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September 19, 2007

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Dept. of Transportation Picks Roads Over Rail for Corridors of the Future Program

On September 10th, the US Department of Transportation announced the six finalist for the Corridors of the Future program. The goal of the COF program was to “develop multi-state corridors to help reduce congestion.” Of the final six proposals chosen, none had a rail component.

The I-95 Corridor Coalition and the Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia DOTs were selected for their Interstate 95 proposal. This proposal would turn Interstate 95 in Virginia from a four or six lane highway, to an eight-lane highway.

Highway costs in Virginia are estimated at \$11 million or more per lane mile, with the total cost to implement the I-95 Corridors of the Future proposal to exceed \$5 billion for Virginia alone.

Only one rail proposal was submitted to the USDOT’s Corridors of the Future program. This proposal by CSX, would have added high-speed passenger rail from Miami, Florida; to Washington, DC along the I-95 corridor. Railway cost in Virginia is estimated at \$2 to 6 million per track mile and additional track through Virginia would have cost at least \$1 billion.

VHSR President Lois Walker commented, “*CSX needs to move forward with their Corridors of the Future proposal through other means. The USDOT has given us more of the same, trying to pave over congestion problems, haven’t we learned that doesn’t work.*” She continued, “*With oil breaking \$80 a barrel, congestion in the Washington region tied for 2nd worst and costing commuters 60 hours and \$1,100 annually in lost time and gas, it is hard to understand why the USDOT does not see CSX’s proposal as a viable solution. From environmental reasons to national security to congestion relief, rail is a better option.*”

Virginians for High Speed Rail is a 501 © (3) non-profit, that educates, advocates, and promotes rail transportation as an energy-efficient, environmentally friendly, mode of transportation for which there is a substantial and growing market, as reflected by user trends, and unmet demand, in both freight and passenger transport.

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