

RAPPAHANNOCK-RAPIDAN REGIONAL COMMISSION



ANNUAL REPORT

FY 2017



Planning



Tourism



Environmental



Housing



Transportation



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**Roster as of June 30, 2017*

fy2017

Staff

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Planner I Mobility Program Coordinator

Jenny Biché

Office Manager Rideshare Coordinator

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Planning

Progress Continues at Carver School...



The Regional Commission remains actively engaged with ongoing work at the George Washington Carver School in Culpeper County. Following the successful completion of a feasibility study focused on building infrastructure and the potential for food enterprise and agricultural opportunities in 2015 and 2016, significant building projects and continued focus on workforce and entrepreneurial prospects at the former regional high school and vocational training center occurred in FY 2017.

Culpeper County has overseen the demolition of one of the former outbuildings based on a recommendation from the 2016 analysis, and renovated another building in support of a machinist training program being developed by New Pathways Tech. New Pathways board members presented at the Regional Commission's August meeting to discuss the regional benefits of their proposed programs and courses.

In addition, the George Washington Carver Agriculture Research Center (GWCARC), with funding provided by the Ohrstrom Foundation, purchased equipment and constructed a high tunnel at the school as a next step in the development of agricultural research and education opportunities and a new farmers training program. The George Washington Carver Food Enterprise Center (GWC FEC) also took possession of donated kitchen equipment for use at the school and made significant progress on an overall business plan for the food enterprise program. Regional Commission staff provided technical assistance to both GWCARC and GWC FEC throughout the year and hosted a meeting of stakeholder at the school in June to discuss communication and engagement of the various entities engaged in potential projects at the Carver School.

UPPER GOOSE CREEK TMDL

The Upper Goose Creek TMDL-IP began on June 21, 2016. RRRC worked collaboratively with the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and consultant Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin (ICPRB) to engage the community and key stakeholders to develop an implementation plan to address high contents of bacteria and remove the Upper Goose Creek and its tributaries from the impaired waters list. Two public meetings, two Agricultural Committee meetings, two Residential Committee meetings, a Government Committee meeting, and a Stakeholder Committee meeting were held to validate the data and develop a plan.

The Final Public meeting was held on June 21, where the draft Implementation Plan was presented by the consultant Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin (ICPRB) and DEQ. There was representation from both Fauquier and Loudoun counties, and a good mix of government agencies, non-profit organizations, farmers, residents and community stakeholders. A public comment period was held from June 21-July 21, 2017. Final changes are being made to the draft IP report, and the production time to incorporate the changes and prepare the report for transmission to EPA for review and approval is still to be determined. The final report will be posted to RRRC's and DEQ's website when it is approved by the EPA.



USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program Grant Award

The U.S. Department of Agriculture awarded approximately \$250,000 to the Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission to promote the region's locally grown food and agri-tourism. One of only fifty organizations across the nation to receive the Farmers Market Promotion Program Grant this year, the planning district commission is partnering with Culpeper Renaissance, Madison Farmers Market, and Piedmont Environmental Council to implement the three-year grant project.

The majority of the funds are being spent developing and conducting a local foods marketing campaign, including a regional brand, eye-catching imagery and cohesive messaging that will resonate with local consumers' values. Funds are also supporting targeted marketing efforts at the Madison and Culpeper Farmers Markets, and continued publication of Piedmont Environmental Council's Buy Fresh-Buy Local guide.

The second aspect of the project specifically targets agri-tourism promotion through further development of the Tween Rivers Trail. Many of the trail sites are small business owners with little to no marketing budget or experience. Expansion of this regional agri-artisan trail combined with quarterly training and networking workshops focused on marketing will help address these issues.

The third aspect promotes direct-to-consumer local food markets within the region by building sourcing channels. In 2014, Piedmont Environmental Council launched the online tool, Farmer-Chef Express to facilitate connections between buyers and sellers, including institutional buyers. Grant funds will be used to hold two farmer-buyer networking events, and a regional food expo.

This project is part of the planning district commission's on-going efforts to foster the region's agricultural economy. Highlights include adoption of a Regional Farm and Food Plan, establishment of the Rappahannock-Rapidan Food Council, creation of the Tween Rivers Trail, and coordination of a feasibility study for the Carver-Piedmont Agricultural Institute.

Purely Piedmont Brand Release

In conjunction with its local foods marketing effort, RRRC received technical assistance funding from the Path Foundation to hire a branding consultant and graphic designer to develop a brand name and logo for the region's locally grown food and beverages. Following stakeholder interviews, a consumer survey, and public input sessions, the Rappahannock-Rapidan Food Policy Council chose "Purely Piedmont" as the brand name at its March 2017 meeting. A logo was voted on and announced in early May. The Purely Piedmont logo will be used on marketing materials for the current public awareness campaign being funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, a local foods label program, and future marketing of the region's local foods and beverages. While the region's 3,455 farmers stand to benefit from this new marketing program in economic terms, consumers will be able to easily identify our farmers' products and have the ability to make more informed choices.

NEWLY
ESTABLISHED
REGIONAL
FOOD BRAND



CHOSEN BY
FARMERS, FOOD
PRODUCERS, AND
OTHER REGIONAL
PARTNERS!



Environmental

REGIONAL TOURISM

Utilizing funds received from the USDA Farmers Market Promotional Program grant the RRRC has further **marketed and expanded the 'Tween Rivers Trail** as well as provided quarterly educational workshops. One on one interviews are conducted with each of the trail sites to learn more about the business, the business owner(s), and to gather feedback on the trail as well as **recommendations for the future**. Photos have been taken of each site and will be used in future marketing promotions. To date there are **63 trail sites** with representation from each of the five counties across a variety of categories. A **new website and rack card** for the 'Tween Rivers Trail is anticipated to be completed this Fall.



'TWEEN RIVERS TRAIL
crafted in the foothills

Two quarterly workshops have been hosted to date, with two more planned by the end of the year. A **Digital Marketing Workshop** hosted by the Virginia Tourism Corporation was held on January 26th at the Fauquier Visitor's Center and was well attended by many throughout the region. Attendees learned about the **importance of social media marketing** and were give some best management practices on how to effectively reach the most people. A **networking social** was held on June 8th at Graves Mountain Lodge for 'Tween Rivers Trail site members and potential members. A **Customer Service Training Workshop** is scheduled for October 3 at The Culpeper Center and will feature speaker Bobbie Walker, retired Director of Education for the Virginia Tourism Corporation.

The Regional Tourism Committee plans to apply for a **Virginia Tourism Corporation Leverage and Marketing Promotion grant** in December. If awarded, funds will be used to redesign The Virginia Piedmont website to complement the 'Tween Rivers Trail website and purchase advertising and marketing materials for the 'Tween Rivers Trail.



Tourism

FOOTHILLS AREA MOBILITY SYSTEM FY17 HIGHLIGHTS



fams
RIDE
A better way to get there!

The Foothills Area Mobility System (FAMS) continues to **work collaboratively** to address human services transportation needs in the region. There were many new and continued efforts highlighted throughout FY17 that are outlined below.

The FAMS website (www.fams.org) has been expanded to include a Veterans and Military Families page as part of the 'Veterans Transportation Community Living Initiative' grant. In addition, social media platforms for FAMS have been developed to now include Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

The Fauquier, Rappahannock, and Culpeper Free Clinics have been working with the FAMS Call Center since October 2016 on a "**Rides 2 Wellness**" initiative that focuses on **addressing transportation barriers** to healthcare. A mobility specialist works one on one with clients in the free clinics to **help eliminate** transportation barriers to care.

The Foothills Express is in its **7th year of service** transporting residents from Culpeper and Madison to Charlottesville. The handicapped accessible bus runs **three times a day, two days a week**. In the late fall we anticipate the schedule will increase to three days a week, with Culpeper and Madison counties providing the local cash match required for the service. While the majority of clients utilize the service for medical appointments, we **encourage anyone to ride for any reason**.

In FY17 the FAMS One Call Center employees **received over 1,000 calls** for rides and transportation support! The FAMS Call Center has grown exponentially since moving to its new location at the Culpeper Senior Center and hiring new staff in October 2016. The call volume has increased significantly, due in large part to education and outreach throughout the region as well as the increase in available transportation options. FAMS Call Center also developed a gas card voucher program to **help address transportation needs** not solved through public, private or volunteer transportation. A taxi cab voucher program will be implemented in the late Fall as another option available to meet transportation needs in the region. This family of services helps **meet individual needs** most efficiently by **leveraging resources** and eliminating duplication of services.

ENHANCING REGIONAL COLLABORATIONS



Transportation

Two FAMS subcommittees were developed during FY17, [Volunteer Transportation](#) and [Employment Transportation](#), and have made significant strides on several initiatives:

- Comprised of non-profit groups and partners from [all of the volunteer transportation programs](#) across the region.
- Development of the 'common application' a [single volunteer application](#) that allows the applicant to volunteer with [any of the region's transportation programs](#). This effort has streamlined the volunteering process and allowed drivers to provide more services overall.
- Development of a [Master Volunteer Driver Orientation Handbook](#) and a Master Volunteer Transportation Program Guidebook.
- Working on a creating a regional volunteer [driver training program](#).
- Working with the PATH Foundation's 'Let's Volunteer' website to list all of the volunteer driver positions.
- Aging Together and the Rappahannock-Rapidan Community Services Area Agency on Aging hosted a volunteer appreciation luncheon in September that [recognized all volunteer drivers](#) in the region.
- Driver recruitment ads have been placed and the committee continues to [develop new ways to recruit](#) new volunteer drivers. The region relies heavily on volunteer transportation and the demand for these services continues to increase.
- The Employment Transportation Subcommittee was developed and includes representatives businesses, non-profits, RRRC Commuter Services, FAMS Call Center, Department of Social Services and other stakeholders who are [working to better understand the needs](#) and unmet needs of employment transportation within the region.
- Transportation Forums were held in three of the five counties and surveys were distributed to employers and employees to collect data on needs and unmet needs regarding employment transportation.
- A [new logo was developed](#), 'RIDE', that unifies the various transportation assistance programs available in the region and create a "no wrong door" approach for residents looking for transportation information.

TRANSPORTATION FOR COMMUTERS



www.nuride.com

www.commutersconnections.org

www.rrcommute.org

Commuter Services is a program primarily focused in providing transportation information, car and van pool ride matching services, and vanpool subsidies across the region.

This year the program has [partnered with NuRide](#), a mobile-friendly app that [shows real-time ride matching](#) for commuters through a user-friendly interface that is free of charge. Although NuRide has been utilized in Virginia for many years, this is the first time that NuRide is being implemented in a 'rural to metro' area.

NuRide is [utilized in conjunction](#) with the Northern Virginia standard commuter resource, Commuter Connections; with Commuter Connections continuing to provide [free 'guaranteed ride home'](#) services.

This partnership is the first of several revised initiatives currently being explored by Commuter Services, with the goal that the program will continue to grow and [support ridesharing](#) as a way to aid in maintaining the region's natural beauty by reducing traffic overall as well as reduce the amount of money and time regional citizens spend to commute out of the region.

GO Virginia Initiative

The statewide GO Virginia program was launched in 2016 following passage of the Virginia Growth and Opportunity Act by the General Assembly. Soon thereafter, the Regional Commission worked in collaboration with the Virginia Association of Planning District Commissions (VAPDC) to develop a recommendation for grouping the state into 9 regions. The recommendation from VAPDC was received and adopted by the Virginia Growth and Opportunity Board as the structure for GO Virginia implementation at the regional level.

In 2017, the Regional Commission worked in close partnership with the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission and the Central Virginia Partnership for Economic Development, which served as the administrative organization in GO Virginia Region 9, to facilitate the process of developing the GO Virginia Region 9 Council and the region's Economic Growth and Diversification Plan. Based on criteria developed at the state level, the partner organizations in Region 9 oversaw a nomination process to fill the seats on the Regional Council, managed the proposal process for identifying a consultant to assist in development the Growth and Diversification Plan, and conducted outreach to public, non-profit, and private sector representatives in support of GO Virginia in the region. The Regional Commission nominated Mr. Gary Deal, Culpeper County Supervisor, and Mr. Bryan David, Orange County Administrator, along with RRRC's Executive Director to serve on the GO Virginia Region 9 Council as public sector representatives from the region.

September 2017 Targeted Industries

IT & Communications

Finance & Business Services

Added Agricultural Value

Light Manufacturing

Biomedical & Biotechnology

September 2017 Workforce Priorities

Talent Development

Growing Existing Businesses

Innovation & Entrepreneurial
Development

Site Development

Foothills Housing Network

In FY 2012, the Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission (RRRC) assumed the role of lead agency for the Foothills Housing Network (FHN) to coordinate the region's adjustment to a new national and state approach to homelessness. Since then, the regional has received over \$2.8 million in federal and state grants for homeless services programs. During this time, 743 homeless people have been permanently housed.

In FY2017, RRRC, with the assistance of the Virginia Housing Alliance, convened a Planning Leadership Team to assess the work of the Foothills Housing Network (FHN) and develop short-term actionable strategies to guide the Rappahannock-Rapidan region's homeless response system and affordable housing network. The results of this planning effort have set the stage for long-term sustainable and effective organizational change.

Key actions steps include the following:

- An increased role in grant and project management on the part of People Incorporated, which will consolidate FHN rapid re-housing, prevention and permanent supportive housing grants under one fiscal agent with the experience and capacity to sustain the homeless programs.
- RRRC will continue to operate the FHN Central Entry Program, and will continue as lead agency for FHN, which is a role required by HUD and Virginia's Department of Housing and Community Development to ensure regional coordination of homeless services resources.
- Local nonprofit and government service providers will expand and strengthen their efforts through data-driven program evaluation and needs assessment.
 - FHN will begin to address the issue of lack of affordable housing, a key underlying cause of homelessness.



Housing

Identifying, communicating with, and bringing together a wide-ranging group of stakeholders is a key part of regional planning initiatives undertaken by the Regional Commission. While our member local governments are the foundation of the Regional Commission's annual work plan, the importance of engaging with individuals, non-profit and private organizations, and other public sector agencies is a cornerstone of RRRC initiatives both past and present. The Regional committees outlined below are a central part of that engagement.

Foothills Housing Network serves as the Continuum of Care planning group for the region. Members include shelter providers, county Departments of Social Services, Aging Together, Skyline CAP, People, Inc., Rappahannock-Rapidan Community Services, Quin Rivers, Piedmont United Way and other area housing stakeholders.

The RRRC Rural Transportation Technical Committee is made up of town and county planners, Virginia Department of Transportation representatives and regional transportation stakeholders.

The Foothills Area Mobility System steering committee includes representatives from the Regional Commission, Rappahannock-Rapidan Community Services, Virginia Regional Transit, both hospitals in the region and other transportation providers.

The Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Tourism Committee is comprised of tourism directors, visitors center representatives and other interested tourism-related stakeholders.

The RRRC Land Use & Environment Committee includes local land use and zoning administrators, planners and environmental managers.

The Rappahannock-Rapidan Food Policy Council includes private agriculture producers, public and private school representatives, Virginia Cooperative Extension agents, technical area experts, agricultural development representatives, and non-profit partners.

The RRRC Chief Administrative Officers Committee is made up of regional County Administrators and Town Managers.

CONVENING REGIONAL PARTNERS



Planning

2016 Regional Leadership Awards

The RRRC annual Distinguished Leadership—Citizen & Government Awards were initiated in 2007 to acknowledge the achievements and contributions of member jurisdiction citizen and government leaders who have gone above and beyond in their promotion and encouragement of enhanced regional communication, coordination and planning across the region.

In 2016, the Regional Commission recognized the contributions of Mr. John Coates for the Government Leadership Award and Dr. G. Russell Aylor, Jr. for the Citizen Leadership Award.

Dr. Aylor was appointed as a founding member of the Culpeper County Planning Commission in 1976, and served as Planning Commission Chairman for 27 years until his passing in 2010. Dr. Aylor's leadership guided Culpeper County through the development of the County's first Comprehensive Plan and subsequent revisions, a comprehensive rezoning in 1989, and periods of unprecedented growth. Dr. Aylor also sought to advance historic preservation in the region as a member of the Brandy Station Foundation and Civil War Preservation Trust, among many other interests and contributions. Dr. Aylor's wife, Page, and son, graciously accepted the award in his honor.

Mr. Coates has had a long career of service to the public in the Rappahannock-Rapidan region as both an appointed and elected official. His service includes a nearly 30 year career as a transportation engineer with the Virginia Department of Transportation, and 16 years as an elected member of the Culpeper County Board of Supervisors with eight years as Chairman. Mr. Coates presently serves on the Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission as a citizen representative from Culpeper County.

Mr. Coates' transportation and engineering background has made him cognizant of the regional, as well as the local implications of any project or issue on the public's agenda, and he continues to bring a cooperative and collaborative leadership style to his work.





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