BOARD OF EDUCATION OF HARFORD COUNTY

INFORMATIONAL REPORT

DECISION ON SCHOOL/ORGANIZATION SPONSORED PROJECT HAVRE DE GRACE MIDDLE/ HIGH SCHOOL SUSQUEHANNA RAIL BRIDGE PROJECT HARRIS FIELD IMPROVEMENTS

APRIL 29, 2024

Background Information:

The National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak) is proposing to improve the Susquehanna Rail Bridge between the City of Havre de Grace in Harford County, Maryland and the Town of Perryville in Cecil County, Maryland. In 2016, Harford County Public Schools (HCPS) was initially contacted about the project and was advised that modifications would need to be made to the existing track and field facilities located at Havre de Grace Middle/ High School, also known as Harris Field, to accommodate the project. As owner and operator of the Susquehanna Rail Bridge, Amtrak is proposing improvements to the sports facilities at Harris Field while implementing additional safety measures as a component of the Susquehanna River Rail Bridge Project. Modifications will be made to the long jump, triple jump, pole vault, high jump, shot put and discus events, and will also include the installation of a storage shed. The enhanced sports facilities will improve capabilities to host regional events and improve the safety of the community-at-large.

Discussion:

The design and engineering for the project is being completed by Amtrak consultant, HNTB. The project will be funded by the Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail Program and managed by personnel from Amtrak. The HCPS Department of Facilities Management will monitor all work that is completed to ensure compliance with the agreed scope of work.

All necessary documentation has been submitted and reviewed by the appropriate school system staff, with comments through the Assistant Superintendent for Operations, as required by school system procedures. Amtrak will comply with the items described in the comments.

Superintendent's Recommendation:

The Superintendent of Schools recommends that the Board of Education approve the improvements to Harris Field proposed by Amtrak. The estimated cost for design, construction, and inspection services for the project at Havre de Grace Middle/ High School is \$1,427,000.

April 25, 2016

Mrs. Barbara P. Canavan Superintendent of Schools Harford County Public Schools A.A. Roberty Building 102 S. Hickory Avenue Bel Air, MD 21014

Dear Mrs. Canavan:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT), as the project sponsor, is proposing to improve the Susquehanna River Rail Bridge between the City of Havre de Grace in Harford County, Maryland and the Town of Perryville in Cecil County, Maryland. The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and MDOT are preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) to evaluate the potential environmental impacts of the Susquehanna River Rail Bridge Project (the "Proposed Project"). The National Passenger Railroad Corporation (Amtrak), as bridge owner and operator, is providing conceptual and preliminary engineering designs in coordination with MDOT and FRA. The existing Susquehanna River Rail Bridge is located along Amtrak's Northeast Corridor (NEC). As explained in more detail below, the NEPA and preliminary engineering phases of the project are being funded by FRA through the High-Speed Intercity Passenger Rail (HSIPR) Program.

Two Build Alternatives are under consideration in the EA—Alternative 9A and Alternative 9B. Both alternatives would construct two new two-track bridges—one very close to the existing alignment and one upstream of it. The alternatives would differ in the track alignment near the Havre de Grace Middle/High School. Alternative 9A would result in permanent impacts to the Havre de Grace Middle/High School Athletic Fields, located in Havre de Grace, Harford County. The Havre de Grace Middle/High School Athletic Fields are publicly-owned recreational facilities that are open to the public when not in use by the school or reserved for special events. As such, this resource qualifies for protection under Section 4(f) of the U.S. Department of Transportation Act of 1966 (49 USC §303, referred to herein as "Section 4(f)").

In accordance with Section 4(f), FRA may not approve the use of land from a publicly-owned public park, recreation area or wildlife and waterfowl refuge, or any significant historic site unless a determination is made that: (i) there is no feasible and prudent alternative to the use of the land from the property; and (ii) the action includes all possible planning to minimize harm to the property resulting from such use, or (iii) the Section 4(f) use is *de minimis*. A *de minimis* Section 4(f) use is one that, after taking into account any measures to minimize harm (such as avoidance, minimization, mitigation or enhancement measures), would not adversely affect the activities, features, or attributes qualifying a park, recreation area, or refuge for protection under Section 4(f). To make a finding that a Section 4(f) use is *de minimis*, FRA requires written concurrence from the official(s) with jurisdiction over the resource that, based on the proposed measures to minimize harm, such use would not adversely affect the activities, features, or attributes that qualify the resource for protection under Section 4(f). In addition, public notice and opportunity for public review and comment on the finding is required.

The impacts to the Havre de Grace Middle/High School Athletic Fields include permanent fee-simple property acquisition as well as a permanent easement for a water main relocation that constitute a Section 4(f) use of the property. The purpose of this letter is to request your concurrence that, in light of proposed minimization and mitigation measures described below, the proposed Section 4(f) use would not







adversely affect the activities, features, or attributes of the Havre de Grace Middle/High School Athletic Fields. To aid your ability to concur, we are providing background information about the proposed project as well as a discussion of FRA and MDOT's justification for reaching these determinations.

Project Purpose and Need

The Susquehanna River Rail Bridge Project would span approximately six miles, between the "Oak" Interlocking at Milepost 63.5 south of the City of Havre de Grace and the "Prince" Interlocking at Milepost 57.3 north of the Town of Perryville (**Attachment 1**). The 110-year-old bridge is a critical link along the NEC, which is one of the USDOT's designated high-speed rail corridors and is the busiest passenger rail line in the United States. The bridge is used by Amtrak, the Maryland Area Regional Commuter (MARC), and Norfolk Southern Railway (NS) to carry intercity, commuter, and freight trains across the Susquehanna River.

The problems posed by the existing Susquehanna River Rail Bridge include: functionally obsolete and aging infrastructure; speed and capacity constraints; operational inflexibility; maintenance difficulties; and conflicts with maritime uses. The primary purpose of the Proposed Project is to provide continued rail connectivity along the NEC. The goals of the Susquehanna River Rail Bridge Project include:

- Improve rail service reliability and safety;
- Improve operational flexibility and accommodate reduced trip times;
- Optimize existing and planned infrastructure and accommodate future freight, commuter, intercity and high-speed rail operations; and
- Maintain adequate navigation and improve safety along the Susquehanna River.

Planning Context

FRA launched the High-Speed Intercity Passenger Rail (HSIPR) Program in June 2009. HSIPR emphasizes a corridor-level approach to planning rail services to support the state-centric funding. The administration's initial vision for establishing high-speed rail was documented in the High-Speed Rail Strategic Plan (April 2009)¹, and clarified by the FRA's Interim Program Guidance (June 2009), which outlined the eligibility requirements and procedures for obtaining funds under the program, and the criteria by which applications are evaluated. USDOT awarded a \$22 million grant to the State of Maryland for preliminary engineering and environmental studies (of which the EA is a part) for the Susquehanna River Rail Bridge Project. As mentioned above, USDOT designated the NEC as a high-speed rail corridor through the HSIPR program.

As part of a separate effort, FRA is leading the NEC FUTURE program, a comprehensive planning effort to define, evaluate, and prioritize future investments along the NEC from Washington, D.C. to Boston, MA. FRA launched NEC FUTURE in 2012 to consider the role of rail passenger service in the context of current and future transportation demands. Through the NEC FUTURE program, the FRA is determining a long-term vision and investment program for the NEC, and preparing a Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Service Development Plan in support of that vision. The NEC Future Tier I Draft EIS was released in November 2015. The purpose of the NEC FUTURE program is to upgrade aging infrastructure and to improve the reliability, capacity, connectivity, performance, and resiliency of passenger rail service on the NEC for both intercity and regional trips, while promoting environmental sustainability and economic growth. Reaching Maximum Allowable Speeds (MAS) along the corridor will be a critical consideration when evaluating the efficiency of the rail network along the NEC now and well into the future. The Susquehanna River Rail Bridge Project is being coordinated with and informed by the NEC FUTURE program. This includes the NEC FUTURE program's goal to achieve at least 160 mph along the NEC wherever possible.

¹ http://www.fra.dot.gov/downloads/rrdev/hsrstrategicplan.pdf. Accessed October 21, 2013.

Project Alternatives

The EA for the Proposed Project includes a No Action Alternative, in addition to two Build Alternatives: Alternatives 9A and 9B. Both Alternatives 9A and 9B would include the decommissioning and removal of the existing bridge and the construction of:

- a new two-track bridge accommodating train speeds of up to 90 miles per hour (mph) to the west (upstream) of the existing bridge, and
- a second new two-track bridge very close to the existing alignment.

The second new bridge would accommodate speeds of up to $\underline{160 \text{ mph}}$ for Alternative 9A and up to $\underline{150}$ \underline{mph} for Alternative 9B.

MDOT and FRA have been conducting a broad public involvement and agency coordination program since the project's inception. In addition to the general outreach, beginning in July 2015, the project team has consulted extensively with staff from Harford County Public Schools (HCPS) to discuss the need for the proposed improvements, as well as associated impacts resulting from Alternative 9A to the Havre de Grace Middle/High School Athletic Fields. No impacts to the Athletic Fields would result from Alternative 9B.

De Minimis Section 4(f) Use

Alternative 9A would require a Section 4(f) use of approximately 2.1 acres from the Havre de Grace Middle/High School Athletic Fields. This use is required because the design curvature of Alternative 9A necessary to achieve 160 mph speeds necessitates property acquisition outside of the current Amtrakowned right-of-way (ROW) within the Havre de Grace Middle/High School Athletic Fields (Attachment 2). This Section 4(f) use is comprised of 1.5 acres of fee simple right-of-way as well as 0.6 acre of perpetual easement. The proposed new rail tracks would encroach partially upon the athletic fields. In addition, a retaining wall would be constructed parallel to the tracks to the south and would be situated fully on the Section 4(f) property. Fencing would also be installed along the top of the retaining wall for its entire length. The retaining wall would have an average height of 17 to 18 feet and would have a maximum height of 25 feet.

The proposed rail track would impact only existing open space, but the proposed retaining wall and the associated construction/maintenance easement would result in impacts to existing amenities including the 110 meter hurdle runout area, the high jump/pole vault facility, the long jump facility, and a storage shed. In addition, the retaining wall and easement would affect the proposed design of a planned baseball diamond, which is intended to be built to the west of the track. Furthermore, the proposed retaining wall would require the relocation of an existing 20-inch water main that currently runs along the north edge of the athletic fields approximately 15 feet inside the property line. The water main belongs to Harford County's Department of Public Works (DPW), who would likely hold the construction / maintenance easement in perpetuity following the water main's relocation resulting from this project's rail alignment construction.

FRA and MDOT have worked with HCPS to develop proposed measures to minimize and mitigate these impacts. Proposed minimization and mitigation for Alternative 9A impacts to the Havre de Grace Middle/High School Athletic Fields are described below and shown on **Attachment 3**.

Existing Track and Field Facilities

The proposed retaining wall requires modification or relocation of the existing pole vault/high jump, long jump and 110 meter hurdle runout area at the existing track and field facility. A storage shed would also be impacted. Minimization and Mitigation for impacts to these facilities include:

- Amtrak would build the railroad on an elevated structure over the 110-meter hurdle runout area. During construction the runout would be reduced to 8.5 meters but after construction would be rebuilt to its current 11.5-meter length.
- Relocate pole vault, high jump, long jump and storage shed (see **Attachment 3**).
- The Project would reimburse HCPS for the agreed upon additional design cost.
- To the extent practical, construction would be scheduled to minimize disruption to these facilities.

Planned Baseball Field Construction

The project team has reviewed plans for a new baseball field as part of the proposed High School/Middle School development. Although this field has not yet been constructed, HCPS is in the process of designing the facility. As such, FRA and MDOT have taken the future baseball field into account in their assessment of the impacts to the property. It is recommended that baseball fields should be built with a 60-foot clear area behind the foul line. As currently designed, the proposed retaining wall for Alternative 9A would encroach within this clear area by up to 20 feet. To address this impact, MDOT has worked with HCPS to develop the following minimization and mitigation measures:

- The baseball field would be redesigned by shifting home plate three (3) feet away from the railroad and rotating the field 2.5 degrees counter clockwise. This would provide more than 60 feet from the foul line to the nearest obstruction. This modification would result 300 cubic yards (CY) of additional fill would be needed near the realigned ballfield. (see **Attachment 3**).
- Design consultant working on the baseball fields would redesign the field to provide adequate clear area around Amtrak's proposed retaining wall.
- The Project would reimburse HCPS for the agreed upon additional design cost.
- Amtrak would provide conduit and embedded inserts for installation of a future score board by HCPS.
- Amtrak would install a protective netting to shield the railroad from foul balls.

Existing 20-Inch Water Main

An existing 20-inch water main is located adjacent to Amtrak right of way, approximately 15 feet inside the Athletic Field property and would require relocation due to the proposed retaining wall. Minimization and mitigation for impacts to the water main include:

- The water main would be relocated in a casing, allowing future replacement to be done without affecting the athletic facilities.
- Construction would be scheduled around use of the facilities.

Based on MDOT's analysis of the proposed use to the Havre de Grace Middle/High School Athletic Fields and the proposed minimization and mitigation measures described above, MDOT's believes that the Section 4(f) use of this property would not adversely affect the activities, features, or attributes qualifying this property for protection under Section 4(f). We request your concurrence that, with the implementation of mitigation measures outlined above, the minor impacts to the Havre de Grace High School/Middle School Athletic Fields to construct Alternative 9A would not impair the activities, features, and attributes important to the facility. Upon your written agreement, MDOT intends to propose a *de minimis* impact finding to the FRA for the use of the facility. Public comment on the proposed impacts will be sought following your concurrence and prior to the request for a *de minimis* impact finding from FRA.

If you agree with the above statements, please indicate your concurrence on the signature line below and return to my attention by May 25, 2016. Should you have any questions or concerns regarding the proposed impact to the Havre de Grace High School/Middle School Athletic Fields, please contact me at please contact me at DReagle1@mta.maryland.gov or 410-767-3771.

Sincerely,

Dan Reagle

Office of Planning

Maryland Transit Administration

6 St. Paul Street, 9th Floor Baltimore, MD 21202

Enclosures

cc:

Mr. Cornell S. Brown, Jr., HCPS

Mr. Paul DelSignore, Amtrak

Ms. Michelle Fishburne, FRA

Ms. Amrita Hill, Amtrak

Mr. Joseph P. Licata, HCPS

Mr. Harry Miller, HCPS

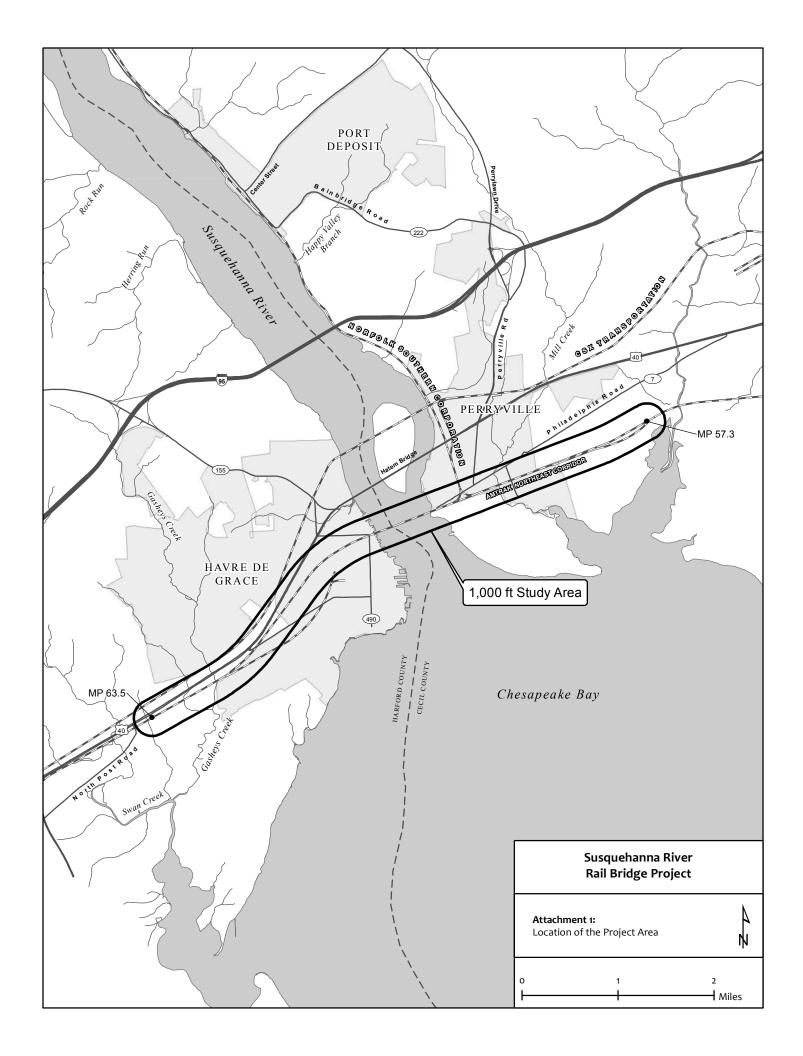
Mr. Patrick Spicer, HCPS

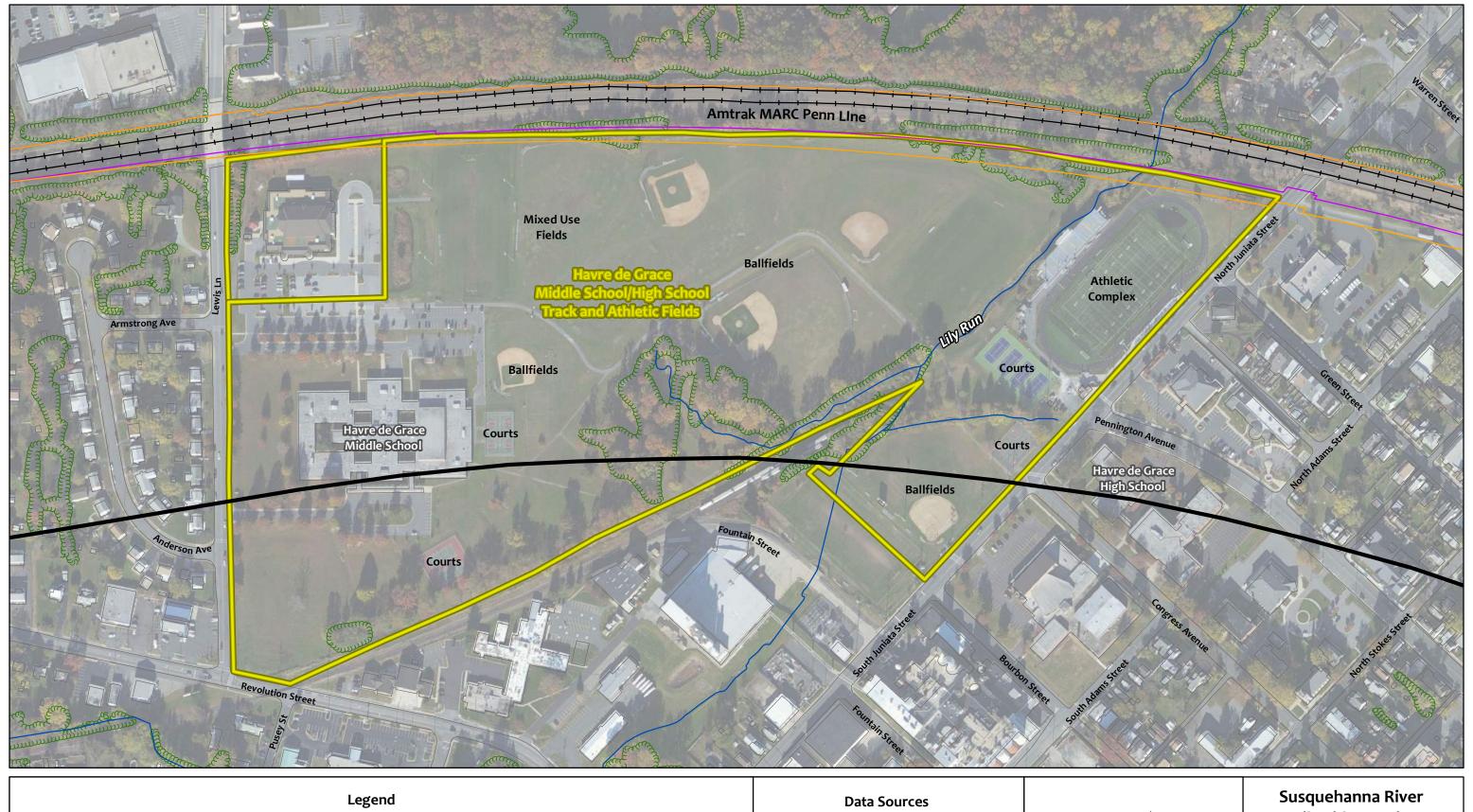
Ms. Jacqueline Thorne, MDOT

April 25, 2016	
Page 6	

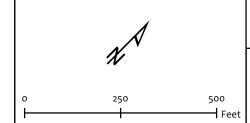
Concurrence with MDOT's determination that the Section 4(f) use of the Havre de Grace High
School/Middle School Athletic Fields for the Susquehanna River Rail Bridge Project Alternative 9A
would not adversely affect the activities, features, or attributes qualifying this property for protection
<i>under Section 4(f):</i>

Harford County Public Schools	Printed Name	Date	
Section 4(f) de minimis Finding App	roval:		
Federal Railroad Administration	Printed Name	Date	



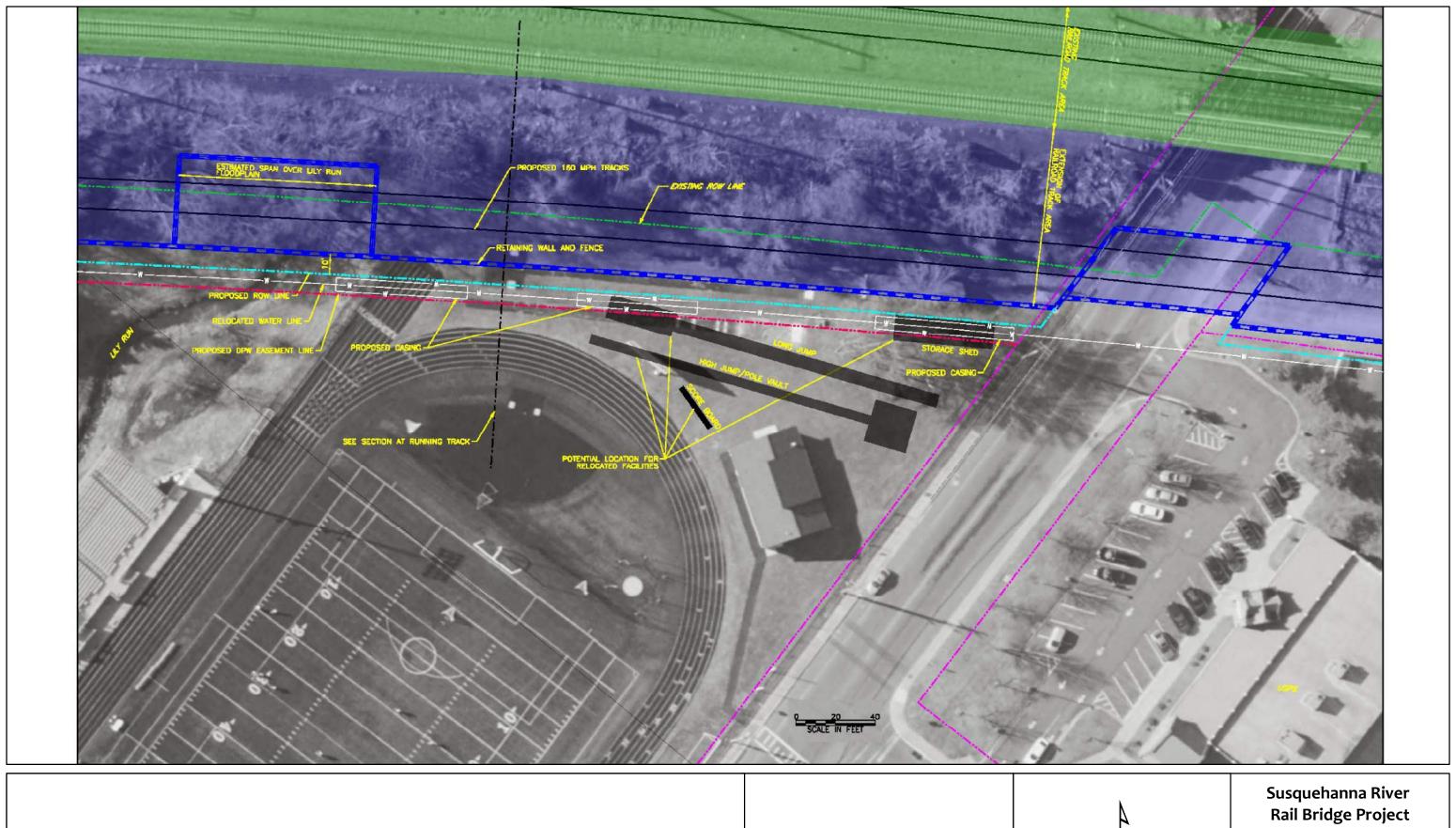






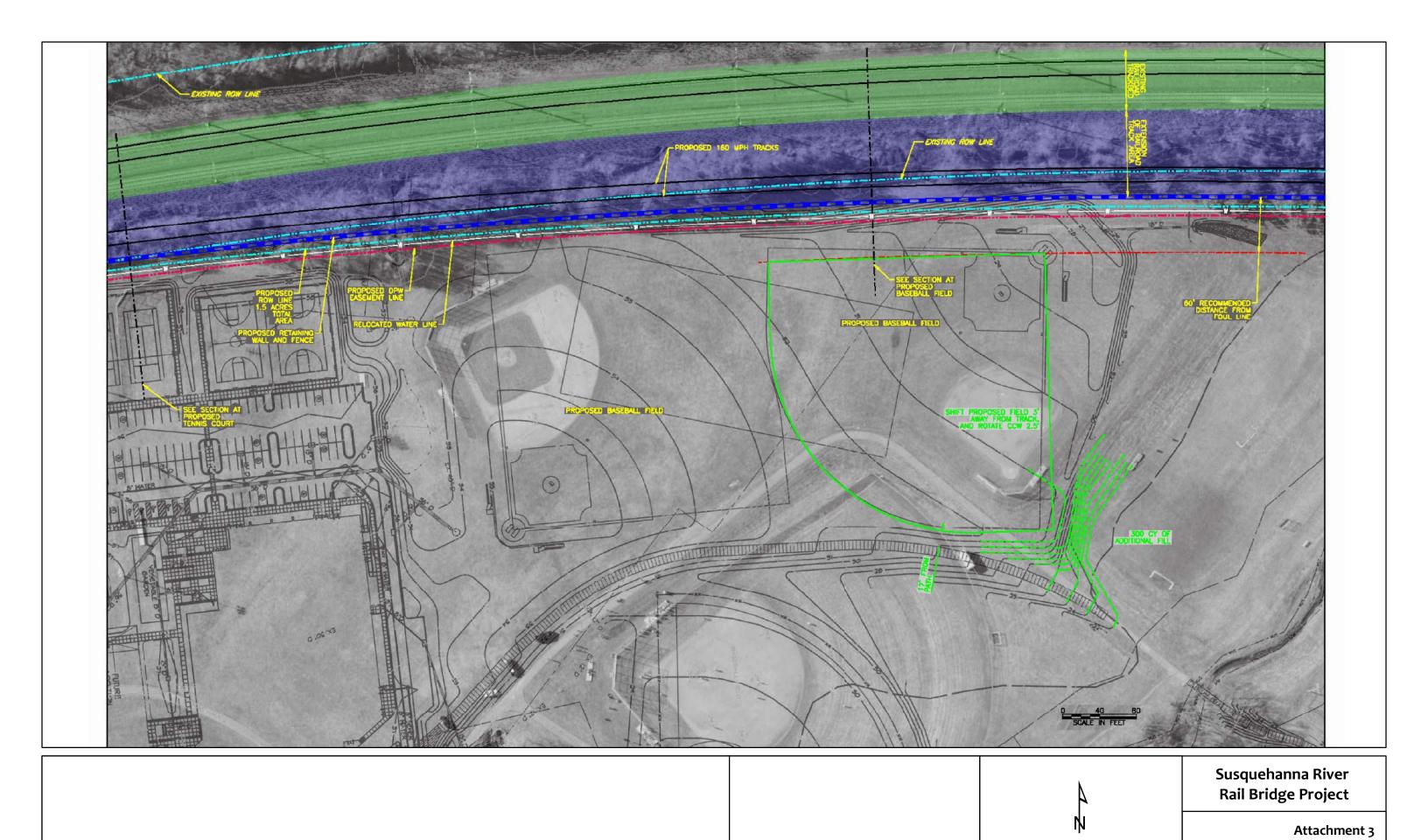
Rail Bridge Project

Attachment 2 Build Alternatives Impacts to the Havre de Grace Middle School/ High School Track and Athletic Fields

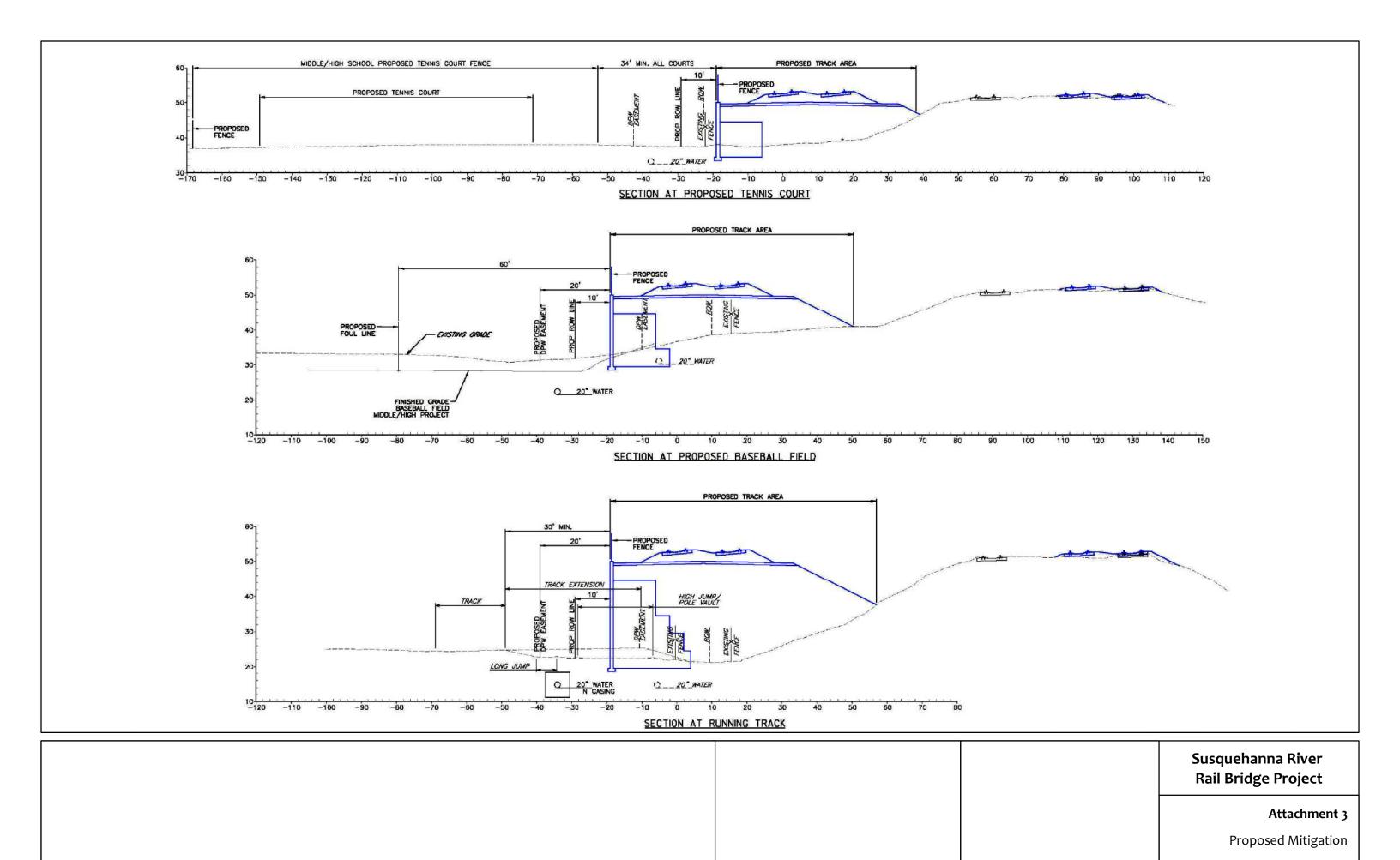


Attachment 3

Proposed Mitigation



Proposed Mitigation





Barbara P. Canavan, Superintendent of Schools 102 S. Hickory Avenue, Bel Air, Maryland 21014 Office: 410-838-7300 • www.hcps.org • fax: 410-893-2478

Cornell S. Brown, Jr., Assistant Superintendent for Operations

Office of Operations

Office: 410-588-5256 • Fax 410-588-5344

September 7, 2016

Mr. Dan Reagle Office of Planning Maryland Transit Administration 6 St. Paul Street, 9th Floor Baltimore, MD 21202

RE: Susquehanna River Rail Bridge Project Havre de Grace Middle School and Havre de Grace High School

Dear Mr. Reagle:

In response to and upon review of the Maryland Department of Transportation's (MDOT) analysis of the proposed use of the Havre de Grace Middle and High School Athletic Fields (Board Property) and the proposed minimization and mitigation measures as set forth in your correspondence, dated April 25, 2016 regarding the Susquehanna River Rail Bridge Project Alternative 9A (Bridge Project), Harford County Public Schools (HCPS) submits it concurrence with your determination that the Section 4(f), use of Board Property for the Bridge Project would not adversely affect the activities, features, or attributes qualifying this property for protection under Section 4(f), with consideration given to the following terms and conditions:

- It is our understanding that this project has only received approval for planning. Upon further
 development of the scope of work associated with Alternative 9A as proposed, any subsequent
 modification to the current proposal requires HCPS' concurrence that scope modifications are de
 minimus. Under this condition, HCPS request that updated drawing, construction documents,
 and all new relevant information be submitted for review, and comment prior to proceeding.
- 2. It is our understanding that the scope of work will exceed \$5,000, includes permanent fee-simple property acquisition, and requires a permanent easement and construction easement. Please be advised of the following:
 - Any improvement to school property in excess of \$5,000 must be formally approved by our Board.
 - b. Fee-simple property acquisition of Board real property requires that the Superintendent coordinate and obtain the approval of the Board, Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), and Harford County Government. As mandated under the Annotated Code of the State of Maryland, local school boards may dispose of real property only by conveying it to the local county government. Fee-simple property conveyance of Board real property must be formally approved by the Board, and authorized by MSDE, and requires the conveyance of such property from the Board to the Harford County Government.



- c. Easements that are granted on Board Property must be formally approved by the Board and receive the administrative approval of MSDE.
- d. For the purposes of obtaining the required approvals and for coordinating the requirements associated with the fee-simple acquisition and necessary easements, once the project scope and engineering are finalized, we request that you submit scope of work narratives, site plans, easement documents, property descriptions, and supporting documentation, to the Office of Operations for processing. The point of contact regarding this condition is as follows:
 - Cornell S. Brown, Jr., Assistant Superintendent for Operations 410.588.5256
 cornell.brown@hcps.org
 - Patrick P. Spicer, Esq., General Counsel 410.638.4005
 patrick.spicer@hcps.org
- 3. De Minimus impacts to be mitigated:
 - a. Planned HDG MS/HS baseball field

In order to accommodate the Bridge Project, the planned design of proposed baseball field will need to be shifted and the grades revised. The engineer of record will need to revise the civil drawing to revise the LEED boundary and the current layout of the field. Additional fill will be needed during construction. This accommodation will result in additional design and construction costs to HCPS, as follows:

- Additional Design Cost \$6,500
- Additional Construction Cost \$45,000
- HCPS will be reimbursed for any cost incurred as the result of these modifications.

b. Harris Field

In order to accommodate the Bridge Project, modifications would need to be made to the existing track and field facilities located at Harris Field. The following summarizes our understanding of the modifications to be made. It is understood that the cost associated with these requirements will be MDOT's responsibility.

- During construction, the 110-meter hurdle runout area will be reduced. After construction, the runout area will be restored to its current length.
- The high jump, pole vault, long jump, and storage shed will need to be relocated.
- HCPS will be reimbursed for any cost incurred as the result of these modifications.

2 / P a g e September 7, 2016



Existing 20-inch water main

In order to accommodate the Bridge Project, an existing 20-inch water main would require relocation due to the proposed retaining wall. HCPS requires that during construction, all work must be scheduled and phased so as not to interfere with the use of the stadium and fields. It should be noted that the water main is owned by Harford County Government and that coordination of your proposal must receive the approval of Harford County Government.

4. During any construction, all work must be scheduled and phased so as not to interfere with, or disrupt the operation of the schools as well as activities under the auspices of the Harford County Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR). Scheduling shall be coordinated with the specific school staff, Transportation Department, Facilities Department, and DPR. Any concerns relative to this condition should be brought to the attention of the Assistant Superintendent for Operations at 410.588.5256.

Prior to the commencement of work, your project manager shall schedule an on-site preconstruction meeting. The attendees shall be staff from the HCPS Central Office, Havre de Grace Middle School, Havre de Grace High School, DPR, and your construction management team. At least 48 hours prior to the actual start of work, the HCPS Facilities Department shall be contacted at 410.638.4084 and notified that work is scheduled to begin. The points of contact regarding this condition are as follows:

- Patti Jo Beard, Executive Director of Facilities Department 410.638.4084
 pattijo.beard@hcps.org
- Charles Taibi, Director of transportation 401.638.4092 charlie.taibi@hcps.org
- Harry Miller, Assistant Supervisor, Planning and Construction 410.809.6120
 harry.miller@hcps.org
- James L. Johnson, Principal, Havre de Grace Middle School 410.939.6608
 james.johnson@hcps.org
- James F. Reynolds, Principal, Havre de Grace High School 410.939.6600
 james.reynolds@hcps.org
- All workers associated with this project:
 - Shall carry appropriate identification when on Board Property.
 - Shall not enter school buildings.
 - c. Shall not have direct, unsupervised, and uncontrolled access to students/children.
- 6. Please contact our Facilities Department at 410.638.4084 for visual inspection prior to the start of work and upon completion of work. As-built documentation shall be forwarded to HCPS, as



required, to keep on record for all work performed. The point of contact regarding this condition is as follows:

 Patti Jo Beard, Executive Director of Facilities Department 410.638.4204
 pattijo.beard@hcps.org

7. General:

- a. All damages to the property shall be MDOT's responsibility.
- b. All ground surfaces shall be returned to original condition or better, permanently seeded, and with matching surface type.
- c. The areas of construction shall be video-taped prior to construction. Any and all damage shall be repaired. Costs associated with required repairs will be MDOT's responsibility.

Sincerely,

Barbara P. Canavan

Superintendent of Schools

Nancy Reynolds

Board of Education, President

cc: Mr. Joseph P. Licata, HCPS

Mr. Cornell S. Brown, Jr., HCPS

Patrick P. Spicer, Esq., HCPS

Mrs. Patti Jo Beard, HCPS

Mr. Christopher L. Morton, HCPS

Mr. Harry Miller, Jr., HCPS

Mr. Charles L. Taibi, HCPS

Mr. Joseph A. Schmitz, HCPS

Mr. James F. Reynolds, HCPS

Mr. James L. Johnson, HCPS

Ms. Jacqueline Thorne, MDOT

Mr. Paul DelSignore, Amtrak

Ms. Michelle Fishburne, FRA

Ms. Amrita Hill, Amtrak

April 17, 2024

Re: Harris Field Modifications/Susquehanna River Rail Bridge Project

To whom this may concern:

Havre de Grace Middle/High would like to extend our support the Susquehanna River Bridge Project that includes modifications to Harris Field. We look forward to this project moving ahead soon.

Sincerely,

Brad Spence

Principal, Havre de Grace Middle and High School



No. Revisions Date By

HNTB

HNTB Corporation 1650 Arch Street, Suite 1700 Philadelphia, PA 19103 215-568-6500 PERRYVILLE/HAVRE DE GRACE, MARYLAND SUSQUEHANNA RIVER RAIL BRIDGE PROJECT HCPS TRACK AND FIELD LAYOUT

Job No:	50625
Sheet No.	

UI SCALE: AS SHUWN /10/2024 R:35:54 AM HCPS

