

COMMUTING SAFELY AND CONFIDENTLY

TIPS FOR BUSINESSES AND COMMUTERS
IN THE COVID-19 ENVIRONMENT

AUGUST 2020



Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation



COMMUTERS



As companies transition employees back into the workplace, developing a new “normal” work routine is a priority for many. As workplaces move towards reopening, commuting to and from work may be different than it was before COVID-19. Some employees will continue to work from home, but others may be required to report to the office. Those returning to the worksite may have personal health and safety concerns regarding how they travel to the office, so many may choose to drive alone. This will increase congestion and result in poor air quality.

This document provides tips and guidance for commuters and employers on how to get to and from work safely and efficiently.

CARPOOLS AND VANPOOLS

At this time, we suggest that rides be shared with specific networks such as coworkers or specified groups such as family.

Tips to keep safe while sharing a ride:

1

Do not ride or drive when you are sick or have a fever.

2

All passengers and the driver should wear face coverings.

3

Limit the number of passengers in the vehicle and maximize the distance between commuters.

4

Sanitize high-touch areas frequently. Including: door handles (inside and out), seatbelts, armrests, keys, shared fuel cards, steering wheel, cup holders, and all other places riders usually touch.

5

Refrain from touching the car and items inside the car, as much as possible. Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer upon arrival at your destination.

6

Check with your vanpool company for their COVID-19 guidance and assistance.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

**What You Need
to Know to Ride
Public Transit
Safely and
with Confidence**

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Transit agencies across Virginia have been engaged in ongoing efforts to protect passengers, employees, and the community from the novel coronavirus, COVID-19. The following guidelines and safety information are provided so if you choose to ride the bus or rail transit, you may do so safely and with confidence.

-  **Wear a mask or face covering** to protect other passengers and transit employees.
-  **Stand at least 6 feet apart** while waiting for and boarding the bus or train.
-  **Maintain physical distance** on the vehicle, and follow posted signs and operator directions.
-  **Do not travel if you have a fever or are feeling ill.**

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Transit agencies across Virginia have increased cleaning of vehicles and are using CDC-approved cleaning products, focusing on high-contact areas, such as hanging straps and poles.

Many transit service providers have made changes to their schedules, fare policies, boarding and seating arrangements. As the pandemic continues, transit providers may make additional changes to help keep everyone safe.

The next page provides links to area transit agencies and their responses to COVID-19. Riders are encouraged to check these sites regularly so you know before you ride.



PUBLIC TRANSIT AGENCIES

Arlington Transit (ART)

<https://www.arlingtontransit.com/about/covid-19-service-changes-and-information/>

Blacksburg Transit

<https://ridebt.org/covid?highlight=WyUjb3ZpZCJd>

BRITE (Waynesboro, Staunton, and Augusta County)

<https://www.britebus.org/>

DASH (City of Alexandria)

<https://www.dashbus.com/covidmods>

Charlottesville Area Transit (CAT)

<https://www.charlottesville.gov/470/Transit>

City of Bristol Transit System

<https://www.bristolva.org/617/Community-Preparedness>

CUE (City of Fairfax)

<https://www.fairfaxva.gov/government/public-works/transportation-division/cue-covid-19-response>

Danville Transit

<http://www.danvilleva.gov/1488/Announcements>

Fairfax Connector (Fairfax County)

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/connector/>

Frederickburg Regional Transit (FRED)

<http://ridefred.com/index.html>

Greater Lynchburg Transit Company (GLTC)

<http://www.gltconline.com/covid-19-gltc-updates/>

Greater Richmond Transit Company (GRTC)

<http://ridegrtc.com/news-initiatives/news-updates/grtc-and-covid-19-coronavirus>

Hampton Roads Transit

<https://gohrt.com/2020/03/hrt-response-to-coronavirus/>

Harrisonburg Public Transportation

<http://www.harrisonburgva.gov/bus-service>

Jaunt

<https://ridejaunt.org/covid-19-response/>

Loudoun County Transit

<https://www.loudoun.gov/buschanges>

MTA Commuter Bus & MARC Commuter Rail

<https://www.mta.maryland.gov/coronavirus>

Mountain Lynx Transit (formerly District Three Transit)

<https://district-three.org/index.php/public-transit/>

Petersburg Area Transit

https://www.petersburgva.gov/1045/Coronavirus-Resources-and-Updates#tab409ed70c-fe8b-44b8-8503-4a037f9505b5_6

PRTC OmniRide

<https://omniride.com/>

RADAR (Roanoke)

<https://radartransit.org/announcements/>

Suffolk Transit

<http://www.suffolkva.us/429/Suffolk-Transit>

Valley Metro (Roanoke)

<https://valleymetro.com/COVID-19.html>

Virginia Railway Express (VRE) Commuter Train

<https://www.vre.org/about/blog/coronavirus-health-safety-guidance-on-vre/>

Williamsburg Area Transit Authority (WATA)

<http://www.gowata.org/AlertCenter.aspx?AID=Service-Alerts-12>

WMATA Metrobus & Metrorail

<https://www.wmata.com/covid19>

EMPLOYERS

How Employers Can Help Their Employees

As businesses across Virginia decide how best to bring employees back to the workplace, many people are trying to figure out the safest way to commute to the office. Some employees may not only be anxious about returning to the office, but also about getting back into the routine commute mode they used before COVID-19.

Employers have an important role in not only making the office a safe place, but assisting their employees with identifying safe commutes to work.

Tips for Employers

Help employees form carpools and vanpools with other employees. Employees may feel more comfortable commuting with their coworkers and it may make contact tracing easier should an employee become ill.

- Send a company-wide email encouraging carpooling and vanpooling with coworkers.
- Set up electronic message boards and messaging so employees can post for rides needed or drivers willing to take coworkers to and from work.

EMPLOYERS

Allow for flexibility of start and end times of employees commuting to the office. Transit schedules may have changed since the pandemic started. Vanpools and carpools that were used before the pandemic may not be in service. Therefore, employees need time to figure out their commute and that may mean arriving at the office at a different time than before COVID-19. Additionally, by shifting trips outside of the normal peak travel times, transit and roadways will be less crowded leading to safer commutes.

Keep employees teleworking. Continue to allow employees to work from home, to the extent possible. This is the single best action to reduce the risk of exposure and continue business operations. Provide employees with the equipment and tools to work successfully at home, and establish a formal telework policy, or review your company's current telework policy to allow more teleworking.

Provide a monthly commuter benefit or pre-tax benefit. For employees that commute by transit or carpool, IRS rules allow employers to provide a monthly qualified transportation benefit, up to \$270, either as a direct benefit or through a pre-tax benefit.



Resources:

- Telework Virginia (Telework!VA) Program (assistance for employers and employees): <http://teleworkva.org/>
- IRS Employer Tax Guide (Qualified Transportation Benefit): https://www.irs.gov/publications/p15b#en_US_2020__publink1000193741 Forward Virginia: <https://www.virginia.gov/coronavirus/forwardvirginia/>
- CDC's Mass Transit Decision Tree: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/pdf/MassTransit-DecisionTree.pdfW>
- American Public Transportation Association's COVID-19 Resources: <https://www.apta.com/public-transit-response-to-coronavirus/>
- Community Transportation Association of America's COVID-19 Resources: <https://ctaa.org/covid-19-resources/>
- CDC's What Bus Transit Operators Need to Know About COVID-19: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/bus-transit-operator.html>
- CDC's What Transit Station Workers Need to Know About COVID-19: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/transit-station-workers.html>
- CDC's Reopening Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces, Businesses, Schools, and Homes: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/reopen-guidance.html>
- Virginia's Emergency Temporary Standard Infectious Disease Prevention: SARS-CoV-2 Virus That Causes COVID-19: <https://www.doli.virginia.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/COVID-19-Emergency-Temporary-Standard-FOR-PUBLIC-DISTRIBUTION-FINAL-7.17.2020.pdf>
- Commute!VA: <http://commuteva.org/>

