Agenda Item 9-A
Information Item

To: Chair Cristol and the VRE Operations Board
From: Doug Allen
Date: October 18, 2019
Re: Draft 2020 Legislative Agenda

Members of the Legislative Committee and staff will update the VRE Operations Board on the status of the attached Draft 2020 Legislative Agenda.

Prior to the start of the Virginia General Assembly session in Richmond, the VRE Operations Board formulates and recommends to the Commissions its priorities to better communicate and influence the actions of the Governor’s Administration and the General Assembly. This agenda will serve as guidance for staff and the contracted legislation liaisons during the legislative session.

In addition, the Legislative Agenda includes Federal Legislative and Regulatory issues that are relevant to transit and commuter rail in the U.S., and VRE specifically. Throughout the year, staff and our contracted Federal Relations consultants will work with the U.S. Department of Transportation and its Agencies, our U.S. Congressional delegation, relevant U.S. Congressional Committees, and others to educate them on these issues and their potential impacts to VRE.

The VRE Operations Board will be asked to recommend the Legislative Agenda to the Commissions at its November 2019 meeting. Both NVTC and PRTC are scheduled to act on their respective Legislative Agendas, as well as VRE’s, at their December meetings.
State Legislative Issues:

Protect Commuter Rail Operating and Capital (C-ROC) funding levels.

Continue to keep legislators and administration apprised of how we are allocating/spending the C-ROC funds.

Support Secretary of Transportation/Department of Rail and Public Transportation on a coordinated funding plan using state and federal funds for Long Bridge expansion project and the DC to RVA rail expansion project.

Support actions by Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA) and others to restore funding for NVTA.

Defend against legislative proposals that would decrease funding for VRE.

Watchlist Issues

Advocate for increasing overall state transit operating and capital funds to “increase the pie” to allow for greater support to commuter rail and transit.

Monitor the Virginia Transit Association and others’ proposals to increase funding for public transportation and create programs that will increase ridership.

Monitor proposals to create transportation authorities that would include VRE jurisdictions.
Federal Legislative and Regulatory Issues:

Federal Grant Programs

Work with USDOT, U.S. Congressional delegation, relevant U.S. Congressional Committees, and regional stakeholders to educate and secure Administration and Congressional support for discretionary grant applications submitted by VRE.

FAST Act Reauthorization

VRE will partner with other stakeholders to advocate for appropriate funding levels and policies to support commuter rail and mass transit.

Surface Transportation Board (STB) Authority

Educate Congress and the Administration on the imperative of preserving STB’s jurisdiction over VRE, and other common carrier commuter railroads.

Monitor industry, Congressional and Administration efforts affecting the ability of VRE, and similar commuter railroads, to seek relief from the STB when negotiating with Amtrak.

Amtrak On-Time-Performance

Amtrak is working with the Federal Railroad Administration on developing OTP metrics and measurements which will then be enforced by the STB.

Watchlist Issues

USDOT Rulemaking

On August 15, 2017, the President signed an Executive Order on “Establishing Discipline and Accountability in the Environmental Review and Permitting Process for Infrastructure.” VRE will track and comment on proposed guidance, rulemakings, or requests for comment from USDOT helping to advance regulatory reforms applicable to VRE’s operations and Capital Improvement Program.