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HOUSE BILL NO. 644

Offered January 14, 2004

Prefiled January 13, 2004

A *BILL to amend the Code of Virginia by adding a section numbered 33.1-221.1:1.1, relating to the Railway Preservation and Development Fund.*

Patron—Abbitt

Referred to Committee on Transportation

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding a section numbered 33.1-221.1:1.1 as follows:

§ 33.1-221.1:1.1. Railway Preservation and Development Fund.

A. The General Assembly declares it to be in the public interest that railway preservation and development of railway transportation facilities are an important element of a balanced transportation system of the Commonwealth for freight and passengers and further declares it to be in the public interest that the retention, maintenance, improvement and development of the railways are essential to the Commonwealth's continued economic growth, vitality, and competitiveness in national and world markets, and there is hereby created in the state treasury a special nonreverting fund to be known as the Railway Preservation and Development Fund, hereafter referred to as "the Fund."

B. The Fund shall be established on the books of the Comptroller, and shall consist of such funds from such sources as shall be set forth in the Appropriation Act and shall be paid into the state treasury and credited to the Fund. Interest earned on moneys in the Fund shall remain in the Fund and be credited to it. Any moneys remaining in the Fund, including interest thereon, at the end of each fiscal year shall not revert to the general fund but shall remain in the Fund. Moneys in the Fund shall be used solely as provided in this section. Expenditures and disbursements from the Fund shall be made by the State Treasurer on warrants issued by the Comptroller upon written request signed by the Executive Director of the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation or the Executive Director's designee.

C. To fulfill this purpose, there shall be funding set forth each year in the budget bill and appropriated by the General Assembly in the Rail Assistance Program of the Department of Rail and Public Transportation. These funds shall be used by the Department of Rail and Public Transportation to administer a Rail Preservation and Development Program for the purposes described in subsection A. Furthermore, the Commonwealth Transportation Board shall include an annual allocation for such purpose in its allocation of transportation revenues. Such appropriation and allocation shall be no less than \$3 million each fiscal year.

D. The Executive Director of the Department of Rail and Public Transportation shall administer and expend or commit, subject to the approval of the Commonwealth Transportation Board, the Fund for acquiring, leasing, and/or improving railways or assisting other appropriate entities to acquire, lease, or improve railways for freight and/or passenger rail transportation purposes whenever the Board shall have determined that such acquisition, lease, and/or improvement is for the common good of a region of the Commonwealth or the Commonwealth as a whole. The Executive Director of the Department of Rail and Public Transportation may consult with other agencies or their designated representatives concerning projects to be undertaken under this section.

E. Tracks and facilities constructed and property and equipment purchased under this section shall be the property of the Commonwealth for the useful life of the project as determined by the Executive Director of the Department of Rail and Public Transportation and shall be made available for use by all common carriers using the railway system to which they connect under trackage rights agreements between the parties.

INTRODUCED

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