

ON THE FAST TRACK

News From Virginians For High Speed Rail

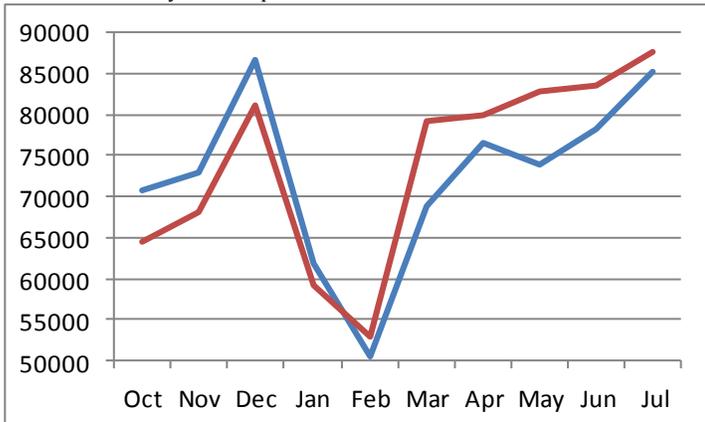
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Fall 2014

Status of Virginia's Regional Trains

The Commonwealth is blessed to be served by six Northeast Regional trains that provide intercity passenger rail service to 18 communities across Virginia. Our Regionals currently serve 76 percent of Virginians, 82 percent of our jobs and economy, over 84 percent of our college students and 41 institutions of higher education, as well as over 100,000 active members of the military and more than 30 military installations.

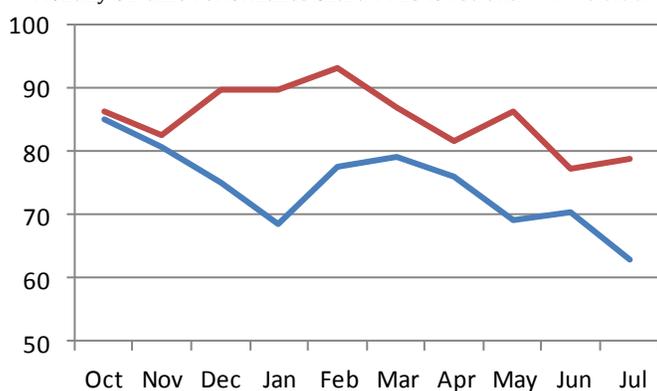
Monthly Ridership Chart. FY13 is red and FY14 is blue.



From 2007 until 2013, ridership on our Regionals grew a resounding 122 percent going from 401,510 riders in FY 2007 to 892,430 riders in FY 2013. However, during the first 10 months of FY 2014 ridership is down about 2.5 percent. The good news is that for the first quarter of FY 2014 ridership was trending ahead about 8 percent, but the rough winter that impacted the Northeast from December to March caused a sharp decline in ridership, as our on-time performance dropped.

Our Regionals ended last year with on-time reliability over 85

Monthly On-time Performance Chart. FY13 is red and FY14 is blue.



percent but compared to last year, so far this year's reliability has dropped an average of 12.6 percent per month with July's on-time performance at only 63 percent. There are several factors that have impacted our performance including dispatching onto/out-of the Northeast Corridor, equipment failures, severe weather, and overall railroad congestion. The one thing that we are sure of is that this lack of reliable service is directly correlating to the decline in ridership. VHSR is working to help identify the various issues and fine solutions to improve the performance of our regional trains.

The one area where Virginia's Regionals continue to be successful is financially. The Commonwealth continues to have three of the top four best financially performing Regional corridors across Amtrak's entire system out of 29 such corridors. Our Regionals have made a small profit of \$0.025 per seat mile during the first 10 months of FY 2014.

Ranking of Virginia's Regional Corridors:

- 1) Lynchburg
- 2) Newport News
- 4) Norfolk
- 16) Richmond

Virginia to Invest \$450 Million to Improve Passenger Rail

The Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) voted in June to invest \$449.1 million to sustain, expand, and improve Virginia's intercity passenger rail network as part of the Commonwealth's Six-Year Transportation Program (SYIP). A majority of that investment comes from Virginia's Intercity Passenger Rail Operating and Capital Fund (IPROC) with the remaining investment coming from federal grants, Virginia's Rail Enhancement Fund (REF), and the railroads.

The projects included in the SYIP are \$81.6 million to sustain Virginia's six Regional trains over the next six years; \$95.8 million to extend service from Lynchburg to Roanoke; \$82.3 million to extend two more Regional trains from Richmond to Norfolk; \$9.2 million (which includes a \$2.8M match from Norfolk Southern) to improve service between Alexandria and Lynchburg; \$20 million for Newport News' new multi-modal passenger rail station; and \$7.6 million for the Washington to Richmond tier II high speed rail study.

The Washington to Richmond tier II high speed rail study is also being funded from a \$44.3 million federal grant awarded in 2010 and a \$3.3 million match from CSX. During the July 16, 2014 CTB meeting, Virginia Secretary of Transportation Aubrey Layne stated that he wanted to see this study get completed before the end of Governor McAuliffe's term in office. The other federal grant that Virginia was awarded is for \$74.8 million to upgrade over 10 percent of the Washington to Richmond

Story continued on next page.

corridor. That project is expected to break ground in 2015.

The final rail project on the horizon is the extension of a second Regional train to Lynchburg which has \$30 million set aside as part of Virginia's US Route 29 Corridor Improvements from money that was previously programmed for the US Route 29 Charlottesville Bypass that was defunded.

Total investment over the next 6-years: \$449.1 million

-State rail funding: \$293.9M

-State non-rail funding: \$30M

-Federal funding: \$119.1M

-Private railroad investment: \$6.1M

FRA Challenges Southeast States to Develop Shared Vision for Rail Service

RICHMOND, Va. – Federal Railroad Administrator Joseph C. Szabo called on elected officials and transportation planners in Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia to develop a shared vision of rail service along the Southeast High-Speed Rail Corridor (SEHSR) between Washington, D.C. and Atlanta. Administrator Szabo's challenge came as he addressed members and supporters of **Virginians for High-Speed Rail during their 20th anniversary luncheon in Richmond.**

"The metropolitan regions of the South and the Southeast in particular, are growing faster than other metropolitan regions across the country," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx. "In order to meet the mobility needs of a growing population and to move the products they will need to market, rail must play an enhanced role in the transportation delivery network there."

Across the country, regions are banding together to forge collective long-term visions for passenger rail. Along the Northeast Corridor (NEC), eight states and the District of Columbia are working on a 40-year plan for rail service between Boston and Washington, D.C. In the Midwest, nine states and 40 cities have already developed the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative, a planning guide for long-term rail investments.

"Good planning is the cornerstone of service delivery and a plan reflecting the collective vision for a region helps the region compete effectively for future rail funds as money becomes available," said Joseph C. Szabo, Federal Railroad Administrator. "In order for the region to achieve optimum growth, it will be necessary for them to work together more closely and plan for their transportation future."

Administrator Szabo said regional planning between Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia could effectively yield seamless passenger rail travel all along the East Coast from Boston to Atlanta.

During his address, Administrator Szabo also highlighted the importance of the GROW AMERICA Act, the Obama Administration's four-year \$302 billion surface transportation reauthorization bill now before Congress. The bill includes \$19 billion for rail, and for the first time, would provide railroads with a predictable, dedicated funding source. The Act will invest \$600 million in existing state corridors like the Southeast High Speed Rail Corridor and provide an additional \$6.4 billion for rail service improvements along existing, expanding and new passenger corridors over the next four years.

Passenger ridership has been setting record highs in the Southeast. In Virginia, passenger ridership is up 100 percent since 2009 and in North Carolina Amtrak's Piedmont service between Charlotte and Raleigh continues to set ridership records carrying about 100,000 more people in 2013 than it did in 2009. Since 2007, passenger ridership in Georgia increased by 15 percent and by 14 percent in South Carolina.

Similarly, freight rail traffic in the Southeast has been increasing since 2009 an average of 10 percent annually. Georgia has seen an increase of nearly 13 percent with a more than 883,000 carloads of freight annually.

The Federal Railroad Administration, along with its 32 state partners and the District of Columbia, is laying the foundation for a higher performance rail network. Sixty-five projects worth \$4.1 billion in High-Speed Intercity Passenger Rail Program funding are currently completed, under construction, or will soon start construction in 20 states and the District of Columbia. Today, about \$736 million in federal funding supports a dozen projects along the Southeast High Speed Rail Corridor.

Upcoming Dates/Events:

September 17: RVA Rapid Transit program ([more info](#)) - free
November 12-14: Governor Transportation Conference ([more info](#))
January 26, 2015: VA Transit Association Legislative Reception



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