



**VIRGINIA RAILWAY EXPRESS**  
**L'ENFANT TRACK AND STATION IMPROVEMENTS PE-NEPA PHASE**

Date: February 8, 2024 Venue: Video Call

**Working Group Meeting #1**

**ATTENDEE LIST**

VRE

- Dagmawie Shikurye
- Christine Hoeffner
- Dallas Richards
- Chris Kocher

Virginia Passenger Rail Authority (VPRA)

- Mark Schnauffer
- Christine Fix
- Naomi Klein

VHB Metro DC

- Mark Colgan
- Adeel Mysorewala
- Lee Farmer
- Meghan Powell
- Lee Dwyer

Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC) 6D

- Bob Link

Amtrak

- Charles Planck
- Dan Thomas
- Jeff Ensor
- Jeff Gerlach
- John Rhodes

Committee of Fine Arts (CFA)

- Dan Fox
- Sarah Batcheler
- Carlton Hart

Committee of 100 (C100)

- James Smailes

CSXT

- Randy Marcus

DC Office of Planning (DCOP)

- Jessica Williams

Department of Rail and Public Transport (DPRT)

- Taylor Holden
- Randy Selleck

District Department of Transportation (DDOT)

- Jonathan Rogers
- Noah Hagen

Federal City Council

- Laura Miller Brooks

Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)

- Amanda Murphy
- Randy Brown

Federal Transit Administration (FTA)

- Rachel Hearon

General Services Administration (GSA)

- Courtney Benton
- Lindsey Veas
- Paul Gyamfi

Greater Washington Partnership

- Michael Jerakis

NCPC

- Matthew Flis
- Mike Weil

National Park Service

- Jason Theuer
- Joel Gorder
- Laurel Hammig
- Sophie Kelly
- Yue Li

Northern Virginia Transportation Commission

- Ann McGrane

Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission (PRTC)

- Cynthia Porter-Johnson



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**ATTENDEE LIST (cont'd)**

Smithsonian Institution

- Mike Carrancho

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

- Dilli Neupane

Southwest Business Improvement District (SW BID)

- Lexie Albe

**DISCUSSION**

Note: The following discussion was accompanied by the attached slideshow presentation.

As the call began, Mark Colgan (VHB) inquired if anyone did not consent to the meeting being recorded; there were no responses to that effect.

**1. Safety Briefing & Introductions**

- Dagmawie Shikurye (VRE) introduced himself as Project Manager, welcomed everyone, and provided a safety moment. He reminded everyone to be aware of their surroundings and how to leave their location in event of an emergency.
- Dagmawie provided an overview of the agenda and the purpose of this Working Group Meeting as part of the PE/NEPA phase, then started introductions for the project team.
  - Christine Hoeffner (VRE) introduced herself as DPM and task lead on the NEPA phase.
  - Mark Schnaufer (VPRA) introduced himself and described VPRA's relationship working with VRE on various projects, including Long Bridge. Also from VPRA, Christine Fix and Naomi Klein introduced themselves.
  - The members of the consultant design team (VHB) introduced themselves and their roles in the project; see **Attendee List** on previous page.
- Dagmawie then directed Working Group member introductions by agency/organization listed on Slide 5; see **Attendee List** for participants.
- After introductions, Dagmawie also asked if there were any parties in attendance not on this list; there were no answers.

**2. Overview of Working Group Meetings**

- Christine provided an overview of the working group, its purpose and goals, and a quick summary of previous working group meetings during the Alternatives Analysis phase of the project. She noted that the Preferred Alternative was approved in Oct 2022.
- Christine said that notes and slides would be shared following the meeting. She provided the [link to the project webpage](#), which will continue to be updated during this PE/NEPA phase, and noted that information about the Alternatives Analysis process is also available on this site, including project documents.



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**3. Project Recap & Preferred Alternative**

- Christine reviewed the project's location in SW DC, its connection to Long Bridge, and the context of track interlockings. She also described existing station conditions: this is the busiest VRE station, which does get crowded; it is a short, side track platform that cannot serve more than one train at a time; also ADA accessibility and connectivity to surrounding neighborhood.
- Christine then handed off the presentation to Meghan Powell (VHB).
- Meghan gave a brief review of the Alternatives Analysis phase and elements of the Preferred Alternative (Alternative 2a), which is now being progressed under the PE/NEPA phase, as well as diagrams and conceptual images of the Preferred Alternative and 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> St SW entries.

**4. PE/NEPA Phase**

- Meghan explained the PE/NEPA Phase scope of work, which includes preliminary engineering, environmental review, and stakeholder coordination.
- Meghan described details of the current state of design, as some design details have changed from the previous phase's Preferred Alternative.
- During initial phases, the Project Team evaluated a potential elevator on the west side of 7<sup>th</sup> St SW location. Meghan explained that after detailed evaluation, the track-south (cardinal west) elevator next to Hancock Park is not recommended due to additional park impacts and constructability challenges.
- Meghan stated that as the current design progresses, the team will try to minimize impacts to Hancock Park as much as possible.
  - Christine clarified that the existing ADA path access through the park to the existing station will be eliminated with the project, since it will not be possible with the 4<sup>th</sup> track.
  - Mike Carrancho (Smithsonian Institution) asked if VRE will be completely demolishing the current platform and noted that noise will be a consideration since the Smithsonian Institution's building is immediately north of that.
  - Mark Colgan replied confirming that the existing platform will be demolished, likely in phases, and that the Project Team will have discussions on adjacency as the design details are further developed.
- Meghan reviewed the overall project timeline, with NEPA completing in late 2024, PE design completing in Feb 2025, construction starting mid-2027, and final delivery expected in 2029. She highlighted the need for coordinating surveying and other on-site work since this is a dense urban area with a lot of underground structures.
- Meghan outlined the Project components and PE/NEPA schedule, explaining that work is underway for 30% design, and the Project Team has started coordination with FTA, the lead federal agency on NEPA/Section 106 review.
- Meghan explained the Working Group schedule and what the planned meetings will cover, then opened up for questions, either via chat or asked out loud.

**5. Question & Answer**

- Paul Gyamfi (GSA) asked via chat about the level of NEPA analysis? e.g. categorical exclusion (CatEx/CE), environmental assessment (EA), or environmental impact statement (EIS)



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- Lee Farmer (VHB) replied that it is not confirmed yet but will probably be a documented CatEx and that more coordination is starting with NPS about their NEPA requirements.
- Christine noted that along with FTA as the lead federal agency, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) is also very closely involved; the federal funding on the project is a mix of FTA-administered VRE formula funds and FRA-administered federal-state partnership grant funds.
- Matthew Flis (NCPC) referred to the site plan on Slide 15 and asked about the ownership of the various parcels.
  - Mark Colgan discussed the Smithsonian building (Capital Gallery, 600 Maryland Ave., SW) adjacency and NPS for Hancock Park as well as DDOT coordination; all other work proposed is within the Railroad right-of-way.
  - Christine pointed out that there will be a Noise and Vibration analysis for whole area between interlockings as part of NEPA.
- Bob Link (ANC 6D) asked how the L'Enfant project timeline aligns with the adjacent Long Bridge project, especially to the south at 7th Street.
  - Mark Schnauer responded that signal coordination will be a big point, since there will be two active Railroad tracks maintained throughout all of these projects. VHB has been also involved in the Long Bridge project and the projects are going hand-in-hand timewise, with L'Enfant being a little bit ahead.
- There was a chat question about any impacts to DDOT facilities.
  - Mark Colgan explained that there will definitely be DDOT coordination for the 6<sup>th</sup> St SW bridge full replacement as well as 7<sup>th</sup> St SW widening of the existing bridge.
- Mike Carrancho (Smithsonian Institution) asked if the L'Enfant station platform is going to be closed or done in phases to handle passengers.
  - Christine responded that VRE will phase construction and maintain operations and service.
  - Christine added that ridership has recovered quicker at L'Enfant station than other VRE stations, though not back to pre-COVID levels, and it will still be a primary VRE station in the future.
  - Dagmawie emphasized that closing the whole station is not something VRE is considering; there may be temporary platforms, but he guaranteed this station will not be out of service.
- Dan Fox (CFA) asked via the chat if there has been/will there be an inventory of historic fabric within the project area (bridges, retaining walls, etc.).
  - Lee Farmer explained that the team has been coordinating with FTA as well as some of the other federal agencies who have Section 106 responsibilities; a formal initiation for Section 106 is next, and consulting agencies like CFA should get their letters soon.
- Laura Miller-Brooks (FCC) inquired about how this project is being coordinated with the Amtrak-Union Station Expansion or plans for Union Station First Street tunnel; she also asked for clarification about ownership of the rail infrastructure itself.



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- Christine replied that for Union Station, VRE has been coordinating directly with Amtrak on the expansion plans and Section 106, and they are also in conversation about design, phasing, and effects of planned improvements, despite the different project timelines.
- Jeffrey Ensor (Amtrak) chimed in to explain that Amtrak owns the railroad north of CP Virginia, whereas this work will be on property that VPRA and CSX owns. Amtrak is sharing information with VRE to coordinate.
- Christine first addressed the ownership question by stating that in this part of the corridor, VRE is essentially a tenant with access agreements.
- Mark Schnauffer then explained that currently CSX owns tracks up to the VA interlocking, and Amtrak owns the rail from there north to Boston. VPRA in the future will have long-term land lease for two of the tracks that will be predominantly passenger; CSX will have the two other separate tracks for freight; this is part of the overall VPRA Transforming Rail in Virginia (TRV) program that is expanding track capacity all the way to Richmond.
- James Smailes (C100) asked via the chat if there has been any progress on evaluating the potential for an elevator from the VRE platform directly to the Metrorail station below.
  - Mark Colgan responded that during the Alternatives Analysis phase VRE/VHB did look at that, but it has been evaluated infeasible. It would require a long route with significant underground structures; the WMATA tunnel vault structure runs under 7<sup>th</sup> St SW and direct penetration through the vault is prohibited.
  - Mark Colgan added that another alternative, an elevator on the track-south side of 7<sup>th</sup> St SW down to the existing street-level WMATA elevator was evaluated, but that was also infeasible with the current geometry of the bridge and abutment.
  - Lee Farmer noted that slides from the Alternatives Analysis phase Working Group meetings should be available online and several slides address the Metrorail connection.
- Dagmawie closed the meeting by thanking everyone for taking the time and invited them to email him with any concerns, feedback, or comments regarding this project.