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Capital Results

October 12, 2016

Ms. Amanda Murphy
Environmental Protection Specialist
Office of Railroad Policy and Development
Federal Railroad Administration
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Washington, DC 20590
info@longbridgeproject.com

RE: Long Bridge Project EIS Scoping

Dear Ms. Murphy:

I am writing on behalf of Virginians for High Speed Rail (VHSR), the Commonwealth of Virginia's largest rail advocacy organization. VHSR promotes fast, frequent, safe, and reliable intercity passenger rail service linking our communities to regions up and down the east coast.

We are writing in support of the study and encourage it to proceed to completion. As you know, the Long Bridge is one of the biggest bottlenecks impacting the trains leaving or entering Virginia. From today to 2040 it is only going to get worse. The number of trains anticipated to travel over the Long Bridge is expected to grow 159 percent! This will leave no elasticity or redundancy in our rail network to deal with any problems that may arise.

While Virginia is served by four of the top seven best performing Regional routes in Amtrak's entire network; getting from Alexandria's King Street station to Washington's Union Station is precarious at best and downright frustrating at worst. Your study team estimates that on-time performance for our Amtrak trains getting across the Long Bridge is 69 percent today, and that it is projected to drop to 16 percent by 2040. Reliability is a key issue for VHSR and we have seen the reliability of our trains have a quantifiable impact on their ridership, which further increases the operational investment needed from the taxpayers of Virginia. We cannot afford to allow that to get any worse.

Thus, we strongly support the advancement of the Long Bridge study and ask that you look at what capacity improvements will be needed to increase movement in the Long Bridge corridor for the next 100 years! We believe what is needed at a minimum is railroad four tracks crossing the Potomac. This is a once in a generation type of project and it would be disappointing to underestimate the potential growth in rail over the decades to come as current generations of Virginians are moving away from the automobile at record numbers never before seen.

On behalf of the Board of Virginians for High Speed Rail, thank you for taking the time to read our comments.

Sincerely,

Danny Plaugher
Executive Director