

**RECORD OF DECISION ATTACHMENT D:
COMMENTS ON THE TIER II FINAL EIS**



D.C. TO RICHMOND SOUTHEAST HIGH SPEED RAIL

**ATTACHMENT D-1:
AGENCY AND ORGANIZATION COMMENTS
ON THE TIER II FINAL EIS**



D . C . TO R I C H M O N D S O U T H E A S T H I G H S P E E D R A I L



**UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION III
1650 Arch Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103-2029**

July 1, 2019

Mr. John Winkle
Transportation Analyst
U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Rail Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington D.C. 20590

Re: Washington, DC to Richmond, Virginia Southeast High Speed Rail Tier II Final Environmental Impact Statement, May 2019 CEQ #20190116

Dear Mr. Winkle,

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Section 309 of the Clean Air Act and the Council on Environmental Quality regulations implementing NEPA (40 CFR 1500-1508), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the D.C to Richmond High Speed Rail Tier II Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). EPA submitted comments on the Draft EIS for the project in correspondence of November 6, 2017. The EIS has been prepared by the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Rail Administration and the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation.

We appreciate the additional information included in the Final EIS, the responses prepared to our comments, and the Project Commitments stated at the start of the document. EPA appreciates the clarity, specificity and detail of the Project Commitments on the project. Please find below some recommendations for the Record of Decision and next steps in project development.

- As noted in the document, there are no project-specific regulatory requirements for wellhead drinking water protection areas. We support and encourage taking steps to minimize impacts to designated areas, including using a green infrastructure approach. We suggest including wellhead protection area Best Management Practices (BMPs), defined and included within project commitments. It may be appropriate to explore training delivered to contractors in the field, to be sure that practices (such as pesticide application in wellhead protection areas) are understood.
- To minimize impacts and increase sustainability of key resources such as surface water, groundwater and drinking water, we would like to offer additional resources in stormwater management efforts. The following are some weblinks to EPA's green infrastructure guidance and smart growth planning:
<https://www.epa.gov/green-infrastructure>
<https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/smart-growth-and-water>
- As the project moves forward, we encourage you to identify and take further action to reduce construction dust.

- We encourage you to support local impacted communities, to the extent practicable, in the planting of trees, support of community gardens and increasing parks and walkways.
- We suggest that you work with potentially-impacted communities, particularly sensitive receptors such as schools or daycares, to develop a comprehensive communication plan, to allow notification of construction schedule.
- We would be pleased to work with you to develop Environmental Justice and community coordination methodologies for use as this project moves forward.
- Please continue to coordinate with the team working on development of the Long Bridge project. It is suggested that coordination be addressed in the Project Commitment summary.

Please continue to work with EPA and other stakeholders as the project progresses through the Record of Decision, permitting and design stages. We suggest efforts to avoid and minimize impacts to the community and natural environment and close coordination with the public continue as the project moves forward. Thank you for providing EPA with the opportunity to review this project. If you have questions regarding these comments, the staff contact for this project is Ms. Barbara Okorn; she can be reached at 215-814-3330.

Sincerely,



Barbara Rudnick
NEPA Program Coordinator
Office of Communities, Tribes & Environmental
Assessment

cc: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers



**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
US ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS
NORFOLK DISTRICT
FORT NORFOLK
803 FRONT STREET
NORFOLK VA 23510-1011**

July 15, 2019

Special Projects Regulatory Section
NAO-2014-01959
Washington, DC to Richmond, Virginia Southeast High Speed Rail Project

U. S. Department of Transportation
ATTN: Mr. John Winkle
USDOT Federal Railroad Administrator
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20590

Virginia Department of Rail and
Public Transportation
ATTN: Ms. Emily Stock
600 East Main Street, Suite 2102
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Mr. Winkle and Ms. Stock:

This letter provides comments on the Tier II Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) prepared for the Washington, D.C. to Richmond, Virginia Southeast High Speed Rail Project (DC2RVA). The FEIS was prepared by the U. S. Department of Transportation Federal Rail Administration (FRA) and the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) has reviewed the FEIS, including the responses provided to our comments on the Draft EIS provided in the letter dated November 6, 2017. We appreciate the detail in your responses to our comments and concerns. We have the following minor comments and/or recommendations:

1. Based on the lapse of time before funding becomes available and other factors, there is the potential that a new delineation might be required and/or verification that there have been no changes to previously delineated aquatic resources when submitting a jurisdictional determination request. As a reminder, jurisdictional determinations once confirmed by USACE are valid for five years.

As noted in the FEIS, DRPT will coordinate for wetland functions and values and Unified Stream Methodology (USM) results for verification prior to the permitting process Appendix B1 (B-23). To ensure sufficient field review for a project of this nature, we highly recommend allowing a very generous timeframe for this coordination and procuring the jurisdictional determination well in advance.

2. We understand the constraints until funding becomes available; however, as you advance to the next level of design, to the extent possible, we recommend continued collaboration with USACE. As acknowledged in Chapter 7, Section 7.8, we recommend early planning with the appropriate branches of USACE for any required Section 408 permissions. We also recommend early coordination in all permit application submittals for a project of this magnitude. When submitting phased permit applications, please note that USACE for each submittal must have logical termini (independent utility), for instance, from station to station.
3. In FRA's response to USACE comments on the DEIS, Appendix B1, (B-21), and as noted in EPA's comment (11), (B-10), FRA notes that after funding becomes available, "*the functions, values, and condition of wetlands and the availability of mitigation sites will be evaluated.*" While USACE acknowledges that there are funding constraints we do recommend to research this early as there are limited to no credits available in some of the watersheds.

The FEIS correctly notes that compensation for impacts to jurisdictional waters and wetlands will be required in accordance with the Mitigation Rule (33 CFR Parts 325 and 332), which indicates a preference for using credits from mitigation banks; use of Virginia Aquatic Resources Trust Fund, an in-lieu fee program, and permittee-responsible mitigation are other potential options. We recommend that the project proponent remain informed about credit availability if the project goes forward to permitting, in order to be prepared to propose adequate and appropriate compensation.

4. We look forward to continuing to work with you throughout the permit review stages and identification of additional avoidance and minimization measures and design considerations. We appreciate the stated commitments noted in Chapter 5, Section 5.1.6.1 and throughout the FEIS. While avoidance and minimization of wetlands and streams has been an important consideration in your identification of the Preferred Alternative, impacts to aquatic resources are substantial. Wetland impacts are estimated at approximately 24 acres, and stream impacts are estimated at approximately 30 thousand linear feet. As the project development continues, further measures to avoid and minimize impacts to streams and wetlands should be evaluated, incorporated wherever practicable, and documented for the record.

To re-affirm what was previously noted in our earlier comments, in accordance with the 404(b)(1) Guidelines, USACE can authorize only the least environmentally damaging practicable alternative (LEDPA). In addition to wetland and waters impacts, we must consider factors such as economics (including displacements of homes and businesses), floodplain hazards and values, water supply and conservation, water quality, safety, cost, economics, threatened and endangered species, historic and cultural resources, and environmental justice. As part of our public interest review, we will consider operability and constructability, cost, and impacts to the social/economic factors as well as the natural environment in our identification of the LEDPA further in our permit review process. It is also important to note that we will consider all comments from the public, including our Federal Advisories, in making a final determination of the LEDPA as part of our permit decision.

A copy of this letter will be sent to: National Marine Fisheries Service, Gloucester, MA, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Gloucester, VA, Environmental Protection Agency, Region III, Philadelphia, PA, NOAA Fisheries Service, Gloucester Point, VA and Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, Richmond, VA.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Tier II FEIS. Should you have any questions about our comments, please contact me at 757-201-7832 or email at lee.a.fuerst@usace.army.mil.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lee A. Fuerst".

Lee Fuerst
Environmental Scientist
Special Projects, Regulatory Section



**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES**

**P.O. Box 178 - City Hall
Alexandria, Virginia 22313
703.746.4025**

alexandriava.gov

July 3, 2019

Emily Stock
Manager of Rail and Planning
Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation
801 East Main Street, Suite 1000
Richmond, VA 23219

Re: DC2RVA Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

Dear Ms. Stock:

City of Alexandria staff appreciates the Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) response to the City's comments and questions on the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and in the Responses to Local Agency Comments in the Final EIS.

The City of Alexandria supports designation of Alexandria Union Station as the Northern Virginia terminus of the DC2RVA project. However, as our comments make clear, the City remains concerned about potential noise and vibration impacts both during construction and upon completion. Similarly, additional right-of-way impacts – though not expected – would be problematic to numerous residential neighborhoods adjoining the proposed corridor.

Regular and meaningful coordination throughout the Final Design process between the City, DRPT, Federal Railroad Administration, WMATA, and VRE will be integral to successful outcomes for all parties.

Again, we thank you for accepting our comments for the record and look forward to working with you through project development.

Sincerely,

Yon Lambert, AICP
Director

cc: Mark B. Jinks, City Manager



Town of Ashland

Center of the Universe

101 THOMPSON STREET
P.O. BOX 1600
ASHLAND, VIRGINIA 23005-4600

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June 28, 2019

Emily Stock
Manager of Rail Planning
DRPT
600 East Main Street, Suite 2102
Richmond, VA 230219

STEVEN P.
TRIVETT
MAYOR

JOHN H.
HODGES
VICE-MAYOR

GEORGE F.
SPAGNA, JR.
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JOSHUA S.
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TOWN MANAGER

ANDREA E.
ERARD
TOWN ATTORNEY

MATTHEW G.
REYNAL
CLERK OF COUNCIL

RE: Official Town of Ashland Comments on the DC2RVA FEIS

Ms. Stock,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the FEIS. Most, if not all, of our technical comments were submitted as part of the DEIS process, and we appreciate DRPT's detailed efforts to provide responses to those comments. In an effort not to duplicate the comments sent as part of the DEIS I will summarize our thoughts on the FEIS as follows:

- The Town believes several decisions made as part of the Tier One study of the corridor were short sighted. In particular, any decision to continue reliance on diesel trains on shared use tracks may well meet the limited purpose and need of the study, but does not meet the current and long term transportation needs of the Commonwealth of Virginia and it's citizens and businesses.
- As DRPT moves forward with more detailed engineering of the grade separated crossings at Vaughan Road and Ashcake Road; the Town would appreciate participating as a partner in the planning, design, and engineering process to assist in limiting negative impact on the community while also coordinating the improvements with the long term land use plans in the surrounding areas. In particular, the Town has plans for much of the area north of Vaughan Road on the west side of the railroad tracks.
- Section 7.3 states, "The SDP discusses the location of the stations to be served under the Preferred Alternative, how these stations will accommodate the proposed service (for example, with amenities such as checked baggage handling or parking), how passengers will access those stations, and how these stations will be integrated with connections to other modes of transportation." The Town would expect to be included in the planning and development of the SDP for the Ashland Station.

- The Town appreciates the inclusion of language which states “If DRPT determines that additional rail capacity is needed in Alternative Area 5 to meet the performance standards required for additional passenger trains, DRPT shall conduct a new study based on updated information.” We will rely upon this language to protect our interests once construction begins on improvements in Alternative Area 5, as well as at such time as DRPT and the FRA determine the 3-2-3 alignment is too much of a bottleneck based on future growth.
- Finally, the Town continues to be concerned that adoption, planning and implementation of the Preferred Alternative 3-2-3 alignment in Alternative Area 5 will inevitably lead to the addition of a third track through Town subsequent to the current DC2RVA process. If DRPT and the FRA are going to continue to rely on existing rail technology rather than looking to alternative technologies to meet future needs we must re-iterate that the only alternative considered throughout the entire process that would meet future capacity needs, and would have received unanimous support of the Citizen Advisory Committee, is the Deep Bore Tunnel option.

Once again, we appreciate the opportunity to share our thoughts and concerns. Attached to this letter is a resolution adopted by the Ashland Town Council on June 18, 2019 which expresses the concerns and positions of the elected representatives of the community.

Respectfully,



Joshua S. Farrar
Town Manager
Town of Ashland, VA

**RESOLUTION OF THE ASHLAND TOWN COUNCIL
REGARDING THE TIER II, FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT
STATEMENT (EIS), WASHINGTON, D.C., TO RICHMOND,
VIRGINIA, RAIL IMPROVEMENTS**

WHEREAS as part of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process to consider ways to improve intercity passenger rail service in Virginia entitled “DC to Richmond Southeast High Speed Rail” (DC2RVA), the Ashland Town Council passed three resolutions (July 5, 2016, January 6th and October 20, 2017), expressing Town concerns to the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT), the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and the Committee established to re-examine options for the DC2RVA project in the Ashland area so that the citizens of Ashland and surrounding areas would be offered the opportunity to view and recommend viable options; and

WHEREAS the information reviewed by the Committee and DRPT reinforced that any type of a third track constructed “at grade” through Ashland would:

- (1) dramatically impact the economic vitality and historic character of the Town and severely restrict vehicular and pedestrian access for many of the existing homes and businesses on Center Street in the heart of town,*
- (2) restrict access to Randolph-Macon College and fundamentally damage the usability, quality and safety of its historic campus,*
- (3) impose additional restrictions on vehicles and pedestrians moving in the east-west corridors through the Ashland; and*

WHEREAS while the Tier II Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) published in May 2019 by the FRA identifies the continued use of two main tracks through Ashland, with one additional track eventually being constructed to the north and south of Ashland, together with the construction of grade separated crossings at Vaughan Road and Ashcake Road, as a viable method for meeting the DC2RVA project’s service and performance goals, the “3-2-3 Alternative” , however:

- *the Tier II FEIS clearly states that the “3-2-3 Alternative” increases the average vehicle delay for the England Street/Thompson Street crossing from 12 cumulative hours per day in 2015, to 41 cumulative hours per day in 2045, thereby creating the “wall of trains” effect and a project bottleneck; and*
- *the Tier II FEIS clearly explains that the “3-2-3 Alternative” will fail when it says, “operation simulation for year 2045 estimated that having only two main tracks in Fredericksburg and/or Ashland failed to dispatch (i.e., the operations simulation concluded that the infrastructure had insufficient capacity for the number of trains projected to operate in the corridor in year 2045);” and*

WHEREAS the Ashland Town Council:

1. *Expresses its appreciation for the extra efforts provided by the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation, the Commonwealth Transportation Board and the Federal Railroad Administration to address concerns raised by the Town;*
2. *However, the Council believes the “3-2-3 Alternative” represents a temporary solution that helps achieve moderately higher speed passenger travel on a heavily used freight right of way, but leaves a cloud of uncertainty over the capacity of the Town’s portion of the right of way to accommodate projected demand for freight and passenger travel without practical alternatives due to future growth surrounding the Town potentially making a third track through downtown Ashland the only feasible long term alternative ensuring the future destruction of downtown Ashland; and*

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Town Council urges the DRPT and FRA to continue to evaluate options for true “High Speed” passenger transportation for the whole DC to Richmond Corridor that would preclude the projected adverse impacts of the “3-2-3 Alternative” on the Town and would include a strategic focus on new passenger transportation technologies that do not mandate the use of a 19th Century shared freight corridor or the use of fossil fuel engines; and

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the only option presented by DRPT through the Environmental Impact Study process that the Town of Ashland would consider a viable alternative in the future using only existing right of way is the Deep Bore Tunnel; and

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Town of Ashland will work with all community, state, and federal entities to continue to collaborate and fully explore any and all alternatives that have the potential to meet the stated goal of providing high speed intercity passenger rail service in Virginia without the projected adverse impacts of the project on the Ashland community, as well as new technologies that have the potential to significantly enhance both freight and passenger transportation.

	Vote:
Steve Trivett:	Aye
John Hodges:	Aye
George Spagna:	Aye
Kathy Abbott:	Aye
Daniel McGraw:	Aye

Certified to be a true copy of a resolution adopted by the Ashland Town Council by a 5-0 vote on June 18, 2019



Matthew G. Reynal, Clerk of Council

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

W. CANOVA PETERSON, CHAIRMAN
MECHANICSVILLE DISTRICT

SCOTT A. WYATT, VICE-CHAIRMAN
COLD HARBOR DISTRICT

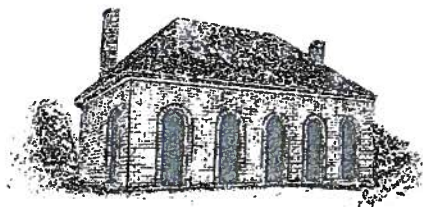
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FAYE O. PRICHARD
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AUBREY M. STANLEY
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HANOVER COUNTY

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DEPUTY COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

KATHLEEN T. SEAY
DEPUTY COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

JAMES P. TAYLOR
DEPUTY COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

WWW.HANOVERCOUNTY.GOV

P.O. BOX 470, HANOVER, VA 23069
7516 COUNTY COMPLEX ROAD, HANOVER, VA 23069

PHONE: 804-365-6005
FAX: 804-365-6234

July 2, 2019

Jennifer Mitchell
Director, Virginia Department of Rail & Public Transportation
600 E Main Street
Richmond, VA 23219

Paul Nissenbaum
Associate Administrator for Railroad Policy and Development
Federal Railroad Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Ms. Mitchell & Mr. Nissenbaum:

On behalf of the Hanover County Board of Supervisors, I would like to thank you for all the time and effort put forward to complete the Tier II Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Final Section 4(f) evaluation. Hanover County supports the finding that Alternative 5A is the best for our respective section of this project. The two new grade separation crossings at Vaughan Road/Archie Cannon Drive and Ashcake Drive will help alleviate the effects of additional trains along this section. This alternative is also consistent with one of the least objectionable alternatives adopted by the Community Advisory Committee (CAC), which was convened to specifically evaluate this section of the corridor.

We also appreciate efforts to work with our citizens within and adjacent to the Town of Ashland to insure, as the FEIS states, that this alternative "provides sufficient railroad capacity to support the purpose and need while having the least impact on property, wetlands and other natural resources, historic and cultural resources, and the built environment". Hanover County supports that conclusion as it is consistent with our comments on the DEIS.

Again we appreciate all the efforts put forth to reach this very difficult conclusions and look forward to working with you as this project proceeds.

Sincerely

W. Canova Peterson, Chairman
Hanover County Board of Supervisors

Cc: John Winkle, Transportation Analyst, U.S. Department of Transportation
Michael McLaughlin, Chief of Rail Transportation, Virginia Department of Rail & Public Transportation
Emily Stock, Project Manager, Virginia Department of Rail & Public Transportation
Steve Trivett, Mayor, Town of Ashland



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Richmond, VA 23219-2431
804-343-1090
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SouthernEnvironment.org

July 1, 2019

Ms. Emily Stock
Manager of Rail Planning
Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation
info@DC2RVArail.com

BY EMAIL

Re: Comments on Tier II Final EIS for Washington, DC to Richmond High-Speed Rail

Dear Ms. Stock:

The Southern Environmental Law Center would like to provide the following comments on the Tier II Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Washington, DC to Richmond High-Speed Rail (DC2RVA) project. SELC is a non-partisan, non-profit organization that works throughout Virginia to promote transportation and land use decisions that strengthen our communities, protect our natural resources, and improve our quality of life. This includes a focus on developing a cleaner transportation system and providing Virginians with a broader range of transportation choices.

We strongly support enhancing passenger and freight rail in the Commonwealth, and we have long supported efforts to provide fast, frequent, and reliable passenger rail service in the critical Washington, DC to Richmond corridor. The DC2RVA corridor is central to the movement of people and goods throughout Virginia, and is both a crucial segment of the Southeast High Speed Rail Corridor and a key connector to the Northeast Corridor. As the Final EIS makes clear, the DC2RVA project would provide many important benefits, including increasing travel options and reducing congestion in this vital transportation corridor, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and encouraging more compact development patterns. It would also provide a backbone for a larger network of efficient transportation options such as local transit and light rail. Improving the DC2RVA corridor must be a top priority for the Commonwealth to meet the evolving transportation needs of our residents and businesses, as well as to advance Virginia's goals of reducing transportation pollution.

In the Final EIS, we support many of the decisions that have been made in selecting the Preferred Alternative, including the focus on keeping improvements primarily within existing right-of-way, the selection of the two-station solution in Richmond focusing on upgrading the existing Main Street and Staples Mill Stations, and the decisions to not pursue destructive new bypasses around Fredericksburg and Ashland that would have had significant adverse effects on habitat, wetlands, and agricultural lands.

We also appreciate the inclusion in this Final EIS of additional information about the estimated costs of the DC2RVA project (both overall and by section), potential federal and state funding sources, and the potential prioritization of these improvements. As the Final EIS acknowledges, completing this \$5.6 billion project will require significant time and coordination, and it is imperative to provide decision-makers and the public with a fair picture of the remaining steps that will be needed to get us there.

The benefits of the DC2RVA project would be substantial. In addition to greatly expanding rail service by accommodating 18 additional intercity passenger trains (9 round trips) each day, the Final EIS shows that the Preferred Alternative is expected to significantly improve on-time performance for passenger trains in the corridor—easily exceeding the 90% on-time performance target.¹ It is also expected to achieve these enhancements to passenger rail with minimal effects on the corridor’s freight services.² Of course, there are a number of variables impacting on-time performance, and even if the DC2RVA project is fully implemented the Commonwealth will need to be vigilant and aggressive in ensuring that on-time performance targets are met.

The Final EIS further estimates that the Preferred Alternative will remove up to 2,700 vehicles per day (and 322,000 vehicle miles per day) from the parallel I-95 and U.S. Route 1 corridors, equating to a net reduction of approximately 3 million gallons of fuel per year being consumed in the corridor.³ The DC2RVA project will also have significant economic and land use benefits, including encouraging transit-oriented development in the vicinity of the corridor’s rail stations. To further augment these benefits, as the DC2RVA project moves forward we strongly encourage continuing consideration of the electrification of rail lines in this corridor, as well as additional opportunities to improve public transit connections to key rail stations.

That being said, the Preferred Alternative would still result in adverse effects in a number of areas along the corridor, and as this project advances to the permitting and final design stages we also urge continuing consideration of additional refinements and mitigation measures that can further avoid or minimize these impacts. Some particular areas in which this further review is needed include anticipated noise impacts on environmental justice communities in the corridor (which the Final EIS found to be disproportionately high in a number of areas), as well as the Preferred Alternative’s remaining impacts on wetlands, streams, and habitat for endangered and threatened species.

Given the Preferred Alternative’s alignment through many existing and long-standing communities, it also has the potential to adversely affect historic and cultural resources in several locations. We appreciate the significant attention paid to these effects in the Final EIS, including recent efforts to address concerns raised by SELC and a number of other groups during this EIS process about the need to further study potential impacts in the vicinity of Richmond’s Main Street Station on the Lumpkin’s Jail/Devil’s Half Acre site and nearby burial grounds in Shockoe Bottom associated with enslavement history. Along these lines, we support the commitments identified in the Final EIS and Section 106 Draft Memorandum of Agreement to, among other things, further research and develop a historic context for this area, increase public awareness of

¹ Final EIS App. I, *DC2RVA Recommendation Report* at 3-2 et seq. (showing estimated improvements in on-time performance for Amtrak passenger trains from between 69.6 and 82.3% in the 2045 No-Build scenarios to well over 90% in the 2045 Build scenarios for the Preferred Alternative).

² *Id.* (showing a 2.4-minute decrease in freight train minutes of delay per 100 train-miles in the 2045 Build condition for the Preferred Alternative when compared to the 2045 No-Build condition for the DC2RVA corridor-specific analysis, and a 2.6-minute increase for this factor in the broader network-wide analysis).

³ See Final EIS at 5-24 (estimating that the avoided automobile trips would have consumed approximately 5.3 million gallons of fuel per year, compared to an estimated 2.3 million gallons of fuel anticipated to be consumed by the additional intercity passenger trips resulting from the project).

its significance, and pursue the establishment of a potential historic district associated with the slave trade in Shockoe Bottom.

Finally, as we have noted in prior comments, we continue to have concerns with the proposal in the Preferred Alternative to shift more of the national trains through Richmond (with the exception of Amtrak's Auto Train) over to the S-Line, and ceding nearly all of the passenger rail access to the A-line around downtown. Based on our understanding, shifting to the S-Line could cost Virginia a significant amount of funds for train slots and infrastructure maintenance it does not have to pay for the A-Line. In addition, while it has been noted that this proposed shift would not *preclude* future use of the A-Line by passenger trains if there end up being problems with the S-Line routing, it seems likely that it will be much harder to recover these slots on the A-Line for this passenger service once they have been given up to make way for additional freight traffic. For a number of reasons, it makes sense to maintain access to the A-Line and incrementally increase routing via the S-Line.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments, as well as the significant time and effort that have gone into this study. We look forward to continuing to work with DRPT to improve this important corridor as this project advances.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Trip Pollard in black ink.

Trip Pollard
Senior Attorney

Handwritten signature of Travis Pietila in black ink.

Travis Pietila
Staff Attorney



Showcasing the rich historical and cultural heritage of our town of Ashland, Virginia

June 30, 2019

Ms. Jennifer Mitchell
Director
Virginia Department of Rail & Public Transportation
600 East Main Street, Suite 2102
Richmond, VA 23219

Re: Comments on Final EIS, Washington, D.C. to Richmond Southeast Rail Project

Dear Ms. Mitchell:

The Ashland Museum continues to endorse the comments from the Town of Ashland.

We hope you understand that your decision will affect the economic vitality and quality of life in Ashland *immediately*, not just beginning in 2045 or when funds become available for the project.

Ashland, Randolph-Macon College and the surrounding area are not sustainable with an at-grade third rail through Town nor with a wall of trains running through or around Town. We encourage you to look at solutions and technologies that will be practical beyond 2045. It makes no sense to increase the number of trains stopping in Ashland when there won't be a community here to support increased rail ridership.

The Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac Railroad choose to built Ashland. It would be sad if 200 years later another railroad decided to demolish the area.

Sincerely,

Ellen Wulf
President, Board of Directors
Ashland Museum

Betsy Hodges
Administrator
Ashland Museum

ATTACHMENT D-2: PUBLIC COMMENTS AND RESPONSES



D.C. TO RICHMOND SOUTHEAST HIGH SPEED RAIL

Citizen Comment(s)	Response Sent
<p>I am writing in support of the final environmental impact statement for the DC2RVA segment of the Southeast high speed rail project.</p> <p>I request that the FEIS be finalized so that the project may move forward to construction</p>	<p>No response required.</p>
<p>The existing AMTRAK program is and has been in debt for years and the taxpayer foots the bill to keep it running. AMTRAK needs to be shut down or privatized. I can see the trains pass between Quantico and Fredericksburg daily and the cars are empty. Just like the FRED busses in Fredericksburg are empty and continue to run for the benefit of the few Mary Washington indigent high rollers. How can anyone continue to spend taxpayer money on these studies for a high speed rail when the existing AMTRAK isn't used? I consider this entire effort a contender for the waste/fraud/abuse award for 2019 and everyone associated with it should be prosecuted. Please provide the FOIA entity I can contact to get dollars spent to date on this entire effort so we can get started.</p>	<p>Thank you for your recent inquiry. The DC2RVA Environmental Impact Statement and Preliminary Engineering project has cost approximately \$44 million to date. The FOIA contact for the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation is Chris Smith. His contact information is pasted below.</p> <p>chris.smith@drpt.virginia.gov</p> <p>(804) 225-3930 600 East Main Street, Suite 2102 Richmond, VA 23219</p>
<p>For the Ashland "3-2-2" proposal, can you clarify where the proposed third rail will be constructed, east side or west side of existing tracks, between the Elmont switching station and Ashcake Road section just south of Ashland? The latest illustration for option 5A looks somewhat confusing. Would you happen to have clarification or a more detailed picture of what the track changes might look like?</p>	<p>The proposed third rail south of Ashland and Ashcake Road will be constructed on the east side of the existing tracks as indicated by the Permanent Limits of Disturbance shown in Final EIS Appendix L, Area 5 on Sheets 163 and 164. South of Gwathmey Church Road, the proposed third rail shifts from the east to the west side of the existing tracks as indicated by the Permanent Limits of Disturbance shown in Appendix L, Area 5 on Sheet 165. The proposed third rail will be constructed on the west side of the existing tracks from south of Gwathmey Church Road to south of Elmont Road as indicated by the Permanent Limits of Disturbance shown in Appendix L, Area 5 on Sheets 166 and 167. These sheets are provided at the level of detail available at the conceptual level required for an environmental document.</p>
<p>These are my personal comments only. They are made also before reading the final document but after attending several public hearings. They are also based on my 60 years of design and construction experience with rail and highway infrastructure. The three track trench is the best long term alternative for Ashland.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> It significantly reduces at-grade crossings thereby greatly improving safety to citizens. It is the fastest and most efficient segment between DC and RVA. It provides some protection to the Town from incidents on rail such as fire or explosions. It retains most of the attractiveness and accessibility of the town center. 	<p>Thank you for your comment. The Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) carefully reviewed each comment, concern, and request received from citizens during the Draft EIS comment period. Appendix C of the Final EIS provides detailed responses to general public comments, including comments similar to yours. To find answers to these comments, please refer to Appendix C1 (Index to General Public Comments), which lists the questions that DRPT responded to. The intent of this index is to provide a way to easily browse all questions that were asked by the general public and locate detailed responses by topic. For your comments, please refer to the "Public Involvement" and "Ashland Area Alternatives" sections of Appendix C. Specifically, detailed responses are provided on the following topics:</p> <p>"What was the outcome of the Ashland CAC after the publication of the Draft EIS" – Response #3 on Page C2-16.</p> <p>"Support for options not evaluated in the Draft EIS", including "Tunnel beneath the Town of Ashland" – Response #2b on Page C2-23.</p> <p>Additionally, please refer to Appendix G of the Final EIS is the Final Summary Report of the Town of Ashland/Hanover County Area Community Advisory Committee.</p>

Citizen Comment(s)	Response Sent
<p>On November 6, 2017 I submitted comments on the Draft EIS. I have been unable to find responses to my comments in the comments response sections of the EIS. Would you please direct me to the pages in the EIS where my comments are addressed?</p>	<p>The Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) carefully reviewed each comment, concern, and request received from citizens during the Draft EIS comment period and compiled them into broad subject matter categories, which are listed on Page C-1 of the Final EIS (Appendix C: Detailed Responses to General Public Comments). In accordance with 40 CFR 1503.4, the comments presented in Appendix C convey the substance of the comments made and condense numerous similar comments together into a single topic. For that reason, the compilation does not always quote comments from individuals verbatim, nor does it list citizens by name.</p> <p>To find answers to comments, please refer to Appendix CI (Index to General Public Comments), which lists the questions that DRPT responded to for each of the subject matter categories. The intent of this index is to provide a way to easily browse all questions that were asked by the general public and locate detailed responses by topic.</p> <p>For your comments, please refer to the “Purpose and Need” and “Proposed Train Service/Operations/Schedule” sections of Appendix C. Specifically, detailed responses are provided on the following topics:</p> <p>“The Purpose and Need is based on an analysis of the current Need for the Project. However, the Draft EIS stated that the Project would be constructed between 15 and 25 years from now and the projections of the demand for enhanced passenger rail and freight service are presented for between 2025 and 2045—neither of which are current.” – Response #7 on Page C2-5.</p> <p>“Concerns about rail technology assumed and/or evaluated in the Draft EIS.” – Response #4 on Page C2-9.</p> <p>“Concerns about freight service.” – Response #6 on Page C2-10.</p>
<p>I'm a resident of the Richmond area and have been so for 20+ years. As someone who has been in positions that often requires travel the train is generally my last option as the service is generally unreliable not necessarily the most affordable in many cases not convenient nor the fastest mode of transportation. After returning from another trip to Europe having experienced their train service in both Spain and Switzerland I got to wondering why is it that our trains are stuck in the 1950s. Also I recently had to pick up my parents at the Staples Mill station as they were coming up from Charlotte. That trek took over 6 hours. I could drive that route faster and it would be more affordable. Which got me to thinking why would anyone ride our current train service with the exception of those who cannot drive? Additionally it became abundantly clear to me on my return trip from Europe how much the US citizens are at the mercy of our airline carriers and in particular those of us who do not live in the NFL cities. Our regional plane from IAD to RIC was delayed 5 hours for multiple reasons and flights out of smaller cities often increase the fare my 2x. Having a cost effective and reliable alternative to get to major metro airports (DC RTP Charlotte) would be a blessing for those of us who do not live in DC NYC etc. (Although that isn't necessarily the market high speed trains would be targeting as that doesn't include much in terms of daily ridership). So I have spent some time reading the proposal on your website. I've also</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment. The Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) carefully reviewed each comment, concern, and request received from citizens during the Draft EIS comment period. Appendix C of the Final EIS provides detailed responses to general public comments, including questions similar to yours. To find answers to these comments, please refer to Appendix CI (Index to General Public Comments), which lists the questions that DRPT responded to. The intent of this index is to provide a way to easily browse all questions that were asked by the general public and locate detailed responses by topic.</p> <p>For your comments, please refer to the “Proposed Train Service/Operations/Schedule” and “Corridor Options Not Evaluated in the Draft EIS” sections of Appendix C. Specifically, detailed responses are provided on the following topics:</p> <p>“The passenger trains proposed by the Project should go faster. This is not true high speed rail that other countries have.” – Response #3 on Page C2-8</p> <p>“Concerns about the technology assumed and/or evaluated in the Draft EIS” - Response #4 on Page C2-9</p>

Citizen Comment(s)	Response Sent
<p>started reading the Reasons.org paper from a few years ago. They are funded by someone who opposes this but it is always good to understand the other side. Obviously I'm late to the conversation and your study is very thorough (voluminous) and I have a ways to go so it is difficult to quickly understand the various inputs and decisions so a few questions:</p> <p>1) the one thing that jumps off the page to me is why the plans are to only support speeds of 90 MPH? Seems like we are placing a lot of time effort and citizen's money into building a 1970's Plymouth Volare and not a 2050 Telsa Voyager (or whatever a 2050 Telsa would be named). From what I can tell the goals of 110MPH were set 20 years ago. We should be looking at 200MPH. We spend billions on roads repaving widening reworking etc etc. Why not redirect a large portion of that to rail for a small window of time and do the job right? If you want people to stop driving you need better than 90 MPH. 90 MPH is a recipe for failure right out of the gate if the goal is to solve the problems listed on Page 4 of the executive summary. If you want me to take the train I need to be able to drive 15 miles to the train station have it be on time and deliver me to downtown DC in an hour so I can take a Metro/Uber to my final destination. Otherwise I'm driving.</p> <p>2) In the executive study there is a lot of info about multi modal. Great but do we really need to bake the freight service into this? I've seen this before in the technology industry. Trying to solve too many problems with a single solution....ends up being a solution that is substandard for all problems. Maybe removing passenger service from the freight tracks alone would be enough for the freight trains to operate more efficiently...and that would be enough. Furthermore how does multimode solve some of the delay issues caused by sharing tracks?</p> <p>3) As I was driving north last week (not taking the train) I really noticed how much open right of way exists in the middle of I-95. Why not take advantage of that (much like we have metro trains in the middle of I-66 in NOVA) and just build a passenger only solution capable of 200MPH right down the middle of I-95? Is it a technical limitation that prevents this? The bridges over the tracks are mostly in place so I'm assuming it would be safer (fewer small roads and chances for train/auto crashes). Certainly some alterations would need to be made in some places to make room - and we are constantly working on I95 so there would be plenty of opportunities to move I-95 in places required to make room for the trains..but it seems you could fit two tracks i place from the Woodbridge to Ashland for the most part.</p> <p>4) Cost study. Looking at the various proposed solutions I'm seeing construction cost of approximately \$36M per mile \$50M per mile (near DC) \$22M per mile etc. Shouldn't that type of money get us a new 200MPH track? Just seems those costs are extremely high for the return on investment. This is not a mountainous area. Pretty flat. Need a few bridges but it is not as if we are boring tunnels through mountains. If rural Interstate Highways cost \$2-3M per mile to build in the US...why is rail 10-25X more expensive? Can't be the materials cant be the construction equipment...so what is it?</p>	<p>"Concerns about freight service" - Response #6 on Page C2-10</p> <p>"Did the Project consider moving all freight rail away/separate from passenger rail?" - Response #2 on Page C2-20</p> <p>"Did the Project consider rail in the I-95 corridor right-of-way and/or within powerline right-of-way?" - Response #4 on Page C2-21</p>

Citizen Comment(s)	Response Sent
<p>I am writing in support of the final environmental impact statement (FEIS) for the DC2RVA segment of the Southeast high speed rail project and request that the FEIS be finalized so that the project may move forward to construction. I will continue to note that the one serious shortcoming in the recommended preferred alternative is the lack of high level station platforms through the entire length of the project area. High level platforms are a necessary component of a successful higher speed rail program as they allow for: · Faster, all door boarding · Easier train accessibility for all passengers · Shorter station dwell times · Reduced travel time It is time for Virginia to move Virginia Railway Express rolling stock towards dual level boarding capability so that the full value of higher speed rail in the Southeast can be realized. Thanks to DRPT for all of the hard work in getting the DC2Richmond improvement project to this final stage of environmental and project review.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments on the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Southeast High Speed Rail, Washington, D.C. to Richmond, Virginia (DC2RVA) project – we appreciate your support for the project and your interest in improving passenger rail service.</p> <p>FRA and DRPT evaluated the use of level boarding platforms at stations throughout the DC2RVA corridor in both the Draft and Final EIS, recognizing the many advantages to passenger rail service. In the Final EIS, the Preferred Alternative does include a level boarding platform at the new Staples Mill Road Station on track dedicated to passenger trains. However, for most station/platforms, it was determined that level boarding platforms were not feasible or practicable as tracks serving the station platforms are shared with freight trains operated by CSXT, the owner of the rail line on which the passenger trains operate. Level boarding platforms are not practicable on track utilized by freight trains.</p> <p>Appendix C of the Final EIS provides detailed responses to general public comments on the Draft EIS, including comments similar to yours. To find answers to these comments, please refer to Appendix C1 (Index to General Public Comments), which lists the questions that DRPT responded to. The intent of this index is to provide a way to easily browse all questions that were asked by the general public and locate detailed responses by topic. For your comments, please refer to the “Station Evaluation” section of Appendix C. Specifically, detailed responses are provided to several topics regarding “Concern regarding proposed level of boarding platforms at station as part of Project improvements”, which is Response #3 of Page C2-28.</p> <p>Again, thank you for your comments and interest in passenger rail.</p>
<p>Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Final EIS for the DC2RVA project. While most of the project was already covered in the Draft EIS phase the identification of a preferred alternative for section 5 through Ashland was not made at that time and it is important that the public be able to respond to this selection before the ROD is issued.</p> <p>The selection of Alternative 5A is likely to severely constrain future rail capacity in Virginia and the entire Southeast corridor and result in congestion delays pollution and fatalities. This is the main line for both freight and passenger rail on the East Coast and alternatives have severe constraints and are not suited for passenger rail in this corridor. Keeping rail capacity at two tracks through Ashland as rail traffic increases is likely to cause congestion and delays which will affect both Ashland by closing off for more of each hour East-West access in the town and on a major state road and the state and region by delaying traffic and reducing the usefulness of passenger rail. It will also push traffic to already congested roads such as I-95 and Routes 1 and 301 which will increase congestion pollution delays and fatal crashes. This is bad locally regionally and nationally.</p> <p>The Alternative 5C will help Ashland by eliminating freight trains that pass slowly through town and often stop blocking critical access within the town. Grade separation in the town would be highly disruptive but building a bypass in rural land affects the</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments on the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Southeast High Speed Rail, Washington, D.C. to Richmond, Virginia (DC2RVA) project – we appreciate your interest in improving passenger rail service. Appendix C of the Final EIS provides detailed responses to general public comments on the Draft EIS, including comments similar to yours. To find answers to these comments, please refer to Appendix C1 (Index to General Public Comments), which lists the questions that DRPT responded to. The intent of this index is to provide a way to easily browse all questions that were asked by the general public and locate detailed responses by topic.</p> <p>For your comments, please refer to the “Public Involvement” section of Appendix C. Specifically, detailed responses are provided regarding “There needs to be a formal comment period on any recommendations in Area 5 prior to the next step in the process”, which is Response #3b on Page C2-16. Additionally, the potential environmental impacts of all Build Alternatives, including residential replacements, were summarized in Section 3 of the Draft EIS Executive Summary and detailed in Chapter 4 of the Draft EIS. In the Final EIS, the basis and justification for selecting 5A as the Preferred Alternative is detailed in Section 4.3.5.2.</p> <p>Again, thank you for your comments and interest in passenger rail.</p>

Citizen Comment(s)	Response Sent
<p>least number of people while maintaining the benefits of an improved rail network. Given the latest route suggestion I saw only 2-3 houses would be directly in line of the bypass and while others may choose to move this is a very small number of people disrupted compared to the building of new highways which often disrupt thousands or tens of thousands of people. It is no coincidence that the building of interstates in the urban parts of the Richmond area was hugely disruptive to tens of thousands -- often low-income and minority residents -- and was implemented on multiple occasions while the building of this rail bypass in a rural area which would affect a few dozen people in a county with a median household income of \$77000 a year and is largely white especially in this part of the county is being passed by.</p> <p>I understand that this alternative was selected as a compromise but the main result of it is to compromise the viability of passenger rail in Richmond Virginia and the Mid Atlantic. The costs of fixing this mistake in the future after much of this area gets slotted for development and many of the people apparently being protected leave anyway will increase dramatically. The penny wise pound foolish Alternative 5A will cost more reduce passenger and freight rail usage encourage interstate widening increase pollution increase sprawl and do a disservice to residents of the Commonwealth and the East Coast. As the project is still in need of much funding the time constraints are not as dire as otherwise would be and the FRA should consider either mandating Alternative 5C for this project or reopening Alternative 5 for further review before issuing an ROD. While that might create some opposition or risk it is better to get this project correct now rather than go through with a project that while otherwise a positive step will likely have significant issues if this critical component is not dealt with.</p>	