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Daniel Plaugher
Virginians for High Speed Rail
804-864-5193

Virginia's Senators Sign On As Sponsors of Amtrak Bill

Senator Jim Webb (D-VA) today joined Senator John Warner (R-VA) as co-patron of Senate Bill 294, the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2007.

This bipartisan bill patroned by Senators Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ), Trent Lott (R-MS) and has been in the works for several years but only with the recent change in Congress has there been hope of this comprehensive long-term Amtrak funding bill passing.

The bill authorizes appropriations of \$4.335 billion for Amtrak operations through 2011. Capital funding of \$6.312 billion would address serious capital needs for infrastructure.

Speaking at the annual meeting of Virginians for High Speed Rail Tuesday (May 15) in Alexandria, Amtrak CEO Alex Kummant said the "demand for rail is phenomenal. The overall picture is good." Freight growth, he added, is "tremendous." Kummant indicated high hopes of the bill's passage.

Virginia's senators bring to 39, the number of senators who have signed on this legislation designed to bring desperately needed updating and stability to passenger rail in the United States.

Virginians for High Speed Rail met recently with staff of Senators Warner and Webb encouraging their support of this important legislation for Virginia. Amtrak support and improved passenger rail service in Virginia have been long time goals of Virginians for High Speed Rail, a statewide nonprofit, education and advocacy organization.

"We are delighted that our two Virginia senators have recognized the importance of S. 294 to the Commonwealth. This bill has more chance of getting through Congress than ever before. Without our senators' support, the benefits to Virginia would be substantially decreased. We are very grateful to Senator Warner and Senator Webb," said Lois Walker of Alexandria, president of Virginians for High Speed Rail.

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