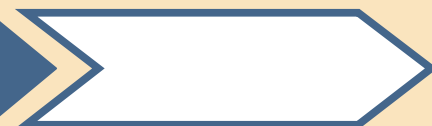


POTOMAC YARD METRORAIL STATION ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT



Scoping Booklet

January 2011



1.0 ABOUT THE PROJECT

1.1 Project Background and Description

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA), as the federal lead agency, in cooperation with the City of Alexandria, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), and the National Park Service (NPS), is initiating the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed Potomac Yard Metrorail Station (or “the project”).

The proposed project consists of construction of a new Metrorail Station located at Potomac Yard within the City of Alexandria along the existing Blue and Yellow Lines between the Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport Station and the Braddock Road Station. Figure 1-2 on the following page shows the location of the project in north Alexandria and depicts the alternative station sites under consideration for further study in the EIS process. The project would serve existing neighborhoods and retail centers as well as high-density, transit-oriented development planned by the City of Alexandria. The project would provide access to the regional Metrorail system for the U.S. Route 1 corridor of north Alexandria, which is currently without direct access to the system. The project alternatives under study are described in more detail in Section 3 of this document.

1.2 NEPA Requirements and Procedures

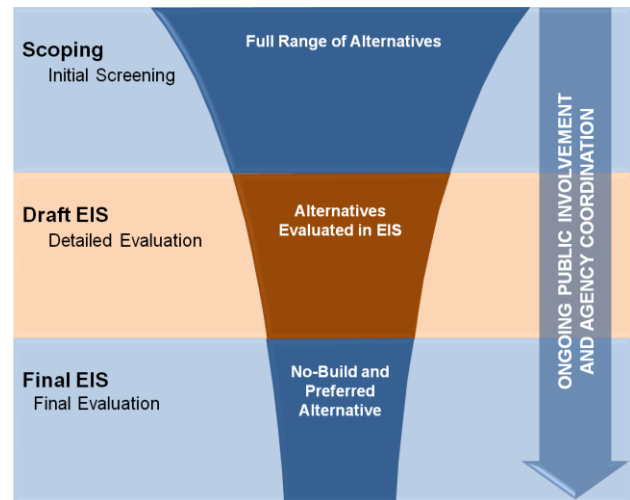
The Potomac Yard Metrorail Station EIS will be prepared in a manner that is consistent with the U.S. Department of Transportation National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Process under the Safe Accountable Flexible Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) Section 6002.

NEPA requires federal agencies to assess the potential impacts of their actions on the human and natural environment. Throughout the EIS process, the public is provided with opportunities to review and comment on various elements of the study.

For an EIS, the NEPA process begins with the publication of a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an EIS in the Federal Register. The NOI initiates the EIS scoping process and provides information on the proposed project including the time and location of public and agency scoping meetings. The scoping process is described in more detail in Section 1.3.

Figure 1-1 shows the general evaluation framework used to identify a preferred alternative during the NEPA process. This begins with identifying a full range of project alternatives and through a series of successive screenings and evaluations during the Scoping, Draft EIS, and Final EIS Phases a preferred alternative is identified.

Figure 1-1: Evaluation Framework

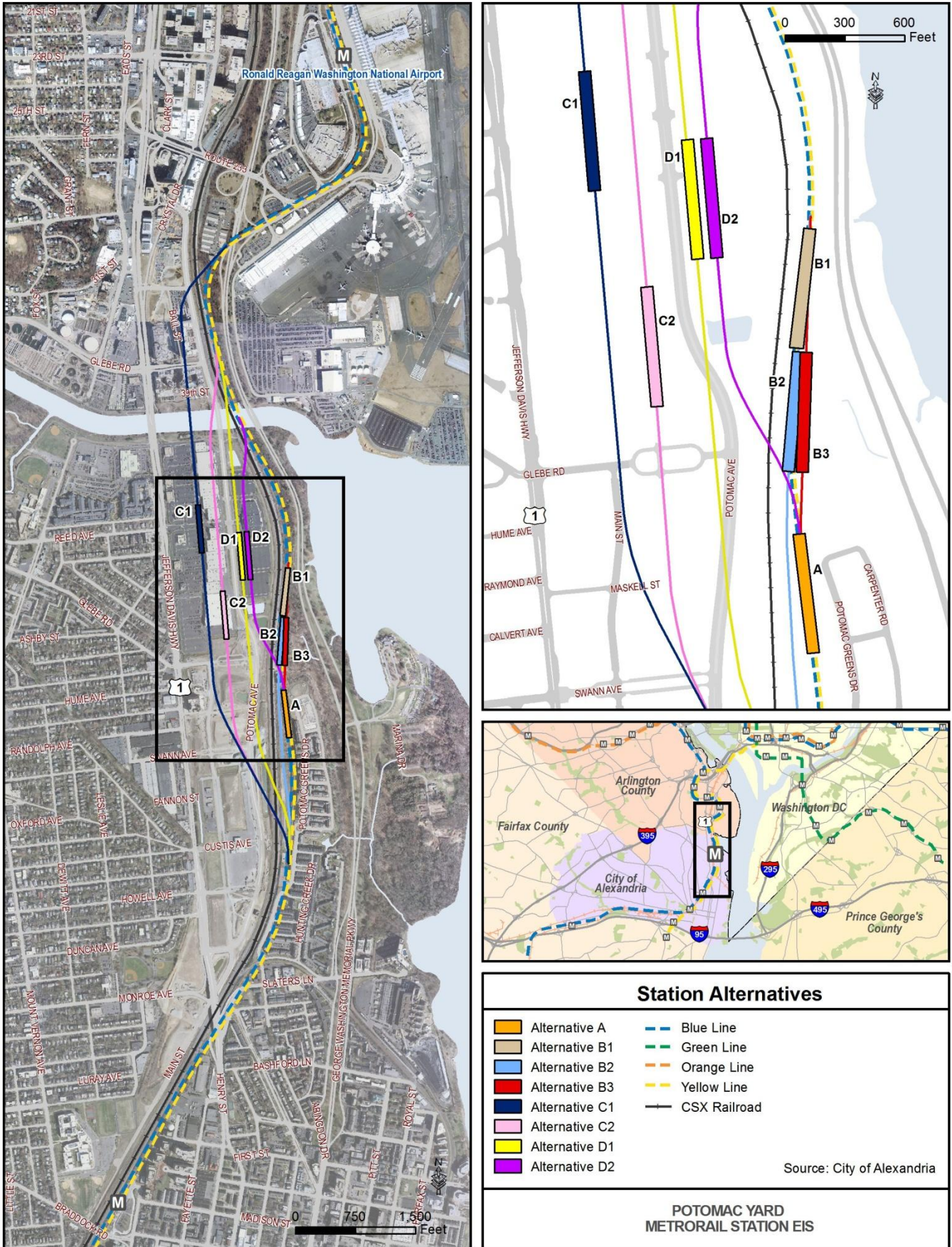


After scoping, the Draft EIS phase begins with documentation of the affected environment, which includes identifying existing conditions and potential opportunities and constraints relative to the proposed project. Based on this information, the potential impacts of each of the remaining project alternatives are assessed and documented. The project alternatives also undergo a detailed evaluation based on potential impacts and their performance relative to the project purpose and need in addition to the goals and objectives.

Upon completion of the Draft EIS, a Notice of Availability is published. The Draft EIS is circulated to all interested parties and those having jurisdiction over the proposed action and is made available for public review for a minimum period of 45 days, beginning no later than 15 days prior to a public hearing for the project and extending for 30 days after the hearing. The Draft EIS provides decision-makers with valuable information on which to base the selection of a preferred alternative.

The Final EIS will then be prepared, documenting the preferred alternative and comparing its impacts to the No Build Alternative. In the Final EIS, a greater level of detail on design, impacts and mitigation, and mitigation commitments, where applicable, will be provided. Finally, a Record of Decision (ROD) will be issued by FTA, documenting the results of the EIS process.

Figure 1-2: Location Map



1.3 Scoping Process

Scoping, as the name implies, is the process of determining the scope of the EIS. It takes place at the beginning of a study and serves the following purposes:

- Identifying a range of actions, reasonable alternatives, and impacts to be considered;
- Connecting previous planning decisions with current project development;
- Establishing a decision-making framework;
- Looking for opportunities to streamline the project and collaborate with partners; and
- Organizing the study and defining boundaries and responsibilities.

During the scoping process, agency and public comments are solicited in response to the information provided and are used to identify reasonable alternatives and potential environmental effects in the preparation of the EIS. SAFETEA-LU Section 6002 specifies that the lead agencies must provide participating and coordinating agencies and the public the opportunity for involvement during the development of the Purpose and Need statement and the identification of the range of alternatives to be considered. As part of this process, the study is providing the opportunity for public comment on the Scoping Booklet (this document).

In addition, these documents and items are being provided to federal, state, regional, tribal, and local agencies with jurisdictional authority or the potential to be impacted by the project for their review and comment. The Scoping Booklet is intended to inform participants of the project and the potential project features planned for consideration in the EIS.

During the scoping process, the full range of alternatives will undergo an initial screening analysis to assess their basic feasibility. See Figure 1-1 for an illustration of the refinement of alternatives throughout the NEPA process. Any alternatives that are clearly not feasible from either a constructability or an environmental perspective will not advance to be evaluated in the EIS. The potential screening criteria include:

- Technical and financial feasibility;
- Performance relative to project purpose, need, goals and objectives;

- General consistency with land use and development plans;
- Potential adverse environmental effects permitted by regulatory agencies; and
- Feasibility of potential environmental mitigation requirements.

1.3.1 Scoping Meetings

Scoping meetings will be conducted at the following date and location:

Date: February 10, 2011

Times: 3:00 pm (agency scoping meeting)
4:30 pm (first public scoping meeting) and
6:30 pm (second public scoping meeting)

Location:

Cora Kelly Recreation Center
25 West Reed Avenue
(at the intersection of Commonwealth and
Reed Avenues)
Alexandria, Virginia

An agency scoping meeting will begin at 3:00 pm. Representatives from federal, state, regional, tribal, and local agencies that may have an interest in any aspect of the project will be invited to serve as either participating or cooperating agencies. They will be invited to come to the agency scoping meeting to review project information and comment on the project purpose and need, agency and public coordination process, alternatives considered, and potential environmental effects addressed in the EIS.

Two public scoping meetings will be held to solicit comments on the scope of the EIS from the public. The first public scoping meeting will begin at 4:30 pm, and the second will begin at 6:30 pm in the same location. A back-up date of Thursday, February 15, 2011 has been set in the event that the meetings cannot be held on February 10 due to inclement weather or another reason.

The meeting will include an open house period where participants will be able to view display boards and handouts with project information and provide comments to staff. This will be followed by a brief presentation summarizing the project information and a comment period. The public will have the opportunity to provide written comments or oral comments documented by a court reporter.

1.3.2 Submitting Comments

Comments will be accepted at the scoping meetings or they may be sent on or before March 15, 2011 by the following methods:

- **By email to:**
comments@potomacyardmetro.com
- **By U.S. postal mail to:**
Potomac Yard Metrorail Station EIS
P.O. Box 25132
Alexandria, VA 22313

Comments will be documented and considered in refining the project purpose and need, alternatives considered, potential environmental effects to be studied, and agency coordination and public involvement process for the project. Written comments will be accepted until March 15, 2011 (30 days after the alternative scoping meeting date). Following this formal scoping process and comment period, a Final Scoping Report will be provided to agencies and the public describing the results of the scoping process and the refined project purpose and need, alternatives considered, potential environmental effects to be studied, and agency coordination and public involvement process.

2.0 PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of the project is to improve accessibility of the Potomac Yard area and provide more transportation choices for current and future residents, employees, and businesses by establishing a new access point to the regional Metrorail system. This additional access point is needed to address existing and future travel demand in the area resulting from the City of Alexandria's planned development of a major transit-oriented mixed-use activity center in the vicinity of the proposed station.

The project area in Alexandria is located in the Northern Virginia portion of the Washington metropolitan region, which is expected to see approximately 30 percent population growth in the next 30 years. The project area is located adjacent to existing residential neighborhoods to the west and southeast and an approximately 600,000 square-foot retail center to the north. The existing retail center is approved for redevelopment, with 2.25 million square feet of total mixed-use development including office, retail, residential and hotel uses. Other properties in the Potomac Yard redevelopment area are approved for a total of approximately 4 million square feet of development. This additional development will

impact the existing roadway network with increased travel demand adding additional vehicle and transit trips. The transportation network in the project area is limited by the heavy rail tracks to the east and limited east-west connectivity west of Route 1.

Currently, the project area is not served by Metrorail or any other rapid transit services which provide regional connectivity. The project area is located between two Metrorail stations that are 3.1 miles apart. This gap between the Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport Station and the Braddock Road Station is the longest for the portions of the Metrorail system that serve urban residential and commercial corridors. This area is currently served by local bus services that operate in mixed traffic along the congested U.S. Route 1 corridor, yet they have numerous local stops resulting in slow transit travel speeds. This results in relatively long transit travel times to access the site. The Crystal City/Potomac Yard Transitway, which will provide bus priority lanes on nearby Route 1, will improve reliability of local transit services along the Route 1 corridor; however, direct access to the Metrorail system is still needed to accommodate longer regional transit trips.

The anticipated Potomac Yard Metrorail Station was included in WMATA's 1999 *Transit Service Expansion Plan*, the 2010 *Financially Constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan for the National Capital Region (CLRP)*, and earlier WMATA and regional transportation plans, in addition to the City of Alexandria's 1992 and 2008 Transportation Master Plans and *North Potomac Yard Small Area Plan*. Establishing a new access point to the regional Metrorail system would promote more transit-friendly development patterns supported by improved access to transit as well as a safe and reliable alternative to automobile travel to and from the Potomac Yard area. Improved access to the regional system is also needed to accommodate a greater share of travel to and from the site on transit, potentially reducing reliance on single-occupant vehicle use, decreasing automobile emissions, and improving regional air quality. The Washington Metropolitan area has been identified as a non-attainment area for ozone and particulate matter because the concentrations of these pollutants exceed acceptable levels as designated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The draft goals and objectives in Table 2-1 address the project purpose and need and will be used in the development and evaluation of project alternatives.

Table 2-1: Project Goals and Objectives

Project Goals	Project Objectives
Goal 1: Improve access to the regional Metrorail system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support WMATA’s current system expansion plans for the Metrorail system • Support regional long-range transportation plans • Maximize access and minimize travel times for regional transit trips to and from existing and planned development in the Potomac Yard area
Goal 2: Serve population and employment growth in the Potomac Yard area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximize accessibility of transit to existing and planned population and employment within the project study area • Support the City of Alexandria’s redevelopment plans and transportation plans and policies for Potomac Yard and the U.S. Route 1 corridor
Goal 3: Accommodate travel demand and improve regional air quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase transit ridership to and from the Potomac Yard area • Increase overall transit mode share for trips in the Potomac Yard area • Reduce automobile vehicle miles traveled
Goal 4: Provide a cost-effective and financially feasible transportation investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximize ridership for existing transit infrastructure • Minimize capital and operating costs • Provide financially feasible transportation choices • Provide opportunities for private sector funding
Goal 5: Enhance transportation and pedestrian safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimize walking distances from the station to residential and commercial development • Maximize direct connections with surface transit services and planned pedestrian and bicycle facilities • Minimize potential for conflicts between pedestrians, transit users, and automobile traffic

3.0 INITIAL ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The EIS will evaluate a No Build Alternative and several Build Alternatives for the Potomac Yard Metrorail Station Project.

The No Build Alternative includes the existing transportation network, plus committed improvements included in the CLRP, the *FY2011-2016 Transportation Improvement Program for the Washington Metropolitan Region (TIP)*, the *City of Alexandria FY2010-2015 Capital Improvement Program*, and the *Washington Metropolitan Transit Authority FY2011-2016 Capital Improvement Program*. The No Build Alternative includes the Crystal City/Potomac Yard Transitway but does not include a Metrorail station at Potomac Yard. Current and future year conditions for the No Build Alternative will be used as a basis for identifying the transportation, environmental, and community impacts of the proposed Potomac Yard Metrorail Station Build Alternatives.

The *Potomac Yard Metrorail Station Concept Development Study (2010)* completed by the City of Alexandria and WMATA examined a number of potential station locations along the existing Metrorail tracks and along alternative alignments west of the existing parallel CSX freight rail tracks. All of the station alternatives included in the previous study, as shown in Figure 1-1, have been identified for

consideration in the EIS scoping process. Additional alternatives may emerge as a result of the scoping process. The following Build Alternatives are being considered in the scoping process:

- **Metrorail Station Alternative A** would be located between the George Washington Memorial Parkway and the CSX Railroad tracks and west of the Potomac Greens Neighborhood.
- **Metrorail Station Alternative B1** would be located between the George Washington Memorial Parkway and the CSX Railroad, just to the north of Alternative A.
- **Metrorail Station Alternative B2** would be located between the George Washington Memorial Parkway and the CSX Railroad, to the north of Alternative A and to the south of Alternative B1.
- **Metrorail Station Alternative B3** would be located between the George Washington Memorial Parkway and the CSX Railroad, just to the east of Alternative B2.
- **Metrorail Station Alternative C1** would be located between the CSX Railroad and Route 1.
- **Metrorail Station Alternative C2** would be located between the CSX Railroad and Route 1, just east of Alternative C1.

- **Metrorail Station Alternative D1** would be located between the CSX Railroad and Route 1, just east of Alternative C2.
- **Metrorail Station Alternative D2** would be located between the CSX Railroad and Route 1, just east of Alternative D1.

4.0 POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

The EIS will evaluate existing conditions and potential effects to the built and natural environment from the No Build and Build Alternatives. Where standard methodologies exist for assessing potential environmental effects, they will be used and tailored accordingly. Draft methodologies for evaluating potential effects to resources will be prepared in advance of the Agency Scoping Meeting, and provided to the agencies that have been invited to be cooperating or participating agencies for the project via email or regular mail if requested. Agencies will have the opportunity to comment on proposed methodologies during the scoping comment period. Comments must be submitted by March 15, 2011.

Environmental effects to be analyzed in the EIS include:

Neighborhood and Community Resources: This section considers effects on neighborhoods, social groups, community facilities, and community cohesion in the study area.

Noise and Vibration: This section considers effects on sensitive receptors such as residential, retail, hotel, and institutional uses in the study area.

Historic and Cultural Resources: This section considers effects on historic and cultural resources that include historic districts, sites, buildings, structures, and other objects included in, or eligible for inclusion in, the National Register of Historic Places. The George Washington Memorial Parkway is a historic resource within the study area.

Parks and Parklands: This section considers effects on publicly-owned parks and recreation lands within the study area, including potential impacts to viewsheds and the George Washington Memorial Parkway.

Water Resources, Wetlands, and Habitats: This section considers effects on water resources, including surface water resources, water quality, wetland systems, floodplains, critical areas, and

groundwater. It also considers effects on ecosystems and protected species.

Air Quality and Climate Change: This section considers greenhouse gas emissions and effects on climate change and regional air quality.

In addition to the potential environmental effects described above, other aspects to be addressed in the EIS include:

- Land Use and Zoning
- Consistency with Local Plans
- Environmental Justice
- Economic Development
- Visual and Aesthetics
- Transportation
- Hazardous Materials/Contamination
- Soils and Geologic Resources
- Utilities
- Energy
- Construction
- Secondary and Cumulative Effects
- Section 4(f) and Section 6(f) Resources

5.0 AGENCY COORDINATION AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Opportunities for the public and agency stakeholders to participate in the EIS process and offer input will be provided at several points during the course of scoping and the preparation of the EIS. Table 5-1 lists project milestones for public involvement.

Section 6002 of SAFETEA-LU identifies two types of agencies that are to be involved in the planning process: cooperating and participating agencies. Cooperating agencies are agencies that have a specific regulatory role in the environmental review process pursuant to federal law. Participating agencies are governmental agencies that may also have a regulatory responsibility or interest in the project because of their jurisdictional authority, special expertise, or statewide interest. WMATA, as the regional transit agency, and NPS, as the manager of the George Washington Memorial Parkway, are cooperating agencies for this project.

Table 5-1: Project Milestones for Public Involvement

Project Milestone	Timeframe
Scoping	
Final Scoping Booklet and Notice of Intent	January 2011
Scoping Meetings	February 2011
Draft Scoping Report	February 2011
Final Scoping Report	March 2011
Public Meetings	
Progress of EIS, Public Meeting	Fall 2011
Appear at Community Meetings, by Request	
Outreach Targeted to Low-Income, Minority, ADA Communities	
Public Hearing and Notice of DEIS and FEIS	
Draft EIS Notice of Availability	Winter 2013
Public Hearing Notice	Winter 2013
Public Hearing	Spring 2013
Submittal of Public Hearing Staff Report	Summer 2013
WMATA Board Project Decision	Summer 2013
Final EIS Notice of Availability	Fall 2013
Record of Decision	Winter 2014

Stakeholders will be kept apprised of developments throughout the EIS process, through project team meetings at regular intervals, email and other correspondence, and teleconference when necessary. Agency coordination will take place before the scoping process begins, but stakeholders will be asked to participate in the EIS process as it progresses. Stakeholders include the Federal Transit Administration; staff from the offices of federal, state, and local elected officials; staff from the City of Alexandria; transportation agencies; environmental groups; local businesses; transit riders; and members of minority and low-income communities.

Community organizations and neighborhood homeowner associations within a half-mile of the project alternatives will be brought into the public involvement process early and frequently over the course of the EIS process. In addition to the project scoping meetings, project briefings and updates will be scheduled with these groups over the course of the project. Their comments will be documented and considered in the impact assessment process. Responses to comments will be prepared and documented.

The public will also be kept informed through periodic project newsletters that highlight project progress, interim work products, key decisions, evaluation of alternatives, and other key EIS results. The newsletters and meeting notices will be mailed to

residents that live within a half-mile of the project alternatives. A database of residents and mailing addresses for this area will be developed based on publicly available tax assessment and other data. The newsletters and meeting notices will be mailed to these individuals. Email addresses of public meeting participants will also be requested as a supplemental means of keeping participants informed. The project-specific website at www.potomacyardmetro.com has been established to provide the public with another means of obtaining information about the project.

6.0 NEXT STEPS

After the publication of this document, the public comment period will begin. Comments will be accepted until March 15, 2011. Comments will be documented and considered in refining the scope of the EIS and the range of potential environmental effects that will be considered during the study period.