

Virginia Passenger Rail Authority Board Meeting

June 4, 2024

# New River Valley Passenger Rail Project

## Project Update



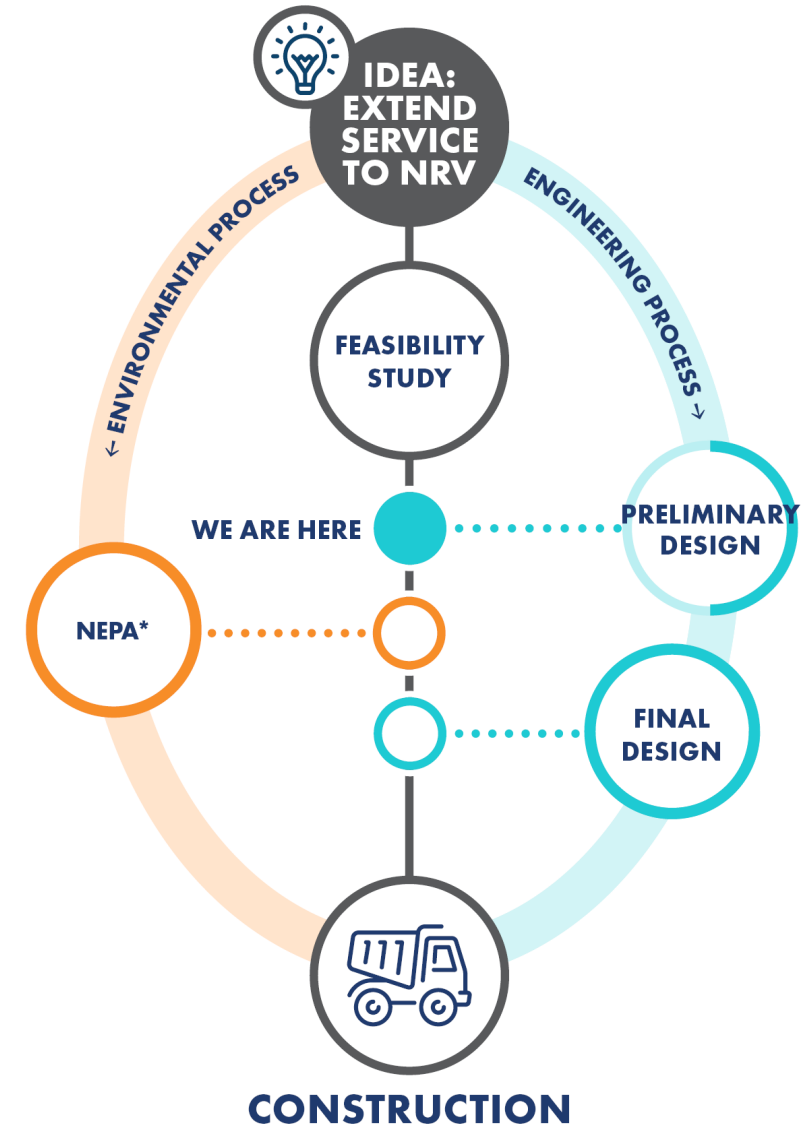
# BACKGROUND

- May 5, 2021: The Commonwealth & Norfolk Southern (NS) announce an agreement to extend passenger rail service to the New River Valley (NRV).
- June 2022: Agreement with NS for purchase of ~28 miles of the Virginian Line (V-Line) finalized and 2<sup>nd</sup> Amtrak roundtrip from the Northeast Corridor to Roanoke began the following month.



# NRV PROJECT DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

- Starts with an idea
- Feasibility Study is the first step in the project development process
- Preliminary engineering
  - 30% design
- 60% Design
- Environmental process
  - Pre-NEPA
  - NEPA
  - Permitting
- Final design
- Construction



\*National Environmental Policy Act

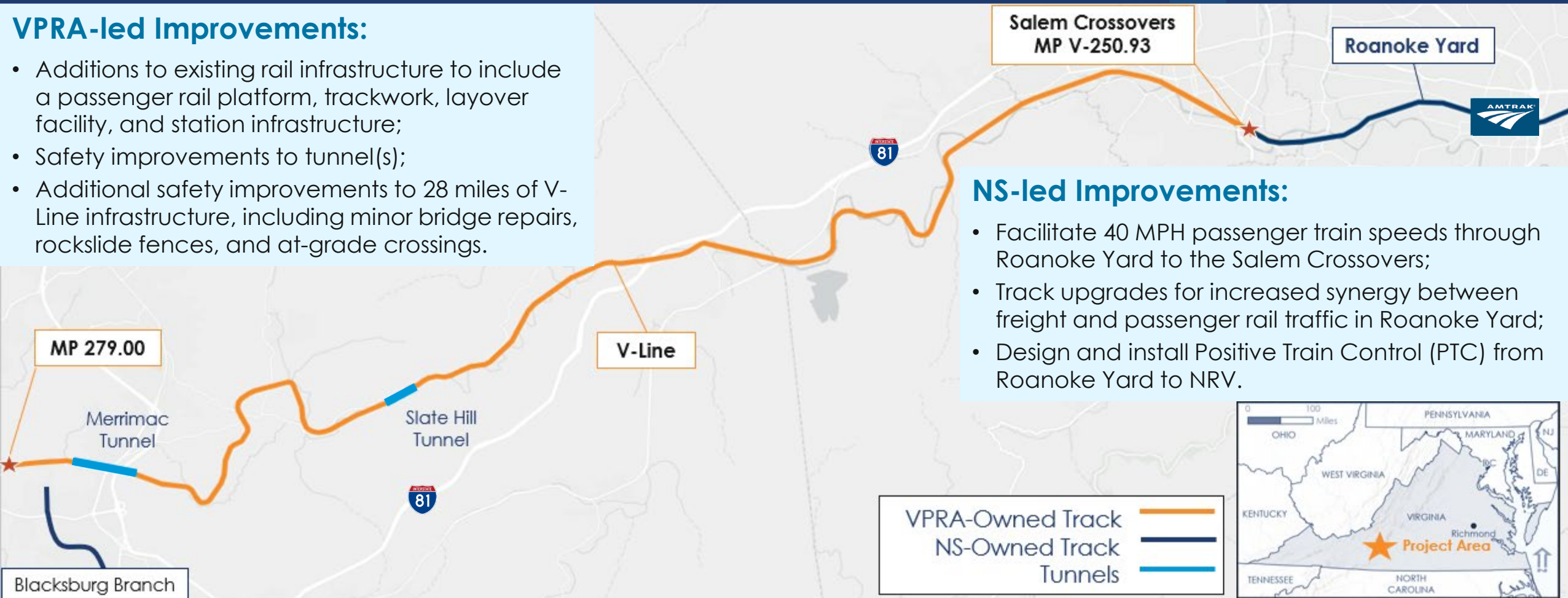
# NECESSARY INFRASTRUCTURE TO BRING SERVICE TO NRV

## VPRA-led Improvements:

- Additions to existing rail infrastructure to include a passenger rail platform, trackwork, layover facility, and station infrastructure;
- Safety improvements to tunnel(s);
- Additional safety improvements to 28 miles of V-Line infrastructure, including minor bridge repairs, rockslide fences, and at-grade crossings.

## NS-led Improvements:

- Facilitate 40 MPH passenger train speeds through Roanoke Yard to the Salem Crossovers;
- Track upgrades for increased synergy between freight and passenger rail traffic in Roanoke Yard;
- Design and install Positive Train Control (PTC) from Roanoke Yard to NRV.



# Alternatives On V-line – Presented to Board in January

## ALTERNATIVE A

### Cinnabar Rd Site

- Slate Hill Tunnel
- Platform and parking at Cinnabar Rd
- Layover facility at Cinnabar Rd

**\$366 Million**  
Q2 2028

## ALTERNATIVE B

### Mall Site with Cinnabar layover facility

- Slate Hill Tunnel
- Merrimac Tunnel
- Connector track
- Platform at NRV Mall
- Layover facility at Cinnabar Rd

**\$785 Million**  
Q2 2030

## ALTERNATIVE C

### Mall Site with Cinnabar layover facility and Cinnabar platform

- Slate Hill Tunnel
- Merrimac Tunnel
- Connector track
- Platform at NRV Mall
- Layover facility at Cinnabar Rd
- Platform and parking at Cinnabar Rd

**\$951 Million**  
Q2 2028  
(Cinnabar)

Q2 2030  
(NRV Mall)

# Summary

Evaluation Criteria	ALT A - Cinnabar Package	ALT B - Mall Package	ALT C - Mall and Cinnabar Package
Accessible by public transportation			
Operational as soon as possible			
Minimize impacts to natural resources (streams, wetlands, protected species habitat, etc.)			
Good financial stewardship of public resources			
Proximity to commercial areas			
Economic development			
Minimize noise increases to residential areas and other sensitive receptors			
Proximity to bicycle and pedestrian facilities			
Proximity for residential areas to access new passenger rail station			
Minimize impacts to the visual environment			
Minimize substantial earth removal			



Most Impact Least Impact
 
 Least Benefit Most Benefit

# Round 1 Outreach

# What We Heard in Round 1 of Outreach

## Key Themes

### The NRV Passenger Rail Project IS HIGHLY SUPPORTED.

- ✓ Top priorities for the new service
- ✓ Support for the new station
- ✓ Current transportation patterns
- ✓ How would travelers access a future passenger rail station

Really hope that we get rail service in the NRV sometime soon. As a 50 year resident of Blacksburg, I loved taking the train in Cambria to Richmond for Christmas in 1976! I would use rail service to visit my grandchildren in Richmond and Baltimore! Thank you!

Please bring passenger rail that connects to Richmond, DC and beyond.

I am handicapped, which makes driving difficult. I would take a train to the NOVA/DC area to visit family. Thank you for your work on this important infrastructure project.

I commute to BWI weekly and this service is very important to me.

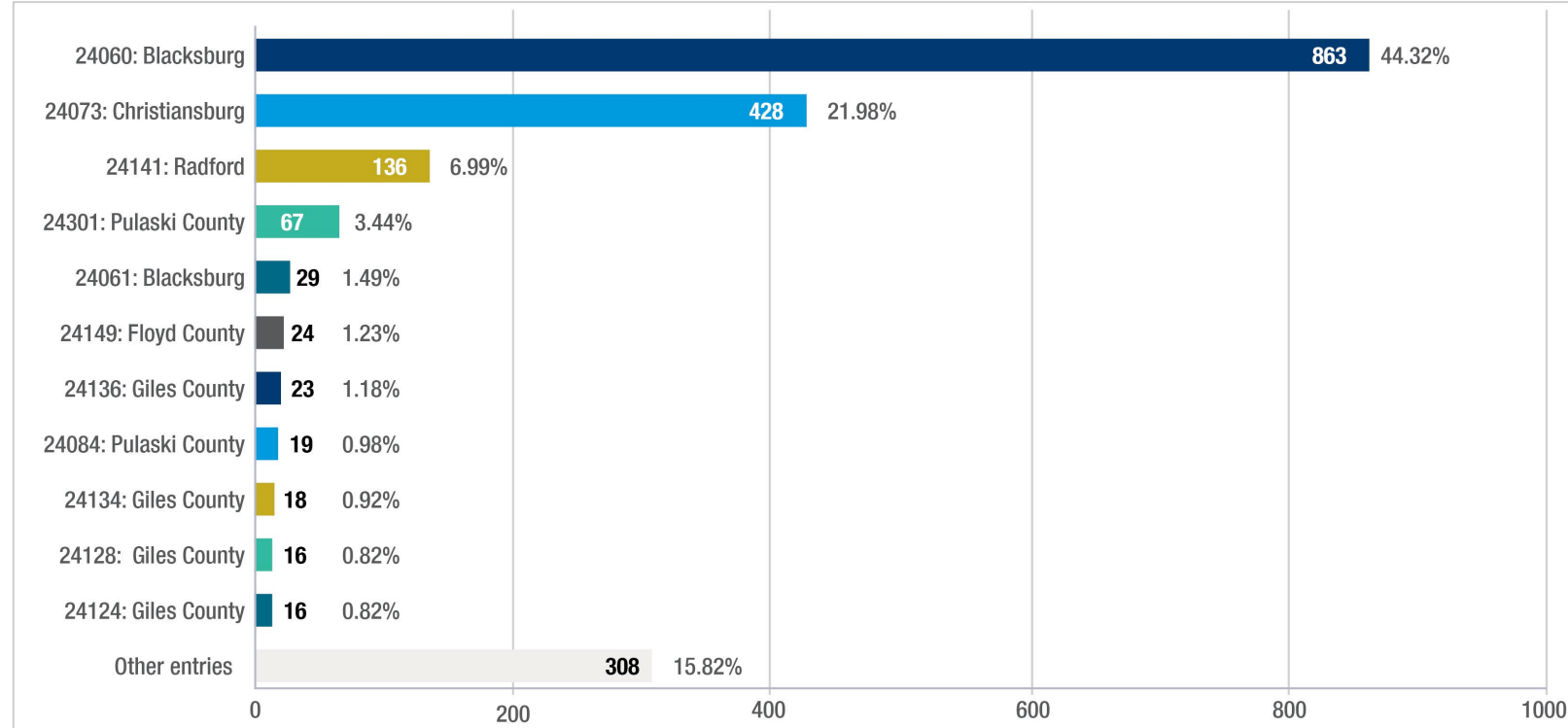
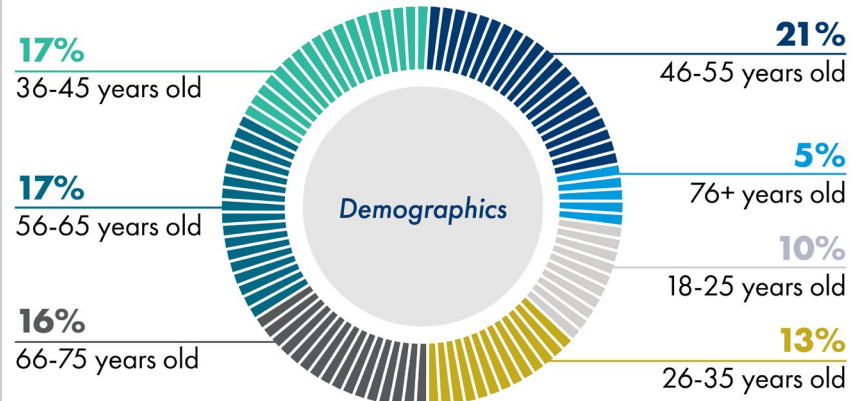
You have 50,000 students in Blacksburg for 10 months of the year that have extremely limited means to travel outside of the area that are budget friendly and logistical. This would be logical and welcomed.

This will make the NRV so much more connected! I'm so happy we are trying to make everyone more mobile. So many times I have had to get to Richmond or DC, and we are just completely disconnected by both rail and air.



# What We Heard in Round 1 of Outreach

## Who Took the Survey



**750**  
rack cards  
distributed

**35,293**  
impressions on  
social media

**150+**  
attended the  
open house

**1,947**  
surveys  
completed

**500+**  
comments  
submitted

# Round 2 Outreach

Where We Went and What We Heard



# Where We Went with Our Communication Toolbox

## Attendance at Community Events

**40**

Blacksburg  
Farmers Market

**5**

Radford  
University

**16**

Virginia  
Tech

**24**

Radford  
Public Library

**53**

Christiansburg  
Open House

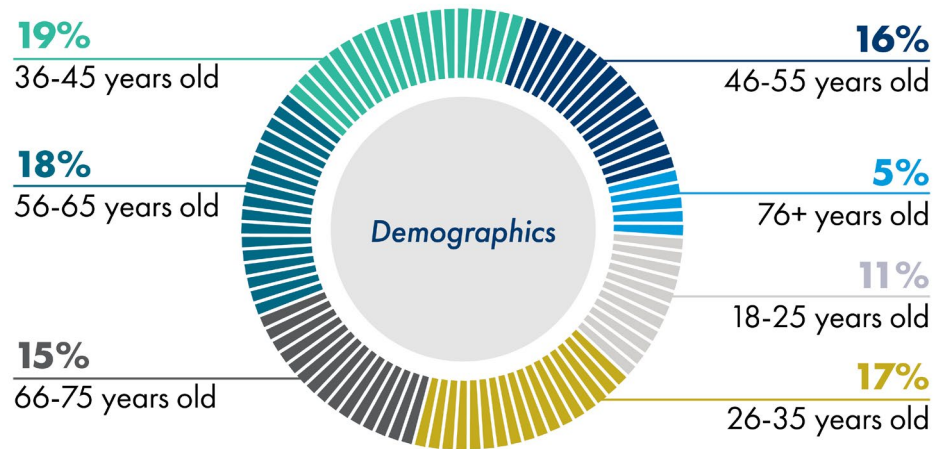
**77**

Blacksburg Fork  
& Cork Festival



# What We Heard in Round 2 of Outreach

## Who Took the Survey



**6,338**  
organic impressions on social media

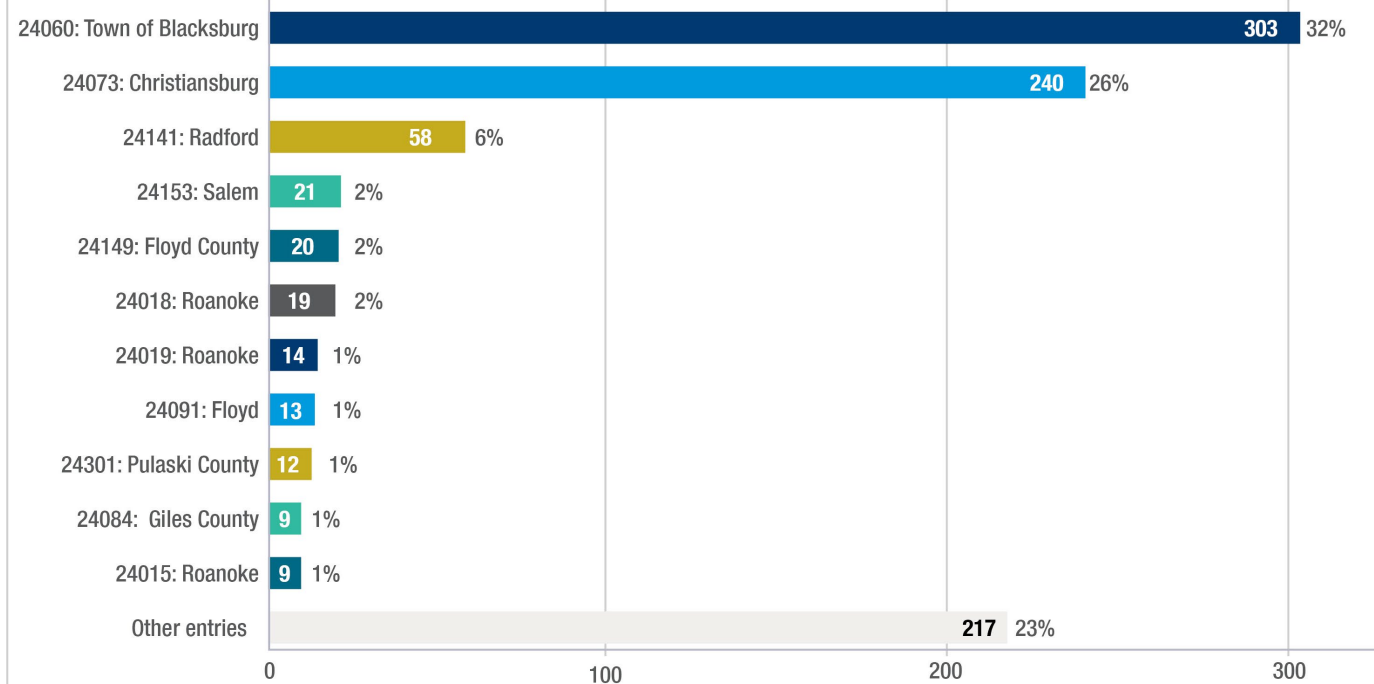
**98,418**  
paid impressions on social media

**215+**  
attended outreach events

**935**  
surveys completed

## Survey Responses by Zip Code: Top 12

935 SURVEY RESPONSES



# What We Heard in Round 2 of Outreach: Survey

How would you describe your level of support for...

	Alternative A		Alternative B		Alternative C	
Fully support	494	56%	376	45%	319	38%
Support with minor changes	124	14%	120	14%	93	11%
Needs major changes to get my support	86	10%	95	11%	76	9%
I do not support this concept	185	21%	246	29%	361	43%

## Alternative A



Close proximity to Blacksburg, lower cost, earlier completion.



It would need to be certain that there were bus lines connecting from this location to other sites in Blacksburg and Christiansburg. Since it is a little out of the way, this is vital for the site to work. Also, there needs to be a lot of parking there so that if you e.g. take the train to Washington, DC for a day or two that you could leave your car there.



## Alternative B



There's actually stuff near the station location. And you could bike there on the Huckleberry Trail.



Delay in completion is a negative. I'm also not sure how it would affect plans to extend to Bristol.



## Alternative C



The ability to have two stops vs one. This location is essential to opening up the area and NRV to locals, students, families, and for tourism!



It is unnecessary having both stops so close to each other.



# What We Also Heard



Seems like the old Cambria station would be ideal. Low economic area could be revitalized.



I don't understand this process at all. Why is the train not following the original n&w line through Cambria and on into Radford, Pulaski, Wytheville, Bristol and on to Knoxville? I don't see any advantage whatsoever to using the old Virginian line. Routing Amtrak onto The Virginian line now almost totally precludes any further Westward options and seems like a monumental waste of money on a dead end. Why?



I believe it would be better to have it located in a less populated area instead of over by the mall. Route 114 is already stressed with all the new housing that is being built with more to come. Plus, this choice costs considerably less than the mall site.

Frankly, I don't understand why the old station area in Cambria couldn't have been a choice. If Christiansburg had better public transportation in the way of buses, passengers could easily get to their destinations from Cambria.



My concern is that future expansion to Bristol won't be possible with Amtrak using the NS Whitethorne District line. The train should have been routed through Cambria!!!



No need to spend so much money on tunnel remediation and station location on the NRV Mall side! Also, makes more sense if service is continued west to Bristol. Although that depends on the requirement for reverse moves -- the service should have been on the NS mainline, as first envisioned by all.



With the budgeter's challenges, does it make sense to revisit the already in place station in Cambria?



# Summary

- High Demand for Passenger Service to Return to NRV
- Concerns about timeline
- Concerns about expense
- Concerns about location – strong preference for stop on NS Main line

# What's happening now?



**Reached out** to NS to understand if access to the Main Line (N-Line) could be an option. NS was receptive.



**Drafted Term Sheet** to explore the options

- Sale of Manassas Line to VPRA.
- Return V-Line to NS
- Gain access to NS Main Line in Christiansburg area
- Explore passenger station at Cambria.



**NS to develop design concepts, with VPRA oversight**, over next few months to determine whether site on NS Main Line is feasible.



# Where Do We Go Next?

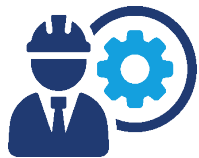


**File Potential Manassas Line Sale** with the Surface Transportation Board.



## **Work with NS**

- Work with NS on proposed designs for platform and track at Cambria site to determine feasibility, budget, and schedule
- Draft Final Comprehensive Rail Agreement.



**Recommend Path Forward to VPRA Board**

# QUESTIONS?

