



Commonwealth Connector

Newsletter of the Virginia Transit Association



VaTransit.com



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Contact: Danny Plaughter - Danny@VATransit.com | Fall 2022

Executive Director's Corner

By this time of the fall, I have finally shifted my attention away from summer and am looking ahead to the next year. As many of you know, I announced my intention to retire from VTA at the conclusion of the FY23 year – June 30, 2023. I have treasured my nine years with VTA and all the wonderful friendships I have formed with transit professionals. I brought extensive nonprofit management and legislative and policy experience with me when I came but I have learned so much about public transportation from all of you. Transit has advanced so much in my time here. Despite years of the pandemic, you deserve credit for embracing new technology, zero-emission fleets, a changing ridership and commuting patterns, workforce demands, and much more. You are transit strong and I have been honored to serve as your Executive Director.

The VTA Board is also pivoting to our Association's next chapter. At its October meeting, the Board unanimously voted to contract with Danny Plaughter to serve as the next VTA Executive Director. As Deputy Director for the past several years, Danny knows the needs of VTA as well as many of its members. Just as I did back in 2014, Danny will form his own business entity that will contract with VTA. He will hire a staffer in the spring to take on some of the communications and event responsibilities. Ideally, that staffer will be on board by the annual conference in May.

The plans are to keep the same office at 1108 E. Main St. in downtown Richmond so there will be as little disruption as possible. Danny and I will be closely partnering to ensure that the transition is smooth and that the work of the Association continues without a hiccup!

Change is often hard but in this case, it is my intention for this transition to be the exception. Danny is already a huge asset to VTA and that will only expand in the coming years. I am confident that I will be leaving matters in strong capable hands.

We have a busy winter on the horizon with the legislative session and then the annual conference in the spring. Your team here is ready for the challenges! We look forward to working with you every step of the way!

Gratefully,

Lisa M. Guthrie
Executive Director

Inside this newsletter:

VTA Executive Director Update	Pg. 1
Legislative Day	Pg. 2
New Chief of Public Transit	Pg. 3
Legislative Agenda and VTA Leadership Institute	Pg. 4
Conference recap + 2023 Conference save the date	Pg. 5

Join us for VTA Legislative Advocacy Day – Monday, January 23, 2023

After a 2-year pandemic hiatus, VTA is pleased to announce that we're back in Richmond for our annual Legislative Advocacy Day!

We start at 9:30 am for our issue briefing at the offices of VCN, the [Virginia Conservation Network](#) (701 E. Franklin Street; Suite 800) which is very close to the Pocahontas Building and the Virginia Capitol. VTA has built a strong alliance with VCN where we have mutual membership. They have stepped forward to join us in supporting public transportation as way to promote strong communities, curtail carbon emissions, and provide equitable transportation for all.



Virginia's State Capitol Undergoing renovations.

We'll provide a briefing of the background of the Governor's budget proposals, the backdrop of the current political lay-of-the-land, VTA's transit initiatives, and tips on how to navigate the day's legislative calendar. Guests will be on hand to offer additional welcoming remarks and share insights. Then we'll equip you with some tools and point you to the offices of your legislators at the Pocahontas Building.

By 11:30 am, you'll need to find your way to the capitol to be seated in the gallery for the opening of the day's session at noon. In the "morning hour" announcements, a legislator will introduce members of the Virginia Transit Association and ask you to stand and be recognized. Lunch is on your own at a nearby restaurant. Then it's back to legislative meetings in the afternoon or watching a committee meeting where you see a glimpse of the "sausage making" – oops! Lawmaking!



Photo credit: Richmond City

VIRGINIA TRANSIT ASSOCIATION

2023 Transportation Choices Legislative Reception
January 23, 2023 | 5:30-7:30 pm
Main Street Station - 1500 East Main Street, Richmond, VA

Featuring Down-Home BBQ by:

REDEMPTION BBQ

Proudly featuring Virginia wine and craft beer! Special bourbon tasting by **Bourbon Excursions**.

We ask that you **RSVP** before **January 19, 2023** to **Jamie Crawford** at **804-643-1166** or **Jamie@VATransit.com**

GRTC courtesy shuttle bus service from the Pocahontas Building starts at 5:15pm.

Sponsors

KEOLIS **GRTC TRANSIT SYSTEM** **Transurban** **Sonny Herriman VIRGINIA'S BUS COMPANY** **CTAV** Community Transportation Association of Virginia

Sponsorships Available:
Item: \$2,000 | Platinum: \$1,000 | Gold: \$750
Non-profit: \$500

Contact **Danny Plaugher** at **Danny@VATransit.com** to sponsor our legislative reception or pay online at www.VATransit.com/legislative-reception

Finally, starting at 5:15 our friends at GRTC will pick up reception attendees at the Pocahontas Building heading for the evening VTA "Transportation Choices" Legislative Reception down at Main Street Station. Crowd-favorite barbeque and Virginia beverages will kick off a celebratory gathering of elected officials, transit leaders, and colleagues. What better location for it than a train shed?!

Participation is free of charge for VTA members (up to 5 per agency) thanks to the generosity of our sponsors. Check out more details at vatransit.com. Registration is open now! Contact Jamie Crawford at jamie@vatransit.com or call the office at

804-643-1166 with the names of those attending.

DRPT welcomes Zach Trogdon as its next Chief of Public Transportation

Trogdon comes from Williamsburg Area Transit Authority

RICHMOND — The Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) is excited to announce that Zach Trogdon has joined the agency as its next Chief of Public Transportation to provide leadership to Virginia's public transportation programs. Trogdon, who comes to DRPT from the Williamsburg Area Transit Authority, begins his new position on October 25.

Trogdon will lead the evaluation, assistance, and execution of a \$4.7 billion portfolio of public transportation, commuter assistance, and congestion management programs throughout the Commonwealth.

Trogdon comes to DRPT with two decades of executive experience in the public sector, most recently as the Executive Director of the Williamsburg Area Transit Authority. While leading the daily activities of the Authority, he managed the progress of important capital facility projects through the acquisition of needed real estate. He also worked with the Authority's fiscal agent to establish a Capital Fund for the Authority to more effectively plan the acquisition, maintenance, and repair of major capital assets.



"We are thrilled to welcome Zach Trogdon to DRPT as its next Chief of Public Transportation," DRPT Director Jennifer DeBruhl said. "His track record of success as a public sector executive will be valuable at DRPT during a transformative time in the public transportation industry with opportunities to improve services for Virginians."

"I am honored to join DRPT as the next Chief of Public Transportation and lead this agency through a pivotal time in the future of public transportation," Trogdon said. "There have been many great advances in public transportation over the last several years and I look forward to working with all public transportation partners to deliver safe and reliable services that meet the needs of Virginians."

Prior to serving at the Williamsburg Area Transit Authority, Trogdon was the County Administrator in Charles City County and a Town Manager in North Carolina. He is a graduate of the University of Mary Washington, holds a master's degree in public administration from the College of Charleston and is a graduate of the Senior Executive Institute at the University of Virginia.

DeBruhl served as DRPT's previous Chief of Public Transportation in the newly created role. She was named the agency's Director in June 2022 after serving in an acting capacity since March. DeBruhl joined DRPT in 2016 and is credited with the development of Virginia's Making Efficient + Responsible Investments in Transit (MERIT) program to bring accountability and transparency to public transportation funding and implementing the Virginia Breeze intercity bus service in rural communities across the Commonwealth. **Article Via DRPT**

Editor's Note: The Virginia Transit Association also congratulates our long-time member Zach on becoming the Commonwealth's next Chief of Public Transportation!

VTA to launch Virginia Transit Leadership Institute

Starting next fiscal year (July 1, 2023), the Virginia Transit Association will launch the first ever Virginia Transit Leadership Institute (VTLI).

VTLI is a five class, nine month educational program targeted towards public transit and planning professionals across the Commonwealth. The program's purpose is to expose the class to all the different facets of public transportation to help them gain a comprehensive understanding of the topic from all angles with insight from professionals in the topic areas of expertise.

The participants will engage in five full day classes over nine months during the fiscal year and as part of the program they, and their assigned teams, will need to present on a topic of their choice at VTA's Annual Conference and Expo. The class will also receive their graduation certificate during our Annual Conference's awards luncheon.

The VTLI planning committee, **Charles L. Koonce Jr.** - Petersburg Transit; **Noelle Pinkard** - Hampton Roads Transit; **Stephanie Salzone** - DASH (Alexandria Transit); **Penny S. Newquist** - Loudoun County Transit; **Juwhan Lee** - Charlottesville Area Transit; **Michael Norvell** - Bay Transit; and **Todd Horsley** - Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation, are still finalizing the program's details including subject topics and speakers, but we anticipate that VTA and CTAV members, as well as DRPT will be eligible for the program.

We are excited to offer this program next year. Please stay tuned for details.

VTA's Legislative Agenda for 2022

We've had successful years recently in legislative achievements. With the competition for legislative attention and limited dollars, that is no mere accident. It takes advocacy from constituents to turn the wheels of democracy. It

means voting on election day. It means communicating with your elected officials all year long but especially during the General Assembly when decision-making is upon us. It means recognizing and saying thank you to those who stood with us on tough votes. As transit professionals, we are charged with speaking for those who rely on our services – the workers who need the bus to get to the job, the college student who commutes to school, the elderly who can no longer drive...They need us to be their voice.

VTA has finalized our agenda for our 2023 General Assembly program. Some of the items indicate what we will support while others clearly point to what we must oppose. A few illustrate the initiatives on which VTA will lead. The agenda is posted on vatransit.com under the Member Center tab, click on Legislative Watch. (Member login is required. Contact Danny@vatransit.com for help.)

We ask you to contact your Delegate and your Senator in November or December if possible to ensure you have some time to chat with them about legislative priorities before the hectic time in Richmond. If you would like to discuss the agenda, please don't hesitate to contact Lisa. Links to Virginia General Assembly website – [Members and Session](#).

The General Assembly convenes on Wednesday, January 11, 2023.

VTA Needs YOU!

We value your input and your involvement! Please complete the Member Engagement Survey and return to lguthrie@img-llc.net today!

Membership Survey can be found online at:

https://vatransit.starchapter.com/images/8_VTA_FY23_Member_Engagement_Survey.pdf

VTA 2022 Annual Conference & Bus Expo and 2023 Annual Conference & Expo Save the Date

Thank you once again for everyone who attended, exhibited, and sponsored our 45th Anniversary Annual Conference and Bus Expo in Roanoke, Virginia. Hosting two annual conferences in one fiscal year (which included our September 2021 Annual Conference in Tysons Corner) was a large undertaking, so we also want to thank all of our speakers and panelist who made our Conferences educational and informative, as well as our staff and volunteers for working overtime to put together two great events.

We also want to thank all the award winners from our 2022 Annual Conference and Bus Expo:

Exceptional Safety Award:

Bay Transit - David Fols

Community Program Award:

Large Transit System | OmniRide - 360 Degree Outreach

Small Transit System | Fredericksburg Regional Transit - Travel Training Program

Transit Marketing Award:

Large Transit System | NVTC - Moving Forward Together

Small Transit System | Charlottesville Area Transit - Meet the Team

Honorable Mention | WMATA - Doing Our Part

Special Marketing & Community Outreach Award:

DASH - New DASH Network

Helen Poore Award:

WMATA - Paul Wiedefeld

Employee Unsung Hero Awards:

- Bay Transit - Michael Shackelford
- DASH - Jovan Jones
- Hampton Roads Transit - Theresa Petrowicz

We also want to ask everyone to mark your calendars and save the dates for our exciting **2023 Annual Conference & Expo** in **Virginia Beach** on **May 23-24, 2023!** Our expo space is right on the Virginia Beach Board Walk and it's going to be a great event.

More information to follow, but please check VAtransit.com/AnnualConference2023 in December for information on the Conference.

