

and towers

From fields...

The Region is...



# My Backyard

The newsletter of the Richmond Regional Planning District Commission, including the Town of Ashland, the Counties of Charles City, Chesterfield, Goochland, Hanover, Henrico, New Kent, Powhatan and the City of Richmond.

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## WANTED: Public Transportation for Disadvantaged Public

Summer 2005

Many elderly, disabled and low-income people are unable to provide their own transportation to meet their basic needs, including access to employment, health and medical appointments or education and social programs. Many of these disadvantaged persons are also unable to utilize public transportation.

The Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) staff is preparing a public transportation needs assessment for disadvantaged population groups including elderly, disabled and low-income persons in the Richmond region. The assessment will be used by the MPO, local government jurisdictions, GRTC, social service agencies and transportation providers in evaluating specialized transportation services available to these groups of persons.



The population of elderly persons is growing and according to the 2000 census, approximately 11 percent of the Richmond region's population is over 65 years of age. The Five Year Mobility Action Agenda released by AARP in

January 2005 noted that to live independently and age successfully, older Americans must be able to maintain a mobile lifestyle. The report also cited that when driving becomes more difficult, many Americans discover that they have few options.

Data evaluated for the public transportation needs assessment indicates that older adults are dispersed throughout the Richmond region (i.e., they do not tend to live in specific locations), come from varying economic classes, have varying degrees of disabilities and have an assortment of mobility needs.

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# What's Happening in Our Capital Region?

## Planning for Natural Disasters

*Natural disasters such as floods, tornadoes and earthquakes can tear apart the very fabric and foundation of a community. But sometimes, they can indirectly act as agents of positive change. Following the aftermath of disasters, open communication lines in the community can serve to facilitate change.*

The Richmond Regional Planning District Commission has opened the lines of communication by undertaking a *mitigation* planning process. Simply put, natural hazard mitigation planning is the process of identifying risk and



vulnerability in the planning district and devising strategies to address the long-term effects of natural hazards.

The planning effort has resulted in the development of a draft *Hazard Mitigation Plan*. Seven local governments in central Virginia participated in this planning process, including the counties of Charles City, Goochland, Hanover, Henrico, New Kent and Powhatan and the City of Richmond. The planning district has assembled a Mitigation Advisory Committee made up of local government representatives from the seven jurisdictions to guide the planning process.

Two major portions of the plan are now complete. Drafts of the *Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (HIRA)* and the *Mitigation Strategy* have been finished. The HIRA identifies the natural hazards that could affect the district, assesses the extent to which the area is vulnerable to the effects of these hazards, and serves as a basis for the development and prioritization of potential mitigation measures.

The *Mitigation Strategy* assumes that certain risks are unacceptable, therefore policies and projects should be

developed to reduce those risks. The strategy is comprised of mitigation *goals*, *objectives* and *measures*.

Goals and objectives help to describe what should occur. Initially, broad-based goals are developed, which are long-term and general statements. Goals are then accomplished by meeting objectives, which are specific and achievable in a finite time period.

The Richmond Regional PDC's proposed goals are:

1. Reduce damage to public property.
2. Develop and maintain infrastructure to ensure continued service delivery.
3. Ensure new development is resilient to natural hazards.
4. Reduce risk to existing development.
5. Educate and train our citizens regarding their vulnerability to natural hazards.
6. Enhance the capabilities of local government to influence and possibly lessen the impact of future disasters.



The Richmond Regional PDC requested input and feedback from citizens about the risks which have been identified in the plan and citizen input was sought on the

*(Continued on Page 8.)*

The Rural Driving Tour is now available on-line! Visit our web site, [www.richmondregional.org](http://www.richmondregional.org) and click on the link located on the navigation bar.

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# What's Happening in Our Capital Region?



## Legislatively Speaking

The 2005 General Assembly session came to a close earlier in the year, with our state legislators coming to agreement on a state budget in February. Of most significance to the Richmond Regional PDC in the final budget language is information on funding—the bottom line. In the Governor's proposed amendments, planning district commissions would not have received any less, nor would they have received any more than in the previous year—the level of funding would remain the same.

The final outcome on February 27 was that rural planning district commissions would receive *additional* funding, resulting in a minimum of \$90,000 for each PDC. The remaining planning district commissions would remain at the same funding level as in the past year. That means the RRPDC will receive \$165,277 for FY 06.

Legislation the RRPDC was monitoring with a brief synopsis of each is listed below:

**Transportation Funding:** The final budget contains \$848.1 million for transportation (\$347.6 million in state general funds and \$500.5 million in non-general funds). Allocations will go toward paying off deficit projects (including Route 288), FRAN debt, Transportation Trust Fund, road and bridge maintenance, mass transit, public-private partnerships, revenue sharing projects, rail, state welcome centers, and DMV computer systems.

**PPTRA (Car Tax Reimbursement):** Governor Warner proposed adding \$24 million to the budget to reimburse localities for delinquent payments received.

There was also language added which includes a schedule upon which localities would receive regular reimbursement.

### **Telecommunications Tax Restructuring:**

Language imposing a 5 percent tax rate on all services was scrapped in committee. What is left is language to allow the Auditor of Public Accounts to study localities' FY 05 tax revenues, so that this data will be readily available if the state wishes to proceed with the legislation in future years.

### **Enterprise Zones:**

The current enterprise zone program from which our localities benefit has been modified, although programs in effect prior to 2005 will continue until their 20-year designation has transpired. The changes will make it extremely difficult, if not impossible, for many jurisdictions to take advantage of the program in the future. Changes to the program include:

- ⚙ Criteria for qualification will take into account the unemployment and income level throughout the jurisdiction, not just the poorer pocket where the enterprise zone is desired.
- ⚙ The total number of qualifiers will be reduced from 60 to 30, cutting the number of eligible jurisdictions in half.
- ⚙ Changes the program from a tax credit program to a grant program.

Please be sure to visit the Richmond Regional PDC web site at [www.richmondregional.org](http://www.richmondregional.org) to access the *Yeas and Nays Report—A Summary of Legislation*, which highlights legislation of interest to our local governments.

For additional information, please contact Patricia Villa at the RRPDC at [pvilla@richmondregional.org](mailto:pvilla@richmondregional.org) or at (804) 367-6001.

Want to receive the RRPDC newsletter by e-mail? Just let us know at (804) 367-6001  
or e-mail us at [RRPDC@richmondregional.org](mailto:RRPDC@richmondregional.org)

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# What's Happening in Our Capital Region?

## June Planning Commissioner's Forum



Forty Planning Commissioners and staff from around the Richmond region attended the Fourth Annual Planning Commissioner's Forum in June. This year's event was hosted by Hanover County at Randolph Macon College in Ashland, Virginia. Topics for discussion included Affordable Housing, Revitalization, Conservation Easements and Purchase of Development Rights and Proffers and Impact Fees.

Lory Pendergraph, Associate Planner for the Richmond Regional PDC presented data on affordable housing in the Richmond region. Additional information on affordable housing and the strategic plan for revitalization in Richmond were presented by Sheila Hill Christian, Executive Director of the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority.

Thomas E. Jacobson, Director of Revitalization for Chesterfield County, discussed the county's efforts to re-develop the Cloverleaf Mall area and to revitalize other greyfields and infill sites. Mr. Jacobson also reviewed other areas in decline and methods being used to improve them.

G. Robert Lee, Executive Director of Virginia Outdoors Foundation presented information on Virginia's land conservation goals and the purchase of development rights. Also discussed were VOF's partnerships with various state agencies to develop land conservation and easement programs and the Open Space Land Preservation Trust Fund.

Sharon E. Pandak, Attorney-at-Law with Sands, Anderson, Marks and Miller, P.C. and former Prince William County

Attorney offered information on financing development through the local land use regulatory framework in Virginia including Comprehensive Plans, Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances, Development Regulations and the Capital Improvement Program. Ms. Pandak also discussed the ability to assess and impose impact fees and limitations on their use.

For additional information on the forum, please contact Allyson Finchum at the Richmond Regional PDC at 367-6001 or by e-mail at [afinchum@richmondregional.org](mailto:afinchum@richmondregional.org).

### Welcome to...

#### Allyson L. Finchum

Allyson Finchum came to us in January of this year from the Town of Ashland, where she oversaw the planning department.

Now at the RRPDC, Allyson is a principal planner and will be project manager on many different undertakings, including assisting localities with land use, zoning and subdivision amendments, village plans and policy analysis.



#### Julie H. Fry

Julie Fry recently joined the Richmond Regional PDC staff as Executive Secretary.

Julie was handed over the administrative reins by recently-retired Katherine Barrett in her duties, which consist of supervising the agency's administrative matters, including supply procurement and coordinating monthly PDC meetings.



**Don't forget: The RRPDC's large conference room is available to our member jurisdictions and affiliates for meetings. It's as simple as picking up the phone and calling us!**

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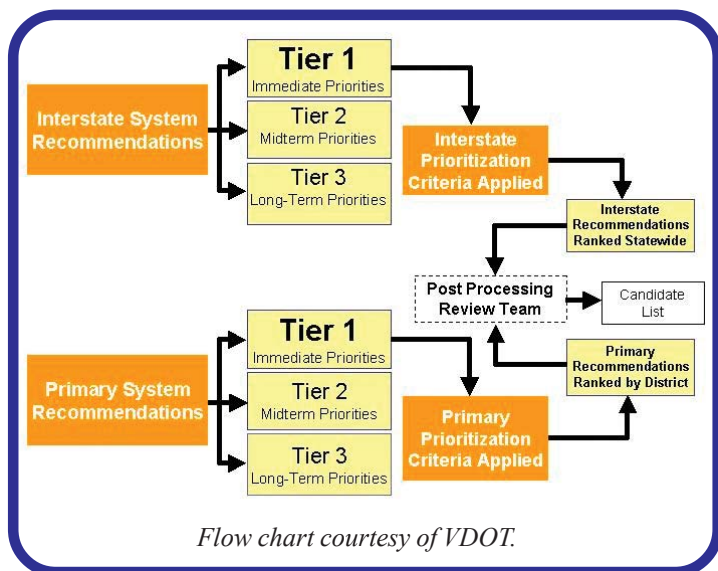
# Getting There...

## New Prioritization System at VDOT

There just doesn't seem to be enough money to go around. So planning ahead and determining priorities just makes good, sound sense, especially when it comes to transportation.

That's why a new prioritization process is underway at VDOT—one which will help to assess interstate and primary roadways' proposed improvements, assisting in the determination of which projects will move forward first.

The main focus of this new prioritizing process is to categorize projects into three tiers: Tier 1 (immediate priority), Tier 2 (intermediate priority) and Tier 3 (long-term priority) and then to evaluate and score each project through a series of criteria.



The steering committee responsible for the new gauge is comprised of VDOT district and central office personnel, with input from the Richmond Regional PDC along with other regional planning organizations and agencies, state universities and localities. Public meetings held earlier in the year offered additional information to citizens as well.

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## MPO/PDC Co-host Transportation Summit

The Richmond Area MPO, along with the Richmond Regional PDC and the Greater Richmond Chamber of Commerce's Regional Transportation Advocacy Board succeeded in bringing together 200 business and government leaders to discuss the present and future mobility needs of the region during the transportation summit held in June.

The lineup for the day included individuals such as former Virginia Governor Gerald Baliles, who has made transportation a priority topic for the region for many years, along with Whitt Clement, former Secretary of Transportation, speaking on the issue of state funding.

During the June Transportation Summit, it was stated that 75 percent of area businesses considering locating in the region showed interest in transit availability.

Former Delegate Jack Rollison, who is now Special Assistant to the Commissioner of VDOT, discussed the need for linking land use with transportation and Gerald McCarthy, who represents the Richmond region on the Commonwealth Transportation Board spoke to the group regarding funding alternatives. Senator John Watkins also attended as a panelist during the question and answer period.

The comprehensive agenda touched upon most modes of transportation—not merely the building and maintenance of roads, but air, rail and transit services as well.

The group received information and comments from the Capital Region Airport Commission, the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation and Ridefinders.

The event was well attended and resulted in its intended goal of generating ideas from many individuals in order to launch a strategy of tackling the region's escalating transportation needs. Although not yet scheduled, a subsequent meeting is planned for the end of the year.

For more information on Richmond Air quality and requirements, access the EPA web site: <http://www.epa.gov/oar/oaqps/gooduphigh>.

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# Getting There...

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## WANTED:

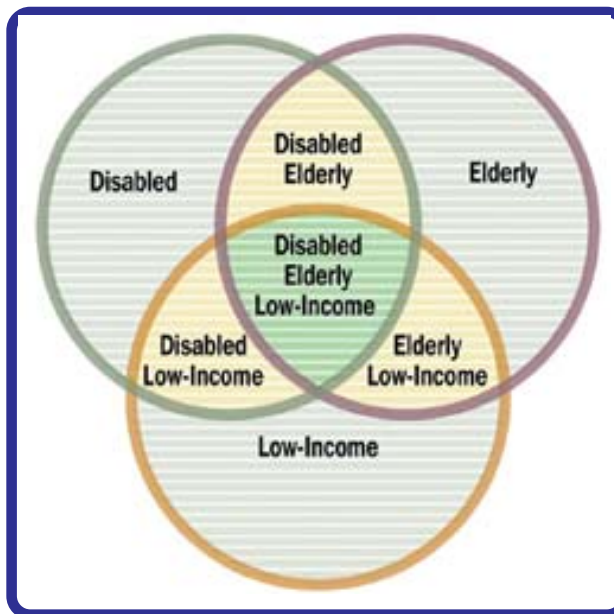
Elderly people are also more likely to have difficulties accessing public transit due to the many physical disabilities that result from aging.

Over 20 percent of the population age 16 and over in the Richmond region are reported to have a disability, defined by the census bureau as “the existence of a long-lasting physical, mental or emotional condition that makes it difficult for a person to perform activities such as walking, climbing stairs, dressing, bathing, learning or remembering. This condition can also impede a person from being able to go outside the home alone or to work at a job or business.”

According to a 2000 survey conducted by the National Organization on Disabilities, 30 percent of respondents with disabilities reported difficulty in accessing transportation, compared to 10 percent of respondents without disabilities.

Nearly nine percent of households in the MPO study area were reported to be below the poverty rate in the 2000 census and tend to reside in specific communities within the region.

The poor make up an increasing share of transit users. However, statistics show that less than 10 percent of people below poverty utilize transit to commute to work. Limited availability, reliability and perceived safety issues could be some of the reasons that the poor are more auto-dependent than transit-dependent. The poor incur the expense of car ownership in order to obtain the flexibility and mobility a car provides, but then trade-offs are made by their spending less on other maintenance needs.



The *Public Transportation Needs Assessment for Disadvantaged Population Groups* is a two-part report. Part one of the study will focus on identifying the deficiencies and inadequacies of the existing transportation system to meet the mobility needs of the transportation disadvantaged public. Part two of the study will utilize the results and recommendations from part one as the basis for reviewing and assessing various public transportation service alternatives.

For information on this assessment, contact Michael Clements at the RRPDC at 367-6001 or by e-mail at [mclements@richmondregional.org](mailto:mclements@richmondregional.org).

## Celebrating Anniversaries at the PDC

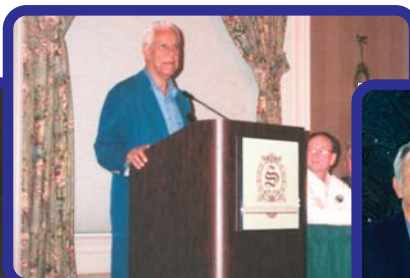
Three staff members at the Richmond Regional PDC will be celebrating milestone anniversaries in the months ahead. **Daniel N. Lysy**, Director of Transportation, is celebrating 25 years of service this July; **Jacqueline S. Stewart**, Director of Planning and Information Systems, is celebrating her 10-year anniversary in July and in September, **Peter M. Sweetland**, Finance and Contracts Administrator, will celebrate his five-year anniversary. Congratulations to these staff members on their good work and professionalism!

Part One of the *Public Transportation Needs Assessment* began earlier this year and will be completed in July, at which time Part Two will begin.

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## Getting There...

### Lessons from Louisville



On April 28 through 30, 2005, RRPDC Chairman, John E. Gordon, Jr., of the Hanover County Board of Supervisors and Executive Director, Paul E. Fisher, represented the Commission on the Greater Richmond Chamber of Commerce InterCity visit to Louisville, Kentucky.

Several other RRPDC commissioners also attended, including Chesterfield County Board Chairman Edward B. Barber and Supervisor Arthur S. Warren; Henrico County Board Chairman, Frank J. Thornton and Richmond City Councilman William J. Pantele.

Other local government officials participating included Mayor L. Douglas Wilder of Richmond, J.T. (Jack) Ward, Chairman of the Hanover County Board of Supervisors and Chief Administrative officials Lane B. Ramsey, Chesterfield County; Virgil R. Hazelette, Henrico County; Cecil R. Harris, Hanover County and William E. Harrell, City

of Richmond. A total of approximately 90 leaders in the community participated.

The trip included many interesting presentations and site visits, starting with a presentation on regional cooperation in the Richmond area by Henrico County Manager, Virgil Hazelett. Lessons learned from the trip will be useful to all the participants as we work to improve the future of the Richmond region.

The mayor of Louisville Metro Government, Jerry R. Abramson, presented a very compelling discussion of aggressive leadership on moving community priorities forward and being an agent of change for future progress. Participants also learned about "The Kentucky Derby Festival," a nonprofit community organization; the Louisville Waterfront Park; Louisville Slugger Field (minor league baseball park) and the UPS Worldport.

### An Elderly and Disabled Voice on the MPO

Next time you are at an intersection on downtown Broad Street, close your eyes. Next, try to figure out when it's safe to cross the street, just by listening to the noises. TIP: when you hear the whizzing of cars, it's probably a good indication that it's not a good time to cross. So, when you don't hear the zipping of cars, it means it's safe, right? Not so fast... What about those right-turns-on-red when cars may stop and then proceed to take the turn or left-turns-on-red on one-way streets?

This scenario is real-life for Linda Brody-Myers, not just an exercise in listening. Linda has been legally blind since 1992. Has this slowed her down? Considering she used to run five to six miles a day while working as a fraud investigator prior to losing her sight, mobility wise, yes; *(Continued on Page 8.)*



Airfare from Richmond will become more competitive with the arrival of AirTran Airways, flying from RIC direct to Atlanta and Philadelphia. Orlando will be added to the schedule in November.

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## What's Happening...

*(Continued from Page 5.)*

### **New Prioritization System**

The process was developed and coordinated with the VTRANS 2025 multimodal goals, objectives and performance measures in mind. Construction priorities that come from this effort will be recommended by VDOT to the Commonwealth Transportation Board for inclusion in the FY 2007 Six-Year Improvement Program.

For additional information on this new ranking process, contact Chad Tucker with VDOT at 786-2974 or at [Chad.Tucker@vdot.virginia.gov](mailto:Chad.Tucker@vdot.virginia.gov).

*(Continued from Page 2.)*

### **Planning for Natural Disasters**

goals, objectives and strategies that will eliminate or reduce the future effects of natural disasters.

A public meeting to obtain citizens' ideas and input was held in April so that citizens could offer their

suggestions on the plan. Interested citizens were encouraged to attend and join in further development of the plan to assure more hazard-resistant communities in the Richmond region.

For additional information on this and other planning issues, contact Jacqueline Stewart at [jstewart@richmondregional.org](mailto:jstewart@richmondregional.org) or at (804) 367-6001 at the PDC.

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### **EDAC Voice on MPO**

gumption-wise, no way. And this is why she was appointed to the Elderly and Disabled Advisory Committee (EDAC) and was also the first EDAC member to serve on the MPO Board when the bylaws were amended this year.

She speaks with a passionate voice for the disabled community and her goal is simply to ensure the community is included in the decision-making process. "Everyone should be able to enjoy their community equally."

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## **Richmond Regional Planning District Commission**

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