welcome from the city. The keynote speaker will be Nat Ford, CEO of the Jacksonville Transportation Authority who will share insights into how his city achieved its vision of a vibrant, revitalized, and better-connected downtown.

Registration is open through the VTA web portal (https://vatransit.com/2019_Annual_Conference) through mid-May.

Shenandoah River overlook named best lookout in Virginia

CULLER'S OVERLOOK in the Shenandoah River State Park has been named the "best lookout" in Virginia by the Matador Network. The Matador Network website describes itself as "a tribe of millions of travelers across the globe with an unquenchable thirst for adventure and exploration." The company is a digital media company based in the San Francisco Bay area that focuses on travel, outdoor adventure, food, nightlife, language learning and culture. Additional information is posted at https://matadornetwork.com/read/roadside-viewpoint-every-state.

The Shenandoah River State Park is in Warren County, 8 miles south of Front Royal and 15 miles north of Luray.

Building Safety Month gets underway in May

BUILDING SAFETY MONTH 2019, which will take place throughout the month of May, will be celebrated through the adoption of proclamations and the holding of special events designed to educate the public about the importance of building codes.

"No Code. No Confidence" is the theme for this year's BSM celebration. Sponsored by the International Code Conference, Building Safety Month 2019 encourages all Americans to raise awareness of the importance of safe and resilient construction; fire prevention; disaster mitigation, and new technologies in the construction industry.

Look for additional information on the ICC website at https://www.iccsafe.org/about-icc/building-safety-month/about.

Also, the Virginia Building and Code Officials Association is urging its members to partner with local businesses by asking them to allow the building officials' department to set up a table on public awareness. More information is available at www.vbcoa.org.

PULSE recognized as engineering achievement

STV, INC., OF FAIRFAX, VA., has earned a National Recognition Award for exemplary engineering achievement in the American Council of Engineering Companies' annual Engineering Excellence Awards for the Pulse Bus Rapid Transit System in Richmond. The Pulse system was designed by STV under a design-build contract with Lane Construction Corporation. The 7.6-mile Pulse is the first bus rapid transit system in Richmond since the 1940s. Busses operate in dedicated lanes around East Main and Broad Street.

The new disruption economy

CAPITALISM DOESN'T JUST ENCOURAGE innovation, it supercharges it. In a market-driven economy, changes come rapidly and relentlessly and woe to the industries that rest on their laurels. This dynamic is at the heart of "disruptive innovation," a phrase coined in 1995 by American scholar Clayton M. Christensen and his collaborators to describe an innovation that "creates a new market and value network and eventually disrupts an existing market and value network, displacing established market-leading firms, products, and alliances."

The idea of "disruptive innovation" itself is not new, nor is the combination of fear and ambition it elicits in those living through it. Imagine what a small-town store owner may have felt upon receiving her first mail order catalog – trepidation at the threat to her livelihood or cautious optimism at the opportunities to grow her business? Or, think what a horse drawn buggy maker envisioned after seeing a Ford Model A chug past his shop – maybe he realized that he had just seen the future, but maybe he also noticed that future will need tires?

Today, advances in technology catalyzed by capitalism have propelled the disruptive model of doing business to the forefront. The idea of disruptive innovation is used as a touchstone in corporate culture and the phrase itself has undergone permutations to include subsets of the original concept including the subject of this issue of *Virginia Town & City* – disruption economies. In this issue we ask, what happens to an economy when a disruption rears its innovative head? More specifically, what's happening in Virginia and how are localities dealing with it all?

We've invited some experts to share their thoughts:

To kick things off, **Jim Regimbal** of Fiscal Analytics, Ltd. provides "Understanding the new disruption economy" – an overview of the concept and how it is affecting traditional business models nationwide and here in Virginia.

We then present a trio of articles about what is arguably the hottest disruptive innovation technology affecting localities today: dockless electric scooters:

- **Erich Eiselt** of the International Municipal Lawyers Association (IMLA) brings his expertise to bear in "An eMobility overview for municipalities" in which he outlines the technology, economics, areas of concern and steps localities can take to deal with the proliferation of e-scooters.
- We bring it back to Virginia with **Jim Larsen**, Arlington County's Commuter Services Bureau Chief whose "In praise of pilot programs" outlines the steps his county has taken to reap the benefits of the new technology while maintaining local control of its use.
- Finally, **Maggie Gendron** from Lime (an e-scooter industry leader) catalogues the possibilities offered by the new technology as well as the paths for successful collaboration between localities and the e-scooter operators.

We then take a bit of a break from technology with a "A look at employment in Virginia" by Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond economist **Sonya Ravindranath Waddell** whose analysis addresses the disparities in job growth among the different regions of the Commonwealth.

But even Ms. Waddell's analysis cannot escape disruption and the impacts of the new "gig economy" entirely. So, for a closer look at this topic **Chris Chmura**, CEO and Chief Economist at Chmura Economics & Analytics" examines this employment disrupter in "What is the new gig economy?"

Last but not least, we explore the sun, specifically its ability to generate power for municipal and commercial purposes as summarized by **Fletcher Mangum**, CEO and Founder of Mangum Economics, in "The economics of utility scale solar development."

After all this talk of disruption, you may find yourself longing for some old-fashioned ways of doing things. If so, remember there are plenty of places in Virginia where you can still ride a horse and buggy into town – just be sure your horse doesn't tread upon any e-scooters along the way.

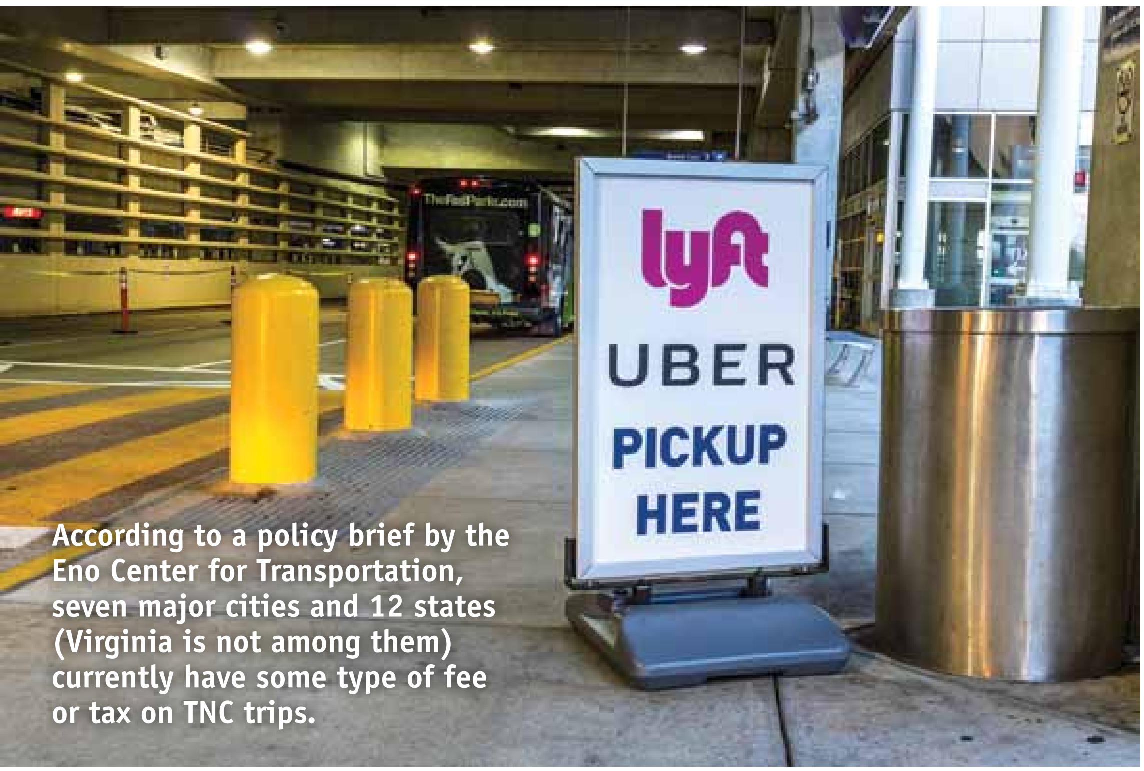
By Jim Regimbal

Understanding the new disruption economy

AS WE MOVE FURTHER into the 21st century, technology is making it easier for producers to interact directly with their customers. This new emphasis on direct relationships between innovators and users, coupled with a generational shift away from ownership towards experience, is all part of what many now refer to as the "disruption economy"-era.

But what exactly is being "disrupted?" The most obvious thing being disrupted are the business models of companies that traditionally occupied intermediary roles between producer and user. These models no longer seem adequate to handle the influx of fast moving, technology-based market innovators.

Disruption economy consumers wield smartphones and big data to harness things like ridesharing, electric scooters, short-term property lets, online payments, raising money for charity, or funding a business idea. The advantages for the consumer are evident. Why call a taxi when an Uber is easier and cheaper? Why buy a bike when electric scooters can be used and abandoned at will? Why pay for the overhead costs of a hotel when more can be had for less via AirBnB?



According to a policy brief by the Eno Center for Transportation, seven major cities and 12 states (Virginia is not among them) currently have some type of fee or tax on TNC trips.

But less evident to the "disruption economy" consumer are the impacts these rapid, technological changes and shifting demographics are having on governments – especially local governments – who must quickly evolve to keep up. A local government grappling with disruption economy consumers in its midst must reckon with new government-policy questions regarding land use, safety, privacy, income inequality, taxation and cyber security.

And that's just for starters. To better understand how specific "disruption economy" offerings can lead to broader economic and policy considerations for local governments, let's explore what emerges from the interaction between the disruptive economy consumer and their local government.

Transportation Network Companies (TNC) – i.e. Uber and Lyft.

At their best, TNCs enhance mobility and provide better transportation access for all community members. While there is still limited information and data about how these services affect transportation decisions and travel patterns, there is a growing concern that a large portion of travelers are substituting ride-hailing in place of public transit, biking, and walking. There is also increasing evidence that while TNCs reduce the need for parking, they actually increase traffic congestion.

These types of concerns come to the forefront when localities and states consider whether or how to tax these services. The ENO Center for Transportation argues that policymakers might be better served now by thinking of TNCs as established companies that can help modernize transportation networks and missions. As such, ENO asks that localities and states considering a tax on TNC services consider four basic questions when crafting their tax policy:

1. Can TNC taxes and fees offset negative effects of urban congestion?
2. Should TNC taxes and fees fund infrastructure and public transit investment?
3. Can TNC taxes and fees provide parity with traditional taxi services?
4. Should TNC charges create funding streams for regulatory costs and community needs?

Answering these questions gets to the heart of government tax policy: the temptation to quickly raise revenue must be balanced with the long-term public policy goals the locality or state are trying to achieve.

Short-term rentals – i.e. Airbnb

Direct consumer-to-consumer short-term rental companies – which essentially turn residential properties into commercial enterprises with little government oversight – are facing pushback from local governments worried about how they affect land use, tax collections and affordable housing stock. Research also suggests short-term rentals are inflating home prices and fueling gentrification. Massachusetts recently became the first state to pass sweeping statewide regulations on short-term home rentals. The new law requires short-term rentals to register with the state, carry a minimum of $1 million in insurance and pay a 5% tax to the state. The law also allows local municipalities to assess an additional 6% tax and creates a state-run affordable housing fund, which will funnel money from another 3% tax on property owners with two or more short-term rentals in the same municipality. The state's new law exempts properties rented for fewer than 14 days a year.

In mid-January, the New Orleans City Council unanimously approved a package that permanently extends a ban on short-term rentals in the French Quarter and Garden District. The new rules also attempt to preserve "brick and mortar" retail space by prohibiting the rental of first-floor units. Furthermore, in residentially-zoned neighborhoods, people can only rent out rooms in homes that they occupy.

In Virginia, the state enables local governments to adopt ordinances requiring people to register if they want to offer their property for short-term rentals. Registries give local governments information needed to monitor and tax the rentals. In 2016, Arlington County adopted procedures to allow short-term rentals through online services but included limitations to protect the character of residential neighborhoods, ensure health and safety measures are in place, and conform the use in a manner consistent with their comprehensive plan. Recently, Virginia Beach adopted new rules placing restrictions on the number of guests in each rental as well as how often a place can be rented. The ordinance will also require permits in most cases and $1 million in liability insurance coverage.

Solar – i.e. solar fields, rooftop installations

Technology also has significantly disrupted the energy industry affecting development, power distribution, consumer costs and regulatory approaches. For example, the US has become the world's largest oil and gas producer, largely through "fracking" improvements. While Virginia has set targets for renewable energy generation (such as solar and wind), there is little teeth to these targets. Nevertheless, renewable energy sources are a rapidly growing portion of the state's energy plan and require new regulatory and taxation rules.

In Virginia, there are limited financial incentives for distributed solar (i.e. rooftop) installations: municipalities may exempt rooftop solar power from property tax assessments (this has been on the books since the 1970s) and Virginia allows net metering for the electricity a business or homeowner with distributed solar does not use (though at an "avoided cost" rate, which is generally less than the retail rate). On the other hand, sales taxes do apply to solar equipment and there is no state income tax credit for solar installations.

Recently, however, Virginia has undertaken tax policy changes that are clearly designed to encourage renewable energy development. For example, Virginia now considers utility-scale solar photovoltaic installations to be certified pollution control equipment and, as such, they are eligible (to varying degrees) for machinery and tools tax relief or exemptions. In addition, machinery and tools used to generate electricity from sunlight or wind are exempt from sales and use taxes.

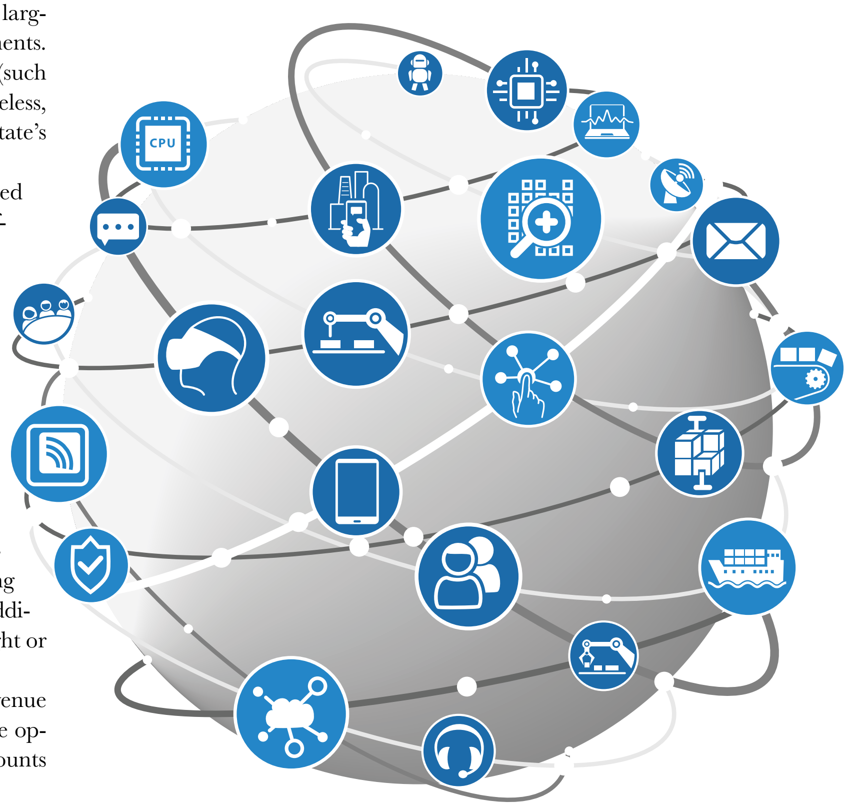
While it's true that a solar field can generate more tax revenue than land left to agricultural purposes, this does not consider the opportunity cost (possible alternative uses) of devoting large amounts of land to a relatively small contribution to local economic growth. For this reason, large installations can put a strain on local finances and availability of land for other economic development purposes. Criticisms of these projects also include concerns about increased land erosion and traffic during the construction phase, environmental issues such as disposal of metal and glass after the life of the project, and the belief that neighboring property values will decline.

How to measure the benefits of disruption?

So, how should we ultimately evaluate the economic and policy considerations of this "disruptive" economy? Putting aside the excitement that new ideas can generate, the actual impact of technological innovation on economic growth, inflation and productivity remains difficult to measure. Do technological advances inevitably lead to economic growth? The answer to this question requires a more complex evaluation than one might think. For example, as technological advances allow machines to perform more jobs traditionally done by people in manufacturing and service sectors (i.e. banking, retail, logistics, health care), these people will need re-training to remain part of the workforce. How much does that re-training cost, who pays for it and what impact does the cost of the training have on economic growth?

A more basic question: Do the new efficiencies provided by technology lead to more productivity – which in turn lowers overall costs and frees up resources for new avenues of economic development? To answer this question, we all need to shift from the mindset of celebrating disruption for its own sake to exploring the collaboration necessary to make the most of the disruption. The technologies of the future will be far too complex and interdependent for anyone – including local government – to go it alone. VTC

About the author: *Jim Regimbal is the principal in Fiscal Analytics, Ltd, which provides research on state and local budget and tax policy issues to local governments, business groups, trade associations, and nonprofit organizations.*



By Erich Eiselt

An eMobility overview for municipalities

MUCH OF OUR work at the International Municipal Lawyer's Association (IMLA) involves high-profile constitutional issues, including First and Second Amendment questions, due process and equal protection challenges, qualified immunity analyses, takings arguments and the like. But many concerns confronting our members are of a more immediate and practical nature, not the least of which relate to transportation. In late 2018, IMLA formed a working group specifically focused on disruptive transportation technologies, including autonomous vehicles and micromobility. This article examines one new entrant in the mobility ecosystem – the e-scooter – including mechanisms that localities can employ to regulate the devices and to recoup their costs.

What is eMobility technology?

Early in this decade, the first large experiments in public-use bicycles surfaced on American streets. These municipally-funded public-private partnerships offered docked cycles, secured in dedicated stations around town. New York City's Citi Bikes (12,000 bikes at 500 stations) and Washington DC's Capital Bikeshare (4,300 bikes across six jurisdictions) were early examples of this genre. Overwhelmingly successful in those cities, they were joined by Chicago's Divvy, Boston's Blue Bike, GoBike in San Francisco and dozens more, adding millions of cyclists to the urban landscape and significantly expanding downtown transportation options.

Technology drove further disruption. Chinese entrepreneurs recognized that GPS-enabled smartphones, remote locking mechanisms and ever-more innovative payment methodologies could enable shared bikes for the masses, accessible across vast metropolitan areas. The dockless bike emerged – a variant which avoided the real estate, infrastructure costs (estimated to be as much as $5200 per bike in New York City) and local government involvement required by docked programs. Enter the private sector – Lime, Ofo, Jump, Mobike and others – which rapidly infiltrated municipalities across the country with tens of thousands of dockless cycles.

That evolution was accelerated by the application of long-lasting, lightweight, rechargeable lithium battery packs. And while bicycles could easily be converted to e-power, a much smaller and far less expensive mobility alternative was even better-suited to such adaptation. New e-scooter purveyors such as Spin, Scoot and Gotcha entered the market, while legacy bike companies rapidly added scooters to their inventory. A spectrum of fresh legal and logistical challenges confronted local officials, law enforcement and government attorneys.

First viewed as an oddity, the new devices have rapidly gained adherents. With a top speed of 15 miles per hour, they easily compete with other street modalities navigating urban rush-hour traffic. In motion, they occupy no more space than a pedestrian; when parked, they fit in spots that would never accommodate bicycles. Their apps entice usage, locating available scooters, displaying power levels, reserving devices for a specific user, indicating permissible riding and parking areas, mapping the rider's route, calculating carbon units saved by forgoing vehicular travel; and seamlessly billing the user's credit card or ApplePay. In the process, the companies have driven acceptance across a widening demographic, promoting "last mile" and commuting use. It is becoming commonplace to see business people traveling down big-city streets on e-scooters.

Money to be made

As noted above, the new devices require virtually no infrastructure and only modest up-front capital outlay – which is not to imply that e-scooter companies are short on funding. Silicon Valley funders recently poured $300 million into Bay Area e-scooter startup Skip. More meteoric are Bird and Lime, each of which began operations in 2017 and had already achieved "unicorn" status (having a putative valuation of more than $1 million) by mid-2018. Uber has acquired Lime, Lyft is an investor in Bird, and Ford Motor Company purchased Spin in late 2018 for an estimated $100 million.

These investments are not being made haphazardly. Micromobility purveyors stand to generate remarkable income from their e-scooter networks. Their general pricing model is $1 to start and $.15 per minute – $3.85 for the average 19-minute ride reported in Portland. The dependent variable, rides per day, appears to be robust and growing. Data from several jurisdictions, among them San Francisco and Spokane, reveal that devices are already being used an average of at least seven times per day, producing top-line revenues of more than $600 per month. When purchased in bulk for $250 or less per unit, e-scooters' return on investment is generous – even accounting for maintenance, charging costs and rapid deterioration. In addition to near-term profitability, e-mobility modalities offer another attribute: unlike e-hailing businesses, they don't involve drivers who can trigger liability claims or assert employment rights.

The dockless devices complement and extend other disruptive transportation options. Urban users may well consider taking an e-scooter in lieu of using ride-share, given that some 43% of American vehicular trips are three miles or less. The devices also yield another channel for reaching and influencing consumers, while providing a valuable trove of user data: information about riders' travel behavior is believed to have been material to Ford Motors' purchase of Spin. They are part of a larger disruptive transportation product line which will continue to attract user loyalty, payments and information. Indicative of the value of the sector generally, in late March 2019 Lyft went public with an aggregate market capitalization of more than $20 billion.

Protecting localities

The micromobility companies generate the impressive revenues outlined above while using city assets including streets, rights of way, bike lanes, sidewalks, bus stops, parks and other facilities. Municipalities expend funds and devote personnel to develop e-mobility programs, respond to accidents, provide outreach to the public, enforce ridership rules, procure analytic software, process usage data, and impound, store and inevitably dispose of abandoned and non-functional devices. As usage increases, pressures mount for municipalities to upgrade their facilities: a recent Nashville Tennessean op-ed piece complained that "Our problem is not electric scooters like Lime, Bird, Lyft or Uber. It is Nashville's lagging infrastructure." The e-mobility purveyors have resisted liability for accidents and injuries occasioned by their devices, which are often poorly suited for uneven road surfaces and crowded sidewalks, leaving municipalities at potential risk for permitting such modalities on their streets. The companies also utilize scores of independent contractors to maintain and charge their devices, adding further regulatory complexity. Local governments cannot afford passivity in the face of these challenges.

There are a wide range of potential legal responses to consider. IMLA's recent publication "Guidance for Regulation of Dockless Micromobility" was drafted by a consortium of local government attorneys who are dealing with the onslaught of unanticipated dockless conveyances on their streets and lays out numerous parameters. As outlined in the IMLA publication, there are several steps localities should take:

First – foreclose unauthorized e-scooters on city streets, sidewalks and rights of way, given that Lime and Bird entered more than 40 markets without obtaining governmental consent, (keeping in mind that existing definitions for "bicycles" will likely not cover the new devices). This step will empower municipal hands to remove, embargo and, if necessary, dispose of nonconforming devices, adding a succinct weapon to more expansive litigation and injunctive relief.

Second – require short-term pilot periods (offering opportunities to more than one qualified purveyor) before entering into lengthy contractual arrangements.

Third – codify the elements which will lead to orderly, safe, and optimized operation. These include age limits, helmet requirements; speed, lighting and other performance specifications, rules about where devices can be ridden and parked; insurance and indemnity provisions; regulations concerning maintaining; charging and re-allocating the e-scooters around town; safety notices; geo-fencing boundaries, minimum and maximum fleet sizes, special pricing mechanisms for low-income users and the like.

As with the case of many other special interests, from fracking to drones to short-term rentals and car-sharing services, the e-mobility purveyors can be expected to encourage statewide rules which limit municipal autonomy.

Fourth – to the extent legally permitted, local governments should require information about usage patterns and generalized demographic data.

Finally, each of these local regulatory structures must be analyzed against potential preemption by the federal government or the statehouse.

Financial terms to consider

Beyond requiring legal compliance, localities can also impose financial parameters which help to offset costs and externalities. Virtually all municipalities impose up-front charges for permitting, whether in a lump sum or on a per-device basis, or both – but these can be minimal (see sidebar).

The National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO), has a guide summarizing the fees charged by numerous localities for introducing shared mobility programs which can be viewed at https://bit.ly/2NMFZLC. As indicated in the NACTO guide, many jurisdictions require only minimal charges.

Cities are recognizing that standard fee structures may be unnecessarily modest considering true governmental costs and the upside reaped by purveyors. A case in point is Santa Monica, which was initially limited by its municipal code to a single $50 permit fee per company and $60 per impounded scooter. It recently upped the ante significantly, requiring pilot program participants to pay a $20,000 annual fee per company, a $130 annual fee per device and a $1 "right of way usage fee" per ride. In January 2019, the Raleigh city council instituted a $300 annual fee per scooter, over Bird's objections. In order to cover what it refers to as Raleigh's "transportation tax"—a characterization which Raleigh's mayor emphatically rejects--the company added a $2 surcharge to the existing $1 initial ridership fee, boosting the price of a 10-minute ride to $4.50. (It would appear that, at five rides per day, the full $300 could be recouped in one month, dramatically boosting margins thereafter—but both Bird and Lyft recently announced plans to leave Raleigh. However, another five companies have already expressed interest in entering that market).

Other cities have imposed similar mechanisms to participate in the e-mobility upside. Portland assesses $.25 per ride, which generated over $200,000 for the city during its 6-month pilot period. Indianapolis charges $1 per day per scooter and imposes a $15,000 annual license fee per company, in addition to charging $25 for an illegally parked device and $100 to remove it. These mechanisms can generate significant revenues for localities, helping to pay for additional bike lanes, right of way enhancements and the like, while defraying some of the costs which will inevitably arise as municipalities face accident-related liabilities.

E-scooters are here to stay

Critics of these ambitious municipal pricing schemes (mainly the scooter companies themselves) argue that they will drive the devices from city streets entirely, depriving residents of the new transportation option and adding further congestion and pollution to the urban ecosystem. Those predictions seem vastly overstated. All the evidence suggests that, with few exceptions (see sidebar), e-scooters are here to stay in America's cities, with other transportation variants already on the way. Local government lawyers should be prepared for their arrival by becoming well-versed in their municipality's options, both legal and financial, as the e-mobility evolution continues.

In some cases, providers may assert that the locality is asking for too much, as with Lime's departure last month from Tempe, AZ – which insisted that the municipality would not accept any liability for accident or injury, even if the municipality was found to be negligent.

About the author: *Erich Eiselt is the IMLA's Assistant General Counsel.*

By Jim Larsen

In praise of pilot programs

Arlington County's experience with Shared Mobility Devices (so far)

SHARED MOBILITY DEVICES, or "SMDs" for short, are the "dockless" electric bikes and scooters that have popped up around the country over the past year and a half. SMDs first made their appearance in the Washington, D.C. region in September 2017 when five dockless bikeshare companies (Mobike, Ofo, Lime, Spin, and JUMP) started offering their services in the District of Columbia and Montgomery County, MD. The bikes attracted a lot of attention for the benefits they offered, but also for their downsides such as sometimes blocking sidewalks and ADA ramps when parked, becoming tripping hazards, underage riders, unsafe and fast riding, and vandalism that renders the devices unsafe or inoperable.

E-scooters arrived a few months later in March 2018 when three companies (Lime, Skip, and Bird) deployed their devices on the streets of our nation's capital. Three months later, 500 Birds migrated across the Potomac River to nest on the streets of Arlington County – without the County's permission.

Regional coordination for a pilot program

The devices were so new that there were few established best practices regarding SMDs. We asked the operators that had deployed e-scooters to the District to delay service in the County until we could develop a pilot program and get it approved by the County Board. My staff reviewed rules and ordinances from pilot programs around the country (and the world) to inform Arlington's pilot.

We also worked with our neighboring jurisdictions to draft regulations that would reduce burdens for operators and confusion for riders. On Sept. 25, 2018, the Arlington County Board approved the pilot program unanimously.

Pilot program considerations

Arlington County's pilot officially launched Oct. 1, 2018 with permits for two operators: Bird, who was already operating in the County at that point, and Lime. As part of our pilot, companies can deploy up to 350 devices per mode, with the opportunity for growth if they are able to meet certain performance metrics (e.g. at least 3 trips per day on average per device). Our Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) set several requirements for operators, including top speeds of 10 mph for e-scooters and 15 mph for e-bikes, correction of mis-parked scooters within two hours of reporting, and monthly data reporting (similar to the Capital Bikeshare contract's requirements). Permit fees are set at a flat $8,000 per fleet mode (rather than per operator), regardless of size, and companies are required to obtain a $5,000 surety bond per fleet in the event of bankruptcy or the company leaving the County without taking their equipment (which happened in the District of Columbia in summer 2018 when Mobike and Ofo stopped operations but did not take all of their bicycles).

As of this writing, seven operators of e-bike and e-scooter fleets have been approved to operate in Arlington County. From October 2018 through February 2019, riders have taken over 218,000 trips for

214,291 miles. I consider that an impressive number considering the freezing temperatures and snowy weather this winter.

Initial complaints

As soon as the scooters began appearing on Arlington's streets, the County received a deluge of complaints from concerned residents. Four top issues quickly emerged: sidewalk riding (currently illegal in Arlington County), improper parking (scooters blocking sidewalks, curb ramps, building entrances and exits, etc.), perceived unsafe behavior from riders, and underage riders (companies require users be at least 18 years old).

Regarding disobedient riders, the County has taken a stance of education first. Arlington County Police Department officers have deployed electronic sign boards at locations along the Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor reminding e-scooter riders to stay off sidewalks and for drivers to watch out for scooter riders. Meanwhile, Arlington Public Schools designed informational flyers for both students and parents educating them on the rules for e-scooter riding. Additionally, our permitted operators have been doing their part through educational outreach events in the community, sending in-app messages to users reminding them of proper riding and parking etiquette, and through their own educational campaigns.

Room for innovation, areas for improvement

SMDs are novel, so the County has had opportunities to innovate. For example, the County installed on-street parking spaces called "corrals" at seven Metrorail stations to cut down on the massing of scooters on sidewalks near entrances. We have worked with our operators to include these locations on their apps to help drive users to the corrals (a full list of locations can be found at www.ridedockless.com). As the pilot progresses, the County hopes to identify more corral areas on other corridors and possibly in dense residential neighborhoods.

Assuming our pilot program is permitted to continue, we have identified several areas with room for improvement. One is equity. Aside from a clause requiring deployment of scooters throughout the County, our pilot program MOA does not contain equity requirements. To correct this, we are considering requiring operators to provide:

- A certain number (or percentage) of devices in neighborhoods with larger minority populations or where transit options are lacking.
- A "text-to-ride/call-to-ride" option to allow individuals without smartphones to use the scooters.
- The ability to use cash to add credit to an account using to allow unbanked individuals to use the scooters.

It's worth noting that some operators are already providing these options.

Further, it may help encourage operators to provide adaptive vehicles for disabled individuals by not counting them against fleet caps or oterwise making allowances for these devices.

Another area with room for improvement is safety. Of course, safety is a top concern with our pilot program, but it's important to remember that unlike traditional station-based bikeshare systems, localities don't have much say over the day-to-day operations and safety standards of SMD operators. Many of the SMD companies rely on independent contractors to inspect and repair devices. We have received several reports of riders injuring themselves on what appear to be defective devices (e.g. brakes failing while riding down hills). Municipalities should consider minimum service standards to keep tabs on operators. For this reason, Arlington County is considering codifying maintenance standards like what is negotiated in many bikeshare contracts with private operators.

Additionally, setting standards for device visibility (particularly at night) with reflectivity requirements, always-on lighting, and other measures can also help reduce conflicts between SMD riders and drivers.

Final thoughts

My advice to jurisdictions is not to reinvent the wheel, but to look to what other jurisdictions have done and to review the work of organizations such as the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) and Transportation for America (see sidebar). Use your legislative powers to develop a program that fits the needs of your community while protecting the public interest. Invest in protected bicycle infrastructure to create safer and more attractive streets for your city, which will benefit people riding bicycles, scooters, and other forms of non-auto transportation. And finally, use the experiences of other jurisdictions to anticipate problems and provide solutions from the start, so your community can enjoy the maximum benefits from these new car-free technologies. VTC

NACTO's Guidelines for the Regulation and Management of Shared Active Transportation and Transportation for America's Shared Mobility Playbook (both available online) are helpful resources for localities wanting to learn more about establishing regulations for SMDs.

About the author: *Jim Larsen is the Commuter Services Bureau Chief in Arlington County.*

By Maggie Gendron

In defense of dockless electric scooters and bikes

An industry leader makes the case for a "disruptive" transportation option

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS ACROSS VIRGINIA – and the nation – are grappling with increasingly complex challenges surrounding mobility, transit, and transportation. As officials in cities, counties, and towns know far too well, easy access to affordable transit options correlates directly with access to high-quality jobs, schools, medical care, and so much more. Too often, resource-strained public transportation networks still exclude many communities, leaving local governments to decide how to fill in the gaps. Often, even if a community has a public transit system such as a bus or rail system, participation in that transit is out of reach for many residents, who live too far from a transit stop – or whose destination might also be too far from a transit stop – for public transit to be worthwhile. In these situations, most people either opt to drive a car as a single individual, or (even worse) they are limited to only choosing jobs, schools, and other resources that are closest to them. Many of these challenges are known as "first mile-last mile" problems.

Enter the dockless scooters and bikes

How can people living in underserved communities move more easily between currently available transit and their various endpoints: home, work, school, the grocery store, etc.? Underscoring the problem are two related questions: how can we encourage individuals to travel without a car – thereby reducing congestion and improving safety – and how can we reduce pollution caused by cars and buses that negatively impact public health?

In recent years, cities around the world have been turning to a rapidly emerging technology as a solution to all the above problems: dockless electric scooters and bikes. Electric scooters and bikes are transforming urban mobility by allowing cities to fill in their transportation gaps and giving individuals an accessible and affordable option to reach their destination without stepping into a car. This technology allows users to pick up an electric scooter or bike wherever they need it most – not necessarily tethered to a docked station – after which they can unlock the device using a smartphone app, often for as low as $1, and drop off the device wherever they finish their ride.

Most electric scooter and bike rides last around ½ mile, and nearly 50% of rides in cities have been used in connection to public transit.

Because transforming mobility requires a focus on equity, the world's two leading scooter operators (Lime and Bird) both provide programs that allow low-income individuals to ride their devices at a reduced cost and allow users without smartphones to be able to pay for their rides through other means. Since their emergence on city streets in 2017, the use and adoption of electric scooters has grown exponentially. Lime, which launched in spring 2017, has expanded operations to more than 150 cities in 21 countries, representing more than 10 million users and 34 million rides, with Bird also having completed tens of millions of rides.

Whether providing mobility options on college campuses or creating easier ways for people around the world to commute, these devices are rapidly changing the face of transportation while also helping to meet challenges related to pollution and sustainability. The EPA confirmed in late 2018 that the transportation sector – cars, trucks, buses, trains, and other vehicles – are collectively the biggest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions, underscoring that reducing car trips not only eases congestion but also improves air quality and public health.

According to a recent study from the Portland Department of Transportation during their four-month scooter pilot program, more than 30% of scooter rides displaced a personal car, ride hailing, or car share trip.

Data shows that Lime has saved over 3,000 tons of carbon with 8 million vehicle miles diverted, saving 380,000 gallons of gas in the last year.

All of Lime's rides are carbon free because we purchase renewable energy for all the electricity required for charging our fleet from both new and existing renewable energy projects, including solar and wind. We also offset the carbon emissions associated with the vehicles used to manage our fleets. We've taken these steps in partnership with Native Energy, an industry leader in building new renewable energy and verified carbon offset projects.

Focus on safety

Safety should always be the guide for localities, operators, and riders working together to develop dockless scooter and bike standards. One of the central questions of this new technology is where riders should be operating bikes and scooters. Most operators, including Lime, believe that scooters should not be operated on sidewalks or anywhere where they would block traffic or pedestrian access, especially ramps or other access points for individuals with disabilities. However, from rider data collected on more than 34 million rides around the world, we know that users will ride where they feel most safe – in some situations this means the street, and in some situations, this means the sidewalk.

The bottom line for safety: we must continue to educate riders on the need to respect local laws and stay off the sidewalks where operation is prohibited, but one of the biggest lessons we at Lime have learned is that to make this possible we must make roads safer for users. The safety of our riders and the community is our number one priority. That's why every day we're innovating on technology, infrastructure and education to set the standard for micromobility safety. Lime is investing more than $3 million in our Respect the Ride campaign to educate riders about safety and responsible riding and are committed to distributing 250,000 free helmets to riders across the globe. And because we believe continued government investment in protected bike lanes and paths is critical, we are working with local governments around the world to support infrastructure for shared scooters and bikes.

Standards: Virginia becomes a leader

In Virginia, dockless electric bikes and scooters first appeared in 2018, and since then localities across the state – Arlington, Alexandria, Charlottesville, Richmond, Norfolk and Harrisonburg – have launched pilot programs to test how these devices can be part of solving their local transportation problems. Additionally, early this year the Virginia General Assembly unanimously passed legislation to update the state motor vehicle code to accurately define electric scooters, and to clarify localities' authority to regulate scooter and bike operations. During months of engagement with Lime and others, the scooter industry worked closely with local governments to craft legislation that reinforced local authority while also ensuring continued support for the industry, and its ability to innovate. Virginia's actions on this bill, HB2752 (patroned by Del. Todd Pillion), have set an important model for the rest of the nation. Most state legislatures have not yet enacted any statewide legislation on electric scooters, and the leadership of Virginia localities on this issue will help to guide the legislative work of communities across the country.

Now that state and local standards regarding the operation of electric scooters and bikes are coming to fruition, 2019 provides a crucial and exciting moment for increased collaboration between the shared mobility industry and local governments. As localities continue to welcome this "disruptive" technology to their streets, the focus now will be on shared cooperation and performance, rather than just regulation and legislation. The burden will be on both private operators and localities to work together and hold each other accountable as partners in the work of closing transit gaps and truly improving traffic and mobility.

Local governments across Virginia have an opportunity in the next few years to completely transform their mobility and transit systems, and operators such as Lime are committed to working alongside localities as trusted partners and collaborators in that mission. VTC

About the author: *Maggie Gendron is the Director of Strategic Development with Lime.*

By Sonya Ravindranath Waddell

A look at employment in Virginia

SINCE THE END of the Great Recession, employment in the U.S. has grown at a steady pace, leaving the nation with an historically tight labor market by most measures of activity. As a regional reserve bank, the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond is responsible for understanding economic conditions throughout the Fifth Federal Reserve District (District of Columbia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, and most of West Virginia). In order to gauge the pace of economic growth, we use data collected by agencies such as the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), we conduct our own surveys, and we talk to businesses throughout the Fifth District. Most businesses across Virginia and the broader District describe significant challenges finding workers to fill their ranks, particularly at the entry level. This difficulty spans industries from manufacturing and construction to accounting and IT and the skill level includes anything from high-skilled cyber security jobs to lower-skilled manufacturing or hospitality roles.

The constraints on growth imposed by labor shortages as reported by businesses are as prevalent in Virginia as in the other Fifth District states. It is also true that since the Great Recession, employment growth in the Commonwealth has trailed that of the nation. It is important to recognize, too, that employment growth varies across regions of the state and that some of the most reliable employment data available excludes those workers who are employed but not on traditional payrolls – i.e., those engaged in the "gig economy."

Virginia's employment growth is trailing the nation

Except for a ten-month period that lasted from July 2015 through April 2016, employment growth in Virginia has consistently trailed that of the U.S. since the end of the Great Recession. This is illustrated in the year-over-year growth rates shown in Chart 1. From January 2010 through January 2019, average annual employment growth in Virginia was 1.2 percent compared to 1.7 percent in the U.S. Much of this slower growth is attributable to slower growth in a key broad industry sector in Virginia: the professional and business services industry.

The outsized contribution of the professional and business services industry to employment in Virginia – it accounts for almost 19 percent of nonfarm employment in the Commonwealth – means that growth in that industry is a major driver of growth in Virginia. In fact, professional and business services played a large role in the most recent expansionary periods. In the post-recession period from 1992-2000, employment in professional and business services grew, on average, almost six percent annually. From 2002-2007, employment in the sector grew just over three percent annually. On the other hand, from 2010-2019, employment in the industry grew at an average annual rate of less than two percent – well below that of previous expansionary periods. In the one period since the Great Recession when Virginia growth exceeded that of the nation – from the middle of 2015 into the spring of 2016 – the increased growth was driven almost entirely by growth in professional and business services.

The professional and business services industry (and, in fact, private service-providing firms more broadly) is a key driver in U.S. growth as well. Although average annual growth from January 2010 through January 2019 in that sector in Virginia was 1.9 percent, it was 2.8 percent in the U.S. So why has Virginia seen slower growth in the sector? Well, that is due at least in part to uncertainty in the government contracting segment, which is a sizeable contributor to the professional and business services industry, particularly in Northern Virginia.

But the slower growth in Virginia is not all attributable to slower growth in professional and business services. Construction employment in the U.S., for example, grew 3.3 percent annually from 2010 to 2019 compared to 0.9 percent in Virginia. And manufacturing growth in Virginia over that period (0.6 percent) was less than half of the national 1.3 percent rate. In fact, the goods producing industries of construction, manufacturing, and mining/logging accounted for between a quarter and a third of total job losses in the state during the Great Recession and as of 2019, only a percentage of those jobs have returned.

Of course, on some measures, the Commonwealth continues to outperform most other areas of the country. For example, in February 2019, Virginia was one of 16 states that had an unemployment rate statistically below that of the U.S. In fact, only Nebraska (2.8 percent), Hawaii (2.7 percent), Iowa (2.4 percent), New Hampshire (2.4 percent), North Dakota (2.4 percent), and Vermont (2.4 percent) had unemployment rates lower than Virginia's 2.9 percent in February. What is more, Virginia has never, in the more than 40-year history of collecting state unemployment rates, had an unemployment rate that exceeded that of the nation. Certainly, the buffer of the federal government in northern VA is part of the story, but the state has other factors going for it, such as an educated populous and a diverse industry base. The labor force participation rate in Virginia has also exceeded that of the U.S. for almost the entire history of the series.

BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS/HAVER ANALYTICS

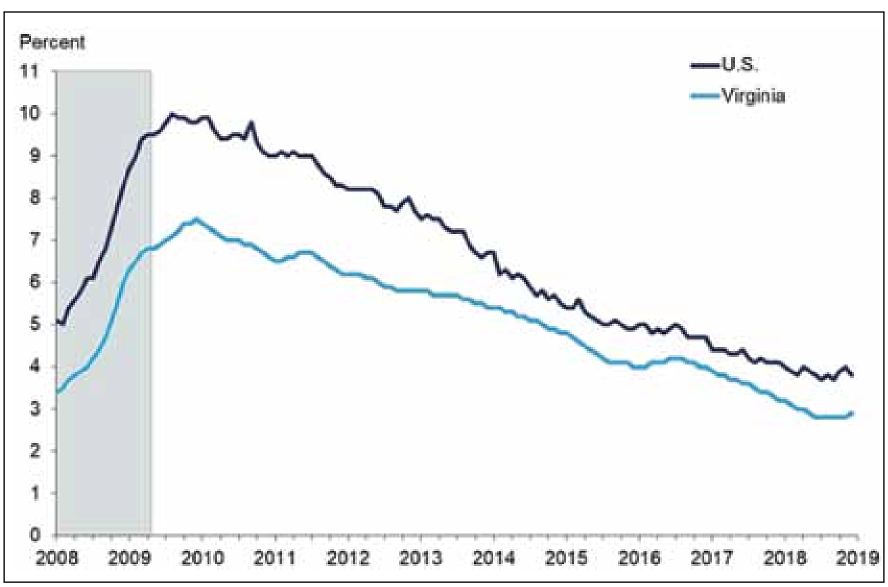


Chart 1: YoY% change in employment in Virginia and the U.S.

All economics is local

In Virginia, as in the U.S., much of the population and employment growth has been focused in the more urban areas, and metro areas are accounting for an increasing share of the state population. In 2017 over 85 percent of the population of Virginia lived in the eleven metropolitan statistical areas that cover parts of the state. During the most recent expansion, the fastest growing metro area was the Winchester VA-WV MSA, which grew around 2.2 percent annually from 2010 to 2019. However, in the last five years, momentum has built in Charlottesville, which grew 2.3% on average since 2014. Of course, despite the strong percentage growth in Winchester and Charlottesville, the three largest metro areas of Northern VA, Hampton Roads, and Richmond continue to dwarf the other metro areas with respect to overall contribution to job increases. From 2010 to 2019, for example, northern Virginia added almost 200,000 jobs to net payrolls in the state compared to 16,500 jobs in Charlottesville and 11,500 jobs in Winchester. The Norfolk-VA Beach MSA, despite its weaker growth rate, added almost 55,000 jobs over the entire period. Meanwhile, Richmond grew more strongly than either of the other two large metro areas over the period and added almost 100,000 jobs, on net, to employment in the state.

Meanwhile, other measures of employment also vary widely across the state. Unemployment rates, as is clear from Chart 3, tend to be higher in the south and southwest areas of the state. Broadly, the more rural areas of the state tend to have higher unemployment and lower employment-to-population ratios than the more urban areas of the state – a dichotomy only exacerbated during the most recent expansion. Understanding why growth between urban and rural areas has diverged even more in this expansion than in past expansions will be important to developing a broad understanding of economic and labor market conditions across the Commonwealth.

Although employment growth in Virginia has lagged that of the nation since the Great Recession, the Commonwealth continues to grow at a solid, albeit not gangbusters, pace. From December 2017 to December 2018, employment in the state grew 0.8 percent – below the 1.0 percent in the prior year and well below the 1.8 percent national growth. On average, the Commonwealth added 2,700 jobs/month in 2018 compared to 3,200 jobs/month in 2017 – a slight slowdown. Growth, particularly year-over-year growth, continued at a similar pace into 2019, and the unemployment rate continued to be one of the lowest in the nation.

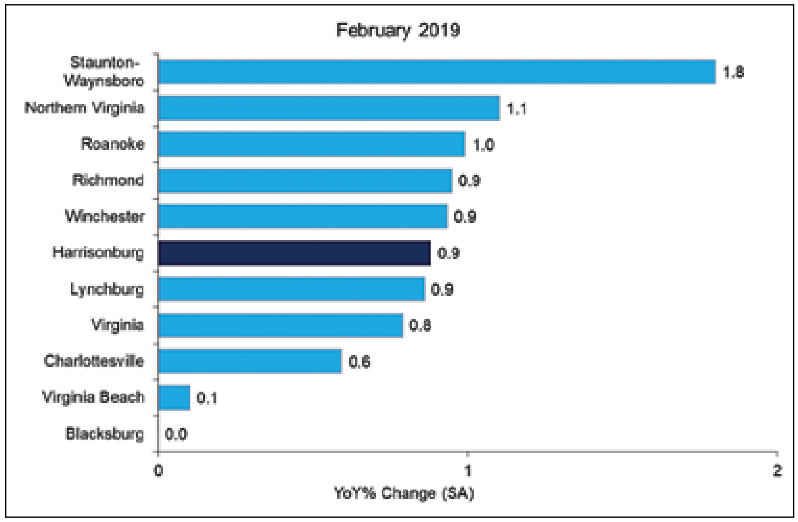


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Chart 2: Employment growth by metro area in Virginia.

And yet, there is so much we do not know…

The data on payroll employment are derived from a BLS survey of about 142,000 businesses and government agencies (and almost 700,000 worksites) nationwide. Employment, by this measure, includes only those included in the traditional payroll count of a firm. The state unemployment and labor force participation rate are derived primarily from a survey of 60,000 households across the nation where individuals are asked a series of questions about their employment status. Employment, by this measure, includes anything that leads the survey participant to report being employed, which could include more traditional or less traditional types of employment.

To better understand employment in the "gig economy," in 2017 the BLS included a supplemental survey on contingent work. The report was released in 2018. Defining contingent workers as people in temporary work who do not expect their jobs to last, the data indicate that 5.9 million Americans – or 3.8 percent of workers – held contingent jobs in May 2017. Interestingly, in February 2005, which was the last time the survey was conducted, the share of workers that were contingent was 4.1 percent – higher than the current level.

Unfortunately, the BLS does not report this data at the state level; however, there are other efforts underway to try to better understand the role of non-traditional employment and the gig economy on local labor markets.

Editor's note: *See the article by Chris Chmura "What is the new gig economy?" for more on this subject.*

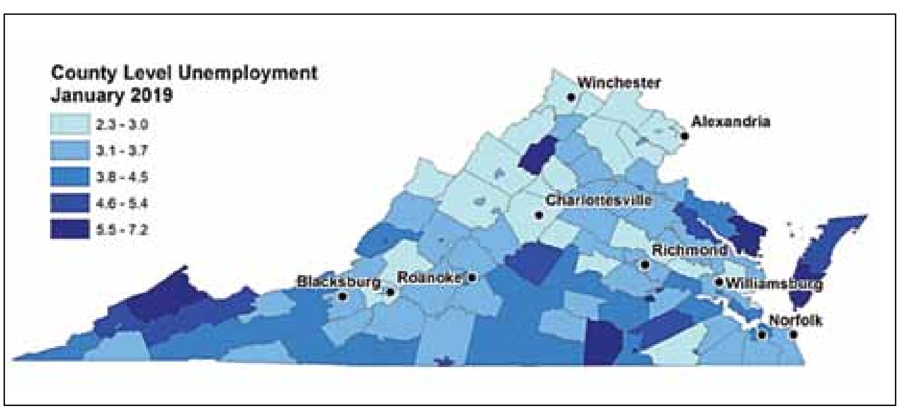

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Chart 3: Unemployment rates by county in Virginia.

The bottom line

Labor markets across Virginia and the nation are tight, with firms continuing to explore innovative ways to recruit and retain workers, including and outside of wage increases. Although employment growth in the state has not been as strong as in the nation during this expansion, the unemployment rate in Virginia, like that in the nation, is at a near-historic low. It is critical to recognize, however, that economic and labor market expansion is not uniform across the Commonwealth. The more we know, the more we can address the challenges that are faced by firms, households, and individuals throughout Virginia. VTC

About the author: *Sonya Ravindranath Waddell is a Vice President and Economist with the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond.*

By Christine Chmura

What is the new 'gig economy?'

IT USED TO BE THAT "GIGS" were the domain of musicians and stand-up comedians performing at different clubs to various audiences. These days, however, the "gig economy" workforce has expanded to include a host of professions. The main driver of this expansion has been the proliferation of smart phones and online platforms which have lowered the barrier for suppliers to provide on-demand services, making it easier for more individuals to complete many types of small jobs and participate in this new economy. Drivers for Uber, short-term rental owners on Airbnb and local handymen listed with TaskRabbit are examples of workers in the new "gig economy."

This new type of economy is sometimes referred to as the "sharing" economy because it has its origin as individuals giving or sharing goods and services. It should be noted, however, that the designation of "sharing" is a misnomer since money still changes hands and one person profits while another spends to enjoy goods or services.

Both workers and consumers in the gig economy receive benefits that have helped it to grow rapidly. Workers enjoy the flexibility of choosing their hours which makes it easier to blend their gig economy job with full-time employment. Consumers generally enjoy lower prices than the traditional alternatives due in large part to the significantly less overhead required to provide the goods or services. It's not surprising then that in some places gig economy offerings are threatening well-established industries such as taxi services and hotels.

How to measure the "gig economy?"

Defining the "gig economy" is relatively easy but understanding the size of the gig economy is more challenging. Neither the Census Bureau nor the Bureau of Labor Statistics publish estimates of gig employment.

Measuring the gig economy is important because without that information, the growth rate of employment in the nation is understated and productivity is overstated.

In a recent report, the Virginia Employment Commission used non-employer statistics from the Internal Revenue Service that track businesses with no employees as a proxy for the gig economy. VEC found that non-employer growth in Virginia was faster from 2010 through 2015 than overall employment growth and the gains were largest in gig-inclined industries such as ground transportation.

The census also used the non-employer statistics to measure taxi and limousine establishments without employees in all states. California topped the list of states with 38,928 non-employer taxi and limousine establishments in 2016, up 44 percent from 2015. Florida was second with 21,858 such establishments – 72 percent growth over the prior year. New York was third with 17,378 non-employer establishments of this type but it only grew 20 percent over the prior year.

While the data indicates the reach of ride sharing, it remains to be seen how the gig economy has penetrated other industries. However, academic studies show that the gig economy is impacting traditional sectors.

A 2017 study by Georgios Vervas, Davide Proserpio and John W. Byers in the *Journal of Marketing Research* found that hotel revenue from January 2003 through August 2014 was down 8-10 percent in Austin, TX, where Airbnb supply was the highest. Lower-end hotels and those not catering to business travelers were most vulnerable.

Jonathan Hall and Alan Krueger used data from Uber to study the characteristics of their drivers in a 2016 study released by the National Bureau of Economic Research. They found that the number of active Uber drivers roughly doubled every six months from the middle of 2012 to the end of 2015. That rate, they admitted, would undoubtedly slow down, or every American would be an Uber driver by 2020! Clearly, this is not possible, but it demonstrates its incredibly rapid pace of growth.

In light of the need to gather more information about gig economy employment, the Bureau of Labor Statistics added four questions to its May 2017 Contingent Worker survey that measures employees that are hired on-demand by organizations. Based on the results of that survey, less than one percent of the total U.S. workforce used an online platform like Uber, Lyft, TaskRabbit, or others to arrange work in the month prior to the survey.

So, we can reasonably conclude that though gig jobs are growing at a fast pace, they currently make up a very small proportion of the labor force.

Amid all the unknowns, however, one thing is clear about gig economy work: There remains much to study.

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By A. Fletcher Mangum

The economics of utility scale solar development

A municipal and industry consultant outlines the economics of utility scale solar

UTILITY SCALE SOLAR ENERGY is advancing rapidly. According to data from the U.S. Energy Information Agency, at the national level the net amount of electricity generated by utility scale solar facilities increased from 0.6 million megawatt hours in 2007 to 53.3 million megawatt hours in 2017 – an increase of 8,607 percent over ten years. Here in Virginia net electricity generated by utility scale solar facilities increased from zero megawatt hours as recently as 2015 to 0.3 million megawatt hours in 2017. And more utility scale solar facilities are coming on line every day.

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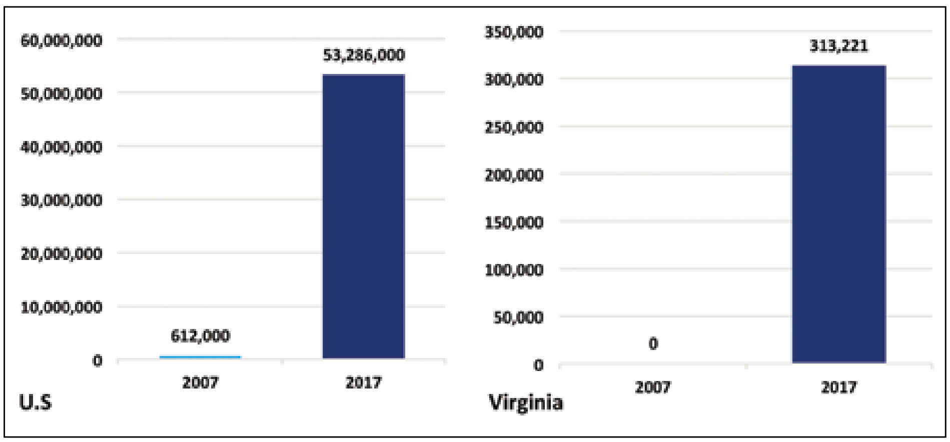

Figure 1: Megawatt Hours of Electricity Production from Solar Energy

Why the sudden interest in solar? A lot of it has to do with increased concern about the environment. It is important to realize that electricity production is the United States' largest source of greenhouse gas emissions. Nationwide in 2007, electricity production generated 2.5 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions, with 2 billion metric tons of that total coming from coal-fired plants. But, where nationwide coal-fired plants produced 49 percent of electricity in 2007, by 2017 that figure had dropped to 30 percent.

Approximately three-fifths of that decrease in the electricity generated from coal power was attributable to the increased use of natural gas. However, the remaining two-fifths came from the increased use of solar and other renewable energy sources. Bottom line, as a result of the shift to cleaner energy sources, carbon dioxide emissions from electricity production dropped from 2.5 billion metric tons nationwide in 2007 to 1.8 billion metric tons in 2017.

Closer to home

In Virginia, the differences were even more stark even if the underlying trends were different. Where coal-fired plants produced 45 percent of electricity in Virginia in 2007, by 2017 that figure had dropped to just 12 percent. And where carbon dioxide emissions from electricity production were 47.2 million metric tons in 2007, by 2017 they had dropped to 31.2 million metric tons. Because Virginia has been a relatively late bloomer in the renewable energy market, almost all that decline came from the increased use of natural gas (in contrast to the national trend outlined above).

Economic considerations

In addition to increased concern about the environment there are also some important economic reasons for the sudden interest in solar. One is that industrial development prospects with high energy needs are becoming increasingly sensitive to the proportion of their energy requirements that are produced through renewable sources, and that has implications for economic development generally. This is especially true of data centers, which according to a recent analysis by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce spend on average about $7.4 million a year on energy costs.

That unusually high demand for energy has caused leading data center companies such as Amazon Web Services (AWS), Apple, Facebook, Google, and Microsoft to move toward sourcing 100 percent of their power needs from renewable energy to reduce their environmental impact. Moreover, they generally prefer to obtain that power from sources that are in reasonable proximity to their facilities. For that reason, data centers have become a driving force behind the development of utility scale renewable energy projects in general, and solar projects in particular.

This trend is especially relevant to Virginia, because data centers are an increasingly important part of Virginia's economy. As our 2018 analysis for the Northern Virginia Technology Council showed, data centers support 43,275 jobs, $3.2 billion in labor income, and $10.2 billion in economic output in Virginia. Additionally, because data centers involve significant investment in computer equipment and other taxable business personal property but have a relatively small

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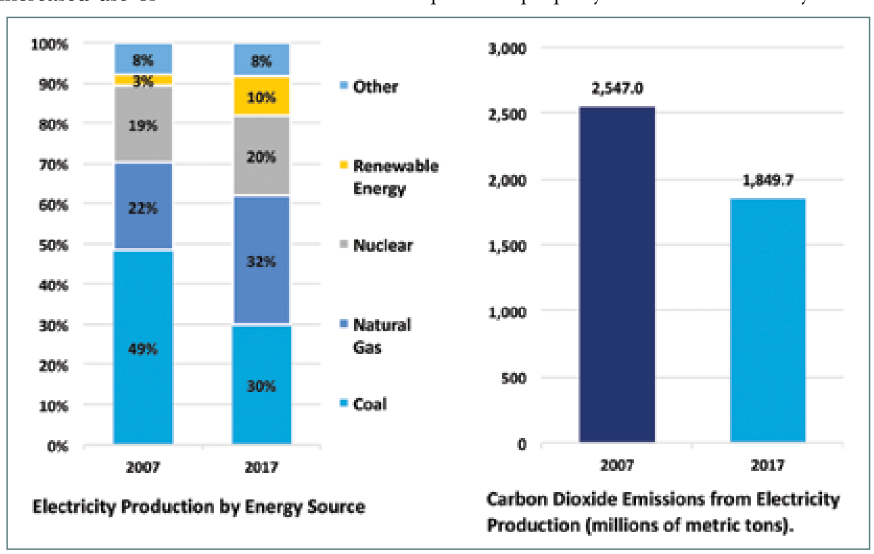

Figure 2: Electricity Production by Energy Source and Carbon Dioxide Emissions from Electricity Production in the U.S.

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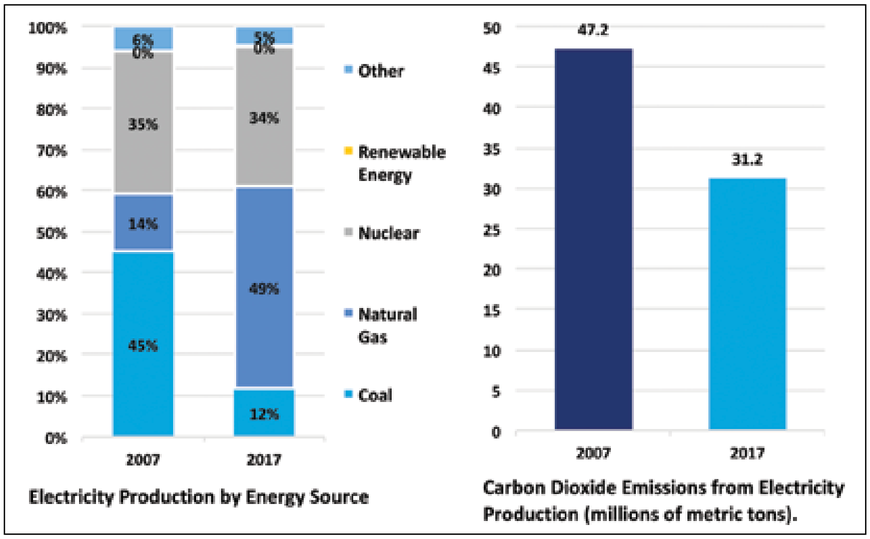

Figure 3: Electricity Production by Energy Source and Carbon Dioxide Emissions from Electricity Production in Virginia.

number of highly paid employees and therefore place little strain on local school systems or other local services, they provide a high net benefit to localities. For example, that same analysis showed that in Loudon County and Prince William County data centers generate more than $8 in local tax revenue for every $1 they generate in local service costs – a more than 8 to 1 benefit-to-cost ratio.

Locality	Estimated Fiscal Benefit	Estimated Fiscal Cost	Benefit / Cost Ratio
Loudoun County	$142,970,214	$17,602,642	8.1
Prince William County	$21,519,155	$2,532,087	8.5

Table 1: Estimated Benefit to Cost Ratio Associated with Data Centers in 2016

Data Source: "The Economic and Fiscal Contribution that Data Centers make to Virginia," produced for the Northern Virginia Technology Council by Mangum Economics, February 2018.

Although much of that overall economic impact is in Northern Virginia, home to the largest concentration of data centers on the planet, it also spreads to Southern Virginia with Microsoft's over $2 billion data center in Mecklenburg County. More recently, with the opportunities provided by the newly constructed MAREA and BRUSA (and the soon to come SAEx1 and Dunant) subsea cable landings in Virginia Beach, it is also spreading to places such as Henrico County in Central Virginia where QTS is expanding its existing data center facilities and Facebook has announced $2 billion in new data center investment.

Another economic reason for the sudden interest in solar is that solar facilities, like data centers, are a clean industry that is capital intensive and thereby generate substantial local tax revenue, while imposing few costs on local services. And we believe this remains true even when one takes into account legislation enacted in 2016 in which the General Assembly provided an 80 percent tax credit on the capital equipment used in solar facilities larger than 20 megawatts. Consider that even with that hefty tax credit, a typical 80-megawatt solar facility with $100 million in capital investment generates around $2.2 million in local tax revenue over 40 years at an average county tax rate of $0.66 per $100 of assessed value (by statute, solar equipment is taxed as real property). Moreover, that figure does not include any increased tax revenue from the land itself, which can be substantial when the property is removed from agricultural use, because agriculture remains a heavily subsidized industry.

Finally, solar facilities can also be an attractive alternative relative to the most likely other use for that land: residential development. According to data from the Virginia Auditor of Public Accounts, in FY 2018 Virginia counties spent about 57 percent of their budgets on schools. As any local planner knows, rooftops mean more school children, along with more traffic, libraries, parks, fire and safety services, etc., etc. As a result, although residential development has benefits it is rare that it actually pays for itself, which is why localities need revenue from commercial and industrial development to close the gap in their budgets.

Concern about the Composite Index

One concern that has been raised about solar facilities is the impact that a solar facility can have on a locality's Composite Index (i.e. the index that the Virginia Department of Education uses to assess the locally funded portion of localities' school budgets based on each locality's "ability to pay"). Each locality's Composite Index is based on three factors – the locality's total real property tax base, total adjusted real income, and total taxable retail sales. Of these, the total real property tax base receives the largest weight. Therefore, hypothetically, a large capital investment could increase a locality's Composite Index and thereby increase the required local contribution to the county's school budget.

In actuality, changes in a locality's Composite Index are driven by changes in the locality's total real property tax base relative to the changes in all Virginia localities' total real property tax base. As a result, for any one capital investment to have an impact on a locality's Composite Index, it would have to drive a percentage change in the locality's real property tax base that was larger than the percentage change in the real property tax base across all Virginia localities. Between Virginia's 2016-18 and 2018-20 Composite Index calculations, that change was 3.8 percent. Of course, 3.8 percent of Craig County's $515 million total real property tax base is substantially different from 3.8 percent of Loudoun County's $75 billion total real property tax base. But on average across all Virginia counties, that would imply a capital investment from a single solar project of around $1.8 billion, once one considers the fact that 80 percent of that investment would be untaxable and would therefore not add to the locality's real property tax base. Not even the largest solar facility comes even close to approaching that level of investment.

Does utility scale solar make sense?

The bottom line is that all local economic considerations are indeed truly local. It's always best for a municipality to decide for itself whether a project is desirable given local conditions. However, based on the numbers outlined above, we believe that in many circumstances solar energy development makes sense for localities from both an environmental and from an economic perspective. VTC

About the author: *Dr. A. Fletcher Mangum is CEO and Founder of Mangum Economics, and a member of the Governor's and the General Assembly's Joint Advisory Board of Economists. His firm has assessed the economic and fiscal impact of solar facilities for localities and several industry firms in Virginia and other states. You may contact him at fletcher@mangumeconomics.com.*

By the VML Policy Team

2019 General Assembly: Legislation wrap-up

This short session was full of activity

WHEN THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY began its short session this year, it promised to be less controversial than the 2018 session because the most divisive piece of legislation, the proffer bill, was already negotiated. Then, one Friday in January it became clear it would be a very different session from what anyone had foreseen. In the time it takes for information to spread across the internet (which is to say, very little time indeed) the political climate in Richmond changed and tax policy, surplus revenue and the upcoming elections entered the debate. In the resulting flurry of political maneuvering, the VML policy team worked to stay above the fray and to remain laser focused on the legislation that mattered most to our members.

This article summarizes some of the important bills that VML watched this year, including bills that passed and failed. The failed bills are important because there is a likelihood that some will come back next year.

A couple of items to note before we dig in:

- The VML policy team is working on a comprehensive list of bills. This will be published in the coming weeks and announced in our *eNews* bulletin.
- The reconvened session was held April 3rd just before we went to print. So, while this article is as up-to-date as possible, there could be further actions taken following the veto session.

Annexation

Following a report issued last year by the Commission on Local Government (CLG) on the moratorium on city annexation and other related issues, Delegate Tony Wilt introduced HB2450. The bill placed a permanent moratorium on city annexation, defined a dependent city, created a Local Government Efficiency Analysis Fund designed to encourage consolidation and interlocal agreements, and required a referendum at the beginning of the consolidation process (in addition to the one at the end of the process). Delegate Wilt agreed to carry his bill over, provided that local governments work with him to develop a bill regarding annexation that will be helpful as an outcome from the study.

As background, during the 2016 regular session of the General Assembly, the existing moratoria on city annexation, county immunity from city annexation, and the granting of new city charters was extended until 2024. Additionally, the Commission on Local Government was directed to report on the following issues by December 1, 2018:

- Evaluate the structure of cities and counties in the Commonwealth;
- Evaluate the impact of annexation upon localities;
- Consider alternatives to the current moratorium on annexation by cities; and
- Consult with and seek input from the Virginia Municipal League, Virginia Association of Counties, and localities directly affected by the moratorium.

The CLG report made recommendations to:

- Modify reversion and consolidation statutes to remove obstacles.
- Make reversion and consolidation more cost-effective through incentives.
- Grant additional powers to counties through reversion and other interlocal agreements.
- Evaluate mandated service delivery methods to identify appropriate service level.
- Relax the requirements for the establishment of joint authorities and special districts.
- Provide planning grants to explore interlocal agreements and other operational efficiencies.
- Evaluate adequacy of local fiscal resources to identify enhancements.
- Create or expand programs to reduce local fiscal stress.
- Incentivize additional regional cooperation and regional programs.

Checkbook bills

The perennial checkbook bill (SB1262) was back this session and Senator Sturtevant found a colleague to carry an identical bill in the House (HB1907-VanValkenberg). The bills would have required all localities with a population of more than 25,000 and school divisions with more than 5,000 students to post quarterly on their website a register of all funds expended. The register would have to include vendor names, dates of payment, description of the expense and include credit card payments. Many localities that already post information would not have been in compliance with this proposed legislation. Both bills died in the House Counties, Cities and Towns Committee.

Broadband

HB2141 is a broadband bill that Delegate Thomas carried for Stafford County that VML really liked as introduced. The original draft allowed localities to create service districts for broadband and telecommunications systems. During its tour of the General Assembly, the bill was modified to say that the locality had to contract with a broadband service provider and the final language now says that the locality must contract with a nongovernmental broadband service provider. In addition, the final version of the bill adds criteria about the service district being unserved. The bill still adds a tool for local governments and attempts to help with the last mile service, but the new criteria makes it is more difficult to implement than was the case in the original bill.

Short-term rentals

SB1701 is the latest example of a short-term rental bill aimed at a particular locality (Fairfax County). The bill would have undermined the authority of Fairfax County to regulate short-term rentals. Even though the bill applied only to Fairfax County, it would have set a dangerous precedent. While this bill was left in House Counties, Cities and Towns, the short-term rental folks are closely watching local government action on short-term rentals. VML urges localities to craft their ordinances carefully and will provide assistance or history to your community as needed.

Proffers

VML along with other stakeholder groups spent numerous summer hours working on the proffer issue. Senator Favola (SB1373) and Delegate Thomas (HB2342) carried the consensus bills that now encourage communication between the parties and provides for on and offsite proffers that are not enumerated in the Code. Several other proffer bills that were not the consensus bills VML worked on fell by the wayside during the session (HB1801, HB2276, SB1143, SB1524).

Localities with small police departments

HB2656 (Collins) amends the definition of "law-enforcement officers" in the Law-Enforcement Officers Procedural Guarantee Act by making the act apply to departments that have 3 or more officers. Currently the statute applies to departments that have 10 or more law-enforcement officers. The Governor has signed the bill.

FOIA

SB1431 (Obenshain) requires local elected officials to complete Freedom of Information Act training from the local government attorney or the FOIA Council within two months of taking office and once every two years while they are in office. The bill also eliminates the three-day notice requirement for a hearing alleging an open meeting violation of the act. The bill is effective July 1, 2020; elected officials holding office on that date must complete the training requirement by December 31, 2020.

HB1772 (Mullin) allows an advisory opinion issued by the FOIA Council to be introduced as evidence that the alleged violation was not made willfully and knowingly.

SB1554 (Surovell) allows (but does not require) a court to impose an additional penalty on an officer, member of a board, etc., if the person cannot produce a public record because it was altered or destroyed in order to avoid FOIA provisions. The court also may impose an additional civil penalty on the public body if an improper closed session is held. In determining whether a civil penalty is appropriate, the court shall consider mitigating factors, including reliance of members of the public body on (i) opinions of the Attorney General, (ii) court cases substantially supporting the rationale of the public body, and (iii) published opinions of the Freedom of Information Advisory Council.

SB1180 (Stuart) redefines trade secrets to mean the same as the term is defined in the Uniform Trade Secrets Act.

SB1182 (Stuart) clarifies certain requirements of law regarding participation in public meetings through electronic communication when there is a state of emergency declared by the Governor. In that circumstance, requirements are waived that public bodies (i) adopt a written policy regarding participation by electronic communication, (ii) have a quorum of a public body physically assembled at a primary or central location, and (iii) make arrangements for the voice of any member participating from a remote location to be heard by all persons at the primary location.

Taxation and finance

HB1866 (Peace) requires that localities submit their annual local audit to the Auditor of Public Accounts. If the audit is not completed as required, the locality must post a statement on its website, if such website exists, declaring that the required audit is pending, the reasons for the delay, and the estimated date of completion. The statement must also be posted and made available to the public at the next scheduled meeting of the local governing body and be sent to the Auditor of Public Accounts. The statement remains posted and updated until the audit is complete. In addition, any town with a population of less than 3,500 that voluntarily has an audit prepared must submit the results of such audit to the Auditor of Public Accounts. SB1312 is a simpler bill that addresses only the requirement pertaining to towns with a population of less than 3,500. Both bills have been signed by the Governor.

HJ687 (Keam) directs the Small Business Commission to study models and streamlined procedures for appealing tax assessment decisions. The Small Business Commission is to report its findings to the members of the General Assembly by the first day of the 2020 Regular Session. As part of the study, the Commission is to seek input from local government representatives, property ownership and management associations, the judicial branch, and state and local tax administrators; evaluate the tax court systems of other states; and evaluate other options and models for streamlining appeals of a local board of equalization or similar local body, including options and models provided by research organizations.

HJ676 (Filler-Corn) and SJ278 (Reeves) exempt from state and local taxes one motor vehicle of a veteran who has a 100 percent service-connected, permanent, and total disability. The proposed constitutional amendment provides that only automobiles and pickup trucks qualify for the exemption. Additionally, the exemption is only applicable on the date the motor vehicle is acquired or the effective date of the amendment (whichever is later) and is not applicable for any period of time prior to the effective date of the amendment. The proposal must be adopted again by the 2020 Session and then approved by voters in the November 2020 general election to become part of the Virginia Constitution.

SB1425 (Dunnavant) provides that when the owner of a new business that operates a mobile food unit has paid a license tax as required by the locality in which the mobile food unit is registered, the owner would not be required to pay a license tax to any other locality for conducting business from such mobile food unit in such a locality. This exemption from paying the license tax in other localities would expire two years after the payment of the initial license tax in the locality in which the mobile food unit is registered, and during that two-year period, the owner would be entitled to exempt up to three mobile food units from license taxation in other localities. However, the owner of the mobile food unit would be required to register with the commissioner of the revenue or director of finance in any locality in which he conducts business from such mobile food unit, regardless of whether the owner is exempt from paying license tax in the locality.

HB2640 (Byron) was DEFEATED but would have, if enacted, provided that, for purposes of the machinery and tools tax, "original total capitalized cost" means the property's cost when acquired by the current owner plus any amount incurred to extend its useful life. This change in definition could create a lack of uniformity and tax inequities and would have overturned two formal, published State Tax Commissioner Rulings and two formal, published Attorney General's Opinions (one Republican and one Democrat).

Community development and zoning

Two bills (HB2779 – Edmunds and SB1785 – McDougle) that have been signed by the Governor allow all enterprise zones to have a total of 25 years of eligibility. Basically, the bills keep the status quo for another five years before zones would not be able to renew. Zones that began before 2005 started with a 20-year period; those now would have one five-year renewal period. Zones that began after 2005 have an initial 10-year period of eligibility and under the bills would have the possibility of three 5-year renewal periods.

Under HB2139 (Thomas), a locality may designate specific receiving and sending areas for transferring or receiving development rights. In addition, the receiving areas may include urban development areas or similarly defined areas in the locality. Current law only authorizes inclusion of urban development areas.

HB1966 (Yancey) requires any fees that are levied by a local governing body to defray the cost of building code enforcement and appeals (with the exception of the levy imposed for the support of training programs of the Building Code Academy) be used only to support the functions of the local building department. The bill also requires local building departments, when denying an application for the issuance of a building permit, to provide to the applicant a written explanation detailing the reasons for which the application was denied. The bill provides that the applicant may submit a revised application addressing the reasons for which the application was previously denied and that, if the applicant does so, the local building department shall be encouraged, but not required, to limit its review of the revised application to only those portions of the application that were previously deemed inadequate and that the applicant has revised.

Redistricting

Stemming from accusations of gerrymandering and current legal action after the Commonwealth's 2011 redistricting process, HJ615 (Cole) and SJ306 (Barker) would create new standards for Virginia elections, including the establishment of an evenly bipartisan redistricting commission with both legislative and citizen representation. A 75-percent majority of each group of commission members – legislators and citizens – would have to approve each new redistricting plan. VML staff, members, and partners put considerable effort into ensuring that the proposed constitutional amendment would ultimately not affect local redistricting.

Because this is a constitutional amendment, HJ615/SJ306 will need to be presented again during the 2020 General Assembly Session. Should the identical amendment pass again, it would then be presented to voters statewide for final approval.

Foster care

HB2014 (Peace) and SB1678 (Mason) align the Code of Virginia with the federal Family First Prevention Services Act of 2018. The federal act substantially rewrites foster care requirements and programs with a focus on keeping families together through prevention-based services and intervention for both parents and children. The bill contains an emergency clause for provisions of the bill relating to background checks for employees of, volunteers at, and contractors providing services to juveniles at children's residential facilities as required by federal law.

Jails

HB1942 (Bell, Robert) authorizes the State Board of Corrections to establish minimum standards for behavioral health services in local and regional jails. Standards will include requirements for (i) behavioral health screening and assessment for all individuals, delivery of behavioral health services in local correctional facilities, and the sharing of medical and mental health information and records; (ii) discharge planning for individuals whose serious mental illness requires behavioral health services upon release from jail; (iii) at least one unannounced annual inspection of each local correctional facility to determine compliance; and (iv) provisions for community services boards to bill a local or regional jail for services provided within the facility. The bill clarifies the authority of a jail to receive medical/mental health information and records from a health care provider for individuals committed to the correctional facility, even without the individual's consent or when consent is not readily obtainable, under some circumstances. A workgroup including local government representatives will develop cost estimates for implementing the new requirements. The requirements for discharge planning have a delayed effective date of July 1, 2020.

HB1918 (Stolle) and SB1598 (Dunnavant) authorize the Board of Corrections to establish minimum standards for health care services in local, regional, and community correctional facilities and procedures for enforcement. This will be done with guidance from the Commissioner of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services and State Health Commissioner. Standards shall require that a local/regional facility submit a standardized quarterly continuous improvement report documenting the delivery of health care services and any improvements to those services. The reports shall be posted on the Board's website. The bill gives the Board flexibility to determine if a facility accredited by the American Correctional Association or National Commission on Correctional Health Care meets the new standards solely on the basis of such accreditation; however, every facility will still be required to submit quarterly continuous quality improvement reports.

Transportation

Here's a look at what happened with transportation bills of interest:

Vehicles on sidewalks & the ADA

HB1786 (Hurst) clarifies that any locality or other public entity may allow power-driven mobility devices to be ridden or driven on sidewalks in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and other state and federal laws.

Parking enforcement and parking fines

HB1818 (Delaney) and SB1044 (Black) authorize any county or town with a population of at least 40,000 to contract out their parking enforcement (issuing parking tickets); cities of 40,000 or more already have this authority.

Towing fees

HB1865 (Fowler) and SB1567 (Marsden) authorize localities statewide to adopt ordinances setting maximum towing fees of $150.

Motorized scooters

HB2752 (Pillion) authorizes localities to regulate the operation of companies that rent scooters or motorized skateboards. If a locality wants to regulate these companies, it must pass an ordinance or take some other governing body or administrative action by January 1, 2020. After that, a company is free to operate without local regulation in a county, city, town, or political subdivision unless and until the locality or political subdivision adopts an ordinance or takes some other official action (e.g., initiates a pilot program).

Immobilization devices for parking violations

SB1432 (Obenshain) allows for the use of devices other than "boots" (such as vehicle "barnacles") to immobilize vehicles for parking violations.

Supplemental operating funds for mass transit providers

A new allocation formula for mass transit operating grants will go into effect this year and will reduce state funding for some localities. HB2553 (Thomas) and SB1680 (Mason) will ease the transition to the new formula by providing supplemental (one-time) funds to those systems losing state money.

Restrictions on driving while using a cellphone

HB1811 (Collins) and SB1341 (Stuart) sought to strengthen the law that restricts individuals from using their cell phones while driving; legislators were unable to agree on revisions to the law, and both bills died. Governor Northam tried again at the veto session to address this issue by submitting amendments to SB1768 (Mason) that would have made it illegal to hold a cell phone while driving but the House effectively rejected the amendments by ruling them non-germane. Otherwise, SB1768 forbids holding a cell phone while driving in a highway work zone. SB1768 has now been returned to Governor Northam.

Natural Resources

Here's a look at some natural resource bills of interest:

Grants for wastewater conveyance structures

HB1822 (Bulova) authorizes the Department of Environmental Quality to award grants to small sewage treatment plants so that they can pipe their partially treated sewage to a larger plant for advanced treatment (such as nutrient removal).

Dogs running at large in packs

Current law allows localities to adopt ordinances prohibiting dogs from running at large. SB1367 (Norment) exempts hunting dogs from such a prohibition. The bill also exempts from such an ordinance dogs used for hunting and requires the locality to include in the ordinance a fine of up to $100. Revenues from these fines must be used by the locality to support animal control.

Removal of coal ash

SB1355 (Wagner) and HB2786 (Ingram) are identical bills that require the owner or operator of an electric utility plant's coal ash pond or landfill to remove the coal ash by recycling it for beneficial use or depositing it in a permitted and lined landfill that meets certain federal standards. The measure requires that any owner or operator beneficially reuse no less than 6.8 million cubic yards in aggregate of such removed CCR from no fewer than two of the sites. Such a closure project shall be completed within 15 years. If the coal ash is removed from the site, it must be done so in a way that minimizes the effect on adjacent properties and surrounding communities.

Loans & grants for riparian buffers

HB2637 (Webert) authorizes the State Water Control Board to give localities, individuals, or financial institutions working with localities, loans and grants from the Virginia Water Facilities Revolving Fund to construct or renovate facilities to implement agricultural best management practices to prevent water pollution.

Special assessments for land preservation

HB2365 (Knight) allows localities that have use value assessment and taxation ordinances to include in their ordinances a provision that limits the annual increase in the assessed value of eligible property to a specified dollar amount per acre.

Local stormwater management funds

HB1614 (Cole) allows any locality to create a local Stormwater Management Fund with appropriated local funds to provide grants to property owners for stormwater management projects on property that is already developed.

Animal care: adequate shelter & tethering

HB1625 (Orrock) and SB1025 (Spruill) set certain requirements for the protection of animals from heat and cold. SB1025 also sets new requirements for the tethering of animals (other than agricultural animals). The General Assembly rejected gubernatorial amendments to SB1025, and the bill has been returned to Governor Northam, who may sign it into law, veto it or let it become law without his signature. Amendments were not proposed to HB1625, which the Governor has signed.

Natural resources bills that did not survive

- **Grants to MS4 Localities for Stormwater BMPs** – SB1328 (Hanger) would have allowed the Department of Environmental Quality to award grants to local governments (generally smaller localities) that are not regulated under municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4) permits to design and implement stormwater best management practices. The bill was passed by the Senate but defeated in the House.
- **Disposable Plastic Bags** – Various bills (HB1669-Carr; HB2095-Guzman; SB1070-Ebbin; SB1116-Petersen) were defeated that would have placed taxes, or allowed localities to place taxes, on disposable plastic bags.

School safety

Following more than seven months of data collection and debate, the House Select Committee on School Safety prepared a package of ten bills for the 2019 General Assembly Session. The final package to pass covers the following topics:

School Construction and Design

- HB1725 (Knight) requires school boards to consult local building officials and either the state or local fire marshal to develop school safety procurement plans that are fire-code compliant.

- HB1738 (Rush) requires school construction plans to be reviewed by engineers or architects certified in crime prevention through environmental design as part of the planning process.

Standards for emergency protocols

- HB1732 (O'Quinn) requires school districts to develop safety procedures and implement at least one training for students and staff in each school annually.
- HB1733 (Gilbert) and SB1214 (Newman) require each school district to develop a memorandum of understanding with its local law enforcement agency regarding the roles and responsibilities of school resource officers (SROs).
- HB1734 (Marshall) and SB1213 (Newman) require the Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety (VCSCS) to develop a standard case management tool for school threat assessment teams statewide.
- HB1737 (Wright) and SB1220 (Newman) require school boards to work with representatives from their local first response agencies (e.g., police, sheriff, fire, EMS, etc.) to develop and review school crisis and emergency response plans.

Student mental and behavioral health

- HB1729 (Landes) requires school counselors to spend at least 80 percent of the school day in direct counseling services for students. This may require school divisions to hire additional support staff to take on responsibilities like test administration that have traditionally fallen to counselors.

The remaining three bills from the original package were tied to the proposed Commission on Student Behavioral Health (HB1735; Robinson), the Public School Security Equipment Grant of 2013 (HB1739; Rush), and the establishment of Election Day as a school holiday (HB1752; Krizek). Ultimately, these failed to pass through both bodies.

School calendar bill

After years of reappearance (and disappearance) at the General Assembly, legislation allowing school divisions to start school before Labor Day was enacted. HB2140 (Thomas) and SB1005 (Chase) allow any division in the Commonwealth to begin the school year up to two weeks before Labor Day, on the condition that the calendar include a four-day weekend from the Friday before through the Monday of Labor Day. The legislation grandfathers in extensions for both those school districts that received waivers to begin the year more than two weeks before Labor Day during the 2018-2019 school year, and for Planning District 16 (Fredericksburg area). HB2140/SB1005 is effective July 1.

Early voting

In a step toward increasing voter access, the General Assembly passed HB2790 (Rush), allowing no-excuse, in-person voting beginning the second Saturday before all elections. Effective beginning with the November 3, 2020 general election, the bill will offer voters the option of voting in person between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. for seven days prior to the actual date of any election, from the second Saturday before an election through the Saturday immediately preceding an election, except Sunday. VML is currently meeting with stakeholders, including the Virginia Department of Elections, the Virginia Association of Counties, and the Voter Registrars Association of Virginia, to discuss estimated costs to localities and implementation plans.

2019

VIRGINIA MUNICIPAL LEAGUE

INNOVATION AWARDS

Recognizing Excellence
in Virginia Local Government

CALL FOR ENTRIES
2019 VML Innovation Awards

THE 2019 VML INNOVATION AWARDS celebrate all that you do to make your city, town or county a great place to live.

The Innovation Awards recognize outstanding achievements in local governments across Virginia. The program – which began under the name "Achievement Awards" 43 years ago - is recognized as Virginia's highest honor in local government creativity.

Don't miss this opportunity to spotlight programs that have made a big difference to your residents and to celebrate innovative solutions that address emerging needs. The awards will be presented at VML's Annual Conference in Roanoke in October.

Criteria

Projects and programs are judged on how well they demonstrate the following:

Innovative problem solving

Improved quality of life

Excellence in management

Making the most of local resources

Increased citizen participation

Long-term value to the community

Adaptability to other communities

Award-winning projects typically demonstrate innovative ways to deliver services, address a community need, or significantly improve an existing service.

City of Falls Church - 2018 Environmental Qualtiy and President's Award winner.

Categories

Award categories are based on broad topics with local governments of all sizes competing within these categories. The panel of judges have years of experience in local governments of varying sizes and will judge the scope and effect of the project in relationship to the community's size, thereby putting all localities on a level playing field.

Many projects relate to more than one category. When deciding what category best fits your project, consider what the primary goal of the project is and what aspect of it demonstrates the greatest innovation.

Localities may submit one entry in each category below:

Community Health

Includes building healthy community environments through active lifestyle programs, nutrition education and improving access to healthier food choices.

Economic Development

Includes business development and retention; international competitiveness; infrastructure development and investment; planning, land use and zoning; blight; enterprise zones; housing; transportation; workforce development; and historic preservation.

Environmental Quality

Includes natural resources and the authority of local governments to manage the environment, including water resources and quality, solid and hazardous waste management, air quality and the Chesapeake Bay.

Public Safety

Includes police, fire, rescue services, emergency planning and coordinated response, building code enforcement, jails, health and mental health related to public safety.

Working with Youth

Includes civics education, pre-k-12 education, summer programs, parks and recreation, and literacy programs.

Communications

Includes promotional campaigns, branding campaigns, crisis plans, events, customer service programs; media can include online, video, print, social and other formats.

President's Award for Innovation

One winning project from the category winners will be selected for the top prize – the President's Award – and will receive this top honor in addition to the award in their category. The President's Award can come from any of the categories.

Deadline

All entries must be received via e-mail by 5 p.m., Monday, Aug. 12, 2019.

Rules for entering

The competition is open to all VML local government members.

All entries must be submitted electronically via email. Localities must download the entry form at www.vml.org/education/innovation-awards and fill in all of the requested information directly on the form. The completed form must then be e-mailed to mtimbreza@vml.org.

Entries must cover new projects or programs completed between Jan. 1, 2018 and June 1, 2019, or – for existing projects – entries must cover major enhancements that occurred between Jan. 1, 2018 and June 1, 2019.

Each entry form must be fully completed and must be signed by the local government's chief administrative or elected official.

A local government can only submit one entry in each of the five categories. The President's Award for Innovation is not a separate category.

Supporting materials totaling no more than 10 pages, including photos, brochures, charts, or other information, can be included in a separate document. This document must also be e-mailed.

NEW THIS YEAR: A video is also required as part of your supporting materials, include the URL (or web address) of that video. Maximum length of video is five minutes.

Questions?

For more information about completing your entry or other details, contact VML's Manuel Timbreza at mtimbreza@vml.org or call 804-649-8471.

The judging

Entries are screened by VML staff and judged by a panel of judges chosen for their expertise in local and state government. The judges generally represent a variety of backgrounds, including small and large localities and state agencies.

The winners

Awards will be presented at the VML annual conference in Roanoke, Oct. 6-8.
All winning entries will also be featured in ***Virginia Town & City.***

Don't miss this premiere opportunity to spotlight innovative programs that make your town, city or county a great place for people to call home!

Get started now by downloading the entry form at www.vml.org.

FOCUS ON OUR MEMBERS

Local officials are a fascinating bunch of people who have careers all over the board and a range of backgrounds and interests. Over the next several months VML will include a brief focus on various members so that we can all gain an appreciation of what a diverse group occupies the seats in council and board chambers. Do you know someone who could be featured? Email Rob Bullington at rbullington@vml.org.

By Mary Jo Fields

Robert Ike Jr., Council Member, Chesapeake

ROBERT IKE GREW UP in a military family, living most of his early years in Europe while his father was in the U.S. Navy. His father retired to Chesapeake in 1976 while Robert was in high school. Following graduation, he enlisted in the U.S. Air Force as a military policeman. After four years of service, he returned to Chesapeake and began work as a deputy sheriff with the Virginia Beach Sheriff's Office. As a deputy sheriff, he worked in the correction center, served civil papers and was a bailiff in the general district court.

In 1985 Robert transferred to the police department for the City of Chesapeake, starting off in the uniformed patrol division. He later became a field training officer, training new recruits in patrol procedures and special skills and teaching courses at the police academy on subjects ranging from emergency vehicle operations to handling the emotionally disturbed. Robert also worked in traffic enforcement and as part of the motorcycle patrol.

In 1989 he and his father started Sentry Security Systems, which supplies security systems, access control and surveillance cameras to businesses and residences. The business took off and in 1996 Robert left the police department to devote more time to the business.

Robert won his first election as a member of council in 2012 and he was re-elected in 2016. His experiences as the owner of a small business have given him a strong perspective on what a city government can do to encourage and promote small businesses and his background in public safety has made him all too keenly aware of the importance of first responders. Beyond that, his professional background gives him insight into how to "read" people and how to work effectively with others.

As a father, grandfather, business owner and council member, Robert's spare time is limited but he has been able to cultivate his interest in local history, specifically in the Battle of Great Bridge, which took place on December 9, 1775. This battle was the first Patriot victory of the Revolutionary War and the upshot was that Lord Dunmore, who was the British Royal Governor of Virginia, was forced to evacuate and eventually leave the state.

He also has managed to find enough time to be a member of the Patriot Guard Riders. Among other activities, the members of this national group attend funeral services of military persons who are killed in action, first responders and veterans in order to show respect for the deceased persons and to shield the family and friends from disruptive protestors.

Linda V. Paige, Mayor, Town of Dillwyn

LINDA VENABLE PAIGE has served on the council in Dillwyn for 18 years, first as a member of council and then as vice mayor and now as mayor. She is a retired educator. When she graduated with a degree in library science from Virginia State University, she started working in a public library but then went to work as a school librarian in Buckingham County. During her career she worked in the primary and middle schools and eventually became director of alternative education. Along the way she also obtained a master's degree in educational media.

Even though Linda is retired from the school system, she still works as an adjunct teacher at Southside Community College, where she helps students obtain their General Education Degrees. And she obviously has an impact in her work; this quote is taken from one of her student's Facebook page:

"You inspire me in so many ways and have such a fire in you that encourages others. What a blessing you are ... my favorite saying is 'It takes a village to raise a child'… I always thought that just meant a small child, now I think of this as helping to raise all of God's children, all ages … You helped raise me up and I'm forever grateful! I hope to pay it forward."

Linda grew up in Pittsylvania County, the daughter of a minister and a member of a family that loved to read. Indeed, Annie Dillard could have been referring to Linda when she wrote "She read books as one would breathe air, to fill up and live." Throughout her life she maintained her love for libraries and was actively involved with the Buckingham County Public Library, which is a branch of the Central Virginia Regional Library. As a long-time resident, library-user and member of the library board, she is especially proud that the library will be moving into new quarters following the renovation of the former Dillwyn Primary School building. She remembers when the library was housed in a school bus, so the facility has come a long way.

Linda has two things she'd like people to remember. One is the Dillwyn Christmas parade (weather permitting) and the second is the annual Halloween event that keeps just growing and growing each year. The event, sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce and the Town of Dillwyn, is held on Main Street, which is shut down to allow children to go safely treat-or-treating from house to house. About 1200 children attended this past Halloween; that's a good number considering that the town itself has about 440 people!

About the author: *Mary Jo Fields is an adjunct VML staff member and a contributing editor to Virginia Town & City.*