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Testimony on Virginia DEQ Draft Water Protection Permit for Potomac Yard Metro Station

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The Coalition for Smarter Growth is a 22-year-old non-profit and the leading organization in the DC region addressing where and how the region grows. Our vision, and one adopted by the region in the Region Forward plan, is one of a network of walkable, mixed-use, mixed-income transit oriented communities knit together by and expanding transit network.

We strongly support the preferred alternative (Alternative B) for the location for the Potomac Yard Metro Station and support the draft water protection permit and its provisions including the required purchase of mitigation credits for the wetlands impacts.

We have been involved with the planning for Potomac Yard since the late 1990's. The addition of the Metro station is critical to realization of the Potomac Yard plan. The location options, their benefits and their impacts, have been the subject of extensive review and discussion over many years. The benefits of Alternative B are many and include:

- 1) It does not require the acquisition of land from CSX for construction, and has reduced impacts and disruption to CSX, Amtrak, Metrorail and VRE during construction as compared to the other alternatives. These transit services are essential for cutting vehicle miles traveled and emissions.
- 2) It is located within walking distance of the highest number of

residences, as well as shopping and entertainment destinations, compared to the other alternatives.

- 3) It is estimated to have 13% greater ridership and the greatest reduction in automobile trips among the alternatives.

We are a conservation-based organization and recognize the importance of avoiding wetlands impacts, but strongly contend that the net environmental benefits of this project far outweigh the impact to 0.92 acres of palustrine forested (PFO) wetland and 0.64 acres of palustrine emergent (PEM) wetland, as well as the temporary impacts.

Climate change and the accompanying sea level rise are heavy precipitation events are very serious threats. Meanwhile transportation is now the number one contributor to U.S. emissions. Studies at the Council of Governments, by Smart Growth America, and in our own work at Coalition for Smarter Growth, have shown that transit-oriented development is the best way to cut vehicle trips, vehicle miles traveled and greenhouse gas emissions. Focusing development at our Metro stations while also reducing highway expansion and sprawl are essential for making major cuts in transportation emissions.

A TOD future also reduces the amount of land we consume and the highways we build in the region, reducing the amount of forests, streams, and wetlands we impact.

Alternative B is the best alternative for supporting high density, mixed-use development and for reducing vehicle trips and emissions – both greenhouse gas and the criteria pollutants of nitrogen oxide, volatile organic compounds and particulates.

Alternative B offers net environmental benefits and therefore we support the granting of the DEQ water protection permit.

Thank you.