

PORTSMOUTH PARTNERSHIP

Promoting economic growth, leadership and education within the City of Portsmouth

Newsletter No. 19

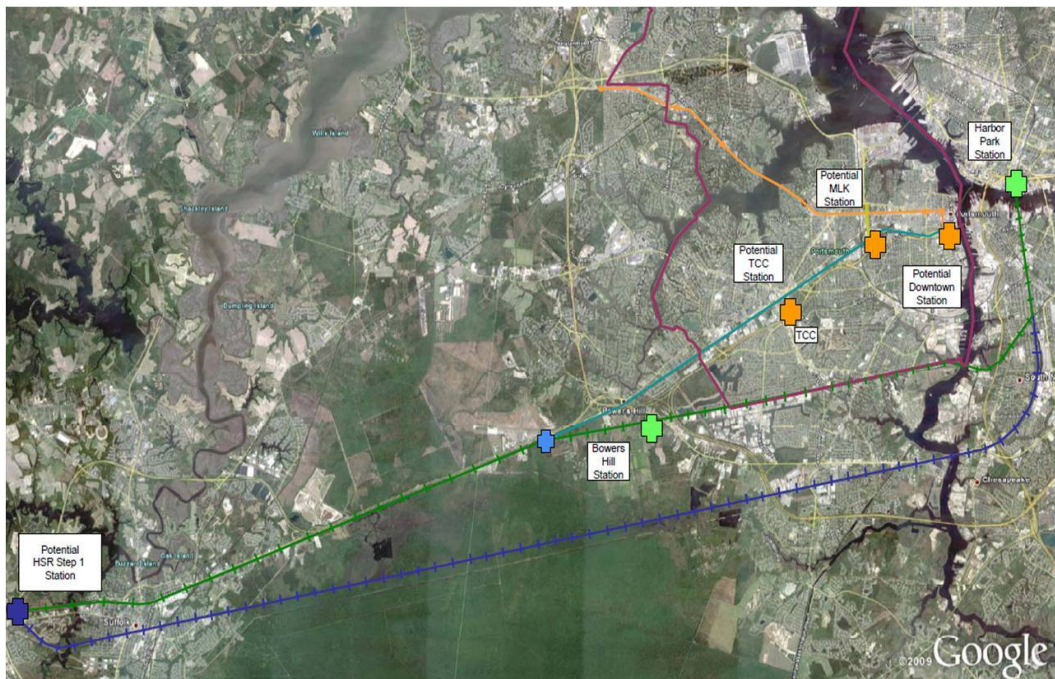
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September 2010

BOWERS HILL STATION KEY TO PORTSMOUTH'S RAIL ACCESS, RIDERSHIP

WHEN THE PLANNING, FUNDING AND CONSTRUCTION of the Southeast High Speed Rail Corridor (www.sehsr.org) is complete, its success, like that of any other business, will be dependent upon its ability to attract customers. In rail lingo, that's **ridership** and **connectivity**. That means that ticket prices, train frequency and travel times must be flexible and competitive. But it also means that, right from the start, **station locations** must be carefully plotted to insure that convenient access is provided to the largest population possible. For the significant ridership which will hail from Portsmouth, Chesapeake, North Suffolk, and even the Peninsula, future access hinges upon one key factor: Step 1 of Virginia's Intercity Passenger Rail plan (www.drpt.virginia.gov) must place a Suffolk station at the western end of the Route 58 bypass, enabling its ultimate connection to a Bowers Hill station in Step 3 of the process. This will, in turn, link to three proposed Portsmouth light rail stations.

DEVELOPMENT of Virginia's Intercity Passenger Rail network, which will connect Hampton Roads with the SEHSR Corridor, will occur in four steps. Step 1, expected to be complete within 3 years, will connect South Hampton Roads to the planned HSR corridor with one daily train, traveling at 79 mph along the existing Norfolk Southern rail line which extends from Petersburg to Norfolk. Step 2 will add daily trains to the schedule. Step 3 calls for new track, accommodating speeds of 110 mph, and a Bowers Hill station. Step 4 will provide true 150 mph high-speed rail service.



Step 1 Intercity Passenger Rail plan will connect Petersburg, Suffolk and Norfolk (dark blue). Step 3 construction of a Bowers Hill station (blue cross) would connect light rail in Portsmouth (aqua) with Rts. 58, 460, I-64, I-264 and I-664 and to the SEHSR corridor in Petersburg (green).

HOW SIGNIFICANT is the ridership potential from Portsmouth and South Hampton Roads? According to the Transportation Economics and Management Systems's July, 2010 report to the HRTPO (www.hrtpo.org), "Introducing rail service to South Hampton Roads . . . lays the groundwork for developing an effective high-speed program." Indeed, the Hampton Roads MSA is the largest between Washington, DC, and Atlanta. Our population size, our broad military presence and our growing role as the East Coast port of choice make for significant ridership potential. TEMS, who asserts that "the corridor is a critical element of the SE High-Speed Rail and the Northeast Corridor," has recommended further study to confirm the value of this ridership, adding that the "Washington-Richmond-Hampton Roads Corridor is of national importance."

WHAT CAN WE, AS CITIZENS, do to help insure that Portsmouth's ridership value is recognized – and that its people are served – by these ambitious new rail plans? Currently, four critical elements are key:

- 1 **Encourage the VDRPT to team with North Carolina to amend the Raleigh-Richmond Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) to fully detail SHR's ridership's size and value**
- 2 **Support TEMS's Phase II study to confirm its view of SHR's ridership's size and value**
- 3 **Encourage DRPT to locate, in Step 1, Suffolk's station at the western end of the US 58 Bypass**
There are two crucial advantages to this location:
 - Limited highway access
 - Access to NS and CSX lines which connect to Bowers Hill and Portsmouth light rail
- 4 **Encourage DRPT to construct, in Step 3, a Bowers Hill station, which will:**
 - Provide access to Portsmouth, North Suffolk, Chesapeake and the Peninsula via routes 58, 460, I-64, I-264, I-664, and Portsmouth light rail
 - Provide connectivity with the Hampton Roads Executive Airport

PORTSMOUTH, LOCATED IN THE HEART OF HAMPTON ROADS, has a long-term transportation plan which aligns with this regional rail vision. Note that the above map indicates light rail station locations at Victory Village/TCC, MLK Blvd/Midtown and Downtown. Not only will these stations serve riders headed West for High-Speed Rail service, but they will also serve those riders who head East every day toward such major employment centers as the Naval Medical Center, US Coast Guard facilities, Portsmouth's port facility and the Norfolk Naval Shipyard.

IT IS CRITICAL that plans for a strategically placed Suffolk station which will ultimately connect with Bowers Hill be made part of the Intercity Passenger Rail vision, right from the start. The time to plan practical, cost-efficient rail access for the greater Portsmouth, North Suffolk and Chesapeake areas is now. If overlooked, access for a significant number of riders will be forever impaired by the draftsman's pencil before the first new rail is set in place.



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