

5.0 Agency Coordination and Public Involvement

Agency coordination and public involvement for the NHHS High Speed Intercity Passenger Rail Project EA/EIE were conducted in accordance with NEPA and CEPA. These Acts and their implementing regulations require that the environmental review of any significant activity undertaken, respectively, by a federal entity or (in the case of CEPA) a state, and which has the potential to impact the environment, be prepared in consultation with appropriate agencies. In addition, a public involvement process must be implemented to seek input from project stakeholders and the general public. Opportunities for public involvement are provided, at minimum, through scoping and a hearing(s) and comment period on the environmental document, before a decision concerning the proposed project is made. The following sections summarize agency coordination and public involvement conducted for this EA/EIE.

5.1 Agency Coordination

Federal Transportation Agencies

FRA is the Lead Agency for the environmental review pursuant to NEPA. The FRA has overall responsibility for facilitating completion of the environmental review process, reviewing the EA/EIE and issuing the decision document.

The FTA is a Cooperating Agency for this EA/EIE because CTDOT anticipates seeking FTA funding for four future stations and improvements to one additional existing station along the line.

Sponsoring Agency

CTDOT is the Sponsoring Agency for this project and is coordinating with the Connecticut Office of Policy and Management (OPM) regarding CEPA compliance.

Other Agencies

Federal, state, and local government agencies that have jurisdiction by law or special expertise regarding the environmental impacts that may result with implementation of the proposed transportation project will have the opportunity to review and provide comments on this EA/EIE and supporting technical reports. These agencies are as follows:

- Amtrak
- Connecticut Office of Policy and Management
- Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
- Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office
- Massachusetts Highway District 2
- Massachusetts Executive Office of Transportation and Public Works
- Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection
- Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development
- Massachusetts Historic Commission
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 1
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- Federal Transit Administration

5.2 Public Involvement

The public has been continuously engaged since 2002 in the development of improved passenger rail service in the NHHS rail corridor. As noted above, this includes public participation in the NEPA/CEPA process associated with implementation of commuter rail along the NHHS rail corridor, as well as in the 2010 Environmental Review and the current 2011 EA/EIE. During the public involvement effort for this EA/EIE, CTDOT has revisited the elected officials and managers of all of the NHHS rail corridor's towns, and has engaged the public to discuss the proposed project and receive public input. Through that effort, the proposed project has been refined to incorporate needs articulated by the towns' representatives.

Meeting minutes are included in the reference document "Public Information Meetings, Local Officials Meetings, and Rail Coordination Meetings."

Public support for the program has been constant since 2002. Public input, raised by individuals and community leaders, has focused on two primary issues:

- Coordination of station improvements and new station construction to ensure compatibility with local development plans; and
- Management of traffic congestion at grade crossings due to the increased number of gate closures necessitated by the proposed service enhancements.

Traffic congestion issues have been analyzed and, if appropriate, addressed to the satisfaction of community officials, as detailed in Section 4.4.10. With the exception of the towns of Wallingford and Windsor Locks, station-related issues also have been resolved for all communities. The resulting concept plans are provided in Section 1.3 of Volume II of this EA/EIE. For Wallingford and Windsor Locks, two station alternatives each are presented and fully evaluated in this EA/EIE. Following the public comment period, the preferred station alternative in each town will be identified.

Implementation Study - Steering Committee

For the *Implementation Study* (June 2005), a project Steering Committee was established to oversee the study's development and provide information to key decision makers throughout the process. In addition to appropriate CTDOT staff, the following were invited to participate on the committee:

- A representative from the Governor's Transportation Strategy Board;
- A representative from MADOT;
- The first official, or his/her representative, from each of the NHHS rail corridor's municipalities;
- A representative from each of the regional planning agencies in the corridor – South Central Regional Council of Governments, Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency, Capitol Region Council of Governments, and Pioneer Valley Planning Commission;
- A representative from the Federal Transit Administration;
- A representative from the Federal Railroad Administration;

- Representatives from Amtrak and freight railroads using the corridor (Guilford Rail Systems, CSX, Connecticut Southern Railroad, and Providence and Worcester Railroad);
- A representative from state and federal regulatory agencies including, but not limited to, the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, US Environmental Protection Agency, Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office, Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development, US Fish & Wildlife Service, and US Army Corps of Engineers, among others;
- A representative from the I-91 Transportation Investment Area (TIA);
- A representative from the Peter Pan Bus Company; and
- Other interested parties, such as freight railroads, All Aboard, CT Fund for the Environment, and Rideworks.

A total of four (4) Steering Committee meetings, all of which were open to the public, were held on the following dates:

- Steering Committee Meeting #1 - October 16, 2002
- Steering Committee Meeting #2 - March 24, 2003
- Steering Committee Meeting #3 - October 16, 2003
- Steering Committee Meeting #4 - June 30, 2004

Implementation Study - Public Meetings

Public meetings held during the course of the Implementation Study included public informational meetings, local official/town meetings, and meetings with other interested stakeholders. The meetings were structured to serve the large number of communities and stakeholders associated with the study corridor. The purpose of all of these meetings was to provide information and solicit input for the development of the proposed project. Public meetings were held twice during the course of the Implementation Study, with the first set of meetings taking place in April and May 2003 and the second set of meetings taking place in November 2004. The meetings consisted of a presentation and discussion of the existing conditions, alternatives evaluated, and recommended action. A total of ten (10) public information meetings were held as follows:

- April 29, 2003 - Windsor Town Hall, 275 Broad Street, Windsor, CT
- April 30, 2003 – Meriden City Hall, 142 East Main Street, Meriden, CT
- May 6, 2003 - Hartford Union Station, One Union Place, Hartford, CT
- May 7, 2003 - Mildred Wakeley Community Center, 7 Linsley Street, North Haven, CT
- May 22, 2003 - Enfield Town Hall, 820 Enfield Street, Enfield, CT
- November 3, 2004 - Mildred Wakeley Community Center, 7 Linsley Street, North Haven, CT
- November 9, 2004 - Windsor Locks Town Offices, 50 Church Street, Windsor Locks, CT
- November 10, 2004 - Berlin Town Hall, 240 Kensington Road, Berlin, CT
- November 16, 2004 - Wallingford Town Hall, 45 South Main Street, Wallingford, CT
- November 17, 2004 - Enfield Town Hall, 820 Enfield Street, Enfield, CT

Public Outreach

The Commuter Rail EA/EIE was prepared with involvement of the public, as well as federal and state agencies with jurisdiction over potentially affected resources. A coordination and public outreach plan was implemented during 2008 and 2009. Coordination with all the municipalities

along the NHHS rail corridor was instrumental for understanding municipal concerns, as well as communicating study progress. Coordination among CTDOT, Amtrak and rail freight operators was required to ensure the proposed project did not negatively impact railroad operations.

Commuter Rail Service - Steering Committee Meeting

A meeting of the NHHS Commuter Rail Steering Committee was held on April 16, 2009. Minutes from this meeting will be made available upon request.

Commuter Rail Service - Agency Scoping Meeting

A meeting with agencies having jurisdiction, special expertise or other interest in the proposed project was held on December 2, 2008.

Commuter Rail Service - Public Scoping Meetings

Meetings to provide the public with an opportunity to comment on the scope of the assessment for the Commuter Rail EA/EIE were held as follows:

- December 8, 2008 in Springfield, MA
- December 9, 2008 in Hartford, CT
- December 11, 2008 in Windsor, CT
- December 16, 2008 in North Haven, CT

Commuter Rail Service - Local Officials Meetings

Meetings were held with local officials in the following communities to provide them an opportunity to comment on the proposed project; minutes of these meetings are included in the reference document "Public Information Meeting, Local Officials Meetings, and Rail Coordination Meetings":

- November 13, 2008 - North Haven, CT
- January 21, 2009 – Wallingford, CT
- January 26, 2009 – Berlin, CT
- February 2, 2009 – Meriden, CT
- February 2, 2009 – Windsor, CT
- February 11, 2009 – Newington, CT
- February 19, 2009 - New Haven, CT
- February 25, 2009 – Enfield, CT
- March 10, 2009 – Hartford, CT
- March 27, 2009 - Windsor Locks, CT

2030 Vision for High Speed, Intercity, and Regional Rail Service in New England

Public informational meetings on *the* 2030 Vision Plan (and the related Service NEPA Environmental Review Document, July 2010) were held in June 2010 at the following locations:

- June 2, 2010 in Springfield, MA
- June 3, 2010 in Hartford, CT
- June 9, 2010 in New Haven, CT
- June 10, 2010 in Brattleboro, VT
- July 29, 2010 in Hartford, CT

At each of these meetings, a presentation of the 2030 Vision was made and public comment was encouraged. The public comments revealed solid public support for the advancement of increased rail service throughout New England. The availability of increased choices in transportation modes and improved connectivity of rail services to make intercity travel more attractive received particularly strong support. Minutes of these meetings are included in the reference document “Public Information Meeting, Local Officials Meetings, and Rail Coordination Meetings”. Comments from the public were solicited via the project website (www.nhhsrail.com), via comment cards at the public meetings and via email to the project team. Through the public outreach effort, input was received on the study goals and objectives, alternatives for improvements to passenger rail service in the corridor, and on the scope of services for the program.

High-Speed Intercity Passenger Rail Project EA/EIE

Preparation of this NEPA/CEPA EA/EIE involves a public involvement program intended to inform the public and receive input the public may have regarding this project. Meetings with officials from each of the 13 communities in the NHHS rail corridor and public information meetings in Wallingford and Windsor Locks were held between April and September, 2011. The EA/EIE is available for public review and comment; public hearings are planned during the comment period. A Notice of Availability has been published in area newspapers and posted on the project website (www.nhhsrail.com) to provide the public with information about where the EA/EIE can be viewed and details of the public hearings.

In addition to the public hearings and comment period on this document, the public involvement process for this EA/EIE comprises the following elements, each of which is briefly described below:

- Local Official Meetings
- Public Information Meetings
- Project Website
- Project Mailing List
- Project Newsletters
- Public Advertisements/Press Releases
- Public Hearings and Public Comment

Local Officials Meetings

An initial meeting was held with each of the 13 corridor municipalities to brief officials on the study scope, existing conditions, study schedule and on the site selection process for proposed new train stations, where required. The meetings, for which minutes are included in the reference document “Public Information Meeting, Local Officials Meetings, and Rail Coordination Meetings,” were held as follows:

Town	Date of Meeting
Berlin, CT	4/14/2011
Enfield, CT	4/15/2011
Hamden, CT	5/23/2011
Hartford, CT	4/19/2011
Meriden, CT	4/26/2011
New Haven, CT	4/29/2011
Newington, CT	4/25/2011
North Haven, CT	5/17/2011
Springfield, MA	4/26/2011
Wallingford, CT	4/11/2011
West Hartford, CT	4/29/2011
Windsor, CT	4/13/2011
Windsor Locks, CT	5/02/2011

An additional meeting was held with several of the 13 corridor municipalities during summer 2011 to brief officials on the study’s progress and to present and discuss general station and parking concepts, ridership forecasts, and rail operations. The meetings were as follows:

Town	Date of Meeting
Berlin, CT	8/25/2011
Enfield, CT	8/04/2011
Hartford, CT	8/5/2011
Meriden, CT	6/28/2011
Newington, CT	6/22/2011
North Haven, CT	7/25/2011
Springfield, MA	7/28/2011
Wallingford, CT	8/11/2011
West Hartford, CT	7/27/2011
Windsor, CT	6/27/2011

Public Information Meetings

Public meetings (see the reference document “Public Information Meeting, Local Officials Meetings, and Rail Coordination Meetings”) were held in both Wallingford and Windsor Locks, where alternative locations have been evaluated for reconstruction of the existing train stations, as follows:

Town	Date of Meeting
Wallingford, CT	8/4/2011
Windsor Locks, CT	9/20/2011

Project Website

The project website (www.nhhsrail.com), re-launched in April 2011, is updated periodically to provide current information on the NHHS Rail Program. Content on the website includes an overview of the proposed project, current project status, project objectives, schedule and cost; reports of past meetings and information regarding future meetings; photographs of the project area; newsletters; and links to relevant websites. The website can be translated to Spanish. This EA/EIE has been posted on the website for review during the public comment period, and a link to it is available on the CTDOT website (www.ct.gov/dot).

Between April, 2011, when CTDOT re-launched the project website, and December 31, 2011, the website was viewed by more than 16,000 visitors. The project website also provides the public with an opportunity to make comments. CTDOT provides e-mail responses to comments submitted by the public.

Project Contact List

A contact list of interested groups or individuals is maintained and is continually updated during the course of the project in order to provide information (e.g., newsletters) to interested parties as it becomes available. The contact list includes more than 900 contacts, including residents and businesses, general public, and local, state, and federal agencies.

Project Newsletters

Two newsletters were prepared and distributed to interested individuals or groups and posted on the project website. The first issue of the newsletter provided an overview of the project and summarized key elements of the project, such as schedule, costs, and benefits. The second issue of the newsletter focused on the EA/EIE, the environmental review process, and the tentative schedule for its completion.

Public Advertisements/ Press Releases

Public advertisements and press releases have been prepared, as required, and disseminated to news outlets (e.g., Hartford Courant, New Haven Register) to advertise the public meetings and hearings. The advertisements have been prepared in English and in Spanish and disseminated to both English and Spanish-language publications. A Notice of Availability has been published, indicating the locations where the EA/EIE is available and the date, time, and place of the public hearings. In addition, the public advertisements have indicated that the EA/EIE is available for download from the project website.

Public Hearings and Public Comment

Three Public Hearings are being held during the public comment period as part of the NEPA/CEPA process. The required 45-day comment period for the EA/EIE begins with the issuance of the EA/EIE and the Notice of Availability is published. See Section 7.0, Distribution List for details on where the document has been sent. All comments received during the 45-day comment period will be addressed in the Final EA/EIE.

5.3 Agency and Railroad Coordination

Agency Information Requests

Written and verbal requests for specific information, essential to the environmental studies performed as part of this document, were made to various federal and state agencies. This correspondence included requests for data on resources such as threatened and endangered species, historical and archaeological sites, fisheries, water quality, and agricultural lands. The following lists the agencies that responded to these initial efforts in the EA/EIE process. Response letters are included in Appendix 8 Formal Agency Coordination.

Federal Agency Information Requests:

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Natural Resources Conservation Services of the U.S. Department of Agriculture

State Agency Information Requests:

- Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, Natural Diversity Data Base
- Connecticut Department of Agriculture
- Connecticut Historical Commission, including the State Historic Preservation Office, are now part of the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism

Other Coordination Meetings

Study Coordination Meetings were held with the four Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) along the rail corridor and those that exercise regulatory authority over the project such as FRA, the Army Corps of Engineers, and the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (CTDEEP). CTDOT hosted two Regional Meetings with Towns and Regional Planning Agencies at its headquarters on March 14, 2011 and October 2011. The purpose of these meetings was to brief municipal and regional officials on the project's purpose and need, the scope of the project, the current EA/EIE process, the proposed coordination and public involvement process, and the project's schedule and to solicit questions and comments.

As part of further coordination, the Army Corps of Engineers attended Project Manager's Meetings on December 15, 2011 and January 9, 2012 to discuss with both CTDOT and CTDEEP a "phased" approach to permitting for the entire NHHS program. The ACOE has issued "phased" permits in the past and also stressed the need to address cumulative impacts in the permit applications. Coordination is on-going.

Rail Coordination

Coordination meetings with railroads currently operating freight and passenger service on the NHHS rail corridor were held on:

- March 17, 2008
- December 11, 2008
- March 20, 2009
- June 11, 2009
- January 13, 2011

An initial agency coordination meeting was held on March 26, 2010, with representatives from Connecticut, Massachusetts, Vermont, Amtrak, and freight railroads. From that time through the preparation of this document, these representatives have communicated frequently, both formally and informally, on service, planning and funding issues. Freight railroads, which have participated in these discussions, include: Connecticut Southern RR (CSO), Providence and Worcester RR (PW), CSX Transportation (CSX), New England Central Railroad (NECR) and Pan Am.

Amtrak, which owns and operates the NHHS rail corridor, has attended bi-weekly progress meetings, as well as other technical meetings, since January 2011.