CHAPTER 4
COMMENTS AND COORDINATION

This chapter includes a summary of agency coordination, tribal coordination, and public involvement that have taken place during the development of this Tier 1 EIS. Agency comments are summarized in Section 4.1 and include responses, tribal input is summarized in Section 4.2, and public input is summarized in Section 4.3.

4.1 AGENCY OUTREACH

Agency coordination has included interaction through email notices, email responses, in-person meetings, and teleconferences, as described in this section. For this Study, agencies are categorized as public entities with decision-making authority for the public.

4.1.1 Early Coordination

An early coordination (EC) packet and invitation to the agency scoping meeting was provided to the following entities, which are considered reviewing agencies:

- Federal agencies
    - Federal Aviation Administration
    - Federal Emergency Management Agency
    - Federal Highway Administration
    - Federal Transit Administration
    - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
    - U.S. Coast Guard
    - U.S. Department of Agriculture
    - U.S. Department of Army
    - U.S. Department of Homeland Security
    - U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
    - U.S. Department of Interior
    - U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
    - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
    - U.S. Geological Survey
- Illinois agencies
    - Illinois Commerce Commission
    - Illinois Department of Agriculture
    - Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity
    - Illinois Department of Human Services
    - Illinois Department of Natural Resources
    - Illinois Division of Aeronautics
    - Illinois DOT Bureau of Railroads
    - Illinois DOT Districts
    - Illinois Environmental Protection Agency

  - Illinois Historical Preservation Agency (Illinois State Historic Preservation Office)
  - Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs
  - Illinois Nature Preserves Commission
  - State of Illinois

- Iowa agencies
  - Iowa Agriculture Development Authority
  - Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship
  - Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs
  - Iowa Department of Human Services
  - Iowa Department of Natural Resources
  - Iowa Department of Public Health
  - Iowa DOT Districts
  - Iowa Economic Development Authority
  - Iowa Environmental Protection Commission
  - Iowa State Parks Bureau
  - Iowa State Preserves Advisory Board
  - Iowa Transportation Commission
  - State Historical Society of Iowa (Iowa State Historic Preservation Office)
  - State of Iowa

- Nebraska agencies
  - Nebraska Department of Aeronautics
  - Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality
  - Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services
  - Nebraska Department of Natural Resources
  - Nebraska Department of Roads District 2
  - Nebraska Department of Roads Rail and Public Transportation
  - Nebraska Game and Parks Commission
  - Nebraska State Historical Society (Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office)
  - State of Nebraska

Agency input on the Study and Project was received during the agency scoping meetings on February 21, 2012, in Ames, Iowa, and on February 22, 2012, in Chicago, Illinois, as well as through responses to the EC packet distributed on April 1, 2012. Appendix O contains meeting notes from the agency scoping meetings and communications received from the agencies.

Summary of Comments

Federal and state resource agencies provided guidance concerning potential environmental requirements, including permitting and approvals needed for the Project. The following is a summary of federal and state resource agency concerns:

- Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) indicated that a formal notice and airspace review may be required.

- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) noted that recent remapping data of floodplain boundaries is available electronically and that FEMA could help FRA acquire the latest data. FEMA stated that it is likely that new mapping would be required in a few years to address climate change.
- Federal Transit Administration (FTA) indicated that it is involved in several intermodal projects in the Midwest, including station improvements in Moline, Illinois, and Dubuque, Iowa.
- Transportation Security Administration (TSA) had a safety concern regarding whether the proposed high-speed passenger rail service would be on dedicated tracks or share tracks with freight rail.
- U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) expressed interest regarding bridge crossings and whether the Arsenal Bridge across the Missouri River would be used for this Project. Locations and plans for bridges over navigable waterways of the U.S. must be approved by USCG prior to construction and a permit must be acquired. The permit application should include sufficient information to allow a thorough assessment of the environmental impact of any improvements to the bridge and its immediate approaches.
- U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance indicated that it would distribute the Notice of Intent and the early coordination packet to appropriate Department of Interior Bureau personnel.
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) Region 7 indicated that it would serve as the lead USEPA agency for this Project. It recommended that the analysis focus on improvements needed for rail as well as support facilities and stations, and that it consider impacts on existing passenger rail service from Chicago through Omaha to the west coast. USEPA noted that the Tier 1 EIS should address potential impacts on wetlands and other waters of the U.S. protected under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, growth-related development impacts, community and wildlife impacts such as noise/vibration and safety, and cumulative impacts on resources of concern.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Rock Island Office indicated that it would likely be the lead for USFWS input and that it will compile information from other USFWS offices. The agency noted that coordination would be needed concerning potential impacts on threatened or endangered species and their habitat. Of particular concern is the Hine's emerald dragonfly. Wetland impacts would need to be assessed, as would noise and vibration impacts on wildlife, especially migratory birds.
- Illinois Department of Natural Resources (Illinois DNR) commented that it has a database that could be accessed through an agreement that would assist in the review of potential environmental impacts of alternatives.
- Iowa State Historic Preservation Office (Iowa SHPO) indicated that based on information provided to date, it was unclear whether any historic properties in Iowa would be affected by any of the considered route alternatives. The agency noted that a section of Route Alternative 4 between Davenport and Iowa City, Iowa, is one of the earliest railroad lines constructed in Iowa, with minimal change in alignment since construction in 1855; it also noted two historic railroad events along the section.

- Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality (NDEQ) indicated that several permits and approvals would likely be needed for the Project, including water quality, air quality, waste, and wetlands.
- Nebraska Department of Natural Resources (Nebraska DNR) noted that impacts on floodways/floodplains in Nebraska would need to be assessed and addressed via a floodplain development permit.
- Nebraska Game and Parks Commission (NGPC) commented regarding impacts on wetlands, streams, and riparian habitats. NGPC encourages that impacts on these resources be avoided and minimized, and that any unavoidable impacts on these habitats be mitigated. It indicated that coordination with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) was needed if any fill materials will be placed into any wetland or stream.

Representatives from counties and local municipalities generally noted their support for the Project, primarily for economic purposes, with a preference for route alternatives within or near their jurisdiction. For those instances where route alternatives did not include the representatives' counties and local municipalities, a combination of route alternatives or a connection line from their municipalities to the route alternative was proposed as a solution for local access to the proposed passenger rail system. Route Alternative 4 or 4-A through the Quad Cities, Iowa City, and Des Moines was generally favored based on a small sample size of representatives from counties and local municipalities; some representatives specifically recommended a route alternative, whereas others identified the cities along the route alternative.

Table 4-1 provides a full list of the agencies providing comments, documents the issues raised, summarizes the comments, and notes the responses. Comments received from resource agencies are organized first by the agency making the comment (ordered by federal, state, county/region/regional governmental organization, and then local municipality), and then by the issue(s) introduced by the agency. Individual comments may apply to more than one issue; for those comments, multiple issues will be identified adjacent to the comments. In some instances, comments for a particular issue are lengthy; if additional paragraphs are included without an issue noted adjacent, the comment applies to the previously identified issue. For some comments, brackets denote information added to the comment for clarification; the bracketed text was not part of the original comment. The Final Scoping Report, which includes comments received prior to the completion of the report, is available on Iowa DOT's Study webpage under Resources at http://www.iowadot.gov/chicagotoomaha/resources.html.

Table 4-1. Summary of Agency Scoping Comments

Agency	Issue	Comment	Response
Federal			
Federal Aviation Administration	Agency Coordination	FAA has reviewed the furnished material and has no comments regarding environmental matters.	Comment noted.
	Permitting and Approvals	The Project may require formal notice and airspace review under Federal Aviation Regulation Part 77, Objects Affecting Navigable Airspace. Use the Notice Criteria Tool on FAA's website, and check multiple locations along the route for potential conflicts with public-use and military airports.	The conceptual level of design during Tier 1 of the NEPA process does not include sufficient information for use of the Notice Criteria Tool. Section 3.27.4.11 of the Tier 1 EIS notes that this effort would be conducted during Tier 2 studies.
Federal Emergency Management Agency	Floodplains	Recent remapping data of floodplain boundaries is available electronically, and FEMA could help FRA acquire the latest data. FEMA stated that it is likely that new mapping would be required in a few years to address climate change.	Comments noted.
Federal Transit Administration	General, Station Facilities and Upgrades	FTA is involved in several intermodal projects in the Midwest, including station improvements in Moline, Illinois, and Dubuque, Iowa.	Comment noted.
Transportation Security Administration	Rail (Operations)	How can "high-speed" trains operate on existing rail routes? Will these routes be dedicated to these passenger trains, or will they be shared with the railroads currently operating on them?	The existing rail lines are owned by the freight railroads. This Study is evaluating the need for improvements to existing rail and supporting infrastructure in order to host high-speed passenger trains as well as the current freight trains. The rail lines could be shared, with sidings used to divert and hold a train while another train uses the main line, or separate tracks could be provided for passenger trains and freight trains.
U.S. Coast Guard	Permitting and Approvals, EIS Process	Locations and plans for bridges over navigable waterways of the U.S. (Missouri and Mississippi rivers) must be approved by USCG prior to construction, and a permit must be acquired. The permit application should include sufficient information to allow a throughout assessment of the environmental impact of the bridge and its immediate approaches. USCG recommends that the permit application discuss the impacts of procedures for constructing cofferdams, sand islands, falsework bents, etc., that will be employed to build the new bridge and demolish the old bridge. The NEPA document should contain data on the	Section 3.27 of the Tier 1 EIS identifies potential known permits and approvals to help expedite future environmental review and permitting during the Tier 2 NEPA process. The Tier 2 NEPA documents would involve close coordination with USCG on any new bridge or bridge improvements across navigable rivers. The Tier 2 NEPA documents would contain details to help facilitate future permitting. The permit application would contain known details of temporary construction methods; if not known at the time of application, USCG would likely condition permit approval upon receipt of these details. FRA would

Agency	Issue	Comment	Response
		number, size, and types of vessels currently using the waterway. This data should be compared with past and projected future trends on the use of the waterway.	then provide this information to USCG at a later date, once the methods are known and prior to implementation.
		How is the Study looking at major bridges across the route?	The Study identifies major structures that might need to be built or rehabilitated, especially those for Mississippi River and Missouri River crossings. For example, the Iowa Interstate Railroad route crosses the Mississippi River on the Arsenal Bridge, and Union Pacific Railroad is building a new bridge at Clinton, Iowa. The Study looks at alternative routes and specifically river crossing locations to determine the gross needs for expansion, reconstruction, or replacement.
		What does this Project have to do with the Chicago to Iowa City project that would use the Arsenal Bridge across the Mississippi River?	The Chicago to Iowa City project was split into two phases. The Chicago to Quad Cities Expansion Program passenger rail project (ending in Moline, Illinois) has state funding from Illinois, and NEPA is ongoing under Illinois DOT's direction. The Moline to Iowa City, Iowa, phase will be managed by Iowa DOT, but a state match in funding will need to be allocated to progress the project. The completion of the Chicago to Quad Cities Expansion Program will determine the next steps for the Moline to Iowa City phase. Relevant data for the Chicago to Iowa City project will be used for this Project.
U.S. Department of Interior	Agency Coordination	The USDOI Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance will distribute the Notice of Intent and the early coordination packet to appropriate Department of Interior Bureau personnel.	Comment noted.
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency – Region 7	Rail (Operations), Transportation (Current Train Traffic), Rail Upgrades, Noise, Safety, and several other relevant environmental resources	Existing track and current railroad operations represent a baseline condition. New track, track that connects between existing routes, and new track geometries for safety and facilitation of higher-speed trains should receive focused analysis above the existing condition. Likewise, the EIS should examine the environmental impacts of the stations and support facilities associated with each of the route alternatives.	Chapter 2 (Alternatives) of the Tier 1 EIS addresses baseline conditions (considered to be the No-Build Alternative), including known future commitments such as the Chicago to Quad Cities Expansion Program improvements and operations. Locations where new track is needed for higher speeds are considered in the Tier 1 EIS, as are station locations and support facilities to the extent known.

Agency	Issue	Comment	Response
	Project Purpose and Need	The Purpose and Need statement indicates that the Study will evaluate "alternatives for the reestablishment of intercity passenger rail service from Chicago, Illinois, through Iowa, to Omaha, Nebraska." Since intercity passenger rail service currently exists between Chicago and Omaha, the term "re-established" is inappropriate.	Chapter 1 (Purpose and Need) of the Tier 1 EIS addresses this comment by eliminating the "reestablishment" terminology.
		The statement also notes that the Proposed Action seeks to "create a competitive rail transportation alternative to the available automobile, bus, and air service and would meet needs for more efficient travel." USEPA recommends clarifying the statement by inserting "passenger" after "rail."	Chapter 1 (Purpose and Need) of the Tier 1 EIS addresses this comment by inserting "passenger" before "rail."
	EIS Process	The Tier 1 process would be expected to eliminate some of the alternatives from further consideration based on specific criteria (such as operating and maintenance costs, ridership, and safety issues). The Tier I EIS should evaluate how the proposed high-speed service will interface with existing service through Omaha to San Francisco.	Chapter 2 (Alternatives) of the Tier 1 EIS addresses the alternatives identification and screening process to carry forward one or more alternatives for detailed evaluation under the NEPA process. The Tier 1 EIS addresses potential impacts on the *California Zephyr* operations.
	Wetlands, Socioeconomic, Noise and Vibration, Safety, Cumulative Impacts	USEPA Region 7 would be the lead for USEPA input on the NEPA process for this Project	Comment noted.
		Tier 1 considerations should include 1) selection of the alternative corridors most likely to achieve the lowest environmentally damaging practical alternative under Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 404, 2) growth-related development impacts, 3) potential for community and wildlife impacts, such as noise/vibration and safety, and 4) cumulative impacts on resources of concern. Future "Tier 2" or project-level analyses will address site-specific environmental impacts of the high-speed train system. Integrating the requirements of NEPA and CWA Section 404 in Tier 1 should serve to expedite the environmental review and permitting process in Tier 2.	Sections 3.15, 3.16, 3.17, and 3.27 of the Tier 1 EIS consider the issues noted and refer to CWA requirements to help expedite future environmental review and permitting during the Tier 2 NEPA process.

Agency	Issue	Comment	Response
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	Threatened and Endangered Species	USFWS data indicate that the species on the list enclosed with USFWS's comment letter may occur in the counties in the Study Area. The list includes descriptions of the habitat requirements, which may be used to help determine if there is suitable habitat within the Study Area. In order to address potential impacts on federally listed species on the enclosed list, USFWS recommends that FRA initiate the Section 7 process by obtaining an official species list and following the steps outlined at http://www.fws.gov/midwest/Endangered for Region 3 (Illinois and Iowa) and http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/endspp/ for Region 6 (Douglas County, Nebraska)	Thank you for providing the list of species by county. The potential for species and habitat presence along the corridor was reviewed during the Tier 1 process; however, potential impacts will not be determined until Tier 2 analysis. If potential adverse impacts on threatened or endangered species are identified, the need for formal Section 7 consultation with USFWS will be documented in the Tier 2 process, where construction-related effects and activities of the preferred alternative can be more definitively assessed to determine whether there would be an adverse effect.
	EIS Process	USFWS Rock Island District will likely be the lead on input from USFWS for this Project and will compile input from other USFWS offices.	Comment noted.
	Wildlife, Noise and Vibration	USFWS recommends that the project be evaluated for potential impacts on wildlife, particularly migratory birds, from increased noise and vibration resulting from increases in train frequency and speed for the alternatives considered.	Section 3.20 of the Tier 1 EIS considers impacts on natural habitats and wildlife, including the effects of increased noise and vibration.
	Route (Route Alternative 4), Threatened and Endangered Species	We are particularly interested in the feasibility of Route Alternative 4 because the portion of the route between Chicago and Joliet, Illinois could be combined with a potential alternative for the Chicago to St. Louis high-speed rail project. The Chicago Field Office has previously identified this potential alternative, carrying passengers east of Joliet, because it would eliminate adverse impacts on the Hine's emerald dragonfly (*Somatochlora hineana*) located in the Lower Des Plaines River Valley. Improvements to the portion of the route between Joliet and Chicago could serve both high-speed rail projects and eliminate impacts on the Hine's emerald dragonfly.	Based on your comment, the specific locations of the seven critical habitat units in Illinois designated for the Hine's emerald dragonfly were reviewed. Route Alternative 4, referenced in your comment, passes no closer than 2.8 miles from the units for the Hine's emerald dragonfly. Consequently, no adverse impacts on the dragonfly are anticipated along this route. Coordination with USFWS will continue throughout this Study to address potential impacts on threatened or endangered species.
	Wetlands	National Wetlands Inventory maps indicate that there may be wetlands within and adjacent to the Study Area for all potential alternatives. USFWS recommends that USACE be contacted for assistance in delineating the wetland types	USACE has been contacted regarding the Tier 1 EIS. The Tier 1 EIS relies on data, maps, and aerial photographs to assess various resources, including wetlands; no field surveys were conducted during this Tier 1 Study. GIS was

Agency	Issue	Comment	Response
		and acreage within the project boundary. Priority consideration should be given to avoid impacts on wetlands. Project activities that would alter wetlands may require a Section 404 permit. Unavoidable impacts will require a mitigation plan to compensate for any losses of wetland functions and values.	used to predict potential wetland impacts. During the Tier 2 NEPA process, field studies would be performed to confirm wetland boundaries. USACE would be contacted again during the Tier 2 process as well as the Section 404 permitting process.
State			
Illinois			
Illinois Department of Natural Resources	Agency Coordination	Illinois DNR requests that coordination occur in the same manner as for the Chicago to St. Louis project. Illinois DNR also asks that FRA acquire its database information to screen route alternatives for resources in their vicinity and to coordinate on those resources.	Illinois DNR was contacted to request the database information for route alternative review.
Iowa			
Iowa Legislative District 26	Jobs, Routes (Location Specific)	Iowa Legislative District 26 urges Iowa DOT to seriously consider Route Alternative [2] through Clinton, a Mississippi River city that would provide a good layover option. The City is well equipped to handle any and all requirements of a passenger rail project and could field a large, skilled workforce.	Comment noted. See Chapter 2 (Alternatives) for a summary of the alternative screening and selection process.
Iowa State Historic Preservation Office	EIS Process, Historical Properties	Iowa SHPO understands that the purpose of the Tier 1 process does not involve consultation regarding specific construction activities, and that those consultations will occur as part of the Tier 2 process and perhaps in separate Section 106 consultation documents.	Comments noted.
		Based on information provided to date, it is unclear whether any historic properties in Iowa would be affected by any of the considered route alternatives. However, the rail segment from Davenport to Iowa City (along Route Alternative 4) is one of the earliest railroad lines constructed in Iowa, and the alignment has changed minimally since its original construction in 1855. This segment also hosted two significant historic events: the Mormon exodus from the State of Illinois, and John Brown's last trip through Iowa prior to the raid at Harpers Ferry, West Virginia. Iowa SHPO looks forward to further consultation on this Project.	Section 3.11 of the Tier 1 EIS addresses the railroad and historic events in consideration of potential Section 106 effects and NEPA impacts of the Project. The Tier 2 NEPA process would involve further consultation for determination of Section 106 and NEPA impacts, including any required mitigation.

Agency	Issue	Comment	Response
Nebraska			
Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality	Permitting and Approvals	As with any facility, permits may be required prior to beginning construction or operation. At a minimum, FRA should be aware of the possible requirements for the following permits:	Comments noted. Section 3.27 of the Tier 1 EIS identifies potential known permits and approvals to help expedite future environmental review and permitting during the Tier 2 NEPA process.
	Water Quality	A Construction Storm Water Permit will be required if there is greater than 1 acre of disturbance of land, which is likely with this Project.	
	Waste	Wastes generated from construction and/or demolition during this Project must be properly disposed at a permitted landfill or recycled.	
	Wetlands	USACE should be contacted regarding Section 404 needs.	
	Air Quality	Any contamination of city roadways will require prevention and/or clean-up per the City of Omaha specifications. Depending on the final route and location in Douglas County as well as installation of stationary equipment, NDEQ Title 129 (outside of city limits) and/or Omaha Air Quality Control regulations (inside of city limits) would apply to the following: • Land clearing and construction-disposal of waste materials by open burning. • Asbestos assessment and abatement prior to any structure demolition. • Fugitive dust control during all land clearing and construction activities. • Construction and/or operating permits for stationary engines, boilers, emergency generation equipment, and other equipment.	
	Permitting and Approvals	Until further along in the planning process, it is unknown whether there may be additional regulatory requirements. NDEQ strongly urges FRA to contact it to determine other requirements. It has been NDEQ's experience that early and open communication helps facilitate the permitting process.	NDEQ will be coordinated with on additional permitting concerns for the Tier 2 Project that would occur in Nebraska.

Agency	Issue	Comment	Response
Nebraska Department of Natural Resources	Surface Water, Floodplains, Permitting and Approvals	Nebraska DNR's statutory responsibilities include surface water right administration, groundwater well registration, and floodplain management programs. Based on Nebraska DNR's initial review of the five potential route alternatives, it does not believe that the route alternatives will have significant impact on Nebraska's surface water and groundwater resources. Floodway/floodplain impacts should be addressed if any segment requires infrastructure in a floodway/floodplain. During the Tier 2 stage (design and construction), a floodplain development permit would be required from the City of Omaha and/or Douglas County before any construction can begin in a floodplain within their jurisdiction.	Comments noted. Section 3.27 of the Tier 1 EIS identifies potential known permits and approvals to help expedite future environmental review and permitting during the Tier 2 NEPA process. Nebraska DNR would be coordinated with on additional permitting concerns for the Tier 2 project that would occur in Nebraska.
	EIS Process	FRA should keep Nebraska DNR informed about Project progress and the availability of the Tier 1 EIS.	
Nebraska Game and Parks Commission	Wetlands, Streams, Wildlife Habitats	NGPC has concerns for impacts on wetlands, streams, and riparian habitats. NGPC encourages that impacts on these resources be avoided and minimized, and that any unavoidable impacts on these habitats be mitigated. Coordination with USACE should occur regarding the need for a Section 404 permit if any fill materials will be placed into any wetland or streams as a result of the proposed project.	Sections 3.15, 3.16, 3.17, and 3.20 of the Tier 1 EIS address potential impacts on wetlands, streams, and riparian habitats. During development of the Potential Impact Area for the Project, these resources were considered, and there was a broad attempt to avoid and to minimize the incorporation of those habitats within the area potentially disturbed by construction. The Tier 2 stage would look in detail at avoidance and minimization of impacts, and identify mitigation if impacts are unavoidable.
	Threatened and Endangered Species	Several state-listed threatened and endangered species are known to occur in the Missouri River, including the pallid sturgeon, lake sturgeon, and sturgeon chub. If the rail line crosses the Missouri River on an existing bridge structure, adverse impacts are not likely to occur. However, if a new bridge structure is needed on a new alignment or modification of an existing structure requires disturbance in the river, then there is a potential to impact these species. NGPC recommends that any construction in the river occur outside the primary migration and spawning period for the species listed above.	If potential adverse impacts on threatened or endangered species are identified in Tier 2 analysis, formal Section 7 consultation with USFWS for impacts on federally listed species will be conducted; coordination will also occur with NGPC for state-listed species. Details of construction timing and techniques would not be determined until the Tier 2 stage, where construction-related effects and activities of the preferred alternative can be more definitively assessed to determine whether there would be an adverse effect.

Agency	Issue	Comment	Response
	Migratory Birds	Under the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act, construction activities in habitats that would otherwise result in the taking of migratory birds, eggs, young, and/or active nests should be avoided. The federal Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act provides for protection of the eagles that use habitat along the Missouri River. If it is determined that migratory birds, including bald and golden eagles, could be impacted by the proposed Project, FRA should coordinate with USFWS.	Migratory birds could be impacted by the Project; coordination will occur with USFWS to reduce the potential of a take of a migratory bird. This coordination and planning would occur during Tier 2 analysis when more specific details of the Project area known.
County/Region/Regional Governmental Organization			
Illinois			
Henry County, Illinois	Energy Use	Public transportation is a viable solution to burning less fuel while moving more people.	Comment noted.
Iowa			
Cass County, Iowa	Routes (General), Funding of the Project	Is this Project going to happen and is the route the only question? Is this plan self-financing, or is this plan going to cost the taxpayer through federal and state subsidies?	The Tier 1 EIS provides high-level analysis of route location, speed, and station locations. Additional Tier 2 studies are needed to identify localized impacts. The system would require federal and state financing.
City Development Board, Iowa	Economy, Economic Impacts	Iowa needs to invest in this Project. More highway and airport traffic creates additional automobile dependency, more congestion, and scattered development patterns. Passenger rail service that is fast and frequent reduces energy consumption and minimizes future disturbances to the natural environment (including farmland). This Project would enhance quality of life across the central portion of the state and help promote smart growth in that area.	Comments noted.
Des Moines Metropolitan Planning Organization, Des Moines, Iowa	Transportation	Would the alternatives analysis process address highway traffic?	Modal review of ridership, indirectly addressing highway traffic, is addressed in the alternatives analysis process as part of the Tier 1 EIS and is discussed in Chapter 2 and Section 3.1. The configuration of how the system would work, including impact on highway traffic and potential modifications of the highway system in areas with at-grade crossings, would be addressed during the Tier 2 NEPA process.
Johnson County, Iowa	EIS Process	Johnson County, Iowa, officials are not aware of any environmental impacts and do not have any comments at this time concerning the Tier 1 EIS process.	Comments noted.

Agency	Issue	Comment	Response
Muscatine County, Iowa	Route (Location Specific, Route Alternatives 4 and 4-A), Support	Muscatine County, Iowa, officials want to convey their strong support of passenger rail from Chicago to Omaha via the BNSF to Iowa Interstate Railroad via the Wyanet Connection in Illinois into Iowa [Route Alternatives 4-A and 4]. This corridor has been analyzed and repeatedly demonstrated its technical, economic, and environmental feasibility. With its proximity to Interstate 80, the route can reduce traffic congestion and air emissions by providing a passenger transportation alternative to cars along this corridor. The proposed route is consistent with the 2040 Quad Cities Long Range Transportation Plan (June 2011), Iowa Region 9 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan (June 2009), Bi-State Region Transit Development Plan (2011), and the 2011 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the Bi-State Region.	Comment noted. Thank you for the information on plans applicable to Route Alternatives 4 and 4-A. See Chapter 2 (Alternatives) for a summary of the alternative screening and selection process.
		As an important economic driver, passenger rail service can play a key role in retaining business and industry and encouraging expansion with greater connectivity to Chicago and Omaha. This route also provides for improved railroad infrastructure to benefit freight and passenger transportation. It would also promote quality of life opportunities for Bi-State Region citizens as an alternative to driving to destinations along the route.	Comments noted.
Southern Iowa Council of Governments, Iowa	Route (Location Specific), Rail (Operations, Upgrades)	The Southern Iowa Council of Governments is concerned about the existing passenger route through southern Iowa being eliminated in favor of a more northern route. Millions of dollars have been spent on track upgrades and depot renovations for the Amtrak route through southern Iowa, and the economic impact of having Amtrak stops in this region is great. Although expansion of passenger rail is desirable through Iowa, it should be accomplished while maintaining the existing *California Zephyr* route through southern Iowa.	Comment noted. The *California Zephyr* is an Amtrak long-distance service operating under congressional appropriations, with decisions made by Amtrak's governing board in consultation with Congress. State-supported trains such as the proposed Chicago to Omaha service are independent from the *California Zephyr* service and federal operating funds authority.
Nebraska			
Douglas County, Nebraska	Route (Location Specific)	The route needs to connect Omaha to Des Moines and to Iowa City at a minimum.	Comment noted. See Chapter 2 (Alternatives) for a summary of the alternative screening and selection process.

Agency	Issue	Comment	Response
Local Municipality			
Illinois			
City of Dixon, Illinois	Public Involvement, Route (Location Specific, Route Alternative 2), Support	Thank you for providing the online public meeting. With the Union Pacific (UP) mainline through Dixon, the City supports the UP line being the preferred route [Route Alternative 2]. The City would be pleased to provide accomodations for future public meetings.	Comments noted. See Chapter 2 (Alternatives) for a summary of the alternative screening and selection process.
City of Silvis, Illinois	Routes (Location Specific, Route Alternative 4), Use of the Project	The present route will be going through the small town of Silvis but will serve thousands of people in the Quad City area.	Comments noted. See Chapter 2 (Alternatives) for a summary of the alternative screening and selection process.
Iowa			
City of Bettendorf, Iowa	Support, Routes (Location Specific, Route Alternative 4-A)	The City of Bettendorf conveys strong support of passenger rail from Chicago to Omaha via Route Alternative 4-A. This corridor has been analyzed for the last decade through the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative and subsequent studies and repeatedly demonstrated its technical, economic, and environmental feasibility.	Comments noted. See Chapter 2 (Alternatives) for a summary of the alternative screening and selection process.
	Transportation, Air Quality	This route alternative has the greatest population and potential riders. Its proximity to I-80 will reduce traffic congestion and air emissions by providing a passenger transportation alternative to cars along this corridor. The proposed route is consistent with the 2040 Quad Cities Long Range Transportation Plan (June 2011), Iowa Region 9 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan (June 2009), Bi-State Region Transit Development Plan (2011), and the 2011 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the Bi-State Region.	Comments noted.
City of Burlington, Iowa	Rail (Upgrades, Improvements), Route (Location Specific, Route Alternative 5), Station Facilities	The City of Burlington believes that the southern route [Route Alternative 5] best meets the needs of this Study. There recently has been a new bridge built across the Mississippi River, and the rail is being upgraded within the Burlington area. Also, Burlington has two [main] lines that are available on Route Alternative 5. Burlington has a depot that could be made available for passenger service.	Comments noted. See Chapter 2 (Alternatives) for a summary of the alternative screening and selection process.

Agency	Issue	Comment	Response
City of Center Point, Iowa	Route (Location Specific, Route Alternative 2)	Route Alternative 2 would have the most passengers coming from the Chicago area to Iowa State University. Ames still has an existing station that could be used.	Comments noted. See Chapter 2 (Alternatives) for a summary of the alternative screening and selection process.
City of Clinton, Iowa (Planner)	Route (Location Specific), Economic Impacts	I suggest that passenger rail service be established through Clinton, Iowa, with a station stop in the city. Passenger rail will bring about many economic development possibilities.	Comments noted. See Chapter 2 (Alternatives) for a summary of the alternative screening and selection process.
City of Clinton, Iowa (Council Member)	Route (Location Specific, Route Alternative 2)	Route Alternative [2] looks great to me.	Comment noted. See Chapter 2 (Alternatives) for a summary of the alternative screening and selection process.
City of Council Bluffs, Iowa	Route (Alternatives), Route (Location Specific, Route Alternatives 4 and 4-A), Station Facilities	The City would like to propose potential locations for a terminus in Council Bluffs. As a historical rail center, the City is concerned with the environmental impacts of routes that will lead to additional traffic through Council Bluffs.	Review of potential station locations is part of the Study and involves coordination with the cities of Council Bluffs and Omaha.
		The Iowa Interstate Railroad route through the Quad Cities, Iowa City/Cedar Rapids metropolitan area, Des Moines metropolitan area, and ending in the Omaha/Council Bluffs metropolitan area [Route Alternatives 4-A and 4] would serve most of Iowa's population centers. The Study should strongly consider terminating the route in Council Bluffs and should consider the opportunity of establishing a multi-modal terminus of the passenger rail line to bus, Eppley Airfield, a bike system, and the interstate system. An optimum location for a terminus is the area northeast of the Lake Manawa/Iowa Highway 192 exit (west of the Iowa Interstate Intermodal Facility and north of the east I-29 and I-80 interchange) with access to both interstates, buses, and bike/pedestrian system. This area is suitable for redevelopment, and there could be some synergism with the proposed interstate reconstruction and planned improvements.	Comments noted. See Chapter 2 (Alternatives) for a summary of the alternative screening and selection process. Coordination with the City of Council Bluffs has occurred, and additional coordination would occur to review potential terminus locations as the Study progresses into Tier 2 analysis.
City of Creston, Iowa	Rail (Speed)	Unless a high-speed route is established, the best manner for moving more people between Chicago and Omaha would be to add service at opposite times of the current Amtrak schedule.	The need for improvements to existing rail and supporting infrastructure to host high-speed trains is being evaluated for this Study.

Agency	Issue	Comment	Response
City of Durant, Iowa	Route (Location Specific, Route Alternative 4-A) Rail (Operations)	The City of Durant likes a combination of Route Alternatives 4 and 5; this allows the route to be shortened and to not have more than three station stops in Iowa. What are the speeds being considered? Will it run on existing track? The City of Durant has five crossings to consider; who will be responsible for maintaining the gates and signals—the railroad or the city? The City does not have room in its budget for additional expenses; currently, Iowa Interstate Railroad maintains all but one signal. How many times a day will the train go through?	Route Alternative 4-A, the combination of Route Alternatives 4 and 5, is reviewed in detail in the Tier 1 EIS. The speeds being considered are 79, 90, and 110 miles per hour. The use of existing track and understanding where improvements are needed, as well as maintenance requirements/responsibility and operational frequency were studied and are documented in Chapter 2 (Alternatives) of the Tier 1 EIS. A more detailed evaluation would continue during the Tier 2 NEPA process.
City of Fort Madison, Iowa	Route (Location Specific, Route Alternative 5)	The City of Fort Madison prefers Route Alternative 5 to bring benefits of development to the most economically distressed part of Iowa.	Comment noted. See Chapter 2 (Alternatives) for a summary of the alternative screening and selection process.
City of Grand Junction, Iowa	Economic Impacts, Transportation (Current Train Traffic)	The City of Grand Junction is trying to promote itself as a "train town" for historical, tourism, and economic development purposes, and has a significant east-west double-tracked Union Pacific (UP) line that intersects with a north-south track that starts in the City and continues up into northwest Iowa (big for grain shippers) but also connects through Fort Dodge and up into northern Iowa and Minnesota.	Comments noted.
	Rail (Operations), Station Facilities, Routes (Alternative Route)	One option is for a route from Dubuque to Fort Dodge, Iowa, and then down to Grand Junction along the UP, and then along the UP over to Omaha [a combination of Route Alternatives 1 and 2]. The UP route [Route Alternative 2] would provide Iowans with the best access points through Clinton (Mississippi River city), Cedar Rapids (Iowa City metropolitan area), Ames (along the Ames-Des Moines business corridor), and perhaps a stop in Carroll, which has great infrastructure and a station.	Comments noted. See Chapter 2 (Alternatives) for a summary of the alternative screening and selection process.
	Rail (Improvements)	Please provide more information on this Project concerning its high-speed rail component and any proposed stations along the routes.	The Study webpage at http://www.iowadot.gov/chicagotoomaha/ provides additional information on the Study. Chapter 2 (Alternatives) of the Tier 1 EIS provides detailed information on the speeds evaluated and potential station locations.

Agency	Issue	Comment	Response
	Routes (Location Specific)	One existing highway overpass is located in Greene County (US 30 on the east side of Grand Junction), and another is being built in the City of Jefferson (Highway 4).	Comment noted.
	Support	Any route would be good for the State of Iowa, but the City is hoping the route will either encompass Des Moines, Ames, or Fort Dodge in Central Iowa.	Comment noted.
City of Grinnell, Iowa (Mayor)	Route (Location Specific, Route Alternatives 4 and 4-A)	The obvious best choice of routes would be the Iowa Interstate Railroad through Iowa City to Des Moines with an intermediate stop in Grinnell [Route Alternatives 4-A and 4].	Comments noted. See Chapter 2 (Alternatives) for a summary of the alternative screening and selection process.
	Support, Economic Impacts, Jobs, Transportation	The community of Grinnell would like to express strong support for the proposed passenger rail route from Chicago to Omaha via Iowa City and Des Moines. The system would attract and retain business and population, especially young people, and help Iowans connect more easily within the state as well as throughout the country. Passenger rail would expand the transportation options for all Iowans with a safe, reliable, cost-effective way to travel, especially with rising prices at the pump. Passenger rail is a smart economic investment for the state.	Comments noted.
	Funding the Project	With federal funds covering about 80 percent of the start-up costs, The City of Grinnell joins with the Greater Des Moines Partnership in supporting continued funding of the Iowa DOT Passenger Rail Fund Program.	Comment noted.
	Routes (Location Specific, Route Alternative 4/4-A), Jobs, Transportation	The proposed route through Iowa City and Des Moines would give better access to Grinnell College students who come here from all over the country and would also provide better access for employees who commute from the Des Moines and Iowa City metropolitan areas. Proximity to I-80 would facilitate access to stations, allowing the rail line to more conveniently serve a larger population.	Comments noted.

Agency	Issue	Comment	Response
City of Grinnell, Iowa (Council Member)	Routes (Location Specific, Route Alternative 4), Transportation	The proposed rail system needs to be faster than a car to attract enough ridership. The former Rock Island route makes the most sense to be centrally located in Iowa and compliment the interstate system with the potential for quick access to stations.	Comments noted.
	Energy Use, Transportation, Economic Impacts, Jobs	This idea would help lower our dependency on oil and would help connect smaller Midwestern cities with larger cities and reduce the number of cars needed. Development of this system would be an economic boom to all parties involved.	
City of Iowa City, Iowa	Route (Location Specific), Support	The City of Iowa City is in full support of a passsenger rail system that includes Iowa City in the route, or at least close proximity (40 miles).	Comment noted. See Chapter 2 (Alternatives) for a summary of the alternative screening and selection process.
City of Lake City, Iowa	Transportation, Support, Use of the Project	The Chicago to Omaha rail service would be great for the Midwest.	Comments noted.
City of Marengo, Iowa	Route (Location Specific, Route Alternative 4), Support	The City of Marengo strongly supports expanded passenger rail service and Route Alternative 4 because rail users are typically college students and this route would pass through the college communities of Des Moines, Grinnell, and Iowa City.	Comments noted. See Chapter 2 (Alternatives) for a summary of the alternative screening and selection process.
City of Mount Vernon, Iowa	Routes (Location Specific, Route Alternative 2, Route Alternative 4), Jobs, Use of the Project, Transportation	The ideal route would connect Omaha to Des Moines, Iowa City, Cedar Rapids, Clinton, and then through the northern suburbs of Chicago to downtown Chicago. This would be the blue route [Route Alternative 4] connecting to the red route [Route Alternative 2] at Cedar Rapids through a connection along the Cedar Rapids and Iowa City Railway (CRANDIC) line, which would be a very popular trip for commuters. University of Iowa students would provide for a lot of traffic to the northern suburbs of Chicago.	Comments noted. See Chapter 2 (Alternatives) for a summary of the alternative screening and selection process.
City of Ogden, Iowa	Transportation	The City of Ogden feels that the concept of a good rail service from Omaha to Chicago is important. It is the right thing to do for efficient transportation and would be desirable as an alternative to both driving and flying.	Comment noted.
City of Roland, Iowa	Transportation, Oppose the Project	Chicago to eastern and central Iowa is already well served by Megabus at a fare that is less than a train, at a speed that is equivalent to a train, and without any state tax dollars.	Comment noted.

Agency	Issue	Comment	Response
Nebraska			
City of Omaha, Nebraska	Cumulative Impacts	How will this Project affect other forms of transportation, such as air travel?	It is anticipated that some demand for other forms of transportation would be slightly reduced by this Project. A demand model was used to anticipate future changes in demand by different travel modes.
	Project Purpose and Need	What prompted this Study? Is there a needs statement?	The MWRRI Study identified the Chicago to Omaha corridor as a prime route for high-speed rail. A needs statement has been developed for the Project and was available for public and agency review during the online scoping meeting. An updated and expanded version of the needs statement is included in Chapter 1 (Purpose and Need) of the Tier 1 EIS and will be available for review.
Other States			
Village of Yellow Springs, Ohio	Support	This is a great idea.	Comment noted.

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4.1.2 Cooperating Agencies

On May 17, 2012, FRA extended an invitation to 24 federal and state agencies to become cooperating agencies for this Tier 1 EIS. Invitation letters were sent to specific agencies based on FRA and Iowa DOT's identification of reviewing agencies that may have an interest in the Project because of the potential for intergovernmental issues and/or the potential for impacts within that agency's legal jurisdiction. Cooperating agencies:

- Participate in coordination meetings.
- Raise concerns about any relevant technical studies that may be needed for the Project.
- Provide information on alternatives.
- Assist the lead agency (FRA) in determining appropriate and practicable mitigation when appropriate. These measures should reflect avoidance, minimization, and compensation.
- Review pre-draft and pre-final documentation and comment as early as practicable on environmental issues of concern.

Agencies that agreed to serve as cooperating agencies on this Project are:

- FHWA Iowa Division
- FTA Region V
- USACE Rock Island District
- USCG District 8
- U.S. Department of the Army, Rock Island Arsenal
- USEPA Region 5
- USEPA Region 7
- USFWS Rock Island
- Illinois DNR
- Iowa SHPO

On October 24, 2012, a teleconference was conducted with cooperating agencies prior to completion of the Tier 1 Draft EIS to discuss the proposed approach for NEPA compliance as well as other environmental requirements. The Tier 1 Draft EIS was issued to these agencies, along with other agencies and the public, and comments from cooperating agencies were considered during preparation of the Tier 1 Final EIS. Section 4.4 includes a summary of comments on the Tier 1 Draft EIS, Appendix O has been supplemented with specific agency comments on the Tier 1 Draft EIS, and Appendix Q includes a table of comments on the Tier 1 Draft EIS and responses to those comments. FRA anticipates that these agencies would continue to be cooperating agencies through participation in future Tier 2 NEPA processes associated with the Project.

4.1.3 Milestones

Iowa DOT coordinated with both reviewing and cooperating agencies from Illinois, Iowa, and Nebraska at selected Project milestones during this Study. These milestones are 1) purpose and need, 2) alternatives to be analyzed, and 3) alternatives to be carried forward. Iowa DOT continued to coordinate with the reviewing and cooperating agencies throughout the Tier 1 NEPA process, including at the fourth milestone, selection of the preferred

alternative. Coordination at these Project milestones helped guide the Study, especially alternatives identification and evaluation.

At each Project milestone, Iowa DOT coordinated with the reviewing and cooperating agencies by distributing information for their review. Coordination for milestone 1 was completed after the purpose and need statement was developed. A packet of information, including the purpose and need statement, was distributed to the agencies prior to the scoping meeting for the agencies' review and comment. Coordination for milestones 2 and 3 occurred after coarse-level and fine-level screening of the alternatives was conducted. The results of the screening were documented in the Alternatives Analysis Report (Appendix A), which was made available to the agencies for review and comment. The Tier 1 Draft EIS addressed milestone 4, selection of the preferred alternative, and was made available to all reviewing and cooperating agencies. Comments by all agencies were considered in preparing the Tier 1 Final EIS.

4.2 TRIBAL OUTREACH

Coordination with Illinois DOT and NDOR was conducted to compile a list of tribes and Native American groups, whose tribal ranges included the portions of Illinois, Iowa, and Nebraska along the route alternatives shown in Figure 2-1. A coordination packet that described the Study and Project and included a figure of the route alternatives was mailed to representatives of each tribe and Native American group on May 17, 2012, by FRA. FRA, as the lead federal agency, is responsible for offering government-to-government consultation with tribes and ensuring that treaty and trust responsibilities to tribes are considered in the review of the proposed route alternatives. This packet was the same as the EC packet sent to resource agencies (see Appendix O). The following is the compiled list of the tribes and Native American groups to which the packet was sent:

- Ho-Chunk Nation
- Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska
- Iowa Tribe of Oklahoma
- Kickapoo Tribe in Kansas
- Miami Tribe of Oklahoma
- Omaha Tribe of Nebraska
- Otoe-Missouria Tribe
- Pawnee Nation of Oklahoma
- Peoria Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma
- Ponca Tribe of Nebraska
- Sac and Fox Nation of Mississippi in Iowa
- Sac and Fox Nation of Mississippi in Kansas and Nebraska
- Sac and Fox Nation of Oklahoma
- Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska
- Yankton Sioux Tribe

In addition to the tribes and Native American groups listed above, an information packet was sent to the Nebraska Commission on Indian Affairs. Feedback from tribes and Native American groups was considered as part of the Study, is documented in this Tier 1 EIS, and establishes coordination for future interaction on the Project as part of Tier 2.

At the request of the Yankton Sioux Tribe, additional Sioux Tribes of the region were sent EC packets on July 5, 2012. The following is the compiled list of additional Sioux Tribes contacted:

- Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation
- Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe
- Crow Creek Sioux Tribe
- Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe of South Dakota
- Lower Brule Sioux Tribe
- Lower Sioux Indian Community in the State of Minnesota
- Oglala Sioux Tribe
- Prairie Island Indian Community Mdewakanton Dakota Sioux of Minnesota
- Rosebud Sioux Tribe
- Santee Sioux Nation
- Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community of Minnesota
- Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate of the Lake Traverse Reservation
- Standing Rock Sioux Tribe of North & South Dakota
- Upper Sioux Community

Comments received from tribes and Native American groups during preparation of the Tier 1 Draft EIS are organized by tribe or group and are summarized below.

The Kickapoo Tribe in Kansas does not currently have sufficient staffing to provide input on the Project and deferred to other tribes and Native American groups with similar historical ties. The tribe acknowledged FRA's compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

The Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska reviewed the route alternatives and indicated that it has cultural properties in some of the areas that could undergo construction. According to oral tradition, the tribe lived in the area in the prehistoric period and in the early years of the historic period. If any burial sites or other cultural properties are found, the tribe must be notified immediately.

The Yankton Sioux Tribe noted that the proposed route alternatives fall within its ancestral lands and is requesting further coordination for conducting a traditional cultural property (TCP) study and including other Sioux tribes in the region as part of Project coordination. Further coordination would occur during the Tier 2 NEPA process.

Section 4.4 includes a summary of comments received on the Tier 1 Draft EIS, including those from tribes and Native American groups, and Appendix Q includes a table of comments on the Tier 1 Draft EIS and responses to those comments.

Future consultation with tribes and Native American groups would occur during Tier 2 through FRA via government-to-government interaction.

4.3 STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH

At the onset of the Study, Iowa DOT conducted a Stakeholder Analysis to identify public stakeholders in Illinois, Iowa, and Nebraska who may be affected by or have data related to the Study. The contact information for these stakeholders was entered into a database as a

starting point for stakeholder outreach. As more members of the public engaged in the Study through the public outreach process, the stakeholder database expanded. All identified stakeholders are receiving updates at Study milestones via one or more of the outreach tools described in Section 4.3.1 and will be invited to the public meetings. In addition, these outreach tools are being used to notify the Study Team of public activity. The Agency and Stakeholder Involvement Plan developed for the Study includes details of the outreach plan (Iowa DOT, March 2, 2012).

4.3.1 Outreach Tools

A variety of outreach tools are being used to notify public stakeholders about the status of this Study and to provide opportunities for input. These include both a Study webpage on Iowa DOT's website, a Project website for hosting online meetings, a toll-free Study information line, an online community tool kit, and an email mailing list.

The Study webpage on Iowa DOT's website (http://www.iowadot.gov/chicagotoomaha) includes general Study information, the Tier 1 EIS schedule, maps of the initial range of route alternatives, resources (including a media webinar, a community tool kit, an online survey, the Notice of Intent, news releases, documents produced for the Study, and links to other resources), in-person public meeting information and links to the online public meeting, materials from previous meetings, a link to an online comment form, links to promote the sharing of Study information through Facebook and Twitter, and contact information. As new information becomes available, it is posted on the Study webpage.

A Project website with a unique URL (http://chicagotoomaha.com/) is used specifically for hosting online public meetings. This website is not always active, and hosts only the most current information. For example, when public scoping was completed, the scoping information was moved to Iowa DOT's Study webpage (http://www.iowadot.gov/chicagotoomaha/resources.html), and the next topic, results of the alternatives analysis screening process and public meetings to review the findings of the analysis, was then posted on the Project website (http://chicagotoomaha.com/).

A toll-free Study information line (1.800.488.7119) is also available to provide general Study updates, to provide opportunities for public participation, to record comments on the Study, and to allow callers to join the Study mailing list, with notification via email and receipt of information via email or postal mail, based on commenter preference. The information line is updated at each Study milestone to provide the most current and up-to-date Study information to stakeholders. An online community tool kit was developed with informational brochures on the Study, the NEPA process, and opportunities to get involved for use by interested stakeholders and community groups. The community tool kit included a survey that was used by stakeholders and community groups to solicit input from their memberships via the Internet, mobile devices, or postal mail from April 13 to September 1, 2012 (see Section 4.3.4 for the community survey results). Finally, Project email messages are sent at key milestones to all stakeholders identified through the Stakeholder Analysis and to those requesting to be added to the Study mailing list. Email invitations have been sent to invite participation at online and in-person public meetings and to announce the launch of the online community tool kit. Table 4-2 summarizes the outreach tools and use by stakeholders from February 2012 through January 21, 2013.

Table 4-2. Outreach Tools and Usage Summary

Outreach Tool	Usage February 2012 Through January 21, 2013
Study webpage	10,835 unique visitors
Project website	6,508 unique visitors
Facebook	1,006 posts
Twitter	166 tweets and 56 retweets
Study information line	23 calls
Community surveys	1,934 completed surveys
Project emails sent	37,200 emails

To announce online and in-person meetings, press releases and media advisories have been released to all print media outlets statewide in Illinois and Iowa, and to the Omaha World Herald and Lincoln Journal Star in Nebraska at all Study milestones, public participation opportunities, and comment periods. This media strategy resulted in 66 earned media mentions in local and national news outlets from February 2012 through January 21, 2013. In addition to press releases, advertisements have been placed in the following newspapers to announce the public meetings and avenues to review information and provide comments:

- Ames Tribune (Ames, IA)
- Burlington Hawk Eye (Burlington, IA)
- Cedar Rapids Gazette (Cedar Rapids, IA)
- Davenport Quad-City Times (Davenport, IA)
- Des Moines Register (Des Moines, IA)
- Dubuque Telegraph Herald (Dubuque, IA)
- Fort Dodge Messenger (Fort Dodge, IA)
- Iowa City Press-Citizen (Iowa City, IA)
- Osceola Sentinel-Tribune (Osceola, IA)
- Taylorville Breeze Courier (Taylorville, IL)
- Waterloo-Cedar Falls Courier (Waterloo, IA)

To accommodate language and communication barriers, all information, including video scripts from public meetings, can be requested by mail and can be translated to Spanish or other languages by request.

4.3.2 Scoping Meeting

Iowa DOT, in conjunction with FRA, hosted an online open-house meeting from February 13 to April 16, 2012, for the public to understand and comment on the scope of the Study and the initial range of route alternatives. The online scoping meeting was held on the Project website (http://chicagotoomaha.com/). Public comments from the online scoping meeting were collected through online comment forms, email messages, letters mailed or faxed to Iowa DOT, and the toll-free Study information line. Based on automatic electronic login recordation for the online open-house meeting, there were 2,789 attendees, and 994 comments were collected.

Many of the comments contained multiple issues and concerns. Each issue was identified and assigned a unique code, and subtopics were assigned as warranted; where appropriate, similar concerns were grouped into categories. For example, "economic impact" was identified as a common topic, and subtopics for that issue included local benefits, improvement of business and job opportunities, and several others. If a comment required an immediate response, such as a media inquiry, or if a comment included questions concerning the scoping period or public meetings, a response was drafted and provided either by telephone, email, or letter. A subject matter expert reviewed the issues and codes, and provided summary information to preparers of the Tier 1 EIS to ensure that the relevant issues are addressed in the NEPA document. Individuals providing public comment were not identified for privacy reasons.

The key comments for each resource topic are summarized here. Expanded summaries of comments by resource topic are provided in the Final Scoping Report in bullet format; in many instances, subtopics have been combined to consolidate similar comments.

Very few public comments expressed concern with potential impacts on the natural and physical environment, either from not constructing the Project or from constructing and operating the Project. The majority of commenters supported development of the Project and cited a variety of reasons for their support, including fuel efficiency, reliability, safety, comfort, competitive cost, and economic development. Those not in favor of the Project gave several reasons, including that current bus service is sufficient and that taxpayer funds should not be used for the Project. However, there were several commenters indicating support for the Project if no taxpayer funds were used. Commenters identifying themselves as retirees and/or college students typically supported the Project. Key comments by issue are identified below:

- **Agricultural Resources** – The use of existing ROW should be maximized in order to minimize the use of farmland and other land uses.
- **Air Quality** – More use of rail service would maximize fuel efficiency while minimizing impacts on air quality. Buses are reported to have a higher rate of passenger mileage per gallon of fuel than passenger trains and fewer emissions of carbon dioxide.
- **Climate Chang**e – Passenger rail service would slow climate change.
- **Cumulative Impact**s – Economic, environmental, and social pros and cons should be considered. In addition to assessing impacts of constructing and operating the passenger rail system, the following should be assessed: reduced highway and airport congestion, improved transportation safety, and the resulting public and private development.
- **Drugs/Crime** – The Study should address potential increases in drug use and crime at station stops and along the route alternatives.
- **Economic Impacts** – The Study should evaluate not only costs of the Project but also the direct and indirect cost benefits, such as reducing highway traffic, improving transportation safety, reducing airline rates through competition, and stimulating the economy. In addition, quality of life improvements for those who cannot afford their own vehicles should be evaluated. A Project benefit would be better commuting and interconnection of young professionals to help reduce out-migration. In addition, high-speed rail service would better link cities' economies. Noted concerns are that the Project could pull money from Iowa to spend in

Chicago and that the Project is not affordable given the current budget deficit. The passenger rail service should be accomplished without affecting the route for the *California Zephyr*; it would be economically detrimental if the Amtrak service were adversely affected.

- **Elderly** – Passenger rail service would be useful for seniors who cannot drive or do not want the stress of driving in congested traffic, especially for rural residents traveling to cities.
- **Energy Use** – Passenger rail service would be more energy efficient, less dependent on foreign oil, and cleaner than individual vehicles that often have only one occupant. However, buses offer more miles per passenger per gallon of fuel than trains. Passenger rail with fuel is not as energy and carbon efficient when compared to Europe's use of electric power for rail operations.
- **Environmental Justice** – The passenger rail service should be accomplished without affecting the route for the *California Zephyr*, which goes through some of the poorest counties in Iowa; it would be economically detrimental to low income populations if the Amtrak service were adversely affected.
- **Funding of the Project** – Because private railroads are the main beneficiary of an upgraded, shared route, they should help fund the Project. The Project would need to be subsidized, would not likely meet its ridership estimates and goals, and would lose money. Funding should be focused on one route alternative based on existing infrastructure. Passenger rail needs better funding from the Federal government, which spends a great deal of money to support the airport and highway systems.
- **General** – This Project would help revitalize a system that worked more than a century ago and works well in Europe. The passenger rail system should be planned to account for existing rail operations and local transit systems. In addition, community support for stations should be considered during system planning.
- **Health** – Public transportation benefits public health and transportation safety.
- **Jobs** – In addition to construction jobs, the passenger rail system would lead to permanent jobs both directly and indirectly. Regional connectivity would be improved and would allow young professionals in Iowa to stay in the state while developing local careers. Businesses will want to be near station depots, and the stations would assist in recruiting potential employees to an area.
- **No-Build Alternative** – The alternative to not build the passenger rail system is the appropriate option because of the current budget deficit.
- **Noise** – Trains are loud and would increase noise levels along the selected route alternative, which is a disadvantage for those living along the route alternative.
- **Oppose the Project** – The Project should be privately funded or not constructed. Do not use tax dollars to fund the Project; use tax dollars for better uses, such as education. The use of a bus system is a better option. The Project would transport problems from Chicago to rural areas and should not be developed.
- **People with Disabilities** – As a nation, we have done little to accommodate people who cannot drive a vehicle.
- **Project Need** – There is no need for a system that cannot support itself without tax dollars. There is a need for affordable, regional travel beyond what is

available from expensive airline fares. A commuter-type service is needed between the most populated parts of Iowa, including Des Moines (the state capital). Given existing bus service, there is no need for passenger rail service.

- **Project Purpose** – There is no purpose for the Project because passenger rail service is not needed.
- **Property Acquisitio**n – Available ROW should be used to the maximum extent possible to minimize property acquisition. A dedicated, direct route requiring acquisition by eminent domain may be the only solution for an efficient passenger rail system. The passenger rail system should be located along existing interstate ROW; this would minimize ROW acquisition and be along a fairly straight and flat route.
- **Public Involvement** – The public involvement website is easy to use and informative, with good visuals. The displays on the public website are difficult to read. A demonstration train should be used for operations to allow the public to better understand the passenger rail concept.
- **Rail – Freight Rail** – Passenger rail must be given priority over freight operations to be efficient. Route Alternatives 1 and 4 have relatively little freight traffic, whereas Route Alternatives 2 and 5 have heavy freight traffic that could interfere with passenger traffic. A separate, dedicated passenger rail line should be installed to avoid conflicts with freight trains.
- **Rail – Improvements and Rail – Upgrades** – Vast improvements and upgrades to tracks, sidings, signals, and other infrastructure would be required. Route alternatives with more, current upgrades could be more economical to modify than antiquated routes. Costs to upgrade, reconstruct, or build new bridges need to be considered. In addition, upgrade of tracks to the highest possible speed during initial construction needs to be considered. Slower service is fine because it would require fewer upgrades and cost less to get the Project going.
- **Rail – Operations/Speed** – The most important operational issues are reliability and cost, followed by scheduling. Air travel is more vulnerable to terrorism than rail travel. Overnight travel would be good between Omaha and Chicago, and an early morning departure would also be recommended. The faster the trains can operate, the more efficient and attractive the system would be compared to air, bus, and single vehicle travel. The schedules for this passenger rail service and Amtrak's *California Zephyr* should be integrated.
- **Routes – Alternative Route/Locations** – While planning this system, the potential for a north-south intersecting route such as Minneapolis-Des Moines-Kansas City should be considered. Service to Sioux Falls should be included. Instead of this Project, a light rail running from Iowa City to Waterloo should be considered. The service should be expanded from Omaha to Lincoln. A combination of route alternatives should be used, such as Route Alternatives 4 and 5 with a connection in Wyanet, or Route Alternatives 2 and 3 with a connection between Cedar Rapids and Ames. Both Iowa City and Ames should be included on the selected route alternative. Because there is already Chicago to Omaha service, the route should run from Chicago to Kansas City. The route should be created from Chicago to Dubuque to Cedar Rapids to Iowa City to Des Moines to Omaha.

- **Routes – Route Alternative 1** – Route Alternative 1 would come close to many of the largest population centers and would provide service to the University of Northern Iowa.
- **Routes – Route Alternative 2** – Route Alternative 2 could be the least expensive route alternative for upgrade based on improvements by Union Pacific. Route Alternative 2 would help transit at multiple colleges and includes depots that could be reused.
- **Routes – Route Alternative 3** – Much of Route Alternative 3 would have to be replaced and would not be an economical option, requiring much property acquisition. The Illinois portion of the route alternative has much freight traffic, making it an unattractive option.
- **Routes – Route Alternative 4** – Route Alternative 4 would be along major population centers and near I-80, which would facilitate quick access to stations. The route alternative would travel by many colleges, which would make this route alternative convenient. Des Moines, as the Iowa state capital, would be a key city along Route Alternative 4 as would the Quad Cities area and Iowa City.
- **Routes – Route Alternative 5** – Route Alternative 5 has several disadvantages as it has the least number of urban centers and a high amount of freight traffic with no dedicated passenger lines, and it already has passenger rail service. The southernmost route would likely have less winter weather impact than the more northern routes. A commuter-type service is needed on this route alternative.
- **Routing Process** – One route should be selected based on what has already been improved for the route, and funding should be obtained for the entire route. Routing should be used that would increase frequencies to maximize investments in present infrastructure. Analysis should be conducted on where people both in and out of state live and will most likely want to travel.
- **Safety** – There are concerns with high-speed rail passenger trains sharing tracks with freight trains. Very good grade-separated crossings should be provided. Passenger rail service should reduce highway traffic accidents by reducing congestion, provide an alternative safer method for winter travel, and decrease drinking and driving incidents and distracted drivers. Something like the Transportation Security Administration should be provided to address security issues for safe travel of the public.
- **Schedule** – The Study should be completed, and the Project should be constructed and operating. Iowa is several years behind Illinois in the planning and construction of passenger rail service.
- **Station Facilities and Upgrades** – The Study should consider better/fewer station stops at key population centers, convenient access, secure stations and parking with free or low-cost parking, amenities at and around the stations, and convenient access to rental cars and mass transit. The passenger trains should support transit of bicycles. The service should have sufficient stops beyond those for major cities. Reuse/upgrade of existing station facilities should be considered, as should station locations in areas near current mass transit centers.
- **Support the Project** – Many support passenger rail service because it would be dependable, fast, safe, progressive, efficient, and greener compared to other modes of transportation. Although buses provide a relatively inexpensive travel

option, they are often late due to traffic and can be crowded. The younger generation is in favor of transit options because of the capability to use laptops, cell phones, etc. Regional passenger rail service would provide options for business trips and vacations, commuting, and travel by college students, senior citizens, and travelers who cannot afford a car.

- **Train Amenities** – Trains are more comfortable, roomy, and frequently more suited to community access than other forms of transportation. Trains need working restrooms, food and beverage service, a variety of seating arrangements, tables, and Wi-Fi for Internet users. People should be able to take more luggage than on an airplane and have the option to store bicycles on the train. There should be multiple departure times and on-time service.
- **Transportation – Bus Service** – Funds for rail would be better spent on upgrading our busing system to make buses more energy efficient. Efficient bus service would make choosing passenger trains less likely. Buses are crowded, uncomfortable, and make too many stops. Buses have a better on-time record than Amtrak with less carbon dioxide output than trains. The rail option is too expensive for families compared to buses. If passenger rail is developed, it should tie into convenient bus service from passenger rail stations to other cities not served by rail.
- **Transportation – Current Train Traffic** – The ongoing conflict between Amtrak operations on freight routes suggests a certain incompatibility and inefficiency between freight and passenger rail services. Amtrak, an existing passenger rail service, should be invested in rather than a new system. Amtrak is unreasonably priced, takes too long, is not reliable, and does not serve the main population centers in Iowa. Potential impacts on the *California Zephyr* system as a result of implementing a regional passenger rail system should be considered; any new system should be accomplished while maintaining the existing service.
- **Transportation – General –** Instead of passenger rail, it would be better to invest in a mode that people will continue to use, such as highways. The passenger rail service should be developed, and inter-urban rail or bus rapid transit should connect with other population centers to help reduce congestion on our highways. Compared to Europe, our passenger train system seems outdated and needs to be improved to become a viable service. The rail system should be electrified.
- **Transportation – Highway Congestion** – The majority of college students in Iowa are from out of state and have only automobiles for traveling between home and college; providing rail service would reduce roadway congestion. Congestion in the Chicago area is a disincentive to driving; people in Iowa would more likely travel to Chicago via passenger rail. With the main population centers along I-80, providing a passenger rail service in this area should help alleviate highway congestion.
- **Use of the Project** – The Study should review the demographics around stations and along route alternatives to help select the route alternatives and stations for the most use. The passenger rail system could be used most regularly by commuters, but also by college students, retirees, vacationers, patients visiting hospitals, and people attending sporting events and traveling on holidays. The system would get more use in the future as other connections are established. Use

of the system could increase during the winter when driving and airline travel are restricted. Use would likely be highest for the route alternative along the largest population centers. If the travel times, costs, and stops are not reasonable, do not build it because there would not be enough use to justify the costs.

- **Water Quality** – The passenger rail system would be a good environmental and economic move to reduce energy expenditures and environmental impacts on air and water quality.

4.3.3 Alternatives Analysis Meetings

A set of three public information meetings was held in May 2012 to obtain input from the public on preliminary results from screening the initial range of route alternatives (see Figure 2-1). The Draft Alternatives Analysis Report (FRA and Iowa DOT, April 27, 2012) was available for review on the Project website the week of the meetings. Chapter 2 of this Tier 1 EIS includes a summary of the Alternative Analysis process and presents the results of the process.

The public information meetings were conducted both through in-person open-house meetings held in three locations and through an online, self-directed open-house meeting. In-person meetings were conducted on Tuesday, May 1, 2012, at Chicago Union Station in Chicago, Illinois; Wednesday, May 2, 2012, at the State Historical Society Building in Des Moines, Iowa; and Thursday, May 3, 2012, at the Mid-America Center in Council Bluffs, Iowa. The in-person meetings were held from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. each evening. The online open-house meeting was available from May 1 through May 21, 2012, on the Project website. The in-person and online open-house meetings were hosted by Iowa DOT, which illustrated the various route alternatives, explained the process used to evaluate the route alternatives, discussed results of the alternatives analysis, and helped Iowa DOT, FRA, and Illinois DOT gain public input on the route alternatives. Based on sign-in sheets for the in-person meetings and automatic electronic login recordation for the online meeting, there were 163 in-person attendees and 5,177 online attendees.

During the comment period for the alternatives analysis, 208 comments were received from agencies, organizations, and the public. The majority of commenters noted that they would use the project and cited a variety of reasons, including personal or business travel. In addition, 134 commenters noted their support for the Project, including a preference for Route Alternative 4 or Route Alternative 4-A, as well as potential economic benefits. Six comments were submitted by those who were not in support of the Project. Non-supportive comments cited the use of taxpayer money and the lack of a market for long-term use. The Alternatives Analysis Report was supplemented with comments and responses, was finalized, and is included in Appendix A.

In addition to the public information meetings, two Stakeholder Meetings were held with municipal representatives, elected officials, and community leaders. The Stakeholder Meetings were hosted by Iowa DOT from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. on Wednesday, May 2, 2012, at the State Library in Des Moines, Iowa, and on Thursday, May 3, 2012, at the Mid-American Center in Council Bluffs, Iowa. Formal invitations were sent to municipal representatives, elected officials, and community leaders asking them to meet with the project team to discuss the same information that was presented at the in-person and online open-house meetings.

4.3.4 Community Survey Results

Public opinion of the full implementation of the Preferred Alternative from Chicago to Omaha was gathered through an online community survey. This survey was qualitative in nature and reflects the opinion of only those who elected to respond. A total of 1,934 completed surveys were submitted during the survey period, which was April 13 through December 26, 2012; the survey remained open until the end of the comment period on the Tier 1 Draft EIS. As shown in Table 4-3, the vast majority of respondents would use the service for business travel or both business and personal travel, support the establishment of regional passenger rail, and think it will have a positive economic impact.

Table 4-3. Community Survey Results Summary

Questions and Possible Responses	Number of Responses	Percentage of Responses[a]
When traveling to destinations in Illinois, Iowa, and Nebraska, which of the following transportation options do you use most often?		
Bus	49	2.7%
Car	1,697	92.0%
Passenger Rail	47	2.5%
Plane	47	2.5%
I don't know	5	0.3%
When traveling to destinations in Illinois, Iowa, and Nebraska, which of the following transportation options would you prefer to use?		
Bus	19	1.0%
Car	337	18.5%
Passenger Rail	1,340	73.7%
Plane	47	2.6%
I don't know	77	4.2%
If improved regional passenger rail were available from Chicago, Ill., through Iowa to Omaha, Neb., including four to five round-trips during the day with greater than 90 percent on-time performance and travel times similar to a car, would you use the service?		
Yes	1,654	88.0%
No	41	2.2%
Maybe	169	9.0%
I don't know	14	0.8%
If improved regional passenger rail were available from Chicago, Ill., through Iowa to Omaha, Neb., why would you use rail service?		
Business Travel	383	20.5%
Personal	680	36.3%
Both	764	40.8%
I would not use the service	44	2.4%
Do you think there will be a positive economic impact on Illinois, Iowa, and Nebraska associated with regional passenger rail service?		
Yes	1697	90.1%
No	50	2.7%
Not Sure	136	7.2%
Do you currently use passenger rail service?		
Yes	565	30.3%
No	1,299	69.7%

Questions and Possible Responses	Number of Responses	Percentage of Responses[a]
Which of the following would be the most important consideration when planning a regional passenger rail system from Chicago through Iowa to Omaha?		
Cost of transportation	506	30.4%
Accessibility	203	12.2%
Convenience	255	15.3%
Cost to taxpayers	77	4.6%
Economic development	122	7.3%
Job creation	36	2.2%
Environmental benefits	130	7.8%
Increased travel options	269	16.1%
Other	69	4.1%
How important are the following elements in selecting a passenger rail route alternative?		
a. Train speed		
Not At All	93	5.0%
Moderately	1,014	54.5%
Extremely	719	38.6%
No Opinion	35	1.9%
b. Costs to residents in Illinois, Iowa, and Nebraska		
Not at all	153	8.2%
Moderately	903	48.6%
Extremely	763	41.0%
No opinion	40	2.2%
c. Costs of travel		
Not at all	23	1.3%
Moderately	661	35.8%
Extremely	1,141	61.8%
No opinion	21	1.1%
d. Impacts to the natural environment (wetlands, streams, air quality, etc.)		
Not at all	168	9.1%
Moderately	717	38.9%
Extremely	890	48.3%
No opinion	67	3.7%
e. Impacts to the built environment (homes, towns, businesses, schools, etc.)		
Not at all	205	11.1%
Moderately	915	49.6%
Extremely	644	34.9%
No opinion	80	4.4%
If regional passenger rail service were available to you, how important would the following factors be in choosing passenger rail service in place of other modes of travel?		
a. Travel times		
Not at all	42	2.3%
Moderately	730	39.4%
Extremely	1,062	57.2%
No opinion	20	1.1%
b. The cost of travel options		
Not at all	31	1.7%
Moderately	616	33.2%
Extremely	1,191	64.3%
No opinion	15	0.8%

Questions and Possible Responses	Number of Responses	Percentage of Responses[a]
c. The experience of traveling by train		
Not at all	167	9.1%
Moderately	749	40.7%
Extremely	864	47.0%
No opinion	58	3.2%
d. Opportunities during travel to work or socialize		
Not at all	247	13.4%
Moderately	784	42.4%
Extremely	745	40.4%
No opinion	70	3.8%
e. Decreased environmental impacts versus other travel modes.		
Not at all	129	7.0%
Moderately	666	36.2%
Extremely	962	52.3%
No opinion	82	4.5%
f. Reliability of service		
Not at all	20	1.1%
Moderately	345	18.7%
Extremely	1,456	78.7%
No opinion	29	1.5%
g. Frequency of use		
Not at all	57	3.1%
Moderately	871	47.2%
Extremely	858	46.6%
No opinion	57	3.1%
h. Proximity of service to your home, destination, etc.		
Not at all	58	3.4%
Moderately	667	39.2%
Extremely	929	54.7%
No opinion	46	2.7%
Do you support the establishment of regional passenger rail service from Chicago through Iowa to Omaha?		
Yes	1,725	92.9%
No	78	4.2%
Not Sure	54	2.9%
Would you like to join our mailing list to receive more information on the study?		
Yes	678	43.0%
No	904	57.0%

4.4 TIER 1 DRAFT EIS PUBLIC HEARING AND COMMENT PROCESS

After the Tier 1 Draft EIS was published, Iowa DOT and FRA held public hearings in the vicinity of the proposed Project. The public hearings were held in three major communities along the proposed route—Chicago, Illinois; Des Moines, Iowa; and Council Bluffs, Iowa—in December 2012. Specific meeting dates and locations were as follows:

- Chicago, Illinois
    - Tuesday, December 11, 2012
    - Union Station

    - Great Hall Gallery
    - 500 West Jackson Street
- Des Moines, Iowa
    - Wednesday, December 12, 2012
    - Des Moines Botanical Center
    - Oak/Willow Room
    - 909 Robert D. Ray Drive
- Council Bluffs, Iowa
    - Thursday, December 13, 2012
    - Council Bluffs Public Library
    - Conference Room A/B
    - 400 Willow Avenue

All of the public hearings were held from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. Hearing attendees were asked to sign in at the meetings. In all, 152 people signed in at the three public hearings, with the highest attendance (74 people) occurring at the Des Moines, Iowa, hearing. Each hearing included a formal presentation at 5:30 p.m., followed by a question-and-answer session concluding at 6:15 p.m. Iowa DOT and consultant staff were available for discussion between 4:00 and 5:30 p.m., and then following the question-and-answer session between 6:15 and 7:00 p.m. Discussions were held with attendees at the information boards and aerial maps of the Study Area. Attendees wishing to provide comments were invited to complete and submit a comment form either in person or through direct mail, or to use one of the many other Project comment mechanisms, discussed below.

At all three public hearings, the same information was presented. The purpose of the public hearings was for Iowa DOT to receive public input on the Tier 1 Draft EIS, including the Project's purpose and need, all reasonable alternatives, the affected environment, and the potential environmental impacts of the alternatives considered. Iowa DOT also explained the basis for selection of the Build Alternative and the No-Build Alternative.

In addition to the public hearings, Iowa DOT hosted an online open-house meeting from November 9 through December 26, 2012, on the Project website (http://chicagotoomaha.com/) for those who were unable to attend the in-person public hearings or who preferred not to attend. Through a series of web pages, the online visitor had the opportunity to review all the information boards, watch videos from Iowa DOT staff, and provide comments. The online open-house meeting presented the same information as the public hearings. The online open-house meeting garnered 910 unique visitors through the end of the comment period on December 26, 2012.

Following the last public hearing, a Stakeholder Meeting was held with municipal representatives, elected officials, and community leaders. The Stakeholder Meeting was hosted by Iowa DOT from 7:30 to 8:30 a.m. on Friday, December 14, 2012, at the Chamber of Commerce Boardroom in Council Bluffs, Iowa. Formal invitations were sent to municipal representatives, elected officials, and community leaders asking them to meet with the project team to discuss the same information that was presented at the in-person public hearings and online open-house meeting.

Comments on the Project were collected through comment forms submitted at the in-person public hearings, comment forms or letters mailed or faxed to Iowa DOT, online comment forms, email messages, and the toll-free Study information line. For comments containing multiple issues and concerns, each issue was identified and assigned a unique code, and subtopics were assigned as warranted; where appropriate, similar concerns were grouped into categories. For example, "economic impact" is a common topic, and subtopics for that issue include local benefits, improvement of business and job opportunities, and several others. If a comment required an immediate response, such as a media inquiry, or if a comment included questions concerning the comment period or public hearings, a response was drafted and provided either by telephone, email, or letter. Comments received by the close of the comment period, which ended on Wednesday, December 26, 2012, were included in the official record for the Project. Individuals providing public comment were not identified for privacy reasons.

A subject matter expert reviewed the issues and codes, and provided summary information. The key comments for each resource topic are summarized here; in many instances, subtopics have been combined to consolidate similar comments.

Very few public comments expressed concern with potential impacts on the natural and physical environment, either from not constructing the Project or from constructing and operating the Project. The majority of commenters supported development of the Project and cited a variety of reasons for their support, including fuel efficiency, reliability, safety, comfort, competitive cost, and economic development. Those not in favor of the Project gave several reasons, including that current bus service is sufficient and that taxpayer funds should not be used for the Project. Key comments by issue are identified below:

- **Air Quality** – More use of rail service would maximize fuel efficiency while minimizing impacts on air quality.
- **Climate Change** – Passenger rail service would slow climate change.
- **Corrections to the Document** – Rail lines were incorrectly plotted inside town limits of Galesburg, Illinois, and Osceola, Iowa; the Study should have used more data from the Chicago to Iowa City Tier 1 study instead of re-inventing the wheel.
- **Cultural Resources** – Commenters were concerned with potential impacts on historic homes and buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places and requested that coordination be conducted with the Amana Colonies Land Use District.
- **Cumulative Impacts** – Economic, environmental, and social pros and cons should be considered. In addition to assessing impacts of constructing and operating the passenger rail system, the following should be assessed: reduced highway and airport congestion, improved transportation safety, and the resulting public and private development.
- **Drugs/Crime** – There would be increases in drug use and crime at station stops and along the route.
- **Economic Impacts** – The Project would have positive economic impacts for the communities through which the route runs and for the State; the Project would spur economic development; and passenger rail travel is a more cost-effective means of travel. Some commenters expressed concerns about the negative impacts on smaller communities.

- **Elderly** – The passenger rail service would be useful for seniors who cannot drive or do not want the stress of driving in congested traffic, especially for rural residents traveling to cities.
- **Energy Use** – Passenger rail service would be more energy efficient and would allow the country to be less dependent on foreign oil; and passenger rail travel is cleaner than vehicle and air travel.
- **Funding of the Project** – Commenters thought that the Project would need to be subsidized, would not likely meet its ridership estimates and goals, and would lose money. Passenger rail needs better funding from the Federal government, which spends a great deal of money to support the airport and highway systems. Many commenters also expressed concerns about spending taxpayer dollars on funding the construction and ongoing operation of the Project, although others were in favor of raising the gas tax to fund it.
- **General** – This Project would help revitalize a system that worked more than a century ago and works well in Europe. The passenger rail system should be planned to account for existing rail operations and local transit systems. In addition, community support for stations should be considered during system planning.
- **Jobs** – In addition to construction jobs, the passenger rail system would lead to permanent jobs both directly and indirectly. Regional connectivity would be improved and would allow young professionals in Iowa to stay in the state while developing local careers. Businesses will want to be near station depots, and the stations would assist in recruiting potential employees to an area.
- **Natural Resources** – The State should consult with local communities and with state environmental experts with groups such as the Iowa Environmental Council and Iowa Sierra Club whenever the project requires landscape modifications that affect wetlands, wildlife refuges, and other environmentally sensitive areas.
- **Noise** – There would be increased noise levels along the route, which is a disadvantage for those living along the route.
- **Oppose the Project** – The Project should be privately funded or not constructed. The Project might transport problems from Chicago to rural areas.
- **Parks** – Commenters expressed an interest in the Project connecting them to other recreational opportunities in the state if they could bring their bikes on board the passenger train.
- **Phased Implementation** – The Study should look at the initial level of service rather than the ultimate goal.
- **Property Acquisition** – Concern was expressed about the coordination of private property acquisition and compensation.
- **Public Involvement** – Commenters asked about meetings and comment methods, requested materials, and stated that they enjoyed the in-person and online meetings.
- **Rail – Current Rail Traffic** – Concerns were noted about the current freight traffic in communities and about the funding of Amtrak's *California Zephyr*.
- **Rail – Improvements and Rail – Improvements** – Vast improvements and upgrades to tracks, sidings, signals, and other infrastructure would be required. Route alternatives with more current upgrades could be more economical to

modify than antiquated routes. Costs to upgrade, reconstruct, or build new bridges need to be considered. In addition, upgrade of tracks to the highest possible speed during initial construction needs to be considered.

- **Rail –Speed** – The faster the trains can operate, the more efficient and attractive the system would be compared to air, bus, and single-vehicle travel.
- **Routes – Alternative Route/Locations** – The route should cross the Missouri River using the UP bridge. The Study Area should be extended into Nebraska to connect the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to other Big Ten schools. Commuter lines for service to Ames and Cedar Rapids, Iowa, should also be evaluated. Connections should be provided to Lincoln, Nebraska; Sioux City, Iowa; Kansas City, Kansas, and Kansas City, Missouri; St. Louis, Missouri; and Minneapolis, Minnesota.
- **Routes – Route Alternative 1** – Commenters were disappointed that Route Alternative 1 was dropped from the evaluation.
- **Routes – Route Alternative 4/4-A** – Route Alternative 4/4-A would be along major population centers and near I-80, which would facilitate quick access to stations. The route alternative would pass many colleges, which would make this route alternative convenient. Des Moines, as the Iowa state capital, would be a key city along the route alternative as would the Quad Cities area and Iowa City.
- **Routes – Route Alternative 5** – Commenters expressed their desire for the passenger rail service to be on Route Alternative 5 because of the improvements to the Burlington Station in Burlington, Iowa.
- **Routing Process** – Commenters asked whether the establishment of the Chicago to Council Bluffs-Omaha service would eliminate the *California Zephyr* in the southern part of Iowa. Routing should be used that would increase travel frequency in order to maximize investments in the present infrastructure.
- **Safety** – Commenters expressed concerns about high-speed rail passenger trains sharing tracks with freight trains and thought that very good grade-separated crossings should be provided. Passenger rail service should reduce highway traffic accidents by reducing congestion, providing an alternative safer method for winter travel, and decreasing drinking and driving incidents and distracted drivers. The passenger rail system should have security screening for riders.
- **Schedule** – Implementation of the Project should be expedited.
- **Station Facilities and Upgrades** – The trains should stop at better/fewer station stops in key population centers and should have convenient access, secure stations and parking with free or low-cost parking, amenities at and around the stations, and convenient access to rental cars and mass transit. The passenger trains should support transit of bicycles. The service should have sufficient stops beyond those for major cities. Reuse/upgrade of existing station facilities should be considered, as should station locations in areas near current mass transit centers.
- **Support the Project** – Many support passenger rail service because it would be dependable, fast, safe, progressive, efficient, and greener compared to other modes of transportation. Although buses provide a relatively inexpensive travel option, they are often late due to traffic and can be crowded. The younger generation is in favor of transit options because of the capability to use laptops, cell phones, etc. Regional passenger rail service would provide options for

business trips and vacations, commuting, and travel by college students, senior citizens, and travelers who cannot afford a car.

- **Train Amenities** – Desired amenities on trains include working restrooms, food and beverage service, a variety of seating arrangements, tables, and Wi-Fi for Internet users. Trains should also be able to accommodate more luggage than airplanes and have the option to store bicycles on the train.
- **Transportation – Alternative Transportation Mode** – Commenters expressed an interest in having an additional and energy-efficient transportation mode available to them.
- **Transportation – Bus Service** – Passenger rail service is preferable to bus service.
- **Transportation – Highway Congestion** – Rail service would reduce roadway congestion. Congestion in the Chicago area is a disincentive to driving; people in Iowa would more likely travel to Chicago via passenger rail. With the main population centers along I-80, providing a passenger rail service in this area should help alleviate highway congestion and accidents.
- **Use of the Project** – The passenger rail system could be used most regularly by commuters, but also by college students, retirees, vacationers, patients visiting hospitals, and people attending sporting events and traveling on holidays. Use of the system could increase during the winter when driving and airline travel are restricted. Use would likely be highest for the route alternative along the largest population centers.
- **Wetlands** – Additional coordination would need to occur with USACE and other agencies for wetland areas.

Several resource agencies provided comments; Appendix O has been supplemented with agency comments, and Appendix Q includes the comments and responses to the comments.

4.5 FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES FOR INPUT

The scoping period and public comment period on the Tier 1 Draft EIS provided opportunities for agencies; tribes and Native American groups; and stakeholders to review route alternatives and the potential impacts associated with their implementation. Section 4.4 described the public hearing and comment period. The comments were reviewed and used to create this Tier 1 Final EIS, which has been issued in the same manner as was the Tier 1 Draft EIS. The Tier 1 Final EIS will be available for review for 30 days, and FRA can take no action for implementing the proposed action during the comment period. Subsequent to the end of the comment period, FRA will issue a Record of Decision (ROD) to document its decision on a proposed action. The ROD will address public input on the Tier 1 Final EIS and will document the selected alternative as well as specific mitigation measures and other environmental commitments. The issuance of the ROD will complete the Tier 1 process.

Commencement of Tier 2 is dependent on the allocation of federal funding, with state contributions, for various sections of the Project. Chapter 5, Next Steps, provides a detailed discussion of the potential sections of the Project and the opportunity for additional involvement during Tier 2.

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