



2024 Legislative Priorities

Amended December 14th, 2023

Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission Legislative Committee: *Phil North, Roanoke County; Jim Wallace, City of Salem; Steve Clinton, Botetourt County; Debbie Laudermilk, Town of Clifton Forge; Lorie Smith, Franklin County; Peter Volosin, City of Roanoke*

Report #PR-20231127-04

Published: November 2023

Abstract

The 2023 Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission’s Legislative Priorities represent the priority needs for the Commission’s 11-locality membership across the areas of community development, economic development, transportation, and more.

Localities included: *Counties of Alleghany, Botetourt, Craig, Franklin, and Roanoke; Cities of Covington, Roanoke, and Salem; Towns of Clifton Forge, Rocky Mount, and Vinton*

Table of Contents:

Abstract	1
Introduction	2
Economic Development	2
Transportation	3
School Construction and Maintenance	4
Roanoke-Blacksburg Regional Airport Investment.	4
Catawba Hospital	5

Cover image Credit
Doug Kerr via Flickr | <https://www.flickr.com/photos/dougtone/8124546182/>

Introduction

This document represents the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission's inaugural development of a list of legislative priorities for consideration by the General Assembly. This list was developed by a Committee of the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission representing the breadth of our geography and the depth of our needs. Members of the Committee are as follows:

- Phil North, Chair – Roanoke County Board of Supervisors
- Steve Clinton – Botetourt County Board of Supervisors
- Debbie Lauder milk – Clifton Forge Town Council
- Lorie Smith – Franklin County Board of Supervisors
- Peter Volosin – Roanoke City Council
- Jim Wallace – Salem City Council

This document is intended to complement and amplify the legislative priorities of our member governments, but in no way replace them.

The language included in this document is the official policy language as adopted (and, when applicable, amended) by the Board of the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission and is intended to be used by Commissioners and staff as a reference.

In this document, **Policy Goals** are offered as short, bullet-pointed lists that summarize the **Adopted Policy**, which is the formal language and justification adopted by the Commission.

Additional collateral and communication pieces, including summaries of the full list of priorities or individual policy goals, may be developed and distributed as needed.

Localities included: Counties of Alleghany, Botetourt, Craig, Franklin, and Roanoke; Cities of Covington, Roanoke, and Salem; Towns of Clifton Forge, Rocky Mount, and Vinton.

Economic Development

Policy Goals:

- **Continue economic development investments in the region focused on industrial site development and reducing regulatory burden.**
- **Consider economic development programs and incentives that support workforce housing.**

Adopted Policy:

The Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission encourages the General Assembly to continue economic development investments in the region, particularly through continued site development and supporting workforce investments in the construction trades to facilitate rapid implementation of projects once they are secured. The Regional Commission also requests the General Assembly to more carefully consider the impact of regulatory requirements on economic development opportunities, especially as small urban and rural localities bear an unequal burden in their implementation.

The Regional Commission also encourages the General Assembly to expand its definition of economic development activities to include workforce housing. The Regional Commission recognizes the regional connection between housing and jobs – that citizen may work in one region and live in another – and encourages the General Assembly to make investments in infrastructure, site development, marketing, and other activities to encourage community-appropriate housing site development in the same way that industrial site development is considered.

Transportation

Policy Goals:

- **Invest in the region's secondary road network through a funding structure focused on rural needs without competing or drawing from the existing SMART SCALE program.**
- **The Regional Commission supports a funding strategy for the I-81 project pipeline which takes into account inflation-related shortfalls as well as a sustained commitment to projects beyond the current 2033 I-81 Corridor Improvement funding program.**
- **The Regional Commission supports analysis to identify and evaluate additional revenue opportunities to support congestion-related improvement of the I-81 corridor.**

Adopted Policy:

The Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission requests that General Assembly to make the necessary investments in the region's secondary road networks to allow for the safe and efficient movement of the region's workforce from corridors of statewide significance to the job sites at which they work and neighborhoods in which they live. Proper investments in the secondary road network are critical to the economic vitality of our suburban and rural communities and are vital connections between these communities and urban job centers.

The Regional Commission requests the General Assembly consider a distinct, complementary transportation funding structure that adequately funds rural needs but does not compete with or draw funds from the existing SMART SCALE funding program.

Given its importance to the mobility and economic vitality of the region, the Commission supports all efforts to fully fund improvements to the I-81 corridor to improve safety, reliability, and congestion.

School Construction and Maintenance

Policy Goals:

- **Continue funding the 2023 Construction Grant program.**
- **Redesign the grant program to focus on a locality's composite index, level of distress, and site readiness for new school projects.**
- **Provide workforce grants for career and technical education capital projects.**

Adopted Policy:

The Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission encourages the General Assembly to make appropriate investments in school construction and maintenance across the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Region, with a particular focus on the need for Career and Technical Education.

The Regional Commission further encourages the General Assembly to a) Continue funding the construction grant program that was created in the 2023 budget in future years and b) Redesign said construction grant formula to focus solely on the locality's composite index, level of distress, and site readiness for the proposed project. Further, grants should be limited to one grant per locality per year to assure equity across the Commonwealth.

Roanoke-Blacksburg Regional Airport Investment

Policy Goals:

- **Support infrastructure investments in the RBRA focused on runway safety improvement and expansions, including securing necessary federal, state, and local funding.**

Adopted Policy:

The Roanoke-Blacksburg Regional Airport is critical to the region's economic success via job growth and tourism, for both our urban and rural localities. To be successful, the airport needs infrastructure investments that will allow for a growth in air service in terms of both numbers and destinations of flights, as well as improvements in the efficiency and service delivery capability of the terminal itself.

Safety being of utmost importance, the Regional Commission encourages the General Assembly to take into account opportunities to improve runway safety, ensuring more resilient air service better able to respond to changing airline needs and concerns.

To this end, the Roanoke Valley Alleghany Regional Commission encourages the General Assembly to take whatever actions necessary to secure funding to expand the airport's runway over I-581 and make other terminal improvements as identified in the airport's most recent master plan, which will result in a forecasted \$1.6 billion in additional economic activity in the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany region.

Catawba Hospital

Policy Goals:

- **The Regional Commission supports the expansion of Catawba Hospital into a state of the art, first of its kind recovery treatment facility.**

Adopted Policy:

The Regional Commission encourages the General Assembly to recognize the important role state hospitals play in providing residential treatment to address the crisis of substance use disorder in the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany region and across the Commonwealth. Further, the Regional Commission strongly encourages the General Assembly to invest the needed funding to expand Catawba Hospital into a state of the art, first of its kind recovery treatment facility.