

A HISTORY
of ROADS
IN VIRGINIA
“the most convenient wayes”



A History Of Roads In Virginia **“the most convenient wayes...”**

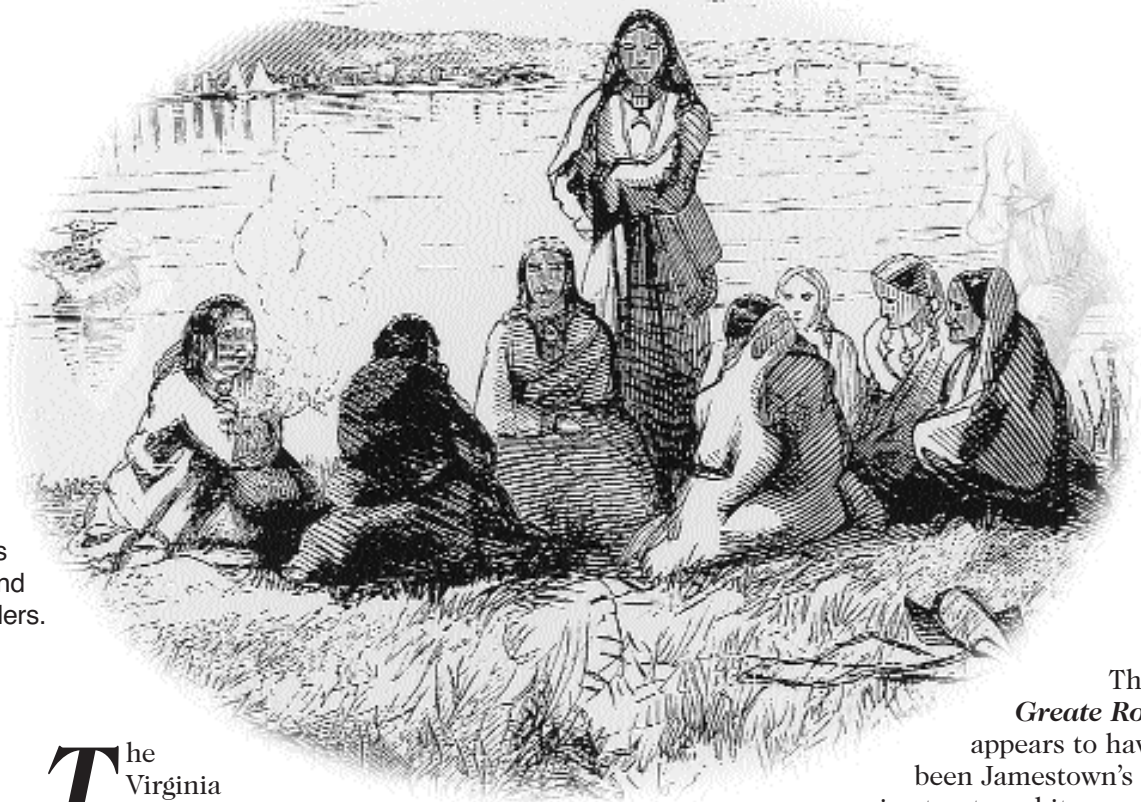
The word “road” probably was derived from the Middle English “rode,” which meant a mounted journey. The companion word “highway” is believed to have come from the practice, hundreds of years ago in England, of building main roads higher than the adjacent land by throwing earth from side ditches toward the center, as the ancient Romans had done. Because they were higher, they were called “high wayes.” This is a story of their development in Virginia.

A HISTORY
of ROADS
IN VIRGINIA
“the most convenient ways”

Produced by the Virginia Department of Transportation Office of Public Affairs
1401 E. Broad Street, Richmond, VA 23219
(804) 786-5731 (TTY users, call 711)
vdotinfo@VirginiaDOT.org
VirginiaDOT.org



Waterways and crude paths met the transportation needs of the Indians and early settlers.



The colonists discovered a crude network of paths made by Indians.

The Virginia settlers, who arrived at Jamestown Island aboard three small ships on May 13, 1607, had little need for a road system.

Barely more than a hundred in number, their first concerns were disease, hunger, shelter, and protection from the often hostile Indians who had lived on the land for generations. In those first rigorous years, survival itself demanded the full energy of the colonists in the wilderness.

The waterways were there for transportation—the great rivers that emptied into the Chesapeake Bay and that were to become known as the James, the York, the Rappahannock, and the Potomac.

As the colonists hunted for food and cautiously began exploring the forest, they discovered a crude network of paths made long before by Indians and wild animals. The colonists used these, and many of the paths were to shape the Virginia road pattern for years to come.

The settlers also found roughly built bridges formed by the Indians from tree trunks and limbs, which the settlers at first believed to be Indian-planted traps rather than bridges. By 1610, with new arrivals from England, the colony numbered some 210.

The *Rhoad* along the River Bank, probably a former Indian path, was used to haul supplies from the ships to the Jamestown Fort.

The *Greate Road* appears to have been Jamestown's main street, and it was of early commercial importance. It crossed the isthmus connecting the island with the mainland at Glass House Point, where in 1608 and for a brief period afterwards, glass was manufactured for export. Faint traces of the road are evident today at Glass House Point.

Eventually, the *Greate Road* extended on the mainland to Middle Plantation, a settlement to become known as Williamsburg and destined to be the capital of the Virginia colony and the hub of the colonial road system.

The first bridge recorded as having been built by the English settlers was constructed in 1611 at Jamestown Island. It wasn't really a bridge, but a wharf about 200 feet long from the bank of the James to the river channel, where the settlers docked their ships. The colony's first agricultural crops raised for export were rolled to these ships.

John Rolfe had begun experimenting with the cultivation of tobacco in 1612 and two years later exported a shipment to England. In less than 20 years, tobacco exports had reached 500,000 pounds annually; tobacco would remain the foundation for the Virginia economy throughout the colonial period.

Inevitably, the success of the tobacco crop was to influence the colony's transportation needs as well.

The tobacco fields spread on the mainland, and a number of the old Indian paths became **tobacco rolling roads**. The name came from the practice of packing the harvested tobacco in barrels called hogsheads and rolling them to the wharves, frequently a distance of miles. The rollers ordinarily tried to follow the high ground and avoided the fords, or shallow stream crossings, because water leaking through the barrels would damage the tobacco. The practice of following the old paths and branching off from time to time on higher ground accounts for many of the early meandering country roads.

After two decades, the colony's population was near 5,000 and growing. The frontier had been pushed well beyond its original boundaries, and while much of the settlers' travel was still by boat, an increasing proportion was on land.

America's First Road Law

The need for improving roads to better serve the social and economic life of the colony was among the matters facing members of the House of Burgesses as they met in Jamestown in September 1632.

Before adjournment, they had passed the first highway legislation in American history, an act providing, in the language of the day, that, "**Highwayes shall be layd in such convenient places as are requisite accordinge as the Governor and Counsell or the commissioners for the monthlie corts shall appoynt, or accordinge as the parishioners of every parish shall agree.**"

The first legislation also required each man in the colony to work on the roads a given number of days each year, a custom dating at least from the feudal period of the Middle Ages in England, or to pay another to work in his place. This labor law, to remain in effect for more than 250 years, provided the main source of work-



Colonists carved roads through the Virginia wilderness.

ers for road and bridge construction.

Twenty-five years later, probably in March 1657, the colony's basic road law was broadened to provide "**that surveyors of highwaie and maintenance for bridges be yearly kept and appointed in each countie cort respectively, and that all generall wayes from county to county and all churchwaies to be laied out and cleered yearly as each countie cort shall think fitt, needful and convenient, respect being had to the course used in England to that end.**"

In 1661, the surveyors were empowered to select locations for roads, choosing "**the most convenient wayes to Church, to the Court, to James Towne, and from County to County.**"

By the end of the 17th century, many miles of primitive roads threaded throughout Tidewater Virginia. The colony's population had reached 70,000. While horseback was the most frequent means of overland travel, horse-drawn carts became more numerous, and some carriages and coaches gradually appeared.

In 1705, the legislature passed a new road act providing for "**making, clearing, and repairing the highwayes and for clearing the rivers and creeks... for the more convenient traveling and carriage, by land, of tobaccos merchandise, or other things within this dominion . . .**"

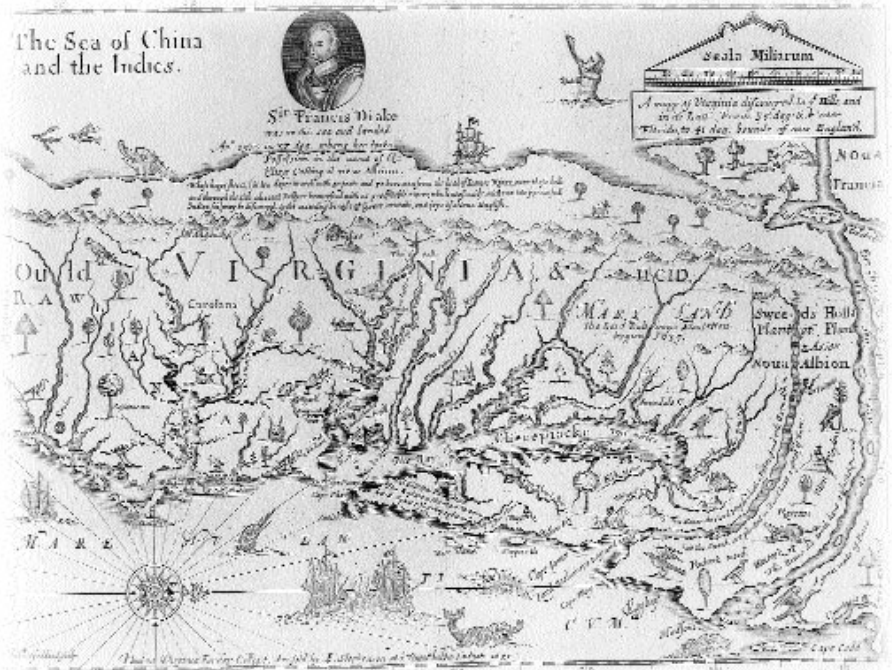
The new road act provided for further extension of the road system and required that the roads “be kept well cleared from woods and bushes, and the roots well grubbed up, at least thirty feet broad.” The new law also provided for skilled labor to erect bridges larger than could be built by the local surveyors, and when such a bridge was to cross a county line, its cost would be divided “proportionable to the number of tithables in each county.”

Other road laws came quickly in the early years of the 18th century. Owners of mill dams were required to provide a 10-foot passage on dams and spillways; it became mandatory for a county in which an iron furnace was operated to provide “good roads to be laid out and made from such works to the nearest place upon some navigable river or creek”; establishment of public ferries was authorized by the legislature.

In 1716, Alexander Spotswood, regarded by many as perhaps the best of the colonial governors, led his “Knights of The Golden Horseshoe” up the summits of the “Great Mountains,” the Blue Ridge, and looked down in amazement at the splendor of the Shenandoah Valley. Spotswood, a former soldier, recognized that settlement of the valley could help protect eastern Virginia from hostile forces.

It was in the next quarter-century that the valley and much of the Piedmont, the rolling country between the mountains and Tidewater, were settled by pioneers moving inland and by many others who came down into the valley from Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

Extending north and south through the valley was a relatively good Indian path, called by various names including the Appalachian Warriors’ Path and the Shenandoah Hunting Path. By the mid-18th century, it had been developed into the *Great Wagon Road*, which eventually



This early map illustrates the importance of waterways.

led from Pennsylvania southward through the valley and on to Georgia.

Toward the southern end of the valley, the Great Wagon Road separated into two branches near Big Lick, later to become Roanoke. While one branch left the valley and went due south, the other continued west and crossed Cumberland Gap through the Allegheny Mountains at what now is the junction of the Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee borders. After Daniel Boone and a band of frontiersmen cleared a path into Kentucky about 1775, the western branch became known as the *Wilderness Road*, and it was to become the main pioneer route along which traveled the first waves of the great migration to the West.

East of the mountains, two principal routes led from where Richmond stands today deep into the interior. One was a path to the settlements that were to become Lynchburg and Roanoke, a course now followed approximately by U.S. Routes 60 and 460. The other was the *Three-Chopt Road* or *Three-Notched Road* to Albemarle, where it connected with another path leading across the mountains at Afton and into the valley. Its name came from the way it was marked to guide travelers, with notches cut on the trees.

Roads and road laws came quickly in the early years of the 18th century.



Much manual labor was the requirement for building and maintaining early roads.

In his *“Notes on the State of Virginia”* in 1785, Thomas Jefferson described the approach to handling road matters. *“The roads are under the government of county courts, subject to be controlled by the general court. They order new roads to be opened wherever they think them necessary. The inhabitants of the county are by them laid off into precincts, to each of which they allot a convenient portion of the public roads to be kept in repair. Such bridges as may be built without the assistance of artificers (skilled workers or craftsmen), they are to build. If the stream be such as to require a bridge of regular workmanship, the county employs workmen to build it at the expense of the whole county. If it be too great for the county, application is made to the General Assembly, who authorizes individuals to build it and to take a fixed toll from all passengers, or gives sanction to such other propositions as to them appear reasonable. Ferries are admitted only at such places as are particularly pointed out by law, and the rates of ferriage are fixed.”*

Turnpike Era

Road building in the latter stages of the 18th century and much of the 19th century was marked by the development of many turnpikes or toll roads. As Jefferson observed, toll financing provided a means of building highway facilities for which there was a need but which were too complex and costly to be constructed by the counties alone.

For the most part, Virginia counties

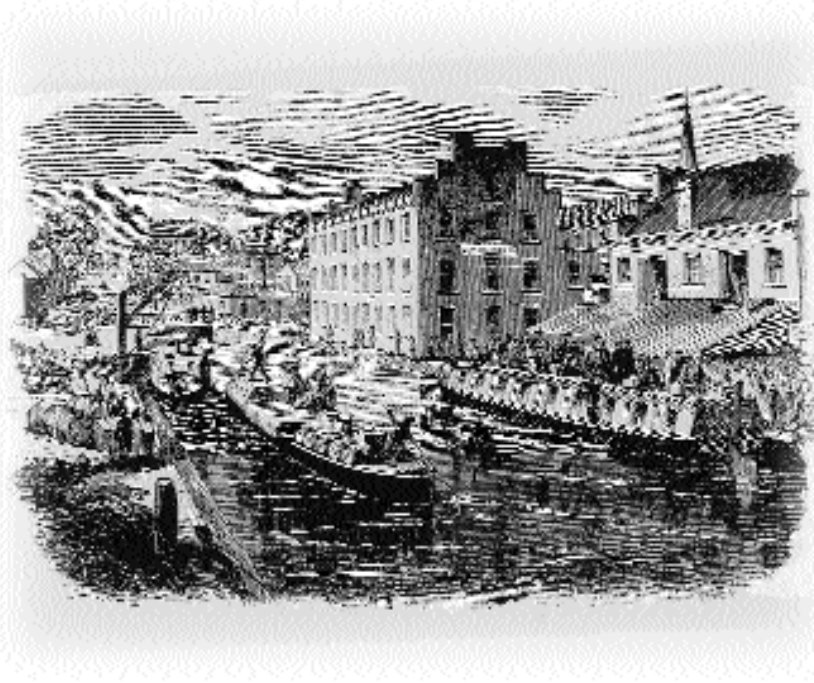
were impoverished and exhausted from their contributions of men, supplies, and other resources to the Revolutionary War. The turnpike era offered a new way of meeting road needs.

The turnpike got its name from its toll gate. When first designed, the gate was a turnstile consisting of two crossed bars pointed at their outer ends and turned on a vertical bar or pole.

In 1772, the Virginia legislature cleared the way for what probably was the first toll road in America, when it authorized Augusta County to build a highway over the mountain between Jennings’s Gap and Warm Springs and to establish a toll gate. The road, as outlined by the legislature, was to be financed with 300 pounds advanced by the colony and 900 pounds raised by a lottery. Revenue collected from travelers was to be spent for the upkeep of the road and *“towards building... housing for the reception of the poor sick resorting to the said springs.”*

In 1785, five years after Richmond had become the state’s capital, the legislature appointed a commission to erect toll gates on existing roads in the Alexandria area to increase road revenue. The Fairfax and Loudoun Turnpike Road Company was chartered in 1795 to construct an improved road between Alexandria and Little River in Fairfax County. It accomplished little, however, and was followed in 1802 by the Little River Turnpike Company which, in 1811, completed a 20-foot- wide turnpike extending west from Alexandria for about 34 miles. It operated as a toll road for nearly a century, and its completion touched off construction of many turnpikes in Virginia by the time of the Civil War.

Virginia's population by 1800 had climbed to 880,200, with settlers in most of the major regions that make up the present state. This growth and expansion led the General Assembly in February 1816 to establish the nation's first state



The James River and the Kanawha Canal played an important role in increasing communications and commerce between commercial centers and rural areas of the state.

board of public works and to create a fund for internal improvement. The board, with the governor serving as president, was empowered to appoint a “*principal engineer*” for the state, and it existed until 1902. Its formation coincided with the beginning of the nation's canal era.

The board was responsible for chartering, finding, and supervising internal improvements. The fund, amounting to more than a million dollars, was created to transfer shares, owned by the state, in the stock of the Little River Turnpike Company, the Dismal Swamp, Appomattox, Potomac, and James River Canal companies and in two banks. Money in the fund was to be used to match private capital in financing improvements.

The office of the principal engineer provided important resources for the location, design, and construction of transportation facilities in Virginia for years to come.

The first principal engineer, Laommi Baldwin, Jr., held office from 1816 until 1818, when he resigned. Baldwin was succeeded by Thomas Moore, who served

until his death in 1822. Moore then was followed by Claudius Crozet, an engineer who was to have deep influence on Virginia transportation.

Crozet had been a French artillery officer under Napoleon Bonaparte before coming to America. He also had been a distinguished teacher at the United States Military Academy at West Point.

In Virginia, he served two terms as principal engineer, 1823-31 and 1838-43. The break in his service reflects the continuing dilemma of those faced with the responsibility for applying the results of a rapidly changing technology to large-scale public works.

One of the major efforts supported by the board of public works was the James River and Kanawha Canal, which was intended to improve communication and trade between the populous and politically powerful eastern Virginia and the comparatively isolated western regions of the state. Development of the canal had started in 1785, but it had not advanced as rapidly as its promoters had hoped.

A new and serious obstacle to its success appeared in 1829, when the Stourbridge Lion, an early locomotive, was imported to the United States from England. A year later, Crozet suggested that in view of this exciting new invention, a steam railroad would be preferable to the canal to link east and west. It was a bold idea indeed, because until then no railroad using steam locomotives had been operated in this country. Moreover, it was a controversial idea; powerful forces in the state wanted completion of the canal.

Largely as an outgrowth of the controversy, the board of public works was reorganized by the legislature in 1831 with a requirement for annual legislative approval of the principal engineer. In addition, Crozet's salary was reduced from \$3,500 to \$2,500. Crozet resigned and spent the next six years in Louisiana.

Crozet returned to his former position in Virginia at the beginning of 1838, and although his position favoring railroads over canals ultimately proved correct, the controversy remained. It ended in 1843 with an act stating “*that the office of chief engineer of the state be and the same is hereby abolished.*”



Plank roads were introduced from Canada in the 19th century, sometimes with jarring results.

Shortly afterwards, Crozet became principal of Richmond Academy in downtown Richmond, but in 1849 he responded to the pleas of his former opponents and returned to engineering to direct construction of a rail road through the mountains. The community of Crozet in Albemarle County is named for him.

During calmer days as state engineer, Crozet also was responsible for building highways through the mountains, as well as in other regions. One of the principal roads was the Northwestern Turnpike, which emerged in 1827 as Virginia's bid for the profitable trade of the territory northwest of the Ohio River.

Legislation incorporating the turnpike authorized subscriptions from the townspeople of Winchester, where the road was to begin, and of the other communities along the way. But its authors chose a route to serve the most populous towns without much regard for the difficult terrain. Little progress was made.

In 1831, the legislature provided for a company, with the governor as president of its board of directors, to borrow money and construct the turnpike with a minimum width of 12 feet ***“from Winchester to some point on the Ohio River to be situated by the principal engineer.”***

The turnpike eventually reached the Ohio River, and its gentle grades and alignment, developed largely under Crozet's direction, made it one of the good roads of its day. The course it followed is largely that used today by U.S. Route 50.

The Valley Turnpike was another important 19th century road developed during this period. Incorporated in 1834, the Valley Turnpike Company was authorized by the legislature to improve the route between Winchester and Harrisonburg — part of the ancient Indian

Warriors' Path and the Great Wagon Road followed by the early pioneers. The improvements were financed largely with \$25 shares sold to private citizens and were completed in 1840.

Early Paving Methods

While most roads remained dirt and in miserable condition, the turnpikes, relying on income from travelers for their existence, were provided in most instances with gravel, broken stone, wood, or macadam surfaces.

The old Manchester Pike near Richmond had been surfaced with gravel in 1808 and was recognized as the first ***“artificial”*** or paved road in the state. The widely used macadam surface was named after its developer, John Loudon McAdam, a Scottish-born engineer who began building roads in England in the early 19th century. McAdam is credited as the first to recognize that dry soil itself generally would support the weight of traffic and that pavement was necessary only to provide a smooth riding surface and to ensure dryness.

The macadam pavement consisted of crushed rock packed tightly into thin layers, with a top surface of sand or finely crushed stone rolled to provide a well-bound surface resistant to the penetrating damage of rain, ice and snow. McAdam generally specified a uniform thickness of seven to 10 inches for the finished road, although some ranged at least to 18 inches in thickness.

A segment of the Lynchburg-Salem Turnpike was the first roadway to be macadamized in Virginia.

The specifications for one macadam road provided for the first layer of stone to be *“cast on with a shovel to a depth of six inches, after the manner of sowing grain.”* It was to be compacted with a cast-iron roller, *“prepared with a box, or a cart bed, to carry two or three tons of sand”* and rolled until *“sufficiently solid and compact to receive the second layer.”* After dressing the surface *“with a rake or otherwise,”* the second layer, three or four inches thick was to be *“put on, rolled, and prepared in all respects as the first stratum was, until in a state of firmness and solidity, proper to admit the third or last stratum, which can then be put on, and the surface raked and dressed to such shape and form as may be required, and also rolled until satisfactorily compacted.”*

Part of the Lynchburg-Salem Turnpike was the first segment of road to be macadamized in Virginia. The Valley Turnpike and the Southwestern Turnpike, between Salem and Seven Mile Fork near Marion, were others.

Wooden pavements were also used widely in the turnpike era, perhaps naturally, since standing timber was abundant over much of the state.

“Corduroy” roads were built by placing small logs side by side along a cleared path and covering them with dirt for smoothness. The *“plank”* road was introduced in the United States from Canada, where some 500 miles were laid between 1834 and 1850. A typical plank road had a single track about eight feet wide, with the planks placed crosswise. Later, they were inclined slightly to allow rainwater to drain.

By the mid-19th century, the railroads Crozet had favored were handling much of the long-distance movement of



Civil War blacksmiths were kept busy repairing weaponry damaged by poor roads.

passengers and freight. This posed a new problem for the turnpikes, many of them already financially troubled. The railroads gained such great popularity that apathy developed toward road improvements. For the turnpikes, it meant reduced use and revenue. For other roads, it meant that many remained little more than dirt paths, impassable after heavy rains or during winter thaws and raising choking clouds of dust at other times.

With the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, roads and railroads became immensely important to both Confederate and Union armies. The transportation arteries often governed the outcome of battles. The armies fought over them, guarded them, rebuilt them and constructed new ones. Food, clothing, medical supplies, guns, ammunition, and men moved by road and by rail.

In September 1861, Gen. Robert E. Lee, writing from a mountain encampment to Gov. John Letcher, said, *“Our greatest difficulty is the roads. It has been raining in these mountains about six weeks. It is impossible to get along. It is that which has paralyzed all our efforts.”*

Two years later, then commander of the Army of Northern Virginia, Lee wrote, *“It has been raining a great deal . . . making the roads horrid and embarrassing our operations.”* Some wagons simply broke down on the road from the mud and rocks.

Other military commanders on both sides could tell similar stories of how road conditions often hindered their operations.



The ravages of Civil War campaigns left many of Virginia's roads in ruins.

Poor to begin with, the roads and bridges were damaged and destroyed as the armies fought over them repeatedly. The company that operated the Valley Turnpike reported that its revenue collections were negligible because *“of the army destroying bridges, injuring toll houses, and we are getting very little tolls.”*

For most of the turnpike companies, the war was the final blow from which they could not recover, and many passed from private to county ownership. Toll collections on most of the turnpikes never had been enough to pay operating and maintenance costs or to do much toward retiring the indebtedness, and the extensive but financially weak turnpike era was nearing an end.

A few toll facilities, the Little River and Valley turnpikes among them, somehow managed to recover sufficiently from the rages of war to remain in operation into the early 20th century. But a constitutional amendment in 1874 decreed that the state government could no longer invest in turnpike company stock. The risk was too great.

After the war, the state's board of public works turned mainly to matters other than roads, and in the counties there developed a widely varying patchwork of road development practices. Twenty-five years after the war, Virginia's roads were far worse than when the war began.

This was true despite the fact that, in the Reconstruction period, the General Assembly enacted much road legislation. The problem was that much of it was confusing and meaningless, and sometimes humorous. One law made it illegal to drive or lead a bear on a public highway, and

another set a fine of \$5 for a pedestrian who crossed a bridge at a pace greater than a walk.

A series of events late in the 19th century and early in the 20th century, however, were about to revolutionize man's mode of travel.

Auto Age Begins

In Springfield, Mass., in September 1893, what generally is accepted as the first American gasoline-powered automobile was given a short road test by its builders, brothers Charles E. and J. Frank Duryea.

That same year in Washington, the Congress established the United States Office of Road Inquiry, directing the Secretary of Agriculture *“to make inquiries in regard to the system of road management throughout the United States,”* to investigate methods of road building and to assist in disseminating information about the nation's roads.

Good roads societies were organized in many states and in Virginia, this movement dates at least to 1894. It was then that the Young Business Men's League of Roanoke took leadership in forming the Virginia Good Road Association. Local meetings and statewide conventions were held, and enthusiasm grew swiftly.

In September 1895, the Duryea brothers established the first American company to manufacture gasoline-driven cars, the Duryea Motor Wagon Company.

In 1904 the Ford Motor Company produced 1,695 cars, and by 1907 had increased its production to 14,887.

The last decade of the 19th century was called the Gay '90s, and the daring new mobility was a part of the mood. What is believed to have been the first automobile of any kind operated in Virginia was driven along Norfolk streets in 1899, powered by kerosene. Eleven years before that significant event, the world's first commercially successful streetcar system had begun in Richmond. The state's population had grown to 1,854,184, and while the population was about 85 percent rural, the capital of Richmond could count 85,000 residents.

Throughout Virginia, as throughout the nation, the public's delight with the automobile was mounting by leaps and bounds. But in most places, the roads weren't ready for this "*horseless carriage*."

Getting Organized for Better Roads

Two governors in this period gave strong support to the mushrooming good roads movement. They were Andrew Jackson Montague, the state's chief executive from 1902 to 1906, and his successor, Claude A. Swanson, who served until 1910. Their recommendations to the General Assembly in 1906 helped set the state government's course in road development for the years ahead.

Meeting in Richmond, the legislature created the first State Highway Commission, giving final approval to the legislation on March 6, 1906. A state highway commissioner was appointed by the governor with General Assembly confirmation. Legislation required that the commissioner be a Virginia citizen, as well as a "*civil engineer and a person well-versed in road-building*."

Legislation also dictated that the commission was to include three professors of civil engineering, one each from the University of Virginia, Virginia Military Institute, and what was then Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute at Blacksburg. These commission members were chosen by the boards of visitors at the respective institutions.

Gov. Swanson appointed Philip St. Julien Wilson, a Powhatan County native and a civil engineering graduate in the class of 1886 at Virginia Military Institute, as the first commissioner. Wilson was 38



Pulling early autos out of the mud was a sideline business for many Virginia farmers.

and serving as assistant city engineer for Richmond at the time of his appointment.

Joining Wilson on the first commission were William M. Thornton, dean of the engineering department at the University of Virginia; Col. T. A. Jones, civil engineering professor at Virginia Military Institute; and Col. R. A. Marr, dean of engineering at Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic institute.

The law specified that the commissioner "*shall have a general supervision of the construction and repair of the main traveled roads in the state; the Commissioner may recommend to the local road authorities of any county, and to the Governor, needed improvements in the public roads; he shall supply technical information on road building to any citizen or officer in the state, and from time to time publish for public use such information as will be generally useful for road improvement.*"

While the counties kept the responsibility for actually making the improvements, they now had a new state agency to which they could turn for help. For example, they could apply to the commissioner for civil engineering advice, and if he concluded that a proposed project would be permanent and on a main road and that it was practical, his office would prepare detailed plans and specifications and, at the county's expense, assign a civil engineer to supervise construction.

The first State Highway Commission was created in 1906.

The 1906 legislature also established the state convict road force as a source of labor. *“All prisoners convicted of a crime and sentenced to either hard labor on the public roads or to imprisonment in jail and all persons imprisoned in jail for the non-payment of fine and costs, shall, when delivered upon order of the superintendent of the penitentiary for such purpose, constitute the state convict road force,”* the statute read.

For some years before, convict labor had been available to the counties for road work, but not more than half of the counties used it. After the 1906 legislation, the convict labor was channeled to roads that would benefit the whole state.

The commissioner also encouraged county officials to look beyond their own borders to the importance of working toward a coordinated, statewide highway system because still, to the frustration of early motorists, an improved road in one county might shrink to a rutted trail or disappear entirely in another. Boat or train remained the most certain means of traveling long distances in reasonable comfort.

In the commission’s first annual report to the governor and General Assembly in October 1907, Wilson shed light on the first year’s operation:

“This department being newly established some time was necessarily required for organization and preparation for carrying out the provisions of the law to the best advantage,” he wrote. *“Efforts along this line proved that men in the state who were familiar with the work of permanent road improvement were difficult to secure. Competent engineers and foremen are obtainable, but comparatively few with any experience in modern highway construction, and without the services of such men road work cannot be carried on to the best advantage.”*

Moreover, he added, *“Much preliminary work had to be done by the county authorities before they were actually ready to begin work. The problem of raising the necessary funds to defray the counties’ portion of the expense was, in most instances, a difficult one, and met with many obstacles and delays. The machinery and equipment furnished by the counties has been, in several instances, very inadequate for the proper handling of the work.”*

For some months, he wrote, *“great*

difficulty was experienced in securing prisoners from jails for service in the state convict road force, and the number of convicts in the state penitentiary who, under the law, were available for road work was very limited. As a consequence, the organization of the first force was not completed until October 1906, and it was not until well on in December 1906, that we were able to put to work as many as five forces of about 50 men each.”

Wilson observed that while criticism had been voiced in several quarters *“about the undesirability, even inhumanity, of using convict labor on public works, all of which may have been justified,”* the fact was that *“the men in the road camps seem satisfied, and many have expressed to me a preference for this work to remaining in jail.”*

The commissioner, after barely more than a year on the job and engaged in what had become largely a mission of public education, also commented on the inadequacy of funds available for road maintenance. It was a problem that had plagued the turnpikes a century before, and it would continue for another decade.

“This is a matter of the greatest importance, as even the best constructed roads require frequent, though not expensive, attention to keep them in good condition and to prevent the extensive and costly repairs that the lack of such attention will necessitate,” he wrote. *“I would suggest than an amendment to the law be made to the effect that state aid will be extended to the construction of a roads only upon condition that the county applying for such aid agree to make suitable provision for the up-keep of the improved road.”*

The first improvement project completed with the help of the commission was the road between Williamsburg and Jamestown Island. Most of the road was surfaced with gravel and a mixture of sand and clay; about two miles were macadamized.

The General Assembly in 1906 had appropriated \$16,000 to support the fledgling road program for the period from July 1, 1906, when the legislation became effective, to Feb. 28, 1908. It was to pay the salaries of the small staff—the commissioner, his assistant, a bridge engineer, a draftsman, a clerk, and a stenographer—and to furnish the offices and to purchase supplies.



Inadequate funds for road maintenance meant it was crude and often neglected.

First Construction Appropriation in 1909

By 1908, the need for better roads had reached the point that the legislature made its first appropriation for construction purposes under the new state program—\$25,000 annually, beginning March 1, 1909, “*out of any money in the state treasury not otherwise appropriated.*” It was intended mainly for use in counties where convict labor was not available and was to be matched equally by the counties paying for road improvements.

“This law does more than provide a very considerable additional fund for road improvement, as its requirement that a county shall raise an amount equal to its share of the fund before it can be obtained arouses the people to the importance of making extra efforts to provide money for improving the roads,” Wilson said.

During this period, state law directed the counties to levy a road tax of up to 40 cents for each \$100 in value on real estate and personal property, with the revenue to cover the counties’ share of improvements and to buy road equipment. In addition, the counties were authorized to issue bonds “*for the purpose of macadamizing or otherwise permanently improving the public roads . . . or building bridges . . .*”

By 1910, Virginians owned 2,705 motor vehicles, and the General Assembly decided the time had come to regulate

their use. That year, the state’s first registration and licensing of motor vehicles was required, with registration fees of \$5 for autos of 20 horsepower or less, \$10 for those with 20 to 45 horsepower, and \$20 for vehicles with more than 45 horsepower. A \$2 registration fee was set for motorcycles and 235 were registered in 1910. The fees were to be paid into the state treasury as a special fund to be spent for improving main roads. Total revenue from the first year’s collections amounted to \$21,656.

In 1910, the General Assembly also enacted the first controls on motor vehicle speeds in Virginia. Twenty miles an hour was the established limit in open country, while eight miles an hour was established in towns, around curves, and at key intersections.

Three years later, with more than 10,000 motor vehicles in the state and the road program continuing to grow, Wilson left Virginia to become chief engineer for the United States Office of Public Roads and Rural Engineering in Washington, an agency that had followed the Office of Road Inquiry. Wilson was succeeded by George P. Coleman, who had been his assistant since 1906.

Even as the changeover in administration was occurring, Wilson again cited the nagging problem of inadequate road maintenance:

“The expenditure of considerable amounts of money derived from long-term bonds by the various counties in the state for the construction of roads, and the evident lack of care of these roads after they have been constructed, demonstrates that unless some more adequate means for the maintenance of these roads is provided than has yet been provided by the several counties in which they have been constructed, there will come a time when the counties have little left but the debt which they have incurred,” Wilson said.

Wilson also stressed that unless stringent maintenance requirements were imposed, *“the expenditures made and the work of this department during the past seven years will have been as naught.”*

By that time, the counties had issued approximately \$7 million in bonds. George Coleman agreed with his predecessor that this investment wasn't being protected.

Increasing use of roads made the problem even more urgent. By 1916, more than 37,000 motor vehicles were registered in the state. It would be a pivotal year for the road program in Virginia and nationally.

In Richmond, the General Assembly passed an automobile maintenance law providing that income from vehicle license fees be placed in a special maintenance fund to be administered by the commission, in cooperation with county authorities and with expenditures to be matched equally by the counties.

The legislature also began curing the headache of the state's disjointed roads, some of which were smooth and hard-surfaced in one county and rutted dirt in the next. A study committee — consisting of three members of the state Senate, four from the House of Delegates, and the highway commissioner — was appointed to develop a plan for a state highway system to include the main roads between population centers.

In Washington, meanwhile, increasing attention was being focused on the prob-



Chip spreader crew at work in Lynchburg District.

lems of improving roads that connected various states. Virginia's George Coleman had been a chief organizer of the American Association of State Highway Officials in 1914. The group was formed by highway administrators in the states to provide a forum for discussion of technical, legislative, and economic matters and to strengthen the state-federal relationship on roads.

One of the association's first moves was to designate a committee to prepare proposed legislation for the Congress authorizing federal participation in construction of highways and encouraging better state-to-state coordination. Coleman was chairman of that legislation-drafting committee.

The committee's proposals were submitted to the Congress in 1916 and were approved that year largely as presented. The new law provided for construction of rural public roads and defined them as *“any public road over which the United States mails now are or may hereafter be transported.”* Federal funds were not to exceed 50 percent of the cost of constructing improvements, and the states were to have the responsibility for maintaining the completed facilities.

President Woodrow Wilson signed the Federal Aid Road Act on July 11, 1916. It was the federal government's first comprehensive law aimed at establishing a nationwide highway system. When it was passed, America had 2,578,078 miles of public roads, 294,569 miles or 11.4 percent of which were surfaced.

For the 1916-17 fiscal year, Virginia received approximately \$100,000 in federal funds. The road between Hansonville and the Washington-Russell County line at Moccasin Gap, now U.S. Route 19, was the first road in the state to be improved with federal aid.

State System Approved; WWI Interrupts Progress

During its 1918 session in Richmond, the General Assembly approved the establishment of the first state highway system, a network of 4,002 miles for which construction and maintenance would be the direct responsibility of the highway commissioner and his staff.

Among the roads to be included was the old Valley Turnpike between Winchester and Staunton, which still was being operated as a toll road in 1918. As late as 1926, it remained the only hard-surfaced road of much distance.

The so-called Richmond-Washington Highway, the often muddy predecessor of U.S. Route 1 and Interstate 95, also was included in the system. At the time, it was gravel and soil except for a short section of concrete south of Alexandria and a short macadamized segment north of

Richmond. As on many roads, cars frequently had to be pulled by other vehicles or by horses through swamp-like areas in rainy weather and in winter thaws. A fully paved Route 1 was not completed until 1927.

In 1918, the legislature also continued the convict road force, but limited its use to the new state system. In 1922, a law authorized the commission to expand the system each year by an amount of mileage equal to two and one-half percent of the original system. Subsequent additions also were made by other legislative action.

In an extra session in 1919, the General Assembly made a significant change in commission organization. It was expanded from four to five members, who were to be appointed by the governor with the advice and consent of the Senate. More importantly, members in the future were to be private citizens chosen to represent major geographical regions of the state. In addition, the governor was to appoint the commissioner, who would administer day-to-day operations.

Virginia's road development was about to be interrupted, however, by circumstances far beyond the state's borders with the outbreak of World War I. Coleman spoke of it this way:

The Federal Aid Road Act was signed in 1916 by President Wilson.



Route 1 near Dumfries as it appeared (from left) in 1919, the early '30s, 1989, and 1999.



An early work crew took time to pose for a group photograph.

“The year opened up with orders from the federal government restricting the use of all cars and the practical confiscation of road materials for war purposes. The declaration of war by this country was followed immediately by a serious labor shortage and a consequent increase in the cost of labor and materials. These restrictions and increased costs were largely on such road materials as steel, cement, stone, gravel, sand, bitumens, and so forth Approximately 80 percent of the engineers and specially trained men of the department entered the service of their country We are making every effort to meet this condition with the funds at hand.”

The state’s population had exceeded 2.3 million and more than 145,000 motor vehicles were registered.

Financing the Roads

After the war, the road development program regained momentum and sought to keep up with the growing popularity of the auto. More than 25,000 vehicles would be added to the state’s roads in a year’s time. Inevitably, questions persisted about how to raise additional highway revenue to meet the mounting needs.

The state Constitution of 1869 had prohibited any state debt except to meet casual deficits in the revenue, to redeem previous liabilities, or to protect the state in the event of insurrection or war. The same restriction remained in a revised

Constitution of 1902, but a later amendment, pushed by the Good Roads Association and approved by 61,000 votes in a 1920 referendum, had permitted the legislature to issue bonds to build or repair roads. Statewide political debate developed about using that permissive borrowing power, however.

State Sen. Harry F. Byrd, Sr., of Winchester, chairman of the Virginia Senate Roads Committee, opposed bonds and urged the levying of a tax of three cents on a gallon of gasoline to produce the revenue.

Early in 1923, Gov. E. Lee Trinkle called an extra “roads” session of the General Assembly to decide a course of action. He recommended a temporary “pay-as-you-go” policy until the question of bonds could be considered again by the voters in a referendum.

The legislature approved the Byrd gasoline proposal and ordered that a suggested \$50 million bond issue be submitted to referendum in November.

By a margin of some 46,000 votes, the citizens this time rejected the bond issue idea in what was considered in many ways a victory for rural voters. Only 19 counties voted for the bond issue, while it won approval in 17 of the state’s cities. The gasoline tax was destined to become the largest single source of revenue for road building and maintenance and was to be increased gradually over the years. At the national level, a gasoline tax approved by the Congress was to become the principal revenue source for the federally aided road program as well.

Motor Vehicle Registration

Year	Number
1910	2,705
1920	145,340
1930	386,664
1940	525,877
1950	983,561
1960	1,533,887
1970	2,576,593
1980	3,510,484
1990	4,985,438
2000	6,313,411

The Department of Highways was formally established in 1927.

During debate about financing, Virginia's highway organization continued to be refined. In 1922, the legislature directed that the state be divided geographically into eight highway districts and that available funds be distributed among them in equal shares.

Other organizational changes in the commission led to the appointment of Henry G. Shirley, who had been Maryland's highway administrator, as chairman. George Coleman stayed as highway commissioner until his resignation in 1923, and later the positions of chairman and commissioner were combined.

In 1927, as part of a reorganization of state government, the Department of Highways was formally established as a state agency, although the commission staff had been called the "*highway department*" since the outset.

As disconnected sections of improved roads were linked into continuous long-distance routes crossing many states, travelers found themselves steadily more bewildered by a confusing array of directional and informational signs. There was little continuity or standardization from state to state, and it was easy for motorists to get lost in unfamiliar territory.

At the request of the American Association of State Highway Officials, the U.S. secretary of agriculture appointed a committee in March 1925 "*to undertake immediately the selection and designation of a comprehensive and uniform scheme for designating such routes in such manner as to give them a conspic-*

uous place among the highways of the country as roads of inter-state and national significance."

It was this move that led to the beginning of route numbers and to uniform signs for the convenience of motorists throughout the nation, and that produced greater continuity in marking Virginia's roads. The basic plan provided generally for assigning even numbers to east-west routes and odd numbers to north-south roads.

By 1930, a total of 386,664 motor vehicles were registered in the state. The license tax produced \$6,564,000 in revenue, and the gasoline tax produced \$7,251,000. The state highway system had been increased to 7,191 miles.

The counties, however, still were plagued by problems of improving and maintaining the local roads for which they were responsible. Most of those roads remained in extremely poor condition. Few counties had engineers on their staffs, and not many had the necessary equipment.

And yet about two-thirds of the state's workers earned their livelihoods from the land and faced the continuing need of hauling farm products to market. The Depression that swept the nation brought more serious problems, and most rural Virginians had little money to pay the property taxes that had continued as the main source of income for the county roads.

In Richmond and in the district highway offices that had been established around the state, adjustments were made in road operations to aid as many families as possible during the economic crisis of the Depression years.

During the fall of 1931, the commission found that under normal work schedules it could provide employment and wages for only a few additional workers. But a "*stagger system*," providing jobs for one force of men one week and another force the next week and alternating the procedure through the construction season, made jobs and income available for 8,000 additional workers. The commission kept this system in effect throughout the Depression.

The Secondary System

It was against this background that the General Assembly in 1932 approved a means by which the counties could be relieved of road construction and maintenance responsibility. The **“Byrd Road Act”** inspired by the former Winchester senator who two years before had completed a term as governor, authorized the establishment of the state “secondary” road system. It permitted each county, if it wished, to give its road responsibility to the Highway Commission. One economist estimated that this action would reduce rural taxes by \$2,895,102 annually.

Four counties - Arlington, Henrico, Nottoway and Warwick - chose to keep the responsibility; the other counties joined the new secondary system. In 1933, Nottoway reversed its earlier decision and joined the system. Years later, Warwick gave up its county status to become a city that eventually merged with Newport News, Arlington and Henrico counties continue to operate their own local roads.

When the secondary system was established, it totaled 35,900 miles. It included 2,000 miles hard-surfaced, 8,900 miles with soil or gravel surfaces, and more than 25,000 miles, or almost 70 percent, of largely unimproved dirt roads. Some counties had no hard-surfaced roads at all.

Within a decade, the amount of hard-surfaced roads had tripled, the mileage of soil or gravel roads had doubled, and the unimproved roads had been reduced by almost half.

With the arrival of the secondary system, the main roads for which the state had been responsible became known as the “primary” highway system.

In August 1939, with motor vehicle registration approaching a half million, Commissioner Henry Shirley reported that **“The demand for a road that can be used throughout the year is becoming greater and greater, and such a road has become a necessity. Practically all horse-drawn equipment has vanished from the highways, and motor equipment taken its place, requiring a road that can be traveled the year-round.”**

A year later, Shirley reported another development that was to become a major part of road operations in Virginia and elsewhere. **“All the main highways are being marked with traffic lines, and the system adopted we hope will be the means of saving many lives. Under no condition should a vehicle cross a solid line when it is next to the vehicle, or two solid lines,”** he said.

Despite the precautions, however, safety problems continued to trouble highway engineers as the number of autos grew.

Brig. Gen. James A. Anderson, who had taught civil engineering and been dean of the faculty at Virginia Military Institute, was on furlough from the academic world and was serving as coordinator of the State Defense Council at the time of Shirley’s death in July 1941. Anderson was appointed highway commissioner, a position in which he was to serve until his retirement in 1957.

The Byrd Road Act relieved counties of road maintenance in 1932.

Virginia’s Highway System Mileage

Year	Interstate	Primary	Secondary	Urban	Total
1918*		4,002			4,002
1930		7,191			7,191
1940		9,404	37,660	228	47,292
1950		8,643	39,189	2,527	50,359
1960	154	7,926	41,823	4,337	54,240
1970	825	7,781	42,303	6,954	57,863
1980	1,019	7,895	43,851	8,166	60,931
2000	1,118	8,012	47,247	10,224	66,601

* (The first state highway system was established in 1918.)

“Accidents on the highways are increasing daily, and every care and precaution within the power of the commission is being taken to reduce this heavy toll of life,” Anderson said shortly after his appointment. *“It is imperative that something be done to reduce the speed of automobiles on the highways, and to educate the drivers to the courtesy of the road.”*

Another World War Begins

Within months, the thoughts of Virginians and other citizens throughout the land were to be diverted by the entry of the United States into World War II.

“The war emergency has multiplied our responsibilities. Today as never before in history, the highways of the nation must be adequate at all times of the year to handle the modern mechanized army, and at the same time keep civilian transportation involving largely, as it does, the marketing of farm and food supplies and the carrying of defense workers to industrial plants, on the move without delay,” the commission told Virginians. *“Under ordinary circumstances, these would not have been serious problems for us to handle. The foresightedness of previous years had modernized our major trunk highways to such a degree that they are equipped to handle their normal traffic load. The problem that has confronted us the most has been the need for rapid development and newly created feeder and access roads to the defense areas.”*

As had occurred a quarter-century before, employees left to join the armed forces and, in some instances, to take jobs in defense industries. Materials and supplies were in short supply. Tire and gasoline rationing reduced travel, but also cut the accompanying revenue from road-user taxes. *“All but the most urgent and important work . . . has been postponed until conditions improve,”* the commission said.

Commission members sought to bring *“our highways through the war winters without undue interruption to traffic or serious loss of capital investment”* and to aid as best they could in the nation’s defense efforts. At one point, 3,000 pieces of federal equipment were repaired or overhauled at the Department of Highways’ equipment depot in Richmond.

Farm labor was hired to help with road maintenance, and students were employed and trained during the summers to assist in drafting rooms.

In 1942, the General Assembly expanded the commission from five to nine members — one from each of the eight highway districts, with the full-time commissioner serving as chairman — and the enlarged group set about planning for the future.

“Under the heavy pounding of war-time traffic and inadequate maintenance, some of the older highway surfaces and bridges are failing and cannot endure for any length of time without costly failure,” the commission said. *“The reconditioning or replacement of these will furnish one of the most important salvage jobs in post-war activities.”*

The winter of 1945-46 was described as *“the worst experienced during the history of the department . . . 20,000 miles of low-type road went to pieces. The continued shortage of labor, equipment, and materials had greatly handicapped efforts to make these roads serviceable throughout the year.”* The winter added to the post-war recovery woes, which were about to be tackled.

Not a School Day Lost...

Just after the war, Commissioner Anderson set a new objective for the state’s regrouping highway forces: Not a school day lost because of mud. Muddy roads remained a problem in many areas, particularly in winter thaws, and Anderson’s idea was to solve that dilemma while providing a solid goal toward which maintenance forces could work.

Moving in other new directions, the commission began implementing a 20-year plan for upgrading all road systems and embarked on a new program intended to replace most of the state’s remaining ferries.

As authorized by a revenue bond act passed earlier by the General Assembly, the commission decided during the 1946-47 fiscal year to construct toll bridges to replace ferry crossings on the York River at Yorktown and the Rappahannock River at Grey’s Point and to acquire from private owners the ferries that carried vehicles across Hampton Roads between the Norfolk and Lower Peninsula

areas. Later, the commission was to construct a modern bridge-tunnel to replace the Hampton Roads ferries. Through separate legislation, the General Assembly would establish a special authority to replace the Chesapeake Bay ferries between the mainland and Eastern Shore with a 17.6-mile toll bridge-tunnel facility and would authorize toll financing for a few other facilities that were considered essential but for which other funds were not available. Unlike the turnpike era a century and a half earlier, there was not to be another period of widespread toll financing for roads. Relatively few were constructed in the 20th century.

By mid-1948, the state's road program generally had recovered from the wartime slowdown. A few deferred construction projects had been completed, and many others had been started. The commission said the secondary roads were in better condition than ever before and proudly announced that *"for the second consecutive winter, not one school bus day was lost because of mud on the roads."*

With that objective producing dividends, another goal was set: A reasonably passable year-round road to every reasonably located farm and rural dwelling in Virginia. It reflected the commission's belief that *"there is no comfortable living in rural Virginia without a motor vehicle and a passable year-round road."*

Progress truly was remarkable in those immediate post-war years. From 1945 to 1947 alone, the unsurfaced secondary system mileage was reduced by more than half—from 11,151 miles to 5,184 miles. As the state entered the second half of the century, its road development program was about to enter its busiest times.

Virginia in 1950 had a population of 3.3 million. Motor vehicle registration was approaching a million. The United States census that year would be the last showing a majority of the state's citizens living



Highways and road signs were vastly improved by the 1930s.

in rural areas. Urban dwellers had grown from 35.3 percent to 47 percent of the total between 1940 and 1950. By the time of the 1960 census, 56 percent of all Virginians would be in urban areas.

Traffic volumes were exceeding estimates, and in August 1950, the commission said that many *"roads designed 10, 15, and 20 years ago were incapable of handling the growing mass of heavy, fast-moving traffic. Throughout the Commonwealth, the demand for road improvement was intensified . . . In most instances, no immediate relief is in sight . . . Funds simply are not available for the overnight modernization of the entire highway system . . . In the municipalities, the problem of providing free movement for traffic became increasingly acute. Huge sums will be required to alleviate traffic congestion in Virginia towns and cities."*

Five years later, the commission said again that it felt *“a growing concern regarding Virginia’s highway needs. People who use our highways are continuing to pay a big price in lives and money because of inadequacies on our roads. Statistics prove that the better road is the safer road. Highways with controlled intersections, with entrances and exits only at designated points, have fewer fatalities in relation to traffic volumes than do highways that lack such controls.”*

It was almost as if the commission knew what was around the next corner.

The Interstate System

In 1923, a Delaware business executive named T. Coleman DuPont had built a three-mile stretch of divided highway with his personal funds and had given it to the state of Delaware. Road historians generally regard that segment of road as representing the origin of the concept of the superhighway. But Depression, war and catching up on other basic needs had slowed the spread of the concept.

Before his death in 1941, Henry Shirley had seen the need for such a facility in the rapidly urbanizing Northern Virginia suburbs of the District of Columbia. Active planning got under way in the mid-1940s, and the road was built in the late ‘40s and early ‘50s. It was Virginia’s first superhighway, and the commission named it for Shirley.

Development of a nationwide system of such highways was first seriously considered in 1938, when the Congress asked the federal highway agency, by then called the Bureau of Public Roads, to study the feasibility of a toll-financed system of three east-west and three north-south superhighways. The study report encouraged the concept of a superhighway system, but said that it would be far from self-supporting if built on a toll-road basis.

It proposed, instead, a network of toll-free roads for which the federal government would pay more than the normal 50 percent federal-aid rate.

The idea was studied further, and in the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1944, the Congress called for the designation of a national system of interstate highways that was *“so located as to connect by routes, as direct as practicable, the principal metropolitan areas, cities, and industrial centers, to serve the national defense, and to connect at suitable border points with routes of continental importance.”*

It was not until the passage of Congressional legislation more than a decade later, in 1956, that sufficient funding was provided for development of the system to begin in earnest. Eventually, the system was to total 42,500 miles. It would represent little more than one percent of



Interstate construction progresses along the I-81 corridor.

the nation’s total road and street mileage, but it would carry 20 percent of the traffic. It was to be financed with 90 percent federal and 10 percent state funds.

Virginia’s share was more than 1,070 miles, and the Highway Commission assessed what development of the interstate system would mean to Virginia:

The Highway Commission expressed a growing concern about safety on Virginia’s roads.

State Secondary System Mileage

Year	Hard-Surface	Soil or Gravel	Unsurfaced	Total
1932*	2,000	8,900	25,000	35,900
1940	6,093	17,742	13,825	37,660
1950	12,092	22,906	4,191	39,185
1960	20,615	19,424	1,784	41,823
1970	25,808	16,074	421	42,303
1980	30,637	12,952	262	43,851
1990	34,978	10,370	137	45,485
2000	37,561	9,551	135	47,247

*(the state secondary system was established)

“Construction of this modern road network . . . involves many problems and radical changes in thought. Under the new program, interstate highways will be insulated from marginal traffic generated by motels, service stations, other types of businesses, and dwellings. Traffic entering and leaving these highways will do so at designated points. Cross movements of traffic, with which we are so familiar, will be eliminated.

“The benefits of controlled-access construction are numerous. A modern controlled-access road transforms, in many ways, the area through which it passes. Land values increase. This type of road promotes safety, saves travel time, reduces the strain on drivers, and aids the economic development of the area. Controlled-access standards also protect the state’s investment in its highways,” the commission observed, even before the first mile of the interstate system had been built.

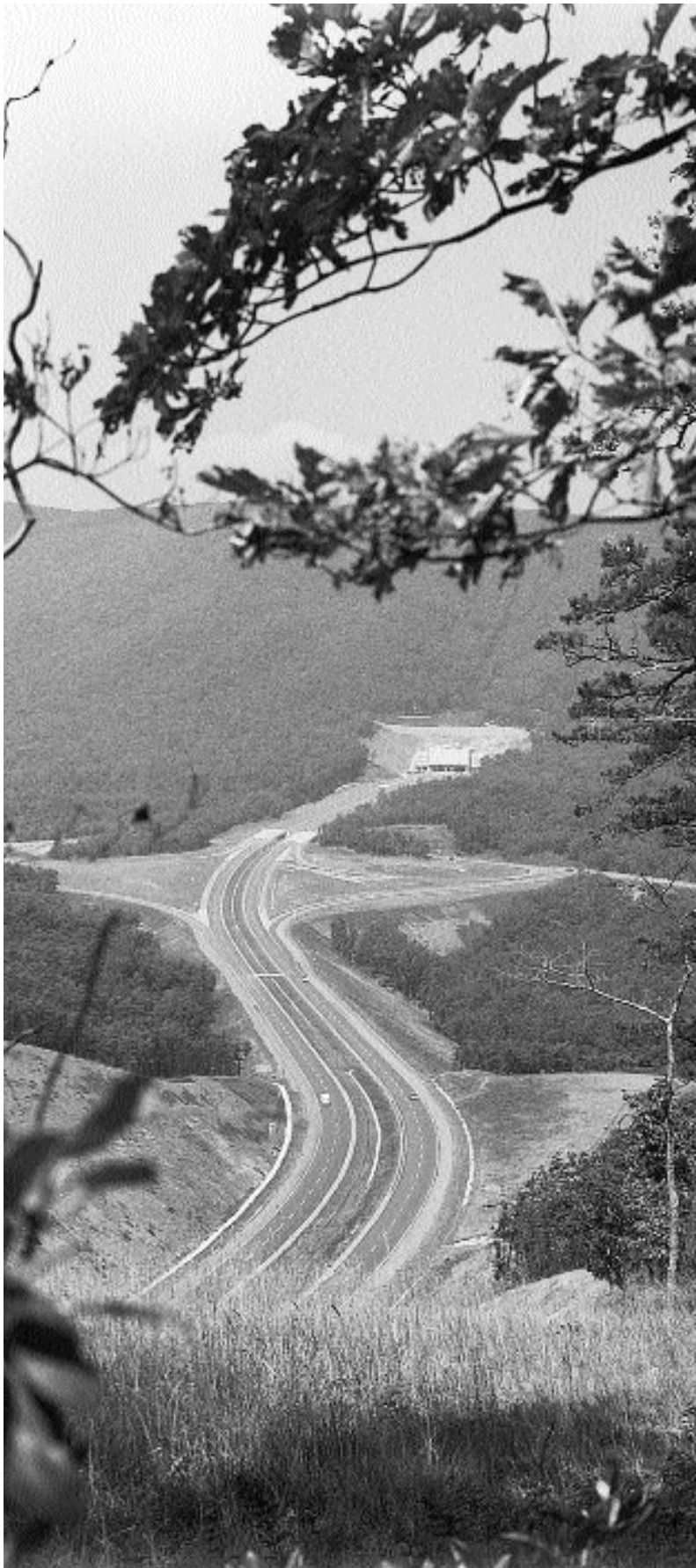
The commission members recognized, as well, the size of the job before them. *“We are now embarked on the most accelerated road program in the state’s history. Unprecedented sums of money will be spent . . . to provide Virginia with modern adequate highways. Present traffic patterns will be changed, new areas will be opened for business, and residential and recreational development. The future will present a challenge greater than any we have faced in our highway develop-*

ment. What we accomplish will depend largely on public understanding, acceptance, and support.”

An extensive series of public hearings was held around the state to discuss plans for interstate system projects with citizens and local governing officials.

The first interstate system hearing in Virginia was held by the Department of Highways on Feb. 20, 1957. It concerned a 10-mile segment of Interstate 95 south of Petersburg. Within the next four months 10 more hearings were conducted on interstate projects, and construction began on the state’s first project on the new system — the six-mile Interstate 95 bypass of Emporia. Early emphasis was focused on the 1-95 facility because it was to parallel U.S. Route 1, which by the mid-1950s had become the most heavily traveled throughroad in Virginia and one of the nation’s busiest highways.

The Emporia bypass also was the first interstate project to be completed in the Commonwealth. It was opened to traffic Sept. 8, 1959. The first major interstate route to be completed fully was Interstate 495, the Virginia portion of a beltway circling the District of Columbia, with its final section being opened on April 2, 1964.



I-77 through Big Walker Mountain Tunnel.

By the early 1970s, the interstate system was about 75 percent finished, and it was fulfilling to a large degree the expectations expressed by the commission at the outset of the program. Accident rates on the new superhighways were only about one-half the rates on the older conventional roads; travel time was reduced an hour or more on cross-state auto trips; the new roads stimulated extensive commercial, industrial, and residential growth; and this, in turn, provided broader tax bases for local governments.

A new generation of Virginians, growing up with the interstate system, could hardly remember what travel was like without it.

A New Study, a New Network

It soon became evident, however, that the interstate routes alone would not adequately serve the burgeoning population and the increasing desire for mobility by Virginians in the second half of the 20th century. The spreading suburban growth that marked Virginia and other states in the years after World War II was induced in large part by the flexible mobility permitted by the family auto. Suburban housing development was followed by suburban shopping centers and office buildings. It all placed new demands on the state's roads and streets. The 20-year improvement plan that had been implemented by the commission in the immediate post-war years had to be revised and updated frequently to keep pace with changing needs and growth patterns.

In 1962, the General Assembly established a new study commission to examine and evaluate highway needs, revenue, fund distribution procedures, and the organization of the Department of Highways. It consisted of one member from each of the eight construction districts and two citizens at large. The study commission members were appointed by Gov. Albert S. Harrison, Jr., in May 1962, with Sen. William F. Stone of Martinsville, an experienced legislator who had been a chief patron of the act calling for the study, chosen as chairman.

For more than a year, the study commission went about its assignment, reviewing nearly every aspect of the highway program. The commission itself probably was the most important highway study group since the 1916 committee that recommended the establishment of the first state highway system.

The Stone commission submitted its report to the governor and the General Assembly in December 1963, in time for its recommendations to be considered at the legislative session beginning the following month.

Among its points: *“One of the prime factors in inducing business management to select a state for expansion or a new location is a good highway system, which not only is needed for transportation of goods and raw materials but enables employees to be drawn from a wide radius. Some other states have moved ahead of Virginia in expanding their highway systems. We cannot afford to be left behind.”*

The study commission also described the motor vehicle as *“an essential and integral part of our everyday life. Its impact upon our economy and way of life has reached dimensions which have exceeded all forecasts.”*

In an effort to keep up, the commission said, a new arterial network should be developed to supplement the interstate system.

Douglas B. Fugate, who had joined the department shortly after his graduation from Virginia Military Institute with a degree in civil engineering in 1927, was serving as assistant chief engineer at the time and in 1964, was appointed commissioner by Gov. Harrison. Fugate proposed the arterial network concept to the study commission and thus became chief architect of the network.

“The arterial road program, when completed, will in conjunction with the interstate system connect every city within the Commonwealth of 5,000 or more and nearly every town having a population of 3,500 to 5,000. When completed, there will be an arterial route or interstate route within a 40-mile radius of every town in Virginia,” the study commission said.

Development of the network was authorized by the 1964 General Assembly, which also provided additional revenue through increases in the state’s motor vehicle registration and operator’s license

fees. As approved, it totaled more than 1,700 miles and was to be developed chiefly by building new two-lane roadways parallel to existing two-lane primary routes to create four-lane, divided facilities. More than 70 bypasses of cities and towns were to be constructed, to free local streets for local traffic, and many of the bypasses would be constructed virtually to interstate standards.

The arterial network was half-finished within seven years after it was begun. In some quarters, the network was described as a *“model for the nation because of the orderly way in which it ensured up-grading of older primary roads while the interstate system development was still under way.”*

In the mid-1950s, when the interstate program was beginning, Virginia had about 300 miles of multi-lane divided highways. With interstate and arterial completion, it later would have slightly more than 3,000 miles of such roads.

Strengthening the Organization

Other Stone commission recommendations led in 1964 to steps aimed at equipping the Department of Highways to better meet the growing challenge. The General Assembly established the urban street system as a separate entity for the distribution of highway funds and directed that it receive a minimum of 14 percent of all revenue exclusive of federal interstate funds.

The urban system was to include extensions of the state’s primary routes within cities and towns and other local streets of adequate width and surface. Eighty-five percent of the cost of building improvements on this system was to be paid by state highway funds or by a combination of state and federal funds, with the local governments providing the remaining 15 percent. In addition, millions of dollars in state road-user revenue were to be returned to the cities and towns each year for maintenance of local streets.

As another result of the study commission, the Department of Highways was reorganized to reduce the number of individuals reporting directly to the commissioner, giving him more hours a day to concentrate on broad policy and administrative issues.

The new organizational structure provided for the commissioner to carry out his assignment largely through the delegation of responsibility to two persons — a deputy commissioner-chief engineer and a director of administration.

The division organization also was to be changed somewhat to more effectively meet the public's highway needs. Its landscape division, organized in 1930 to deal mainly with erosion control, beautification, and outdoor advertising control, was expanded into an environmental quality division to coordinate increasing ecological considerations. A metropolitan transportation planning division was established to prepare long-range, comprehensive plans for more than 45 cities and towns and to aid in development of urban mass transit improvements. A data processing division was formed to take maximum advantage of the remarkable time savings permitted through computers. A management services division became responsible for ensuring thorough implementation of internal policies and procedures.

Through the 1960s and into the '70s, the emphasis of the organization continued largely on the interstate and arterial programs, and on upgrading the older routes by elimination of obsolete bridges, poor alignment, and curves. The factor of "need" was added to others, such as population, land area, miles of road, and vehicular miles of travel, which long had been considered in apportioning funds.

Improvements also continued on the secondary road system. By 1972, four decades after the system was established, 27,000 secondary roads were hard-surfaced, compared to 2,000 miles at the outset. Only 400 miles remained unsurfaced, and most of them served fewer than a dozen vehicles daily.

The public's investment in Virginia's highways was valued at more than \$5 billion. With nearly 12,000 employees, the Department of Highways was the largest agency in state government and was among the half-dozen largest employers in the Commonwealth.

A strong corps of private contractors had developed, and major construction projects were built under contracts awarded on a low-bid basis. Prospective bidders on this work were required to be "pre-qualified" on the basis of their experience, manpower, equipment, and financial resources, to ensure satisfactory comple-

tion of contracts.

Questions about the importance of road and bridge maintenance had vanished long before, and millions of dollars were spent annually to protect the public's investment and to keep the facilities in safe condition.

Some 5,000 department employees were assigned to maintenance operations — snow and ice control in winter, roadside mowing in summer, as well as resurfacing, clearing side ditches, collecting litter, and a multitude of other jobs. The road system they maintained had become the nation's third-largest, covering about 51,000 miles.

But for maintenance personnel, the demands sometimes were far from routine. The night of Aug. 19, 1969, was an example.

It was then that rains from Hurricane Camille touched off flooding that swept across large portions of western and central Virginia, striking while the people slept. The U.S. Weather Bureau said later that 27 inches of rain had fallen in about eight hours near the little community of Massies Mill in Nelson County. Great torrents of water streamed down the mountainsides, uprooting trees that became battering rams against the houses below. Ordinarily tranquil rivers and creeks poured out of their banks and rushed ahead with massive destruction. Some said it was the worst storm in America's history, and it struck hard at much of the nation's East Coast. In Virginia 114 persons were killed, 37 others were missing, and more than 100 were injured.

Two hundred miles of the state's roads were destroyed, and nearly 100 bridges were wrecked. The cost of repairing the facilities alone would exceed \$20 million.

Less than three years later, on the night of June 19, 1972, rain from a new hurricane — one called Agnes and considered a tropical storm by the time it reached Virginia — caused similar destruction over a wider area from the western regions to the coast.

At least 13 people died; dozens were injured. The property damage climbed above that of Camille, and estimates placed the toll at \$160.7 million. Six hundred miles of roads were damaged. One hundred and four bridges were left useless — washed away, heavily damaged, or without passable approaches.

By 1972, only 400 miles of secondary roads remained unsurfaced.



The flooding generated by Hurricane Camille resulted in the most devastating damage ever inflicted by nature on the state's highway system, as seen in part in this photo of Scottsville.

Road maintenance crews hadn't seen problems of these proportions before. Yet, they worked around the clock, and traffic was moving again within hours in many of the flood-wrecked areas and within a few days in most other places. The urgency was underscored because frequently other emergency and rescue operations could not proceed until roads were reopened and river and creek crossings were restored.

Changing Concepts

By the 1970s, Virginia was a rapidly urbanizing state. Its population had grown to more than 4.6 million, with two-thirds living in the cities, towns, and suburbs.

Motor vehicle registration had risen to more than 2.5 million. Between 1960 and 1970, travel on the state's highway system had increased more than 65 percent, and on an average weekday, motorists drove some 75 million miles on Virginia's highways and streets. The two-car family had become commonplace, and driving was described as the nation's leading form of outdoor recreation.

Years before, agriculture had begun its decline as the principal foundation of the state's economy, although it remained of major importance. New and expanding industries occupied an increasingly vital role in the economic base.

In a December 1971 report to the Virginia Advisory Legislative Council, the General Assembly's continuing study arm,

the Highway Commission said that *"much remains to be done in order to provide Virginians with what truly may be considered an adequate, statewide transportation system."*

The council continued, "In every county, city, and town, there are substandard facilities. Throughout Virginia, there remains thousands of miles of roads and hundreds of bridges constructed more than 40 years ago. They were satisfactory for the uses they were built to serve; they are far from satisfactory for the demands of the 1970s, and for those of the years beyond," the commission said.

Commissioner Douglas Fugate, writing in the April 1970 issue of the Eno Foundation's *Traffic Quarterly*, had discussed the changing highway concepts involved in solving such a problem:

"We should not be particularly surprised that transportation planning requirements differ from those of even a decade ago," he wrote. *"For in many respects the nation's people differ — there are far more of them, they tend in growing numbers to congregate in and around the cities, they tend to be more affluent; and they have a new concern for all aspects of the environment in which they live. Thus, it is no longer sufficient to examine highway proposals solely from such standpoints as traffic service, economics, and engineering feasibility. An entirely new range of considerations has developed, and must be accepted by those responsible for the highway program."*

“Such matters as the social impact of highways, environmental enhancement, and pollution are becoming integral elements in the highway planning process. Similarly, in urban regions, attention must be focused more extensively on utilizing the highway as an artery for mass transportation, and on fresh concepts concerned more with moving people than with moving vehicles. Any notions of a comfortable philosophy based on the belief that every problem has a formula for solution and that every decision can be made in conformity with established policy must be forsaken, if indeed they still exist,” the commissioner wrote. “We must greatly broaden our concepts of the highway’s role in an increasingly urban society.”

In the heavily populated Northern Virginia suburbs of the District of Columbia, special lanes of Interstate 95, the old Shirley Highway, were reserved for express buses. Commuters were encouraged to leave their cars behind and use the bus to reduce congestion. It represented the nation’s first experience with setting aside lanes of interstate highway for buses, and its results were impressive. In barely more than three years, more commuters were riding buses than were driving their personal cars during the morning rush hours.

The success of the Shirley “*busway*,” coupled with increased traffic congestion, led highway officials to allow private vehicles to use the reserved travel lanes as long as they were carrying four or more passengers.

Increasing congestion on urban highways led to reserved lanes during rush hours.



In Southwest Virginia, the challenges were different from those in the highly urbanized regions of the state. In July 1972, hundreds gathered to observe the opening of the Big Walker Mountain Tunnel on Interstate 77. The tunnel, carved through the Appalachian range in Bland County, was heralded as the beginning of a new and prosperous era for the citizens of Southwest Virginia.

Two and a half years later, on Dec. 20, 1974, a second mountain tunnel was completed. The East River Mountain Tunnel, which routes I-77 traffic through the mountain between Bland County, Virginia, and Mercer County, West Virginia, was built cooperatively by the two states.

Increasingly, the planning function of highway administrators and engineers was changing vastly as society itself sought to adjust to the needs and desires of the expanding, more urbanized population.

More and more, highway planning was related to total community goals. The days of muddy roads, of inadequate technology and equipment, and of neglected maintenance had passed. A modern highway system permitted improved mobility and traffic safety. But there were new challenges to replace the old ones, including those brought about by events happening halfway across the world.

An expanding, urbanized population brought special challenges to transportation planners.

Surviving an Oil Embargo

In 1973, several Middle East nations imposed an embargo on exports of oil, forcing major changes in the United States and other countries. At the beginning of the 1970s, Virginia's transportation future seemed bright, but the oil embargo and the ensuing efforts to conserve fuel would have a debilitating effect on state transportation revenues for years to come.

Supplies of gasoline and other fuels plummeted, prices soared, and long lines were common at gas stations. The crisis became so severe that on Nov. 26, 1973, Gov. Linwood Holton declared a state of emergency as a result of the motor vehicle fuel shortage.

Federal and statewide conservation policies were implemented immediately. In Virginia, Gov. Holton ordered the speed limit on the interstate system reduced from 70 to 55 miles per hour. The action was followed shortly by the Congress setting the same limit on a nationwide basis.

Over the winter, the problem continued to grow. On Feb. 18, 1974, Virginia's newly inaugurated Gov. Mills E. Godwin, Jr. took the fuel conservation measures a step further.

He implemented a statewide mandatory gasoline distribution plan, which already was known in several other states as the "odd-even plan."

The plan related numbers on motor vehicle license plates to those on the calendar. A motorist whose license number ended in an odd digit could buy gasoline only on odd-numbered calendar days. Those whose licenses ended in even numbers could buy gasoline only on even-numbered days.

The new plan, and the public's support of fuel conservation efforts, went far toward alleviating the problem. Generally, long waiting lines at gasoline stations disappeared, but gas prices increased substantially. The fuel shortage was eased further by the lifting of the Mideast embargo in March 1974.

By April, the situation had improved sufficiently for Gov. Godwin to suspend the odd-even restrictions. But he cautioned that fuel supplies were expected to remain limited and that citizens should continue voluntarily to practice conserva-



The fuel crises of the '70s were to have a lasting impact on highway revenues.

tion measures. Moreover, he said, the speed limit would remain at a maximum 55 miles an hour.

The crisis had long-term, adverse effects aside from personal inconvenience. Reductions in gasoline use led to reductions in the state's income from the motor fuel tax, the largest single source of revenue for highway construction and maintenance. Only two years earlier, in 1972, the General Assembly had increased the gasoline tax from seven to nine cents a gallon to help finance a new 10-year plan for road and street improvement and for expanded state aid to urban mass transit. Suddenly, revenue was falling below anticipated levels, and the commission forecast a shortfall of approximately \$22 million for the 1974-75 fiscal year.

With petroleum being a major ingredient in roadway asphalt, construction costs also rose.

The revenue reductions, combined with sharply rising costs due to rapid inflation, made it clear that Virginia's highway budget wouldn't stretch as far as once hoped, and the commission began a reassessment of the 10-year plan. Also, federal authorities warned that the energy crisis "could critically curtail the federal state highway program," from which came 90 percent of interstate highway construction funds.

The environmental impacts of highway construction became a major concern.

The Department of Highways, like most agencies, initiated fuel conservation measures within its own organization. Employees were encouraged to join car pools for trips to work and were required to join such pools for business trips. It was decided to let roadside grass grow to 15 inches instead of 10 inches before mowing and to adjust snow-removal standards by eliminating plowing in subdivisions until snow was at least six inches deep.

Motor oil was saved for reuse in diesel engines and oil-fired furnaces. Oil changes in state vehicles were made every 4,000 miles instead of every 3,000 miles. An increased emphasis was placed on the use of asphalt that had low petroleum content and that required little heating before use.

But while the energy crisis produced changes in operations, and sometimes resulted in inconveniences, it also pointed the way to improved traffic safety. During the critical months of the fuel crisis in Virginia, traffic on the state's major highways decreased for the first time since World War II. The reduced speed limits and travel were accompanied by long-sought reductions in accidents.

In Virginia during the period between December 1973 and April 1974, 52 persons were killed in traffic accidents on the 2,000 miles of highways with reduced speed limits; the toll had been double on the same roads in the corresponding period the year before. In the first six months of 1974, Virginia's total traffic death toll on all of its highways stood at 458, down sharply from 608 in the same period of 1973.

There was another issue that emerged in the 1970s. It was not as immediately dramatic as the energy crisis, but it was one that would have a major effect on the department — concern about the environmental impact of highways.

The broadened public concern for environmental protection was accepted by department engineers as an indication of the public's willingness to pay the cost required for higher levels of preservation and conservation.

Opposition to the construction of Interstate 66 in Northern Virginia prompted department officials to examine even more closely the environmental impact highways would have in predominantly urban areas. On April 4, 1972, the 4th U.S. Court of Appeals in Richmond barred construction of the interstate through Arlington County until an environmental

impact statement was completed.

When the final segment of I-66 between the Capital Beltway and the Theodore Roosevelt Bridge was opened on Dec. 22, 1982, the highway was vastly different from the one proposed 26 years earlier. The newly opened highway had four lanes instead of the eight originally planned, and it was restricted to car pools, buses, and Dulles International Airport traffic during morning and evening rush hours.

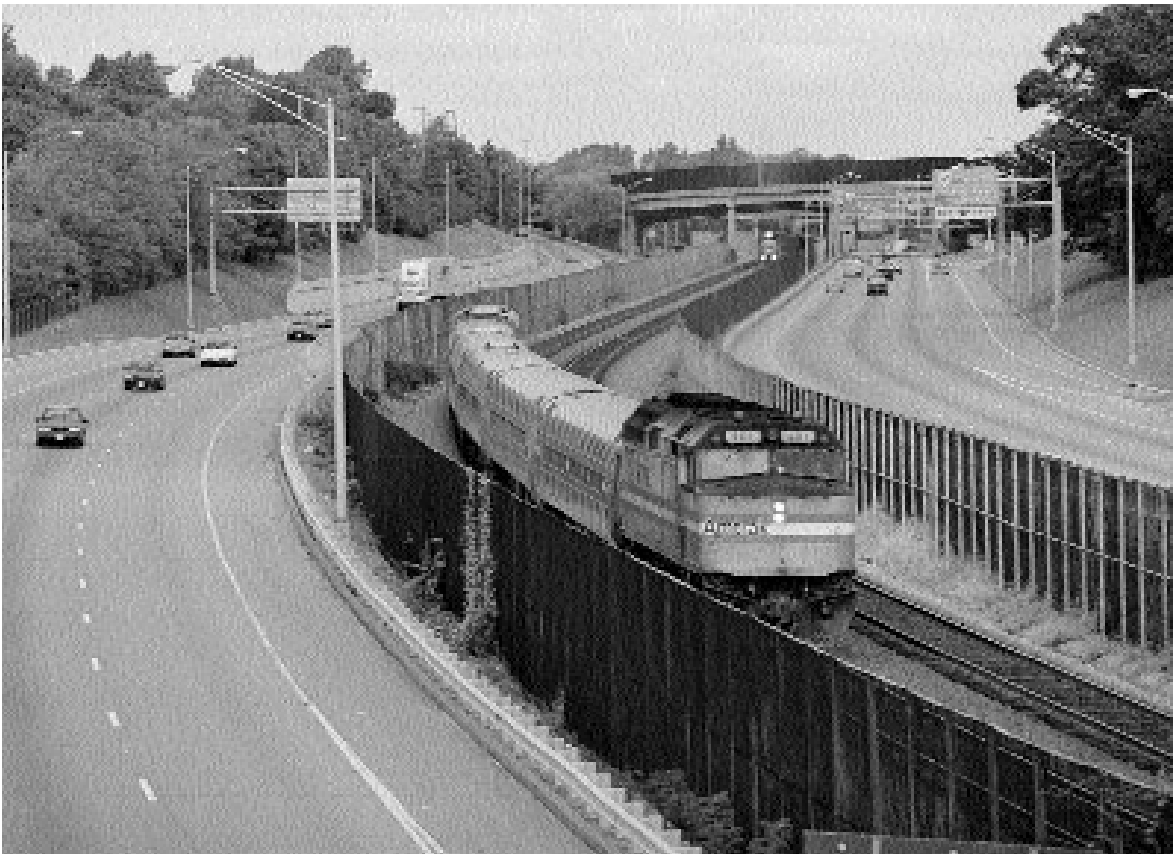
As a result of the department's heightened awareness of environmental issues, highway construction plans were scrutinized repeatedly for environmental impacts, particularly in urban areas. Among other efforts, the department began to include provisions for noise walls and hiking and biking trails. In addition, when possible, plans were altered to avoid the destruction of historical and cultural resources.

A Broadened Mission

Economic conditions in the 1974-76 biennium slowed virtually all of the department's operations as construction costs climbed 34 percent and revenue from state highway-user tax sources fell approximately \$30 million below estimates. A seven-month moratorium was placed on most new construction, and the General Assembly asked the Virginia Advisory Legislative Council to study the impact of the rising costs and reduced revenue.

The 10-year road and street improvement program approved by the commission in 1971 set the cost of highway improvement needs at \$5.2 billion by 1982. Although cost and income trends seemed to stabilize by the mid-1970s, attainment of the 10-year objectives still proved beyond reach by 1982.

It was also in the wake of the country's fuel crisis and the dollar's declining buying power that the Department of Highways would undergo major organizational changes. The changes resulted from action of the 1974 General Assembly, which expanded the duties of the department and enacted a new transportation policy for Virginia. To reflect this expansion, the department was renamed the Department of Highways and Transportation.



I-195 in Richmond was constructed with a rail line in the median, a sign of the department's broadened mission.

“It is hereby declared to be the policy of the Commonwealth of Virginia that the present and future welfare and mobility of the citizens of Virginia require a balanced transportation system, consisting of coordinated private and public facilities and services, provided and administered to assure adequate, safe, economical, and efficient transportation,” the assembly said.

Such a system, it continued, should *“stimulate economic growth, provide access to employment, health, educational, recreation, and other activities for all . . . citizens, facilitate the flow of commerce, encourage efficient allocation of human and economic resources, and preserve the inherent advantages of each mode, while utilizing inter-modal advantages to the fullest extent.”*

The department's job in the planning of air, rail, and waterway facilities was limited by the General Assembly to one of coordination. The authority of other state and local agencies and the private sector was kept intact.

Still, precisely what would be the state government's role in the planning, development and administration of highways, rail transportation, air travel, urban mass transit, ports and waterways remained a

question in the minds of department officials. And, how should state government's resources be organized to fulfill the role?

The answer to these questions as they related to rail transportation came in 1973, after the bankruptcy of eight rail companies in the Northeast and Midwest regions of the country led the Congress to pass the Regional Rail Reorganization Act. Among other things, the act provided limited funds for rail financial assistance.

In order to qualify for the federal subsidies, states were required to develop rail plans providing an overall appraisal of their statewide rail systems and making detailed analyses of sections for which financial aid was to be requested. Development of this plan in the Commonwealth was assigned to the Department of Highways and Transportation.

Virginia was fortunate that, with one exception, self-supporting rail service was provided by companies recognized as leaders in the railroad industry. The exception was the service formerly provided by the bankrupt Penn Central on the Eastern Shore and on a short segment in the Winchester area.

Since rail service in both of these areas was considered vital, the department submitted Virginia's completed plan to the Federal Railroad Administration on Jan. 9, 1976, and it was approved less than six weeks later.

The role of public transportation in department operations enjoyed increased emphasis beginning in the late 1970s.



The second Hampton Roads Bridge-Tunnel was under construction in 1973.

Recognizing that well-planned transit service could reduce traffic congestion, air pollution, and the costly consumption of fuel, the 1978 General Assembly established a public transportation division within the department.

The decision to create a new division expanded a transit assistance program that began in the department nearly a decade earlier, elevating it to a higher organizational level and reflecting the growing importance of mass transit operations, particularly in urban areas.

Milestones and New Financial Formulas

By 1975, revenue and cost trends stabilized sufficiently to permit resumption of a regularly scheduled highway construction program, with 172 projects totaling nearly 137 miles and \$191.5 million placed under contract.

A milestone in Virginia transportation occurred on June 3, 1976, when tolls were removed from three Tidewater bridges and the Hampton Roads Bridge-Tunnel. It was also on that day that the second Hampton Roads Bridge-Tunnel, running parallel to the first, was opened. Though it had been a long time coming, many hailed the removal of the tolls and the opening of a second Hampton-Norfolk connector as the most important factor in Tidewater's development.

In 1977, Virginia's laws governing the allocation of state highway revenue were rewritten and greatly simplified by the General Assembly.

Over the years, the allocation formulas had become steadily more complex as additional programs were initiated and as new or increased sources of revenue were provided. One result was that an important premise — that citizens ought to be able to understand what government is doing, and why — was jeopardized where the spending of highway funds was concerned.

Recognizing that the public's investment in highway facilities must be guarded, the legislation mandated that state funds be allocated first for the maintenance of all existing systems before any distribution for construction or other purposes.

Fifty percent of the construction funds was allocated for the primary system, 25 percent for the secondary system, and 25 percent for the urban system.

The new legislation reflected the growing influence of the state's urban areas by simplifying the methods of distributing the funds within each system and making allocations to predominantly rural and predominantly urban districts more equitable.

The General Assembly action also reduced from 15 percent to 10 percent the municipalities' share of urban construction costs.

Energy Crisis Revisited

The worrisome fuel shortage of 1973-74 occurred again in the summer of 1979, and left nagging questions about highway-related transportation for the years ahead. This time, as before, traffic declined, automobile sales dropped sharply, and many commuters sought public transportation or car and van pools as means of getting to and from work. Again, that meant a decrease in revenue from the motor fuel tax, the largest single source of income for road construction and maintenance.

As the state, its localities, and the commission became increasingly engaged providing improved public transportation, it was apparent that transit for most communities meant buses. But buses, like automobiles, required adequate highways and streets to operate safely and effectively.

Amid the questions and uncertainty, the energy situation led to a reduction in the traditional growth rate of fuel, tax, and other road-use tax revenue. In the past, the growth had helped partly to offset the higher construction and maintenance costs brought on by inflation.

Progress on the interstate and arterial systems had slowed somewhat due to the shortage in revenues. Highway officials had expected completion of the two systems by the early '80s. More than three-quarters of the interstate system was completed by 1972, but it would take another 20 years to complete the remaining 25 percent.

With the shortage in revenues and steadily increasing road maintenance requirements, the highway construction program was set back substantially, and the future of this program in Virginia was tinged with doubt as a new decade began.

Into the '80s: New Needs Bring New Financing and Building Methods

In Virginia as in other states, the new decade was marked by a highway construction and improvement program caught in a tightening squeeze caused by inflation and a drop in revenue.

The dilemma was compounded by sharply higher maintenance expenses required simply to take care of the existing state road system and its bridges.

As a result, the amount of new construction fell to its lowest level in five years. In the 1978-79 fiscal year, 206 contracts totaling \$326.5 million were awarded for work on 215 miles. The following year, the commission was able to award only 143 contracts, amounting to \$190.6 million, to build or improve 90 miles of the system.

Without some action, it was estimated that by 1991 maintenance costs would take all the revenue generated by the gas tax, leaving no money at all for new construction. Not only were construction funds decreasing, they were on a roller coaster ride. They plunged from \$233 million in 1975 to \$117 million two years later, only to rebound to \$200 million in 1980 and then to drop again, to \$95 million in 1982. Meaningful planning became impossible.

Coupled with spiraling costs, income from state highway-user taxes dropped below the levels anticipated and appropriated.

Commissioner Harold C. King, a former Federal Highway Administration official who had been appointed to the state position in 1978, reported on the overall situation in a December 1979 letter to Gov. John N. Dalton and the members of the General Assembly:

“Virginia’s highway construction and improvement program is in jeopardy. It is entirely possible that within the 1980-82 biennium it will become necessary to forego any new state-financed improvements, and to reserve state construction money to match federal aid. In the 1982-84 biennium, it may be impossible to match federal aid, thus risking the loss of millions of dollars needed to complete our interstate routes and to improve bridges and other existing highway facilities.”

Decreased funds
and spiraling costs
limited the
construction
program.

After much consideration, the 1980 General Assembly approved a 2-cents-a-gallon increase in the state motor fuel tax. The increase provided approximately \$576 million more annually for the state highway program.

Barely had the state legislative session ended, however, when federal authorities announced the curtailment of the federal-aid program nationwide, dealing a second blow to an already sparse transportation budget.

After extensive conferences with federal authorities, the commission was authorized to begin projects totaling about \$126 million, some \$16 million below the level anticipated before the cutback was imposed.

By 1980, Virginia continued to maintain the nation's third-largest highway system, with 52,600 miles of interstate, arterial, primary, and secondary roads, behind only North Carolina and Texas.

In addition, the state provided financial aid to 67 cities and towns with populations over 3,500 to assist them in maintaining about 8,100 miles of local streets.

At the beginning of the decade, the state system also included approximately 12,000 bridges, with approximately 500 more bridges within the municipalities.

Even in a time of high fuel prices, motorists drove an average of more than 100 million miles daily on state highways and streets.

Approximately 3.2 million Virginians were licensed drivers in 1980, and four million motor vehicles were registered.

Administrative Belt-Tightening

In 1980, the General Assembly ordered the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC) to review the department's operations and finances and recommend changes to make the best use of the resources available. Between July 1, 1978, and Nov. 1, 1981, employment in the department statewide was cut from 12,865 to 11,030, a reduction of more than 14 percent. The cutbacks were partly the result of the JLARC evaluation, which recommended reductions in manpower

within the agency.

While most of the decline was accomplished by attrition, some employees were laid off from their jobs. The lower payroll costs cut approximately \$15 million from the budget each year.

The employment decline reflected a determination to streamline the organization, but to a greater degree it was a reflection of the shrinking highway program.

Despite cutbacks in personnel and efforts to save money, the funding situation became increasingly severe, prompting the Department of Highways and Transportation to reassess the status and public use of substandard roads and bridges throughout the state.

Local governments were asked in 1981 to identify what they regarded as their most serious highway needs. The result of that request was the development of the Six-Year Improvement Program for the highway system. The program was adopted on July 1, 1982, and it established a schedule of construction and reconstruction projects for the interstate, primary, and urban road systems in Virginia on a priority basis.

New Directions

Still concerned about a rapidly growing backlog of highway, bridge, and public transit needs, the 1982 General Assembly provided a substantial increase in funds to shore up the state's lagging transportation budget.

In doing so, the legislature averted a revenue crisis of major proportions that had threatened to bring the state's highway system improvements to an abrupt halt.

By enacting a 3 percent oil excise tax, plus increases in motor vehicle registration and several other highway-user fees, the legislature authorized an estimated \$263 million in additional money — \$224 million for highway and bridge construction and reconstruction and \$39 million to assist local public transportation systems with capital and administrative costs.



Earth slides halted construction in 1978 and in 1983, but the Commission on Transportation in the 21st Century funds helped complete this section of Route 23.

The new funds enabled the state to move forward with transportation improvements that otherwise would have been deferred indefinitely or, in some instances, abandoned entirely.

Out of the revenue collected for highway use, maintenance of the existing roads was paid first, as mandated by the General Assembly in 1977. This meant that a loss of funds had to be absorbed by the construction program. Escalating maintenance costs and the sagging highway budget left several districts' construction programs in danger of collapse. Though lawmakers repeatedly tried to

deal with the problem by increasing gas taxes, falling sales left only a string of broken promises to build new or expanded roads.

The answer to the transportation crisis of the mid-1980s clearly was to find a new and stable revenue source. Some thought that explosive growth in areas like Northern Virginia and Tidewater made the “*pay-as-you-go*” method of financing highway construction projects obsolete; urbanization had occurred too quickly for road construction to keep pace, particularly in light of the revenue decline and increased costs seen throughout the ‘70s.

Meeting the Challenge

Until 1984, the eight transportation districts had remained as originally established in 1922—Bristol, Culpeper, Fredericksburg, Lynchburg, Richmond, Salem, Staunton, and Suffolk. The 1984 General Assembly authorized the creation of the Northern Virginia district to respond more effectively to the area's transportation problems. The newly formed transportation district was carved from the existing Culpeper district to include the counties of Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William.

In the General Assembly, the growing influence of urban areas also led to greater pressures to modify again the formulas that allocated road-building monies around the state.

In July 1985, the department began using a new allocation formula, enacted by the General Assembly, to distribute funds for highway construction and other programs. It was the first major change in highway fund distribution since 1977, and it increased funding to urban areas.

Under the new formula, 5.67 percent of the money came off the top for hard-surfacing dirt roads. Of the remainder, 40 percent was allocated for improving the primary system. The remaining 60 percent was split equally between the secondary and urban systems.

In 1986, newly inaugurated Gov. Gerald L. Baliles presented a series of initiatives to improve transportation and prepare for the 21st century. His initiatives and subsequent legislative action marked a period of sweeping changes that eliminated the dependence on user fees only and “*pay-as-you-go*” financing for transportation needs. On Jan. 13, 1986, in his State of the Commonwealth Address, Gov. Baliles called for a vastly different approach to paying for transportation:

“Periodic tax increases have helped only by providing new revenues, but they only postpone the problems — they don’t solve them,” the governor said. *“Even worse, the adjustments to our highway funding formula have divided us, competing with one another for the inadequate funds . . . the heart of the problem now is that we can’t begin to plan for future needs, if we can’t complete meeting today’s needs.”*

Gov. Baliles called for a blue-ribbon,

non-partisan commission of leaders from government, business, finance, and transportation. Its challenge was to study how to plan and finance the comprehensive transportation system Virginia would need to take it into the next century.

The Commission on Transportation in the 21st Century (COT 21) identified more than \$20 billion worth of needs in highway construction, rail, public transit, ports, and airports by the turn of the century. To meet those needs, the commission recommended major changes in the way Virginia paid for transportation projects.

Traditionally, users had paid for transportation in Virginia. Improvements and maintenance were paid through such sources as taxes on motor fuels and license plates. Roads were paid for out of current funds—no general fund financing, no debt financing or bond issues, except those for which there was a specific revenue source, such as a toll road.

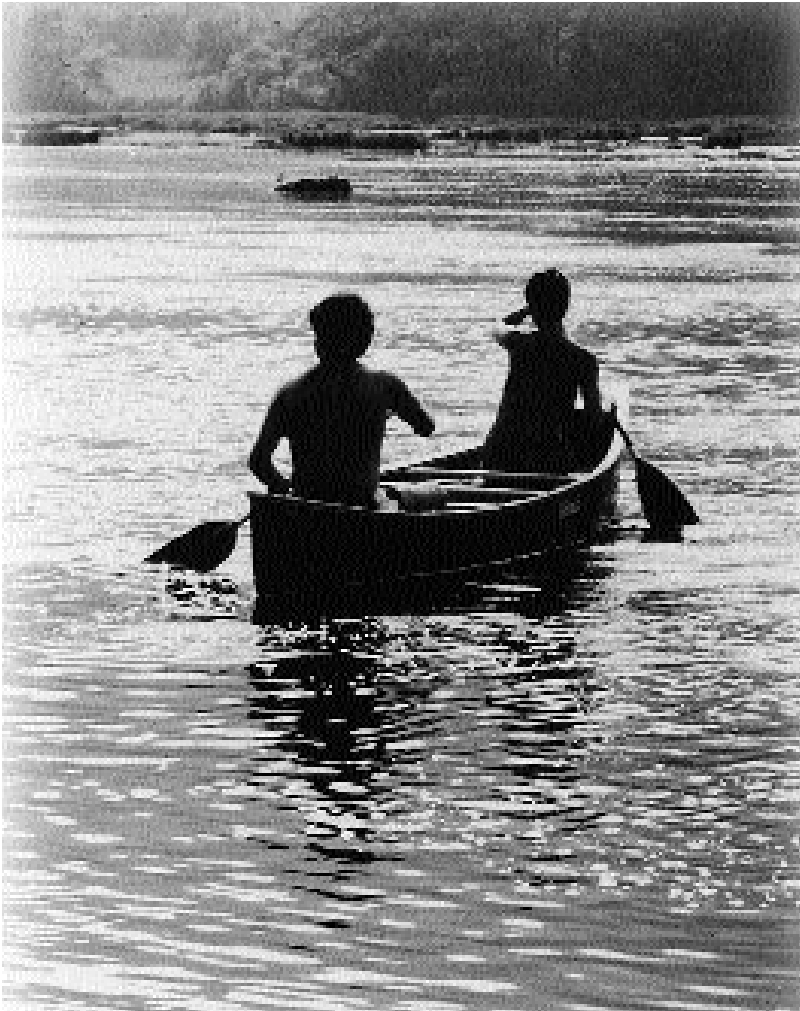
The commission recommended that the user fees be increased slightly, and also recommended that the state's general sales tax be raised and the increase dedicated strictly to transportation uses. Specific percentages would be allocated to specific modes of travel—ports, airports, public transportation, and roads. The commission also recommended the use of bonds to finance major, long-term projects.

While the commission was doing its research, the 1986 General Assembly appropriated \$150 million in “*seed money*” to complete designs and purchase right of way for critical highway projects so they would be ready to be built when the additional monies were made available.

In September 1986, the legislature met in a special session and agreed with the governor and the commission that “*business as usual*” was not enough to address Virginia's transportation needs. A new and vastly different approach was needed to build the road to the future.

To help stabilize the funds, the assembly added a half-cent to the state's general sales tax, raising it to 4.5 cents on the dollar. It also added 2.5 cents to the fuel tax, making it 17.5 cents per gallon. Further it increased the vehicle titling tax from 2 to 3 percent of the purchase price and added \$3 to the annual license plate fee.

More than \$20 billion in transportation needs were identified by a special commission.



Development of recreational sites was promoted through the use of recreational access funds to construct roads to those areas.

With part of the general sales tax earmarked for transportation, the state was assured that funds would keep pace with inflation and would not be influenced as much by fluctuating oil prices and vehicles that use less fuel.

The new revenues generated more than \$420 million a year, with 8.4 percent designated by law for public transportation systems, 4.2 percent for port improvements, and 2.4 percent for airport improvements. The remaining 85 percent was dedicated for highways.

During that session, the General Assembly also changed the name of the agency to the Virginia Department of Transportation to reflect the increased emphasis on diverse modes of transportation. The legislature also renamed the State Highway and Transportation Board as the Commonwealth Transportation Board and expanded the board from 12 to 15 members, with five serving at large and the commissioner serving as chairman.

In addition to increasing its commitment to transportation in general, the

General Assembly increased its commitment to separate transportation programs specifically for economic development. This money was used to construct “access” roads or rail spurs to factories and other industrial sites where companies were locating or expanding.

By 1990, \$6 million a year was available in road and rail industrial access funds, up from \$3 million in 1986. Similar programs provided new or improved roads to recreational areas and airports.

Economic development also was the reason the 1989 legislature took the major step of providing special financing to widen and straighten the longest road in the state. That road, Route 58, stretches more than 500 miles from the Atlantic Ocean to the Kentucky border at the western tip of Virginia.

To pay for the project, the legislature authorized \$600 million in bonds to be sold over several years and paid off with \$40 million a year from the state's "*recor-dation tax*," the state fee imposed at the county courthouse or city hall when real estate transfers are recorded.

The legislature also took several other actions in the last half of the decade to increase funds for transportation projects. It gave localities the right to create special tax districts and impose local income taxes. In the special tax districts, land owners and developers paid a special tax, up to 20 cents per \$100 assessed, to be used to build or improve roads sooner than would have been possible without the special tax. A local income tax of up to one percent could be levied in certain localities if the local voters authorized it.

The General Assembly also gave localities \$40 million a year for five years from the recordation tax to spend on education or transportation, beginning in 1990. This was separate from the \$40 million a year designated for upgrading Route 58.

Special Action in Northern Virginia

Due to the critical transportation needs in Northern Virginia, those localities took the lead in adopting alternative financing methods for highway construction and improvement projects.

Northern Virginia was first in using a "proffer" system that allowed the counties to negotiate with private developers in zoning matters so the developers paid for needed public improvements, such as new streets and schools, in return for favorable zoning decisions.

Some local governments also issued their own bonds for highway work. Proceeds from these bond sales were used either to supplement state funds or to build road projects for which state funds were not available.

One of the keys to transportation progress and economic development is cooperation between the public and private sector. Resources are often available from private enterprise to meet transportation challenges more effectively now and in the future.

In 1988, the General Assembly, with the support of Gov. Baliles, approved legislation that allowed private companies to build and operate for-profit toll roads. Companies must have their plans approved by state and local officials before building, and the toll structure must be approved by the State Corporation Commission. Private firms took the lead in other highway projects in Northern Virginia. The first 1.5-mile segment of one of Fairfax County's most-needed roads was built by a developer in conjunction with construction of a major office park.



This 1972 photo shows heavy traffic on I-395 as it passes under Route 7 in Arlington County.

County, state, and federal funds were used to build other sections of the 35-mile Fairfax County Parkway.

Another example of public and private sector cooperation was the financing of the improvements to Route 28 in Northern Virginia. The state sold bonds to widen and upgrade the heavily congested road near Dulles Airport, with the owners of commercial and industrial land in the area paying off the bonds through a special property tax. This first special tax district was authorized by the General Assembly in 1987. Since then, similar tax districts have been permitted in other areas of the state.

The transportation initiatives and increased funding since 1986 meant a doubling, and in some areas a tripling, of the highway construction program. That kind of expansion in a short time frame could have led to problems if steps to address them were not taken. There were two questions in particular that had to be answered: could the road-building industry absorb the additional work, especially without a jump in prices, and could the Virginia Department of Transportation manage such an expanded program efficiently and effectively?

The answer to both questions was “yes.” The COT 21 members had looked into the first, and Gov. Baliles and the legislature had taken steps to deal with the second.

The cost of highway construction remained stable, in part because of the increased competition for the road-building dollars. The number of contractors interested in working on Virginia’s roads increased, as did the number who bid on the various construction projects.

The department took several steps to discourage and detect collusion while making sure bids and prices remained competitive in the expanded construction program. Among the steps was the creation of the nation’s first full-time, multi-person, antitrust unit in a state transportation agency.

When Gov. Baliles first proposed his transportation initiatives, he brought in a management expert, Ray D. Pethel, to head the 11,000-employee agency. Pethel, who previously had served as



The increase in state aid to public transit benefited tens of thousands of Virginians.

head of the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC), instituted a series of changes within the agency to make it more efficient and more effective.

The time it took to complete highway projects was cut 20 percent, and the job was being done with fewer people per dollars spent. Substantial authority was decentralized to field offices around the state. Training was given new emphasis, along with increased communication with employees, the general public, elected officials, construction contractors, design and engineering consultants, minority-owned businesses, and others. Use of computers and other technology increased in areas from surveying to drafting.

Transit Makes Its Mark

When funds for highway construction doubled, so did funds for public transportation services. Increasing pressures for these services were felt in all sections of Virginia.

Public transportation service includes a lot more than buses in the cities or the Metrorail subway in the Washington, D.C., area. It includes ridesharing efforts with car and van pools, park-and-ride lots, special high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes on congested highways for vehicles carrying at least two and sometimes three people, special transportation for elderly and handicapped persons, and development of commuter rail service.

Public-private cooperation began to enhance the highway system.



The I-295 cable-stayed bridge is one of few like it in the U.S. today. It crosses the James River south of Richmond between Varina and Enon.

By the late 1980s, public transportation was making its mark. More than two-thirds of the people crossing the Potomac River between Northern Virginia and Washington, D.C., during rush hours traveled either by public transit or car pool. But many more innovations beyond public transportation would be required to keep Virginia moving in the last decade of the century.

The 1990s: Aging Highways, Increasing Traffic, New Technologies, and Funding Infusions

The 1990s brought no slowdown in the increasing needs of Virginians for mobility. Surging volumes of traffic—combined with aging highways, accelerating technological progress, and landmark legislation—brought a dynamic set of challenges to transportation in the century’s last decade. Public demands for more transportation capacity were met with dramatic increases in transportation funding and burgeoning highway construction programs. In that context, VDOT sought and implemented continuous innovation in its management and

engineering programs.

From 1980 to 1990, vehicle registrations jumped from 4 million to 5 million. **Miles traveled daily in Virginia leaped from 105 million to 165 million.** Despite the demand for more roads and bridges, voters indicated in 1990 that they were unwilling to give up completely the “pay-as-you-go” philosophy of funding for transportation. In a referendum, they turned down a proposal to sell pledge bonds to finance highway improvements.

At the same time, the Commonwealth was moving toward a more modern transportation infrastructure. In 1990 the General Assembly, at Gov. Douglas Wilder’s request, created **separate secretariats for transportation and public safety**, functional areas that had been combined in the past. The legislation also provided that the secretary of transportation would serve as chairman of the Commonwealth Transportation Board, and the commissioner of the Department of Transportation would become vice-chairman.

Within a few months, however, **the department experienced the effects of a weakening economy.** The resulting loss of revenue caused VDOT to scale back maintenance, mowing, and snow plowing; and the value of construction contracts awarded for highway improvements fell 28 percent from 1990 to 1991. By 1992 more than 100 highway projects had been delayed. In addition, maintaining and rebuilding roads—especially aging interstate highways—was becoming a special challenge. Help was on the way, however, in a new federal aid package.

Federal Legislation Sets Stage for the Decade

In December 1991, Congress passed a six-year, \$151 billion transportation act called the **Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA)**. It was the first reauthorization of federal surface transportation legislation since the beginning of the interstate program. While ISTEA provided funds for highway

construction and repairs, the emphasis of the legislation was on preservation, operation, and better management of existing transportation facilities. Intermodal transportation, in which various modes of transportation are designed to work together to move people and products, was a key theme.

In tune with that theme were two major manifestations within the Commonwealth in the early 1990s of increased reliance on intermodalism. One was the **establishment of the Virginia Railway Express (VRE)**, developed to provide 4,500 or more Northern Virginia daily commuters a reliable alternative to congested highway travel. With VDOT's support, the VRE opened 36 miles of service between Manassas and Union Station in Washington, D.C., in June of 1992 and a 57-mile VRE line from Fredericksburg to the capital city in July of that year. That same month, the General Assembly elevated **VDOT's Division of Rail and Public Transportation to separate agency status**. The new department would help Virginia achieve a balance between building more highways and improving and expanding public transit. As the decade proceeded, a citizens' campaign to establish rail passenger service between Bristol and Richmond and Washington, D.C., built up steam. In addition, planning for high-speed rail service from Washington to Richmond and on to Charlotte, N.C., gained momentum.

The move toward intermodalism reflected to a large degree the **intensified concern for the environment**, as did a change in VDOT's mission statement in 1991. No longer would the statement provide only for "a safe, efficient, and effective surface transportation system"; now it also would include an "environmentally balanced" system. Consequently, environment-protecting policies of the department were given new priority, and minimizing disturbances to the state's natural and historic resources took on new importance. Roadway noise levels in neighborhoods were lowered by shifting highway alignments and constructing sound barriers. Wetlands lost to highway improvement projects were replaced with similar and even additional

wetlands nearby. High-occupancy-vehicle lanes (HOVs) were constructed and motorists were encouraged to carpool.

Historic sites were assessed and, whenever possible, were preserved before highway projects commenced. In addition, **VDOT's Adopt-a-Highway Program**,



VDOT's volunteer Adopt-a-Highway program is one of the largest in the nation.

inaugurated in 1988 to remove litter from Virginia's highways, became one of the nation's largest volunteer programs in the 1990s.

A popular feature of ISTEA was a provision for "**enhancement grants**", which were awarded to localities for increasing the usefulness of transportation facilities, making them more aesthetically pleasing, or creating them from scratch. Consequently, the Commonwealth Transportation Board was able to award millions of dollars over the decade to restore old railroad stations, preserve historic sites, create hiking, biking, and driving trails, landscape transportation facilities, and more.

Even as a new priority was being placed on the environment and alternative modes of transportation, federal funding levels for Virginia's highways increased dramatically through ISTEA—from \$290 million annually to an average of \$436 million. At the beginning of fiscal year 1992-93, **VDOT's budget was increased, for the first time in two years, to \$1.89 billion**. The budget allocations included a total of \$829.5 million for transportation improvement programs



VDOT's "smart" traffic management centers reduce traffic backups.

and \$518 million for state highway maintenance. VDOT Commissioner Ray D. Pethel was positive in his outlook, predicting that ISTEA "allows us to deliver a strong, stable transportation improvement program." Virginians looked forward to spending \$5 billion during the next six years in state and federal funds on highway improvement projects, mass transit, ports, and airports.

Intelligent Technologies Applied to Highways

The growing numbers of vehicles using the highways in the 1990s demanded more efficiencies in the operation of those highways. Early in the decade, VDOT engineers worked with national committees to evaluate the potential benefits of what became known as "intelligent transportation systems"—a whole new array of technologies being applied to roadways, vehicles, and traffic management. Often these systems were adapted from technologies developed earlier by the defense industry. Upon being named commissioner in 1994, David R. Gehr, a veteran VDOT engineer and administrator, secured a position for

VDOT as a national leader in implementing these new systems.

In 1998, under Gehr's leadership, the department consolidated these evolving technologies across Virginia under a program called "Smart Travel." The program includes regional Smart Traffic Centers to help manage traffic and incidents; traffic signals coordinated by computers; Internet pictures of traffic conditions; a statewide Transportation Emergency Operations Center in Richmond; toll booths that deduct tolls from motorists' accounts without stopping their vehicles; and truck weigh stations that check truckers' registrations and weight data without stopping their trucks. In the traffic-clogged Washington, D.C., region, VDOT and the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation joined 37 other public and private organizations in a program called "Partners in Motion." The program offers real-time, route-specific information about all modes of travel in the region. It is disseminated via telephone, Internet, personal pagers, cable TV, kiosks, and in-vehicle navigational devices. As a result, commuters and other travelers are making more efficient decisions about their travels.

In a special effort that showed Virginia's determination to make full use of technology, a "Smart Road," the first roadbed in the nation built specifically to test intelligent transportation systems, was constructed by VDOT and Virginia Tech. It was designed as part of a new highway between Blacksburg and I-81. Testing new technologies on the Smart Road will help make travel safer, save motorists time and money, and enable VDOT personnel to work more efficiently.

By 1990, computers linked VDOT employees throughout the state and, by the end of the decade, engineers in several locations were working simultaneously on the same road design plans, via computer, without shipping cumbersome blueprints back and forth. **As the decade progressed, solar power was weighing and classifying vehicles as they crossed pavement sensors—and there was much more.** Surface condition analyzers (SCAN) were recording roadway temperatures, moisture, and salinity to give road crews critical information for timing their application of chemicals to pavements during winter storms. Management information systems were keeping vast data on highways, bridges, signals, and signs

in order to engineer safer roadways and maintain them more efficiently. Also, highway contractors were accessing project advertising schedules and viewing awards for highway contracts via the Internet.

These efficiencies were needed more than before after the department lost 927 senior employees through an **early retirement option** in 1991 during Gov. Douglas Wilder's administration and another 1,227 employees in 1995 through a retirement option offered by Gov. George Allen. Both events thinned VDOT's senior employee ranks and dropped full-time employee strength to about 9,700, the lowest since 1986. Those losses forced increasing reliance by the department on consultants and contractors to do work traditionally performed by VDOT employees, and that "**outsourcing**" became a continuing trend. It closely resembled another trend gaining momentum throughout the Commonwealth and the nation— "privatization."

'Privatization' Takes Hold

In 1993, ground was broken for the **Dulles Toll Road Extension**, known as the Dulles Greenway, a 14-mile stretch from Route 28 at Dulles International Airport to Leesburg. It would be built and operated as a private enterprise—the first private toll road built in Virginia since the 1800s. It followed the General Assembly's 1988 Virginia Highway Corporation Act, which allowed a private corporation to build, own, and operate a toll road for profit.

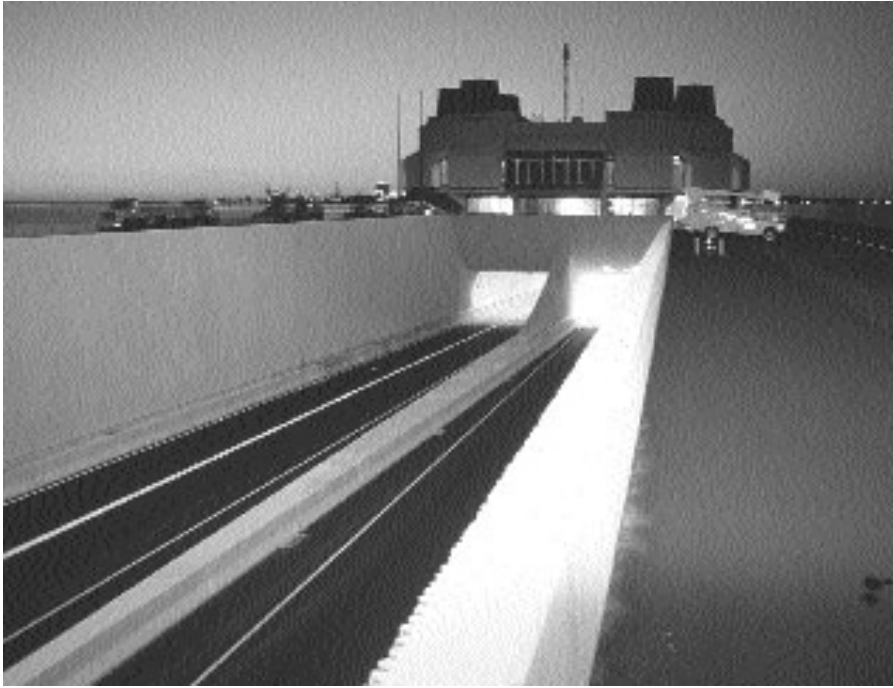
Then, in 1995, the General Assembly introduced a broader opportunity for privatization by passing the **Public-Private Transportation Act (PPTA)**, a part of Gov. Allen's legislative package. The act allowed private ventures to build new transportation facilities and expedited new cooperation between VDOT and the private sector. The first PPTA project approved by the Commonwealth Transportation Board was the Pocahontas Parkway, or Route 895, begun in 1999 by the combined forces of two major engineering firms. The parkway, a toll road crossing the James River just south of Richmond, connects Chesterfield and Henrico counties. It will provide much



Artificial rain and snow makers provide realistic conditions for tests on the "Smart Road" near Blacksburg.

easier access to Richmond International Airport for many motorists in the metropolitan area. Also notable among privatization measures was a pilot program to allow private entities to maintain and operate long stretches of Virginia's interstate, including much of I-95, I-77, and I-81. A new firm, Virginia Interstate Maintenance Services, Inc., was created by a corporate partnership of engineering firms to meet the requirements of the pilot, which ran from 1997 until 2002.

Meanwhile, **highway construction expenditures continued to climb**. The value of contracts under way by VDOT increased from about \$1 billion in 1994 to about \$2.2 billion in 2000, representing a new infusion of funds from state and federal legislation. In 1998, the federal transportation legislation of 1991, ISTEA, was replaced by the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21). **Under TEA-21**, Virginia began receiving about 62 percent more in federal funds annually than it had under ISTEA, bringing the federal funding up from about \$415 million per year to \$671 million. In addition, Virginians also were guaranteed 90.5 cents on each dollar in Highway Trust Fund contributions, instead of 80 cents as provided under ISTEA.



The Monitor Merrimac Memorial Bridge Tunnel is the second man-made crossing of the Hampton Roads waterways.

The Commonwealth Acts on Future Mobility Needs

Major highway construction projects were completed during the 1990s, among them the last stretch of Virginia's interstate network, a section of I-295 around Richmond finished in June 1992. The completion of I-295 brought the number of miles of interstate highway in the Commonwealth to 1,105. Where I-295 crosses the James River, the Varina-Enon Bridge was constructed with a cable-stayed design used on only a few other bridges in the nation. Cables fan out from two 300-foot-high towers on the bridge structure, making for a dramatic and beautiful feat of engineering.

Completion of I-295 was preceded by a few weeks by the opening of the Monitor Merrimac Memorial Bridge Tunnel (MMMBT). This massive project carries traffic over 3.5 miles of the waters of Hampton Roads and under almost one mile of those waters through a tunnel of twin tubes. The tunnel required joining fifteen 300-foot sections of the steel tubes, each wide enough to carry four lanes of traffic. When encased in concrete, each section weighed 28,000 tons, and each had to be joined to others under the water with a tolerance of one

inch. The MMMBT enabled I-664 to link Newport News and Suffolk and put the last piece in place in a 55-mile interstate beltway in the region. It became the second water crossing from the Peninsula to Southeast Virginia after the Hampton Roads Bridge-Tunnel, which opened its first two lanes in 1957 and its second two lanes in 1976.

A choke point of congestion at the George P. Coleman Bridge across the York River between Yorktown and Gloucester Point was remedied with the conversion of the bridge from two lanes to four. It was a marvel of engineering that provided for construction of the new, larger spans in Norfolk and the delivery of them, by barge, to the reinforced piers. The new spans were set in place while closing the bridge to traffic for only nine days. The innovative project won several awards.

Meanwhile, **renewing the aging interstates without disrupting travelers** on them was a continuing challenge, one that was met with intense planning and innovative engineering. Chief among these projects was the intersection of I-395 and I-495 with I-95 in the Springfield Interchange in Northern Virginia. This facility carries almost 400,000 vehicles daily on traffic lifelines for the entire East Coast. In the same period, VDOT began to convert the four-lane I-81 corridor to six lanes, as north-south traffic along it burgeoned. Meanwhile, bridges on I-95 through Richmond, one of the earliest pieces of interstate built in Virginia, were being rehabilitated.

Despite the increase in highway construction activity, highway congestion continued to be a major concern for citizens, especially in Northern Virginia and Hampton Roads. That concern often became a demand for more roads, built more quickly. In 1996, the General Assembly created the **Commission on the Future of Transportation** in Virginia to address ways of meeting the projected highway needs through the year 2015. Those needs involved projects some citizens considered vital and others considered optional, but all of them together totaled \$34.7 billion, far more than the state had projected in revenues over that time period.

Shortly after taking office in 1998, Gov. Jim Gilmore appointed a **Governor's Commission on Transportation Policy** to

Transportation Act of 2000 set a record-breaking budget.

study Virginia's present and future transportation needs. Subsequently, in August 1999, Governor Gilmore unveiled a transportation plan called "Innovative Progress." Then, in the spring of 2000, the General Assembly passed much of the governor's plan into law, as well as its own transportation measures, in the **Virginia Transportation Act of 2000**.

The act provided a new record-setting transportation budget of \$3.2 billion for fiscal year 2001—an increase of 22 percent over the previous year's budget.

Legislators also stipulated in the act of 2000 that there would be **three tiers of priorities for upcoming highway construction projects**. Projects of first priority would be partially funded from what became known as the Priority Transportation Fund, a fund created under the act. It would draw funding from increased efficiencies in motor fuel tax collections, dedication of a portion of taxes paid on insurance premiums, and specified savings within VDOT. Among the priority projects listed were improvements to Route 58, construction of the Coalfields Expressway in Southwest Virginia, a third crossing for Hampton Roads waterways, and widening of I-81 through Virginia. Second in priority would be projects in the Six-Year Improvement Program to be financed in part with money from the state's General Fund. Third in priority would be other projects in the Six-Year Improvement Program, or those that would be added to it in the future.

'Unprecedented Investment' for Transportation Projects

Through the Virginia Transportation Act of 2000, legislators provided for about \$3 billion in new money or accelerated financing for \$10 billion worth of highway construction, public transportation, airports, and ports during the next six years. It was called "**an unprecedented investment in transportation in the Commonwealth's history**" by Gov. Gilmore, and Commissioner Charles D. Nottingham, responding to the momentum of the bill, said, "We will build roads as fast as the law allows and the money flow allows."

In December of 2000, Gov. Gilmore proposed a **Transportation Reform**

Initiative to reduce the time required for completion of construction projects and to bring savings in the construction program of \$140 million annually. In the proposal were 105 recommendations for best practices developed by the Governor's Commission on Transportation Policy. The recommendations included one to allow the Commonwealth Transportation Board to enter into design-build contracts, which put one contractor in charge of an entire highway project rather than dividing responsibility for the project among many contractors under VDOT's supervision. The General Assembly was asked to pass into law several of these recommendations, and in 2001 did so, including one to allow counties to choose to reassume responsibilities for building or maintaining secondary roads within their boundaries.

Unexpected Setbacks Come in the New Century

Even before taking office in 2002, Gov. Mark R. Warner expressed his concern about the financing and scheduling of highway projects, as well as about cost overruns for new projects and inadequate budget projections to maintain the highway infrastructure.

The construction program so dramatically enlarged just two years earlier by the previous administration and the General Assembly was being severely crimped by the downturn in the economy. Rosy revenue projections foreseen for transportation in late 2001 were realized as untenable in 2002. Project cost estimates did not adequately account for inflation and were significantly low. The available funding and the extensive improvements in the transportation system called for were recognized as incompatible.

The new governor called for a "realistic and achievable" Six-Year Program for transportation improvements and directed VDOT to produce it. Secretary of Transportation Whittington W. Clement, recently appointed by the governor, indicated a sharp reduction in the construction program was necessary, saying, "We can't do it all, but whatever it is, we're going to do it well."

Gov. Warner also appointed a new commissioner of transportation, Philip A. Shucet, and within weeks he and VDOT staff prepared a Six-Year Program that reduced the previously approved program



The Pocahontas Parkway is a new and time-saving link for motorists crossing the James River south of Richmond. It opened in 2002.

by nearly a third. At the same time, Virginia's aging highway system required more maintenance, further reducing available funding for new construction. Virginia, which long held "pay as you go" as its transportation funding philosophy, had to use Federal Reimbursement Anticipation Notes (FRANs), or special-use bonds, to help cover some construction projects' costs.

"No doubt, tough decisions are being made to deliver a transportation program

that is truly credible and realistic," Secretary Clement stated.

It appeared to be the beginning of an era of retrenchment, but at the same time, 1,157 projects across the state remained in the \$7.3 billion Six-Year Program. And, simultaneously, motorists across Virginia rated highly the service they received from roads and highways, even in areas where traffic congestion was problematic.

The transportation theme of the new century, however, had been changed from spending and building to one of a realistic, credible, and systematic improvement process.

Looking at the Recent Past and on to the Future

Throughout the 1990s, Virginia's transportation system had **undergone continuous upgrades** with new technologies, innovative funding, selective privatization, and reorganization of its agency for road building and maintaining. In that context, the Commonwealth has continued a long-standing tradition of providing one of the finest highway networks in the nation, and one of the best maintained and operated.

At the same time, motorists' use of Virginia highways continued to grow rapidly—from 165 million miles traveled daily in 1990 to 205 million in 2000. Simultaneously, the population of Virginia grew from 6.2 million in 1990 to about 7 million in 2000. Consequently, the demand for transportation services is not abated, and undoubtedly the initiative and imagination required in every decade of the twentieth century will be required again, and again, as the new century's transportation challenges unfold.

To help meet those challenges, Virginia continues as a national leader in transportation technology, launching one of the first voice-activated "511" travel and tourism information services in the country in February 2002. In March, the Commonwealth Transportation Board and its North Carolina counterpart approved a high-speed rail corridor from Washington, D.C., through Richmond and

In 2002, the Virginia transportation system managed by VDOT includes:

- nearly 56,950 miles of interstate, primary, secondary, and frontage roads;
- more than 11,855 bridges;
- four underwater tunnels in Hampton Roads;
- two mountain tunnels in Southwest Virginia;
- one toll road in Northern Virginia, one in central Virginia, and one in Southeast Virginia;
- three Smart Traffic Centers;
- 41 rest areas and 10 welcome centers; and
- approximately 110 commuter parking lots.

South Hill to Charlotte, N.C.

In June 2002, through a project supported financially by VDOT, a magnetic levitation train car was set in place on its elevated guideway at Old Dominion University—the first implementation of maglev technology in the United States.

In Retrospect...

The 20th century has been an amazing century in many ways, especially in transportation. Virginia began the century with no highway network, but rather with only a disjointed assortment of deeply rutted county roads. Now, almost a century after the State Highway Commission was established, there are well-engineered highways, smooth pavements, strong bridges, and sophisticated traffic management systems on approximately 57,000 miles of state-maintained roadways in Virginia. All have contributed to the state's economic development and prosperity. In the future, continual diligence, innovation, and foresight will be required to preserve that prosperous condition. ■

Population Growth

Year	Number
1800	880,200
1820	1,065,266
1840	1,239,797
1860	1,596,318
1880	1,512,565
1900	1,854,184
1920	2,309,187
1940	2,677,773
1960	3,954,429
1970	4,651,448
1980	5,346,818
1990	6,187,000
2000	7,078,515

Virginia's Highway Commissioners



Phillip St. Julien Wilson
(1906-1913)



George P. Coleman
(1913-1922)



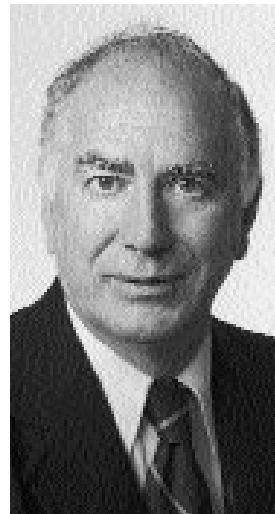
Henry G. Shirley
(1922-1941)



James A. Anderson
(1941-1957)



John E. Harwood
(1976-1978)



Harold C. King
(1978-1986)



Ray D. Pethel
(1986-1994)
and acting January-April 2002



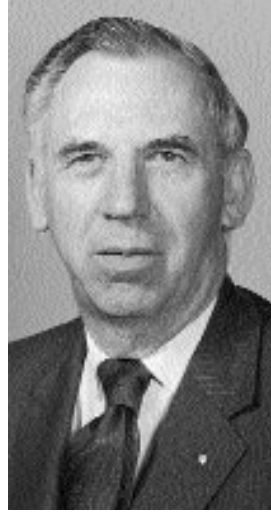
*Francis A. Davis,
Acting Commissioner
(1958 and 1963-64)*



*Samuel D. May
(1958-1960)*



*Howard H. Harris
(1960-1963)*



*Douglas B. Fugate
(1964-1976)*



*David R. Gehr
(1994-1999)*



*Charles D. Nottingham
(1999-2002)*



*Philip A. Shucet
(2002-)*