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Capital Results

January 5, 2016

Mrs. Emily Stock
Manager of Rail Planning
Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation
600 E Main Street, Suite 2102
Richmond, VA 23219
info@DC2RVArail.com

RE: Washington to Richmond High Speed Rail Project

Dear Mrs. Stock:

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

While we are waiting for more data pertaining to operation, ridership, and cost projections, I would like to offer the following comments.

We consider speed a secondary factor to the level and quality of service, however trip time is important. We need to make sure that our trip times are not only comparable to driving but are faster than driving an automobile on I-95. That is why we support the investments in freight bypasses around physically constrained locations such as Fredericksburg and Ashland. These bypasses will allow for the smooth movement of freight while freeing up much needed capacity in some of the most congested and restrained portions of the corridor. However, we urge caution that such bypasses should not have a detrimental effect on historic or protected properties.

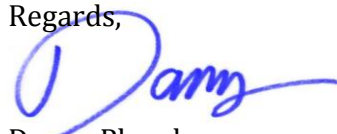
In regards to the Richmond regional station issue, much more data is needed however in the past we have supported the idea of two stations in the region with those stations primarily being downtown in Richmond's central business district and a suburban location. Looking at comparable regions with similar rail service, many have multiple stations that serve diverse sets of populations, and the Richmond region should be no different. A potential concern with a single station option at either the Boulevard or Broad Street locations is the impact of passenger rail service along the Peninsula to Williamsburg and Newport News.

The Peninsula passenger rail stations saw their ridership grow 1.9% over the last year (double the state as a whole) and 37.4% since 2006 with no additional service and a severe lack of reliability. During FY 2015 the Newport News Amtrak Regionals served the top Regional corridor in Amtrak's system even though their on-time performance was consistently below 60%. Improvements built as part of the DC to RVA corridor should improve service along the Peninsula not negatively impact it.

We continue to urge that improvements to intercity passenger rail service to Hampton Roads, both the Peninsula and Southside, be taken into account during the DC to RVA higher speed rail study. The Richmond to Hampton Roads portion of Virginia's urban crescent is what will make higher speed rail in the Commonwealth viable and sustainable for the long-term.

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit formal comments from Virginians for High Speed Rail. We look forward to continuing to work together to advance this important study.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Danny". The signature is stylized with a large, looped "D" and a long, sweeping tail.

Danny Plaughter
Executive Director