



Public Involvement Plan

Identification of Potential Passenger Rail Alternatives Chicago - Fort Wayne Corridor

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City of Fort Wayne, Indiana in partnership with Indiana
Department of Transportation and the Federal Railroad Administration.**

August, 2017

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1.1 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN

Federal law requires the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process for surface transportation projects that require approval by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA). The Chicago–Fort Wayne Passenger Rail Corridor study is conducting pre-NEPA Alternatives Analysis to determine the best alternative to meet future transportation needs across northern Indiana and on into Ohio. To ensure transparency throughout the entire process a public involvement plan is being developed for this preliminary work as well. The FRA has allowed the corridor partners to conduct this pre-NEPA analysis work in order to clarify whether a proposed passenger rail corridor is necessary to meet travel demand and, if needed, which route has the most potential for success.

The Chicago–Fort Wayne-Columbus Passenger Rail Corridor study is being phased in several ways. First, this study will look at route alternatives, for the Chicago to Fort Wayne corridor. Since future NEPA work is required to include a “no-build” alternative this study will not address this “alternative of no-action.” Additionally, the route itself will be studied in two phases – Chicago to Fort Wayne and Lima, OH; and then Lima on into Columbus, OH.

The purpose of the PIP is to develop and implement a process to engage the public and agencies in accordance with NEPA, FRA, and state public involvement policies. As this study is a pre-NEPA project that will lead to future studies required to follow the NEPA guidelines it is appropriate that the public involvement plan is equivalent to the engagement required in future work.

The Public Involvement Plan (PIP) for the Chicago-Fort Wayne Passenger Rail Corridor will serve as a plan for outreach efforts to freight rail line-owners, other interested stakeholders, reviewing agencies, the news media, public officials, and the general public throughout the project. The goals of the PIP are to engage the public in a meaningful and transparent way and to build community consensus around recommendations.

The plan will contain a series of public involvement and educational activities that will include: interactive/informational community meetings; educational materials and displays; briefings for federal, state, and local elected officials; small group meetings; media outreach strategy; creation of a web page; creation and maintenance of a comment/response database; creation and maintenance of a public outreach database; an agency coordination effort; and coordination with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) by the project steering committee.

The PIP is a dynamic document and will be updated as necessary throughout the duration of the project.

1.2 National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Process

This Alternatives Analysis will assist in the decision-making process as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended (42 United States Code [U.S.C.] 4321 et seq.), Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations for implementing the provisions of NEPA (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Parts 1500 through 1508), and FRA's policies and procedures..

The City of Fort Wayne and Northern Indiana Passenger Rail Association (NIPRA), in cooperation with Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT), is proposing to restore intercity passenger rail service along nearly 130 miles of CSX freight rail line running across northern Indiana, serving major population centers including Fort Wayne, with service continuing into Lima, Ohio. The project study corridor traverses from east to west through two counties in Ohio, Allen and Van Wert and through eight (8) Indiana counties, also from east to west, Allen, Whitley, Kosciusko, Marshall, Starke, La Porte, Porter and Lake. This pre-NEPA work will focus on alternative analysis and service development.

1.3 Project Description

With technical guidance from the FRA, the project will identify and analyze reasonable and feasible alternatives between Tolleston (Gary) and Fort Wayne, with potential service continuing to Lima, OH, resulting in the selection of a preferred alternative. After the selection of the preferred alternative, a Service Development Plan for this section of the corridor will be prepared and will include concept engineering and capital programming; detailed service plan including service frequency, timetables, general station locations, and intermodal connections; identification of infrastructure, rolling stock, and facilities improvements; financial plan; operations plan; ridership estimates; assessment of benefits; and program implementation strategy. The most western section of the corridor from Tolleston into Chicago is being determined during the Chicago-Detroit Tier 1 EIS which accounts for future northern Indiana passenger rail service.

1.4 Project Team

The City of Fort Wayne and consultant HNTB are working in cooperation with

NIPRA, Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) and the FRA to complete Alternatives Analysis and Public Outreach for the corridor. The project team consists of the City of Fort Wayne as the lead agency and NIPRA, INDOT and FRA as cooperating agencies. Consultants HNTB and TEMS will be the lead on the alternatives analysis, conceptual engineering, selecting the preferred alternative, and service development planning. The City of Fort Wayne will be lead agency on the Public Involvement Plan in cooperation with three Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) in Indiana: Northeast Indiana Regional Coordinating Council (NIRRCC), Northwest Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC), and the Michiana Area Council of Governments (MACOG). There is also currently one cooperating Ohio MPO in this segment of the corridor: Lima-Allen Regional Planning Commission.

1.5 Contact Database

A database of elected officials, public officials, agency staff, and key public stakeholders, will be established and maintained. The database will be used to provide the public with information concerning progress on the project and for notifying the public of meetings and workshops.

The initial mailing list will not attempt to include all of the adjacent property owners in the study corridors. The mailing list will be built using data obtained from key public agencies. Public officials will also be asked to provide community leader names during the initial telephone contact. Included in the database will be civic/social service agencies as identified in the community outreach research.

1.6 Agency Coordination

As part of the early coordination in advance of NEPA, an agency coordination meeting will be held to discuss issues related to the project as identified by affected Federal, State, local agencies, and Native American Tribes. This early coordination meeting will help the City and NIPRA determine the scope of issues, analyses and coordination to consider in the NEPA document. The meeting will be held in Fort Wayne, IN for affected Indiana and Ohio agencies.

1.7 Freight Railroad Coordination

The City of Fort Wayne, HNTB, INDOT and FRA will work with the freight rail owners CSX, CFER and Norfolk Southern and coordinate work on any aspects of the Alternative Analysis and Service Development Plan where their input is needed or required.

2.1 PROJECT STAKEHOLDERS

Identifying project stakeholders is an essential part of the public involvement plan. Identifying stakeholders will ensure that affected parties are aware of the project and have the opportunity to comment or inquire about the project. Just as the public involvement plan is a “living document” and is subject to change throughout the project, the stakeholders may also change. Below is a preliminary list of stakeholders.

1. Federal Agencies
 - a. Federal Railroad Administration
 - b. U.S. Fish and Wildlife
 - c. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
 - d. U.S. Army Corp of Engineers
2. State Agencies
 - a. Indiana Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)
 - b. Ohio Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)
 - c. Indiana Department of Natural Resources
 - d. Ohio Department of Natural Resources
 - e. Indiana Department of Environmental Management
 - f. Ohio Environmental Protection Agency
3. Indiana Counties
 - a. Allen County
 - b. Whitley County
 - c. Kosciusko County
 - d. Marshall County
 - e. Starke County
 - f. LaPorte County

- g. Porter County
 - h. Lake County
- 4. Ohio Counties
 - a. Allen County
 - b. Van Wert County
- 5. Indiana Native American Tribes
 - a. Miami Nation of Indiana
 - b. Miami Nation of Oklahoma
- 6. Ohio Native American Tribes
 - a. Shawnee Nation United Remnant Band
 - b. Munsee Delaware Indian Nation of Ohio
- 7. Indiana Transportation Agencies/Metropolitan Planning Organizations
 - a. Northeast Indiana Regional Coordinating Council;
 - b. Northwest Indiana Regional Planning Commission;
 - c. Michiana Area Council of Governments.
- 8. Ohio Transportation Agencies/Metropolitan Planning Organizations
 - a. Lima-Allen Regional Planning Commission

Additionally, affected cities in Indiana and Ohio have been indicated as stakeholders. See Appendix A for a complete list of these cities.

3.1 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

Public involvement activities will allow the project team to educate agencies and the public on the Chicago-Fort Wayne corridor and to receive comments and concerns. Public involvement activities include:

- Public Involvement Meetings
- Public Officials Informational Meetings
- Small Group Meetings/Speakers' Bureau

3.2 Public Involvement Meetings

One round of public meetings will occur at three (or four) locations throughout the project. They will be held in the following locations:

- Valparaiso, IN
- Warsaw, IN
- Fort Wayne, IN
- (Lima, OH)

The public meetings will be held at well-known, centralized locations with easy access for people with disabilities and transit riders. Easy to read graphics, hand-outs and comment forms will be provided. The meeting format will be an open house with a presentation/general question, answer and comment segment at advertised times. Meeting notifications will be published in the local daily newspaper and at least one minority news outlet serving low income or minority populations, if available, in each community where the public meeting is held. Printed and electronic meeting notifications will be distributed by e-mail and at social service agencies, libraries and at other locations where low income and/or minority populations might frequent.

The public meeting will occur at the three (four) locations listed above.

Public Involvement Meeting will occur after the reasonable and feasible route alternatives have been identified. The public will be asked for their input on the results of the Alternative Selection Report - the narrowed route alternatives and service plans in the corridor based on travel time, market size, capital and operating costs, safety, and reliability.

3.3 Public Officials Information Meetings

At key points in the study, meetings will be held with the local public officials. These will most likely occur prior to Public Information Meetings and will utilize board mounted graphic exhibits prepared for the public meetings. When needed and/or requested, these formal meetings with public officials will be supplemented with small group meetings.

3.4 Small Group Meetings

The purpose of the small group meetings is to provide the public with an opportunity to be informed about the project, the proposed purpose and need for the project, and the development of study corridors, and to solicit their input. These meetings will take place with a variety of community and neighborhood groups, civic, business groups, and municipalities along the corridor. Some small group meetings will be face to face meetings with local officials and business leaders as needed and could also include outreach efforts with minority or low-income groups. It is envisioned that these meetings will take place in a variety of locations throughout the corridor.

4.1 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT COMMUNICATION

Public involvement communication allows the project team to inform agencies and the public about project information. Additionally, agencies and the public will be able to express concerns regarding the project. The communication methods include:

- Agency database
- Fact sheets
- Media outreach
- Project website
- Project email address

4.2 Agency Database

The purpose of the agency database is to provide a repository for contact information for the project. The database will include contact information for key contacts within public agencies, public officials, relevant interest groups, and affected Native American Tribes.

4.3 Fact Sheets

Additionally, fact sheets will be prepared for key issues of public concern. Fact sheets will describe the project and its benefits, activities occurring in this phase, project schedule and contact information. Fact sheets will be distributed to those communities in which a particular topic may be an issue. Other copies will be used as handouts at meetings and other outreach activities or used to provide project information as requested by the public.

4.4 Media Outreach

A media outreach strategy will be implemented including preparing press releases, meeting notices, and general outreach to both the print and broadcast media. The effort will include a periodic update to the media about the project. The effort will also include the identification of the key media markets and needed media contact information. Meeting notices, press releases, and briefings will be prepared for major markets of the corridor. Materials developed for public meetings and events, including public information pieces will be provided to the media.

4.5 Project Website

The purpose of the project website is to provide up-to-date project information to the public. The website will be updated on a regular basis and during key milestones throughout the study to ensure the accuracy of information. City of Fort Wayne will host the project website at <http://www.NIPRArail.org>. The consultant team will assist in providing content from the public meetings for use on the website.

Information the website will include:

- Introduction/overview page
- Presentation/meeting materials
- Newsletters/brochures/fact sheets
- Frequently Asked Questions

4.6 Project Email Address

The purpose of the project email address is to provide an additional form of communication between the project team and the public. The project email address has been established by City of Fort Wayne to seek questions and comments from the public. The email address is: info@NIPRArail.org. All comments will be documented and, as appropriate, responded to.

Appendix A – List of Cities that are current Project Stakeholders

City of Gary, IN

City of Valparaiso, IN

City of Plymouth, IN

City of Warsaw, IN

City of Fort Wayne, IN

City of Lima, OH