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HOUSE BILL NO. 1648

Offered January 12, 2011

Prefiled January 10, 2011

A BILL to amend and reenact § 33.1-221.1:1.1 of the Code of Virginia, and to repeal § 33.1-391.3:1 of the Code of Virginia, relating to the Rail Enhancement Fund; allocation and use of funds.

Patrons—Cosgrove, Comstock and Garrett

Referred to Committee on Transportation**Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:****1. That § 33.1-221.1:1.1 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:****§ 33.1-221.1:1.1. Rail Enhancement 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 freight and passenger 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 Rail Enhancement Fund which shall be considered a special fund within the Transportation Trust Fund, hereafter referred to as "the Fund."

B. The Fund shall be established on the books of the Comptroller, and shall consist of dedications pursuant to § 58.1-2425 and such funds from other sources as may 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 Director of the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation or the Director's designee.

C. 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 railways or railroad equipment, rolling stock, rights-of-way or facilities, or assisting other appropriate entities to acquire, lease, or improve railways or railroad equipment, rolling stock, rights-of-way or facilities, 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. ~~Prior to recommending an allocation of the Fund to the Commonwealth Transportation Board, the Director of the Department of Rail and Public Transportation shall consult with and obtain the advice and recommendations of the Rail Advisory Board established pursuant to § 33.1-391.3:1 Funds provided in this section may also be used as matching funds for federal grants to support passenger or freight rail projects.~~

D. Projects undertaken pursuant to this section shall be limited to those the Commonwealth Transportation Board shall have determined will result in public benefits to the Commonwealth or to a region of the Commonwealth that are equal to or greater than the investment of funds under this section. Such public benefits shall include, but not be limited to, the impact of the project on traffic congestion, environmental quality, and whenever possible, give due consideration to passenger rail capacity on corridors identified by the Commonwealth Transportation Board that have existing or proposed passenger rail service. Such projects shall include a minimum of 30 percent cash or in-kind matching contribution from a *federal or private* source, which may include a railroad, a regional authority, or a local government source, or a combination of such sources.

2. That § 33.1-391.3:1 of the Code of Virginia is repealed.

INTRODUCED

HB1648