

UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION III

1650 Arch St., Philadelphia, PA 19103

Mr. Karl Roher

Project Manager

Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation

1550 Wilson Boulevard

Suite 300

Arlington, Virginia 22209

Dear Mr. Roher:

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 Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) and Section 4(f) Evaluation. This project was initially described in the context of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) in June 2002. EPA rated the DEIS and the locally preferred alternative with Lack of Objections with Adequate documentation (LO-1) in August 2002.

The SDEIS describes and summarizes changes of the potential transportation and environmental impacts related to minor design changes that resulted from the review of the DEIS and public comments. In addition, due to funding constraints, the overall project is now proposed to be completed in two phases with the final completion pushed to 2015 instead of 2009. These changes in the project scope and design were made after the completion of the DEIS and are the major focus of the SDEIS.

The locally preferred alternative continues to be the development of the full scope of the project with the minor design changes that resulted from the review of the DEIS and public comment. 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. The project is located in the rapidly growing and heavily congested Dulles Corridor which includes Dulles International Airport and the major employment hub of Tyson's 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, Tyson's Corner and Dulles Airport.

Alternatives studied in the SDEIS included 1) the no-build alternative, 2) the DEIS locally preferred alternative (Metrorail extension to Dulles Airport). 3) the SDEIS modified locally preferred alternative (Metrorail extension to Dulles Airport with design modifications) and 4) a phased approach, which includes Metrorail extension as far as Tyson's Corner and interim bus service to Dulles Airport by 2009 with completion of the Metrorail to Dulles Airport by 2015.

The suggested design changes to the locally preferred alternative, Alternative 3, mostly resulted in no change or a reduction in impacts. There are no identified major community impacts, Environmental Justice issues, or natural resource issues. The project continues to be confined to existing right-of-way or is located on existing parking lots, streets and other developed lands. There are still no residential displacements and commercial displacements appear to be less as a result of the revisions. Wetland and stream impacts are less than that associated with a typical residential development in the area. The modified Metrorail alternative remains on the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOC) Constrained Long Range Transportation Plan (CLRP) and it conforms with regional air quality plans.

Phasing of the project will result in total impacts similar to the SDEIS modified locally preferred alternative (Metrorail extension to Dulles Airport with design modifications). However, phasing of the project does appear to adversely effect early year ridership numbers and thus may have less of an air quality and traffic benefit in the short run as compared to an early full build out. However, all alternatives conform to the regional air quality plans.

Consequently EPA continues to rate the Dulles Corridor Rapid Transit Project and the SDEIS with a Lack of Objections with Adequate documentation (LO-1). 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.

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

Sincerely,

William Hoffman, Director

Office of Environmental Programs