**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND THE CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, BY ADDING SECTION 57‑1‑75 SO AS TO ESTABLISH A HIGH SPEED RAIL SYSTEM COMMISSION TO EXAMINE AND DEVELOP A PLAN FOR ACTION FOR A HIGH SPEED RAIL SYSTEM IN THIS STATE, TO PROVIDE FOR THE DUTIES OF THE COMMISSION, AND TO REQUIRE THE COMMISSION TO REPORT ITS FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY BY JANUARY 1, 2016.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. Article 1, Chapter 1, Title 57 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

“Section 57‑1‑75. (A) There is a established a High Speed Rail System Commission to examine the needs and opportunities, together with corresponding economic development opportunities within this State, presented by high speed rail and in conjunction with the Southeast High Speed Rail Corridor (SEHSR), and to develop a plan of action for development of a high speed rail system to tie into the SEHSR Corridor and, if feasible, to connect regions and cities of South Carolina with each other and with neighboring states.

(B) The commission is composed of the following nine members:

(1) four members appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives;

(2) four members appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate; and

(3) one member from the South Carolina Transportation Infrastructure Bank Boardas appointed by the chairman of the board.

(C) The Secretary of Commerce and the Director of the Department of Transportation, or their designees, also shall serve as members of the commission.

(D) The specific duties of the commission in developing its plan and recommendations include the following:

(1) study, assess, develop, and promote effective and competitive plans for the design, construction, financing, and operation of high speed rail service and intercity passenger rail service through and between points in this State and to other states;

(2) assess, advise and assist this state’s efforts to coordinate federal, state, and regional planning that best establishes high speed rail service in and through South Carolina; and

(3) coordinate with counterparts in other states on the SEHSR Corridor and, in turn, assess and advise on matters which insure compatible long‑term criteria are adopted and that optimum train scheduling is obtained to best provide high speed rail service to all applicable regions in South Carolina, including through‑service passenger train options; and

(4) assess, advise, and assist this state’s efforts to maximize federal funding in support of the establishment of high speed interstate rail service for certain parts of South Carolina as elements of the SEHSR Corridor.

(E) The expenses of the commission must be paid from the approved accounts of both houses. Staff of the Department of Transportation, the Department of Commerce, and the General Assembly shall assist the commission in the performance of its duties.

(F) Notwithstanding the provisions of Section 8‑13‑770, a member of the General Assembly may be appointed to serve on the commission.

(G) A member of the commission shall serve without pay, but shall receive mileage, subsistence, and per diem as provided by law for members of state boards, commissions, and committees.

(H) The commission shall report its findings and recommendations to the General Assembly by January 1, 2016.”

SECTION 2. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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