Southeast High Speed Rail Corridor

A Time to Act

"We intend to create a corridor of national significance that will rival the interstate highway system in terms of benefits to our region."

– Elizabeth Mabry, Executive Director,
South Carolina Department of Transportation

"...The average trip on the Southeast Corridor would be longer [in distance] and generate more revenue than on any other route..."

– High Speed Ground Transportation for America
U.S. Department of Transportation, 1997

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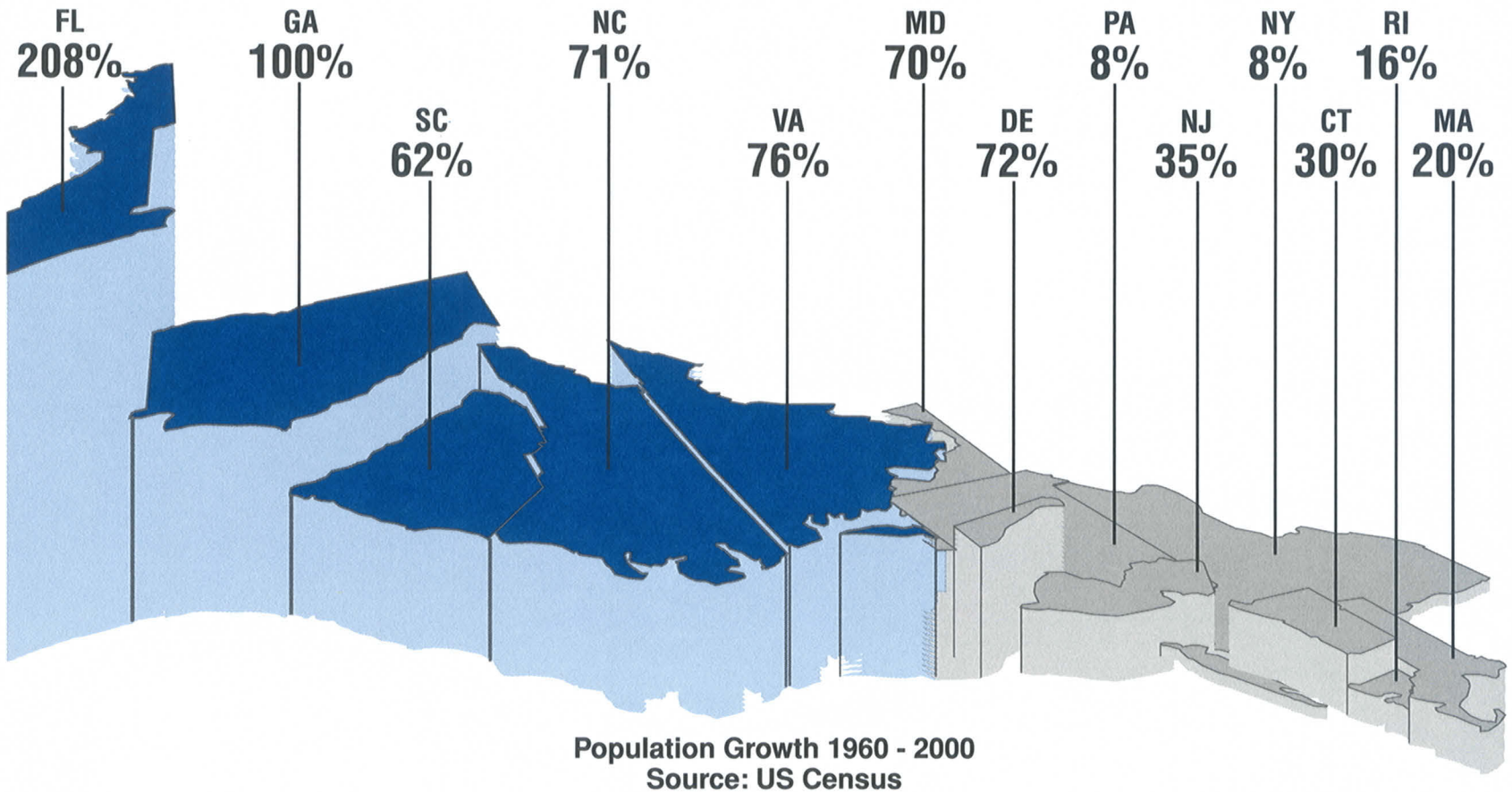
June 1999

Southeast Growth Rate Double That of Northeast



Population Growth 1960 - 2000
Source: US Census

SEHSR Objectives

Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia have joined together to form a four-state coalition to plan, develop, and implement the Southeast High Speed Rail corridor (SEHSR), in order to extend 110 mph rail passenger service from the Northeast Corridor (NEC) southward to the major cities and cultural attractions of the Southeast. The federally designated SEHSR is a rail corridor of national significance, and will extend the high speed rail benefits of the nearly completed NEC southward to Richmond, Raleigh, Greensboro, Charlotte, Greenville-Spartanburg, Atlanta and Macon, as well as to Columbia, Savannah, and Jacksonville.

The burgeoning populations and robust economies of the Southeast states ensure the success of the SEHSR. The continued quality of life and regional mobility of its residents may well depend on the SEHSR's early implementation.

The SEHSR will form a vital rail link between the Northeast and the Southeast, performing a twenty-first century development role similar in many ways to the economic boon created by the construction in the mid-twentieth century of Interstates 95 and 85. Not only will the Southeast states benefit, but the citizens and residents of the Northeast will benefit as well by the new ease of access to and from the Southeast, for business purposes, trips to college and personal travel.

While in the near term, the states of the Southeast have individual rail programs designed to upgrade and expand intrastate rail services to connect areas with the greatest populations, the four states are united in their objective to link these current programs into a regional Southeast High Speed Rail corridor that would generate immense benefits, not only in travel convenience and reliability, but also in economic activity, for both the Northeast and Southeast regions of the nation.

Airports and Interstate Segments with Frequent Traffic Delays

A Four State Vision

The Southeast increasingly lives in a world framed by congested interstate highways and an overburdened airport and airway infrastructure. Improvements and alternate travel choices are clearly needed. Rail passenger service can become an important part of the solution.

- Between Washington and Richmond, VA I-95 traffic levels exceed that highway's design capacity not just during peak hours, but throughout the day. So onerous and notorious has this stretch of highway become that it discourages discretionary travel far beyond its congested sections.

- On I-85, which links Southeast population centers from Durham and Charlotte to Greenville–Spartanburg and Atlanta, daily traffic levels regularly exceed the highway's design capacity, causing delays and unreliable transit times.

- In the ten years from 1986 to 1996, traffic on I-85 increased 68 percent, on I-95 traffic increased 40 percent, and on I-75 (which links Macon and Atlanta) traffic increased 45 percent.

- Highway related travel delays are costing the Southeast millions of dollars in lost productivity. Yet adding traffic lanes to existing interstates in many cases is becoming cost prohibitive due to urban development that has enveloped many interstate stretches.

- The Southeast states are concerned about the deteriorating air quality in the urbanized areas of the region. Implementation of the SEHSR will assist the states in maintaining the region's air quality by providing an environmentally friendly travel option.

- Implementation of the Southeast High Speed Rail corridor can provide a viable alternative to the Southeast's crowded interstates at an affordable cost. Construction of the SEHSR will permit maximum rail speeds of 110 mph at approximately one-third the cost of building an average interstate highway mile and one-tenth the cost per mile of constructing new urban beltways.

FLIGHT OPERATIONS	
ATLANTA HARTSFIELD	EXPECT DELAYS
CHARLOTTE DOUGLAS	EXPECT DELAYS
RALEIGH – DURHAM	EXPECT DELAYS
WASHINGTON DULLES	EXPECT DELAYS
WASHINGTON NATIONAL	EXPECT DELAYS
BALTIMORE WASHINGTON	EXPECT DELAYS
PHILADELPHIA	EXPECT DELAYS
NEWARK	MOST DELAYS IN USA
NEW YORK LA GUARDIA	EXPECT DELAYS
NEW YORK JOHN F. KENNEDY	EXPECT DELAYS
BOSTON LOGAN	EXPECT DELAYS

Source: FAA

- Four years from now, in 2003, the above major East Coast airports which link the Northeast and Southeast are estimated to generate 20,000 annual hours of flight delays. Time sensitive business and leisure travelers are increasingly spending more time in departure lounges waiting for delayed flights than actually traveling to their destinations.

- Where the Northeast and Southeast airport delays are projected to be the greatest, construction of the SEHSR will provide a reliable, comfortable, affordable travel alternative.

MOST POPULAR AIR DESTINATIONS*		
From Atlanta	**From Raleigh-Durham**	**From Richmond**
1. New York	1. Atlanta	1. Atlanta
2. Chicago	2. New York	2. New York
3. Washington, DC	3. Chicago	3. Chicago
4. Dallas/Ft. Worth	4. Dallas/Ft. Worth	4. Orlando
5. Philadelphia	5. Newark	5. Dallas
6. Orlando	6. Boston	6. Newark
7. Boston	7. Philadelphia	7. Philadelphia
8. Tampa	8. Washington, DC	8. Charlotte

* Shaded areas represent destinations served by the NEC–SEHSR.

- SEHSR implementation would also reduce the demand for short haul air service between the Northeast and Southeast, freeing up landing slots at major airport hubs, and permitting a more balanced service pattern to and from regional airports such as Richmond, Columbia, Charleston, Greenville – Spartanburg, and Savannah.

- Airports are generally located far from a community's commercial core. Rail terminals by contrast traditionally have been sited at a city's center of activity. Implementing SEHSR can assist in revitalizing downtowns, providing a renewed focus of commercial and cultural life in the region's traditional centers, and maintaining the strong sense of place that characterizes the Southeast.

- SEHSR will link those cities and communities in the Southeast and the Northeast where highway and airline travel volumes are the greatest, providing a much needed travel alternative to the region and helping ease the congestion on present transportation facilities.

- By providing fast, frequent, and cost-effective travel to and through the Southeast, SEHSR will allow cities to attract and keep businesses, spurring economic growth and employment opportunities.

- SEHSR will have an enormous positive economic impact on the region. In North Carolina alone, SEHSR construction and operation is projected to create:

  - ➢ $700 million in new tax revenues,
  - ➢ Approximately $10.5 billion in employee wages over 20 years,
  - ➢ Over 31,400 new one-year jobs from SEHSR's construction,
  - ➢ Over 800 permanent new railroad operating positions, and
  - ➢ Nearly 19,000 permanent full-time jobs from businesses which choose to locate or expand in the state as a result of SEHSR's creation.

Similarly positive impacts can reasonably be expected from the initiation of SEHSR service in Virginia, South Carolina, and Georgia.

The burgeoning populations and robust economies of the Southeast states will ensure the success of the SEHSR. The continued quality of life and regional mobility of its residents may well depend on the SEHSR's early implementation.

The Federal Perspective

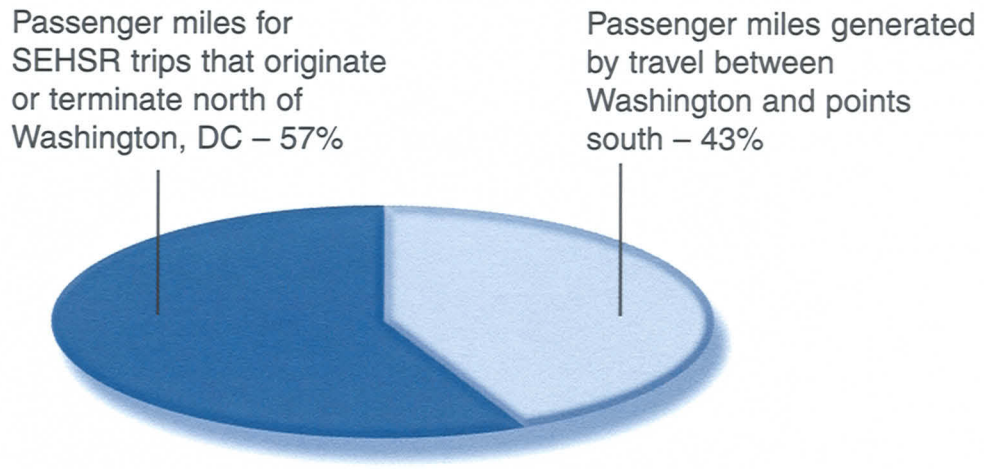
"...The average trip on the Southeast Corridor would be longer and generate more revenue than on any other route..."

– U.S. Department of Transportation, 1997

- According to the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), the SEHSR will provide economic and transportation benefits to both the Northeast and Southeast states since it "would increase traffic levels on the Northeast Corridor itself...thus creating synergistic ridership, revenue, expense and income effects" throughout the two regions.

- These synergies are due to the large number of passengers who will use trains traveling from SEHSR communities to destinations in the Northeast Corridor. In fact, a majority of the passengers traveling on SEHSR trains will begin or end their journeys in the Northeast Corridor (Figure 1).

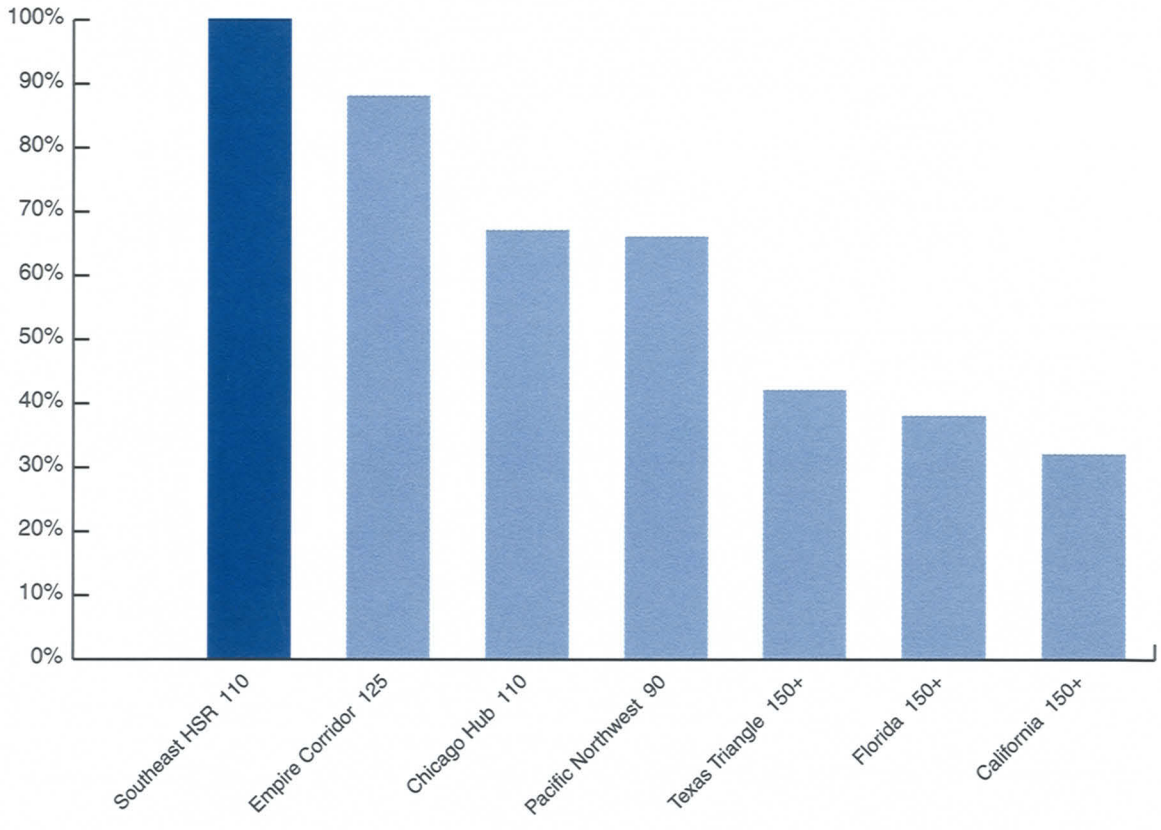
Figure 1: **Composition of Corridor Traffic (Passenger Miles, Year 2020)**



Source: USDOT

- In the USDOT's landmark report, High Speed Ground Transportation for America, SEHSR was given a "specialized analysis" and "afforded exceptional treatment" because of its extraordinary potential for commercial success. According to the report:
  - ➢ As an extension of the NEC, SEHSR will "generate more revenue than any other" proposed rail corridor in the nation.
  - ➢ SEHSR has a ratio of public benefits against public costs 27 times larger than any other proposed corridor.
  - ➢ SEHSR will generate $2.54 in benefits to the nation for every one dollar spent to build and operate it.
  - ➢ SEHSR is the only corridor projected to cover its total costs from system revenues (Figure 2).
  - ➢ SEHSR will generate revenues in excess of operating costs of at least $58 million by 2020, producing an operating cost recovery ratio of 184 percent.

Figure 2: **Percent of Total Costs Covered by Revenues, Proposed Rail Corridors**



Includes construction & operating costs.
Number next to corridor name indicates maximum speed.

Source: USDOT

An HSR Chronology

1965 – Congress passes High Speed Ground Transportation Act.

1969 – First Metroliners enter service with three hour New York-Washington running times.

1971 – Amtrak created to operate nation's intercity passenger service.

1976 – Four-R Act becomes law, creating Northeast Corridor Improvement Project (NECIP).

1976 – Amtrak's New York-Savannah Palmetto and Boston-Newport News Colonial services initiated. (First daylight services in the Southeast.)

1978 – NECIP begins $4.6 billion Northeast Corridor rehabilitation.

1979 – Amtrak assumes operation of the New York-Atlanta-New Orleans Crescent.

1985 – New York - Richmond Virginian begins service.

1988 – Washington Union Station reopens.

1990 – New York-Raleigh-Charlotte Carolinian initiated.

1991 – New Haven-Boston electrification project launched.

1992 – Virginia Railway Express (VRE) begins service.

1992 – USDOT designates Washington, DC-Richmond-Raleigh-Charlotte as a high speed rail corridor.

1997 – USDOT's report High Speed Ground Transportation for America issued.

1998 – USDOT extends SEHSR designation to include Charlotte-Greenville/ Spartanburg-Atlanta-Macon and Raleigh-Columbia- Savannah-Jacksonville.

1999 – Northeast High Speed Rail Program completed; Amtrak Acela Express connects Boston and New York in three hours, New York and Washington in two hours, 45 minutes.

The Northeast: Twenty Years of High Speed Rail

The Northeast has always been the most densely populated region of the nation. While the Northeast in the 1960's had more passenger rail service than other areas, even there rail was not widely used, except for Boston, New York, and Philadelphia commuter services.

In 1964, there were 26 weekday trains between New York and Washington, DC. (There are today by contrast, 60 weekday trains between these two cities.) In the Northeast in the 1960's, most intercity travel was by highway on the newly constructed, limited access expressways and toll roads. Time sensitive travelers chose the Eastern Airlines Shuttle, which offered hourly no-reservation service between Washington, New York La Guardia and Boston airports on turboprop Lockheed Electras.

Rail was seen as uncomfortable, unreliable and slow. Most of the equipment used in the Northeast Corridor was purchased in 1952 or earlier and the GG-1 locomotives dated to the late 1930's. While the Afternoon Congressional made the 226 mile run from the Potomac to Manhattan in three hours 35 minutes, most runs took four hours.

All this changed in 1965, when Senator Claiborne Pell (D-RI) introduced and Congress passed the High Speed Ground Transportation Act. In a Federal Government demonstration project with the Pennsylvania Railroad, $56 million was spent to make essential upgrades to the railroad right-of-way between New York and Washington, DC, as well as to purchase 50 MU electric Metroliner cars capable of 120 mph speeds. The newly built Metroliners went into service on January 16, 1969, making the run between New York and Washington, DC with five stops in two hours 59 minutes - shaving an hour off most previous schedules. The Metroliners proved enormously popular, carrying over two million passengers in their first two years and single handedly reversing declining rail patronage between New York and Washington, DC.

Two events helped shape rail passenger service in the Northeast in the 1970's. On May 1, 1971, Amtrak was created to provide rail passenger service. And, on February 5, 1976, the 4-R Act was signed into law creating the Northeast Corridor Improvement Project (NECIP) whose goals were to achieve New York-Washington running times of two hours forty minutes and Boston-New York running times of three hours forty minutes. Approximately $1.6 billion in federal funds was appropriated to achieve these goals, by installing continuously welded rail, replacing wooden ties with concrete ties, replacing or rebuilding bridges, reboring tunnels, realigning curves for high speed operation, and modernizing the electric supply system.

Work on NECIP improvements began in earnest in 1978 and it quickly became apparent the infrastructure improvement needs, especially between New Haven and Boston, were much greater than had been forecast. Congress appropriated another

billion dollars to fund NECIP improvements. In 1982, in order to conserve funds, electrification of NEC east of New Haven was dropped from NECIP plans.

By 1991, the disparities between the New York-Washington section of the NEC, where hourly Metroliners sped along the Corridor at 125 mph, and the New York-Boston segment, which was traversed by 11 daily trains averaging 49 mph, were becoming unacceptable. South of New York, Amtrak carried 41 percent of all non-highway travelers between New York and Washington, and 70 percent of all non-highway travelers to and from intermediate points such as Trenton, Philadelphia, Wilmington, and Baltimore. East of New York, Amtrak services captured only 11 percent of the New York-Boston market.

The Northeast Corridor High Speed Rail Program was therefore initiated to bring the New York-Boston segment of the NEC up to the same levels of performance as the New York-Washington section. When completed in late 1999, approximately $2.4 billion in federal funds will have been spent to extend electrification east of New Haven to Boston, rebuild interlockings and terminal trackage to permit higher speed running, upgrade bridges, modernize signal systems, and purchase 20 electric high speed Acela Express trainsets. These NEC infrastructure improvements and introduction of Acela Express service are expected to reduce Boston-New York times to three hours, with hourly service, and New York-Washington times to two hours forty-five minutes with twice hourly service. Maximum running speeds along certain stretches of the NEC will be 150 mph.

It has taken over 20 years of effort, and cost $4.6 billion in federal funds, but the Northeast Corridor is Amtrak's gem. It transports more passengers than any other rail corridor in the country and has become Amtrak's most cost-effective operation. Over 11 million intercity passengers, and tens of millions of commuters in Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, southeastern Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts use the Northeast Corridor annually for their trips. The NEC, once just a vision of certain foresighted legislators and Johnson Administration planners has become an invaluable and irreplaceable major component of the Northeast's transportation infrastructure.

The Southeast: A Rail Passenger Success Story

While the Northeast, with its population densities, has always had rail passenger service keyed to its regional needs, the same cannot be said of the Southeast. Historically, most trains passing through Virginia, Georgia, and the Carolinas were bound somewhere else. Famous limiteds such as the East Coast Champion, the Orange Blossom Special and the Silver Meteor were scheduled for convenient arrival and departure times in Northeast cities and Florida vacation destinations, not intermediate points such as Petersburg, Raleigh, Columbia, or Savannah. To access rail service in the Southeast often meant departing or arriving points in Virginia, Georgia, and the Carolinas in the middle of the night.

This tradition of watching trains pass through Virginia and the Carolinas continued well into the Amtrak era. Then, on June 15, 1976, when sufficient Amfleet I cars had been delivered to make new daylight services possible, Amtrak initiated the New York-Charleston, SC-Savannah Palmetto and the Boston-Richmond-Newport News Colonial. These services were instantly popular and opened up new and more convenient rail options for travelers to Southeast points. In 1985, Amtrak added the Richmond-New York Virginian on a business-travel-oriented schedule.

Before June 1976, Richmond's Staples Mill Station saw six trains a day, all en route to or from Florida points. By 1998, with the introduction of overnight Hampton Roads-Boston service on the Twilight Shoreliner, 14 daily trains passed through or originated in Richmond, only six of which were proceeding to or from Florida.

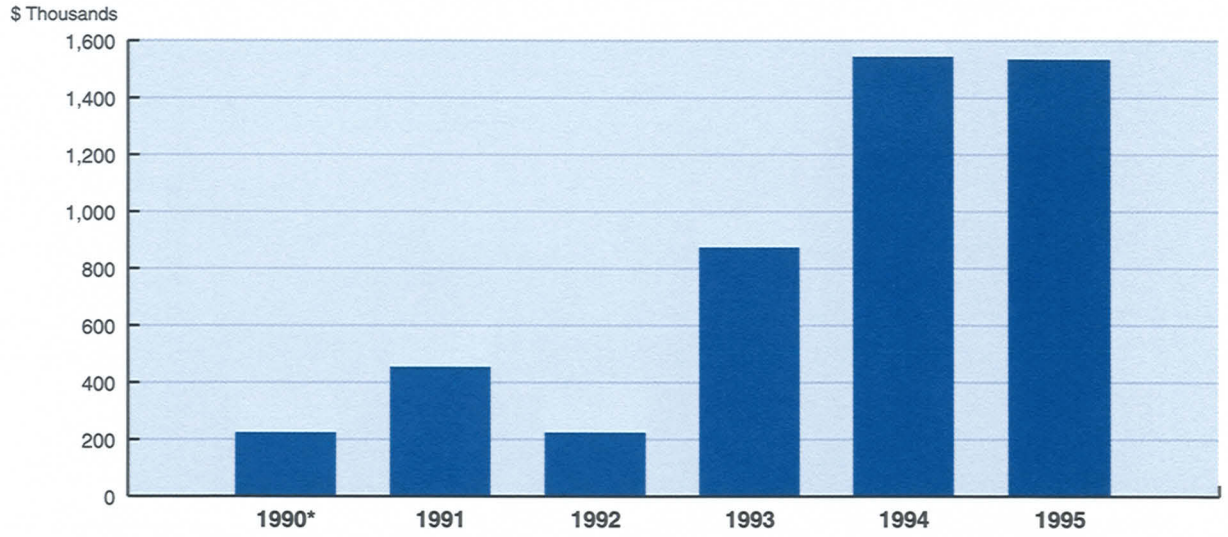
Rail passenger service connecting Georgia, the Carolinas and Virginia with the Northeast, specifically scheduled to provide convenient arrival and departure times in these communities, was now a reality.

There are very good reasons why Amtrak gradually has increased service to the Southeast. The region is, among other things, experiencing rapid population growth. In the last 40 years, the population of Virginia increased by 76 percent, the population of North Carolina by 71 percent, South Carolina by 62 percent, and Georgia by 100 percent. Residents of these states are increasingly educated, affluent and mobile. The quality of life in the region and the availability of a qualified work force are attracting major industrial and technology firms to the area, greatly increasing employment opportunities. Business and leisure travel between the Southeast and the Northeast has been growing by leaps and bounds.

On May 12, 1990, Amtrak and the State of North Carolina initiated the Carolinian between Charlotte-Raleigh-Richmond-Washington and New York. The Carolinian was an immediate success both financially and with the traveling public, despite its circuitous route and slow travel times. (The Carolinian, for example, requires six hours

between Raleigh, NC and Washington, DC while the trip can be made in less than four hours, 45 minutes by automobile.)

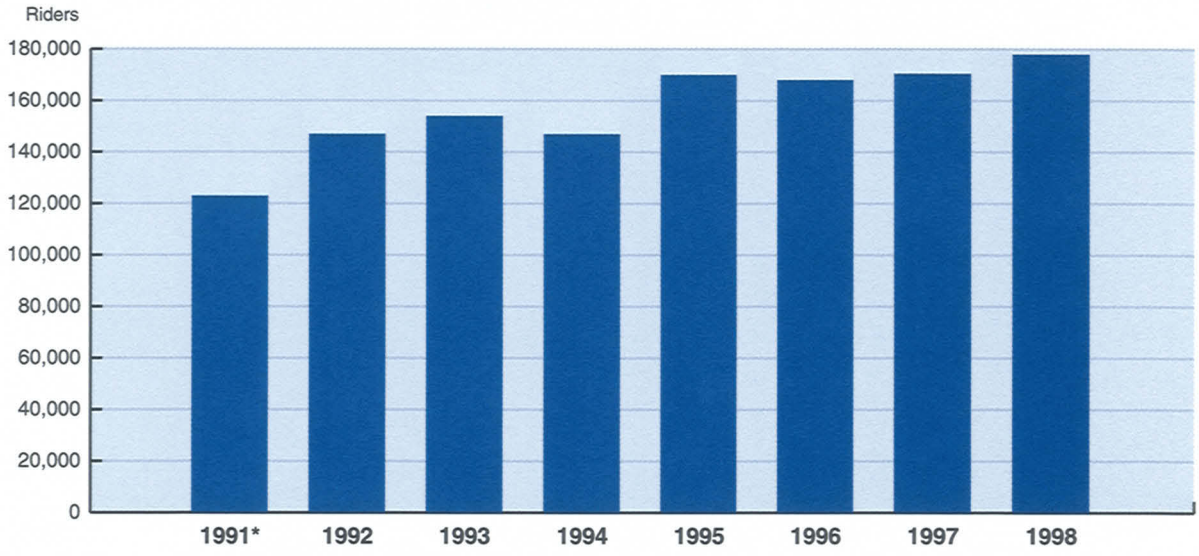
Figure 3: **Carolinian Operating Surplus, Fiscal Years 1990 - 1995 (in Thousands)**



* Partial fiscal year.
Due to changes in Amtrak accounting system, comparable data for later years are not available

Source: Amtrak

Figure 4: **Carolinian Ridership, Fiscal Years 1991 - 1998**



* Partial Fiscal Year
Does not include passengers traveling solely within the NEC.

Source: NCDOT & Amtrak

The Carolinian was not alone in its popularity and financial success. In 1995, for example, the New York-Savannah Palmetto, the New York-Charlotte Carolinian, the Lorton, VA-Sanford, FL Auto-Train, and the Boston-Hampton Roads, VA Colonial were the most financially successful Amtrak services outside the Northeast Corridor.

Service to the Southeast from the NEC not only was proving popular with travelers, but in many cases proving able to recover its operating costs through the farebox.

In the last three years, rail ridership has increased 10 percent in Georgia and by 15 percent in South Carolina. From FY 1992 through FY 1998, Amtrak ridership in Virginia, along the proposed Southeast High Speed Rail (SEHSR) corridor, grew from 750,000 passengers to 900,000 passengers, an increase of 20 percent. Virginia has projected that if Washington, DC-Richmond rail travel times of 90 minutes can be achieved, ridership in this I-95 corridor will triple by 2015.

In addition, the 1996 Southeast States Market and Demand Study projected that implementing the SEHSR corridor would be immensely popular in the Southeast, growing Washington, DC-Columbia, SC rail patronage by 588 percent, Columbia, SC-Savannah patronage by 406 percent, Raleigh to Atlanta patronage by 628 percent (from 9,400 annual riders to 68,400 riders) and Charlotte to Atlanta patronage by 507 percent.

The Federal Government took notice of the growing popularity and viability of rail passenger service in the Southeast region when in October 1992, the US Department of Transportation designated Washington, DC-Richmond-Raleigh-Charlotte, as one of the five federally designated high speed corridors eligible for federal HSR planning funds. This designation was expanded on December 1, 1998, when USDOT Secretary Rodney Slater extended the corridor from Raleigh, through Columbia, SC and Savannah, to Jacksonville, FL and from Charlotte, through Greenville and Spartanburg, to Atlanta and Macon, to form the Southeast High Speed Rail (SEHSR) corridor.

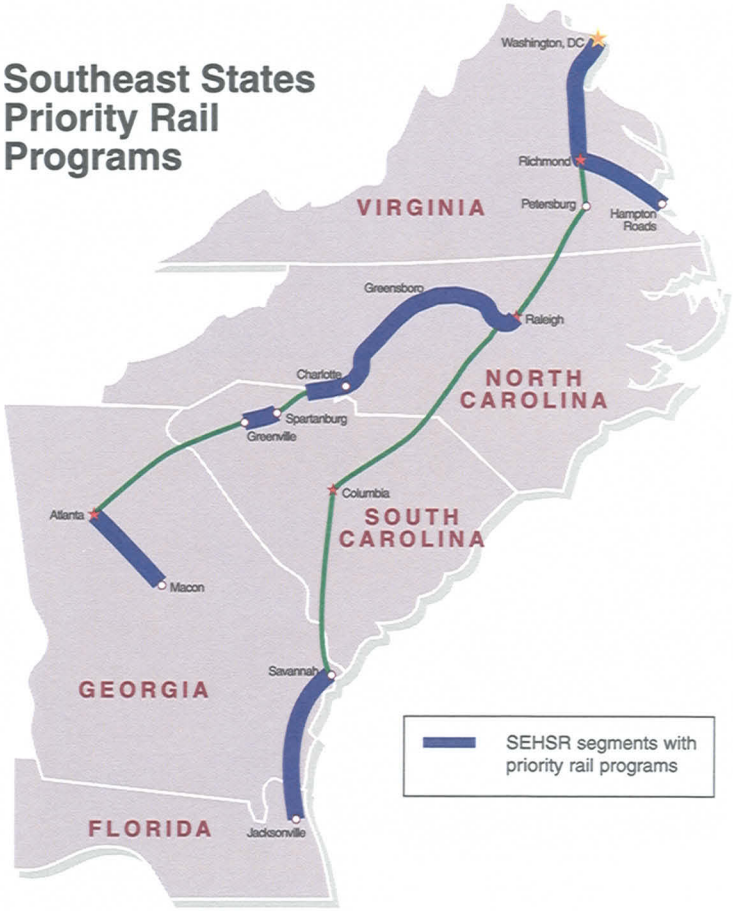
The viability and public usefulness of the SEHSR is compelling. Since the original federal designation, an impressive number of independent studies have confirmed the US Department of Transportation's wisdom and foresight in designating this route as a logical southern extension of the NEC (See Bibliography).

A Four State Progress Report

Each of the four Southeast states has developed its own intrastate rail programs and transportation priorities. Among the highest priorities for Georgia are connecting Macon and Atlanta by rail and improving rail passenger service between Savannah and Jacksonville, FL. In South Carolina, near term rail objectives include preserving abandoned or threatened rights-of-way that could be used for future rail passenger service, providing greater protection at existing grade crossings, and planning additional grade separated crossings, as well as evaluating the feasibility of commuter rail service connecting such communities as Greenville and Spartanburg, Columbia, Newberry and Winnsboro, Rock Hill and Charlotte, NC. North Carolina's rail efforts are focused on enhancing rail passenger service on the state-owned North Carolina Railroad between Raleigh and Charlotte by making infrastructure improvements to reduce travel times. In Virginia, the state is progressing a multi-year capital improvement program to reduce Washington, DC – Richmond rail travel times for the 100 mile trip from 120 minutes to 90 minutes.

These individual rail segments reflect each state's transportation priorities. But when taken together, each of the Southeast states current rail programs also represent important first steps toward linking the Southeast states together through the creation of the Southeast High Speed Rail corridor. Equally significant, the locations where the four states are currently concentrating their rail program funds are also where in many instances the greatest interstate highway congestion and delays are occurring (see interstate delays map on page 3).

Southeast States Priority Rail Programs



GEORGIA

Georgia has developed a passenger rail plan which will provide **110 mph intercity service on seven corridors** as well as rail commuter service on six corridors. The 1995 and 1997 Commuter Rail Studies and the Intercity Passenger Rail Study of 1997 call for build out of the commuter and intercity corridors over 12 years with an investment of $1.5 billion. The designated Southeast High Speed Rail segments within Georgia are included in the first phase of the state's rail implementation plan.

The State Transportation Board has instructed the Department of Transportation to identify Federal funds which could be flexed in support of the rail program. Currently in excess of $100 million worth of projects dedicated to passenger rail development are included in the three year State Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP). For FY 2000, the Georgia General Assembly has provided over **$7.5 million in state funds** for rail acquisition, rehabilitation, and enhancement of rail connectivity in downtown Atlanta, an Atlanta area rail capacity study and evaluation of potential new corridors.

TEA-21 authorized $29.3 million for design and construction of the **Atlanta – Macon corridor** and also designated the corridor segment from Atlanta to Griffin as an FTA "new start." In Georgia's current State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), $45 million is programmed for the Atlanta – Macon corridor to complete the rail infrastructure evaluation and begin final design and construction for the reintroduction of rail passenger service. The Department has also applied for a Section 1103 (c) **grade crossing hazard elimination** grant for the Atlanta to Macon and the Savannah to Jacksonville SEHSR segments.

The **Multi Modal Passenger Terminal (MMPT)** to be built near Five Points in downtown Atlanta will be the major Atlanta terminal for intercity and commuter rail services, and will provide facilities for AMTRAK, connections to MARTA rail and bus services and facilities for intrastate bus service. The cost of the MMPT, which includes acquisition of key rail links, is $195 million at build out. The first phase sufficient for several lines would cost $55 million including track improvements. The second and third phase to accommodate all services in the rail passenger program would cost an additional $135 million. The project, in the heart of commercial downtown Atlanta, is a prime candidate for private sector participation in a private/public funding arrangement to be developed.

Numerous other studies are underway to identify additional corridors which could be added to the passenger rail program. These include the study of a Marietta – Lawrenceville light rail corridor, the Canton/Cartersville – Atlanta corridor, and the **Atlanta – Chattanooga** corridor. The Georgia Department of Transportation has designated the Atlanta Regional Commission as the entity to take the lead on the behalf of the states of Tennessee and Georgia to apply for federal preconstruction planning assistance for a magnetic levitation (mag/lev) transportation demonstration project between Atlanta and Chattanooga.

SOUTH CAROLINA

The South Carolina Transportation Commission in December 1998, approved $500,000 in state funds to supplement local planning funds to conduct **rail passenger feasibility studies** throughout the state and purchase abandoned railroad right-of-way. Rail feasibility studies under consideration, scheduled or underway include Greenville to Spartanburg, Newberry and Winnsboro to Columbia, Rock Hill to Charlotte, NC and access to Myrtle Beach. The Commission, on April 30, 1999, passed a resolution in support of SEHSR and expressed its desire to include passenger rail access to South Carolina coastal areas such as Myrtle Beach and Charleston. Additionally, South Carolina is examining the feasibility of providing rail service between Columbia and Charlotte.

In the past 10 years, South Carolina has spent $5.9 million on the SEHSR segments in South Carolina to upgrade **grade crossing protection** systems. In addition, the state has applied for $200,000 in Section 1103(c) hazard elimination funds to determine what further grade crossing improvements are needed and the costs for possible grade separations, crossing consolidations and closures.

The South Carolina Passenger Plan of 1997 noted that approximately 744 miles of rail lines have been abandoned since the 1970's. Greenville County has recently acquired three **rail abandonment** candidate lines. The RailTex Company had proposed abandoning these rail line segments in and adjacent to the City of Greenville, which are essential for future passenger service into downtown Greenville.

South Carolina additionally has requested a progress update from the Federal Railroad Administration of the two year high speed rail study, funded by TEA 21, for **Atlanta – Charleston**.

NORTH CAROLINA

In 1998, North Carolina, as part of its ongoing **Traffic Separation Studies**, for which there is currently $2.75 million available in Section #130 funds for improvements, evaluated 39 grade crossings along the SEHSR between Salisbury and Charlotte. In December, the state signed agreements with five communities to eliminate, consolidate, grade separate or improve grade crossing protection systems in their jurisdictions. Also in 1998, North Carolina received a $2 million federal grant to extend its "**Sealed Corridor**" program, which upgrades heavily used highway crossings with such improvements as four-quadrant gates and median barriers, from Greensboro to just west of Durham.

North Carolina has completed its $71 million purchase of the North Carolina Railroad which owns the **Raleigh to Charlotte** section of the SEHSR. The state is in active negotiations with CSXT to purchase the CSX line northward from Raleigh to the Virginia state line for use by SEHSR trains enroute to Richmond.

A **Congestion Mitigation Study** is underway to determine what capital improvements are necessary along the 172 mile Raleigh to Charlotte line segment to reduce the present running times for passenger trains from three hours forty-five minutes to two hours fifty minutes, while providing capacity for future business growth by Norfolk Southern, the line's freight operator.

In order to prepare the Virginia and North Carolina segments of the SEHSR for service implementation, North Carolina has begun the necessary multiyear **Environmental Impact Study (EIS)** work from Charlotte through Raleigh and Richmond to Washington, DC.

VIRGINIA

As part of the SEHSR partnership, the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (VDRPT) is coordinating a federally funded **signal system study** of the SEHSR from Washington, DC to Charlotte in conjunction with CSXT, Norfolk Southern, Amtrak and VRE. The study will recommend those long term improvements needed to construct and implement a state-of-the-art train communication system that will be compatible with all SEHSR users locomotives and capable of supporting operating speeds of 110 mph. The four state coalition intends to request that the signal system study area be eventually extended and funded to include the South Carolina and Georgia segments of the SEHSR.

Both Virginia and the City of Richmond are completing plans to restore train service to the historic **Main Street Station** in downtown Richmond as part of multi-modal facility incorporating intercity bus, local transit, taxis and airport limousines. The station is a critical element in improved SEHSR passenger service as it will provide a modern, efficient facility in Richmond with convenient access to nearby state government offices, cultural attractions and Richmond's main business district. Reconstruction is scheduled to begin in 2000.

The Commonwealth has been working with Virginia Railway Express, CSX Corporation, Norfolk Southern, Amtrak, and the Federal Railroad Administration to develop a package of improvements to accommodate the increase in rail traffic projected for **Richmond to Washington**. The corridor boundaries have been extended to Landover, Maryland to incorporate CSX freight enhancements that will significantly reduce passenger and freight rail congestion in Washington, DC. More than $770 million in needed capital improvements has been identified, with approximately $210 million in funds committed or programmed for projects planned by CSX, NS, VRE and Virginia. This improvement package is being developed so that the Richmond – Washington segment of the SEHSR may qualify for innovative funding techniques made available through TEA-21. It is anticipated that the credit assistance provided through federal programs, combined with the private investments of CSX and Norfolk Southern, as well as state and local funds committed to the corridor, will leverage a package of federal

grants and private financing that will enable these significant Richmond – Washington infrastructure improvements to move forward.

The Southeast states are not waiting for the future to arrive. The four states are committing their resources now to near and long term rail improvements, renovating transportation facilities, raising speed limits on improved track segments, purchasing state-of-the-art locomotives, evaluating train communication systems, embarking on comprehensive environmental analyses, and purchasing needed SEHSR line segments. Year by year, increment by increment, the four state coalition is assembling the SEHSR, making it a corridor of national significance.

Southeast States Legislative Program

In 1992, the US Department of Transportation designated Washington, DC-Richmond-Raleigh-Charlotte as a high speed corridor eligible for federal HSR planning funds. In late 1998, that designation was extended by USDOT from Raleigh through Columbia, SC and Savannah to Jacksonville, FL as well as from Charlotte through Greenville and Spartanburg, to Atlanta and Macon, to form the Southeast High Speed Rail (SEHSR) corridor.

Because the designations were six years apart, the current rail funding needs of Virginia and North Carolina are markedly different from the needs of South Carolina and Georgia to plan and implement the SEHSR corridor.

Using a combination of federal and state funds, Virginia and North Carolina have completed more than 20 comprehensive studies in the last four years on the costs, benefits, and feasibility of implementing SEHSR service between Washington, DC, Richmond, Raleigh, and Charlotte. Virginia and North Carolina believe that essentially all the analyses necessary to qualify this segment of the SEHSR corridor for construction funding have been performed and the time has arrived to move toward developing a plan for implementation.

South Carolina and Georgia are in the initial stages of conducting detailed SEHSR feasibility analyses, developing construction cost estimates, and projecting SEHSR economic development impacts on their states. Additional funds are needed to support these efforts.

While the four Southeast states HSR funding needs are in different stages of development, they are united in their goal of creating a corridor of national significance that will link the Northeast and Southeast regions of the country and provide a modern, efficient, and affordable alternative to interstate highway and air travel.

As such, the four states have identified various legislative actions needed to further the objectives and funding needs of the SEHSR. What follows is the legislative program of the Southeast states coalition.

The four Southeast states request that

> CONGRESS FULLY FUND SECTION 7201 OF TEA-21 AND PROVIDE SUCH FUNDS FOR SEHSR CORRIDOR PLANNING AND PRECONSTRUCTION ACTIVITIES.

The four states endorse the recent report by the National Governors Association that stated, "The governors urge Congress to fully fund Section 7201 of TEA-21, which authorizes $35 million in planning and technology funding to develop and improve the

life of high speed rail corridors. The high speed rail provisions of TEA-21 extended the ability of Congress to provide funding for the existing high speed rail assistance program created in the Swift Rail Development Act of 1994. These funds provide financial assistance to public agencies for high speed corridor planning activities and certain pre-construction activities, including right-of-way acquisition. Further, as states continue to assume a greater role in developing and maintaining passenger and commuter rail corridors, they should be afforded the maximum amount of flexibility to invest federal funds in rail corridors that relieve congestion in heavily traveled corridors or that contribute to air quality improvements in nonattainment areas."

Section 7201 funds would be used by the four state coalition to, among other things, acquire certain rail rights-of-way necessary for SEHSR implementation, extend the current EIS analysis and rail signalization study to include SEHSR segments in Georgia and South Carolina, and fund essential preconstruction feasibility studies.

The four Southeast states request that

> CONGRESS PROVIDE $20.25 MILLION IN CONTRACT AUTHORITY UNDER SECTION 1103(C) OF TEA-21 FOR GRADE CROSSING SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS AND PROVIDE SUCH FUNDS FOR SEHSR HAZARD ELIMINATION PROGRAMS.

The four states concur with the recent report by the National Governors Association, which stated, "The governors support full funding for the mitigation of grade crossing hazards under TEA-21. Technology has greatly reduced the potential of collisions between trains, but more progress can be made by addressing the issue of rail grade crossings. Proven educational efforts, such as Operation Lifesaver, along with technological advances and better planning, will play a key role in addressing this threat."

"The governors strongly believe that the authority for grade crossing improvements, closures, grade separations, and rail line relocation lies under the jurisdiction of the state. Adequate funding for applicable federal programs will assist states in addressing rail grade crossing safety improvement."

Section 1103(c) funds would be used by the four Southeast states to accelerate state programs to enhance SEHSR grade crossing safety through upgrading of warning devices and related track circuitry, consolidation or elimination of redundant and unsafe highway crossings, construction of grade separations, feasibility studies, and linking of warning devices with advanced train control systems.

The four Southeast states request that

> CONGRESS GRANT STATES THE FLEXIBILITY TO USE TEA-21 FUNDS FOR HIGH SPEED RAIL DEVELOPMENT.

Authority to use TEA-21 funds for development of high priority rail corridors would permit the Southeast states the flexibility to begin the necessary rail line acquisition, infrastructure upgrades, capacity enhancements, and facility improvements necessary to support the implementation of SEHSR service.

The four Southeast states believe that federal funding is both appropriate and essential for regional transportation projects that are national in their impact and importance. The four Southeast states believe that SEHSR would be an exceptional candidate project for federal funding since SEHSR would facilitate national economic growth through improved movement of people and goods, would address capacity constraints that hamper the movement of people and goods between states and metropolitan areas, and would greatly assist in alleviating the capacity limitations of the existing transportation infrastructure, producing a measurable time savings in major transportation markets.

The states of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia are committed as a four-state coalition to plan, develop, and implement the Southeast High Speed Rail corridor, which will generate immense benefits, not only in travel convenience and reliability, but also in economic development and employment creation for the Southeast region. We invite our Congressional representatives to join with us in this historic endeavor.

SEHSR: A Time to Act

The Southeast is no longer quiet and rural. With its mild climate, educated workforce and positive labor and regulatory environment, the Southeast is experiencing burgeoning population growth and massive economic development.

Many important industries now call the Southeast home. CNN, the world's leader in news and information, and the storm tracking Weather Channel are headquartered in Atlanta, the city of the Braves and the 1996 Summer Olympics. Major auto manufacturers, such as BMW and Honda, have located in South Carolina. Charleston has built one of the nation's most modern and important intermodal ports. North Carolina's largest city, Charlotte, is now the nation's second largest banking center, containing the headquarters of Bank of America (NationsBank) and First Union Bank. Raleigh-Durham is home to Research Triangle Park, where companies such as the biomedical leader Glaxo-Welcome are located.

Virginia is not only a vital distribution and manufacturing link between the Northeast and Southeast, but also supports major military installations, port facilities, and federal government complexes. Richmond and Norfolk, VA are headquarters for two of the nation's largest railroads, CSX Transportation and Norfolk Southern. Delta Airlines (Atlanta), Midway Airlines (Durham, NC) and US Airways (Arlington, VA) also call the Southeast home. Major public and private colleges and universities are thriving in the Southeast, attracting an international student body, contributing mightily to the Southeast's education levels and becoming important research institutions in their own right.

Yet, population growth and economic development have led to increasing traffic congestion on major highways and thoroughfares in the Southeast. Average highway speeds, particularly during rush hours, are declining while concerns about air quality along such corridors are rising. Indeed, the explosive growth the Southeast has experienced, the kudzu-like spread of residential and commercial developments into areas only recently rural, and the resulting traffic and urban congestion have led many residents to express concern that these events may pose a threat to the Southeast's quality of life.

As a result, each of the four Southeast states is facing serious transportation choices. Government, business and community leaders in the Southeast have expressed a renewed interest in creating wider number of transportation alternatives, including conventional and high speed passenger rail. Maintaining the progress and economic development of recent decades while meeting the transportation needs of the next century is a daunting challenge, but one that the four states of the Southeast are

committed to meet. The Northeast Corridor's success serves as an impressive example of how high speed rail can be made a vital component in a balanced transportation system. The SEHSR can perform a similarly important role in the Southeast's twenty-first century transportation system.

Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia are working together to create the Southeast High Speed Rail corridor to connect the communities of the Southeast and provide convenient and affordable access to and from the Northeast. We ask that our Congressional representatives become our partners in this historic endeavor.

To succeed, much time, energy and effort will be needed to make the SEHSR a reality. But it is time to start. And Congress can assist us greatly by:

- Fully funding section 7201 for TEA-21 and providing such funds for SEHSR corridor's planning and preconstruction activities;
- By providing major contract authority under Section 1103(c) of TEA-21 for grade crossing safety improvements and providing such funds for SEHSR hazard elimination programs; and,
- By granting states the flexibility to use TEA-21 funds for high speed rail development.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the Southeast High Speed Rail (SEHSR)?

It is a proposed 110 mph passenger rail corridor stretching from Macon and Atlanta, GA, Greenville and Spartanburg, SC, through Charlotte, Greensboro and Raleigh, NC to Richmond, VA and Washington, DC, as well as from Jacksonville, FL, Savannah, GA, Columbia, SC to Raleigh, NC and points north. (SEHSR trains will use the high speed Amtrak Northeast Corridor trackage beyond Washington, DC to continue on to Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York and other Northeast points.)

2. Why is SEHSR needed?

The highways of the region and the airports along the Eastern seaboard simply cannot handle the present traffic, let alone accommodate future travel needs. An affordable, modern, timely alternative to driving crowded interstates or flying short distances (usually at stunningly high fares) is required.

3. How much will it cost to build the SEHSR?

To reconstruct the existing rail lines between Charlotte, Raleigh, Richmond, and Washington, DC for SEHSR travel times is estimated to cost $1.2 billion, or approximately $2.5 million per mile, about one-third the cost to build a mile of interstate highway. Construction costs for SEHSR segments in South Carolina and Georgia have not yet been determined.

4. How much time will I save?

Proposed SEHSR trip times include Charlotte to Washington, DC in five hours 15 minutes; Raleigh to Richmond in one hour 45 minutes; Richmond to Washington in 90 minutes; Charlotte to Atlanta in three hours; Atlanta to Macon in 90 minutes; and Columbia to Richmond in four hours, ten minutes.

5. How much will a ticket cost?

Initial planning, to calculate demand for the service, priced one-way tickets at approximately twenty cents a mile. This compares to one dollar and more a mile for one way airline tickets today in many SEHSR markets.

6. How soon will all this happen?

Implementing the SEHSR will be a lengthy process. Detailed cost estimates, environmental clearances, construction permits, equipment selection and manufacture, ordering of materials, and actual reconstruction of the rail lines must take place before the SEHSR is ready for passengers. While heavily dependent on the availability of state and federal funds, the process should take approximately seven to ten years to complete.

7. Is this another government boondoggle?

Hardly. The US Department of Transportation, in reviewing the high speed rail plans for 23 states, came to the conclusion that the SEHSR will produce more revenue than any other proposed corridor, that it will generate $2.54 in public benefits for each dollar spent to build and operate the corridor, and that the SEHSR is the only proposed corridor projected to cover its total costs from the fare box.

8. How fast will SEHSR trains go through my town?

The rail line is being engineered for a maximum speed of 110 mph. There will, however, be many areas where such speeds will not be possible, especially in congested areas, near station stops, etc. Built up areas will receive security fencing and landscaping to maximize public safety and minimize the rail line's intrusion to the community.

9. Where will SEHSR trains stop?

Between Charlotte, Raleigh, Richmond, and Washington, DC, SEHSR trains will make essentially the same stops as today's Piedmont and Carolinian although not all trains will make all stops. Stops for SEHSR trains in South Carolina and Georgia have not yet been determined. However, no community currently with Amtrak service will lose such service.

10. If the SEHSR trains do not stop in my community, what benefit will there be to me?

The construction and operation of the SEHSR will have a tremendous impact on the economies of the towns it passes through. In North Carolina alone, it has been estimated the SEHSR will bring $700 million in new state and local tax revenues, $10.5 billion in employee wages over 20 years, over 31,400 new one-year construction jobs, more than 800 permanent new railroad operating positions, and nearly 19,000 permanent full-time jobs from businesses which choose to locate or expand in North Carolina because of the SEHSR. It can be reasonably assumed that similarly positive benefits will accrue to Virginia, Georgia, and South Carolina from SEHSR's implementation.

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