National Capital Planning Commission

Smithsonian Metrorail Station Vent Modifications

1200 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC

Approval of Preliminary and Final Site Development Plans

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

October 9, 2025 File No. 7466

Project Summary

Commission Meeting Date: October 9, 2025

NCPC Review Authority: 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1) and (d)

Applicant Request: Approval of Preliminary and Final Site Development Plans

Session: Consent Calendar

NCPC Review Officer: Lee Webb

NCPC File Number: 7466

Project Summary:

The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), in coordination with the National Park Service (NPS) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has submitted an application for preliminary and final site development plans to make modifications to an existing WMATA vent on the National Mall, adjacent to the Smithsonian National Mall Metro Station, located on the National Mall, near 12th Street, SW and Jefferson Drive, SW, in Washington, D.C. This shaft is located within the 500-year old floodplain.

Following initial construction, drains in the bottom of the four vent shafts on the National Mall became clogged with gravel. The gravel migrates from the surface pathway/trail into the shafts. For several years, sandbags have been placed around the vent shaft openings to reduce the volume of water entering the shafts. In 2017, WMATA presented conceptual plans to modify the four vent shaft openings. NCPC approved the design on May 4, 2017, but the modifications were not implemented.

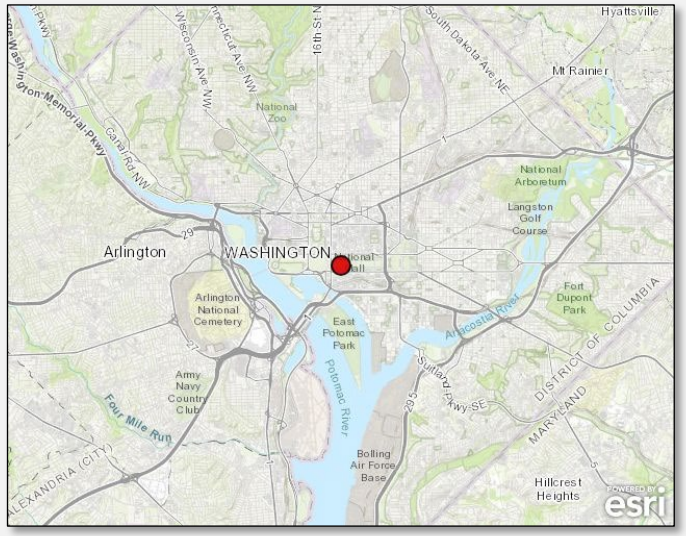
In 2025, National Park Service approached WMATA to address the situation. Working with NPS and the review agencies, including NCPC, WMATA refined the previously-approved design. The current design reduces the overall impact from the previously-approved design by reducing the heights of the modifications. The size and dimensions of the existing vents will not be changed.

Project Summary

The original design approved by NCPC in 2017 called for the elevation of the shafts to be increased by 6 inches; while the revised proposed design calls for the shafts to remain at its original heights. The area around the vents will have exposed aggregate concrete finish. Originally, an 8 ft-collar around the vent shafts was proposed [approximately 22 ft x 150 ft surface dimensions including vent shafts] while the revised design has been modified [20 ft x 164 ft surface dimensions including vent shafts]. The color of the concrete is designed to match existing materials. The slopes will be adjusted for the design slightly to ensure compliance with accessibility requirements. The vent shaft gratings will be replaced with grates having a finer mesh design.

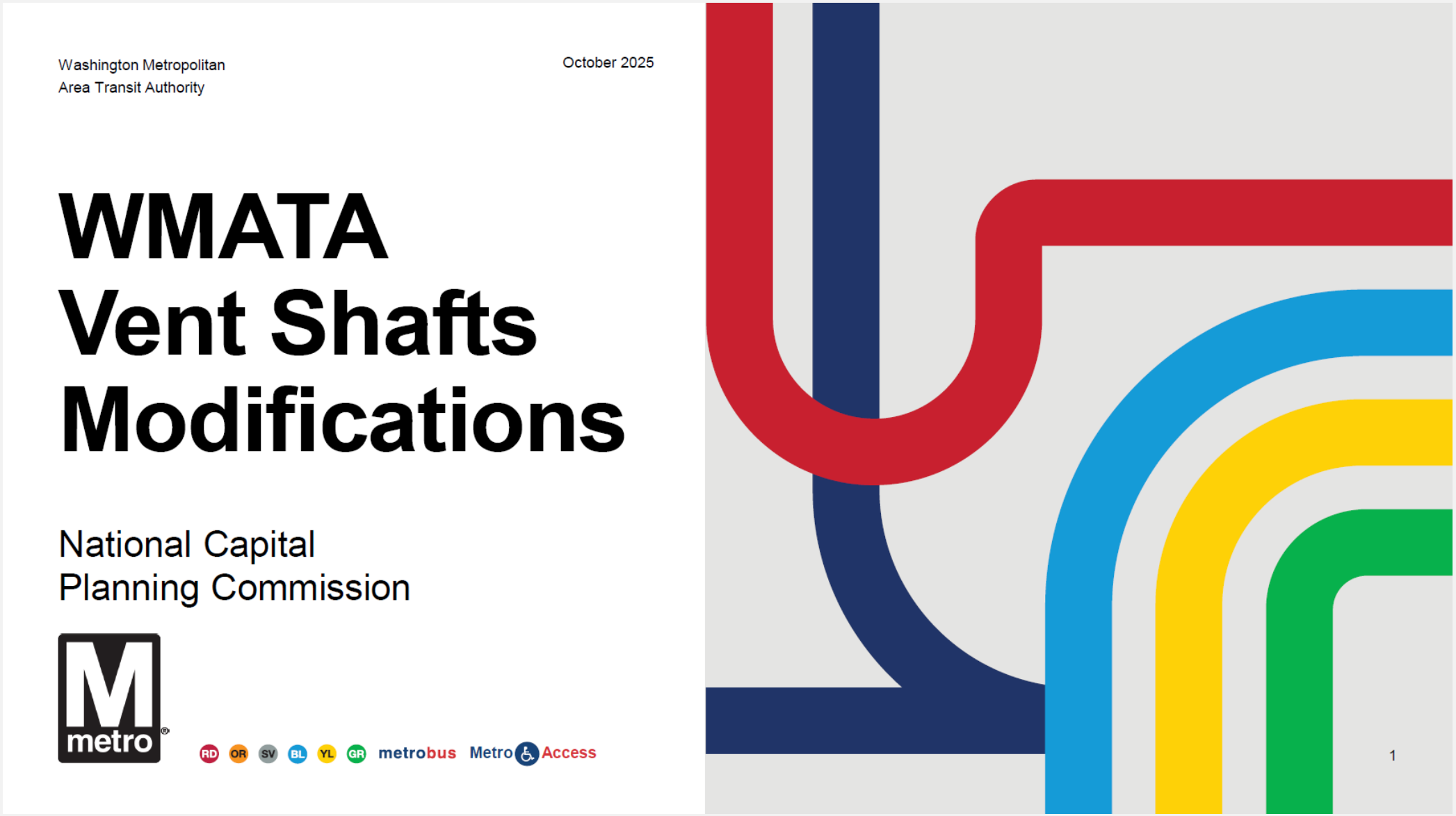
A Memorandum of Agreement for Section 106 purposes was signed in December 2016, including the DC SHPO, to address Section 106 issues.

Site Location

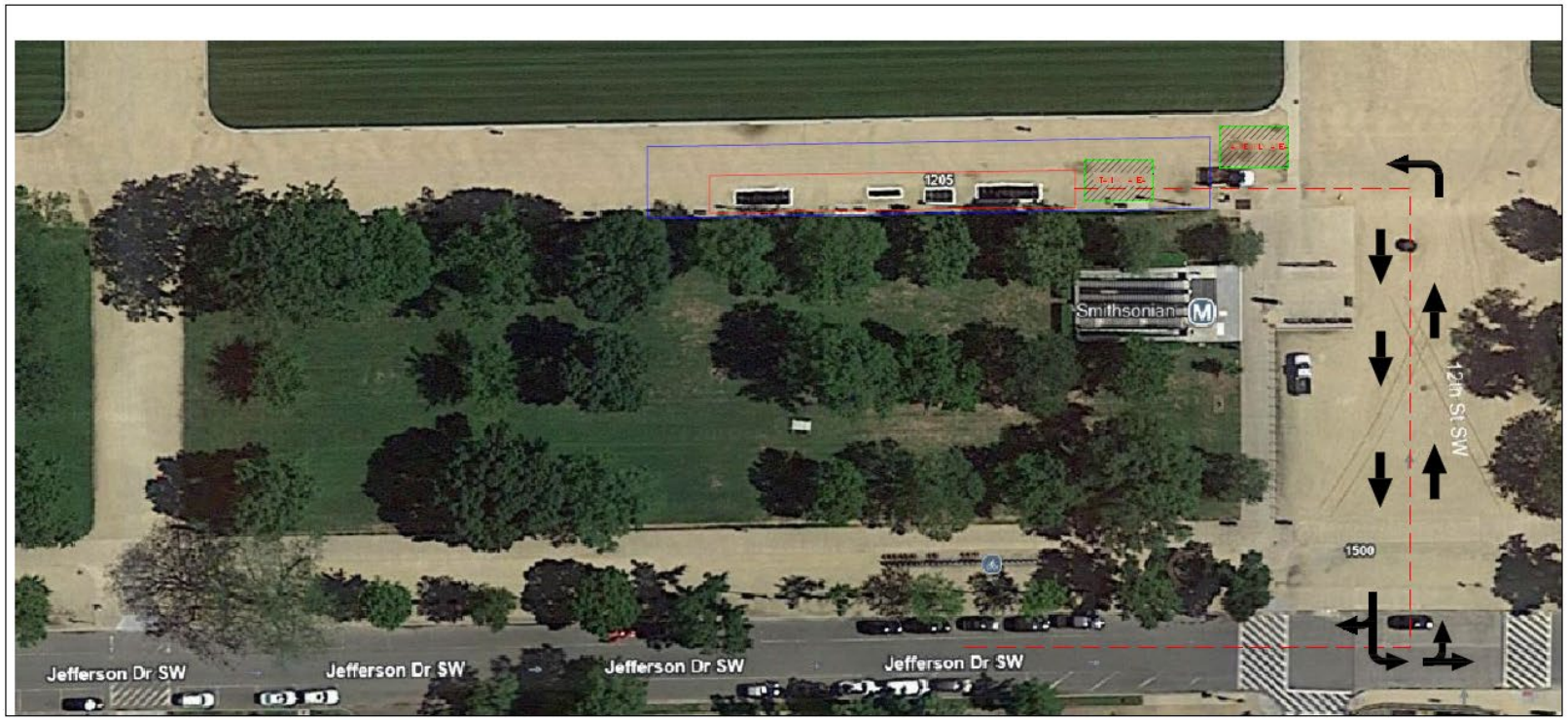


Location Map

WMATA Vent Shafts Modifications on National Mall



Site Location on National Mall of Vent Modifications



NOTES

1. MAINTAIN A 6 FOOT WIDE WALKING PATH OUTSIDE THE PERIMETER FENCING.
2. MAINTAIN EGRESS PATH UNOBSTRUCTED AT ALL TIMES.
3. INSPECT AND MAINTAIN TEMPORARY WALK DAILY DURING USE PERIOD.
4. REMOVE TEMPORARY WALKWAY AFTER CONSTRUCTION COMPLETED OR AS DIRECTED.
5. ROADWAY IS NOT TRAFFIC-CONTROLLED. EXPECT CONTINUOUS PEDESTRIAN DURING VEHICLE MOVEMENT.

LEGEND

ASSEMBLY AREA – ASSEMBLY AREA

– – – – ACCESS ROUTE

REFERENCE DRAWINGS

REVISIONS

WASHINGTON METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSIT AUTHORITY

DEPARTMENT OF TRACK & STRUCTURES
OFFICE OF CIVIL AND ENVIRONMENTAL

SMITHSONIAN STATION
NORTH ENTRANCE VENT SHAFT
INGRESS AND EGRESS PLAN

SCALE: NONE | DRAWING NO: C-004 | SHEET NO: 4 OF 13

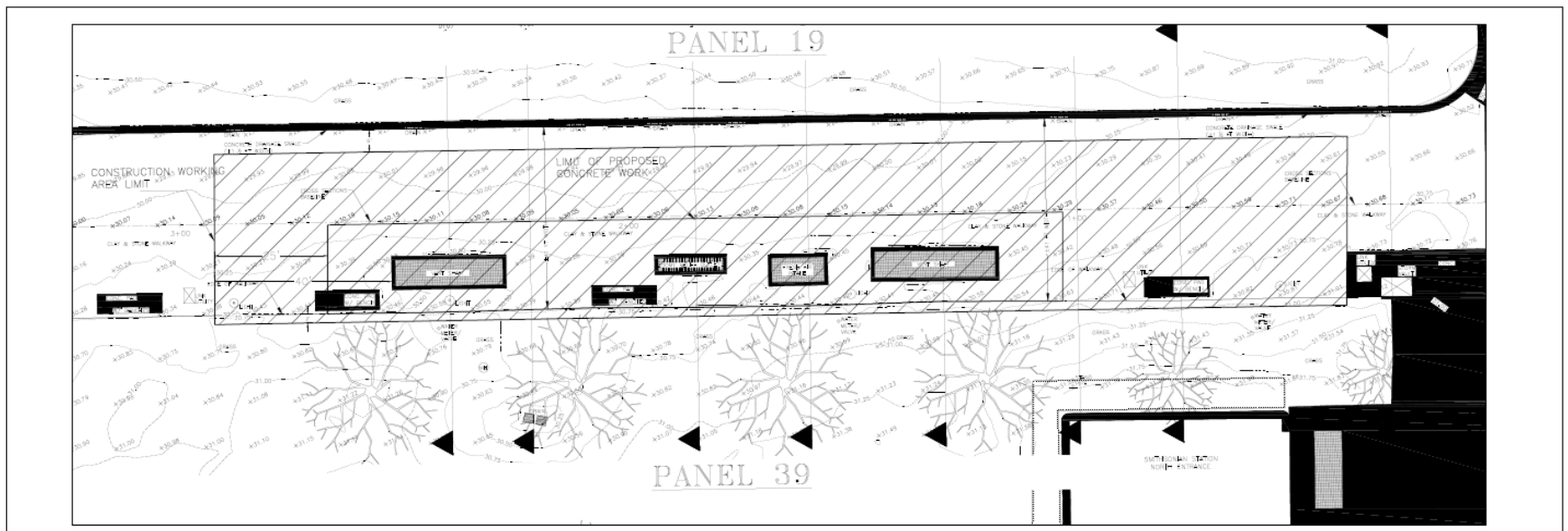
Project History

Project History

October 2025

- Following initial construction, drains in the bottom of the four vent shafts on the National Mall became clogged with gravel. The gravel migrates from the surface pathway/trail into the shafts.
- For several years, sandbags have been placed around the vent shaft openings to reduce the volume of water entering the shafts.
- In 2017, WMATA presented conceptual plans to modify the four vent shaft openings. NCPC approved the design on May 4, 2017.
- In 2025, National Park Service approached WMATA to address the situation. Working with NPS, WMATA refined the previously-approved design. The current design reduces the overall impact from the previously-approved design by reducing the heights of the modifications.
- WMATA now seeks approval of the final design for the National Mall vent shafts.

Location Indication Scope of Modification Work



NOTE

– EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS TO BE STORED ON SITE IS LIMITED TO: EXCAVATION EQUIPMENT; CONCRETE FINISHING EQUIPMENT; WATER TANK; TEMPORARY/PORTABLE RESTROOM FACILITIES; CONCRETE FORM MATERIALS; CONCRETE RE-ENFORCING MATERIALS.

LEGEND

– CONSTRUCTION WORKING ZONE LIMIT, INCLUDING STAGING AREA

DESIGNED: W.T. 08/18/25 DATE
DRAWN: W.T. 08/18/25 DATE
CHECKED: D.A. 08/18/25 DATE
APPROVED: M.A. 08/18/25 DATE

REFERENCE DRAWINGS

NUMBER	TITLE

REVISIONS

DATE	NUM	DESCRIPTION

WASHINGTON METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSIT AUTHORITY
DEPARTMENT OF TRACK & STRUCTURES
OFFICE OF CIVIL AND ENVIRONMENTAL
SUBMITTED BY: _____ DATE _____ APPROVED BY: _____ DATE _____

CONTRACT NO. ######

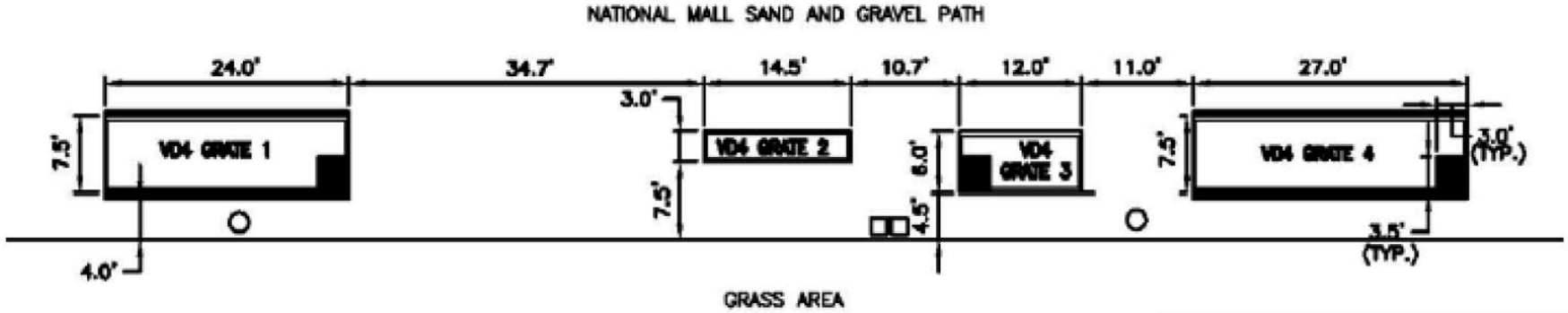
SMITHSONIAN STATION
NORTH ENTRANCE VENT SHAFT
LIMIT OF WORK

SCALE	DRAWING NO.	SHEET NO.
NONE	C-006	6 OF 13

Existing Condition

Existing Condition

October 2025



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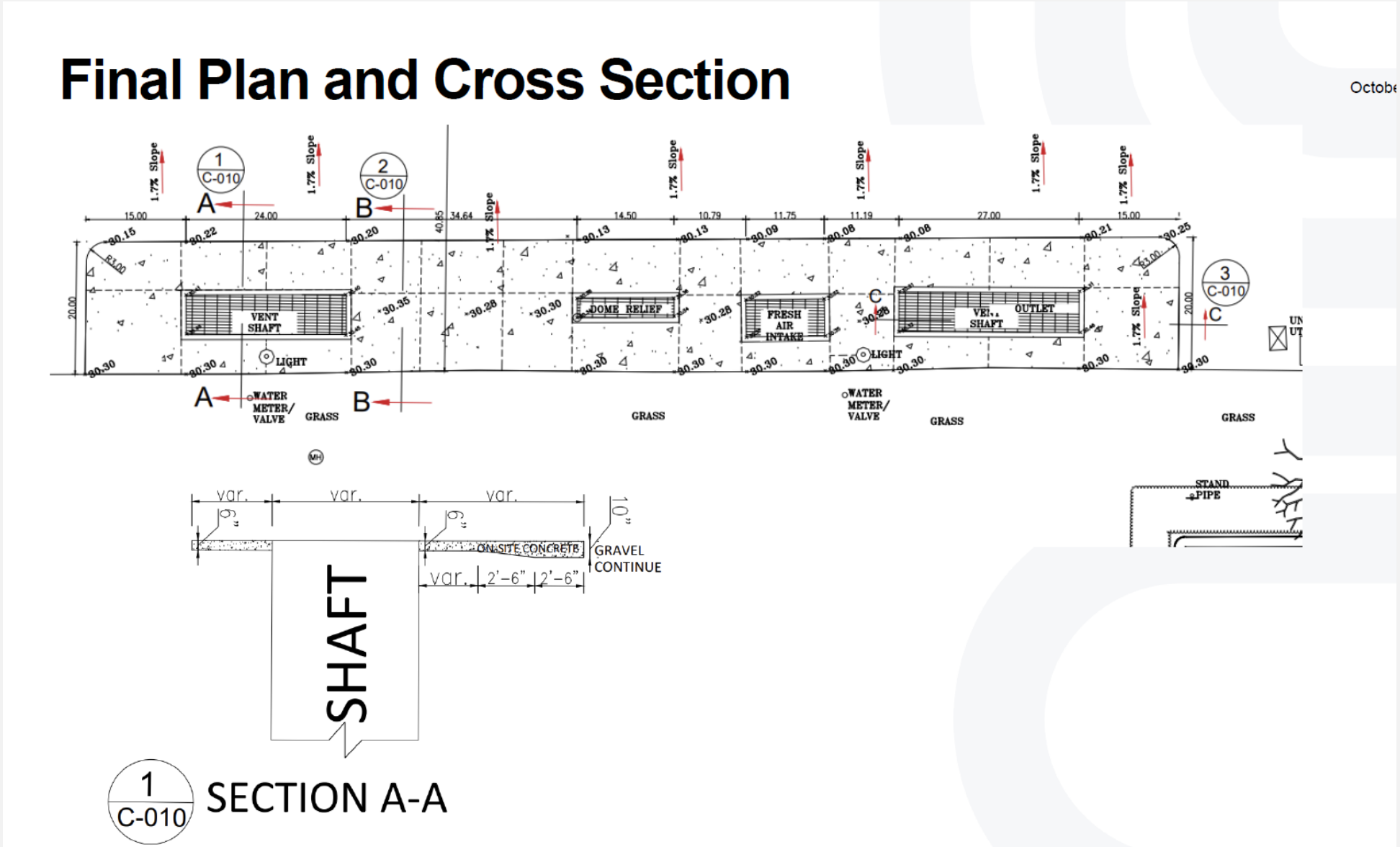
Plan and Cross Section



Proposed Project Modifications

Project Modifications

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- Elevation:
  - *Original design called for the elevation of the shafts by 6 inches;*
  - *Current design calls for the shafts to remain at its original heights.*
- Area: Exposed aggregate concrete finish
  - Originally, an 8 ft-collar around the vent shafts was proposed [approximately 22 ft x 150 ft surface dimensions including vent shafts];
  - *Current design has been modified [20 ft x 164 ft surface dimensions including vent shafts].*
  - *Color of the concrete is designed to match existing materials.*
- Slopes: Slight slope adjustments were made in the design (to ensure compliance with accessibility requirements).
- Gratings: The vent shaft gratings will be replaced with grates having a finer mesh design.

Rendering of Design for Vent

Rendering of proposed Final Plan

Proposed Concrete Layout Plan