



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

Environmental Impact Statement

FRA is the lead federal agency and the Iowa Department of Transportation (Iowa DOT) is the joint-lead state agency for the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Chicago to Council Bluffs-Omaha Regional Passenger Rail System Planning Study. FRA and Iowa DOT used a tiered environmental process for the Project. Tiering is a phased environmental review process that is commonly used in the development of complex projects. With a tiered approach, the Tier 1 NEPA document evaluates impacts of a broad-scale project with focus on more qualitative than quantitative impacts on specific resources. Following completion of the Tier 1 NEPA document and the associated decision document, Tier 2 NEPA documents are developed to evaluate quantitatively the environmental impacts within one or more specific logical sections or phases of the Project, which would be developed through separate but related projects.

Iowa DOT proposes to expand intercity passenger rail service from Chicago, Illinois, through Iowa, to Council Bluffs, Iowa, and Omaha, Nebraska. The Chicago to Omaha Corridor (Corridor) is approximately 500 miles long and consists of tracks currently owned and operated by four rail carriers between Chicago and Omaha: BNSF Railway (BNSF), Iowa Interstate Railroad (IAIS), Union Pacific Railroad (UP), and Amtrak. The Project would include construction of new main track, sidings, and connection tracks, as well as upgrades to existing track to enable faster passenger train speeds and the desired passenger train service reliability and safety. The Project also includes improvements to railroad crossings, signals, and stations.

The EIS Documents considered and evaluated several route alternatives along existing railroads connecting the Chicago and the Omaha/Council Bluffs metropolitan area.

Route Alternative 4-A

Route Alternative 4-A has been identified as the only reasonable and feasible alternative to carry forward in the EIS process as the Preferred Alternative for the Corridor. Route 4-A meets the purpose and need; has low construction complexity and low construction costs; has modest grade crossing complexity; does not require a new bridge over the Mississippi River; is the shortest route alternative, serves a large population; and has direct connection to Chicago's Union Station.

Relationship to Quad Cities

In October 2011, FRA agreed to a phased implementation approach for the Chicago to Quad Cities Expansion Project. The proposed routes for this Project were considered in addition to those improvements for the Chicago to Quad Cities Expansion Program implemented by Illinois DOT, which includes a connection to join BNSF and IAIS track near Wyanet, Illinois. Construction for the Chicago to Quad Cities service is anticipated to commence in 2013 and the service to be operational by 2015.



Final Environmental Impact Statement

The Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was signed for the Chicago to Council Bluffs-Omaha Regional Passenger Rail System Planning Study by the FRA on May 24, 2013. The Notice of Availability for the EIS is in the June 7, 2013 Federal Register published by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, which can be found at http://www.regulations.gov/#!documentDetail;D=EPA_FRDOC_0001-14195.

FRA executed a [Record of Decision](#) (ROD) on August 2, 2013 advancing this project.

Final EIS documents for download:

(Note: many of these files are very large and could take up to several minutes to download.)

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Draft EIS documents for download:

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