

McLean Citizens Association Resolution
West Falls Church Metro Service and Inspection Yard
Special Exception Amendment 85-D-033-02
7305 M Idylwood Road
Tax Maps 40-3 ((1)) 85, 86, 91A, 93B and 40-1 ((1)) 25B
October 7, 2009

Whereas, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) currently operates a Metro service and inspection yard in West Falls Church under special exception (SE) permit SE 85-D-033-01 in support of the Orange Line operations; and,

Whereas, Washington Metropolitan Airports Authority (MWAA) seeks a Special Exception Amendment (SEA) to expand the facilities of the yard to provide operational support of the Silver Line Metrorail extension to Dulles Airport and Loudoun County; and,

Whereas, the subject properties comprise 39 acres in the R-1 and R-2 zoning districts; and,

Whereas, the SEA proposes a new 23,000 square foot shop annex building; and,

Whereas, five (5) track segments would be added to store up to 40 additional Metro cars, specifically the rolling stock inventory of the Silver Line; and,

Whereas, the yard would connect to the Silver Line tracks via a tunnel running under the eastbound lanes of the Dulles Access Road Extension to a surface portal in the median; and,

Whereas, this yard expansion would require a new traction power substation, proposed to be housed in a 2,800 square foot building, 20 feet in height; and,

Whereas, the number of employees on-site will increase by 40 from approximately 80 to 120; and,

Whereas, the northeastern portion of the special exception amendment (SEA) properties lies within a Pimmit Run Resource Protection Area (RPA) and a stormwater management facility would be constructed within the RPA to buffer the runoff from this new construction; and,

Whereas, the yard currently employs a short-radius loop track that is a well-known high noise generator; and,

Whereas, this Metro facility has been the subject of noise complaints from the community for many years, particularly, in regards to the high pitched noise of the loop track known as 'wheel squeal'; and,

Whereas, the applicant proposes to cover a 1,038-foot portion of the loop track with a sound cover box to reduce this wheel squeal noise as recommended by the 2004 Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and required by the Federal Transportation Administration's Record of Decision; and,

Whereas, in July 2009, MWAA conducted a noise study that measured both ambient noise and the noise generated from yard operations, and the study further assessed the effectiveness of preliminary acoustical design of the sound cover box to reduce noise levels in the community; and,

Whereas, the existing loop track noise was measured at a maximum of 94 dBA, approximately 17 dB lower than the measurements recorded in the FEIS, and this reduction in noise level was attributed to recent maintenance actions on the track and ballast; and,

Whereas, the fact this corrective action produced such a very large reduction in noise level indicates the proper maintenance of this loop track will be essential in keeping the noise at a level at which the sound cover box will remain effective; and,

Whereas, an existing SE development condition states, “*Noise measurements shall be taken during hours of peak activity on the site. The maximum noise level generated by this facility shall not exceed 55 dBA Ldn off-site.*”; and,

Whereas, Ldn, the standard measure of day and night time average noise, does not adequately measure or characterize the annoyance of wheel squeal because of its unique pitch, duration and intermittence; and,

Whereas, although the acoustical design of the sound cover box is not yet complete, the noise study projects that the preliminary design will meet the noise limit of 55 dBA maximum set by the Fairfax County Noise Ordinance in almost all cases;

Now, therefore, be it resolved that the McLean Citizens Association opposes the SEA 85-D-033-02 unless the applicant agrees to the following development conditions:

1. The noise generated by the operations and activities of the site shall be subject to the following maximum noise limits, as measured at the boundary lines of the Yard: such noise shall not exceed 55 dBA Lmax and the octave band maximum limits for residential zoning districts, that are specified in Section 108-4-4 of the Fairfax County Code,
2. Upon completion of the construction of the sound box facility at the Yard, the applicant shall cause an independent certified noise-engineer expert to conduct a noise test to measure the levels of such noises, which are attenuated by this sound box facility. The measurements shall be taken at a time when ambient noise is suitably low to permit such measurement and the Yard shall simulate normal Yard operations for the duration of the test which shall be conducted for a minimum of three consecutive hours. It shall be demonstrated that such noises are reduced to such levels that comply with the maximum noise limits set forth in the above paragraph. The applicant shall submit a report of such test, including also a description of the method of testing and measurement, to the Director of the Zoning Evaluation Division, Department of Planning and Zoning, Fairfax County, for review and approval. Further, the applicant shall implement such additional mitigation measures, to the extent that they are necessary in order to further reduce such noises to such levels that comply with the maximum noise limits set forth in the above paragraph.

cc: John Foust, Dranesville Supervisor
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