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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 55

Offered January 8, 2020

Prefiled January 6, 2020

Requesting the Department of Rail and Public Transportation to study the feasibility of an east-west Commonwealth Corridor passenger rail service. Report.

Patrons—Rasoul, Adams, D.M., Aird, Askew, Bagby, Bourne, Carroll Foy, Carter, Convirs-Fowler, Hope, Hudson, Jenkins, Jones, McQuinn, Price, Samirah, Tyler, Ward, Ware and Willett; Senator: McClellan

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Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, Virginia is a leader in expanding and improving intercity passenger rail service; and

WHEREAS, Virginia launched new intercity passenger rail service between Lynchburg and Washington, D.C., in 2009 and Richmond and Washington, D.C., in 2010; and

WHEREAS, Virginia extended the Richmond - Washington, D.C., service to Norfolk in 2013 and the Lynchburg - Washington, D.C., service to Roanoke in 2017; and

WHEREAS, intercity passenger rail service provides a beneficial alternative to the use of highways for travelers, especially students, business travelers, and tourists; and

WHEREAS, by providing an alternative to using highways, increased use of intercity passenger rail service can reduce highway congestion, generate economic development, and improve air quality; and

WHEREAS, in 2017 Amtrak trains in Virginia removed 568 million passenger miles from our roadways, reduced carbon pollution by 233 million pounds, generated nearly $1.1 billion in economic benefits, and sustained over 11,000 jobs; and

WHEREAS, there is no east-west cross-state intercity passenger rail service in Virginia; and

WHEREAS, to travel by train from Norfolk to Roanoke would take 16 hours, which includes a six-hour layover in Washington, D.C.; and

WHEREAS, an intercity passenger rail corridor between Hampton Roads and the New River Valley would improve transportation connectivity for 3.7 million Virginians, 1.4 million workers, and 330,000 higher education students; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) be requested to study the feasibility of an east-west Commonwealth Corridor passenger rail service connecting Hampton Roads, Richmond, and the New River Valley.

In conducting its study, the DRPT shall assess the feasibility, desirability, and possibility of expanding intercity passenger rail service connecting the metropolitan areas from Hampton Roads through Richmond to the New River Valley.

All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the DRPT for this study, upon request.

The direct costs of this study shall not exceed $300,000 and shall be paid for from the Intercity Passenger Rail Operating and Capital Fund.

The DRPT shall complete its meetings by November 30, 2020, and shall submit to the Governor and the General Assembly an executive summary and a report of its findings and recommendations for publication as a House or Senate document. The executive summary and report 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 2021 Regular Session of the General Assembly and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.