



U.S. Department  
of Transportation

# Transportation Management Area Planning Certification Review

Federal Highway  
Administration

Federal Transit  
Administration

## Richmond Regional Transportation Planning Area



### Summary Report

March 2022

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## 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On August 24, 2021, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) conducted the certification review of the transportation planning process for the Richmond Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RRTPO) urbanized area. FHWA and FTA are required to jointly review and evaluate the transportation planning process for each urbanized area over 200,000 in population at least every four years to determine if the process meets the Federal planning requirements.

The Richmond Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RRTPO) is the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) that serves as the cooperative forum for regional transportation planning and decision-making for the Richmond metropolitan planning area. The MPO Policy Board also provides direction over the selection of projects receiving Federal funds that are suballocated to the region. The 2010 Decennial Census population for the region was 1,004,696, and the Transportation Management Area (TMA) includes Hanover County, Henrico County, Town of Ashland, City of Richmond, as well as portions of Charles City County, Goochland County, New Kent County, Powhatan County and most of Chesterfield County (a portion of Chesterfield County is within the Tri-Cities Planning Area boundary where they are also a member of the Tri-Cities MPO).

PlanRVA is the region's planning district commission (as enacted by the Commonwealth) that provides staffing and administrative support to the RRTPO. It is the fiscal agent for the RRTPO and through a Memorandum of understanding provides technical planning and program administration services to the RRTPO under the leadership of a designated lead staff member, PlanRVA's Director of Transportation.

Per the RRTPO's 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), the City of Richmond is anticipated to have modest population growth over the next twenty years. However, while the region as a whole is growing, some areas are growing faster than others. The result of this growth pattern is that the jurisdictions around Richmond are expected to have the higher growth concentrations by 2045, with employment growth throughout the region. While the region grows to accommodate more jobs and more people (including shifting employment and employment centers) and as jobs and households become increasingly further apart, greater demands will be placed on the transportation system. Furthermore, funding for rehabilitation and maintenance will continue to remain in short supply to meet the needs of a multimodal transportation system. These challenges require collaboratively seeking innovative, multi-modal solutions to meeting current and future transportation demand.

### 1.1 Summary of Current Findings

The review found that the metropolitan transportation planning process conducted in the RRTPO area meets Federal planning requirements.



As a result of this review, FHWA and FTA are certifying the transportation planning process that is cooperatively conducted by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), Richmond Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RRTPO) and Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT). There are recommendations in this report that warrant close attention and follow-up, as well as areas that TPO is performing very well in that are to be commended.

Review Area	Finding	Action	Corrective Actions/ Recommendations/ Commendations	Resolution Due Date
Metropolitan Transportation Plan 23 U.S.C. 134(c),(h)&(i) 23 CFR 450.324	The TPO meets the Federal requirements for development of the long-range metropolitan transportation plan, as well as consultation and coordination.	Commendation	Richmond TPO has embarked on an innovative and inclusive approach to planning transportation investments in their region as demonstrated with the 2045 LRTP's Equity and Accessibility measures used to guide and prioritize decision-making across modes. These inclusive measures illuminate a robust set of benefits unique to transit and non-motorized projects to deliver comprehensive, equitable and convenient service for historically underrepresented and underserved communities in the Richmond planning area.	N/A
		Recommendation	Development of a periodic system performance report evaluating the condition and performance of the transportation system with respect to the performance targets, and progress achieved in meeting the performance targets.	N/A
Transportation Improvement Program 23 U.S.C. 134(c)(h)& (j) 23 CFR 450.326	The RRTPO meets the Federal requirements for development of the Transportation Improvement Program.	Commendation	The Richmond TIP is one of the more informed TIPs in the State. The amount of project information is beyond what is required by regulations and the visualization and mapping is well done.	N/A



		Recommendation	Update of TIP narrative indicating specific dollar amounts (or percentage of total TIP amount) utilized toward achievement of transit performance targets similar to the effort for highway investments.	N/A
TPO Structure and Bylaws 23 U.S.C. 134(d) 23 CFR 450.310(d)(3)	The RRTPO meets the Federal requirements for their organizational structure and bylaws.	Commendation	The RRTPO provides a competent staff with robust set of skills to meet new challenges, requirements, and expectations as the organization makes the transition towards a performance-based planning and programming process.	N/A
		Recommendation	We strongly recommend that the Secretary of Transportation review the Commonwealth’s current representation on the Policy Board to ensure that the Commonwealth’s interests in passenger and freight rail, transportation demand management, ridesharing, and public transportation are appropriately represented. We recommend that VDRPT be considered to be made a voting member moving forward.	N/A
Metropolitan Planning Area Boundaries 23 U.S.C. 134(e) 23 CFR 450.312(a)	The RRTPO meets the Federal requirements for Metropolitan Planning Area Boundaries	None	None	N/A
TPO Agreements and Contracts 23 CFR 450.314(a)	The RRTPO meets the Federal requirements for Agreements and Contracts.	Recommendation	It is recommended that RRTPO, once guidance is released for the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill (BIL), to reexamine the 3-C agreement (Memorandum of Understanding) on Metropolitan Transportation Planning Responsibilities for the Richmond Area to ensure it is in compliance.	N/A



Unified Planning Work Program 23 CFR 450.308	The RRTPO meets the Federal requirements for developing the Unified Planning Work Program.	Commendation	The Federal Review Team commends the RRTPO on recognizing the potential regional impacts of the 2020 Census and taking the initiative to expand the MPO boundary to include the 9-member planning region which benefits rural counties in access to federal funds.	N/A
Freight and Multimodal Planning 23 U.S.C. 134(h) 23 U.S.C. 134(i)(2) 23 CFR 450.306 23 CFR 450.318	The RRTPO meets the Federal requirements for multimodal planning and integrating freight in the planning process.	Commendation	1. The Review Team commends the RRTPO on supplementing their travel demand model with Replica, an analysis tool that incorporates insights from an activity-based model, to assist with scenario planning and implement their freight planning program.	N/A
		Commendation	2. The Review Team commends the RRTPO on prioritizing non-motorized transportation by developing its own Vision Zero plan, in collaboration with the City of Richmond, which will consider the unique landscape of the region to include both rural and urban land uses.	
Civil Rights, Non-discrimination, and Public Participation 23 U.S.C. 324 23 U.S.C. 134(i)(6) 23 CFR 450.316 & 450.326(b)	The RRTPO meets the Federal requirements for Civil Rights and Non-discrimination and Public Participation.	Commendation	The RRTPO is commended for their efforts to incorporate the intent, spirit, and essence of Title VI and subsequent nondiscrimination authorities, including Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice, in their planning process.	N/A
		Recommendation	1. VDOT provide Section 504 training to the RRTPO to support their self-certification of Section 504.	N/A



		Recommendation	2. VDOT provide procedures and documentation to support the State's self-certification statement pursuant to 23 CFR 450.336 that the metropolitan planning process is being carried out in accordance with Section 504, ADA, The Older Americans Act, 23 USC 324, and with consideration of E.O. 12898 (EJ).	
Public Transportation, Coordination, and Transit Planning 49 U.S.C. 5303 23 U.S.C. 134 23 U.S.C. 134(g) & (i) 23 CFR 450.316, 23 CFR 450.324(g) 49 U.S.C. 5303 23 U.S.C. 134 23 CFR 450.314	The TPO, state DOT and transit agencies are in compliance with Federal regulations.	Commendation	Transit planning in the region is extensive, as seen by the many plans undertaken by the RRTPO, VDRPT and GRTC over the last five years. These efforts will enable the TPO to effectively fund public transportation investments over the short and near-term in support of the region's project population and employment growth in an equitable manner.	N/A
		Recommendation	RRTPO should continue to support a robust transit network which delivers comprehensive, equitable and convenient service, particularly in areas of greatest need, especially in light of new CVTA revenues.	
Financial Planning/Financial Constraint & Annual Listing Projects 23 CFR 450.322, 23 CFR 450.216	The RRTPO meets the Federal requirements for Metropolitan Planning Area Boundaries	None	None	N/A

Details of the certification findings for each of the above items are contained in this report.





## 2.0 INTRODUCTION

### 2.1 Background

Pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 134(k) and 49 U.S.C. 5303(k), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) must jointly certify the metropolitan transportation planning process in Transportation Management Areas (TMAs) at least every four years. A TMA is an urbanized area, as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau, with a population of over 200,000. After the 2010 Census, the Secretary of Transportation designated 183 TMAs – 179 urbanized areas over 200,000 in population plus four urbanized areas that received special designation. In general, the reviews consist of three primary activities: a site visit, a review of planning products (in advance of and during the site visit), and preparation of a Certification Review Report that summarizes the review and offers findings. The reviews focus on compliance with Federal regulations, challenges, successes, and experiences of the cooperative relationship between the MPO(s), the State DOT(s), and public transportation operator(s) in the conduct of the metropolitan transportation planning process. Joint FTA/FHWA Certification Review guidelines provide agency field reviewers with latitude and flexibility to tailor the review to reflect regional issues and needs. As a consequence, the scope and depth of the Certification Review reports will vary significantly.

The Certification Review process is only one of several methods used to assess the quality of a regional metropolitan transportation planning process, compliance with applicable statutes and regulations, and the level and type of technical assistance needed to enhance the effectiveness of the planning process. Other activities provide opportunities for this type of review and comment, including Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) approval, the MTP, metropolitan and statewide Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) findings, air-quality (AQ) conformity determinations (in nonattainment and maintenance areas), as well as a range of other formal and less formal contact provide both FHWA/FTA an opportunity to comment on the planning process. The results of these other processes are considered in the Certification Review process.

While the Certification Review report itself may not fully document those many intermediate and ongoing checkpoints, the “findings” of Certification Review are, in fact, based upon the cumulative findings of the entire review effort.

The review process is individually tailored to focus on topics of significance in each metropolitan planning area. Federal reviewers prepare Certification Reports to document the results of the review process. The reports and final actions are the joint responsibility of the appropriate FHWA and FTA field offices, and their content will vary to reflect the planning process reviewed whether or not they relate explicitly to formal “findings” of the review.

To encourage public understanding and input, FHWA/FTA will continue to improve the clarity



of the Certification Review reports.

## 2.2 Purpose and Objective

Since the enactment of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991, the FHWA and FTA, are required to jointly review and evaluate the transportation planning process in all urbanized areas over 200,000 population to determine if the process meets the Federal planning requirements in 23 U.S.C. 134, 40 U.S.C. 5303, and 23 CFR 450. The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), extended the minimum allowable frequency of certification reviews to at least every four years.

The RRTPO is the federally designated MPO for the Richmond urbanized area. Virginia DOT is the responsible State agency and DRPT is the responsible public transportation operator. Current membership of the RRTPO consists of elected officials and citizens from the political jurisdictions in Central Virginia. The study area includes all of Central Virginia with Chesterfield County as the largest population center.

Certification of the planning process is a prerequisite to the approval of Federal funding for transportation projects in such areas. The certification review is also an opportunity to provide assistance on new programs and to enhance the ability of the metropolitan transportation planning process to provide decision makers with the knowledge they need to make well-informed capital and operating investment decisions.



## **3.0 SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Review Process**

This report details the 2021 review, which consisted of a formal site visit and a public involvement opportunity, conducted in August 2021.

Participants in the review included representatives of FHWA, FTA, Virginia DOT, VDRPT, and staff assigned to support the RRTPO. A full list of participants is included in Appendix A.

A desk audit of current documents and correspondence was completed prior to the site visit. In addition to the formal review, routine oversight mechanisms provide a major source of information upon which to base the certification findings.

The certification review covers the transportation planning process conducted cooperatively by the MPO, State, and public transportation operators. Background information, current status, key findings, and recommendations are summarized in the body of the report for the following subject areas selected by FHWA and FTA staff for on-site review:

- Metropolitan Transportation Plan
- Transportation Improvement Program
- TPO Organizational Structure and Bylaws
- Metropolitan Planning Area Boundaries
- TPO Agreements and Contracts
- Unified Planning Work Program
- Multimodal Planning / Integration in Freight Planning
- Civil Rights and Nondiscrimination
- Public Transportation, Coordination, and Transit Planning
- Financial Planning / Financial Constraint & Annual Listing Projects

### **3.2 Documents Reviewed**

The following MPO documents were evaluated as part of this planning process review:

- 3C Agreement, 2018
  - Fiscal Year (FY) 21 & FY22 PL Agreement
- FY 2022 Unified Planning Work Program for the RRTPO
- 2040 RRTPO MTP



- FY21 - FY24 MTIP and Self-Certification
- Organizational Structure:
  - RRTPO Governance Structure, Policy Board Membership, Committee Structure, Boundary Expansion Action – June 2021, and PlanRVA Organizational Chart
- Public Participation Plan, 2020 with Amendments
- Project Selection Procedures for RSTP
- Title VI, June 2021
- Congestion Management Process
  - FY21 CMP Story-map
- List of Obligated Projects
- Travel Demand Forecasting
- Performance Measures
- Financial Planning/Fiscal Constraint
  - TIP Financial Plan
  - MTP Financial Plan
- Approved Bylaws for RRTPO and Committees
  - Policy Board
  - Executive Committee, TAC, and CTAC
- RRTPO-TCMPO MOU, 2019
- Transit Plan/Programs
  - 2040 Transit Vision Plan
  - Transit Vision Plan – Strategic Technical Analysis, 2020
  - Park & Ride Investment Plan, 2019
- Bike/Pedestrian/Multimodal Plan, 2004
- Freight Plan, 2010



## 4.0 PROGRAM REVIEW

### 4.1 Metropolitan Transportation Plan

#### 4.1.1 Regulatory Basis

23 U.S.C. 134(c), (h) & (i) and 23 CFR 450.324 set forth requirements for the development and content of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) or long-range transportation plan. Among the requirements are that the MTP address at least a 20-year planning horizon and that it include both long and short range strategies that lead to the development of an integrated and multi-modal system to facilitate the safe and efficient movement of people and goods in addressing current and future transportation demand.

The MTP is required to provide a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive multimodal transportation planning process. The plan needs to consider all applicable issues related to the transportation system's development, land use, employment, economic development, natural environment, and housing and community development.

23 CFR 450.324(c) requires the MPO to review and update the MTP at least every 4 years in air quality nonattainment and maintenance areas, and at least every 5 years in attainment areas, to reflect current and forecasted transportation, population, land use, employment, congestion, and economic conditions and trends.

Under 23 CFR 450.324(f), the MTP is required, at a minimum, to consider the following:

- Projected transportation demand
- Existing and proposed transportation facilities
- Operational and management strategies
- A description of the performance measures and performance targets used
- A system performance report
- Congestion management process
- Capital investment and strategies to preserve transportation infrastructure and provide for multimodal capacity
- Design concept and design scope descriptions of proposed transportation facilities
- Potential environmental mitigation activities
- Pedestrian walkway and bicycle transportation facilities
- Transportation and transit enhancements
- A financial plan



#### 4.1.2 Current Status

The RRTPO's Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) process brings together project recommendations from local governments, the state DOT, VDRPT, GRTC, and other transportation providers (i.e. RideFinders). The priorities established by these stakeholders are the primary source of projects submitted for the region's MTP, known as plan2040.

The Richmond ConnectRVA 2045 MTP, adopted in October 2021, is a multi-modal planning document considering all types of surface transportation projects to best serve bicyclists, pedestrians, people using public transportation and cars, as well as to ensure the efficient movement of goods and services over the next 20 years. Of note was the 2045 MTP Project Scoring process, which considers "Equity and Accessibility" measures consistent with MTP guiding principle #5 that stresses, "... equity and inclusion in all transportation spending and planning decisions." Prominent use of equity and EJ measures to score and prioritize transportation investments better positions transit and pedestrian projects whose most significant features often get discounted in similar rankings as compared to highway projects.

The USDOT has published rules (under MAP-21 and FAST Act) for states and MPOs to collect data and establish performance targets that will support performance-based investment decisions. To this end, the TPO has set regional targets in the areas of roadway safety, pavement condition, bridge condition, roadway performance, and freight, as well as transit asset management and transit safety.

The RRTPO continues to strengthen linkages between work elements of the UPWP and the planning factors.

The MTP does include a fiscally constrained list of highway and transit projects for the region and includes an illustrative list of "vision" projects where transportation needs exist however, transportation funding resources are not committed or reasonably available. Combined, these lists serve as a roadmap for programming projects in the TIP and for SmartScale selections. The MTP notably attempts to emphasize non-traditional transportation modes (i.e., bicycle, pedestrian and "greenway trails"), while translating plan elements into work activities. The RRTPO is working to include environmental justice and equity considerations in the selection of transportation projects.

The RRTPO reached out to the State's environmental resources agencies when developing goals and strategies as part of the MTP development. For example, under the Land Use & Environmental Mitigation chapter of plan2045, there are maps of Superfund sites, Threatened and Endangered Species, Wetlands, Parklands and Conservation Lands, and Scenic Rivers. Also, the MTP references plans and efforts from the Virginia Department of Conservation and



Recreation, US Fish and Wildlife Service’s Endangered Species Program and National Wetland Inventory, and the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries.

Several outreach methods were utilized in development of the MTP including a MTP Advisory Committee, MTP surveys, several public meetings, as well as the involvement from the RRTPO’s standing committees.

### **4.1.3 Findings**

The TPO meets the Federal requirements for development of the metropolitan transportation plan, as well as consultation and coordination.

#### **Commendation:**

Richmond TPO has embarked on an innovative and inclusive approach to planning transportation investments in their region as demonstrated with the 2045 MTP’s Equity and Accessibility measures used to guide and prioritize decision-making across modes. These inclusive measures illuminate a robust set of benefits unique to transit and non-motorized projects to deliver comprehensive, equitable and convenient service for historically underrepresented and underserved communities in the Richmond planning area.

#### **Corrective Action:**

None

#### **Recommendation:**

Development of a periodic system performance report evaluating the condition and performance of the transportation system with respect to the performance targets, and progress achieved in meeting the performance targets.

## **4.2 Transportation Improvement Program**

### **4.2.1 Regulatory Basis**

23 CFR 450.326(d) states that the TIP shall include, to the maximum extent practicable, a description of the anticipated effect of the programmed investments with respect to the performance targets established in the MTP, the anticipated future performance target achievement of the programmed investments, and a written narrative linking investment priorities to those performance targets and how the other Performance Based Planning and Programming (PBPP) documents are being implemented to develop the program of projects.



23 U.S.C. 134(c), (h) & (j) set forth requirements for the MPO to cooperatively develop a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Under 23 CFR 450.326, the TIP must meet the following requirements:

- Must cover at least a four-year horizon and be updated at least every four years.
- Surface transportation projects funded under Title 23 U.S.C. or Title 49 U.S.C., except as noted in the regulations, are required to be included in the TIP.
- Make progress toward achieving the performance targets.
- A description of the anticipated effect of the TIP toward achieving the performance targets (to the maximum extent practicable).
- List project description, cost, funding source, and identification of the agency responsible for carrying out each project.
- Projects need to be consistent with the adopted MTP.
- Must be fiscally constrained.
- The MPO must provide all interested parties with a reasonable opportunity to comment on the proposed TIP.

#### **4.2.2 Current Status**

The RRTPO's FY2021-2024 TIP was developed in cooperation with the VDOT and VDRPT, local public transportation operators, and the local governments encompassing the urbanized area's transportation system. However, the preparation of the TIP is driven, in large part, by the Six-Year Improvement Program (SYIP). The Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) has lead responsibility for selecting and programming federally funded Interstate Maintenance, Bridge, National Highway Performance Program, Statewide (non-metropolitan) STPG, HSIP, Enhancement and projects, while local governments have lead responsibility for selecting projects within the urban and secondary roadway systems. The RRTPO however has lead responsibility for the project review, selection and funds-allocation process for Regional STPG, CMAQ, and Transportation Alternatives (TA) programs. The project selection process involves coordination and consultation among all parties. Federal transit capital funds under the Section 5310 program for elderly individuals and individuals with disabilities are administered at the State level by the VDRPT. Qualified local agencies apply to VDRPT for Section 5310 grants on an annual basis for eligible projects.

Since 2014, SmartScale (formerly HB2) requires the CTB to develop and implement a quantifiable and transparent prioritization process for making funding decisions for capacity and safety-enhancing projects within the Virginia's Six-Year Improvement Program (SYIP). Candidate projects will be solicited from eligible entities beginning in August of each year, then VDOT and VDRPT staffs will screen, review, and evaluate the projects per the SmartScale scoring process from October through early January consistent with the Transportation Needs Assessment of the State's long range plan - VTrans2040. MPOs are eligible to submit projects (including Highway, bus and rail transit, freight rail, road, operational improvements, and





transportation demand management projects) along with counties, cities, and those towns that maintain their own infrastructure.

STPG and CMAQ funds are apportioned by the State to their TMAs within Virginia. The RRTPO's STPG and CMAQ project selection (revised in September 2014) is a cooperative process between the RRTPO and VDOT. The procedure for selecting and prioritizing projects includes the development of candidate project lists by the RRTPO Transportation Technical Committee (TTC). The results of the ratings and project recommendations are reported to the RRTPO Policy Board for funding consideration. The STPG and CMAQ project development and selection procedures are documented on the RRTPO's website. The SmartScale selection process is led by the State and is documented on-line however the process is not included in the RRTPO's TIP process. The RRTPO's documented procedures for how the RRTPO takes action for determining TIP amendments versus an administrative adjustment (i.e., modifications) is located in the Public Participation Plan and TIP.

FTA's final rule on Transit Asset Management (TAM) requires transit agencies receiving FTA funding to develop asset management plans and monitor performance for public transportation assets, including vehicles, facilities, equipment, and transit infrastructure. GRTC as a Tier I public transportation provider (defined as large transit agency having greater than 101 transit vehicles) has developed its own Transit Asset Management (TAM) plan in FY 2018, as well as Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) in FY 2020. Annual targets developed by the transit agency are then incorporated by the TPO into their planning processes. However, the FY 21 TIP does not include these Tier I TAM targets nor was a description of the anticipated effect of programmed investments toward achieving the transit performance targets present. The FY 21 TIP does contain a narrative linking investment priorities to highway performance targets listing specific dollar amounts (or percentage of total TIP amount) utilized toward achievement of targets.

The TIP contains regionally significant projects funded by FTA and FHWA. Project listings for "roadway" and transit sections included sufficient descriptive material and total project costs. In accordance with the RRTPO's Public Involvement Policy, the public was afforded several opportunities to comment upon the development the FY2021-2024 TIP.

The Federal Team did not see a system performance report evaluating the condition and performance of the transportation system with respect to the performance targets. Both the TIP performance target descriptions and system report helps inform the public and decision-makers on the condition of transportation assets in the region and the funding necessary to maintain a state of good repair.

### **4.2.3 Findings**

The RRTPO meets the Federal requirements for development of the Transportation Improvement Program.



### **Commendation:**

The Richmond TIP is one of the more informed TIPs in the State. The amount of project information is beyond what is required by regulations and the visualization and mapping is well done.

### **Corrective Action:**

None

### **Recommendations:**

Update of TIP narrative indicating specific dollar amounts (or percentage of total TIP amount) utilized toward achievement of transit performance targets similar to effort for the highway investments.

## **4.3 TPO Organizational Structure and Bylaws**

### **4.3.1 Regulatory Basis**

23 U.S.C. 134(d) and 23 CFR 450.314(a) state the MPO, the State, and the public transportation operator shall cooperatively determine their mutual responsibilities in carrying out the metropolitan transportation planning process. These responsibilities shall be clearly identified in written agreements among the MPO, the State, and the public transportation operator serving the MPA. Additionally, 23 CFR 450.314(h) states that the MPO, the State, and the public transportation operator shall jointly develop specific written provisions for cooperatively developing and sharing information related to transportation performance data, the selection of performance targets, the reporting of performance targets, the reporting of performance to be used in tracking progress toward attainment of critical outcomes for the region of the MPO, and the collection of data for the State asset management plans for the National Highway System. Furthermore, 23 CFR 450.314(g) states if part of an urbanized area that has been designated as a TMA overlaps into an adjacent MPA serving an urbanized area that is not designated as a TMA, the adjacent urbanized area shall not be treated as a TMA. However, a written agreement shall be established between the MPOs with MPA boundaries, including a portion of the TMA, which clearly identifies the roles and responsibilities of each MPO in meeting specific TMA requirements (e.g., congestion management process, Surface Transportation Program funds suballocated to the urbanized area over 200,000 population, and project selection).

### **4.3.2 Current Status**

RRTPO is the organization responsible for conducting the continuing, comprehensive, and coordinated (3-C) planning process for the Richmond region in accordance with Federal requirements. Staff of PlanRVA perform the day-to-day operations of the RRTPO including



providing technical staff, administrative support, and serving as the RRTPO's contracting agent. The staff, in conjunction with RRTPO's member agencies, collect, analyze, and evaluate demographic, land use, and transportation data to gain a better understanding of the transportation system requirements of the area. Staff members also prepare materials for use at Board and Committee meetings.

The RRTPO structure consists of a Policy Board and three standing advisory groups; an Executive Committee, Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), and Citizen Transportation Advisory Committee (CTAC).

The policy making body of the RRTPO is its Board which consists of twenty-four voting members. The voting membership of the Policy Board consists of four representatives each from the City of Richmond, three representatives each from the Counties of Henrico and Chesterfield; two representatives from the County of Hanover; two representatives from the Counties of Goochland, New Kent, and Powhatan; and one representative from the Town of Ashland, County of Charles City, Capital Region Airport Commission (CRAC), Greater Richmond Transit Authority (GRTC), the Richmond Metropolitan Transportation Authority (RMTA), and the Virginia Department of Transportation (representing the State). Other agencies with non-voting membership on the RRTPO Policy Board include: the FHWA, FTA, CTAC Chair, and Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (VDRPT). Policy Board meetings are open to the public.

The Executive Committee is a long-time standing committee of the RRTPO, meets monthly, serves as an advisory committee to the RRTPO, and consists of elected representatives from jurisdictions within the region.

The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) provides technical review, comments, and recommendations, supervision, and assistance in transportation planning to the Policy Board decision makers. TAC is specifically responsible for advising the RRTPO in the development of the regional constrained long-range Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), the transportation Improvement Program (including the Transportation Alternative and Regional Surface Transportation Program selection processes), the regional Congestion Management Process (CMP) Plan and the Unified Planning Work Program within the Richmond/Tri-Cities urbanized area, as well as the development and review of various planning documents, amendments, and reports. TAC meetings are open to the public.

The CTAC consists of appointed members from RRTPO jurisdictions, and diverse organizations. The purpose of the CTAC is to advise the RRTPO on issues, plans, studies, and matters necessary and appropriate for providing viable and reasonable citizen input.

Most recently in 2020, the Central Virginia Transportation Authority is a newly created authority in central Virginia to help provide new funding opportunities for priority transportation investments across the region. This Authority was established by the 2020 General Assembly of Virginia and PlanRVA serves under a Memorandum of Agreement as a



planning and staffing resource for the Authority and to promote coordination between the RRTPO and CVTA.

The Central Virginia Transportation Authority comprises the counties and cities located in Planning District 15. The Authority will administer transportation funding generated through the imposition of an additional regional 0.7 percent sales and use tax and a wholesale gas tax of 7.6 cents per gallon of gasoline and 7.7 cents per gallon of diesel fuel with the gas tax rates being indexed for inflation. The bill requires a local maintenance of effort for transit funding of at least 50 percent of what was provided on July 1, 2020, with such amount to be indexed beginning in 2023.

The VDRPT is a state agency that administers Federal public transportation funds apportioned to Virginia and to the Richmond region. As a state agency, VDRPT represents the Commonwealth on the RRTPO and represents the Commonwealth's interests with respect to "passenger and freight rail, transportation demand management, ridesharing, and public transportation." [Code of Virginia (section 33.2-285)]

During previous Federal reviews of the RRTPO, FHWA and FTA have considered VDRPT to be a public agency that administers a major mode of transportation (i.e. passenger and freight rail, public transportation) and/or an appropriate State transportation agency whose official should be a voting member. In addition to the consideration of federal regulations, our past recommendations for VDRPT to be a voting member were in response to the "bifurcated missions" and responsibilities between VDOT and VDRPT and the growing public feedback expressing concerns regarding the region's public transportation.

### **4.3.3 Findings**

The RRTPO meets the Federal requirements for their organizational structure and bylaws.

#### **Commendation:**

The RRTPO provides a competent staff with robust set of skills to meet new challenges, requirements, and expectations as the organization makes the transition towards a performance-based planning and programming process.

#### **Corrective Action:**

None

#### **Recommendations:**

In consideration of new and past public comments received by the FHWA and FTA regarding the lack of regional public transportation options for elderly and low income populations to access opportunities in the region, we strongly recommend that the Secretary of



Transportation review the Commonwealth's current representation on the Policy Board to ensure that the Commonwealth's interests in passenger and freight rail, transportation demand management, ridesharing, and public transportation are appropriately represented. In light of the Code of Virginia (section 33.2-285) and the Commonwealth/Virginia Secretary of Transportation's voting representation by VDRPT on other TMA MPOs in Virginia, we recommend that VDRPT be considered to be made a voting member moving forward.

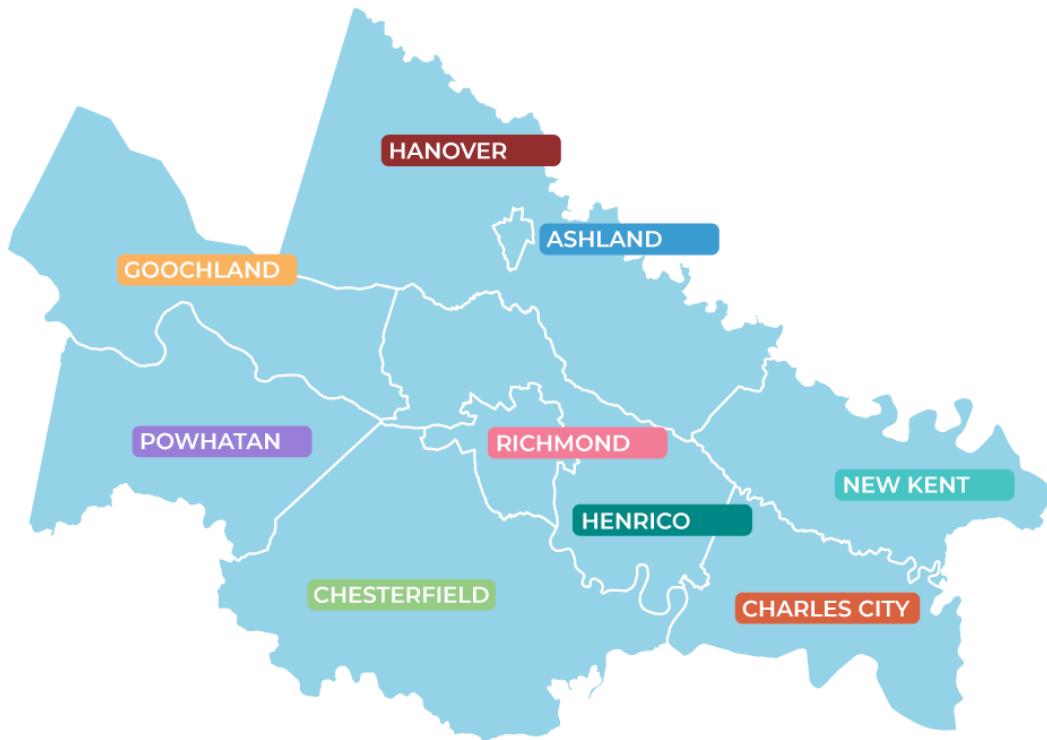
## **4.4 Metropolitan Planning Area Boundaries**

### **4.4.1 Regulatory Basis**

The metropolitan planning area (MPA) boundary refers to the geographic area in which the metropolitan transportation planning process must be carried out. The MPA shall, at a minimum, cover Census-defined, urbanized areas (UZA's) and the contiguous geographic area(s) likely to become urbanized within the 20-year forecast period covered by the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). Adjustments to the UZA as a result of the transportation planning process are typically referred to by FHWA and FTA as the urbanized area boundary. In accordance with 23 U.S.C. 134 (e), the boundary should foster an effective planning process that ensures connectivity between modes and promotes overall efficiency. The boundary should include Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-defined nonattainment and/or maintenance areas, if applicable, in accordance with the National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) for ozone or carbon monoxide.

### **4.4.2 Current Status**

The RRTPO is the federally designated regional transportation planning organization that serves as the cooperative forum for regional transportation planning and decision-making for the Richmond metropolitan planning area. The 2010 Decennial Census population for the region was 1,004,696, and the metropolitan planning area (MPA) includes Hanover County, Henrico County, Town of Ashland, City of Richmond, as well as portions of Charles City County, Goochland County, New Kent County, Powhatan County and a majority of Chesterfield County. In 2000, the census-defined urbanized areas of the Richmond and Tri-Cities merged and created one urbanized area – Richmond urbanized area. Instead of combining MPOs to serve the new urbanized area, the Richmond TPO and Tri-Cities MPOs decided to maintain separate MPOs but would agree to coordinate planning activities. In the last certification review, it was requested by jurisdictions (i.e. Goochland County and Powhatan County) to expand the planning area boundary for economic purposes. Since then, the request taken under consideration and the boundaries were expanded for Goochland County and Powhatan County.



#### 4.4.3 Findings

The RRTPO meets the Federal requirements for metropolitan planning area boundaries.

**Commendation:**

None

**Corrective Action:**

None

**Recommendations:**

None



## 4.5 TPO Agreements and Contracts

### 4.5.1 Regulatory Basis

In accordance with 23 U.S.C. 134 and 23 CFR 450.314, MPOs are required to establish relationships with the State and public transportation agencies under the cover of specified agreements between the parties to carry out a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive (3 C's) metropolitan planning process. The agreements must identify the mutual roles and responsibilities and procedures governing their cooperative efforts.

Where applicable, agreements must identify the designated agency for air quality planning under the Clean Air Act and address the responsibilities and situations arising from there being more than one MPO in a metropolitan area or serving one urbanized area (23 CFR 450.314(e)).

### 4.5.2 Current Status

The RRTPO has established transportation planning responsibilities through a 2018 Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the state, RRTPO, GRTC and the Richmond Regional Planning District Commission (RRPDC). The Federal team reviewed the RRTPO's agreements and have concluded that the RRTPO's 3-C agreement (Memorandum of Understanding on Metropolitan Transportation Planning Responsibilities for the Richmond Area) that was executed on July 10, 2018, was updated since the last certification review but may need to be reviewed and potentially updated to ensure compliance with the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL).

### 4.5.3 Findings

The RRTPO meets the Federal requirements for Agreements and Contracts.

#### **Commendation:**

None

#### **Corrective Action:**

None

#### **Recommendations:**

It is recommended that RRTPO, once guidance is released for the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill (BIL), to reexamine the 3-C agreement (Memorandum of Understanding) on Metropolitan Transportation Planning Responsibilities for the Richmond Area to ensure it is in compliance



## 4.6 Unified Planning Work Program

### 4.6.1 Regulatory Basis

23 CFR 450.308 sets the requirement that planning activities performed under Titles 23 and 49 U.S.C. be documented in a Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). The MPO, in cooperation with the State and public transportation operator, shall develop a UPWP that includes a discussion of the planning priorities facing the MPA and the work proposed for the next one- or two-year period by major activity and task in sufficient detail to indicate the agency that will perform the work, the schedule for completing the work, the resulting products, the proposed funding, and sources of funds.

### 4.6.2 Current Status

On an annual basis, RRTPO cooperatively develops a UPWP that supports a regional approach to transportation planning and manages the use of transportation planning funds. RRTPO adopted their FY22 UPWP on June 3, 2021 which describes the priorities, work tasks and budget that guides the TPO in meeting federal, state, and local planning and programming activity requirements. The TPO suitably addressed the recommendations from the 2017 Certification Review to improve the organization and content of their UPWP.

The UPWP clearly outlines the work products, responsible entity, and anticipated schedule for each work task. Tasks are assigned as the UPWP is developed and staff is abreast on the tasks' progress on a bi-weekly basis. The RRTPO monitors the progress of each task accordingly and produces monthly and quarterly progress reports to the Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT). Monthly status reports are also provided to the policy board and elected officials which include expenditures per task and is very beneficial as the annual cycle for the budget is every Spring. Additionally, RRTPO has discussed the impacts of the 2020 Census on the MPO boundaries which led to the policy board taking action to approve the expansion of the MPO boundary to include the entire 9-member planning region. The boundary shift will help rural counties regarding access to allocated funding sources such as CMAQ and STBG funds.

Impacts from the pandemic has led the TPO to be flexible with their fiscal resources while adjusting to a virtual environment. For instance, new staffing goals weren't met in the previous year; however, this year the addition of multiple new staff members is accounted for in this year's program budget. Another instance is the use of visualization tools which have assisted the MPO in their outreach efforts, especially in a virtual environment. These tools include Story Maps and dashboards to educate the public as well as illustrate LRTP development, project list development and updates, transportation issues and solutions, and COVID-19 impacts on the transportation system in the region.

Regional coordination efforts exist between RRTPO, Tri-Cities, and VDOT. The RRTPO collaborates on regional projects with Tri-Cities such as the Fall Line regional trail system and





participates on advisory committees with VDOT to provide feedback on impacts that affect both RRTPO and Tri-Cities. Additionally, emergency management and hazard mitigation efforts are coordinated at the district level and staff from both MPOs who communicate consistently on an as needed basis. VDOT holds quarterly data meetings with the Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment (OIP) to discuss and highlight best practices within the region. RRTPO continues to build relationships and participate in panels with VDOT and other Eastern state DOTs to share their regional story and data sharing efforts.

Overall, the RRTPO meets the Federal requirements for developing the Unified Planning Work Program.

#### **4.6.3 Findings**

The RRTPO meets the Federal requirements for developing the Unified Planning Work Program.

#### **Commendation:**

The Federal Review Team commends the RRTPO on recognizing the potential regional impacts of the 2020 Census and taking the initiative to expand the MPO boundary to include the 9-member planning region which benefits rural counties in access to federal funds.

#### **Corrective Action:**

None

#### **Recommendations:**

None

## **4.7 Multimodal Planning / Integration in Freight Planning**

### **4.7.1 Regulatory Basis**

The MAP-21 established in 23 U.S.C. 167 a policy to improve the condition and performance of the national freight network and achieve goals related to economic competitiveness and efficiency; congestion; productivity; safety, security, and resilience of freight movement; infrastructure condition; use of advanced technology; performance, innovation, competition, and accountability, while reducing environmental impacts.

In addition, 23 U.S.C. 134 and 23 CFR 450.306 specifically identify the need to address freight movement as part of the metropolitan transportation planning process. Specific requirements include giving adequate and timely notice of opportunities to participate in or comment on transportation issues and processes, employing visualization techniques to describe metropolitan transportation plans and TIPs, making public information readily available in



electronically accessible formats and means such as the world wide web, holding public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times, demonstrating explicit consideration and response to public input, and a periodically reviewing of the effectiveness of the participation plan.

#### **4.7.2 Current Status**

RRTPO continues to address freight and multimodal planning within their transportation program. Existing initiatives that the MPO participates in to address freight are the Commerce Road Corridor project, work groups, and partnerships with agencies such as the Port of Virginia and Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) on projects that include station and corridor improvements. RRTPO recognizes that freight is a specialized role and continues to incorporate available data and travel demand models into the transportation planning process. RRTPO and Tri-Cities have a combined travel demand model where data from both regions are included in the inputs. RRTPO uses accessibility data from the demand model when developing the long-range plan, developing freight performance measures, scoring projects, and implementing their freight planning program. To supplement their current travel demand model, RRTPO uses Replica which is another analysis tool that gives insights of an activity-based model to help the MPO examine trends and assist with scenario planning.

In addition to freight planning, RRTPO also addresses non-motorized transportation in the planning process. The Richmond region is developing its first ever Vision Zero plan with the City of Richmond as the lead and help from VHB and VDOT. For the region, it is important that the Vision Zero plan considers both rural and urban land uses. This effort has received support from jurisdictions and a task force for the Vision Zero plan meets bi-monthly. The current Bike Plan will be updated concurrently with the LRTP and will include a thorough inventory of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure in the region (a key feature right now is the Fall Line trail). The project listing will be consistent with the region's LRTP fiscally constrained project list. The Bike Plan will also consider the level of stress on the region's roadways and further analyze data of the priority corridors. The update to the Bike Plan will be produced over several meetings with localities as well as with a designated steering committee.

#### **4.7.3 Findings**

The RRTPO meets the Federal requirements for multimodal planning and integrating freight in the planning process.

#### **Commendation:**

1. The Review Team commends the RRTPO on supplementing their travel demand model with Replica, an analysis tool that incorporates insights from an activity-based model, to assist with scenario planning and implement their freight planning program.



2. The Review Team commends the RRTPO on prioritizing non-motorized transportation by developing its own Vision Zero plan, in collaboration with the City of Richmond, which will consider the unique landscape of the region to include both rural and urban land uses.

**Corrective Action:**

None

**Recommendations:**

None

## **4.8 Civil Rights and Nondiscrimination**

### **4.8.1 Regulatory Basis**

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, prohibits discrimination based upon race, color, and national origin. Specifically, 42 U.S.C. 2000d states that “No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.” Title VI bars intentional discrimination (i.e., disparate treatment) as well as disparate-impact discrimination stemming from neutral policy or practice that has the effect of a disparate impact on protected groups based on race, color, or national origin. In addition to Title VI, there are other Nondiscrimination statutes that afford legal protection and related authorities. These include:

1. **Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964**, 42 U.S.C. 2000d, provides: No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.
2. **Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973**, 42 U.S.C. 794, et seq., provides: No qualified handicapped person shall, solely by reason of handicap, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity that receives or benefits from Federal financial assistance.
3. **Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990**, 42 U.S.C. 12131, et seq., provides: No qualified individual with a disability shall, by reason of such disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination by a department, agency, special purpose district, or other instrumentality of a State or local government.



4. **The Older Americans Act/Age Discrimination Act of 1975**, 42 U.S.C. 6101, provides: No person in the United States shall, on the basis of age, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.
5. **Federal Aid Highway Act of 1973**, 23 U.S.C. 324, provides: No person shall, on the ground of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal assistance under this Title or carried on under this Title.

Authorities:

1. **E.O. 12898**, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations
2. **E.O. 13166**, Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency

The planning regulations [23 CFR 450.336] require the MPO and State to jointly certify that the planning process is being carried out in accordance with all applicable Federal transportation planning and programming requirements and:

- In nonattainment and maintenance areas, sections 174 and 176(c) and (d) of the Clean Air Act, as amended (42 U.S.C. 7504, 7506(c) and (d)) and 40 CFR part 93;
- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended (42 U.S.C. 2000d-1) and 49 CFR part 21;
- 49 U.S.C. 5332, prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, color, creed, national origin, sex, or age in employment or business opportunity.
- Section 1101(b) of the FAST Act (Pub. L. 114-357) and 49 CFR part 26 regarding the involvement of disadvantaged business enterprises in DOT funded projects;
- 23 CFR part 230, regarding the implementation of an equal employment opportunity program on Federal and Federal-aid highway construction contracts;
- The provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.) and 49 CFR parts 27, 37, and 38;
- The Older Americans Act, as amended (42 U.S.C. 6101), prohibiting discrimination on the basis of age in programs or activities receiving Federal financial assistance;
- Section 324 of title 23 U.S.C. regarding the prohibition of discrimination based on gender; and
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 794) and 49 CFR part 27 regarding discrimination against individuals with disabilities.

#### 4.8.2 Current Status

The RRTPO recently adopted a Title VI Implementation Plan that documents the processes and methods to support the RRTPO's self-certification requirements for Title VI of the Civil Rights



Act and other Nondiscrimination statutes contained in the self-certification statement. During our desk audit review, we found the document to be thorough, and subsequent discussions with staff during our site-visit provided clarification to additional questions regarding implementation.

At the time of the review, the RRTPO had not yet approved the region's 2045 updated Long Range Transportation Plan. However, the draft 2045 plan did appear to be a significant and substantial improvement over the 2040 with community and citizen engagement profoundly serving as the building blocks for meeting the accessibility and mobility needs of the citizens throughout the Richmond region.

The Federal team discussed efforts to respond to our historical concerns and recommendations contained in our previous report about regional transit accessibility and mobility. Additionally, we discussed VDOT's most recent Title VI and Nondiscrimination review of the RRTPO, and the findings contained in the report.

Absent from the Title VI and Nondiscrimination review report were several statutes that are contained in the certification statement signed by the RRTPO and VDOT at the time the RRTPO's Transportation Improvement Program is approved. These statutes include:

1. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 42 U.S.C. 794
2. Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, 42 U.S.C. 12131
3. Federal Aid Highway Act of 1973, 23 U.S.C. 324
4. The Older Americans Act/Age Discrimination Act of 1975, 42 U.S.C. 6101

VDOT followed the latest guidelines provided by the FHWA on the Title VI Program which removed the EJ, Section 504, ADA, 23 U.S.C. 324, and Age components from the subrecipient Title VI review template.

New legislation was approved by the Governor that established a Central Virginia Transportation Authority (CVTA) that provides new funding opportunities for priority transportation investments across the region. This provides for a unique relationship between the RRTPO, PlanRVA, and CVTA, and we briefly discussed the role of each of these regional Boards.

The Federal team discussed the most recent GRTC Transit Vision Plan and inquired about whether the Vision Plan, at a minimum, included the population of Chesterfield County that resides within the Tri-Cities planning area boundary where Chesterfield County (50% GRTC Owner) is also a member of the Tri-Cities MPO. Additionally, we inquired about whether there existed any coordination or agreements between GRTC and Petersburg Area Transit (PAT) that



is consistent with 23 CFR 450.314 (h)(1) where for more than one MPO serving an urbanized area:

“The MPO(s), State(s), and the providers of public transportation shall jointly agree upon and develop specific written provisions for cooperatively developing and sharing information related to transportation performance data, the selection of performance targets, the reporting of performance targets, the reporting of performance to be used in tracking progress toward attainment of critical outcomes for the region of the MPO (see § 450.306(d)), and the collection of data for the State asset management plan for the NHS.”

### **4.8.3 Findings**

The RRTPO is commended for their efforts to incorporate the intent, spirit, essence and objective of Title VI and subsequent nondiscrimination authorities including Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice in their planning process. The updated Title VI Plan and Public Engagement Plan together represent a serious commitment to engaging all citizens, communicating public comments to decision makers, and analyzing investing decisions to ensure a regional transportation network that will benefit everyone.

The VDOT is required to monitor its subrecipients (MPOs) to ensure that they are in compliance with Title VI and related non-discrimination statutes and other authorities/directives. Several non-discrimination statutes were not included as part of the VDOT Title VI and Nondiscrimination review of the RRTPO. This includes Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. However, as noted above, VDOT indicated that they followed the latest guidelines provided by FHWA. During our review, we asked RRTPO staff about their understanding of the statutes as it pertains to the planning and programming process, and they mentioned that additional training would be helpful.

#### **Commendation:**

The RRTPO is commended for their efforts to incorporate the intent, spirit, and essence of Title VI and subsequent nondiscrimination authorities, including Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice in their planning process.

#### **Corrective Action:**

None

#### **Recommendations:**

1. VDOT provide Section 504 training to the RRTPO to support their self-certification of Section 504.
2. VDOT provide procedures and documentation to support the State’s self-certification statement pursuant to 23 CFR 450.336 that the metropolitan transportation planning



process is being carried out in accordance with Section 504, ADA, The Older Americans Act, 23 USC 324, and with consideration of EO 12898 (EJ).

## **4.9 Public Transportation, Coordination, and Transit Planning**

### **4.9.1 Regulatory Basis**

49 U.S.C. 5303 and 23 U.S.C. 134 require the transportation planning process in metropolitan areas to consider all modes of travel in the development of their plans and programs. Federal regulations cited in 23 CFR 450.314 state that the MPO in cooperation with the State and operators of publicly owned transit services shall be responsible for carrying out the transportation planning process.

### **4.9.2 Current Status**

The primary transit agency in the TPO planning area is the Greater Richmond Transit Company (GRTC), which serves Richmond and parts of Chesterfield and Henrico counties. The GRTC provides fixed route local bus, bus rapid transit, express bus, and paratransit van. In 1989 GRTC became jointly owned by City of Richmond and Chesterfield County and today also provides service to Henrico County and Petersburg. GRTC also oversees the RideFinders transportation demand management (TDM) program, offering commuter-based ride matching services, across multiple central Virginia counties and jurisdictions. GRTC Transit System is a voting member on the RRTPO Policy Board.

The region is a key connection between the Southeast High-Speed Rail (SEHSR) corridor, which runs from Washington D.C. to Atlanta, and the Northeast Corridor (NEC), which connects north to Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. Within the Richmond region there are three passenger rail stations served by Amtrak: Staples Mill station in Henrico County, Main Street Station in downtown Richmond, and the Ashland station in the Town of Ashland.

Representatives from both the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (VDRPT) and GRTC participated in the Richmond Planning Certification site visit. From this discussion and review of the 2045 LRTP and the FY21 TIP, it appears the TPO's plans and programs are cooperatively developed and coordination between the MPO and the transit agency is robust. In particular, several transit-specific plans and analyses have been conducted by the TPO in coordination with VDRPT and GRTC. The RRTPO's Greater RVA Transit Vision Plan was completed in 2017 (sponsored by VDRPT) and established a long-term framework for transit growth in the Richmond region, as well as the GRTC system-wide Transit Development Plan (funded by VDRPT) completed in July 2018. From these efforts a Phase II or Near-Term Strategy was completed by the RRTPO to advance strategic actions and committed regional projects



including new Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) routes and a permanent downtown Bus Transfer Center identified in the newly adopted (October 2021) MTP - ConnectRVA 2045.

In 2020 the General Assembly of Virginia created the Central Virginia Transportation Authority (CVTA), allowing the greater Richmond region to use newly specified tax revenues to fund transportation needs in the region. Starting in FY2021, GRTC will receive 15% of CVTA funding to support public transportation and provide new transit and mobility services. This 15% transit component of CVTA funds is projected to generate approximately \$28 million per year or \$168 million over a six-year period.

For the most part the CVTA membership area overlaps with the RRTPO planning area, however each entity contains its own decision-making structure. This arrangement between MPO and taxing authority is somewhat similar to the Regional Transit Advisory Panel recently created in the Hampton Roads area with the HRTPO. It appears the ConnectRVA 2045 MTP and other TPO planning efforts will provide the planning foundation for CVTA funding decisions, consistent with TPO goals and performance measures. The RRTPO must also program fiscally constrained CVTA projects in the publicly reviewed TIP, as required for obligation of federal funding.

While the GRTC Board is comprised of six directors: three from the City of Richmond and three from Chesterfield County, the CVTA member jurisdictions include eight counties and cities in the Richmond area. During the site visit potential concerns were discussed arising from localities expressing interest in GRTC Board representation for their CVTA tax contributions, as well as interest in expanded GRTC service to CVTA membership areas now tied indirectly to the transit agency.

### **4.9.3 Findings**

The RRTPO views public transportation to be an integral part of the overall regional transportation system and has shown support for transit initiatives. The RRTPO continues its strong coordination efforts with GRTC and VDRPT regarding development of the MTP as well as other data sharing, technical resource, and transit planning efforts. Transit planning in the region is extensive, as seen by the many plans undertaken by the RRTPO, VDRPT and GRTC over the last five years. It was also noted from the site visit discussion that the TPO has a new dedicated mobility coordinator for smaller transit providers demonstrating the commitment to public transportation planning for the region. With new revenues available for transit, the RRTPO will be challenged to advance transit investments from these planning products expanding transit service both into new suburban markets while improving the core urban areas in an equitable manner.

The TPO, state DOT and transit agencies are in compliance with Federal regulations.





### **Commendation:**

Transit planning in the region is extensive, as seen by the many plans undertaken by the RRTPO, VDRPT and GRTC over the last five years. These efforts will enable the TPO to effectively fund public transportation investments over the short and near-term in support of the region's project population and employment growth in an equitable manner.

### **Corrective Action:**

None

### **Recommendations:**

RRTPO should continue to support a robust transit network which delivers comprehensive, equitable and convenient service, particularly in areas of greatest need, especially in light of new CVTA revenues.

## **4.10 Financial Planning/Financial Constraint & Annual Listing Projects**

### **4.10.1 Regulatory Basis**

The metropolitan planning statutes state that the long-range transportation plan and TIP (23 U.S.C. 134 (j) (2) (B)) must include a "financial plan" that "indicates resources from public and private sources that are reasonably expected to be available to carry out the program." The purpose of the financial plan is to demonstrate fiscal constraint. These requirements are implemented in transportation planning regulations for the metropolitan long-range transportation plan, TIP, and STIP. These regulations provide that a long-range transportation plan and TIP can include only projects for which funding "can reasonably be expected to be available" [23 CFR 450.322(f) (10) (metropolitan long-range transportation plan), 23 CFR 450.324(h) (TIP), and 23 CFR 450.216(m)(STIP)]. In addition, the regulations provide that projects in air quality nonattainment and maintenance areas can be included in the first two years of the TIP and STIP only if funds are "available or committed" [23 CFR 450.324(h) and 23 CFR 450.216(m)]. Finally, the Clean Air Act's transportation conformity regulations specify that a conformity determination can only be made on a fiscally constrained long-range transportation plan and TIP [40 CFR 93.108].

In metropolitan planning areas, on an annual basis, no later than 90 calendar days following the end of the program year, the State, public transportation operator(s), and the MPO shall cooperatively develop a listing of projects (including investments in pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities) for which funds under 23 U.S.C. or 49 U.S.C. Chapter 53 were obligated in the preceding program year [23 CFR 450.334].



#### 4.10.2 Current Status

The TPO's financial planning for the FY 21 TIP and 2045 MTP relies mostly on information provided by VDOT or VDRPT and from the transit operator. This process is described in the Financial Plan sections of the TIP and MTP. Highway funding and most transit funding was developed by the relevant state agency and allocated to the RRTPO based on projected historic trends in obtaining funding within the region. The financial estimates for both revenues and costs are given in year of expenditure dollars using a modest inflation factor. For example, projections of federal transit revenues beyond 2025 were developed by the RRTPO using a steady 1.7% annual increase based on historic growth assumptions. VDOT cost estimates are from the VDOT Project Cost Estimating System. For projects not administered by the state, cost estimates are developed cooperatively through the RRTPO or responsible local governments and agencies.

Fiscal constraint is demonstrated over separate tables (for highway and transit) in the FY21 TIP and 2045 MTP showing a balance of anticipated revenues in comparison to project costs over the length of the respective planning document. For the MTP, the "cost constrained" regional projects list can be found in Technical Report F of the 2045 MTP, for which funding can reasonably be expected to be available as demonstrated in the Financial Plan. Alternatively, projects for which funds are not committed can be found in the "vision list" for illustrative purposes or for when funding comes available.

The TPO has developed an Annual Listing of Obligated Projects report for Federal FY20 listing funds that have been authorized and committed by the state or designated recipients (e.g. GRTC Transit System) for expenditures on projects programmed in the preceding program year. Obligated grouped projects were listed separately in the report. This document is available to the public on the TPO's website.

#### 4.10.3 Findings

The TPO, state DOT and transit agencies are in compliance with Federal regulations.

##### **Commendation:**

None

##### **Corrective Action:**

None

##### **Recommendations:**

None



## 5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The FHWA and FTA review found that the metropolitan transportation planning process conducted in the Richmond urbanized area **meets** Federal planning requirements.

### 5.1 Commendations

The following are noteworthy practices that the RRTPO is doing well in the transportation planning process:

- Richmond TPO has embarked on an innovative and inclusive approach to planning transportation investments in their region as demonstrated with the 2045 MTP's Equity and Accessibility measures used to guide and prioritize decision-making across modes. These inclusive measures illuminate a robust set of benefits unique to transit and non-motorized projects to deliver comprehensive, equitable and convenient service for historically underrepresented and underserved communities in the Richmond planning area.
- The Richmond TIP is one of the more informed TIPs in the State. The amount of project information is beyond what is required by regulations and the visualization and mapping is well done.
- The RRTPO provides a competent staff with robust set of skills to meet new challenges, requirements, and expectations as the organization makes the transition towards a performance-based planning and programming process.
- The Federal Review Team commends the RRTPO on recognizing the potential regional impacts of the 2020 Census and taking the initiative to expand the MPO boundary to include the 9-member planning region which benefits rural counties in access to federal funds.
- The Review Team commends the RRTPO on supplementing their travel demand model with Replica, an analysis tool that incorporates insights from an activity-based model, to assist with scenario planning and implement their freight planning program.
- The Review Team commends the RRTPO on prioritizing non-motorized transportation by developing its own Vision Zero plan, in collaboration with the City of Richmond, which will consider the unique landscape of the region to include both rural and urban land uses.
- RRTPO is commended for their efforts to incorporate the intent, spirit, and essence of Title VI and subsequent nondiscrimination authorities, including Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice, in their planning process.



- Transit planning in the region is extensive, as seen by the many plans undertaken by the RRTPO, DRPT and GRTC over the last five years. These efforts will enable the TPO to effectively fund public transportation investments over the short and near-term in support of the region's project population and employment growth in an equitable manner.

## 5.2 Corrective Actions

There were no corrective actions found with the RRTPO. No further actions are required.

## 5.3 Recommendations

The following are recommendations that would improve the transportation planning process:

- Development of a periodic system performance report evaluating the condition and performance of the transportation system with respect to the performance targets, and progress achieved in meeting the performance targets.
- Update of TIP narrative indicating specific dollar amounts (or percentage of total TIP amount) utilized toward achievement of transit performance targets similar to the effort for highway investments.
- RRTPO should continue to support a robust transit network which delivers comprehensive, equitable and convenient service, particularly in areas of greatest need, especially in light of new CVTA revenues.
- We strongly recommend that the Secretary of Transportation review the Commonwealth's current representation on the Policy Board to ensure that the Commonwealth's interests in passenger and freight rail, transportation demand management, ridesharing, and public transportation are appropriately represented. We recommend that VDRPT be considered to be made a voting member moving forward.
- It is recommended that RRTPO, once guidance is released for the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill (BIL), to reexamine the 3-C agreement (Memorandum of Understanding) on Metropolitan Transportation Planning Responsibilities for the Richmond Area to ensure it is in compliance.
- VDOT provide Section 504 training to the RRTPO to support their self-certification of Section 504.
- VDOT provide procedures and documentation to support the State's self-certification statement pursuant to 23 CFR 450.336 that the metropolitan planning process is being carried out in accordance with Section 504, ADA, The Older Americans Act, 23 USC 324, and with consideration of E.O. 12898 (EJ).



## APPENDIX A - PARTICIPANTS

The following individuals were involved in the Richmond urbanized area on-site review:

### FHWA Virginia Division

- Richard Duran
- Ronnique Bishop
- Ivan Rucker
- Mour Diop

### FTA Region III

- Ryan Long

### Richmond Regional Transportation Planning Organization / Plan RVA

- Chet Parsons
- Martha Heeter
- Eric Gregory
- Pat O'Bannon
- Diane Fusco
- Phil Riggan
- Kenneth Lantz
- Miles Bushing
- Greta Ryan
- Sulabh Aryal
- Jin Lee

### Tri-Cities Area Metropolitan Planning Organization

- Ron Svejovsky

### Virginia Department of Transportation

- Marsha Fiol
- Mark Riblett
- Liz McAdory
- Jay Kerman
- Sandra Norman



- Ferrell Solomon
- Todd Shodd
- Larry Hagan

#### Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation

- Tiffany Dubinsky

#### GRTC

- Emily Del Ross
- Adrienne Torres
- Trisha Robinson



## APPENDIX B – PUBLIC COMMENTS

Public input was an important part of this certification review, utilizing both direct public comments solicited from the TPO's website over a 60-day period, as well as input from a public listening session held with the Federal Team (via Zoom) on August 26, 2021. This was a joint public meeting to review both the Tri-Cities MPO and Richmond Regional TPO planning processes.

Specifically, we heard that many of the TPO/MPO regional public engagement and community advisory groups CAC (Petersburg)/CTAC (Richmond) efforts are going well. The general sentiment was that the TPO/MPO does a good job with respect to public engagement, however there is a challenge to expand outreach to low income or minority populations.

YouTube Link: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4gWH1e-U\\_6g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4gWH1e-U_6g)

### Public Participants' Comments

- Lisa Guthrie from Virginia Transit Association / New Kent County on CTAC – TPO does a good effort to reach out to the public. Working to do more multimodal efforts.
- Mike Sawyer – Good Vision Zero planning process. Health and Transportation linkages can be a new topic to be undertaken by MPO. State and Federal partnership.
- Von Tisdale from GRTC RideFinders – Good working relationship between inclusive groups that supports MPOs. They have a good working relationship with both MPOs.
- Louise Lockett Gordon – Part of LRTP advisory panel for Richmond LRTP update. Richmond TPO has made good strides but need to keep the engagement continuously. There is a potential for some groups outside the transportation field feeling their participation was not particularly valued.
- Patricia Page – New Kent County. Looking to address needs from rural counties – transit and connectivity between systems. Needs new growth to supporting elderly needs. Congestion on secondary roads is an issue – volumes are much higher than designed. Safety concerns.
- Stewart Schwartz – Partnership for Smarter Growth - Made a general comment on the importance of a citizen's advisory committee. Make sure public involvement early and often, help shapes better. Equity and accessibility issues are important. Chet commented on how the CTAC and how it evolved and its role to the TPO. CTAC provides a report to the monthly Board meeting. Climate change factors might be a good factor to use in the future.



## APPENDIX C - LIST OF ACRONYMS

**ADA:** Americans with Disabilities Act  
**AMPO:** Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations  
**CAA:** Clean Air Act  
**CFR:** Code of Federal Regulations  
**CMP:** Congestion Management Process  
**CO:** Carbon Monoxide  
**DOT:** Department of Transportation  
**EJ:** Environmental Justice  
**FAST:** Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act  
**FHWA:** Federal Highway Administration  
**FTA:** Federal Transit Administration  
**FY:** Fiscal Year  
**HSIP:** Highway Safety Improvement Program  
**ITS:** Intelligent Transportation Systems  
**LEP:** Limited-English-Proficiency  
**M&O:** Management and Operations  
**MAP-21:** Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century  
**MPA:** Metropolitan Planning Area  
**MPO:** Metropolitan Planning Organization  
**MTP:** Metropolitan Transportation Plan  
**NAAQS:** National Ambient Air Quality Standards  
**NO<sub>2</sub>:** Nitrogen Dioxide  
**O<sub>3</sub>:** Ozone  
**PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub>:** Particulate Matter  
**SHSP:** Strategic Highway Safety Plan  
**STIP:** State Transportation Improvement Program  
**TDM:** Travel Demand Management  
**TIP:** Transportation Improvement Program  
**TMA:** Transportation Management Area  
**U.S.C.:** United States Code  
**UPWP:** Unified Planning Work Program  
**USDOT:** United States Department of Transportation



