

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 656

Establishing a joint subcommittee to study funding for public transportation in Hampton Roads.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 23, 1995

Agreed to by the Senate, February 21, 1995

WHEREAS, public transportation, an essential element of the transportation system on the Peninsula and in South Hampton Roads which comprise the Hampton Roads region of the Commonwealth, provides mobility to commuters, shoppers, tourists and many citizens who would otherwise be isolated from jobs, family members, retail stores, tourist destinations, medical treatment, and other facilities; and

WHEREAS, public transportation is vital to the physical well-being, safety, and quality of life of both older and disabled citizens in Hampton Roads, many of whom would have no safe and reliable means of travel but for the existence of the public transportation services of Hampton Roads, including James City County Transit, the Peninsula Transportation District Commission (PENTRAN), and the Tidewater Transportation District Commission (TRT); and

WHEREAS, a reliable and efficient public transportation system is a crucial factor in attracting future economic development and preserving existing jobs in Hampton Roads, as evidenced by the support of the Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce and the Peninsula Chamber of Commerce for dedicated, reliable funding for public transportation in the region; and

WHEREAS, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has downgraded the characterization of the Hampton Roads region to a "moderate" air quality nonattainment area under the Clean Air Act amendments of 1990, posing a substantial threat to Hampton Roads' future ability to attract new economic development and to retain existing businesses which are the heart of the region's economy, and placing an absolute premium on maintaining an effective system of public transportation that will serve the entire Hampton Roads region; and

WHEREAS, federal policies contained in the Clean Air Act Amendments, the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act, and energy policies require an expanded role for public transportation; and

WHEREAS, federal funding for public transportation has declined dramatically over the past decade, placing increased stress on state and local funding for public transportation and resulting in large increases in fares paid by passengers, many of whom live on fixed incomes; and

WHEREAS, reduced funding for public transportation has also resulted in service reductions, which deprive citizens of basic and essential mobility, and further reductions in federal and state financial assistance have raised the probability of further service cuts in the immediate future; and

WHEREAS, local governmental support for public transportation throughout Hampton Roads currently is drawn from general funds in local treasuries, placing the responsibility for local support of public transportation primarily upon homeowners and other property taxpayers; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That a joint subcommittee be established to study funding for public transportation in Hampton Roads.

The joint subcommittee shall consist of 11 members as follows: four members of the House of Delegates to be appointed by the Speaker of the House; three members of the Senate to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections; and four members at large who are residents of the Hampton Roads region, two to be appointed by the Speaker of the House and two to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections.

In its deliberations, the joint subcommittee shall examine: (i) the current sources of local funding for public transportation; (ii) the scope of property tax relief which could be realized for homeowners and other property taxpayers in Hampton Roads by identifying dedicated funding sources, other than local general funds, to support public transportation; and (iii) sources of stable and reliable dedicated funding for public transportation.

The Division of Legislative Services shall provide staff support for the study. Technical assistance shall be provided to the joint subcommittee by the Peninsula Transportation District Commission, the Tidewater Transportation District Commission, James City County Transit, and the Department of Rail and Public Transportation. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the joint subcommittee, upon request.

The direct costs of this study shall not exceed \$6,500.

The joint subcommittee shall complete its work in time to submit its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the 1996 Session of the General Assembly as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents.

Implementation of this resolution is subject to subsequent approval and certification by the Joint

ENROLLED

HJ656ER

Rules Committee. The Committee may withhold expenditures or delay the period for the conduct of the study.