



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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RRPDC Commissioners Set Future Direction

Fall/Winter 2007



Because he chose not to run for re-election in Chesterfield this year, R.M. "Dickie" King will relinquish his Richmond Regional PDC chairmanship as of January 10, 2008.

By a unanimous vote, members of the Richmond Regional Planning District Commission approved a list of priorities—the culmination of months of work by the membership—that will bring a greater sense of direction, unity and cooperation to the Richmond region.

Government leaders and citizen appointees of the nine jurisdictions in the region built on the foundation set by three previous chairmen to identify common concerns and the role the regional planning agency should serve in addressing them.

Harvey L. Hinson who has extensive experience in local government, having served Henrico County's citizens for more than forty years with the last fifteen as Deputy County Manager for Community Development, summed up the successful efforts of the area's leaders by stating, "The tremendous cooperation, leadership and understanding of those involved in the process led to the adoption of priorities that will make the PDC more effective and more visible as a regional planning body.

The recommendations that came forward from the committees will guide the membership and commission staff as they work to ensure the region continues to focus on initiatives for sustainable quality economic growth and opportunities for all to meet the needs of our citizens."

The area's leadership will focus on priorities that include working on regional infrastructure assessments and initiatives; utilizing new and established technologies to the greater benefit of the region, its localities and citizens; and establishing a proactive legislative program both federally and within Virginia's legislature.

Also included is the retention of two committees comprised of members of each local jurisdiction's leadership to continue to focus on needs of the region and its member governments. John E. Gordon Jr., Hanover County Supervisor, and Faye O. Prichard, Mayor of the Town of Ashland, are the current chairs of the two committees. Robert R. Setliff who serves on the board of supervisors in Hanover County commented, "As a member of the Richmond Regional Planning District Commission, I am pleased that the commission members have agreed on a list of priorities that will be beneficial for the citizens of each of the localities that we represent. This is a good example of how we can target areas for effective cooperation.

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What's Happening in Our Capital Region

Long-Range Transportation Plan: Public Meeting and Forward Direction



Citizens attended the LRTP public meeting, sharing their views on the direction of transportation in our region.

The new RRPDC board room was filled with maps, presentation boards and other information about the Richmond area's transportation system. A beautiful Saturday morning in fall, with the leaves at their multi-colored peak, greeted the visitors who devoted a small part of their day to attend the first of a series of public meetings on the Richmond Area Long-Range Transportation Plan.

The open house meeting held on November 17 was the attraction that brought in a crowd of interested citizens to view the displays, enjoy refreshments and share their views on the transportation related needs in the area. Staff will incorporate this public input into the on-going efforts to prepare an updated long-range plan for the region.

This public meeting was timely inasmuch as the 2031 Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) Study Advisory Committee had just held its "kick-off" meeting earlier in the week on November 15. This committee is appointed by the MPO and consists of a group of dedicated individuals representing local governments, transportation service providers and citizen volunteers.

With a tight schedule for plan completion, the LRTP Advisory Committee agreed to a series of six

additional meetings through early February.

The Advisory Committee's initial task will focus on developing a list of proposed transportation projects through 2031 so that these projects can be modeled and analyzed for air quality impacts. This process will help ensure that the Richmond area stays within permitted levels for ozone and other air pollutants for the foreseeable future.

The modeling and analysis, performed by VDOT, takes several months, so the Advisory Committee has its mission cut out to complete the recommended list by early February 2008. The 2031 LRTP is scheduled for adoption by the MPO in early July 2008.

Advertisements and announcements will be made for additional public meetings as dates, times and places are set. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions or comments on the Richmond Area Long-Range Transportation Plan. Contact Lee Yolton, at 804.323.2033 or by e-mail at lyolton@richmondregional.org.

Socioeconomic Data

The region's 2031 socioeconomic data forecasts were approved on November 8, 2008 by the Richmond Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (RAMPO). Data includes population, households, housing units, autos and employment. It was distributed into 637 traffic analysis zones encompassing the urban study area of the region.

The zone data will be used to support the region's travel demand model, a primary element to the MPO's Long-Range Transportation Plan (see article above) which is currently being updated.

The data is also being used as part of the MPO's Regional Mass Transit Study (see article, page 5) to project future demand for public transportation services.

The Socioeconomic Report can be accessed from the Richmond Regional PDC's web site at www.richmondregional.org.

Getting Around in Our Capital Region



Legislatively Speaking

At the December meeting of the RRPDC, Commissioners unanimously endorsed a list of legislative priorities for the upcoming session. These priorities were part of a larger program presented by the area's legislative liaisons to our General Assembly Caucus members on December 10 at their caucus meeting. The priorities endorsed by the Commissioners include:

- Provide increased funding for Comprehensive Services Act ("CSA") services.
- Continue to seek opportunities for additional funding for transportation projects in the region.
- Support funding of the Region's Priority Transportation Projects submitted to the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB).
- Protect land use and zoning authority.
- Fully provide for the state's share of funding in education. Any efforts to redistribute state funds should not penalize localities which have previously used local funds to provide services.
- Protect local revenues (Real Estate Tax).
- Prevent cost shifting to localities and oppose unfunded state mandates.

Citizens may track up to 5 bills at no charge by accessing <http://leg1.state.va.us/h015.htm> and registering.

Legislative Dates to Remember

January 9 — General Assembly Convenes
February 7 — VACo/VML Legislative Day at the Capitol
March 8 — General Assembly Adjourns (Sine Die)
April 16 — Reconvened Session (VETO)

According to the Code of Virginia, the General Assembly must convene on the second Wednesday in January. A regular session convened in an even year shall continue no longer than sixty days; the session may be extended for no longer than thirty days.

'Tis the Season



Generosity at the RRPDC beat expectations for the seventh year in a row. Shown here are just a few PDC staff members who participated.

The holidays just might be a little merrier for eight elderly folks because of the generous contributions staff at the RRPDC made toward The Salvation Army's program, Silver Bells.

Each year, volunteers from the PDC brave the storm of holiday shoppers after Thanksgiving, visiting area merchants to purchase items on our adopted bells' wish lists with cash raised by staff. The gift-wrapped packages—ranging from coats to slippers—are then delivered to The Salvation Army in early December, where they are distributed to the Bells in time for the holidays.

Want to receive the RRPDC newsletter by e-mail? Just let us know at 804.323.2033 or e-mail us at RRPDC@richmondregional.org.

From fields and towers....The Region is My Backyard

What's Happening in Our Capital Region

Check Out the Chickahominy

The Chickahominy River and its tributaries are a shared resource among five localities in the Richmond region and one in the Hampton Roads Planning District. The upper reaches of the watershed begin northwest of the City of Richmond forming a river that weaves almost 90 miles through wetlands and diverse habitats and opening on the James River about five miles from Jamestown.



Paddlers enjoy the many splendors of the Chickahominy River.

The Chickahominy River Recreational Access Study, under the direction of the RRPDC, examines public access to the coastal river and its tidal tributaries in order to provide information necessary in creating a system of blueways on the river.

The study, published in October, found that a million and a half people live within an hour's drive of this spectacular natural area. With millions more visiting the Williamsburg area every year, the river has enormous eco-tourism potential. Already thousands of bass anglers launch boats on the river every year, but public access on "the Chick" for canoeists and kayakers is extremely limited. Paddlers currently use informal paths next to bridges in the swamp areas or the commercial boat launches on the tidal river as part of a patchy and incomplete water access network.

The RRPDC study is broken into four sections and includes appendices with planning and resource information. The first section looks at the Chickahominy River watershed as a whole including its nature, historical resources, recreation and tourism.

The second section describes the existing and potential access sites to the water by canoeists and kayakers along

the river and its main tributaries, and includes a summary of future uses and potential concerns.

The third section looks at types of planning done to provide recreational access on the Chickahominy River and in the area.

The final section provides suggestions for developing blueways and increasing access to the water.

The full report may be accessed from the RRPDC web site at www.richmondregional.org under publications. For additional information, contact Jacqueline Stewart at the RRPDC.

ESRI Certified Instructor Now on Staff



In August, Michelle Fults, GIS Manager, completed the necessary training and exams to become an authorized instructor through Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI) to teach Introduction to ArcGIS I for ArcGIS 9.2. (Refer to page 7 for a list of training dates.)

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!

From fields and towers....The Region is My Backyard

Getting Around in Our Capital Region

Regional Mass Transit Study-Next Steps



Citizens look on as Daniel Lysy, Director of Transportation, explains a diagram.

The turnout was impressive; the comments forthcoming. The event was the first of two general public meetings to discuss the prospects for a regional transit system in the Richmond area. Held at the Children's Museum on the evening of November 8, citizens packed the room, viewing displays, discussing transportation issues with staff and then heard a presentation from the consultant.

The thoughtfulness of the questions and comments was a clear indication of the interest and concern that area residents have regarding transportation in the region.

Everyone, it seems, feels that our future transportation system must reach beyond the traditional "drive yourself" approach and emphasize a "share the ride" approach.

Spurred by the data and information at the meeting, the close relationship between patterns of urban development and the use of mass transit was a frequent discussion topic. The environmental and health benefits of mass transit use were also constant themes running through conversations.

Many of the attendees took the time to complete comment forms provided for the occasion, giving the staff a written record of specific ideas and concerns about regional mass transit. The results of this first

public meeting are an important element for further refinement of the initial concepts for a regional mass transit system.

The study advisory committee, with the help of staff and the consultant, will take this public input into consideration as the remaining study tasks are undertaken.

With completion due in April 2008, the study will now focus on the analysis of the data, review

Continued on Page 8.

RICHMOND REGIONAL MASS TRANSIT STUDY

Study Objectives:

- Plan of action for development of regional mass transit system over mid-range (3 to 10 years) and long-range (up to 25 years)
- Address all surface public transportation modes
 - local and express bus
 - car and vanpool programs
 - ADA/specialized public transportation services
 - bus rapid transit
 - street car/trolley
 - light rail
 - commuter rail
- Recommendations for dedicated, on-going funding programs
- Recommendations for supportive land uses appropriate to enhancing public transportation services
- Incorporate a Human Services Public Transportation Coordination Plan

Schedule:

To be completed in April 2008

The Regional Mass Transit Study is due to be completed in April 2008. Recommendations will be posted on the RRPDC web site as they become available.

From fields and towers....The Region is My Backyard

What's Happening in Our Capital Region

Region's Priority Projects Presented to CTB



RAMPO members, Stran Trout and George Homewood, from New Kent County, look over detailed maps during the CTB public hearing in October.

With all the transportation hoopla these days, how do we decide which projects get attention first? Who decides?

Citizen, elderly and disabled groups as well as technical staffs from local governments have weighed in with their recommendations to the Richmond Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (RAMPO) and the project list was presented to the Commonwealth Transportation Board in October. Making the list were:

- Richmond International Airport Expansion and Access Improvements
- Main Street Station, High-Speed Intercity Rail, GRTC Improvements
- Route 360 (East of I-295 in Hanover) and Route 10 Widening (Chesterfield)
- Parham Road/Patterson Avenue Urban Interchange (Henrico)
- Huguenot Bridge Reconstruction
- Route 250 Widening from Route 623 to Route 621 (Goochland)

Given recent allocations, five of these projects are

expected to be fully funded by 2013.

Main Street Station and the High-Speed Intercity Rail will have a balance of \$401.2 million, Route 360 will have a balance of \$18 million and Parham Road/Patterson Avenue Interchange will have a balance of \$80 million.

RAMPO included the following additional priorities vital to the capital region:

- I-64 Widening to New Kent/James City County Line and Rail Improvements, Richmond to Hampton Roads
- Route 360 Widening West of Route 288 (Chesterfield)
- Widening of I-64 from Route 288 to 1.6 Kilometers West of Route 623 to Six Lanes (Henrico-Goochland County)
- Virginia Capital Trail Project (Richmond to Williamsburg)
- I-95/Lewistown Road Interchange Improvements (Hanover)

Webinars at the PDC

The RRPDC will host a series of American Planning Association audio/web conferences in 2008. These conferences provide training to planners, planning officials, researchers, students and allied groups. American Institute of Certified Planners certification maintenance credit is offered for most courses and advance registration is requested.

Refer to page 8 for the list of conferences offered; for further information or to register, please call Rhonda Bailey at 804.323.2033.

Congratulations!



Archita Rajbhandary was recently promoted from Associate Planner to Senior Planner. She will serve as Project Manager for the Congestion Management System and assist in development of the Long-Range Transportation Plan (see page 2).

The list of six priority transportation projects was presented to the Commonwealth Transportation Board along with a detailed report of the location, cost estimate and description for each.

From fields and towers....The Region is My Backyard

Getting Around in Our Capital Region

RRPDC Offers Low Cost GIS Training

The Richmond Regional Planning District Commission recently became the first teaching PDC in the state to offer localities a low cost training opportunity for employees interested in geographical information system (GIS).



Area jurisdiction staff members take advantage of the GIS Certification Program provided at the RRPDC.

Because relocation to the new RRPDC office included a training area within the new setting, the additional space has served the jurisdictions well; this training room will not only be used for GIS but for other types of training as well. The new training room can hold five students along with the instructor, making the class size small and individualized to each participant.

To date, five groups of students have graduated from this course. Typically, the training classes are held on a monthly basis at the beginning of each month, and many classes are already full.

The cost of this class for the localities is approximately one-third to one-half of the cost if taken from an ESRI authorized center or an authorized instructor from ESRI.

So far, this endeavor has been extremely successful and localities are very excited about the new training. Jurisdictions that have taken advantage of this offer include Hanover County, Chesterfield County, City of Richmond, Charles City County, New Kent County, and Powhatan County.

2008 TRAINING DATES

All January classes are full.

February 21-22

March 4-5

March 17-18

April 8-9

April 21-22

May 7-8

May 22-23

June 3-4

June 16-17

As an additional benefit, the RRPDC will be offering more GIS classes in 2008, including “tips and tricks” classes on such things as advanced project development, ArcCatalog and cartography.

For additional information, please contact Michelle Fults at 804.323.2033 or at mfults@richmondregional.org.

Welcome...

Sarah Smith is the newest addition to the Richmond Regional PDC team.



She is a graduate from the Master of Urban and Regional Planning program at the L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Ms. Smith first came to the PDC as an intern before accepting this position. Her responsibilities include data development, GIS analysis and Census 2010 update.

Hours at the Richmond Regional PDC are Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

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Getting Around in Our Capital Region

RMTS

Cont'd. from Page 5.

findings from the peer group review and work toward an action plan for the development and implementation of a regional mass transit system, with both a mid-range (10-year) and long-range (25-year) time horizon.

The MPO greatly appreciates those concerned citizens who took the effort to become involved in this important study for the future transportation system in the region. Another public meeting will be held in winter 2008. To visit the project web site, go to www.richmondregional.org and follow the link to the Regional Mass Transit Study.

For additional information on the Regional Mass Transit Study, please contact Lee Yolton at the RRPDC at 804.323.2033 or at lyolton@richmondregional.org

Webinars

Cont'd. from Page 6.

- **Complete Streets** (1.5 CM credits requested)
January 30, 2008, 4:00 p.m.–5:30 p.m. ET
- **Mastering Density** (1.5 CM credits requested)
February 13, 2008, 4:00 p.m.–5:30 p.m. ET
- **Design Guidelines for Small Towns and Rural Communities** (1.5 CM credits requested)
March 5, 2008, 4:00 p.m.–5:30 p.m. ET
- **Confronting NIMBYs** (1.0 CM credits requested)
March 19, 2008, 4:00 p.m.–5:00 p.m. ET
- **Community-Based Brownfields Redevelopment** (1.5 CM credits requested)
May 21, 2008, 4:00 p.m.–5:30 p.m. ET
- **Planning Law Review** (1.5 CM credits requested)
June 25, 2008, 4:00 p.m.–5:30 p.m. ET

For additional information, please call Allyson Finchum at the RRPDC or by e-mail at afinchum@richmondregional.org

Richmond Regional Planning District Commission

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