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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 26

Offered January 14, 2026

Prefiled January 12, 2026

Requesting the Department of Rail and Public Transportation, in collaboration with Hampton Roads Transit and the City of Virginia Beach, to study the feasibility of extending light rail operations to the Virginia Beach Oceanfront. Report.

Patron—Askew

Committee Referral Pending

WHEREAS, The Tide is the Commonwealth's only light rail, which runs approximately 7.3 miles and connects Eastern Virginia Medical School, located to the west of downtown Norfolk, to Newtown Road and additionally connects to routes serviced by Hampton Roads Transit bus services, providing for accessible and easy public transport; and

WHEREAS, light rails benefit regions by presenting viable transportation alternatives to driving through heavily congested areas, offer quick transport to key destinations, and provide predictable arrival schedules to residents, visitors, students, and employees; and

WHEREAS, metropolitan areas that have invested in light rails have experienced significant economic growth and development and attracted additional businesses to their region; and

WHEREAS, an extension of the light rail in Hampton Roads to the Virginia Beach Oceanfront would not only assist in reducing traffic congestion and offer a space-efficient alternative to increased roadway expansion, but would benefit tourism initiatives by providing quick access to the Virginia Beach Oceanfront from other locations in Hampton Roads, provide residents with mobility issues or residents without access to a vehicle an alternative method of travel, and enable easier access to employment, health care, and entertainment in the City of Virginia Beach; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Department of Rail and Public Transportation, in collaboration with Hampton Roads Transit and the City of Virginia Beach, be requested to study the feasibility of extending light rail operations to the Virginia Beach Oceanfront. Such study shall include an evaluation of potential funding options for construction and future maintenance of the light rail.

In conducting its study, the Department of Rail and Public Transportation (the Department), in collaboration with Hampton Roads Transit and the City of Virginia Beach, shall (i) assess potential alignments of the light rail, taking into consideration right-of-way impacts, energy needs, and other already established transportation infrastructure; (ii) evaluate (a) engineering needs such as the installation of complex utilities, including drainage systems and power conduits, and track system components; (b) environmental impacts; and (c) community impacts such as additional noise from light rail service and ridership, future population density impacts if the presence of additional public transport incentivizes development of multi-family residential properties surrounding the location of the light rail, and impact to property values of current residences; (iii) analyze funding needs to support construction, operational, and maintenance costs, offer recommendations for funding sources, and analyze potential revenue impacts on the locality; (iv) provide ridership forecasts based on potential alignments proposed for a light rail extension, factoring in the location of possible boarding stations and both resident and visitor population density for proposed boarding stations; and (v) provide recommendations for establishing a fair and transparent public engagement process.

All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Department upon request.

The Department shall complete its meetings for the first year by November 30, 2026, and for the second year by November 30, 2027, and the Department shall submit to the Governor and the General Assembly an executive summary and report of its findings and recommendations for publication as a House or Senate document for each year. The executive summaries and reports shall be submitted as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and reports no later than the first day of the next Regular Session of the General Assembly and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.

INTRODUCED

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