History was made in the fourth quarter of 2016 when the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) voted on the first wave of transportation projects scored under Virginia’s new data-driven prioritization process known as “SMART SCALE, Funding the Right Transportation Projects in Virginia” (formerly called the “House Bill 2” or “HB2” process).

SMART SCALE, which stands for System for the Management and Allocation of Resources for Transportation, is a major game changer and the first of its kind in the nation. It aims to help Virginia select, fund and build transportation projects that generate the greatest benefit for taxpayers. As has been said before, we are taking the politics out of transportation decision making by using data to prioritize and pursue projects that will bring about improvements to safety, congestion reduction, accessibility, land use, economic development and the environment.

Last fall, localities submitted $7 billion in projects to be scored – quadruple the available funding. This underscores why an objective, transparent prioritization process is crucial.

In June, the CTB approved the latest Six-Year Improvement Plan, which allocates $14.4 billion to transportation projects over the next six fiscal years beginning July 1. Of that, $1.7 billion in funding to build 163 projects were selected through the SMART SCALE process. Those projects are fully funded through all phases of project development and construction.

We’ve revolutionized how transportation projects are chosen. The focus now shifts to their delivery. Virginians can expect a better transportation system, one that funds the right projects for the right reasons.

We take pride in being fair, responsible stewards of taxpayer dollars and effective at serving all who travel the commonwealth. It truly is an exciting time to be at VDOT.

Charlie Kilpatrick, P.E.
VDOT Commissioner

Cups “Serve” Safety Message
VDOT employees installed 1,500 cups in two fences on opposite sides of the state to share one simple message: SLOW DOWN IN WORK ZONES. The chain-link fence installations were the idea of Salem District Communications Manager Jason Bond, who found specially designed fence cups that snap into place without turning into roadside litter. He chose a highly visible location along Interstate 581 in Roanoke for the display.

A similar installation was placed on a fence surrounding the Culpeper District complex along Route 15. Combined, it is estimated that the fence-cup designs were seen by 80,000 people each day during Work Zone Awareness Week in mid-April.

Statewide Construction Quality Compliance

Construction quality, as evaluated by VDOT’s Construction Quality Improvement Program (CQIP), measures project compliance with contract quality requirements. A checklist of more than 1,100 construction quality checkpoints guides this critical assessment. The results show VDOT’s commitment to building quality roads and bridges, while seeking the opportunity for continuous improvement. Construction quality (CQIP) compliance was at 94.9 percent for FY16, exceeding both the target of 91 percent and FY2015’s year-end rating of 93.5 percent.
Major Projects

Replacement of Rest Areas: Plans were announced in April to replace three Safety Rest Areas on Interstate 95 – the Ladysmith rest areas on north and southbound I-95 in Caroline County and the Skippers rest area and welcome center on northbound I-95 in Greensville County – at a cost of $11.6 million. Demolition began in mid-April with temporary facilities put in place. Construction is scheduled for completion by Memorial Day 2017.

Midtown Tunnel Opens: Elizabeth River Crossings opened the first lane of the Midtown Tunnel from Norfolk to Portsmouth on June 17, several months ahead of schedule.

Route 29/Rio Road: The 103-day shutdown period on the Route 29/Rio Road grade-separated intersection in the Culpeper District began May 23.

Social Media Reach

In April, a video message from Commissioner Charlie Kilpatrick about Work Zone Awareness Week had higher than normal reach, receiving more than 17,000 views, 319 shares and 192 likes on Facebook. The video was also posted on YouTube, where it has been seen about 800 times.

Awards and Honors

Excellence in Infrastructure Award: The Washington Boulevard Bridge over Columbia Pike in Arlington, also dedicated as the Freedman’s Village Bridge, won the Excellence in Infrastructure Award from the Heavy Construction Contractors Association. The $46 million project to replace the bridge and make interchange improvements was completed in December 2015.

Design Build Institute of America (DBIA): DBIA recognized VDOT as Transportation Owner of the Year in April at the DBIA Design-Build in Transportation Conference in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Governor’s Teamwork Award: The SMART SCALE (formerly known as HB2) Core Implementation Team, consisting of employees from VDOT and the Department of Rail and Public Transportation, were recognized as part of the Governor’s Awards for Public Service. Through regular communication, problem-solving and attention to time-sensitive issues, the team displayed extraordinary commitment to quality, transparency, cross-functional coordination and innovation.

Public Relations Society of America (PRSA): VDOT received seven Virginia Public Relations Awards from the Richmond PRSA chapter. Top awards went to VDOT-TV (an internal news program), the 2015 Work Zone Awareness Week poster design and a communications campaign for Interstate 81 Exit 150 improvements in Botetourt County.

The International Partnering Institute (IPI): IPI presented VDOT and its partners a Ruby-level Partnered Project of the Year Award at a ceremony in San Francisco in May recognizing the Avens Bridge Route 670 Project in the Bristol District. A Ruby award is the second-highest honor awarded by IPI.

International Bridge Conference: Central Office Communications photographer Trevor Wrayton and videographer John “Jack” Beilhart garnered three awards in the 2016 International Bridge Conference photography contest. Wrayton placed third for his photo of the Woodrow Wilson Bridge over the Potomac River in Washington. He and Beilhart tied for seventh place with photos of the Greiner Bridge over the James River in Richmond.