

CONNECTION

OCTOBER 2008

VIRGINIA RECEIVES NEW FEDERAL FUNDING FOR RAIL AND TRANSIT

Many Virginians are turning to public transportation for a more cost-effective way to travel. In fact, Virginia experienced a three percent increase in transit ridership in August 2008 compared to August 2007.

At a time public transportation ridership and fuel prices are increasing, the Commonwealth has received additional federal funding to advance improvements to Virginia's rail and transit network and provide more efficient and effective transportation options.



DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Welcome to the October 2008 issue of Connection, DRPT's external newsletter. Much of this issue focuses on providing enhanced transportation choices.

Everyone is feeling the effects of

today's slowing economy, such as higher fuel prices. Many Virginians are making the choice to utilize the cost-effective and efficient public transit services available in the Commonwealth. Virginia experienced a three percent increase in ridership in August 2008 compared to August 2007. As ridership continues to grow, DRPT will continue its effort to provide more transportation choices.

In this issue, you will read about new federal funding for rail and transit projects throughout Virginia. You will learn about plans to enhance passenger and freight rail service and reduce congestion on the highways. You will learn about new programs funded through state and federal grants to provide additional transportation for the elderly and disabled population in Virginia. You will read about how we are working to improve transportation demand management options, and to keep Virginia at the forefront of transportation technology.

I hope you enjoy reading the October issue of Connection, and feel free to send us your business news for future issues at drptpr@drpt.virginia.gov.

On September 30, 2008, U.S. Secretary of Transportation Mary Peters and Governor Timothy Kaine announced that Virginia is one of 12 states that will receive federal funds to match local investments for rail projects to help improve intercity passenger rail service. This is the first time that federal funds have been made available to states to match local investments in passenger rail projects.

Virginia will receive \$2 million to help advance construction of a third track south of Fredericksburg that will increase capacity and enhance the ability of trains to pass one another. These improvements will also increase the reliability of passenger rail service and reduce delays caused by freight and passenger rail traffic congestion.

The Commonwealth also recently received an additional \$32 million in federal transportation spending authority reallocated to Virginia from other states. Each year, states receive federal funding through the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) for transportation-related projects. In September, those states unable to utilize all federal funds must return the remaining funds to the FHWA for reallocation to states that have utilized all federal funds and have additional eligible projects ready to move to the next phase of development.

Virginia received \$10 million of the reallocated funds to advance the Dulles Corridor Metrorail Project, which will create a new Metrorail connection through one of Virginia's largest employment centers to one of our nation's busiest airports and will carry approximately 91,200 people per day in 2025. An additional \$3.8 million will be used to purchase new locomotives for Virginia Railway Express (VRE), which will help ensure reliable, efficient and comfortable commuter rail service for the more than 15,000 commuters who use VRE service each day.

This additional federal funding will help DRPT and its customers advance projects that may have otherwise been delayed due to the slowing economic environment. The Commonwealth will continue to work with the federal government and local partners to ensure that essential projects advance and that Virginia's transportation system continues to improve to meet growing demands.

TRANSIT SUSTAINABILITY AND INVESTMENT POLICY APPROVED

In October, the Commonwealth Transportation Board approved the Transit Sustainability and Investment Policy, which provides a framework for the investment of transit funds for initiatives that are responsive to market needs, provide the highest and best use of funds, increase transit ridership, and improve the environment and quality of life for Virginians. The policy emphasizes the maintenance of existing assets, improved accountability and the implementation of transportation improvements. The policy is geared to improve coordination between the Commonwealth and local governments for designing, planning, funding, implementing and sustaining new transit services.



FY09 RAIL ENHANCEMENT FUND PROJECTS APPROVED

In September, the Commonwealth Transportation Board approved projects for FY09 expenditures of REF funding in the amount of \$26.6 million for projects to improve passenger and freight rail transportation in Virginia. Highlights of the approved projects include improvements to and potential expansion of Virginia Railway Express service, projects to accommodate the projected increase in traffic at Virginia's ports, continued planning for high speed rail service, and upgrades to rail infrastructure to ease freight rail congestion and improve the reliability of passenger rail service along the busy I-95 and I-64 corridors.

CONGRATULATIONS TRY TRANSIT WEEK WINNERS!



Congratulations to Prince William County for winning the 2008 Try Transit Week Local Participation Award and to Fritzi Brocklebank of Ashburn, VA., for winning the one year transit pass during Try Transit Week! The statewide event encouraged Virginians to try a form of transit and the first year was a great success.



STATEWIDE TRANSIT INTELLIGENT TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS (ITS) PLAN UNDERWAY

In September, DRPT began work on an ITS Strategic Plan to develop a vision and goal for the use of transit technology in the Commonwealth. ITS focuses on technology in transportation to provide operational efficiencies, real-time information and better communication. DRPT's ITS plan will evaluate available transit technology and provide short and long term goals for the use of transit technology in the Commonwealth. To complete the plan, DRPT will work with transit operators to assess current technology capabilities and needs. DRPT will also host meetings in order to provide a time for grantees to review the plan's purpose and approach as well as draft findings when they are available. Meetings will be held November 6 and 7 in Richmond and Chantilly. Visit the OLGAs section on DRPT's Web site, www.drpt.virginia.gov, for more information.

NEW HUMAN SERVICE PROGRAMS FUNDED

DRPT recently helped human service transportation operators complete Coordinated Human Service Mobility plans to identify gaps in service and develop plans to address those gaps. In October, the Commonwealth Transportation Board approved funding for 20 new projects to help address gaps in service and improve transportation for elderly and disabled Virginians. The projects, funded through the federal New Freedom Program and DRPT's Senior Transportation Program, will expand transit services, purchase new vehicles, provide travel training programs, establish passenger assistance programs and provide transportation vouchers. These programs will help meet the Commonwealth's goals to provide more transportation options and increase the mobility of our senior and disabled population.

DRPT ANNUAL TRANSPORTATION DEMAND MANAGEMENT (TDM) CONFERENCE



The 2008 Virginia Statewide TDM Conference was held October 8 – 10, 2008 in Luray, Va., to provide updates on DRPT's programs and policies to TDM agencies and stakeholders. TDM agencies provide information and support for innovative congestion management strategies such as carpooling, vanpooling and telework. The conference discussed a broad range of TDM topics, including updates on the statewide ridematching system and database, information on the influences that affect self-matching of rideshare applicants, information on the new vanpool insurance program administered through GWRideConnect, an update on the TeleworkVA! Program, a discussion on measuring TDM program performance and an update on Long Range TDM Plans.

SEPTEMBER DRPT TRANSIT/TDM WORKSHOPS

In September, DRPT held transit/TDM grantee workshops in Blacksburg, Richmond and Fairfax to update grantees on DRPT programs and policies and to provide an opportunity for discussion and feedback. Topics discussed at the workshops include detailed program application guidance, an update on capital budgeting, an introduction to Virginia guidelines regarding Small Women and Minority (SWaM) businesses, information on DRPT's transit sustainability policy, details on asset management,

an update on the DRPT Dashboard and associated performance reporting requirements, information on the performance review program, and a statewide planning update. Materials provided at the workshops are available in the OLGA section on DRPT's Web site, www.drpt.virginia.gov.



FEDERAL NEWS

- In October, President Bush agreed to sign the Rail Safety Improvement Act of 2008 which authorizes \$12.9 billion for Amtrak and passenger rail over the next five years for capital improvements, operating expenses and debt service. The funding includes \$1.9 billion for a state grant program for intercity rail projects and \$1.5 billion for development of high-speed rail corridors. The legislation requires several Amtrak reforms and passenger rail safety mandates. The bill authorizes \$1.5 billion over 10 years for grants to the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) for capital and preventative maintenance projects to maintain WMATA's existing infrastructure. The WMATA funding is contingent on enactment of dedicated funding mechanisms in Maryland, Virginia, and DC and future appropriations.
- Several senators are seeking to include public transportation in the energy package currently under congressional review. In July, a proposal was offered that

would provide \$1.3 billion for transit investment in FY08 and \$400 million for transit investment each year from FY09 to FY11. In September, the Senate introduced a companion bill that outlined similar funding, with \$750 million in FY08 and FY09 for urban transit funding and \$100 million in both years for rural transit funding. It is unclear which bill will receive more support but it is clear Congress is working to increase transit funding to help address high energy costs.

- The Federal Railroad Administration recently launched a new program, the Risk Reduction Program (RRP) which will increase current federal regulations, inspection requirements and other compliance activities to shift the focus of risk reduction from correcting issues after an incident to identifying and addressing issues before an incident occurs. The RRP will develop new processes to address risk factors that contribute to train accidents.

CONNECTION



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DID YOU KNOW...

- Charlottesville Transit Service has extended its service by adding three new bus routes and offering extended night service on existing route five. Charlottesville Transit serves the Charlottesville area and portions of Albemarle County. For more information, visit www.charlottesville.org.
- Greene County Transit has made some exciting changes to its service. Bicycle racks have been installed on transit vehicles that travel to and from Charlottesville and weekday service has been extended until 10:00 p.m. For more information on Greene County Transit, visit www.gcva.us/dpts/trns/default.htm.
- RideFinders recently received the Association for Commuter Transportation's (ACT) Creative Excellence Award for a marketing campaign in the \$20,000 and up category. The "Team RideFinders" campaign incorporates seven transit and commuter heroes that emphasize the different services that RideFinders offers in the Greater Richmond area. For more information on RideFinders, visit www.ridefinders.com.



UPCOMING EVENTS

- 10/19 – 22 18th National Conference on Rural Public and Intercity Bus Transportation, Omaha, NE
- 10/22 DRPT Quarterly Rail Stakeholder Meeting, Richmond, VA
- 10/24 DRPT Quarterly Transit/TDM Meeting, Richmond, VA
- 10/26 AASHTO National Transportation Management Conference, Mystic, CT
- 10/26 – 30 Rail~volution Conference, San Francisco, CA
- 11/6, 7 Statewide ITS Plan Kick Off Meetings, Richmond and Chantilly, VA
- 11/13 Rail Advisory Board Meeting, Richmond, VA
- 11/19 – 20 Commonwealth Transportation Board Meeting, Richmond, VA
- 12/9 – 10 APTA ITS Standards: International Best Practices Symposium, San Francisco, CA
- 12/17 Commonwealth Transportation Board Meeting, Richmond, VA