

A. DONALD McEACHIN

4TH DISTRICT, VIRGINIA

WASHINGTON OFFICE
314 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515
(202) 225-6365

RICHMOND DISTRICT OFFICE
110 N. ROBINSON ST. SUITE 401
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA 23220
(804) 486-1840



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4604

May 16, 2017

COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS (RANKING MEMBER)
FEDERAL LANDS
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
SEA POWER AND PROJECTION FORCES
READINESS
FRANKING COMMISSION

Mr. Joseph J. Vinish
Secretary
Planning District Commission
PO Box 1808
Petersburg, VA 23805-0808

Dear Mr. Vinish,

I wish to express my support for keeping an Amtrak train station in Ettrick, Virginia. I understand that would neither impede our ability to bring high-speed rail south of Richmond, nor limit the Tri-Cities' access to that rail system once it is built.

While I recognize other sites are under consideration, and each site has its advantages, I want to speak to why Ettrick is an excellent choice. Please know that all the options are within my congressional district and I know all of them have some advantages. These are all communities that could use economic development that I know a train station would bring.

I first want to speak to the importance of maintaining rail service in this part of the Commonwealth. Rail provides an important transportation option for those who don't have cars or for whom highway travel is daunting. Rail is better for the environment, creates jobs and moves goods and people efficiently.

I also want to emphasize how important high speed rail would be to my entire district. High speed rail would facilitate the movement of people and goods throughout the Commonwealth, creating a significant amplifier for the economy. Moreover, high speed rail would assist the economy of all states up and down the east coast. The requirements of high speed rail and expediting its growth in the Commonwealth are my first priorities.

Ettrick is the home of Virginia State University (VSU), an esteemed HBCU. Students at VSU do not necessarily have cars, yet are residents who are more likely to consistently be travelling longer distances as they go home on school vacations to visit family. Unlike those who have to travel a significant distance to work — and who often therefore have cars to get there — VSU students study and play on campus. They may not have access to cars, making their easy access to the train station all the more important.

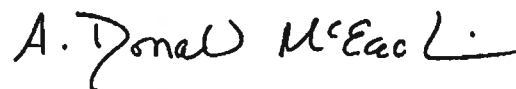
Also, a station is already located in Ettrick. The community, both in Chesterfield County (where Ettrick is located) and the larger community that includes Petersburg and Prince George, is accustomed to the train station in its present location. While certainly folks could adjust, there seems no overriding reason for upending the present situation.

In the Richmond metro area of Virginia, we have two train stations that are merely 20 minutes apart, both close to I-95. One is located in a suburban college town, Ashland, the home of Randolph-Macon College, and the other is located near Richmond in Henrico County. I would like to recommend and suggest that we consider having train stations both in Ettrick, an equivalent college town and building one in Petersburg. This arrangement, like in Richmond and Ashland, would allow trains to serve even more potential passengers.

Again, my greatest concern is to improve the rail system in the Fourth Congressional District, and throughout the state — by bringing in high speed rail, and by maximizing access once it has arrived. My understanding is that a new station in Ettrick is not incompatible with those goals. With that in mind, I want to advocate for Ettrick remaining as the station location for all the reasons I articulated above.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A. Donald McEachin". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

A. Donald McEachin
Member of Congress
Virginia's 4th District