



VIRGINIA RAILWAY EXPRESS
OPERATIONS BOARD

Agenda Item 11-D
Information Item

To: Chair Bohmke and the VRE Operations Board

From: Rich Dalton

Date: July 19, 2024

Re: Legislative Agenda Discussion

Staff will update the Operations Board on 2024 Legislative Agenda efforts/highlights and discuss the timeline and key issues for formulation of a 2025 Legislative Agenda.

Attachments:

VRE 2024 Legislative Agenda



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Transportation Commission
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Arlington, VA 22201
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**Virginia Railway Express
2024 Legislative Agenda
State Funding and Legislative Issues:**

Commuter Rail Exemption for Virginia State Tax on Surplus Lines Insurance

Advance legislation that would add policies for rolling stock and operating properties of railroads used for commuter rail service in the commonwealth, as well as cybersecurity policies for organizations operating such service, to the exemptions for state tax on surplus lines insurance.

Future Additional Service

Educate legislators on VRE's plans for additional service as part of the Commonwealth's Transforming Rail in Virginia program and begin planning for the need to find additional sustainable funding for operations.

Commuter Rail Operating and Capital Fund (C-ROC)

Monitor all proposed transportation funding legislation to ensure there are no adverse changes to C-ROC revenue sources.

Explore ways to diversify C-ROC revenue sources to include sustainable options that will reduce reliance on the gas tax.

Restoration of Lost Transportation Revenue Resulting from the Elimination of the State Sales and Use Tax on Groceries.

Support efforts to develop a plan to restore lost transportation revenue resulting from the elimination of the state sales and use tax on groceries. Elimination of the state sales and use tax on groceries reduced funding to public transportation by \$83 million over the SYIP and \$27 million for Virginia's passenger and freight rail programs.

Transportation Authorities

Monitor and support efforts by the Fredericksburg Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (FAMPO) to create a Regional Transportation Authority within Planning District 16, which includes several VRE member jurisdictions.

Freedom of Information Act

Coordinate with VRE's parent commissions and other stakeholders on legislative proposals that would maximize the flexibility of VRE and other public bodies to make policies on the conduct of electronic meetings that allow greater access to the public and opportunities for members to participate, while remaining open and transparent to the public.

**Virginia Railway Express
2024 Legislative Agenda
Federal Funding, Legislative and Regulatory Issues:**

Federal Grant Programs

Work with the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), Virginia's congressional delegation, relevant congressional committees, and regional stakeholders to educate and secure administration and congressional support for discretionary grant applications submitted by VRE or the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority (VPRA); or applications for projects submitted by others for projects directly impacting VRE service.

Rail Passenger Transportation Liability Cap

Collaborate with industry stakeholders in urging congress to make changes to the timeline for implementation of increases to the Rail Passenger Transportation Liability Cap from 30 days to as much as 180 days, as well as any other changes to the liability cap adjustment process that would be advantageous to VRE.

Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act/Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Implementation and Yearly Appropriations

Continue to partner with industry stakeholders and associations to advocate for robust annual appropriations, funding levels at the authorized levels, and appropriate implementation policies to support commuter rail and mass transit.

U.S. DOT Regulations and Rulemaking

Track and comment on proposed guidance, rulemakings, or requests for comment from U.S. DOT helping to advance permit streamlining reforms applicable to VRE's operations and Capital Improvement Program, as well as any proposed new or changes to existing rail related regulations.

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. This will come in the form of letters to Members of Congress and committees of jurisdiction, as well as in-person or virtual meetings to discuss VRE's position and circumstance.

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. As necessary, submit comments to regulatory bodies to advocate for preserving STB jurisdiction over VRE.

Federal Workforce

Follow legislative and administration actions focused on Federal workforce return to in-office work and permanent work-from-home policies, identifying opportunities to request strategies spreading the days federal workers and consultants are physically in the office throughout the workweek. These strategies would increase efficiency of the entire transportation system that currently sees peak usage and congestion mid-week and under-utilization on Mondays and Fridays.

Educate Congress and the administration on the imperative of siting new federal buildings and leasing federal office space at transit hubs that include both heavy and commuter rail, to promote transit ridership amongst the federal workforce.

Transit Benefits

Engage with relevant stakeholders on a proposal to increase and/or restructure transit benefits, including support for allowing a bike transit benefit to be used in concert with transit and parking benefits to encourage biking to VRE stations.