Agenda Item 10-D
Information Item

To: Chairman Cook and the VRE Operations Board

From: Doug Allen

Date: March 20, 2015

Re: VRE’s Proposed Fare Increase: Comments from Public Hearings

Background:

During the FY 2016 budget process, VRE staff recommended a fare increase of up to 4%. The Operations Board referred the FY 2016 Budget to the Commissions on December 19, 2014, along with directing the CEO to get public comment on the proposed fare increase. VRE proposed an across the board increase of up to 4%, without any change to the current ticket discount structure, and an increase in cost of the Step-Up ticket from $3 to $5 per ticket. Public hearings were held in Washington, D.C., Crystal City, Burke, Woodbridge, Manassas, Stafford and Fredericksburg.

The fare increase was recommended primarily due to reductions in state operating funds, operating costs associated with Positive Train Control (PTC), increased costs for train operations, and scheduled increased costs for track access. In addition, plans are in place to open the Spotsylvania station and add an additional Fredericksburg Line train in summer 2015.

The public comment period began on February 18, 2015 and ran through March 12, 2015. Comments were received via e-mail and through public hearings. The hearings were attended by 31 people (3 Fredericksburg, 6 L’Enfant, 4 PRTC, 9 Manassas, 6 Crystal City, 2 Burke, and 1 Stafford). During the public hearings, there
was general acceptance of the need for the proposed fare increase as riders understood the need to balance the budget through a fare increase. However, other participants stated their opposition to the fare increase as it is a direct out-of-pocket expense increase for them. In addition to comments received at the Public Hearings, 51 emails were received. Public comments received via email were largely in opposition to the proposed fare increase.

In addition to comments regarding the change in fares, passengers also took the opportunity to provide their opinions regarding their satisfaction with VRE service and on-time performance. They also asked questions about extending service, “S” schedules, and to advocate for additional services and more capacity.

VRE staff will bring forth its fare increase recommendation to the Operations Board at its April meeting along with a final summary of public comments received.

**Fiscal Impact:**

It is anticipated that the fare increase will generate $1.1 million in additional fare revenue in FY 2016.