



2021 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 1) **Sustainable Funding.** A stable and predictable plan which is comprehensive, which
13 addresses investment across the state, and which does not rely upon general fund
14 revenue.
- 15 2) **Fiscal responsibility.** Dedicated revenues, which are activity-based, will strengthen as
16 the economy does.
- 17 3) **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 4) **Shared responsibility.** Transportation planning and authority are delegated to regional
23 bodies where they exist and to localities. These bodies prioritize and authorize individual
24 projects within their jurisdictions, an essential element of equity which does require
25 coordination among involved localities.
- 26 5) **Project prioritization.** VML supports the collaborative approach taken by the
27 Commonwealth Transportation Board to seek input from regional and local bodies to
28 develop a statewide prioritization process to leverage the highest value of scarce
29 resources by measuring targeted projects that expand capacity, address congestion
30 mitigation, economic development, accessibility, safety, and environmental quality.
31 VML recognizes the importance of having an objective, quantifiable, and consistent

32 process that also takes the different needs of regions into consideration and recognizes
33 the significant progress made on this issue through SMART SCALE implementation.

- 34 6) **Infrastructure modernization.** Our transportation efforts must include a comprehensive
35 statewide plan to provide transportation options for rail passenger and transit systems.
36 Such plans must ensure that all Virginians — rural, suburban, and urban – are able to
37 contribute to and benefit from statewide economic opportunities.
- 38 7) **Congestion mitigation.** Alleviation of commuter congestion is essential to economic
39 development and to enhance citizens’ quality of life. Corridor-wide solutions which
40 promote alternative modes including highways, transit and non-traditional solutions still
41 need to be developed.
- 42 8) **Resilience.** Decisions to construct or modify transportation facilities and other
43 infrastructure improvements must assess the benefits and costs of adapting to sea level
44 rise and extreme events and disturbances. Transportation funding and plans must
45 anticipate the impacts of pandemics which impact how Virginians use the transportation
46 network as well as transportation revenues.

47 48 **Revenues**

49 Since the transportation needs of the state are so much greater than the current funding
50 provisions, it remains essential that the General Assembly continue and expand transportation
51 and infrastructure investment which is fiscally sound, well documented and serves local, regional
52 and state-wide needs by:

- 53 • Raising revenue from those who use the transportation and transit systems.
- 54 • Identifying new revenue streams for state-wide, regional, and local transportation needs
55 while preserving existing funding sources.
- 56 • Increasing dedicated funding for public transportation to meet transit operating and
57 capital expenses and make Virginia competitive for federal transport funds.
- 58 • Providing or extending as a local option transportation impact fee authority to all
59 localities.
- 60 • Authorizing practical options for using long-term financing for major transportation
61 projects.
- 62 • Providing full state funding for the revenue sharing program as provided for in § 33.2-
63 357.
- 64 • Seeking equity among various road users by ensuring that trucks pay their share of road
65 costs. VML also advocates for increased local influence when the state considers
66 mitigating negative impacts resulting from truck traffic.

67
68 Any attempt at repurposing state funds distributed to localities should allow impacted localities
69 the opportunity to provide input in the legislative process at the committee level when proposals
70 directly impact annual transportation funding. VML opposes the redirection of the local share of
71 state transportation funds distributed to localities across multiple regions for transportation
72 projects in a single region.

73

74 **Pass-Through of Federal Funds**

75 Localities are often successful in receiving federal funds such as special appropriations and
76 enhancement funds. These funds are passed through the State to localities and the transfer of
77 these funds is often delayed. The federal government and the state need to streamline the transfer
78 of these funds and allow localities to move forward with these projects. Additionally, localities
79 with limited experience with federal projects should be provided training to reduce
80 administrative risks.

81 **SAFETY**

82

83 **Vision Zero**

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

90

91 **Pedestrian**

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

97

98 **Bicycling**

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

102

103 **Multi-Modal Transportation Options**

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

108

109 **Preservation of rights-of-way**

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

113 **Technical Assistance**

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

117

118 **Traffic Calming**

119 VML supports continued improvements to VDOT’s traffic calming program to improve safety
120 for users of public streets. Additionally, VML has supported, and continues to support,
121 expanding the availability of photo-camera traffic enforcement for all localities in the context of

122 a defined transportation safety program that includes engineering, enforcement, education, and
123 emergency response elements while respecting civil rights.

124

125 **Metropolitan Planning Organizations (mpos)**

126 VML opposes broadening MPO voting membership to include private sector representatives.

127 VML believes that representation by public officials makes MPOs accountable to citizens.

128

129 **Public Transit**

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

133

134 VML supports:

135 1) increased federal and state funding for public transit;

136 2) policies that allow for the equitable distribution of such funding;

137 3) a dedicated source of funding to support public transit; and

138 4) state legislation to provide localities with additional taxing authority to adopt regionally-based
139 or local taxes to address transit capital needs.

140

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

145

146 **Rail Transportation**

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

150

151 State government and railroad executives must work cooperatively with local officials to
152 improve and enhance railroad maintenance, safety, traffic and conflicts (for example at at-grade
153 crossings).

154

155 The Commonwealth needs to:

156 • Work with railroad executives to provide greater access for passenger service (for
157 commuters and tourists).

158 • Strengthen funding for cost-effective intercity passenger service and high-speed rail
159 operations to complement federal construction funding.

160 • Work with surrounding states to foster greater interstate passenger rail service and to
161 promote the development of the Northeast high-speed rail corridor, the New York to
162 Atlanta corridor and services to Western Virginia, where these systems provide

163 meaningful reduction of travel times, higher than historic reliability and needed coverage
164 to vital business districts which are in close proximity to population centers.
165 VML believes the state needs to work with rail executives and the commuter rail system to
166 permit commuter system extension and expansion throughout the Commonwealth and to develop
167 a source of funds to accomplish.

169 **Air Transportation**

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

174
175 The federal government is urged to appropriate federal funds for airport infrastructure
176 improvements at authorized levels and to develop a national airport access strategy intended to
177 stimulate local economic development opportunities. Additionally, the state is urged to
178 complement federal infrastructure investments as well as expand state support for capital
179 improvements.

181 **Ports and Water Transportation**

182 VML requests the protection and promotion of an effective port and water transportation system
183 by:

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

190
191 Concerning the deepening of channels, VML requests the state to work closely with local
192 governments regarding spoils disposal from channel deepening.

193
194 The revenues derived from Virginia's public ports are dedicated exclusively to the state. Some
195 portion should be shared with localities to account for street and road maintenance and police
196 and fire protection services directly related to the impacts of tax-exempt port properties.

197
198 VML urges a significant study of the state's water transportation system, including the expanded
199 use of barge traffic for freight transportation.

201 **REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITIES**

202 **Facilities**

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

205

206 **Town voting membership**

207 VML supports town voting membership on regional transportation authorities

208

209 **Protective floor gas tax**

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

215

216 **Annual Adjustment for Inflation**

217 VML thanks the General Assembly for amending [§58.1-2217](#) to ensure the motor fuels tax
218 grows with the rate of inflation as measured by the U.S. Department of Labor. This will ensure
219 transportation revenues keeps up with the increasing cost of goods and services.

220

221 **LIVABILITY**

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

229

230 **TRANSPORTATION NETWORK COMPANIES**

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

241

242 **Personal Delivery Devices**

243 Autonomous delivery devices often operating as “personal delivery devices” have legal authority
244 to operate on sidewalks owned, maintained by local governments. VML supports local control of
245 locally owned sidewalks and the authority of localities to regulate, tax, license, and prohibit the
246 use of devices on sidewalks.

247

248 **Technological Innovation**

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