To: Chairman Smedberg and the VRE Operations Board

From: Doug Allen

Date: November 15, 2013

Re: VRE System Plan Update and Virginia Department of Rail and Passenger Transportation Report

In follow-up to the presentation at the October VRE Operations Board meeting, an overview of the specific system investments recommended in the System Plan, including a preliminary estimate of capital costs, will be provided.

A discussion of available VRE capacity (train slots) and agreements related to the use of those slots will also be provided. As background to the presentation, a summary of the agreements addressing VRE capacity expansion follows:

The Operating/Access Agreement between CSX and VRE, executed in 1995 and most recently amended in 2011, outlines a commitment by VRE to build a parallel Third Mainline of Track within the railroad corridor from mile post (MP) CFP 53.2 (XR, also referred to as Crossroads) to MP 112.3 (Virginia Avenue Interlocking, also referred to as CP Virginia) to expand railroad capacity and make all three lines of track fully operable for mixed freight and passenger rail purposes.

The initial 1995 version of the Operating/Access Agreement required the completion of the entire Third Mainline Project from XR to Virginia Avenue Interlocking before any expansion in VRE service would be permitted. Subsequent discussions with CSX regarding this provision resulted in the 2002 CSX-VRE-DRPT Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) where the parties agreed to an incremental approach to constructing the Third Mainline (i.e., increasing railroad capacity) and incremental VRE and DRPT-contracted service expansion linked to completion of specific capacity improvements. DRPT participated in the MOU and joined in the commitment to the Third Mainline Project because of its interest in VRE service as well as the advancement of state-contracted intercity service each of which are facilitated by the Third Mainline Project.
The 2002 MOU identified an initial series of railroad capacity improvements towards the Third Mainline commitment, including:

- Quantico Creek Bridge
- VA Tunnel to L’Enfant Plaza Third Mainline
- Slaters Lane to RO Third Mainline
- AF to Franconia-Springfield Third Mainline
- Fredericksburg to HA Third Mainline

The MOU improvements have been completed and earned an additional eight daily trains or “slots”; six on the Fredericksburg Line and two on the Manassas Line. A slot is a one-way train trip. A round trip consists of two slots. By 2008, VRE was using two of the Fredericksburg Line slots (for train 301 and a northbound afternoon non-revenue train.)

DRPT requested an amendment to the MOU in 2008 to initiate the state-contracted intercity service. The First Amendment to the MOU, executed in 2009, permits DRPT to borrow four VRE slots; one round-trip on each line. The Amendment also permitted VRE to convert the existing Fredericksburg Line afternoon non-revenue train to Train 300, a new express morning revenue train.

The First Amendment also addresses the steps DRPT must take to return the slots it borrowed to VRE. It stipulates that DRPT will fund new rail capacity improvement project(s) to expand CSX Mainline capacity to replace the VRE slots. Those projects will receive priority for future year Commonwealth funding and no additional DRPT-contracted trains can be added until the slots are restored to VRE.

A process for implementing additional capacity improvements towards the Third Mainline commitment has been agreed upon by CSX, VRE and DRPT. That process includes the following steps:

1) Identify the specific railroad capacity improvements (e.g., track and related signals, switches and other infrastructure) which will advance the Third Mainline project;
2) Determine the effect of specific improvements on capacity and/or operations;
3) Establish the priority to be given to specific improvements;
4) Assess the benefits to passenger and freight rail service to be derived from the improvements;
5) Identify the source(s) of public funding for the construction and maintenance of the specific improvements; and
6) Determine the extent to which, if any, VRE service and DRPT-contracted intercity service may be expanded upon completion of the specified capital improvements.

In addition to initiating state-sponsored intercity service, DRPT is also advancing planning for the Virginia portion of the Southeast High Speed Rail (SEHSR) initiative that will establish high speed rail service from Atlanta, GA, through Charlotte, NC and Richmond, VA to Washington, DC. Within the VRE service area, the SEHSR alignment follows the existing CSX rail corridor. DRPT is in the process of initiating work on a Tier
2 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to assess the potential impacts of the Richmond, VA to Potomac River segment (RAPS) of the SEHSR corridor. The EIS provides a detailed analysis on the impacts, including track location, station arrangement and detailed design. High speed rail trains will share the CSX rail corridor with VRE trains, Amtrak long distance trains, DRPT-contracted intercity trains and freight trains. While there have yet to be discussions with DRPT about how the SEHSR initiative should be coordinated with the VRE’s commitment to a third mainline, it is anticipated this will occur sometime in the future.