

Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation

Discussion Draft 3/31/15

*Report on the Response of the Department of Rail and Public Transportation to the Impact of the  
Aging of Virginia's Population*

March 2015

Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation

Pursuant to Code of Virginia §§2.2-5510 and 51.5-136, the Department of Rail and Public Transportation submits this report of its progress in addressing the impact of the aging of Virginia's population.

Jennifer Mitchell, Director

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

Policy and Program Review Contact

Contact information is presented below for the DRPT designated agency official responsible for reviewing policy and programs and accommodating the interests of older adults and adults with disabilities under Code of Virginia §2.2-604.1.

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## **Executive Summary**

The Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) prepared this report to summarize the agency's ongoing efforts to address the transportation needs of Virginia's citizens as they are impacted by many factors, including the aging of our population. While DRPT is not a direct service provider to the general public, the agency does work with over 160 partners to deliver transportation services to the citizens of the Commonwealth every day.

The report highlights DRPT's continuing progress in supporting the transit needs of the aging population by administering federal programs focused on supporting transit and mobility management services for seniors and people with disabilities. The report also highlights the agency's state and regional coordination efforts with numerous partners, promoting improved transit services for the aging population.

## Agency Description

The Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) receives funding from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and plays a key role in meeting transportation needs of all Virginians, including seniors and people with disabilities. DRPT provides financial and technical assistance to more than 160 public transportation operators, health and human service providers, commuter assistance agencies, and railroad operators in the state. With its mission “to improve the mobility of people and goods while expanding transportation choices in the Commonwealth,” the Code of Virginia (§33.2-285) identifies 16 specific responsibilities for DRPT.

The DRPT Director reports to the Secretary of Transportation and the Commonwealth Transportation Board provides guidance and oversight for the agency. The board’s 17 members are appointed by the Governor, the Secretary of Transportation is its chair, the Commonwealth Transportation Commissioner is its vice chair, and the DRPT Director is a non-voting member. DRPT works with VDOT and other state agencies to plan and administer a wide range of transportation activities in Virginia and has specific responsibility for oversight, evaluation, and technical assistance for certain federal grant programs.

DRPT was created by the General Assembly in 1992 and is a working model of the public private partnership concept. DRPT works with transit systems, Norfolk Southern and CSX, short-line railroads, Amtrak, localities, commuter assistance agencies, state agencies, and other entities to address Virginia's transportation issues through the use of various federal and state grants.

DRPT's mission critical products and services include project management and oversight of the financial assistance provided for rail and public transportation projects; statewide planning using a multimodal approach; safety, security, and emergency preparedness; technical assistance, and coordination of multi-jurisdictional transportation services. DRPT provides project management and oversight of over \$500 million annually. Federal and state funding is provided for certain capital project costs of freight rail, passenger rail, public, and human service transportation. Additionally, funding is provided for the operating and maintenance costs in support of public and human service transportation services across the Commonwealth.

### **Information Requested – Item 1**

- 1. If your agency has undertaken any actions to respond to the current and future impact of an aging population, such as needs assessments, strategic planning, or use of best practices, please briefly describe those actions. Please indicate what assistance from DARS could help your agency as it prepares to serve an aging Virginia population.***

DRPT recognizes the important mobility needs of Virginia’s aging population and works to incorporate senior mobility improvements in all of its programs and projects. For example, DRPT supported human service transportation projects are guided by regionally focused, stakeholder driven, Coordinated Human Service Mobility (CHSM) Plans. These plans identify regional human service transportation priorities and include consideration of the impacts of an aging population. Working with Virginia’s transit service providers, DRPT is committed to ensuring that the special needs of the seniors are addressed in all rail, public transportation, commuter assistance, and human service transportation programs.

### **Information Requested – Item 2**

***Briefly describe your agency’s services that are used primarily by older Virginians and the funding streams (types and amounts) that support those services. If these particular services or funding streams are provided in conjunction with other state or local agencies or other for profit or non-profit organ***

DRPT does not administer programs that place the agency in a direct role as a service provider to the general public. However, approximately 80% of Virginia’s 8.3 million residents, and especially the one million people aged 65 or older, have access to one or more of the grant funded services supported by DRPT.

DRPT administers eight State Aid Grant Programs and seven Federal Aid Grant Programs. The FTA Section 5310 Program and state Senior Transportation Program primarily benefit older Virginians and are summarized below.

- Federal Section 5310 provides grant funds for capital and certain operating expenses to eligible recipients (nonprofits; local government authorities) for:
  - *Public transportation projects planned, designed, and carried out to meet the special needs of seniors and individuals with disabilities when public transportation is insufficient, inappropriate, or unavailable;*
  - *Public transportation projects that exceed the requirements of the ADA;*
- Human service transportation is typically provided by, or on behalf of, a human service agency to provide access to agency services and/or to meet the basic, day-to-day mobility

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needs of seniors and people with disabilities. It is not traditional fixed route public transportation.

- In FY15 DRPT is using \$2,900,253 in federal Section 5310 funds and \$725,059 in local cash match to purchase 79 vans for 35 recipient agencies providing human service transportation *meeting the special needs of seniors and people with disabilities*.
- In FY15 DRPT also awarded \$1,554,807 in federal funds to support human service transportation operating costs and mobility management services for people with disabilities statewide. The federal share of operating costs totaled \$672,696. A total of \$538,215 in state paratransit operating funds was also awarded to partially support operating costs of 14 recipient agencies.
- Additionally, DRPT's Senior Transportation grant program primarily benefits older Virginians. In FY 15 DRPT is using \$163,788 in state funds and \$40,948 in local cash match to support 12 projects providing additional transportation options for seniors. For example, the Rappahannock Area Agency on Aging Mobility Options Program schedules and provides trips for seniors and people with disabilities in Caroline, King George, Spotsylvania and Stafford counties and the City of Fredericksburg. In addition to being a clearinghouse of transportation resources for the region, the agency uses Senior Transportation funds to support a collaborative effort with FRED to provide travel training to seniors.

### **Information Requested – Item 3**

***Identify current agency programs specifically designed to serve older Virginians that fall into any of the following eight categories: Health Care/Wellness; Education Public Safety (including Adult Abuse Prevention); Recreation; Housing; Accessibility (including Livable Communities <http://www.vadrs.org/vblc/>); Financial Security; Transportation.***

The FTA Section 5310 Program is among seven federal grant programs administered by DRPT and fits within the transportation category. The Section 5310 Program is authorized under the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21 Century Act (MAP-21) enacted in July, 2012 (see 49 U.S.C. 5310). MAP-21 established a modified FTA Section 5310 Program that consolidates the previous New Freedom and Elderly and Disabled Programs.

The purpose of the Section 5310 Program is to enhance mobility for seniors and people with disabilities by providing funds for programs to serve the special needs of transit-dependent populations beyond traditional public transportation services and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) complementary paratransit services. State paratransit funds are also used to support operating expenses of these projects.

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Under MAP-21, 60% of funds are apportioned to large urban areas, 20% to small urban areas and 20% to rural areas. Additionally, within these apportionments not less than 55% of Section 5310 funds must be available for traditional Section 5310 capital projects (vehicles). These provisions may make maintaining and expanding human service transportation options in rural and small urban areas challenging while providing opportunities for significant growth in large urban areas.

DRPT's Senior Transportation Program also fits within the transportation category. This program supports operating expenses for new transportation services for adults 60 years of age and older. The overall objective is to increase the quality and quantity of coordinated transportation services available for older adults

### **Information Requested – Item 4**

***Is your agency able to meet all of the service demands of older Virginians for the services listed above? If there are any instances where the demand for services exceeds your agency's ability to meet the demand, please indicate the service and the extent of the unmet demand. Also, if your agency maintains waiting lists for services, please provide this information, including the waiting list numbers for each service.***

Virginia faces many challenges in the provision of transportation services. The need for rail, public transportation, Travel Demand Management (TDM), and human service transportation will continue to grow as Virginia faces the combined effects of an increasing population, longer commutes, an increase in the senior population, and a large number of zero-car households. The challenges will vary across the state from serving a role for basic mobility to providing congestion relief in growing urban corridors. Some of the more significant implications for expected changes include:

- Transit is not meeting service demands of a transit dependent population in many rural jurisdictions – high proportions of households without an automobile are found in locations where transit service does not currently exist.
- Demand and need for transit service – especially demand-responsive service – will continue to increase as Virginia's senior population continues to grow.
- Statewide population increases and employment growth will substantially increase the demand for the provision of more transit service, even if transit's market share of total travel demand remains the same.
- Many residents will need to travel to jurisdictions other than those in which they reside to obtain employment opportunities – increasing the demand for transit services that cross the existing service area boundaries.

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- The demand and need for improved transit services will continue to increase with the urbanization of suburban locations in the Northern Virginia, Hampton Roads, and Richmond/Petersburg metropolitan areas – exacerbated by exurban population growth that will mean increased demand for long-distance transit service.
- Under MAP-21, 60% of Section 5310 funds are apportioned to large urban areas, 20% to small urban areas and 20% to rural areas. These provisions may make maintaining and expanding human service transportation options in rural and small urban areas especially challenging, while providing opportunities for growth in large urban areas.

### **Information Requested – Item 5**

***Provide the number of persons, by gender if available, who received services from the agency in each of the past five state fiscal years (FY 2010 through FY2014) who fell into the following age ranges: 60-64; 65-74; 75-84; and 85 and older. If your agency lacks specific information about the numbers of older Virginians it serves but has other evidence indicating that it is serving more or fewer older Virginians than it has in the past, please describe the basis for that estimation.***

- For the year ending October 31, 2014, 65 agencies operating Section 5310 supported vehicles reported providing 1,641,354 trips for seniors and people with disabilities. This represents an increase of 11%, or 169,378 rides, when compared to the prior year.
- For FY2013 agencies operating Section 5310 supported vehicles reported providing 1,471,976 trips for seniors and people with disabilities.
- For FY2012 agencies operating Section 5310 supported vehicles reported providing 1,470,547 trips for seniors and people with disabilities.
- For FY2011 agencies operating Section 5310 supported vehicles reported providing 1,118,331 trips for seniors and people with disabilities.
- For FY2010 agencies operating Section 5310 supported vehicles reported providing 1,241,093 trips for seniors and people with disabilities.

### **Information Requested – Item 6**

***Referring to the services or funding you described in item two, describe any services or funding provided to older Virginians for which the accessibility or availability varies considerably in different parts of the Commonwealth.***

As indicated above, serving transit dependent populations in many rural jurisdictions continues to be a challenge. For example, high proportions of households without an automobile are found in locations where transit service also does not currently exist. Additionally, under MAP-21, 60% of Section 5310 funds are apportioned to large urban areas, 20% to small urban areas and 20% to rural areas. These provisions may make maintaining and expanding human service transportation options in rural and small urban areas especially challenging, while providing opportunities for growth in large urban areas. For example:

- FY16 Section 5310 funding available for Virginia’s rural human service transportation projects can support approximately 83% of their requests.
- FY16 Section 5310 funding available for Virginia’s small urban human service transportation projects can support approximately 86% of their requests.
- Conversely, eligible applicants in the large urban areas sought significantly less than the available amount in FY16.
- Through careful review of FY16 Section 5310 grant applications, ongoing conservative management of available funds, and prudent use of prior year balances etc., DRPT sought to target budget reductions and preserve services and prioritize the critical transportation needs in Virginia’s rural and small urban areas.

### **Information Requested – Item 7**

***Over the next five to 10 years, in what ways do you anticipate that an aging population will impact your agency’s services, funding streams, or policies? Consider the impact from an increase in the number of older Virginians and whether the needs of older Virginians will differ from those of today’s older adults. Please include any anticipated impacts upon the cost of services, changes in type of services or the manner of service delivery, or modifications to agency policies, staffing needs, or procedures.***

Public transportation services are critical to Virginia’s senior population. The American Public Transit Association estimates that 1 in 5 Americans over 65 do not drive and that on any given day more than 50% of non-drivers age 65 or older stay home partially because they lack transportation options. Older non-drivers have a steadily decreasing ability to participate in the community and the economy. Public transportation services provide mobility to older Americans and can reverse this trend.

DRPT administers grant programs which provide funding assistance to public transportation providers whose services benefit Virginia’s senior population. For example, in some rural and small urban areas of the state, small transit systems exist that are open to serve the general public

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but were designed mainly to serve the senior population. In urban areas, where public transportation systems are much larger and more prevalent, some fixed route providers offer deviated-route services to meet the transportation needs of seniors and/or people with disabilities who are unable to directly access bus stops. Therefore, the grant programs administered by DRPT that provide funding assistance to public transportation providers benefit all of Virginia's citizens, including seniors and people with disabilities.

In urban areas of the Commonwealth, seniors and people with disabilities have several public transportation options available to them to meet their transportation or travel needs. However, in rural and small urban areas, most of the public transportation options available are provided by human service organizations, and are available primarily to program-eligible clientele. Furthermore, in both urban and rural areas, for seniors and people with disabilities who cannot, or choose not to drive, accessing the available public transportation can be difficult, if not impossible, forcing many to rely on neighbors and family members, and sometimes, perhaps prematurely, on social service programs to meet their transportation needs.

With the rising population of Virginians aged 60 or older, the demand for transportation services by older Virginians to meet their basic needs is expected to increase substantially over the next five to 10 years. However, it is important to note that unlike the average transit user whose travel peaks in the morning and evening, most seniors use transit services in the middle of the day. The need is growing for providers to adjust their transit services to serve seniors and the market for these services will increase among the senior population in the future. As this need grows, it is expected that DRPT will see an increase in the number of funding applications for increased mid-day services by providers, in addition to expansions of service areas and new start-up applications for services that cater solely to this market. It should be noted, however, that this mid-day service is less efficient and in most cases will not be operated unless additional state assistance is provided.

Another transportation request that is growing among seniors and people with disabilities is the ability to attend recreational or leisure activities. While most appreciate being able to find transportation alternatives to meet doctor or dental appointments during regular service provider business hours, many would also like to attend community and recreational events. These events are usually scheduled outside of normal business hours, or on weekends, and fall outside of the operating schedule of many local providers. Again, as this need grows, it is expected that DRPT will see an increase in the number of funding applications for increased off-day and off-hour services by providers, in addition to expansions of service areas and new start-up applications for services that cater to this market.

### **Information Requested - Item 8**

***Please describe the primary steps that should be taken at the federal, state, or local levels to meet the future demands of older Virginians and to make services delivery more effective and efficient.***

Examples of DRPT's leadership on statewide policy initiatives designed to address the future demands of older Virginians and to make service delivery more effective and efficient can be

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found in its ongoing participation in various state multidisciplinary planning groups including: the Four Year Plan for Aging Services Workgroup, the Blueprint for Livable Communities Advisory Group, the Community Integration Advisory Commission, and the Virginia Disability Commissions' Workgroup on Housing and Transportation.

On a regional and strategic level, DRPT has also taken a leadership role in facilitating the development of stakeholder driven regional Coordinated Human Service Mobility (CHSM) Plans. A total of 21 regional plans, conforming to Planning District Commission boundaries, were initially developed in 2008. These plans were revised and updated in 2013 and 2014 through a series of 26 regional meetings.

In 2008, DRPT worked with rural and small urban areas around the Commonwealth to develop Coordinated Human Service Mobility (CHSM) Plans that met FTA coordinated transportation planning requirements, and DRPT supported the development of such plans in large urban areas. With the enactment of the MAP-21 legislation, DRPT began a process of consultation with local stakeholders to update the CHSM Plans for their respective regions. This process included extensive discussion of MAP-21 changes to human service transportation funding and careful review and updating of local and regional transportation needs and issues.

Through a series of initial regional meetings held from September through November 2012, and series of a follow up meetings conducted in June and July 2013 to review plan revisions and gather additional input, Virginia's CHSM planning effort provided a structure and process intended to:

- Provide a forum to gain consensus on the transportation priorities in the region and facilitate input from seniors, individuals with disabilities, representatives of public, private, and non-profit transportation and human services providers, and others.
- Take into account previous transportation planning efforts,
- Foster local partnerships and provide an opportunity for the development of new ones,
- As appropriate, identify examples of projects and programs initiated since issuance of 2008 plans which demonstrate human service transportation enhancements and coordination efforts, i.e. mobility management efforts and new services,
- Continue an ongoing structure to support coordination efforts or help establish new coordination structures,
- Serve as a tool for educating local decision makers, elected officials, and other stakeholders on unmet transportation needs in the region.

This planning process also drove the development of updated CHSM Plans meeting the Federal coordinated transportation planning requirements and facilitating access to critical FTA monies. Nineteen of 21 plans were finalized by September 2013 and the remaining plans were finalized in 2014. All 21 regional plans can be accessed here: <http://www.drpt.virginia.gov/planning-and-commuter-programs/transit-reference-material/>

DRPT will work to meet the future demands of older Virginians and to make services delivery more effective and efficient by continuing to facilitate regional CHSM plan update meetings, conducting grant application trainings and review meetings, and providing technical assistance.

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Additionally, DRPT will continue participation in various state multidisciplinary planning groups including: the Four Year Plan for Aging Services Workgroup, the Blueprint for Livable Communities Advisory Group, the Community Integration Advisory Commission, and the Virginia Disability Commissions' Workgroup on Housing and Transportation.

On the federal level, revisions to the Section 5310 program should be considered. For example, the FTA's interpretation of relevant statutory requirements, and the current FTA Section 5310 Circular make clear that Section 5310 funds available to large urban areas cannot be allocated to rural or small urban projects, regardless of the need or availability of funds. As indicated previously, under these MAP-21 Section 5310 provisions human service transportation projects in small urban and rural areas are under-funded while unobligated balances exist for large urban areas. Consideration should be given to revising Circular and statutory language as necessary to provide maximum state administrative flexibility in the allocation of funding among large urban, small urban, and rural areas.

### **Information Requested - Item 9**

*Identify the extent to which your agency provides "customer-oriented" publications and websites that are designed to be "senior-friendly." If the information you currently provide is not readily accessible to older Virginians, please identify any steps your agency is taking to improve their access to this information.*

The Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation attempts to reach all citizens, regardless of age, income or disability. DRPT regularly evaluates document sizes, load times, and other factors that could prevent computer users without high-speed Internet access from viewing our site. Additionally, DRPT encourages citizens to contact the Department with any challenges they may experience regarding the website and any publications. Additionally, DRPT seeks to ensure that our website meets W3C accessibility specifications.

### **Information Requested - Item 10**

*Describe any other services or programs that your agency plans to implement in the future to address the impact of the aging of Virginia's population.  
Continue coordination*

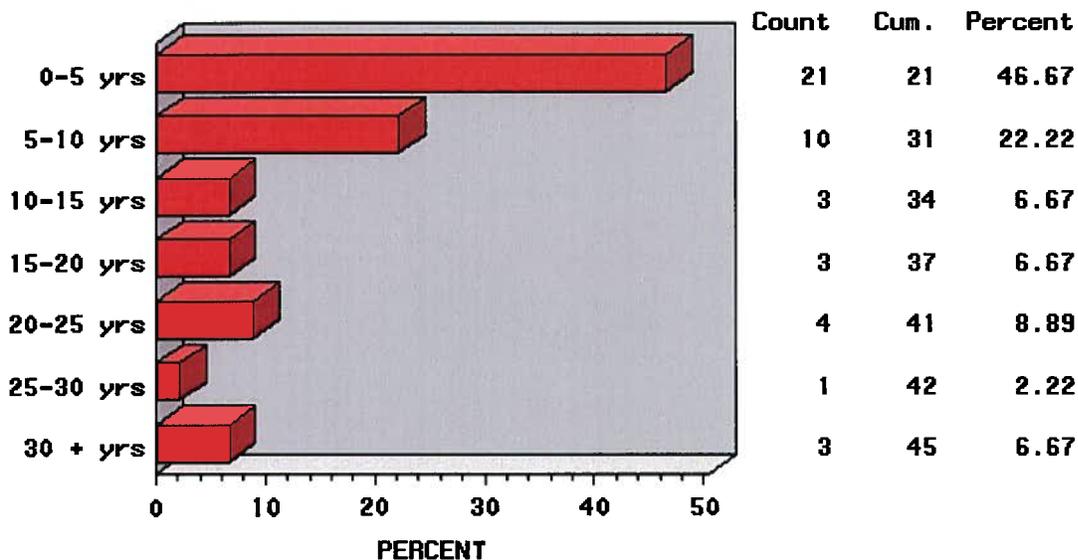
DRPT recognizes the important mobility needs of Virginia's aging population and works to incorporate mobility improvements in all of its programs and projects. DRPT has and will continue to develop plans and programs that enhance service to seniors. Working with Virginia's transit service providers, DRPT is committed to ensuring that the special needs of seniors and people with disabilities are addressed in all rail, public transportation, commuter assistance, and human service transportation programs.

**Information Requested - Item 11**

*Please indicate if your agency is experiencing an increase in employees retiring later and describe any actions your agency is taking or plans to take to accommodate its aging workforce with innovative practices.*

In recent years DRPT has not experienced an increase in employees retiring later. Currently, as shown below, three, or 6.6%, of our classified employees have more than thirty years of service. And, nearly 70% of our employees have 10 or fewer years of service. Additionally, two, or 4.4 % of our classified employees are age 65 or older, while 71% of the workforce is less than 55 years of age. These numbers and percentages have remained relatively stable in recent years. DRPT is currently developing a strategic plan. It is anticipated that the final plan will include elements addressing how the agency can accommodate an aging workforce through innovative practices.

**Dept of Rail & Public Trans**  
**Years Of Service Range**



As of February 28, 2015  
 (Classified Employees Only)