INTRODUCTION
Virginia faces major transportation challenges. Transportation is central to our economy and quality of life—yet many roads and bridges need repair, congestion costs are high in many areas, transportation is the leading source of carbon pollution in the Commonwealth, many low income citizens lack adequate access to jobs and services, and there are too few alternatives to driving despite increasing demand from businesses for more transportation choices. Despite some significant recent progress, Virginia continues to focus heavily on highway construction and expansion—an approach that is costly to taxpayers, communities, and the environment while doing little to relieve congestion in the long run. We need a cleaner, balanced, more equitable transportation system.

BACKGROUND
A number of significant transportation reforms have been adopted in recent years, including development of the SMART SCALE prioritization process that provides a more objective and transparent basis for selecting projects for funding (see Defending SMART SCALE, p. 38). In addition, funding for alternatives to driving has increased—such as the first-ever dedicated state capital funding for Metro (matched by Washington, D.C., and Maryland), additional passenger and commuter rail service, and funding for Richmond’s first bus rapid transit line which opened in June 2018. However, the Commonwealth still spends only a small percentage of its total transportation budget to rail, transit, and bicycle and pedestrian facilities. In addition, steps should be taken to accelerate the transition to electric vehicles in the private sector, for public transportation, and for government vehicles (see Curbing Vehicle Pollution, p. 36). More funding should also be directed to address the multi-billion dollar backlog of maintenance needs on our roads and bridges, and increase maintenance payments to cities, to protect taxpayer investments in existing infrastructure and to make our infrastructure more resilient to the effects of climate change.

CONCLUSION
We need to adopt policies and make investments to develop a cleaner, balanced, and more equitable multimodal transportation system that does more to protect our communities and our natural, historic, and scenic resources while focusing on accessibility to daily needs that are central to our economy and quality of life.

Policy Recommendations

**Fund alternatives to driving.**
- Increase funding for transit, rail, bicycle, and pedestrian projects, and ensure that a substantial percentage of any new state or regional transportation funding be devoted to such projects;
- Protect dedicated funding for passenger rail and secure additional federal, state, and local resources. In addition, the state should study the establishment of a Virginia Rail Authority to help ensure continuity of policies and investments and provide a mechanism for ownership of assets funded by taxpayers; and,
- Support freight rail as a preferred means of adding capacity in congested corridors with high truck density, such as I-81 and I-95, and ensure that opportunities to move cargo by rail are seriously considered during the review and study process for any highway expansion. Further, Virginia’s Rail Enhancement Fund should be reviewed—and amended if needed—to advance more projects that will shift freight from roads to rail.

**Fix-it-first.** Allocate a greater share of highway funding to road and bridge maintenance and increase funding for transit operations and maintenance.

**Improve performance standards and funding priorities.**
- Require state plans to meet standards to reduce per capita vehicle miles traveled and increased mode share for transit, rail, walking, bicycling, and telecommuting;
- Oppose giving even greater weight to congestion mitigation and economic development as priorities for state or regional funding, as well as any effort to weaken or eliminate environmental quality and land use in project scoring; and,
- Oppose exempting any project from SMART SCALE.

**Support transportation process reform,**
including steps to reduce the damage projects cause to natural, cultural, and historic resources, enhance public involvement in planning, and improve the Public Private Transportation Act.

**Better link transportation, land use,** and climate planning, including: target transportation spending to avoid sprawl inducing projects; provide greater authority to localities to promote mixed use, transit-oriented, walkable communities; increase efforts to ensure transportation systems and communities are resilient to climate change and to protect natural features contributing to resiliency to sea level rise and flooding.