



2020 Transportation Policy Statement

CRITICAL INVESTMENTS ARE NEEDED to maintain and improve Virginia's transportation network. The structural imbalance between critical needs and available resources persists. Even with past actions taken by the General Assembly to enact a transportation and public transit funding bill, the challenges abound for all transportation modes. The federal Highway Trust Fund, which pays for roads and transit, is barely solvent, and Congress has proven unable to develop a long-term solution.

VML is mindful of and acknowledges the contribution of the legislation enacted in the 2013 session (HB2313) and in the 2014 session SMART SCALE (HB 2) as important first steps in addressing the transportation needs of Virginia's localities. Future legislative and administrative initiatives should be based on these principles:

- **Sustainable Funding.** A stable and predictable plan which is comprehensive, which addresses investment across the state, and which does not rely upon general fund revenue.
- **Fiscal responsibility.** Dedicated revenues, which are activity-based, will strengthen as the economy does.
- **Statewide focus.** Transportation is a statewide issue, not a regional, urban or rural issue. Every area of the state is economically hampered by insufficient infrastructure management. However, if the General Assembly chooses a funding approach that emphasizes regional efforts, then such opportunities should be made available across the Commonwealth.
- **Shared responsibility.** Transportation planning and authority are delegated to regional bodies where they exist and to localities. These bodies prioritize and authorize individual projects within their jurisdictions, an essential element of equity which does require coordination among involved localities.
- **Project prioritization.** VML supports the collaborative approach taken by the Commonwealth Transportation Board to seek input from regional and local bodies to develop a statewide prioritization process to leverage the highest value of scarce resources by measuring targeted projects that expand capacity, address congestion mitigation, economic development, accessibility, safety, and environmental quality. VML recognizes the importance of having an objective, quantifiable, and consistent process that also takes the different needs of regions into consideration and recognizes the significant progress made on this issue through SMART SCALE implementation.
- **Infrastructure modernization.** Our transportation efforts must include a comprehensive statewide plan to provide transportation options for rail passenger and transit systems. Such plans must ensure that all Virginians – rural, suburban and urban – are able to contribute to and benefit from statewide economic opportunities.
- **Congestion mitigation.** Alleviation of commuter congestion is essential to economic development and to enhance citizens' quality of life. Corridor-wide solutions which promote alternative modes including highways, transit and non-traditional solutions still need to be developed.
- **Resilience.** Decisions to construct or modify transportation facilities and other infrastructure improvements must assess the benefits and costs of adapting to sea level rise and the consequences of flooding from stormwater and other rain events.

Topics addressed in this statement:

- Revenues
- Pass-through of federal funds
- Safety
- Preservation of rights-of-way
- Technical assistance
- Traffic calming
- Metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs)
- Public transit
- Rail transportation
- Air transportation
- Ports and water transportation
- Regional transportation authorities
- Livability
- Transportation network companies

Revenues

Since the transportation needs of the state are so much greater than the current funding provisions, it remains essential that the General Assembly continue and expand transportation and infrastructure investment which is fiscally sound, well documented and serves local, regional and state-wide needs by:

- Raising revenue from those who use the transportation and transit systems;
- Identifying new revenue streams for state-wide, regional, and local transportation needs while preserving existing funding sources;
- Increasing dedicated funding for public transportation to meet transit operating and capital expenses and make Virginia competitive for federal transport funds;
- Providing or extending as a local option transportation impact fee authority to all localities;
- Authorizing practical options for using long-term financing for major transportation projects;

- Providing full state funding for the revenue sharing program as provided for in § 33.2-357; and
- Seeking equity among various road users by ensuring that trucks pay their share of road costs. VML also advocates for increased local influence when the state considers mitigating negative impacts resulting from truck traffic.

Pass-Through of Federal Funds

Localities are often successful in receiving federal funds such as special appropriations and enhancement funds. These funds are passed through the State to localities and the transfer of these funds is often delayed. The federal government and the state need to streamline the transfer of these funds and allow localities to move forward with these projects. Additionally, localities with limited experience with federal projects should be provided training to reduce administrative risks.

Safety

Vision Zero. Vision Zero approaches road safety through aggressive casualty reduction goals, coordinated and interdisciplinary actions, increased priority and resources allocated towards road safety improvement, and an overarching policy framework. VML supports the state's Vision Zero approach to transportation safety in state highway safety plans and encourages VDOT to collaborate and provide resources where appropriate to reach the Arrive Alive goal and the intent of Vision Zero.

Pedestrian. VML recommends that the Virginia Code be amended to clarify the respective rights and duties of pedestrians and vehicle drivers. Drivers should be required to stop, not just yield, for pedestrians in all marked and unmarked crosswalks. In addition, police need the ability to issue simpler citations than currently allowed under Virginia law to more effectively enforce the laws against jay walking.

Bicycling. VML also recommends changes to the Code of Virginia clarifying the rights and responsibilities of bicyclists in their use of public streets in order to ensure the safety of all road users.

Multi-Modal Transportation Options. VML supports multi-modal transportation options, including but not limited to scooters, mopeds, and electric bicycles, at both the local and regional levels. This support is conditioned in that local input and local rights, including regulation, on access to multi-modal facilities are recognized by the state.

Preservation of Rights-Of-Way

Transportation projects take many years from the planning stage to construction. Localities need additional authority to reserve miles of right-of-way years in advance of any funding availability for these projects, or risk development in the path of these transportation projects.

Technical Assistance

Smaller communities and regions require additional and enhanced transportation planning and technical assistance from the state. This includes establishing equitable equipment rental rates and administrative costs.

Traffic Calming

VML supports continued improvements to VDOT's traffic calming program to improve safety for users of public streets. Ad-

ditionally, VML has supported, and continues to support, expanding the availability of photo-camera traffic enforcement for all localities in the context of a defined transportation safety program that includes engineering, enforcement, education, and emergency response elements while respecting civil rights.

Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs)

VML opposes broadening MPO voting membership to include private sector representatives. VML believes that representation by public officials makes MPOs accountable to citizens.

Public Transit

Mass transit is critical to the state's economy and the quality of life for all Virginians. Public transit includes all available multiple occupancy vehicle services and technologies designed to transport passengers on local and regional routes.

VML supports:

1. increased federal and state funding for public transit;
2. policies that allow for the equitable distribution of such funding;
3. a dedicated source of funding to support public transit; and
4. state legislation to provide localities with additional taxing authority to adopt regionally based or local taxes to address transit capital needs.

VML also appreciates congressional actions taken to restore and make permanent the \$260 per month parity between employer-sponsored benefits for parking and for mass transit riders. (The federal tax deduction taken by employers for providing these benefits ended under the Tax Cuts and Job Act enacted in December 2017.)

Rail Transportation

VML recommends the expansion of interstate and intra-state passenger and freight rail service corridors, with no requirement for local match to provide transportation alternatives, and to help to stimulate economic development and tourism.

State government and railroad executives must work cooperatively with local officials to improve and enhance railroad maintenance, safety, traffic and conflicts (for example at at-grade crossings).

The Commonwealth needs to:

- Work with railroad executives to provide greater access for passenger service (for commuters and tourists).
- Strengthen funding for cost-effective intercity passenger service and high-speed rail operations to complement federal construction funding.
- Work with surrounding states to foster greater interstate passenger rail service and to promote the development of the Northeast high-speed rail corridor, the New York to Atlanta corridor and services to Western Virginia, where these systems provide meaningful reduction of travel times, higher than historic reliability and needed coverage to vital business districts which are in close proximity to population centers.

VML believes the state needs to work with rail executives and the commuter rail system to permit commuter system extension and expansion throughout the Commonwealth and to develop a source of funds to accomplish.

Air Transportation

VML wants the state and federal governments to actively work to develop and sustain comprehensive air service throughout the Commonwealth, connecting it to the mid-Atlantic region as well as the entire country. Additionally, VML wants the state and federal government to invest in and deploy new technologies intended to improve air service and safety.

The federal government is urged to appropriate federal funds for airport infrastructure improvements at authorized levels and to develop a national airport access strategy intended to stimulate local economic development opportunities. Additionally, the state is urged to complement federal infrastructure investments as well as expand state support for capital improvements.

Ports and Water Transportation

VML requests the protection and promotion of an effective port and water transportation system by:

1. developing alternative water transportation mechanisms to alleviate congestion, such as ferries, that will move people, goods and vehicles as an alternative to road travel;
2. enhancing rail service to move goods in and out of ports;
3. deepening major water ports and navigable rivers;
4. relieving congestion in the ports by enhancing rail and highway access out of ports; and
5. developing policies on the disposal/reuse of shipping containers.

Concerning the deepening of channels, VML requests the state to work closely with local governments regarding spoils disposal from channel deepening.

The revenues derived from Virginia's public ports are dedicated exclusively to the state. Some portion should be shared with localities to account for street and road maintenance and police and fire protection services directly related to the impacts of tax-exempt port properties.

VML urges a significant study of the state's water transportation system, including the expanded use of barge traffic for freight transportation.

Regional Transportation Authorities

Facilities. VML supports by-right authority for the creation of regional transportation authorities to promote coordination of transportation and related facilities.

Town voting membership. VML supports town voting membership on regional transportation authorities

Protective floor gas tax. VML thanks the General Assembly for amending Virginia Code § 58.1-2295 to establish a protective floor price for the 2.1 percent regional gas tax, much as was done for the statewide fuels tax in §58.1-2217. Such a floor concept is essential to provide a more stable, dedicated revenue source needed for long-term financing of regional projects as well as bus and commuter rail operations.

Livability

Streets do much more than move cars; they often define community character and serve as important public spaces. Small towns and larger cities alike are using complete streets policies to reclaim public space and solve traffic problems at the same time. Many complete street solutions are low-cost—some are as simple as changing paint-striping on pavement. VML supports securing mainstream transportation funds for non-motorized improvements and policy changes that result in construction of complete streets and improved bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure within the existing right of way.

Transportation Network Companies

VML supports state licensing of Internet-based transportation network companies (TNCs) as contained in HB 1662 (2015 session) which establishes safety and insurance standards for vehicles and drivers. VML acknowledges that state licensing is preferable to local licensing recognizing the wide area of operations of TNCs, the need to avoid conflicting or competitive licensing among jurisdictions, the need to establish a functional basis for taxation, the need to provide consistent driver credentials and the need to ensure all segments of the transportation industry are treated fairly. VML supports open market pricing for TNCs rather than fixed pricing, somewhat like variable toll pricing on major highways. VML also supports development of data-sharing agreements with TNCs to require the companies to share general trip information with DMV and which would be made available to all jurisdictions.