



SOUTHERN  
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LAW CENTER



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## Virginia Groups Call for New East-West Trains

*Demographic trends show need for greater transportation options.*

Richmond, VA— A new report finds that expanding Virginia's rail service to add an east-west corridor would make colleges and universities across the Commonwealth more accessible to students, increase economic development and tourism, and give 3.7 million Virginians additional access to passenger rail.

*"This expansion to our rail system would increase points of access for so many people across the state and beyond," said **Danny Plaughter**, executive director of Virginians for High Speed Rail, "the corridor could serve nearly 3.7 million Virginians who live within 20 miles of a rail station by expanding our transportation connectivity."*

Virginians for High Speed Rail, the Southern Environmental Law Center, the Hampton Roads Chamber, Virginia21, and Roanoke Regional Chamber jointly released the report, **Expanding Virginia's Passenger Rail: Connecting the Blue Ridge to the Beach with the Commonwealth Corridor**.

The benefits of creating an east-west rail service include:

- Links 45 percent of our jobs and is estimated to generate millions in economic benefits.
- Serves communities where 32 percent of Virginia's anticipated population growth will happen.
- Connects more than 300,000 students to 35 higher education schools across the state, including: Virginia Tech, University of Virginia, Virginia Commonwealth, Virginia State University, University of William & Mary, and Old Dominion University.
- Increases connectivity for millennials and citizens over age 65 who are driving less.
- Cuts fuel consumption by 800,000 gallons, and reduces carbon pollution by 15.4 million pounds when the corridor is fully operational.
- Relieves roadway congestion on a corridor that has seen time stuck in traffic increase 6 percent from 2014 to 2019 according to the Texas Transportation Institute.

*"Since 1990, passenger rail has become one of the fastest growing mode of transportation in Hampton Roads." stated **Bryan Stephens**, President & CEO of*

Hampton Roads Chamber *"By connecting nearly half of the Commonwealth's jobs with new cross-state passenger rail service, we're giving our citizens and businesses even more travel choices. That makes good business sense!"*

*"Mobility is a significant issue for Virginia's college students and young professionals"* said **Jared Calfee**, executive director of Virginia21. *"Virginians under 35 possess the fewest drivers' licenses per capita of any generation; exploring new options to get from point A to point B has the potential to make our colleges more accessible for students and our communities more attractive to the workforce of tomorrow."*

*"The Roanoke region is served by the top Regional train in the nation, which generates millions in economic benefits for our region,"* stated **Joyce Waugh**, President and CEO of Roanoke Regional Chamber, *"a cross-state train will open numerous economic opportunities for our communities including increased tourism and connectivity."*

*"The need for more travel options is obvious,"* said **Trip Pollard**, director of the Southern Environmental Law Center's Land & Community Program. *"To travel by train from Roanoke to Norfolk today would take 16 hours—including a 6-hour layover in Washington, DC. We can and we must do better for Virginians."*

We are asking that the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation complete a feasibility study on the Commonwealth Corridor and outline potential next steps to launch this service as soon as possible.

For more information, please visit [www.CommonwealthCorridor.com](http://www.CommonwealthCorridor.com)

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**Virginians for High Speed Rail** is a non-profit coalition of citizens, businesses, localities, community organizations, and economic development agencies that educate and advocate for the expansion of fast, frequent, and reliable rail service connecting our communities to increase the economic potential of the Commonwealth. We were founded in 1994 as a partnership between the Chamber RVA and the Future of Hampton Roads. [www.VHSR.com](http://www.VHSR.com).

For over 30 years, the **Southern Environmental Law Center** has used the power of the law to champion the environment of the Southeast. With more than 80 attorneys and nine offices across the region, SELC is widely recognized as the Southeast's foremost environmental organization and regional leader. SELC works on a full range of environmental issues to protect our natural resources and the health and well-being of all the people in our region. [www.SouthernEnvironment.org](http://www.SouthernEnvironment.org)

**The Hampton Roads Chamber** is a vigorous advocate for the economic success of its nearly 2,000 member businesses, which employ 280,000 men and women in southeastern Virginia. The Chamber promotes Hampton Roads' healthy business climate through economic development, public policy initiatives, services, and benefits to members. The Chamber is dedicated to creating economic opportunity and enhancing the quality of life in Hampton Roads. [www.HamptonRoadsChamber.com](http://www.HamptonRoadsChamber.com)

**Virginia21** is a 501(c)3 organization that has engaged over 100,000 young people in the political process by providing information, directing advocacy and coordinating political action on a non-partisan platform that includes higher education, student health and safety, and economic development. [www.virginia21.org/](http://www.virginia21.org/)

**The Roanoke Regional Chamber** fosters the growth of our members and our community by offering relevant programs and events designed to address business needs, solve business problems and increase opportunities for members. The Chamber promotes regional business by providing invaluable referrals and connections and influencing public policy to benefit all businesses. The Chamber was founded in 1889 and represents more than 800 businesses with over 75,000 employees and an estimated payroll of more than \$1.5 billion. [www.roanokechamber.org](http://www.roanokechamber.org)