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News

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FRA Clears Hurdle For Improving Freight and Passenger Rail Between D.C. and Richmond, VA

Agency seeks public input for Preferred Alternative

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) today announced the completion of the Tier II Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for the 123-mile section of the Southeast High-Speed Rail Corridor from Washington, D.C., to south of Richmond, VA. This action moves the project one step closer to the construction phase of the Southeast Corridor, which will improve freight and rail traffic south of the nation's capital.

The Preferred Alternative in the DEIS prepared by the FRA with the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (Virginia DRPT) will:

- Reduce passenger and freight congestion and improve on-time performance
- Accommodate planned and funded Virginia Rail Express (VRE) growth of four new round-trip trains
- Accommodate forecasted CSX freight growth through 2045 (doubling from approximately 21 trains in 2015 to 42 in 2045)
- Increase maximum train speeds from 69 mph to 79 mph between D.C. and Fredericksburg and to 90 mph between Fredericksburg and Richmond
- Add nine new round-trip trains from D.C. to Richmond, with four continuing east to Hampton Roads and four south to Raleigh.

"Moving people and goods as quickly and as safely as possible is an important cornerstone of the Federal Rail Administration's mission," said **FRA Deputy Administrator Heath Hall**. "As this project moves forward, it's critical that we receive feedback from potential passengers and the public at large."

FRA and Virginia DRPT will accept public comments on the DEIS for 60 days beginning on September 8, 2017. Based on public comments on the DEIS and the Preferred Alternative, DRPT and FRA will prepare a Final EIS (FEIS), which will list environmental commitments to mitigate unavoidable impacts.

The total cost of the project is approximately \$5 billion, which is estimated in 2025 dollars to reflect the first year of service; however, no funding commitments have been made for construction.

Publication of the DEIS is a milestone in the NEPA review process. It initiates a comprehensive public comment period before the FRA issues a FEIS and Record of Decision.

For more information, visit FRA.gov

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