



# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

## *Virginia Passenger Rail Authority*

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### **RESOLUTION OF THE VIRGINIA PASSENGER RAIL AUTHORITY BOARD**

**January 24, 2023**

#### **MOTION**

**Made By: James Spore      Seconded By: Patricia Doersch**

**Action: Motion Carried, Unanimously**

#### **Title: Resolution Adopting the Northern Virginia Core Capacity Project**

**WHEREAS**, the mission of the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority (“VPRA”) is to promote, sustain, and expand the availability of passenger and commuter rail service in the Commonwealth of Virginia; and

**WHEREAS**, VPRA is the sponsor of the Northern Virginia Core Capacity Project, consisting of the following elements:

- (i) the Long Bridge Project,
- (ii) the Alexandria Fourth Track Project, and
- (iii) the acquisition of three new trainsets to be used in the Virginia Railway Express commuter train service; and

**WHEREAS**, the District of Columbia’s *State Rail Plan* (2017) included robust public and stakeholder engagement between 2015 and 2017 to identify near-term and future project needs and identified Long Bridge as a future project to expand passenger and freight service capacity; and

**WHEREAS**, the District of Columbia completed a Phase I planning and feasibility study in the Long Bridge corridor in 2015 that identified structural and operational deficiencies in the corridor and studied concepts to address those deficiencies, including concepts to keep the two-track capacity of the corridor or expand capacity to four tracks; and

**WHEREAS**, the District of Columbia completed a Phase II study in 2016 that included further refinement of engineering concepts, the development of draft evaluation criteria to identify and screen concepts, and the development of a long-range service plan based on future demand in the corridor; and

**WHEREAS**, throughout the Phase I and Phase II study processes, the District of Columbia held public meetings and stakeholder briefings to ensure broad public awareness of the study development and findings; and

**WHEREAS**, the Long Bridge Project received environmental clearance under the *Combined Final Environmental Impact Statement/Record of Decision and Final Section 4(f) Evaluation* dated August 2020 (the “**Long Bridge Project EIS/ROD**”), prepared by the Federal Railroad Administration (“**FRA**”) and approved by FRA and the National Park Service;

**WHEREAS**, the Federal Transit Administration (“**FTA**”) participated in the Long Bridge Project EIS/ROD as a cooperating agency and intends to adopt the Long Bridge Project EIS/ROD pursuant to 23 USC § 139(c)(5); and

**WHEREAS**, the Long Bridge Project evaluated multiple alternatives to meet the project purpose to provide additional long-term railroad capacity and to improve the reliability of railroad service through the Long Bridge corridor; and

**WHEREAS**, the Long Bridge Project is needed to address the insufficient capacity, resiliency, and redundancy to accommodate the projected demand for future railroad services; and

**WHEREAS**, the Northern Virginia Core Capacity Project will construct the preferred alternative with respect to the Long Bridge Project (Action Alternative A) that best meets the project needs; and

**WHEREAS**, the Long Bridge Project identified the preferred alternative to include the expansion from two (2) to four (4) tracks within the current 1.4-mile railroad corridor between RO Interlocking in Arlington, VA (MP 110.1) through LE Interlocking in the District of Columbia (MP 111.5); and

**WHEREAS**, the Long Bridge Project preferred alternative includes new four (4) track railroad bridges over Maine Avenue SW, over Washington Channel, and Ohio Drive SW, and new two (2) track railroad bridges over Interstate 395, the Washington Area Metropolitan Transit Authority rail tunnel portal, and the Potomac River and George Washington Memorial Parkway; and

**WHEREAS**, the Long Bridge Project also includes a new pedestrian and bicycle bridge over the Potomac River and George Washington Memorial Parkway; and

**WHEREAS**, in 1992, the U.S. Department of Transportation designated the Southeast High-Speed Rail (“**SEHSR**”) corridor between the District of Columbia and Charlotte, NC as one of the original national high-speed rail corridors; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2002, FRA, in coordination with the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation and the North Carolina Department of Transportation, completed a first-level Tier I Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision for the SEHSR corridor between the District of Columbia and Charlotte, NC that defined the physical limits for passenger rail improvements in the 500-mile corridor between the endpoint cities, from which subsequent studies would define the specific alignment and infrastructure improvements and service plan for a section within the larger corridor; and

**WHEREAS**, the Atlantic Gateway Program included a suite of projects to expand rail and highway capacity in Northern Virginia that included constructing six miles of fourth mainline track from RO Interlocking in Arlington to the AF Interlocking in Alexandria, where passenger and commuter trains bound for Manassas diverge from the SEHSR corridor; and

**WHEREAS**, Virginia’s 2017 Statewide Rail Plan recognizes the rail network as an asset for the Commonwealth and identified the DC to Richmond High Speed Rail Project, the Atlantic Gateway Program, and the Long Bridge Capacity Expansion as important initiatives to advance; and

**WHEREAS**, the construction of approximately six miles of fourth track between RO Interlocking in Arlington, VA (MP 110.1) and AF Interlocking in Alexandria, VA (CFP 104.3), known as the Alexandria Fourth Track Project, is a project cleared under the Atlantic Gateway Program (now known as the Transforming Rail in Virginia Program); and

**WHEREAS**, the *DC to Richmond Southeast High Speed Rail Tier II Final Environmental Impact Statement and Final Section 4(f) Evaluation*, dated May 2019, includes the Alexandria Fourth Track Project; and

**WHEREAS**, FTA intends to issue a categorical exclusion under the National Environmental Policy Act (“NEPA”) for the acquisition of right-of-way for the Alexandria Fourth Track Project pursuant to 23 CFR 771.118(d)(4); and

**WHEREAS**, in 2014, the Virginia Railway Express (“VRE”) Operations Board adopted the *2040 System Plan* providing a framework for VRE system investments and actions VRE should pursue through 2040, including expanding peak service and introducing reverse peak trains and additional express trains; and

**WHEREAS**, VPRA’s Transforming Rail in Virginia Program includes capital and infrastructure investments to expand passenger rail service across the state, including supporting the increase of VRE service along the I-95 corridor by 75%, with more service in the peak period and additional late-night and weekend service; and

**WHEREAS**, the Commonwealth of Virginia has successfully negotiated the transfer of 223 miles of track and more than 400 miles of right-of-way to the Commonwealth, a key part of a larger \$3.7 billion program announced in 2019 to double Amtrak passenger service and increase VRE commuter rail service; and

**WHEREAS** the acquisition of rolling stock is eligible for a categorical exclusion under NEPA pursuant to 23 CFR 771.118(c)(17); and

**WHEREAS**, the Long Bridge Project and the Alexandria Fourth Track Project are each included as capital projects within the VPRA Fiscal Year 2023 Budget, and the trainsets are included in the VRE Fiscal Year 2024 Budget and;

**WHEREAS**, VPRA is currently delivering the Long Bridge Project and the Alexandria Fourth Track Project pursuant to a Comprehensive Rail Agreement between VPRA and CSX Transportation, Inc. dated March 26, 2021, which agreement was assigned to VPRA pursuant to a resolution of this Board dated May 24, 2021; and

**WHEREAS**, VPRA is authorized by Va. Code § 33.2-292(A)(14) to accept federal grants, and is currently taking the necessary steps to become an eligible recipient of FTA federal transportation assistance, including with respect to a potential Capital Investment Grant for the Northern Virginia Core Capacity Project; and

**WHEREAS**, VPRA’s Northern Virginia Core Capacity Project was accepted into Project Development for FTA’s Capital Investment Grant Program in November of 2021; and

**WHEREAS**, it is a condition of FTA Capital Investment Grant funding that this Board adopt the Northern Virginia Core Capacity Project as a discrete VPRA project.

**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Board hereby adopts as a VPRA project and intends to advance the Northern Virginia Core Capacity Project, consisting of the following elements as the locally preferred alternative:

- (i) the Long Bridge Project,
- (ii) the Alexandria Fourth Track Project, and
- (iii) the acquisition of three new trainsets to be used in the Virginia Railway Express commuter train service.

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