

Virginia Avenue Tunnel Reconstruction Project: *About the Final Environmental Impact Statement*

What is this project about?

The Virginia Avenue Tunnel currently runs under Virginia Avenue from 2nd Street SE to 11th Street SE on the south side of the I-695. The tunnel is used to move freight rail traffic into and through the District of Columbia. This historic tunnel is nearing the end of its useful life and needs to be replaced. CSX owns and operates the tunnel and has proposed to replace it with a new tunnel that would allow for double-stacked train operations and create two tracks, address aging infrastructure and maintenance needs, and better meet increasing demand for freight services. Double stacking means that intermodal freight containers – which carry consumer goods like appliances and clothing – can be stacked on top of each other. This stacking allows each CSX freight train to handle the cargo of 280 trucks, which reduces congestion, highway maintenance costs and emissions in the District and across the region.

What is the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS)?

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) released the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) on June 13, 2014. “**Alternative 3 – Two New Tunnels**” was identified as the “Preferred Alternative” for tunnel reconstruction. The preferred alternative was developed based on community feedback during the environmental review process, responds to several issues raised by neighbors and best meets the Purpose and Need. Elements of the preferred alternative include:

- Offers the **shortest construction timeframe** (approximately 30 to 42 months);
- Operates trains in an **enclosed tunnel in front of all residences**;
- Holds all train operations during construction to the **Federal Railroad Administration safety standards** that apply across CSX’s network and the nation;
- Includes a **fully-enclosed construction site with full-time site security** to enhance the safety of neighbors, children and pets;
- **Maintains access for residents and emergency responders** to all homes and cross-streets during the entire construction process; and
- **Establishes a community office at 861 New Jersey Avenue SE** with regular hours to answer questions, address concerns and handle claims.

What are CSX’s commitments to the community?

CSX understands that the tunnel’s neighbors have concerns about the impact of construction on their daily lives. The National Environmental Policy Act and other federal regulations require significant actions and investments by CSX to limit those impacts. These commitments would fall into several categories: actions that would be naturally a part of the construction plan (briefly explained above); actions CSX would take during construction to minimize impacts; and actions CSX would take to help enhance the Virginia Avenue neighborhood after construction.

To reduce the impact from construction, CSX’s required actions include:

- Limiting construction hours;

- Controlling dust at the construction site to maintain air quality (page 5-24);
- Reducing construction noise and vibration by creating physical barriers, choosing less noisy construction techniques, and doing noise and vibration monitoring (page 5-35, 5-43);
- Monitoring traffic flow around the construction site and changing the timing of traffic signals as necessary to reduce impact (page 5-93);
- Providing mitigation in the form of compensation to the residents who are impacted the most – the residents directly next to the project – and to Virginia Avenue Tunnel neighborhood organizations, to minimize construction impacts as the residents and organizations choose (page 5-13).

CSX will also make enhancements to the new streetscape to complement the other development in the neighborhood. That effort will include improved reconstruction of Virginia Avenue and other areas affected by construction, including Virginia Avenue Park and the Marine Corps Recreation Facility. Here are some of CSX's commitments for improvements:

- Improving access to Garfield Park for wheelchair-dependent individuals (page 5-65);
- Building a continuous bike path between 2nd and 9th Streets connecting Garfield Park and Virginia Avenue Park (page 5-98);
- Straightening the alignment of Virginia Avenue SE within the 400 block to be consistent with the original L'Enfant Plan (page 5-59);
- Improving the traffic lane configuration between 5th/6th and 8th Streets to provide safer and calmer traffic conditions (appendix M, roadway layout sheets 2 and 3 of 4); and
- Installing landscaping and improved street lighting, traffic signals and crosswalks (page 5-84).

What happens next?

The FEIS will be available for review for 30 days before an official decision is released, called the Record of Decision (ROD). The FEIS is available for download from the project website: www.virginiaavenuetunnel.com and is available at the following locations:

- Southeast Neighborhood Library, 403 7th Street SE, Washington, DC 20003
- Southwest Neighborhood Library, 900 Wesley Place SW, Washington, DC 20024

A public meeting will also be held on July 1, 2014 at the Capitol Skyline Hotel, 10 Eye Street SW, Washington, DC 20024 from 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. The meeting will include a presentation on the details about construction and will include a brief time to ask questions of the project team. After the conclusion of the 30 day review period, FHWA will issue a ROD, which provides the basis for the decision, summarizes mitigation measures incorporated into the project and documents any required Section 4(f) approval. Dependent upon the decision rendered CSX will share additional information about timing and other specifics.

CSX is committed to completing this project the right way – safely, efficiently, and in a way that addresses your concerns and enhances the neighborhood. Stop by CSX's community office or visit www.virginiaavenuetunnel.com for more information and to contact the project team.