



Roanoke Valley-Alleghany  
**REGIONAL**  
commission

Connect

Collaborate

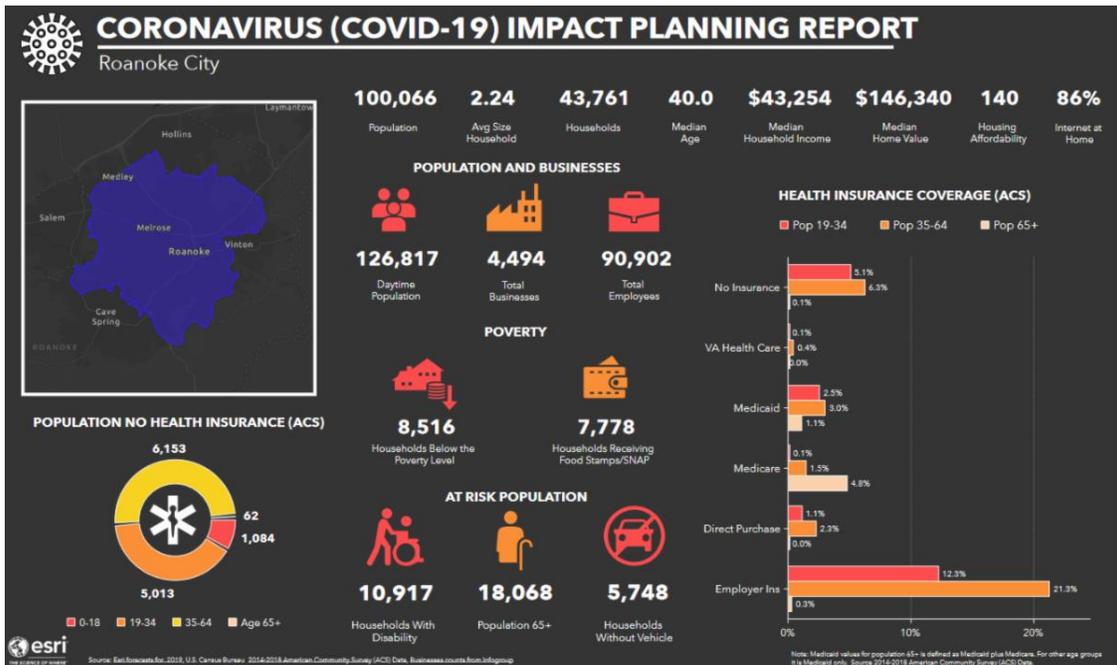
Cooperate

### RVARC Special Alert

With the safety and wellbeing of our community and our employees in mind, some of the staff of the Regional Commission will be out of the office for the next two weeks. This is in response Governor Northam's request for social distancing and teleworking and the Regional Commission's COVID-19 Response Plan. Staff will be checking emails and teleworking from home during this time. Everyone please stay healthy as we all work through this health emergency.

### COVID-19 Impact Planning Report

Regional Commission staff prepared COVID-19 planning reports for the RVARC region using various data sources compiled by ESRI, Inc. Click [HERE](#) to access the full report which includes information on each locality.



## RIDE Solutions Hosts Earth Day Online University

On April 22<sup>nd</sup>, the Commission’s RIDE Solutions commuter assistance program celebrated Earth Day by hosting Earth Day Online University – a virtual educational event held on social media to promote multiple aspects of green living. The event brought together local governments, businesses, and nonprofits, along with resources from national and international experts to discuss issues like transportation, stormwater, recycling, lighting, home gardening, beekeeping, and more.

“Normally, this would be a time to get outside, to celebrate with friends and neighbors by taking a chance to connect with neighbors, or maybe volunteer with a local environmental group on a river cleanup or other related event,” said RIDE Solutions Director Jeremy Holmes. “While the lockdown imposed by COVID-19 ended those opportunities, we thought it was important to continue the education and inspiration that we would normally see with an Earth Day celebration, and wanted to highlight everything happening here in the region to help protect and sustain the environment..

Hosted primarily via a Facebook event page, Earth Day Online University had 483 attendees and was seen by over 25k people ahead of Earth Day. It featured 39 videos shared approximately every minutes starting at 9 am and ending at 6pm. As of the time of this newsletter, videos from the event had been viewed 9,016 times.



The full lineup of videos produced for and shared on Earth Day Online University are available at [ridesolutions.org/earthdayonline](https://ridesolutions.org/earthdayonline).



## Regional Commission Receives VHDA Grant for Regional Housing Study

On April 10th, staff was notified by the Virginia Housing Development Authority that it received a Community Impact Grant for \$80,000 to develop a Regional Housing Market Study Analysis. With this funding, a consultant will be hired to perform the study. The study will include the Counties of Franklin and Roanoke (incorporating the Towns of Boones Mill, Rocky Mount, and Vinton respectively), and the Cities of Roanoke and Salem.



The goals of the study are to:

- Develop a document that identifies housing needs and provides both a regionwide and locality-specific market analysis.
- Analyze commuter and residential patterns.
- Incorporate results and findings from recently performed housing studies in Botetourt County, Village of Ferrum (Franklin County), Route 419 Town Center Plan Residential Analysis (Roanoke County), and the Alleghany Highlands portion of the region.
- Create economic development opportunities by providing strategies to address housing concerns.

- Develop regional and locality-specific recommendations that address local housing needs and encourage private investment.
- Engage stakeholders to determine local housing needs and identify potential opportunities and partners to address and identify needs.

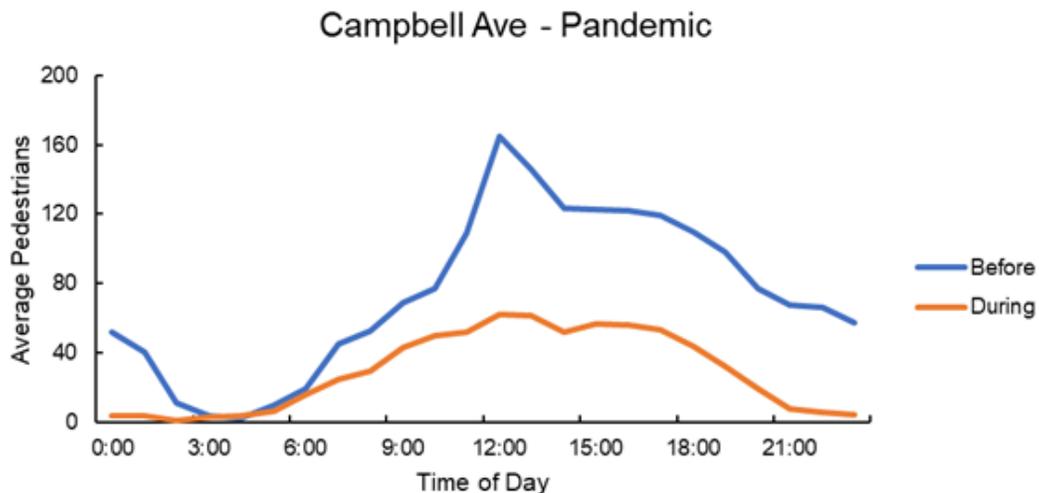
Staff received seven responses to a Request for Proposals issued in late February, and have since interviewed three consulting firms. Currently, staff is in negotiations with one firm and is hopeful to execute a contract and begin the Study in May.

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## Bicycle and Pedestrian Counts

RVARC partners with the Greenway Commission, the Virginia Department of Transportation, and Virginia Tech who provide equipment to count people on greenways, sidewalks, and bike lanes. The data support grant applications to fund facilities such as greenways, sidewalks, bike lanes, crosswalks, curb ramps, and pedestrian signals. City, county, and town staff use the data to justify new projects and the staff to support those projects. We are just beginning to explore how our data can support local businesses and public health.

View past, present, and proposed count locations [here](#). View live count data [here](#).



**Figure Legend:** Average hourly pedestrian traffic on Campbell Avenue from February 15 – March 15, 2020 (Before) and from April 1 – April 7, 2020 (During). The noon peak in pedestrian traffic is so prominent that it obscures the typical morning and evening commuter peaks (blue line). While pedestrian activity drops off in the evening, it is still lively until early morning. Pedestrian traffic is much lower at all hours during the pandemic-induced social distancing (orange line).

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## Emergency Meetings of RVTPO and RVARC Held



On April 23rd, the Roanoke Valley Transportation Planning Organization Policy Board and the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission Board held emergency meetings without a quorum present in one location. This was made possible as a result of Governor Northam's State of Emergency Declaration on March 12.



At each respective meeting, there were two actions that the Boards considered:

1. Establishing a written policy authorizing participation in meetings via electronic communication; and
2. Authorizing adoption of procedures for electronic public meetings and public hearings to ensure the continuity of government during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Most all of the localities in the region had previously adopted written policies and emergency ordinances which allowed for electronic meetings without a quorum present in one place. In each of the localities' emergency ordinances, regional public bodies were also identified as being unsafe to hold in one location. As a result, the RVTPO and RVARC Boards adopted a written electronic meetings policy (to be used in non-emergency situations), and adopted the City of Roanoke's Emergency Ordinance of March 27<sup>th</sup> with procedures to hold regular meetings electronically without a quorum present in one location.

The next day, Governor Northam Signed into law HB 29, the budget bill, which among its many amendments had language allowing public bodies during a state of emergency to meet electronically without a quorum present in one location. It also allowed for procedures to be developed in to maintain continuity of operations during the emergency. It is anticipated that in the 2021 General Assembly session, formal legislation will be enacted in the Code of Virginia.

Regular meetings will continue of the RVTPO and RVARC remotely through the duration of the state and local states of emergency.

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## **RVARC and RVTPO Submit SMART SCALE FY22 Pre-Application**

April 17<sup>th</sup> was the deadline for submission of pre-applications for the FY22 round of SMART SCALE funding. On behalf of its member localities, the RVARC and RVTPO have submitted a total of six pre-applications (three from each body). The project pre-applications are as follows:

Applicant	Project Location	Project Title	Project Description
RVARC	Botetourt Co.	I-81 Northbound Safety Improvements MM167.4 to MM169.5	The project is focusing on the improvement of the northbound alignment which will however require the realignment of southbound I-81 also. The proposed improvements would be required between mile markers 166.7 and 169.4 and include the interchanges located at Exit 167 and Exit 168. The alternatives studied to date will require the northbound and southbound lanes of I-81 to be realigned and the partial interchange at Exit 167 to be removed. To maintain full access to and from I-81 via Route 11, Route 11 will be extended to Arcadia Road (Exit 168) via a connection made to the southern terminus of Diamond Hill Road.
RVARC	Franklin Co.	Roadway Improvements on Rtes. 220/613 (Naff Rd.)	To construct an unsignalized Continuous Green T intersection with no restriction for left turns off of Route 613; new right-turn lane (SB) on U.S. Route 220; extension of NB acceleration lane on U.S. Route 220.
RVARC	Roanoke Co.	I-581 at Exit 2 Interchange Improvements	Improve traffic operations and safety on Interstate 581 and on Peters Creek Road. Eliminate weaves along northbound and southbound I-581 between the loop ramps. Eliminate the substandard merges and diverges along eastbound and westbound Peters Creek Road at the I-581 ramps. Improve access management between ramps and intersections along Peters Creek Road. Integrate pedestrian accommodations along Peters Creek Road.
RVTPO	City of Roanoke	Orange Avenue Improvements	Widen Orange Avenue from two lanes in each direction to three lanes in each direction from and including the 11th Street, N.E intersection to approx. 1230 feet east of Gus Nicks Boulevard.
RVTPO	Roanoke Co.	Route 460 at West Ruritan Road Intersection Improvements	Construct a Thru-Cut at the intersection of Route 460 and West Ruritan Road to prohibit northbound and southbound movements to cross Route 460. These movements will instead make U-turns at Blue Hills Village Drive and Valley Gateway Boulevard. The West Ruritan Road intersection modifications will result in a traffic signal phase reduction.
RVTPO	Roanoke Co.	Route 460 Intersections from Carson Rd. to Huntridge Rd.	Improve a series of four intersections with Innovative Intersections to include the following: RCUT at Carson Road, Seagull at East Ruritan Road, RCUT at Country Corner and access changes at Huntridge Road. Pedestrian accommodations may also be provided.

Roanoke County requested the I-581 interchange project after the RVARC Board endorsed two of their four available projects. The two U.S. 460 projects were conditionally endorsed by the RVTPO Policy Board but, at the time, the project scopes were undetermined. It is anticipated that these projects will be endorsed by the respective Boards in May.

All pre-applications are currently being pre-screened before the full application portal is opened in June. The deadline for the full application is August 1<sup>st</sup>.

## Initial Unemployment Claims in the RVARC Region

Over 17,000 unemployment claims have been filed in the region since mid-March according to the Virginia Employment Commission. The City of Roanoke has seen over 8,000 claims filed in this period. As expected, restaurants and the food service occupations have seen the largest number of claims, followed by office workers, production workers, personal care/service and sales occupations. The tables below show data for the RVARC region.

### Initial Weekly Unemployment Claims by County/City

Locality	Week 3/14	Week 3/21	Week 3/28	Week 4/4	Week 4/11	Week 4/18
Alleghany County	1	46	76	77	58	38
Botetourt County	4	93	310	356	280	196
Craig County	1	9	39	48	52	23
Franklin County	13	148	520	595	531	327
Roanoke County	10	399	1,132	1,238	980	713
Covington City	5	86	182	185	135	88
Roanoke City	42	666	1,682	1,696	1,285	957
Salem City	7	146	492	509	457	293
<b>RVARC Total</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>1,593</b>	<b>4,433</b>	<b>4,704</b>	<b>3,778</b>	<b>2,635</b>

Source: Virginia Employment Commission, April 24, 2020.

### Initial Unemployment Claims by Occupation March 1 -April 18

Occupation Type	RVARC Region
Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	5,405
Office and Administrative Support Occupations	3,153
Production Occupations	2,310
Personal Care and Service Occupations	2,063
Sales and Related Occupations	2,008
Management Occupations	1,987
Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	1,484
Healthcare Support Occupations	1,190
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	1,130
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations	954
Construction and Extraction Occupations	747
Educational Instruction and Library Occupations	733
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations	653
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations	517
Business and Financial Operations Occupations	431
Architecture and Engineering Occupations	294
Computer and Mathematical Occupations	280
Community and Social Service Occupations	267
Protective Service Occupations	168
Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations	143
Legal Occupations	58
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations	55

Source: Virginia Employment Commission

Occupations are self reported

\*Aggregate Initial Claims for March 1, 2020-April 18, 2020

## How to Help Your Streams

Amanda McGee and Gabriel Irigaray, planners with the Roanoke Valley Alleghany Regional Commission, review Best Management Practices (BMPs) for improving water quality in the region.

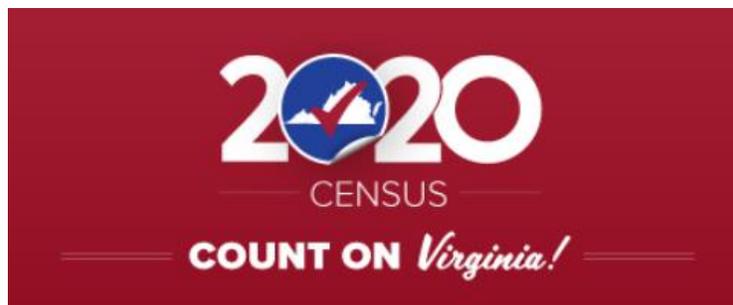


**The 2020 Census is happening now. You can respond online, by phone, or by mail.**

[LEARN HOW](#)

## Why is a Complete Census Count Important?

- In 2016, Virginia received **\$17,766,199,831** through 55 federal spending programs as a result of data collected from the 2010 Census
- **\$4,553,022,000** was given to the Medical Assistance Program (Medicaid)
- **\$1,169,412,644** was given to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- **\$1,024,381,647** was given to Highway Planning and Construction
- **Over 1 million** children under the age of five weren't counted in the 2010 Census
- Virginia was in the the **top 10 states** that had the **highest number of undercounted children** in the 2010 Census
- Children of color were missed **twice as often** in the 2010 Census as white children
- In Virginia, nearly a quarter of all children under five live in Northern Virginia, and the majority of those children are children of color
- Virginia, Arizona and Oregon are estimated to be frontrunners for an additional seat in the U.S. House of Representatives if their population growth is on the high end of estimates
- Census data will determine the placement, advancement, and funding for universities, medical facilities, nonprofit organizations, research facilities, and emergency resources.



#Census2020 #VACompleteCount #CountOnVirginia

[2020 Census: Count on Virginia](#)

[Click here to see your locality's response rate](#)

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**Ongoing Projects**

The Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission is always working with localities on projects that benefit the region. Some of these projects are listed below.

- Alleghany Highlands Trail and Greenway Inventory
- Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy 5-Year Update
- Regional Housing Study: Franklin and Roanoke Counties, and the Cities of Roanoke and Salem
- Economic Impact of the Roanoke Higher Education Center
- Rural Bikeway Plan
- Local Food Plan
- Operation of Zagster bike-share in Roanoke, Salem, Vinton
- Promotion and access improvements for the Roanoke River Blueway
- Work with regional local foods partners to examine "Food Hub" needs in the region

For more information on ongoing projects contact [Tim Pohlad-Thomas](#) or visit [RVARC.org](#).

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Visit our website

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