

VIRGINIA ACTS OF ASSEMBLY -- 2005 SESSION

CHAPTER 241

An Act to provide for the establishment of the Interstate Route 81 Corridor Multistate Transportation Planning Initiative.

[S 778]

Approved March 20, 2005

Whereas, the General Assembly has determined that the transportation of freight and passengers by rail frequently provides a less expensive, safer, and more environmentally friendly alternative to the construction of additional highways; and

Whereas, hundreds of miles of railroads in the Commonwealth have been abandoned and dismantled within the last 50 years, and hundreds of additional miles of railroad tracks are currently in need of repair, poorly utilized, and threatened with abandonment; and

Whereas, improvements and repairs to rail equipment and infrastructure can, in many circumstances, reduce or eliminate the cost to the public of highway construction, and can also reduce accidents, traffic congestion, fuel consumption, and air and water pollution; and

Whereas, the railroad companies that own most of the railroad infrastructure in the Commonwealth do not have the financial ability to make all of the repairs and improvements to rail infrastructure that would be in the public interest; and

Whereas, a higher-speed dual-track railway would enable the diversion of up to 30 percent of the through truck traffic from interstate highways to "truck ferries"; and

Whereas, there is a pressing public need to provide a mechanism for making improvements and repairs to the Commonwealth's rail infrastructure that are clearly in the public interest and in assisting in the financing of such improvements; now, therefore,

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. *§ 1. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the States of New York, New Jersey, West Virginia, Maryland, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana, primary states served by the Interstate Route 81 corridor, be requested to adopt an I-81 corridor multistate transportation planning initiative.*

§ 2. The Interstate Route 81 corridor multistate transportation planning initiative shall:

1. *Study, develop, and promote a plan for the design, construction, financing, and operation of optimal freight and passenger transportation facilities in the I-81 corridor, a national and international transportation corridor, through and between points in the Commonwealth and other states;*

2. *Coordinate efforts to establish the least costly and most efficient combination of transportation infrastructure development including highway expansion, higher-speed rail service, coordinated user regulations, and enforcement proposals at the federal, state, and local government levels;*

3. *Coordinate and require joint planning by the Virginia Department of Transportation and the departments of transportation in other states; and*

4. *Seek and provide funding and resources for innovative and appropriate passenger and freight transportation improvement concepts, including improved infrastructure, user regulation, and enforcement options, which most effectively meet the purpose and need of the corridor for a safe, efficient, least costly, and least environmentally damaging approach.*