

# 2001-2002 VML POLICY STATEMENTS

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*The Virginia Municipal League has five policy committees. Each committee develops a policy statement that covers issues in its respective area. The policy statement expresses the agreement of VML's membership on matters of interest to local governments. The statement is limited to broad, long-term, philosophical positions, as opposed to positions that address immediate, short-term issues (which are included in the Legislative Program). The VML membership approves the policy statements at its annual meeting.*

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## 2002 TRANSPORTATION POLICY STATEMENT

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The Commonwealth's transportation system must move people and goods safely, conveniently and efficiently. VML encourages Virginia's leaders to:

A. Promote and enhance all modes of transportation including highways facilities, transit services, port operations, aviation facilities and railways, including freight and passenger rail service;

B. Promote fiscally responsible transportation solutions through the enactment of funding policies that foster and enhance economic development (including providing access to every region of the state), reduce congestion, and meet the needs of other critical service areas:

1. Congestion:

a. Virginia's leaders must move beyond traditional transportation solutions to alleviate commuter congestion. The Commonwealth's decision makers are challenged to develop corridor-wide solutions that promote alternative modes including highways, transit and non-traditional solutions (for example, live-near-where-you-work programs, telecommuting options (from regional centers and homes), flextime schedules, car-pooling and car-sharing programs); and

b. The Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990, while representing important environmental advances, has created difficult financial pressures on urban areas. Federal law should require that Clean Air Act mandates are contingent upon sufficient federal and state funding (for example, the Congestion Mitigation Air Quality enhancement funding program);

C. Sufficiently sustain (with adequate maintenance funding) and expand (with adequate capital funding) the system to accommodate projected demand; and

D. Recognize the vital role local leaders play in the development of state, regional and local transportation plans and work with local leaders to implement and fund such plans.

### RESOURCES

VML encourages Virginia's leaders to develop enhanced and/or new funding strategies for all modes of transportation including non-traditional solutions (for example, live-near-where-you-work programs, telecommuting options (from regional centers and homes), flextime schedules, car-pooling and car-sharing programs).

### REVENUES

VML urges the state's leaders to adopt any of the following recommendations to increase transportation revenues so as to address documented funding shortfalls (for both maintenance and capital funding):

- Adjusting funding sources, such as the motor fuels tax, to keep pace with inflation;

- Dedicating a part of an additional increase in the state's sales tax to transportation (presently, one-half of one percent of the state's sales tax is dedicated to transportation)
- Imposing appropriate increases in state transportation-related taxes and fees, including the motor fuels tax, the road use tax, the motor vehicles sales and use tax, motor vehicle license fees, and motor vehicle rental tax;
- Authorizing practical options for using long-term financing for major transportation projects;
- Authorizing at the request of a region or regions -- specific funding solutions (intended to address regional project needs). (Moreover, towns should be treated as equal partners in regional initiatives, including the authority to collect any tax revenues authorized by a region and in receiving a return of revenues collected.);
- Seeking equity among various road users by ensuring that trucks pay their share of road costs. (Moreover, the state and the federal government should strictly regulate and enforce truck weight, length, inspection, operation and driver standards. VML opposes state and federal proposals to authorize triple-trailers and also opposes allowing NAFTA cross-border trucking due to safety concerns. VML supports federal and state efforts to require anti-sail tire flaps, to lower rear impact guards (from 22 inches to 16 inches), and establishing standards for truck retread tires. VML also advocates for increased local influence when the state considers mitigating negative impacts resulting from excessive truck traffic. Additionally, VML encourages greater rail transport of freight.); and
- Specific as well as financially sound and well-documented public-private initiatives that serve specific local, regional or statewide needs (and that do not divert scarce state resources if such projects falter). (Moreover, VML supports legislation and efforts to involve affected local leaders as well as their constituencies in the review and construction of public-private initiatives. Such projects should comply with affected local comprehensive plans.)

## **TRANSPORTATION TRUST FUNDS**

The federal and state transportation trust funds must be dedicated to improving transportation and should not be diverted to non-transportation related purposes.

## **PHOTO-ENFORCEMENT**

VML supports legislation to permit all localities to enact radar camera enforcement programs as a means of improving public safety by reducing the incidents of illegal speeding (and the related and subsequent harmful consequences).

## **STREET STANDARDS**

Municipalities in the urban system should receive greater flexibility in regard to the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) roadway acceptance criteria. VML recommends the establishment of a streamlined process that allows the State Urban Engineer to grant waivers to the street acceptance criteria in regard to both pavement width and right of way width based on justification provided for by the local governing body. (Currently there is not such a waiver for roadways constructed prior to 1996.)

## **PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETINGS**

VML urges VDOT to work with local officials to modernize and customize its public information meeting process. VDOT maintains an overarching responsibility to ensure that their public meetings are: held at convenient times and locations; properly advertised (notices should include sufficient advance notice and appropriate documents/information); customer friendly meetings that include sufficient documents, plans, conceptual designs, and advanced technological images; focused on treating members of the public as stakeholders; and structured to permit adequate time and forums to address comments and questions, including providing follow-up responses (if necessary).

## **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

Smaller communities and regions require additional and enhanced transportation planning and technical assistance from VDOT. VDOT therefore has a continuing obligation to assist these areas, including by establishing equitable equipment rental rates and administrative costs.

## **TRAFFIC CALMING**

VML supports enhanced recognition by VDOT of congestion and safety in defining, planning and constructing transportation projects. (Traffic calming is a combination of public education and physical and engineering measures intended to reduce the negative effects of motor vehicle use, alter driver behavior, and improve conditions for users of public streets.)

## **ITS TECHNOLOGY**

VML supports the adaptation of “smart” technologies for use in all forms and modes of transportation. Local governments must be included in the discussion of the use and location of such technologies throughout the Commonwealth.

## **TOWN FUNDING**

VML supports legislation permitting towns that drop below the 3,500 population threshold to remain in the urban construction and maintenance programs.

## **METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATIONS (MPOS)**

VML believes that representation by public officials makes MPOs accountable to citizens. VML opposes broadening MPO voting membership to include private sector representatives.

## **WELFARE-TO-WORK INITIATIVES**

VML supports the coordination of the federal and state welfare-to-work program funding to encourage efficient and effective regional efforts and to promote solutions that help other segments of the population that are unable to drive, such as the elderly and disabled.

## **TRANSIT OPTIONS**

VML supports actions to preserve, expand, and improve traditional, fixed-route mass transit, taxicab, special commuter bus services, commuter rail services, ridesharing, slugs, vanpooling, and other contract transit services that are an integral part of the public transportation system.

## **RAIL TRANSPORTATION**

VML supports the expansion of interstate and intrar-state passenger rail service (separate from transit services such as commuter rail initiatives) in Virginia to help to stimulate economic development and tourism. Virginia's leaders are encouraged to work with surrounding states to foster greater interstate passenger rail service and to promote the development of the Northeast high-speed rail corridor and the New York to Atlanta corridor.

Although VML encourages greater rail transport of freight (as an alternative to increased truck traffic), state leaders and railroad executives must work cooperatively with local leaders to improve and enhance railroad maintenance, safety, traffic and conflicts (for example at at-grade crossings). State and railroad executives must also work cooperatively to provide greater access for passenger service (for commuters and tourists).

VML encourages the federal and state government to fund new passenger rail services without negatively impacting vital commuter congestion funding (including funding for local and regional transit services).

## **AIR TRANSPORTATION**

VML encourages the state and federal governments to actively work to develop and sustain comprehensive air service throughout the Commonwealth, the mid-Atlantic region as well as the entire country. Additionally, VML encourages the state and federal governments to invest in and deploy new technologies intended to improve air service and safety.

The federal government is urged to appropriate federal funds for airport infrastructure improvements at authorized levels and to develop a national airport access strategy intended to exploit local economic development opportunities. Additionally, the state is urged to compliment federal infrastructure investments as well as expanding state support for capital improvements.

## **PORTS AND WATER TRANSPORTATION**

VML encourages the protection and promotion of an effective port and water transportation system, including the development of alternative water transportation mechanisms to alleviate congestion. Specific emphasis should be placed on the need to deepen water ports and navigable rivers like Hampton Roads, the Port of Richmond, the Potomac River and Elizabeth River. Additionally, the state should expedite the deepening of the Hampton Roads channel. VML encourages the state to work closely with local governments regarding spoils disposal from channel deepening.

Revenue from the ports goes exclusively to the state. Port communities should be allowed to use a portion of this revenue locally to improve their port areas.

VML urges a significant study of the state's water transportation system, including an examination of maintenance issues. The state's leaders must address growing concerns about increased traffic in the inter-coastal waterways and the conflict between land and water transportation. Additionally, the replacement of draw-bridges with span bridges should be expedited.

VML encourages the study of a permanent water transportation link between the mainland, the Eastern Shore, and the islands of Virginia.

#### **ADDITIONAL FEDERAL ISSUES**

Compliance with federal regulations is a major cost factor for all transportation systems. VML requests the repeal of burdensome regulations/requirement/policies that discourage innovation, such as:

- The Davis-Bacon Act, which requires the use of prevailing wage (generally interpreted to mean union scale wages) for any project using more than \$2,000 in federal funds.
- Section 13 (c) labor provisions for transit which mandate a U.S. Department of Labor review of local agreements and offers unique labor protections to one specific group of public employees.