

NEC FUTURE

A Rail Investment Plan
for the Northeast Corridor



SCOPING SUMMARY



December 2012



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Railroad
Administration**

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I. Executive Summary

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) is developing a rail investment program for the Northeast Corridor (NEC), the rail spine which runs from Washington, D.C. through New York to Boston. Known as NEC FUTURE, this initiative includes a broad environmental analysis, known as a Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), and a Service Development Plan (SDP) that will outline how future passenger rail service is to be provided on the NEC. These studies will be completed in 2015 and will guide future investments in the corridor through 2040.

A key first element of NEC FUTURE was a scoping process that enabled agencies, stakeholders and the public to learn about and contribute to shaping the NEC FUTURE program. The scoping process was carried out in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) over a four-month period from June 22 through October 19, 2012. During this period, the FRA invited the public to comment on the Purpose & Need for the rail investment program, the Study Area, the range of alternatives to be considered, and the types of environmental consequences to be evaluated in the Tier 1 EIS. A Scoping Package that provided background information on each of these topics was posted on the project website.

In August 2012, the FRA held agency and public scoping meetings in each of the NEC's eight states and the District of Columbia. The agency meetings included a presentation and informal discussion and were attended by over 100 federal, state, regional, and local agencies, rail and transit operators, and tribal governments. Over 500 people attended the public meetings, which included a presentation, open house, and opportunities for formal public and private testimony. Comments were received at the public scoping meetings as well as via mail, email, and the project website.

Approximately 800 individuals, representatives from agencies and other organizations provided comments, with many commenters addressing multiple topics. This resulted in nearly 2,500 distinct comments for review and analysis by the FRA. The ideas, comments, and concerns expressed during this process have all been considered and are a key element in moving the NEC FUTURE program forward and in the development of the Tier 1 EIS and SDP.

The scoping comments addressed a wide range of topics including, but not limited to, the NEC FUTURE Study Area, Purpose & Need, alternatives, funding, and the public involvement process. Both corridor-wide and locale-specific comments were received.

The following are highlights of the corridor-wide comments:

- A central theme was the desirability of an incremental approach that would repair and strengthen the existing NEC before adding new services. This could include bringing the entire NEC into a state of good repair, improving operations and connections, and a phased approach to increase capacity, reduce travel times, and extend coverage.
- Connectivity and coordination were also key themes: comments addressed the need to improve connections between regional and local service through improved scheduling, increased capacity and through-ticketing, as well as improving connections with airports and local transit.
- Another theme was balancing service to existing NEC cities with service to new markets.

- Some commenters recommended a focus on near-term, low-cost investments, while others called on FRA to “think big” and consider improvements beyond the next 30–40 years.
- Support was expressed for new technologies and operating practices.
- Commenters suggested clarifying project goals with additional language on affordability of rail service, climate change, and support for economic development.
- Commenters also stressed the importance of an open and inclusive public process, with regular opportunities for dialogue.

Other concerns were specific to a particular state, metropolitan area or locality:

- Many agencies stressed the importance of coordinating and supporting related plans, programs and policies in their respective areas. Others mentioned the need to be sensitive to changing demographic trends and new visions for future development.
- In each region, participants expressed support for local projects or proposals, such as the North-South Rail Link in Boston, trans-Hudson capacity options in New York and New Jersey, and bridge and tunnel projects in Maryland.
- Comments addressed the potential for serving new stations or maintaining and improving service to existing stations; many stressed the benefits of improved rail service to downtowns and metropolitan areas.
- Participants requested the expansion of the Study Area to include areas such as Maine, Vermont, Montreal, and Virginia.

This report describes the scoping process and summarizes comments received. It identifies the range of concerns raised by agencies and the public, provides representative examples of comments on each general topic, and summarizes how the comments will be addressed.

Moving forward, the scope of the NEC FUTURE program will continue to be updated based on additional public involvement and agency coordination. The input received during this scoping process will shape and inform the development of alternatives, the Tier 1 EIS, agency coordination, and the public involvement process.

II. Introduction

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) is developing a rail investment program for the Northeast Corridor (NEC), the rail spine which runs from Washington, D.C. through New York to Boston. Known as NEC FUTURE, this initiative consists of a Service Development Plan (SDP) that will outline how future passenger rail service is to be provided and a Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Together, the SDP and Tier 1 EIS will form a Passenger Rail Corridor Investment Plan (PRCIP) that will guide future investments in the corridor through 2040. The PRCIP will define an integrated, comprehensive passenger rail transportation solution for the Northeast. Its purpose is to improve mobility, effectively serve travel demand due to population and job growth, support economic development, reduce growth in carbon emissions and dependence on foreign oil, and contribute to improved land utilization and investment in both urban and non-urban communities in the region.

The Northeast region has one of the most extensive multi-modal passenger and freight transportation systems in the world—highways, airports, ports, intercity and regional/commuter rail, and public transit serving all major cities and many intermediate markets. However, despite significant investment in all transportation modes over recent decades, the region still faces major congestion and capacity constraints. These constraints, if not addressed, have the potential to curtail future mobility and economic growth and place the Northeast at a competitive disadvantage to other regions of the United States and the world.

The goal of the NEC FUTURE program is to define a comprehensive and integrated preferred investment program for the NEC that provides the capacity and reliability necessary for the region's passenger rail system to support Northeast transportation needs in the coming decades. With eight states, the District of Columbia, nine commuter authorities, Amtrak, and multiple freight operators using and investing in the NEC, a coordinated and integrated NEC plan is essential. NEC FUTURE provides the vision, framework, and regional platform to coordinate this collaborative effort.

A key first element of NEC FUTURE was a scoping process that enabled agencies, stakeholders and the public to learn about and contribute to the NEC FUTURE program. The scoping process was carried out in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) over a four-month period from June 22 through October 19, 2012. During this period, the FRA invited the public to comment on the Purpose & Need for the rail investment program, the Study Area, the range of alternatives to be considered, and the types of environmental consequences to be evaluated in the Tier 1 EIS. In August 2012, the FRA held agency and public scoping meetings in each of the NEC's eight states and the District of Columbia. Numerous comments were received at the public scoping meetings as well as via mail, email, and the project website.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SDP AND TIER 1 EIS

A Service Development Plan (SDP) provides a platform to improve existing rail service to meet growing travel demand. A SDP defines possible rail improvements and evaluates the operational, network, and financial impacts of the proposed improvements. For the NEC FUTURE program, the SDP will provide the framework for the selection of a preferred investment program.

Given the scope, complexity and long-term nature of possible alternatives to be considered for the NEC FUTURE program, FRA is implementing a tiered approach to environmental review. This environmental review is consistent with FRA's *Procedures for Considering Environmental Impacts* (64 FR 28454) and NEPA. The NEC FUTURE Tier 1 EIS will take a broad approach to the overall environmental effects of alternatives.

The Tier 1 EIS and SDP are being advanced in parallel, with the consideration of environmental factors informing the rail planning efforts. The Tier 1 EIS will define the overall framework for subsequent site-specific actions, when those actions are ready to be advanced. Those site-specific actions may require subsequent project-level environmental reviews.

PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

This report outlines the scoping process and identifies the range of comments that were received during the scoping period. In addition, this report provides responses to representative comments. These comments and the responses will help inform the FRA as it moves forward with the NEC FUTURE program and in the development of the Tier 1 EIS.

The NEC FUTURE program received numerous informative and insightful comments. These comments covered a range of issues and concerns raised about the NEC FUTURE program by agencies, organizations, communities, and individuals. The purpose of this document is not to provide a verbatim transcript of all of those comments, but a meaningful summary of what was heard and how those comments will inform the NEC FUTURE program as it advances.

Comments provided during scoping were reviewed and organized into eight broad categories: Study Area; Purpose & Need; Alternatives; NEPA Process; Affected Environment; Cost and Funding; Public and Agency Involvement; and Outside of Scope. After categorization, comments were reviewed by the FRA and appropriate responses were prepared.

NEPA AND THE SCOPING PROCESS

The intent of scoping is to establish an open forum for communication and to identify the "scope" and significance of issues to be addressed during the preparation of the Tier 1 EIS. As such, the scoping process for the NEC FUTURE Tier 1 EIS has included the review and categorization of all comments received during scoping.

The FRA recognizes the importance of an open public dialogue to develop a credible rail investment plan. As part of NEPA, scoping is an early and open process that invites agencies and the public to comment on various aspects of a project. Information gathered during the scoping process helps to shape alternatives and identifies issues for consideration in the Tier I EIS.

Scoping launches the ongoing agency and public involvement process that is the cornerstone of the NEC FUTURE program. The scale and diversity of the region, the large number of organizations and jurisdictions potentially interested in the NEC FUTURE program, and the array of issues to be considered demand a broad, multi-faceted outreach program.

Consistent with the requirements of NEPA, Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, and FRA's *Procedures for Considering Environmental Impacts*, efforts were made to reach out to a diverse group of stakeholders during scoping. Groups that were involved and engaged in the

scoping process included members of the public, elected officials, interest groups, government and non-government agencies and businesses. The scoping process consisted of four major elements:

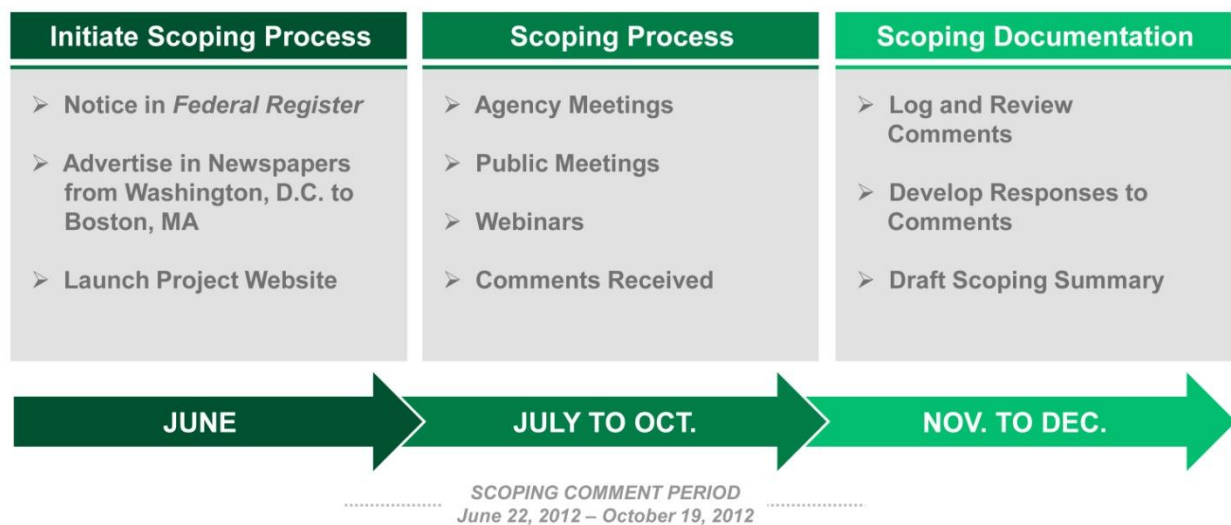
- Notice of Intent (NOI)
- Scoping Package
- Agency and Public Scoping Meetings
- Scoping Comment Period

On June 22, 2012, the scoping process was initiated with the publication of the Notice of Intent (NOI) in the *Federal Register*. *Figure 1: Scoping Timeline* identifies the various elements of the scoping process, which culminates with the publication of this Scoping Summary. Scoping was advertised in numerous newspapers and periodicals throughout the Northeast region. Scoping materials were provided for public review through public notices, the project website (www.necfuture.com), written communications with federal, state, regional, and local agencies, rail and transit operators, tribal governments, and briefings with the Northeast Corridor Infrastructure and Operations Advisory Commission (NEC Commission) members, state transportation agencies, and metropolitan planning organizations (MPO). The Scoping Package (June 2012) was developed to share information about the NEC FUTURE program. It contains information on a variety of topics including the Purpose & Need, Study Area, goals and objectives, planning context, and the public involvement process.

As originally noticed, the scoping comment period was to close on September 14, 2012. An extension of the scoping comment period to October 19, 2012 was noticed in the *Federal Register* on September 9, 2012 in response to comments received during the scoping process. A copy of the NOI and the subsequent notice issued by FRA to extend the scoping period to October 19, 2012, are included in the **Appendix** to this document.

The FRA invited interested parties to submit comments on the project website, by email, or by mail. In addition, interested parties could provide comments in person at the scheduled scoping meetings either via written comment card or oral testimony.

Figure 1: Scoping Timeline



Scoping meetings were held in August 2012 in each of the eight states along the existing NEC, and Washington D.C. Both a public meeting and agency meeting were held at each location. The public meetings consisted of an open house followed by a presentation by the FRA and public testimony. All verbal testimony provided at the public scoping meetings was recorded by stenographers.

The NEC FUTURE team continued to receive comments until the close of the comment period on October 19, 2012. All input received that is documented in this Scoping Summary will be considered in the development of the Tier I EIS.

ONGOING PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Beyond scoping, the FRA will provide ongoing opportunities for public input to inform the Tier 1 EIS and SDP. In December 2012, a series of public workshops, known as the “*December Dialogues*,” were held to review and discuss the study, including the results of the scoping process. These workshops were held in Boston, MA; New York, NY; Philadelphia, PA; and by webinar. The workshops provided opportunities to discuss the NEC FUTURE goals, including potential additions or refinements, as well as to review and prioritize rail passenger service characteristics for consideration in developing and evaluating alternatives.

FRA will provide additional forums for interactive communication during 2013. Information about these opportunities for continued stakeholder and public involvement will be available on the NEC FUTURE website, www.necfuture.com, and through email communications to everyone in the email database.

FRA will schedule a public hearing to request comments from the public upon completion of the Tier 1 Draft EIS in 2014. This comment process will follow formal procedures similar to scoping. There will be a Notice of Availability (NOA) for the Tier 1 Draft EIS, which will be published in the *Federal Register*. There will be formal public hearings and agencies and the public will have the opportunity to attend and provide oral or written comments at these hearings. There will also be opportunities to submit written comments within a specified comment period. Comments submitted during the public hearing process will be addressed in the Tier 1 Final EIS.

III. Public Scoping Process and Comments

The FRA utilized a variety of techniques to inform and engage the public during the NEC FUTURE scoping process. This section identifies the methods and means used to provide information about NEC FUTURE to the public and the opportunities afforded the public to become informed and provide comment.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

The FRA conducted public scoping meetings for the NEC FUTURE program from August 13 through August 22, 2012, in each of the corridor’s eight states and the District of Columbia. Public meetings were attended by agencies, elected officials, individual members of the public, business groups and other interest groups. The meetings were held from 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. in multiple cities as shown in *Table 1*.

Table 1: Public Meeting Dates and Locations		
Date	City, State	Building Location
August 13	Boston, MA	Massachusetts State Transportation Building 10 Park Plaza
August 14	New Haven, CT	Shubert Theater 247 College Street
August 15	Baltimore, MD	University of Baltimore, Thumel Conference Facilities 11 W. Mount Royal Street
August 15	Newark, NJ	North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority Board Room One Newark Center
August 16	New York City, NY	Moynihan Station 380 W. 33 rd Street
August 20	Philadelphia, PA	SEPTA Board Room Complex 1234 Market Street
August 20	Wilmington, DE	Carvel State Office Building 820 N. French Street
August 21	Washington, D.C.	Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments 777 N. Capitol Street, NE
August 22	Providence, RI	State Administration Building One Capitol Hill

The meetings included an open-house format with project information boards, copies of which are included in the **Appendix**. The meetings were staffed by the NEC FUTURE team. Conversational interactions and informal discussions were encouraged between the public and team members as the members of the public reviewed the information boards. A formal presentation took place at 5:00 p.m. followed by an opportunity for public and private testimony.

The meetings were widely publicized throughout the corridor with legal notices, display advertisements, and numerous newspaper articles. More than thirty newspapers, including regional editions of the *Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times* and *METRO*, a free newspaper handed out

at transit stops, ran advertisements about the meetings. Several papers ran more than one advertisement, such as *The New York Times*, which ran a legal notice on August 2 and region-specific display advertisements on August 9 and August 12.

Information about the Scoping Package and scoping meetings were also available on the project website, www.necfuture.com.

Legal notices and display advertisements were published in the newspapers listed below in *Tables 2* and *3* from August 1 through August 17, 2012.

Table 2: Legal Notices		
Publication	Published Date	Meeting Publicized
<i>Baltimore Sun</i> (MD)	8/1/2012	Baltimore Washington, D.C.
<i>Connecticut Post</i> (CT)	8/1/2012	New Haven
<i>Hartford Courant</i> (CT)	8/1/2012	New Haven
<i>New Haven Register</i> (CT)	8/1/2012	Boston
<i>Star Ledger</i> (NJ)	8/1/2012	Newark
<i>Boston Globe</i> (MA)	8/2/2012	Boston
<i>The Day</i> (CT)	8/2/2012	New Haven Providence
<i>New York Times</i> (NY)	8/2/2012	New York City
<i>Stamford Times</i> (CT)	8/3/2012	New Haven
<i>Trenton Times</i> (NJ)	8/3/2012	Newark
<i>Springfield Republican</i> (MA)	8/4/2012	Boston New Haven
<i>Delaware News Journal</i> (DE)	8/6/2012	Philadelphia Wilmington
<i>Philadelphia Inquirer</i> (PA)	8/6/2012	Philadelphia Wilmington
<i>Washington Post</i> (DC)	8/6/2012	Baltimore Washington, D.C.
<i>Providence Journal</i> (RI)	8/7/2012	Providence

Table 3: Display Advertisements

Publication	Published Date	Meeting Publicized
<i>Washington Post</i> (DC)	8/8/2012	Baltimore Washington, D.C.
<i>New York Times</i> (NY)	8/9/2012, 8/12/2012	Newark New York City Philadelphia
<i>Boston Globe</i> (MA)	8/9/2012	Boston New Haven Providence
<i>Metro</i> (MA)	8/9/2012	Boston New Haven Providence
<i>Metro</i> (NY)	8/9/2012	New Haven Newark New York City Philadelphia
<i>Metro</i> (PA)	8/9/2012	Newark New York City Philadelphia Wilmington
<i>Philadelphia Tribune</i>	8/9/2012	Philadelphia Wilmington
<i>Wall Street Journal</i> (NY)	8/9/2012	Newark New York City Philadelphia
<i>Wall Street Journal</i> (New England)	8/9/2012	Boston New Haven Providence
<i>Wall Street Journal</i> (DC)	8/9/2012	Baltimore Washington, D.C.
<i>Wall Street Journal</i> (PA)	8/9/2012	Philadelphia Wilmington
<i>El Diario</i> (NY)	8/10/2012	Boston New Haven Newark New York City Philadelphia Providence
<i>El Tiempo Hispano</i> (PA)	8/10/2012	Philadelphia Wilmington
<i>Baltimore Afro American</i> (MD)	8/11/2012	Baltimore Washington, D.C.
<i>Al Dia</i> (PA)	8/12/2012-8/18/2012	Philadelphia Wilmington
<i>Washington Post Express</i> (DC)	8/14/2012	Baltimore Washington, D.C.
<i>Washington Afro American</i> (DC)	8/18/2012	Baltimore Washington, D.C.

In total, over 500 people attended the nine public scoping meetings. Ninety-four speakers delivered oral comments and 57 written statements were received. Attendees included representatives of federal, state, regional, and local agencies; elected officials (i.e., state, county, local); businesses and business organizations; non-profit organizations; railroads and transit organizations; railroad users, residents, and members of the media.

PUBLIC SCOPING COMMENT OVERVIEW

The FRA received approximately 2,500 distinct comments from approximately 800 commenters during the four-month scoping period. Many of the commenters addressed multiple issues, while others focused on a single issue, leading to the difference in the number of comments versus commenters.

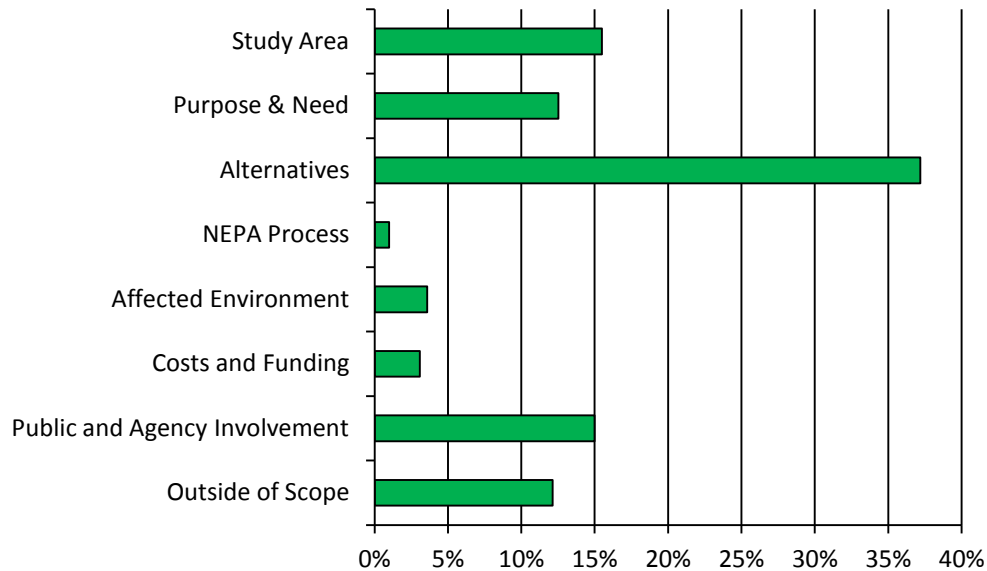
This document is organized first by commenter type. The commenter types are defined below:

- **Public** – This includes the general public, private businesses, non-governmental organizations (including Coalition of Northeastern Governors (CONEG), New York-Connecticut Sustainable Communities Consortium, Regional Plan Association (RPA)), freight railroads (including Conrail, Providence & Worcester, Norfolk Southern, CSX Transportation), and various interest and advocacy groups (including the Empire State Passengers Association, Lackawanna Coalition, National Association of Railroad Passengers, New Jersey Association of Railroad Passengers, North-South Rail Link Citizen Advisory Committee, Rail Users’ Network, Sierra Club).
- **Elected Officials** – This includes publicly elected federal, state, and local officials.
- **Agencies** – This includes all federal, state, regional, and local agencies and passenger rail and transit operators/providers.

The comments are then organized by comment categories. The eight general comment categories include: Study Area, Purpose & Need, Alternatives, NEPA Process, Affected Environment, Costs and Funding, Public and Agency Involvement, and Outside of Scope.

More than one-third of all comments received were about Alternatives. Study Area, Purpose & Need, and Public and Agency Involvement categories each represented at least 10% of the total. The overall distribution of comments received by comment category is shown in *Figure 2, Comments by Category*. *Figure 2* includes all distinct comments received during the scoping period.

Figure 2: Comments by Category



To better understand the participation and distribution of comments, the scoping commenters and their comments were further grouped by type: Non-Governmental Organization, Individuals and Private Business, Agency, and Elected Official. The following two pie charts, *Figures 3 and 4*, show the percentage of scoping commenters and their distinct comments by stakeholder group, respectively.

Individuals or private businesses represented approximately 76% of the nearly 800 commenters. Individuals and private businesses also provided the majority of all comments, with 63% of all comments being made by an individual or representative of a private business. Non-governmental organizations were the next largest group of commenters, making up 15% of all commenters, and providing 21% of all comments.

All comments received throughout the NEPA process will be read and considered, but only those comments received during the official comment period are considered in this Scoping Summary.

Figure 3: Commenters by Stakeholder Group

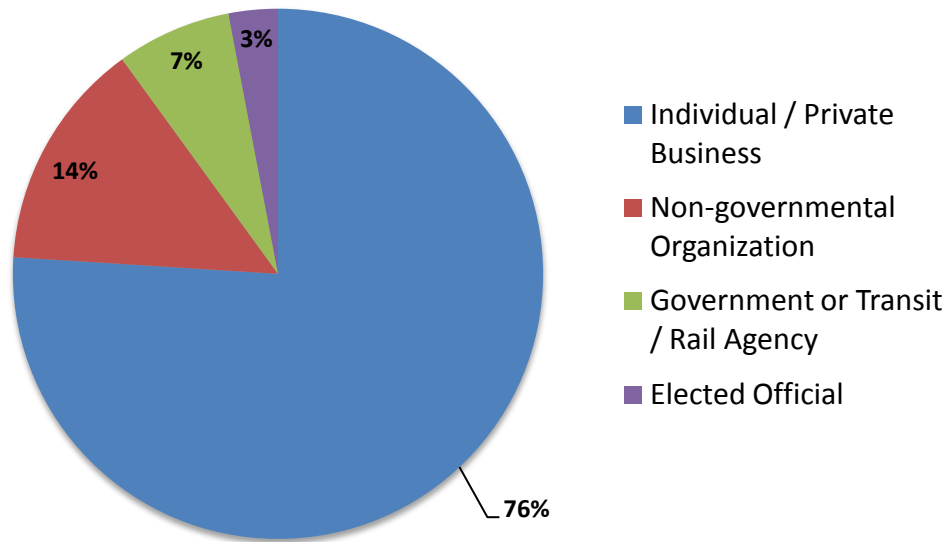
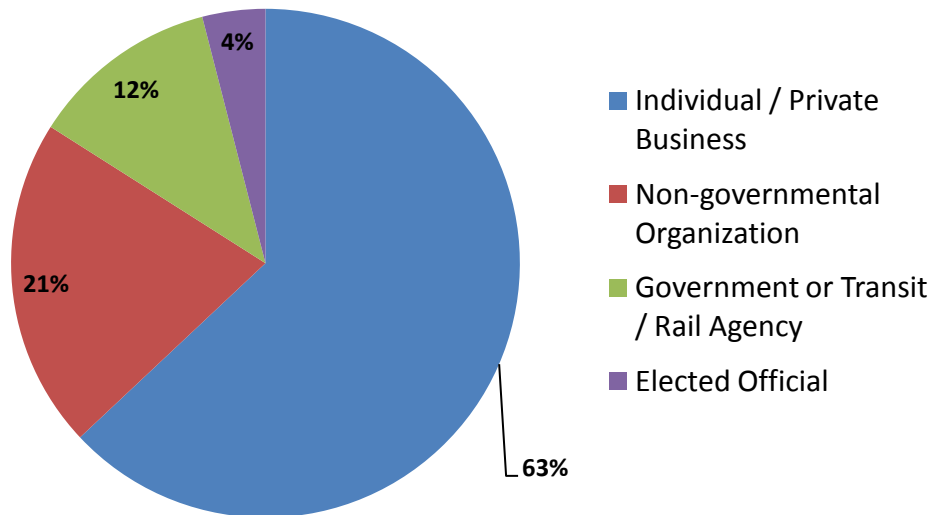


Figure 4: Comments by Stakeholder Group



SUMMARY OF COMMENTS BY CATEGORY

The following sections highlight the overarching themes for each of the previously identified comment categories as expressed in comments received from the public. For each comment category, individual comments were reviewed to identify themes or concerns articulated by more than one commenter. For each theme within a comment category, a response is provided. To help illustrate the individual perspectives within each theme, quotes have been extracted from individual comments. These quotes are provided without attribution to keep the focus on the comments themselves and not the individual or organization making the comment. All comments received during scoping have been considered and are represented in this Scoping Summary.

The summary in this section represents only those comments received from the public, non-governmental agencies, elected officials and advocacy or special interest groups. Comments from federal, state, regional or local agencies, rail and transit operators, and tribal governments are separately summarized, by agency, in Section IV of this Scoping Summary.

Study Area

Approximately 350 comments, about 15% of all comments, addressed the NEC FUTURE Study Area. The NEC FUTURE Study Area includes those metropolitan areas containing the NEC rail spine, which runs between Washington, D.C., New York City and Boston, MA. In addition, portions of Virginia and New Hampshire that are within the Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) of Washington, D.C. and Boston, MA respectively are also included.

Themes within the Study Area category include Virginia coverage, New York-Pennsylvania coverage, and New England coverage.

Figure 5 depicts the NEC FUTURE program Study Area.

Table 4 summarizes comments and responses on the Study Area. For each theme, representative quotes have been excerpted from a group of statements that express similar concerns. In addition, a response is provided for each comment theme.

Figure 5: Preliminary Study Area



Table 4: Study Area Comments and Responses		
Study Area Themes	Representative Comments	Response
Virginia Coverage	<p><i>The following representative quotes are excerpts from individual comments:</i></p> <p><i>“Include the Hampton Roads metro area and the Chesapeake Bay Urban Crescent in the ‘Study Area’ to be used by FRA and NEC Commission.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“Please include Richmond, VA in your NEC planning.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“The Norfolk area needs to be better connected to the other large job centers of the northeast.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“...we encourage you to expand your Study Area to include Virginia’s Golden Crescent.”</i></p>	<p>The NEC FUTURE Tier 1 EIS Study Area includes the metropolitan areas¹ surrounding the NEC Spine and connecting corridors between Washington, D.C. and Boston, MA. Markets and rail corridors outside or adjacent to the Study Area, such as Hampton Roads and Richmond, VA, and how they relate to or influence the NEC FUTURE program, will be considered in the alternatives development process.</p>
New York-Pennsylvania Coverage	<p><i>“I noticed that the New York - Newark - Scranton - Binghamton corridor is not included in the Study Area. That appears to be a gaping omission among the feeder corridors to the NEC spine...”</i></p>	<p>The NEC FUTURE program will consider potential services beyond the Study Area, which would connect to the NEC Spine, in the alternatives development process.</p>
New England Coverage	<p><i>The following representative quotes are excerpts from individual comments:</i></p> <p><i>“Massachusetts, New England, as well as the entire NEC would likewise benefit by extending the NEC northward from Boston. The population density north of Boston to northeastern Massachusetts and Portland, Maine and Manchester, New Hampshire, and eventually Montreal, Canada would be well served.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“Multimodal transportation, especially high-speed rail, from New England to Montreal is important to commercial interests and our prosperity along these routes and elsewhere.”</i></p>	<p>The NEC FUTURE program Study Area extends from the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area to the Boston, MA metropolitan area. Markets and rail corridors outside or adjacent to the Study Area, such as Portland, ME; Manchester, NH; and Montreal, Canada and how they relate to or influence the NEC FUTURE program, will be considered in the alternatives development process.</p>

¹ Consistent with U.S. Census Bureau definitions, metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) are one or more adjacent counties or county equivalents that have at least one urban core area of at least 50,000 population, plus adjacent territory that has a high degree of social and economic integration (as measured by commuting to work) with the core.

Purpose & Need

Approximately 13% of all comments focused on the NEC FUTURE program's Purpose & Need and goals. The Purpose & Need Statement will play a pivotal role in every stage of the NEC FUTURE program. It defines the purpose of the program, the present and future challenges facing the Northeast region, and the need for passenger rail transportation solutions to address these challenges. The NEC FUTURE goals will form the basis for evaluating and screening alternatives and eventually recommending a preferred investment program for the NEC. As such, the program goals must broadly define those elements that proposed alternatives should possess to best address identified needs and meet the program purpose. Overall, the comments in this category address the specific elements of the Purpose & Need; goals; and the relationship of this program to other government and transportation agency plans, policies, and projects.

Table 5 summarizes comments and responses on the Purpose & Need. For each theme, representative quotes have been excerpted from a group of statements that express similar concerns. In addition, a response is provided for each comment theme.

Table 5: Purpose & Need Comments and Responses		
Purpose & Need Themes	Representative Comments	Response
Economic Competitiveness & Development	<p><i>The following representative quotes are excerpts from individual comments:</i></p> <p><i>“We cannot sit idle anymore. The world is moving past us... countries in Asia and Europe are going to have a better rail system... than we ever can hope for. And we are behind the eight ball and playing catch-up. Those countries see the need for rail service. They see the need. There is a need, people.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“...we believe the FRA should develop an intercity rail investment plan that enhances the economic productivity and competitiveness of the Northeast mega-region’s² major job centers, one which includes the capital city of Providence, Rhode Island, by reducing travel times between major markets.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“We can use infrastructure to propel economic development, create quality jobs and improve the lives of all Americans.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“In no uncertain terms, intercity and commuter rail are essential to the economic development of our region. The highways are heavily congested; there are no major airports in the region; and there is an urgent need to upgrade the existing rail infrastructure.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“Northeast Corridor Infrastructure improvements are a must if the United States wants to stay economically competitive in the 21st century.”</i></p>	<p>The Purpose & Need for the NEC FUTURE program states that major investments in the NEC and other transportation modes are needed for the Northeast to grow and remain economically competitive in national and international markets. The FRA recognizes the role transportation and mobility play in influencing economic growth and development. The program goals identified in the Scoping Package will be refined to better articulate this relationship between mobility and economics.</p>

² A megaregion consists of two or more cities. The Northeast Megaregion stretches some 500 miles down the East Coast of the United States from Boston through New York City to Washington, D.C.

Table 5: Purpose & Need Comments and Responses		
Purpose & Need Themes	Representative Comments	Response
Sustainability/Social Equity	<p><i>“One dimension that is missing from the listed goals in Section 2. 3 and should be included in the subsequent statement of Purpose & Need is a focus on the third “E” of sustainability - social equity - in addition to the environment and the economy. Efforts should be made to make rail service more affordable and hence available to more travelers.”</i></p>	<p>The FRA recognizes the importance of considering a broad range of mobility options for a diverse cross-section of travelers. As such the program goals will be refined to better reflect the affordability aspect of passenger rail services. In addition, specific impacts to environmental justice communities associated with program alternatives will be assessed in the Tier 1 EIS.</p>
Capacity	<p><i>The following representative quotes are excerpts from individual comments:</i></p> <p><i>“...consider options for improving performance on the Boston-Washington Northeast Corridor, planning for much needed increases in Hudson River passenger rail capacity is critical.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“...ensure that the Program provides for a sufficient level of additional future capacity above those levels required to support planned service levels in order to accommodate unforeseen increases in demand or subsequent demand occurring beyond the study horizon.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“Expansion of rail capacity allows the railroads providing service in the NEC to offer additional seats, including in peak periods when commuter flows are highest. ... Once capacity has been maximized by this approach, it is necessary to increase the capacity of the infrastructure itself to accommodate more train services. If this is not done, the only realistic alternative is to increase fare levels to manage demand downwards to within available capacity levels.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“Transportation officials must work collaboratively ... to substantially increase railroad capacity between Northern New Jersey and Penn Station. An enhanced Northeast Corridor is vital for the tri-state area to compete in an increasingly complex, 21st century global economy.”</i></p>	<p>The FRA recognizes the importance of the NEC Spine and its connecting corridors in meeting existing and future demand. The program goals and objectives will be refined to reflect this.</p>

Table 5: Purpose & Need Comments and Responses		
Purpose & Need Themes	Representative Comments	Response
Travel Time	<p><i>The following representative quotes are excerpts from individual comments:</i></p> <p><i>“We recommend that FRA set ambitious goals of cutting 30 minutes from the travel time to NY, and a comparable amount of travel time to Boston, and that these improvements be one of the first upgrades to the NEC.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“...time makes a difference even for regional travel. And so one of the urgings is to look at making sure that in the Northeast Corridor, upgrades you’re considering, that speed of regional rail is also enhanced.”</i></p>	<p>A broad range of alternatives, including improved reliability and travel time along the NEC, as well as other operational improvements, will be considered in the Service Development Plan and Tier 1 EIS.</p>
Reliability, Redundancy, State of Good Repair	<p><i>The following representative quotes are excerpts from individual comments:</i></p> <p><i>“I am less concerned with true “high speed” rail, and more concerned with frequent, reasonably fast service--with frequency and reliability and connectedness more important than absolute speed.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“The NEC FUTURE program is a vital step in defining and creating adequate capacity for the NEC so our nation will not need to turn to alternative and more costly modes of transportation, which may pose greater threats to our environment.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“...to achieve a state of good repair on the existing corridor to provide more reliable, frequent, and faster commuter passenger service...”</i></p>	<p>The FRA recognizes the importance of improving safety, reliability, and redundancy. The goals of the NEC FUTURE program include identifying and developing a program that provides attractive, competitive and high-quality passenger service. Investment in the existing NEC is a priority for the FRA. NEC FUTURE program goals will be refined to better articulate this.</p>

Table 5: Purpose & Need Comments and Responses		
Purpose & Need Themes	Representative Comments	Response
Rail Network/Connectivity	<p><i>The following representative quotes are excerpts from individual comments:</i></p> <p><i>“I’d like to see the NEC Future project explore options to come as close as possible to having direct connections to all subway, light rail, and commuter rail lines in the greater NEC area.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“The Northeast Corridor rail system is critical to both current and future economic prosperity and mobility for residents of this state and certainly as a whole to the larger Northeast region. A dedicated high speed corridor should serve major population and employment centers. Those centers must have extensive, high quality and frequent commuter rail service that makes critical connections for the riding public.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“It is important that Federal and regional transit agencies work together to advance an affordable and passenger-friendly plan that serves both regional and intercity travelers.”</i></p>	<p>Service and market impacts related to intermodal connections will be addressed within the Service Development Plan and the Tier 1 EIS. Specific improvements which emerge from the Tier 1 EIS would be the subject of separate project-level studies.</p>
Relationship to Agency Plans and Policies	<p><i>The following representative quotes are excerpts from individual comments:</i></p> <p><i>“[Municipal/County/Regional] Plan envisions a clean, safe, culturally diverse community supported by an efficient, flexible, and economically viable transportation system that is essential to the growth and prosperity of the City. Rail is a critical component...to reduce overall dependence on the automobile, and in addressing the challenges - traffic congestion, oil dependence, air and noise pollution, efficiency, economics, and health.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“...reports by NEC transit agencies and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) may also contain useful background information that might be included by reference in the document.”</i></p>	<p>The FRA is coordinating with the responsible agencies to incorporate appropriate information from related plans, studies, or programs.</p>

Table 5: Purpose & Need Comments and Responses

Purpose & Need Themes	Representative Comments	Response
<p>Relationship to Transportation Plans and Policies</p>	<p><i>“We also believe that it is important for the study to identify all the rail discussions and plans that are already in play...Each of the railroads should be surveyed for rail goals, policies, and recommendations. Each of the railroads should be surveyed for plans, studies and other input.”</i></p>	<p>The FRA is coordinating with states and MPOs concerning relevant plans and programs, including state rail plans.</p>
<p>Relationship to Transportation Projects</p>	<p><i>The following representative quotes are excerpts from individual comments:</i></p> <p><i>“Content-wise, one option to look at. . . is now nine years old from the MIS Summary Report for ARC, which shows a connection from Penn, New York Penn to Grand Central.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“Coordinate with planning studies underway, including NY Penn Station, Gateway Tunnel, NYC extension of #7 Subway into NJ.”</i></p>	<p>The FRA will coordinate with the responsible agencies to incorporate appropriate information from related studies.</p>
<p>Future Demand</p>	<p><i>The following representative quotes are excerpts from individual comments:</i></p> <p><i>“Travel demand projections, need to include consideration of a more varied future by developing “what if” scenarios to contrast with basing the forecasts on a projection of past trends.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“I see a future in shared transportation and a multiplicity of options, so that I would like to encourage big thinking.”</i></p>	<p>The FRA is considering forecast growth in passenger demand and ridership in the alternatives development process. The focus of the NEC FUTURE program is on meeting current and future passenger needs and market growth. The FRA will coordinate with the appropriate agencies to incorporate a range of growth forecasts throughout the corridor.</p>

Table 5: Purpose & Need Comments and Responses		
Purpose & Need Themes	Representative Comments	Response
Governance	<p><i>The following representative quotes are excerpts from individual comments:</i></p> <p><i>“ . . . if any effort in the Northeast Corridor is going to be made to promote a seamless transportation network in the northeast, it’s important that all public agencies, transit agencies and every agency work collaboratively. . . work closely together in collaboration and provide seamless information . . . and thorough information and services as was mentioned before.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“Finally, while it is tempting for a project at this scale to think according to top-down national-policy approaches, the realities of federal funding and political uncertainties make bottom-up approaches increasingly important. Therefore, the EIS should recognize the importance of greater stakeholder involvement from state and local governments and regional businesses - not only in planning, but also in finance, management, and implementation.”</i></p>	<p>The benefits, impacts and costs of developing collaborative relationships with other federal and state agencies will be considered, particularly when exploring cost and funding of any Reasonable Alternative.</p>

Alternatives

Commenters provided ideas, preferences or concerns about alternatives to be considered in the NEC FUTURE program. Over 34% of all individual comments received were related to alternatives. Of the more than 800 individual comments received on alternatives, over half provided suggestions about specific alignments, stations or infrastructure improvements. While these site-specific or project-specific suggestions are valuable input to the overall NEC FUTURE program study process, the Tier 1 EIS represents a broader, more programmatic view of the full range of possible corridor-wide alternatives. Site-specific or project-specific suggestions included references to improvements at specific stations, upgrades to specific services or alignments (e. g., specific location and alignment of a new trans-Hudson tunnel). These location specific recommendations will be broadly considered in the Tier 1 EIS and would be the subject of subsequent project-level reviews.

Some comments identified near-term, low-cost investments to improve the existing NEC while others called on FRA to ‘think big’ and consider improvements even beyond the next 30 – 40 years. Themes for which multiple comments were received include improvements to the existing NEC and its connecting corridors; NEC state of good repair; intercity, regional, and commuter services; NEC capacity; incremental or phased investment strategies; intermodal connectivity; high-speed rail; organizational and operating practices; fares and affordability; customer amenities; technology; freight; and selection of alternatives. Three specific improvements were the subject of many comments: the trans-Hudson tunnel/Gateway project (NY and NJ); a Penn Station – Grand Central Terminal connection (NY); and the North-South Rail Link (Boston, MA).

Table 6, summarizes comments and responses on the Alternatives. For each theme, representative quotes have been excerpted from a group of statements that express similar concerns. In addition, a response is provided for each comment theme.

Table 6: Alternatives Comments and Responses		
Alternatives Themes	Representative Comments	Response
Improvements to Existing NEC & Connecting Corridors	<p><i>The following representative quotes are excerpts from individual comments:</i></p> <p><i>“Until the present NEC is used to its full capacity, justification for a new railroad is lacking.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“Work into the plan near-term/low-investment opportunities to improve capacity, build ridership, and to grow revenues and market share. Here are a couple of examples: (a) Through running of MTA and NJ Transit services via Penn Station; (b) A Jamaica-New Rochelle connection via available and underutilized tracks and unused track space.”</i></p>	<p>Opportunities to create operating efficiencies to better utilize existing capacity will be considered in the Service Development Plan (SDP) and Tier 1 EIS alternatives development process.</p>

Table 6: Alternatives Comments and Responses		
Alternatives Themes	Representative Comments	Response
<p>NEC State of Good Repair</p>	<p><i>The following representative quotes are excerpts from individual comments:</i></p> <p><i>“As we contemplate the future and address those needs, it is important to also reflect on the critical importance of achieving a state of good repair on the Northeast Corridor today. Both Amtrak and NJ TRANSIT experience all too often failures of existing critical infrastructure and limitations of functionally obsolete components.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“The heavily-used rail corridor from New York City to New Haven should be a priority for early investment in state of good repair and enhancement.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“The Passenger Rail Corridor Investment Plan (PRICP) should ensure that the NEC is in a State of Good Repair with high degree of service reliability, and should address capacity and service improvement needs. If the NEC is not brought to and maintained at a state of good repair, the resulting unreliable infrastructure will not be able to provide the baseline capacity or trip-times that might become the foundation of the no-action NEPA and SDP scenario.”</i></p>	<p>Improvements to the existing NEC necessary to bring the rail line to a state of good repair are consistent with the NEC FUTURE program's goals and will be considered in the alternatives development process. Investment in the existing NEC will continue to be a priority.</p>

Table 6: Alternatives Comments and Responses

Alternatives Themes	Representative Comments	Response
<p>Intercity, Commuter and Regional Services</p>	<p><i>The following representative quotes are excerpts from individual comments:</i></p> <p><i>“...Intercity and commuter rail are essential to our region.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“Today, thousands depend on access to the Northeast Corridor for Amtrak and commuter rail service, including brand new connections to the new Rhode Island stations at T.F. Green.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“...look at working with the organizations that run commuter rail along the Northeast Corridor, ensuring that they work together and efficiently with those organizations. For example, on the Providence Line, the MBTA runs 80-mile-per-hour diesel push-pull locomotive service. This will always be incompatible with high-speed rail at 150 miles per hour if they want to increase capacity.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“It is of little help to zoom along at high speed only to sit and wait for hours for the next link in the journey. Numerous connecting commuter train lines offer less than one train an hour. Effort needs to be invested to ensure that the entire network operates at frequent intervals and that connections are made between all of the carriers and services that may be used for the total journey from Portland to Newport News.”</i></p>	<p>The FRA is considering the full range of services currently operated along the NEC Spine and its connecting corridors, including intercity, regional and commuter services. Opportunities to optimize operations and improve the integration and connectivity of this passenger rail network will be considered by the FRA in the NEC FUTURE program.</p>

Table 6: Alternatives Comments and Responses		
Alternatives Themes	Representative Comments	Response
NEC Capacity	<p>The following representative quotes are excerpts from individual comments:</p> <p><i>“I would like to encourage a system that doesn't just handle projected capacity, but handles the kind of capacity that happens if half of the users in the Northeast Corridor don't use their cars anymore.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“More than anything, I would like to see capacity and thus supply increased. I want more people to be able to have affordable access to the NEC. As a rail corridor in the nation's and the world's premier megapolitan region, it seems that inter-city rail ought to be able to carry many more passengers than the current 6 percent total mode share that it does today.”</i></p>	<p>Improvements to the existing NEC from Washington, D.C. to Boston, MA are consistent with the NEC FUTURE program's goals and will be considered in the alternatives development process. Additional capacity, improved reliability and travel times will be evaluated in developing these alternatives.</p>
Incremental or Phased Investment	<p>The following representative quotes are excerpts from individual comments:</p> <p><i>“Given the obvious limitations on funding in the foreseeable future, an incremental approach to expanding service development will ensure that “perfect” does not become the enemy of possible, and that a focus is maintained on identifying rail corridor improvements that can be realized in a reasonable amount of time.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“...the phasing of the project [Gateway Tunnels] should start with implementing a first tunnel so that it relieves some of the traffic congestion, particularly in New York Penn, and provides more flexibility and, more importantly, to the Northeast Corridor, provides redundancy.”</i></p>	<p>Incremental or phased improvements to the existing NEC from Washington, D.C. to Boston, MA are consistent with the NEC FUTURE program's goals and will be considered in the development of alternatives for the NEC FUTURE program. A broad range of alternatives, including those that can be implemented in the nearer term will be considered in the Service Development Plan and Tier 1 EIS.</p>

Table 6: Alternatives Comments and Responses

Alternatives Themes	Representative Comments	Response
<p>Intermodal Connectivity</p>	<p><i>The following representative quotes are excerpts from individual comments:</i></p> <p><i>“Please incorporate intermodal considerations as part of the planning process, specifically intercity and commuter bus...In other cities, “transit” hubs have been developed or are being planned in a seemingly parallel and distinct process...”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“Full intermodal cooperation and coordination...will be important to create opportunities for it to occur...good physical connectivity between airports and the rail system can have positive implication for both industries.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“We are also keenly interested in promoting the connectivity of any new service with the existing commuter and intercity rail services in the northeast to maximize public return on investment in this system.”</i></p>	<p>Intermodal connections and opportunities to increase travel benefits with improved customer services will be considered and are consistent with the NEC FUTURE program goals.</p>

Table 6: Alternatives Comments and Responses		
Alternatives Themes	Representative Comments	Response
Operations and Service	<p><i>The following representative quotes are excerpts from individual comments:</i></p> <p><i>"[look at] The price vs. speed trade-off (maintenance and capital) of very high speed rail (200 to 220mph) vs. reliable 160 mph or so speeds."</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>"I also recommend upgrades of Keystone Service between Philadelphia and Pittsburgh and the Empire Service between NYC and Albany."</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>"Whereas, if there [was] service that went...straight from Hempstead to Trenton... that would be a way of relieving this congestion, as well as providing very, very significantly improved and more desirable transportation alternatives for people who live in the region."</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>"I think one of the detriments to better ridership on the corridor in the Baltimore to Richmond zone is the fact that you have this . . . long time wasted at Washington Union Station. . . . you should plan out for the implementation of thru service either through diesel electric locomotives or, I know currently you already have catenary poles that run down from Washington Station . . . to Potomac Yards on the Virginia side. You might be able to extend it to Alexandria or something and pick up passengers there."</i></p>	<p>The NEC FUTURE program will identify levels of investment that provide for physical improvements, technologies and operating efficiencies to reliably and safely respond to 2040 demand for commuter, regional and intercity passenger rail service, including opportunities for service to new markets and increased service to existing markets. This will include better ways of serving connecting corridors.</p>

Table 6: Alternatives Comments and Responses

Alternatives Themes	Representative Comments	Response
<p>On-Corridor/Off-Corridor Routes</p>	<p><i>The following representative quotes are excerpts from individual comments:</i></p> <p><i>“There are two other routes: (1) Amtrak northern route Waterbury-Danbury-Hartford, and (2) Long Island alignment proposed by University of PA...the evaluation of these routes go beyond pure engineering and cost, to look at network connectivity...”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“I am writing to express my concerns about the current plan to route the proposed NEC upgrade project through Danbury and Hartford, instead of Stamford, Bridgeport, and New Haven.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“Routing options that bypass Philadelphia should be eliminated. In addition to being a major departure and arrival point, it is an efficient connection point for Harrisburg, Atlantic City, Philadelphia International Airport, and suburban Philadelphia destinations.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“Commuters who live between Perryville, MD and Baltimore, MD, should have access to trains that make all local stops in between Perryville and Baltimore, and with one set of trains running express from Baltimore to DC along the new 220 MPH alignment, and the other set of trains running express from Wilmington to Philadelphia.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“Will the NEC look at former rail lines (many which have been converted to rails-to-trails lines)?”</i></p>	<p>The FRA recognizes the importance of service to markets along the existing intercity, regional and commuter rail routes. The NEC FUTURE program will identify the levels of investment that provide for physical improvements, technologies, and operating efficiencies to reliably and safely respond to 2040 demand for passenger service. This will include the analysis of on-corridor and off-corridor routes examining: network connectivity, impacts to existing and new markets, and impacts on the region's transportation system, the environment, and economy.</p>

Table 6: Alternatives Comments and Responses		
Alternatives Themes	Representative Comments	Response
High-Speed Rail	<p><i>The following representative quotes are excerpts from individual comments:</i></p> <p><i>“Northeast Corridor is the ideal case for true high speed rail service. Please do build the rail, we deserve it, we need it and we need it sooner than 2040 and we can get it done sooner so hope you can expedite the process.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“Please continue to fight for high-speed rail in the Northeast. We need it, because the region is only going to get more congested in the future. All of that time sitting in traffic represents so many lost dollars and so much lost time, and that's not good for anybody.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“I just urge that the upgrades improve the existing shoreline corridor to feed into the high speed line. One way or the other, I hope the high traffic NE Corridor gets a full high speed rail line...”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“...there's no more room to build more highways or more airports, and our mobility is endangered by depending just strictly on oil. So high-speed rail is certainly the way to go.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“This plan should advance an integrated strategy that supports the development of true high-speed rail in the NE, as well as faster and more reliable commuter and regional intercity rail service on existing corridors.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“...build two new, dedicated tracks for true high-speed rail service the length of the corridor to increase capacity for future growth and thereby reducing trip times.”</i></p>	<p>NEC FUTURE will examine the market for higher-speed rail services along the NEC, and, assuming it is warranted, will evaluate where best to provide that new service. This is likely to include both on-corridor and off-corridor routes. The analysis will consider network connectivity, impacts to existing and new markets and on the region's transportation system, environment and economy. The focus of the NEC FUTURE program is a corridor-level analysis. More detailed alignment issues would be the subject of subsequent project-level environmental reviews.</p>

Table 6: Alternatives Comments and Responses

Alternatives Themes	Representative Comments	Response
<p>Organizational and Operating Practices</p>	<p><i>“In order to cost effectively improve the Northeast Corridor, the FRA and Amtrak should adopt the motto, change organization and operational practices first and foremost. If that doesn’t work, then look at fixing electronics and software systems. Finally, if nothing else works, then look at changing concrete in order to upgrade the line.”</i></p>	<p>The NEC FUTURE alternatives development process will focus on service, railroad operations and infrastructure improvements to enhance service within the NEC. The alternatives will include a wide range of proposals to increase capacity, enhance safety, improve reliability, and reduce trip time, including those to improve operations.</p>
<p>Fares and Affordability</p>	<p><i>The following representative quotes are excerpts from individual comments:</i></p> <p><i>“This high speed line should have affordable everyday fares.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“We recommend that steps be taken to introduce a viable rail alternative for price-conscious travelers, which would serve to divert such travelers from buses on highways to the rails of the NEC and connecting lines.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“An update, no matter how welcome, would be pointless however, unless the cost of using the system is addressed as well.”</i></p>	<p>The FRA will explore a variety of service and operation plans that include a number of pricing strategies as variables. The NEC FUTURE alternatives development process will consider a mix of service types and fare structures to meet different traveler and market needs.</p>
<p>Customer Amenities</p>	<p><i>The following representative quotes are excerpts from individual comments:</i></p> <p><i>“And in lieu of very high speed...consider higher frequency and reduced price as a way to attract more riders.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“When will trains become bike friendly?”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“Make stations friendly travel centers, with basic amenities: seats, information about local connecting service and for other key stations, map and a summary of service frequency on major routes, rack with timetables for connecting rail service. These amenities could increase use of the NEC by casual travelers.”</i></p>	<p>The FRA recognizes the importance of providing attractive, competitive, high-quality, and user friendly passenger rail service to customers, which is consistent with the overall NEC FUTURE program goals and will be broadly considered in the alternatives development process. Specific implementation details will be considered in subsequent project-level analyses.</p>

Table 6: Alternatives Comments and Responses		
Alternatives Themes	Representative Comments	Response
Technology	<p><i>The following representative quotes are excerpts from individual comments:</i></p> <p><i>"I am writing to go on record in the current scoping process for the Northeast Corridor EIS to make the point that Maglev should be seriously considered in this process."</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>"...wants to use this scoping process to officially go on record to urge the Federal Railroad Administration to do a side-by-side comparison of the true costs and benefits of high speed rail and maglev."</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>"...it would be nice in the future if a passenger from Amtrak or from one of the regional commuter agencies would be able to have thru ticketing."</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>"...Amtrak should take advantage of the technology to go to double-decker bi-levels, because it would lower the cost per seat mile, the ticket prices."</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>"I'd like to see some thought about commuter rail on that corridor also being electrified."</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>"So if we have technology and it can speed up our travel time from Washington, D.C. to Boston by using faster technology, I think that would be a wise investment than to go with old fashioned technology that may be limited in 10 years now, 20 years from now."</i></p>	<p>Technologies, such as maglev, will be considered in the alternatives development process and included in the Initial Alternatives list. The alternatives development process will be documented as part of the SDP and Tier 1 EIS.</p>

Table 6: Alternatives Comments and Responses

Alternatives Themes	Representative Comments	Response
<p>Freight</p>	<p><i>The following representative quotes are excerpts from individual comments:</i></p> <p><i>“I know there are freight needs and they're legitimate and they do need to be addressed. And freight trains travel slower, generally, on the corridor than the passenger trains do and the freight's speed should be speeded up somewhat too.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“Win-Win opportunities for both passenger and freight rail.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“As alternatives are identified and evaluated for future investments, network alignment, and operations plans, it is important to consider the impacts on freight service. Those impacts include the ability of freight railroads to grow and deliver economic, environmental and social benefits to communities along the Corridor and to the Nation.”</i></p>	<p>The FRA considers forecast growth in both passenger and freight markets in the alternatives development process. The focus of the NEC FUTURE program is on meeting current and future passenger needs while accommodating future freight needs corridor-wide. Current freight operators are working with the FRA to identify their future needs and opportunities within the NEC FUTURE program.</p>
<p>Selecting Reasonable Alternatives</p>	<p><i>“If you look at the way they propose phasing it, there are four segments from Washington to here. Four segments from here to New York. And five segments onto Boston. I don't see how in January we're going to see a reasonable set of alternatives selected from the multitude of input which you've had here tonight.”</i></p>	<p>The FRA is committed to a transparent and expeditious study process that includes public participation across a broad range of interested parties. A framework has been established for categorizing and defining these numerous ideas into a set of Initial Alternatives. Once that is complete, the initial Alternatives will be consolidated and organized into the Preliminary Alternatives and then screened to a set of Reasonable Alternatives for consideration in the Tier 1 EIS.</p>

Table 6: Alternatives Comments and Responses		
Alternatives Themes	Representative Comments	Response
Trans-Hudson Tunnel (NY and NJ)	<p><i>The following representative quotes are excerpts from individual comments:</i></p> <p><i>“Right now, among it's [NEC's] highest priorities must be rebuilding between Newark and Manhattan, including adding tunnel capacity to Penn Station New York, and eventually a connection to the new lower level at GCT for LIRR...”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“The fact that there's just one tunnel going in and one tunnel going out creates problems on the weekends when you're running 30 minutes in and 30 minutes out. It creates problems at rush hour because you're funneling a lot of trains into a single -- a single tunnel. Additional tunnels would help that.”</i></p>	<p>Alternatives for increasing trans-Hudson capacity between New Jersey and New York will be broadly considered in the alternatives development process. Alignment-specific details will be considered in subsequent project-level environmental reviews.</p>
Penn Station – Grand Central Terminal Connection (New York, NY)	<p><i>“...the key for the corridor, we believe, is that a connection between New York Penn and Grand Central terminal. Without that, Penn Station is overloaded. All the new riders, most of them are taking subways. And the way to really gain an improved regional mobility is to provide people with a one-seat ride.”</i></p>	<p>Alternative routes that include a possible connection between Grand Central Terminal and Penn Station will be considered as part of the alternatives development process. Alignment-specific details will be considered in subsequent project-level environmental reviews.</p>
North-South Rail Link (Boston, MA)	<p><i>The following representative quotes are excerpts from individual comments:</i></p> <p><i>“No study of increasing capacity on the north end of the NEC would be complete without examination of a rail link between the two major passenger stations in Boston.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“The study should include an assumption that a North Station-South Station rail link will be established, allowing The Downeaster and future New Hampshire rail lines (including resumption of rail to Montreal via Concord, and Lebanon, New Hampshire).”</i></p>	<p>The NEC FUTURE Study Area extends from the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area to the Boston, MA metropolitan area. Markets and rail corridors outside or adjacent to the Study Area and how they relate to or influence the NEC FUTURE program, will also be considered. Within the Boston metropolitan area, the North-South Rail Link will be considered in the alternatives development process.</p>

NEPA Process

Approximately 1% of all comments received during scoping addressed the NEPA Process. Comments addressed several NEPA-related themes. Some comments expressed concern with the length of time required for the NEC FUTURE study and urged expedited project delivery. Other comments focused on specific aspects of the NEPA process, such as the tiered approach to the EIS, federal oversight, or targeted stakeholder engagement. Comments regarding the assessment of impacts to the affected environment are summarized in the following section on Affected Environment.

Table 7 summarizes comments and responses on the NEPA Process. For each theme, representative quotes have been excerpted from a group of statements that express similar concerns. In addition, a response is provided for each comment theme.

Table 7: NEPA Process Comments and Responses		
NEPA Process Themes	Representative Comments	Response
Schedule	<p><i>The following representative quotes are excerpts from individual comments:</i></p> <p><i>"...This need is so urgent that it cannot wait for a 3-year P-EIS in the 21st century this is an eternity."</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>"...they're going to take four years to do an environmental report. And I understand that the law requires a very thorough investigation, but the material I've seen outside says the demand for service is increasing and increasing. And I'm very concerned that by the time they get the study done, conditions will have changed."</i></p>	<p>The FRA recognizes the urgency of needs along the NEC and is committed to advancing the Tier 1 EIS and SDP as expeditiously as possible, but remains equally committed to making sure that a transparent and inclusive process is conducted and that sound technical analyses are provided.</p>

Table 7: NEPA Process Comments and Responses		
NEPA Process Themes	Representative Comments	Response
Tiered Approach	<i>"We are slightly concerned about what a Tier 1 scoping process is for a nine-state process or eight-state and D.C. It's supposed to be some broad overview. I don't understand how it's going to work compared to what we've seen for Environmental Impact Statements in the past in the NEPA or 109 [sic] process."</i>	A tiered approach was selected for the NEC FUTURE program due to the scope, complexity, and long-term nature of this multi-state planning effort. "Tiering" takes a broad approach to the overall analysis and typically uses readily-available information to establish baseline conditions and conduct analyses. The affected environment will be documented primarily through the use of existing mapping, studies and reports and a wide range of federal and state resource databases. For this Tier 1 EIS, no field work or subsurface testing will be completed. More detailed analysis will occur at subsequent phases of project development.
Relationship to Tier 2 Environmental Reviews	<i>"I assume that the subsequent SDP, as well as an updated (FRA-Amtrak) fleet strategy, will help inform the current and future needs for NEC facilities; but will the NEC FUTURE program identify future capital programs and streamline the environmental process for new facilities (stations, maintenance facilities, crew bases, etc.)?"</i>	The NEC FUTURE Tier 1 EIS and SDP will set the stage for subsequent project-level environmental reviews. Through the Tier 1 EIS, the FRA will work with affected stakeholders to identify key issues early for resolution during Tier 1 documentation and to identify opportunities for efficiencies in advancing subsequent project-level reviews.

Table 7: NEPA Process Comments and Responses

NEPA Process Themes	Representative Comments	Response
Federal Oversight	<i>“Expand federal oversight to include FTA, FHWA and FAA, and other appropriate agencies.”</i>	The NEC FUTURE program is a multi-state planning effort managed and directed by the FRA in collaboration with other NEC stakeholders including states with intercity passenger service on the NEC or connected to it; Amtrak; and the commuter and freight railroads that share usage of the NEC infrastructure. In support of this multi-state and multi-operator effort, the FRA is similarly coordinating through the U.S. Department of Transportation (US DOT) with each of the modal agencies, including the FTA, FHWA, and FAA.
Engaging Potentially Impacted Groups	<i>“If a new alignment for high-speed passenger trains is chosen to serve Philadelphia International Airport, existing communities through which the new alignment might run such as Eddystone, Ridley Township, and Essington and Lester in Tinicum Township need to be consulted from the beginning of the planning process.”</i>	The FRA is committed to an extensive outreach program with a broad range of stakeholder groups including local government, airports and other related entities. Any site- or project-specific improvements would likely be considered in subsequent project-level environmental reviews.

Affected Environment

The broad category of Affected Environment, addressing regulation of or potential impacts to both natural and man-made resources, comprised approximately 4% of all comments. The range of comments generally included identification of programs and agencies responsible for protecting specific resources, requests and suggestions to avoid or minimize impacts, and acknowledgement of potential project benefits. While not captured in this section of the report, it is important to note that many regulatory and resource agencies submitted comments pertaining to the affected environment (see Section IV for further details).

Comments made with regard to the affected environment will be considered during the development of the Tier 1 EIS and addressed through coordination with the responsible resource and regulatory agencies. Major themes in this category include: land use and parks; socioeconomics; cultural resources; air quality; climate change; safety and security; and local considerations.

Table 8 summarizes comments and responses on Affected Environment. For each theme, representative quotes have been excerpted from a group of statements that express similar concerns. In addition, a response is provided for each comment theme.

Table 8: Affected Environment Comments and Responses		
Affected Environment Themes	Representative Comments	Response
Land Use and Parks/Green Infrastructure	<p><i>The following representative quotes are excerpts from individual comments:</i></p> <p><i>“I do not think a new swath of tracks should be laid through Connecticut. This would deface peaceful communities and rural areas and cut towns in half.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“The East Coast Greenway runs through Eddystone and Ridley and Tinicum Townships and it needs to be incorporated into FRA plans if the existing Conrail Chester Secondary line right-of-way will be used for high-speed passenger train service to connect with Philadelphia International Airport.”</i></p>	<p>The FRA is evaluating a variety of alternatives that will result in a preferred investment program. The FRA will evaluate, at a broad level, the potential benefits and adverse effects of each alternative on the built and natural environment. As planning for the program progresses and more detail on alternatives is available, the FRA will assess the potential effects on these resources. Documentation of site-specific impacts would be the subject of separate project-level studies.</p>

Table 8: Affected Environment Comments and Responses

Affected Environment Themes	Representative Comments	Response
<p>Socio-Economics</p>	<p><i>The following representative quotes are excerpts from individual comments:</i></p> <p><i>“Our population grew 5% in the last decade, which is one of the highest growth rates of any city in the Northeast, and our jobs base expanded 2% in just the past year. We held our jobs base through the recession with this very proximate walk to work transit-oriented development pattern that’s emerging in New Haven. I’d ask you at every level of your analysis to do that deeper dive to understand what’s happening in the major cities, be it Stamford, Bridgeport, Hartford or New Haven, so we can plan our service accordingly.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“... what this is all going to do to ticket prices. ... taking the regional at \$49 between Boston and New York is still much above the Mega Bus prices and the Bolt Bus.”</i></p>	<p>A broad-level evaluation of the effects of the NEC FUTURE program on existing socioeconomic conditions will be included as part of the Tier 1 EIS. General fare pricing for intercity passenger rail will also be reviewed.</p>
<p>Cultural Resources</p>	<p><i>“...the present Northeast Corridor, parts of which date to the mid-19th Century, is a treasure trove of historic railroad bridges, rights-of-way and technology. We would like to see as much of this notable infrastructure preserved as is possible consistent with the changes to be proposed in the ongoing NEC Future study.”</i></p>	<p>The FRA is evaluating a variety of alternatives that will result in a preferred investment program. The FRA will evaluate, at a broad level, the potential benefits and adverse effects of each alternative on the built and natural environment. As planning for the program progresses and more detail on alternatives is available, the FRA will assess the potential effects of alternatives on these resources, including historic resources. Documentation of site-specific impacts would be the subject of separate project-level studies.</p>

Table 8: Affected Environment Comments and Responses		
Affected Environment Themes	Representative Comments	Response
Air Quality	<p><i>The following representative quotes are excerpts from individual comments:</i></p> <p><i>“The NEC Future Plan should ensure there are no adverse air quality impacts or competing commitments to equipment and resources.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“[We are] interested in the North-South Rail Link because of the vast improvements of air quality that we will get. It will also have excellent financial effects on the City of Boston and many other desirable attributes.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“...improved high speed ground transportation could dramatically reduce shuttle air travel in the corridor and help reduce greenhouse gas emissions.”</i></p>	<p>The FRA is evaluating a variety of alternatives that will result in a preferred investment program. Through the NEC FUTURE program, the FRA will evaluate, at a broad level, the potential benefits and adverse effects of each alternative on the built and natural environment, including air quality and greenhouse gas emissions.</p>
Climate Change	<p><i>“... adaptability and resiliency of rail to climate change and sea level rise.”</i></p>	<p>Climate change and sea-level rise will be considered and evaluated in the Tier 1 EIS at a broad level.</p>
Safety and Security	<p><i>The following representative quotes are excerpts from individual comments:</i></p> <p><i>“...need security cameras on the Northeast Corridor line and outdoor to watch out for trespassers.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“...[Passenger Trains] needs security cameras because their riders...and their employees could be at risk.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“The planning process needs to consider the safety implications of proposed options for local communities...as it relates to vehicles at grade crossings and pedestrians near or over the NEC rights-of-way.”</i></p>	<p>General safety and security needs of the overall program will be evaluated as part of the Tier 1 EIS. Detailed safety and security planning will be conducted at future stages of project development.</p>

Table 8: Affected Environment Comments and Responses		
Affected Environment Themes	Representative Comments	Response
Local Considerations	<p><i>The following representative quotes are excerpts from individual comments:</i></p> <p><i>“The planning process needs to consider and weigh local economic, community and environmental impacts of program alternatives and options due to corridor expansion, service expansion, and improved/increased modal interconnections, including noise, traffic impacts of closing at grade crossings, and road, transit and parking capabilities to handle expected traffic at intermodal connections.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“Large amount of vacant and underutilized land adjacent to 30th street station, Zoo Junction area, North Philadelphia Station that can be developed with office and apartment building. Without expending any funds to relocate the NEC, Philadelphia can expand from one core area to three, with two situated at NEC station.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“The planning process needs to identify opportunities for increased economic development within local communities through which the NEC runs...including transit oriented development, air rights development, and related commercial and residential development near modal interconnections with the NEC.”</i></p>	<p>The FRA will evaluate, at a broad level, the potential benefits and adverse effects of each alternative on the built and natural environment. Documentation of site-specific impacts would be the subject of separate project-level studies. Similarly, the NEC FUTURE alternatives may include expansion of existing rail stations and the development of new rail stations within the NEC FUTURE program Study Area. The FRA will take into account areas of vacant and underutilized land during planning efforts that may offer some benefit to the NEC FUTURE program. However, detailed analysis on potential redevelopment opportunities would be conducted at future stages of project development and would be the subject of separate project-level studies.</p>

Cost and Funding

Approximately 3% of all comments received addressed Cost and Funding. Many commenters cited the need to include long-term maintenance costs in the analysis. The costs and benefits of alternative routes, modes, and services will be considered in the alternatives development process. Commenters also raised concerns with overall program finance and funding.

Table 9 summarizes comments and responses on Cost and Funding. For each theme, representative quotes have been excerpted from a group of statements that express similar concerns. In addition, a response is provided for each comment theme.

Table 9: Cost and Funding Comments and Responses		
Cost & Funding Themes	Representative Comments	Response
<p>Capital, Operation, and Maintenance Costs</p>	<p><i>The following representative quotes are excerpts from individual comments:</i></p> <p><i>“With respect to skipping Hartford, Wilmington, and Baltimore, I'd like to see detailed information about the costs and benefits of bypass tracks for Hartford, Wilmington, and Baltimore.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“...[we] urge the Federal Railroad Administration to do a side-by-side comparison of the true costs and benefits of high speed rail and maglev. Having seen the study results for the project, we have become aware that maglev has lower annual operating costs primarily because the technology uses less energy.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“When there is an appropriate opportunity to analyze the feasibility of the North South Rail Link, it would be helpful to have a reliable cost estimate if future funding becomes available.”</i></p>	<p>The benefits, costs, and impacts of different alternatives will be considered in the alternatives development process which will be documented in the SDP and Tier 1 EIS.</p>

Table 9: Cost and Funding Comments and Responses

Cost & Funding Themes	Representative Comments	Response
<p>Funding</p>	<p><i>The following representative quotes are excerpts from individual comments:</i></p> <p><i>“The issue of funding future operation, maintenance, and keeping the NEC up-to-date should be included within the scope of the study. It will be of little use to expend a great sum to build a super railroad which cannot be operated or maintained, or which cannot be kept in a state of the art condition.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“I would recommend some sort of collaboration with the toll authorities between [DC] and New York where...the authorities are approached and their elected representatives get some steady source of funding for these massive capital improvements projects that are absolutely necessary.”</i></p>	<p>Funding for operations, maintenance, and modernization of the NEC will be considered in the alternatives development process.</p>

Public and Agency Involvement

Comments regarding Public and Agency Involvement were received from a broad range of stakeholders, including local government representatives, interest groups, and residents. Approximately 15 percent of all comments received during scoping addressed Public and Agency Involvement.

Several recurring themes included the importance of an open and inclusive public involvement process, concern regarding advance notice of the scoping meetings, and the suggestion to form a citizens group to maintain public participation and monitor progress.

Table 10 summarizes comments and responses on Public and Agency Involvement. For each theme, representative quotes have been excerpted from a group of statements that express similar concerns. In addition, a response is provided for each comment theme.

Table 10: Public and Agency Involvement Comments and Responses		
Public and Agency Involvement Themes	Representative Comments	Response
Open and Inclusive Process	<p><i>The following representative quotes are excerpts from individual comments:</i></p> <p><i>“An extensive public input process should be part of the study process.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“...mobilize the public. Get the public engaged...especially for a project of this magnitude, I think we need a commensurate commitment in terms of promotion of the relations, public education, branding this -- this project, establishing who's in charge, who's the coordinator, making it easy for the public to relate to the project through public service announcements and all kinds of media exposure.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“The planning process needs to be inclusive with active participation by all major stakeholders, including both public and private sector stakeholders likely to be impacted by whatever happens to the NEC; various service modes and operators which use the NEC, including rail passenger, rail freight, and intermodal freight; and communities and businesses located along and within the NEC and other transportation corridors which connect to the NEC.”</i></p>	<p>The FRA is committed to an ongoing and open public participation process through which concepts, criteria, and alternatives will be discussed. A variety of strategies are being used to inform and engage the many stakeholders. These include interviews, briefings with organizations and public officials, public meetings, and workshops and webinars to engage agencies and groups throughout the corridor. Other communication methods that will be used throughout the duration of the project include e-mail blasts, newsletters and posting of project information on the web site.</p>

Table 10: Public and Agency Involvement Comments and Responses

Public and Agency Involvement Themes	Representative Comments	Response
<p>Stakeholder Involvement in Alternatives Evaluation</p>	<p><i>“A precondition for creating an appropriate set of outcome-based goals, objectives, and performance measures includes having stakeholders provide input regarding how they feel good performance should be defined. This process will create a clear and uniform framework with which to evaluate the alternatives developed.”</i></p>	<p>The FRA agrees that it is important to get broad input into the entire alternatives development process, including the goals, objectives and measures for success, and will continue to provide meaningful opportunities for stakeholder involvement.</p>
<p>Meeting Notice</p>	<p><i>The following representative quotes are excerpts from individual comments:</i></p> <p><i>“NEC Future Scoping Package confirms scoping meetings, dates, times and locations should have been published and communicated at least 30 days prior to their start. However, newspaper notification was 6 days prior, e-mail notification 7 days prior, website notification was 10-14 days prior.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“I would urge you to enhance the procedure here. In particular, the -- the comment period should really be extended beyond the current September 14th deadline. I would request that you add an additional 60 days given the magnitude and the complexity of this project.”</i></p>	<p>The scoping process began on June 22, 2012 with a Notice of Intent (NOI) in the <i>Federal Register</i> and the availability of the Scoping Package on the NEC FUTURE website. The NOI included notice that agency and public scoping meetings would be held between August 13, 2012 and August 23, 2012 in each of the NEC’s nine states and the District of Columbia. Confirmation of specific scoping meeting dates, times, and venues were subsequently publicized in newspaper advertisements, news releases and media alerts, e-mail notices, print communications, web-based announcements, and mailings.</p> <p>The FRA extended the scoping comment period from the original deadline of September 14, 2012 to October 19, 2012, resulting in an overall scoping comment period of 119 days.</p>

Table 10: Public and Agency Involvement Comments and Responses		
Public and Agency Involvement Themes	Representative Comments	Response
<p>Citizen’s Advisory Committee</p>	<p>The following representative quotes are excerpts from individual comments:</p> <p><i>“A Citizens Advisory Committee should be established to contain responsible members of the users and potential users of the corridor, representing the stakeholders of the project – the public, their political representatives, advocates like our organization, and the press – that should be kept informed about decisions being considered and made.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“An extensive public input process should be part of the study process. . . Interested parties should be invited to join a citizen’s advisory project committee. This committee should be provided with frequent updates on both the ongoing work and on the soon-to-begin work.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“We need more citizen participation in the form of a regional citizen’s liaison committee, citizen’s advisory committee...”</i></p>	<p>The FRA is committed to regular interaction with concerned citizens during the development of the NEC FUTURE program. Communication methods suited to the scale of the 457-mile corridor will be used, including public meetings, regional workshops, the NEC FUTURE website, newsletters and e-mail communication. In addition, the FRA anticipates providing specific forums to engage rail system users.</p>
<p>Targeted Stakeholder Engagement</p>	<p>The following representative quotes are excerpts from individual comments:</p> <p><i>“...urges the FRA to engage in significant outreach to members of the business community throughout the corridor.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>“We also urge the FRA to engage in a significant outreach program to members of the business community throughout the corridor, both to gain feedback about potential demand for rail improvements and to educate them about the project.”</i></p>	<p>The FRA is committed to an ongoing and open public participation process through which concepts, criteria, and alternatives will be discussed. A variety of strategies are being used to inform and engage the many stakeholders. These include interviews, briefings with organizations and public officials, public meetings, and workshops and webinars to engage agencies, businesses, rail users, and groups throughout the corridor. Other communication methods that will be used throughout the duration of the project include e-mail blasts, newsletters and posting of project information on the web site.</p>

Table 10: Public and Agency Involvement Comments and Responses

Public and Agency Involvement Themes	Representative Comments	Response
<p>Participation of Low Income and Minority Populations in Scoping</p>	<p><i>"I want to speak first to the notice issue that was just mentioned and the fact that in Boston now, the population is more than 50 percent people of color, and there are none or very few people of color in this audience right now."</i></p>	<p>Executive Order (EO) 12898, <i>Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations</i>, requires federal agencies to ensure greater public participation from communities with substantial minority and/or low-income populations. To this end, the NEC FUTURE outreach program publicized the scoping meetings through advertisements in publications targeted to minority audiences. In later phases, public outreach will include contacting established groups that represent targeted communities for their input and assistance.</p>
<p>Location of Future Public Meetings</p>	<p><i>The following representative quotes are excerpts from individual comments:</i></p> <p><i>"Schedule some NEC study groups, agency scoping meetings, and public hearings in Virginia along the Commonwealth's Golden Crescent."</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p><i>"Schedule at least one NEC FUTURE Public Hearing in Hampton Roads at the terminus of the Chesapeake Bay Urban Crescent..."</i></p>	<p>Public meetings will be held in the NEC FUTURE program Study Area, which extends from the metropolitan areas of Washington, D.C. and Boston, MA. However, the FRA will use alternative venues, such as webinars, to extend the reach of who might participate. Public meetings relating to the program will be open to any member of the public, whether within or outside of the Study Area. All input received will be considered.</p>

Outside of Scope

Some comments were received that will not be addressed in the NEC FUTURE Tie 1 EIS. For example, comments regarding Amtrak’s existing services or other aspects of a specific railroad’s operations are beyond the scope of the NEC FUTURE program. As appropriate, the FRA will forward those comments to the appropriate entity.

The following are representative of comments received during the scoping period which are outside the scope of work for this program.

Table 11: Outside of Scope Comments and Responses		
Outside of Scope Themes	Representative Comments	Response
Legislative Definition of the Northeast Corridor	“Amend Title 49, section 24102, part 6 of the United States Code to add Virginia as part of the Northeast Corridor.”	By legislative definition USC, Title 49, Section 24102, Part 6, the Northeast Corridor includes “Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island.” This definition does not preclude the FRA from considering markets or services in Virginia, or any other jurisdiction outside the legal definition of the Northeast Corridor, in the alternatives development process.
Amtrak: Service, Projects and Planning Efforts	<p><i>The following representative quotes are excerpts from individual comments:</i></p> <p>“Update the 2012 Amtrak NEC Update Report...”</p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p>“In the short run there should be more trains on Amtrak with better amenities.”</p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p>“...consideration should be given to accepting pets on Amtrak trains.”</p>	The FRA will broadly consider customer amenities, but specific near-term changes to existing Amtrak services are outside the scope of this Tier 1 EIS. Comments specific to Amtrak’s existing services will be forwarded to Amtrak for their attention.
Northeast Corridor Commission	<p><i>The following representative quotes are excerpts from individual comments:</i></p> <p>“We object to the lack of any representatives of the riding public on the Northeast Corridor Commission and we call for such appointments to be made.”</p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p>“Add Virginia to the current eight states serving on the NEC Commission.”</p>	The FRA is committed to an open and transparent public involvement process and is closely coordinating with the Northeast Corridor Infrastructure and Operations Advisory Commission (NEC Commission) as well as many other NEC stakeholders. The membership of the NEC Commission does not impact the scope of the NEC FUTURE Tier 1 EIS and will not be addressed.

ELECTED OFFICIAL COMMENTS

Numerous elected officials provided comments at the public meetings and through the web or via mail. The majority of these comments supported the project and raised numerous local concerns and projects. The comments below are organized geographically within the Study Area from south to north.

Malcolm Smith, State Senator 14th District, New York

“Given the urgency of these overhauls, we need improvements and plan completion to take place as efficiently as possible. Thus, it is imperative that public officials, particularly at the top, do everything in their power to expedite project delivery on the NEC. Doing this will demonstrate that the government has its act together to the region’s businesses and commuters, while providing better service and reduced congestion for the region.”

Senator Smith focused his comments on the importance of pursuing and financing an ambitious plan for the Northeast region and the importance of leadership in expediting the delivery of the project. He highlighted projects such as the Gateway Program, the Empire Corridor, access to John F. Kennedy International Airport (JFK), and freight improvements to include in the scope of NEC FUTURE.

Toni Boucher, State Senator, Connecticut

“Safe and efficient train service is essential for the large and growing section of our population who rely on our railroads for work and travel, and a flexible, state of the art rail system is vital for ensuring future economic growth.”

Senator Boucher requested that future plans include improvements aimed at increasing rail capacity from New York to Southern Connecticut. Stamford, Greenwich to New Haven, and Norwalk to Danbury were specifically identified within the comments.

Gail Lavielle, State Representative 143rd District, Connecticut

“Our location makes Connecticut critical to the success of the Northeast Corridor Rail Plan. Connecticut can be a destination or just a place you pass through to get somewhere else, and it can offer either swift passage or a bottleneck; we have our choice.”

Representative Lavielle commented that rail is critical to New England’s economy. She advocated for fixing and upgrading the highly used New Haven Line and its branches before making new investments. She also noted that she was disappointed in the limited communication about the opportunity to comment on the project.

John Larson, US House of Representatives, Connecticut

“I support U.S. Department of Transportation’s NEC FUTURE initiative and urge incorporation of Hartford into the mainline of the Northeast Corridor.”

Representative Larson wrote to support the NEC FUTURE initiative and encouraged the development of an integrated passenger rail solution between Boston and New York City. Hartford’s local planning efforts were highlighted in his letter.

Governor Dannel Malloy, Connecticut

“The Northeast Corridor rail system to and through Connecticut is critical to the current and future economic prosperity and mobility of the state and the larger northeast region.”

Governor Malloy identified numerous items that are a priority for Connecticut. They included: the importance of serving major population and employment centers; evaluating a coastal alignment, an I-84 alignment, and an I-91 alignment when considering new alignments; continuing investment to address needs on the existing NEC and New Haven-Hartford-Springfield (NHHS) lines; defining a modal analysis that considers highways and airports serving the same rail markets; and forecasting ridership by including planned growth.

Kim Rose, State Senator Connecticut

Senator Rose supports a high-speed rail system with a station in New Haven.

Massachusetts General Court, letter signed by the following:

- Senator Jamie Eldridge, Middlesex and Worcester
- Representative Sean Garballey, Twenty-third Middlesex
- Senator Patricia D. Jehlen, Second Middlesex
- Representative Chris Walsh, Sixth Middlesex
- Representative Kay Kahn, Eleventh Middlesex
- Representative Lori A. Ehrlich, Eighth Essex
- Representative Frank I. Smizik, Fifteenth Norfolk
- Senator Susan C. Fargo, Third Middlesex
- Representative Ruth B. Balse, Twelfth Middlesex
- Representative Linda Campbell, Fifteenth Essex
- Representative Jerald A. Parisella, Sixth Essex
- Representative Jennifer E. Benson, Thirty-seventh Middlesex
- Representative Peter V. Kocot, First Hampshire
- Representative Carl Sciortino, Thirty-fourth Middlesex
- Representative Timothy J. Toomey, Jr. , Twenty-sixth Middlesex
- Senator Katherine Clark, Middlesex and Essex
- Representative Denise Provost, Twenty-seventh Middlesex
- Senator William N. Brownsberger, Second Suffolk and Middlesex
- Senator Cynthia Stone Creem, First Middlesex and Norfolk
- Representative Antonio F. D. Cabral, Thirteenth Bristol
- Representative Thomas P. Conroy, Thirteenth Middlesex

“Massachusetts’ economic competitiveness, business climate, and tourism industry will benefit from the construction of the North-South Rail Link.”

The above listed elected officials signed a letter as members of the Massachusetts General Court requesting that the North-South Rail Link be a key component of the FRA’s Tier 1 EIS. Economic benefits, connecting markets, and existing station capacity were cited as reasons this project should be included in NEC FUTURE.

James Eldridge, State Senator Middlesex and Worcester District Massachusetts

“I just think that it would be an incredibly powerful thing to be able to one day take the train from Union Station in Washington D.C., up to Maine, whether it was Portland or further north.”

Senator Eldridge stated his support for the North-South Rail Link. Taking the train from Washington, D.C. to Maine would be good for the economy and would add to the quality of life for local residents.

Frank Smizik, State Representative, Brookline, Massachusetts

Representative Smizik noted that he supports the North-South Rail Link. He is supportive of transit to cut back on carbon and improve air quality around Boston. He also stated that public health issues could be improved by having a train that goes straight through Boston.

IV. Agency Scoping Process and Comments

Representatives from federal, state, regional, and local agencies, rail and transit operators, and tribal governments participated in the NEC FUTURE scoping process. These agencies, organizations, and tribal governments were invited to the public scoping meetings. Agencies were also provided with a separate but concurrent opportunity to informally discuss the NEC FUTURE program and process with the FRA at a series of agency meetings.

This section summarizes the agency scoping discussions by topic from the nine agency scoping meetings and webinar. In addition, many agencies provided formal written comments or testimony at the public scoping meetings. Agencies commented on their specific regulatory responsibilities as well as issues of local or regional concern. Formal agency comments are summarized and addressed in this section.

AGENCY MEETINGS

In addition to their participation in the public scoping meetings, agencies had the opportunity to attend agency scoping meetings for the NEC FUTURE program from August 13 through 22, 2012, in each of the NEC's eight states and the District of Columbia. The purpose of these meetings was to provide information so that agencies could better prepare formal scoping comments. In addition, an agency scoping webinar was held on September 24, 2012 for those unable to attend a meeting in person.

The agency scoping meetings were held from 10:30 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. at the locations listed in *Table 12*.

Table 12: Agency Meeting Dates and Locations		
Date	City, State	Building Location
August 13	Boston, MA	Massachusetts State Transportation Building 10 Park Plaza
August 14	New Haven, CT	Shubert Theater 247 College Street
August 15	Baltimore, MD	University of Baltimore, Thumel Conference Facilities 11 W. Mount Royal Street
August 15	Newark, NJ	North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority Board Room One Newark Center
August 16	New York City, NY	Moynihan Station 380 W. 33 rd Street
August 20	Philadelphia, PA	SEPTA Board Room Complex 1234 Market Street
August 20	Wilmington, DE	Carvel State Office Building 820 N. French Street
August 21	Washington, D.C.	Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments 777 N. Capitol Street, NE
August 22	Providence, RI	State Administration Building One Capitol Hill

Invitations were mailed to approximately 250 federal, state, regional, and local agencies, rail and transit operators, and tribal governments. A total of 194 people participated in the agency scoping process. The **Appendix** lists the invited agencies.

Table 13: Agency Scoping Quick Facts	
Total Organizations and Tribes Invited	252
Organizations and Tribes Attended	105
Persons Invited	303
Persons Attended	194

Both the in-person agency meetings and the webinar were conducted similar to public meetings, beginning with a PowerPoint presentation on the overall NEC FUTURE program. Agency representatives were encouraged to ask questions and participate in discussion throughout the meeting. Project boards provided additional information and were particularly useful during conversations between the attendees and the NEC FUTURE program team. Agencies were provided with a copy of the Scoping Package, the NEC FUTURE Newsletter, and the PowerPoint presentation. These materials were provided to facilitate communication with other agency representatives who were not in attendance and to inform agency comments. Agency meeting materials are included in the **Appendix**.

Agency Meeting Highlights

Participating agencies discussed a variety of issues at each of the individual meetings and the webinar. Highlights are provided below.

Study Area

Participating agencies raised questions regarding the development of the overall Study Area and in particular, the Study Area boundaries. The Study Area was defined by the FRA using the existing NEC, portions of connecting corridors, and the boundaries of MSAs. The focus of the NEC FUTURE program is on regional issues with an emphasis on enhancing connectivity.

NEPA and Related Environmental Reviews

Several participating agencies inquired about the scope and outcome of the Tier 1 EIS. The scope of the Tier 1 EIS will follow the guidance drafted by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) to address a broad review of environmental issues. The Tier 1 EIS will not include site-specific detail. Individual projects identified through the Tier 1 process may require additional project-level or Tier 2 NEPA analyses. These subsequent project-level analyses would be potentially prepared by agencies or sponsors other than FRA. NEC FUTURE will address the full range of NEPA environmental factors within the Tier 1 EIS.

FRA has initiated Section 106 consultation and will continue to coordinate with State Historic Preservation Officers (SHPOs) and Native American Tribal Governments, as needed. Permits are not an anticipated outcome of the Tier 1 NEPA process.

Data Sources and Forecasting Tools

Several participating agencies inquired about the process for normalizing data across such a large and diverse Study Area and about how data would be shared with the various NEC FUTURE stakeholders. The data collection effort for the NEC FUTURE program covers a variety of technical areas including, but not limited to, land use, air, water, rail alignments, rail operations, markets, and ridership. The primary sources of data are federal and state transportation and environmental agencies, passenger and freight railroads, and MPOs.

Data are being collected in a variety of formats, and the FRA is focused on minimizing the effort required from the data owners by accommodating a wide-range of native formats including spreadsheets, databases, GIS data (geo-spatial information system data), published documents, etc. As necessary, data inputs will be normalized or factored to the necessary geography or timeframes. As part of the program, the FRA will conduct traveler surveys and utilize information obtained through those surveys to calibrate and validate a new corridor-wide travel demand forecasting model.

Definition and Evaluation of Alternatives

At the agency scoping meetings, participants also engaged in discussion about the nature and scope of alternatives and how they will be developed, screened, and assessed. The Tier 1 EIS review process will consider a broad range of markets, service and user needs within the NEC. The markets will drive the definition of service alternatives and routes. Alternatives may include: enhanced commuter and intercity rail service; infrastructure improvements on the existing NEC; new service on the existing NEC; or new service in new corridors. Currently, all options are on the table with regard to the broad range of possible alternatives for the NEC FUTURE program. The NEC FUTURE program will include alternatives comprised of multiple projects and new service options which can be phased or incrementally implemented.

Funding/Financing

Participating agencies raised questions about funding sources and the role of the states and the private sector in funding improvements identified in the Service Development Plan. The FRA will focus on identifying service and infrastructure improvements required to accommodate 2040 ridership demand across the NEC. This will include developing capital and operating cost estimates to implement the improvements. However, it is not a specific objective of the Tier 1 EIS to define the sources of funding for the improvements or to allocate responsibility for providing funding. Funding and financing will be considered by the United States Department of Transportation, U.S. Congress, transit agencies, railroads and the states as improvements are planned and implemented. The NEC FUTURE Service Development Plan will identify potential options for funding and financing improvements.

Freight

Several participating agencies were interested in how the NEC FUTURE program will address freight rail issues, both in terms of accommodating future freight rail growth along the NEC and addressing segments of the NEC main line used by freight railroads. While the scope of the NEC FUTURE program does not include developing specific freight alternatives or a regional freight plan, goods movement is an important consideration in the process of developing an integrated rail solution for the NEC. The FRA has been working with the NEC freight railroads, the states, and the NEC Commission to collect data regarding freight rail growth. Several states requested that the FRA consider state and port freight plans and initiatives beyond those identified by the freight operators

themselves. Ensuring that freight rail growth is not impeded by efforts to facilitate the growth of passenger rail service is an important priority for the NEC FUTURE alternatives analysis and development process.

Local Priorities

A variety of local projects at various stages of planning, programming, and implementation were identified during the agency scoping meetings. As appropriate, they will be incorporated into the NEC FUTURE analysis both with regard to the No Action and Build alternatives. Projects that are currently the subject of separate NEPA analyses, or in the midst of a permitting process, will continue to follow their own timeline as they advance in parallel to the NEC FUTURE program. Examples of these projects include: Washington D.C. Union Station Master Plan, Connecticut movable bridges, freight connections to major ports, Susquehanna River Bridge replacement, Moynihan Station, B&P Tunnel, North-South Rail Link, etc.

Other Studies

Participating agencies noted that numerous other studies have been performed by a variety of organizations. The FRA will utilize the existing work and supplemental information developed from these other efforts to inform the definition of current and future conditions as well as the analysis of potential alternatives.

FORMAL COMMENTS BY AGENCY / ORGANIZATION

Formal comments were received from a variety of agencies and rail and transit operators. They include federal agencies, state departments of transportation, state regulatory and resource agencies, MPOs, counties, and local governments. General summaries of agency written comments are organized by federal, state and regional agencies and organized geographically from Washington, D.C. to Boston within their respective categories. Agencies outside of the Study Area are included at the end of the appropriate state and regional summaries. Responses to the comments follow the summary. Comments from counties and local governments are reflected in *Section III, Public Scoping Process and Comments*.

Federal Agencies

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA):

FHWA commented that they may fulfill three roles on this study: providing assurance that FHWA funded projects are consistent with the NEC FUTURE program and that they do not restrict future improvements; cooperating if there are proposed changes to the Interstates and access control; and as a potential funding source. Additionally, FHWA will be formally asking for FRA's cooperation during the Connecticut Department of Transportation's (ConnDOT) I-84 Aetna Viaduct project.

FRA Response:

The FRA will coordinate with FHWA and ConnDOT regarding the identified I-84 Aetna Viaduct project. As appropriate, it will be considered in the NEC FUTURE analysis.

Funding for operations, maintenance and modernization of the NEC will be considered in the alternatives development process.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS):

NMFS focused their comments on the identification of potential adverse impacts on Essential Fish Habitat (EFH). Their letter provided guidance and outlined regulatory requirements in the following areas: Essential Fish Habitat; bridge/rail construction and potential impacts; EFH Assessment; Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act; Endangered Species Act; and the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

FRA Response:

The FRA will evaluate, at a broad level, the potential benefits and adverse effects of each alternative on the built and natural environment. As planning progresses and more detail on alternatives is available, the FRA will coordinate with NMFS to more fully understand the potential effects of project alternatives on resources under NMFS's purview. Documentation of site-specific impacts would be the subject of separate project-level studies.

US Department of the Interior Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS):

Comments from the USFWS focused on project definition, Study Area, Purpose & Need and goals, Alternatives, and environmental considerations. The USFWS requested that the life of the project be defined, and that the Study Area definition be narrowed and geographically defined. The USFWS requested that the FRA consider concurrent capital improvement projects that are being undertaken to address future travel demand. They also recommended that the FRA clarify the project purpose to focus on passenger rail options, as well as adopt a goal to significantly contribute to a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in the Northeast. The USFWS requested clarity regarding the definitions of the No Action and Build alternatives. They also recommended that the FRA identify and assess the environmental effects on various resources. Within the Tier 1 EIS, they requested that information be provided on reductions to cumulative impacts to air and water from the entire transportation industry. The USFWS recommended that FRA clarify to what degree freight rail would benefit in this process and that the FRA address energy-efficiency and sustainability models, and potential long-term energy solutions.

FRA Response:

The NEC FUTURE Tier 1 EIS Study Area includes the metropolitan areas surrounding the NEC Spine and connecting corridors between Washington, D.C. and Boston, MA. The FRA will evaluate, at a broad level, the potential benefits and adverse effects of each alternative on the built and natural environment. As planning progresses and more detail on alternatives is available, the FRA will coordinate with the USFWS to more fully understand the potential effects of project alternatives on resources under USFWS's purview. Documentation of site-specific impacts would be the subject of separate project-level studies.

The FRA will coordinate with agencies planning concurrent capital improvement projects. As appropriate, they will be considered in the NEC FUTURE analysis.

The FRA recognizes the importance of sustainability, energy-efficiency, and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in the Northeast. A potential benefit of the program may result in an overall regional reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. As such, the FRA will work with the appropriate agencies to develop a methodology that is appropriate for a broad-level Tier 1 NEPA analysis to assess the effects on greenhouse gas emissions as part of the Tier 1 EIS.

The NEC FUTURE program considers forecast growth in both passenger and freight markets in the alternatives development process. A focus of the NEC FUTURE program is on meeting current and future passenger needs while accommodating future freight needs corridor-wide. Freight operators along the NEC are working with the FRA to identify their future needs and opportunities for accommodating those needs within the NEC FUTURE program.

State Agencies

Washington D.C. Historic Preservation Office (DC HPO):

“As you are aware, Union Station is the historically significant, National Register of Historic Places-listed landmark building that serves as the southern terminus of the NEC. We are currently working ... to review the Master Plan that will guide the redevelopment of Union Station and the air rights development areas to the north. At the same time, we are engaged in consultation with the Union Station Redevelopment Corporation (USRC) and others to review specific, ongoing projects within the historically significant station itself.”

DC HPO also commented that other historic railroad related resources exist along the corridor and additional survey and evaluation may be required on those cultural resources.

FRA Response:

The FRA is evaluating a variety of alternatives that will result in a preferred investment program. The FRA will evaluate, at a broad level, the potential benefits and adverse effects of each alternative on the built and natural environment. As planning for the project progresses and more detail on alternatives is available, the project team will assess the potential effects of project alternatives on these resources, including historic and potential archaeological resources, and will coordinate with DC HPO to more fully understand the potential effects of project alternatives on resources under DC HPO's purview. Documentation of site-specific impacts would be the subject of separate project-level studies.

Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT):

“This corridor is a vital component of our multimodal transportation network, connecting Maryland to the greater Northeast region through critical passenger services including intercity trains, commuter rail, and freight rail operations which serve the Eastern Shore, Port of Baltimore, and beyond.”

MDOT also noted that several major rail facilities within their state are in dire need of replacement and modernization and highlighted three projects for inclusion in the NEC FUTURE program. MARC service is expected to triple by 2035 and MDOT highlighted the importance of commuter and intercity passenger service being maintained and expanded at Baltimore Penn Station. MDOT cited freight rail as having significant economic, energy, and emissions benefits. Freight rail would benefit from an expanded operating window to access the port. Multimodal connections, particularly to Baltimore / Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport (BWI), were highlighted. MDOT recommended that rail alternatives be compared to non-rail modal alternatives in the region. MDOT requested that the states be included as collaborators in the identification and prioritization of screening criteria for alternatives. States should also be accorded a prominent role in determining which projects move forward to design and construction as well as determining how projects are funded.

FRA Response:

The FRA recognizes the importance of improving safety, reliability, and redundancy. The goals of the NEC FUTURE program include identifying and developing a program that provides attractive, competitive, and high-quality passenger service.

Improvements to the existing NEC necessary to bring the rail line to a state of good repair are consistent with the NEC FUTURE program's goals and will be considered in the alternatives development process.

The FRA considers forecast growth in both passenger and freight markets in the alternatives development process. The focus of the NEC FUTURE program is on meeting current and future passenger needs while accommodating future freight needs corridor-wide. Freight operators along the NEC are working with the FRA to identify their future needs and opportunities for accommodating those needs with the NEC FUTURE program.

The NEC FUTURE program Purpose & Need and goals address the mobility challenges of the Study Area in a multi-modal context, but are focused on the role of passenger rail in meeting those challenges. The FRA will consider the capacity constraints of the total transportation system (rail, highway, air) in evaluating future passenger rail needs. In this context, the NEC FUTURE program alternatives will provide options for how rail can contribute to the overall mobility of the region given the broader transportation system context. The NEC FUTURE alternatives development process will include a high-level cost-benefit analysis of alternative passenger rail investments. The NEC FUTURE Purpose & Need and goals will be refined to strengthen this focus on passenger rail.

The FRA is committed to an ongoing and open public participation process through which concepts, criteria, and alternatives will be discussed.

The FRA is committed to coordinating with States and rail providers to incorporate appropriate information from a variety of sources.

Maryland Department of Planning (MDP):

MDP raised questions about the alternatives and if the project was going to focus on intercity or local commuter alternatives. Both services were identified as having needs and there were also questions raised about how those needs and respective improvements would be prioritized. MDP suggested that a goal be added to address the need for supporting economic growth and development in the corridor. Additionally, alternatives screening criteria were cited as an item needing clarification to better reflect the goals including the development of an integrated passenger rail transportation solution and strengthening intermodal connections. MDP offered to share state data with the project team.

FRA Response:

The NEC FUTURE program recognizes the importance of improving safety, reliability, and redundancy. The goals of the NEC FUTURE program include identifying and developing a program that provides attractive, competitive, and high-quality passenger service. Investment in the existing NEC is a priority for the NEC FUTURE program.

The Purpose & Need for the NEC FUTURE program states that major investments in the NEC and other transportation modes are needed for the Northeast to grow and remain economically competitive in national and international markets. The FRA recognizes the role transportation and mobility play in influencing economic growth and development. The program goals identified in the Scoping Package will be refined to better articulate this relationship between mobility and economics.

The NEC FUTURE program Purpose & Need and goals address the mobility challenges of the Study Area in a multi-modal context, but are focused on the role of passenger rail in meeting those challenges. In this context, the NEC FUTURE program alternatives will provide options for how rail can contribute to the overall mobility of the region given the broader transportation system context.

State of Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT):

“The Northeast Corridor is a significant asset for the State’s multi-modal needs, serving both passenger rail for Amtrak and Southeastern Passenger Transportation Authority (SEPTA) services and providing a corridor for movement of freight goods. The State has increased rail infrastructure as part of its infrastructure priorities for the state. The State recognizes the need to upgrade the state of good repair for parts of the Corridor, provide increased access for passengers on intercity and regional rail services and improve freight movement through expansion and/or elimination of scheduling conflicts with passenger trips.”

DelDOT encouraged the FRA to consider state of good repair investments for priority funding and recommended the expansion of commuter rail into Delaware from Maryland. DelDOT also cited the need for (3) three tracks between Perryville and the Northeast rail segment and identified the need for bridge improvements across the Susquehanna River. Additional comments addressed freight, air quality, green-house gases, sea-level rise, and the potential for environmental impacts on a new alignment. DelDOT encouraged the development of high-speed rail to supplement existing intercity service and recommended that Delaware continue to be included for consideration in future rail planning.

FRA Response:

The NEC FUTURE program will identify the physical improvements, technologies, and operating efficiencies to reliably and safely respond to 2040 demand for passenger service. This will include the analysis of on-corridor and off-corridor routes examining: network connectivity, impacts to existing and new markets, and impacts on the region's transportation system, the environment, and economy. This analysis will be documented in the SDP and Tier 1 EIS.

Improvements to the existing NEC necessary to bring the rail line to a state of good repair are consistent with the NEC FUTURE program's goals and will be considered in the alternatives development process.

The NEC FUTURE program recognizes the importance of sustainability, energy-efficiency, and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in the Northeast. A potential benefit of the program may result in an overall regional reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. As such, the FRA will work with the appropriate agencies to develop a methodology that is appropriate for a broad-level Tier 1 NEPA analysis to assess the effects on greenhouse gas emissions as part of the Tier 1 EIS.

Site or location-specific decisions will be addressed in subsequent, project-level environmental reviews.

FRA will work with the appropriate agencies to develop a methodology that is appropriate for a broad-level Tier 1 NEPA analysis to assess the effects of climate change and sea-level.

State of Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC):

DNREC noted that numerous portions of the Study Area lie within Delaware’s federally approved Coastal Zone and are subject to the Federal Coastal Zone Management Act. DNREC supports the project but noted the potential for deleterious impacts to important coastal resources. The letter identified numerous laws, studies, and contact people to assist in addressing coastal issues, sea level rise, wetlands, subaqueous lands, and contaminants.

FRA Response:

The NEC FUTURE program is evaluating a variety of alternatives that will result in a preferred investment program. The NEC FUTURE program will evaluate, at a broad level, the potential benefits and adverse effects of each alternative on the built and natural environment. As planning for the project progresses and more detail on alternatives is available, the NEC FUTURE team will assess the potential effects of project alternatives on these resources. Documentation of site-specific impacts would be the subject of separate project-level studies.

Climate change and sea-level rise will also be considered and evaluated in the Tier 1 EIS at a broad level.

NJ TRANSIT:

“We believe, along with the other NEC states, that this rail corridor is both a major existing artery sustaining our present economy and an opportunity we must take advantage of to provide needed future transportation capacity tomorrow. The critical location and function of the Northeast Corridor in New Jersey makes it the single most important railroad we use to provide our services in this state.”

NJ TRANSIT also highlighted the critical importance of achieving a State of Good Repair along the existing NEC and that the current needs not be impeded by future service improvements. Additional trans-Hudson and midtown Manhattan capacity are two areas of defined need. NJ TRANSIT recommended focusing attention on the following project attributes when evaluating alternatives: sufficient future capacity implemented to meet future demand; a feasible, efficient, and flexible rail operating plan; and addressing station capacity in midtown Manhattan and access to the street and subway system.

FRA Response:

Improvements to the existing NEC necessary to bring the rail line to a state of good repair are consistent with the NEC FUTURE program's goals and will be considered in the alternatives development process.

The NEC FUTURE program will identify the physical improvements, technologies, and operating efficiencies to reliably and safely respond to 2040 demand for passenger service. This will include the analysis of on-corridor and off-corridor routes examining: network connectivity, impacts to existing and new markets, and impacts on the region's transportation system, the environment, and economy. This analysis will be documented in the SDP and Tier 1 EIS.

New Jersey Department of Agriculture (NJDA):

NJDA focused their comments on the protection and preservation of farmland. Their program identifies and protects agriculture development areas. Construction or other impacts to these areas must go through a state mandated process before the land can be utilized.

FRA Response:

The focus of the NEC FUTURE program is a corridor-level analysis. More detailed alignment issues would be the subject of subsequent project-level environmental reviews.

Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (PANYNJ):

“Ridership on the PATH system is growing, with a new car fleet and with funding for a new signal system that will bolster its peak-period capacity. PATH handles an essential share of trans-Hudson commuter demand and provides resilience and redundancy when [NJ Transit] and Amtrak services across the Hudson are disrupted.”

The PANYNJ identified the following goals for the NEC FUTURE project: supporting expanded train operations via Penn Station; incorporating Moynihan Station as an element of the NEC system; including PANYNJ/PATH transit system requirements such as rehabilitation of Dock Bridge and Newark Penn Station; expanding service to complement long term strategies addressing regional air demand; coordinating service to provide ground transportation to Newark Liberty International Airport; and accommodating increased rail freight rail service.

FRA Response:

The FRA recognizes the importance of service to markets along the existing intercity and commuter rail shoreline route. The NEC FUTURE program will identify the physical improvements, technologies, and operating efficiencies to reliably and safely respond to 2040 demand for passenger service. This will include the analysis of on-corridor and off-corridor routes examining: network connectivity, impacts to existing and new markets, and impacts on the region's transportation system, the environment, and economy.

New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority (NY MTA):

NY MTA noted that the Scoping Package emphasized Amtrak and intercity rail issues while under emphasizing the importance of commuter service. Additional coordination with FTA in terms of decision-making and funding choices was cited as an important issue. MTA's specific comments included the following: develop a capital investment policy for the NEC; capacity improvements will require investment from commuter/regional railroads; the needs of commuter/regional railroads that merge onto the NEC must also be addressed; a State of Good Repair with high degree of reliability will be required for the “no action” alternative; maximizing the efficiency of intermodal moves and minimizing negative impacts to subway operations; Metro-North Railroad (MNR) Penn Station Access should not be part of the “no action” alternative; success will be limited by the weakest link in the system, be it infrastructure or rolling stock; requesting the list of projects on the “no action” alternative list and the Initial List of Alternatives; consideration of a “Baseline” or “Transportation System Management” type alternative; and identification of numerous items that will need to be addressed before implementation of high speed or higher speed rail.

FRA Response:

The NEC FUTURE program recognizes the importance of improving safety, reliability, and redundancy. The goals of the NEC FUTURE program include identifying and developing a

program that provides attractive, competitive, and high-quality passenger service. Investment in the existing NEC is a priority for the NEC FUTURE program.

FRA is coordinating its planning efforts as part of this program with their fellow agencies under the USDOT umbrella. This includes FTA, FHWA, and FAA.

Improvements to the existing NEC necessary to bring the rail line to a state of good repair are consistent with the NEC FUTURE program's goals and will be considered in the alternatives development process.

All comments received during scoping will be considered in the alternatives development process. This includes the development of the No Action Alternative. FRA is committed to an ongoing and open public participation process through which concepts, criteria, and alternatives will be discussed.

State of Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP):

DEEP stated that the economic benefits of a new alignment would need to be clearly defined along with the future demand. If a new alignment is part of the recommended alternative, DEEP will look for assurances that it will not lead to a decline in financial support or physical upkeep of the existing NEC Spine. Finally DEEP requested that the EIS evaluate the following alignment for new rail service: New Haven Line to New Haven, Springfield Line to Springfield and then the Boston and Albany line to reach Boston.

FRA Response:

The NEC FUTURE program will identify the physical improvements, technologies, and operating efficiencies to reliably and safely respond to 2040 demand for passenger service. This will include the analysis of on-corridor and off-corridor routes examining: network connectivity, impacts to existing and new markets, and impacts on the region's transportation system, the environment, and economy.

The focus of the NEC FUTURE program is a corridor-level analysis. More detailed alignment issues would be the subject of subsequent project-level environmental reviews.

Economic benefits will be considered in the alternatives analysis and are consistent with the NEC FUTURE program goals.

Funding for operations, maintenance, and modernization of the NEC will be considered in the alternatives development process.

State of Connecticut Department of Transportation (ConnDOT):

“The NEC rail system to and through Connecticut is critical to the current and future economic prosperity and mobility of Connecticut and the entire Northeast region. Connecticut has a rich commuter rail and transit network that is a key driver to our economy. Investments to achieve and maintain a state-of-good-repair for the existing NEC and the intermodal systems that connect to the NEC must be the priority, BEFORE considering future high speed corridor investments.”

ConnDOT also identified the need for immediate and compelling investments to rolling stock, support facilities, and existing infrastructure in order to address reliability, capacity, frequency, and travel time issues. ConnDOT emphasized that there will be a need for additional service along the New Haven Line, New Haven Line branch lines, and Shore Line East to address growth, population projections, and highway congestion in the next two to three years. Infrastructure and service plans

along the NHHS line and an inland route from Boston to New York were identified as priority needs. Additional issues that were highlighted included: determining an optimal balance of use for freight, achieving a state of good repair on the existing alignment, the importance of Hartford on a new alignment, forecasting ridership using a planned growth model instead of historic travel patterns, and identifying a collaborative process to set the evaluation criteria for alternatives. ConnDOT also recommended that rail alternatives be compared to non-rail modal alternatives.

FRA Response:

The NEC FUTURE program will identify the physical improvements, technologies, and operating efficiencies to reliably and safely respond to 2040 demand for passenger service. This will include the analysis of on-corridor and off-corridor routes examining: network connectivity, impacts to existing and new markets, and impacts on the region's transportation system, the environment, and economy.

Improvements to the existing NEC necessary to bring the rail line to a state of good repair are consistent with the NEC FUTURE program's goals and will be considered in the alternatives development process.

The NEC FUTURE program addresses both intercity and commuter rail in the alternatives development process. Station locations will be considered in a market-based analysis. This analysis will be documented in the SDP and Tier 1 EIS. Site or location-specific decisions will be addressed in subsequent, project-level environmental reviews.

The NEC FUTURE program considers forecast growth in both passenger and freight markets in the alternatives development process. The focus of the NEC FUTURE program is on meeting current and future passenger needs while accommodating future freight needs corridor-wide. Freight operators along the existing NEC are working with the FRA to identify their future needs and opportunities for accommodating those needs with the NEC FUTURE program.

The FRA is committed to an open, transparent, and robust process and is committed to coordinating with states and rail providers to incorporate appropriate information from a variety of sources.

The NEC FUTURE Purpose & Need addresses the mobility challenges of the Northeast region in a multi-modal context, but is focused on the role of passenger rail in meeting those challenges. The FRA will consider the capacity constraints of the total transportation system (rail, highway, air) in evaluating future rail transportation needs. In this context, the NEC FUTURE program alternatives will provide options for how rail can contribute to the overall mobility of the region given the broader transportation system. The NEC FUTURE Service Development Plan and Tier 1 EIS alternatives development process will include a cost-benefit analysis of alternative passenger rail investments. The NEC FUTURE Purpose & Need will be refined to strengthen this focus on passenger rail.

State of Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD):

DECD highlighted three transportation projects and planning efforts that are receiving major investment within the state. These projects include the NHHS Rail Corridor, New Britain Hartford Busway, and the Connecticut Airport Authority. Within the state, DECD noted that inland routes for alternative corridors would be preferred along the I-84 and I-91 corridors with the inclusion of

Hartford as a station stop. Finally, the existing NEC was highlighted as urgently in need of infrastructure improvements to address capacity and reliability issues.

FRA Response:

FRA will coordinate with the participating states and rail providers within the NEC to incorporate appropriate information from a variety of sources.

The NEC FUTURE program will identify the physical improvements, technologies, and operating efficiencies to reliably and safely respond to 2040 demand for passenger service. This will include the analysis of on-corridor and off-corridor routes examining: network connectivity, impacts to existing and new markets, and impacts on the region's transportation system, the environment, and economy.

Improvements to the existing NEC necessary to bring the rail line to a state of good repair are consistent with the NEC FUTURE program's goals and will be considered in the alternatives development process.

Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT):

“While only 50 miles in length from end to end, the NEC has shaped RI’s development patterns since it was first laid out in the 1830’s. The NEC continues to shape our development – most recently with the NEC relocation in downtown Providence in the 1980’s. This move and creation of a new station completely transformed the area of downtown Providence into a successful and thriving office and retail center.”

RIDOT comments also focused on their vision for the corridor. Their primary concerns include multi-modal connections, achievement of a State of Good Repair, a strong federal role including funding and maintenance, and that the NEC remains a public asset. Detailed comments focused on: addressing the connection to land use in the Study Area; balancing commuter and freight rail needs; expanding commuter rail services in the southern portion of the state; creating a gateway between the Providence station and downtown; maintaining existing connections; increasing capacity and expanding service to numerous stations; supporting transit oriented development; development of a maintenance/overhaul facility in the state; and focusing on a comprehensive coordinated planning effort.

FRA Response:

The NEC FUTURE program is evaluating a broad range of alternatives as well as other operational improvements that will be considered in the Service Development Plan and Tier 1 EIS. The NEC FUTURE program will evaluate, at a broad level, the potential benefits and adverse effects of each alternative on the built and natural environment

Improvements to the existing NEC necessary to bring the rail line to a state of good repair are consistent with the NEC FUTURE program's goals and will be considered in the alternatives development process.

The FRA recognizes the importance of service to existing and emerging markets along the existing intercity and commuter rail routes. The NEC FUTURE program will identify the physical improvements, technologies, and operating efficiencies to reliably and safely respond to 2040 demand for passenger service. This will include the analysis of on-corridor and off-corridor routes examining: network connectivity, impacts to existing and new markets, and impacts on the region's transportation system, the environment, and economy.

The NEC FUTURE program considers forecast growth in both passenger and freight markets in the alternatives development process. The focus of the NEC FUTURE program is on meeting current and future passenger needs while accommodating future freight needs corridor-wide. Freight operators along the existing NEC are working with the FRA to identify their future needs and opportunities for accommodating those needs with the NEC FUTURE program.

Site or location-specific decisions will be addressed in subsequent, project-level environmental reviews.

The FRA is committed to an open, transparent, and robust process. FRA will coordinate with the participating states and rail providers within the NEC to incorporate appropriate information from a variety of sources.

Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT):

“In order for the results of the NEC FUTURE process to be relevant to the NEC states – indeed, for state-level stakeholders to embrace the outcome at all – the process must respect and incorporate current state funding priorities and planning processes. MassDOT is wary of an outcome of the NEC FUTURE process in which the federal government identifies investment priorities that it will then look to the states to fund, a nearly-impossible situation given the grim fiscal realities currently facing the transportation agencies of many of the NEC states.”

MassDOT also expressed the need for additional outreach to agencies located in the northern portions of the corridor and additional opportunities for public outreach. Upon reviewing the project timeline they noted that it did not provide sufficient time for the data collection phase. MassDOT requested more detailed information on the screening criteria, any preliminary lists of potential alternatives that may have already been developed, and clarification as to the process for identifying the preferred alternative. Additional comments included the need to identify and integrate the different alternatives and planned improvements that already exist in the corridor, including the needs and priorities of the freight rail system. MassDOT also expressed that a new dedicated high-speed corridor should serve major existing centers and stressed the importance of bringing the NEC to a state of good repair.

FRA Response:

The FRA is committed to an open, transparent, and robust process and is committed to coordinating with states and rail providers to incorporate appropriate information from a variety of sources.

The FRA is committed to coordinating with states and rail providers to incorporate appropriate information from a variety of sources and to completing this study on time and on budget in 3 years.

All comments received during scoping will be considered in the alternatives development process. A framework will be established for categorizing and defining these numerous ideas into a set of Initial Alternatives. Initial Alternatives will be consolidated and organized into a set of Preliminary Alternatives and then screened to a set of Reasonable Alternatives for consideration in the Tier 1 EIS. FRA is committed to an ongoing and open public participation process through which concepts, criteria, and alternatives will be discussed.

The FRA is coordinating with states and MPOs concerning relevant plans and programs.

The NEC FUTURE program will consider forecast growth in both passenger and freight markets in the alternatives development process. The focus of the NEC FUTURE program is on meeting current and future passenger needs while accommodating future freight needs corridor-wide. Freight operators along the existing NEC are working with the FRA to identify their future needs and opportunities for accommodating those needs with the NEC FUTURE program.

The FRA recognizes the importance of service to existing and emerging markets along the existing intercity and commuter rail routes. The NEC FUTURE program will identify the physical improvements, technologies, and operating efficiencies to reliably and safely respond to 2040 demand for passenger service. This will include the analysis of on-corridor and off-corridor routes examining: network connectivity, impacts to existing and new markets, and impacts on the region's transportation system, the environment, and economy.

Improvements to the existing NEC necessary to bring the rail line to a state of good repair are consistent with the NEC FUTURE program's goals and will be considered in the alternatives development process.

Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT):

Two letters were received from Virginia DRPT. The Virginia Urban Crescent region was highlighted in a request to expand the Study Area. The Southeast High Speed Rail (SEHSR) corridor improvements currently being studied were identified for inclusion in the NEC FUTURE program. DRPT also requested that the EIS consider technologies where electric and diesel electric service is provided on the same locomotive and yard and station locomotive shuttle train operations.

FRA Response:

The NEC FUTURE program Study Area extends from the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area to the Boston, MA metropolitan area. Markets and rail corridors outside or adjacent to the Study Area, such as Hampton Roads and Richmond, VA, and how they relate to or influence the NEC FUTURE program, will be considered in the alternatives development process.

The NEC FUTURE program's Purpose & Need and goals include evaluating alternative equipment for future rail service alternatives.

North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT):

NCDOT requested that the study fully consider the importance of through and connecting services to/from destinations along the SEHSR network.

FRA Response:

The NEC FUTURE program Study Area extends from the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area to the Boston, MA metropolitan area. Markets and rail corridors outside or adjacent to the Study Area, such as Hampton Roads and Richmond, VA, and how they relate to or influence the NEC FUTURE program, will be considered in the alternatives development process. Previous and ongoing studies pertaining to passenger rail service in and through Virginia will be considered in the alternatives development process.

Regional Planning Organizations

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOCG) Washington, D.C.:

The MWCOCG sent a letter requesting the following: expand the Study Area to include Virginia's Golden Crescent; schedule outreach meetings in Virginia; and modify the United States Code to redefine the NEC to include Virginia.

FRA Response:

The NEC FUTURE program Study Area extends from the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area to the Boston, MA metropolitan area. Markets and rail corridors outside or adjacent to the Study Area, such as Hampton Roads and Richmond, VA, and how they relate to or influence the NEC FUTURE program, will be considered in the alternatives development process. Previous and ongoing studies pertaining to passenger rail service in and through Virginia will be considered in the alternatives development process.

By legislative definition USC, Title 49, Section 24102, Part 6, the Northeast Corridor includes "Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island." This definition does not preclude the FRA from considering markets or services in Virginia, or any other jurisdiction outside the legal definition of the Northeast Corridor, in the alternatives development process.

Wilmington Area Planning Council (WILMAPCO) Delaware:

"The NEC also serves as an economic development engine as it is the primary rail freight corridor for the entire Delmarva Peninsula. It is important to maintain this 100 year-old rail corridor while also creating the capacity to accommodate more trains and passengers in the future."

WILMAPCO identified the following initiatives and studies for inclusion in the NEC FUTURE program: Newark Regional Transportation Center; Newark Train Station Feasibility Study; expansion of MARC train service to Elkton; Chesapeake Connector Freight and Rail Passenger Benefits Study; and development of TOD in Perryville, MD.

FRA Response:

FRA is coordinating with states and MPOs concerning relevant plans and programs.

FRA will coordinate with WILMAPCO to understand the projects that were identified.

FRA will evaluate, at a broad level, the potential benefits and adverse effects of each alternative on the built and natural environment.

Documentation of site-specific impacts would be the subject of separate project-level studies.

Lebanon County Metropolitan Planning Organization Pennsylvania:

The Lebanon County Metropolitan Planning Organization commented that parking at stations needs to be improved.

FRA Response:

The NEC FUTURE program recognizes the importance of providing attractive, competitive, high-quality, and user friendly passenger rail service to customers, which is consistent with the overall NEC FUTURE program goals. Specific implementation details will be considered in subsequent project-level analyses.

New York Metropolitan Transportation Council (NYMTC) New York:

NYMTC focused their comments on the need for supporting strengthened connections among intercity, regional, and local rail and passenger modes. They noted that increased transportation efficiency is a sustainability tool that can increase economic vitality.

FRA Response:

The NEC FUTURE program will identify the physical improvements, technologies, and operating efficiencies to reliably and safely respond to 2040 demand for passenger service. This will include the analysis of on-corridor and off-corridor routes examining: network connectivity, impacts to existing and new markets, and impacts on the region's transportation system, the environment, and economy.

The Purpose & Need for NEC FUTURE program states that major investments in the NEC and other modes are needed for the Northeast to grow and remain economically competitive in national and international markets. The FRA recognizes the role transportation and mobility play in influencing economic growth and development. The program goals identified in the Scoping Package will be refined to better articulate this relationship between mobility and economics.

Council of Governments of the Central Naugatuck Valley (COGCNV) Connecticut:

COGCNV supports high-speed rail along the I-84 corridor and improvements to the freight rail system within Connecticut.

FRA Response:

The NEC FUTURE program will identify the physical improvements, technologies, and operating efficiencies to reliably and safely respond to 2040 demand for passenger service. This will include the analysis of on-corridor and off-corridor routes examining: network connectivity, impacts to existing and new markets, and impacts on the region's transportation system, the environment, and economy.

The NEC FUTURE program considers forecast growth in both passenger and freight markets in the alternatives development process. The focus of the NEC FUTURE program is on meeting current and future passenger needs while accommodating future freight needs corridor-wide.

South Central Regional Council of Governments (SCRGO) Connecticut:

SCRGO comments addressed economic impacts. Economic competitiveness was cited as a factor to consider in the alternatives analysis. The alignment between New York and New Haven was identified as a priority for early investment in state of good repair and enhancement projects. Three corridors, including the existing coastal route, were identified as alignments that would provide redundancy and increased capacity. In addition, SCRGO noted the need to change policies that precluded the rail corridor from New York to New Haven from being eligible for certain federal funding sources because it is owned by the State of Connecticut.

FRA Response:

The Purpose & Need for the NEC FUTURE program states that major investments in the NEC and other modes are needed for the Northeast to grow and remain economically competitive in national and international markets. The FRA recognizes the role transportation and mobility play in influencing economic growth and development. The

program goals identified in the Scoping Package will be refined to better articulate this relationship between mobility and economics.

Improvements to the existing NEC necessary to bring the rail line to a state of good repair are consistent with the NEC FUTURE program's goals and will be considered in the alternatives development process.

The FRA recognizes the importance of service to existing and emerging markets along the existing intercity and commuter rail shoreline route. The NEC FUTURE program will identify the physical improvements, technologies, and operating efficiencies to reliably and safely respond to 2040 demand for passenger service. This will include the analysis of on-corridor and off-corridor routes examining: network connectivity, impacts to existing and new markets, and impacts on the region's transportation system, the environment, and economy.

The benefits, impacts and costs of developing collaborative relationships with other federal and state agencies will be generally considered in the alternatives development process. Possible funding mechanisms will be explored for the Preferred Investment Program.

Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency (CCRPA) Connecticut:

“As our region has much to gain from future rail investment, we offer a few comments and suggestions. To insure that this process results in the best possible plan, it is essential that existing plans be consulted and respected.”

CCRPA expressed the need to consult existing plans, including Connecticut's *Plan of Conservation and Development*, to minimize impacts on quality of life and the natural environment. CCRPA encouraged proposed new alternative alignments adhere to the existing interstate highway or the existing rail alignments in order to minimize disruptions. They are supportive of a full service stop in Hartford.

FRA Response:

The FRA will coordinate with Connecticut to incorporate appropriate information from the *Plan of Conservation and Development*.

The NEC FUTURE program will identify the physical improvements, technologies, and operating efficiencies to reliably and safely respond to 2040 demand for passenger service. This will include the analysis of on-corridor and off-corridor routes examining: network connectivity, impacts to existing and new markets, and impacts on the region's transportation system, the environment, and economy. This analysis will be documented in the SDP and Tier 1 EIS.

Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) Connecticut:

Service along the NHHS line that could revitalize Hartford, Hartford's Union Station, and connect to Bradley International Airport is a priority of the CRCOG. CRCOG also identified the need to avoid negative impacts to existing freight rail service and to provide for future opportunities to enhance freight service. Many of their communities have focused on leveraging passenger rail investments to spur economic development through the use of transit-oriented development. Other comments included a request that there be no adverse air quality impacts or competing commitments to equipment and resources. The letter included suggestions for three potential alignments to access Hartford.

FRA Response:

The NEC FUTURE program addresses both intercity and commuter rail in the alternatives development process. Station locations will be considered in a market-based analysis.

The NEC FUTURE program will identify the physical improvements, technologies, and operating efficiencies to reliably and safely respond to 2040 demand for passenger service. This will include the analysis of on-corridor and off-corridor routes examining: network connectivity, impacts to existing and new markets, and impacts on the region's transportation system, the environment, and economy. This analysis will be documented in the SDP and Tier 1 EIS.

Site or location-specific decisions will be addressed in subsequent, project-level environmental reviews.

The focus of the NEC FUTURE program is on meeting current and future passenger needs while accommodating future freight needs corridor-wide. Freight operators along the existing NEC are working with the FRA to identify their future needs and opportunities within the NEC FUTURE program.

Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC), Massachusetts:

Comments from the PVPC focused on enhanced service and facility improvements for the City of Springfield, including the planned revitalization of Springfield Union Station. Their letter was supportive of the market-based approach and encouraged the review of previous and current rail planning studies. PVPC requested a reduction in travel time and increased service between Springfield and the following cities: New Haven, New York, Washington, D.C., Albany, Worcester, and Boston. The inland route from New Haven to Boston via Springfield was identified for evaluation including a near-term phase for complete double track.

FRA Response:

The NEC FUTURE program addresses both intercity and commuter rail in the alternatives development process. This analysis will be documented in the SDP and Tier 1 EIS. It is likely to include both on-corridor and off-corridor routes.

The analysis will consider network connectivity, impacts to existing and new markets, and impacts on the region's transportation system, environment, and economy. Station locations will be considered in a market-based analysis.

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) Massachusetts:

BRPC stressed the need to consider the NEC in a comprehensive manner including analysis on connecting corridors. Underutilized rail assets were identified as a resource that could accommodate passengers or freight. Sea-level rise was cited as a reason to consider an inland route and to identify existing portions of the NEC that could be at risk. Additional comments included the need to identify opportunities for regular intercity service, the request that impacts to the highway system be identified for no or various levels of improvements to the rail system, and identifying all rail discussions and plans that are under development.

FRA Response:

The NEC FUTURE program is coordinating with states and MPOs concerning relevant plans and programs, including analysis on connecting corridors and underutilized rail assets.

Both on-corridor and off-corridor alternatives for meeting future forecast commuter and intercity rail travel demand will be considered in the alternatives development process. Freight rail capacity is also a consideration.

General station locations will be evaluated as part of the NEC FUTURE SDP and Tier 1 EIS. The analysis will consider network connectivity, impacts to existing and new markets, and impacts on the region's transportation system, environment, and economy.

Development of the No Action Alternative will include discussion of highway capacity and congestion issues.

The Purpose & Need addresses the mobility challenges of the Northeast region in a multi-modal context, but is focused on the role of passenger rail in meeting those challenges. The FRA will consider the capacity constraints of the total transportation system (rail, highway, air) in evaluating future rail transportation needs. In this context, the NEC FUTURE program alternatives will provide options for how rail can contribute to the overall mobility of the region given the broader transportation system. The NEC FUTURE SDP and Tier 1 EIS alternatives development process will include a cost-benefit analysis of alternative passenger rail investments. The NEC FUTURE Purpose & Need will be refined to strengthen this focus on passenger rail.

Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization Virginia:

The Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization requested that Richmond and Hampton Roads be included within the Study Area. Their letter contained numerous references to other studies evaluating this part of Virginia in conjunction with the Northeast in an effort to support their argument to expand the NEC FUTURE Study Area.

FRA Response:

The NEC FUTURE program Study Area extends from the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area to the Boston, MA metropolitan area. Markets and rail corridors outside or adjacent to the Study Area, such as Hampton Roads and Richmond, VA, and how they relate to or influence the NEC FUTURE program, will be considered in the alternatives development process.

Previous and ongoing studies pertaining to passenger rail service in and through Virginia will be considered in the alternatives development process.

Counties and Local Governments

Numerous counties and local governments provided comments related to a variety of concerns. Most of these comments focused on local issues, identified local projects and initiatives, or requested information and briefings. Comments were included within *Section III, Public Scoping Process and Comments*.

Passenger Rail Providers

Amtrak Comments:

“Given that all program alternatives developed through the NEC FUTURE process will be judged against their estimated ability to fulfill the Purpose and Need and achieve the Program Goals and Objectives, Amtrak believes it is vital that these statements clearly lay out the mobility and development challenges facing the Region over the decades ahead and comprehensively capture the beneficial possibilities that may stem from improved and increased rail service in the NEC.”

Amtrak provided numerous suggested improvements, additions, and clarifications to the Purpose & Need and the goals. The suggestions focused on mobility and development challenges facing the region in the upcoming decades as well as capturing benefits from improved and increased rail service. Additional topics addressed in their letter include: safety; communities and socioeconomic conditions; sustainability and land use; adaptation; market; economic growth; long-term costs; demand forecast and scenarios; capacity; network services; and participation. Based on their own studies of the corridor, they also provided a series of recommended Initial Alternatives for consideration.

FRA Response:

The NEC FUTURE program recognizes the importance of improving safety, reliability, and redundancy. The goals of the NEC FUTURE program include identifying and developing a program that provides attractive, competitive, and high-quality passenger service. NEC FUTURE program goals will be refined to better articulate this.

The Purpose & Need for NEC FUTURE program states that major investments in the NEC and other modes are needed for the Northeast to grow and remain economically competitive in national and international markets. The FRA recognizes the role transportation and mobility play in influencing economic growth and development. The program goals identified in the Scoping Package will be refined to better articulate this relationship between mobility and economics.

The FRA will consider all alternatives presented during the NEC FUTURE scoping process. These ideas will be reflected in the alternatives development process which will be documented in the SDP and Tier 1 EIS.

The NEC FUTURE program is evaluating a variety of alternatives that will result in a preferred investment program. The NEC FUTURE program will evaluate, at a broad level, the potential benefits and adverse effects of each alternative on the built and natural environment. As planning for the project progresses and more detail on alternatives is available, the project team will assess the potential effects of project alternatives on these resources. Site or location-specific decisions will be addressed in subsequent, project-level environmental reviews.

Virginia Railway Express (VRE) Comments:

VRE requested that the Washington DC First Street tunnel be included within the Study Area, and that impacts on operations between Washington Union Station and Union Terminal Ivy City from rail operations on the NEC approaching Union Station should be considered. VRE also requested that electrification proposals evaluate the impacts to bi-direction non-electric rail service.

FRA Response:

The NEC FUTURE Study Area extends through Washington Union Station and the First Street tunnel to the connection with the CSX mainline in Virginia. The FRA will broadly consider the limitations and potential capacity impacts and solutions for the First Street tunnel corridor as well as ongoing planning for and impacts to Washington Union Station.

V. Next Steps

Input received during scoping will shape future stages of the NEC FUTURE program. In particular, comments received through the scoping process will be valuable in understanding the Study Area and affected environment, refining the Purpose & Need, defining program alternatives, and guiding the public and agency involvement process. The ideas, comments and concerns expressed during this process have all been considered and are a key element in moving the NEC FUTURE program forward and in the development of the Tier 1 EIS and SDP.

The comments received from federal, state, regional and local resource and regulatory agencies during scoping will be important in developing the analytical resource methodologies to assess the affected environment and environmental consequences. Where potentially significant issues related to resources have been raised, the FRA will reach out to resource specific agencies to discuss those topics more specifically so that they can be adequately addressed in the Tier 1 EIS. The FRA is committed to continuing an open dialogue with stakeholder agencies.

Scoping comments and the FRA's responses summarized in this Scoping Summary will be documented in both the SDP and Tier 1 EIS. Specific responses, however, may be refined as the study process advances and new information, insights and analyses are available. The FRA's response to comments regarding the project's Purpose & Need will be addressed, as appropriate, in the Tier 1 EIS Purpose & Need chapter. Similarly, the numerous ideas, comments and concerns with regard to alternatives will be incorporated in the alternatives development process and documented in the SDP and Alternatives Considered chapter of the Tier 1 EIS. The assessment of the Study Area and the affected environment will be provided in the Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences chapter of the Tier 1 EIS.

Ideas, comments, and concerns raised during the process related to public involvement will be carefully considered to ensure the continuation of an open, transparent public dialogue. The NEC FUTURE program team will regularly update the project website (www.necfuture.com) with new information and provide the public with access to relevant project publications. Regular communications through venues such as meetings, webinars, and emails will continue throughout the project. The FRA will continue to work with specific stakeholder groups to create the right forum for their input and involvement.

The publication of the NOI and the scoping process are significant early milestones the development of the Tier 1 EIS. The next steps in the development of the NEC FUTURE Tier 1 EIS include:

- Continued development of the alternatives to be considered and evaluated in the document;
- Preparation of the Tier 1 Draft EIS; and
- Continued public and agency coordination.

Once the Tier 1 Draft EIS is completed and approved by the FRA, a Notice of Availability (NOA) will be published in the *Federal Register* and through other media announcements. The NOA will indicate the public comment period; where copies of the document can be reviewed; how comments will be received; and the dates, times, and locations of the public hearings on the Tier 1 Draft EIS. The input received at that time will help the FRA identify a preferred investment program to be carried forward in the Tier 1 Final EIS and SDP.