

APPENDIX C

DETAILED RESPONSES TO GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENTS



D.C. TO RICHMOND SOUTHEAST HIGH SPEED RAIL

Appendix C

DETAILED RESPONSES TO GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENTS

As described in Chapter 2 of the Final EIS, the general public submitted more than 14,000 comments regarding the Project during the 30-day comment period and public hearing process that followed the September 2017 publication of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS) for the DC2RVA Project. Most comments came from individuals living, working, or having property interests in the Project corridor, particularly within the Town of Ashland, Hanover County, and the City of Richmond. In accordance with 40 CFR 1503.4, the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) carefully reviewed each comment, concern, and request and compiled them into broad subject matter categories, which generally parallel the chapter structure of the Draft and Final EIS documents, for presentation within this appendix:

- Study Process
 - Purpose and Need
 - Proposed Train Service/ Operations/Schedule
 - Public Involvement
 - Other Considerations
- Evaluation of Alternatives
 - Corridor Options Not Evaluated in the Draft EIS
 - Ashland Area Alternatives
 - Richmond Area Alternatives
 - Station Evaluation
- Funding, Implementation, and Construction
- Environmental Impacts
 - General
 - Traffic/Transportation
 - Right-of-Way/Displacements/ Property Values
 - Land Use
 - Community Facilities/Title VI/ Environmental Justice
 - Farmland
 - Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities
 - Cultural Resources
 - Natural and Water Resources
 - Noise and Vibration
 - Air Quality
 - Visual / Aesthetics
 - Hazardous Materials
 - Indirect and Cumulative Effects
 - Safety

This appendix provides detailed responses from DRPT and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) to address substantive comments within the above topic areas. In general, substantive comments are those that question, with reasonable basis, the accuracy of information and methodology in the Draft EIS or present new information not considered in the Draft EIS, and

cause changes or revisions in one or more alternative or environmental resource as part of the Final EIS. Many individuals commented on topics that did not warrant changes to methodology or information provided in the Draft EIS, such as:

- Suggestion of additional alternatives to consider, most of which were considered but dismissed during the 2002 Tier I EIS for the Southeast High Speed Rail (SEHSR) corridor between Washington, D.C. and Charlotte, NC, or do not align with the implementing actions that were the outcome of the 2002 Tier I EIS and Record of Decision (ROD).
- Request for detailed information or data that is beyond the scope of an environmental document and would be developed during the final design and permitting process.
 - Environmental impact assessments for the Project are based on conceptual engineering, which is approximately a 10% design level. Chapter 5 of the Final EIS clarifies the use of temporary and permanent impacts on environmental resources. Temporary impacts at the conceptual design level are a fixed offset or distance from the permanent impact limits; this is an allowance to account for possible construction means and methods that may exceed the permanent impact limits. Final design will clarify the potential construction means and methods that might be used to eliminate or mitigate temporary impacts.
 - Final design and mitigations will occur after Project funding becomes available and incremental improvements are scheduled, as explained in Chapter 7 of the Final EIS.

Notwithstanding, DRPT provided responses to these topics within the detailed responses provided in this appendix. DRPT did not provide responses to comments on overall position/opinion for or against the Project or preference for or against a specific Build Alternative that was evaluated in the Draft EIS. Additionally, DRPT addressed specific property questions directly with the property owner, separate from this response document. All comments received were considered as part of the selection process for the Preferred Alternative for this Final EIS.

The comments presented in this appendix convey the substance of the comments made, but condense similar comments together into a single topic and do not necessarily quote comments from individuals verbatim. The responses include reference to information provided in both the Draft and Final EIS, and some responses are the outcome from ongoing analyses and coordination that have occurred since the publication of the Draft EIS. DRPT and FRA do not view the public comment process as a “vote counting” process but rather one seeking substantive comments that benefit the FRA and DRPT in their final decision-making process. The public comment process is also an opportunity for the public to inform FRA or DRPT of potential concerns or conditions that were not identified during the preparation of the Draft EIS.

HOW TO USE THIS APPENDIX:

This general public response appendix is presented in two parts:

- **Appendix C1** lists the questions that DRPT responded to for each of the comment topic areas and provides an index to the page number in Appendix C2 where the detailed response can be found. The intent of this index is to provide a way to easily browse all questions that were asked by the general public and locate its detailed response.
- **Appendix C2** provides the detailed responses to each of the substantive comments within the previously-identified topic areas.