



DC2RVA Town of Ashland / Hanover County Area Community Advisory Committee (CAC) Meeting #3

Meeting Summary

Project: Washington, D.C. to Richmond Southeast High Speed Rail Tier II EIS (DC2RVA)
Town of Ashland/Hanover County Area Community Advisory Committee (CAC)

Date: Monday, July 25, 2017
6:00 – 9:00 p.m.

Location: Randolph-Macon College – Birdsong Hall

Participants: CAC Members, Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT),
DC2RVA Consultant Team

Meeting Open to the Public

Public Attendance: estimated 280

CAC Members in Attendance:

Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation:

- Jennifer Mitchell, Director

Town of Ashland:

- Jim Foley, Mayor
- Josh Farrar, Town Manager
- Kristin Reihl, Citizen Representative

CSXT:

- Randy Marcus, Resident Vice President
- Brian Barton, Trainmaster – Passenger Operations

Hanover County:

- Bucky Stanley, Hanover County Board of Supervisors
- Rhu Harris, Hanover County Administrator
- Carey Carlisle, Citizen Representative
- Linwood Attkisson, Citizen Representative

Randolph-Macon College:

- Jen Thompson, Executive Assistant to the President
- Preston Bryant, Board of Associates
- Paul Davies, CPA Vice President of Administration and Finance

Richmond Regional TPO:

- Barbara Nelson, Richmond Regional TPO

Agenda:

	TOPIC	DISCUSSION LEAD
6:00 PM	Welcome and Facility Briefing	Jennifer Mitchell, DRPT Director Randolph-Macon College Representative
	Opening Statement	Jennifer Mitchell, DRPT Director
	Alternatives Discussion	CAC
	Potential new alternatives	
	Questions from CAC	
	Operations Modeling Results	Mark Hemphill, DC2RVA Consultant Team
	Questions from Last Meeting	John Morton, DC2RVA Consultant Team
	Topics for Next Meeting	Jennifer Mitchell, DRPT Director
7:00 PM	Public Opportunity to Address CAC	Open
9:00 PM	Adjournment	Jennifer Mitchell, DRPT Director

DRPT PRESENTATION

Agenda items led by DRPT, including Alternatives Discussion, Operations Modeling Results, and Questions from Last Meeting, were presented using PowerPoint slides. The PowerPoint presentation itself is the best record of these items. It is posted on the project website www.dc2rvarail.com

SUMMARY OF QUESTIONS/ANSWERS FROM CAC MEMBERS

This meeting summary is intended as a summary of topics discussed and comments spoken by the CAC members and not a verbatim transcript. Some responses may have been modified for clarity and context. Please refer to the PowerPoint presentation and meeting video for further detail.

COMMENT:	<p>The community is losing confidence. The tone of the previous presentation was discouraging and showed a lack of common sense by consultants.</p> <p>For the Doswell Connection there is a ton of space to the west and could easily connect to Buckingham Branch. The eastern option has a horse trail and parks but that is not an issue. There would be a lot of historic impacts to Ashland. Where is the voice of the people? The Buckingham Branch would be supported by both sides of the track. This group is not going to recommend a 3rd track or a western bypass.</p>
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	What can the CAC members do to eliminate the 3 rd track and western bypass options?
COMMENT:	We have people living on the east and west and I have been listening to these people for 34 years. You don't stay in one place without listening to the people. I didn't mean to throw the eastern bypass under the rail last time and think the tunnel is the best option because CSX would benefit with the freight trains going under the town. We had the benefit of talking with the team about the deep bore tunnel. I know there will be additional buildings for fans and that it is expensive, but I support the deep bore tunnel, and I thank the east, west and Town for coming together to try to make this tunnel work.
COMMENT:	How does Ashland feel about the station and tunnel? If it is a freight-only tunnel, then where would the tunnel go? I am against the 850' platform.
COMMENT:	The 850' platform should be completely off the table
COMMENT:	If the tunnel is freight train only, then fewer structures for the tunnel would be necessary. I would like to keep the Ashland Station, but if it's the station or 3 rd rail, then I choose the station to go.
COMMENT:	This issue has fractured our community. The CAC needs to listen to what's available and listen to them educate us.
COMMENT:	The CAC needs to be listening to the facts about each of these alternatives and less concerned on who is specifically impacted. That is the only way to make an informed decision.
COMMENT:	The CAC needs to see design specifics. A tunnel appears to be a good option, but what is actually happening? Will it hit properties or the Washington-Lacy Park?
Q:	Can the CAC eliminate options?
A:	Yes, it would be helpful for the CAC to come to consensus about which alternatives you would like to continue to consider and which options you no longer are considering. However, we haven't issued the draft EIS yet, so a full range of options will be listed in the draft EIS. A realistic goal would be to identify the best option in each category for the Eastern Bypass, Western Bypass, Through Town, and Below-Grade options.
Q:	What improvements would be required to Buckingham Branch to divert northbound and southbound freight traffic? On the third rail, what right of way would be required of the town or the college?
A:	We will prepare additional information for the CAC on the Buckingham Branch. Related to the third track through town options we have a packet for each of you that shows the alignments through town at different scales. The packet includes cross sections and different alignments with the different widths. All materials will be posted to the website.
Q:	Are design engineers beginning to look at improvements needed for the Buckingham Branch?

A: We will have more information on the Buckingham Branch that can be provided by the next CAC meeting.

Q: What options can make it through the process and be approved by the FRA? Can DRPT provide some information or advice on the decision making process?

A: The EIS lays out a preferred alternative and records FRA's decision. The purpose of the EIS is to identify the types of improvements that would meet the goals of the project and is subject to funding availability. We are focusing our resources on the most congested areas which are primarily in the north near D.C. and where improvements are needed first. I'd be happy to bring more information back to you as well.

Q: There has been talk of the deep bore tunnel alternative. Knowing the height and placement would be very helpful. Which side of the track would they be placed? How many ventilation systems and where? How tall are they?

A: In general, we would be looking at ventilation systems provided at each end of the tunnel and one in the middle. In general ventilation would be located south of Ashcake Road, north of Vaughan Road and in the center. They are approximately three stories tall but there are different standards depending on whether it is passenger or freight.

Q: Where will the emergency exits be located?

A: Emergency egress will be required approximately every 2,000 feet. On the surface the exits could be at-grade- like a grate for example.

Q: With Buckingham Branch I have noticed with most sections there is one rail. Is that what is being looked at, the one rail, or we looking at an expanded area?

A: There are several different scenarios like using just a short section of the Buckingham Branch between Highway 54 and Doswell. A different scenario would be diverting rail traffic in Richmond and using about 24 miles of the Buckingham Branch between Richmond and Doswell.

COMMENT: Do you have the property lines of those people that are willing to sell?

COMMENT: I sent the Director an email with those people who are willing to sell.

Q: If we make some improvements to Buckingham Branch do all trains that go to Acca yard stop?

A: About half of the trains stop for modifications.

COMMENT: We think looking at the passenger option through Buckingham Branch would be a good option. We are happy to be a resource for Buckingham Branch diversions or tunneling options. This is a passenger project and we just need to maintain our capabilities.

Q: Can you explain the full build two track option?

A: There were three tracks everywhere except for a 9,000 foot section in Ashland between Vaughan and Ashcake, where the existing two track railroad would remain.

Q: Will the modeling results be available before the committee finishes its work?

A: It should be. We are currently evaluating the freight impacts. As soon as we get this information we will bring it to you. It's not included in the DEIS.

Q: Can we get the scores as opposed to getting a yes or no?

A: We can bring back some relative metrics to show comparability.

Q: Is it correct that the no-build 3-2-3 currently does not meet performance objectives?

A: To clarify, at the request of FRA, we evaluated a scenario where a third line would be built in the VRE territory north of Spotsylvania and the existing two track system would remain south of Spotsylvania. This scenario did not work. This is a vastly different scenario than the two tracks through Ashland or the 3-2-3 alternative.

Q: There are 30 pages of comments from Citizens, will DRPT be providing responses? If so, when will they be provided?

A: We viewed these as comments to the CAC, but we can provide responses to you.

Q: Did you have a release date for the Draft EIS? Could you update us?

A: We have been in conversations with FRA, but it is out of our hands at this point. We would like to get them to you as soon as possible.

Q: Concerning the Buckingham Branch, would this be for passenger only or also for freight?

A: CSX recommends passenger only on Buckingham Branch. Freight needs to go through Acca Yard.

Q: If passenger trains go to Buckingham Branch, if the freight trains were the same, and new trains were diverted, would this be sufficient?

A: We have only looked at that option at a very high level. You would submit your request for consideration through the project team. CSX is happy to be a resource.

Q: I think we should explore the option. I would encourage the DRPT to evaluate the Buckingham Branch as much as possible.

A: Considerations to accommodate freight are significantly different than what is looked at to accommodate passenger. What was looked at previously would accommodate both freight and passenger. We heard from you all that you would like to look at freight only, but CSX said it won't work for freight.