



"Looking Toward Tomorrow's City"

**Comments to the HRTPO
by Michael J. Barrett, President, Virginia Beach Vision
September 15, 2010**

**Phase II of Consultant Study of Hampton Roads High-Speed
and Intercity Passenger Rail**

Speaking on behalf of Virginia Beach Vision and its 115 Virginia Beach business and community leaders, I urge you to authorize the second phase of the TEMS consultant study, the Hampton Roads High-Speed and Intercity Passenger Rail Vision Plan.

- High-speed rail and intercity passenger rail connections to Hampton Roads would be transformational for our region and its future, providing a critical alternative link to major destinations both north and south.
- Hampton Roads is home to the largest concentration of federal activities anywhere in the country outside of D.C., with **16 departments and agencies** of the Executive Branch of the federal government along with **all five military services** located in the region.
 - High-speed rail is believed to be most competitive for travel destinations of 300 to 500 miles , making it a very competitive alternative for travel to DC.
 - Frank Roberts at the January hearing at the Half Moone Cruise Center provided travel documentation that showed travel to DC today costs a minimum of **\$525 for a one-day round trip** inclusive of the cost in loss of productivity. Were these individuals able to travel on high speed rail at 110 mph, **this cost would drop by 43%**.
 - An informal survey conducted by several business organizations last January, receiving responses from 200 area businesses, indicated unanimous support for high speed rail as a travel alternative with their monthly ridership projection to D.C. at over **1,200 passenger trips**.
- Hampton Roads is also a major vacation destination, attracting nearly 5 million tourists annually. High speed rail, coupled with connection to an intercity light rail system will

provide a much needed transportation alternative to visitors and will help mitigate growing congestion during the peak tourist season.

- High speed rail would also provide a high volume transportation option for moving citizens more quickly from the region should there be an emergency evacuation, without further congesting limited highway evacuation routes.

The initial TEMS study indicates that our region's connection to the high-speed rail corridor will have a significant impact on overall ridership to points north and south, reaching as many as **2 million passenger trips annually**. It shows that an **operating ratio in excess of 1.5** can be achieved from both the CSX-Peninsula and the Norfolk Southern 460 Route making it competitive for private investment and federal funding support.

The Hampton Roads region is late in getting into the competition for federal high speed rail funding and future delay is unacceptable. We must not allow this opportunity to slip away due to inertia. We encourage the HRTPO to authorized the next phase of study. The cost of doing otherwise is just too great.