



## VIRGINIA RAILWAY EXPRESS

# 2023 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

### STATE FUNDING & LEGISLATIVE ISSUES

#### **State Operating Support**

Advance legislation that would remove VRE from the commonwealth's Transit Operating Assistance Program and instead create a direct, percentage-based allocation from the Mass Transit Fund for VRE operations.

#### **Commuter Rail Operating and Capital Fund (C-ROC)**

Safeguard funding for C-ROC to protect the revenue source of the VRE bonds and the ability of VRE to use funding for pay-as-you-go projects that support the commonwealth's Transforming Rail in Virginia Program and VRE's Capital Improvement Program.

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

#### **Virginia Passenger Rail Authority (VPRA)**

Continue to identify opportunities to require that future gubernatorial appointees to the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority Board of Directors for the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC)/Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission (PRTC) districts are selected from lists provided by the NVTC and PRTC boards of commissioners and potential voting status for the CEO of VRE.

Engage with staff and gubernatorial appointees to the VPRA board.

Monitor, analyze and respond to any proposed VPRA-related legislation or policy affecting VRE's fiscal or operational position.

#### **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.

#### **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.

#### **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.





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### FEDERAL FUNDING & LEGISLATIVE 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 with VRE as a partner.

#### ***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 or above the authorized levels, and appropriate implementation policies to support commuter rail and mass transit. Engaging with the Virginia congressional delegation, providing comments on policy and regulatory position documents and collaborating on legislative advocacy will be necessary to ensure commuter rail interests are reflected in yearly funding levels.

#### ***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.

#### ***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.

#### ***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.

#### ***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 contractors 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.

#### ***Transit Benefits***

Engage with relevant stakeholders on a proposal to increase and/or restructure transit benefits.

