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# Rail and Transit Update

Virginia Association of Counties- August 19, 2021

Jennifer Mitchell, Director  
Department of Rail and Public Transportation



# State of Rail and Transit in the Commonwealth

- 2020 Omnibus Bill **increased funding** and created a **streamlined allocation model**
- **Commonwealth Rail Fund** dedicates 93 percent of rail revenues to the **Virginia Passenger Rail Authority**
- **Transforming Rail in Virginia** initiative expands passenger rail and includes a new **Long Bridge** between DC and VA
- **Dedicated Funding** provided to commuter rail and large transit systems
  - WMATA Capital Fund
  - Commuter Rail Operating and Capital Fund
  - Central Virginia Transportation Authority
  - Hampton Roads Regional Transit Fund



# State of Rail and Transit in the Commonwealth

- **Transit Ridership Incentive Program (TRIP)** dedicated funding to zero fare programs and regional routes
- 2018 MERIT reforms brought **greater accountability and transparency** to DRPT funding programs
- New **innovations and technology pilots** enhanced the transit and rail industry
- **Toll revenues (I-66, I-395/95) and interstate funding (I-81)** set aside for transit and rail projects



# State of Transit in the Commonwealth

- Pre-pandemic, transit services and ridership were **growing** throughout the Commonwealth
  - **26 transit agencies** reported ridership increases through February 2020

Mode	FY19 (July '18 – Feb '19)	FY20 (July '19 – Feb '20)	% Change
Heavy Rail	58,778,997	61,469,907	+4.6%
Bus	49,033,235	49,060,605	+0.1%
Paratransit	1,013,218	1,005,736	-0.7%
Commuter Rail	2,811,187	2,994,111	+6.5%
Light Rail	958,534	867,388	-9.5%
Ferryboat	181,939	173,685	-8.0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>112,777,110</b>	<b>115,571,432</b>	<b>+2.5%</b>

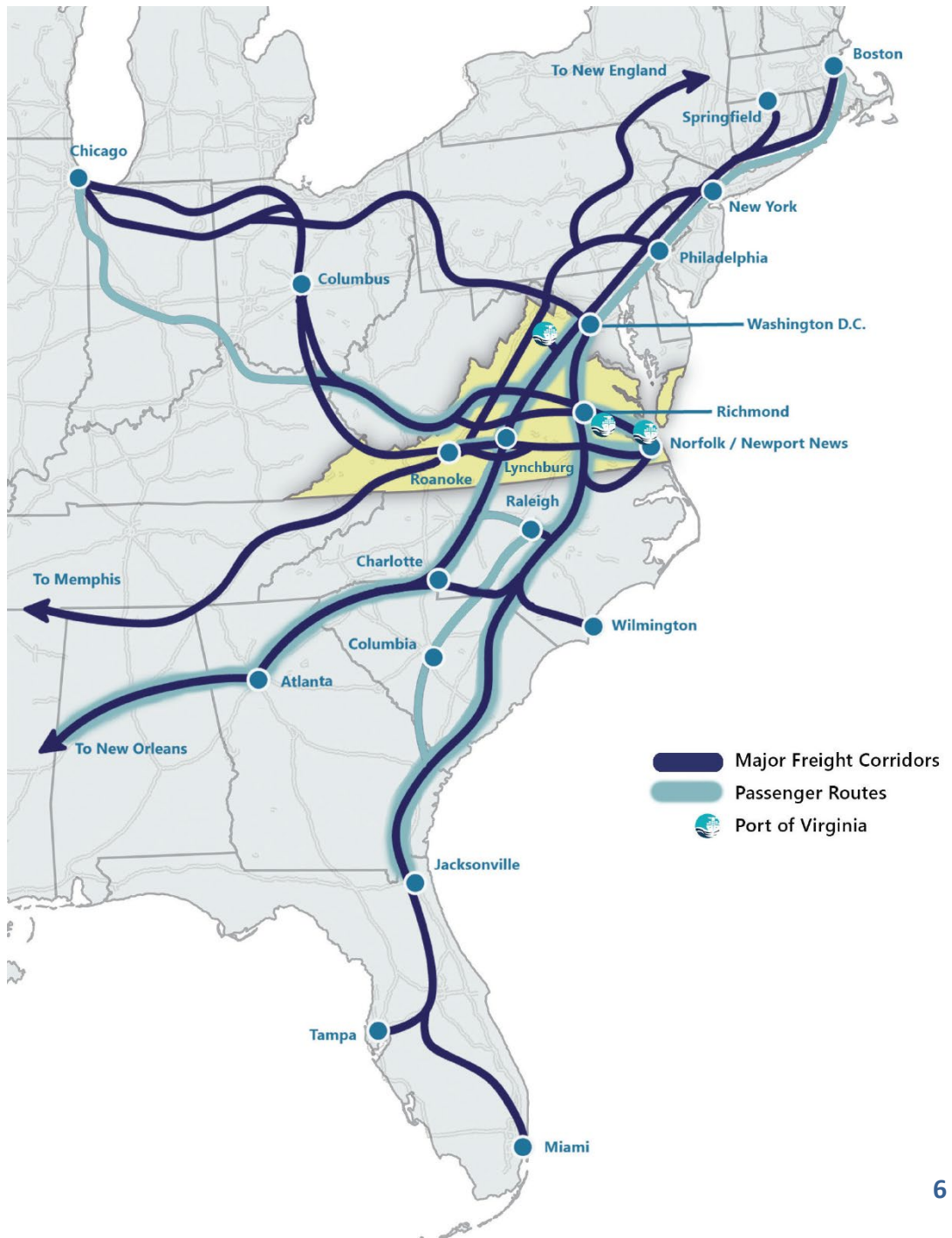
# State of Passenger Rail in the Commonwealth

- Like transit, pre-pandemic passenger rail ridership was **growing** throughout the Commonwealth

Route	FY19 (July '18 – Feb '19)	FY20 (July '19 – Feb '20)	% Change
Roanoke-Washington	137,685	152,644	+10.9%
Newport News-Washington	217,915	229,427	+5.3%
Norfolk-Washington	103,085	203,672	+97.6%
Richmond-Washington	101,309	75,561	-25.4%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>559,994</b>	<b>687,633</b>	<b>+22.8%</b>

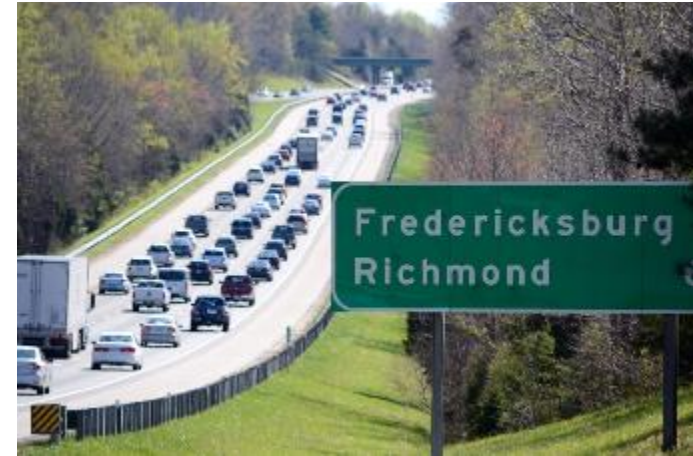
- A second Norfolk daily roundtrip started on March 4, 2019. Therefore, Norfolk service had a significant increase while Richmond service saw a decrease

# Virginia: Center of the East Coast Rail Network



# Today's Constraints

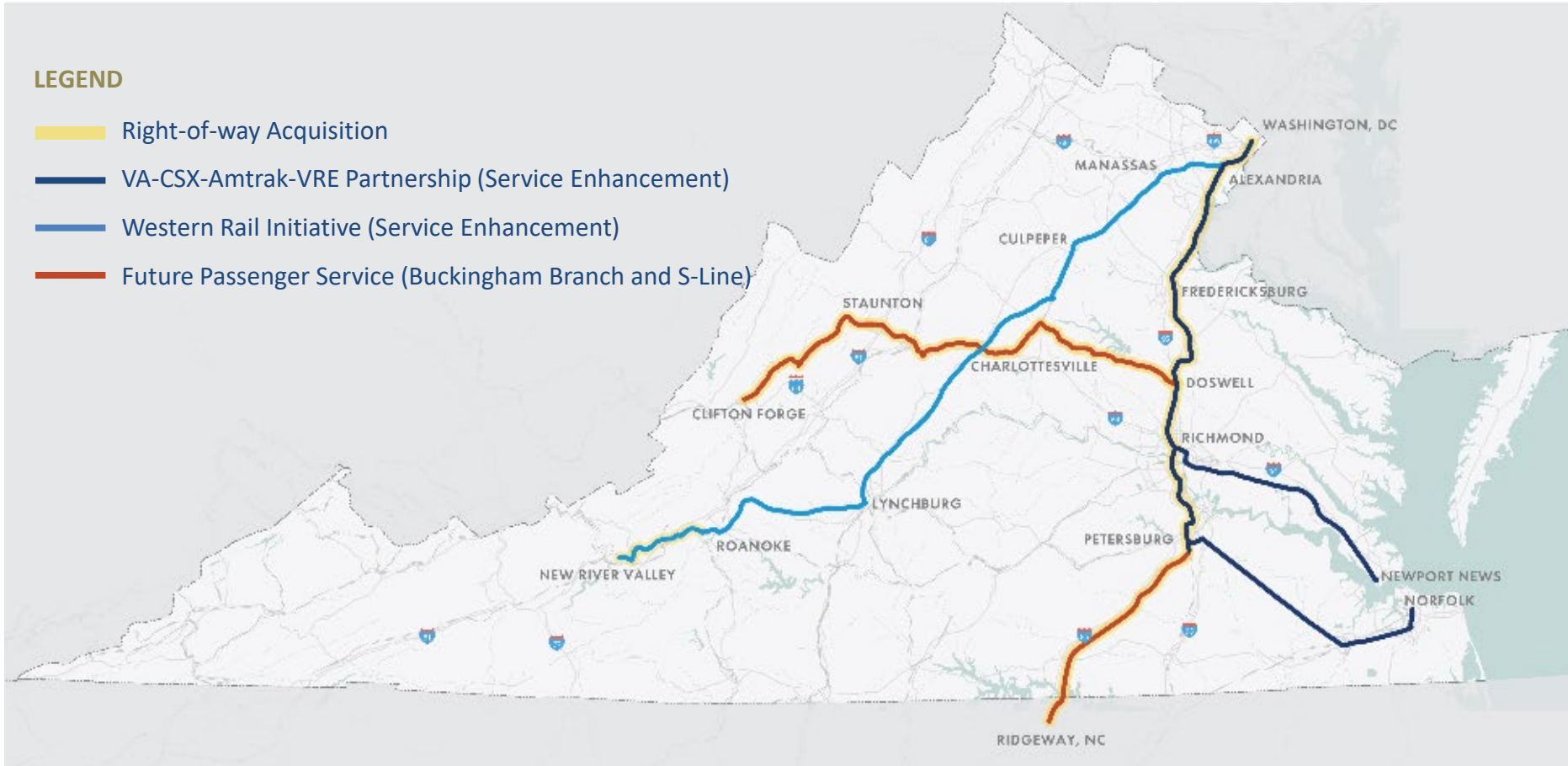
- **Virginia's interstate congestion is growing at an unsustainable pace**
  - I-95 from Fairfax County to Fredericksburg, is the most congested stretch of highway in the U.S.
  - Vehicle miles traveled is forecasted to reach 100 billion by 2040 (15% increase)
- **Cost of Adding one Lane to I-95 between I-495 and Thornburg: \$12.6 Billion**
  - Within 10 years, congestion would be worse than today's conditions
- **Passenger Rail cannot grow due to bottleneck between VA and DC**
  - Long Bridge over the Potomac River is at 98% capacity during peak hours
- **The Port of Virginia is increasing capacity by 40%, however, rail will need to move 45% of freight by 2040 (up from 37% today)**



# Transforming Rail in Virginia

## LEGEND

- Right-of-way Acquisition
- VA-CSX-Amtrak-VRE Partnership (Service Enhancement)
- Western Rail Initiative (Service Enhancement)
- Future Passenger Service (Buckingham Branch and S-Line)





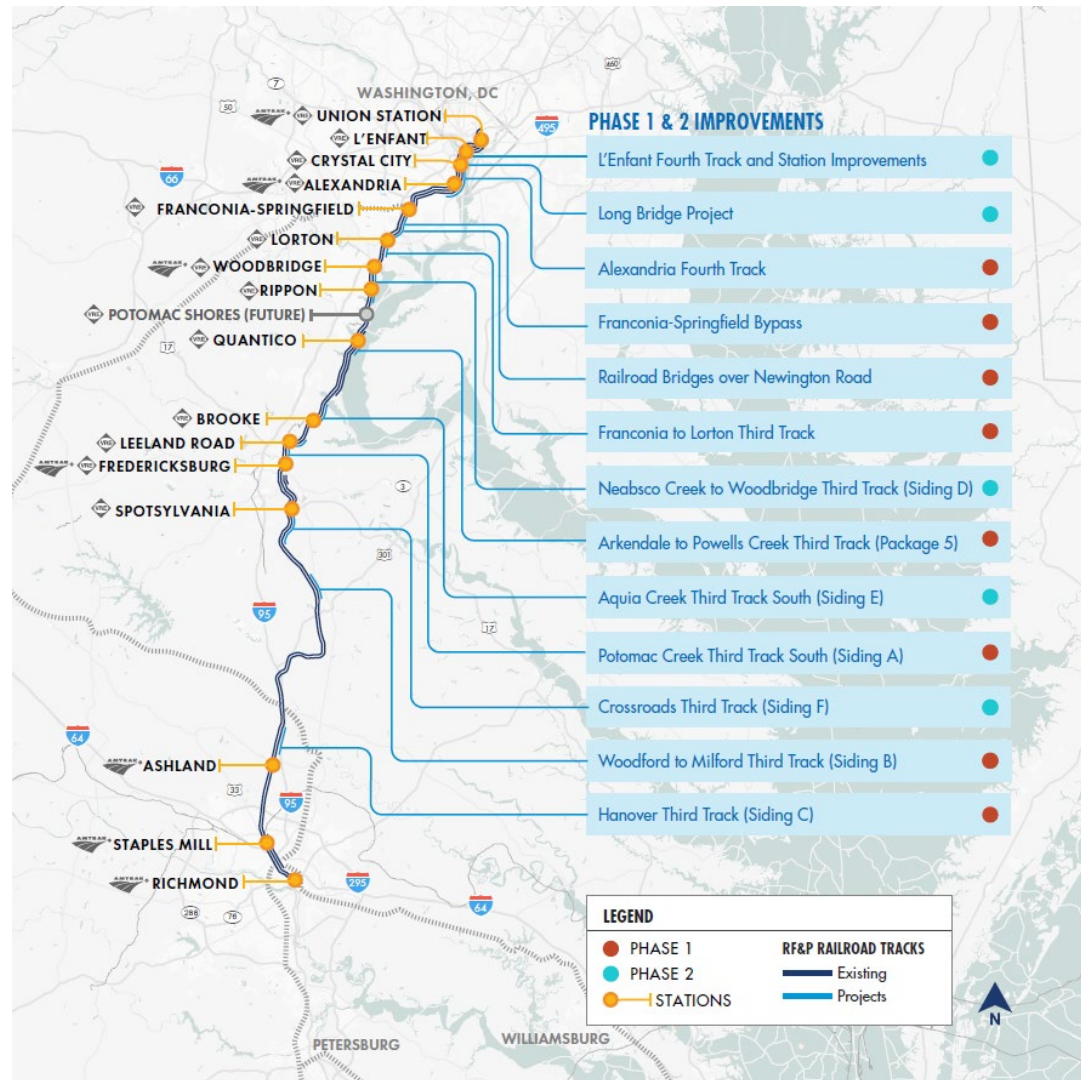
# VA-Amtrak-CSX-VRE Initiative

- Doubles Virginia-supported Amtrak service between Washington, DC, and Richmond, resulting in near-hourly service in this corridor
- Increases Amtrak service to Newport News and Norfolk
- Increases VRE service by more than 60 percent including the addition of late night and weekend service



# VA-Amtrak-CSX-VRE Initiative

- Acquire approximately half of the railroad right-of-way and existing rail infrastructure in the RF&P Corridor
- Construct infrastructure projects including 37 miles of new track and the new Long Bridge
- Develop a two-track passenger corridor from Washington to Petersburg with an exception for Ashland and downtown Richmond
- Future phases advance the path to full separation of freight and passenger service between Washington and Richmond



# The Long Bridge Project

- Current bridge and tracks are owned by CSX
- Project is a 1.5-mile corridor; includes a new, 2-track bridge over the Potomac River and 4th track in DC into Union Station
- Includes 5 additional bridges over GW Parkway, I-395, 11th Street, Washington Channel and Ohio Drive
- Estimated project cost: \$1.9B
  - Virginia will own the new bridge and track dedicated passenger rail



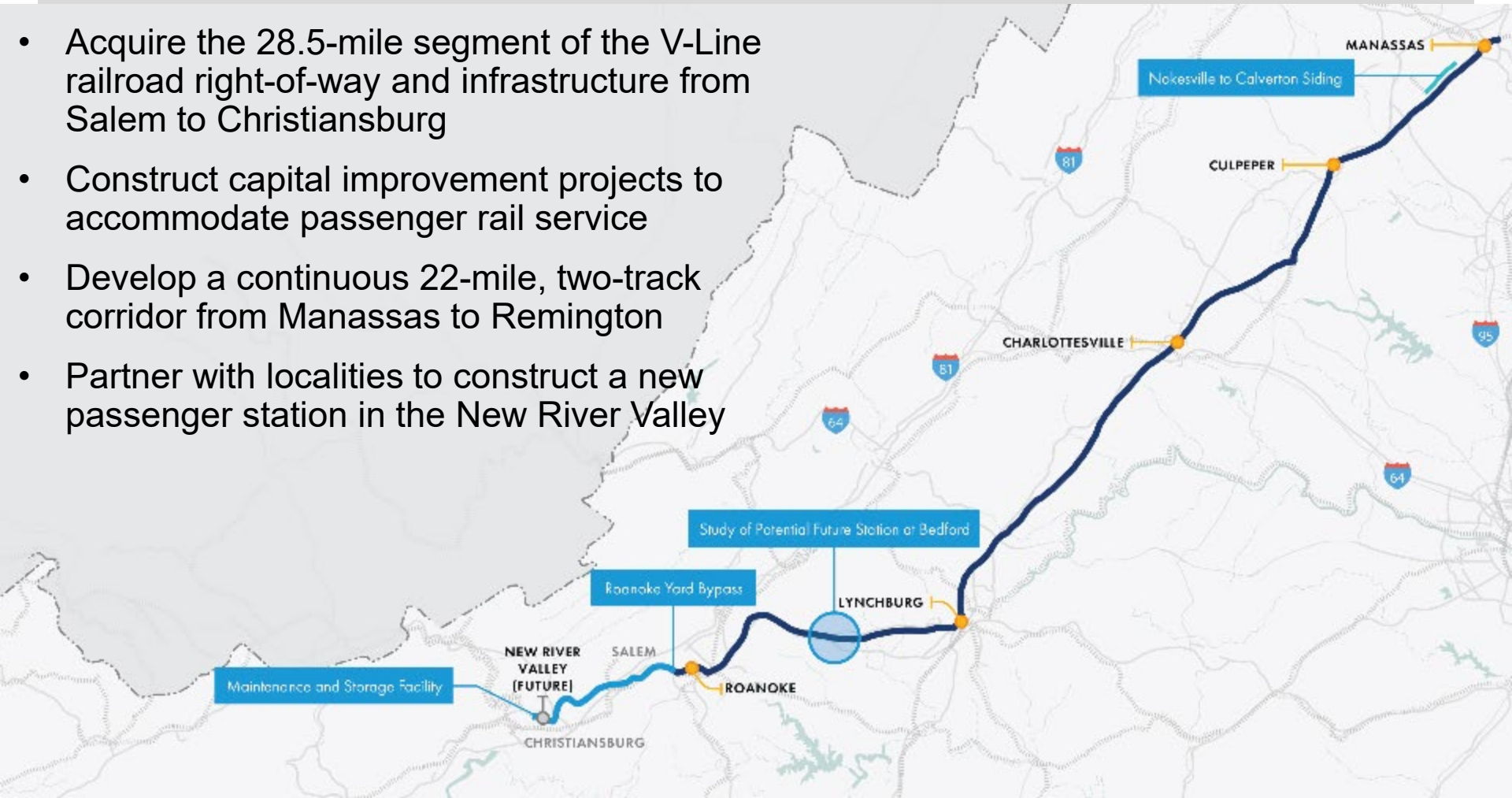
# Western Rail Initiative

- Doubles Amtrak service from Washington to Roanoke (2022)
- Extends Amtrak service from Roanoke to New River Valley (2025)
- Addresses bottlenecks to improve freight and passenger reliability
- Studies potential for a future station in Bedford, subject to future funding availability



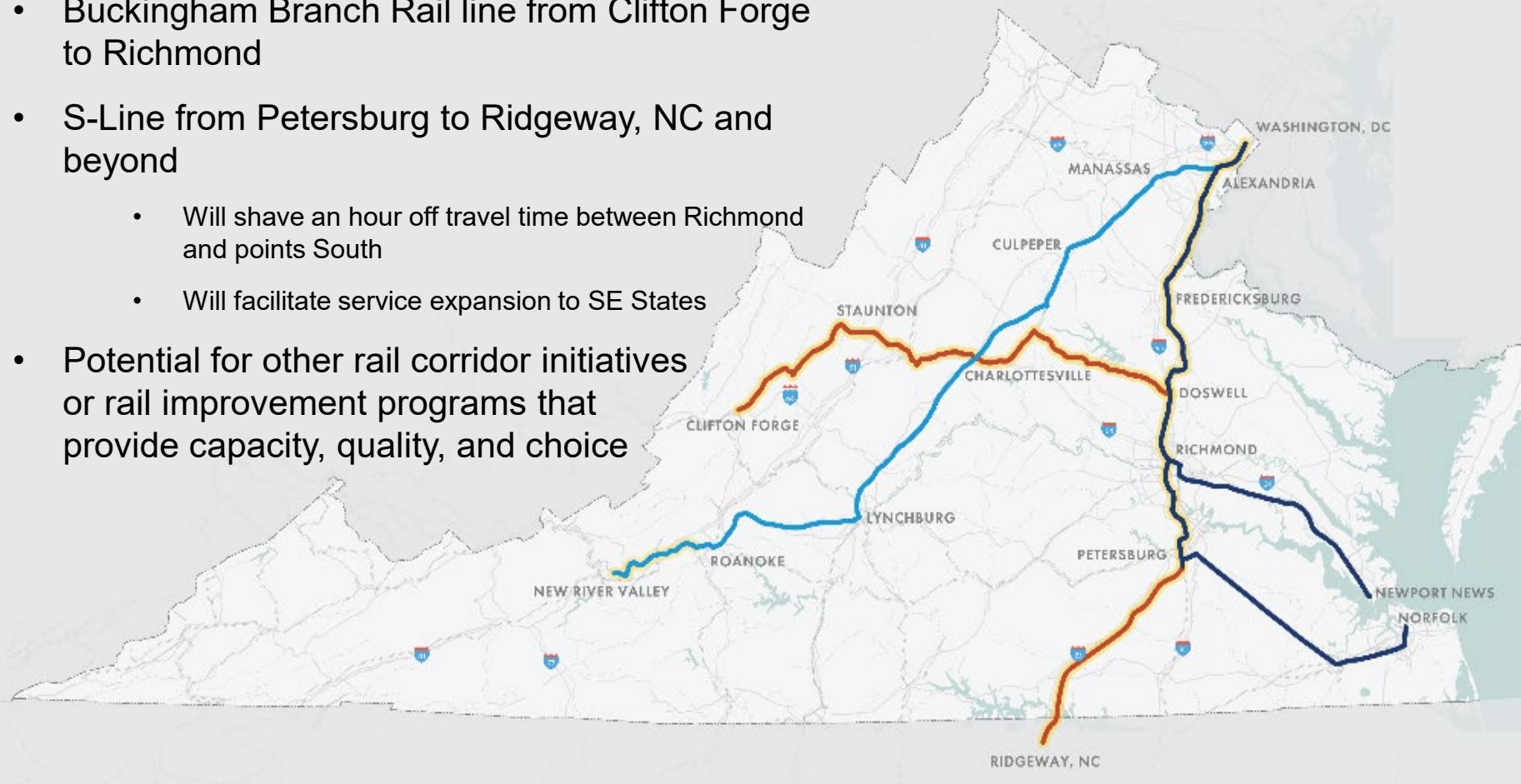
# Western Rail Initiative

- Acquire the 28.5-mile segment of the V-Line railroad right-of-way and infrastructure from Salem to Christiansburg
- Construct capital improvement projects to accommodate passenger rail service
- Develop a continuous 22-mile, two-track corridor from Manassas to Remington
- Partner with localities to construct a new passenger station in the New River Valley



# Future Initiatives

- Buckingham Branch Rail line from Clifton Forge to Richmond
- S-Line from Petersburg to Ridgeway, NC and beyond
  - Will shave an hour off travel time between Richmond and points South
  - Will facilitate service expansion to SE States
- Potential for other rail corridor initiatives or rail improvement programs that provide capacity, quality, and choice



# FY22 SYIP Transit Highlights



- **Statewide Operating Assistance**

- Offset a portion (20-30%) of agency's operating expenses in a typical year
- Transit performance metrics utilized to allocate operating assistance have varied greatly across the state (ridership, service levels)
- Carryforward performance data utilized to calculate operating assistance for FY21 (pre-pandemic) for FY22
- Provide 2% increase in state transit operating assistance program

- **Statewide Capital Assistance**

- Focus on state of good repair/minor enhancement needs and vehicle purchases delayed due to pandemic
- Purchase of 394 transit vehicles
  - 152 diesel buses
  - 21 electric buses



# COVID-19 Research Demonstration Grant

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- DRPT received FTA funding to support the creation of a comprehensive COVID relief toolkit
  - **\$2M for transit recovery marketing**
    - DRPT will receive proposals for mid-cycle applications
  - **Statewide marketing campaign to be released in Fall 2021**
    - Provides a unified message to most appropriately attract riders back
    - Reiterates the presence of new safety measures
    - Provides explanation on why public transportation is a safe and viable option
  - **Strategies Handbook to be released in September 2021**
    - Will provide necessary information for transit agencies on tactics to mitigate risk
      - Tailoring options
      - Limiting vehicle capacities
      - Heightening sanitation efforts



# Technology in Transit

- **VW Mitigation Trust Funds**

- FY22: \$7.8M allocation leveraged with transit capital
- Final year of three year \$16.7M partnership with DRPT & DEQ
- Replacement vehicles prioritized through MERIT Process
  - Greater Roanoke Transit Company
  - Blacksburg Transit
  - Fairfax County

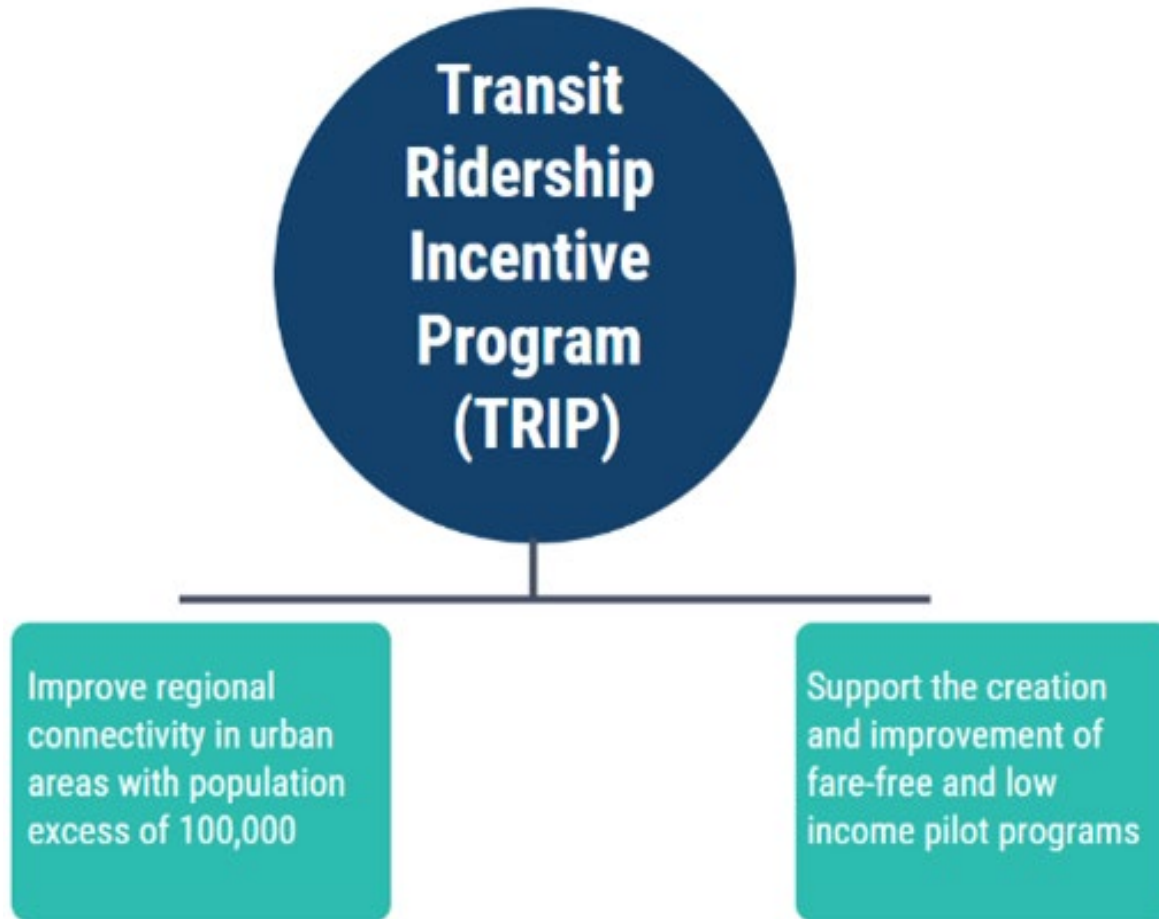


- **Microtransit Deployment Initiative**

- Funded in part through FTA Integrated Mobility Innovation Grant and Virginia's Innovation Technology Transportation Fund (ITTF)
- Will handle dispatch, assign pickup location, and route vehicles allowing multiple riders to share a single vehicle
- Pilots- Bay Transit (Bay Express) & Mountain Empire Older Citizens (METGo)



# Transit Ridership Incentive Program



- **FY22:**
  - \$10M in 2021 Transportation Initiative Funding dedicated for Zero-Fare Pilots
  - \$3.6M of regular TRIP funding must be used for congestion mitigation projects
- **Beyond FY22:**
  - Up to 25% annually can be utilized for Zero-Fare/Low Income projects

# Virginia Breeze

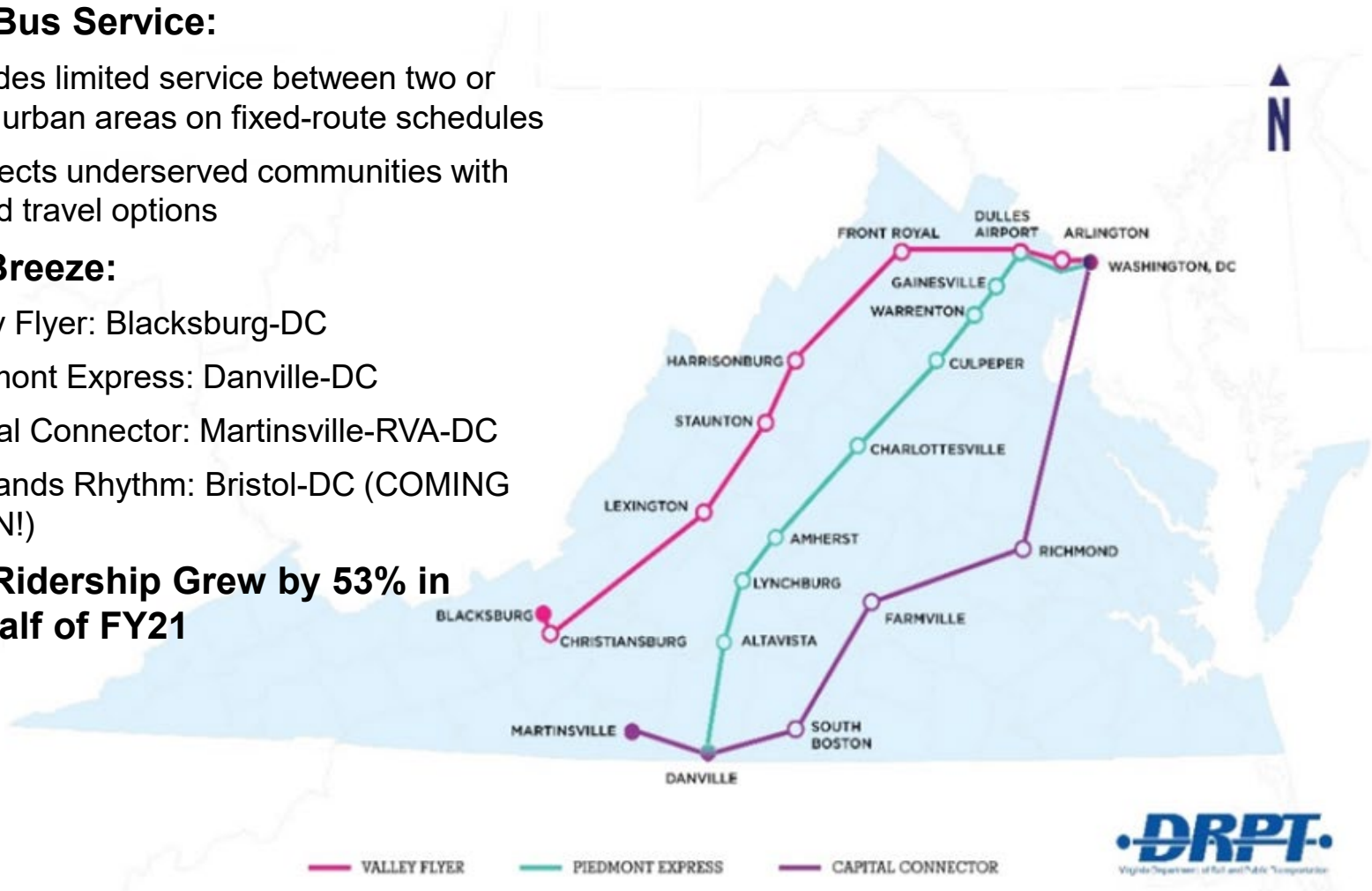
- **Intercity Bus Service:**

- Provides limited service between two or more urban areas on fixed-route schedules
- Connects underserved communities with limited travel options

- **Virginia Breeze:**

- Valley Flyer: Blacksburg-DC
- Piedmont Express: Danville-DC
- Capital Connector: Martinsville-RVA-DC
- Highlands Rhythm: Bristol-DC (COMING SOON!)

- **Monthly Ridership Grew by 53% in second half of FY21**



# Transit Equity & Modernization Study

- **Study Areas:**

- Transit Accessibility
- Adequacy of Transit Infrastructure
- Transit Electrification
- Implementation of Emerging Technology
- Safety
- System Engagement

- **Focus on transit services and engagement opportunities for underserved and underrepresented communities**

- **Timeline:**

- Interim Report - December 1, 2021
- Final Report - August 1, 2022



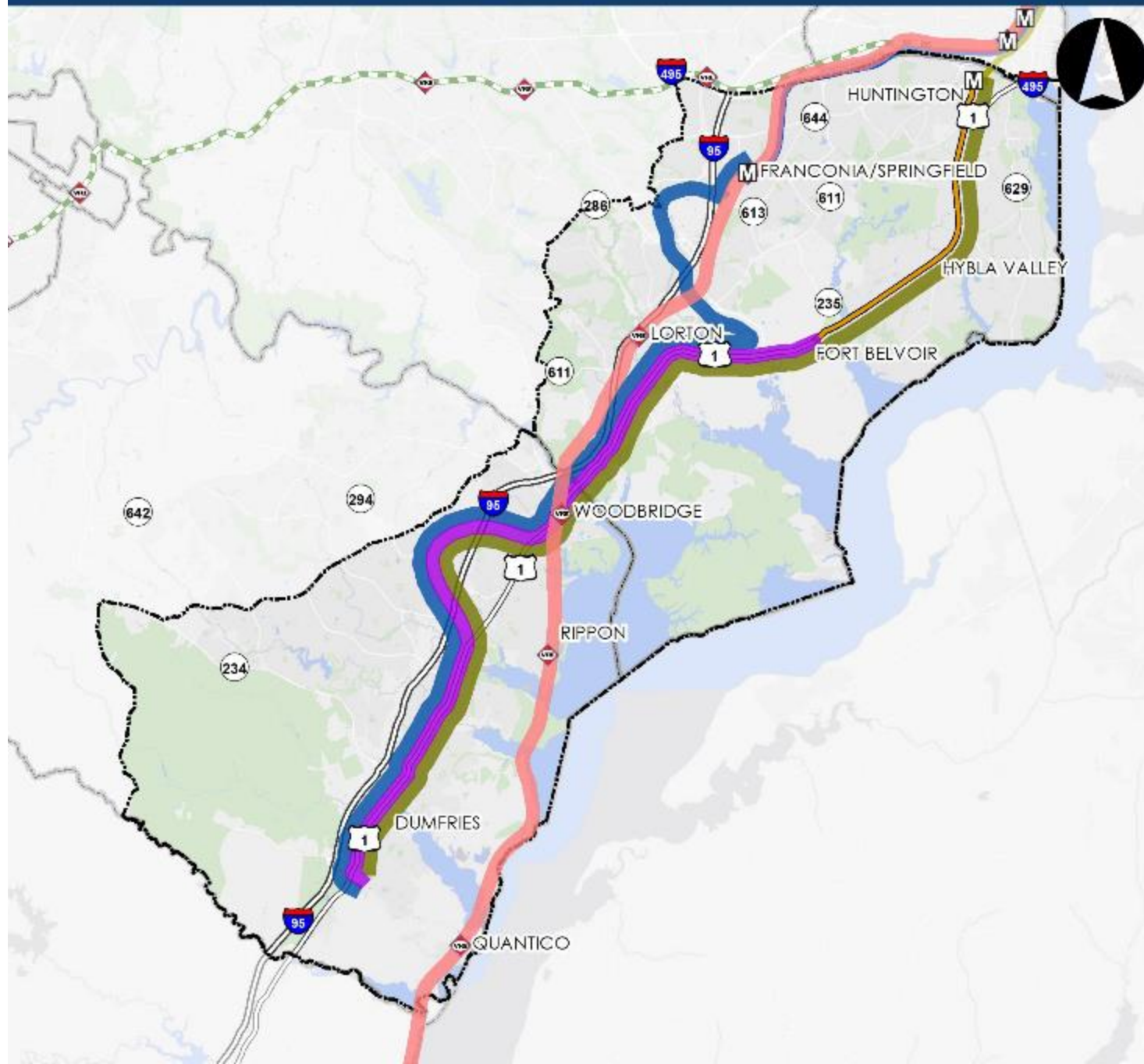
# Springfield-Quantico Public Transportation Study

- 2020 General Assembly approved a budget amendment directing DRPT to conduct a feasibility study:

*"F. The Department of Rail and Public Transportation, in cooperation with Fairfax and Prince William counties, shall evaluate enhanced public transportation services from the Franconia-Springfield Metro Station to Fort Belvoir, Lorton, Potomac Mills, and Marine Corps Base Quantico in Prince William County, including the cost and feasibility of extending the Blue Line and other multimodal options such as bus rapid transit along Interstate 95 and U.S. Route 1. The Director of the Department of Rail and Public Transportation shall submit a report of its findings to the Chairs of the House Appropriations Committee and the Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee by December 1, 2021."*

- Study must be completed by December 1, 2021
- A range of multimodal transit investments will be evaluated

# POTENTIAL ALTERNATIVES



- Metrorail Stations
- Virginia Railway Express (VRE) Stations
- County Boundary
- Richmond Highway BRT
- Metrorail Routes**
  - Blue
  - Yellow
- VRE Routes**
  - Manassas
- Alternatives**
  - Blue Line Metrorail
  - Yellow Line Metrorail
  - Bus Rapid Transit
  - Increased Frequency Along Existing VRE Alignment



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