

APPENDIX K: PUBLIC MEETING SUMMARIES



GreatLakesRail.org

Chicago – Detroit / Pontiac Passenger Rail Corridor Program

TIER 1 Environmental Impact Statement **SCOPING SUMMARY REPORT**

DECEMBER 2012 REVISED APRIL 2014



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<http://greatlakesrail.org/~grtlakes/index.php/site/documents-and-resources>

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1 INTRODUCTION

The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), in partnership with the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) and the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), and in association with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), completed the scoping phase for the Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that is being prepared for the Chicago-Detroit/Pontiac Passenger Rail Corridor Program (Program). This Scoping Report describes the process and summarizes the comments that were received from government agencies, project stakeholders, and the public.

The scoping process as described by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) was completed to support the development of the Tier 1 EIS. Scoping facilitates public and agency participation and sets the framework for input throughout the development of the EIS. The scoping process for this Program followed the scoping guidelines within the CEQ Regulations, 40 CFR § 1501.7, which state that “there shall be an early and open process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed and for identifying the significant issues related to the proposed action.” Under 64 Federal Register (FR) 28545, Procedures for Considering Environmental Impacts, Section 13(c)(2), FRA requires the use of a scoping process and references Section 1501.7 of the CEQ regulations.

The scoping process is intended to identify agency and public concerns; clearly define the environmental issues, present the range of alternatives to be examined in the Tier 1 Draft EIS; and identify and address related environmental requirements of other federal agencies, as well as state and local agencies. Scoping helps identify the key concerns of agencies and the public, thereby prioritizing all potential issues and allowing sufficient study of those deemed most important. An effective scoping process can help reduce unnecessary paperwork and time delays under NEPA by clearly identifying all relevant procedural requirements that need to be addressed in the Tier 1 DEIS.

This report will focus on the scoping process and will not duplicate other background information for the Program including the Purpose and Need statement and the Alternatives Evaluation Process and Criteria Technical Memorandum. The Scoping Report will be summarized within the Comments and Coordination Chapter of the Tier 1 EIS. The full Scoping Report will also be included in the Tier 1 EIS as an appendix.

2 MEETING OVERVIEW

This section describes the dates, locations and attendance at the agency and public scoping meetings. Also, it includes a summary of the meeting invitations, the online scoping meeting and third party communications. Appendix A includes agency scoping materials and Appendix B includes public scoping materials including meeting notices, handouts and presentations. Appendix C shows the press releases and news articles that were run by various media outlets regarding the Program and the public meetings.



2.1 Agency Scoping Meetings

Three agency scoping meetings were held in September 2012 as shown in Table 1. One meeting was held in each Program state near or at the same location as the public session. Meeting attendees included representatives from local, regional, state and federal government agencies. The conversations with these agencies were essential to identifying issues early on in the process and coordinating efforts and resources that are important to the Program's success. In total, 17 agencies were represented at the meetings. Most agencies participated in person, while some agencies participated via teleconference.

Table 1: Agency Scoping Meeting Locations and Dates

Date	Location	Agencies Represented
September 12, 2012 1 - 3 p.m.	HNTB Chicago Office 111 N Canal St, Suite 1250 Chicago, IL 60606	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers U.S. Coast Guard, Marine Safety Unit U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Federal Railroad Administration Federal Highway Administration Michigan Dept. of Transportation Illinois Dept. of Transportation Forest Preserve District of Cook County
September 13, 2012 10 a.m. - 12 p.m.	Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission 6100 Southport Road Portage, IN 46369	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service US National Park Service, Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore Indiana Dept. of Transportation Michigan Dept. of Transportation Indiana Dept. of Natural Resources Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission
September 26, 2012 1 - 3 p.m.	Double Tree Hotel 5801 Southfield Expressway Dearborn, MI 48228	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Michigan Dept. of Transportation Michigan Dept. of Environmental Quality Michigan Dept. of Natural Resources Michigan State Historic Preservation Office Wayne County Airport Authority

At the meetings, a PowerPoint presentation was given that provided an overview of the Program; discussed the Program's purpose and need statement; showed the area of analysis for the preliminary alternatives; described the alternatives screening process; and discussed the resource analysis methodologies. After the presentation, a roundtable discussion was held to give agencies an opportunity to ask questions and identify their interests and issues of concern. Several handouts were provided at the meetings including an agency scoping document, a handout that summarized the methodology for analyzing the socioeconomic and environmental resources, and the Program's summer 2012 newsletter.



2.2 Public Scoping Meetings

Four public scoping meetings were held as shown in Table 2. The meetings were open to the public from 4 to 7 p.m. A presentation was given at 4:30 p.m. and repeated at 6 p.m. In total, 277 people signed in at the public meetings.

The meeting locations were selected for their proximity to the highway and/or bus and rail routes. All facilities were ADA accessible. Spanish and Arabic interpreters were provided at the Dearborn, Mich., meeting and a Spanish interpreter was provided at the Kalamazoo, Mich., meeting. Interpreters were chosen for these sites based on area demographics and the need for interpreters at previous MDOT meetings in these communities.

Everyone in attendance was encouraged to sign in at the welcome table. Display boards and take-home materials were provided that summarized the program and the EIS scoping process. Program staff was on hand to answer questions. A question and answer session followed each presentation and attendees were encouraged to share their comments and concerns at that time or through the written comment forms. They were informed about program materials, additional opportunities to provide comments online or via mail, and ways to stay informed.

Table 2: Public Scoping Meeting Locations and Dates

Date	Location	Attendance
September 12, 2012 4:00 - 7:00 p.m.	Chicago Union Station Union Gallery Room 500 West Jackson Boulevard Chicago, IL 60661	88
September 13, 2012 4:00 - 7:00 p.m.	Michigan City/City Hall 100 East Michigan Boulevard Michigan City, IN 46360	78
September 26, 2012 4:00 - 7:00 p.m.	Double Tree by Hilton Hotel 5801 Southfield Expressway Dearborn, MI 48228	67
September 27, 2012 4:00 - 7:00 p.m.	Radisson Plaza Hotel 100 West Michigan Avenue Kalamazoo, MI 49007	44
Total	All locations	277

2.3 Online Scoping Meeting

A self-guided scoping meeting was provided on the Program's website at www.GreatLakesRail.org. The online meeting provided the same information that was displayed at the public meetings. An electronic copy of the online



meeting was available for download and printing. As of the October 15, 2012, the deadline for scoping comments, the website was viewed 1,375 times and the online meeting page was viewed 283 times.

2.4 Meeting Invitations

This section describes the invitations and notices that were used to encourage attendance at the agency and public scoping meetings.

2.4.1 Agency Meeting Invitations

Invitations to the agency scoping meetings were sent to relevant resource agencies in Michigan, Illinois, and Indiana. The first invite was a ‘Save the Date’ email that was sent on August 15, 2012. The invitation announced the start of the Program and provided the dates of the upcoming agency scoping meetings.

A second invitation was sent on September 5, 2012. This invitation included an agency scoping document that included information about the Program, its Purpose and Need statement and maps showing the area of analysis that would be used to develop preliminary route alternatives for the Chicago-Detroit/Pontiac corridor (Corridor). MDOT also made follow-up phone calls to encourage agency attendance at the meetings.

2.4.2 Public Meeting Notices

Various types of meeting notices were used to communicate the dates, times and locations of the public meetings. Notices included:

- Flyers - Meeting flyers were created in three languages – English, Spanish and Arabic. The flyers were posted on the program website, displayed at train stations and emailed to agencies and stakeholders.
- E-blasts - Four separate e-blast notices were sent to the program’s master contact list including: a save the date invitation, an official meeting notice, a meeting reminder, and a comment due date reminder.
- Press releases - Media sources in Illinois, Indiana and Michigan were notified of the meetings.
- Community calendars - Meeting notices were posted on community calendars in towns and cities where the meetings were held.
- Social media – MDOT, INDOT and IDOT posted notices on their Facebook and Twitter accounts.

2.5 Third Party Communications

Third party communicators were identified to help distribute information about the public meetings. Third-party communicators included groups such as chambers of commerce, municipalities, transit agencies, advocacy organizations, metropolitan planning organizations, municipal leagues and organizations that represent environmental justice and Title VI populations.



The meeting flyers in all three languages and text for social media were provided to third party groups. The third party communicators subsequently distributed the information to their membership via social media outlets, electronic newsletters, and postings on their websites and blogs.

Based on a survey of public meeting participants, emails from third party communicators proved to be an effective way to get the word out about the meetings. Table 3 shows the list of confirmed third party communicators that helped distribute meeting information.

Table 3: Third Party Organizations that Posted Public Meeting Information

Organizations		
Active Transportation Alliance, Chicago, IL	Illinois Chamber of Commerce	Northwest Indiana Regional Planning Commission
Ann Arbor Chamber of Commerce	Illinois Hispanic Chamber of Commerce	Riders for Better Transit, Chicago
Chesterton/Duneland Chamber of Commerce	Indiana High Speed Rail Association	South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association, IL
Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning	Metropolitan Planning Council, Chicago	Southeast Environmental Task Force, Chicago
Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce, Chicago	Michigan Association of Counties	Southwest Michigan Planning Commission
Chinatown Chamber of Commerce, Chicago, IL	Michigan Association of Rail Passengers	Three Oaks Chamber of Commerce, MI
City of East Chicago, IN	Michigan Municipal League	Town of Chesterton, IN
City of Gary, IN	Michigan's Great Southwest Sustainable Business Forum	Transportation Riders United, MI
City of Hammond, IN	Midwest High Speed Rail Association	U.S. 12 Heritage Trail, MI
City of Michigan City, IN	Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission	Unity Foundation of LaPorte County, IN
Federal Railroad Administration	Near South Planning Board, Chicago	University of Illinois Chicago
Greater LaPorte Economic Development Corporation, IN	New Buffalo (Harbor County) Chamber of Commerce	Urban League of Northwest Indiana
Hoosier Environmental Council, IN	Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District	World Business Chicago



3 COMMENT SUMMARY

This section summarizes the agency and public comments that were received. The comment period for scoping ended October 15, 2012. A total of 705 comments were received. Appendix D includes a list of all agency and public scoping comments that were submitted during the scoping period. Appendix E shows all the government agency and stakeholder organization letters that were mailed or emailed to MDOT.

3.1 Comments by Source

Table 4 shows the source of the 705 comments that were submitted during the scoping process. The online comment form that was provided on the Program's website generated 96 comments. Eighteen individuals submitted a written comment form at the public meetings. Many of the participants who attended the public scoping meetings also asked questions after the presentation or spoke with Program staff directly at the meetings. Sixteen letters were sent via mail or email directly to MDOT.

The Midwest High Speed Rail Association collected comments from their membership and then forwarded the comments to the Program team. They generated 575 comments. The vast majority of the comments utilized a standard comment that was suggested by the association. Just over 120 comments submitted by the association members were customized. The standard comments and the customized comments were all integrated into the database and assigned to appropriate categories.

Table 4: Number of Comments by Source

Comment Source	Number
Online comment form	96
Meeting comment form	18
Letter by mail or email	16
Midwest High Speed Rail Assoc. members	575
Total	705

3.2 Comments by Topic

The comments were assembled into a database to document and analyze all public and agency feedback. The comments were categorized into main topics to identify common themes. Many of the comments contained multiple issues and concerns and each topic was classified individually. Table 5 shows the distribution of comments by main topic.



Table 5: Comments by Main Topics

Main Topics	Number of times mentioned
Study Process	14
True High-Speed Rail (150+ mph, electrification)	554
Purpose and Need	535
Travel times (speed/reliability)	46
Schedules (patterns/frequencies)	13
Trains (types, amenities)	19
Stations (new, upgrade facilities)	23
Potential Impacts	36
Economic Benefits	21
Environmental Benefits	7
Route Alternatives	12
Connectivity (Canada, East Coast, Midwest, Michigan)	33
Infrastructure (specific improvement areas, grade crossings)	20
Multimodal connections (other transportation facilities/feeder services)	25
Coordination with other studies and projects	20
Funding	8
Oppose study/project	2
Employment /contracting opportunities for this study/project	4

Comments by main topic area are discussed below:

- **Study Process** – The most common topic that was discussed about the Program’s process was about providing frequent updates to the public and stakeholders. A few comments expressed gratitude for the Program website and the interactive public scoping meetings. One comment stated public meeting sites should be more transit accessible and another comment said the presentation at the public meetings was not geared to the average layperson.
- **True High-Speed Rail** - The most common comment was submitted by the Midwest High Speed Rail Association and many of its members. The comment stated that they support this project and the short term goal of 110 mph service. However, they would like the Program to include the needs of 220 mph trains in the

plans especially for the Chicago to Porter, Ind., section. Provisions for fixed-span bridges over the Calumet and Chicago Rivers should be included in the planning. Additionally, the new track should be constructed in such a way that it can be electrified later and a plan for eliminating all highway grade-crossings should be included in the 20-year plan. Other individuals not connected with the association also mentioned the benefits of true high-speed rail and felt that the Program should not preclude future 220 mph service. Some comments mentioned planning for speeds as fast as 350 mph.

- **Purpose and Need** – Almost all the comments related to this topic were submitted by the Midwest High Speed Rail Association and many of its members. As part of their comment they requested that the purpose and need be broadened “to more fully address the full potential for high-speed trains to provide competitive travel options in this corridor” especially for the Chicago – Porter, Ind., section. Another comment discussed how the purpose and need statement should explicitly discuss that the rail investments are needed to make intercity passenger rail more cost effective by shorter trip times, greater reliability, better equipment, more attractive transportation service, and increased and more balanced load factors. One comment stated that the word “improved” in the purpose and need was too vague and that stronger language should be used.
- **Travel Times** – Many comments discussed the need to improve travel times along the corridor with faster trains and more reliable service. This would help make passenger rail service competitive with air and auto modes of transportation. Comments often discussed the need to improve service reliability by decreasing conflicts between passenger and freight trains. Some comments stated a dedicated passenger rail was the best way to avoid conflicts with freight rail. Many individuals suggested they would take the train more often if rail travel times could be reduced.
- **Schedules** – Several comments discussed ways to change train schedules to improve service. Some comments said additional train frequencies should be added including early morning and late evening departures to allow same day travel between Chicago and Detroit. Other comments suggested changing the operation of trains to provide early morning trains that originate out of Battle Creek or Kalamazoo to Chicago and Detroit. This would allow arrivals in the major cities before 9:00 a.m. A few comments suggested running some trains with express service that have fewer stops at stations.
- **Trains** – Several comments stated new modern train equipment that provides a smoother and faster ride is needed for high-speed service. Some comments stated all rolling stock should be converted to bi-level equipment for easy boarding and alighting. Train amenities that were mentioned include quiet cars, business and first class cars and internet service. Several comments also stated they would like to see baggage service reinstated in Michigan and roll-on bicycle service. A few comment said they were disappointed with the recent train equipment purchase for the Wolverine service because it did not appear to be aerodynamic and probably would not handle curves. Suggestion for train options would be high-speed trains similar to Europe or Talgo trains.
- **Stations** – New station stops were requested in Ypsilanti, Mich., and Chesterton, Ind. A few comments suggested serving many towns along the corridor and providing express and local service. Some comments



discussed the need to improve and modernize existing stations. Specific improvements mentioned included new signage, better landscaping, adequate parking facilities, expanded waiting rooms and multimodal facilities. Several comments stated stations should be ADA compliant and provide level boarding platforms. A few comments suggested exploring moveable platforms similar to airlines to serve multiple types of trains. Other comments mentioned improving station access to facilitate local economic development. Also, building in extra capacity at stations was discussed.

- **Potential Impacts** – Potential environmental impacts to water resources, wildlife habitat, threatened and endangered species and historic and archeological resources were primarily discussed by federal and state resource agencies. Of particular concern are the sensitive environmental resources in the South of the Lake area in Indiana. The general public was typically more concerned with noise and vibration levels from the trains and the potential for property acquisition. Also, some comments discussed concern about the safety of railroad crossings and the safety of fast trains passing through rural/small town communities. Impacts to existing transit services and impacts to local street networks/local community connectivity were also mentioned as concerns.
- **Economic Benefits** – Many comments discussed the economic benefits of passenger rail service including creating design and construction jobs, improving access to job markets, facilitating business travel, encouraging tourism and developing a U.S. based train equipment industry. Some comments also discussed how stations could help revitalize downtowns by creating a convenient location for businesses to locate. Creating a convenient passenger rail option was seen as particularly important given increasing highway congestion and declining service for air travel under 600 miles. It should be noted that several comments felt more economic benefits could be realized with high-speed rail corridors that are designed for 220 mph.
- **Environmental Benefits** – Several comments discussed how train travel will benefit the environment by decreasing fuel consumption, improving air quality and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Route alternatives** – Some comments discussed that route alternatives should be developed to decrease the congestion in the South of the Lake area in Indiana. Some comments stated route alternatives in this area should avoid the Coastal Zone of Lake Michigan to reduce potential environmental impacts including the Norfolk Southern tracks that run through the Indian Dunes National Lakeshore. In the Chicago area, the Norfolk Southern discussed that their route is not appropriate for high-speed passenger rail service because the company restricts speeds to 79 mph on joint use corridors. Plus, it is already a very congested corridor. Norfolk Southern prefers a contiguous passenger-exclusive high speed intercity passenger rail route through Indiana that connects Chicago Union Station with the rail corridor owned by Amtrak in Michigan. Alternatives should also consider impacts to Metra where joint use is proposed and where new passenger trains will cross Metra lines. The Midwest High Speed Rail Association felt that preliminary routing alternatives presented at the public scoping meetings are missing two sections that would be needed to create a truly attractive alternative: 1) The St. Charles Airline from the Chicago Union Station to the former Illinois Central mainline along the lakefront and 2) the former Michigan Central from Kensington to Calumet Park.

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- **Connectivity** – Several comments discussed the need to connect with other passenger rail corridors including connections to Ontario, Canada, the East Coast and various destinations in the Midwest. Some comments also mentioned expanding passenger rail service within the state of Michigan. This would help reduce the concern that the corridor only benefits Chicago. A few comments that expressed interest in expanding rail to northern Michigan felt that access to passenger rail should have priority over speed. A few comments mentioned the possibility of using a “sealed train” concept to eliminate border delays with Canada.
 - **Infrastructure** – Some comments mentioned specific areas that would require infrastructure improvements including: bypassing Albion, Mich.; minimizing curves in the Chicago area; restoring track at the Battle Creek station to reduce conflicts between passenger and freight rail; and restoring the track connection north of New Buffalo to allow Pere Marquette service to access the Corridor. Concerns about railroad crossings were also mentioned. Some comments discussed safety concerns with the crossing at M52 in Chelsea, Mich., and the Central Avenue and Lonyo crossings in Detroit. Some comment discussed the need to implement a railroad crossing program that would prioritize and separate crossings over time.
 - **Multimodal Connections** – Several comments discussed the need to provide and improve multimodal connections with the passenger rail system. Suggestions included making connections to airports and other transportation hubs such as Chicago-Gary International Airport, Detroit Metro Airport; Rosa Parks Transit Center; Metra, CTA, and O’Hare. Other comments suggested providing feeder rail and thruway bus routes to make travel more convenient and to make sure the system is not just Chicago centered.
 - **Coordination** – Several comments discussed the need to coordinate the Program with other projects and studies that are underway along the corridor. The most common comment related to this topic was in regards to the realignment of the NICTD corridor in Michigan City, Ind. Several comments expressed a preference for NICTD to operate along the Amtrak corridor to avoid two rail corridors, stations and bridge crossings in Michigan City. Also, the city of Michigan City is interested in creating a multimodal hub for passenger rail, commuter rail and bus transit services. Other studies that were mentioned include the Chicago Union Station Master Plan, the Downtown Pontiac Transportation Assessment and the CREATE program.
 - **Funding** – Very few comments were made regarding funding. A few comments mentioned that state support for this Program will help demonstrate the importance of this corridor. One comment stated subsidies should be used for rail instead of cars. Another comment mentioned that public transportation systems should avoid private investment so they remain public. Another comment felt spending money on rail is not a good use of funds because no one will use it; and would make more sense to spend the money on improving the interstate.
 - **Program Support** – Almost all of the comments that were received were supportive of the Program and the possibility of improved intercity passenger rail along the Corridor. The public comments mostly focused on the need for improved passenger rail service and the types of benefits that it would bring. The agencies focused on NEPA requirements and potential environmental impacts that could be associated with implementation of the Corridor. See Section 3.3 for details about agency comments.

Only two comments specifically mentioned they did not support the Program and investment in passenger rail. One comment felt improvements to the passenger rail system are not needed because the business community relies on truck transportation and tourists prefer to take their cars because they are bringing their family and boats. The other comment felt that another study was not necessary because the environmental impact of using existing right of way is minimal.

- **Employment/Contracting Opportunities** – A few inquiries were made about obtaining employment and/or contracting opportunities related to this Program.

3.3 Topics Discussed by Agencies

This section was provided to give more detail about government agency comments that were received. A total of 17 comments were received from various government agencies. A summary of the agency comments are included in Table 6.

Table 6: Agency Comments

Agency	Summary of Key Points	Comment Source
Chicago Metropolitan Planning Council	Support dedicated passenger right of way through Indiana; consider future 220 mph service, double track and plan for greatly increased service frequency including hourly service.	Comment form
City of Ann Arbor	Supports intercity passenger rail and feels the investment will enhance their community and its assets; Encourages modern, well designed and located passenger stations – important factors are seamless transfers between local and intercity modes, adequately sized stations and parking facilities, traffic mitigation to/from station; multimodal linkages, ADA compliance, mobility for aging population; Maintain local transportation system connectivity – railroad creates physical barrier between city neighborhoods and its recreation and environmental assets, maintain at-grade crossings for vehicles and non-motorized modes. See the city's Non-motorized Transportation Master Plan.	Letter
City of Chelsea	Safety concerns about high-speed trains in rural communities; Consider grants to assist with small downtown decorative fencing; Concerned about safety of M52 crossing - would like it to be reviewed.	Comment form
City of Fort Wayne	Supports the program to enhance passenger rail service; Supports route options that maximize rail connectivity for other regional communities; Especially support rail system upgrades to Chicago-Porter section as all future east-west rail development will depend on enhancement through northern Indiana; City currently has no direct passenger rail service and sees the Chicago-Detroit program as an opportunity to strengthen federal and state support for restoring rail service to Chicago and Detroit and future extensions to other major cities including Toledo, Cleveland, and Columbus.	Letter

Agency	Summary of Key Points	Comment Source
City of Michigan City	Critical to integrate Chicago-Detroit/Pontiac analysis with NICTD/South Shore line study; Examine feasibility of one multimodal station in Michigan City.	Website
City of Ypsilanti	Requesting a stop in Ypsilanti; Would like to meet to discuss a station stop.	Letter
Forest Preserve District of Cook County	Would like a detailed map of proposed routes to assess impact to their properties and provide substantive comment.	Website
Genesee County Road Commission	Would like the alternatives analysis to consider: Varying service design standards (speed oriented) and impacts on required additional ROW or whole new alignments and their impact on whole social-economic conditions; Look at the potential of improved track and service in connecting state routes Pere Marquette and Blue Water; Review cost and feasibility of separate track for freight and passenger in corridor or separate corridors.	Website
Indiana Department of Natural Resources	According to the Natural Heritage Program database, the three-county area contains numerous rare species and high quality natural areas; A list of nature preserves and conservation easements was provided; Staff will provide more specific location data as plans develop to help avoid impacts; Provided general recommendations on how to avoid and minimize impacts to fish, wildlife and botanical resources and compensate for impacts when possible; A mitigation, bank stabilization, revegetation, and/or monitoring plan should be development and submitted with any permit applications if required.	Letter
Metra	Address impacts to existing and future Metra service and avoid or appropriately mitigate impacts; Consider second double track bridge at 21 st Street if Amtrak/NS route from Union Station is advanced; Limited ability to accommodate additional trains on the south side of Union Station. Union Station Master Plan addresses these issues, which must be considered; Metra is managing Englewood Flyover (CREATE-P1) project, which may have significant long-term and near-term impacts on proposed routing for Chicago-Detroit corridor; Metra encourages efforts to include all stakeholders including right of way owners in the process early and often.	Letter
Norfolk Southern Railway	NS Chicago line is not appropriate for high-speed passenger service- NS policy restricts speeds on joint use tracks to 79 mph; NS supports establishment of a contiguous passenger-exclusive route through Northern Indiana; NS supports MDOT's pursuit of high speed rail, but only to the extent it does not negatively impact current and future NS freight operations.	Letter
Omaha Tribe of Nebraska	Interested in project as they believe through historical accounts that some of the project extends into their historical lands.	Website
Southwest Michigan Planning Commission	Consider impacts of all jurisdictions; Small and large - the communities of Dowagiac and Niles provide opportunities for local people to connect into larger job markets on a daily basis.	Website

Agency	Summary of Key Points	Comment Source
U. S. Environmental Protection Agency	Include discussion and reference of other NEPA studies completed within corridor and supplement with appropriate studies where HSR may have different impacts; The purpose and need should address the possibility that this project may be an incremental step toward 200+mph service in the future and identify components such as rail alignments, curves, rail bed, signaling or PTC that are intended to accommodate higher speeds; Locate and plan new rail right of way and station sites for minimal impact, include sufficient detail to assure adequate avoidance and minimization has been considered; Give full consideration to alternatives that would move HSR routes away from congested SOTL, avoiding the Lake Michigan Coastal Zone would reduce environmental impacts; Clarify where routes will be single, double or siding tracked and fully disclose ancillary construction such as roadway maintenance, at-grade crossing and signaling/communications structures; Consider all environmental impacts to determine the need for further analysis: suggestions include: air quality and air toxics; water quality, surface waters, and wetlands; environmental justice; noise; historic, cultural and archeological resources; threatened and endangered species/migratory birds; indirect and cumulative impacts; All potential impacts, specific commitments and anticipated mitigation ratios, long-term maintenance and adaptive management should be clearly discussed in Tier 1 analysis.	Letter
U.S. Coast Guard	Any new infrastructure or modifications to existing bridges over waterways will have to be analyzed to determine Coast Guard involvement or permitting requirements; Waterways and existing railroad bridges along the southern shore of Lake Michigan are some of the busiest waterways with regularly operating drawbridges that the Coast Guard deals with; The goal for all stakeholders is for these drawbridges to be managed effectively and safely; The addition of more train traffic at these crossings potentially adds to the already existing challenges.	Letter
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	Will consider existing projects (such as CREATE, Indiana Gateway and Kalamazoo-Dearborn purchase) part of the No Action alternative. Major concerns with 9-mile eastern portion of 29-mile NS right of way through Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore. USFWS strongly supports alternatives that avoid the NS tracks through this area. Less use by visitors/butterflies along CSX tracks from Willow Creek/Portage westward to Broadway in Gary. Western Gary/N Clark Rd has 2 State Nature Preserves that need to be addressed when considering station location to serve airport. Lakeshore Railroad Prairie – no federally listed species found. Impacts to resources for alternative routes that go through Hoosier Prairie State Nature Preserve, Ivanhoe South Dune and Swale Preserve, Gibson Woods and Tolleston Ridges need to be addressed in Tier 1 EIS. Concern about mortality and injury to all wildlife from collision with trains (not just listed and candidate species). Evaluate project for impacts to wildlife from high winds, noise and vibration. Schedule construction activities to avoid violation of Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Several endangered species identified within range of project in all three states. No known suitable habitat for Illinois species within the Area of Analysis, non-known suitable habitat for some of identified species within Michigan and Indiana area of analysis.	Letter

Agency	Summary of Key Points	Comment Source
U.S. National Park Service	If any National Historic Landmarks are identified, will be required to comply with Section 110(f) of National Historic Preservation Act; Stations should meet/exceed ADA codes; plan for bicycles on train.	Website

4 CONCLUSIONS

The scoping process for the Tier 1 EIS was held between August 31, 2012 and October 15, 2012. The scoping process was successful in introducing the Program, establishing communication and obtaining initial comments from agencies, stakeholders and the public. Feedback submitted through both dialogue at agency and public meetings and written comments provided valuable input on the scope of the Tier 1 EIS.

Almost all of the comments were supportive of the Program and the possibility of improved intercity passenger rail along the Corridor. The public comments mostly focused on the need for improved passenger rail service and the types of benefits that it would bring. A large number of comments expressed a desire for the Program to consider plans for future 220 mph service, especially within the Chicago-Porter, Ind. section. The agencies typically focused on NEPA requirements and potential environmental impacts that could be associated with implementation of the Corridor. Only two comments were submitted that did not support the Program.

Many comments validated that the draft Purpose and Need accurately addressed the reasons for improvements along the corridor – improved service, and benefits to the environment and economy. Others commented that the Program needed to place more emphasis on coordination with other projects and plans within the corridor. As a result, the Purpose and Need statement in the Tier 1 Draft EIS will be modified to emphasize the Program’s commitment as part of the MWRRI to coordinate with other activities along the corridor such as providing a direct connection to Chicago’s Union Station, incorporating CREATE projects, coordinating with proposed NICTD improvements (especially within Michigan City, Ind.), and other initiatives being delivered within all three states along the Corridor.

No new alternatives were identified through the scoping process; thus, the input helped validate the preliminary alternatives. Valuable information was learned about environmental concerns for some routes, including resource sensitivities within the South of the Lake area, potential impacts to freight railroads on some routes, and challenges accessing Chicago Union Station. These comments will shape the evaluation of preliminary alternatives and help focus the socioeconomic and environmental analysis for the Draft Tier 1 EIS on the most critical issues and resources.

Ongoing agency and public participation is vital to this Program. The input received during the scoping period will continue to be referenced during the development and evaluation of Preliminary and Reasonable Alternatives and



during the development of the Tier 1 Draft Environmental Impact Statement. All comments provided are made part of the permanent administrative record for this Program.

Appendix A: Agency Scoping Meeting Materials

Contents

- Meeting invitations
 - Save the date invitation, August 15, 2012
 - Official invitation, September 5, 2012
- Agency scoping document
- TIER 1 EIS Social, Economic and Environmental (SEE) Impact Analysis
- Opportunities and constraints map
- Agency meeting presentation

The appendix materials can be found at the Program website here:

<http://greatlakesrail.org/~grtlakes/index.php/site/documents-and-resources>



Appendix B: Public Scoping Meeting Materials

Contents

- Meeting flyers: save the date and official notice (English, Spanish and Arabic)
- E-blast notifications to master contact list
 - Save the date notification, August 16, 2012
 - Official meeting notification, August 31, 2012
 - First meeting reminder, September 11, 2012
 - Michigan meetings reminder, September 24, 2012
 - Comment due date reminder, October 4, 2012
- Press release (English, Spanish and Arabic)
- Meeting attendee survey – how they heard about the meeting
- Public meeting presentation
- Welcome handout
- Summer 2012 newsletter
- Display boards

The appendix materials can be found at the Program website here:

<http://greatlakesrail.org/~grtlakes/index.php/site/documents-and-resources>



Appendix C: Press Releases and News Articles

Contents

- Press releases (English, Spanish and Arabic)
- News articles

The appendix materials can be found at the Program website here:

<http://greatlakesrail.org/~grtlakes/index.php/site/documents-and-resources>



Appendix D: List of all comments received

The appendix materials can be found at the Program website here:

<http://greatlakesrail.org/~grtlakes/index.php/site/documents-and-resources>



Appendix E: Letters received

The appendix materials can be found at the Program website here:

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GreatLakesRail.org

Chicago – Detroit / Pontiac Passenger Rail Corridor Program

Level 1 Alternatives Analysis

OUTREACH SUMMARY

DECEMBER 2013



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LIST OF APPENDICES

The following appendices can be found at the Program website here:

<http://greatlakesrail.org/~grtlakes/index.php/site/documents-and-resources>

Appendix A: Level 1A Meeting Materials
Appendix B: Level 1B Meeting Materials
Appendix C: Level 1A List of Comments Received
Appendix D: Level 1B List of Comments Received



INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes the outreach that was conducted for the Level 1 alternatives analysis phase for the Chicago-Detroit/Pontiac Passenger Rail Corridor Program (Program). Public involvement during this phase focused on route alternatives for the Chicago to Porter, Ind., segment of the corridor, including the area known as the South of the Lake (SOTL). This area is one of the busiest freight rail corridors in the country and contains many possible route alternatives.

The purpose of this outreach phase was to gather input that would help narrow the range of alternatives between Chicago and Porter and identify the alternatives that would be evaluated in the Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

Outreach for the Level 1 alternatives analysis included two main touch points with the public to present the results of the Level 1A and Level 1B screening analyses. Section 2 of this report describes the outreach that was conducted for the Level 1A analysis that involved an online self-guided presentation and a stakeholder group meeting. Section 3 describes the outreach that was conducted for the Level 1B analysis that included four public meetings and a series of stakeholder meetings. The final section, Section 4, summarizes all public, stakeholder and agency feedback that was received as a result of Level 1 outreach activities.

1 LEVEL 1A OUTREACH

This section summarizes the outreach that was conducted for the Level 1A analysis. The Level 1A analysis included identifying current and former railroad routes used by passenger and freight trains to assemble a “SOTL project area network” and dividing the network into 68 subsections that were screened by the Program’s criteria. (See Chapter 2 of the EIS for more information about alternatives.) An online self-guided presentation and a stakeholder webinar were utilized to present information and receive feedback. Appendix A contains all the materials and notices that were created for the Level 1A outreach.

1.1 Self-Guided Presentation

An online self-guided presentation was created and posted on the Program website for the Level 1A screening analysis. The purpose of the presentation was to keep the public informed about the progress of the alternatives analysis and to present the results of the Level 1A screening analysis.

The public was originally notified about the presentation’s availability on the Program website on April 24, 2013. The public comment period ran through May 29, 2013 and was extended to June 12, 2013.



1.1.1 Online Meeting Notices

The following forms of communication were used to advertise the availability of the self-guided presentation to the public, stakeholders and government agencies:

- **Flyer** – A flyer was created with information about how to access the presentation and how to submit comments. It was posted on the Program website and provided to third party communicators.
- **E-blasts** – Two e-blast notices were sent to the Program’s master contact list including the original notification (4/11/2013) and a comment due date reminder (4/30/2013). Each e-blast contained a link to the self-guided presentation and had information for how to comment.
- **Third party outreach** – Third party communicators were sent an Advance Notice of the self-guided presentation (4/30/13) and asked to send the notice to their contact lists informing them about the self-guided presentation and the comment due date.

1.2 Group Stakeholder Meeting

A group stakeholder meeting was conducted on April 29, 2013 as shown in Table 1. The purpose of the meeting was to present the results of the Level 1A analysis and seek feedback from key stakeholders such as railroad companies and rail advocacy groups listed in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Level 1A Stakeholder Meeting

Date/Time	Location	Stakeholders Represented
April 29, 2013 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.	MDOT – Horatio S. Earle Learning Center Lake Michigan Meeting Room 7575 Crowner Dr. Dimondale, MI 48821	Battle Creek Unlimited – Battle Creek, Mich.
		Council of State Governments Midwest
		CSX Railroad
		DeCook Government Policy and Strategies (GPS) – Lansing, Mich.
		Environmental Law and Policy Center –Chicago, Ill.
		Michigan Environmental Council
		Michigan Assoc. of Railroad Passengers
		Midwest High Speed Rail Association – Chicago, Ill.
		National Association of Railroad Passengers
		Norfolk Southern Railway
	Or Webinar	Right Place – Grand Rapids, Mich.

Participants at the group stakeholder meeting were able to attend in-person or via webinar. In total, 35 people participated in the meeting. At the meeting, the Program team presented the self-guided presentation and provided



an opportunity for participant questions. Invitations were sent as an outlook appointment by the Michigan Department of Transportation. The invitation and invitee list can be found in Appendix A.

2 LEVEL 1B OUTREACH

This section summarizes the outreach that was conducted for the Level 1B analysis. The Level 1B analysis identified complete SOTL route segments between Chicago and Porter, Ind., and screened the routes with Program criteria. (See Chapter 2 of the EIS for more information about alternatives.) Four public meetings and a series of stakeholder meetings were utilized to present information and receive feedback. Appendix B contains all the materials and notices that were created for the Level 1B outreach.

2.1 Public Meetings

Four public meetings were held for the Level 1B analysis as shown in Table 2. The meetings were open to the public from 4 to 7 p.m. A presentation was given at 4:30 p.m. In total, 164 people signed in at the public meetings.

Table 2: Public Meeting Locations, Dates and Attendance

Date	Location	Attendance
September 13, 2013 4:00 - 7:00 p.m.	Chicago Union Station Union Gallery Room 500 West Jackson Boulevard Chicago, IL 60661	92
September 18, 2013 4:00 - 7:00 p.m.	Genesis Convention Center Lake Room One Genesis Center Plaza, Gary, IN 46402	19
September 19, 2013 4:00 - 7:00 p.m.	Porter Town Hall Main Floor Meeting Room 303 Franklin Street Porter, IN 46304	23
September 24, 2013 4:00 - 7:00 p.m.	Double Tree by Hilton Hotel 5801 Southfield Expressway Dearborn, MI 48228	30
Total	All locations	164



Figure 1: Public Meeting at Chicago Union Station September 17, 2013

The meeting locations were selected for their proximity to the proposed route alternatives being evaluated. All facilities were ADA accessible. Spanish and Arabic interpreters were provided at the Dearborn, Mich., meeting.

Interpreters were chosen based on area demographics and the need for interpreters at previous MDOT meetings in this community.

Everyone in attendance was encouraged to sign in at the welcome table. Display boards summarized the program and the results of the Level 1A and Level 1B alternatives analysis process. Participants were able to view the route alternatives overlaid on a large aerial image and leave comments by applying post-it notes. A take home handout was provided to participants that explained the purpose of the meeting and how to provide comments.

Program staff was on hand to answer questions. A question and answer session followed the presentation and attendees were encouraged to share their comments and concerns at that time or through the written comment forms. Participants were informed about program materials, additional opportunities to provide comments online or via mail, and other ways to stay informed. The public comment period ran from the start of the original meeting notice that was sent on September 4, 2013 through October 28, 2013.

2.1.1 Public Meeting Notices

Various types of meeting notices were used to communicate the dates, times and locations of the public meetings. Notices included:

- **Flyers** – A meeting flyer was prepared and posted on the Program website and utilized for third party outreach.
- **E-blasts** - Three separate e-blast notices were sent to the program's master contact list including: an original meeting notice (9/4/2013), a meeting reminder (9/16/2013) and a comment due date reminder (10/17/2013).
- **Press releases** - Media sources in Illinois, Indiana and Michigan were notified of the meetings. Press releases were provided in three languages - English, Spanish and Arabic.
- **Social media** – MDOT, INDOT and IDOT posted notices on their Facebook and Twitter accounts.
- **Third party outreach** – Third party communicators were contacted and asked to send a notice to their contact lists informing them about the public meetings and the comment period.

2.1.2 Third Party Communications

Third party communicators were identified and contacted to help distribute information about the public meetings. Third-party communicators included groups such as chambers of commerce, municipalities, transit agencies, advocacy organizations, metropolitan planning organizations, municipal leagues and organizations that represent environmental justice and Title VI populations.

The meeting flyers and text for social media were provided to third party groups. Several of the third party communicators that were contacted subsequently distributed the information to their membership via email, social media outlets, electronic newsletters, or postings on their websites and blogs. Table 3 shows the list of confirmed third party communicators that helped distribute meeting information.



Table 3: Third Parties that Distributed Public Meeting Information

Illinois	Indiana	Michigan
Midwest High Speed Rail Association	Indiana High Speed Rail Association	Michigan By Rail
Active Transportation Alliance	Chesterton Chamber of Commerce	MI Environmental Council
Environmental Law & Policy Center	City of Michigan City	WaterStory
Crain's Chicago Business	Town of Porter	Metromode
	City of Gary	Mode Shift
	NW IN Regional Planning Commission	
	Save the Dunes	

2.1.3 Online Meeting Materials

The Program website was utilized to post public meeting materials online. This allowed meeting participants to review materials after the meetings and it allowed those who were unable to attend a meeting to participate in the process. All the exhibits that were on display at the meetings were posted to the Program website along with the PowerPoint presentation and meeting summaries. Also, a voice-recorded presentation was posted to the website to assist visually impaired individuals and to allow individuals who were not able to attend the meeting to learn about the alternatives analysis process.

2.2 Stakeholder Meetings

Three stakeholder meetings were conducted as part of the Level 1B public outreach efforts as shown in Table 4.

The first stakeholder meeting was held on September 19, 2013 with attendance from railroads and rail advocacy groups. Participants were able to attend the meeting in-person or via webinar. At the meeting, the Program team made a presentation and provided an opportunity for participant questions.

On November 8, 2013 the Program team conducted two stakeholder meetings with the city of Gary, Ind. The first meeting was held with the Honorable Karen Freeman-Wilson, Mayor of Gary. The purpose of the meeting was to increase understanding within the City of Gary leadership of the Program's activities and to understand more about the City of Gary and how economic development opportunities planned for the Gary area could be recognized and potentially incorporated into future decision making.

After the meeting with the mayor, the Program team met with neighborhood and civic leaders from Gary to develop a grass roots foundation for outreach to the larger Gary community. The discussion helped to build an understanding of the Program's purpose and development to date and allowed the Program Team to obtain input regarding priorities and considerations of importance to Gary neighborhoods. Participants took a bus tour of the local area to get a better understanding of the economic development projects currently underway in Gary.



Table 4: Level 1B Stakeholder Meetings

Date/Time	Location	Stakeholders Represented
September 19, 2013	Porter, IN and webinar	CSX Railroad Environmental Law and Policy Center – Chicago Midwest High Speed Rail Association – Chicago
November 8, 2013 9:00 – 10:30 a.m.	City of Gary 401 Broadway, Suite 203 Gary, IN, 46402	Karen Freeman-Wilson, Mayor of Gary, Ind.
November 8, 2013 10:45 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.	City of Gary 401 Broadway, Suite 203 Gary, IN 46402	City of Gary neighborhood/civic leaders

2.2.1 Stakeholder Meeting Notices

Invitations for the railroad advocacy meeting were sent by the Michigan Department of Transportation. Both meetings in the city of Gary were arranged through phone calls and emails sent by Matti McCormick, Indiana Public Involvement coordinator for the Program. The invitation and invitee list can be found in Appendix A.

3 PUBLIC COMMENT SUMMARY

This section summarizes the comments that were received by the public, stakeholders and government agencies during the Level 1A and Level 1B screening analyses. Appendix C includes a list of all the comments that were received. Appendix D includes all the government agency and stakeholder organization letters that were mailed or emailed to the Program team. Letters or emails that were sent by members of the general public were incorporated into the list of public comments in Appendix C.

3.1 Comments by Source

As shown on Table 5, a total of 1,357 comments were received. The public submitted 109 comments through the online comment form, 7 comments were received at public meetings and 22 letters and emails were sent directly to the Program team. The Midwest High Speed Rail Association collected comments from their membership and then forwarded the comments to the Program team. They generated 600 comments during the Level 1A comment period and they generated 612 comments during the Level 1B comment period for a total of 1,212 comments. The vast majority of the comments utilized a standard comment that was suggested by the association.



Table 5: Level 1 – Number of Comments by Source

Source	Level 1A Comments	Level 1B Comments
Online comment form	49	60
Public meeting comment form	N/A	7
1-800 phone line	3	4
Letter or email	14	8
Midwest High Speed Rail Association	600	612
Total	666	691
Grand Total – Level 1A-B	1,357	

3.2 Comments by Topic

All the comments that were received for Level 1A and Level 1B outreach phases were assembled into a database and analyzed. The following subsections summarize the comments for each phase.

3.2.1 Level 1A Comment Summary

Federal Agencies - The Program team received comments from two government agencies for the 1A screening. The Ninth Coast Guard District commented that routes running closer to the Lake Michigan Shoreline will be more frequently interrupted by large commercial vessel traffic and drawbridge opening. They also requested that analysis of the impacts on vessel navigation be included in the study. The U.S. National Park Service (NPS) commented on the nearness of the routes to the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore and the need to protect wildlife, such as a species of endangered butterflies. In addition, they discuss the importance of quiet crossings for local communities and wildlife, and that more information will be needed to determine if any national historic landmarks would be affected.

Stakeholder groups/Local officials - Stakeholder groups requested to stay informed on the progress of the study. The Northeast Indiana Passenger Rail Association commented that the Gary Airport should be considered as a station. A comment from the Cook County Farm Bureau regarding the South of the Lake corridor said impacts to the natural environments and local communities should be minimized, and the existing rail corridors should be utilized if possible. The Ogden Dunes Town Counsel requested to be a part of the study further and offered to assist in the planning and implementation of this project.

Railroads - Comments were received from Metra, CSX and the Norfolk Southern Corporation. Metra emphasized the impacts that the enhanced service will have on existing service, including Metra lines that have little to no extra capacity for additional rail service and other planned passenger rail routes. Norfolk Southern (NS) said they fully



support the program's goals to improve reliability, reduce congestion, and improve the quality of existing intercity passenger rail. However, they stated the NS Chicago Line is not suitable for high speed passenger service because NS policies restricts joint freight and passenger operations to a maximum speed of 79 mph and it is one of the heaviest used freight rail routes in the county. Also, sufficient right of way is not available for a dedicated passenger track in this corridor because the existing right of way is limited and needed to meet increasing freight capacity. CSX indicated their concerns regarding safety, capacity, compensation and liability. They require that trains going over 90 miles per hour operate on separate track; CSX does not have capacity to add a passenger service to their rail without effecting freight. CSX recommends reexamining the abandoned corridors to minimize the disruption to freight.

General public comments - The general public comments cover a variety of topics. Overall, there was positive support for the program. In discussion of route alternatives, a former railroad employee recommended that instead of creating two passenger mains along the south side of the NS mainline from Buffington to Porter, that the NS Pine Yard be eliminated. Another commenter favored the line from Chicago to New Buffalo, Mich., south out of Gary, Ind., through Chesterton, Ind., Hobart, Ind., Portage, Ind., and onto Michigan City, Ind. Also mentioned was routing the segment through South Bend, Ind., and Niles, Ill., instead of using the Amtrak alignment via New Buffalo because it could add ridership via the college population of South Bend and Notre Dame. Also mentioned was the benefit of having a route that serviced airports, like the Gary, Chicago, and Detroit.

Other comments discussed true high speed rail, multi-modal connections and funding. Many comments emphasized the need to include the infrastructure necessary to upgrade to true high speed rail. Multi-modal comments noted that it would be beneficial if riders could load bikes onto trains. In regards to funding, the comments were both positive and negative. One comment stated the study is a waste of money, while others in support of the project recommended additional funding for implementation.

3.2.2 Level 1B Comment Summary

Federal Agencies - Comments were received regarding the 1B screening from the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The USFWS was not supportive of the use of right of way through the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore. They also emphasized the importance of protection of the dunes, wildlife, and wetlands. The EPA requested additional information on the stations, routes, and facilities from Porter, Ind., to Detroit, Mich. They also requested further information regarding the methodology that was used to eliminate routes.

Stakeholder groups/Local officials – Several comments discussed the need for true high speed rail, the elimination of at-grade crossings and the elimination of drawbridges. Other comments mentioned congestion and the need to improve the areas where bottlenecks are present. One stakeholder recommended using funding available to improve the NS corridor or implementing the project incrementally as funding becomes available.



MWHSRA - MWHSRA members utilized a standard comment provided by the association. In summary, the standard comment stated the South of the Lake corridor between Chicago and Michigan City, Ind., should be designed with long-term needs in mind including the potential for future electrification of the corridor and future traffic demands from the Chicago-Detroit corridor and expanding service to Grand Rapids, Mich., Lansing, Mich., Port Huron, Mich., and other cities in Michigan, Ohio and Indiana.

Railroads - Metra, Norfolk Southern (NS), and CSX all commented on the 1B screening. Metra noted that they support the decision to eliminate the use of the Rock Island District and they do not have additional capacity on the Metra Electric District. Norfolk Southern requested that the NS Chicago line east of Englewood not be considered as part of the DEIS process. They also noted that some of their lines are not appropriate for high speed passenger service due to speed restrictions. CSX touched on the importance of safety surrounding freight and passenger trains sharing infrastructure with the passenger trains travelling at 110 miles per hour. CSX emphasized the importance of freight for the economy and the need to keep freight traffic separate from passenger traffic.

General public comments- The general public comments covered a wide variety including improving travel times with faster and more reliable service. One comment mentioned how trains are rarely on time making the passenger rail undependable. Another comment mentioned the need to upgrade the equipment and technology to improve service. In regards to stations, one comment said stations should be more pedestrian friendly and have better lighting to improve safety. Others were in favor of the program for the environmental benefits such as the improvement in air quality and the decrease in fuel consumption. Multi-modal connections were discussed to better integrate bicycles and rail transit.

The two most discussed topics were true high speed rail and route alternatives. In terms of true high speed rail, there was support for the possibility to increase projected speeds from 110 miles per hour to 220. Many commenters mentioned the importance of being able to electrify the line. The discussion on route alternatives discussed which alternative would be best suited for the project and the possibility of adding stops. One commenter recommended that the present route not change. A former rail traffic controller commented that the alternative from Buffington Harbor Drive to Tolleston in Gary, Ind. had a lot of at-grade crossings which would make faster speeds more difficult. Another comment favored using the NICTD alternative because there would be a reduction in public and private crossings. Also, some comments recommended the analysis of the IHB Dune Park branch on the east side of Gary, which could be used to go from the NS Chicago Line inland. New station stop requests included Mount Pleasant, Mich., Lansing, Mich., Windsor, Ont., Flint, Mich., and Chicago O'Hare Airport.

There were also comments made that were not supportive of the study. One commenter questioned why there is a study being done for rail service to Detroit. Another felt that it was a waste of funding and tax money. One comment was not in support of trains travelling at 110 miles per hour through their neighborhood.

