



**Minutes  
Compact Meeting  
November 29, 2017**

**Location:** Chief Engineer's Conference Room, NCDOT  
4809 Beryl Road, Raleigh, North Carolina

Members of the Virginia-North Carolina Interstate High Speed Rail Compact met on November 29, 2017, from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM in the North Carolina Department of Transportation's Chief Engineer's Conference Room (4809 Beryl Road). The following Compact members participated in the meeting:

**Virginia**

Senator John Cosgrove  
Senator Scott Surovell  
Delegate Jeion Ward

**North Carolina**

Senator Jim Davis  
Senator Tom McInnis  
Representative Bill Brawley (NC Co-Chair)  
Representative Nelson Dollar  
Michael S. Fox (Governor's Appointee and  
Chairman NC Board of Transportation)

Delegate Ron Villanueva and Richard Anderson did not participate. Virginia is in the process of identifying two new delegates to the Compact.

North Carolina Department of Transportation and Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRTP) staff that attended are listed below:

Jennifer Mitchell	VA DRPT
Michael McLaughlin	VA DRPT
Emily Stock	VA DRPT
Nick Ruiz	VA DRPT
Andrew Wright	VA DRPT
Julie White	NCDOT
Allan Paul	NCDOT
Sandra Stepney	NCDOT
Eddie McFalls	NCDOT
Jason Orthner	NCDOT
Jahmal Pullen	NCDOT
Asa Godfrey	NCDOT
Earline Richardson	NCDOT

Additional attendees are listed as follows.

Ken Altman	Amtrak (phone)
Jay McArthur	Amtrak
Will Dyer	Federal Railroad Administration
Jessie Gatti	Federal Railroad Administration
Randy Brown	Federal Railroad Administration
John Edwards	Norfolk Southern
Rich Dalton	Virginia Railway Express
Corey Hill	Kimley-Horn

Danny Plaughter  
Ramona McGee  
Kym Hunter  
Michael Testerman  
Rick Wyatt  
Steve Ogden

Virginians for High Speed Rail  
Southern Environmental Law Center  
Southern Environmental Law Center  
Virginia Rail Policy Institute  
SCDOT  
NC Senate Staff

The agenda for the meeting is attached. Following introductions, Representative Brawley provided opening remarks, the agenda, and outlined the purpose of the Compact and meeting.

Mike McLaughlin provided an update on Amtrak service and projects in Virginia. The presentation is attached and included the following:

- A new Roanoke passenger service was initiated.
- The DC to Richmond (DC2RVA) Environmental Impact Statement is progressing. The Town of Ashland and Hanover County Advisory Committee are considering alternatives in the Ashland area. The Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision are anticipated in early 2019
- The Atlantic Gateway grant is being scoped and negotiated. Final approval is need from CSX. The rail portion of the project includes 14 miles of track, 2 crossovers, preliminary engineering for the Long Bridge, and the transfer of the S-Line in Virginia.
- It was noted that the District of Columbia Department of Transportation (DDOT) is preparing the environmental documentation for the Long Bridge. NEPA completion is anticipated in 2019. The Long Bridge Project is a top priority for freight, intercity passenger, and commuter capacity in Virginia.
- The third track project in Arkendale is progressing. The project is at 65% complete, with full completion anticipated by June, 2020.
- The Acca Yard Bypass and Richmond Area improvements are 65% complete. The projects will be completed in January 2019. The project will allow Amtrak to bypass the Acca Yard and provide additional intercity passenger rail slots to Norfolk and Lynchburg via CSX.
- VA DRPT has modernized the signals on the Buckingham Branch which benefits the Amtrak Cardinal Services. In addition, \$75 million of projects are underway on the Short Line network in Virginia.

Sandra Stepney provided updates on North Carolina initiatives. The presentation is attached and included the following:

- The Piedmont Improvement Program has reached substantial completion. Funds had to be expended by September, 2017. The program enables NCDOT to operate two additional *Piedmont* frequencies (2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> *Piedmont* frequencies which coupled with the *Carolinian* provide the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> round trips between Raleigh and Charlotte)
- Raleigh Union Station is nearing completion. Construction started in January, 2016 and is anticipate to be completed in the Spring of 2018
- The City of Charlotte, NCDOT, and USDOT are partnering to construct Charlotte Gateway Station. The City is seeking a phased approach to the station to advance the project and relocate Amtrak service to downtown. Phase I will include four bridges, two 2000-foot station tracks, and a high-level boarding platform. Phase I is anticipated to be let for construction in February 2018 and

completed in 2021. The City will launch a public-private-partnership to seek partners to design and construct the permanent passenger / multi-modal station in the summer of 2018.

- The NEPA process for the Raleigh to Richmond portion of the Southeast Corridor was completed in March 2017 when the Record of Decision was signed. Completion of the environmental document is an important milestone that opens up the corridor for next steps in project development.
  - NCDOT is scoping an Incremental Service Development Plan to look at potential ways to phase the project
  - NCDOT has provided CSX with an appraisal for the North Carolina portion of the S-Line. However, no negotiations have been held to date on that topic
  - NCDOT submitted an INFRA grant application to fund projects between Raleigh and Wake Forest that would seal that portion of the Raleigh to Richmond Corridor
  - NCDOT and other southeastern states have been participating in an FRA-led Southeast Regional Rail Plan study that is anticipated to be completed in 2018. The study identified the Southeast Corridor as the primary backbone of a southeast network.
- Metropolitan Planning Organizations and Rural Planning Organizations submitted 122 projects at a preliminary value of \$2.2 billion for scoring in the Strategic Transportation Investments (STI) program. Grade separations and projects that contribute toward the diversion of truck-miles to rail perform well in STI. Scoring for projects that qualify at the statewide level will be completed in the Spring. Scoring for projects that qualify at the regional and Division level (like passenger station projects) will be completed near the end of 2018.
- Freight Rail and Rail Crossing Safety Improvement Fund (FRRCSI) – 58 projects were approved for funding by the Board of Transportation in 2017. These projects include Short Line infrastructure assistance projects, safety projects, and industrial / economic development projects.

Following the Virginia and North Carolina updates, Ken Altman of Amtrak provided an update on the federal funding environment. His presentation is also included. He noted that a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) would be released in late 2017 / early 2018 for several competitive FRA grants. The FRA grant programs are listed below:

- State of Good Repair Grants - \$25 million
- Restoration and Enhancement Grants - \$5 million
- Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements - \$68 million

Ken Altman noted that the Administration and Congress may turn toward working on an infrastructure bill following completion of tax reform. Infrastructure is near the top of the agenda, but a return to the health care discussion could happen first. Spring was provided as an estimate of when an infrastructure bill could be on the agenda.

Will Dyer of the Federal Railroad Administration provided an update on the Southeast Regional Rail Plan. The plan will identify a conceptual southeastern network and uses the Connect Model to evaluate performance between market pairs. The plan also has explored potential governance models to implement the network. The presentation highlighted the fact that House Report 114-606 specifies the following:

*The Committee's recommendation includes \$1,000,000 to stand-up the Southeast Corridor Rail Commission. The Commission will develop a regional rail plan and improve mutual cooperation and planning between states and stakeholders.*

The Southeast Regional Rail Plan will be completed in 2018. A draft will be circulated to the lead state stakeholders in the spring.

The Compact was asked to discuss its thoughts on the relationship between the Southeast Commission identified in the House Report, the existing Virginia-North Carolina Compact, and an expanded Compact.

Representative Brawley noted that the governance approach to delivering a high performance rail network could either be top down or from the ground up. Representative Brawley noted that the best way to build consensus amongst the southeastern states would be building the governance from the ground up. He noted that staff is communicating well, but the legislators in the other southeastern states need to be brought along. Legislation will have to be passed by each of the states entering the Compact. The major change for the North Carolina and Virginia legislation will be to establish a new model for chairmanship.

Representative Brawley asked other Compact members their thoughts on the budget item to stand up a Southeast Rail Commission.

Senator John Cosgrove noted that a concerted effort between each state's legislature and Congressional delegation will be needed. Bringing in additional states will help strengthen the Compact's position in Congress and in funding discussions. He noted that governance of rail in the Southeast has to start within meetings like the Compact meeting. Compact members need to reach out to other state's transportation chairs.

Senator Tom McInnis noted that in a top-down approach, the states would likely have less discretion in how things are set up and implemented. He said he would rather have staff from NCDOT or Virginia DRPT in the driver's seat.

Senator Surovell noted that the future high performance rail network will require massive investment of federal money for implementation. He noted that states should continue their planning to be prepared for the money.

Next, the issue of how to involve the Class I railroads was raised. Senator Cosgrove noted that Virginia had done a lot of coordination with Norfolk Southern on the new Roanoke Service and used the euphemism that "rising tides float all boats" to indicate that improvements to the system could benefit both passenger and freight services.

Delegate Jeion Ward said she thought the Compact helps to show that Virginia and North Carolina speak with one voice and their priorities are aligned. When the Compact is expanded to add other states, it will help the region in the pursuit of funding.

Representative Dollar noted that the Compact accepting the \$1 million grant could be an action to help demonstrate political will in Virginia and North Carolina. The grant could also help to reach out to the other states in a more formalized manner to ascertain their political will. It was noted that the Compact does have the legal authority to receive grants. Will Dyer of FRA noted that the Compact and their designee (either NCDOT or VA DRPT) would need to work out the scope, schedule, and budget with FRA. Jennifer Mitchell noted that they were agnostic to the grant, they would administer it, but would also be fine with NCDOT administering it. She noted that the big challenges will be to outline what kind of powers it will have and whether it will be able to override individual state authorities on particular funding issues. Whose money will the Compact be spending and will the Southeast Commission have control over state budgets?

Representative Brawley added that the process will falter if the politics are done poorly. But, the members of the Compact will initiate the process politically. Representative Dollar noted that the grant would enable continued planning of the system, governance, and policy.

Senator Cosgrove noted the Chesapeake Bay Commission may be a model to consider for the Southeast Rail Commission structure.

Senator Jim Davis of North Carolina made a motion that the Virginia-North Carolina Compact accept the potential FRA-grant to stand up the Southeast Rail Commission. Senator Cosgrove of Virginia seconded the motion.

Michael Fox noted that acceptance of the grant would allow for continued planning to prepare potential projects for future funding opportunities.

All members voted in favor of the motion for the Virginia-North Carolina Compact to accept the grant and then have either NCDOT or VA DRPT to administer it. NCDOT Rail Division staff will prepare a letter to the Federal Railroad Administration for the Compact's signature stating the Compact's willingness to accept the grant and have NCDOT or VA DRPT administer the grant on the Compact's behalf.

Following the vote, the meeting was adjourned.

These minutes are our record of the meeting's proceedings. Comments or changes may be submitted to Eddie McFalls, PE at [ebmcfalls@ncdot.gov](mailto:ebmcfalls@ncdot.gov) or (919) 707-4727.