Texas-Oklahoma Passenger Rail Study Corridor, South Texas to Oklahoma City – Service Level (Tier 1) Environmental Impact Statement

Environmental Impact Statement

FRA is the lead federal agency and the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) is the lead state agency for the preparation of a Service Development Plan (SDP) and accompanying Tier 1 or Service-Level Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Texas-Oklahoma Passenger Rail Study (TOPRS). The goal of the Study is to establish a long-term strategy for passenger rail service along an 850-mile corridor that runs north-south and roughly parallels Interstate 35 (I-35).

The EIS does not grant approval for construction. Instead, it selects alternatives, for specific geographic sections along the corridor, to be carried forward in a more detailed, Project-Level EIS in the future.

Final Tier 1 EIS and Record of Decision

FRA prepared the Final EIS/Record of Decision (ROD) in accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality's regulations for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (40 CFR parts 1500-1508), FRA's Procedures for Considering Environmental Impacts (64 Federal Register [FR] 28545, May 26, 1999), and Section 1311 of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (Pub. L. 114-94).

On October 23, 2017, FRA issued the Final EIS/ROD for TOPRS. The ROD formally identifies seven Selected Alternatives that will serve as the framework for future investment in new and improved conventional and high-speed passenger rail service in three regions between Oklahoma City and South Texas.

- **Northern Section – Edmond, OK to Dallas and Fort Worth, TX:** One route alternative and service type for conventional rail is the Preferred Alternative.
- **Central Section – Dallas and Fort Worth to San Antonio, TX:** Three high-speed rail routes are the Preferred Alternatives.
- **Southern Section – San Antonio to South Texas (Corpus Christi, Brownsville, Laredo, and the Rio Grande Valley), With the Option to Extend to Monterrey, Mexico:** One high-speed and two higher-speed routes are the Preferred Alternatives.

Notice of issuance of the Final EIS and execution of the ROD was published in the *Federal Register* on November 3, 2017 by the Environmental Protection Agency.

The notice can be found at: https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2017-11-03/pdf/2017-23967.pdf

Final Tier 1 EIS/ROD

- Texas-Oklahoma Passenger Rail Study Service-Level FEIS ROD-MAIN TEXT
- Texas-Oklahoma Passenger Rail Study Service-Level FEIS ROD Appendix A Public Hearing Distribution List
- Texas-Oklahoma Passenger Rail Study Service-Level FEIS ROD Appendix B Public Hearing Notices
- Texas-Oklahoma Passenger Rail Study Service-Level FEIS ROD Appendix C Public Hearing Materials
- Texas-Oklahoma Passenger Rail Study Service-Level FEIS ROD Appendix D Public Hearing SignIn Sheets
- Texas-Oklahoma Passenger Rail Study Service-Level FEIS ROD Appendix E Public Hearing Transcripts Certification
- Texas-Oklahoma Passenger Rail Study Service-Level FEIS ROD Appendix F DEIS Comments Received
- Texas-Oklahoma Passenger Rail Study Service-Level FEIS ROD Appendix G Comment Response Matrix
- Texas-Oklahoma Passenger Rail Study Service-Level FEIS ROD Appendix H Revised DEIS Sections

Draft Tier 1 EIS

FRA published a Notice of Intent to produce the EIS on March 13, 2013, officially starting the EIS process for the Tier 1 analysis, and held public scoping meetings in the summer of 2013.

Draft Environmental Impact Statement:

- Texas-Oklahoma Passenger Rail Study Service-Level DEIS-MAIN TEXT
- Texas-Oklahoma Passenger Rail Study Service-Level DEIS Appendix A Final Scoping Report
- Texas-Oklahoma Passenger Rail Study Service-Level DEIS Appendix B Alternatives Criteria Memo
- Texas-Oklahoma Passenger Rail Study Service-Level DEIS Appendix C Route Alternatives Analysis
- Texas-Oklahoma Passenger Rail Study Service-Level DEIS Appendix D Draft Alternatives Analysis
- Texas-Oklahoma Passenger Rail Study Service-Level DEIS Appendix E Air Quality Technical Study
- Texas-Oklahoma Passenger Rail Study Service-Level DEIS Appendix F Water Quality Study
- Texas-Oklahoma Passenger Rail Study Service-Level DEIS Appendix G Natural Eco Systems Technical Study
- Texas-Oklahoma Passenger Rail Study Service-Level DEIS Appendix H T-E Species Technical Study
- Texas-Oklahoma Passenger Rail Study Service-Level DEIS Appendix I Aesthetics Visual Technical Study
- Texas-Oklahoma Passenger Rail Study Service-Level DEIS Appendix J Historic Architectural Technical Study

- Texas-Oklahoma Passenger Rail Study Service-Level DEIS Appendix K Archaeological Sites Technical Study
- Texas-Oklahoma Passenger Rail Study Service-Level DEIS Appendix L Transportation Technical Study
- Texas-Oklahoma Passenger Rail Study Service-Level DEIS Appendix M Demographics Population Data

TxDOT has additional information about the project on their Texas-Oklahoma Passenger Rail Study website.

Background:

The 850-mile TOPRS Corridor extends from Oklahoma City in the north through Dallas, Fort Worth, Austin, and San Antonio to destinations in south Texas including Laredo, Corpus Christi, and Brownsville. Existing passenger rail service includes Amtrak intercity service via the Heartland Flyer (Oklahoma City to Fort Worth), Texas Eagle (Fort Worth to San Antonio), and Sunset Limited (Los Angeles to New Orleans via San Antonio), regional/commuter rail service via the Trinity Railway Express (Dallas to Fort Worth), and Capital MetroRail (Austin) operated by Texas operators. Intercity passenger rail between Oklahoma City and San Antonio provides service to cities and communities along the I-35 corridor.

The I-35 corridor, running from Duluth, MN to Laredo, TX, is a congressionally identified corridor of national significance and is one of the fastest growing regions in the U.S., running through 6 of the largest urban areas and 9 of the 50 largest cities in the U.S. International truck traffic demand, intercity truck traffic demand, and passenger travel demand compete for highway capacity, creating substantial congestion inside the urban areas through which the highway runs. Projections for the Dallas/Fort Worth to San Antonio portion of the corridor show average speeds along I-35 would drop from 55 to 15 miles per hour by 2035.

Transportation plans for Texas and Oklahoma have identified substantial population growth within the Study area. Texas population is expected to grow by 39% between 2010 to 2035. The population of the Texas Triangle (a region of Texas bounded by Dallas, Houston, and San Antonio) has been growing rapidly over the last several decades, with growth rates as high as 27% in some areas. Texas' population growth makes it the second most populous state in the U.S.—with most of the State's population centered in the eastern half of the State, along and east of the I-35 corridor. Oklahoma City is expected to see a population increase of 25% from 2000 to 2035, with intensified population densities in the metropolitan area.

Populations within the Study area are also aging, with the percentage of people who are 65 years old or older expected to grow from about 13% to nearly 20% by 2030 in Oklahoma, and from 10% to over 17% in Texas. It is expected that this aging population will rely more heavily on public transportation such as intercity rail. Long-range transportation plans in Texas and Oklahoma have identified the need to improve passenger rail services to meet the future demand brought on by these changes in population.

Permitting Dashboard

The U.S. Permitting Dashboard is an online tool for Federal agencies, project sponsors, and interested members of the public to track the Federal government's environmental review and authorization processes for large or complex infrastructure projects. The Dashboard is part of a government-wide effort to improve coordination, transparency, and accountability. A link to this project's page on the Dashboard is below.

- **Permitting Dashboard Link**