

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

- The first steam-driven railroad ran from Richmond, Virginia to Weldon, North Carolina in 1833.
- Norfolk, Portsmouth, Petersburg, and Fredericksburg had railroads in the 1830s.
- In 1838 the Norfolk & Western Railway began with a 10 mile line from Petersburg to City Point.
- In the early and mid 1800s, the cities along the Fall Line all built their own short railroads. They all tried to compete with Norfolk for the western trade.
- In the 1840s Claudius Crozet laid the first rail line from Gordonsville to Waynesboro, across the Blue Ridge Mountains. He also built the first railroad tunnels through the mountains. These rail lines made it easier to ship coal and other products between the western and eastern parts of the state.
- By 1860 the major railroads were the Virginia & Tennessee; the Orange & Alexandria; the Virginia Central; the Manassas Gap; the South Side; the Richmond & Danville; the Seaboard & Roanoke; the Norfolk & Petersburg, and the Richmond, Fredericksburg & Potomac.
- In 1881 the Norfolk and Western Railroad joined its east-west line to the north-south Shenandoah Valley line at a place called Big Lick. The town changed its name to Roanoke. It soon became an important railroad city.
- The Norfolk and Western Railroad began hauling coal from the western mines to Norfolk around 1883. This made it much easier to ship the coal.
- In the 1880s, Collis P. Huntington bought the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad. He built tracks from Newport News to Richmond. Newport News and Richmond became important shipping centers.
- In 1891 the first railroad line reached all the way to Big Stone Gap.
- In 1894 the Southern Railway was created by combining the Richmond & Danville Railroad and the East Tennessee, Virginia & Georgia Railroad.
- In 1909 The Virginian Railway began transporting coal from western Virginia and West Virginia to Norfolk. By 1910 three lines brought coal to Norfolk and Newport News.
- By 1910 there were eight working railroad lines in Virginia.
- In 1982 the Norfolk & Western Railway and the Southern Railway combined to form Norfolk Southern. These lines still operate in the state, transporting coal and other goods.