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HOUSE BILL NO. 977

Offered January 11, 2006

Prefiled January 11, 2006

A *BILL to amend the Code of Virginia by adding a section numbered 33.1-221.1:1.2, relating to the Shortline 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 33.1-221.1:1.2 as follows:**

§ 33.1-221.1:1.2. *Shortline Railway Preservation and Development Fund.*

A. *The General Assembly declares it to be in the public interest that shortline railway preservation and development of railway transportation support facilities are important elements 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, and improvement of the shortline railway and development of railway transportation support facilities are essential to the Commonwealth's continued economic growth, vitality, and competitiveness in national world markets, and there is hereby created in the state treasury a special nonreverting fund to be known as the Shortline Railway Preservation and Development Fund, hereinafter in this section referred to as "the Fund." A "shortline railway," for the purposes of this section, shall mean any Class II or Class III railroad as defined by the United States Surface Transportation Board. "Railway transportation support facilities," for the purposes of this section, shall mean facilities required for the loading, transfer, or additional track capacity to facilitate the shipment of goods by rail other than as provided for in § 33.1-221.1:1 or 33.1-221.1:1.1.*

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 general 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 Director of the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation or the 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 Shortline Railway 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.*

D. *The 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 shortline railways and the development of railway transportation support facilities or assisting other appropriate entities to acquire, lease, or improve shortline railways and the development of railway 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 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.*

F. *Tracks and facilities constructed, and property and equipment purchased, with funds under this section shall be the property of the Commonwealth for their useful life of the project, not to exceed 15 years, as determined by the 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 the trackage rights agreements between the parties. Projects undertaken pursuant of this section shall be limited to those of a region of the Commonwealth or the Commonwealth as a whole. Such projects shall include a minimum of 30% cash or in-kind matching contribution from a private source, which may include a railroad, a regional authority, private industry, or a local government source, or a combination of such sources. No single project shall be allocated more than 50% of total available funds.*

INTRODUCED

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