

13. CONCLUSION

This Statewide Rail Plan identifies high priority projects and recommended funding allocations for implementation of rail improvements in the Commonwealth for both short term and long term planning horizons including potential FRA ARRA grants.

13.1 Future Rail Plan Updates

13.1.1 Commonwealth Statewide Rail Plan Updates

It is DRPT's intent that the Statewide Rail Plan will be updated on a major basis every five years, with annual reviews conducted in accordance with FRA requirements. The Six-Year Improvement Program will be reviewed on an annual basis to:

- Evaluate rail transportation changes in the context of a multimodal transportation system – particularly passenger rail services (including high speed rail) and intermodal movements through the Ports of Hampton Roads.
- Respond to any Commonwealth or FRA ARRA grants of High-Speed Passenger rail funding programs, safety and security, reporting, environmental and funding program changes.
- Review implementation of rail plan priorities based on the following transportation goals:
 - Safety and Security
 - Preservation and Management
 - Mobility, Accessibility and Connectivity
 - Economic Vitality and Development
 - Land Use and Quality of Life
- Evaluate new technologies that could be implemented for rail improvements

13.1.2 Federal Railroad Administration Annual Review Requirements

In accordance with Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) requirements (CFR Sec. 266.15 FRA Requirements for State Rail Plan – [d], [d.1] updates, revisions and amendments), the Commonwealth will review the Statewide Rail Plan on at least an annual basis for potential updates, revisions and amendments and prepare an annual report to FRA summarizing the review. Any changes to the adopted plan will be subject to the same review procedures by the Commonwealth and FRA as the original plan.

The contents of the Commonwealth's annual report to FRA on the Statewide Rail Plan shall include the following (CFR Sec. 266.15 FRA Requirements for State Rail Plan – [d.2], [d.2.i] through [d.2.vii] updates, revisions and amendments):

- A response to unanswered FRA comments on previously submitted updates, revisions, amendments, or the original State Rail Plan;

- An update of information in previous submittals which is no longer accurate as a result of plan implementation, action by a governmental entity or railroad, or changed conditions;
- For lines receiving rail service continuation assistance, inclusion of revenue and cost information from the past year's operating experience and a reevaluation of service based on these new data;
- Updating of the maps and descriptions required under paragraph CFR Sec. 266.15 FRA Requirements for State Rail Plan [c.2];
- Analysis of any new projects developed by the State in accordance with paragraphs CFR Sec. 266.15 FRA Requirements for State Rail Plan [c.4], [c.5] and [c.6];
- Changes in agency responsibilities and authority including ability to provide the non-Federal share; and
- Revisions in the State's policies, objectives or long-range expectations.

13.2 Conclusion

As the preceding chapters have pointed out, rail is vital for the Commonwealth's economy, connecting Virginia to the global marketplace both overseas through connections at the Ports of Hampton Roads and in North America through rail connections that extend to the nation's East and West Coasts, north to Canada and south to Mexico.

Virginia's rail system faces a challenging future. This is due to several factors:

- Population in the U.S. is growing, and the Commonwealth's economic viability is drawing an even larger percentage increase than that of the nation overall. This means more crowded roadways, greater need for increasingly expensive fuel, increased demand for goods and services and a concern for maintaining natural resources and the environment.
- Passenger rail is seeing increasing demand in Virginia, particularly in its major metropolitan areas (Northern Virginia, Richmond and Hampton Roads), as congestion, fuel costs and environmental concerns make commuter and inter-city train travel a more attractive option.
- There is also increasing demand for freight rail. Partly this is due to the overall increase in demand for goods, such as coal, that currently use Virginia's rail system. Partly this is due to a desire to move freight from trucks to rail to obtain greater fuel efficiency, address roadway congestion and improve CO₂ emissions.
- Passenger and freight rail share tracks that are owned by private freight railroads. The dual demands of increased passenger and freight rail — which can have competing needs for track availability — have to be managed strategically in order to support and sustain the growth and quality of life to which the Commonwealth is committed.

By thinking in terms of an integrated multimodal transportation corridor network, the Commonwealth has accomplished much to meet these challenges, from rail line improvements and expansion to the establishment of a dedicated funding source. This

Statewide Rail Plan presents rail needs for the future that build on past achievements, with a focus on identifying key corridors and potential investments.

Given the costs of projects and limited public funding available, partnerships and collaboration will be the key to moving projects from dreams to operation. The Commonwealth is committed to enhancing partnerships with the private sector, including railroads, local governments and regional planning organizations, to attract private capital and to achieve its strategic goals.

Virginia has an ambitious rail agenda of alleviating congestion and creating a rail system appropriate for future passenger and freight growth. The Commonwealth cannot choose between freight or passenger rail. We need to focus on multimodal solutions for both that support our desire to reduce congestion, support economic prosperity and enhance the quality of life for all Virginians.