Director's Report

March 2026

DRPT
VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF RAIL AND PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION



Growing Ridership & Relationship Building
Public Transportation Updates

Statewide Ridership

- 25 of Virginia's 40 public transportation providers had calendar year-over-year ridership increases
  - VRE led ridership growth with a 45% increase year-over-year
  - WMATA's ridership in Virginia increased by 10.8 million (11%)
  - The Pony Express, Loudoun County Transit, and OmniRide all had year-over-year ridership increases over 20%

Transit Operator Appreciation Day

- Transit Operator Appreciation Day is March 18
- DRPT is partnering with the Virginia Transit Association and transit partners across Virginia to celebrate the work of transit operators throughout March

Industry Engagement

- On February 20, Director Zimmerman participated in the Virginia Transit Association's lunch and learn, which served as an introduction to the broader Virginia transit community
- Director Zimmerman also spoke at a recent meeting of Virginia Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations and will address the Virginia Transportation Contractors Alliance at its upcoming conference later this month
- On March 9, DRPT met with the American Association of Retired Persons to discuss the outcomes of the 2026 Coordinated Human Service Mobility Plan

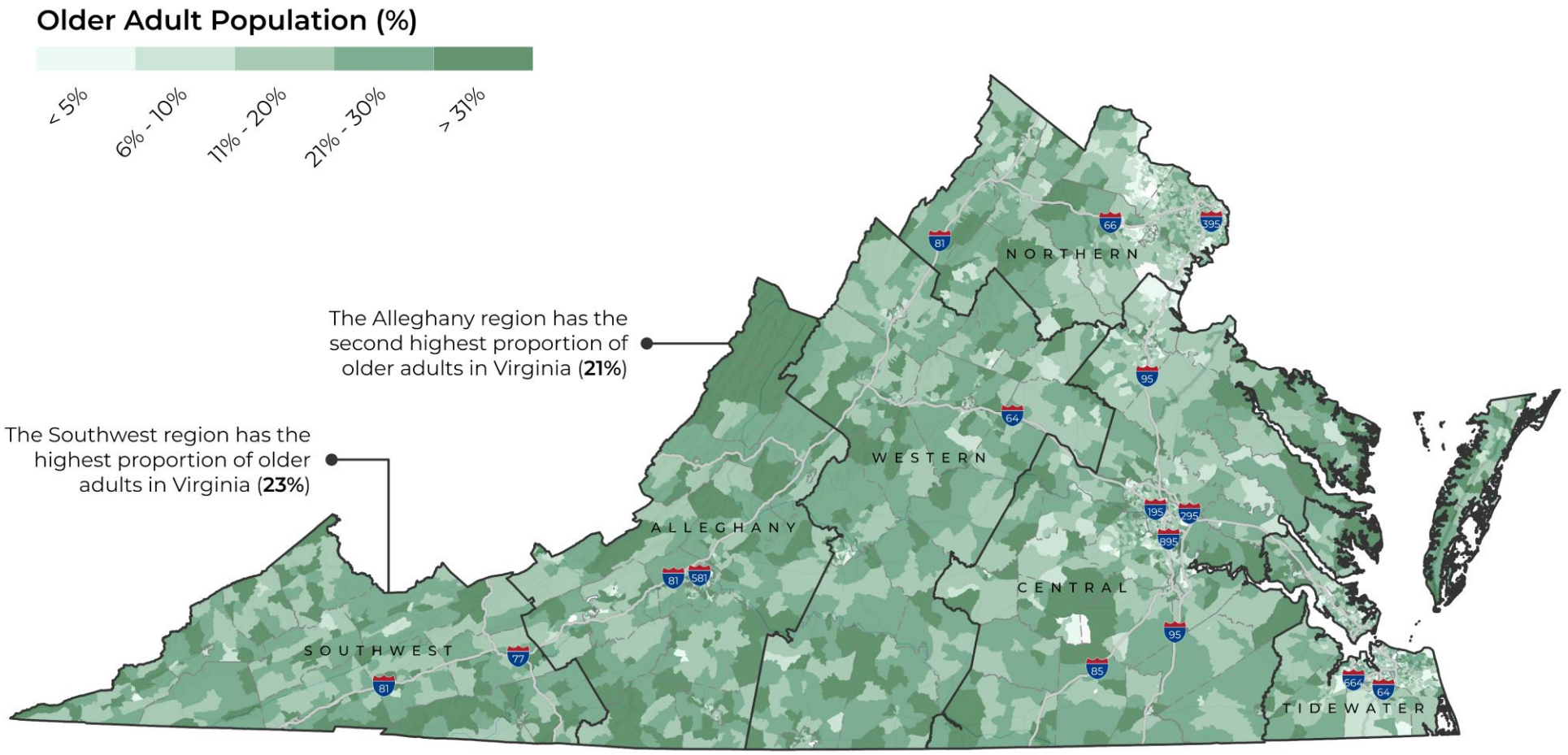
Accessible Transportation More Critical Than Ever
Coordinated Human Service Mobility Plan

- DRPT has released the 2026 Coordinated Human Services Mobility (CHSM) Plan Update, a people-centered strategy to improve access to transportation for older adults, people with disabilities, veterans, and low-income Virginians who rely on human services mobility to reach health care, work, grocery stores, and daily needs
- 2026 - 2030 Goals:
  - Diversify funding sources for human service transportation
  - Create additional capacity for and expand existing services
  - Expand beyond existing services
  - Increased support for riders over the complete trip
  - Consistent information and streamlined distribution
  - Bring human service transportation into the broader planning conversation
  - Structured and consistent technical support for riders and providers
- DRPT Implementation:
  - Convene fellow state agencies, transit providers, and regional partners to put strategies into action and elevate mobility needs of older Virginians, people with disabilities, and rural communities
  - Leverage federal and state funding to deepen partnerships with localities, health care, non-profits and human service providers for more structured regional coordination and resource partnership

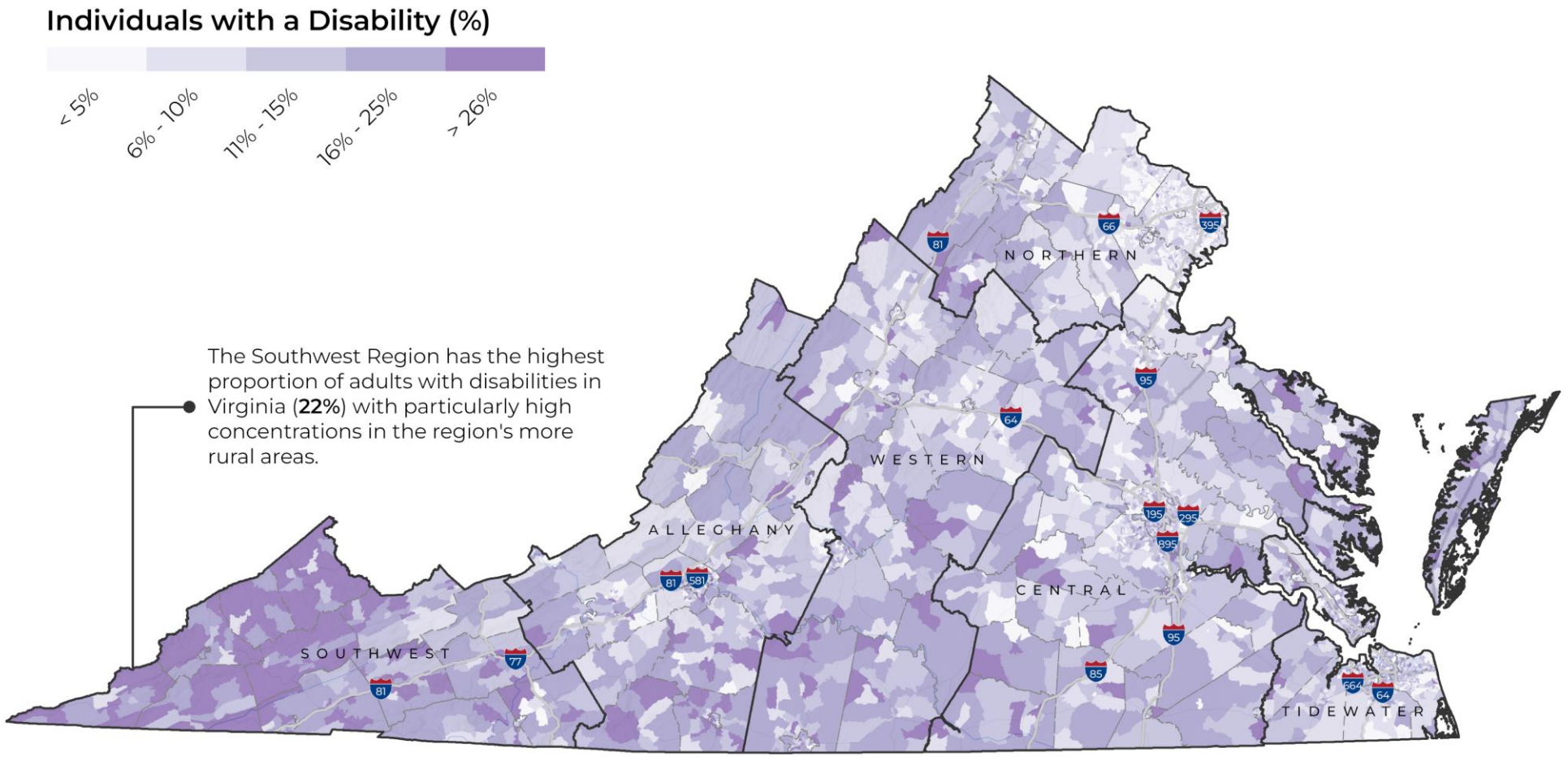
What did we learn?
Coordinated Human Service Mobility Plan Findings

- As Virginia's demographics shift, more residents are facing transportation challenges
- 1.4 million residents are over the age of 65, a cohort projected to increase to 1.8 million by 2030 (over 28% increase)
- Almost one million adults have a disability that may impact their mobility, a population that is also expected to increase as the Commonwealth ages
- Income and access to a vehicle also impact demand for human services transportation
  - Over 500,000 households are defined as low-income
  - Almost 200,000 households live without access to a vehicle
- While home to fewer people, rural areas generally have higher proportions of those expected to rely on human services transportation, with less access to public transit systems

Where Are Older Adults Concentrated?



Where Are Persons with Disabilities Concentrated?





Funding Supports Over 70 Mobility Partners Statewide

Coordinated Human Service Mobility Plan

- Human service providers primarily serve senior citizens or individuals with disabilities to fill gaps where public transit is insufficient or unavailable
- FTA section 5310 provides formula funding to states and designated recipients to meet these needs
- DRPT administers the FTA 5310 program for Virginia's rural areas, small urbanized aeras, and large urbanized areas except for within the DC area
- DRPT provides $1.5M in state funding off-the-top of the Commonwealth Mass Transit Fund to support human service transportation services
  - State funds are used as match federal funds FTA section 5310 funding
  - Federal funds are oversubscribed in rural areas, where the need is greatest, as well as in small urban areas

Celebrating Our Transit Operators

- DRPT has partnered with the Virginia Transit Association to celebrate our hard working and dedicated transit operators throughout March
- We received over 40 submissions from 16 transit agencies throughout the state





Visit DRPT's Facebook to see the submissions!

Growing Intercity Bus Service Throughout Virginia
Virginia Breeze Updates

Valley Flyer Express

- The Valley Flyers Express launched in March, offering faster trips between Blacksburg, Harrisonburg, Dulles, and Union Station with no intermediate stops, providing riders greater schedule flexibility at the same cost
- This express service was launched to address operational concerns about bus spacing during high-demand travel periods
- The operating schedule is currently being refined, with potential expansion to other routes pending performance and demand

Tidewater Current

- The Virginia Breeze's first east-west service connecting Hampton Roads and the Shenandoah Valley, will launch on April 20

Wytheville Bus Stop

- Construction has started
- Utilizes I-81 highway construction funds to relocate existing bus stop to have greater connectivity and amenities to include lighting, ADA accessibility, and a bus shelter



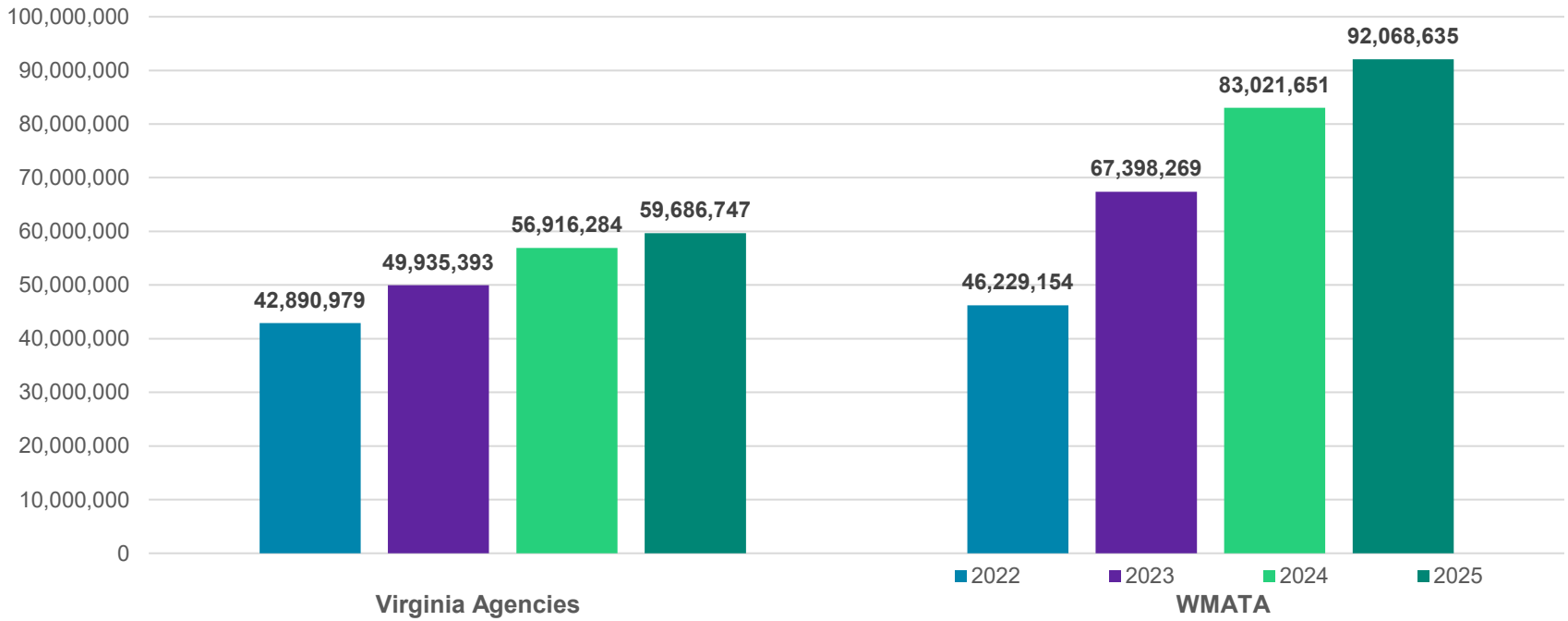


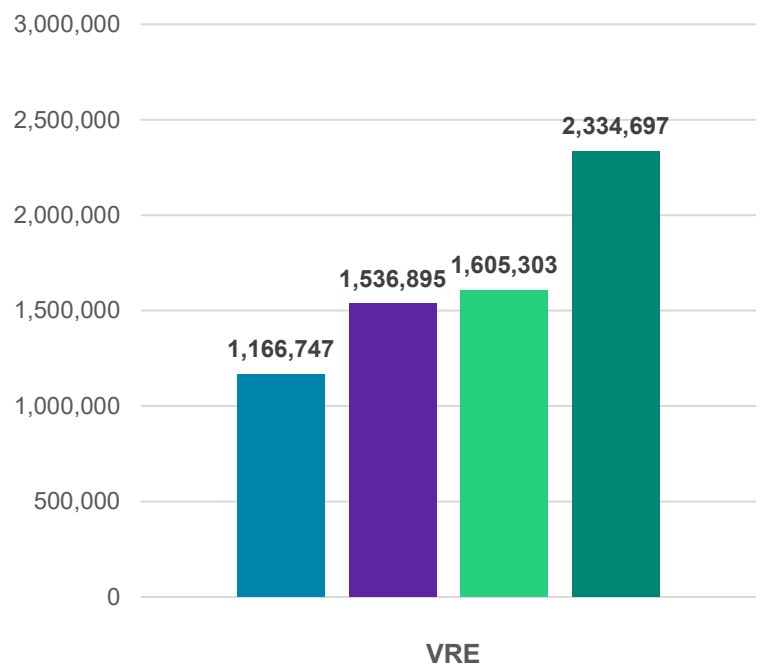
Transforming Rail 2.0

Rail Updates

- 2026 Statewide Rail Plan
  - Develop by DRPT with assistance from VPRA every four years per FRA guidance, and in alignment with the goals and objectives of Vtrans
  - Provides long-range projections and recommendations on a 20-year horizon to address freight and passenger rail needs
- Current Status:
  - Public and stakeholder engagement are underway, with stakeholder and public surveys planned for March
  - DRPT has initiated data collection with Amtrak, VPRA, and VRE
  - DRPT expects a draft to be available for the CTB in October, with updates along the way

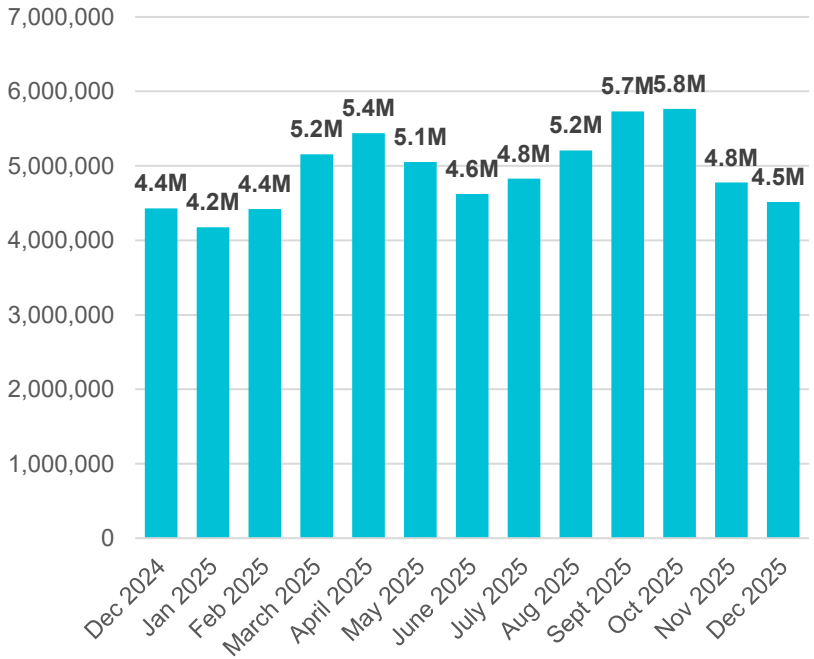
Statewide Transit Ridership Comparison
Calendar Years 2022-2025



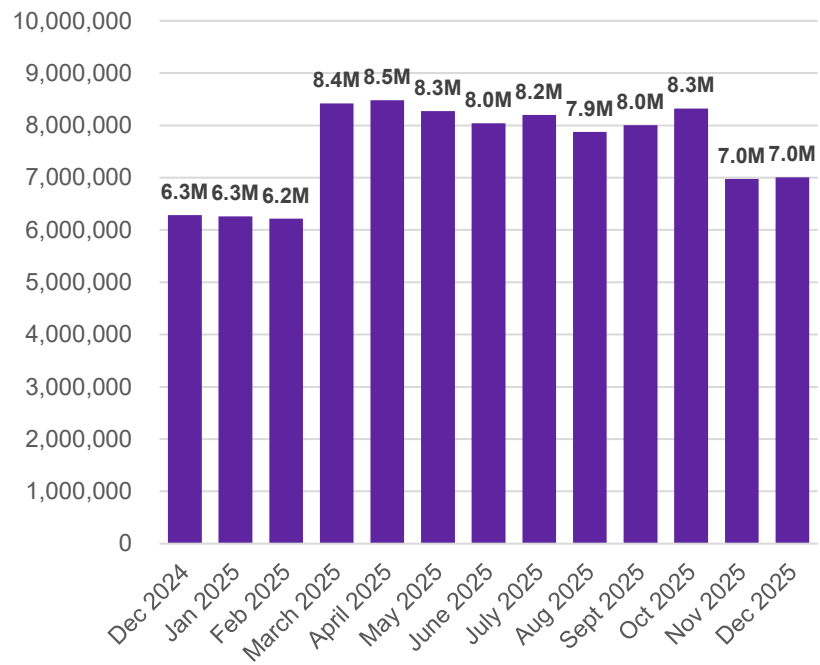


Mode	2022	2023	2024	2025	2025 vs 2022	2025 vs 2023	2025 vs 2024
Virginia Agencies	42,890,979	49,935,393	56,916,284	59,686,747	39%	20%	5%
VRE	1,166,747	1,536,895	1,605,303	2,334,697	100%	52%	45%
WMATA	46,229,154	67,398,269	83,021,651	92,068,635	99%	37%	11%
All Agencies + VRE + WMATA	**90,286,880**	**118,870,557**	**141,543,238**	**154,090,079**	**71%**	**30%**	**9%**

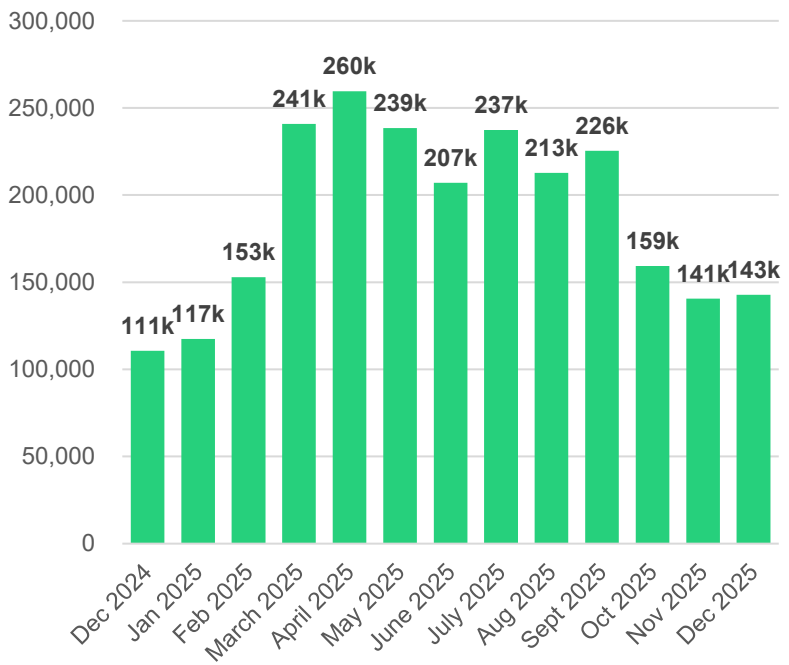
Statewide Transit Ridership
December 2024-December 2025



Virginia Agencies



WMATA

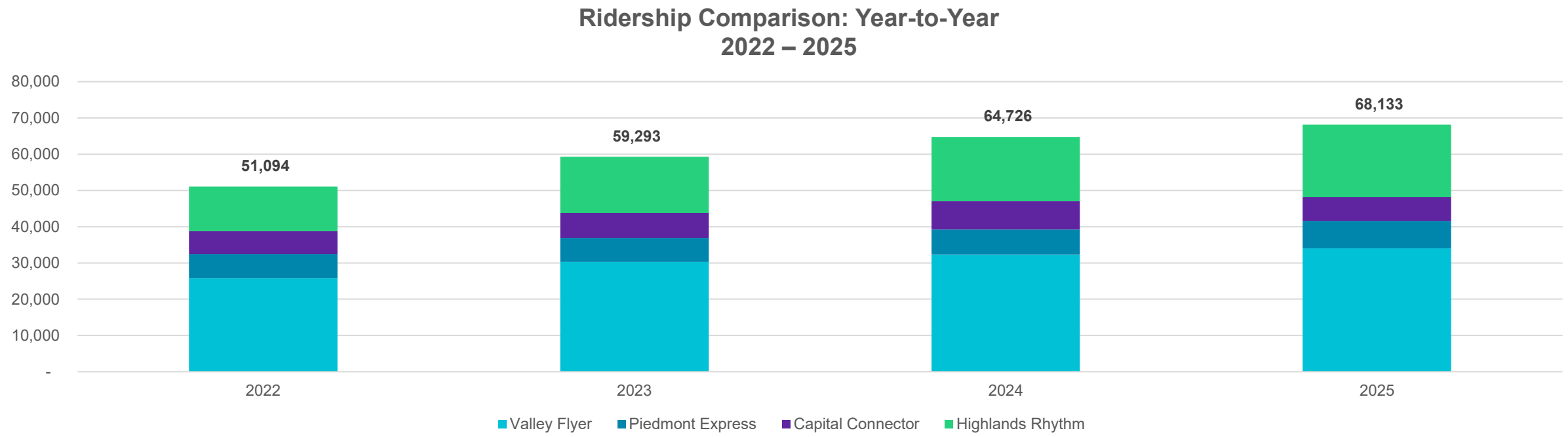


VRE

Agencies	Dec 2024	Jan 2025	Feb 2025	March 2025	April 2025	May 2025	June 2025	July 2025	Aug 2025	Sept 2025	Oct 2025	Nov 2025	Dec 2025	Total *
Virginia Agencies	4,427,428	4,177,150	4,422,149	5,155,217	5,437,004	5,053,320	4,624,290	4,826,487	5,208,249	5,729,123	5,765,456	4,774,932	4,513,370	59,686,747
VRE	110,625	117,466	152,882	240,794	259,585	238,518	207,130	237,363	212,798	225,504	159,390	140,553	142,714	2,334,697
WMATA	6,283,260	6,256,404	6,213,666	8,418,575	8,483,804	8,272,850	8,038,628	8,197,440	7,877,904	8,005,759	8,320,907	6,977,427	7,005,271	92,068,635
All Agencies + VRE + WMATA	**10,821,313**	**10,551,020**	**10,788,697**	**13,814,586**	**14,180,393**	**13,564,688**	**12,870,048**	**13,261,290**	**13,298,951**	**13,960,386**	**14,245,753**	**11,892,912**	**11,661,355**	**154,090,079**

**Last 12 Months*

Calendar Year Virginia Breeze Ridership
Calendar Years 2022-2025



Mode	2022	2023	2024	2025	2025 vs 2022	2025 vs 2023	2025 vs 2024
Valley Flyer	25,789	30,255	32,278	34,010	32%	12%	5%
Piedmont Express	6,612	6,669	6,946	7,588	15%	14%	9%
Capital Connector	6,342	6,876	7,786	6,512	3%	-5%	-16%
Highlands Rhythm	12,351	15,493	17,716	20,023	62%	29%	13%
All Routes	**51,094**	**59,293**	**64,726**	**68,133**	**33%**	**15%**	**5%**

Virginia Breeze Ridership
December 2024-December 2025

In December 2025, ridership totaled 6,201:

- 217% higher than original estimates
- 19% lower than December 2024

In December 2025, the VA Breeze contributed to a reduction of 292 metric tons of CO_2 equivalent emissions.

Valley Flyer:

- Ridership – 15% lower than December 2024
- Farebox Rev. – 18% lower than December 2024

Piedmont Express:

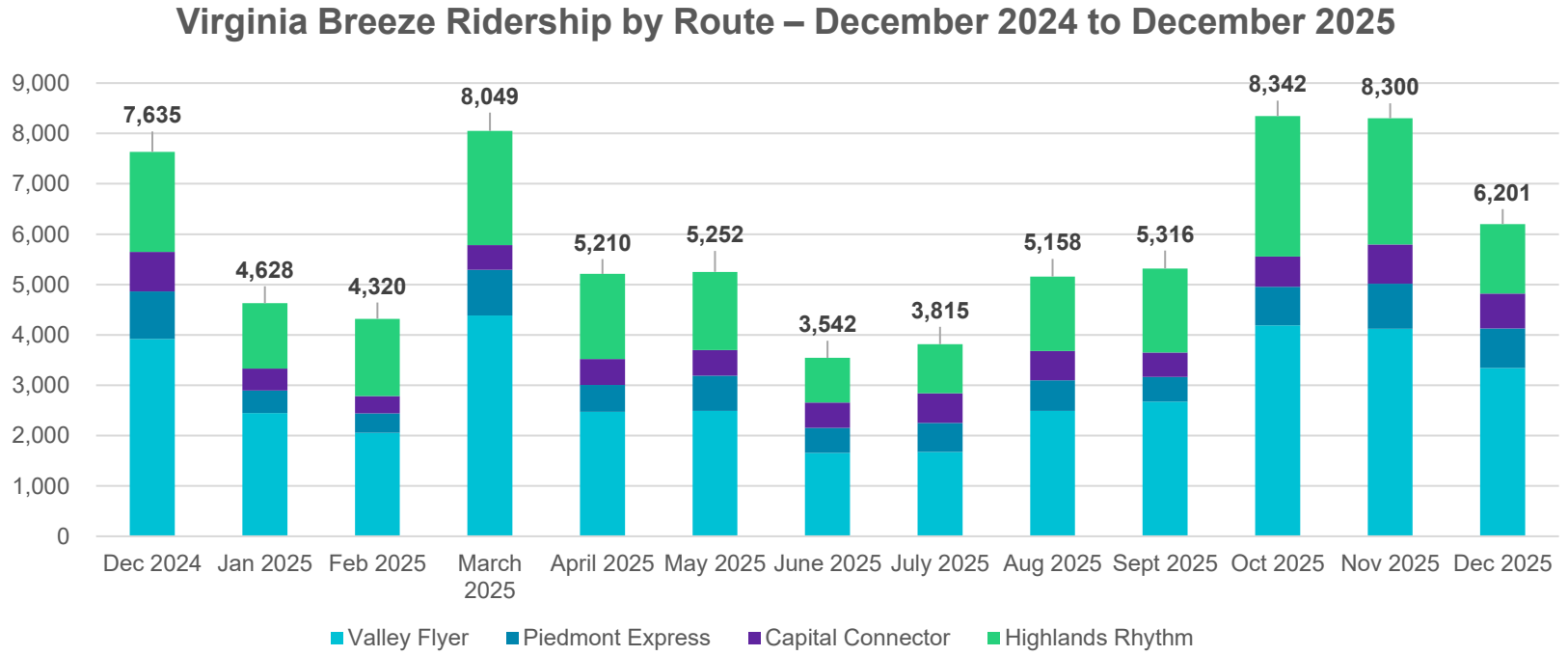
- Ridership – 17% lower than December 2024
- Farebox Rev. – 18% lower than December 2024

Capital Connector:

- Ridership – 12% lower than December 2024
- Farebox Rev. – 11% lower than December 2024

Highlands Rhythm:

- Ridership – 30% lower than December 2024
- Farebox Rev – 29% lower than December 2024



Route	Dec 2024	Jan 2025	Feb 2025	March 2025	April 2025	May 2025	June 2025	July 2025	Aug 2025	Sept 2025	Oct 2025	Nov 2025	Dec 2025	Total *
Valley Flyer	3,920	2,448	2,057	4,385	2,475	2,489	1,655	1,675	2,493	2,676	4,189	4,124	3,344	34,040
Piedmont Express	940	448	384	908	531	702	499	577	606	490	767	895	781	7,588
Capital Connector	790	432	345	490	513	508	504	585	581	484	598	778	694	6,512
Highlands Rhythm	1,985	1,300	1,534	2,266	1,691	1,553	884	978	1,478	1,666	2,788	2,503	1,382	20,023
All Routes	**7,635**	**4,628**	**4,320**	**8,049**	**5,210**	**5,252**	**3,542**	**3,815**	**5,158**	**5,316**	**8,342**	**8,300**	**6,201**	**68,133**

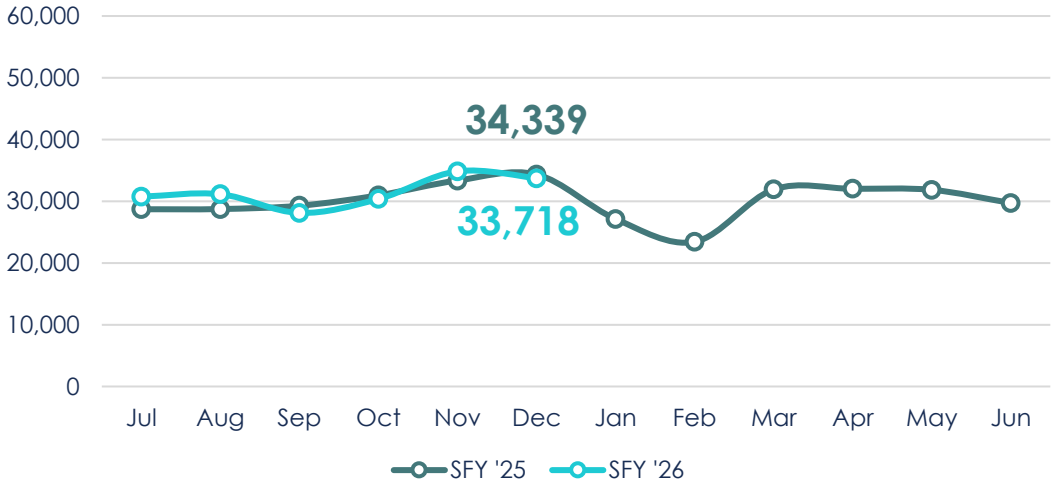
*Last 12 Months

Virginia-Supported Monthly Ridership by Route SFY '26 vs. SFY '25

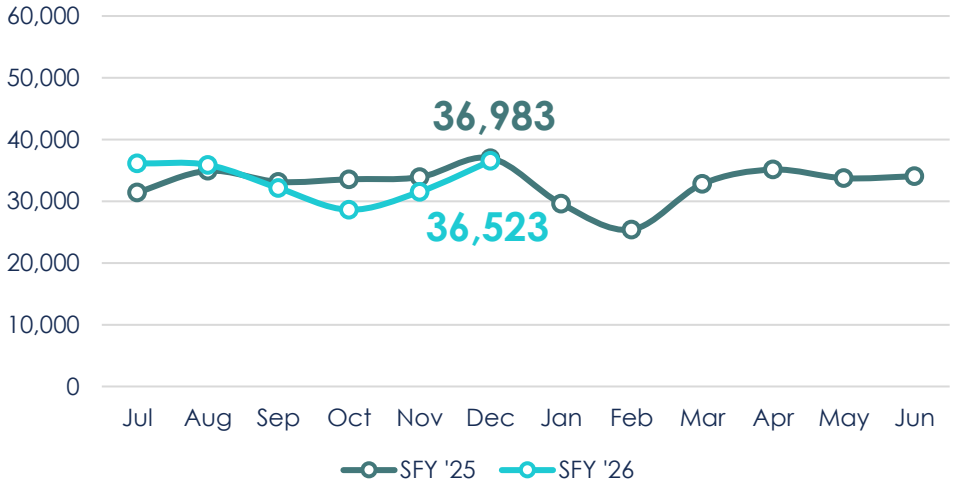
The NFK route set a new monthly ridership record.

The NPN route is back in service after it was suspended 10/25-11/7 due to a freight rail incident.

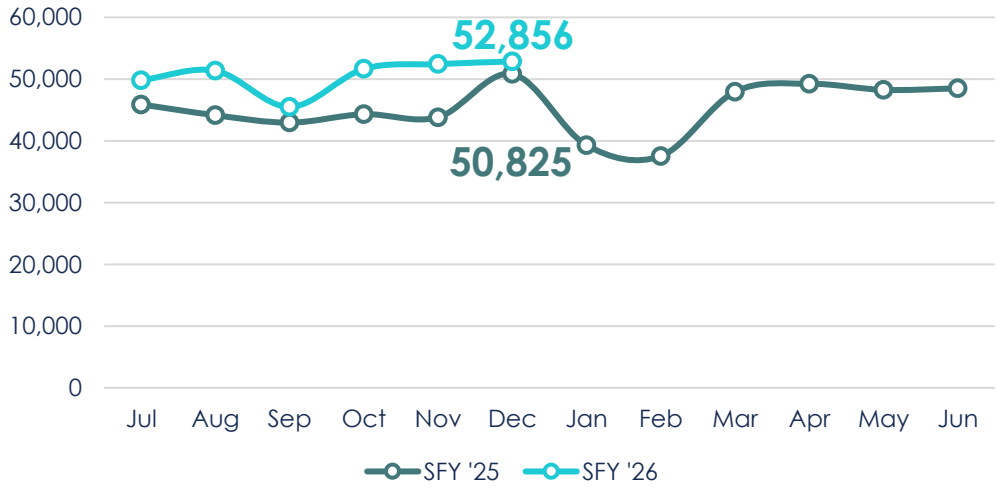
Route 46: Roanoke (-1.8%)



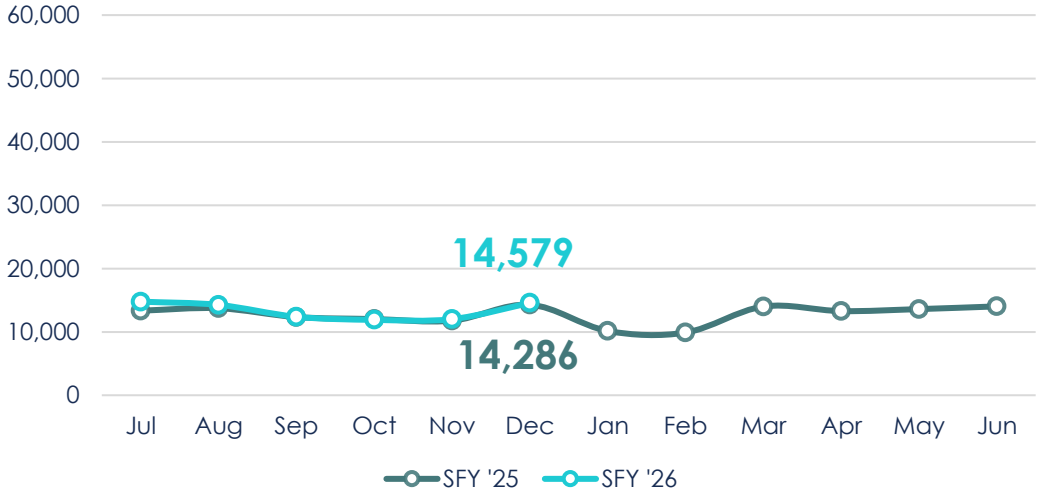
Route 47: Newport News (-1.2%)



Route 50: Norfolk (+4.0%)



Route 51: Richmond (+2.1%)



Virginia & Comparable State-Supported Service Ridership

Normalized: Monthly Ridership ÷ Daily Trains

