



VIRGINIA RAILWAY EXPRESS

March 19, 2020

VIA EMAIL

The Honorable Mark Warner
The Honorable Tim Kaine
The Honorable Don Beyer
The Honorable Gerald Connolly
The Honorable Eleanor Holmes Norton
The Honorable Abigail Spanberger
The Honorable Jennifer Wexton
The Honorable Rob Wittman

Dear Members of Congress:

As Congress works to address the devastating effects of COVID-19, I write to request your urgent assistance to deal with the dire financial circumstances facing the Virginia Railway Express (VRE) as we take extraordinary steps to protect the health and safety of riders and employees while maintaining essential services for our region.

On March 17, VRE began operating a reduced service. As area businesses and government agencies began encouraging or mandating telework to help contain the spread of COVID-19, VRE ridership dropped to a level warranting this reduction in service. Ridership has decreased each day this week to the point where we are running trains with **80 to 90 percent fewer passengers**. Many of those who continue to use our service – such as federal government officials, law enforcement, and other emergency responders – do so because they provide services that are critical during this crisis.

As a result of this significant drop in ridership, VRE is dealing with a dramatic loss of revenue. Fare revenue covers 50 percent of VRE's operating cost, so a sustained reduction of this magnitude will be financially crippling for our service. **We estimate our lost revenue could be \$3 million per month.**

Federal assistance is critical to help us offset the revenue losses we are facing. We need support for transit operations, but traditional transit formula funding is not designed to address our unique circumstances. Operating funding is what's required to address this unprecedented loss. I request your support in securing this emergency funding for VRE so that we may continue to fill our critical role in safely providing commuter rail service in our region.

Should you have any questions or need further information please contact VRE's Chief of Staff, Joe Swartz, at jswartz@vre.org or 703.838.5425.

Rich Dalton
Acting Chief Executive Officer

Virginia Congressional Delegation

March 19, 2020

Page 2

Cc: VRE Operations Board

Kate Mattice, Executive Director, Northern Virginia Transportation Commission

Dr. Bob Schneider, Executive Director, Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission

Jennifer Mitchell, Director, Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation