

Chapter I



Introduction

I. INTRODUCTION

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) has prepared this Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Section 4(f) Evaluation in coordination with the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) and in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) (42 United States Code [USC] §§ 4321 et seq.), the Council of Environmental Quality (CEQ) NEPA Regulations (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Parts 1500-1508), the FRA Procedures for Considering Environmental Impacts (64 Federal Register [FR] 28545 [May 26, 1999]), and FRA's Update to NEPA Implementing Procedures (78 FR 2713 [January 14, 2013]). The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) is involved with the development of the Baltimore and Potomac (B&P) Tunnel Project ("Project") through the NEPA process as a cooperating agency in accordance CEQ regulation 40 CFR § 1508.5.

The Project considers the rehabilitation or replacement of a 1.4-mile long rail tunnel located along the Northeast Corridor (NEC) in Baltimore, Maryland. The B&P Tunnel is owned by the National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak) and is used for Regional and Acela intercity passenger trains, Maryland Area Rail Commuter (MARC) passenger trains, and Norfolk Southern Railway (NS) freight trains. Built in 1873, the B&P Tunnel is one of the oldest structures on the NEC. The existing double-track tunnel was constructed out of brick and stone masonry; additional materials were added over time.

The Study Area surrounds the existing 1.4-mile B&P Tunnel in west-central Baltimore City, as shown in **Figure II-1**. The extent of the Study Area is intended to maximize capture of potential resources that could directly or indirectly be impacted by the Project.

NEPA requires the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for all major federal projects or actions that are likely to have a significant impact on the environment. This FEIS is a tool for FRA and MDOT to describe the environmental impacts of the Project in accordance with NEPA. The FEIS summarizes the alternatives evaluation from the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), including review of the alternatives, their ability to address the Purpose and Need of the study, and their likely impacts to the social, cultural, and natural environment. This FEIS identifies a Preferred Alternative, provides a rationale for identification of the Preferred Alternative, and describes potential mitigation measures to address the documented environmental impacts of the Preferred Alternative. The DEIS and all technical reports and memoranda referenced in the FEIS are available for review on the Project website at www.bptunnel.com.

Alternative 3B is identified as the Preferred Alternative for the Project. Of the alternatives considered, Alternative 3B best meets the Project's Purpose and Need while minimizing environmental impacts to the maximum extent possible. Specifically, Alternative 3B replaces the aging infrastructure of the existing B&P Tunnel, which is nearing the end of its useful life; improves travel time and reliability in the portion of the NEC between Penn Station, Baltimore, and the Gwynns Falls Bridge; and provides for an improved West Baltimore MARC Station that will be in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). A description of the Preferred Alternative is included in **Chapter IV** of the FEIS.