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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 396
AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE
(Proposed by the House Committee on Rules
on February 19, 2001)
(Patron Prior to Substitute—Senator Watkins)

Establishing the Virginia-North Carolina Interstate High-Speed Rail Commission.

WHEREAS, levels of congestion on interstate highways and at major airports all along the East Coast of the United States are rapidly rising, and in some locations have reached virtual gridlock for hours each day; and

WHEREAS, it is thus highly desirable that, to the maximum degree possible, alternative modes of transportation be used to move people and goods long distances along the East Coast corridor; and

WHEREAS, the establishment of high-speed rail passenger service between Virginia and North Carolina would increase mobility for passengers on connecting rail services, and on connecting rail lines in the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, preliminary engineering studies have documented that the creation of high-speed passenger rail service between points in Virginia and points in North Carolina could provide travelers all along the corridor an attractive alternative to highway travel, thus reducing highway congestion; and

WHEREAS, establishment of high-speed passenger rail service between Virginia and North Carolina offers the additional possibility of connection through the District of Columbia to origins and destinations as far north as New England; and

WHEREAS, establishment of high-speed passenger service between Virginia and North Carolina offers the possibility of connections to additional destinations in the south, including Florida; Greenville-Spartanburg, South Carolina; Atlanta, Georgia; and others; and

WHEREAS, it would appear both useful and prudent to have a panel of legislators from both Virginia and North Carolina established in order to explore the benefits, costs, and required legislative actions associated with establishing this service; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the Virginia-North Carolina Interstate High-Speed Rail Commission be established. The Virginia component of the Commission shall consist of six legislative members as follows: two members of the Senate, to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections, and four members of the House of Delegates, to be appointed by the Speaker of the House, in accordance with the principles of proportional representation contained in the Rules of the House of Delegates.

In conducting the study, the Commission shall conduct such meetings, tours of inspection, and public hearings as appropriate to determine the desirability and feasibility of establishing high-speed passenger rail service between Virginia and North Carolina, including connecting rail lines in Hampton Roads. If the Commission determines that such rail service is desirable and feasible, it shall consider and recommend to the Governor and General Assembly legislative action necessary to facilitate the establishment of high-speed passenger rail service and connecting rail lines in Virginia, determine necessary levels of funding, and identify the sources of such funds.

The direct costs of this study shall not exceed \$7,500 per year.

The Division of Legislative Services shall provide staff support for the study. Technical assistance shall be provided by the Department of Rail and Public Transportation. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Commission, upon request.

The Commission shall complete its work in time to submit its written findings and recommendations by October 20, 2002, to the Governor and the 2003 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 Rules Committee. The Committee may withhold expenditures or delay the period for the conduct of the study.