

## **A Brief History of Pathways in Virginia**

- The early colonists used boats to explore the rivers that emptied into the Chesapeake Bay. These rivers became known as the James, the York, the Rappahannock, and the Potomac.
- When the colonists reached the Fall Line, where navigation by river was impossible, some of them followed Native American trails on foot, or created new paths.
- The colonists began to settle inland, and use the rivers to take their goods to the shipping ports. Virginia's coast has the largest natural harbor in America, so Norfolk became the country's largest shipping port.
- Outpost settlements grew to become cities, counties, and regions. The population density exploded.
- As people moved inland, they discovered new geography and natural resources that shaped Virginia's pathways from the waterways to the mountain trails.
- The first pathways followed the Native American Indian trails. The Great Indian Warpath Trail led from Creek County, Alabama to the Great Lakes in Pennsylvania and New York. It ran through Virginia between the Allegheny and Blue Ridge Mountains. By 1750 it was called the "Great Wagon Road," and had a connecting branch to Philadelphia. It also separated near Roanoke. The western part crossed the Cumberland Gap through the Allegheny Mountains. Daniel Boone blazed the trail into Kentucky, this branch became the Wilderness Road, and was the main route for the pioneers. The Potomac Path followed the Fall Line from Fairfax to Petersburg. U. S. Route 1 now follows the Potomac Path.
- Bigger and better roads were soon needed to support the industries that were rapidly growing in Virginia. The areas east of the Fall Line needed roads to transport tobacco and other crops. The areas west of the Fall Line needed roads to transport coal and textiles.
- The first roads in Virginia were paid for and built by local governments for local residents. New laws set aside a portion of local tax payers' money to help build the roads.
- Virginia's road laws, passed in the 1600's, were the first road laws in America. The tax money went towards materials and special engineers who were hired to design new kinds of roads and pavements.
- As automobiles became popular, the cost of designing and building new roads increased. Virginia's citizens began paying taxes on personal property and vehicle licensing.
- The state developed toll gates on major roads to make sure that travelers who used the roads paid for them.

- Around 1923, Virginia instituted a "pay-as-you-go" policy for funding new roads. This put a tax on gasoline purchases, and became the largest source of revenue for new roads in Virginia. The federal government adopted this tax, and it helps pay for interstate highways.
- In 1986, Governor Baliles recommended a different method of financing road construction and improvement. The government added a half-cent to the general sales tax, 2 1/2 cents to the fuel tax, increased vehicle titling tax to 3 percent, and added \$3 to the annual license plate fee.