

APPENDIX L: TIMELINE OF VIRGINIA PASSENGER RAIL ACTIVITIES AND STUDIES



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Over the past two decades, various passenger and freight rail studies and improvement projects have been completed on both of Virginia's main passenger rail corridors. These have addressed rebuilding aging infrastructure; accommodating demand; increasing connectivity and capacity; and improving service to provide a better and more reliable shared-use network for intercity passenger, commuter, and freight rail services. A timeline of the previous intercity passenger and high-speed rail corridor studies and other actions taken to advance the development of high-speed rail in Virginia, and incremental conventional passenger service from Washington D.C. and Richmond, appears below.

- **1994** — Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia formed a four-state coalition (Southeast Rail Coalition) to facilitate the development of the Southeast High Speed Rail (SEHSR) corridor.
- **1996** — The Virginia Department of Rail and Public Facilities (DRPT) conducted an initial study addressing the feasibility of implementing fast, frequent, and reliable passenger rail service in the Washington, D.C. to Richmond segment of the SEHSR corridor.
- **1996** — DRPT publishes *House Document 51*, a preliminary feasibility study for developing intercity passenger rail service on freight rail lines serving Lynchburg.
- **1998** — DRPT released the *Bristol Rail Passenger Study, Phase 2 Final Report*, which developed ridership forecasts and capital cost estimates for introducing intercity passenger rail service on the Interstate 81/U.S. 29/U.S. 460 corridors using tilting passenger car equipment to maintain higher speeds through curves.
- **1998** — DRPT, North Carolina Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, and Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding to jointly develop environmental documentation (Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)) for the SEHSR in Virginia and North Carolina.
- **1999** — FRA and Amtrak conducted an operational analysis and preliminary engineering study, submitted to Congress in May 1999 (*Report to Congress: Potential Improvements to the Washington-Richmond Railroad Corridor*). The operational analysis evaluated then current facilities, services and operating conditions, and simulated the performance of future services over multiple configurations of infrastructure improvements. The result of the study was a set of recommended necessary improvements that would enable the Washington, D.C. to Richmond corridor to reliably accommodate the mix and volume of higher speed passenger, commuter, and freight services that the line's operators (CSX Transportation (CSX), Amtrak, and Virginia Railway Express (VRE)) and public partners (FRA and DRPT) envisioned for 2015.
- **1999** — The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) completed the *Interstate 64 Major Investment Study*. The study's identification of a Locally Preferred Alternative included plans for the widening of Interstate 64 and recommendations for double-tracking the CSX rail line from

Richmond to Newport News parallel to Interstate 64, from Richmond to Newport News, increasing maximum train speed to 110 mph, and increasing frequencies to eight round-trip passenger trains per day.

- **2000** — Amtrak released a feasibility study identifying proposed service levels, ridership estimates, and cost estimates for initiating passenger rail service on the Interstate 81 / U.S. 29 corridor.
- **2002** — The Tier I EIS for the Washington, D.C. to Charlotte SEHSR corridor project was completed. The FRA issued a Record of Decision (ROD) that same year.
- **2002** — DRPT published *Richmond to South Hampton Roads High-Speed Rail Feasibility Study, Task 1-Engineering*, a feasibility study for the development of an extension of the Southeast High-Speed Rail corridor between Richmond, Petersburg and Norfolk along a mix of Norfolk Southern (NS) and CSX-owned track, with a range of service frequencies from one to six daily round trips.
- **2002** — DRPT completed a study that identified capital costs associated with implementing Trans Dominion Express service on NS lines between Richmond and Roanoke.
- **2003** — VDOT and the Richmond Area Metropolitan Planning Organization published the *Final Report – Richmond Rail Transit Feasibility Study, Richmond, Virginia*, which examined the feasibility of developing commuter rail service in Richmond on routes extending to Midlothian and Ashland.
- **2003** — DRPT completed the *Richmond Area Rail Master Plan—Phase I* document in which near-term improvements were identified supporting the redirection of passenger trains terminating at Staples Mill Road Station to a refurbished Main Street Station in downtown Richmond. This document was based on several earlier studies, including the range of proposed improvements that was identified by FRA in the May 1999 Report to Congress titled the “*Potential Improvements to the Washington—Richmond Railroad Corridor*,” and considered to be a living document that would continue to evolve over time. At about the same time, the “*Interim Phase Improvements—Staples Mill Rd. Station to Main Street Station*” and “*Final Phase Improvements—Staples Mill Rd. Station to Centralia*” reports were prepared by FRA. Both of these reports identified potential improvements required to support various levels of future passenger and freight traffic in the Washington, D.C. to Richmond rail corridor, and more specifically, within the metro Richmond area.
- **2004** — VRE released its *VRE Strategic Plan-Phase 2* report.
- **2004** — FRA released a *Technical Monograph: Transportation Planning for the Richmond–Charlotte Railroad Corridor*.

- **2004** — DRPT conducted a *Third Track Conceptual Location Study* in which a third main line track was proposed for the 92.7-mile-long corridor between the Richmond Staples Mill Road Station.
- **2004** — DRPT released the *2004 Virginia Statewide Rail Plan*.
- **2005** — The General Assembly created the Rail Enhancement Fund and dedicated 3 percent of the 10 percent tax on car rentals to finance rail infrastructure and Amtrak operations that expand service within Virginia. Since then, Virginia has invested public funds to upgrade privately owned rail lines in order to increase the competitive status of its ports, reduce truck traffic on state highways, and to increase passenger rail service capacity. All Rail Enhancement Fund investments must meet a public benefit test showing a return on the investment of public funds.
- **2005** — DRPT published *House Document 37* for the General Assembly that identifies projected capital investment costs and annual operating costs for the proposed Trans Dominion Express network of intercity passenger rail corridors radiating from Lynchburg to Washington, Richmond, Roanoke, and Bristol. The report also documented the feasibility of starting a pilot service.
- **2005** — DRPT released the *Richmond to South Hampton Roads High-Speed Rail Feasibility Study*.
- **2006** — DRPT conducted a more detailed *Third Track Feasibility Study* in which an 8.1-mile-long rail corridor connecting Richmond's Main Street Station to Staples Mill Road Station via Acca Yard was studied in conjunction with the 92.7-mile-long corridor of the previous (2004) study. This study, like the 2004 *Third Track Conceptual Location Study*, did not include parts of the corridor through Fredericksburg and Ashland, VA.
- **2006** — The City of Richmond published *Richmond Main Street Station: Track and Platform Modifications-Concept Design Study*. This study presented the findings of field investigations and a concept design study for train turning and storage facilities serving Main Street Station related to planned and proposed future train movements.
- **2007** — DRPT published the *Trans Dominion Express Status Update Study*, which provided refined ridership, capital cost, and operating cost estimates for the startup of passenger service on the Interstate 81, U.S. 29, and U.S. 460 corridors from Lynchburg extending to Washington, D.C., Roanoke, Bristol, and Richmond, Virginia.
- **2008** — On May 3, FRA issued a Finding of Infeasibility from the Americans with Disabilities Act and U.S. Department of Transportation that allowed for Main Street Station to be provided with a low-level platform and alternate means of access in lieu of level boarding.
- **2008** — PRIIA established the initial guidance for the high-speed rail corridors throughout the United States. In January 2008, Amtrak published its short-term action plan, *Part I for Advancing Passenger Rail in the Commonwealth of Virginia*. Two key recommendations from this study

called for adding one daily round-trip passenger train between Washington, D.C. and Lynchburg, and adding one daily round-trip passenger train between Washington and Norfolk.

- **2008** — DRPT released the updated rail plan *Virginia Statewide Rail Plan* and a *Rail Resource Allocation Plan* in July 2008.
- **2008** — DRPT issued the *Urban Crescent Corridor Study (Washington-Richmond-Hampton Roads)*, which was a precursor to the Richmond to Hampton Roads Tier 1 EIS.
- **2009** — On May 29, FRA issued a letter to DRPT stating that it had considered but dismissed the Buckingham Branch Route between Doswell, Virginia and Main Street Station from further consideration for passenger service in the SEHSR corridor.
- **2009** — Virginia and Amtrak partnered to provide state-subsidized regional passenger rail service under the name “Amtrak Virginia.” Amtrak Virginia assumed responsibility for four regional trains traveling between Washington, D.C. and Richmond (Staples Mill Road Station). Two of these regional trains terminated in Richmond (Staples Mill Road Station), and two continued to Richmond’s Main Street Station and then on to Newport News.
- **2009** — As part of the SEHSR program, DRPT conducted a comprehensive study of the Virginia Interstate 95 High Speed Rail Corridor and formulated a Service Development Plan.
- **2010** — Amtrak Virginia introduced three new Amtrak Northeast Corridor (NEC) service expansions in Virginia by extending trains that had previously terminated in Washington, D.C.:
 - A new round-trip extending to Richmond (Staples Mill Road Station) for a fifth daily regional train between Washington, D.C. and Richmond
 - An extension of one round-trip train from Richmond (Staples Mill Road Station) to Norfolk (implemented in 2012)
 - One round-trip extending to Lynchburg, VA (implemented in late 2009)
- **2010** — Amtrak completed the *NEC Infrastructure Master Plan* that identified investment needed to maintain the current Amtrak NEC system so that it could be easily integrated into future freight/passenger service plans.
- **2010** — Amtrak presented a high speed rail concept for the NEC - *A Vision of High-Speed Rail in the Northeast Corridor* (the 2010 HSR Vision).
- **2011** — The Virginia-North Carolina High-Speed Rail Compact was authorized by Congress and established through legislation enacted by the Virginia and North Carolina General Assemblies. The purpose of the Compact is to examine and discuss strategies to advance multi-state high-speed rail initiatives. The SEHSR project is the primary multi-state, high-speed rail initiative advanced by the Compact.
- **2011** — Virginia’s General Assembly established the Intercity Passenger Rail Operating and Capital (IPROC) fund, providing a mechanism for the Commonwealth Transportation Board and

General Assembly to allocate transportation funds to passenger rail operations and development projects.

- **2011** — On September 23, 2011, FRA and DRPT executed Grant/Cooperative Agreement No. FR-HSR-0093-11-01-00, which allotted \$44,308,000 in federal funding to develop a Tier 2 EIS and conduct preliminary engineering for the Washington, D.C. to Richmond segment of the SEHSR corridor. This grant was supplemented by \$11,077,000 in funding from DRPT and CSX.
- **2012** — FRA initiated a NEC comprehensive planning effort to study, assess, and prioritize the investments in the NEC from Washington, D.C. to Boston. (The NEC FUTURE Tier I EIS and Service Development Plan was completed in 2016). In July 2012, Amtrak also released its plans for the NEC, *The Amtrak Vision for the Northeast Corridor—2012 Update Report*.
- **2012** — Amtrak released its *Norfolk Short Term Action Plan*, which outlined activities to enable the introduction of regional passenger service from Richmond to Norfolk later that year as well as the extension of two additional round-trip frequencies from Richmond to Norfolk by 2022.
- **2012** — DRPT joined with CSX in a Joint Corridor Planning and Investment Agreement to promote planning for high-speed passenger rail in the Washington, D.C. to Richmond corridor. The Agreement calls for CSX to invest no less than \$15 million in projects that benefit high speed passenger rail in the corridor, including improvements to track, signals and communications, and other infrastructure. The Agreement stands in addition to various other agreements between CSX and Virginia regarding state funded freight and passenger rail improvements and commitments.
- **2012** — A federal ROD was signed for the Tier I EIS for the Richmond to Hampton Roads SEHSR Passenger Rail Project.
- **2013** — DRPT updated Virginia's *Statewide Rail Plan* that identified passenger and freight rail improvements within this corridor along with various other corridors. An accompanying *Virginia Rail Resource Allocation Plan* was also released.
- **2014** — VRE issued its *Virginia Railway Express System Plan 2040*, which established a vision for future expansion to position VRE to meet projected future travel demands in Northern Virginia based on long-term population and employment forecasts for the region.
- **2014** — DRPT released its *2014 Update: Passenger Rail Improvements Utilizing CSX's Interstate 95 Rail Corridor Synthesis Report*.
- **2015** — FRA signed the Tier II Final EIS and Preliminary Engineering for the SEHSR Richmond, Virginia to Raleigh, North Carolina segment.
- **2016** — FRA released the Tier I Final EIS Statement for NEC FUTURE.
- **2017** — FRA signed a ROD for the Tier II SEHSR Richmond, Virginia to Raleigh, North Carolina segment.