Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission

Working with our member governments to promote regional cooperation, coordination, and communication.

FY 2008 ANNUAL REPORT
The phrase “Green Initiatives” can be found in numerous publications related to government management and operations. Environmentally sustainable development has been promoted for at least two decades, but this topic has become a particularly important theme in government over the last decade. However, the Regional Commission has been involved in “green” related projects since the 1970s. Our first major “green” project was the development of the Areawide Wastewater Management Plan in 1976, which led to the creation of the regional wastewater plant in the City of Roanoke. Since the 1970s, the Commission has been involved in regional planning for:

- water supply,
- solid waste management,
- stormwater management (flood reduction),
- ozone reduction (air quality),
- fine particulate matter PM 2.5 reduction (air quality),
- water quality,
- viewshed protection,
- open space and greenway development, and
- alternative transportation (carpooling, bicycling, bus ridership).

The Commission has supported the efforts of its eleven member governments to promote a greener region in various ways. Our member governments are involved with the Roanoke Valley Greenway Commission, Cool Cities Coalition movement, the bicycle-friendly community initiative, urban forest canopy program, Early Action Compact to improve air quality — just to name a few. The Commission and its member governments don’t just view the green movement as the “project du jour” but instead we clearly see improvements in air and water quality and open space as a benefit to our citizens, as well as to prospective businesses and individuals who might want to live here in the future.

Every citizen and business has a role to play in making our region a more desirable place to live, work and play. There are many opportunities to become involved in enhancing the area’s quality of life. All it takes is a phone call to the Regional Commission to find out how to get involved in various green initiatives. The Commission hopes that folks will call to find out more about what they can do to be a part of making this a “greener” region.

Bradley E. Grose
Chairman
Commission Members

Each local governing body appoints two or more representatives, according to population, to serve as voting members on the board of the Regional Commission. Board membership also includes non-voting liaison members representing the regional chambers of commerce, economic development agencies, and institutions of higher education. NOTE: The following members served during the 2008 Fiscal Year (July 1, 2007 – June 30, 2008).

Alleghany County
The Honorable Carolyn Barnett
The Honorable Dave Price
John Strutner

Botetourt County
The Honorable Don Assaid
The Honorable Stephen Clifton
The Honorable Billy Martin, Sr.
Todd Wampler

Craig County
The Honorable Larry Burb
The Honorable Richard Flora

Franklin County
The Honorable David Cundiff
The Honorable David Hurt
The Honorable Charles Wagner
Chris Whittow

Roanoke County
Elmer C. Hodge, Jr.
The Honorable Kevin Hutchins
Dean Martin
The Honorable Joe McLanura
The Honorable Charlotte Moore
J. Lee E. Osborne

City of Covington
The Honorable Stephanie Clark
Claire Collins

City of Roanoke
Carlene Burcham
The Honorable Bev Fitzpatrick, Jr.
Jay Foster
The Honorable Sherman Lea
Rob Logan, III
The Honorable David Trinkle

City of Salem
The Honorable John Givens
The Honorable Howard Packett
Melinda Payne

Town of Clifton Forge
The Honorable Annette Anderson
LeeAnna Tyler

Town of Rocky Mount
James Ervin
The Honorable John Lester

Town of Vinton
Consuelia Caudill
The Honorable Bradley E. Grose

Liaison Members (Non-Voting)
Debbie Kavitz
(Salem-Roanoke County Chamber of Commerce)

Temple L. Kessinger, Jr.
(Alleghany Highlands Chamber of Commerce)

Dave Kjosheide
(Roanoke Valley Convention & Visitors Bureau)

Dr. Robert Sandel
(Virginia Western Community College)

Phil Sparks
(Roanoke Regional Partnership)

Dr. Richard Teaff
(Dabney S. Lancaster Community College)

Doloris Vest
(Western Virginia Workforce Development Board)

Joyce Waugh
(Roanoke Regional Chamber at Commerce)

Community & Economic Development

Regional Commission staff assisted the counties of Alleghany, Bath, Craig, and Highland, the city of Covington and the town of Clifton Forge with the development of a regional tourism marketing plan, brand and organizational plan – Virginia’s Western Highlands Regional Tourism Branding. Staff is currently completing a website for the new regional tourism partnership. The project was formerly referred to as the Greater Alleghany Highlands Tourism Trail project.

In FY 2008, the Commission staff initiated the development of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The document will identify regionally significant priorities for economic development and is the first requirement to become designated as an Economic Development District by the U.S. Economic Development Administration. The document is scheduled to be completed in early 2009 (http://www.regionalstrategy.org).

The Regional Commission worked cooperatively with the Alleghany Highlands Economic Development Corporation to develop a cluster analysis for the Alleghany Highlands region. The Commission staff is also working in the development of the Alleghany Highlands Cluster/Target Industry Analysis by providing qualitative research and overall project management to the effort. Virginia Tech’s Office of Economic Development contributed qualitative research to the report. The report identifies the region’s largest industry clusters and examines niche and value-added activities that can strengthen the region’s existing traditional industry base and promote greater diversity within the area’s economy (http://rvarc.org/work/fin/alleghanyhighlandcluster08.pdf).

Staff completed a number of requests for custom economic analysis using its IMPLAN Economic Impact Model, including an analysis for the Nonprofit Resource Center of Western Virginia which examined the Regional Nonprofit Community.

Staff continued to maintain the website for the statewide Entrepreneur Express Program administered by the Virginia Department of Business Assistance and to serve on the statewide Entrepreneur Advisory Team (http://www.vastartup.org).

Commission staff is coordinating the Alleghany Highlands Resource Center project. The Resource Center will be a central site or building for an incubator, small business assistance center, and research center in the Alleghany Highlands. The incubator will provide hands-on management assistance, access to financing, office space, and exposure to critical business or technical support services. The small business assistance center will offer a variety of expertise including strategic and business planning, marketing, operations, accounting, government procurement and access to capital. The research center will support existing industry clusters by providing research on product and process development and enhancements.

The Regional Commission is assisting the Roanoke Valley Emergency Planning Committee (RVEPC) in updating the Roanoke Valley Hazardous Materials Plan as mandated by the Commonwealth of Virginia. The RVEPC is composed of the cities of Roanoke and Salem; Roanoke County and the Town of Vinton, and serves as the focal point for the Title III Hazardous Materials activities in the Roanoke Valley. The contacts and additional risk facilities have been updated as well as mapping for fire stations, rescue stations, child care centers, hospitals, hotels, shopping malls, nursing homes, office buildings, schools and hazardous materials sites. The plan is intended to assist government agencies, businesses and emergency-related agencies in their response to the release of hazardous materials in the Roanoke Valley.

The RVARC Regional Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan must be implemented, monitored, updated and resubmitted for approval within five years of the original FEMA approval date (03/29/06) in order for jurisdictions to maintain eligibility for the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, the Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program, and the Flood Mitigation Assistance Program. The Regional Commission staff compiled the annual report and continues to monitor plan implementation.

The Commission staff continues to provide Technical Assistance to its member localities. Currently, the staff is working with Craig County and the Town of Buchanan to update the zoning ordinance for each locality. The staff also worked with the Buchanan Planning Commission to update the Town’s Comprehensive Plan.

Staff developed a Guide to Cash Proffers in the Commonwealth of Virginia which included an overview of proffers, local government eligibility, the process of administering cash proffers, and a list of state laws relevant to the guide.

The Commission staff is working with Craig County, the Virginia Department of Transportation and Congressman Rick Boucher’s office to develop a Craig County Greenway to connect downtown New Castle and the Craig County school complex. A special allocation for the project was contained in the SAFETEA-LU federal transportation law. Craig County proposes to design and construct a greenway along a portion of an abandoned CS&O Railroad right-of-way. The project area is approximately 1.5 miles in length.

Craig County has completed all the preliminary requirements for the Community Development Block Grant for the Craig County Medical Clinic and is now under
Community & Economic Development

contract with the Department of Housing and Community Development. Designs for the new clinic have been finalized, and a project management team has been formed. The project has been bid and a consultant selected for the construction of the new building. A ground-breaking ceremony was held on May 4, 2008.

The Regional Commission is providing grant management assistance for the project.

The Commission staff worked with Craig County and the County Youth and Community Services Board, a private nonprofit partner, along with its branch group Craig County Recreation and Conservation Association, to develop a Craig County Land and Water Conservation Fund Grant application fund. The purchase of an 18-acre site that will be developed into a recreational complex with facilities for baseball, softball, football, soccer, ADA-accessible trails, picnics, and passive recreation.

The Commission staff worked with the Executive Director of the Franklin County Perinatal Education Center to develop a grant application for Seed funds. The Seed Program is a two-year capacity building program that provides financial assistance for operating support and technical assistance to develop the capacity of eligible organizations.

The Jackson River Total Maximum Daily Load Plan will be extended into 2008-09. The Department of Environmental Quality and MeadWestvaco continue to work cooperatively on determining the best methods to address water quality in the Jackson River. New innovative water quality activities are being explored at this time with the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The research being done for the project is expected to serve as an example for other watersheds across the nation.

The Looney Creek Water Quality Improvement Plan was presented to the public and the Environmental Protection Agency in November 2007. The plan outlined different ways to clean up the watershed, including voluntary programs that offer financial incentives for landowners to install best management practices. A small group of citizens in the Looney Creek watershed have started a monitoring group with assistance from the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality West Central Regional office and the Mountain Castles Soil and Water Conservation District.

The Commission, in cooperation with the City of Covington and Alleghany County, was awarded a grant from the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development to create a Regional Broadband Plan for the Alleghany Highlands. The firm of Design Nine, Inc., was hired to conduct the study with the assistance of key stakeholders in the region. Recently completed, the plan outlines ways that Alleghany County, the City of Covington, and the Town of Floyd Forge can develop broadband infrastructure and take advantage of improved broadband services. The difficulty of broadband delivery in rural areas is identifying enough demand for services, while keeping the costs of deployment low. Solutions often take the form of mixing wireless and wired technologies and using both private and public sector infrastructure. The study outlines existing conditions and recommends a variety of solutions; from education and policy changes all the way to fiber optic cable deployment.

In the fall of 2007, the Commission formed a Regional Stormwater Management Committee to examine opportunities to work cooperatively in addressing flood reduction and water quality concerns. One of the primary aspects of the Committee’s work is to determine how best to pay for stormwater and water quality improvements that will be mandated by federal and state agencies in the future. The Committee is composed of elected officials from the cities of Roanoke and Salem, counties of Franklin and Roanoke, and the town of Vinton. A Stormwater Advisory Group was also established, composed of key local government staff involved with stormwater-related matters.

The Regional Commission is working with 13 local governments, as well as other stakeholders, to develop a Greater Roanoke Regional Water Supply Plan to comply with the State Water Control Board’s regulation 9 VAC 25-780, Local and Regional Water Supply Planning. The regulation mandates that “all counties, cities and towns in the Commonwealth of Virginia shall submit a local water supply plan or shall participate in a regional planning unit in the submittal of a regional water supply plan to the board in accordance with this chapter.” Draper Aden Associates serves as the project consultant. The Greater Roanoke Regional Water Supply Plan is being developed using a phased, multi-year planning process, and is scheduled for completion in late 2008. Once completed, each local government will be required to adopt the plan as outlined in regulation 9 VAC 25-780. Additional information is available at http://www.roarc.org/water.

The Regional Commission continues to assist Alleghany County, the City of Covington, and the town of Floyd Forge and Iron Gate in development of an Alleghany Highlands Regional Water Supply Plan. Phase I of the plan was completed in FY 2008 and was funded in part by a grant from the VDEQ’s FY 2008 DEQ Local and Regional Water Supply Planning Competitive Grants Program. Phase II of the plan is currently being developed and is scheduled for completion in mid-2009. Additional information is available at http://www.nrarc.org/water.

Transportation Multi-Modal Planning

One responsibility of the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission is to provide a leadership role in the transportation planning process for the cities of Roanoke and Salem, the town of Vinton, and portions of Bedford, Botetourt and Roanoke counties. This is accomplished through the Roanoke Valley Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (RVAMPO), which is staffed by the Regional Commission. The U.S. Department of Transportation recognizes the Roanoke Valley Area MPO as the entity responsible for transportation-related planning within the Roanoke urbanized area boundary. A 15-member Policy Board establishes regional transportation policy, approves the Long Range Transportation Plan and the Transportation Improvement Program, determines committee duties, and adopts an annual planning work program. Policy Board members who served during the 2008 fiscal year (July 1, 2007 – June 30, 2008) included:

- Bedford County
- Botetourt County
- Botetourt County (City of Clifton Forge)
- Roanoke County
- Roanoke County (City of Roanoke)
- Roanoke County (City of Salem)
- Town of Vinton
- Town of Vinton
- Virginia Department of Transportation
- Greater Roanoke Transit Company
- Roanoke Regional Airport Commission
- Intergovernmental Review Agency (Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission)
- Virginia Department of Rail & Public Transportation
- Federal Highway Administration
- Federal Transit Administration

MPO Policy Board Members
- The Honorable Dale Wheeler
- Ron Smith
- The Honorable Billy Martin, Sr.
- The Honorable Beverly T. Fitzpatrick, Jr.
- The Honorable David Trinkle, Chair
- The Honorable Richard C. Flora, Vice Chair
- The Honorable Joe McNamara
- The Honorable Howard Packett
- Melinda Payne
- Doug Adams
- The Honorable Tom Rotenberry
- Richard L. Caywood
- Chip Holdren
- Jacqueline L. Shuck
- J. Lee E. Osborne

Chip Badger*
Unwanna N. Bellingar*
Tony Cho*
* Non-Voting Members

One of the core responsibilities of the Roanoke Valley Area MPO is to adopt a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for the Roanoke urbanized area. The TIP is a list of transportation projects that must be approved by the MPO in order to receive federal funding. Projects such as I-81, I-77, US 220 and bridge reconstruction, as well as funding for public transportation and greenways, are included in the TIP. During the federal fiscal year, 5.6 million of funding was obligated for transportation through the TIP process.

The Regional Commission, in conjunction with the Virginia Department of Transportation and the region’s rural localities, continued work on a Rural Regional Long-Range Transportation Plan. The Plan will identify project priorities and funding in the rural portions of the region over a 20-year planning horizon. This plan will complement the existing Constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan for the Roanoke Valley urbanized area. Approximately 20 locations across the region were identified for detailed field analysis and study during Phase III of the plan development. Staff also developed draft goals, objectives and strategies for the plan update. The plan update was scheduled to be completed in February 2009. Staff developed a Long-Range Transportation Plan 2035 website to communicate planning process progress to citizens and other stakeholders (http://www.rvarc.org/mopo/tip.html).

To further promote its Public Participation activities, the staff expanded its electronic kiosk program to include rural locations such as the Franklin Center Workforce Development Center, Greenfield Education & Training Center, and Dabney S. Lancaster Community College. Staff also continued its neighborhood group/civic league focus group series, including the Clearbrook Civic League, among others.

Staff participated in the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation planning process. The resulting plan will update the RVAMPO’s current Human Services-Public Transit Coordinated Transportation Plan.
In partnership with the City of Roanoke, the Commission began development of a Downtown Roanoke Emergency Evacuation Plan. An evacuation planning committee was formed and composed of representatives from the City Emergency Management, Fire/EMS, Police, Sheriff, Transportation, Planning and E-911, as well as Valley Metro, RADAR, Virginia Department of Transportation and the Virginia Department of Emergency Management. The committee has developed a draft plan that will be finalized in FY 2009.

Commission staff completed Corridor Reviews of US 220 in Botetourt County and Route 116 in the City of Roanoke and Roanoke County. The reviews contained detailed data on the transportation, land use, and environment features of the corridors. The reviews will be used as resources for improvement projects along the corridors during the scoping and preliminary environmental review process.

When gas prices began to skyrocket in March of 2008, we saw the first nationwide drop in vehicle miles traveled since records started being kept in the 1930s. The Regional Commission’s RIDE Solutions Transportation Demand Management Program rode that wave, with record numbers of commuters registered to find carpool partners or learn about transit, bike and walk options. From March 2008, RIDE Solutions’ database nearly doubled, with as many commuters signing up between March and June of 2008 as had registered for the entirety of 2007. Through the Workplace Partnership Program, RIDE Solutions was ready to serve regional businesses eager to help employees fight the high cost of gas. Partnerships were formed with Carilion Clinic, ITT Night Vision, The Roanoke Times, Washovia, and many others — 23 employers in all who continue to use RIDE Solutions in our member localities. Staff also summarized top transportation efforts for their employees.

The 2008 Clean Commute Day event was a great success, with over 207 Clean Commute Pledges received, resulting in 4,406 miles not driven on Friday, May 16, 2008. This year, RIDE Solutions partnered with several local bicycle organizations, including the Blue Ridge Bicycle Club and Sharebike, to fold Clean Commute Day into a larger Bike Month event, including a number of rides, social events, helmet giveaways, bike rodeos, and other events.

In December of 2007, the RVAMPO developed a Student Paper Competition open to undergraduate and graduate students. Students were asked to develop papers exploring the link between transportation and land use and present perspectives that staff could use as they developed scenarios in their long-range transportation planning process. Area businessman Ken Lanford, President of Lanford Brothers Co., partnered with the RVAMPO and donated the prize awards. Four entries were received, and the top three were recognized and presented with their prize awards at the March 2008 MPO meeting (First—University of Virginia students, Second—George Mason University student, and Third—Virginia Tech students).

The Regional Commission established a Regional Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC) to assist in improving bicycle accommodations in the Roanoke Valley. The BAC is composed of a range of stakeholders, including local government staff, regional and state agencies, bicycle clubs and advocacy groups, local shops, non-profits, and other interested parties. Establishing a Regional Bicycle Advisory Committee was an action item developed during a “Bicycle-Friendly Community” workshop held in Roanoke and presented by the League of American Bicyclists. Additional information is available at www.rvarc.org/bike.

The Regional Commission continues to assist the Roanoke Valley Greenway Commission and local governments in greenway-related mapping and planning efforts. Mapping projects include wayfinding “guides” for individual greenways and the Roanoke River Greenway Status Map. RIDE Solutions also continues to update the Interactive Bicycle Map showing a range of bicycle accommodations in the region, including area greenways. Additionally, the Regional Commission is assisting the Greenway Commission in updating its website. Mapping and other greenway information is available at www.rvarc.org/greenways.

The Roanoke Valley Area Metropolitan Planning Organization was awarded an $80,000 Planning Grant from the Virginia Multimodal Transportation Planning Office. The plan development process will begin in August 2008 and include recommendations in the areas of traffic signal timing, public transportation, bicycle and pedestrian mobility, freight mobility, and park-n-ride facilities along the Route 419/Electric Road corridor.
The Regional Commission was recognized this year by the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) with separate awards. The first NADO Innovative Award was granted to the Commission’s rideshare program, RIDE Solutions, for its outreach efforts with new Web 2.0 technologies, particularly its use of Facebook, YouTube, and other social media to build awareness of the program. Jeremy Holmes, Program Director for RIDE Solutions, was invited to speak at NADO’s Southeastern Regional Transportation Forum in Raleigh as part of their “Best Practices in Regional Transportation” Panel on using new information technologies to build public participation programs for MPOs and other agencies.

In addition, the Commission also received NADO’s Excellence in Regional Transportation Award for the RIDE Solutions Interactive Bicycle Map (www.ridesolutions.org/bikewalk/map.shtml). The map was the result of programming and field work by Jeremy Holmes and Shane Sawyer, Regional Planner II, adapting the Regional Bicycle Plan and previously completed work on identifying bicycle facilities into an interactive Google Map. The map allows commuters interested in trying bicycle commuting to map their routes using available bike lanes, paved shoulders, and alternative routes such as greenways.

The Regional Commission continues to coordinate the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Advisory Council on Homelessness, which facilitates and coordinates the region’s efforts to prevent, treat, and end homelessness and serves as the lead entity for the area’s Continuum of Care planning process. The Advisory Council includes the counties of Alleghany, Botetourt, Craig, and Roanoke; the cities of Covington, Roanoke, and Salem; and the towns of Clifton Forge and Vinton. Additional information is available at www.rvarc.org/homeless.

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Grant Resource Access Network (GRANT), a free service of the Regional Commission, is a system to notify area governments, non-profits, and other interested parties in the region of grant opportunities and resources available from federal and state agencies, as well as private foundations. Current GRANT membership includes more than 125 individuals from the region and beyond, representing local governments, state agencies, non-profits, businesses, and individuals. GRANT membership is offered free of charge, and you can join by contacting grant@rvarc.org or calling 540.343.4417 and providing the following information: name, email address, mailing address, and organization (if applicable).

The Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission serves its member governments, citizens and businesses by actively promoting inter-jurisdictional communication, coordination, and cooperation on issues affecting the district and by providing local technical assistance.

Wayne Strickland, Executive Director; Jake Gilmer, AICP, Regional Planner III; Jeremy Holmes, Alternative Transportation Coordinator; Mark McCaskill, AICP, Senior Planner; Matthew Rehnborg, Office Manager; Shane Sawyer, Regional Planner II; Eddie Wells, AICP, Finance Director; Olivia Dooley, GISP, Director of Information Services; John Hull, Regional Economic Resources Planner; and Matt Miller, Information Services Director.

For more information about the Regional Commission and its activities, visit our web site at www.rvarc.org.
The Regional Commission

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Serving the counties of Alleghany, Botetourt, Craig, Franklin and Roanoke, the cities of Covington, Roanoke and Salem, and the towns of Clifton Forge, Rocky Mount and Vinton