# *City of Alexandria, Virginia*

## PRELIMINARY MEMORANDUM

DATE: MAY 7, 2015

TO: CHAIRS & MEMBERS OF THE PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION

FROM: PARK PLANNING, DESIGN+CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION, PARKS & CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

SUBJECT: SELECTION OF A LOCALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE FOR THE POTOMAC YARD METRORAIL STATION

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**ISSUE:** Selection of a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) for the Potomac Yard Metrorail Station.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the Park and Recreation Commission support Alternative B for the Potomac Yard Metrorail, to include mitigation to the GWMP as discussed in the staff report on the preferred alternative, and that the Commission write a letter of support to City Council.

**BACKGROUND:** Potomac Yard represents one of the most significant redevelopment opportunities for the City with the potential to achieve the vision for an urban mix of uses near transit. The construction of a Metrorail station has been the center of discussion in regard to transportation and land use planning for Potomac Yard for many years, most recently in the adopted 2008 City-wide Transportation Master Plan and the 2010 North Potomac Yard Small Area Plan.

In 2011, the City of Alexandria initiated an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for construction of the proposed Potomac Yard Metrorail Station. The lead Federal agency for the EIS has been the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the City has been the project co-lead and sponsor. WMATA and the National Park Service (NPS) have been cooperating agencies. As part of this process, a Draft EIS was released on March 27, 2015.

The selection of the preferred location of the Metrorail station is a significant decision for the City from a transportation, land use and economic development perspective. This decision is one of the final steps in the Draft EIS process. Following selection of the preferred alternative, a Final EIS will be prepared which will include further design and refinement of the preferred alternative to minimize community and environmental impacts. The NEPA process will close out with Records of Decision (ROD) issued by FTA and NPS in 2016. Following the ROD, the project can move to award of the design-build contract, final design, and construction.

Building a new Metrorail station is the key to transforming Potomac Yard into a smart-growth, urban, walkable community with a mix of office, residential uses, high-quality retail, entertainment, and new parks. A new Metrorail station will help accommodate growing transportation demand in the Route 1 corridor within the existing roadway network and will provide additional benefits to the City, as described in the Potomac Yard Metrorail Station Staff Recommendation document for the Preferred Alternative (Attachment).

**DISCUSSION:** Selecting the most appropriate location for the Potomac Yard Metrorail station, closest to the most potential development and office uses in particular, is critical to the success of Potomac Yard. The North Potomac Yard Small Area Plan recommends that the station be located closest to the highest density. The Plan also allows the most density if the station is constructed in the Alternative B location (and requires the developer to contribute to the cost of construction), and therefore yields the most economic benefit to the City. Alternative B locates the Metrorail station within 0.25 mile of the densest development and creates the best opportunity for smart growth and a walkable, compact, urban community. Staff has determined after much analysis that Alternative B best balances land use and transportation, is consistent with City plans, and places the station in the best location to serve the largest number of potential Metrorail riders. As noted in the Staff Report to City Council, several Boards and Commissions, as well as the Potomac Yard Metrorail Implementation Work Group (PYMIG), are involved in the review process to provide comment and public input for matters related to their purview.

Parklands

Parks in Potomac Greens, Potomac Yard and Potomac Yard North are integral parts of the neighborhoods. The staff recommendation of Alternative B reflects the importance of these public assets. The proposed alternatives impact existing parks through varying combinations of pedestrian bridge landings, station locations and track realignments.

Pedestrian bridge landings in Potomac Greens Park, Potomac Yard Park and/or Potomac Yard Park North are identified in each of the alternatives. Pedestrian bridges in the vicinity of East Glebe Road and North Potomac Yard Park were anticipated during the design and development of Potomac Yard Park. The pedestrian bridge landing in Potomac Greens Park, while not incorporated in the design, was anticipated in the Pedestrian Bridge Special Use Permit. Other bridge locations that were not anticipated during the design of these parks would have greater impact on park facilities and programming, especially in Potomac Yard Park. The southern bridge landing for Alternative A is located in the widest part of Potomac Yard Park and would impact the park more than the other alternatives. Station locations impact parkland in Alternatives A, B, D and the B-CSX Design Option. Alternative A, Alternative D and the B-CSX Design Option impact programmed open space in Potomac Yard Park and the planned North Potomac Yard Park, reducing the parks' functionality. Alternative B impacts passive open space in Potomac Greens Park. Alternatives B, D and the CSX Design Option impact parkland through track realignment.

Construction Impacts

Temporary impacts to parks are anticipated through construction staging and laydown space requirements and through construction of the station and pedestrian bridges. These impacts are anticipated to be refined during the Final EIS to minimize disruption to park facilities. Maintenance and access for park users throughout the construction process will be components

of these refinements. Impacted facilities may require re-design or modification in order to ensure the parks operate at the current or an improved level of service.

Potential Mitigation

Because Alternative B would require a land exchange and release of the Greens Scenic Easement from the National Park Service, the City will need to enter in to a Net Benefits Agreement with NPS to include the elements outlined in Appendix B of the attached staff report.

City staff have worked closely with NPS staff throughout the Draft EIS process to develop a framework for the mitigation of impacts to the GWMP that will result in a net benefit to this important cultural and historic resource. The phrase "net benefit" is used because it indicates that in order to implement Alternative B, mitigation must result in improvements to the GWMP beyond its existing condition. Some of the elements contained in the City's proposal include:

- Stormwater management planning and implementation of stormwater-related improvements to Daingerfield Island and the adjacent section of the GWMP;
- Development of and at least partial funding for the implementation of a Master Plan for improvements to Daingerfield Island;
- Repairs and improvements to the Mount Vernon Trail in the vicinity of the project area;
- Plans and studies that will address the acute planning needs for the south section of the GWMP (Four Mile Run to Mount Vernon), covering such topics as vegetation and landscape, cultural resources and archeology, viewshed protection, visitor use, resource stewardship and facility management
- NPS participation in the design process for the station; and
- Exchange of the natural area of Potomac Greens Park (approximately 13 acres) for approximately 7,000 square feet of GWMP property and 1.71 acres of the Greens Scenic Area Easement. The exchanged land will remain parkland and is anticipated to retain its existing character and public access.

Staff recommends that during refinement of the preferred alternative through the Final EIS process and as design advances, the City continue to pursue strategies to avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse impacts to the community, natural, and cultural resources, including but not limited to the strategies outlined in the staff report (Attachment). These strategies will look at construction of infrastructure as well as long term maintenance and management solutions. Staff recommends that access points located in parks be designed to minimize impacts to the parks and become a feature of the park through circulation and architectural design. As previously discussed with the Park and Recreation Commission, the station will be an urban station and will not include a kiss and ride area, short or long term parking or use of park space for a taxi stand.

All mitigation measures suggested in the staff report will be confirmed and refined during the Final EIS or at later stages when the details of the project components and the construction scenarios are further developed.

**COMMUNITY INPUT:** The public has been engaged throughout the NEPA process through public meetings, meetings with community groups, briefings of boards and commissions, and meetings of the Potomac Yard Metrorail Implementation Work Group (PYMIG), all of which were open to the public. Since February 2015, staff has reached approximately 250 residents at meetings of community groups, 100 residents through a series of three recent informational open

houses, and 150 residents through booths at the Del Ray and Old Town Farmers Markets. Print, electronic, and broadcast media coverage has been extensive.

Many residents have expressed support for Alternative B based on its potential to positively affect the development of Potomac Yard, its citywide economic benefits, and its transportation benefits. Residents who support Alternative B have noted some concerns about some of the potential negative effects. These potential negative effects of Alternative B are the same or similar to effects that may occur with Alternative A, with the exception of the NPS land required and the scenic easement revision, which would be offset by the mitigation committed to in the Net Benefits Agreement. The most frequently noted concerns related to the effects of Alternative B include impacts from construction, parking and traffic, impacts to the GWMP, impacts to parks, wetlands, the potential for increased crime, and questions on financial feasibility. Additional detail is included in Appendix C of the attached staff report.

Additional comments received from the public following the publication of this memorandum will be transmitted to City Council on May 19, 2015 as an addendum.

**IMPLEMENTATION:** Following approval of the LPA by City Council, preparation of the Final EIS will begin. This process will include public discussion of proposed mitigation measures in Fall 2015. The project team anticipates releasing a combined Final EIS and ROD in early 2016.

Procurement for the design-build contract will also begin following approval of the LPA, and will run concurrently with the Final EIS process. Award of the design-build contract is expected in mid-2016, with construction beginning in early 2017. Staff will update the Commission on the public approval process, including modifications to the Development Special Use Permits for the parks. The station is anticipated to open in 2019.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** The current financing plan for the Potomac Yard Metrorail Station assumes a self-financing plan that will not require the use of current general fund revenues. The bulk of the capital costs will be paid for using new Potomac Yard-generated tax revenues and developer contributions. The City has established the Potomac Yard Metrorail Station Fund, the proceeds of which are to be used solely for the design, construction, and financing of the station and will be segregated from other revenues. The Station Fund will accumulate revenue from net new tax revenues from Potomac Yard, two special tax districts, and developer contributions. The City will fund the portion of the station construction costs not funded through other sources described below by issuing general obligation bonds. The bond issuance will be structured to minimize debt service in the early years, with a gradually increasing annual principal repayment over 30 years.

In January 2015, the Commonwealth Transportation Board awarded the City of Alexandria a $50 million loan from the Virginia Transportation Infrastructure Bank (VTIB) for construction of the Metrorail station. The 30-year loan locks in an interest rate of 2.17%, which is lower than the City's bonding rate. The loan also requires no interest or principal payments for four and one-half years after contract completion. This grace period is important to allow early development around the Metrorail station to begin to create new revenue prior to the City's first repayments. The flexible terms of the VTIB loan repayment reduce the City's risk as new development is anticipated to generate new revenues utilized for the repayment of principal and interest associated with the loan.

The plan also assumes $69.5 million in Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA)-granted 70% funds, with the majority of that funding requested for FY2017. Although NVTA has not yet considered the City's request, the Potomac Yard Metrorail Station was one of the highest ranked projects during consideration of NVTA projects for FY2015 and FY2016, indicating that the City's request has a high probability of being funded. In addition, the City is planning to apply for up to $50 million through the United States Department of Transportation's TIGER program. However, the probability of a TIGER grant award is low given that the number of grant applications for this program typically exceeds available federal funds.
Staff recommends that additional regional, state, and federal funding sources continue to be pursued where available. Prior to authorization of the design-build contract by City Council, assumptions in the financial feasibility analysis will be updated based on real estate performance and revised projections to ensure that the project remains financially feasible.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Attachment: Staff Recommendation for the Preferred Alternative – April 24, 2015 with appendices:

Appendix A: Draft EIS Executive Summary
Appendix B: Letter from the National Park Service re: Net Benefit Agreement
Appendix C: Community Feedback on Impacts of Alternatives

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# Potomac Yard Metrorail Station

## Staff Recommendation for the Preferred Alternative

**April 24, 2015**

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**Appendix A** **Draft EIS Executive Summary**

**Appendix B** **Letter from the National Park Service re: Net Benefits Agreement Framework**

**Appendix C** **Community Feedback on Impacts of Alternatives**

## 1.0 SUMMARY

Potomac Yard represents one of the most significant redevelopment opportunities for the City with the potential to achieve the vision for an urban mix of uses near transit. The construction of a Metrorail station has been the basis for transportation and land use planning for Potomac Yard for many years, most recently in the 2010 North Potomac Yard Small Area Plan and the 2008 Transportation Master Plan which included the following recommendation:

*The City expects that any amendment to the Potomac Yard/ Potomac Greens Small Area Plan which results in an increase in density beyond what is currently approved will include reasonable provisions to address the development and funding of an additional Metrorail Station.*

The selection of the preferred location of the Metrorail station is an important decision for the City from a transportation, land use and economic development perspective. Discussions regarding this large and complex City project have been ongoing for many years and the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS) is the last step in this process before City Council can select a location for the Metrorail station in Potomac Yard.

Building a new Metrorail station is the key to transforming Potomac Yard into a smart-growth, urban, walkable community with a mix of office and residential uses, high-quality retail, entertainment, and new parks. A new Metrorail station will help accommodate growing transportation demand in the Route 1 corridor within the existing roadway network and will provide additional benefits to the City and region by:

- Maximizing the number of people taking transit to and from the Potomac Yard area by providing direct access to Metrorail;
- Removing thousands of cars from the Route 1 corridor every day;
- Enabling a mix of uses in an environment where people can walk or bike to destinations in Potomac Yard for their daily needs;
- Providing a vibrant destination for all Alexandrians with a mix of uses, including significant shopping and public parks; and
- Strengthening and diversifying the tax base to improve the long-term economic stability of the City by enabling additional office development within Potomac Yard.

Getting the Metrorail station location right, closest to the most potential development and office uses in particular, is critical to the success of the project. The North Potomac Yard Small Area Plan recommends that the station be located closest to the highest density. The Plan also allows the most density if the station is constructed in the Alternative B location (and requires the developer to contribute to the cost of construction), and therefore yields the most economic benefit to the City. Alternative B puts the Metrorail station within 0.25 mile of the most development and creates the best opportunity for smart growth and a walkable, compact, urban community. Staff has determined after much analysis that Alternative B best balances land use and transportation, is consistent with City plans, and places the station in the best location to serve the largest number of potential Metrorail riders.

## 1.1 Background

Planning for a Metrorail station in Potomac Yard has a long history. The potential for a Metrorail station at Potomac Yard was initially considered during the planning of the Metrorail Regional System in the 1960s and 1970s. While a Metrorail station was not required as part of the 1999 City approval for South Potomac Yard, a reservation site for a future Metrorail station (Alternative A) was required so as to not preclude a future Metrorail station. No financing plan was developed in 1999.

Major milestones in the history of planning for the Potomac Yard Metrorail Station include:

- 1968 and 1975: Metrorail system plans identified Potomac Yard as a site for a future Metrorail station that could benefit new development.
- Mid-to-Late 1980s: The draft Alexandria 2020 plan proposed a mixed-use, neighborhood development with a Metrorail station. Operations of the existing rail yard began to be phased out.
- 1992/1999: The City of Alexandria's Potomac Yard/ Potomac Greens Small Area Plan identified the potential for a Metrorail station. A 2009 revision included approval for an urban, mixed-use Town Center along East Glebe Road.
- 2010: The Potomac Yard Concept Development Study, conducted by the City of Alexandria and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), analyzed eight potential Metrorail station locations, recommending further examination of three locations.
- 2010: The North Potomac Yard Small Area Plan was adopted, envisioning replacement of the existing shopping center with a high-density, transit-oriented neighborhood anchored by a Metrorail station.

## 1.2 NEPA Process

The North Potomac Yard Small Area Plan noted that a final station location decision would be subject to coordination among stakeholders, resolution of environmental issues, and consideration of alternatives through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process.

In 2011, the City of Alexandria initiated an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) under NEPA for construction of the proposed Potomac Yard Metrorail Station. The lead Federal agency for the EIS is the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the City is the project co-lead and sponsor. WMATA and the National Park Service (NPS) are cooperating agencies. As part of this process, a Draft EIS was released on March 27, 2015.

The Draft EIS will be circulating for public review and comment through May 18, 2015 during which time there will be two public hearings (on April 30 and May 16) as well as a range of public involvement activities, described in more detail in Section 2.0. Following the public comment period, City Council will select a preferred alternative,

The Final EIS will be prepared over the six months following identification of the preferred alternative. The Final EIS will include further design and refinement of the preferred alternative to minimize community and environmental impacts, identify with more detail the impacts of the preferred alternative, and develop measures for avoiding, minimizing, or mitigating adverse

impacts. Options for avoidance of impacts and mitigation will be discussed at meetings of the Potomac Yard Metrorail Implementation Work Group and the appropriate boards and commissions, where there will also be opportunities for public comment.

FTA and NPS will then each issue a Record of Decision (ROD), which will present the basis for the decision, specify the environmentally preferable alternative, and detail the commitments made to avoid, minimize, or mitigate the adverse impacts. The ROD will close out the NEPA process and allow the project to move into the design and construction phase.

The Section 106 process has been integrated into the NEPA process. The Section 106 review process identifies whether there are any historic properties in the Area of Potential Affect and whether they may be adversely affected by the undertaking. The Section 106 process also seeks to mitigate any potential adverse effects to historic properties.

## 1.3 Alternatives Considered

As noted in Section 1.2, the Draft EIS evaluates technically feasible alternatives that meet the project's purpose and need, as well as the No Build Alternative. The purpose of the Potomac Yard Metrorail station project is to improve local and regional transit accessibility to and from the Potomac Yard area adjacent to the U.S. Route 1 corridor for current and future residents, employees, and businesses. The need for the project includes:

- **Access to Regional Transit:** The area is currently not served by direct access to regional transit services, such as Metrorail. Although the area is served by local bus services that operate in the U.S. Route 1 corridor, including the Crystal City/Potomac Yard Transitway (also known as "Metroway"), direct access to the Metrorail system will facilitate regional transit trips.
- **Congestion Relief:** Traffic congestion will increase on U.S. Route 1 even without the proposed development in Potomac Yard. Increasing the share of transit trips would help to manage congestion, reduce auto trips and emissions along transit corridors, and make efficient use of existing infrastructure.
- **Additional Transportation Options:** Due to the constrained capacity of the existing roadway network, additional transportation options are needed to support redevelopment plans by accommodating travel demand through transit and other non-auto modes.

The Draft EIS evaluates three Build Alternatives (A, B, and D), as well as a design option (B-CSX Design Option). This design option was developed in 2013 at the request of NPS in an effort to avoid and minimize adverse impacts to the George Washington Memorial Parkway (GWMP). The alternatives and their potential impacts are described in more detail in the Draft EIS and the Executive Summary to the Draft EIS, provided in Appendix A. The potential station locations are shown in Figure 1.

The Draft EIS evaluates two construction access options for Alternatives A and B: access primarily via the GWMP (Option 1) or via Potomac Greens Drive (Option 2). Both options were evaluated in order to understand the potential impacts. However, NPS policy and federal regulations prohibit commercial vehicles on the GWMP if another option is available.

Alternative B best serves the purpose and need of the project and will have the most positive impact on the future development of Potomac Yard. Specifically:

- **Alternative B** would provide a Metrorail station in Potomac Yard and improve regional transit accessibility. Alternative B places the most amount of density in North Potomac Yard within walking distance of the proposed station, thereby enabling the highest density and greatest mix of uses, including office uses, to be constructed. Alternative B produces the most trips taken by transit and encourages a variety of transportation options due to the dense mix of uses that it enables. Alternative B, which is estimated to cost $268 million, has the most economic, community, and transportation benefits of all the alternatives. It also provides benefits to users of the GWMP through the mitigation proposed in the framework for the Net Benefits Agreement with the National Park Service (see Section 4.1 and Appendix B). **Staff recommends Alternative B as the preferred alternative for Potomac Yard with construction access Option 2 (not from GWMP).** Construction access Option 2 is recommended because NPS cannot issue permits for access from the GWMP (Option 1) based on NPS policy and federal regulations.

Staff does not recommend the No Build Alternative, Alternatives A or D, or the B-CSX Design Option for the following reasons:

- The **No Build Alternative** would not improve the regional transit accessibility of Potomac Yard. The lack of direct access to the Metrorail system would result in a higher proportion of trips being taken by car. The lack of a Metrorail station would also result in a less diverse mix of uses in Potomac Yard, including significantly less office development, which would result in less economic benefit to the City and fewer benefits to neighborhoods in the Potomac Yard area.
- **Alternative A** would provide a Metrorail station in Potomac Yard, and would therefore improve regional transit accessibility. However, it would be located the farthest from the dense redevelopment and planned office uses in North Potomac Yard. This would result in fewer trips taken via transit. Because North Potomac Yard would be farther from the new station, the planned redevelopment would have less density and fewer office uses than in the approved plan, resulting in a decreased economic benefit to the City and fewer benefits to surrounding neighborhoods when compared to Alternative B. Alternative A, which is estimated to cost $209 million, would also be located directly behind townhouses in the Potomac Greens neighborhood, resulting in more adverse impacts to that neighborhood, including noise impacts from operation of the station. Alternative A is also located in the widest part of Potomac Yard Park and would impact the existing Park more than the other alternatives.
- **B-CSX Design Option** would provide a Metrorail station in the northern portion of Potomac Yard and improve regional transit accessibility. However, it would require the use of 5 acres of land in North Potomac Yard that is currently available for development. It would therefore reduce the amount of development possible in North Potomac Yard. The station would cost an estimated $351 million, which is approximately $83 million more than Alternative B and would require the cooperation of CSXT to relocated existing tracks. However, CSX has not yet agreed to move their tracks. For these reasons, it would also require at least a 3 year delay in the opening of the station.
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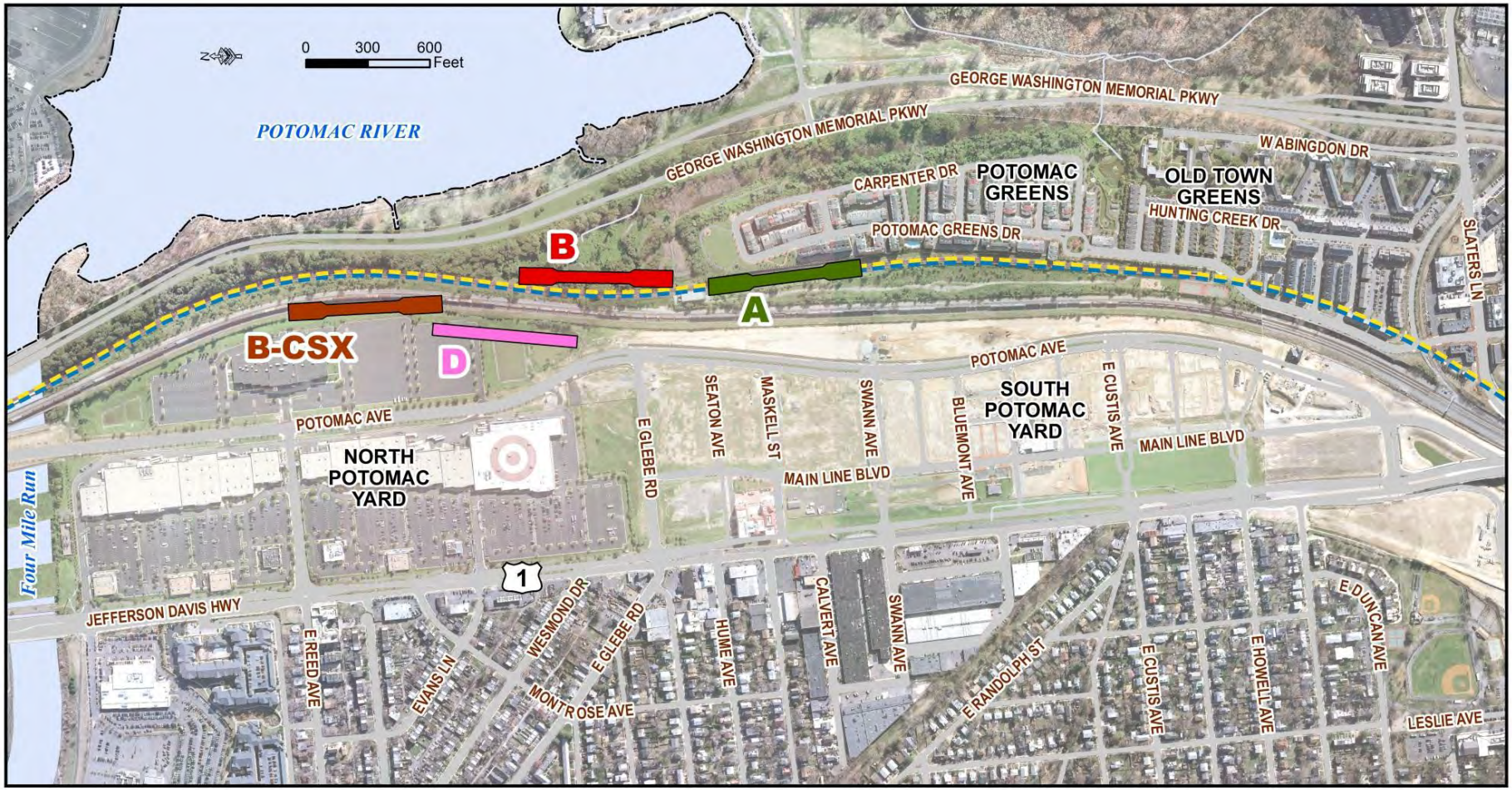
## Figure 1: Draft EIS Potential Station Locations




**LEGEND**

- Alternative A Station Location
- Alternative B Station Location
- B-CSX Design Option Station Location
- Alternative D Station Location
- Existing Metrorail Blue/Yellow Line

Note: Trackwork and Bridges not shown

Source: City of Alexandria; Arlington County; District of Columbia; WMATA

POTOMAC YARD METRORAIL STATION EIS

- **Alternative D** would provide a Metrorail station in the northern portion of Potomac Yard and improve regional transit accessibility. However, it would require the use of 3 acres of land in North Potomac Yard that is currently available for development. Therefore, it would reduce the amount of development possible in North Potomac Yard. It would also cost an estimated $493 million, which is not financially feasible, as described in Section 1.4. The elevated guideway required for Alternative D would negatively affect views from the GWMP, would reduce the functionality of Potomac Yard Park, and would have negative impacts to residents of Potomac Greens.

## 1.4 Funding and Financial Feasibility

The current financing plan for the Potomac Yard Metrorail Station assumes that the bulk of the capital costs will be paid for using new Potomac Yard-generated tax revenues and developer contributions. The City has established the Potomac Yard Metrorail Station Fund, the proceeds of which are to be used solely for the design, construction, and financing of the station and will be segregated from other revenues. The Station Fund will accumulate revenue from the following sources and mechanisms:

- **Net new tax revenue**: for new tax revenue generated by new development in Potomac Yard, a fixed set of percentages will go to the General Fund to pay for City services and schools that the new Potomac Yard residents and businesses will need. A portion of the new net tax revenue will go to the Station Fund to pay debt service and station-related operating costs. The remaining balance would be deposited in the City's General Fund to provide benefits citywide for Alexandria residents and businesses.
- **Special tax districts**: two special tax districts have been established to generate revenue for the Station Fund (see Figure 2, Special Tax Districts). The Tier I special tax district applies to non-single family development and collects 20 cents per $100 of valuation. Collections began in 2011. The Tier II special tax district would apply to single-family and condominium development in the lower part of Potomac Yard and would assess 10 cents per $100 of valuation. Collections would begin in the calendar year after the station opens.
- **Developer contributions**: for Alternative B, CPYR, Inc., the owner of North Potomac Yard, agreed in 2010 to contribute up to $49 million in 2010 dollars, indexed to inflation, some of which could be accelerated as a shortfall guarantee. CPYR's representatives have subsequently indicated they wish to renegotiate their previously agree-to contribution downward. Discussions about amending their existing obligation would occur in 2016 when a replanning of some elements of the 2010 North Potomac Yard Small Area Plan is contemplated. The Potomac Yard Metrorail Station financing plan substantially benefits from, but does not require, the previously agreed to CPYR contribution level to remain financially feasible.

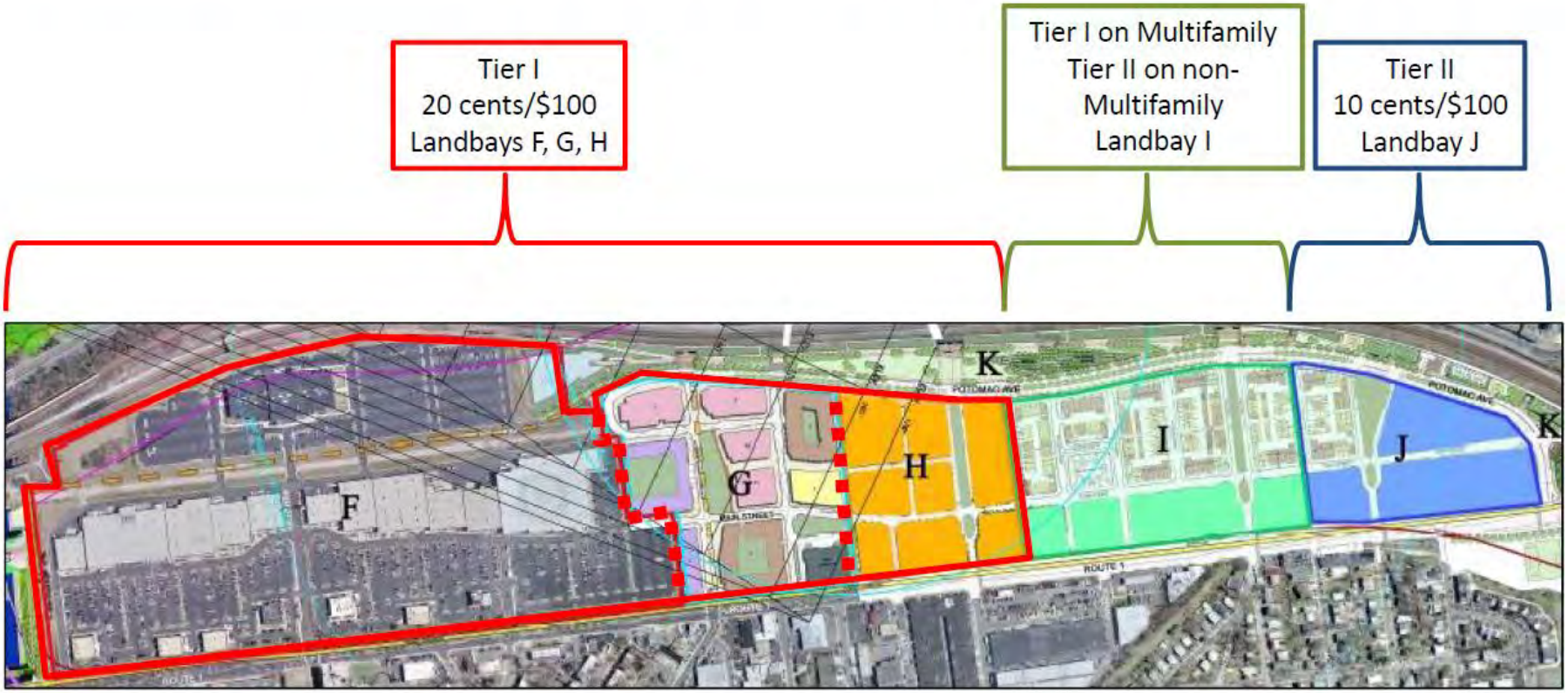
  MRP and PYD, the developers of the southern portion of Potomac Yard, have agreed to contribute $2 million.

The revenue sources described above will be used to pay back borrowings from two sources:

- **General Obligation Bonds:** The City will fund the station construction costs not funded through other sources by issuing general obligation bonds. The bond issuance will be structured to minimize debt service in the early years, with a gradually increasing annual principal repayment over the 30 year amortization period.

**Figure 2: Special Tax Districts**

| | |
|---|---|
| Tier I | • Special tax of 20 cents per $100 of valuation applied to Landbays F, G, H, and the multifamily portion of I.<br>• Collections began in 2011. |
| Tier II | • Special tax of 10 cents per $100 of valuation applied to the non-multifamily development in Landbay I and all of Landbay J.<br>• Collections will commence the first calendar year after the station opening. |



- **Virginia Transportation Infrastructure Bank (VTIB)**: The City was recently awarded a $50 million loan from the Virginia Transportation Infrastructure Bank. The low interest rate of the loan (2.17 percent) reduces borrowing costs by lowering the overall debt service associated with total borrowing requirements for construction of the station. The flexible terms of the VTIB loan repayment reduce the City's risk as new development is anticipated to generate new revenues utilized for the repayment of principal and interest associated with the loan.

In order to reduce the total amount borrowed for station construction, the City has planned to request $69.5 million from the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority. In addition, the City will be applying for up to $50 million in TIGER grant funds from the U.S. Department of Transportation.

### Financial Feasibility

Project budget cost estimates were developed by WMATA as part of the Draft EIS process and were based on the preliminary engineering completed to date. Costs were escalated to the midpoint of construction based on an assumed completion date of late 2018 for Alternatives A, B, and D and late 2021 for Design Option B-CSX. Estimated costs included a range from low to high. The financial feasibility analysis assumed 85 percent of the high end of the cost estimate range, shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Estimated Cost of Potomac Yard Metrorail Station Alternatives**

| Alternative | Alt A | Alt B | Design Option B-CSX | Alt D |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Estimated Cost (millions) | $208.8 | $268.1 | $351.4 | $492.7 |

The financial feasibility analysis found the Alternatives A and B and Design Option B-CSX have positive cash flow that cover the debt service and operating costs from the first year. However, Alternative D has a substantial funding shortfall that lasts for 10 years from the opening of the station and which makes Alternative D financially not feasible.

## 2.0 COMMUNITY INPUT

Significant community engagement and outreach have occurred during the last four years of the NEPA process. Public outreach and agency coordination for the EIS began in February 2011 with the Scoping meeting, and open community meetings were held in 2012 to provide updates on the project progress. The Potomac Yard Metrorail Implementation Group (PYMIG) was established in June 2011 to review the EIS document, provide policy guidance to the City and WMATA staff, analyze station concept refinements, and consider funding issues related to the new Metrorail station. PYMIG met regularly for four years to discuss the project with staff. Topics discussed included station alternatives, the screening process, key environmental considerations and impacts, funding, community outreach and other issues documented in the Draft EIS. The public was invited to attend each PYMIG meeting as well as the community meetings for the NEPA process mentioned above. In addition to the PYMIG and community meetings, staff presented to various boards, commissions and community groups in to provide updates on the Draft EIS throughout the process.

Since February 2015, staff has met with numerous boards, commissions, and community groups in preparation for the release of the Draft EIS. Staff met with the following five City boards and commissions:

- Board of Architectural Review (Old and Historic District)
- Environmental Policy Commission
- Park and Recreation Commission
- Planning Commission
- Transportation Commission

Staff also met with the following nine community groups at their standing meetings or upon request, and reached approximately 250 residents at these meetings:

- Del Ray Citizens Association
- Federation of Civic Associations
- Hume Springs Citizens Association
- Lynhaven Citizens Association
- NorthEast Citizens Association
- Old Town Civic Association
- Old Town Greens Townhome Owners Association
- Potomac Greens Home Owners Association
- Potomac Yard residents

The City has also held three informational open houses to discuss the results of the Draft EIS, which reached approximately 100 residents.

There has also been extensive print, broadcast, and electronic media coverage at each stage of this Draft EIS process.

The extensive public outreach efforts have garnered community feedback on a variety of issues. Comments from the public related to Alternatives A, B, and D and the B-CSX Design Option are summarized in Appendix C. Additional comments received following release of this report will be included as a separate attachment to City Council prior to their decision on the preferred alternative.

Many residents have expressed support for Alternative B based on its potential to positively affect the development of Potomac Yard, its citywide economic benefits, and its transportation benefits. Residents who support Alternative B have noted some concerns about some of the potential negative effects. These potential negative effects are the same or similar to effects that may occur with Alternative A. The most frequently noted concerns related to the effects of Alternative B include:

- Construction: Construction access for Alternative B could come through Old Town Greens and Potomac Greens. Some residents have expressed concern about traffic

from construction trucks using neighborhood streets, particularly where there are children playing. Noise, vibration, and dust from construction activities could be disruptive to residents, particularly when construction takes place at night and on weekends.

- Parking and Traffic: The station is designed as an urban station, with the majority of riders expected to arrive on foot or bicycle. Bus riders would access the station from Potomac Avenue. Some residents have expressed concern about traffic from cars using neighborhood streets to access the Metrorail station. Because the station will not include any park-and-ride lots, residents have also expressed concern that Metrorail riders will park on neighborhood streets.

- The George Washington Memorial Parkway (GWMP): Alternative B would be located partially on land currently occupied by a scenic easement administered by NPS, and would require approximately 7,000 square feet of GWMP property. The GWMP is an important resource commemorating the nation's first president, which was designed to provide a quality entryway for visitor's to the nation's capital. Some residents are concerned about impacts to the GWMP, particularly that a visible Metrorail station will degrade the quality of this resource. NPS has indicated Alternative B is viable providing that a mitigation plan acceptable to NPS can be agreed to. The City and NPS have reached agreement on a mitigation framework which will be of net benefit to NPS and the GWMP. This framework is described in Section 4.1 and Appendix B.

- Parks: Access points to the Metrorail station would be located in Potomac Greens Park and Potomac Yard Park, near existing multi-use trails. Some residents are concerned that these access points would negatively affect their use and enjoyment of the parks.

- Wetlands: Alternative B would impact wetlands to the north of Potomac Greens. Some residents have expressed concern over both the permanent impacts and the temporary impacts resulting from the staging area for construction as currently designed.

- Crime: Some residents of Potomac Greens and Old Town Greens have noted that their neighborhoods are relatively isolated, with only one access point to Slaters Lane. They have expressed concern that adding an access point to Metrorail would increase the opportunity for crime in their neighborhood.

- Financial Feasibility: Some residents have expressed concern that the station would need to be paid for using monies from the General Fund if the development of Potomac Yard does not proceed as expected.

In recommending Alternative B as the preferred alternative, City staff also recommends that special attention be paid to these concerns as the project advances, and that efforts be made to avoid, minimize, or mitigate negative impacts to the extent feasible. Additional detail is provided in Section 4.0 regarding how these concerns should be addressed.

## 2.1 Role of Boards and Commissions

This staff recommendation will be discussed with relevant boards and commissions, as well as the Potomac Yard Metrorail Implementation Work Group (PYMIG). There will be opportunity for public comment at each meeting. Each board or commission is asked to comment on the staff recommendation as it relates to the issues within their purview as outline below.

- The **Board of Architectural Review (BAR)** will provide comments on potential visual impacts from the GWMP. The comments will be forwarded to City Council. In addition, if Alternative B is selected the final design of the station will be subject to review and approval by the BAR.
- The **Environmental Policy Commission** will determine if the staff recommendation adequately balances environmental impacts in accordance with the Eco-City Alexandria Charter.
- The **Planning Commission** will evaluate the consistency with the Master Plan, Potomac Yard Coordinated Development District(s) and associated approvals.
- The **Parks and Recreation Commission** will determine if the staff recommendation is consistent with local park plans.
- The **Transportation Commission** will determine if the staff recommendation is consistent with the City's 2008 Transportation Master Plan.
- **PYMIG** will consider the comments of the other boards and commissions and will determine whether the staff recommendation is consistent with land use and transportation plans for Potomac Yard.

# 3.0 STAFF ANALYSIS

Staff recommends that City Council adopt Alternative B as the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) for the Potomac Yard Metrorail Station for the following reasons.

An evaluation of the costs and benefits of each of the alternatives shows that, while each of the alternatives meets the goal of providing a Metrorail station in Potomac Yard, only Alternative B provides the mix of benefits to land use and economic development, neighborhoods, and transportation that will help to realize the full vision for Potomac Yard. Alternative B also provides the best opportunity to balance impacts and benefits to the community. See Section 4.0 for recommendations regarding mitigation to impacts identified by the community as areas of particular concern.

## 3.1 Land Use and Economic Benefits

Only Alternative B is consistent with the City's land use plans. The North Potomac Yard Small Area Plan created a vision of North Potomac Yard as an area for long-term economic growth within the City. The development of a transit-oriented, mixed use community that maximizes office development adjacent to the Metrorail station is the central focus of the plan. North Potomac Yard is uniquely located within the City and has strong potential as a site for office development due to its close proximity to Washington D.C., Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport, and the Pentagon. However, significant office development is unlikely without a Metrorail station.

Office development is a critical component for a strong and sustainable tax and employment base, and Alternative B provides approximately 950,000 square feet more office within one-quarter mile of the Metrorail station than Alternative A.

In order to achieve this vision and the density of 7,525,000 square feet of development planned for North Potomac Yard, and therefore the greatest economic and employment benefit for the City of Alexandria, it is necessary to locate the station at Alternative B. All other station locations would require a reduction in the amount of development, office use and economic value for the City (3,700,000 square feet of development is permitted if any other alternative is selected).

Alternative B provides for maximum accessibility to the Metrorail station, with the entire North Potomac Yard development within one-half mile of the Metrorail station, and more than 50 percent of the blocks located within one-quarter mile (see Figure 3, Blocks within ¼-mile and ½-mile of Alternative B). In addition, the blocks south of the existing retail center and adjacent to the southern landing of Alternative B contain the greatest amount of office space in South Potomac Yard. Alternative B is located approximately 900 feet (approximately three Old Town blocks) farther north than Alternative A. This is a critical difference, as the likelihood of office workers riding Metrorail is particularly sensitive to distance from the station. The importance of proximity is reflected in the fact that currently 86 percent of all office buildings under construction in the region are within one-quarter mile of a Metrorail station (PlanItMetro.com, April 22, 2015). Given the increasing regional competition for commercial office development, the location of a Metrorail station at the site of Alternative B will maintain Potomac Yard's strength in this market. In addition, for the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, Alternative B represents the best smart growth choice because it enables the most development in a walkable, transit-oriented, mixed-use community close to the region's core.

## 3.2 Public Benefits

The development of North Potomac Yard is grounded on the principle of a dynamic mixture of uses, with significant amounts of retail development and a balance of residential and office uses. The North Potomac Yard Plan established Alternative B as the focal element for the Metro Square neighborhood, and the neighborhood as the transit hub of North Potomac Yard.

Constructing a Metrorail station at Alternative B also serves the mobility and economic development needs of surrounding communities, including Del Ray, Potomac Greens, Arlandria, and Lynhaven. For many of these current residents, who cannot currently walk to Metrorail, the Metrorail station and future employment locations will be within a one-half mile to one mile walk.

The ability of the City to provide public amenities such as community facilities is significantly affected by the presence and location of a Metrorail station. The location of the Metrorail station at Alternative B leads to a substantial increase in property value. Based upon this increase the developer is required to provide community facilities and services.

## Figure 3: Blocks within 1/4-mile and 1/2-mile of Alternative B

In addition to the basic infrastructure, these include improvements to Four Mile Run, extending and expanding the Potomac Yard Park, a significant amount of neighborhood-serving retail uses, provision of a live performing arts theater, and land and partial funding for the construction of a school.

### 3.3 Transportation Benefits

The vision for Potomac Yard relies on creating an environment where residents, employees, and visitors travel by modes other than the automobile. This is consistent with the City of Alexandria's 2008 Transportation Master Plan, which focuses on providing transit, bicycle, and pedestrian infrastructure in conjunction with land use planning to create layers of transportation options.

Alternative B would provide the greatest number of Metrorail riders and remove the most automobile trips from area roadways. Because it enables the highest density and greatest mix of uses in North Potomac Yard, Alternative B would result in more trips being taken within Potomac Yard, many of which would occur on foot or bike. Finally, more office development in Potomac Yard would also help to balance existing Metrorail ridership, by encouraging reverse commuting (as has been seen with the Silver Line in Tysons Corner and the Orange Line in Arlington).

### 3.4 Citywide Economic Benefits

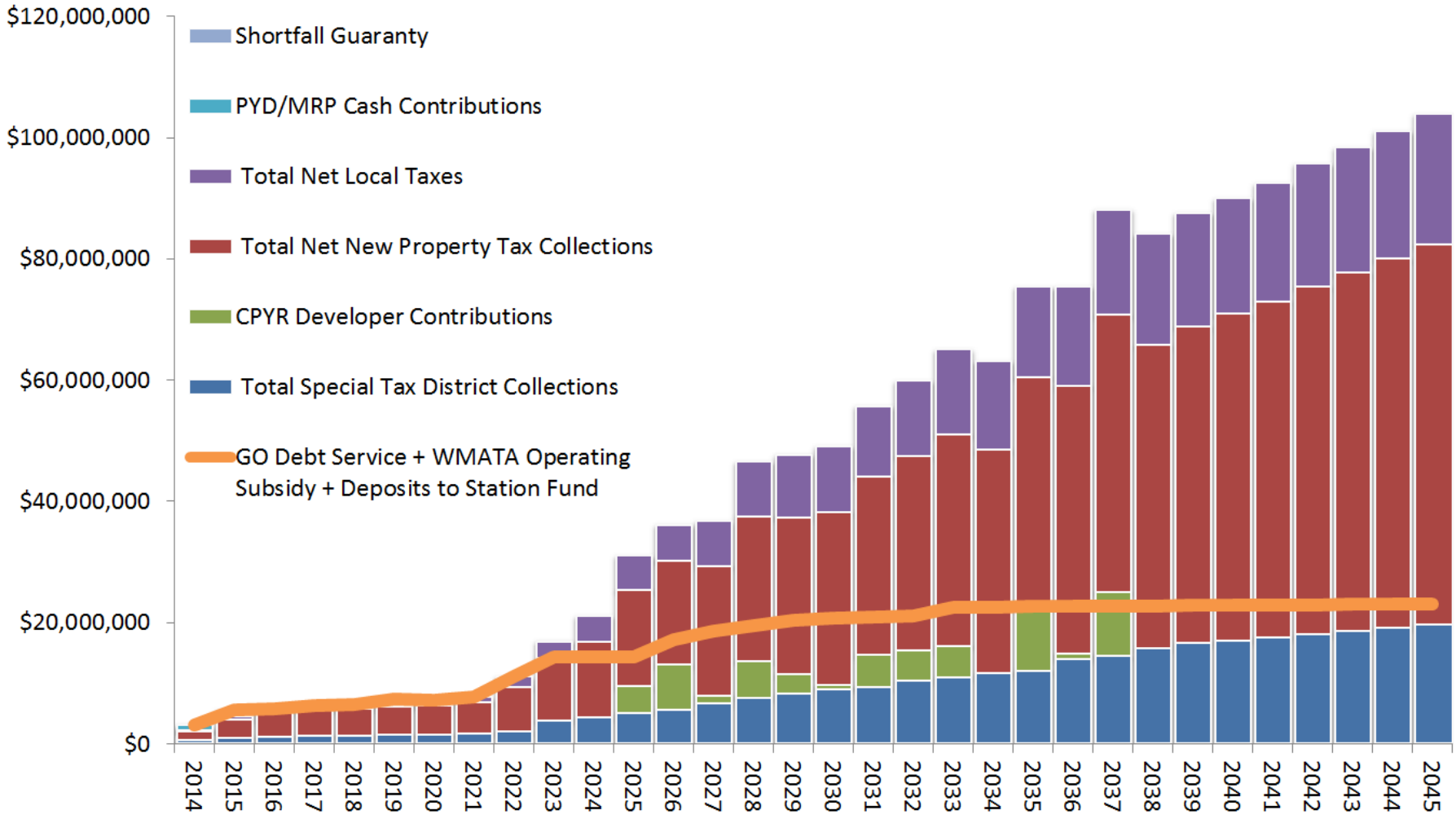
Projections show that a Metrorail station at Alternative B will result in approximately $1.5 billion in net revenue to the City over forty years. By the end of that period, the development in Potomac Yard will be producing approximately $98 million of revenue every year beyond what is needed to pay for the station and City services for the residents and businesses in Potomac Yard (see Figure 4, Alternative B Cash Flow). This means that the redevelopment of Potomac Yard will be producing $98 million every year that can be used to pay for services and amenities throughout the City.

## 4.0 STAFF RECOMMENDATION FOR THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Staff recommends that City Council select Alternative B with Construction Access via Potomac Greens (Option 2 - no access from GWMP) as their preferred alternative, based on its ability to enable the high-density mix of uses envisioned for North Potomac Yard, and the associated community, transportation, and economic development benefits.

Staff recommends that during refinement of the preferred alternative through the Final EIS process and as design advances, the City continue to pursue strategies to avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse impacts to the community, natural, and cultural resources, including but not limited to the strategies outlined below. This will also include looking at alternative construction access options to reduce the dependence on access through Potomac Greens. Because Alternative B would require a land exchange and release of the Greens Scenic Easement from the National Park Service, staff recommends that the City enter in to a Net Benefits Agreement with NPS to include the elements outlined in Table 2 and Appendix B.

**Figure 4: Alternative B Cash Flow**



Mitigation measures suggested below will be confirmed during the Final EIS or at later stages when the details of the project components and the construction scenarios are further developed.

## 4.1 George Washington Memorial Parkway

The George Washington Memorial Parkway is an important resource for the City of Alexandria and the region. Alternative B impacts a small amount of National Park Service land and the Greens Scenic Area Easement. As part of the Draft EIS process potential visual impacts to the GWMP and the Greens Scenic Area Easement were analyzed and discussed extensively. The analysis included the preparation of a physical model and a video simulation to understand the impacts.

City and NPS staff have worked together to develop the framework for a Net Benefits Agreement to provide appropriate mitigation for impacts to the GWMP and Greens Scenic Area Easement, and to provide for a property exchange to allow the release of NPS property and interests (see Table 2 and Appendix B). Staff feels that these items not only provide the most benefit to the GWMP but are also a benefit to residents of the City of Alexandria. Benefits include improvements to Daingerfield Island in Alexandria and the nearby Mount Vernon Trail, which are used extensively by City residents, as well as measures to enhance the experience of Parkway users such as eliminating stormwater ponding in the median of the GWMP and additional landscaping between the station and the GWMP roadway.

The design of the prominent elements of the station, such as the roof and the pedestrian bridges will need to integrate with the character of the GWMP and the neighborhood. The final design of the station will be subject to the Board of Architectural Review (BAR). The station will also require subsequent approval of a development special use permit (DSUP) process and review by the Planning Commission and approval by City Council.

Staff will continue coordination with NPS to develop a Net Benefits Agreement based on the framework described above. Specific mitigation to screen views of the station from the GWMP should include landscaping and station design strategies to minimize the visual impact of the station.

The Draft EIS evaluates the impacts of two construction access options. Option 1 includes access from the GWMP, while Option 2 does not include access from the GWMP. Federal regulations and park policy prohibit the issuance of permits for commercial vehicles to use the GWMP when other options exist. Therefore, staff recommends that Construction Access Option 2 (not from the GWMP) be pursued for the preferred alternative.

## 4.2 Construction

Construction Access Option 2 for Alternative B would be via Potomac Greens Drive, the WMATA Substation Access Road, and Potomac Avenue. Potential impacts from construction include truck traffic along neighborhood roadways as well as associated noise and dust.

Staff recommends that measures to minimize construction impacts be pursued throughout the design and construction process. Enforcement of City ordinances and coordination with the community during construction will be essential to these efforts. To the extent practicable, construction activities should be conducted during the daytime and during weekdays in accordance with the City's construction management practices and existing noise ordinance.

**Table 2: Mitigation Proposal for Impacts to George Washington Memorial Parkway Interests**

| Category | Mitigation Item |
|---|---|
| **Loss of parkland** | Exchange NPS fee (0.16 acres) and easement area (1.71 acres) for fee ownership of the remaining easement area in CoA ownership (13.56 acres). Exact amount to be determined as station design advances. Access for maintenance and emergency response will be maintained according to WMATA standards. City will also reserve necessary access for maintenance of stormwater facilities and other existing easements. |
| | Exchange NPS fee and easement area for limitations on height and other restrictions (on items such as materials, signage, and lighting) on portions of Potomac Yard adjacent to the GWMP. City agrees to establish restrictions via ordinance and will work with the property owner to potentially establish the existing maximum heights, signage and lighting as a legally binding easement. |
| **Impact to park resources** | Preparation of a stormwater management plan for Daingerfield Island and the adjacent section of GWMP (where there is a known stormwater issue) |
| | Implementation of a stormwater management plan for Daingerfield Island and the adjacent section of GWMP (approximately 45 acres) |
| | Prepare Daingerfield Island Master Plan which will address improvements to visitor services, facilities, recreation, and park amenities. |
| | Implementation of Daingerfield Island Master Plan |
| | Implement repairs and improvements to the Mount Vernon Trail in the vicinity of the project area |
| | Vegetation survey for south section of the GWMP (Four Mile Run to Mount Vernon) to evaluate the number, type, size, age, and health of vegetation |
| | Prepare landscape plan of the south section of the GWMP |
| | Preparation of updated NR nomination for GWMP |
| | Prepare Cultural Landscape Report for GWMP |
| | Prepare Archeological Overview and Assessment for the south section of the GWMP |
| | Complete Viewshed Protection Plan to include a viewshed inventory and assessment of the south section of the GWMP |
| | Visitor Use Survey and Visitor Use Management Plan |
| | Prepare Resource Stewardship Strategy |
| | Facility management plan including drainage plan |
| **Visual impact minimization/mitigation** | Design of station and landscape, including planting and berms, in order to mitigate the visual impact of the station on the GWMP. NPS would participate in the design process. City is working with WMATA to develop a design-build process that enables a higher level of City involvement with specific high-visibility elements of the station. NPS participation would be incorporated into this process. |
| **TOTAL Cost** | **$12,000,000** |

** Mitigation for wetlands not included, as mitigation requirements would be determined through coordination with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, NPS, and the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality through the Joint Permit Application process in compliance with Section 404 of the Clean Water Act and Director's Order 77-1.*

The public should be adequately notified of construction operations and schedules, and procedures set in place to address complaints quickly. Operations should be conducted in a manner that will minimize, to the greatest extent feasible, disturbance to the public in areas adjacent to the construction activities and to occupants of nearby buildings. Construction management conditions are established by the Department of Transportation & Environmental Services in the plan review and permitting process, and other applicable regulations. The additional traffic due to construction vehicles may impact the roadway pavement, which will be repaired as part of the project.

## 4.3 Parking and Traffic

The station will be designed as an urban station. All local bus service is planned to be curbside on the west side of the station (from Potomac Avenue). The Crystal City/Potomac Yard Transitway (Metroway) will interface with the station along Potomac Avenue. The station will not have a suburban-style park-and-ride or kiss-and-ride lot. Most riders will access the station on foot or via bike, or will transfer to Metrorail from buses. However, some riders may try to park on neighborhood streets.

Staff recommends working with adjacent communities to establish residential parking zones to discourage commuter parking.

## 4.4 Potomac Yard Park and Potomac Greens Park

Potomac Yard Park serves as a regional park for the City of Alexandria, and the draw from adjacent neighborhoods for such features as the playgrounds, trails, and other features is significant. The southern pedestrian access point for Alternative B would touch down in Potomac Yard Park to the south of East Glebe Road, away from the most active part of the park.

At the northern end of Potomac Greens, Potomac Greens Park includes a playground as well as a passive recreation area for the residents of that neighborhood. The access point for the pedestrian/bicycle bridge for Alternative B would touch down in Potomac Greens Park.

Limiting the impacts to park features is beneficial to the larger community. Staff recommends that access points located in parks be designed to minimize impacts to the parks. To the extent practicable the access points in parks should become a feature of the park rather than an intrusion. Staff should coordinate with the community where the relocation or redesign of park uses is necessary. Any reconfiguration of Potomac Yard Park will also require an amendment to the approved development special use permit (DSUP) and review by the Planning Commission and approval by City Council.

## 4.5 Wetlands

Wetlands are defined as “lands where saturation with water is the dominant factor determining the nature of soil development and the types of plant and animal communities living in the soil and on its surface” (*Classification of Wetlands and Deepwater Habitats of the United States*, Cowardin et al. 1979). There are wetlands to the north and east of Potomac Greens, which include walking paths for recreation. As currently designed, Alternative B would affect a portion of the wetlands to the north of Potomac Greens.

Staff recommends that wetland impacts be minimized through design to the greatest extent practicable. Construction methods that avoid or minimize harm to wetlands should be investigated and implemented where practicable.

Mitigation for impacted wetlands will be determined through coordination with the United States Army Corps of Engineers and NPS, as provided for by federal regulations. Staff recommends that mitigation be a benefit to the community, where possible.

### 4.6 Crime

Residents of Potomac Greens and Old Town Greens have expressed concern that an additional access point to the neighborhood will increase the likelihood of crime. This is of specific concern to the residents of Potomac Greens because the neighborhood is currently isolated, with only one access point from Slaters Lane.

Staff recommends coordination with the Alexandria Police Department to address community concerns and allocate appropriate resources for the study area. Staff recommends a detailed evaluation of strategies to mitigate the risk of crime.

### 4.7 Financial Feasibility

The financing plan for Alternative B currently relies on a combination of sources, including revenue from the redevelopment of Potomac Yard. Residents have expressed concern that revenues may not reach the levels projected and therefore jeopardize the financial feasibility of the project.

Staff recommends that additional regional, state, and federal funding sources continue to be pursued where available. Prior to issuance of the design-build contract, assumptions in the financial feasibility analysis should be updated based on real estate performance and revised projections to ensure that the project remains financially feasible.

## 5.0 NEXT STEPS

Preparation of the Final EIS will begin following identification of the preferred alternative. The Final EIS will include further design and refinement of the preferred alternative to minimize community and environmental impacts, identify with more detail the impacts of the preferred alternative, and develop measures for avoiding, minimizing, or mitigating adverse impacts. The mitigation developed during the Final EIS will build on the recommendations detailed in Section 4.0.

Options for avoidance of impacts and mitigation will be discussed at meetings of the Potomac Yard Metrorail Implementation Work Group and the appropriate boards and commissions, where there will also be opportunities for public comment.

Following completion of the Final EIS, FTA and NPS will each issue a Record of Decision (ROD), which will present the basis for the decision, specify the environmentally preferable alternative, and detail the commitments made to avoid, minimize, or mitigate the adverse impacts. The ROD will close out the NEPA process and allow the project to move into the design and construction phase.

# Appendix A:
# Potomac Yard Metrorail Station Draft Environmental Impact Statement Executive Summary

# POTOMAC YARD METRORAIL STATION

## DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# Introduction

## Environmental Impact Statement for a New Metrorail Station at Potomac Yard

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the City of Alexandria, in cooperation with the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA or Metro) and the National Park Service (NPS), have prepared this Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS) under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for construction of a proposed Potomac Yard Metrorail Station. NPS is a cooperating agency because of the potential of the project to impact natural and cultural resources of the George Washington Memorial Parkway. Any action taken by NPS in conjunction with this project must be consistent with the National Park Service Organic Act, which directs NPS to "conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein" (16 U.S.C. 1). Construction would include a new Metrorail station, associated track improvements, and pedestrian bridges at Potomac Yard within the City of Alexandria. The station would be located along the existing Metrorail Blue and Yellow Lines between the Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport Metrorail Station and the Braddock Road Metrorail Station.

This document summarizes key information from the Draft EIS and gives information on opportunities to provide comments on the document. The entire Draft EIS document is available for review online at:

www.potomacyardmetro.com

Hard copies of the Draft EIS are available for review at the City of Alexandria public library and at:

**Alexandria City Hall**
**301 King Street**
**Alexandria, VA 22314**

The public comment period for the Draft EIS will be open until May 18, 2015. See **pages 14-15** for information on providing comments and participating in the public hearing.

## Why Do We Need a Metrorail Station at Potomac Yard?

### Project Purpose

The project is proposed to improve local and regional transit accessibility to and from the Potomac Yard area adjacent to the U.S. Route 1 corridor for current and future residents, employees, and businesses.

### Project Need

Currently, the project area is not served by direct access to regional transit services, such as Metrorail. This area is served by local bus services that operate in the U.S. Route 1 corridor, including the Crystal City/Potomac Yard Transitway (also known as "Metroway"). Direct access to the Metrorail system will facilitate regional transit trips.

Traffic congestion will increase on U.S. Route 1 even without the proposed development in Potomac Yard. Increasing the share of transit trips would help to manage congestion, reduce auto trips and emissions along transit corridors, and make efficient use of existing infrastructure. Additional transportation options are needed to support the City of Alexandria's redevelopment plans.

Due to the constrained capacity of the roadway network, additional transportation options are needed to support the City of Alexandria's redevelopment plans by accommodating travel demand through transit and other non-auto modes. Direct regional transit access would provide more transportation choices for residents and workers and would enhance connections to regional employment and activity centers.

## Planning for the Potomac Yard Area

Several initiatives have studied and proposed a Metrorail station in the Potomac Yard area:

- **1968 and 1975:** Metrorail system plans identified Potomac Yard as a site for a future Metrorail station that could benefit new development.
- **Mid-to-Late 1980s:** The draft *Alexandria 2020* plan proposed a mixed-use, neighborhood development with a Metrorail station. Operations of the existing rail yard began to be phased out.
- **1992/1999:** The City of Alexandria's *Potomac Yard/ Potomac Greens Small Area Plan* identified the potential for a Metrorail station. A 2009 revision included approval for an urban, mixed-use Town Center along East Glebe Road.
- **2010:** The *Potomac Yard Concept Development Study*, conducted by the City of Alexandria and Metro, analyzed eight potential Metrorail station locations, recommending further examination of three locations.
- **2010:** The *North Potomac Yard Small Area Plan* was adopted, envisioning replacement of the existing shopping center with a high-density, transit-oriented neighborhood anchored by a Metrorail station.
- **2011:** The current EIS study began, gathering public and agency input on the scope of the environmental study, project alternatives to be evaluated, and defining agency roles in the process.

*Location of Potomac Yard and the Project*

# Description of Alternatives

## Alternatives Considered

The Draft EIS identifies and evaluates alternatives that meet the project's purpose and need. The Draft EIS includes a "No Build Alternative," which describes what would happen if no station was built. The No Build Alternative provides a baseline to compare impacts.

### Screening of Initial Alternatives

In March 2011, the project team completed scoping for the Draft EIS. A total of 36 initial alternatives were evaluated and screened to select those that were:

1. Responsive to project purpose and need;
2. Consistent with land use and development plans; and
3. Technically feasible.

Build Alternatives A, B, and D – representing three different Metrorail station locations – emerged from the scoping process. A design option of Build Alternative B, identified as "B-CSX Design Option," was developed in an effort to avoid and minimize adverse impacts of Alternative B to the George Washington Memorial Parkway, Federally owned land administered by NPS.

### Alternatives Studied in the EIS

The **No Build Alternative** includes planned transportation projects expected to be finished by 2040, except the Potomac Yard Metrorail Station. These No Build projects include:

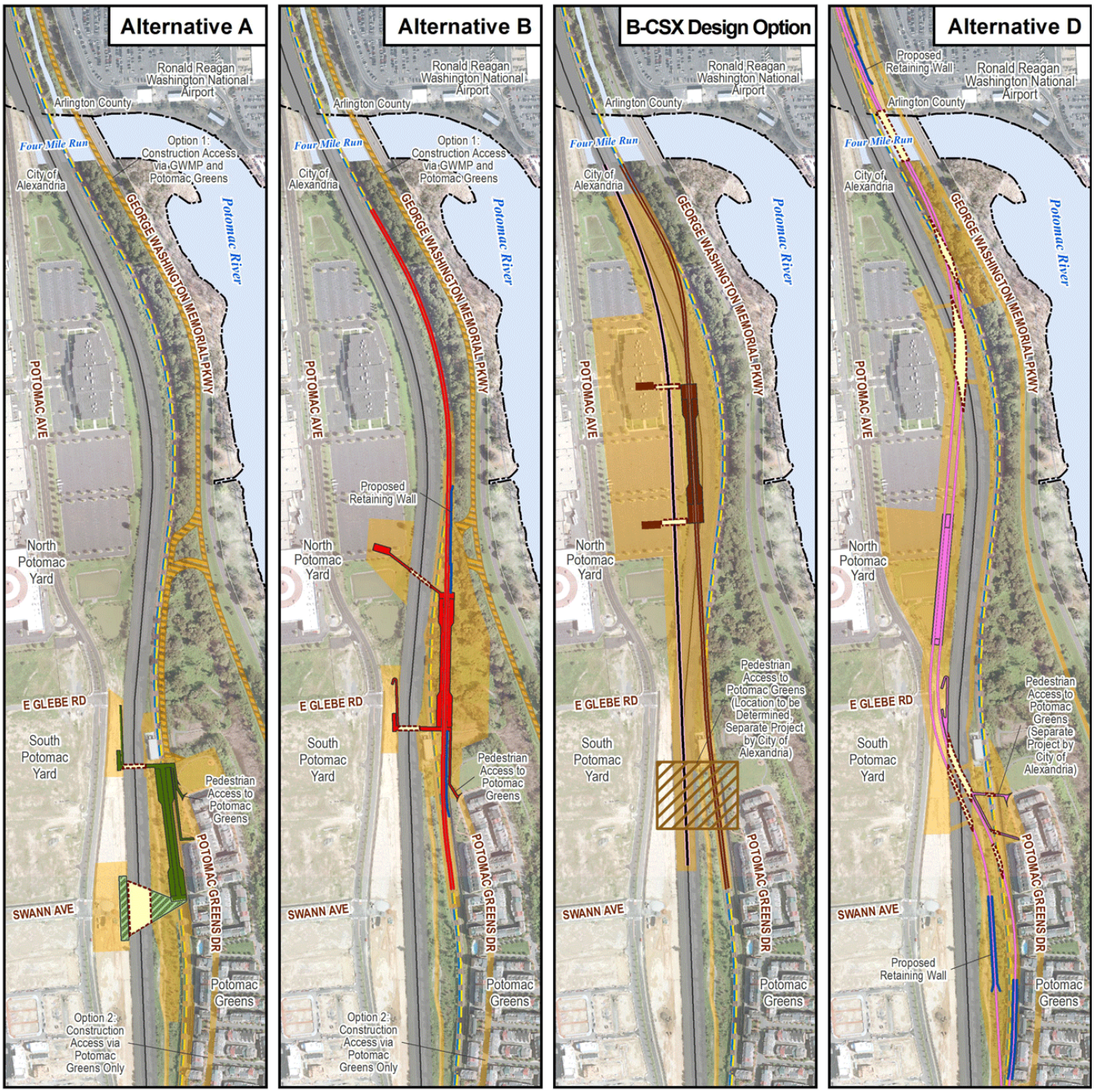
- Completion of the Potomac Yard street network and multi-use trails;
- Future pedestrian/bicycle bridge between Potomac Yard and Potomac Greens; and
- Expansion of local bus services.

The **Build Alternatives** are the three Metrorail station alternatives and design option shown on this page. Detailed depictions of each Build Alternative are provided on the following page.

*Build Alternative station locations*

- **Build Alternative A** is located along the existing Metrorail tracks between the CSX Transportation (CSXT) railroad tracks and the north end of the Potomac Greens neighborhood, generally within the "Metrorail Reservation" identified as part of the *Potomac Yard/Potomac Greens Small Area Plan* (1999).

# Project Build Alternatives




- Alternative A - Platform & Facilities
- Alternative A - Range of Potential Pedestrian Crossings
- Alternative B - Platform & Facilities
- Alternative B - New Metrorail Track
- B-CSX Design Option - Platform & Facilities
- B-CSX Design Option - New Metrorail Track
- B-CSX Design Option - Realigned CSXT Track
- Alternative D - Platform & Facilities
- Alternative D - New Metrorail Track
- Aerial Structure over Railroad or Water
- Construction Access and Impact Area
- Alternative A and B - Option 1: Additional Construction Access and Impact Area
- Existing Metrorail Blue/Yellow Line
- Existing CSXT Tracks
- Existing CSXT Right-of-Way

0 350 700 Feet

N

*Source: City of Alexandria; Arlington County; District of Columbia; WMATA*

- **Build Alternative B** is located between the George Washington Memorial Parkway and the CSXT railroad tracks north of the Potomac Greens neighborhood, and east of the existing Potomac Yard Shopping Center. Portions of Build Alternative B would be located within the Greens Scenic Area, a NPS-administered easement located within the City's Potomac Greens Park.
- **B-CSX Design Option** is located east of the existing Potomac Yard movie theater on land currently occupied by the CSXT railroad tracks. This design option of Alternative B would require relocation of the CSXT tracks to the west, providing the room necessary for the station and realigned Metrorail track to avoid George Washington Memorial Parkway property and the Greens Scenic Area easement.
- **Build Alternative D** is located west of the CSXT railroad tracks near the existing Potomac Yard Shopping Center. The alternative would require elevated tracks starting north of Four Mile Run, crossing over the CSXT tracks into Potomac Yard, and then crossing over the CSXT tracks again to reconnect to the existing Metrorail line behind Potomac Greens.

## Station Design

- Build Alternatives A, B, and B-CSX Design Option would have station platforms at the same level as the existing Metrorail tracks, with elevated entrance mezzanines providing two pedestrian bridges from the station over the CSXT railroad tracks to Potomac Yard.
- Build Alternative D would have an elevated station platform with a ground floor mezzanine entrance.

## Pedestrian Connections

- Build Alternatives A and B would provide 24-hour pedestrian/bicycle access between Potomac Yard and Potomac Greens via one of their two pedestrian bridges.
- B-CSX Design Option and Build Alternative D would have separate pedestrian/bicycle bridges providing 24-hour access between Potomac Yard and Potomac Greens.

## Construction Access and Staging

Construction activities would occur within identified staging areas and access routes shown on page 4. Construction activities for the project would last approximately two years. Opening of the station was assessed in the Draft EIS for the year 2016 based on previous project schedule assumptions. The schedule and anticipated opening year will be updated in the Final EIS.

Two construction access options for **Build Alternatives A and B** were assessed in the Draft EIS:

- *Option 1* – access to construction staging areas from the George Washington Memorial Parkway, Potomac Greens Drive, and the Rail Park, with relatively limited construction access from Potomac Yard.
- *Option 2* – access to construction staging areas from Potomac Greens Drive and the Rail Park, with relatively limited construction access from Potomac Yard, and no access from the George Washington Memorial Parkway.

**B-CSX Design Option** construction access would be provided from the Rail Park and Potomac Yard. **Build Alternative D** construction access would be provided from the George Washington Memorial Parkway, Potomac Greens Drive, the Rail Park, and Potomac Yard.

Commercial vehicles are prohibited from the George Washington Memorial Parkway, with limited exceptions, under *NPS Management Policies 2006* (9.2.1.2.1) and Federal regulations (36 CFR 5.6). The NPS policies state that "commercial traffic will be prohibited on roads within parks, except for the purpose of serving park visitors and park operations (9.2.1.2.1)." If access to private lands is otherwise not available, the park Superintendent has the discretion to issue permits for commercial vehicles. The proposed construction project areas for Build Alternatives A and B are accessible from locations other than the George Washington Memorial Parkway. However, since

potential impacts would occur to residential communities at these other locations, construction access from the George Washington Memorial Parkway was also studied as an option in the Draft EIS.

# Potential Benefits of the Project

## Project Benefits

A new Metrorail station would serve residents, employees, and visitors, providing mobility benefits and supporting the City of Alexandria's redevelopment plans for Potomac Yard by helping accommodate higher-density, mixed-use development.

### Transportation Benefits

- A Metrorail station in Potomac Yard would provide Metrorail access for thousands of Alexandria residents, employees, and visitors.
- Direct access to Metrorail would maximize the number of people taking transit to and from the Potomac Yard area.
- Additional high-density development, supported by Metrorail, would mean thousands of trips would stay in the community and allow more people to walk or bike to destinations in Potomac Yard to take care of their daily needs.

| Transportation Benefits of a Potomac Yard Metrorail Station | |
|---|---|
| 10,000-11,300 | Daily boardings at a Potomac Yard Metrorail Station |
| 34% | Daily trips taken by transit, walking, or bike |
| 5,000 | Daily auto trips removed from the road |

### How Much Development is Permitted in Potomac Yard?

The amount of residential and commercial development in Potomac Yard will vary depending on the location of a new Metrorail station.

- Levels of development currently permitted are based on the City's North Potomac Yard Small Area Plan (2010) and adopted zoning, which assume the construction of a Metrorail station in the vicinity of Build Alternative B.
- Currently, a total of 13.075 million square feet of residential, commercial and office development are allowed in Potomac Yard.
- If the No Build Alternative or a different station location other than Build Alternative B is chosen, current zoning restricts the amount of development to 9.250 million square feet.
- B-CSX Design Option and Build Alternative D would occupy otherwise developable land in Potomac Yard, and Build Alternative A would be located too far from the northern end of Potomac Yard to adequately support the densest levels of redevelopment for the existing shopping center site.

*U.S. Route 1 at Potomac Yard*

## Development Benefits

- A new Metrorail station would **support the City of Alexandria's redevelopment plans by providing regional transit access to Potomac Yard**, helping offset automobile trips and traffic congestion caused by the current and future development already approved.
- Depending on the location of a new Metrorail station, **additional high-density residential and commercial development is permitted** in Potomac Yard under current plans and zoning.
- If no Metrorail station is provided, then less development would be permitted in Potomac Yard.

*Existing Potomac Yard Shopping Center*

*Artist's rendering of planned North Potomac Yard Redevelopment*

## Support for the Project Purpose and Need

The table below evaluates how the different alternatives would support the project purpose and need.

| Evaluation Measure | No Build Alternative | Build Alternatives | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Alternative A | Alternative B | B-CSX Design Option | Alternative D |
| **Project Purpose: Improving regional transit accessibility** | | | | | |
| Regional transit access to Potomac Yard | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| **Project Need: Providing additional transportation choices for residents and workers** | | | | | |
| Additional transportation choices for residents and workers | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| **Project Need: Increasing the share of transit and other non-auto trips** | | | | | |
| Increased share of trips by transit, bike, and walking compared to Potomac Yard without regional transit access | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| **Project Need: Supporting City of Alexandria redevelopment plans** | | | | | |
| Total Potomac Yard development volume (million square feet) permitted under approved plans | 9.250 M | 9.250 M | 13.075 M | 9.250 M | 9.250 M |

# Costs and Funding Sources

## Estimated Capital Costs

Capital cost estimates are preliminary and based on conceptual engineering completed to date. Capital costs include all costs necessary to construct the station.

## Capital Funding Sources

The City has created the Potomac Yard Metrorail Station Fund to manage the revenues collected for the project. Proceeds from the fund are to be used solely for the design, construction, and financing of the station and will be accounted for separately from other City revenues. Fund revenue comes from:

- Net new tax revenues generated by Potomac Yard development (beyond taxes to pay for City and School services);
- Two special tax districts in Potomac Yard; and
- Developer contributions.

Other opportunities for federal or state funds for construction include Surface Transportation Program funds, loans through the Transportation Infrastructure Financing Innovation Act (TIFIA), additional funding from the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority, and a $50 million loan through the Virginia Transportation Infrastructure Bank (VTIB).

## Operating Costs and Funding Sources

The Potomac Yard Metrorail Station would add system-wide operating costs to Metrorail. The City of Alexandria's share of the WMATA operating subsidy for Metrorail is 5.1 percent, or approximately $10 million in FY2013. The addition of one station and an estimated 5,000 additional City residents would increase the City's share to 5.3 percent under the approved allocation formula, requiring an additional $1.39 million annual contribution. The City plans to fund the additional WMATA subsidy using the Potomac Yard Metrorail Station Fund.

## Conceptual Capital Costs (millions of 2016 Dollars)*

| Build Alternative | Low | High |
|---|---|---|
| Build Alternative A | $119 | $228 |
| Build Alternative B | $149 | $293 |
| B-CSX Design Option | $193 | $358 |
| Build Alternative D | $277 | $539 |

** These estimates were based on a previous implementation schedule that assumed an opening date for the Potomac Yard Metrorail Station in 2016. Construction cost inflation likely would increase the estimated capital costs for a later opening date.*

*Existing Metrorail Blue/Yellow Line between Potomac Greens and Potomac Yard*

## Summary of Permanent Project Effects

| Resource | Build Alternatives | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No Build Alternative | Alternative A | Alternative B | B-CSX Design Option | Alternative D |
| **Transportation** | | | | | |
| Additional off-peak Metrorail train required | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Improved pedestrian/bicycle access between Potomac Greens and Potomac Yard | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| **Human Environment** | | | | | |
| Land acquisitions (acres) | 0 | 1.3 | 4.0 | 14.4 | 10.0 |
| Displacements of businesses or residences | 0 | 0 | 0 | Movie Theater | Movie Theater |
| Consistent with City of Alexandria Plans | No | No | Yes | No | No |
| Consistent with Regional Transportation Plans | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Consistent with Plans for George Washington Memorial Parkway (GWMP) | Not inconsistent | Not inconsistent | Not inconsistent | Not inconsistent | Not inconsistent |
| Adverse impacts to viewsheds from GWMP (opening year viewsheds with a reduction in quality) | 0 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Adverse impacts to viewsheds from Potomac Greens (opening year viewsheds with a reduction in quality) | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| Adverse impacts to viewsheds from Potomac Yard (opening year viewsheds with a reduction in quality) | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Effects to GWMP historic architectural resources and parkland (acres) | 0 | • Visual impacts<br>• Removal of trees (for Option 1) | • Transfer of land (0.16 ac.)<br>• Visual impacts<br>• Removal of trees | • Visual impacts | • Transfer of land (1.43 ac.)<br>• Visual impacts<br>• Removal of trees |
| Effects to archaeological resources (sites) | 0 | Option 1: 2<br>Option 2: 0 | Option 1: 2<br>Option 2: 0 | 0 | 1 |
| City of Alexandria park impacts (acres) | 0 | 1.16 | 3.01 | 3.86 | 5.38 |
| Greens Scenic Area easement impact (acres) | 0 | 0 | 1.71 | 0 | 0 |
| FTA noise criteria impacts (residences) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 |
| WMATA noise criteria impacts (residences) | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 3 |
| FTA vibration criteria impacts (residences) | 0 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 7 |
| WMATA vibration criteria impacts (residences) | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Natural Environment** | | | | | |
| Increase in impervious surface (acres) | 0 | 1.82 | 2.24 | (-0.02) | 9.24 |
| U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (USACE) regulated wetlands impacts (acres) | 0 | 0.02 | 1.22 | 0 | 0.52 |
| NPS regulated wetlands impacts (acres) | 0 | 0 | 1.28 | 0 | 0.50 |
| Floodplain impacts (acres) | 0 | 0 | 1.48 | 0 | 0.90 |
| Resource Protection Area impacts (acres) | 0 | 0.41 | 3.36 | 1.12 | 2.07 |
| Natural habitat loss (acres) | 0 | 0.03 | 2.58 | 0.18 | 1.76 |
| **Secondary and Cumulative Effects** | | | | | |
| Secondary traffic & visual impacts | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Adverse effects to GWMP historic architectural resources | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Cumulative traffic, visual & floodplain impacts | None | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |

## Summary of Temporary Construction Effects

| Resource | Build Alternatives | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No Build Alternative | Alternative A | Alternative B | B-CSX Design Option | Alternative D |
| General impacts to roadways and driveways | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Use of GWMP roadway | No | Option 1: Yes<br>Option 2: No | Option 1: Yes<br>Option 2: No | No | Yes |
| Effects to GWMP historic architectural resources and parkland (acres) | 0 | Option 1: 0.30<br>Option 2: 0 | Option 1: 0.78<br>Option 2: 0.55 | 0 | 2.40 |
| Effects to archaeological resources (sites) | 0 | Option 1: 2<br>Option 2: 0 | Option 1: 2<br>Option 2: 0 | 0 | 1 |
| City of Alexandria park impacts (acres) | 0 | Option 1: 5.49<br>Option 2: 4.80 | Option 1: 5.48<br>Option 2: 5.48 | 0.97 | 5.53 |
| Greens Scenic Area easement impact (acres) | 0 | Option 1: 0.25<br>Option 2: 0.13 | Option 1: 3.09<br>Option 2: 3.09 | 0 | 0.02 |
| USACE regulated wetlands impacts (acres) | 0 | Option 1: 0.30<br>Option 2: 0.01 | Option 1: 3.61<br>Option 2: 3.54 | 0 | 0.41 |
| NPS regulated wetlands impacts (acres) | 0 | Option 1: 0.35<br>Option 2: 0.01 | Option 1: 3.68<br>Option 2: 3.57 | 0 | 0.48 |
| Resource Protection Area impacts (acres) | 0 | Option 1: 1.75<br>Option 2: 0.49 | Option 1: 5.50<br>Option 2: 5.27 | 0.58 | 2.40 |

# Project Effects for Key Environmental Resource Areas

## Key Environmental Resource Areas

An overview of environmental impacts is shown on page 9; temporary construction impacts to environmental resources are listed in the table above. Specific effects to the George Washington Memorial Parkway are also described individually by resource area at the end of the section.

### Land Acquisitions and Displacements

The Build Alternatives would require property for station facilities and right-of-way for realigned track, as well as additional temporary construction easements or access permits. No residential displacements would be required for any of the alternatives. B-CSX Design Option and Build Alternative D would result in a displacement of one existing business, the movie theater in the Potomac Yard Shopping Center. Build Alternatives A and B would not result in the displacement of any businesses.

Build Alternatives B and D would require permanent acquisition of 0.16 acre and 1.43 acres, respectively, of the George Washington Memorial Parkway property. Build Alternatives A and B-CSX Design Option would not require permanent acquisitions of the George Washington Memorial Parkway. In addition, Build Alternative B would be a violation of the Greens Scenic Area easement. Build Alternative B could not proceed unless the easement is released by NPS. Construction staging and access areas for Build Alternatives A and D would also be in violation of the Greens Scenic Area easement. B-CSX Design Option would not be in violation of the Greens Scenic Area easement.

Land acquisitions would be conducted in accordance with all applicable laws.

## Local Plans and Zoning

The *North Potomac Yard Small Area Plan* and the zoning for Coordinated Development District (CDD) 19 link the level of development to the presence of a Metrorail station at the approximate location of Build Alternative B. Build Alternative A, B-CSX Design Option, and Build Alternative D are inconsistent with City of Alexandria plans. If a Metrorail station is constructed at a location other than Build Alternative B or is not built, the amount of permitted development in North Potomac Yard is reduced by approximately 3.825 million square feet. The selection of Build Alternative A, B-CSX Design Option, or Build Alternative D would require the City to undertake a revised planning and rezoning process for North Potomac Yard.

## Visual Resources

The three Build Alternatives and B-CSX Design Option would impact views from the George Washington Memorial Parkway, the Potomac Greens neighborhood, Potomac Greens Park, and Potomac Yard, due to the introduction of new visual elements and removal of vegetation for construction access and staging areas. New visual elements include the stations and pedestrian bridges for all Build Alternatives, B-CSX Design Option, and the elevated track and structures required for Build Alternative D. The new higher-density development permitted in Potomac Yard under the No Build and Build Alternatives will also result in visual impacts, although this will happen whether or not a Metrorail station is constructed at Potomac Yard.

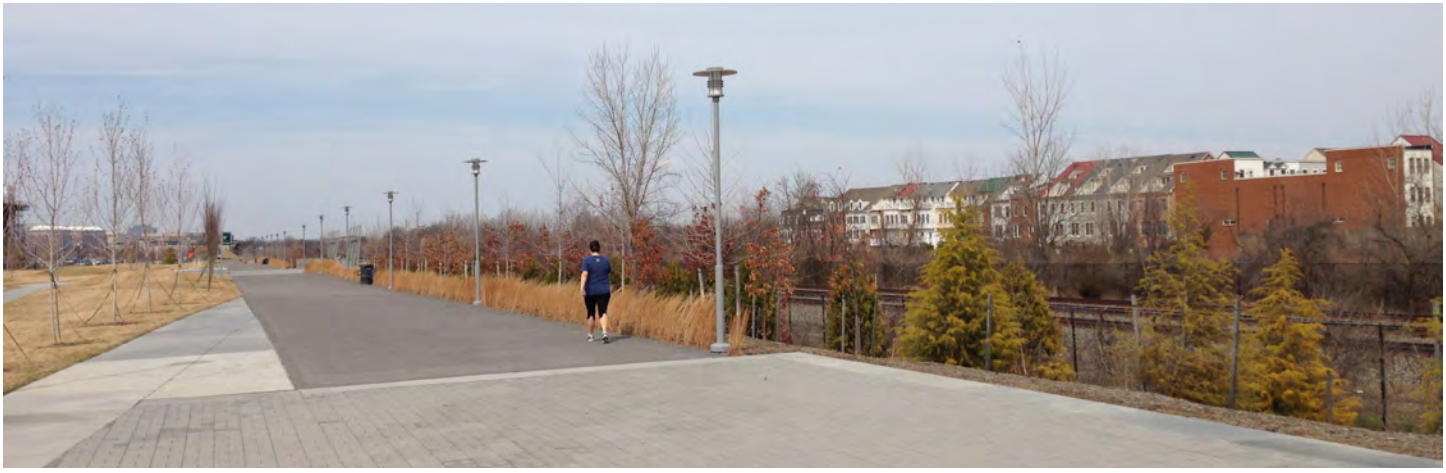
## Noise and Vibration

Residences in Potomac Greens were constructed alongside the pre-existing Metrorail alignment; current Metrorail operations exceed WMATA noise criteria at seven residences. Approval for construction of these residences included a reservation for a future Metrorail station (location of Build Alternative A), and the potential construction of a Metrorail station is disclosed in land and ownership documents.

The existing noise conditions would remain under the No Build Alternative, Build Alternative A, Build Alternative B, and B-CSX Design Option. Build Alternative D would reduce noise impacts at four residences, but would result in new noise impacts based on FTA criteria at eight residences due to its elevated track.

Build Alternative B and B-CSX Design Option would not exceed criteria for vibration impacts. However, both Build Alternatives A and D would result in increased vibration impacts based on FTA criteria to residences in Potomac Greens due to Metrorail trains passing over new switches.

Other noise sources are associated with the proposed station. Metrorail door chimes, train conductor announcements, station public address announcements, and brake noise would be audible in the community as a new noise source. These noises are not expected to contribute to any exceedance or noise impact, based on WMATA and FTA criteria. These noise sources would be evaluated more closely during final design when the station features are finalized, and would be mitigated, as appropriate.



*Potomac Yard Park, CSXT railroad tracks, and Potomac Greens*

## Wetlands and Waterways

Wetlands exist in the area to the east and north of Potomac Greens, between the WMATA tracks and George Washington Memorial Parkway, and in the vicinity of Four Mile Run. Build Alternative B would permanently fill 1.22 acres of wetland regulated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) under the Clean Water Act. Build Alternative D would permanently fill 0.52 acre of USACE regulated wetland and would require a new bridge over Four Mile Run with new bridge piers in the stream. Build Alternative A and B-CSX Design Option would have impacts of less than one-tenth of an acre. Wetlands are also regulated by NPS; specific impacts to wetlands within the parkland of the George Washington Memorial Parkway and the Greens Scenic Area easement are described on page 13.

## Construction Access and Staging

Areas designated for construction staging (see areas shaded in orange on Page 4) would be cleared of all trees and other natural vegetation and filled or leveled as necessary to make construction activities possible. After construction, the areas would be replanted and landscaped according to prior uses and wetlands would be restored in coordination with NPS, USACE, and other relevant agencies. A screen of vegetation along George Washington Memorial Parkway would be maintained where possible to minimize the visual impact to users.

Option 1 construction access for Build Alternatives A and B (access from the George Washington Memorial Parkway) would impact two archaeological sites if avoidance measures are not possible. Construction of Build Alternative D would impact one archaeological site.

## George Washington Memorial Parkway/ Mount Vernon Memorial Highway

The George Washington Memorial Parkway, including the historic Mount Vernon Memorial Highway, commemorates the first president, preserves the natural setting, and provides a quality entryway for visitors to the nation's capital. The construction of a Metrorail station at Potomac Yard would affect resources of the Parkway:

### *Cultural Resources*

The segment of the George Washington Memorial Parkway within the project study area is listed on the National Register of Historic Places through two separate nominations: the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway and the George Washington Memorial Parkway.

Build Alternative D, and Option 1 construction access for Build Alternatives A and B (access from the Parkway) would impact the George Washington Memorial Parkway. Specifically, construction of temporary access roads to support station construction under the alternatives would require removal of trees and other vegetation that were intended to screen views of uses to the west. B-CSX Design Option, and Option 2 construction access for Build Alternatives A and B (no access from the Parkway) would not require the construction of temporary access roads from the George Washington Memorial Parkway. For Build Alternative B, both construction access options would require use of a portion of parkland for construction staging, regardless of the access route. Viewsheds and the visitor experience along the Parkway would be impacted by the introduction of a new Metrorail station under any of the three Build Alternatives or B-CSX Design Option.

The three Build Alternatives and B-CSX Design Option would impact historic resources by removing vegetation west of the George Washington Memorial Parkway and introducing new non-historic visual elements and views to the west. These new non-historic elements would impact the integrity of the designed historic landscape and degrade the scenic and historic quality and contemplative experience for travelers, important characteristics of the Parkway experience.

Option 1 construction access for Build Alternatives A and B (access from the George Washington Memorial Parkway) would impact two archaeological sites if avoidance measures are not possible. Construction of Build Alternative D would impact one archaeological site if avoidance measures are not possible. B-CSX Design Option, and Option 2 construction access for Build Alternatives A and B (no access from the Parkway) would not impact any archaeological sites.

### Visual Resources

Views from the George Washington Memorial Parkway would be impacted by the introduction of the Metrorail station as well as the Potomac Yard redevelopment in all Build Alternatives, especially during winter, due to the loss of vegetative foliage.

- Build Alternatives requiring construction access from the Parkway (Option 1 construction access for Build Alternatives A and B, and Build Alternative D) would create long-term viewshed impacts. Removal of vegetation would create gaps in the vegetated viewsheds, and replacement vegetation would need to develop and mature to match the existing vegetation growth.
- Build Alternatives that do not require construction access from the Parkway (Option 2 construction access for Build Alternatives A and B, and B-CSX Design Option) would have viewshed impacts from station structures and bridges, and removal of vegetation off of the George Washington Memorial Parkway property. Build Alternative B would require clearing of vegetation within the Greens Scenic Area easement.
- Under the No Build Alternative, viewsheds would be degraded as the Potomac Yard area is developed.

### Wetlands

Depending on the construction option, up to 1.28 acres of wetlands on NPS parkland or the Greens Scenic Area easement would be impacted. Up to 3.68 acres of additional wetlands would be temporarily impacted during construction.

Build Alternatives B and D would permanently impact 1.28 and 0.50 acre, respectively, of NPS regulated wetlands. Option 1 construction access for Build Alternatives A and B, and Option 2 construction access for Build Alternative B would all lead to additional temporary wetland impacts. Specific wetland mitigation would be determined through discussions with various agencies for unavoidable impacts. All wetlands located on NPS land would be replaced within the Parkway property or on other NPS sites. B-CSX Design Option and Option 2 construction access for Build Alternative A would not result in any permanent or temporary impacts to wetlands on the George Washington Memorial Parkway.

### Construction Traffic

Build Alternatives that require construction access from the George Washington Memorial Parkway (Option 1 construction access for Build Alternatives A and B, and Build Alternative D) would have temporary traffic impacts due to construction vehicles. Construction vehicles would impact the driver experience along the Parkway and would require a permit from NPS. The number of construction vehicles accessing the site per day would vary and would be restricted to specific times based on NPS and City of Alexandria construction regulations and permits. Construction vehicles using the Parkway may damage the roadway pavement, which would require repair after construction. B-CSX Design Option and Option 2 construction access for Build Alternatives A and B would not require construction access from the George Washington Memorial Parkway.

Construction traffic would impact park user experience, an important element of the purpose of the park.

Commercial vehicles are prohibited from the George Washington Memorial Parkway, with limited exceptions, under *NPS Management Policies 2006* (9.2.1.2.1) and Federal regulations (36 CFR 5.6). The NPS policies state that “commercial traffic will be prohibited on roads within parks, except for the purpose of serving park visitors and park operations (9.2.1.2.1).” If access to private lands is otherwise not available, the park Superintendent has the discretion to issue permits for commercial vehicles. The

*Existing wetland area within Potomac Greens Park; George Washington Memorial Parkway in the background*

proposed construction project areas for Build Alternatives A and B are accessible from locations other than the George Washington Memorial Parkway. However, since potential impacts would occur to residential communities at these other locations, construction access from the George Washington Memorial Parkway was also studied as an option in the Draft EIS.

# Public Involvement and Next Steps

## How Has the Public Been Engaged in the Project?

The public has been engaged through:

- Public meetings and community group meetings;
- Project newsletters and email distribution lists;
- Project website; and
- Interaction with community organizations.

Informational materials at all public meetings, including presentation materials, handouts, and comment sheets, have been available in Spanish as well as English, and a Spanish-speaking staff member has been present at all meetings.

In addition, the Alexandria City Council created the Potomac Yard Metrorail Implementation Work Group to assist in the EIS process by informing City officials and providing a venue for input on the project.

### What Are the Roles of Other Agencies?

During project scoping, Federal, state, and local agencies that might have an interest in the project were invited to participate. Agencies have been involved through briefings and additional communication focused on specific areas of expertise within each agency's reviewing purview. Agencies, as well as the public, are invited to comment on the Draft EIS.

Agencies are also involved through concurrent Federal processes, including reviews for consistency with:

- Clean Water Act;
- National Historic Preservation Act;
- U.S. Department of Transportation Act ("Section 4(f)"); and
- Coastal Zone Management Act.

The National Park Service (NPS) is a cooperating agency because of the potential of the project to impact the George Washington Memorial Parkway. Any action taken by NPS must be consistent with the National Park Service Organic Act, which established NPS and governs its activities.

## Public Comment Period

The public has the opportunity to comment on the environmental analysis. Comments received during this period can help to identify changes to alternatives that may mitigate adverse effects. Any changes will be incorporated into the Final EIS. See www.potomacyardmetro.com for the full copy of the Draft EIS and supporting background materials from the study.

Hard copies of the Draft EIS are available for review at the City of Alexandria public library and at:

**Alexandria City Hall**
**301 King Street**
**Alexandria, VA 22314**

**The public comment period on the Draft EIS will be open until May 18, 2015.**

See following page for information on opportunities to provide comments at the public hearing, by email, or by mail.

*Project public meeting, April 2012*

## City of Alexandria Outreach

The City of Alexandria will be hosting two public workshops, in which individuals can learn more about the EIS process and get more information about specific subject areas. A separate public hearing will be held by the City of Alexandria as part of its legislative process.

For more information on the final dates of City meetings and hearings related to the project, please visit the City's website:

Alexandriava.gov/PotomacYard/

or you may call the City's general information line:

**703-746-4357**

## Public Hearing

A public hearing on the Draft EIS will be held as part of the NEPA process at the following time and location:

**Thursday, April 30, 2015 at 6:30pm**

**Cora Kelly Recreation Center**
**25 W. Reed Avenue**
**Alexandria, VA 22305**

The location of the hearing is wheelchair accessible. Any individual who requires special assistance such as a sign language interpreter or additional accommodation to participate in the public hearing, or who requires these materials in an alternate format, should contact Danise Peña at 202-962-2511 or TTY: 202-962-2033 as soon as possible in order for WMATA to make necessary arrangements. For language assistance, such as an interpreter or information in another language, please call 202-962-2582 at least 48 hours prior to the hearing.

### What Happens after the Public Hearing?

Following the public hearing, the City of Alexandria will choose a preferred alternative. The City will continue coordination with FTA and NPS before selection of a preferred alternative to ensure compliance with NEPA and other applicable laws.

After identification of the preferred alternative, a Final EIS will be prepared. The Final EIS will state how public comments are addressed, include further design and refinement of the project to minimize community and environmental impacts, identify impacts of the preferred alternative, and describe measures for avoiding, minimizing, or mitigating adverse impacts.

## Comment on the Draft EIS

Submit written comments by May 18, 2015:

- By email: comments@potomacyardmetro.com
  or
  writtentestimony@wmata.com
- By mail: **Potomac Yard Metrorail Station EIS**
  **P.O. Box 16531**
  **Alexandria, VA 22302**
  or
  **Office of the Secretary**
  **WMATA**
  **600 Fifth Street Northwest**
  **Washington, DC 20001**

# Appendix B:
# Letter from the National Park Service re: Net Benefits Agreement Framework

# United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
National Capital Region
1100 Ohio Drive, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20242

IN REPLY
REFER TO:

1.A1. (NCR-GWMP)

April 20, 2015

Mr. Mark Jinks
City Manager, City of Alexandria
301 King Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

Dear Mr. Jinks:

I am writing to follow up on the November 14, 2014 letter from the National Park Service (NPS) to City Manager, Rashad Young regarding the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed Potomac Yard Metro Station. In that letter, the NPS stated its belief that Build Alternatives A or B could be viable from its perspective, but that the NPS and the City of Alexandria would need to agree on a package of mitigations that would ensure a net benefit to the George Washington Memorial Parkway (GWMP) should Alternative B be selected.

The NPS understands that, with the release of the Draft EIS, your staff is likely to recommend Alternative B as the "locally preferred alternative" for approval by the Alexandria City Council at an upcoming meeting. Over the last several months the NPS and the City of Alexandria staff have had productive discussions regarding potential measures for mitigating impacts and the loss of parkland within the GWMP. We believe that the City's current proposal appears to mitigate those impacts sufficiently so that NPS would not object to the identification of Alternative B as the locally preferred alternative.

The City's proposal would offset the loss of approximately 7,000 square feet of GWMP parkland by providing the United States with full fee ownership of most of a parcel of City parkland on which it currently holds a scenic easement, and by placing limitations on building heights adjacent to the GWMP, building lighting, and building signage, through easements and/or City regulations. In addition, the City proposes to allocate approximately $12 million to mitigate impacts to park resources through the following measures:

- Stormwater management planning and implementation of stormwater-related improvements to Daingerfield Island and the adjacent section of the GWMP;
- Development of and at least partial funding for the implementation of a Master Plan for improvements to Daingerfield Island;
- Repairs and improvements to the Mount Vernon Trail in the vicinity of the project area; and
- Plans and studies that will address the acute planning needs for the south section of the GWMP (Four Mile Run to Mount Vernon), covering such topics as vegetation and landscape, cultural resources and archeology, viewshed protection, visitor use, resource stewardship, and facility management.

The NPS believes that the full implementation of the package described above would sufficiently mitigate the loss of park and easement land and the impacts to park resources, and NPS accordingly does not

object to the identification of Alternative B as the locally preferred alternative in the EIS. NPS notes that significant work remains to complete this National Environmental Policy Act process, as well as compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act and Section 4(f), and that some aspects of the project are still under discussion. Those processes and issues will need to be completed and resolved before NPS would provide any needed final approval for Alternative B or whatever alternative is ultimately selected.

Thank you for your continued cooperation on this process and your work with the NPS to preserve parkland and resources. If you have any questions or need further information, please contact me or Peter May, Associate Regional Director for Lands, Planning and Design at (202) 619-7025.

Sincerely,

Robert A. Vogel
Regional Director

# Appendix C:
# Feedback on Impacts of Alternatives

# Appendix C:
# Feedback on Impacts of Alternatives

The evaluation of the costs and benefits of each of the alternatives considered in the Draft EIS included a consideration of comments from the public, including both benefits and issues related to each alternative. This feedback was received by email, through public testimony, and heard at boards, commissions, and community meetings. Staff has summarized the feedback from the public for the No Build Alternative, Alternative A, Alternative B, Alternative D, and Design Option B-CSX.

## NO BUILD ALTERNATIVE

The following reasons are typically being heard from residents in support of the No Build Alternative:

- Project Purpose and Need: Residents who support the No Build Alternative typically do so because they believe the existing and future transportation network (including the Crystal City/Potomac Yard Transitway) is sufficient to support the mobility needs of the Potomac Yard area. Some residents who support the No Build Alternative would also like to see a lower level of development in North Potomac Yard, and therefore believe a Metrorail station is unneccesary.
- The George Washington Memorial Parkway (GWMP): A number of residents are concerned about impacts to the GWMP, particularly that a visible Metrorail station will degrade the quality of this resource. A No Build Alternative would not have any permanent or temporary impacts to the GWMP.
- Financial Feasibility: Some residents have expressed support for the No Build Alternative as they are worried the City would jeopardize its bond rating and need to use monies from the General Fund if the development of Potomac Yard does not proceed as projected.
- Wetlands: Some residents support the No Build Alternative because this alternative would not result in impacts to the wetlands north of Potomac Greens.

The following concerns are typically being heard from residents regarding the No Build Alternative:

- Lack of regional transit accessibility: Residents have expressed concern that without the addition of a Metrorail station at Potomac Yard, fewer trips would be taken via transit, resulting in additional capacity pressures on area roadways.
- Development impact: Residents have expressed concern that Potomac Yard would see a less diverse mix of uses without a Metrorail station, including significantly less office development.

- Competitiveness: Residents have expressed concern that the lack of a Metrorail station at Potomac Yard would affect the area's attractiveness for new residents and businesses.

## ALTERNATIVE A

The following reasons are typically being heard from residents in support of Alternative A:

- Financial Feasibility: Some residents have expressed support for Alternative A as the most fiscally sensible Build Alternative to construct. Alternative A has the lowest construction costs of all Build Alternatives.

- Proximity to Del Ray Community: Some residents of the Del Ray neighborhood are in support of Alternative A as this station location would have access points nearest to the greatest number of residents and businesses in their neighborhood.

The concerns described below are typically being heard from residents regarding Alternative A. It should be noted that residents of Potomac Greens have expressed many concerns about the impacts of this alternative, given its location at the northern end of the neighborhood.

- Construction: Construction access for Alternative A could come through Old Town Greens and Potomac Greens. Some residents have expressed concern about traffic from construction trucks using neighborhood streets, particularly when there are children playing. Noise, vibration, and dust from construction activities could be disruptive to residents.

- Parking and Traffic: The station is designed as an urban station, with the majority of riders expected to arrive on foot or bicycle. Bus riders would access the station from Potomac Avenue. Some residents have expressed concern about traffic from cars using neighborhood streets to access the Metrorail station. Because the station will not include any park-and-ride lots, residents have also expressed concern that Metrorail riders will park on neighborhood streets.

- Parks: Access points to the Metrorail station would be located in Potomac Greens Park and Potomac Yard Park, with the southern bridge for Alternative A landing at the widest point of Potomac Yard Park and displacing uses there. Some residents are concerned that these access points would negatively affect their use and enjoyment of the parks.

- Crime: Some residents of Potomac Greens and Old Town Greens have noted that their neighborhoods are relatively isolated, with only one access point to Slaters Lane. They have expressed concern that adding an access point to Metrorail would increase the opportunity for crime in their neighborhood.

- Financial Feasibility: Some residents have expressed concern that the station would need to be paid for using monies from the General Fund if the development of Potomac Yard does not proceed as projected.

- Noise and Vibration: Given the location of the station behind a number of homes in Potomac Greens, some residents have expressed concern that noise from the station will negatively affect their quality of life, and that there could be vibration impacts to their homes.

- Visual Impact: Some residents whose homes are located approximately 50 feet from the platform for Alternative A are concerned about the visual impact of the station from their windows and balconies.

- Property Values: Some residents of Potomac Greens worry that the combined negative effects of Alternative A would result in lower property values within the neighborhood.

## ALTERNATIVE B

The following reasons are typically being heard from residents in support of Alternative B:

- Development Impact: Alternative B receives support from residents who want the maximum potential development of North Potomac Yard and, therefore, maximum economic benefit to the City.
- Economic Competiveness: Some residents have expressed support for Alternative B as this location would allow for maximum potential development of North Potomac Yard and provide a vibrant destination that will attract a young, educated and talented workforce.
- Smart Growth: Alternative B receives support from residents who see it as the alternative that will do the most to foster the redevelopment of Potomac Yard as a walkable, transit-oriented hub for the City and the region. These residents note that Alternative B will maximize the transportation, economic, and environmental benefits of the project.

- Property Values: A number of Potomac Greens residents have expressed support for Alternative B as this location would not have the combined negative effects of Alternative A that would result in lower property values within the neighborhood.

The concerns described below are typically being heard from residents regarding Alternative B.

- Construction: Significant construction access for Alternative B could come through Old Town Greens and Potomac Greens. Some residents have expressed concern about traffic from construction trucks using neighborhood streets, particularly where there are children playing. Noise, vibration, and dust from construction activities could be disruptive to residents, particularly when construction takes place at night and on weekends.

- Parking and Traffic: The station is designed as an urban station, with the majority of riders expected to arrive on foot or bicycle. Bus riders would access the station from Potomac Avenue. Some residents have expressed concern about traffic from cars using neighborhood streets to access the Metrorail station. Because the station will not include any park-and-ride lots, residents have also expressed concern that Metrorail riders will park on neighborhood streets.

- The George Washington Memorial Parkway (GWMP): Alternative B would be located partially on land currently occupied by a scenic easement administered by NPS, and would require approximately 7,000 square feet of GWMP property. The GWMP is an important resource commemorating the nation's first president, which was designed to provide a quality entryway for visitor's to the nation's capital. Some residents are concerned about impacts to the GWMP, particularly that a visible Metrorail station will degrade the quality of this resource.

- Parks: Access points to the Metrorail station would be located in Potomac Greens Park and Potomac Yard Park, near existing multi-use trails. Some residents are concerned that these access points would negatively affect their use and enjoyment of the parks.

- Wetlands: Alternative B would impact wetlands to the north of Potomac Greens. Some residents have expressed concern over both the permanent impacts and the temporary impacts due to the staging area for construction as currently designed.

- Crime: Some residents of Potomac Greens and Old Town Greens have noted that their neighborhoods are relatively isolated, with only one access point to Slaters Lane. They have expressed concern that adding an access point to Metrorail would increase the opportunity for crime in their neighborhood.

- Financial Feasibility: Some residents have expressed concern that the station would need to be paid for using monies from the General Fund if the development of Potomac Yard does not proceed as expected.

## B-CSX DESIGN OPTION

The following reasons are typically being heard from residents in support of B-CSX Design Option:

- The George Washington Memorial Parkway (GWMP): A number of residents are concerned about impacts to the GWMP as a result of construction access and staging. B-CSX Design Option would not have any permanent or temporary impacts to the GWMP.

- Wetlands: Some residents support the B-CSX Design Option because this design option would not result in permanent impacts and the temporary impacts due to the staging area for construction as currently designed for Alternative A, Alternative B, and Alternative D.

The concerns described below are typically being heard from residents regarding the B-CSX Design Option.

- Construction Cost and Timing: At a minimum, the B-CSX Design Option would add three years to the construction schedule and would cost approximately $83 million more than Alternative B. Some residents have expressed concern that the B-CSX Design Option could take many more years to construct than any of the other alternatives. This is not only due to the additional time required to move the CSXT right-of-way, but also because this option does not have the support of CSXT. Residents have also noted that coordination with CSXT could add many years to the project, even if they do eventually agree. Residents have also expressed concern related to the additional cost of the B-CSX Design Option compared to Alternatives A and B.

- Development Impact: The B-CSX Design Option would require the use of otherwise developable land. Some residents have expressed concern that the B-CSX Design Option will affect the full realization of the potential development in North Potomac Yard.

- Station Access: B-CSX Design Option is located at the northern end of Potomac Yard. Some residents have expressed concern that it is located too far from existing development at the southern end of Potomac Yard and west of Route 1, and therefore would not provide a benefit to those neighborhoods.

- Pedestrian/Bicycle Access: B-CSX Design Option would not include a pedestrian/bicycle bridge between Potomac Yard and Potomac Greens as part of the project (the bridge would be constructed separately). Some residents have expressed a preference for alternatives that integrate the pedestrian/bicycle bridge into the station (as in Alternatives A and B).

- Financial Feasibility: Some residents have expressed concern that the station would need to be paid for using monies from the General Fund if the development of Potomac Yard does not proceed as expected.

## ALTERNATIVE D

The following reasons are typically being heard from residents in support of Alternative D:

- Station Access: Some residents of Lynhaven have expressed support for Alternative D as the station location would be located closer to their neighborhood.
- Property Values: Some residents of Potomac Greens have expressed support for Alternative D as this location would not have the combined negative effects of Alternative A or Alternative B that would result in lower property values within the neighborhood.

The concerns described below are typically being heard from residents regarding the Alternative D.

- Construction Cost: Some residents are concerned that the high construction cost for Alternative D is not financially feasible.

- Visual Impact: Alternative D would require the construction of aerial track over the existing Metrorail and CSXT tracks, as well as a new bridge over Four Mile Run. Some residents are concerned that the aerial structures and platform of Alternative D would be out of character for the City and would negatively affect views from the George Washington Memorial Parkway. The aerial guideway would also negatively affect views from the windows of houses in Potomac Greens.

- Noise and Vibration: The aerial tracks for Alternative D rejoin the existing Metrorail tracks behind the homes in Potomac Greens. Some residents have expressed concern that they could be negatively affected by noise and vibration from trains passing over these aerial tracks.

- Parks: The aerial structures for alternative would occupy portions of Potomac Yard Park, requiring the relocation of existing park uses. Some residents are concerned that this would negatively affect their use and enjoyment of the park.

- Development Impact: Alternative D would require the use of otherwise developable land. Some residents have expressed concern that this would affect the full realization of the potential development in North Potomac Yard.

- Station Access: Alternative D would be located at the northern end of Potomac Yard. Residents have expressed concern that it would be located too far from existing development at the southern end of Potomac Yard and west of Route 1, and therefore would not provide a benefit to those neighborhoods.

- Pedestrian/Bicycle Access: Alternative D would not include a pedestrian/bicycle bridge between Potomac Yard and Potomac Greens as part of the project (the bridge would be constructed separately). Some residents have expressed a preference for alternatives that integrate the pedestrian/bicycle bridge into the station (as in Alternatives A and B).