

News Release



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Contact:
Courtney Ware
804 225 3746
courtney.ware@drpt.virginia.gov

Steve Kulm
Amtrak
202 906 3730
mediarelations@amtrak.com

LYNCHBURG AMTRAK VIRGINIA SERVICE EXCEEDS YEARLY PERFORMANCE GOALS Clear demand for intercity passenger rail service

RICHMOND & WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Amtrak Virginia train on the Lynchburg route has exceeded its annual performance targets for its first full year of operation. The route provides a daily one-seat ride as far north as Boston from Lynchburg in the I-81/Route 29 corridor.

Ridership for the train, which began October 1, 2009, is tracked based on the federal fiscal year. From October 1, 2009, to September 30, 2010, the Lynchburg train achieved an annual ridership of 126,072, exceeding its yearly target of 51,000 by 147.2 percent. The service also exceeded the annual revenue goal of \$2,580,000 by generating \$6,337,457.42 in revenue, 145.6 percent over the goal.

“Virginia is very proud of the success of this train,” said Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) Director Thelma Drake. “This success shows that there is demand for intercity passenger rail service in Virginia, and by serving major population centers we are able to remove thousands of cars from the highways.”

The service’s monthly ridership began at 8,585 in October 2009, and ended the first year of operation at 9,690 in September 2010. The average monthly ridership was 10,506 over the year period. There are many factors that can influence ridership month to month, such as additions/changes in service, seasonal changes, service interruptions, on-time performance, fuel prices and unemployment levels.

“The Lynchburg train is the best performing state-supported train in Amtrak’s system in terms of cost-recovery,” said Jay McArthur, principal officer in Amtrak’s Policy & Development Department. “The partnership between Amtrak and the Commonwealth is a great example of a cooperative arrangement that meets a need for intrastate rail service.”

The Lynchburg service is one of two in the Amtrak Virginia partnership. The Richmond service, which was launched July 20, 2010, has also experienced promising success during its first months of operation. Because performance goals are tracked on the federal fiscal year, which ends September 30, the Richmond service was tracking toward goals representing 72 days of operation.

During its first months of operation, the Richmond service achieved a ridership of 10,666, exceeding its goal of 8,352 by 27.7 percent. Due to heavy thru traffic, which results in lower revenue credited to Virginia, the service generated \$363,754.39 in revenue, falling 11 percent short of its revenue goal of \$408,528.

On-time performance on both the Lynchburg and Richmond trains has exceeded the state average. In September 2010, the Lynchburg service achieved 92.5 percent on-time performance, and the Richmond service achieved 83 percent on-time performance, compared to the state average of 69.2 percent.

“Because these services originate in Lynchburg and Richmond, they have more reliable departure times, and by extension, better on-time performance,” said Drake. “Reliable departure and arrival times are keys to encouraging riders to travel by rail instead of car.”

Both services have helped drive growth at stations along the route. Lynchburg’s Kemper Street Station has seen 235 percent growth and Richmond’s Staple Mill Station has seen 9 percent growth year to date. Richmond’s Staples Mill Station is Virginia’s busiest station with 72,057 passengers to date.

The success of both Amtrak Virginia services is promising as the Commonwealth works to increase intercity passenger rail service to major population centers in Virginia. DRPT is working with Norfolk Southern to identify improvements necessary to extend the Richmond train to Norfolk within three years. DRPT is also working to evaluate a potential extension of the Lynchburg train to Roanoke, as well as a bus bridge to offer service between the two cities in the short term.

Demonstration projects, such as the Amtrak Virginia partnership, help Virginia determine the viability of new transportation choices. A key challenge facing the new service is the availability of operating funds. Virginia has no dedicated source of state rail operating funds today. Governor McDonnell and the General Assembly authorized up to \$6 million in Rail Enhancement funds to support operating costs in FY 2011, but there is not sufficient funding identified beyond FY 2011.

Virginia Senator Yvonne Miller sponsored Senate Joint Resolution 63, which directs DRPT to evaluate potential state operating fund sources and report back to the General Assembly before the beginning of the 2011 session. The report will provide benchmarking information about passenger rail funding in other states and other data that the General Assembly will need to make important decisions about the future of passenger rail service in Virginia.

About Amtrak Virginia

Amtrak Virginia is a partnership between the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) and Amtrak to provide more rail travel choices in Virginia. The Lynchburg train was initiated in October 2009, and serves the following Virginia stations: Lynchburg, Charlottesville, Culpeper, Manassas, Burke Centre and Alexandria. The Richmond train was initiated in July 2010, and serves the following Virginia stations: Richmond-Staples Mill, Ashland, Fredericksburg, Quantico, Woodbridge and Alexandria. Amtrak Virginia service promotes economic, tourism and environmental benefits. See www.amtrakvirginia.com for more information.

About Amtrak

As the nation's intercity passenger rail operator, Amtrak connects America in safer, greener and healthier ways. Last fiscal year (FY 2010), the railroad carried over 28.7 million passengers, making it the best year in the company's history. With 21,000 route miles in 46 states, the District of Columbia and three Canadian provinces, Amtrak operates more than 300 trains each day—at speeds up to 150 mph (241 kph)—to more than 500 destinations. Amtrak also is the partner of choice for state-supported corridor services in 15 states and for several commuter rail agencies. Visit www.Amtrak.com or call 800-USA-RAIL for schedules, fares and more information.

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