

CHAPTER 7 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

7.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of public outreach and public involvement opportunities to date. Appendix F provides copies of the public involvement materials referenced throughout this chapter.

7.1 Public Outreach Activities and Information Exchange

The objective of the public participation program is to invite and encourage the public to learn about and become more involved in the project. DRPT has provided diverse opportunities for many voices to be heard and for all interested parties to participate in the project development process. The public participation program has enabled the project team to educate stakeholders about the project development process, keep the public informed about project updates, receive comments and suggestions on project phases, provide multiple opportunities to receive general comments and recommendations, and ensure the openness and fairness of the project development process by considering all comments. The public participation program is designed to be proactive and responsive to the requirements of National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended.

The public participation program includes several different elements designed to engage specific audiences in a variety of ways. These elements include the establishment of a Technical Working Group (TWG) to help guide the initial project development process, public workshops and information meetings, and presentations to general interest groups in the corridor and elsewhere in the project area. Printed and electronic public information materials will be produced and updated during each phase of the project to include elements of interest for each audience. Formal public hearings on the Tier I Draft EIS are planned for winter 2009/2010.

All public participation activities have been planned in close coordination with project stakeholders, including staff from many project area cities and counties, the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT), the Southeast High-Speed Rail Project (SEHSR) team, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), the Hampton Roads Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), the Petersburg Planning District Commission (PPDC), the Crater Planning District Commission (CPDC), the Richmond Regional Planning District Commission (RRPDC), the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission (HRPDC) and Hampton Roads Transit (HRT). A complete list follows in Section 7.3.1.

7.1.1 Project Identifier (Logo)

A logo was developed to provide a unique identity for the project. This logo has been used on all written and electronic communication materials and is prominently displayed during public meetings. The lead agency name has been integrated into the project logo to provide the public with a clear understanding of the Virginia organization responsible for leading the project development process.



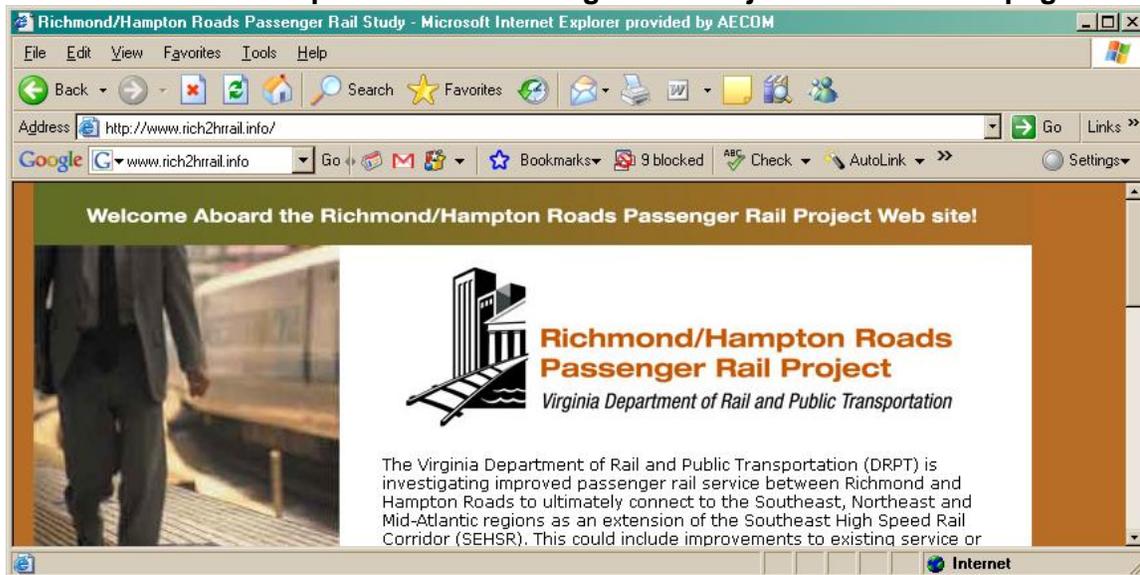
7.1.2 Stakeholder Mailing List

A project-specific stakeholder mailing list has been developed and maintained to include all interested stakeholders along each project route under consideration. The list continues to be refined and as the study progresses; it now includes nearly 3,500 contacts from the general public, agencies, committees, elected officials, the military, special interest groups, major employers and the media.

7.1.3 Internet Access/Website (www.rich2hrrail.info)

The project website provides 24-hour access and information about the project to interested parties. This website can also be accessed through the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) website at: www.drpt.virginia.gov. The project team has provided links to key stakeholder websites from the project website, and encourages stakeholders to provide a link to the project website on their websites as well. Information about the project, the study process and public meetings, in addition to communications materials such as maps, timelines, handouts and comment forms, are included on the site. Figure 7.1-1 below shows the homepage for the project website.

Figure 7-1: Richmond/Hampton Roads Passenger Rail Project Website Homepage



7.1.4 Project Information Phone Line

A toll-free telephone number (1-877-RICH2HR) was established to offer another method of communication between stakeholders and the project team. This phone number helped to inform and educate the public, and provided another means for the project team to receive public feedback. Calls were monitored seven days a week and the phone number was advertised in all the printed and electronic materials produced. The project phone line was cancelled in Summer 2007 due to minimal usage.

7.1.5 Web Page/Information Line Promotion

To promote the project website and the toll-free telephone information line, project business cards have been printed. These cards are distributed at all public and agency meetings, government offices, libraries and other community access locations.

7.1.6 Newsletters

The project team produced two educational newsletters at strategic points over the course of the project schedule. A final newsletter will be produced and distributed just prior to the public hearings on the Tier I Draft EIS in winter 2009/2010. Newsletters are distributed to agencies, organizations, officials, and individuals included in the project database. Additionally, newsletters are distributed through area libraries and a PDF file of each newsletter is uploaded to the project's website. Copies of the newsletters provided to date are included in Appendix F.

Newsletter #1 was mailed in October 2004 to 3,544 stakeholders in the project database, and Newsletter #2 was mailed in August 2005 to 3,797 stakeholders on the project database. An additional 610 copies were distributed through area libraries, and 60 were mailed to several regional senior and recreation centers for

further distribution. Newsletters were also hand delivered to busy public areas and local businesses in the corridor.

Newsletter #3 will be issued once the Tier I Draft EIS is released for public comment to encourage the general public to review and comment on the document and attend the public hearings.

7.1.7 Media Relations (News Releases, Story Development and Coverage)

The media is integral to this project's public participation program. Press releases have been developed and distributed to more than 100 media outlets at key points in the project schedule. Below is a summary of the three releases that have been written and distributed. In 2009, it is anticipated that several additional releases will be developed to include an announcement of the release of the Tier I Draft EIS and the announcement of the public hearings.

Scoping Press Release – The public scoping press release described the project and announced the March 2004 scoping meetings. The release generated 14 editorial features in print and broadcast media outlets. In addition, at the team's request the Cities of Williamsburg and Chesapeake taped the scoping meetings held in their respective cities, aired the video and subsequently shared the video with other municipal stations. As a result of the scoping press release, a media interview was taped on May 26, 2004 with Cox Communications Cable Channel 11. The talk show format featured interviews with the project team, Greater Norfolk Corporation and the City Manager for Williamsburg. The program aired 13 times in Hampton Roads and offered viewers an overview of the project as well as input from Peninsula and Southside representatives. Topics included benefits of high-speed passenger rail service to the region, the project schedule and potential funding opportunities.

Alternatives Development Press Release – The alternatives development press release provided a project update and announced the November 2004 public meetings, which provided information on the alternatives under development. Several news stories were generated based on these meetings. As a result of the release and subsequent follow up, eight editorial features were placed in targeted print media and three broadcast stories ran on broadcast news outlets.

Study Reaches Key Milestone Press Release - In August 2005, a project update press release was issued to announce that the alternatives under consideration had been narrowed from four to two. The release also described each alternative and the latest project developments. As a result of the release, the study team conducted media interviews within the project area and provided project briefings to key stakeholders.

7.2 Public Meetings

7.2.1 Public Meetings - Scoping

Due to the expansive and diverse area covered by the project, four scoping meetings were held in the northern, central and southern geographic segments of the project area in Richmond, Petersburg, Chesapeake and Williamsburg. Table 7-1 provides a summary of the dates, locations and attendance for each meeting.

Table 7-1: Scoping Meetings: Summary Meeting Dates, Locations and Attendance

Meeting Date	Meeting Time	Meeting Location	# Attend
AGENCY MEETING: Tuesday, March 9, 2004	1 p.m. – 2 p.m. Presentation followed by Q&A	DRPT Central Conf. Room 1313 East Main Street Suite #300 Richmond, VA	28
Tuesday, March 9, 2004	Open House: 4 p.m. – 7 p.m. Presentations: 4:30 p.m. & 6:00 p.m.	Science Museum of Virginia 2500 West Broad St. West Terrace Richmond, VA	47
Wednesday, March 10, 2004	Open House: 4 p.m. – 7 p.m. Presentations: 4:30 p.m. & 6:00 p.m.	Petersburg Train Station 103 River St. Petersburg, VA	37
Thursday, March 11, 2004	Open House: 4 p.m. – 7 p.m. Presentations: 4:30 p.m. & 6:00 p.m.	Chesapeake Central Library 298 Cedar Rd., Room 1 Chesapeake, VA	63
Wednesday, March 24, 2004	Open House: 4 p.m. – 7 p.m. Presentations: 4:30 p.m. & 6:00 p.m.	City of Williamsburg Community Bldg. 401 North Boundary St. Williamsburg, VA	110
TOTAL:			285

The public scoping meetings were held from 4:00 p.m. until 7:00 p.m. at each location. The information, presented on easel-backed displays boards, was identical at each meeting. Presentations by the project team were offered twice each night at 4:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. Handouts included a comment form and a website/information line business card to promote on-line education about the project.

The scoping meetings were announced through a variety of methods. Print ads were placed in seven regional newspapers including minority publications (see Table 7-2), a postcard was mailed to 74,642 homes in the project area and an e-mail notice was distributed to 130 interested parties. Finally, in an effort to reach a larger, rural and more diverse audience with project information, small stacks of postcards were delivered to libraries, major employers, the military, special interest groups, civic and cultural organizations, and homeowner associations.

After the scoping meetings, letters thanking those who attended were sent to 236 workshop attendees. Copies of the print ad, postcard, e-mail notice and thank you letter are included in Appendix F.

Table 7-2: Newspaper Placement Schedule – Scoping Meetings

NEWSPAPER	PLACEMENT DATES
Virginian Pilot	3/3/04, 3/6/04
Petersburg Progress Index	3/3/04, 3/6/04
Richmond Times Dispatch	3/3/04, 3/6/04
Newport News Daily Press	3/6/04, 3/17/04
Williamsburg Virginia Gazette	3/17/04, 3/20/04
Richmond Free Press	3/4/04
Norfolk New Journal & Guide	3/10/04

7.2.2 Public Meetings - Alternatives Development

Three public meetings were held during the alternatives development phase of the project schedule. These meetings were held in Richmond, Newport News and Norfolk. Meeting specifics are summarized in Table 7-3.

Table 7-3: Alternatives Development Meetings: Summary Meeting Dates, Locations and Attendance

MEETING DATE	MEETING TIME	MEETING LOCATION	# ATTEND
Tuesday, November 16, 2004	Open House: 4 p.m. – 7 p.m. Presentations: 4:30 p.m. & 6 p.m.	City Center Conference Facilities James and Warwick Rooms 700 Town Center Drive Newport News, VA	44
Wednesday, November 17, 2004	Open House: 4 p.m. – 7 p.m. Presentations: 4:30 p.m. & 6 p.m.	Norfolk Airport Hilton Ballrooms C&D 1500 North Military Highway Norfolk, VA	42
Thursday, November 18, 2004	Open House: 4 p.m. – 7 p.m. Presentations: 4:30 p.m. & 6 p.m.	Main Street Station 1500 East Main Street Richmond, VA	39
TOTAL:			125

The alternatives development meetings were held from 4:00 p.m. until 7:00 p.m. at each location. The information, presented on easel-backed boards, was identical at each meeting. Presentations by the project team were offered twice each night at 4:30 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.

Handouts included a comment form, copies of Newsletter #1 and website/information line promotional business cards to encourage use of the website for information.

In addition to the press release and October 2004 newsletter, the alternatives development meetings were announced through an e-mail message sent to 792 stakeholders on the project's mailing list and through a meeting poster. The posters were sent to Technical Work Group members, libraries and civic organizations to distribute and post. Letters were mailed to local elected officials and Commonwealth Transportation Board members to encourage their participation in the alternatives development meetings.

After the meetings, letters were mailed to meeting attendees thanking them for their participation in the project.

- Posters:
 - 115 were mailed to Technical Work Group members to distribute
 - 76 libraries in the study area received copies to post in their library
 - 1, 044 black-and-white copies of the poster were sent to civic organization contacts
- Letters:
 - Personalized letters of invitations were mailed to 238 local elected officials and to the Commonwealth Transportation Board members to encourage their participation in the alternatives development meetings.
 - After the meetings, 125 letters were mailed to meeting attendees thanking them for their participation in the project.
- Copies of the e-mail notice, poster and letter of invitation are included in the Appendix F.

7.2.3 Speakers Bureau/Ad Hoc Meetings

In this large and diverse project area, small group meetings have provided additional opportunities for community participation and have helped the project team to better understand community viewpoints. These meetings have been accomplished through the establishment of a speakers' bureau made up of project team members. Table 7-4 below is a summary of ad hoc meetings held through May 2009.

Table 7-4: Ad Hoc Meetings: Meeting Dates, Meeting Description and Attendance

Date	Description Of Meeting	# Attend
3/17/2004	Newport News Planning Commission	20
3/30/2004	Greater Norfolk Corporation & Virginia Beach Vision	40
4/19/2004	TIGR/Sierra Meeting. Sponsors: Sierra Club - Virginia Chapter, Sierra Club - Falls of the James Group, League of Women Voters of the Richmond Metropolitan Area	13
4/22/2004	Hampton Roads Planning District Commission	6
1/10/2005	York County Transportation Safety Commission	15
4/21/2005	Isle of Wight Board of Supervisors	100-150
4/21/2005	Richmond Area Metropolitan Planning Organization - Technical Advisory Committee	22
4/26/2005	Richmond Regional Planning District Commission	25
5/4/2005	Williamsburg Shriners	30
5/6/2005	Crater Planning District Commission	12
5/12/2005	Richmond Area Metropolitan Planning Organization	n/a
7/6/2005	Hampton Roads Transportation Advisory Committee	50
7/19/2005	Route 460 Public Hearing: Two team members attended with maps, newsletters and other information to help the public understand the differences between the highway project and this project.	408
7/21/2005	Route 460 Public Hearing: Two team members attended with maps, newsletters and other information to help the public understand the differences between the highway project and this project.	340

7.3 Agency Coordination

7.3.1 Technical Working Group Meetings

A technical working group (TWG) made up of city and county representatives from the project area was established to provide input on community and business needs, help resolve points of conflict, and assist with project direction in the early planning stages. The TWG helped shape the project development process from first steps to scoping and the development of alternatives. Table 7-5 provides the list of TWG member agencies. Table 7-6 is a summary of the TWG meetings held.

Table 7-5: TWG Member Agencies

Prefix	First Name	Last Name	Job Title	Affiliation
Mr.	Drew	Galloway	Strategic Planning	Amtrak
Mr.	William	Britton	Director, Development	Charles City County
Mr.	John	McCracken	Director, Transportation Dept.	Chesterfield County
Mr.	Earl	Sorey	Transportation Engineer	City of Chesapeake Public Works Dept.
Mr.	J. Chris	Kollman, III	City Clerk	City of Colonial Heights
Mr.	Fred	Whitley	City Engineer	City of Hampton
Mr.	Keith	Cannady	Planning Department	City of Hampton
Ms.	Britta	Ayers	Sr. District Planner, District III	City of Newport News
Mr.	Leo	Bevon	IT Analyst	City of Newport News
Mr.	Al	Riutort	Planning Director	City of Newport News
Mr.	Tom	Slaughter	Dept. of Engineering	City of Newport News
Mr.	Jeffrey	Raliski	Planning Manager	City of Norfolk Dept. of Planning
Mr.	B. David	Canada	City Manager	City of Petersburg
Mr.	Richard	Hartman	City Engineer	City of Portsmouth
Ms.	Vickey	Badger	Dept. of Community Development	City of Richmond
Mr.	Eric	Nielson	Director of Public Works	City of Suffolk
Mr.	Travis	Campbell	Transportation Planner	City of Virginia Beach
Ms.	Jodi	Miller	Assistant City Manager	City of Williamsburg
Mr.	Jackson	Tuttle	City Manager	City of Williamsburg
Mr.	Joe	Vinsh	Planner III	Crater Planning District Commission

Prefix	First Name	Last Name	Job Title	Affiliation
Mr.	Gary	Kujala	Transportation Projects	CSX Transportation
Mr.	Jay	Westbrook	Assistant VP/Public-Private Partnerships	CSX Transportation
Mr.	Dick	Cogswell	Senior Engineer	Federal Railroad Administration
Mr.	Barry	Bishop	Exec. Vice President	Greater Norfolk Corporation
Mr.	Henry	Shriver	Transportation Committee	Greater Norfolk Corporation
Ms.	Jayne	Whitney	Chief Development Officer	Hampton Roads Transit
Mr.	Todd	Eure	Transportation Engineer	Henrico County
Mr.	Arthur L.	Collins	Executive Director	HRPDC
Mr.	Dwight	Farmer	Executive Director	HRPDC
Mr.	W. Douglas	Caskey	County Administrator	Isle of Wight County
Mr.	Sandon	Rogers	Transportation Planner	Isle of Wight County
Mr.	Doug	Powell	Asst. Mgr. Community Svc.	James City County
Mr.	George	Homewood	Dir. Of Comm. Dev.	New Kent County
Mr.	Bill	Schafer	Dir. Strategic Planning	Norfolk Southern Corporation
Ms.	Brenda	Garton	County Administrator	Prince George County
Mr.	Leon	Hughes		Prince George County
Mr.	Dan	Lysy	Director of Transportation	Richmond Regional PDC
Mr.	Michael W.	Johnson	County Administrator	Southampton County
Mr.	Tyrone	Franklin	County Administrator	Surry County
Ms.	Deborah	Jenkins	Asst. to County Admin.	Sussex County
Ms.	Mary	Jones	County Administrator	Sussex County
Mr.	Chris	Collins		VDOT
Ms.	Sherry	Munford	Location and Design Div.	VDOT
Mr.	Dick	Beadles		VHSR/VA Rail Policy Institute
Mr.	Daniel	Plaughter	Executive Director	Virginians for High Speed Rail
Mr.	Timothy	Cross	Principal Planner	York County Planning Div.

Table 7-6: TWG Meetings- Date, Description and Attendance

Date	Description	# Attend*
12/9/2003	TWG 1 Meeting: 10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. Virginia Diner, Wakefield	19
2/17/2004	TWG 2 Meeting: 10:00 - 11:30 a.m., City of Williamsburg Municipal Building	15
7/28/2004	TWG 3 Meeting: 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m., City of Suffolk Police Department	20
4/14/2005	TWG 4 Meeting: 10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m., City of Williamsburg Municipal Center (Alternatives Discussion)	17
1/31/2006	TWG 5 Meeting: 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon Virginia Diner, Wakefield	16

* The attendance does not reflect project team members who attended.

7.3.2 Agency Involvement/Agency Workshop

The initiation of the project's scoping process began with the publication of a Notice of Intent (NOI) in the Federal Register on February 24, 2004, as shown in Appendix A. In addition to the public scoping meetings described in Section 7.2.1, an agency scoping workshop was held on March 9, 2004 in DRPT's Richmond office to present the project to the agencies, to establish ongoing dialogue on the project going forward and to receive their initial comments. The meeting was well attended with 28 agencies and TWG members represented. Additional coordination with potentially affected federal, state and local agencies occurred in July 2005 to update agencies on the status of the project and to ascertain the potential effects of the alternatives under consideration. All correspondence related to agency coordination is included in Appendix B.

7.4 Public Comments

To date, more than 200 public comments have been recorded and collected via email, public meetings and USPS mail. The formal comment period for Public and Agency Scoping ended on May 14, 2004. The comments received during the formal comment period have been incorporated into this Tier 1 Draft EIS and are summarized in the Final Scoping Summary Report, June 2004. Throughout the project process, public

comments have continued to be collected, reviewed and considered. The next official public comment period will begin once the Tier I Draft EIS is released for public review and public hearings are held in winter 2009/2010. After the public hearings, the public comments received will be summarized and documented.

7.5 Future Public Participation Activities

7.5.1 Public Comments on the Tier I Draft EIS

The project team will schedule three public hearings and hold a public comment period to gather the public's feedback on the Tier I Draft EIS document in winter 2009/2010. The general public, key stakeholders and agencies will be notified and encouraged to attend the hearings and provide their comments in a variety of ways, including notifications in regional newspapers, press releases, project website information, stakeholder communications and Newsletter #3, which will be produced and distributed to the project contact list with additional distribution to libraries and other public venues. The project stakeholder contact list will be reviewed and updated to maximize the reach of the mailing within project area. In addition, copies of the Tier I Draft EIS will be made available in all public libraries in the study area and DRPT offices in Richmond. It also will be available for download from the project website.

Public comments will be gathered through the public hearings, including written and verbal comments, and during the formal public comment period. Public comments received on the Tier I Draft EIS will be considered in the development of the Tier I Final EIS, and will be summarized in the final document. The process is as follows:

- Once the Tier I Draft EIS has been completed and signed, a notification of availability (NOA) is published in the Federal Register by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and advertised through local media to solicit public comment by DRPT. The Tier I Draft EIS is circulated to those agencies with jurisdiction by law, parties that have expressed an interest, either through the scoping process or in response to the NOA, and other entities potentially affected by any of the alternatives. The circulation period will last a minimum of 45 days and a public hearing will be held with at least 15 days prior notice.

After completion of the circulation period, all substantive written comments and the public hearing testimony are addressed and the preparation of a Tier I FEIS begins. The principle components of the Tier I FEIS include: 1) identification of a preferred alternative; 2) responses to comments made during the circulation period; 3) commitments to mitigate adverse impacts of the project; 4) evidence of compliance with related environmental statutes, Executive Orders and regulations; and 5) a description of changes that have been made to the project since the Tier I Draft EIS was published. Once the appropriate FRA official has approved the Tier I FEIS, it is concurrently filed by FRA with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) for publication of a notification of availability for a 30-day circulation period in the Federal Register and it is distributed and advertised through local media by the DRPT.