

A Citizen's Guide to the Transportation Improvement Program



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

July 2004



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Acknowledgment

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Disclaimer

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

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

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

Introduction

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

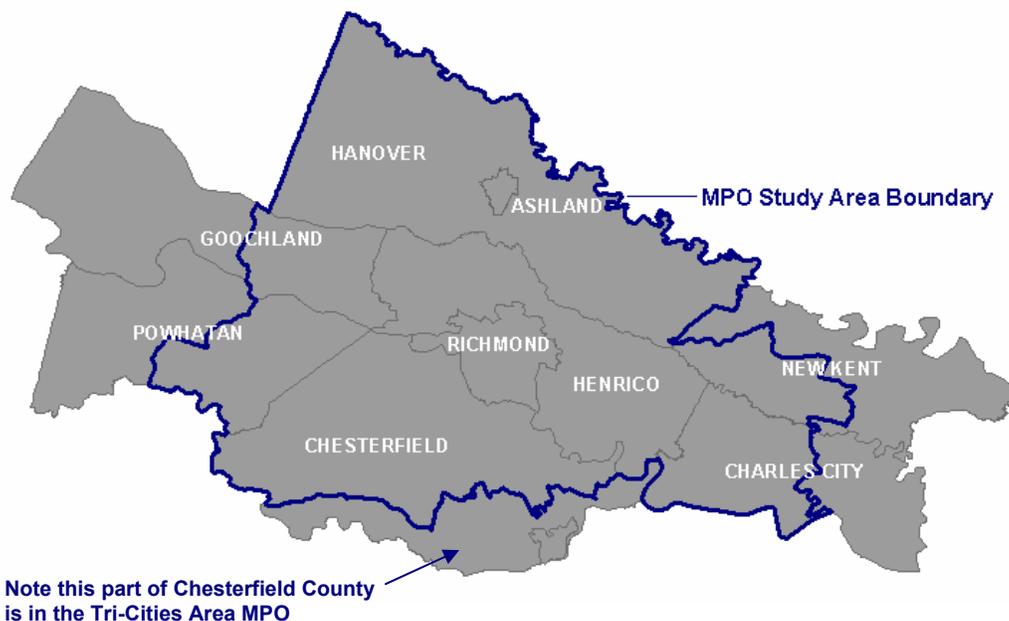
Before explaining the *TIP* process, here's a word about the metropolitan transportation planning framework for the region—starting with a description of the Richmond Area MPO.

Transportation projects and programs in the Richmond region cannot receive federal funds unless they are in the TIP.

Richmond Area MPO

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

MPO Study Area



Key Documents Common to MPOs

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

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

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

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

	TIME / HORIZON	CONTENTS	UPDATE REQUIREMENTS
UWP	1-2 Years	Planning Studies & Tasks	Annually
TIP	3 Years	Transportation Investments	Every 2 Years
LRTP	20 Years	Future Goals, Strategies & Projects	Every 3 Years (5 years for attainment areas)
CMS	20 Years	Strategies & Projects to Increase Mobility	Every 3 Years

The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

Under federal law, the *TIP*:

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



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

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

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

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

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

The TIP Represents Regional Consensus

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

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

The TIP and the Long-Range Plan

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

All regionally significant projects in the TIP must be drawn from the MPO long-range plan.

The TIP and Air Quality

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

As of June 15, 2004, the Richmond region is classified by the USEPA as an ozone nonattainment area. Thus, whenever the *L RTP* or *TIP* is approved or updated, the MPO must make sure these documents comply with the established air quality conformity requirements set forth in the *SIP*. The conformity analysis includes all regionally significant transportation projects regardless of funding source.

Who Are the Players?

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

MPO voting members:

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

Non-voting Members:

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

How Does a Project Get in the TIP?

Securing a spot in an MPO's *Transportation Improvement Program* is not a simple task. Typically, years of study and public input precedes a project's inclusion in the *TIP*. The chart on page 6 illustrates the overall planning process that can lead to a project being selected for inclusion in the *TIP*.

THE TRANSPORTATION PLANNING PROCESS

How Projects are Proposed, Planned, and Implemented

The chart reads from the bottom to the top

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

Acronym Guide

CMAQ	Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program	PDC	Planning District Commission
CTAC	Citizens Transportation Advisory Committee	RSTP	Regional Surface Transportation Program
CTB	Commonwealth Transportation Board	STIP	Statewide Transportation Improvement Program
EDAC	Elderly and Disabled Advisory Committee	TAC	Technical Advisory Committee
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration	TIP	Transportation Improvement Program
FTA	Federal Transit Administration	UWP	Unified Work Program
GRTC	Greater Richmond Transit Company	VDOT	Virginia Department of Transportation
LRTP	Long-Range Transportation Plan	VDRPT	Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization		

In What Ways Can the Public Participate?

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

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

The Richmond Area MPO transportation planning process includes a variety of avenues for public input

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

For More Information

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

MEMBER JURISDICTIONS

Town of Ashland		
Town Manager	(804) 798-9219	http://www.town.ashland.va.us/
Charles City County		
Director of Development	(804) 829-9217	http://www.co.charles-city.va.us/
Chesterfield County		
Director of Transportation	(804) 748-1037	http://www.co.chesterfield.va.us/
Goochland County		
Assistant County Administrator	(804) 556-5352	http://www.co.goochland.va.us/
Hanover County		
Department of Public Works	(804) 365-6176	http://www.co.hanover.va.us/
Henrico County		
Department of Public Works	(804) 501-4617	http://www.co.henrico.va.us/
New Kent County		
Director of Planning	(804) 966-9690	http://www.co.henrico.va.us/
Powhatan County		
Dir. of Planning and Community Dev.	(804) 598-5624	http://www.powhatanva.com/
City of Richmond		
Dept. of Community Development	(804) 646-5871	http://www.ci.richmond.va.us/

TRANSIT OPERATORS

GRTC Transit System		
Director of Planning	(804) 358-3871	http://www.ridegrtc.com
Ridefinders, Inc.	(804) 643- RIDE	http://www.ridefinders.com

STATE AGENCIES

Virginia Department of Transportation		
Transportation & Mobility Planning	(804) 786-2964	http://virginiadot.org/
Virginia Department of Transportation		
Richmond District Office	(804) 663-4188	richmondinfo@virginiadot.org
VDOT, Ashland Residency		
(Goochland, Hanover)	(804) 752-5522	
VDOT, Chesterfield Residency		
(Chesterfield, Powhatan)	(804) 674-2800	
VDOT, Sandston Residency		
(Charles City, Henrico, New Kent)	(804) 328-3044	
Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation	(804) 786-4440	http://www.drpt.state.va.us/

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION / PLANNING AGENCIES

Capital Region Airport		http://www.flyrichmond.com/HTML/About_Airport_Pages/Capital_Region.html
Commission (CRAC)	(804) 226-3001	
Port of Richmond (PORT)	(804) 646-2020	http://www.ci.richmond.va.us/departement/port/index.asp
Richmond Metropolitan Authority (RMA)	(804) 649-8494	http://www.rmaonline.org
Richmond Regional Planning District Commission (RRPDC)	(804) 367-6001	http://www.richmondregional.org

Richmond Area Metropolitan Planning Organization

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

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FTA

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