

# HIGH SPEED RAIL transportation

## Appropriate Funding for Passenger Rail

### Statement of the Issue

Increased congestion on our roads and in our airways, vulnerability to volatile fossil fuel prices, dependence on foreign oil, and air and water pollution are just some of the problems with our current transportation system that have led many local, state, and federal officials to endorse more sustainable transportation options.

Rail plays a critical part in a more sustainable transportation approach. Rail's 21st century role should be to provide increased freight and passenger capacity in order to maximize the energy efficiency and competitiveness of Virginia's economy, especially in corridors where additional highway projects are prohibitively expensive and/or environmentally detrimental. High-speed rail could link metro regions under 600 miles apart, with commuter rail feeding those metro regions and public transit serving those metro regions, giving people alternatives to driving in and between urban areas.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) provides \$8 billion to fund the start of a high-speed rail system, as was set up in the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act (PRIIA), and Virginia currently has applications pending to receive some of this funding for improvements to the I-95 corridor. However, the short-term nature of ARRA left many states with a micro-view of how to properly invest in high-speed rail. Without a strategic, macro-view policy on the federal and state levels, investment in high-speed rail will result in a mish-mash transportation system that neither serves the needed markets nor connects on an inter or intra-city level.



### Background

In 1992, the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) designated five high-speed rail corridors, including the Southeast High Speed Rail Corridor, which extended from Washington, D.C. to Richmond to North Carolina and Georgia. In 1996, the USDOT added a high-speed rail link to Hampton Roads, and other modifications have been made to the Southeast High Speed Rail Corridor and other corridors have been identified. However, due to a lack of federal investment, there has been no significant progress made towards the advancement of high-speed rail outside of the Northeast Corridor. This changed with the passage of PRIIA in late 2008,

# Recommendations: High-Speed Rail

- Create an “Intercity Passenger Rail Operations Fund” (IPROF) which can be used to fund the current state sponsored passenger rail service and all future expansions.
- Identify a long-term, sustainable funding source for the IPROF and enable the state’s Rail Enhancement Fund to match federal investments in Virginia’s rail infrastructure.
- Increase the power and authority of the Rail Advisory Board or establish an independent state-wide Rail Development Authority to oversee expansion of freight and passenger rail to accrue public benefits, and ensure public input and accountability. They should be empowered to engage in a wide-ranging and inclusive planning process.
- Articulate a long-term vision that integrates high-speed rail, freight rail, public transit, roads and airports to create a sustainable multi-modal system for Virginia’s future.

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funding locate a long-term, sustainable funding source for passenger rail operations. Virginia sponsors two daily roundtrip Amtrak Northeast Regional trains on the Piedmont Corridor (Lynchburg, Charlottesville, and Manassas) and Urban Crescent (Richmond, Fredericksburg, Alexandria) rail corridors. Yet Virginia does not have a long-term, sustainable funding source to pay for passenger rail operations, and is paying for this new service with a three-year demonstration grant. In addition, to date Virginia has applied for \$1.825 billion of high-speed rail funding from ARRA. Again, no long-term, sustainable funding source has been identified for any future service expansions.

which created the framework for federal investment in high-speed rail and authorized about a billion dollars over six years for high-speed rail. Next came the passage of ARRA, which provides \$8 billion for high-speed rail. In April 2009, the USDOT and Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) released their preliminary guidelines for high-speed rail funding.

Among other things, the FRA guidelines require that states who receive high-speed rail

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