

Appendix

F

AGENCY COORDINATION



EARLY COORDINATION





DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
MISSISSIPPI VALLEY DIVISION, CORPS OF ENGINEERS
P.O. BOX 80
VICKSBURG, MISSISSIPPI 39181-0080

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF:

Executive Office

16 Sep 2011

Mr. David Valenstein
Division Chief
Environmental and Systems Planning
Office of Passenger and Freight Programs
U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Railroad Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Mr. Valenstein:

I am writing in response to your August 9, 2011, letter requesting that the Corps of Engineers be a cooperating agency in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process for the Chicago to St. Louis High-Speed Rail Tier 1 EIS.

Within the Mississippi Valley Division, your project will cross the geographic boundaries of our St. Louis and Rock Island Districts. I understand that Regulatory staffs at both the St. Louis and Rock Island Districts were involved in this project during the development of your 2004 EIS. On September 7, 2011, at the Federal Highway Administration's NEPA/404 merger meeting in Springfield, Illinois, Corps Regulator personnel heard presentations on the subject Tier 1 EIS process.

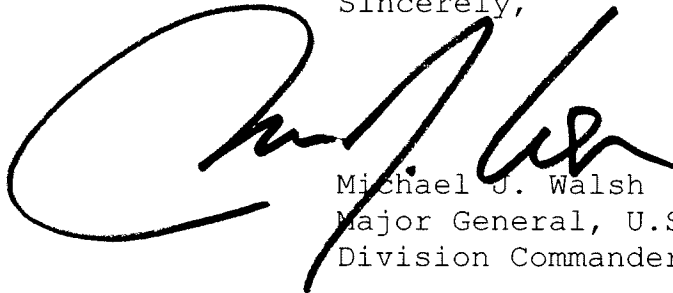
I concur in your request that the St. Louis and Rock Island Districts serve as cooperating agencies in this EIS process. Although the Corps must exercise its independent judgment while carrying out its regulatory responsibilities, the Corps will give deference to the maximum extent allowed by law to the project purpose, project need, and project alternatives that the Federal Railroad Administration determines appropriate for the project. I am confident that continued early coordination between our agencies will ensure that the purpose, need, and suite of alternatives presented in the NEPA document are usable

by the Corps in carrying out the its legal responsibilities under binding statutes and regulations (e.g., conducting the Corp's public interest review, determining the "least environmentally damaging practicable alternative" under the Clean Water Act section 404(b)(1) guidelines, and fulfilling other applicable legal requirements).

My points of contact are Mr. Keith McMullen of the St. Louis District Regulatory Branch, (314)331-8582, Keith.A.Mcmullen@usace.army.mil, and Mr. Ward Lenz, of the Rock Island District, (309) 794-5370, Gary.W.Lenz@usace.army.mil.

I look forward to working with you and your staff on this project.

Sincerely,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, likely belonging to Michael J. Walsh. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'M' and 'J'.

Michael J. Walsh
Major General, U.S. Army
Division Commander



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Rock Island Field Office

1511 47th Avenue

Moline, Illinois 61265

Phone: (309) 757-5800 Fax: (309) 757-5807



IN REPLY REFER
TO:

FWS/RIFO

March 18, 2011

RECEIVED
MAR 22 2011

Mr. George E. Weber, Acting Deputy Director
Illinois Department of Transportation
Division of Public & Intermodal Transportation
James R. Thompson Center
100 West Randolph Street, Suite 6-600
Chicago, Illinois 60601

Illinois Dept. of Transportation
Division of Public and
Intermodal Transportation

Dear Mr. Weber:

This is in response to your letter of February 18, 2011, requesting our comments on the proposed Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), Illinois High Speed Rail Chicago to St. Louis. This study will examine a range of reasonable corridor-level alternative routes between Chicago and Joliet. The EIS will assess changing the existing rail corridor from one track to two tracks; increasing the number of high-speed passenger trains; potential corridor route alternatives between Chicago and Joliet, through the City of Springfield, and the approach to St. Louis. For the purposes of this letter we will provide information relative to the project described above.

Threatened or Endangered Species

Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 requires that actions authorized, funded, or carried out by Federal agencies not jeopardize federally threatened or endangered species or adversely modify designated critical habitat. To fulfill this mandate, Federal agencies (or their designated non-federal representative) must consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) if they determine their project "may affect" listed species or critical habitat. If Federal agencies or their non-federal representatives determine their actions will have "no effect" on listed species, their habitats, or designated critical habitat, consultation is not required. However, we recommend you maintain a written record of why "no effect" findings are warranted for your Federal actions.

In order to determine if your project "may affect" threatened or endangered species in the project area, we invite you to use a new tool the Service has designed to help with the consultation process – the Section 7(a)(2) Technical Assistance webpage (<http://www.fws.gov/midwest/endangered/section7/s7process-index.htm>). 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 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. Species specific best management practices will also eventually be available. Example letters and templates are available to assist with documenting "no effect" determinations and preparing requests for "not likely to adversely affect" concurrence.

Bald eagle - As of August 9, 2007, the bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) is no longer included on the list of threatened and endangered species. It remains protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and may not be harassed, harmed, or disturbed when present nor may nest trees be cleared. For more information go to <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/eagle/guidelines/index.html>.

Wetlands

National Wetland Inventory maps indicate that there may be wetlands within and adjacent to the project area. These areas may be affected by the proposed project. The Corps of Engineers is the Federal agency responsible for wetland regulation, and we recommend that you contact them for assistance in delineating the wetland types and acreage within the project boundary. Priority consideration should be given to avoid impacts to these wetland areas. Any future activities in the study area that would alter these wetlands may require a Section 404 permit. Unavoidable impacts will require a mitigation plan to compensate for any losses of wetland functions and values. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Clock Tower Building, P.O. Box 2004, Rock Island, Illinois, 61201, should be contacted for information about the permit process.

These comments are provided as technical assistance in accordance with the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (87 Stat. 884, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq*). These comments do not constitute the report of the Secretary of the Interior on the project within the meaning of Section 2(b) of the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, do not fulfill the requirements under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, nor do they represent the review comments of the U.S. Department of the Interior on any forthcoming environmental statement. If you have questions, please contact Heidi Woeber of my staff at 309-757-5800, extension 209.

Sincerely,


for Richard C. Nelson
Field Supervisor

cc: ILDNR (Hamer)



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Chicago Ecological Services Field Office
1250 South Grove Avenue, Suite 103
Barrington, Illinois 60010
Phone: (847) 381-2253 Fax: (847) 381-2285

IN REPLY REFER TO:
FWS/AES-CIFO/2009-FA-0558

September 8, 2011

David Valenstein
Division Chief
Environment and Systems Planning
Office of Passenger and Freight Programs
USDOT Federal Railroad Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Mr. Valenstein:

This responds to your request for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) to be a cooperating agency with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) in the development of a Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Chicago to St. Louis High Speed Rail (HSR) project. The Tier 1 EIS will assess changing the existing rail corridor from one track to two tracks; increasing the number of high-speed passenger trains; potential corridor route alternatives between Chicago and Joliet, through the City of Springfield, and the approach to St. Louis; and the associated transportation and environmental impacts. It is anticipated that the EIS will also examine the viability of Chicago to Joliet corridors utilizing the Canadian National, Metra Rock Island District, and other reasonable corridors that could support high speed rail passenger service.

The Service accepts your request to serve as a cooperating agency for this project, to the degree that time and resources permit. We will provide technical assistance in the manner that you requested, specifically:

1. We will provide meaningful and early input on defining the purpose and need, determining the range of alternatives to be carried forward, and the methodologies and level of detail required in the alternatives analysis;
2. We will participate in coordination meetings and joint field reviews, as appropriate; and
3. We will provide timely review and comment on pre-draft or pre-final environmental documents, including alternatives considered, anticipated impacts, and mitigation.

The Service's acceptance of cooperating agency status does not necessarily imply endorsement or support of the project or of a particular alternative. The intent of our acceptance of cooperating agency status is to ensure that significant environmental issues are identified as early as possible in the planning process and that throughout the multiple stages of the planning process, decision makers have the environmental information necessary to make informed and timely decisions. The Service has various statutory authorities and responsibilities. Cooperating agency status neither enlarges nor diminishes the decision-making authority of any agency involved in the NEPA process (CEQ memorandum of January 30, 2002).

We look forward to working closely with the FRA, IDOT, and other cooperating agencies as the planning of this project goes forward. If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Shawn Cirton at 847/381-2253, ext. 19.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Louise Clemency". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Louise Clemency
Field Supervisor

cc: USEPA, West
USACOE, Chernich
IDOT, Weber



AUG 16 2011

RECEIVED
AUG 30 2011Illinois Dept. of Transportation
Division of Public and
Highway Transportation

mailcode E-19J

David Valenstein
Division Chief
Environment and Systems Planning
Office of Passenger and Freight Programs
USDOT Federal Railroad Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

RE: Federal Railroad Administration Request for the U.S. EPA to be a Cooperating Agency on their Joint Tier I & II Environmental Impact Statement with the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) for a Chicago to St. Louis High-Speed Rail

Dear Mr. Valenstein:

The United States Environmental Protection Agency, Region 5 (EPA) has received your invitation letter of August 9, 2011, regarding a Tier I Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the above High Speed Rail (HSR) Project. It is proposed that a route from downtown Chicago to Joliet, Illinois and an approach into St. Louis will be considered; alternatives for double tracking the Chicago to St. Louis rail corridor will be identified; and adding necessary infrastructure, signaling, station, equipment, and rolling stock improvements for increasing railroad corridor speeds to 125 mph will be determined. A combined Tier I and Tier II analysis will be included in this NEPA documentation to select a route through the Springfield, Illinois corridor segment, such that segment construction could begin once the Record of Decision (ROD) is signed. Because EPA has expertise concerning the nation's natural resources and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents, we do have an interest in this project.

Pursuant to the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) and in keeping with our responsibilities under the NEPA and Section 309 of the Clean Water Act, we accept the invitation to be a cooperating agency for this project, to the degree time and resources permit, in the manner you requested, specifically:

1. We will provide meaningful early input to defining the purpose and need, the range of alternatives to be considered in detail, methodologies and level of detail for alternatives analysis;
2. Participate in coordination meetings and appropriate field reviews; and
3. Provide timely review and comment on pre-draft and subsequent environmental documents, including mitigation proposals.

We look forward to continuing discussion of the issues involved in this project along with the preparations for and review of the draft EIS. Feel free to contact me at 312-886-2910 / westlake.kenneth@epa.gov or Norm West, my staff member, at 312-353-5692 / west.norman@epa.gov, with further information or inquiries regarding this project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kenneth A. Westlake', written over a horizontal line.

Kenneth A. Westlake
Chief, NEPA Implementation Section
Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance

Cc: George Weber, IDOT Bureau of Railroads
Kathy Chernich, US ACE
Shawn Cirton, US FWS



Natural Resources Conservation Service
2118 West Park Court
Champaign, IL 61821
Phone: 217/353-6600
Fax: 217/353-6676

February 24, 2011

Mr. George Weber, Acting Deputy Director
Division of Public and Intermodal Transportation
Illinois Department of Transportation
Division of Public & Intermodal Transportation
James R. Thompson Center
100 West Randolph Street, Suite 6-600
Chicago, IL 60601

RECEIVED
MAR 1 2011

Illinois Dept. of Transportation
Division of Public and
Intermodal Transportation

RE: Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement, Illinois High Speed Rail Chicago to St. Louis
Agency Scoping Meetings

Dear Mr. Weber:

We have reviewed the proposed project as requested.

The proposed infrastructure, signal, communication and station improvements would be confined to the existing rail corridor. These will have no impact on prime or important farmlands. If alternative corridors outside of existing track routes are proposed they will need additional investigation to determine their impacts on prime or important farmland.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "William J. Gradle".

WILLIAM J. GRADLE
State Conservationist

cc:

Ronald Ziehm, ASTC, USDA-NRCS, 502 Comfort Drive, Suite D, Marion, IL 62959
Steve Mozley, ASTC, USDA-NRCS, P.O. Box 19281, State Fairgrounds, Springfield, IL 62794
Don McCallon, ASTC, USDA-NRCS, 3605 N. IL Route 47, Suite C, Morris, IL 60450
Angela Biggs, ASTC, USDA-NRCS, 6021 Development Drive, Suite 3, Charleston, IL 61920
Lindsay Reinhardt, Acting SSS, NRCS, 2118 West Park Court, Champaign, IL 61821

TP:IL_DOT_High_Speed_rail_comment

United States Department of Agriculture



Natural Resources Conservation Service
2118 W. Park Court
Champaign, IL 61821-2986
(217) 353-6600

www.il.nrcs.usda.gov

August 31, 2011

David Valenstein, Division Chief
Environmental and Systems Planning
Office of Passenger and Freight Programs
U.S. DOT Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Mr. Valenstein:

After reviewing the invitation to participate in the Tier II analysis of the Chicago to St. Louis High-Speed Rail Project, it was determined that the Natural Resources Conservation Service does not have adequate staff to support the effort as a Cooperating Agency. We may be called on for technical assistance or consultation, but this is probably best handled on an ad hoc basis.

We have previously completed the Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) and Farmland Protection Program evaluations. Please send us a copy of the draft and final environmental documents for this project for comment and contact us if we can assist you in any other manner.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William J. Gradle".

WILLIAM J. GRADLE
State Conservationist

cc:

Ms. Wendy Messenger, Environmental Protection Specialist, Office of Railroad Policy & Development, Federal Railroad Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation, 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE., MS-20, Washington, DC 20590
George Weber, IDOT, Bureau Chief, Bureau of Railroads, Division of Public & Intermodal Transportation, 2300 S. Dirksen Parkway, Springfield, IL 62764
Michael Garcia, IDOT, Bureau of High Speed & Passenger Rail, Division of Public & Intermodal Transportation, 2300 S. Dirksen Parkway, Springfield, IL 62764
Gary R. Struben, State Soil Scientist, USDA-NRCS, 2118 W. Park Court, Champaign, IL 61821

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U.S. Department
of Transportation

**Federal Highway
Administration**

Illinois Division

September 2, 2011

3250 Executive Park Dr.
Springfield, IL 62703
(217) 492-4640
www.fhwa.dot.gov/ildiv

In Reply Refer To:
HPER-IL

Mr. David Valenstein
Environment Systems and Planning
Federal Railroad Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E.
Washington, DC 20590

Subject: Chicago to St. Louis High-Speed Rail Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement

Dear Mr. Valenstein:

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has received your letter of August 9, 2011, requesting FHWA become a cooperating agency for the subject project. The FHWA hereby accepts the request to become a cooperating agency because FHWA possesses special expertise with respect to the environmental issues that will be analyzed as part of the project. Specifically, FHWA will be interested in reviewing the potential impacts the project may have on safety and operations of roadways that may be impacted by the project as well as any impacts that the project may have on the Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency Program.

FHWA agrees to participate in the development of the project to the degree, time and resources permit in the manner you requested, including:

- Provide meaningful and early input on defining the purpose and need, determining the range of alternatives to be carried forward, and the methodologies and level of detail required in the alternatives analysis;
- Participate in coordination meetings and joint field reviews, as appropriate, and
- Timely review and comment on the pre-draft and pre-final environmental documents to reflect the views and concerns of FHWA

We look forward to working with the Federal Railroad Administration on the project. Please contact Matt Fuller at (217) 492-4625 or by email at Matt.Fuller@dot.gov should you have any further information or inquiries regarding this project.

Sincerely,

Jon-Paul Kohler
Planning and Program Development Manager

ecc: Mr. George Weber, Bureau of Railroads, IDOT
Mr. Michael Garcia, Bureau of High Speed and Passenger Rail, IDOT



U.S. Department
Of Transportation

**Federal Aviation
Administration**

Central Region
Iowa, Kansas
Missouri, Nebraska

901 Locust
Kansas City, Missouri 64106-2325

March 3, 2011

Mr. George E. Weber, Acting Deputy Director
Illinois Department of Transportation
Division of Public & Intermodal Transportation
James R. Thompson Center
100 West Randolph Street, Suite 6-600
Chicago, IL 60601

Re: Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement, Illinois High Speed Rail Chicago to St. Louis
Agency Scoping Meetings

Dear Mr. Weber:

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) reviews other federal agency environmental documents from the perspective of the FAA's area of responsibility; that is, whether the proposal will have negative effects on aviation. We generally do not provide comments from an environmental standpoint. Therefore, we have reviewed the material furnished with your letter dated February 18, 2011 and have no comments regarding environmental matters.

Airspace Considerations

The project may require formal notice and review for airspace review under Federal Aviation Regulation (FAR) Part 77, Objects Affecting Navigable Airspace. To determine if you need to file with FAA, go to <http://oeaaa.faa.gov> and click on the "Notice Criteria Tool" found at the left-hand side of the page.

If you determine that filing with FAA is required, I recommend a 120-day notification to accommodate the review process and issue our determination letter. Proposals may be filed at <http://oeaaa.faa.gov> (requires free registration).

More information on this process may be found at:
<http://www.faa.gov/airports/central/engineering/part77/>

If you have questions, please contact me at scott.tener@faa.gov or 816-329-2639.

Sincerely,

Scott Tener, P.E.
Environmental Specialist

U.S. Department of
Homeland Security

United States
Coast Guard



Commander (dpb)
Ninth Coast Guard District
1240 E. Ninth Street, Room 2047
Cleveland, OH 44199-2060

Phone: (216) 902-6087
FAX: (216) 902-6088

16590
B-049/sms
March 15, 2011

Mr. George Weber, Acting Deputy Director
Department of Intermodal and Public Transit
Illinois Department of Transportation
100 West Randolph Street – Suite 6-600
Chicago, Illinois 60601

Dear Mr. Weber:

This letter is in response to the Notice of Intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Chicago to St. Louis High-Speed Rail Corridor Program published in the February 14, 2011 edition of the Federal Register (76 FR 8397).

This office submitted comments in response to the original Environmental Assessment in 2009. We described what we believed to be existing bridges crossing waterways under study at that time, and a general statement that Coast Guard Bridge Permit actions may be necessary, pending further specific information to positively identify the waterways and bridges under the jurisdiction of Ninth Coast Guard District.

Based on the information provided so far for the Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), it appears the crossing of existing Norfolk Southern Railway and Canadian National Railway bridges will not be under further consideration. Without further detailed information this office cannot positively identify which waterways or existing bridges are under consideration for the project corridor(s), or the extent of our jurisdiction or involvement with the study. It appears that the existing Amtrak Bridge at Mile 3.77 over South Branch of Chicago River is included in the Union Pacific Railroad corridor in the study, but additional information would be needed to make that determination. There could be a Coast Guard Bridge Permit requirement depending on the extent of changes to existing structures. This office is prepared to clarify its jurisdiction, permitting requirements, or involvement in the ongoing EIS upon receipt of additional specific information.

Please feel free to contact me at (216) 902-6085 to discuss this project or to answer any questions or concerns. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scot M. Striffler".

SCOT M. STRIFFLER
Chief, Bridge Branch
By direction of Commander,
Ninth Coast Guard District

RECEIVED
MAR 18 2011

Illinois Dept. of Transportation
Division of Public and
Intermodal Transportation



**Illinois Historic
Preservation Agency**

FAX (217) 782-8161

1 Old State Capitol Plaza • Springfield, Illinois 62701-1512 • www.illinois-history.gov

Various Counties

Chicago to St. Louis

High Speed Rail Project

Exact Route Not Yet Selected

IHPA Log #011091109

March 21, 2011

George Weber, Bureau Chief
Illinois Department of Transportation
Division of Public and Intermodal Transportation
100 W. Randolph St., Suite 6-600
Chicago, IL 60601

Dear Mr. Weber:

Thank you for including the State Historic Preservation Office in the scoping meeting for the above referenced project. It was very beneficial to get an update on the project status. We also had the opportunity to talk to the cultural resources consultant to get a specific update on structures and archaeological survey progress. We look forward to meeting with you again to discuss the draft surveys and continue section 106 consultation.

Sincerely,

Anne E. Haaker
Deputy State Historic
Preservation Officer

RECEIVED
MAR 23 2011

Illinois Dept. of Transportation
Division of Public and
Intermodal Transportation



Illinois Historic Preservation Agency

FAX (217) 782-8161

1 Old State Capitol Plaza • Springfield, Illinois 62701-1512 • www.illinois-history.gov

Various Counties

Chicago to St. Louis

High Speed Rail Project

Exact Route Not Yet Selected

IHPA Log #011091109

September 9, 2011

David Valenstein

U.S. Department of Transportation

Federal Railroad Administration

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE

Washington, DC 20590

Dear Mr. Valenstein:

We have received your letter of August 9, 2011 regarding the ongoing Environmental Impact Statement process for the proposed High Speed Rail project. The Illinois State Historic Preservation Office accepts your invitation to participate pursuant to 36 CFR part 800 in accordance with section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended.

Sincerely,

Anne E. Haaker

Deputy State Historic

Preservation Officer



ILLINOIS ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

1021 North Grand Avenue East, P.O. Box 19276, Springfield, Illinois 62794-9276 • (217) 782-2829
James R. Thompson Center, 100 West Randolph, Suite 11-300, Chicago, IL 60601 • (312) 814-6026

PAT QUINN, GOVERNOR

DOUGLAS P. SCOTT, DIRECTOR

217-782-0547

February 24, 2011

Mr. George Weber
Acting Deputy Director
Illinois Dept of Transportation
Division of Public & Intermodal Transportation
James R. Thompson Center
100 West Randolph Street, Suite 6-600
Chicago, Illinois 60601

RECEIVED
FEB 28 2011

Illinois Dept. of Transportation
Division of Public and
Intermodal Transportation

Dear Mr. Weber:

The Agency has reviewed the proposed Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement for the Illinois High Speed Rail Chicago to St. Louis.

The Agency has no objections to the proposed project; a permit will be required from the Division of Water Pollution Control. A construction site activity stormwater NPDES permit will be required for one or more than one acre being disturbed during construction. For questions or comments, you may contact Al Keller, 217-782-0610.

Solid and hazardous waste must be properly disposed of or recycled.

Sincerely,

Lisa Bonnett
Acting Deputy Director



ILLINOIS ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

1021 NORTH GRAND AVENUE EAST, P.O. BOX 19506, SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS 62794-9506 - (217) 782-2113

PAT QUINN, GOVERNOR

217/785-4140
TDD 217/782-9143

September 16, 2011

David Valenstein
Division Chief
Environment and Systems Planning
Office of Passenger and Freight Programs
USDOT Federal Railroad Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Subject: Chicago to St. Louis High-Speed Rail Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement

Dear Mr. Valenstein:

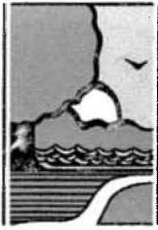
The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency appreciates your invitation to participate in the above-referenced project as a "cooperating Agency." The Illinois EPA is looking forward to reviewing and commenting on the draft Environmental Impact Statement documents, however; we are not able to commit to serving as a cooperating agency.

Please contact Mike Rogers at 217/524-4408 with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "L. Kroack", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Laurel L. Kroack, Chief
Bureau of Air



Illinois Department of Natural Resources

One Natural Resources Way Springfield, Illinois 62702-1271
<http://dnr.state.il.us>

Pat Quinn, Governor

Marc Miller, Acting Director

August 15, 2011

Mr. David Valenstein, Division Chief
Environment and Systems Planning
U.S. DOT Federal Railroad Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

RE: Chicago to St. Louis High-Speed Rail
Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement
IDNR Cooperating Agency

Dear Mr. Valenstein:

Thank you for the opportunity to participate as a Cooperating Agency in the development of the Tier One Environmental Impact Statement for the above referenced project. It is important that the Illinois Department of Natural Resources be involved in the review process to assure resources protection and compliance with the state Endangered Species Protection Act and the Illinois Wetlands Protection Act of 1989.

Please address all correspondence and meeting agenda to Mr. Steve Hamer of the Office of Realty and Environmental Planning, Division of Ecosystems and Environment at One Natural Resources Way, Springfield, IL. 62702-1271.

If you have any questions on the above, please contact me at 217-785-4862.

Sincerely,

Steve Hamer
Transportation Review Program
Division of Environment and Ecosystems

file

Printed on recycled and recyclable paper



Jeremiah W. (Jay) Nixon, Governor • Sara Parker Pauley, Director

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

www.dnr.mo.gov

March 2, 2011

George Weber
Acting Deputy Director
Division of Public & Intermodal Transportation
Illinois Department of Transportation
100 West Randolph Street, Suite 6-600
Chicago, Illinois 60601

Re: Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement, Illinois High Speed Rail Chicago to St. Louis (FRA) St. Louis City, Missouri

Dear Mr. Weber:

Thank you for submitting information on the above referenced project for our review pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (P.L. 89-665, as amended) and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's regulation 36 CFR Part 800, which requires identification and evaluation of cultural resources.

We have reviewed the information provided concerning the Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement, Illinois High Speed Rail Chicago to St. Louis. We look forward to receiving further information relevant to the project, and to the opportunity to participate in this process.

If you have any questions, please write Judith Deel at State Historic Preservation Office, P.O. Box 176, Jefferson City, Missouri 65102 or call 573/751-7862. Please be sure to include the SHPO Log Number (099-SLC-11) on all future correspondence or inquiries relating to this project.

Sincerely,

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Mark A. Miles".

Mark A. Miles
Director and Deputy
State Historic Preservation Officer

MAM:jd

C Alexandra Newcomer, FRA
Jan Cameron, STL/CRO



Pat Quinn, Governor
Thomas E. Jennings, Director

Bureau of Land and Water Resources

State Fairgrounds • P.O. Box 19281 • Springfield, IL 62794-9281 • 217/782-6297 • TDD 217/524-6858 • Fax 217/557-0993

September 12, 2011

Mr. David Valenstein, Division Chief
Environment and Systems Planning
Office of Passenger and Freight Programs
USDOT Federal Railroad Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SWE
Washington, DC 20590

Re: Invitation for Participating Agency
Chicago to St. Louis High-Speed Rail Project
Tier One Environmental Impact Statement

Dear Mr. Valenstein:

Thank you for your August 9, 2011 correspondence notifying the Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA) that the Federal Railroad Administration, in cooperation with the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), has initiated a Tier One Environmental Impact Statement for the Chicago to St. Louis High-Speed Rail Project.

A Chicago to St. Louis High-Speed Rail Tier One Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is being prepared to ascertain project objectives to meet current and future regional travel needs through significant improvements to the level and quality of passenger rail service along the Chicago to St. Louis Corridor. Specifically, the EIS will consider increasing the frequency of high-speed passenger trains between Chicago and St. Louis and increasing train speeds up to 125 mph from the 110 mph maximum speed currently planned for the corridor.

The Tier One EIS will assess changing the existing rail corridor from one track to two tracks; increasing the number of high speed passenger trains; potential corridor route alternatives between Chicago and Joliet, through the City of Springfield, and the approach to St. Louis; and the associated transportation and environmental impacts. The Tier One EIS will conclude with a Record of Decision selection of an alternative to carry forward into further analysis at a Tier 2 level.

The IDOA accepts your invitation to become a participating agency in the development of the Chicago to St. Louis High-Speed Rail Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement.

Sincerely,


Steven D. Chard, Acting Chief
Bureau of Land and Water Resources

SDC:TS

cc: Barbara Stevens, IDOT Central Office
Agency project file

TIER 1 DRAFT EIS





DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
CHICAGO DISTRICT, CORPS OF ENGINEERS
111 NORTH CANAL STREET
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60606-7206

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF:

August 15, 2012

Technical Services Division
Regulatory Branch
LRC-2012-00096

SUBJECT: Comments on the Tier 1 Draft EIS for the High-Speed Rail Service Improvements in the Chicago to St. Louis Corridor in Cook, Will, Grundy, Livingston, McLean, Logan, Sangamon, Macoupin, Jersey, Madison, and St. Clair Counties in Illinois and St. Louis County in Missouri

Joseph Shacter
Illinois Department of Transportation
100 West Randolph Street, Suite 6-600
Chicago, Illinois 60601-3229

Dear Mr. Shacter:

This letter is in response to your request that the Department of the Army (Corps) provide comments on the tier 1 draft EIS for the Chicago to St. Louis High Speed Rail service improvements. Comments contained herein relate to alternatives located within the Chicago District Regulatory boundaries of Cook and Will County. Following a review of the draft document, the Corps provides the following comments:

In the event that a Corps permit is requested in the future, the Corps must be provided with all coordination documentation for any alternative selected that would affect the Hine's emerald dragonfly, designated critical habitat for the Hine's emerald dragonfly, or other species yet to be identified within the project area.

Table 3.3-3 indicates the wetland acreage for each alternative. The alternatives that contain the lowest acreage of wetlands are: 2, 5a, 5b, 5c, 6a, 6b, and 6c with acreages ranging from 9.06 to 10.20 acres. For the two alternatives that were carried forward for further consideration, Table 3.3-3 identified 10.2 acres of wetlands for Alternative 2 (Section 1) and 21.57 acres of Alternative 4d (Section 2).

Table 5.11-1 identified 1.1 acres of wetland impact for Section 1 and 5.6 acres of wetland impact for Section 2. The amount of wetland acreage present within each alternative corridor does not necessarily correspond with the amount of anticipated wetland impact, so it is difficult to use the acreage totals in Table 3.3-3 as a factor in dismissing any of the alternatives (with the possible exception of Alternative 1 with 73.12 acres).

In addition, Alternatives A and B (Section 1) involve a potential direct impact to designated critical habitat for Hine's emerald dragonfly, whereas Alternatives C and D (Section

2) do not result in this impact. Potential wetland impacts for Alternatives A and B in Section 1 are less than those in for Alternatives C and D in Section 2. As such, Alternatives A and B would be more favorable from a wetland impacts perspective, but Alternatives C and D would be more favorable from a Section 7 perspective. This could create a potential point of conflict.

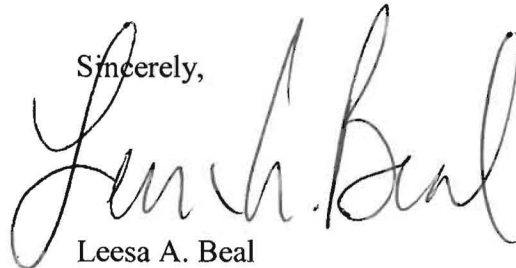
The Joliet to Alton section has 2 alternatives around the Springfield area, but the remainder of this section contains only 1 alternative. Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie is located along the route. As stated in the document, Midewin is the first national tallgrass prairie in the country. Midewin is well known as being a high quality resource for the region.

Summarizing the above, the Corps has the following recommendations:

- a. Due to the difference in wetland acreages listed in Table 3.3-3 and the potential impact acreages listed in Table 5.11-1 as well as the potential conflict point between wetland impacts and Section 7 impacts in choosing a preferred alternative, additional alternatives should be retained.
- b. Due to the high quality nature of Midewin, the feasibility of alternatives that avoid impacts to this resource should be investigated.

If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Soren Hall of my staff by telephone at 312-846-5532, or email at Soren.G.Hall@usace.army.mil.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Leesa A. Beal". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Leesa A. Beal
Chief, Regulatory Branch
Chicago District

Copy Furnished:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (Norm West)
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Shawn Cirton)
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Jeff Sniadach)
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Amy Henke)

United States Department of Agriculture



Natural Resources Conservation Service
2118 West Park Court
Champaign, IL 61821
Phone: 217/353-6600
Fax: 217/353-6676

July 27, 2012

Mr. James W. Moll, Vice President
Hanson Professional Services, Inc.
1525 S. Sixth Street
Springfield IL 62703

RE: Tier 1 Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Chicago, Illinois to St. Louis Missouri
High Speed Rail Corridor Program

Dear Mr. Moll:

We have reviewed the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Chicago, Illinois to St. Louis Missouri High Speed Rail Corridor Program as requested.

The proposed project as outlined in the EIS will have minimal impacts on prime farmland in Illinois. We have completed a Farmland Conversion Impact Rating (Federal Form AD-1006) for the corridor from Shipman IL to Godfrey IL in Jersey, Macoupin and Madison Counties. As the project progresses, we will need to complete additional ratings when corridor alignments have been finalized.

Our contact for the Farmland Conversion Impact Rating process is Tim Prescott at (217) 353-6637. Please contact him directly if you have questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ivan N. Dozier".

IVAN N. DOZIER
State Conservationist

cc:

R. Ziehm, ASTC, USDA-NRCS, 502 Comfort Drive, Suite D, Marion, IL 62959 A1
J. Harryman, DC, USDA-NRCS, 2031 Mascoutah Avenue, Belleville, Illinois 62220
D. Steinman, DC, USDA-NRCS, 7205 Marine Road, Edwardsville, Illinois 62025
A. Holmes, ASTC, USDA-NRCS, PO Box 19281, St. Fairgrounds, Springfield, IL 62794 A2
B. Dickerson, DC, USDA-NRCS, 1650 5th Street Road, Lincoln, Illinois 62656
H. Pyle, DC, USDA-NRCAS, 2623 Sunrise Drive, Suite 1, Springfield, Illinois 62703-7302
J. Jackson, DC, USDA-NRCS, 300 Carlinville Plaza, Carlinville, Illinois 62626
C. Nance, DC, USDA-NRCS, 604 East Franklin, Jerseyville, Illinois 62052-9701
D. McCallon, ASTC, USDA-NRCS, 3605 N. IL Route 47, Suite C, Morris, IL 60450 A3
R. Edwards, DC, USDA-NRCS, 1201 S. Gougar Road, New Lenox, Illinois 60450
R. Briggs, DC, USDA-NRCS, 2315 Dean Street, Suite 100, St. Charles, Illinois 60175
J. Hamer, DC, USDA-NRCS, 3605 N. Illinois Route 47, Suite B, Morris, Illinois 60450
E. McTaggart, DC, USDA-NRCS, 1510 West Reynolds, Pontiac, Illinois 61764
K. Bohnhoff, DC, USDA-NRCS, 402 North Kays Drive, Normal, Illinois 61761
G. Struben, SSS, NRCS, 2118 West Park Court, Champaign, IL 61821
T. Prescott, Res Inv Specialist, USDA-NRCS, 2118 West Park Court, Champaign, IL 61821

TP:IL_DOT_High_Speed_rail_comment

STATE OF ILLINOIS



ILLINOIS COMMERCE COMMISSION TRANSPORTATION BUREAU / RAIL SAFETY SECTION

Michael E. Stead

Rail Safety Program Administrator

July 27, 2012

Mr. Joseph E. Shacter
Director, Division of Public and Intermodal
Illinois Department of Transportation
100 W. Randolph, Suite 6-600
Chicago, IL 60601

Dear Mr. Shacter:

This office has reviewed the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS) that the Illinois Department of Transportation prepared for the Chicago, Illinois to St. Louis, Missouri High Speed Rail Corridor (Chicago-St. Louis HSR Corridor) Program. The Draft EIS includes a Tier 1 corridor-level evaluation and a Tier 2 project-level evaluation for the Springfield Rail Improvements Project. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on both documents.

This office has conducted a review of the Tier 1 evaluation of the Chicago-St. Louis HSR Corridor and the Tier 2 evaluation for the Springfield Rail Improvements Project. Our comments are outlined on the enclosed document.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide comments. If you have any questions, or need additional information, please contact me at (217) 557-1285 or mstead@icc.illinois.gov.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael E. Stead".

Michael E. Stead
Rail Safety Program Administrator

Enclosure

Illinois Commerce Commission
Transportation Bureau-Rail Safety Section Comments
Draft Environmental Impact Statement
Chicago-St. Louis High Speed Rail Corridor Program

TIER 1 Document

1. Section 4 (Affected Environment) of the Tier 1 DEIS document: Section 4.16.2.2 (Highway-Rail Crossing) indicates that the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) have regulatory jurisdiction over safety at crossings, pursuant to the Highway Safety Act of 1966. In Illinois, the Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) has regulatory jurisdiction over safety at crossings. In addition, no mention is made of pedestrian-rail crossings or private highway-rail or pedestrian-rail crossings. This section needs to be rewritten to include that information. A suggested rewrite is noted below:

There are two kinds of crossings: highway-rail and pedestrian-rail. Where a roadway, sidewalk or pedestrian trail/bikeway crosses the track at the same elevation, this is called a "grade" crossing. Where a roadway, sidewalk or pedestrian trail/bikeway passes over the tracks via an "overpass" bridge structure or passes under a railroad track via an underpass bridge structure, these crossings are referred to as "grade separated."

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and FRA have regulatory jurisdiction over safety at crossings, pursuant to the Highway Safety Act of 1966 (HSA) (23 USC 401 et seq.). The HSA governs the distribution of federal funds to states aimed at eliminating hazards at highway-rail grade crossings. USDOT has issued regulations that address crossing safety and provides federal funding for the installation and improvement of warning devices through state departments of transportation. In addition to federal oversight and funding, states also monitor crossings and, in many cases designate funding to complement the federal funds.

Jurisdiction over highway-rail grade crossings falls primarily to the states. This authority is set forth in the Railroad-Highway Grade Crossing Handbook (FHWA 2007a). Each state department of transportation is required to periodically inspect highway-rail grade crossings and to determine the adequacy of warning devices at each location, as well as to order safety improvements. USDOT oversees and approves the state determinations.

In Illinois, the Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) has regulatory jurisdiction over safety at all public crossings (625 ILCS 5/18c-7401). No public road, highway, street, sidewalk or pedestrian trail/bikeway shall be constructed across the track of any rail carrier at grade, nor shall the track of any rail carrier be constructed across a public road, highway, street, sidewalk or pedestrian trail/bikeway at grade, without permission of the ICC.

Illinois Commerce Commission
Transportation Bureau-Rail Safety Section Comments
Draft Environmental Impact Statement
Chicago-St. Louis High Speed Rail Corridor Program

The ICC also has the power to require the separation of grades at any proposed crossing where a public road, highway, street, sidewalk or pedestrian trail/bikeway may cross the tracks of a rail carrier.

All warning signs or automatic warning devices installed at public crossings in Illinois must meet the minimum requirements of 92 Illinois Administrative Code 1535. In addition, all warning signs or warning devices installed at crossings must comply with FHWA's Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) (23 CFR 646.214[b][1]). The MUTCD provides standards for the types of warning devices that must be installed at all highway-rail grade crossings (FHWA 2007b). FRA issued regulations under its railroad safety authority that impose minimum standards for highway-rail grade crossings (49 CFR 234 - 236). FRA maintains information for each highway-rail grade crossing based on information provided by the states and the railroads. FRA and FHWA coordinate research efforts related to highway-rail grade crossing collisions and provide guidance and solutions to problems.

2. Appendix E:

- a. General - No information is shown for the installation of warning signs or automatic warning devices at pedestrian-rail grade and private highway-rail grade crossings. Based upon diagnostic reviews conducted at all crossings located within the Dwight to St. Louis portion of the Chicago-St. Louis Corridor, for which FRA issued a Record of Decision (ROD) in January 2004, it is our understanding that these types of crossings are scheduled to receive safety improvements. The proposed improvements should be included in the DEIS.
- b. Page E-4 - Why are Four Quad Gates proposed for the Stephen Street grade crossing (MP 25.15) under the "No-Build" option?
- c. Page E-4 - Why are no warning devices shown for the West 135th Street grade crossing (MP 28.95) under the "no-Build" and Build" columns?
- d. Page E-17 – The Washington Street grade crossing (MP 73.95) is listed as being equipped with Four Quad Gates under "Existing". Our records show the crossing is currently equipped with standard flashers and gates (Gates).
- e. Page E-27 - There appears to be a duplicate entry for Sangamon Avenue. The railroad bridge that carries UP tracks over Sangamon Avenue (MP 182.80) is also listed on page E-26.
- f. Page E-28 - There is an entry for Iles Avenue (MP 187.35) with no crossing protection listed under the three conditions. According to the ICC and FRA databases, this crossing has been closed since December 2001.

Illinois Commerce Commission
Transportation Bureau-Rail Safety Section Comments
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- g. Page E-31 - Four Quad Gates are proposed for Allen Road (MP 216.08) under the No-Build and Build options. It should be noted that local highway authority agreed to voluntary close this crossing (Commission Order T12-0048).
- h. Page E-33 - Four Quad Gates are proposed for Gilworth Lane (MP 234.57) under the No-Build and Build options. It should be noted that local highway authority has voluntarily closed this crossing (Commission Order T12-0007).
- i. Page E-35 - An existing public grade crossing is not listed (Evans Street, Wood River, AAR/DOT #294453D, MP 264.20). Please note that an agreement is out to the parties regarding the voluntary closure of this crossing.
- j. Page E-35 – E. 7th Street (MP 265.2) is a private crossing according to ICC and FRA records.
- k. Page E-35 – The Pontoon Road (MP 272.64) grade crossing has been replaced with a Railroad-Under grade separation (Commission Order T02-0067).
- l. Page E-35 - Four Quad Gates are proposed for 20th Street (MP 275.05) under the No-Build and Build options. This crossing has been closed since March 2011 (Commission Order T02-0067).
- m. Page E-36 – Four Quad Gates are proposed for 2 grade crossings in St Clair County (Missouri Avenue and Trendley Avenue) under the No-Build and Build options. Diagnostic reviews of these crossings for proposed improvements were not included under the ROD project. Which railroad owns these crossings?

TIER 2 Document

- 1. Section 5 (Environmental Consequences) - The drawing on page 5-15 is the same as the drawing on page 5-12. It is assumed that the drawing on page 3-15 should show proposed improvements at Ash Street crossing of CN's track (19th Street Corridor).
- 3. Section 4 (Affected Environment) of the Tier 2 DEIS document: Section 4.13.2.2 (Highway-Rail Crossing) indicates that the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) have regulatory jurisdiction over safety at crossings, pursuant to the Highway Safety Act of 1966. In Illinois, the Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) has regulatory jurisdiction over safety at crossings. In addition, no mention is made of pedestrian-rail crossings or private highway-rail or pedestrian-rail crossings. This section needs to be rewritten to include that information. A suggested rewrite is noted below:

Illinois Commerce Commission
Transportation Bureau-Rail Safety Section Comments
Draft Environmental Impact Statement
Chicago-St. Louis High Speed Rail Corridor Program

There are two kinds of crossings: highway-rail and pedestrian-rail. Where a roadway, sidewalk or pedestrian trail/bikeway crosses the track at the same elevation, this is called a "grade" crossing. Where a roadway, sidewalk or pedestrian trail/bikeway passes over the tracks via an "overpass" bridge structure or passes under a railroad track via an underpass bridge structure, these crossings are referred to as "grade separated."

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and FRA have regulatory jurisdiction over safety at crossings, pursuant to the Highway Safety Act of 1966 (HSA) (23 USC 401 et seq.). The HSA governs the distribution of federal funds to states aimed at eliminating hazards at highway-rail grade crossings. USDOT has issued regulations that address crossing safety and provides federal funding for the installation and improvement of warning devices through state departments of transportation. In addition to federal oversight and funding, states also monitor crossings and, in many cases designate funding to complement the federal funds.

Jurisdiction over highway-rail grade crossings falls primarily to the states. This authority is set forth in the Railroad-Highway Grade Crossing Handbook (FHWA 2007a). Each state department of transportation is required to periodically inspect highway-rail grade crossings and to determine the adequacy of warning devices at each location, as well as to order safety improvements. USDOT oversees and approves the state determinations.

In Illinois, the Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) has regulatory jurisdiction over safety at all public crossings (625 ILCS 5/18c-7401). No public road, highway, street, sidewalk or pedestrian trail/bikeway shall be constructed across the track of any rail carrier at grade, nor shall the track of any rail carrier be constructed across a public road, highway, street, sidewalk or pedestrian trail/bikeway at grade, without permission of the ICC.

The ICC also has the power to require the separation of grades at any proposed crossing where a public road, highway, street, sidewalk or pedestrian trail/bikeway may cross the tracks of a rail carrier.

All warning signs or automatic warning devices installed at public crossings in Illinois must meet the minimum requirements of 92 Illinois Administrative Code 1535. In addition, all warning signs or warning devices installed at crossings must comply with FHWA's Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) (23 CFR 646.214[b][1]). The MUTCD provides standards for the types of warning devices that must be installed at all highway-rail grade crossings (FHWA 2007b).

Illinois Commerce Commission
Transportation Bureau-Rail Safety Section Comments
Draft Environmental Impact Statement
Chicago-St. Louis High Speed Rail Corridor Program

FRA issued regulations under its railroad safety authority that impose minimum standards for highway-rail grade crossings (49 CFR 234 - 236). FRA maintains information for each highway-rail grade crossing based on information provided by the states and the railroads. FRA and FHWA coordinate research efforts related to highway-rail grade crossing collisions and provide guidance and solutions to problems.



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance
Denver Federal Center, Building 67, Room 118
Post Office Box 25007 (D-108)
Denver, Colorado 80225-0007



August 13, 2012

9043.1
ER-12/0473

Mr. Joseph E. Shacter
Director, Division of Public and Intermodal
Illinois Department of Transportation
100 West Randolph Street, Suite 6-600
Chicago, Illinois 60601

Dear Mr. Schacter:

As requested, the Department of the Interior (Department) has reviewed the Tier 1/Tier 2 Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the High Speed Rail (HSR) Corridor Program from Chicago, Illinois, Chicago, Illinois to St. Louis, Missouri, by the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Railroad Administration. The Department offers the following comments and recommendations for your consideration:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) reviewed the information provided in the Tier One Draft EIS, and has participated in reviewing the project as a Cooperating Agency. During Tier One, FWS checked their records for the presence of federally listed species, FWS trust resources, and other fish and wildlife resources that may be affected by the proposed project. They also reviewed their previous correspondence providing comments on the Chicago to St. Louis HSR project, including associated Environmental Assessments (EAs) within the corridor. Their previous correspondence is enclosed. They have previously provided information about the federally endangered Hine's emerald dragonfly (*Somatochlora hineana*), federally endangered leafy prairie clover (*Dalea foliosa*), and the federally threatened eastern prairie fringed orchid (*Platanthera leucophaea*). These comments, as well as informal consultation on the project in 2001, identified potential impacts to the Hine's emerald dragonfly and its designated critical habitat from some of the proposed alternatives.

With respect to those portions of the Draft EIS, the FWS offers the following comments and recommendations for your consideration.

Alternatives (Section 3)

Subsection 3.3 - Build Alternatives

3.3.4.2 – Screening Results for Chicago to Joliet Alternatives

This section summarizes the results of Tier One screening of alternatives in the Chicago to Joliet portion of the project and provides reasons for eliminating alternatives from further consideration. Two alternatives, Alternatives 2 and 4D, are proposed to be carried forward for further study in Tier One based on meeting the screening criteria and purpose and need.

The information and data developed for the Tier One screening process (summarized in Table 3.3-3) does not support the elimination of all alternatives except for Alternatives 2 and 4D. Specifically, Alternatives 4A through 4C should be retained because for some of the criteria for which they were eliminated, these alternatives performed as well (or nearly as well) as Alternative 4D, which is being retained. Some of these criteria include: operational issues, estimated average number of trains per day, capital cost, wetland impacts, and environmental justice. Alternatives 4A through 4C also performed better than Alternative 2 for some criteria such as: capital cost, right of way impacts, and threatened and endangered species impacts. Similarly, Alternative 3 should be strongly considered for retention because it performed as well (or nearly as well) as Alternatives 4D and Alternative 2 for several criteria. As noted in previous correspondence, Alternative 2 would impact the Hine's emerald dragonfly and its critical habitat, while Alternatives 4A through 4D and Alternative 3 would not impact the endangered species.

Additionally, the 4A through 4D alternatives, from Joliet to Chicago, appear to be on the same alignment as the Route 4 alternative for the Chicago to Omaha City high speed rail project. Improvements to the portions of these alternatives between Joliet and Chicago would eliminate impacts to the Hine's emerald dragonfly and could serve both high speed rail projects.

Affected Environment (Section 4)

Subsection 4.6 – Natural Resources

4.6.3 – Threatened and Endangered Species

This section discusses critical habitat for the endangered Hine's emerald dragonfly. Alternatives 1 and 2 intersect or are adjacent to designated critical habitat for the Hine's emerald dragonfly. Please see the attached figure prepared by the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service, based on the project shapefiles that were provided by FRA and FWS's own data on critical habitat locations. None of the other Chicago to Joliet alignments would impact federally threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat.

Environmental Consequences (Section 5)

Subsection 5.6 - Natural Resources

5.6.2.2 – Ecological Resources

The Affected Environment section (Section 4) contains information about the habitat and wildlife located within the project corridor, including: birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and

aquatic species. However, the Environmental Consequences section does not provide information about the wildlife that could be impacted by the proposed project (besides federal and state listed species). Wildlife identified in Section 4 should be discussed in the Tier One Final EIS. In particular, impacts to migratory birds should be discussed in detail as the project would result in the loss of suitable habitat (e.g., forest, prairie, and wetland). Additionally, migratory birds could be impacted by noise generated from the project. This issue will be further discussed in Subsection 5.8.

This section also briefly discusses the impacts on wildlife habitat. Impacts to forest, prairie remnants, and protected natural areas are discussed. However, the discussion of protected natural areas focuses mostly on prairie remnants and state protected natural areas (e.g., nature preserves). The Tier One Final EIS should focus on all natural areas that are providing wildlife habitat along the corridor. It would be more useful if the exhibits showed the natural areas that would be impacted in their entirety, rather than showing only the portions that would be impacted within the corridor right-of-way.

5.6.2.3 – Threatened and Endangered Species

Limited information is provided about the potential impact to the federally endangered Hine's emerald dragonfly, though the impacts to its critical habitat and impacts to flying adults via collisions with trains are noted. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has provided substantial information regarding potential impacts to this species in our prior correspondence on this project, since we first reviewed the 2003 EIS and including our most recent comments on the 2011 Dwight to Joliet EA. These comments are enclosed and all comments regarding impacts to the Hine's emerald dragonfly should be incorporated in the Tier One Final EIS. We agree that further coordination on threatened and endangered species impacts will continue during the Tier Two stage of the project, for all federally listed species (as suitable habitat may occur within the proposed right-of-ways). We anticipate that review of the habitat assessments and associated floristic quality assessments discussed in our November 10, 2011, correspondence with FRA regarding the Joliet to Dwight Project EA and FONSI will be needed to determine if suitable habitat is present for other federally listed species throughout the alternative corridors.

The Draft EIS should clarify that the Hine's emerald dragonfly occurs not only in designated critical habitat but is additionally known to occur around critical habitat units 4 and 7.

Table 5.6-3, which lists state threatened and endangered species, should include the Hine's emerald dragonfly, which is also a state endangered species. The EIS should also be edited to clarify that the state listed species leafy prairie clover is also federally listed as endangered, and the state listed Mead's milkweed is federally listed as a threatened species. The leafy prairie clover has at least three occurrences (rather than only one as indicated in table 5.6-3). We are not aware of any Mead's milkweed populations within the corridor.

The Draft EIS states that the anticipated increase in train-dragonfly collisions from selection of an alternative that crosses the habitat of this endangered species would have a minimal overall impact on the species. We are not aware of any information that would support this conclusion. We anticipate the need for further analysis of the scope and consequences of increased train-dragonfly collisions during the Tier 2 process and during the Endangered Species Act (ESA) section 7 consultations. We will need to assess the degree of impact that increased train-

dragonfly collisions will have on the persistence and resilience of the Hine's emerald dragonfly population, and whether the level of impact could lead to extirpation of the population from Illinois. This endangered dragonfly persists at only a few sites in Illinois and one of the retained alternatives (Alternative 2) runs through remaining habitat for the species. Impacts to even a small amount of critical habitat acreage could result in extirpation of an endangered species if adult mortality occurs at unsustainable levels.

Subsection 5.8 – Noise and Vibration

Noise impacts to wildlife resources, particularly migratory birds, are not discussed in this section. Several studies indicate that noise can adversely affect migratory birds (we can provide reference materials to FRA if requested). The Tier One Final EIS should evaluate the potential impacts to wildlife, particularly migratory birds, from increased noise and vibration resulting from increases in train frequency and speed for the alternatives considered. These impacts should be addressed in either Subsection 5.6 or 5.8.

Subsection 5.17 - Permits

This section includes the statement that “if endangered species are identified during program implementation, all activity in the immediate area would cease.” We assume this statement should read “if previously unknown occurrences of endangered species are identified during program implementation, all activity in the immediate area would cease. Coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service would be initiated as required by section 7 of the ESA.”

For all federally listed species and critical habitat already known to occur in the project area, we anticipate continuing to work with FRA through the Tier 2 and informal consultation process to avoid and minimize impacts to listed species in compliance with section 7 of the ESA.

Subsection 5.19 – Indirect and Cumulative Impacts

5.19.2 – Build Alternatives

In regard to indirect impacts, the Tier One Draft EIS focuses on the project's potential to induce development in the vicinity of the train stations and determined that the project would result in negligible indirect impacts. The U.S Fish and Wildlife Service believes this assessment of indirect impacts is narrow in scope and that FRA should expand its assessment of indirect impacts. Specifically, FRA should consider the indirect impacts to wildlife and their habitats. Examples of these indirect impacts would be the loss or fragmentation of forested, wetland, or prairie habitats and the associated loss of wildlife. Potential impacts of noise on wildlife could also be considered as there are areas identified within the corridor with concentrations of migratory birds that could be affected (e.g., Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie). The Tier Two Final EIS should fully assess all possible impacts to wildlife resources.

Similarly, the Tier Two Final EIS should fully assess all possible impacts to wildlife resources as related to cumulative impacts. The Tier One Draft EIS indicates that cumulative impacts to natural resources would be negligible. Without additional information on the habitats described in the Draft EIS, specifically for information on these natural resources outside of the project corridor, we cannot concur with FRA's assessment.

FRA also discusses the increase in freight traffic south of Joliet due to the intermodal facility and Metra's plans to expand service along the Metra Heritage Corridor. Cumulative impacts to wildlife resources that could result from these changes should be addressed in the Tier Two Final EIS as well.

Subsection 5.21 - Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitments of Resources

This section is confusing, in that it appears to say that impacts to prairie and forested habitats are irreversible, but that the build alternatives would not result in irreversible and irretrievable commitments of resources for natural areas, threatened or endangered species, or water resources. We do not agree with this assessment since prairie and forested habitats are natural areas which could provide habitat for listed species. We note also that this section should recognize that extirpation of a federally listed species from its critical habitat would represent an irretrievable commitment of resources. The Tier Two Final EIS should be updated to consider all wildlife resources.

Subsection 5.23 – Potential Mitigation Measures

This section discusses mitigation for impacts to prairies, federal and state listed species, and wetlands. However, this section does not discuss mitigation for impacts to forested areas or migratory birds (from loss of habitat or noise impacts); mitigation for these should be discussed in the Tier Two Final EIS.

In addition, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) had specific comments on wildlife.

4.6.2.3 Wildlife

Pg. 4-32: The document provides a cursory description of wildlife that may be impacted; however, the information on bird species and population trends is limited. We suggest the Final EIS include the data and information available in the USGS Breeding Bird Survey, and in Sauer et al, 2011. The USGS Breeding Bird Survey includes routes that are close to the project area.

The locations of the routes can be found on the internet at <http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/BBS/results/routemaps/routeMapStatic.html>

The list of species for each route can be found on <https://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/BBS/PublicDataInterface/index.cfm>

Routes can be found on <http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/BBS/results/routemaps/routeAssignMap.cfm>.

Additional information on the trends in bird populations can be found at <http://www.mbr-pwrc.usgs.gov/bbs/bbs.html> and in the publication: Sauer, J. R., J. E. Hines, J. E. Fallon, K. L. Pardieck, D. J. Ziolkowski, Jr., and W. A. Link, 2011, The North American Breeding Bird Survey, Results and Analysis 1966 - 2010. Version 12.07.2011 USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, Laurel, MD; available online at <http://www.mbr-pwrc.usgs.gov/bbs>.

This letter provides comment under the authority of, and in accordance with, the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (83 Stat. 852, as amended P.L. 91-190, 42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.), the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act of 1956 (48 Stat. 401, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 661 et seq.), the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (87 Stat. 884, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.), the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (40 Stat. 755, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 703 et seq.), and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (54 Stat. 250, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 668-668d).

The Department has a continuing interest in working with the Federal Railroad Administration to ensure impacts to resources of concern to the Department are adequately addressed. For continued consultation and coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, please contact Mr. Shawn Cirton, 1250 South Grove Ave, Suite 103, Barrington, Illinois 60010-2668, telephone (847) 381-2253, ext. 19. If you have any questions concerning USGS comments, please contact Gary LeCain, Environmental Document Reviews Coordinator, U.S. Geological Survey, Office of the Director, Mail Stop 423, Reston, Virginia 20192, telephone (303) 236-1475.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide these comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert F. Stewart". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line extending from the end.

Robert F. Stewart
Regional Environmental Officer

Enclosures

cc:

Andrea E. Martin, Environmental Protection Specialist
Office of Railroad Policy and Development
Federal Railroad Administration
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE., MS-20
Washington, DC 20590

Enclosure 1 – Chicago to St. Louis HSR Letters



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Chicago Ecological Services Field Office
1250 South Grove Avenue, Suite 103
Barrington, Illinois 60010
Phone: (847) 381-2253 Fax: (847) 381-2285

IN REPLY REFER TO:
FWS/AES-CIFO/2009-FA-0558

November 10, 2011

Andrea Martin
Office of Railroad Policy and Development
USDOT Federal Railroad Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE, Room W33-404
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Ms. Martin:

This responds to your emails to Mr. Shawn Cirton, of this office, dated November 2 and November 8, 2011, requesting comments on the Joliet to Dwight Project Environmental Assessment (EA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). The EA is dated April 2011; however, we did not receive the EA for this project until November 2, 2011.

We previously received a March 18, 2011, letter from the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) seeking comments during "the information gathering phase" (i.e., the scoping process); we responded with comments on April 1, 2011. Our comments expressed our view that the Joliet to Dwight Project and the Chicago to St. Louis High Speed Rail Project were connected actions that should not be evaluated separately. IDOT responded to our April 1, 2011, letter with a letter dated September 9, 2011, saying that the Joliet to Dwight Project was independent of the Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement study for the Chicago to St. Louis High Speed Rail Project and that the two projects had independent utility.

We have also received a letter from the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) dated August 15, 2011, seeking concurrence on your determinations of "no effect" for the Hine's emerald dragonfly, sheepnose mussel, snuffbox mussel, lakeside daisy, Mead's milkweed, eastern massasauga rattlesnake, and eastern prairie fringed orchid related to your section 7 responsibilities under the Endangered Species Act. Please note that we do not provide concurrence on "no effect" determinations made by Federal agencies. FRA's letter also indicated that surveys had been conducted for the eastern prairie fringed orchid and that surveys for the leafy prairie clover had been scheduled during the flowering for that species. We would need to review the results of the surveys in order to determine if we agree with FRA's determinations for the eastern prairie fringed orchid and the leafy prairie clover. We still have not seen those surveys. Likewise, to determine whether all suitable habitat for those species along the corridor has been identified, we would need to review the wetland delineations and associated floristic quality assessments for the project.

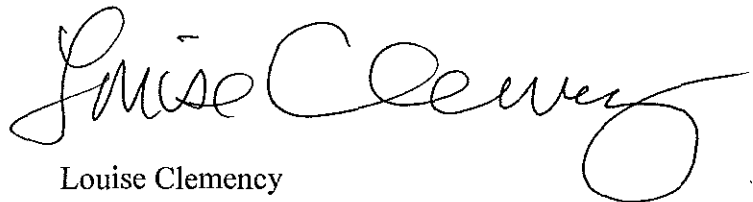
IDOT's March 18, 2011, letter indicated that our comments would be incorporated into the EA and that a draft EA would be submitted to our office. We did not receive a draft EA to review until last week. FRA has requested that we provide any comments to them on the EA and FONSI by November 10, 2011, despite our only recently receiving the documents. In addition, FRA has not provided to us the requested surveys and wetland information. Therefore, we cannot provide comments by the November 10, 2011, deadline on the potential impacts to fish and wildlife resources, since we have not had the opportunity to review the surveys and associated information, as described in the August 15, 2011, letter and in IDOT's September 9, 2011, letter.

Additionally, in FRA's August 15, 2011, letter, regarding section 7 consultation, it states that the Joliet to Dwight Project is part of the Chicago to St. Louis High Speed Rail Program. Please be aware that our section 7 related comments for the Joliet to Dwight Project are separate from and are not intended to address future section 7 comments for the Chicago to St. Louis High Speed Rail Program (since FRA and IDOT indicated that the Joliet to Dwight Project is independent of the High Speed Rail Project in IDOT's September 9, 2011, letter).

This letter provides comment under the authority of, and in accordance with, the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (83 Stat. 852, as amended P.L. 91-190, 42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (48 Stat. 401, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 661 *et seq.*) and the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (87 Stat. 884, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*).

If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Shawn Cirton at 847/381-2253, ext. 19.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Louise Clemency". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Louise Clemency
Field Supervisor

cc: USEPA, West
USACOE, Chernich
USFS-Midewin, Thakali
USFWS, Woeber
IDOT, Weber



United States Department of the Interior

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FILE COPY

IN REPLY REFER TO:
FWS/AES-CIFO/2009-FA-0558

April 1, 2011

George Weber
Illinois Department of Transportation
100 West Randolph Street, Suite 6-600
Chicago, IL 60601

Dear Mr. Weber:

This responds to your letter dated March 18, 2011 requesting comments for the preparation of an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Union Pacific Railroad's (UPRR) Dwight-Joliet Improvement project. The proposed improvements would occur between Joliet, Illinois to Dwight, Illinois and would be located on the Chicago to St. Louis corridor. The project would consist of three components located within UPRR's Joliet Subdivision.

We provided comments to the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) on May 19, 2010 (enclosed) for an EA and Categorical Exclusion which covers the same UPRR rail line as the proposed project. We also provided comments to your office on October 19, 2010 (enclosed) that responded to a request for comments for the Tier 1 Service Level EA for the Chicago to St. Louis High Speed Passenger Rail (HSR) project. Most recently, we commented on FRA's Notice of Intent (NOI), dated February 14, 2011 for the Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Chicago to St. Louis HSR project. Our comments for the NOI were the same as our October 19, 2010 comments.

We have reviewed the information provided with your most recent letter. Your letter indicates that the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) is seeking grant funding from the FRA for the proposed improvements. As we noted in our May 19, 2010 letter, we do not believe that it is appropriate under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to evaluate the proposed UPRR Dwight-Joliet Improvement project separately from the larger Chicago to St. Louis HSR project. As we also noted in previous correspondence, the proposed improvements would not be occurring but for the larger HSR project. It is inappropriate under NEPA to evaluate fragmented segments of a larger project (*i.e.*, piecemealing), especially when individual project segments represent a commitment of resources that may constrain the selection of alternatives for the overall project.

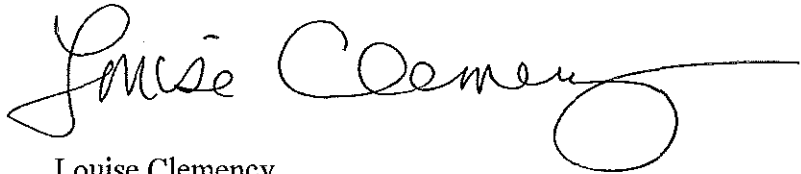
NEPA states that the scope of analysis is to be determined by the range of actions, impacts and alternatives to be considered in the planning effort (§1508.25). The range of actions includes connected actions, which are described as closely related actions which shall be discussed in the same impact statement. The NEPA notes that actions are connected if they: (i) automatically trigger other actions which may require EISs; (ii) cannot or will not proceed unless other actions are taken previously or simultaneously; (iii) are interdependent parts of a larger action and depend on the larger action for their justification. Therefore, we believe that the UPRR Dwight-Joliet Improvement project and Chicago to St. Louis HSR project are connected actions that should not be evaluated separately and that the connected actions should be evaluated as part of the Tier 1 EIS for the Chicago to St. Louis HSR project.

We are also concerned that authorization of the UPRR Dwight-Joliet Improvement project could prematurely lead to elimination of practicable alternatives, between Joliet and Chicago, to the preferred alternative for the larger Chicago to St. Louis HSR project. The map attached to your March 18, 2011 letter shows that improvements would begin along the Joliet Subdivision, north of I-80 (MP 36.7). The most recent map shared with us on March 1, 2011, at the Chicago to St. Louis HSR Agency Scoping meeting, shows the Chicago to Joliet alternatives with alternatives that tie into the Joliet Subdivision south of I-80. Again, we are concerned that authorization of the proposed improvement project could lead to the premature identification of a preferred alternative or elimination of other practicable alternatives.

This letter provides comment under the authority of, and in accordance with, the provisions of National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (83 Stat. 852 as amended P.L. 91-190, 42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (48 Stat. 401, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 661 *et seq.*) and the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (87 Stat. 884. as amended; 16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*).

If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Shawn Cirton at 847/381-2253, ext. 19 or Mr. Kristopher Lah at 847/381-2253, ext. 15.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Louise Clemency". The signature is fluid and extends to the right with a long horizontal stroke.

Louise Clemency
Field Supervisor

Enclosures

cc: FRA, Wendy Messenger
USEPA, Kenneth Westlake
USCOE, Kathy Chernich
FWS RIFO, Heidi Woeber



United States Department of the Interior

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IN REPLY REFER TO:
FWS/AES-CIFO/9-FA-0558

FILE COPY

May 19, 2010

Wendy L. Messenger
Environmental Protection Specialist
Office of Railroad Development
Federal Railroad Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Ms. Messenger:

This letter is written in regard to the proposed Chicago to St. Louis High-Speed Passenger Rail Service (HSR) project. We provided a letter to the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) dated October 19, 2010 (enclosed) that responded to a request for comments on the Tier 1 Service Level Environmental Assessment (EA) for the HSR project. That letter provided detailed information on the consultation process required under section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 as amended. On October 15, 2009, we also gave a powerpoint presentation during a Webinar with you and other folks involved in the HSR project (enclosed) which gave an overview of the section 7 consultation process and the threatened and endangered species issues related to the Chicago to St. Louis HSR project.

We have also been made aware that the work on a Tier 1 EIS (similar to a Feasibility Study) will begin soon and is scheduled for completion sometime in the spring of 2011; it will include a double-track corridor with multiple options for Springfield. North of Dwight a minimum of 3 alternatives will be evaluated to determine a preferred alternative. By fall 2011 a Tier 1 Final EIS/ROD is expected to be issued for the Chicago-St. Louis double-track corridor.

One of the most effective methods of streamlining section 7 consultation is for the Service, action agencies, and applicants to coordinate early and often throughout the consultation and design processes. This guidance is designed to assist consultation participants in conducting the appropriate level of coordination at the appropriate times in the consultation process. The guidance presented in the enclosed document is optional; however, it is strongly recommended that these coordination steps be implemented to help ensure the establishment of a complete administrative record and a smooth consultation process. The attached guidance describes

sixteen steps, in four distinct stages, for efficiently coordinating the NEPA and section 7 consultation processes.

We have also enclosed for your reference a "recovery scorecard" which provides an overview of the status and recovery needs for the Hine's emerald dragonfly. This may assist you in assessing impacts to the species and proposing appropriate avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures for the HSR.

We are in receipt of two letters dated April 30, 2010 from Mr. George Weber of the IDOT Bureau of Railroads. These letters were seeking input and comments on new railroad siding projects from Braidwood (MP 58.26) to Braceville (MP 60.44), and from Joliet (MP 36.8) to Elwood (MP 44.69). These construction projects are clearly indicated as being a part of the Chicago to St. Louis corridor that will be studied in the development of a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). However, these two construction projects are apparently being pursued separately at this time due to some potential FRA grant funding. It does not seem appropriate, however, to evaluate these two proposed construction projects separately because they would not be occurring but for the larger HSR Chicago to St. Louis project. We have provided information about the resources of concern to our agency in our previous letter (enclosed), however, we believe that evaluating and pursuing permitting for these projects separately amounts to piecemealing.

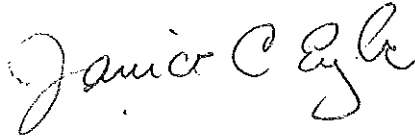
This letter provides comment under the authority of, and in accordance with, the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (83 Stat. 852 as amended P.L. 91-190, 42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.), the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (48 Stat. 401, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 661 et seq.) and the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (87 Stat. 884. as amended; 16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.).

Wendy L. Messenger

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If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Kristopher Lah at 847/381-2253, ext. 15 or Mr. Jeffrey Mengler at ext 17 or jeffrey_mengler@fws.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Janice C. Engle".

Janice C. Engle
Field Supervisor

enclosures

cc: USEPA: Kenneth Westlake
USCOE: Kathy Chernich
FRA: Daniel Orlaskey
FWS Rock Island Illinois Field Office: Heidi Woeber
FWS Law Enforcement: Craig Tabor
IDOT BRR: George Weber
FHWA: JD Stevenson



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IN REPLY REFER TO:
FWS/AES-CIFO/2009-FA-0558

October 19, 2009

Mr. George Weber
Bureau of Railroads Bureau Chief
Illinois Department of Transportation
100 W. Randolph
Suite 6-600
Chicago, Illinois 60601

Dear Mr. Weber:

This responds to your request for comments on the Tier 1 Service Level Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Chicago to St. Louis High-Speed Passenger Rail Service (HSR) project. Illinois Department of Transportation and Missouri Department of Transportation, in conjunction with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) are evaluating the reestablishment of passenger rail service between the aforementioned cities. The Tier 1 Service Level EA addresses the service level issues that would be part of the initial operations and the proposed alternatives. The Tier 2 Project Level analyses would address specific project level activities. We provide comments as they relate to fish and wildlife resources that may be affected by construction and operation of the proposed project.

We reviewed the information provided in your Tier 1 Service Level EA. We checked our records for the presence of federally listed species, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) trust resources, and other fish and wildlife resources that may be affected by the proposed project. Based on our review we offer the following comments that should be addressed in the Tier 2 Project Level EA.

General Comments

The Tier 1 Service Level EA does not adequately identify adverse impacts to the Service's trust resources (federally listed species and migratory birds) and does not fully disclose impacts to other wildlife.

Applicable Regulations and Permits

- Clarification is needed regarding the requirement to address federally listed species and critical habitat under section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (ESA). Section 7(a)(2) requires each Federal agency to insure that any action it authorizes, funds, or carries out is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of listed species or destroy or adversely modify designated critical habitat prior to a project going forward. Since the HSR project would involve funding from the FRA, we assume that they would be the lead Federal action agency. In addition, since this project has the potential (see below) to affect a listed species or critical habitat, the Federal action agency must consult with the USFWS under section 7 of the ESA before final decisions can be made under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). Although consultation was initiated on the HSR project by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) on impacts to the federally endangered Hine's emerald dragonfly, FHWA suspended consultation in 2001. At this time consultation has not been reinstituted for this project.

In order to initiate consultation a Federal action agency must submit a consultation request to the USFWS with a biological assessment that includes a description of the action, description of the specific area that may be affected, description of the manner in which the action may affect listed resources, an analysis of cumulative effects and any relevant reports or other information. Within 30 days of receipt of an initiation package, the USFWS can provide written acknowledgement of the consultation request, advise the Federal action agency of any data deficiencies and request either the missing data or a written statement that the data are not available. The USFWS then issues a biological opinion within 135 days of initiation of consultation. The biological opinion includes: the opinion of the USFWS as to whether or not a Federal action is likely to jeopardize the continued existence of listed species or destroy or adversely modify designated critical habitat; jeopardize the continued existence of species proposed for listing; or adversely modify proposed critical habitat. In addition, the biological opinion may authorize incidental take of a listed species provided that the Federal action agency complies with any terms and conditions included.

- The Tier 1 Service Level EA fails to identify the need to address the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, as amended (MBTA). Under the MBTA it is illegal to "take" migratory birds, their eggs, feathers or nests. Take is defined as "to pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or any attempt to carry out these activities." Removal of inactive nests of migratory birds should not be accomplished prior to consultation with the USFWS. A permit may be required for removal of inactive nests. In addition, Executive Order 13186 directs Federal departments and agencies to take certain actions to further implement the MBTA.

- The Tier 1 Service Level EA fails to identify the need to address the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act of 1934, as amended (FWCA). The FWCA authorizes the Secretaries of Agriculture and Commerce to provide assistance to and cooperate with Federal and State agencies to protect, rear, stock, and increase the supply of game and fur-bearing animals, as well as to study the effects of domestic sewage, trade wastes, and other polluting substances on wildlife. In addition, the FWCA requires consultation with the USFWS and the fish and wildlife agencies of States where the "waters of any stream or other body of water are proposed or

authorized, permitted or licensed to be impounded, diverted or otherwise controlled or modified" by any agency under a Federal permit or license. Consultation is to be undertaken for the purpose of "preventing loss of and damage to wildlife resources."

- The Tier 1 Service Level EA fails to identify the need to address the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act of 1940, as amended (BGEPA). Although bald eagles were removed from the Federal list of threatened and endangered species, they remain protected under the BGEPA. The BGEPA prohibits anyone, without a permit issued by the Secretary of the Interior, from "taking" bald eagles, including their parts, nests, or eggs. The BGEPA defines "take" as "pursue, shoot, shoot at, poison, wound, kill, capture, trap, collect, molest or disturb." Under the BGEPA "disturb" means: "to agitate or bother a bald or golden eagle to a degree that causes, or is likely to cause, based on the best scientific information available: 1) injury to an eagle; 2) a decrease in its productivity, by substantially interfering with normal breeding, feeding, or sheltering behavior; or 3) nest abandonment, by substantially interfering with normal breeding, feeding, or sheltering behavior." In addition to immediate impacts, this definition also covers impacts that result from human-induced alterations initiated around a previously used nest site during a time when eagles are not present, if, upon the eagle's return, such alterations agitate or bother an eagle to a degree that interferes with or interrupts normal breeding, feeding, or sheltering habits, and causes injury, death or nest abandonment.

Alternatives

Selection of a preferred alternative at this time fails to take Federal threatened and endangered species and designated critical habitat into consideration. Selection of a preferred alternative without consideration of federally listed entities reduces potential to identify reasonable and prudent alternatives that would avoid potentially jeopardizing the survival and recovery of listed species. Selection of a preferred alternative should not be made until the Federal Railway Administration has completed consultation on the project under section 7 of the ESA. Please see information below regarding three federally listed species and critical habitat under the "Threatened and Endangered Species" section below.

Environmental Resources, Impacts and Mitigation

Noise and Vibration

The Tier 2 EA should evaluate whether wildlife, particularly migratory birds, would be affected by noise and vibration from the possible increase in frequency and speed of trains for both alternatives.

Groundwater

The Tier 2 EA and a Biological Assessment should evaluate the potential for groundwater contamination and disturbance to hydrologic systems within the Canadian National – Illinois Central/Union Pacific and Rock Island District Alignments. Construction and operation activities within these alignments may result in the destruction or adverse modification of critical habitat for the Hine's emerald dragonfly.

Threatened and Endangered Species

This section simply provides a list of state and federally threatened, endangered, and candidate species and fails to describe construction and operation impacts to those species. The list is incomplete. Federally listed entities missing from the list include the threatened eastern prairie fringed orchid (*Platanthera leucophaea*) and endangered leafy prairie clover (*Dalea foliosa*) in Will County and designated critical habitat for the endangered Hine's emerald dragonfly (*Somatochlora hineana*) in Cook, DuPage and Will Counties. In addition, the section fails to address the need for Federal agencies to consult with the USFWS on impacts. While the Tier 1 Service Level EA describes previous work completed under NEPA, it does not describe previous consultation related to this project under the ESA.

Previously three alternative routes were proposed and at that time the Federal action agency (FHWA) was informed that HSR along the Canadian National - Illinois Central/Union Pacific alternative would impact the Hine's emerald dragonfly; whereas, the Norfolk Southern Alignment and Metra Rock Island District Alignment alternatives would not impact the Hine's emerald dragonfly. The FHWA initiated section 7 consultation and submitted a biological assessment that addressed impacts related to HSR train traffic but not take related to existing train traffic on the Canadian National - Illinois Central/Union Pacific Alignment. The biological assessment on the HSR estimated increased take of 16 adult Hine's emerald dragonflies a year. Additional trains have since been added to the Canadian National - Illinois Central/Union Pacific Alignment and are not in compliance with the ESA. On February 15, 2007 we recommended that Canadian National Railway Corporation consider participating in the development of a habitat conservation plan for the Hine's emerald dragonfly as a way to authorize existing take from operations on the Canadian National - Illinois Central/Union Pacific alignment. Canadian National Railway Corporation is currently not participating in the habitat conservation planning process leaving the ongoing take unresolved.

On May 10, 2001 the USFWS informed the FHWA that increased mortality of 16 Hine's emerald dragonflies per year, based on a population estimate of 35 adults at Long Run Seep Nature Preserve, would be an adverse affect that the population could not sustain. This level of impact could potentially reduce the survival and recovery of Hine's emerald dragonfly and therefore jeopardize the continued existence of the species. The USFWS proposed measures (e.g. alternatives, train speeds, tunnel, etc.) to avoid or minimize take. The FHWA withdrew the Chicago-Dwight Illinois segment of the project from further analysis in the Environmental Impact Statement and suspended section 7 consultation leaving this issue unresolved.

Since 2001 new information has become available regarding federally listed species and critical habitat in the project area. The USFWS has verified that Hine's emerald dragonflies breed at Long Run Seep Nature Preserve and that the species crosses the DesPlaines River. In addition, the current population estimate of Hine's emerald dragonflies for Long Run Seep Nature Preserve is 8 adults. In 2007 critical habitat was designated for the Hine's emerald dragonfly and the Canadian National - Illinois Central/Union Pacific alternative passes through critical habitat unit 7.

In addition to impacts to the Hine's emerald dragonfly and designated critical habitat for the species the Tier 1 EA neglects to address impacts to the federally endangered leafy prairie clover and eastern prairie fringed orchid. Both species and their habitat occur along the Canadian National - Illinois Central/Union Pacific and Metra Rock Island District Alignment alternatives.

No federally threatened, endangered, candidate species or designated critical habitat are known to occur along the Norfolk Southern Alignment alternative.

Special Lands

The Tier 2 EA should describe and identify all natural areas providing habitat for wildlife resources adjacent to the proposed alternatives. These natural areas would include state nature preserves and county forest preserves which provide valuable habitat for fish and wildlife resources. For example, Long Run Seep and Grant Creek Nature Preserves are important natural areas that contain State and Federal threatened and endangered species and are located along the Canadian National - Illinois Central/Union Pacific Alignment. A figure should be provided in the Tier 2 EA that shows all natural areas along the proposed alternatives.

Indirect and Cumulative Impacts

The Tier 2 EA should fully disclose all indirect and cumulative impacts to natural resources. The Tier 1 EA only discusses anticipated beneficial impacts from the two alternatives. Indirect and cumulative impacts such as those that could occur to streams, wetlands, water quality, etc. as a result of proposed track upgrades should be identified as well.

These comments only address activities within the Chicago Illinois Field Office coverage area, which ends at the Will-Grundy County border for the Canadian National - Illinois Central/Union Pacific and Metra Rock Island District Alignment alternatives and at the Will-Kankakee County border for the Norfolk Southern Alignment alternative. The Service's Rock Island Field Office should be contacted for comments outside of our coverage area in Illinois and the Columbia Missouri Field Office should be contacted for comments in Missouri.

This letter provides comment under the authority of, and in accordance with, the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (83 Stat. 852 as amended P.L. 91-190, 42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.), the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (48 Stat. 401, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 661 et seq.) and the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (87 Stat. 884. as amended; 16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.).

Mr. George Weber

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If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Kristopher Lah at 847/381-2253, ext. 15.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Janice C. Engle".

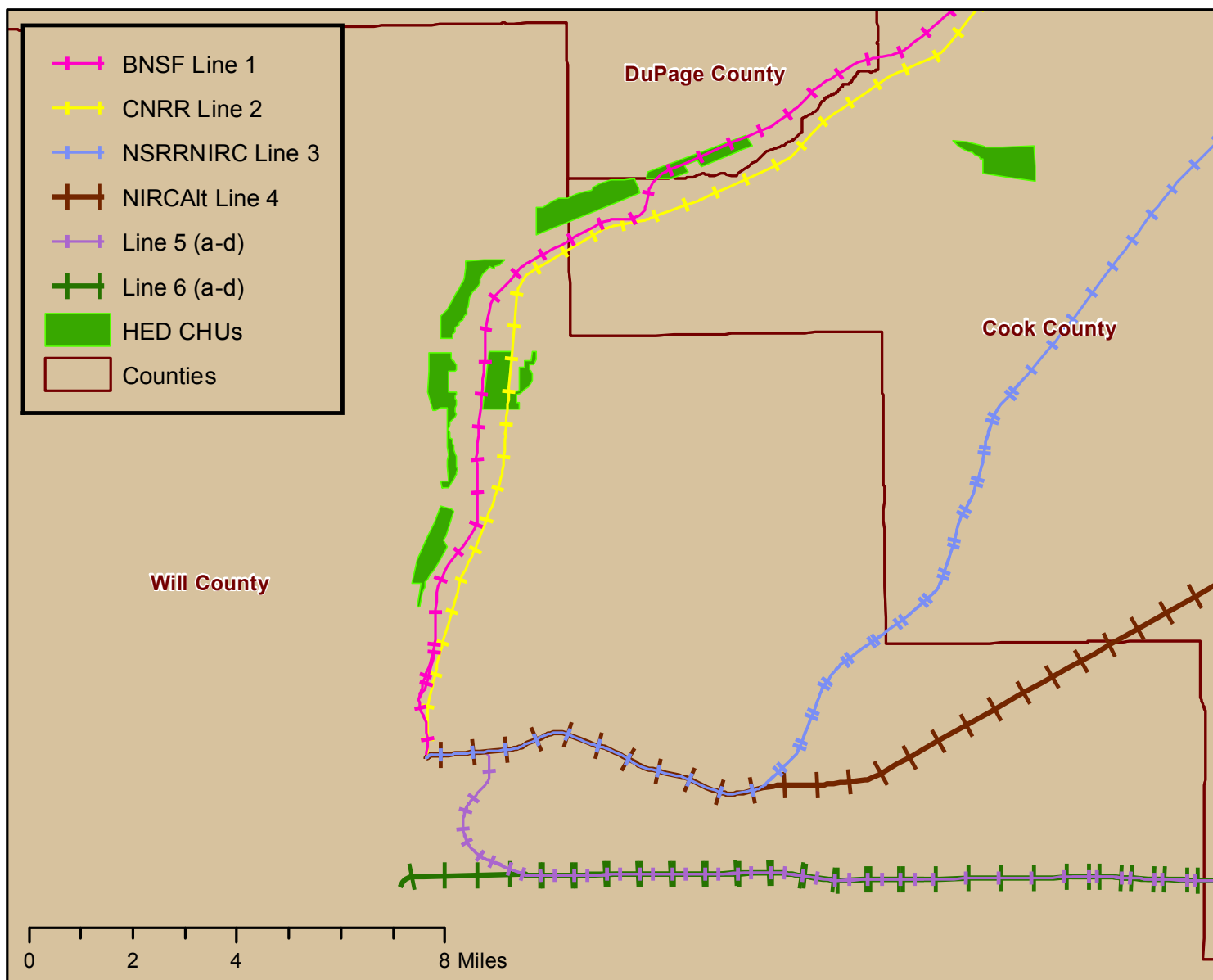
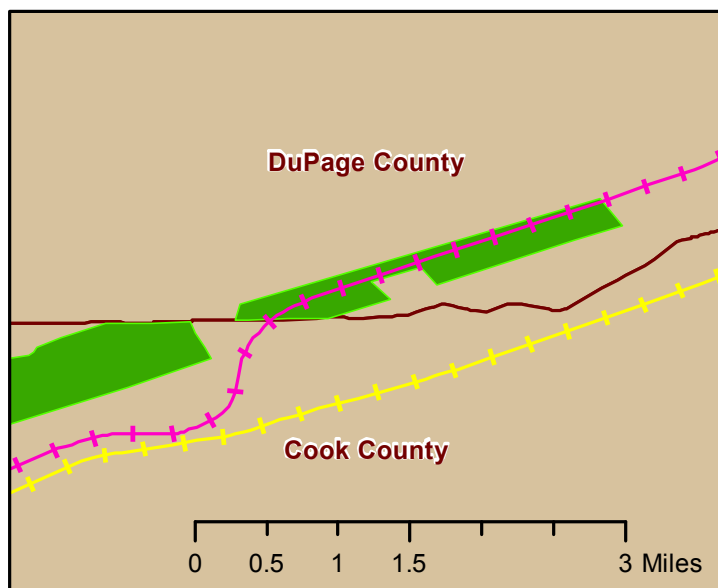
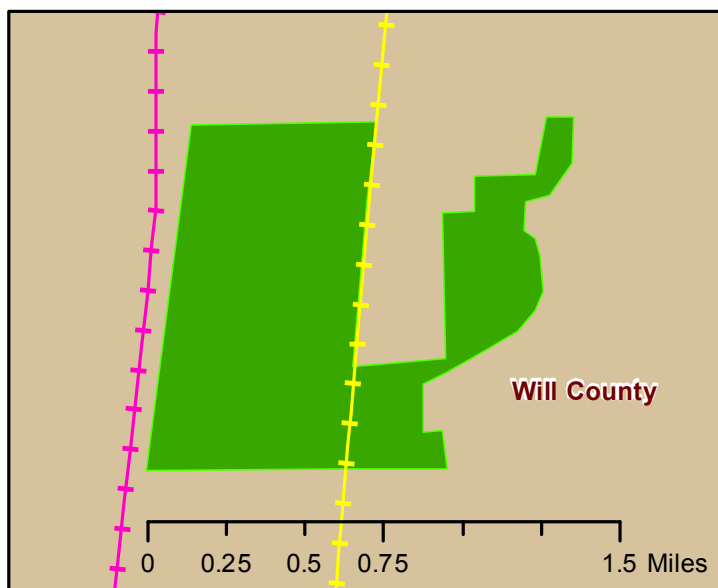
Janice C. Engle
Acting Field Supervisor

cc: USEPA: Kenneth Westlake
USCOE: Kathy Chernich
FRA: Wendy Messenger and Daniel Orlaskey
FWS Rock Island Illinois Field Office: Heidi Woeber
FWS Law Enforcement: Craig Tabor

Enclosure 2 – HSR Critical Habitat Map

Chicago - St. Louis High Speed Rail Line Alternatives

Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 16N





UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION 5

77 WEST JACKSON BOULEVARD
CHICAGO, IL 60604-3590

AUG 20 2012

REPLY TO THE ATTENTION OF:

Andrea Martin
USDOT Federal Railroad Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue S.S., Mail Stop 20
Washington, DC 20590

**Re: Comment on the Chicago to St. Louis High-Speed Rail Program
Tier 1 Draft Environmental Impact Statement, CEQ # 20120213
and the associated Volume II Springfield Rail Improvement Project
Tier 2 Draft Environmental Impact Statement**

Dear Ms. Martin:

In accordance with U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act (CAA), we have reviewed the June 2012 Tier 1 Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Chicago, Illinois to St. Louis, Missouri High Speed Rail (HSR) Program. The project proposes to improve public transportation service capacity, mode choice, rail speed and reliability for the Chicago to St. Louis corridor. Compared to the dominant mode of corridor travel, the automobile, HSR would improve safety and sustainability for travel along this urban linkage.

The Tier 1 DEIS describes the no-build alternative and identifies four build alternative routes for Amtrak passenger rail service between the Chicago Union Station and the St. Louis Gateway Multimodal Center. The HSR build proposals will further complete double tracking of the existing corridor right-of-way (ROW), add additional siding tracks, analyze further rail crossing upgrades (including at-grade crossings, separating rail, highway and pedestrian crossings, crossings of waterways and floodplains), and station improvements for additional passenger capacity, parking, and access at Joliet, Dwight, Pontiac, Normal, Lincoln, Carlinville and Alton, Illinois. Three major rail bridges are proposed for upgrade by this project; the 21st Street Bridge over the Chicago River, and the MacArthur and Merchant Bridges over the Mississippi River at St. Louis. It is not clear whether additional tracks to increase freight train capacities near St. Louis have been adequately represented in this DEIS. Page 6-28 clearly states some improvements are needed to accommodate both the anticipated rise in freight train numbers along with the HSR operations across the two Mississippi River bridges. Page 3-19 indicates a parallel maintenance access road will also be constructed along the entire length of the corridor.

The Tier 1 Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) anticipates identifying all the potential impacts to human and natural resources these corridor improvements might cause. Subsequent

Tier 2 NEPA analysis and final design permitting would specify the actual impacts and mitigation for those impacts.

Some areas of potential impacts were well presented, e.g Parks under Section 4(f) of the Transportation Act, while the information on other areas was insufficient or had contradictions between the text and associated tables, e.g. Environmental Justice and Threatened and Endangered Species.

A second volume Tier 2 DEIS is provided in association with the Tier 1 DEIS. This second volume in essence is completion of a normal non-tiered EIS for the section of the HSR project passing through Springfield, Illinois. The Springfield Tier 2 DEIS specifically amends the Purpose and Need of the Tier 1 DEIS for the more specific Springfield segment of the project. The Springfield Tier 2 DEIS more fully describes the no-build and five potential build alternatives for this segment of the Chicago to St. Louis corridor, identified in the Tier 1 DEIS as Section 5. The Springfield Tier 2 DEIS selects two of those five build alternatives to carry forward to the Springfield Tier 2 FEIS. The Springfield Tier 2 DEIS subsequently presents the Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences for the no-build and the two build alternatives carried forward.

EPA Region 5 has participated in early project scoping on September 18, 2009, and agreed to be a Cooperating Agency on August 16, 2011. EPA involvement should be acknowledged in Appendix F: Agency Coordination. We later participated in phone conference call updates and encouraged establishing agency coordination meetings in a letter dated December 22, 2011. Due to the complexity of the project, these coordination meetings have helped clarify what the no-build alternative is, ongoing constructions of the no-build alternative projects in the corridor, and issues in the project corridor raised by these proposed Tier 1 and Tier 2 projects. The no-build projects are being built as a result of earlier NEPA analyses.

The following list of comments on Purpose and Need, Alternatives, Environmental Impacts, and Mitigation of Impacts presents the basis for our rating the Tier 1 DEIS and associated Springfield Tier 2 DEIS as EC-2, Environmental Concerns - Insufficient Information. See the attached Summary of Rating Definitions for an explanation of EPA's rating system. EPA recognizes the potential benefits a well planned high-speed rail mode alternative can provide to our region, including improved air quality, energy efficiency, and traveler safety.

PURPOSE AND NEED

The background, current conditions and developing conditions that warrant considering the proposed HSR project are concisely presented and provide some clarification of this complex rail system.

We understand that the Purpose and Need for this proposal is not to improve freight train operations in this corridor and that simply acknowledging this connected action is sufficient and adequate at this point in the DEIS.

An increased ridership is projected for the 2030 horizon year. This raises some questions not addressed in the presentation. What is the minimum increase in ridership needed to support this project? Assuming the project is very successful in attracting new rail travelers, what maximum capacity will the proposed build rail system be able to accommodate? What is the ridership growth potential of this build proposal before additional system construction would be needed? If built as proposed, the projected ridership could vary dependent upon the fares charged. The DEIS indicates that this HSR proposal (maximum speed of 110 miles per hour) is an incremental step toward much higher speeds in the more distant future. The FEIS should discuss what factors would influence the pursuit of further upgrades to passenger train speeds in this corridor.

We recommend the Springfield Tier 2 DEIS Purpose and Need acknowledge the existing City of Springfield's planning goals of enhancing the City's Medical Center Campus and establishing a 10th Street Multimodal Center. These factors are subsequently used in the alternatives analysis as arguments for dropping alternatives.

ALTERNATIVES

We commend the provision of screening selection comparison charts such as Table 3.3-3 and similar tables, Table 3-12, in the Springfield Tier 2 DEIS. They assist understanding what factors went into certain decisions.

Because both the Merchants and the MacArthur Bridges over the Mississippi River are to be reconstructed, the FEIS should clearly commit to both Alton to St. Louis alternatives and include the impacts of both bridge improvements in the environmental analysis.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

We appreciate that project impacts and costs are concisely summarized in Table 5.22-1.

Freight Trains - The Purpose and Need section of the DEIS acknowledges the increased freight train operations associated with this project. However, the impacts of changes in freight operations are not discussed in the DEIS. These changes in freight operations include increase in the number of trains, length and speed of trains and shifts in time of day to accommodate HSR. These changes resulting from this project are direct impacts, add their own direct and indirect impacts, and should be fully addressed in the NEPA analysis. Section 6.3 (HSR train operations impacting freight rail service) does not address these project-related changes to freight operations. Subjects such as air quality, wildlife impacts, noise, vibration, crossing delays in urban and rural settings, and accident/spills/safety should be included in the impacts analysis. Regarding HSR impacts on freight trains, we recommend the FEIS include discussion of the compression wave and air turbulence impacts of HSR trains on passing freight trains, particularly those trains carrying containers. This air turbulence should also be discussed for its potential impacts to pedestrians (flying debris) and vehicles at crossings.

Major Bridges - The DEIS describes some design consideration for the three major river crossing bridges, the Chicago River at 21st Street and the St. Louis Merchants and MacArthur bridges over the Mississippi River, but impacts are not addressed. We recommend the FEIS specify all impacts associated with these reconstructions.

Access Road - There is no DEIS discussion concerning impacts related to the access road to be constructed the entire length of the rail corridor, which is mentioned on page 3-19. While such a road may be simple by comparison to the railroad work, this should be studied to assure possible impacts are fully considered. One area may be threatened and endangered species and their habitats. Other topics that should be addressed in the NEPA documents for this construct include but are not limited to waterway crossings where applicable, stormwater runoff, dust particulate matter and safety.

A significant number of Special Waste sites are noted within 200 feet of the rail right-of-way (ROW) (Table 5.14-2 and Appendix D). Most of these will only be a problem if construction disturbs them, and this is one specific reason the access road needs to be included in this NEPA analysis.

Threatened and Endangered Species - Summary information on page S-11 and Section 5.6.2.3 addresses impacts to threatened and endangered species. After acknowledging critical habitat impacts and potential increased direct hit losses for the federally listed Hine's emerald dragonfly in proposed Section 1, between Chicago and Joliet, the summary concludes "that this potential increase would have a minimal overall impact on the species." The DEIS does not provide information to support such a statement. The DEIS states, based upon computer database research, "there are no other critical habitats or known habitats or populations of other federally listed species located within the study corridor that could be impacted by any program alternatives. However, this Tier 1 level of documentation did not include detailed fieldwork to identify potential habitats and/or populations of threatened and endangered species."

Table 5.6-3 and Exhibit 5.6-1 indicate that there is some knowledge of State Threatened and Endangered Species along the corridor south of Joliet. While the project intent is to remain on existing ROW, we recommend that FRA undertake a field analysis in this area. We believe gathering such information is prudent now so that options to avoid, minimize or mitigate impacts can be considered in the FEIS. We are concerned about construction impacts to species of concern within the existing ROW. A fuller identification of these sites may find areas adjacent to the ROW are also of concern.

Migratory Birds - The DEIS analysis does not address protection of migratory birds, which is a concern for the corridor. Recent studies by the Illinois Natural History Survey (INHS) confirm that railroad corridors do have an impact on wildlife including migratory birds. We recommend further coordination with FWS and IDNR to address these impacts, including but not limited to impacts at the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie.

Environmental Justice - The DEIS provides limited information on Environmental Justice (EJ). The EJ Section simply identifies the number of qualifying EJ census blocks, with no

accounting for numbers of people or households in those census blocks that may be impacted, Table 5.2-1. The DEIS lacks support for a conclusion of "no disproportionate impacts."

Sensitive Noise Receptors - The noise and vibration impacts to receptors, especially EJ communities, are important. We commend the construction and operation reductions and mitigations presented on pages 5-54 through 5-58, and recommend these be clearly committed to in the FEIS. However, the noise analysis in Section 5.8.3 only considers train horn noise, and does not include the rail / wheel noise and distinct HSR noise(s) of operating trains at faster speeds. Here again, the freight traffic with heavy loads will contribute differently than the HSR trains and should be included in these DEIS impacts. We recommend the FEIS clearly delineate all project noise and vibration, so that impacts to sensitive community facilities and wildlife can be appropriately considered both in terms of decibels and increased numbers of HSR and freight trains.

The DEIS is unclear as to the distance from the HSR corridor that was analyzed for sensitive receptors. Please clarify this in the FEIS.

At-Grade Crossings - Appendix E presents the extensive list of rail crossings through the entire corridor. Most are grade separated and some additional ones, such as in Springfield, are being considered for grade separation. We recommend the FEIS discuss how increased speed and frequency of trains will affect users of the many at-grade private or commercial "access crossings."

Surface Water Crossings - Some of the 216 stream crossings will be replaced and others lengthened to accommodate the additional tracks. We recommend the FEIS commit to using bridging and/or three-sided open bottom culverts for waterway crossings wherever possible, to retain natural functions and avoid disturbing stream beds.

Sustainability - We commend your agency for its consideration of sustainability concepts, Section 6.1.1.4, and recommend those concepts be clearly committed to in the FEIS and included in project contracting documents. These include commitments to maintenance, energy efficiency, water use minimization, green buildings, and corridor development synergies.

MITIGATION OF IMPACTS

We commend the inclusion of Table S.5-1 as a concept. We recommend it be expanded in the FEIS to list all project mitigation commitments and their associated implementation schedules, locations, responsible parties, and monitoring/maintenance/adaptive management.

The DEIS mentions wellhead protection areas as a concern, but does not discuss how the proposal will avoid, minimize, mitigate impacts to wellhead protection areas. While these may be Tier 2 level details for final resolution, the Tier 1 document should discuss how these might be approached.

We commend the DEIS for its many clear and helpful exhibits. However, some exhibits are too small or poorly labeled to convey adequate information, including but not limited to: Exhibits 6.1-6 and 6.1-8 and the Springfield Tier 2 DEIS Exhibits 4-4 and 4-5. The Tier 1 DEIS includes stringline diagrams, Exhibits 6.1-4, through 6.1-9, which are more appropriately put in a technical appendix, as they are not self-explanatory to the general reader. The Springfield Tier 2 DEIS exhibits in Section 5 are insufficiently labeled to clearly describe the alternatives.

We appreciate the opportunity to review these documents. We look forward to coordinating with and providing feedback on the Chicago to St. Louis HSR Program as they are progressively developed. Please send me a hard copy and two CD digital copies of each NEPA document related to these projects. If you have any questions, or wish to discuss our comments further, please contact me or Norm West of my staff at (312)-353-5692 or at west.norman@epa.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kenneth A. Westlake", written over a horizontal line.

Kenneth A. Westlake
Chief, NEPA Implementation Section
Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance

Enclosure: EPA Summary of Rating Definitions

Cc: Joseph E. Shacter, IDOT

SUMMARY OF RATING DEFINITIONS AND FOLLOW UP ACTION*

Environmental Impact of the Action

LO-Lack of Objections

The EPA review has not identified any potential environmental impacts requiring substantive changes to the proposal. The review may have disclosed opportunities for application of mitigation measures that could be accomplished with no more than minor changes to the proposal.

EC-Environmental Concerns

The EPA review has identified environmental impacts that should be avoided in order to fully protect the environment. Corrective measures may require changes to the preferred alternative or application of mitigation measures that can reduce the environmental impacts. EPA would like to work with the lead agency to reduce these impacts.

EO-Environmental Objections

The EPA review has identified significant environmental impacts that must be avoided in order to provide adequate protection for the environment. Corrective measures may require substantial changes to the preferred alternative or consideration of some other project alternative (including the no action alternative or a new alternative). EPA intends to work with the lead agency to reduce these impacts.

EU-Environmentally Unsatisfactory

The EPA review has identified adverse environmental impacts that are of sufficient magnitude that they are unsatisfactory from the standpoint of public health or welfare or environmental quality. EPA intends to work with the lead agency to reduce these impacts. If the potential unsatisfactory impacts are not corrected at the final EIS state, this proposal will be recommended for referral to the CEQ.

Adequacy of the Impact Statement

Category 1-Adequate

The EPA believes the draft EIS adequately sets forth the environmental impact(s) of the preferred alternative and those of the alternatives reasonably available to the project or action. No further analysis or data collecting is necessary, but the reviewer may suggest the addition of clarifying language or information.

Category 2-Insufficient Information

The draft EIS does not contain sufficient information for the EPA to fully assess the environmental impacts that should be avoided in order to fully protect the environment, or the EPA reviewer has identified new reasonably available alternatives that are within the spectrum of alternatives analyzed in the draft EIS, which could reduce the environmental impacts of the action. The identified additional information, data, analyses, or discussion should be included in the final EIS.

Category 3-Inadequate

EPA does not believe that the draft EIS adequately assesses potentially significant environmental impacts of the action, or the EPA reviewer has identified new, reasonably available alternatives that are outside of the spectrum of alternatives analyzed in the draft EIS, which should be analyzed in order to reduce the potentially significant

environmental impacts. EPA believes that the identified additional information, data analyses, or discussions are of such a magnitude that they should have full public review at a draft stage. EPA does not believe that the draft EIS is adequate for the purposes of the NEPA and/or Section 309 review, and thus should be formally revised and made available for public comment in a supplemental or revised draft EIS. On the basis of the potential significant impacts involved, this proposal could be a candidate for referral to the CEQ.

*From EPA Manual 1640 Policy and Procedures for the Review of the Federal Actions Impacting the Environment



Illinois Historic Preservation Agency

FAX (217) 782-8161

1 Old State Capitol Plaza • Springfield, Illinois 62701-1512 • www.illinois-history.gov

Various Counties

Chicago to St. Louis

High Speed Rail Project

Tier 1 Draft Environmental Impact Statement

Tier 2 Evaluation of Springfield Rail Improvements Project

IHPA Log #011091109

August 20, 2012

Joseph Shacter

Illinois Department of Transportation

Division of Public and Intermodal

100 W. Randolph St., Suite 6-600

Chicago, IL 60601-3229

Dear Mr. Shacter:

We have reviewed the referenced documents in accordance with our responsibilities pursuant to section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended. First, let me say that I really appreciate the time and effort that the Federal Railroad Administration, the Illinois Department of Transportation and the various consultants have devoted to this project to ensure cultural resources are fully considered during this planning process.

These documents adequately identify historic resources and possible effects that will occur as a result of project implementation.

We understand that for the Phase I for the project as a whole from Joliet to the Mississippi River, a literature search for historic properties was all that was performed but that a more in depth look at properties and affects to them will be completed as a part of the Phase II Environmental Impact Statement.

For the Springfield Tier 2 portion, we concur that the 10th Street Corridor will have minimal adverse effects to historic properties as compared to the 3rd Street corridor. We urge the 10th Street Corridor be adopted as the preferred alternative.

We look forward to continuing a more detailed consultation as the project moves into the next phase of planning.

Sincerely,

Anne E. Haaker

Deputy State Historic

Preservation Officer

c: Brad Koldehoff, Illinois Department of Transportation

Andrea Martin, U.S. Department of Transportation

Walter Zyzniwski, Illinois Department of Transportation

A teletypewriter for the speech/hearing impaired is available at 217-524-7128. It is not a voice or fax line.



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AUG 16 2012

Illinois Dept. of Transportation
Division of Public and
Intermodal Transportation

Southern Region

Jim Vena
Senior Vice President, Southern Region

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August 15, 2012

Mr. Joseph E. Shacter
Illinois Department of Transportation
100 West Randolph Street, Suite 6-600
Chicago, IL 60601

Re: *Draft Environmental Impact Statement, Chicago/St. Louis High Speed Rail
Corridor Program*

Dear Mr. Shacter:

In June, IDOT and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) issued a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) to address, among other matters, various routing alternatives for IDOT's proposal to improve high-speed rail (HSR) passenger service between Chicago and St. Louis. IDOT has asked parties to comment on the DEIS by August 20, and CN appreciates the opportunity to do so.

The DEIS includes a Tier 1 corridor-level evaluation that includes numerous routing alternatives, including several alternatives for the portion of the route between Chicago Union Station (CUS) and Joliet. Of those, the DEIS has recommended two options for further consideration: the current route, largely over CN, on which 10 Amtrak trains now run daily (Alternative 2), and a route using Metra's Rock Island Line (Alternative 4D). CN understands that after the comment period IDOT and FRA will fully review the alternatives analysis and include a recommendation for the preferred CUS-Joliet route to be used for HSR and other Amtrak trains as part of the final Environmental Impact Statement that is expected by the end of this year.

The DEIS recognized that at-grade rail-rail crossings create significant concerns and noted that "it is being assumed that railroad flyovers would be provided to eliminate [] conflict point[s] and improve rail operational efficiencies along both the alternative and crossing railroad." DEIS, 3-7. Further, in its discussion of the Rock Island Line alternative, the DEIS specifically noted that improvements would include a "potential flyover at EJ&E east of Joliet." DEIS, 3-29, 3-53. Consistent with the DEIS, CN strongly supports inclusion of a grade separation for the crossing of the Metra Rock Island Line and CN's EJ&E line east of Joliet (Rock Island Junction) as part of Alternative 4D.

Such a grade separation would be imperative to the smooth operation of both the Rock Island and EJ&E lines under Alternative 4D. Since its January 2009 acquisition of the EJ&E, CN has begun moving additional freight trains over the EJ&E line that runs through the Metra-controlled interlocking at Rock Island Junction, with more trains expected as the transaction is fully implemented.¹ As freight traffic has increased over the EJ&E, so have conflicts with trains moving over the Rock Island line, resulting in delays to traffic moving through the interlocking. Shifting 10 daily Amtrak trains from the Joliet Sub to the Rock Island line plus HSR trains will add to these delays, as would added commuter service that Metra may contemplate over the Rock Island line, greatly impairing CN's operations and reducing the important public benefits in more efficient and fluid rail transportation in greater Chicago underlying CN's acquisition of EJ&E and the Surface Transportation Board's authorization of that transaction.

For these reasons, CN urges FRA and IDOT to maintain the proposed grade separation of Rock Island Junction as part of Alternative 4D. With that proposed grade separation, and only with it, CN would support Alternative 4D, and, indeed, would support Alternative 4D versus Alternative 2 as the lower cost alternative likely offering the greatest overall public benefits.

Sincerely,



Jim Vena
Senior Vice-President

cc: Mr. Alexander Clifford
Northeast Illinois Regional Commuter Railroad Corporation (Metra)
547 W. Jackson Blvd.
Chicago, IL 60661

¹ CN currently is moving on average almost 17 freight trains daily over this segment of the EJ&E line. See STB Monthly Operational Oversight Report for June 2012, Train Volumes, filed July 16, 2012, EJ&E Segment 7 (<http://www.stbfinancedocket35087.com/html/monthlyreports.html>). In CN's operating plan for its acquisition of the EJ&E, which was filed with the Surface Transportation Board, it estimated that an average of 28 freight trains daily would eventually run over this segment. See CN-14, STB Finance Docket No. 35087, *Canadian National Railway Co. and Grand Trunk Corp.--Control--EJ&E West Co.*, Attachment A.2, Segment 7, filed Jan. 3, 2008 (copy attached).

Attachment A.2

Potential Changes in Traffic on Affected EJ&E Rail Line Segments

**Traffic Changes on EJ&E Rail Line Segments in United States Affected
by Canadian National/EJ&E West Company Transaction**

Rail Line Segment Description				Freight - Trains/Day			Freight - Gross Tons/Day				Hazmat - Cars/Day		
Segment Number	From Station	To Station	Road	Base	Change	Total	Base	Merged	Difference	Percent Change	Base	Merged	Difference
15	Rondout	Leithton	EJE	3.2	0.0	3.2	3,222	2,038	(1,184)	-37%	9.4	9.4	-
14	Leithton	Spaulding	EJE	5.3	15.0	20.3	19,123	164,398	145,275	760%	18.1	183.3	165.2
13	Spaulding	Munger	EJE	5.5	17.0	22.5	21,950	179,150	157,200	716%	29.0	209.4	180.4
12	Munger	West Chicago	EJE	4.4	19.0	23.4	14,397	191,557	177,160	1230%	21.1	271.3	250.2
11	West Chicago	East Siding	EJE	10.7	20.9	31.6	62,233	253,673	191,440	308%	30.7	315.2	284.6
10	East Siding	Walker	EJE	15.7	23.8	39.5	87,162	307,411	220,249	253%	43.4	392.6	349.2
9	Walker	Bridge Junction	EJE	18.5	23.8	42.3	89,329	310,165	220,835	247%	48.9	398.1	349.2
8	Bridge Junction	Rock Island Jct	EJE	18.5	23.8	42.3	78,157	297,491	219,334	281%	48.9	398.1	349.2
7	Rock Island Jct	Matteson	EJE	6.4	21.9	28.3	35,375	233,576	198,201	560%	49.0	360.8	311.8
6	Matteson	Chicago Hts	EJE	8.6	22.9	31.6	48,455	260,774	212,319	438%	78.7	496.0	417.3
5	Chicago Hts	Griffith	EJE	10.2	23.9	34.2	51,696	268,910	217,214	420%	71.6	496.5	424.9
4	Griffith	Van Loon	EJE	7.6	21.0	28.6	29,536	215,949	186,413	631%	44.7	421.5	376.8
3	Van Loon	Ivanhoe	EJE	9.7	20.0	29.7	42,024	209,633	167,609	399%	45.5	399.3	353.8
2	Ivanhoe	Cavanaugh	EJE	9.8	20.0	29.8	41,879	209,488	167,609	400%	45.5	399.3	353.8
1	Cavanaugh	Gary	EJE	11.8	20.0	31.8	44,098	211,700	167,602	380%	52.5	406.3	353.8
0	Gary	Indiana Harbor	EJE	3.5	0.0	3.5	13,340	23,681	10,341	78%	0.0	11.0	11.0
-1	Indiana Harbor	Hammond	EJE	1.8	0.0	1.8	6,594	9,054	2,461	37%	0.0	1.4	1.4
-2	Hammond	South Chicago	EJE	0.9	0.0	0.9	929	3,390	2,461	265%	0.0	1.4	1.4

NOTE: The traffic change numbers in the Attachments A.1, and A.2, reflect changes that will result after complete implementation of the Transaction. The numbers reflect train counts and gross tons on each segment, with the same train potentially crossing multiple segments. Thus, the numbers for each segment are not additive to determine the total number of trains or tonnage to be added on the entire length of EJ&EW, or to be subtracted from the CN lines.



547 W. Jackson Blvd. Chicago, IL 60661 (312) 322-6900 TTY# 1-312-322-6774

August 20, 2012

Mr. Joseph E. Shacter
Director, Division of Public and Intermodal
Illinois Department of Transportation
100 West Randolph Street, Suite 6-600
Chicago, Illinois 60601

Dear Mr. Shacter:

Metra is pleased to have the opportunity to review the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) has been prepared for the Chicago, Illinois to St. Louis, Missouri High Speed Rail Corridor Program. Metra has a vested interest in the outcomes of this project, and we look forward to working with IDOT as the vision for this projects is brought to its fruition.

Metra supports the conclusion of the DEIS that further study is required to determine whether the CN/Heritage Corridor or the Metra/Rock Island District and Norfolk Southern route is preferable for the operation of HSR service between Joliet and Chicago. Metra requests the opportunity to provide input at all appropriate opportunities during this more detailed Tier 2 evaluation. Metra supports the development and analysis of the "Further improvements ...to support future additional commuter rail service," as described in the Summary (S-20).

In the subsequent Tier 2 studies, Metra requests that additional efforts should be made to include all stakeholders, especially right-of-way owners in the process early and often during the studies. Additional detailed comments are provided in the attached document.

Metra appreciates the opportunity to be involved in this process, and we look forward to continuing to work with the project team as this project moves forward, further addressing the transportation needs of the traveling public throughout the State of Illinois and beyond.

Sincerely,

Lynnette H. Ciavarella
Senior Division Director
Strategic Capital Planning/Grants Development

Attached: specific comments



Metra Comments on Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) prepared for the Chicago, Illinois to St. Louis, Missouri High Speed Rail Corridor Program
8/20/12

General Comments:

- A. Metra supports the conclusion of the DEIS that further study is required to determine whether the CN/Heritage Corridor or the Metra/Rock Island District and Norfolk Southern route is preferable for the operation of HSR service between Joliet and Chicago. Metra requests the opportunity to provide input at all appropriate opportunities during this more detailed Tier 2 evaluation. Metra supports the development and analysis of the "Further improvements ...to support future additional commuter rail service," as described in the Summary (S-20).
- B. In the subsequent Tier 2 studies, additional efforts should be made to include all stakeholders, especially right-of-way owners in the process early and often during the studies.

Specific Comments:

- S-19 The text asserts that Metra has no plans for changing or expanding the existing service along the Rock Island District. Note that Metra is currently embarking on a strategic planning effort and final determination of what service modifications or expansions are reflected in the resulting strategic plan have not yet been determined. Furthermore, Metra reserves the right to consider service expansions in the future in order to meet passenger demand and operating requirements. (see also 6-45)
- S-20 Note that Metra's plans to construct the new Romeoville Station on the Heritage Corridor, referenced as "a new station between Lemont and Lockport," are not dependent on the proposal to increase commuter service on this line. The current phrasing suggested they are related. (see also 6-45)
- S-22 Why is it assumed that the additional vehicular traffic that necessitates proposed parking expansions would not create any access or traffic congestion problems associated with the Build Alternatives?
- 1-2 This list of anticipated decisions does not clearly reflect that the selection of the preferred alternative from Chicago to Joliet routing is subject to a further Tier 2 Analysis. This should be reflected to address this more clearly.
- 3-33 Note that the proposed Metra HC station at Romeoville (135th Street) and the proposed Metra Rock Island station at Auburn Park (78th Street) should be reflected in this list that would require further study in Tier 2 environmental studies. These stations are currently being designed, but appropriate accommodations should be reflected into the station designs.
- 3-53 Section 1 and Section 2— The text does not discuss the congestion at the 21st Street vertical lift bridge. There are over 100 passenger, freight and yard movement trains a day that use this

bridge. This bridge is a source of train congestion and delays. The EA evaluated building a new double track bridge over the Mississippi River at the Merchants Bridge location that has 64 trains a day. Since this bridge has over 100 trains a day, the bridge and the associated track interlocking plants on both sides of the bridge should be evaluated. Since there are more train over this bridge than the Merchants Bridge, it would be logical for the study to consider adding a second double track bridge at the Chicago 21st Street Bridge location which would reduce running time a little, significantly reduce train delays and thus improve on-time performance. There is an operational double track railroad bridge that does not have tracks connecting to it anymore, the C&WI bridge just north of Torrence Avenue and 126th Street in Chicago over the Calumet River. This railroad bridge is a few feet longer than the existing 21st Street railroad bridge.

Section – 2 The study does not address track and route capacity issues between 40th Street on the Metra RID and also on the NS between 40th Street and the 21st Street Chicago River Vertical Lift bridge.

- 3-58 The assumption that a new station between Chicago and Joliet should be developed at I-294 ignores the fact that new highway entrance/exit ramps on I-294 would likely be impossible or incredibly expensive due to existing geography including bridges over the Des Plaines River and the Sanitary & Ship Canal. The current access from I-294 to the Metra Willow Springs Station via 75th Street, Willow Springs Road, Archer Avenue and Market Street provides easy access to an *existing* rail station location in this vicinity from an *existing* highway interchange that could be easily signed to provide clear motorist direction to the station. We recommend removing or revising this reference accordingly.

The need to analyze impacts in the Tier 2 study to existing Metra stations on both routes between Joliet and Chicago should be mentioned. Also, it may be better to analyze utilizing an existing Metra station that is convenient to the Interstate Highway system for HSR trains instead of building a new station. Passengers could easily transfer to and from Metra trains at that station in addition to Joliet. It would also reduce track maintenance problems associated with station platforms at an additional location. Pedestrian grade crossing improvements or pedestrian grade separations at Metra stations should be considered in the Tier 2 study. (see also 6-52)

- 3-62 Since this appears to account for the largest source of variation in the cost estimates between alternatives, the description in the first non-bulleted paragraph could be made clearer to the reader by specifically citing the number of flyovers proposed in each of the two Chicago to Joliet segments. The Joliet EJ&E flyover may negatively impact Metra's Joliet Coach Yard. This impact and related cost are not included in the document. There is no mention of potential additional crossovers on 3rd mainline track on the Metra RID alignment in the report. The potential construction of pedestrian underpasses at Metra stations is not mentioned nor included in the cost estimate. The current 2012 under construction Tinley Park 80th Avenue pedestrian tunnel underpass has a cost of \$2 Million.
- 3-62-4 The cost estimates do not appear to reflect additional costs for commuter station reconstruction when new grade separations are constructed on adjacent roadways. If this cost is reflected in the estimates, it should be clearly identified. The following locations proposed for highway grade separations may impact adjacent commuter rail station facilities:

ID	Crossing Name	Station Name
1265	West 95th Street	Longwood (95th Street)
1261	West 103rd Street	Washington Heights (103rd Street)
1252	West Vermont Street	Vermont Street
1244	139th Street	Robbins
1241	147th Street	Midlothian
1231	Oak Park Avenue	Tinley Park
1229	80th Avenue	80th Avenue
554	West 135th Street	Romeoville (proposed)

- 6-13 Table 3 6.1-4 “Trains Per Day – Chicago to Joliet (Section2)” and the associated text need to be corrected. On an average basis, Metra operates an average of 23 engine and deadhead movements between LaSalle Street Station and our 47th Street Yard. This table also does not reflect that IAIS operates three round-trips a day and yard movements out on the mainline, CSX operates one round trip a day and Chicago Rail Link operates two round trips a day for a total average of 12 freights a day on the RID mainline. Table 3 6.1-4 is also missing the freight and passenger traffic on the NS between 40th Street and the 21st Street vertical lift bridge over the Chicago River along with the over 100 trains a day on this bridge.

The CREATE Program will connect the SWS to Metra’s Rock Island District around 75th Street and those 30 scheduled trains a day will operate into LaSalle Street Station. The corresponding engine and deadhead movements between LaSalle Street Station and 47th Street Yard would double to 46 movements on weekdays. This future impact on Rock Island District mainline and yard movements is not discussed in the report and should be added. A third mainline track from Gresham northward may be needed if HSR trains are also on this route.

- 6-33 The text description for improvements in the “Build Alternatives” needs to add information about track and signal improvements on both routes between Joliet and Chicago and that this should be investigated in further detail in the Tier 2 analysis.
- 6-34 The text description for improvements in the “Build Alternatives” needs to add information about station improvements on both routes between Joliet and Chicago and that this should be investigated in further detail in the Tier 2 analysis.
- 6-35 Do the ridership estimates accurately account for the fact that travel within the Metra service area on Amtrak trains is only permitted for persons connecting from other Amtrak service (i.e. Chicago to Joliet Amtrak trips are only allowed to be purchased in combination with a trip from Chicago to somewhere beyond the Metra service territory)?
- 6-47.1 In addition to 23 engine or train deadhead moves to and from the yard facilities at 47th Street, the Metra Rock Island District operates four inbound and five outbound deadhead moves between LaSalle Street and Blue Island and one inbound deadhead move between Joliet and Blue Island. This should be made clear in the first paragraph on this page.

Note that overnight and weekend storage and servicing of Rock Island District trains is also performed at the Blue Island Coach Yard. This should be made clear in the first paragraph on this page.

Add the following text: The CREATE Program will connect the SWS to Metra's Rock Island District around 75th Street and those 30 scheduled trains a day will operate into LaSalle Street Station. The corresponding engine and deadhead movements between LaSalle Street Station and 47th Street Yard would double to 46 movements on weekdays. This future impact on Rock Island District mainline and yard movements is not discussed in the report and should be added. A third mainline track from Gresham northward may be needed if HSR trains are also on this route.

The potential Rock Island District grade separation over the EJ&E may impact Metra's Joliet Coach Yard. The coach yard has a yard track on the south side of the mainline tracks in addition to the yard tracks north of the mainline tracks.

The "Build Alternatives" do not address the train congestion at the 21st Street Vertical Lift bridge with over 100 trains and yard movements a day nor the train traffic on the NS between 40th Street at the 21st Street lift bridge. The study analyzes adding a second double track bridge over the Mississippi River with 64 trains a day. Therefore the 21st Street lift bridge should get similar analysis.

- 6-48 In the "Section 6.6.2", the text references "Appendix D", when it should reference "Appendix E" instead.
- 8 This section does not reflect coordination efforts with the railroad owners. Descriptions of these efforts should be added to this chapter. In the subsequent Tier 2 studies, additional efforts should be made to include all stakeholders, especially right-of-way owners in the process early and often during the studies.



ILLINOIS ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

1021 NORTH GRAND AVENUE EAST, P.O. BOX 19276, SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS 62794-9276 • (217) 782-3397

PAT QUINN, GOVERNOR

JOHN J. KIM, INTERIM DIRECTOR

JUL 30 2012

To Miriam

Mr. Joseph E. Shacter
Director, Division of Public and Intermodal
Illinois Department of Transportation
100 West Randolph Street, Suite 6-600
Chicago, Illinois 60601-3229

RE: Draft EIS for the Chicago to St. Louis High-Speed Rail Corridor Program

Dear Mr. Shacter:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Chicago to St. Louis High-Speed Rail Corridor.

The Agency has no objections to the project; however a permit will be required from the Division of Water Pollution Control for modifications to any existing sewer or the construction of new sewer mains or connections. In addition, a Section 401 water quality certification will have to be obtained. If one or more acres are disturbed during construction, a construction site activity stormwater NPDES permit will be required as well. Please contact Al Keller at 217-782-0610 with questions.

Also demolition, asbestos and lead paint should be addressed before actual repairs are preformed to ensure proper abatement is done if needed. If demolition and/or abatement are needed, notification will be required 10 days prior to the project start date. Contact Alan Grimmett for all questions on this matter at 217-557-1438.

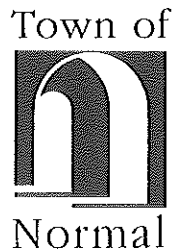
In addition, solid and hazardous waste must be properly disposed of or recycled.

Sincerely,

Lisa Bonnett
Deputy Director

RECEIVED
AUG - 3 2012

Illinois Dept. of Transportation
Division of Public and
Intermodal Transportation



August 13, 2012

Mr. Joseph E. Shacter
Director, Division of Public and Intermodal
Illinois Department of Transportation
100 West Randolph Street, Suite 6-600
Chicago, Illinois 60601

Re: Illinois High-Speed Rail – Chicago to St. Louis: Tier 1 Draft
Environmental Impact Statement Comment

Dear Mr. Shacter:

Town of Normal has reviewed the Chicago to St. Louis High-Speed Rail Tier 1 Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). The comments below are submitted on behalf of the Town of Normal.

The Tier 1 DEIS does not discuss or appear to consider the proposed the McLean County – U.S. Route 66 Bikeway that extends from the Village of McLean to approximately 2.5 miles north of the Village of Towanda. The McLean County – U.S. Route 66 Bikeway project began in the late 1990's. In 1999, McLean County and the municipalities of Bloomington, Chenoa, Lexington, Towanda, McLean and Normal entered into an intergovernmental agreement for the development of a bikeway in McLean County. The Project Development Report for this bikeway was approved by the Illinois Department of Transportation in September of 2008.

McLean County received funding for a section from Shirley to Fox Creek Road in southwest Bloomington in 2009, with construction of the bikeway taking place in 2010. McLean County received notification of ITEP funding in October of 2010 for a section from Normal to Towanda. Phase II engineering is currently underway for this section with construction planned for the summer of 2013.

McLean County and the municipalities participating in the project request that the Tier 1 DEIS be revised to acknowledge potential impacts of the Chicago-St. Louis High Speed Rail implementation on the proposed McLean County – U.S. Route 66 Bikeway. Particular attention should be given to the anticipated crossing improvements at the intersection of the high speed rail lines and Airport Road between the Town of Normal and

"Committed to Service Excellence"

100 East Phoenix Avenue • Post Office Box 589 • Normal, Illinois 61761-0589
Telephone (309) 454-2444 • Fax (309) 454-9609 • TDD (309) 454-9630
www.normal.org

the Village of Towanda. Further areas of concern that we have about the interaction of the projects are as follows:

As previously mentioned, construction of the bikeway between the Town of Normal and the Village of Towanda is planned for 2013. We are currently developing plans for this construction project, but we need to have plan details for the high speed rail improvements at the intersection of Airport Road and U.S. Route 66 to move forward. We do not want to build a piece of the bikeway at this location in 2013 and have it removed by a intersection reconstruction project in immediate future; however, this project is very important to the community and a long term delay in the project is not desirable either. The participating municipalities would like a commitment on the planned timeframe for the intersection improvements to enable this section of the bikeway to move forward. Delays in the section of the project could also impede funding opportunities for future sections of the bikeway.

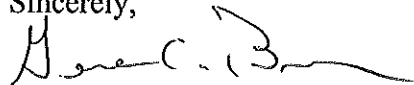
The need for safety and security fencing along this section of the bikeway is also a concern for the participating municipalities. If it is determined that fencing is required, the cost of such fencing installation and maintenance should be the responsibility of the High-Speed Rail project, as the fencing is not required to protect the bikeway as previously approved in the Project Development Report.

Coordination between the McLean County – U.S. Route 66 Bikeway project and the High-Speed Rail project is currently underway. Representatives from IDOT, McLean County, and the engineering consultant teams for the U.S. Route 66 Bikeway project and the Chicago to St. Louis High-Speed Rail met on June 8, 2012, in Bloomington, Illinois and on June 21, 2012, in Chicago, Illinois to discuss the projects.

We look forward to participating in the successful completion of this project and will put forth every effort possible to ensure that outcome. If you have any questions concerning these comments, please contact me at (309) 454-9574.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gene C. Brown", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Gene C. Brown, P.E.
Town of Normal Engineer



MCLEAN COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

115 E. Washington St., M103 • Bloomington, IL 61701-4089
Phone: 309-828-4331 • Fax: 309-827-4773 • www.mcplan.org

August 15, 2012

Via Electronic Transmittal and First Class Mail

Mr. Joseph E. Shacter
Director, Division of Public and Intermodal
Illinois Department of Transportation
100 West Randolph Street, Suite 6-600
Chicago, Illinois 60601



Re: Chicago to St. Louis: Tier 1 Draft Environmental Impact Statement
Comment by McLean County Regional Planning Commission
McLean County – U.S. Route 66 Bikeway

Dear Mr. Shacter,

As the Metropolitan Planning Organization and the agency responsible for coordinating long-range planning throughout McLean County, this Commission has reviewed the Chicago to St. Louis High-Speed Rail Tier 1 Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and offers the following comments.

The Tier 1 DEIS does not discuss or appear to consider the proposed the McLean County – U.S. Route 66 Bikeway that extends from the Village of McLean to approximately 2.5 miles north of the Village of Towanda. The McLean County – U.S. Route 66 Bikeway project began in the late 1990's. In 1999, McLean County and the municipalities of Bloomington, Normal, Chenoa, Lexington, Towanda, and McLean entered into an intergovernmental agreement for the development of a bikeway in McLean County. The Project Development Report for this bikeway was approved by the Illinois Department of Transportation in September of 2008.

McLean County received funding for a section from Shirley to Fox Creek Road in southwest Bloomington in 2009, with construction of the bikeway taking place in 2010. McLean County received notification of ITEP funding in October of 2010 for a section from Normal to Towanda. Phase II engineering is currently underway for this section with construction planned for the summer of 2013.

McLean County and the municipalities participating in the project request that the Tier 1 DEIS be revised to acknowledge potential impacts of the Chicago-St. Louis High Speed Rail implementation on the proposed McLean County – U.S. Route 66 Bikeway. Particular attention should be given to the anticipated crossing improvements at the intersection of the high speed rail lines and Airport Road between the Town of Normal and the Village of Towanda. Further areas of concern that we have about the interaction of the projects are as follows:

Planning for the Future through Regional Cooperation

Carl Teichman, Chairman • George Benjamin, Vice Chairman • Joseph Butcher • Mary Jefferson
Jhun Medina • Linda Olson • Jay Reece • Tari Renner • Tim Strader • George Walden • Tyler Wrezinski



As previously mentioned, construction of the bikeway between the Town of Normal and the Village of Towanda is planned for 2013. We are currently developing plans for this construction project, but we need to have plan details for the high speed rail improvements at the intersection of Airport Road and U.S. Route 66 to move forward. We do not want to build a piece of the bikeway at this location in 2013 and have it removed by a intersection reconstruction project in immediate future; however, this project is very important to the community and a long term delay in the project is not desirable either. The participating municipalities would like a commitment on the planned timeframe for the intersection improvements to enable this section of the bikeway to move forward. Delays in the section of the project could also impede funding opportunities for future sections of the bikeway.

The need for safety and security fencing along this section of the bikeway is also a concern for the participating municipalities. If it is determined that fencing is required, the cost of such fencing installation and maintenance should be the responsibility of the High-Speed Rail project, as the fencing is not required to protect the bikeway as previously approved in the Project Development Report.

Coordination between the McLean County – U.S. Route 66 Bikeway project and the High-Speed Rail project is currently underway. Representatives from IDOT, McLean County, and the engineering consultant teams for the U.S. Route 66 Bikeway project and the Chicago to St. Louis High-Speed Rail met on June 8, 2012, in Bloomington, Illinois and on June 21, 2012, in Chicago, Illinois to discuss the projects. We anticipate that these discussions will continue, but believe that this direct coordination effort should be reflected and supported in the formal Tier 1 Environmental Statement.

We look forward to participating in the successful completion of this project and will make every effort to ensure that outcome. If you have any questions concerning these comments, please contact Jennifer Sicks of our staff at (309) 828-4331, Ext. 24 or jsicks@mcplan.org.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paul E. Russell".

Paul E. Russell, AICP
Executive Director

CC: **Miriam Gutierrez**

Illinois Department of Transportation
Division of Public & Intermodal Transportation
James R. Thompson Center
100 West Randolph Street, Suite 6-600
Chicago, Illinois 60601-3229
Miriam.Gutierrez@illinois.gov

From: Striffler, Scot [<mailto:Scot.M.Striffler@uscg.mil>]
Sent: Tuesday, August 14, 2012 11:15 AM
To: Shacter, Joseph E.
Cc: Stanifer, William <William.B.Stanifer@uscg.mil>; Soule, Lee <Lee.D.Soule@uscg.mil>
Subject: Draft EIS (Chicago to St. Louis High Speed Rail Corridor Program)

Dear Mr. Shacter,

I am responding to the Draft EIS and request for comments regarding the Tier 1 evaluation for the Chicago to St. Louis High-Speed Rail Corridor Program.

Commander, Ninth Coast Guard District, would only be involved for aspects of the Program within the Chicago to Joliet portion of the study. Our Area of Responsibility includes Chicago Sanitary Ship Canal, Des Plaines River, and Chicago River northward of Lockport Lock in Lockport, IL (approximate river mile 291.0 and above).

The alternatives carried forward within the Chicago to Joliet area (#2 and #4D) appear to include utilization of the existing AMTRAK bridge and facilities over South Branch of Chicago River (between Canal Road and 18th Street on the river). The drawbridge provides 10-feet of vertical clearance for vessels in the closed position. The existing AMTRAK bridge is the only drawbridge on South Branch of Chicago River required to open for every commercial tug/barge passage between downtown Chicago and Lockport, as well as for other commercial or recreational vessels that cannot pass under the drawbridge in the closed position. It is our understanding the existing drawbridge carries Union Pacific freight trains, AMTRAK trains, and other local commuter trains into Union Station. It is a very busy crossing for both rail and vessel traffic. Efficient management and operation of this drawbridge is necessary for the safety of both rail and vessel traffic.

Generally, any proposed modification, addition, or replacement of the drawbridge crossing at the existing AMTRAK bridge across South Branch would need to be reviewed by this office for possible permit requirement and vessel traffic coordination. Any other existing or new crossings over the waterways mentioned above that could become part of the ongoing evaluation would need to be reviewed by the Coast Guard for potential permitting or coordination activity.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft EIS document. I can be contacted at the number below if there are any questions, or to discuss further. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Scot Striffler
Bridge Program Manager

Ninth Coast Guard District
(216) 902-6087
Fax: (216) 902-6088
Scot.M.Striffler@uscg.mil

August 20, 2012

Mr. Joseph E. Shacter
 Director, Division of Public and Intermodal
 Illinois Department of Transportation
 James R. Thompson Center
 100 West Randolph Street, Suite 6-600
 Chicago, Illinois 60601-3229

Dear Mr. Shacter:

The CREATE partners are pleased to present our review comments on the *Chicago-St. Louis High-Speed Rail Tier 1 DEIS*. As you know, the CREATE (Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency) Program is a public/private partnership between the U.S. DOT, the State of Illinois, City of Chicago, Metra, Amtrak, and the nation's freight railroads. A program of regional and national significance, CREATE consists of 70 separate yet interrelated projects, including roadway and rail overpasses and underpasses, improvements to existing viaducts and grade crossings, and upgrades to tracks, switches, and signal and dispatch systems. The benefits of the program include improved passenger rail service, reduced freight rail congestion to boost regional and national economic competitiveness, reduced motorist delay due to rail conflicts at grade crossings, enhanced public safety, enhanced economic development, creating and retaining jobs, improved air quality, and reductions in noise from idling or slow-moving trains.

The CREATE partners have identified ten improvement projects that intersect with the High-Speed Rail (HSR) alternatives under consideration. The table below lists the ten projects with the project number, project name and DEIS Alternative that causes the potential CREATE/HSR conflict. In the following pages, we have attached more detailed information on each of these CREATE projects and our specific comments with regard to the potential conflicts. Additional information on the Program and its projects can be found in the *CREATE Program Final Feasibility Plan* (January 2011), which serves as a NEPA compliant decision-making document for the CREATE Program.

CREATE Project Number	Project Name	DEIS Build Alternative with Potential Conflict
P1	63rd and State (Englewood) Flyover	Alternatives C & D
P2*	75th Street Corridor Improvement Project	Alternatives C & D
P5	Brighton Park Flyover	Alternatives A & B
P6	CP Canal Flyover (IHB/CN Flyover)	Alternatives A & B
B8	Summit Signalization	Alternatives A & B
B9/EW1**	Argo Connections/Clearing Yard Main Lines	Alternatives A & B
WA2	Ogden Junction to 75th Street	Alternatives A & B
WA3	Signalization – Ogden Junction to CP 518	Alternatives C & D
WA5	Corwith Tower Upgrade	Alternatives A & B
WA7	Brighton Park Connection	Alternatives A & B

*Projects P2, P3, EW2 and GS19 are linked for the purposes of environmental review under the 75th Street Corridor Improvement Project.

**Projects B9 and EW1 are linked for the purposes of environmental review.

For the CREATE program, all program-level NEPA analysis has been completed. The projects listed in the table and detailed in this correspondence are at various stages of project-level NEPA analysis, final design, and construction. The CREATE partners are investing billions of dollars in critically needed improvements to increase the efficiency of the region's passenger and freight rail infrastructure and enhance the quality of life for Chicago-area residents. As of March 2012, the CREATE partners have invested nearly \$1 billion in needed rail and roadway improvements in the Chicago region. The CREATE improvements that are completed are showing demonstrated benefits in passenger and freight rail efficiency and improved rail operations. The CREATE partners ask that you take the information provided into consideration as you assess the Illinois HSR alternatives.

Sincerely,

CREATE Partners

CC:

Miriam Gutierrez, Division of Public & Intermodal Transportation, IDOT

CREATE Partners

CREATE Project Number: B8

Project Name: Summit Signalization

Project Status: Phase III Construction Complete

Project Location: Along Indiana Harbor Belt railroad near Pielet Drive and West 59th Street to near Archer Avenue and West 63rd Street in Summit, IL.

Scope of Work: Upgrade a 40 year-old signal system along the Indiana Harbor Belt Corridor from Bedford Park to Summit, Illinois.

Affected Railroad(s):

Owner(s): B&OCT (CSX)

Operator(s): Amtrak, CSX, IHB, and Metra

HSR Tier I Draft EIS Comments:

Build Alternative with Potential Conflict: Alternatives A & B

CREATE Partner Comments: The B8 project installed new TCS signaling for the purpose of increasing train speeds and capacity between CP Argo and CP Canal. While all the improvements at this location will not be fully realized until the entire CREATE program is completed, the CREATE partners ask that you review this information and take it into consideration as you review the IL HSR alternatives.

CREATE Project Number: B9/EW1*

Project Name: Argo Connections/Clearing Yard Main Lines

Project Status: Phase I - 30% design and ECAD in progress

Project Location: Indiana Harbor Belt (IHB) mainline between 62nd Street and 71st Street and Belt Railway of Chicago (BRC) Clearing Yard from IHB/BRC connection near the intersection of 65th and 76th Avenues to the intersection of 75th and Hohman Streets in Summit, Bedford Park and Bridgeview, IL. Chicago Community Areas: Ashburn, Chicago Lawn, Clearing, and West Lawn.

Scope of Work: Project B9 will construct a new double track connection and crossovers between the BRC and IHB/CSX line. This project will connect the CREATE Beltway and East-West Corridors and will upgrade mainline crossovers. Additional crossovers will be added to the control point at 71st Street to allow access into and out of a signal-controlled siding track. Project B9 proposes Argo Yard improvements necessary to create yard capacity lost as a result of installing the new main line crossovers. Yard work will include realignment of switching lead tracks, installation of three new yard tracks, and creating new industry lead track to avoid switching within the control point. Project EW1 will consider constructing two new 7-mile main tracks around the south side of Clearing Yard, in Bedford Park and Chicago from Harlem Avenue to Southwest Highway. The project will install crossovers and turnouts at the CP West Subdivision and CP East End. This project will provide three new control points that include the installation of a series of crossovers. Project EW1 includes yard improvements to offset the loss of yard capacity due to the new main lines. Yard work includes realignment of switching lead tracks, run-through tracks, tracks leading to the hump used to classify cars, and construction of additional departure yard tracks. All work will be within the existing railroad ROW.

Affected Railroad(s):

Owner(s): B&OCT (CSX), BRC

Operator(s): Amtrak, BRC, BNSF, CN, CP, CSX, IHB, and Metra

HSR Tier I Draft EIS Comments:

Build Alternative with Potential Conflict: Alternatives A & B

CREATE Partner Comments: The B9 project provides for connection to the new East-West Corridor for through trains at Clearing Yard (Project EW1), improves the connection to the Beltway Corridor at CP Argo and adds capacity to the Beltway between Argo and 87th Street. It also upgrades the connection between the B&OCT and CN at CP Canal. This project is nearing the end of preliminary design, is fully funded and we expect construction to start in late 2012 or early 2013. This project will result in a significant improvement to an important and congested freight corridor between the major Class I carriers in Chicago. While all the improvements at this location will not be fully realized until the entire CREATE program is completed, the CREATE partners ask that you review this information and take it into consideration as you review the IL HSR alternatives.

*Projects B9 and EW1 are linked for the purposes of environmental review.

CREATE Project Number: P1

Project Name: 63rd and State (Englewood) Flyover

Project Status: Phase III – Construction in progress

Project Location: Chicago, from 57th Place to 69th Street along the Metra Rock Island District (near State Street). Project is located within the Englewood and Greater Grand Crossing Community Areas.

Scope of Work: This project will build a rail-rail flyover to carry the north-south Metra Rock Island line over the east-west NS/Amtrak line. The project will construct bridges that will accommodate 3 tracks to carry Metra operations over the four tracks of NS and a possible future fifth track for a high speed intercity passenger rail connection to points east and/or south.

Affected Railroad(s):

Owner(s): Metra and NS

Operator(s): Amtrak, Metra, and NS

HSR Tier I Draft EIS Comments:

Build Alternative with Potential Conflict: Alternatives C & D

CREATE Partner Comments: The P1 project will construct a triple-tracked bridge to carry Metra operations over the four tracks of NS, a possible fifth track for a high speed intercity passenger rail connection. The purpose of the P1 project is to eliminate significant rail delays between Metra's Rock Island District and NS freight, and Amtrak operations at Englewood Interlocking. This location is one of the most congested on the Amtrak system resulting in significant delays on a regular basis. In addition, construction of P1 will improve the flow of NS traffic in this corridor, thus improving movement of NS's time sensitive traffic to a nearby intermodal yard. While all the improvements at this location will not be fully realized until the P1 project is completed and the entire CREATE program is completed, the CREATE partners ask that you review this information and take it into consideration as you review the IL HSR alternatives.

CREATE Project Number: P2*

Project Name: 75th Street Corridor Improvement Project

Project Status: Phase I – 30% design and EIS in progress

Project Location: City of Chicago; north limit--69th St.; south limit--100th St.; east limit--the Dan Ryan Expressway (I-90/94); west limit--Central Park Ave. City of Chicago Community Areas: Auburn Gresham, Chatham, Englewood and Greater Grand Crossing, Ashburn, Gresham, Chicago Lawn, West Englewood, Roseland, and Washington Heights.

Scope of Work: Alternatives are being developed to address conflicts between CSX, BRC, UP, NS and Metra. The approach will consider reconfiguring the Belt Railway of Chicago (BRC) main tracks between the Dan Ryan and Belt Junction where four freight railroads conflict with each other and Metra's South West Service operations (EW2). The project will consider constructing a second main track for Metra's South West Service operations from near Wrightwood Station to Western Avenue (P2). The project will consider reconfiguring and building a third BRC main track, and constructing a flyover to connect the Metra South West Service to the Rock Island Line in the vicinity of 74th and Normal and 75th and Parnell (EW2 and P2). This project will consider constructing a bridge that significantly reduces conflicts between CSX and BRC, Metra and NS (P3). The project will also consider constructing a road-rail grade separation of 71st St. and the CSX freight line (GS19). Associated signals, tracks, crossovers, and bridge work are included in the project.

Affected Railroad(s):

Owner(s): B&OCT (CSX), BRC, City of Chicago, Metra, NS, and UP

Operator(s): Amtrak, BRC, CN, CP, CSX, Metra, NS, and UP

HSR Tier I Draft EIS Comments:

Build Alternative with Potential Conflict: Alternatives C & D

CREATE Partner Comments: The purpose of the P2 project—which is an element of the 75th Street Corridor Improvement Project—is to reduce congestion and delays between 80th Street and Forest Hill, increase capacity for Metra, and eliminate rail traffic conflicts between the Metra Southwest service and the B&OCT (CSX), the NS and the BRC Mainline (Belt Junction), which allows access to LaSalle Street Station instead of Union Station and frees up capacity for Metra and Amtrak at Union Station. The P2 project will reconfigure the BRC Main tracks between 80th Street and Belt Junction, eliminate Belt Junction and construct a flyover to connect the Metra Southwest service to the Rock Island Line. The project includes extensive bridge, signal, and track work. While all the improvements at this location will not be fully realized until the entire CREATE program is completed, the CREATE partners ask that you review this information and take it into consideration as you review the IL HSR alternatives.

*Projects P2, P3, EW2 and GS19 are linked for the purposes of environmental review under the 75th Street Corridor Improvement Project.

CREATE Project Number: P5

Project Name: Brighton Park Flyover

Project Status: Future Project

Project Location: On either side of the current Brighton Park rail crossing in Chicago (between the intersection of Rockwell and 37th Streets and the intersection of Leavitt and 35th Streets).

Scope of Work: Construct a bridge to carry CN Joliet Subdivision also referred to as Amtrak Heritage Corridor (2 tracks) over or under CSX and NS tracks on the CREATE Western Avenue Corridor (five tracks). This project includes associated signal, track and structural work.

Affected Railroad(s):

Owner(s): B&OCT (CSX), CN, and NS,

Operator(s): Amtrak, BNSF, CN, CSX, Metra, NS, and UP

HSR Tier I Draft EIS Comments:

Build Alternative with Potential Conflict: Alternatives A & B

CREATE Partner Comments: The purpose of the P5 project is to reduce congestion and delays by eliminating passenger and freight train conflicts at Brighton Park. The concept is to construct a double-tracked bridge to carry the CN Joliet Subdivision over or under the Western Avenue Corridor and includes associated bridge, track and signal work. The Phase I work on this project has not started. While all the improvements at this location will not be fully realized until the P5 project is completed and the entire CREATE program is completed, the CREATE partners ask that you review this information and take it into consideration as you review the IL HSR alternatives.

CREATE Project Number: P6

Project Name: CP Canal Flyover (IHB/CN Flyover)

Project Status: Phase I – 30% design and EA in progress

Project Location: Summit, IL; On either side of CP Canal Interlocking (where CN crosses the Indiana Harbor Belt) between First Avenue on the east and 63rd Street on the west.

Scope of Work: Construct a double-tracked bridge to carry two CN main tracks over or under the Indiana Harbor Belt (two existing tracks and a future track). Includes associated signal work.

Affected Railroad(s):

Owner(s): B&OCT (CSX), CN

Operator(s): Amtrak, BNSF, CN, CP, CSX, IHB, Metra, NS, and UP

HSR Tier I Draft EIS Comments:

Build Alternative with Potential Conflict: Alternatives A & B

CREATE Partner Comments: The purpose of the P6 project is to reduce congestion and delays by eliminating passenger and freight train conflicts at CP Canal. This is expected to be accomplished by construction of a double-tracked bridge to carry CN Joliet Subdivision two main tracks over or under the Beltway Corridor (two existing tracks and a future track) so that passenger trains operated by Metra and Amtrak on CN's line, as well as CN's freight traffic, can avoid conflicts with the IHB (Beltway Corridor) trains. This project is currently in Phase I design and an Environmental Assessment is being developed. While all the improvement at this location will not be fully realized until the P6 project is completed and the entire CREATE program is completed, the CREATE partners ask that you review this information and take it into consideration as you review the IL HSR alternatives.

CREATE Project Number: WA2

Project Name: Ogden Junction to 75th Street

Project Status: Phase III – Construction in progress

Project Location: Ogden and Western Ave to 75th Street, west of Damen Avenue in Chicago. Chicago Community Areas: Brighton Park, Chicago Lawn, East Garfield Park, Gage Park, Lower West Side, McKinley Park, New West Side, New City, North Lawndale, South Lawndale, and West Englewood.

Scope of Work: This project will install a new bi-directional computerized Traffic Control System (TCS) on a seven-mile segment of the CSX rail line along the CREATE Western Avenue Corridor. Approximately 15 hand-thrown switches will be upgraded to power switches. At the CSX 59th Street Yard signals and switches will be upgraded to improve flexibility in mainline operations. One of the CSX mainlines will be upgraded between 51st Street and 71st Street from the existing 10 mph maximum speed to allow 25 mph operations

The project will install a new eastward connection to the Belt Railway from a CSX main line. All of this work will be within existing railroad right-of-way. Bridges at 35th Street and 36th Street will be reconstructed to accommodate the proposed increase in speed. All of this work will be within existing railroad right-of-way.

Affected Railroad(s):

Owner(s): B&OCT (CSX)

Operator(s): Amtrak, CSX, and Metra

HSR Tier I Draft EIS Comments:

Build Alternative with Potential Conflict: Alternatives A & B

CREATE Partner Comments: The WA2 project is designed to increase train speeds, increase capacity, improve utilization of trackage and reduce congestion on the Western Avenue Corridor from Ogden Junction south to 75th Street. The project is currently under construction. The efficiency of the operation along the Western Avenue corridor has continued to improve as the various portions of the WA2 project are put in service. While all the improvements at this location will not be fully realized until the WA2 project is completed and the entire CREATE program is completed, the CREATE partners ask that you review this information and take it into consideration as you review the IL HSR alternatives.



CHICAGO REGION
ENVIRONMENTAL AND
TRANSPORTATION
EFFICIENCY PROGRAM

CREATE PROGRAM
c/o CTCO
1501 S. CANAL STREET
CHICAGO, IL 60607-5204

CREATE Project Number: WA3

Project Name: Signalization – Ogden Junction to CP 518

Project Status: Phase III – Construction in progress

Project Location: Ogden Junction to a location near intersection of 40th Street and Canal (CP 518). Chicago Community Areas: Armour Square, Bridgeport and McKinley Park.

Scope of Work: This project will replace/install power operated switches and a Traffic Control System (TCS) along the Norfolk Southern main tracks. WA3 will signalize and allow bidirectional movements along the main tracks through Ashland Avenue Yard from 22nd Street to Control Point 518. The project adds a passing track alongside the Ashland Avenue Yard.

Affected Railroad(s):

Owner(s): NS

Operator(s): Amtrak, Metra, and NS

HSR Tier I Draft EIS Comments:

Build Alternative with Potential Conflict: Alternatives C & D

CREATE Partner Comments: The purpose of the WA3 project is to increase train speeds, reduce congestion and add capacity along the NS (CR&I/CJ) mains between Ogden Junction and CP 518. The project is currently under construction. The efficiency of the operation along the Western Avenue corridor has continued to improve as the various portions of the WA3 project are put in service. While all the improvements at this location will not be fully realized until the WA3 project is completed and the entire CREATE program is completed, the CREATE partners ask that you review this information and take it into consideration as you review the IL HSR alternatives.

CREATE Project Number: WA5

Project Name: Corwith Tower Upgrade

Project Status: Phase III – Construction complete

Project Location: North of BNSF's Corwith Yard, near 36th Street and South Central Park Avenue. Chicago Community Areas: Brighton Park, North Lawndale, and South Lawndale.

Scope of Work: Install new signal system at the west end of BNSF's Corwith Yard, which included automation and remote control of Corwith Tower. Upgrade track and signals and reconfigure the Corwith Interlocking where the BNSF Chillicothe Subdivision and CN Joliet Subdivision/Metra Heritage Corridor rail lines cross.

Affected Railroad(s):

Owner(s): BNSF and CN

Operator(s): Amtrak, BNSF, CN, CSX, Metra, and NS

HSR Tier I Draft EIS Comments:

Build Alternative with Potential Conflict: Alternatives A & B

CREATE Partner Comments: The WA5 project is complete and has improved train operations through the Corwith Interlocking. The project included automation of Corwith Tower, upgrade of track and signals and reconfigure the Corwith Interlocking. While all the improvements at this location will not be fully realized until the entire CREATE program is completed, the CREATE partners ask that you review this information and take it into consideration as you review the IL HSR alternatives.



CHICAGO REGION
ENVIRONMENTAL AND
TRANSPORTATION
EFFICIENCY PROGRAM

CREATE PROGRAM
c/o CTCO
1501 S. CANAL STREET
CHICAGO, IL 60607-5204

CREATE Project Number: WA7

Project Name: Brighton Park Connection

Project Status: Phase I – 30% design and ECAD in progress

Project Location: California Avenue and 37th Place to 21st Street and Western Avenue. Chicago Community Area: Brighton Park, Douglas Park, South Lawndale, Little Village.

Scope of Work: Construct new connection from the CN Joliet Subdivision near California Avenue and Archer Avenue to the CREATE Western Avenue Corridor. Also includes construction of and additional track along the Western Avenue Corridor to the 22nd Street. Interlocking near 21st Street and Western Avenue. Rehabilitate multiple bridges over city streets and over the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal. Install crossover switches between the new track and the CREATE Western Avenue Corridor. Install Centralized Traffic Control signalization over the length of the project.

Affected Railroad(s):

Owner(s): B&OCT (CSX), CN, and NS

Operator(s): BNSF, CN, CSX, and UP

HSR Tier I Draft EIS Comments:

Build Alternative with Potential Conflict: Alternatives A & B

CFREATE Partner Comments: The purpose of the W7 project is to connect the Western Avenue corridor with the CN Joliet Subdivision. This project is currently going through Phase I design and environmental review process. Once constructed, this new connection will greatly reduce train activity on other corridors that must currently be used to connect the Western Avenue Corridor with the CN Joliet Subdivision. While all the improvements with this connection will not be fully realized until the WA7 project is constructed and entire CREATE program is completed, the CREATE partners ask that you review this information and take it into consideration as you review the IL HSR alternatives.



Illinois Department of Natural Resources

One Natural Resources Way Springfield, Illinois 62702-1271
www.dnr.illinois.gov

Pat Quinn, Governor
Marc Miller, Director

August 16, 2012

Mr. Joseph E. Shacter
Director, Division of Public and Intermodal
Illinois Department of Transportation
100 West Randolph St. Suite 6-600
Chicago, Illinois 60601-3229

RE: Chicago to St. Louis
High-Speed Rail
Tier 1 DEIS

Dear Mr. Shacter:

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) has reviewed the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) Tier 1 for the Chicago to St. Louis High-Speed Rail. We offer the following comments for your consideration.

The main thought that should continue to be considered as this project progresses through the planning and design phase, is to implement the "avoidance and minimization" concept of impacts to natural resources on the landscape.

In the DEIS, reference is made to the continued coordination with IDNR for studies/surveys to be completed concerning prairie remnants, state listed species and wetlands. Results of those surveys will be made available for review and comment as the project progresses during the Tier 2 phase.

Currently, coordination efforts are ongoing for the Eryngium stem borer (state listed insect) that is present within the proposed improvements along the UPRR tracks, between Dwight and Pontiac Illinois. Application for an Incidental Take Authorization (ITA) has been submitted and is being processed at this time.

In keeping with the resource policies established by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, the Interagency Wetland Policy Act allows a three year time period for wetland impact determinations and wetland compensation plans to be implemented before having to be re-evaluated. This same three year time period applies to the reviews for compliance with the state Endangered Species Protection Act and resource studies relative to the project.

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources has no further comments and looks forward to the continued coordination efforts as the project progresses.

RECEIVED
AUG 21 2012

Illinois Dept. of Transportation
Division of Public and
Intermodal Transportation

If you have any questions, please contact me at 217-785-4862

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve Hamer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Steve" and last name "Hamer" clearly legible.

Steve Hamer
Impact Assessment Section
Division of Ecosystems and Environment
Illinois Department of Natural Resources
One Natural Resources Way
Springfield, Illinois 62702-1271

Cc: Bob Szafoni/ORC-IDNR Springfield; Mark Phipps/NHB-ORC Region 4; Dan Kirk/NHB District-10-ORC; Kris /Kris Lah/USFWS Barrington; Norm West/USEPA Chicago; Kathy Chernich/USACOE Chicago



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
Economic Development Administration
CHICAGO REGIONAL OFFICE
111 N. CANAL ST., SUITE 855
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60606-7208

AUG 15 2012

Mr. James W. Moll, P.E., S.E.
Vice President
Hanson Professional Services, Inc.
1525 S. Sixth Street
Springfield, IL 62703

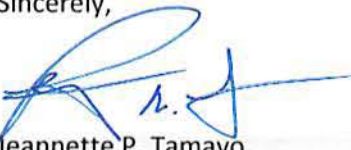
Dear Mr. Moll,

Thank you for your letter July 3, 2012 requesting Economic Development Administration (EDA) comments with regards to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Chicago, Illinois to St. Louis, Missouri High-Speed Rail Corridor Program. EDA's mission is to generate jobs, help retain existing jobs and stimulate industrial and commercial growth in economically distressed areas. This is accomplished through grant programs that are available to rural and urban areas experiencing high unemployment, low income or other severe economic distress.

At this point, EDA does not have any concerns or issues that need to be addressed regarding the DEIS for the high-speed rail service from Chicago to St. Louis. If you have any other concerns or questions, you may contact Robin D. Bush, Coordinator, Environmental & Strategic Analysis at 312-353-8143 ext. 146.

EDA encourages investments that will significantly benefit areas experiencing or threatened with substantial economic distress and has the potential to increase high wage jobs and private sector investment. We appreciate your recognition of EDA and its programs.

Sincerely,


for Jeannette P. Tamayo,
Regional Director