



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Transit
Administration**

SEP 28 2012

REGION III
Delaware, District of Columbia,
Maryland, Pennsylvania,
Virginia, West Virginia

Federal Transit Administration
Region III
1760 Market Street, Suite 500
Philadelphia, PA 19103
215-656-7100
215-656-7260 (fax)

Mr. Ralign T. Wells
Administrator
Mass Transit Administration
6 Saint Paul Street
Baltimore, MD 21202-2267

Re: Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)
JD to Jones Hill Double Tracking


Dear Mr. Wells:

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has completed its review of the JD to Jones Hill Double Tracking Environmental Assessment received by our office on June 4, 2012. Based on our review, the FTA is issuing a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for this project.

Please note that if a grant is approved for this project, the standard terms and conditions of the FTA grant contract will require the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) to undertake all environmental mitigation measures identified in the environmental assessment.

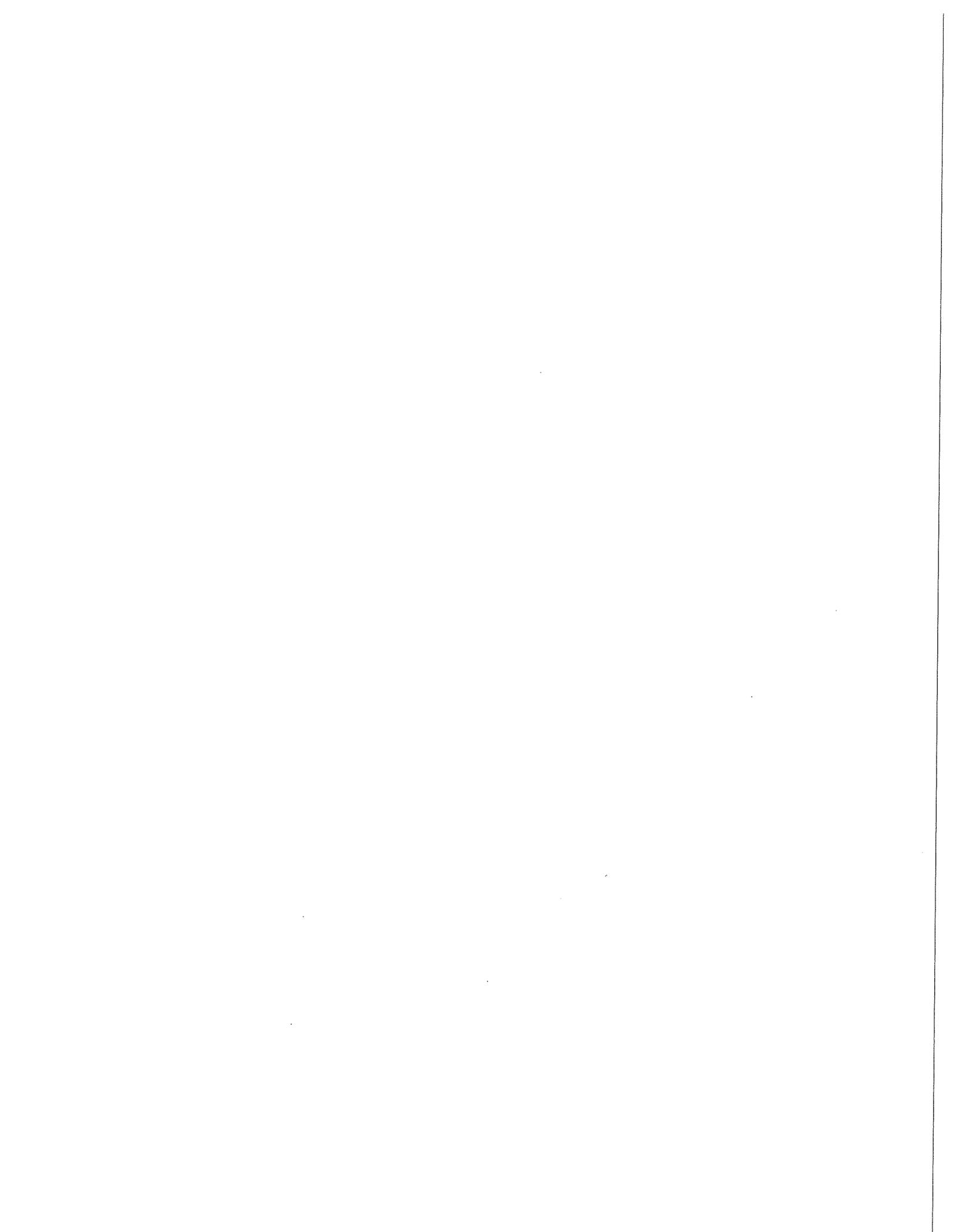
A copy of the approved FONSI is enclosed. Copies of the FONSI and the Environmental Assessment should be made available to the public by posting them on the project website. Notice of this availability and the web location to access these documents should be sent to the affected units of Federal, State and local governments and to the State intergovernmental review contacts in accordance with 23 CFR 771.121(b).

Thank you for your cooperation in meeting the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act. Gail McFadden-Roberts, Community Planner, of my staff is available to answer questions and provide any further assistance via phone (215) 656 7121 or via e-mail Gail.McFadden-Roberts@dot.gov.

Sincerely,


Brigid Hynes-Cherin
Regional Administrator

Enclosure



FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION
REGION III

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

PROJECT: JD to Jones Hill Double Tracking
APPLICANT: Maryland Transit Administration
PROJECT LOCATION: Prince George's County, Maryland
FTA GRANT NUMBER: None

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) completed its review of the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the JD to Jones Hill Double Tracking project ("project") in Prince George's County. These materials have been reviewed in accordance with 23 CFR Section 771.119 (Environmental Assessments), 23 CFR Section 771.121 (Findings of No Significant Impact (FONSI)), and FTA's Environmental Process Standard Operating Procedures to determine if environmental requirements have been satisfied.

Section 771.115 identifies three classes of action that prescribe the level of documentation required in the NEPA process. A project in which the significance of the environmental impact is not clearly established is a Class III (environmental assessment) action. Class III actions require documentation from the applicant to clearly establish that there are no significant impacts or controversy with the project, that no significant environmental impacts will result and that any Section 4(f) or 106 issues have been resolved to the satisfaction of all parties. The actions may be subject to additional study if circumstances warrant. The FTA determined that the appropriate class of action was an environmental assessment and the following is documentation of the FTA's review.

Project Description

The Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) proposes improvements to a two-mile stretch of railroad on a section of tracks known as the Alexandria Extension. The Alexandria Extension runs from Hyattsville, Maryland to Virginia Avenue in the District of Columbia where it joins tracks from Union Station to form a route to Virginia and all points south. The Alexandria Extension is currently a single track for its entire four-mile length. In addition to trains heading into Virginia, freight trains delivering aggregates to construction facilities and coal to Southern Maryland power stations use the Alexandria Extension. This project would occur between Decatur Street and a point north of Frolich Road in Prince George's County, Maryland. Improvements would include the construction of a second track, the shifting of the existing track, modification of the existing bridge, construction of an additional railroad bridge deck over the Northeast Branch of the Anacostia River and other minor associated work.

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Project Purpose and Need

The purpose of this project is to alleviate congestion on a portion of the CSX-owned Alexandria Extension that often causes disruptions to the MTA's MARC train service. The MARC Camden Line, which carries approximately 4,400 passengers between Camden Yards in Baltimore, Maryland and Union Station in Washington, D.C. each weekday, is the MARC line located adjacent to the Alexandria Extension and is affected by delays on the Alexandria Extension. Approximately 25 to 35 trains use the Alexandria Extension daily. Many times during the day a freight train must wait on the Camden Line for a train traveling in the opposite direction because only one track exists for a four-mile stretch. A train traveling to Virginia from the north has no place to wait other than on one of the two main tracks on the MARC Camden Line on either side of Hyattsville. Likewise, a northbound train may be forced to move from the Alexandria Extension onto the Camden Line to allow a southbound train to pass.

Alternatives Considered

A build alternative of two miles of second track and a no-build alternative were considered in the EA.

Environmental Effects and Findings

Based on the evaluation contained in the EA, significant impacts that cannot be mitigated have not been found. The project will be constructed with the mitigation measures presented in the JD to Jones Hill Double Tracking Project Environmental Assessment (April 2012), which is incorporated by reference into this finding of no significant impact (FONSI). The mitigation commitments are listed in the NEPA Finding section of this FONSI.

The FTA will require in any future funding agreement on the project that all committed mitigation measures be implemented in accordance with the EA. Any project changes, including changes in mitigation, deemed necessary or desirable as final design and construction proceed, will be subject to appropriate environmental review before FTA approval. The FTA will require that MTA submit quarterly written reports on its progress in implementing the mitigation commitments.

The environmental record for the Jones Hill Double Tracking project includes the previously referenced EA that represents the detailed statement required by NEPA and by 49 USC Section 5324(b) of the Federal Transit Act on:

- The environmental impacts of the proposed project;
- Adverse environmental effects which cannot be avoided should the proposed project be implemented;
- Alternatives to the proposed project; and
- Any irreversible and irretrievable impact on the environment which may be involved in the proposed project should it be implemented.

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The environmental effects and measures to minimize harm are fully described in the EA. A summary of effects and associated mitigation measures appear below.

Land Use and Zoning

The area surrounding the project is an urban area comprised predominantly of industrial land uses, with a small amount of commercial, high-density residential, and park uses. Since the project will occur mostly within existing CSX right-of-way in a rail transportation corridor, the addition of the second track will not change this use and is not inconsistent with existing zoning.

Environmental Justice

No low-income block groups and five minority block groups were identified in the six block group study area, but only one of those five block groups contain residences adjacent to the tracks. The project will result in minor visual impacts to both commercial and residential adjacent properties that are consistent with the existing character of the project corridor. Therefore, no disproportionate and adverse effects will occur to low-income or minority populations as a result of this project.

Traffic and Transportation

The existing transportation network within study area consists of railroads, streets and highways, and pedestrian/bicycle facilities. The project will reduce congestion on the MARC Camden Line by creating a place for trains on the Alexandria Extension to pass each other. The project will cross 13 streets, six above or below grade and seven at-grade. The impacts to the at-grade street crossings will be temporary and minor and coordinated with affected parties by CSX. The project will have temporary, minor impacts to Northeast Branch Trail in the evening when it is closed and to Lloyd Street Connector pedestrian/bicycle path.

Historic Resources

On February 12, 2010, the Maryland Historical Trust (MHT) indicated that the project would have no adverse effect on historic resources. After that finding, the project design changed to require acquisition of right-of-way and the MTA subsequently re-coordinated with the MHT. On November 10, 2010, the MHT concurred that the project would continue to have no adverse effect to historic resources.

Visual Impacts/Aesthetics

The visual and aesthetic environment of the study area for this project is dominated by intense commercial and industrial development along the Alexandria Extension. The proposed improvements will occur along the already existing railroad corridor and will be similar in character to the infrastructure that is currently present. In addition, a substantial portion of the proposed improvements will be located on an existing elevated structure and will not be visible from the ground.

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Air Quality Conformity

The project is included in the Metropolitan Washington Council of Government's FY 2011 – 2016 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). In a report entitled *Air Quality Conformity Determination of the 2009 Constrained Long Range Plan and the FY2010 – 2015 Transportation Improvement Program for the Washington Metropolitan Region* dated November 17, 2010; a determination of conformity was made with respect to the requirements under the Clean Air Act.

Hazardous Materials

A Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) was completed to identify recognized environmental conditions (RECs) in connection with the project. Two RECs were identified during the site inspection: routine railroad operations and one unidentified pipe vent near the Air Gas East property. If extensive cut and fill operations are to occur, surficial soil sampling will be performed to identify any potential contamination. The unidentified pipe vent will be investigated to determine its purpose and origin. Additional mitigation commitments will be made, as necessary and appropriate, based on the investigation of these two RECs.

Noise and Vibration

The sound from standing trains near residences will decrease as idling locomotives would be moved to south of Tanglewood Drive, a non-residential area. The number, speed and locomotive power requirements of trains traversing the area would not change as a result of this project and the sound currently created by moving trains would not change. Similarly, as the number and speed of trains and the condition of the train wheels traveling through this area will not be affected by this project, vibrations due to these factors will not change.

Wetlands and Waters of the U.S.

In 2009, a wetland delineation identified four waters of the U.S. and no wetlands in the project area. The project will impact four waters of the U.S. for a total impact of 1,822 square feet (0.04 acre) and qualifies for a Maryland State General Permit-3 which was received on February 1, 2011. Mitigation for the stream impacts is not required as a condition of the permit.

Water Quality

A Section 401 Water Quality Certificate was issued as part of the Wetlands and Waters of the U.S. permit on February 1, 2011.

Floodplains

The project area traverses the 100-year floodplains of Beaverdam Creek and the Northeast Branch of the Anacostia River. The Northeast Branch 100-year floodplain is confined to the channel due to levees that exist on either side of the stream. Due to active flood management practices such as routine vegetation cuttings, the floodplain is devoid of natural vegetation.

The widening of the existing bridge over the Northeast Branch of the Anacostia River will impact approximately 5,783 square feet (0.13 acre) of the 100-year floodplain. However, the results of a HEC-RAS model showed a "No-Rise" to the existing conditions base flood elevations (BFEs).

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Vegetation

The proposed track passes through a highly urbanized two-mile corridor with little natural vegetation. A majority of the vegetation has been cleared and maintained as part of the CSX right-of-way. The forested areas that remain within the project area are associated with streams that bisect the right-of-way. Approximately 10,963 square feet (0.25 acre) of forest will be impacted by the project in areas just south of Lawrence Street and north of the Anacostia River crossing, but neither of these areas meets the definition of a forest as defined by the State Forest Conservation Technical Manual. These areas are very disturbed and linear in nature with invasive species as the dominant vegetation.

Rare, Threatened and Endangered Species

The project will have no adverse effect on rare, threatened or endangered species because there are no known records of these species within the project area.

Safety and Security

Seven at-grade crossings of roads occur along the project corridor, five of which are controlled by signals and two by stop signs. The addition of the double-track will not increase the number of at-grade crossings and the existing intersection control devices will be used to minimize potential accidents. Further, there are no concerns related to passenger safety because only freight railroads use the Alexandria Extension.

Parklands and Recreation

The Bladensburg Waterfront Park, the Lloyd Street Connector and Anacostia River Park (containing the Northeast Branch Trail) are adjacent to or cross the project corridor. The project will have no effect to the Bladensburg Waterfront Park. The Lloyd Street connector is a paved path that provides access to the Bladensburg Waterfront Park from Lloyd Street which connects to the main north-south thoroughfare of Kenilworth Ave. There will be short term and minor impacts to the crossing of Lloyd Street when the second track is installed. The Anacostia River Park is on both banks of the Northeast Branch of the Anacostia River and contains the Northeast Branch Trail for pedestrians and cyclist. When the Northeast Branch Trail is closed at night, its use will be restricted to allow for construction of the bridge widening over the Northeast Branch of the Anacostia River. The trail will be open during daylight hours.

Two linear strips of right-of-way will be required from the Anacostia River Park totaling 16,518 square feet. The Anacostia River Park is publically owned and was acquired with funds by the Capper Cramton Act. On June 6, 2011, MTA sent a letter to the coordinating agency, National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC), confirming that NCPC will adopt this EA to fulfill its NEPA obligations, after which the necessary right of way will be acquired.

On the basis of the evaluation of social, economic and environmental impacts contained in the EA, and the written and oral comments offered by the public and other agencies, FTA has determined that in accordance with 49 USC Section 5324(b):

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- Adequate opportunity was afforded for the presentation of views by all parties with a significant economic, social, or environmental interest in the community in which the proposed project is located; and
- There exists no feasible and prudent alternative to the adverse effect of the project and all reasonable steps have been taken to minimize such effect.

Section 4(f)

Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966, codified at 49 U.S.C. 303, declares a national policy that a special effort should be made to preserve the natural beauty of the countryside, public park and recreational lands, wildlife and waterfowl refuges, and historic sites. The Secretary of Transportation may not approve transportation projects that adversely affect such resources unless a determination is made that there is no feasible and prudent alternative, and that all possible planning has been done to minimize harm (23 CFR 771.135).

On December 17, 2010, the MNCPPC concurred with the assessment that the project and acquisition of 16,518 square feet (0.38 acre) of land from the park would not adversely affect the activities, features and attributes of the park and that a *de minimis* finding is appropriate as long as the Northeast Branch Trail remains open during normal park hours. The Northeast Branch Trail will be closed at night and will remain open during normal park hours.

FTA finds that the proposed project's use of any resources protected by Section 4(f) of the DOT Act of 1966 will have a *de minimis impact*.

Section 106

The project will not adversely affect any resources covered by Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

NEPA Finding

The following documents are attached and incorporated by reference as part of this FONSI:

- Attachment A: Environmental Assessment (EA) for the JD to Jones Hill Double Tracking Project (April 2012)
- Attachment B: Responses to Public Comments

Based on the Environmental Assessment and its associated supporting documents, **the Federal Transit Administration finds pursuant to 23 CFR 771.121 that there are no significant impacts on the human and natural environment associated with the development and operation of the proposed JD to Jones Hill Double Tracking project. This determination is subject to the following identified mitigation measures (the number following each mitigation measure is the page number of the EA at which the measure is identified):**

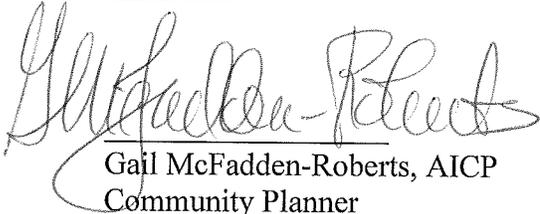
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Mitigation Measures

- All affected property owners will be subject to the assistance requirements set forth in the Federal Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act (7)
- The closure of Northeast Branch Trail will only occur at night when trail is closed to public (15)
- The acquisition of the right-of-way from Anacostia River Park will not occur until after the NCPC adopts this EA (15)
- Local emergency service providers will be contacted prior to construction to discuss potential temporary detours (16)
- Access to local businesses will be maintained to the extent possible during construction, with most of the construction occurring on weekends when businesses are closed (16)
- All construction activities will be completed using Best Management Practices, including limiting work below the Ordinary High Water Mark, use of sediment fencing, rock checks, sediment traps, and reseeded exposed banks or other disturbed areas (24)
- Bank slopes disturbed during construction will be returned to pre-construction contours (24)
- There will be no in-stream construction from February 15 to June 15 to protect aquatic habit and species (28)
- The project will comply with all Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Commission regulations (29)
- If extensive cut and fill operations occur within the CSX right-of-way, soil sampling will be performed to identify any potential contamination – additional mitigation commitments will be as necessary and appropriate (32)
- An unidentified pipe vent will be investigated to determine its purpose and origin – additional mitigation commitments will be as necessary and appropriate (32)

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Approval



Gail McFadden-Roberts, AICP
Community Planner
Federal Transit Administration

9/21/12
Date



Vida Morkunas, Director
Office of Planning and Program Development
Federal Transit Administration

Sept. 28, 2012
Date



Jay Fox
Regional Counsel
Federal Transit Administration

9/28/2012
Date



Brigid Hynes-Cherin
Regional Administrator
Federal Transit Administration

Sept 29 2012
Date