



RVA

RVA Rapid Transit

2021

State of Transit

# CONTENTS

3

## *Introduction*

Message from the Board • How It All Started • Where Are We? • Benefits of Regional Transit

7

## *More Buses, More Places*

Progress to the Vision • Demographic Maps • Job Access Maps

15

## *Diginified Places to Wait*

Bus shelters and benches

16

## *The Rider's Voice*

Rider Stories • GRTC Ridership Demographics

20

## *Ways to Get Involved*

Ride the Bus • Adopt-a-Stop • Share your story • Donate



# A MESSAGE FROM

# THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE



Joh Gehlbach  
President



Kendra Norrell  
Vice President



Jess Powers  
Treasurer



Stephen Davenport  
Secretary

RVA Rapid Transit is a nonprofit dedicated to educating and advocating for frequent, far-reaching public transit in the Richmond region. Our aim is to make it easier to get around every day by bus, especially for those most reliant on our public transit system. This State of Transit Report lays out our region's transit progress to date and the key steps still requisite to reach and reap the benefits of a robust, regional public transit system. Thank you for your interest and your support!

Sincerely,  
RVA Rapid Transit's Executive Committee



# HOW IT ALL STARTED

"RICHMOND RANKED 92ND OUT OF THE TOP 100"

RVA Rapid Transit began in 2014 as a grassroots movement out of Richmond Hill ([richmondhillva.org](http://richmondhillva.org)) calling for regional public transit. At the time, Richmond ranked 92 out of the top 100 cities in terms of access to jobs by public transportation ("Missed Opportunity: Transit and Jobs in Metropolitan America," Brookings Institution).

RVA Rapid Transit became a 501(c)(3) nonprofit in the fall of 2016 dedicated to connecting all people of the Richmond region as we educate, organize, and advocate for the design, construction, and operation of a first-class metro-wide rapid transit system. While Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) plays a key part of that system, we are seeking to make it easier to get around everyday life by public transit in all forms.



We are dedicated to :

- educating
- organizing
- advocating

for frequent and far-reaching transit in the Richmond region. Quality transit provides opportunities for residents and visitors to thrive in the Richmond region.





# WHERE ARE WE?

**NOW**

The last 7 years have brought unprecedented growth of public transit in the Richmond region, but we still have a lot to do to reap the benefits of a comprehensive regional transit system.

Frequent, far-reaching transit provides a backbone around which people can build their lives, develop businesses, and deepen neighborhood ties. It also yields environmental benefits, including cleaner air and reduced greenhouse gas emissions.



**2020**

The Central Virginia Transportation Authority; Chesterfield County launches bus line along Rt 1.

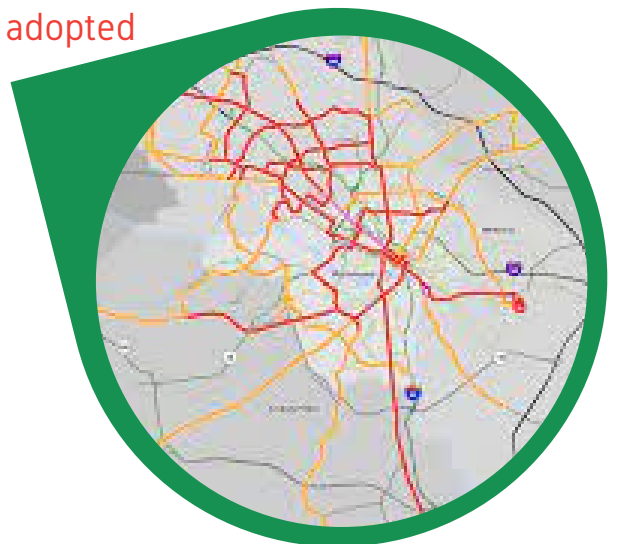


**2018**

The Pulse launches with redesign of Richmond City's lines and expansion of Henrico County's lines.

**2017**

Greater RVA Transit Vision Plan completed and adopted by regional leaders.



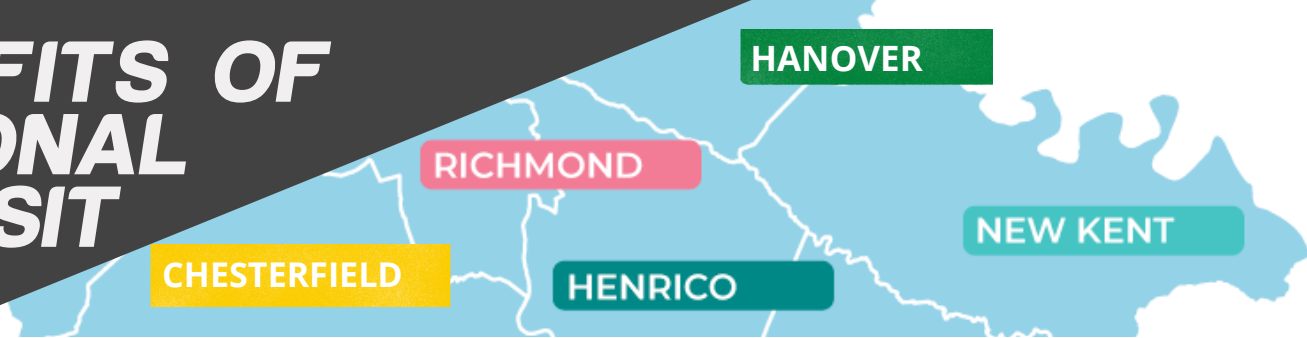
**2014**



Federal TIGER Grant awarded for BRT line.



# BENEFITS OF REGIONAL TRANSIT



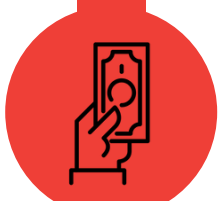
## *Economic*

- Every \$1 spent on public transportation brings \$5 in economic benefits
- Every \$10 million investment yields \$32 million in increased business
- U.S. public transportation use saved 865 million hours in travel time



## *Health*

- Buses emit 80% less Carbon Monoxide than Cars
- Riding a bus is 91 times safer than car travel
- 29% of people were able to achieve 30 minutes or more of daily exercise through walking to or from public transportation alone



## *Financial*

- Costs \$9,561 per year to own and operate an automobile
- Building a parking garage costs over \$21,000 per spot
- In Greater Richmond, it is currently zero-fare to travel by bus



## *Equity*

- Over 90% of those on public assistance do not own a car
- Public transit is particularly important to people with limited incomes
- For older adults and persons with disabilities, paratransit services provide vital links to reaching medical and other essential services



## *Climate*

- Switching to public transit two days a week will cut personal greenhouse gas emissions by 25%
- Public transportation reduces gasoline consumption by 6 billion gallons



## *Societal*

- Less cars on road - less traffic congestion
- Serves those who cannot drive
- Access to good transit is vital to a community's livability
- 87% of trips on public transit have a direct impact on the local economy
- Valuable public space can be dedicated to people instead of cars



# MORE BUSES, MORE PLACES



The 111 has exceeded GRTC's initial performance targets in its first year, with an average of 140 rides per weekday and 70 on Saturday.

Great strides have been made toward a comprehensive, effective public transit system for our region. In particular, the growth of transit along Broad Street to Short Pump and along Rt 1 South to Brightpoint Community College (formerly John Tyler).



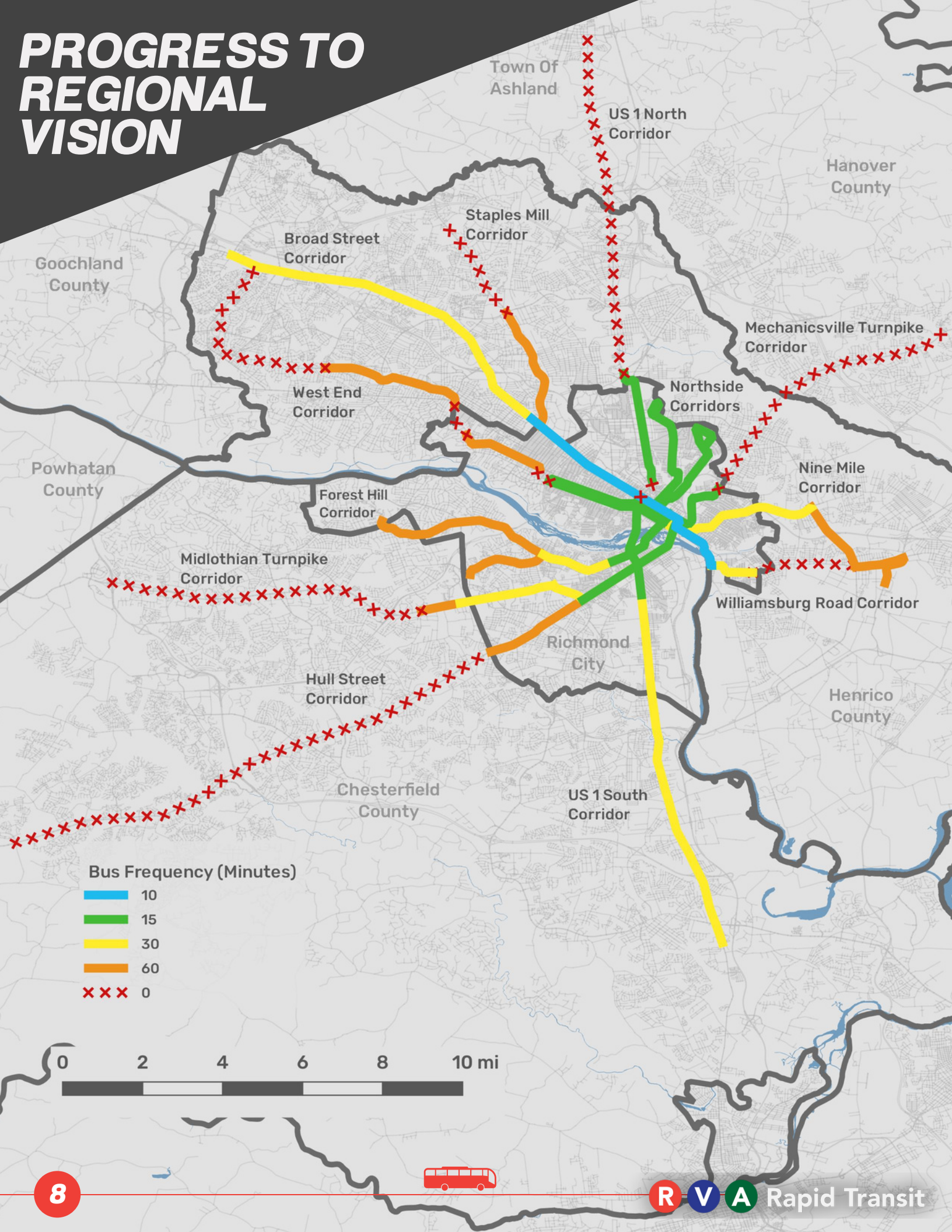
Nevertheless, we have many steps left to go to reach the benefits of the frequent, far-reaching public transit system put forward in the Greater RVA Transit Vision Plan ([planrva.org/transportation/greater-rva-transit-vision-plan](http://planrva.org/transportation/greater-rva-transit-vision-plan)). This Vision Plan seeks frequent bus service (15 minutes or better) on 13 major corridors in Greater Richmond. Today, only two corridors have hit that goal.

The Greater RVA Transit Vision Plan was completed in 2017 and establishes a long-term vision for transit in the Richmond region.

The following maps highlight corridor progress, population density, income, and job access to demonstrate the need for an effective regional system. These maps utilize current data from the U.S. Census Bureau, current GRTC service, and transit service in the Greater RVA Transit Vision Plan.



# PROGRESS TO REGIONAL VISION



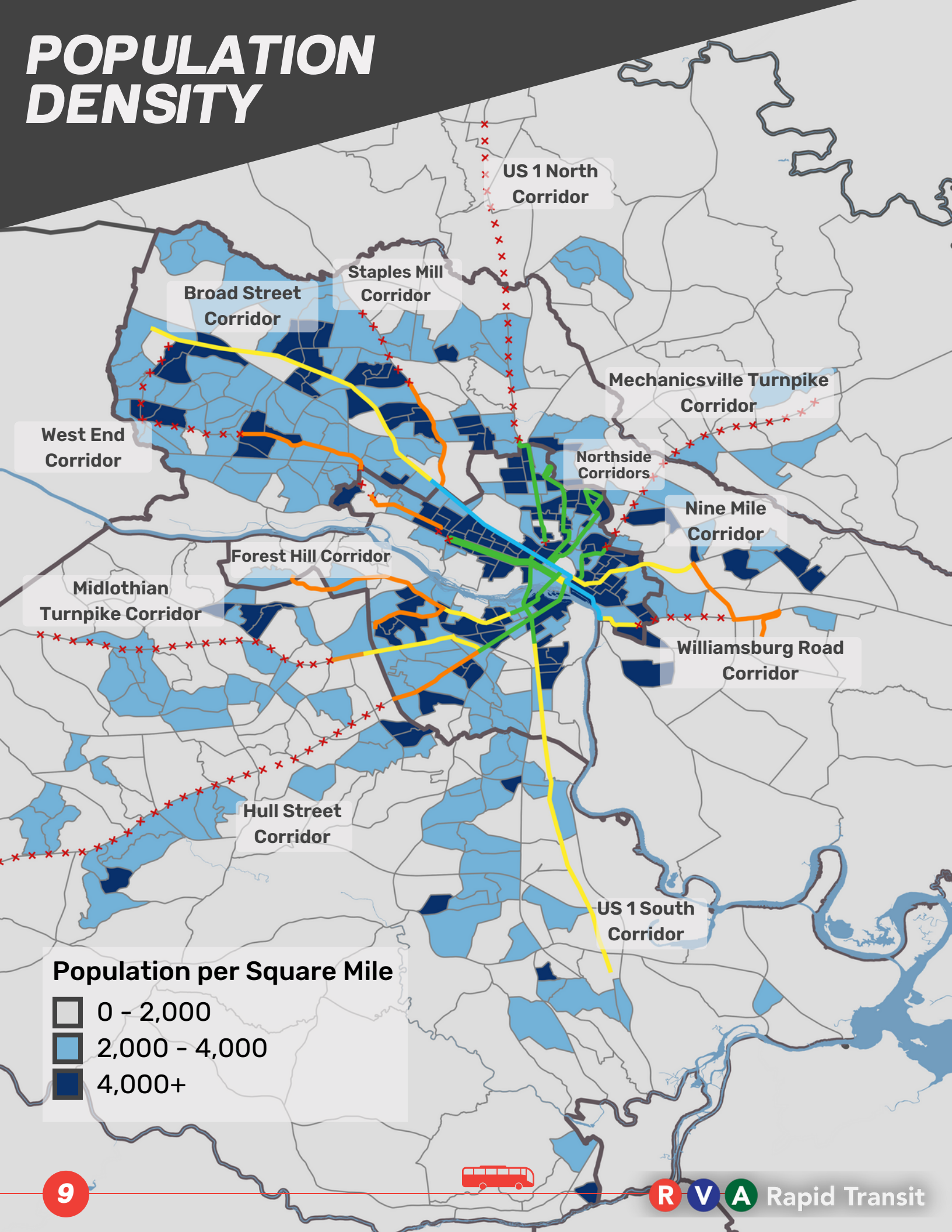
Bus Frequency (Minutes)

- █ 10
- █ 15
- █ 30
- █ 60
- x x x 0





# POPULATION DENSITY

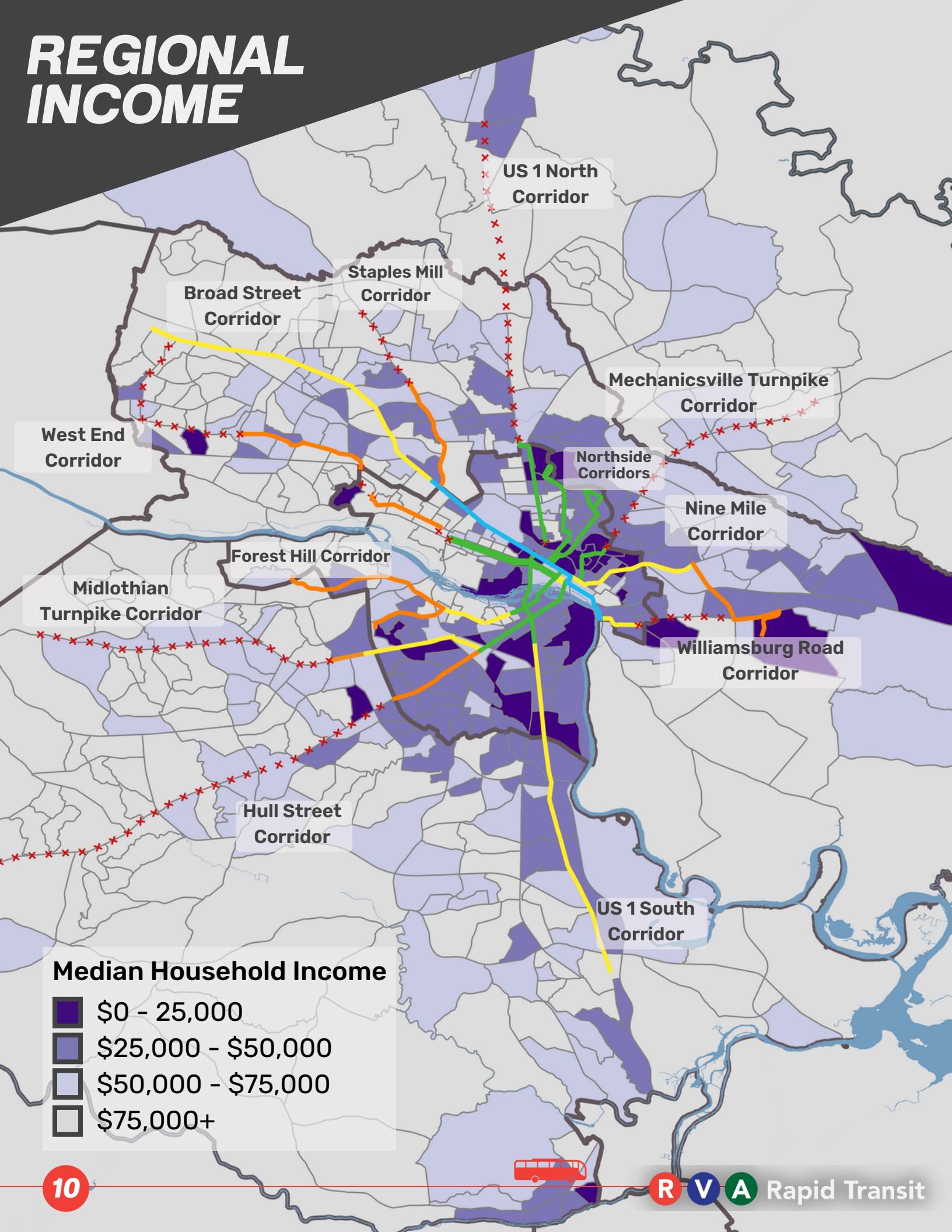


## Population per Square Mile

- 0 - 2,000
- 2,000 - 4,000
- 4,000+



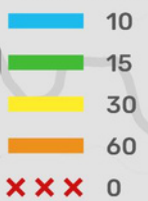
# REGIONAL INCOME



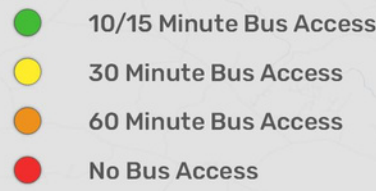
# JOB ACCESS



### Bus Frequency (Minutes)



### Transit Access



### Amount of Jobs



# JOB ACCESS



**23%**

of our region's jobs are well served by frequent transit today (15 minutes or less)

**52%**

of jobs would be well served if all 13 2040 corridors had frequent transit

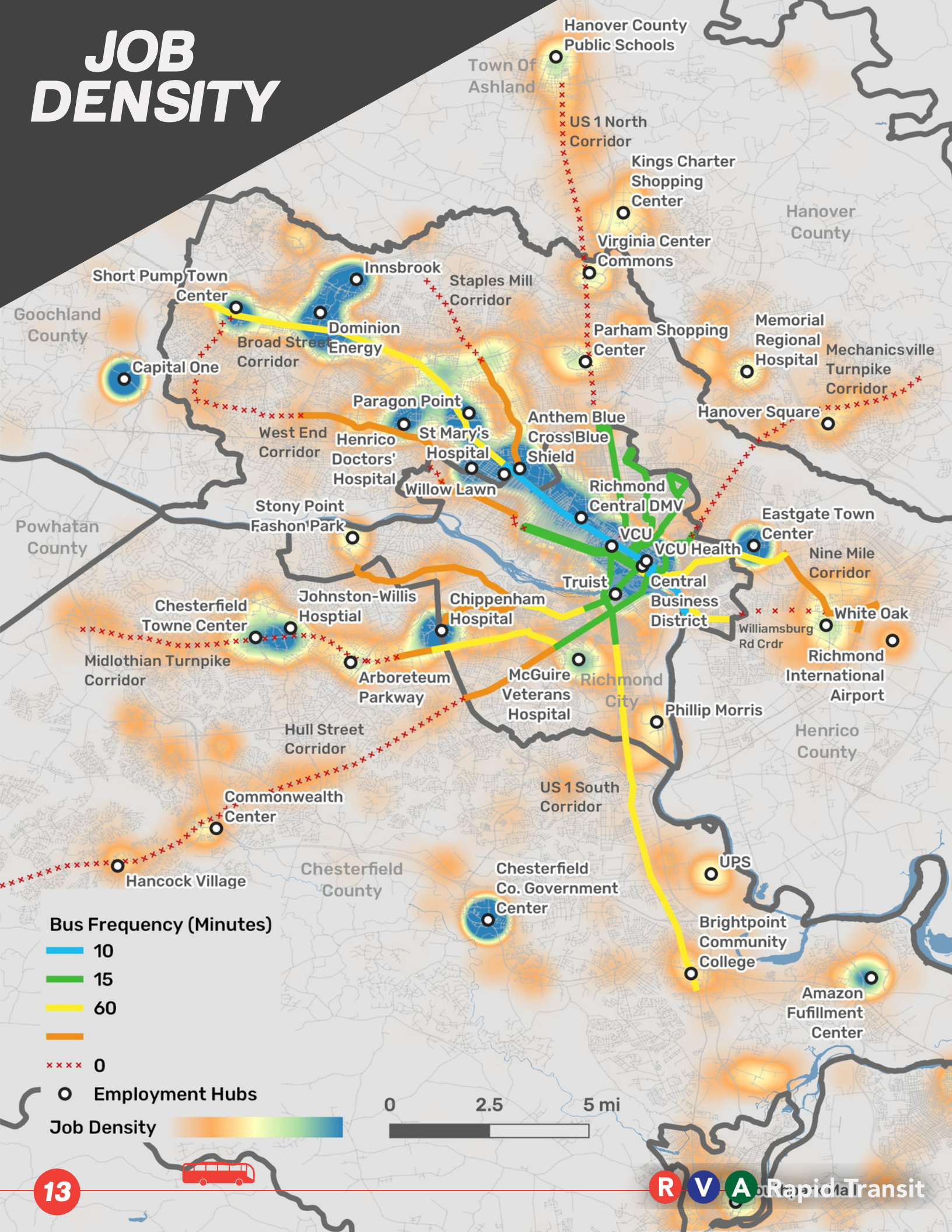
**64%**

of jobs would be well served if all current routes and 2040 corridors had frequent transit

\*Data compiled from U.S. Census Bureau, current GRTC lines, and Greater RVA Transit Vision Plan



# JOB DENSITY



Bus Frequency (Minutes)

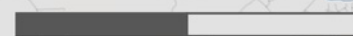
- 10
- 15
- 60
- 0
- x x x x 0

○ Employment Hubs

Job Density



0 2.5 5 mi

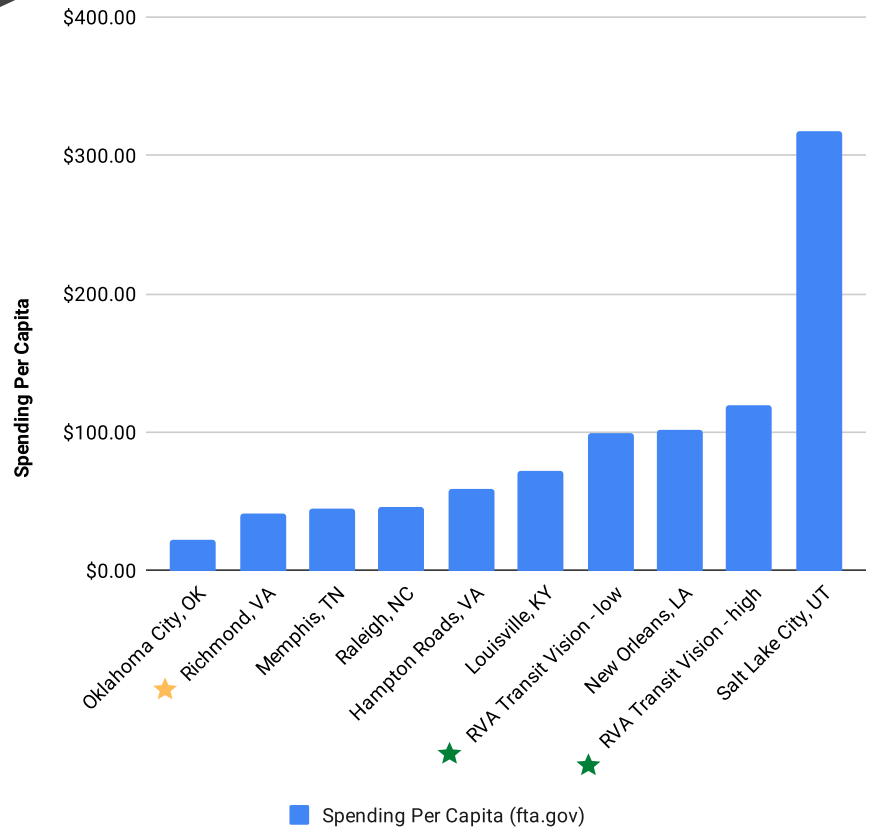


# REACHING THE VISION

## PEER CITY TRANSIT FUNDING

### HOW DO WE COMPARE?

This graph is a recent snapshot of where we ranked with peer cities in 2019 in terms of transit funding per capita (FTA.gov data). It also shows where we would have ranked if we already had the full vision funded and implemented (all costs adjusted in 2019 dollars).



## REACHING FULL VISION

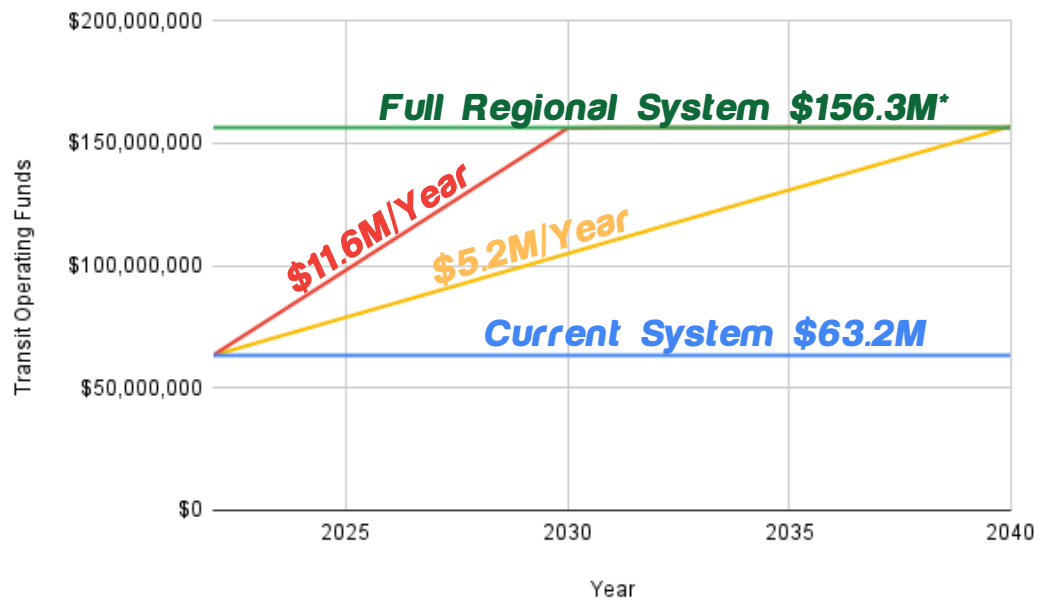
We need an annual increase in operating funding of

**\$11.6 million\*  
per year  
for Regional  
Transit by  
2030**

**OR**

**\$5.2 million\*  
per year  
for Regional  
Transit by  
2040**

## FUNDING THE PLAN



\*Subject to inflation. Operating the regional system is estimated to cost between \$142.4 - \$170.2 million (2021 dollars; inflation-adjusted from Greater RVA Transit Vision Plan). The graph above is the mean of that operating cost: \$156.3 million. GRTC's current FY22 operating budget is \$63.2 million.



# DIGNIFIED PLACES TO WAIT

RVA has 1600+ bus stops  
5% have shelters  
20% have benches

If you drive a car, imagine if only 20% of the time you had somewhere to sit and only 5% of the time you had somewhere covered from the rain, heat, or snow when waiting at a stoplight. For folks relying on public transportation, shelters and benches play a critical role in health, safety, and overall commute experience.



Jhiana  
South Side Plaza  
Stop ID# 1327

There is no systematic way to keep bus stops and shelters clean in our region. GRTC's current budget only covers a small portion of stops, such as the PULSE station stops. And local governments are only responsible for servicing trash cans at bus stops, not litter on the ground.

"There's a lot of stops around where I go that don't have benches that should, because of not only elderly people but pregnant women also. When I was pregnant and having to take the bus, I didn't have anywhere to sit. It was hard for me to sit on the ground and get back up and to be able to get up for the bus in time. There was actually a time a driver left me because I was sitting on the ground. I ended up having to walk home just because I couldn't get off the ground. They were impatient and didn't want to wait."

"You can have good bus drivers that take you to good places, and they get paid for what they do. They do a good job. But you can't have good bus drivers and the other part be undone. You want to have good transportation, but you also need to have clean areas for people to catch the bus."

Angie  
White Oak Village  
Stop ID# 1470



**GRTC's Goal:**  
*Benches at 35% of stops and shelters at 15% of stops by 2026.  
Let's help them reach this goal even faster!*



# THE RIDER'S VOICE



**Uzella  
Thomas**

**Stevie  
Thornton**

**Martin  
Hill**

"They definitely need [more shelters]. Cause I mean, older people like me or people that are handicapped and... you don't have no where to sit when you be waiting for the bus"

"I don't mind catching the bus, getting a little fresh air out here... you can catch the Pulse all day long"

"Everywhere I go it takes me... an hour and a half to two hours to get from point A to point B... If I have to be at work at 7 in the morning, I have to be at the bus by 5"



Sticker Campaign  
Launched Spring '21  
Have you seen them around  
town?

The Rider's Voice aims to amplify core bus riders' stories, experiences, and concerns for better transit in the Richmond Region. One of the most powerful tools in advocacy is a story because it can persuade and move people to action. Since its launch in Spring of 2021, rider comments have been featured in:

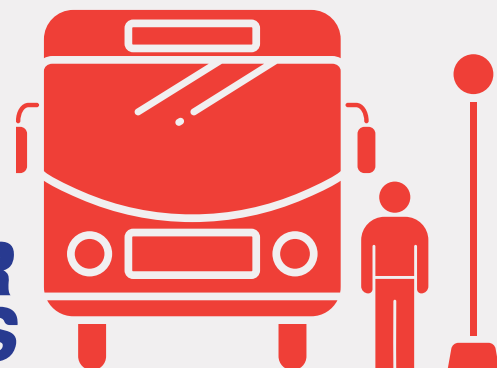
- Two Richmond Times-Dispatch Op/Eds
- "Richmond Racial Equity Essays"
- Two GRTC Board Meetings
- The Virginia Transit Association Conference in Tysons Corner
- The Joint Transportation Committee to the General Assembly



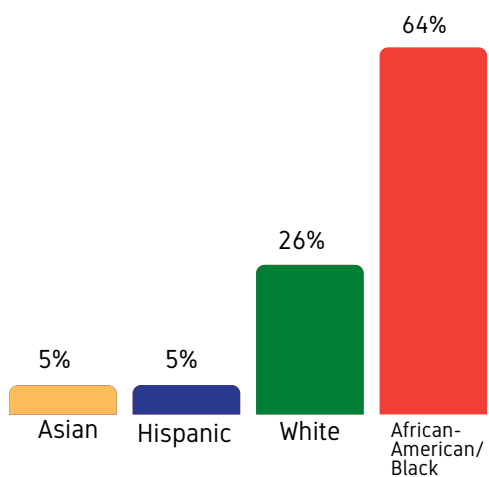


# WHO RIDES THE BUS?

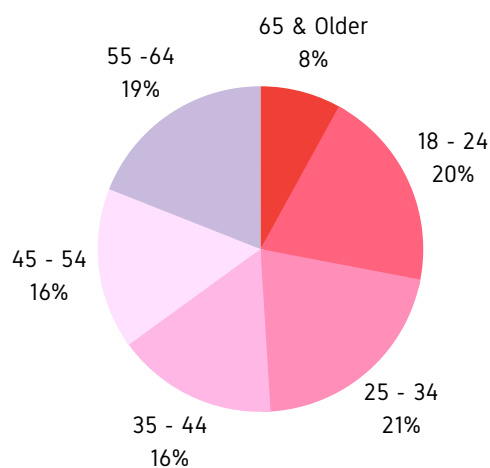
## RVA RIDER DEMOGRAPHICS



### ETHNICITY



### AGE



### GENDER

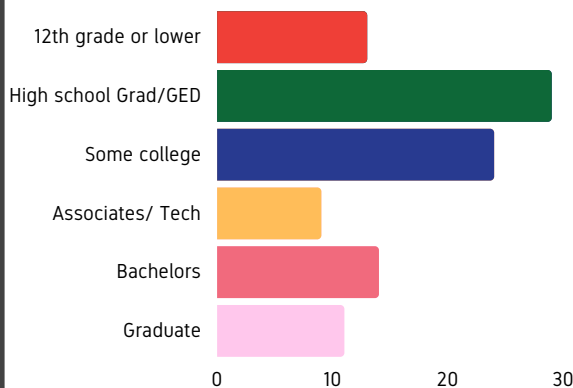


57% Female



43% Male

### EDUCATION



\*Info from GRTC 2019 Passenger Survey

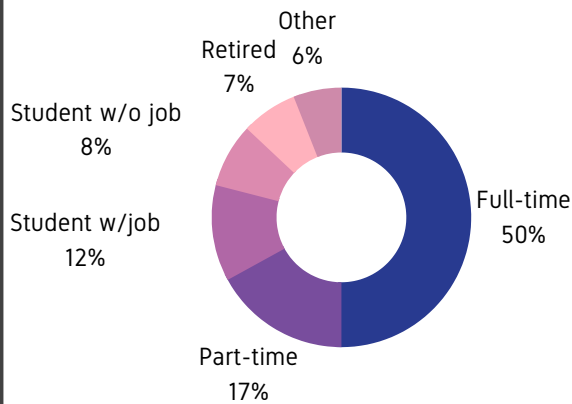


# WHO RIDES THE BUS?

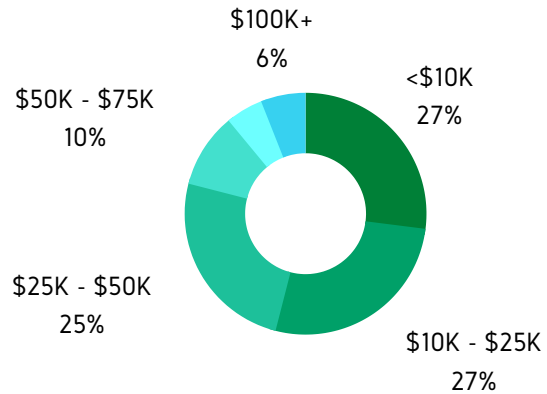
## RVA RIDER DEMOGRAPHICS



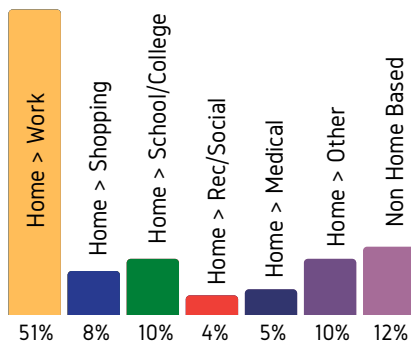
### EMPLOYMENT



### HOUSEHOLD INCOME



### TRIP PURPOSE



### DID YOU KNOW?



GRTC is one of the few transit systems that recouped its ridership "post-pandemic". While most adults were working from home during the lockdown, Richmond's core ridership was still catching the bus. Because of GRTC's focus to provide higher frequencies in denser neighborhoods with lower incomes, Richmond's fare-free experiment was successful.

\*Info from GRTC 2019 Passenger Survey



# A MESSAGE FROM



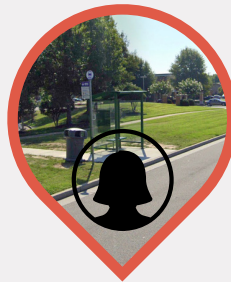
## THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Faith Walker

I am so grateful for the opportunity to lead the charge for Virginia's only public transportation non-profit representing bus riders. We know that public transportation provides people with mobility and access to employment, community resources, medical care, and recreational opportunities throughout the Richmond Region. As we continue our efforts to make transportation frequent and far-reaching, we have committed to 3 core goals:

### 1. More Buses, More Places

When I hear stories like Angie's, it helps me realize that frequency is bigger than convenience. Frequency allows people the opportunity for economic mobility with access to higher-paying jobs. Buses that run more frequently and routes that take people to more places will ensure financial growth for RVA's core riders and attract new ones.

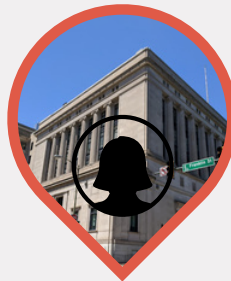


Angie  
Routes 7A/7B  
Laburnum Ave

"For the bus to be able to come every 30 minutes would be beneficial for me... I'm trying to start a new job with Amazon right now. I can't get the shift that I need with my kids because the bus comes every hour. That prevents me from being able to get a better job to support my family. If the bus came every 30 minutes that would change **everything** for me."

### 2. Dignified Places to Wait

Dignity is the state or quality of being worthy of honor or respect. Work is one essential responsibility that shapes and fulfills human dignity by providing for the needs of one's self and one's family in Richmond. Traveling to work makes up for 51 % of GRTC trip purposes. Riders deserve dignified places to wait that protect them and their families from the elements provides safety with clean comfort because we demand that in all public spaces.



Anonymous  
StopID# 352  
Broad & 11th

"A lot of days the sun is extremely hot! And like me, I'm over here in the shade trying to keep a little cool.... also when it snows or its raining it will be good to have a shelter that covers you at least... We will be in a safe area you know, where we are protected from the sun and from the rain or sleet."

### 3. The Riders' Voice

We believe that our advocacy should be centered around what the rider is saying. We also recognized that riders in the Richmond Region don't have a transportation board that fully reflects them or their lived experiences. Our goal is to advocate, educate and train for a shift in power so they can meaningfully shape the transit practices and funding that affect them. Transportation planning that values the riders' voice will ensure equitable mobility that meets the needs of the most dependent on it.

Sincerely,

*Faith R. Walker*



# Ways to Get Involved

## Take Action!



### 1. Ride the Bus

- Support transit by using transit
- Save on gas and reduce car maintenance costs.
- Reduce the stress of dealing with traffic or parking .
- Help the environment by reducing your greenhouse gas emissions



### 2. Adopt or Sponsor a Bus Stop

- Regularly maintain stop by being responsible for litter pick-up at and around the bus stop. Visit [rvarapidtransit.org/better-bus-stop](http://rvarapidtransit.org/better-bus-stop)
- We are also encouraging organizations, civic associations, businesses, and individuals to sponsor new shelter and benches!



### 3. Share Your Story

- We want to hear your experience using public transportation in our Region
- Call 804-286-0007 and leave your comment or visit [rvarapidtransit.org/riders-voice](http://rvarapidtransit.org/riders-voice) to fill out our online survey



### 4. Donate

- Your support enables RVA Rapid Transit to educate and advocate for frequent, far-reaching transit
- Visit [rvarapidtransit.org/donate](http://rvarapidtransit.org/donate) or mail donations to:  
RVA Rapid Transit  
1627 Monument Avenue  
Richmond, VA 23220



# THE TEAM



Faith Walker  
Executive Director



Richard Hankins  
Research Fellow



Elias Frantz  
Research Fellow

## *Board Members*

- Joh Gehlbach **President**
- Kendra Norrell **Vice President**
- Jess Powers **Treasurer**
- Stephen E. Davenport **Secretary**
- Nelson Reveley
- Anna Clemens
- Wyatt Gordon
- Amelia Lightner
- Brantley Tyndall
- Brendan Staley
- Danny Plaughter
- Elaine Williams
- Frank Thornton, Jr
- Mariia Zimmerman
- Sheryl Johnson
- Suzanne Hall
- Benjamin Campbell





## How It All Started

- [brookings.edu/research/missed-opportunity-transit-and-jobs-in-metropolitan-america/](https://www.brookings.edu/research/missed-opportunity-transit-and-jobs-in-metropolitan-america/)

## Benefits of Transit

- [magazine.northeast.aaa.com/daily/life/aaa/costs-more-than-ever-to-own-a-car/](https://magazine.northeast.aaa.com/daily/life/aaa/costs-more-than-ever-to-own-a-car/) - Financial: 1
- [mygreenway.org/benefits-of-public-transit](https://mygreenway.org/benefits-of-public-transit) - Societal 1
- [bcmj.org/presidents-comment/benefits-riding-bus](https://bcmj.org/presidents-comment/benefits-riding-bus) - Health 1, 2; Climate 1
- [apta.com/news-publications/public-transportation-facts/](https://apta.com/news-publications/public-transportation-facts/) - Economic 1, 2; Climate 2; Societal 4,
- [kcata.org/about\\_kcata/entries/environmental\\_benefits\\_of\\_public\\_transit](https://kcata.org/about_kcata/entries/environmental_benefits_of_public_transit) - Economic 3
- [fhwa.dot.gov/policy/2002cpr/pdf/ch14.pdf](https://fhwa.dot.gov/policy/2002cpr/pdf/ch14.pdf) - Equity 1, 2; Societal 2, 3
- [transportation.gov/mission/health/Expand-Public-Transportation-Systems-and-Offer-Incentives](https://transportation.gov/mission/health/Expand-Public-Transportation-Systems-and-Offer-Incentives) - Health 3, Equity 3
- [ridegrtc.com/fares](https://ridegrtc.com/fares) - Financial 2
- [nar.realtor/articles/public-transportation-boosts-property-values](https://nar.realtor/articles/public-transportation-boosts-property-values) - Societal 5

## More Buses, More Places

- [ridegrtc.com/planning-your-trip/system-map](https://ridegrtc.com/planning-your-trip/system-map)
- [planrva.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Greater\\_RVA\\_Transit\\_Vision\\_Plan.pdf](https://planrva.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Greater_RVA_Transit_Vision_Plan.pdf)
- [lehd.ces.census.gov/](https://lehd.ces.census.gov/)

## Who Rides the Bus?

- [ridegrtc.com/media/annual\\_reports/GRTC\\_survey\\_final\\_report.pdf](https://ridegrtc.com/media/annual_reports/GRTC_survey_final_report.pdf)

## Pictures

Big thanks to GRTC's marketing team & City of Richmond for allowing us to use photos.

## A Note on the Font

Our header font, Harabara, is the font used by TransJakarta, which is the operator of the largest BRT system in the world. As we are pushing for an expansion of Bus and BRT service, we wanted to give a nod to the standard bearer of Bus Rapid Transit.

