



Virginia Transit Association • Virginians for High Speed Rail • Southern Environmental Law Center
ChamberRVA • Coalition for Smarter Growth • Future of Hampton Roads
Greater Norfolk Corporation • Greater Washington Partnership • Hampton Roads Chamber
NRV Passenger Rail • Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance • Prince William Chamber of Commerce
Roanoke Regional Chamber • RVA Rapid Transit • Virginia Conservation Network
Virginia Rail Policy Institute

August 31, 2020

To: Members of the Virginia General Assembly

Re: Governor Northam's transportation-related budget amendments
(Item 430, Item 443, Item 444)

Dear Honorable Members of the Virginia General Assembly:

On behalf of the organizations signing this letter, thank you for adopting the 2020 transportation omnibus package (HB 1414 and SB 890) earlier this year. Had you not passed this legislation, the pandemic's impact on transportation revenue could have been much worse—with an estimated decline of \$1.4 billion over the biennium instead of the current projected decline of \$870 million. Passing the transportation omnibus also protected thousands of jobs.

We are also writing to urge you to **support** Governor Northam's transportation-related amendments (Item 430, Item 443, Item 444) to the FY2021-2022 biennial budget.

Budget Item 430 will provide the Commonwealth Transportation Board with flexibility to allow Virginia to continue investing in much-needed transportation projects that are underway or ready to go, using allocated revenue sharing, Smart Scale, and State of Good Repair funds that are currently sitting idle and are not scheduled to be spent during FY 2021. The funds that would be authorized to be transferred will be returned to these projects when needed during the course of the Six-Year Improvement Program (SYIP). Without this budget amendment, the CTB will have to cancel up to one billion dollars in projects from the SYIP, the Long Bridge and Virginia Rail Initiative will be delayed, transit and passenger rail service will be reduced, and jobs will be lost.

Budget Item 443 allows the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) to continue to advance the Virginia Rail Initiative while the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority authorized by the transportation omnibus legislation is being set up. The formal establishment of the Authority has been delayed by the pandemic, and it is critical that this delay not harm Virginia's passenger rail efforts.

Budget Item 444 simply allows DRPT to maintain their current staff levels, which by code are funded from 5 percent of the public transit and rail funds they manage. It also corrects a small drafting error in the original budget. The negative impact of the pandemic on rail and public transit funds has been dramatic. This budget item simply allows DRPT to maintain their staff levels at their FY2020 levels so that our passenger rail and public transportation networks will be available to help us re-build and re-grow our economy.

These budget amendments will help Virginia avoid cutting jobs, delaying transportation projects, and making extensive cuts to our transportation budget like North Carolina (\$1.5 billion), Maryland (\$413 million), Kentucky (\$162 million), and Georgia (\$300 million) have implemented.

We ask that you support these amendments to the FY 2021-2022 biennial budget.

Sincerely,

Danny Plaughter
Virginians for High Speed Rail

Bryan Stephens
Hampton Roads Chamber

Lisa Guthrie
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CC:

Members, Virginia House of Delegates

Members, Senate of Virginia

Hon. Ralph Northam, Governor of Virginia

Hon. Shannon Valentine, Virginia Secretary of Transportation

Hon. Jennifer Mitchell, Director, Virginia Dept. of Rail and Public Transportation