

PRESS RELEASE



401 9th Street, NW
North Lobby, Suite 500
Washington, DC 20004
Tel: 202 482-7200
Fax: 202 482-7272
www.ncpc.gov

April 5, 2007
For Immediate Release

Contact: Lisa MacSpadden,
202-482-7263 or lisa@ncpc.gov or
Roland McElroy,
202-482-7289 or roland@ncpc.gov

NCPC and DDOT Announce Findings of Railroad Relocation Feasibility Study *Three routes evaluated as viable alternatives*

Washington, DC – At its monthly meeting today, the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) will share the preliminary findings of a nine-month rail study conducted in partnership with the District Department of Transportation (DDOT). Working with consultant Parsons Brinckerhoff—one of the world’s leading engineering firms—NCPC and DDOT examined the feasibility of relocating freight rail service away from the monumental core of the nation’s capital.

The feasibility study, funded by a \$1 million grant from the Department of Homeland Security’s 2005 Urban Areas Security Initiative, evaluated three viable alternative corridors for a rail line that passes through the heart of the nation’s capital. The seven-mile stretch of tracks that runs through Washington, DC extends from Alexandria, Virginia to Hyattsville, Maryland posing security, accessibility, and development challenges. The rail line transports hazardous cargo within four blocks of the United States Capitol and near an estimated 100-thousand federal employees.

“This study shows that it is possible to eliminate a serious security threat to the nation’s capital,” said DDOT Director Emeka Moneme. “This also improves freight and passenger rail operations to reduce congestion, which threatens the health and well-being of people on a daily basis.”

The rail line divides neighborhoods from the city’s center, separates Capitol Hill from the Anacostia River, and limits public access to the waterfront. A new route would not only help resolve these issues, but also eliminate transportation bottlenecks and provide increased efficiency for this vital link in the East Coast rail corridor. More than 250 million tons of freight and more than 100 million passengers make use of the corridor annually.

“It has long been NCPC’s vision to remove the impediments that divide the city’s neighborhoods and to restore public access to the city’s waterfront,” said NCPC Chairman John V. Cogbill, III. “Realigning the corridor would reconnect Southeast and Southwest Washington to the rest of the city and provide tremendous development opportunities along the way, as outlined in NCPC’s 1997 *Extending the Legacy* plan.”

—MORE—

Started in spring 2006, the study's main objectives were to identify the constraints of the existing alignment; define potential alternative corridors; and evaluate the costs and benefits of each.

"The study was conducted to determine if a more detailed analysis is warranted," said NCPC Plan and Project Implementation Division Director, Bill Dowd. "It focused on three alternatives but does not make a recommendation for a preferred route. Selection of a preferred alternative would be based on a more detailed NEPA study that includes significant public involvement."

"We explored potential corridors throughout the entire region," said NCPC Project Officer David Zaidain. "We examined significant population and employment centers, topographical and environmental issues, potential Potomac River rail crossing locations, and redevelopment opportunities offered by new alignments and adjacent lands."

The three options presented by the consultant team include a new tunnel running from Potomac Yard in Alexandria to the District/Maryland border east of the Anacostia River; a new alignment east of the city running from the Indian Head area in Charles County, Maryland to the Jessup, Maryland area; and a new alignment east of the city running from the Dahlgren area of Virginia to the Jessup, Maryland area. The study does not identify a preferred route. That will not happen until the corridors are studied in more detail in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

"I was relieved to finally get hazmat protection through the House but the NCPC options are far away the best long term recommendations for the region," said Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC).

"The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) appreciates NCPC's leadership in overseeing this timely and important study," said David Robertson, COG executive director. "Since September 11, COG has worked with government, private sector, and community leaders to ensure that the Washington area is safe and secure. This study is an important first step to begin a dialogue on this sensitive issue. We look forward to our on-going work with NCPC and other stakeholders to protect residents and visitors and ensure rail mobility for passengers and freight."

The corridors evaluated in the feasibility study offer a number of significant benefits including:

- Elimination of the terrorism risk associated with the rail transport of hazardous materials through the monumental core of the nation's capital.
- Improved efficiency and capacity of freight movement by rail along the East Coast.
- Development opportunities for the District of Columbia along the Anacostia River, and east of the River, as well as new development opportunities in the vicinity of the Minnesota Avenue and Deanwood Metro Stations.
- Transportation benefits for Maryland include an incentive to improve the Baltimore rail tunnels and the potential for improvements to the MARC service.
- Transportation benefits for Virginia include opportunities to expand the VRE service.

Preliminary estimated costs are \$5.3 billion for the tunnel alternative, \$4.3 billion for the Indian Head alternative, and \$4.7 billion for the Dahlgren alternative. Next steps must include more detailed alignment studies and preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

“This is a challenging issue and it is critical that we conduct more detailed analysis to determine the necessary costs and the resulting public benefits of rerouting freight traffic,” said Matthew Tucker, director of Virginia’s Department of Rail and Public Transportation.

NCPC and DDOT coordinated their efforts with the District of Columbia Office of Planning, State of Maryland Department of Transportation, Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Rail & Public Transportation, the Architect of the Capitol, the Department of Homeland Security, the Federal Railroad Administration, the Transportation Security Administration, and the Virginia Railway Express. NCPC and DDOT also coordinated the findings of the study with CSX Corporation, Norfolk Southern, and Amtrak.

“Continued cooperation among local, state, federal, and private entities must continue to ensure a successful outcome,” said NCPC Executive Director Patricia Gallagher. “We look forward to future collaboration with all of the entities who have played an important role in this study.”

###

The **National Capital Planning Commission** is the federal government’s central planning agency in the District of Columbia and surrounding counties in Maryland and Virginia. The Commission provides overall planning guidance for federal land and buildings in the region. It also reviews the design of federal projects and memorials, oversees long-range planning for future development, and monitors capital investment by federal agencies.

The **District of Columbia government's Department of Transportation** (DDOT) manages and maintains transportation infrastructure. DDOT Plans, designs, constructs, and maintains the District's streets, alleys, sidewalks, bridges, traffic signals, and street lights; Manages and makes improvements to the street system to facilitate traffic flow through the District of Columbia; Manages, with the Department of Public Works, the removal of snow and ice from the streets; Coordinates the District's mass transit services, including the reduced-fare program for students using MetroBus and MetroRail.