

September 2004

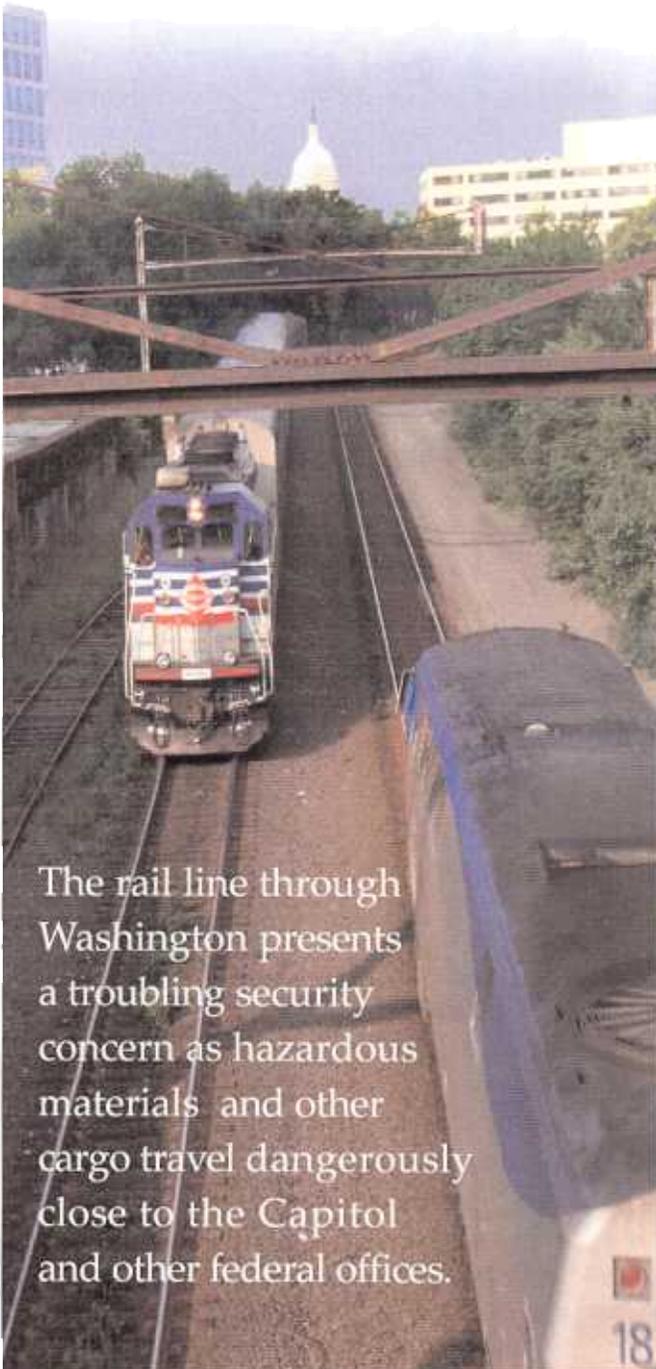
Improving and Securing Rail Service in the Nation's Capital

A Railroad Relocation Initiative

The East Coast corridor is one of the most heavily traveled rail corridors in the nation, annually moving some 250 million tons of freight and more than 100 million passengers. Seven miles of those rail lines run through Washington's monumental core, and this section of track is vital to the East Coast corridor. Unfortunately, major choke points, antiquated bridges and tunnels, and security concerns in Washington, DC present extraordinary challenges for this stretch of the rail. Furthermore, the proximity of the rail line to the heart of Washington poses security, accessibility, and development challenges for the nation's capital.

Hazardous materials and other cargo travel dangerously close to the U.S. Capitol and to an enclave of federal agencies that employ some 71,000 workers. The Long Bridge, which offers the only viable Potomac River rail crossing on the East Coast, is in need of repair. Furthermore, the rail alignment's Virginia Avenue tunnel is severely antiquated, and the line fractures Pierre L'Enfant's historic design for the federal city by disconnecting the southern portions of the city from the central business district and monumental core.

Solving these significant transportation, development, and security problems will require an in-depth study of alternative solutions. Given the regional and national impacts of this railroad line, such a study is clearly warranted. It would address not only the infrastructure and transportation limitations of the line, but it would also present a unique opportunity to reconnect the southern half of the nation's capital to the rest of the city, as proposed in Pierre L'Enfant's Plan for Washington.



The rail line through Washington presents a troubling security concern as hazardous materials and other cargo travel dangerously close to the Capitol and other federal offices.

Issues

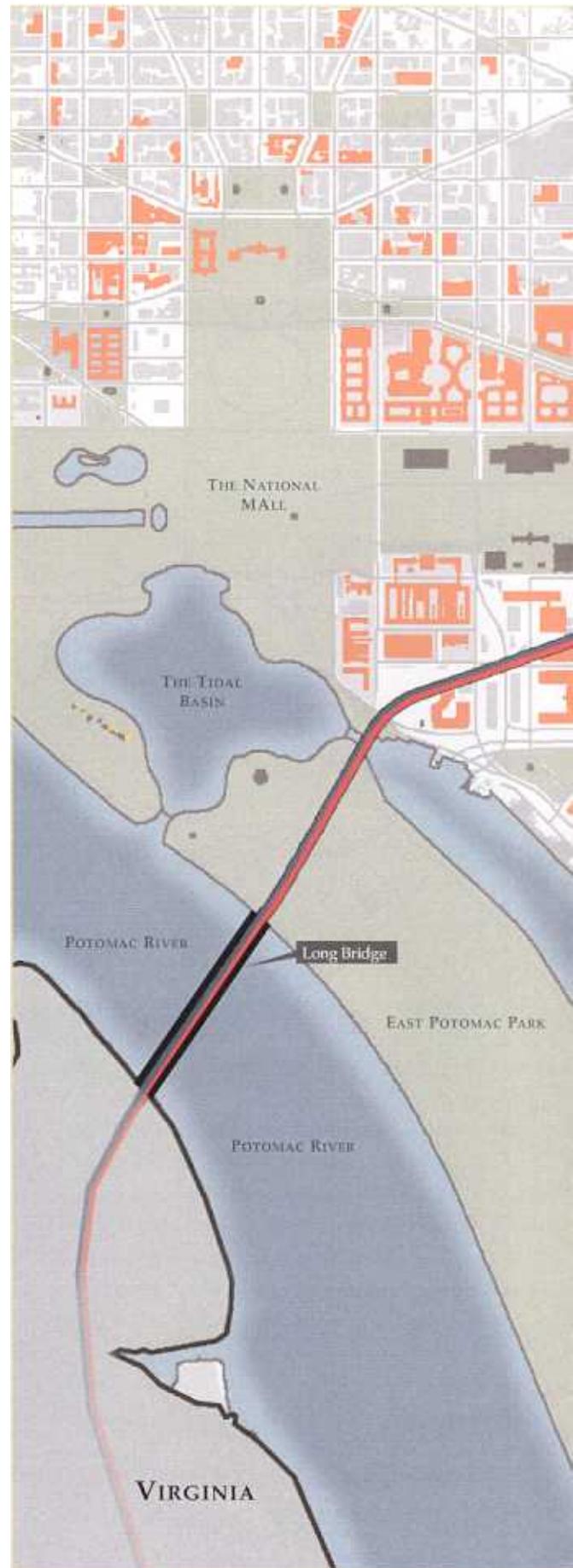
SECURITY RISKS

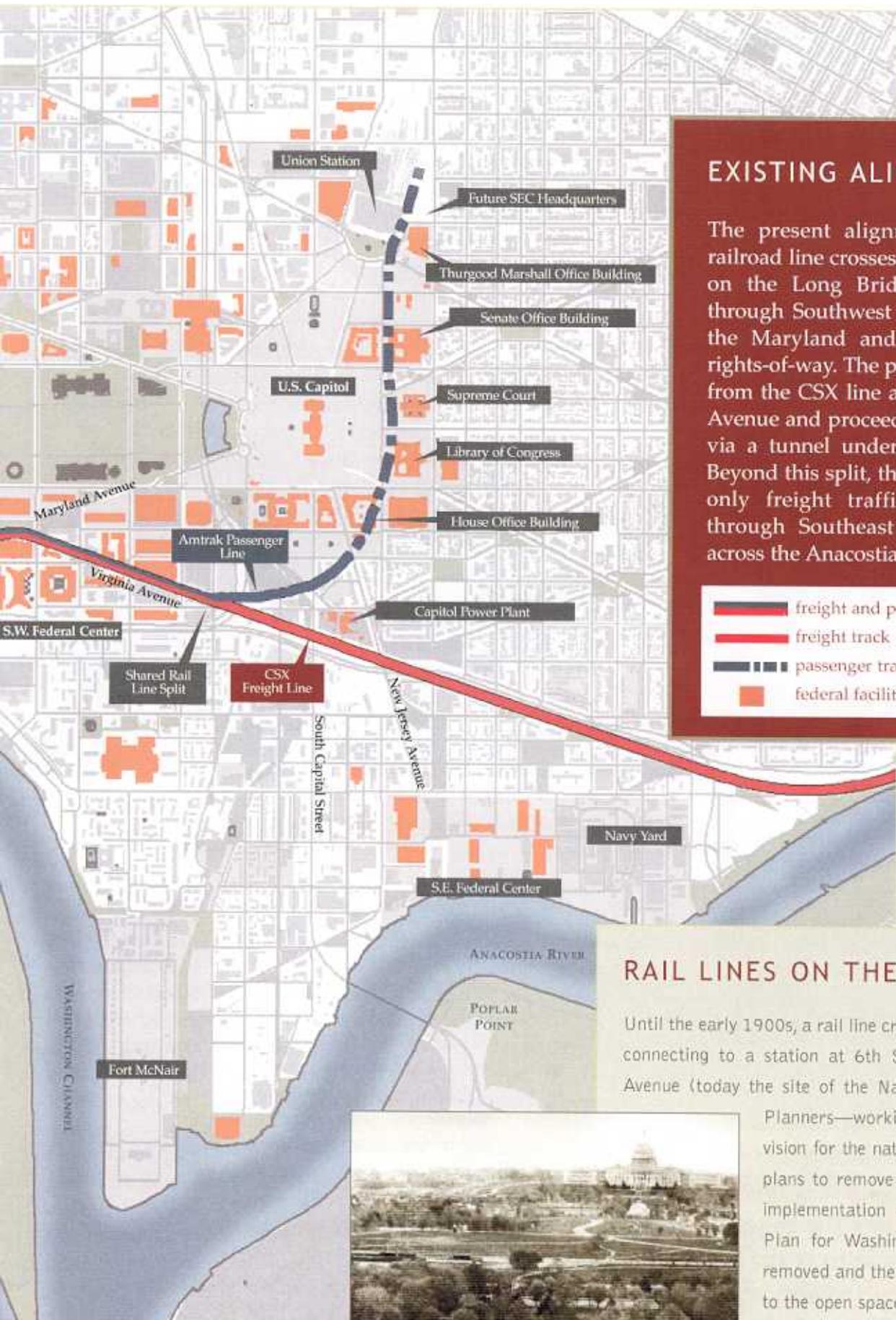
As a result of the attacks of September 11, 2001, the tragic train bombing in Madrid earlier this year, and other deadly international transit attacks, the security of the world's transportation systems has become a major concern. Railroad lines handle increasing numbers of passengers and freight, all of which travel through densely populated urban areas. The CSX Corporation railroad line in Washington, D.C. comes within four city blocks of the United States Capitol and it passes through the Southwest Federal Center, an enclave of numerous federal agencies including the Department of Energy, the General Services Administration, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Approximately 71,000 federal workers are employed in this area. The security threat is even more significant because these freight cars often carry hazardous materials through the Southwest Federal Center. For example, in 2002, an

Any attack would not only put critical federal buildings and citizens at risk, it would severely disrupt rail traffic up and down the East Coast.

estimated 6 million tons of chemical freight traveled through the District of Columbia on this route. Any attack on the CSX line would not only put critical federal buildings and citizens at risk, it would severely disrupt rail traffic up and down the East Coast and cripple freight and passenger traffic from Richmond to Boston.

In recognition of the security threat, the Senate proposed the Rail Security Act of 2004 and the House of Representatives initiated the Safe Transit and Rail Awareness and Investments for National Security Act of 2004 (Safe Trains Act). While both pieces of legislation require a study of operational security on the existing tracks, they will only address short-term security issues and not long-term solutions such as a study of alternative alignments and the separation of freight and passenger traffic. Because of its location within the national capital, the CSX rail alignment clearly presents a security concern that warrants a study aimed at long-term solutions.





EXISTING ALIGNMENT

The present alignment of the CSX railroad line crosses the Potomac River on the Long Bridge and proceeds through Southwest Washington along the Maryland and Virginia Avenue rights-of-way. The passenger line splits from the CSX line around New Jersey Avenue and proceeds to Union Station via a tunnel underneath First Street. Beyond this split, the CSX line handles only freight traffic as it proceeds through Southeast Washington and across the Anacostia River.

-  freight and passenger shared track
-  freight track
-  passenger track/tunnel
-  federal facilities

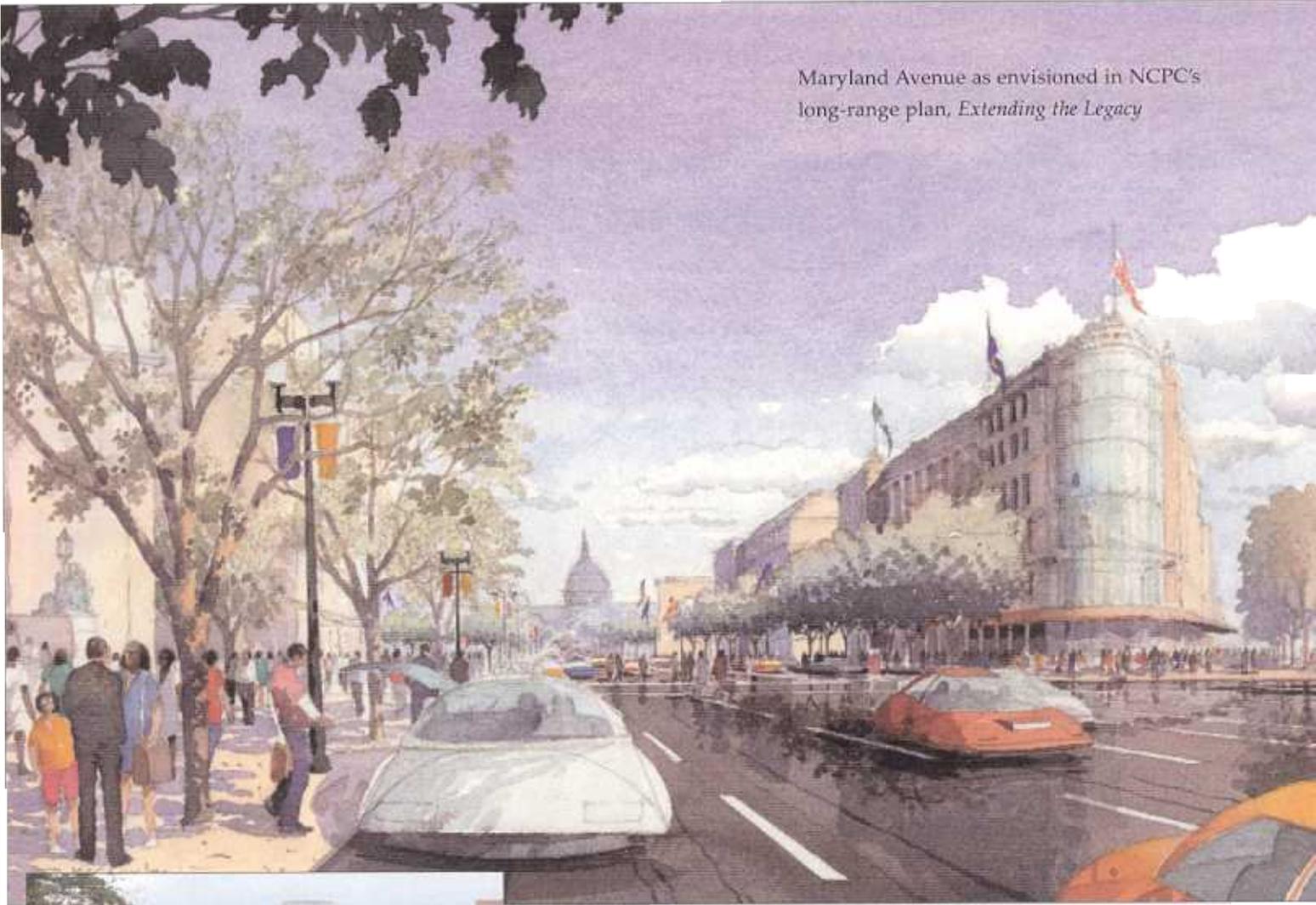
RAIL LINES ON THE MALL

Until the early 1900s, a rail line crossed the National Mall connecting to a station at 6th Street and Constitution Avenue (today the site of the National Gallery of Art).

Planners—working to restore L’Enfant’s vision for the nation’s capital—developed plans to remove the rail lines. With the implementation of the 1901 McMillan Plan for Washington, these lines were removed and the National Mall restored to the open space we treasure today.



Maryland Avenue as envisioned in NCPC's long-range plan, *Extending the Legacy*



The same stretch of Maryland Avenue as it appears today with rail lines interrupting the street

PLANNING/URBAN DESIGN

The current CSX alignment fractures the original L'Enfant Plan of the city and creates a barrier to development in Southwest and Southeast Washington. The rail line parallels the Virginia Avenue right-of-way, interrupting the street grid and urban fabric of the city. Along with the Southeast/Southwest Freeway, the railroad separates the Capitol Hill neighborhood from the Anacostia River. Further, the railroad line's crossing of the Anacostia River presents an unsightly intrusion into the waterfront's parkland environment, limiting its public access.

The existing CSX railroad line presents the biggest obstacle to realizing *Legacy's* vision of a grand boulevard.

In NCPC's long-range plan, *Extending the Legacy*, Maryland Avenue is envisioned as a grand ceremonial boulevard, restoring the visual connection between the U.S. Capitol and the Jefferson Memorial. The avenue is reclaimed for pedestrians and motorists and is landscaped in a manner worthy of its prominent location. The existing CSX railroad line presents the biggest challenge in making this vision a reality, and a detailed study of alternative alignments would advance the *Legacy Plan's* objectives.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Over the years, the railroad's tunnels and bridges have become antiquated. Many tunnels are unable to accommodate today's larger freight and passenger cars and need costly repairs. For example, the Virginia Avenue tunnel currently needs repairs estimated at \$50 million.



Many of the railroad's tunnels are antiquated.

The Long Bridge over the Potomac River is the only river crossing leading directly into the District. This structure continues to age and is costly to maintain. Further, the Long Bridge's unsightly appearance presents a visual intrusion into the beautiful Potomac River viewshed, which is a significant gateway to the nation's capital.

TRANSPORTATION LIMITATIONS

The existing CSX railroad alignment and infrastructure limit the capacity for future growth in East Coast freight and passenger services. Because freight and passenger services share a single track throughout much of the District of Columbia, these services often experience delays, and commuter services are limited. For example, the Virginia Railway Express (VRE) purchases time slots on the CSX line to provide its commuter service from northern Virginia to downtown Washington. Because of VRE's increasing ridership, it is likely that the CSX line will be unable to support the anticipated growth of the service.

Freight and passenger services have to share a track and bridge to cross the Potomac River to move through the nation's capital.

The only alternate to the Long Bridge rail crossing of the Potomac River is 70 miles northwest of Washington, D.C. at Harper's Ferry, West Virginia. This route is significantly less efficient for most customers. Consequently, most freight and passenger services must share one track and bridge to cross the Potomac River. The Mid-



The Potomac River "Long Bridge" is the only crossing for freight and passenger service within 70 miles of the Washington D.C. area.

Atlantic Rail Operations Study, a study of transportation on the eastern seaboard conducted by the Interstate 95 Coalition, concluded that the East Coast rail system is constrained by choke points such as this and that their repair would improve rail efficiency and produce significant benefits at the regional and national levels.

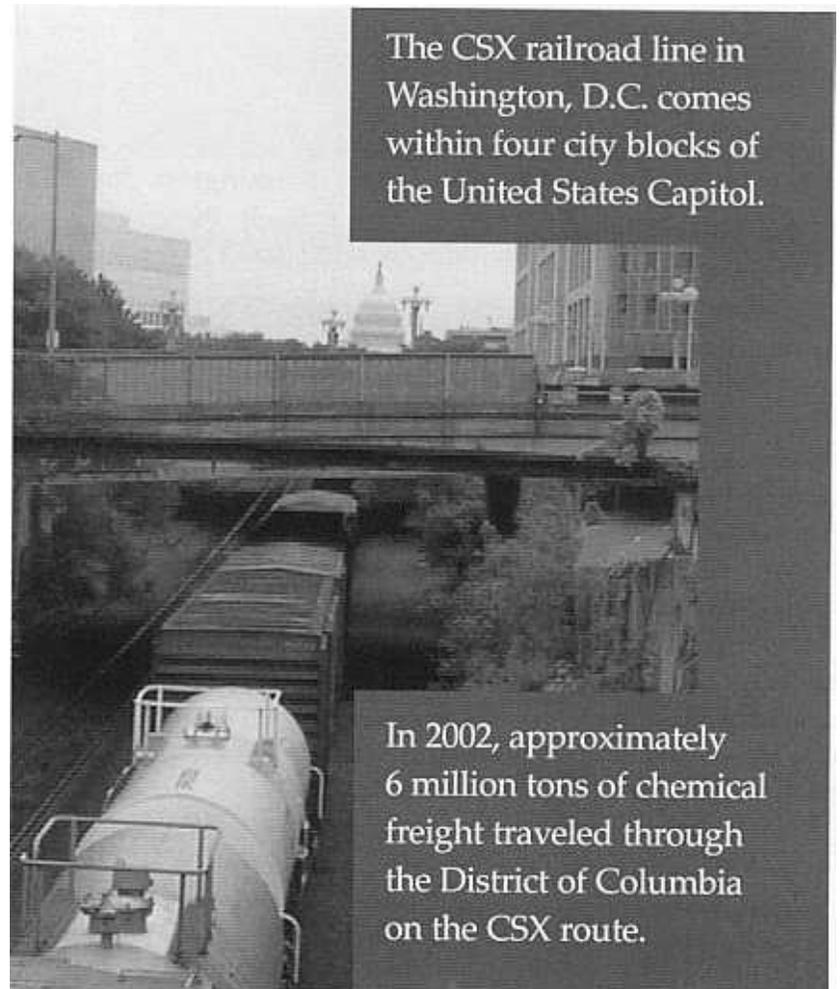
URBAN RAIL IMPROVEMENTS AROUND THE COUNTRY

Chicago, Illinois

The City of Chicago has created a unique initiative to address its railroad issues. Chicago's rail system has many of the same infrastructure problems and development constraints as the Washington rail network. To address these challenges, the city government has created a plan in partnership with state, federal, and railroad officials called the Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency project (CREATE). This plan calls for \$1.5 billion in various infrastructure improvements for Chicago's rail network. The State of Illinois, the City of Chicago, and participating railroad companies have committed funding for CREATE. Further, it is anticipated that the federal government will allocate \$900 million for the projects recommended in this effort. A critical project in CREATE is the removal of the half-mile Illinois-Central St. Charles Air Line. After much study, it was determined that the removal of this half-mile, shared line will spur neighborhood revitalization on Chicago's Near South Side and improve passenger and freight traffic flow. The freight and passenger services will be relocated to more efficient, alternative routes and development is already taking shape in anticipation of the removal of the St. Charles line.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

NCPC is conducting a study of Washington, D.C.'s rail network to assess and document issues associated with the existing CSX alignment. The study will determine how the existing alignment's capacity restraint affects traffic volume. In addition, the study will examine how the rail line impacts passenger and freight flows throughout the East Coast corridor. Once these issues have been analyzed, NCPC and its planning partners can develop solutions that would explore alternative alignments to the existing railroad network, improve its impact on rail traffic, and minimize any potential security risks to the nation's capital.

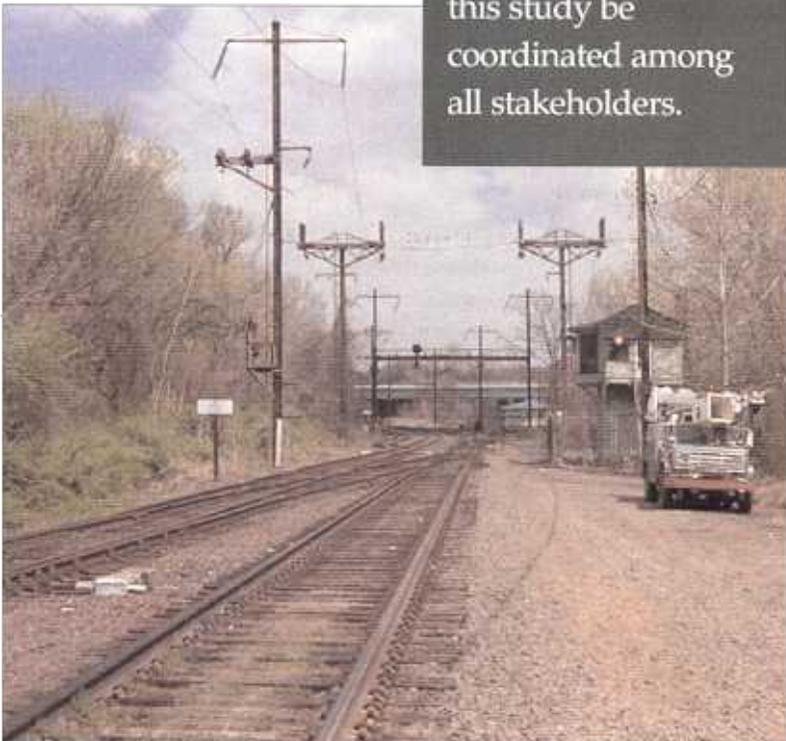


ALTERNATIVE ALIGNMENT FEASIBILITY STUDY

To solve the problems of security, capacity, and urban design, a thorough study of alternatives and impacts must be conducted. Given the regional and national significance of this railroad line, it is critical that this study be coordinated among all stakeholders. The National Capital Planning Commission continues to work with regional partnership agencies and rail services including the Virginia Department of Transportation, the Maryland Department of Transportation, the District of Columbia Department of Transportation, Virginia Railway Express, CSX Corporation, and Amtrak on this issue. Other key federal agencies including the Federal Railroad Administration and the Department of Homeland Security have also been a part of this effort.

The study will expand upon the initial assessment of the alignment's existing conditions and identify and evaluate potential short-term and long-term solutions, including alternative alignments. The study will include estimated costs and implementation strategies.

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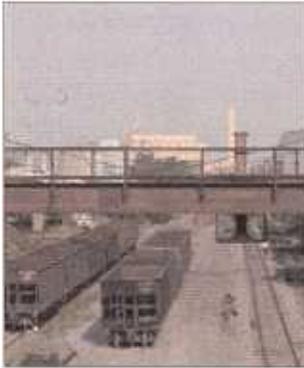


Firemen at the scene of Baltimore's Howard Tunnel fire

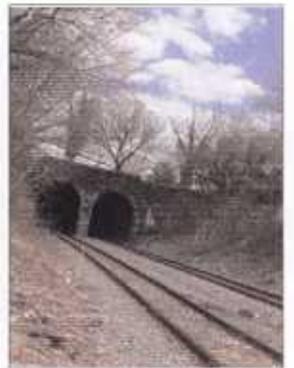
URBAN RAIL IMPROVEMENTS AROUND THE COUNTRY

Baltimore, Maryland

The rail network in Baltimore, Maryland is under study to address problems with its infrastructure. Unlike Chicago, this effort was initiated as a result of an unfortunate event. In mid 2001, a train derailed and caught fire in the Howard Street Tunnel, suspending business in downtown Baltimore for almost a week and detouring freight traffic as far west as Cleveland, Ohio. This incident revealed that, like Washington, Baltimore's rail network has significant infrastructure problems and is antiquated. The network has steep grades and sharp corners, which limit train speed, and none of Baltimore's three major rail tunnels can handle most modern freight cars. To address these issues, Congress appropriated \$750,000 for the Federal Railroad Administration to conduct a comprehensive study of the freight and passenger rail infrastructure in the Baltimore area. This study is being carried out in cooperation with the State of Maryland, Amtrak, CSX, and the Norfolk Southern Corporation and is scheduled to be completed in late 2004.



Solving the significant transportation and security problems in the nation's capital will require an in-depth study of alternative solutions.



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NATIONAL CAPITAL PLANNING COMMISSION
401 9th Street, NW, North Lobby, Suite 500 Washington, DC 20576
Telephone: 202 482-7200 | Fax: 202 482-7272 | Web Site: www.ncpc.gov