

March 21, 2023

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary of Transportation
United States Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E.
Washington, D.C. 20590

Re: Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation Application for the Federal Railroad Administration's Corridor Identification and Development Program Commonwealth Corridor

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

This letter is to express the support of the Charlottesville-Albemarle Metropolitan Planning Organization (CA-MPO) for the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation's (DRPT) submission of an application for the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) Corridor Identification and Development (CID) Program for the Commonwealth Corridor, an east-west passenger rail corridor in Virginia that connecting the Hampton Roads region, including Norfolk and Newport News, with the Richmond region, Charlottesville, and Southwest Virginia. The Commonwealth Corridor will encompass existing state-sponsored passenger rail service connecting Hampton Roads to the Richmond/Petersburg area, with future plans to fill the gap in passenger rail service between Richmond and Charlottesville along the freight route operated by Buckingham Branch Railroad. The intent is to eventually provide east-west service across Virginia in a single seat.

A passenger rail connection between Charlottesville and Richmond will increase the convenience of rail as an affordable mode of transportation and improve access to goods, services, and economic opportunities in Richmond and Hampton Roads for residents of Charlottesville and the surrounding region. Increased passenger rail travel efficiency will benefit those traveling to Charlottesville from outside of the region to access destinations such as the University of Virginia, top-ranking medical specialty services, and historical resources such as Thomas Jefferson's Monticello.

Improved comfort and convenience of passenger rail into and out of the Charlottesville region will encourage its use as an alternative to reliance on single occupancy vehicles to travel into or out of the region, supporting climate action goals adopted by both the City of Charlottesville and Albemarle County. Furthermore, supporting the state's passenger rail initiatives to improve travel to or through Charlottesville is explicitly stated in the Charlottesville Comprehensive Plan adopted in 2021.

Please accept this letter of recommendation as an indication of support from CA-MPO for DRPT's application for the FRA CID Program for the Commonwealth Corridor. We thank you for your consideration and support of multimodal transportation options.

Sincerely,

Brian Pinkston
Chair, CA-MPO Policy Board