



PORTAL BRIDGE CAPACITY ENHANCEMENT

Environmental Impact Statement
Scoping Document

December 2006



A. INTRODUCTION

The National Railroad Passenger Corporation (AMTRAK) and the New Jersey Transit Corporation (NJ TRANSIT) are proposing to enhance the capacity and improve the operation of the Portal Bridge, a rail crossing over the Hackensack River. The existing Portal Bridge is a two-track, moveable swing-span rail bridge completed in 1910 between the City of Kearny and the City of Secaucus in Hudson County, New Jersey. The Portal Bridge is located at Milepost 6.1 along the heavily used “High Line” portion of AMTRAK’s Northeast Corridor, which connects Newark, NJ and New York, NY. The aging Portal Bridge is a bottleneck along the Northeast Corridor that conflicts with marine traffic and impedes efficient and reliable passenger rail service. The Portal Bridge Capacity Enhancement Project will examine alternatives including replacement, rehabilitation, or modification of the existing structure to improve existing operations and ensure passenger safety.

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) requires federal agencies to consider the environmental effects of their proposed actions. As such, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be prepared for the Portal Bridge Capacity Enhancement Project. The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), which oversees AMTRAK’s capital programs, will serve as the lead federal agency for the environmental review. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) is a cooperating agency for the environmental review. FTA will contribute information for which it has special expertise and ensure the EIS is prepared in compliance with its environmental regulations. Other cooperating agencies may be identified during the EIS process. The EIS will be prepared in accordance with the following: NEPA (as amended) and the Council on Environmental Quality’s (CEQ) implementing regulations for NEPA; Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act; Section 4(f) of the U.S. Department of Transportation’s (USDOT) Act of 1966; FRA Environmental Procedures (64 F.R. § 28545); and FTA NEPA regulations (23 C.F.R. Part 771); and other applicable federal, and state laws and regulations.

The first steps in the preparation of an EIS are the issuance of a Notice of Intent and initiation of the public scoping process. A Notice of Intent was issued in the Federal Register on December 12, 2006. The public scoping process begins with publication of this Scoping Document. The purpose of this Scoping Document is to provide the public and agencies with an initial opportunity to comment on the Draft EIS (DEIS) process including the project’s purpose and need, alternatives considered, and the methodologies to be used in the analyses. This Scoping Document presents a description of the project’s purpose and need (Section B), alternatives to be considered (Section C), the project goals and objectives (Section D), the methodology to be used for the environmental analyses (Section E), and a description of the plan for public and agency involvement (Section F). Section F also provides information regarding the public hearing that will be held to solicit comments on this Scoping Document.

B. PROJECT PURPOSE AND NEED

BACKGROUND

The Northeast Corridor is the most heavily used passenger rail line in the U.S., both in terms of ridership and service frequency¹. The Northeast Corridor extends from Washington, D.C. in the south to Boston, MA in the north, serving the densely populated northeast region, including Pennsylvania Station in New York City (PSNY). AMTRAK, the nationwide intercity passenger rail operator, owns much of and operates over all of the Northeast Corridor. AMTRAK operates regional service, long distance service and high-speed Acela Express service along the line. Several commuter rail agencies provide local and semi-express passenger services along the Northeast Corridor.

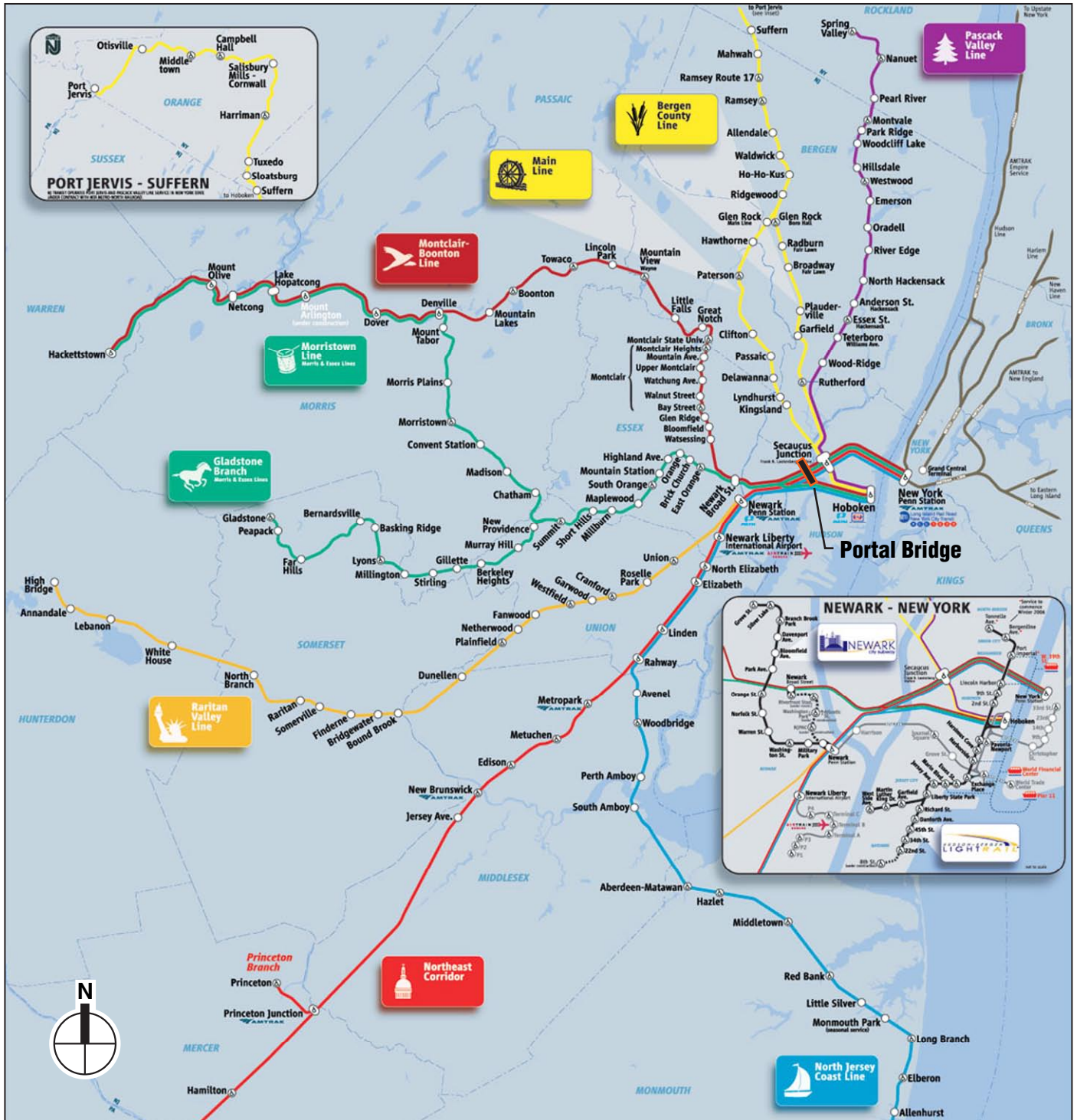
AMTRAK is the nation's intercity passenger railroad providing service to over 500 destinations in 46 states on 21,000 miles of routes. AMTRAK owns and operates the Northeast Corridor from PSNY in New York City to Washington D.C., including the heavily used "High Line" portion connecting Newark, NJ and New York, NY with the Portal Bridge at Milepost 6.1. An average of over 69,000 passengers travel on up to 300 AMTRAK trains per day across the nation. AMTRAK carries approximately 23,700 intercity passengers per day between New York and Washington, D.C..

NJ TRANSIT, New Jersey's public transportation corporation, provides bus, rail, and light rail transit throughout the state. NJ TRANSIT is the nation's largest statewide public transportation system, providing bus, rail, and light rail services that connect major points in New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania. Over 800,000 daily trips are provided on NJ TRANSIT's 238 bus routes, 11 commuter rail lines, and 3 light rail lines. NJ TRANSIT's Northeast Corridor Line operates over AMTRAK's Northeast Corridor in portions of Pennsylvania and in New Jersey from Trenton to PSNY. Several of NJ TRANSIT's other commuter rail lines join AMTRAK's Northeast Corridor west of the Hackensack River and subsequently travel under the Hudson River to their terminus at PSNY (see Figure 1).

AMTRAK's Northeast Corridor and NJ TRANSIT's commuter rail system helps drive the region's economic growth by connecting the regions of Washington, D.C., Baltimore, Wilmington, Philadelphia, and New Jersey with New York City. This includes the growing west-of-Hudson residential communities throughout New Jersey, Orange and Rockland Counties in New York, and portions of Pennsylvania. AMTRAK carries approximately 15,700 passengers each day over Portal Bridge, including 3,900 passengers per day on the time-sensitive premium Acela Express service. Approximately 270,000 people commute into Manhattan from points west of the Hudson River in areas served by NJ TRANSIT's commuter trains, and an estimated 21 percent of these commuters use rail as the primary means of entering New York City². Between the years 1980 and 2000, suburban commuting into Manhattan grew by 86,000 people, a 19 percent increase. The North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority

¹ Source: "A Recommended Approach to Funding the Estimated Capital Investment Needs of the Northeast Corridor Rail Infrastructure," BGL Rail Associates, prepared for Amtrak Reform Council, April 2002.

² Source: Census 2000 commuting data found at <http://www.census.gov/population/www/cen2000/commuting.html> and Total Manhattan data from "Journey-to-Work in the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council (NYMTC) Area and the Surrounding Tri-State Metropolitan Region," NYMTC, October 1999



 Portal Bridge

NOT TO SCALE

(NJTPA) projects the population of northern New Jersey will grow more than 16 percent by 2025, to 7.6 million people. Most of this growth is expected in the southern- and western-most counties, including Ocean, Sussex, and Warren Counties. The commuter rail system will need to meet increased demands from this population growth.

Currently, many of NJ TRANSIT's rail commuters and all AMTRAK Northeast Corridor passengers en route to or from Manhattan and points south travel over the Portal Bridge. Four of NJ TRANSIT's rail lines—the Northeast Corridor Line, the North Jersey Coast Line, certain Montclair-Boonton Line trains, and certain Morris & Essex Line (which includes the Gladstone Branch and Morristown Line) trains—utilize the Portal Bridge. AMTRAK currently operates approximately 51 weekday scheduled trains in each direction over this segment of the Northeast Corridor (on average, one train every 30 minutes). AMTRAK's Northeast Corridor operations, which connect Washington, New York City, and Boston, are considered among the most financially viable of all its routes around the country, and service along this corridor has consistently been regarded as essential by each state through which it operates and by Congress.

Table 1 shows the number of passengers and number of trains using the Portal Bridge in the AM peak hour. Due to capacity constraints and higher demand, the ratio of passengers to trains is greater for those trains operating over the Portal Bridge than for those trains not operating over the Portal Bridge. As shown in Table 1, 20 NJ TRANSIT trains operating over the Portal Bridge serve 17,700 passengers, while 13,600 passengers are served by 29 trains that do not operate over the bridge.

Over the past few decades, improvements to the Northeast Corridor's infrastructure have greatly enhanced rail operations for Amtrak and NJ . As discussed in "Problem Identification" below, the Portal Bridge is an essential yet weak link along the Northeast Corridor. Planned projects intended to meet future transportation demands (discussed in Section C, "Planning Context") will place additional importance on a reliable and efficient Hackensack River crossing.

PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION

The Portal Bridge was constructed by the Pennsylvania Railroad and began operations in 1910. It made possible direct train service between western and southern points on the Pennsylvania Railroad and New York. The current Portal Bridge was constructed as part of a larger project that also included the following elements: New York's original Pennsylvania Station; twin tunnels from Tonnelle Avenue in New Jersey to 9th Avenue in Manhattan; the portion of the Northeast Corridor from Tonnelle Avenue to the former Manhattan Transfer station in Harrison, NJ; and traction power and signal systems along this segment. The Portal Bridge is a two-track, moveable swing-span bridge that crosses the Hackensack River in New Jersey between the City of Kearny and the City of Secaucus. It is a critical infrastructure element for AMTRAK and NJ TRANSIT, enabling movement between east-of-Hudson and west-of-Hudson destinations. The existing Portal Bridge, however, poses reliability concerns, capacity constraints, and operational inflexibility. The problems associated with the existing Portal Bridge are discussed below.

Table 1

Existing NJ TRANSIT AM Peak Hour (7:30-8:30 A.M.) Ridership

NJ TRANSIT Rail Line	Service Operating over the Portal Bridge ⁽¹⁾		Service Not Operating Over the Portal Bridge ⁽²⁾	
	Passengers	Trains	Passengers	Trains
Northeast Corridor and North Jersey Coast Line	10,296	12	4,518	2
Main/Bergen Line	NA	NA	3,693	13
Morris & Essex Line	4,896	6	1,512	4
Montclair-Boonton Line	1,118	2	819	4
Pascack Valley Line	NA	NA	1,270	4
Raritan Valley Line	1,320 ⁽³⁾	NA	1,789 ⁽³⁾	5
Total	17,700	20	13,601	29
Total Trains (including AMTRAK trains)	-	23	-	29
Notes: ⁽¹⁾ Includes NJ TRANSIT's Northeast Corridor Line, AMTRAK's Northeast Corridor trains, and portions of NJ TRANSIT's North Jersey Coast Line, Montclair-Boonton Line, and Morris & Essex Line. ⁽²⁾ Includes portions of NJ TRANSIT's North Jersey Coast Line, Montclair-Boonton Line, and Morris & Essex Line. Includes all Main/Bergen Line, Raritan Valley Line, and Pascack Valley Line trains. ⁽³⁾ Total ridership on the Raritan Valley Line, which terminates in Newark, is 3,109. 1,320 of these riders transfer to Northeast Corridor and North Jersey Coast Line trains in Newark.				
Sources: NJ TRANSIT, January 2006				

AGING AND LIMITING INFRASTRUCTURE

The Portal Bridge was constructed nearly a century ago. Design standards for steel railroad bridges anticipate a typical lifespan of 100 years. Given the Portal Bridge's age, the structure is nearing the end of its economic life. Passenger safety is a top priority for both AMTRAK and NJ TRANSIT. One of AMTRAK's stated goals in its Strategic Reform Initiatives and FY06 Grant Requests (April 2005) is the return of the Northeast Corridor infrastructure to a "state of good repair and operational reliability." NJ TRANSIT also strives to maintain the infrastructure in a "state of good repair," which is achieved when infrastructure components are replaced on a schedule consistent with their life expectancy. The existing Portal Bridge presents a considerable ongoing operation and maintenance expense for AMTRAK because the mechanical and structural components are prone to failure due to age and wear and because swing bridges, as discussed below, are the most complicated moveable rail bridge type.

In addition to the age of the Portal Bridge, several aspects of the bridge's design are problematic. The bridge consists of seven spans and totals 961 feet in length. The middle span is a 300 foot long moveable swing span and is able to pivot to an open position (perpendicular to the rail line) to allow marine traffic to pass through the bridge. When the swing span is open, the bridge is closed to rail traffic. Special rail connections, known as "miter rails," allow the rails to disengage and the bridge to open and close. These connections are mechanically separated and automatically controlled for the swing span to open and then are realigned after it is closed. Mechanical wedges must lock the structure in the closed position and with electric traction special mechanical catenary connections must join the continuous contact wire on either end of the bridge. Depending on the reliability of this process, the period of time the bridge is closed to train traffic may be adversely affected resulting in train delays. Due to these issues, older swing span bridges are now being replaced by other types of moveable bridges such as vertical lift and single-span bascule bridges. The miter rail connections have been an ongoing problem since the Portal Bridge was constructed, and the connections have been replaced several times. They are vulnerable to maladjustment and negatively affected by temperature changes. The rate of wear on these miter rail connections is worsened with higher train speeds and frequencies. As a result, while trains can operate at 90 miles per hour (mph) on adjacent portions of the Northeast Corridor, speeds on the Portal Bridge have previously been restricted to 70 mph, and most recently (December 2006) have been permanently restricted to 60 mph.

As discussed in more detail below, the Hackensack River is a navigable waterway and marine traffic requires frequent bridge openings. These openings increase the likelihood of mechanical malfunctions, which have in the past caused the bridge to remain in the open position for long periods of time. Between 2001 and 2005, instances where train traffic was delayed due to the opening of the Portal Bridge for marine traffic increased from 28 to 52. The average length of delay over these five years stayed relatively constant (around 15 minutes per opening). Instances where train traffic was delayed due to mechanical malfunction of the bridge increased substantially from 15 to 38 openings per year between 2001 and 2005. Additionally, the average length of delay due to these malfunctions have steadily increased going from 78 minutes in 2001 to 131 minutes in 2005.

CAPACITY CONSTRAINTS AND OPERATIONAL INFLEXIBILITY

The two-track configuration of the Portal Bridge and the speed restrictions discussed above limit the number of trains that can cross the Hackensack River, which is especially problematic during peak hours. Recent system enhancements, such as the implementation of NJ TRANSIT's Midtown Direct service (which allows a limited number of Morris & Essex Line trains and Montclair-Boonton Line trains to merge onto the Northeast Corridor west of Portal Bridge for direct access to midtown Manhattan) have increased the total number of daily trains traveling over this already congested section of rail line.

The Northeast Corridor has two tracks between Swift Interlocking (the point where Midtown Direct trains merge onto the Northeast Corridor) and Secaucus Junction Train Station (the point where six NJ TRANSIT lines intersect). Typically, one track operates eastbound and one track operates westbound. This current configuration creates two bottlenecks. Eastbound trains must merge from two tracks to one track at Swift Interlocking, and westbound trains must merge from two tracks to one track leaving Secaucus Junction. Because multiple rail lines and different train types operated by NJ TRANSIT and AMTRAK are merging onto a two-track bridge, the window of opportunity for each train is reduced. This operational inflexibility means that a delay on one rail line can cascade to other rail lines. For example, if a Northeast Corridor Line train is

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delayed, a Midtown Direct train on the Montclair-Boonton Line may be forced to miss its appointed time to pass through Swift Interlocking and over the Portal Bridge. Similarly, if an eastbound North Jersey Coast Line train is stalled on the Portal Bridge, other eastbound trains on the Morris & Essex, Montclair-Boonton, and Northeast Corridor Lines may be delayed. Likewise, delays to a NJ TRANSIT train may delay AMTRAK trains and vice versa.

A recent analysis (January 2006) of train delays between Swift Interlocking and Secaucus Junction was conducted over a two-week period. The analysis revealed that on seven out of ten weekdays, at least one peak period train was delayed due to the merge at Swift Interlocking. On average, an additional four to five trains were subsequently delayed due to the initial interruption. Frequent bridge openings exacerbate the current operational inflexibility. Bridge openings must be scheduled during certain time periods, during which trains cannot operate over the Portal Bridge. Since several rail lines use the bridge, mechanical malfunctions during bridge closing cause a ripple effect throughout the corridor.

MAINTENANCE DIFFICULTIES

The complexity of the swing bridge with the miter rail configuration and the level of train traffic require vigilant maintenance and inspection of the Portal Bridge, especially the connections between the bridge and adjacent track. The current level of train traffic over the bridge leaves few windows of opportunity for maintenance and inspection activities to be performed. Sections of track must be taken offline to perform these tasks. To avoid disruption to passenger service, AMTRAK is forced to conduct maintenance and inspection during increasingly limited time periods, such as at night and on weekends. As traffic along the Northeast Corridor increases, fewer suitable time periods for maintenance and inspection will be available.

CONFLICTS WITH MARITIME USES

The Hackensack River is a navigable waterway governed by the U.S. Coast Guard. The existing Portal Bridge has only 23 feet of clearance between mean high water (MHW) and the lowest steel elevation of the bridge. As a result, marine traffic along this segment of the Hackensack River requires the frequent opening of the Portal Bridge and disruption of Northeast Corridor train traffic. This conflict is currently managed by restricting the times during which the bridge is permitted to open. Under current federal regulations, the bridge need not be opened Monday through Friday, except federal holidays, from 6:00 A.M. to 10:00 A.M. and from 4:00 P.M. to 8:00 P.M. However, additional bridge openings shall be provided for commercial vessels from 6:00 a.m. to 7:20 A.M.; 9:20 A.M. to 10:00 A.M.; 4:00 P.M. to 4:30 P.M. and from 6:50 P.M. to 8:00 P.M.; if at least one-hour advance notice is given by calling the number posted at the bridge. Nonetheless, the lengthy time that is required to open and close the Portal Bridge for marine traffic continues to be disruptive to efficient rail operations. Over the past two years, the bridge has opened for marine traffic an average of approximately 28 times per month.

PLANNING CONTEXT

Numerous improvements have been made to the Northeast Corridor in recent years, and many more large- and small-scale improvements are planned. As described above, NJ TRANSIT's Midtown Direct service (implemented in 1996 and expanded in 2002) allows passengers on the Morris & Essex Line and the Montclair-Boonton Line the option of direct service to midtown Manhattan in addition to previously existing service to Hoboken. The recently completed Secaucus Junction serves as a transfer station for NJ TRANSIT commuter rail passengers.

Passengers on Hoboken-bound trains can switch for service to New York's Pennsylvania Station, and vice versa. Other recent improvements include: the train station at Newark International Airport; extension of electrified territory; upgraded signal system for increased train frequency; additional substations for improved traction power system; additional concourses at New York's Pennsylvania Station.

Amtrak funded major capital projects in the vicinity of the study area include the reconstruction of the North (Hudson) River tunnel Weehawken shaft to improve normal and emergency ventilation and emergency egress; and installation of standpipes and improved lighting in the North River tunnels.

Several large transportation projects are currently in the planning phase. NJ TRANSIT is currently preparing a Draft EIS for the Monmouth-Ocean-Middlesex Project, which will evaluate commuter rail alternatives for areas within those three central New Jersey counties. NJ TRANSIT is preparing a Draft EIS and has entered preliminary engineering for the Access to the Region's Core Project (ARC), which includes an evaluation of a new two-track tunnel under the Hudson River and a new rail terminal in Manhattan under 34th Street and adjacent to the existing Penn Station. ARC will also include a connection to rail lines serving residents of Rockland, Orange, Bergen, and Passaic Counties. The ARC project is particularly relevant to the Portal Bridge Capacity Enhancement Project, as Portal Bridge is within the ARC project's study area, and many of the potential environmental effects from operation of a new and expanded Portal Bridge have been addressed in the ARC EIS analyses. Perhaps most importantly, the ARC service plan proposes increasing the number of trains crossing the Hackensack River on the Northeast Corridor from 23 in the AM peak hour to 37. Both of these future NJ TRANSIT projects, as well as other improvements and system upgrades planned by AMTRAK and NJ TRANSIT, will be considered in the Portal Bridge Capacity Enhancement Project EIS.

C. ALTERNATIVES TO BE CONSIDERED

AMTRAK and NJ TRANSIT are proposing the Portal Bridge Capacity Enhancement Project to address problems posed by the existing river crossing. The project will include examination of alternatives including replacement, rehabilitation, or modification of the existing Portal Bridge. To address the bottleneck between Swift Interlocking and Secaucus Junction, several of the project alternatives will include construction of additional track(s) between these two points. Other alternatives may include additional track(s) only along the eastbound and westbound bridge approaches. The project's geographic limits are expected to be bound by Dock Interlocking to the west and Secaucus Junction to the east. The northern and southern project limits will be refined as the project alternatives are developed; however, they may extend beyond the existing rail right-of-way. For purposes of the EIS, the project build year will be approximately 2012 to 2013. The year of analysis will be 2025.

Consistent with NEPA requirements, the project alternatives to be evaluated will include a No Action Alternative, wherein the existing structure would remain in place and only regular maintenance would occur, and several build alternatives.

NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

The No Action Alternative consists of the transportation facilities most likely to be in place by the design year of 2025. The No Action Alternative assumes that the existing Portal Bridge will remain in place and will be subject only to regular maintenance, and serves as a baseline for

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comparison to the build alternatives. The No Action Alternative also takes into account planned improvements that have recently been completed or are programmed for completion in the near future, as well as planned improvements that are included in the long-range regional transportation plan. Small-scale projects may include “state-of-good-repair” maintenance as well as improvements to switches, signals, tracks and platforms. These additions achieve some incremental capacity for the rail system, reduce dwell times, and add to system redundancy. Major investment projects involve substantial improvements to the transportation system in the region. A complete list of applicable projects to be included in the No Action Alternative will be included in the EIS, however, provided below are descriptions of planned projects known to be relevant to the Portal Bridge Capacity Enhancement Project.

Major Planned Projects

Access to the Region’s Core (ARC)

This major investment being undertaken by NJ TRANSIT involves the construction of a new passenger station underneath 34th Street (in New York) along with an additional two-track tunnel underneath the Hudson River that will connect with the existing Northeast Corridor east of Secaucus Station. ARC will also include construction of a loop track at Secaucus Station, which will allow trains from the Main, Bergen, and Pascack Valley Lines to travel directly into New York’s Pennsylvania Station via the Northeast Corridor. Ancillary elements of ARC will include the construction of a new yard for equipment storage and associated connections west of the Hackensack River in Kearny, NJ, and the purchase of dual-mode electric/diesel equipment to be used on the presently non-electrified Raritan Valley Line to allow “one-seat rides” to PSNY.

Newark Pennsylvania Station Improvements

NJ TRANSIT will improve the condition, appearance and function of Platform E (Track 5), which is primarily used by Raritan Valley Line service at Newark’s Pennsylvania Station (NPS). This will include repair and restoration of the platform, drainage systems, canopy roof, waiting areas, walls/windows/doors, signage, and lighting. In addition, NJ TRANSIT is also improving passenger connections between the NEC and Broad Street. A new professional hockey arena and mixed-use development are currently under construction in the area between these two points. The project includes the construction of stairways and elevators at one or more station platforms at the western end of NPS to a pathway along the abandoned Central Railroad of New Jersey (CNJ) bridge over the NEC.

Farley Post Office/Moynihan Station Redevelopment Project

The Farley Post Office/Moynihan Station Redevelopment Project, proposed by the Empire State Development Corporation (ESDC), would involve the transformation of the current Farley Post Office into an intermodal transportation facility supported by new commercial development. The Farley/Moynihan project would not add any rail capacity, but would create a major transportation hub, improve pedestrian circulation and capacity, and provide safety amenities at the PSNY complex. The projected construction period is between 2007 and 2010.

New Yard Capacity in the Vicinity of New York’s Penn Station

This improvement would allow additional staging/storage of NJ TRANSIT trains adjacent to platform tracks at PSNY through the construction of additional yard capacity. This project, being undertaken by NJ TRANSIT will improve utilization at Platforms 1 through 4 and will be in service by 2011.

New York's Pennsylvania Station York Capacity Enhancements

To address the crowded stairways and platforms at PSNY, NJ TRANSIT is proposing the construction of a pedestrian connection from Tracks 1 and 2 to an extended West End Concourse, the extension of the existing Central Corridor to West 31st Street, and the extension of Tracks 1 through 4 and lengthening of Platforms 1 and 2 to accommodate longer trains. This project, being undertaken by NJ TRANSIT will be completed by 2011.

Introduction of Bi-Level Cars to NJ TRANSIT

NJ TRANSIT has recently entered into contract to purchase 234 bi-level coaches to expand capacity on its rail system. These cars have up to 15 to 20 percent more seating than the existing coaches used today and are expected to be delivered over the next three years.

Minor Planned Projects

Smaller-scale upgrades to NJ TRANSIT's and AMTRAK's existing infrastructure along various rail lines are summarized in Table 2. These planned improvements are included in NJ TRANSIT and AMTRAK's Capital Improvement Plan, and will provide a modest amount of additional rail capacity in the future, and improve service reliability. These improvements include upgrades to switches between tracks, extensions and upgrades of existing platforms, improvements of signals along with the construction of additional tracks.

Table 2
NJ TRANSIT Capital Improvement Program

	Proposed Improvements			
	Switches	Platforms	Signals	Tracks
Bergen County Line	X	NA	X	X
Gladstone Branch	X	NA	NA	X
Main Line	X	NA	NA	X
Montclair-Boonton Line	NA	NA	NA	X
Morristown Line	X	X	X	X
Northeast Corridor Line	X	X	X	X
North Jersey Coast Line	X	X	X	NA
Pascack Valley Line	NA	NA	NA	NA
Raritan Valley Line	NA	NA	NA	X
Source: NJ TRANSIT's 2025 Capital Improvement Plan				

In addition to these planned projects, the No Action Alternative will include assumptions about future operations of the region's transportation network. Some of these operating assumptions are included in the rail simulations performed for the ARC EIS, the results of which are relevant to the analyses performed for this EIS. The operating assumptions will include items such as: future bus operations between New Jersey and New York; toll and fare increases; energy cost increases; limited additional NJ TRANSIT trains and bi-level cars; full operations of Secaucus Junction (which is not currently operating at maximum capacity); and future ferry services.

The operating plan for the ARC project includes these assumptions as well as major planned transportation projects, including the replacement of Portal Bridge. The projected 2025 Build

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AM peak hour service associated with ARC includes 25 more trains traveling to PSNY, as compared to existing 2006 conditions. This will result in a total of 48 NJ TRANSIT trains traveling to PSNY in the AM peak hour and a net increase of 14 trains over the Portal Bridge, as shown in Figure 2. Because of this increase in direct service, the number of trains terminating at Newark Penn Station in the AM peak hour would be reduced from 6 to 2; the number of trains terminating at Hoboken in the AM peak hour would be reduced from 27 to 23. Therefore, with the implementation of ARC, the NJ TRANSIT commuter rail system would experience a net increase of 17 AM peak hour trains.

The rail simulation and several of the environmental analyses developed for the ARC project will be used to estimate the effects of the Portal Bridge Capacity Enhancement Project. While enhancement of Portal Bridge capacity has been assumed for ARC, the proposed operating plan (i.e., 48 peak hour trains to PSNY) could be achieved without replacement of the Portal Bridge. This would be accomplished by re-routing some of the trains along a more circuitous route. As proposed in the ARC operating plan, 37 AM peak hour trains would use an enhanced Portal Bridge under the Locally Preferred Alternative. In the future, without any improvements, the Portal Bridge will not be able to accommodate this level of train activity. Therefore, the No Action Alternative for this EIS will assume some of the 37 trains are routed to alternate lines, enabling them to access the new Hudson River tunnels.

The ARC project further proposes one new track adjacent to the existing Main/Bergen Line that would extend southward from Secaucus Junction to existing West End Interlocking (West End Wye) on the existing NJ TRANSIT Morristown Line, two miles west of Hoboken Terminal. Improvements proposed by the ARC project include an improved wye track connection to the existing Morristown Line. This new infrastructure will support an alternate route between Newark Penn Station and PSNY. This route could support a limited number of daily train movements in a No Action Alternative or serve as a temporary detour route as a key element of a build alternative.

BUILD ALTERNATIVES

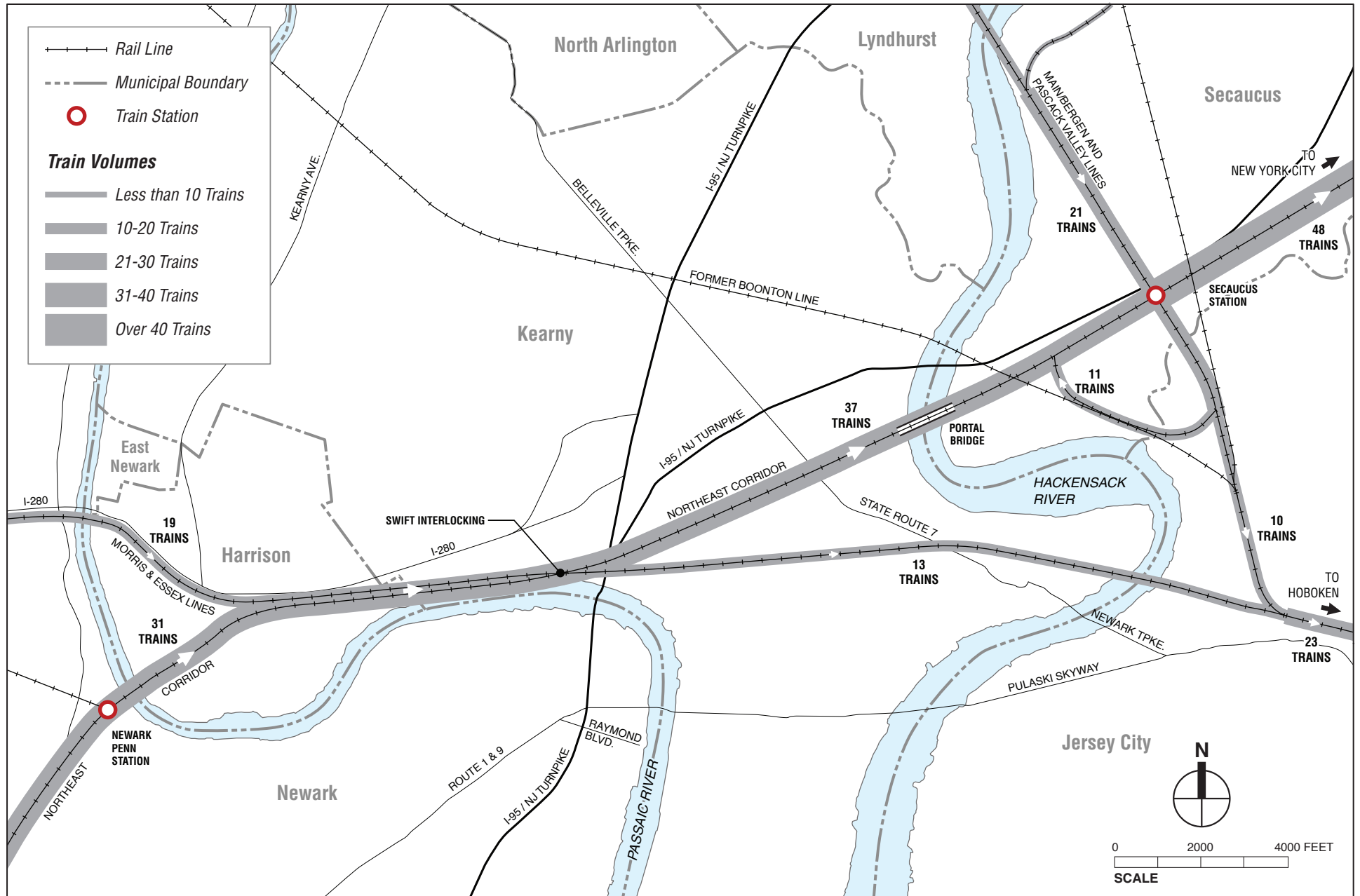
The EIS will consider a number of different build alternatives to improve the existing Northeast Corridor rail crossing over the Hackensack River. These alternatives will consider both retention and removal of the existing Portal Bridge. Alternatives retaining the Portal Bridge will, in some cases, include the modification of certain characteristics of the existing bridge—such as height and operation (e.g., a moveable structure versus a fixed structure). For a new bridge, alternatives proposed will vary in bridge height, operation type (moveable/fixed), and number of tracks to be constructed between Swift Interlocking and Secaucus Junction.

Alternatives Retaining the Existing Portal Bridge

These alternatives would retain the existing Portal Bridge and include construction of a new two or three track bridge, either fixed or moveable.

Alternatives Modifying the Existing Portal Bridge

These alternatives would involve physically modifying the existing Portal Bridge (beyond normal maintenance), rehabilitating the structure, and raising it above its existing height. Some of these alternatives would raise the existing bridge to allow fixing it in the closed position. Other alternatives would raise the bridge to a lesser height and retain its moveable nature. These alternatives would also include a new bridge, either fixed or moveable, with two or three tracks.



Alternatives Removing the Existing Portal Bridge

These alternatives would involve the construction of two new bridges and removal of the existing Portal Bridge. These alternatives would include a mix of bridge height, operation type (moveable or fixed), and alignment along the Hackensack River. Some of these alternatives would include the construction of a new two- or three-track moveable bridge with a second new two-track fixed or moveable bridge. Other alternatives in this category would include a new two- or three-track fixed bridge and a second new two-track fixed bridge.

D. PROJECT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

A project's goals and objectives are the foundation of its purpose and need under NEPA. They are used as the basis for developing the criteria and screening methodology for evaluating the project alternatives. Six goals have been established for the Portal Bridge Capacity Enhancement Project, relating to capacity, reliability, safety, compatibility, cost-effectiveness, and environmental considerations. Objectives will be developed for each goal during the scoping process to provide specific and measurable means by which to evaluate and compare project alternatives. The six project goals are as follows:

- GOAL 1: Enhance capacity to meet current and future demand—including new service—along the Northeast Corridor.
- GOAL 2: Improve service reliability and operational flexibility.
- GOAL 3: Provide a redundant Hackensack River crossing to facilitate maintenance and enhance passenger safety and security.
- GOAL 4: Minimize conflicts with maritime traffic.
- GOAL 5: Optimize existing infrastructure and planned improvements.
- GOAL 6: Minimize impacts on the surrounding environment.

E. SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

The EIS will consider all potential direct, indirect and cumulative effects of the project alternatives upon the social, economic and environmental resources in the study area. Generally, while the project limits have been defined as Dock Interlocking (adjacent to Newark Penn Station) to the west and Secaucus Junction in the east, the study areas for each resource will vary with its area of potential effect. Resources such as contaminated materials and archaeology which can be directly affected by project construction will have study areas confined to the limits of disturbance. Other study area may include off-site considerations such as the potential for indirect effects related to increased train service. As shown on Figure 3, the larger project study area extends outside of the area of immediate effect.

Since the ARC and Portal Bridge projects assume the same future train service in their respective build scenarios, the analysis of future operational impacts will be the same in the two documents. Therefore, the Portal Bridge DEIS will rely on the ARC DEIS analyses as they relate to the effects of increased train service and ridership on local and regional traffic, train noise and vibration, and ambient air quality. Furthermore, the ARC DEIS has examined much of the growth-inducing and secondary effects due to this increase in commuter rail service and will provide the basis for much of the analysis in the Portal Bridge DEIS.

TRANSPORTATION

The transportation analysis in the DEIS will focus on the potential beneficial and adverse effects on both commuter and intercity rail operations and its related effect on passenger travel. The analysis will consider both short-term (during construction) and long-term (during operation) effects on AMTRAK and NJ TRANSIT operations. The analysis will consider the long-term operations of NJ TRANSIT and AMTRAK including implementation of ARC's Locally Preferred Alternative's service plan.

The transportation analysis will also consider the effects of the project alternatives, both during construction and operation, on the passage of marine traffic along the Hackensack River. This analysis will be based on historical information on marine traffic and bridge openings and will consider potential future changes in land use along the Hackensack River upstream of the Portal Bridge.

LAND USE AND SOCIOECONOMIC CONDITIONS

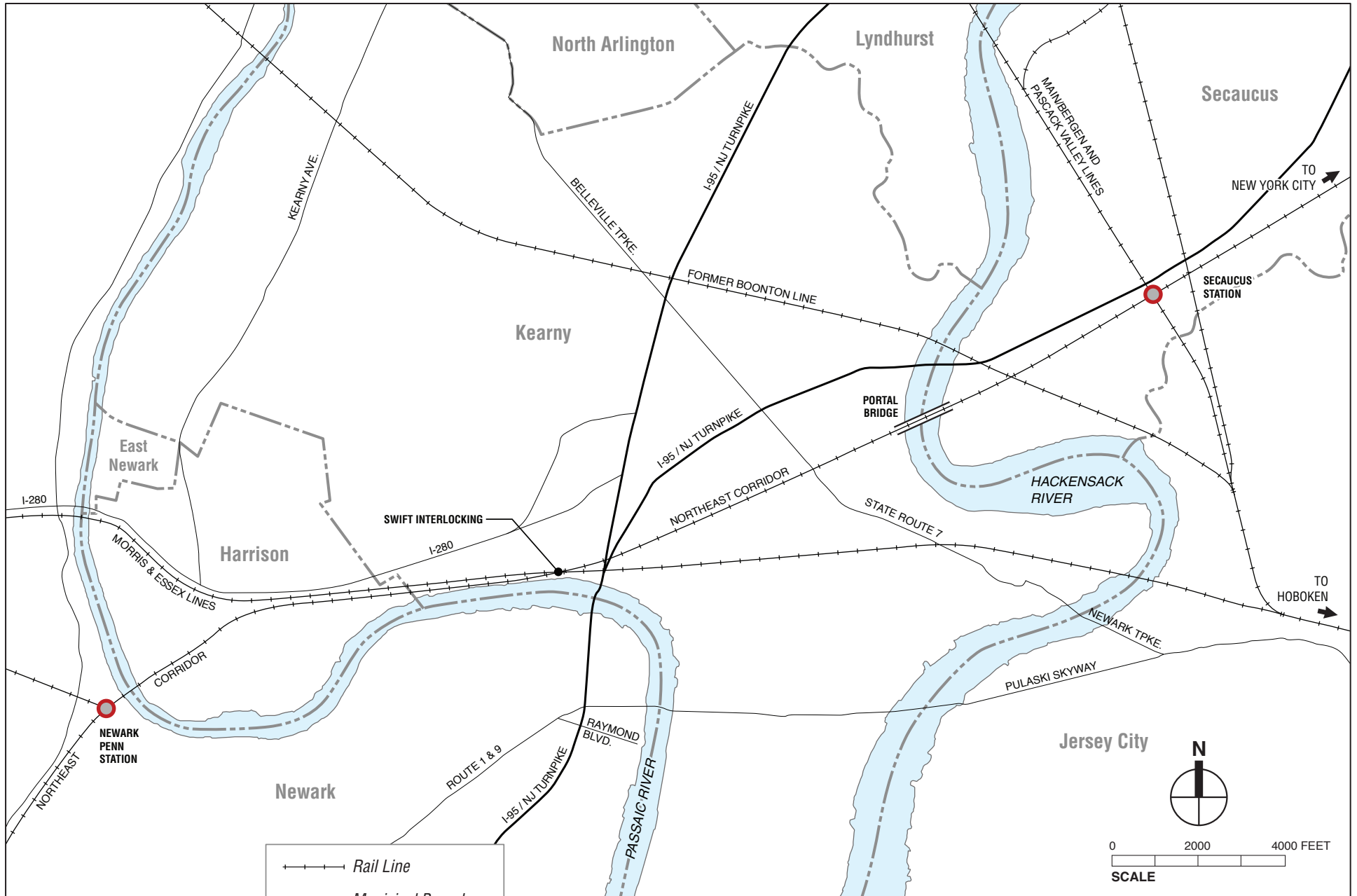
Land use and socioeconomic impacts consider land acquisition and displacement of business or individuals, land use and development, economic impacts, and community impacts. These considerations represent a perspective of particular importance for establishing baseline conditions. In the process of compiling an accurate socioeconomic profile of existing conditions and a justifiable projection of future conditions, an important perspective will focus on land use and public policy. In particular, the policies of the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission (NJMC), which is charged with regulating the Meadowlands District (including 8,400 acres of open space, waterways, and wetlands), will be discussed in the analysis. Accurate identification of existing land uses, other proposed projects, and a clear understanding and representation of current and proposed public policies in the study area will be essential information throughout the planning process. These data will be used in the alternatives screening to flag issues as well as establishing the future baseline condition against which impacts will be assessed.

If an alternative would require the acquisition of public and/or private land, a description of the affected land (location area, existing use, ownership, etc.) will be provided. If the acquisition requires the displacement of existing businesses or individuals, characteristics and needs of these affected persons and businesses will be described and an inventory of replacement sites/dwellings will be provided. Any relocation issues will be identified as specified under the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisitions Policies Act (42 U.S.C. 4601) and its applicable regulations (49 CFR Part 24).

This task also considers both the economic benefits of the project, in terms of supporting economic growth through the more additional capacity and efficiency improvements provided for by the enhancement of the Hackensack River crossing. The analysis will be performed in conjunction with the land use, neighborhood character, and social conditions analyses, above, and will be performed for the same study areas.

AIR QUALITY

By improving commuter and intercity rail service, the proposed project would contribute to a decrease in automobile travel in the area and lead to regional air quality benefits. Localized air quality, however, may be impacted from construction and/or operation of the new bridge. Operation of the new bridge may lead to local air quality impacts in areas of increased vehicular activity. This increased activity would be related to increases in rail ridership attributable to the



proposed project and may correspond to increased use of existing parking facilities. The analysis will first apply screening methods to determine whether any detailed intersection modeling analysis is necessary.

No direct air quality impacts would be expected from the Portal Bridge project, other than those from physical construction of the bridge (discussed under “Construction,” below). It is assumed that the Portal Bridge project would not result in any increased activity of diesel train operations and therefore no analysis of diesel locomotives would be necessary.

The air quality analysis will include the following tasks:

- A description of existing ambient air quality levels for the study area. A summary of applicable regulations, such as the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection’s (NJDEP) Bureau of Air Quality Management and the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) will be included, along with a statement regarding the attainment status for each criteria pollutant.
- A regional (“mesoscale”) air quality analysis will be conducted for each alternative and compared to the No Action Alternative. Annual regional air pollutant emissions of carbon monoxide (CO), volatile organic compounds (VOCs), particulate matter (PM), and nitrogen oxides (NOx), will be calculated for the proposed project based on the expected change in vehicle miles traveled (VMT).
- A screening analysis will be conducted for microscale CO. If necessary, a detailed CO intersection analysis will be conducted using USEPA’s standard analysis modeling techniques (the CAL3QHC microscale intersection model and the MOBILE6.2 mobile source emission model).
- A Transportation Conformity analysis, based on the USEPA’s recent Final Rule, will be conducted for the project alternatives to determine their consistency with the State Implementation Plans (SIP) as required by the Clean Air Act amendments.

NOISE AND VIBRATION

Intercity, transit and commuter rail projects have the potential for noise and vibration impacts along the right-of-way from new or increased service. Since noise and vibration levels drop dramatically with distance, the focus is typically along those segments of the right-of-way near sensitive receptors. FTA and FRA guidance, which take into account factors such as track characteristics, structure type, train speed, and distance to nearest sensitive receptor, will be used for noise and vibration analysis.

The noise and vibration analysis will include the following tasks:

- A summary of applicable noise and vibration regulations, terminology, standards, and evaluation criteria.
- A description of ambient noise and vibration conditions within the project study area, based on the ARC project.
- Using the May 2006 FTA Transit Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment and the October 2005 FRA High-Speed Ground Transportation Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment documents, and data from ARC DEIS, an assessment of potential noise and vibration impacts will be presented.

ECOLOGY

The Portal Bridge is surrounded by mapped wetland and open water habitats that are part of New Jersey's Meadowlands District. Implementation of any proposed alternative for the Portal Bridge project will likely result in impacts to these areas, and impacts to other natural resources occurring in the vicinity of the bridge. Wetlands in the Meadowlands are regulated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACOE); however, projects involving wetland impacts in the Meadowlands District also are reviewed by NJMC. Furthermore, the NJDEP reviews applications for activities in the Meadowlands District that require Waterfront Development Permits, Water Quality Certificates, and Coastal Zone Management Consistency Determinations, all of which will likely be necessary as part of the proposed Portal Bridge project.

As part of the ecology analysis, baseline conditions of surface waters, wetlands, floodplains, vegetation, and wildlife will be documented through field efforts, compilation of historical documentation and data collected in the area, and coordination/correspondence with applicable natural resource and regulatory agencies. Surface water quality data and other surface water resource information for the proposed project area and surrounding vicinity will be obtained from the NJDEP, U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), and other agencies as appropriate. Available studies previously conducted by NJ TRANSIT, AMTRAK, and/or NJMC will be reviewed. Potential impacts associated with implementation of the selected or other alternatives will be assessed.

The wetland habitats will be characterized based on secondary sources of information including existing data, documentation, mapping, and reports available from USACOE, Natural Resource Conservation Service, and NJMC. These secondary sources also shall serve as the basis for the impact assessments that will be performed for the proposed alternatives. A conceptual listing of potentially applicable federal, state, and local permits and approvals in addition to a discussion on the permitting and regulatory implications of the proposed alternatives also will be presented.

Floodplain areas present near the Portal Bridge will be identified and mapped based on Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) mapping, NJDEP flood studies, and any other applicable resources. Both 100-year and 50-year floodplain boundaries will be presented on maps. Potential encroachment and resulting impacts to floodplain areas will be identified and assessed. The NJDEP Natural Heritage Program (NHP), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) will be contacted to confirm the presence or absence of threatened or endangered species, or other sensitive species that occur in the project's vicinity and potentially be affected by the proposed activities. Secondary source information and data will be obtained to confirm abundance and distribution of other fish and wildlife species known to occur in the project vicinity. A list of fish, wildlife, and plant species known to occur onsite and common fish and wildlife species occurring in the region will be compiled. Wildlife species will be categorized at the community level and mapped accordingly. Potential impacts to fish and wildlife will be assessed.

CONTAMINATED MATERIALS

Soil and groundwater beneath a site can become contaminated because of past or present uses on that site, or because of past or present uses on adjacent properties. Contaminated materials can include both hazardous and non-hazardous soil and groundwater. Proper classification of contaminated materials as hazardous or non-hazardous is critical, as hazardous materials are highly regulated substances that are defined by the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act

(RCRA). Site that are currently or have historically been used for rail-related purposes may contain certain categories of contamination. Contaminants commonly found along rail lines include volatile and semi-volatile organic compounds, heavy metals, pesticides, and herbicides. Pesticides and herbicides are used to control vectors and vegetation in rail yards and along rail lines. Creosote, a coal-derived product, was historically used in the manufacturing of rail ties and can result in semi-volatile organic compound contamination. Fuel storage may result in petroleum contamination and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) are commonly used as a dielectric fluid in train-mounted or yard transformers. Urban areas are often underlain by historic fill material, which may contain contaminants of concern. Above ground structures, such as bridges, typically require an assessment of asbestos-containing material and lead-based paint.

The assessment of contaminated materials will include a Phase I environmental site assessment for those locations where activities could disturb contaminated materials. The Phase I assessments will include a four-tiered investigation: (1) past and current land use review, including a review of historic aerial photographs and Sanborn maps; (2) contaminated database and records research; (3) review of previous site investigations; and (4) site inspection. Photographs will be taken during the site inspection to document current conditions and items of note. The review of regulatory files will include a review of relevant NJDEP and USEPA files.

VISUAL RESOURCES/AESTHETICS

The proposed project could result in a new elevated structure over the Hackensack River. The effect of this new structure on the surrounding visual environment, and whether it may affect or block views to existing visual resources, will be evaluated. A visual resource analysis will be conducted pursuant to the guidelines of the USDOT for visual analysis under NEPA. The existing environment of each visible project element and its surrounding study area will be described. Existing visual resources and important view corridors or viewsheds will also be identified, and existing views toward any potentially visible project element from surrounding neighborhoods will be discussed. Existing resources and corridors will be classified as distinctive, common, or minimal. Topography, vegetation, and existing buildings and structures will be taken into consideration, and viewer groups and duration of views will be identified. Using all this information, the proposed project alternatives will be assessed. If the potential for temporary visual impacts during construction exists, it will be discussed in the construction impacts assessment.

HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 requires that federal agencies consider the effects of their actions on any properties listed on or determined eligible for listing on the National Register. As part of the Section 106 process, the federal agency would afford the State's Historic Preservation Officer, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and interested members of the public a reasonable opportunity to comment on the undertaking and its potential effect. The following steps will be taken pursuant to Section 106 regulations to identify and assess potential project effects on historic properties.

The first step will be to identify the area of potential effect (APE) for historic and archaeological resources. This is the area where potential project effects could occur. APEs would be developed in consultation with NJSHPO. Within the APE historic resources would be identified. These include the AMTRAK Portal Bridge at Milepost 6.1 (formerly known as the Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York Railroad Company Portal Bridge) on the project site. Construction of the

bridge began in 1907 as part of the eight-mile direct rail line to Midtown Manhattan, and it is listed on the New Jersey State Register of Historic Places (SR). Other historic resources in the APE will be identified, including properties listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places (S/NR) or determined eligible for such listing, National Historic Landmarks (NHLs) and properties determined eligible for such listing, and architectural resources that may be locally designated or eligible for designation. Additionally, a survey would be conducted to identify any previously undesignated properties in the APE that appear to meet eligibility criteria for listing in the S/NR, designation as NHLs, and local designation. Potential architectural resources would be identified based on site visits and through the use of historical sources including local repositories, texts, images, and maps. If such properties are identified, documentation would be provided to NJSHPO to allow for determinations of NR eligibility to be made. To evaluate archaeological resources, a Phase 1A documentary study will be prepared for the archaeological resources APE to determine whether areas that would be impacted by the proposed project may contain archaeological resources. This study would include cartographic research, review of contextual histories, identification of documented archaeological sites on or in the vicinity of the project site, and the potential for the APE to contain any previously unidentified archaeological resources. This study would be provided to NJSHPO for their review and acceptance.

Once the historic and archaeological resources have been identified, the potential effects of the proposed project on these properties will be assessed, including direct physical effects (e.g., demolition, alteration, or damage from construction of a historic standing structure or disturbance of an archaeologically sensitive area) and indirect, contextual effects, such as the isolation of a property from its surrounding environment, or the introduction of visual, audible, or atmospheric elements that would be out of character with the property or alter its setting. Should any adverse effects be identified, such as if the Portal Bridge is to be demolished, avoidance and mitigation measures would be developed in consultation with the lead federal agency and NJSHPO. These measures would be set forth in a Programmatic Agreement or Memorandum of Agreement, which would be executed by the FRA, the NJSHPO, potential consulting parties, and possibly the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

The environmental justice analysis will comply with the requirements of Executive Order 12898, “Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations” and assess the project’s potential for disproportionately high and adverse environmental impacts on minority and/or low-income populations. In addition to the Executive Order, the analysis will follow the guidance in the Council on Environmental Quality’s “Environmental Justice Guidance under the National Environmental Policy Act” (December 1997, the USDOT’s “Final Order on Environmental Justice” (April 1997), and any relevant guidance from the State of New Jersey. Demographic data from the U.S. Census Bureau will be used to determine whether minority and/or low-income populations are located within the study area. Creating an effective public participation program to assure communities meaningful representation in the planning process is also required under the Executive Order. The potential environmental impacts from construction and operation of the bridge will be considered. If needed, mitigation measures will be proposed to address disproportionate impacts.

CONSTRUCTION IMPACTS

The construction assessment will include an evaluation of the construction means and methods proposed, disruption to existing rail service, disruption of utilities, dust control measures, safety

and security, traffic routes and disposal of contaminated materials. The mode of material delivery and disposal is also considered in a construction impact analysis. The potential for adverse environmental impacts (such as stormwater runoff, air quality, traffic and transportation, and noise impacts) to nearby sensitive receptors will be assessed. The project site appears to be a substantial distance from the nearest residents and businesses; however, impacts to adjacent wetland areas and wildlife will be evaluated in the construction assessment. An important factor for this chapter will be the potential effects of constructing the project alternatives on existing marine and rail traffic.

SECONDARY AND CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

The federal Council on Environmental Quality's regulations implementing the procedural provisions of NEPA, set forth in 40 CFR Part 1500-1508, requires federal agencies to consider the environmental consequences of their actions, including not only direct, but also indirect and cumulative effects. The approach to the assessment of capacity enhancements for the Portal Bridge project will focus on its potential cumulative effects with the improvements planned for the ARC project. Much of the analysis of the cumulative and secondary effects as it relates to additional train service for NJ TRANSIT commuters will rely on the analysis in the ARC DEIS. These issues would include the growth-inducing effects of the improved service and the related environmental effects (e.g. traffic, air quality and noise) consequences of the increased passenger demand. The potential long-term effects on socioeconomics, traffic, air quality, and noise that would result from increased train service and passenger activity at various station locations upon completion of both projects would be considered.

The cumulative effects chapter will describe the potential cumulative effects for each of the environmental subject areas. However, greater detail will be provided for resources that may be affected by increased capacity for NJ TRANSIT and AMTRAK. Specifically, the secondary and cumulative effects chapter will address:

- Potential changes in socioeconomic trends related to increased service for AMTRAK and NJ TRANSIT;
- Impacts on traffic, transit, and pedestrian circulation near AMTRAK and NJ TRANSIT stations (including New York's Penn Station);
- Decreases in mesoscale air emissions from reductions in VMT; and
- Effects on sensitive receptors outside the Portal Bridge alignment from increases in train pass-bys.

SECTION 4(f) EVALUATION

Section 4(f) of the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) Act of 1966 (49 USC §303) prohibits the Secretary of Transportation from approving any program or project that requires the "use" of (1) any publicly owned land in a public park, recreation area, or wildlife and waterfowl refuge of national, state, or local significance, or (2) any land from a historic site of national, state, or local significance (collectively "Section 4(f) resources"), unless there is no feasible and prudent alternative to the use of such land and the project includes all possible planning to minimize harm to the resource.

With respect to the term "use" there are three possible ways in which a project could involve a "use" of a resource:

Portal Bridge Capacity Enhancement Project

- When land is permanently incorporated into a transportation facility;
- When there is a temporary occupancy of land that is adverse in terms of the statute's preservation purpose; or,
- When there is a constructive use of land.

Constructive use occurs when the project does not directly incorporate land from a Section 4(f) resource, but the project's impacts are so severe that the protected activities, features, or attributes that qualify a resource for protection under Section 4(f) are substantially impaired. Substantial impairment occurs only when the protected activities, features, or attributes of the resource are substantially diminished.

The Section 4(f) evaluation for the Portal Bridge project will consider the project's potential use of historic resources, archaeological resources, and, potentially, parklands and wildlife or waterfowl refuges of national, state, or local importance. For each of these resources, the Section 4(f) evaluation will describe the resource; will character the project's potential use of the resource; will evaluate alternatives to the use of the resource; and will describe efforts to minimize harm.

F. PUBLIC OUTREACH

NEPA, along with Executive Order 12898 require federal agencies to work to ensure greater public participation in the decision-making process. The success of any project lies in its ability to be implemented and implementation is dependant upon public acceptance. The public provides unique insight into local conditions that can add value to technical aspects of the project. A Public Involvement Plan (PIP) has been developed to encourage participation from both members of the general public, along with involved and interested public agencies.

The goals of the Public Involvement Plan are as follows:

- To provide an opportunity and a mechanism for a diverse group of public participants to engage in the development of the EIS and give relevant input to the project
- To focus public input in a structured manner that will allow decisions to be made with the maximum benefit from public involvement, and to ensure that public input influences recommendations and decisions.
- To ensure that elected officials, agencies, stakeholders, and the general public are adequately informed about the project and its implications for their communities, and to identify potential issues so that they can be addressed and resolved before the completion of the EIS process.
- To solicit community feedback for the scoping document on the scope of alternatives, environmental and community issues to be covered, and the methods for their evaluation, followed later by comments on the Draft EIS as to impacts on specific areas.
- To convey NJ TRANSIT's, AMTRAK's, and the study team's commitment to public involvement and become the primary sources of project information.
- To build a consensus on a preferred alternative by balancing points of view among regional/local interests and environmental/commercial concerns and define and build support for the preferred alternative.

The goals of the Project Involvement Plan will be accomplished through the following strategies and techniques:

- Identifying key groups and interest in the outreach area.
 - This strategy will be implemented through the creation of a Regional Citizens Liaison Committee that will provide an opportunity for community members to have an input throughout the EIS process. Additional techniques include the creation of a project mailing list to inform interested parties on the project's process, as well as to encourage local participation in the study.
- Coordinating with involved and interested agencies.
 - This strategy involves the development of a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), which provides a forum for open communication between the project team and representatives of state, local and federal agencies. Involved and interested agencies will also be encouraged to participate in the project by holding an agency scoping meeting which will allow TAC agencies to provide input on issues such as the purpose and need of the project, potential alternatives for consideration, issues to be addressed in the environmental assessment, among other issues.
- Enabling face-to-face dialogue with the study team.
 - This will be accomplished by holding various meetings and other opportunities for the public and involved agencies to interact with the project team.
- Utilizing a variety of communication tools.
 - A variety of communication tools will be used to encourage public and agency involvement, including newsletters, meeting announcements, press releases, a website and meeting materials.
- Documenting agency, stakeholder, and public input.
 - Input from various stakeholders will be documented through transcripts, written comment sheets, and logging correspondence.

A public scoping meeting will be held on January 17, 2007 where the public will be given the opportunity to comment on this document. The meeting will have an afternoon and evening session. Each session will be preceded by a brief presentation of the project. The public will have an opportunity to view information materials and make oral comments. The meeting date, location, and time are as follows:

January 17, 2007 – 4:00 P.M. to 8:00 P.M.

The Newark Public Library

Centennial Hall, 2nd Floor

5 Washington St,

Newark, NJ 07101-0630

973-733-7800

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