

# 2012 RRPDC LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

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*The Richmond Regional Planning District Commission unanimously adopted the following 2012 RRPDC Regional Legislative Agenda during its meeting on November 10, 2011.*

## STATE LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

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*These State Legislative Priorities are the specific actions the RRPDC is asking of the executive and legislative branches of the Commonwealth of Virginia. The RRPDC is prepared to support efforts to accomplish these actions.*

### **Commonwealth Transportation Board**

Add a third urban at-large seat to the Commonwealth Transportation Board (see Va. Code Ann. § 33.1-2) and fill it with a resident of the Richmond-Petersburg Metropolitan Statistical Area.

Update the archaic definitions of urban and rural used for appointing at-large members to the Commonwealth Transportation Board (see Va. Code Ann. § 33.1-2) by replacing outdated “standard metropolitan statistical areas” language with “metropolitan planning areas with population greater than 200,000.”

### **Passenger Rail**

Fund passenger rail operations by establishing a permanent source of funding for the Intercity Passenger Rail Fund.

Increase funding for the Rail Enhancement Fund, then use the funds for capital improvements to the Richmond Region’s passenger rail network.

### **Watershed Improvement**

Fund local watershed improvement programs and provide funding to jurisdictions to implement Virginia’s Watershed Implementation Plan designed to reach the Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load goals.

## FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

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*These Federal Legislative Priorities are the specific actions the RRPDC is asking of the legislative and executive branches of the United States of America. The RRPDC is prepared to support efforts to accomplish these actions.*

### **Public Infrastructure Investment**

Allow rehabilitation expenditures for public school buildings to qualify for the federal rehabilitation tax credit. Current federal law allows for tax credits when a historic school is rehabilitated and used by another entity, but not where the buildings are reused as public schools.

### **Urban Area Security Initiative**

Protect the national security and emergency preparedness interests of Central Virginia by continuing funding for the Central Virginia Urban Area Security Initiative.

# STATE LEGISLATIVE POSITIONS

*These State Legislative Positions are statements of support for, or opposition to, various issues that impact the Richmond Region. These position statements are intended to provide broader guidance on issues that may arise. The RRPDC will monitor these issues and make a case-by-case determination of the appropriate manner to respond.*

## Government Reform

### Regional Cooperation

We **SUPPORT** reform measures and financial incentives that encourage regional cooperation. We **SUPPORT** the efforts of the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission to study the costs and benefits to the Commonwealth of providing financial and other incentives to localities that collaborate on capital projects and operating services (see HJ 570, 2011).

We **SUPPORT** the Commonwealth's efforts to develop programs and policies that utilize Virginia's planning district commissions in order to reduce costs through economies of scale and increase collaborative implementation with localities.

We **SUPPORT** increased state funding of Virginia's planning district commissions based upon a formula jointly agreed upon by the Virginia Association of Planning District Commissions, the Virginia Municipal League, and the Virginia Association of Counties.

### Local Taxes and Funding Mechanisms

We **SUPPORT** comprehensive evaluation of local tax authority that:

- enables localities to generate sufficient revenue to provide services and comply with state and federal mandates;

- provides counties, cities, and towns with equal taxing authority;
- updates taxing mechanisms to reflect modern business practices; and
- reduces local dependence on real estate and personal property taxes.

We **OPPOSE** piecemeal attempts to eliminate existing local funding sources, such as the Machinery and Tools Tax or Business, Professional and Occupational License Taxes, and urge that any elimination of single sources of local funding be replaced by realistic and implementable tools that enable localities to generate equal or greater funds.

### Governing Locally

We **SUPPORT** local government autonomy to make policy decisions on local issues, particularly concerning land-use regulation and local revenue measures.

We **SUPPORT** full funding of all state and federal mandates on local governments.

We **SUPPORT** a study by the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission to examine the impact of the Dillon Rule on local government's ability to efficiently address local issues such as public safety, land use, and revenue.

## Transportation

### Passenger Rail

We **SUPPORT** enhancements to intercity passenger rail service connecting through Richmond, especially those that increase reliability, on-time performance, and speeds of travel.

We **SUPPORT** the extension of high-speed rail from Washington, DC to Richmond followed by

further extensions from Richmond to Raleigh, North Carolina and from Richmond to Norfolk along the Southeast High Speed Rail corridor.

We **SUPPORT** allowing federal funds to serve as matching funds for passenger rail projects seeking funds from the Commonwealth's Rail Enhancement Fund (see Va. Code Ann. § 33.1-221.1:1.1). Currently, the code only allows

matching contributions from private sources, local government sources, or a combination of both.

### **Public Transit**

We **SUPPORT** increased state funding for public transit service operations.

We **SUPPORT** measures that enhance the Richmond Region's transit system.

### **Regionally-Allocated Transportation Funding**

We **SUPPORT** efforts of local jurisdictions, metropolitan planning organizations, the Commonwealth Transportation Board, the Virginia Department of Transportation, and the Virginia Department of Rail and Public

Transportation to allocate, obligate, and expend regionally-allocated transportation funds in a timely manner, so long as any deadlines for allocation, obligation, and expenditure:

- are developed in cooperation with the Virginia Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations;
- realistically balance the timely delivery of projects with adequate time to complete the phases of transportation projects;
- reflect federal deadlines;
- do not penalize metropolitan planning organizations for delays that are outside their control; and
- enable metropolitan planning organizations to appeal any rescission of funds on a case-by-case.

## **Land Use**

### **Growth Management Tools**

We **SUPPORT** strengthening local government authority to manage future growth in the Region.

We **SUPPORT** local growth management tools that:

- can be tailored to the needs of the local jurisdiction;
- are flexible to the specific needs of development locations;
- are simple to implement and easy to understand;
- transparently allow all parties of interest to freely and fairly negotiate agreements; and
- only require development to contribute its fair share for infrastructure improvement.

We **SUPPORT** cash proffers or impact fees as tools for local governments to require developers to pay for public infrastructure improvements required to accommodate development.

We **SUPPORT** local government authority to apply zoning laws and comprehensive plans to all private residences and private businesses, including:

- businesses that sell liquor and
- assisted living centers of all sizes.

### **Public Infrastructure Investment**

We **SUPPORT** growth that maximizes public infrastructure investment, including infill development and redevelopment of areas where existing infrastructure is under-utilized.

We **SUPPORT** local government authority to adopt adequate public facilities ordinances.

## **Education**

### **Education Funding**

We **SUPPORT** a state budget that meets the Commonwealth's obligations to localities for K-12 education funding.

We **SUPPORT** an assessment of the equity of the local composite index formula for funding K-12 education.

## Environment

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### Resource Protection

We **SUPPORT** the protection and enhancement of Virginia's natural resources through environmental regulations and programs that:

- are based on well-researched scientific foundations;
- have demonstrated an ability to achieve meaningful improvements to the environment;
- offer short and long-term solutions;
- fully consider unintended consequences;
- consider the size, location, or type of development being regulated instead of imposing a generalized standard;
- can be implemented in a reasonable time period and in a cost-effective manner;

- embrace the planning authority of local government and allow flexibility for local government to determine the best approach to meet program goals; and
- are connected with adequate funding to implement mandated programs.

We **OPPOSE** water quality regulations and programs that:

- strip the authority of urbanized localities to maintain and manage wastewater treatment plants;
- discourage proper planning by stripping the unused, yet permitted, allocation of discharge capacity of wastewater treatment plants; or
- solely regulate permitted point sources of pollution without addressing the impact of non-point sources of pollution.

## Public Safety

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### Public Safety Funding

We **SUPPORT** full funding of the Commonwealth's commitment for local law enforcement assistance, including Compensation Board funding for Sheriff's offices and HB 599 funding for police departments.

### Emergency Management

We **SUPPORT** restructuring the program for state regulation of dams to focus on those dams which involve the potential for significant risk to public safety or property.

## FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE POSITIONS

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## Local Authority

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### Federal Mandate for Collective Bargaining

We **OPPOSE** federal legislation that would require localities to provide collective bargaining rights for public safety employees.

## Transportation

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### Passenger Rail Funding

We **SUPPORT** the Commonwealth's efforts to obtain federal funding for capital improvement projects that will enhance passenger rail service in the Richmond Region.