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Richmond Leaders Call on U.S. Senate to Fully Fund High-Speed Rail Urge Senators to match \$4 billion appropriation by U.S. House

Richmond, Virginia – Richmond Mayor Dwight Jones joined Kim Scheeler of the Greater Richmond Chamber of Commerce, Jack Berry of the Richmond Metropolitan Convention and Visitors Bureau, Daniel L. Plaughter of Virginians for High Speed Rail and the Fourbillion.com Coalition, Trip Pollard of the Southern Environmental Law Center, and several other regional leaders to call on the U.S. Senate to match the House of Representative’s \$4 billion commitment to high-speed rail in the FY 2010 U.S. Department of Transportation appropriation.

The groups are working as part of the fourbillion.com coalition, and voters can visit the website of the same name to send a message to the U.S. Senate. The additional \$4 billion will continue the investment made by President Barack Obama on what he called an \$8 billion “down payment” in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act for high-speed rail.

Governor Tim Kaine and the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation submitted an application worth \$1.75 billion to upgrade the Washington-Richmond/Petersburg rail corridor to emerging high-speed rail, which will result in an increase of the reliability to 90 percent, top speed to 90 mph, and reduce the travel time to 90 minutes.

“We need to keep Richmond economically competitive, by giving our residents and businesses multiple transportation options, and having our high-speed trains work with our planes and Interstates,” stated **Richmond Mayor Dwight C. Jones**. “This is why we are asking Senators Webb and Warner to support the \$4 billion for high-speed rail in 2010.”

“High-speed rail has the potential to be a game changer for the Richmond Region. It can spur economic development and create greater efficiencies for companies that have to do business in DC, but would prefer to locate here for economic and quality of life reasons.” said **Kim Scheeler, president of the Greater Richmond Chamber of Commerce** “ We’re excited by the opportunity and encourage our Senators to support the funding needed to drive High-speed rail as a transportation mode for the future.”

“With over 5.7 million visitors to the Richmond region each year” stated **Jack Berry, president of the Richmond Metropolitan Convention & Visitors Bureau** “we need to continue to ensure that we have a world class transportation system that includes high-speed rail. Tourism equals jobs, and with a travel time of less than 5 hours to New York City, high-speed rail has the potential to create a lot of tourism.”

“We’ve got to invest much more in cleaner, efficient transportation choices,” said **Trip Pollard, director of SELC’s Land and Community Program and head of its Richmond office**, “High-speed rail projects such as the Richmond to Washington proposal will benefit our economy, our health, our environment, and our communities.”

“With over \$57 billion in requests for the initial \$8 billion in funding, America has spoken loudly and clearly,” stated **Daniel L. Plaugher, executive director of VHSR and co-chair of the Fourbillion.com Coalition**. “This \$4 billion represents the first step in continuing to advance high-speed rail, and connect the Southeast, Virginia, and Richmond with fast, frequent, and reliable rail service.”

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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.

Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC) is a non-profit organization that works in Virginia and five other southern states to protect the region’s environment and outstanding natural areas and to promote smarter growth, sensible transportation solutions, and community revitalization. For more information visit www.SouthernEnvironment.org

The Richmond Metropolitan Convention & Visitors Bureau (RMCVB), the official destination marketing and tourism organization for the Richmond Region, is a private, not-for-profit organization dedicated to promoting the Region to meeting planners, tour operators and leisure travelers. RMCVB operates three Visitor Centers located at the Greater Richmond Convention Center downtown, the Richmond International Airport and Bass Pro Shops Outdoor World in Hanover County.