



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Virginia Passenger Rail Report Unveils Bold Vision for the Future of Mobility in the Commonwealth



Amtrak Airo trains will begin serving Virginia's Regional routes by 2027 ([download image here](#)); Credit: Amtrak

Richmond, Virginia – November 16, 2023 - **Virginians for High Speed Rail (VHSR)**, the **Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC)**, **RVA757 Connects**, **Greater Washington Partnership (GWP)**, and **New River Valley (NRV) Passenger Rail** are proud to announce the release of the report, "[Virginia Passenger Rail: Keys to Further Success](#)," a comprehensive examination of the current state of passenger rail in Virginia and a roadmap for its expansion and enhancement. This collaborative effort brings together experts, advocates, and community leaders to address the critical need for a more robust and efficient rail system in the Commonwealth.

Passenger rail in Virginia has been incredibly successful and garnered strong bi-partisan support. Over the last three decades, Amtrak has handled over 33.6 million trips in Virginia while VRE has carried more than 95.7 million passengers. Combined, these 129.3 million trips avoided an estimated 15.1 billion miles people would have traveled on our roads, reducing fuel consumption by 303.2 million gallons, and preventing the release of 5.9 billion pounds of carbon emissions as well as other tailpipe pollutants. Not to mention that **Virginia's Amtrak and VRE trains have generated over \$16.3 billion in economic benefits for the Commonwealth** during that time span. This Report lays out the path for how our passenger trains will provide even greater benefits over the next three decades.

Barry Bishop, President of **Virginians for High Speed Rail**, expresses enthusiasm for the report's potential impact: "Virginians for High Speed Rail is dedicated to advocating for fast, frequent, and reliable passenger rail service to enhance the economic potential of the Commonwealth. This report not only identifies the tremendous work that is underway but also outlines the challenges we're facing and provides strategic recommendations to continue to transform the Commonwealth's transportation landscape to promote economic growth and improved connectivity."

Trip Pollard, Director of the Land & Community Program at the **Southern Environmental Law Center**, emphasizes the environmental and consumer benefits of passenger rail: "At the Southern Environmental Law Center, we seek solutions that ensure everyone has access to sustainable, reliable transportation. This report shows that passenger rail is key to developing a cleaner, more accessible transportation system. Transportation is the largest source of carbon pollution in the Commonwealth, and we need to build upon our track record of success to provide a robust passenger rail network that gives Virginians more alternatives to driving."

John W. Martin, President and CEO of **RVA757 Connects**, emphasizes the regional significance of the report: "RVA757 Connects is committed to advancing economic prosperity in the Richmond and Hampton Roads regions. The Virginia Passenger Rail Report plays a pivotal role in identifying opportunities that benefit the entire I-64 Innovation Corridor, promoting collaboration, and shared economic success through the enhanced mobility and connectivity that a world-class passenger rail network can provide."

T.J. Maloney, Vice President of Policy & External Affairs for the **Greater Washington Partnership**, underscores the regional collaboration embedded in the report: "The Greater Washington Partnership brings together leading employers across Maryland, Virginia, and Washington, DC committed to championing growth and shared prosperity. The "Virginia Passenger Rail: Keys to Further Success" report builds on the Partnership's Regional Rail vision by highlighting how Virginia can drive economic competitiveness by building out a competitive passenger rail network that is regionally connected and coordinated across VRE, MARC, and Amtrak."

Sandy Davis, co-chair of **New River Valley Passenger Rail**, highlights the longstanding grassroots community support behind the group's efforts: "NRV Passenger Rail is a community-driven initiative to bring Amtrak service to Virginia's New River Valley. For over a decade, the broad-based support and enthusiasm for bringing passenger rail service to the area illustrates its importance to our citizens and the continued demand for this service. Providing a convenient alternative to I-81 offers numerous benefits to local residents and visitors, including increased safety and access. "Virginia Passenger Rail: Keys to Further Success" is a guide to how passenger rail will positively impact our higher education institutions, localities, and businesses across the New River Valley to strengthen our economy and community for generations to come."

The Virginia Passenger Rail Report represents a collaborative effort to shape the future of transportation in the Commonwealth. By addressing current challenges and presenting innovative solutions, the report sets the stage for a more connected, sustainable, and economically vibrant Virginia.

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About VHSR: Virginians for High Speed Rail is a nonprofit 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.

About SELC: The Southern Environmental Law Center is one of the nation's most powerful defenders of the environment, rooted in the South. SELC takes on the toughest environmental challenges in court, in government, and in our communities to protect our region's air, water, climate, wildlife, lands, and people. Nonprofit and nonpartisan, the organization is headquartered in Charlottesville, Virginia.

About RVA757 Connects: RVA757 Connects is a nonprofit organization focused on advancing the economic prosperity for everyone in the Richmond region (RVA) and Hampton Roads (757) – a megaregion called the I-64 Innovation Corridor. The organization identifies, supports, and advances major opportunities, initiatives, and projects that meaningfully benefit both the Richmond and Hampton Roads regions.

About GWP: The Greater Washington Partnership is the first-of-its-kind nonprofit alliance of the region's most influential leading employers across diverse industries in Maryland, Virginia and Washington, DC – all committed to championing the region's economic growth and vibrancy.

About NRV Passenger Rail: NRV Passenger Rail is broad-based community initiative to bring Amtrak passenger rail service to Virginia's New River Valley. Formed in 2013, NRV Passenger Rail represents a unique partnership between business, municipal, legislative, and university leaders with support from all corners of our region.

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