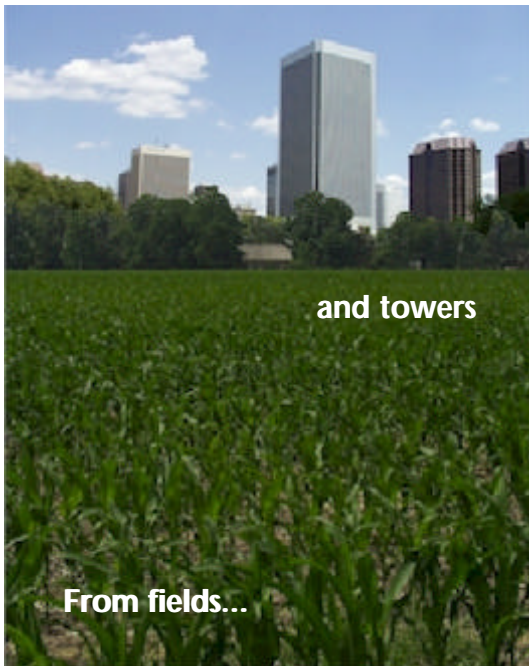


The Region is...

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.



and towers

From fields...

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THE RICHMOND REGIONAL PDC CHAIR

Meet "Joe" Brooks...

Joseph E. Brooks, a board member of the Richmond Regional Planning District Commission since 1992, is Chairman of the Planning District Commission for fiscal year 2000-01. He served as Chairman of the Richmond Area Metropolitan Planning Organization during fiscal year 1999-00.

A graduate from the University of Richmond with a Bachelor of Science degree in accounting, he continued his education at the University of North Carolina, earning an M.B.A. degree.



Mr. Brooks was elected to the Richmond City Council in 1992; he currently chairs its Finance Committee and is a member of the Organizational Development Committee as well as the

Audit Committee. He is also a member of the Port of Richmond Commission.

Active in the National League of Cities (NLC), he is currently a Board of Directors member and board representative to the NLC's Finance, Administration and Intergovernmental Relations (FAIR) Policy Committee. He serves as NLC's representative on the Federal Tax Association's Advisory Steering Committee on Sales and Use Tax on Electronic Commerce.

He is a member of the Virginia Legislative Commission on Educational Infrastructure. Mr. Brooks currently chairs the Executive Committee of the Virginia Municipal League and is a member of the Virginia Municipal League/Virginia Association of Counties advisory committee studying a new tax structure for Virginia.

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What's Happening in Our Capital Region?

Once again Richmond ranks near the top under the category of *Best Jobs in America*. A surprise? Not when our jobless rate was at 2.1 percent in 1999 (Four percent is considered full employment), the projected job growth rate is 18 percent by 2010, eight Fortune 500 companies have made Richmond their headquarters and the economy is booming.

Add to that: Fidelity Holdings, a high-tech firm whose future plans include situating the company in Henrico County and promising 500 new jobs, and Capital One's expansion with a new facility in Goochland County, adding 4,000 new positions.

Jobs

The signing of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) created sweeping welfare reforms with requirements intended to get families off welfare and into the workforce. Because the rural counties of Charles City, Goochland, New Kent and Powhatan have limited public transportation options available to welfare recipients for employment travel, these new programs, requirements and time limits for assistance will affect many low-income persons. For those making the transition from welfare to work, adequate transportation is a large and daunting challenge. Currently, these counties have informal transportation networks consisting of community action agencies and other community organizations. On an individual level, low-income families primarily have vehicles that are often unreliable or they rely on the kindness of family and friends for transportation, creating a transportation barrier for low-income rural residents.

To address these concerns, the Richmond Regional PDC conducted research and looked at the transportation supply and demand in these rural areas. The concluding report, *Achieving Transportation Service Coordination in Rural Communities*, provides an overview of recent welfare legislation changes and identifies transportation supply and demand through an analysis of transportation options, providers, and employment characteristics. Analyzing regional employment patterns and economic trends demonstrates the spatial mismatch between where entry-level and service sector jobs are located and where welfare recipients live.



Welfare-to-Work programs assist those rural counties that have informal transportation networks.

Not only does the spatial mismatch barrier hinder rural welfare recipients from obtaining available employment, inadequate transportation options create additional barriers to overcoming the transition from welfare to work.

Overcoming these transportation barriers is possible through innovative solutions. Examples of successful transportation coordination initiatives from regions across the country and from within Virginia provide a basis for discussion concerning the implementation of new transportation programs and services for the rural counties of the Richmond region.

An overview of funding alternatives for rural transportation programs offers insight on federal and state

(Continued on page 8)

TRIVIA Question 1: What was the first "Garden City" in the United States? (Answer on page 7.)

What's Happening in Our Capital Region?

Governance



Changes in prefiling bills during this year's General Assembly "short" session limited the time in which legislators had to prefile bills. For 2001, requests for drafting bills and resolutions had to be made by December 18, 2000 and then prefiled by January 10, 2001, the first day of the session. After this date, delegates were able to introduce only 6 bills and senators only 10.



Each year, the region's legislative liaisons present a list of regional priorities to the Capital Region Caucus—the legislative caucus comprised of the region's legislators. Highlighted in this year's list are issues such as library, education, juvenile detention and school construction funding, as well as cell towers, transportation, local land use and local grievance procedures. A copy of the liaisons' presentation can be found on the Richmond Regional PDC web site.

Air, Land and Water

The Powhatan Courthouse ISTEIA project: The Powhatan Courthouse ISTEIA project has received all environmental clearances. As a result, Powhatan County should be rebuilding the brick sidewalks around the courthouse and constructing a small parking area behind it next spring.

Earlier this fall, the Virginia Department of Transportation's (VDOT) Location and Design section reviewed the survey work and engineering design, then certified the right of way.

Based on these approvals, VDOT authorized the

advertisement of this project on October 5. The bid document, which must be advertised for a minimum of 21 days, is being prepared by Draper Aden Engineers. This document, the engineer's estimate, bid tabs and recommendation for the selection of the contractor for the construction must be approved by the Commonwealth Transportation Board at one of their regular monthly meetings. Once this has been done, construction can start.

For additional information on this project, contact Jacqueline Stewart at the Richmond Regional PDC.

Downtown

And now, the answer to the most frequently asked question downtown these days: With the Greater Richmond Convention Center's topping off ceremony in November, the construction of the long-awaited center is **on schedule and on time**. Completion of the center will synergize economic development in the area, offering convention-goers "an entire neighborhood of meeting space and four football fields of exhibit space." Some benchmarks include:

- May 2001: Ballroom opens
- June 2001: Parking deck to accommodate 500 cars
- April 2002: Exhibit halls are ready
- January 2003: Major exhibit hall opens



The topping-off ceremony for the Richmond Center marks a significant highpoint in completion of the facility.

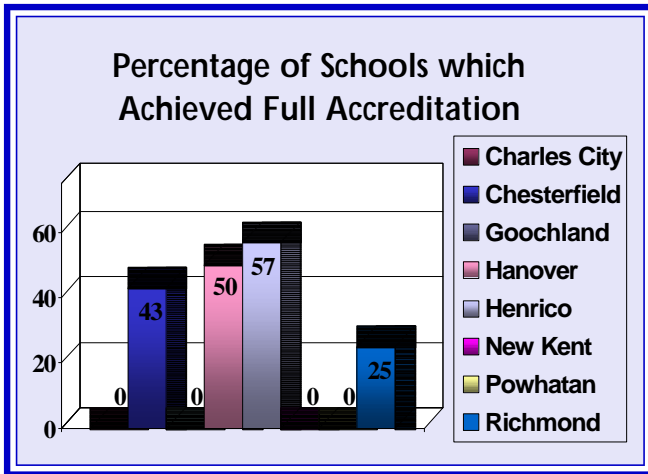
TRIVIA Question 2: In what country was the first automobile built? (Answer on page 7.)

What's Happening in Our Capital Region?

Learning

Students everywhere in our Richmond region are breathing a sign of relief—temporarily, at least. The testing is over for now. Below is a chart with data collected from our member governments comparing jurisdictions' spring 1999 SOL test scores.

Results show Henrico in the lead with 57 percent of its schools meeting requirements and Chesterfield in a close second with 50 percent.



Richmond Regional PDC and the NBC12 Angle Tree



PDC staff purchased toys and clothes for their adopted Angels as part of the Salvation Army Angel Tree Campaign.

The joy of giving was shared by the Richmond Regional PDC staff this year, as they participated in the NBC12/Salvation Army Angel Tree campaign. Six boys and girls, ranging from 2 to 10 years old, were “adopted.” The staff looks forward to expanding their community service in the future by selecting two projects a year in which to participate.



Farewell to Dr. Hassinger

James R. Hassinger, Executive Director for the Richmond Regional Planning District Commission since 1993, will be leaving his post in

Richmond this January to accept an exciting position at the Centralina Council of Governments in Charlotte, North Carolina as Executive Director.

During Dr. Hassinger’s tenure at the Richmond Regional PDC, he was involved in pursuing a future vision for the region that balanced the needs of the community with the challenges of the new millennium. Part of his passion included a sound transportation network which incorporated high-speed rail. He was instrumental in coordinating Focus Forward, the 1996 initiative that fostered a sense of regional community where the slogan, “RIMBY—The Region is My Backyard,” emerged.

The Richmond Regional PDC Personnel and Operating Policies Committee is currently performing a search to fill his position.

We wish you the best, Dr. Hassinger!

TRIVIA Question 3: Some historians claim that this event has had the second greatest impact on humanity after the discovery of the wheel. What is it? (Answer on page 7.)

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

Getting There...

Riding Rail Into Richmond

*Travelers will soon hear the words “All Aboard!” as the phrase **Back to the Future** offers new significance to the Richmond region—not that of a movie which debuted in the 1980s but that of a new transportation beginning—one utilized back in the early 1900s. In a sense, we are going back in time, and it is a good thing.*



All Aboard—trains are preparing to leave Main Street Station once more!

The ground-breaking ceremony which took place in October marked a major event which has the potential to expand economic development, improve personal mobility, increase Richmond's image as a

Preparations include:

- The abatement of hazardous materials
- Construction of a passenger platform—east side
- Construction of parking areas and mechanical plant
- Improvements to serve GRTC buses, airport shuttles and taxis.

Phase 2: Completion date 2003/2004. This phase brings premier Amtrak service to Richmond, allowing trains to originate downtown, increasing service to 8-10 trains daily.

Preparations include:

- Modification to existing rail infrastructure
- Construction of storage and service facility
- Establishment of Amtrak ticket office
- Construction of passenger platform and walkway—west side
- Franklin Street improvements to accommodate traffic
- Safety improvements from Main Street Station to the Staples Mill Station (made by state and federal governments and by CSX)

(Continued on page 8)

business destination and increase employment opportunities, adding 2,132 jobs to the region.

Sparking the celebration were city, state and federal officials, each connecting their vision of Richmond as a multimodal transportation hub with the efforts brought together by everyone gathered under the Main Street Clock tower for the ceremony.

Former Governor Linwood Holton, who sits on the Amtrak board of directors, summarized during the ceremony, “We have excellent highway and airline systems, but they are overcrowded.”

The \$47.6 million project is scheduled to be built in three phases:

Phase 1: Completion date early 2002. Phase I consists of reopening Main Street Station to rail passenger service.



State and federal elected officials participated in the Main Street Station ground-breaking ceremony.

TRIVIA Question 4: The maximum tax-free subsidy an employer can give an employee for using public transit is \$_____ per month while parking is \$_____. (Answer on page 7.)

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

Getting There...

Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) Moves Forward

The update to the area's LRTP—the document detailing the area's transportation improvements for the next 20 years—is underway. The plan, updated every 3 years, examines highway, transit, airports, ports and Intelligent Transportation Systems (see article on this page) elements.

Included in each year's Plan are highway, transit, ports and other projects which address transportation concerns throughout the region. The LRTP is intended to address transportation concerns that affect the greatest number of people. That's why, for example, the highway element focuses on projects for roads like Midlothian Turnpike, I-95 and transit examines future rail options.

Prior to the Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO) adoption of the Plan in March, the draft Plan will be placed in libraries for public review; public meetings will be scheduled during the month of February for citizens to provide comments.

Once adopted, the Plan will be forwarded to The Virginia Department of Transportation, the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration for review to ensure it meets all regulations and requirements. When this occurs, the Richmond region becomes eligible for federal funds to implement the projects in the LRTP.

LONG-RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN UPDATE TIMELINE

Task	Done
1. Pre-Project Planning	February 2000
2. Issue Formulation	March 2000
3. Data Collection/Assimilation	June 2000
4. Data Analysis	July 2000
5. Goals and Objectives	October 2000
6. Formulate Draft Plan	January 2001
7. Conformity Review	On-going
8. Public Review	Scheduled-February 2001
9. MPO Adoption	Scheduled-March 2001
10. VDOT, FHWA Review	Scheduled-April 2001
11. Conforming LRTP in Place	Scheduled-April 2001

For additional information on the LRTP, contact Daniel Rudge at the Richmond Regional PDC.



The City of Richmond Traffic Signal System

ITS

Which scenario do you prefer:

Scenario 1: You must catch the bus at 7:30 a.m. on a cold, blustery winter day, which will be late because of the weather—but just how late? The only option you have is to drag yourself outside and wait it out, only to find that once the bus arrives, you have waited outside for 45 long, cold minutes.

Scenario 2: You must catch the bus at 7:30 a.m. on that same cold, blustery winter day. Except this time, you pick up the phone and call the one-stop information center which informs you that your bus will arrive 45 minutes late. So you pour yourself another cup of coffee and read the newspaper while waiting in the warmth and comfort of your living room.

The 1998 Transportation Efficiency Act (TEA-21) mandates that each MPO incorporates Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) into its transportation planning process. ITS involves using the latest in advanced technologies to increase the safety and efficiency of the transportation system. For example, before leaving home, commuters may be able to log onto their personal computers and get real-time travel information regarding their drive into work, or simply make a phone call to access travel information for all modes of transportation.

(Continued on page 7)

TRIVIA Question 5: The world's first steel bridge was built in what city? (Answer on page 7.)

Getting There...

Bicycle Study Update

In the last issue of the Richmond Regional PDC newsletter, we reported on a bicycle pilot study announced by VDOT. Since then, the MPO established a Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Study Advisory Committee at its November MPO meeting comprised of technical staff from all jurisdictions as well as a member from the Greater Richmond Transit Company System (GRTCS), VDOT, the Sierra Club, the MPO's Citizens Transportation Advisory Committee (CTAC), and the Richmond Area Bicycling Association. This committee will review the detailed work scope and provide comments and recommended action to VDOT so the scope can be finalized. ●●●●●●●●●●

ITS (Continued from page 6.)

The Richmond region has identified a goal to develop a framework for intergovernmental coordination that promotes regional cooperation and prosperity when addressing transportation issues within the region. One of the strategies in reaching this goal is to develop an ITS working committee (within two years) to identify and implement ITS technologies that mitigate traffic congestion in the Richmond region.

Although VDOT is the lead agency for the Richmond region's ITS program, the Richmond Area MPO has been involved in providing overall guidance and direction for the implementation of the regional ITS plan through its ITS Steering Committee. This committee, which includes local administrators, planners and engineers in the Richmond region working with VDOT and other transportation agencies, was responsible for developing the *ITS Early Deployment Study Richmond/Tri-Cities Area* in 1996. This report identifies specific short- and long-term ITS projects, needs and direction.

Many of the short-term ITS projects and tasks are underway—VDOT's regional Smart Traffic Center located in Chester is in operation and is continuing to develop as the traffic information hub for the region; Variable Message Signs (VMS) and Portable Variable Message Signs (PVMS) are managing traffic through highway accidents and construction projects; Highway Advisory Radios (HAR) are alerting motorists of traffic

THE ITS IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

- Establish an on-going group to coordinate ITS planning
- Develop system for exchanging data among local agencies
- Install Incident Detection System
- Improve signal coordination and timing plan implementation on major diversion routes
- Develop and implement coordinated Highway Advisory Radio (HAR) and Variable Message Signs (VMS) systems
- Develop regionwide or statewide standard for electronic toll collection
- Provide real-time transit schedule/location information
- Establish one phone number accessing travel information for all modes
- Improve interagency coordination at incidents
- Establish VDOT's smart traffic as the centralized information manager

situations on interstate highways; Electronic Toll Collection Systems (Smart Tags) are keeping traffic flowing on the Powhite Parkway, Powhite Extension, Downtown Expressway and the Boulevard Bridge; and a synchronized traffic signal system is moving traffic efficiently through some of the busiest streets in Richmond.

Currently there are several areawide and districtwide ITS projects identified in the Transportation Improvement Program. They include continued funding for the Smart Traffic Center, Variable Message Signs, Highway Advisory Radios and the Fiber Optic Resource Sharing Initiative.

ITS strategies and alternatives will be integrated into the upcoming Long-Range Transportation Plan and the Congestion Management System. Plans to reactivate the ITS Steering Committee are also underway to ensure that this region will continue to move forward with the latest in ITS technologies and initiatives.

For addition information, contact Wanda Moore at the Richmond Regional PDC.

Answers to Trivia Questions

1. The first "Garden City" was Radburn, NJ.
2. The first automobile was built in Germany in 1898.
3. The Model T, which made automobile ownership affordable for the "common man."
4. \$65 and \$175—A tax law change that took effect on January 1, 2000 allows the \$65 transit pass to be paid from pre-tax wages.
5. The world's first steel bridge was built in London in 1794.

For more information on this and other articles, contact the Richmond Regional Planning District Commission at 358-3684 or e-mail us at richmondregional@richmondregional.org.

Getting There...

(Continued from page 2)

funding sources available for rural transportation improvements. Based on the research, three goals are developed for improving rural transportation services: 1.) Sustainability over a period of time 2.) Affordability for the individual 3.) Cost-effectiveness of services.

Four recommendations, which provide the path to attaining those goals, are offered. These include: 1.) Promote and use existing public and private transportation services in the rural areas 2.) Expand existing transportation services to the rural region 3.) Build relationships with social services and other community groups to share vehicles 4.) Fill in the remaining gaps by developing new service in the rural areas.

The combination of a goal oriented system and a systematic approach to rural transportation issues will lay the foundation for an improved transportation system in the rural communities and throughout the region.

To view the full document, access our web site at www.richmondregional.org or contact Christine Holt at the Richmond Regional PDC.

(Continued from page 5)

Phase 3: Completion date mid-2005. Phase 3 expands the passenger rail service and establishes a multimodal center at the facility to include Amtrak's southeast corridor trains to stop downtown, an intercity bus terminal and facilities to integrate GRTC bus/trolley service, airport shuttles and taxis, increasing rail passenger service to 16-17 trains/day.

Preparations include:

- Purchase of remaining Main Street Station from the state
- Additional rail infrastructure
- Alterations to the train shed
- Modifications/expansion of platforms, ticket office and rail passenger amenities
- Construction of an intercity bus terminal
- Construction of additional parking facilities

A call for artists was sent out by the Department of Community Development, seeking proposals for original artwork which would enhance the station's identity and welcome patrons. Selected proposals will be reviewed by the City Planning Commission in February.

Richmond Regional Planning District Commission

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

The Richmond Regional PDC newsletter can also be accessed on our web site:

www.richmondregional.org

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