A Citizen’s Guide to the Transportation Improvement Program

March 2005

Town of
Ashland
Counties of
Charles City
Chesterfield
Goochland
Hanover
Henrico
New Kent
Powhatan
City of
Richmond
Acknowledgment

Prepared in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration, Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation, and the Virginia Department of Transportation.

Disclaimer

The contents of this document reflect the views of the Richmond Area Metropolitan Planning Organization. The Richmond Regional Planning District Commission is responsible for the facts and accuracy of the information presented herein. The contents do not necessarily reflect the official views or policies of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Transit Administration (FTA), Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (VDRPT), the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), or the Richmond Regional Planning District Commission. This document does not constitute a standard, specification, or regulation.

The FHWA, FTA, VDRPT, or VDOT acceptance of this report as evidence of fulfillment of the objectives of this planning study does not constitute endorsement/approval of the need for any recommended improvements nor does it constitute approval of their location and design or a commitment to fund any such improvements. Additional project level environmental impact assessments and/or studies of alternatives may be necessary.

As each project in the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is implemented, coordination, agreement, and independent approval of the local jurisdictions is required. No part of the LRTP or the TIP is to be interpreted as to diminish the authority of local jurisdictions in the area of land use and transportation.
Introduction

This Citizen’s Guide provides information to enable citizens, local government officials, groups, and organizations to actively participate in the transportation project development process for the Richmond region. The major milestone in this process occurs when a project obtains a position in the Richmond Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Transportation Improvement Program, or TIP. Transportation projects and programs in the Richmond region cannot receive federal funds unless they are in the TIP.

Before explaining the TIP process, here’s a word about the metropolitan transportation planning framework for the region—starting with a description of the Richmond Area MPO.

Richmond Area MPO

The Richmond Area MPO is the regional transportation planning organization that serves as the forum for cooperative transportation decision-making in the Richmond area. The Richmond Regional Planning District Commission (RRPDC) provides the administrative and technical staff for the Richmond Area MPO. The MPO is responsible for planning and programming transportation projects for a geographic area that is projected to be urbanized within the next 20 years. Currently, the MPO study area includes approximately two-thirds of the Richmond Regional Planning District (see map below). Bicycle, pedestrian, highway, and public transit projects that are located within the study area boundary must be approved by the MPO prior to their becoming eligible for federal funds.

MPO Study Area

![MPO Study Area Map](image)

Note this part of Chesterfield County is in the Tri-Cities Area MPO

Transportation projects and programs in the Richmond region cannot receive federal funds unless they are in the TIP.
Key Documents Common to MPOs

The Unified Work Program (UWP): The UWP lists the transportation studies and tasks to be performed by the MPO staff or member agencies over a one- to two-year period. The UWP includes all federally funded studies plus other state and local planning activities. Updates are required annually.

The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP): The TIP is the region’s way of prioritizing its limited transportation resources among the various needs of the area. It is a three-year program covering the most immediate needs for transportation projects and strategies from the long-range transportation plan. In order to be included in the TIP, these projects must have available funding.

The Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP): The transportation plan is used as the guide for the way the region plans to invest in the transportation system over a twenty-year period. The LRTP includes both long-range and short-range strategies/actions that lead to the development of efficient roadways, public transportation, bicycle/pedestrian transportation, and freight connections. The Richmond Area LRTP is updated every three years.

The Congestion Management System (CMS): Urban areas like Richmond—with populations over 200,000—are called transportation management areas (TMAs). Transportation management areas must develop a CMS that both identifies and evaluates projects and strategies aimed at reducing traffic congestion and increasing the mobility of people and goods. The Richmond Area CMS is updated every three years.
The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

Under federal law, the TIP:

- Covers a minimum three-year period
- Is updated at least every two years
- Is realistic in terms of available funding (known as a fiscally constrained TIP) and is not just a "wish list" of projects
- Conforms with the State Implementation Plan (SIP) for air quality if the region is designated a non-attainment or maintenance area (see page 4)
- Is approved by the MPO and the Governor for air quality; and is incorporated into the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).
- Lists all federally funded and regionally significant locally funded projects.

The TIP shows estimated costs and schedule by project phase. The TIP not only lists specific projects, but also documents the anticipated schedule and cost for each project phase: preliminary engineering, right-of-way acquisition, and construction.

The TIP may be changed after it is adopted. The approved TIP can be amended to add new projects, delete projects, advance projects into the first year, and accommodate cost and phase of work or scope changes to a project.

The TIP covers all modes of travel. The TIP is multimodal; in addition to the more traditional highway and public transit projects, it may also include bicycle, pedestrian, and freight-related projects as well.

The TIP obligates funds for at least three fiscal years. The title of each adopted TIP contains the three fiscal years covered under the document. The Commonwealth of Virginia’s fiscal year runs from July 01 to June 30; therefore, the first year programmed in the current TIP (FY 02/03) would be July 01, 2002 – June 30, 2003. Funds obligated to a project – or for a phase of a project – in the first year of a TIP are committed dollars. Obligations for the next two years are reasonable projections of when federal, state, or local funds are to be spent to complete an entire project or just one of its phases.

The TIP has several funding sources. The major funding source for the projects in the TIP is the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), administered through the US Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA). In addition, funds are made available by the State of Virginia to match federal funding (in varying ratios), and to provide 100 percent financing for selected projects. Local counties, municipalities, and private developers or toll authorities, as well as transit operators may also participate in providing matching funds for federal aid.
**The TIP Represents Regional Consensus**

The production of the *TIP* is the culmination of the transportation planning process and represents a consensus among state and regional officials as to projects selected for implementation. Consensus is important because the federal and state governments want assurances that all parties have cooperatively developed priorities before committing funds to a project. A project's inclusion in the *TIP* signifies regional agreement on the priority of the project and establishes federal fund eligibility.

After the *TIP* is approved by the MPO, it is submitted to VDOT for inclusion in the *Statewide TIP (STIP)*, which is then submitted to FHWA and FTA for approval.

**The TIP and the Long-Range Plan**

Regionally significant projects must be drawn from the Long-Range Transportation Plan and all projects in the *TIP* must work toward its implementation. The *LRTP* is the document which directs transportation decisions over a minimum 20 year horizon. A current *TIP* represents the short-term implementation of selected recommendations from the MPO’s most recently adopted *LRTP*.

**The TIP and Air Quality**

The transportation conformity process, dictated by the Clean Air Act of 1990 (CAA), ensures that transportation projects meet air quality standards in order to be eligible for federal funding. The CAA requires that each state environmental agency develop a plan called a *State Implementation Plan (SIP)*. The *SIP* shows how the state will meet the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for each type of air pollutant, according to the schedules outlined in the CAA. The six criteria air pollutants identified under the CAA are ozone, carbon monoxide, particulate matter, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, and lead. Regions are continually monitored to assure that the criteria pollutants are within acceptable air quality standards. If an area exceeds one or more of these standards, it is classified by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) as a nonattainment area. Nonattainment areas are further classified from better to worse nonattainment as follows: marginal, moderate, serious, severe, or extreme.

As of November 22, 2004, the Richmond region is classified by the USEPA as a marginal nonattainment area for ozone. Thus, whenever the *LRTP* or *TIP* is approved or updated, the MPO must make sure these documents comply with the established air quality conformity requirements set forth in the *SIP*. The conformity analysis includes all regionally significant transportation projects regardless of funding source.
Who Are the Players?

Approximately 21 participants are directly involved in the TIP development process. They include member governments, transportation operating agencies, citizen appointees, and state and federal agencies. Municipalities within the MPO study area participate through their respective governments (i.e., Board of Supervisors, Town Council, and City Council). Other groups, organizations, and the general public become involved through the Richmond Area MPO public participation process in addition to their involvement at the local government level.

MPO voting members:
- Town of Ashland
- Charles City County
- Chesterfield County
- Goochland County
- Hanover County
- Henrico County
- New Kent County
- Powhatan County
- City of Richmond
- Capital Region Airport Commission
- GRTC Transit System
- Richmond Metropolitan Authority
- Richmond Regional Planning District Commission
- Virginia Department of Transportation

Non-voting Members:
- Citizen Appointees
- Citizens Transportation Advisory Committee
- Federal Highway Administration
- Federal Transit Administration
- Ridefinders, Inc.
- Virginia Department of Aviation
- Virginia Department of Rail & Public Transportation

How Does a Project Get in the TIP?

Securing a spot in an MPO’s Transportation Improvement Program is not a simple task. Typically, years of study and public input precedes a project’s inclusion in the TIP. The chart on page 6 illustrates the overall planning process that can lead to a project being selected for inclusion in the TIP.
### THE TRANSPORTATION PLANNING PROCESS
How Projects are Proposed, Planned, and Implemented

The chart reads from the bottom to the top

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOCALITY</th>
<th>REGION</th>
<th>STATE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City Public Works/Traffic Engineering Dept builds or contracts for small projects, and advises VDOT on contracts for state/federal projects funded locally, and advises VDOT on contracts for state/federal funded projects. GRTC operates City of Richmond, Chesterfield County, and Henrico County transit service.</td>
<td>MPO monitors status of projects, may participate in design studies in advisory capacity.</td>
<td>Specific locations and designs developed by VDOT Location/Design staff. Right of Way purchased by VDOT ROW Division. Construction contracted by VDOT District or Resident Engineer’s office. Transit grant funding forwarded to GRTC by FTA.</td>
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<td>Local improvement plans, such as surrounding county’s six-year road plans, identify priorities and funding sources. Local government Capital Improvement Plans include projects to be done with local funding. Local governments designate allocations from RSTP and CMAQ funding sources.</td>
<td>Richmond Area MPO TIP identifies and prioritizes transportation projects using federal money. Other state, local, or private projects are included in the TIP for informational or air quality analysis purposes (approved in Fall, forwarded to state for approval and inclusion in STIP).</td>
<td>Virginia Transportation Six-Year Improvement Program selects transportation projects for funding. STIP identifies federal money to be matched with state and other sources; STIP is submitted to FHWA and FTA for approval.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive plans, special area studies, GRTC planning efforts, and studies developed by city/county governments provide information.</td>
<td>Richmond Area MPO 2026 Long-Range Transportation Plan, ongoing regional corridor study and modeling efforts, and special studies provide information. TAC provides technical guidance to MPO on plans and programs.</td>
<td>State Multimodal Long-Range Plan, Highway Needs Assessment, Small Urban Area Studies, special area studies, Environmental Impact Statements, and VDRPT rail plans and transit evaluations provide information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public comment sought prior to approval of annual budgets, including Capital Improvement Plans, and throughout the process of updating Comprehensive Plans. Members of the public may speak at City Council or Board of Supervisors meetings, and to individual elected officials or planning commissioners. Citizens regularly appointed to serve on local planning boards and committees.</td>
<td>Public comment sought annually for TIP update, and throughout development of LRTP updates. CTAC/EDAC provide forum for public input to MPO plans/programs. Public hearings held each year prior to approval of major MPO plans and programs. Members of the public may speak at MPO meetings, and to individual MPO members.</td>
<td>Public comment is solicited every spring at the VDOT Construction District and Central Offices for the annual update of the state six year program, and for each stage of major plans, environmental impact studies, and location/design studies. Members of the public may contact CTB representatives at any time.</td>
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**Acronym Guide**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CMAQ</td>
<td>Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>CTAC</td>
<td>Citizens Transportation Advisory Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>CTB</td>
<td>Commonwealth Transportation Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>EDAC</td>
<td>Elderly and Disabled Advisory Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>FHWA</td>
<td>Federal Highway Administration</td>
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<tr>
<td>FTA</td>
<td>Federal Transit Administration</td>
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<tr>
<td>GRTC</td>
<td>Greater Richmond Transit Company</td>
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<tr>
<td>LRTP</td>
<td>Long-Range Transportation Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>MPO</td>
<td>Metropolitan Planning Organization</td>
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<td>PDC</td>
<td>Planning District Commission</td>
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<td>RSTP</td>
<td>Regional Surface Transportation Program</td>
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<td>STIP</td>
<td>Statewide Transportation Improvement Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>TAC</td>
<td>Technical Advisory Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>TIP</td>
<td>Transportation Improvement Program</td>
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<td>UWP</td>
<td>Unified Work Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>VDOT</td>
<td>Virginia Department of Transportation</td>
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<tr>
<td>VDRPT</td>
<td>Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation</td>
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In What Ways Can the Public Participate?

Public participation occurs during all stages of a project’s development. Letters of concern to state, regional, and local government officials are one of the most effective starting points. Public input may also be provided at various meetings or informal sessions with government officials and staff. Citizens are also asked to participate in special task forces to review transportation improvement concepts at the corridor, city/county, and regional level. Finally, once a project is in the TIP and it enters the preliminary engineering phase, the detailed environmental review process affords additional opportunities for public comment.

The Richmond Area MPO’s public participation process includes ongoing public participation activities through the Citizens Transportation Advisory Committee (CTAC) and the Elderly and Disabled Advisory Committee (EDAC). Representatives from the private sector, social service agencies, civic/environmental organizations, and other interest groups are contacted and advised of upcoming public review meetings and opportunities for providing comments on proposed projects. The CTAC and EDAC also review and comment on MPO plans, programs, and studies. These citizen members also serve on various special-purpose regional planning committees.

Citizens and public interest groups also have the opportunity to comment on the draft TIP before it is officially adopted by the MPO. The MPO conducts a public comment period for the TIP and holds several informational meetings to allow citizens to ask questions and make comments. Copies of the draft TIP are distributed to many area libraries and the final TIP documents can be accessed through the RRPDC’s web site at www.richmondregional.org.
For More Information

The following contact information is provided for your use in obtaining additional information.

**MEMBER JURISDICTIONS**

Town of Ashland  
  Town Manager  
  (804) 798-9219  
  http://www.town.ashland.va.us/

Charles City County  
  Director of Development  
  (804) 829-9217  
  http://www.co.charles-city.va.us/

Chesterfield County  
  Director of Transportation  
  (804) 748-1037  
  http://www.co.chesterfield.va.us/

Goochland County  
  Assistant County Administrator  
  (804) 556-5352  
  http://www.co.goochland.va.us/

Hanover County  
  Department of Public Works  
  (804) 365-6176  
  http://www.co.hanover.va.us/

Henrico County  
  Department of Public Works  
  (804) 501-4617  
  http://www.co.henrico.va.us/

New Kent County  
  Director of Planning  
  (804) 966-9690  
  http://www.co.henrico.va.us/

Powhatan County  
  Dir. of Planning and Community Dev.  
  (804) 598-5624  
  http://www.powhatanva.com/

City of Richmond  
  Dept. of Community Development  
  (804) 646-5871  
  http://www.ci.richmond.va.us/

**TRANSIT OPERATORS**

GRTC Transit System  
  Director of Planning  
  (804) 358-3871  
  http://www.ridegrtc.com

Ridefinders, Inc.  
  (804) 643-RIDE  
  http://www.ridefinders.com

**STATE AGENCIES**

Virginia Department of Transportation  
  Transportation & Mobility Planning  
  (804) 786-2964  
  http://virginiadot.org/

Virginia Department of Transportation  
  Richmond District Office  
  (804) 663-4188  
  richmondinfo@virginiadot.org

VDOT, Ashland Residency  
  (Goochland, Hanover)  
  (804) 752-5522

VDOT, Chesterfield Residency  
  (Chesterfield, Powhatan)  
  (804) 674-2800

VDOT, Sandston Residency  
  (Charles City, Henrico, New Kent)  
  (804) 328-3044

Virginia Department of Rail  
  and Public Transportation  
  (804) 786-4440  
  http://www.drpt.state.va.us/

**REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION / PLANNING AGENCIES**

Capital Region Airport Commission (CRAC)  
  (804) 226-3001  
  http://www.flyrichmond.com/HTML/  
  About_Airport_Pages/Capital_Region.html

Port of Richmond (PORT)  
  (804) 646-2020  
  http://www.ci.richmond.va.us/department/port/index.asp

Richmond Metropolitan Authority (RMA)  
  (804) 649-8494  
  http://www.rmaonline.org

Richmond Regional Planning District Commission (RRPDC)  
  (804) 367-6001  
  http://www.richmondregional.org
Richmond Area Metropolitan Planning Organization

The Richmond Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is the federal and state designated regional transportation planning organization that serves as the forum for cooperative transportation decision-making in the Richmond area. The Richmond Regional Planning District Commission is the contracting agent and staff for the Richmond Area MPO.

Town of Ashland
Angela L. LaCombe
Faye O. Prichard*

Charles City County
Michael L. Holmes
William R. Britton, Jr.*

Chesterfield County
Edward B. Barber
Richard M. “Dickie” King
R. John McCracken
Sherman W. Litton
Stan Newcomb*
Barbara K. Smith*
Steven E. Simonson*
James R. Banks*

Goochland County
Malvern R. Butler
Joseph T. Lacy
Robert A. Hammond*

Henrico County
Patricia S. O’Bannon
E. Todd Eure
Frank J. Thornton
Ralph J. Emerson, Jr.
Randall R. Silber*
Robert C. Thompson*

New Kent County
George M. Homewood
Stran L. Trout
Richard S. Ellyson *
Rodney A. Hathaway *

Powhatan County
Russell E. Holland
Richard W. Ayers
Brandon Stidham*

Hanover County
Rebecca G. Draper
Robert R. Selthiff
John E. Gordon
David P. Maloney*
Timothy E. Ernst*
Joseph E. Vidunas *

City of Richmond
William J. Pantele
Diane M. Linderman
Eugene A. Mason
S. Mark Strickler*
Viktoria W. Badger*
Gary Duval*

CRAC
Jon Mathiasen
Douglas E. Blum*

GRTC Transit System
John M. Lewis
Robert Hodder *

RMA
Robert M. Berry
James B. Kennedy*

Richmond Regional PDC
Paul E. Fisher
Daniel N. Lysy*

VDOT
Thomas A. Hawthorne
Mark E. Riblett*

Non-Voting Members

CTAC
Robert F. Bredhoft
Malcolm H. Hines*

EDAC
Linda G. Broady-Myers
Marjorie L. Payne *

FHWA
Ivan Rucker

FTA
Patricia Kampf

MPO Chairman’s Citizen Appointees
David T. Williams

Ridefinders, Inc.
Von S. Tisdale

VA Dept. of Aviation
P. Clifford Burnette, Jr.

Va Dept. of Rail and Public Transportation
Jack E. Apostolides

Members

Staff

Paul E. Fisher
Executive Director
Jo A. Evans
Assistant Executive Director
Peter M Sweetland
Finance and Contracts Administrator
Patricia A. Villa
Communications Coordinator
Daniel N. Lysy +
Director of Transportation
Michael O. Clements
Principal Planner
Lawrence C. Hagin +
Principal Planner
Jim H. Lee +
Senior Planner
James N. Britton
Associate Planner

+ Principal project staff

Jacqueline S. Stewart
Director of Planning & Info. Systems
Michelle E. Fults
GIS Manager
Allyson L. Finchum
Principal Planner
Joseph M. Ndanga
Senior Planner
Sarah M. Weisger
Senior Planner
Lory F. Pendergraph
Associate Planner
Leigh R. Medford
Planning Technician – GIS
Julie H. Fry +
Executive Secretary
Rhonda J. Bailey
Administrative Secretary
Sharon E. Robeson
Administrative Secretary
Demetra N. Jones
Receptionist