

**UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY**

**REGION III**

**1650 Arch St., Philadelphia, PA 19103**

Mr. Corey W. Hill

Northern Virginia Regional Manager

Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation

1550 Wilson Boulevard

Suite 300

Arlington, Virginia 22209

Dear Mr. Hill:

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act, the Environmental Protection Agency Region 3 (EPA) offers the following comments regarding the Dulles Corridor Rapid Transit Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and Section 4(f) Evaluation.

The DEIS describes and summarizes the potential transportation and environmental impacts related to developing major new transit system enhancements in the Dulles Corridor by providing a direct connection to the existing regional Metrorail system. The project limits extend 24 miles from the vicinity of the existing West Falls Church Metrorail station in Fairfax County, Virginia westward to the vicinity of Rt 772 just west of Dulles Airport in Loudoun County, Virginia.

Alternatives studied in the DEIS included 1) the no-build alternative, 2) Bus Rapid Transit on a dedicated ROW the entire project length, 3) Metrorail extension to Tysons Corner and Bus Rapid Transit to the westward limits of the study, 4) Metrorail the entire project length and 5) a phased implementation of the full Metrorail alternative beginning with Bus Rapid Transit, followed by incremental construction of Metrorail.

This project is located in the rapidly growing and heavily congested Dulles Corridor which includes Dulles International Airport and the major employment hub of Tysons Corner. The project would serve to link these major traffic generators with the regional mass transit system providing a direct rapid transit link between downtown Washington DC, Tysons Corner and Dulles Airport.

Environmental impacts of this proposal are minor and EPA has not identified any potential environmental impacts that would require substantive changes to any of the alternatives. The project is confined to existing right-of-way or is located on existing parking lots, streets and other developed lands. There are no residential displacements and up to only six commercial displacements associated with any of the alternatives. The Metrorail alternative is on the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG) Constrained Long Range Transportation Plan (CLRP) and it conforms with regional air quality plans. Wetland and stream impacts are less than that associated with a typical residential development in the area. Noise, vibration and visual impacts were the only significant issues identified in the DEIS and the DEIS identified ways to minimize and mitigate these impacts.

Projected opening year ridership is estimated to be 27,000 to 72,000 average weekday riders depending on the alternative chosen. This project will provide a clean air alternative transportation mode for many commuters and travelers. The environmental impacts are less than the typically more environmentally damaging highway improvements. For example this project is projected to move up to 87,000 riders a day by 2025 with no residential displacements. Compare that to the recently proposed Capital Beltway improvements which displaced up to 300 residences and would adversely impact many more, while providing 2025 capacity for 2000-6000 more cars each rush hour or up to 42,000 cars per day.

Consequently EPA rates this project and the associated documentation with Lack of Objections with Adequate documentation (LO-1). Enclosed for your reference is a copy of EPA's rating system. We encourage the development of the full Metrorail alternative because with the highest ridership it will have the greatest capacity of moving people through the corridor and should have the greatest impact on reducing congestion and air pollution. The full Metrorail alternative will be a permanent alternative to the heavily congested roads in the Dulles Corridor and is supported by more businesses, residences and community groups than any other alternative. In addition, the full Metrorail alternative is on the MWCOG CLRP and has been found to conform to regional air quality plans.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this letter please feel free to contact me at 215-814-3367/2995 or Mr. Peter Stokely of my staff at 703-648-4292.

Sincerely,

William Arguto Hoffman, Acting Director

NEPA/Fed Fac Team Leader Office of

Environmental Programs

Enclosure