



City of Havre de Grace

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Susquehanna River Rail Bridge Project
Advisory Board
Of the Mayor and City Council

Advisory Bulletin #12
Rail Commuter Station – First Update
January 26, 2015

Background

The Advisory Board met on October 28, 2014, to examine the feasibility and best location of a new rail commuter station to serve Havre de Grace, and issued Advisory Bulletin #6 on November 6, 2014, based on all the information it had at that time. This advisory was based on an assumption that the southeasterly pair of new high-speed tracks would be aligned more in that direction, leaving enough space between that track pair and a northwesterly pair of lower-speed commuter/freight tracks to make room for a northbound station platform.

As feasibility studies and preliminary design with regard to track alignment have been developed further by the SRRBP study team since last October, it appears that the most favorable high-speed track curvature and alignment with the new bridges will not leave sufficient room for a northbound station platform unless the lower-speed pair of freight/commuter tracks are aligned significantly northwestward.

The most recent track alignment information was obtained by the Board at its special meeting with the Project Team in November, and at the public outreach session in December. The recommendations provided herein pertain only to the latest development of track and bridge alignments by the Project Team. The Advisory Board continues to vigorously support all other rail commuter station recommendations provided in Advisory Bulletin #3.

Track Alignment

The most current plan resulting from the Project Team feasibility study favors positioning the new two-track north bridge for freight and commuter operations along the north side of the existing bridge, and the new two-track south bridge for high-speed operations in about the same location as the existing bridge. This alignment will require a northwesterly shift of the present elevated embankment to align with the new north bridge, and will likewise shift the proposed commuter platforms and their emergency/maintenance access ramp more northwesterly.

In order to gain enough separation from the southeasterly pair of high-speed tracks to install a safe northbound boarding platform, the freight/commuter track pair should remain on tangent (straight ahead) from the bridge track alignment for some distance before curving gradually. The high-speed track pair would begin curving southwesterly immediately after landing at the new south bridge. This alignment would require a significant widening of the existing embankment toward the northwest until track curvature can return to the existing roadbed some distance southwest of the station.

Number of Boarding Platforms

The Advisory Board has considered the idea of providing only a single boarding platform at the most northwesterly track, normally used by a southbound commuter train, to eliminate the problem of separating a northbound boarding platform from adjacent high-speed traffic. It would appear feasible to have northbound commuter trains cross over onto the southbound track just before the Havre de Grace station, and remain on that track until entering the Perryville station siding. Northbound commuter trains currently execute a crossing of the same southbound track before they enter the Perryville station siding.

The disadvantage of this scheme is that other southbound traffic would be delayed for a much longer period of time waiting for the northbound commuter train to cross over, enter the Havre de Grace station, board riders, clear the station, and cross the river at a lower speed. It could also prevent freight traffic departing the Susquehanna River line from heading southbound until the commuter train arrives in the Perryville station, assuming additional crossovers are installed in Perryville to facilitate such movements.

The Board has also considered the idea of installing only one southbound boarding platform, bypassing Havre de Grace altogether northbound, and boarding/deboarding riders on the return run from the Perryville terminus of the MARC line. This would be very inconvenient to northbound Havre de Grace riders, and would become unworkable if MARC moves its overnight train parking to a new Perryville facility, or extends commuter service to Elkton and beyond.

The Board has concluded that the installation of standard northbound and southbound boarding platforms in Havre de Grace offers the greatest advantages in rider convenience, destination ridership numbers, movement of other trains, and avoidance of crossover delays.

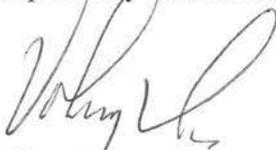
Safe Separation

Safe separation distance between the high-speed track pair and the proposed northbound commuter boarding platform could be reduced by installation of a very strong concrete barrier, similar to a highway Jersey barrier in the platform area. This would also eliminate the effects of high-speed wind blast. Such a barrier could also be incorporated into the design of the northbound boarding platform shelter and means of access from the station below.

Recommended Action

The Advisory Board requests that the Mayor and City Council take necessary steps to consolidate these recommendations into a formal communication to the SRRBP Project Team as soon as possible, and to emphasize the need to adequately align the lower-speed tracks for a commuter station sometime in the future, if not in conjunction with bridge replacement. Failure to do so can permanently put a future station out of consideration, due to the added cost of elevated roadbed and rail realignment beyond that incurred during the bridge construction and its rail realignment process.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Volney H. Ford', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Volney H. Ford
Chairman