

February 23, 2011

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20050

Dear President Obama,

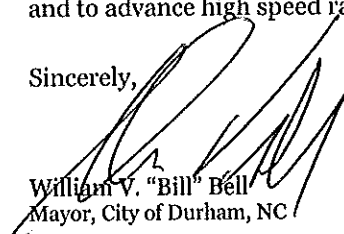
Thank you for your continued commitment to implementing a high speed and intercity passenger rail vision for America. As you explore the opportunities for new high speed rail investments, we urge you to consider funding the Richmond-Petersburg-Raleigh portion of the Southeast High Speed Rail (SEHSR) corridor which extends south from Washington, DC to Richmond, Hampton Roads, Raleigh, Charlotte, and cities throughout the southeast.

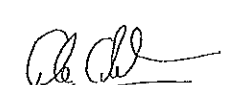
Constructing the Richmond to Raleigh high speed rail corridor — which will “Connect the Capitals” of VA and NC with Washington, DC — will help jumpstart the creation of the national high speed rail network for a host of reasons:


- Southeast corridor revenues are expected to exceed operating expenses, providing the basis for operation without any ongoing public subsidy
- Door-to-door travel times will be faster than or competitive with both flying and driving among city pairs in North Carolina and Virginia as well as to Washington, DC
- Average passenger operating speeds will be among the fastest in the USA at more than 90 MPH from Petersburg, Virginia to Raleigh, a distance of over 130 miles
- The Richmond-Raleigh corridor will open with a top speed of 110 MPH and incorporate track geometry and vertical clearances that will allow for possible future electrification and even higher speed operations
- The corridor will be completely grade-separated — by rerouting or bridging all existing highway crossings — in order to maximize safety, operational efficiency, and reliability
- The corridor will “Connect the Capitals” of Raleigh and Richmond via a new corridor that will be more than 30 miles shorter than the existing, indirect routing and save more than 90 minutes off of existing rail travel times
- The corridor will join the twin urban “job crescents” of Virginia and North Carolina between Charlotte, the Piedmont Triad, the Research Triangle, Richmond, Hampton Roads, N. Virginia and Washington, DC
- The existing Charlotte-Raleigh-Richmond-Washington-New York train already covers 78% of operating costs, even via the indirect, slower-speed route
- The Draft Tier II environmental impact statement (EIS) for Richmond-Raleigh was signed by FRA in May 2010, with the Final Tier II EIS due for completion by late next year
- USDOT has reported to the Congress that connecting the Southeast corridor to the Northeast corridor (NEC) is expected to boost NEC ridership and revenues by 17%
- Advancing this corridor will accelerate new rail service to Hampton Roads while boosting ridership and support for our shared priority of new high speed rail service from Richmond Main Street Station to Washington, DC

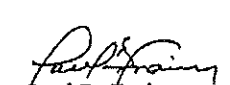
We urge you to fund all or a portion of this investment to make the Richmond-Petersburg-Raleigh corridor a reality and to advance high speed rail in America, via reallocated or new federal high speed rail funding.

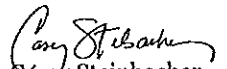
Sincerely,



William V. “Bill” Bell
Mayor, City of Durham, NC



Charles Meeker
Mayor, City of Raleigh, NC

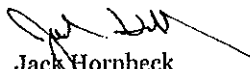

Dwight C. Jones
Mayor, City of Richmond, VA


Paul D. Fraim
Mayor, City of Norfolk, VA


Casey Steinbacher
President and CEO
Greater Durham Chamber


Harvey Schmitt
President and CEO
Greater Raleigh Chamber


Kim Scheeler
President and CEO
Greater Richmond Chamber


Jack Hornbeck
President and CEO
Hampton Roads Chamber

cc David Agnew, Deputy Director, White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs
Ray LaHood, Secretary, United States DOT

Robert F. McDonnell, Governor, Commonwealth of Virginia
Sean Connaughton, Virginia Secretary of Transportation
Thelma Drake, Director, Virginia DRPT
Kevin Page, Chief of Rail Transportation, Virginia DRPT

Beverly Eaves Perdue, Governor, State of North Carolina
Eugene Conti, Jr., North Carolina Secretary of Transportation
Jim Westmoreland, Deputy Secretary for Transit, NCDOT
Pat Simmons, Director, Rail Division, NCDOT