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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 354
FLOOR AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE

(Proposed by Senator Edwards
on February 4, 2003)

(Patron Prior to Substitute—Senator Edwards)

Requesting the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation to study the Rail Transportation Development Authority to finance improvements to railroad freight and passenger transportation in Virginia.

WHEREAS, improvement and expansion of rail freight and passenger infrastructure and facilities in Virginia can reduce the need for expenditures on highway construction and maintenance by diverting both freight and passenger traffic from highway to rail; and

WHEREAS, the diversion of passenger and freight traffic from highway to rail reduces congestion, promotes safety, and avoids significant air and water pollution; and

WHEREAS, the freight railroads that currently own and operate most of the rail lines in Virginia do not have the financial resources to make many of the improvements to rail facilities and infrastructure that might clearly be in the public interest; and

WHEREAS, in order to facilitate the clear public interest in diverting freight and passenger traffic from highway to rail, and to insure the construction of rail facilities that are clearly in the public interest, there is a need to review and analyze the Virginia Rail Transportation Development Authority with regard to its functions, structure, and responsibilities for both freight and passenger rail activities; therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation be requested to investigate the Virginia Rail Transportation Development Authority for the purpose of providing or facilitating financing required for the acquisition, construction, repair, and extension of rail facilities, including rolling stock and infrastructure, that are determined by the Authority to be in the public interest; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Department of Rail and Public Transportation be requested to review an assessment of financial feasibilities and options, a literature search of national best practices in reference to creating rail authorities, and other outstanding issues; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Department of Rail and Public Transportation be requested to recommend to the General Assembly how the Authority could be structured, how it could obtain the revenues essential to its purposes, and what powers and duties it could have.

All agencies of the Commonwealth are requested to provide such assistance to the Department of Rail and Public Transportation in the implementation of this resolution as that Department may request.

The Department of Rail and Public Transportation shall complete its investigation and report its findings to the Governor and the General Assembly by November 30, 2003.