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NCPC Updated on Proposed Baltimore-Washington Superconducting Maglev *Commission Approves Updates to NCPC's Submission Guidelines*

Washington, DC—At its May 6, 2021 meeting the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) heard an information presentation (no official action is taken on information presentations) by NCPC staff on the proposed Baltimore-Washington Superconducting Maglev project. The Maglev would connect the two cities via high-speed rail in 15 minutes along a 33-to-36-mile alignment. Stations would be located east of Mount Vernon Square in Washington, at Baltimore/Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport, and in Baltimore's Cherry Hill neighborhood or Camden Yards. The two potential route alignments, one on the east side of the Baltimore-Washington Parkway and the other on the parkway's eastern side, and a proposed maintenance facility, would have impacts on federal land and facilities.

NCPC is preparing a comment letter on the project's Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to be sent this month to the Federal Railroad Administration and the Maryland Department of Transportation. NCPC is unclear about the project's benefits given its potential to significantly impact many federal activities. Comments are primarily focused on impacts to federal and District of Columbia properties, particularly potential significant physical and planning costs/impacts to federal properties including the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center, NASA Goddard Space Flight Center, and U.S. Secret Service Rowley Training Center. NCPC staff have also questioned the potential impacts on existing rail service and ridership in the corridor.

Recommendations include the following: consider alternatives to the two Baltimore-Washington Parkway alignment options due to potential permanent and temporary negative impacts to the parkway; continue to develop specific mitigation measures from Maglev impacts and specific locations for these measures; and collect more detailed planning information before deciding on a preferred alternative.

Commissioners noted that they still have many questions and concerns; expressed their agreement with staff's comments; appreciated staff's thoughtful analysis about the project's potential impacts; and said they looked forward to a future information presentation on the project by Federal Railroad Administration representatives.

The final EIS is anticipated to be completed in the spring of 2022, and construction could begin in 2023 (and last through 2030). NCPC would not review the project as a whole. The Commission would review individual project developments on federal land in Washington (NCPC has approval authority), and on federal land in Prince George's County or District property in Washington (NCPC has advisory review authority).

In a separate action, the Commission approved updates to the agency's Submission Guidelines. The guidelines describe the content of submissions that NCPC reviews, submission stages, as well as the coordination and review process. The existing guidelines were adopted in 2017 and several updates have occurred since that time.

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The most recent revisions focus on improving the review process to provide earlier opportunities for Commissioners to engage with federal applicants and their submissions. The first change reflects clarifications to the master plan review process by adding more details about when concept review of a master plan is appropriate and what should be included as part of the submission. Additional details about the role of information presentations, which are not an official step of the review process, were also added. These presentations are primarily used to introduce large or complex projects before a project is officially submitted to NCPC for review. Information presentations can also provide an update on topics related to projects the Commission previously reviewed or provide opportunities for staff or other organizations to present a briefing on planning-related topics.

The Commission also heard a related information presentation regarding a NCPC outreach program to federal facilities in Maryland and Virginia that builds upon existing efforts. The initiative, scheduled to begin in the summer of 2021, does not include National Park Service properties. These will be added later.

The initiative's primary goal is to establish an annual coordination schedule with applicant agencies that will result in earlier coordination in the review cycle, ensuring that projects and plans are submitted at the appropriate stage for review. This is important because NCPC is the only planning agency providing oversight for these facilities, as local and state governments do not have the authority to review development on federal land.

This month's agenda included two consent calendar items (no presentations were given). Unless otherwise noted, all projects are in Washington, DC.

1. Final site and building plans for the Smithsonian Institution Museum Support Center Pod 6, 4210 Silver Hill Road, Suitland, Maryland. (8220)
2. Preliminary and final site development plans for the Jamie L. Whitten Federal Building Public Gathering Area Security Plan Modification, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW. (8129)

The Executive Director approved eight items under authority delegated by the Commission. Unless otherwise noted, all projects are in Washington, DC.

1. Highway plan amendment for the Modification of the Permanent System of Highways at Square 4408, Lot 812 and Square 4396, Lot 805 - S.O. 21-02601, 2412 Rand Place, NE. (8259)
2. Preliminary and final building plans for a permanent radio tower installation at the Elephant House, National Zoological Park. (8260)
3. Final site and building plans for the Joint Air Defense Operations Center Phase II Expansion, Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling, 20 MacDill Boulevard, SE. (8217)
4. Preliminary and final site development plans for the St. Elizabeths West Campus Mass Notification System, 2701 Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue, SE. (8264)
5. Preliminary and final building plans for the BARC water tower antenna relocation and installation, 10300 Baltimore Avenue, Beltsville, Maryland. (8266)
6. Preliminary site and building plans for Army Family Housing Renovation Program at Fort McNair and Fort Myer, Joint Base Myer Henderson Hall. (8166)
7. A report to the Zoning Commission of the District of Columbia for Design Review for Parcel H of The Yards, 110 N Street, SE. (ZC 21-06)
8. A report to the Zoning Commission of the District of Columbia for a Text Amendment to Subtitles Y and Z. (ZC 20-26A)

Commission actions and related materials will be available [online](#).

The National Capital Planning Commission is the federal government's central planning agency in Washington, DC and surrounding counties of Maryland and Virginia. The Commission provides overall 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.