

North Corridor Transit Project Early Scoping Summary Report

DECEMBER 2010



CENTRAL PUGET SOUND
REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY

PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

From September 24 to October 27, 2010, Sound Transit and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) conducted “early scoping” to start the public planning and environmental processes for the North Corridor Transit Project in King and Snohomish Counties in the metropolitan Puget Sound region. The proposed project would start at the regional light rail system in the Northgate neighborhood of Seattle and would extend northward to Shoreline, Mountlake Terrace, and Lynnwood.

The purpose of this report is to describe how the early scoping process was conducted and summarize comments received during the early scoping period. This information will be considered by Sound Transit and FTA as they define and study alternatives for the North Corridor Transit Project.

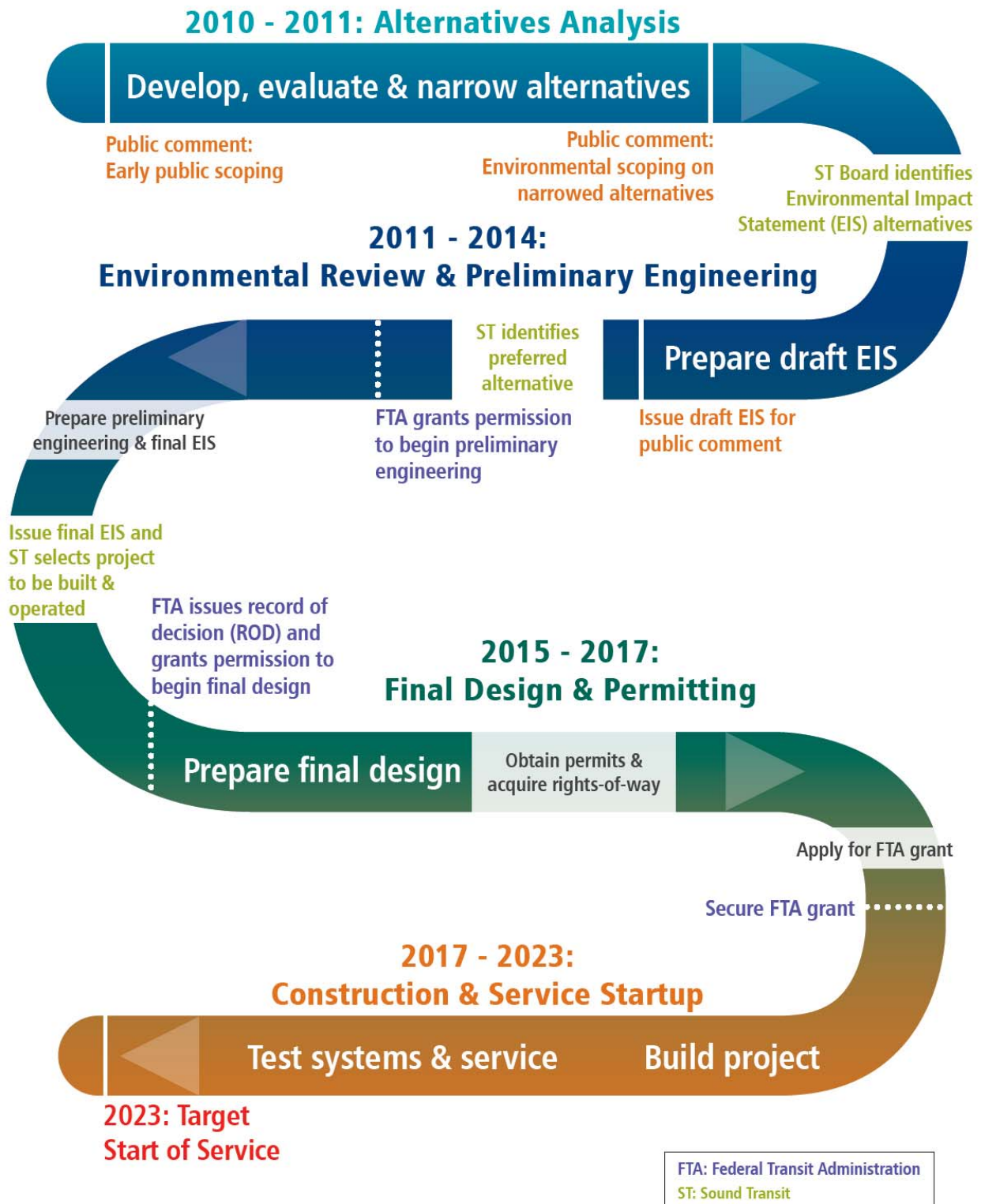
Project Background

Because the North Corridor Transit Project is seeking federal funding, Sound Transit is conducting an Alternatives Analysis (AA), as required by FTA’s New Starts major transit capital investment program.

As defined by federal law, an AA is the first step of the New Starts project development process. The AA provides a way for project proponents to evaluate the costs, benefits, and impacts of a range of transportation alternatives designed to address mobility problems and other locally-identified objectives in a defined transportation corridor. It also provides a means for determining the particular investment strategy that should be advanced for more focused study and development. For AA studies that may result in the local selection of a project eligible for FTA New Starts or Small Starts funding, the AA serves as the process for development of the technical information necessary to support a candidate project’s approval for preliminary engineering.

This project will need to satisfy the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1970 (NEPA) and Washington’s State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA), which will likely involve the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

The proposed study schedule for the North Corridor Transit Project (which was also provided to the public in early scoping materials) is shown below. Opportunities for public involvement and input will continue throughout the environmental review process.



The North Corridor Transit Project and the Region's Mass Transit System

The North Corridor Transit Project is an element of the proposed Sound Transit 2 (ST2) package of mass transit projects currently being considered by Sound Transit. The project is part of the agency's adopted Long-Range Plan and is part of the ST2 Plan for regional transit investments approved by voters in 2008. The project is also an element of the region's Metropolitan Transportation Plan (Puget Sound Regional Council's *Transportation 2040*), which anticipates the eventual extension of mass transit service north to Everett.

The North Corridor is about 8 to 9 miles long, depending on its alignment, starting at Northgate in north Seattle and ending in Lynnwood. The corridor generally follows Interstate 5 (I-5), the major north-south route through Washington. There is a large commuter market in this area that travels between the communities in Snohomish and King Counties, toward Seattle or north to Everett, where many of the region's jobs are located.

THE EARLY SCOPING PROCESS

The early scoping process for the North Corridor Transit Project began September 24th with a series of public notices, advertisements, and mailings and continued through October 27, 2010.¹ The project has held three public meetings and an agency meeting and accepted public comments in a wide variety of formats.

Sound Transit and FTA decided to conduct early scoping, which is an optional step in the state and federal environmental review processes, to engage the public and stakeholders in the AA study process, before defining formal alternatives that would undergo more detailed engineering and environmental study. When the project alternatives are more fully defined, Sound Transit and FTA will announce the type of environmental document they will prepare and offer further opportunities for public comment. If an EIS is to be prepared, FTA and Sound Transit will announce an additional public scoping and comment period for the EIS.

Public Notices in the Federal Register and the SEPA Register

Early scoping notices were published in the Federal Register on September 27, 2010, and in the SEPA Register on September 24, 2010. (The Federal Register is the official daily federal government publication containing the notices of all federal agencies. The SEPA Register is

¹ Most of the initial public notices, advertisements, and mailings, including a legal notice and a SEPA Register notice, appeared on or before September 24th and requested comments by October 25th. However, the official federal notice was not published in the Federal Register until September 27th. To allow at least 30 days for comments, Sound Transit extended the comment period to October 27th and included the extended date on subsequent notices and on the Sound Transit Web site.

the Washington State Department of Ecology listing of all SEPA environmental notices and documents.)

With the early scoping announcements, Sound Transit and FTA invited the public and agencies to learn about the project and provide comments. The announcements provided the dates and times of public meetings, described how people could get more information about the project, and provided project contacts. They also stated the purpose of the early scoping process and described the overall planning, public involvement, and state and federal environmental processes expected for the North Corridor Transit Project. The notices invited public comments on the scope of the AA for the North Corridor Transit Project, including the purpose of the project, the range of alternatives, and the environmental, transportation, and community impacts and benefits to be considered.

Links to the notices were provided on Sound Transit's Web site at <http://www.soundtransit.org/NorthHCT>. The text of the Federal Register notice is provided as Attachment A of this report.

To provide additional background on the project and encourage comments, Sound Transit prepared an Early Scoping Information Report. The report provided more detail about the project corridor, the potential alternatives, details on the public meetings and how to comment, along with a Preliminary Purpose and Need Statement and the project's current schedule. This report was available on the Sound Transit Web site starting on September 24th, and copies were at the public meetings, and at the agency scoping meeting.

Advertisements and Legal Notices

Display advertisements were placed in the following publications:

- *The Seattle Times* (legal notice, daily, 9/24, 10/1, and 10/8)
- *The Everett Herald* (daily, 9/29 and 10/5)
- *North Seattle Herald Outlook* (weekly, 9/29 and 10/6)
- *The Enterprise* (weekly, 9/29 and 10/6)
- *The Edmonds Beacon* (weekly, 9/30 and 10/7)
- *Snohomish County Business Journal* (monthly, October)

Advertisements were placed in online newspapers and blogs, either continuously or based on the number of views ("impressions"). The advertisements linked directly to the project Web site.

- The Seattle Times (9/30 – 10/14)
- The Seattle PI (9/30 – 10/14)
- Snohomish County Business Journal (9/27 – 10/14)
- My Edmonds News (9/27 – 10/14)

- The Everett Herald/HeraldNet (9/30 – 10/14)
- Mountlake Terrace News (9/27 – 10/14)
- The Enterprise (9/27 – 10/14)
- The Edmonds Beacon (9/27 – 10/14)
- Lynnwood Today (9/27 – 10/14)
- Publicola (9/30 – 10/14)
- Seattle Transit Blog (9/27 – 10/14)
- Aurora Seattle (9/27 – 10/14)

Flyers, Mailings, and Other Media Notices

Before the beginning of the early scoping period, postcard notices were mailed to approximately 130,000 single-family homes, apartments, and businesses in and around the North Corridor; they began appearing in mailboxes on September 22nd. Translated information about interpretation services was provided in Spanish and traditional Chinese. The postcards also indicated how people could receive the information in other formats or languages.

Sound Transit also provided notices to local area governments, community calendars, and blogs, and they were posted on the following online sites:

- City of Shoreline
- City of Lynnwood
- City of Mountlake Terrace
- City of Lake Forest Park
- City of Edmonds
- Publicola's Publicalendar
- Shoreline Area News
- Feet First

Email notices were sent to community groups, elected officials, and city governments. Notice of the project was also part of the Sound Transit "CEO Report" and highlighted on Sound Transit's home page and agency public calendar. A project-specific email list is currently being developed.

Public Outreach to Minority and Low-Income Populations ("Environmental Justice")

The project's public outreach efforts are being conducted to help identify and involve minority and low-income populations that could be benefited or impacted by the project. Executive Order 12898, signed by President Clinton in 1994, directs federal agencies to make achieving "Environmental Justice" (EJ) part of its mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority and low-income populations.

The project's initial analysis of the larger corridor area, using U.S. Census data and other sources indicated that areas of the corridor contain members of a number of minority groups, including people identifying themselves as Asian or Hispanic. The translated public notices developed by Sound Transit in Spanish and Chinese were intended to help reach these groups.

In addition to the blanket mailing of 130,000 postcards with translation notices that were sent to all residential addresses in areas in and surrounding the project corridor, the project distributed bundles of postcards at nearly 35 locations in the project area. The sites included facilities serving the general public as well as specifically the Asian or Hispanic communities, such as service or resource centers, churches, libraries, recreation centers, senior centers, and retail establishments. The multiple newspaper notices in a variety of project area papers also were intended to reach low-income and minority populations in addition to others in the various communities.

Sound Transit will continue to develop its strategy and outreach to EJ populations as the project moves forward. Sound Transit has made it a priority to engage and solicit input from these populations early in the planning and development process.

Public Early Scoping Meetings

More than 200 people attended the public meetings, which were held at the following locations from 6:00 to 8:30 pm:

- North Seattle: October 7, 2010—Ingraham High School, 1819 North 135th Street, Seattle 98133 (40 attendees)
- Lynnwood: October 12, 2010—Lynnwood Convention Center, 3711 196th Street SW, Lynnwood 98036 (90 attendees)
- Shoreline: October 14, 2010—Shoreline Conference Center, 18560 First Avenue NE, Shoreline 98155 (80 attendees)

Agency Early Scoping Meeting

In addition to the Federal Register, the SEPA Register, and other legal notices, Sound Transit sent invitations for the agency scoping meeting to local, state, and federal agencies, as well as tribal governments. The agency scoping meeting was held on October 14, 2010, in the Sound Transit Board Room. Fifteen people attended the meeting, representing the following cities and agencies:

- City of Shoreline
- City of Edmonds
- Seattle City Light
- Snohomish County Public Works

- City of Mountlake Terrace
- City of Everett
- City of Lynnwood
- King County Metro
- Community Transit

In an ongoing interagency outreach and coordination effort, Sound Transit is also meeting with working groups of local agency technical and policy staff. These two groups are the North Corridor Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) and the North Corridor Interagency Technical Working Group (ITWG). These working groups met as the project entered early scoping and again at the end of the early scoping period. Additional meetings are planned throughout the AA phase and into the project's later phases. Sound Transit also met with elected officials and representatives of local governments and other agencies to brief them on the project and inform them of the early scoping activities.

How the Public Meetings Were Held

Each public meeting was held from 6:00 to 8:30 pm and consisted of an open house (6:00 pm), a presentation and question-and-answer period (6:45 pm), and small group sessions that used a workshop format (7:15 pm). All meetings were in locations accessible to persons with disabilities, and in one meeting, participants with hearing disabilities were provided with sign language interpretation. The public notices and advertisements for the meetings described the format and timing of each meeting.

During the open house portion of the meetings, participants were invited to review project information, display boards, and an aerial map. Project staff was available to answer questions. Sound Transit staff provided a presentation explaining Sound Transit's overall mission and services, describing the ST2 program, and providing background on the project. The presentation included a question-and-answer session, which was followed by the workshop portion of the meeting.

During the workshop, participants formed small groups, which varied from 6 to 12 people, depending on the attendance at the particular meeting. Within each group, two project staff members guided discussions, using a large aerial map of the general project corridor, encompassing areas with potential alignments identified to date, including I-5, State Route 99 (SR 99), and 15th Avenue. The groups also were supplied with tools such as a scale to show a half-mile and a mile radius around potential stations or access points, a flip chart, pens for documentation, and stick-on dots to show areas of interests.

The groups were asked the following questions to guide their conversations:

- Looking at the aerial map, where do you think there should be access to HCT service?

- Why do you think those are the right access points?
- What would make you choose differently about those access points for transit?
- How might we connect those access points?

The workshop groups had nearly 50 minutes to discuss their thoughts. They used the stick-on dots to show their ideas about potential station locations and routes. They used the flip charts to record their major themes, including the potential features or attributes of the project. The group also provided their opinions on why some alignments or modes of transportation had more advantages or disadvantages than others. The workshop groups then shared their major points with the entire group.

Opportunities to Comment

Written scoping comments, which were accepted through October 27, 2010, were sent by U.S. mail or email to the individual indicated below or submitted at the public meetings. A list of respondents is included in Attachment B of this report.

Comments were sent to:

Roger Iwata, North Corridor HCT Project, Sound Transit, 401 South Jackson Street, Seattle, WA 98104-2826; or roger.iwata@soundtransit.org.

Online Questionnaire Tool

The project used an online questionnaire tool to help in targeting the online community and people who might not be able to attend a public meeting. The tool was available on the project Web site (<http://www.soundtransit.org/NorthHCT>) throughout the early scoping period. Although the results cannot be considered a statistical representation of the public's preferences, they do provide feedback on general trends and opinions, particularly when considered in conjunction with the formal written comments and the results of the public meeting workshops. Nearly 275 people completed the questionnaire, and almost half of them submitted additional informal written comments, narrative in nature, at the end of their entry. Details of the survey and the comments are available for review on the Sound Transit Web site link (www.soundtransit.org/NorthHCT).

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS RECEIVED

This summary is an overview of nearly 90 written comments received between September 24 and October 27, 2010. Nine of these comments were provided by state and local agencies. Approximately half of the comments were submitted by email or regular mail, and half were

received at public meetings. Three members of the general public commented more than once. Copies of all early scoping comments submitted to Sound Transit are available for review at Sound Transit's offices at 401 South Jackson Street, Seattle, Washington 98104-2826, or by contacting Roger Iwata at (206) 689-4904.

In addition to formally submitting written comments, the public also had the opportunity to express their opinions about the project by participating in the public meetings or by using the project's online questionnaire tool. Following the discussion of written comments, this report summarizes the public workshop and questionnaire results.

The written comments from the general public were fairly limited in number as well as length, which is not uncommon for an early scoping period, when specific project alternatives are not yet defined. The agency comments were typically more detailed. The general themes of the comments are described below, followed by summaries of the agency comments that were received.

1. Comments related to the Preliminary Purpose and Need Statement

a. Specific comments about the draft statement

Sound Transit received five comments specific to the Preliminary Purpose and Need Statement from the City of Lynnwood, the City of Seattle, King County, Snohomish County, and Community Transit. The comments focused on issues such as:

- Connecting centers with rapid and reliable high capacity regional transit service
- Consistency with the regional transit system long-range plan and its goals to eventually connect Tacoma, Seattle, and Everett
- The needs of the urban growth areas within the North Corridor and the importance of regional transit to serve the people who will live or work there

b. General comments about what the project should achieve

Respondents that addressed what the project should achieve were in consensus with the purpose stated in the Preliminary Purpose and Need Statement, which included providing transit for existing and future demand, supporting local visions, and supporting Sound Transit's Long-Range Plan.

c. General comments about why the project is needed

Respondents that addressed the need for the project supported the needs stated in the Preliminary Purpose and Need Statement, which included meeting a growing need for transportation while addressing increasing and unreliable travel times;

ensuring long-term regional mobility, multimodal connectivity, and convenience for local residents; providing transit infrastructure for development; and helping to support local goals.

2. General comments about the project

a. Support or opposition

Many respondents explicitly supported extending light rail into the North Corridor, with comments not specific to segments, but also citing reasons why light rail is needed.

b. Project timing

One respondent commented that the project would need to be completed prior to 2023 to meet the high demand for transportation in the area. Several respondents indicated that the project should be built as fast as possible.

c. Project financing

Several respondents commented that they would be willing to pay additional taxes to fund the project. One respondent commented that Snohomish County should not be obligated to pay for sections of the project in King County.

3. Comments specific to a potential project alignment or features

a. Routes or stations specifically identified

The City of Edmonds comments indicated support for a Mountlake Terrace Park-and-Ride station and an I-5 alignment. The City identified several concerns with a SR 99 alignment, particularly potential construction impacts.

The City of Lynnwood commented on the importance of a Lynnwood station as a point-of-access to the system for riders traveling to/from destinations throughout Snohomish County and suggested a second Lynnwood station in the core of the City Center to maximize service to the City Center and Convention Center. This station would be located beyond the current ST2 terminus.

The City of Mountlake Terrace supported the I-5 alignment and requested that another station at 220th Street SW and I-5 be considered if funds are available.

The City of Seattle encouraged further study of light rail and bus rapid transit (BRT) alternatives along the I-5 and SR 99 corridors, and commented that 15th Avenue NE

alignments did not appear to warrant further study. Seattle also urged Sound Transit to develop alignment alternatives for SR 99 that include a station in the vicinity of North 130th Street.

The City of Shoreline supported continuing study of the I-5 representative alignment identified in the ST2 plan. The City described an interest in a I-5 alignment along the west side of I-5 in the vicinity of NE 185th Street, where a station and parking structure could be located. The City also commented on potential alignments for Aurora Avenue North (SR 99), suggesting analysis of a route from Northgate to Aurora Avenue North and through Shoreline, including options that could maximize use of Interurban Trail right-of-way owned by Seattle City Light (SCL), while maintaining the trail. The City also suggested other SR 99 options such as route continuing on SR 99 and ultimately to Everett, and a route that would intersect with the Mountlake Terrace Transit Center at SW 236th Street.

Among individual respondents, there was the most support for the I-5 alignment, followed by SR 99. Only one comment in support of the 15th Avenue alignment was received, and one comment in opposition to the 15th Avenue alignment was received. Several respondents advocated for stops at Alderwood Mall and Lynnwood City Center. One respondent did not believe that a connection between Northgate and Lynnwood was necessary.

b. Other comments related to project alignment or features

Individual respondents appeared to be primarily concerned with parking, connectivity to/integration with other existing and future modes of transportation, impacts on residents in areas where stations will be constructed, and access to stations. One respondent requested large print and Braille signage at all designated areas. One respondent requested mobile walkways at the stations.

4. Comments specific to a mode

Of public comments received through email, U.S. mail, telephone, or at the public meetings, 33 commented on mode. Of these, 31 specified support of light rail. One respondent preferred buses and another monorail, but both of these respondents also showed support for light rail. Seven of nine agencies indicated a mode preference, and all supported light rail.

5. Comments specific to a location or neighborhood

The City of Lynnwood believes the analysis should document the expected increase in traffic on local streets, predict the resulting increase in congestion, and recommend measures to mitigate that congestion. Lynnwood would also like the analyses to address the impact of this congestion on the planned redevelopment of the Lynnwood City Center.

6. Comments on environmental issues or process

The City of Edmonds commented that light rail could provide a much lower impact on the environment by reducing the amount of air pollutants and greenhouse gases. Edmonds commented that additional alternative comparisons are necessary to reaffirm the advantages of light rail along I-5, including total cost, capacity, and delay comparisons.

The City of Shoreline provided detailed comments on a range of potential environmental, land use, and transportation issues, including measures of effect and potential enhancements and mitigation that it believes should be considered in the AA and the subsequent environmental review.

The City of Lynnwood suggested that an earlier analysis of BRT by Sound Transit of BRT should be updated and that BRT emissions should be compared to those associated with light rail service.

King County noted that it is important to ensure innovative and cost-effective alternatives through an objective AA process, particularly with fewer tax revenues than previously assumed. King County also noted that preliminary alternatives need to balance FTA's project justification criteria with the unique transportation needs of the North Corridor study area. Another comment from King County was that preliminary alternatives should include conceptual service integration recommendations. King County does not support specific modes or alignments but recommended considering all alternatives, including modes, alignments, profiles, tolled or untolled, and a delayed implementation alternative.

The Muckleshoot Indian Tribe provided information regarding the issues that should be addressed in the EIS, particularly regarding impacts on fisheries and related natural resources including water quality and habitat.

7. Comments from public agencies and jurisdictions

Sound Transit received comments from state and local agencies. Most of these agencies requested coordination with Sound Transit or highlighted specific concerns related to light rail construction and operation. These comments are summarized below by agency.

City of Edmonds

The City of Edmonds supports expanding transit service in the region and would strongly support the extension of light rail service along I-5.

City of Lynnwood

The City of Lynnwood supports light rail service to Snohomish County and Lynnwood in ST2. However, it recommended that an earlier analysis of service on I-5 be updated to reaffirm the advantages of light rail. Lynnwood recommended that this reanalysis include a comparison of projected emissions associated with BRT and light rail.

Lynnwood requested that this analysis recognize and promote the Sound Transit Long-Range Plan goals for connecting designated centers with rapid and reliable high-capacity regional transit service. It also requested that the analysis include shared use of parking to align with the goals and objectives of the Lynnwood City Center Subarea Plan. Additional comments from the City of Lynnwood are discussed in 3a and 5 above.

City of Mountlake Terrace

The City of Mountlake Terrace supports light rail service along the east side of I-5 as it passes through Mountlake Terrace, with a station in proximity to the Mountlake Transit Center at 236th Street SW and I-5. Mountlake Terrace noted that the proximity of the Town Center area would provide an excellent pedestrian connection and that the Mountlake Terrace Transit Center parking lot and garage provide existing vehicle parking for commuters. Mountlake Terrace requested that an additional station be located at 220th Street SW and I-5 if supporting funds are found.

City of Seattle Department of Transportation

The City of Seattle noted that the Preliminary Purpose and Need statement was well-crafted. Although Seattle believes that consideration of light rail and BRT alternatives along the I-5 and SR 99 corridors is appropriate, it does not view the consideration of the 15th Avenue NE corridor as necessary to represent a range of reasonable alternatives. Seattle urged Sound Transit to take full advantage of the AA process by identifying and analyzing well-differentiated mode and corridor alternatives.

Seattle also recommended that the approach to defining alternatives be shaped by an alternative evaluation framework that considers system performance measures, passenger experience measures, land use and economic measures, and cost measures.

Seattle urged Sound Transit to develop alignment alternatives for the SR 99 corridor that include a station in the vicinity of North 130th Street to meet the goals of the Seattle's Comprehensive Plan related to what has been designated as the Bitter Lake Hub Urban Village.

City of Shoreline

The City of Shoreline supports light rail as the preferred mode in the North Corridor. The City recommended that Sound Transit evaluate light rail alignment alternatives in two corridors: the I-5 corridor, and the Aurora Avenue North (SR 99)/Interurban corridor. Its comments emphasized two main concepts: (1) Shoreline is very interested in seeing the multiple transit agencies that serve the region work in concert with each other to ensure frequent east-west bus service to serve a regional system with multiple north-south transit corridors; and (2) the selected station locations in Shoreline should be evaluated not only for convenience of boarding and transferring but also for their future potential as transit-oriented developments, including housing and jobs. Shoreline did not endorse or support a specific alignment at the time its comments were received. Shoreline provided an outline of specific issues to be evaluated as part of the AA, including alignments; cost; aerial, surface, or underground construction; travel time; Ridership; traffic impacts; accessibility; social equity; transit feeder service; land use transitions; supportive land uses; visual impacts; noise; destinations and origins; funding for dedicated staff; and mitigation strategy.

King County Department of Transportation

King County did not recommend specific alignments or modes but offered guidance on the AA process, outlined in 6 above.

Snohomish County

Snohomish County supports the selection of light rail, citing that any other mode will erode regional travel times. Snohomish County provided some comments on the Preliminary Purpose and Need statement, a summary of which is provided in 1a above. Snohomish County also recommended measures for evaluating alternatives and station areas, keeping in mind the connection to a regional transit system, current and future land uses, and the ability to accommodate connections to a variety of transportation. Snohomish County also noted that Community Transit's *Swift* BRT must be taken into account during the evaluation of the SR 99 alignment alternative.

Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, Fisheries Division

The Fisheries Division of the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe provided several comments related to fisheries resources. The following evaluations were recommended for consideration as the project undergoes environmental review under NEPA: fish passage along the I-5 alignment, water typing, riparian function assessment, lighting, and stormwater.

Community Transit

Community Transit provided general support for the project, particularly the stations located at the Mountlake Terrace and Lynnwood Transit Centers. Community Transit provided several comments related to the Preliminary Purpose and Need Statement, which are outlined in 1a above. Community Transit also commented that it would emphasize and support connection of the North Corridor to the east-west Transit Emphasis Corridors as identified in Community Transit's 2008–2013 Transit Development Plan. Community Transit questioned the viability of requiring existing Community Transit intercounty bus services to remain in place on I-5 and suggested reallocation of those services instead.

Public Workshops and Online Questionnaire

Several key themes emerged from the public meetings and online questionnaire tool:

- Light rail was the mode suggested by most participants. Nearly half of the respondents emphasized their support for light rail in the North Corridor because of its benefits and it was expected after the approval of the ST2 ballot measure in 2008.
- Most people said ease of access was important. This includes strong east-west corridor connections with coordinated and direct feeder buses, substantial/appropriate parking, and easy bicycle and pedestrian access.
- Most people identified either I-5 or SR 99 as appropriate routes for the system. Several thought 15th Avenue should be considered.
 - Those who favored I-5 often stated that the alignment would provide the fastest and most efficient service, be the easiest and least expensive to build, and have fewer impacts on properties and residents.
 - Those who favored SR 99 cited reasons such as the opportunity for transit-oriented development. Many thought I-5 would not provide any development opportunities and would require a vehicle or vastly improved bus connections to access the system.

- Workgroups at the public meetings appeared more likely to find I-5 preferable to SR 99, but responses to the online questionnaire showed approximately equal preference for both routes or a slightly greater preference for SR 99.
- Responses about potential station areas and numbers of stations were mixed. Many people understood why the planned location of system termination is at the Lynnwood Transit Center, but many asked if it could be extended farther north to Alderwood Mall. Many people thought the new Mountlake Terrace Transit Center could provide good access to the system, whereas comments about potential southern station areas on I-5 and potential station areas on SR 99 varied.
- Overall, participants wanted to know more about the potential tradeoffs and impacts of the project. Some expressed concerns about how the project would be affected by Sound Transit's current financial situation and tradeoffs being explored by the Sound Transit Board.

Questions from the online questionnaire and summary of responses

Learning about the community questions:

- *Do you currently use public transportation today?*
 - More than three-quarters of respondents identified themselves as transit riders. The majority of respondents indicated that one to two people in their household were transit riders. The majority of respondents said that one to two people in their household were drivers.
- *What kind of public transportation do you use in King and Snohomish Counties (select all that apply)?*
 - Many options were provided; most respondents used King County Metro (78 percent), Link light rail (58.7 percent), and ST Express buses (52.8 percent).

Planning the future system questions:

- *Please select one activity area between Northgate (where a light rail station will be built as part of the North Link project) and NE 155th Street that you think HCT should serve.*
 - Three areas were almost evenly selected: 1-5/North 145th Street area (near Lakeside School), Bitter Lake Commercial Area, and Aurora Square.
 - The few who selected "other" stated they were not familiar enough with the area or that none of the options was acceptable. Some identified specific locations including Lake City or a shopping area near 15th Avenue and 125th Street.

- *Please select one activity area between NE 155th Street and NE 205th Street/SR 104 that you think HCT should serve.*
 - Most respondents selected the Aurora Village Transit Center/Park-and-Ride.
 - A handful of people selected “other,” identifying locations including the Shoreline Conference Center and the Crest Theater. A few stated they were not familiar with the area or did not like the multiple choice options.
- *Please select one activity area between NE 205th/SR 104 and Lynnwood Transit Center that you think HCT should serve.*
 - Most respondents selected the Mountlake Terrace Transit Center. Edmonds Community College was the second choice.
 - Those who selected “other” reinforced the opinion that Mountlake Terrace Transit Center would be a good choice, as well as going beyond the Lynnwood Transit Center to Alderwood Mall.
- *Which existing major transportation corridors within the project area do you think should be considered to connect Northgate and Lynnwood and the other locations you just identified (check all that apply)?*
 - Nearly 150 respondents selected I-5, 159 respondents selected SR 99, and 64 respondents selected 15th Avenue.
 - Corridors identified in the “other” category included the Interurban Trail, Lake City Way, Greenwood Avenue, and Fifth Avenue.
- *When mass transit is available, what major regional destinations would you use the system to get to most often (please choose up to two)?*
 - Most respondents selected downtown Seattle, followed by Seattle-Tacoma International Airport and the University of Washington.
- *For what purposes do you think you might use HCT (check all that apply)?*
 - Most respondents selected commuting to work, attending a special event/entertainment, or shopping/running errands.
 - Some “other” responses included connecting to Amtrak.
- *Which of the following statements best meets your expectations for HCT service in the North Corridor?*
 - The majority of respondents selected “light rail on its own fixed system where I don’t need to think about schedule or road traffic slowing me down.”
 - Those who selected “other” offered various suggestions, including a combination of light rail, Sounder commuter rail, BRT, and local bus.

- *Getting people to stations will be an important part of making sure riders use the system. I would most likely to use HCT if:*
 - Most respondents selected if they could access it by driving and parking in a park-and-ride, taking a local bus, or walking.

At the outset of the North Corridor Transit Project, some questions were directly related to assisting the project team in planning techniques for future public engagement. Most respondents commented that their preferred method of communication and receiving information about the project was email, the Sound Transit Web site, independent Web sites, or social networking sites. Most respondents selected the following from a list of activities or places where they would be most likely to attend and receive information about the project: at a public meeting, during their commute or at a transit center, during their lunch hour, at a local place where they shop, or at a library.

NEXT STEPS

Alternatives Analysis

The alternatives presented in the Early Scoping Information Report and the alternatives that emerge from the public scoping process will undergo a screening analysis to determine the alternatives to be examined in the project subsequent planning, engineering and environmental review phases.

Scoping to Identify Environmental Issues

Following early scoping, Sound Transit will develop an initial list of potential alternatives, including alternatives that emerge as a result of public and agency scoping comments. Next, the alternatives will be evaluated based on their ability to satisfy the project's Purpose and Need, using criteria such as transportation benefits, cost, ridership, communities and populations served, land use benefits, and environmental performance. The Sound Transit Board will then identify the alternatives to be studied in the project's federal and state environmental review process. If the alternatives to move forward have the potential for significant environmental impacts requiring an EIS, FTA, in coordination with Sound Transit, will issue a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an EIS, and public and agency scoping for the EIS will be initiated at that time. This would be followed by further engineering, environmental analysis (including a Draft EIS for public and agency comment, followed by a Final EIS, if an EIS is required), and public involvement work on the project, leading to final decisions about the project to be built and operated in the North Corridor (see the project schedule on page 4)

ATTACHMENT A
Federal Register Notice

Passenger Rail Program. The Answers to Frequently Asked Questions can be found on FRA's Web site at <http://www.fra.dot.gov/Pages/11.shtml>.

DATES: Written comments on FRA's Buy America Answers to Frequently Asked Questions may be provided to the FRA on or before October 18, 2010.

ADDRESSES: Please submit your comments by one of the following means, identifying your submissions by docket number FRA-2010-0147. All electronic submissions must be made to the U.S. Government electronic site at <http://www.regulations.gov>. Commenters should follow the instructions below for mailed and hand-delivered comments.

(1) *Web Site:* <http://www.regulations.gov>. Follow the instructions for submitting comments on the U.S. Government electronic docket site;

(2) *Fax:* (202) 493-2251;

(3) *Mail:* U.S. Department of Transportation, 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE., Docket Operations, M-30, Room W12-140, Washington, DC, 20590-0001; or

(4) *Hand Delivery:* Room W12-140 on the first floor of the West Building, 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE., Washington, DC, 20590, between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays.

Instructions: All submissions must make reference to the "Federal Railroad Administration" and include docket number FRA-2010-0147. Due to security procedures in effect since October 2001, mail received through the U.S. Postal Service may be subject to delays. Parties making submissions responsive to this notice should consider using an express mail firm to ensure the prompt filing of any submissions not filed electronically or by hand. Note that all submissions received, including any personal information therein, will be posted without change or alteration to <http://www.regulations.gov>. For more information, you may review DOT's complete Privacy Act Statement in the **Federal Register** published on April 11, 2000 (65 FR 19477), or visit <http://www.regulations.gov>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For questions about this notice, please contact Ms. Linda Martin, Attorney-Advisor, FRA Office of Chief Counsel, (202) 493-6062 or via e-mail at Linda.Martin@dot.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 (PRIIA) (Division B of Pub. L. 111-432)

authorized the appropriation of funds to establish several new passenger rail grant programs, including capital investment grants to support intercity passenger rail service (§ 301), high-speed corridor development (§ 501), and congestion grants (§ 302). FRA consolidated these and other closely related programs into the High-Speed Intercity Passenger Rail (HSIPR) program, as detailed in FRA's High-Speed Intercity Passenger Rail (HSIPR) Interim Guidance (74 FR 29900 (June 23, 2009)) and as further detailed in a second set of HSIPR interim program guidance governing the distribution of fiscal year 2010 funding (75 FR 38344 and 38365 (July 1, 2010)). Spending authorized under PRIIA is subject to the Buy America provision of 49 U.S.C. 24405(a).

In 2009, President Obama, together with Vice President Biden and Secretary of Transportation LaHood, articulated a new "Vision for High-Speed Rail in America" (available on FRA's Web site). The HSIPR program is a component of that vision, as is the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), which appropriated funds for PRIIA-authorized grant programs. The vision includes a goal to bolster American passenger rail expertise and resources. The Buy America requirements reinforce this goal, and aid in encouraging a domestic market in the rail sector. PRIIA authorized FRA to operate the grant programs under guidance, prior to the issuance of final regulations. FRA is beginning the process of implementing regulations to govern the application of the Buy America statute to all PRIIA-authorized spending as part of the HSIPR program. As required, the proposed regulation will be published in the **Federal Register** for public comment under RIN 2130-AC23 and docket number FRA-2010-0147. In the interim, to aid grantees who must immediately apply Section 24405(a) to funds granted them by FRA, FRA is providing Answers to Frequently Asked Questions describing its procedures for applying the Buy America provision in the HSIPR program on its Web site at <http://www.fra.dot.gov/Pages/11.shtml>.

Issued in Washington, DC, on *September 22, 2010*.

Mark E. Yachmetz,

Associate Administrator for Railroad Policy and Development, Federal Railroad Administration.

[FR Doc. 2010-24126 Filed 9-24-10; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-06-P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Transit Administration

Early Scoping for the Alternatives Analysis of the North Corridor Transit Project in Metropolitan Seattle

AGENCY: Federal Transit Administration, DOT.

ACTION: Early Scoping Notice.

SUMMARY: The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority (Sound Transit) issue this early scoping notice to advise other agencies and the public that they intend to explore alternatives for improving transit service between Northgate in Seattle and Lynnwood, in King and Snohomish counties, Washington. The early scoping is being conducted within the context of the Council on Environmental Quality's regulations for complying with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and is part of a planning Alternatives Analysis (AA) required by Title 49 United States Code (U.S.C.) 5309 to analyze the potential for a fixed guideway alternative to be implemented as an FTA-assisted major capital transit investment. The AA process results in the selection or confirmation of a locally preferred alternative which is the proposed action. The early scoping notice is intended to invite public comments on the scope of the AA study, including the transportation problems to be addressed, a range of alternatives, the transportation and community impacts and benefits to be considered, the capital and operating costs, the financial plans and other factors that the public and agencies believe should be considered in analyzing alternatives. If preparation of an environmental impact statement (EIS) is warranted following completion of the planning AA, a notice of intent to prepare an EIS will be published. This early scoping process is intended to support the future NEPA scoping process. Public meetings and the range of alternatives currently identified to address the project's purpose are described below.

DATES: Three public scoping meetings and one agency scoping meeting to accept comments will be held on the following dates and locations:

Public Meetings

North Seattle: October 7, 2010. Ingraham High School, 1819 N. 135th St., Seattle, 98133.

Lynnwood: October 12, 2010. Lynnwood Convention Center, 3711 196th St., SW., Lynnwood, 98036.

Shoreline: October 14, 2010.
Shoreline Conference Center, 18560 1st Ave., NE., Shoreline, 98155.

All public meetings will be from 6 to 8:30 p.m.

Agency Meeting

Seattle: October 13, 2010, 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. Sound Transit offices, 401 S. Jackson St., Seattle, 98104.

Invitations to the interagency scoping meeting will be sent to appropriate Federal, state, local, and tribal governmental units.

In addition to the supplemental information provided below, information on the AA will be provided at the public meetings, which will also provide opportunities for spoken or written comments. Information is also available on Sound Transit's Web site at: <http://www.soundtransit.org/NorthHCT>. Written scoping comments are requested by October 25, 2010 and can be sent or e-mailed to the address below, submitted at the public meetings, or provided via the online comment form available at <http://www.soundtransit.org/NorthHCT>.

ADDRESSES: Roger Iwata, North Corridor Project, Sound Transit, 401 S. Jackson Street, Seattle, WA 98104-2826, or by e-mail to roger.iwata@soundtransit.org.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: John Witmer, Community Planner, Jackson Federal Building, 915 Second Avenue, Suite 3142, Seattle, WA 98174; *Phone:* (206) 220-7954; *e-mail:* John.Witmer@dot.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Early Scoping

As defined by law, alternatives analysis (AA) is the first step of the New Starts project development process. AA is the local forum for evaluating the costs, benefits, and impacts of a range of transportation alternatives designed to address mobility problems and other locally-identified objectives in a defined transportation corridor, and for determining which particular investment strategy should be advanced for more focused study and development. For AA studies which may result in the local selection of a project eligible for FTA New Starts or Small Starts funding, the AA further serves as the process for development of the technical information necessary to support a candidate project's entry into New Starts preliminary engineering. Early scoping for the North Corridor project is being conducted in support of NEPA requirements and in accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality's regulations and guidance for implementing NEPA. See 40 CFR 1501.2

through 8, which encourage federal agencies to initiate NEPA early in their planning processes. Early scoping allows the scoping process to begin as soon as there is enough information to describe the proposal so that the public and relevant agencies can participate effectively. This is particularly useful in situations when a proposed action involves a broadly defined corridor with an array of modal and alignment alternatives under consideration.

This early scoping notice is intended to generate public comments on the scope of the planning AA, including the purpose and need for the project, a range of alternatives, the financial plans, and the environmental, transportation and community impacts and benefits to be considered.

The North Corridor and the Regional Transit System

The North Corridor is approximately eight to nine miles long depending on routing. Starting at Northgate in north Seattle and ending in Lynnwood, the corridor generally follows Interstate 5 (I-5), which is the major north-south route through Washington State and serves a large commuter market traveling between Snohomish and King Counties and the City of Seattle. The corridor is within a geographically constrained urban area that lies between the Puget Sound to the west and Lake Washington to the east, which limits transportation options. This is one of the densest urban areas in the Pacific Northwest and comprises one of the region's most productive markets for transit.

Sound Move, the first phase of regional transit investments, was approved and funded by voters in 1996. Sound Transit is now completing the development of *Sound Move*, which includes light rail, commuter rail and regional express bus infrastructure and service, including the Central Link light rail system between Northgate, the University of Washington, downtown Seattle, Tukwila and SeaTac. In 2009, Sound Transit began light rail operations between downtown Seattle and SeaTac. Link light rail north from downtown Seattle to Capitol Hill and the University of Washington is now under construction and is scheduled to open in 2016. The final section of Central Link light rail from the University of Washington to Northgate is about to enter final design with operation to begin in 2020.

In 2004, Sound Transit initiated planning for the second phase of investment to follow *Sound Move*. This work included updating Sound Transit's Long-Range Plan and associated

environmental review. Following several years of system planning work to detail, evaluate, and prioritize the next round of regional transit system expansion, voters in 2008 authorized funding for the extension of the regional light rail system in the North Corridor as part of the Sound Transit 2 (ST2) Plan. The ST2 Plan also includes an East Link light rail line from downtown Seattle to Bellevue and Redmond to the east, and from SeaTac to Federal Way to the south.

Transportation Purpose of the North Corridor Project

The purpose of the project is to improve transit service from Seattle north into Snohomish County by:

(1) Providing reliable, rapid, and efficient two-way, all-day transit service of sufficient capacity to meet the existing and projected demand between the communities and activity centers located in the North Corridor and the other urban centers in the central Puget Sound area by providing a mobility alternative to travel on congested roadways and improved connections to the regional multimodal transportation system;

(2) Supporting North Corridor communities' and the region's land use, transportation and economic development vision, which promotes the well-being of people and communities, ensures economic vitality and preserves a healthy environment; and

(3) Supporting the long-range vision, goals, and objectives for transit service established by Sound Transit's Long-Range Plan for high quality regional transit service connecting major activity centers in King, Pierce and Snohomish counties.

The project is needed to:

- Meet the rapidly growing transportation needs of the corridor and the region's future residents and workers by increasing mobility, access, and transportation capacity to and from regional growth and activity centers in the North Corridor and the rest of the region, as called for in the region's adopted plans, including the Puget Sound Regional Council's VISION 2040 and *Transportation 2040*, as well as related county and city comprehensive plans.

- Address the problems of increasing and unreliable travel times for transit users in the North Corridor, who are now dependent on the corridor's highly congested roadway and high occupancy vehicle systems.

- Address overcrowding facing current and future North Corridor transit riders due to insufficient

capacity of the infrastructure that supports the current transit system.

- Provide an alternative to automobile trips on I-5 and SR 99, the two primary highways serving the corridor, which are unreliable and over capacity throughout significant portions of the day.

- Implement the long-range vision for regional transit service established by Sound Transit's Long Range Plan, with a transit investment that supports economic vitality, preserves the environment, preserves communities, and allows for the further extension of regional transit north to Everett.

- Ensure long-term regional mobility, multimodal connectivity, and convenience for North Corridor citizens and communities, including travel-disadvantaged residents and low income and minority populations.

- Provide the transit infrastructure needed to support the development of Northgate and Lynnwood as designated regional growth centers providing housing, employment, public services, and multimodal transportation connections.

- Help support the environmental and sustainability goals of the state and region, including state regulations setting goals for reducing annual per capita vehicle miles traveled by 2050, in accordance with RCW 47.01.440, and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions (Limiting Green House Gas Emissions, RCW Chapter 702.35).

Alternatives

In developing the ST2 Plan, Sound Transit defined a light rail alignment that helped establish the ridership potential and costs for the transit improvements in the North Corridor. The alignment was assumed to be entirely elevated primarily along I-5. The project elements included a light rail guideway, track, and systems extending approximately 8.5 miles north from Northgate Station to Lynnwood Transit Center. After leaving Northgate Station, the alignment followed the east side of I-5 to about 48th Avenue W. in Snohomish County and then crossed to the west side of I-5 to enter Lynnwood Transit Center. Four new stations were anticipated at NE 145th Street, NE 185th Street, SW., 236th Street, and the Lynnwood Transit Center (terminal station), all sized to accommodate 4-car trains. Park-and-ride structures of 500 stalls each would be provided at NE 145th Street, NE., 185th Street, and Lynnwood Transit Center.

As part of the AA and in accordance with FTA guidance for New Start projects, Sound Transit will explore alternative mode, alignment, station,

and design configurations for improved transit in the North Corridor. All alternatives will be compared to a "No-Build" alternative, which represents the future transportation system through the year 2030 without North Corridor transit improvements, and a Transportation Systems Management (TSM) alternative, which will examine methods for improving transit in the North Corridor without a new fixed guideway. Potential elements of a TSM alternative could include more frequent bus service, new or expanded park-and-ride capacity, or freeway or arterial transit priority improvements.

Sound Transit is inviting comments on the alternative transit modes, alignments, station locations, and design configurations to be studied, as well as comment on proposed evaluation measures to be used to compare alternatives. Routes that may be considered follow portions of State Route 99, the Interurban Trail, Interstate 5 and 15th Avenue NE. The definition of these alternatives will reflect a range of high and low cost capital improvements, including non-guideway options which can serve as a "baseline" for measuring the merits of higher level investments. Measures for evaluating the relative merits of alternatives will be identified, as will technical methodologies for generating the information used to support such measures; these will typically include disciplines such as travel forecasting, capital and operations and maintenance costing, and environmental and land use analyses. Finally, costs, benefits, and impacts of each alternative are developed and evaluated, funding strategies are analyzed, and a locally preferred alternative (LPA) is affirmed to be advanced for further development.

At the conclusion of the AA process, Sound Transit and the FTA anticipate narrowing the range of alternatives for further evaluation in a draft environmental impact statement (EIS), if warranted, potentially including identification of a locally preferred alternative. If the resulting range of alternatives involves the potential for significant environmental impacts requiring an EIS, a Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS will be published in the **Federal Register**, and public and agency comment on the scope of the EIS will be invited and considered at that time.

Issued on: September 17, 2010.

Linda Gehrke,

Deputy Regional Administrator.

[FR Doc. 2010-24103 Filed 9-24-10; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Highway Administration

Notice of Final Federal Agency Actions on Proposed Highway in North Carolina

AGENCY: Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), DOT.

ACTION: Notice of Limitation on Claims for Judicial Review of Actions by FHWA and Other Federal Agencies.

SUMMARY: This notice announces actions taken by the FHWA and other Federal agencies that are final within the meaning of 23 U.S.C. 139(I)(1). The actions relate to a proposed highway project, the Monroe Connector/Bypass, from US 74 near I-485 in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, to US 74 between the towns of Wingate and Marshville in Union County, North Carolina. The Monroe Connector/Bypass is also known as State Transportation Improvement Program Project R-3329/R-2559. Those actions grant licenses, permits, and approvals for the project.

DATES: By this notice, the FHWA is advising the public of final agency actions subject to 23 U.S.C. 139(I)(1). A claim seeking judicial review of the Federal agency actions on the highway project will be barred unless the claim is filed on or before March 28, 2011. If the Federal law that authorizes judicial review of a claim provides a time period of less than 180 days for filing such claim, then that shorter time period still applies.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. George Hoops, P.E., Major Projects Engineer, Federal Highway Administration, 310 New Bern Avenue, Suite 410, Raleigh, North Carolina 27601-1418, *Telephone:* (919) 747-7022; *e-mail:* george.hoops@dot.gov. FHWA North Carolina Division Office's normal business hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (Eastern Time). Ms. Jennifer Harris, P.E., Director of Planning and Environmental Studies, North Carolina Turnpike Authority (NCTA), 5400 Glenwood Avenue, Suite 400, Raleigh, North Carolina 27612, *Telephone:* (919) 571-3000; *e-mail:* jennifer.harris@ncturnpike.org. NCTA's normal business hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (Eastern Time).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Notice is hereby given that FHWA and other Federal agencies have taken final agency actions by issuing a Record of Decision (ROD) for the following highway project in the State of North Carolina: The Monroe Connector/Bypass, a 20-mile long, multi-lane, fully access-controlled, new location toll road. The project is

ATTACHMENT B

List of Respondents

Attachment B

Agency Scoping Comment Providers

Name	Agency
Jerry Smith	City of Mountlake Terrace
Ethan Melone	City of Seattle DOT
Keith A. McGlashan	Shoreline City Council
Karen Walter	Muckleshoot Fisheries Division
Aaron Reardon	Snohomish County Executive Office
Don Gough	City of Lynnwood
Joyce Eleanor	Community Transit
Michael Usen	King County DOT
Mike Cooper	City of Edmonds

Citizen Scoping Comment Providers

Name	Name
Jeff Altman	David Kleitsch
Shelley Anderson	Janiene Lambert
Roger Bennett	Lawrence Lewis
Gretchen Bennett Guethner	Sheila Long
Ezra Bradford	Mike Manderscheid
Heidi Campbell	Tyler McCormick
Douglas Carl	Louise McDonald
Richard Chen	Caryl McGee
Dustin Collings	Charles McManus
Cathy Combe	Randy Miner
Susanna Harada Cullinan	Donna Moss
Jim Cusick	Belle M. Nishioka
Jeff Davies	Bejan P.
Diane Day	Jeff Peery
Keshi Dayalu	Andrew Reay-Ellers
James Detter	Deborah Scharnikow
Jeffrey Dickerhoof	Jeff Schumacher
Kellen Donohue	Shawn Seavers
Mary Ferrari	Jim Shaw
Roland Gerard	Kristina Stimson
Euphorio Gibbons	Beth and Scott Taylor
Mitch Gitman	Brianna Torgerson
Eric Goodman	L. Wene
Robert Gorski	Jack Whisner
Barbara Guthrie	Gary White
Robert Haynie	Emilie Wicker
John Hempelmann	Jim Wilker
Jeanette Hesedahl	Douglas Wittinger
John Hibbs	Mary Xenos
Stephanie Klein	Bill Young

