



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

September 17, 2019

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Commonwealth Commemorates 10 Years of Virginia-Sponsored Passenger Rail Service

Expanding passenger rail has improved mobility for Virginians and led to significant ridership increase over last decade

RICHMOND – The Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation ([DRPT](#)) celebrated 10 years of Virginia-sponsored passenger rail service in the Commonwealth of Virginia at a ceremony today at Main Street Station. Virginia Secretary of Transportation Shannon Valentine, Virginia Tourism Corporation President and CEO Rita McClenny, and Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation Director, Jennifer Mitchell spoke at the event.

On October 1, 2009, the Commonwealth of Virginia launched the inaugural daily round-trip Lynchburg to Washington D.C. Amtrak *Northeast Regional* service, the first state-sponsored intercity passenger rail service in Virginia. Enactment of the federal Passenger Rail Improvement and Investment Act

(PRIIA) the prior year required states to begin funding a significant share of regional Amtrak routes between 70 and 750 miles or otherwise services would cease. In its first year of operation, over 125,000 passengers used the new train.

In the decade since, Virginia's state-sponsored Amtrak services have grown from one to four routes and include six daily round-trip trains, with average annual ridership exceeding 850,000.

"I am honored to have been part of launching the first Virginia-sponsored Amtrak train in the Commonwealth in 2009," **said Shannon Valentine, Secretary of Transportation**. "Standing on the shoulders of many, we continue to build a rail network that supports job creation, workforce recruitment, tourism, and business investment throughout our Commonwealth."

Through the first 10 months of fiscal year 2019, total ridership across all Commonwealth-sponsored routes has increased 8.3% from the same period a year ago. Following the 2017 Lynchburg extension to Roanoke, ridership on the route increased 9% and remains up 5.3% year-to-date. In March 2019, a second Richmond to Norfolk service extension began. Coupled with new, optimized schedules for the routes serving Richmond, Norfolk, and Newport News, ridership is up 9.3%.

"Amtrak ridership continues to grow throughout the Commonwealth, supporting Virginia's economic growth in business and tourism," **said Jennifer Mitchell, DRPT Director**. "DRPT is committed to ensuring that Amtrak passenger service not only remains in Virginia, but also expands and improves by moving more people to all of the places they want to go."

In addition to the increase in ridership, Virginia's key passenger rail accomplishments over the last decade include:

- Inaugural service to Lynchburg in 2009
- Additional service to Richmond in 2010
- General Assembly creation of a dedicated funding for passenger rail in 2011
- Inaugural service to Norfolk in 2012 – the first time since 1977
- Acquisition of four round-trip trains in 2013 serving Richmond and Newport News
- Inaugural service to Roanoke in 2017 – the first time since 1979
- Addition of service and optimized schedules for Norfolk and Hampton Roads in 2019

Additionally, 331,000 tourists used Amtrak in Virginia in 2016, generating nearly \$2.3 million in tourism spending for the Commonwealth. Moreover, rail travel eliminates or prevents car congestion that clogs Virginia's heavily trafficked interstates, including I-95, I-66, I-64, and the Northern Virginia and Hampton Roads beltways. Eight passenger rail cars take 240 personal vehicles off of the highways.

"Tourism is an important economic driver and instant revenue generator for the Commonwealth," **said Rita McClenny, President & CEO of Virginia Tourism Corporation**. "Last year, visitors to Virginia spent \$26 billion, injecting critical funds back into our communities across the state. In Virginia, tourism and trains go hand-in-hand, as more and more travelers are choosing to make their trips by passenger rail. The ease and convenience of rail travel makes Virginia an even more attractive destination for travelers, which is why we are thrilled to celebrate this special fare and the positive impact it will have on our tourism economy."

DRPT is pleased to announce a special \$10 fare commemorating 10 years of Virginia-sponsored Amtrak service throughout the Commonwealth. This exciting promotion celebrates DRPT's success in improving mobility for all Virginians by ensuring continued growth of and financial support for passenger rail in Virginia.

For 10 days beginning Oct. 1 through 10, 2019, a one-way trip on all Amtrak *Northeast Regional* routes to and from Virginia stations, including Washington, D.C., is only \$10. Customers can begin booking trips today by visiting www.amtrak.com/virginia. The celebratory fare is available through Oct. 10, 2019, by using code V110 at check out.

Virginia has also financially supported exclusive discounts on Amtrak travel throughout Virginia and Washington, D.C., introducing the Virginia Anytime Fare (15% off) and the Virginia Student Fare (25% off for ages 13-25 with valid student ID). In-state travelers can also enjoy other select discounts supported by DRPT, including [ShareFares](#), which allow travelers a savings of up to 45% on tickets when traveling with up to five companions, and the [Saturday BOGO Sale](#), which offers customers one free adult ticket with the purchase of one adult ticket for Saturday travel on the Amtrak *Northeast Regional* service. Both ShareFares and the BOGO Saturday Sale require three-day advanced purchase. Other terms and conditions apply.

DRPT and Amtrak partner to provide intercity passenger rail service throughout Virginia. Customers can take advantage of same-seat service on six daily Amtrak *Northeast Regional* trains to and from 18 stations, including Newport News, Norfolk, Richmond and Roanoke, connecting to Washington, D.C., Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York City, and other cities in the Northeast.

For more information on the terms and conditions of all Amtrak discounts available to Virginia travelers, and to book online, please visit: www.amtrak.com/virginia.

Discount codes include:

- \$10 Fare – V110
- 15% off Virginia Anytime Fare – V552
- Virginia Student Fare – V449
- ShareFares – V291
- Saturday BOGO Sale – C222

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About the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation

DRPT's mission is to improve the mobility of people and goods while expanding transportation choices in the Commonwealth through rail, public transportation, and commuter services. DRPT is committed to ensuring that no person is excluded from participation in or denied the benefits of its services on the basis of race, color, or national origin as protected by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.