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May 22, 2017

Mr. Joseph Vinsh
Special Projects Coordinator
Crater Planning District Commission
1964 Wakefield Street
Petersburg, Virginia 23805
jvinsh@craterpdc.org

Re: Federal Railroad Administration's Tri-Cities Multimodal Station Draft
Environmental Assessment (EA) Report

Dear Mr. Vinsh:

On behalf of Virginians for High Speed Rail (VHSR), I would like to thank you for allowing us the opportunity to make public comments regarding the draft environmental assessment for the Tri-Cities multimodal station. We appreciate the Crater Planning District Commission taking the lead on identifying where the region's multi-modal transportation station should be located. However, we would like to urge caution.

We see the Tri-Cities' station as the major transfer hub connecting South Hampton Roads to destinations in the Southeast. Therefore, a new multi-modal station has to be built so that it can sustain for the next century.

Increased population density along the Southeast High Speed Rail Corridor inevitably will result in more automobile congestion and traffic, compounded with reduced air travel options due to air carrier consolidation, and intercity and higher speed passenger rail is positioned for success. While a minimum of 6 daily Amtrak national trains, 12 daily Amtrak regional trains from South Hampton Roads, and 10 daily Southeast trains from North Carolina are anticipated, there is the potential for much more passenger rail traffic. In Petersburg with only one additional daily round-trip, we've seen ridership increase of 64% in the last decade! With anticipated ridership expected to reach nearly 100,000 by 2025 if not higher, we have to make sure that the Tri-Cities multimodal station is not outdated before its opened.

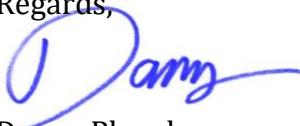
Which is why we are urging caution. The final phase of the Richmond to Hampton Roads High Speed Rail Study hasn't started, the DC2RVA high speed rail study isn't completed, and the Long Bridge rail study is just beginning. Additionally, the Southeast Regional Rail Planning Study whose purpose is to *"explore the potential for a high-performance, multi-state intercity passenger rail network in the Southeast region"* just launched last summer.

This leads to some of our concerns, what happens if Georgia/Florida want additional Southeast trains from the Northeast to Atlanta or Jacksonville? What happens if more of the 18 Northeast Regional trains that end in Washington, DC are extended to Norfolk? Will the proposed station be able to handle the unanticipated ridership and train traffic?

We would like to propose modest improvements to the current Ettrick station including improving the ADA accessibility of the station. Then once the various corridor and regional studies are further along, the Tri-Cities Multimodal Station Study can be completed with a full understanding of what is needed in regards to the size and scope of a new multi-modal station.

Thank you again for taking the time to read our public comments.

Regards,



Danny Plaugher
Executive Director