



# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Office of the Governor

Aubrey L. Layne, Jr.  
Secretary of Transportation

February 10, 2014

Mr. Mark K. Reeter  
Bedford County  
122 East Main Street, Suite 202  
Bedford, VA 24523

Dear Mr. Reeter,

Thank you for your letter in which you shared your concerns about an Amtrak Station in Bedford. The following information is provided in response to the Board of Supervisors recent action concerning this topic.

**Issue:**

On December 9, 2013, the Bedford County Board of Supervisors passed a resolution requesting the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) document and disclose its findings and conclusions with respect to the feasibility of a Bedford Amtrak stop.

In December 2013, Governor McDonnell announced the Commonwealth and Norfolk Southern had signed an agreement for capital improvements to extend the Lynchburg train to Roanoke by 2017. The slated Roanoke intercity passenger rail service will travel through the Town of Bedford. The Town of Bedford has therefore requested consideration for an Amtrak stop.

Several correspondences between DRPT, The Honorable Bob Goodlatte (Representative of the 6th Congressional District, Virginia), and Mr. Stephen Stevick of Bedford informed the Town of Bedford that DRPT had no plans for an Amtrak station between Roanoke and Lynchburg. The following reasons were cited:

- Distance between existing stations
- Projected ridership
- Time-loss factors (frequent stops affect scheduling)
- Cost of track improvements at the station and platform

### History:

In 2008 Amtrak prepared a Short-Term Action Plan for “Advancing Passenger Rail in the Commonwealth of Virginia.” This effort continued a cooperative effort between DRPT and Amtrak to develop a strategic plan identifying promising markets and routes which could lead to the implementation of enhanced intercity passenger rail services. Key evaluation criteria for potential short-term action included serving established markets with large populations, tourism and/or business travel, and commuter demand. Cost considerations for service extension took into account the capital equipment necessary and the capital improvements which may be necessary to upgrade tracks and preserve freight capacity on the host railroad mainline tracks. Recommendations for intercity passenger rail service expansions included large urban population centers such as Lynchburg, Hampton Roads, Richmond, and Roanoke.

Since the 2008 Amtrak report, DRPT has taken on a greater role in the expansion and operation of intercity passenger rail services. Based on the 2008 action plan and after years of demonstration projects, the Lynchburg, Richmond, and Norfolk service expansions were added to connect with destinations in the Northeast Corridor. In addition to service expansions, DRPT has expanded funding responsibility for regional routes under 750 miles, including four existing intercity routes which were shifted from federal to state funding in 2013.

### Policies and Best Practices for Station Location Decisions

The Virginia Statewide Rail Plan provides guidance on the Department’s policies and goals for freight and passenger rail initiatives. Section 5 of the 2013 Virginia Statewide Rail Plan prioritizes projects to enhance and expand freight and passenger rail in Virginia through 2040. Recommended projects are consistent with the Commonwealth Transportation Board’s long-term vision, as well as DRPT’s approach of making incremental investments that benefit both passenger and freight rail. As stated in Section 2.3, population growth is a critical driver of passenger and freight needs. Population density and growth projections for the future have particular significance for new passenger rail services as it is the primary driver for ridership.

DRPT is expanding passenger rail incrementally to high population centers and centers of economic activity. This approach is also consistent with the Federal Railroad Association’s (FRA) planning document, “Station Area Planning for High-Speed and Intercity Passenger Rail.” This FRA planning document supports locating stations in regional centers of activity where it is most convenient and in close proximity to destinations that maximize initial ridership. This includes placing stations in the “heart” of a city, where public transportation is available to reach jobs and major venues.

### Analysis

The table below presents a comparison of population centers with potential for an Amtrak stop serving the Roanoke and Lynchburg region. Lynchburg and Roanoke are chosen because they are areas served or soon to be served by intercity passenger rail in the region according to the State Rail Plan and existing funding allocations. The Town of Bedford is chosen because of the request from the Bedford County Board of Supervisors.

2010 Census Data	Roanoke	Lynchburg	Town of Bedford
<b>Population</b>	<b>96,922</b>	<b>75,568</b>	<b>6,222</b>
<b>Persons per square mile</b>	<b>2,280</b>	<b>1,538</b>	<b>905</b>
<b>Total number of firms*</b>	<b>7,102</b>	<b>4,795</b>	<b>591</b>

\*2007 Survey of Business Owners provides basic economic data on businesses.

Based on the above data, the cited studies, and Department policies, the City of Lynchburg and the City of Roanoke most effectively serve the regions with Amtrak service. These are the localities with the highest population, the greatest population density, and are the predominant centers of economic activity. Both Lynchburg and Roanoke have been prioritized in the Statewide Rail Plan and advanced funding by the Commonwealth Transportation Board.

#### Additional Considerations:

##### Distance Between Existing Stations

The Town of Bedford is located approximately 25 miles from Lynchburg's Kemper Street Amtrak Station and approximately 28 miles from Roanoke, Virginia. Commute time from the Town of Bedford to either Lynchburg or Roanoke is about 30 – 40 minutes. DRPT considers this to be within the "travel shed" of Lynchburg's Kemper Street Station, since passengers are more likely to travel north to Lynchburg to catch the northbound train.

##### Projected Ridership

The Town of Bedford has a significantly smaller population than the City of Lynchburg and the City of Roanoke. Due to its close proximity, ridership from a station located in Bedford is more likely to shift ridership from Lynchburg's station than it is to increase total new riders on the Amtrak route.

##### Time-Loss (Stopping More Frequently)

DRPT receives multiple requests from many localities throughout the Commonwealth for Amtrak stops. Additional stops come at the expense of schedule delays. Changes in schedules require analysis of the entire networks as trains travel north toward the more congested freight and passenger rail corridors around Washington, DC, Philadelphia, New York City, and Boston. Frequent stops are also detrimental to car competitive service.

##### Cost of Track Improvements and Platform

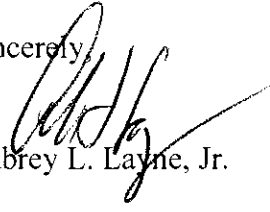
New passenger rail service affects freight railroad scheduling, and the host railroad requires capacity improvements to preserve freight capacity and allow for safe passenger rail service. When DRPT takes passenger service to a locality, the Commonwealth typically pays for the track improvements, sidings, crossovers, servicing facilities, turning facilities, and the platform. The train station building for passengers is the responsibility of the locality. Therefore, in addition to ridership and schedule concerns, an additional stop at Bedford would require capital improvements with state funds which the Department has determined would not best serve the route and the majority of riders utilizing the service.

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For the reasons described above, DRPT has determined that it is not prudent to incorporate a rail stop at Bedford into the service between Lynchburg and Roanoke. If you should have any questions please contact Kevin Page at (804)796-3963 or [kevin.page@drpt.virginia.gov](mailto:kevin.page@drpt.virginia.gov).

Thank you for your interest in rail transportation in Virginia.

Sincerely,



Aubrey L. Layne, Jr.