

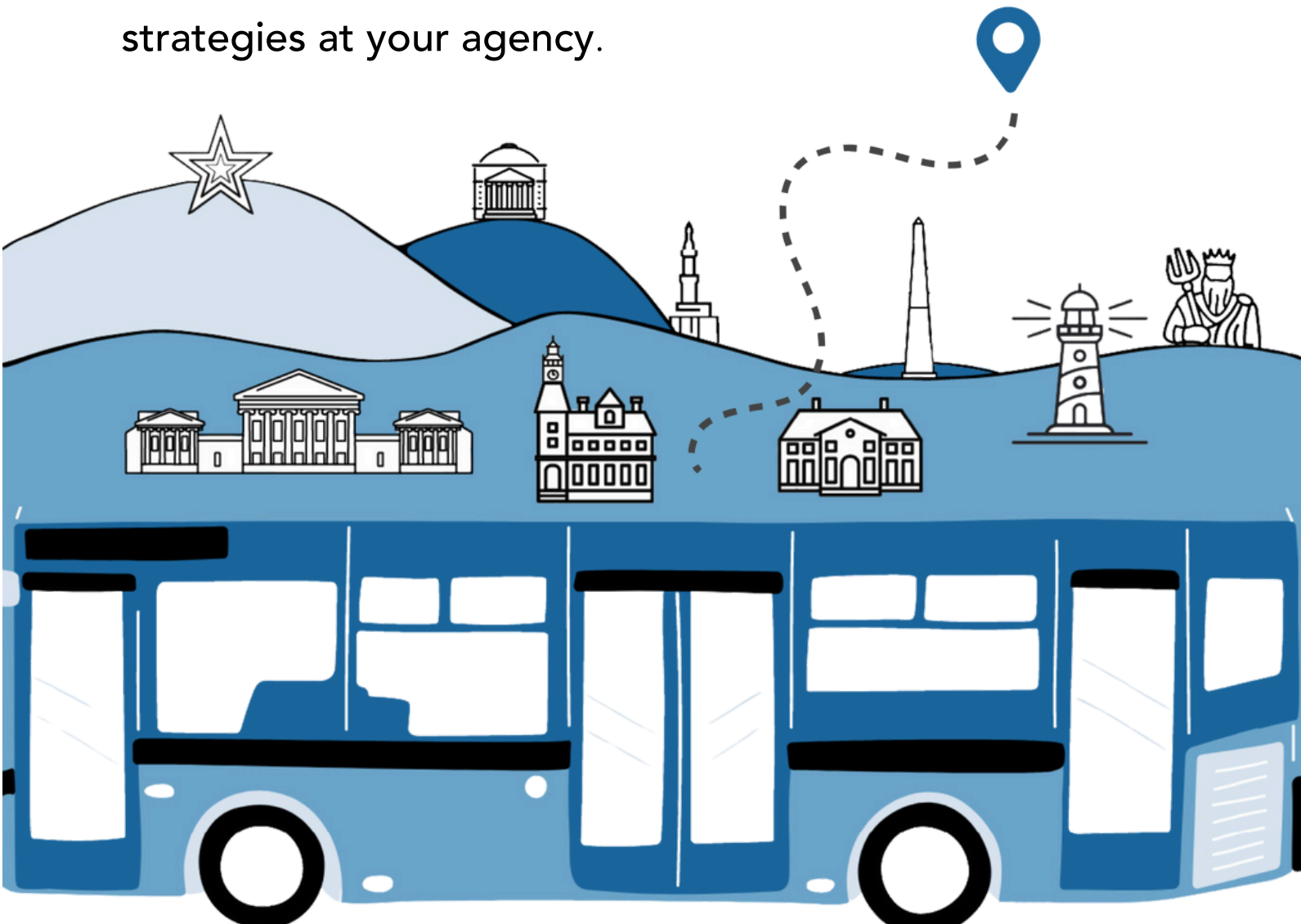


Virginia Transit Leadership Institute

Class IV

2026-2027

A nine-month program designed to develop leadership skills and drive actionable strategies at your agency.



Introduction

Overview

Virginia Transit Leadership Institute, a program of Virginia Transit Association, was created by the Commonwealth's transit systems and the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation to engage, elevate, and cultivate the next generation of public transportation leadership in Virginia. This multi-faceted program is targeted to mid-level and future executives who want a comprehensive understanding of transit from all perspectives and viewpoints across the Commonwealth. The VTLI selection committee, made up of your transit professional colleagues, will select 15 individuals from VTA member organizations to participate in the nine-month program.

Mission & Vision

VTLI's mission is to inspire the next generation of public transit leaders in Virginia by fostering collaboration and networking among fellows while promoting innovation and best practices in the transit industry.

The vision is to expose fellows to all of the different facets of public transportation to help them gain a comprehensive understanding from all angles with insight from professionals in the topic areas of expertise.

Fellows will engage in five full day classes over nine months during the fiscal year with an emphasis on leadership development, knowledge expansion, and skill enhancement preceding a graduation ceremony at the awards luncheon during the 2027 VTA Annual Conference.



How to Apply

Eligibility

VTLI is open to members of VTA and Community Transportation Association of Virginia (CTAV). This program's intended audience are professionals with approximately 3-5 years of industry work experience, including 1-3 years of managing tasks, projects, or staff. We encourage applications from emerging leaders in middle-management public transportation and planning roles at Virginia's transit agencies, public sector agencies, businesses, and nonprofits.

Only two applications per organization may be submitted.

Cost & Commitment

Once accepted, the cost to join is \$2,100 per fellow. The program spans seven business days over a nine-month period between September 2026 to May 2027. Participants are encouraged to attend sessions in-person across the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Application & Program Timeline

1. Applications are **Now Open**
2. Applications close **April 30, 2026 5:00 p.m.**
3. VTLI Selection Committee reviews and selects applicants through May
3. Applicant notification before 2026 Annual Conference on **May 20, 2026**
4. Fellows announced at Annual Conference
5. Program begins **September 16, 2026**
6. Program ends with award ceremony and graduation at VTA's Annual Conference in **May 2027**



Program Overview

Curriculum

The curriculum is based on five topic areas and includes various skill-building workshops, round table sessions, speakers, collaboration, and unique access to industry leaders and mentors.

1. Introduction to Transit

- a. Types of transit in Virginia
- b. Rural, suburban, and urban
- c. Transit background
- d. What will the future of transit look like in the next 5, 10, 20 years e.
- e. Innovative transit modes (i.e. BRT/light rail/microtransit)

2. Legislative Overview & Funding

- a. Federal overview
 - i. Federal legislative overview
 - ii. Federal funding
- b. State overview
 - i. State legislative overview
 - ii. State funding
- c. Local overview
 - i. Local and regional funding
 - ii. Transit operational models (city agency, regional partnership, etc.)
 - iii. Move to regionalization – how it impacts transit
 - iv. How to work with your local elected officials

3. Communications & Community Outreach

- a. How to speak to the media
- b. Social media best practices
- c. How to sell your transit system/program
- d. How to hold a successful public hearing
- e. How to engage with stakeholders

4. Transit Network & Service Planning

- a. TSP/TDP
- b. Network redesign
- c. How to plan a new route
- d. Emerging technologies, for example:
 - i. Going electric or zero-emissions
 - ii. Impact of apps
 - iii. Microtransit

5. Leadership & Operations

- a. What makes an effective transit system CEO
- b. Labor negotiations
- c. The other transit professionals: hearing from mechanics, bus operators, and dispatchers
- d. Human resources today/employee hiring and retention challenges



Calendar

Each session takes place at a different transit partner around Virginia to give fellows the full experience of transit around the Commonwealth. VTA will secure a hotel room block at each location for those who need accommodation, as well as catering. Sessions will be held on the 3rd Wednesday of the following months:

Wednesday, September 16, 2026

Wednesday, October, 21, 2026

Wednesday, November, 18, 2026

Monday, January 26, 2027

Wednesday, March 17, 2027

Wednesday, April 15, 2027

VTA Annual Conference and VTLI Graduation May 2027

Schedule

Each session consists of five 50-minute blocks and tailors the subject matter to the hosting locality or agency. Below is how each one-day VTLI session is structured.

Block 1	10 a.m.— 10:50 a.m.	Example: Intro to Transit
Block 2	11 a.m.— 11:50 a.m.	Example: Legislative Overview & Funding
Lunch	11:50 a.m.— 1 p.m.	Example: Networking & Break
Block 3	1 p.m.— 1:50 p.m.	Example: Communications
Block 4	2 p.m.— 2:50 p.m.	Example: Transit Network Planning
Block 5	3 p.m.— 3:50 p.m.	Example: Leadership & Operations

Following Block 5, the fellows may have the opportunity to tour our host facility including visiting their maintenance, dispatching, and operations departments.



Benefits to Fellows

Professional development and Leadership Institute recognition with a graduation ceremony and certificate presented upon completion of the program.

Opportunities for networking, collaborating, community-building, and professional visibility.

Form valuable connections with seasoned industry professionals and guest speakers offering different perspectives from transit agencies, planning commissions, nonprofit organizations, private businesses, and state agencies.

Gain hands-on experience with, and insights into, the unique strengths and challenges of each locality's transit system.

Catered lunch and refreshments are included with each session.



VTLI has helped me make connections in the industry, inspired me to step into leadership roles with more confidence and purpose, and expanded my knowledge in ways that continue to shape my decisions and approach. I highly recommend it to anyone looking to grow their impact and connect with transit professionals from across the Commonwealth.



Michael Mayo

Operations Supervisor
Blacksburg Transit

Application Questions

1. Full Name (Include post-nominals if applicable, such as PE, AICP, JD, PhD, etc.)
2. Current Title/Position Name
3. Organization/Agency
4. Work Address: Street, Suite # (optional), City, State, Zip Code
5. Best Phone Number to Reach You
6. Best Email Address to Reach You
7. Social Media Links (if available): LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, etc.
8. Your Direct Supervisor's: Name, Title, Phone Number, and Email Address
9. List post-secondary degrees. If none, select N/A
10. List industry-related training and certifications. If none, select N/A
11. Number of years working in the passenger transportation industry
12. List participation in transit-related groups and associations, as well as any positions held in those organizations. If none, select N/A
13. State what you consider to be your major contribution to your organization, transit-related groups, and associations. Minimum 250 words. Maximum 400 words.
14. Why is Public Transportation important to you? How can our Virginia Transit Leadership Institute help you in your career? Minimum 250 words. Maximum 400 words.
15. Please send a letter of support from your organization's CEO, Executive Director, or highest leadership role to diana@vatransit.com when you submit this application, from your email you listed on this form.



The VTLI is a fantastic program that provides fellows with a look “behind-the-curtain” at public transit initiatives across the state, an opportunity to network with fellows and employees from other agencies and ultimately learn and grow from each other. I recommend this program for anyone who is new to transit all the way to those who have been in the sector for their whole career.



Katie Fenimore

Marketing and Communications Strategist
Hampton Roads Transit



APPLY NOW

WE'RE HERE TO HELP

Please contact us if you require assistance filling out the application or are unable to access the form.

OR enter this URL

<https://forms.cloud.microsoft/r/ymbdfJeiHk>

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