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November 20, 2014

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 who promotes fast, frequent, and reliable intercity passenger rail service linking our communities to regions up and down the east coast. Thank you for the opportunity to submit our comments.

In regards to the request for public comment as part of the scoping portion of the Washington to Richmond High Speed Rail Project, I would like to submit the following thoughts to be considered.

As you know the Washington to Richmond corridor is part of the larger Virginia Urban Crescent which connects Washington-Richmond-Hampton Roads and is home to 64.2 percent of Virginians, 68.5 percent of our jobs and economy, 50.6 percent of our higher education students confined to 15.13 percent of the Commonwealth's land mass. Our Urban Crescent is also home to some of the worst traffic in the Nation where the average commuter wastes 46.3 hours and \$952 annually due to traffic congestion. Further, as our population continues to grow, traffic will only continue to get worse with estimates that predict that nearly 80 percent of every mile driven in 2035 will be confined to the Urban Crescent Corridor.

That is why this study is an important first step to expanding fast, frequent, and reliable intercity passenger rail across Virginia.

We believe that the travel time from Washington to Richmond should be shorter and more reliable than travel by automobile. Getting the trip time to below 2 hours is key to reaching the choice passenger and moving people from their cars to Virginia's passenger trains. Additionally, reliability on the corridor is especially vital to the passenger rail's success therefore achieving an on-time performance level of 90 percent is important.

Further, improvements to the corridor should take into account future expansions of service from the Northeast Corridor to Newport News, Norfolk, Roanoke/Lynchburg, as well as Raleigh and Charlotte, and the study should put a priority on stations and alignments that serve a greater density of citizens, transit oriented development communities, and central business districts. Increasing the level of service, and serving area with greater population, is needed to ensure the long-term success of the Commonwealth's passenger rail network.

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 vital study.

Regards,

Danny Plaugher
Executive Director