



TIER 1 FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
VOLUME 1 (PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE)

11. Agency and Public Involvement

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11. Agency and Public Involvement

11.1 INTRODUCTION

Decisions about the future of the Northeast Corridor (NEC) affect a wide range of stakeholders, from today's rail passengers and the agencies and operators providing services on the NEC to the residents, travelers, businesses, and communities potentially affected by the outcomes of NEC FUTURE. Since the inception of NEC FUTURE, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) has been committed to an open and transparent process for involving these stakeholders.

Given the geographic scale and diversity of the Study Area, the large number of organizations and jurisdictions potentially affected, and the array of complex issues being considered, the FRA has implemented a broad, multifaceted agency and public involvement process. The FRA used a consistent approach to agency and public involvement activities throughout the Study Area, with a variety of communication tools—a program website (www.necfuture.com), meeting materials and publications, and informal outreach activities—to inform and engage the public and interested organizations in NEC FUTURE. To date, the FRA has held 35 public meetings throughout the Northeast, beginning with a scoping process in 2012 and continuing with regional workshops, open houses, and public hearings on the Tier 1 Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Tier 1 Draft EIS). The FRA has also reached out to rail passengers with a rail station pop-up tour, station displays, and advertisements in commuter newspapers.

Two unique elements shaped the agency and public involvement process for NEC FUTURE. The first was the FRA's close coordination with the Northeast Corridor Commission (NEC Commission), an organization that was established through federal legislation to promote mutual cooperation and planning for the NEC.¹ The NEC Commission members include representatives from the U.S. Department of Transportation (U.S. DOT), the NEC states and Washington, D.C., Amtrak, and non-voting representatives of the freight railroads that operate over the NEC. Connecting states and commuter operators on the NEC also participate as non-voting representatives. Since the NEC Commission will play a primary role in implementing the rail investment plan developed through NEC FUTURE, its involvement in the program has been especially important.

Another unique element of the NEC FUTURE agency involvement process was the early engagement of environmental agencies through a special partnership with the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ). In January 2012, the CEQ selected NEC FUTURE as one of five projects to participate in its National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Pilot Program to identify, evaluate, and disseminate innovative ways to prepare NEPA reviews. The year-long pilot program was designed to promote early collaboration with federal and state environmental agencies for efficient environmental decision-making, and to help identify best practices for environmental collaboration in a complex, multi-state planning process. The pilot program set the stage for ongoing coordination among resource and regulatory agencies throughout the Tier 1 EIS process.

¹ 49 U.S.C. 24905

The metropolitan planning organizations (MPO) of the Northeast region play a critical role in transportation analysis and decision-making in their respective metropolitan regions, and as such have served as partners for NEC FUTURE, both on technical and policy levels. There are approximately 49 MPOs in the Study Area.² Coordination with MPOs has included both general briefings and technically focused meetings at individual MPOs, webinars to inform and update groups of MPOs on the program, and coordination webinars to which all of the MPOs were invited.

This chapter describes the agency and public involvement process for the Tier 1 Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Tier 1 Draft EIS), public comment period, and public hearings, as well as outreach activities following the Tier 1 Draft EIS comment period up to the release of this Tier 1 Final EIS. Volume 2, Chapter 11, describes the FRA's public involvement and agency consultation activities prior to the release of the Tier 1 Draft EIS in November 2015 and provides additional details on the public and stakeholder outreach for NEC FUTURE.

11.2 TIER 1 DRAFT EIS PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD AND PUBLIC HEARINGS

On November 10, 2015, the FRA released the Tier 1 Draft EIS for public review and comment, along with the Draft Programmatic Agreement under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The FRA established an initial public comment period of over two months, ending on January 30, 2016. In response to requests for additional time to comment on the Tier 1 Draft EIS, the FRA subsequently extended the comment period to February 16, 2016. Public hearings were held during December 2015 and January 2016.

11.2.1 Distribution and Publicity for the Tier 1 Draft EIS

On November 10, 2015, the FRA posted the Tier 1 Draft EIS and appendices on the NEC FUTURE website and issued a press release on their availability. Hard copies of the main body and key appendices were also made available in libraries within the Study Area, as indicated on the website. Table 11-1 provides a list of these libraries.

The FRA provided copies of the Tier 1 Draft EIS to environmental and transportation agencies in each state within the Study Area. As part of compliance with the Section 106 consultation process, the FRA sent the Tier 1 Draft EIS and Draft Programmatic Agreement to signatories of, and consulting parties to, the NEC FUTURE Programmatic Agreement, including tribal consulting parties. To inform potentially affected local jurisdictions of the Tier 1 Draft EIS, the FRA also sent information packets (including a letter from the FRA and an executive summary brochure) to elected officials in each of the 216 local jurisdictions and 42 counties within the Affected Environment of the Action Alternatives' Representative Routes. Appendix FF lists the agencies, tribes, elected officials, and organizations to which the FRA sent information on the Tier 1 Draft EIS. In addition, on November 10, 2015, the FRA sent a mass email notification to 3,361 individuals on the NEC FUTURE email contact list, with a link to the Tier 1 Draft EIS on the program's website. Persons who commented during the scoping period in 2012 were notified about the availability of the Tier 1 Draft EIS by email or by letter.

² The number of MPOs in the Study Area is in flux because of ongoing consolidation amongst some MPOs.

Table 11-1: Libraries Displaying the Tier 1 Draft EIS during the Public Comment Period

State	City	County	Library
DC	Washington, D.C.	District of Columbia	Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Library
MD	Baltimore	Baltimore City	Enoch Pratt Library
	Towson	Baltimore County	Towson Branch of Baltimore County Library
	Bel Air	Harford	Harford County Public Library
	Upper Marlboro	Prince George's	Prince George's County Memorial Library
	Elkton	Cecil	Cecil County Public Library
	Chestertown	Kent	Kent County Public Library
	Annapolis	Anne Arundel	Anne Arundel County Public Library
DE	Wilmington	New Castle	Wilmington Public Library
PA	Media	Delaware	Media-Upper Providence Free Library
	Philadelphia	Philadelphia	Parkway Central Library
	Doylestown	Bucks	Bucks County Free Library
NJ	Trenton	Mercer	Trenton Main Library
	New Brunswick	Middlesex	New Brunswick Free Public Library
	Elizabeth	Union	Main Library
	Newark	Essex	Newark Public Library
	Jersey City	Hudson	Main Library
NY	Manhattan (NYC)	New York	New York Public Library Science & Industry & Business
	Brooklyn (NYC)	Kings	Central Library
	Bronx (NYC)	Bronx	Bronx Library Center
	Jamaica (NYC)	Queens	Central Library
	Mineola	Nassau	Mineola Public Library
	Bohemia	Suffolk	Connetquot Public Library
	Carmel	Putnam	Kent Public Library
	New Rochelle	Westchester	New Rochelle Public Library
	White Plains	Westchester	White Plains Public Library
CT	Meriden	New Haven	Meriden Public Library
	Stamford	Fairfield	The Ferguson Library
	Waterbury	New Haven	Silas Bronson Library
	Danbury	Fairfield	Danbury Library
	Middletown	Middlesex	Russell Library
	Mansfield	Tolland	Mansfield Public Library
	Willimantic	Windham	Willimantic Public Library
	New Haven	New Haven	New Haven Free Public Library
	Hartford	Hartford	The Downtown Library
	New London	New London	Public Library of New London
RI	Providence	Providence	Providence Public Library
	Kingston	Washington	Kingston Free Library
MA	Boston	Suffolk	Boston Public Library
	Cambridge	Middlesex	Main Library – Cambridge
	Taunton	Bristol	Taunton Public Library
	Dedham	Norfolk	Dedham Public Library
	Worcester	Worcester	Worcester Public Library
	Springfield	Hampden	Central Library

Source: NEC FUTURE team, 2016

A Notice of Availability of the Tier 1 Draft EIS appeared in the *Federal Register* on November 13, 2015. Legal notices of the availability of the Tier 1 Draft EIS and the public hearings appeared in 21 newspapers (Table 11-2). Display advertisements were also placed in the major newspapers closest to each hearing location approximately two weeks prior to each hearing, as well as in the free newspapers distributed to rail commuters in Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, New York City, and Boston, as shown in Table 11-2. The FRA also informed media outlets throughout the region of the Tier 1 Draft EIS and public hearings, and distributed notices via the FRA's social media platforms. Targeted publicity for the public hearings was also directed at rail passengers via wall posters and large hanging banners in selected rail stations. Appendix FF provides copies of these publicity materials.

Table 11-2: Placement of Legal Notices and Display Advertisements

State	Newspaper	Legal Notice	Display Advertisement
D.C.	Washington Post	11/13/2015	12/8/2015
	Washington Post Express	n/a	12/10/2015
D.C./MD	Afro American Newspapers	11/14/2015	12/12/2015
MD	Baltimore Sun	11/13/2015	1/8/2016
DE	Delaware News Journal	11/13/2015	1/10/2016
DE/PA	El Tiempo Hispano	11/13/2015	12/11/2015
PA	Philadelphia Inquirer	11/13/2015	1/4/2016
	Philadelphia Tribune	11/13/2015	1/5/2016
	Metro (Philadelphia edition)	n/a	1/4/2016 and 1/8/2016
	Al Dia	11/18/2015	1/6/2015
NJ	Trenton Times	11/24/2015	n/a
	Star Ledger	11/24/2015	1/7/2016
NY	The New York Times	11/13/2015	12/6/2015
	Metro (New York edition)	n/a	12/7/2016 and 1/5/2015
	El Diario	11/13/2015	12/7/2015
	Newsday	11/13/2015	1/5/2016
CT	Connecticut Post	11/13/2015	n/a
	Hartford Courant	11/13/2015	1/3/2016
	New Haven Register	11/13/2015	12/3/2016
	The Hour	11/13/2015	n/a
	The Day	11/13/2015	n/a
RI	Providence Journal	11/13/2015	12/6/2015
MA	Boston Globe	11/13/2015	11/29/2015
	Metro (Boston edition)	n/a	11/30/2015 and 12/7/2015
	Springfield Republican	11/13/2015	n/a

Source: NEC FUTURE team, 2016

11.2.2 Opportunities to Comment

The FRA solicited comments on the Tier 1 Draft EIS, which could be submitted in one of four ways: in person at a public hearing; online, via a comment form on the NEC FUTURE website, by email, or by U.S. mail. At the public hearings, there were opportunities for public and private testimony, as well as the option to submit a comment card.

11.2.3 Public Hearings

The FRA held 11 public hearings throughout the region during the comment period. Table 11-3 indicates the dates and locations of the hearings. Each hearing ran from 4:00-7:00 p.m., with scheduled presentations at 4:30 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. and an opportunity to orally comment following each presentation, as well as the option to submit a comment card. The FRA also provided a stenographer for private testimony throughout each hearing. The recorded presentation and public hearing displays are available on the NEC FUTURE website.

Table 11-3: Public Hearing Dates and Locations

Date	City, State	Location
12/9/2015	Boston, MA	Back Bay Events Center – 180 Berkeley Street
12/14/2015	New Haven, CT	Gateway Community College – 20 Church Street
12/15/2015	New York, NY	CUNY Graduate Center – 365 Fifth Avenue
12/16/2015	Washington, D.C.	Hall of States – 444 North Capitol Street, NW
12/17/2015	Providence, RI	State Administration Building – One Capitol Hill
1/11/2016	Philadelphia, PA	Southeast Pennsylvania Transportation Authority – 1234 Market Street
1/12/2016	Mineola, NY	Nassau County Municipal Building – 1550 Franklin Avenue
1/13/2016	Hartford, CT	Lyceum – 227 Lawrence Street
1/14/2016	Baltimore, MD	University of Baltimore – 21 W. Mount Royal Avenue
1/19/2016	Newark, NJ	NJ TRANSIT Board Room – One Penn Plaza East
1/20/2016	Wilmington, DE	Delaware Technical Community College – 333 Shipley Street

Source: NEC FUTURE team, 2016

The FRA arranged for an American Sign Language interpreter as well as a Spanish-speaking interpreter to be present at each hearing. Each hearing included a staffed exhibit area with information displays on the Tier 1 Draft EIS. A total of 485 participants attended the public hearings.

11.2.4 Outreach to Environmental Justice Populations

Volume 2, Chapter 11, describes the methods the FRA used to reach out to low-income, minority, and limited-English proficiency populations within the Study Area prior to the release of the Tier 1 Draft EIS. The FRA followed these same methods for the Tier 1 Draft EIS notification and public hearings. These methods included distributing information on the Tier 1 Draft EIS to organizations representing low-income and minority persons in each state and Washington, D.C. (by email and U.S. mail), and enlisting Environmental Justice (EJ) points of contact at MPOs in the region to help distribute information to their constituencies. A flyer and cover email were provided to the MPO contacts for this purpose.

As part of the outreach to local officials described in Section 11.2.1, the FRA also provided information on the Tier 1 Draft EIS to the chief elected officials in jurisdictions with concentrations of EJ populations. In addition, notices were placed in minority newspapers and minority media outlets were contacted as part of the FRA's media outreach.

All public hearings were held in transit-accessible locations, with Spanish-speaking interpreters on-site. The FRA also engaged a remote real-time language interpretation service to assist in the event other language interpretation was needed. The FRA also translated the executive summary

(Highlights brochure) and key pages of the website, including the comment form, into Spanish, the principal language spoken by those persons with limited-English proficiency. Hearing publicity materials, including rail station posters and electronic flyers, referred Spanish-speaking readers to meeting information in Spanish on the program website.

11.2.5 Stakeholder Outreach

Following the release of the Tier 1 Draft EIS, the FRA continued to coordinate with the NEC Commission, states transportation agencies, railroad operators, environmental resource and regulatory agencies, and MPOs. These activities included providing NEC FUTURE overview briefings, publicizing public hearings, and providing clarifications on questions related to an agency's review of the Tier 1 Draft EIS. All information shared during these meetings was included in data and analysis presented in the Tier 1 Draft EIS.

Table 11-4 lists the meetings held with these stakeholders by stakeholder category.

Table 11-4: Meetings with NEC Commission, Agencies, and MPOs during the Comment Period

Date	Stakeholder
NEC Commission	
12/7/2015	NEC Commission
Agency	
1/7/2016	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Metropolitan Planning Organizations	
11/10/2015	DVRPC Regional Technical Committee
11/10/2015	Transportation Managers Group of the Massachusetts Regional Planning Agencies/MPOs
2/2/2016	NVision 2020: Naugatuck Valley Corridor Conference on Infrastructure & Development
2/4/2016	DVRPC Central Jersey Forum

Source: NEC FUTURE team, 2016

11.3 TIER 1 DRAFT EIS COMMENTS

This section provides a summary of the comments received during the Tier 1 Draft EIS public comment period. As noted in Section 11.2.1, the public comment period opened on November 10, 2015. The FRA established an initial public comment period of over two months, ending on January 30, 2016. However, in response to requests for additional time to comment on the Tier 1 Draft EIS, the FRA subsequently extended the comment period to February 16, 2016.

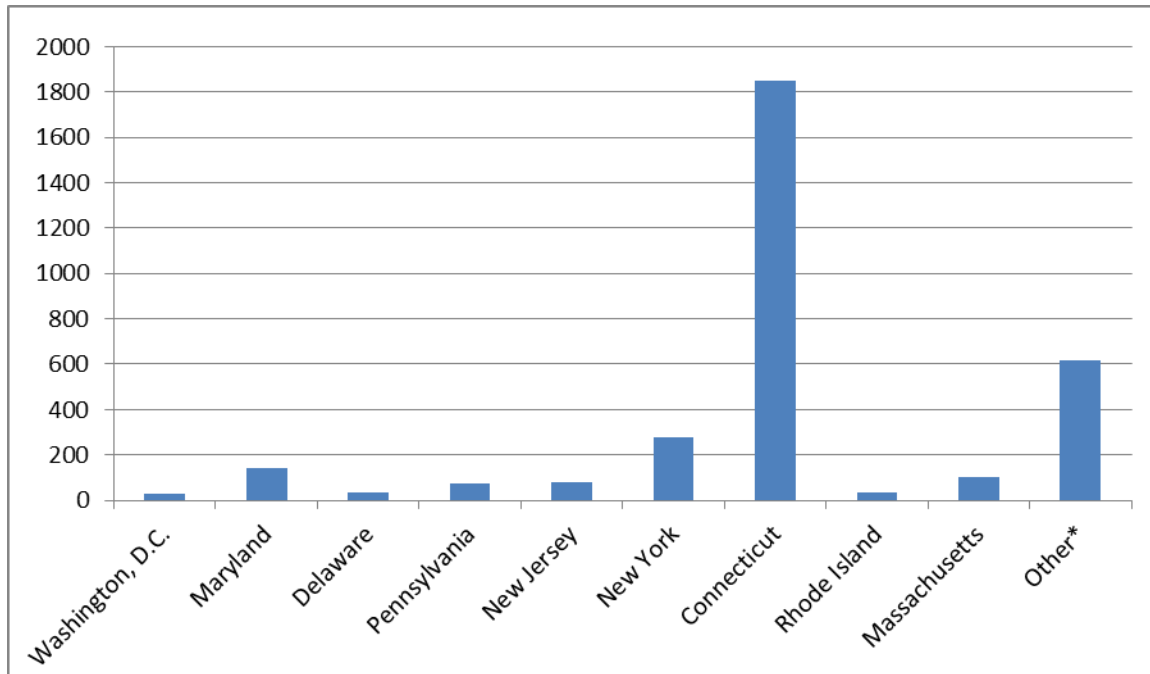
11.3.1 Number and Source of Comments

The FRA received over 3,200 submissions on the Tier 1 Draft EIS from individuals, agencies, and organizations. A majority (77 percent) of these were submitted through the website, while the remainder were submitted by email (15 percent), public hearing testimony (4 percent), U.S. mail (2 percent), comment card (1 percent), or other hard copies (1 percent).

The FRA categorized these submissions by stakeholder type. Private individuals submitted the most (92 percent). Special interest groups submitted 3 percent of the comments, followed by local

agencies (2 percent) and elected officials (1 percent). All other categories (federal agencies, state agencies, passenger railroads, freight railroads, tribes, and other) submitted less than 1 percent. The FRA received more than half (58 percent) of the submissions from individuals or organizations in the state of Connecticut (Figure 11-1).

Figure 11-1: Number of Submissions by State of Origin



Source: NEC FUTURE team, 2016

* Other includes all states outside the NEC FUTURE Study Area and submissions where no state was identified.

11.3.2 Comment Themes

The FRA analyzed and categorized each submission based on the comment topics included. Many submissions included comments on more than one topic, resulting in a database of over 5,000 total comments. The majority of the comments received addressed one or more of the following key themes:

- ▶ The overall vision for passenger rail in the Northeast, as articulated in the Action Alternatives described in the Tier 1 Draft EIS, including the importance of maintaining the existing NEC
- ▶ The importance of enhancing transportation connections and mobility at all levels of the system, from roll-on bicycle access to improved ties to connecting corridors
- ▶ The critical role of passenger rail service in maintaining the importance of the region's economy, along with opportunities for growth
- ▶ Impacts to the built and natural environment, including opposition to infrastructure investments that would affect the built and/or natural environment in places such as South Wilmington, DE; Garden City, NY; and Old Lyme, CT
- ▶ The data and methodologies used for the analyses presented in the Tier 1 Draft EIS

- The study process, in particular, the need for more public outreach to potentially affected communities, and the difficulty of evaluating alternatives at a Tier 1 level of detail

The comments provided useful insights into the concerns of the traveling public and helped to guide the FRA in developing a Preferred Alternative that responds to the needs of travelers in the Study Area, provides the best opportunities for economic growth, and minimizes effects to built or natural environmental features of particular concern.

The next sections summarize some of the comments received on each of these themes and include comment excerpts—as seen with the text in quotations—that represent the range of comments received on each theme. These excerpts are presented without attribution as examples of the language and sentiments articulated by those submitting comments. The Comment Summary Report (part of Appendix FF, Agency and Public Involvement) provides a more comprehensive summary. Appendix JJ, Comments and Responses, provides a comprehensive compilation of all comments received and the FRA’s responses.

11.3.2.1 Overall Vision for Passenger Rail in the Northeast

The Tier 1 Draft EIS presented three distinct visions for the future role of passenger rail in the Northeast transportation system. The visions represent a range of service levels designed to maintain (Alternative 1), grow (Alternative 2), or transform (Alternative 3) the role of rail in 2040, with corresponding infrastructure investments. The Tier 1 Draft EIS compared each vision, or Action Alternative, with a No Action Alternative. The FRA received numerous comments on the alternative visions. These comments overwhelmingly stressed the importance of achieving a state of good repair, with clear support for going beyond the No Action Alternative. While there was some support for a transformative vision that would create a “world class” rail system, most commenters preferred a less ambitious approach, and many called on the FRA to fix the existing NEC before undertaking any expansion. Commenters also sought to ensure that improved Regional rail service be an integral part of the vision.

11.3.2.2 Enhancing Transportation Connections and Mobility

A second major theme in the comments on the Tier 1 Draft EIS is the importance of improving mobility through better connections at all levels of the system. This includes better connections on the existing NEC, to connecting corridors, to potential new markets, and to other modes of transportation. Commenters seek more rail options, whether for commuting to work or for Intercity travel. There is also interest in seeing a more integrated, customer-friendly NEC, with features such as a common fare card for greater convenience.

11.3.2.3 Importance to the Economy

Another topic of concern to many commenters is the importance of passenger rail to the Northeast economy. Comments on this theme addressed the role of rail in retaining the region’s existing jobs and workforce, as well as the growth opportunities that significant rail service improvements could create. The importance of continued service on the existing NEC along the Connecticut coastline was also emphasized, as well as the importance of enabling growth in freight rail.

11.3.2.4 Environmental Benefits and Impacts

The FRA received a broad range of comments regarding both environmental benefits and potential effects associated with the No Action Alternative and Action Alternatives. Many articulated support for the air quality, transportation and economic development benefits of improved passenger rail services. There were two issues that generated a significant number of comments: 1) a proposed aerial structure through the town of Old Lyme, CT, as part of a proposed rail segment (in Alternative 1) between Old Saybrook, CT, and Kenyon, RI; and 2) a possible routing via Long Island (in Alternative 3). Similarly, commenters raised concern with a potential rail segment (in Alternative 3) through both the Patuxent Research Refuge in Maryland and the John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge in Pennsylvania. Some supported a central Connecticut routing to connect new markets, while others raised concern with the effect on open space and other natural features. While some supported proposed off-corridor representative routes, commenters asked questions about potential land use changes and effects to open space, forested and agricultural lands. Other environmental resources of concern include wetlands and marshes; wildlife and bird habitat; ecology; waterways, estuaries, and rivers. Several comments raised concerns about potential effects on Environmental Justice (low-income or minority) communities.

11.3.2.5 Cost of Improvements and Availability of Funding

Another common theme in the comments is the cost of capital improvements and the feasibility of obtaining funding for any of the visions outlined. Many commenters felt that Alternative 3 was too costly. Others were most concerned about how funding would be secured. Given fiscal constraints, many stakeholders urged that the FRA's primary focus should be on the near-term implementation of a first phase of priority projects.

11.3.2.6 Data and Methodologies used for the Tier 1 Draft EIS Analyses

The FRA also received comments about the methodologies and data used in the various analyses conducted for the Tier 1 Draft EIS. These comments principally addressed the ridership estimates, including underlying assumptions about pricing and demographic data. Comments were also received on the capital cost estimates and methodology.

11.3.2.7 Study Process

The FRA also heard from a variety of organizations and individuals with concerns about the NEC FUTURE study process. These comments primarily addressed the need for more public outreach in potentially affected communities, the need for more time to consider the information, and the difficulty of evaluating alternatives at the Tier 1 level of detail.

11.3.3 Documentation of Comments and Responses

The FRA reviewed and considered all comments received during the public comment period, and developed responses to each comment. Appendix JJ provides a matrix documenting the comments received and responses, organized by topic (e.g., Alternatives Considered, Environmental Resources, Section 106) and commenter type (e.g., elected offices, federal and state agencies, individuals).

11.4 STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH FOLLOWING THE TIER 1 DRAFT EIS COMMENT PERIOD

Following the close of the public comment period, the FRA continued to coordinate with agencies, railroads, MPOs, and other stakeholders as work progressed on the identification and analysis of the Preferred Alternative and the preparation of the Tier 1 Final EIS. During this period the FRA met with local government representatives in several potentially affected jurisdictions to discuss questions and concerns raised during the public comment period.

11.4.1 Lead and Cooperating Agencies

As described in Volume 2, Chapter 11, Sections 1501.5–1501.6 of the CEQ’s *Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act* (CEQ Regulations) define federal agency roles and responsibilities in the NEPA process. The lead federal agency is the designated federal agency that is responsible for undertaking and ensuring compliance with NEPA. For NEC FUTURE, the FRA is the designated lead federal agency.

Also described in Volume 2, Chapter 11, Section 1508.05 of the CEQ Regulations defines cooperating agencies as those federal agencies, other than the lead agency, that have jurisdiction by law or a special expertise with respect to any environmental impact involved in a proposal (or a reasonable alternative) for legislation or other major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. The FRA invited the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to be a cooperating agency, in light of the FTA’s special expertise in passenger rail alternatives and environmental reviews, and in consideration of the many commuter railroads that might seek FTA funding to implement projects subsequent to the NEC FUTURE Tier 1 EIS Record of Decision. The FTA accepted the FRA’s invitation to be a cooperating agency, and since that time, the FRA has coordinated with the FTA on a regular basis on the development of alternatives, the Tier 1 Draft EIS, and this Tier 1 Final EIS.

11.4.2 Northeast Corridor Commission

The FRA continued to coordinate regularly with the NEC Commission. This coordination included biweekly conversations with NEC Commission staff, committee presentations, and briefings for the NEC Commissioners on February 26 and June 15, 2016. To inform the FRA’s decision-making, preliminary information about the deliberative Preferred Alternative was discussed with these key stakeholders during this timeframe.

11.4.3 State Transportation Agencies and Railroad Operators

The FRA also continued to coordinate with state transportation agencies and railroad operators to clarify the evaluation presented in the Tier 1 Draft EIS. Table 11-5 lists in chronological order the meetings held with these stakeholders. These meetings provided an opportunity for the FRA to share their deliberations regarding a Preferred Alternative with key stakeholders and to then incorporate the feedback received into their decision-making process. Typical of the ideas exchanged included the importance of focusing on the existing state of the NEC and urgent infrastructure needs while also gaining agreement on a longer-term vision.

Table 11-5: Meetings with NEC Commission, State Transportation Agencies, and Railroad Operators

Date	Stakeholder
3/21/2016	Amtrak
3/21/2016	NJ TRANSIT
4/20/2016	Massachusetts DOT
4/21/2016	MTA
4/25/2016	Connecticut DOT
5/6/2016	Amtrak
6/8/2016	Amtrak
8/3/2016	Freight railroads (CSX Corporation, Norfolk Southern Railway, Providence & Worcester RR)

Source: NEC FUTURE team, 2016

11.4.4 Metropolitan Planning Organizations

The FRA continued to coordinate with the 49 MPOs in the Study Area. The MPOs play an important role in the FTA project development process. As a cooperating agency for NEC FUTURE, the FTA is a possible funding source for Tier 2 projects implemented to advance the Selected Alternative. The FRA and the FTA recognize the importance of coordinating with MPOs to ensure consistency with long-range planning documents. A webinar was held on August 2, 2016, to provide an update on the FRA's process to identify the Preferred Alternative and provide feedback on comments the FRA received on the Tier 1 Draft EIS that were relevant to regional planning. That webinar was also an opportunity for the FRA to identify ways to include NEC FUTURE in the MPOs' individual long-range planning processes.

11.4.5 Environmental Resource and Regulatory Agencies

A hallmark of NEC FUTURE has been the extensive and ongoing coordination with federal and state resource and regulatory agencies. Following the close of the comment period on the Tier 1 Draft EIS, the FRA met with these agencies on several occasions, continuing the consultation process described in Volume 2, Chapter 11. These meetings were useful in keeping the FRA up to date on available information and updates to regulatory requirements relevant to the Tier 1 assessments. The dialogue also helped identify the appropriate methodology for subsequent Tier 2 project studies. The meetings facilitated an ongoing collaboration between the FRA and federal and state resource and regulatory agencies and were instrumental in preparing the updated environmental effects assessments for the Preferred Alternative. Table 11-6 lists the meetings held during this period.

Table 11-6: Meetings with Resource and Regulatory Agencies

Date	Agency
3/7/2016	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
3/15/2016	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
8/23/2016	Resource and Regulatory Agency webinar

Source: NEC FUTURE team, 2016

11.4.6 Section 106

The NEC FUTURE agency consultation process includes consultation with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPO), and Government-to-Government consultation with Indian tribes, undertaken as part of the Section 106 review process. Appendix GG describes the Section 106 process, including a listing of the FRA's meetings with the ACHP, SHPOs, and the Indian tribes. Following the Tier 1 Draft EIS and Draft Programmatic Agreement comment period, the FRA met with specific SHPOs—such as with the New Jersey SHPO on February 19, 2016, and the Delaware SHPO on June 13, 2016—to address questions. In addition, the FRA coordinated with all consulting parties to the Programmatic Agreement with a webinar on March 14, 2016.

11.4.7 Other Meetings

After reviewing the public comments received on the Tier 1 Draft EIS, the FRA met with several local jurisdictions to discuss questions or concerns raised in their comments and how they might be addressed going forward. These meetings were held with the town of Old Lyme, CT; with local representatives and agencies in the Hartford, CT, and Springfield, MA, area; and with representatives of the city of Philadelphia. Table 11-7 lists the meetings held with potentially affected jurisdictions.

Table 11-7: Other Meetings

Date	Jurisdictions
3/11/2016	Old Lyme, CT Coordination Meeting
3/14/2016	Connecticut Coordination Meeting
6/2/2016	Hartford/Springfield Area Coordination Meeting
6/10/2016	City of Philadelphia Coordination Meeting

Source: NEC FUTURE team, 2016

The FRA's decision-making process was informed through these discussions with stakeholders. The discussions were useful to the FRA in identifying workable solutions to potential effects, such as changing the construction type of the Representative Route through the historic district of Old Lyme, CT. Similarly, discussions with agencies in Hartford, CT, and Springfield, MA, provided useful insights into the importance of connectivity between Hartford, Springfield, and points east and south. During these meetings, the FRA shared draft information with the various stakeholders with the understanding that no decisions had been made nor was the information finalized. This collaborative approach is consistent with the FRA's transparency throughout the Tier 1 EIS process.