

HISTORY!



America Gets on Board with High-Speed Rail

By Daniel L. Plaugher

High-speed rail is moving forward in America...Finally!

In October 2008, the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act (PRIIA), which created the framework for the federal government's high-speed rail program, passed Congress and was signed into law by President George W. Bush. Since then, President Barack Obama and Congress have funded this program with \$8 billion designated in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). In February of 2009, President Obama called the initial \$8 billion "a first step" that would create "a new system of high-speed rail in America"—a system that "will be faster, cheaper, and easier than building more freeways and adding to an already overburdened aviation system."

On April 16, 2009, President Obama announced the creation of our nation's high-speed rail program, and released the Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA) guidelines for the successful implementation of this program. The FRA's guidelines designate the creation of three "tracks" of funding for high-speed rail. These three "tracks" of high-speed rail funding are outlined as track one for shovel ready projects, track two for corridor development projects, and track three for high-speed rail studies.

In addition to creating the three funding "tracks," the FRA also defines American high-speed rail in three categories. First is *Emerging High-Speed Rail*, which is classified as speeds of 90-110 mph, with a 90

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New Amtrak Service For the Commonwealth

By: Daniel L. Plaugher

The Commonwealth of Virginia is making history this fall/winter by joining 14 other states in sponsoring Amtrak service, and becoming the first state to launch new state sponsored Amtrak service on two corridors simultaneously. The Piedmont Corridor, serving stations in Lynchburg, Charlottesville, Culpeper, Manassas, Burke and Alexandria, and connecting to Washington and destinations on the Northeast Corridor, launched on October 1. The Urban Corridor service, connecting Richmond to Washington and destinations on the Northeast Corridor, will launch December 15.

These new services are a result of the 2008 Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation short-term action plan, "Advancing Passenger Rail in the Commonwealth of Virginia," which was developed in partnership with Amtrak. In this report, Amtrak recommended extending two Northeast Regional trains from Washington, DC to Lynchburg and Newport News. However, due to capacity limitations east of Richmond's Main Street station, the additional Newport News service will initially start from Richmond's Staples Mill station.



The festivities at Charlottesville, Virginia for the new Lynchburg to Washington-Northeast Corridor Service. Photo by: Michael Testerman

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President's Corner

Dear Supporters,

We have reached a transformational time in our nation's history. Intercity and high-speed rail are receiving the serious attention and major investments necessary to begin to create a more sustainable balance between rail and other modalities for moving people and goods from place to place.

Virginia's first state-supported intercity passenger service connecting Lynchburg to Washington, DC and the Northeast Corridor launched operations on October 1. On September 30, a gala Whistle Stop Tour celebrating the train's Inaugural run south on its way to Lynchburg was marked with festivities at each station, including speeches by Governor Timothy Kaine, as well as local politicians and other dignitaries. I was privileged to take part in the festivities at Charlottesville Station as Chairman of the Piedmont Rail Coalition.

A second state-funded passenger train connecting Richmond to the Northeast Corridor will begin operations in December. Both new services are the result of an historic partnership between the Commonwealth of Virginia and Amtrak.

VHSR is working proactively to ensure that these new services receive long-term funding from the Commonwealth. Ultimately, the Federal Government will require a long-term, dedicated source of funding for additional passenger rail operations if we are to continue to develop more frequent passenger rail service in Virginia.

At the federal level, VHSR continues to mobilize grassroots support for high speed and intercity rail. When the Obama Administration took the first step by allotting \$8 billion for intercity and high-speed rail through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, VHSR was there to generate public support. We also recently mobilized our extensive statewide network of over 100,000 rail advocates to help defeat an amendment to the federal appropriations bill which would have reduced annual high-speed rail funding from \$4 billion to \$1 billion. A majority of Virginia's Congressional delegation supported the higher funding. Considering the massive amount of federal investment that will be necessary to create a national network of high speed rail, an annual funding level of \$4 billion is just the beginning.

These are indeed exciting times, and each of you who supports the work of VHSR has a part in it. We thank you for your past and continued support in these tough economic times. With your help, we will continue to see successes like these.

Sincerely,



Meredith Richards



President Meredith Richards

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percent on-time performance level on a shared use corridor with freight and/or commuter trains; next is *Regional High-Speed Rail*, which is classified as speeds of 110-150 mph, with a 90 percent on-time performance level on a shared and dedicated (passenger trains only) use corridor; and lastly, *Express High-Speed Rail*, which is classified as 150 mph or faster, with a 90 percent on-time performance level on a dedicated use corridor. The federal government’s goal is to raise the level of our rail service incrementally, beginning with those corridors where service levels are presently low, or as Amtrak’s President and CEO Joe Boardman put it, “*the best way to go fast is not to go slow.*”

In addition to the tracks of funding and classes of high-speed rail, the FRA guidelines also included a requirement for a pre-application by all state governments seeking money for any project funded through the ARRA. For the \$8 billion in available funding, the FRA received 278 pre-applications worth over \$103 billion, with about \$2.5 billion worth of requests from Virginia, including a \$1.6 billion request for upgrades to Washington to Richmond/Petersburg. North Carolina also made a \$424.7 million on behalf of Virginia for the Richmond to Raleigh rail corridor.

On August 24, Virginia turned in its track one application for one shovel ready project worth \$74.8 million that includes 11 miles of third track in Prince William and Stafford counties. On October 2, Virginia turned in its corridor development, or track two application, worth \$1.75 billion, which also included the \$74.8 million shovel ready project that will upgrade the Washington to Richmond/Petersburg corridor to Emerging High-Speed Rail status.

When fully upgraded to Emerging High-Speed Rail status, the Washington-Richmond/Petersburg corridor will achieve the three 90s: a 90 mph top speed, a 90 percent on-time performance level, and a 90 minute commute between Washington and Richmond with an increased frequency of service. In addition to faster speeds between Richmond and Washington, the upgrade will allow for express Virginia Railway Express service on the Fredericksburg line.

Also included in Virginia’s pre-application was a request worth \$330 and \$844 million to extend high-speed rail to Hampton Roads. Virginians for High Speed Rail supports the extension of Emerging High-Speed Rail to both Hampton Roads corridors (Richmond to Williamsburg and Newport News; and Richmond/Petersburg following route 460 to South Hampton Roads), with the first steps being improving the on-time performance on the Peninsula corridor, which currently hovers around 50 percent, and extending Amtrak service to South Hampton Roads, which is currently the largest population center in Virginia without passenger rail service. Furthermore, the Commonwealth’s \$1.75 billion application for high-speed rail between Washington and Richmond/Petersburg will improve the reliability of the Williamsburg and Newport News Amtrak service by 15 percent.

When high-speed rail links Washington, Richmond, and Hampton Roads, three in five Virginians will be served by fast, frequent, and reliable passenger rail service.

In addition to the \$8 billion in ARRA funding, President Obama stated that he would include \$5 billion over the next five years (FY 2010-2014) for high-speed rail in his budget. The House of Representatives (House) increased the President’s request to \$4

billion for the first year in the Department of Transportation’s (US DOT) FY 2010 appropriations bill. Virginians for High Speed Rail and our supporters helped to fight back a Congressional amendment that would have reduced the FY 2010 funding back to \$1 billion by encouraging our Congressional delegation to vote against it. As a result, 64 percent of our House delegation voted against the decrease. In mid-September, the U.S. Senate took up the US DOT’s FY 2010 appropriations bill and recommended only \$1.2 billion for FY 2010. Now heading to a conference committee, Virginians for High Speed Rail is encouraging all its supporters to reach out to their Senators and Congressperson and voice their support for the House’s original \$4 billion appropriation.

With high-speed rail moving forward, Virginians for High Speed Rail will work to ensure that high-speed plays a significant role in the federal government’s Surface Transportation Reauthorization legislation that is beginning to advance through Congress. The House of Representative’s Transportation Committee has released its outline of the legislation that includes \$50 billion over six years for high-speed rail, and VHSR will work hard to make sure that the \$50 billion makes it through the legislation’s passage.

Congressional High-Speed Rail Voting Record 2008-2009				
Name	District	PRIIA	H.R. 3288, adm.365	H.R. 3288
R. Wittman	VA 1 - R	Nay	Yea	Nay
G. Nye	VA 2 - D	-	Nay	Yea
R. Scott	VA 3 - D	Yea	Nay	Yea
J. Forbes	VA 4 - R	Nay	Yea	Nay
T. Perriello	VA 5 - D	-	Nay	Yea
R. Goodlatte	VA 6 - R	Yea	Yea	Nay
E. Cantor	VA 7 - R	Yea	Nay	Nay
J. Moran	VA 8 - D	Yea	Nay	Yea
F. Boucher	VA 9 - D	Yea	Nay	Yea
F. Wolf	VA 10 - R	Yea	Yea	Nay
G. Connolly	VA 11 - D	-	Nay	Yea
J. Webb	Senate - D	Yea	-	Yea
M. Warner	Senate - D	-	-	Yea
PRIIA: The Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act. Yea vote is pro-high-speed rail.				
H.R. 3288 - US DOT's FY 2010 appropriation legislation which includes money for high-speed rail. Yea vote is a pro-high-speed rail.				
H.R. 3288, Amendment 365: Would have reduced high-speed rail funding for FY 2010 from \$4 billion to \$1 billion in the US DOT's FY 2010 appropriation. Nay vote is pro-high-speed rail.				

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Governor Timothy Kaine and his transportation staff at the Department of Rail and Public Transportation made the launching of this new service one of his gubernatorial priorities. "It took a lot of work," stated Meredith Richards, President of Virginians for High Speed Rail, "but we appreciate the blood, sweat, and tears that the various stakeholders put in to make this a reality. Without the support of Governor Kaine and his administration, this would never have come to fruition."

To fund this new service, the Commonwealth Transportation Board approved a three-year funding demonstration grant of \$17.2 million at their March 19, 2009 meeting, as part of their Six-Year Improvement Program for FY2009-FY2014. This money pays for three years worth of expected operating subsidy, estimated at \$10.6 million, as well as infrastructure improvements necessary to launch the new services. The ridership for the new services is expected to exceed 90,000 for both corridors combined. "The cost to operate daily roundtrip Amtrak service from Lynchburg and Richmond to Washington for three years is cheaper than the cost of one lane mile of interstate," said Governor Linwood Holton at the Lynchburg Station during a whistle stop tour on September 30.

"These new Amtrak services are incredibly important for the Commonwealth as we work to give our citizens and our communities more, and better transportation options," said E. Dana Dickens, a Commonwealth Transportation Board member and a member of VHSR's Advisory Board.

The Lynchburg trains are Northeast Regional 176, which will leave Lynchburg at 7:38 am, arrive in Washington at 11:20 am, and return as Northeast Regional 171 leaving Washington at 4:50 pm and arriving in Lynchburg at 8:36 pm, on weekdays. On Saturday and Sunday, Northeast Regional Train 156 departs Lynchburg at 9:59 am and arrives in Washington at 1:34 pm, and on Saturday it returns as Northeast Regional 147 leaving Washington at 4:00 pm and arriving in Lynchburg at 7:39



Ribbon cutting at Charlottesville with Del. Bell, Gov. Kaine, VHSR President Richards, Gov. Holton, Del. Toscano, Del. Valentine, Lynchburg Mayor Foster, NS President Wick Moorman, and VA Trans. Secretary Homer.

pm. On Sunday, it returns as Northeast Regional 145 leaving Washington at 4:50 pm and arriving in Lynchburg at 8:29 pm.

The new Richmond to Washington trains are Northeast Regional 174, estimated to depart Richmond's Staples Mill station at 7:30 am and arrive in Washington at 10:00 am, and return as Northeast Regional 125 departing Washington at 3:30 pm and arriving in Richmond at 6:00 pm, on weekdays. On Saturday and Sunday, Northeast Regional 164 is estimated to depart Richmond at 6:30 am and arrive in Washington at 9:00 am, and return as Northeast Regional 199 on Saturday, departing Washington at about 7:00 pm and arriving in Richmond at 9:30 pm. On Sunday, Northeast Regional train 157 will depart Washington at about 4:00 pm and arrive in Richmond at 7:30 pm. **The times for the new Richmond to Washington service are estimates until the official Amtrak schedule is released.**

With over 140 trains converging at Washington's Union Station daily, extending these two Northeast Regional trains will help to alleviate layover congestion at Union Station. They join the four other Northeast Regionals that already initiate and terminate at Richmond's Staples Mill Station and Newport News' Amtrak Station. When both of these state-sponsored services begin, Virginia will be served by six daily roundtrip Northeast Regional trains, in addition to twelve that begin and end in Washington, but do not serve Virginia. Those twelve trains can be extended into Virginia to increase the frequency of existing Amtrak service, or extend service to South Hampton Roads and Roanoke with the proper infrastructure upgrades and a long-term, sustainable funding source for operations.

Virginians for High Speed Rail is supporting the creation of an "Intercity Passenger Rail Operations Fund" to cover any operating expenses for Virginia's new Amtrak services after the three-year demonstration grant has ended, as well as to help fund the expansion of service to South Hampton Roads and Roanoke. Furthermore, the creation of an "Intercity Passenger Rail Operations Fund" will show a good faith effort on the part of the Commonwealth, as Virginia pursues federal funding to expand high-speed rail to Richmond and Hampton Roads. Federal funding requires such a fund for future operating subsidies.



Gubernatorial Survey

Virginians for High Speed Rail mailed every gubernatorial and Lt. gubernatorial campaign a survey regarding their positions on various rail issues (see below for a copy of the questions we sent). The McDonnell for Governor and Bolling for Lt. Governor, co-signed a letter; and the Deeds for Governor also sent a letter. The Wagner for Lt. Governor responded by answering the questions we provided.

Due to space limitations, we were unable to print them in this newsletter, however we have uploaded them online at www.vhsr.com/election2009. **If you would like a paper copy of their positions please contact our office at 804.461.8165 and we will more be more than happy to mail you a copy.**

VHSR is a non-partisan, non-profit and does not make endorsements, and this is for our members and supporters information only.



Gubernatorial Questionnaire

- 1) Virginia is now vigorously pursuing federal resources for high-speed rail, which will require administrative resources and commitment to a consistent rail policy established over many years. As Governor or Lt. Governor, will you commit the resources necessary for carrying out a long-range high-speed rail policy and plan, and how will you work to assure our State's commitment to such a policy for the long term?
- 2) All federal funding for high-speed rail, excluding funding in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, will require a minimum 20 percent match by Virginia (similar to Federal Highway funding). As Governor or Lt. Governor, will you make it a priority to locate the necessary resources to match any federal high-speed rail funding?
- 4) This fall/winter, Virginia will make history by becoming the first state to launch state-sponsored Amtrak service on two different corridors, from Lynchburg and Richmond linking to Washington and destinations on the Northeast Corridor. However, there is a need for a long-term sustainable funding source for this new service and future expansions to Roanoke, Norfolk, and Newport News. Furthermore, a dedicated, long-term funding source for passenger rail operations is required in order to obtain federal high-speed rail funds. As Governor or Lt. Governor, would you support the creation of an "Intercity Passenger Rail Operations Fund"?
- 5) Further to the question above, Virginia's existing dedicated source of rail infrastructure funding, the Rail Enhancement Fund, is funded by a portion of the car rental fee, which is 2-3 percent lower than most of Virginia's neighboring states or jurisdictions (Maryland, North Carolina, Washington, DC, West Virginia) and is paid for by-and-large by non-residents. As Governor or Lt. Governor, would you consider raising the car rental fee 1.5% to fund the "Intercity Passenger Rail Operations Fund"?
- 6) Are there any further comments that you would like to make in reference to rail in your transportation plan?

Please return your answers by Monday, September 14th, 2009. You may email your answers to VHSRDC@earthlink.net, fax them to 804.864.5194, or mail them to VHSR, 5101 Monument Ave, Richmond, Virginia 23230

Thank you,

Board of Directors
Virginians for High Speed Rail

Annual Meeting—2009



Gil Carmichael and VHSR President Meredith Richards drawing our raffle winners.



VA Dept. of Rail and Public Transportation Director Chip Badger talking about the new Amtrak service between Lynchburg and DC.



Rep. Tom Perriello and VHSR executive director Danny Plaughter



VHSR board members. Back row L to R: Litt Thompson, Jim Ukrop, Ignacio Pessoa, Donna Kelliher, Barry Bishop, Jerry Deily, Dick Beadles. Front Row L to R: Bill Pantele, Meredith Richards, Danny Plaughter, Lois Walker, Craig MacQueen, Tom Tingle.



Former Federal Railroad Administration Administrator Gil Carmichael discussing the need for a Steel Interstate.



The crowd listening to Representative Tom Perriello talk about high-speed rail.



Representative Tom Perriello talking about the need for high-speed and intercity passenger rail.

Photos by Schilling Event Photography
Joe.Schilling@Gmail.com

Virginians for High Speed Rail Membership Form

We invite you to join us today with your tax-deductible contribution. **Virginians for High Speed Rail** is a 501 (C) (3) non-profit education and advocacy coalition. **Your donation is tax deductible.**

Membership Levels

Commuter Rail (\$25) Conventional Rail (\$50) Emerging High-Speed Rail (\$100)

Regional High-Speed Rail (\$500) Express High-Speed Rail (\$1,000)

Other Contribution \$ _____

Business/ Corporate Sponsorships Available

Name: _____

Organization: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone/Email: _____

Credit Card (Visa, MasterCard, Discover): _____ - _____ - _____ - _____ exp: _____ code: _____

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Please return this form with your check made out to **Virginians for High Speed Rail** at:

5101 Monument Ave, Richmond, Virginia 23230

or make your contribution online at www.VHSR.com

Virginians for High Speed Rail's First Annual Raffle Fundraiser

Prize: Two Roundtrip Tickets on Amtrak to New York City*

Date: Drawing will take place on December 15, 2009

1 ticket for **\$10**, **3** tickets for **\$25**, or **6** tickets for **\$45** Ticket(s) _____ X \$ _____ = \$ _____

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Please fax to **804-864-5194** or mail to **VHSR**, 5101 Monument Ave, Richmond, Virginia 23230

*Two round trip tickets to New York City from any Amtrak Station in Virginia that is served by a Northeast Corridor Regional Train. Other stations and long-distance trains are not excluded but dependent upon seat availability and cost. Northeast Corridor Regional Trains are also subject to seat availability. Full discretion is given to VHSR's staff. Contributions for raffle tickets are NOT tax-deductible.



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