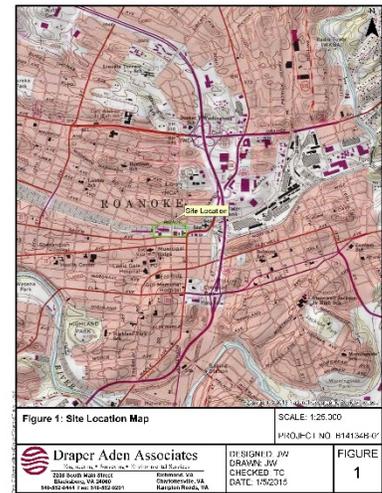


**NEPA Overview**

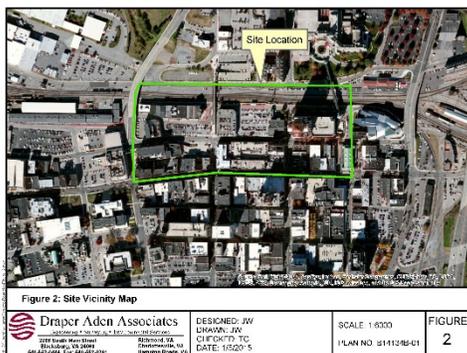
In task 5, a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) study was undertaken as required by federal agencies for receipt and use of federal funds. There are three (3) levels of study that NEPA reviews may fall under. For this project, a Categorical Exclusion (CATEX), the minimal of all studies was required to document any environmental effects and potential mitigation measures to address those.

On behalf of the City of Roanoke, and as part of the Wendel project team, Draper Aden Associates completed a Categorical Exclusion and Documented Categorical Exclusion Worksheet (CATEX) for a proposed project in downtown Roanoke (Proposed Action). The Proposed Action for the Categorical exclusion was defined as the development of a Passenger Rail and Transit Intermodal facility in Downtown Roanoke.

Federal funding likely will be sought for these transportation-related project elements; therefore, the Proposed Action is subject to the regulations and guidance established by National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended (42 USC 4321 et seq.). Projects or actions which do not have significant effects on the human and natural environment may be categorically excluded from certain documentation requirements of NEPA. Categorical Exclusions as defined in 23 CFR 771.118 include actions which do not induce significant impacts to planned growth or land use for an area, do not require the relocation of significant numbers of people, and do not involve significant impacts to any natural, cultural, recreational, historic, community or other resource. Furthermore, the action must not have significant impacts to air, noise, or water quality or have a significant impact on existing travel patterns. An action that qualifies as a Categorical Exclusion does not require the preparation of an environmental assessment (EA) or environmental impact statement (EIS) (i.e., it is categorically excluded from the need for such documentation).



The Proposed Action does not qualify as an Automatic CE or a PCE. Results of technical studies and resource analyses that were prepared clearly demonstrate the Proposed Action will not have significant environmental impacts.



The purpose of the Proposed Action is to increase access to public transportation and encourage its use through the construction of a new passenger rail and transit intermodal facility to support the reintroduction of passenger rail service in Roanoke, a service that ceased in 1979. The Proposed Action will build upon the ongoing construction of the commercial Amtrak rail facility platform currently under development by Norfolk Southern, Amtrak, City of Roanoke and the Commonwealth of Virginia, in the general vicinity of the Proposed Action, allowing a shared infrastructure benefit for the City of Roanoke and GRTC. Other potential collocated facilities include an updated GRTC bus station and adequate space to support bike sharing and taxi parking areas. The Proposed Action will serve existing and future commuter demand along the Heartland Rail Corridor of the Norfolk Southern

Railroad and help reduce traffic congestion along U.S. Interstate 81, one of the most congested Interstate corridors with regards to commercial traffic, in the U.S.

Amtrak intends to utilize the Proposed Action of reintroducing passenger rail service in order to provide efficient and convenient transportation to and from the Washington D.C. Metro Area. The intermodal facility will also support the use of mass transit by encouraging bus, taxi, and bicycle access from residential and commercial portions of the City to the proposed intermodal facility. This will allow mass transit access to the Washington D.C. Metro Area as well as points along the way and access to Union Station, one of the largest train stations in the nation, thereby providing access to locations nationwide. This Proposed Action supports multiple transportation initiatives including the Heartland Corridor Initiative, an ongoing rail improvement project of “national significance”. The construction of the Proposed Action will serve the existing and future regional demand for commuter rail service. Additionally, the Proposed Action will help provide updated facilities to support the GRTC bus transit operations.

The Proposed Action will also decrease vehicle miles traveled regionally and along the U.S. Interstate 81 corridor in particular, which supports the stated goals and policies in state and regional planning documents. As recent studies have shown, severe traffic congestion exists throughout the region and on U.S. Interstate 81. Without the Proposed Action, drivers to and from the Roanoke Region will exacerbate these transportation problems. Based on a traffic estimated ridership, daily traffic volumes in the region will be lower with the Proposed Action as commuters will be able to travel shorter distances to the new commuter rail stop in Roanoke.

### Existing Conditions

The proposed project area currently consists of mixed use commercial, industrial, and residential structures. The project area is located adjacent to the existing Norfolk Southern railway and is largely covered with impervious surfaces. Current uses include large parking lots, parking garage, bus station facility, residential apartment buildings, retail store front property, restaurants and light industrial operations.

### Criteria Required for Documented Categorical Exclusion

The CATEX documents the following natural, cultural, and community resources and issue areas required by NEPA for the Proposed Action:

- Traffic, Transportation and Parking;
- Land Acquisition and Displacements;
- Land Use and Zoning;
- Air Quality;
- Noise;
- Cultural and Natural Resources;
- Visual/Aesthetics;
- Public Safety and Security;
- Ecologically Sensitive Areas and Endangered Species;
- Wetlands;
- Water Resources/Water Quality;
- Floodplains;
- Wild and Scenic Rivers, Navigable Waterways, and Coastal Resources;
- Farmlands;
- Socioeconomics;
- Environmental Justice (EJ);
- Environmental Risk Sites and Hazardous Materials;

- Seismic;
- Property Acquisition;
- Construction Impacts; and
- Indirect and Cumulative Impacts.

### Conclusion of NEPA Process

Based on a review of environmental components and evaluation of impacts associated with the City of Roanoke's implementation of the proposed action, no significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impact on the human or natural environment is anticipated. The existing management and control systems combined with implementation in compliance with existing environmental regulations and best management practices (BMPs) would mitigate potential impacts associated with the new passenger rail and transit intermodal facility. It should be noted that Draper Aden Associates was unable to determine the potential for negative impacts to historical resources at this time given the preliminary nature of this project. This information will need to be further evaluated as additional details are available via official consultation with Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR) to be initiated by FTA.

The full Categorical Exclusion and Documented Categorical Exclusion Worksheet are located in Appendix B of this report.