



Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation



RAIL



TRANSIT



COMMUTER PROGRAMS

Fall 2021



Director's Message

Thank you for reading the DRPT quarterly update for Fall 2021.

In this report, you'll read the latest on Transforming Rail in Virginia as well as the recent expansion of the Virginia Breeze Bus Lines. Both programs are connecting and enhancing communities throughout the Commonwealth, and they are removing

vehicles from our highways.

Since my last update, the Commonwealth Transportation Board received DRPT's recommendations on projects for funding through the new Transit Ridership Incentive Program, which is promoting increased ridership of large urban systems and reducing the barriers to transit use for low-income individuals. The Board also approved funding for two new Rail Industrial Access projects at its most recent meeting.

DRPT also continues new and innovated ways to use and promote transit services. Bay Transit and MEOC's new microtransit services are tremendous success. In 2022, we hope to expand these pilot programs to new areas of the state. We also have introduced the new Transportation Navigator. It is a one-click directory to transportation services in your area.

Lastly, and most importantly, we celebrated Transit Appreciation Month in October. Much thanks to the many transit employees across the Commonwealth who have continued to provide dedicated service during the pandemic. Your work is greatly appreciated.

Enjoy the read, and if you have any questions or comments, [please do not hesitate to contact me](#).

Jennifer Mitchell

DRPT would like to announce the following new hires:

Chaquasha Cooper, Accountant

Tanyea Darrisaw,
Chief Financial Officer

Amy Friedenberger,
Communications Specialist

Amy Garbarini,
Northern Virginia Transit Planner

Kimberly Hall-Deans, Controller

Jennifer Mayton,
Chief Administrative Officer

We also would like to announce the following promotions:

Linda Balderson,
Rail Capital Programs Manager

Miriam Foster,
Communications Specialist

Randy Selleck
Director of Rail Planning

Emily Stock,
Chief of Rail Transportation

Michael Todd,
Manager of Rail Capital Programs

***DRPT's Annual Grant Application Period for FY2023
Opened December 1, 2021***

Virginia Launches Expanded Richmond-Washington Train Service



On September 27, Governor Ralph Northam and Secretary Valentine joined DRPT and the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority (VPRA) to launch expanded rail service from Richmond to Washington and cities along the Northeast corridor. The Amtrak *Northeast Regional* Route 51 now offers early morning service from Main Street Station, getting travelers from Downtown Richmond to Washington when the workday begins or to New York for a lunchtime meeting.

The new train is the first expansion of service under Governor Northam's Transforming Rail in Virginia program to significantly expand rail infrastructure throughout the Commonwealth. The event ended with a ribbon-cutting and the inaugural train heading out of Main Street Station at 5:35 am with the Governor, state officials, and DRPT/VPRA staff on board. Early ridership numbers indicate healthy demand for the extended service.

The Transforming Rail in Virginia initiative is already receiving recognition throughout the country for its role in changing the future of transportation. At the District of Columbia's Committee of 100's bi-annual award ceremony, DRPT received a 2021 Vision Award recognizing the Transforming Rail in Virginia Program. Director Jennifer Mitchell accepted the award on behalf of DRPT, Governor Northam, and the Virginia General Assembly.

Transit Ridership Incentive Program

The 2020 General Assembly created the Transit Ridership Incentive Program (TRIP) to promote increased ridership of large urban systems and to reduce the barriers to transit use for low-income individuals. The Commonwealth Transportation Board approved the program's policy at its July meeting after delaying its implementation due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



DRPT received applications for funding between August 1 and September 17. During this period, DRPT received ten zero-fare and three regional applications requesting approximately \$13.4M in funding.

DRPT recommended the following regional route programs for funding:

- Greater Lynchburg Transit Company: Route 4 Extension

- Petersburg Area Transit: Southern Connector (Petersburg-Emporia)
- Hampton Roads Transit: Naval Base Circulator (Increased on-base circulation)

DRPT recommended the following zero-fare/low-fare programs for funding:

- GRTC, DASH (Alexandria), and MEOC: Systemwide Zero-Fare
- Fairfax County: Low Income Pass Program

DRPT will continue working with the following applicants and advancing their projects as funding becomes available:

- Charlottesville Area Transit and Fredericksburg Regional Transit: Systemwide Zero-Fare

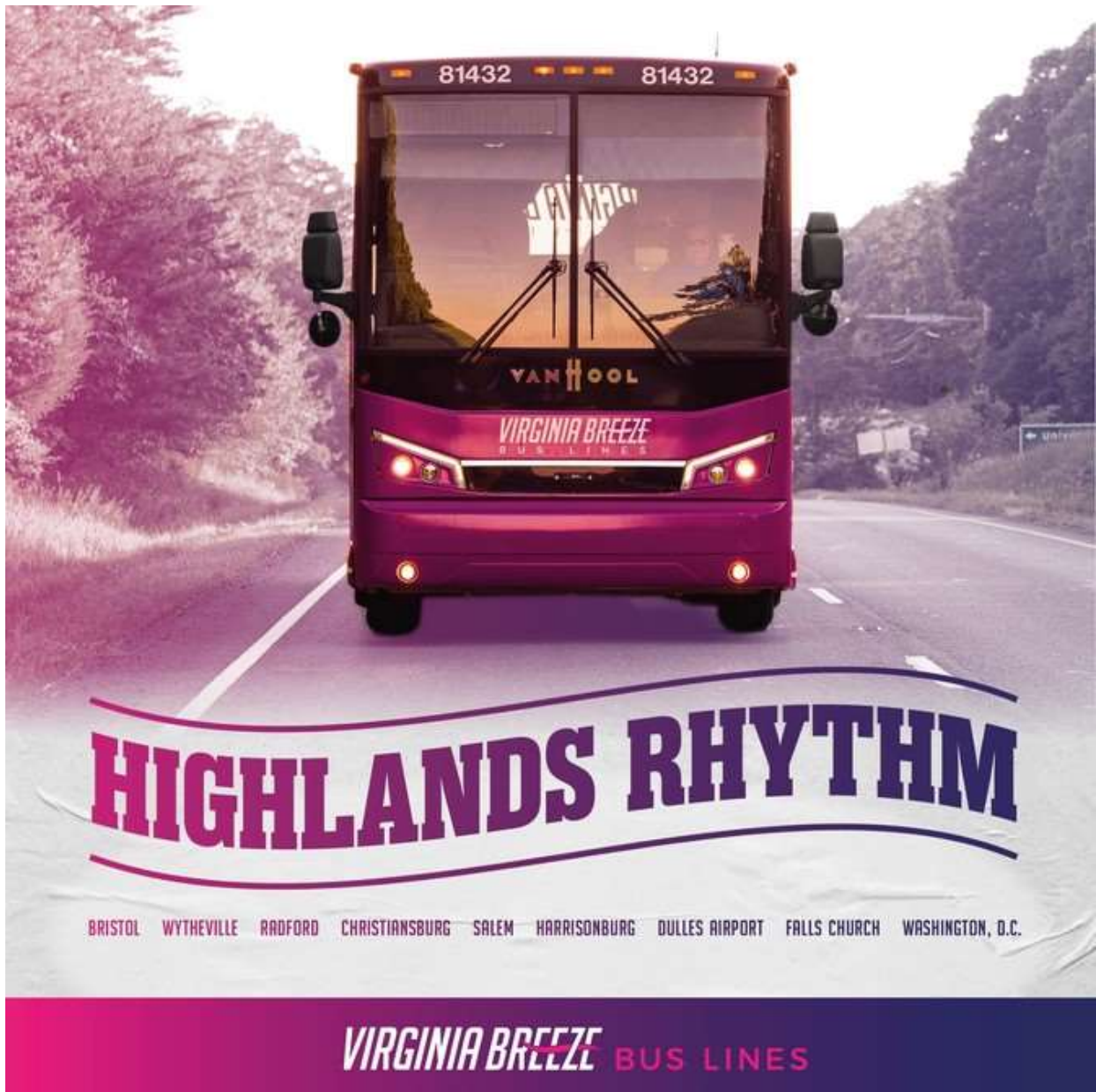
The Commonwealth Transportation Board will vote on these recommendations at its December meeting.

Virginia Breeze Launches Fourth Route

On November 13, DRPT launched the 4th Virginia Breeze Bus Lines Route, the Highlands Rhythm at a ribbon-cutting ceremony at the Birthplace of Country Music Museum in downtown Bristol. The Virginia Breeze is funded through the Federal Transit Administration's Intercity Bus Program.

The Highlands Rhythm, which will run along Interstate 81, is among the first multimodal projects to receive funding through the Interstate 81 Corridor Improvement Program. The program aims to make infrastructure and safety improvements to Interstate 81 and support alternative modes of transportation to get more vehicles off of the crowded highway and reduce the number of crashes and incidents. The Interstate 81 funding will offset a portion of the Highlands Rhythm operating costs and fund improvements at some stop locations along the route.

The Highlands Rhythm expands upon the current Virginia Breeze service along the corridor. The route includes additional trip options for some locations already served by the successful Valley Flyer. The Valley Flyer has surpassed expectations on every level, from on-time performance, total ridership, and operating expenses being met by passenger fares. The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in service being temporarily halted, but since it has resumed, ridership levels have continued to increase.



Transit Appreciation Month

October was our second annual Transit Appreciation Month, and throughout the month we recognized the agencies and partners across the Commonwealth that keep Virginia moving. Each week consisted of a different theme to help us show our appreciation.

Week one, we shared the ways transit agencies work to keep drivers and passengers safe. Week two



Rural MicroTransit

DRPT has partnered with Bay Transit, a division of Bay Aging, and Mountain Empire Older Citizens (MEOC) on an initiative to bring on-demand public transportation services to rural Virginians. Both services have been a tremendous success thus far.

MEOC's METGo! microtransit service has shown record ridership since its inception. In October, this

celebrated all things transit including agencies that keep Virginians on the move and employees and crews who keep us safe. Week three, spotlighted local transit agencies that keep our communities moving. The fourth and final week, we thanked our transit agencies and asked Virginians to "re-discover their ride"! We'd like to take this opportunity to thank our participating partners and reiterate our gratitude for everything you do!

demonstration project in Wise and Norton Virginia reached a new ridership record with 100 trips completed in a single day.

The service has seen significant growth since launching on June 28. To date, the service has provided over 3,970 rides and is averaging 50 completed rides per day across a fleet of three vehicles.

Transportation Navigator



In October, DRPT launched *Transportation Navigator*, the one-click directory that connects you with the information needed to find transportation services near you.

This initiative is funded through the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) Mobility for All grant program and the Commonwealth Transportation Board's Innovation and Technology Transportation Fund (ITTF). It aims to improve mobility through innovative coordination of transportation options and by enhancing access to vital community services.

Contact drptpr@drpt.virginia.gov if your agency would like to put the Transportation Navigator widget on its website to help users find

transportation services in your area.

This is one of many steps that DRPT will be taking over the upcoming months to improve its tools for the public. In early 2022, DRPT will be unveiling its Open Data Portal, powered by Socrata, to provide access to DRPT information empowering users to interpret, analyze, and transform our data into actionable intelligence. Within the portal, individuals can view stories and dashboards, create visualizations, and filter data.

Rail Industrial Access Program

The Commonwealth Transportation Board continues to promote and allocate funding for the Rail Industrial Access program. At its October meeting, the Board approved two new applications.

It approved funding for North Branch Resources towards the construction of 900 feet of track to serve as a facility in Hanover County. This project is part of North Branch Resources' initiative to resurrect the Calciment market in the southeastern United States. The construction of the industrial sidetrack is critical to North Branch Resource's expansion for capacity.

The Board also approved funding for Recycling Management Resources Richmond LLC (RMR) towards the rehabilitation of 2,321 feet of track to serve a facility in Henrico County. RMR is a family owned, supplier focused, full-service recycler handling over 400,000 tons of materials annually. This project is part of RMR's initiative to expand their footprint in the Richmond market by opening new markets for inbound volume as well as allowing new outbound marketing and shipping opportunities. The rehabilitation of the industrial sidetrack is critical to RMR's business plan for expanded capacity.



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