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Contact: Karen Finucan Clarkson (VRE)
571-255-0931
kfinucanclarkson@vre.org
Chad Chitwood (APTA)
202-496-4841
cchitwood@apta.com

Former VRE Operations Board Chair to Receive APTA Distinguished Service Award

Sharon Bulova honored for decades-long efforts to ensure region is served by high-quality, high-capacity transit

Alexandria, Va. – Noting her work in founding the Virginia Railway Express (VRE), championing Metrorail’s Silver Line expansion and securing dedicated funding for Metro, the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) has named Sharon Bulova, former chair of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors and the longest-serving member of the VRE Operations Board, as the recipient of its prestigious 2020 Distinguished Service Award.

“Having spent more than three decades not just advocating for public transportation but literally rolling up her sleeves to stand up a variety of transportation modes throughout the region, Sharon Bulova has demonstrated the highest level of commitment to the industry,” said VRE Acting CEO Rich Dalton, who nominated her for the award. “Her dedication and determination have resulted in a myriad of mobility options that are used by tens of thousands every day.”

The nomination details Bulova’s work in support of public transportation over 35 years, beginning in 1984 and ending with her retirement in 2019. It also describes her embrace of APTA’s core values, including leadership, integrity, excellence, diversity, inclusiveness, fairness and equity, teamwork and professionalism.

Bulova’s nomination was endorsed by four members of Northern Virginia’s congressional delegation, Virginia’s Governor and the chairman of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Board of Directors. Calling her a “transit visionary,” U.S. Senator Tim Kaine noted that Bulova “foresaw that transit-oriented development could absorb traffic congestion, spur economic development, and make for vibrant, pedestrian-friendly communities. ... I witnessed Sharon’s hallmark savvy and willingness to make hard choices to

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get big things done. In a matter of months, the Silver Line will be transporting its first riders to Dulles International Airport; without Sharon's leadership, this would still be a model on a conference room table."

"There is no denying Sharon Bulova's passion for, understanding of and commitment to public transportation," wrote Paul Smedberg, chair of the WMATA Board of Directors. "Often referred to as the 'mother' of VRE, Sharon stood up a fledgling commuter rail service that is now a vital cog in the region's transportation network. ... Her willingness to consider both sides of an issue and ability to identify common ground allowed the region to coalesce in its support of dedicated funding for WMATA."

Bulova will be recognized at APTA's TRANScend virtual meeting October 21-22, and formally honored at a ceremony during APTA's 2021 TRANSform Conference & EXPO in Anaheim, California, March 14-17, 2021.

The 13th largest commuter rail service in the U.S., VRE is a transportation partnership of the Northern Virginia and the Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commissions. VRE's mission is to provide safe, cost effective, accessible, reliable, convenient, and customer responsive commuter-oriented passenger rail service. The 4.5 million rides the railroad provides annually remove some 100 million vehicle miles from Northern Virginia's interstates. Learn more at www.vre.org.

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