

# Chapter 1

## Introduction and Purpose

The Commonwealth's extensive transportation network connects people, places and products, both locally and globally. By providing access via rail, roadways, seaports and airports to desired activities and goods, Virginia's transportation system creates the foundation for the economy and future economic development. Yet, as noted in Virginia's Transportation Performance Report (2006), transportation remains one of the most urgent problems facing Virginia today due to increasing costs for both new transportation improvements and maintenance of existing systems. Transportation needs continue to greatly outpace available funding.

The Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) is the state agency for rail, transit and congestion management in Virginia. DRPT has the flexibility to provide diverse transportation solutions to move more people and goods statewide by focusing on projects that deliver public benefits for the investment of public funds.

The Commonwealth has made great strides in incorporating forward-thinking planning and improvements to support the creation of a comprehensive, multimodal transportation corridor network. Specific examples of this thinking and commitment to integrating passenger and freight rails needs into Virginia's overall transportation network include:

- ⚡ Establishment of the Rail Enhancement Fund and Rail Advisory Board in 2005 created the first dedicated source of funding for passenger and freight rail improvements.
- ⚡ To move more freight from the Ports of Hampton Roads, the Commonwealth is participating in the Heartland Corridor Project sponsored by Norfolk Southern Railway that will take more than 150,000 trucks off of the road on an annual basis.
- ⚡ Virginia has allocated more than \$151.55 million in rail funds for the I-95 and I-81 corridors to relieve congestion; advance freight, commuter and intercity passenger rail; and advance higher-speed rail, including building a new bridge over Quantico Creek to eliminate a major congestion point between Washington, DC to Richmond corridor.
- ⚡ The Maersk APM Terminal, which opened in July 2007, was the first privately owned and operated port terminal developed in the United States. This project received state rail funding that supported the construction of an on-dock rail yard to support movement of goods on rail rather than on Virginia roads. The first double-stack intermodal train served the terminal in May 2008.

Rail transportation plays an important role in Virginia's evolving transportation network, reducing highway congestion and pollution by redirecting cargo from trucks to rail and diverting people from cars to passenger rail. DRPT, as the leading state agency for rail, periodically identifies and updates rail needs, priority corridors and capacity chokepoints across the state through the development of a Statewide Rail Plan. This report is an update of the 2004 plan and illustrates the significant progress since that document. More importantly, this update addresses new challenges and opportunities with projects that support a vision of future prosperity.

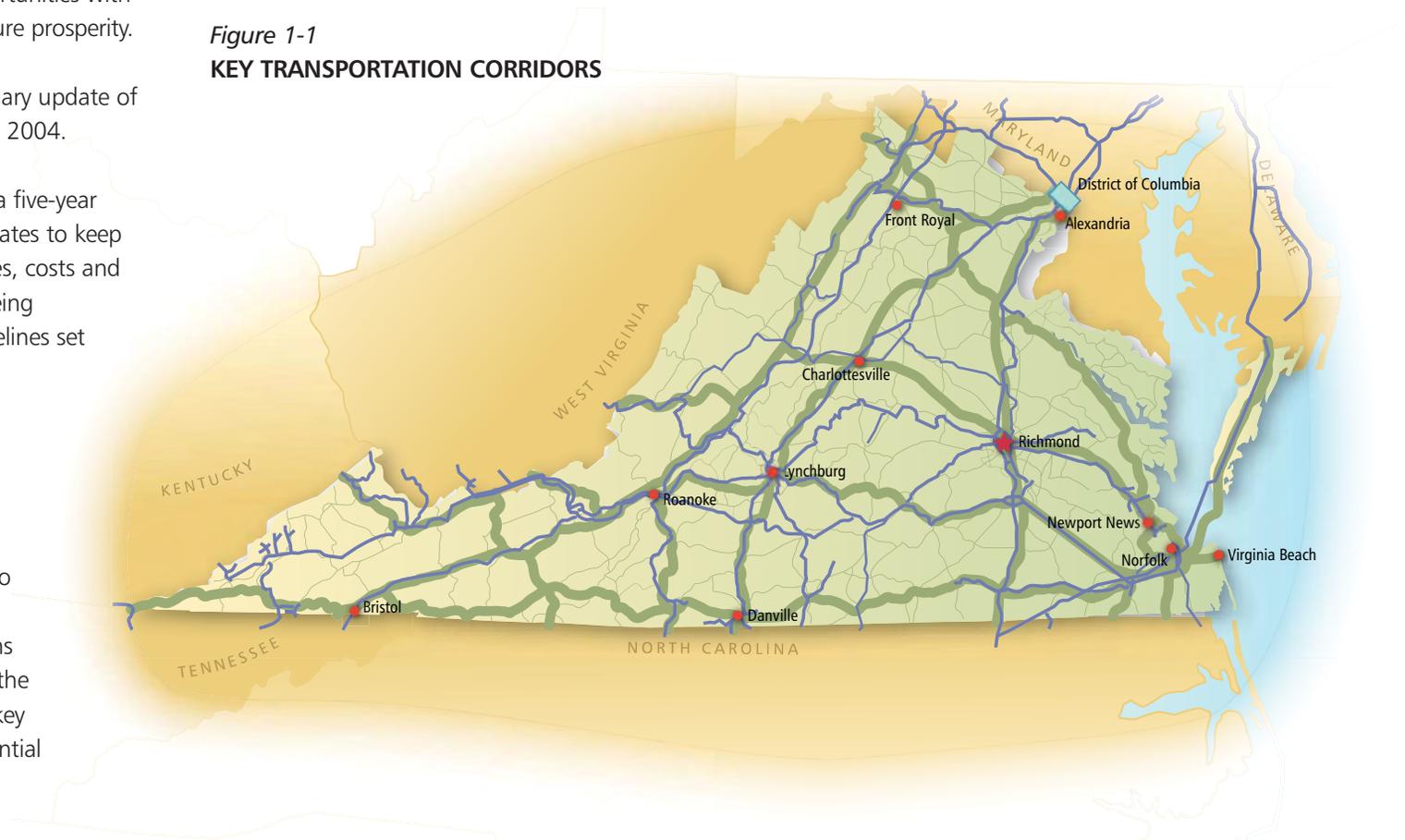
This draft report represents a summary update of the Statewide Rail Plan published in 2004. Moving forward, DRPT will produce comprehensive statewide plans on a five-year basis, supplemented by annual updates to keep pace with emerging trends, priorities, costs and needs. This Statewide Rail Plan is being developed in accordance with guidelines set out by the Federal Railroad Administration for state plans in order to ensure that Virginia's rail plans are consistent with federal funding requirements.

The current document is intended to provide high-level information on existing rail conditions and programs in Virginia today and rail needs for the future, with a focus on identifying key corridors (see *Figure 1-1*) and potential investments.

While this draft Rail Plan identifies high priority projects, it does not recommend funding allocations or provide an implementation plan. Funding and the implementation plan for short term projects will be defined in the Rail Action Plan scheduled for publication in September 2008. The Rail Action Plan will outline a strategy for the allocation of resources between passenger and freight rail projects statewide, with a focus on identifying specific projects for funding and implementation over the

next six years. Projects will be narrowly defined, with anticipated funding sources for both public and private sector investment. Projects will be developed based on the needs and priorities identified in the draft Statewide Rail Plan, and the selection of projects for implementation in the next six years will be guided by the evaluation of projects based on the achievement of state transportation goals and the determination of public benefits to be achieved through each project.

*Figure 1-1*  
**KEY TRANSPORTATION CORRIDORS**





*Freight rail transportation helps people save on the cost of goods by conserving fuel and providing more cost-effective shipping choices for many consumer products.*

The Statewide Rail Plan will be finalized upon completion of the Rail Action Plan. The final Statewide Rail Plan will include all short- and long-term rail priorities for Virginia, providing direction for critical rail projects that will support a cost-effective and efficient rail network. Ultimately, rail transportation in Virginia will provide more transportation choices for people and goods, congestion relief for the state's highway system, energy savings through reduced fuel consumption and better air quality through reduced emissions.

The rail system is vital for the Commonwealth's economy, connecting Virginia to the global marketplace both overseas through connections at the Ports of Hampton Roads and in North America through rail connections that extend to the nation's East and West Coasts, north to Canada and south to Mexico.

The Commonwealth is committed to enhancing partnerships with the private sector, including railroads, local governments and regional planning

organizations, to attract private capital and to achieve its strategic goals.

The Statewide Rail Plan has been developed in coordination with other Commonwealth transportation agencies, including the State Multimodal Office, VDOT, the Virginia Port Authority (VPA) and the Virginia Department of Aviation (DOAV). Input or information was also received from major rail stakeholders including the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP), Norfolk Southern, CSX Transportation (CSX), Amtrak, Virginia Railway Express (VRE), Regional Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), Regional Planning District Commissions (PDCs), Virginia's ten shortline railroads, the U.S. military (U.S. Army Surface Deployment Command) and other organizations. Public input has been included through a comprehensive public involvement program.

## Transportation Goals

The Statewide Rail Plan has been developed using the Commonwealth Transportation Goals, DRPT Strategic Plan Goals and Transportation Goals for Rail.

### COMMONWEALTH TRANSPORTATION GOALS

- Safety and Security
- Preservation and Management
- Mobility, Accessibility and Connectivity
- Economic Vitality
- Land Use and Quality of Life

## DEPARTMENT OF RAIL AND PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

- Assist in managing the growth in congestion on Virginia's highways.
- Improve access for the general public and business to alternative transportation (public transportation, carpools, vanpools, human service transportation, passenger rail and freight rail) and telecommuting.
- Provide access and improvements to Virginia's railways to encourage economic development and reduce truck traffic on Virginia's highways.
- Seek the highest possible return on investment to maximize limited funding.
- Increase communication to the general public, businesses and community decision-makers on alternative transportation choices and telecommuting.
- Implement best practice management tools and techniques to improve customer service and accountability.



*Virginia Railway Express provides commuter rail service in the Northern Virginia region.*

### TRANSPORTATION GOALS FOR RAIL

In accordance with the Governor's Transportation Accountability Commission guidelines, the implementation of this rail plan will be conducted with the following goals:

- Safety and Security:** Rail improvements will be developed to provide a safe and secure transportation system – particularly as high speed rail services are brought online. The railroads in Virginia have strong safety records. However, constant diligence, education in rail safety and security and improvements at highway-rail grade crossings will continue the Commonwealth's past history of annual reductions in rail-related injuries and fatalities. Metrics include:
  - Number and rate of fatalities (grade crossings and trespassers)
  - Number and rate of injuries (grade crossings and trespassers)
  - Increase in the number of grade separation structures
  - Increase in the number of at-grade crossings closed
- Preservation and Management:** DRPT will work with Virginia's private railroad companies to preserve and manage the existing rail transportation system through technological improvements and more efficient operations. Metrics include:
  - Improve on-time performance for both freight and passenger rail trains
  - Percentage of Virginia's shortline rail system in need of repair
  - Percentage of passenger trainsets that exceed replacement age
  - Encourage self-sufficiency of passenger operators by higher farebox revenues
- Mobility, Accessibility and Connectivity:** DRPT and our public-private partnerships with the rail industry will develop projects that facilitate the efficient movement of people and goods and improve interconnectivity of all transportation modes. Metrics include:
  - Increase passenger rail ridership
  - Increase diversion of freight from trucks to rail
  - Expand rail services to developed markets
- Economic Vitality:** DRPT will develop projects that improve Virginia's economic vitality and facilitate the coordination of rail transportation, land use and economic development planning activities. Metrics include:
  - Use of Rail Industrial Access and Rail Enhancement Funds to retain existing businesses and attract new businesses (number of jobs created, number of jobs maintained and economic impact of projects)
- Land Use and Quality of Life:** Diversion of trucks to freight rail and people in cars to passenger rail will provide significant environmental benefits due to decreased pollution and improvements in air quality and water quality, as well as decreased energy consumption. Metrics include:
  - Tons of transportation-related emissions saved by rail improvements
  - Number of trucks diverted from highway usage to freight rail usage
  - Fuel usage saved by diversion of trucks to freight rail and people from cars to passenger rail