CHAPTER 5
NEXT STEPS

As stated in Chapter 1 and throughout this Tier 1 Final EIS, public, resource agency, and tribal input will be considered to complete the Tier 1 process. Following the Tier 1 process, Tier 2 studies and NEPA documentation must occur before final design and implementation can be completed. This chapter describes how FRA, Iowa DOT, and Illinois DOT plan to complete the Tier 1 process and the additional analysis required for Tier 2 studies, NEPA documentation, and design needed to advance the proposed Project.

5.1 TIER 1 COMPLETION

The Tier 1 Draft EIS was issued to solicit input on the preferred alternative from the public, resource agencies, tribes, and Native American groups. Comments received on the Draft EIS during the comment period were used to prepare and issue this Tier 1 Final EIS that addresses these comments. Subsequent to distribution of the Final EIS, a Record of Decision (ROD) will be developed, documenting the decision of selecting the preferred alternative and the process for accommodating mitigation measures that will be implemented in subsequent phases of the Project. Because this is a Tier 1 NEPA document, most mitigation measures represent commitments for further coordination with the public, resource agencies, tribes, and Native American groups during Tier 2 studies as more detailed information on the design of the Project is developed.

5.2 TIER 2 SECTIONS

As funding becomes available, Tier 2 studies and NEPA documentation would be advanced for logical sections of the proposed Project. That is, one or more sections could be developed as individual projects that would comprise components of the Chicago to Council Bluffs-Omaha Regional Passenger Rail System Program. Separate Tier 2 NEPA documentation would be prepared for each of the sections identified; the specific class of NEPA document has not yet been determined for each of the Tier 2 sections. Each of the sections would have independent utility and, therefore, could be improved with or without improvements to other sections. Likewise, each of the sections could be implemented in phases, as discussed further in Section 5.6. Preliminary design and NEPA documentation would be conducted in support of those Tier 2 studies because such details are necessary to identify the resources that would be impacted by construction activities and on a long-term basis. At this time, the following Tier 2 sections are anticipated for full implementation, but these sections may be combined, modified in the future, or revisited based on available funding:

- **Chicago to Aurora, Illinois, Track Improvements –** This Tier 2 NEPA document would include the evaluation of the track, drainage structure, roadway crossing, and train-control system improvements necessary to provide capacity for additional passenger trains along this section of the alignment in Illinois. Potential station platform, layover, and maintenance facility improvements at Chicago Union Station will also be included.

- **Aurora, Illinois, to the Wyanet Connection near Wyanet, Illinois, Track Improvements -** This Tier 2 NEPA document would include the evaluation of the track, drainage structure, roadway crossing, station, and train-control system improvements necessary to provide capacity and to increase speeds to up to 110 mph for additional passenger trains along this section of the alignment in Illinois.
- **Wyanet Connection near Wyanet, Illinois, to Iowa City, Iowa, Track Improvements** – This Tier 2 NEPA document would include the evaluation of the track, drainage structure, roadway crossing, and train-control system improvements necessary to provide capacity and to increase speeds to up to 110 mph for additional passenger trains along this section of the alignment in Illinois and Iowa.
- **Mississippi River Bridge –** This Tier 2 NEPA document would include the evaluation of the Government Bridge across the Mississippi River between Rock Island, Illinois, and Davenport, Iowa, for the capacity and capability necessary for additional passenger trains.
- **Iowa City, Iowa, Station –** This Tier 2 NEPA document would include the evaluation of the potential acquisition and/or rehabilitation of the existing former Rock Island Route station in Iowa City, including platform, parking, and site improvements. Should acquisition or rehabilitation not be possible, an evaluation of alternative station locations and designs would be conducted in lieu of the analysis of rehabilitating the existing station.
- **Iowa City, Iowa, Layover and Maintenance Facility –** This Tier 2 EPA document would include the evaluation of passenger train layover and maintenance facility location and design alternatives.
- **Iowa City to Short Line Yard, Des Moines, Iowa, Track Improvements** – This Tier 2 NEPA document would include the evaluation of the track, drainage structure, roadway crossing, and train-control system improvements necessary to provide capacity and to increase speeds to up to 110 mph for additional passenger trains along this section of the alignment in Iowa.
- **Grinnell, Iowa, Station –** This Tier 2 NEPA document would include the evaluation of the potential acquisition and/or rehabilitation of the existing former Rock Island Route station in Grinnell, including platform, parking, and site improvements. Should acquisition or rehabilitation not be possible, an evaluation of alternative station locations and designs would be conducted in lieu of the analysis of rehabilitating the existing station.
- **Des Moines, Iowa, Short Line Yard Improvements –** This Tier 2 NEPA document would include the evaluation of alignment and design alternatives necessary to provide the capacity for additional passenger trains through the Short Line Yard terminal area. It would also include the evaluation of the track, drainage structure, roadway crossing, and train-control system improvements necessary to provide capacity and to increase speeds to up to 70 mph through Des Moines for additional passenger trains along the alignment in Iowa.

- **Des Moines, Iowa, Station** – This Tier 2 NEPA document would include the evaluation of the potential acquisition and/or rehabilitation of the existing former Rock Island Route station in Des Moines, including platform, parking, and site improvements. Should acquisition or rehabilitation not be possible, an evaluation of alternative station locations and designs would be conducted in lieu of the analysis of rehabilitating the existing station.
- **Des Moines, Iowa, Layover and Maintenance Facility –** This Tier 2 NEPA document would include the evaluation of passenger train layover and maintenance facility location and design alternatives.
- **Des Moines to Council Bluffs, Iowa, Track Improvements –** This Tier 2 NEPA document would include the evaluation of the track, drainage structure, roadway crossing, and train-control system improvements necessary to provide capacity and to increase speeds to up to 110 mph for additional passenger trains along this section of the alignment in Iowa.
- **Atlantic, Iowa, Station –** This Tier 2 NEPA document would include the evaluation of the potential acquisition and/or rehabilitation of the existing former Rock Island Route station in Atlantic, including platform, parking, and site improvements. Should acquisition or rehabilitation not be possible, an evaluation of alternative station locations and designs would be conducted in lieu of the analysis of rehabilitating the existing station.
- **Council Bluffs, Iowa, Station –** This Tier 2 NEPA document would include the evaluation of alternative station locations and designs in Council Bluffs, including the potential acquisition and/or rehabilitation of the existing former Rock Island Route station in Council Bluffs, including platform, parking, and site improvements.
- **Omaha, Nebraska/Council Bluffs, Iowa, Layover and Maintenance Facilities –** This Tier 2 NEPA document would include the evaluation of passenger train layover and maintenance facility location and design alternatives.
- **Council Bluffs, Iowa, to Omaha, Nebraska, Track Improvements –** This Tier 2 NEPA document would include the evaluation of alignment and design alternatives necessary to provide the capacity for additional passenger trains through the Council Bluff-Omaha terminal area. It would also include the evaluation of the track, drainage structure, roadway crossing, and train-control system improvements necessary to provide capacity and to increase speeds to up to 40 mph for additional passenger trains along this section of the alignment in Iowa and Nebraska.
- **Missouri River Bridge –** This Tier 2 NEPA document would include the evaluation of alternative bridges and bridge locations across the Missouri River between Council Bluffs, Iowa, and Omaha, Nebraska, for the capacity and capability necessary for additional passenger trains anticipated by the Project.
- **Omaha, Nebraska, Station** – This Tier 2 NEPA document would include the evaluation of the alternative station locations and designs in Omaha, including the potential acquisition and/or rehabilitation of the existing former Burlington Route station in Omaha, including platform, parking, and site improvements.

5.3 ADDITIONAL STUDIES

Multiple NEPA documents would be developed during the Tier 2 NEPA process but are anticipated to be a mixture of Environmental Assessments for areas such as the Missouri River crossing between Council Bluffs, Iowa, and Omaha, Nebraska, and Categorical Exclusions for areas with minimal effects. Public involvement would occur during Tier 2 studies, primarily through NEPA, but there may also be separate coordination regarding the design of stations and other railroad facilities. Public input would be considered in the NEPA and design processes.

In addition to NEPA documentation for evaluation of the Tier 2 sections, numerous studies would be completed as part of the Tier 2 NEPA process to determine the specific nature and quantity of impacts. The analysis would consider avoidance and minimization of impacts on sensitive environmental resources. For each Tier 2 section, the following studies may be required:

- Detailed local-level alternatives analysis
- Wetland delineations and identification of Section 404 permitting requirements
- Cultural resources surveys and Section 106 consultation
- Threatened and endangered species surveys
- Engineering surveys
- Noise and vibration analysis
- Section 4(f) evaluation
- Phase I Environmental Site Assessments
- Air emissions analysis in non-attainment areas
- Station-area traffic studies

5.4 MITIGATION PLANNING

In addition to the Tier 2 studies, mitigation for impacts would also be developed. Anticipated types of mitigation include wetland mitigation, construction timing restrictions for threatened and endangered species, implementation of a stormwater pollution and prevention plan, implementation of best management practices, and documentation of historic railroad structures and other historic properties. Specific mitigation during the Tier 2 process would be determined in consultation with the federal or state agency responsible for assessing impacts on a given resource. As needed, formal consultation would occur with resource agencies to address obligations to minimize and mitigate impacts, such as those obligations under Section 7 of the ESA and Section 106 of the NHPA. For example, a Section 106 PA could be developed after the Tier 1 process that would address the process of consultation between FRA, tribes and Native American groups, Iowa DOT, Illinois DOT, and the Illinois, Iowa, and Nebraska SHPOs, as well as other consulting parties, for meeting historic preservation compliance requirements.

5.5 PROJECT COMMITMENTS

This Tier 1 Final EIS identified mitigation commitments for each relevant resource section in Chapter 3. During the Tier 1 process, the primary commitments have been to work with the public, resource agencies, tribes, and Native American groups to identify specific mitigation measures during the Tier 2 process and subsequently implement those measures.

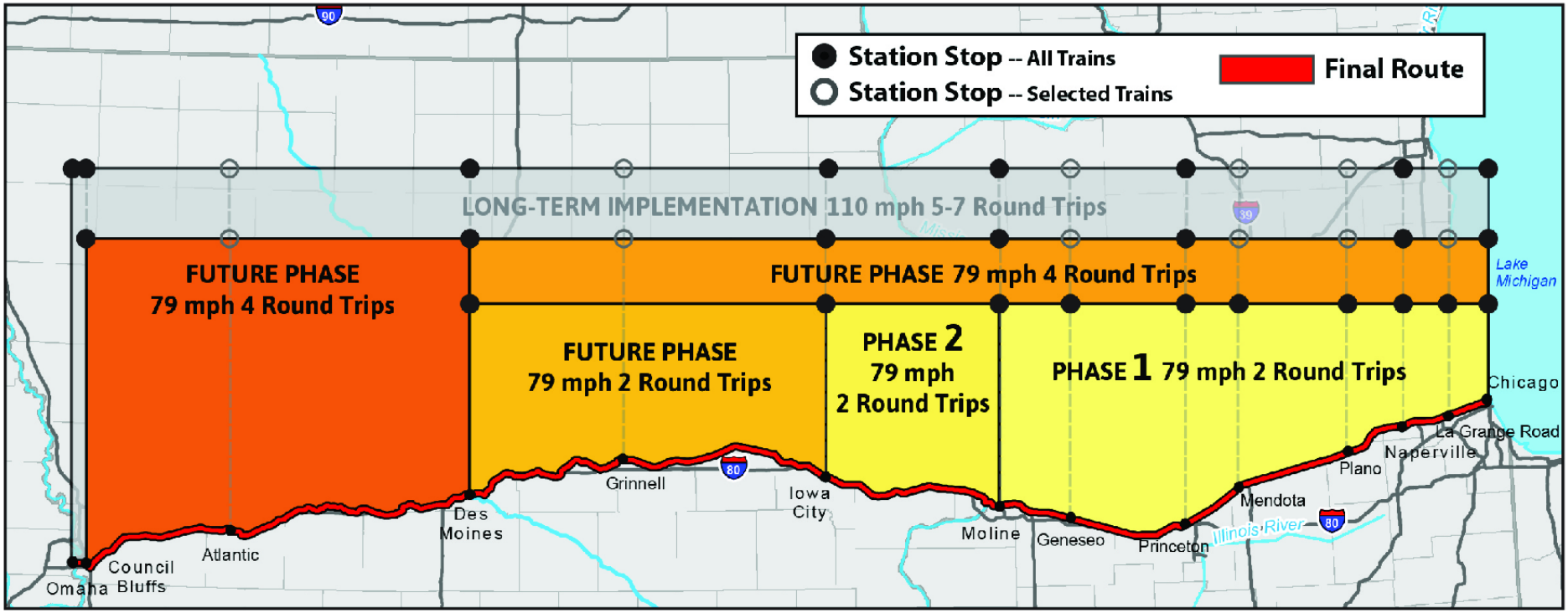
5.6 PHASED IMPLEMENTATION

Based on experience with other passenger rail projects and on service development planning for this Project, Iowa DOT anticipates that the Chicago to Council Bluffs-Omaha Project would be incrementally funded and that construction and operations would be implemented in phases. Within the approximate 20-year planning horizon of the SDP, initial and successive phases have been considered through the interim implementation phase, which is the last phase that would be implemented using existing SDP information. Funding initially could be allocated for improvements of facilities to support speeds lower than a maximum of 110 mph, or to improve/construct particular stations and maintenance and layover facilities. Service initially could start with fewer stations, at lower speeds, and with fewer round-trips. As more funding is allocated to the Project, further improvements could be implemented to expand service. The specific phasing of the proposed Project is not known at this time but will be determined as funding is allocated to the proposed Project. Figure 5-1 illustrates the proposed implementation phases.

Based on current service development planning, the proposed Project is anticipated to commence with two round-trips per day from Chicago to Moline at a maximum speed of 79 mph (Phase 1); Phase 1 is funded and would occur independently as part of the Quad Cities Expansion Program passenger rail project. Phase 2 would include two round-trips per day between Chicago and Iowa City. The Project would then be extended westward to Des Moines, with two and then four round-trips per day between Chicago and Des Moines. The last phase of the proposed Project that would be implemented within the 20-year planning horizon of the SDP would be four round-trips per day between Chicago and Council Bluffs. The proposed schedule developed for the SDP for these phases includes the following estimated timeframes:

- Chicago to Moline (two round-trips) – construction 2014-2015; service begins December 31, 2015
- Chicago to Iowa City (two round-trips) – construction 2015-2016; service begins 2017
- Chicago to Des Moines (two round-trips) – construction 2020-2021; service begins 2022
- Chicago to Des Moines (four round-trips) – equipment procurement 2024; service begins 2025
- Chicago to Council Bluffs (four round-trips) – construction 2028-2029; service begins 2030

After additional service development planning is completed in the future, the service would be extended to Omaha; currently estimated to commence in 2040. Ultimately, the speed and the frequency of round-trips would increase with subsequent implementation phases up to a maximum of 110 mph and up to seven round-trips per day from Chicago to Des Moines, with five of the round-trips extending from Chicago to Omaha. Full implementation would be realized over many years of phased implementation as federal and state funds are allocated to the proposed Project.



Iowa Department of Transportation

Iowa Connections
Get on Board

Implementation Phases

Chicago to Council Bluffs - Omaha
Regional Passenger Rail System Planning Study

DATE
May 2013

FIGURE
5-1