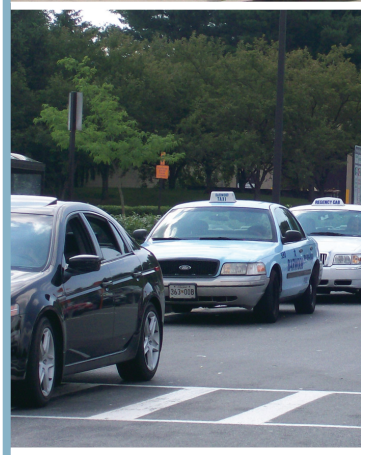
Corridor Cities Transitway



INTRODUCTION

CORRIDOR CITIES TRANSITWAY
SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Introduction

This Supplemental Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a companion to the other NEPA documents that have been prepared for the I-270/US 15 Multi-Modal Corridor Study. These include the 2002 *I-270/US 15 Multi-Modal Corridor Study Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Section 4(f) Evaluation* (2002 DEIS), completed in May 2002, and the 2009 *I-270/US 15 Multi-Modal Corridor Study Alternatives Analysis/Environmental Assessment* (2009 AA/EA), completed in May 2009. This SEA addresses only the transit elements of the Multi-Modal Study and focuses on the portion of the transit corridor that is under consideration for alignment modification. It is considered an additional contribution to the total body of analysis related to the full-length highway and transit alternatives presented to date within these documents. This document presents no new information regarding the highway alternatives. The latest information available on the I-270/US 15 highway project remains the 2009 AA/EA included on a CD found inside the back cover of this document and online at www.I270multimodalstudy.com.

Specifically, this SEA presents the environmental impacts, possible mitigation, and the potential transportation benefits of three sets of proposed modifications to the Original CCT Alignment. These modifications were developed to serve three distinct areas within the CCT corridor: the future Crown Farm development; the Life Sciences Center biotechnology campus; and the Kentlands community/redevelopment.

The principal study area for the proposed modifications to the Original CCT Alignment is a sub-set of the CCT corridor in the Gaithersburg area that contains the three development areas that are under consideration for more direct service by the CCT alignment and stations. These areas, from east to west, are known as Crown Farm, Life Sciences Center (LSC), and Kentlands and are shown in **Figures II-2** through **II-5** and listed in **Table II-2** (found in **Chapter II** of this document). The three areas of alignment modifications occur sequentially in an approximately two-mile section of the Original CCT Alignment. Additionally, each is a diversion from the Original CCT Alignment that was studied in the 2002 DEIS and the 2009 AA/EA documents. Essentially, each modification begins and ends on the Original CCT Alignment and the remainder of the Original CCT Alignment remains as presented in the previous documents.

While most of the document focuses on the impacts of a roughly two-mile section of the total CCT alignment in the Gaithersburg area, the document also analyzes the effects of implementing one or more of the proposed alignment modifications on the transportation performance (such as ridership, capital cost, annual operations and maintenance costs, and cost-effectiveness) of the complete CCT project (COMSAT to Shady Grove).

In addition, this document presents more detailed analysis of two sites for the transit Operations and Maintenance (O&M) facilities for the CCT. One of these sites, which could be used for either BRT or LRT alternatives, is located adjacent to the proposed Metropolitan Grove station on land currently in use as a police vehicle impound lot. The second site would be a BRT-only site, located on Observation Drive in the vicinity of the CCT northern terminus in COMSAT. These two sites are carried forward from previous studies. Both sites are located to the north of the Gaithersburg area where the above-described alignment modifications are located.

Lastly, this document includes a Section 4(f) analysis of alignment options specifically developed to avoid or minimize impacts to historic resources. In particular, there are two areas where the proposed CCT alternatives could result in adverse impacts to sites determined to be eligible for the National Register for Historic Places. These two sites are the Crown Farm property near I-270 within the City of Gaithersburg and the Belward Farm property, which is situated at the heart of the proposed Life Sciences Center development. Both of these sites are identified and approved by local agencies for future development that could potentially change the historic integrity of these places and therefore may result in a modified determination of eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places. However, because the properties remain in their current state and are not yet developed, the MTA is required to identify and carry forward into the planning and design process options to

avoid impact to these locations while still meeting the project purpose and need in accordance with federal law. The Section 4(f) summary will describe other areas of potential cultural significance and the potential for impacts to those resources, including anticipated effects to local parks.

Project Overview

The Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT) is a proposed 14 to 16 mile transit corridor between the Shady Grove Metrorail Station in Rockville, Maryland and the COMSAT facility near Clarksburg, Maryland. The CCT is the transit element of the I-270/US 15 Multi-Modal Corridor Study, a joint project planning study undertaken by the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) and Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA). The CCT would be either Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) or Light Rail (LRT) operating on an exclusive guideway. The CCT would provide transit service to a number of existing and planned activity centers. It would also provide direct connections to the Metrorail Red Line at the Shady Grove station and the MARC Brunswick Line at the Metropolitan Grove station, as well as linking with numerous local and express bus services in the region.

Since the mid-1990s, the SHA and MTA have been working cooperatively to assess a series of multimodal improvements in Montgomery and Frederick Counties as part of the I-270/US 15 Multi-Modal Corridor Study. This process resulted in the development of documents required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 and other requirements, including the 2002 DEIS and 2009 AA/EA. These documents and supporting technical reports may be found on the I-270 Multi-Modal Corridor Study website, www.I270multimodalstudy.com. Together, the 2002 DEIS and 2009 AA/EA analyze the environmental effects and transportation benefits and costs of a comprehensive array of transportation alternatives comprised of a combination of different highway and transit solutions. These alternatives include a No-Build alternative, Transportation System Management alternatives (relatively low-cost strategies for maximizing the performance of the existing transit and highway systems), addition of general-purpose lanes, auxiliary lanes, high occupancy vehicle lanes (HOV), Express Toll Lanes℠ (ETLs℠), premium bus services operating on HOV lanes, and BRT and LRT operating on the CCT. The full range of highway and transit alternatives studied in these documents is shown in **Tables i-1** through **i-3**.

The public circulation of both the 2002 DEIS and 2009 AA/EA included public hearings and an extensive public review and comment period to obtain the comments of members of the public as well as agency stakeholders on the proposed alternatives. Following the 2009 hearings on the 2009 AA/EA, both MTA and SHA had specific requests from entities related to the portion of the project that they managed. The SHA was asked by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to conduct a more thorough modeling analysis relative to the performance of all of their alternatives using the most recent travel demand model for the region. Additionally, they were asked to take a closer examination of how the I-270/US 15 improvements would fit into the larger highway system and the growing network of managed lanes including the Intercounty Connector Express Tollway and High Occupancy Toll lanes under construction in northern Virginia. Meanwhile, MTA was asked by the Montgomery County Council and County Executive and the City of Gaithersburg to consider modifications to the CCT alignment to more directly serve planned development in the Gaithersburg area of the CCT corridor. Until recently, the 14 to 16 mile CCT transitway had always followed a single alignment defined in local area master plans, including those of Montgomery County and the City of Gaithersburg. The original alignment dates back to the mid-1980s. However, as development and development plans have evolved in the county, so has thinking about the transportation needs of the area, including the CCT alignment.

The feedback obtained by MTA and SHA relative to their parts of the I-270/US 15 Multi-Modal

Study led the agencies to consider taking separate but coordinated paths towards the next phases of project development for their individual project components. The SHA is conducting traffic modeling requested by the FHWA, as well as an Independent Utility Study that will confirm the viability of the CCT as an autonomous project within the context of addressing the transportation purpose and needs identified in the 2002 DEIS and supporting documents. The MTA conducted and made public a feasibility study of the proposed modifications to the CCT alignment in response to local government requests. After determining that the modifications have substantial transportation benefits for the Gaithersburg area a more detailed environmental analysis of the modifications was needed to be consistent with the prior environmental work and to inform a final selection of the preferred alignment and station locations. Documenting this environmental analysis is the primary function of this report.

Table i-2: Alternatives Evaluated in 2009 AA

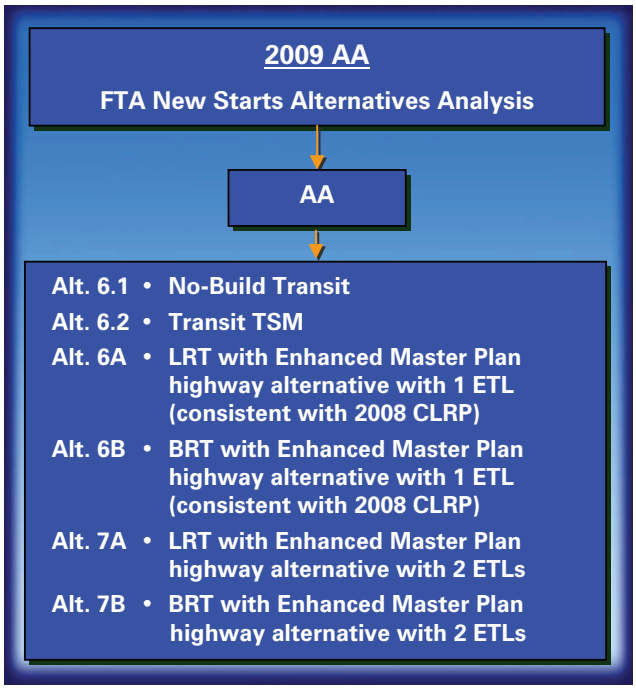


Table i-1: Alternatives Evaluated in 2002 DEIS and 2009 EA

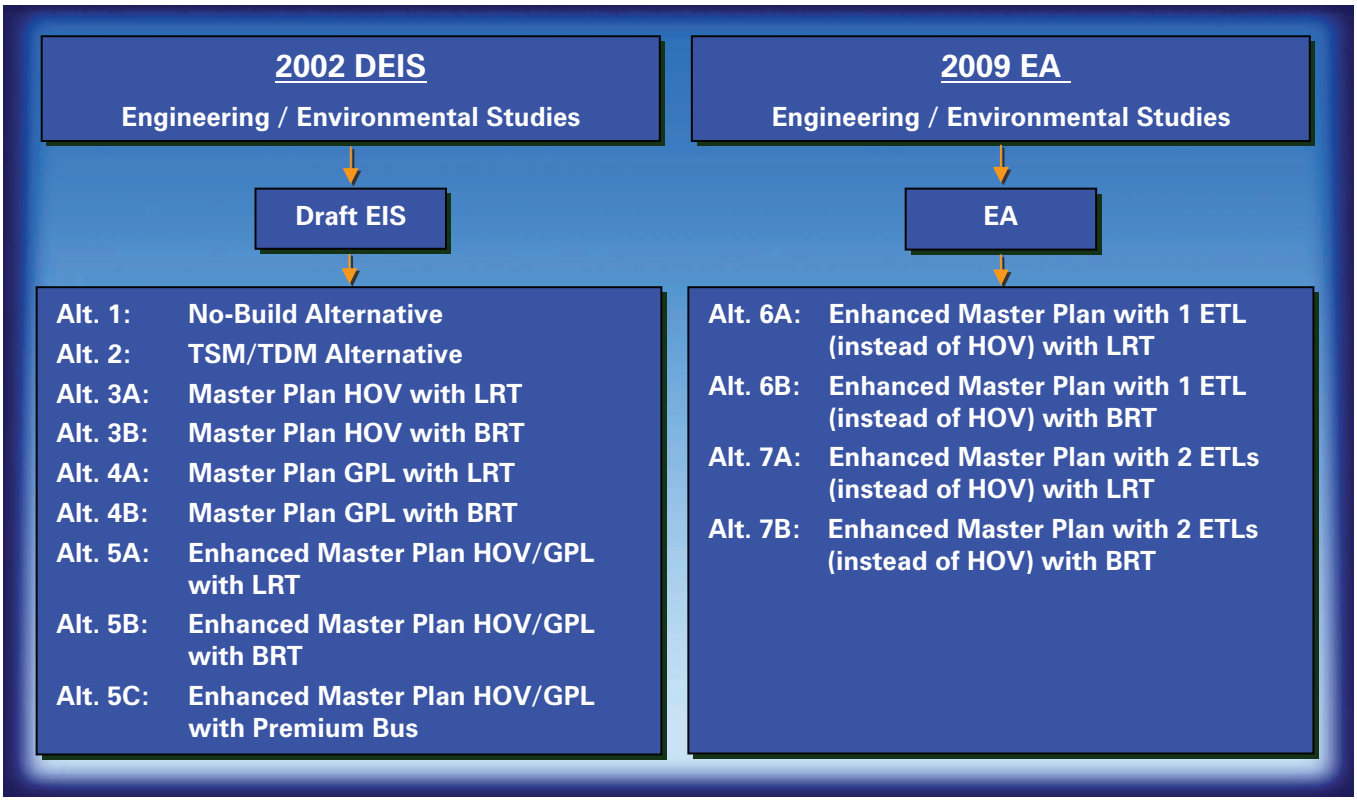


Table i-3: Alignment Modifications 2010 SEA

Issues to Be Resolved and Next Steps

As a supplement to the 2002 DEIS and the 2009 AA/EA, this SEA identifies and describes possible impacts associated with the potential modifications to the Original CCT Alignment. The information will help support the selection of the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA), the project mode and alignment to be advanced in the project development process. Once the LPA is determined, further design and impact analysis work will be carried out and documented in a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). This design and analysis work will be done along the full length of the CCT alignment (from Shady Grove to COMSAT).

Additional issues to be addressed in the next steps in the planning process include:

- Selection of a transit mode for the CCT corridor (BRT or LRT)
- Selection of a location for an Operations and Maintenance facility (e.g., train yard or bus garage)
- Coordination with local agencies and developers on specific site locations for stations, parking facilities, noise walls and maintenance facilities
- Determination and design of storm water management facilities
- Continuing coordination to minimize harm to Section 4(f) resources
- Continuing coordination with the Maryland Historical Trust and owners of possibly affected resources to complete a Memorandum of Agreement for adverse effects of the project on the Belward Farm and Crown Farm properties
- Continuing coordination with State and local governments on potential effects to local parkland in the City of Gaithersburg and the Seneca Creek State Park
- Continuing minimization of residential and business displacements
- Continuing minimization of natural resources impacts
- Selection of a highway improvement component of the LPA (or possible separation of the highway from the transit portions of the I-270/US 15/CCT project)

Next steps in the planning process also include continuing coordination and consultation with the resource and regulatory agencies and the public, and completion of a compensatory mitigation package for all impacts. The publication of an FEIS and issuance of a Record of Decision (ROD) would complete the planning process.

Organization of This SEA

The Introduction presents the following:

- Lead agency contacts
- A list of locations where this SEA is located for public review
- Information on the upcoming SEA public review and comment period, including the project public open house and hearing
- Contact information for the submission of comments on this document, as well as questions, comments or requests for additional information on the CCT or the I-270/US 15 Multi-Modal Corridor Study.

The document is divided into the following chapters:

Chapter I – Purpose and Need describes the purpose and need for the transit improvements within the context of the Purpose and Need for the multi-modal improvements presented in the I-270/

US 15 Multi-Modal Corridor Study. This includes the role of the CCT project in meeting the broader project goals and objectives. The Purpose and Need has not substantively changed since the 2009 AA/EA, however updated transit-related information is provided.

Chapter II – Alternatives Considered describes the transit alternatives under review and analysis within this document. It also briefly summarizes the range of alternatives that have been developed and reviewed to date in the 2002 DEIS and the 2009 AA/EA. The focus of the chapter is the description of the alignment modifications proposed for the Gaithersburg area.

Chapter III – Transportation System Performance and Effects describes the effects of the actions analyzed within this document on the existing transportation system and network, including the existing highway, transit, and non-motorized transportation network. It also presents the effects of implementing one or more of the proposed actions on the performance of the full CCT project (COMSAT to Shady Grove) in areas such as transit ridership, capital costs, annual operations and maintenance costs, and cost-effectiveness.

Chapter IV – Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences describes the effects of the Gaithersburg area alignment and station location modifications on the natural, cultural, and community environment. A comprehensive range of resources are addressed in this Chapter. Each subject is described separately and generally includes a description of existing conditions, a description of methodology used in the analysis, a description of the impacts anticipated, and possible mitigation. Additional information regarding effects associated with two O&M sites retained from previous studies is also included.

Chapter V – Section 4(f) Summary reviews the impacts of alignment options developed to avoid and minimize impacts to National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) eligible historic resources and public parks within the study area.

Chapter VI – Comments and Coordination summarizes the transit related testimony and comments received to the 2009 AA/EA document and public hearings. These comments express issues, concerns, and preferences regarding the entire transit project from COMSAT to Shady Grove and may relate to any aspect of the project, including mode, alignment, operations, etc. Additionally, this section describes all public and agency coordination with local, state, and federal agencies that has occurred on the project since the publication of the 2009 AA/EA document.

Appendices – Appended to this SEA is a set of plan sheets that show the proposed alignment modifications under discussion within the SEA document, a list of references used in the development of this document, and other relevant documentation.

Document Availability

This SEA document and its supporting technical reports, along with the 2009 AA/EA and the 2002 DEIS and their respective supporting technical reports, are available for viewing and download on the project website, www.i270multimodalstudy.com.

Printed copies of the SEA document are available for public review through the end of the comment period at selected public libraries within Montgomery and Frederick Counties, the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission office in Montgomery County, the Montgomery County Upcounty Regional Services Center in Germantown, the SHA Headquarters in Baltimore, the SHA District 3 Office in Greenbelt, the SHA District 7 office in Frederick, the MTA Headquarters in Baltimore, and at the Rockville, Gaithersburg, and Frederick city halls. Any person with special needs, such as English language assistance or Braille, should contact the MTA for assistance.

Public Review and Comment Period

The MTA will make this document available for public review and comment a minimum of 45 days. No sooner than 15 days after the document is made available for public review, public hearings will be held to record public and agency comments on the proposed project. These comments will be included in the project records and will be responded to in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS).

Informational Contacts

Additional information concerning the CCT project may be obtained by contacting:

Ms. Diane Ratcliff
Director
Office of Planning
Maryland Transit Administration
6 Saint Paul Street, Suite 902
Baltimore, Maryland 21202
Hours: 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM, Mon - Fri.
Phone: (410) 767-3787

Mr. Rick J. Kiegel, P.E.
Project Manager
Office of Planning
Maryland Transit Administration
6 Saint Paul Street, Suite 902
Baltimore, Maryland 21202
Hours: 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM, Mon - Fri.
Phone: (410) 767-1380

Project websites: www.i270multimodalstudy.com
www.mta.maryland.gov/cct

Additional information on the highway elements of the I-270/US 15 Multi-Modal Corridor Study may be obtained by contacting:

Mr. Gregory Slater
Director
Office of Planning and Preliminary Engineering
State Highway Administration
707 North Calvert Street, Mail Stop C-301
Baltimore, MD 21202
Hours: 7:30 AM to 4:30 PM, Mon - Fri.
Phone (410) 545-8500

Ms. Suseela Rajan
Project Manager
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Phone (410) 545-8514

Acronyms

ACRONYMS	
AA	Alternatives Analysis
ACHP	Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
ADT	Average Daily Traffic
AEC	Atomic Energy Commission
APE	Area of Potential Effects
AQTR	Air Quality Technical Report
ARMA	Air and Radiation Management Administration
ASTM	American Society for Testing and Materials
BIBI	Benthic Index of Biotic Integrity
BLS	US Bureau of Labor Statistics
BMPs	Best Management Practices
BRT	Bus Rapid Transit
BTU	British Thermal Unit
CAA	Clean Air Act
CAAA	Clean Air Act and Amendments of 1990
CCT	Corridor Cities Transitway
CD Lanes	Collector-Distributor Lanes
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CLRP	Constrained Long Range Transportation Plan
CO	Carbon Monoxide
COMAR	Code of Maryland Regulations
COMSAT	Communications Satellite, Inc.

ACRONYMS	
CTP	(Maryland) Consolidated Transportation Program
dBA	Decibels, A-weighted (representing the range of human hearing)
DC	District of Columbia; Washington, DC
DEIS	Draft Environmental Impact Statement
DOE	Department of Energy
DPW&T	(Montgomery County) Department of Public Works and Transportation
EA	Environmental Assessment
EPA	US Environmental Protection Agency
ETLs℠	Express Toll Lanes℠
EJ	Environmental Justice
FACT	Frederick Area Committee on Transportation
FCDPW	Frederick County Department of Public Works
FCLF	Frederick County Landmarks Foundation
FCIR	Farmland Conversion Impact Rating
FCA	Forest Conservation Act
FCP	Forest Conservation Plan
FEIS	Final Environmental Impact Statement
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FFGA	Full Funding Grant Agreement
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
FIBI	Fish Index of Biotic Integrity
FIR	Flood Insurance Rating
FPPA	Farmland Protection Policy Act

ACRONYMS	
FSD	Forest Stand Delineation
FTA	Federal Transit Administration
GP	General-Purpose (Lanes)
GSA	Government Services Administration
HAZMAT	Hazardous Materials
H&H	Hydrologic and Hydraulic
HCS	Highway Capacity Software
HOT	High Occupancy/Toll
HOV	High Occupancy Vehicle
IBI	Index of Biotic Integrity
ICC	Intercounty Connector
ICE	Indirect and Cumulative Effects
ISA	Initial Site Assessment
ITS	Intelligent Transportation Systems
LI	Light Industrial
LRT	Light Rail Transit
LOS	Level of Service
LPA	Locally Preferred Alternative
LUST	Leaking Underground Storage Tank
LWC	Land and Water Conservation
MBSS	Maryland Biological Stream Survey
MCDEP	Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection
MCDOT	Montgomery County Department of Transportation
MDNR	Maryland Department of Natural Resources

ACRONYMS	
MDE	Maryland Department of the Environment
MDOT	Maryland Department of Transportation
MDP	Maryland Department of Planning
MD SHPO	Maryland State Historic Preservation Office
MDTA	Maryland Transportation Authority
MHT	Maryland Historical Trust
MIHP	Maryland Inventory of Historic Places
M-NCPPC	Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
MOE	Measures of Effectiveness
MOS	Minimal Operating Segment
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
mS/cm	milliSiemens per centimeter (a measure of electrical resistance - Siemen is an inverse ohm)
MSAT(s)	Mobile Source Air Toxics
MTA	Maryland Transit Administration
MWAQC	Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee
MWCOG	Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
MXD	Mixed-use development zoning
NAAQS	National Ambient Air Quality Standards
NAC	Neighborhood Advisory Council (Frederick City)
NAC	Noise Abatement Criteria (Noise Analysis)
NCA	Neighborhood Conservation Area
NCPC	National Capital Planning Commission
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act (1969)

ACRONYMS	
NETR	Natural Environmental Technical Report
NFRAP	No Further Remedial Action Planned
NIST	National Institute of Standards & Technology
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act of 1966
NMF	National Marine Fisheries
NO_X	Nitrogen Oxides
NPDES	National Pollution Discharge & Elimination System
NPS	National Park Service
NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service
NRE	National Register Eligible
NRHP; NR	National Register of Historic Places
O_3	Ozone
O&M	Operations and Maintenance
ORI	Office/Research/Industrial
PE	Preliminary Engineering
PEM	Palustrine Emergent Wetlands
PFA	Priority Funding Area
PFO	Palustrine Forested Wetlands
PHI	Physical Habitat Index
PM	Particulate Matter
$PM_{2.5}$	Particulate Matter less than 2.5 microns in size
PM_{10}	Particulate Matter less than 10 microns in size
POS	Program Open Space
PSC	Potential Sites of Concern

ACRONYMS	
PSS	Palustrine Scrub-Shrub Wetlands
ROD	Record of Decision
ROW	Right-of-Way
RTE	Rare, Threatened and Endangered
SAFETEA-LU	Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users
SCEA	Secondary and Cumulative Effects Analysis
SETR	Socio-Economic Technical Report
SHA	Maryland State Highway Administration
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Office
SIP	State Implementation Plan
SSA	Sole Source Aquifer
STIP	State Transportation Improvement Program
SVP	Stream Valley Park
SWM	Stormwater Management
TDM	Transportation Demand Management
TIP	Transportation Improvement Program
TMD	[North Bethesda] Transportation Management District
TMP	Transportation Management Plan
TNM	Traffic Noise Model
TOD	Transit-Oriented Development
TPB	Transportation Planning Board
TSM	Transportation System Management
TTF	Maryland Transportation Trust Fund

ACRONYMS	
US	United States
USACE	US Army Corps of Engineers
USDOT	US Department of Transportation
USFWS	US Fish and Wildlife Service
USGSA	US General Services Administration
VdB	Vibration Decibels
VDEQ	Virginia Department of Environmental Quality
VDOT	Virginia Department of Transportation
VHT	Vehicle Hours Traveled
VMT	Vehicle Miles Traveled
VOC	Volatile Organic Compounds
WHD	Wildlife and Heritage Division
WIM	Weigh In Motion
WMATA	Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority
WSSC	Wetlands of Special State Concern
WSTC	Washington Suburban Transit Commission