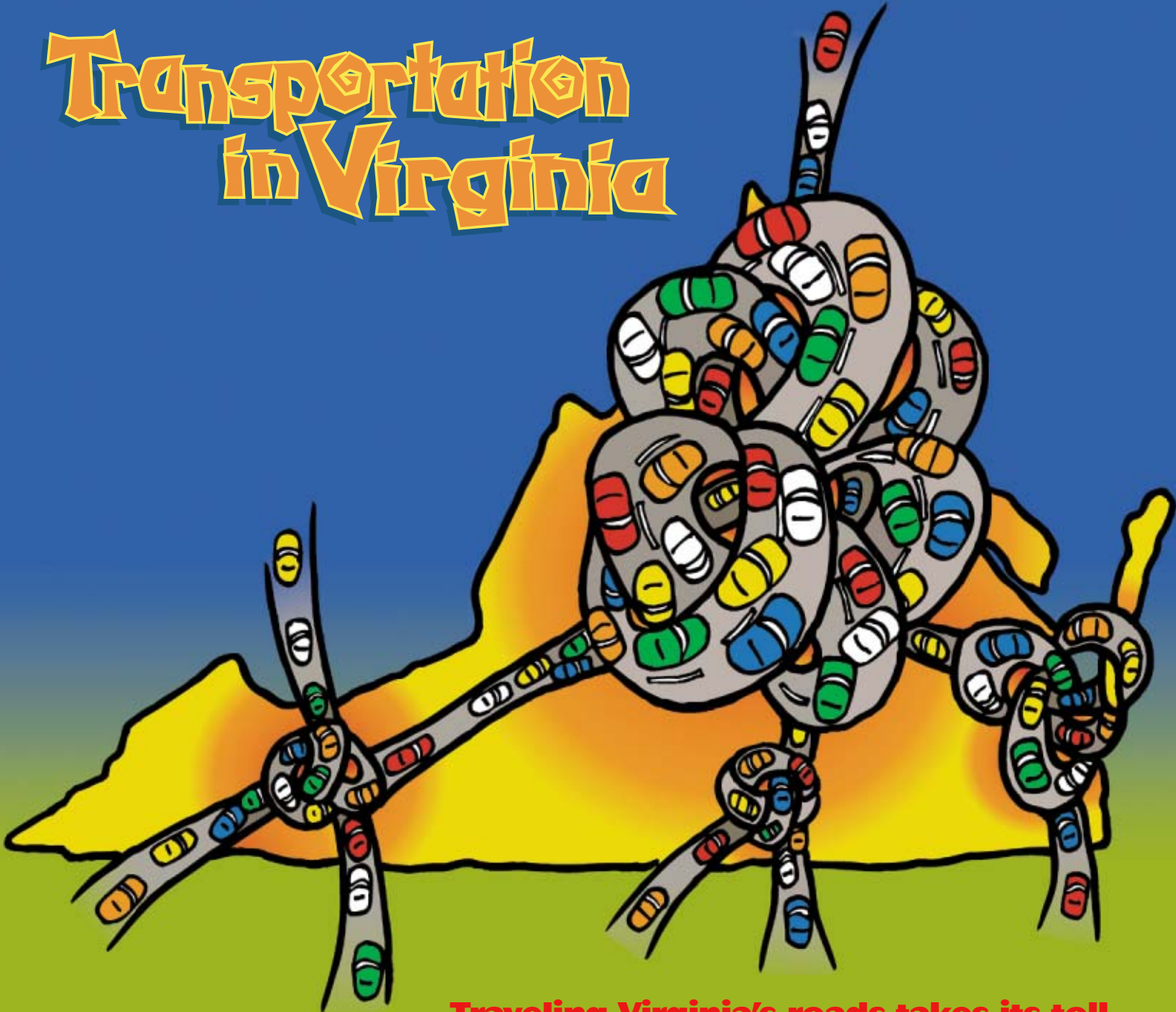


VIRGINIA

CAPITOL CONNECTIONS

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE

Transportation in Virginia



Traveling Virginia's roads takes its toll.

What is the #2 campaign issue in 2005?

Summer 2005

Restoring Trust

By Gov. Mark R. Warner

Every Virginian sitting in traffic instead of spending more time with family knows it. Every business owner who has to factor traffic into a delivery time knows it. Every government official who can think beyond the next budget knows it. We must find ways to fund new construction in our transportation network.

I fought for it through referenda in Northern Virginia and Hampton Roads early in my term. I proposed significant new funding as part of tax and budget reform in 2004, but that funding did not make it into the final legislative compromise. In 2005, together with legislators, we passed a series of innovative approaches and the largest one-time infusion of cash into our transportation budget. But serious dollars and stronger land use planning are needed.

But the truth is, we couldn't start there. When I ran for office in 2001, VDOT was an easy target and its problems were used as an excuse to not adequately fund transportation. Over the course of my administration, one of my top priorities has been restoring public confidence in our transportation agency. From day one, we have been committed to transparency in our approach to planning, budgeting, and project execution. By restoring professional leadership, accountability, and sound business practices within VDOT, the agency's record has really turned around.

As a result of a two-year study, the non-partisan Government Performance Project "Grading the States 2005" report assigned Virginia the "best managed state in the nation" status and made us the only state with straight A's across the board. And the former poster child for government mismanagement — our VDOT—was cited for the significant progress made over the past few years.

As the report stated, *"Four years ago, VDOT was completing fewer than 20 percent of its projects on time. By fiscal year 2005, it was on track to finish two-thirds of them on time and nearly 90 percent within budget."*

In July, as part of the continuing effort to bring transparency to government and the best possible service to the public, VDOT launched Dashboard 2.0. While its predecessor, Project Dashboard,

has generated attention from transportation departments around the country, this version delivers improved performance management software to the citizens of the Commonwealth. In addition to delivering information about construction budgets, schedules, and project management via the Internet, Dashboard 2.0 has added information about closures and detours, environmental compliance, highway safety, the status of engineering and studies, and the improved ability to communicate with senior managers about specific citizen concerns.

Additionally, the Commonwealth Transportation Board has transformed the Six-Year Program into a list of projects that are financially viable; it no longer reads as a political wish list.

Part of the clean-up was simply paying our bills. \$256 million of the \$848 million authorized this year by the General Assembly was earmarked to eliminate project deficits on completed projects — that means roads we're already driving on. As of July 1, we were able to write "\$0" next to the word "deficit" for completed VDOT construction projects. That's good progress since we started with a deficit over \$867 million. In fact, we passed legislation to outlaw the practice of keeping project deficits on the books. Ultimately, this change will give Virginians more mileage for their taxpayer dollars now that we can use new money for new projects rather than having it tied up in cleaning up the books.

Other investments this year included a fund to help attract more private capital to our transportation program, approaches to encourage more local governments to assume more responsibility for construction projects if they want it.

And because we'll never pave our way out of the problem, we created a first-ever dedicated source of funding for rail and transit projects.



Elect No Strangers!
(The Blue Book)

Available in August '05, the Blue Book contains all contact information for those running for state office in Virginia (Governor, Lt. Governor, and Attorney General plus 100 House of Delegate seats)

Call 804-643-5554 for information www.davidbaileyassociates.com
ashley@capitol-square.com

Virginia's Directory of Candidates for Public Office

2005

The Rail Enhancement Fund will distribute \$23 million annually, and when combined with at least 30 percent matching funds from non-state sources such as railroad companies, local governments, or regional authorities, will support improvements to passenger and freight rail projects, and continue to strengthen Virginia's intermodal networks.

Great debates remain. It's my hope that restored confidence in Virginia's largest state agency, a transportation project list that reflects reality, and a series of innovative new approaches have 'paved the way' (pardon the pun) for Virginia to address her critical transportation needs. Our economy and the quality of life of all Virginians depend on it. ▣

It's official:

The new name for the old Virginia State Library is the Patrick Henry Building, named for Virginia's first elected governor. The building has been renovated and now houses the Governor's office, Cabinet secretaries, and the Departments of Planning and Budget and General Services. ▣



What's the Word on the Square? By Bonnie Atwood

An editorial in a local paper once referred to proponents of railroad transportation as “train buffs.”

Huh? I have enthusiastically supported the train as viable transportation ever since I first rode one at the

age of six, but I do not consider myself a “buff.” A buff is somebody who constructs tiny models of trains and towns and people the size of fleas, can name all those old rail slogans like “Chessie never sleeps,” and rides steam-powered excursion trains every fall. Not that there’s anything wrong with that.

But I am not alone, and I am deadly serious, in regarding an efficient passenger train system as an essential component of our nation’s transportation options.

The National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP), a lobbying group in Washington, D.C., has a website that stunned me. If you go to www.narprail.org, and click into the flyer called “Nationwide Service is Threatened! Help Save Our Trains!,” you will see how many routes served us in 1967. You’ll see an intricate network of railroads. Look further down at the routes existing in 2004. You can reach only a handful of cities now.

Why is this so important? In my view, rail travel is the great leveller. People with all kinds of physical and cognitive disabilities can ride the train, some with little or no training or assistance. Elderly people can stop worrying about plowing into people with their cars, and just sit back and enjoy a pleasant train ride. Children can ride the train—the conductors are very skilled at assisting them. Environmentalists can ride the train and feel good about all the natu-

ral resources they are conserving. People who choose not to own cars can ride the train without questions about why they are so different. And yes, even people like me, who own and drive cars, but just would rather read a good novel than fight my road rage—we can ride the train in solid comfort.

Ah, but you say that train travel is expensive. If it’s not the high-priced tickets, it’s the high-priced government subsidies. Why should non-riders pay for rail that only the passengers will use? This is a specious argument. We subsidize highways and airports to the hilt, and nobody raises these questions. I, a regular train rider, don’t object to road and air subsidies. The groceries I buy, the dry goods that I consume, all come to me because of a good highway and air system. But I say, let’s subsidize train travel as well. Even if you can never bring yourself to board a train (and boy, are you missing something), you are still benefiting because all those passengers are NOT driving their cars or polluting your air. Enjoy.

There are many ways to support this wonderful system. You can join a group, like NARP, or one of the more local rail support groups. You can treat yourself and your family to a train ride (if you’re a NARP member, you can get a sweet discount). You can write letters to your legislators in support of rail as an alternative transportation system. Some Congressmen are all for it; others are going to take a lot of convincing. Federal funding is in grave jeopardy as I write this.

I’ve heard it claimed that trains are dirty (not true), slow (that’s the beauty of it), and late (this can be fixed).

When I was just six years old, and my mother took me by train from Washington, D.C., to Mobile, Alabama, I knew that train transportation was for me. Since then I have ridden more times than I can count, and always enjoyed it. Even when I rode from Long Beach, California, to New York City, a trip taking a full week, I didn’t want to get off. Nothing is more relaxing than watching the city lights whirl by from a lower berth.

I am in wholehearted agreement with Edna St. Vincent Millay. She said, “There isn’t a train I wouldn’t take, no matter where it’s going.”

Appointments

- Governor Mark Warner has appointed Virginia Department of Transportation Inspector General Gregory A. Whirley to serve as VDOT’s Interim Commissioner.
- Suzette Denslow has been appointed by Governor Warner to be his Policy Director.
- Robert P. Crouch, Jr., was named Counselor to the Governor effective May 3. He previously served in the Warner administration as Deputy Secretary of Public Safety.

From Shad Planking to the November Election

What will be the #2 issue?

- Education? • Environment?
- Public Safety? • Economy?
- Health care? • Other?

Submit your #2 issue to batwood@capitolsquare.com.

Kudos to Bonnie Atwood and the David Bailey Associates Website!

We won first place in the “Writing for the Web” category for the 2004 Communications Contest for Virginia Press Women (VPW). We went on to win second place in the National Federation of Press Women (NFPW) awards. These are very competitive contests; prominent professional women for all over the nation compete for these high honors.



Selling I-81: Losing control of our “Main Street”

By Rees Shearer

As his legacy, Alaska’s Congressman Don Young wants to build a national system of truck-only lanes. Young is Chairman of the U.S. House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, and Chairman Young usually gets what he wants. He wants to initiate his truck toll-lane concept on I-81, right here in Virginia.

STAR Solutions has proposed building the four new truck-only lanes along Virginia’s I-81, to transform I-81, paid for by taxpayers, into a tolled East Coast Truck Bypass.

Chairman Young put forward toll-based privatization of I-81 by STAR Solutions, with virtually no opportunity for public comment and without considering alternatives. This strategy would essentially privatize western Virginia’s most valuable public asset, I-81, for 47 years.

It’s hard to ignore the relationship between STAR Solutions and Young. In the last election cycle, STAR Solutions employees donated more than \$150,000 to Young’s election campaign, according to federal election campaign contribution reports. Virginia officers and employees of the STAR Solutions consortium donated over \$64,000 to Young’s 2004 election campaign – in Alaska. Who runs STAR Solutions? The Halliburton Corporation, through its subsidiary KBR.

In March, Chairman Young inserted \$600 million in the federal transportation bill to subsidize a demonstration project for his mammoth national truckway plan. Young says he wants to build his first truckway in Virginia, so his fellow lawmakers in Washington can see it.

Instead of maintaining competition between two or more potential private partnerships, or waiting to determine what transportation improvements the Environmental Impact Study determines appropriate, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) is negotiating a contract now with STAR Solutions. . . .

On the other hand, local leaders in the Corridor forged a remarkable consensus when 41 local Virginia governments and regional

planning commissions in the I-81 corridor, all passed resolutions supporting rail alternatives to massive highway widening.

Much of the Western and Southwest Virginia business community, including trucking companies, manufacturers, and tourism-related businesses, oppose the high tolls required to pay for the \$13 billion project. I-81 users would pay tolls for a lifetime. It’s hard to find any residents who support the STAR Solutions-Don Young project once they understand it.

VDOT reports one third of all fatal accidents on I-81 occur in only eight percent of I-81 lane miles. Fixing only the problem areas can be done far quicker and cheaper than border-to border widening as STAR proposes.

Gov. Mark Warner could stop VDOT consideration of the STAR plan. He could cooperate with Norfolk Southern to create a higher speed rail freight alternative. Such a rail plan would dramatically upgrade the rail line, parallel to I-81, into a “Steel Interstate”. Sadly, Governor Warner has not stopped the STAR-VDOT negotiations.

So Virginians must stand up now for ourselves. Insist on a transportation approach that does not place communities, businesses, families or the environment at risk. Demand improved safety, with true freight separation, rather than trucks speeding a mere rumble strip away from your family car. Actually, VDOT projects half of heavy trucks will travel with cars—not using truck lanes.

Rail is a safer, cheaper, and more efficient way to move the long-haul freight passing straight through Virginia. Rail improvements enhance our communities’ economic development fortunes without precipitating an asthma epidemic.

The interstate is our “Main Street.” Keep it free.

Rees Shearer, Emory, VA, is Chair of RAIL Solution, www.railsolution.org. 