

Chapter 9 – Public Transportation System

Transit System

For many long-time Richmond residents, fond memories include the old streetcars that traveled along Broad Street and other corridors to provide public transportation in Richmond. When the old track system was removed and replaced with fixed-route transit service, the end of an era occurred in Richmond. Since that time, more and more Richmond area residents have relied on private automobiles for the majority of their trips and public transportation services shifted to filling the needs of the area's transportation dependent. Today, the Richmond area has a public transit network that is limited by funding and jurisdictional support for such services.

The GRTC Transit System (GRTC) is the sole fixed bus route service provider in the Richmond region. GRTC is a non-profit public service corporation, owned by the City of Richmond and Chesterfield County and governed by a Board of Directors. GRTC currently operates 41 fixed routes throughout the City of Richmond with service extending into Henrico County. Two express routes operate on a trial basis in Chesterfield County, and one express route operates to Petersburg. In addition to the fixed route system, GRTC oversees RideFinders, the region's transportation demand management agency, supports the Capital Region Taxicab Advisory Board (CRTAB), contracts with outside agencies to provide Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) services for the region's elderly and disabled population, and oversees C-VAN, a welfare-to-work transportation service provided in cooperation with local social service agencies.

The City of Richmond is served by a network of fixed-route bus lines operating along a radial route system. The routes provide the spokes of the traditional transit hub and spoke system, with downtown Richmond serving as the hub. Downtown Richmond was traditionally the commercial and employment center of the region. However, beginning in the 1980s and continuing through the 1990s, the Richmond area began to exhibit rapid suburban development similar to other communities in the country. With it came relocation of commercial and employment sites away from downtown and into suburban areas that had little or no transit service.

While GRTC has added several new routes and has attempted to modify existing services, many commercial and office developments still do not have transit service. This is due in large part to financial constraints placed on GRTC. GRTC was included in the top 15 most efficient transit systems in the country in a 2000 study released by the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Much of its efficiency is due to its limited service area and hours of service. Without some form of additional operating subsidies, service expansion and improvements will be difficult. According to the 2001 Comprehensive Operational Analysis, GRTC has fewer vehicle revenue miles than similarly sized metropolitan areas. In short, GRTC has a highly efficient service in a limited service area that has not grown to match suburban growth patterns in the region.

Existing GRTC bus routes are described in Figure 9-1 and are shown graphically on Map 9-1.

Figure 9-1: Existing GRTC Bus Routes

1/2 – Church Hill/Monument/Patterson	Downtown, Broad St., 21 st St. & Marshall, Chimborazo, Oakwood, R St., Sheppard, Monument, Briel, St. Mary’s Hospital, Patterson, Three Chopt, Regency Square
3/4 – Robinson/Fairmount	Downtown, Broad St., 22 nd St., Fairfield Court area, Whitcomb Court area, Mechanicsville Tpk., Robinson St., South Meadow, Maymont Park, Cary St., Idlewood Ave., Douglasdale Rd. (U.R.Stadium)
6 – Broad St./Main St.	Downtown, Broad St., Grace, 8 th St., Main, Willow Lawn, Williamsburg Rd., Montrose Heights, Darbytown
7 – Seven Pines	Downtown, Broad St., Nine Mile Rd., Fairfield Commons, Seven Pines/Highland Springs area, Williamsburg Rd., Airport area
10 – Riverview/Jefferson	Downtown, Broad St., Jefferson Ave., M St., Creighton Ct., Richmond Community Hospital, Harrison St., Idlewood Ave., Colorado Ave., Riverview area
11 – Laurel/17 th Street	Downtown, Broad St., Laurel St., Oregon Hill area, Main St., 18 th St., Oliver Hill Court Building, Mosby Court area
13 – Main Street/Church Hill	Downtown, Broad St., Main St., Cary St., 25 th St., Marshall St., Oakwood Ave., Briel St., Westmoreland, Grove, Commonwealth Ave., River Road Shopping Center
16 – Westhampton	Downtown, Grove Ave., University of Richmond
18 – Henrico Shuttle	Willow Lawn Shopping Center, West Broad St., Henrico Government Center, Parham Road, Staples Mill Road
19 – Pemberton Rd.	Broad St., at 10 th St., west to Pemberton Road
20 – Northside – Dill Rd./Willow Lawn	Dill Rd., Pollock St., W. Broad St., Willow Lawn Shopping Center
22 – Hermitage/Oak Grove	Downtown, Broad St., Lombardy, Brook, Harrison, 14 th St., Azalea Mall
24 – Lakeside	Downtown, Broad St., Boulevard, Westwood, Hamilton, Hermitage, Westbrook, Crestwood
26 – Parham Rd. Express	Parham Rd. / Fordson Rd. Park-N-Ride lot to downtown
27 – Glenside Express	Glenside Dr. / Staples Mill Rd. Park-N-Ride lot to downtown
28 – Fair Oaks Express	Airport Dr. / Audubon Dr. Park-N-Ride lot to downtown
29 – Gaskins Express	Gaskins Rd. / Mayland Dr. Park-N-Ride lot to downtown
32 – Ginter Park	Downtown, North Ave., Laburnum Ave., Fendall Ave., Ginter Park / Washington Park area
34 – Highland Park	Downtown, Fourth Ave., First Ave., Meadowbridge Rd., Highland St.
37 – Chamberlayne	Downtown, Chamberlayne Ave., Brook Rd., former Azalea Mall site
56 – S. Laburnum	7 th St., 9 th St., Broad St., 35 th St., Glenwood, Darbytown Rd., S. Laburnum Ave., Richmond International Airport
61 – Broad Rock Shuttle	Broad Rock, Southside Plaza, Westover Hills, Crutchfield, Forest Hill Ave. (Midlothian K-Mart on Sundays only)
62/63 – Hull St./Midlothian	Downtown at 7 th & Broad, Hull St., Midlothian and Broad Rock corridors
64 – Stony Point Express	Old Gun Rd., Duryea Dr., Forest Hill Ave., Huguenot High School to downtown

65 – Stony Point Fashion Park/VCU Health System (Express)	Downtown, VCU Health System at Stony Point, Stony Point Fashion Park
66 – K-Mart Express	K-Mart, Midlothian Turnpike, German School Rd., Forest Hill Ave. to downtown
67 – Chippenham	Chippenham Mall, Warwick Rd., Clarkson Rd., Southwood, Hull St., Bainbridge St., Commerce Rd., downtown
70/71 – Forest Hill	Downtown, Lee Bridge, Semmes Ave., Forest Hill Ave., Wal-Mart, Huguenot High School, Jahnke Rd., Chippenham Hospital, Carnation St., Midlothian Tpk., K-Mart, Stony Point Shopping Ctr.
72/73 – Ruffin Rd. / Amphill	Route 72: Downtown, Manchester Bridge, Jefferson Davis Hwy, Ruffin Rd., Commerce Rd., Phillip Morris, Maxxim Medical. Route 73: Downtown, Manchester Bridge, Jefferson Davis Hwy, Dupont/Amphill area, Food Lion
74 – Oak Grove	Downtown, Belvidere, Broad, Marshall, Commerce, Hull, Lynhaven, Brady
81 – Chesterfield Plaza Express	Chesterfield Plaza/Koger Center Blvd. Park-N-Ride lot at Lowe’s to downtown
82 – Winterpock / Lowe’s / Commonwealth 20 Express	Winterpock Rd./Hull St. Park-N-Ride at Lowe’s to Commonwealth 20 to downtown
90 – Regency Square / VA Center Commons	Regency Square Mall, Fargo Rd., Parham Rd., Henrico County Government Center, Villa Park Dr., Brook Rd., J. Sargeant Reynolds CC, Virginia Center Commons Mall
91 – Laburnum Connector	Willow Lawn, W. Broad St., Westwood Ave., Laburnum, Seven Gables Apartments, Nine Mile Rd., Eastgate Blvd., Colwyck, Fairfield Commons
92 – Lakeside Connector	Henrico Depot, Woodman Rd., Vernon Rd., Waddill, Dumbarton, Lakeside, Brook, former Azalea Mall site, Parham, Lydell
95 – Richmond/Petersburg Express	Tabb St. and Union St. Park-N-Ride lots to downtown

Fixed Route System Analysis

In 2000, GRTC contracted with Urbitran Associates, Inc. to conduct a comprehensive operational analysis (COA) of the transit operations. This section is taken from the 2001 COA Final Report, and examines areas where transit service would be important in the urban and/or urbanizing jurisdictions in the Richmond area.

City of Richmond

Many portions of the City of Richmond have characteristics that would suggest the existence of both a need and a market for public transportation. These indicators include density of population, significant number of persons who are elderly or who reside in households with income below the poverty level, households with one or no automobiles, persons commuting to jobs in downtown Richmond or other places with concentrations of employment. In Richmond, GRTC has recognized these factors and responded to these needs. The following observations can be made:

- The area generally bounded by I-95, Broad Street, and Belvidere Street has the highest population density in the city. It also has significant populations with low car ownership and households in poverty. A concentration of employment exists at the eastern end of the area. This area is currently served by almost all GRTC routes. Service commensurate with the market should be retained.
- Significant numbers of households with incomes below the poverty level are found throughout the city, with particular concentrations south of I-64 and east of I-95, between I-95 and the James River south of Bellemeade, and in the tract north of Midlothian Turnpike just east of Chippenham Parkway. GRTC service is available to all these areas and should be maintained.
- The current route structure is responsive to commuting patterns with significant transit service available to areas showing higher percentages of work travel to downtown Richmond.
- Large areas of Richmond south of the James River show low car ownership, indicative of a probable transit need, but transit service is relatively sparse compared to other portions of the city. Opportunities for service enhancement should be investigated.
- The portions of the city west of I-195/Powhite Parkway have the fewest indicators of transit need. The portion of this area south of the James River shows relatively low percentages of residents commuting to downtown Richmond and is the portion of the city with the least transit service.
- Service to employment concentrations is desirable. The greatest concentration of jobs is in the downtown/State Capitol area. Other concentrations are found along West Broad Street, in the corridor between Broad Street and I-95, along Jefferson Davis Highway, and along Midlothian Turnpike near the city line. Good transit service is available to downtown and West Broad Street employment areas. The need for enhancing service to the job concentrations south of the James River should be examined. Residential areas with a high percentage of their work trips to downtown are located primarily in near West End (west of I-195, north of Forest Hill Avenue, east of St. Christopher's Road and south of Monument Avenue).
- The number of jobs in the city is projected to decrease, but at a modest rate. The projected increase in employment opportunities in other areas of the region should allow many of these new jobs to be filled by city residents, with commuting patterns to and from downtown remaining much as they are today. There is a need to develop reverse commute services from the city to outlying employment centers.
- Clusters of persons most likely to be in need of transit are located in Southwest Richmond (east of Chippenham Parkway, south of the Powhite Parkway, and north of Walmsley Boulevard) and in south Richmond (along the I-95/U.S. Route 1 corridor, south of Mimosa Street). Several of these areas with high concentrations of persons below poverty, elderly persons, and zero car households are not currently served by GRTC.

Map 9-1: Existing Transit and Park and Ride Network

- Service to hospitals and medical facilities is desirable. All hospitals in Richmond are accessible by transit.
- Service to higher education facilities including the University of Richmond (Route #16), Virginia Union University (Route #22), Virginia Commonwealth University (Routes #1/2, 3/4, 6, 10, 11, 16, 19, 24), Medical College of Virginia (Routes #1/2, 3/4, 7, 10, 19, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29, 37, 64, 65, 66, 81, 82, 95), and J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College (Route #90) should be maintained.

Chesterfield County

- Service is desirable for persons living in the area near Chippenham Parkway, from Jefferson Davis Highway west to Powhite Parkway.
- Service is desirable to employment opportunities and medical facilities in the Midlothian Turnpike corridor. The land use element of the comprehensive plan should be reviewed to determine other areas where employment opportunities exist and consideration should be given to providing services to those areas.
- Service should be available to the courthouse and to health facilities in the Chesterfield County Complex.
- Service to community college campuses is desirable.
- There is a market for commuters to Richmond, particularly from the western Midlothian Turnpike corridor. This area is currently served by the 81 Chesterfield Plaza Express.

Hanover County

- Service for persons in poverty is desirable. Persons in poverty were found in areas located north of the Town of Ashland border.
- Service to employment concentrations is desirable. A few census tracts with 1,000 to 5,000 jobs are scattered throughout central Hanover County (along the U.S. 1 and I-95 corridors) and in the southeast (along the Henrico County border, north of Mechanicsville Turnpike).
- The area with the largest number of work trips to downtown Richmond is located in Central Hanover County, along the border of Henrico County.
- Service to Randolph-Macon College and other educational institutions is desirable.
- Currently, GRTC provides no transit service in Hanover County.

Henrico County

- Service for the elderly is desirable, particularly in areas located in central and western Henrico County, west of U.S. Route 1 to the Goochland/Henrico border. Specifically, several clusters are located south of I-64. GRTC Routes #1/2 and 6 currently provide limited service to some of those areas.

- Services for persons below poverty is desirable, particularly in areas located in central Henrico County, in between the City of Richmond and Hanover County borders (east of Highway 2 and north of Lake Drive). No service is currently provided to these areas.
- Service to employment concentrations is desirable. The Dabney Center Industrial Park located along the Richmond border, south of I-64/Staples Mill Road section has 10,000 to 15,000 jobs and no GRTC service. The Innsbrook employment area north of West Broad Street near I-295 should also be served.
- Henrico County had 232,725 jobs in 2000 and is anticipated to have 323,866 jobs by 2026, a percentage change of 39 percent and the largest absolute growth in the region. If these forecasts hold, by 2026 Henrico County will continue to have the most jobs of any of the region's jurisdictions and only minimal transit service.

Transfer Centers

The Comprehensive Operational Analysis also examined the need of GRTC to move away from a hub (downtown Richmond) and spoke (transit routes) system to one that provides multiple transfer locations that link multiple jurisdictions without the need for going downtown (to the hub) along one spoke and transferring to another spoke. The COA recommended the following transfer center locations:

- Downtown between 7th and 8th Streets on Grace Street (Currently unavailable due to the Federal Courthouse relocation)
- Southside Plaza (short term satellite location)
- Willow Lawn (short term satellite location)
- Former Azalea Mall (short term satellite location)
- Regency Square Mall (long term satellite location)
- Fair Oaks Park and Ride/Richmond Airport (long term satellite location)
- Virginia Center Commons (long term satellite location)
- Chesterfield Town Center (long term satellite location)
- Chippenham Mall (long term satellite location)
- Du-Pont/K-Mart/Amphill (long term satellite location)

Paratransit Service

GRTC's Community Assisted Ride Enterprise (CARE) service is a curb-to-curb service available to eligible customers in the system's fixed-route service area. Operated on a contract basis by Laidlaw Transit Services, Inc. of Richmond, the service area includes the City of Richmond and Henrico County. To be eligible for service, an application must be submitted to GRTC's Customer Service Department. Customers are approved based on eligibility requirements established by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and receive an identification card and program information.

Tickets for CARE service are sold in books of six for \$13.50 or \$2.25 per ticket and can be purchased at GRTC ticket outlets or by mail. Each ticket is good for a one-way trip. Standing reservations may be made for customers who travel between the same origin and

destination at the same time at least four days a week. This allows customers whose trips occur on a regular basis to avoid making individual phone reservations for each trip. Customers may not change origins/destinations or time of travel for standing reservations. Cancellations require a minimum two-hour advance notice.

Demand response trips are defined as those that occur three days per week or less, and require travel from varied origins and destinations. Reservations for each trip must be made in advance at least one day before the trip. Reservations are accepted between 8:00 A.M. and 4:30 P.M. Cancellations must be made at least two hours in advance of the arranged pick-up time.

CARE service operates in the City of Richmond on weekdays and weekends between the hours of 5:30 A.M. and 12:30 A.M. Service is provided in Henrico County weekdays between the hours of 6:00 A.M. and 7:00 P.M. CARE service is unavailable on major holidays.

The overall level of service in the City of Richmond is adequate in both coverage and availability. Because Henrico has agreed to comprehensive service throughout the county, coverage is not an issue but evening and weekend availability is a concern. There are a number of residents in Chesterfield County who would qualify for ADA paratransit service but do not have access to it. According to GRTC, current demand can be met, but the need for CARE service is expected to expand a great deal in the coming 20 years. Senior population will be increasing faster on a percentage basis than total population. In addition, the general population is also expected to grow rapidly which will place even further strains on the CARE services.

New Technologies and Service Techniques

Given the size of GRTC, the following new technologies should be able to become a reality during the next 10 years:

- Low-emission diesel, alternatively-fueled or electric/electric-hybrid buses that make up the vast majority of the GRTC fleet.
- Intelligent Transportation System technology applied to fleet management, including traffic signal preemption.
- Real-time passenger information system at stop locations, in transit vehicles, at kiosks or via the Internet.
- Use of magnetic swipe cards as fare collection media, contact and radio frequency cards to update accounts and facilitate the fare payment process for customers while reducing fare collection times and costs for GRTC buses.
- Use of Bus Rapid Transit facilities. This may include dedicated bus lanes on an existing roadway or guideways off a street that is reserved for exclusive use by transit vehicles. Systems of this type are already in use in Pittsburgh and Ottawa.
- Installation of bicycle racks on buses. This service will expand public transit's service area given other improvements to accommodate bicyclists (see Chapter 10).

Public Transportation Services in Rural Counties

In 2000, the Richmond Regional Planning District Commission examined the public transportation services available in the remaining rural jurisdictions. Updated excerpts from that study are included below.

An analysis of commuting patterns, employment growth, and specified transportation issues displays the transportation demands within the rural counties. Commuting patterns prove more rural residents travel daily into the central core of the Richmond region. Employment analysis shows similar results, and indicates that suburban communities will experience more job openings and will increase the commuting rate into these areas. Discussions about transportation demands in the rural communities have shown a small population in need of after hours transportation, shuttles to employment centers, educational centers, flexibility, and direct access to urban and suburban communities.

While there are a variety of transportation options throughout the Richmond region, there are no services that unify the rural communities with the remainder of the region. Large-scale urban transit service through GRTC is currently limited to the larger localities, and does not extend into the rural counties. Community action agencies and specialized paratransit services and taxi cabs are the only transit options available to residents of Charles City, Goochland, New Kent, and Powhatan counties. Many individuals do not utilize this service because of limited availability and cost, and may opt to rely on family and friends for transportation to and from work. Ridefinder's carpool and vanpool services are an additional work commuting option available to rural residents of these counties.

Charles City County

- Commuting patterns in Charles City County show over 48 percent of workers travel into the City of Richmond and Chesterfield and Henrico counties.
- Only 22 percent commute to work within county bounds.
- The majority of job growth continues to occur in the suburban areas of the Richmond region, especially Chesterfield and Henrico, while job growth in Charles City County remains marginal. This displays a need for transportation services to those areas of higher job growth.
- Charles City County maintains a higher unemployment rate (2.7%) than state (2.2%) or regional rates (1.9%) and a significantly higher rate of households below the poverty level than the region (17%).
- Quin Rivers Community Action Agency provides much of the transportation services available to residents of Charles City County. Additional vans and funding for maintenance are desired to continue these transportation services.
- Residents, especially low-income, elderly and disabled, indicate a need for reliable transportation services.

New Kent County

- Commuting patterns of New Kent workers indicate 49 percent travel into the City of Richmond, Chesterfield or Henrico counties.
- Only 20 percent commute to work within county bounds.
- Services connecting western New Kent to employment centers in the core of the Richmond region will benefit these commuters.
- While a significant amount of job growth has occurred in New Kent, total numerical job growth in the suburban counties of the Richmond region will continue to outpace New Kent County.
- Additional services for persons in poverty are desirable, especially to employment centers in Henrico County and the City of Richmond.

Goochland County

- Residents primarily commute into Henrico County (35%) and the City of Richmond (21%) while 28% work within county bounds.
- Job growth continues to outpace population growth.
- Additional job growth is expected due to the extension of the West Creek facilities. Transportation services to this employment center will be beneficial to those below poverty.
- Goochland Fellowship and Family Services and the Powhatan-Goochland Community Action agency provide limited services for low-income persons.
- Transportation services for low-income families to childcare and retail centers are desired.
- Transportation services to employment centers during the day as well as evening hours are needed. Shuttle services offer a possible solution.
- Additional after hours services to a nightly health clinic and education centers will be beneficial for low-income persons.

Powhatan County

- Commuting patterns of Powhatan workers indicate over 66 percent travel into Chesterfield and Henrico counties or the City of Richmond daily.
- Limited services for low-income persons are currently provided through the Powhatan-Goochland Community Action Agency. Additional vans and drivers are continually needed to maintain these services.
- Services to employment and educational centers are desirable, especially if those areas contain additional connections to GRTC.
- A service to retail centers such as Chesterfield Town Center is desirable. This service will provide access to goods and services as well as employment.

