

D.C. to Richmond Southeast High Speed Rail

Planning for the D.C. to Richmond SE High Speed Rail is moving forward. Since the June 2015 public meetings, the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) has completed an initial analysis of several preliminary alternatives and is prepared to share them with the public to narrow down to the most reasonable alternatives to be carried forward for more detailed analysis. There will be a meeting in Springfield on December 9. An online meeting will launch December 7 and be live through January 8, 2016. You can find the documents and maps [online](#).

Here are two comments submitted by CCCA members that deal directly with our Crystal City situation and the DRPT replies:

Comment: Crystal City is already burdened by noise and air quality impacts from existing freight and passenger rail service; please offset any noise increases with benefits to the Crystal City community.

Response: The neighborhood adjacent to the Crystal City VRE station is another community that experiences a unique set of rail-related impacts due to existing freight and passenger rail traffic in the area and the resulting noise and vibration from idling trains and locomotive horns, which could potentially be exacerbated by adding additional trains to the corridor. DRPT will be reaching out to residents in the vicinity of the Crystal City VRE station and to community organizations in other areas where local input is particularly crucial to understanding and protecting the community's environmental and social fabric.

Comment: Any increase in trains is going to have an environmental impact on the residents of Crystal City who live near the train tracks. If this project goes through, and it makes sense, then there MUST be a quid pro quo to upgrade the VRE station in Crystal City and eliminate the need for engineers to blow their horns when arriving at the station.

Response: The analysis of station locations will take into account amenities appropriate to high speed rail service.

CCCA Comments: *The existing Crystal City commuter station must be improved to allow for air horn noise mitigation and to provide service to Arlington by at least some of the new "higher" speed trains. Amtrak trains now only pass through Arlington with horns blowing while taxpayers subsidize service to countless small communities too numerous to name.*

The argument likely to be made is that it would be "expensive" to upgrade the existing Crystal City VRE station. Additional station stops slow the pace of "higher" speed and "non-stop" trains from Richmond to DC. However, for years railroads have identified their trains with names like "Limited" or "Express" as opposed to "Local." Small communities on the New York line such as Aberdeen, Maryland & Newark, Delaware & Princeton, New Jersey are served by some, but not all, Amtrak trains. The same benefit should be afforded to Arlington.

The bottom line is this: *If at least some of the new trains provide service to Arlington and air horn noise is greatly mitigated, we should support the project.*