

Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement

Issue #2

Next Round of Public Meetings Scheduled for High-Speed Rail Study

Many route alternatives will be studied for high-speed rail service from Chicago to St. Louis and they will be presented at upcoming public meetings hosted by the Illinois Department of Transportation and the Federal Railroad Administration. These meetings are the next step in the Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), which is currently being conducted to identify improvements for higher speed trains and additional trips in the corridor providing reduced travel time, increased service reliability, and enhanced safety. Through more convenient connections to Chicago and St. Louis, this project will attract new investment to station communities creating new jobs and improving the environment by reducing green house gas emissions.

Comment forms will be available at the meetings. Attendees may provide their input, which will be considered when deciding on alternatives to move forward into the EIS. Illinois Department of Transportation officials will be available at the meetings to answer

questions. An open house format will be used for all meetings and the public is invited to attend at their convenience.

The meetings will be held between 4:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. in Joliet, Bloomington, Springfield, Carlinville and Alton.



Visit **www.idothsr.org** for more project specific information, business opportunities, and to comment on the Illinois High-Speed Rail project.

Yisit us at www.facebook.com/IllinoisHighSpeedRail

Project Hotline 1-855-IDOT-HSR (436-8477)

Visit www.connectthemidwest.org for Midwest High-Speed Rail information.

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Alternatives Being Considered for Chicago to St. Louis Corridor

As part of the Tier I EIS, many alternative passenger routes for high-speed rail service are being considered between Chicago and Joliet, through Springfield, and between Alton and St. Louis. The alternatives will consider changing the existing Chicago to St. Louis rail corridor from one track to two tracks to allow for more high-speed passenger trains. Below is a brief summary of the primary alternatives being considered.

Chicago to Joliet:

- Use the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) line from Joliet that runs along the west side of the Des Plaines River.
- Use the existing passenger rail line along the Canadian National Railroad (CNRR) that runs from Chicago to Joliet.
- Use the Metra Southwest line that handles local passenger service.
- Use the Metra Rock Island line.
- Use the Elgin, Joliet and Eastern Railroad Company (EJ&E) line.

City of Springfield:

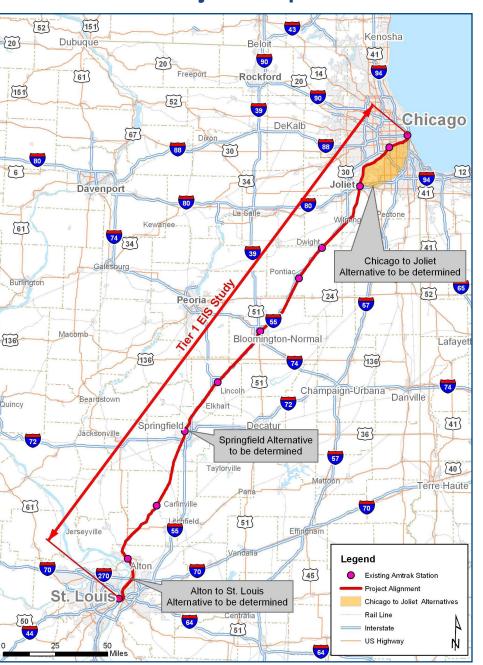
- Leave passenger and freight trains on Third Street.
- Shift passenger and freight trains on Third Street to Tenth Street.
- Leave passenger trains on Third Street and shift freight trains to Tenth Street.
- Shift freight trains from Nineteenth Street to Tenth Street.

Alton to the St. Louis Amtrak Station:

- Use the current Amtrak route and cross the MacArthur Bridge in East St. Louis into St. Louis.
- Cross the Merchants Bridge north of Venice and travel down the west side of the Mississippi River.
- Use combininations of the above alternatives.

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Project Map



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Also being considered is a future East St. Louis station and a "no-build" alternative for the entire corridor. The latter means that once the construction currently underway is completed, the rail facilities would be maintained and no additional track or track upgrades would be built.

Springfield Railroad Corridor Study Now Part of High-Speed Rail Study

The City of Springfield and Sangamon County have been studying ways to improve safety, reduce congestion, and enhance overall livability in the city's three railroad corridors.

The Springfield Study will be incorporated into the Tier 1 EIS. The Tier 1 EIS is being led by the Illinois Department of Transportation and the Federal Railroad Administration and must comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements. As such, all viable alternatives will be considered during the EIS study. All public input from the Springfield Study will be included in the decision-making process.

Screening Criteria Will Be Used to Analyze Alternatives

Part of the Tier I EIS is to evaluate the potential impacts, both positive and negative, associated with the corridor-wide alternatives being considered. Evaluation criteria are being developed to determine which alternatives should move forward for more detailed analysis. Evaluation criteria will include, but will not be limited to, the following.

- Residential and commercial impacts
- Travel time reduction
- Ridership increases
- Safety
- Construction costs
- Environmental impacts on threatened and endangered species, noise and vibration, wetlands, floodplains, stream crossings, public parks, recreational areas and historic structures.

The full set of screening criteria will be presented for comment at the fall public informational meetings.

Send Your

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Why the Project is Needed

The first step in preparing a Tier I EIS is to determine the purpose and need for the project, which establishes why a project is being proposed and provides the basis from which alternatives are developed, analyzed, and ultimately selected.

The purpose of the high-speed rail project is to identify improvements for accommodating higher speed trains and additional daily round trips between Chicago and St. Louis.

The project is needed to improve travel time, frequency, and reliability. Nearly all of the 35 million trips made annually within the corridor are by automobile

and air, and only one percent of the trips are made by passenger rail. This modal imbalance contributes to congestion, reduced overall traveler safety, increased air pollutant emissions and energy consumption, travel delays, and reduced travel reliability.

Additionally, the large number of grade crossings in the City of Springfield impacts safety, vehicle and pedestrian delays, and noise levels.





Frequently Asked Questions



What is the High-Speed Rail Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)?

Preparation of a Tier 1 EIS is part of an overall high-speed rail project to enhance passenger service between Chicago and St. Louis. It will identify additional improvements necessary to increase the number of daily round trips in the corridor to eight. The current Chicago to St. Louis corridor operates on a single track that is shared by both traditional freight and passenger rail service (Amtrak). However, future visions for this corridor include the full build-out (additional second track and other improvements). The Tier 1 EIS will assess the following:

- Potential addition of a second mainline track;
- Potential routing alternatives between Chicago and Joliet, the Springfield area, and Alton to St. Louis;
 and
- Associated transportation and environmental impacts of these improvements.

How is this different from the current High-Speed Rail program that is under construction?

In 2003, the Illinois Department of Transportation completed an EIS for high-speed rail from Chicago to St. Louis.

This resulted in a Record of Decision (2004) that included provisions for accommodating high-speed (110 mph maximum) trains along the existing Chicago to St. Louis corridor. After applying for and receiving federal funding, track improvements along a 76.5-mile segment in the corridor began in September 2010. Completion of all improvements outlined in the 2004 Record of Decision will make it possible to operate more daily round trips between the two cities. The Tier 1 ElS is a study within the program that will address broad corridor-level issues and environmental impacts associated with the full build-out (additional second track and other improvements) needed to accommodate an increased number of high-speed trains and daily round trips between Chicago and St. Louis. Subsequent phases or tiers will analyze site-specific projects and alternatives based on the decisions made in Tier 1.

What is the Tier 1 EIS process?

The EIS process generally includes the following components in this order:

- Scoping an open coordination process with agencies and the general public to identify the scope of issues to be addressed in the EIS;
- Purpose and Need identification of what the project is intended to address;
- Preliminary Alternatives development of a range of alternatives that address the purpose and need;
- Alternative Analysis evaluation of the preliminary alternatives using established evaluation criteria;
- Draft EIS identification of the preferred alternative with public review and comment; and
- Final EIS and Record of Decision based on the comments on the Draft EIS, the final EIS is written and submitted to the Federal Railroad Administration for a Record of Decision.

Who will make the final decision on which alternatives are chosen?

The Federal Railroad Administration, in coordination with the Illinois Department of Transportation, makes the final decision on the Preferred Alternative for the Tier 1 EIS. This decision-making process will include input received from the local municipalities, agencies, community members and the general public.