



Draft Alternatives Analysis Report

Chicago to Omaha
Regional Passenger Rail System Planning Study

April 27, 2012



TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1-1
1.1 Study Area	1-2
1.2 Purpose of and Need for the Study	1-3
1.2.1 Study Background	1-3
1.2.2 Purpose	1-4
1.2.3 Need	1-4
1.3 Alternatives Analysis Review Process	1-6
CHAPTER 2 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED SERVICE	2-1
2.1 Speed and Travel Time.....	2-1
2.2 Stations.....	2-1
2.3 Frequency.....	2-2
2.4 Infrastructure.....	2-2
2.5 Phased Implementation	2-3
CHAPTER 3 RANGE OF ROUTE ALTERNATIVES	3-1
3.1 No-Build Alternative	3-1
3.2 Previously Established Routes.....	3-1
3.3 Potential Combinations of Routes.....	3-3
3.4 Summary.....	3-3
CHAPTER 4 SCREENING METHODOLOGY	4-1
4.1 Screening Criteria	4-1
4.1.1 Purpose and Need.....	4-2
4.1.2 Technical Feasibility	4-2
4.1.3 Economic Feasibility	4-2
4.1.4 Environmental Concerns	4-2
4.2 Screening Process.....	4-2
4.2.1 Step 1 – Coarse-Level Screening	4-3
4.2.2 Step 2 – Fine-Level Screening	4-6
CHAPTER 5 COARSE-LEVEL SCREENING.....	5-1
5.1 Route Alternative 1	5-1
5.1.1 Purpose and Need: Travel Demand	5-1
5.1.2 Purpose and Need: Competitive and Attractive Travel Modes	5-1
5.1.3 Technical Feasibility	5-1
5.1.4 Economic Feasibility	5-2
5.1.5 Environmental Concerns: Major Challenges.....	5-2
5.1.6 Environmental Concerns: Sensitive Areas.....	5-2

5.1.7	Environmental Concerns: Right-of-Way.....	5-2
5.2	Route Alternative 2	5-2
5.2.1	Purpose and Need: Travel Demand	5-3
5.2.2	Purpose and Need: Competitive and Attractive Travel Modes	5-3
5.2.3	Technical Feasibility	5-3
5.2.4	Economic Feasibility.....	5-4
5.2.5	Environmental Concerns: Major Challenges.....	5-4
5.2.6	Environmental Concerns: Sensitive Areas.....	5-4
5.2.7	Environmental Concerns: Right-of-Way.....	5-4
5.3	Route Alternative 3	5-4
5.3.1	Purpose and Need: Travel Demand	5-5
5.3.2	Purpose and Need: Competitive and Attractive Travel Modes	5-5
5.3.3	Technical Feasibility	5-5
5.3.4	Economic Feasibility.....	5-5
5.3.5	Environmental Concerns: Major Challenges.....	5-5
5.3.6	Environmental Concerns: Sensitive Areas.....	5-6
5.3.7	Environmental Concerns: Right-of-Way.....	5-6
5.4	Route Alternative 4	5-6
5.4.1	Purpose and Need: Travel Demand	5-7
5.4.2	Purpose and Need: Competitive and Attractive Travel Modes	5-7
5.4.3	Technical Feasibility	5-7
5.4.4	Economic Feasibility.....	5-8
5.4.5	Environmental Concerns: Major Challenges.....	5-8
5.4.6	Environmental Concerns: Sensitive Areas.....	5-8
5.4.7	Environmental Concerns: Right-of-Way.....	5-9
5.5	Route Alternative 5	5-9
5.5.1	Purpose and Need: Travel Demand	5-9
5.5.2	Purpose and Need: Competitive and Attractive Travel Modes	5-9
5.5.3	Technical Feasibility	5-10
5.5.4	Economic Feasibility.....	5-10
5.5.5	Environmental Concerns: Major Challenges.....	5-10
5.5.6	Environmental Concerns: Sensitive Areas.....	5-10
5.5.7	Environmental Concerns: Right-of-Way.....	5-11
5.6	Route Alternative 4-A.....	5-11
5.6.1	Purpose and Need: Travel Demand	5-11
5.6.2	Purpose and Need: Competitive and Attractive Travel Modes	5-11
5.6.3	Technical Feasibility	5-11
5.6.4	Economic Feasibility.....	5-12

5.6.5	Environmental Concerns: Major Challenges.....	5-12
5.6.6	Environmental Concerns: Sensitive Areas.....	5-12
5.6.7	Environmental Concerns: Right-of-Way.....	5-12
5.7	No-Build Alternative	5-13
5.7.1	Purpose and Need: Travel Demand	5-13
5.7.2	Purpose and Need: Competitive and Attractive Travel Modes	5-13
5.7.3	Technical Feasibility	5-13
5.7.4	Economic Feasibility.....	5-13
5.7.5	Environmental Concerns: Major Challenges.....	5-13
5.7.6	Environmental Concerns: Sensitive Areas.....	5-13
5.7.7	Environmental Concerns: Right-of-Way.....	5-14
5.8	Summary.....	5-14
CHAPTER 6 FINE-LEVEL SCREENING.....		6-1
6.1	Route Alternative 1	6-3
6.1.1	Purpose and Need: Travel Demand	6-3
6.1.2	Purpose and Need: Competitive and Attractive Travel Modes	6-3
6.1.3	Technical Feasibility: Passenger and Freight Capacity	6-4
6.1.4	Technical/Economic Feasibility: Alignment.....	6-5
6.1.5	Technical/Economic Feasibility: Structures	6-5
6.1.6	Technical/Economic Feasibility: Grade Crossings.....	6-5
6.1.7	Economic Feasibility.....	6-5
6.1.8	Environmental Concerns: Environmental Impacts	6-6
6.1.9	Environmental Concerns: Right-of-Way.....	6-7
6.2	Route Alternative 2	6-7
6.2.1	Purpose and Need: Travel Demand	6-7
6.2.2	Purpose and Need: Competitive and Attractive Travel Modes	6-7
6.2.3	Technical Feasibility: Passenger and Freight Capacity	6-7
6.2.4	Technical/Economic Feasibility: Alignment.....	6-8
6.2.5	Technical/Economic Feasibility: Structures	6-9
6.2.6	Technical/Economic Feasibility: Grade Crossings.....	6-9
6.2.7	Economic Feasibility.....	6-9
6.2.8	Environmental Concerns: Environmental Impacts	6-10
6.2.9	Environmental Concerns: Right-of-Way.....	6-11
6.3	Route Alternative 4	6-11
6.3.1	Purpose and Need: Travel Demand	6-11
6.3.2	Purpose and Need: Competitive and Attractive Travel Modes	6-11
6.3.3	Technical Feasibility: Passenger and Freight Capacity	6-12
6.3.4	Technical/Economic Feasibility: Alignment.....	6-13

6.3.5	Technical/Economic Feasibility: Structures	6-14
6.3.6	Technical/Economic Feasibility: Grade Crossings.....	6-15
6.3.7	Economic Feasibility.....	6-15
6.3.8	Environmental Concerns: Environmental Impacts	6-16
6.3.9	Environmental Concerns: Right-of-Way.....	6-17
6.4	Route Alternative 5	6-17
6.4.1	Purpose and Need: Travel Demand	6-17
6.4.2	Purpose and Need: Competitive and Attractive Travel Modes	6-17
6.4.3	Technical Feasibility: Passenger and Freight Capacity	6-18
6.4.4	Technical/Economic Feasibility: Alignment.....	6-18
6.4.5	Technical/Economic Feasibility: Structures	6-19
6.4.6	Technical/Economic Feasibility: Grade Crossings.....	6-19
6.4.7	Economic Feasibility.....	6-20
6.4.8	Environmental Concerns: Environmental Impacts	6-21
6.4.9	Environmental Concerns: Right-of-Way.....	6-21
6.5	Route Alternative 4-A.....	6-22
6.5.1	Purpose and Need: Travel Demand	6-22
6.5.2	Purpose and Need: Competitive and Attractive Travel Modes	6-22
6.5.3	Technical Feasibility: Passenger and Freight Capacity	6-22
6.5.4	Technical/Economic Feasibility: Alignment.....	6-23
6.5.5	Technical/Economic Feasibility: Structures	6-24
6.5.6	Technical/Economic Feasibility: Grade Crossings.....	6-24
6.5.7	Economic Feasibility.....	6-25
6.5.8	Environmental Concerns: Environmental Impacts	6-26
6.5.9	Environmental Concerns: Right-of-Way.....	6-27
6.6	No-Build Alternative	6-27
6.6.1	Purpose and Need: Travel Demand	6-27
6.6.2	Purpose and Need: Competitive and Attractive Travel Modes	6-27
6.6.3	Technical Feasibility: Passenger and Freight Capacity	6-27
6.6.4	Technical/Economic Feasibility: Alignment.....	6-27
6.6.5	Technical/Economic Feasibility: Structures	6-27
6.6.6	Technical/Economic Feasibility: Grade Crossings.....	6-28
6.6.7	Economic Feasibility.....	6-28
6.6.8	Environmental Concerns: Environmental Impacts	6-28
6.6.9	Environmental Concerns: Right-of-Way.....	6-28
6.7	Summary.....	6-28
6.7.1	Purpose and Need.....	6-28
6.7.2	Technical Feasibility	6-30

6.7.3	Economic Feasibility.....	6-31
6.7.4	Environmental Concerns	6-32
CHAPTER 7 REASONABLE AND FEASIBLE ALTERNATIVES CARRIED FORWARD	7-1	
7.1	Results from the Coarse-Level Screening.....	7-1
7.2	Results from the Fine-Level Screening	7-1
7.2.1	Route Alternative 1	7-4
7.2.2	Route Alternative 2	7-4
7.2.3	Route Alternative 3	7-4
7.2.4	Route Alternative 4	7-4
7.2.5	Route Alternative 5	7-5
7.2.6	Route Alternative 4-A	7-5
7.2.7	No-Build Alternative	7-5
7.3	Reasonable and Feasible Alternatives.....	7-5
CHAPTER 8 REFERENCES	8-1	

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1-1.	Counties Traversed by Routes in the Study Area	1-2
Table 2-2.	Total Trips in the Chicago-Des Moines-Omaha Corridor for the Year 2000	1-5
Table 3-1.	Previously Established Passenger Rail Routes.....	3-2
Table 4-1.	Coarse-Level Screening Criteria	4-4
Table 4-2.	Fine-Level Screening Criteria.....	4-7
Table 5-1.	Route Alternative Comparison	5-15
Table 6-2.	Route Alternative 1 Environmental Resources within ROW and Buffer	6-6
Table 6-3.	Route Alternative 2 Environmental Resources within ROW and Buffer	6-10
Table 6-4.	Route Alternative 4 Environmental Resources within ROW and Buffer	6-16
Table 6-5.	Route Alternative 5 Environmental Resources within ROW and Buffer	6-21
Table 6-6.	Route Alternative 4-A Environmental Resources within ROW and Buffer	6-26
Table 6-7.	Stage 1 Forecast Results for Proposed Chicago-Omaha Passenger Rail Options	6-29
Table 6-8.	Comparative Running Times.....	6-29
Table 6-9.	Implementation Cost and Forecasted Revenue (\$ millions) of Route Alternatives.....	6-31
Table 6-10.	Environmental Resources within ROW and Buffer for Route Alternatives.....	6-33
Table 7-1.	Route Alternative Comparison	7-2
Table 7-2.	Implementation Alternatives to be Evaluated in the Tier 1 Service Level EIS	7-6

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1-1. Chicago to Omaha Previously Established Routes.....	1-7
Figure 2-1. Chicago to Omaha Illustrative Passenger Train Stringline	2-3
Figure 3-1. Chicago to Omaha Route Alternatives.....	3-4
Figure 4-1. Minimum Distance Required for One Train Overtaking Another Train	4-17
Figure 5-1. Route Alternative 1, Relative Population Served at Potential Stations.....	5-16
Figure 5-2. Route Alternative 2, Relative Population Served at Potential Stations.....	5-17
Figure 5-3. Route Alternative 3, Relative Population Served at Potential Stations.....	5-18
Figure 5-4. Route Alternative 4, Relative Population Served at Potential Stations.....	5-19
Figure 5-5. Route Alternative 5, Relative Population Served at Potential Stations.....	5-20
Figure 5-6. Route Alternative 4-A, Relative Population Served at Potential Stations	5-21
Figure 6-1. Freight Train Overtake Events Required at Different Passenger Train Speeds	6-34

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A	Fare Structure
Appendix B	Modal Comparison Documentation
Appendix C	Train Overtake Distance Calculations
Appendix D	Cost Index Ranking