



Virginia Railway Express

Working Group Meeting #2
VRE L'Enfant Station and Fourth Track
Preliminary Engineering/NEPA Phase
Microsoft Teams

May 16, 2024 from 2 - 3 PM

ATTENDEE LIST

VRE

- Dagmawie Shikurye
- Christine Hoeffner

Department of Rail and Public Transport (DPRT)

- Taylor Holden
- Randy Selleck

Virginia Passenger Rail Authority (VPRA)

- Mark Schnauffer
- Naomi Klein

District Department of Energy and Environment (DOEE)

- Linda O'Brien

VHB Metro DC

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

District Department of Transportation (DDOT)

- Margaret Crane
- Meredith Soniat
- Noah Hagen

Amtrak

- Amy Wetterskog

Federal City Council

- Laura Miller Brooks

Committee of 100 (C100)

- James Smailes

Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)

- Chris Hansen
- Halie Mitchell
- Stephanie Perez-Arrieta

DC State Historic Preservation Office (DC SHPO)

- Andrew Lewis

Federal Transit Administration (FTA)

- Rachel Hearon



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General Services Administration (GSA)

- Courtney Benton

Greater Washington Partnership

- Michael Jerakis

National Park Service

- Laurel Hammig

Northern Virginia Transportation Commission

- Ann McGrane

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA)

- Abel Cardenas Ortega

NOTES

1. Introductions & Safety Briefing

- Dagmawie Shikurye (VRE) began by welcoming everyone to the second Working Group meeting in the Preliminary Engineering (PE)/NEPA Phase of the VRE L'Enfant Station and 4th Track Project.
- He notified participants that the meeting was being recorded and by participating in this meeting, they agreed to the recording. He also noted that slides will be shared after the meeting and asked working group members to please reserve questions for the end.
- Dagmawie then provided a safety moment, reminding everyone to be aware of their address for emergency calls, know locations of emergency first aid and AED equipment, and to stretch.
- He briefly introduced the VRE and VPRA project teams before handing off to VHB.
- Meghan Powell (VHB) introduced the consultant design team on the call.
- She then reviewed the list of agencies and other stakeholders in the Working Group, noting that several people participating today attended the previous Working Group of this phase. Due to the number of Working Group members, introductions followed a roll-call format, in which Meghan went through the list and asked a representative of each agency or group to speak up if present.

2. Working Group Meeting Recap

- Christine Hoeffner (VRA) refreshed everyone's memory about the purpose of this Working Group: to bring together stakeholders who have some level of review/approval authority on the project as well as others who have may an interest or potential concerns.
- Christine stated that the VRE's goals are to seek feedback on designs while advancing the PE/NEPA phase, keep Working Group members updated on the project progress, and to share information that Working Group members can bring back to their organization or agency.
- She briefly reviewed the updated Working Group meeting schedule and the main topic for each meeting:
 - The purpose of today's meeting, the second of 5 total for the PE/NEPA phase, is to provide an update on the draft 30% design.
 - Other Working Group meetings will take place in the fall through early next year.

3. Preliminary Engineering Design

- Adeel Mysorewala (VHB) provided an update on the draft 30% design, starting with an overview diagram.





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- He explained how the proposed station design meets the goals of the project—accessibility and improved capacity/service—because the proposed future Track 4 gives VRE ability to serve two trains on two tracks and there are also two ADA entrances, one on each end of platform.
- He noted that the proposed design will require widening the existing 7th St SW bridge and replacing the existing 6th St SW bridge, and that it will avoid impact to Hancock Park.
- Adeel provided an overview of the proposed 6th St SW bridge replacement:
 - Bridge nearly 100 years old, with a steel through-plate girder, and three spans over roadway, and steel piers; requires replacement
 - Replacement will essentially match current layout shared on the slide
 - The design is being explored in coordination with CSX, DDOT, and other stakeholders; considering options that range from a partial replacement to a full replacement; no decision has been made yet
 - Challenges for 6th St SW bridge
 - Requires unique bridge structure
 - L'Enfant is one of VRE's busiest stations
 - Congested rail corridor; VRE, CSX, Amtrak run about 80 train/day
 - Required to keep two tracks in operation at all times
 - Primary drivers for additional coordination are the vertical clearances (roadway clearances and track elevation), potential impact to Virginia Ave wall, aesthetics, potential historic resource impacts, and construction phasing
 - Showed proposed bridge replacement design that accommodates the 4th track; construction would be phased to avoid impacts to rail service
- Adeel provided an overview of the proposed 7th St SW bridge widening:
 - Existing bridge was replaced by WMATA in the 1970's; WMATA runs underneath 7th St SW
 - Existing bridge is a single span over the road; WMATA lowered the road when the bridge was constructed
 - Existing vertical clearance is signed at 13'-6"; the actual clearance is 14'-0" which will be maintained
 - Proposed bridge will be widened to accommodate the 4th track
 - To avoid impact to Hancock Park, the draft 30% design has tapered platform on the west end
 - No impact to the Metro's proposed elevator on 7th St
 - Shorter girders on north side (proposed widening) to avoid affecting vertical clearance above road
- Adeel provided an overview of Hancock Park:
 - Hancock Park is located on the northwest corner of the project limits, is administered by NPS, and is a remanent of Reservation 13
 - Proposed design avoids permanent impacts to park; there will be some construction impacts
 - Design will remove existing path to the VRE platform; a wall will also be built outside of Hancock Park but access to the park will be needed to build the wall





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- Adeel discussed the next steps for PE:
 - Complete survey and utility locating (already started) and borings (once permits are done)
 - Continue refining design and submit a draft 30% design for VRE and stakeholder review, followed by comment resolution and final design submittal

4. NEPA/Section 106 - Lee Farmer

- Lee Farmer (VHB) discussed the NEPA (environmental review) and Section 106 (historic preservation review) process and schedule along with current status:
 - The Project team has aligned the NEPA/106 processes with the PE design
 - Team has been doing due diligence on existing conditions, initiated consultation under Section 106, and developing Determinations of Eligibility (DOE), and over the summer will develop impacts analysis and assessment of effects using draft 30% plans
 - A lot of the Working Group organizations are also part of the Section 106 Consulting Party
 - Goal to wrap up Section 106 and NEPA processes while finalizing 30% design
- Lee provided more detail on the NEPA efforts and affected environment, with the areas of highest concern identified as being:
 - Parks and Recreation Areas – due to potential impacts to Hancock Park during construction
 - Historic Resources – to be discussed more in a moment
 - Noise and vibration – since there is a hotel (Holiday Inn) immediately adjacent to the corridor and the 4th track will be closer to that building
 - Aesthetics – view corridors along 6th and 7th streets
- Lee gave a brief summary of the other resources either less affected, not affected, or not present/not applicable to this location:
 - Resources not affected – land use, air quality, or energy
 - Resources less affected –
 - Hazardous materials – in a historic active rail corridor
 - Threatened and endangered species – northern long-eared bat
 - Environmental justice – will be addressed in documentation; however, majority of population is south of I-395
 - Indirect and cumulative effects – cumulative effects of other railroad and development projects happening in the area
 - Resources not present – water resources or floodplains
- Lee described the processes for analyzing possible impacts:
 - Noise and vibration
 - Team will be going out soon to take noise measurements at several locations along corridor, as shown on slide
 - Of particular concern are institutional and residential/hotels
 - Section 106/historic properties
 - Team has presented the Area of Potential Effect (APE) to Consulting Parties previously
 - APE follows railroad corridor with larger area closer to VRE L'Enfant Station due to potential visual impacts





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- Will prepare DOE for four properties on map (rail corridor, 6th St Bridge, 7th St Bridge, and American Road Builders Association Building)
- Assessment of effects will be based on the 30% design
- Lee shared the list of the Section 106 Consulting Parties and noted that the only invited party that chose not to participate is WMATA.
- Lee shared an overview of current and upcoming public and stakeholder engagement activities:
 - Activities are aligned with specific milestones for NEPA, Section 106, and PE design
 - VRE and VHB started conducting some public outreach activities this spring and will continue additional outreach activities in the fall
 - There will be coordination with CFA staff in June with plans for meeting with them in July, and working towards concept approval with CFA in the fall
 - Additional Consulting Party meetings will be held in the fall to discuss the assessment of effects

5. Discussion

- Meghan (VHB) wrapped up the presentation and opened for questions and discussion.
- Andrew Lewis (DC SHPO) commented on the 6th St bridge design; he requested that rehabbing or preserving certain elements of the bridge be considered to minimize adverse effects to historic property, e.g., wing walls, through-plate girders, or existing steel piers.
 - Andrew noted that this something DC SHPO would certainly support.
 - Adeel noted that plans call for keeping the existing masonry walls; he was not sure if rehabbing or preserving piers will be possible but said the team would look into that.
- Laura Miller Brooks (Federal City Council) asked Lee Farmer (VHB) to expand on the 45-years-old distinction for the historic eligibility process.
 - Lee explained that properties over 50 years old may be considered for eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places; we use 45 years as a threshold because by the time a project gets to construction, the property may have reached 50 years.
 - Laura thanked her and expressed excitement on the progress of designs and the pace of the project schedule.
- Andrew Lewis (DC SHPO) posted to the meeting chat the image below (from 6th St looking SW at current station entrance) and noted that the existing railroad wall has already been heavily altered on north side of the bridge. He asked if the team knew anything about the condition of the existing wall behind the 6th St entrance.
 - Adeel (VHB) noted that the new entrance would be placed where that wall has already been altered. He also noted that for the existing wall that runs parallel to the sidewalk, the design would go over that wall and it would not be impacted.
 - Andrew also asked if the grade would be steep; Adeel replied that the structure would be raising by 1 ft at most over existing conditions.
 - Andrew noted that DC SHPO would like to consider this more carefully and requested if the team can share more information and photos about the historic wall and its condition.
 - Adeel noted that more information can be provided once the design progressed more.





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6. Wrap-up

- Christine (VRE) wrapped up by letting Working Group members know about upcoming public outreach and inviting them to come speak to her:
 - May 17: Bike to Work Day pitstop outside the SWBID offices, VRE and VHB would be there engaging with the public and sharing information about the project and the VRE System Plan Update
 - May 22: SWBID has an Out To Lunch event at Hancock Park, VRE will be there as well with information about L'Enfant project
- Dagmawie and Meghan thanked everyone again for joining and encouraged Working Group members to send any questions they may have.
 - Next WG meeting will be in September/fall 2024
 - Slides and recording from this meeting will be shared by email
 - People can view previous meeting notes and materials via the VRE project website (under "Preliminary & NEPA Phase (2023- Present)" at <https://app.e-builder.net/public/PublicFolderView.aspx?FolderID={32b6f7f2-9190-43ef-9b6b-957a3c54dbf3}>)

