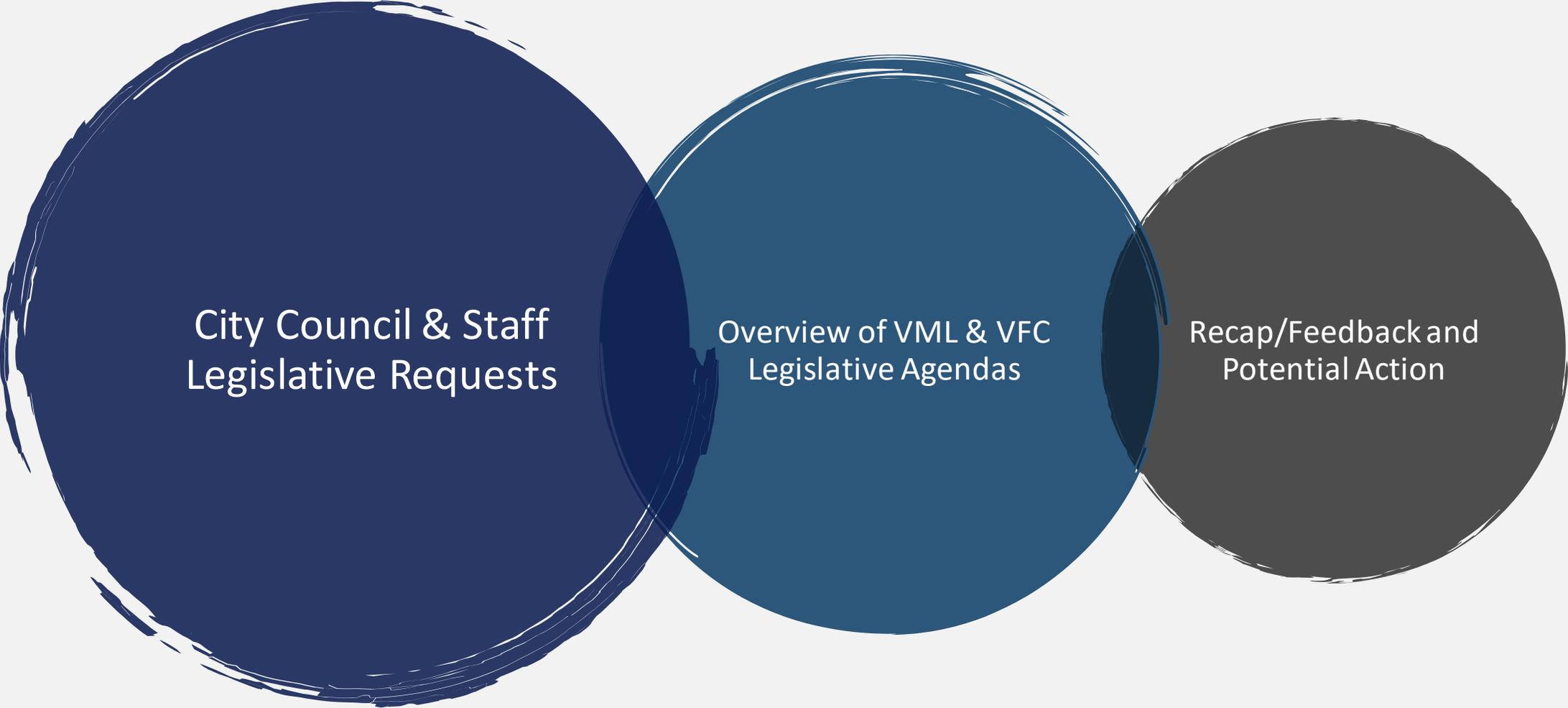




LEGISLATIVE AGENDA PROGRAM

AGENDA



City Council & Staff
Legislative Requests

Overview of VML & VFC
Legislative Agendas

Recap/Feedback and
Potential Action

Legislative Request #1- City Council /Economic Development

- Request infrastructure funding for immediate business site development readiness at Petersburg Pharmaceutical Park Phase I (\$750,000).

Legislative Request #2- City Council /Economic Development

- Request infrastructure funding for business site development readiness at Petersburg Pharmaceutical Park Phase II (\$27 million).

Legislative Request #3- City Council /Library

- Budget appropriation in the amount of \$300,000 for the Petersburg Public Library capital expansion to increase service capacity and provide space for community event space.

Legislative Request #4- City Council

- Funding for dredging the Appomattox River to make it navigable for watercraft from the Chesapeake Bay.

Legislative Request #5- Planning & Community Development

- Grant funding for the development of historic structures. Funding totaling \$300,000 would allow the City to complete the rehabilitation of the Jarratt House

Legislative Request #6- Planning & Community Development

- Funding for Technical Assistance to localities to develop Comprehensive Plans. Funding totaling \$300,000 for technical assistance grants to 10 localities with demonstrated need.

Legislative Request #7- Neighborhood & Community Services

- Request a Vacant Property Registry Fee escalator- the standard is set at \$100 per year. Some localities utilize an escalator i.e. \$100 the first year, \$200 the second year, \$300 third year, \$400 thereafter in perpetuity until the house is sold.

**Legislative
Request #8-
City Council
Councilmember
Cuthbert**

- Increase the power of localities to grant ABC board licenses; no ABC license shall be issued in the absence of compelling circumstances, and the ABC shall not issue an ABC license over the locality's authority.

Legislative Request #9- City Council

Councilmember Cuthbert

- Make the City of Petersburg eligible for Tobacco Commission funding.

**Legislative
Request #10-
City Council
Councilmember
Wilson-Smith**

- Request authorization for Charter amendment to require CPA or similar professional qualifications for the City Treasurer position.

Legislative Request #11- City Council

- Allow local governments to place limits on the concentration of group homes licenses by the Department of Behavioral Health and Development Services.

Legislative Request #12- City Council / Public Safety

- Authorization from the General Assembly to install additional traffic cameras to identify drivers who exceed the speed limit and or disregard traffic signals to reduce auto accidents and enhance public safety. Current law limits the number to three based on 3/10,000 population. No cost, as revenue from citation generated fund installation and maintenance.

Legislative Request #13- Public Safety/ Petersburg Community Corrections

- Pretrial expansion funding to provide pretrial to localities without services. Update the funding formula for probation and pretrial services agencies through the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) as recommended by the Crime Commission in 2017 and ensure equitable distribution of the funding for pretrial and probation programs, which provide alternatives to incarceration statewide.

Legislative Request #14- City Council /Petersburg Community Corrections

- Bail Reform- to reduce the reliance on cash bail, to reduce the unnecessary incarceration of individuals pending trial, to improve the overall performance of the criminal justice system and ensure a fair and equitable experience within the criminal justice system.

Legislative Request #15- City Council

- Funding for regional wastewater treatment and handling infrastructure improvements totaling \$105,000,000 to meet U.S. and Virginia nutrient water requirements and improve water quality in the Chesapeake Bay.

Legislative Request #16- City Council

- School Facility Modernization – there exists a severe need in Petersburg for updating our public-school buildings. Old HVAC systems, leaking roofs, dimly lit classrooms, small hallways, lack of auditoriums, lunchroom spaces, etc. and technology challenges merit funding for these buildings being modernized to meet the current and future needs.

Legislative Request #17- City Manager's Office

- Request Citywide expansion of rental inspection districts.

Virginia Municipal League Legislative Agenda

1. Funding the Real Cost of Education

- A strong public-school system is essential to economic development and prosperity.
- During an economic downturn and particularly during a pandemic, state funding is vital to provide the tools and supplies necessary to maintain safe and effective education services – in person or virtually –for students across Virginia. This includes access to broadband service.
- The state must be a reliable funding partner in accordance with the Virginia Constitution and state statutes.
- The Standards of Quality should recognize the resources, including staff positions, required for a high-quality public education system.
- VML opposes changes in methodology and changes in the division of financial responsibility that result in a shift of funding responsibility from the state to localities.

Virginia Municipal League

2. COVID- 19 Addressing Short- and Long-Term Needs

- The COVID 19 pandemic has exacerbated the need to provide broadband access for all homes and businesses without delay. Localities understand the importance of robust broadband for economic viability, the pandemic has further stressed the need for broadband to address K 12 education and telemedicine access. Private broadband, internet, and wireless companies and potential new service providers including electric cooperatives, need to work with localities and the state to provide this access. Along with broadband access for economic, education, and medical needs during an extended health emergency now and in the future, VML supports:
 - Increased state and federal funding and technical support to allow for robust and timely COVID 19 testing and contact tracing services throughout the Commonwealth.
 - Creation of a state stockpile of personal protection equipment (PPE) to ensure safety of residents

Virginia Municipal League

3. State Assistance to Local Police Departments (HB 599)

- Almost 70 percent of Virginians live in communities served by police departments. The state created a program of financial assistance to local police departments (HB 599) when it imposed an annexation moratorium on cities more than 30 years ago. It has increasingly deemphasized this funding obligation as a priority but has never compromised on the annexation moratorium. **VML calls for the state to honor its commitment to local governments and public safety by funding the program as stipulated in the Code of Virginia or lift the moratorium on annexation.**

4. Stormwater Local Assistance

- VML supports the continued investment of at least \$50 million annually in the Stormwater Local Assistance Fund to assist localities with critical stormwater projects to comply with federal and state clean water requirements.

Virginia Municipal League

5. Taxing, Licensing, and Regulating Internet based Businesses and Services

In taking state action to regulate private enterprises employing a business model that emphasizes the use of the internet to either provide retail or facilities or ride sharing services, local government interests should be acknowledged, and localities should be included in the decision making. As general principles, VML believes state and local policies should 1) encourage a level playing field for competing services in the marketplace; 2) not provide a tax preference or tax policy advantage for one group at the expense of another group in the competitive field; 3) seek to preserve state and local revenue; 4) ensure safety, reliability, and access for consumers, providers, and the public; and 5) protect local government's ability to regulate businesses whether they are traditional, electronic, Internet based, virtual or otherwise. **VML also believes that the state should not prohibit the sharing of financial information between the Commonwealth and appropriate local authorities that is normally treated as part of the public domain. VML further believes that the state should not prohibit a locality from exercising its authority to enter into voluntary collection agreements provided that such agreements include provisions to protect the public's interest**

Virginia Municipal League – Other Legislative Priorities

1) Addressing behavioral health services in local and regional jails

- The Board of Corrections is considering enhanced behavioral health care regulations to apply to every local and regional jail in response to legislation approved by the 2019 General Assembly. **VML supports necessary health care services and urges the state to provide needed funding for such services through either enhanced jail per diem payments or another funding mechanism that covers the additional costs to serve inmates with serious behavioral health needs.**

2) Communications Sales and Use Tax

- The Virginia Communications Sales and Use Tax was enacted to establish a statewide tax rate and preempt local taxes on communications sales and services.
 - **VML supports setting the tax rate at the same level as the state sales tax rate and broadening the coverage of the tax to include audio and video streaming services and prepaid calling cards.**
 - **VML opposes transfers of these revenues to the state general fund for purposes other than those currently stipulated in the Code of Virginia.**

3) CSA Special Education Programs & Private Day School Funding

- Virginia cities and counties share the funding responsibility for special education private day school placements through the Children's Services Act (CSA) program. The cost of these programs has been growing at a greater rate than inflation for a number of years; the number of placements continue to steadily rise as well. **VML supports state rate setting; state contracts for such day programs as well as for residential placement services, with an opt out provision for larger localities; and pilot programs allowing local school districts and their local governments to individually or regionally offer special education day programs using CSA funds to serve more children in the community.**

Virginia Municipal League – Other Legislative Priorities

4) Economic Development

- VML supports local flexibility to promote economic development as our localities come out of this pandemic. VML supports transparency but also a balance in financial reporting requirements on citizen volunteers to ensure that economic development authorities and industrial development authorities continue to operate with interested and knowledgeable volunteers.

5) FOIA

- VML supports the position that any proposed changes to the Freedom of Information Act legislation be sent to the FOIA Council for analysis and recommendations prior to General Assembly consideration or enactment.

6) Funding for Planning District Commissions

- VML supports increased state funding for the statewide network of planning district commissions/regional councils (PDCs). PDCs carry out efforts supported by state and local policy makers to advance and sustain regional coordination, cooperation, and technical assistance for the benefit of regions across the Commonwealth.

7) Funding of community services boards and behavioral health authorities

VML supports additional state funding to community services boards/behavioral health authorities in order to:

- Successfully implement STEP VA requirements;
- Allow CSBs/RBHs to fully and safely respond to community
 - needs during an extended pandemic, including the use of tele
 - health services, which require access to broadband service in
 - communities across the state.
- Respond to increased focus and need for crisis response as of criminal justice reform

Virginia Municipal League – Other Legislative Priorities

8) Land Use Control

- Localities must maintain control of local land use decisions. Neither the state nor the federal government should usurp or pre-empt a locality’s authority to make such decisions; nor should they impose requirements that weaken planning and land use functions. This includes the authority to promote affordable and mixed income housing as well as the required infrastructure to facilitate in-fill development, redevelopment and mixing of uses.

9) Liberty Amendments Day

- VML supports the establishment and recognition of a Liberty Amendments Day in the Commonwealth to recognize the significance of the 13th, 14th, 15th, and 19th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution and our continuing efforts to form a more perfect union. These amendments expand and reinforce the rights of all citizens to vote and participate in the governance of their local, state, and national governments. Unlike July 4th, Bill of Rights Day, and Juneteenth, these Constitutional amendments currently have no one day as a focus because they were ratified at different times in our nation’s history, but like these other properly recognized days, they represent basic rights and freedoms deserving of remembrance, honor, and reflection now and into the future.

10) Local Option Income Tax

- To broaden local tax bases, the General Assembly should authorize, at local option, a “piggyback” income tax to be imposed at the local level for both general and special purposes.

Virginia Municipal League – Other Legislative Priorities

11) Property Assessments Appeals

- Article X of the Virginia Constitution mandates that all real and personal property be assessed at fair market value and that all property not constitutionally exempt be taxed.
- Taxpayers have the right to contest property assessments through administrative and legal means. Taxpayers pay no local fees to challenge real property and personal property assessments. If taxpayers are displeased with the determinations made by their local commissioner of the revenue or other local assessing official, additional real property appeals can be submitted to the local Boards of Equalization. Taxpayers can also appeal real and personal property assessments in the Circuit Courts and, if still aggrieved, may appeal to the Virginia Supreme Court.
- ***VML does not believe the assessment appeals process is flawed or in need of major policy changes and opposes statutory changes that would upend a process that protects taxpayers and the public.***

12) Sovereign Immunity

- Expanding liability and eroding immunities at the state level across the nation have had a chilling effect on the actions of local government officials contributing to local government insurance problems, creating immense financial risks (particularly for legal costs), and posing a substantial obstacle to the provision of needed public services.
- The Virginia General Assembly should strengthen and must maintain the principles of sovereign immunity for local governments and their officials.
- VML supports limiting the liability for civil damages for injury or death resulting from or related to actual or alleged exposure to COVID-19 in the course of or through the performance or provision of the localities business operations unless the government, or political subdivision failed to substantially comply with applicable COVID procedures established by the federal, state, or local agency which governs the business operations.

Virginia Municipal League – Other Legislative Priorities

13) Transportation Funding Assistance

- VML supports continued funding assistance and flexibility to continue local transportation programs and projects and the operation of public transit systems.

14) Utilities

- Many local governments own and operate utilities that provide services that may include but are not limited to water, sewer, electric and natural gas. These utility services are funded by localities both outright and as enterprise funds. These utilities have bonding authority and financial restrictions on their operations.

Localities must be able to manage revenues and expenditures related to these services without state interference.

15) Water Quality Funding

- For continued successful local water quality improvement projects the Commonwealth must fully capitalize the Water Quality Improvement Fund and provide the necessary appropriations for local government water quality improvement projects to clean up the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. In addition, **any changes to the state's stringent wastewater mandates imposed on localities must be scientifically and economically defensible, employing implementation strategies that produce any necessary wastewater improvements at the least cost.**

Virginia First Cities - Annexation Moratorium/Fiscal Stress Statement

1) Request the Governor and the General Assembly fund HB 599 monies for FY22/23 in an amount of at least \$8.6 million.

2) Support increased funding for street maintenance needs for our cities to ensure an equitable funding for urban areas that have not received adequate funding for on-street parking areas, bike lanes, transit lanes and turning lanes. We need funding to invite diversity with our amenity-filled public spaces, like connecting small businesses in walkable, vibrant streets, along with transit, and cycling.

3) “**Gray/skill machines**” should be banned post-July 2021. As regards K-12 sales tax replacement revenue, should it be needed, **the Commonwealth should look to means other than gray machines to fully fund city K-12 education.**

Virginia First Cities – Community Wealth Building

1) **TANF for Employment** – This is the VFC incubated innovative grant program designed to breakdown silos to connect persons to career paths and sustainable income by providing wraparound services.

2) Maintain funding for the **TANF for Employment Grant Programs** at \$7.5 million (round 1), \$3 million (round 2), and \$1.5 million (round 3) in each FY22 and FY23.

3) Connect **budget language** to link the **Network2Work** effort with existing TANF for Employment/Community Wealth Building Grant Program, rounds 1-3, especially to enable **technology upgrades** and for a more seamless delivery of client services (Ridge Schuyler/Charlottesville)

4) Provide eligible working citizens **better access to affordable housing and financing** for public housing replacement and public housing infrastructure improvements.

5) Support increased funding in the **Virginia Housing Trust Fund**.

6) Support an allocated and bifurcated **Virginia housing opportunity tax credit in an amount equal to the federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC)** in Virginia and a minimum amount of \$20 million of credits annually over a 10-year credit period to enable expanded affordable housing. (Newport News)

7) Support **energy efficiency programs and policies** that assist our low-and-moderate income citizens who shoulder a disproportionate utility cost burden. (Charlottesville)

Virginia First Cities – Economic Gardening, Resiliency, & Sustainability

- 1) Increase funding by \$3.5 million in each year for the **Industrial Revitalization Fund**.
- 2) Increase the **Virginia Main Street Program** by \$4 million in each year.
- 3) Increase funds for the **Enterprise Zone Program** to avoid grant proration to the Real Property Investment Tax Credit. **Any effort to eliminate the locations of existing enterprise zones will be vigorously opposed by VFC.**
- 4) Provide \$10 million per year for the **Urban Public Private Partnership Redevelopment Fund**.
- 5) Increase of \$5.5 million each year for the **Brownfields Restoration and Remediation Program** and budget and statute language changes to increase the amount of grant monies available (currently \$50,000/increase to \$100,000) for assessment of residential properties on, adjacent, or in close proximity to former landfill sites where public housing is proposed to be redeveloped.
- 6) Amend the Code of Virginia to allow **all VFC cities** the ability to **transfer blighted properties directly to a land bank entity** created by the locality or an **existing nonprofit** entity designated by the locality to carry out the functions of a **land bank entity** in lieu of sale at public auction for unpaid real estate taxes and other liens held by the locality. Under current statute, only the Cities of Norfolk, Richmond, Hopewell, Newport News, Petersburg, Fredericksburg, Hampton, and Martinsville have the ability to do this.
- 7) **Classification of blighted and derelict properties** Adjust the qualifying criteria for localities that are authorized to treat blighted properties and derelict structures as a separate class of property for local taxation of real property to capture all VFC members. As currently structured, the criteria for qualification in the statute only includes Petersburg and Emporia. (Richmond)
- 8) Support for **Healthy Food Financing** and investments to ensure our cities and citizens have access to thriving, sustainable grocery options and that these small businesses succeed.
- 9) Oppose a decrease or a further extension of the cap on the **Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit**.
- 10) Support maximum funding for the **Stormwater Local Assistance Fund (SLAF)**.
- 11) Support **flood/resilience risk reduction infrastructure projects** and aid to localities for tidal and street flooding mitigation efforts including grant matching and Shoreline Assistance Fund.
- 12) For many of our urban cities, **broadband coverage and affordability**, particularly in lower-income neighborhoods, is a pervasive issue that has far-reaching implications for K-12 education and lifelong learning. VFC supports a concentrated governmental effort to ensure broadband coverage is both available and affordable to those that are most in need. (Newport News)
- 13) Support polices that help municipalities reduce their **carbon footprint and promote sustainability**. An increasing number of our member cities want to lead on climate change issues and contribute to the Commonwealth's overall climate goals. And, helping lead on creating more opportunities for energy efficiency can be a key tool in helping to drive down energy costs for our most vulnerable citizens. (Charlottesville)

Virginia First Cities – Education & Early Childcare

- 1) Continue to increase the **At-Risk Add-On**.
- 2) Support the **extended-year and year-round school** grants program with increased funding.
- 3) Support funding for the **Master Teacher Residency Program** at \$3 million each year to support teacher training, mentoring and retention.
- 4) Continue to support a more robust **early childhood/Pre-K program** including **Virginia Early Childhood Success to provide** seamless, affordable **access for the most at-risk families to quality early childhood services**, including home visiting, subsidized childcare, and preschool.

Virginia First Cities – City Government/Administration Issues & Public Safety

City Government

- 1) Virginia First Cities urges the General Assembly to remove the caps on city council salaries. (Delegate Sally Hudson, Charlottesville).
- 2) VFC will vigorously oppose any attempt to eliminate or reduce the **M&T and BPOL** taxes unless it includes an alternative funding mechanism.

Public Safety

- 1) Reallot/funding for **Aid to Localities with Police Departments** according to statute with a formula that is responsive to urban police departments facing challenges with workforce recruitment and training.
- 2) Increase the **per diem rate for all state-responsible inmates** incarcerated in local jails to a rate that recognizes the increased burden of mental health and substance abuse on the local jail population.
- 3) More robust and widespread funding of **day reporting centers** and community wealth building initiatives to **decrease recidivism** and provide stability and a positive trajectory for those soon to be released from jail.

Virginia First Cities – Transportation

- 1) Support increased street maintenance funding to ensure equitable funding for independent cities and urban areas that, in the current formula, do not receive adequate funding for on-street parking areas, bike lanes, transit lanes and turning lanes.
- 2) Ensure that transit funding from the 2020 omnibus transportation bill is maintained in the state budget.
- 3) **Support allowing local governments the option to implement a radar speed enforcement initiative in urban centers on residential streets to help calm traffic. Authorizing the use of radar-enabled speeding and red-light cameras (beyond the currently allowed posted school crossing zones or work zones) to include business and residential districts will be a traffic calming measure, a cycling and pedestrian friendly measure, and a way to hopefully gain compliance with speed limits on our streets without having to hire or redirect local police. (Richmond)**

Special Thanks to:

- ❖ City Council for their guidance and support
- ❖ City Manager and City staff for their commitment to this endeavor.

THANKYOU