



Virginia Breeze

Connecting the Commonwealth with Virginia's intercity bus service

Zach Trogdon, Chief of Public Transportation



Background



Launched in 2017 after a needs assessment determined that bus operators had abandoned unproductive routes and were not meeting the intercity travel needs of the rural areas of the Commonwealth



Valley Flyer was the original route and connected Blacksburg to Union Station in D.C. Service funded solely through FTA Intercity Bus Program and ticket sales








Two new routes added in August 2020 – Piedmont Express (Danville to D.C. via Route 29) and Capital Connector (Martinsville to D.C. via 360/95)



Operated by Dillon's Bus Service, which provides vehicles, drivers, and maintenance.

Background (cont.) – FTA Definition of Intercity Bus Service

-  Stops in underserved rural communities that have lower levels of access to intercity transportation
-  Provides meaningful connections with stops and schedules that allow public transit users or other passengers to transfer to the national intercity bus network
-  Provides space for passengers' baggage
-  Fixed-route, fixed-schedule
-  Travels long-distance - generally meaning between two urban areas not in close proximity





EXTENDING VIRGINIA BREEZE SERVICE TO BRISTOL

- The I-81 Advisory Committee was created in 2019 and provided an opportunity to fund a multimodal project in the I-81 Corridor Improvement Plan (CIP). DRPT completed a study in 2020 that recommended using the funding to extend Virginia Breeze service to southwest Virginia with a terminus in Bristol.
- The Commonwealth Transportation Board approved I-81 funding that included \$243,000 per year for five years (through November 2026) from operational improvement funds to support a portion of operating expenses for a service extension to Bristol. \$100,000 in one-time capital funds were also included in the initial CIP for stop improvements on the route such as shelters and benches. The new service, named the Highlands Rhythm, began operation in November 2021. Stop improvements are underway.

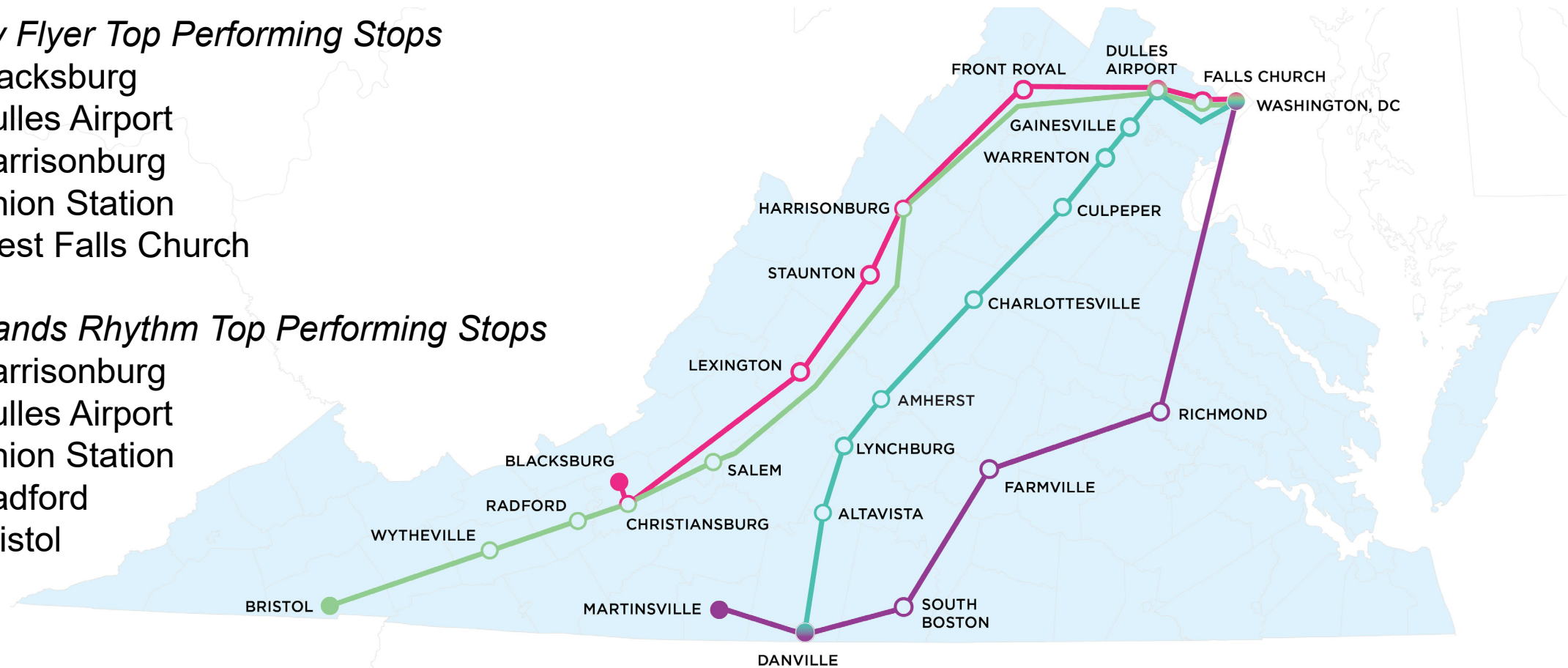
Virginia Breeze Routes

Valley Flyer Top Performing Stops

- 1) Blacksburg
- 2) Dulles Airport
- 3) Harrisonburg
- 4) Union Station
- 5) West Falls Church

Highlands Rhythm Top Performing Stops

- 1) Harrisonburg
- 2) Dulles Airport
- 3) Union Station
- 4) Radford
- 5) Bristol



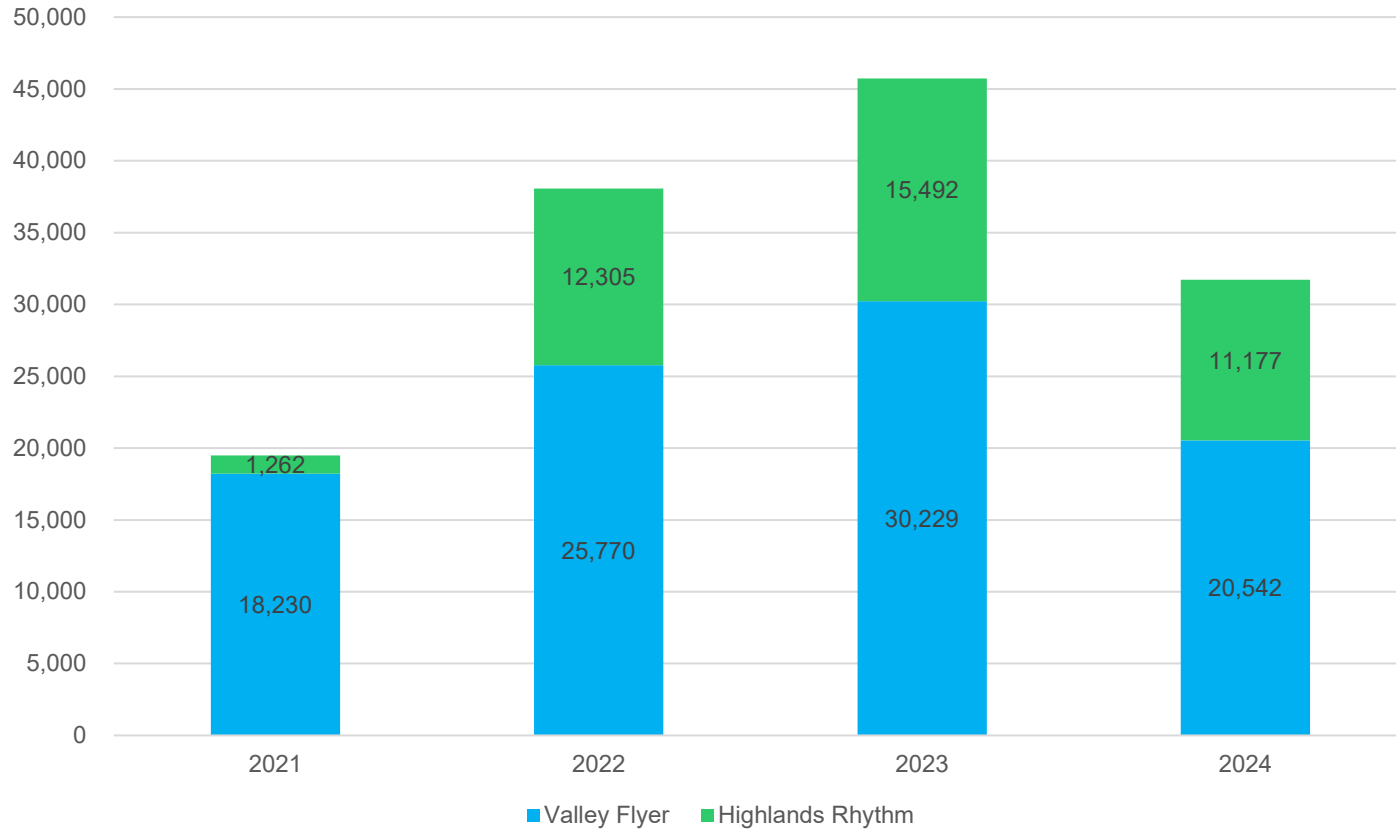
— VALLEY FLYER — PIEDMONT EXPRESS* — CAPITAL CONNECTOR* — HIGHLANDS RHYTHM

*Piedmont Express and Capital Connector routes shown for illustration. These routes do not serve the I-81 Corridor or receive I-81 funding.

Highlands Rhythm Funding Sources

Funding Sources		
<i>Source</i>	<i>FY 2024 Actual</i>	<i>FY 2025 Budget</i>
I-81 Program Multimodal Funding	\$243,000 (17%)	\$243,000 (17%)
FTA 5311(f) Intercity Bus Program	\$631,244 (46%)	\$677,940 (47%)
Ticket Sales	\$509,971 (37%)	\$512,832 (36%)
Total Funding Sources	\$1,384,215	\$1,433,772

Virginia Breeze Ridership - I-81 Corridor



Ridership

- **2021: 19,492**
 - Valley Flyer: 18,230
 - Highlands Rhythm: 1,262
- **2022: 38,075**
 - Valley Flyer: 25,770
 - Highlands Rhythm: 12,305
- **2023: 45,721**
 - Valley Flyer: 30,229
 - Highlands Rhythm: 15,492
- **2024: 31,719 (Jan-Sept)***
 - Valley Flyer: 20,542
 - Highlands Rhythm: 11,177

- Highlands Rhythm began operation in November 2021
- Valley Flyer does not receive funding from the I-81 program
- Ridership displayed by calendar year (January-December)
- *Ridership Year-to-Date for 2024

Highlands Rhythm - Schedule

- Launched November 2021
- Operates 365 days per year with bidirectional travel along I-81/I-66
- Fares range from \$21 to \$60 depending on origin/destination and average fare is \$31.

NORTHBOUND SCHEDULE

Bristol to Washington, D.C.

CITY / STOP Change Direction	DEPARTURE (DAILY)
BRISTOL Exit 5 Park and Ride Lot	11:00 AM
WYTHEVILLE Rural King Parking Lot	12:10 PM
RADFORD Radford University Parking Lot JJ	12:55 PM
CHRISTIANSBURG Falling Branch Park & Ride	1:10 PM
SALEM Exit 130 VDOT Park and Ride Lot	1:45 PM
HARRISONBURG JMU, Godwin Transit Center	3:40 PM
DULLES INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT Curb 2A	5:45 PM
WEST FALLS CHURCH West Falls Church Metrorail Station	6:20 PM
WASHINGTON, D.C. Union Station Bus Deck	6:55 PM

SOUTHBOUND SCHEDULE

Washington, D.C. to Bristol

CITY / STOP Change Direction	DEPARTURE (DAILY)
WASHINGTON, D.C. Union Station Bus Deck	12:50 PM
WEST FALLS CHURCH West Falls Church Metrorail Station	1:20 PM
DULLES INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT Curb 2A	1:55 PM
HARRISONBURG JMU, Godwin Transit Center	4:00 PM
SALEM Exit 130 VDOT Park and Ride Lot	5:50 PM
CHRISTIANSBURG Falling Branch Park & Ride	6:15 PM
RADFORD Radford University Parking Lot JJ	6:35 PM
WYTHEVILLE Rural King Parking Lot	7:20 PM
BRISTOL Exit 5 Park and Ride Lot	8:30 PM



I-81 Intercity Bus Enhancements



Wytheville Bus Stop Relocation

Efforts currently underway to utilize I-81 capital funds to relocate existing bus stop to have greater connectivity and amenities to include lighting, ADA accessibility, and a bus shelter. Estimated cost for shelter is \$60,000 and anticipated construction to begin summer of 2025.



Tidewater Current Route Development

New route being developed linking I-64 and I-81 Corridors with proposed stops including Virginia Beach, Norfolk, Newport News, Williamsburg, New Kent, Richmond International Airport, Richmond Main Street Station, Charlottesville, Staunton, and Harrisonburg. Anticipated launch date is October 2025.



Questions?

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