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Building on Success, Rail Advocates Release Vision for Train Service in Virginia

Richmond, Virginia- Virginians for High Speed Rail, the Southern Environmental Law Center, the Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce, Greater Richmond Chamber of Commerce, and Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce have jointly released their vision for expanded regional train service throughout the Commonwealth in a new report entitled **The Case for Virginia's Regional Trains: The Foundation for the Future**.

The report details the rail advocates vision to triple the number of regional trains, reduce trip times by up to 35%, increase on-time reliability to over 90%, and expand regional service to reach 80% of Virginians. The transportation funding package Virginia adopted earlier this year creates a dedicated source of funding for passenger rail, which will provide the resources to advance many of the recommendations in the report.

Virginia's existing regional trains have seen their ridership increase by 10.3% over the last year and grow a remarkable 100% since 2009, indicating a high demand for rail transport. Virginia's six current roundtrip regional trains and their bus connectors serve 23 destinations, 75% of Virginia's population, and 81% of the Commonwealth's economy along key economic corridors.

"Transportation is a major issue for the citizens and businesses of Hampton Roads. With key assets such as our ports, defense and educational institutions, along with several corporate headquarters, it is essential for our citizens and visitors to have the ability to travel to and from Hampton Roads easily and efficiently, which is why our Regional trains are so vital to our communities." stated Bryan K. Stephens, President and CEO of the Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce.

"Every person that we can put on a train means one less automobile burning fuel and pumping pollution into our air." said Trip Pollard, Director of the Land and Community Program of the Southern Environmental Law Center. "Additionally, investments we make in passenger rail often add freight capacity, which will help reduce the number of long-distance trucks needing to use our highways."

"Returning daily Regional passenger rail to Roanoke and Southwest Virginia will give our business leaders, students, and all citizens an efficient and dependable connection to Washington and other

destinations along the Northeast.” stated Joyce Waugh, president of the Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce. "This connection is critical for the future economic vitality of our region."

“Expanding and enhancing our regional train network is vital for the future economic growth of the Commonwealth; however this can only be accomplished by increasing service, reducing travel times, and improving reliability. Our report lays out a vision for how to make this a reality.” said Danny Plaughter, Executive Director of Virginians for High Speed Rail.

The report includes facts and figures about Virginia’s current rail service, discusses the economic, environmental, and social benefits of this service, and outlines next steps to be taken to further grow regional rail in the Commonwealth.

The report can be found here: <http://www.vhsr.com/system/files/VARegionalReport.pdf> or <http://www.southernenvironment.org/uploads/publications/varegionaltrains.pdf>

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Virginians for High Speed Rail is a non-profit coalition of citizens, businesses, localities, community organizations, and economic development agencies that educate and advocate for the expansion of fast, frequent, and reliable rail service connecting our communities to increase the economic potential of the Commonwealth. We were founded in 1994 as a partnership between the Greater Richmond Chamber of Commerce and the Future of Hampton Roads. More information on VHSR can be found at www.VHSR.com

The Southern Environmental Law Center is a regional nonprofit using the power of the law to protect the health and environment of the Southeast (Virginia, Tennessee, North and South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama). Founded in 1986, SELC's team of nearly 60 legal and policy experts represent more than 100 partner groups on issues of climate change and energy, air and water quality, forests, the coast and wetlands, transportation, and land use. www.SouthernEnvironment.org

The Greater Richmond Chamber is building a thriving business community by supporting the success of its members, providing a strong business voice and developing leaders and entrepreneurs. The Chamber, a not-for profit business memberships association with more than 1,100 members, is the voice of business in the City of Richmond and the counties of Charles City, Chesterfield, Goochland, Hanover, Henrico, New Kent and Powhatan, as well as the Town of Ashland. Please visit www.GRCC.com.

The Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce was established in 1889 and has over 1,200 members in 42 localities. More information can be found at: www.roanokechamber.org

The Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce is a vigorous advocate for the economic success of its nearly 2,000 member businesses, which employ 280,000 men and women in southeastern Virginia. The Chamber promotes Hampton Roads’ healthy business climate through economic development, public policy initiatives, services and benefits to members. The Chamber is dedicated to creating economic opportunity and enhancing the quality of life in Hampton Roads. (www.HamptonRoadsChamber.com)

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