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May 12, 2014

The Honorable Aubrey Layne
Secretary of Transportation
Commonwealth of Virginia
P.O. Box 1475
Richmond, VA 23218

Dear Secretary Layne:

RE: The Route 29 Solutions Advisory Panel's Recommendations

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

VHSR strongly supports the Route 29 Advisory Panel's recommendation to invest \$5 million in a second frequency of the Lynchburg Northeast Regional train serving Lynchburg, Charlottesville, Culpeper, Manassas, Alexandria, and Burke Centre into Washington and the Northeast Corridor, which will fund 25 percent of the cost of rehabilitating a train set for this purpose. .

The Route 29 (Piedmont rail) corridor is home to 12.04 percent of Virginians and over 13 percent of our Commonwealth's jobs and economy. Additionally, 15 institutions of higher education and 32.77 percent of Virginia's college students reside along the corridor. For every college student, recreational traveler or business person traveling to Washington and the Northeast Corridor that you can take off Route 29 and get on a train, that is potentially one less costly investment in the roadway that the Commonwealth will have to make and maintain. Especially given the tremendous success of the Amtrak Lynchburg-Washington Regional train.

The single Lynchburg-Washington Amtrak Regional train continues to be the most financially successful regional service in the nation, exceeding expectations year after year. During the first half of fiscal year 2014, ridership is up 1.8 percent over the same period in FY 2013, revenue is operating at a profit of about \$0.083 per seat mile, and reliability continues to be above 81 percent. Needless to say, the Lynchburg Regional service continues to be the gem of the Commonwealth's Intercity Passenger Rail Program and is deserving of a second frequency.

I hope that you will endorse the US Route 29 Advisory Panel's recommendation of investing \$5 million into a second frequency along the Piedmont rail corridor.

Sincerely,



Danny Plaugher
Executive Director

CC: Commonwealth Transportation Board