

ON THE MOVE

HAMPTON ROADS TRANSIT'S QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER • SPRING 2025



Public Transit a Hit for Tides Baseball Games

Transit is a partnership. A solution. An experience.

Those qualities certainly apply to the growing collaboration between Hampton Roads Transit, the City of Norfolk and the Norfolk Tides baseball team.



What started with free rides on The Tide light rail on some popular Saturday night fireworks games in 2023 expanded in 2024 to include all home games, plus sold-out Savannah Bananas exhibitions.

This season, the convenience and connectivity of transit further expanded to alleviate parking and traffic congestion with casino construction next to Harbor Park stadium.

Free rides on the Tide continue this year – along with free sailings on the Elizabeth River Ferry on game days.

“From opening night to the last out of the season, fans recognize HRT’s transportation solutions for baseball games and other big events this spring and summer,” says William E. Harrell, President and CEO. “We thank the City of Norfolk and the Norfolk Tides for recognizing HRT’s important role in moving fans efficiently and safely all season long and making it possible again to ride for free this year.”

Early ridership numbers show people are considering transit to get to the ballpark, a trend the City of Norfolk and Norfolk Tides hope will continue throughout the season. ■

Weathering Winter Storm Kingston

On February 20, 2025, Hampton Roads Transit suspended all services for two days when a winter storm dropped a foot of snow on parts of Southeastern Virginia. The last time HRT had to suspend all services due to inclement weather was in January 2018, when a blizzard shut service down for five days.

HRT is the only public transit agency in the Commonwealth with a dedicated emergency manager. At the helm just four months, Lawrence Mason had a plan.

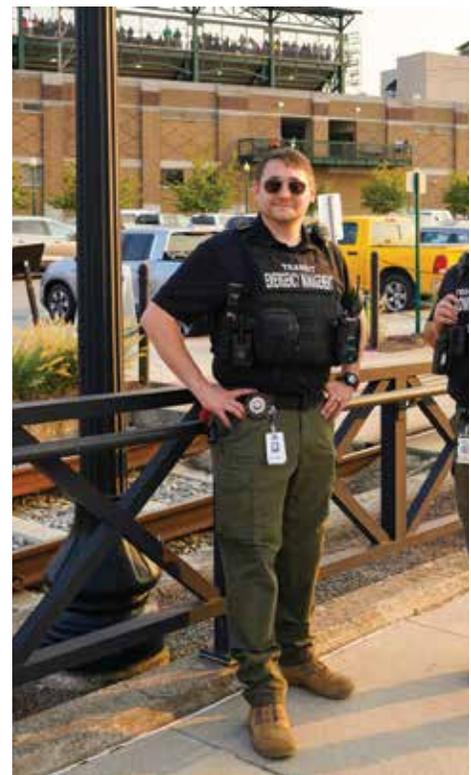
Before the storm’s arrival and throughout, Mason was engaged with his counterparts in Chesapeake, Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, Portsmouth, and Virginia Beach. He was also plugged into the Virginia Department of Emergency Management, the National Weather Service office in Wakefield, and the state Department of Rail and Public Transportation.

“While I’m not making all of the decisions,” said Mason, “my job is to arm [leadership] with as much information as I can to inform and guide those decisions.”

Mason facilitated daily briefings with members of the Senior Executive Team and other department leaders throughout the winter storm. Information sharing was critical, both within the agency and externally, with customers, community partners, and the cities we serve.

“Our decision to suspend service leads to a decision by the city on what roads they plow and how they plow them,” said Mason. “In some areas where the city or their contractors do sidewalk clearance, they prioritized areas where HRT operates so we could get buses running quicker,” said Mason.

HRT was operating its snow routes by day three and fully operational by day five - a significant improvement from the storm of 2018. Mason says some lessons were learned, but he’d still give us an “A,” especially for our ability to adapt. ■



Base Express Reaches Ridership Milestone

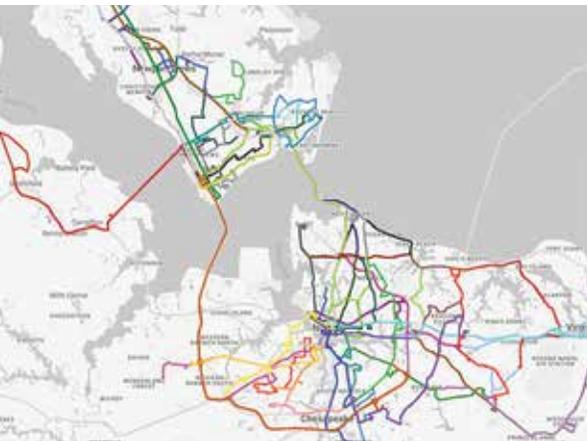
In January, the Base Express marked a major milestone - reaching 100,000 riders in just over two years. Hampton Roads Transit staff visited Naval Station Norfolk on Jan. 29 to celebrate this achievement. They handed out lanyards, pens, and other swag to customers on the Blue and Gold Routes.

The Base Express, launched in December 2022 with two routes, provides free public transit to service members, their families, government contractors, and veterans. When the service began, it was anticipated to reach 25,000 riders within the first three years. It currently has an average ridership of about 5,000 per month and has surpassed all expectations. Riders tell us they hope to see this popular service expand to other parts of the base. ■



HRT Launches Interactive System Map for Easier Navigation

Hampton Roads Transit (HRT) has launched an innovative tool to make navigating the bus system easier than ever – a new interactive System Map.



Developed by HRT's Technology team, the System Map will help customers navigate our sprawling transit system. It features every route and over 2,600 bus stops. Now available at gohrt.com, the system map is a significant upgrade from the current options available via other providers, such as Google Maps, which only show major stops.

The new digital system map is user-friendly and designed to help with trip planning and increase customer confidence while using our system. By selecting a route, either by clicking directly on it or through the dropdown menu beneath the map, users can highlight the route along with its associated stops. The route number and a comprehensive list of stops, ordered from inbound to outbound, will be displayed underneath the map. Selecting a specific stop provides real-time arrival information for all routes serving that stop.

The system map also features location awareness. By clicking the "get location" button beneath the map, the page will request the user's location and provide information about stop(s) within a half-mile radius and the corresponding routes. This feature enables

customers to identify accessible HRT services within walking distance from their location.

Accessing the System Map is easy from both a desktop and mobile device. Visit gohrt.com and find the link at the bottom of the homepage or visit gohrt.com/system-map. ■

HRT Participates in Transit Advocacy Day

On Monday, January 27, 2025, a delegation of Hampton Roads Commissioners, senior staff members, and regional stakeholders joined hundreds of transit and rail advocates in Richmond for Transit and Rail Advocacy Day. This annual event, hosted by the Virginia Transit Association, is a vital opportunity to engage with state legislators and advocate for policies that support robust, sustainable public transportation.

HRT's advocacy efforts are instrumental in securing the funding and resources necessary to maintain and expand transit services across Hampton Roads. As state legislative decisions continue to shape how transit systems are funded and operated, the leadership and engagement of HRT and its stakeholders play a critical role in influencing favorable policy outcomes that promote efficient and equitable mobility solutions for the region.

While in Richmond, Going Places host Amy Jordan sat down with members of the Hampton Roads Delegation and local advocates to talk all things public transit. Hear the full interview by scanning the QR code. ■



Ridership Growth Continues into 2025 for HRT's 757 Express

Hampton Roads Transit's 757 Express service continues to grow following an increase to 15-minute, peak-period service frequencies.

Route 112, which runs from Lee Hall to Newport News Shipbuilding via Jefferson Avenue in Newport News, notched an increase of 41.8 percent between November 2022 and January 2025.

Route 114, serving Mercury Boulevard and Downtown Hampton, was up 27 percent between June 2023 and January 2025.

Route 20, connecting downtown Norfolk with the Virginia Beach Oceanfront via Virginia Beach Boulevard, saw ridership increase 18.4 percent between December 2023 and January 2025.



Routes that share stops with 757 Express buses also are seeing ridership increases due to increases in transfer opportunities.

The 757 Express is envisioned as a regional transit system, including a mix of high-frequency, express, and limited-stop bus service connecting commuters to major employment destinations. The 757 Express will eventually consist of 13 bus routes connecting the highest densities of people and jobs in the region. Buses arrive every 15 minutes during the weekday peak hours of 6-9 a.m. and 3-6 p.m. ■

Hampton Roads Transit Drives Out Hunger

Hampton Roads Transit hosted its second annual Drive Out Hunger Food and Fund Drive to benefit Virginia Peninsula Foodbank and Foodbank of Southeastern Virginia and the Eastern Shore.

The event to support National Poverty Awareness Month in January was sponsored by HRT Cares, an employee group supporting fellow employees and community organizations.

"We are proud to host this food drive and support our local food banks," said William E. Harrell, President and CEO at Hampton Roads Transit. "HRT cares about the community it serves, and we believe in the power of coming together to make a meaningful difference."

Food banks typically receive fewer donations in winter; this annual initiative helps fill the gap.

"We extend our heartfelt thanks to HRT for recognizing the profound impact that every donation can have on the lives of those in need," said Christopher Tan, President and CEO at the Foodbank of Southern Eastern Virginia and the Eastern Shore.

Last year, HRT employees donated nearly 700 meals for families in need. This year, HRT asked the public to help by dropping off donations at one of three locations on Wednesday, Jan. 15. Together, we collected over 300 pounds of food.

"We are thankful for the annual HRT Drive Out Hunger food drive that will help provide the nourishment that families need to live healthier and more hopeful lives," said Bob Latvis, Jr., CEO of the Virginia Peninsula Foodbank.

HRT staff continued their support by helping fill 500 bags for SEVA's Child Nutrition Backpack Program. The bags are delivered weekly to local schools and discreetly given to students needing extra help. ■

