



2026 Virginia Statewide Rail Plan

Virtual Public Meeting #2

September 8, 2026

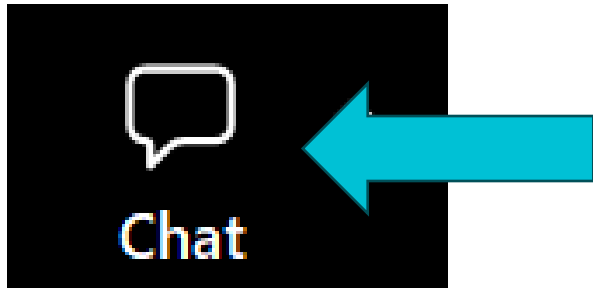


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Institute for Engagement & Negotiation



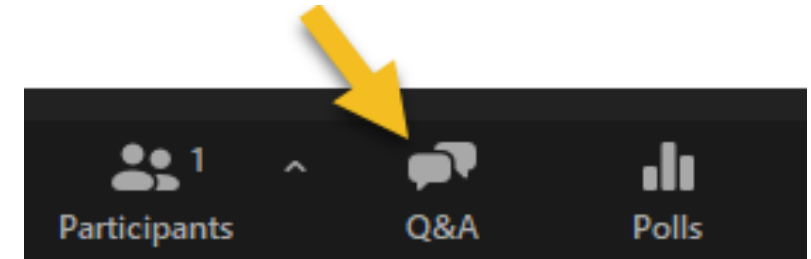
Meeting Structure

- We'll be using Zoom Chat to ask you questions



- Please use the “Chat” feature when prompted

- We'll be answering questions at the end of the meeting



- Please use the Q&A feature to submit questions

Icebreaker Question

What is the best or most memorable train ride you've ever taken? If you've never taken a train ride, or none stand out to you, what train ride would you like to take someday?

An aerial photograph of a large freight train yard, showing numerous colorful railcars (blue, red, yellow, green, and white) parked in long rows on multiple tracks. The image is partially obscured by a blue circular graphic element on the left side of the slide.

Agenda

- 2026 Virginia Statewide Rail Plan (VSRP) Activities Review
- Stakeholder Engagement Overview and Takeaways
- New Rail Plan Strategies
- Public Survey Results Maps
- Document Production and Next Steps
- Q&A

Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT)

Who are we?



The catalyst to connect and improve the quality of life for all Virginians through innovative transportation solutions



Our vision is a connected Commonwealth with an integrated multimodal network that serves every person, every business, and every need



The agency works with rail and public transportation stakeholders to provide service to people throughout Virginia



The General Assembly established DRPT in 1992 as an independent agency separate from VDOT

What do we do?



Allocates state and federal funding through capital and operating grants, as well as grants to support specific enhancements or improvements



Conducts statewide rail and transit studies, including improving service or identifying new opportunities



Plans and programs new services and capital improvement projects, from public transportation to freight and passenger rail



Provides leadership, advocacy, technical assistance, and funding oversight

Statewide Rail Plans

- Under 49 U.S. Code Chapter 227, each State, *at its own election*, may prepare and maintain a State Rail Plan as a means for:
 - Setting forth State policy involving freight and passenger rail transportation, including commuter rail operations, in the State.
 - Establishing the period covered by the State Rail Plan.
 - Presenting priorities and strategies to enhance rail service in the State that benefits the public.
 - Serving as the basis for Federal and State rail investments within the State.
- *Currently not* required for projects to be eligible for federal discretionary grants.
- Recommendations remains for a 4-year cycle.



Virginia Statewide Rail Plan

Creating a vision for the future of rail in Virginia

Records progress and charts path forward.

Data driven and aligns with goals and objectives of VTrans, the Commonwealth's long-range multimodal transportation plan.

Requires close coordination with the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority (VPRA).

Includes 6-year and 20-year horizons.

Data points and metrics can be compared plan to plan and state to state.

Supports applications for federal rail funding for passenger and freight projects.

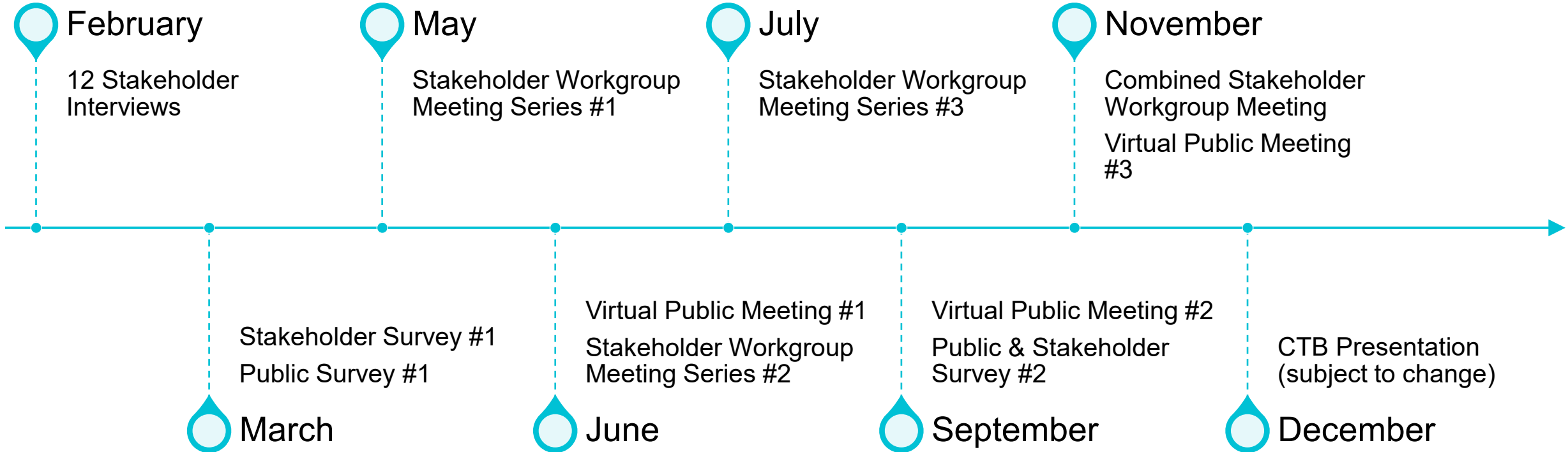


2026 Virginia Statewide Rail Plan Engagement Schedule

Phase 1:
Interviews and Survey

Phase 2:
Workgroups and Public Meetings

Phase 3:
Plan Review and Refinement



How does public involvement fit into the plan?

- June's public meeting recapped public and stakeholder surveys.
- Three rounds of stakeholder meetings between May and August 2026.
 - Discussed several rail improvement strategies with stakeholders and received feedback.
 - Identified new strategies between the second and third round of meetings.
- Today's public meeting will present a summary of feedback for each strategy category and will introduce the new strategies.
- As the plan is developed, the strategies will be documented where appropriate to highlight how DRPT proposes implementing rail improvements in the future.

Stakeholder Groups

Stakeholder Groups	Description
Rail Industry & Freight Partners	Organizations directly involved in operating, managing, or supporting freight and passenger rail infrastructure
Planning, Policy & Government Partners	Agencies, authorities, and commissions responsible for transportation planning, land use, and public policy at federal, state, regional, and local levels
Transit, Accessibility & Advocacy Organizations	Transit service providers, advocacy and civic groups representing passenger interests, accessibility, environmental justice, and sustainable transportation priorities
Business / Economic Development Partners	Organizations involved in state, regional, and local economic development and/or businesses that rely on passenger and freight rail

Focus: VSRP Strategies

- Strategies inform the scope and implementation of the VSRP.
- Grouped into **5 strategy categories** – categories were updated after Stakeholder Meeting #2.
- The original set included 26 draft strategies; some were refined and 13 were added based on stakeholder and/or public feedback
- For a full list of strategies, see Virtual Public Meeting #1 Presentation here:



Stakeholder Meeting Series

Stakeholder Meeting 1

- Strengths and needs for each strategy category.

Stakeholder Meeting 2

- What's Working?
- What Needs Strengthening?
- What's Missing?

Stakeholder Meeting 3

- How should DRPT carry out this strategy?
- What are some limitations/barriers?
- How would we measure success of this strategy?

Tool Overview - Miro

- Online, collaborative digital whiteboard platform.



Stakeholder Meeting 1 – Strengths and Needs

For each strategy category:

- **What are the system's strengths?**
 - Existing assets, investments, partnerships, and opportunities that provide a foundation for future growth.
- **What does the system need?**
 - Service, infrastructure, funding, access, coordination, and information improvements needed to support the future rail network.

Stakeholder Meeting 1 – Strengths and Needs

Strategy Category	Strengths	Key Needs
Passenger Rail	Growing demand; strong state support; reliable, sustainable alternative	More frequency and capacity; expand service; improve first/last-mile connections
Stations & Access	Strong existing network; community and multimodal assets; local partnerships	Improve parking, bike/pedestrian and ADA access; modernize amenities and transit connections
Funding	Established state programs and partnerships	More stable, predictable long-term funding for capital and operations
Freight Rail	Extensive network; strong private investment; economic and environmental benefits	Expand capacity, industrial access, and intermodal facilities; improve coordination
Rail Data	Strong existing datasets and analytical expertise	Better passenger/freight data, transparency, dashboards, and localized information

Stakeholder Meeting 2 – Surveying each strategy

For each strategy:

- **What's Working?**
 - Which existing efforts, programs, or approaches provide a strong foundation?
- **What Needs Strengthening?**
 - Where do strategies need additional investment, clarity, coordination, or emphasis?
- **What's Missing?**
 - What is missing that should be incorporated into this, or another, strategy?

Stakeholder Meeting 2 – Passenger Rail

What's Working	Needs Strengthening	What's Missing
Foundation for expansion	More frequent and reliable service	Rural and underserved community access
Service growth in new corridors	Better passenger-freight rail coordination	Faster travel times and capacity
Competitive and sustainable travel option	Stronger station connectivity	Clear metrics for success and future vision

Stakeholder Meeting 2 – Stations & Access

What's Working	Needs Strengthening	What's Missing
Growing emphasis on multimodal station planning and transit-oriented development	Better agency coordination	Consistent multimodal connections
Successful station connectivity models	More community guidance and collaboration	Enhanced station amenities
Strong local partnerships	Stronger land use integration	Additional investment in sidewalks, bike facilities, and connections to area attractions

Stakeholder Meeting 2 – Funding

What's Working	Needs Strengthening	What's Missing
Established funding programs (freight, station, and passenger rail)	Greater funding awareness for potential grantees	Stable, long-term funding
Strong state investment	More efficient program coordination	Higher capital and operating investments
Effective grants and partnerships	More technical assistance	Resources for future demand

Stakeholder Meeting 2 – Freight Rail

What's Working	Needs Strengthening	What's Missing
Supports economic growth	More site and infrastructure funding	Added capacity and site access
Strong foundations of grants and site investments	Better stakeholder coordination	Freight corridor policies
Effective public-private partnerships	Greater outreach and technical assistance	Improved site and capacity data

Stakeholder Meeting 2 – Rail Data & Communications

What's Working	Needs Strengthening	What's Missing
Support for statewide coordination	More accessible rail data	Comprehensive performance data
Strong existing data and planning foundation	Clearer planning guidance	Local tools and technical support
Interest in stronger liaison role for DRPT	Better partner communication	Stronger rail value messaging

Stakeholder Meeting 3 – Implementation, Barriers, and Metrics

Stakeholders were asked to consider three questions for each strategy:

- **How should DRPT implement it?**
 - What programs, partnerships, policies, or investments could move the strategy forward?
- **What barriers exist?**
 - What funding, capacity, coordination, policy, or market challenges could affect implementation?
- **How should success be measured?**
 - What outcomes and performance measures should demonstrate progress?

Stakeholder Meeting 3 – Passenger Rail

Priorities

- Expand service frequency & market reach
- Support station and corridor expansion
- Improve passenger-freight coordination
- Reduce delays and travel times

Barriers

- Limited long-term funding
- Capacity and resource constraints
- Complex multi-stakeholder coordination
- Service expansion vs. travel time tradeoffs

Metrics

- Increased ridership
- Faster travel times
- Greater passenger capacity
- Expanded access and reliability

Stakeholder Meeting 3 – Stations & Access

Priorities

- Improve station access and connectivity
- Integrate planning with development
- Expand innovative access options

Barriers

- Limited funding and service resources
- Complex interagency coordination
- Varied local development contexts
- Community-specific access needs

Metrics

- Expanded walking and biking connections
- Completed station improvements
- Increased station-area development

Stakeholder Meeting 3 – Freight Rail

Priorities

- Increase freight rail capacity
- Preserve strategic freight corridors
- Align rail and economic development planning

Barriers

- Limited funding availability
- Gaps in freight data and information
- Complex public-private coordination
- Community concerns and acceptance

Metrics

- More rail-served industrial sites
- Growth in rail freight volumes
- Increased rail utilization
- Preserved freight corridors

Stakeholder Meeting 3 – Rail Data & Communications

Priorities

- Improve rail data and mapping tools
- Strengthen planning resources and guidance
- Enhance stakeholder coordination

Barriers

- Data availability and quality limitations
- Limited staff capacity and resources
- Diverse regional needs and priorities

Metrics

- Greater access to rail information
- Increased use of planning resources
- Improved stakeholder coordination

Stakeholder Meeting 3 – Safety

Priorities

- Improve rail crossing safety
- Reduce rail-highway conflicts
- Strengthen safety education and awareness

Barriers

- Limited funding for safety investments
- Network-wide risk identification challenges
- Safety data limitations
- Coordination challenges

Metrics

- Fewer rail-related incidents
- Completion of priority safety projects
- Increased public safety awareness
- Greater use of safety data

Developing New Strategies from Public Engagement

- Received feedback from public via Survey #1, public meeting comments.
- Received feedback from stakeholders via Stakeholder Group meetings 1-3.
- DRPT assessed viability of existing strategies.
- Developed new strategies based on public/stakeholder comments.

New Strategies

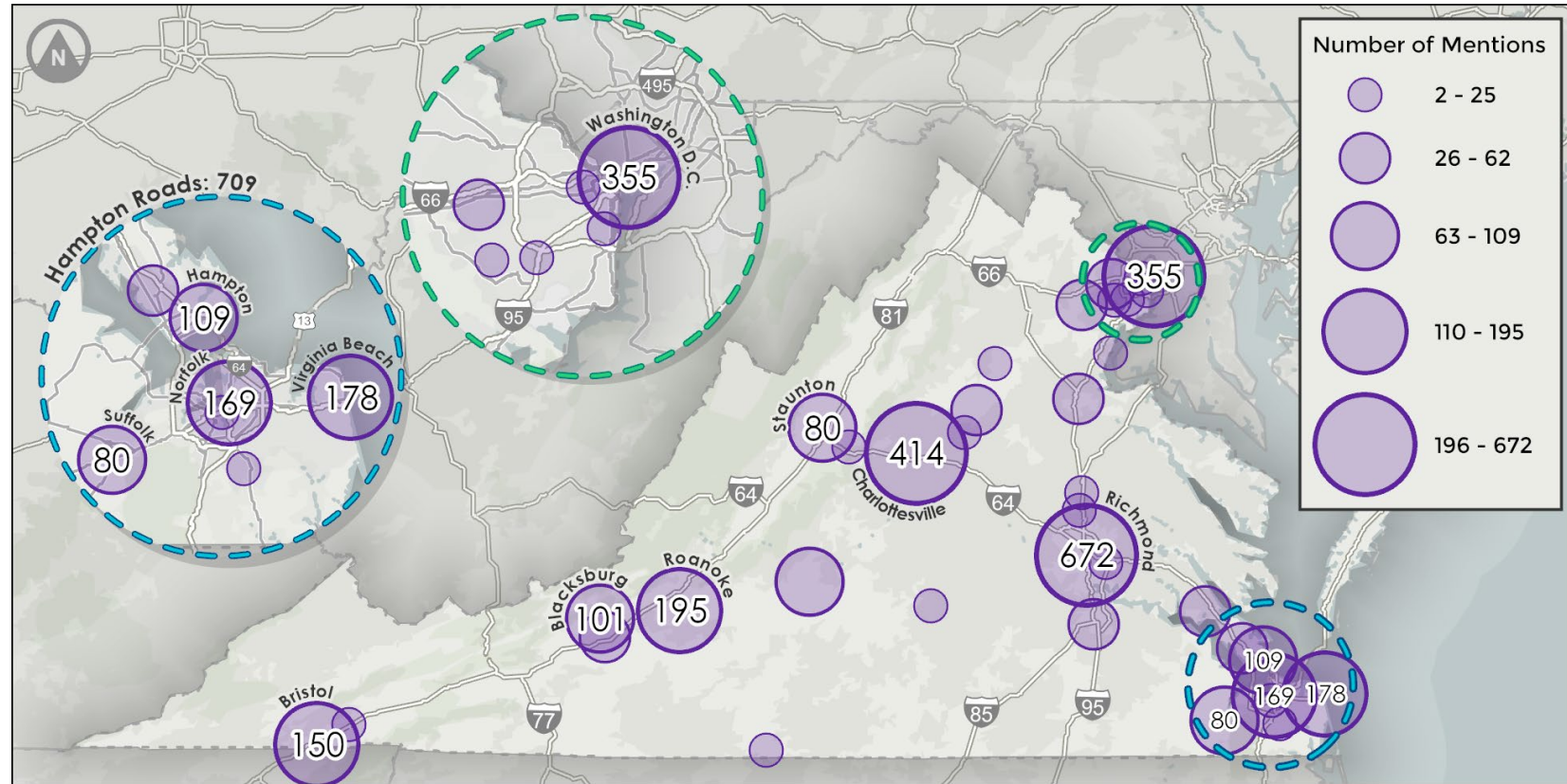
- Rail Data & Communications
 - Host and coordinate quarterly rail stakeholder meetings.
 - Establish environmental planning, permitting, and project management guidance.
 - Provide a centralized rail infrastructure and services database.
 - Create a strategy for marketing rail benefits.
 - Establish Commonwealth policies on rail corridor abandonment for other transportation or recreation purpose.

New Strategies

- Freight Rail
 - Increase Rail Preservation Fund (RPF) funding.
 - Grant support for short line signal upgrades.
 - Develop rail business development map/application.
 - Unused Rail Spur studying and marketing.
- Stations & Access
 - Develop passenger rail transit connectivity pilots.
 - Develop station transit-oriented development (TOD) guidance (DRPT currently working on TOD Guidebook).
- Safety
 - Dedicated state funds for crossing safety improvements.
 - Develop crossing technology pilot projects.

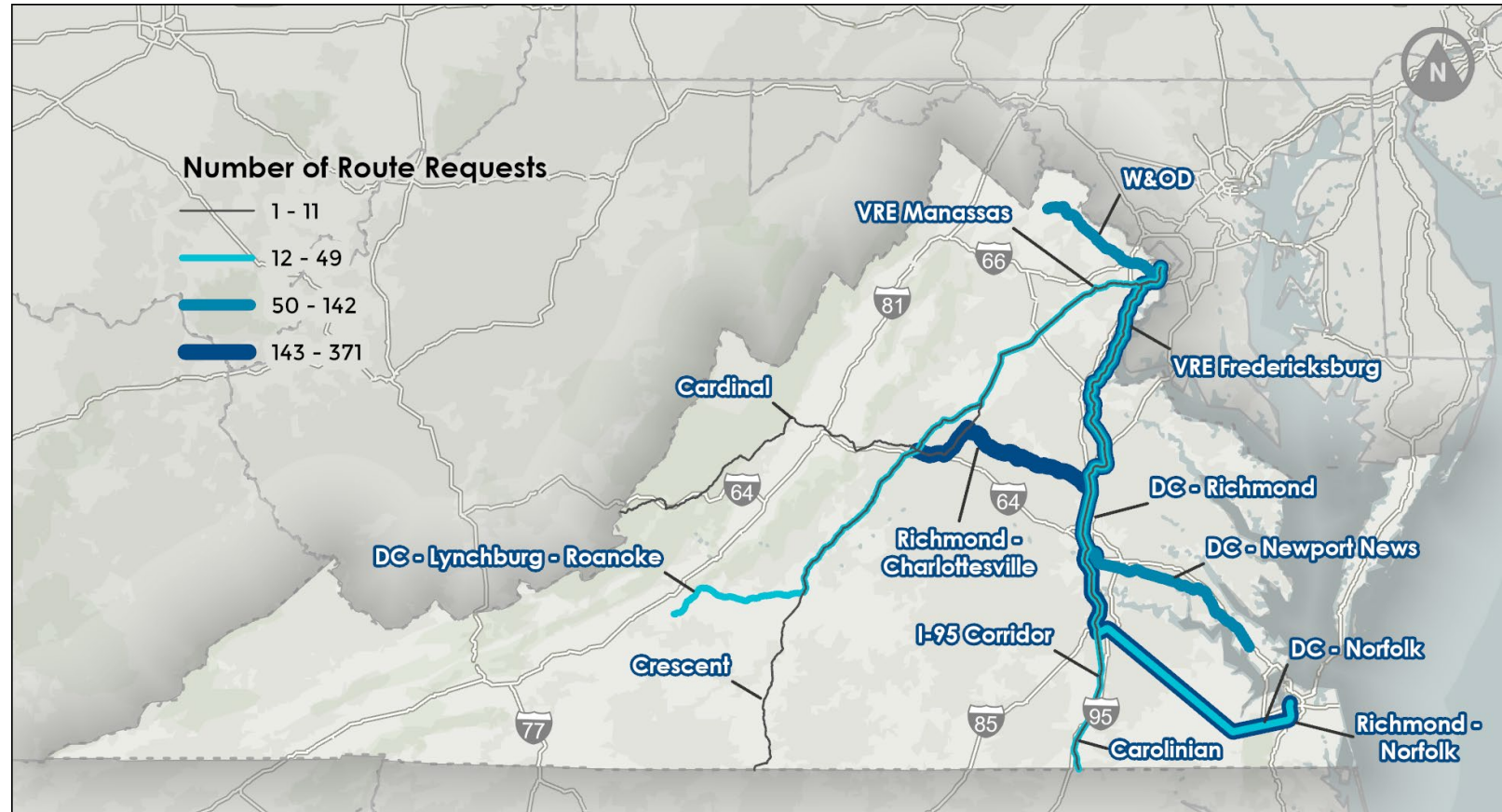
Public Survey Results: Where do you want to see new or more service?

- Public responses were coded for mention of specific locations.
- Respondents mentioned more than 3,600 specific locations.



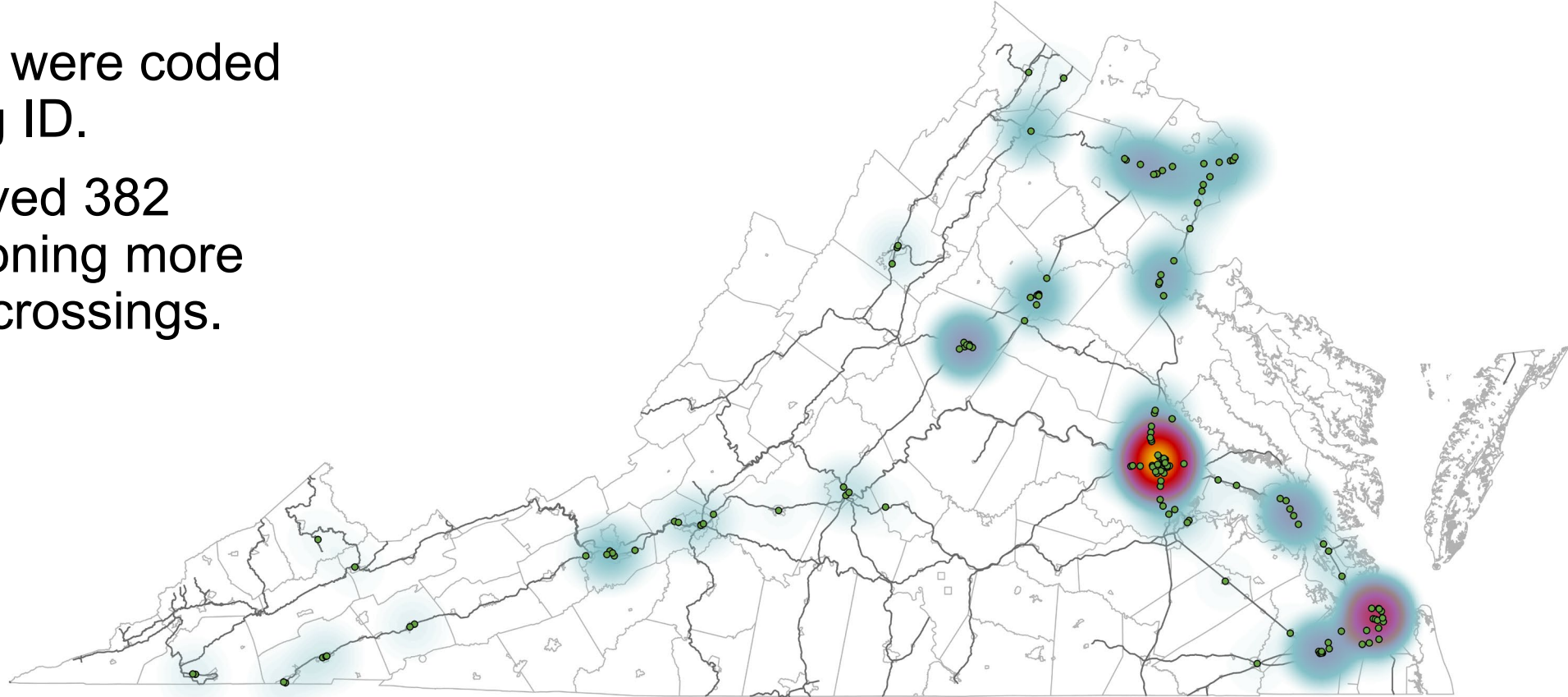
Public Survey Results: Where do you want to see new or more service?

- Public responses were coded for mention of specific routes.
- More than 1,000 responses mentioned a specific route.



Public Survey Results: Do you have a rail crossing of concern in your community?

- Public responses were coded to match crossing ID.
- The survey received 382 comments mentioning more than 160 unique crossings.



Next Steps

- Ongoing data collection, analysis, and chapter development.
- Anticipate initial drafts of chapters in September and October 2026.
- Second Public Survey in fall 2026.
- 3rd Virtual Public Meeting late fall 2026.
- Planned CTB presentation December 2026.
- Planned submission to FRA January 2027.



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