



Resolution of Endorsement
For
New Amtrak Passenger Rail Service through the Region

WHEREAS, Charlottesville and the Central Virginia Region have enjoyed a rich history of passenger rail service connecting the region to Northern Virginia and Washington, D.C., and

WHEREAS, the railroads were vital to the growth of Central Virginia's economy and to the development, strength and diversity of its educational, cultural and civic institutions, and

WHEREAS, these historical ties to Northern Virginia and Washington, D.C. continue to be critical to the strength of our economy, to the health and vitality of our academic and research institutions, to our tourism industry, and to Central Virginia's increasing role as host to federal defense agencies and their allied contractors, and

WHEREAS, the Amtrak Crescent is the only daily passenger train connecting Charlottesville to Washington, D.C. and the Northeast Corridor, supplemented three days a week by the Amtrak Cardinal and

WHEREAS, neither of these Amtrak trains provides peak hour service to Northern Virginia and Washington, D.C., nor do they, as part of Amtrak's national system, provide a sufficient level of on-time performance to meet the needs of the business or non-business traveler who must arrive early in the day, arrive on-time, and return the same evening, and

WHEREAS, in spite of these limitations, Charlottesville maintains one of the highest, most consistent ridership levels of any Amtrak station in Virginia, and

WHEREAS, the Charlottesville Regional Chamber of Commerce found that 63% of its member businesses regularly send employees to Northern Virginia and Washington, D.C. for business purposes, 84% of the time they travel there by car, and 66% said they would use a reliable passenger rail link if one were available, and

WHEREAS, multiple state-funded studies over the past decade have identified Charlottesville-Washington as the route segment having the greatest potential for ridership growth in the US29/I-81 corridor, and

WHEREAS, in a 2008 report to the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (VDRPT), Amtrak recommended new service in the Lynchburg-DC corridor "as soon as possible," describing it as "underserved" and "a route segment that frequently sells out." and Amtrak proposed a new service structure, along with a schedule, and

WHEREAS, both VDRPT and Amtrak expressed interest in providing peak hour service for Washington-bound passengers; for example, Amtrak described the proposed schedule as offering "...a good service pattern for business travel to Washington - a first for the region.", and

WHEREAS, Central Virginians rallied around the Amtrak proposal, providing broad-based public input to the Department of Rail and Public Transportation to demonstrate that current Amtrak service is not currently meeting the region's needs, particularly for business and non-business travel to Washington, D.C., and

WHEREAS, both the City of Charlottesville and the County of Albemarle unanimously joined twenty-two political subdivisions in the US29 corridor that executed a resolution of support for the proposed Lynchburg-DC service, and

WHEREAS, in June 2007 the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission expressed support for additional passenger rail service from Central Virginia to Washington, D.C. by adopting Resolution 06-07

WHEREAS, Governor Tim Kaine has secured the necessary agreements with the host railroads, Amtrak and Virginia Railway Express, and the Commonwealth Transportation Board has appropriated the funds to operate Lynchburg-DC intercity passenger service for three years as a Demonstration Project, and

WHEREAS, VDRPT recently released the approved schedule for the Lynchburg-DC train, but this schedule is not useful for the business traveler or for a day trip to Washington, D.C., having a 7:43 a.m. departure from Lynchburg and 11:20 a.m. arrival in Washington, and

WHEREAS, passenger rail carriers in the United States are confined to certain time "slots" made available by the host railroads, but the host CSX line between Manassas and Washington Union Station was not available for additional peak hour slots serving the Lynchburg-DC train, and

WHEREAS, according to DRPT, "...the actual schedule for the new trains was developed based on the available time slots for new trains to be added in each corridor and compatibility with Amtrak Northeast Corridor service schedules, as defined in the agreements executed with the applicable host railroads and Amtrak." , and

WHEREAS, with the approved schedule, the Lynchburg-DC train will add to the rail options available for recreational travelers and others making extended stays, but will perpetuate the existing situation wherein passenger rail is of limited utility to the business, professional, academic, government and defense-related sectors of the Charlottesville and Central Virginia region, and will not serve the citizens of the US29 corridor who would choose the train for a day-trip to Washington, D.C. if an early morning arrival were available, and

WHEREAS, in order to demonstrate success and to justify future investments in the corridor, the ridership for the Lynchburg-DC train must materialize,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission urges VDRPT to closely monitor ridership performance during the first year of the Lynchburg-DC train service to determine if it is meeting expectations, as well as conduct comprehensive, valid market surveys to determine if a peak hour schedule, such as the schedule originally published by Amtrak, would result in greater use of the service, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission urges Governor Kaine, Secretary Homer and the VDRPT to do everything within the state of Virginia's legal power and authority to negotiate an additional, peak hour slot in the aforementioned Northern Virginia corridor, including an appeal with the Surface Transportation Board, if necessary, to mediate additional access for this and future trains serving the US29 corridor.

Adopted this 9th day of July, 2009.

Carl Schmitt, Chair