

ORANGE COUNTY  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

ACTION AGENDA ITEM ABSTRACT

Meeting Date: March 2, 2010

Action Agenda

Item No. 4-g

**SUBJECT:** Letter Supporting Continued Federal Funding for Southeast High Speed Rail

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**DEPARTMENT:** Planning and Inspections

**PUBLIC HEARING:** (Y/N)

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**ATTACHMENT(S):**

- 1. Letter of Support
- 2. List of Federal and State Officials

**INFORMATION CONTACT:**

Karen Lincoln, 245-2594  
Craig Benedict, 245-2592

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**PURPOSE:** To consider authorizing the Chair to sign a letter supporting continued Federal funding through annual budgetary appropriations to accelerate the Southeast High Speed Rail corridor south of Washington, DC.

**BACKGROUND:** The Federal Rail Administration, on January 28, 2010, awarded North Carolina \$545 million dollars for improvements for the Charlotte-Raleigh-Richmond-Washington D.C. corridor. The funding will be used primarily to increase speed (up to 90 miles per hour) and frequencies (4 frequencies per day) on the Raleigh to Charlotte passenger rail service. The State intends to continue to pursue grants for additional improvements in this corridor, such as improvements in Orange County associated with a planned 5<sup>th</sup> frequency of the passenger rail service between Raleigh and Charlotte.

The draft letter (Attachment 1) thanks President Barack Obama for support of high speed rail and North Carolina's \$545 million allocation of American Reinvestment and Recovery Act funds, and requests the federal government's continued support for high speed rail with annual budgetary appropriations. The attached list of addressees (Attachment 2) includes the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Transportation, North Carolina Department of Transportation officials, U.S. Senators representing North Carolina, Congressmen representing the Triangle region of North Carolina, and North Carolina Congressmen serving on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** There is no financial impact to the County with this action item.

**RECOMMENDATION (S):** The Manager recommends the Board authorize the Chair to sign the letter supporting continued federal funding for high speed rail to accelerate the Southeast High Speed Rail corridor south of Washington, DC.

March 2, 2010

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, D.C. 20050

Dear President Obama:

Thank you for your commitment to developing a high speed rail vision for America. The high speed rail corridor from Washington, DC to Charlotte, NC will be a catalyst for development of commuter rail service for the Triangle and Triad regions of North Carolina. Orange County thanks you for supporting North Carolina's application for high speed rail funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act with a \$545 million allocation of federal recovery funds, and strongly supports continued investment through annual budgetary appropriations to accelerate the Southeast High Speed Rail corridor south of Washington, DC, and help realize your vision of a high speed rail future for America.

North Carolina's sustained focus on high speed rail in cooperation with Virginia is demonstrated by a completed Tier I environmental record of decision for the entire 450 mile corridor from Charlotte to Washington, DC and the recent submittal of a preliminary Tier II application for the section from Raleigh to Richmond. In addition, our state has developed solid partnerships with two Class I railroads and has invested more than \$300 million in stations, equipment, and passenger operations in the past decade alone.

Our state's efforts in preparing for high speed rail have resulted in unanimous, bipartisan support from our congressional delegation for our state's application for ARRA funding. Leaders from across the state recognize that the Southeast High Speed Rail corridor will provide travelers with a competitive alternative to air and automobile trips between Washington and the southeastern United States, ease the rate of congestion growth along the I-95/I-85 corridor, improve safety and energy effectiveness, and enhance air quality.

North Carolina is committed, focused, and ready for high speed rail, and has a proven track record of performance. We applaud your efforts at creating a sustainable transportation future for our nation and we encourage your support for continued funding for high speed rail. We also ask for your support for funding North Carolina's applications for future grant opportunities for additional improvements in the Charlotte-Raleigh-Richmond-Washington D.C. corridor.

Sincerely,

<signature>

Valerie Foushee, Chair  
Orange County Board of County Commissioners

cc: Ray LaHood, Secretary, USDOT  
Eugene Conti, Jr., Secretary, NCDOT  
Charlie Grady, Office of the Secretary, NCDOT  
Pat Simmons, Director, Rail Division, NCDOT  
Joe Milazzo II, PE, Regional Transportation Alliance

**List of Addressees****TO:****President Barack Obama**

The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, D.C. 20050

**CC:****Secretary Ray LaHood**

U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE  
Washington, D.C. 20590

**North Carolina Department of Transportation Officials****Secretary Gene Conti, Jr.**

NC Department of Transportation  
1501 Mail Service Center  
Raleigh, NC 27699-1501

**Charlie Grady**

Special Assistant to the Secretary  
NC Department of Transportation  
1501 Mail Service Center  
Raleigh, NC 27699-1501

**Pat Simmons**

Director, Rail Division  
NC Department of Transportation  
1553 Mail Service Center  
Raleigh, NC 27699-1553

**Senators representing North Carolina****Senator Richard Burr**

217 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510  
Fax: (202) 228-2981

**Senator Kay Hagan**

521 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510  
Fax: (202) 228-2563

**List of Addressees****Congressmen representing the Triangle region of North Carolina****Representative David Price**

2162 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515  
Fax: (202) 225-2014

**Representative Bob Etheridge**

1533 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515  
Fax: (202) 225-5662

**Representative Brad Miller**

1127 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515  
Fax: (202) 225-0181

**Congressmen from North Carolina  
serving on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee****Representative Howard Coble**

2468 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515  
Fax: (202) 225-8611

**Representative Heath Shuler**

422 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515  
Fax: (202) 226-6422