

**-NEWS RELEASE-**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**VIRGINIA TRANSIT ASSOCIATION RELEASES TRANSIT FUNDING VIDEO**

**Richmond, VA** – Transit is the backbone of Virginia’s economy, attracting jobs and residents to the Commonwealth. A potential loss of state transit capital funding threatens our economic growth and quality of life. [A new video \(http://bit.ly/2fUq28r\)](http://bit.ly/2fUq28r) by the [Virginia Transit Association](#) (VTA) looks at the consequences of the looming funding gap through the eyes of four transit providers in the state.

An October [report by the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation](#) (DRPT) details a possible \$1.1 billion gap between state transit capital funding needs and projected state revenues over the next decade. These projections highlight the serious challenge faced by the Commonwealth in identifying long-term, sustainable transit capital funding. DRPT estimates that the statewide funding deficit averages \$107 million per year, growing markedly beginning in fiscal year 2021. That’s when state-of-good-repair needs alone would exceed available revenues.

The VTA video focuses on the contributions of transit to the economies of Hampton Roads, Lynchburg, Northern Virginia, and Richmond and the potentially devastating impacts from a decline in state transit revenues. Narrator The Honorable Thomas Davis Rust, former chair of the Virginia House of Delegates Transportation Committee and current member of the Commonwealth’s Transit Capital Project Revenue Advisory Board, notes that the looming gap in revenues could unravel the economic contributions made by transit agencies across the state.

“Once we hit the fiscal cliff, as we’re calling it, agencies will have just a couple of opportunities,” says Rust. “One, to cut back on service, cut back on maintenance, cut back on expansion or some combination of all of those things. Secondly, to raise fares for the users of the system, and that’s always difficult. Or, thirdly, go to their local government and ask them for a substantial subsidy. And, in these days and times, that will be difficult.”

“Stripping transit of funding will have a huge impact on our region’s growing appeal, particularly to the rising Millennial workforce” says David Green, CEO of the Greater

Richmond Transit Company. “Sixty percent of businesses across the Richmond region have employees that rely on transit to get to and from work.”

Were the Greater Lynchburg Transit Company to face a reduction in or elimination of state funding, “We would be crippled significantly. We would deal with an inability to keep up with the growth of the city,” says General Manager Josh Baker. “We would also deal with an inability to meet the current demands.”

A loss of funds in Hampton Roads – which relies on bus, ferry and light rail to get employees to work – “would have a significant impact on our regional gross domestic product,” says William Harrell, president and CEO of Hampton Roads Transit. “That will certainly impact this region and the resources of the Commonwealth. We have to remain committed to funding public transportation even in difficult economic times. We are a backbone of the economy.”

A lack of sustainable funding jeopardizes the ability of Virginia Railway Express to provide service to a growing population, says Doug Allen, the commuter railroad’s CEO. “Based on the planning and analysis we’ve done, long term we’re at risk. And, it may be shorter term than we’d like to think.”

The bottom line, according to Rust, is that a dramatic reduction in state transit funding will impede the Commonwealth’s future growth. Virginia’s ability to appeal to new businesses and residents depends on transit.

To learn more about transit in the Commonwealth and the need for sustainable funding, contact the Virginia Transit Association. VTA is a coalition of transit professionals from public and private organizations who recognize the value public transportation brings to individual mobility, economic sustainability, a clean environment, and livable communities. Visit VTA at <http://vatransit.com> or call us at 804-643-1166.

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