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BUSINESS AND PLANNING GROUPS SUPPORT VIRGINIA AS IT TURNS IN ITS RICHMOND TO WASHINGTON HIGH-SPEED RAIL APPLICATION

Richmond, Virginia- Today, Virginia turns in their application to the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) for funding under the first round of Track Two or “corridor development” projects, as set out in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act’s (ARRA) High-Speed Rail program.

Virginia’s track two application for \$1.75 billion will upgrade the Washington to Richmond/Petersburg section of the Southeast High Speed Rail Corridor from conventional passenger rail to Emerging High-Speed Rail. Emerging High-Speed Rail is classified by the FRA as reasonably expected to reach 90 to 110 mph, maintaining at least a 90 percent on-time performance with increased service on a shared use corridor, which includes both freight and commuter rail service. When fully upgraded an Emerging High-Speed Rail corridor will allow passenger trains to connect Washington and Richmond with a 90 minute trip. Furthermore, the improvements between Washington and Richmond/Petersburg will improve the reliability of service between Richmond and Newport News from 52 percent to 67 percent.

“Extending high-speed rail to Richmond will create or sustain 10’s of thousands of jobs, reduce two million automobile trips, and lower fuel consumption by 12 million gallons annually” stated **Daniel L. Plaugher, Executive Director, Virginians for High Speed Rail**, “as well as achieve the three 90’s, a 90 mph top speed, a 90 minute commute, and most importantly a 90 percent on-time performance with increased service between Washington and Richmond.”

“The business community in the Richmond Region is totally united in support of the proposal to extend high-speed rail service to our region, as evidenced by the unanimous resolutions of support offered by the Greater Richmond Chamber and six other Chambers of Commerce in the Richmond Region.” said **Kim Scheeler, President and CEO of the Greater Richmond Chamber of Commerce**. “High-speed rail improves connectivity between our region and the Northeast corridor while also providing us with one of the most significant economic development opportunities since the interstate highway system was conceived. We’re very pleased to see Virginia’s corridor development application submitted today.”

“This application represents a huge step forward for the Commonwealth of Virginia and the greater Fredericksburg region,” said **Gene Bailey, President of the Fredericksburg Regional Alliance and a Virginians for High Speed Rail Director**. “Not only will it link our corridor with fast, frequent, and reliable passenger rail service, but it will allow for express Virginia Railway Express service connecting Fredericksburg and Washington. One day, you will be able to get on high-speed Amtrak service, or express VRE service, and be in Washington before you could get to Woodbridge in your car. That’s pro-business, and pro-quality of life.”

“The Richmond Regional Planning District Commission and its nine member jurisdictions, along with the Capital Region Collaborative, have offered unanimous regional support for the extension of high-speed rail service to the Richmond Region” stated **Robert A. Crum, Jr. Executive Director of the Richmond Regional Planning District Commission**. “High-speed rail service will strengthen the Region’s economy and decrease congestion along the I-95 corridor.”

Today's Track Two application is the corridor development application to fully upgrade the Washington-Richmond/Petersburg corridor to Emerging High-Speed Rail status by increasing capacity and removing bottlenecks along the length of the corridor. A second Track Two application will be submitted for the Richmond to Hampton Roads upgrades. The Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transit has positioned Virginia to be ready and competitive for this new program, having completed in-depth planning studies and agreements with Amtrak, Virginia Railway Express, Norfolk Southern, and CSX.

About our organizations:

Virginians for High Speed Rail (VHSR) is a non-profit 501(C) (3) coalition of citizens, localities, economic development agencies, community organizations, and businesses that educate and advocate for the improvement and expansion of fast, frequent, and reliable rail service in Virginia. For more information visit www.vhsr.com.

Greater Richmond Chamber of Commerce (GRCC): Since 1867, the Greater Richmond Chamber (www.GRCC.com) has taken the lead to enhance and institute change in the Richmond Region, making the region an ideal location for businesses to prosper. The Chamber, a not-for-profit business membership association with more than 1,600 members and a professional staff of 40, is a catalyst for business development and the voice of business in Greater Richmond.

Fredericksburg Regional Alliance (FRA) is a public-private economic development marketing partnership created to provide CEOs, presidents, corporate real estate executives, facility planners, and site selection consultants with a single source for comprehensive demographic, economic, and commercial real estate information on the Fredericksburg Region -- which includes the City of Fredericksburg and the counties of Caroline, King George, Spotsylvania, and Stafford -- while also providing a wide range of services designed to facilitate the site selection process.

The Richmond Regional Planning District Commission encourages and facilitates local government cooperation in addressing issues that impact its nine jurisdictional members in Central Virginia. The Commission promotes the orderly and efficient development of the physical, social and economic elements of the district by planning, and encouraging and assisting localities to plan, for the future. The region includes the City of Richmond, the Town of Ashland, and the Counties of Charles City, Chesterfield, Goochland, Hanover, Henrico, New Kent, and Powhatan.

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