

**RESOLUTION
OF THE
COMMONWEALTH TRANSPORTATION BOARD**

December 6, 2017

MOTION

Made by: Mr. Brown, Seconded by: Ms. Valentine

Action: Motion Carried, Unanimously

Title: Recommendation of a Preferred Alternative for the Washington, D.C. to Richmond Southeast High Speed Rail Tier II Environmental Impact Statement

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth Transportation Board adopted Recommended Alternative A-Plus (see Attachment A), as set forth in the *Study Area Alternatives Recommendation Report for the Southeast High Speed Rail Tier I Draft Environmental Impact Statement*, dated March 5, 2002 which was subsequently adopted by the Federal Railroad Administration in the Tier I Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision; and,

WHEREAS, the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT), in conjunction with the Federal Railroad Administration, have continued to further the effort of implementing higher speed passenger rail service within the Southeast Rail Corridor by developing the Washington, D.C. to Richmond Southeast High Speed Rail (DC2RVA) project, a Tier II Environmental Impact Statement to identify a preferred alternative within the selected 123- mile corridor between Washington, D.C. and Richmond; and,

WHEREAS, DRPT conducted significant public and stakeholder involvement for the DC2RVA project including direct mail, newspaper advertisements, project website and social media campaigns, ten public meetings, five formal public hearings, and multiple local meetings and workshops; and,

WHEREAS, the DC2RVA Tier II Draft Environmental Impact Statement that evaluated multiple alternatives in six Alternative Areas along the CSX Transportation corridor between Washington, D.C. and Richmond was published on September 8, 2017 and was followed by a 60-day public comment period; and,

WHEREAS, DRPT included in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement a recommended preferred alternative for Alternative Areas 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6 of the DC2RVA study corridor as shown in Attachment B; and,

WHEREAS, DRPT limited the footprint of potential construction activities for DC2RVA project alternatives at Main Street Station, located in the Shockoe Bottom area of Richmond, in order to avoid and/or limit any potential impacts after evaluating, in a manner consistent with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources guidelines, and per the process set forth in Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the cultural resources in the Shockoe Bottom area of Richmond; and,

WHEREAS, DRPT has relied on a broad array of historical research to inform its layout of the DC2RVA improvements and to summarize available historical research and assets associated with the Shockoe Bottom slave trade, including areas for future slavery museums and memorials, five known archaeological sites, scholarly research on the Shockoe Bottom slave trade, current public commentary, and possible locations for additional historical and archaeological research and preservation, all to be summarized in a separate chapter of the Final Environmental Impact Statement as supplemental information that may be beneficial to future public and private decisions and actions in the Shockoe Bottom area; and,

WHEREAS, recognizing the unique nature of the region and concerns from the community over Draft EIS alternatives in Alternative Area 5 as shown in Attachment B, DRPT convened the Town of Ashland/Hanover County Community Advisory Committee, to take a more intensive look at all rail options that could meet the purpose and need of the DC2RVA project, while also minimizing or avoiding any potential impacts of those options; and,

WHEREAS, DRPT briefed the Commonwealth Transportation Board on DRPT's recommendation at its October 23, 2017 Workshop meeting and at its November 9, 2017 Rail Committee meeting on the outcome of the CAC process, being the following three least-objectionable alternatives for Alternative Area 5: maintain two tracks through the town of Ashland (5A), add a two-track west bypass (AWB1, previously screened out), and add a three-track trench through the Town of Ashland (variation of tunnel option previously screened out).

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Commonwealth Transportation Board recommends to Federal Railroad Administration the following preferred alternative for inclusion in the forthcoming Rail Alignment Recommendation Report, Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision, in concurrence with DRPT's recommendation, in the following areas of the DC2RVA study corridor, as shown in Attachment B: Alternative Area 1-1A, 1B, or 1C; Alternative Area 2-2A; Alternative Area 3-3B; Alternative Area 4-4A; Alternative Area 5-5A; Alternative Area 6-6F.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the recommended preferred alternative for Alternative Area 1 (Arlington) will include the retention of all three alternatives 1A, 1B and 1C until after completion of the Long Bridge Tier II Environmental Impact Statement, whereby one of the three retained alternatives will be selected as the recommended preferred alternative based on compatibility with the Long Bridge Tier II Environmental Impact Statement preferred alternative.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that if the Commonwealth Transportation Board on the recommendation of 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, including but not limited to future freight volumes, land uses, and capacity needs within the overall rail network.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Commonwealth Transportation Board hereby directs DRPT to avoid and/or minimize any permanent property acquisitions, to the extent practicable, in areas where only two mainline tracks on the current alignment are recommended, and to avoid any permanent property acquisitions related to the DC2RVA project that would affect the operations of Randolph-Macon College.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the Commonwealth Transportation Board hereby directs DRPT to explore the need for other potential improvements in downtown Ashland (Alternative Area 5) that will help protect the safety of motorized and non-motorized roadway users, and to facilitate emergency access.

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Attachment A

Excerpt from Record of Decision for the Tier I Southeast High Speed Rail Project November 20, 2002

DECISION

The FRA and the FHWA working closely with NCDOT and VDRPT have selected the following build alternative for the SEHSR project for further Tier II environmental studies:

The preferred alternative consists of Alternative A (utilizing the S-line and the NCRR rights-of-ways) modified to include passenger connectivity to Winston-Salem, NC (Alternative B via the Winston Salem South Bound –WSSB and the K-line railroad rights-of-ways). The combination of Alternatives A and B best meets the project's purpose and need, while minimizing environmental impacts and has the highest level of public and agency support. VDRPT and NCDOT recommend that the Alternative A portion be developed first and that the Alternative B portion be developed in conjunction with the efforts of the Piedmont Authority for Regional Transportation (PART), as appropriate. PART is responsible for coordinating the regional transportation system in the counties around the Winston-Salem connection. The combination of Alternative A and Alternative B has:

- Minimized potential impacts to wetlands and threatened and endangered species;
- Moderate levels of potential environmental complexity;
- Strongest agency support;
- Highest level of service;
- Highest projected annual ridership;
- Largest combined trip diversions from auto and air to rail, with competitive total travel time;
- Second best net reduction in NO_x emissions and overall net energy use reduction;
- Best potential operating cost recovery; and
- Highest level of public support.

As identified in the FEIS, the preferred alternative is also the environmentally preferred alternative.



Figure 1
Preferred Alternative
Alt. A + Alt. B

Attachment B

Description of DRPT's Recommended Preferred Alternative for DC2RVA

