Dear lead authors:  
  
Greetings Volker,

This is an interesting paper and I hope it will make it into PRL.

Thank you.

Here are a few comments:

Abstract:

 The abstract should convey the most important results in a compact form. The sentence “Our data appear to favor the Regge pole model ….” is not a result. Either drop the ‘appear to’ or the sentence should be removed from the abstract.

Great suggestion, removed the word "appear" and modified the verb to match the clause.

Introduction: Since the paper is targeted for PRL it would be good to make the intro a bit more appealing to a broader audience. I don’t have any specific suggestions, but you may want to formulate something around the unusual properties of the pion.  (Note: the broad audience aspect is important for the acceptance of papers in PRL. The referees are specifically asked to look at this aspect.) It is a nearly massless particle, although as a qq-bar meson with constituent quark masses

of 350 MeV one would expect a much larger rest mass. It has a role in chiral symmetry breaking,

and may play an important role in quark confinement and the stability of the proton. All of this makes it interesting to understand its properties when probed in dynamical processes such as is discussed in this paper ..

I'm not sure what to do here, both Moskov and I agree that the suggested addition makes the paper to appear more complicated, while we were asked by Volker to make it more appealing. More suggestions?

Dear Gary, can you add some general words to make Volker (and Schumakher) happy?

Line 44:  “The oldest model..” replace with something like “The earliest model..” or “The first model…” .

Replaced with "An early" model ....

Line 57:  “(A\_2,etc.)   ..  (rho,etc)”  => delete the ‘etc.’  or give concrete mesons by name.

Removed "etc", and replace with concrete examples

Line 61-63: The sentence “While the dip at t=-0.5 GeV^2 is present in pi^0 data, it is not in the recent beam asymmetry data on eta photoproduction [5]”.   Reference [5] refers to the GlueX polarized beam asymmetry data, where the dip at t=-0.5 is not present. However, it is not present in both, the pi0 and the eta data.

It is not present in the GlueX $\Sigma$ data for both pi0 and eta. The cross section data for \pi^0 in the paper are consistent with a dip in that region. For the current CLAS ds/dt pi0 paper, Eg(max) is 5.5 GeV.  While GlueX [5] published \pi^0 and \eta $\Sigma$ data at 9 GeV.  GlueX is going to publish \pi^0 ds/dt for Eg = 7 (1) 11 GeV.  The analysis is still in progress.

Line 69:  “ However, to “explain” …… they remove…, ad hoc” replace with “However, to “reproduce” ….they remove …”  (it “explains” nothing).

Done, replaced "explain" with "reproduce" and removed "ad-hoc'

Line 81: “..while the other models are “good” for more ..” => I suggest to replace “good” with “applicable”.

Done.

Line 95-97: The excursion to DVCS (which is electroproduction at small t and is unrelated to the topic of this paper) seems to only serve the purpose to include reference [12], and not even the published version of that paper but a conference proceeding). I think it is a distraction and may just be confusing to the reader.

Authors agree and have removed this sentence.

Line 151:  “..using a tagged photon beam ...”  => “ .. using an energy-tagged photon beam,..”.

Thanks. Done.

Fig.1:  Add the color code normalization as side bars. Also, instead of using M\_E(p,e+,e-) as a missing energy I suggest to use the notation E\_X(p,e+,e-) as missing energy (E) and define it properly in the text, in analogy to the missing mass  (M) notation M\_X(,,,).  The “X” denotes the “missing part”.

Done.

Line 305 – 317: You may want to add acknowledgment to the German Funding Agency, if they provided funds.

Jim, I need help here

References:

[16] and [19]. As in references to Hall A [15] and to GlueX [5] you may want to add “CLAS Collaboration to the reference [16] and [19].

Done

Best Regards

Team π paper