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METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

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February 8, 2023

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
 Secretary of Transportation
 U.S. Department of Transportation
 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
 Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

I am writing to support the ***Raleigh to Richmond Innovating Rail Program – Phases IA and II*** application for the Federal Rail Administration’s Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail Program fiscal year 2022 grant program. The Raleigh to Richmond Innovating Rail Program is being advanced as a partnership between the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) and the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority (VPRA).

The intent of the program is to advance the development of the federally designated Southeast Corridor by providing engineering design for infrastructure improvements and construction of the S-Line, a critical missing link in the Southeast network. This important step in development will support network resiliency for freight as well as expanded high-performance intercity rail service from Raleigh, North Carolina to Richmond, Virginia and beyond. Phases IA and II of the program focus on continuing engineering design, safety improvements, track upgrades, and service development through construction of several grade separations on the active S-Line in North Carolina.

Overall, the program has both local and multi-regional benefits as it directly effects eight counties (Warren, Vance, Franklin, Wake, Mecklenburg, Brunswick, Dinwiddie, and Chesterfield) across North Carolina and Virginia. Phases IA and II of the program will build upon previous federal and state investments in environmental research and documentation of the Southeast Corridor, as well as North Carolina’s acquisition of the S-Line. This subsequent step of incremental engineering and construction prepares the regions for future improvements and services along the rail line that will provide economic development, job growth and enhanced mobility opportunities to underserved and growing communities. The program will also support the realization of continued planning efforts of future interstate rail infrastructure and service development partnerships that have been established through the Virginia-North Carolina Interstate High Speed Rail Compact and the Southeast Corridor Commission.

Thank you for your consideration of the ***Raleigh to Richmond Innovating Rail Program – Phases IA and II***.

Sincerely,

Jenn Weaver, Chair
 DCHC MPO Board