Chicago to St. Louis Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement

DRAFT Scoping Document

July 2011

Illinois Department of Transportation

Federal Railroad Administration

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1.0 Project Definition

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) are jointly preparing a Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Chicago, Illinois to St. Louis, Missouri High Speed Rail Corridor Program. The EIS is also incorporating a Tier 2 assessment of the portion of the overall corridor in Springfield, Illinois. The expected outcome of this combined assessment is the release of a Tier 1 Record of Decision for the entire Chicago to St. Louis corridor and a Tier 2 Record of Decision for the Springfield Railroad Corridor. The Springfield Railroad Corridor project could then proceed to implementation without additional Tier 2 environmental studies. This approach takes into account the urgency seen by IDOT, the City of Springfield, and the local community for moving Springfield improvements quickly to implementation, while meeting the careful and systematic decision-making requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), with associated stakeholder involvement. The project corridor and the Springfield component are illustrated in a map on Figure 1.

The objectives of the proposed Chicago to St. Louis project are to meet current and future regional travel needs through significant improvements to passenger rail service from Chicago to St. Louis. The proposed service improvements to be considered within the EIS are in addition to the first phase of improvements, which were examined in a previous EIS process and are currently being constructed between Chicago and St. Louis under a grant/cooperative agreement funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). This work is supported by a 2004 FRA Record of Decision and by additional NEPA documents covering specific improvement areas and reevaluations, as needed. The current improvements include infrastructure (e.g. track) improvements, communications and signaling installation, stations improvements, and new passenger equipment procurement. These improvements will allow passenger rail speeds to increase from 79 mph to a maximum of 110 mph over a portion of the corridor, and other enhancements.

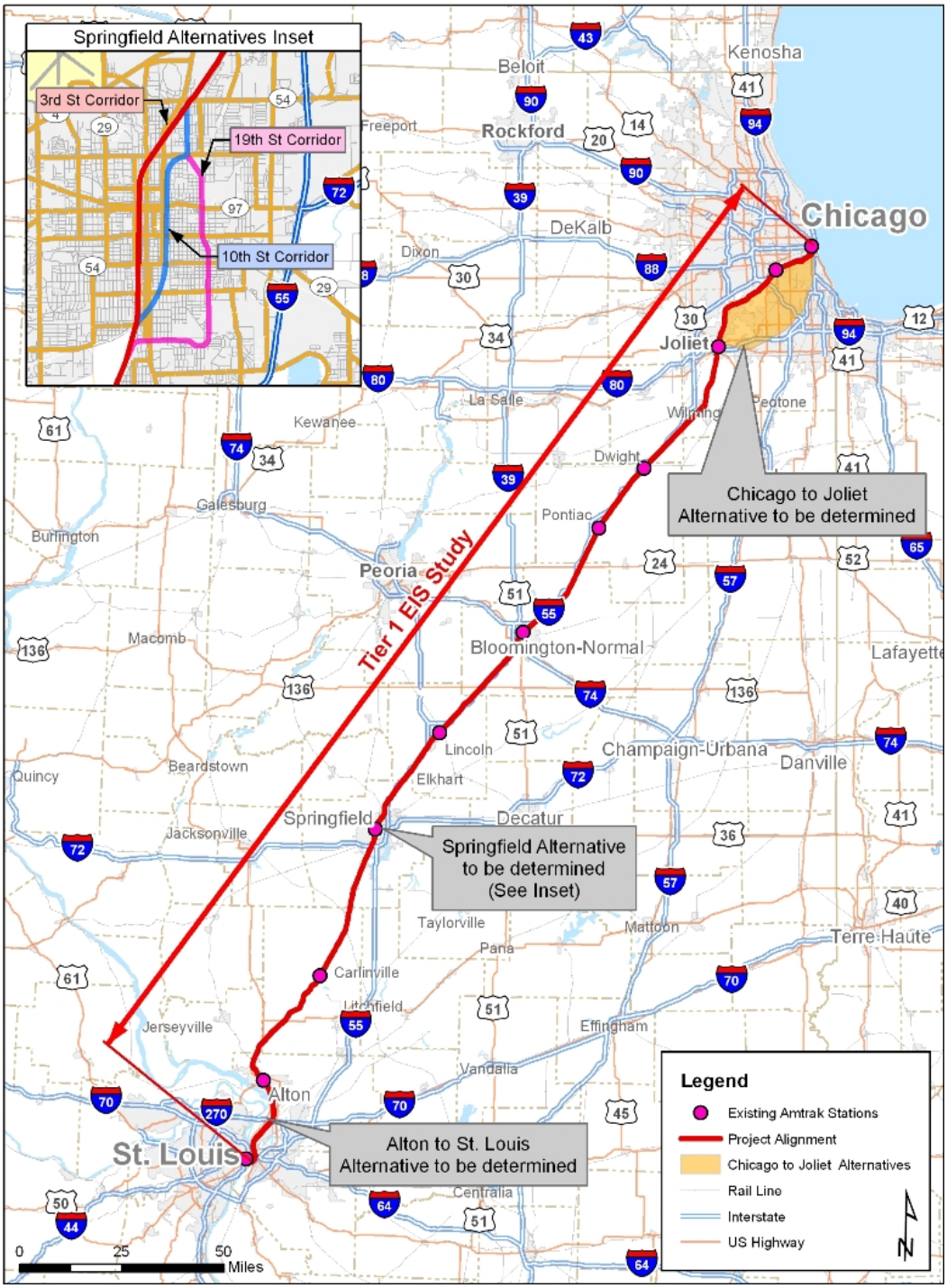
The Tier 1 EIS, being conducted in accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 CFR 1502.20) for tiering large, complex transportation projects, will examine:

- Alternative passenger rail routes between Chicago and Joliet, including the existing route, the Canadian National (CN), the Metra Rock Island District (RID), and others. Alternative routes, including the existing route, also will be considered in the Springfield and St. Louis areas. The locations where alternative routes may be considered are shown in Figure 1

- Additional infrastructure improvements between Joliet and St. Louis to support additional passenger trains and the anticipated growth in freight rail traffic, including adding a second track where this does not already exist

- Increasing the number of passenger trains

Figure 1. Study Area



- Improvements that would allow the maximum safe train speed to rise above the 110 mph, if appropriate.

The Norfolk Southern-Canadian National alignment between Chicago and Dwight was considered in a 2003 EIS for the Corridor as an alternative route for passenger trains. It was included in the earlier document because it would have potentially served a proposed South Suburban Airport. This route will not be considered in the current study because it would divert intercity passenger rail service from the larger populations currently served in the Chicago-Joliet corridor, and the South Suburban Airport area is served by an existing commuter rail service to Chicago. In addition, the Norfolk Southern Railroad does not support the introduction of high-speed passenger rail to its facilities because the capacity of the corridor to carry trains is limited and difficult to expand. Thus, only the existing passenger route will be examined between Joliet and Dwight.

The Tier 2 component in Springfield is considering routing alternatives for the high-speed passenger service, the redistribution of forecasted passenger and freight traffic among the three railroad corridors that currently pass though Springfield, and a reduction in the number of at-grade railroad crossings.

In addition to the proposed increase in frequencies related to the high-speed passenger program, freight traffic through Springfield is expected to increase significantly over the next several years. The Springfield component of the EIS will analyze alternatives for accommodating the growing freight and passenger rail traffic through Springfield.

There are currently three north-south railroad corridors through Springfield, generally along:

- Third Street (owned by Union Pacific).
- Tenth Street (primarily owned by Norfolk Southern).
- Nineteenth Street (primarily owned by Canadian National).

Existing rail passenger service uses the Third Street corridor. There are 73 at-grade crossings along these three corridors. They cause traffic congestion and create safety issues when trains traverse the city. A new Union Pacific Railroad intermodal rail yard near Joliet, Illinois is anticipated to generate increased freight traffic on the Third Street corridor. The combination of increased passenger trains and increased Union Pacific freight trains would likely require a second track on Union Pacific's Third Street corridor to accommodate the greater number of freight and passenger trains expected or that may be proposed as a part of the study of improvements from Chicago to St. Louis.

Build alternatives to accommodate this increase in rail traffic in Springfield will be assessed in both Tier 1 (as a part of the larger project) and the Tier 2 components of the EIS. Alternatives under consideration include:

- No-Build Alternative
- Adding a second track to the Third Street corridor
- Moving the Third Street and Nineteenth Street corridor trains to the Tenth Street corridor, consolidating Springfield's rail traffic into one corridor
- Moving just the Third Street corridor trains to the Tenth Street corridor
- Consolidation of freight trains onto the Tenth Street corridor, with passenger trains remaining on the Third Street corridor

The No-Build Alternative (no-action alternative) is being used as a baseline for comparison of all build alternatives within the EIS. The No-Build Alternative includes travel opportunities on alternative modes, auto, air, and intercity bus, as well as passenger rail with the improvements previously planned and funded for implementation prior to the completion of this new project.

2.0 Environmental Review Process

The EIS will be developed in accordance with Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 CFR part 1500 et seq.) implementing the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.), and FRA's Procedures for Considering Environmental Impacts (64 FR 28545; May 26, 1999). NEPA requires federal agencies to integrate environmental values into their decision-making processes by considering the environmental impacts of their proposed actions and reasonable alternatives to these actions.

The FRA and IDOT will use a tiered process, as provided for in 40 CFR 1508.28 and in accordance with FRA guidance, in the completion of the environmental review of the Project. ''Tiering'' is a staged environmental review process applied to environmental reviews for complex projects.

In the EIS, FRA and IDOT will consider and minimize the impacts of the proposed action to both the human-made and natural environments. The human-made environment includes residences, businesses, agriculture, neighborhoods, noise, and transportation systems, community and land use conditions of the area. The natural environment consists of features including streams, wetlands, threatened and endangered species, and wildlife.

Specifically, FRA and IDOT propose to consider the issues outlined below with either a quantitative or qualitative impact assessment, as indicated within the table.

Issue Areas	Level of Detail			Quantitative impact assessment	Descriptive impact assessment	Description
	Use GIS or other published data with field check	Detailed data gathering required	Field Surveys			
Transportation				X	X	1) Include the service development plan. 2) Address benefits of reduced passenger rail travel time; improved passenger rail service reliability; improved passenger rail capacity, improved rail safety, and reduced vehicle emissions and energy use for travel between St. Louis and Chicago. These are to evaluate how each alternative meets the purpose and need. 3) Impacts on intercity rail, air, and bus service; intercity automobile travel; freight and commuter rail operations; other automobile operations; and navigable water operations.
Social/Economic (including Environmental Justice)	X	X		X	X (EJ)	General: Present general population and employment information identifying population concentrations along the line, land use plans (including new sensitive resources next to tracks and new rail-related development), and residential concentrations, parks, and other public facilities along the lines). Impacts to be considered include displacement, adverse travel, community cohesion, community service function and access, safety, and economic benefits of construction and operation, as well as related visual, noise and vibration impact. Environmental Justice (EJ): Assessment of potential for environmental justice groups to suffer inequitable impacts compared to other groups. Consider the equitability of service benefits to environmental justice and other groups.
Energy				X		Anticipated consumption of energy during construction, and the anticipated change in transportation energy usage (including operation and maintenance costs) in intercity corridor travel resulting from implementation and operation of the build alternatives. Energy usage calculated from the start of project construction through the design year, including air, bus, rail, and automobile travel.
Agriculture	X	X		X		Farmland taken (active and soils) or adversely impacted. Other types of agricultural impact are not expected to be of concern.
Cultural Resources	X	X		X		Archaeology: Number of known and potential sites affected; coordination with State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and Native American Tribes; Historic: Displacement, visual, noise, vibration, and economic impacts; coordination with SHPO and native

Issue Areas	Level of Detail			Quantitative impact assessment	Descriptive impact assessment	Description
	Use GIS or other published data with field check	Detailed data gathering required	Field Surveys			
						American Tribes. Programmatic Agreement (PA) or Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) at FEIS.
Natural Resources (including Threatened and Endangered Species)	X		X (T&ES)	X	X	General: Acres used outside of existing railroad right-of-way by available GIS categories of habitat, including wetlands and prairie remnants plus qualitative discussions of wildlife impact. Threatened and Endangered Species (T&ES): Known species sightings and species with habitat in the area and potential for impact. Detailed focus on Hine's emerald dragon fly and other species of concern identified by USFWS.
Air Quality				X		Air quality conformity; emissions by trains, bus, and automobile; and change in overall transportation emissions. Include greenhouse gas (CO_2) emissions. Address air toxics. CO hot-spot analysis at a single worst-case at-grade crossing in each non-attainment area.
Noise/Vibration	X			X		Develop noise (with and without horn blowing) and vibration impact contours along the corridors given the operations scenarios and count of sensitive resources affected by type. Limited background measurements at sensitive receptors by type of receptor area (urban, suburban, and rural). Address the type and reasonableness of potential mitigation. Cumulative impacts will need to add reasonably foreseeable additions to freight service, including operations and trackwork.
Water Quality/Resources	X				X	Number of stream crossings and length of relocation, number of other water bodies affected. General description of types of potential impacts to water quality and habitat. Potential water quality impacts in general terms with right-of-way maintenance, water flow maintenance, BMP mitigation commitments, potential for disruption of groundwater and well-head protection areas.
Floodplains	X			X		Identification of areas of floodplain used and potential for adverse effect. Consideration of impacts of induced floodplain development to be included.
Wetlands	X	X			X	Potential impacts identified. Potential avoidance, minimization, mitigation strategies also will be identified
Utilities	X				X	Focus on utilities within the right-of-way that would need to be moved; as well as trunk lines, pipelines, treatment plants, and substations. Assume that the

Issue Areas	Level of Detail			Quantitative impact assessment	Descriptive impact assessment	Description
	Use GIS or other published data with field check	Detailed data gathering required	Field Surveys			
						relocation of local distribution utilities is not important to the Tier 1 decision.
Visual and Aesthetic Quality	X	X	X		X	Change in views because of new vertical elements. Where passenger service does not now exist, introduction of views from trains into private spaces.
Special Waste (Hazardous Waste and Waste Disposal)	X	X		X	X	Number of CERCLIS sites affected and, in particular, any that would substantially affect project cost because of associated clean-up.
Special Lands (including Section 4(f) Resources)	X			X		Assessment of potential properties and commitment to avoid 4(f) and 6(f) properties, and evaluation of noise, vibration, and visual impacts for potential constructive use.
Safety and Security					X	Focus on safety as it relates to grade crossings and the rail line passing through developed areas. It can be presumed that such issues as facility security do not need to be addressed in detail until Tier 2, but include discussion of general guidelines for facility design that enhance safety and security.
Permits					X	Identify & list
Construction Impacts					X	Customary list
Indirect and Cumulative Effects	X			X	X	Cumulative impacts include impacts from increased freight service above the baseline, other proposed trackwork improvements along corridors, potential for induced development in station areas (indirect impacts), and other foreseeable significant projects along the corridor. Indirect and cumulative impacts addressed by environmental issue type.

A Tier 1 evaluation is completed at a sufficient level of engineering and environmental detail to assist decision makers in selecting a preferred overall Chicago to St. Louis rail improvement alternative. Tier 1 includes preparing a draft and final EIS that will disclose potential environmental and social effects (evaluated at a planning level) of the proposed improvements. The final EIS will conclude with a Record of Decision (ROD) by FRA that states the Selected Alternative to be carried forward into Tier 2 analysis. The Tier 1 EIS focuses on broad issues, including:

- Defining the specific purpose and need for the project.
- Defining a study area that will encompass reasonable build alternatives.

- Identifying overall project goals and objectives that improvements should achieve and reflecting them in the project purpose and need.

- Identifying the range of reasonable build alternatives to be assessed, including alignments, right-of-way requirements, infrastructure and equipment requirements, and operational changes.

- Developing evaluation criteria to measure the potential for each alternative to meet the purpose and need and goals and objectives.

- Describing the environmental impacts associated with the alternatives.

- Identifying the timing and sequencing of independent actions that can be taken to implement each alternative.

- Selecting a Preferred Alternative for more detailed evaluation in Tier 2 studies.

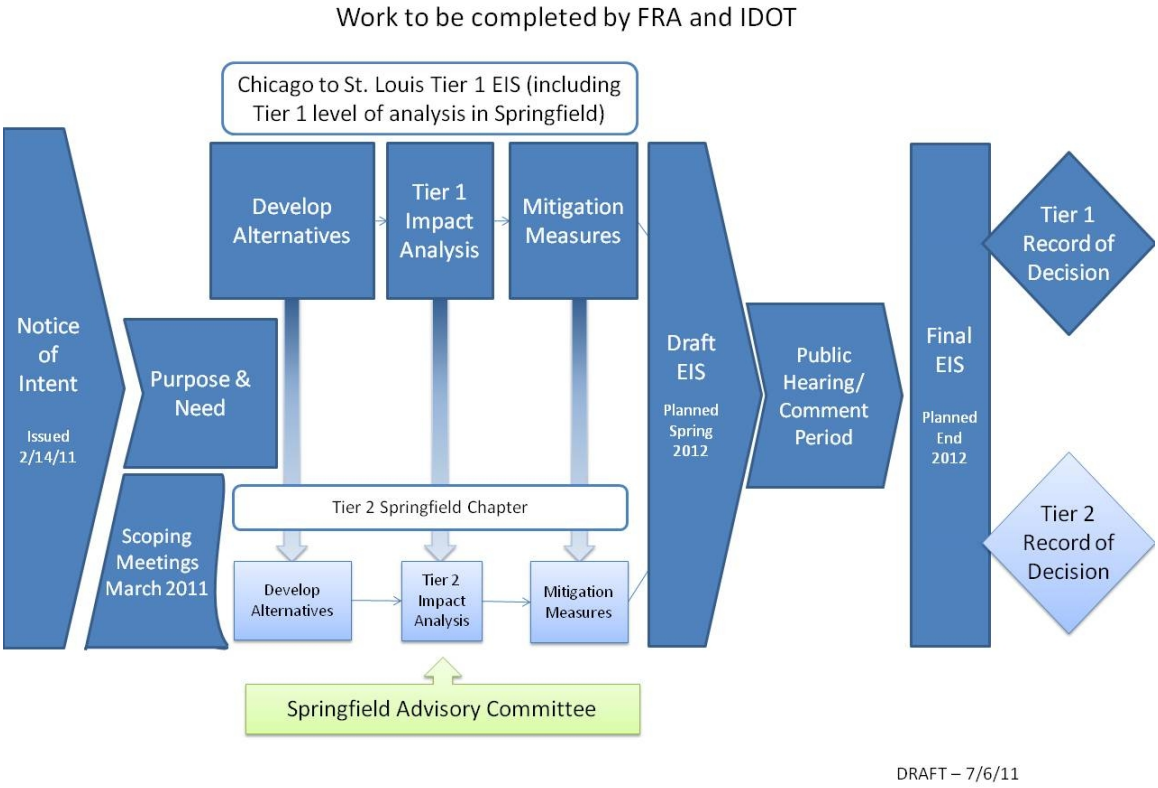
The Tier 1 process identifies components of the overall rail improvement program that can be advanced independently through Tier 2 studies. The second tier could involve the preparation of one or more NEPA documents including EISs; Environmental Assessments (EAs); or Categorical Exclusions (CEs) for specific stand alone projects that have independent utility within the overall program.

For each Tier 2 project, the engineering analysis completed during the Tier 1 process would be supplemented to verify the general layout, preliminary design and footprint of the project, as well as associated right-of-way requirements. Additionally, Tier 2 would include detailed studies of possible methods to avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts on environmental resources within the project footprint. The Tier 2 environmental document(s) would serve as the basis for a decision on whether to proceed with the design and possible construction of each project.

As noted in Section 1.0, a more detailed Tier 2 analysis of the Springfield Railroad Corridor will be incorporated into the Chicago to St. Louis Tier 1 EIS to provide the opportunity for Springfield improvements to proceed as quickly as possible.

Figure 2 presents a flow chart illustrating the process and relationship of the Tier 1 EIS and the Tier 2 level analysis for the Springfield Rail Corridor.

Figure 2. Chicago to St. Louis Tier 1 EIS Flow Chart



3.0 Project Schedule and Milestones

A project schedule has been developed to guide the progress and development of the study. Below is an overview of the proposed project schedule by major milestones:

- Notice of Intent: February 2011
- Public Meetings on Scoping: March 2011
- Purpose and Need Development: June - July 2011
- Draft Scoping Report: July 2011
- Alternatives Analysis: June 2011 – February 2012
- Public Meetings on Draft Scoping Report and Alternatives: October 2011
- Final Scoping Report: November 2011
- Draft EIS Development: November 2011 - March 2012
- Public Hearing on Draft EIS: March - April 2012
- Final EIS Development: April 2012 – November 2012
- ROD Issuance: December 2012

The purpose and need statement for the overall Tier 1 EIS is anticipated to be completed in July 2011. Upon finalization of the purpose and need statement by FRA and IDOT, it will then be used to assess and compare alternatives. A series of public meetings are planned for fall 2011 to discuss the scoping report, purpose and need, and alternatives. In spring 2012, a public hearing will be held to solicit comments on the Draft EIS. A Record of Decision is anticipated to be completed by the end of 2012.

Items completed to date for the Chicago to St. Louis corridor study include:

- Publication of the Notice of Intent in the Federal Register on February 14, 2011
- Public Scoping Meetings for the Tier 1 EIS:
  - March 1, 2011: Joliet, IL
  - March 2, 2011: Bloomington-Normal, IL
  - March 3, 2011: Springfield, IL
  - March 8, 2011: Carlinville, IL

  - March 9, 2011: Alton, IL

- Agency Scoping Meetings for the Tier 1 EIS:
  - March 1, 2011: Joliet, IL
  - March 3, 2011: Springfield, IL
- Publication of the first project newsletter.
- Establishment of the project's public information web site (www.idothsr.org).
- Draft Stakeholder Involvement Plan, including future involvement activities in Springfield.
- Draft Statement of Purpose and Need, including incorporation of the Springfield Tier 2 components.
- Identification of the range of alternatives to be considered in the full corridor, including alternatives already being considered in Springfield.
- Draft alternatives analysis methodology.
- Tier 1 Draft Environmental Impact Statement outline, including the Springfield Tier 2 components.
- Initiation of data collection on the characteristics of the full corridor including:
  - Population and land use data from counties and communities along corridor
  - Railroad facilities and operations data
  - Aerial photography and topographic survey data for corridor
- Initiation of coordination with the Missouri Department of Transportation.
- Sending of letters to environmental resource and regulation agencies to initiate coordination.
- Contacts with various Native American tribes with interest in the project.

3.1 Tier 2 Tasks for EIS

The Tier 2 analysis for Springfield will be conducted in a parallel process with the Tier 1 EIS schedule.

FRA and IDOT will consider the work conducted to date on the Springfield Corridor Study, which began in January 2010, in the EIS analysis. Items completed to date include:

- Stakeholder Involvement Plan
- Purpose and Need Statement
- Identification and evaluation of alternatives
- Data collection and impact assessment of alternatives at a Tier 2 level of detail related to:
  - Community characteristics and impacts
  - Historic and archaeological sites
  - Noise and vibration
  - Section 4(f) (park and historic resource) impacts
  - Hazardous waste sites
  - Threatened and endangered species
- Community outreach activities, including:
  - Informational video
  - Website
  - Three study newsletters
  - Traveling informational kiosks
  - Community presentations
  - Two public meetings
- Coordinate with railroads, including individual meetings with railroads and four technical committee meetings.

4.0 Stakeholder Outreach

NEPA requires scoping and encourages early and frequent coordination with the public and resource agencies throughout the project development process. Scoping facilitates public and agency participation and provides the opportunity for their input during preparation of the EIS. The scoping process for this project is following the scoping guidelines within the CEQ Regulations, 40 CFR § 1501.7, which provide that "there shall be an early and open process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed and for identifying the significant issues related to the proposed action." Formal scoping meetings have been held for this project, as noted in Section 3.0.

Scoping comments were received after issuance of the Notice of Intent. The comments received to date include:

- Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) – Office of Mines and Minerals – the office requested the project avoid known mine areas because of settlement issues
- Illinois Environmental Protection Agency – the agency provided notification that a permit will be required from the Division of Water Pollution Control
- Natural Resources Conservation Service – the agency reviewed the proposed project and has determined that there will be no impacts to prime or important farmlands
- Illinois Historic Preservation Agency – the agency thanked IDOT for invitation to the scoping meeting and looks forward to continued Section 106 consultation
- State of Missouri Department of Natural Resources – the agency thanked IDOT for submitting project information and looks forward to continued Section 106 consultation
- United States Department of Interior – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – the agency provided feedback on threatened and endangered species for Section 7 and the EIS
- United States Coast Guard – the agency reiterated previous comments submitted to IDOT in 2009 and provided general guidance, with a request for more specific project information
- Federal Aviation Administration – the agency has no comment on environmental matters

In addition, FRA and IDOT are inviting agencies with jurisdiction by law, special expertise, or potential interest in the project to be cooperating agencies in the EIS. These include the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Federal Highway Administration, U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Interior, Illinois Department of Agriculture, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, and the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency.

Stakeholder involvement for the Chicago to St. Louis HSR Tier 1 EIS study will be an ongoing process from project initiation through completion. Activities completed to date for the full corridor and the Springfield area are listed in Section 3.0. As the DEIS progresses, the project's Stakeholder Involvement Plan calls for:

- Small group meetings
- Updating the project website
- Additional project newsletters and fact sheets
- Public meetings and workshops
- Public Hearings for the Draft EIS
- Maintaining a project mailing list
- Response to Public Comments on the Draft EIS

5.0 Further Information

For further information on the Chicago-St Louis Corridor and the EIS, please visit the IDOT HSR website at:

http://www.idothsr.org/tier_1/

You may also contact IDOT at 1-855 IDOT HSR (436-8477) or:

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