

CHAPTER 2 AGENCY SCOPING

Agency input on the Study and Project was received during the agency scoping meetings on February 21, 2012, in Ames, Iowa, and on February 22, 2012, in Chicago, Illinois, as well as through responses to the EC packet distributed on April 1, 2012. This chapter of the Scoping Report summarizes the comments received from federal, state, and local resource agencies.

2.1 SUMMARY OF COMMENTS

Table 2-1 identifies the agency or agencies providing comment(s), documents the issues raised, summarizes the comment(s), and notes a response. Comments received from resource agencies are organized first by the agency making the comment, and then by the issue(s) introduced by the agency. Individual comments may apply to more than one issue; for those comments, multiple issues will be identified adjacent to the comments. In some instances, comments for a particular issue are lengthy; if additional paragraphs are included without an issue noted adjacent, the comment applies to the previously identified issue. For some comments, brackets denote information added to the comment for clarification; the bracketed text was not part of the original comment. Section 2.2 provides a summary of the key comments received. The full comments as provided via letter, email, or other media are reproduced in Appendix C.

Table 2-1. Summary of Agency Scoping Comments

Agency	Issue	Comment	Response
Federal Aviation Administration	Agency Coordination	We have reviewed the furnished material and have no comments regarding environmental matters.	Comment noted.
	Permitting and Approvals	The Project may require formal notice and airspace review under Federal Aviation Regulation Part 77, Objects Affecting Navigable Airspace. Use the Notice Criteria Tool on FAA's website, and check multiple locations along the route for potential conflicts with public-use and military airports.	The conceptual level of design during Tier 1 of the NEPA process does not include sufficient information for use of the Notice Criteria Tool. The Tier 1 Service Level EIS will note that this effort would be conducted during Tier 2 Project Level studies.
U.S. Department of Interior	Agency Coordination	Our office will distribute the Notice of Intent and the early coordination packet to appropriate Department of Interior Bureau personnel.	Comment noted.

Agency	Issue	Comment	Response
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency – Region 7	Rail (Operations), Transportation (Current Train Traffic), Rail Upgrades, Noise, Safety, and several other relevant environmental resources	Existing track and current railroad operations represent a baseline condition. New track, track that connects between existing routes, and new track geometries for safety and facilitation of higher speed trains should receive focused analysis above the existing condition. Likewise, the EIS should examine the environmental impacts of the stations and support facilities associated with each of the route alternatives.	The Tier 1 Service Level EIS will address baseline conditions (considered to be the No-Build Alternative), including known future commitments such as the Chicago to Moline improvements and operations. Locations where new track is needed for higher speeds will be considered in the Tier 1 Service Level EIS, as will station locations and support facilities to the extent known.
	Project Purpose and Need	The Purpose and Need statement indicates that the Study will evaluate “alternatives for the reestablishment of intercity passenger rail service from Chicago, Illinois, through Iowa, to Omaha, Nebraska.” Since intercity rail passenger service currently exists between Chicago and Omaha, the term "re-established" is inappropriate.	Chapter 1 (Purpose and Need) of the Tier 1 Service Level EIS will address your comment by eliminating the “reestablishment” terminology.
		The statement also notes that the Proposed Action seeks to “create a competitive rail transportation alternative to the available automobile, bus, and air service and would meet needs for more efficient travel.” The EPA recommends clarifying the statement by inserting “passenger” after “rail.”	Chapter 1 (Purpose and Need) of the Tier 1 Service Level EIS will address your comment by inserting “passenger” before “rail.”
	EIS Process	The Tier 1 process would be expected to eliminate some of the alternatives from further consideration based on specific criteria (such as operating and maintenance costs, ridership, safety issues, etc.). The Tier I EIS should evaluate how the proposed high-speed service will interface with existing service through Omaha to San Francisco.	Chapter 2 (Alternatives) of the Tier 1 Service Level EIS will address the alternatives identification and screening process to carry forward one or more alternatives for detailed evaluation under the NEPA process. The Tier 1 Service Level EIS will address potential impacts on the California Zephyr operations.
	Wetlands, Socioeconomic, Noise and Vibration, Safety, Cumulative Impacts	Tier 1 considerations should include: 1) selection of the alternative corridors most likely to achieve the lowest environmentally damaging practical alternative under Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 404; 2) growth-related development impacts,	The Tier 1 Service Level EIS will consider the issues noted and will refer to CWA requirements to help expedite future environmental review and permitting during the Tier 2 Project Level NEPA process.

Agency	Issue	Comment	Response
		<p>3) potential for community and wildlife impacts, such as noise/vibration and safety, and</p> <p>4) cumulative impacts on resources of concern. Future “Tier 2” or project-level analyses will address site-specific environmental impacts of the high speed train system. Integrating the requirements of NEPA and CWA Section 404 in Tier 1 should serve to expedite the environmental review and permitting process in Tier 2.</p>	
Transportation Security Administration	Rail (Operations)	How can “high-speed” trains operate on existing rail routes? Will these routes be dedicated to these passenger trains, or will they be shared with the railroads currently operating on them?	The existing rail lines are owned by the freight railroads. This Study is evaluating the need for improvements to existing rail and supporting infrastructure in order to host high-speed passenger trains as well as the current freight trains. The rail lines could be shared, with sidings used to divert and hold a train while another train uses the main line, or separate tracks could be provided for passenger trains and freight trains.
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	Threatened and Endangered Species	<p>Our data indicate that the species on the enclosed list may occur in the counties of your proposed action. Descriptions of the habitat requirements are included with the list. You may use these descriptions to help you determine if there is suitable habitat within your project area. In order to address potential impacts to federally listed species on the enclosed list, we recommend that you initiate the Section 7 process by obtaining an official species list and following the steps outlined at http://www.fws.gov/midwest/Endangered/Region3/IllinoisandIowa and http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/endspp/ for Region 6 (Douglas County, Nebraska). Through internal review and analysis, you may make a determination(s) regarding whether listed species would be impacted. By following the instructions, you can determine what your action area is, whether listed species may be found within the action area, and if the project may affect listed species. You</p>	Thank you for providing the list of species by county. If potential adverse impacts on threatened or endangered species are identified, the need for formal Section 7 consultation with USFWS will be documented in the Tier 1 process. However, formal consultation would not be initiated until the Tier 2 Project Level stage, where construction-related effects and activities of the preferred alternative can be more definitively assessed to determine whether there would be an adverse effect.

Agency	Issue	Comment	Response
		<p>will find several products on the site that can streamline the consultation process for this and future projects. When determining if listed species may be located within a project area, you can download county-specific species lists for all of the states in Region 3 and Region 6.</p>	
	Wildlife, Noise and Vibration	<p>We also recommend that the project be evaluated for potential impacts on wildlife, particularly migratory birds, from increased noise and vibration resulting from increases in train frequency and speed for the alternatives considered.</p>	<p>The Tier 1 Service Level EIS will consider impacts on natural habitats and wildlife, including the effects of increased noise and vibration.</p>
	Route (Route Alternative 4), Threatened and Endangered Species	<p>We are particularly interested in the feasibility of Route Alternative 4 because the portion of the route between Joliet, Illinois, and Chicago, Illinois, could be combined with a potential alternative for the Chicago to St. Louis high speed rail project. The Chicago Field Office has previously identified this potential alternative, carrying passengers east of Joliet, because it would eliminate adverse impacts on the Hine's emerald dragonfly (<i>Somatochlora hineana</i>) located in the Lower Des Plaines River Valley. Improvements to the portion of the route between Joliet and Chicago could serve both high speed rail projects and eliminate impacts on the Hine's emerald dragonfly.</p>	<p>Based on your comment, the specific locations of the seven critical habitat units in Illinois designated for the Hine's emerald dragonfly were reviewed. Route Alternative 4, referenced in your comment, passes no closer than 2.8 miles from the units for the Hine's Emerald Dragonfly. Consequently, no adverse impacts to the dragonfly would be anticipated along this route. Coordination with USFWS will continue throughout this Study to address potential impacts to threatened or endangered species.</p>
	Wetlands	<p>National Wetland Inventory maps indicate that there may be wetlands within and adjacent to the project area for all potential alternatives. We recommend that you contact the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for assistance in delineating the wetland types and acreage within the project boundary. Priority consideration should be given to avoid impacts on wetlands. Project activities that would alter wetlands may require a Section 404 permit. Unavoidable impacts will require a mitigation plan to compensate for any losses of wetland</p>	<p>USACE has been contacted regarding the Tier 1 Service Level EIS. The Tier 1 Service Level EIS will rely on data, maps, and aerial photographs to assess various resources, including wetlands; no field surveys are planned during this Study. GIS will be used to predict potential wetland impacts, which will be identified. During the Tier 2 Project Level NEPA process, field studies would be performed to confirm wetland boundaries.</p>

Agency	Issue	Comment	Response
		functions and values.	USACE will be contacted again during the Tier 2 process as well as the Section 404 permitting process.
Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality	Permitting and Approvals	As with any facility, permits may be required prior to beginning construction or operation. At a minimum, you should be aware of the possible requirements for the following permits:	Comments noted. The Tier 1 Service Level EIS will identify potential known permits and approvals to help expedite future environmental review and permitting during the Tier 2 Project Level NEPA process.
	Water Quality	A Construction Storm Water Permit will be required if there is greater than one acre of disturbance of land, which is likely with this project.	
	Waste	Wastes generated from construction and/or demolition during this project must be properly disposed at a permitted landfill or recycled.	
	Wetlands	Check with USACE for Section 404 needs.	
	Air Quality	<p>Depending on the final route and location in Douglas County as well as installation of stationary equipment NDEQ Title 129 (outside of city limits) and/or Omaha Air Quality Control regulations (inside of city limits) would apply to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land clearing and construction-disposal of waste materials by open burning • Asbestos assessment and abatement is needed prior to any structure demolition. • Fugitive dust control during all land clearing and construction activities is required by NDEQ and City of Omaha. Any contamination of city roadways will require prevention and/or clean-up per the City of Omaha specifications. • Construction and/or Operating permits for stationary engines, boilers, emergency generation equipment and other 	

Agency	Issue	Comment	Response
		equipment may be required by the City of Omaha Air Quality Control and/or NDEQ.	
	Permitting and Approvals	Until further along in the planning process, it is unknown whether there may be additional regulatory requirements. We strongly urge the project sponsors to make contact with the Department to determine other requirements. It has been our experience that early and open communication helps facilitate the permitting process.	NDEQ will be coordinated with on additional permitting concerns for the Tier 2 Project that would occur in Nebraska.
Nebraska Department of Natural Resources	Surface Water, Floodplains, Permitting and Approvals	Our agency's statutory responsibilities includes surface water right administration, groundwater well registration and floodplain management programs. Based on our initial review of the 5 potential route alternatives, we don't believe they will have significant impact on Nebraska's surface and ground water resources. Assess and address floodway/floodplain impacts if any segment requires infrastructure in a floodway/floodplain. When your project moves into its Tier 2 Phase (design and construction), a floodplain development permit would be required from the City of Omaha and/or Douglas County before any construction can begin in a floodplain within their jurisdiction.	Comments noted. The Tier 1 Service Level EIS will identify potential known permits and approvals to help expedite future environmental review and permitting during the Tier 2 Project Level NEPA process. NDNR will be coordinated with on additional permitting concerns for the Tier 2 Project that would occur in Nebraska.
	EIS Process	Please keep us informed about your project progress and the availability of the Tier 1 EIS.	
State Historical Society of Iowa	EIS Process	We understand that the purpose of the Tier 1 process does not involve consultation regarding specific construction activities, and that those consultations will occur as part of the Tier 2 process and perhaps in separate Section 106 consultation documents.	Comments noted.
		Based on information provided to date, it is unclear whether any historic properties in Iowa would be affected by any of the considered route alternatives. However, the rail	The Tier 1 Service Level EIS will address the railroad and historic events in consideration of potential Section 106 effects and NEPA impacts of the

Agency	Issue	Comment	Response
		segment from Davenport to Iowa City (along Route Alternative 4) is one of the earliest railroad lines constructed in Iowa, and the alignment has changed minimally since its original construction in 1855. This segment also hosted two significant historic events: the Mormon exodus from the State of Illinois, and John Brown's last trip through Iowa prior to the raid at Harpers Ferry, West Virginia. We look forward to further consultation on this Project.	Project. The Tier 2 Project Level NEPA process will involve further consultation for determination of Section 106 and NEPA impacts, including any required mitigation.
Illinois Department of Natural Resources	Agency Coordination	We request that coordination occur in the same manner as for the Chicago to St. Louis project. Please contact us to acquire our database information to screen routes for resources in the vicinity of the route corridors, and to coordinate on those resources.	Illinois DNR was contacted to request the database information for route alternative review.
Iowa Legislative District 26	Jobs, Routes (Location Specific)	I urge Iowa DOT to seriously consider Route Alternative [2] through Clinton, a Mississippi River city that would provide a good layover option. The City is well equipped to handle any and all requirements of a passenger rail project and could field a large, skilled workforce.	Comment noted.
Muscatine County, Iowa	Route (Location Specific, Route Alternatives 4 and 4-A), Support	On behalf of Muscatine County, we want to convey our strong support of passenger rail from Chicago-Omaha via the BNSF to Iowa Interstate via the Wyanet connection in Illinois into Iowa [Route Alternatives 4-A and 4]. This corridor has been analyzed and repeatedly demonstrated its technical, economic, and environmental feasibility. With its proximity to Interstate 80, the route can reduce traffic congestion and air emissions by providing a passenger transportation alternative to cars along this corridor. The proposed route is consistent with the 2040 Quad City Area Transportation Long Range Plan (June 2012), Region 9 Long Range Transportation Plan (June 2009), Bi-State Region Transit Development Plan (2011), and the 2011 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the Bi-State Region.	Comment noted. Thank you for your information on plans applicable to Route Alternatives 4 and 4-A.

Agency	Issue	Comment	Response
		As an important economic driver, passenger rail service can play a key role in retaining business and industry and encouraging expansion with greater connectivity to Chicago and Omaha. This route also provides for improved railroad infrastructure to benefit freight and passenger transportation. It would also promote quality of life opportunities for Bi-State Region citizens as an alternative to driving to destinations along the route.	Comments noted.
Southern Iowa Council of Governments, Iowa	Route (Location Specific), Rail (Operations, Upgrades)	We are concerned about the existing passenger route through southern Iowa being eliminated in favor of a more northern route. Millions of dollars have been spent on track upgrades and depot renovations for the Amtrak route through southern Iowa, and the economic impact of having Amtrak stops in our region is great. Although expansion of passenger rail is desirable through Iowa, it should be accomplished while maintaining the existing California Zephyr route through southern Iowa.	Comment noted. The California Zephyr is an Amtrak long-distance service operating under congressional appropriations, with decisions made by Amtrak's governing board in consultation with Congress. State-supported trains such as the proposed Chicago to Omaha service are independent from the Zephyr service and federal operating funds authority.
Johnson County, Iowa	EIS Process	We are not aware of any environmental impacts and do not have any comments at this time concerning the Tier 1 EIS process.	Comments noted.
City Development Board, Iowa	Economy, Economic Impacts	Iowa needs to invest in this Project. More highway and airport traffic creates additional automobile dependency, more congestion, and scattered development patterns. Passenger service that is fast and frequent reduces energy consumption and minimizes future disturbances to the natural environment (including farmland). This Project would enhance quality of life across the central portion of the state and help promote smart growth in that area.	Comments noted.
Douglas County, Nebraska	Route (Location Specific)	The route needs to connect Omaha to Des Moines and to Iowa City at a minimum.	Comment noted.
Cass County, Iowa	Routes (General), Funding of the Project	Is this project going to happen and is the route the only question? Is this plan self financing or is this plan going to cost the tax payer through	The Study is ongoing with many factors under consideration such as route location, speed, and station locations. The system

Agency	Issue	Comment	Response
		state and federal subsidies?	would require state and federal financing.
Henry County, Illinois	Energy Use	Public transportation is a viable solution to burning less fuel while moving more people.	Comment noted.
City of Omaha, Nebraska	Cumulative Impacts	How will this project affect other forms of transportation such as air travel?	It is anticipated that some demand for other forms of transportation would be slightly reduced by this Project. A demand model is being run to anticipate future changes in demand by different travel modes.
	Project Purpose and Need	What prompted this Study? Is there a needs statement?	The MWRRI Study identified the Chicago to Omaha corridor as a prime route for high-speed rail. A needs statement has been developed for the Project and was available for public and agency review during the online scoping meeting. An updated and expanded version of the needs statement will be included in Chapter 1 (Purpose and Need) of the Tier 1 Service Level EIS and will be available for review.
City of Grand Junction, Iowa	Economic Impacts, Transportation (Current Train Traffic)	We are trying to promote our City as a “train town” for historical, tourism, and economic development purposes, and have significant east-west double-tracked Union Pacific (UP) line that intersects with a north-south track that starts here and continues up into northwest Iowa (big for grain shippers) but also connects through Fort Dodge and up into northern Iowa and Minnesota.	Comments noted.
	Rail (Operations), Station Facilities, Routes (Alternative Route)	One option is for a route from Dubuque to Fort Dodge, Iowa, and then down to Grand Junction along the UP, and then along the UP over to Omaha [a combination of Route Alternatives 1 and 2]. The UP route [Route Alternative 2] would provide Iowans with the best access points through Clinton (Mississippi River city), Cedar Rapids (Iowa City metro area), Ames (along Ames-Des Moines business corridor), and perhaps a stop in Carroll, which has great infrastructure and a station.	Comments noted. The first option you suggest is a hybrid of Route Alternatives 1 and 2 along UP line west of Fort Dodge to Grand Junction.

Agency	Issue	Comment	Response
		Please provide more information on this project concerning its high speed rail component and any proposed stations along the routes.	The website http://www.iowadot.gov/chicago-toomaha/ provides additional information on the Study. The Tier 1 Service Level EIS will provide detailed information on the speeds evaluated and potential station locations.
	Rail (Improvements)	We have one existing highway overpass here in Greene County (US 30 on east side of Grand Junction), and we are building another in the City of Jefferson (Highway 4).	Comment noted.
	Routes (Location Specific)	Any route would be good for the state of Iowa, but I am hoping the route will either encompass Des Moines, Ames, or Fort Dodge here in Central Iowa.	Comment noted.
	Support	As a city council member in Grand Junction, I am equally supportive, encouraged, and even a bit optimistic!	Comment noted.
City of Durant, Iowa	Route (Location Specific, Route Alternative 4-A)	I like a combination of Route Alternatives 4 and 5; this allows us to shorten the route, and not have more than three station stops in Iowa.	Route Alternative 4-A, the combination of Route Alternatives 4 and 5, is under review for this Project.
	Rail (Operations)	What are the speeds being considered? Will it run on existing track? We have five crossings to consider; who will be responsible to maintain the gates and signals—the railroad or the city? We don't have room in our budget for additional expenses; currently, Iowa Interstate Railroad maintains all but one signal. How many times a day will the train go through?	The speeds being considered are 79, 90, and 110 miles per hour. The use of existing track and understanding where improvements are needed, as well as maintenance requirements/responsibility and operational frequency are being studied and will be documented in the Tier 1 Service Level EIS. A more detailed evaluation will continue during the Tier 2 Project Level NEPA process.
City of Creston, Iowa	Rail (Speed)	Unless a high speed route is established, the best manner for moving more people between Chicago and Omaha would be to add service at opposite times of the current Amtrak schedule.	The need for improvements to existing rail and supporting infrastructure to host high-speed trains is being evaluated for this Study.

Agency	Issue	Comment	Response
City of Burlington, Iowa	Rail (Upgrades, Improvements), Route (Location Specific, Route Alternative 5), Station Facilities	I believe the southern route [Route Alternative 5] best meets the needs of this Study. There recently has been a new bridge built across the Mississippi, and the rail is being upgraded within the Burlington area. Also, we have two [main] lines that are available on Route 5. Burlington has a depot that could be made available for passenger service.	Comments noted.
City of Council Bluffs, Iowa	Route (Alternatives), Route (Location Specific, Route Alternatives 4 and 4-A), Station Facilities	<p>I would like to propose potential locations for a terminus in Council Bluffs. As a historical rail center, we are concerned with the environmental impacts of routes that will add additional traffic through Council Bluffs.</p> <p>The Iowa Interstate route through the Quad Cities, Iowa City/Cedar Rapids metro area, Des Moines metro area, and ending in the Council Bluffs-Omaha metro area [Route Alternatives 4-A and 4] would serve most of Iowa's population centers. The Study should give termination of the route in Council Bluffs a strong consideration and consider the opportunity of establishing a multi-modal terminus of the passenger rail line to bus, Eppley Airport, bike system, and the interstate system. An optimum location for a terminus is the area northeast of the Lake Manawa/Iowa Highway 192 exit (west of the Iowa Interstate Intermodal Facility and north of the east I-29 and I-80 interchange) with access to both interstates, buses, and bike/pedestrian system. This area is suitable for redevelopment, and there could be some synergism with the proposed interstate reconstruction and planned improvements.</p>	<p>Review of potential station locations is part of the Study and will involve coordination with the cities of Council Bluffs and Omaha.</p> <p>Comments noted. Additional coordination will be performed to review potential terminus locations.</p>
City of Grinnell, Iowa (Mayor)	Route (Location Specific, Route Alternatives 4 and 4-A)	The obvious best choice of routes would be the Iowa Interstate RR through Iowa City to Des Moines with an intermediate stop in Grinnell [Route Alternatives 4-A and 4].	Comments noted.
	Support, Economic Impacts, Jobs,	The community of Grinnell would like to express our strong support for the proposed passenger rail route	Comments noted.

Agency	Issue	Comment	Response
	Transportation	from Chicago to Omaha via Iowa City and Des Moines. The system would attract and retain business and population, especially young people, and help Iowans connect more easily within the state as well as throughout the country. Passenger rail would expand the transportation options for all Iowans with a safe, reliable, cost-effective way to travel, especially with rising prices at the pump. Passenger rail is a smart economic investment for the state.	
	Funding the Project	With federal funds covering about 80 percent of the start-up costs, we join with the Greater Des Moines Partnership in supporting continued funding of the IADOT Passenger Rail Fund Program.	Comment noted.
	Routes (Location Specific, Route Alternative 4/4-A), Jobs, Transportation	The proposed route through Iowa City and Des Moines would give better access to Grinnell College students who come here from all over the country, and also provide better access for employees who commute from the Des Moines and Iowa City metro areas. Proximity to I-80 would facilitate access to stations, allowing the line to more conveniently serve a larger population.	Comments noted.
City of Grinnell, Iowa (Council Member)	Routes (Location Specific, Route Alternative 4), Transportation	The proposed rail system needs to be faster than a car to attract enough ridership. The former Rock Island route makes the most sense to be centrally located in Iowa and compliment the interstate system with the potential for quick access to stations.	Comments noted.
	Energy Use, Transportation, Economic Impacts, Jobs	This idea would help lower our dependency on oil and would help connect smaller Midwestern cities with larger cities and reduce the number of cars needed. Development of this system would be an economic boom to all parties involved.	

Agency	Issue	Comment	Response
City of Marengo, Iowa	Route (Location Specific, Route Alternative 4), Support	I strongly support expanded passenger rail service and Route Alternative 4 because fellow rail users are typically college students and this route would pass through the college communities of Des Moines, Grinnell, and Iowa City.	Comments noted.
City of Iowa City, Iowa	Route (Location Specific), Support	I am in full support of a passenger rail system that includes Iowa City in the route, or at least close proximity (40 miles).	Comment noted.
City of Fort Madison, Iowa	Route (Location Specific, Route Alternative 5)	I prefer Route Alternative 5 to bring benefits of development to the most economically distressed part of Iowa.	Comment noted.
City of Clinton, Iowa	Route (Location Specific, Route Alternative 3)	Route Alternative [2] looks great to me.	Comment noted.
City of Dixon, Illinois	Public Involvement, Route (Location Specific, Route Alternative 2), Support	Thank you for providing the online public meeting. With the Union Pacific (UP) mainline through Dixon, we support the UP line being the preferred route [Route Alternative 2]. We would be pleased to support future public meetings in our City.	Comments noted.
City of Center Point, Iowa	Route (Location Specific, Route Alternative 2)	Route Alternative 2 would have the most passengers coming from the Chicago area to Iowa State University. Ames still has an existing station that could be used.	Comments noted.
City of Clinton, Iowa	Route (Location Specific), Economic Impacts	I suggest that passenger rail service be established through Clinton, Iowa, with a station stop in the city. Passenger rail will bring about many economic development possibilities.	Comments noted.
Village of Yellow Springs, Ohio	Support	This is a great idea.	Comment noted.
City of Ogden, Iowa	Transportation	I feel the concept of a good rail service from Omaha to Chicago is important. It is the right thing to do for efficient transportation and would be desirable as an alternative to both driving and flying.	Comment noted.
City of Lake City, Iowa	Transportation, Support, Use of the Project	I think Chicago to Omaha rail service would be the best thing that ever happened to the Midwest, and I would love to use the system.	Comments noted.
City of Silvis, Illinois	Routes (Location Specific, Route Alternative 4), Use of the Project	The present route will be going through my small town but will serve thousands of people in the Quad City area. I cannot wait until I can again ride the train into places like Des Moines and Chicago.	Comments noted.

Agency	Issue	Comment	Response
City of Roland, Iowa	Transportation, Oppose the Project	Chicago to eastern and central Iowa is already well served by Megabus, at a fare that is less than a train, at a speed that is equivalent to a train, without any state tax dollars.	Comment noted.
City of Bettendorf, Iowa	Support, Routes (Location Specific, Route Alternative 4-A)	On behalf of the City of Bettendorf, we want to convey our strong support of passenger rail from Chicago-Omaha via Route Alternative 4-A. This corridor has been analyzed for the last decade through the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative and subsequent studies and repeatedly demonstrated its technical, economic, and environmental feasibility.	Comments noted.
	Transportation, Air Quality	This route has the greatest population and potential riders. Its proximity to I-80 will reduce traffic congestion and air emissions by providing a passenger transportation alternative to cars along this corridor. The proposed route is consistent with the 2040 Quad City Area Transportation Long Range Plan (June 2012), Region 9 Long Range Plan (June 2009), and the Bi-State Regional Transit Development Plan (2011), and is also consistent with the 2011 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the Bi-State Region.	Comments noted.
City of Mount Vernon, Iowa	Routes (Location Specific, Route Alternative 2, Route Alternative 4), Jobs, Use of the Project, Transportation	The ideal route would connect Omaha to Des Moines, Iowa City, Cedar Rapids, Clinton, then through the northern suburbs of Chicago to downtown Chicago. This would be the blue route [Route Alternative 4] connecting to the red route [Route Alternative 2] at Cedar Rapids through a connection along the Cedar Rapids and Iowa City Railway (CRANDIC) line (which would be a very popular trip for commuters). University of Iowa students would provide for a lot of traffic to the northern suburbs of Chicago.	Comments noted.

2.2 KEY COMMENTS

Federal and state resource agencies provided guidance concerning potential environmental requirements, including permitting and approvals needed for the Project. The following is a brief summary of federal and state resource agency concerns:

- FAA indicated that a formal notice and airspace review may be required.
- The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) had a safety concern regarding whether the proposed high-speed passenger rail service would be on dedicated tracks or share the tracks with freight rail.
- USEPA recommended that the analysis focus on improvements needed for rail as well as support facilities and stations, and that it consider impacts on existing passenger rail service from Chicago through Omaha to the west coast. USEPA noted that the Tier 1 Service Level EIS should address potential impacts on wetlands and other waters of the U.S. protected under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, growth-related development impacts, community and wildlife impacts such as noise/vibration and safety, and cumulative impacts on resources of concern.
- USFWS noted that coordination would be needed concerning potential impacts on threatened or endangered species and their habitat. Of particular concern is the Hine's emerald dragonfly; the closest habitat is located approximately 3 miles from Route Alternative 4 and 7 miles from Route Alternative 5. Wetland impacts would need to be assessed, as would noise and vibration impacts on wildlife, especially migratory birds.
- Illinois DNR commented that it has a database that could be accessed through an agreement that would assist in the review of potential environmental impacts of alternatives.
- NDEQ indicated that several permits and approvals would likely be needed for the Project, including water quality, air quality, waste, and wetlands.
- NDNR noted that impacts to floodways/floodplains in Nebraska would need to be assessed and addressed via a floodplain development permit.
- IA SHPO indicated that based on information provided to date, it was unclear whether any historic properties in Iowa would be affected by any of the considered route alternatives. The agency noted that a section of Route Alternative 4 between Davenport and Iowa City is one of the earliest railroad lines constructed in Iowa, with minimal change in alignment since construction in 1855; they also noted two historic railroad events along the section.

Project requirements will be reviewed and documented during development of the Tier 1 Service Level EIS. However, only conceptual design is contemplated during this portion of the Project, whereas detailed design would be prepared during Tier 2. Consequently, total impacts, specific requirements, and necessary permits would not be known until Tier 2. Continued coordination would be conducted with federal, state, and local agencies during Tier 2 to understand all required environmental clearances for the Project.

Representatives from local municipalities and counties generally noted their support for the Project, primarily for economic purposes, with a preference for route alternatives within or near their jurisdiction. For those instances where route alternatives did not include the

representatives' local municipalities and counties, a combination of route alternatives or a connection line from their municipalities to the route alternative was proposed as a solution for local access to the proposed passenger rail system. Route Alternative 4 or 4-A through Des Moines, Iowa City, and Quad Cities was the preferred route alternative based on a small sample size of municipal respondents; some respondents specifically recommended a route alternative, whereas others just identified the cities along the route alternative.