

Appendix H

Glossary

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

100-year floodplain – The areas along or adjacent to a stream or body of water that are capable of storing or conveying floodwaters during a 100-year frequency storm event.

accessibility – A measure of how reachable locations or activities are from a given site; it is influenced by changes in travel time, safety, vehicle operating costs, and transportation choice.

adverse effect – Defined in Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) (36 CFR 800.5(a) (1)). An adverse effect to a historic property occurs when the project under consideration alters any characteristic that qualifies the property for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places in a manner that would diminish the integrity of the property.

affected environment – Ambient conditions at the time an Environmental Impact Statement is prepared.

Agricultural and Forestal District (AFD) - Provides a means to conserve, protect, and encourage the development and improvement of agricultural and forestal lands for the production of food and other agricultural and forestal products, and conserve and protect agricultural and forestal lands as valued natural and ecological resources which provide essential open spaces for clean air sheds, as well as for aesthetic purposes.

alignment – The ground plan of a roadway, railway or other fixed route.

ambient air – A physical and chemical measure of the existing concentration of various chemicals in the outside air, usually determined over a specific time period (e.g., one hour, eight hours).

ambient background noise – The existing cumulative noise that is characteristic of an area based on current activity levels.

Area of Potential Effect (APE) – For purposes of complying with Section 106 of the NHPA, a geographic area or areas where an undertaking (e.g., the Richmond/Hampton Roads High Speed Rail Project) may directly or indirectly cause alterations in the character or use of historic properties, if any such properties are located in the area of the project.

at-grade – level with the ground surface.

Best Management Practices (BMPs) – Specific standards utilized during construction and design to minimize the impact on surrounding resources.

build alternative – The alternative being evaluated as the proposed action during the EIS process.

capital costs – The cost to construct a transportation system such as passenger rail. Costs include design fees, vehicle procurement, environmental mitigation, property acquisition, construction materials, and labor for the construction of a project.

census tract – A small statistical subdivision of a county defined by a local committee of census data users for the purpose of presenting census information every ten years. The census tract boundaries, which are nested within counties, generally follow visible features and often follow governmental unit boundaries or invisible features.

Clean Air Act of 1970 (CAA) – Legislation mandating the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to set national air quality standards to protect the public against common pollutants. State governments are required to devise clean-up plans to meet these EPA standards.

Clean Air Act Amendment of 1990 (CAAA) – A strategy for the U.S. to address the problem of urban smog. It requires states and the Federal government to reduce emissions from automobiles, trucks, buses, ships, barges, and consumer products, and to meet air quality standards. It particularly addresses the urban problem of ozone, carbon monoxide (CO), and particulate matter. It defines how areas are designated “attainment” and allows the EPA to classify “non-attainment” areas as those that do not meet the federal air quality standards.

coastal plain - An area of flat, low-lying land adjacent to a seacoast and separated from the interior by other features

Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) – A seventeen-member board appointed by the Governor of Virginia that is primarily responsible for locating routes, approving construction contracts, creating traffic regulations, naming highways, and administering and allocating transportation funds in Virginia.

Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) – Commonly known as Superfund, this law was passed in 1980 to create a tax on the chemical and petroleum industries and provide broad federal authority to respond directly to releases or hazardous substances that may endanger public health or the environment.

Comprehensive Plan – A plan required by state law to be used by local municipalities as a guide to decision-making about the natural and built environment.

commuter rail – A mode of passenger transportation where either diesel or electric-powered rail cars use tracks that are part of a general rail network.

Conformity – A designation given to transportation plans, programs, and projects that conform to federally mandated state air-quality plans.

Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) – Authorized under the Intermodal Surface Transportation Equity Act (ISTEA), this law provided \$6 billion in funding for surface transportation and other related projects that contribute to improvements in air-quality and reduce congestion.

Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) – Established in the Executive Office as part of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), the council coordinates federal environmental efforts, policies, and initiatives, and ensures that federal agencies meet NEPA requirements.

CSX Transportation Railway – A national freight rail operator operating within the study corridors.

cumulative impact - The impact on the environment which results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions.

decibel – A unit of measure of sound pressure used to describe the loudness of sound on the A-weighted scale.

determination of eligibility – The decision made by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) regarding whether historic buildings or district are eligible for or listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP).

direct effects - Effects that occur as a direct result of the project.

Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS) – A comprehensive study of potential environmental impacts related to federally assisted projects. Projects for which a DEIS is required are defined in the National environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended.

effects – Synonymous with impact, includes the result from actions that may have a beneficial or detrimental outcome.

endangered species – A species whose prospects for survival are in immediate danger based on a loss of habitat, over-exploitation, predation, competition, or disease. An endangered species requires immediate attention or extinction will likely follow.

Environmental Justice (EJ) – Provides for equal protection from environmental hazards and fair treatment for all people regardless of race, ethnicity, or economic status, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. Fair treatment implies that no population of people bear an unequal share of negative environmental impacts of pollution or environmental hazard resulting from industrial, municipal, and commercial operations or the execution of federal, state, or local policies.

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) – As part of the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT), the FHWA is charged with the broad responsibility of ensuring that America's roads and highways continue to be safe and technologically up-to-date.

Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) - Created by the Department of Transportation Act of 1966 (49 U.S.C. 103, Section 3(e)(1)). Its purposes are to enforce regulations, administer railroad assistance programs, and conduct research and promote rail safety.

Federal Transit Administration (FTA) – The agency of the USDOT responsible for regulation and funding of public transportation.

freight rail – A mode of freight transportation where either diesel or electric-powered rail cars use tracks that are part of a general rail network.

Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) – The document that is published following a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS) that addresses revisions in the design of the proposed project and incorporates public and agency comments received during the public circulation period of the Draft EIS and during the Draft EIS public hearing.

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) – A system of computer software and hardware, data, and personnel to manipulate, analyze and present geographically referenced information or data that is identified according to their locations.

grade crossing - An intersection where a roadway crosses a railway at the same elevation.

grade-separated – Used to describe an alignment that is elevated or below ground, or crossings that use an overpass or an underpass. Grade separation allows traffic or transit vehicles to pass through intersections without stopping for opposing traffic.

ground-borne vibration and noise – The vibration-induced levels that propagate over ground between the source and a receptor such as a building; typically assessed indoors.

habitat - The area or environment where an organism or ecological community normally lives or occurs.

high-speed rail (HSR) – Passenger rail service that operates between major metropolitan areas at speeds of 124 mph and higher.

hydric soils - A soil that formed under conditions of saturation, flooding or ponding long enough during the growing season to develop anaerobic conditions in the upper part.

hydrology indicators - The presence of water at or near the surface for a designated amount of time.

hydrophytic vegetation - Plant-life that thrives in wet conditions.

Jurisdictional determination (JD) – Regulatory review of previously identified wetlands and waters of the United States Army Corp of Engineers (USACE) in compliance with Section 404 of the Clean Water Act.

land use – Classification providing information on land cover and the types of human activity occurring on a parcel of land, such as “commercial,” “industrial,” “residential,” or “open space.”

level of service (LOS) – A letter grade designation used to describe given roadway conditions with “A” being at or close to free-flow conditions and “F” being at or close to over-saturation of the roadway; usually based on the progression of vehicles through the green phase of a signal, driver discomfort/frustration, lost travel time, and fuel consumption.

low-income – Any household with income at or below the U.S. Bureau of the Census poverty thresholds.

Major Investment Study (MIS) – Also called Alternatives Analysis, a study that seeks to find the best capital improvement within a given corridor to solve the need for additional transportation investment.

mass transportation - Transportation that provides regular and continuing general or special transportation to the public; does not include school buses, charters, or sightseeing transportation.

master plan – An exhaustive plan for a community’s future development activities.

Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) – The forum for cooperative transportation decision-making for a metropolitan area. Title 23 USC Section 134 requires that (1) a MPO be designated for each Urbanized Area (UZA) containing 50,000 or more persons based on the latest US Census, and (2) the metropolitan area has a continuing, cooperative and comprehensive transportation planning process.

micron - A unit of length equal to one millionth (10⁻⁶) of a meter.

minority – A member of the following races: (1) Black or African American, (2) American Indian or Alaska Native, (3) Asian, (4) Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, (5) Hispanic or Latino Origin.

mitigation – The actions necessary to reduce or eliminate an impact and thereby restoring the affected environment.

mitigation banking – The restoration, creation, enhancement, and preservation of wetlands and/or other aquatic resources, for the purpose of providing compensatory mitigation in advance of authorized impacts to similar resources.

mixed-use – Combination of land uses, such as residential uses combined with office, retail, public, entertainment, or even manufacturing uses.

National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) – Requires federal agencies to consider the environmental impacts of major federal projects or decisions, to share information with the public; to identify and assess reasonable alternatives; and to coordinate efforts with other planning and environmental reviews taking place.

National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) – A federal list of buildings, sites, district or other properties that have a historic significance. The National Register of Historic Places is maintained by the Keeper of the National Register.

No Action Alternative – The future condition of an area in the absence of a project; assumes that no improvements will be made with the exception of periodic maintenance and minor enhancements needed to maintain safe operation and those already designated in the approved plan.

Norfolk and Southern Railway (NS) – A national freight rail company operating within the study corridor.

off-peak period – Used to describe times where travel is not at its peak, or highest level, during the day. Off-peak travel usually occurs in the midday and evenings in most cities.

operating costs – The periodic and usual expenses a company incurs to generate revenues.

park-and-ride facility – A parking facility that is part of a transportation facility; an access mode for patrons to drive private vehicles to a transportation facility.

Passenger Rail – A passenger railroad service that operates between cities on trackage that is usually part of the general railroad system.

Peninsula/CSXT Route - Route being evaluated by the Richmond/Hampton Roads Passenger Rail Study along the Peninsula. The route runs parallel to Interstate-64, between Richmond and Newport News.

Record of Decision (ROD) – A formal decision made by a lead federal agency based on its interpretation of a Final Environmental Impact Statement.

ridership - The number of people using a public transportation system during a given time period.

river basin - The entire geographical area drained by a river and its tributaries.

right-of-way (ROW) – Land available for operation of transportation facilities (roadways or rail lines). The land is typically government-owned (local, state, or federal). A transportation facility may occupy all or a portion of the right-of-way. ROWs can be grade-separated or at-grade.

scoping - The effort taken at the beginning of a study to consider all issues that should be addressed in the study. It is the first phase of activity to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement.

secondary impact – The effect of an action that takes place some time after a primary event has occurred.

Southside/NS Route - Route being evaluated by the Richmond/Hampton Roads Passenger Rail Study. The Southside/NS Route is located parallel to State Road 460 and runs between Main Street Station in Richmond and the present station in Norfolk.

State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) – A state administrative agency responsible for carrying out consultation in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended and other state historic preservation regulations.

study area – The special limits within which alternatives are considered.

Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) - A written statement, required by Section 102 (2) (C) of the NEPA for projects that involve a federal action such as funding. The Tier 1 EIS serves to provide information about significant environmental impacts and informs decision-makers and the public of practical alternatives that would prevent or minimize adverse impacts or improve the quality of the human environment.

threatened species - A species that may become endangered if surrounding conditions begin or continue to deteriorate.

topography – The surface features of a place or region.

Transportation Systems Management (TSM) - Different actions and activities designed to make an existing transportation system more efficient.

vehicle miles traveled (VMT) – The number of miles traveled by an automobile per individual within a given area.

wetlands – Tidal areas or swamps with water saturated soil characteristics and associated vegetation that meet certain criteria on which filling and development are federally- and/or state-regulated.

zoning ordinance – A local land use ordinance that identifies and regulates the use of property within a given municipality. Zoning ordinances prescribe land use type, relationships to nearby uses, densities, height and setback requirements, parking requirements and related elements.