

October 14, 2011

The Honorable Robert F. McDonnell
Governor, Commonwealth of Virginia
Patrick Henry Building, 3rd Floor
1111 East Broad Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Dear Governor McDonnell:

As an informal group of Hampton Roads based business organizations, the Passenger Rail Business Coordinating Steering Committee, through a series of briefings has become aware of a significant opportunity for the region and the Commonwealth that requires your proactive leadership and support. As you move into the final stages of preparing your biennial budget, we would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to brief you on the specifics and how Virginia might capitalize on this historic opportunity.

VDRPT Director Thelma Drake has done a yeoman's job in laying the foundation for rail passenger service to begin between Hampton Roads and Petersburg by 2013 with direct, one-seat service to Richmond, D.C. and beyond. Like the opening of the light rail service in Norfolk, we anticipate that the higher-speed rail service will exceed ridership expectations. We further believe that the Hampton Roads region offers the best business case for a true high speed rail link of any region in the country. The Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization (HRTPO) contracted a study by TEMS that estimates the cost benefit ratio at 110 mph to 125 mph service as 1.94 up to 2.28, making it the strongest candidate in the country for a public-private venture.

To realize this historic opportunity it is essential that the Virginia legislature authorize a dedicated source of funding for the newly created rail operating fund. This fund will be essential to:

- Meet the FRA's requirement for a long term revenue stream to support rail operating costs by 2013.
- To provide the public support that will be an ingredient for attracting private investment in a high speed rail link from Hampton Roads to our nation's capital.
- Provide a source of matching funds necessary to compete for federal funding of future capital costs