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Libraries' free books, computers pull in patrons during recession

[By Dan Parsons](#)

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WILLIAMSBURG

Ernest Hemingway was fond of saying that all good books have one thing in common — "they are truer than if they had really happened."

Libraries in the area have something in common lately — the truth of a crippling economic slump is causing more patrons to access the free information they offer.

"Some years ago, people were saying that libraries were a thing of the past ... that they were going out of business," said Kevin Smith, director of the York County Public Library. "We're not going anywhere. If anything, we're the most popular game in town."

In Williamsburg, the parking lots of the two branches of the regional library have been full daily for the past six months, according to director John Moorman. The library has experienced record circulation and general usage since the fiscal year began July 1, 2008.

Since then, it has loaned out 848,077 items — or 3.5 percent more than the same period a year ago, according to Moorman.

More striking is the spike in computer use and information database access, Moorman said. Since July, 146,601 people have accessed computers at Williamsburg Regional libraries — a 10.5 percent increase over the same period a year prior.

On Thursday, the Williamsburg branch's computer bank was nearly full of folks typing and surfing, some for jobs, some for fun, all for free.

Most of those people accessing the library's computers are coming to type up resumes, search the Internet for jobs and file job applications, said Moorman.

"A lot of this is economy driven," he said. "For a lot of these folks that don't have computers at home, we're the only way they can apply for unemployment benefits and apply for jobs. We're seeing a lot of people that don't have computer skills that need help with resumes and filling out applications."

York County is seeing the same trend, Smith said. Since July, 252,304 people have walked through the doors of the library's two branches — a 12 percent rise over the same time a year before.

More than 56,000 people have logged onto the libraries' computer system, a 15 percent jump. Space

rental at both the Williamsburg and York libraries is up as well as attendance, probably because most of the programs they offer are free to the public, Smith said.

"We've also seen a big jump in attendance at our basic computer skills classes," Smith said. "They've become very popular."

The Newport News Public Library System has seen a similar spike in usage, according to spokeswoman Karen Gill. The system is expecting at least a 100,000 item increase in circulation this fiscal year over last year.

In the first six months of fiscal year 2009, the library system loaned out nearly 506,000 items – compared with 715,000 items in all of fiscal 2008, she said. In fiscal 2008, the system's computers were accessed 176,000 times. In the first six months of the current fiscal year, the computers have already been accessed 142,000 times.

The book boom is being felt in the private sector as well. Carrie LaRose, manager of the Book Exchange on Jamestown Road in Williamsburg, has seen a jump in business recently. Customers are especially flocking to take advantage of the store's credit program. Readers can bring in books and, based on their condition and store needs, can be rewarded with up to one-fourth of each book's retail value toward store purchases.

"People who used to look down their noses at us as a used-book store are bringing in used books for store credit," LaRose said, checking out a customer who brought in \$18 worth of used books. "We like it. We're seeing and meeting a lot of new people. If you go to (a retail book store) and open the flyleaf of a hardback book, it's technically used. The books here are in just as good shape and people realize that when they come in."

Outside the store, LaRose had set up a sign summing up the rhetoric being thrown around about the economy and encouraging people to shop in the store.

"Save Money While Supporting our Local Economy," it said. For LaRose, the uptick in walk-ins means a boost to her bottom line.

But for the public libraries, funding will be either stagnant or decreased when budgets are passed this summer. Williamsburg has requested from both the city and James City County a funding level with what it received for the current fiscal year — about \$6 million. Smith, director of the York County Public Library, expects the York library to receive about 5 percent less funding than its \$2.5 million budget for the current fiscal year.

While he is encouraged by increased enthusiasm for library services, Moorman said the spike in usage is nothing new. In his 35 years in library administration, he said he's seen the same trend through a number of recessions.

"When the economy is very good and people are working, there is little time for things like library use," Moorman said. "When things get bad, we see more people through our doors."

"I've seen it many times."

Checking out the Peninsula's library numbers

(use now, compared

with last year)

Williamsburg

Regional Library branches

- Items loaned since July 1: 848,077 — up 3.5 percent
- Computer sessions: 146,601, up 10.5 percent

York County libraries

- Visitors: 252,304 — up 12 percent
- Computer sessions: More than 56,000 — up 15 percent

Newport News

Public Library System

- Items loaned in first six months of fiscal year: almost 506,000 items — compared with 715,000 items in all of last fiscal year
- Computer sessions: 142,000 since July 1 – compared with a total 176,000 last fiscal year

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**COMPILATION OF LOCALITY COMPREHENSIVE
PLANS and OTHER SOURCES**

A working document for use in the development of a vision statement and goals for the 2034 Long-range Transportation Plan.



March 27, 2009

REVIEW OF COMP PLANS & OTHER SOURCES FOR 2034 VISION and GOALS

Sources:

Locality comprehensive plans

CH – Chesapeake
GL – Gloucester County
IW – Isle of Wight County
JC – James City County
NO – Norfolk
NN – Newport News
PQ – Poquoson
PS – Portsmouth
SU – Suffolk
VB – Virginia Beach
WB – Williamsburg
YC – York County

Draft Transit Vision Plan (TVP)

MPO Retreat of February 11, 2009 (MPO)

Virginia Port Authority Strategic Plan (VPA)

SAFETEA (FED)

SAFETEA Planning Factors

Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency. (FED)

Increase the safety of the transportation system for all motorized and non-motorized users. (FED)

Increase the ability of the transportation system to support homeland security and to safeguard the personal security of all motorized and non-motorized users. (FED)

Increase accessibility and mobility of people and freight. (FED)

Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve the quality of life, and promote consistency between transportation improvements and State and local planned growth and economic development patterns. (FED)

Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight. (FED)

Promote efficient system management and operation. (FED)

Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system. (FED)

FROM MPO RETREAT

Regional priorities over local priorities (MPO)

Public trust (MPO)

Collaboration (MPO)

Actual outcomes (MPO)

Leadership (MPO)

Funding (MPO)

Credibility with citizens and general assembly (MPO)

APPROPRIATE FOR VISION STATEMENTS

Neighborhoods will be linked to each other, to businesses, to the natural environment, and to recreational and cultural centers, through efficient and sustainable multi-modal transportation systems and open space corridors. (CH)

Public facilities will be strategically located for efficiency and all infrastructure systems will be developed to sustain planned levels of growth. (CH)

Achieve a safe, efficient, economical, and multi-modal transportation system, including non-motor vehicle modes and public transportation, while recognizing that pressures for increased motor vehicle travel will continue. (CH)

Balance the priorities of motor vehicles with those of bicycles and pedestrians in the design of roadways and land-use patterns so that most residents have the choice to walk and bicycle conveniently to shopping, schools, and recreation. (CH)

Provide adequate transportation facilities and services that meet the City's adopted service standards. (CH)

Coordinate the city's transportation system with the regional transportation network to promote commerce and emergency evacuation routes. (CH)

To encourage the development of innovative and effective means of improving ground, water, and air transportation systems. (GL)

To encourage the provision of adequate mobility for all segments of the community. (GL)

Our mission is to serve Isle of Wight County with the provision and enhancement of quality of life services for all citizens. (IW)

To provide for the safe and efficient movement of people and goods throughout the County. (IW)

Improve existing transportation facilities efficiently to meet increased demand. (IW)

Develop and maintain an efficient, safe, and attractive transportation system that increases mobility in the County, reinforces the goals of the Comprehensive Plan, and contributes to a pedestrian and bicycle friendly community. (JC)

Develop a transportation system that facilitates a variety of transportation modes in order to reduce congestion, pollution, and energy consumption. (JC)

And a safe, efficient transportation network will meet the everyday needs of our residents while at the same time fully integrating James City County into Hampton Roads. (JC)

Newport News has a balanced transportation system. (NN)

Plan and develop a balanced transportation system to reduce congestion and support the City's future growth and development. (NN)

Emphasize safety, convenience, and environmental factors in the planning and design of transportation facilities. (NO)

Establish and support superior intercity transportation connections between Norfolk and the nation and the world. (NO)

Building a sustainable community. (PQ)

Develop a transportation system capable of moving people and goods safely and comfortably in and out of the city. (PQ)

Plan and develop a balanced transportation system to support the goals and objectives set forth in the comprehensive plan. (PQ)

Provide a road network that will facilitate the safe and efficient movement of traffic among commercial, educational, residential, and recreational facilities. (PQ)

A multi-modal transportation network with enhanced features that support the city of Portsmouth's quality of life and economic vitality. (PS)

Provide opportunities for residents to adopt a lifestyle that is less dependent on auto travel. (SU)

Provide facilities and policies that ensure adequate multi-modal access throughout the growth areas of the City. (SU)

An effective multimodal transportation network that connects areas of the city to one another, areas of the region to one another, and the region to the rest of the world. (VB)

Develop and implement strategies that strive for a better balance in the City's transportation network. Consider the needs of all residents and visitors including those with limited mobility options. (VB)

Provide an effective transportation system which is compatible with the future landuse plan, serves pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists, and promotes the expanded use of transit and rail. (WB)

Provide for the safe and efficient movement of people and goods within York County and throughout the Hampton Roads region. (YC)

Promote the development of a regional multi-modal transportation system. (YC)

Increase funding for transportation improvements critical to the mobility of York County's citizens. (YC)

An integrated public transit network will provide Hampton Roads with transportation choice, thereby ensuring greater mobility, economic development, environmental protection, energy independence, and quality of life. (TVP)

BIKE/PED

Decrease the need for automobile trips by encouraging mixed-use developments, pedestrian pathways and bike paths. (IW)

Continue working to develop a trails/bikeway system (IW)

Support the provision of sidewalks and bikeways in appropriate areas, increased use of public transportation services, and investigation of other modes of transportation. (JC)

Include bikeways and/or pedestrian facilities within major developments and elsewhere in the County, especially connecting residential and non-residential areas. (JC)

Continue efforts of James City County, the City of Williamsburg, York County, and the Historic Triangle Bicycle Advisory Committee to coordinate and implement a regional bicycle network, including further joint planning and development of regional funding proposals. (JC)

A bicycle trail network in the City allows people to ride their bicycles to work or for recreation. Sidewalks exist on the rights of way of all major streets and on most residential streets. (NN)

Incorporate, develop, and support pedestrian and bicycle facilities in conjunction with transportation improvements. (NO)

Develop a bicycle and pedestrian trail system in Poquoson which connects recreational, commercial, educational, and residential centers. (PQ)

Develop a bikeway network facilitating safe bicycle transportation within the city and between neighboring localities. (PQ)

Provide aesthetically pleasing sidewalks throughout commercial areas and along main thoroughfares in the City. (PQ)

Complete existing pedestrian systems in cooperation with adjoining jurisdictions. (PQ)

Continue construction of bikeways as part of road construction or reconstruction/widening projects. (PQ)

Promote pedestrian and bicycle facilities and usage throughout the City. (PS)

Improve and expand bicycle and pedestrian facilities as an important part of the transportation system, with special emphasis on filling in gaps to create an interconnected system. (WB)

Increase the number of bicycle lane miles in the County in accordance with the *Regional Bikeway Plan* for Williamsburg, James City County, and York County. (YC)

Provide a safe and convenient walking environment for pedestrians. (YC)

TRANSIT

Explore transit development options (IW)

Continuing to provide public transit to areas of greatest demand and for populations with special needs. Pursue greater interconnection between the local and regional transit systems. (JC)

Encouraging land use development patterns which promote public transit and encourage transit-dependent uses and users to locate in areas currently served by transit and in areas to be served by transit in the future. (JC)

Explore and develop new transportation opportunities for the elderly, through agencies such as Williamsburg Area Transport. (JC)

The highway system is complemented by frequent bus service throughout the City and light rail transit on the CSX corridor. HRT's buses have ten minute head ways and take passengers between their homes, transit stations and other destinations. Expanded bus service includes route deviation providing bus service into neighborhoods and shuttle buses in commercial areas. (NN)

Improve bus service in the City. (NN)

Develop and support public transportation. (NO)

Offer a mix of traditional and innovative public transportation services that meet the needs of a wide range of people. (NO)

Provide essential services to Norfolk citizens dependent upon transit for mobility, particularly the elderly and handicapped. (NO)

Encourage the development of public transportation facilities and facilities for seniors, physically challenged residents and other special populations. (PQ)

Enhance transit service and usage throughout the City by increasing ridership opportunities to activity centers and special event attractions. (PS)

Support mass transit providing an acceptable level of service for the Williamsburg area, including James City and York Counties, Colonial Williamsburg, and the College of William & Mary, with the Williamsburg Transportation Center serving as the regional hub. (WB)

Support the development and implementation of improved high-speed rail and light-rail service, with the Williamsburg Transportation Center serving as the regional hub. (WB)

Maximize limited infrastructure budgets through parity between transit and highway investments. (TVP)

Provide greater mobility options through an integrated, high-capacity transit system. (TVP)

Improve land use and transportation coordination by encouraging transit supportive development within mixed-use activity centers and corridors. (TVP)

Reduce energy consumption, improve air quality, and mitigate climate change with a robust transit system based on renewable energy sources. (TVP)

Promote economic growth and regional competitiveness through a transit system that connects major activity and employment centers. (TVP)

TDM

Decrease levels of commuter traffic during the a.m. and p.m. peak traffic hours through techniques such as car pooling, staggering work schedules, and telecommuting, etc. (IW)

Transportation management strategies (IW)

Reduce the number of vehicle trips with special emphasis on reducing single occupancy trips by car. (NN)

Increase the capacity and efficiency of Norfolk's major transportation corridors through effective management strategies. (NO)

Promote the development of TDM techniques in order to reduce traffic volumes, particularly during peak hours. (PQ)

In addition to adding highway capacity, manage demand where opportunities exist. (VB)

HIGHWAY

To guide the development of the County road system into a network that facilitates safe and convenient local traffic as well as high-speed, long-distance traffic. (GL)

To work to provide all residents safe and, where feasible, multiple access to and from all neighborhoods. (GL)

To support interstate highway, expressway system and state highway improvements which provide regional access to Hampton trade areas. (HA)

To assure the utilization of arterial roadways for major traffic movements through and within the City and to assure that such movement is accomplished safely at desired speeds. (HA)

To assure the utilization of collector streets to channel major traffic movements into and out of separate areas of the community and to assure that such movement is accomplished safely at desired speeds. (HA)

Develop a circulation system that encourages the separation of through traffic from local traffic and enhances connections between neighborhoods within the development service districts. (IW)

Pro-actively manage access (IW)

Ensure that regional and local transportation networks are interconnected and complement each other. (JC)

Maintain and improve Norfolk's major highways to meet future travel demands. (NO)

Develop an integrated system of freeways and arterials in Norfolk ... to improve traffic flows and maximize development opportunities. (NO)

Cooperate with state and regional officials to improve the larger highway network linking Norfolk to the region and the country. (NO)

Enhance the existing roadway network to optimize operational efficiency. (PS)

Establish a roadway hierarchy the serves the city's transportation, economic and mobility needs. (VB)

**Maintain adequate levels of service on County roadways (i.e., LOS C or better). (YC)
Reduce crash rates on York County roadways. (YC)**

LAND-USE

Coordinate land-use and public facilities development with the transportation system in order to ensure safety, efficiency and convenience. (CH)

To maintain effective County enforcement of land use ordinances for the efficient and safe use of roadways within the County. (GL)

To work to ensure that industrial, commercial, and residential development result in minimal negative impact on road systems and traffic patterns within the County. (GL)

Sustain efforts to assure coordination of the Land Use/Transportation Planning Process (IW)

Manage commercial and Industrial development form (IW)

Integrate land uses where appropriate (IW)

Develop local circulation plans for activity centers (IW)

Plan and coordinate land use development and transportation improvements at the regional and local levels for all modes of transportation in such a manner as to establish and maintain acceptable levels of service throughout the County. (JC)

Encourage commercial and industrial development patterns that maintain or improve the planned function and character of County roadways. (JC)

Insure that land use planning and transit networks are directly linked. (NO)

Coordinate land use strategies with the existing and future multi-modal transportation system. (PS)

Integrate land use and transportation planning to create a landuse pattern and a transportation system that enhances the livability of our community. (VB)

Promote development and land use strategies that enhance roadway safety and preserve the carrying capacity of the roadway network. (YC)

FREIGHT

Recognize the importance of rail service as a viable transportation mode for the movement of people and goods. (JC)

Assist rail freight movements. (NO)

Respond to changes in port technology and goods movement with appropriate transportation improvements. (NO)

The Virginia Port Authority (VPA) shall foster and stimulate the commerce of the Ports of the Commonwealth, promote the shipment of goods and cargoes through the ports, secure necessary improvements of navigable tidal waters within the Commonwealth and, in general, perform any act or function which may be useful in developing, improving, or increasing the commerce, both foreign and domestic, of the Ports of the Commonwealth. (VPA)

The Port of Virginia will be the primary gateway for international cargo transported through the Mid-Atlantic and Mid-West regions of the United States. (VPA)

The Virginia Port Authority will promote economic development and stimulate job growth within the Commonwealth through international trade. (VPA)

OTHER

Provide adequate transportation access to the City's waterways. (CH)

To encourage adequate and accessible transportation for all residents who are physically handicapped and have difficulty finding or using public or private transportation: the handicapped, the elderly, and those of low income. (GL)

To assist commuters by encouraging the development of parking lots, public information services, and commuter service programs. (GL)

To provide new or improved access to key economic growth areas of the city including Downtown Hampton, Mercury Central, the Magruder Corridor, Pembroke Avenue Corridor, Phoebus and Buckroe by assigning high priority to the improvement and reconstruction of major roads within and leading to these economic growth areas. (HA)

Utilize Quality of Service/Adequate Public Facilities Standards (IW)

Ensure that the transportation system supports a land use pattern that is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. (JC)

Ensure that planning for development of future transportation and road systems includes consideration of the concept of interconnectivity with neighboring jurisdictions in order to support economic well-being, safety, and environmental protection for all concerned. (JC)

Continue to encourage landscaped roadways and roadway designs that enhance the County's image and reduce the visual impact of auto-related infrastructure. (JC)

Coordinate the pedestrian, bicycle, automobile, and transit modes of travel with each other, and with the land use patterns they help create. (JC)

Encourage the design of roads that allow automobiles, public transit, pedestrians, and bicyclists to coexist safely on roads and streets in residential and commercial areas. (JC)

Continue to identify and implement changes to the transportation system that improve air quality. (JC)

Update and implement the road functional classification system for the James City County primary and secondary road network in order to balance land use and economic development needs with the need to retain a high degree of mobility for short and long intra-County trips. (JC)

Transportation centers in downtown and at the Airport, allow passengers to transfer between buses, light rail transit, high speed rail and air carriers. (NN)

Improve the city's streets to accommodate existing and projected traffic. (NN)

Reduce the impact of traffic on residential neighborhoods. (NN)

Increase public awareness and involvement in transportation planning. (NN)

Obtain alternative funding sources for transportation projects and improvements. (NN)

Develop the city's airport and seaport as quality facilities. (NN)

Insure ease of access across the City of Norfolk boundaries. (NO)

Protect existing transportation investments through appropriate maintenance programs. (NO)

Insure that transportation facilities enhance the aesthetic appearance of the city. (NO)

Pursue the expansion and development of existing and new water crossings entering Norfolk. (NO)

Work to influence federal and state transportation programs and legislation for the benefit of Norfolk and the region. (NO)

Pursue adequate financing for other modes of travel. (NO)

Encourage the beautification of roadways in the City, especially along entrance corridors and major collectors. (PQ)

Secure state and federal grants for alternative funding sources for transportation projects and improvements. (PQ)

Continue to support additional regional facilities. (PS)

Develop traffic calming standards and procedures appropriate to certain locations within Portsmouth. (PS)

Provide for parking adequate to meet needs within the context of Portsmouth's roadway network and urban/historic character. (PS)

Enhance communication with the public regarding the transportation system. (PS)

Investment in infrastructure will be targeted to areas where need either is or is forecasted to be greatest. (SU)

The City will employ appropriate regulatory and financial incentives to ensure that access to and within the central core area supports private sector initiatives. (SU)

Establish better linkages to the regional and national transportation networks. (VB)

Protect and enhance the service levels of the city's transportation system. (VB)

Incorporate traffic-calming measures in appropriate locations to minimize traffic impacts on the City's neighborhoods. (WB)

Utilize technology to enhance mobility and safety. (YC)

Promote the development of improved air transportation service convenient to York County residents. (YC)

Provide for the particular mobility needs of the senior population when planning transportation programs and facilities. (YC)