



February 8, 2023

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg  
Secretary, U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E.  
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

We are writing to express our strong support for Hampton Roads Transit's (HRT), Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability & Equity (RAISE) \$25 million grant application for the construction of the new, state-of-the-art, net-zero ready, Southside Bus Operating Division Facility and the agency's transition to a fully zero emissions fleet. The facility will provide the necessary maintenance and operations support spaces to allow HRT to greatly expand its service through the new Regional Transit System (RTS). The RTS program includes a 13-route regional backbone bus service that connects the six cities HRT serves with 15-minute service frequencies, and increases service to approximately 487,000 citizens. This grant will support this critical component of HRT's expanding service and will meet both HRT's and USDOT's goals of moving towards a green-energy future. The new Southside Maintenance Facility will replace aging, inefficient infrastructure, reduce operating costs, and provide opportunities for more jobs in the region. The new facility will be built to support a 100% electric fleet and will have the ability to use alternative energy sources such as electricity generated from offshore wind farms, geothermal heating, and on-site solar panels.

Sierra Club Virginia Chapter commends HRT on its equity efforts. We have collaborated with HRT to increase awareness for issues and solutions related to transit equity, including bus electrification to reduce tailpipe pollution that disproportionately affects disadvantaged communities.

HRT's proposed new facility will allow for closure of its current trolley barn which is located in a residential neighborhood adjacent to Persistent Poverty Tract #442. This action will lead to cleaner air, as buses and trolleys will no longer travel the local streets to reach the maintenance facility, nor will neighbors be subject to pollution from idling vehicles that are being serviced. Additionally, the new facility will support HRT's transition to a clean, fully electric fleet.

The new facility will house buses closer to the areas that they serve, which will further reduce pollution. Shifting buses to the new facility will create additional space at HRT's Norfolk facility, allowing HRT to expand service to Norfolk and Portsmouth, both of which are home to several



Persistent Poverty and Historically Disadvantaged tracts. These communities rely on transit to get to jobs, shopping, health services and more.

HRT is vital to the economy of Hampton Roads and provides transit service to six of Virginia's ten most populous cities. In addition to 73 bus routes, the agency provides ferry, paratransit, seasonal trolleys, transportation demand management services, and is home to Virginia's only light rail system. HRT carries approximately 600,000 trips per month across the region on all of its services. The New Southside Bus Operating Facility supported by this RAISE grant application will enable HRT to continue to meet its goal of connecting Hampton Roads with transportation solutions that are reliable, safe, efficient, and sustainable.

Sierra Club advocates for clean, equitable, accessible transit for all, reduction of vehicle miles traveled, and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. The climate crisis has already taken an extraordinary toll on the Hampton Roads area, which has one of the fastest rising sea levels in the country. The Department of Defense has acknowledged that impact since 2010 and continues to partner with HRT and the community through its Naval Station Norfolk Transit Corridor Project to improve the resiliency of the region.

Thank you for your consideration of the Hampton Roads Transit RAISE application.

Sincerely,

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Transportation and Smart Growth Program Manager  
Sierra Club Virginia Chapter

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