

VIRGINIA BEACH
VISION

August 21, 2012

Ms. Rebecca Reyes-Alicea
Federal Railroad Administration
Office of Railroad Policy & Development
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

re: Public comment on Tier-1 EIS for the new Northeast High Speed Rail corridor

Dear Ms. Reyes-Alicea:

Speaking on behalf of the Board of Directors of Virginia Beach Vision, Inc., I ask that the NEC FUTURE Tier-1 EIS study area be expanded to include the Hampton Roads region.

Virginia Beach Vision, Inc. is a not-for-profit, non-partisan business organization representing 120 CEOs and senior executives in the Virginia Beach area. The organization is dedicated to creating a vision and advocating actions that will ensure economic prosperity and a high quality of life for our citizens. As a part of the Hampton Roads MSA, we believe connection to the Northeast high speed rail corridor will be significant to our region's future economic growth, military commands and transportation system.

With a population in excess of 1.7 million we represent a significant potential for ridership along the high speed rail corridor. More importantly, Hampton Roads is the home to the largest concentration of military commands and facilities on the east coast, creating high demand for efficient and economical travel to the Pentagon and the nation's capital. The City of Virginia Beach is a major tourist destination drawing largely from states to the north and Canada. The establishment of higher speed passenger rail will provide visitors an alternative transportation mode, bypassing our severely congested bridges and tunnels that can prove a significant travel deterrent.

Our communities, with the introduction of a light rail system 12 months ago, have already embraced passenger rail as a travel alternative. At our one year anniversary for this first phase of what must one day be a regionally connected rail system, ridership exceeded 1.7 million, more than double the projected ridership. In December 2012, passenger rail service from Norfolk along the Route 460 corridor to Richmond, Virginia; Washington, D.C. and beyond will begin much anticipated service. Even at speeds of 79 mph or less, ridership projections anticipate 500,000 riders by 2025 from Hampton Roads annually. As speeds are increased those ridership projections could reach 4 million by 2025 and the system will be not only self sustaining but profitable.

In summary, we believe the inclusion of the Hampton Roads region in the NEC FUTURE Tier-1 EIS study is warranted to link 1.7 million citizens to the Northeast rail corridor, to provide convenient and efficient transportation for our military and defense industry personnel to the Washington, D.C. area, and to provide thousands of annual visitors the ability to bypass our congested bridges and tunnels during their business and vacation travels.

We thank you for your consideration and applaud your work to grow the Northeast High Speed Rail corridor.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James H. Copps". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "James" being the most prominent.

President
Virginia Beach Vision, Inc.
5101 Cleveland Street, Suite 202
Virginia Beach, VA 23462
757-499-7003

cc: Mayor William D. Sessoms, Jr. and Virginia Beach City Council
Thelma Drake, Director, Virginia Dept. of Rail & Public Transportation
Dwight Farmer, Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization
Dan Bell, Future of Hampton Roads
Danny Plaughter, Virginians for High Speed Rail