

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Department of Rail and Public Transportation**

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**\*On October 14, 2014, a correction was made to the project information, changing the corridor length from 115 miles to 123 miles.**

## **DRPT and FRA Offer Early Opportunity for Public to Weigh in on Washington D.C. to Richmond, VA Higher Speed Passenger Rail**

**RICHMOND**—The Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT), in cooperation with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), today announced the start of a preliminary engineering and environmental review project for enhanced intercity passenger rail service between Washington, D.C. and Richmond, Va. The 115-mile corridor is a segment of the Southeast High Speed Rail Corridor (SEHSR), which runs from Washington, D.C. through Richmond, Va. and Raleigh, N.C. to Charlotte, N.C. It is part of a nationwide initiative by the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) to improve service and connections to higher speed rail service in the northeast (Boston, Mass. to Washington, D.C.) to points in the southeast (Miami, Fla. to Charlotte, N.C.) and beyond.

The project, expected to be complete within three years, is the second step in a two-tiered process of federal review. The Tier II Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) being prepared will further evaluate the preferred alternative from the Tier I EIS completed in 2002 (Alternative “A” – the CSX Transportation line), as well as other passenger rail improvements required to support increased passenger service and faster, more reliable connections. While the Tier I study established the general corridor for improved service, the exact corridor route and stations will be decided as a part of the Tier II EIS process.

The public will play an integral role in the development of the preferred alternative and in the overall environmental review process. Throughout the study, the public will have multiple opportunities to learn more and provide insight regarding how improved intercity passenger rail service will impact their communities. The first opportunity for public input is available now through an online survey at [www.DC2RVArail.com](http://www.DC2RVArail.com). This survey offers citizens and other stakeholders a chance to give initial input on the scope of the study before the public scoping meetings, which will take place in November.

“It has been several years since the Tier I EIS was completed in this region,” said Jennifer Mitchell, Director of the Department of Rail and Public Transportation. “This survey will allow us to gather new information and capture everyone’s thoughts on intercity passenger rail service from Richmond to D.C. With such a large study area, it’s important for us to understand all localized transportation needs and concerns early in the process to ensure successful outcomes.”

Four public meetings will be held throughout the corridor in November 2014 to offer citizens an opportunity to learn details of the study, review information from the Tier I EIS, and to provide feedback.

Public information meeting dates and locations as well as study details can be found on the project website at [www.DC2RVArail.com](http://www.DC2RVArail.com), the project Facebook page at DC2RVArail, and Twitter at @DC2RVArail.

## **Background**

DRPT and FRA are preparing a Tier II EIS for the Washington, D.C. to Richmond, Va. segment of the SEHSR corridor as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). A Tier I EIS for this corridor and beyond to Charlotte, N.C. was completed in 2002. The current Tier II EIS is the next step toward a more rigorous environmental study of potential alternatives to bring higher speed rail to the Commonwealth. In addition to completing this next phase of environmental study, DRPT will conduct preliminary engineering to evaluate station, track, and safety improvements, as well as the feasibility of adding an additional track in the corridor. These improvements are required in order for additional passenger trains on the corridor to operate at higher speeds with fewer delays.

The goal of the Tier II EIS is to reach a set of approvable and buildable projects that meets the Purpose and Need of the project while protecting environmental and community resources. The end result will be an Environmental Impact Statement, coupled with a service development plan whose analysis and approval may support the Design-Build or final design and construction of the corridor in the future.

The Richmond area to Washington, D.C. higher speed rail corridor is an integral component of the Commonwealth's transportation system and will complete a critical link in the U.S. rail system between the Northeast Corridor (Boston, Mass. to Washington, D.C.) and the SEHSR. These proposed improvements will enhance the connectivity by providing faster and more reliable rail service.

This study is funded through a cooperative agreement between the DRPT and FRA for the completion of preliminary engineering and Tier II environmental review.

### ***About the Department of Rail and Public Transportation:***

*The Department of Rail and Public Transportation's mission is to improve the mobility of people and goods while expanding transportation choices in the Commonwealth through rail, public transportation, and commuter services.*

*DRPT is committed to ensuring that no person is excluded from participation in or denied the benefits of its services on the basis of race, color or national origin, as protected by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. For additional information on DRPT's nondiscrimination policies and procedures or to file a complaint, please contact the Title VI Compliance Officer, Linda Balderson, (804) 786-4440, 600 E. Main Street, Suite 2102, Richmond, VA 23219.*

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