



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 3, 2009

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New Amtrak Service Begins Virginia's Quest for High-Speed Rail

Richmond, Virginia- Today, Governor Timothy Kaine announced the final agreement with Amtrak to officially launch the first Virginia sponsored Northeast Regional Train connecting Staples-Mill Richmond to the highly traveled Northeast Corridor with destinations such as Washington, New York, and Boston.

According to preliminary guidelines by the Federal Railroad Administration, two key prerequisites for project selection are Stakeholder Agreements and a Financial Plan for operations. The completion of this stakeholder agreement with Amtrak puts Virginia in a strong position of advancing high-speed rail through the Commonwealth having already completed other stakeholder agreements with CSX Transportation, Norfolk Southern, and Virginia Railway Express.

While the new Virginia sponsored passenger rail services are three-year demonstrations and a dedicated long-term funding source for operational costs have not been identified, nonetheless, Virginia is one step closer for having launched these new services.

"High-speed rail is on the horizon for Virginia." stated Daniel L. Plaugher, executive director of Virginians for High Speed Rail, "Having traveled to both Charlotte, NC and Philadelphia, PA for the Federal Railroad Administration's stakeholder meetings regarding the \$8 billion for intercity and high-speed passenger rail, I have noticed that Virginia is in a strong position to take full advantage of these federal resources for passenger rail." Mr. Plaugher continued "The Northeast (high-speed rail corridor) is looking to extend to Richmond to relieve congestion on their corridor and the Southeast High Speed Rail Corridor begins at Washington extending through Virginia. The stakeholder agreements with the host railroads, Virginia Railway Express, and Amtrak along with the leadership of Governor Kaine, his Secretary of Transportation, and Chip Badger and Kevin Page at the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation have put Virginia in a great position to properly utilize these federal resources to advance high-speed rail in Virginia." Mr. Plaugher finished "Simply put, the leg work that Governor Kaine and his transportation team have completed will stimulate our economy, create jobs, alleviate congestion on our highways, reduce gas consumption, and promote economic development and smart growth all the while advancing the Commonwealth's high-speed rail aspirations."

The next step is for the release of the official Federal Railroad Administration guidelines which is expected before June 17, 2009.

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 rail service in Virginia. For more information visit www.vhsr.com.

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