

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority  
**Board Action/Information Summary**

☒ Action ☐ Information

MEAD Number:  
202233

Resolution:  
☒ Yes ☐ No

**TITLE:**

Metrorail Station Name Changes Proposal

**PRESENTATION SUMMARY:**

Briefing on jurisdiction requests for rail station name changes.

**PURPOSE:**

Board consideration of station name proposals submitted for West Falls Church Metrorail Station and the new Metrorail station currently under construction between the Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport and Braddock Road Metrorail stations.

**DESCRIPTION:**

*There are no interested parties in this matter.*

**Key Highlights:**

- As was the case with the first phase of the Silver Line, station signage and map updates for phase two of Silver Line service present an opportunity to review current station names.
- One proposal was received from Fairfax County to change the name of a current Metrorail Station under current policy. The jurisdiction has committed to fund the incremental \$332K needed to make the signage changes.
- Fairfax County proposes removing 'UVA' as a secondary name for the West Falls Church Metrorail Station since the University of Virginia (UVA) no longer has a presence near that station.
- Letters of support were not submitted by Fairfax County since this change is administrative.
- One proposal was received from City of Alexandria to name the new Metrorail Station under construction between Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport and Braddock Road Metrorail Stations. This

station is expected to open in 2022.

- City of Alexandria proposed formalizing Potomac Yard Metrorail Station as the name of the new station, which corresponds with the name of the neighborhood surrounding the station. The City also passed a resolution recommending the addition of 'VT' to the proposed station name since the station will be located less than a quarter mile from Virginia Tech's (VT) new Innovation Campus.
- In compliance with the Board's Metro System Station Names Policy, the City of Alexandria's proposal includes letters of support from community groups.
- WMATA conducted a regional survey of riders and the public to collect feedback about the proposed station names. The survey had 2,955 responses and found support for removing UVA, support for naming Potomac Yard, and mixed reviews of the addition of VT.

### **Background and History:**

Station names are guided by Board policy (P/I 4.1/4). Station name changes (or new names) are to be submitted by jurisdictions to the Metro Board for approval. The submissions must include community support and a funding commitment for any signage and map changes.

Major tenets of the Metro System Station Names Policy include the following:

- Jurisdictions are to complete outreach in their communities to determine potential station names. Names are then formally submitted to the WMATA staff to conduct required regional research of the potential names;
- Names should identify the station locations by geographical features or centers of activity, provided that landmarks are within one half mile of the station (walking distance);
- Names should be distinctive and evoke imagery in the mind of the patron; and
- Each station name should be no longer than 19 characters (including spaces and punctuation), except for transfer station names, which should be no longer than 13 characters.

In May 2011, the Board reviewed and updated the Metro System Station Names Policy to:

### **Higher Education/Universities:**

- Grandfather all existing higher education/universities
- Limit future names to main campuses within ½ mile

#### Institutions/Landmarks:

- Retain current policy
- Grandfather all existing institutions/landmarks
- Encourage landmarks on neighborhood and interactive maps

#### Hospitals:

- Retain current practices

#### Commercial Naming Rights:

- Continue current practice of not selling commercial naming rights
- Promote station domination and other opportunities to grow revenue outside of changing station names

#### **Discussion:**

In advance of the next phase of Silver Line service, Metro is preparing for systemwide signage and rail map changes. Notices went to the Board and jurisdictions that station name changes could be considered as part of the signage change-outs. The signage changes need to be finalized by December 31, 2020, in order to meet all deadlines and avoid delay penalties.

Two proposals were submitted under current policy to change the names of Metrorail Stations from Fairfax County and City of Alexandria.

Fairfax County proposes changing the secondary name of West Falls Church Metrorail Station from 'VT/UVA' to 'VT.' As of April 2020, UVA no longer has a presence near West Falls Church Metrorail Station so it should no longer be referenced as part of the station name. The jurisdiction has committed to fund the incremental \$332K needed to make the signage changes throughout the system.

Community outreach was not conducted for this proposal because the change is administrative in nature and seeks to update the station name, so it is factually correct.

City of Alexandria proposes formalizing Potomac Yard Metrorail Station as the name of the station currently under construction between the Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport and Braddock Road Metrorail Stations. A resolution was also passed proposing adding 'VT' to the station name. In accordance with WMATA policy, VT would be the secondary name.

The new station is located in the Potomac Yard neighborhood of Northern Virginia that includes southeastern Arlington County and northeastern

Alexandria, located principally in the area between U.S. Route 1 and the Metrorail Blue/Yellow Line tracks. The “Potomac Yard” name is also used to refer to several developments in the area, including the Potomac Yard Retail Center.

The station will also be located less than a quarter of a mile from VT's new Innovation Campus, which is expected to eventually enroll between 2,000 and 3,000 students. The campus is expected to open in 2024, two years after the new Metrorail Station opens.

Fairfax County completed the required community outreach and received letters of support for the proposed station name from Alexandria Chamber of Commerce, Alexandria Economic Development Partnership, Alexandria Small Business Development Center, JBG Smith, National Industries for the Blind, Potomac Yard Design Advisory Committee and Stonebridge Carras. These efforts fulfilled the community outreach requirement of the policy.

Fairfax County and City of Alexandria submitted the following name changes to WMATA for customer testing:

- West Falls Church  
VT
- Potomac Yard  
VT

Consistent with the policy, WMATA conducted an online survey that was completed by 3,693 respondents, including SmarTrip customers, Metro’s Amplify customer panel and the general public. The survey was actively promoted via local TV news, print media and social media.

Respondents were asked to rate the potential station names in meeting each of the following Metro System Station Names Policy criteria:

- Relevance: Describes the location well
- Brevity: Easy to remember
- Uniqueness: Not easily confused with other station names
- Evocation: Appealing; Clearly conveys where you are when you reach the station
- And, to determine if customers like the name

The results of the survey found that 86% of respondents agree that UVA should be removed from West Falls Church station.

An overwhelming number of respondents support the name Potomac Yard for the new station. Of the survey respondents, 90% found the name easy to remember, 79% said it describes the location well, and 83% agreed that they like the name.

However, the addition of Virginia Tech to the name Potomac Yard got mixed results in the regional survey. Only 37% support the name with Virginia Tech added, and 42% prefer Potomac Yard as a stand-alone name. Notably, 11% had no preference. If Virginia Tech is not added to Potomac Yard, 62% are in favor of also removing the name from West Falls Church.

#### **FUNDING IMPACT:**

|                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| No impact, as the jurisdictions will cover the incremental cost of \$332,000 related to the requested name changes that are beyond the Silver Line signage requirement. |                                                |
| Project Manager:                                                                                                                                                        | Lynn Bowersox                                  |
| Project Department/Office:                                                                                                                                              | Customer Service, Communications and Marketing |

#### **TIMELINE:**

|                                               |                                                                                                   |
|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Anticipated actions after presentation</b> | Anticipated action in 2021, effective with installations of Silver Line phase II station signage. |
|                                               |                                                                                                   |

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

The proposed name for the new Metrorail Station opening in the City of Alexandria follows the Metro System Station Names Policy. The name is distinctive and represents the name of the neighborhood surrounding the Metrorail Station. The primary station name has 17 characters, less than the 19-character limit. While the secondary name does not follow the current policy because it is not VT's main campus, it will be VT's flagship campus in Northern Virginia and there is strong community support the name.

Therefore, staff recommends that the Board approve the removal of UVA from West Falls Church station, and approve the name Potomac Yard for the new station. Staff further recommends that the Board make an exception and include the name VT as a secondary name for the new station, consistent with WMATA policy.

SUBJECT: WEST FALLS CHURCH-VT/UVA STATION NAME CHANGE AND NEW  
POTOMAC YARD STATION NAME

RESOLUTION  
OF THE  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
OF THE  
WASHINGTON METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSIT AUTHORITY

WHEREAS, Pursuant to Resolution 2011-36 and Metro System Station Names Policy (P/I 4.1/4), as amended, the Board of Directors is required to approve all changes to Metro station names; and

WHEREAS, Fairfax County has requested that West Falls Church-VT/UVA Station be changed to West Falls Church-VT Station and committed the funding for the full cost of the name change; and

WHEREAS, The City of Alexandria has requested that the station currently being constructed between Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport and Braddock Road Metrorail Stations formally be named Potomac Yard-VT Station; and

WHEREAS, The station name change and the new station name will assist the traveling public in wayfinding; and

WHEREAS, The Safety and Operations Committee recommends waiving the main university campus requirement established by the Metro System Station Names Policy for Potomac Yard-VT station because Virginia Tech's Northern Virginia flagship campus will be located there;

NOW, THEREFORE, be it

*RESOLVED*, That the Board of Directors approves the station name change from West Falls Church-VT/UVA Station to West Falls Church Station with a secondary name of VT ("West Falls Church-VT Station") to take effect upon installation of new signage associated with the beginning of passenger service for Silver Line Phase Two stations; and be it further

*RESOLVED*, That the station currently being constructed between Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport and Braddock Road Metrorail Stations be named Potomac Yard Station with a secondary name of VT ("Potomac Yard-VT Station") to take effect when the station opens; and be it finally

*RESOLVED*, That this Resolution shall be effective 30 days after adoption in accordance with § 8(b) of the WMATA Compact.

Reviewed as to form and legal sufficiency,

/s/ Patricia Y. Lee

Patricia Y. Lee

Executive Vice President and General Counsel

WMATA File Structure No.:  
20.9.2 Rail Station Names