



# Virginia Rail Policy Institute

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April 12, 2013

Rebecca Reyes-Alicea

USDOT

Federal Railroad Administration—Office of Railroad Policy & Development

Mail Stop 20

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE

Washington, D.C. 20590

Subject: Northeast Corridor Future Draft Rail Investment Plan

Dear Ms. Reyes-Alicea:

We are pleased to note the recognition given to Virginia as an important market-driver of NEC ridership. To the extent you are permitted to do so under your mandate, Hampton Roads should be included, even if you trim away some of the Virginia market-area now graphically illustrated to the southwest of I-95 (although we would prefer you to keep all of it in). The DC-Richmond-Hampton Roads corridor contains more than two-thirds of Virginia's eight million residents. We believe that you will find, among prior studies, including those of the Bureau of Transportation Statistics, that the Norfolk-DC corridor is one of the top travel corridors in the USA. The presence of numerous DOD facilities in Hampton Roads is a major contributor. The only way to justify the enormous cost of improving the NEC to meet 2040 travel demands is to maximize the ridership potential.

Washington Union Station is, as you are keenly aware, one of the major capacity-limiting facilities in the NEC. Throughput can be improved in many ways, including: (a) inauguration of run-through commuter rail service between Virginia Railway Express and Maryland's MARC, (b) encouraging more of the one-million Virginians who use DC Union Station to board and alight on the south side of the Potomac, and (c) to facilitate that objective ("b") and to serve numerous other purposes, we suggest planning for the development of a new intercity rail terminal as a physical component of Reagan National Airport, from which point NEC electric-powered trains might originate and terminate in lieu of at Washington Terminal. [We believe there is sufficient undeveloped rail corridor land adjacent to Reagan National and the G.W. Parkway to add several tracks and platforms.]. If this were done, Reagan would then have many of the same intermodal transportation options as BWI, only better.

With only one existing rail crossing of the Potomac River at Washington, it is not only desirable to replace Long Bridge in the future, it will ultimately become imperative to plan for,

R. Reyes-Alicea, 4-12-'13, p.2

and construct, an entirely new rail approach route and rail crossing up-steam, or down. This would not only mitigate rail freight and passenger capacity issues on either end of Long Bridge, it would be essential to the maintenance of intercity passenger service to and from the NEC in the event of some natural, or hostile, occurrence. Already, train service south of Union Station in DC is occasionally halted prior to, and for the duration of, presidential motorcades.

Finally -- and we appreciate that your studies have to stop somewhere -- the operational and travel "hinge" that Virginia represents, in its linkage function as between today's NEC and the proposed SEHSC, should be at least acknowledged and requiring further study. Although the impact may not be fully felt by 2040, the Southeast Rail Corridor will also be a major user of NEC capacity.

We appreciate the good work that the Study Team has done so far, and we look forward to learning more about your preferred options and alternatives as this important work progresses.

Best Regards,

/s/

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