To: Chairman Milde and the VRE Operations Board
From: Doug Allen
Date: March 21, 2014
Re: TIGER Grant for Long Bridge Expansion

The VRE System Plan identified the expansion of railroad capacity in the Long Bridge corridor between the VRE Alexandria station and L’Enfant station, including expansion of the bridge across the Potomac River, as a critical need to support long-term VRE growth and service expansion. Concurrent with the development of the VRE System Plan, the District of Columbia Department of Transportation (DDOT) has been advancing the Long Bridge Study, a comprehensive study of existing 2-track bridge and identification of long-term improvements to expand the capacity of the bridge for commuter rail, intercity passenger rail, freight and other multi-modal uses. That study is expected to be completed in the next several months. The next step in planning for the expansion of the bridge is NEPA analysis and refinement of the bridge concepts developed in the current DDOT study.

VRE staff met with DDOT staff on March 7, 2014 to discuss partnering on the submission of a FY14 TIGER planning grant application to continue the planning for the Long Bridge expansion. Input and concurrence is sought from the VRE Operations Board, including participation as a funding partner in the TIGER grant application to contribute towards the non-federal match requirement. Should VRE partner with DDOT, a memorandum of understanding (MOU) or similar document will be developed to formalize VRE’s relationship with DDOT on the TIGER planning grant application and resulting study, if the grant application is successful. That MOU will be brought to the VRE Operations Board for authorization.
The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2014 appropriated $600 million to be awarded by the USDOT for National Infrastructure Investments, also referred to as TIGER Discretionary Grants. TIGER grants will be awarded on a competitive basis for projects that will have a significant impact on the Nation, a metropolitan area, or a region. Up to $35 million of the $600 million total available may be awarded as planning grants. Projects that are eligible for planning grants include activities related to the planning or design of a single surface transportation project or activities related to regional transportation investment planning. The deadline for TIGER applications is 5:00 p.m. on April 28, 2014.

There is a minimum 20% non-federal match required for the planning grant. However, applicants can increase their competitiveness for the TIGER program by providing overmatch above and beyond the 20% minimum. The VRE FY15 capital budget allocates funding for project development activities to advance system investments recommended in the System Plan including completing planning, NEPA and/or preliminary design. The planning work proposed for the Long Bridge expansion project under the TIGER grant is consistent with those activities. Furthermore, $2M effort is included in the approved Senate version of the state budget for VRE to advance a core capacity project such as this Long Bridge project. The estimated cost for the Long Bridge NEPA analysis is $5 million. DDOT has identified approximately $1 million in existing federal funds to commit to the project. A TIGER planning grant request for the remaining $4 million is anticipated, which would require a minimum $800,000 non-federal match. It is proposed that VRE project development funds be used to satisfy a portion of the TIGER grant non-federal match requirement.

DDOT staff will reach out to other Long Bridge stakeholders, including Amtrak, CSX, the U.S. Redevelopment Corporation, and others to discuss obtaining their support and partnership in the TIGER application. VRE staff has contacted the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation to involve them in the discussions. A meeting is planned the week of March 17th among all stakeholders to discuss the application further.