

# GEORGE WASHINGTON REGION TRANSIT POLICY PLAN

Framework for the Development of a  
George Washington Regional Transportation Authority  
(GWRTA)

*Version 5  
September 27, 2007*



## Current Situation

- The George Washington Region is growing rapidly.
- Transportation improvements are not keeping pace with growth:
  - Infrastructure is deteriorating.
  - Congestion continues to increase.
- VDOT is not adequately addressing the Region’s transportation needs.
- VDOT desires to “devolve” the responsibility for Regional and local roadway systems to localities.
- By themselves, Fredericksburg and the counties do not have the resources necessary to meet the Region’s growth-related transportation needs.
- To implement the transportation improvements that are needed, the George Washington Region needs to develop the capacity to address its own transportation needs.

## Proposed Solution

*Create a George Washington Regional Transportation Authority (GWRTA) to:*

- Compliment actions by the Commonwealth and local governments and effectively address the Region's growing transportation needs.
- "Fill the gap" between what the Commonwealth and localities can do and what is needed in three areas:
  - Transit
  - Regional roadways
  - Smart-growth projects
- Provide stable funding sources that will meet the Region's transportation needs.
- Advocate more effectively for VDOT improvements in the George Washington Region.

## Overview of GWRTA

- GWRTA would:
  - Provide transit service.
  - Develop, improve and maintain Regional roadways.
  - Initiate and implement smart growth projects.
- GWRTA's membership and service area would include Fredericksburg and Stafford, Spotsylvania, Caroline, and King George Counties.
- GWRTA would be governed by representatives of the same jurisdictions.
- GWRTA would be funded through dedicated sources.
- GWRTA would have the powers necessary to undertake its duties.

## GWRTA Programs and Services

- Transit and Transportation Demand Management
  - Transit services now provided by FRED, plus expanded service.
  - Transportation demand program services now provided by GWRC.
  - Assistance with Human Service Transportation Programs.
- Roadways
  - Improvement and expansion of the Regional roadway system.
  - “Regional roadways” still need to be defined, but would include “roadways of intra-Regional significance,” such as Principal Arterials, Minor Arterials, and some Major Collectors.
  - Roadway improvements developed in collaboration with localities.
- Smart-Growth
  - *Smart-Growth: “Environmentally-sensitive land development that minimizes dependence on auto transportation, encourages use of alternative travel modes, and makes infrastructure investments more efficient.”*
  - Develop smart-growth projects:
    - Either on its own or in cooperation with other entities (which could include the city and counties and the private sector).
    - In conformance with local land use regulations and subject to all applicable local government approvals.

## Creation

- The creation of GWRTA would require legislation.
- The legislation would define:
  - The Authority
  - Its governance
  - Its powers and duties
  - Funding mechanisms
- Specifics would be a jointly determined by the localities.

## Membership and Governance

- GWRTA membership would consist of the five localities that the Authority would represent: the City of Fredericksburg and the Counties of Stafford, Spotsylvania, Caroline, and King George.
- GWRTA's Board of Directors would consist of:
  - Two elected officials from each of its five localities.
  - The Director of the DRPT and the VDOT Commissioner (or their designees) as ex-officio members.
- To ensure coordination with Regional planning activities, the board would be comprised of the same representatives as the GWRC Board.
- An Advisory Board would advise the Board of Directors and would consist of:
  - Members of the current FRED Public Transit Advisory Board (PTAB).
  - Additional members as determined by the Board to reflect other transportation interests.

## Powers and Functions

- GWRTA would be provided with the powers needed to perform its functions, similar other Authorities in Virginia.
- General powers and duties would include:
  - Hire employees, attorneys, accountants, and consultants as the Board considers necessary to carry out the purposes of the Authority.
  - Enter into contracts, agreements, deeds, leases, conveyances or other instruments.
  - Make rules and regulations for the Authority’s organization and internal management.
  - Apply for and receive loans and grants of money and property.
  - Sell or lease property.
  - Issue bonds.
  - Sue and be sued.
  - To do all things required to carry out its purpose and to exercise the powers granted to the Authority.

## Powers and Functions

- Additional powers related to transportation:
  - Prepare transportation plans to implement MPO policy.
  - Construct and acquire transportation facilities.
  - Acquire land through purchase, lease, gift, condemnation, or otherwise, either for its own use or on behalf of other agencies for transportation projects.
  - Operate or contract for the operation of transportation services.
  - Enter into contracts and agreements with counties, cities, and Transportation Districts and Authorities outside of the George Washington Region, to provide transportation services to and from those areas, and to operate related facilities.
  - Enact user fees and taxes to fund transportation programs.
  - Determine public transit fares, determine schedules and routes, and enter into franchising agreements.
  - Provide operating and capital funding for services operated by others (for example, private bus operators and VRE).

## Powers and Functions

- Additional powers related to roadways:
  - In collaboration with localities:
    - Build, operate, and maintain Regional roadways, including toll roads, AND/OR
    - Provide funding for the maintenance, improvement, or expansion of Regional roadways by localities.
  - Set toll rates and collect tolls on new or expanded transportation facilities.
  - In coordination with the Commonwealth and local jurisdictions, manage traffic signals and other vehicle control devices.
- Additional powers related to smart-growth:
  - Develop and manage smart-growth projects, using its own authority in cooperation with other public and private entities (in conformance with local zoning regs and subject to all local approvals).
  - Generate revenue through the sale or lease of smart-growth facilities and projects.
  - Acquire land through purchase, lease, or gift—*but not through condemnation*—for smart-growth projects.

## Program Priority Setting/Regional Equity

- The Authority is intended to provide the Region's localities with a vehicle to address Regional needs that:
  - They cannot meet by themselves.
  - Are consistent with local desires.
- All of the Authorities capital projects would be determined through existing processes:
  - FAMPO's Long Range Transportation Plan process, which includes collaboration with localities, will prioritize projects and programs.
  - The full desired program has and will continue to exceed revenues available from existing sources.
  - New revenues and taxes available to the Authority would then be used to fund the gap and determine Authority projects.
- GWRTA will be constrained to spending resources on projects in the Plan, based on their priority.
- The GWRTA Board composition of two elected representatives per jurisdiction is intended to doubly ensure that expenditures:
  - Are made in accordance with local desires.
  - Provide Regional equity.

## Taxing and Funding Authority

In addition to existing Federal and State revenue sources, the new Authority would have four new sources of funding:

1. Regional fees and taxes similar to those authorized in 2007 by the General Assembly for NVTA and HRTA.
2. New State and Federal funds associated with the transfer of roadway maintenance responsibilities to from the State to local areas.
3. Toll revenues.
4. Smart-growth revenues.

## Taxing and Funding Authority

- Authority Taxes and Fees:
  - GWRTA could seek approval to enact similar fees and taxes to those recently granted by the legislature to NVTA and HRTA:

Authority Tax/Fee	Rate
▪ Grantor's tax	40¢/\$100
▪ Transient Occupancy Tax	2%
▪ Safety Inspection Fee	\$10
▪ Initial Vehicle Registration Fee	1%
▪ Sales Tax on Auto Repairs	5%
▪ Regional Registration Fee	\$10

- New State and Federal Funds
  - Regional roadway capital and maintenance costs would be funded primarily through new State and Federal funding associated with the transfer of the roadway responsibilities from the Commonwealth to the Authority.
  - The specifics through which this would be done still need to be determined.

## Taxing and Funding Authority

- Toll Revenues
  - GWRTA would be empowered to set tolls on new or expanded roadways.
  - Toll revenue levels would vary based on the specific projects pursued and the toll rates set by the Authority.
- Smart-Growth Revenues
  - Smart-growth projects would be designed to generate profits that would be used to subsidize GWRTA's transit and roadway programs.
  - The Authority would sell bonds or use savings to initially fund the projects and then use sale and lease revenue to repay the bonds and cross-subsidize transportation projects and programs.
  - Smart-growth revenues would vary based on the specific projects that are pursued.

## New Local Revenue

- Also as in the NVRTA and HVRTA areas, the RTA legislation could seek approval for new local-option fees and taxes.

Local Option Tax/Fee	Rate
▪ Motor Fuels Sales Tax	2%
▪ Commercial Real Estate	Up to 10¢
▪ Local Registration Fee	\$10
▪ Commercial/Residential Impact Fee	Determined by Jurisdiction

- The local option taxes would be imposed at the discretion of each jurisdiction.
- The local option taxes would be controlled by the collecting jurisdiction for transportation purposes.
- These funds would be available to the localities for:
  - Local transportation projects.
  - Local shares of GWRTA projects, if any.

## Summary

*GWRTA is intended to provide a vehicle that can produce meaningful Regional transportation improvements that are consistent with local needs and desires.*

*GWRTA would:*

- ‘Fill the gap” between what the Commonwealth will do and what the localities can do by themselves.
- Provide a mechanism for localities to jointly develop Regional solutions.
- Be controlled by the localities.
- Abide by capital spending priorities set through the existing FAMPO Long Range Planning Process (rather than independently set its own priorities).
- Provide additional funding for Regional projects and for local projects.
- Provide more stable funding.
- Be provided with the powers and authorities to carry out its mission.