

## **AGENDA ITEM #11: FOR YOUR INFORMATION**

### **A. New HRTPO Website**

The HRTPO has launched its new and improved website, reflecting the unique needs, values, and concerns of Hampton Roads' diverse stakeholders and citizens. The website is part of the HRTPO's effort of maintaining an accessible and transparent transportation planning process.

The new website serves as a how-to guide for accessing and getting involved in the various projects, programs, and other work of the HRTPO and gives citizens a direct say in the decisions made about transportation in our region. To facilitate this process and make it as easy as possible for citizens, the website continues to feature an events calendar and translator, allowing for the translation of the HRTPO's reports, notices, and website between a number of languages. The website can be viewed at [www.hrtpo.org](http://www.hrtpo.org).

### **B. HRTPO 2012 Public Participation Plan**

On December 5, 2012, the Draft HRTPO Public Participation Plan (PPP) Update closed for public comment. Originally intended to run for a 45-day comment period, the Draft PPP comment period was lengthened to 90 days. The comment period was extended to allow for the best opportunity for public comment. Comments received were considered and utilized in the finalization of the plan. The Public Participation Plan is now available as a final report.

### **C. RECORD OF DECISION ISSUED FOR THE RICHMOND TO HAMPTON ROADS PASSENGER RAIL STUDY**

In a December 14, 2012 press release (attached), the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) announced that the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) had signed a Record of Decision (ROD) for the Richmond to Hampton Roads Passenger Rail Study, satisfying the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for a Tier I Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that considered alternatives for improving rail service between the Richmond and Hampton Roads regions.

The issuance of the ROD makes DRPT and FRA eligible to initiate the Tier II NEPA process, which will develop, evaluate, and recommend specific improvements within the corridor that are consistent with the ROD and will achieve the purpose and need of the Tier I level study.

To review the Tier I Final EIS, go to [http://rich2hrrail.info/pages/mp\\_reports.html#Tier](http://rich2hrrail.info/pages/mp_reports.html#Tier).

Attachment 11-C

## **D. HAMPTON ROADS 2012 QUADRENNIAL FEDERAL CERTIFICATION REVIEW: FINAL REPORT**

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) recently conducted a joint Planning Certification Review of the Hampton Roads Transportation Management Area. This review covers the period from 2008 through 2012. The certification review determines if the HRTPO's metropolitan transportation planning process adequately addresses major issues facing Hampton Roads in accordance with applicable Federal regulations, and also assesses the cooperative planning process between the HRTPO, transit operators, local governments, and state agencies.

As a result of this certification review, a report was prepared by FHWA/FTA summarizing the Federal team's findings on how the HRTPO currently addresses specific planning elements under the metropolitan planning regulations. The report identifies commendations and recommendations for improvement as well as notable planning practices and accomplishments by the HRTPO since the last certification review. In his remarks to the HRTPO Board at its November 2012 meeting, Mr. Ivan Rucker, Highway Safety Programs Manager/Freight and Emergency Coordinator for FHWA, noted "Not only has the HRTPO expanded the playing field, but they made the playing field more diverse." Most of the recommendations are not regulations; rather they reflect national interest and trends and are intended to assist the HRTPO in its efforts to effectively meet Federal planning requirements.

Handout



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**RECORD OF DECISION ISSUED FOR THE RICHMOND TO  
HAMPTON ROADS PASSENGER RAIL STUDY**

*Marks Completion of the Tier I National Environmental Policy Act Process*

WASHINGTON –The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) has signed a Record of Decision (ROD) for the Richmond to Hampton Roads Passenger Rail Study, satisfying the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for a Tier I Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that considered alternatives for improving rail service between the Richmond and Hampton Roads regions.

The ROD records FRA’s decision to support the selected alternative identified by EIS proponent Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT), which recommends increased conventional speed service (maximum 79 mph) along the existing Virginia Peninsula intercity passenger rail route from Newport News to Richmond. The selected alternative also recommends new higher speed service (maximum 90 mph) on the Southside route from Norfolk to Richmond, generally following U.S. Route 460 south of the James River.

Thelma Drake, director of the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) said, “The Record of Decision is significant on many levels. It’s much more than a review of the environmental impact. This decision establishes the Southeast High Speed Rail Corridor route into Hampton Roads, at a time when the Commonwealth has initiated intercity passenger rail service to the region after a 35 year absence.”

In advance of the ROD, FRA and DRPT circulated the Final Tier I EIS for agency and public review on August 31, 2012. Comments received during the review period were addressed and summarized in the ROD. The Draft EIS, Final EIS and ROD are available at <http://www.rich2hrrail.info>.

With today’s announcement, DRPT and FRA are eligible to initiate the Tier II NEPA process, which will develop, evaluate and recommend specific improvements within the corridor that are consistent with the ROD and will achieve the purpose and need of the Tier I level study.