

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.

### Look Inside For Articles On:

Regional Radio Interoperability .....	2	APA Award Winner .....	4
RRPDC Assists American Red Cross .....	2	Help Air Quality and Protect Pockets .....	5
Legislatively Speaking .....	3	Rustic Roads .....	5
Welcome New Board Members .....	3	Congestion Management .....	6
Better Air-Better Health .....	4	New Staff Additions .....	7

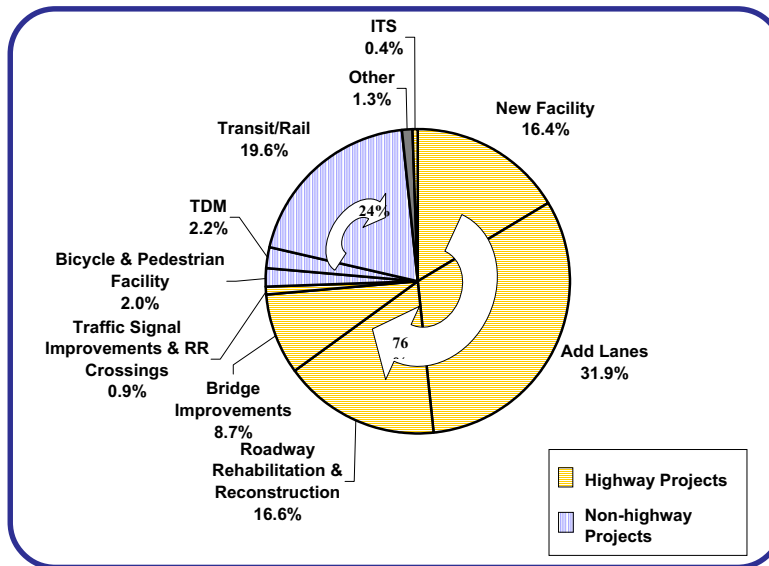
## 2026 Long-Range Transportation Plan — The Plan Comes Together!

Summer 2004

Transportation planners and engineers from local governments and transportation agencies, in coordination with regional, state and federal transportation agencies, spent almost a year preparing the Richmond region's long-range transportation plan. And the long-awaited for result is here! The plan, officially titled *Richmond Area Metropolitan Planning Organization 2026 Long-Range Transportation Plan*, was formally adopted on April 8, 2004 by the MPO policy board.

The plan is required to cover a minimum of 20 years, address multiple modes of transportation and be financially constrained (include only those projects for which funding is known to be reasonably available). It has a 23-year time horizon with individual chapters devoted to public transportation, bicycle/pedestrian travel, intermodal freight movement and

carpool/vanpool travel, as well as travel by private automobiles; it accounts for over \$2.2 billion in financial resources (not including maintenance).



The plan was developed under the guidance of an advisory task force comprised of 14 voting members, including representatives from the nine local jurisdictions, four Citizen Transportation Advisory Committee (CTAC) representatives and one Elderly and Disabled Advisory Committee (EDAC) representative. Other local transportation providers and agencies were also part of the advisory task force.

Although transportation project needs submitted by local jurisdictions and transportation agencies totaled over \$5 billion, (Continued on Page 8.)

# What's Happening in Our Capital Region?

## Regional Radio Interoperability

One of the most important factors during regional emergencies is communication: First responders must be able to exchange information. Up until now, this task has been a daunting one for the region—lack of interoperability between jurisdictions' radio communications systems has been a challenge for emergency management.



Recognizing the need to address interoperability in communities throughout the Commonwealth, Governor Mark Warner has charged the Office of Public Safety to design a strategic plan for statewide interoperability. Since the involvement of local and statewide emergency responders is essential to the success of developing a Statewide Interoperability Strategic Plan, a planning session was held in May. This strategic planning session brought together key stakeholders and leaders from local, regional, state and federal levels to identify key initiatives for public safety communications interoperability in Virginia, based on the local public safety responder perspectives gathered from six regional focus groups. Participants from the region included staff from Henrico Police Department, Chesterfield County and Richmond Regional Planning District Commission.

The Strategic Planning Session was designed as a series of conversations centered on the local perspective of communications interoperability (statewide and regional) as it relates to the current state, the case for why change needs to occur, the envisioned future state and recommended strategies to pursue in achieving the future state. From this, the fundamental cornerstone of the statewide interoperability strategy was developed.

The Strategic Planning Session in May provided valuable input to the development of the Statewide Communications Interoperability Strategic Plan. The session resulted in the participants: 1.) confirming and providing upgrades to the short- and long-term strategic initiatives developed through the focus groups 2.) providing recommendations to the proposed

mission and vision statements for the Commonwealth Interoperability Coordinator, Office of the Secretary of Public Safety 3.) recognizing the need to more clearly define the scope of public safety in the identified regions.

The key initiatives identified in the Strategic Planning Session, along with

data gathered through the six regional focus groups, will serve as the cornerstone of the Statewide Interoperability Strategic Plan. The Interoperability web site ([www.interoperability.publicsafety.virginia.gov](http://www.interoperability.publicsafety.virginia.gov)) provides additional informational resources as well as the reports from each regional focus group session. For additional information, contact Jacqueline Stewart at the Richmond Regional PDC at 367-6001 or by e-mail at [jstewart@richmondregional.org](mailto:jstewart@richmondregional.org).



## The RRPDC Assists the American Red Cross

On behalf of the Greater Richmond Disaster Preparedness Coalition, PDC staff was invited earlier in the year to participate in a planning group consisting of nonprofit organizations throughout the region, spearheaded by the American Red Cross. PDC efforts will enhance coordination and planning of shelter resources.

Specifically, PDC staff has worked with the American Red Cross to gather and map their shelter locations into a GIS database. The draft database was presented to the American Red Cross's Disaster Management Team in March.

RRPDC staff will continue to collect data on existing local government shelters and to develop the database with the region's local governments and the American Red Cross.

For additional information on the project, contact Jacqueline Stewart at the RRPDC or by e-mail : [jstewart@richmondregional.org](mailto:jstewart@richmondregional.org).

As of January 1, 2004 there were 38,799 local government and school employees in the Richmond-Petersburg area.

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# What's Happening in Our Capital Region?

## Government

### VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE



## Legislatively Speaking

Prior to the 2004 General Assembly convening, the Richmond Regional Planning District Commission hosted the December Capital Region Caucus meeting along with the Greater Richmond Chamber of Commerce. The meeting consisted of dinner with the legislators and a presentation by the area's legislative liaisons, highlighting and discussing the upcoming legislative priorities for the region.



The *Yeas and Nays Report* (RRPDC's final legislative report) was posted to the Richmond Regional PDC web site in May, detailing legislation, including the Governor's amendments.

On May 7, the General Assembly adopted the Commonwealth's budget. Some of the most important highlights included:

- ✚ Added an additional \$1.5 billion in **Direct Aid to Education**, addressing some recommendations made by

JLARC, including increased funding for at-risk-four-year-olds and earmarking 1/4 of the 1/2 cent sales tax increase for education.

- ✚ Increased funding for **HB 599** to be used for public safety purposes.
- ✚ Reduced the **Car Tax Relief Program** by \$277 m in FY 06 and capped payments at \$950 m.
- ✚ Leveled funding of **ABC profits** and **wines taxes** at FY 04 levels. Allocations will be in the same as in the current fiscal year.
- ✚ Decreased PDC funding by 10 percent. Specifically, the Richmond Regional PDC will receive \$165,277 each year.

## Welcome to New Board Members!

The Richmond Regional PDC welcomes nine new Board members. They include:

R.M. Dickie King, Chesterfield County  
Sherman W. Litton, Chesterfield County  
Frank M. Hartz, Goochland County  
Elizabeth W. Moorhouse, Hanover County  
Gentry Bell, Henrico County  
Lisa D. Ware, Henrico County  
Stran L. Trout, New Kent County  
Russell E. Holland, Powhatan County  
John C. Grier, City of Richmond

New officers for FY2005 began their terms in July. They include:

John E. Gordon, Jr., Chairman, Hanover County  
Malvern R. Butler, Vice Chairman, Goochland County  
Russell E. Holland, Treasurer, Powhatan County  
Edward B. Barber, Secretary, Chesterfield County

The Richmond Regional Planning District Commission meets the second Thursday of every month. Check the Richmond Regional PDC web site for meeting agendas and minutes: [www.richmondregional.org](http://www.richmondregional.org).

Capital One Financial Corp., although down by 261 employees from 2003, continues to be Richmond's largest private employers in 2004, with 9,018 employees.

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# What's Happening in Our Capital Region?

## Better Air Equals Better Health—Right?

Everyone seems to be in agreement that good air quality impacts our health and quality of life. So if a jurisdiction does something good for the environment, it's a good thing. But when a group of jurisdictions and agencies get together and combine efforts—now there's something even better. And that's what V-REMS is all about.



Earlier this spring, staff attended a ceremony at the Defense Supply Center Richmond for a celebration in reaching Department of Environmental Quality Level Two Recognition.

The Virginia Regional Environmental Management System (V-REMS) is a multilevel partnership between federal, state and local organizations working closely to achieve goals regarding environmental issues. Specifically, the group is addressing air quality pertaining to the Richmond region—a topic which has been in the news a lot lately—in an effort to ensure responsible environmental behavior and consistent management of environmental issues for each partner and across the region.

Since cross-boundary issues and concerns can be addressed more effectively by the whole rather than by individuals, V-REMS takes the Environmental Management System (EMS) framework, originated at the federal level, one step further by expanding it from individual communities to an entire region. Current partners in the Richmond region include Defense Supply Center Richmond (DSCR), City of Richmond, County of Chesterfield, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality,

Department of Army-Fort Lee, City of Hopewell, County of Henrico, Maritime Administration, Richmond Regional PDC and Crater PDC.

Using EMS as the framework, the group launched into what continues to be an innovative approach to coordinate environmental activities from a regional perspective. The partners advocate the *reduce, reuse and recycle* philosophy coined in 1972 to encourage citizens to reduce waste, reuse paper goods and then recycle rather than discard. In addition, the group is promoting the use of electric vehicles by industries for short trips (i.e., for use by security and maintenance patrols). This partnership will help manage environmental and regulatory responsibilities—and prevent new environmental risks. It also provides a common framework and language for partners to discuss environmental issues as a region.

For additional information on V-REMS, contact Jacqueline Stewart at the Richmond Regional PDC at 367-6001 or by e-mail at [jstewart@richmondregional.org](mailto:jstewart@richmondregional.org).

## APA Award Winner: Brad Shelton!



Many readers are already aware that Brad Shelton was not only a full-time employee at the Richmond Regional PDC, but that he was also a graduate student at Virginia Commonwealth University in the Urban Studies and Planning masters program, all the while maintaining a 4.0 GPA. So it came as no surprise when Brad was recently awarded the distinction of “Outstanding Student of the Year” at VCU.

Brad was honored at an awards ceremony at the 2004 American Planning Association Conference held in Washington, D.C., earlier this spring.

Brad recently moved to Philadelphia, and although he will be greatly missed at the PDC, we wish him the best!

**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...

### Help Air Quality and Protect Your Pocket— Share the Ride!

#### *RideFinders Shows Central Virginia the Way to Go!*

RideFinders—Central Virginia region’s rideshare and transportation demand management agency—works to improve the efficiency of the roadway network and maintain the region’s air quality.



RideFinders is challenging the Richmond region to participate in the annual “Get Aware of Your Air!” Clean Air Campaign. This campaign, which runs from May through September, aims to increase public awareness of the link between transportation choices and air quality, encourages the use of alternative commute modes and alerts the public of days when ground level ozone reaches harmful levels.

Given the rising cost of gasoline prices and the Richmond region recently being placed on the bad air list, do your share to help air quality and protect your pocket during the summer ozone season.

With only a few months left to participate, log on to **ridefinders.com** to register for the Clean Commute Carpool Contest. The contest, a unique feature of this year’s campaign, seeks to encourage commuters to carpool at least three days a week for three months between April and September, although all commuters are invited to participate in the clean air campaign by completing a pledge form.

The Grand Prize of the challenge is a brand new 2004 Honda Civic Value Pack Sedan, an EPA “green car,” donated by Mechanicsville Honda.

“It is extremely timely to concentrate on carpooling in this year’s campaign given skyrocketing gas prices,” says Von Tisdale, Executive Director of RideFinders. “More importantly, carpooling has great benefits for commuters such as saving time, money and commuter stress like parking issues.”

So take the pledge and join RideFinders “Get Aware of Your Air!” Clean Air Campaign! For more information, visit [ridefinders.com](http://ridefinders.com), call 804-643-7433 or stop by the RideFinders Commuter Store located at 1111 East Main Street (Bank of America Pavilion) in Downtown Richmond.

### Rustic Roads, Take Me Home



The Richmond Regional PDC is studying non-paved roads in New Kent County for recommendation into the Rustic Roads Program. The VDOT program, passed by the General Assembly in 2003, allows localities to pave miles with limited funding through minimal encroachment and without compromising the safety of the road.

Guidelines are few but include requirements such as the road must carry at least 50 yet fewer than 500 vehicles per day, it must be a priority in the secondary Six-Year Plan and it must be predominately for local use, to name a few. Besides the obvious cost savings to localities, it is another way to maintain rural character.

For additional information, contact Christine Fix at the PDC at 367-6001 or by e-mail at [cfix@richmondregional.org](mailto:cfix@richmondregional.org).

Look for interesting reading on the *Living Towns* program in the next issue of *My Backyard*.

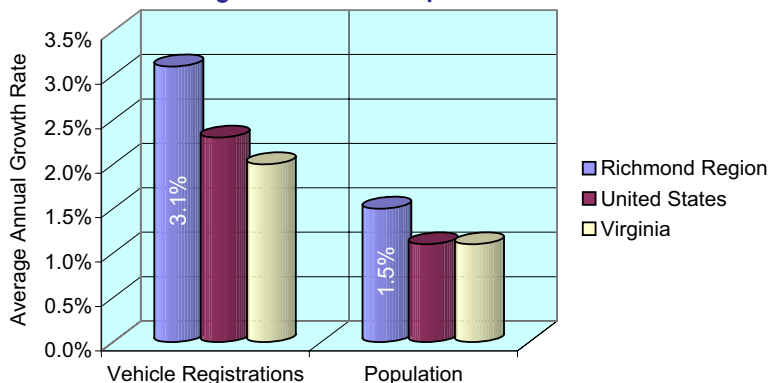
# Getting There...

## Congestion Management

*Study shows traffic jams growing but region still not paralyzed by gridlock*

In the Richmond area, growth in vehicle registrations has been outpacing the region's population growth. The graph below shows that, from 1992 to 2001, the region's average annual growth rate for vehicle registrations (3.1%) is approximately double that of the area's average annual growth in population (1.5%) and, for both factors, we are growing faster than state and national levels.

**Average Annual Growth Rate in Vehicle Registrations and Population: 1992-2001**



As a result, the sum of the number of miles every vehicle travels on an average weekday in the Richmond region—expressed in terms of vehicle-miles of travel (VMT)—have grown steadily by an average of 2.9 percent annually from 1994 to 2001, and that growth is slightly outpacing state and national VMT growth trends for the same time period.

For the Richmond urbanized area, there were approximately 18.5 million vehicle-miles of travel per day in 2001. To put that number into perspective, every day the total VMT in the Richmond area is equivalent to driving around the circumference of the earth about 740 times.

So, our region's roadways are being used at an ever increasing rate, but how does the resulting performance of our transportation system stack up to other urban areas across the country?

To answer this question, the Congestion Management System (CMS) contains an analysis of traffic data taken

from the Texas Transportation Institute's (TTI) annual Urban Mobility Study. Richmond is included in the study under the classification of a medium urban area (population between 500,000 and 1,000,000). Throughout the report, Richmond's congestion and mobility data are compared to the 21 other medium urban areas.

Of the several measures available from the report, staff looked at the following performance indicators from 1982 to 2001:

- Travel Time Index
- Congestion Cost per Person
- Annual Hours of Delay per Person

Looking more closely at one of the factors, the analysis showed that the annual hours of delay per person in the Richmond region have been growing at a much faster rate than the average growth rate observed for all of the medium metropolitan areas studied.

The urban mobility report identified approximately 10 annual hours of delay per capita in the Richmond metropolitan area for 2001. This value has increased significantly since 1982 when TTI recorded one annual hour of delay per capita in the Richmond area.

By comparison, the report identified an average figure of 15 annual hours of delay per capita for all of the medium urban areas studied (see chart page 7). This value has grown by 400 percent since 1982.

The highest annual delay per capita for the medium urban areas was Austin, TX at 30 hours per person and the lowest figure was found in Rochester, NY at three hours of delay per person. The Richmond area ranked 15<sup>th</sup> of the 21 metropolitan areas studied.

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According to recent Richmond Regional Planning District Commission Congestion Management System (CMS) research, traffic congestion throughout the Richmond metropolitan area continues to worsen, but the burden is not as great as congestion found in comparable metropolitan areas across the country.

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Despite this rapid increase in annual hours of delay over time, in 2001 the Richmond region's estimated annual hours

*(Continued on Page 7.)*

The CMS report, while historically created as a separate document, is now incorporated into the Long-Range Transportation Plan as Chapter 8.

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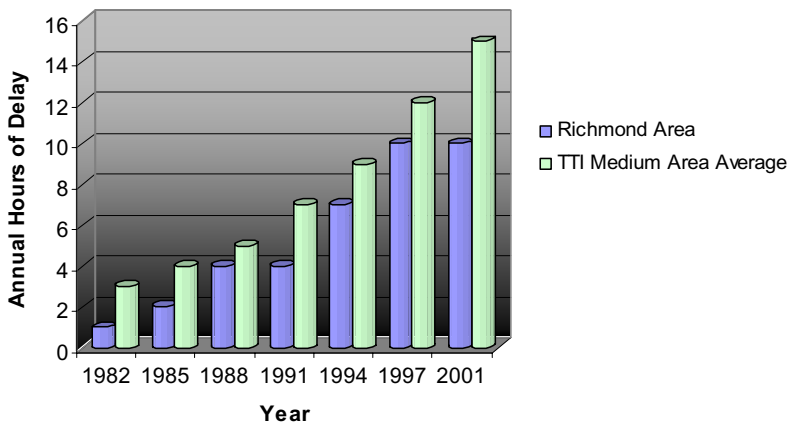
# Getting There...

(Continued from Page 6.)

## Congestion Management

of delay per person was one of the lowest of the 21 medium metropolitan areas studied. Similar results were recorded for the two additional TTI factors studied as well. The research highlighted here is taken from the Richmond Regional PDC's efforts to understand and manage traffic congestion through the third update to the Richmond Area MPO's Congestion Management System, or CMS.

**Historical Annual Hours of Delay per Person for the Richmond Area, 1982-2001**



The CMS was recently updated in conjunction with the Richmond Area MPO 2026 Long-Range Transportation Plan update. To find out more about the region's CMS, look in Chapter 8 of the MPO's recently adopted Long-Range Transportation Plan. A separate CMS technical document contains detailed information about the analyses presented throughout the chapter.

You can access the CMS chapter as well as the entire Long-Range Transportation Plan through the Richmond Regional PDC's web site ([www.richmondregional.org](http://www.richmondregional.org)) by clicking on the 2026 LRTP link.

For additional information on the Congestion Management System, contact Lawrence Hagin, Principal Planner and project manager for the CMS document, at the Richmond Regional PDC at 367-6001 or by e-mail at [lhagin@richmondregional.org](mailto:lhagin@richmondregional.org).

## Welcome to Our New Staff Additions!

If you've visited the RRPDC lately, you may have noticed two new faces: Nick Britton and Michelle Fults.

Nick's first experience with the PDC was as an intern from VCU's Urban Studies and Planning graduate program. Five months into his internship, he was hired as an associate planner in the Division of Urban Transportation where he will be lead staff for the Transportation Division for GIS data base program development and maintenance. Nick will also be involved in the MPO annual public input/information meetings, census research, transportation database information reports, CMS development and public transportation needs assessment/reports.



Michelle Fults joined us in December 2003 as GIS Manager and has hit the ground running, having been almost literally thrown into the world of Long-Range Transportation Plan creation, spearheading the development of maps for the Plan.

Currently working on an E-911 map book and updating the tax parcel data for Charles City County, she will also oversee the database development of regional emergency shelters and a hazard mitigation plan GIS analysis. Michelle will also lead the GIS database development for the Regional Historic Inventory.

**Correction:** The pie chart title on page 6 of the Fall-Winter newsletter read *Year 2000 Population* in error. It should have been entitled, *Year 2026 Population*.

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## What's Happening...

(Continued from Page 1.)

### 2026 LRTP Comes Together

estimates of future funding totaled only \$2.2 billion. Consequently, the advisory task force had the unenviable task of prioritizing the region's transportation projects to fit within the available financial resources.

The list of 374 *financially constrained* transportation projects included in the plan is well balanced between modes of transportation, considering the size of the Richmond region and its reliance on the private automobile.

Approximately 76 percent of the financial resources anticipated to be available are designated for "highway" projects. These include new roadways, roadway widening projects, roadway reconstruction and rehabilitation, bridge improvements, traffic signal and railroad crossing improvements and intelligent transportation system (ITS) projects. The remaining 24 percent of the funds are designated for "non-highway" projects such as public transportation, bicycle and pedestrian facilities and transportation demand management (TDM) improvements.

The list of financially constrained projects also includes 34 projects anticipated to be financed with private or local funds including local general funds and developer funds such as cash proffers and right-of-way donations/improvements.

Given the current shortfall of public funding at all levels for transportation projects, additional alternative sources of funds, public-private partnerships and creative strategies to utilize all modes of travel, as well as better operational use of our transportation system are necessary to keep up with the demand to keep people and goods moving in the Richmond region.

For questions or for additional information regarding the 2026 Long-Range Transportation Plan, contact Michael Clements, Principal Planner and the project manager for the LRTP, by e-mail at [mclements@richmondregional.org](mailto:mclements@richmondregional.org) or by phone at 367-6001.

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## Richmond Regional Planning District Commission

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Comments on the FY 05 Transportation Improvement Program have been received. The final TIP can be viewed by accessing the Richmond Regional PDC web site at [www.richmondregional.org](http://www.richmondregional.org)

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