



Former B&O Railroad Right of Way (MD1985)

What You Need to Know

Site Location

The 8.22-acre Former B&O Railroad Right of Way property (Property) is located between Hill Street and Tempest Lane in Mount Airy, Frederick County, Maryland. The Town of Mount Airy purchased the Property from CSX Transportation, Inc (CSXT) in September 2021 with the intent to convert the former rail line to a bike path.

Site History

The rail line on the Property was approximately 0.59 miles of CSXT's Old Main Line Subdivision ("OML"). The OML is the oldest commercial railroad route in the United States and was constructed by the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad from about 1828-1831 to provide the Port of Baltimore with traffic from the expanding Midwest. The rail line serviced the cold storage facility in the Town of Mount Airy and rail traffic ceased in the early 2010s.

Environmental Investigation

On September 19, 2019, the Town of Mount Airy applied to Maryland Department of the Environment's, Land Restoration Program (MDE-LRP), Voluntary Cleanup Program (VCP) as an inculpable person. Composite soil sampling data from 2014 was submitted as part of the VCP application package that identified concentrations of arsenic ranging from 126 to 174 ppm and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), including benzo(a)pyrene ranging from 0.531 ppm to 6.51 ppm. LRP determined that additional investigation was necessary to determine the areal extent of impacts to the 8.22-acre Property or adjacent portions of the unused rail line from arsenic and PAHs.

The application was accepted for participation on September 6, 2019 for moderate frequency recreational use (Tier 4B) of the Property and MDE required that a Response Action Plan ("RAP") be developed, approved by the MDE, and implemented to address risks to human health and the environment resulting from arsenic and PAHs at the Property. The acceptance letter required that further delineation of the areal and lateral extent of the arsenic and PAH impacts on the Property must be conducted prior to development of the RAP so that Mount Airy could determine the necessary areal extent of the proposed remedy.

In February 2021, MDE approved a work plan for composite sampling to determine the areal extent of impacts on the Property to determine whether there are any additional concerns about the extent of contamination on the property, including potential for off-site impacts. In June 2021, the data was submitted demonstrating that arsenic impacts were present in surface and subsurface soil twenty (20) feet from the center line of the tracks.

Arsenic ranged from 18 to 166 ppm in surface soil and 4 to 119 ppm in subsurface soil. PAH impacts were limited and where present, they were co-located with arsenic.

On October 8, 2021, the Town of Mount Airy submitted a proposed RAP for remedial capping at the Property. MDE has declined to review and comment on the proposed RAP until additional delineation was conducted to determine the extent of contamination.

On October 19, 2021, MDE approved a work plan for additional onsite delineation up to thirty-two (32) feet from the center track line. The November 2021 results were submitted to MDE in March 2022 and composite samples further demonstrated that arsenic impacts range from 7.77 to 63.6 ppm in the surface soil and 3.29 to 48 ppm in the subsurface soil thirty-two (32) feet from the center of the track.

Current Status

In April 2022, CSXT removed the railroad tracks and ties. Limited tree removal from the rail bed occurred during this activity.

MDE approved a work plan for additional on-site delineation on April 18, 2022. MDE's approval specified that the discrete samples for each composite from the property boundary must be kept for thirty (30) days following submittal of the preliminary data to MDE and preliminary results must be submitted to MDE within sixty (60) days of the work plan approval or thirty (30) days following the collection of the samples, whichever is later.

MDE also approved a work plan for sampling adjacent residential lots on May 3, 2022. The approval specified that the three (3) samples from each residential property will be collected within five (5) feet of the property boundary with the former B&O Railroad Right of Way Property and that preliminary results must be submitted to MDE within sixty (60) days of being granted access or thirty (30) days following the collection of the samples, whichever is later. Sampling is scheduled to begin in late May 2022 with Arcadis contacting homeowners for access.

Contact

Please contact Richelle Hanson, the project manager, at richelle.hanson@maryland.gov or 410-537-3467 regarding any questions.