

**RICHMOND AREA  
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION  
2031 LONG-RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN**

**PART 2**

**PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**



# Chapter 4 – Citizen Participation

## Introduction

*“Each Metropolitan Planning Organization shall provide citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, and other interested parties with a reasonable opportunity to comment on the transportation plan.”*

Title VI of SAFETEA-LU Section 134 (i)(5)(a)

Initiated under the mandate of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA), strengthened in the provisions of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), and continued in 2005’s Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act, A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), public participation in the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) planning process is an integral part of regional transportation plans.

This chapter provides a summary of the processes and comments obtained as a result of the public input process. It is necessary to establish a free exchange of information and allow for public input at all stages of the planning process. In order for the public input process to be effective, it must be proactive; it must provide complete information to the public; there must be timely public notices to ensure the public’s awareness of the opportunities; the public must be allowed to provide input toward decisions; the process must begin early and be continuing; and the process must involve a broad cross-section of the public.

This chapter is divided into three major sections: Joint Technical/Citizen LRTP Advisory Committee; Initial Public Review Activities; and Final Draft LRTP Public Review Activities.

## Joint Technical/Citizen LRTP Advisory Committee

The primary mechanism for on-going public input to the Long-Range Transportation Plan is through the MPO’s Long-Range Transportation Plan Advisory Committee. The LRTP Advisory Committee is composed of voting members from the MPO’s Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), Citizens Transportation Advisory Committee (CTAC) and the Elderly and Disabled Advisory Committee (EDAC). There are nine TAC members (one from each MPO area local government), four CTAC members (appointed at-large by CTAC) and three EDAC members (appointed at-large by EDAC). There are also non-voting transportation advisors on the committee composed of other TAC members and staffs from area state and regional transportation agencies and organizations. A summary list of the committee membership shown on the inside front cover of the document.

As a joint technical/citizen advisory committee, the LRTP Advisory Committee provides on-going citizen involvement for development of the 2031 LRTP with citizens empowered as voting members on the committee. Notice for all LRTP Advisory Committee meetings is posted on the RRPDC website, with meeting agendas faxed or emailed to area news media

and interested citizens. Each LRTP Advisory Committee meeting has an open comment period at the beginning of the meeting.

## **Initial Public Review Activities**

An extensive effort was made to provide widespread notice of a public review meeting asking for input in defining the transportation vision for the region before developing and evaluating possible projects. During a 45 day period the MPO staff offered to bring a presentation on the LRTP and survey document to any interested groups or organizations. The following section details the activities and results of the initial public review meetings, and the results of the citizen survey. Notice of the public review period was posted on the RRPDC website from October 31, 2007 to January 22, 2008.

### ***November 17 Public Review Meeting***

The public review meeting was held at the offices of the Richmond Regional Planning District Commission on Saturday, November 17, 2007, from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm. Presentation boards were on display to inform the public of highlights from various transportation plans, studies, and reports, providing demographic data and forecasts for population and employment, and providing background information on the MPO member organizations, and the MPO's planning and programming process. Staff was available to guide participants through the various display boards and to answer individual questions. Staff also had a PowerPoint presentation on the MPO planning and programming process (with two showings during the meeting period). After completing a review of the various display boards and/or the PowerPoint presentation, participants were asked to complete the survey/questionnaire and to provide feedback on how they found out about the meeting.

A total of 25 persons were in attendance (not including staff). Participants identified their affiliations as follows:

- Private Citizens ..... 13 (52%)
- Non-Profit/Advocacy Groups ..... 8 (32%)
- Transit representatives ..... 2 (8%)
- Local Government ..... 2 (8%)

### ***Public Outreach Meetings***

During the public review period, staff conducted three public outreach meetings providing information on the MPO and obtaining additional citizen input (additional survey/questionnaires completed). These three meetings were held as follows (dates and organizations noted):

- November 14, 2007 – Resources for Independent Living
- December 12, 2007 – United Way of Greater Richmond and Petersburg; Older Adults Action Council
- January 16, 2008 – United Way of Greater Richmond and Petersburg; Community Building Committee Board

### *Transportation Survey/Questionnaire*

In an effort to obtain citizen views, comments and priorities for transportation issues and projects, staff prepared, distributed, and made available a transportation survey/questionnaire (see the Appendix). This survey was posted on the RRPDC website (for downloading as a hard copy, then completing and returning by mail or by fax). Notice of the survey was provided in various media or distributed (see the Appendix).

A total of 54 surveys were completed and returned. Results of survey findings are provided in the next section and citizen comments are provided in the Appendix. Note that this survey should not be considered a random sample and therefore, no statistical significance can be concluded from its results. However, the survey does reflect opinions and responses from interested and concerned citizens.

### **Transportation Survey/Questionnaire Results**

The transportation survey/questionnaire results were presented and reviewed at the January 24, 2008 LRTP Advisory Committee meeting. The following results were presented for each section of the survey. Note that these survey results were presented and discussed with the LRTP Advisory Committee prior to its review and selection of proposed new projects.

#### **1. ABOUT YOU**

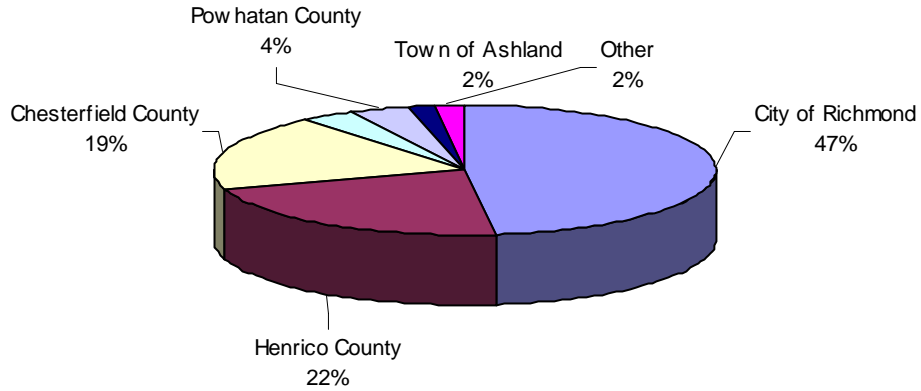
The first section asks questions about the respondents including where the respondents live, work or go to school, how far they travel to work or school, what mode of transportation is used to make these trips, what time they leave home for work or school and what time they leave to return home.

##### ***Where do you live?***

As shown in Figure 1, approximately 47 percent of the respondents live in the City of Richmond; 22 percent live in Henrico County; 19 percent live in Chesterfield County; and 8 percent live in either Hanover or Powhatan counties (including the Town of Ashland). Approximately 2 percent of the respondents said they lived in a community outside the planning district.

**Figure 4-1**

**WHERE DO YOU LIVE?**

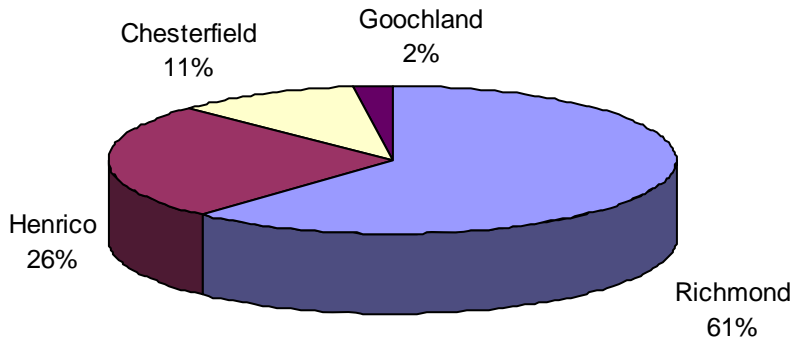


***Where do you work or go to school?***

As shown in Figure 2, more than half of the respondents (61 percent) stated they work in the City of Richmond, while 26 percent said they work in Henrico County, 11 percent work in Chesterfield County, and 2% work in Goochland County.

**Figure 4-2**

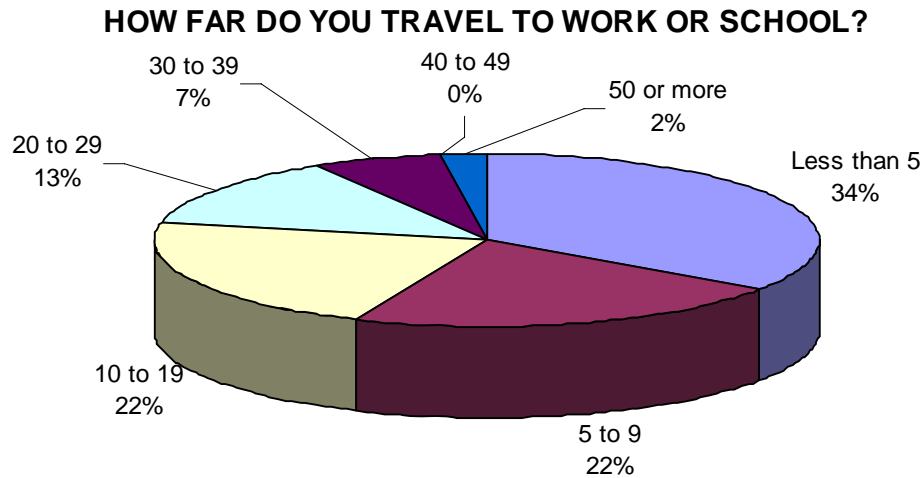
**WHERE DO YOU WORK OR GO TO SCHOOL?**



### *How far do you travel to work or school?*

The average travel distance to work or school of all the respondents is approximately 12 miles. As shown in Figure 3, 34 percent of the respondents said they travel five miles or less to work or school, 22 percent said they travel between five and 9 miles, while 22 percent said they travel between 10 and 19 miles to work or school. Only 22 percent of respondents travel 20 miles or more to work or school.

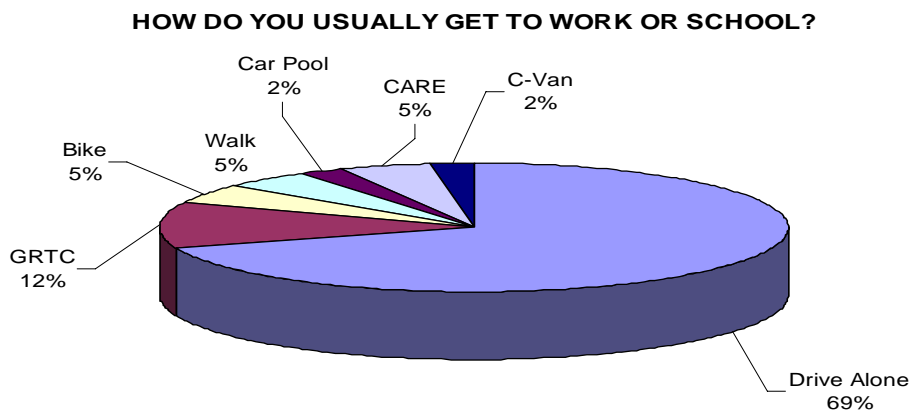
**Figure 4-3**



### *How do you usually get to work or school?*

A majority of the respondents (69 percent) who answered the question stated that they drive alone to work or school (Figure 4). Nineteen percent of the respondents said they use public transportation (GRTC, C-Van, or CARE) to travel to work or school. Approximately 12 percent said they walk (5 percent), bike (5 percent), or carpool (2 percent).

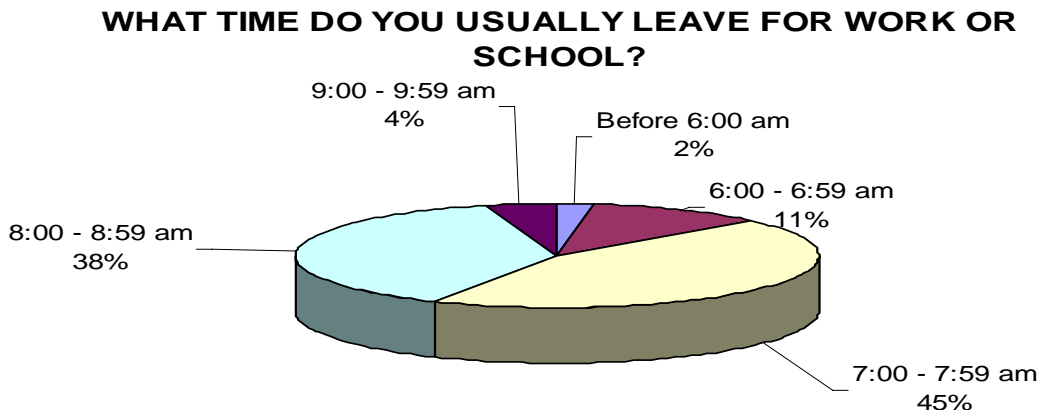
**Figure 4-4**



***What time do you usually leave home for work or school?***

As shown in Figure 5, approximately 83 percent of the respondents stated that they leave home in the typical morning peak commuter period (7:00 A.M. to 8:59 A.M.). Approximately 11 percent of the respondents stated they leave home in the hour prior to the morning peak commuter period (6:00 A.M. to 6:59 A.M.) and 4 percent said they leave home in the hour after the morning peak commuter period (9:00 A.M. to 9:59 A.M.).

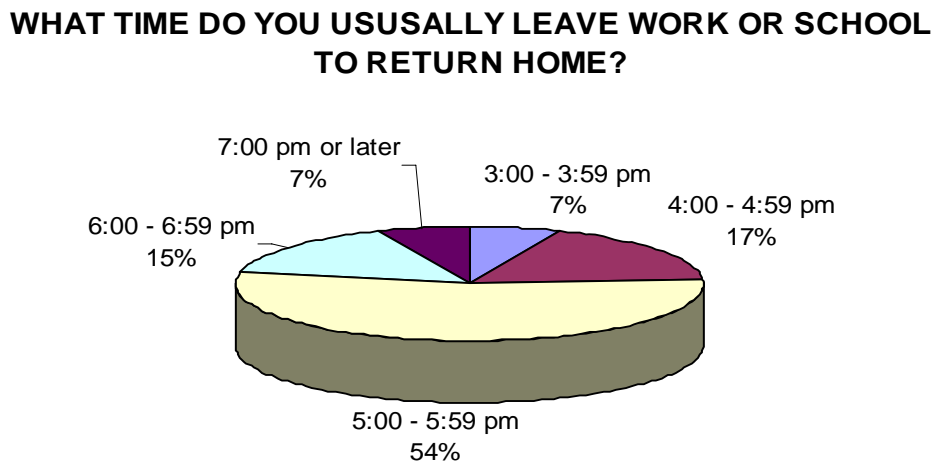
**Figure 4-5**



***What time do you usually leave work or school to return home?***

As shown in Figure 6, approximately 71 percent of the respondents stated that they leave work in the typical evening peak commuter period (4:00 P.M. to 5:59 P.M.). Approximately 7 percent of the respondents stated they leave work or school in the hour prior to the evening peak commuter period (3:00 P.M. to 3:59 P.M.) and 22 percent said that they leave work at 6:00 PM or later.

**Figure 4-6**

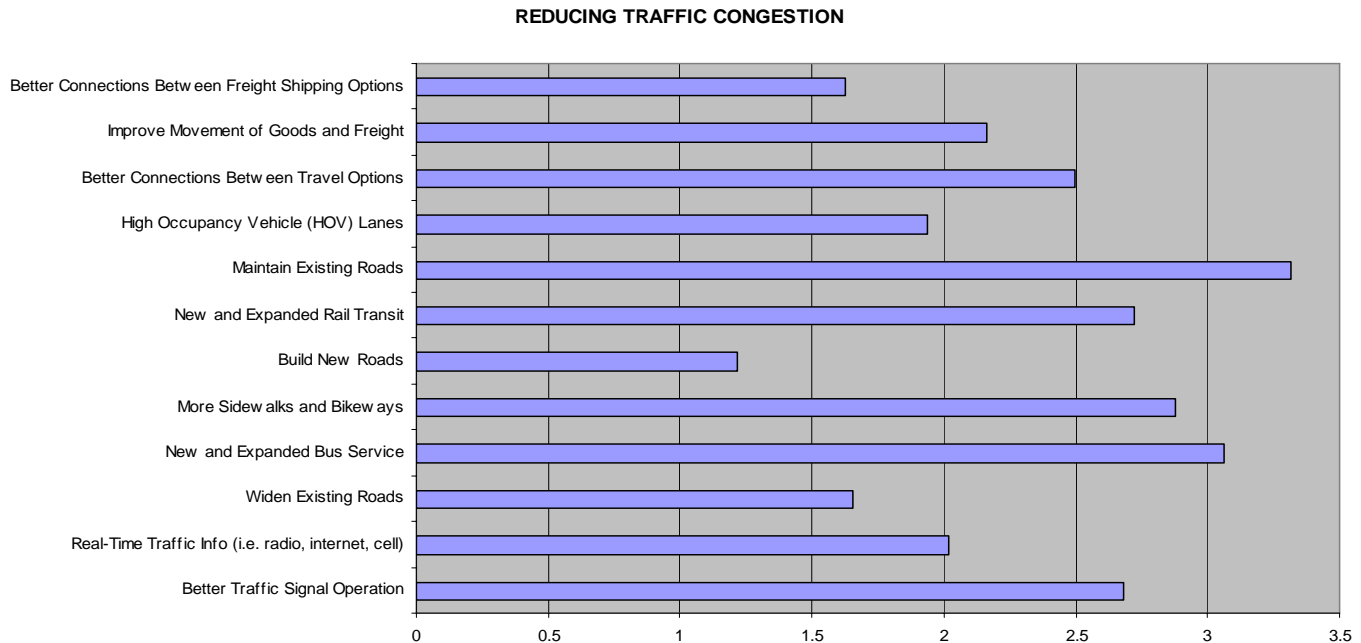


## 2. REDUCING TRAFFIC CONGESTION

This section of the transportation survey asked participants to look at a list of transportation issues related to reducing traffic congestion and to “tell us which are most important to consider in planning and funding transportation projects *for the next 20 years*” using a scale of 0 to 4, with 0 being the least important and 4 being the most important. The responses were tabulated to determine an average score from the 54 survey participants.

The most heavily supported strategy is “Maintain Existing Roads” (score of 3.3), followed by “New and Expanded Bus Service” (score of 3.1), then “More Sidewalks and Bikeways” (score of 2.9).

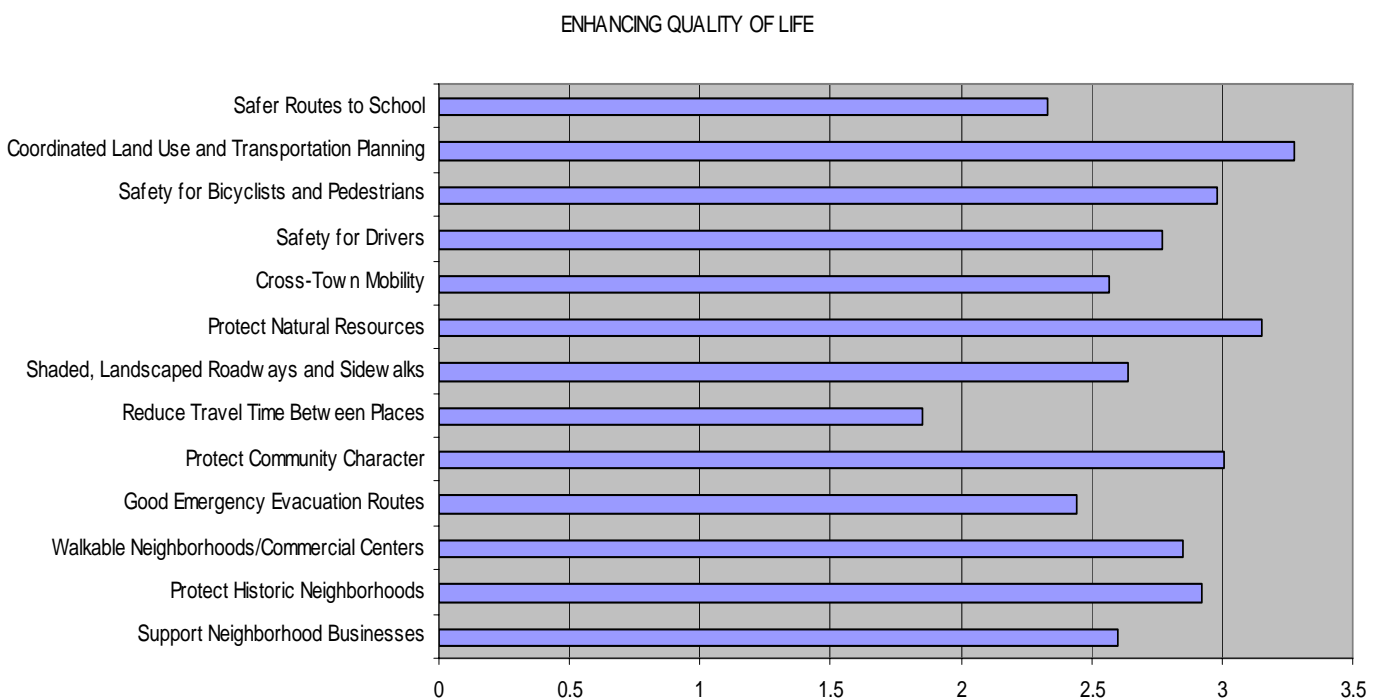
Figure 4-7



### 3. ENHANCING QUALITY OF LIFE

Similar to the previous section, participants were also asked to look at a list of transportation issues related to enhancing quality of life and to “tell us which are most important to consider in planning and funding transportation projects *for the next 20 years*” on a scale of 0 to 4. Like Figure 7, Figure 8 shows an average score of all survey respondents. The first is “Coordinated Land Use and Transportation Planning” (score of 3.3), followed by “Protecting Natural Resources” (score of 3.15), and “Protecting Community Character” (score of 3).

**Figure 4-8**



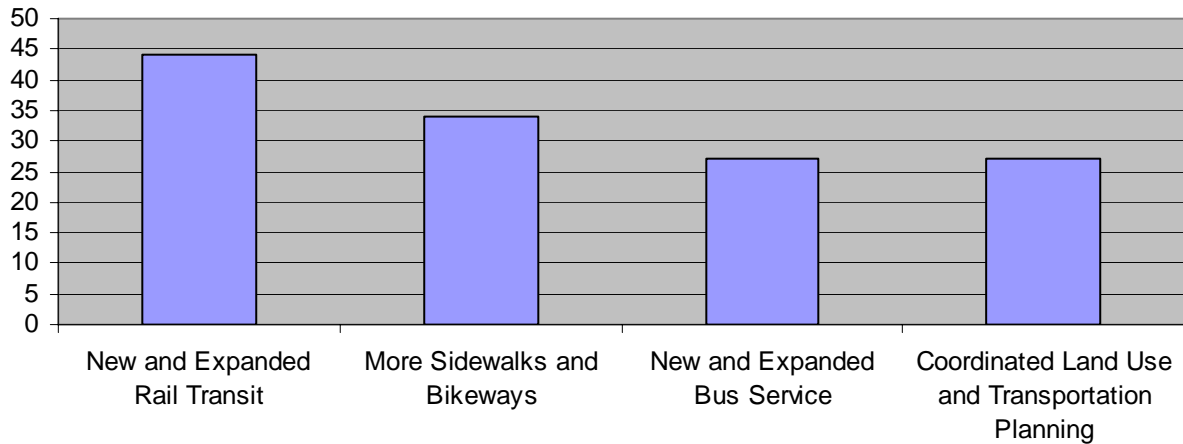
### 4. RANKING TRANSPORTATION PRIORITIES

This section of the survey asked participants to select three transportation issues from the lists provided in sections 2 and 3 and to rank them in order of their importance, with 1 being the top priority. The top four priorities for the region are shown in Figure 9. To compare the priorities, a scoring methodology is used that assigns each number 1 ranking a score of three, each number 2 ranking a score of two and each number 3 ranking a score of one. The total accumulated scores for each issue are then calculated and used to rank the issues. The higher the score, the more priority is assigned to a transportation issue.

New and expanded rail transit was listed as the number 1 priority of the respondents with more sidewalks and bikeways as the second. New and expanded bus service and coordinated land use and transportation planning tied for third and fourth place.

Figure 4-9

### TOP TRANSPORTATION PRIORITIES FOR THE REGION



## 5. PREFERRED MODE OF TRANSPORT

### How Do You Get Around Now?

Participants were shown modes of transportation that are available in the Richmond metropolitan area and asked to provide the average number of trips per day that they currently use for each mode. The participants were informed that a round trip is equal to two trips. The modes of transportation available today include bus service (GRTC), on-demand transit, vanpool, carpool, single occupant vehicle, bicycle, and walking. The results from this section and the next are displayed together in Figure 10.

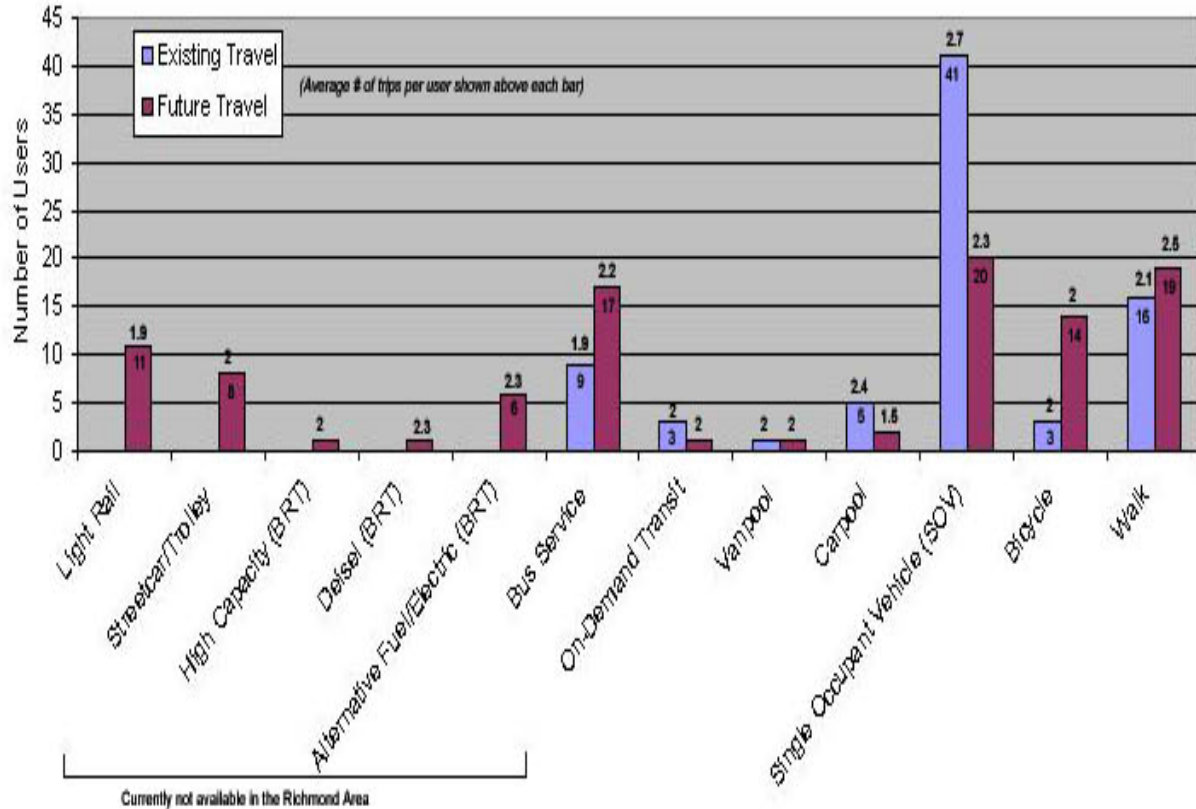
### How Will You Get Around in the Future?

Similar to the previous section, participants were shown modes of travel that potentially could be available in the future to the Richmond metropolitan area and asked to provide the average number of trips per day that they would like to use each one. The modes of transportation listed for the future include light rail, streetcar/trolley, and bus rapid transit (high capacity, diesel, and alternative fuel/electric), as well as the modes that are currently available today. The results of these two questions are shown together in Figure 10.

The desire of the respondents to use new rail transit, new and expanded bus service, and bicycles for future travel is shown in the survey results. Small increases in alternative modes of transportation such as vanpool, carpool, and walking are shown. The intent of the participants to rely less on single occupant vehicles is also shown in this comparison.

**Figure 4-10**

TRAVEL CHOICES- EXISTING AND FUTURE MODES



**6. COMMENTS/QUESTIONS/SUGGESTIONS**

Approximately 12 of the 54 participants provided a comment, question, or suggestion in this section of the survey. A complete list of the comments received for this section is provided in the Appendix.

## Final Draft Public Review Activities

The Richmond Area MPO Draft 2031 Long-Range Transportation Plan was made available for public review during a four-week period from June 24 through July 25, 2008. Copies of the draft plan were placed in 15 local libraries, as well as the RideFinders office downtown and at the RRPDC office (see Map 4-1). A copy of the draft plan was also made available for review on the RRPDC web site.

Comments received from the public and staff responses to the comments are provided in the Appendix.

### *Public Review Activities*

Notice of the public review period was published in the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* on June 30, 2008, in the *Richmond Free Press* on June 25, 2008, the Centro de Richmond on June 26, 2008, the Chesterfield Observer and the Mechanicsville Local on July 2, 2008 and the Henrico Citizen on July 3, 2008. The notice indicates that the document was made available at the RRPDC and RideFinders offices, 15 area libraries for review, and provided details of the dates, times and locations of the three public comment meetings which the MPO would sponsor. Notice of the meetings and availability of the plan for review was also published on the RRPDC website.

A total of 816 notices of the LRTP public review period and three public meetings were distributed as follows:

- PDC, MPO, and MPO standing committee members/alternates for TAC, CTAC, and EDAC and interested parties
- Richmond area social and human services agencies
- Representatives of area freight and public transportation users
- Richmond area news media, including newspapers, TV, radio, magazines, Asian American Society of Virginia and newspaper by radio for the vision impaired

Detailed documentation of distribution notices and advertising for public review/comment meetings and the availability of the draft 2031 LRTP for public review and comment is provided in the Appendix.

The first meeting was held at the Chester Library from 2 p.m. until 6:00 p.m. on June 15, 2008; the second meeting was held at the Tuckahoe Library from 12:00 p.m. until 6:00 p.m. on June 16, 2008; and the final public comment meeting was held at the Richmond Regional Planning District Commission (RRPDC) offices from 12:00 p.m. until 6:00 p.m. on June 17, 2008. The RRPDC location is within identified concentrations of minority/low income populations and was scheduled in the late afternoon and early evening hours. In addition to the paid advertisements in newspapers of local circulation, a live ten-minute interview regarding the program was aired on WVNZ, a Hispanic radio station, during the morning drive time on July 15, 2008 along with twenty 60-second BTA spot ads airing in Spanish between July 11 and July 15, 2008. Notice of the meetings was also submitted to the local news media and TV Channel 12 provided two brief newscast items about the opportunity to

comment at the public meetings along with a news article on the review period on their web site on July 16, 2008.

The draft plan document, public review notice, and a flyer providing background information on the MPO and the LRTP public review period were distributed to area libraries, RideFinders, and were made available at the public information meetings. The TAC received a copy of the public review notice and the draft TIP, including the final air quality conformity documentation. The public review notice was placed on the RRPDC web site June 24, 2008.

***Final Public Review Meetings***

Presentation boards, hand-outs, plan documents and a power point slide presentation were used at the meetings to inform the public of the various components contained in the draft LRTP. Those who attended were encouraged to complete a comment form soliciting input on the draft document. Thirty-nine people, excluding RRPDC staff, attended the three public meetings held in June 2008.

Public information meeting location and resulting attendance was as follows:

<u>Location</u>	<u>Attendance</u>
Chester Library	10
Tuckahoe Library	23
Richmond Regional Planning District Commission	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>

***Pubic Review Comments***

Staff received one letter, two emails and two comment forms from interested citizens. Comments received and staff responses to the comments are provided in the Appendix.

**Map 4-1  
Public Workshops and  
Draft Plan Review Locations**

