

Rural Transportation Planning Assistance Program Initiative to Develop Regional Long-Range Plans (RLRP) for Transportation

Background

- Almost 70% of Virginia's state maintained roads are located in rural areas
- A disproportionate amount of traffic fatalities occur on rural roads
- Many disadvantaged groups live in rural areas, and have fewer transportation options
- A considerable amount of freight moves through rural areas impacting highway facilities (safety, maintenance, capacity) without providing economic benefit

These trends, coupled with the growth in rural and suburban areas, highlight the need for a more formalized regional transportation planning process for the non-metropolitan areas of the Commonwealth. At the Rural Workshop on November 16, 2005, VDOT staff unveiled a proposal to use the rural program as a tool to develop a Regional Long-Range Plan (RLRP) for transportation in every participating PDC. The response received was very positive. This initiative is aimed at creating regional plans in rural areas that compliment those in the metropolitan areas of the state, thereby elevating the role of PDCs in the transportation planning process. VDOT is fully committed to this effort and will work with PDC staff and local representatives to provide needed technical assistance and guidance.

Overview

The development and components of each RLRP will be modeled after the federally mandated metropolitan transportation planning process (continuing, comprehensive, and cooperative). The transportation plans will have a minimum planning horizon of 20 years and will address the expected impacts of population and employment growth on the transportation system. Each will be developed as a vision plan and will be updated every five years. It is our goal that each region will be able to use these plans to identify regional priorities for funding.

To ensure a consistent approach to planning throughout the state, we have prepared a one page listing of tasks and deliverables to be included in the FY-07 Scope of Work. These Phase I tasks and deliverables represent the first year in a multi-year effort that will result in a safety conscious, GIS-based long-range multimodal transportation plan. These plans will address highways, bicycle/pedestrian, freight, aviation and transit systems for your region.

The four phases for this initiative are:

- Phase I Goals and Data Collection
- Phase II Analysis and Problem Identification
- Phase III Public Outreach and Recommendation Development
- Phase IV Public Endorsement and Regional Adoption

Additional Objectives of the RLRP process:

- Identification of operational improvements (intersection improvements, access management strategies, etc.)
- Identification and potential impact of high growth areas (residential, retail, and distribution centers) using local comprehensive plans
- Identification of critical freight infrastructure and improvements
- Identifying facilities that should be targeted for bicycle and pedestrian improvements
- Recognizing corridors to preserve right of way for future transportation improvements
- Identifying areas of need for on-demand transit services
- Providing increased opportunity for local/regional input on interstate and primary recommendations in the State Highway Plan
- Ensuring consistency of secondary recommendations with interstate and primary recommendations

RLRP recommendations could be prioritized using the methodology that has already been developed for the State Highway Plan. This will assist localities and the region in identifying and establishing priorities. The programming of secondary roads projects already occurs on a county-by-county basis, with the Board of Supervisors and VDOT Residencies working together to develop a list of priorities. The development of a RLRP will further formalize the process, address regional continuity issues, and allow for opportunities to better coordinate land use and transportation issues (linking comprehensive plans with transportation recommendations).

Funding and Technical Assistance

Each PDC receives \$48,000 annually from VDOT's Rural Transportation Planning Assistance Program (with a \$12,000 local match) to conduct rural transportation planning efforts. The development of RLRPs will be the primary focus of this program for all participating PDCs throughout the state. Some PDCs have already performed many of the tasks listed in Phase I. Each PDC will work with their VDOT projects manager to determine which tasks should be included in the FY07 work program.

Currently available technical resources:

- 1) VDOT has developed a Statewide Planning System containing road inventory information and performance measures (traffic forecasts, capacity analysis, bridge sufficiency ratings, etc.) for all federal functional classified roadways throughout the state. This database is GIS enabled allowing maps to be easily created. VDOT will provide each PDC with a CD-ROM containing datasets from SPS as well as the associated base map layers.
- 2) VDOT has already developed preliminary recommendations on the secondary road system for all counties (except in Northern Virginia, where the entire construction district is within the Metropolitan Washington

Urbanized Area). These recommendations were developed by TMPD staff and District staff and could provide a foundation and starting point for the region to build its RLRP upon.

- 3) Online Transportation Information Map—provides aerial photographs, traffic and roadway data in a GIS format. Could be used to highlight corridor specific recommendations in a graphic format. There is also access to environmental layers which indicate the presence of wetlands, 4F sites, historic and cultural resources, agricultural and forest districts, etc. Access on web at - <http://www.virginia-dot.org/projects/prOTIM.asp>
- 4) VDOT Planning Staff – Each PDC has a VDOT project manager to help provide assistance and guidance. In addition, the Transportation and Mobility Planning Division in Richmond has created a Rural Planning Team to oversee the Rural Transportation Planning Program and provide assistance and technical support.

Additional Benefits

RLRPs will:

- Serve as a proactive step toward addressing land use and transportation issues in potential growth areas
- Assist localities with determining impacts from future development, assisting localities with the identification of potential proffer requests for developers
- Assist localities with the development of setback/ entrance requirements on transportation corridors
- Assist localities in identifying transportation priorities for the programming process
- Ensure coordination of State Highway Plan recommendations with locally identified recommendations
- Address linking local, regional, and statewide transportation planning efforts
- Assist VDOT in meeting VA Code requirements for assisting localities with transportation elements of their local comprehensive plans
- Assist VDOT in meeting federal rural consultation requirements

For more information contact your VDOT Project Manager, or:

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Rural Transportation Planning Program	
FY07 Regional Long Range Transportation Plan	
Tasks and Deliverables	
Phase I: Goals and Data Collection	
<i>Tasks</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>
1. Establish Rural Technical Committee (RTC)	Planning District Commission
A. Committee to include representatives of member jurisdictions, VDOT, DRPT, VDOA and FHWA	
B. PDC will act as staff to committee	
C. The RTC should help guide the development of the Regional Long Range Transportation Plan and help identify regional and local work elements for the rural planning assistance annual scope of work.	
2. Host kick-off meeting to introduce new program (First quarter)	VDOT and PDC staff
3. Hold meetings with local elected and government officials to discuss and document transportation safety and capacity concerns (First and second quarter)	VDOT and PDC staff
4. Develop transportation goals for region (Second and third quarter)	RTC
A. It is suggested that federal planning factors be used as a basis for establishing regional goals (VDOT will provide goals used for the State Highway Plan – Each region can customize these as needed)	
5. Identify objectives and measures for each goal	RTC
A. VDOT will provide objectives and measures used for the State Highway Plan – Each region can customize these as needed	
6. Establish/Update Public Involvement Process (Second and third quarter)	PDC staff and RTC
7. Inventory/Data Collection (All quarters)	
A. Transportation	
1. Compile highway network inventory for major collectors and above	VDOT staff
2. Develop inventory and map of significant projects in SYIP	VDOT staff (inventory) PDC staff (map)
3. Develop inventory and map of existing transit services	PDC staff/RTC
4. Develop inventory and map of existing bike/ped accommodations	PDC staff/RTC
5. Develop inventory and map of major freight generators in the region	PDC staff/RTC
6. Develop inventory and map of existing aviation facilities	PDC staff/RTC
B. Land Use	
1. Identify and map activity centers for residential, commercial, industrial, and public services (schools, hospitals, etc.)	PDC staff/RTC
2. Identify and map high growth areas for residential, commercial and industrial development	PDC staff/RTC
3. Map sewer and water availability and future expansion plans	VA Econ Dev Partnership (VEDP)\PDC staff
C. Socio-economic	
1. Population growth and projections by county (VEC)	PDC staff
2. Employment growth and projections by county (VEC)	
3. Identify and map disadvantaged groups	
a. Examples – Elderly, Low-income, Disabled, etc.	
D. Review and summarize existing regional/local plans and studies	PDC Staff
1. Document main issues, recommendations, etc.	
Deliverables	
<p>Phase I Report containing the following elements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional goals, objectives and measures • Public Involvement Plan • Transportation inventories and maps • Land use maps and associated narratives • Regional socio-economic profile and maps • Summary of existing plans and studies 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RTC meeting minutes 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GIS data files/layers to be provided to VDOT and localities 	