



"Looking Toward Tomorrow's City"

September 5, 2010

Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization
The Regional Building
723 Woodlake Drive
Chesapeake, VA 23320

Dear Chairman Sessoms and TPO members:

On behalf of the Virginia Beach Vision Board of Directors, comprised of 115 Virginia Beach business and community leaders, we urge you to authorize the second phase of the TEMS consultant study, the Hampton Roads High-Speed and Intercity Passenger Rail Vision Plan.

The first phase of the study conducted by TEMS was a "vision plan" and was very much a preliminary report that begs for further study and analysis. The second phase of the study will more fully examine the early findings of ridership estimates and financial feasibility and provide for peer review of report assumptions and analysis. With ridership projections ultimately reaching 2 million trips annually and an operating ratio in excess of 1.50 for both the CSX-Peninsula line and the Norfolk Southern-Route 460 corridor, this early analysis demands further scrutiny. If these projections are sustained, the Hampton Roads, Richmond, Washington corridor will be one of the most competitive high-speed rail corridors in the country and a strong contender for federal funding as well as private investment.

The Vision Plan was done without fiscal constraints. The second phase of study must move past "visioning " and begin the analysis of financial feasibility, environmental constraints, right of way and land acquisition requirements and essential intergovernmental cooperation. Potential fatal flaws concerning right-of-way and greenfields must be vetted. Only after this additional examination is completed will we have a real sense of the potential impact a high-speed rail connection will have on Hampton Roads and the Southeast and Northeast corridors.

The Hampton Roads region is late in getting into the competition for federal high speed rail funding and can ill afford further delay. As a region, we must know whether the projections in the Vision Plan are valid. We must not miss out on what could be the greatest transportation opportunity of our lifetimes nor become a cul-de-sac without connection to the passenger rail system that will transverse the east coast.

For these reasons, the Virginia Beach Vision Board of Directors encourages the HRTPO to move forward expeditiously in support the next phase of study of high-speed passenger rail connections to Hampton Roads, along both the Southside and Peninsula corridors.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. W. Bennett". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "M. W." written in a more compact, stylized manner followed by the last name "Bennett".

President
Virginia Beach Vision, Inc.