



BETTER COMMUNITIES THROUGH SOUND GOVERNMENT

2022 TRANSPORTATION POLICY STATEMENT

1 Critical investments are needed to maintain and improve Virginia’s transportation network. The
2 structural imbalance between critical needs and available resources persists. Even with past
3 actions taken by the General Assembly to enact a transportation and public transit funding bill,
4 the challenges abound for all transportation modes. The federal Highway Trust Fund, which
5 pays for roads and transit, is barely solvent, and Congress has proven unable to develop a long-
6 term solution.

7
8 VML is mindful of and acknowledges the contribution of the legislation enacted in the 2013
9 session (HB2313), and in the 2014 session SMART SCALE (HB 2) and the 2020 session
10 (HB1140/SB890) as important first steps in addressing the transportation needs of Virginia’s
11 localities. Future legislative and administrative initiatives should be based on these principles:

- 12
- 13 A. Sustainable Funding. A stable and predictable plan which is comprehensive, which
14 addresses investment across the state and which does not rely upon general fund revenue.
- 15 B. Fiscal responsibility. Dedicated revenues, which are activity-based, will strengthen as the
16 economy does.
- 17 C. Statewide focus. Transportation is a statewide issue, not a regional, urban, or rural issue.
18 Every area of the state is economically hampered by insufficient infrastructure
19 management. However, if the General Assembly chooses a funding approach that
20 emphasizes regional efforts, then such opportunities should be made available across the
21 Commonwealth.
- 22
- 23 D. Shared responsibility. Transportation planning and authority are delegated to regional
24 bodies where they exist and to localities. These bodies prioritize and authorize individual
25 projects within their jurisdictions, an essential element of equity which does require
26 coordination among involved localities.
- 27 E. Project prioritization. VML supports the collaborative approach taken by the
28 Commonwealth Transportation Board to seek input from regional and local bodies to
29 develop a statewide prioritization process to leverage the highest value of scarce
30 resources by measuring targeted projects that expand capacity, address congestion
31 mitigation, economic development, accessibility, safety, and environmental quality.
32 VML recognizes the importance of having an objective, quantifiable, and consistent
33 process that also takes the different needs of regions into consideration and recognizes
34 the significant progress made on this issue through SMART SCALE implementation.

- 1 F. Infrastructure modernization. Our transportation efforts must include a comprehensive
2 statewide plan to provide transportation options for rail passenger and transit systems.
3 Such plans must ensure that all Virginians — rural, suburban, and urban – are able to
4 contribute to and benefit from statewide economic opportunities.
- 5 G. Congestion mitigation. Alleviation of commuter congestion is essential to economic
6 development to enhancing citizens’ quality of life and improving resilience to the impacts
7 of a changing climate. Corridor-wide solutions which promote alternative modes
8 including highways, transit and non-traditional solutions still need to be developed.
- 9 H. Resilience. Decisions to construct or modify transportation facilities and other
10 infrastructure improvements must assess the benefits and costs of adapting to sea level
11 rise and extreme events and disturbances. Transportation funding and plans must
12 anticipate the impacts of pandemics which impact how Virginians use the transportation
13 network as well as transportation revenues.
- 14 I. Locally Administered Projects. Any performance metrics tied to locally administered
15 projects or attempt to compare local completion of locally administered projects should
16 not diminish the ability of localities to continue to administer projects.

17
18 **REVENUES**

19 Since the transportation needs of the state are so much greater than the current funding
20 provisions, it remains essential that the General Assembly continue and expand transportation
21 and infrastructure investment which is fiscally sound, well documented and serves local, regional
22 and statewide needs by:

- 23
- 24 • Raising revenue from those who use the transportation and transit systems;
 - 25 • Identifying new revenue streams for statewide, regional, and local transportation needs while
26 preserving existing funding sources;
 - 27 • Increasing dedicated funding for public transportation to meet transit operating and capital
28 expenses and make Virginia competitive for federal transportation funds;
 - 29 • Providing or extending as a local option transportation impact fee authority to all localities;
 - 30 • Authorizing practical options for using long-term financing for major transportation projects;
 - 31 • Encouraging the restoration of Revenue Sharing projects for localities and removal of
32 emergency cash flow mitigation strategies implemented as a response to the 2020 recession
33 as soon as possible while also returning to the pre-recession funding cycle.
 - 34 • Providing full state funding for the revenue sharing program as provided for in § 33.2-357;
35 and
 - 36 • Seeking equity among various road users by ensuring that trucks pay their share of road
37 costs. VML also advocates for increased local influence when the state considers mitigating
38 negative impacts resulting from truck traffic.

39
40 Any attempt at repurposing state funds distributed to localities should allow impacted localities
41 the opportunity to provide input in the legislative process at the committee level when proposals
42 directly impact annual transportation funding. VML opposes the redirection of the local share of
43 state transportation funds distributed to localities across multiple regions for transportation
44 projects in a single region.

45
46 **PASS-THROUGH OF FEDERAL FUNDS**

1 Localities are often successful in receiving federal funds such as special appropriations and
2 enhancement funds. These funds are passed through the state to localities and the transfer of
3 these funds is often delayed. The federal government and the state need to streamline the
4 transfer of these funds and allow localities to move forward with these projects. Additionally,
5 localities with limited experience with federal projects should be provided training to reduce
6 administrative risks.

7
8 **SAFETY**

9 **Vision Zero**

10 Vision Zero approaches road safety through aggressive casualty reduction goals, coordinated and
11 interdisciplinary actions, increased priority and resources allocated towards road safety
12 improvement, and an overarching policy framework. VML supports the state’s Vision Zero
13 approach to transportation safety in state highway safety plans and encourages VDOT to
14 collaborate and provide resources where appropriate to reach the Arrive Alive goal and the intent
15 of Vision Zero.

16

17 **Pedestrians**

18 VML recommends that the Code of Virginia be amended to clarify the respective rights and
19 duties of pedestrians and vehicle drivers. VML appreciates efforts by the General Assembly to
20 require drivers to stop, not just yield, for pedestrians in all marked and unmarked crosswalks. In
21 addition, police need the ability to issue simpler citations than currently allowed under Virginia
22 law to enforce the laws more effectively against jay walking.

23

24 VML supports maintaining the authority of localities to design, upgrade, improve, and maintain
25 crosswalks on locally owned and maintained streets and rights of way.

26

27 **Bicycling**

28 VML recommends changes to the Code of Virginia updating the rights and responsibilities of
29 drivers and bicyclists in their use of public streets in order to ensure the safety of all road users.

30

31 To encourage the continued development of multi-modal trails, paths, and infrastructure VML
32 supports state and federal funding formulas that do not penalize multi-modal infrastructure that is
33 not constructed adjacent to existing roads.

34

35 **Multi-Modal Transportation Options**

36 VML supports multi-modal transportation options, including but not limited to scooters, mopeds,
37 and electric bicycles, at both the local and regional levels. This support is conditioned in that
38 local input and local rights, including regulation, on access to multi-modal facilities are
39 recognized by the state.

40

41 **PRESERVATION OF RIGHTS-OF-WAY**

42 Transportation projects take many years from the planning stage to construction. Localities need
43 additional authority to reserve miles of right-of-way years in advance of any funding availability
44 for these projects, or risk development in the path of these transportation projects.

45

46 **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

1 Smaller communities and regions require additional and enhanced transportation planning and
2 technical assistance from the state. This includes establishing equitable equipment rental rates
3 and administrative costs.

4
5 **TRAFFIC CALMING**

6 VML supports continued improvements to VDOT’s traffic calming program to improve safety
7 for users of public streets. Additionally, VML has supported, and continues to support,
8 expanding the availability of photo-camera traffic enforcement for all localities in the context of
9 a defined transportation safety program that includes engineering, enforcement, education, and
10 emergency response elements while respecting civil rights.

11
12 **METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATIONS (MPOs)**

13 VML opposes broadening MPO voting membership to include private sector representatives.
14 VML believes that representation by public officials makes MPOs accountable to citizens.

15
16 **PUBLIC TRANSIT**

17 Mass transit is critical to the state’s economy and the quality of life for all Virginians. Public
18 transit includes all available multiple occupancy vehicle services and technologies designed to
19 transport passengers on local and regional routes.

20
21 VML supports:

- 22 1) increased federal and state funding for public transit;
23 2) policies that allow for the equitable distribution of such funding;
24 3) a dedicated source of funding to support public transit; and
25 4) state legislation to provide localities with additional taxing authority to adopt regionally-based
26 or local taxes to address transit capital needs.

27
28 VML also appreciates congressional actions taken to restore and make permanent the \$260 per
29 month parity between employer-sponsored benefits for parking and for mass transit riders. (The
30 federal tax deduction taken by employers for providing these benefits ended under the Tax Cuts
31 and Job Act enacted in December 2017.)

32
33 **RAIL TRANSPORTATION**

34 VML recommends the responsible expansion of interstate and intra-state passenger and freight
35 rail service corridors, with no requirement for local match to provide transportation alternatives,
36 and to help to stimulate economic development and tourism.

37
38 State government and railroad executives must work cooperatively with local officials to
39 improve and enhance railroad maintenance, safety, traffic, emergency response and conflicts (for
40 example at at-grade crossings).

41
42 The Commonwealth needs to:

- 43 • Work with railroad executives to provide greater access for passenger service (for commuters
44 and tourists).
45 • Strengthen funding for cost-effective intercity passenger service and high-speed rail
46 operations to complement federal construction funding.

- 1 • Work with surrounding states to foster greater interstate passenger rail service and to
2 promote the development of the Northeast high-speed rail corridor, the New York to Atlanta
3 corridor and services to Western Virginia, where these systems provide meaningful reduction
4 of travel times, higher than historic reliability and needed coverage to vital business districts
5 which are in close proximity to population centers.
6

7 VML believes the state needs to work with rail executives and the commuter rail system to
8 permit commuter system extension and expansion throughout the Commonwealth, as well as
9 transportation innovations that improve the speed of service and to develop a source of funds to
10 accomplish this goal
11

12 **Virginia Passenger Rail Authority**

13 In recognition of the newly created Passenger Rail Authority and their role in improving and
14 upgrading intercity passenger rail service across the commonwealth it is critical that localities
15 retain local land use control and that the authority provide opportunities for localities to provide
16 input on rail projects and improvements. It is also important to consider using right of way for
17 multi-modal transportation corridors along right of way that is acquired by the Authority
18

19 **AIR TRANSPORTATION**

20 VML wants the state and federal governments to actively work to develop and sustain
21 comprehensive air service throughout the Commonwealth, connecting it to the mid-Atlantic
22 region as well as the entire country. Additionally, VML wants the state and federal government
23 to invest in and deploy new technologies intended to improve air service and safety.
24

25 The federal government is urged to appropriate federal funds for airport infrastructure
26 improvements at authorized levels and to develop a national airport access strategy intended to
27 stimulate local economic development opportunities. Additionally, the state is urged to
28 complement federal infrastructure investments as well as expand state support for capital
29 improvements.
30

31 **PORTS AND WATER TRANSPORTATION**

32 VML requests the protection and promotion of an effective port and water transportation system
33 by:

- 34 a. developing alternative water transportation mechanisms to alleviate congestion, such as
35 ferries, that will move people, goods and vehicles as an alternative to road travel;
36 b. enhancing rail service to move goods in and out of ports;
37 c. deepening major water ports and navigable rivers;
38 d. relieving congestion in the ports by enhancing rail and highway access out of ports; and
39 e. developing policies on the disposal/reuse of shipping containers.
40

41 Concerning the deepening of channels, VML requests the state to work closely with local
42 governments regarding spoils disposal from channel deepening.
43

44 The revenues derived from Virginia's public ports are dedicated exclusively to the state. Some
45 portion should be shared with localities to account for street and road maintenance and police
46 and fire protection services directly related to the impacts of tax-exempt port properties.
47

1 VML urges a significant study of the state’s water transportation system, including the expanded
2 use of barge traffic for freight transportation.

3
4 **REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITIES**

5 **Facilities**

6 VML supports by-right authority for the creation of regional transportation authorities to
7 promote coordination of transportation and related facilities.

8
9 **Town voting membership**

10 VML supports town voting membership on regional transportation authorities

11
12 **Protective floor gas tax**

13 VML thanks the General Assembly for amending Code of Virginia § 58.1-2295 to establish a
14 protective floor price for the 2.1 percent regional gas tax, much as was done for the statewide
15 fuels tax in §58.1-2217. Such a floor concept is essential to provide a more stable, dedicated
16 revenue source needed for long-term financing of regional projects as well as bus and commuter
17 rail operations.

18
19 **Annual Adjustment for Inflation**

20 VML thanks the General Assembly for amending §58.1-2217 to ensure the motor fuels tax
21 grows with the rate of inflation as measured by the U.S. Department of Labor. This will ensure
22 transportation revenues keeps up with the increasing cost of goods and services.

23
24 **LIVABILITY**

25 Streets do much more than move cars; they often define community character and serve as
26 important public spaces. Small towns and larger cities alike are using complete streets policies to
27 reclaim public space and solve traffic problems at the same time. Many complete street solutions
28 are low-cost—some are as simple as changing paint-striping on pavement. VML supports
29 securing mainstream transportation funds for non-motorized improvements and policy changes
30 that result in construction of complete streets and improved bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure
31 within the existing right of way.

32
33 **TRANSPORTATION NETWORK COMPANIES**

34 VML supports state licensing of Internet-based transportation network companies (TNCs) as
35 contained in HB 1662 (2015 session) which establishes safety and insurance standards for
36 vehicles and drivers. VML acknowledges that state licensing is preferable to local licensing
37 recognizing the wide area of operations of TNCs, the need to avoid conflicting or competitive
38 licensing among jurisdictions, the need to establish a functional basis for taxation, the need to
39 provide consistent driver credentials and the need to ensure all segments of the transportation
40 industry are treated fairly. VML supports open market pricing for TNCs rather than fixed
41 pricing, somewhat like variable toll pricing on major highways. VML also supports
42 development of data-sharing agreements with TNCs to require the companies to share general
43 trip information with DMV and which would be made available to all jurisdictions.

44
45 **Personal Delivery Devices**

46 Autonomous delivery devices often operating as “personal delivery devices” have legal authority
47 to operate on sidewalks owned, maintained by local governments. VML supports local control of

1 locally owned sidewalks and the authority of localities to regulate, tax, license, and prohibit the
2 use of devices on sidewalks.

3

4 **Technological Innovation**

5 VML supports research and implementation of new technologies that increase the efficiency,
6 effectiveness, and equity of the transportation system. Such technologies should not create
7 additional fiscal burdens or bypass local decision making.