To: Chairman Smedberg and the VRE Operations Board  
From: Doug Allen  
Date: September 15, 2017  
Re: Crystal City Station Improvement Project Update

Summary:

VRE has evaluated potential locations for a new Crystal City platform using a two-step evaluation process that integrated extensive public outreach and stakeholder coordination. The technical analysis has determined that the Option 2 site is the preferred platform location on which to focus further analysis and design. This location, when compared to other options, provides the highest level of connectivity with local jobs and regional transportation, a comparable level of community and environmental impacts, and moderate construction cost.

Crystal City Station Improvement Project Background and Update:

The Virginia Railway Express (VRE) Crystal City Station, one of the busiest in the system, was designed over a quarter century ago. Ridership has significantly increased since that time, requiring longer VRE trains. There is an immediate need to extend the station platform to accommodate the longer VRE trains operating today. A second platform edge is needed to allow greater operational flexibility in this heavily trafficked segment of the CSXT RF&P Subdivision. The project also provided an opportunity to better align VRE with Crystal City’s vision for growth.

The current phase of the project, initiated in December 2016, focused on identifying the optimal location of the station and its access points. Objectives include better job access through enhanced pedestrian and bicycle connectivity, improved intermodal connections (Metrorail, Metroway, local buses, and Department of Defense shuttles) and consideration of community impacts.

Determining the location of the new VRE platform is needed prior to the start of engineering for the new fourth track through Crystal City, which is fully-funded as part of
DRPT’s Atlantic Gateway/FASTLANE project and currently anticipated to begin in 2018.

VRE conducted a technical analysis of three possible station locations using a two-step evaluation process. The process integrated extensive public outreach and stakeholder coordination. A project website provided ready access to technical information and event materials. The analysis was reviewed by a stakeholder working group comprised of JBG Smith and Equity Residential (property owners of land adjacent to the railroad), the Crystal City Business Improvement District, the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority, the National Park Service, and the Department of Defense Transportation Management Program Office at the Pentagon (significant destination for VRE riders). Working with Arlington County staff, VRE also provided briefings to the Arlington County Transportation Commission and the County Board.

Extraordinary steps were taken for a planning study to gather and address input received from residents, riders, the business community, and the general public. Four public events were held between November 2016 and June 2017, that involved the Crystal City Civic Association (CCCA), a residents’ group, and were attended by up to 80 individuals. Based on concerns expressed by Crystal City residents and other stakeholders, additional analyses were performed regarding noise, vibration, and visual impacts associated with each option that would have been otherwise performed in a later phase of project development.

Based on the technical analysis and the feedback received, the VRE staff recommends Option 2 as the preferred station location. Riders and representatives of the business community expressed a preference for Option 2. The CCCA expressed a preference for Option 3.

In September, VRE will present its staff recommendation to the Arlington County Planning Commission, Transportation Commission, Transit Advisory Committee, and the County Board. The staff recommendation will be presented to the VRE Operations Board at their October meeting along with feedback from these stakeholders for action to adopt a preferred station location.

Upon selection of a single platform location, VRE will proceed with more detailed preliminary engineering and environmental investigations for that location. That will include negotiating preliminary agreements with private property owners, where appropriate, for access across their property to Crystal Drive.