



## **Virginia's Rural Transportation Planning Program**

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**Marsha Fiol**

**Director, Transportation and Mobility Planning**

# Virginia's Rural Transportation Planning Program

## Overview of Virginia's Rural Area

- Approximately 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.



# Virginia's Rural Transportation Planning Program

## Virginia's establishment of PDCs

- **1968 Virginia's General Assembly pass legislation § 15.2-4207 requiring the formation of planning district commissions across the Commonwealth**
- **The planning districts boundaries were based on the community of interest among counties, cities and towns.**
- **23 PDCs were established, currently there are 21 PDCs**

# Virginia's Rural Transportation Planning Program

## RPO –vs- PDC

### **Rural Transportation Planning Organization –**

A voluntary organization of local elected officials or their designees and representatives of local transportation systems formed by a memorandum of understanding with the Department of Transportation to work cooperatively with the Department to plan rural transportation systems and to advise the Department on rural transportation policy.

### **Planning District Commission –**

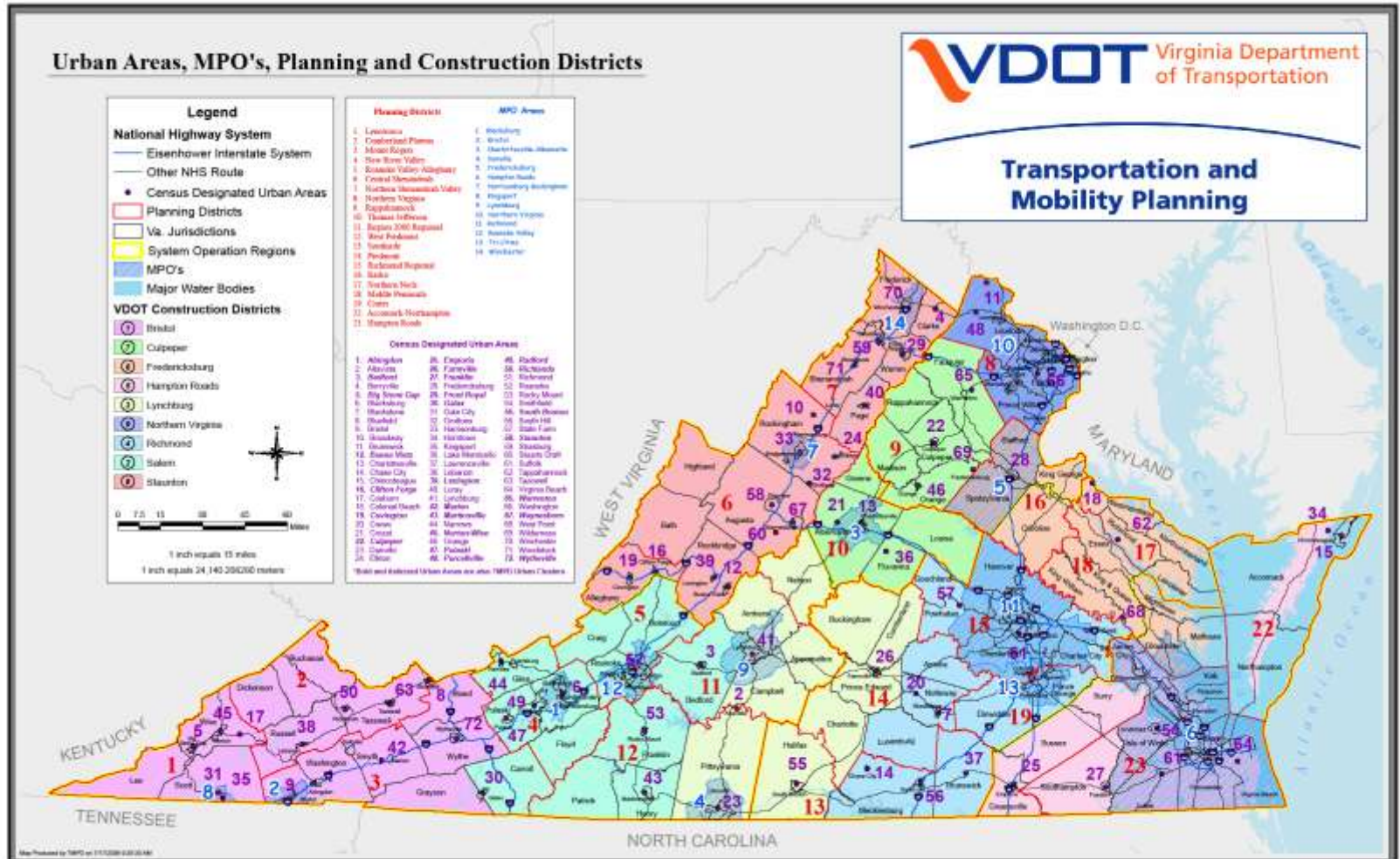
Planning District Commission is a political subdivision of the Commonwealth made up of elected officials and citizens *to encourage and facilitate local government cooperation and state-local cooperation in addressing on a regional basis problems of greater than local significance.* Virginia's PDCs provide a variety of technical and program services to member local governments including grant application assistance, management services for program implementation, land use planning services, mapping and transportation planning.

# Virginia's Rural Transportation Planning Program

## Purpose of the Rural Transportation Planning Program

- **In 1993 VDOT's vision of the Rural Transportation Planning Program was to assist the 20 Rural PDCs with financial assistance to address local and regional transportation needs across the Commonwealth.**
  - Regional Vision Transportation Plans
  - Mid-Bay Ferry Feasibility Study
  - Route 122 Corridor Study
  - Gloucester Pedestrian / Bike Path Feasibility Study
  - Route 29 Access Management Study
  
- **Today, the focus of the program is to assist VDOT with local and regional Transportation Planning input for the Statewide Surface Transportation Plan.**

# Virginia's Rural Transportation Planning Program



# Virginia's Rural Transportation Planning Program

## History of Rural Transportation Program

### **1993 – Established Virginia Rural Transportation Assistance Program**

- Initial funding \$40,000 + \$10,000 match by PDC
  - Funding provided to 20 PDCs
- Source of funding is State Planning and Research (SPR) funds
  - RTPP is not a state or federally mandated program
  - Carried out at the discretion of VDOT

### **1997 – Established a 3 year Transportation Planning Grant Program pilot program**

- \$200,000 was allocated for this program
- Source of funding was State Planning and Research (SPR) funds
- Grant applications were reviewed and selected by VDOT staff

# Virginia's Rural Transportation Planning Program

## History of Rural Transportation Program cont:

- 2000 – Meetings were held with Planning District Commission Staff (PDC) staff to discuss the VDOT's rural program**
  - Funding for the Rural Transportation Planning Grant Program was continued for future years
  
- 2006 – Directed the PDCs to develop Regional Long Range Transportation Plans, similar to MPO plans**
  
- 2008 – Rural Transportation Planning Granted Program was suspended**
  - Funding was transferred to Rural Transportation Assistance Program
  
- 2000 to present – Annual workshops with the PDC to evaluate the program and discuss focus areas for upcoming year's work program**



# Virginia's Rural Transportation Planning Program

**Annual RTAP Funding - SPR (80%) + PDC (20%) = Total for fiscal year**

## July 1, 1993 to June 30, 2001

- \$40,000 + \$10,000 = \$50,000

**\$40,000 \* 20 = \$800,000 per fiscal year**

## July 1, 2001 to June 30, 2009

- \$48,000 + \$12,000 = \$60,000

**\$48,000 \* 20 = \$960,000 per fiscal year**

## July 1, 2009 to present

- 58,000 + \$14,500 = \$72,500

**\$58,000 \* 20 = \$1,160,000 per fiscal year**

**Total State investment over the past 19 years = \$17,560,000**

**An additional \$2,000,000 was invested into the grant program**

**As of today, there has been a 31% increase in funding since the beginning of the program in 1993**



# Virginia's Rural Transportation Planning Program

## Additional means off assistance to the PDC

### VDOT On Call Consultant

- Corridor Analysis
- Bike / Pedestrian Feasibility Study
- Access Management Study & Plan

### VDOT Staff

- Central Office
- District



# Virginia's Rural Transportation Planning Program

## How we manage the program?

- **1 Program Manager in Central Office**
  - Coordinates statewide activities for consistency
  - Serves as a resource for district planners
  
- **8 Project Managers in the VDOT Districts to oversee the 20 Rural PDCs**
  - Interacts with the PDCs on a day to day basis
  - Attend PDC meetings
  - Serve on the PDC rural technical committee
  - Assist with the development of Regional Long Range Transportation Plans
  - Assists the PDCs with the development of the annual work programs

# Virginia's Rural Transportation Planning Program

## Changing the way we plan

- Traditionally, the planning process has focused on long-term, high-cost capital improvements for the transportation system
- A significant challenge we all face is the lack of revenues needed to implement large-scale highway improvements
- We must begin to focus more heavily on identifying and implementing short-term, low-cost roadway improvements aimed at improving efficiency, capacity and safety
- With today's safety, mobility, and funding challenges, it is imperative for State DOTs to continue to identify innovative ways to improve the transportation system using all the tools available (capacity, operations, information, etc.)

# Virginia's Rural Transportation Planning Program

## How VDOT implemented the change

- **Develop Rural Long Range Transportation Plans**
  - Establish Rural Technical committees
  - Get localities involved in the planning process early
  - Get a dialogue started between neighboring jurisdictions
  
- **Develop the Surface Transportation Plan**
  - Bottom up approach
  - Incorporate recommendations from all plans
  - Insure consistency among various plans

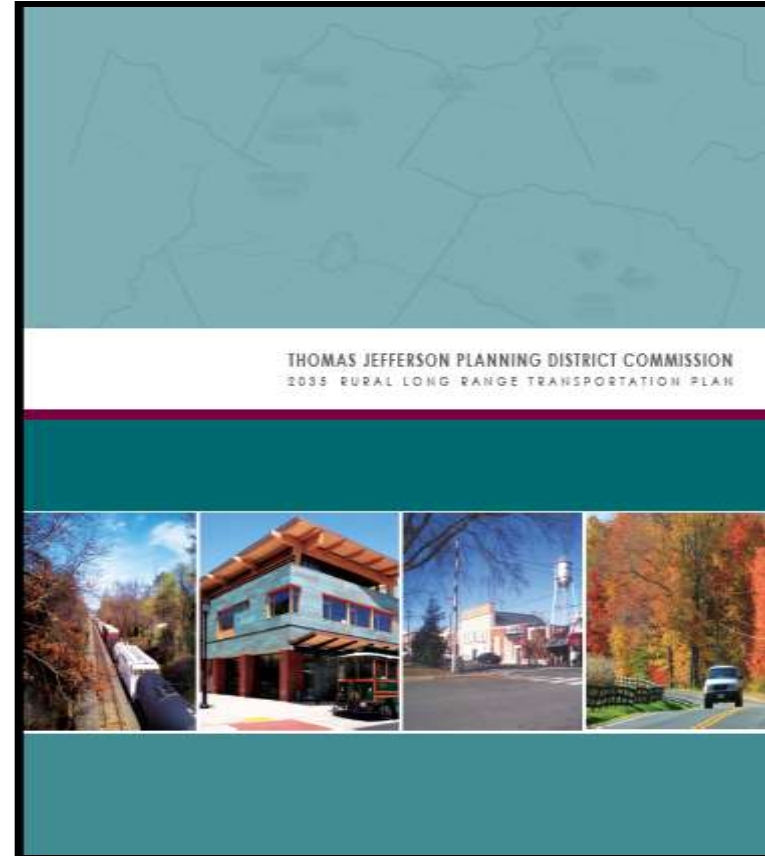


# Virginia's Rural Transportation Planning Program

## Virginia's Rural Long Range Plans

The development and components of each RLRP consists of:

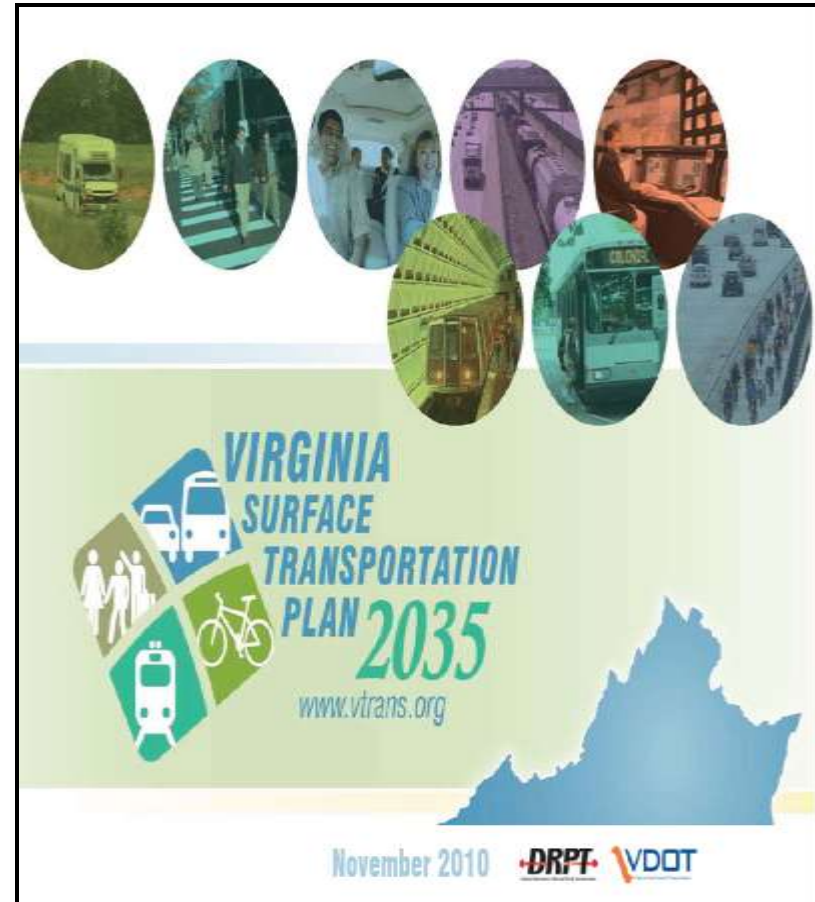
- Modeled after the federally mandated metropolitan transportation planning process (continuing, comprehensive, and cooperative).
- The transportation plans will have a minimum planning horizon of 20 years and will address the expected impacts of population and employment growth on the transportation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



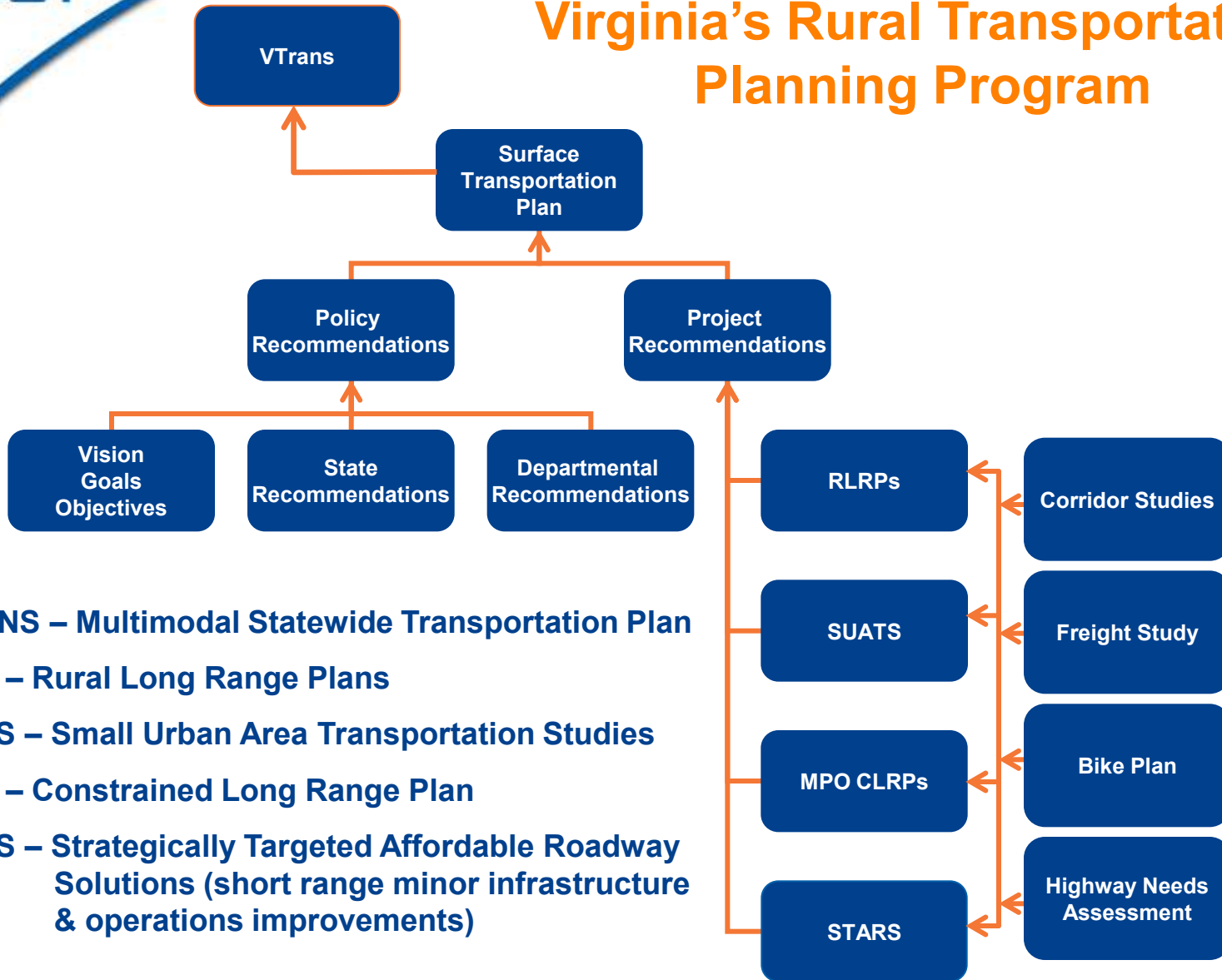
# Virginia's Rural Transportation Planning Program

## Virginia's Surface Transportation Plan

- Planning document that includes an analysis of current and future transportation issues and trends and makes recommendations for highway/transit/freight improvements and policy changes
- Purpose is to guide policy and programming decisions
- 20+ year horizon
- Not constrained



# Virginia's Rural Transportation Planning Program



**VTRANS – Multimodal Statewide Transportation Plan**

**RLRP – Rural Long Range Plans**

**SUATS – Small Urban Area Transportation Studies**

**CLRP – Constrained Long Range Plan**

**STARS – Strategically Targeted Affordable Roadway Solutions (short range minor infrastructure & operations improvements)**



# Virginia's Rural Transportation Planning Program

## Future direction of the program

- Continue to use the PDC for valuable regional & local input to the transportation planning & programming process
- Interact more with the elected officials by obtaining their input early in the programming process
- Continue and modify successful efforts
  - Rural Long Range Plans
  - Virginia Surface Transportation Plan

# Virginia's Rural Transportation Planning Program

## Suggestions for States new to the process

- Start from the bigger picture
- Ask how can we help each other?
- Setup rural technical committees to get jurisdictions communicating. Planning does not stop at jurisdictional boundaries.



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For more information contact:

Marsha Fiol, State Transportation Planner

[Marsha.Fiol@VDOT.Virginia.gov](mailto:Marsha.Fiol@VDOT.Virginia.gov)

804 786-2985 (W) 804 225-4785 (F)

Or

Darrel Johnson, Program Manager

[Darrel.Johnson@VDOT.Virginia.gov](mailto:Darrel.Johnson@VDOT.Virginia.gov)

804 371-8868 (W) 804 225-4785 (F)