Environmental Assessment and Section 4(f) Statement for the Tri-Cities Multimodal Station

Prepared Pursuant to 42 USC §4332, 49 USC § 303, and 64 FR 28545

by the U.S. Department of Transportation –
Federal Railroad Administration

and

Crater Planning District Commission

The following person may be contacted for information on the Environmental Assessment:

Mr. Joseph Vinsh, Director of Transportation
Crater Planning District Commission
1964 Wakefield Avenue
Petersburg, VA 23805
(804) 861-1666 or
jvinsh@craterpdc.org

PROJECT BACKGROUND AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the proposed Tri-Cities Area Multimodal Station (Project).

This summary is intended to assist readers in answering these and other important questions:

- What is the Tri-Cities Area Multimodal Station Project?
- What is an EA?
- What goes into an EA?
- How is an EA prepared? Who prepares it?
- What were the steps in the environmental review of the Tri-Cities Area Multimodal Station project?
- What are some areas of controversy related to the Tri-Cities Area Multimodal Station project?
- What are some of the environmental effects related to the Tri-Cities Area Multimodal Station project?

Some of the highlights of this EA are discussed below.

WHAT IS THE TRI-CITIES AREA MULTIMODAL STATION PROJECT?

The Project involves the construction of a new multimodal station in the Tri-Cities area of Virginia, which includes the Cities of Petersburg, Colonial Heights and Hopewell (Tri-Cities). The proposed station will serve existing and future Amtrak regional and long distance trains, which operate at conventional speeds[1] through the Tri-Cities area, and will also support the introduction of higher speed rail[2] service along the Southeast High Speed Rail (SEHSR) Corridor. The SEHSR Corridor extends from the Northeast Corridor (NEC) and Washington, DC through Richmond and the Tri-Cities area, then branching onto two routes extending eastward to Norfolk, VA and westward to Raleigh and Charlotte, NC. Previous SEHSR[3] studies did not evaluate potential environmental impacts of new stations as part of its documentation, including the Tri-Cities area, leaving that analysis to be conducted in conjunction with local jurisdictions such as the Crater Planning District Commission (CPDC), the agency sponsoring this evaluation.

Figure ES 1 shows the Study Area for this Project and includes all localities within Tri-Cities area.

[1] Not in excess of 80 mph for passenger trains on Class 4 track – 49 CFR 213.9.

[2] Maximum authorized speed of 110 mph – SEHSR Tier II FEIS (2015)

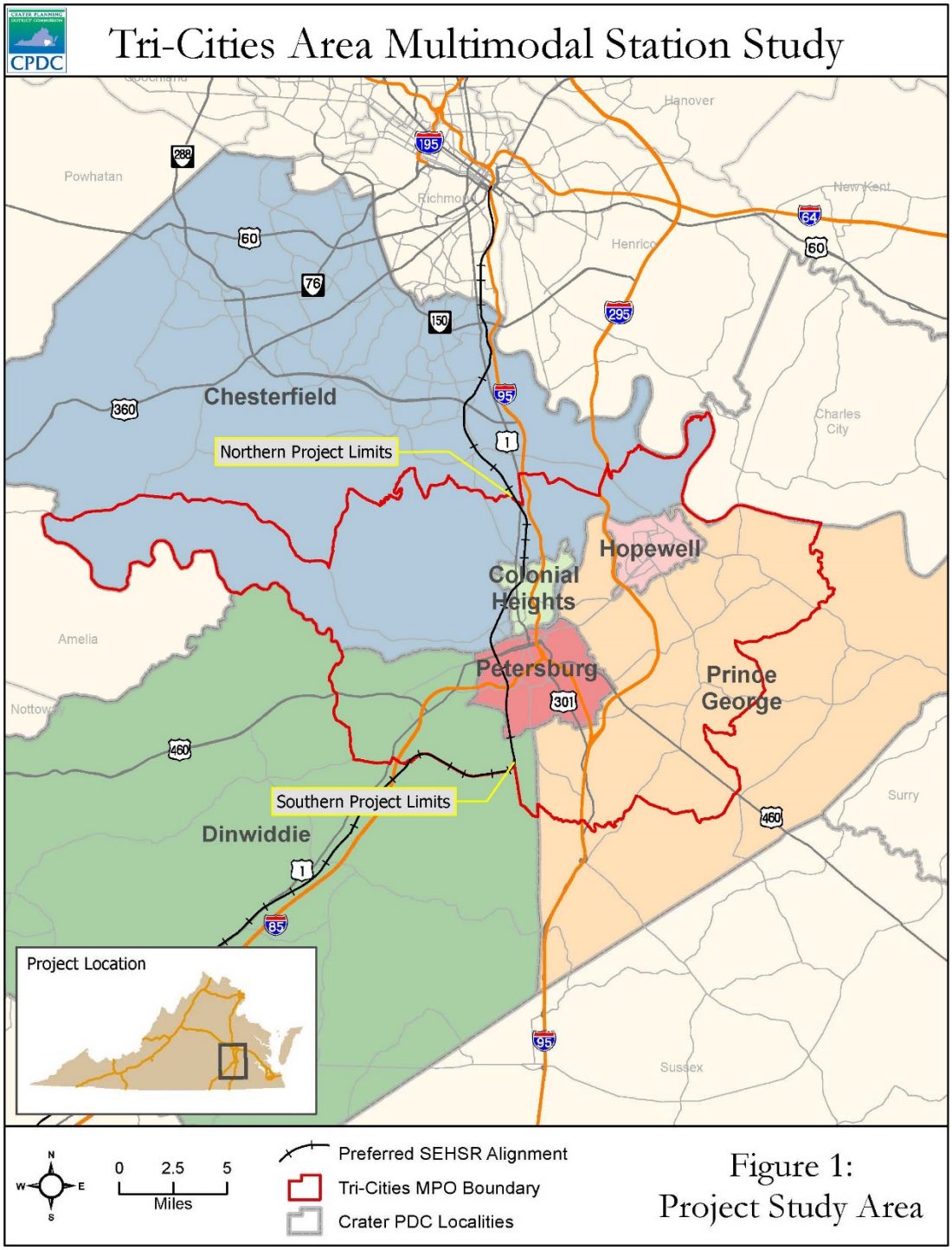
[3] Tier-I EIS, Southeast High Speed Rail Project, Washington D.C. to Charlotte NC, 2002.

Tier-I EIS, Richmond to Hampton Roads Passenger Rail Project, 2012.

Tier-II EIS, Southeast High Speed Rail, Richmond, VA to Raleigh, NC (2015)

The purpose of the Project is to construct the Tri-Cities Area Multimodal Station for current intercity passenger rail service through Petersburg, including the relatively new conventional service to Norfolk, and prepare for the future introduction of higher speed rail service on the SEHSR corridor to Norfolk and North Carolina.

Figure ES 1: Project Study Area



WHAT IS AN ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (EA)?

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) (42 U.S.C. § 4321, et seq.) requires federal agencies to facilitates public disclosure and establishes policies to study the reasonable range of alternatives and assess environmental impacts of proposed projects.

A NEPA document must be prepared by a federal agency for any major federal action that could potentially affect the quality of the natural and built environment. The appropriate type of NEPA document that a federal agency must prepare for a given project (either a Categorical Exclusion, an EA, or an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)) is determined by the agency through a thorough review of the proposed project. A "major federal action" might include an agency proposal to approve or implement a project or program, or when an agency provides funding for a project. The term "environment" refers to the natural and physical setting, including resources like animals, plants, buildings, and landscapes, and the relationship of people with that natural and physical setting. When the significance of impacts of an action is uncertain, an EA is prepared to assist in making this determination. If the EA finds that the Project will result in significant, unmitigatable impacts, the preparation of an EIS will be required. If no significant impacts are associated with the action after completing the EA, a finding of no significant impact (FONSI) may be prepared.

An "environmental effect" is any change to the environment resulting from the proposed activity. Environmental effects can be both positive (beneficial) or negative (adverse). An EA typically includes measures to mitigate potential adverse effects.

WHAT GOES INTO AN EA?

NEPA assumes that any proposed goal can be achieved through different means. To this end, NEPA requires that an EA evaluate the environmental effects of a "reasonable range" of project alternatives. NEPA defines a "reasonable alternative" as an option that would feasibly achieve the objectives of a particular proposed action.

NEPA does not require any specific number of alternatives. Instead, the number and type of reasonable alternatives depends on the specific nature of the Project. The reasonable range of alternatives is determined after careful consideration of a number of factors which may include technical and environmental criteria.

Practicality is another consideration in determining whether an alternative is "reasonable"–NEPA allows cost, engineering feasibility, and other factors to be considered.

NEPA does require that an environmental document explicitly note two specific alternatives:

- No Build or No Action Alternative
- Agency Preferred Alternative

Each of the alternatives is discussed in more detail below. Under NEPA, the No Build or No Action Alternative (which will be referred to as the No Build Alternative in this EA) details the environmental effects that would result if no action were taken. In this case, no new multimodal station would be constructed.

The term "Agency Preferred Alternative" refers to the option/alternative that the lead and cooperating agencies believe would best fulfill each agency's statutory mission and responsibilities, in consideration with economic, environmental, and technical factors.

WHAT IS THE PROCESS FOR PREPARING THE EA?

NEPA and the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) implementing regulations[4] define the general framework for preparing an EA. Each federal agency may also have its own, more specific guidelines for implementing NEPA that will influence the contents of an environmental document. For example, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) uses its Procedures for Considering Environmental Impacts to supplement the CEQ regulations.[5]

Scoping

The scoping process refers to the early and open process for identifying significant issues related to a proposed action. As part of the scoping process, public agencies and the public are invited to participate and provide comment. Public scoping meetings are held to give agencies and the public a chance to submit comments, discuss the proposed alternatives, and talk about the NEPA guidelines and EA process with project team members. A public workshop was held to initiate this EA process and to help scope out concerns on December 11, 2014. Scoping packages were also distributed to agencies and identified stakeholders at that time. An additional public workshop was held on September 16, 2015 to receive input on project alternatives under consideration.

Appendix K-5 of this EA contains summary reports of the public workshops held.

Environmental Assessment (EA)

The purpose of this EA is to disclose all of the environmental effects associated with the alternatives, whether they are adverse or beneficial and allow for the public to review and comment on the document. The lead agency, FRA, publishes the document and informs citizens and stakeholders of its availability through a variety of means. The EA is used to determine the next step in the NEPA process – either the preparation of an EIS or a FONSI as noted above. If no significant impacts are associated with the action after completing the EA, a FONSI may be prepared and would represent the final step in this process.

Who prepares an EA?

NEPA establishes a framework whereby federal, state, local and tribal agencies as well as the public can have important roles in project development and the environmental review process. FRA is the Lead Agency preparing this EA for the Project. FRA has the authority to regulate the safety of railroads and manages financial assistance programs for rail capital investments. FRA is also the lead agency for the Tier-II EIS for the SEHSR Richmond, VA to Raleigh, NC project, which encompasses the railroad corridor adjacent to the Project and will provide service to the station. FRA has also been identified as the lead agency because it is

[4] See Section 1.5 for applicable regulations and permits

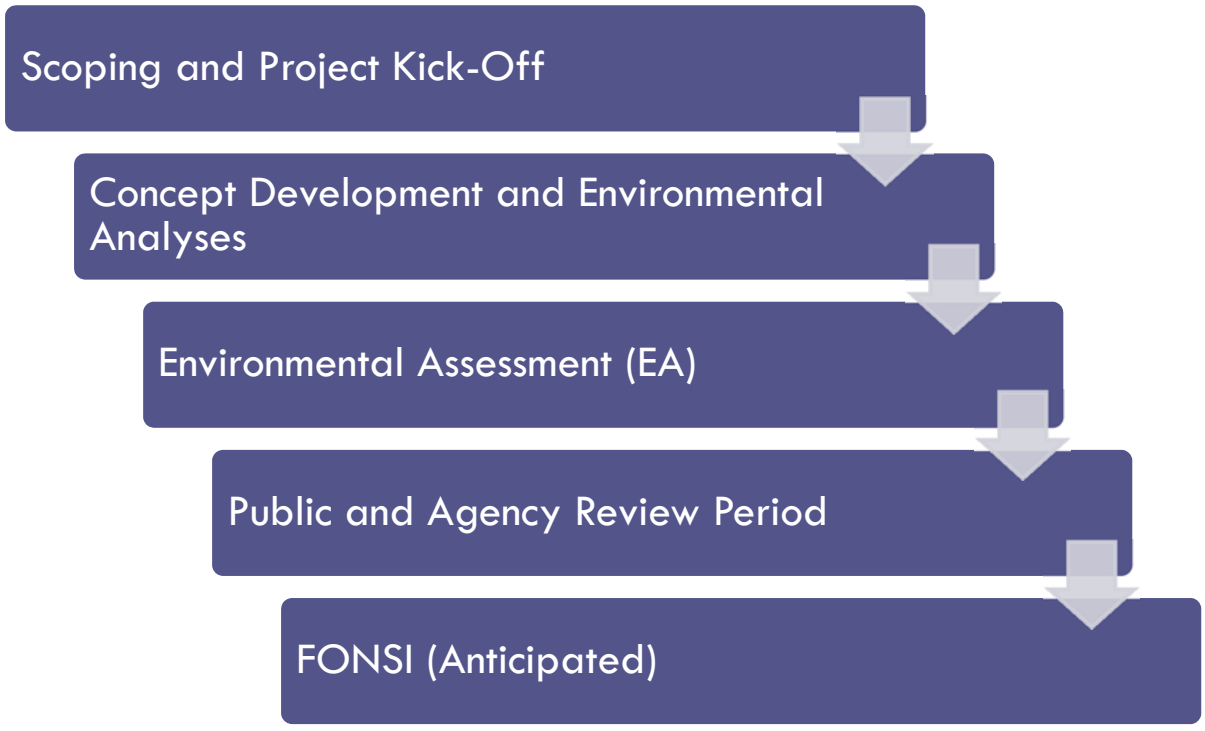
[5] See 64 Fed. Reg. 28545.

anticipated that they could provide funding assistance for station construction. Overall management for the EA was provided by the CPDC, who is FRA's state partner on the Project and was the sponsor for the environmental document. A Study Working Group (SWG) formed by CPDC, which is also described in the EA, consisting of local agencies and stakeholders, provided guidance for the EA process. These agencies reviewed the proposed project and environmental analyses and provided comments and input on the overall process.

For the NEPA process for this Project, FRA has worked with two Cooperating Agencies, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The role of the Cooperating Agencies is to assist the Lead Agency during the scoping process and in developing information and preparing environmental analyses; the specific roles depend on the agency's expertise and relationship to the proposed action. Additional station funding may be available from FTA and FHWA, therefore this EA included their participation. While not considered formal Cooperating Agencies, the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) and the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) also worked closely with FRA throughout the EA process. Chapter 4.0, Coordination and Consultation, of this EA lists all of the agencies that were consulted in the development of these documents.

Figure ES 2 illustrates the Tri-Cities Area Multimodal Station EA process.

Figure ES 2: Environmental Assessment Process



WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE TRI-CITIES AREA MULTIMODAL STATION PROJECT?

One of the most important aspects of NEPA is the requirement to define the "purpose and need" of a project. In other words– what is the objective of the Project? What need will it fulfill?

The purpose of this Project is to construct a multimodal station for current intercity passenger rail service through Petersburg, including the relatively new conventional service to Norfolk, and to prepare for the future introduction of high speed rail service on the SEHSR corridor to Norfolk and North Carolina. While the existing Petersburg Station in Ettrick supports current Amtrak passenger rail service, additional investment is required to attract and accommodate increased ridership, improve accessibility to the local and regional transportation network, improve ADA accessibility, and provide capacity to support future high speed rail service.

The secondary purposes of this Project are to:

- Construct a station in a location that supports the SEHSR goal of diverting trips from air and highway within the travel corridor to passenger rail use, thus reducing the growth rate of congestion on I-95; and

- Construct a station in a location that serves long-distance, regional, business and leisure travelers within and beyond Virginia, including Amtrak's Northeast Corridor (NEC), extending from Washington, DC, to Boston, MA, as well as points south (the SEHSR Tier-II EIS serves as the key link for these travelers to the busy Northeast) and east to the Norfolk and Hampton Roads area.

This EA includes a comparative analysis of potential station locations that would best serve the Tri-Cities area passenger rail market.

The Purpose and Need for the Project are summarized in Chapter 1 of this EA.

WHAT ALTERNATIVES WERE CONSIDERED IN THIS EA?

This EA identifies and evaluates a number of potential station locations relative to the purpose and need requirements supporting the regional SEHSR Corridor as well as the local transportation network in the Tri-Cities. The Tri-Cities MPO (CPDC) and their appointed SWG, in conjunction with input from FRA, were instrumental in the selection and application of the criteria and measures of effectiveness used to evaluate existing and proposed station location alternatives for this study. This work is consistent with the recommendations of the SEHSR Tier-II EIS as mentioned previously. Other than analyzing how potential stations would impact the overall transportation network, the SEHSR Tier-II EIS did not evaluate potential environmental impacts of new stations as part of its documentation, leaving that analysis to be conducted in conjunction with local jurisdictions.

The first step for alternatives evaluation was a preliminary screening evaluating the entire rail corridor within the Study Area. The preliminary screening identified all possible areas with the appropriate track geometry

and available land area to accommodate a rail platform and station. The preliminary screening was a two-step process, resulting in 13 preliminary station location concepts. The 13 concepts are discussed in more detail in Chapter 2 of this EA.

The assessment of 13 preliminary station concepts was an iterative screening process conducted in coordination with the Tri-Cities MPO's SWG. The screening process compared each of the station areas to the established measures of effectiveness that were developed in collaboration with the SWG and based on input received at a public workshop held December 11, 2014. The measures of effectiveness are organized into five different categories, with multiple measures in each category.

A summary of the measures is included below and the complete details of each measure are included in Appendix A.1:

- Design Considerations – platform accommodation, ADA compatibility, and freight integration
- Property Implementation – assessed value, access routes, and relocations
- Environmental Constraints – environmental justice and human/natural resources
- Proximity – distance to interstate, population and employment within 1 mile, and transit access
- Local Compatibility – compatibility with each locality's Comprehensive Plan and locality support

Based on these measures of effectiveness, each station concept was scored and ranked to understand its strengths and weaknesses. The results of the screening indicate that all station sites have advantages and disadvantages; some more so than others.

The five highest ranked preliminary station areas following an initial Screening #1 phase, which were highly conceptual in nature, are presented from north to south in the list below and shown in Chapter 2 of this EA.

- Walthall - the Walthall site in Chesterfield County is one of the farthest north of the 13 potential station sites. This site ranked fourth (tie) overall in the preliminary screening. The Walthall site has some strengths, including design considerations and a large open parcel. However, being so far north, the site is furthest from major population and employment centers[6], with limited supporting land uses surrounding the site. Multiple environmental and cultural resource constraints exist within the parcel, and stakeholders have raised serious security concerns due to the proximity to secured industrial uses.
- Branders Bridge NE – the Chesterfield County site at Branders Bridge ranked second because of its central location to the urban core and population, limited environmental constraints, and favorable design considerations. However, the site is largely in a residential area and the county's comprehensive plans do not incorporate a multimodal station at this location.

[6] Average distance to geographic center of each Tri-City, Fort Lee and VSU. All sites = 5.7mi; Walthall = 8.6mi.

- Boulevard NW – the Boulevard site is the only location in the City of Colonial Heights and ranked third overall in the preliminary screening. The Boulevard site is a relatively inactive commercial site along a multi-use corridor. The site has significant connectivity to population, employment, and transit. The Boulevard site also has direct roadway access and an existing parking area that would facilitate incorporating a station.

- Ettrick – the Chesterfield County site at the existing station ranked the highest among all the potential station sites in the preliminary screening process. Ettrick's biggest strengths are in the design consideration and property implementation categories since it is an existing station on CSXT property, and is also within close proximity to much of the area's population and employment[7], and has limited environmental constraints. In addition, the County recently adopted the Ettrick Virginia State University (VSU) Special Area Plan, a plan for future growth and development of the community of Ettrick and VSU. The County's plan is to promote economic development (i.e., commercial) around the Ettrick Station that supports rail travelers and the surrounding community. The plan promotes multimodal access to the station, as well as enhancement of the station to better serve as a gateway into the county.

- Collier East – the Collier site in the City of Petersburg, just south of Interstate (I-85), tied for the rank of fourth with the Walthall site. Collier East is a large, open parcel owned by the City of Petersburg, making it score highly in property implementation. The site is located just south of the city and somewhat removed from major population and employment centers when compared to the other station locations. In addition, the site has not been included in any adopted plans by the City of Petersburg.

The Screening #2 phase compared conceptual layouts for each of the five station concept locations relative to the sensitive resources within the site. The comparative results were used to evaluate site development feasibility and refine the concepts into more detailed Build Alternatives for evaluation in this EA.

The Walthall Station conceptual site was not carried forward for further evaluation due to the potential impacts to: the operations of a secure, private facility; wetlands and surface waters; designated resource protection areas; and archaeological resources. These potential impacts are greater at this site than at the remaining four sites. In addition, the potential impacts activate issues associated with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, Section 4(f) of the U.S. DOT Act, and Sections 404 and 401 of the Clean Water Act. In addition to these environmental concerns, Walthall is located the farthest north of the existing urban core and does not have existing or planned transit connectivity, which fails to meet the need for the Project to be within proximity to population and employment centers, and transit access. Thus, it was recommended to be designated as an alternative considered and dismissed from detailed analysis. The SWG affirmed their consent of this designation.

The Collier conceptual location was evaluated in Screening #2 and carried forward for further evaluation in the EA. During the Phase I archaeological survey of the Collier site, sufficient artifacts were identified within the conceptual footprint to warrant a more detailed, Phase II archaeological survey. The Phase II survey

[7] Average distance to geographic center of each Tri-City, Fort Lee and VSU. All sites = 5.7mi; Ettrick = 4.4mi.

uncovered archaeological remains of a mid-nineteenth-century outbuilding believed to be associated with a kitchen or dairy of a large farming operation active during the Antebellum, as well as Civil War and Reconstruction periods of the site. Given the historic significance of the site, the SWG agreed that shifting the Collier site southward, away from the newly discovered archaeological site, would serve as an appropriate avoidance measure. This shifted Collier site, referred to as Collier South was carried forward into the EA.

Of the five conceptual station sites evaluated in Screening #2, four concepts were carried forward for further evaluation in this EA to become the Build Alternatives: Boulevard (NW), Branders Bridge (NE), Ettrick, as well as the shifted location for Collier - Collier South. The No-Build Alternative (maintaining the existing Petersburg Amtrak Station in Ettrick with no improvements to the station) is also a baseline alternative against which the proposed station sites are compared, although it would not meet the purpose and need for this Project.

To test for site development suitability and environmental impacts at each of the four Build Alternatives, a common station concept was developed. Station size, determined by current utilization and anticipated ridership growth, calls for a Small/Medium Station. The typical station footprint is approximately 2.5 acres, although this can vary once design phase is conducted depending on unique site characteristics. Each Build Alternative station and configuration was influenced by topographical constraints and site-specific conditions. Upon identification of a Preferred Build Alternative at the conclusion of this NEPA process, the station site design will be further refined during final design. The sites, as currently assessed, are conceptual in nature and subject to refinement.

At this conceptual stage of design, the typical station features for any of the four Build Alternatives include the following:

- Center platform, to be located between the eastern-most existing mainline track and the future SEHSR third track. The platform would be a minimum of 24 feet wide and extend up to 1,200 feet on tangent/level track. Depending on the site selected, either an overhead bridge or underpass would be constructed to provide access to the center platform.

- 3,600 square foot station building with a minimum of passenger waiting, restrooms, and vending amenities.

- Parking for 30-50 vehicles.

- Automobile access road, and in one case, a new bridge to nearest arterial road.

For each of the four Build Alternatives, the proposed facility was located to best fit the existing topographic conditions; minimize impacts to existing natural and cultural resources; minimize impacts to private property and structures; and minimize grading, related earthwork, and other ground-disturbing activities. If a station site required a new access road, such roads were kept to a minimum length, providing the clearest, most direct access to the site in light of natural and human resource constraints. Vehicular access to the station site that requires or increases travel through primarily residential or neighborhood streets was avoided where possible.

No-Build Alternative (Maintain Existing Ettrick Station)

The No-Build Alternative maintains the existing Petersburg Amtrak Station in Ettrick as it currently exists. Only routine maintenance would be provided at this station (Figure 6). While the No-Build Alternative does not disturb the Project site nor result in any immediate impacts, it would not address the Purpose and Need for the Project.

Boulevard Build Alternative

The central development focus of Colonial Heights is along US 1, known locally as the "Boulevard". The Boulevard Build Alternative is primarily on private property that was once a big-box retail store with a correspondingly large, paved parking area adjacent to Boulevard (US 1). Current use of the site includes a tape slitting operation (Superior Slitting), an equipment rental business (Rent-E-Quip), a carpet sales store (Carpet-N-Floors), and an automatic ice vending booth. As proposed, the platform, station, and parking area would be on the eastern side of the rail line, within the existing paved parking area. The SEHSR Tier-II EIS Preferred Alternative calls for a third track to be constructed on the eastern side of the rail line. A new platform would be provided between the current track and this newly constructed track, necessitating grade-separated pedestrian access. The mainline tracks are above grade at this location (approximately 12 feet to 15 feet), which necessitates retaining walls, as well as ADA ramps/elevator access to the platform from the passenger waiting area. The platform would be constructed within the existing railroad right-of-way, parallel to the existing track, with the new SEHSR track located on the opposite side of the platform for a center island design. Station access would be provided via Boulevard (US 1). See Table 6 in the main EA document for additional details of the station features at the Boulevard conceptual station site as well as the other sites.

Branders Bridge Build Alternative

Located in the Chesterfield County, the Branders Bridge Build Alternative site is on private property that is currently undeveloped. However, the property has been recently purchased and the property owner intends to construct an agri-business and home on the property. The exact location and extent of this development is not available at this time. As proposed, the station and parking area would be on the eastern side of the current rail line. The SEHSR Tier-II EIS Preferred Alternative calls for a third track to be constructed on the eastern side of the rail line. A new platform would be provided between the current track and this newly constructed track, necessitating grade-separated pedestrian access. The SEHSR Tier-II EIS Preferred Alternative also calls for the removal of the existing, at-grade rail crossing of Branders Bridge Road. This crossing would be replaced with a new Branders Bridge Road overpass. The new overpass would span the existing rail, center platform, and proposed new third track. Potential design considerations for a new overpass could include an additional pedestrian (elevator) access point down to the station platform at this location. A new access road to the station would be necessary to connect to the realigned Branders Bridge Road.

Ettrick Build Alternative

Located in Chesterfield County, the Ettrick conceptual station is approximately 220 feet north of the existing Ettrick station, along the eastern side of the rail line. The site is owned by CSXT. The SEHSR Tier-II EIS Preferred Alternative calls for a third track to be constructed to the east of the existing rail line. A new platform would be provided between the current track and this newly constructed track, necessitating grade-

separated pedestrian access. The existing Ettrick station could be replaced in its entirety or incorporated into a plan for adaptive re-use. Access to the station would continue to be via South Street to either James Street then East River Road or to Bessie Lane to Granger Street.

Collier South Build Alternative

Located in the City of Petersburg, the Collier South Build Alternative site, platform, parking lot, and access road are within property owned by the City of Petersburg (See Figure 8 in the EA). This station location must accommodate the switch point location to the Norfolk Connection Track, which provides a connection for passenger trains traveling to and from Norfolk. Ultimately, the optimal station location was chosen with two platforms that enable both Norfolk trains (side platform) and Amtrak long distance trains traveling along the eastern seaboard and SEHSR trains to North Carolina (center platform) to be served. Station locations farther north or south on this property would result in less optimal design/access, such as limited platform length or requirement for a platform on a curve, which does not conform to Amtrak's preferred station design guidelines.

The SEHSR Tier-II EIS Preferred Alternative calls for a third track to be constructed east of the existing rail line. A new platform would be provided between the current track and this newly constructed track, necessitating grade-separated pedestrian access. Given the platform design requirements, the station location requires an approximately 1,800-foot long access road to the south to connect to Route 604 (Halifax Road). To shift the access road to the north and connect to Defense Road would have adverse effects to multiple Civil War resources eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP): Defense Road, Dimmrock Line/Earthworks, and the Bridge over Defense Road. To avoid these potential Section 106 and Section 4(f) resources, the access road is located to the south and includes a grade separated crossing in order to access the station. A secondary access road from the east remains possible at this location, which would not provide primary access but would allow for additional entry for emergency or service vehicles.

More details about the screening process and the Build Alternatives are provided in Chapter 2 of this EA.

WHAT INPUT WAS RECEIVED DURING THE PROCESS ABOUT THE ALTERNATIVES?

Once the Build Alternatives were defined and preliminary concepts created, these were shared with the SWG and the public in a workshop held on September 16, 2015 in Ettrick. Input on preferences or any remaining concerns about the four Build Alternatives was solicited at that time and are discussed in Chapter 4 of this EA and included in Appendix K5.

At that workshop and during the 30 day comment period that followed, a total of thirty-five (35) comment sheets were received. Of those received during the comment period, thirteen (13) citizens stated their preference for the Ettrick Build Alternative location, eleven (11) preferred the Boulevard Build Alternative location, nine (9) preferred the Collier South Build Alternative, and two (2) did not state a preference. At the workshop, concerns about the Branders Bridge Build Alternative were discussed and it received no preferences. In identifying why citizens selected a preferred location, the two highest benefits cited for any location were consideration of vehicular access to the Build Alternative and consideration of future

development potential of the Build Alternative site and surrounding land uses. After the comment period was closed, seven (7) additional comments and notes of support were submitted stating a preference for the Ettrick Build Alternative.

Members of the SWG, which consists of stakeholders and localities within CPDC, were also asked to identify their preferences of any of the Build Alternatives under consideration. Responses are also included in Appendix K5. The Branders Bridge Build Alternative did not receive any support from the localities or stakeholders in the SWG. The Boulevard Build Alternative was identified as the preferred Build Alternative by Colonial Heights and Prince George County (who identified two preferred Build Alternatives). The Ettrick Build Alternative was identified by Chesterfield County as the preferred location. The Collier South Build Alternative was the preferred location by Dinwiddie County, Hopewell, City of Petersburg, the Petersburg Area Transit authority (PAT) and Prince George County. The resolutions that support these preferences were provided to the FRA, FHWA, and FTA as part of the process and are included in Appendix K5.

WHAT IS THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

The Preferred Alternative is the Project alternative that best meets the purpose and need of the Project and is favored by the agencies for approval and future construction. The Preferred Alternative is the alternative which FRA and the Cooperating Agencies, FHWA and FTA, believe would most closely align with their statutory mission and responsibilities, giving consideration to economic, environmental, technical and other factors. As the Lead Federal Agency, FRA is responsible for considering the input from Cooperating Agencies with regard to the selection of the Preferred Alternative. FRA and the Cooperating Agencies have considered the range of alternatives presented in this EA when selecting the Preferred Alternative as well as the input provided throughout the study process. FRA has identified the Boulevard Build Alternative as the Preferred Alternative for the Project for the following reasons:

- The Boulevard site is the most accessible and visible under consideration, as it is located approximately one mile (1.1 miles) from I-95 on a major arterial that provides convenient access to population centers in the region. Furthermore:
    - The site is less than a three minute travel time to I-95. Access to Interstates is a key consideration for Amtrak and inter-regional train service patronage, including potential feeder bus service, such as Amtrak's Thruway connection service[8].
    - Access from I-95 to the proposed site is provided along existing major arterials, Temple Avenue and Boulevard (US 1).
    - Improvements to Temple Avenue access at I-95 are currently under construction by VDOT.

[8] https://www.amtrak.com/thruway-connecting-services-multiply-your-travel-destinations

- The Boulevard site is close to the existing population / activity centers, including Fort Lee, VSU, downtown Petersburg and downtown Colonial Heights.
- Existing transit routes provide access to the site along Boulevard (US 1).
- The site is consistent from a land use perspective as it is proposed in an existing mixed /use and commercial corridor.
- The station could utilize existing parking that is directly accessible from Boulevard (US 1), requiring no new access routes or improvement to routes that provide access to the station.
- The Boulevard Build Alternative is the station site with the highest WalkScore[9], a widely used measure of walkability in the station area that looks at the presence of sidewalks, land use and the overall pedestrian environment and measures how amenable it is to walking. The site is located within a "somewhat walkable" environment – the only station site to receive that category of rating.
- The Boulevard Build Alternative has been endorsed by the locality, the City of Colonial Heights.

  No environmental constraints exist that would preclude implementation of the station in this location.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS RELATED TO THE TRI-CITIES AREA MULTIMODAL STATION PROJECT?

This EA provides an evaluation of the environmental effects associated with the Build Alternatives. The Build Alternatives would have both negative (adverse) and positive (beneficial) impacts on the environment. Mitigation measures are provided to reduce or eliminate adverse environmental effects, where needed. The potential effects, both beneficial and adverse, of the Build Alternatives are summarized below. Table 1 summarizes the comparable effects of the Build Alternatives. Chapter 4 of this EA includes detailed evaluations for each of the Build Alternatives.

[9] As determined at https://www.walkscore.com/

Table ES-1: Summary of Impacts

Category	Impacts by Build Alternative				
	No-Build (Existing Ettrick Station)	Boulevard	Branders Bridge	Ettrick (New Station)	Collier South
Total Area of Station Footprint (acres)	N/A	2.67	2.57	2.34	4.30
Current Station Parcel Ownership	CSXT*	Private Property	Private Property	CSXT*	City of Petersburg
New Station Access Road (square feet)	N/A	0	14,316	5,056	61,817
Cost (Platform, Station, Parking, Access Road, Bridge, Parcel ($ Millions -2015 Dollars))	N/A	$9 – 12 M	$9 - $11 M	$7 - $9 M	$14 – $17 M
Violations of National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS)	None	None	None	None	None
Sensitive Noise Receptors Impacted	N/A	Category 3 (Institutional Land Uses): 1 Moderate Impact	Category 2 (Residential Land Uses): 1 Moderate Impact	None	None
Vibration	None	None	None	None	None
Water Quality	None	Minimal	Minimal	Minimal	Minimal
Wetlands (acres)	0	0	0	0	0
Streams (linear feet)	0	0	0	0	0
Threatened & Endangered Species	0	0	Potential: Northern Long-eared Bat** *Federal Threatened*	0	0

Category	Impacts by Build Alternative				
	No-Build (Existing Ettrick Station)	Boulevard	Branders Bridge	Ettrick (New Station)	Collier South
Critical Habitat	None	None	None	None	None
Floodplains (acres)	0	0.3	0	0	0
Visual Resources	N/A	Visually Compatible	Limited Impact	Visually Compatible	Limited Impact
Land Use & Zoning Consistency	Consistent	Consistent	Inconsistent	Consistent	Consistent
Farmland Impacts (acres)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3.7 acres Prime Farmland NRCS Rating = 141 out of 260 Points
Relocations: Home, Business, Farm, Non-Profit	0	Requires private property. Existing businesses may remain at same location, but, due to center platform track configurations, one business relocation is possible (adjacent to bridge).	Requires private property, but no relocations	0	0
Environmental Justice (EJ) Concerns	EJ Communities Present No disproportionately high and adverse impacts anticipated	EJ Communities Present No disproportionately high and adverse impacts anticipated	No EJ Communities	EJ Communities Present No disproportionately high and adverse impacts anticipated	EJ Communities Present No disproportionately high and adverse impacts anticipated
Public Health Concerns	Minimal	Minimal	Minimal	Minimal	Minimal
Public Safety Concerns	Minimal	Potential Improvement	Potential Improvement	Potential Improvement	Potential Improvement
Contaminated / Hazardous Waste Sites	0	0	0	0	0

Category	Impacts by Build Alternative				
	No-Build (Existing Ettrick Station)	Boulevard	Branders Bridge	Ettrick (New Station)	Collier South
Parks & Recreation Areas	0	0	0	0	0
# Cultural Resource Properties Affected (NRHP Listed or Eligible) ***	0	No Adverse Effect on 2 Properties	No Adverse Effect on 1 Property	No Adverse Effect on 1 Property	No Adverse Effect on 3 Properties
Section 4(f) Property Used ***	0	0	0	0	3 *de minimis* uses
Secondary & Cumulative Development Potential	Higher Potential	Higher Potential	Minimal Potential	Higher Potential	Moderate Potential

Source: Michael Baker International, 2015.

* CSXT is a private entity, but as a transportation services provider it traditionally works in conjunction with passenger rail services in its corridors. In this instance, the building and facilities are the responsibility of Amtrak but land is owned by CSXT.

**Northern Long-eared Bat: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has indicated that station construction at the Branders Bridge site may effect this federally threatened species. Avoidance of impacts to this species is achieved by implementing time-of-year (TOY) restrictions for no tree clearing from April 15 – September 15 of any year at this site.

*** In a February 17, 2016 letter to FRA, SHPO stated concurrence with FRA's determination of effects was premature given that the Project is at the conceptual stage. SHPO asked to see more detailed plans for the preferred alternative, along with written comments from consulting parties [namely, the National Park Service], before providing formal comments on project effects. Because this is a conceptual-level EA, FRA is not conducting detailed engineering design on any alternative until a Preferred Alternative is identified. Therefore, the Section 106 process will not be completed until after the release of the EA and the selection of the Preferred Alternative. Following the selection, FRA will again seek SHPO's concurrence on determinations of effect and incorporate the results in the subsequent FONSI. While a formal determination of effect from SHPO is on hold until more detailed design information is available, SHPO stated that, based on the conceptual-level of information available, the potential for adverse effects appears minimal at each of the four station sites (Appendix H, DHR letter dated February 17, 2016). In addition, if necessary, the next step in the Section 4(f) process is for FRA to provide SHPO, in writing, its intent to make a de minimis impact finding. However, because SHPO is not providing a formal determination of effect until more detailed engineering design is available, FRA is unable to complete the Section 4(f) coordination requirements with SHPO. As with completion of the Section 106 process, the Section 4(f) process will be finalized following FRA's selection of a Preferred Alternative, subsequent coordination with SHPO, and documentation of these efforts and results in the FONSI. For more details on the Section 106 and Section 4(f) procedures, see Section 3.23 and 3.24 of this EA.