May 15, 2015

DC TO RICHMOND
SOUTHEAST HIGH SPEED RAIL

Scoping Summary Report

FINAL

DRPT
Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Railroad Administration

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1 INTRODUCTION

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) propose passenger rail service and rail infrastructure improvements in the north-south travel corridor between Washington, D.C. and Richmond, VA. These passenger rail service and rail infrastructure improvements are collectively known as the Washington, D.C. to Richmond Southeast High Speed Rail project (DC2RVA). The Project will deliver higher speed passenger rail service, increase passenger and freight rail capacity, and improve passenger rail service frequency and reliability in the corridor shared by growing volumes of passenger, commuter, and freight rail traffic, thereby providing a competitive option for travelers going between Washington, D.C. and Richmond and those traveling to and from adjacent connecting corridors.

The Project corridor is a 123-mile, active rail corridor owned by CSX Transportation, Inc. (CSXT) that roughly parallels Interstate 95 between Washington and Richmond. In addition to CSXT freight activity, Amtrak and Virginia Railway Express (VRE) operate passenger service on the corridor. From north to south, the Project travels through the following counties and cities:

- Arlington County
- City of Alexandria
- Fairfax County
- Prince William County
- Stafford County
- City of Fredericksburg
- Spotsylvania County
- Caroline County
- Hanover County
- Henrico County
- City of Richmond
- Chesterfield County

The Project is part of the larger Southeast High Speed Rail (SEHSR) corridor, which extends from Washington, D.C. through Richmond, VA, and from Richmond continues east to Hampton Roads (Norfolk), VA and south to Raleigh, NC and Charlotte, NC, and then continues west to Atlanta and south to Florida. The purpose of the SEHSR program, as stated in the 2002 Tier I Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) completed for the full SEHSR corridor, is to

provide a competitive transportation choice to travelers within the Washington, D.C. to Charlotte travel corridor. The purpose of the current Washington, D.C. to Richmond Southeast High Speed Rail project described here is to fulfill the purpose of the SEHSR Tier I EIS within this segment of the larger SEHSR corridor. The Project, by increasing rail capacity and improving travel times between Washington, D.C. and Richmond, will improve passenger train performance and reliability in the corridor, enabling intercity passenger rail to be a competitive transportation choice for travelers between Washington, D.C. and Richmond and beyond.

The DC2RVA Tier II EIS is being prepared pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969. As per Council of Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40CFR part 1500 et seq.) for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and FRA's Procedures for Considering Environmental Impacts (64 FR 28545, May 26, 1999), FRA and DRPT conducted scoping to guide the development of the Tier II EIS for the Project. The scoping process invites comments from interested agencies and the public to ensure the full range of issues related to the Project are addressed, reasonable alternatives are considered, and significant issues are identified. To provide an early and open scoping process, DRPT and FRA employed many forms of outreach to engage diverse audiences, inform them of the Project and enable them to contribute their input. These efforts culminated in one agency scoping meeting, four in-person public scoping meetings and one self-guided online meeting. In total, 3,307 parties participated in the scoping process, providing 1,625 scoping comments.

2 OUTREACH EFFORTS

On October 23, 2014, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) issued a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare a Tier II Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Washington, D.C. to Richmond Southeast High Speed Rail project (DC2RVA) in the Federal Register (FR) (Vol.79, No. 205). The NOI included a summary of the Project, environmental review process, and public scoping meeting information (Appendix A).

DRPT and FRA held public scoping meetings for the Project on November 5, 6, 12 and 13, 2014 as well as a scoping meeting for federal, state, and local agencies on November 3, 2014. The intent of the meetings was to introduce the Project, explain the study process, refine purpose and need, and begin to identify alternatives for consideration. The public, agencies, and other stakeholders were invited to provide comments about the Project, during and after each meeting through various formats.

DRPT developed and implemented a robust outreach campaign to ensure stakeholders were aware of the opportunities offered to engage in the scoping process.

2.1 PROJECT LAUNCH

On October 6, 2014, 30 days from the first public scoping meeting date, the Project's public outreach was initiated through a series of public announcements.

2.1.1 Website Splash Page

An initial group of four web "splash" pages, launched on October 6, 2014, announced the kick-off of the Project, offered a brief description of the Project, provided a way to join the mailing list, encouraged visitors to take a brief initial survey and provided details of the upcoming public scoping meetings.

2.1.2 Email

An email message was distributed on October 6, 2014, to 983 contacts on the Project database to announce the Project kick-off, to promote the Project website and to direct the recipients to the Project splash page. This email was part of a series of emails distributed throughout scoping. The series of emails can be found in Appendix B. The email distribution list was expanded throughout the scoping process as additional members of the public, agencies and other stakeholders asked to be placed on the list for future emails.

2.1.3 Press Release

An initial press release was distributed on October 6, 2014, to key local and regional print and electronic media, including ethnic and specialty media, to announce the Project kick-off and to begin to educate the public and the media of the process. This press release was part of a series of press releases distributed throughout scoping. The series of press releases can be found in Appendix C.

2.1.4 Social Media

Twitter and Facebook accounts were set up and the first postings were sent on October 6, 2014, as part of the Project kick-off. Messages announced the kick-off and directed visitors to the Project website splash page and encouraged them to take the initial survey.

2.1.5 Initial Survey

An electronic survey was developed to gain initial information from respondents including how they got their news and information, what time of day was better for a public meeting, whether or not they were rail users, how they perceive the benefits of rail, and to survey demographic information. The survey was available via a link on the Project website splash page from October 6 to October 20, 2014. There were 1,091 responses to the survey and included responses from a geographically diverse group throughout the Project corridor. See Appendix D for a summary of survey responses.

2.2 PROJECT WEBSITE

The full Project website went live on October 20, 2014. The site can be found directly at http://www.DC2RVArail.com. In addition, a brief project overview and related links were provided on the DRPT main website. The website includes translation and font enlargement features.

The site offers information pertaining to the project process and background, public meeting notices, the study schedule, access to the online scoping meeting and an electronic comment form. A screen capture of the homepage and a summary of website usage are included in Appendix E.

2.3 NEWSPAPER ADVERTISING

Newspaper advertisements were placed in the main news sections of several newspapers along the Project corridor between Arlington and Richmond. See Table 2-1 for details. Copies of the advertisements are included in Appendix F.

TABLE 2-1: NEWSPAPER ADVERTISEMENTS

Newspaper	Region/Audience	Advertisement Dates	Size
Richmond Times Dispatch	Richmond	10/28/14, 11/3/14	4 col. x 6”
Richmond Free Press	Richmond – African American	10/30/14	4 col. x 6”

TABLE 2-1: NEWSPAPER ADVERTISEMENTS

Newspaper	Region/Audience	Advertisement Dates	Size
Free Lance-Star	Fredericksburg	10/31/14, 11/7/14	4 col. x 6"
Nueva Raices (Spanish ad)	Richmond & Fredericksburg – Hispanic	10/28/14	1/6 page
Washington Post Express	NOVA and Washington, D.C.	10/28/14	4 col. x 6"
El Tiempo (Spanish ad)	NOVA and Washington, D.C. – Hispanic	10/31/14	4 col. x 6"
Virginia Press Association	Northern Virginia Region – 31 papers including some ethnic	10/26/14 – 11/3/14	3.22" x 2"

2.4 EMAIL

Invitations to attend the scoping meetings and information about the Project were sent via email. DRPT identified and contacted specific community group contacts and asked that they send emails on behalf of the Project to their constituents. These groups included city council clerks and business and human service organization advocates. The email messages are included in Appendix B.

The email distribution list included the following groups:

- Public involvement offices
- Elected officials and community leaders
- Citizens (those who requested to be included via the Project website)
- Transit/transportation organizations and advocacy groups
- Business/institutional community
- Community organizations & special interest groups
- Environmental Justice populations and low English proficiency (translated to Spanish)

The following emails were sent in anticipation of or during scoping.

General Public

- October 27, 2014 – Initial announcement of the public meeting with links to website. Sent to 959 database members.
- November 3, 2014 – Reminder of upcoming meetings with meetings. Sent to 956 database members.
- December 1, 2014 – Final reminder of the end of the comment period (12/5/14) with a link to the electronic comment form. Sent to 1,417 database members.

Federal, State and Local Agencies

- October 20, 2014 – Invitation to participate in the agency scoping meeting. Sent to 133 database members.
- October 30, 2014 – Reminder of upcoming agency scoping meeting. Sent to 124 database members.

Community Leaders

- October 27, 2014 – Spanish version of the general public email from 10/27/14 was sent to contacts at Hispanic organizations throughout the corridor. Sent to 20 database members.
- November 21, 2014 – Version of the general public email from 12/1/14 was sent to contacts at faith-based organizations throughout the corridor. Sent to 113 database members.

2.5 SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media accounts were established and became live for posting on October 6, 2014, to coincide with the Project's public outreach launch. The purpose of the Project's social media efforts are to broaden outreach, increase awareness of the Project and provide engagement opportunities to stakeholders who might not otherwise participate.

Although social media posts are not included in the public record, the conversation occurring online is important to the process. DRPT summarized the content of social media comments for comparison with formal comments to check for most discussed topics and potential new issues not identified through traditional means. DRPT used social media to perform real-time evaluation of project information and locate geographic areas with higher or lower levels of stakeholder participation. See Appendix G for the Social Media Impact Report.

Social Media Profiles

- Twitter: @dc2rvarail
- Facebook: dc2rvarail

2.6 STATIC DISPLAYS

Large format display boards with information about the Project and details about the public scoping meetings were developed, printed and delivered on October 12, 2014, to 10 locations in the Project corridor. See Table 2-2 for details. Copies of the boards are included in Appendix H.

TABLE 2-2: STATIC DISPLAY LOCATIONS

Location	Region
Broad Rock Branch Library	Richmond
Dumbarton/Staples Mill Library	Henrico
Dumfries Neighborhood Library	Dumfries
East End Branch Library	Richmond

TABLE 2-2: STATIC DISPLAY LOCATIONS

Location	Region
Lorton Library	Lorton
Salem Church Library	Fredericksburg
Crystal City Business Improvement District (BID)	Arlington
Hanover Arts Museum	Ashland
Duncan Library	Ashland
Virginia Railway Express	Fredericksburg

2.7 FLIERS

Three weeks in advance of the scoping meetings (October 12 through October 24, 2014), 715 fliers produced in English and Spanish were hand-delivered and mailed to 250 locations along the Project corridor and in the areas surrounding potential rail stations. PDF versions of the fliers were provided to public information officers via email and were also placed on the Project website to allow the public to download it. A copy of the flier and the distribution are provided in Appendix I.

2.8 MEDIA RELATIONS

Members of the press were sent press releases and media advisories to spur media coverage. They were also provided media kits at the meetings and via the Project website. To broaden message distribution, news releases were prepared in English and Spanish and sent to local print and broadcast media as well as minority media along the Project corridor. A series of news releases were developed and distributed as follows:

- October 6, 2014 – Project Initiation Launch Release distributed.
- October 22, 2014 – Public Scoping Meeting Details Release distributed.
- November 4, 2015 – Public Scoping Meeting Media Advisory distributed.

The series of press releases can be found in Appendix C.

As a result of these efforts, several articles appeared in local newspapers and morning and afternoon news shows covered the Project, meeting dates and locations. Members of the project team were also interviewed during the Scoping period, which helped raise awareness of the Project, the meetings and opportunities for the public to provide input. Tables 2-3 and 2-4 summarize media coverage during the scoping period.

TABLE 2-3: EARNED MEDIA COVERAGE THROUGH DECEMBER 5, 2014

Date	Source	Title
10/6/2014	NBC29, Charlottesville	(none)
10/12/2014	Free-Lance Star, Fredericksburg	High Speed Rail To Get Public Say
10/14/2014	Times Dispatch.com, Richmond Times Dispatch	NC-VA high speed trains starting slowly
10/15/2014	Village News, Chesterfield	D.C. to Richmond high-speed rail evaluated
11/4/2014	Stafford County Sun	Area high speed rail options to be presented at Marines' museum
11/5/2014	Washington Post	High-Speed rail meetings planned in Virginia
11/5/2014	The Daily Journal	1st of 4 public meetings on proposed high-speed rail in VA set for Wednesday in Ashland
11/5/2014	WCVE, Richmond	Public Meetings On High Speed Rail Begin in Ashland
11/5/2014	Times Dispatch.com, Richmond Times Dispatch	High-speed rail meetings planned in Virginia
11/5/2014	CBS DC	High Speed Rail Meetings Planned
11/5/2014	WSLS TV, Roanoke	High Speed Rail Meetings Planned in VA
11/6/2014	Times Dispatch, Richmond	Public meeting on high speed rail held in Richmond
11/7/2014	Railway Age, Magazine	Virginia DOT, FRA host meetings on proposed D.C.-Richmond high-speed project
11/12/2014	Stafford County Sun, Stafford	Public meeting on high speed rail tonight
11/16/2014	Herald-Progress, Ashland	Third rail idea floated for Ashland
11/17/2014	Free-Lance Star, Fredericksburg	High-speed rail plan that's being reviewed would include Fredericksburg region
11/30/2014	Free-Lance Star, Fredericksburg	How much faster will high-speed rail be?

TABLE 2-4: MEDIA INTERVIEWS

Date	Source	Type	Project Team Member
11/5/2014	WCVE	On-Air Radio	Emily Stock
11/5/2014	The Herald Progress	In-person (Ashland public meeting)	Emily Stock
11/6/2014	Louis Llovio, Richmond Times Dispatch	Phone	Emily Stock
11/12/2014	Stafford Sun	Phone	Emily Stock
11/12/2014	Scott Shenk, Free Lance-Star	In-person (Quantico public meeting)	Kevin Page
11/12/2014	Gail Parker, Fairfax County Independent Cable TV program "Green" (not endorsed by County)	In-person (Quantico public meeting)	Emily Stock

2.9 FORMAL LETTERS TO ELECTED OFFICIALS

Elected officials at the state and local levels were notified of the scoping program and upcoming scoping meetings through a formal letter sent on October 24, 2014. The letter was sent to 359 elected officials and included project background, a project corridor map and information about how their constituents would be engaged and how input would be solicited. An example of the letter can be found in Appendix J.

2.10 ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND OTHER SPECIAL TARGETED OUTREACH

Special targeted outreach was conducted to ensure that diverse segments of the population were given the opportunity to become involved with the Project at an early stage. Targeted outreach included identifying contacts representing low income, minority, seniors, disabled, human service groups and organizations that advocate and/or provide services on their behalf. All groups and individuals identified through this process were provided information regarding the Project and the scoping meetings and were asked for detailed contact information so that they could be included in future communications about the Project. Social Services, Disabilities Boards, the Area Agency on Aging, Hispanic business and advocacy groups, and the NAACP were included in addition to community centers, universities, neighborhood associations and businesses.

Title VI & Limited English Proficiency

Pursuant to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, DRPT took specific steps to ensure that scoping meetings and materials were accessible to all individuals, regardless of race, color, national origin, age, or physical ability:

- Offered, by advance request (48 hours), foreign language translators and American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters would be provided at in-person meetings. One person requested and received ASL services.
- Included Spanish statement to request assistance/translation for meetings on outreach materials.
- Ensured meeting locations were ADA accessible.
- Included TDD/TYY number in outreach materials.
- Translated ads to Spanish for Spanish newspapers.
- Translated press release to Spanish for Spanish media.
- Translated emails to Spanish for Hispanic organizations and advocacy groups.
- Provided a website translation tool and font enlargement tool.

2.11 PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER WEBINAR

DRPT contacted 108 public information officers via email and placed 24 telephone calls, inviting them to participate in a webinar to learn about the Project and identify ways in which they could help promote the Project through their established channels. The webinar was held on October 22, 2014, and had 14 participants. Following the webinar, the presentation was emailed

to the 108 contacts to ensure those that did not participate still had access to the information. A printed copy of the webinar can be found in Appendix K.

3 SCOPING MEETINGS

3.1 AGENCY SCOPING

On November 3, 2014, an agency scoping meeting was held at the Virginia Housing Center in Glen Allen, Virginia from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. to gather federal, state and local agency input regarding the scope of the Project. The meeting began with an open house format from 1 to 1:30 p.m., followed by a short presentation from 1:30 to 2 p.m. The remainder of the meeting was a question and answer session. The meeting had 16 attendees. The email invitees list and a scanned copy of the meeting sign-in sheets are provided in Appendix L.

TABLE 3-1: AGENCY SCOPING MEETING LOCATION AND ATTENDEES

Meeting Location	Date and Time	Emailed Invitations	Attendees
Virginia Housing Center 4224 Cox Road, Glen Allen, VA	Monday, November 3, 2014 1:00-3:00pm	139	16

As attendees entered the meeting, they were given a project handout and comment form. Copies of these can be found in Appendix L. During the open house portion of the meeting, the information boards that were created for the public scoping meetings were on display so that attendees could see the type of information the public would be able to review. Attendees were encouraged to fill out the hardcopy comment forms at the public meeting. They were also informed of opportunities to provide comment via the Project website, the Project email address, the telephone hotline and direct mail to the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) main office. DRPT received three agency scoping comments. For detailed information regarding scoping comments, please refer to Chapter 4 of this report: Comment Summary.

3.2 PUBLIC SCOPING: IN-PERSON MEETINGS

On November 5, 6, 12, and 13, 2014, public scoping meetings were held from 5:00 to 7:30 p.m. along the Project corridor. A formal presentation was given at 6:00 p.m. Attendees were invited to meet with project team members before and after the presentation to ask questions and discuss Project details. See table 4 for meeting locations and attendance. Scanned copies of the meeting sign-in sheets are provided in Appendix M.

TABLE 3-2: : PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING LOCATIONS AND ATTENDEES

Meeting Location	Date and Time	Attendees
Hanover Arts and Activities Center 500 South Center Street Ashland, VA	Wednesday, November 5, 2014 5:00-7:30pm	58
Department of Motor Vehicles 2300 W. Broad Street Richmond, VA	Thursday, November 6, 2014 5:00-7:30pm	74
National Museum of the Marine Corps – Quantico 18900 Jefferson Davis Highway Triangle, VA	Wednesday, November 12, 2014 5:00-7:30pm	39
Westin Crystal City 1800 Jefferson Davis Highway Arlington, VA	Thursday, November 13, 2014 5:00-7:30pm	66
	Total	237

As attendees entered the meeting, they were given a Project handout, comment form and DRPT's required Title VI survey for public meetings. Copies of these handouts and a summary of the Title VI information collected via the survey can be found in Appendix M. During the open house portion of the meeting, information boards were on display to provide information about the Project, its purpose, the environmental factors currently under consideration for evaluation, potential improvements and impacts of the Project, and the future schedule. See Appendix M for copies of the information boards. A copy of the presentation given at the meeting is also available in the appendix.

Attendees were encouraged to fill out the hardcopy comment forms at the public meeting. They were also informed of opportunities to provide comment via the Project website, the Project email address, the telephone hotline and direct mail to DRPT's main office. DRPT received 1,625 public scoping comments over the course of the scoping period. For detailed information regarding scoping comments, please refer to Chapter 4 of this report: Comment Summary.

3.2.1 Special Assistance

All of the public meetings were held at ADA and transit accessible locations. Informational materials were developed in an easy-to-read format and included visuals as appropriate. The meeting handouts and comment forms were available in English and Spanish. All meeting notifications and outreach advertised that attendees with special needs should contact DRPT's Title VI Compliance Officer in advance of the meetings to request assistance. DRPT received one request via the Project email address for a sign language interpreter at the Arlington meeting. The sign language interpreter provided interpreting services for the duration of the meeting.

3.3 PUBLIC SCOPING: ONLINE MEETING

An online meeting was hosted on the Project website. It launched on October 27, 2014, and accepted scoping comments through December 5, 2014. The meeting is still available in archive form on the Project website via the Public Meeting Archive page. The online meeting was designed to mirror the in-person meetings. Online meeting participants were presented the same information boards and handout that were available to attendees of the in-person meetings. The meeting is self-guided and was available 24 hours a day to allow those who were unable to physically attend the meeting an opportunity to learn about the Project and provide their input. At the close of the scoping period, the online meeting had 348 attendees. See Appendix N for a screen capture of the online meeting.

4 COMMENT SUMMARY

In order to offer stakeholders—both agencies and the general public—ample opportunity to provide scoping input on the Washington, D.C. to Richmond Southeast High Speed Rail project (DC2RVA), comment forms were made available and collected in several locations. Comments were submitted by:

- Submitting a hardcopy comment form to any project team member at any of the in-person meetings.
- Mailing the hardcopy comment form to the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) main office.
- Submission via the comment form on the website.
- Submission via the online meeting.
- Emailing the Project email address.
- Calling the toll-free Project hotline.

DRPT received 1,625 scoping comments. All comments received were fully considered. DRPT reviewed each comment, then categorized them by topic and appropriately grouped them for response. Summary responses were prepared and are presented in Section 4.2 below. Figure 4-1 and Table 4-1 provide a summary of comment trends, indicating the number of times a particular topic was mentioned by commenters.

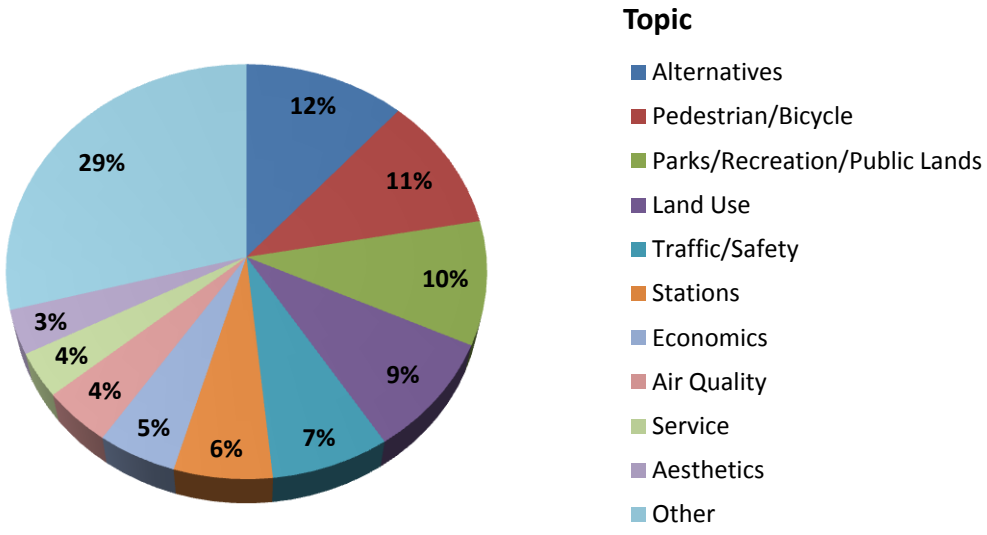

FIGURE 4-1: TOP TEN COMMENT TOPICS

TABLE 4-1: COMMENT TRENDS

Topic	Number of Mentions	Topic	Number of Mentions
Alternatives	202	Cultural Resources	11
Pedestrian/Bicycle	184	Wetlands	11
Parks/Recreation/Public Lands	168	Real Estate	10
Land Use	158	General Opposition	9
Traffic/Safety	130	Mobility	9
Stations	108	EIS Process	8
Economics	87	Wild and Scenic Rivers	8
Air Quality	77	Wildlife	7
Service	61	Cumulative Impacts	6
Aesthetics	60	Agency Coordination	5
Parking	56	Threatened and Endangered Species	5
General Support	38	Coastal Zone Impacts	4
Mailing List Request	36	Flooding/Floodplains	4
Operations/Maintenance	28	Social Impacts	4
Cost	24	Sustainability	4
Displacements	21	Rail Technology/Electrification	3
Right-of-Way	21	Soil/Topography	3
Compatibility with Other Projects/Plans	20	Construction	2
Ridership	20	Energy	2
Schedule	19	Environmental Justice	2
Public Involvement	17	Purpose and Need	2
Biological Resources	16	Utilities	2
Information Request	16	ADA Accommodations	1
Noise/Vibration	14	Ownership/Trackage Rights	1
Study Area/Termini	12	Revenue	1
Water Quality/Resources	12	Special Waste	1
Conservation/Mitigation	11		

4.1 AGENCY COMMENTS

Table 4-2 summarizes the 11 agency comments received during the scoping period. Copies of these letters are provided in Appendix O.

FIGURE 4-2: AGENCY SCOPING COMMENTS

Agency	Date	Summary
Virginia Department of Environmental Quality	11/3/2014	Provided advice on complying with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Coastal Zone Management Act, and the Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program, as well as a list of helpful environmental databases.
Richmond Regional Planning District	11/6/2014	Clarified the Richmond Regional Planning District's role in the process and requested an explanation for why the study will reconsider the CSXT A-Line (which was eliminated in previous studies of the corridor) as a possible alignment through Richmond.
National Park Service	11/19/2014	Identified four National Park Service-managed trails (the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail, Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail, Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail, and Washington Rochambeau Revolutionary Route National Historic Trail) that are in close proximity to the rail corridor. Advocated for taking advantage of any opportunities to include information that references the National Trails where the Project crosses or comes into close proximity to the trail routes. Education and promotional materials describing trail stories such as maps and other publications could be located on future commuter cars and at stops, interpretive signage of the national trails could be installed at strategic locations, and public access opportunities could be included in any new bridge crossings of river tributaries.
Virginia Department of Environmental Quality – Piedmont Regional Office	11/25/2014	Provided a list of the streams and rivers in the Piedmont Region that the Project will cross, as well as guidance on complying with state regulations related to erosion and sediment control, hazardous and solid waste, and air quality.
City of Richmond	12/4/2014	Advocated for the kind of downtown-to-downtown service that has driven the success of the Northeast Corridor, which could be achieved by choosing a high speed rail alignment that uses the S-Line and serves Main Street Station in downtown Richmond.
County of Fairfax	12/4/2014	Stated that the Project presents an opportunity to upgrade or install water quality controls by implementing stormwater and flood protection measures which did not exist when the rail line was originally constructed, and that the study should also evaluate noise impacts and impacts to natural areas. Identified the Fairfax County water bodies and parks within the study area.

FIGURE 4-2: AGENCY SCOPING COMMENTS

Agency	Date	Summary
County of Henrico	12/4/2014	Stated that the Buckingham Branch Railroad between Richmond and Doswell should be eliminated from consideration, as it was previously evaluated by DRPT and determined not to be a cost-effective alternative. Stated that the existing Staples Mill Road Station should be evaluated as the primary passenger rail station for the Richmond region.
Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation	12/4/2014	Presented results of Biotics data system search for occurrences of natural heritage resources—which include rare, threatened, or endangered species, unique or exemplary natural communities, and significant geologic formations—within the study area.
Virginia Railway Express	12/4/2014	Provided information on VRE planning, design, and construction initiatives and recommended that future VRE service plans be considered in the Project's analysis of rail operations and rail improvements identified to serve future combined VRE, intercity/regional passenger rail, and freight operations.
Stafford County	12/5/2014	Provided information on existing conditions at rail crossings in Stafford County, as well as environmental resources such as wetlands, Chesapeake Bay Resource Protection Areas, endangered species, cultural resources, Dam Break Inundation Zones, floodplains, and streams and rivers. Provided guidance on complying with state and local stormwater management and erosion and sediment control regulations.
Virginia Department of Transportation	12/12/2014	Highlighted a range of considerations for areas where the proposed improvements are adjacent to or interact with VDOT roadways, including direct impacts to VDOT right-of-way or wetland mitigation sites, safety and delays at grade crossings, detailed noise and vibration analysis on alignments parallel to VDOT roadways, and not precluding planned highway improvements,

4.2 PUBLIC COMMENTS

The scoping program yielded an outpouring of public interest and input. Public comments ranged from general support or opposition to very specific remarks on particular locations and resources. They also included several logistical comments and questions related to the scoping meetings and comment process, such as requests for meeting accommodations for sign language, comments on website function, and information requests.

Of the 1,614 public comments received, 1,220 of them were form letters, which are discussed in Section 4.2.1 below. The rest were unique letters, emails, comment forms, or telephone comments, though many of them touched on similar themes. These comments are summarized in Section 4.2.2, and DRPT's response is provided below each comment summary.

4.2.1 Form Letters

DRPT received multiple copies of two form letters during the scoping, one from Virginians for High Speed Rail, and another from the East Coast Greenway Alliance. These letters are summarized below.

4.2.1.1 Virginians for High Speed Rail Form Letter

The following form letter was received from 428 members of Virginians for High Speed Rail (VHSR), which advocates for improved rail service in the Commonwealth:

Comment: Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the scoping portion of the Washington to Richmond Southeast High Speed Rail Corridor Tier II study. As you continue with the study, you should factor in the following thoughts:

- The travel time from D.C. to Richmond should be shorter than a trip in an automobile.
- Reliability of the service is vital to the corridor's success, thus reaching a threshold of 90 percent on-time performance is important.
- Improvements to the level of service on the corridor should take into account future expansions of service to Newport News, Norfolk, Roanoke/Lynchburg, as well as Raleigh/Charlotte.
- The study should put a priority on stations/stops that serve a greater density of citizens, transit oriented development communities, and central business districts.
- The service quality should capture the choice passenger while also providing safe, reliable, and convenient transportation options to all of the corridor's citizens.

Thank you again for this opportunity to make public comments in support of the Washington to Richmond Southeast High Speed Rail Corridor Tier II study.

> ***Response:*** *DRPT appreciates the support for the DC2RVA project from so many members of Virginians for High Speed Rail. DRPT is committed to providing a safe and affordable travel option for the Commonwealth. As noted in the comment letter, total trip time, service reliability, service frequency, service quality, and station stops are all be important considerations for the new high speed passenger rail service and will be part of the criteria used in DRPT's analysis. DRPT will also build on the work completed in the Tier I Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the entire Southeast High Speed Rail (SEHSR) corridor and other potential expansions of passenger rail service in Virginia.*

4.2.1.2 Greenway Form Letter

Supporters of the East Coast Greenway Alliance, a group spearheading the development of a continuous pedestrian/bicycle trail network from Maine to Florida, submitted 792 copies of the following form letter:

Comment: Let's build a greenway along with the rails! I want to express my concern that no consideration has been given for the inclusion of a greenway in the proposed High Speed Rail from Richmond to Washington, D.C. and ask that a parallel greenway be included in the Tier II EIS Study. A greenway was included in the Richmond to Raleigh EIS and a northern extension is a logical addition to that facility. A greenway in the corridor offers many benefits including:

Attracts tourism and jobs; Reduces CO_2 & NO_x emissions and other air pollutants; Promotes multi-modal connections to the train stations; Reduces parking needs at the train stations; Reduces traffic congestion in the impacted communities. A greenway in this corridor would be a key link in the East Coast Greenway which will connect Florida to Maine. Once this corridor is upgraded, citizens will live with it for the next century. Let's get it right.

> ***Response:*** *DRPT recognizes the value of greenways, as evidenced by its support for greenway development projects over the years, including the support of a separate ongoing project to develop a greenway parallel to the Richmond to Raleigh SEHSR alignment adjacent to certain corridor sections. The decision to establish a new greenway is a separate and distinct action from establishing high speed passenger rail service under NEPA. Decisions related to a potential greenway could be pursued independently of DRPT and FRA's decision on new high speed passenger service.*
>
> *A parallel greenway is not part of the DC2RVA Tier II EIS as it is not supported by the SEHSR Program's Purpose and Need as defined in the Tier I EIS. A parallel greenway does not provide a competitive choice for intercity travel in the corridor relative to the Purpose and Need for the Project, nor does it benefit capacity or speed of train movements within the corridor.*
>
> *The incremental approach called for in the Tier I EIS requires utilizing existing rights-of-way as much as possible. The DC2RVA corridor runs on right-of-way belonging to CSX Transportation, a private company. The CSXT right-of-way is not of sufficient width to support a greenway, nor does CSX allow recreational use of its rights-of-way. Development of higher speed passenger service along the existing rail corridor would not preclude a future greenway outside the CSXT right-of-way, should the Commonwealth decide at some point to pursue such a greenway.*
>
> *Developing a parallel greenway outside the CSXT right-of-way is a major undertaking, likely involving numerous takings of private lands and other environmental impacts, and would likely require its own unique corridor study by an authorized agency under NEPA if federal funds are involved.*

4.2.2 Unique Comments

4.2.2.1 General Service Characteristics

Many comments highlighted particular service characteristics or features that commenters hope to see (or not see) in future rail service in the corridor:

Comment: 90 miles per hour is too modest a goal; this is not high speed rail.

> ***Response:*** *The 2002 Final Tier I EIS for the Southeast High Speed Rail corridor recommended an incremental approach to develop the SEHSR corridor using fossil fuel train sets capable of speeds up to 110 mph where safe and practical (*http://www.sehsr.org/reports.html*). This approach minimizes the impacts to both the human and natural environments by utilizing the existing rail infrastructure and rail rights-of-way. By using existing infrastructure, the initial capital investment required by the system is also reduced. At this time DRPT, FRA, and their partners are focused on improving services and reducing travel time using the incremental and cost effective approach to develop SEHSR with an established goal of 90 miles per hour (mph).*
>
> *DRPT also concluded that in rail corridors that support both passenger service and freight rail, passenger rail speeds greater than 90 mph would increase the rail infrastructure (number of tracks, sidings, and signals) required because of the large speed differences between the slower*

moving freight trains, the commuter trains, and the faster high speed intercity passenger trains. Designing the corridor for increased passenger speeds to 90 mph will likely require acquisition of additional right-of-way; accommodating a 110 mph operating speed would likely require even more right-of-way acquisition. The current maximum authorized speed for passenger trains in this corridor is 70 mph, the proposed DC2RVA project would reduce travel time adding cost effective infrastructure which would limit the Project's cost, property requirements, and environmental impacts.

Comment: Is electrification being considered? The design solution should not preclude future electrification.

Response: *The Tier I EIS for the Southeast High Speed Rail corridor recommended an incremental approach to develop the SEHSR corridor using fossil fuel train sets capable of speeds up to 110 mph where safe and practical. While the Tier I EIS considered electrification for the SEHSR corridor, it was not recommended for the initial phase of development due to the high capital cost of installation relative to the benefit to the service (trip time, ridership, and revenue). Electrification also requires additional operating and safety measures, such as increased vertical clearance below overhead structures and signal technology compatible with electric traction systems. In anticipation of future ridership growth on the SEHSR corridor, the DC2RVA project will consider design criteria as not to preclude future electrification, such as vertical clearances below overhead structures and horizontal clearances for catenary support structures.*

Comment: Consider adding a third express track that does not make all stops.

Response: *A variety of operating scenarios, including express service will be considered as part of this Project. This operational scenario will be applied to the co-mingled use of all tracks.*

Comment: I am concerned that higher speed will lead to a great number of accidents.

Response: *Safety is of paramount importance and will be a primary consideration in the development of improvement concepts. Safety analyses performed as part of the DC2RVATier II EIS will address the effectiveness of each proposed concept with regard to safety. In addition, Project improvements will include new and enhanced safety features such as road and rail grade separations and flashing lights and gates at roadway-rail at-grade crossings throughout the corridor as appropriate.*

Comment: The tracks should be controlled by a passenger rail operator. Consider purchasing the corridor from CSXT.

Response: *A robust and efficient freight rail system is an important element of Virginia's transportation system, and DRPT is committed to working cooperatively with the various freight carriers and shippers in the corridor during the development and implementation of the higher speed passenger service. The DC2RVArail corridor is an integral part of CSXT's freight operations along the National Gateway Corridor. DRPT believes that Amtrak's and VRE's existing passenger and commuter rail services, as well as the new higher speed service, operate effectively along the CSXT-owned and controlled corridor through capacity improvements and negotiated agreements that maximize the efficiency of the system.*

The Tier I EIS selected the CSXT A-Line as the preferred route for the Washington, D.C. to Richmond segment of the larger SEHSR corridor. The Tier I EIS also recommended an incremental approach to develop the SEHSR corridor, which minimizes the impacts to both the human and natural environments by utilizing the existing rail infrastructure and rail rights-of-

way. By using the existing privately-owned infrastructure, the initial capital investment required by the system is also reduced.

Comment: The layover at Washington, D.C. Union Station is a major disincentive to rail travel in the corridor.

Response: *Under the current operations, the layover in Washington, D.C. is required to transfer between electric and diesel-electric locomotives. In the future, it is possible that a dual mode locomotive will be developed that allows for high speed electrified service in the Northeast Corridor to continue south of Washington with diesel-electric operations, eliminating the need for a locomotive change at Washington Union Station. New Jersey has begun to use such a technology, which would require further advancement to be applied to Virginia service. While operations within Union Station are not part of this Project, Amtrak and other stakeholders are conducting a separate project to develop and implement a Master Plan for Union Station. One of the goals of this separate project is to streamline rail movements in and out of the congested station.*

Comment: On-time performance, reliability, and travel time are important evaluation criteria. The trip from Washington, D.C. to Richmond should be under two hours, and on-time performance should be 90 percent or greater.

Response: *DRPT agrees that on-time performance, reliability, and travel time are appropriate metrics for evaluating passenger service and will be used as DRPT develops and evaluates new higher speed passenger service. The recommendations for specific goals to be achieved will be taken into consideration as part of the alternatives development and evaluation process.*

Comment: Procure railcars from Virginia (or U.S., if Virginia is not possible) manufacturers.

Response: *Equipment that will operate on the DC2RVA corridor must be compatible with operations on the Northeast Corridor. DRPT will work with Amtrak and other partner states to obtain the best value for Virginia in the acquisition of equipment. In order to get the best value, DRPT will need flexibility to pool Virginia resources with other states.*

Comment: Provide feeder bus services from towns not immediately along the rail corridor (or towns that will not have a high speed rail station) to expand access to high speed rail for more Virginians.

Response: *Multimodal access to high speed rail stations, including highway, public transit, and other modes, will be one of the evaluation criteria for selecting which stations may receive additional passenger service under this Project. However, this Project does not include any provisions to develop or implement new transit service. Any new transit service would need to be developed through existing local and regional authorities.*

Comment: Future VRE service plans should be taken into account when planning these improvements.

Response: *VRE is an active stakeholder in the DC2RVA project and participates in the Project's Task Force group. VRE's existing and future service plans will be considered in planning and evaluating Project alternatives.*

4.2.2.2 Planning Process/Public Involvement

Several comments focused on the planning process itself, and how DRPT can ensure the public is informed and involved:

Comment: The planning process is too slow. I am disappointed we are still just studying this.

> ***Response:*** *DRPT has adopted a three-year schedule to complete the DC2RVA Tier II EIS. Because the DC2RVA project involves a corridor with many different uses and because of the large number of stakeholders, DRPT believes that the schedule is very aggressive and appropriate. It is important to note that the Project also includes engineering and mitigation design for the 123-mile long corridor, which will advance Project readiness. It is possible that through the course of the NEPA process, DRPT, in cooperation with FRA, may identify certain individual projects in the corridor that have independent utility and could be advanced or accelerated through an alternate class of action while the EIS is underway.*

Comment: DRPT should develop a vision plan to address overall connectivity and mobility in the greater Richmond area.

> ***Response:*** *The FRA-approved Tier I EIS for the SEHSR corridor considered overall connectivity and mobility in the greater Richmond area and the entire Southeast corridor. Subsequent to the Tier I EIS, DRPT conducted additional studies focused on improving mobility in the Richmond region that considered the feasibility of replacing Staples Mill Road Station with a new suburban station at Parham Road, as well as improvements at Main Street Station. The Tier II EIS for the DC2RVA corridor will build on these earlier studies, examining in more detail connectivity to rail as well as other modes of transportation in the Richmond area. For example, analysis of station location alternatives for the new high speed rail service will examine proximity to other transportation modes.*

Comment: The study should quantify how improving rail service in the corridor will positively or negatively affect travel by other modes (e.g., auto, air).

> ***Response:*** *The DC2RVA Tier II EIS will evaluate the potential effects – both positive and negative – that the Project would have on the existing social, environmental, economic, and transportation conditions in the Project corridor, including travel by other modes (auto, truck and air). The detailed analyses will include an evaluation of the diversion of passengers from other modes to rail and the resultant changes to travel operations and air quality.*

Comment: Please schedule meetings at times and locations that accommodate VRE commuters.

> ***Response:*** *Public meetings will be offered in several locations along the corridor for a duration of no fewer than two hours to accommodate as many attendees as possible. For each public meeting, public transit information will be provided on the Project website and in advertisements when space allows. Each phase of this study will also have an accompanying online public meeting for members of the public who are not able to make the in-person meetings.*

Comment: This study and the Richmond to Raleigh Tier II EIS should be part of the same study.

> ***Response:*** *The DC2RVA project and the Richmond to Raleigh Project are two segments of the Southeast High Speed Rail Corridor, which was evaluated in an FRA-approved Tier I EIS for in 2002. FRA and DRPT elected to evaluate the SEHSR corridor in a tiered process in order to advance projects that are more developed to allow for construction as soon as possible. Therefore, the decision was made to complete the Tier II NEPA process separately for SEHSR projects. The*

DC2RVATier II EIS will build on the work completed as part of the Richmond to Raleigh Tier II EIS in order for the two segments to seamlessly fit together as part of the overall SEHSR corridor.

Comment: Include municipalities early on in the planning process.

Response: *Inclusion of municipalities early in the process is extremely important and is taking place. Early discussion with communities ensures that any concerns of communities are addressed early, and that communities' interests are fully considered in the review.*

4.2.2.3 Project Cost

Several commenters were interested in how much the project would cost relative to the benefits it would yield to Virginia citizens. Some were outright opposed, while others advocated for a robust analysis of costs and benefits:

Comment: The project is a boondoggle and waste of taxpayer money. It is too large a cost for a project of little benefit.

Comment: The study should include a realistic cost/benefit analysis showing who pays and who benefits financially, and how much.

Response: *One of the primary reasons that DRPT and FRA are conducting the DC2RVATier II EIS is to better define, understand, and disclose the costs and benefits of the proposed new passenger rail service. This information will allow an informed decision to be made. Therefore, determining the projected costs and benefits of various alternatives, including a "do nothing" or "no-build" alternative, will be part of the Tier II EIS process.*

Other commenters were concerned that they would bear the brunt of the costs while the benefits accrued at the opposite end of the corridor:

Comment: This project provides no benefit to northern Virginia, so Richmond taxpayers and private entities should be the ones to bear the cost.

Comment: This project provides no benefit to Chesterfield and would provide a poor return on investment for Chesterfield taxpayers.

Response: *The Project would provide multiple benefits to Virginia taxpayers throughout the state and the general traveling public, including:*

- *Improving connectivity of passenger rail operations in Virginia and beyond;*
- *Accommodating VRE commuter rail service operations;*
- *Preserving the movement of freight by rail through the corridor, including to and from Virginia's ports;*
- *Increasing the capacity of the shared freight-passenger rail system between Washington, D.C. and Richmond and beyond;*
- *Improving freight and passenger rail operations efficiency and reliability in the corridor; and*
- *Improving air quality by diverting passenger trips by automobile and movement of freight by trucks to rail.*

Improved passenger rail service in the Commonwealth will offer travelers more transportation choices and more efficient and reliable rail service that connects the northeast and southeast. Implementing higher speed passenger rail service would encourage economic development in the

Commonwealth and along the northeast and southeast travel corridors. Because the Project corridor is a shared-use corridor with freight rail service, the proposed improvements would also secondarily enhance the capacity and efficiency of freight rail movements within and through the corridor. Improvements to movement of freight by rail would encourage economic development, including increased freight traffic through Virginia's ports, and presents an opportunity for greater diversion of freight transport from congested highways to rail.

Chesterfield County would also directly benefit because the infrastructure improvements to the Washington, D.C. to Richmond section of the SEHSR corridor are required to allow the passenger rail service to move south from Washington, D.C., through Richmond and south to Raleigh, NC on the segment through Chesterfield County.

Other cost-related questions and comments included the following:

Comment: Where would the funding for this project come from?

Response: *The funding for the Project is anticipated to come from multiple sources. Funding for the current DC2RVA Tier II EIS is from an FRA grant with the Commonwealth of Virginia and CSX railroad providing the local match to the grant. Future funding for project construction could potentially come from a number of sources, including additional FRA high speed intercity passenger rail grant funds, US DOT Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) Discretionary Grant funds, the Commonwealth of Virginia, and other sources.*

Comment: Consider lower-priced fixes first, such as level boarding at all stations to decrease dwell time at stations and improve reliability.

Response: *Prior analysis has demonstrated that significant investment is needed to create additional rail capacity. However, lower cost improvements will be considered.*

Comment: Project costs should be shared among all users that will benefit from the improvements.

Response: *As noted above, funding for capital construction costs could potentially come from a number of sources. This new service will be part of Virginia's state supported passenger rail system and a system of long-distance Amtrak and multi-state high speed rail lines. Therefore, operation and maintenance cost would be covered by a combination of passenger fare revenue recovery and state, federal, and/or local funds.*

Comment: The capital and operating cost implications of expanded service should be looked at in tandem so the timing of incremental investments in the corridor are in synch with planned service expansion.

Response: *Capital and operating costs will be estimated as part of the service development portion of this study.*

4.2.2.4 Environmental/Social Resources

Many commenters focused on the Project's potential impacts on various environmental and cultural resources and individual communities and populations. This subset of comments included the following:

Comment: The Project's impact on all aspects of the natural and built environment should be taken into account during this study.

Comment: The Tier I EIS should document the community and environmental benefits of rail.

Comment: Rail has a positive impact on air quality and requires less land use and energy than building more highways.

Comment: Minimize impacts to homes and wetlands adjacent to the Centralia Road flyover.

Comment: Minimize impacts to wetlands and streams.

Comment: Minimize impacts to coastal areas/tidal river areas to preserve habitat and opportunities for recreation.

Comment: Minimize impacts to Widewater State Park/Widewater Peninsula. I am also concerned that I will not be able to access my waterfront property on the east side of the railroad between Arkendale Crossing and Widewater Creek if the private crossing there is eliminated.

Comment: Minimize impacts to Roaches Run bird sanctuary.

Comment: Preserve historic bridges in Fredericksburg and elsewhere.

Comment: Minimize impacts to historic buildings, battlefields, and scenic landscapes.

Comment: Widening rail bridges over the Occoquan and Rappahannock river bridges could result in impacts to environmental and cultural resources.

Comment: Minimize impacts to the conservation area off Centralia Road.

Comment: There is a drainage issue where the tracks cross Potomac Avenue in Quantico.

Comment: Consider seniors on fixed incomes when planning the new service.

Comment: Consider the impact on federal lands and facilities along the corridor.

Comment: This project would destroy the rural landscape of southern Virginia.

Comment: Will this project impact the river crossings at South Anna and the Little River?

> ***Response:*** *The DC2RVATier II EIS will evaluate the potential effects – both positive and negative – that the Project would have on the existing social, environmental, economic, and transportation conditions in the Project corridor. It will also identify the actions recommended to avoid, minimize, or mitigate any negative impacts resulting from the Project.*
>
> *The process will begin by identifying and documenting existing resources and conditions in the corridor, including (but not limited to) residences, businesses, community facilities, recreational areas, viewsheds, historic and cultural resources, air quality, noise and vibration, water bodies and wetlands, and plant and animal species. This information will be compiled through research, environmental fieldwork and analysis, and community input – including comments received during the scoping process.*
>
> *Alternatives will be evaluated based in part on their impacts to environmental resources, and the Preferred Alternative that is ultimately selected will be designed to avoid, to the extent possible, impacts to environmental and community resources and preserve environmental quality.*

One commenter was concerned about environmental justice impacts in the Mayfield neighborhood in Fredericksburg:

Comment: The Mayfield neighborhood in Fredericksburg, a predominantly African American neighborhood just south of Fredericksburg Station, is disproportionately impacted by the storage of hazardous materials along the railroad.

Response: *An important part of the NEPA process is ensuring that the proposed Project does not disproportionately adversely affect minority or low income populations. The environmental justice (EJ) analysis that will be performed as part of the NEPA evaluations will determine whether or not there are any environmental, public health, or interrelated social and economic effects that have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on minority and low-income populations. The EJ analysis also will determine whether there are appropriate measures to avoid, minimize, and/or mitigate the above effects and whether or not there are proposed offsetting benefits or community enhancement opportunities provided to the affected populations by the Project.*

DRPT also received several comments from residents and business-owners where the existing rail corridor crosses Neabsco Creek:

Comment: Neabsco Creek home- and business-owners are concerned about being displaced by the project and want to be actively involved with developing the design solution in that area. Consider keeping improvements on the west side of the tracks where they will have fewer impacts. There is also a 12-inch petroleum line in this area that could increase the risk, cost, and complexity of the project. The Neabsco Creek bridge is in poor condition and should be replaced as part of this project.

Response: *The Neabsco Creek community is one of many areas along the corridor with a complicated array of environmental conditions. In addition to the detailed socio-economic analyses conducted as part of the NEPA evaluations, DRPT will be reaching out to Neabsco Creek residents and business owners and to community organizations in other areas where local input is particularly crucial to understanding and protecting the community's environmental and social fabric.*

Comment: Crystal City is already burdened by noise and air quality impacts from existing freight and passenger rail service; please offset any noise increases with benefits to the Crystal City community.

Response: *The neighborhood adjacent to the Crystal City VRE station is another community that experiences a unique set of rail-related impacts due to existing freight and passenger rail traffic in the area and the resulting noise and vibration from idling trains and locomotive horns, which could potentially be exacerbated by adding additional trains to the corridor. DRPT will be reaching out to residents in the vicinity of the Crystal City VRE station and to community organizations in other areas where local input is particularly crucial to understanding and protecting the community's environmental and social fabric.*

4.2.2.5 Grade Crossings

DRPT received a range of questions and comments on how grade crossings along the corridor would be handled:

Comment: How will grade crossings in rural areas be handled to reduce risk to pedestrians?

Comment: Consider grade-separating all crossings along the corridor.

Comment: Separating grade crossings at Ashlake Road and Archie Cannon would enhance the project from a traffic and safety standpoint.

Comment: Brent Point Road and/or the adjacent railroad should be realigned to improve safety at the grade crossing, which has been a dangerous issue for many years.

Comment: I am concerned about what will happen with the existing grade crossings in the Chester area. Currently, they are poorly maintained, noisy, and the gates remain down longer than they are allowed to be.

Comment: This project will exacerbate traffic delays at Chesterfield grade crossings.

Comment: Add quad gates to more grade crossings to decrease locomotive horn noise.

> ***Response:*** *All at-grade crossings will be evaluated to assess the effectiveness of existing at-grade crossing protection for future conditions, which may include higher train speeds and increased train traffic. Crossing assessments will consider improvements based on a number of factors, including rail geometry and traffic volumes, highway geometry and traffic volumes, crossing protection, type of vehicles using the crossing, emergency access, school bus routes, pedestrian access, etc.*
>
> *Public at-grade crossings will be consolidated to the maximum extent possible and may include grade separations where appropriate and feasible to eliminate at-grade crossings. It is not DRPT's intent to grade separate all crossings in the corridor, just those shown to be necessary based on an analysis of the site-specific situation and train speeds. Crossings will be evaluated to determine if an individual crossing may be closed to roadway traffic in conjunction with improvements to alternate adjacent crossings. Improvements may include roadway infrastructure, traffic signals, grade separations, and crossing safety improvements such as four-quadrant gates and other safety/warning devices. Improvements will be developed in accordance with CSX and VDOT at-grade crossing standards. At-grade roadway crossings with pedestrian sidewalks will be evaluated for grade separations on a case-by-case basis.*
>
> *Crossing recommendations, public or private, will be determined on site-specific conditions. All publically accessible at-grade crossings, public or private, will have train activated warning systems.*

4.2.2.6 Alignment

DRPT also received many suggestions for specific alignment alternatives, either through Richmond or for the full corridor. All of these proposals are being evaluated by the engineering team as part of the alternatives identification and screening process. Alignment suggestions included the following:

Comment: I favor routing high speed trains through Ashland and Staples Mill Station rather than along the Buckingham Branch.

Comment: Use existing tracks for high speed trains traveling through Ashland, but slow trains down.

Comment: Eliminate North and South Center Street in downtown Ashland and add a third track for high speed trains.

Comment: High speed trains should bypass Ashland on the Buckingham Branch, but VRE service should be extended to Ashland, and freight traffic service should continue to travel through Ashland.

Comment: Freight trains should bypass Ashland, and the existing two tracks should be retained for passenger use.

Comment: Straighten the alignment from Guinea to Ruther Glen.

Comment: Please fix the bottleneck between Acca Yard and Main Street Station.

> ***Response:*** *DRPT will develop and evaluate multiple alternatives to meet the Project's Purpose and Need, including potential bypasses for high speed passenger rail and freight service along existing rail corridors.*

Comment: High speed rail would destroy the atmosphere of Ashland; instead, trains should be routed down the I-95 corridor, and the freeway should be expanded.

> ***Response:*** *DRPT and FRA held a scoping meeting in Ashland to better understand the unique issues associated with implementing high speed passenger service on the rail corridor through Ashland. Specific options related to Ashland will be evaluated and presented in the DC2RVATier II EIS.*

Comment: Please consider rail links westward to Bristol, Virginia/Bristol, Tennessee to support economic development in western Virginia.

> ***Response:*** *This Project is limited to the rail corridor between Washington, D.C. and Richmond, VA. DRPT is evaluating other rail links in the state as separate projects.*

Comment: Extending VRE service to Richmond should be part of this study.

> ***Response:*** *VRE is an active stakeholder in the Project and participates in the Project's Task Force group. VRE's existing and future service plans will be considered in developing and evaluating Project alternatives.*

Comment: The ideal solution would be a greenfield alignment with full electrification.

> ***Response:*** *The Tier I EIS selected the CSXT A-Line as the preferred route for the Washington, D.C. to Richmond segment of the larger SEHSR corridor. The Tier I EIS also recommended an incremental approach to develop the SEHSR corridor, which minimizes the impacts to both the human and natural environments by utilizing the existing rail infrastructure and rail rights-of-way. By using the existing privately-owned infrastructure, the initial capital investment required by the system is also reduced. A greenfield alignment with full electrification does not meet the Tier I EIS recommendations. Because DRPT and FRA have chosen to implement high speed passenger service in an incremental fashion, it is possible that after this new service is implemented and depending upon travel demand and population growth, future studies may choose to look at new alignment and different forms of motive power.*

Comment: Keep within the existing right-of-way as much as possible to minimize the cost and impacts of the project.

> ***Response:*** *DRPT will develop and evaluate multiple alternatives to meet the Project's Purpose and Need, including alternative routes for high speed passenger rail and freight service along existing rail corridors. The analysis of alternatives will evaluate potential trade-offs between minimizing cost and impacts and reducing rail travel time and improving on-time performance.*

Comment: The southern terminus of the study should be Collier Yard in Petersburg.

> ***Response:*** *Centralia was determined to be the logical terminus of the DC2RVATier II EIS because it marks the junction of the two alternative routes through Richmond, the S-Line (which serves Main Street Station) and the A-Line to the west. Collier Yard, south of Petersburg, is being considered in the separate Richmond to Raleigh Tier II EIS.*

4.2.2.7 Stations

Commenters provided suggestions on which stations – either existing or new – should be served by high speed rail:

Comment: I believe that Carmel Church Station in Caroline County can be a great asset to the rail network between D.C. and Richmond as a high-density, mixed-use project with very easy access for riders from both I-95 and Route 1. Carmel Church Station is referenced in the 2008, 2013 VA State Rail Plan, and in a 2014 Federal Alternatives Analysis study. Carmel Church is zoned as a high-density, multi-modal transit-oriented development area.

Comment: Any increase in trains is going to have an environmental impact on the residents of Crystal City who live near the train tracks. If this project goes through, and it makes sense, then there MUST be a quid pro quo to upgrade the VRE station in Crystal City and eliminate the need for engineers to blow their horns when arriving at the station.

Comment: Please consider getting rid of the Staples Mill Station. It is only accessible by car and an eyesore. I would prefer everything going thorough one Richmond Station like Main Street Station.

Comment: Staples Mill Road should be the primary high speed rail station in Richmond.

Comment: If you expand rail service to Richmond, you also have to expand parking at the Richmond train stations. Staples Mill must have a parking structure built ASAP - parking there is awful.

Comment: The study should put a priority on stations/stops that serve a greater density of citizens, transit oriented development communities, and central business districts.

Comment: I believe that Richmond needs a better, signature, train station. It would be a real boost for the city to have a one of a kind train station that the city could be proud of. Unfortunately, Main Street has too many hurdles, and Staples Mill does not cut it. If a train station was located in the Broad St. corridor in downtown Richmond, say around the DMV or Science Museum, Broad Street would immediately see a flood of investment.

Comment: High speed trains should stop at Woodbridge and Main Street Station, which offer the highest concentration of riders.

Comment: These new trains should provide service to Arlington at a new and modern Crystal City railroad station replacing the current single outdoor ramp. But the status quo is not acceptable. If your plan simply calls for more trains coming through Crystal City without stopping and adding to the already horrible rail noise problem, you will encounter an absolute torrent of opposition.

Comment: The high speed rail station in Richmond should be at Main Street or elsewhere downtown.

Comment: Add a third Richmond station for regional trains (not high speed trains) where the tracks cross under Boulevard, near Greyhound and the ballpark.

Comment: A downtown Richmond station at Broad Street near DMV or the Science Museum would increase investment in that area. It also provides more opportunities for parking, would be more welcoming to visitors, is near the interstate, along the Broad Street BRT route, and cheaper. Main Street Station could then be converted to a visitors' center and/or slave museum.

Comment: Both Main Street and Broad Street station options offer transit-oriented development potential for the City of Richmond.

Comment: Replacing Staples Mill Road Station with a station near Parham Road is misguided.

Comment: It is important to maintain rail service in downtown Richmond, because access to train stations is limited for residents of central, east, and south Richmond.

Comment: The poor quality of existing stations along the corridor discourages business travel by rail.

Comment: L'Enfant Plaza should become a standard stop on all trains between Washington, D.C. and Richmond.

Comment: This new service should start in Washington, D.C. with stops at Alexandria, Fredericksburg, Richmond Staples Mill, Richmond Main Street, and Richmond Airport. Having the train stop at these locations will lessen and reduce highway congestion.

> ***Response:*** *DRPT will evaluate multiple alternatives to meet the Project's Purpose and Need, including alternative station locations for high speed passenger rail service along existing rail corridors. The analysis of alternatives will include evaluating effects on existing and planned Amtrak and VRE stations, as well as stations to be served by any additional passenger service. Results of this analysis will be documented in the EIS and supporting technical documents.*

Commenters also weighed in on station facilities and amenities:

Comment: Improve ADA accommodations at stations.

Comment: Provide car rental options at Richmond stations.

Comment: Signage and communications should be improved at all stations (especially Fredericksburg).

Comment: Add parking at Ashland Station.

Comment: Include trails that connect to rail stations to improve pedestrian and bicycle access to stations.

> ***Response:*** *The analysis of station locations will take into account amenities appropriate to high-speed rail service.*