

REGIONAL POSITION AND TALKING POINTS

HAMPTON ROADS CONNECTION TO S. E. HIGH SPEED RAIL CORRIDOR

Overarching position: (unanimously adopted by the Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization (HRTPO))

Endorse the extension of high-speed rail service from Washington, D.C. to Richmond/Petersburg and the Hampton Roads region, designating a high-speed rail corridor along the Norfolk Southern/Route 460 corridor designated ultimately at speeds of more than 110 mph, and enhance the intercity passenger rail service along the CSX/I-64 corridor. The HRTPO position is best reflected in a strengthened alternative #1, which we strongly endorse.

TALKING POINTS

- **UNIQUE NATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Hampton Roads is a unique national asset, containing the largest concentration of federal activities anywhere in the country outside of D.C. The region houses operations of 16 departments and agencies of the Executive Branch of the federal government including all five military services. It is home to the nation's largest naval facility, provides primary air defense to our nation's Capitol, and homeland security to our port and seacoast. Dependable, efficient and cost effective travel to and from the D.C. area is vital to operations.

- **SUSTAIN AND GROW TOURISM**

Hampton Roads is home to major tourist designations, including the Virginia Beach oceanfront and the historic Williamsburg area, attracting nearly 5 million tourists annually. High speed rail, coupled with a connection to an intercity light rail system whose first phase is already under construction, will provide a much needed transportation alternative to visitors and will help mitigate growing congestion during the peak tourist season.

- **ENHANCED ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS**

Our ability to rapidly move both people and freight to and from the region and connect with the marketplace is fundamental to Hampton Roads' future competitiveness. In addition to facilitating the movement of people, improvements in the Norfolk Southern/Route 460 corridor will have the added benefit of enhancing the competitiveness of the Port of Virginia, while fostering the growth of manufacturing and distribution centers along the corridor.

- **SIGNIFICANT RETURN ON INVESTMENT**

Given Hampton Roads unique market characteristics; the regions proximity to Washington, D.C.; the suitability of the Norfolk Southern/Route 460 corridor to high-speed rail; and the fact that passenger rail service can be implemented in the corridor with a modest investment and in a relatively short period of time, Hampton Roads arguably offers the single best return on investment of any rail corridor in the country.

- **SUPPORT INTERCONNECTED LIVABLE COMMUNITIES**

The Bowers Hill station will provide easy access via I-264 and the Hampton Roads beltway (I-64/I-664). Community plans envision an intermodal transfer facility at the Harbor Park station in downtown Norfolk that will link high-speed rail to the light rail system, intercity and regional bus systems, ferry service, cruise ship facilities and direct interstate access. Along the multi-modal corridors that will be served, business and residential development will be concentrated.

- **PUBLIC SAFETY AND EMERGENCY EVACUATION**

Hampton Roads has insufficient emergency evacuation routes to handle its population, hindered to a great extent by bridge and tunnel crossings on every major corridor. High-speed rail will provide a high volume transportation option for moving citizens more quickly from the area without future congesting limited highway evacuation routes.

Additional Project information:

- Amtrak has expressed a desire to move its' Northeast Regional trains out of Union Station in Washington to Richmond/Petersburg. Some of the trains could easily terminate and overnight in Norfolk or Newport News and originate their first trips of the day from Hampton Roads.
- Passenger rail service can be implemented along the Norfolk Southern/Rt. 460 corridor with minimal investment and in a relatively short period of time. (Preliminary estimates are as low as \$75 million to begin limited passenger service.)
- The Norfolk Southern/Rt. 460 corridor is ideally suited to introduction of high speed rail service with sufficient right-of-way and a straight line connection from the City of Suffolk to Petersburg.
- The first phase of the light rail system, the only one in the Commonwealth outside of Northern Virginia, is expected to begin service in 2011 and study for expansion to Virginia Beach and the Norfolk Naval Station are underway.
- Air fare to Reagan National in D.C. from Norfolk International via U.S. Air is currently in excess of \$1,000. Conversely, current Amtrak service from Newport News is under \$80 but service is infrequent and not reliable. Enhanced Amtrak service from the Peninsula and high speed rail from Southside Hampton Roads will be cost and time efficient.