

News Release



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GOVERNOR BOB MCDONNELL ANNOUNCES AMTRAK AND VIRGINIA REACH AGREEMENT FOR NEW ERA IN PASSENGER RAIL

Commonwealth is first state to take greater control of regional intercity passenger service under federal law

WASHINGTON – Governor Bob McDonnell announced today that Virginia has stepped up in partnership with Amtrak to sign on as the first state to usher in a new era and take greater control of passenger rail service. Under the agreement Virginia will be assuming greater costs associated with making intercity passenger rail service available to communities between Washington, D.C., and Lynchburg, Newport News and Norfolk, including Richmond.

This new operating and capital cost-sharing agreement with Amtrak, as required under federal law, needed to be in place no later than October 1, 2013 or all Virginia regional rail service would have ceased.

“Over 1.5 million people either board or disembark on a train in Virginia,” said Governor McDonnell. “Stopping regional Amtrak service in the Commonwealth was not an option. With this agreement between Virginia and Amtrak, we can continue to provide for existing regional intercity passenger rail service and work toward extending new service from Lynchburg into Roanoke and extend more service to Norfolk. I’m pleased that Virginia was the first state able to sign this agreement.”

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“Under the leadership of Governor McDonnell, Virginia worked to ensure that a dedicated funding source was created to insure that state-supported regional intercity passenger rail continues to operate after October 1,” said Transportation Secretary Sean T. Connaughton. “Many Virginians rely on this cost-effective, comfortable transportation option, and this administration has recognized how important this service is to citizens of the Commonwealth.”

The agreement supports Virginia’s ongoing commitment to offering the public transportation choices to driving on congested highway corridors like I-95, Route 29, Route 460, and I-81, expanding mobility and increasing connectivity for travel throughout the regions served and along the Northeast Corridor. Passenger rail service also supports economic development and job growth for long-term local investment along service routes.

“Virginia is a forward-thinking leader on this issue, developing the cost-sharing methodology with Amtrak and becoming the first state to ensure its corridor services continue to operate beyond the October 1 deadline,” said Amtrak President and CEO Joe Boardman.

“Virginia recognizes the value, mobility and economic development that Amtrak service brings to the state and local communities.”

The agreement between Virginia and Amtrak is part of Section 209 of the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 (PRIIA), a federal law that requires Amtrak to work with the 19 affected states to establish a consistent cost-sharing methodology for the 28 corridor routes of less than 750 miles in order to ensure fair and equitable treatment of all states. Starting in late 2010, Amtrak and the Section 209 State Working Group, comprised of representatives from California, Maine, North Carolina, Virginia, and Wisconsin, developed a cost-sharing methodology that ultimately received approval for implementation by the Surface Transportation Board.

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About Amtrak Virginia:

Amtrak Virginia is a program developed by the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) and Amtrak to provide more rail travel choices in Virginia. The new service promotes economic, tourism and environmental benefits. For more information visit AmtrakVirginia.com.

About Amtrak®:

Amtrak is America’s Railroad®, the nation’s intercity passenger rail service and its high-speed rail operator. A record 31.2 million passengers traveled on Amtrak in FY 2012 on more than 300 daily trains – at speeds up to 150 mph (241 kph) – that connect 46 states, the District of Columbia and three Canadian Provinces. Amtrak operates intercity trains in partnership with 15 states and contracts with 13 commuter rail agencies to provide a variety of services. Enjoy the journey® at Amtrak.com or call 800-USA-RAIL for schedules, fares and more information. Join us on facebook.com/Amtrak and follow us at twitter.com/Amtrak.