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Linking Virginia with fast, frequent, safe, and reliable passenger rail service

September 4, 2018

US Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)
1200 New Jersey Ave SE
Washington, DC 20590

To FRA:

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

I am writing in support of the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation's (VDRPT) Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) grant request to improve and upgrade Henrico's Staples Mill Road Station.

Staples Mill Road Station (SMS) is the largest station in the South by passenger volume, handling nearly 400,000 passengers a year. In fact, this one station handles more passengers than 32 entire states. The passengers that travel to and from SMS generate over \$46M in tourism for the Greater Richmond Region, create or sustain 475 jobs annually, reduce fuel consumption by 2.7 million gallons which lowers carbon pollution by 54.3 million pounds, and reduce vehicle miles traveled on our roadways by nearly 60 million miles each year. Further, SMS handles three of the top six best performing regional trains in Amtrak's network.

However, like many of Amtrak's 1970s replacement stations it was never meant to handle the amount of passenger traffic that it currently does, nor does it have the modern amenities/facilities that today's passengers desire (such as free and accessible Wi-Fi). The Commonwealth has already invested heavily in expanding the transportation options at the station (doubling parking, building a transit loop, etc.), however this grant will go a long way towards helping to modernize the station itself which is long overdue.

I encourage you to support DRPT's CRISI grant application.

Sincerely,

Danny Plaughter
Executive Director