PROJECT DESCRIPTION
The purpose of the Virginia Railway Express Midday Storage Replacement Facility project is to replace the current storage space leased from Amtrak at the Ivy City Coach Yard in the District of Columbia. The project includes planning, designing, and constructing a permanent midday storage replacement facility for VRE trains that travel to the District. The proposed facility will be used to store commuter trains on weekdays between the inbound morning commute and the outbound afternoon commute. VRE will work with members of the community, stakeholders, and property owners to assess potential impacts and determine ways VRE can be a good neighbor.

PROJECT PURPOSE
Midday train storage in the Washington, DC metropolitan region is critical to VRE’s continued operations and growth. VRE operates trains providing daily commuter rail service from as far as Manassas and Fredericksburg, Virginia, into Union Station. During the weekday midday, those trains need to be parked near Union Station and off the main line tracks. Currently, VRE stores trains in Amtrak’s Ivy City rail complex in the District of Columbia. The current and future demand for train storage and maintenance functions within the existing Ivy City rail complex exceeds available space. To accommodate growth of intercity passenger rail service, Amtrak needs the tracks that VRE is using currently for maintenance and storage.

HOW DOES THE PROJECT BENEFIT THE DISTRICT?
The District is the destination for 63% of all VRE trips (and growing). That means every weekday, people are traveling to the District using commuter rail instead of driving and parking. VRE’s commuter rail service plays a key role in helping to reduce traffic congestion on the District’s roads and reduces the need for parking. VRE is considered a vital part of the District’s multimodal transportation system and is included as a component of the District’s long-range multimodal plan, moveDC. The proposed rail storage facility will allow VRE to increase service in the future, bringing more commuters into the District by rail instead of car.

WHY NOT STORE THE TRAINS IN VIRGINIA?
On weekdays, trains bring people into the District in the morning and take them back to Virginia in the evening. During the middle of the day, trains must be “parked” somewhere close to Union Station, but out of the way of other rail users. Trains travel from Virginia to the District by crossing the Potomac River on the Long Bridge, but VRE is limited in the number of trains that can cross the bridge each day. Sending empty trains across the bridge to be stored during the middle of the day would result in VRE reducing service and commuters being forced to drive into the District.
PLANNING PROCESS AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

WHAT’S HAPPENED

VRE held its first public meeting for the VRE Midday Storage Replacement Facility in February 2017. At the meeting, VRE provided an overview of the project, described the process, and listened to feedback from the community. The attendees expressed concerns about the potential for the project to inhibit revitalizing New York Avenue NE as a gateway into the District. In addition, they would like to see VRE explore options that provide a direct benefit to the residents of Ivy City, such as a multiuse trail, lowering the tracks below New York Avenue NE, and incorporation of public open space.

After discussions with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), Amtrak, and the public, VRE will no longer be using the public right-of-way, which is consistent with the 30 feet of right-of-way outlined in the District Department of Transportation’s New York Avenue Streetscape and Trail project. In addition, VRE is looking to design a buffer between the railroad and New York Avenue. The buffer will be designed using community feedback to help improve the appearance of New York Avenue NE.

WHAT’S NEXT

VRE will continue to work with the community on the design elements of the buffer in coordination with the New York Avenue Streetscape Project.

SCREENING IDEAS FOR NEW YORK AVENUE NE

The project will address and integrate community interests. VRE is considering options to create a buffer between the railroad facility and to support New York Avenue NE as a gateway, as well as reinforce neighborhood revitalization. Using this as a guide to generate ideas, VRE will be working with the community to design a buffer. Some examples of best practices for buffering similar facilities are green screening and decorative artwork:

GREEN SCREENING

DECORATIVE ARTWORK