



Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation



and

North Carolina Department of Transportation

SOUTHEAST HIGH SPEED RAIL  
RICHMOND, VA, TO RALEIGH, NC  
TIER II DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT  
STATEMENT

City of Richmond, City of Colonial Heights, City of Petersburg, Chesterfield  
County, Dinwiddie County, Brunswick County, Mecklenburg County

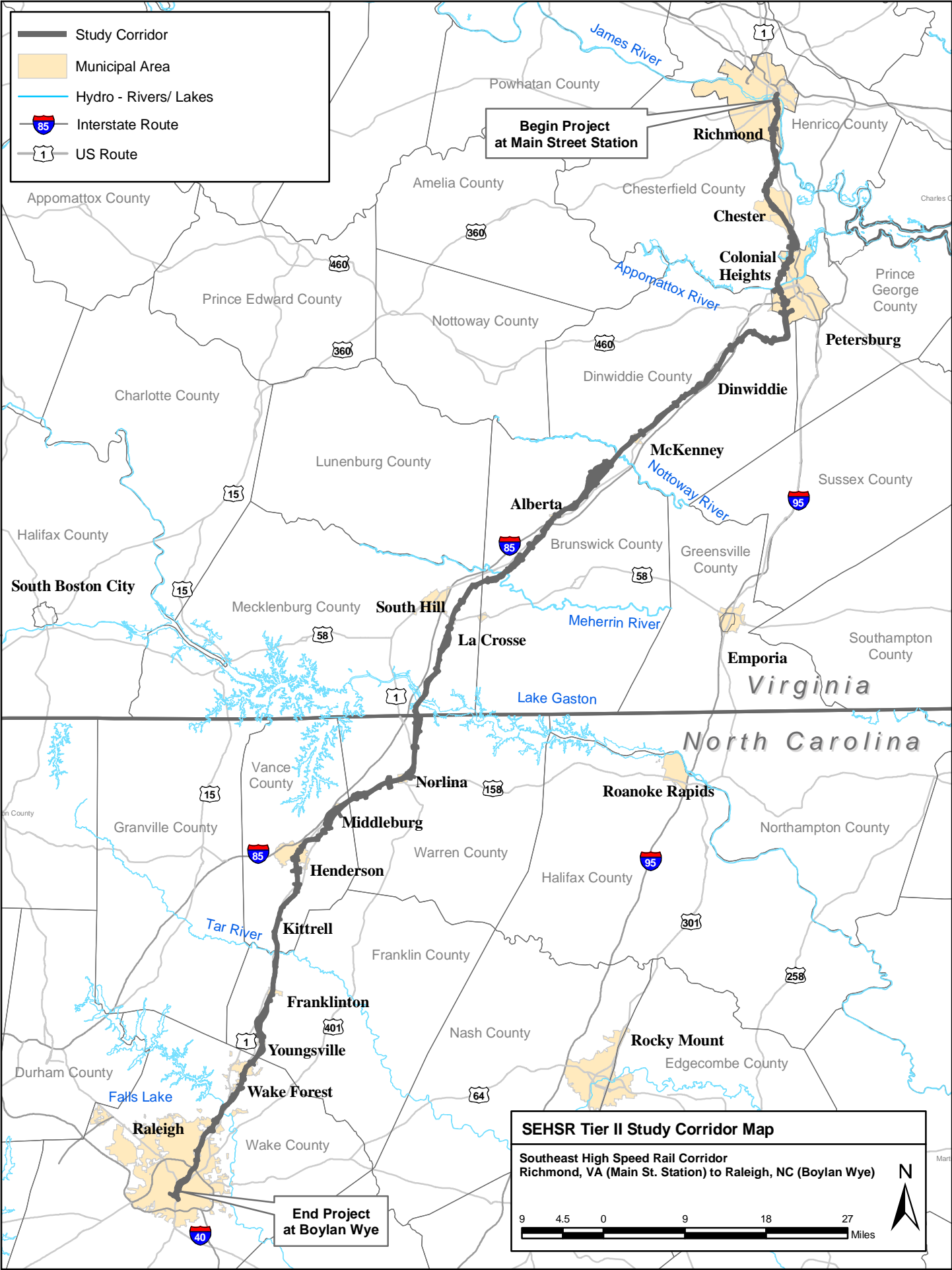
PUBLIC HEARINGS

**Brunswick County,  
Mecklenburg County**  
Thursday, July 15, 2010  
Southside VA Community College  
Christanna Campus  
109 Campus Drive  
Alberta, VA 23821

**Richmond**  
Tuesday, July 20, 2010  
Virginia DMV Cafeteria  
1<sup>st</sup> Floor  
2300 W. Broad Street  
Richmond, VA 23269

**Chesterfield County, Colonial Heights,  
Petersburg**  
Wednesday, July 21, 2010  
Union Station  
103 River Street  
Petersburg, VA 23804

**Dinwiddie County**  
Thursday, July 22, 2010  
Sunnyside Elementary  
10203 Sunnyside Road  
McKenney, VA 23872



- Study Corridor
- Municipal Area
- Hydro - Rivers/ Lakes
- Interstate Route
- US Route

**Begin Project  
at Main Street Station**

**End Project  
at Boylan Wye**

**SEHSR Tier II Study Corridor Map**

Southeast High Speed Rail Corridor  
Richmond, VA (Main St. Station) to Raleigh, NC (Boylan Wye)

N

9 4.5 0 9 18 27 Miles

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) and North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) Rail Division, in cooperation with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), propose to implement high speed passenger rail service between Richmond, VA, and Raleigh, NC. The Southeast High Speed Rail (SEHSR) project proposes to implement approximately 162 miles of high speed rail as part of an overall plan to extend high speed passenger rail service from the Northeast Corridor (Boston to Washington, DC) southward through Virginia to Charlotte, NC. The SEHSR project applies an “incremental approach” to high speed rail development. This means that existing rail lines and rail rights of way will be used as much as possible.

## **PURPOSE OF PUBLIC HEARING**

Today’s hearing is an important step in making you, the public, a part of the project development process. The purpose of the hearing is to obtain public input on the location and design of the proposed project.

Planning and environmental studies of the rail project with its associated roadwork are provided in the SEHSR Tier II DEIS, Richmond, VA, to Raleigh, NC. Copies of this report have been available for public review at:

- Richmond Main Public Library, 101 East Franklin Street, Richmond, VA.
- Richmond Regional Planning District Commission, 9211 Forest Hill Avenue, Suite 200, Richmond, VA.
- Chesterfield County Central Public Library, 9501 Lori Road, Chester, VA.
- Colonial Heights Public Library, 1000 Yacht Basin Drive, Colonial Heights, VA.
- Petersburg Central Public Library, 137 S. Sycamore Street, Petersburg, VA.
- Crater District Planning Commission, 1964 Wakefield Street, Petersburg, VA.
- Dinwiddie County Planning Department, 14016 Boydton Plank Road, Dinwiddie, VA.

- Southside Virginia Community College Library, Christiana Campus, 109 Campus Drive, Alberta, VA.
- Southside Planning District Commission, 200 S. Mecklenburg Avenue, South Hill, VA.

Copies of the maps and document have also been available for review or download on the project website: [www.sehsr.org](http://www.sehsr.org)

### **YOUR PARTICIPATION**

You are encouraged to participate by making your comments and/or questions a part of the public record. Several DRPT and NCDOT representatives are present. They will be happy to talk with you, explain the designs to you and answer your questions. You may write your comments or questions on the comment sheet and leave it with one of the representatives or mail them by August 30, 2010, to the following address:

Public Information Office  
Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation  
600 East Main Street, Suite 2102  
Richmond, VA 23219

Comments may also be submitted electronically by visiting the project website: [www.sehsr.org](http://www.sehsr.org)

Everyone present is urged to participate by providing their written comments. Please recognize that **the opinions of all individuals should be respected regardless of how divergent they may be from your own**. Accordingly, debates are out of place at public hearings. Also, the public hearing is not to be used as a referendum to determine the location and/or design by a majority vote of those present.

## **WHAT IS DONE WITH THE INPUT?**

After the comment period has ended, the project team will meet to review all of the public and agency comments. DRPT staff, Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) staff representing Right of Way, NCDOT staff and others who play a role in the development of a project will attend this meeting. The project will also be reviewed by the Federal Railroad Administration, the Federal Highway Administration and other state agencies such as the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, and the Department of Historic Resources, among others.

All project comments and issues received from the public are discussed at the post-hearing meeting. Most are resolved at the post-hearing meeting. The DRPT, NCDOT and the FRA consider safety, costs, traffic service, social impacts and public comments in making decisions. Minutes of the post-hearing meeting are prepared and a summary is available to the public. To receive a copy of the summary, please note your request on the attached comment sheet.

## **PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR THE PROJECT**

The Richmond, VA, to Raleigh, NC, portion of the SEHSR project is an integral part of the overall Washington, DC, to Charlotte, NC, corridor that was evaluated in the 2002 Tier I SEHSR Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The purpose for the 162-mile Richmond to Raleigh segment is tied to implementation of the larger 450-mile corridor. Therefore, the purpose of this proposed action is to facilitate the previously approved purpose for the SEHSR Tier I EIS, which includes the following and is applicable to the current project.

The purpose of the proposed project is to:

- Divert trips from air and highway within the travel corridor, reducing the growth rate of congestion (specifically on I-85 and I-95)
- Provide a more balanced use of the corridor's transportation infrastructure

- Increase the safety and effectiveness of the transportation system within the travel corridor
- Serve both long-distance business and leisure travelers between and beyond Virginia and North Carolina, including those using Amtrak's Northeast Corridor, which extends from Washington, DC, to Boston, MA, as well as points south.

The Tier I EIS for the SEHSR between Washington, DC, and Charlotte, NC, established the overall need for the project:

The need for the project is:

- Growth – Population and economic growth rates in VA and NC have been higher than national averages for the past several decades and are projected to remain high into the future. If transportation systems do not provide options for reliable and convenient movement of goods and people, the region's economy will suffer.
- Congestion – Area growth has led to increasing vehicle use on interstates and major highways in the region, as well as increasing demand for air travel. This specific project section encompasses portions of both I-95 and I-85, as well as the airports of Richmond, VA and Raleigh, NC.
- Travel Time – Currently, within the SEHSR corridor, conventional passenger rail travel times are not competitive with travel by airplane or auto. If meaningful reductions in rail travel time are achieved, transportation modeling indicates that the competitiveness of rail passenger service will increase, and travelers will divert from other modes of transportation.
- Connectivity – Implementation of HSR service could enhance regional connectivity, serving as a spine in a network of proposed rail improvements in VA and NC, allowing rail service passengers to connect to the proposed SEHSR service and associated national rail network including connectivity with the portion of the SEHSR corridor designated to serve the Hampton Roads area of Virginia. The Richmond, VA to Raleigh, NC portion of the SEHSR corridor would provide greatly enhanced speed, reliability, and reductions in travel time.
- Air Quality – A number of counties within the SEHSR corridor are presently experiencing air quality impacts from mobile source emissions (cars, trucks,

buses, and airplanes). Rail causes significantly less pollution per passenger mile traveled than other mobile sources. Diverting some of the traveling public from automobiles to trains will aid in reducing emissions throughout the corridor.

- Safety – Rail has a safety record similar to air travel, and, based on current data, is exponentially safer than automobile travel. Figures from the National Safety Council show that Amtrak experienced .04 fatalities per 100 million passenger miles, while automobile fatalities equaled 1.29 fatalities per 100 million passenger miles. NCDOT and DRPT have been working to improve safety along active rail lines within the SEHSR corridor since the 1990's.
- Energy Efficiency – Additional rail improvements could also result in less energy use and a corresponding decrease in pollution within the SEHSR corridor. Intercity rail is 45 percent more energy-efficient than domestic commercial airline service and 76 percent more energy-efficient than general aviation. Passengers traveling by rail use 21 percent less energy per mile on average than those traveling by automobile.

### **SCHEDULE AND FUNDING**

- Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) – Late 2011
- Record of Decision (ROD) – Mid 2012
- Construction – beginning between 2013-2017 depending on the availability of project funding, with a 3-5 year build-out.

Following the ROD, DRPT and NCDOT will pursue construction funding through the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act (PRIIA), the reauthorization of federal transportation programs, and other funding sources. PRIIA authorizes the appropriation of funds to FRA to establish and implement a high-speed rail corridor development program. Virginia and North Carolina will aggressively compete for available federal funds. A number of factors can affect a project schedule, so schedules are subject to change.

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **Is there existing rail service in the project study corridor?**

There is existing freight and conventional passenger rail service operating within the project corridor between Richmond and Petersburg, VA. From Petersburg, VA, to Norlina, NC (approximately 76 miles), the railroad right of way is largely intact, but rail service was discontinued in the mid 1980s and the tracks were removed. From Norlina, NC, to Raleigh, NC, there is active freight service (approximately 1-4 trains per day).

### **How fast will the high speed trains operate?**

The proposed Maximum Authorized Speed (MAS) is 110 mph where achievable and with the approval of the adjacent freight railroad as appropriate. MAS is similar to a speed limit on a highway; it represents the highest speed trains are allowed to operate and is based on factors such as curve, elevation, equipment, and host railroad operating policies. There would be areas where high speeds are not possible, such as in congested areas and near station stops. The average speed is anticipated to be 85-87 mph depending on the stop configuration, location on the corridor, and final preferred alignment. Current passenger service between Charlotte, NC, and Washington, DC, operates at a top speed of 79 mph and an average speed of 46-48 mph.

### **What type of train equipment will be used?**

The system has been designed for trains to be powered by fossil fuel; however, the current designs do not preclude conversion to electricity in the future, which would allow higher speeds. Such conversion would require additional environmental evaluation at the appropriate time.

### **How will you ensure the safety of rail-road crossings?**

The proposed project would create a fully grade separated railroad (no at-grade crossings). This means that roads crossing the railroad would have a bridge or underpass. Highly developed areas would receive fencing and landscaping as appropriate for public safety and to minimize the rail line's disturbance to the community.

**How will the preferred alternative for the project be chosen?**

For evaluation of the project, the corridor is divided into 26 sections. There are three alternatives in each section, and each rail alternative includes an associated set of road improvements. In many areas, the alternatives are concurrent (i.e., the same).

The endpoints of each of the 26 sections are in locations where the alternative alignments are in a common location. The alternatives will be evaluated section by section, allowing a “best-fit” preferred alternative to be developed, thus helping minimize overall impacts.

**RELATIONSHIP TO LOCAL LAND USE AND TRANSPORTATION PLANS**

In Virginia and North Carolina, planning and development activities in rural areas are mostly conducted at the city or county level. If no specific entity exists to guide land use development, assistance is often received from the regional planning districts such as Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and Planning District Commissions (PDCs). Land use and long-range transportation plans, and their compatibility with SEHSR are reviewed in Table 1.

<b>Table 1 Compatibility with Future Land Use and Long-Range Transportation Plans- Virginia</b>		
<b>City, County MPO / PDC</b>	<b>Future Land Use Plan</b>	<b>Reference SEHSR and in Support?</b>
<b>City of Richmond</b>	Downtown Master Plan, 2008	Yes
	Strategic Multi modal Transportation Plan-update to be completed in 2010	Yes
<b>Chesterfield County Ettrick</b>	Chesterfield County Comprehensive Plan -2004 – The Ettrick Village Plan	Yes
<b>City of Colonial Heights</b>	Comprehensive Community Development Plan, 1997	Not Mentioned
<b>City of Petersburg</b>	Comprehensive Plan 2000 Update	Yes
<b>Dinwiddie County Dinwiddie Courthouse Area, McKenney</b>	2006 Comprehensive Plan Update	Yes

<b>Table 1 Compatibility with Future Land Use and Long-Range Transportation Plans- Virginia</b>		
<b>City, County MPO / PDC</b>	<b>Future Land Use Plan</b>	<b>Reference SEHSR and in Support?</b>
<b>Richmond Regional MPO</b>	2031 Long Range Transportation Plan	Yes
<b>Tri-Cities MPO (Crater District), Colonial Heights Petersburg</b>	Tri-Cities Area MPO: Unified Transportation Planning Work Program for FY 2010	Yes
	2031 Transportation Plan	Not Mentioned
<b>Southside PDC La Crosse</b>	Community Economic Development Strategy for 2007	Yes

City, county, PDC and MPO transportation plans within the project study area all address the issues of highway planning, and most regional plans also address high speed rail. Several consider other modes of transportation than highway and rail, including transit, bicycle and/or pedestrian plans (Table 2). Collectively, the planning organizations see the SEHSR as a vital part of the planning future in both Virginia and North Carolina.

<b>Table 2 Is SEHSR Compatible With Other Modal Transportation Plans?</b>				
<b>City, County, MPO or PDC</b>	<b>Highway Plans</b>	<b>Transit Plans</b>	<b>Bicycle/ Pedestrian Plans</b>	<b>Other Plans: (Port /Air)</b>
Richmond, VA	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chesterfield County, VA	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Colonial Heights, VA	Yes	--	Yes	--
Petersburg, VA	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Dinwiddie County, VA	Yes	--	Yes	--
Richmond Regional MPO	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Tri-Cities MPO	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Crater PDC	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Southside PDC	Yes	Yes	--	--

Source: Plans from referenced Cities, Counties, MPOs and PDCs

Note: Service to the Hampton Roads area of Virginia is also part of the federally designated SEHSR Corridor. A separate Tier I EIS is being completed by the Commonwealth of Virginia for that portion of the SEHSR. The Tier I Draft EIS for the

Hampton Roads portion has identified the corridor parallel to US 460 as most appropriate for high speed service. When the final Tier I EIS and ROD are complete for the Hampton Roads portion, a detailed Tier II environmental study will be prepared for specific alignments and improvements necessary to implement that service.

### **RIGHT-OF-WAY PROCEDURES**

The Commonwealth of Virginia and the State of North Carolina follow Federal and State laws, policies and regulations in acquiring property from those affected by transportation projects.

After decisions are made regarding the final design and project funding has been secured, fair value will be determined for affected properties. A right of way agent will contact affected property owners and make an offer of just compensation for the property rights that are needed. Property owners will be given a reasonable amount of time to consider the written offer and present their views on the just compensation presented.

If you occupy property that is being acquired as part of the project, and you are displaced from your residence or business, you will be offered the necessary relocation assistance and advisory services to assist you in your move.

**NOTE: PAMPHLETS SUMMARIZING RIGHT-OF-WAY AND RELOCATION PROCEDURES ARE AVAILABLE AT THE SIGN-IN TABLE.**





