COMMUTING SAFELY AND CONFIDENTLY
TIPS FOR BUSINESSES AND COMMUTERS IN THE COVID-19 ENVIRONMENT
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DRPT
Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation
The COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact our daily lives and business operations. As business leaders strived to maintain continuity of operations, some went to full-time telework, while others maintained some level of in-office workers. Transitioning back to normal office operations has been difficult to figure out and probably will continue to be difficult as new strains of the virus form and vaccine roll out continues. The health and safety of Virginia’s business operations and workers, including our transportation workers, is of the utmost importance.

This document provides tips and guidance for commuters and employers on how to get to and from work safely and efficiently, and includes the latest CDC guidance on traveling safely.
At this time, we suggest that rides be shared with specific networks such as coworkers or specified groups such as family.

Tips to keep safe while sharing a ride:

1. Do not ride or drive when you are sick or have a fever.

2. All passengers and the driver should wear face coverings.

3. Limit the number of passengers in the vehicle and maximize the distance between commuters.

4. Sanitize high-touch areas frequently. Including: door handles (inside and out), seatbelts, armrests, keys, shared fuel cards, steering wheel, cup holders, and all other places riders usually touch.

5. Refrain from touching the car and items inside the car, as much as possible. Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer upon arrival at your destination.

6. Check with your vanpool company for their COVID-19 guidance and assistance.
What You Need to Know to Ride Public Transit Safely and with Confidence
Transit agencies across Virginia have been engaged in ongoing efforts to protect passengers, employees, and the community from the novel coronavirus, COVID-19. The following guidelines and safety information are provided so if you choose to ride the bus or rail transit, you may do so safely and with confidence.

**NEW** On January 29, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued an order requiring that all passengers wear face masks to prevent the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19.

CDC Order: Requirement for Persons to Wear Mask While on Conveyances and at Transportation Hubs
U.S. Department of Transportation Mask Requirement - Frequently Asked Questions
Federal Executive Order on Promoting COVID-19 Safety in Domestic and International Travel

- Wear a mask or face covering to protect other passengers and transit employees.
- Stand at least 6 feet apart while waiting for and boarding the bus or train.
- Maintain physical distance on the vehicle, and follow posted signs and operator directions.
- Do not travel if you have a fever or are feeling ill.
Transit agencies across Virginia have increased cleaning of vehicles and are using CDC-approved cleaning products, focusing on high-contact areas, such as hanging straps and poles.

Many transit service providers have made changes to their schedules, fare policies, boarding and seating arrangements. As the pandemic continues, transit providers may make additional changes to help keep everyone safe.

The next page provides links to area transit agencies and their responses to COVID-19. Riders are encouraged to check these sites regularly so you know before you ride.
Arlington Transit (ART)  
https://www.arlingtontransit.com/about/covid-19-service-changes-and-information/

Bay Transit  
https://www.baytransit.org/

Blacksburg Transit  
https://ridebt.org/covid?highlight=WyJjb3ZpZCJd

BRITE (Waynesboro, Staunton, and Augusta County)  
https://www.britebus.org/

DASH (City of Alexandria)  
https://www.dashbus.com/covidmods

Charlottesville Area Transit (CAT)  
https://www.charlottesville.gov/470/Transit

City of Bristol Transit System  
https://www.bristolva.org/617/Community-Preparedness

CUE (City of Fairfax)  

Danville Transit  
http://www.danvilleva.gov/1488/Announcements

Fairfax Connector (Fairfax County)  
https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/connector/

Frederickburg Regional Transit (FRED)  
http://ridefred.com/index.html

Greater Lynchburg Transit Company (GLTC)  
http://www.gltconline.com/covid-19-gltc-updates/

Greater Richmond Transit Company (GRTC)  

Hampton Roads Transit  
https://gohrt.com/2020/03/hrt-response-to-coronavirus/

Harrisonburg Public Transportation  
http://www.harrisonburgva.gov/bus-service

Jaunt  
https://ridejaunt.org/covid-19-response/

Loudoun County Transit  
https://www.loudoun.gov/buschanges

MTA Commuter Bus & MARC Commuter Rail  
https://www.mta.maryland.gov/coronavirus

Mountain Lynx Transit (formerly District Three Transit)  
https://district-three.org/index.php/public-transit/

Petersburg Area Transit  
https://www.petersburgva.gov/1045/Coronavirus-Resources-and-Updates#tab409ed70c-fe8b-44b8-8503-4a037f9505b5_6

PRTC OmniRide  
https://omniride.com/

RADAR (Roanoke)  
https://radartransit.org/announcements/

Suffolk Transit  
http://www.suffolkva.us/429/Suffolk-Transit

Valley Metro (Roanoke)  

Virginia Railway Express (VRE) Commuter Train  
https://www.vre.org/about/blog/coronavirus-health-safety-guidance-on-vre/

Williamsburg Area Transit Authority (WATA)  

WMATA Metrobus & Metrorail  
https://www.wmata.com/covid19
How Employers Can Help Their Employees

As businesses across Virginia decide how best to bring employees back to the workplace, many people are trying to figure out the safest way to commute to the office. Some employees may not only be anxious about returning to the office, but also about getting back into the routine commute mode they used before COVID-19.

Employers can play an important role in building return-to-work confidence. Not only can they put safety measures in place in the office, employers can help identify safe commute options for their employees.

Tips for Employers

Send reminders to employees regarding how to safely travel to and from work. Use this document for messages regarding the safest way to carpool, vanpool or use transit. Examples of safety reminders include:

- Wear a mask when in a vehicle with others.
- Keep as far apart as possible from others in the vehicle, whether it be a bus, train, van or car.
- Use hand sanitizer before entering and after exiting the vehicle.
- Do not touch surfaces in the vehicle.
- Use disinfectant wipes to clean touch points in and outside your vehicle is using it to carpool or vanpool with others.

If possible, provide CDC approved masks and hand sanitizers to employees.
Allow for flexibility of start and end times of employees commuting to the office. Transit schedules may have changed since the pandemic started. Vanpools and carpools that were used before the pandemic may not be in service. Therefore, employees need time to figure out their commute and that may mean arriving at the office at a different time than before COVID-19. Additionally, by shifting trips outside of the normal peak travel times, transit and roadways will be less crowded leading to safer commutes.

Keep employees teleworking. Continue to allow employees to work from home, to the extent possible. This is the single best action to reduce the risk of exposure and continue business operations. Provide employees with the equipment and tools to work successfully at home, and establish a formal telework policy, or review your company’s current telework policy to allow more teleworking. If employees need a monthly parking pass to park at the office, consider daily parking passes to provide greater flexibility for employees who telework.

Provide a monthly commuter benefit or pre-tax benefit. If before the pandemic your company provided a monthly commuter benefit or pre-tax commuter benefit for employees who commute to work by bus or vanpool, continue to provide the benefit as employees return to the office. For employees that commute by transit or vanpool, IRS rules allow employers to provide a monthly qualified transportation benefit, up to $270, either as a direct benefit or through a pre-tax benefit.
Resources

- Telework Virginia (Telework!VA) Program (assistance for employers and employees)
- CDC Order: Requirement for Persons to Wear Mask While on Conveyances and at Transportation Hubs
- U.S. Department of Transportation Mask Requirement - Frequently Asked Questions
- Federal Executive Order on Promoting COVID-19 Safety in Domestic and International Travel
- IRS Employer Tax Guide (Qualified Transportation Benefit)
- American Public Transportation Association’s COVID-19 Resources
- Community Transportation Association of America’s COVID-19 Resources
- CDC’s What Bus Transit Operators Need to Know About COVID-19
- CDC’s What Transit Station Workers Need to Know About COVID-19
- CDC’s Reopening Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces, Businesses, Schools, and Homes
- Virginia’s Emergency Temporary Standard Infectious Disease Prevention
- Commute!VA