ITEM 6.6
December 3, 2020
PRTC Regular Meeting
Res. No. 20-12-___

MOTION:

SECOND:

RE: **APPROVE THE 2021 VIRGINIA RAILWAY EXPRESS LEGISLATIVE AGENDA**

ACTION:

WHEREAS, the Virginia Railway Express (VRE) is an essential part of a regional transportation network for the Northern Virginia and DC Metropolitan region; and

WHEREAS, VRE serves residents throughout the Commonwealth to provide a meaningful public transportation option; and

WHEREAS, it is essential for VRE to educate and advocate for desired legislative and regulatory outcomes with members of Congress and their staff, with staff of federal entities, in the Virginia General Assembly, and with the Governor and his administration; and

WHEREAS, VRE has coordinated its Legislative Agenda with the staffs of the Commissions and member jurisdictions; and

WHEREAS, the VRE Operations Board recommends the following action.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission does hereby approve the 2021 VRE Legislative Agenda and authorizes the Chief Executive Officer to actively pursue the elements set forth in the attached 2021 VRE Legislative Agenda.

Votes:
Ayes:
Nays:
Abstain:
Absent from Vote:
Alternate Present Not Voting:
Absent from Meeting:

Amended 11-20-20

Virginia Railway Express
2021 Legislative Agenda
State Funding and Legislative Issues

COVID-19 Pandemic Response
Monitor, evaluate and respond to legislative proposals pertaining to the COVID-19 pandemic that would impact VRE's operations, such as sick leave policies, hazard pay, and employee liability issues.

Support the maintenance of state funding and any necessary flexibility needed for public transportation in general, and VRE specifically, as the Commonwealth deals with the fiscal impact of the pandemic.

State Capital Funding
Protect state funding for the Long Bridge expansion plan and *Transforming Rail in Virginia* projects passed in the 2020 legislative session.

Safeguard funding for the Commuter Rail Operating and Capital (C-ROC) fund to ensure the Long Bridge expansion project continues to move forward and mitigate VRE revenue impacts resulting from lower ridership throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Virginia Passenger Rail Authority (VPRA)
Engage with and educate the staff of and gubernatorial appointees to VPRA about VRE's operations. Monitor, analyze and respond to proposed legislation or VPRA policy affecting VRE's fiscal or operational position. Support VRE's CEO in his capacity as an ex-officio member of VPRA.

Meetings Held Through Electronic Communication Means
Coordinate with VRE's parent commissions and other stakeholders on legislative proposals that would increase the flexibility of VRE and other public bodies to make policies that better accommodate the needs of their board members while remaining open and transparent to the public. This includes support for removing the state limit on how often Members may participate electronically when there is a physical quorum present, while retaining VRE's authority to govern such participation with additional guidelines or restrictions.

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

Virginia Transit Association (VTA)
Analyze VTA and others' proposals to increase funding for public transportation and create programs that will increase ridership.

Transportation Authorities
Monitor, evaluate and respond to proposals to create additional transportation authorities that would include VRE jurisdictions.

Proposed

Virginia Railway Express
2021 Legislative Agenda
Federal Funding, Legislative and Regulatory Issues

Surface Transportation Reauthorization
Partner with industry stakeholders and associations to advocate for robust funding levels and appropriate policies to support commuter rail and mass transit. Efforts will include, but are not limited to, participating in association committee meetings, providing comments to policy and regulatory position documents, and collaborating on legislative advocacy.

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.

Amtrak On-Time-Performance
Monitor and, as needed, submit comments to Amtrak and the Federal Railroad Administration regarding joint efforts to develop on-time-performance metrics and measurements which will be enforced by the STB.

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 with VRE as a key partner.

U.S. DOT Rulemaking
Track and comment on proposed guidance, rulemakings, or requests for comment from U.S. DOT helping to advance permit streamlining and regulatory reforms applicable to VRE's operations and Capital Improvement Program.

Liability Insurance Reform
Coordinate with the American Public Transportation Association and other stakeholders to investigate potential liability insurance reforms, with the goal of producing research on possible legislative and regulatory solutions to the industry's current struggles with attaining sufficient insurance to meet regulatory mandates and the increasing cost of doing so.

COVID-19 Relief
Monitor and, as appropriate, advocate for congressional and administration support for commuter rail and mass transit as the industry manages the impacts of COVID-19. Track and provide comments on congressional action specifically for front-line transit workers, including but not limited to, hazard pay for essential workers.

Proposed