

Virginia Light Rail Symposium a huge success

A convincing and compelling case was made for developing streetcar and light rail systems around the Commonwealth at the Virginia Light Rail Symposium, held at the Science Museum of Virginia on November 17, 2006.

Nearly 150 attendees filled the meeting room to capacity, including 20 urban planning students from Virginia universities, sponsored by VARP member Jerry Deily. Planning and economic development commissions were also well represented.

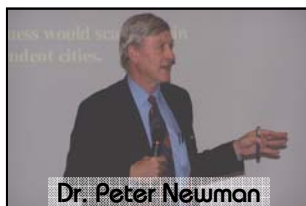
The one-day event was co-promoted by VARP, the Sierra Club-Virginia Chapter and Virginians for High Speed Rail/Richmond Friends of Rail. Michael Testerman, who is a member of all three organizations, served as the chairman of the committee that planned the event.



Gary Landrio

Breakfast keynote speaker, Gary Landrio and luncheon keynote speaker Dr. Peter Newman, each reprised versions of presentations that they recently gave at the Rail~Volution Conference in Chicago.

Mr. Landrio, a rail consultant, spoke on the topic, "Oil or Not—Why Virginia Needs to Emphasize High Capacity Transit." He has developed data, similar to that popularized by Al Gore's documentary film that shows unequivocally that world oil production is beginning a permanent decline. The efficiencies of rail transit will be needed to sustain our economies, without feeding inflation. Dr. Newman, a visiting Fulbright scholar from Murdoch University in Perth, Australia, has documented the transportation energy consumption of the world's major cities. Atlanta citizens consume the most energy for transportation of any region in the world. They also expend the highest proportion of household income just to get around—nearly



Dr. Peter Newman

32%. Professor Newman pointed to data revealing that cities with the best transit oriented development also have the highest quality of life, due to more disposable income. The theme of Peter Newman's presentation, "The Global

Rail Revival" was illustrated with examples from big old cities, such as New York, London and Chicago; across the spectrum, to new world car-dependent cities that are revisiting rail transit, including 100 US cities.

The symposium received excellent newspaper, radio and TV coverage. The Richmond Times Dispatch reported, "I was skeptical that a streetcar line of proper length and location could attract investors and

population to the inner city," said development consultant Bern Ewert of Charlottesville. "I'm now convinced. That's important," said Ewert, "because inner cities in Virginia are losing population."

There was much enthusiasm to build on the success of the symposium and broadly disseminate its information to Virginia's leaders. Plans are being made to have all of the symposium PowerPoint presentations accessible on the web page: http://www.varprail.org/lt_rail_symp_nov06.html A speakers bureau may be established.

Attendees were encouraged to obtain the newly-published book *STREET SMART: Streetcars and Cities in the Twenty-First Century*. Copies may be ordered by going to: <http://www.reconnectingamerica.org/html/TOD/StreetcarBook.htm>

Plans are already being discussed for holding another Virginia Light Rail Symposium in 2009, when Norfolk's light rail system begins operations.



Charlottesville



Roanoke



Richmond



Arlington



Norfolk



Dr. Newman addressing 140 attendees

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The DVD relates all aspects of the railroad's recovery and the dedicated work of NS employees who made it possible.

Copies of this DVD are available from VARP with your donation of \$25 or more.

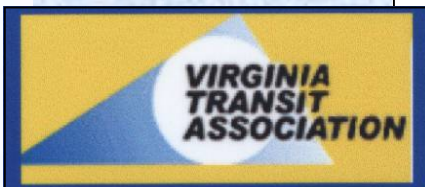
Your previous donations enabled VARP to contribute over \$600 to the recent Light Rail Symposium. Help VARP continue to promote rail in the Virginias!



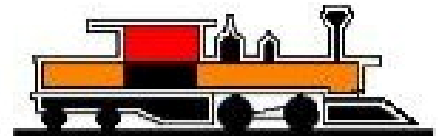
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