

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: SEPTEMBER 15, 2009

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER *J*

SUBJECT: RESOLUTION ON THE PROPOSED HIGH-SPEED RAIL LINE FROM RICHMOND TO WASHINGTON, D.C.

**ISSUE:** Consideration of a resolution endorsing the proposed high-speed rail line from Richmond to Washington, D.C.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That City Council adopt by roll call vote the attached resolution which endorses high-speed rail service from Richmond to Washington, D.C.

**DISCUSSION:** High-speed rail transportation is a very different mode of transportation from traditional train service. By definition, high-speed rail express service is frequent, express service between major population centers 200 to 600 miles apart, with few intermediate stops. The speed for true high-speed rail is at least 150 miles an hour, with complete grade separation. High-speed rail regional services are relatively frequent services between major and moderate population centers 100 to 500 miles apart, with some intermediate stops. This service has top speed of 110 to 150 mph, and has some grade separation, but shares some track with other rail lines. Emerging High-Speed Rail also serves corridors between 100 to 500 miles, with a high potential for future HSR regional and/or Express Service. Top speeds of 90 to 110 mph on primarily shared track with advanced grade crossing protection or separation. Conventional intercity trains travel more than 100 miles with as little as one to as many as 7 to 12 daily trains. This service is on shared track. The existing train service from Richmond to Washington, D.C. is currently a conventional intercity train. The Department of Rail and Public Transportation hopes to make improvements in the corridor, in the short term, which will convert it into an Emerging High-Speed Rail service. In time, this service is planned to be upgraded further. On October 2, the Commonwealth of Virginia will be submitting a major high-speed rail grant application to the Federal Railroad Administration, and has asked local governments to formally endorse this important grant application.

Since 1992, there have been active proposals to build high-speed rail from Washington, D.C. to Richmond, Virginia, as part of the Southeast High-Speed Rail Corridor (SEHSR). In that year, the United States Department of Transportation named this route as one of five main potential high-speed rail routes in the United States. In 1999, Virginia and North Carolina began a Tier I

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on the SEHSR from Washington, D.C. to Charlotte, NC. This document examined nine alternatives. The Draft Tier 1 EIS was completed in 2001. The final EIS, which identified a preferred corridor, was completed in June 2002, the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Railroad Administration providing a record of decision in October, approving the project, and allowing the second round of environmental studies to begin. The portion of the corridor from Richmond to Raleigh, NC is being analyzed through a Draft Tier II EIS.

In early 2009, the Obama administration and Congress announced that the United States will be making a substantial investment in High-Speed Rail services. It proposed to spend \$8 Billion of American Recovery and Reinvestment funds on High-Speed Rail. Further, the Administration hopes to invest \$1 billion a year for the next five years in High-Speed Rail. As a consequence of this commitment, all eligible corridors, which includes the Southeast Corridor, were eligible to submit projects for funding. The Commonwealth of Virginia submitted a project in the Richmond-Washington, D.C. corridor for the first round of stimulus funding. This project, submitted on August 24, 2009, builds 11.4 miles of third track in Stafford and Prince William Counties, at a cost of \$74.8 million. If the Commonwealth receives this grant, the goal of achieving 90 mph train service from Alexandria to Richmond will come closer to reality.

The Commonwealth is also in the process of developing another application for the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) under the FRA's Track 2 program. This application is intended to enhance modal connectivity at stations in the corridor and increase passenger rail service to downtown stations. The proposed corridor project in Alexandria will provide ADA compliant connections to local buses and to the Washington Metrorail system. This project will make the station ADA compliant by installing two elevators to a new tunnel from Alexandria's train station to the King Street Metrorail Station. This connecting tunnel was contemplated when the King Street Metro Station was constructed, but funding for this new tunnel connection has never been available. This project is expected to cost \$16,000,000. The project will greatly enhance the flexibility and throughput of the station. Councilman Smedberg asked that the attached resolution be docketed for Council consideration.

Along with these developments, the amount of regular train service traveling through Alexandria will increase shortly. On October 1, the Commonwealth will be funding passenger rail service which originates in Lynchburg and travels through Charlottesville, Manassas, and Alexandria on its way to points along the Northeast Corridor such as New York and Boston. In the middle of December, the Commonwealth is scheduled to add an additional train between Richmond and Washington, D.C., with a stop in Alexandria.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** The City will not be required to provide local matching funds for any of these grants or services, but will benefit tremendously as the addition of high speed rail service with a stop in the City will have long-lasting economic and tax generating benefits.

**ATTACHMENT:** Resolution

**STAFF:**

Mark Jinks, Deputy City Manager

Richard J. Baier, P.E., Director, T&ES

Bruce Johnson, Chief Financial Officer, OMB

Bob Garbacz, Acting Director of Transportation and Transit, T&ES

James Maslanka, Division Chief of Transit, T&ES

Antonio Baxter, Division Chief of Administration, T&ES

RESOLUTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

WHEREAS, the connection of high-speed rail service from Alexandria to Richmond will offer significant economic opportunities, reduce traffic congestion, along the I-95 corridor, saves valuable travel; time, and improves air quality, and

WHEREAS, the Washington, D.C. to Richmond Region high-speed rail connection is a critical section of the Southeast High-speed Rail Corridor; and

WHEREAS, the City of Alexandria will be one of the major beneficiaries of Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) administered ARRA funding if a pending grant application is approved by the FRA. This application will fund \$16,000,000 of improvements to make the Alexandria Union Station ADA accessible, and to provide a better connection with local buses and Metrorail stations.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City of Alexandria, this 22<sup>nd</sup> day of September, 2009, hereby endorses the extension of high-speed rail service from the Washington Metropolitan Area to the Richmond Region and encourages the preparation and submission of an important infrastructure.

AND, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City of Alexandria strongly encourages the Federal Railroad Administration to approve the Commonwealth of Virginia's funding applications for monies to construct high-speed rail from the Washington Metropolitan Area to the Richmond Region.

The undersigned duly qualified and acting as City Clerk of the City of Alexandria certifies that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of a Resolution, adopted at a legally convened meeting of the City Council held on the 22<sup>nd</sup> day of September, 2009.

ADOPTED: \_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

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WILLIAM D. EUILLE    MAYOR

ATTEST:

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JACQUELINE M. HENDERSON    CITY CLERK

**RESOLUTION NO. 2359**

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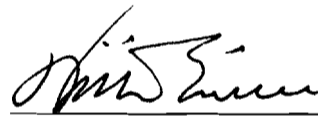
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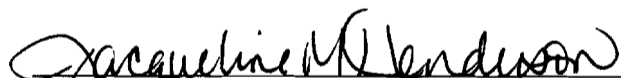
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ADOPTED: September 22, 2009



**WILLIAM D. EULLE                      MAYOR**

ATTEST:



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Jacqueline M. Henderson, CMC    City Clerk