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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 128

Offered January 8, 2020

Requesting the Department of Rail and Public Transportation to study and develop best practices for constructing, operating, and maintaining commuter rail systems in the Commonwealth. Report.

Patrons—Roem, Adams, D.M., Cole, J.G., Hope, Rasoul and Samirah

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, building and widening roads is not sufficient to meet the transportation needs of the Commonwealth, and commuter programs such as rail systems are a necessary part of the solution to improve mobility and help the economy grow; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Railway Express in Northern Virginia provides critical person-carrying capacity that is the equivalent of a full interstate lane in the peak-hour traffic direction in the Interstate 95 and Interstate 66 corridors, with less pollution, energy consumption, and accident cost than highway operations; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Railway Express's Fredericksburg Line Extension project received the highest economic development, safety, and environmental scores in the Commonwealth for the 2017 SMART SCALE program, resulting in an award of \$93 million; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Rail and Public Transportation, as well as other statewide and regional agencies, are conducting major initiatives to increase transportation options across the Commonwealth, including investing over \$600 million in federal and state revenues for commuter rail operating and capital expenses across the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, the rail transportation system in Switzerland is so affordable and reliable that the citizens of Switzerland travel more kilometers in trains than the citizens of any other nation; and

WHEREAS, Japan is increasing rail transportation options to develop the national economy as well as encourage growth in local economies; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Department of Rail and Public Transportation be requested to study and develop best practices for constructing, operating, and maintaining commuter rail systems in the Commonwealth.

In conducting its study, the Department of Rail and Public Transportation (Department) shall focus on the methods and procedures used in Switzerland and Japan as well as in the United States for constructing, operating, managing, designing, engineering, and maintaining commuter rail systems in such countries. The study of systems in the United States shall be limited to peer agencies that (i) are required to pay track access fees to a host railroad, including Amtrak; (ii) utilize a third-party operator; and (iii) provide no fewer than one million and no more than nine million passenger trips annually. The Department shall determine if such methods and procedures (a) can be considered best practices to mitigate and reduce costs for constructing, operating, managing, designing, engineering, and maintaining commuter rail systems and (b) are feasible for implementation in the Commonwealth. In making such determinations, the Department shall consider the unique needs of commuter rail systems throughout the Commonwealth, including costs related to the use of track access fees paid to host railroads and Amtrak as well as costs related to the use of any third-party commuter rail operator. The Department shall consult with the Virginia Railway Express Operations Board and relevant stakeholders in conducting this study and in drafting any reports or recommendations relating to such study.

All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Department of Rail and Public Transportation for this study, upon request.

The Department of Rail and Public Transportation shall complete its meetings by June 30, 2021, and the Department shall submit to the Governor and the General Assembly an executive summary and report of its findings and recommendations for publication as a House or Senate document prior to the start of the 2022 Regular Session of the General Assembly. Prior to the start of the 2021 Regular Session of the General Assembly, the Department shall submit to the Governor and the General Assembly an executive summary of its progress for publication as a House or Senate document. The executive summaries and reports shall be submitted as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and reports no later than the first day of the next Regular Session of the General Assembly and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.

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