



VIRGINIA RAILWAY EXPRESS
OPERATIONS BOARD

Agenda Item 10-B
Information Item

To: Chairman Skinner and the VRE Operations Board

From: Rich Dalton

Date: October 16, 2020

Re: Draft 2021 Legislative Agenda

Members of the Legislative Committee and staff will update the VRE Operations Board on the status of the attached Draft 2021 Legislative Agenda.

Prior to the start of the Virginia General Assembly session in Richmond, the VRE Operations Board formulates, and recommends to the commissions for approval, its priorities to communicate with and influence the actions of the Governor's Administration and the General Assembly. This legislative agenda will serve as general guidance for staff and the contracted legislation liaisons during the legislative session but does not preclude engaging on other issues as they arise.

In addition, the Legislative Agenda includes Federal Legislative and Regulatory issues that are relevant to transit and commuter rail in the U.S. and to VRE specifically. Throughout the year, staff and our contracted Federal Relations consultant 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 2020 meeting, with the Commissions in turn acting on their own legislative priorities as well as VRE's at their December meetings.



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**Virginia Railway Express
Draft 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 a legislative proposal 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.

Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVRTA) Funding

Support actions by NVRTA and others to fully restore funding for NVRTA.

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.

**Virginia Railway Express
Draft 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.