

Commonwealth Corridor

**U.S. Department of Transportation /
Federal Railroad Administration
FY 2022 Corridor Identification and
Development Program Application**

Project Narrative

MARCH 27, 2023

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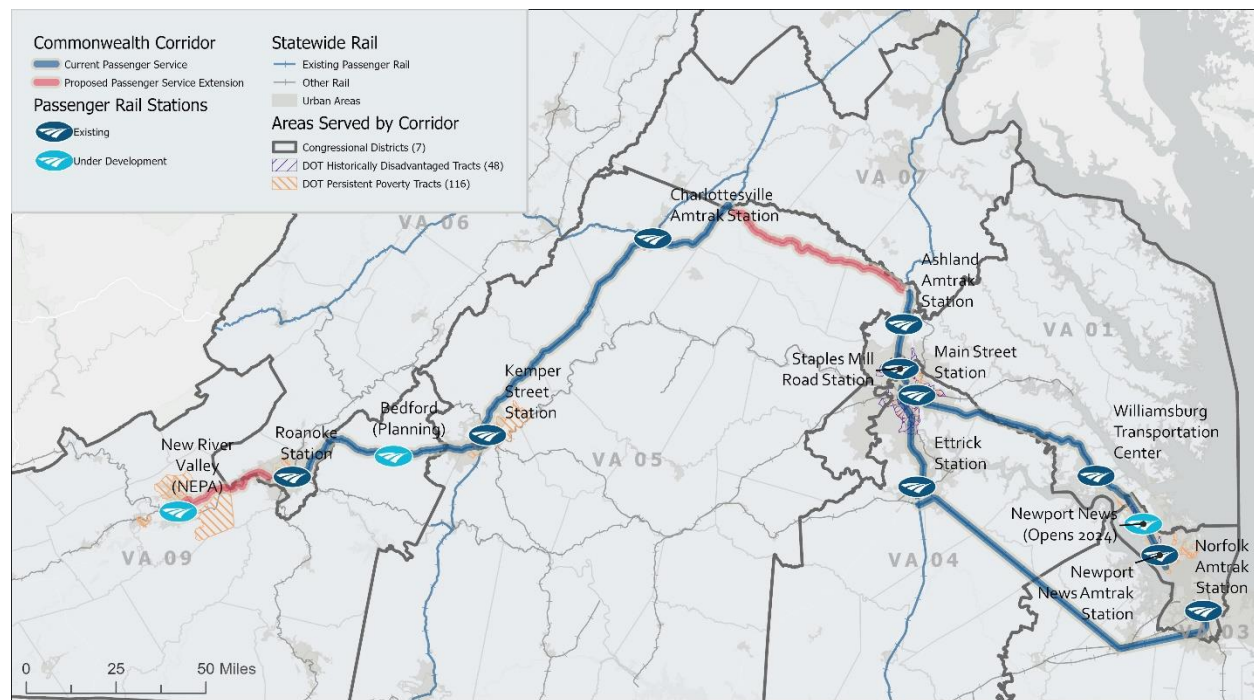
Cover Page

Corridor Title	Commonwealth Corridor
Applicant	Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation
Was a Federal Grant Application Previously Submitted for this Corridor?	A Corridor ID Application has not been submitted previously. An expression of interest was submitted in 2022.
Other sources of Funding for the Corridor?	Virginia Passenger Rail Authority FY23 Budget
City(-ies), State(s) Where the Corridor is Located	Newport News, Williamsburg, Richmond, Ashland, Doswell, Charlottesville, Lynchburg, Roanoke, Christiansburg, Bristol
Congressional District(s) Where the Corridor is Located	VA01, VA03, VA04, VA05, VA06, VA07, VA09
Is the Corridor currently programmed or identified in: State rail plan, or regional or interregional intercity passenger rail systems planning study?	Yes, 2023 Virginia Statewide Rail Plan
Is the applicant working with other entities in support of the Corridor?	Yes, Virginia Passenger Rail Authority

Corridor Summary

The Commonwealth Corridor expands intercity passenger rail service on an east-west, cross-state corridor linking Hampton Roads, Richmond, and the New River Valley. Currently, there is no east-west service across the Commonwealth. The development of this corridor would connect two existing passenger rail corridors: Newport News to Richmond, Charlottesville, Roanoke, and eventually the New River Valley (service planned for expansion to New River Valley starting in 2026). There is also the potential to run the service through Petersburg to Norfolk — this route could be studied further in the Service Development Plan (SDP). The expansion of service would increase access to economic and educational opportunities across Virginia by connecting Hampton Roads, Richmond, and Southwest Virginia. **Figure 1** depicts the proposed Commonwealth Corridor along with existing state-supported Amtrak passenger rail services.

Figure 1: Proposed Commonwealth Corridor



Corridor Funding

The Commonwealth of Virginia has developed sustained funding mechanisms to support passenger and freight rail, and in recent years has made monumental investments to increase and improve passenger rail service. Virginia has invested an average of \$170 million per year for rail projects over the past 5 years. In 2020 the Virginia General Assembly created the Commonwealth Rail Fund (CRF) with dedicated transportation revenues for passenger and freight rail projects. This includes funding for the newly created Virginia Passenger Rail Authority (VPRRA) to implement major passenger rail improvement programs such as Transforming Rail in Virginia and the Western Rail Initiative. It also includes funding for freight rail projects and long-range/statewide rail planning through the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT). The annual revenue into the CRF is approximately \$300 million per year (set at 7.5% of total Commonwealth Transportation Fund).

The Transforming Rail in Virginia program of projects includes \$4.5 billion in capital improvements to increase passenger rail capacity along the I-95 Corridor. This includes acquisition of track between Richmond and Doswell, which is a significant connection for the Commonwealth Corridor. The Western Rail Initiative includes planned capital improvements of \$273 million over the next six years with the goal of expanding passenger rail service from Washington, D.C., to Southwest Virginia. The program extends existing passenger service from its current terminus in Roanoke to a new passenger rail stop in the New River Valley, the location of which is currently the subject of a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) study. Planned investments along this corridor overlap with portions of the Commonwealth Corridor. Together these projects will lay the necessary groundwork for capacity and frequency improvements between Charlottesville and the New River Valley portion of the Commonwealth Corridor. Collaboration with FRA on a SDP is the next step in the process to establish an east-west passenger rail connection in Virginia that is timed to enhance existing and planned north-south service in eastern and western Virginia. DRPT pledges to work with partners to identify match funding to develop the necessary capital projects, which will likely be concentrated along the one section of the corridor that does not serve passenger rail today — the Buckingham Branch Railroad (BBRR) between Doswell and Charlottesville.

Applicant Eligibility

DRPT's mission is to connect and improve the quality of life for all Virginians with innovative transportation solutions. We are the Commonwealth's advocate for promoting transportation options to the general public, businesses, and community decision makers. DRPT's vision is a connected Commonwealth with an integrated multimodal network that serves every person, every business, and every need. As an Executive Branch agency within Virginia's Transportation Secretariat entrusted with public dollars, DRPT seeks the highest possible return on public and private investments to maximize funding and strives to implement best practice management strategies.

DRPT oversees programs and initiatives that support passenger and freight rail investments and delivers data-driven planning recommendations and policies for both passenger and freight rail.

Once passenger rail projects associated with the Commonwealth Corridor progress through the preliminary engineering phase, it is anticipated that they would be transitioned to VPRAs as the implementing agency to carry projects through to completion. As mentioned above, VPRAs are currently leading the Transforming Rail in Virginia and Western Rail Initiative programs, both of which include multiple projects being conducted in cooperation with FRA using multiple sources of federal grant funding.

Detailed Corridor Description

The Commonwealth Corridor, as defined by the Virginia General Assembly, is a cross-state, east-west intercity passenger rail corridor connecting Hampton Roads, Richmond, and the New River Valley regions of Virginia. Building upon ongoing efforts to enhance intercity passenger rail service that connects to Amtrak's Northeast Corridor, development of the Commonwealth Corridor would rely on existing track infrastructure to the greatest extent possible for east-west service. For the purposes of this study and related analysis efforts, the Commonwealth Corridor has been divided into the following six route segments:

1. Hampton Roads to Richmond (2021 study assumed direct service to Newport News)
2. Richmond to Doswell

3. Doswell to Charlottesville
4. Charlottesville to Lynchburg
5. Lynchburg to Roanoke
6. Roanoke to New River Valley

Table 1 below provides a high-level summary of the six rail segments considered in the corridor, including segment length, ownership, subdivisions, number of passenger and freight trains per day, and track speed.

Table 1: Commonwealth Corridor Route Segment Summary

Route Segment Endpoints	Approximate Length	Owner	Subdivision Name	Average Trains per Day	Maximum Authorized Train Speeds
Newport News to Richmond	78 miles	CSXT	Peninsula Subdivision	Passenger: 4 Freight: 9	Passenger: 79 mph Freight: 50 mph
Richmond to Doswell	17 miles	CSXT ¹	RF&P Subdivision	Passenger: 20 Freight: 10-20	Passenger: 70 mph Freight: 40-60 mph
Doswell to Charlottesville	71 miles	BBRR/VPRA ²	Piedmont Subdivision (Doswell-Gordonsville, 48 miles); North Mountain Subdivision (Gordonsville-Charlottesville, 23 miles)	Passenger: 1 Freight: 5-10	Passenger: 60 mph Freight: 25-40 mph
Charlottesville to Lynchburg	62 miles	NSR	Washington District	Passenger: 4 Freight: 20-30 ³	Passenger: 79 mph Freight: 45-60 mph
Lynchburg to Roanoke	49 miles	NSR	Blue Ridge District (Lynchburg-Vinton); Roanoke Terminal (Vinton-Roanoke)	Passenger: 2 Freight: 14	Passenger: 70 mph Freight: 40-60 mph
Roanoke to New River Valley	35 miles	NSR	N-Line/Christiansburg District/Roanoke Terminal (Roanoke-Salem, 6 miles); V-Line/Whitethorne District (Salem in West Roanoke -Merrimac, 29 miles)	Passenger: 0 Freight: V-Line: 6-18 ³ N-Line: 30-40 ³	Passenger: N/A Freight: 40 mph (V-Line) ³

The Commonwealth of Virginia, through VPRA, owns the BBRR-operated right of way between Doswell and Gordonsville. This acquisition was made to secure this corridor for future passenger service. Significant improvements to existing railroad infrastructure need to be made to upgrade the tracks for passenger rail service, but no design or funding plans are underway at

¹ VPRA will acquire under the Transforming Rail In Virginia initiative.

² Piedmont subdivision is BBRR operated and VPRA owned. North Mountain subdivision is BBRR operated and owned.

³ According to FRA Grade Crossing Inventory.

this time beyond the pursuit of entry into the CID program. VPRA is currently leading a project to expand Amtrak service to the New River Valley by 2026.

Amtrak is the assumed operator of passenger service on the Commonwealth Corridor, but CSX Transportation (CSXT), Norfolk Southern (NSR), and BBRR operate freight service in different portions of the corridor and will be beneficiaries to any improvements made along the route. Safety improvements will benefit highway users, pedestrians, and operators, specifically regarding railroad crossing improvements such as grade separations.

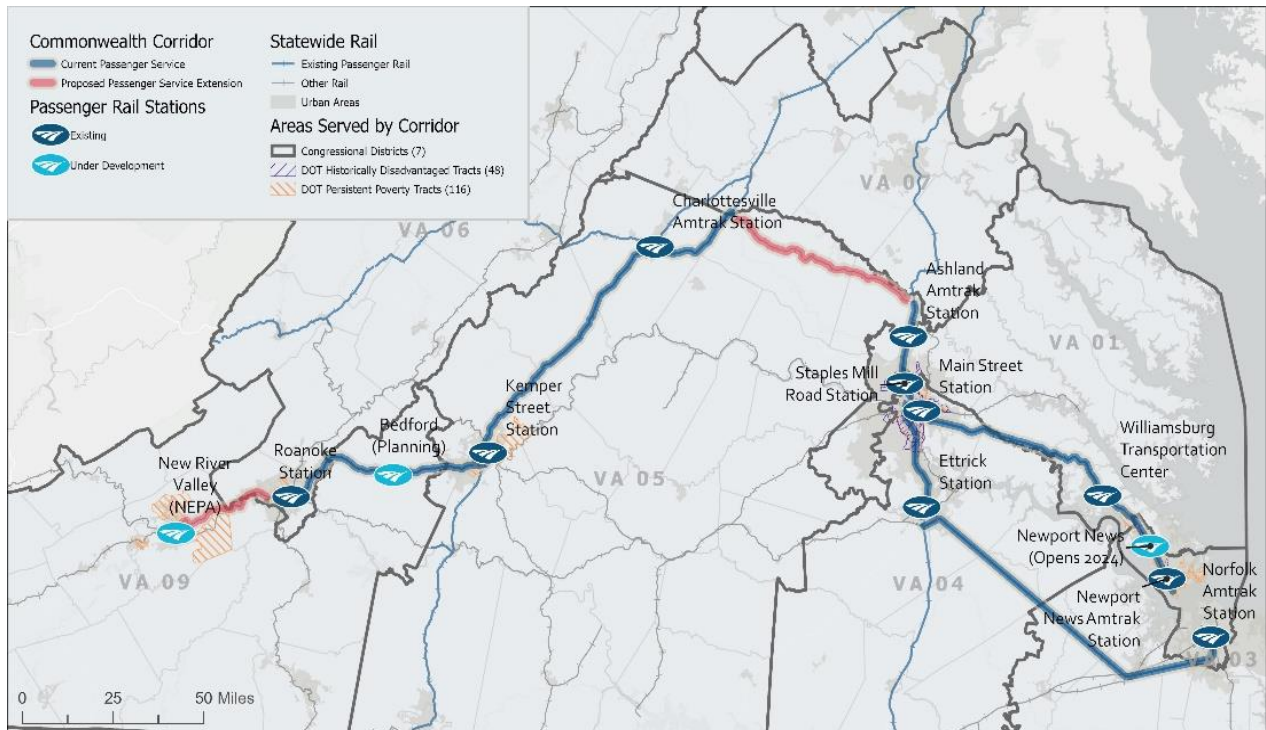
The Commonwealth Corridor would connect the urban areas of eastern Virginia along the Interstate 64 and Interstate 95 highway corridors to more rural Southwest Virginia. East-west service across the Commonwealth is a current gap in Virginia's passenger rail service. The service could be continued from the New River Valley through Bristol, eventually connecting with Tennessee. Additionally, the Commonwealth Corridor connects with multiple long-distance Amtrak routes, including the Cardinal, Carolinian, Crescent, Palmetto, Silver Meteor and Silver Star. The Commonwealth Corridor will also provide Virginians with better access to the Northeast Corridor and major Southern cities, such as Charlotte, Charleston, Atlanta, and New Orleans.

DRPT is submitting Corridor Identification and Development Program (CID) applications for both the Commonwealth Corridor and the D.C.-Bristol Corridor. Portions of these two corridors overlap — specifically, the Charlottesville to New River Valley segment of the corridors. The Commonwealth Corridor will provide a long-needed east-west service connection, while the D.C.-Bristol corridor will enhance and extend north-south oriented service in the western part of the state.

Corridor Location

The proposed Commonwealth Corridor creates a missing east-west connection across the state. The 10 proposed stations serve 7 Congressional Districts, 48 Department of Transportation (DOT) Historically Disadvantaged Census Tracts, and 116 DOT Census Tracts of Persistent Poverty. There are varying levels of existing state-supported passenger service along the corridor, but the Doswell to Gordonsville segment connecting the eastern and western sections of the corridor does not currently have passenger rail service. Upgrading this segment of the corridor will connect these communities across the state.

Figure 2. Location of the Commonwealth Corridor



Evaluation and Selection Criteria

i. Corridor Benefits

The expansion of passenger rail service along the Commonwealth Corridor will have a variety of measurable and large-scale impacts for transportation in Virginia. Virginia lacks an east-west passenger rail connection and completing this connection with reliable cross-state service is essential to the Commonwealth’s continued growth and prosperity.

A. Projected Ridership, Revenues, Capital Investment and Operating Funding Requirements

DRPT developed ridership forecast estimates for the Commonwealth Corridor to assess potential passenger demand for service and confirm the proposed service plan approach. DRPT estimated the total ridership demand for the proposed Commonwealth Corridor and individual market pairs by implementing a hybrid approach using the Virginia Statewide Travel Demand Model (VSTM) production-attraction data for intercity rail and Amtrak FY2019 origin-destination (OD) data to appropriately scale the VSTM data to annual trips. FY2019 data was used as the most recent data source for Amtrak given the significant reduction in person trips in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The forecast estimated 177,200 potential annual passengers would board proposed Commonwealth Corridor services in 2040. This estimate is based on two roundtrips per day. Assuming constant ridership throughout the year for all services, the model estimates an average of approximately 121 passengers per scheduled Commonwealth Corridor revenue train trip, totaling 485 daily passengers onboard the four daily trips. It is important to note that the preliminary ridership estimates developed for this study are intended to be used for high-level planning purposes only and do not reflect the presence of other passenger rail services in

Virginia and related network ridership effects. It is possible that some diversion of ridership from existing routes could occur. Net new ridership was not estimated due to the long range and high-level nature of this study. Ridership estimates for the corridor represent the total estimated annual trips between all possible market pairs along the corridor and is not reflective of total station boarding and alighting.

B. Anticipated Environmental, Congestion Mitigation, and Other Public Benefits

Increasing passenger rail ridership has a variety of benefits, including reductions in environmental impact and congestion. DRPT used an internal BCA tool to estimate some of the benefits of completing passenger rail along the Commonwealth Corridor. Based on the ridership projections, DRPT estimates a reduction in vehicle miles traveled of 449,443,636 miles per year, which is the equivalent of taking 1,610,909 vehicles off Virginia's roads per year. These congestion reduction benefits are estimated to be worth \$291 billion annually, primarily on the I-81 and I-64 corridors. The environmental benefits associated with the reduction in the level of carbon dioxide, volatile organic compounds, nitrogen oxides, and particulate matter due to vehicle traffic moving to rail are estimated to be \$4 million per year.

C. Projected Trip Times and their Competitiveness with Other Transportation Modes

As part of the Commonwealth Corridor Feasibility Study (2021), DRPT developed a proposed initial service plan consisting of two daily round trips operating between Newport News and the New River Valley passenger rail station (anticipated service start in 2026).

The proposed schedules provide a one-seat ride "end-to-end" service across the corridor, for which participants in outreach efforts had expressed a preference. By offering more than one round trip at the startup of service, same-day return trips could be possible in certain segments of the corridor, and riders would have more travel flexibility and a choice of departure times, which were additional service attributes that survey respondents ranked highly.

DRPT developed conceptual train schedules for the initial service plan that estimated trip times, station stops, and feasible service windows to provide morning and evening departures from each endpoint while minimizing conflicts at shared facilities with other existing and planned intercity passenger rail services.

DRPT used the following inputs to estimate trip times for the Commonwealth Corridor conceptual timetables:

- Estimated Newport News-Doswell trip times were based on existing state-supported Amtrak Northeast Regional schedules and proposed Transforming Rail in Virginia Phase 2 base schedule for regional trains, and additional planned improvements.
- Estimated a reduction in trip time of 7-8 minutes from existing passenger train times between Newport News and Williamsburg based on the relocation of the Newport News station to a new Bland Boulevard site in 2024.
- Estimated a reduced running time of 24-25 minutes between Richmond Main Street Station and Richmond Staples Mill Road Station based on a DRPT engineering analysis for potential upgrades to support enhanced intercity passenger rail service on the CSXT S-Line (Bellwood Subdivision) between Centralia, Richmond Main Street Station, and Acca Yard.
- Included a proposed 5-minute station dwell at Richmond Staples Mill Road Station for a crew change.

- Estimated Doswell-Charlottesville trip times of 1:10 were based on a preliminary engineering analysis of BBRR conditions and potential upgrades for passenger rail service.
- Estimated Charlottesville-Roanoke trip times were based on existing state-supported Amtrak Northeast Regional passenger rail schedules.
- Estimated Roanoke-New River Valley trip time of approximately 45 minutes was based on DRPT’s 2019 “Virginian Line Planning Study.”

Table 2 depicts the proposed daily eastbound and westbound Commonwealth Corridor conceptual schedule.

Table 2. Commonwealth Corridor Conceptual Schedule

1109 (read down)	1111 (read down)	Mile	Station	1110 (read up)	1112 (read up)
9:45 a.m.	4:40 p.m.	0	Newport News – Bland Blvd.	1:25 p.m.	8:35 p.m.
9:59 a.m.	4:54 p.m.	15	Williamsburg	1:02 p.m.	8:12 p.m.
10:51 a.m.	5:46 p.m.	62	Richmond – Main Street	12:10 p.m.	7:20 p.m.
11:16 a.m. – Arr 11:21 a.m. – Dep	6:11 p.m. – Arr 6:16 p.m. – Dep	70	Richmond – Staples Mill Road	11:46 a.m. – Dep 11:41 a.m. – Arr	6:56 p.m. – Dep 6:51 p.m. – Arr
11:35 a.m.	6:30 p.m.	81	Ashland	11:19 a.m.	6:29 p.m.
12:57 p.m.	7:52 p.m.	158	Charlottesville	9:57 a.m.	5:07 p.m.
2:10 p.m. – Arr 2:13 p.m. – Dep	9:05 p.m. – Arr 9:08 p.m. – Dep	219	Lynchburg	8:40 a.m. – Dep 8:37 a.m. – Arr	3:50 p.m. – Dep 3:47 p.m. – Arr
3:32 p.m.	10:27 p.m.	271	Roanoke	7:21 a.m.	2:31 p.m.
4:21 p.m.	11:11 p.m.	306	New River Valley	6:35 a.m.	1:40 p.m.

D. Anticipated Positive Economic and Employment Impacts

DRPT expects significant positive economic and employment benefits from the expansion of passenger rail along this corridor. The I-81, I-95, and I-64 corridors are all identified as Virginia Corridors of Statewide Significance. Reduction in passenger vehicles along the corridors will increase the efficiency of moving goods and people throughout the Commonwealth. The estimated congestion reduction benefits are estimated to be worth \$124 million.

Increased connections between the Hampton Roads region, Richmond, Charlottesville, and Roanoke would allow for better access to jobs throughout the Commonwealth, which would benefit both employees and employers. Passenger rail service in this corridor would provide alternative modes of transportation for daily, weekly, or monthly commuters. Less time spent driving or in traffic may allow residents to consider job opportunities previously deemed inaccessible. The proposed service will also provide connections for the students of many Virginia colleges and universities, including Old Dominion University, Christopher Newport University, The College of William & Mary, Virginia Commonwealth University, University of Richmond, University of Virginia, Virginia Tech, and Radford University.

E. Benefits to Rural Communities

Passenger rail service will be expanded across the Commonwealth. Predominantly rural Southwest Virginia will be better connected, specifically to the Richmond and Virginia Beach-

Norfolk-Newport News metropolitan regions via a one-seat ride. This will expand the alternative modes of transportation available, as well as improve existing infrastructure to improve reliability and travel options. There is also currently no time-competitive east-west route for passenger rail service in the state — adding this service would expand access to rural communities in central Virginia.

F. Service to Historically Unserved or Underserved and Low-Income Communities or Areas of Persistent Poverty

The stations along the Commonwealth Corridor will serve 48 DOT Historically Disadvantaged Census Tracts, and 116 DOT Census Tracts of Persistent Poverty. There are varying levels of existing state-supported passenger service along the corridor, but the Doswell to Gordonsville segment connecting the Eastern and Westerns sections of the corridor does not currently have passenger rail service. The completion of the corridor will connect these communities across the state.

G. Benefits or Improvements to Connectivity with Existing or Planned Transportation Service of Other Modes

Expanding freight and passenger rail helps to mitigate congestion. The Commonwealth Corridor will help to move trucks and cars off I-64, I-95, and I-81, all of which experience extreme congestion and traffic delays and all of which are designated as Corridors of Statewide Significance by the Commonwealth. Rural residents will also enjoy more direct connections to airport facilities throughout to state.

H. Connections Between at Least 2 of the 100 Most Populated Metropolitan Areas

The Commonwealth Corridor will connect the Virginia Beach-Norfolk-Newport News, VA-NC metropolitan area to the Richmond, Virginia, metropolitan area, both of which are among the 100 Most Populated Metropolitan Areas. Through connections from existing service and long-distance routes, Virginians will also be better connected to the Northeast Corridor and farther destinations such as Chicago, Illinois, via the Cardinal Amtrak long distance service.

I. Enhancements to Regional Equity and Geographic Diversity of Intercity Passenger Rail Service

Currently, there is no passenger rail service connecting the eastern and western regions of Virginia without going north to Washington, D.C., adding hours of travel without a timed transfer. The Commonwealth Corridor provides for the east-west connection currently missing in Virginia passenger rail service. This will also provide additional service to stations and cities beyond the I-95, I-64, and I-81 highway corridors.

J. Integration into the National Rail Passenger Transportation System and Benefits to Other Passenger Rail Routes and Services

The Commonwealth Corridor connects existing passenger rail service on National Rail Passenger Transportation System. There is existing successful service to Amtrak's Northeast Corridor from Richmond to Newport News and from Charlottesville and Roanoke. The proposed corridor would unite these existing routes and provide one-seat east-west service across Virginia. There is also the potential to connect new riders with existing long distance Amtrak routes such as the Cardinal, Crescent, Northeast Regional, and the Silver Service/Palmetto.

ii. Technical Merit

A. Applicant Readiness

DRPT has spent 30 years working to expand transportation options within the Commonwealth. Virginia has robust state-supported Amtrak service and currently has multiple ongoing projects expanding passenger rail service throughout the region. In partnership with Amtrak and host freight railroads, the Commonwealth has added eight new state-supported frequencies in the past 12 years. DRPT facilitates long-range passenger planning efforts such as the Commonwealth Corridor, while VPRA oversees implementation including: advanced engineering, construction, and operations. This evolving partnership allows Virginia to continue looking forward while quickly bringing projects online.

B. Technical Qualifications and Experiences of Applicant

DRPT has a long history and experience administering federal programs. It is the Commonwealth's agency responsible for long-range freight and passenger rail planning. DRPT has previously developed service plans and completed the design phases of complex corridor rail projects such as the Washington, D.C.,-to-Richmond (DC2RVA) segment of the Southeast High-Speed Rail (SEHSR). DRPT has been managing a successful rail program since 1993 and created the first fund for passenger rail in the country in 2004.

C. Commitment to Implementation and Operation of Corridor

DRPT and the Commonwealth of Virginia are committed to expanding passenger and freight rail service and infrastructure across the Commonwealth. This includes an equitable distribution of service in both rural and urban areas. DRPT is committed to the planning, study, and initial design of the Commonwealth Corridor. Final design, construction, and operation would be carried out by VPRA.

Created in 2020, VPRA manages all capital expansion projects, infrastructure, and land acquisitions related to its programs expanding passenger rail in Virginia. The Commonwealth of Virginia has demonstrated a firm commitment to expanding passenger rail, and the Commonwealth Corridor has been identified as a priority for connecting the state east to west.

D. Corridor Mention in Planning Studies

In 2020, FRA released the Southeast Regional Rail Plan, produced in coordination with Virginia and Southeast Corridor Commission member states. The study presented a common, long-term vision for intercity passenger rail service in the Southeast US. Under the plan, what is now known as the Commonwealth Corridor between Virginia's Western Corridor and Eastern Corridor, is designated as a "Network Independent" service that shows potential to become part of the network in the future, but has a lower demand than that of the "Emerging," "Regional," and "Core Express" high-performance tier classifications. Two potential Commonwealth Corridor routes are included — one between Charlottesville and Richmond and another between Lynchburg and Richmond. These two corridors represent the Commonwealth Corridor and the previously-proposed TransDominion Corridor, respectively.

At the request of the Virginia General Assembly in 2020, DRPT completed a feasibility study for an east-west Commonwealth Corridor passenger rail service connecting Hampton Roads, Richmond, and the New River Valley.⁴ The study included a description of the proposed

⁴ Based on the identification of several popular submarkets, the study recommended the Newport News to Richmond to Charlottesville/Roanoke route rather than the earlier TransDominion Corridor route.

corridor, summary of public outreach efforts, a proposed initial service plan, forecasted range of ridership, needed capital improvements and their estimated costs to provide the service, an estimate of high-level operating and maintenance costs, and recommended next steps.

E. Most Committed or Anticipated Non-Federal Funding

Virginia has dedicated rail funding from the General Assembly through the Commonwealth Rail Fund. Developing and continuing intercity passenger and freight rail operations and the development of rail infrastructure, rolling stock, and support facilities to support intercity passenger and freight rail service are important elements of a balanced transportation system in the Commonwealth. The retention, maintenance, improvement, and development of intercity passenger and freight rail-related infrastructure improvements and operations are essential to the Commonwealth's continued economic growth, vitality, and competitiveness in national and world markets. This funding is allocated to VPRA and DRPT to support planning, design, and construction of passenger rail and freight improvements and to provide matching funds for federal grants.

VPRA has \$273 million over the next six years programed for improvements along the Western Rail Corridor. Segments of these improvements will overlap with the expected projects needed to complete the Commonwealth Corridor. Additional improvements on the I-95 corridor related to Transforming Rail in Virginia will improve capacity between Richmond and Doswell. There is currently no funding, nor plans to improve the freight corridor between Doswell and Gordonsville for passenger rail, beyond this CID application.

F. Statewide Rail Plan

Long-range improvements in the Commonwealth Corridor or cross-state corridors have been identified in successive versions of Virginia's Statewide Rail Plan.

The 2013 Virginia Statewide Rail Plan identified potential improvements to a cross-state corridor from Bristol to Hampton Roads via Roanoke, Lynchburg, Farmville, and Richmond known as the TransDominion Corridor. The Plan highlights this corridor for additional study.

The 2017 Virginia Statewide Rail Plan also emphasized the need for long-term investment in a cross-state passenger rail corridor. The plan identified potential investments in an alignment along the US Route 460 corridor between Lynchburg and Richmond or the BBRR between Charlottesville and Richmond.

The 2022 Virginia Statewide Rail Plan confirms Virginia's continued support for implementing the long-term service and infrastructure initiatives acknowledged in previous state rail plans. The plan identifies the Commonwealth Corridor as the proposed east-west rail corridor. The plan also identifies a need for investment in the Charlottesville Amtrak Station and passenger rail service on the newly state-acquired BBRR.

G. Operator Support

The Commonwealth of Virginia has a good relationship and long history of working with Amtrak, NSR, CSXT, and shortline operators in this corridor. All freight and passenger operators will be engaged in the SDP process. Per a 2021 agreement with NSR, Virginia is acquiring the 28.5-mile stretch from Salem Crossovers to Christiansburg, allowing for infrastructure and operations improvements that will enable expansion of passenger rail in the corridor. Amtrak is currently the operator for state-supported and long-distance service in segments of the corridor and across the Commonwealth.

DOT Strategic Goals

A. Safety

The Commonwealth Corridor will include railroad crossing improvements, such as four quad gates and grade separation where possible, thus improving safety for both train and vehicular traffic. DPRT has done extensive analysis on priority railroad crossings across Virginia. This will be used to inform future design and construction projects within the corridor. The expansion of rail service in the corridor will also remove cars from Virginia's roads. Providing a safer travel alternative will enhance the safety of travelers in and through Virginia. Safety will likewise be improved for freight rail traffic through the planned rail infrastructure improvements in the corridor.

B. Economic Strength and Global Competitiveness

Improving both passenger and freight rail infrastructure will increase network fluidity and reliability. This will allow for more efficient movement of goods and people. Freight improvements will lead to increased economic development opportunities, creating new, good-paying American job growth. Direct and indirect jobs will be created to support the project during the study, design, and construction phases. The freight benefits of the infrastructure improvements associated with the project will help support resiliency in global supply chains and increased access to jobs and workforces which will increase economic opportunity in the Commonwealth.

A rail connection across Virginia would be the only alternative form of passenger travel, since there is no air or bus connection at this time. This would open up an alternative mode of travel between job centers, universities, and recreation.

C. Equity

The Commonwealth Corridor will increase passenger rail service and connectivity in rural and urban communities across Virginia. The predominantly rural Southwest Virginia will be better connected to the major metropolitan areas of Richmond and the Hampton Roads region. The corridor will provide an alternative to personal vehicle travel and expand transportation options for Virginians who do not have access to a vehicle.

D. Climate and Sustainability

Increasing rail transportation infrastructure, for both passenger and freight usage, has environmental benefits. This corridor has the potential to decrease truck and car usage, and it is a more environmentally efficient mode of transportation than automobile usage. Mass transit is a more sustainable transportation option and helps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate climate change impacts.

E. Transformation

The Commonwealth Corridor includes strategic assets purchased by the Commonwealth for its value both as a future expanded passenger rail corridor and as an existing freight rail link in national and global supply chains served by Virginia companies. Improvement and maintenance of these assets are critical to maintaining supply chain resilience, expanding passenger rail service, maintaining freight rail traffic, and fulfilling the Commonwealth's vision for its multimodal network on a rail line that has been identified as a Virginia Corridor of Statewide Significance.