



The Virginia Chapter of the American Planning Association

ISSUE BRIEF

VIRGINIA NEEDS TRANSPORTATION POLICIES AND PROGRAMS THAT SUPPORT STRONG, VITAL COMMUNITIES AND PROVIDE MOBILITY CHOICES FOR ALL VIRGINIANS.

Transportation is one of the most pressing public policy issues facing Virginians and our policy makers. As state and local leaders consider possible roadway projects and transit services, it is critical to recognize that **transportation decisions must support the goals and policies of local communities in order to preserve a high quality of life for all Virginians.**

Transportation investments and land use decisions are inseparably linked. Although planning and decision-making are divided into separate agencies and levels of government, the fact remains that decisions made in one arena always affect conditions in the other. Poorly coordinated planning leads to inefficient development patterns that spread jobs, housing, and services far away from existing towns and cities. This sets the stage for a never-ending expansion of economic, environmental, and transportation problems.

Well-coordinated planning results in transportation investments that support vibrant, healthy communities, and land use decisions that maximize transportation system performance. The land development goals of local communities may conflict with the mobility goals of transportation agencies – but, with coordinated planning, mutually supportive solutions can be found.

All of the Commonwealth's communities stand to benefit from coordinated planning -- from fast-growing counties dealing with nightmarish congestion and unprecedented service demands to struggling towns and cities desperately in need of strategic investments that will help them attract good jobs and revitalize neighborhoods.

State and local entities across the Commonwealth have made a number of laudable efforts toward better coordination, from policy documents such as VTRANS and regional Metropolitan Planning Organization transportation plans to programs such as the VDOT's Rural Transportation Planning Technical Assistance Program to Planning District Commissions. In order to ensure the success of these efforts and more, Virginia's legislature must provide clear, strong direction to cause effective statewide coordination of transportation and land use decisions.

Toward this end, **VAPA recommends the General Assembly embrace the following core principles for coordinated planning: Plan for People, Plan for Places, and Plan for Prosperity.** We encourage legislators to consider these simple, yet comprehensive principles carefully when weighing the merits of any proposed legislation, studies, policies, funding programs or other actions regarding the future development of the Commonwealth.

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PRINCIPLES FOR COORDINATING TRANSPORTATION AND LAND USE

Plan for People

- Provide **transportation choices** for people of all ages & abilities
- Ensure **safety** for all travelers, whether they are driving, walking, using transit, or on bicycles.
- Promote **civic pride** and a sense of community
- Support **public health** with initiatives that promote clean air and active living, especially among children
- Involve community stakeholders and decision-makers early and continuously in planning and project development to build **consensus** on decisions that will work
- Provide **easily accessible information** on transportation plans and projects, using graphics such as maps, charts, and brief progress reports, and communicating through a wide array of venues, from the World Wide Web to church parish halls.
- Build **partnerships** and cultivate leadership among state, regional and local decision-makers

Plan for Places

- Invest in **vibrant urban centers** that include safe, useful pedestrian and bicycle networks; comprehensive transit services; streetscapes that enhance the urban experience; and a broad array of activities in close proximity.
- Support **successful suburbs** by investing in street networks and pedestrian paths that provide a variety of choices, thus reducing congestion along arterials and neighborhood cut-through traffic; and promoting balanced development patterns that improve accessibility and shorten travel time between homes, jobs and commercial centers.
- Promote the character and economic well-being of **traditional towns and villages** through attractive gateway corridors; pedestrian-friendly Main Streets; access to inter-city rail and bus services; and well-maintained truck routes along major highways that provide an effective alternative to quiet town streets and narrow rural roads.
- Preserve **vital rural lands** through investments that support active farms and rural economic enterprises; protect pristine wildlife habitats and scenic views; provide visitor access to natural amenities and outdoor recreation; and support local growth management strategies.

Plan for Prosperity

- Bring state, regional and local agencies together to **develop long-term goals** and to **leverage investments** that mutually support statewide and local mobility, economic vitality, environmental stewardship, and community quality of life
- Focus resources on the development and redevelopment of **existing cities and towns**
- **Fix it first**, improving traffic flow, street connectivity, and transit services along existing roads before considering roadway expansions.
- Support **planning and funding policies** that facilitate **the right investments at the right time**, such as street connections and transit services that coincide with new development; streetscaping and pedestrian amenities that optimize local redevelopment initiatives; and access management strategies that support local growth management policies.

Illustrations – urban, suburban, rural: Transportation investments should respect the unique qualities of a community and contribute to its sense of place. Urban centers must provide effective, safe pedestrian and transit systems, while growing suburbs need interconnected streets and balanced development of jobs, housing, and commercial areas within close proximity of each other. Rural communities need to carefully plan new transportation access to support, rather than undermine, small town vitality and the preservation of working farms and open space.

MAKING GREAT COMMUNITIES HAPPEN: VAPA will support state-level planning policies that make Virginia and its communities the best place to live, work and play. Sound planning offers a key to making Virginia the best place it can be for all Virginians. Every region requires planning that promotes good jobs in livable communities. Faster growing regions have the added need for planning that recognizes pressures that are unprecedented in Virginia's history. Good planning actively involves the people of a community in the process; it combines their input on what is "valuable" for a good community with the technical facts brought by professionals and scientists. Sound planning includes an understanding of the differences between technical and value judgments and blends both appropriately to recommend a direction that moves a community toward the best place it can be for its citizens.

ADVOCATING FOR GREAT COMMUNITIES: In our efforts to advocate sound planning policies, regulations, and practice, VAPA's diverse membership is available as a resource for information and expert testimony regarding planning practice in Virginia. Likewise, through our parent organization, APA, we can provide information regarding planning practice through the United States. VAPA is ready and willing to assist local, regional and state decision-makers in developing effective plans for our Commonwealth's future.

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