



## **Focus on the Interstate 81 Corridor**

November 7, 2007

**Matthew Tucker, Director, DRPT**

**David Ekern, P.E., Commissioner, VDOT**

## Interstate 81 Corridor: Conduit for Global Commerce

- Freight and passenger growth at Dulles International Airport
- Port of Virginia, where trade with China is increasing at an enormous rate
- Trade with Mexico, Gulf Coast ports, West Coast ports and Canada on highways and rail

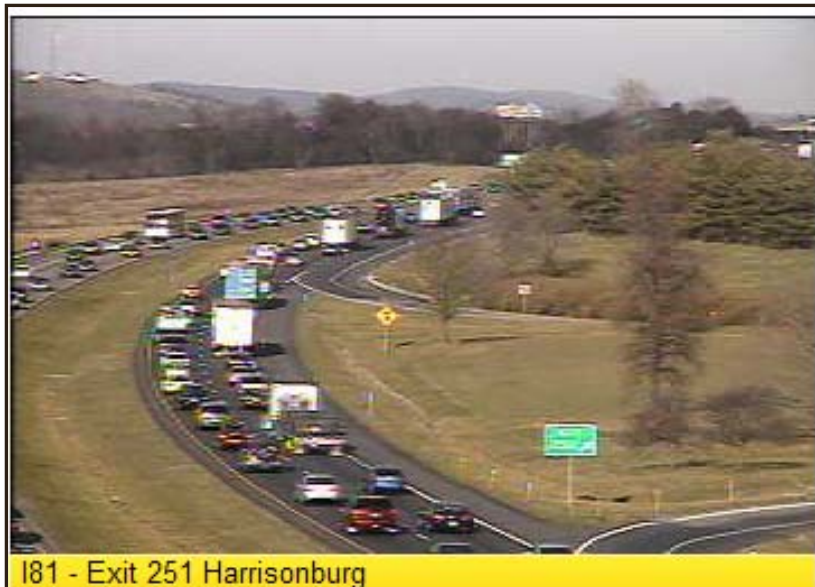


## I-81 in Virginia

- Stretches 325 miles from Tennessee to West Virginia
  - Connects 21 cities and towns and 13 counties
  - Largely undeveloped and rural (only 25% of population is in an MPO)
  - Dominant land uses are agricultural, pastures and forest
- Serves about 20% of Virginia's population
  - Since 1970, growth rate was 38% (overall Virginia growth = 60%)
- Two MPOs in 2000; now there are five
- From 1990-2000, labor force growth equal to Virginia's; since 2000, rate has slowed
  - Largest employment sectors are services, manufacturing, retail trade
  - 24,000 business establishments
  - ¼ of Virginia's manufacturing workers
  - Value added by manufacturing: \$9.6 billion (more than the \$8.0 billion in the DC metro area and \$7.9 billion in the Norfolk metro area)

## Congestion Issues

- I-81 is Main Street; commuting has increased five-fold since the interstate opened
- Due to topography, there are few alternate north-south routes
- Trucks on rolling and mountainous terrain take the space of 4-6 cars
- Congestion: peak times, special events, incidents
- If an incident blocks one lane, then I-81 loses more than half of its capacity in that direction



**VIRGINIA**  
THE ROANOKE TIMES THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2007

### Tanker crash snarls I-81 traffic for hours

Twelve hours after the accident, traffic was still backed up at least six miles in each direction.

By Reed Williams  
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A tanker that wrecked on Interstate 81 at Natural Bridge leaked about 200 gallons of hazardous materials and created a traffic nightmare for many motorists.

The southbound tanker ran into the median about 5:30 a.m. Wednesday in Rockbridge County just south of Exit 175 near the Botetourt County line.

Twelve hours later, traffic remained backed up at least six miles in each direction after officials closed all four lanes while attempts were made to remove a potentially flammable resin from the tanker.

"This is a mess," said Chuck Lounberger, spokesman for the Virginia Department of Transportation. "There's no doubt about it."




Marc Lafountain, spokesman for the Virginia Department of Emergency Management, said that a regional hazardous materials team was at the accident scene. The cleanup was expected to continue today.

Lafountain also said that because the resin's fumes were flammable, firefighters were on the scene just in case.

Lafountain said the ravine where the resin leaked is relatively far from lakes, streams, homes and businesses. No one was evacuated.

State police Sgt. Bob Carpenter said it was unclear what caused the truck to veer into the median. The injured driver, William Hardin Hopkins Jr., 46, of Cascade, was flown to Carilion Roanoke Memorial Hospital, where he was in fair condition Wednesday evening.

Both southbound lanes were closed after the crash. One of the lanes was opened a little later.

Given the traffic delays, VDOT officials urged southbound motorists on I-81 to consider taking Interstate 64 west to Clifton Forge and head south on U.S. 220 back to I-81 in Botetourt County.

At least two other accidents were also reported on I-81, one in Augusta County and the other in Rockbridge County.

All four lanes were closed about 5:30 p.m. so a crane could lift the tanker to gain access to valves expected to enable the resin's removal. About 6:30 p.m., the northbound lanes reopened, about 10:30 p.m., the southbound lanes reopened.

A boiler truck from West Virginia was being called in to heat the resin and make its extraction easier.

Traffic backed up at least six miles Wednesday on southbound Interstate 81 near the Rockbridge Botetourt county line. Traffic was detoured onto U.S. 11 after a tanker truck carrying a flammable material crashed in the median near Exit 175. All four lanes of the interstate were closed.

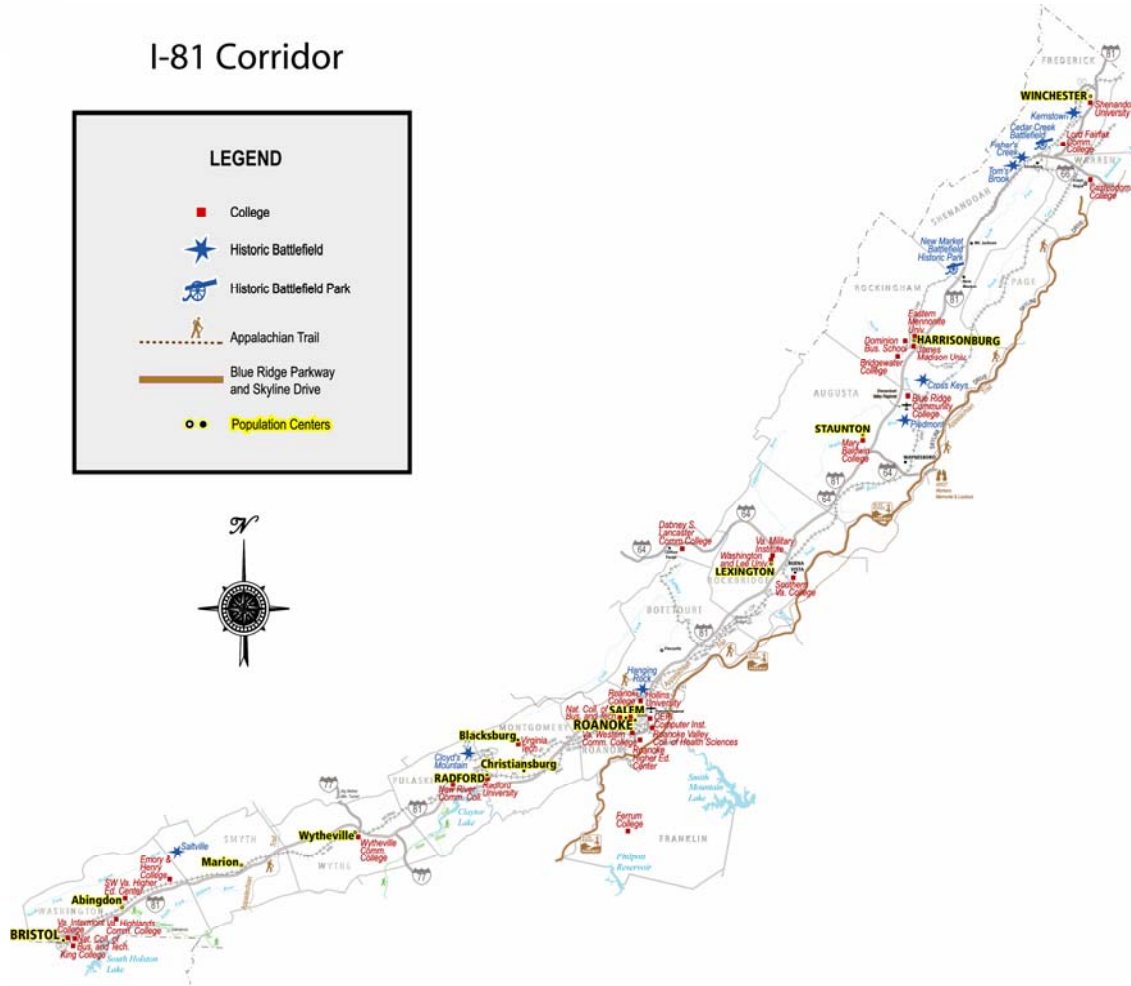
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# Corridor Assets: People

## I-81 Corridor

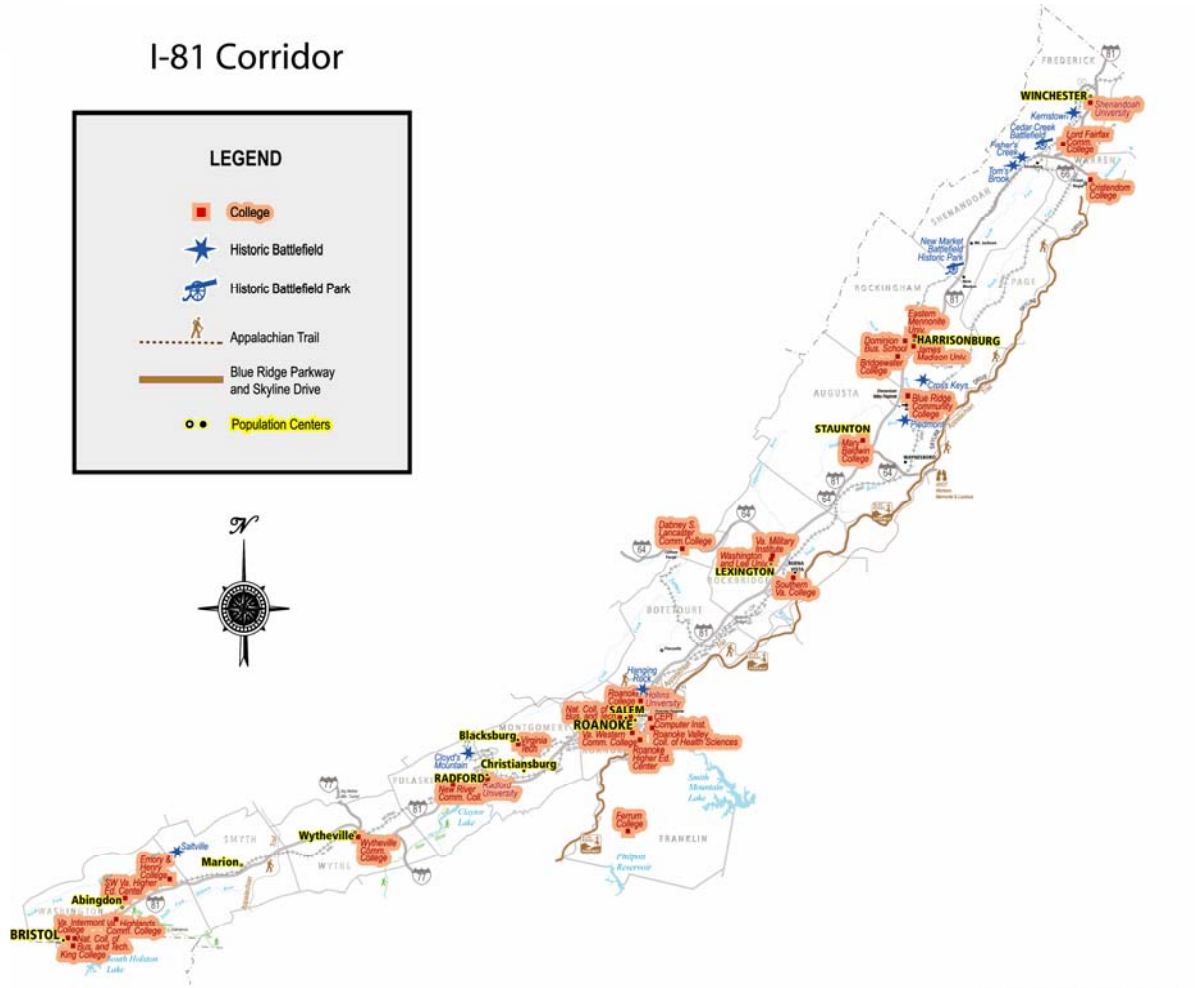
**LEGEND**

- College
- ★ Historic Battlefield
- 🗡️ Historic Battlefield Park
- 👤 Appalachian Trail
- 🛣️ Blue Ridge Parkway and Skyline Drive
- Population Centers



# Corridor Assets: Colleges and Universities

I-81 Corridor

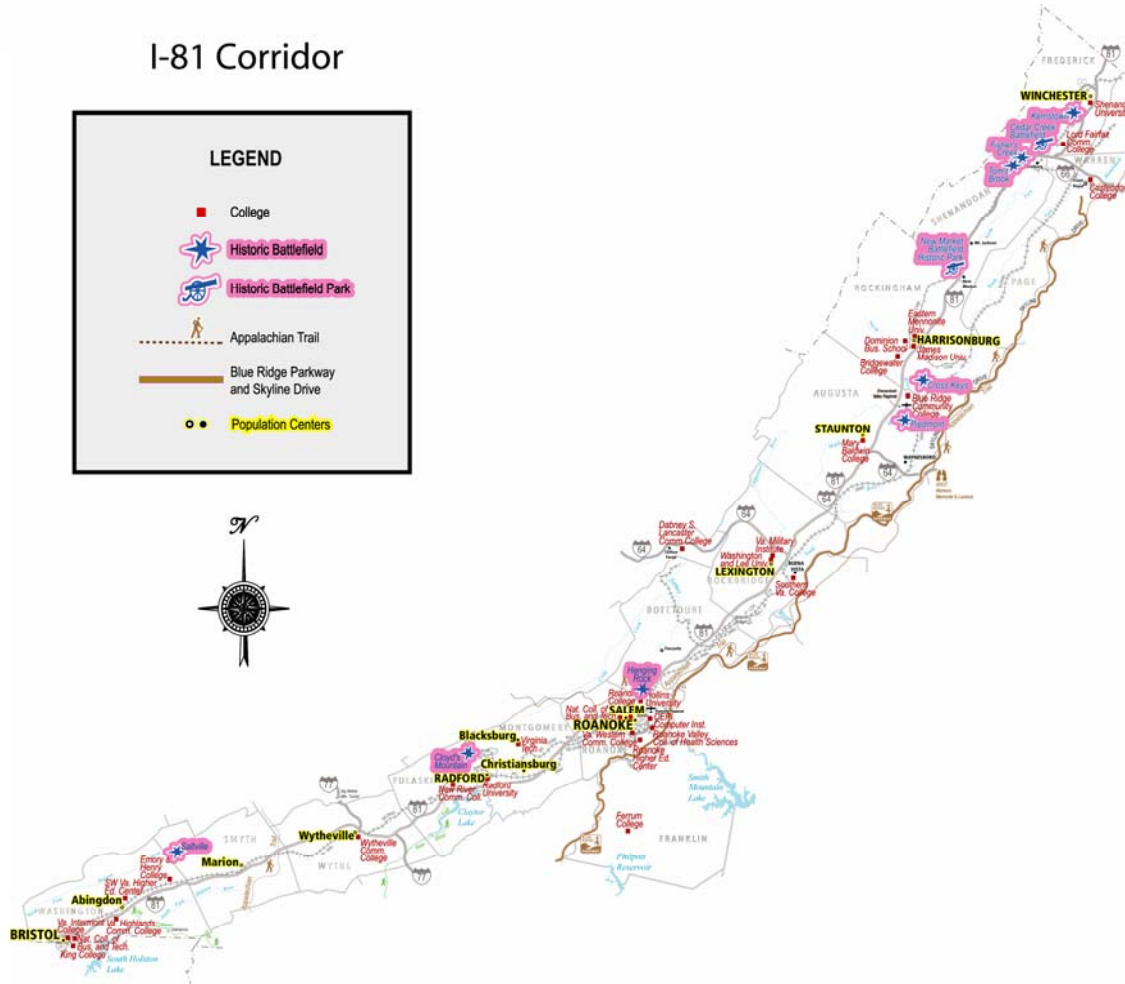


# Tourism Assets: Historic Battlefields and Sites

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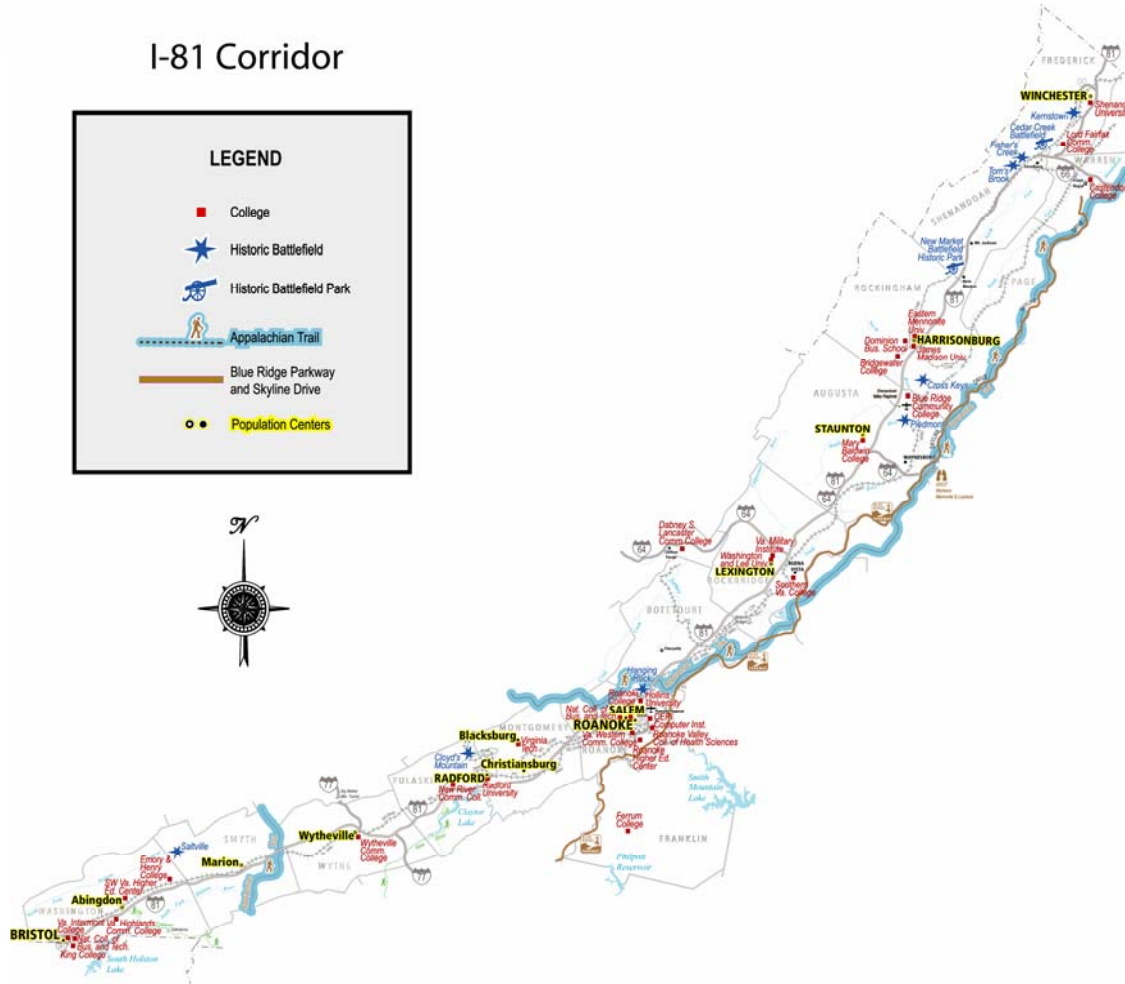


# Tourism Assets: Trails and Topography

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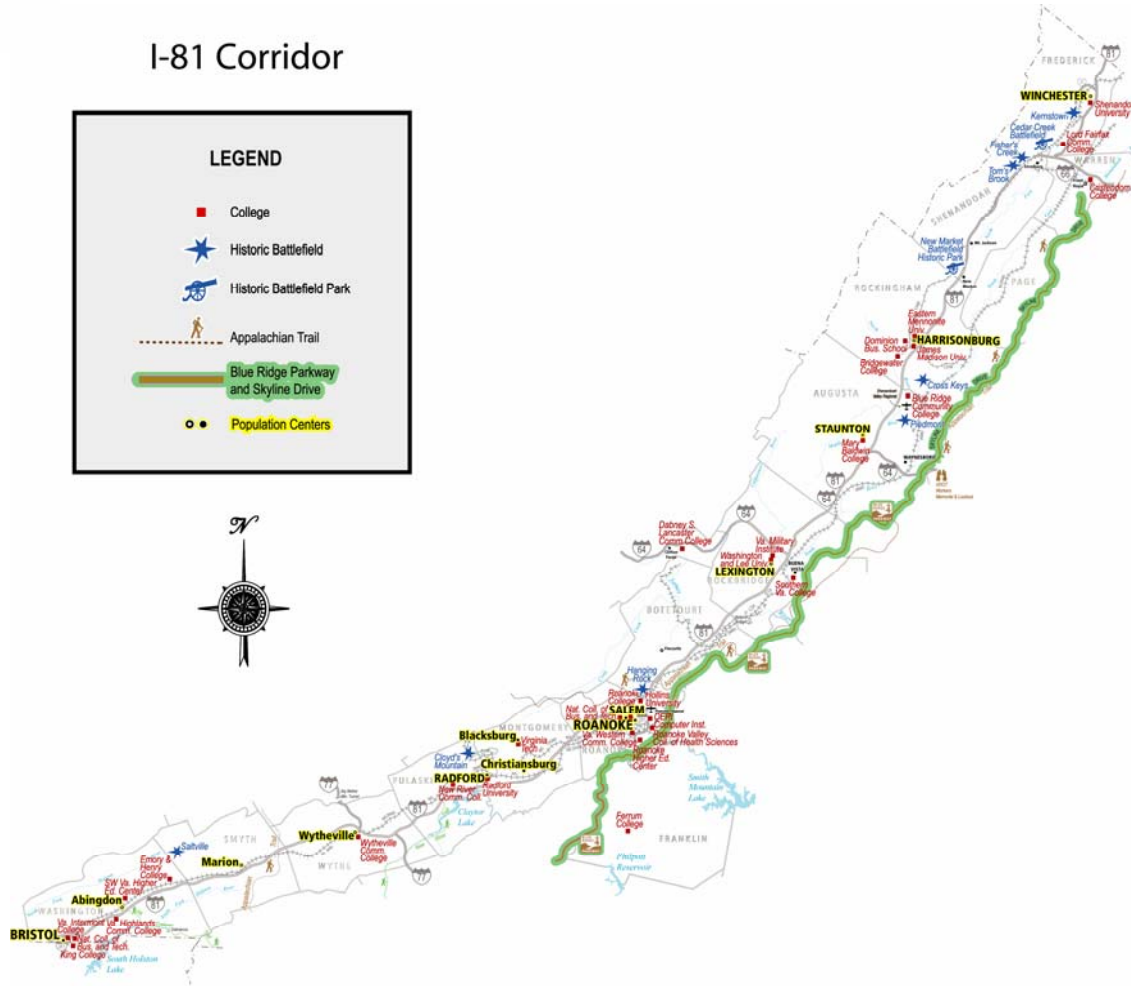


# Tourism Assets: Parkway and Parks

## I-81 Corridor

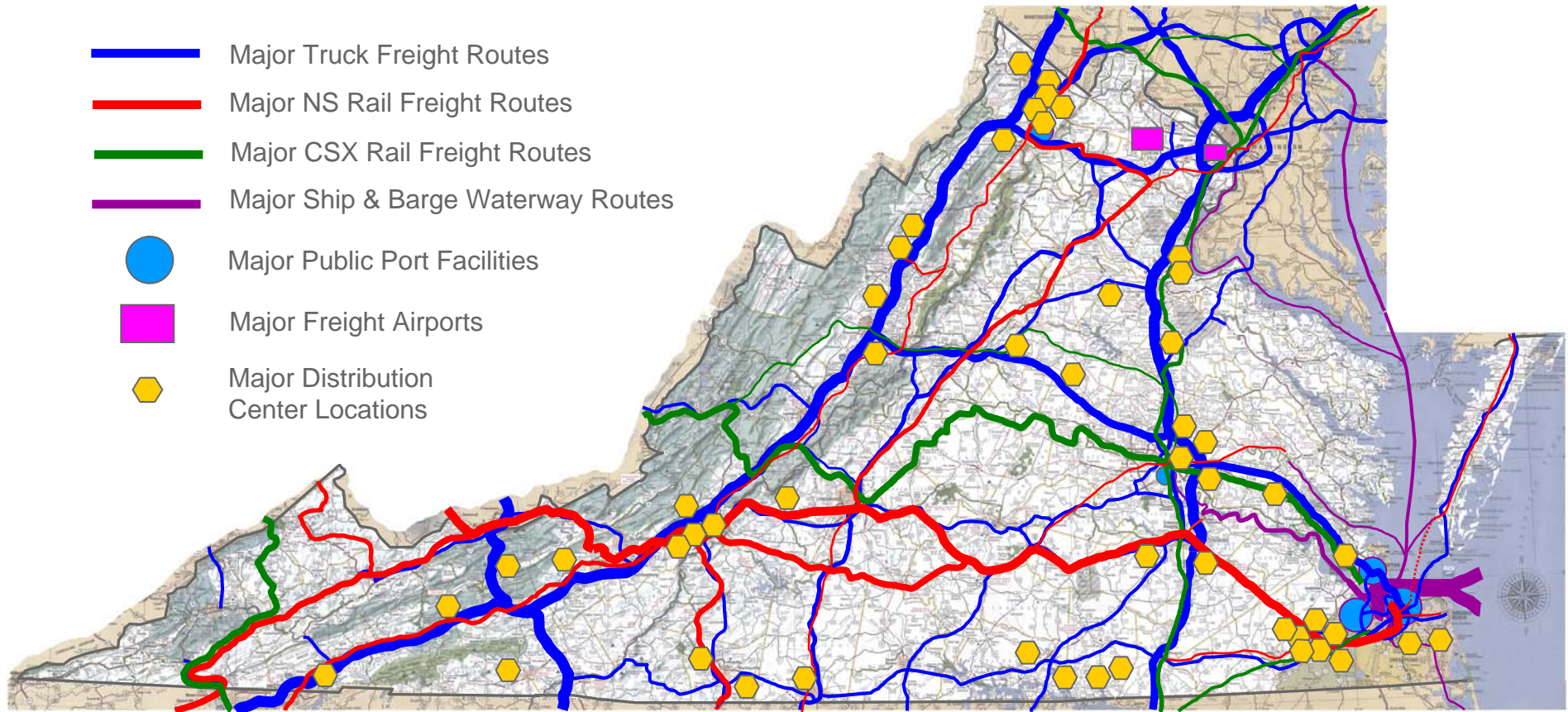
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# Major Freight Corridors in Virginia



Note: Thickness of lines denotes relative cargo volume for each mode.

# Virginia Freight Challenges and Opportunities

## Port capacity and connectivity

Port expansion, local truck and rail access improvements, multistate initiatives (Heartland Corridor)

## Highway congestion

Related to auto traffic, Virginia trucks, pass through trucks

Urban area projects, statewide corridor improvements, multistate corridors

## Rail capacity and connectivity

Continue to serve needs of port and domestic traffic

Offer potential alternative to highway (I-81 Crescent Corridor, I-95 MAROps)



## I-81 Corridor Coordination

### **Multistate coordination is critical.**

In 2004, Virginia initiated and hosted first meeting of road and rail officials from I-81 states to share information.

- Four corridor-wide meetings have been held since, including Canada and NS.
- Virginia is a member of I-95 Corridor Coalition, representing all states from Maine to Florida, which performed an early evaluation of I-81 corridor.
- Virginia funded study with Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, West Virginia – *the Latin American Trade and Transportation Study* – to address trade with Mexico and Canada.
- Virginia also is participating with Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee and West Virginia in the Institute for Trade and Transportation Studies to continue to address that trade.

### **Federal government must be a partner.**

### **Partnership and collaboration is essential.**

An example is Norfolk-Southern and Virginia.