

APPENDIX A

**AGENCY SCOPING MEETING
SUMMARIES AND PRESENTATION**



Chicago to Omaha

Regional Passenger Rail System
Planning Study

Meeting Notes

Subject: Agency Scoping Meeting	
Meeting Date: 2/21/12	Meeting Location: Ames, Iowa
Notes by: HDR	

Attendees:

In-person attendees: Andréa Martin (FRA Project Manager), Amanda Martin (Iowa DOT Project Manager), Janet Vine (Iowa DOT NEPA Manager), Phil Meraz (Iowa DOT), Jim Armstrong (Iowa DOT District 5 Engineer), Dylan Mullenix (Des Moines MPO), Will Sharp (HDR Project Manager), John Morton (HDR NEPA Manager), Kelly Farrell (HDR), Tim Flagler (HNTB), and Caron Kloser (HNTB).

On-line attendees: David Studt (USCG), Joe Cothorn (EPA), Kip Strauss and Gretchen Ivy (HNTB), Julie Ward (NDEQ), Mark Bechtel (FTA), Brian Goss (HDR).

Topics Discussed:

The meeting commenced at approximately 10:10 am to discuss agency scoping for the Chicago to Omaha Regional Passenger Rail System Planning Study. In-person and on-line attendees introduced themselves. The meeting notes below are organized by a summary of the PowerPoint presentation, followed by questions generated, and the answers provided.

Action/Notes:

Amanda Martin led off the meeting indicating that Iowa DOT received Federal funding in 2009 to start the study, but the effort has been on hold until some things came in to place. The delay of the project being obligated and other factors has led to the need for an aggressive schedule. Andréa Martin noted she was representing FRA as the lead federal agency of the study, and that she is looking forward to working with Iowa DOT and Illinois DOT on the study, and moving ahead with the project. John Morton of HDR introduced the agenda slide of the PowerPoint presentation shown at the meeting in Ames, as well as via the Adobe Connect web link, and indicated that the agenda (provided to the agencies via the notification e-mail) would be followed for the presentation.

John Morton indicated that the Chicago to Omaha Regional Passenger Rail System Planning Study is part of an FRA Track 3 Application for a Planning Grant. FRA is funding half of the study with Iowa funding the remainder. There will be several decisions documented by the study including a preferred route alternative and identification of cities with station stops, speed of trains, and frequency of service. The project is part of the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative (MWRRI), with Chicago as the hub. The study is a Service Level analysis, with a broad, high-level approach to the evaluation of potential route alternatives. A Tier 1 EIS will be prepared, and will identify future Project Level Tier 2 NEPA studies. The Tier 1 Service Level Draft EIS will be distributed for agency and public comment, and comments will be used to prepare a Tier 1 Service Level Final EIS.

The purpose of the project is to provide competitive passenger rail transportation between Chicago and Omaha to help meet future travel demands in the study area. Project needs include increased travel demand from population growth and changing demographics, and an alternative competitive travel mode. The purpose and need statement for scoping is on the public website established for the project, and was provided to agency respondents to the e-mail on the agency scoping meeting.

The major project tasks for this study include the NEPA process, including alternatives analysis, a service development plan, and conceptual engineering. These processes are ongoing concurrently, with the tasks

feeding into each other. The study is starting with evaluation of the five previously established routes that connected Chicago to Omaha: a map of the five routes being considered was displayed and identified routes by numbers 1 through 5: 1 is the CN route, 2 is the UP route, 3 is the former Milwaukee Road route, 4 is the Iowa Interstate route, and 5 is the BNSF route, currently used by the California Zephyr (a daily Amtrak train between Chicago, Illinois and Emeryville, California).

The NEPA task is ongoing with GIS data compilation for evaluation of the route alternatives. The NEPA evaluation will be based on corridor-level impact assessment rather than design footprint related assessment. Corridor decisions will be made in Tier 1, but no infrastructure design will be developed until the Tier 2 project level. Noise, vibration, and air quality are among those resources that will be evaluated and will be based on estimated operational data. General station locations will be defined during Tier 1, but no specific locations will be identified. The Tier 1 EIS will evaluate speeds of 79, 90, and 110 mph service (and consider the relationship between speed, ridership, and revenue), and identify the preferred route alternative. A reasonable cost estimate will be developed for the preferred alternative. All of the study outcomes identified (Tier 1 EIS, preferred route alternative, service development plan, and conceptual engineering) are needed for getting FRA implementation funding in the future.

The Alternatives Analysis Task is ongoing and involves two levels of screening, coarse level (done at a high-level) and fine level, that both use four main categories of evaluation criteria: purpose and need, environmental feasibility, technical feasibility, and economic feasibility. Factors being reviewed include, but are not limited to, right-of-way (ROW) availability, population served, environmental resources, and route length. Fine level screening gets into more detail on the four criteria and their application to the remaining alternatives that pass through the coarse level screening step. Fine level screening will involve a ridership evaluation, more detailed characterization of the environment, ridership and revenue potential, and operating, equipment, and maintenance costs. A screen shot of a typical environmental constraints map review within GIS was shown and was considered during the Tier 1 Service Level EA for the Chicago to Iowa City project. The coarse level and fine level steps will be documented in a Draft Alternatives Analysis Report. This report will be available for agency and public input in the spring 2012 timeframe. Information will be available on-line and also be the topic of public meetings. The input received will be used to finalize the report, and identify one or more specific route alternatives to be evaluated in the Tier 1 EIS.

Tim Flagler discussed the Tier 1 EIS approach for environmental resources. Resource impact methodologies are being developed and will be documented in technical memoranda for each resource. Each memorandum will address the regulatory framework for the resource, data gathered for use in the analysis and compiled into a geographic information system (GIS), description of the resource, and an assessment of high level impact analysis along one or more specific route alternatives remaining after the fine level screening process. Typically, a resource study area is about 500 feet on either side of rail centerline along a route alternative. Potential impacts will be quantified for some resources (by number rather than a specific area) and will be qualified for other resources. Potential mitigation approaches will be characterized, but specific mitigation would be addressed during Tier 2 Project Level NEPA analysis. Technical memoranda will be used for input on resources within sections of Chapter 3 (Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences) of the Tier 1 EIS.

John Morton introduced the schedule, indicating that the study is in the public and agency scoping process stage now, with an on-line open scoping meeting process. The Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an EIS has been drafted. Andrea Martin indicated that the NOI will be published in a few weeks. Scoping will continue 30 days after the NOI is published. Public information meetings will be held in spring 2012 for evaluating the range of alternatives, the process for reviewing the alternatives, and on the route alternative(s) to be carried forward in the Tier 1 Service Level EIS. The Draft Tier 1 Service Level EIS is planned to be available for review this fall (with a public hearing), and the Final EIS in winter, followed by the Record of Decision. Future Tier 2 Project Level NEPA documents would address details of the proposed improvements along the preferred route alternative.

Since project inception, the purpose and need has been drafted (and has been sent to responding agencies and is on the public website); public scoping is ongoing using a live public website; initial railroad coordination has been completed; and resource impact methodology, alternatives assessment methodology, and annotated outline for the Tier 1 Service Level EIS have been drafted. An agency and stakeholder

involvement plan has been developed, and coarse level screening is occurring. This is the first agency scoping meeting and a second meeting will be held in Chicago, Illinois tomorrow.

We are seeking agency input to guide study by providing comments on the purpose and need, alternatives process, and resource methodologies. FRA and Iowa DOT are also seeking identification of agency issues of concern and resource information.

John Morton indicated that the public involvement process is ongoing. E-mails to agencies included a link that provides access to the public involvement website. Active public input was discussed noting the number of visitors to the website, those that left comments, and those that requested being placed on a mailing list. There have been several articles in local and regional newspapers and television stations, and there have been paid newspaper advertisements with information on the project. Interested parties can participate through electronic media or phone to request information.

Comments/Responses:

The floor was opened to agency input, and the following is a brief summary of the questions/comments and responses: responses and follow-up interaction on the topic are indented below the question/comment.

David Studt: How is the study looking at major bridges along these routes?

John Morton: The study will identify major structures that might need to be built or rehabilitated, especially those for Mississippi River and Missouri River crossings; these are important cost items. For example, the Iowa Interstate route crosses the Mississippi River on the Arsenal Bridge, and the Union Pacific is building a new bridge at Clinton Iowa. The Study would look at the 5 routes and specifically river crossing locations to determine the gross needs for expansion, reconstruction, or replacement.

David Studt: What about the Iowa City to Chicago project which was proposed to use the Arsenal Bridge crossing?

Amanda Martin: For that project, the Iowa legislature did not approve the necessary state match funds during last year's legislative session. The Chicago to Iowa City Project was consequently split into two phases. Chicago to Moline (IL) has state funding and NEPA is ongoing under Illinois DOT direction. The Moline to Iowa City phase will be managed by Iowa DOT, but state match in funding will need to be allocated to progress. The completion of this project will determine the next steps for the Moline to Iowa City phase. Relevant data for the Chicago to Iowa City Project will be used for this Project.

Joe Cothorn: Joe is representing US EPA Region 7 and will lead the US EPA effort, but will be consulting with Norm West in Region 5 (which includes Illinois in their region). US EPA will provide a scoping letter on this project with input based on other rail projects, such as lessons learned. US EPA has a comprehensive GIS on environmental resources that can be accessed. He asked whether US EPA would be offered participation as a cooperating agency. They typically have an added response if a letter requests input as a cooperating agency.

Andréa Martin: FRA will likely have requests for cooperating agencies going out in early March.

Joe Cothorn: Good input for US EPA consideration would include any information from public scoping that is asking for US EPA's input on resources of concern.

John Morton: Although we didn't talk much about Nebraska, the western terminus is in Omaha. Big decisions need to be made on where to cross the Missouri River; much of that work will be deferred until Tier 2.

Julie Ward: Let us know how NDEQ can help.

David Studt: Will Draft EIS be available this fall or next fall?

John Morton: The Draft EIS is planned for distribution this fall in 2012; the overall Tier 1 Service Level NEPA process is planned to be completed before fall 2013. Final EIS is planned to be distributed early spring 2013.

Dylan Mullenix: If anything is needed by local governments, let us know if you need help.

Mark Bechtel: FTA is involved in several intermodal projects in the Midwest. FTA is working with Dubuque, Iowa and Moline, Illinois considering a bus hub and a rail platform. Do cities compete to be on route? Will there be spokes of rail from the City centers along passenger rail to other communities?

Andréa Martin: The project in Moline is currently under the Chicago to Moline Tier 2 project level effort being led by Illinois; this is a different project but this section of rail does fall within one of the route alternatives.

Andréa Martin: The Chicago to Moline project is an IL DOT-led project. A NEPA Tier 2 Project is ongoing that will address the specific location of the platform and its design characteristics. There will be a conference call next week on the next steps for that project.

Mark Bechtel: To build the rail platform in Dubuque, funding will need to be procured through FRA or TIGER.

Amanda Martin: There will be a conference call with FRA and Iowa DOT on Dubuque next week. The City will probably be moving forward with a TIGER application. [The City of Dubuque told us on 2/22 that they will not be moving forward with a TIGER application.] Illinois DOT is moving forward with a Chicago to Dubuque route.

Mark Bechtel: Dee Phan is an environmental specialist and will be involved in FTA input on the NEPA study.

John Morton: The Study has involved communication with many communities in Iowa and Illinois, but is not designed to promote competition between cities. Moline is along the Iowa Interstate route, and Dubuque is along the CN route. The Study will identify stations only along the routes carried forward for detailed evaluation in the EIS. Cities aren't directly competing with each other. The Tier 1 Analysis will focus on the alternative route corridor, without getting into detail at tie-in points. For example, all route alternatives are proposed for crossing into Nebraska as the western terminus, but specifics of that crossing will not be known during Tier 1; most of specificity will be addressed during Tier 2.

Mark Bechtel: The developments with rail opportunities are exciting, and Dubuque and Moline are both planning ahead.

John Morton: Illinois DOT plans to use state funds for an intercity passenger rail line between Chicago and Dubuque. Federal funds are planned for Chicago to Moline. Both of those projects would be based on conventional speeds (up to 79 mph), but the Chicago to Omaha study will look at speeds of 79, 90, and 110 mph and evaluate what the speed differences might do for revenue and ridership.

Mark Bechtel: Will PowerPoint be available on website?

Amanda Martin: The PowerPoint will be sent to the attendees of the scoping meeting. There appears to be a need for clearly explaining the interrelationships of the different projects in the EIS as well as to the public.

John Morton: The project website for the public will be updated with information on different projects to differentiate them. At this stage of the Chicago to Omaha project, probably will primarily identify cities that could be directly served by different routes.

Kelly Farrell: The Tier 1 EIS will have a section with a discussion on other projects.

Dylan Mullenix: There was mention that the coarse analysis would look at population. Will there be a comparison with highway traffic or would that be in subsequent evaluations?

John Morton: Overall purpose and need will address ridership through comparison of competitive mode. Currently, 97% of the traffic between Chicago and Omaha is via passenger automobile for an 8-hour trip. Modal review of ridership will be part of the coarse level and fine level analysis. The study will look at populations along each corridor, evaluate modal opportunities, and review potential populations to be served. The configuration of how the system would work, accounting for highway traffic, would be addressed during Tier 2.

Caron Kloser: Will the NEPA process address an implementation plan due to funding not being all available at one time?

John Morton: FRA has asked to define how the service could be implemented. It is most likely that full funding would not be available, but smaller amounts of funding should be available to phase in segments. The Tier 1 EIS will have an implementation section to show how reasonable investment can partially meet goals and be used before future improvements can be funded.

Kelly Farrell and Amanda Martin discussed and showed components of the public website, and showed agencies the basic method of operating and viewing the website. The method for downloading PDFs was demonstrated. The website was recommended for internal agency use, and to provide access to others.

Action Items:

- FRA will send out Cooperating Agency letters after the NOI is published.
- Iowa DOT will put NOI on website once it is published
- Iowa DOT will note scoping meeting end date on website
- Iowa DOT will send PowerPoint to group of attendees
- Iowa DOT will supplement the website with information to help clarify and differentiate various rail passenger projects.

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Chicago to Omaha

Regional Passenger Rail System Planning Study

Meeting: Ames Agency Scoping

Date: 2/21/12

Name	Organization	Address	City, State & Zip	Email
1. Kelly Farrell	HDR	8404 Indian Hills Dr	Omaha, NE 68114	Kelly.Farrell@hdrinc.com
2. Tim Flagler	HNTB	715 Kirk Dr.	Kansas City, MO 64105	tflagler@hntb.com
3. Carol Kloser	"	11414 W. Park Place, Suite 300	M. Waukegan, WI 53224	ckloser@hntb.com
4. Dylan Mullenix	Des Moines Area MPO	420 Wilson Powell, Jr. Pkwy, Sct 200	Des Moines, IA 50309	dmullenix@dmsmro-0-5
5. Andrea Martin	FRA	1200 NJ AVE SE WASHINGTON DC	20590	andrea.martin@dot.gov
6. Jim Armstrong	Iowa DOT 05	307 West Briggs, Fairfield, IA 52556		james.armstrong@dot.iowa.gov
7. Janet Vine	IA DOT	800 Lincoln Way, Ames, IA 50010	→	janet.vine@dot.iowa.gov
8. PHIL MERAZ	IA DOT	" "	"	phillip.meraz@dot.iowa.gov
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Chicago to Omaha

Regional Passenger Rail System
Planning Study

Meeting Notes

Subject: Agency Scoping Meeting	
Meeting Date: 2/22/12	Meeting Location: Chicago, Illinois
Notes by: HDR	

Attendees:

In-person attendees included: Andr ea Martin (FRA Project Manager), Michael Garcia (Illinois DOT), Todd Popish (Illinois DOT), Norm West (USEPA), Shawn Cirton (USFWS), Frank Shockey (FEMA), John Morton (HDR NEPA Manager), Janice Reid (HDR), Angela Brazzale (HDR).

On-line attendees: Amanda Martin (Iowa DOT Project Manager), Janet Vine (Iowa DOT NEPA Manager), Walt Zyznieuski (Illinois DOT), Tim Flagler (HNTB), Gretchen Ivy (HNTB), Kelly Farrell (HDR), Brian Goss (HDR).

Topics Discussed:

The meeting commenced at approximately 1:00 pm to discuss agency scoping for the Chicago to Omaha Regional Passenger Rail System Planning Study. In-person and on-line attendees introduced themselves. The meeting notes below are organized by a summary of the PowerPoint presentation, followed by questions generated, and the answers provided. Although much of the question and answer process occurred during the presentation portion of the meeting, the flow of the presentation summary would have been disrupted by including them when they occurred; consequently the meeting summary is not in precise chronologic order.

Action/Notes:

Amanda Martin led off the meeting indicating that Iowa DOT received Federal funding in 2009 to start the study, but the effort has been on hold until some things came in to place. The delay of the project being obligated and other factors has led to the need for an aggressive schedule. Andr ea Martin noted she was representing FRA as the lead federal agency of the study, and that she is looking forward to working with Iowa DOT and Illinois DOT on the study, and moving ahead with the project. John Morton of HDR introduced the agenda slide of the PowerPoint presentation shown at the meeting in Chicago, as well as via the Adobe Connect web link, and indicated that the agenda (provided to the agencies via the notification e-mail) would be followed for the presentation.

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The major project tasks for this study include the NEPA process, including alternatives analysis, a service development plan, and conceptual engineering. These processes are ongoing concurrently, with the tasks feeding into each other. The study is starting with evaluation of the five previously established routes that connected Chicago to Omaha: a map of the five routes being considered was displayed and identified routes by numbers 1 through 5: 1 is the CN route, 2 is the UP route, 3 is the former Milwaukee Road route, 4 is the Iowa Interstate route, and 5 is the BNSF route, currently used by the California Zephyr (a daily Amtrak train between Chicago, Illinois and Emeryville, California).

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The Alternatives Analysis Task is ongoing and involves two levels of screening, coarse level (done at a high-level) and fine level, that both use four main categories of evaluation criteria: purpose and need, environmental feasibility, technical feasibility, and economic feasibility. Factors being reviewed include, but are not limited to, right-of-way (ROW) availability, population served, environmental resources, and route length. Fine level screening gets into more detail on the four criteria and their application to the remaining alternatives that pass through the coarse level screening step. Fine level screening will involve a ridership evaluation, more detailed characterization of the environment, ridership and revenue potential, and operating, equipment, and maintenance costs. A screen shot of a typical environmental constraints map review within GIS was shown and was considered during the Tier Service Level 1 EA for the Chicago to Iowa City project. The coarse level and fine level steps will be documented in a Draft Alternatives Analysis Report. This report will be available for agency and public input in the spring 2012 timeframe. Information will be available on-line and also be the topic of public meetings. The input received will be used to finalize the report, and identify one or more specific route alternatives to be evaluated in the Tier 1 EIS.

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John Morton introduced the schedule, indicating that the study is in the public and agency scoping process stage now, with an online open scoping meeting process. The Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an EIS has been drafted. Andréa Martin indicated that the NOI will be published in a few weeks. Scoping will continue 30 days after the NOI is published. Public information meetings will be held in spring 2012 for evaluating the range of alternatives, the process for reviewing the alternatives, and on the route alternative(s) to be carried forward in the Tier 1 Service Level EIS. The Draft Tier 1 Service Level EIS is planned to be available for review this fall (with a public hearing), and the Final EIS in winter, followed by the Record of Decision. Future Tier 2 Project Level NEPA documents would address details of the proposed improvements along the preferred route alternative.

Since project inception, the purpose and need has been drafted (and has been sent to responding agencies and is on the public website); public scoping is ongoing using a live public website; initial railroad coordination

has been completed; and resource impact methodology, alternatives assessment methodology, and annotated outline for the Tier 1 Service Level EIS have been drafted. An agency and stakeholder involvement plan has been developed, and coarse level screening is occurring. The first agency scoping meeting was held yesterday in Ames, Iowa.

We are seeking agency input to guide study by providing comments on the purpose and need, alternatives process, and resource methodologies. FRA and Iowa DOT are also seeking identification of agency issues of concern and resource information.

John Morton indicated that the public involvement process is ongoing. E-mails to agencies included a link that provides access to the public involvement website. Active public input was discussed noting the number of visitors to the website, those that left comments, and those that requested being placed on a mailing list. There have been several articles in local and regional newspapers and television stations, and there have been paid newspaper advertisements with information on the project. Interested parties can participate through electronic media or phone to request information.

Comments/Responses:

The floor was opened to agency input, and the following is a brief summary of the questions/comments and responses: responses and follow-up interaction on the topic are indented below the question/comment.

Michael Garcia: Is there a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between Iowa DOT and Illinois DOT to study potential routes within the state of Illinois?

Amanda Martin: Iowa DOT has had some previous discussions about the project with George Weber of Illinois DOT but she couldn't recall if an MOU was specifically discussed. Amanda will discuss an MOU specifically with Ms. Tammy Nicholson of Iowa DOT and get back to Illinois DOT.

Norm West: How is this project different than the Chicago to Iowa City project, and what is the status of that project? Are previous NEPA documents being put aside and is there a fresh start with this project?

John Morton: For that project, the Iowa legislature did not approve the state match last year. The Chicago to Iowa City Project was consequently split into two projects: Chicago to Moline, IL has state funding and NEPA is ongoing under Illinois DOT direction and Moline to Iowa City, IA. The Moline to Iowa City project will be managed by Iowa DOT, but state match in funding will need to be allocated to progress. Relevant data for the Chicago to Iowa City project will be used for this Project. The Tier 1 Service Level EIS for the Chicago to Omaha project will have a section with a discussion on the other projects.

Andréa Martin: FRA issued a FONSI for the Tier 1 Service Level Chicago to Iowa City project in November 2011; the FONSI included a list of actions that need to be completed during Tier 2. She will send a copy of the FONSI to USEPA. None of the previous studies are being put aside and are moving along different and independent schedules. Information from past NEPA documents will be taken into account as part of this project's analysis. Iowa DOT will send the PowerPoint to attendees of the scoping meeting, as well as USACE. There appears to be a need for clearly explaining the interrelationships of the different projects in the EIS as well as to the public. Agency comments that were received previously as part of the Chicago to Iowa City, Chicago to Dubuque (IA), and Chicago to Moline (IL) projects will be considered as part of the historical record for the Tier 1 EIS. This project somewhat overlaps with the Chicago to Iowa City project because it could share some of the same track.

Michael Garcia: The Tier 1 Service Level EA for Chicago to Iowa City is being reassessed by Illinois DOT for the Chicago to Moline section of the route. The Tier 2 Project Level EA has not yet started.

Norm West: Could you please send a direct link for the files you are directing us to rather than just noting the files are on the website?

John Morton: The project website for the public will be updated with information on different projects to differentiate them. A direct link to this information will be provided. At this stage of the Chicago to Omaha project, the level of information for website update will likely be identification of cities that could be directly served by different routes.

Michael Garcia: Illinois DOT intends to include all NEPA projects for Illinois passenger rail projects on an interactive map of Illinois. Amanda Martin should send an email to Miriam Gutierrez requesting that the Illinois DOT High Speed Rail (HSR) link be linked to the Chicago to Omaha project website. We are working toward getting this site fully functional.

Andréa Martin: Past documents as well as those for review on current projects could be posted to links. The Chicago to Detroit project hasn't started yet. FRA will discuss the use of the interactive map with Illinois DOT. FRA will likely have requests for cooperating agencies going out in early March, at the same time the NOI is published (possibly on March 9th). The scoping period will then be open for 30 days from NOI publication.

Norm West: Will the Chicago to Omaha Tier 1 EIS look at broader agency issues? Are you looking for resource agency input on resources such as threatened and endangered species that may be in the area or issues with major water crossings?

John Morton: Yes. Input is being sought from agencies on broad issues and readily-available data. More specific analysis would occur during Tier 2 Project Level analysis.

Shawn Cirton: Because federal agencies have different permitting responsibilities, they may ask for some more detailed information, which might typically be done in Tier 2.

Michael Garcia: The FHWA Tier 1 Process is different than the FRA Tier 1 Process; however, they both still follow NEPA.

Andréa Martin: The FRA has its own implementing regulations, per CEQ. FRA will state clearly the regulations that are being followed in the Tier 1 Service Level EIS and the NOI, and the level of analysis during Tier 1 Service Level and Tier 2 Project Level.

Michael Garcia: Based on his understanding, it doesn't appear that the screening criteria will be reviewed by the agencies or public prior to proceeding with the screening process. Is the intent to eliminate alternatives during screening to a single alternative?

John Morton: The screening criteria and methods are being developed and reviewed by FRA. The coarse level screening process has begun. The website is currently receiving comments on the project. The Draft Alternatives Analysis Report on the alternatives analysis (which will include both the coarse and fine level screening processes) will be placed on the public website for agency and public review, and public meetings will be held in spring 2012. Comments will be considered and used to create a Final Alternatives Analysis Report. What comes out of the Report will be the range of reasonable and feasible alternatives carried forward in the EIS; the intent of the screening is to potentially get down to a single alternative to carry forward in the EIS. The Final Alternatives Analysis Report will be summarized and make up the bulk of Chapter 2 of the EIS.

Amanda Martin: Iowa DOT will provide Walt Zyzniwski the screening criteria for review. Michael Garcia will be copied on everything; Walt will receive information as it pertains to NEPA. Determining the preferred route alternative is FRA's decision.

Janet Vine: The public will have opportunities to provide input on the alternatives screening process. The Draft Alternatives Analysis Report will be published and posted for review, with the public able to provide comments through the publish website or during meetings.

Shawn Cirton: Please review wildlife impacts from noise as well as human impacts (similar to what was done for CN-EJE acquisition). Has the USFWS Rock Island Field Office been contacted concerning this project?

The Rock Island office will likely be the lead contact for USFWS. Shawn Cirton will provide FRA with the contact information for the USFWS Rock Island office.

Andréa Martin: The Rock Island Office will be coordinated with concerning this project [an e-mail invitation to scoping was provided] and will receive the cooperating agencies letter from FRA in March.

Michael Garcia: Will the Tier 1 EIS be done in a phased approach to identify what you anticipate in the Tier 2 documents or will it address building the entire project at once? Will it address an implementation plan due to funding not being all available at one time? Will it recommend what is needed for Tier 2?

John Morton: FRA has asked Iowa DOT to define how the service could be implemented. It is most likely that full funding would not be available, but smaller amounts of funding should be available to phase in study and development of segments. The Tier Service Level 1 EIS will have an implementation section to show how reasonable investment can partially meet goals and be used before future improvements can be funded. The Record of Decision (ROD) will also have an implementation strategy and will discuss what is needed in Tier 2.

Andréa Martin: An implementation plan will be included in the EIS and the ROD. Based on funding constraints, the project would definitely need a phased approach.

John Morton: The phased approach with an implementation plan is consistent with the philosophy of the MWRRI. The project could be phased geographically as well as in frequency and speed.

Michael Garcia: Will the Tier 1 EIS look at Chicago Union Station (CUS) capacity? There are other projects going on which add more trains into CUS; for example Illinois and Michigan both have projects at the Tier 1 stage that would add more trains. At some point, CUS won't be able to handle more trains.

John Morton: The two challenges are on both termini – getting into CUS and getting across the river into Omaha. Neither challenge will be solved at the Tier 1 Service Level but there will be enough analysis to show that it can be done, with detailed evaluations to be completed in Tier 2. So CUS capacity will definitely be analyzed during Tier 1; it will be identified as a constraint and a problem.

Michael Garcia: Has coordination been performed with host railroads on how passenger trains will interact with freight trains?

John Morton: Early coordination has been performed with host railroads concerning the awareness of the project. The railroads haven't signed any agreements on operations or use of tracks, but have responded that they are willing to work with FRA and Iowa DOT on the potential development with various caveats.

Shawn Cirton: Please provide USFWS offices with a more detailed map of the Illinois counties they serve so they can provide more substantive comments

Andréa Martin: FRA will include the requested map with the cooperating agencies letter.

Frank Shockey: FEMA has new Illinois mapping available in GIS. We should call him if we have trouble obtaining GIS data from FEMA's website. We also should reach out to Iowa and Nebraska FEMA agencies. The new FEMA maps do not reflect recent climate change discussions, so they may change again.

Norm West: Suggests that it would be wise to consider increased rains and flooding possibilities in the future and not to rely solely on the past data.

Andréa Martin: Future increased rains and flooding possibilities would be examined in Tier 2.

Frank Shockey: When looking at specific infrastructure requirements in Tier 2, we will need to look at impacts on flooding. There may be more revised flood maps in the next few years.

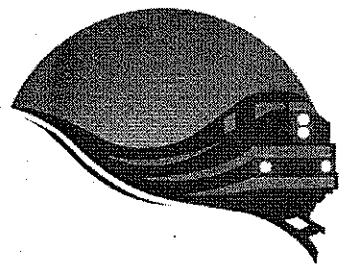
Norm West: Have station locations been identified?

John Morton: We have potential locations identified for the termini, and at some midpoints. The dots on the map (provided with the e-mail notification of the scoping meeting) of route alternatives do not indicate specific locations. Potential station locations will be identified during the fine level screening process. During coarse level screening, we are only looking at population served/ridership potential. Some of the routes go through more densely populated areas than others. The Chicago area population skews the analysis of potential station locations because the population served in the Chicago is so high. For comparisons of the population served along potential routes, we are excluding Chicago and Omaha during coarse level screening because all of the route alternatives will serve those cities.

John Morton and Amanda Martin discussed and showed components of the public website, and showed agencies the basic method of operating and viewing the website. The method for downloading PDFs was demonstrated. The website was recommended for internal agency use, and to provide access to others. The website tracks use; the highest number of hits have been from 1-3 in the afternoon and 9-11 at night, which is not when public meetings are typically held. The website is similar to what had been used for the Canadian National project but has evolved considerably since then.

Action Items:

- FRA will send out Cooperating Agency letters after the NOI is published.
- FRA will contact Rock Island USFWS as part of agency coordination.
- FRA will provide more detailed maps of potential routes near Chicago area for USFWS review.
- FRA to send FONSI for Chicago to Iowa City Tier 1 Service Level EA to Norm West.
- FRA to include reference to FRA environmental procedures in the NOI.
- Iowa DOT will have an internal discussion regarding an MOU with Illinois DOT.
- Iowa DOT will send PowerPoint to the meeting attendees and USACE who was not in attendance.
- Iowa DOT will supplement the Iowa DOT project website with information to help clarify and differentiate various rail passenger projects.
- Iowa DOT will provide HDR with agency comments that were received previously for the NEPA effort for the Chicago to Dubuque project.
- Iowa DOT to send Illinois DOT an email to Miriam Gutierrez with logo that formally requests that a link to the Chicago to Omaha project be added to the Illinois DOT HSR website.
- Iowa DOT will ensure that Michael Garcia and Walt Zyznieuski receive the Alternatives Analysis methodology and Alternatives Analysis documents for review.
- Illinois DOT will provide HDR with agency comments that were received previously for the NEPA effort for the Chicago to Moline project.



Chicago to Omaha

Regional Passenger Rail System Planning Study

Meeting: Chicago to Omaha Reg. Passenger Rail Study Date: Feb. 22, 2012
Agency Scoping Meeting - Chicago

Name	Organization	Address	City, State & Zip	Email
1. Janice Reid	HDR	8550 W. Bryn Mawr Chicago	Chicago, IL 60631	janice.reid@hdrinc.com
2. John Morton	HDR	8404 Indian Hills Dr.	Omaha, NE 68114	john.morton@hdrinc.com
3. MICHAEL GARCIA	IDOT	2300 S. DIRKSON PKWY, CHICAGO	SPRINGFIELD, IL 62764	MIKE.GARCIA@ILLINOIS.GOV
4. Norm West	U.S. EPA	77 W. JACKSON Blvd, E-19J, Chicago 60604		west.norman@epa.gov
5. Todd Popiel	IDOT	100 W Randolph Suite 6-600 Chicago	Chicago IL 60601	todd.popiel@illinois.gov
*6. Amanda Martin	Iowa DOT			
*7. Janet Vine	Iowa DOT			
*8. Walt Zyzneuski	IDOT			
*9. Brian Goss	HDR			
10. Angela Brazzale	HDR	30 N. LaSalle, #3220,	Chicago, IL 60602	Angela.Brazzale@hdrinc.com
11. Andrea Martin	FRA	1200 N.J. Ave SE Mail stop 20	Washington, DC 20590	andrea.martin@dot.gov
12. Shawn Cirton	USFWS	1250 S. Grove Av. Av., Barrington, IL 60010 →		shawn_cirton@fws.gov
*13. Tim Flagler	HNTB			
14. Frank Shockey	FEMA Region I	536 S. Clark St. 6th Floor Chicago IL 60605		frank.shockey@dhs.gov
*15. Kelly Farrell	HDR			
*16. Gretchen Ivy	HNTB			
17.				
18.				
19.				
20.				

* Via Teleconference



Chicago to Omaha

Regional Passenger Rail Planning Study

Agency Scoping Meetings
February 21 and 22, 2012

Agenda

- 1. Introductions**
- 2. Study Introduction**
 - a. Study Background**
 - b. Purpose and Need**
 - c. Project Description**
 - d. Alternatives Screening**
 - e. Resource Methodologies**
 - f. Schedule**
 - g. Agency Input**
- 3. Discussion of Issues**
 - a. Agency Interests and Concerns, and Available Information**
 - b. Online Public Information Meeting**
- 4. Action Items**
- 5. Meeting Conclusion**

Chicago to Omaha – Study Background

Regional Passenger Rail Planning Study

FRA Track 3 (Planning Programs) Application

- Submitted by Iowa DOT jointly with Illinois DOT
- Application Requirements
 - Detailed Project Overview
 - Public Return on Investment
 - Project and Financial Management Plan and Risk Assessment
 - Project Scope and Schedule
- Planning Study Cost = \$2 million (50 % federal funding)

Key Project Decisions

- Preferred Route Alternative
- Cities with Station Stops
- Frequency of Service
- Maximum Speed (90 mph to 110 mph desired)
- Implementation Plan
- Twenty Year Financial Plan
- Timetable Schedule
- Ridership / Revenue Optimization

Part of Midwest Regional Rail Initiative



NEPA Task

- Corridor Wide or “Service Level” Environmental Document
 - Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement
 - Broad High Level Evaluation of Potential Route Alternatives
 - Determine Preferred Route Alternative
 - Identify Cities for Potential Station Stops
 - Prepare Draft EIS and Obtain Public / Agency Input
 - Identify Future “Project Level” (Tier 2) Environmental Studies

Purpose and Need

- Purpose - The Chicago to Omaha Regional Passenger Rail System Would Provide Competitive Passenger Rail Transportation Between Chicago and Omaha to Help Meet Future Travel Demands in the Study Area
- Needs
 - Increased Travel Demand from Population Growth and Changing Demographics
 - Alternative Competitive Travel Mode

Major Project Tasks

- NEPA / Alternatives Analysis
- Service Development Plan
- Conceptual Engineering

All Major Tasks are Interrelated and Completed Concurrently

Alternatives Being Considered



NEPA Task

- Environmental Impact Analysis
 - Compile GIS Database of Environmental Resources
 - Evaluate Feasible Route Alternatives
 - Corridor Level Environmental Impact Analysis (Wetlands, Waterways, Regulated Materials, Historical Properties, Protected Resources, T&E, EJ)
 - Noise and Vibration Analysis
 - Energy Consumption Analysis

NEPA Task

- Evaluation of Feasible Alternatives in Draft EIS
 - Hi-Rail Routes
 - Identify General Station Locations
 - Speed, Ridership, and Revenue Forecasts
 - Environmental Impact Analysis
 - Public Input
- Determine Preferred Route Alternative
- Publish Final EIS

Study Outcomes

- System Level NEPA Process
 - Tier 1 EIS
 - Determine Preferred Route Alternative
- Approved Service Development Plan
- Conceptual Engineering
 - Identify Infrastructure Improvements Required
 - Coordinate with Freight Railroads and Amtrak
 - Prepare Cost Estimates
- Implementation Plan
- Economic Analysis

**Necessary Steps Completed to Pursue
Future FRA Implementation Funding**

Alternatives Analysis Task

- Alternatives Analysis Screening Report
 - Coarse Level Screening
 - Fine Level Screening
- Evaluation Criteria
 - Purpose and Need
 - Environmental Feasibility
 - Technical Feasibility
 - Economic Feasibility

Alternatives Analysis Task

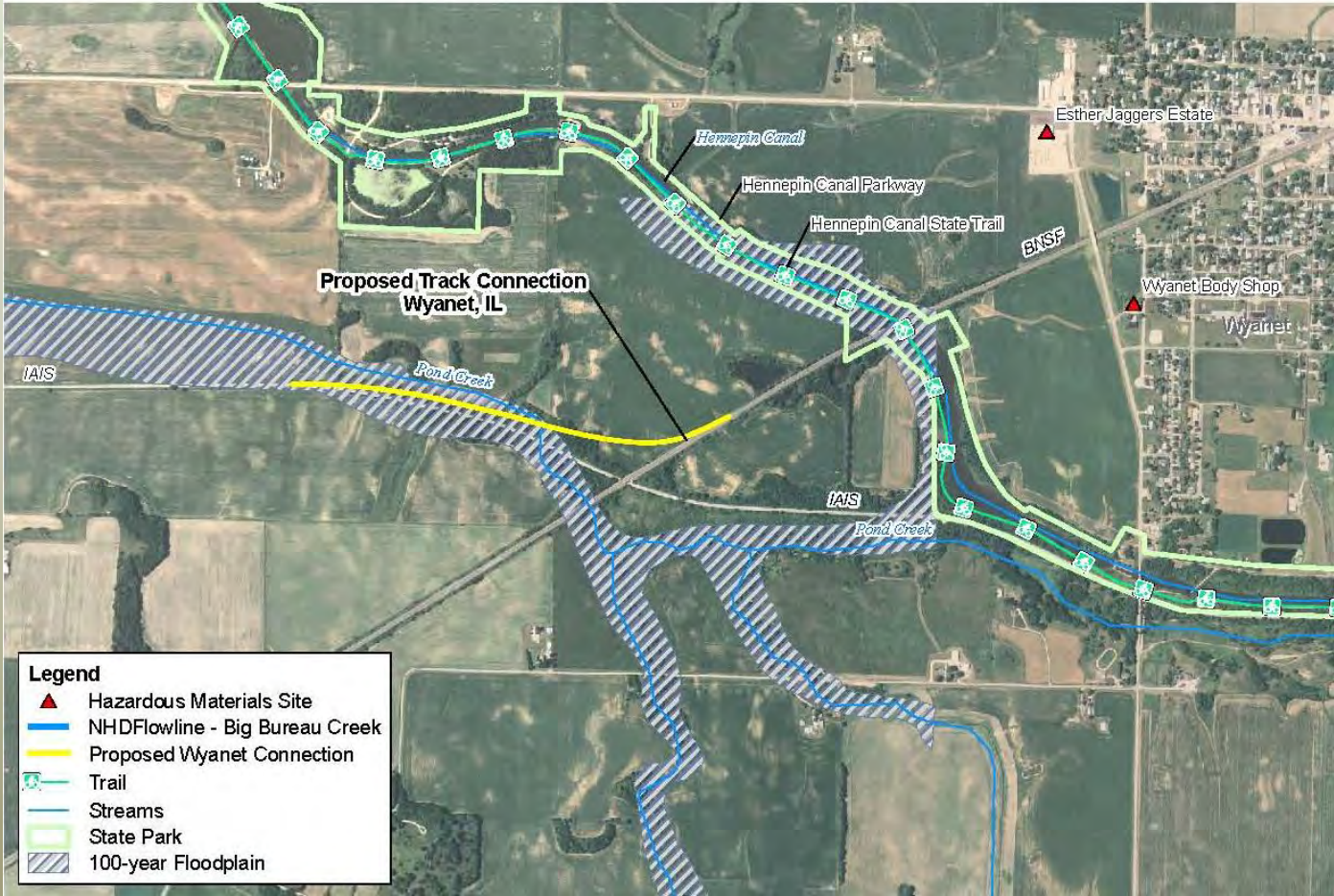
- Alternatives Analysis - Coarse Level Screening
 - Consider All Previously Established Passenger Rail Routes
 - High Level Screening
 - Evaluation Factors
 - Population Served
 - Characterize Environmental Resources (Qualitative)
 - Right-of-Way Availability
 - Route Length
 - Construction Costs (high level)

Alternatives Analysis Task

- Alternatives Analysis – Fine Level Screening
 - Identify “Reasonable and Feasible” Routes
 - Evaluation Factors
 - Schedule Times (High Level – maximum speeds of 79 mph, 90 mph, 110 mph)
 - Ridership and Revenue Potential (High Level)
 - Characterize Environmental Resources (GIS)
 - Right-of-Way Availability
 - Construction Costs (high level) – Grade Crossings, Potential Track Improvements
 - Operating Costs
 - Equipment Costs
 - Maintenance Costs

NEPA Task

- Example Environmental Constraints Map



Alternatives Analysis Task

- Alternatives Analysis
 - Publish Draft Alternatives Analysis Report
 - Obtain Public and Agency Input – Public Meetings
 - Finalize Alternatives Analysis Report

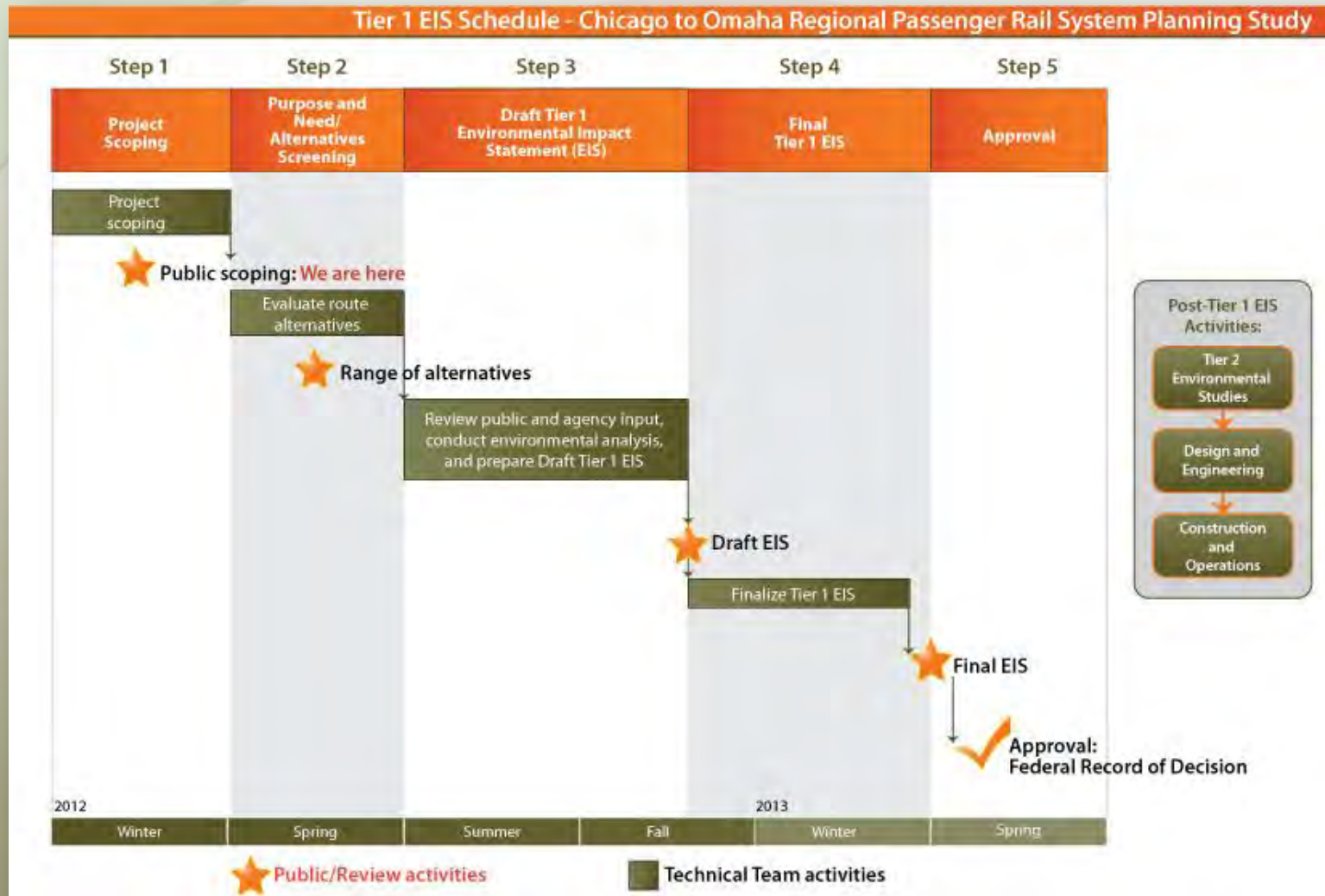
Tier 1 EIS Methodologies

- Resource Impact Analysis Methodologies
(Resource Technical Memoranda Contents)
 - Regulatory Framework for Environmental Resource
 - Data Collection (GIS, Website, and Published Data) and Agency Coordination
 - Review of Data and Description of Existing Environment
 - “High-Level” Evaluation of Potential Impacts
 - Potential Need for Mitigation

Tier 1 EIS Resources

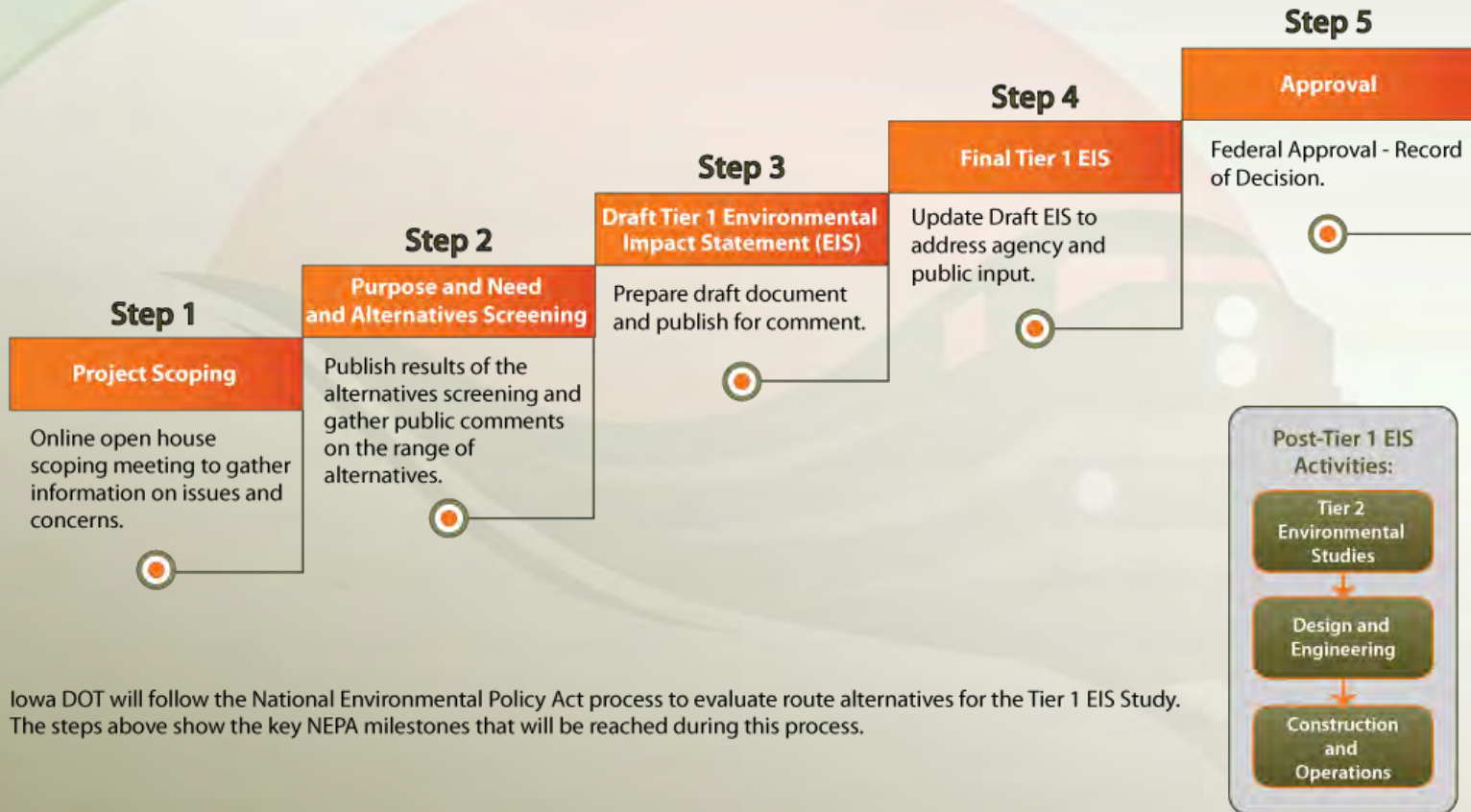
- Transportation
- Land Use
- Agricultural Resources
- Socioeconomics
- Environmental Justice
- Elderly & Disabled
- Public Health & Safety
- Noise & Vibration
- Air Quality
- Hazardous Waste
- Cultural Resources
- Parks & Natural Areas
- Section 4(f) & 6(f)
- Visual Quality
- Water Resources
- Wetlands
- Water Quality
- Floodplains
- Geology
- Natural Habitats & Wildlife
- T & E Species
- Energy Use & Climate Change
- Construction Impacts
- Indirect & Cumulative Impacts
- Irreversible & Irretrievable Commitment of Resources
- Permits
- Summary of Impacts & Mitigation

Project Schedule



Project Process

Tier 1 EIS Process - Chicago to Omaha Regional Passenger Rail System Planning Study



Iowa DOT will follow the National Environmental Policy Act process to evaluate route alternatives for the Tier 1 EIS Study. The steps above show the key NEPA milestones that will be reached during this process.

Efforts Completed to Date

- Public Involvement
 - Agency and Stakeholder Involvement Plan
 - Project Web Site Active
 - First On-Line Public Meeting Live
- NEPA
 - Developed Draft Purpose and Need
 - Agency Scoping Meeting – Scheduled for 2/21, 2/22
 - Developing Environmental Impact Methodologies and EIS Annotated Outline
- Service Development Plan / Conceptual Engineering
 - Initial Host Railroad Coordination Complete
 - Alternatives Analysis Methodology Complete
 - Coarse Level Alternatives Analysis Underway

Agency Input

- Agency Scoping and Early Coordination is Ongoing
 - Agency Scoping Meeting
 - Notice of Intent to Prepare an EIS
 - Early Coordination Packages
 - FRA Request for Cooperating Agencies
- What are we Seeking?
 - Input on Purpose and Need, Alternatives Process, Resource Methodologies
 - Identification of Your Issues of Concern
 - Information Relevant to Resources Under Your Management

Discussion of Issues

- Open Discussion of Agency Interests and Concerns at Tier 1 Level of Study and in Future Tier 2 Analyses
- Resource Agency Available Information

Public Involvement To-Date

Chicago to Omaha Regional Passenger Rail System Planning Study

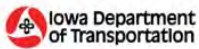
Iowa Connections
Get on Board


Welcome


The purpose of this meeting is to:

- Introduce you to the study
- Gather your input on study issues


We encourage you to click the Comment Form button below and submit your email address to receive ongoing updates on Project information and additional opportunities to participate.

 Iowa Department of Transportation

 U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Railroad Administration

 Illinois Department of Transportation

Click to Enlarge



Your input will help the [Iowa Department of Transportation](#) and the [Federal Railroad Administration](#) understand your priorities, concerns and goals for the reestablishment of intercity passenger rail service from Chicago, Illinois, through Iowa, to Omaha, Nebraska.

The potential for improved intercity passenger rail service between Chicago and Omaha has been outlined in the [Midwest Regional Rail Initiative](#). Improvements could include greater frequency, greater reliability and shorter travel times. Maximum ridership and revenue will be analyzed at speeds of 79, 90, and 110 miles per hour, with up to 5 round trips per day.

Please use the arrows located on either side of the screen to navigate through this meeting.

You may leave a comment on the study by clicking the Comment Form button below. Please be sure to leave your email to be added to the mailing list. You may begin typing your comment at any time and add to it during your entire session in the open house.

Comment Form

Share 2 Mail 0 Tweet 5

Comment Form

Public Involvement To-Date

Tool	Impact
Website Visits	3,820 Unique Visitors
Online Meeting Visits	1,953 Unique Visitors
Mailing List Requests	477
Comments	734
Facebook	<i>151 shares, 299 Liked/ Shared/ Commented</i>
Twitter	<i>84 Tweets/ Retweet, 66,868 Impressions</i>
Earned Media	<i>29 Mentions in Iowa/ Illinois/ Nebraska</i>
Paid Media	<i>10 Ads in Iowa/ 1 Ad in Illinois</i>

Opportunities to Participate

Event	Time Frame
Public Scoping Online Meeting	<i>Online February 13, 2012</i>
Community Tool Kit / Online Survey	<i>Online Late Winter 2012</i>
Range of Alternatives Open House	<i>Online and In-person Spring 2012</i>
Public Hearing – Review Draft EIS	<i>Online and In-person Fall 2012</i>
Website / Information Line	<i>www.iowadot.gov/ChicagotoOmaha 800-488-7119</i>

Action Items

- Summary and Recordation of Action Items Identified at the Agency Scoping Meeting

Meeting Conclusion

- Thank You for Your Participation and Input During this Tier 1 EIS Agency Scoping Meeting!!