Virginia's Long-Range Multimodal Transportation Plan 2007-2035

STAKEHOLDER LISTENING SESSION SUMMARY March 23, 2009

Prepared for:
Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment
April 2009

Prepared by:
Wilbur Smith Associates

What: Stakeholder Listening Session
When: Monday, March 23, 2009 from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.
Where: Richmond Regional Planning District Commission Board Room
Why: To inform special interest stakeholders of the VTrans process and receive input on issues and potential key initiatives

Hosts: Ralph Davis, Deputy Secretary of Transportation, Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment
Dr. Mary Lynn Tischer, Multimodal Planning Office

Attendees:

Name	Title	Organization
Lon Anderson	Director Public and Government Affairs	AAA of Virginia
Champe Burnley	President	Richmond Area Bike Association
Bob Chase	President	Northern Virginia Transportation Alliance
Tyler Craddock	Director of Government Affairs	Virginia Chamber of Commerce
Mike Edwards	Deputy Director for Legislative Affairs	Virginia Association of Counties
George Homewood	Director of Community Development	New Kent County, representing Virginia Chapter of the American Planning Association
Dan Johnson	Legislative Specialist	AARP
Linda McMinimy	Executive Director	Virginia Transit Association
Rita McClenny	Virginia Operations	Virginia Tourism Corporation
Kathy Miller	Director of LTC	Virginia Department of Aging
Martha Meade	Virginia Public Affairs Manager	AAA of Virginia
Arthur Moye, Jr.	Executive Vice President	Virginia Maritime Association
Rob McClintock	Research Director	Virginia Economic Development Partnership
Kimberly Likens-Perry	Executive Director	Bike Walk Virginia
Trip Pollard		Southern Environmental Law Center
Juan Rivera	President	Virginia Airport Operator's Council
Leo Schefer	CEO	Washington Airports Task Force
Stan Scott	Military Projects Manager	Virginia National Defense Industrial Authority
Jeff Southard	Executive Vice President	Virginia Transportation Construction Alliance
Bud Vye		Virginia Bicycling Federation
Jennifer Wampler	Trails Coordinator	Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation
Junius Williams	Managing Director – VA/NC State and Local	Dominion Virginia Power
Gale Wilson	President	Virginia Rail Association
Dale Zehner	Chief Executive Officer	VRE

Observers/Facilitators/Note-Takers:

Name	Title	Organization
Tom Biesiadny	Division Chief	Fairfax County DOT
Linda Carpenter	Vice President	Wilbur Smith Associates
Chris Gay	Project Manager	Vanasse Hangen Brustlin
Kathy Graham	Multimodal Planning Office	Virginia Department of Transportation
Robin Grier	Transportation and Mobility Planning	Virginia Department of Transportation
Marsha Fiol	Transportation and Mobility Planning	Virginia Department of Transportation
Rusty Harrington	Manager Planning & Environmental	Virginia Department of Aviation
Amy Inman	Transit Planning Manager	Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation
Ken Jennings	Director of Motor Carriers	Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles
Ben Mannell	Transportation and Mobility Planning	Virginia Department of Transportation
Heather Mantz	Director, Environmental Affairs	Virginia Port Authority
Brad Shelton	State Highway Plan Project Manager	Virginia Department of Transportation
Don Vary	Director of Transportation	Wilbur Smith Associates

Agenda

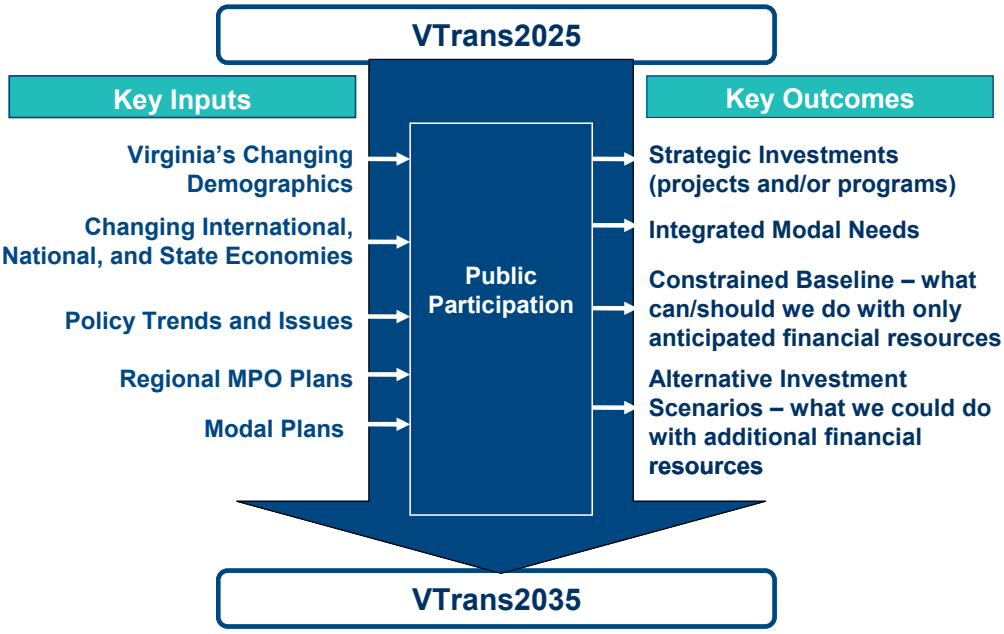
- Introductions by Ralph Davis
- PowerPoint Presentation on VTrans Background and Overview as well as Transportation Issues Facing Us in the Future by Mary Lynn Tischer
- Brainstorming Session on Issues moderated by Mary Lynn Tischer
- Key Initiatives Exercise by participants
- Final Discussion on Key Issues moderated by Mary Lynn Tischer
- Conclusions by Ralph Davis

Background

Virginia is updating its long-range transportation plan, known as VTrans2035. This state and federally required long-range transportation plan establishes policy recommendations that provide direction for statewide transportation planning across all modes – road, rail, transit, air, water, bicycling, and walking. VTrans2035 will also address critical transportation issues and identify major strategic investments that are critical to the Commonwealth and its transportation infrastructure and programs. Since the completion of VTrans2025 in 2004, the social, economic, and technological landscape has changed significantly. Virginia's population continues to grow, age, and become more diverse. The current economic outlook is changing the speed with which plans can be implemented, and in some cases is causing a reconsideration of priorities. The focus on climate change adds an additional dimension to decision-making.

Continuing improvements in technology generate new issues as well as unforeseen solutions. The linkage between land use and transportation continues to be critical.

VTrans2025 is being updated to VTrans2035 by analyzing demographic and economic data, identifying current policy issues and trends, and coordinating with the Commonwealth's metropolitan planning organizations and modal administrations to ensure the goals and objectives of plans are consistent across Virginia. A key outcome will be the identification of 10-12 strategic investments. This graphic shows the process for updating VTrans2025 to VTrans2035.



Summary of Brainstorming Session

The event began with a participant-led 45-minute round table discussion on key transportation issues facing Virginia in the future. The discussion yielded mostly complementary issues that reflect the wide perspective that must be taken for transportation investments to support the Commonwealth's diverse needs. Issues ranged from protection of right-of-way to the transportation needs of an aging population; from security issues associated with military base access to maintenance needs; from sustainability to freight issues. Frequently mentioned topics (in no particular order of importance) follow.

- **Land Use**
  - **Right-of-way preservation**
    - Be more proactive in ROW acquisition. Do not let opportunities slip away and costs rise; preserve right-of-way not just for roads, but for air, rail, port, etc. facilities as well.
    - Need to consider integration of 21st century rail/transit with land use, do not just provide a transit facility where it can go most

easily (such as in a highway corridor), but plan for where it should go through the land use (for better access to people).

- **Military base access**
  - A special land use that is also tied to security is base expansion. Belvoir and Fort Lee are expanding and the access needs for these special uses must be considered.
- **Development patterns**
  - In the past the transportation system shaped development patterns. We need to determine what we want development to be and then provide the transportation system to accommodate it.
  - Zoning regulations and related policies are not adequate for guiding integrated land use and transportation, especially in urban areas.
  - Likely to have more village (dense, compact communities) development in the future. This pattern may be a reaction to the aging population and concern for emergency situations. This development pattern is suitable for transit, walking and bicycling.

- **Sustainability**
  - **Climate change/environment**
    - The impact of transportation investments on the climate and overall environment needs to be considered.
  - **Getting more from existing system**
    - Improving the performance of existing systems through measures such as access management and congestion pricing needs to be given attention.
  - **Multimodal corridors**
    - Corridors should be not only multimodal but also accommodate utility and data/information needs.
  - **Funding**
    - Public money should not be spent on non-sustainable improvements; or in other words priority should be given to sustainable projects.
- **Economy**
  - **Support economic engines**
    - Dulles Airport and the Port of Virginia are good examples of transportation investments driving the Virginia economy. Are there other investment opportunities that can be as successful? What will Virginia need in the future? A third international airport in Northern Virginia? If so, what impact does that have on other infrastructure needs?
    - Hampton Roads is the only port on the east coast that can handle the largest ships, but fell to #3 port ranking behind Savannah recently. We need to build on this economic engine and have infrastructure to attract distribution centers to locate in Hampton Roads to enhance competitiveness. A quality transportation system is vital.

  - **Freight**
    - Moving freight is important to Virginia's economy. What do we need to do to keep freight moving?
  - **Tourism**
    - Tourism is another important factor in Virginia's economy. The proposed cuts in rest stops are a concern. If the Commonwealth does not want to be in that business, there should be a plan for privatization.
- **Maintenance**
  - There should be "a fix it first" philosophy where existing infrastructure and services are fixed and maintained at a state of good repair. This applies to all modes. Part of the process should be identification of the cost of having an inadequate system.
- **Aging Population**
  - Most of the elderly want to age in their own homes. Literature shows that many continue driving for about 7 years past when they can do so safely due to lack of alternatives. This is both a mobility and safety issue. Alternative transportation such as transit and walking, supported by smart growth principles, must be adopted.
- **Technologies**
  - The plan must consider that new technologies are on the horizon such as light jets/air taxis; transit technologies, etc. for shorter trips, to connect more activity centers and that these new modes may have different infrastructure needs.
- **Pedestrian/Bicycles/Transit/Rail**
  - **Reliability**
    - Sometimes new technologies do not come on the scene as fast as anticipated. Travelers often value reliability more than speed, such that more modal choices are warranted. Demand for reliable traditional modes such as walking and bicycling keep increasing, and this requires more infrastructure and integration with other modes.
  - **Public health consequences**
    - There are health-related consequences (cost of obesity) if there is a continued focus on cars/trucks that push out other modes. Priority should be given to "active" transportation modes that promote better public health.
- **Highways**
  - We have to maintain and expand the road system, along with providing other modes on the roadway system. Roads move freight. Buses are on roads. Seniors are on shuttle buses on roads. Roads address many of the critical issues.
- **Needs/Process**
  - **Expansion needs**
    - With limited financial resources, you should consider the actual demand for transportation in certain corridors and modes as well

as the cost of service. What we have in some places (such as Northern Virginia) is not working well, so just fixing what we have will not take us where we need to be.

- **Unconstrained needs**
  - A financially constrained plan is understandable, but we should also not lose sight of unconstrained needs.
- **Regulations**
  - The plan should review regulatory requirements and how they often drive up costs.
- **Emergency management**
  - Integrate emergency planning into the process. With an older population and the need for evacuation, reliance and dependency on transit becomes more critical. Also, the process should look at areas prone or affected by disaster.

Key Initiatives Exercise

After the Brainstorming Session, participants were given the opportunity to identify issues or initiatives of major importance to VTrans2035. They were asked to identify the most important issue (put on a green post-it) and then to identify one additional critical issue (on a yellow post-it). This information was collected and categorized by the facilitators during a short break. The summary table below is a record of all the comments received with a (1) indicating it was the most important issue or initiative identified by a participant and a (2) indicating it was the second most important issue or initiative.

The categories help summarize the 48 comments received. Many of the initiatives could be placed in more than one category, but have been placed in only one for the purposes of this exercise.

Table 1. Summary of Key Initiatives Exercise

Category	Comment	Importance (1 or 2)
More Choices	Develop robust regional and statewide alternative transportation networks (transit, rail, sidewalks, and bikeways) that will support mobility, accessibility and more compact development.	1
	Infrastructure - Non-motorized transportation network; systems thinking	1
	Make sure that all new projects are truly multi-modal, including pedestrian and bicycling accommodations	1
	Passenger rail has to be part of any long-range plans for transportation. You can't build enough highway capacity fast enough to keep up with demand and in some places there is no room.	1
	Reducing existing roadway size to accommodate bike, pedestrian facilities (retro-fitting)	1
	On all rail enhancements (state and federal funded) improvements or additions, true multi-modal accommodations (i.e., rails with trails) be included as an integral and mandatory part of the project.	1

Table 1. Summary of Key Initiatives Exercise (cont.)

Category	Comment	Importance (1 or 2)
More Choices (cont.)	Provide multiple choices for riders and freight among different modes. Make modes competitive to deliver the best reliable service level.	2
	More emphasis on transit and inter-city rail.	2
	Enforce a policy that requires all new roadway projects to have both biking and walking facilities	2
	Expand accessibility for various modes of transportation to allow choices	2
	Programs - Incentives for using active transportation modes. Encouragement supported by law enforcement	2
	Ensure convenient public transportation in urban and suburban areas. This creates incentives to grow up and not out.	2
People and Freight	Focus on mobility – people and freight. Make sure selection criteria consider all modes.	1
	All transportation corridors serve all modes more or less equally well	1
	Increase rail movements, both freight and passenger. Requires additional funding. Remember – most passenger trains operate on freight railroads.	1
	Strategic expansion of highway system to address movement of cars, freight, mass transit	1
Economy	Improved intermodal infrastructure to permit freight volume increases on Rt. 460 and Rt. 58 and other Hampton Roads MPO projects	1
	Need to link Virginia with global economy – and stay in prominent spot. Discern projects and plan for new assets that maximize Virginia's geographical position and maximize potential of existing assets (international, airports, Virginia ports, etc).	1
	World class air service for international and domestic travelers (leisure and business), connections to and from	1
	Ensure that future transportation planning efforts support continued economic development.	2
	Freight / Rail should get fair consideration in the process. This will help ease congestion on the highways.	2
	Plan and spend intelligently for future, taking into account emergency needs, economic, commerce needs, military protections.	2
Land Use/ Corridor Preservation	Identify and preserve right-of-way for all modes to provide future flexibility and lower future costs. Require localities to harmonize their land use decision with Virginia as well as local transportation	1
	Protect new strategic transportation corridors.	1
	With regard to transportation and land use, identifying the types of development for which there is consumer demand (e.g. what type of neighborhoods do people want?) and designing systems to serve those types of development as opposed to the other way around. Let consumer demand drive this; don't try to use transportation to dictate consumer demand	2
	Going forward, the Commonwealth and its localities must work more cooperatively regarding land use planning and coordination.	2

Table 1. Summary of Initiatives Exercise (cont.)

Category	Comment	Importance (1 or 2)
Land Use/ Corridor Preservation (cont.)	Give localities adequate land use and access control decision mailing and tools and more local funding for local and regional transportation needs	2
	Land Use	2
	Identifying and preserving corridors and rights of way of future transportation needs – roads, rail, bikes	2
Maintenance	Fix it first. Maintenance $ highest priority.	1
	Maintain adequate level of repair / safety of ALL current systems	1
	Look at existing infrastructure first. Modify to better serve needs and maintain in as close to excellent condition at all times as possible.	2
Process	Identify statewide needs / demands. Why? To help determine funding liabilities.	1
	Incorporate emergency management into the overall process.	1
	Asses transportation policy and projects against – o What Americans will accept and want o Mobility and "access" effectiveness for the way Virginia business have to operate and how Virginians want to live.	2
Aging Population	Greater accessibility for the elderly, disabled and low income	1
	Accessible and affordable transportation for older Virginians	1
Sustainability	Expanding road systems does not satisfy existing demand; it creates new demand by making new regions / places attractive to development. That is: expanding I-95 in NOVA will not make it less congested; it only opens new developments to the south. This continues until congestion again peaks. Answer: Guide development through network construction	1
	The state should actively encourage, incent and reward bike, pedestrian and other sustainable projects and prioritize these in your plans	2
	Reduction of VMT by adopting and expanding "smart growth"	2
Technology	Incorporate new technology needs that are on the horizon for the different modes and how they will or may impact future development.	1
	Use of technology to improve traffic flow to decrease congestion, decrease hydrocarbons and save dollars.	2
Policies	The identification and remediation of those legislatorial regulatory policies that unnecessarily increase the cost to construct or maintain transportation facilities and diminish the buying power of existing funding streams	1
Funding	Establish a state fund to finance construction of new and existing corridors of statewide significance	2
	Greater % transportation $ to rail, transit, bike/pedestrian, link transportation / land use.	2
	Current budget (VDOT) only has funding to provide highway maintenance through 2013. What happens then? Does private enterprise have a plan?	2
	State transportation funding policies should be revised to encourage multimodal choices.	2

Table 1. Summary of Initiatives Exercise (cont.)

Category	Comment	Importance (1 or 2)
Funding (cont.)	Improve highway comfort and rest centers to provide the most efficient stops for rest, safe stop, comfort and traveler information. Long term plan for privatization. Change federal legislation.	2

Final Discussion

The types of comments received were reviewed with the group. Then the group was challenged to identify what issues might be missing or understated that would be critical to the success of VTrans2035. Much of the discussion turned to funding, finance and setting priorities. A synopsis of the final discussion includes:

- **Pricing** – This was a recognition of the real costs of various actions, from the cost of automobile use on the environment to the unrecognized subsidy of roadway costs;
- **Taxes and Tolls** – The Europeans support their transportation system with taxes, tolls, subsidies, policies and land use that support alternative transportation. We must not plan based on a utopian belief of what should be, but on reality of what can be.
- **Priorities** – Virginia has lists of needs/projects, but not real priorities. VTrans2035 should identify those investments that rise above all others and provide the most benefit.
- **Rural Needs** – The level of demand is not always a good indication of need. We must not forget the transportation needs of our rural areas.
- **Safety** – We need to restate our commitment to safe designs and operations.
- **Congestion** – the word did not come up much in earlier discussions, but sustainability, accessibility, and mobility did. Congestion is an underlying component of these issues and must be addressed.
- **Climate Change and Revenues**- The potential switch to more environmental friendly vehicles and more alternative transportation use will benefit the environment but also cause a reduction in gas tax revenues. We need to consider alterative funding sources.

Conclusions

Ralph Davis thanked everyone for their participation and frank discussion of the issues facing transportation officials. He directed participants to keep informed on VTrans2035 through the web site (www.vtrans.org). He informed participants that a summary of findings would be posted on the web site as soon as possible.