

Roanoke Valley Transportation PLANNING ORGANIZATION



Roanoke Valley TRANSIT VISION PLAN

Approved September 22, 2016

PART 1: Introduction

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1.0 WHAT IS TRANSIT?

Transit is the act of moving people from one place to another.

Public transportation is a system of trains, buses, etc. that is paid for or run by the government for use by the general public.

Like roads, electricity, water, and broadband, public transportation is a key element of the Roanoke Valley's infrastructure, providing a vital transit service needed for our region to function properly.

Riding public transportation, along with driving, walking, and bicycling, are the fundamental components that create a multimodal transportation system. This interconnected network allows people to move around the Valley between places where they live, work, learn, play, exercise, eat, socialize, and receive personal care without needing to rely solely on a personal vehicle.

The ability for people to move around easily and freely contributes significantly to people's ability to live well in the Roanoke Valley. Public transportation is for everyone! Some choose to use it for many trips, others choose to use it once in a while; others decide every time they take a trip to use another mode. To all, that is the beauty of choice. Even if public transportation is not something everyone uses, everyone benefits from its existence.

Given that the provision of transit services is a community investment, it is very important for citizens and decision-makers alike to understand the goals of the investment, the desired outcomes, and the associated costs of the strategies to achieve those goals.

1.1 What is a Transit Vision Plan?

The Roanoke region's transit services and public transportation network have largely remained unchanged for 25 years. Knowing that a comprehensive analysis of the existing transit network was

overdue, the Roanoke Valley Transportation Planning Organization initiated a multi-year planning process in 2013. The planning process was designed for regional stakeholders to reflect on the past, evaluate current transit services, identify common values and goals, and to explore opportunities for the improvement and expansion of the Roanoke Valley's transit system. Over the next three years, citizens were provided a forum to voice their ideas about the transit system. Experts were also consulted to review the collected data and generate recommendations on the development of an improved regionalized transit system. Unveiled in the spring of 2016, the draft Roanoke Valley Transit Vision Plan provides a substantive conceptual framework for regional policymakers to consider as they prioritize resources to meet the evolving multimodal transportation needs of the region.

1.2 Transit Vision Plan Goals

The Transit Vision Plan becomes one element of the region's Constrained Long-Range Multimodal Transportation Plan (CLRMTP). As one element of the CLRMTP, the Transit Vision Plan accomplishes the following functions:

- ▲ RECORD THE REGION'S VISION, GOALS, AND STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING THE TRANSIT MODE OF TRANSPORTATION IN THE ROANOKE VALLEY AS IDENTIFIED THROUGH INPUT FROM CITIZENS AND LOCAL LEADERS
- ▲ SERVE AS A RESOURCE GUIDE FOR TRANSIT SERVICE PLANNING IN THE ROANOKE VALLEY
- ▲ ENCOURAGE LOCAL GOVERNMENTS TO INCORPORATE TRANSIT-SUPPORTIVE DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE IN LOCAL ORDINANCES, POLICIES, PLANS, AND RELATED GUIDING DOCUMENTS
- ▲ IDENTIFY AND MAP ALL EXISTING AND PROPOSED TRANSIT SERVICES

- ▲ IDENTIFY AND MAP LOCATIONS WHERE TRANSIT SERVICES ARE NEEDED AND DESIRED
- ▲ PROVIDE STRATEGIES FOR ACCOMPLISHING THE NEEDED SERVICES IN A REASONABLE TIMEFRAME
- ▲ SUGGEST WAYS TO MEASURE THE REGION'S PROGRESS IN ACCOMPLISHING ITS VISION.

With this Plan as a foundation, regional transportation decision-makers, transit operators, engineers, designers, planners, development reviewers, inspectors, and infrastructure maintenance staff will work to build and maintain the envisioned regional transit network so that regional services will improve greatly as current services and investments are adapted to create a more livable Roanoke Valley.

2.0 A LIVABLE ROANOKE VALLEY

A few years ago, many people in the community participated in an initiative to envision a more Livable Roanoke Valley. Through that process the strongest elements of our community were identified as well as areas that needed more support. The overarching Vision for the community is displayed below.

OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE

We are living the dream. Beautiful mountains. Clean rivers and streams. People who care. The Roanoke Valley is filled with promise. To make the most of these opportunities, we will work to provide quality education, access to healthcare, work and career opportunities, responsible stewardship of the environment, and greater regional cooperation. As we strive to fulfill our promises, we will be the destination for individuals, families and businesses who share our same dream.

It is with this Vision in mind that all subsequent plans are developed including this Transit Vision Plan. Transit is a key element to helping many people “live the dream”.

Guiding principles for enhancing livability are outlined in the Plan. These guiding principles remind us of our common values for people of all races, ages, abilities, and income levels surrounding our environment, health, equality, quality of life, diversity, culture, economic vitality, adaptability to change, collaborative spirit, investment in shared infrastructure, and educational opportunities.

LIVABILITY GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Protect the beauty and ecology of the Roanoke Valley.
- Provide a healthy and equitable quality of life for all of our citizens.
- Celebrate the diversity of our region and its contribution to our culture.
- Embrace both our traditions and new innovations to create economic vitality.
- Anticipate and adapt to change with responsible leadership.
- Build on the assets of our local communities to strengthen our regional collaboration.
- Invest in regional infrastructure improvements that meet the communities' needs of the 21st century.
- Promote excellence in education, job training, and a culture of lifelong learning.

The Livable Roanoke Valley Plan outlines four goals:

- ▲ **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:** CREATE JOBS, INCREASE INCOMES AND GROW BUSINESSES TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR ALL RESIDENTS OF THE ROANOKE REGION.
- ▲ **WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT:** PROVIDE ACCESS TO JOB TRAINING AND EDUCATIONAL ADVANCEMENT BY FOSTERING A CULTURE OF LIFELONG LEARNING FOR PEOPLE OF ALL AGES AND ABILITIES.
- ▲ **HEALTHY ROANOKE VALLEY:** MOBILIZE COMMUNITY RESOURCES TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO CARE, COORDINATION OF SERVICES, AND PROMOTE A CULTURE OF WELLNESS.
- ▲ **NATURAL ASSETS:** WORK COLLABORATIVELY TO PRESERVE THE HISTORIC, CULTURAL, AND NATURAL ASSETS OF THE REGION

In developing the Transit Vision Plan these goals played a key role and were reflected upon specifically looking at how transit helps the community achieve each one.

The Transit Vision Plan is one way that the work started under Livable Roanoke Valley continues. Through a focused look at this one element of life, transit, that helps so many people accomplish their own personal goals for health, income, knowledge, and helps our community thrive sustainably, the hope is that this Transit Vision Plan will provide the needed guidance to move the community forward to become a more livable place for the people who live here today and those yet to come.

2.1 Transit and Livability

Transit plays a key role in enabling a region to grow strongly and sustainably. Continued investment in transit-, bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly environments along with bikesharing, carsharing, and ridesourcing will further enhance the Roanoke region's efforts to promote active lifestyles and be an outdoor community and destination. Investment in a range of mobility options will also play a crucial role in attracting and retaining a younger, more diverse workforce. Recent surveys have shown that Millennials prefer environments that are mixed-use and walkable with multiple transportation options.¹

The development of a more transit-oriented environment would coincide with the Roanoke Valley's outdoor character, its vision for economic development, and attracting and retaining a diverse workforce that seeks mobility options. For such reasons, the active-oriented lifestyle coincides with transit-oriented growth. Transit, biking, and walking along with bikesharing, carsharing, and ridesourcing (e.g. Uber and Lyft), all work together in a way which appeals to people who desire a less auto-dependant lifestyle. While the auto-oriented lifestyle is one that many people have grown up with and continue to desire, there are a growing number of people who would enjoy the opportunity to live a more active-oriented lifestyle, which transit helps to provide.

¹ See American Planning Association, [Investing in Place for Economic Growth and Competitiveness: A Research Summary](#), May 2014. Available https://planning-org-uploaded-media.s3.amazonaws.com/legacy_resources/policy/polls/investing/pdf/pollinvestingreport.pdf; David Goldberg, "Survey: To recruit and keep millennials, give them walkable places with good transit and other options," [Transportation for America](#), April 22, 2014. Available <http://t4america.org/2014/04/22/survey-to-recruit-and-keep-millennials-give-them-walkable-places-with-good-transit-and-other-options/#.U1bQ6ZuN7Gg.twitter><http://t4america.org/2014/04/22/survey-to-recruit-and-keep-millennials-give-them-walkable-places-with-good-transit-and-other-options/>

3.0 ROANOKE VALLEY TRANSIT VISION AND GOALS

The Roanoke Valley is a livable community with a growing economy and recognized for its outstanding quality of life. As such, the residents and employees of the Roanoke Valley envision a community where transit provides an easy and timely way for people to get to their destination.

3.1 Regional Uses of Transit

The TPO Policy Board recognizes the importance of transit in the Roanoke Valley's transportation system and envisions the following primary functions of regional transit:

- ▲ TO SPUR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
- ▲ TO PROVIDE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN OTHER TRANSPORTATION MODES
- ▲ TO UNLOAD CONCENTRATED TRAFFIC AT SPECIAL EVENTS
- ▲ TO REDUCE TRAFFIC, ASSOCIATED AIR POLLUTION, AND ACCIDENTS
- ▲ TO PROVIDE ACCESS TO JOBS
- ▲ TO SIMPLIFY GETTING FROM POINT A TO POINT B
- ▲ TO SHOWCASE CREATIVITY THROUGH PUBLIC ART
- ▲ TO PROVIDE PEOPLE WHO HAVE NO OTHER OPTIONS WITH A WAY TO GET AROUND

3.2 Regional Vision for Transit

As the region's decision-makers and citizens work together to develop a more livable community, they envision transit in the Roanoke Valley will:

- ▲ SERVE A GREATER PART OF THE REGION THAN IT DOES NOW
- ▲ SERVE PEOPLE WHO DO NOT DRIVE AS WELL AS PEOPLE WHO DRIVE BUT PREFER TRANSIT FOR SOME TRIPS
- ▲ BE PART OF AN INTEGRATED MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM AND COMPLEMENT OTHER MODES OF TRANSPORTATION
- ▲ BE SAFE
- ▲ BE COMPLIANT WITH THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT OF 1990
- ▲ BE CONVENIENT
- ▲ BE FREQUENT WHERE IT MAKES SENSE
- ▲ BE DEPENDABLE
- ▲ BE AFFORDABLE TO RIDERS
- ▲ BE COST-EFFECTIVE IN THAT THE SERVICES PROVIDED JUSTIFY THE COST
- ▲ BE COMPETITIVE WITH OTHER MODES IN TRAVEL TIME
- ▲ BE AN EMPLOYEE BENEFIT
- ▲ BE ENVIRONMENTALLY-FRIENDLY VIA THE VEHICLES AND FUELS USED
- ▲ HELP VISITORS BECOME BETTER ACQUAINTED WITH THE REGION
- ▲ SHARE THE COST OF PROVIDING SERVICES AND AMENITIES BY ESTABLISHING PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS WITH BUSINESSES

- ▲ USE NEW TECHNOLOGY TO MAKE RIDING TRANSIT EASIER FOR RIDERS

3.3 Regional Goals for Transit

The above vision will take regional cooperation and investment to accomplish. From this vision, five goals for transit have been established.

- ▲ GOAL #1: CAPITALIZE ON THE COMMUNITY'S INVESTMENT IN TRANSIT TO ENRICH THE ECONOMY OF THE ROANOKE VALLEY.
- ▲ GOAL #2: UTILIZE TRANSIT TO SUPPORT PEOPLE'S ABILITY TO LIVE HEALTHY LIFESTYLES.
- ▲ GOAL #3: SUSTAIN THE ROANOKE VALLEY'S NATURAL ENVIRONMENT BY EMBRACING TRANSIT ON A PERSONAL AND COMMUNITY LEVEL.
- ▲ GOAL #4: PROVIDE INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT PEOPLE'S ABILITY TO SAFELY USE TRANSIT.
- ▲ GOAL #5: IMPROVE THE MOBILITY OF RESIDENTS, EMPLOYEES, AND VISITORS THROUGHOUT THE ROANOKE VALLEY BY PROVIDING SEAMLESS CONNECTIONS WITH OTHER TRANSPORTATION MODES AND ENABLING PEOPLE TO GET AROUND WITHOUT THE NEED FOR A PERSONAL VEHICLE.

The Roanoke Valley Transit Vision Plan has been developed within the context of this vision and these goals.

4.0 PLAN DEVELOPMENT

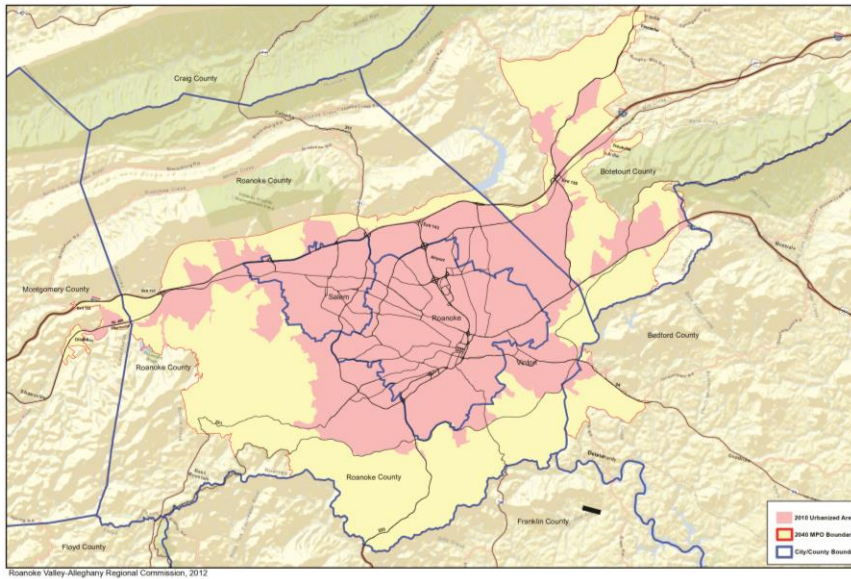
The Roanoke Valley Transit Vision Plan was a three-year effort that began in July 2013 and sought to evaluate transit to a level of detail and public input that had never been undertaken before. In 2012, the Roanoke Valley urbanized area became classified by the federal government as a Transportation Management Area due to its population in the urban area surpassing 200,000 residents, a number which is significant, particularly as federal funding structures are concerned, to distinguish smaller urban areas from larger ones. The change required the Roanoke Valley decision-makers to begin thinking about transit, and specifically our investment in public transportation compared to the value that transit brings to our community, in ways that were not required previously. Ultimately, the need to plan and fund transit services collectively with a common vision will strengthen the community.

4.1 Study Area

The Transit Vision Plan covers the Roanoke Valley Transportation Planning Organization (RVTPO) 2040 Study Area which includes the Roanoke Census Defined Urbanized Area² and the contiguous geographic area(s) likely to become urbanized within the 25-year forecast period covered by the Constrained Long-Range Multimodal Transportation Plan. Localities within the RVTPO Study Area include the cities of Roanoke and Salem, the towns of Fincastle, Troutville, and Vinton, and portions of Bedford, Botetourt, Montgomery, and Roanoke counties. The following figure shows the TPO Study Area boundary (yellow), Roanoke 2010 Urbanized Area (pink), and the jurisdictional boundaries (blue).

² An Urbanized Area is a statistical geographic entity, designated by the Census Bureau, consisting of a central core and adjacent densely settled territory that together contain at least 50,000 people, generally with an overall population density of at least 1,000 people per square mile.

Figure 4.1-1 | Roanoke Valley TPO 2040 Study Area Boundary



4.2 Roles and Responsibilities

Many people have been involved in the Plan’s development. The Plan itself was funded through a grant from the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation and local matching funds provided by the RVTPO and Valley Metro. The roles and responsibilities of key groups are described below.

Roanoke Valley Transportation Planning Organization Policy Board

The RVTPO Policy Board is made up of elected representatives from each member local government as well as the Greater Roanoke Transit Company, the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation, the Virginia Department of Transportation and other non-voting representatives. The Policy Board is responsible for approving federal funding for transit projects

consistent with the region’s program of projects. As such, the Policy Board is the lead agency responsible for setting the regional transit vision from which subsequent transit development plans and program of projects can be developed. In June 2015, the Policy Board voted to establish a steering committee to guide the continuation of the Plan’s development through the recommendations phase.

Transit Vision Plan Steering Committee

The Transit Vision Plan Steering Committee was recommended to be established by the RVTPO Transportation Technical Committee and approved by the RVTPO Policy Board. The purpose of the Committee was to gather a diverse group of stakeholders who represent a variety of community interests to advise and guide the Plan’s development through the recommendations phase. The RVTPO Policy Board approved an initial list of proposed organizations to be represented on the steering committee. The steering committee was assembled and began meeting in September 2015 until the Plan’s completion.

Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission Staff

The Regional Commission, because it provides the staff for the RVTPO, took the role of facilitating the Transit Vision Plan’s development as well as many technical aspects including conducting the initial technical analysis, developing and analyzing surveys, organizing public engagement, translating the Plan’s recommendations into network scenarios for use in the Constrained Long-Range Multimodal Transportation Plan’s development, and presenting the Plan to interested stakeholders.

Michael Baker/Foursquare Integrated Transportation Planning Consultant Staff

Assistance from a transit consultant was sought to bring an outside expert perspective on transit, assess the needs of our

region, analyze the existing services, and provide recommendations based on the community's values, goals and vision. Michael Baker Inc. and Foursquare Integrated Transportation Planning provided that expertise and supported the effort in its third and last year of the process to further engage the public and make recommendations.

Project Management Team

A project management team guided the Plan's development progress. Team members included representatives from the Regional Commission, Michael Baker/Foursquare Integrated Transportation Planning, Valley Metro, and the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation. The team met frequently and at times weekly via conference call to coordinate the Plan's activities.

Local Transit Operators

Valley Metro, RADAR, and Botetourt County, as operators of local transit services, each participated in the Plan's development and were instrumental in providing ridership data and administering surveys to their customers.

Transportation Technical Committee and Citizens Advisory Committee

The Transportation Technical Committee (TTC) was instrumental in the initial work for the plan by contributing to the regional values and vision statements for transit. The TTC also worked to identify regional multimodal centers and districts. These key planning tools are used to guide regional and local plans and investments to support public transportation, biking, and walking in places where they should be commonly used transportation choices.

The TTC and the Citizens Advisory Committee were kept abreast throughout the Plan's development and were given

opportunities to provide feedback on the Plan's recommendations prior to its approval.

Local Government Staff

Local government staff was very supportive during the Transit Vision Plan's development. Staff shared information about local plans that identify transit needs; they helped to spread the word about public input opportunities whether they were in person or online. Staff also assisted with arranging opportunities to speak with their local Planning Commission, City Council, or Board of Supervisors.

Citizens

Citizens played a key role through the Plan's development. The Plan is ultimately for the citizens, and it was essential to engage citizens throughout the Plan's development. At each step in the process, they had an opportunity to shape the Plan and the community's vision for transit by sharing their values, stating their needs and the needs of others, communicating their desires about a Livable Roanoke Valley, and indicating how transit contributes to those desires.

4.3 Plan Timeline

The Plan's development included the following activities that began in July 2013 and concluded in summer 2016.

JULY 2013 - JUNE 2014

Valley Metro and Regional Commission staffs conduct bus route surveys in conjunction with the National Transit Database survey effort to determine level of bus stop activity.

SEPTEMBER - DECEMBER 2013

Initial Public Engagement / General Public Survey conducted in conjunction with the Roanoke Valley Pedestrian Vision Plan.

SEPTEMBER 2013

TTC Review/Comment of Public Involvement Plan

TPO and TTC group activities on transit values answering the questions:

Values: Is public transit important to our community (the MPO region), why/why not?

If it is important, what should public transit be used for in our community?

Vision: What do we want the future to be?

Goals: What are some broad statements of the desired outcomes for public transit?

Staff attended and administered the general public survey in conjunction with Downtown Roanoke Plan public meeting and Senior Citizen Coordinating Council Open House.

OCTOBER 2013

TPO and TTC review values and vision statements; Update on Public Involvement; Introduction to DRPT's Multimodal System Design Guidelines; Review Map of Existing Activity Density; Discussion of Multimodal Centers and Districts.

NOVEMBER 2013

TTC: Group Mapping Exercise: Place Dots on Large Maps Indicating Existing and Emerging Multimodal Centers and Districts.

TPO: Bus tour showcasing Valley Metro and RADAR dispatch, scheduling, maintenance, and operations facilities.

DECEMBER 2013

TTC: Review Multimodal Center Typology; Activity on Defining Roanoke Valley Multimodal Centers and Districts.

JANUARY 2014

TPO and TTC: Summary of Completed General Public Survey (471 responses); Update on the development and review of Multimodal Centers and Districts.

Staff receives RADAR trips and customer data for 2012-2013 and begins processing and analyzing the information.

FEBRUARY 2014

TTC: Review Draft Maps of Regional Multimodal Centers and Districts.

MARCH 2014

TPO and TTC: Review Final Draft Multimodal Centers and Districts

JUNE 2014

Valley Metro riders are surveyed; 1,894 paper surveys are returned; staff begins processing surveys and analyzing feedback.

JANUARY 2015

TPO approves Multimodal Centers and Districts to guide long-range transportation planning;

TPO approves Roanoke Valley Pedestrian Vision Plan, which includes regional pedestrian infrastructure improvements needed to support transit accessibility.

JULY 2015

TTC reviews the draft Technical Report to the Transit Vision Plan (TVP).

AUGUST 2015

TTC reviews the draft Technical Report to the TVP a second time Part 3: The Existing Conditions Technical Report to the TVP on survey and data analysis is approved by the RVTPO Policy Board.

SEPTEMBER 2015

Michael Baker/Foursquare Integrated Transportation Planning is hired to provide technical assistance during the recommendations development phase of the plan;

Transit Vision Plan Steering Committee is formed and meets for the first time; Members share why they want to be part of the Committee, review the background and purpose of the Plan, and hear about the region's current transit services.

OCTOBER 2015

TPO is updated on the progress of the Transit Vision Plan. Steering Committee reviews the content of the Technical Report; and reflects on the questions:

Why is Transit Important to Me?

How will I benefit from improved transit services?

Who in the region is responsible for doing what in order to develop a robust transit community?

What can I do personally and what can my organization do to improve transit in the Roanoke Valley?

NOVEMBER 2015

First round of public open house workshops are held to identify desired connections and preferences on transit tradeoffs.

Steering Committee met and reflected on the roles and responsibilities of groups to develop a robust transit community;

reviewed information on transit propensity; reviewed current stakeholder/public outreach; provided additional input to the public's feedback on where service is needed and for whom; where evening and Sunday service is needed; and where service is needed for all day vs. commute to/from work.

Staff briefed the Roanoke County Planning Commission and the Transportation Advocacy Committee at the Roanoke Chamber.

DECEMBER 2015

Steering Committee meets to review the draft recommendations.

JANUARY 2016

TPO is updated on the progress of the Transit Vision Plan;

Steering Committee meets to review and discuss the Plan's goals, strategies, desired outcomes and performance measures;

Second round of public open house workshops are held to share the draft recommendations.

FEBRUARY 2016

TTC is briefed on the Transit Vision Plan's progress and draft recommendations are shared.

Focus Group meetings are held.

MARCH 2016

Steering Committee meets to review the revised draft recommendations.

APRIL 2016

Steering Committee reviews the first draft Transit Vision Plan document.

Staff briefs various local government Boards, Councils and Planning Commissions on the plan and its draft recommendations.

MAY 2016

Regional Commission holds its Annual Open House where the public is invited to review and ask question about the draft Transit Vision Plan.

Steering Committee reviews the draft Executive Summary.

TTC reviews the draft Transit Vision Plan.

TPO is updated on the Plan's development and draft recommendations.

Public has the opportunity to comment on the Draft Plan.

JUNE 2016

Steering Committee and TTC review the Final Draft Plan.

5.0 MEDIA COVERAGE HIGHLIGHTS

The development of the Transit Vision Plan received great support from the local media which did an excellent job conveying the significance of the Plan to the region's future, educating the public, and soliciting public input.

From the beginning, WSL10 featured work being undertaken as part of the Transit Vision Plan on a TV broadcast and their online news feed. The October 29, 2013 broadcast advertised the public survey.

Survey to help make Roanoke Valley more walking & public transit friendly

*Posted: Oct 29, 2013 4:17 PM EST
Updated: Nov 12, 2013 4:17 PM EDT*

By Katie Love, Reporter - [bio](#) | [email](#)

Leaders with the Roanoke Valley Alleghany Regional Commission need your help finding ways to make the area more friendly for walkers and public transportation users.

They're asking people in Roanoke, Salem, Vinton, and Bedford, Botetourt, Montgomery and Roanoke counties to take a survey.

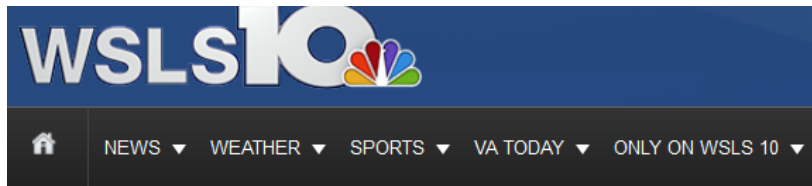
The survey is part of the Regional Pedestrian and Transit Vision Plans.

The goal is to make walking and public transit easier to use.

"We are now considered a large urban area by state standards," regional planner, Cristina Finch says. "So, as we try to plan for the future as our region continues to grow, we need to start thinking about how people get around our region, not just about driving."

The survey has 25 questions. You can take it [here](#).

A WSL10 broadcast in April 2016 highlighted the draft Plan and its recommendations.



Roanoke looks at new transit plan



By **Bethany Teague** - New River Valley Reporter

Published: April 4, 2016, 10:45 pm | Updated: April 4, 2016, 11:52 pm

ROANOKE (WSLS 10) – Public transportation could soon be changing for the Roanoke Valley.

The Roanoke Valley Alleghany Regional Commission is working on a plan to expand transit services in the coming years.

Goals include providing Sunday service, as well as late night hours.

Residents have also asked for expanded routes to places like Carilion clinics, Tanglewood and Valley View malls and the DMV.

The commission hopes to have a draft plan out by next month.

Several Roanoke city council members said they are in favor of expanded service, but the surrounding jurisdictions should contribute money.

Roanoke Vice-Mayor David Trinkle said, “We need more transit. We need more routes. We need longer hours. We need Sunday service. These are a lot of things that we all hear about and we all want, but there is a cost associated with that.”

The commission has not yet established how much the plan will cost, or who will pay for it.

A final transit plan is due out in June.

WFIR radio on multiple occasions conducted interviews with staff which was used to educate citizens and encourage public participation.

Jeff Sturgeon at the Roanoke Times shared the news about the first round of public open house workshops with readers in his article about the Plan on October 23, 2015.

THE ROANOKE TIMES

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Public meeting set to discuss future of transit in the Roanoke Valley

Story

Comments

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Posted: Friday, October 23, 2015 3:37 pm

By Jeff Sturgeon jeff.sturgeon@roanoke.com 981-3251

The Roanoke Valley Transportation Planning Organization, which is staffed by the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission, is summoning area residents to a forum next month on transit.

The reason? “The Roanoke Valley is not like it was 25 years ago, nor will it be like it is today in 25 years,” the group says.

The organization is preparing a groundbreaking study of transit in the valley. Analysts have run surveys and crunched data, and on Nov. 5 the organization invites residents to speak up. A transit vision plan will result that will shape future investment in transit upgrades.

During earlier surveys, residents favored the primary public transit service, the Valley Metro bus system, and said they want more from it. In general, more transit services are needed. The public meeting is intended to detail when, how often, for whom. The broad topic of transit also covers walking and biking.

“The Roanoke Valley has a tremendous opportunity to create a robust regional transit network that will better meet the needs of people today and in the years to come. When planned well and with the right investments, transit can be a catalyst to a better future for people and for business,” according to event planners.

Two gatherings are scheduled for Nov. 5:

3 to 5 p.m. at Campbell Court, 31 Campbell Ave. S.W.

7 to 9 p.m. at the Brambleton Center, 3738 Brambleton Ave.

Information is available from Cristina Finch at the commission, 343-4417.

Matt Chittum at the Roanoke Times reported on a staff presentation of the draft plan to Roanoke City Council in April 2016.

THE ROANOKE TIMES
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Roanoke council hears plan for a better bus system, but wary of cost

Story Comments

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Posted: Monday, April 4, 2016 5:45 pm | Updated: 5:49 pm, Mon Apr 4, 2016.

By Matt Chittum matt.chittum@roanoke.com 981-3331

Roanoke City Council members got a look Monday at a new vision for the Valley Metro bus system, nodded approvingly, and immediately asked, “Who is going to pay for it?”

The Roanoke Valley Transit Vision Plan was put together during a two-and-a-half-year process by the region’s Transportation Planning Organization, a group consisting of local government appointees and staffed by the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission.

The report calls for a first phase of improvements that includes Sunday transit, extended hours, extending service to new locations such as the Department of Motor Vehicles office on Valleypark Drive and along Virginia 419, and increasing the frequency of buses to key locations like Virginia Western Community College, Melrose Avenue and Tanglewood and Valley View malls.

Subsequent phases call for keeping the system’s hub downtown but adding express lines and connections to the Carilion Clinic complex, Lewis-Gale Medical Center, Hollins, Vinton, Cave Spring and downtown Salem.

As soon as Cristina Finch, transit planning and programming manager for the regional commission, finished her presentation, the skepticism poured out.

“Somebody’s got to pay for it,” Councilman Court Rosen said. His question: Who?

“That’s yet to be determined,” Finch said. She noted the plan is a vision, with more study to follow, [including identifying funding sources](#).

Finch added that she believes if the region values the plan, partners in the transit system will find a way to pay for it. The Greater Roanoke Transit Co., or Valley Metro, currently receives an annual subsidy of \$1.8 million from the city.

That pointed Rosen to central issue: Only two of the 19 entities on the steering committee for the plan actually contribute money to Valley Metro, he said.

“If they’re going to provide opinions for what transit should look like, they should also be willing to pay for it,” Rosen said.

Finch said she had presented the plan to only one local government so far, but she predicted, “That’s going to be a common theme.”

It certainly was during the remainder of the discussion.

“This is not a problem that’s operating in a vacuum,” said Councilwoman Anita Price. “It requires a team approach.”

“The bottom line is, where’s the money?” said Councilman Sherman Lea.

Lea echoed a comment from Rosen that improvements to the bus system have become a political topic lately, apparently referring to a discussion during the Citizens Convention Roanoke City Council Candidates Forum on Thursday. Candidates offered up many of the ideas contained in the report.

Only one, Michelle Dykstra, offered a means of funding: increasing ridership, especially by changing the impression that public transit is only for low-income residents and encouraging young professionals to ride, too.

“I think people need to know, we are talking,” Lea said. “We are working towards a solution.”

Councilman Ray Ferris, along with Rosen, cited expanded ridership as a key part of increasing funding for the bus system. More income makes the city’s subsidy of Valley Metro go farther, he said.

But he, too, addressed the lack of financial support from other local governments.

A member of the TPO, Ferris said at meetings other members speak earnestly about the need to expand service. He noted that of the 10 new locations for suggested new service in the plan presented Monday, seven are outside the city of Roanoke.

But, “no one gets the checkbooks out.”

Yet, he said, for that to change, it’s going to take constituents in other localities telling their local government that it’s a priority.

“We can’t bully our neighbors into this. They have to recognize it something their constituents want,” he said.

Vice Mayor David Trinkle was slightly more optimistic.

“I hope a report like this will bring more people to the table,” he said.

Trinkle suggested that some aspects of the plan that are confined to the city could be tackled without outside help. And perhaps some

key changes — especially important new routes, for example — could be taken on piecemeal.

“Hopefully our regional partners can come to the table and experiment a little bit,” he said.

THE ROANOKE TIMES

roanoke.com

Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission includes Botetourt County in future plans

Story

Comments

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Posted: Monday, May 2, 2016 6:00 pm

Cathy Benson Cathy.benson@roanoke.com 540-981-3140

The Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission has included Botetourt in future plans. The Roanoke Valley Transit Vision Plan was detailed in a presentation to the Botetourt County Board of Supervisors at the April 26 meeting. Christina Finch of the committee gave a PowerPoint presentation.

Some of the key points include environmental sustainability, economic and workforce development and health as well. The future plan shows how Botetourt County will be connected by transportation to the Roanoke Valley in the future. Finch referred to it as a multimodal plan. The committee has been working on it for three years, Finch said. They have had 4,000 pieces of information submitted.

Botetourt Supervisors are interested in a park and ride as well as a mass transit system that could take residents between Botetourt and Roanoke.

Using Route 460 from Botetourt County to downtown Roanoke was appealing as was using Route 11 out of north Roanoke and Hollins into Botetourt County.

Looking further into the future, in the next 12 to 25 years, a proposed plan to increase the frequency of express commuter services and expand into the Salem area from Botetourt are among some of the long-term goals. The commission is looking for sponsorship and assistance from key business and stakeholders.

“Over time,” Finch said, we will seek more partnerships.” She mentioned all new developments should consider transit. “We need to support a livable Roanoke Valley,” she told the supervisors.

The Roanoke Tribune included advertisements for the November and January public open house workshops.

ROANOKE VALLEY TRANSIT VISION PLAN
Your Input is Important!

Please join us at one of the following public workshops, or see the website below, to provide input on the future of transit in the Roanoke Valley.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2015

3:00-5:00 PM Campbell Court - 2 nd Floor Downtown Roanoke (Enter at 31 Campbell Ave., SW)	OR	7:00-9:00 PM Brambleton Center 3738 Brambleton Ave., Rke, VA (Entrance off of Valley Forge Ave.)
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Both locations are wheelchair accessible.
For more information, visit www.rvarc.org/transit or contact Cristina Finch at cfinch@rvarc.org or (540)343-4417.

ROANOKE VALLEY TRANSIT VISION PLAN
Your Input is Important!


Come to this public workshop and review draft recommendations for the future of transit in the Roanoke Valley. Refreshments will be served.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 21, 2016

12:00-2:00 PM Campbell Court - 2 nd Floor Downtown Roanoke (Enter at 31 Campbell Ave., SW)	OR	5:00-7:00 PM Vinton Library 300 S. Pollard St., Vinton, VA (Entrance off of Valley Forge Ave.)
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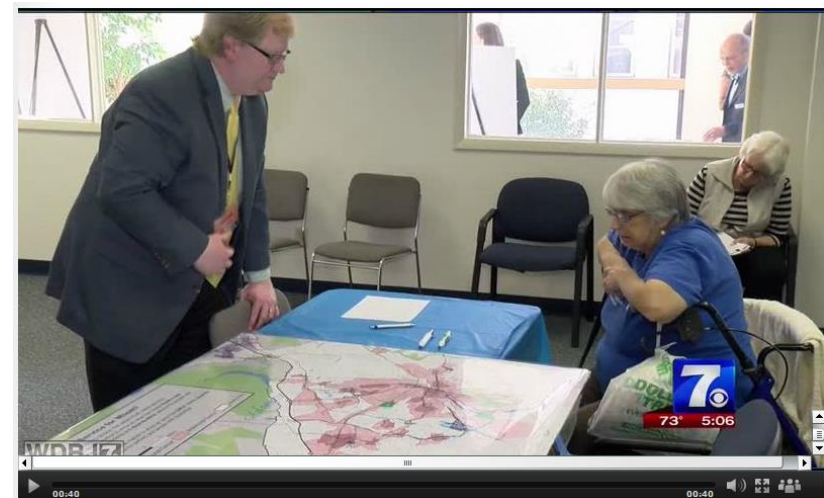
Both locations are wheelchair accessible.
For more information, visit www.rvarc.org/transit or contact Cristina Finch at cfinch@rvarc.org or (540)343-4417.

WDBJ7 reported from the first public open house workshop on November 4, 2016 and advertised the second event taking place that evening.

MUST SEE 

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Roanoke Valley leaders want your transportation input
POSTED: 07:00 PM EST Nov 04, 2015 | UPDATED: 06:06 PM EST Nov 05, 2015



Planners say they need your input to shape the transit services we'll see in the future.

TRANSCRIPT:

(What) services do you use? And what improvements would you like to see? The Roanoke Valley transportation planning organization is working on a new long-range plan that should be complete next summer. Planners say they need your input to shape the transit services we'll see in the future. Cristina Finch: this plan is really focusing in on how we make the Roanoke Valley a more livable Roanoke Valley, and in particular how can we use our transit investments to help us in the areas of economic development, health and natural assets. Planners held a public workshop this afternoon in Downtown Roanoke. Another is scheduled tonight from 7 to 9 at the Brambleton center in Roanoke.

WDBJ7 in January 2016 reported on the second public open house workshop and shared with citizens their opportunity to provide input through the online forum.

Leaders want feedback on potential bus changes



Christian Heilman, cheilman@wdbj7.com

POSTED: 09:14 PM EST Jan 29, 2016 | UPDATED: 01:16 AM EST Jan 30, 2016

ROANOKE, Va. -

Local transit leaders are looking to make it easier to get around the Roanoke Valley. Now, they want your help.

The Roanoke Valley-Allegheny Regional Commission is behind a short and long-term plan to fix some common complaints with bus service.

Clifton Stewart rides the bus and thinks bus service could use a little work, especially in the northern part of the city.

"I wonder why. What's wrong with the rest of the city? What about the DMV? I might want to go out there one day and get my license," Stewart said.

Ozell Jones, who also rides the bus, said, "The DMV is terrible because you have about a mile and a half walk either direction."

They're not alone. Cristina Finch with the Roanoke-Alleghany Regional Commission says people want bus service to reach places like the DMV.

Cristina Finch, Roanoke-Alleghany Regional Commission, said, "Folks all over the region have been saying they need service to a variety of different places."

"I'd like to see a Sunday route because I'm pretty much stuck on Sunday," said Jones. "I can't go anywhere. No distance."

For the past two years, the commission has been collecting data and information from riders. They created a six-year vision plan to expand transportation in the Roanoke Valley. Now, they're asking for everyone's help.

Finch said, "So at this point, we're trying to make sure we've heard the public correctly and that we haven't missed anything."

Their recommendations include new stops and Sunday service. They want people to vote and give their feedback on their trips now, that way, they might be a little better in the future.

The commission will complete the plan this summer and then hand it over to Valley Metro and Radar.

You can look at the suggestions and give your feedback by [visiting this website](#).

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WDBJ7's news anchor Kimberly McBroom in February 2016 did a special report on transportation challenges experienced by people with disabilities and highlighted the Transit Vision Plan and citizen's opportunity to provide feedback.

Transportation can be difficult for people with disabilities in the Roanoke Valley



Kimberly McBroom, kmcbroom@wdbj7.com

POSTED: 05:58 PM EST Feb 29, 2016 | UPDATED: 07:21 PM EST Feb 29, 2016

ROANOKE, Va. -

Heading to an evening movie, attending Sunday services, or even going to work might sound routine to you and me. For people with disabilities, it's part of normal life they often have to miss.

Many of them say a lack of available public transportation is putting more limits on them, than their disability itself.

Michele Via spends a lot of time waiting. A form of glaucoma severely limits her eyesight.

She often relies on RADAR buses to take her to a Tuesday computer class at New Vision in Roanoke.

Valley Metro and RADAR buses don't run on Sundays, or late in the evenings.

For Via and others like her, those travel limits are the equivalent of having a curfew.

"If there's a program going on, I feel like I have to be home by 8:00. I mean, I feel like I'm a little child," says Via.

Diane Decker hears stories like these all the time.

She's the leader of the Roanoke Alliance for the Visually Enabled, or RAVE.

Decker says it's sometimes a challenge just getting group members back and forth from their meetings.

"By the time our meetings over at 8:30 p.m., the systems will have stopped running. So, they can't get a ride home through any kind of public mean," says Decker.

Stephen Grammer is also a longtime advocate for the disabled. He has cerebral palsy, and is a graduate of Partners in Policymaking. Grammer's a regular at Roanoke city transportation meetings, and is vocal about his need for better transportation to get to more jobs and volunteer opportunities.

Roanoke Valley leaders say they are aware of the need for more access to public transportation, but like most things, it comes down to money.

The Roanoke Valley Alleghany Regional Commission is working on a transit vision plan that'll be part of a long- range transportation plan for the next 25 years

People can offer their comments and suggestions online. [Click here to fill out a survey for the Roanoke Transit Vision plan community.](#)

Along with public input, local leaders also have to look at usage and demand.

Roanoke City Council member Bill Bestpitch says, "If you're sending a big bus around to pick up one or two people, that's not really cost- efficient."

Bestpitch suggests that riders be vocal and persistent about their needs.

"If you only say something one time, somebody may think well, it's not really that significant. But if the same request is repeated, then I think that gets more attention," he says.

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Virginia First, WFXR News – Fox, also reported on the public's opportunity to provide input to the Draft Plan before it is finalized. On Monday, May 16 Reporter Paris Holmes shared that citizens have until May 27 to provide input before the Plan is finalized in June.



Region's new transit plan almost ready, Officials asking for public feedback

Changes are soon coming to the region's public transit system.

[Read Story](#)

POWERED BY



ROANOKE, Va

Changes are soon coming to the region's public transit system.

For the last 2 1/2 years the Roanoke Valley-Allegheny Regional Commission have been putting together a vision plan to expand bus services. Now, they want the public's final input to make sure they got it right.

The commission is asking for the input of transit users like Toby Shannon. Shannon has been riding Valley Metro for about 4 years. He's happy, but there are things he would change.

"They have one bus...Bus 91.. And it's always packed coming in and out...it's like they need two buses," said Toby Shannon, Valley Metro user.

From the outside looking in--it may not seem like a big deal, but for Shannon it's dangerous.

"They fight and fuss when they're jammed in like that and you have to stand up and hold the hand rails they've gotten new buses to try and accommodate that but when the capacity for the bus is 45 and you got 60 to 65 maybe 70 people on that bus line that's not safe with children and handicapped," said Shannon.

Shannon's complaint is not the only one.

"We've received over 4000 pieces of information from people," said Christina Finch of the Roanoke Valley-Allegheny Regional Commission.

For over 2 years, the Roanoke Valley Allegheny Regional Commission says they've heard the issues of commuters like Shannon. Now, they say they have a final plan in place to address commuter concerns.

"The recommendation in the transit vision plan includes expanding

the service area for the valley metro fixed routes, increasing the hours of services, increasing the service frequencies," said Finch.

The plan addresses areas like Hollins, where there are recommendations to add service that will connect Plantation Road to Green Ridge Recreation Center to the DMV. Also, according to the plan people may no longer need to ride all the way downtown to transfer buses.

"Downtown Roanoke will continue to be the largest place for transfers in the region but smaller transit transfer facilities can develop over time as new services are added to the regional system," said Finch.

Finch says there are short and long term recommendations, and what's required in each determines how long and how much it's going to take.

The plan also addresses the needs of senior citizens and people with disabilities. It should be incorporated in the next 6 to 12 years. [Click here for more information on the plan and to submit a survey.](#)

The deadline for the public's input is May 27th.

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6.0 PLAN COMPONENTS

The Roanoke Valley Transit Vision Plan includes the following components:

- ▲ EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
- ▲ PART 1: INTRODUCTION
- ▲ PART 2: BACKGROUND AND EXISTING CONDITIONS
- ▲ PART 3: EXISTING CONDITIONS TECHNICAL REPORT: SURVEYS AND DATA ANALYSIS
- ▲ PART 4: PREFERENCES AND DEMAND
- ▲ PART 5: RECOMMENDATIONS
- ▲ PART 6: IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES

The future holds many uncertainties particularly with regard to technology, changing workforce needs, and personal interests and desires. For these reasons, the Transit Vision Plan reflects the needs and desires of life as we know it today and anticipate it for the future. The intent is for the Plan to be updated when significant new information about the future unfolds or when enough of the Plan's recommendations have been accomplished or attempted and determined to not satisfy the anticipated need.

The Roanoke Valley Transit Vision Plan showcases information from the past, imparts current data, and presents trends to consider as transit services are planned, modified, and provided in the coming years. Ultimately, the Plan provides recommendations for how to restructure the Roanoke Valley's transit services to provide the robust system needed to support the region's economy and people's lifestyles.

The Plan's development process benefitted from the input of many citizens, stakeholders from many organizations, local and state technical staff, and local decision-makers along with technical assistance from a specialized transit consultant team. The

combination of many local perspectives defined the region's values towards transit along with how the vision and goals for transit play into the much larger vision of a Livable Roanoke Valley. The expertise of the consultants and regional technical staff enabled the community's desires and needs combined with travel and demographic data to develop clearly stated specific recommendations.

However, with growing uncertainty in federal and state transit funding sources, additional analysis on the prioritization of these recommendations with the region's other transportation infrastructure priorities will be needed. Moving forward, stakeholders should consider the creation of a working regional group consisting of leaders from local jurisdictions. The first priority of the stakeholder group would be to develop a regional governance model that would build upon the current structure for the Greater Roanoke Transit Company (GRTC) by taking into account those jurisdictions being served. Working in conjunction with the Roanoke Valley Transportation Planning Organization and GRTC, the regional stakeholder group would be positioned to oversee an operational analysis of the recommendations contained in the Transit Vision Plan, ensure their alignment with the multimodal transportation goals of participating localities, explore potential funding options and scenarios for implementation, and engage the business community and other transit stakeholders in future transit planning.