



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Commonwealth Transportation Board

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Agenda item # 3

RESOLUTION OF THE COMMONWEALTH TRANSPORTATION BOARD

November 20, 2019

MOTION

Made By: Ms. Hynes, Seconded By: Mr. Kasprowicz

Action: Motion Carried, Unanimously

Title: NVT Application Endorsement: Franconia-Springfield Passenger Rail Bypass Project

WHEREAS, the proposed Franconia-Springfield Passenger Rail Bypass Project (“Project”) is a dedicated passenger rail bridge that would remove up to 26 conflicts per day between passenger and freight trains crossing tracks as they enter or exit the northern VRE Corridor (Franconia-Washington, DC) to access service specific facilities and customers; and

WHEREAS, railroad operations will be more reliable and safer by enabling passenger trains to cross between the east and west sides of the tracks without interference from trains on the other two tracks; and

WHEREAS, this Project would add capacity for additional passenger rail service improving service reliability, making passenger rail travel more competitive, and providing an alternative to interstate travel which is critical in Northern Virginia as volume to capacity forecasts for interstates demonstrate continued degradation of the system as a result of higher vehicle miles traveled and continued growth in population; and

WHEREAS, the planned construction of a four-track corridor between Alexandria and Washington D.C., including the Long Bridge Project, the Atlantic Gateway Alexandria 4th Track Project and VRE station projects, will remove existing bottlenecks, adding rail capacity and further improving the reliability of both freight and passenger rail on the most heavily used rail line in the Commonwealth of Virginia; and

WHEREAS, the proposed Franconia-Springfield Passenger Rail Bypass Project, combined with the projects noted above will significantly improve operations over 20 miles of track and deliver economic growth, higher performance, and greater safety and security; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Rail and Public Transportation, in addition to its broader duties to advance projects related to expansion of passenger rail capacity, has applied to the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority for up to \$100 million in Authority funding to advance the Franconia-Springfield Passenger Rail Bypass Project; and

WHEREAS, the Franconia-Springfield Passenger Rail Bypass Project is eligible to receive Northern Virginia Transportation Authority funding as a project associated with TransAction Primary ID 93 (Fredericksburg Line Rail Capacity Improvements).

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board hereby supports the application for the Franconia-Springfield Passenger Rail Bypass Project and authorizes the Director of DRPT to submit this resolution to NVTA in order to complete the application process for receiving up to \$100 million in Authority funding; and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board authorizes the Director of DRPT to execute the Standard Project Agreement with NVTA, subject to approval of the agreement by the Office of the Attorney General, if funds are awarded by NVTA as part of their FY2020-2025 Six Year Improvement Program.

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CTB Decision Brief

Title: NVTA Application Endorsement: Franconia-Springfield Passenger Rail Bypass

Issue: On July 1, 2019, the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (“NVTA”) posted a Call for Regional Transportation Projects for FY2024 and FY2025 regional revenue consideration as part of their FY2020-2025 Six Year Program Update. The Department of Rail and Public Transportation (“DRPT”) prepared and submitted an application for the Franconia-Springfield Passenger Rail Bypass Project (“Project”). This Project will construct a dedicated passenger rail bridge in the northern VRE Corridor (Franconia-Washington, DC) enhancing access service to specific facilities and customers by eliminating up to 26 conflicts a day between passenger and freight trains. The bypass is within the limits of DRPT’s Atlantic Gateway Franconia-Occoquan project, which extends the current three-track section north of the VRE Franconia-Springfield Station south to Occoquan (7.2-miles). A CTB resolution endorsing DRPT’s application is required for the application to be considered in NVTA’s project evaluation process.

Facts: The proposed bridge is 0.9 miles long with a maximum height of 36.6 feet and will include one new track with capacity for a second track in the future. Existing tracks in the area will also be shifted. Railroad operations will be more reliable and safer by enabling passenger trains to cross between the east and west sides of the tracks without interference from trains on the other two tracks. VRE operations will especially benefit from less train interference, as they consistently report interference to be one of the most common causes of delay. While the Project has independent utility, it will also enable the region to maximize the benefits of other rail infrastructure improvements being planned or underway such as the planned construction of a four-track corridor between Alexandria and Washington D.C., including the Long Bridge Project, Atlantic Gateway Alexandria 4th Track Project and VRE station projects. These projects will remove existing bottlenecks, add rail capacity and further improve the reliability of both freight and passenger rail on the most heavily used rail line in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Combined with the Franconia-Occoquan Project and Franconia-Springfield Passenger Rail Bypass, these projects will significantly improve operations over 20 miles of track and deliver economic growth, higher performance, and greater safety and security.

Additionally, the Franconia-Springfield Passenger Rail Bypass will help reduce congestion in the heavily traveled I-95/I-395/US 1 corridor. This project adds capacity for additional passenger rail service and improves service reliability, making passenger rail travel more competitive. The expansion of passenger rail as an alternative to interstate travel is critical in Northern Virginia as volume to capacity forecasts for interstates demonstrate continued degradation of the system as a result of higher vehicle miles traveled and continued growth in population. More specifically, the top two bottlenecks in the region are currently located adjacent to the project area on I-95 (95 S and 95 N at VA-123/Exit 160). Two VRE trains an hour can carry approximately 2,000 persons or the equivalent capacity of one lane of traffic each on I-95/I-395/ US 1 and I-66. By supporting increased rail capacity in the region, the Project expands the capacity of the corridor and contributes to the reduction of regional congestion. Similarly, 100 freight railcars are the equivalent of 340 semi-trailer trucks, so improved reliability can make rail a more attractive mode for transporting freight and decrease the number of trucks on adjacent roadway facilities.

Recommendation: DRPT recommends approval of the resolution.

Action Required by CTB: Approval of the attached resolution in advance of NVTAs November 29, 2019 application deadline.

Options: Approve, Deny or Defer.