



2026 Virginia Statewide Rail Plan

Virtual Public Meeting #1

June 1, 2026



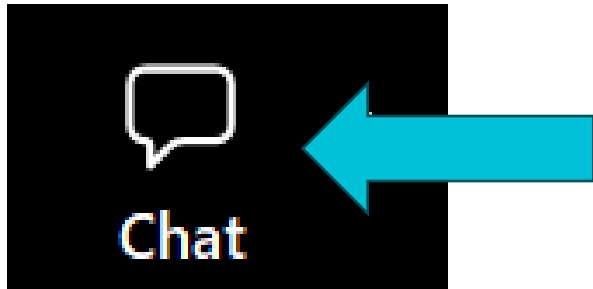
UNIVERSITY
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Weldon Cooper Center
for Public Service
Institute for Engagement & Negotiation



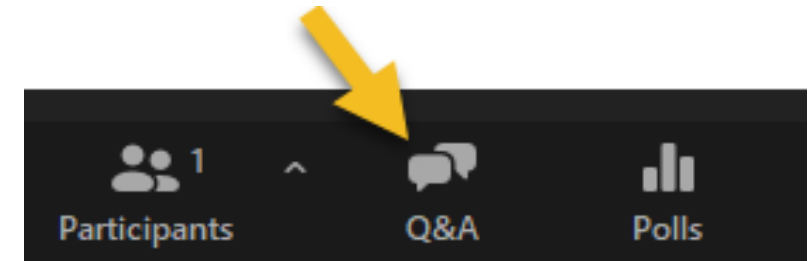
Meeting Structure

- Overview of Statewide Rail Plan and Survey Results
- We'll be using Zoom Chat to ask you questions



- Please use the “Chat” feature when prompted

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



- Please use the Q&A feature to submit questions

Icebreaker Questions

- What percent of growth in ridership did Virginia state-supported passenger rail services experience between 2022 and 2025?

47% increase (1.021M to 1.499M)

- How many truck trips were diverted by use of rail from DRPT supported projects between 2022 and 2025?

Over 50 million! (50,539,500 to be exact)



Agenda

- DRPT/Statewide Rail Plan Overview
- 2022 Virginia Statewide Rail Plan Review
- 2026 Virginia Statewide Rail Plan - Institute for Engagement & Negotiation (IEN) Survey Results and Observations
- 2026 Virginia Statewide Rail Plan Next Steps

Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT)

Who are we?



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



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



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



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

What do we do?



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



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



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



Provides leadership, advocacy, technical assistance, and funding oversight

Benefits of Rail

Save Money



Freight Rail

\$2.1 billion
in annual benefits

About 10 cents per ton-mile of rail use



Passenger Rail

\$133.4 million
in annual benefits

About 50 cents per passenger-mile of rail use

Benefits are largely derived from savings from diverting freight and passengers from highways to rail and includes congestion savings and crash reduction benefits and do not account for total economic benefit associated with job creation, tourism, tax generation, etc.

Breathe Easier



On average, railroads are **four times** more fuel efficient than trucks



Moving freight by rail instead of truck generates **75% less** greenhouse gas emissions



The total estimated level of rail service in Virginia in 2019 was about **21 billion ton-miles**



2.4M tons of CO₂ emissions avoided (6% of total in Virginia per year)

Travel Safe



Shipping by rail avoids about **1.5 billion miles** of truck travel in Virginia



Passenger travel by rail avoids about **266 million miles** of personal travel in Virginia



\$65M Saved from reducing crash-related accidents, injuries, and deaths

Relieve Congestion

\$231M

Annual in congestion savings



1 = 30



Passenger Vehicles

\$85M

Annual pavement maintenance savings

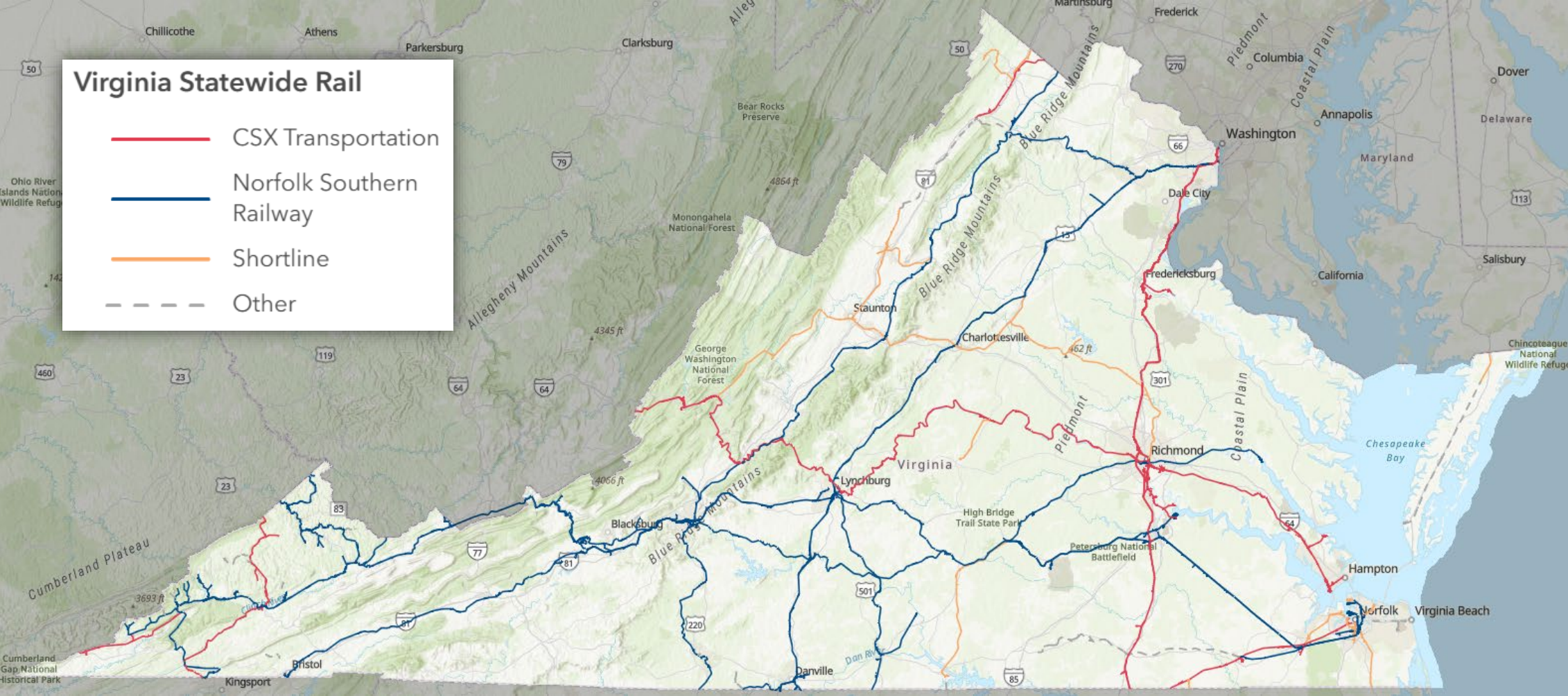


1 = 3.4



Semi-Trailer Trucks

Virginia's Rail Network



Intercity Passenger Rail Network

Services

- Virginia State-Supported Regional Service
 - Route 46 (Washington-Roanoke)
 - Route 47 (Washington-Newport News)
 - Route 50 (Washington-Norfolk)
 - Route 51 (Washington-Richmond Main St. Station)

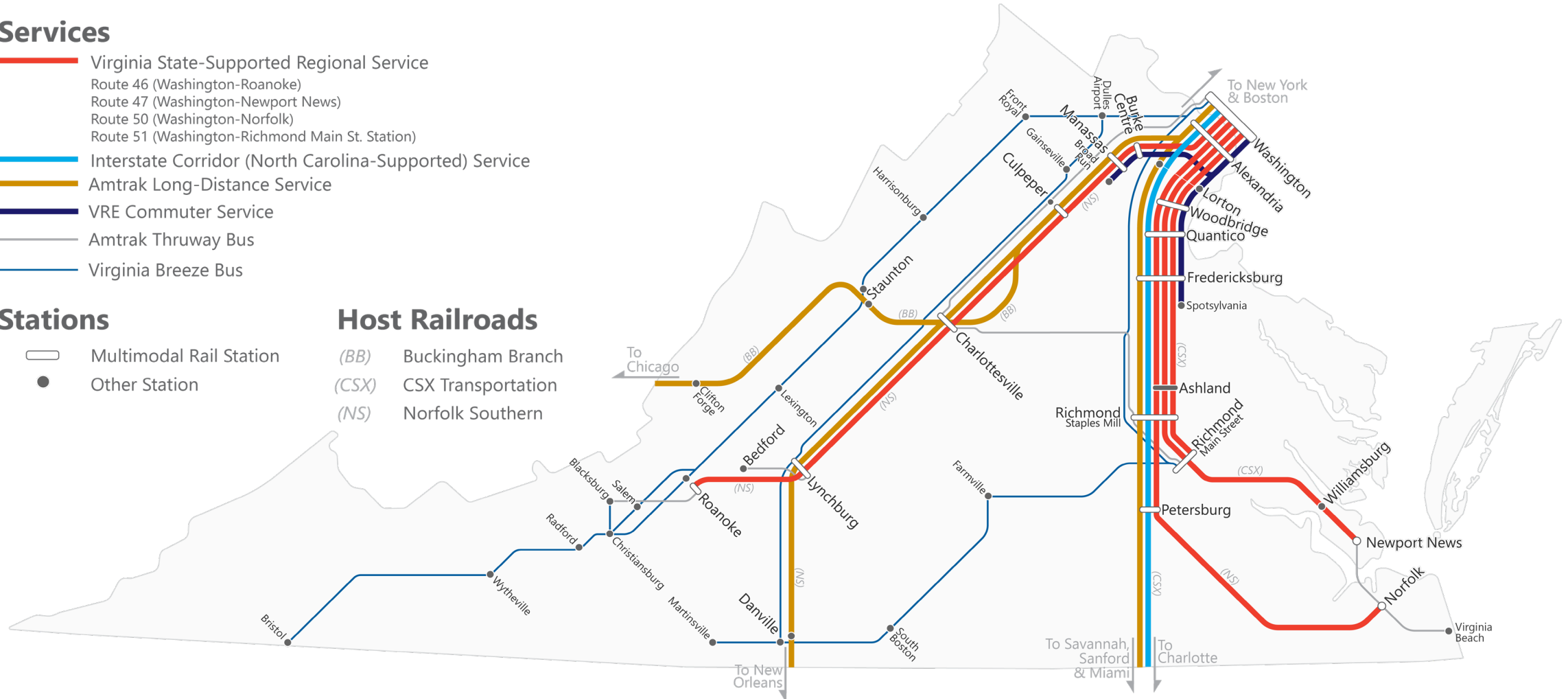
- Interstate Corridor (North Carolina-Supported) Service
- Amtrak Long-Distance Service
- VRE Commuter Service
- Amtrak Thruway Bus
- Virginia Breeze Bus

Stations

- Multimodal Rail Station
- Other Station

Host Railroads

- (BB) Buckingham Branch
- (CSX) CSX Transportation
- (NS) Norfolk Southern



Statewide Rail Plans

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



Virginia Statewide Rail Plan

Creating a vision for the future of rail in Virginia

Records progress and charts path forward.

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

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

Includes 6-year and 20-year horizons.

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

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



FRA Rail Plan Outline – Chapter by Chapter

1. The Role of Rail in Statewide Transportation
2. The State's Existing Rail System
 - I. Description and Inventory
 - II. Trends and Forecasts
 - III. Stakeholder Input with Recommendations
 - IV. Rail Service Needs and Opportunities
3. Proposed Passenger Rail Improvements and Investments
4. Proposed Freight Rail Improvements and Investments
5. The State's Rail Service and Investment Program
6. Coordination and Review

2022 Virginia Statewide Rail Plan Review



Collection

2022 Virginia Statewide Rail Plan

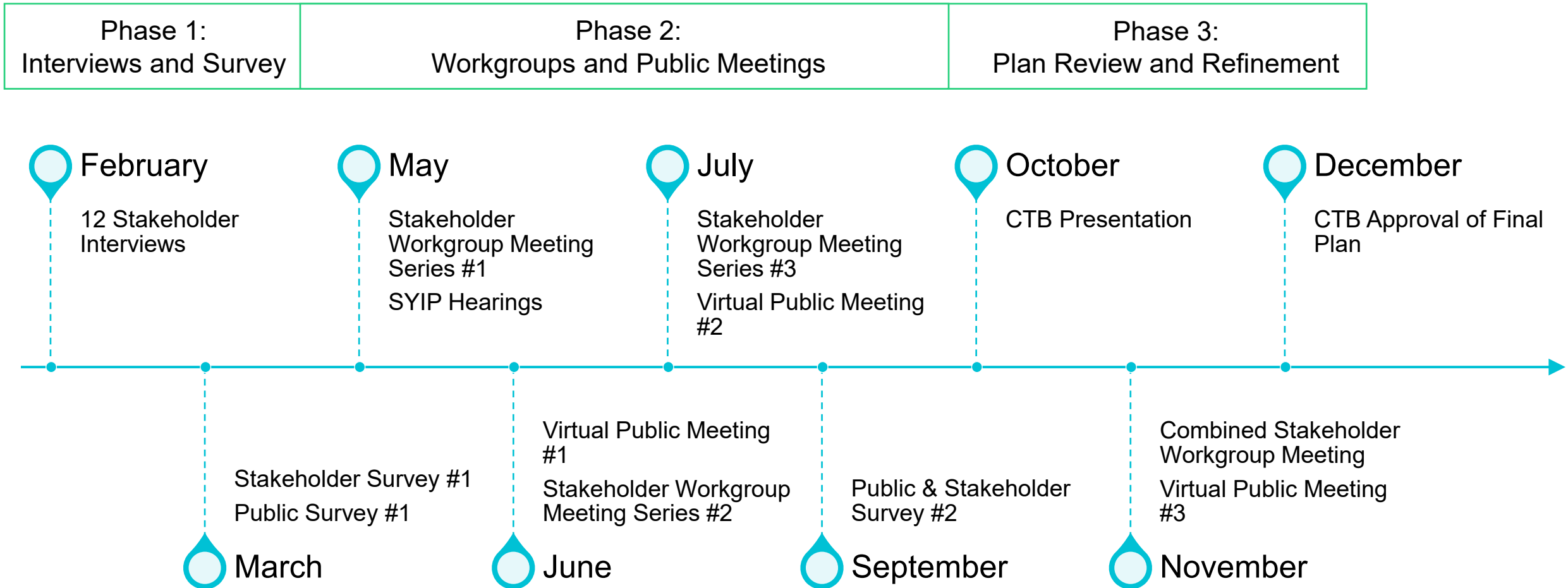
Virginia's rail network is a valuable asset that grows the economy, relieves congestion and saves taxpayer money. Continued investment in rail infrastructure will ensure the mission and vision of the Commonwealth's transportation network is achieved.

Get started



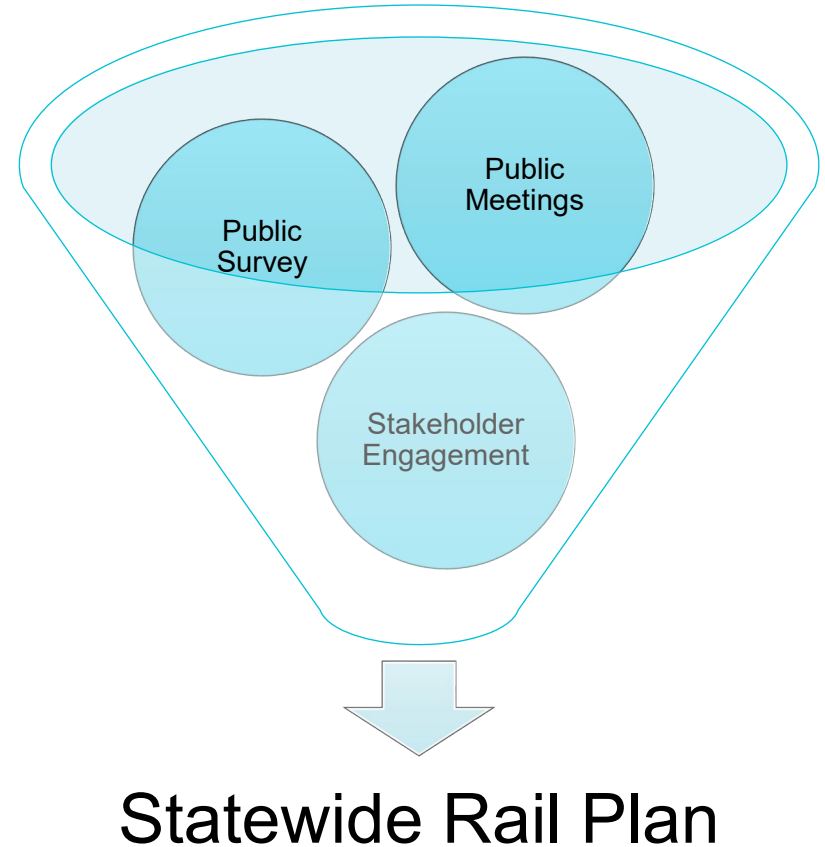
- First in the nation to be built entirely in ArcGIS Online StoryMaps
 - Multimedia Applications
 - Interactive Maps, dashboards, and visuals for required data
- Written during major changes to VA rail landscape
 - Creation of VPRA
 - Transforming Rail in Virginia (TRV) deals
 - Passage of IIJA and new FRA grant programs

2026 Virginia Statewide Rail Plan Engagement Schedule



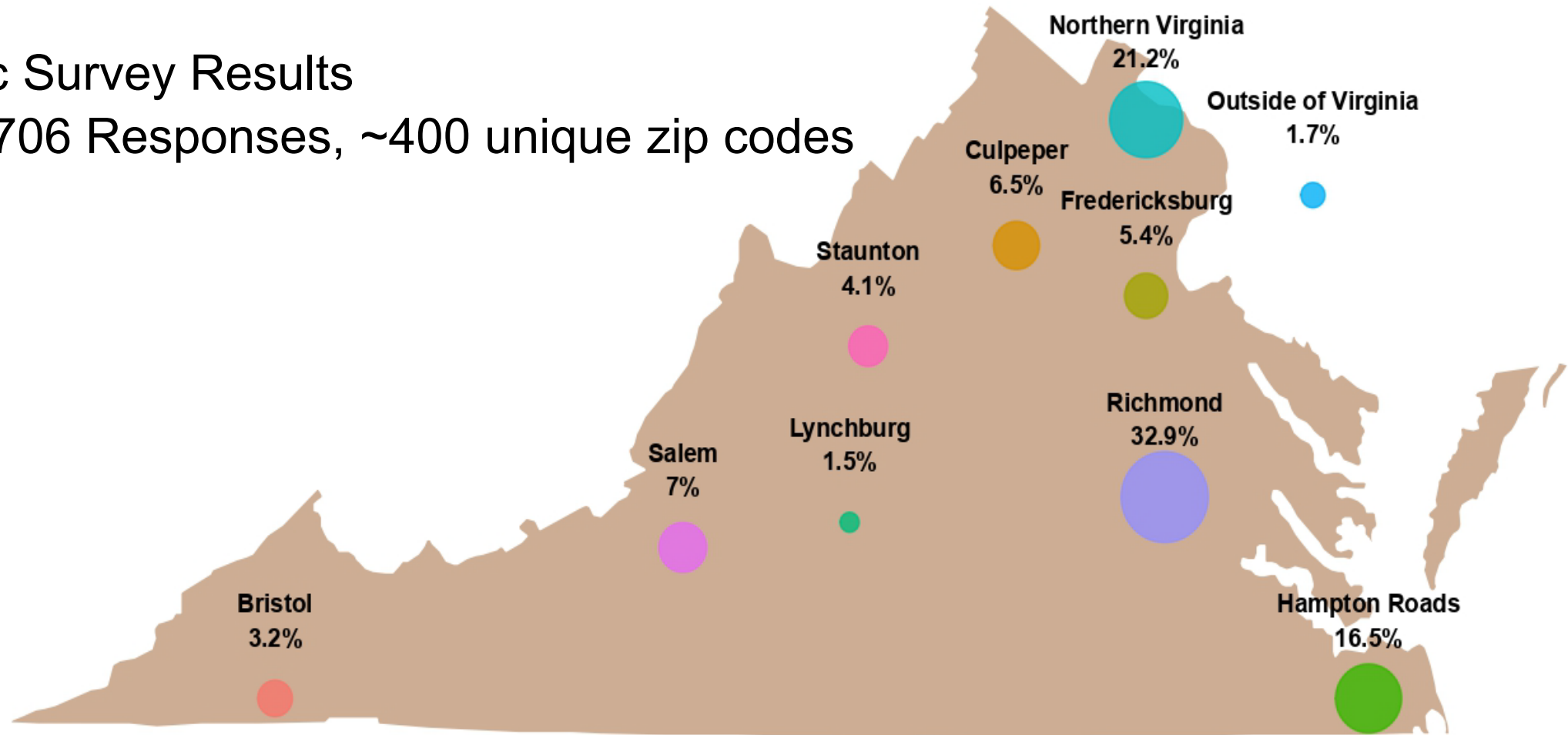
Public Engagement

- This meeting builds on previous engagement with public through survey.
- Rail Plan stakeholder and public engagement will provide key insight into preferences and high-level priorities.



Public Engagement / Survey Results

- Public Survey Results
 - 2,706 Responses, ~400 unique zip codes

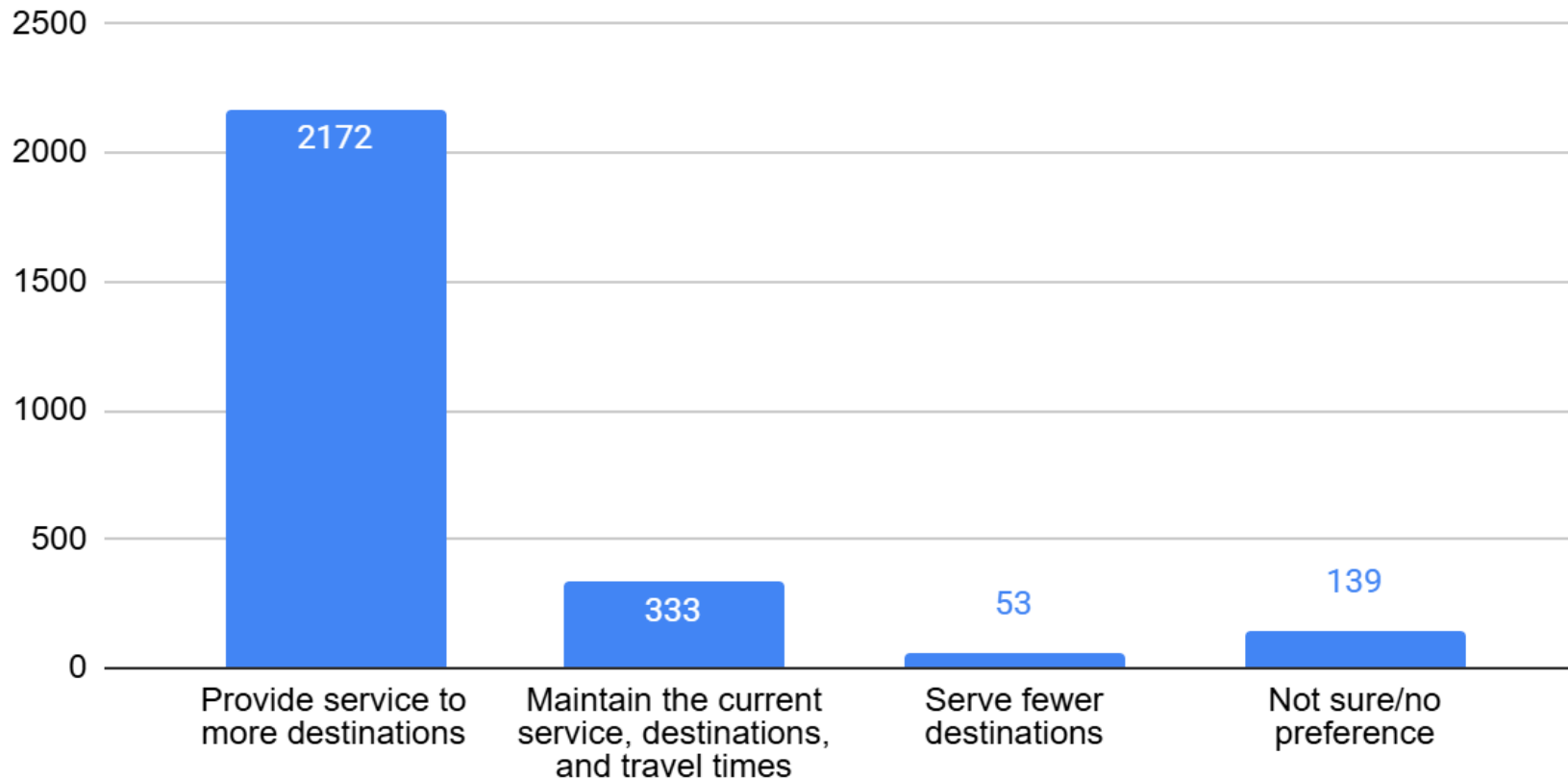


Survey Results - General

- Strong preference for expanding rail access, with the vast majority supporting service to more destinations.
- Most respondents favor expanding travel within Virginia and Washington, D.C. rather than focusing on out-of-state connections.
- Nearly 60 percent support a balanced approach that includes both new routes and enhanced service on existing corridors.
- Overall input reflects strong demand for increased connectivity, accessibility, and system growth.

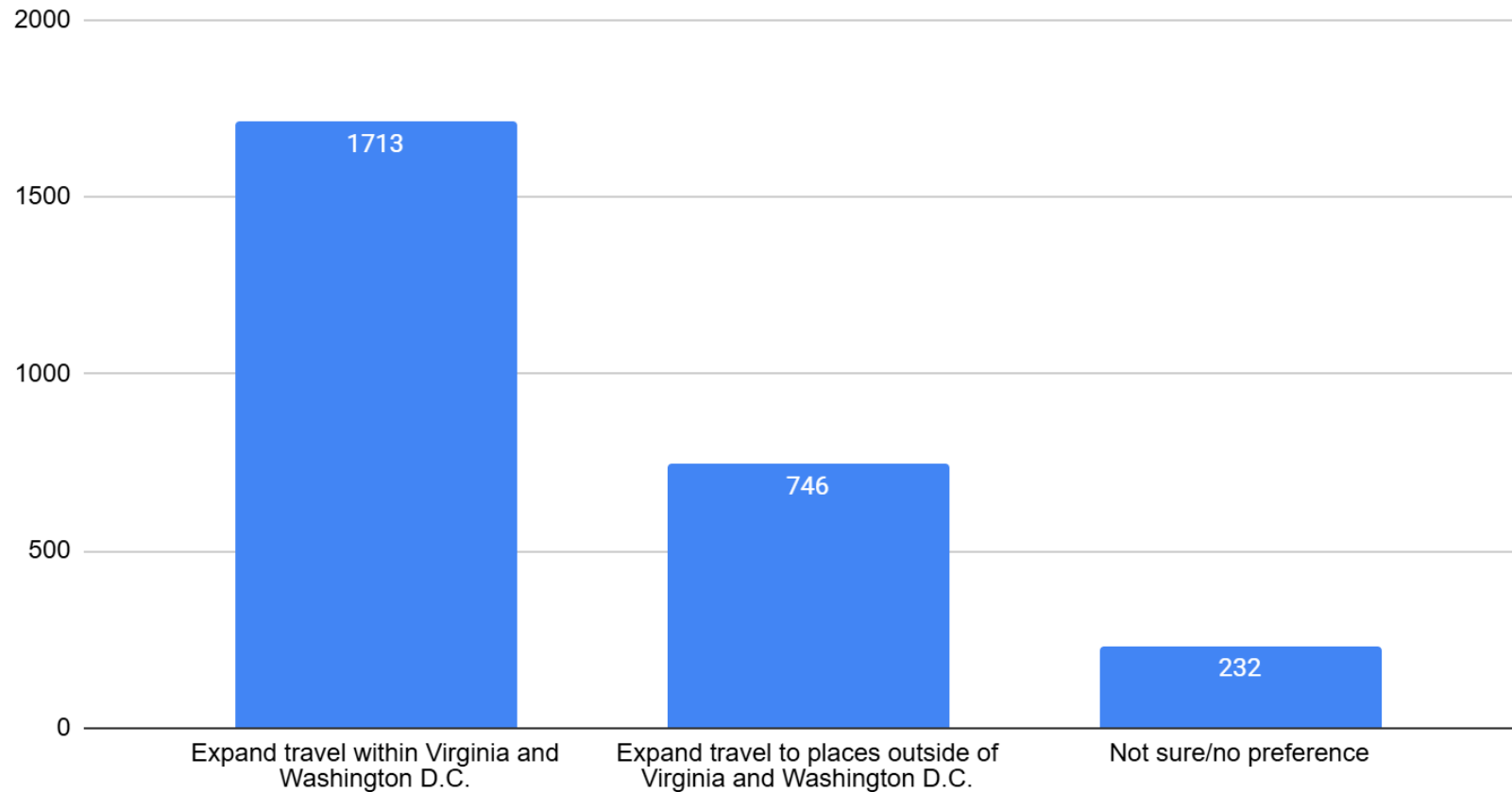
Survey Results – Passenger Rail Preferences

Overall, would you like to see the VA rail system increase or decrease the number of stops?



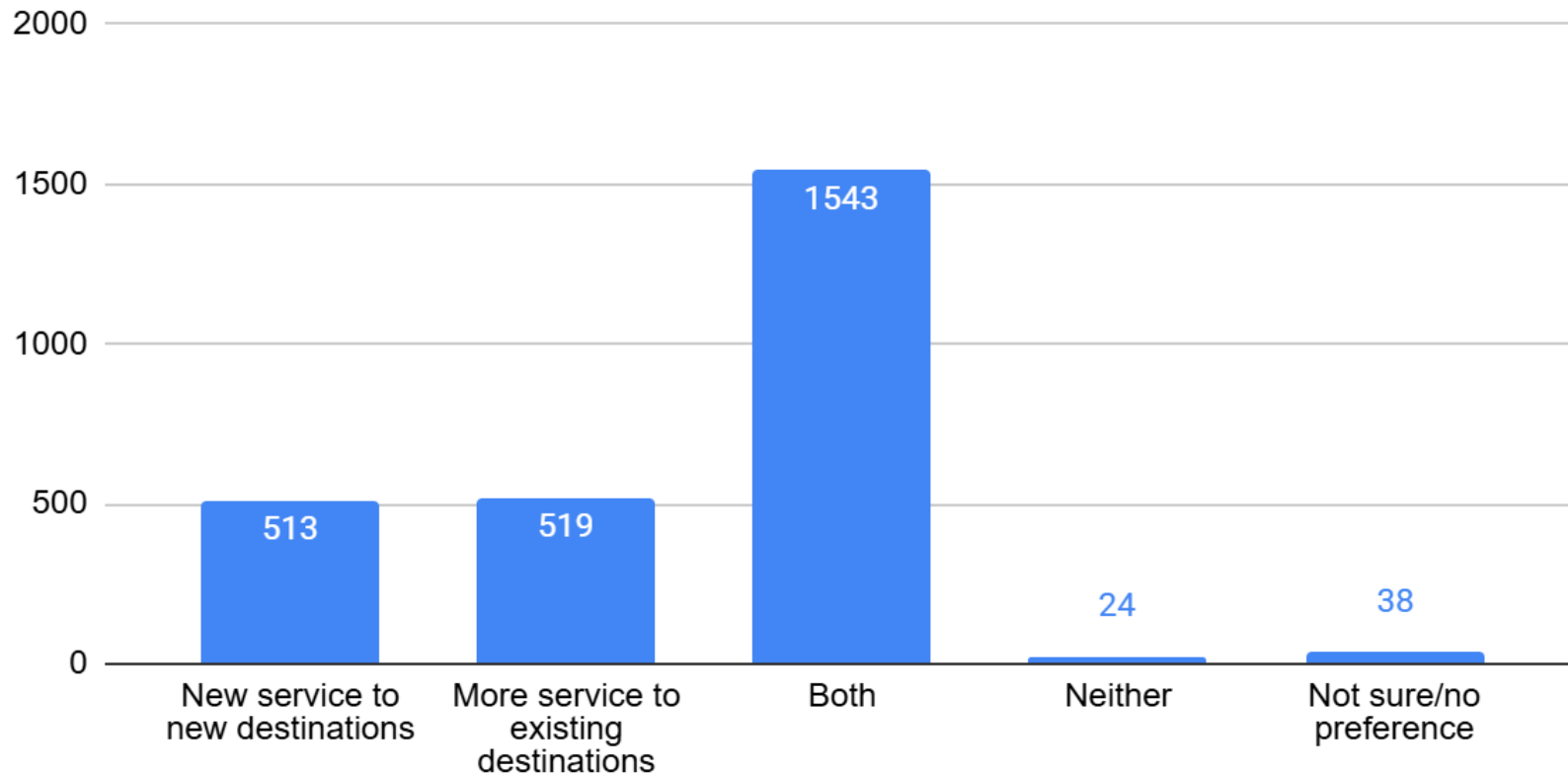
Survey Results – Passenger Rail Preferences

Overall, would you like to see DRPT focus on expanding the options for travel within Virginia and Washington D.C. or to places outside of Virginia?



Survey Results – Passenger Rail Preferences

Should Virginia invest more to establish new service to new destinations or more service on existing routes?



Survey Questions – Topic Specific

The following are key strategies identified by DRPT to support **Freight Rail** in Virginia. Which of these strategies do you consider the most important for the 2026 Rail Plan?

Select **up to TWO** strategies.

- Increase funding for development of rail-served economic development sites
- Increase funding to grant programs to assist railroads and rail shippers with rail capital expenses and/or shipper incentive programs
- Prioritize improving safety at railroad/highway grade crossings and reducing blocked crossings
- Maintain and expand Commonwealth ownership/control of freight rail corridors for freight service preservation
- Prioritize shifting truck freight traffic to rail to lessen highway maintenance impacts
- Establish Commonwealth policies on rail corridor abandonment for other transportation/recreation purposes
- A Freight Rail strategy not listed (please describe):

The following are key strategies identified by DRPT to support **Passenger Rail** in Virginia. Which of these do you consider the most important for the 2026 Rail Plan?

Select up to **TWO** strategies.

- Increase rail service and reliability
- Serve new travel markets with stations on new passenger rail corridors
- Establish new stations/stopping patterns and frequencies on existing passenger corridors
- Provide rail trip times that are competitive with car trip times
- Expand all-day and/or peak period commuter services
- A Passenger Rail strategy not listed (please describe):

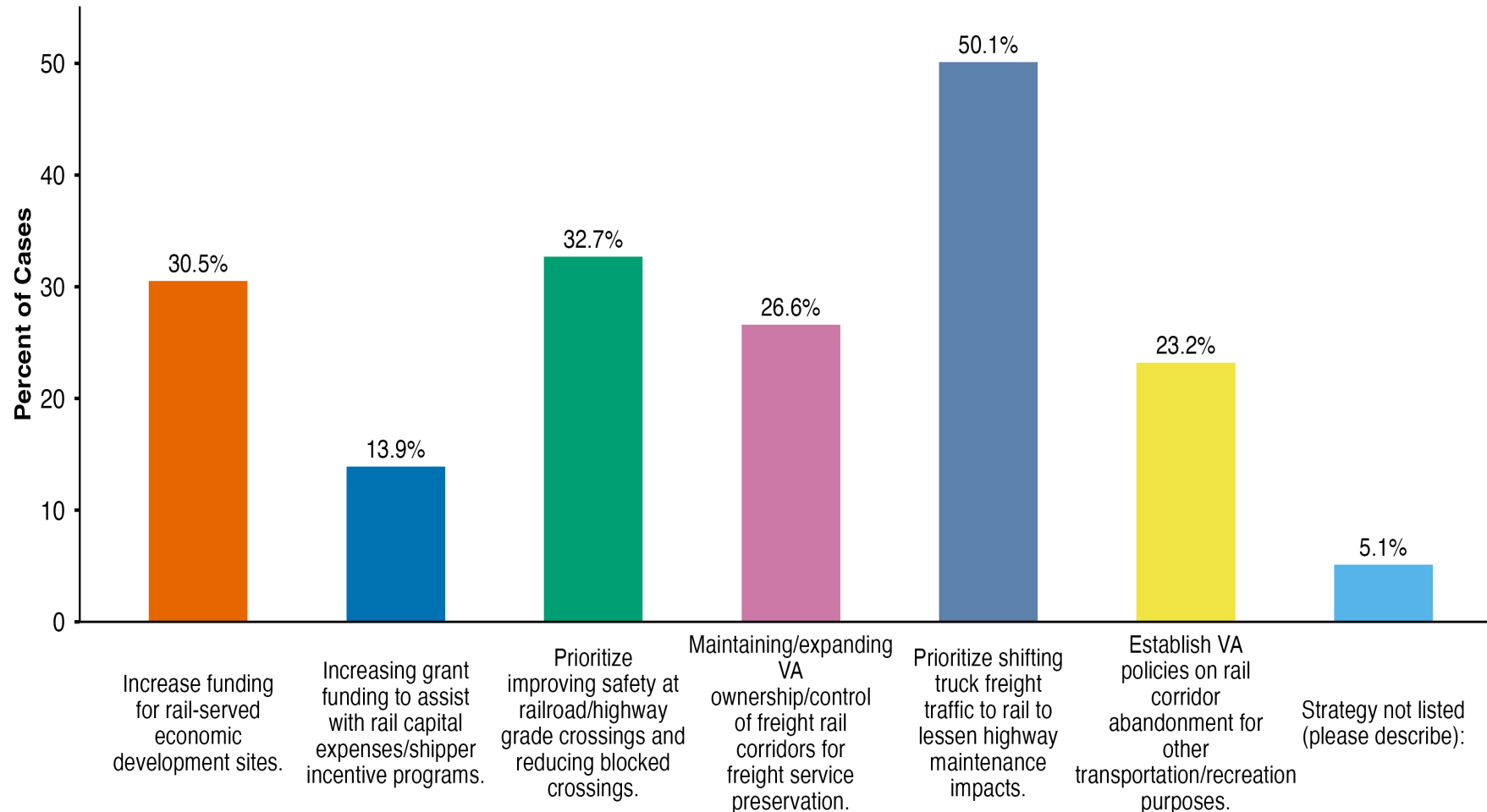
Survey Questions – Topic Specific

The following are key strategies identified by DRPT related to existing Stations in Virginia. Which of these strategies do you consider the most important for the 2026 Rail Plan?

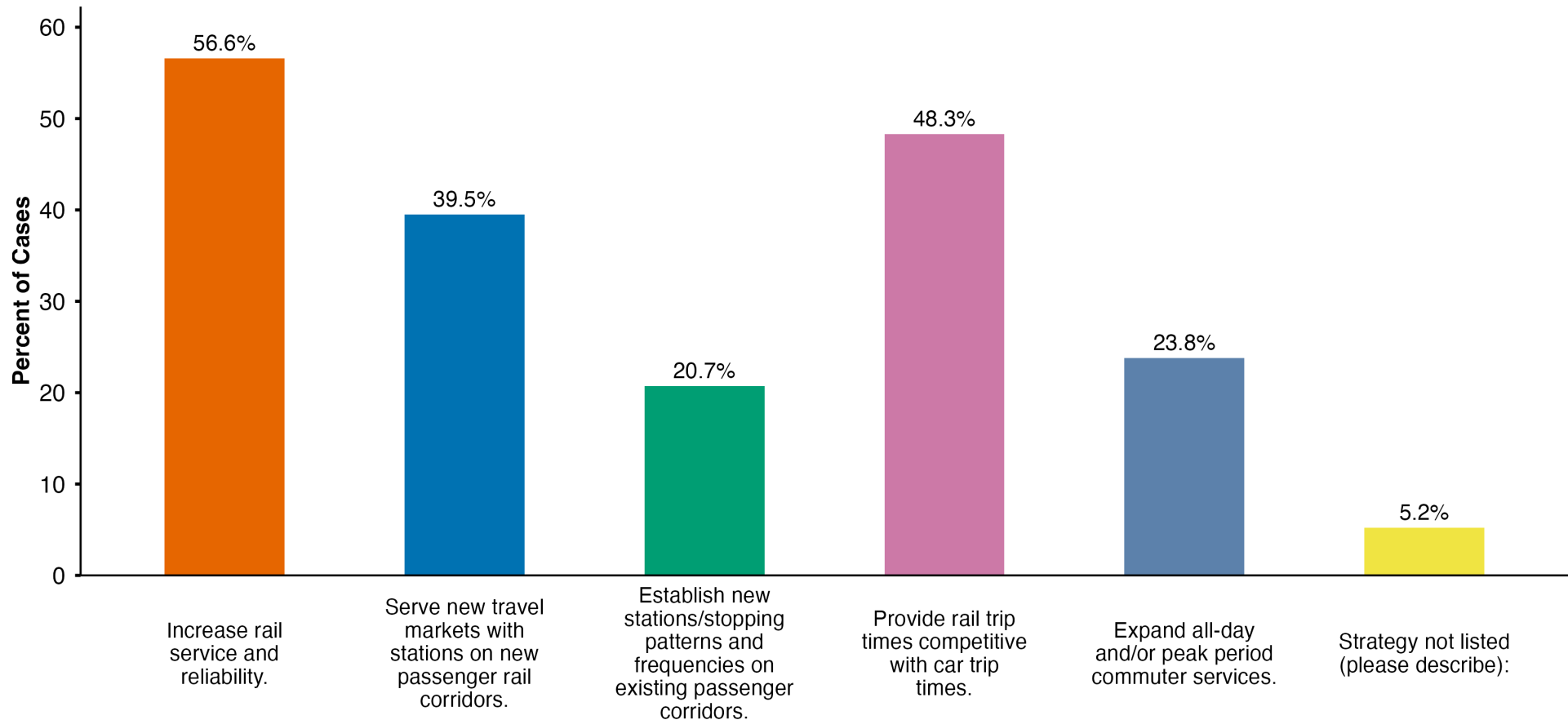
*Select up to **TWO** strategies.*

- Provide dedicated transit connections at stations to local activity centers
- Provide complementary intercity bus route/connections to the rail network
- Encourage private real estate development around stations (Transit Oriented Development) to improve station vitality and/or move existing stations to better locations in region
- Improve parking and highway access to stations
- Expand sidewalk, multi-use path, and bike infrastructure to connect stations to local activity centers
- A Station strategy not listed (please describe): _____

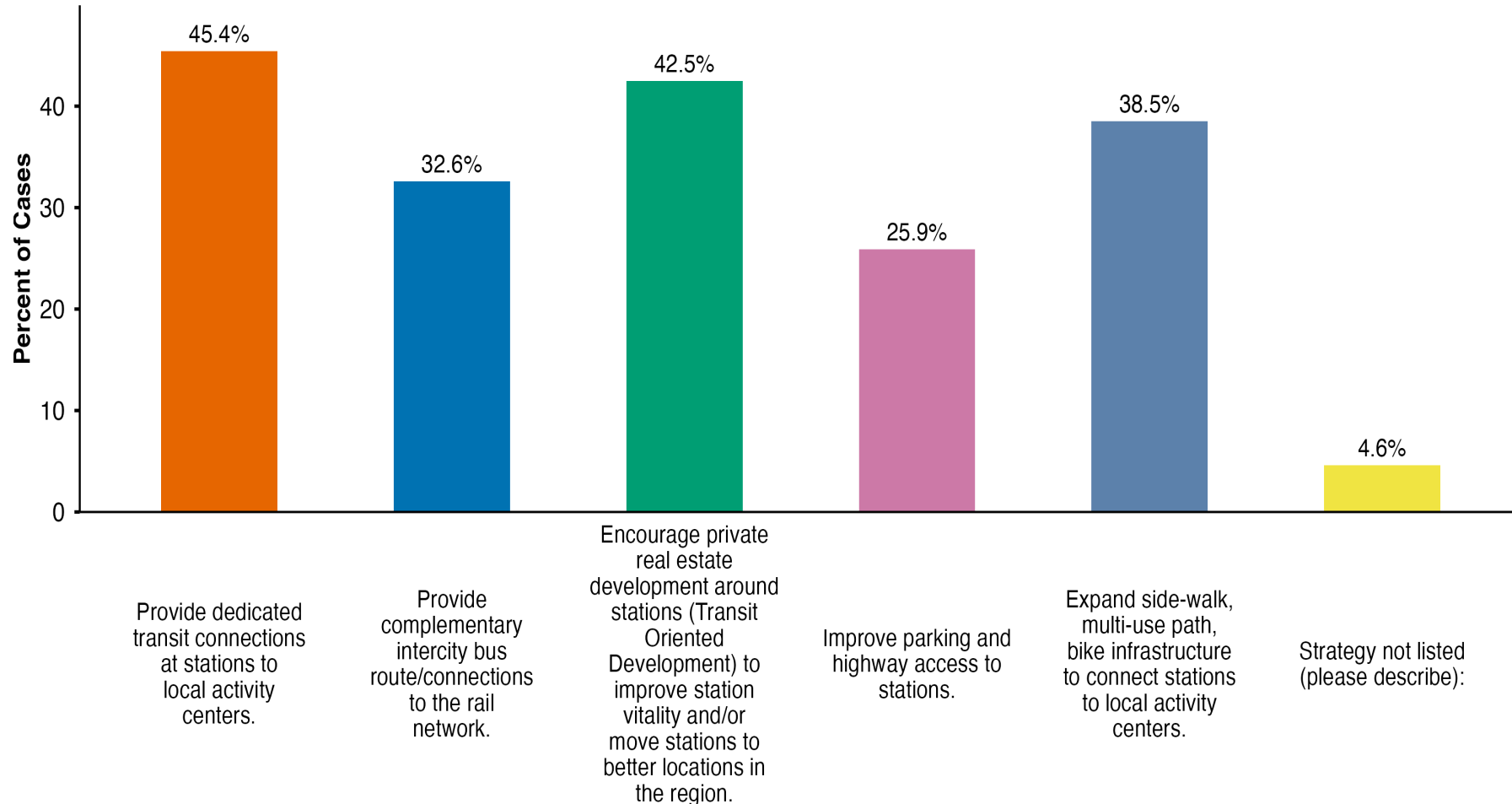
Survey Results – Freight Rail Strategies



Survey Results – Passenger Rail Strategies



Survey Results – Existing Stations

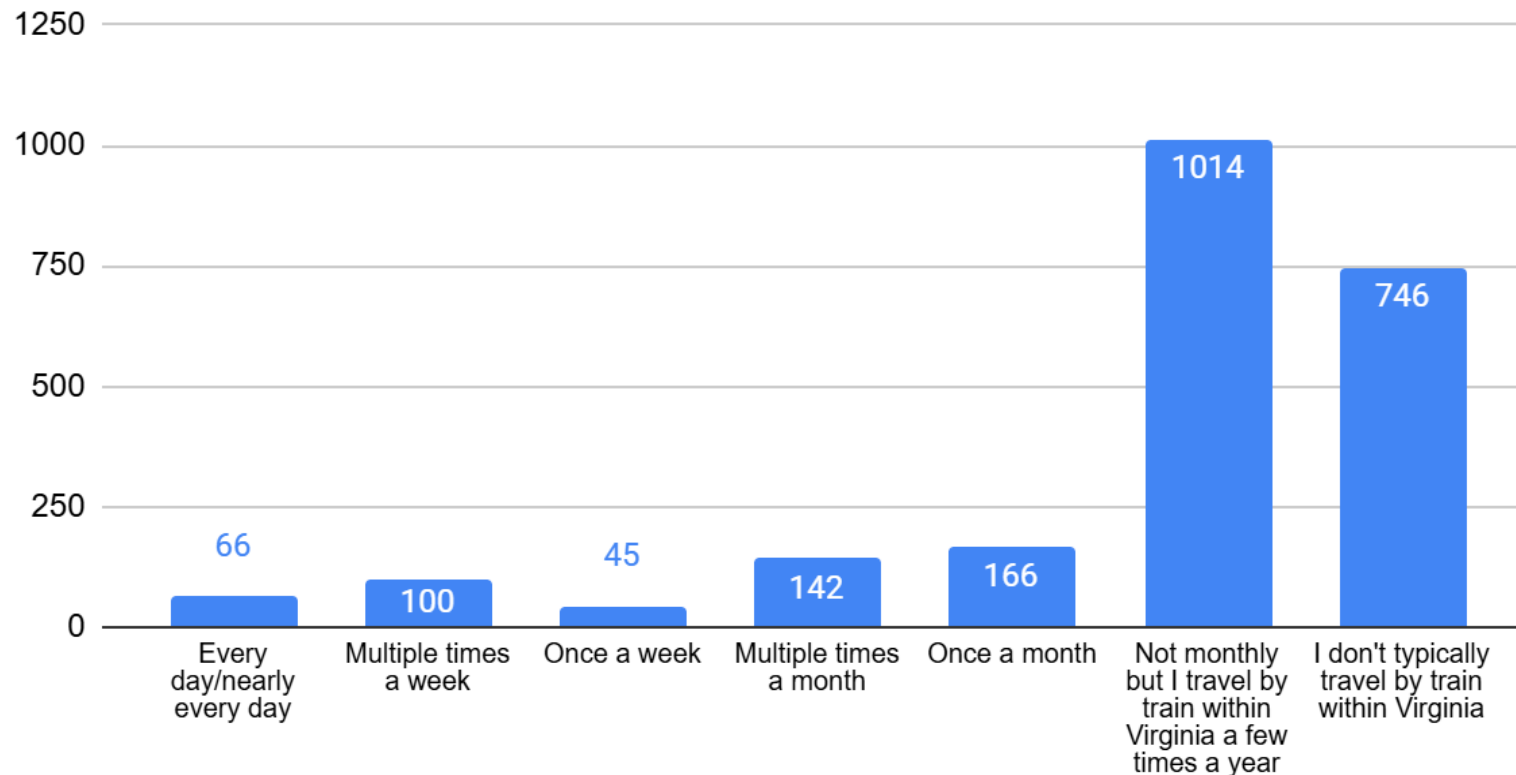


Survey Results – Topic Specific

- **Passenger Rail:** focus on improving reliability, increasing frequency, expanding service, and making travel times competitive with driving.
- **Freight Rail:** emphasis on shifting truck traffic to rail, improving safety at crossings, and supporting rail-served economic development.
- **Stations:** strong interest in better multimodal connections, transit-oriented development, and improved pedestrian and bicycle access.
- **Usage patterns:** most respondents travel by rail occasionally rather than frequently, indicating significant opportunity for continued growth.

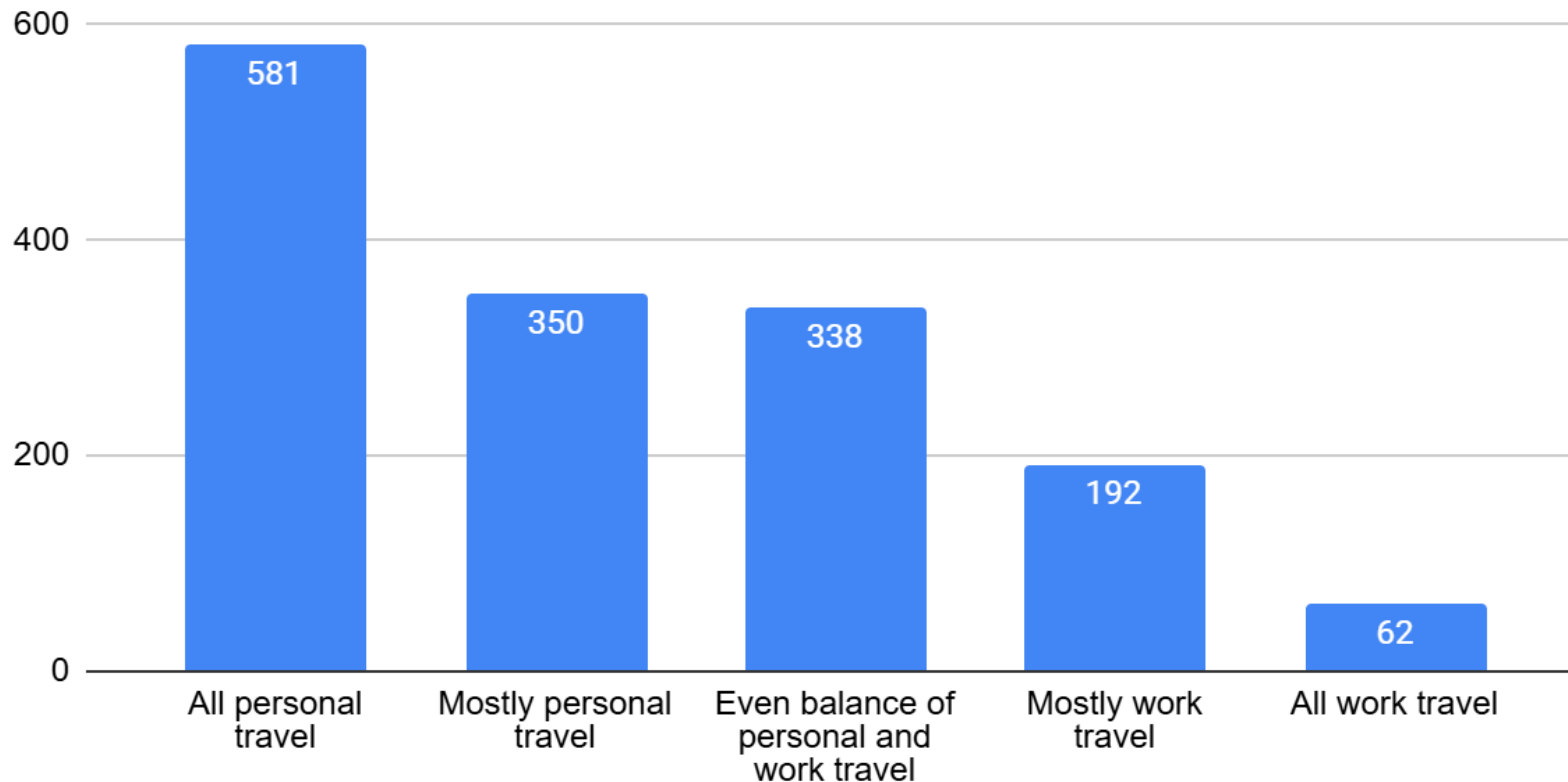
Survey Results – Ridership, Crossings, and Destinations

Thinking about a typical month, about how often do you travel by train within Virginia?



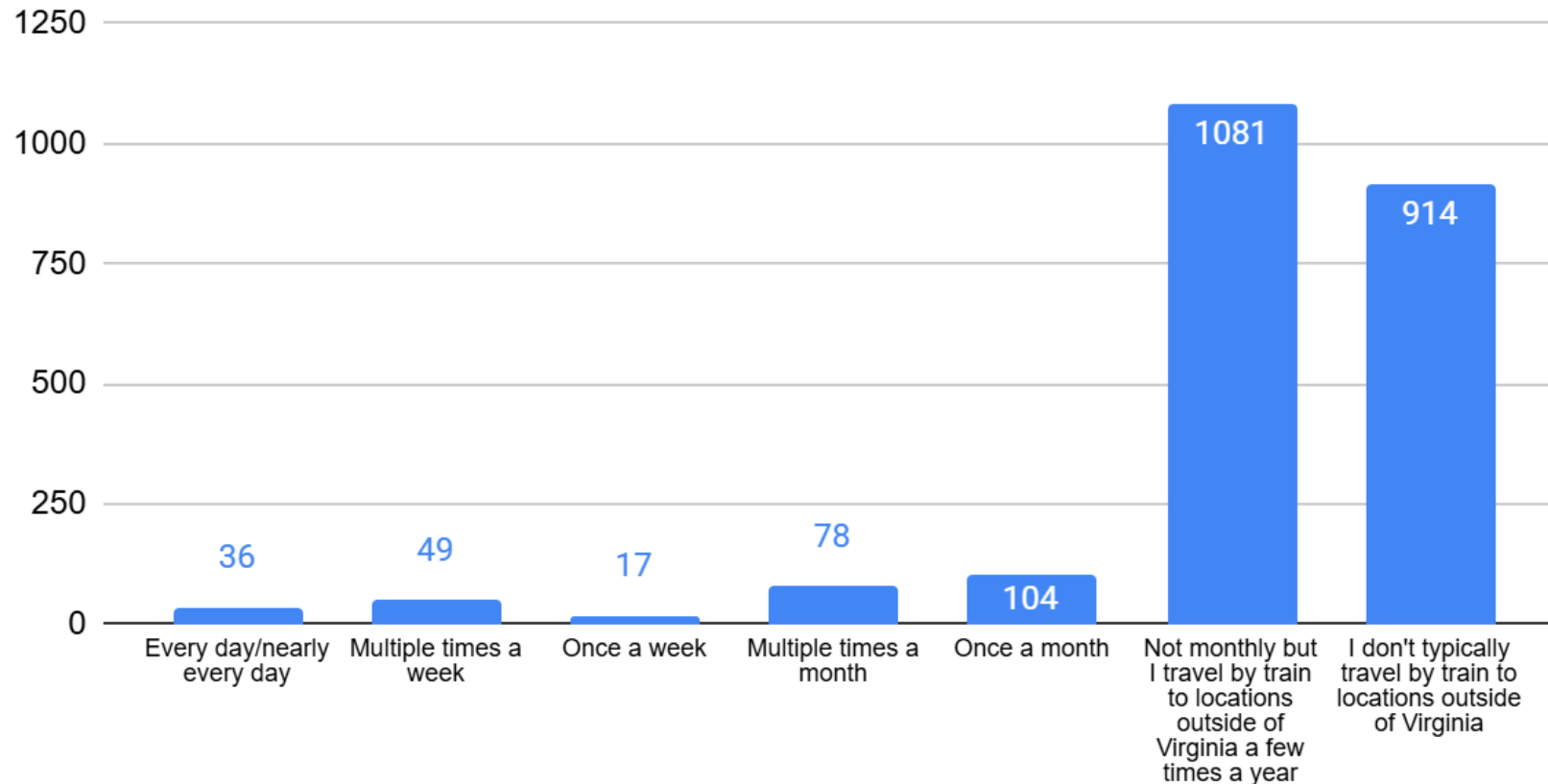
Survey Results – Ridership, Crossings, and Destinations

Has this travel within Virginia been for personal or work reasons?



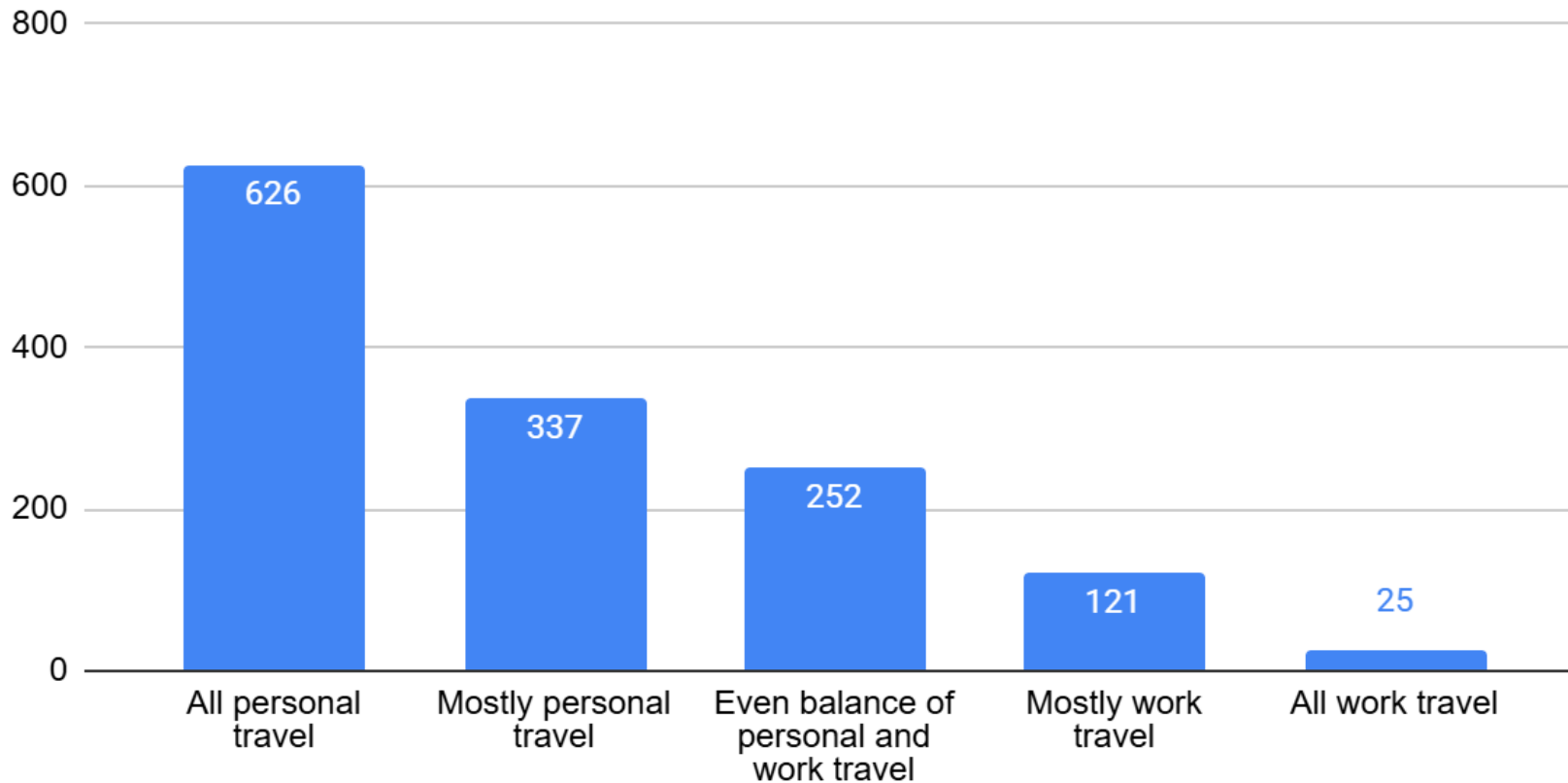
Survey Results – Ridership, Crossings, and Destinations

Thinking about a typical month, about how often do you travel by train to locations outside of Virginia?



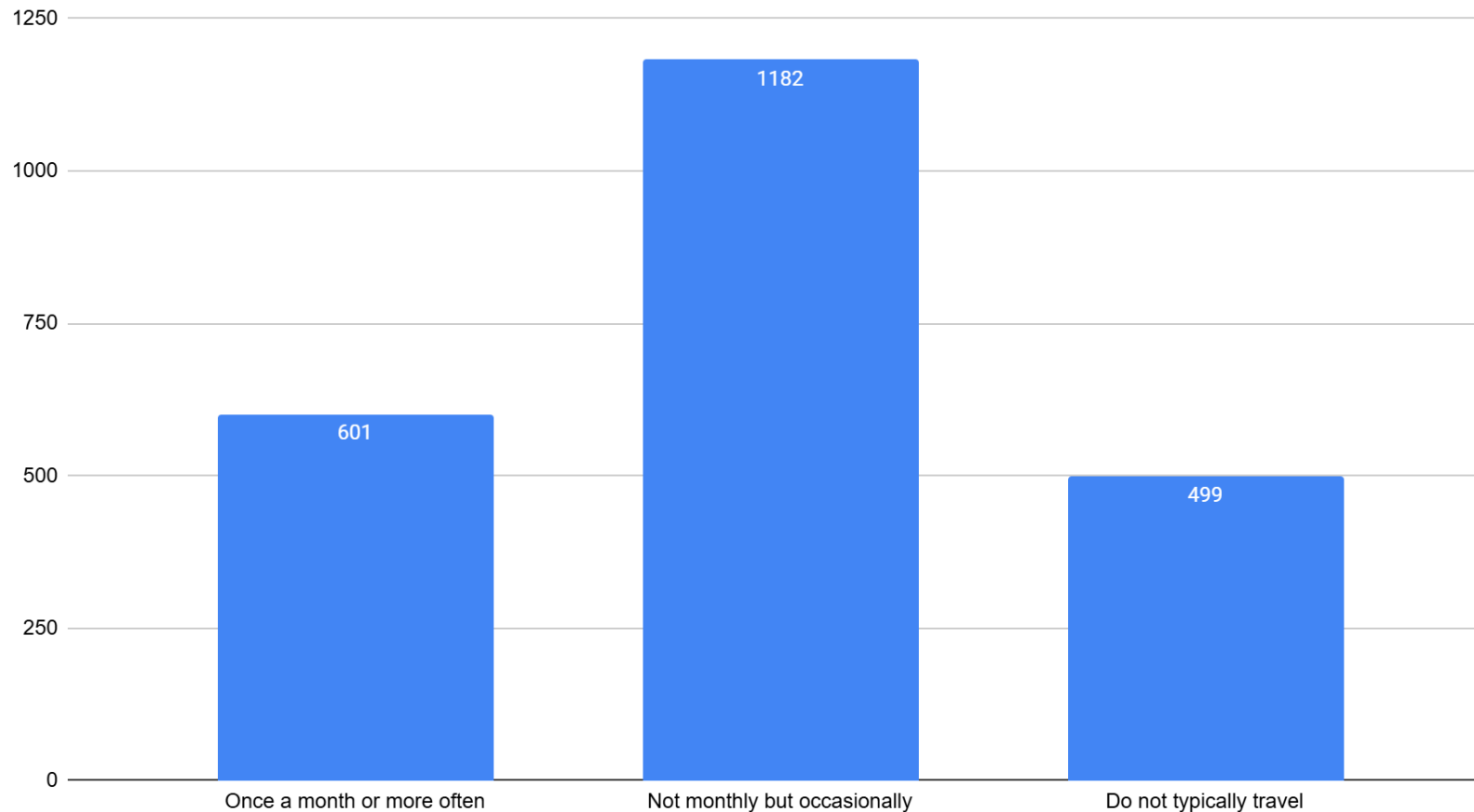
Survey Results – Ridership, Crossings, and Destinations

Has this travel to locations outside of Virginia been for personal or work reasons?



Survey Results – Ridership, Crossings, and Destinations

Combined travel frequency - Within and outside Virginia travel



Ridership, Crossings, and Destinations - Overview

- **Travel within Virginia (Frequency)** - 66.1% ride only a few times per year and 32.7% not traveling at all, while roughly 14% report traveling at least once a month or more.
- **Travel within Virginia (Reason)** - Travel within Virginia is primarily for personal reasons, with 38.1% reporting all personal travel and 23.0% mostly personal (about 61% combined), compared to 22.2% who balance work and personal trips and just 16.7% who travel mostly or entirely for work.

Ridership, Crossings, and Destinations - Overview

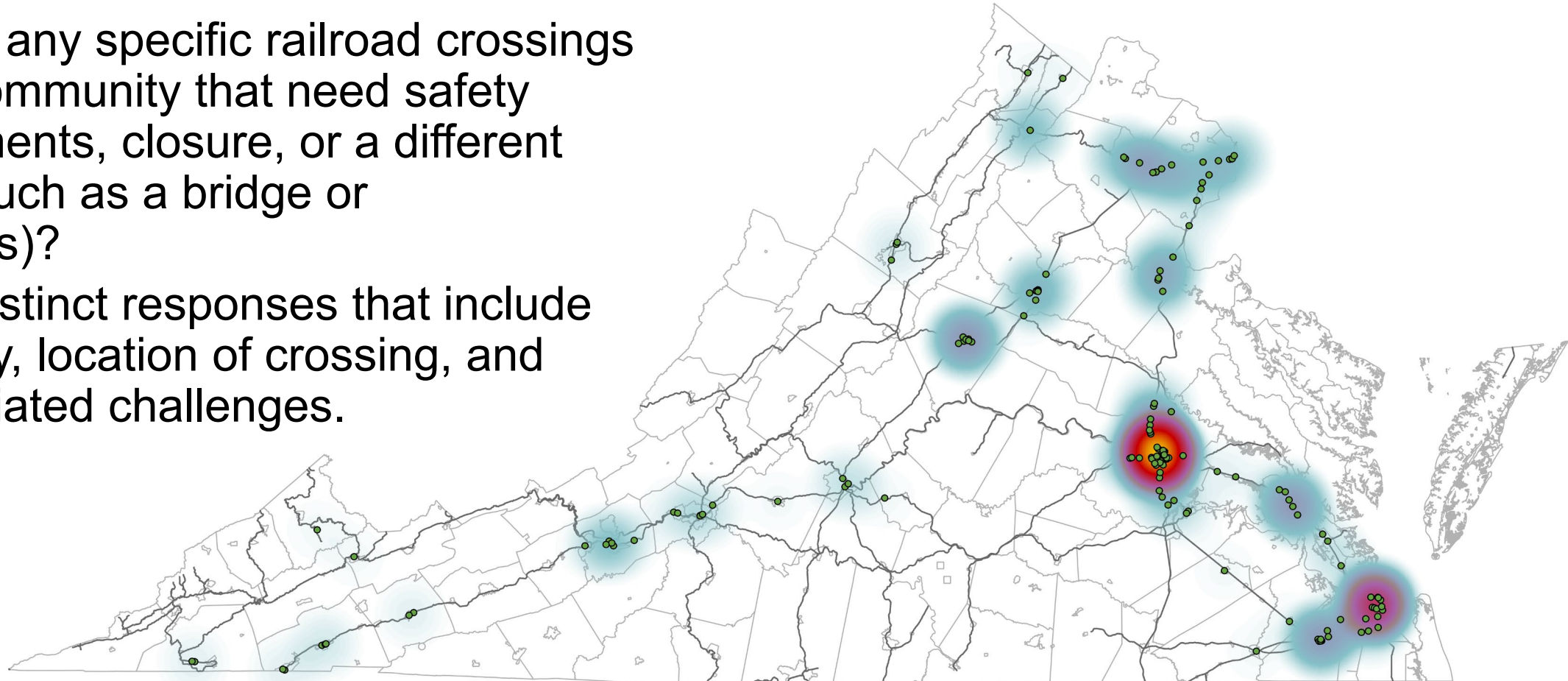
- **Travel outside Virginia (Frequency)** - Travel by train outside Virginia is less frequent than within Virginia, with 79.2% of respondents only travel a few times per year and 40.1% do not typically travel, leaving only about 20.7% who make trips at least monthly.
- **Travel outside Virginia (Reason)**- Out-of-state train travel includes more personal trips than within Virginia, with 46.0% reporting all personal travel and 24.8% mostly personal (about 70.8% combined), while just 10.7% travel mostly or entirely for work and 18.5% report a mix.

Ridership, Crossings, and Destinations - Overview

- **Overall Travel Frequency:** Most respondents (51.8%) travel only occasionally (not monthly), 26.3% travel at least once a month or more, and 21.9% do not typically travel by train at all.

Survey Results – Ridership, Crossings, and Destination

- Are there any specific railroad crossings in your community that need safety improvements, closure, or a different design (such as a bridge or underpass)?
 - 362 distinct responses that include locality, location of crossing, and associated challenges.



What do you think? What did we miss?

- What was the most surprising result of the public survey?
- What was the most interesting result of the public survey?
- Are there any other takeaways from the public survey you'd like to highlight?
- Are there additional data points that you'd like to include in the 2026 Virginia Statewide Rail Plan?
- Are there any questions you feel are important to ask in a follow up survey?

What's Next?

- Input from this meeting will compliment public survey results and inform recommendations
- Virtual Public Meeting #2 later this summer to review proposed recommendations
- Public & Stakeholder Survey #2 will incorporate and build upon feedback from this meeting and the March surveys
- Final plan to be submitted to FRA at the end of 2026



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