



Council Bluffs -
Omaha

Chicago

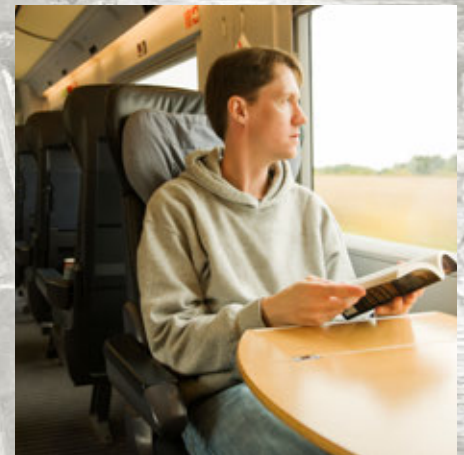
Chicago to Council Bluffs – Omaha Regional Passenger Rail System Planning Study

Tier 1 Service Level

FINAL

Environmental Impact Statement

May 2013



FEDERAL RAILROAD ADMINISTRATION

Chicago to Council Bluffs-Omaha Regional Passenger Rail System Planning Study Tier 1 Service Level Final Environmental Impact Statement

Prepared by
U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Railroad Administration
and
Iowa Department of Transportation
and
Illinois Department of Transportation

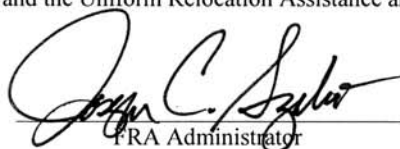
Cooperating Agencies

Federal Highway Administration, Iowa Division	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 5
Federal Transit Authority, Region 5	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 7
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Rock Island District	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Rock Island
U.S. Coast Guard, District 8	Illinois Department of Natural Resources
U.S. Department of the Army, Rock Island Arsenal	Iowa State Historic Preservation Office

Pursuant to:

National Environmental Policy Act (42 USC §4332 et seq.), and implementing regulations (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508), 64 FR 28545, 23 CFR §771, 49 USC §303 (formerly Department of Transportation Act of 1996, Section 4(f)); National Historic Preservation Act (16 USC §470); Clean Air Act as amended (42 USC §§7401 et seq. and 40 CFR Parts 51 and 93); the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 USC §1531-1544); the Clean Water Act (33 USC §1251-1387); and the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, as amended (42 USC §4601).

5/24/13
Date of Approval


FRA Administrator

5/2/2013
Date of Approval


for Iowa DOT

5/2/2013
Date of Approval


for Illinois DOT

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This Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) evaluates intercity passenger rail service improvements in the 500-mile Chicago, IL to Omaha, NE Corridor in Cook, DuPage, Kane, Kendall, DeKalb, La Salle, Bureau, Henry, and Rock Island counties in Illinois; Scott, Muscatine, Cedar, Johnson, Iowa, Poweshiek, Jasper, Polk, Dallas, Madison, Guthrie, Adair, Cass, and Pottawattamie counties in Iowa; and Douglas County in Nebraska. A No-Build and a Build Alternative for passenger rail improvements are evaluated. The No-Build Alternative would include independently planned construction of passenger rail service from Chicago to Moline, referred to as the Chicago to Quad Cities Expansion Program. The Build Alternative would consist of improvements to tracks currently owned and operated predominantly by the Iowa Interstate Railroad and the BNSF Railway, and would create a competitive transportation alternative between Chicago and Omaha by reducing passenger rail travel times, improving service reliability, increasing frequency of trips, providing an efficient transportation option, improving passenger ride quality and comfort, and providing environmental benefits, including reduction of air pollutant emissions.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ES.1 BACKGROUND

The Iowa Department of Transportation (Iowa DOT), in conjunction with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), is evaluating alternatives for the expansion of intercity passenger rail service from Chicago, Illinois, through Iowa, to Council Bluffs, Iowa, and Omaha, Nebraska (the Project). Intercity passenger rail service provides “connectivity between major urban centers” (MWRRI, September 2004). Iowa DOT’s evaluation is documented in this Chicago to Council Bluffs-Omaha Regional Passenger Rail System Planning Study (the Study) Tier 1 Service Level Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Past planning documents identified a “Chicago to Omaha” corridor, so for the purposes of this analysis, the corridor reference will remain as previously designated. The Project name includes “Council Bluffs” in the title because the Project terminus is the Omaha/Council Bluffs metropolitan area; “Council Bluffs” is listed before Omaha because it is located between Chicago and Omaha. For passenger rail projects, this Tier 1 EIS focuses on broad corridor and service level issues, while subsequent Tier 2 analyses would focus on the details of a specific project or action.

This Tier 1 EIS evaluates the No-Build Alternative and the Build Alternative as described in Section ES.3. In addition, following publication of the Tier 1 Draft EIS, Iowa DOT determined that an interim implementation phase for the Project would be needed, as described in Section ES.3.4.4.

ES.1.1 History

The existing rail lines that are proposed to be used to provide passenger service from Chicago, Illinois, through Iowa, to Omaha, Nebraska, were all in place by 1871 and were initially constructed to carry passengers and to haul a variety of freight (Colton, 1871; Hudson, 2005). Most of the passenger service along these routes began in the 1850s, 1860s, and 1870s (Young, 2005). By the 1880s, commuter rail service in Chicago had been developed in a hub-and-spoke pattern, extending 30 to 40 miles in 15 different directions from downtown Chicago. This hub-and-spoke system is still operating today as Chicago’s Metra (Conzen, 2005; Young, 2005). Intercity passenger rail service generally was terminated by the 1970s, when railroad passenger service declined nationally, and was consolidated into Amtrak (Hudson, 2005).

The Midwest Regional Rail Initiative (MWRRI) was established in 1991 as part of federal transportation acts that included a broader national effort to support high-speed rail investment. Sponsors of the MWRRI included Amtrak and nine Midwest transportation agencies of the states of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio, and Wisconsin.

As a result of the MWRRI and the national high-speed rail initiative, numerous corridors were identified and refined, with Chicago as the hub. Between 1996 and 2004, a single transportation plan was developed that included all of these corridors; this plan is known as the Midwest Regional Rail System. The nine passenger rail corridors originally considered for the Midwest Regional Rail System included (see Figure ES-1):

- Chicago to Detroit/Grand Rapids/Port Huron, Michigan
- Chicago to Cleveland, Ohio
- Chicago to Cincinnati, Ohio
- Chicago to Carbondale, Illinois
- Chicago to St. Louis, Missouri
- St. Louis, Missouri, to Kansas City, Missouri
- Chicago to Quincy, Illinois
- Chicago to Omaha, Nebraska
- Chicago to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and to St. Paul, Minnesota/Green Bay, Wisconsin

Planning, design, and development for passenger rail corridors have progressed since the original conception of the Midwest Regional Rail System. Figure ES-2 shows the currently proposed rail corridor in the Great Lakes Megaregion as it is anticipated to exist in 2050.

In 2009 and 2010, Iowa DOT and the Illinois Department of Transportation (Illinois DOT), in conjunction with FRA, evaluated alternatives for the corridor extending from Chicago Union Station to Iowa City, Iowa, with the completion of the Chicago to Iowa City Intercity Passenger Rail Service Tier 1 Service Level Environmental Assessment. On October 28, 2010, FRA awarded Iowa DOT and Illinois DOT a grant of \$230 million to proceed with the Chicago to Iowa City corridor Tier 2 Project Level studies and construction activities.

In 2010 and 2011, additional studies were completed for the MWRRI prior to commencement of the Chicago to Council Bluffs-Omaha Regional Passenger Rail System Planning Study. These studies included MWRRI corridor alternatives analysis, capital cost updates, operating equipment configurations and performance standards, advanced train control, and public outreach (MWRRI, 2011). The Chicago to Omaha corridor (the Corridor) was included in these studies. Subsequent to these studies, Iowa DOT and FRA concluded that analysis for speeds up to 110 miles per hour (mph) is warranted for the Chicago to Omaha Corridor and would include a maximum of seven round-trips per day.

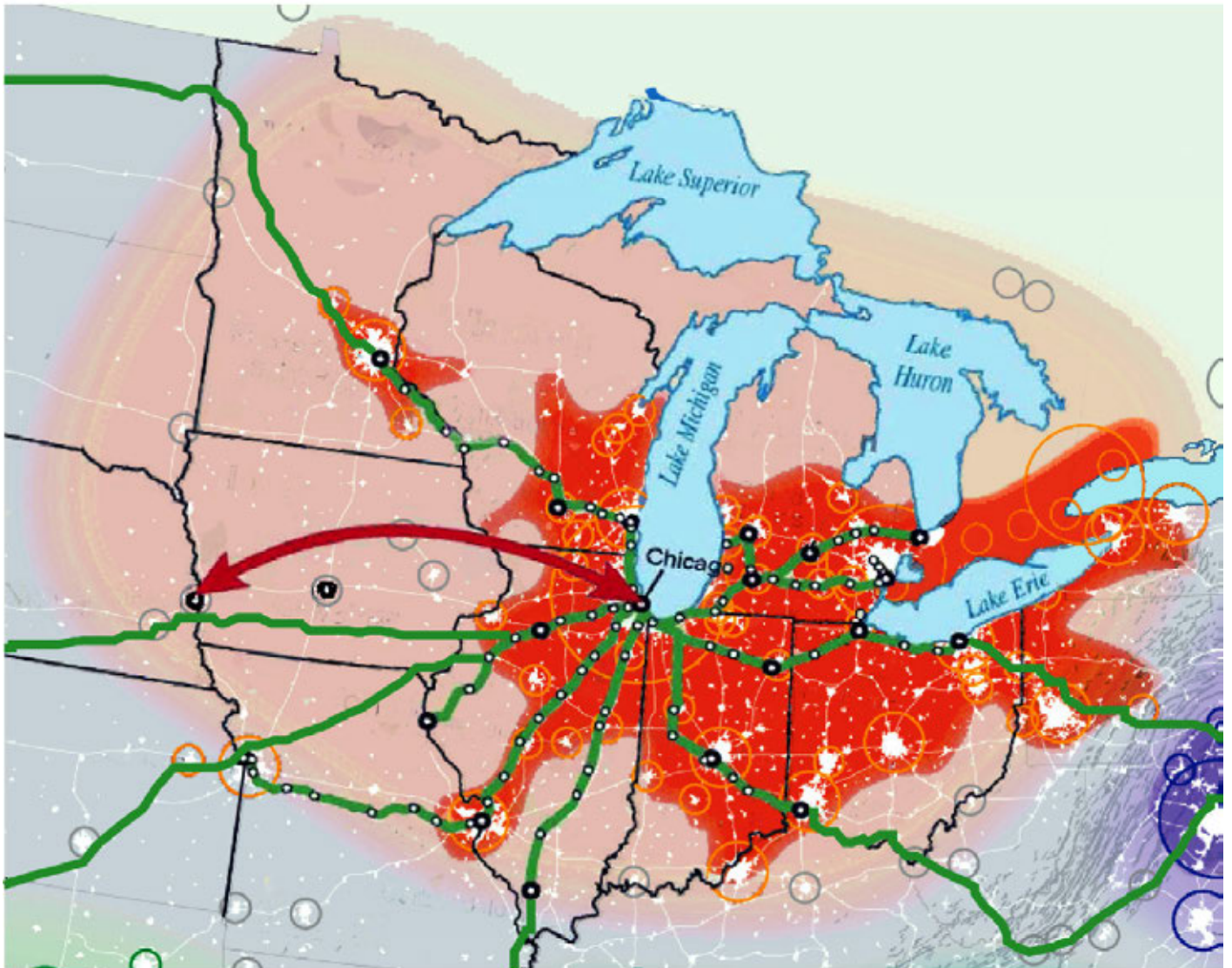
Full implementation of the MWRRI would significantly improve Midwest passenger rail service by upgrading existing rail lines to permit frequent, reliable, efficient, high-speed passenger train operations that would provide through-service and connectivity in Chicago to locations throughout the Midwest region. With full implementation, the Midwest Regional Rail System would encompass approximately 3,000 route miles in the sponsor states and would attract approximately 13.6 million passengers annually. Approximately 90 percent of the Midwest region's population would be within an hour's ride of a Midwest Regional Rail System rail station and/or within 30 minutes of a Midwest Regional Rail System feeder bus station (MWRRI, September 2004).



Midwest Regional Rail System

Chicago to Council Bluffs - Omaha
 Regional Passenger Rail System Planning Study

DATE	May 2013
FIGURE	ES-1



■ Megaregion
 ■ Area of influence
 ↔ Chicago to Council Bluffs-Omaha
— Current long-distance and intercity passenger rail routes

Regional Plan Association, 2013,
 America 2015 (<http://www.america2050.org>).



Great Lakes Megaregion Rail System and Areas of Influence (2050)

Chicago to Council Bluffs - Omaha
 Regional Passenger Rail System Planning Study

DATE
 May 2013

FIGURE
 ES-2

On October 14, 2011, FRA agreed to a phased implementation approach for the Chicago to Iowa City corridor. Illinois DOT is proceeding with the Tier 2 studies and construction activities for the portion of the corridor extending from Chicago to Quad Cities with a terminus in Moline, Illinois. Iowa DOT would conduct Tier 2 studies for the portion of the corridor from the Quad Cities to Iowa City.

While the Chicago to Iowa City service and Chicago to Council Bluffs-Omaha service may ultimately use the same corridor from Chicago to Iowa City for implementation, the level of service under consideration is different. From Chicago to Iowa City, service was evaluated at a maximum of five round-trip trains per day at speeds up to 79 mph, while the Chicago to Council Bluffs-Omaha service is being evaluated for a maximum of seven round-trip trains per day at speeds up to 110 mph. The higher maximum speed and frequency of service for the Chicago to Council Bluffs-Omaha service would result in additional impacts, and, therefore, require additional study. For analysis purposes in this Tier 1 EIS, the passenger rail service from Chicago to the Quad Cities is assumed to be constructed and in operation.

ES.1.2 Study Area

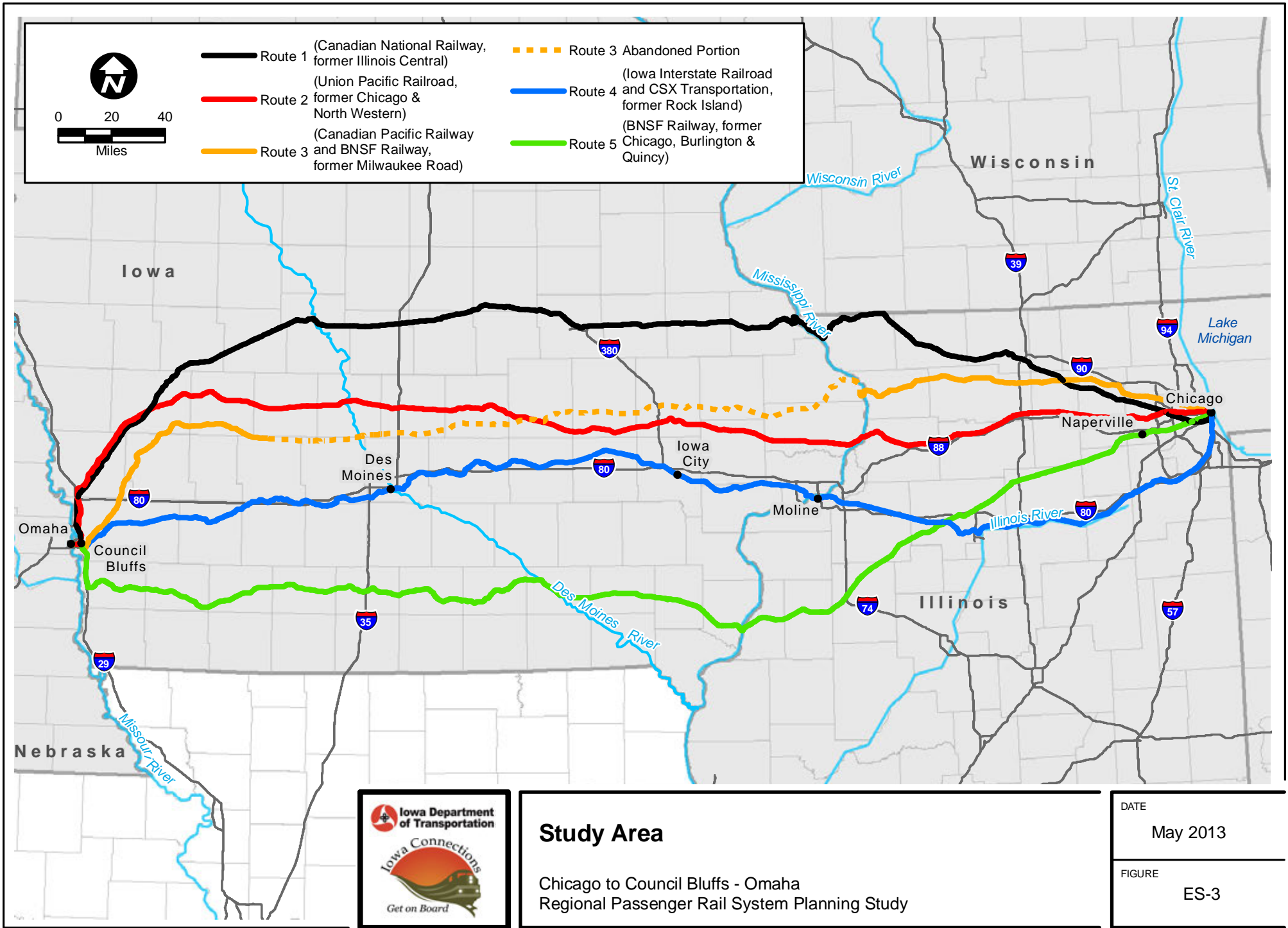
The Corridor extends from Chicago Union Station, in downtown Chicago, Illinois, on the east to a terminal in Omaha, Nebraska, on the west. The Study Area consists of the five previously established passenger rail routes between Chicago and Omaha that pass through the states of Illinois and Iowa (Figure ES-3).

ES.2 PURPOSE AND NEED

ES.2.1 Purpose

The Project and the Midwest Regional Rail System are intended “to meet current and future regional travel needs through significant improvements to the level and quality of passenger rail service,” as defined by the MWRRI in its Midwest Regional Rail System Executive Report (MWRRI, September 2004). The Chicago to Council Bluffs-Omaha Regional Passenger Rail System would provide competitive passenger rail transportation between Chicago and Omaha to help meet future travel demands in the Study Area. The Project would create a competitive passenger rail transportation alternative to the available automobile, bus, and air service and would meet needs for more efficient travel between major urban centers by:

- Decreasing travel times
- Increasing frequency of service
- Improving reliability
- Providing an efficient transportation option
- Providing amenities to improve passenger ride quality and comfort
- Promoting environmental benefits, including reduced air pollutant emissions, improved land use options, and fewer adverse impacts on surrounding habitat and water resources






 Route 1	(Canadian National Railway, former Illinois Central)	 Route 3 Abandoned Portion	(Iowa Interstate Railroad and CSX Transportation, former Rock Island)
 Route 2	(Union Pacific Railroad, former Chicago & North Western)	 Route 4	(BNSF Railway, former Chicago, Burlington & Quincy)
 Route 3	(Canadian Pacific Railway and BNSF Railway, former Milwaukee Road)		



Study Area

Chicago to Council Bluffs - Omaha
Regional Passenger Rail System Planning Study

DATE
May 2013

FIGURE
ES-3

ES.2.2 Need

The need for the Project stems from the increasing travel demand resulting from population growth and changing demographics along the Corridor as well as the need for competitive and attractive modes of travel (MWRRI, June 2004). Population in the Study Area is increasing and becoming more urbanized, with expanded access to and demands for public transportation (Iowa DOT, December 27, 2010). The population is also aging and is increasingly seeking alternative modes of transportation. Currently, the predominant mode of travel in the region is the automobile, estimated to account for approximately 98 percent of travel between city pairs in the Study Area.

Intercity passenger rail service would provide an option to highway and air travel between major urban centers in the face of a growing and aging population and increasing congestion on Midwest highways and at Midwest airports. A one-way trip by automobile between Chicago and Omaha along Interstate 80 (I-80) or Interstate 88 (I-88), at posted interstate speeds, would take about 8 hours during off-peak hours. The cost of driving round-trip between Omaha and Chicago with one day of parking in either Omaha or Chicago would be approximately \$547 to \$577 respectively.

I-80 is also a major truck route in the region. Between 2010 and 2030, vehicle miles traveled in Iowa on I-80 are expected to increase by more than 65 percent. If no capacity improvements are made, nearly 75 percent of I-80 in Iowa would be bordering on unstable traffic flow, at or beyond capacity (Iowa DOT, January 24, 2012), resulting in stop-and-go traffic conditions in Chicago, Des Moines, and Omaha (Federal Highway Administration [FHWA], November 2010).

Air service in the Study Area is currently available between the major cities of Chicago, Moline, Des Moines, and Omaha. Direct flight service between Chicago and Omaha is served by American Airlines, Southwest Airlines, United Airlines, and U.S. Airways, with typical flight times ranging from 1 hour and 20 minutes to 1 hour and 40 minutes. Tickets purchased with 2 weeks advanced notice typically cost between \$210 and \$1,400 (FRA and Iowa DOT, 2012).

Bus service is provided in a majority of mid-to-large sized cities, with intermittent service in smaller towns. Service between Chicago and Omaha, with multiple stops, was provided by Greyhound, although its routes were taken over by Burlington Trailways in August 2012. Typical bus service includes two trips per day—one in the early morning and one in the late evening—with travel times ranging from 9 hours and 15 minutes for “Express” service to 9 hours and 40 minutes for regular service (Greyhound, 2011). Bus ticket prices vary from \$40 to \$126 (FRA and Iowa DOT, 2012). Megabus.com, a subsidiary of Coach USA, is a low-fare express bus service that recently added daily service between Chicago and Omaha with stops in Iowa City and Des Moines. Megabus.com provides two round-trips per day: one in the morning and one in the late evening. The full one-way trip from Chicago to Omaha takes 8 hours and 50 minutes.

Current passenger rail service between Chicago and Omaha is part of Amtrak’s long-distance service on the *California Zephyr*, with arrival and departure times late at night or early in the morning, and travel times of approximately 8 hours and 55 minutes from Chicago to Omaha, and approximately 9 hours and 36 minutes from Omaha to Chicago (Amtrak, November 7,

2011). Tickets purchased with 2 weeks advanced notice typically cost \$69 to travel from Chicago to Omaha and \$108 to travel from Omaha to Chicago (FRA and Iowa DOT, 2012).

Inclement winter weather in the Study Area often creates conditions that impact both highway and air travel, creating a need for an alternative mode that is less prone to winter service interruptions.

ES.2.3 Decisions to be Made

Iowa DOT and FRA must comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) due to the proposed use of FRA's High-Speed Intercity Passenger Rail Program funds for the Project. FRA has issued guidance supporting a tiered NEPA approach that includes Tier 1 NEPA documents followed by Tier 2 NEPA documents (FRA, August 14, 2009). With a tiered approach, the Tier 1 NEPA document evaluates impacts of a broad-scale project with focus on more qualitative than quantitative impacts on specific resources. Following completion of the Tier 1 NEPA document and the associated decision document, Tier 2 NEPA documents are developed to evaluate quantitatively the environmental impacts within one or more specific logical sections or phases of the Project, which would be developed through separate but related projects.

The purpose of this Tier 1 EIS is to provide environmental resource and regulatory agencies, the public, and decision makers with a full understanding of the service-wide environmental impacts of the Project alternatives. Decisions to be made through this Tier 1 EIS process include selection of a preferred corridor and identification of communities served by station stops, frequency of service, speed of service, and a plan for phased implementation of service. Prior to implementation of passenger rail service between Chicago and Council Bluffs-Omaha, Tier 2 NEPA documents will be developed for the logical sections or phases identified in Section ES.7, Next Steps.

ES.2.4 Other Transportation Projects

In addition to the Chicago to Council Bluffs-Omaha Regional Passenger Rail System Planning Study, numerous transportation projects in and near the Study Area are in various stages of development. These major transportation projects for passenger rail, commuter rail, tollways, and interstate travel include the following:

- MWRRI corridors that are currently funded passenger rail projects and are under development at various stages of planning and implementation:
 - Chicago to Detroit (Pontiac), Michigan
 - Chicago to St. Louis, Missouri
 - St. Louis, Missouri, to Kansas City, Missouri
 - Chicago to Moline, Illinois (the Illinois portion of the Chicago to Iowa City project)
 - Chicago to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to Twin Cities, Minnesota, to Duluth, Minnesota
- An Illinois DOT project between Chicago and Dubuque, Iowa, that is in the early planning stages
- Metra projects that include improvements and expansion of commuter rail service in the Chicago metropolitan area

- The Illinois State Toll Highway Authority’s capital programs for improvements to existing tollways, development of new tollways, improvements to rebuild and restore the existing system, and the recently constructed south extension of I-355 into Will County
- Numerous localized interstate improvement projects of both Illinois DOT and Iowa DOT, including:
 - Illiana Corridor (Illinois), which would provide a direct connection between I-55 in Illinois and I-65 in Indiana
 - Elgin O’Hare West Bypass Study (Illinois), which involves a new expressway, arterial, transit, and bicycle/pedestrian improvements west of O’Hare International Airport
 - Council Bluffs Interstate System Improvements Project (Iowa), which addresses improvements to I-80, I-29, and I-480

ES.3 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

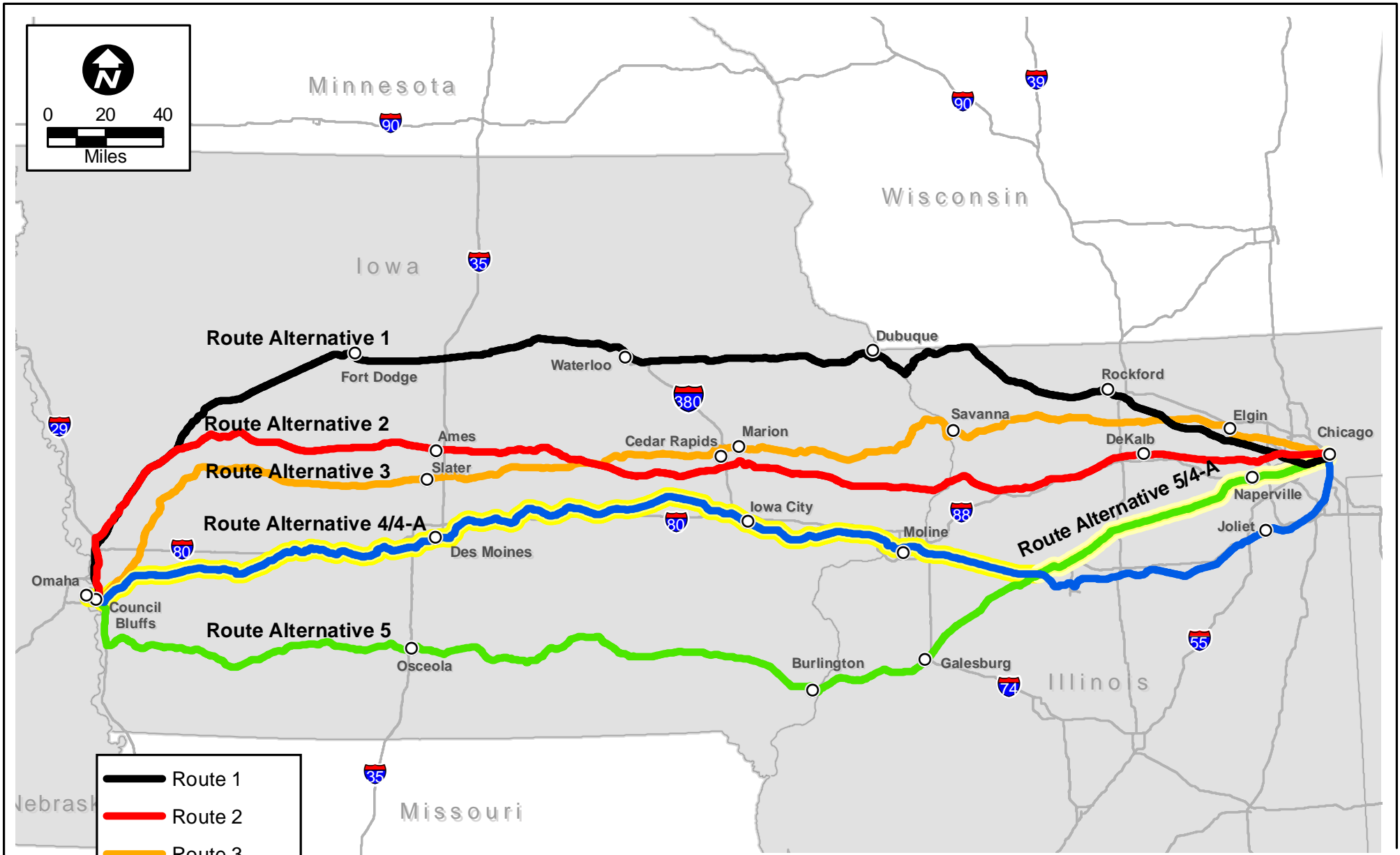
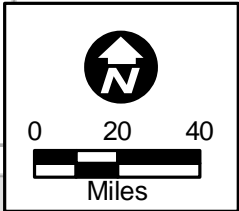
The initial range of route alternatives proposed for consideration for the Study, the screening criteria and multi-step process used to evaluate the route alternatives, and the results of the alternatives analysis are summarized in this section. Subsequent to the route screening process, options for service (speeds, frequencies, and station stops) were identified, reviewed, and screened, and design options for route connectivity through the Des Moines, Iowa, area and the Council Bluffs, Iowa, and Omaha, Nebraska, area were considered. The No-Build Alternative and Build Alternative (including its phased implementation) are also described in detail in this section.

ES.3.1 Initial Range of Route Alternatives

The potential route alternatives for the Corridor have been evaluated based on reviews of previous studies and also the ideas and concepts that were suggested by resource agencies and the public during the scoping process.

The range of route alternatives evaluated included the No-Build Alternative and existing or former freight-only or freight-passenger routes that may have been previously identified by the MWRRI and other studies.

The No-Build Alternative, the five previously established passenger rail routes in the Corridor (Route Alternatives 1 through 5), and the combination of Route 4 and Route 5 (Route Alternative 4-A) compose the initial range of route alternatives proposed for consideration for the Study. These route alternatives are shown in Figure ES-4, including the major cities through which they travel. The No-Build Alternative is included to provide a basis for comparison to the other route alternatives (40 CFR 1502.14; 64 FR 28545).



- Route 1
- Route 2
- Route 3
- Route 4
- Route 5
- Route Hybrid



Route Alternatives
Chicago to Council Bluffs - Omaha

Chicago to Council Bluffs - Omaha
 Regional Passenger Rail System Planning Study

DATE	May 2013
FIGURE	ES-4

ES.3.2 Screening Process

The screening process included two steps: an initial coarse-level screening to identify whether any route alternative would be hindered by major challenges (and would thus be eliminated from further evaluation) and a subsequent fine-level screening to evaluate each route alternative in greater quantitative and qualitative detail. This two-step screening process was intended to allow the Tier 1 EIS to focus on only those route alternatives that would meet the purpose and need for the service, and that are reasonable and feasible.

Coarse-Level Screening of Route Alternatives

Coarse-level screening was conducted to compare the merits and drawbacks of each route alternative against broad screening criteria. These criteria and their factors for evaluation for coarse-level screening are as follows:

- Purpose and Need: Travel Demand (travel demand based on population served)
- Purpose and Need: Competitive and Attractive Travel Modes (providing a time-competitive route)
- Technical Feasibility (major construction efforts and freight train traffic conflicts)
- Economic Feasibility (benefit/cost ratio and project costs)
- Environmental Concerns: Major Challenges (natural and human environment)
- Environmental Concerns: Sensitive Areas (wetlands, wildlife and waterfowl refuges, cultural resources, and park and recreation lands)
- Environmental Concerns: Right-of-Way (potential ROW acquisition)

A conservative 500-foot-wide buffer was applied to each of the route alternatives analyzed in the coarse-level screening. Unreasonable alternatives were eliminated from further consideration.

Fine-Level Screening of Route Alternatives

Fine-level screening was conducted to determine which remaining route alternatives would be carried forward for detailed evaluation in this Tier 1 EIS. During fine-level screening, route alternatives carried forward from the coarse-level screening were further screened for their ability to offer the highest potential ridership; the least potential construction, operation, and maintenance cost; and the least potential impact on the natural and human environment. This screening relied on the broad screening criteria and the factors for evaluation noted below:

- Purpose and Need: Travel Demand (potential ridership)
- Purpose and Need: Competitive and Attractive Travel Modes (running times that are time-competitive)
- Technical Feasibility: Passenger and Freight Capacity (general infrastructure improvements required)
- Technical/Economic Feasibility: Alignment (alignment or grading problems to meet speed and capacity requirements)
- Technical/Economic Feasibility: Structures (conceptual costs of major structures)
- Technical/Economic Feasibility: Grade Crossings (at-grade and grade-separated crossings)

- Economic Feasibility (high-level project costs, including operating and maintenance costs)
- Environmental Concerns: Environmental Impacts (substantial impacts on key environmentally sensitive areas in the categories listed below)
 - Streams
 - Floodplains
 - Wetlands
 - Farmland
 - Threatened and endangered species
 - Cultural resources
 - Potential Section 4(f)/6(f) protected properties
 - Environmental justice
 - Noise and vibration
 - Hazardous materials
- Environmental Concerns: Right-of-Way (refining conceptual ROW acquisition in relation to demolition/disruption of homes, businesses, farms, and historic properties)

In order to estimate potential impacts during fine-level screening, a preliminary impact area was identified for each route alternative. Existing ROW was assumed to be 100 feet wide throughout each route alternative. A buffer ranging from 25 to 50 feet wide was then applied where necessary to accommodate additional track needs, to promote efficient track maintenance, and to mitigate any operating disruptions generated by passenger trains.

Fine-level screening was applied to the remaining alternatives, and the one or more alternatives that passed through the fine-level screening process were carried forward for detailed evaluation under the Tier 1 NEPA process.

ES.3.3 Results of Route Alternative Screening Process

The coarse-level screening process eliminated Route Alternative 3 from further consideration because it would have the highest cost; require a substantial permitting effort; result in unacceptably high impacts on landowners because of the ROW needs; and cause extensive impacts on communities, infrastructure, wetlands, streams, and wildlife habitat.

The fine-level screening process eliminated Route Alternatives 1, 2, 4, and 5 from further consideration because they were neither reasonable nor feasible, as discussed below. During fine-level screening, the route alternatives were compared to the base case for two criteria. The base case represents the lowest cost or shortest travel time and varies depending on the criterion. Route Alternative 4 had the lowest estimated cost and was considered to be the base case for the preliminary cost estimate, and Route Alternative 2 had the shortest travel time and was the base case for the comparison of travel times. Route Alternatives 1, 2, 4, and 5 were eliminated for the following reasons:

- **Route Alternative 1** did not meet the purpose and need because it would not attract the necessary ridership to generate adequate revenue, would not offer a competitive travel time (longest and slowest alternative), would have excessive

operations and maintenance costs, would require a major new structure over the Mississippi River, and its costs were excessive compared to the base case.

- **Route Alternative 2** has the shortest travel time, but did not meet the purpose and need because it would not attract adequate ridership or generate the necessary revenue, would require extensive new ROW and a major new structure over the Mississippi River, would have excessive capital cost requirements (costing approximately \$1 billion more than the base case) without providing any additional service or ridership benefits.
- **Route Alternative 4** did not meet the purpose and need because the Chicago terminus of Route Alternative 4 is at La Salle Street Station instead of Chicago Union Station, which provides the connection to the MWRRI high-speed network. This connection would be costly, would have impacts on urban areas through which the connection would be constructed, and is not practical.

Route Alternative 4 was the least costly (not accounting for a connection from La Salle Street Station to Chicago Union Station), would attract adequate ridership, and would generate adequate revenue. However, Route Alternative 4 currently does not have a direct connection to Chicago Union Station and does not have adequate capacity for the proposed Chicago to Council Bluffs-Omaha passenger trains to travel on the shared commuter train routes in the Chicago urban area. Extensive track upgrades and additional ROW would be needed for an additional connection track and main track, and would require extensive acquisitions of adjacent homes and businesses. Based on the lack of an existing connection from La Salle Street Station to Chicago Union Station and the lack of capacity on the existing Metra commuter rail line as well as the associated cost and impacts of constructing a connection and providing additional capacity, Route Alternative 4 was determined to be neither reasonable nor feasible.

Following publication of the Tier 1 Draft EIS for the Project, the Record of Decision for the Tier 1 Chicago to St. Louis High-Speed Rail Corridor Program (FRA, December 2012) was signed by FRA. That Record of Decision indicated that a connection is planned from Metra's Rock Island District track to Chicago Union Station along Route Alternative 4. However, an FRA-required Tier 2 site-specific NEPA document would still need to be completed to evaluate the section of the program that includes the connection, and before the project plans would be implemented. The proposed connection would require land acquisition in an urban setting. In addition, the capacity and level of service of the proposed connection is unknown. Consequently, the potential exists that the connection might not be present, or may not have adequate capacity, which would affect planning and design for the Project. Because the comparison of route alternatives for the Project was conducted based on the review of existing conditions, the lack of a current connection was a critical element in reviewing the practicality of this route alternative.

- **Route Alternative 5** did not meet the purpose and need because it would not attract adequate ridership or generate the necessary revenue, would require extensive new ROW and a major new structure over the Mississippi River, would

have excessive capital cost requirements (approximately \$1.2 billion more than the base case) without providing any additional service or ridership benefits.

Route Alternative 4-A is the only route alternative carried forward for further analysis in the Tier 1 EIS. Below is a summary providing the rationale for carrying forward Route Alternative 4-A. When compared to the other route alternatives considered, Route Alternative 4-A:

- Meets Project purpose and need
- Has relatively low construction complexity and relatively low construction costs (technical and economic feasibility)
- Has grade-crossing complexity similar to all route alternatives (technical feasibility)
- Is the shortest route alternative (purpose and need)
- Has a competitive passenger-train travel time (purpose and need)
- Serves the largest population (purpose and need)
- Has the highest ridership and farebox revenue forecast (purpose and need, and economic feasibility)
- Has direct access to Chicago Union Station (technical and economic feasibility)
- Has no unreasonable environmental resource issues (environmental concerns)

ES.3.4 Description of Alternatives

The No-Build Alternative and the Build Alternative (Route Alternative 4-A) are carried forward for further analysis in this Tier 1 EIS and are described below.

No-Build Alternative

The No-Build Alternative would consist of the current trackage and operations with the present level of maintenance and no appreciable change to current track configuration or operations. The No-Build Alternative would not involve construction and operation of intercity passenger rail service from Chicago to Omaha, but independently planned construction of passenger rail service from Chicago to Moline would still occur. This project is referred to as the Chicago to Quad Cities Expansion Program and includes operation of two round-trips per day at speeds of up to 79 mph, a connection to join BNSF Railway (BNSF) and Iowa Interstate Railroad (IAIS) track near Wyanet, Illinois, as well as improvements at Eola Yard in Eola, Illinois. Construction for the Chicago to Quad Cities Expansion Program is anticipated to commence in 2013 and the service to be operational by 2015.

Other transportation projects in the vicinity of the proposed Chicago to Council Bluffs-Omaha Regional Passenger Rail System could occur independently, with or without the Project. Sections 1.5 and 3.26.2 of the Tier 1 Draft EIS provide more information on these projects.

Other intercity passenger rail services that currently operate within or adjacent to the Chicago to Omaha Corridor, including Amtrak's *California Zephyr* and *Southwest Chief* (both long distance trains) and Illinois' state-supported, Amtrak-operated *Illinois Zephyr* and *Carl Sandburg* services (regional trains with daytime schedules), are assumed to continue to operate under the No-Build Alternative.

Under the No-Build Alternative, other forms of long-distance and regional transportation, such as commercial airline and bus services, are assumed to continue operating within the Corridor in the same manner as current operations.

The No-Build Alternative would not meet the project purpose and need because intercity passenger rail service would not be reestablished in Iowa City or Des Moines, there would not be an attractive alternative to highway or airline travel; and congestion of these modes of transportation in the Corridor would not be reduced.

The No-Build Alternative was retained for detailed analysis to allow equal comparison to the Build Alternative carried forward and to help decision makers and the public understand the consequences of taking no action. NEPA requires consideration of no action to serve as a baseline for comparison with the proposed action.

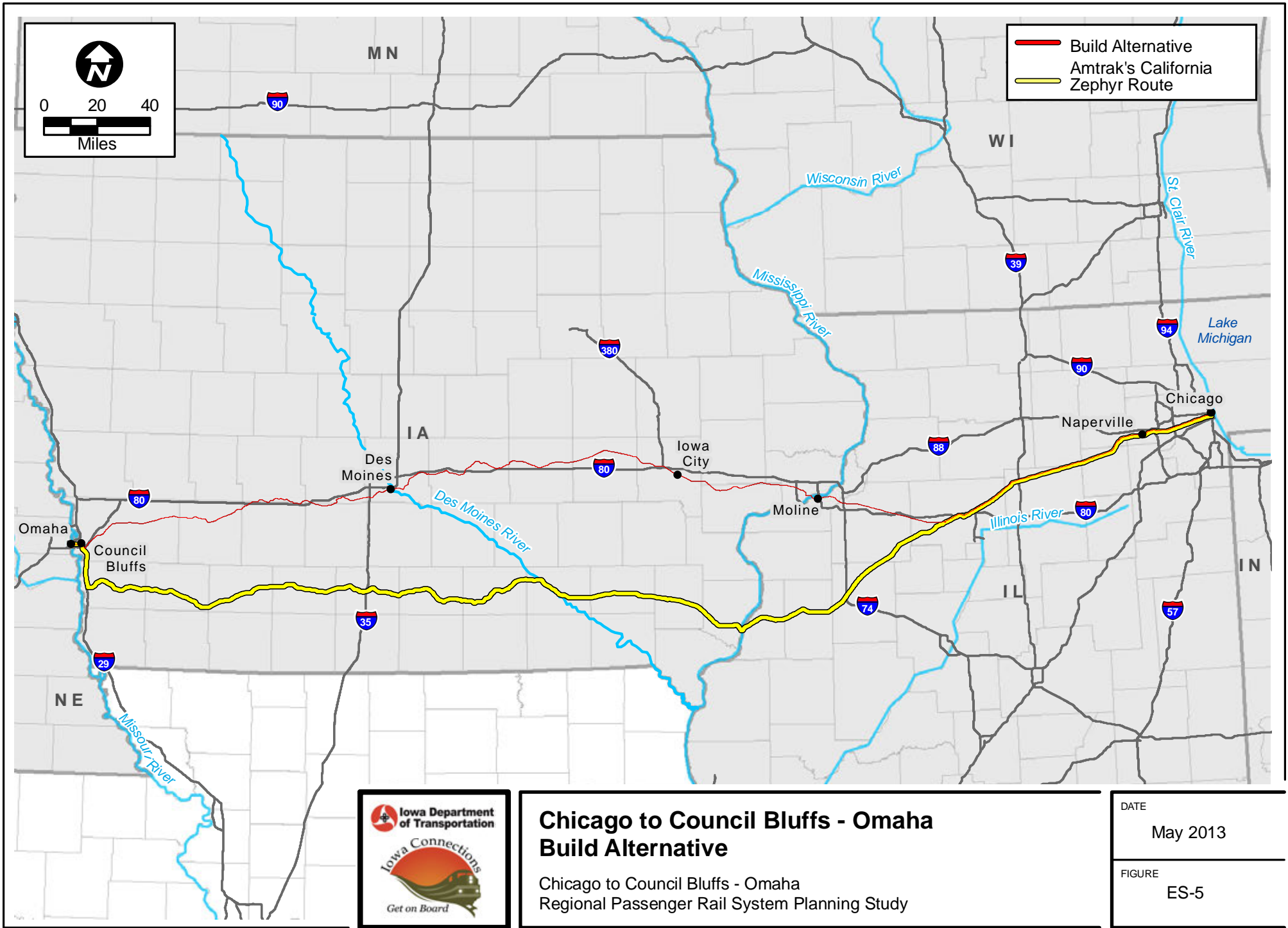
Build Alternative

The Build Alternative, which is the Preferred Alternative for this Project, consists of the improvements associated with Route Alternative 4-A to accommodate up to seven round-trip passenger trains per day at maximum speeds of up to 110 mph. The Build Alternative, shown in Figure ES-5, is approximately 475 miles long and consists of tracks currently owned and operated by four rail carriers between Chicago and Omaha. The BNSF and IAIS railways own and operate the vast majority of trackage in the Study Area, while Amtrak and Union Pacific Railroad (UP) own and operate relatively short distances within the metropolitan areas of Chicago, Des Moines, and Omaha/Council Bluffs. Figure ES-5 also shows the route of the *California Zephyr*; this service is anticipated to continue regardless of whether the Chicago to Council Bluffs-Omaha Project is constructed.

For the Build Alternative to function efficiently, improvements would be required, including infrastructure upgrades, at-grade roadway crossings, stations, and layover and maintenance facilities.

The Build Alternative would include construction of new main track, sidings, and connection tracks; upgrades to existing track to enable faster passenger train speeds and the desired passenger train service reliability; and installation of wayside signaling systems. Throughout the Corridor, connections to the existing main track would be required for meet/pass events, access to industries, and capacity for maintenance-of-way activities. Detailed capacity modeling will be conducted during Tier 2 analysis to identify more specific requirements for revisions of and improvements to the wayside signal system, crossovers and interlocking plants, and connection tracks in order to provide adequate capacity for the proposed passenger trains.

In consideration of existing infrastructure, train traffic, roadways, urban land uses, and abandoned rail corridors, a few alignment options within the Corridor were identified. There are multiple alignment options through East Des Moines, Iowa, and across the Missouri River between Council Bluffs, Iowa, and Omaha, Nebraska, as well as multiple station location options in Des Moines, Council Bluffs, and Omaha.



Chicago to Council Bluffs - Omaha Build Alternative

Chicago to Council Bluffs - Omaha
Regional Passenger Rail System Planning Study

DATE
May 2013

FIGURE
ES-5

The proposed passenger rail service would continue to use existing Amtrak long-distance or Illinois-state-sponsored service stations at Chicago Union Station, La Grange Road, Naperville, Plano, Mendota, and Princeton, Illinois; and potentially at Omaha, Nebraska. New stations or reuse and modification of existing or past stations are proposed at Geneseo and Moline, Illinois; Iowa City, Grinnell, Des Moines, Atlantic, and Council Bluffs, Iowa; and potentially Omaha, Nebraska.

An overnight train layover and light maintenance facility would be required in the Des Moines and Omaha/Council Bluffs metropolitan areas, and interim layover and light maintenance facilities may be required at Moline or Iowa City depending on implementation strategies. Specific sites for layover and light maintenance facilities will be evaluated in subsequent Tier 2 NEPA documents. In addition to light maintenance, heavy maintenance for locomotives and train sets would be required. The aforementioned Des Moines and Omaha/Council Bluff locations for light maintenance could potentially be selected to also support heavy maintenance activities

There are approximately 850 at-grade roadway crossings on the Build Alternative. Grade crossing surfaces and warning systems would need to be improved to meet safety standards for passenger trains traveling at 110 mph. All crossings would undergo diagnostic studies during Tier 2 analysis for identification of improvement needs. The crossing analysis would evaluate all crossings with potential for closure under the Build Alternative. Warning devices would be installed based on speed-dependent criteria. Existing warning devices would be reused where practical if they conform to the speed-dependent criteria.

Service Options of Build Alternative

An iterative process was conducted for determining the optimum number of round-trips per day, train speeds, and types and numbers of station stops for the Build Alternative. The process considered ridership and revenue, as well as general operation and maintenance costs, as maximum frequency and speed increased and as station stops were added. Service options considered between two and seven round-trips per day between Chicago and Omaha, and also between Chicago and Des Moines; maximum speeds of between 79 and 110 mph; and two types of station stop service, standard-stop or selected-stop. Standard-stop service would involve a train stopping at all identified station stops, and selected-stop service would involve a train stopping at only some identified station stops.

Service options were compared based on estimated travel times, ridership, revenue, and general operation and maintenance costs. The primary criteria used to screen the service options were the ridership and revenue forecasts because they are indicative of competitiveness with other modes of transportation. As anticipated, the 110 mph design speed resulted in the quickest trips and the highest estimated ridership. Iowa DOT selected the optimum service option (described in the following paragraph) for full implementation, and eliminated other considered options (such as different combinations of speeds and station stops) that did not have adequate ridership and revenue, and did not have sufficient station stops.

Operations under the Build Alternative would ultimately include a combination of standard-stop and selected-stop service. Selected-stop station stops would be Chicago Union Station, Naperville, Princeton, and Moline, Illinois; Iowa City, Des Moines, and Council Bluffs,

Iowa; and Omaha, Nebraska. Standard-stop service would include the selected-stop locations as well as station stops at La Grange Road, Plano, Mendota, and Geneseo, Illinois, and Grinnell and Atlantic, Iowa. Figure ES-6 shows the locations of all station stops. There would be up to seven round-trip passenger trains per day travelling between Chicago and Des Moines, with five of these round-trips continuing to Omaha. The passenger trains would travel at speeds of up to 110 mph, with travel time averaging under 7 hours from Chicago to Omaha and under 5 hours from Chicago to Des Moines. These travel times are competitive with the personal automobile.

Phased Implementation

Based on experience with other passenger rail projects, and on service development planning for this Project, FRA and Iowa DOT anticipate that the Chicago to Council Bluffs-Omaha Project would be incrementally funded and that construction and operations would be implemented in phases. The specific phasing of the Project is not known at this time but would be determined as funding is allocated to the Project.

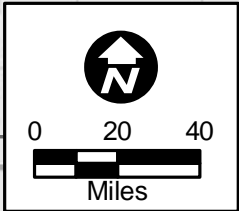
The Project is anticipated to expand from the baseline of two round-trips per day from Chicago to Moline at a maximum speed of 79 mph (included in the Quad Cities Expansion Program passenger rail project) and service extended to Iowa City (included in the Chicago to Iowa City project). The Project would then be extended westward sequentially from Iowa City, to Des Moines, to Council Bluffs, and then to Omaha.

A Service Development Plan (SDP) has been drafted for the Project, addressing the rationale for and details of the proposed passenger rail service, including a plan for phased implementation of the service, an operating plan for each phase of service, and a capital and financial plan for determining the types and amounts of funding needed for each phase of service. The SDP has an approximate 20-year planning horizon, but under phased implementation, full implementation of the Project would extend beyond 20 years. Therefore, the SDP focuses on the interim implementation phase, which is the phase of the Project that would be implemented within this 20-year planning horizon. The interim implementation phase would likely include four round-trips per day at 79 mph between Chicago and Council Bluffs. Full implementation would be five to seven round-trips per day at 110 mph between Chicago and Omaha, and would be realized over many years of phased implementation as federal and state funds are allocated to the Project.

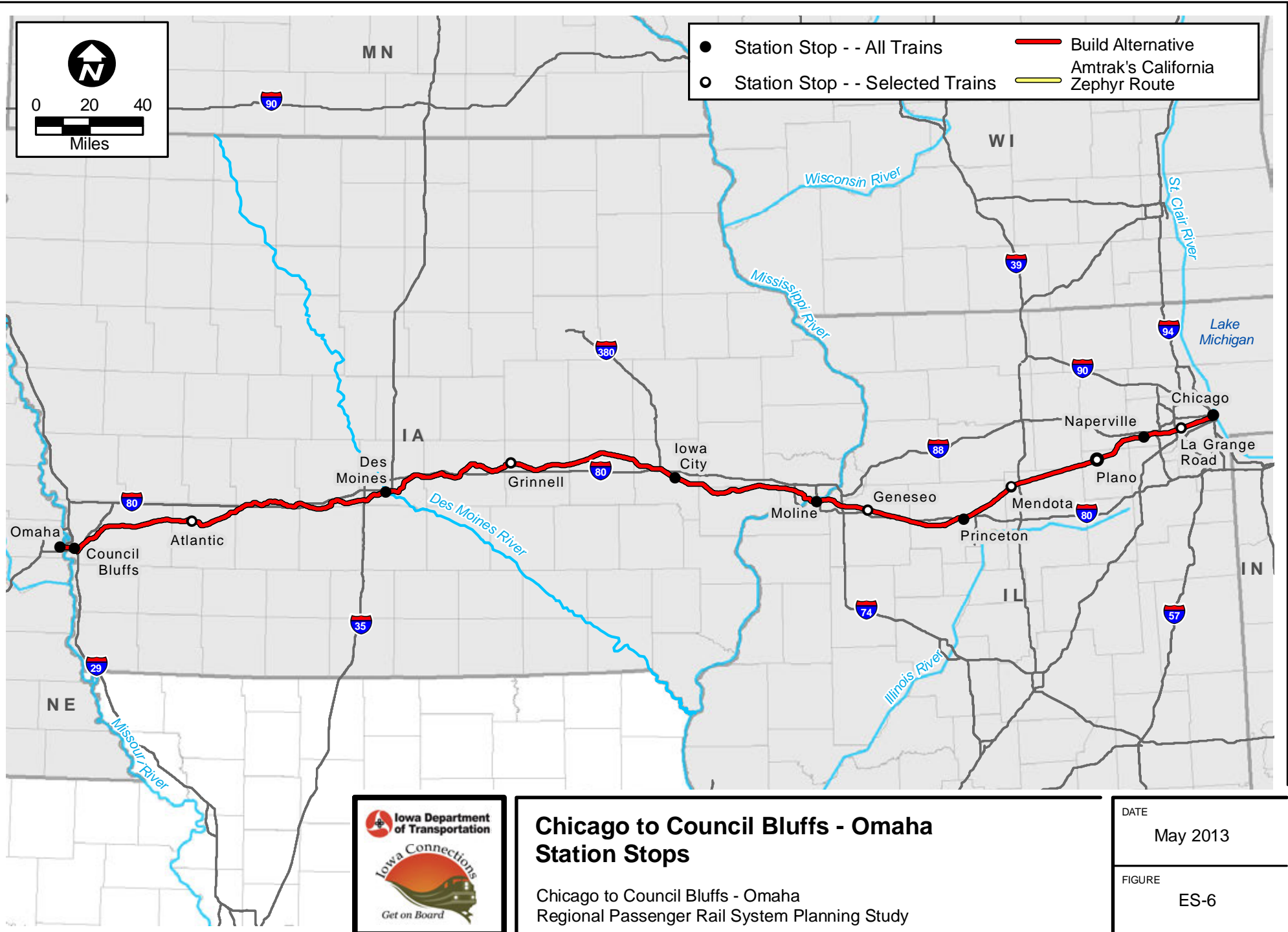
Consequently, although the Tier 1 Draft EIS evaluated potential impacts of full implementation of the Project, FRA decided that the Tier 1 Final EIS would also include an analysis of the potential impacts of the interim implementation phase. Section 3.28 has been added to the Final EIS for assessing these potential impacts in a qualitative manner. Service development planning for the later phases leading up to full implementation would be completed in coordination with the Tier 2 NEPA analyses for those phases.

Preferred Alternative

In accordance with the requirements of 40 CFR 1502.14, FRA has identified a preferred alternative for this Project: the Build Alternative, Route Alternative 4-A. The Build Alternative is preferred because it meets the purpose and need for the Project, giving the public a viable option for efficient transportation between Chicago and the Omaha/Council Bluffs metropolitan area, and points near and between those Project termini.



- Station Stop - - All Trains
- Station Stop - - Selected Trains
- Build Alternative
- Amtrak's California Zephyr Route



Chicago to Council Bluffs - Omaha Station Stops

Chicago to Council Bluffs - Omaha
Regional Passenger Rail System Planning Study

DATE
May 2013

FIGURE
ES-6

ES.5 SUMMARY OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS

This section summarizes the potential impacts of the No-Build Alternative and full implementation of the Build Alternative based on the detailed analysis of the social, economic, and environmental resources documented in Chapter 3 of the Tier 1 EIS. As discussed in Section ES.3, the No-Build Alternative does not meet the Project purpose and need, but was retained for detailed analysis to allow equal comparison to the Build Alternative. The potential impacts associated with each resource are listed in Table ES-1 and are described in more detail in the text that follows the table.

The potential impacts reported in Table ES-1 are based on construction occurring within the entire Potential Impact Area. For analysis in this Tier 1 EIS, the area along all alignment options under consideration was evaluated as if it would be impacted, and the Potential Impact Area also includes a buffer to account for future flexibility in design to avoid or minimize environmental impacts. Consequently, the potential impacts predicted to be caused by construction are overestimated. For example, although 104,150 linear feet of streams are present within the Potential Impact Area, many feet of streams would be undisturbed where no new bridges or widening of existing bridges would be required. Specific resource impacts, such as whether there would be an adverse effect under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, a use of property under Section 4(f) of the U.S. Department of Transportation Act, or an adverse effect under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, would be determined during Tier 2 analyses.

Table ES-1 summarizes the potential impacts of the No-Build Alternative and the Build Alternative. The potential impacts associated with each resource are described in the text that follows Table ES-1.

Table ES-1. Summary of Potential Impacts

Resource Topic	No-Build Alternative	Build Alternative
Transportation	Increased traffic congestion on highway system	Competitive transportation alternative; reduced freight traffic interference; safety improvements; changes in travel patterns where unsafe at-grade crossings are closed; temporary construction impacts (delays, detours)
Land Use, Zoning, and Property Acquisitions	Minor impacts (much less than Build Alternative)	Impacts on land use, primarily on industrial and farmland
Agricultural Resources	Minor impacts (much less than Build Alternative)	3,190 acres prime farmland; 840 acres statewide important farmland
Socioeconomic Environment	Minor improvements to socioeconomic conditions (Chicago to Quad Cities only)	Economic benefits provided through job creation, joint development, improved accessibility, and increased economic activity (Chicago to Omaha)
Title VI and Environmental Justice	No disproportionately high and adverse impacts	Beneficial economic and mobility impacts; potential impacts on Environmental Justice population area in Des Moines
Elderly and People with Disabilities	New accessible service between Chicago and Quad Cities	New accessible service between Chicago and Omaha
Public Health and Safety	Improvements to at-grade crossings and signals (Chicago to Quad Cities)	Improvements to at-grade crossings and signals (Chicago to Omaha)
Noise and Vibration	Minor impacts (much less than Build Alternative)	1.7 new noise impacts per mile; 7.0 new vibration impacts per mile
Air Quality	Increase in pollutant emissions over time due to fewer modal shifts	Decrease of most pollutant emissions due to increased modal shifts
Hazardous Waste and Waste Disposal	Minor impacts (much less than Build Alternative)	Minor impacts on 3 Superfund (NPL) sites, 34 leaking underground storage tanks, 27 Non-National Priorities List sites, and 1 wastewater treatment facility site
Cultural Resources	No Project impacts	60 historic properties (37 buildings, 1 structure, 3 bridges, and 19 historic districts)
Parks and Federally or State-Listed Natural Areas	No Project impacts	44 parks, 24 recreation areas, and 22 natural areas
Section 4(f) and 6(f) Properties	No Project impacts	44 public parks, 21 public recreation areas, 8 public refuges, and 60 historic properties
Visual Resources and Aesthetic Quality	Minor impacts on sensitive receptors	Impacts on visual resources (parks, natural areas, riparian corridors) and sensitive receptors in Des Moines
Waterways and Water Bodies	Minor impacts	Streams: 104,150 linear feet Lakes: 32 acres Ponds: 33 acres
Wetlands	Minor impacts	238 acres (1 acre aquatic bed, 84 acres emergent, 33 acres scrub-shrub, and 120 acres forested)

Resource Topic	No-Build Alternative	Build Alternative
Water Quality	Minor potential impacts	24 streams on 303(d) list of impaired water bodies; more impacts than No-Build Alternative
Floodplains	Minor impacts	1,657 acres
Topography, Geology, and Soils	Minor impacts	More impacts than No-Build Alternative, but minor impacts on Loess Hills
Natural Habitats and Wildlife	Minor impacts	178 acres of natural terrestrial habitat; aquatic habitat impacts; potential impacts from train/animal collisions; potential stormwater runoff pollution
Threatened and Endangered Species	Suitable habitat for federally and state-listed species	Suitable habitat for federally and state-listed species with potential for impact from constructing a new Missouri River crossing
Energy Use and Climate Change	Increase in energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions due to fewer modal shifts	Long-term decrease in energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions due to increased modal shifts
Construction Impacts	Minor, temporary impacts	Substantially more impacts than No-Build Alternative, but temporary in nature
Irreversible and Irrecoverable Commitments of Resources	Minor commitments of land, construction materials, financial resources, and energy consumption by automobiles	Substantial commitments of land, construction materials, financial resources, and energy consumption
Short-Term Use versus Long-Term Productivity	Short-term construction impacts of other projects, including benefit of construction employment; minimal reduction in long-term productivity of natural resources; and improvement in transportation network	Short-term construction impacts (including benefit of construction employment) and reduction in air pollutant emissions and long-term productivity of natural resources beyond that of the No-Build Alternative; improved long-term socioeconomic productivity through transportation network enhancement
Indirect and Cumulative Impacts	Increase in vehicular traffic congestion and decrease in air quality and energy	Reduced traffic congestion and vehicle emissions; reduced ridership of other transportation modes; improved air quality and safety; indirect impacts on parks, natural areas, and wildlife; increased chance of hazardous material incidents and water pollution; transit-oriented development near stations

Note: All potential impacts shown are preliminary and have been evaluated at a Tier 1 level of analysis. Impacts will be reviewed and revised as necessary within future Tier 2 NEPA documents.

ES.5.1 Transportation

According to travel demand and diversion forecasts for 2040, The Build Alternative would attract a projected ridership of approximately 1,922,800 passenger trips per year. The Build Alternative is projected to divert 1,366,300 automobile trips, 324,700 bus passenger trips, and 40,900 plane passenger trips per year, and would also generate an induced demand estimated to be approximately 190,900 passengers per year; reducing fuel usage, air pollutants, and non-passenger rail transportation system congestion in the Study Area.

Unsafe at-grade crossings may be eliminated, where alternate access can be reasonably provided, resulting in some changes to the travel patterns of the existing transportation system. In some locations, where appropriate and feasible, implementation of grade-separated crossings would improve the safety, traffic flow, and efficiency of the transportation system. Construction activities for improvements related to grade crossings would result in temporary impacts on the vehicular transportation system; including traffic congestion, delays, detours, and disrupted access to properties and neighborhoods.

Typical travel times for the Build Alternative would be approximately 6.5 hours. This would provide a competitive transportation alternative to the automobile and bus service, and would be competitive in fares compared to air service. A one-way trip between Omaha and Chicago would take about 8 hours by automobile at posted interstate speeds, approximately 9.5 hours by bus, and approximately 1.5 hours by plane. Under the No-Build Alternative, traffic congestion, air pollutants, and fuel usage would continue to worsen.

ES.5.2 Land Use, Zoning, and Property Acquisitions

Within the Study Area, the majority of land uses within urbanized areas are industrial in nature and currently adjacent to existing freight rail lines. As a result, few direct or indirect impacts on sensitive uses are anticipated from the Build Alternative. Most improvements would be located adjacent to existing rail lines and stations. The stations along the rail line are anticipated to enhance transportation-oriented development. New ROW would be acquired for the Build Alternative at station locations, maintenance facilities, and in areas where a new parallel track would be required. The Build Alternative would also include Des Moines Design Option 3, an option for a southeast alignment through Des Moines, Iowa, that would require substantial property acquisition, and would run parallel to the Southeast Connector. Although this area is industrial in character, sensitive land uses that would be directly impacted include an established residential neighborhood and Chester Field Park. New ROW would be required for the No-Build Alternative at station locations and at Wyanet and the Eola Yard in Illinois.

ES.5.3 Agricultural Resources

Impacts of the Build Alternative within rural areas primarily include impacts to agriculture, including approximately 3,190 acres of prime farmland and approximately 840 acres of farmland of statewide importance. These impacts would be relatively minor linear amounts that would be needed for adding parallel track and siding to the existing railroad grade. No severances of existing farmland would occur. The No-Build Alternative would have minimal impacts on farmland.

ES.5.4 Socioeconomic Environment

Although the Build Alternative would cause some temporary disruptions to existing businesses and neighborhoods during construction, it would provide long-term economic benefits to communities through job creation, potential for joint development, and increased economic activity. Under the No-Build Alternative, modest improvements to socioeconomic conditions would be realized since there would be increased service between Chicago and the Quad Cities, but not in the remainder of the Corridor.

ES.5.5 Title VI and Environmental Justice

Throughout most of the Study Area, there would be no anticipated disproportionate adverse human health or environment effect on minorities or low-income populations because a majority of the project improvements would be within or adjacent to existing ROW. However, the Build Alternative includes an optional alignment through Des Moines (Des Moines Design Option 3) that would impact both minority and low-income populations. During Tier 2 analyses, refinements in the design options could avoid or minimize impacts on adjacent minority and low-income populations. The Build Alternative would provide benefits for these populations through improved accessibility, mobility and employment opportunities. Under the No-Build Alternative, impacts on environmental justice populations are not anticipated.

ES.5.6 Elderly and People with Disabilities

There would be no anticipated permanent adverse impacts on the existing transportation services and general mobility of elderly persons and persons with disabilities because a majority of the project improvements would be within or adjacent to existing ROW. The Build Alternative would provide an additional means of accessible public transportation for the elderly and disabled populations, support expanded transit operations for efficient use of the transit system, and increase the availability of transportation options that connect to other cities beyond their immediate region. The No-Build Alternative would not result in permanent adverse impacts on the transportation and mobility of the elderly and people with disabilities, although there would be some benefits by providing service through the Chicago to Quad Cities Expansion Program.

ES.5.7 Public Health and Safety

The Build Alternative would include additional track and substantial track and signal upgrades, to address public health and safety, and to limit conflicts with existing freight rail service. A centralized traffic control (CTC) system, with positive train control (PTC) integration, including a wayside signal system and remote control switches, would also be installed where needed. The Build Alternative would provide a safe and efficient mode choice for travel from Chicago to Omaha. The No-Build Alternative would contribute to increased train operations between Chicago and the Quad Cities. Consequently, the potential for at-grade conflicts would increase and upgraded warning or traffic control devices would be required to help protect the safety and health of workers and the public.

ES.5.8 Noise and Vibration

Analysis results for the Build Alternative show 5,172 moderate and 2,373 severe noise impacts compared to existing conditions. Compared to the No-Build Alternative, a low incremental increase in new noise impacts per mile associated with the Build Alternative would occur: 569 moderate and 271 severe noise impacts over an approximately 500-mile corridor. The Build Alternative is projected to result in approximately 1.1 new moderate noise impacts per mile, 0.6 new severe noise impact per mile, and a combined total of 1.7 new noise impacts per mile over approximately 500 miles. On this basis, the incremental increase in train noise is not significant.

Of the 7,545 new noise impacts predicted to occur under the Build Alternative, 3,260 of them are attributed to locomotive horn use, and they occur in areas where locomotive horns are currently in use (with many of them occurring even if the Project is built or not). The analysis does not account for any change in at-grade intersections to grade-separated intersections where horns would not be required. Implementing quiet zones has the potential to further reduce these impacts. Because of the preliminary nature of this Tier 1 analysis and the acknowledgement that upgrade of some at-grade intersections would be known during Tier 2, these grade-crossing impacts are not considered significant. The remaining 4,285 noise impacts attributable to the Build Alternative are associated with wayside noise and are spread throughout the corridor (equivalent to less than one noise impact per mile), which makes mitigation challenging and potentially impractical in some areas based on the consideration of feasibility and reasonableness of noise barriers for a few receptors. Given the minimal number of noise impacts per mile, and the potential that many of the impacts may not occur either through conversion of at-grade intersections to grade-separated intersections or through use of quiet zones, noise impacts, whether the Project is built or not, are not considered significant.

The ground-borne vibration analysis identified approximately 7.0 vibration impacts per mile associated with the Build Alternative. On a Project-wide basis, 7.0 additional vibration impacts (due to 14 daily pass-by events) per mile are not considered significant. However, the number of vibration impacts is projected to dramatically increase in more densely populated portions of the study area, particularly where train speeds may reach a maximum of 110 mph. The magnitude of the increase in vibration impacts attributable to the Build Alternative is considered to be significant.

Under the No-Build Alternative, 4,603 moderate and 2,102 severe noise impacts are estimated to occur along the approximately 500 mile corridor. Vibration impacts under the No-Build Alternative are not projected to change. If the Project were not constructed, the Chicago to Quad Cities Expansion Program would contribute to slightly increased noise and vibration along this portion of the Chicago to Omaha route.

ES.5.9 Air Quality

Impacts on air quality are unavoidable because the Build Alternative would include new train service. However, impacts on emissions, energy consumption, and climate change would be beneficial overall because this additional rail service is anticipated to replace some passenger vehicles, and bus and plane trips along a similar route. Trains produce fewer emissions per passenger than other modes of transportation. Year 2040 projections indicate that operation

of the Build Alternative would directly impact the air quality by reducing hydrocarbon (HC) emissions by approximately 142 tons per year and sulfur dioxide (SO₂) emissions by approximately 2.7 tons per year. In addition, carbon dioxide (CO₂), the main greenhouse gas (GHG) emission, would decrease by approximately 23,513 tons per year. Nitrogen oxides (NO_x) emissions, the only GHG emission that would increase with the Build Alternative, would increase by approximately 420 tons/year.

A general conformity analysis included the assessment of air quality impacts of the Build Alternative in the counties which are currently designated as maintenance or nonattainment, all of which are in the Chicago area. The slight increase in NO_x emissions is balanced by a reduction in emissions of HC, particulate matter smaller than 10 microns in diameter (PM-10), and particulate matter smaller than 2.5 microns in diameter (PM-2.5). This reduction would help the counties and states with their air quality management. Although the resulting net emissions are below the *de minimis* threshold, this general conformity analysis would need to be verified in the Tier 2 NEPA analyses. Under the No-Build Alternative, another viable and energy efficient transportation mode such as passenger rail service would not be provided. Therefore emissions of pollutants generated by vehicles and planes are expected to increase due to anticipated worsening traffic congestion.

ES.5.10 Hazardous Waste and Waste Disposal

Because of track and crossing upgrades, the safety of hazardous material transportation by freight trains would improve under the Build Alternative along the entire Corridor, and would experience minor improvements under the No-Build Alternative between Chicago and the Quad Cities. The Build Alternative would impact three National Priority List (NPL) Superfund sites, 27 non-NPL sites, 34 Leaking Underground Storage Tank (LUST) sites, and one wastewater treatment facility.

Although the Build Alternative is within the contamination areas of three NPL sites, specific impacts would not be determined until the Tier 2 NEPA studies. The potential for exposure to hazardous waste contamination during construction may vary. The Des Moines TCE Site, and the Railroad Avenue Groundwater Contamination Site (in Des Moines), have both gone through cleanup activities. However, the cleanup of contaminated soils in the Omaha Lead Site includes only residential yards, public parks, playgrounds, and child care facilities. Consequently, the Corridor, extending primarily through industrial use areas within the boundaries of the Omaha Lead Site, could have some residual lead contamination in the soil.

For the No-Build Alternative, it is anticipated that there would be only minimal impacts on hazardous material or waste sites.

ES.5.11 Cultural Resources

The Potential Impact Area, which accounts for the area potentially disturbed by construction, includes 60 historic resources (37 buildings, 1 structure, 3 bridges, and 19 historic districts) either listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) or eligible for listing on the NRHP. Direct impacts on NRHP resources could occur within the Potential Impact Area, and indirect impacts (such as visual and noise impacts) on historic resources could occur within the APE. As the Project proceeds into the Tier 2 NEPA process, avoidance of these properties would be considered.

Based on a review of cultural resources within the Area of Potential Effect (APE), resources outside but near the Potential Impact Area were also reviewed for indirect impacts, such as visual intrusion or audible impacts, as a result of construction activities and future operation of the passenger rail system. Depending on the proximity of cultural resources to operating trains, structures may be identified for protection from noise and vibration impacts and incompatible visual intrusions. If the Project would require diminishment of historic properties, these modifications may be considered potential adverse effects and require further Section 106 consultation to determine the preferred method of treatment (mitigation).

Under the No-Build Alternative, the Chicago to Quad Cities service would contribute to slightly increased noise and ground vibration along this portion of the Chicago to Omaha route. The Chicago to Quad Cities Tier 1 environmental assessment indicated that no impacts on significant cultural resource properties were anticipated to occur for the Wyanet Connection and Eola Yard improvements. The Chicago to Quad Cities Expansion Program has the potential to affect historic properties within and between the aforementioned cities, but the impacts would be addressed as part of the Tier 2 NEPA process and Section 106 consultation for that project.

ES.5.12 Parks and Federally or State-Listed Natural Areas

The Potential Impact Area includes 44 parks, 24 recreational resources, and 22 natural areas. In most instances, only a very small portion of the resources are within the Potential Impact Area, which was developed with a sufficient buffer to facilitate design refinement and likely reduction of the area during Tier 2 NEPA analysis. There are three parks (Tiffin City Park in Tiffin, Iowa; Twin Creek Park in Pleasant Hill, Iowa; and Waterworks Park in Des Moines, Iowa) and two natural areas (Zoo Woods Forest Preserve in Riverside, Illinois, and Correll Wildlife Area near Adair, Iowa) that are transected by the Build Alternative. In addition, there are six locations where there are parks, recreation areas, or natural areas on opposite sides of the Build Alternative. Avoidance of these properties would be considered in the Tier 2 analysis and unavoidable impacts will be further analyzed in the Tier 2 and Section 4(f) NEPA documents.

Under the No-Build Alternative, the Chicago to Quad Cities service would contribute to slightly increased air emissions and noise in parks, recreation areas, and natural areas along this portion of the Corridor. The Chicago to Iowa City Intercity Passenger Rail Service Tier 1 Service Level Environmental Assessment, which included the Chicago to Quad Cities service, indicated that no impacts on parks or recreation areas were anticipated to occur for the Wyanet Connection and Eola Yard improvements, but some prairie areas would likely be disturbed to construct the Wyanet Connection.

ES.5.13 Section 4(f) and 6(f) Properties

The Potential Impact Area, which includes land likely to be disturbed during construction and thereby resources on which the Project would have direct effects, includes 44 public parks, 21 public recreational resources, 8 public refuges, and 60 private and public historic properties. In most instances, only a very small portion of the resources are within the Potential Impact Area, which was developed with a sufficient buffer to facilitate design refinement and likely reduction of the area during Tier 2 NEPA analysis. In some cases,

resources protected by Section 4(f) would be transected by the Potential Impact Area, including three parks and two natural areas.

As the Project proceeds into Tier 2 analysis, avoidance of these properties would be considered and unavoidable potential impacts would be further analyzed. It is not anticipated that any impacts would result in a constructive use of these Section 4(f) resources. Further evaluation of the potential impacts will be addressed during Tier 2 analysis when more details of the design and operation are known.

The Potential Impact Area also includes three individual parks and five park districts or community park departments that received Land and Water Conservation Funds (LWCF). During Tier 2 analysis, coordination will occur with the administering agencies to determine if lands within the Potential Impact Area were improved with LWCF funding. If any areas are considered to be LWCF lands, potential impacts will be addressed during Tier 2 analysis.

Under the No-Build Alternative, the Project would not be built, and impacts on Section 4(f) and 6(f) resources are not anticipated beyond those that could occur due to other projects.

ES.5.14 Visual Resources and Aesthetic Quality

Only small portions of visual/scenic resources would be within the Potential Impact Area because additional ROW would be abutting the existing ROW rather than being on new alignment. As a result, alteration of these resources and effects on the views of those resources would most likely be minimal. In addition, the expansive Mississippi and Missouri Rivers would provide unique scenic views as the passenger trains travel on the bridges over these water resources. Views of scenic resources would also be provided by adjacent parks, recreation areas, natural areas (including the Loess Hills), perennial stream corridors, historic buildings, and views of urban and rural small town character. The Build Alternative follows existing railroad alignments and would travel by residential areas containing sensitive visual receptors. However, those residents are currently accustomed to views of the railroad facilities. Des Moines Design Option 3 would result in visual impacts to the sensitive visual receptors in the neighborhood that it would bisect. Under the No-Build Alternative, it is anticipated that there would be minimal or no direct impacts on visual/scenic resources and sensitive residential visual receptors because of little or no additional ROW acquisition.

ES.5.15 Waterways and Water Bodies

The Build Alternative would cross, or otherwise impact, approximately 104,150 linear feet of waterways. In addition, 32 acres of lakes and 33 acres of ponds would potentially be impacted. For the No-Build Alternative, including the Wyanet Connection and the Eola Yard in Illinois, there would be minimal impacts on waterways and water bodies.

ES.5.16 Wetlands

Based on National Wetlands Inventory mapping, there would be potential impacts on approximately 1 acre of aquatic bed wetland, 84 acres of emergent wetlands, 33 acres of scrub-shrub wetlands, and 120 acres of forested wetlands, totaling 238 acres of potential wetland impacts within the Potential Impact Area. As the project proceeds into the Tier 2 NEPA analyses, wetland impacts will most likely be reduced as actual ROW requirements are determined and minimized where practicable. For the No-Build Alternative, including the

Wyanet Connection and the Eola Yard in Illinois, there would be minimal impacts on wetland areas.

ES.5.17 Water Quality

The Build Alternative would cross 24 of the 28 streams on the 303(d) List of Impaired Waters (water quality limited waters) within the Study Area. The Build Alternative could potentially affect the water quality of several water resources, as would the No-Build Alternative, but to a lesser extent. Potential water quality impacts could be caused by soil erosion from stormwater runoff, fill material placed in water resources, and construction of bridges and culverts or culvert extensions. In addition, potential pollutant runoff and spills from operation and maintenance activities could potentially reach adjacent water resources. The avoidance or minimization of water quality impacts would be accomplished in appropriate areas by the use of stormwater Best Management Practices (BMPs) and adherence to federal and state water quality requirements.

ES.5.18 Floodplains

The Build Alternative would cross and permanently encroach on several 100-year floodplain areas as a result of adding track and siding, bridge additions or replacements, and culvert replacements or extensions. Approximately 1,657 acres of 100-year floodplains would be within the Potential Impact Area. For the No-Build Alternative, including the Wyanet Connection and the Eola Yard in Illinois, there would be minimal impacts on 100-year floodplains.

ES.5.19 Topography, Geology, and Soils

The topographic conditions are not expected to pose an adverse challenge to the Build Alternative since it is adjacent to an existing railroad grade, and minimal cut and fill would be required. Bedrock encountered in the Potential Impact Area would increase construction costs, but would not be an insurmountable challenge for the project. In addition, the Build Alternative would not impact the underground mining entrances located in the Des Moines, Iowa area. The Build Alternative would have minor impacts on the Loess Hills landform area as a result of adding track and siding in the northeast portion of Council Bluffs, Iowa. The grading operations of the Build Alternative would impact various soil types, most of which are silt loams and silty clay loams, which would not pose adverse construction challenges. It is anticipated that there would be no impacts from topography, geology, or soils having characteristics that would adversely affect the No-Build Alternative.

ES.5.20 Natural Habitats and Wildlife

It is estimated that approximately 178 acres of natural terrestrial habitat areas would be directly impacted by the Build Alternative, in addition to the aquatic habitats (waterways, water bodies, wetlands) previously discussed. Because the proposed widening activities about the existing ROW, impacts from the alternative would be relatively minimal and linear, and would not further fragment remaining large parcels of natural habitat areas.

The wildlife species that are present along the rail corridor have been continually exposed to train traffic in varying degrees. However, improvements of the Build Alternative—including new CWR track, and new trains and equipment having less overall weight than freight

trains—would result in less noise and vibration than the existing train noise and vibration that the resident and migratory species have been experiencing. It is therefore anticipated that impacts from noise and vibration would be negligible. The potential effects of noise and vibration, and potential train collisions with migratory birds and other wildlife, which can vary considerably among species, will be further analyzed during the Tier 2 NEPA analysis, in coordination with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and state resource agencies. During the Tier 2 NEPA analysis, coordination with USFWS, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (Illinois DNR), Iowa Department of Natural Resources (Iowa DNR), and Nebraska Game and Parks Commission (NGPC) would take place to determine potential locations of migratory bird and/or eagle occupancy within the Study Area, in addition to determining seasonal nesting, roosting, and foraging requirements of potentially affected wildlife species. The increase in train traffic and railroad ROW could also increase the chances of water quality/pollutant-related impacts on wildlife and their habitats.

Under the No-Build Alternative, the number of noise and vibration occurrences, potential collision impacts, and water quality/pollutant-related impacts on wildlife and their habitats would be fewer than those of the Build Alternative.

ES.5.21 Threatened and Endangered Species

The Build Alternative would have no impacts on designated critical habitats (DCHs) of any federally listed threatened or endangered species. It is also possible that one or more new bridge structures could be needed across the Missouri River, which is suitable habitat for the federally endangered pallid sturgeon (*Scaphirhynchus albus*) and piping plover species (*Charadrius melodus*). In addition, it is likely that the upland and riparian woodland areas in the Iowa counties of the Study Area may potentially provide suitable foraging and roosting habitat for the endangered Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*), although there is no DCH for this species in the Study Area. The Build Alternative would result in minimal linear impacts to wooded areas, rather than fragmenting large parcels of woodlands. The Build Alternative would also result in minor linear impacts on the Eola Road Marsh, which contains habitat for four state-listed endangered species.

The potential for train collisions with threatened or endangered species, and potential effects of noise and vibration, which can vary considerably among various species, will be further analyzed during the Tier 2 NEPA process, in coordination with USFWS and state resource agencies. The potential for impacts from erosion and sedimentation, pollutant runoff and spills, and temporary construction impacts would also be further analyzed in the Tier 2 NEPA documents.

Field surveys and coordination with USFWS, Illinois DNR, Iowa DNR, and NGPC will take place during the Tier 2 NEPA studies to determine the potential for the existence of, and impacts on threatened or endangered species in the Study Area.

Under the No-Build Alternative, it is anticipated that there would be no adverse effects on federally listed species, and may have potential minor impacts on state-listed species, if only temporary, at the Eola Road Marsh. In addition, the number of noise and vibration occurrences, potential train-species collision impacts, and water quality/pollutant-related impacts on potential threatened and endangered species would be fewer than those of the Build Alternative.

ES.5.22 Energy Use and Climate Change

Implementation of the Build Alternative would have the potential to provide energy savings and would reduce the transportation system's impact on GHG emissions. Based on a preliminary passenger rail forecast, the Build Alternative would provide a net reduction on energy consumption and GHG emissions through diverted trips from automobiles, buses, and trains to new passenger rail service. Ridership and modal diversion forecasts indicate that the Build Alternative would decrease automobile traffic by approximately 646.3 million passenger-miles per year and reduce bus travel by approximately 153.6 million passenger-miles per year. CO₂, the main GHG emission, would decrease by approximately 23,513 tons per year. Although new passenger trains would consume approximately 17.1 million gallons of fuel per year, automobile fuel consumption would decrease by approximately 17.8 million gallons per year. Under the No-Build Alternative, passenger train service would not be as readily available to the public west of Moline, resulting in the continued reliance of automobiles, buses, and planes for transportation for this portion of the Study Area. As a result, energy consumption and GHG emissions would likely continue to steadily increase.

ES.5.23 Construction Impacts

Typical main line improvements proposed for the Build Alternative include construction of an additional track through much of the Study Area to increase rail capacity and limit conflicts with existing rail operations. Other construction activities include an upgrade of the rails, cross ties, signalization, and grade crossing protection throughout the Potential Impact Area. Construction of these improvements would result in temporary construction impacts, including increases in waste disposal, potential impacts to water quality, air quality, increased noise levels, vibration, dust, traffic congestion, visual changes, disrupted access to properties and neighborhoods, and safety issues. Under the No-Build Alternative, temporary construction impacts would be similar to those of the Build Alternative, but to a lesser extent.

ES.5.24 Irreversible and Irrecoverable Commitments of Resources

Construction of the Build Alternative would result in the irreversible and irretrievable commitment of land where additional ROW is needed. The land would be converted from its current condition to a railroad grade and track. Construction materials would consist largely of steel, concrete, ballast rock, and wood. Whereas the use of these materials would be largely irretrievable, these resources are not in short supply and many of the materials could be recycled for other projects when they no longer meet the design needs for passenger rail service. Several energy resources would be committed to the Project, including petroleum, natural gas, electrical, and manpower expenditures for construction, operation, and maintenance. These resources are generally irretrievable.

Under the No-Build Alternative, the Chicago to Quad Cities service would contribute to some commitment of resources for that project for constructing the Wyanet Connection and Eola Yard improvements. Also, energy resources would continue to be consumed by automobile travelers between Chicago and Omaha at a slightly higher rate than with the Project.

ES.5.25 Short-Term Vs. Long-Term Productivity of the Environment

The Build Alternative could contribute to potential short-term construction impacts related to hazardous materials and waste disposal, water quality, air quality, noise and vibration, property access, and traffic and pedestrian delays/detours. In addition, short-term employment, use of materials to construct the project, and purchases of goods and services generated by project construction could create a short-term increase in the local economy that would end once the construction phase is completed.

In the region between Chicago and Omaha, the addition and enhancement of passenger rail service would contribute to improvements in the transportation network and access within the region by providing competitive passenger rail service that would meet the needs of increased future travel demand and more efficient travel between major urban centers. With the Build Alternative, long-term benefits would include a reduction in air pollution emissions as a result of passenger rail service replacing automobile, bus, and plane trips; and decreased congestion on local streets and highways. Other long-term benefits would include improved accessibility within the region, economic benefits through employment opportunities, potential for transit-oriented development, increased economic activity, improvements in safety for at-grade crossings.

In addition to some permanent impacts to waterways, water bodies, wetlands, floodplains, plant communities, natural habitat, and wildlife; other long-term losses/effects on the productivity of the environment would include the following:

- Removal of existing farmland from productivity
- Reduction of the local tax base as a result of acquiring farmland, commercial, and industrial property for additional railroad ROW
- Potential economic impacts on other modes of public transportation
- Potential acquisition of park land, recreation land, and natural areas
- Noise and vibration impacts on sensitive receptors
- Collision impacts on wildlife

The No-Build Alternative would contribute to short-term and long-term impacts and benefits similar to those of the Build Alternative, but to a lesser extent.

ES.5.26 Indirect and Cumulative Impacts

Construction and operation associated with any phase of the Build Alternative has the potential to cause indirect impacts. The following is a summary of potential indirect impacts identified through evaluation of various environmental resources:

- Increased noise and ground vibration, as well as air emissions, and visual and aesthetic impacts could potentially result in indirect impacts of reduced use of nearby parks, recreation areas, and natural areas. Section 4(f) properties could be indirectly affected by noise, ground vibration, aesthetics, and access issues. Additionally, there could be indirect impacts on wildlife through reduced use of areas near train operations. Threatened or endangered species could potentially be indirectly affected by air emissions and water quality impacts affecting habitat.

- Indirect effect of reducing ridership on current transportation services, such as intercity bus and flight service, by offering a competitive alternative to these modes. Diverted trips from these modes to passenger rail service may have implications to the viability of these modes in the future.
- Potential indirect positive impacts include a slight reduction in vehicular congestion on I-88 and I-80 within the Study Area. This would have positive impacts on air quality, safety and reduce future delays due to congestion.
- Commencement of passenger service and modification of at-grade crossings could indirectly affect traffic flow from previous traffic conditions.
- Increased chance of a hazardous material incident, which could also affect water quality as railway contaminants or accidental chemical/fuel spills from operations and maintenance activities could reach water resources adjacent to, or downstream of the project area.
- Noise and vibration from passenger rail traffic could cause indirect impacts to cultural resources by affecting visitor experience. Induced transit-oriented development in the vicinity of station areas may indirectly affect nearby cultural resources.
- Potential indirect impacts to downstream water bodies and wetlands could occur from culvert and/or bridge replacements.
- Transit-oriented development could result indirectly from the construction and use of station locations.
- Indirect impacts on adjacent land uses from changes in traffic flow at rail crossings and near future station sites. Temporary traffic indirect impacts would occur through closings during construction and rerouting traffic through adjacent neighborhoods and business areas. Increased travel time and delay for local residents and potential economic impacts to businesses that depend on convenient accessibility. Potential increased congestion and traffic delays near crossings with new passenger rail service.
- Temporary increase in GHG emissions from construction activities from on-site equipment as well as increased delays and congestion from automobile and bus traffic.
- Indirect positive impacts on air quality from contributing to the development of a more complete multi-modal transportation system within the Study Area and encouraging changes in long-term travel behavior and advocacy for more energy efficient modes of transport that improve air quality.
- Upgrades to rail infrastructure may indirectly benefit existing freight service.

Cumulative impacts from other projects in the region would also occur. The majority of projects are linear transportation projects, often occurring either in existing ROW or adjacent to existing ROW. It is likely that many of these projects would be affecting drainage and could involve impacts to wetlands and other waters of the U.S. In rural areas, it is likely that the other projects may be affecting farmland, natural areas, and wildlife habitat primarily through expansion of existing corridors.

When considered collectively with other projects in the region, the Build Alternative would have a slight beneficial contribution to cumulative impacts by improving overall air quality and reducing roadway congestion and would have the potential for increased transit-oriented development. Should construction of this Project occur simultaneously with some of the other projects in the region, existing passenger and freight rail services could see temporary increases in delays and congestion, but overall train traffic would be maintained throughout construction.

Many of the other transportation projects are improvements along existing alignments, with reconstruction or other modifications occurring either within or adjacent to existing ROW. Therefore, new impacts of the other projects outside existing ROW would be relatively narrow and linear. Consequently, cumulative impacts on resources within a designated area, such as a watershed or ecosystem, would likely be minor.

The majority of the Build Alternative corridor is in rural areas dominated by farmland uses. Highly developed areas are also present along the corridor. Land use throughout the Corridor is likely to remain unchanged with the implementation of the Build Alternative and other proposed projects. Suburban areas associated with large cities such as Chicago and Des Moines are likely to incur the most change in land use with a potential for cumulative impacts because of the land available for modification in areas where population is increasing.

Given the numerous planned transportation projects, air quality, mobility, and safety would cumulatively benefit. Minimal cumulative negative impacts associated with these projects would likely occur on farmland, habitat, wetlands, and streams along the Build Alternative.

Station development associated with the Build Alternative has the potential to result in induced development in close proximity to the stations. However, station locations will be selected through coordinated efforts with local city/county/metropolitan area planners to help ensure that the sites and opportunities presented for growth development are suitable to handle increased traffic and other demands, minimizing the potential for adverse cumulative impacts.

Under the No-Build Alternative, the Chicago to Quad Cities service would contribute to slightly increased air emissions, energy consumption, and noise along this portion of the Chicago to Omaha route. Potential direct, or indirect, and cumulative impacts of those improvements are being addressed in Tier 2 NEPA documents currently underway. The No-Build Alternative would result in a slight indirect impact on transportation due to the lack of passenger rail service between Moline and Omaha. This indirect impact would primarily be in the form of increased traffic congestion as travelers between Moline and Omaha would continue to use existing roadways. In addition, the No-Build Alternative would have a slight negative contribution to cumulative impacts on transportation by continuing the dependence on personal automobiles on highways for travel between Moline and Omaha, and to a more limited extent, between Chicago and Moline.

ES.5.28 Permits

Construction of the Build Alternative would likely require the following federal, state, and local permits and approvals:

- Section 404 Permit – USACE (Waters of the U.S. impacts)
- Section 401 Water Quality Certification – Illinois EPA, Iowa DNR, Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality (NDEQ)
- Section 9 Bridge Permit – USCG (navigable waters)
- Section 10 Permit – USACE (impacts in navigable waters)
- Section 402 NPDES Permit – Illinois EPA, Iowa DNR, NDEQ (land disturbance and stormwater runoff)
- Section 408 Approval – USACE (impacts to levees/flood control structures)
- Floodplain Development Permit – DNRs of each state, and local jurisdictions
- Air Pollution Control Permits – Illinois EPA, Iowa DNR, NDEQ
- National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants (NESHAP) 40 CFR Part 61 – Illinois EPA, Iowa DNR, NDEQ
- Iowa Sovereign Lands Construction Permit – Iowa DNR
- Formal Notice and Airspace Review – Federal Aviation Administration

The No-Build Alternative may also require a majority of these same permits.

ES.5.29 Interim Implementation Phase Impacts

As discussed in Section ES.3.4.4, Phased Implementation, the interim implementation phase of the Project is the last phase that would be implemented within the 20-year planning horizon of the SDP. The interim implementation phase would consist of four round-trips per day at 79 mph between Chicago and Council Bluffs. A qualitative review was performed for the impacts that the interim implementation phase would have on each resource previously reviewed for impacts under full implementation of the Build Alternative in Sections ES.4.1 through ES.4.27.

The interim implementation phase was evaluated based on two main categories of activities likely to cause environmental impacts: 1) ROW acquisition and construction (footprint-dependent impacts), and 2) operation and maintenance of the system. Some resources were evaluated individually, and some were addressed in aggregate. In addition, some resources would be affected by only one category, and some resources would be affected by both categories. For example, natural habitats and wildlife can be directly affected by vegetation removal as a result of ROW acquisition and construction impacts, and can also be affected by train operations as a result of animal collision impacts.

Whereas the interim implementation phase would be a step toward full implementation (which would have the greatest Project impacts), less ROW acquisition and construction would be required in this phase, and fewer operations and slower speeds would occur. Consequently, adverse environmental impacts would be less than for full implementation of the Build Alternative, and are discussed qualitatively in comparison to the estimated impacts of full implementation (previously described in Sections ES.4.1 through ES.4.27). In addition, any beneficial impacts that would result from the interim implementation phase, such as reduced cumulative air emissions from more efficient transportation of people, would

not occur to the same extent as under full implementation of service. A more detailed discussion of the impacts on each resource is presented in Section 3.28 in Chapter 3 of this Tier 1 EIS.

ES.6 SUMMARY OF POTENTIAL MITIGATION

Table ES-2 introduces potential mitigation for impacts to resources that would result from full implementation of the Build Alternative, as identified through the Tier 1 NEPA process. Specific mitigation measures, to the extent required, will be identified and discussed during Tier 2 analysis after design details are known, recorded in NEPA documents as specific impacts are identified, and implemented prior to construction.

Table ES-2. Potential Mitigation

Impacted Resource	Potential Mitigation
Transportation	Signal upgrades to address safety concerns at intersections and to limit disruption of existing freight rail service. Traffic Control and Safety plan for construction. Specific mitigation measures, to the extent required, will be discussed in Tier 2 NEPA documents.
Land Use, Zoning, and Property Acquisition	Where property acquisition cannot be avoided, the provisions of the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act will be followed. During Tier 2 analyses, the extent of land use, zoning, and property acquisition impacts will be analyzed for potential mitigation issues that may be identified through agency coordination and public involvement.
Agricultural Resources	As part of the Tier 2 NEPA process, coordination would take place with the NRCS. Form NRCS-CPA-106, Farmland Conversion Impact Rating for Corridor Type Projects, would be required to determine if farmland impacts are above the threshold level for consideration of farmland protection measures.
Socioeconomic Environment	In the Tier 2 analysis, strategies to avoid, minimize, or mitigate potential impacts on socioeconomic conditions (neighborhoods, community facilities, businesses, employment) will be considered. In addition, public involvement and agency coordination activities may result in identification of potential mitigation needs.
Title VI and Environmental Justice	Potential mitigation measures will be determined in the Tier 2 NEPA studies, if it is determined that adverse human health or environmental effects occur to minority and/or low-income populations, and if those effects are determined to be disproportionately high.
Elderly and People with Disabilities	Adverse impacts on the elderly and people with disabilities could be mitigated by providing beneficial ADA compliant services and facilities for those populations. A more detailed analysis of adverse impacts on the elderly and disabled populations, mitigation measures, and the public involvement process will be provided in the Tier 2 NEPA documents.
Public Health and Safety	The Tier 2 NEPA studies will address safety measures and strategies to protect the health and safety of passengers, as well as motor vehicles and pedestrians, at existing or new at-grade crossings.

Impacted Resource	Potential Mitigation
Noise and Vibration	Minimizing locomotive horn use would be the greatest opportunity to mitigate potential noise impacts. Other mitigation measures could include upgrading of some electronic circuitry through installation of constant time circuitry (warning lights) at public at-grade roadway-rail crossings. Municipalities can choose to initiate the process of developing quiet zones to take advantage of the infrastructure provided by the proposed project. During the Tier 2 NEPA process, measures to mitigate ground-borne vibration would be evaluated.
Air Quality	During the Tier 2 NEPA studies, mitigation to reduce NO _x emissions would be considered and investigated, such as converting fleet vehicles from diesel fuel to alternative fuels, or the feasibility of implementing idling restrictions for locomotives at station stops and maintenance facilities. All emissions are below their <i>de minimis</i> thresholds for the nonattainment and maintenance areas. General air quality conformity analysis modeling may be required in Tier 2 NEPA documents to verify these findings.
Hazardous Waste and Waste Disposal	Potential impacts on or from NPL Superfund sites and other non-NPL sites will be further evaluated in the Tier 2 NEPA studies, to determine level of risk and potential mitigation or cleanup procedures. Mitigation requirements may include safety procedures and protection of human health and the environment to help ensure that there would be no further contamination of adjacent sites, and to provide a safe working environment during construction. In addition, solid waste materials generated during construction could be recycled or properly disposed of.
Cultural Resources	If, during the preparation of Tier 2 NEPA documents, it is determined that the project will adversely affect NRHP-eligible historic resources, mitigation measures may be developed in accordance with the terms of a PA between FRA and consulting parties, including the ACHP and SHPOs.
Parks and Federally or State-Listed Natural Areas	Specific mitigation measures, to the extent required, will be discussed in Tier 2 NEPA documents as specific impacts are identified.
Section 4(f) and 6(f) Properties	During the preparation of Tier 2 NEPA documents, minimization and mitigation measures for adverse impacts will be determined, to the extent required, through consultation with the official of the agency owning or administering the resource. Minimization of harm could include alternative design that lessens the impact on Section 4(f) resources and/or mitigation measures that compensate for residual impacts. For 6(f) LWCF lands that cannot be avoided, mitigation would include replacement property that is of at least equal fair market value as the impacted property, and of reasonably equivalent usefulness for recreation purposes.
Visual Resources and Aesthetic Quality	Through continued public involvement, residents' concerns about the potential views of the railroad facilities will be identified. Mitigation and impact minimization efforts will be addressed in more detail in the Tier 2 NEPA documents. Mitigation could include consideration of potential measures such as appropriate re-vegetation of disturbed areas of the scenic resources, visual screening of railroad facilities from adjacent residential areas, appropriate design of aesthetic features, and landscaping that would complement and blend with the context of the surrounding visual environment.

Impacted Resource	Potential Mitigation
Waterways, Water Bodies, and Wetlands	Mitigation options for unavoidable impacts on waterways, water bodies, and wetlands will be discussed in more detail during the Tier 2 NEPA documents. Mitigation measures could include mitigation banking, in-lieu fees, and on-site or off-site mitigation. During the design process, coordination will take place with the USACE and appropriate state resource agencies to develop mitigation strategies. The mitigation strategies to be identified and selected would account for the fact that not all mitigation options are available to all states and USACE Districts.
Water Quality	The Tier 2 NEPA documents would address mitigation measures and control of pollutants and sediments in regard to the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permitting, Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plans (SWPPPs), and stormwater Best Management Practices (BMPs). In addition, each state's required Section 401 Water Quality Certifications would be addressed. Mitigation for impacts on mapped or unmapped water wells, including proper abandonment of the wells (such as plugging and sealing) to prevent groundwater pollution would also be addressed.
Floodplains	During the Tier 2 NEPA process, coordination with the State Emergency Management Agencies (SEMAs), the DNRs of each state, and local floodplain administrators would be initiated to discuss floodplain development permitting and potential mitigation measures. In accordance with Executive Order 11988, discussions would include avoidance and minimization measures such as restoring natural and beneficial floodplain values, significant changes in flooding risks or damage, and the potential for incompatible floodplain development.
Topography, Geology, and Soils	No requirements for mitigation related to topographic, geologic, and soil conditions are anticipated, with the exception of impacts on the Loess Hills, which could include buffer zones and re-establishing native vegetation. Specific impacts and potential mitigation measures will be investigated and evaluated in further detail in the Tier 2 NEPA documents.
Natural Habitats and Wildlife	During the Tier 2 process, avoidance and minimization of impacts would be assessed, and unavoidable impacts to natural habitats and migratory birds would be coordinated with USFWS and state resource agencies to determine compliance with regulatory requirements and potential mitigation measures to offset impacts, which could include restrictions on construction activities in specific areas during the breeding/nesting seasons. Coordination with Iowa DNR would also take place regarding mitigation of woodland impacts, which require replacement according to Iowa Code 314.23, Environmental Protection.
Threatened and Endangered Species	During the Tier 2 process, Section 7 consultation with USFWS would take place to determine whether or not the Build Alternative could have the potential to affect a federally listed species, and if so, whether or not the proposed activity would adversely affect (jeopardize the continued existence of) a listed species. Mitigation measures for unavoidable adverse impacts would be determined as part of the formal Section 7 consultation. Avoidance and minimization of impacts on state-listed species would also be assessed during the Tier 2 NEPA documents. If it is determined that unavoidable impacts on state-listed species would occur, coordination with the Illinois DNR, Iowa DNR, and NGPC, as appropriate, would take place to determine potential mitigation measures.

Impacted Resource	Potential Mitigation
Energy Use and Climate Change	Mitigation may not be required for energy and climate change due to the positive impact and the diverted trips from other modes of transportation, lowering the overall amount of CO ₂ emissions along the Study Area. Verification will be made during the Tier 2 NEPA studies.
Construction Impacts	<p>Impacts from construction activities will be reviewed and mitigation will be considered during the development of the Tier 2 NEPA documents. The potential for Project construction impacts may be mitigated through measures such as the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waste Disposal – Recycling and properly disposing of construction debris. • Water Quality – Management of stormwater runoff through implementation of BMPs. • Air Quality – Adherence to construction permit conditions and all state and local regulations in regard to emissions and exhaust, fugitive dust, and burning of debris. • Noise and Vibration – Equipping and maintaining muffling equipment for construction machinery, and limiting times of day for various construction activities. • Access – Development of a traffic mitigation plan for construction sequencing. • Traffic and Safety – Developing and implementing a traffic control and safety plan.
Indirect and Cumulative Impacts	Specific mitigation measures, to the extent required, will be discussed in Tier 2 NEPA documents as specific indirect and cumulative impacts are identified.

ES.7 COMMENTS AND COORDINATION

Agency coordination, tribal coordination, and public involvement have taken place during the development of this Tier 1 EIS.

ES.7.1 Agency Outreach

Agencies are categorized as public entities with decision-making authority for the public. Agency coordination has included interaction through email notices, email responses, in-person meetings, and teleconferences. An early coordination (EC) packet and invitation to the agency scoping meeting was provided to 14 federal agencies, 13 Illinois state agencies, 14 Iowa state agencies, 9 Nebraska state agencies, and several county/regional and municipal governmental organizations within or near the various route alternatives. Agency input on the Study and Project was received during the agency scoping meetings on February 21, 2012, in Ames, Iowa, and on February 22, 2012, in Chicago, Illinois, as well as through responses to the EC packet distributed on April 1, 2012. Federal and state resource agencies provided guidance concerning potential environmental requirements, including permitting and approvals needed for the Project. Representatives from counties and local municipalities generally noted their support for the Project, primarily for economic purposes, with a preference for route alternatives within or near their jurisdiction, or a proposal for a combination of route alternatives or a connection line from their municipalities to the route alternative. Route Alternative 4 or 4-A through the Quad Cities, Iowa City, and Des Moines

was generally favored based on a small sample size of representatives from counties and local municipalities. Chapter 4 of this Tier 1 EIS provides a full list of the agencies providing comments, documents the issues raised, summarizes the comments, and notes the responses.

Cooperating Agencies

On May 17, 2012, FRA extended an invitation to 24 federal and state agencies to become cooperating agencies for this Tier 1 EIS. Invitation letters were sent to specific agencies based on FRA and Iowa DOT's identification of reviewing agencies that may have an interest in the Project because of the potential for intergovernmental issues and/or the potential for impacts within that agency's legal jurisdiction. Cooperating agencies participate in meetings, provide pertinent information, raise concerns, assist in determining appropriate mitigation, and review pre-draft and pre-final documentation.

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

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

The Tier 1 Draft EIS was issued to these agencies, along with other agencies and the public, and comments from cooperating agencies were considered during preparation of the Tier 1 Final EIS. Section 4.4 in Chapter 4 includes a summary of comments on the Tier 1 Draft EIS, Appendix O has been supplemented with specific agency comments on the Tier 1 Draft EIS, and Appendix Q includes a table of comments on the Tier 1 Draft EIS and responses to those comments.

Milestones

Iowa DOT coordinated with both reviewing and cooperating agencies from Illinois, Iowa, and Nebraska at selected Project milestones during this Study. These milestones are 1) purpose and need, 2) alternatives to be analyzed, 3) alternatives to be carried forward, and 4) selection of the preferred alternative which was addressed in the Tier 1 Draft EIS and made available to all reviewing and cooperating agencies.

ES.7.2 Tribal Outreach

Coordination with Illinois DOT and the Nebraska Department of Roads (NDOR) was conducted to compile a list of tribes and Native American groups, whose tribal ranges included the portions of Illinois, Iowa, and Nebraska along the route alternatives. A coordination packet that described the Study and Project, and included a figure of the route alternatives, was mailed to representatives of each of 15 tribes and Native American groups on May 17, 2012. An information packet was also sent to the Nebraska Commission on

Indian Affairs. At the request of the Yankton Sioux Tribe, 14 additional Sioux Tribes of the region were sent EC packets on July 5, 2012.

The Kickapoo Tribe in Kansas does not currently have sufficient staffing to provide input on the Project and deferred to other tribes and Native American groups with similar historical ties. The Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska reviewed the route alternatives and indicated that it has cultural properties in some of the areas that could undergo construction, and requested that they be notified immediately if any burial sites or other cultural properties are found. The Yankton Sioux Tribe noted that the proposed route alternatives fall within its ancestral lands and is requesting further coordination for conducting a traditional cultural property (TCP) study and including other Sioux tribes in the region as part of Project coordination. Section 4.4 in Chapter 4 of this Tier 1 EIS includes a summary of comments received on the Tier 1 Draft EIS, including those from tribes and Native American groups, and Appendix Q includes a table of comments on the Tier 1 Draft EIS and responses to those comments.

ES.7.3 Stakeholder Outreach

At the onset of the Study, Iowa DOT conducted a Stakeholder Analysis to identify public stakeholders in Illinois, Iowa, and Nebraska who may be affected by or have data related to the Study. The stakeholder database expanded as more members of the public engaged in the Study through the public outreach process. All identified stakeholders are receiving updates at Study milestones via various outreach tools, including a Study webpage on Iowa DOT's website, a Project website for hosting online meetings, a toll-free Study information line, an online community tool kit (including a community survey), and an email mailing list.

To announce online and in-person meetings, press releases and media advisories have been released to all print media outlets statewide in Illinois and Iowa, and to the Omaha World Herald and Lincoln Journal Star in Nebraska at all Study milestones, public participation opportunities, and comment periods. This media strategy resulted in 66 earned media mentions in local and national news outlets from February 2012 through January 21, 2013. In addition to press releases, advertisements have been placed in 11 newspapers throughout the Study Area to announce the public meetings and avenues to review information and provide comments.

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

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

not be used for the Project. However, there were several commenters indicating support for the Project if no taxpayer funds were used. Commenters identifying themselves as retirees and/or college students typically supported the Project. A summary of comments is presented in Section 4.3.2 in Chapter 4 of this Tier 1 EIS.

A set of three public information meetings was held in May 2012 to obtain input from the public on preliminary results from screening the initial range of route alternatives. The public information meetings were conducted both through in-person open-house meetings held in three locations and through an online, self-directed open-house meeting. In-person meetings were conducted on Tuesday, May 1, 2012, at Chicago Union Station in Chicago, Illinois; Wednesday, May 2, 2012, at the State Historical Society Building in Des Moines, Iowa; and Thursday, May 3, 2012, at the Mid-America Center in Council Bluffs, Iowa. The online open-house meeting was available from May 1 through May 21, 2012, on the Project website.

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

In addition to the public information meetings, two Stakeholder Meetings were held in May 2012 with invited municipal representatives, elected officials, and community leaders to discuss the same information that was presented at the in-person and online open-house meetings.

Public opinion of the full implementation of the Preferred Alternative from Chicago to Omaha was gathered through an online community survey, which began April 13, 2012. This survey was qualitative in nature and reflects the opinion of only those 1,934 people who elected to respond. The survey remained open until December 26, 2012, the end of the comment period on the Tier 1 Draft EIS. The vast majority of respondents indicated that they would use the service for business travel or both business and personal travel, support the establishment of regional passenger rail, and think it will have a positive economic impact.

ES.7.4 Tier 1 Draft EIS Public Hearing and Comment Process

After the Tier 1 Draft EIS was published, Iowa DOT and FRA held public hearings in three major communities along the proposed route: Chicago, Illinois – December 11, 2012; Des Moines, Iowa – December 12, 2012; and Council Bluffs, Iowa – December 13, 2012. In all, 152 people signed in at the three public hearings, with the highest attendance (74 people) occurring at the Des Moines, Iowa, hearing. Each hearing included a formal presentation, followed by a question-and-answer session. Iowa DOT and consultant staff were available for discussions, which were held with attendees at the information boards and aerial maps of the Study Area. Attendees wishing to provide comments were invited to complete and submit a comment form either in person or through direct mail, or to use one of the many other Project comment mechanisms, discussed below.

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

In addition to the public hearings, Iowa DOT hosted an online open-house meeting from November 9 through December 26, 2012, on the Project website (<http://chicagotoomaha.com/>), which presented the same information as the public hearings. The online open-house meeting garnered 910 unique visitors through the end of the comment period on December 26, 2012.

Following the last public hearing, a Stakeholder Meeting was held in Council Bluffs, Iowa on December 14, 2012 with municipal representatives, elected officials, and community leaders. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the same information that was presented at the in-person public hearings and online open-house meeting.

Very few public comments expressed concern with potential impacts on the natural and physical environment, either from not constructing the Project or from constructing and operating the Project. The majority of commenters supported development of the Project and cited a variety of reasons for their support, including fuel efficiency, reliability, safety, comfort, competitive cost, and economic development. Those not in favor of the Project gave several reasons, including that current bus service is sufficient and that taxpayer funds should not be used for the Project. Key comments are summarized in Section 4.4 in Chapter 4 of this Tier 1 EIS.

ES.7.5 Future Opportunities for Input

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

ES.8 NEXT STEPS

ES.8.1 Tier 1 Completion

The Tier 1 Draft EIS was issued to solicit input on the preferred alternative from the public, resource agencies, tribes, and Native American groups. Comments received on the Draft EIS during the comment period were used to prepare and issue this Tier 1 Final EIS that addresses these comments. Subsequent to distribution of the Final EIS, a Record of Decision (ROD) will be developed, documenting the decision of selecting the preferred alternative and the process for accommodating mitigation measures that will be implemented in subsequent

phases of the Project. Most mitigation measures represent commitments for further coordination with the public, resource agencies, tribes, and Native American groups during Tier 2 studies as more detailed information on the design of the Project is developed.

ES.8.2 Tier 2 Sections

As funding becomes available, Tier 2 studies and NEPA documentation would be advanced for logical sections of the proposed Project. That is, one or more sections could be developed as individual projects that would comprise components of the Chicago to Council Bluffs-Omaha Regional Passenger Rail System Program. Separate Tier 2 NEPA documentation would be prepared for each of the sections identified; however, the specific class of NEPA document has not yet been determined for each of the Tier 2 sections. Each of the sections would have independent utility and, therefore, could be improved with or without improvements to other sections. Likewise, each of the sections could be implemented in phases, as discussed further in Section ES.7.5. Preliminary design and NEPA documentation would be conducted in support of those Tier 2 studies because such details are necessary to identify the resources that would be impacted by construction activities, and on a long-term basis. At this time, the following Tier 2 sections are anticipated for full implementation, but these sections may be combined, modified in the future, or revisited based on available funding:

- Chicago to Aurora, Illinois, Track Improvements
- Aurora, Illinois, to the Wyanet Connection near Wyanet, Illinois, Track Improvements
- Wyanet Connection near Wyanet, Illinois, to Iowa City, Iowa, Track Improvements
- Mississippi River Bridge
- Iowa City, Iowa, Station
- Iowa City, Iowa, Layover and Maintenance Facility
- Iowa City to Short Line Yard, Des Moines, Iowa, Track Improvements
- Grinnell, Iowa, Station
- Des Moines, Iowa, Short Line Yard Improvements
- Des Moines, Iowa, Station
- Des Moines, Iowa, Layover and Maintenance Facility
- Des Moines to Council Bluffs, Iowa, Track Improvements
- Atlantic, Iowa, Station
- Council Bluffs, Iowa, Station
- Omaha, Nebraska/Council Bluffs, Iowa, Layover and Maintenance Facilities
- Council Bluffs, Iowa, to Omaha, Nebraska, Track Improvements
- Missouri River Bridge
- Omaha, Nebraska, Station

ES.8.3 NEPA Documents and Additional Studies

Multiple NEPA documents would be developed during the Tier 2 NEPA process, but are anticipated to be a mixture of Environmental Assessments for areas such as the Missouri River crossing between Council Bluffs, Iowa, and Omaha, Nebraska, and Categorical

Exclusions for areas with minimal effects. Public input would be considered in the Tier 2 NEPA and design processes. In addition to NEPA documentation for evaluation of the Tier 2 sections, numerous studies would be completed as part of the Tier 2 NEPA process to determine the specific nature and quantity of impacts. For each Tier 2 section, the analyses would consider avoidance and minimization of impacts on sensitive environmental resources and may include:

- Detailed local-level alternatives analysis
- Wetland delineations and identification of Section 404 permitting requirements
- Cultural resources surveys and Section 106 consultation
- Threatened and endangered species surveys
- Engineering surveys
- Noise and vibration analysis
- Section 4(f) evaluation
- Phase I Environmental Site Assessments
- Air emissions analysis in non-attainment areas
- Station-area traffic studies

ES.8.4 Mitigation Planning and Project Commitments

Potential mitigation for impacts is summarized in Section ES.5. Specific mitigation during the Tier 2 process would be determined in consultation with the federal or state agency responsible for assessing impacts on a given resource. As needed, formal consultation would occur with resource agencies to address obligations to minimize and mitigate impacts, such as those obligations under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). During the Tier 1 process, the primary commitments have been to work with the public, resource agencies, tribes, and Native American groups to identify specific mitigation measures during the Tier 2 process and subsequently implement those measures.

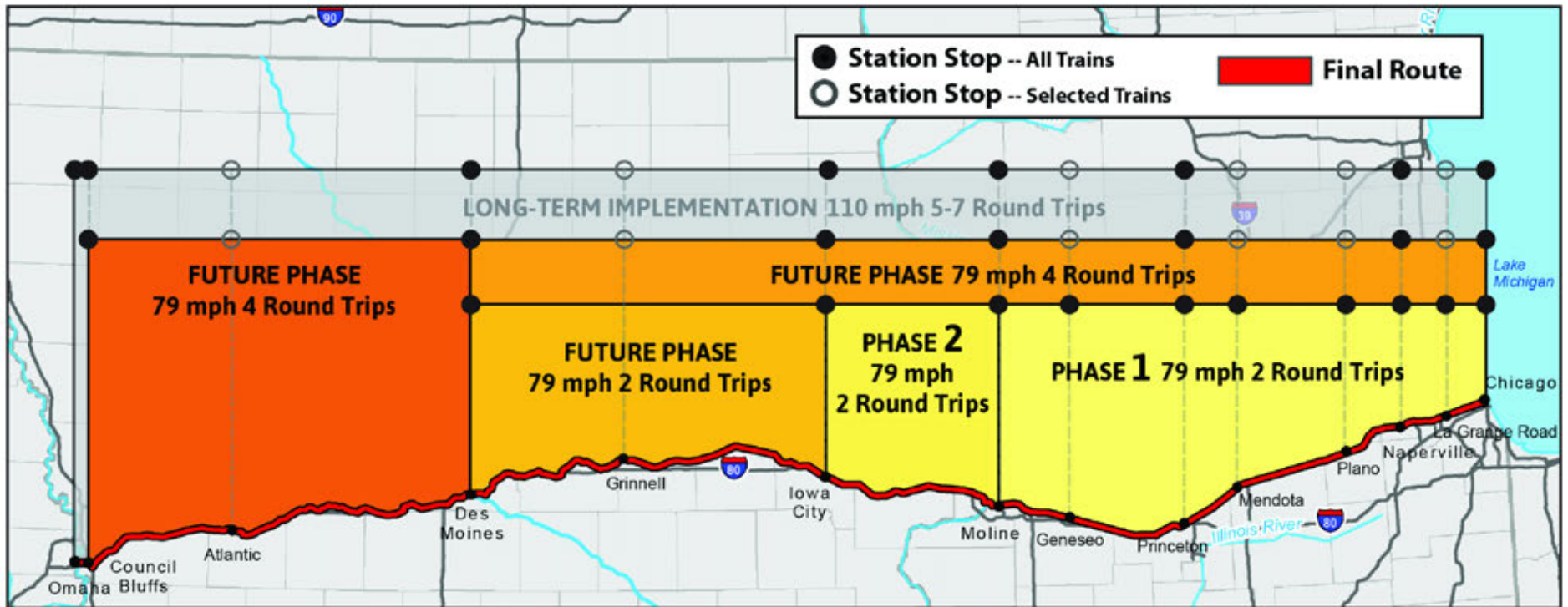
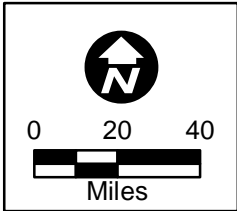
ES.8.5 Phased Implementation

Based on experience with other passenger rail projects, and on service development planning for this Project, Iowa DOT anticipates that the Chicago to Council Bluffs-Omaha Project would be incrementally funded and that construction and operations would be implemented in phases. Within the approximate 20-year planning horizon of the SDP, initial and successive phases have been considered through the interim implementation phase, which is the last phase that would be implemented using existing SDP information. Funding initially could be allocated for improvements of facilities to support speeds lower than a maximum of 110 mph, or to improve/construct particular stations and maintenance and layover facilities. Service initially could start with fewer stations, at lower speeds, and with fewer round-trips. As more funding is allocated to the Project, further improvements could be implemented to expand service. The specific phasing of the proposed Project is not known at this time but will be determined as funding is allocated to the proposed Project. Figure ES-7 illustrates the proposed implementation phases.

Based on current service development planning, the proposed Project is anticipated to commence with two round-trips per day from Chicago to Moline at a maximum speed of 79 mph (Phase 1); Phase 1 is funded and would occur independently as part of the Quad Cities Expansion Program passenger rail project. Phase 2 would include two round-trips per day between Chicago and Iowa City. The Project would then be extended westward to Des Moines, with two and then four round-trips per day between Chicago and Des Moines. The last phase of the proposed Project that would be implemented within the 20-year planning horizon of the SDP would be four round-trips per day between Chicago and Council Bluffs. The proposed schedule developed for the SDP for these phases includes the following estimated time frames:

- Chicago to Moline (two round-trips) – construction 2014-2015; service begins December 31, 2015
- Chicago to Iowa City (two round-trips) – construction 2015-2016; service begins 2017
- Chicago to Des Moines (two round-trips) – construction 2020-2021; service begins 2022
- Chicago to Des Moines (four round-trips) – equipment procurement 2024; service begins 2025
- Chicago to Council Bluffs (four round-trips) – construction 2028-2029; service begins 2030

After additional service development planning is completed in the future, the service would be extended to Omaha; currently estimated to commence in 2040. Ultimately, the speed and the frequency of round-trips would increase with subsequent implementation phases up to a maximum of 110 mph and up to seven round-trips per day from Chicago to Des Moines, with five of the round-trips extending from Chicago to Omaha. Full implementation would be realized over many years of phased implementation as federal and state funds are allocated to the proposed Project.



Implementation Phases

Chicago to Council Bluffs - Omaha
Regional Passenger Rail System Planning Study

DATE

May 2013

FIGURE

ES-7

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS, ACRONYMS, AND SHORT FORMS.....	X
CHAPTER 1 PURPOSE AND NEED.....	1-1
1.1 History.....	1-1
1.2 Study Area	1-6
1.3 Purpose and Need	1-9
1.3.1 Purpose	1-9
1.3.2 Need.....	1-9
1.4 Decisions to be Made.....	1-13
1.5 Other Transportation Projects	1-14
CHAPTER 2 ALTERNATIVES	2-1
2.1 Route Alternatives Development and Screening.....	2-1
2.1.1 Initial Range of Route Alternatives	2-1
2.1.2 Screening Methodology.....	2-2
2.1.3 Screening Criteria.....	2-2
2.1.4 Screening Process	2-4
2.2 Description of Alternatives	2-13
2.2.1 No-Build Alternative.....	2-13
2.2.2 Build Alternative.....	2-15
2.2.3 Preferred Alternative.....	2-28
2.3 Summary of Potential Impacts	2-28
CHAPTER 3 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES	3-1
3.1 Transportation.....	3-3
3.1.1 Methodology and Regulatory Requirements.....	3-3
3.1.2 Affected Environment	3-3
3.1.3 Impacts of No-Build Alternative	3-6
3.1.4 Impacts of Build Alternative	3-6
3.1.5 Potential Mitigation Measures.....	3-8
3.2 Land Use, Zoning, and Property Acquisitions	3-8
3.2.1 Methodology and Regulatory Requirements.....	3-8
3.2.2 Affected Environment	3-8
3.2.3 Impacts of No-Build Alternative	3-9
3.2.4 Impacts of Build Alternative	3-9
3.2.5 Potential Mitigation Measures.....	3-11

3.3	Agricultural Resources.....	3-12
3.3.1	Methodology and Regulatory Requirements.....	3-12
3.3.2	Affected Environment	3-12
3.3.3	Impacts of No-Build Alternative	3-13
3.3.4	Impacts of Build Alternative	3-13
3.3.5	Potential Mitigation Measures.....	3-14
3.4	Socioeconomic Environment.....	3-14
3.4.1	Methodology and Regulatory Requirements.....	3-14
3.4.2	Affected Environment	3-14
3.4.3	Impacts of No-Build Alternative	3-17
3.4.4	Impacts of Build Alternative	3-17
3.4.5	Potential Mitigation Measures.....	3-19
3.5	Title VI and Environmental Justice	3-19
3.5.1	Methodology and Regulatory Requirements.....	3-19
3.5.2	Affected Environment	3-20
3.5.3	Impacts of No-Build Alternative	3-21
3.5.4	Impacts of Build Alternative	3-21
3.5.5	Potential Mitigation Measures.....	3-23
3.6	Elderly and People with Disabilities.....	3-23
3.6.1	Methodology and Regulatory Requirements.....	3-23
3.6.2	Affected Environment	3-23
3.6.3	Impacts of No-Build Alternative	3-26
3.6.4	Impacts of Build Alternative	3-26
3.6.5	Potential Mitigation Measures.....	3-27
3.7	Public Health and Safety.....	3-27
3.7.1	Methodology and Regulatory Requirements.....	3-27
3.7.2	Affected Environment	3-28
3.7.3	Impacts of No-Build Alternative	3-28
3.7.4	Impacts of Build Alternative	3-29
3.7.5	Potential Mitigation Measures.....	3-29
3.8	Noise and Vibration.....	3-30
3.8.1	Methodology and Regulatory Requirements.....	3-31
3.8.2	Affected Environment	3-38
3.8.3	Impacts of No-Build Alternative	3-38
3.8.4	Impacts of Build Alternative	3-46
3.8.5	Potential Mitigation Measures.....	3-56

3.9	Air Quality	3-57
3.9.1	Methodology and Regulatory Requirements.....	3-57
3.9.2	Affected Environment	3-58
3.9.3	Impacts of No-Build Alternative	3-58
3.9.4	Impacts of Build Alternative	3-59
3.9.5	Potential Mitigation Measures.....	3-60
3.10	Hazardous Waste and Waste Disposal.....	3-60
3.10.1	Methodology and Regulatory Requirements.....	3-60
3.10.2	Affected Environment	3-61
3.10.3	Impacts of No-Build Alternative	3-63
3.10.4	Impacts of Build Alternative	3-63
3.10.5	Potential Mitigation Measures.....	3-65
3.11	Cultural Resources.....	3-65
3.11.1	Methodology and Regulatory Requirements.....	3-65
3.11.2	Affected Environment	3-67
3.11.3	Impacts of No-Build Alternative	3-67
3.11.4	Impacts of Build Alternative	3-67
3.11.5	Potential Mitigation Measures.....	3-70
3.12	Parks and Federally or State-Listed Natural Areas	3-70
3.12.1	Methodology and Regulatory Requirements.....	3-71
3.12.2	Affected Environment	3-71
3.12.3	Impacts of No-Build Alternative	3-71
3.12.4	Impacts of Build Alternative	3-72
3.12.5	Potential Mitigation Measures.....	3-72
3.13	Section 4(f) and 6(f) Properties	3-72
3.13.1	Methodology and Regulatory Requirements.....	3-73
3.13.2	Affected Environment	3-73
3.13.3	Impacts of No-Build Alternative	3-74
3.13.4	Impacts of Build Alternative	3-74
3.13.5	Potential Mitigation Measures.....	3-75
3.14	Visual Resources and Aesthetic Quality	3-75
3.14.1	Methodology and Regulatory Requirements.....	3-75
3.14.2	Affected Environment	3-76
3.14.3	Impacts of No-Build Alternative	3-77
3.14.4	Impacts of Build Alternative	3-78
3.14.5	Potential Mitigation Measures.....	3-80

3.15	Waterways and Water Bodies.....	3-80
3.15.1	Methodology and Regulatory Requirements.....	3-80
3.15.2	Affected Environment	3-81
3.15.3	Impacts of No-Build Alternative	3-82
3.15.4	Impacts of Build Alternative	3-82
3.15.5	Potential Mitigation Measures.....	3-83
3.16	Wetlands.....	3-83
3.16.1	Methodology and Regulatory Requirements.....	3-84
3.16.2	Affected Environment	3-84
3.16.3	Impacts of No-Build Alternative	3-85
3.16.4	Impacts of Build Alternative	3-85
3.16.5	Potential Mitigation Measures.....	3-86
3.17	Water Quality	3-87
3.17.1	Methodology and Regulatory Requirements.....	3-87
3.17.2	Affected Environment	3-87
3.17.3	Impacts of No-Build Alternative	3-88
3.17.4	Impacts of Build Alternative	3-88
3.17.5	Potential Mitigation Measures.....	3-89
3.18	Floodplains.....	3-90
3.18.1	Methodology and Regulatory Requirements.....	3-90
3.18.2	Affected Environment	3-90
3.18.3	Impacts of No-Build Alternative	3-91
3.18.4	Impacts of Build Alternative	3-91
3.18.5	Potential Mitigation Measures.....	3-92
3.19	Topography, Geology, and Soils.....	3-92
3.19.1	Methodology and Regulatory Requirements.....	3-92
3.19.2	Affected Environment	3-92
3.19.3	Impacts of No-Build Alternative	3-94
3.19.4	Impacts of Build Alternative	3-94
3.19.5	Potential Mitigation Measures.....	3-95
3.20	Natural Habitats and Wildlife.....	3-95
3.20.1	Methodology and Regulatory Requirements.....	3-95
3.20.2	Affected Environment	3-96
3.20.3	Impacts of No-Build Alternative	3-98
3.20.4	Impacts of Build Alternative	3-99
3.20.5	Potential Mitigation Measures.....	3-101

3.21	Threatened and Endangered Species.....	3-102
3.21.1	Methodology and Regulatory Requirements.....	3-102
3.21.2	Affected Environment	3-102
3.21.3	Impacts of No-Build Alternative	3-106
3.21.4	Impacts of Build Alternative	3-107
3.21.5	Potential Mitigation Measures.....	3-109
3.22	Energy Use and Climate Change.....	3-110
3.22.1	Methodology and Regulatory Requirements.....	3-110
3.22.2	Affected Environment	3-110
3.22.3	Impacts of No-Build Alternative	3-111
3.22.4	Impacts of Build Alternative	3-111
3.22.5	Potential Mitigation Measures.....	3-112
3.23	Construction Impacts	3-112
3.23.1	Methodology and Regulatory Requirements.....	3-112
3.23.2	Affected Environment	3-112
3.23.3	Impacts of No-Build Alternative	3-113
3.23.4	Impacts of Build Alternative	3-113
3.23.5	Potential Mitigation Measures.....	3-115
3.24	Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitments of Resources	3-116
3.24.1	Methodology and Regulatory Requirements.....	3-116
3.24.2	Affected Environment	3-116
3.24.3	Impacts of No-Build Alternative	3-117
3.24.4	Impacts of Build Alternative	3-117
3.24.5	Potential Mitigation Measures.....	3-117
3.25	Short-Term Use Vs. Long-Term Productivity of the Environment.....	3-117
3.25.1	Methodology and Regulatory Requirements.....	3-117
3.25.2	Affected Environment	3-118
3.25.3	Impacts of No-Build Alternative	3-118
3.25.4	Impacts of Build Alternative	3-118
3.25.5	Potential Mitigation Measures.....	3-119
3.26	Indirect and Cumulative Impacts.....	3-120
3.26.1	Methodology and Regulatory Requirements.....	3-120
3.26.2	Affected Environment	3-121
3.26.3	Impacts of No-Build Alternative	3-123
3.26.4	Impacts of Build Alternative	3-124
3.26.5	Potential Mitigation Measures.....	3-126

3.27	Permits.....	3-127
3.27.1	Section 404 Permit	3-127
3.27.2	Section 401 Water Quality Certification	3-128
3.27.3	Section 9 USCG Bridge Permit.....	3-128
3.27.4	Section 10 Permit	3-129
3.27.5	Section 402 National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit	3-129
3.27.6	Section 408 Approval	3-130
3.27.7	Floodplain Development Permit.....	3-130
3.27.8	Air Pollution Control Permits.....	3-130
3.27.9	40 CFR Part 61 - NESHAP	3-131
3.27.10	Iowa Sovereign Lands Construction Permit.....	3-131
3.27.11	Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Formal Notice and Airspace Review.....	3-131
3.27.12	Potential Mitigation Measures.....	3-131
3.28	Interim Implementation Phase	3-132
3.28.1	ROW Acquisition and Construction Impacts on Resources	3-132
3.28.2	Operation and Maintenance Impacts on Resources	3-135
3.28.3	Potential Mitigation Measures.....	3-139
CHAPTER 4 COMMENTS AND COORDINATION		4-1
4.1	Agency Outreach	4-1
4.1.1	Early Coordination	4-1
4.1.2	Cooperating Agencies	4-21
4.1.3	Milestones	4-21
4.2	Tribal Outreach	4-22
4.3	Stakeholder Outreach	4-23
4.3.1	Outreach Tools	4-24
4.3.2	Scoping Meeting.....	4-25
4.3.3	Alternatives Analysis Meetings.....	4-31
4.3.4	Community Survey Results	4-32
4.4	Tier 1 Draft EIS Public Hearing and Comment Process.....	4-34
4.5	Future Opportunities for Input	4-39
CHAPTER 5 NEXT STEPS.....		5-1
5.1	Tier 1 Completion.....	5-1
5.2	Tier 2 Sections	5-1
5.3	Additional Studies	5-4
5.4	Mitigation Planning.....	5-4
5.5	Project Commitments.....	5-4
5.6	Phased Implementation	5-5

CHAPTER 6 LIST OF PREPARERS	6-1
6.1 Federal Railroad Administration.....	6-1
6.2 Iowa Department of Transportation.....	6-1
6.3 Illinois Department of Transportation	6-3
6.4 HDR Engineering, Inc. and HNTB Corporation	6-3
CHAPTER 7 REFERENCES	7-1
INDEX	I-1

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1-1. Counties Traversed by Routes in the Study Area	1-8
Table 1-2. Population Change.....	1-10
Table 1-3. Total Trips by Mode for the Year 2040.....	1-10
Table 1-4. Population 65 Years of Age and Over.....	1-11
Table 2-1. Coarse-Level Screening Criteria	2-4
Table 2-2. Fine-Level Screening Criteria.....	2-6
Table 2-3. Route Alternative Comparison	2-11
Table 2-4. Summary of Impacts	2-29
Table 3.1-1. Total Trips by Mode for the Year 2040.....	3-4
Table 3.1-2. Total Rail Ridership by Diverted Travel Mode.....	3-7
Table 3.3-1. Farmland Impacts	3-13
Table 3.8-1. Summary of Traffic Conditions.....	3-35
Table 3.8-2. Noise Condition Definitions	3-36
Table 3.8-3. Traffic Conditions	3-37
Table 3.8-4. Incremental Increase in Noise Impacts Associated with the No-Build Alternative	3-38
Table 3.8-5. Ground-borne Vibration Impacts Associated with the No-Build Alternative	3-43
Table 3.8-6. Incremental Increase in Noise Impacts Associated with the Build Alternative.....	3-47
Table 3.8-7. Ground-borne Vibration Impacts Associated with the Build Alternative.....	3-52
Table 3.8-8. Distances to Category 2 Ground-Borne Vibration Impacts.....	3-56
Table 3.9-1. Nonattainment and Maintenance Areas within the Study Area	3-58
Table 3.9-2. Summary of General Conformity Determination for the Build Alternative in 2040	3-59
Table 3.9-3. Build Alternative – 2040 Estimated Changes in Air Pollutants from Diversion of Passenger Vehicle, Bus, and Plane Trips (Tons per Year).....	3-60
Table 3.10-1. Hazardous Material and Waste Sites Impacts.....	3-63
Table 3.11-1. Historic Resources within the Potential Impact Area	3-68
Table 3.15-1. Impacts on Waterways and Water Bodies	3-83
Table 3.16-1. Impacts on Wetlands (by type).....	3-86
Table 3.18-1. 100-Year Floodplain Impacts	3-91
Table 3.20-1. Natural Habitat Area Impacts	3-100

Table 3.21-1. Federally Listed Threatened and Endangered Species 3-103
 Table 3.21-2. Illinois State-Listed Threatened and Endangered Species in Study Area 3-106
 Table 3.21-3. Illinois State-Listed Threatened and Endangered Species Potential Impacts 3-109
 Table 3.28-1. Total Rail Ridership by Diverted Travel Mode 3-136
 Table 4-1. Summary of Agency Scoping Comments..... 4-5
 Table 4-2. Outreach Tools and Usage Summary 4-25
 Table 4-3. Community Survey Results Summary..... 4-32

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1-1. Midwest Regional Rail System..... 1-3
 Figure 1-2. Great Lakes Megaregion Regional Rail System with Areas of Influence (2050) 1-4
 Figure 1-3. Study Area 1-7
 Figure 2-1. Route Alternatives, Chicago to Council Bluffs-Omaha 2-3
 Figure 2-2. Chicago to Council Bluffs-Omaha Build Alternative 2-16
 Figure 2-3. Des Moines Design Options 2-19
 Figure 2-4. Missouri River Crossing Design Options, Council Bluffs, IA, and Omaha, NE 2-20
 Figure 2-5. Proposed Station and Maintenance Locations, Des Moines and Council Bluffs/Omaha 2-21
 Figure 2-6. Proposed Station Locations, Grinnell and Atlantic 2-22
 Figure 2-7. Chicago to Council Bluffs-Omaha Station Stops..... 2-26
 Figure 5-1. Implementation Phases 5-6

LIST OF GRAPHS

Graph 3.8-1. FTA Noise Impact Criteria 3-32

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A Alternatives Analysis Report
 Appendix B Chapter 3 Figures
 Appendix C Socioeconomic Environment
 Appendix D Title VI and EJ
 Appendix E Noise and Vibration
 Appendix F Air Quality
 Appendix G Hazardous Waste and Waste Disposal
 Appendix H Cultural Resources

Appendix I	Parks and Federally or State-Listed Natural Areas
Appendix J	Section 4(f) and 6(f) Properties
Appendix K	Waterways and Water Bodies
Appendix L	Water Quality
Appendix M	Natural Habitats and Wildlife
Appendix N	Threatened and Endangered Species
Appendix O	Agency Coordination
Appendix P	Noise and Vibration, Interim Implementation Phase
Appendix Q	Tier 1 Draft EIS Comments and Responses

ABBREVIATIONS, ACRONYMS, AND SHORT FORMS

ACHP	Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
ACS	American Community Survey
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
ADT	average daily traffic
APE	Area of Potential Effect
ASARCO	American Smelting and Refining Company, Inc.
BGEPA	Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act
BMP	Best Management Practice
BNSF	BNSF Railway
BTUs	British Thermal Units
CAA	Clean Air Act of 1970
CBIS	Council Bluffs Interstate System
CBEC	Council Bluffs Energy Center
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
CERCLA	Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980
CERCLIS	Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Information System
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CO	carbon monoxide
CO ₂	Carbon Dioxide
COGs	Councils of Government
Corridor	Chicago to Omaha corridor

CRI&P	Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad
CTA	Chicago Transit Authority
CTC	Centralized Traffic Control
CTS	Coralville Transit System
CWR	continuously welded rail
DART	Des Moines Area Regional Transit Authority
dB	decibels
dba	A-weighted decibels
DCHs	Designated Critical Habitats
DOT	Department of Transportation
EA	Environmental Assessment
EC	early coordination
EcoCAT	Ecological Compliance Assessment Tool of Illinois DNR,
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
Environmental Procedures	FRA's Procedures for Considering Environmental Impacts
EO	Executive Order
EPCRA	Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act
ESA	Endangered Species Act
ESRI	Environmental Systems Research Institute
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
FIRMs	Flood Insurance Rate Maps
FRA	Federal Railroad Administration

FRS	Facility Registry System
FRSA	Federal Railroad Safety Act
FTA	Federal Transit Administration
FWCA	Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act of 1934
GBV	ground-borne vibration
GHG	greenhouse gas emissions
GIS	geographic information system
HC	hydrocarbons
HIRTA	<i>Heart of Iowa Regional Transit Agency</i>
HUD	U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
I-29	Interstate 29
I-480	Interstate 480
I-80	Interstate 80
I-88	Interstate 88
IAIS	Iowa Interstate Railroad
ICT	Iowa City Transit
IFPA	Illinois Farmland Preservation Act
IGWS	Iowa Geological and Water Survey
ILCS	Illinois Compiled Statutes
Illinois DNR	Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Illinois DNR/OWR	Illinois Department of Natural Resources/Office of Water Resources
Illinois DOT	Illinois Department of Transportation
Illinois EPA	Illinois Environmental Protection Agency
Iowa DOT	Iowa Department of Transportation
Iowa DNR	Iowa Department of Natural Resources

INAI	Illinois Natural Areas Inventory
INPC	Illinois Nature Preserves Commission
ISGS	Illinois State Geological Survey
ISTEA	Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991
L_{dn}	day-night noise level
L_{eq}	equivalent noise level
LEP	limited English proficiency
LUST	leaking underground storage tank
LWCF	Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965
MAPA	Metropolitan Area Planning Agency
MBTA	Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918
MetroLINK	Rock Island County Metropolitan Mass Transit District
MGT	million gross tons
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
MSA	metropolitan statistical area
MSATs	Mobile Source Air Toxics
MWRI	Midwest Regional Rail Initiative
NAAQS	National Ambient Air Quality Standards
NCSD	Nebraska Conservation and Survey Division
NDEQ	Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality
NDOR	Nebraska Department of Roads
Nebraska DNR	Nebraska Department of Natural Resources
NEMA	Nebraska Emergency Management Agency
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act of 1969
NESHAP	National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants

NFIP	National Flood Insurance Program
NGPC	Nebraska Game and Parks Commission
NHD	National Hydrography Dataset
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NO ₂	nitrogen dioxide
NOI	Notice of Intent
NO _x	nitrogen oxides
NPDES	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
NPL	National Priorities List
NPS	National Park Service
NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
NRI	Nationwide Rivers Inventory
NS	Norfolk Southern Railway
NWI	National Wetlands Inventory
O ₃	ozone
OHW	ordinary high water
OHWMs	Ordinary High Water Marks
OLE	Office of Location and Environment
OSHA	Occupational Safety and Health Administration
PA	Programmatic Agreement
PAB	Palustrine Aquatic Bed
Pb	lead
PEM	Palustrine Emergent
PFO	Palustrine Forested

PL	Public Law
PM	particulate matter
PM-2.5	particulate matter smaller than 2.5 microns in diameter
PM-10	particulate matter smaller than 10 microns in diameter
PRA	Pittman-Robertson Act
Project	the expansion of intercity passenger rail service from Chicago, Illinois, through Iowa, to Omaha, Nebraska
PSS	Palustrine Scrub-Shrub
PTC	Positive Train Control
PWEDA	Public Works and Economic Development Act
Quad Cities	East Moline, Moline, and Rock Island, Illinois, and Davenport and Bettendorf, Iowa
RCRA	Resource Conservation and Recovery Act
ROD	Record of Decision
ROW	right-of-way
RTA	Regional Transportation Authority
SARA	Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act
SEATS	Special Needs and Elderly Assisted Transportation System
SEMAs	State Emergency Management Agencies
SES	SouthEast Service
SFHA	Special Flood Hazard Areas
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Office
SIP	state implementation plan
SO ₂	sulfur dioxide
STAR Line	Suburban Transit Access Route
STS	Special Transit Service

Study	Chicago to Omaha Regional Passenger Rail System Planning Study
SWITA	Southwest Iowa Transit Agency
SWPPP	Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan
TCE	Trichloroethylene
TCP	traditional cultural property
TEA-21	Transportation Equity Act
THPO	Tribal Historic Preservation Office
TSA	Transportation Security Administration
TSCA	Toxic Substances Control Act
TWC	track warrant control
UP	Union Pacific Railroad
UP-NW	Union Pacific Northwest
UP-W	Union Pacific West
USACE	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
USCG	U.S. Coast Guard
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
USDOT	U.S. Department of Transportation
USEPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
USGS	U.S. Geological Survey
VOCs	volatile organic compounds
VMT	vehicle miles traveled
WA	Wilderness Act

CHAPTER 1

PURPOSE AND NEED

The Iowa Department of Transportation (Iowa DOT), in conjunction with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), is evaluating alternatives for the expansion of intercity passenger rail service from Chicago, Illinois, through Iowa, to Council Bluffs, Iowa, and Omaha, Nebraska (the Project). Intercity passenger rail service provides “connectivity between major urban centers” (MWRRI, September 2004). Iowa DOT’s evaluation is documented in this Chicago to Council Bluffs-Omaha Regional Passenger Rail System Planning Study (the Study) Tier 1 Service Level Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Past planning documents identified a “Chicago to Omaha” corridor, so for the purposes of this analysis, the corridor reference will remain as previously designated. The Project name includes “Council Bluffs” in the title because the Project terminus is the Omaha/Council Bluffs metropolitan area; “Council Bluffs” is listed before Omaha because it is located between Chicago and Omaha. For passenger rail projects, this Tier 1 EIS focuses on broad corridor and service level issues, while subsequent Tier 2 analyses would focus on the details of a specific project or action.

This Tier 1 EIS evaluates the No-Build Alternative and the Build Alternative as described in Chapter 2. In addition, following publication of the Tier 1 Draft EIS, Iowa DOT determined that an interim implementation phase for the Project would be needed, as described in Chapter 2.

This chapter describes the history of the Project, the Study Area, the purpose of and need for the Project, decisions to be made based on this Tier 1 EIS, and other transportation projects in and near the Study Area.

1.1 HISTORY

The existing rail lines that are proposed to be used to provide passenger service from Chicago, Illinois, through Iowa, to Omaha, Nebraska, were all in place by 1871 (Colton, 1871) and are among the oldest rail lines in the region. The railroads were initially constructed to carry passengers and to haul a variety of freight and have evolved into very busy railroads (Hudson, 2005). Most of the passenger service along these routes began in the 1850s, 1860s, and 1870s (Young, 2005). By the 1880s, commuter rail service in Chicago had been developed in a hub-and-spoke¹ pattern, extending 30 to 40 miles in 15 different directions from downtown Chicago (Conzen, 2005). This hub-and-spoke system is still operating today as Chicago’s Metra (Young, 2005). Intercity passenger rail service generally was terminated by the 1970s, when railroad passenger service declined nationally, and was consolidated into Amtrak (Hudson, 2005). In the Chicago metropolitan area, the section between Chicago and Naperville, Illinois, carries the heaviest volume of commuters (Hudson, 2005).

¹ A hub-and-spoke passenger rail system provides transportation to a central location. From this central location (the hub), one can travel to various other destinations (the spokes).

The Midwest Regional Rail Initiative (MWRRI) was established in 1991 as part of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) (Public Law [PL] 102-240) and its reauthorization in 1998 with the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) (PL 105-178). ISTEA and TEA-21 included a broader national effort to support high-speed rail investment. Nine transportation agencies across the Midwest, along with Amtrak, sponsored the MWRRI:

- Illinois Department of Transportation
- Indiana Department of Transportation
- Iowa Department of Transportation
- Michigan Department of Transportation
- Minnesota Department of Transportation
- Missouri Department of Transportation
- Nebraska Department of Roads
- Ohio Rail Development Commission
- Wisconsin Department of Transportation

As a result of the MWRRI and the national high-speed rail initiative, numerous corridors were identified and refined, with Chicago as the hub. Between 1996 and 2004, a single transportation plan was developed that included all of these corridors; this plan is known as the Midwest Regional Rail System. Meanwhile, numerous studies were completed with regard to bus service integration with the MWRRI; financial, economic, market, and transportation analyses; infrastructure and capital costs; operating costs; and institutional and organizational issues. These efforts culminated in 2004, when the MWRRI issued the *Midwest Regional Rail Initiative Project Notebook* (MWRRI, June 2004) and the *Midwest Regional Rail System: A Transportation Network for the 21st Century, Executive Report* (MWRRI, September 2004).

Since 2004, efforts have progressed to develop the various corridors. In 2006, the *Midwest Regional Rail Initiative Project Notebook*, Chapter 11, Benefit Cost and Economic Analysis, was updated to reflect economic conditions at that time (MWRRI, November 2006). The nine passenger rail corridors originally considered for the Midwest Regional Rail System included (see Figure 1-1):

- Chicago to Detroit/Grand Rapids/Port Huron, Michigan
- Chicago to Cleveland, Ohio
- Chicago to Cincinnati, Ohio
- Chicago to Carbondale, Illinois
- Chicago to St. Louis, Missouri
- St. Louis, Missouri, to Kansas City, Missouri
- Chicago to Quincy, Illinois
- Chicago to Omaha, Nebraska
- Chicago to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and to St. Paul, Minnesota/Green Bay, Wisconsin

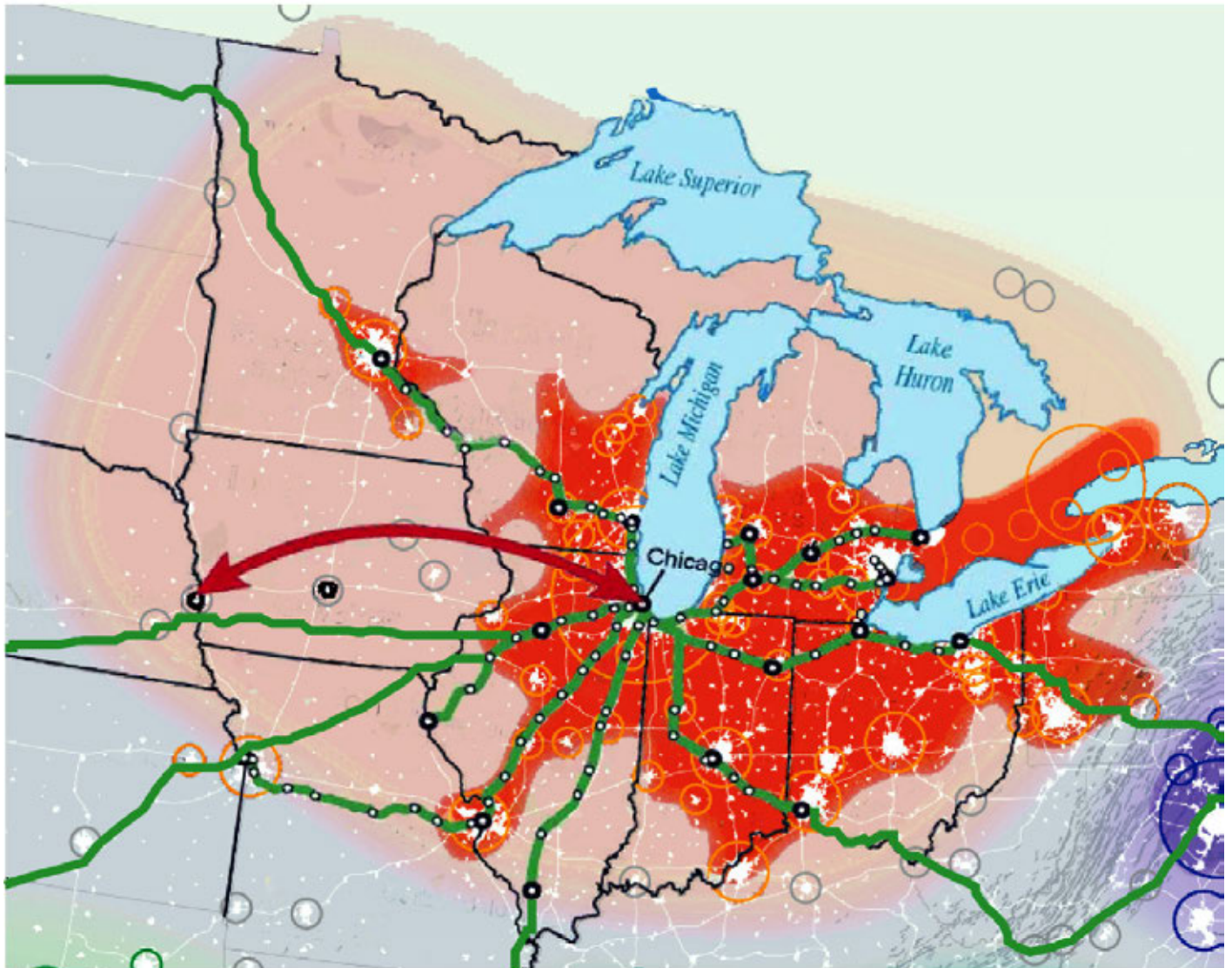
Planning, design, and development for passenger rail corridors have progressed since the original conception of the Midwest Regional Rail System. Figure 1-2 shows the currently proposed rail corridor in the Great Lakes Megaregion as it is anticipated to exist in 2050.



Midwest Regional Rail System

Chicago to Council Bluffs - Omaha
 Regional Passenger Rail System Planning Study

DATE	May 2013
FIGURE	1-1



■ Megaregion
 ■ Area of influence
 ↔ Chicago to Council Bluffs-Omaha
— Current long-distance and intercity passenger rail routes

Regional Plan Association, 2013,
 America 2015 (<http://www.america2050.org>).



Great Lakes Megaregion Rail System and Areas of Influence (2050)

Chicago to Council Bluffs - Omaha
 Regional Passenger Rail System Planning Study

DATE
 May 2013

FIGURE
 1-2

In 2009 and 2010, Iowa DOT and the Illinois Department of Transportation (Illinois DOT), in conjunction with FRA, evaluated alternatives for the corridor extending from Chicago Union Station to Iowa City, Iowa, with the completion of the Chicago to Iowa City Intercity Passenger Rail Service Tier 1 Service Level Environmental Assessment. On October 28, 2010, FRA awarded Iowa DOT and Illinois DOT a grant of \$230 million to proceed with the Chicago to Iowa City corridor Tier 2 Project Level studies and construction activities.

In 2010 and 2011, additional studies were completed for the MWRRI prior to commencement of the Chicago to Council Bluffs-Omaha Regional Passenger Rail System Planning Study. These studies included MWRRI corridor alternatives analysis, capital cost updates, operating equipment configurations and performance standards, advanced train control, and public outreach (MWRRI, 2011). The Chicago to Omaha corridor (the Corridor) was included in these studies.

The MWRRI includes many high-speed (that is, 110 miles per hour [mph]) passenger rail corridors, but the MWRRI initially identified the service between Chicago and Omaha for conventional-speed (that is, 79 mph) and not high-speed service. The 2010 and 2011 studies expanded the analysis to include five round-trips per day between Chicago and Des Moines and four round-trips per day between Chicago and Omaha (MWRRI, 2011). Subsequent to these studies, Iowa DOT and FRA concluded that analysis for speeds up to 110 mph is warranted for the Chicago to Omaha Corridor. The Project includes a maximum of seven round-trips per day at maximum authorized track speeds of up to 110 mph between Chicago and Omaha.

As stated in the *Midwest Regional Rail Initiative Project Notebook* (MWRRI, June 2004), full implementation of the MWRRI would significantly improve Midwest passenger rail service by:

- Upgrading existing rail lines to permit frequent, reliable, high-speed passenger train operations
- Accommodating operation of a hub-and-spoke passenger rail system that provides through-service and connectivity in Chicago to locations throughout the Midwest region
- Introducing modern train equipment that offers improved amenities operating at speeds of up to 110 mph
- Providing multimodal connections and feeder bus systems to improve access to the rail system
- Introducing a contracted rail operation that improves efficiency, reliability, and on-time performance

With full implementation, the Midwest Regional Rail System would encompass approximately 3,000 route miles in the sponsor states and would attract approximately 13.6 million passengers annually. Approximately 90 percent of the Midwest region's population would be within an hour's ride of a Midwest Regional Rail System rail station and/or within 30 minutes of a Midwest Regional Rail System feeder bus station (MWRRI, September 2004).

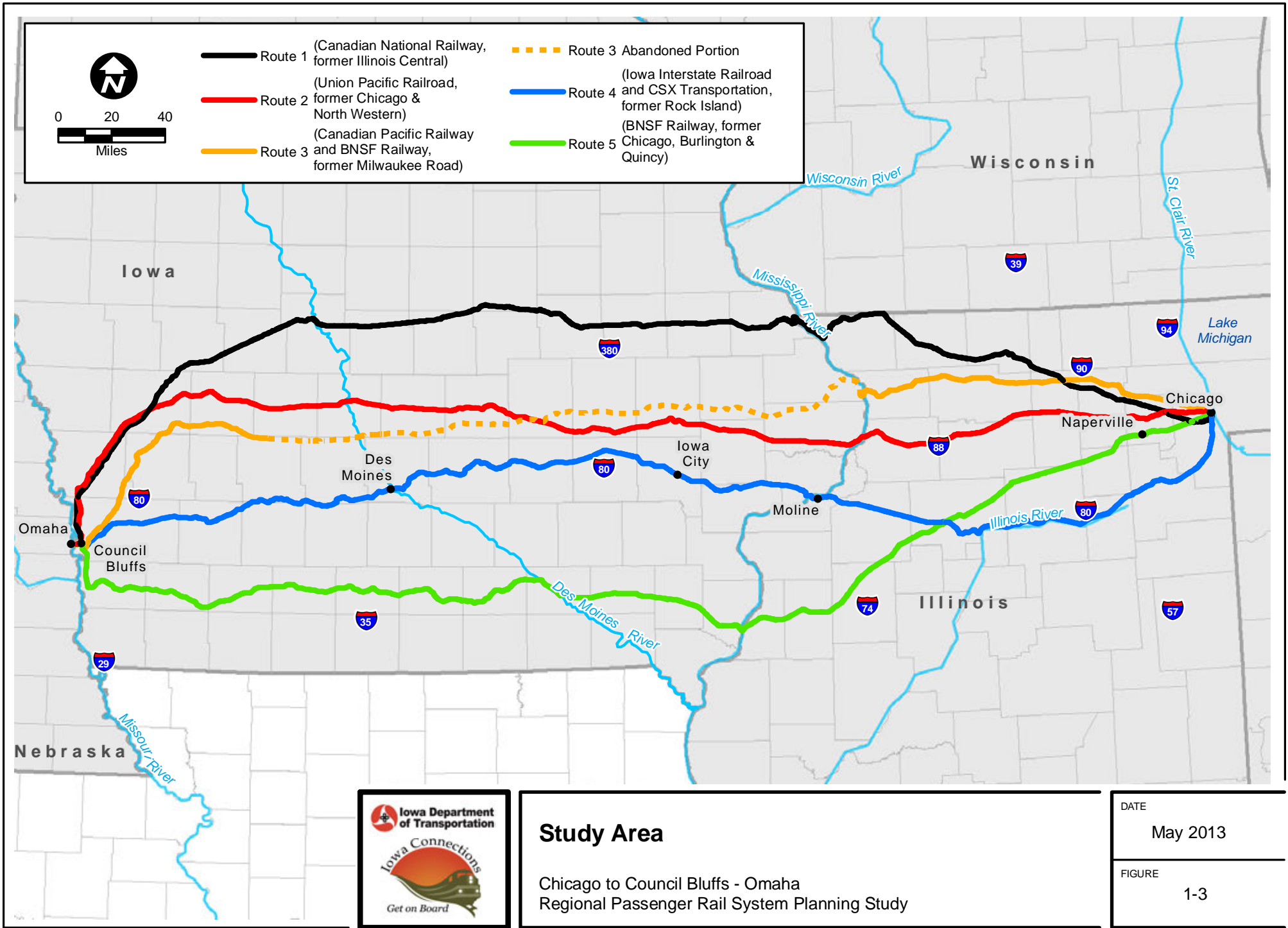
On October 14, 2011, FRA agreed to a phased implementation approach for the Chicago to Iowa City corridor. Illinois DOT is proceeding with the Tier 2 studies and construction activities for the portion of the corridor extending from Chicago to Quad Cities (East Moline,

Moline, and Rock Island, Illinois, and Davenport and Bettendorf, Iowa) with a terminus in Moline, Illinois. Iowa DOT would conduct Tier 2 studies for the portion of the corridor from the Quad Cities to Iowa City.

While the Chicago to Iowa City service and Chicago to Council Bluffs-Omaha service may ultimately use the same corridor from Chicago to Iowa City for implementation, the level of service under consideration is different. From Chicago to Iowa City, service was evaluated for the Tier 1 analysis at a maximum of five round-trip trains per day at speeds up to 79 mph, while the Chicago to Council Bluffs-Omaha service is being evaluated for a maximum of seven round-trip trains per day at speeds up to 110 mph. The higher maximum speed and frequency of service for the Chicago to Council Bluffs-Omaha service would result in additional impacts, and, therefore, require additional study. For analysis purposes in this Tier 1 EIS, the passenger rail service from Chicago to the Quad Cities is assumed to be constructed and in operation.

1.2 STUDY AREA

The Corridor extends from Chicago Union Station, in downtown Chicago, Illinois, on the east to a terminal in Omaha, Nebraska, on the west. The Study Area consists of the five previously established passenger rail routes between Chicago and Omaha that pass through the states of Illinois and Iowa (Figure 1-3). The Study Area for each route is approximately 500 miles long and 500 feet wide. In Illinois, the Study Area runs generally west from Chicago Union Station, the hub for the MWRRI, to the Mississippi River and, depending on the route, is a distance of between 150 and 250 miles. In Iowa, the Study Area runs west from the Mississippi River for approximately 300 miles across the entire state of Iowa to the Missouri River. In Nebraska, the Study Area terminates in Omaha, which is located at the Missouri River, the eastern border of the state. The general location for the terminal in Omaha will be identified as part of this Study. For each route, the counties that are traversed in Illinois, Iowa, and Nebraska are listed east to west in Table 1-1.



Route 1 (Canadian National Railway, former Illinois Central)	Route 3 Abandoned Portion
Route 2 (Union Pacific Railroad, former Chicago & North Western)	Route 4 (Iowa Interstate Railroad and CSX Transportation, former Rock Island)
Route 3 (Canadian Pacific Railway and BNSF Railway, former Milwaukee Road)	Route 5 (BNSF Railway, former Chicago, Burlington & Quincy)



Study Area

Chicago to Council Bluffs - Omaha
Regional Passenger Rail System Planning Study

DATE	May 2013
FIGURE	1-3

Table 1-1. Counties Traversed by Routes in the Study Area

State	Route 1	Route 2	Route 3	Route 4	Route 5
Illinois	Cook	Cook	Cook	Cook	Cook
	DuPage	DuPage	DuPage	Will	DuPage
	Kane	Kane	Kane	Grundy	Kane
	DeKalb	DeKalb	DeKalb	La Salle	Kendall
	Boone	Ogle	Ogle	Bureau	DeKalb
	Winnebago	Lee	Carroll	Henry	La Salle
	Stephenson Jo Daviess	Whiteside		Rock Island	Bureau Henry Knox Warren Henderson
Iowa	Dubuque	Clinton	Jackson	Scott	Des Moines
	Delaware	Cedar	Clinton	Muscatine	Henry
	Buchanan	Linn	Jones	Cedar	Jefferson
	Black Hawk	Benton	Linn	Johnson	Wapello
	Butler	Tama	Benton	Iowa	Monroe
	Franklin	Marshall	Tama	Poweshiek	Lucas
	Hardin	Story	Marshall	Jasper	Clarke
	Hamilton	Boone	Story	Polk	Union
	Webster	Greene	Boone	Dallas	Adams
	Calhoun	Carroll	Dallas	Madison	Montgomery
	Sac	Crawford	Guthrie	Guthrie	Mills
	Crawford	Harrison	Carroll	Adair	Pottawattamie
	Harrison	Pottawattamie	Crawford	Cass	
	Pottawattamie		Shelby Harrison Pottawattamie	Pottawattamie	
Nebraska	Douglas	Douglas	Douglas	Douglas	Douglas

1.3 PURPOSE AND NEED

1.3.1 Purpose

The Project and the Midwest Regional Rail System are intended “to meet current and future regional travel needs through significant improvements to the level and quality of passenger rail service,” as defined by the MWRRI in its Midwest Regional Rail System Executive Report (MWRRI, September 2004). The Chicago to Council Bluffs-Omaha Regional Passenger Rail System would provide competitive passenger rail transportation between Chicago and Omaha to help meet future travel demands in the Study Area. The Project would create a competitive passenger rail transportation alternative to the available automobile, bus, and air service and would meet needs for more efficient travel between major urban centers by:

- Decreasing travel times
- Increasing frequency of service
- Improving reliability
- Providing an efficient transportation option
- Providing amenities to improve passenger ride quality and comfort
- Promoting environmental benefits, including reduced air pollutant emissions, improved land use options, and fewer adverse impacts on surrounding habitat and water resources

1.3.2 Need

The need for the Project stems from the increasing travel demand resulting from population growth and changing demographics along the Corridor as well as the need for competitive and attractive modes of travel (MWRRI, June 2004).

1.3.2.1 Travel Demand

Travel demand is the total demand for travel services in the Corridor. Between 2000 and 2010, the Chicago and Omaha/Council Bluffs metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) have seen growth of 3.3 and 20.7 percent, respectively (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). As shown in Table 1-2, the combined population in Illinois, Iowa, and Nebraska has increased by 14.8 percent between 1970 and 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau, March 27, 1995, and 2010). Not only is population increasing in the area, but it is also becoming more urbanized, with expanded access to and demands for public transportation (Iowa DOT, December 27, 2010). For example, Iowa has historically had a mostly rural population; however, that trend has shifted, and 64 percent of the population lived in urban areas in 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau, April 2, 2012).

Table 1-2. Population Change

State	Total Population & Urban/Rural Percent of Total			Percent Change (+/-) Between 1970 and 2010
	1970	2000	2010	
Illinois	11,113,976	12,419,293	12,830,632	+15.4
Urban	9,251,930 (83.2%)	10,909,520 (87.8%)	11,353,553 (88.5%)	+22.7
Rural	1,862,046 (16.8%)	1,509,773 (12.2%)	1,477,079 (11.5%)	-20.7
Iowa	2,824,376	2,926,324	3,046,355	+7.9
Urban	1,616,405 (57.2%)	1,787,432 (61.1%)	1,950,256 (64.0%)	+20.7
Rural	1,207,971 (42.8%)	1,138,892 (38.9%)	1,096,099 (36.0%)	-9.3
Nebraska	1,483,493	1,711,263	1,826,341	+23.1
Urban	912,598 (61.5%)	1,193,725 (69.8%)	1,335,686 (73.1%)	+46.4
Rural	570,895 (38.5%)	517,538 (30.2%)	490,655 (26.9%)	-14.1
Total State	15,421,845	17,056,880	17,703,328	+14.8
Total Urban	11,780,933 (76.4%)	13,890,677 (81.4%)	14,639,495 (82.7%)	+24.3
Total Rural	3,640,912 (23.6%)	3,166,203 (18.6%)	3,063,833 (17.3%)	-15.8

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, March 27, 1995, "County Population Census Counts 1900-90," retrieved December 5, 2011, <http://www.census.gov/population/www/censusdata/cencounts/index.html>.

U.S. Census Bureau, February 26, 2003, *Urban and Rural Population for the U.S. and all States: 1900 – 2000*, retrieved April 11, 2013, <http://data.iowadatacenter.org/datatables/UnitedStates/urusstpop19002000.pdf>.

U.S. Census Bureau, 2010, *Census 2010, Summary File 1, Table P12: SEX BY AGE - Universe: Total population*, generated by Kelly Farrell using American FactFinder, retrieved December 19, 2011, <http://factfinder2.census.gov/main.html>.

U.S. Census Bureau, April 2, 2012, *Urban and Rural Population by State, 2010*, retrieved April 11, 2013, <http://www.census.gov/geo/www/ua/2010urbanruralclass.html>.

The predominant mode of travel in the region is the automobile. Highway access between Chicago and Omaha is provided through Interstate 80 (I-80) and Interstate 88 (I-88), portions of which are toll road, as well as a number of federal and state highways. Table 1-3 shows the total trips estimated by mode within the Corridor for the year 2040.

Table 1-3. Total Trips by Mode for the Year 2040

Mode of Travel	Total Trips ^a	Percent of Total
Automobile	108,300,000	97.7%
Air	1,832,000	1.7%
Bus	533,000	0.4%
Passenger Rail	168,000	0.2%
Total	110,833,000	100%

Note:

^a Excludes short trips of less than 100 miles.

The population is also aging and is increasingly seeking alternative modes of transportation. As shown in Table 1-4, between 2000 and 2010, the population of individuals who are 65 years of age and over in Illinois, Iowa, and Nebraska has increased by 7.3, 3.8, and 6.2 percent, respectively (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 and 2010). Within the Chicago and Omaha MSAs, the growth of the population of individuals who are 65 years of age and over, a population segment who tend to rely more on public transportation, is 8.2 and 25.9 percent higher, respectively, in 2010 compared to 2000 (Iowa DOT, 2012b; Iowa DOT, December 27, 2010; U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 and 2010).

Table 1-4. Population 65 Years of Age and Over

State	Total Population 65 Years of Age and Over (Percentage of Total Population)		Percent Increase Between 2000 and 2010
	2000	2010	
Illinois	1,500,025 (12.1)	1,609,213 (12.5)	7.3
Iowa	436,213 (14.9)	452,888 (14.9)	3.8
Nebraska	232,195 (13.6)	246,677 (13.5)	6.2
Total	2,168,433 (12.7)	2,308,778 (13.0)	6.5
Chicago MSA	998,464 (10.9)	1,079,893 (11.4)	8.2
Omaha MSA	76,345 (10.6)	96,098 (11.1)	25.9

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010, *Census 2010, Summary File 1, Table P12: SEX BY AGE - Universe: Total population, generated by Kelly Farrell using American FactFinder, retrieved December 19, 2011, <http://factfinder2.census.gov/main.html>.*

1.3.2.2 Competitive and Attractive Travel Modes

Introducing intercity passenger rail service connecting major urban centers in the Corridor, which are the proposed station stops, would provide a competitive modal option for travel in the Corridor. The travelling public selects travel modes based on a combination of trip time, cost, and convenience. As shown in Table 1-3, approximately 98 percent of travel between city pairs in the Study Area is estimated to occur by automobile, with air, bus, and passenger rail travel making up the remainder.

Intercity passenger rail service would provide an option to highway and air travel between major urban centers in the face of a growing and aging population and increasing congestion on Midwest highways and at Midwest airports. For example, highway vehicle miles traveled in Iowa have increased 37 percent since 1990, and I-80 in Chicago, Des Moines, and Omaha currently experience peak-period congestion and capacity issues. Chicago O'Hare International Airport is the second busiest airport in the nation (Iowa DOT, 2012b; U.S. DOT, January 2012).

Travel modes available to the public along the Corridor include automobile, air, bus, and conventional-speed long-distance passenger rail. The primary automobile travel route is Interstate 88 (I-88) between Chicago and East Moline, approximately 160 miles, and Interstate 80 (I-80) between East Moline and Downtown Omaha, approximately 313 miles. From southern Chicago, the entire route along I-80 from Chicago to Omaha is approximately 470 miles. A one-way trip by automobile between Chicago and Omaha along either of these routes at posted interstate speeds would take about 8 hours during off-peak hours. Using the

2012 Internal Revenue Service standard of \$0.555 per mile,² the cost of driving round-trip between Omaha and Chicago with one day of parking in either Omaha (\$5) or Chicago (\$35) is \$547.10 and \$577.10, respectively (FRA and Iowa DOT, 2012).

I-80 is also a major truck route in the region. Between 2010 and 2030, vehicle miles traveled in Iowa on I-80 are expected to increase by more than 65 percent. If no capacity improvements are made, nearly 75 percent of I-80 in Iowa would be bordering on unstable traffic flow, at or beyond capacity (Iowa DOT, January 24, 2012). In Chicago, Des Moines, and Omaha, I-80 currently has peak-period congestion and capacity issues due to a volume/service flow ratio³ greater than 0.95 that results in stop-and-go traffic conditions (Federal Highway Administration [FHWA], November 2010). The remainder of the Corridor is not currently experiencing substantial traffic congestion. By 2040, if no capacity improvements are made, the I-80 corridor between Chicago and Omaha with the exception of rural parts of Illinois will be experiencing peak-period congestion issues due to a volume/service flow ratio greater than 0.95 with stop-and-go traffic conditions (FHWA, November 2010).

Air service is currently available between major cities in the Study Area. Commercial air service is provided in Chicago (Chicago O'Hare International Airport and Chicago Midway International Airport), Moline (Quad Cities International Airport), Des Moines (Des Moines International Airport), and Omaha (Eppley Airfield). Direct flight service between Chicago and Omaha is served by American Airlines, Southwest Airlines, United Airlines, and U.S. Airways. Typical flight times range from 1 hour and 20 minutes to 1 hour and 40 minutes. Direct flight service between Chicago and Des Moines is served by American Airlines, Southwest Airlines, United Airlines, and U.S. Airways. Typical flight times range from 1 hour and 15 minutes to 1 hour and 25 minutes. Direct flight service between Chicago and the Quad Cities is also served by American Airlines, United Airlines, and U.S. Airways. Typical flight times range from 52 minutes to 56 minutes. There is no direct service between Moline and Omaha or between Des Moines and Omaha; typical connections go through Chicago or Minneapolis. Between February 2011 and February 2012, the 17 daily flights between Chicago and Omaha were reliable an average of 79 percent of the time, with the other 21 percent of flights either delayed 15 minutes or more or cancelled (FRA and Iowa DOT, 2012). Tickets purchased with 2 weeks advanced notice typically cost between \$210 and \$1,400 (FRA and Iowa DOT, 2012).

Bus service is provided in a majority of mid-to-large sized cities, with intermittent service in smaller towns. Service between Chicago and Omaha, with multiple stops, was provided by Greyhound. Typical bus service includes two trips per day: one in the early morning and one in the late evening. Typical travel time by bus between Chicago and Omaha ranges from

² The Internal Revenue Service annually adjusts its standard mileage rates to include both the fixed and variable costs of operating a vehicle. These rates can be used for income tax filing for reimbursement for certain uses of vehicles.

³ The volume/surface flow ratio represents the relationship between actual traffic volumes and the maximum capacity of the roadway. No roadway congestion is present when the volume/surface flow ratio is 0.0. Roadways are considered congested when the volume/surface flow ratio is between 0.75 and 0.95. A roadway with a volume/surface flow ratio of 0.95 to 1.0 has traffic volumes approaching or equal to the surface flow is considered to be highly congested, and experiences stop-and-go traffic conditions.

9 hours and 15 minutes for “Express” service to 9 hours and 40 minutes for regular service (Greyhound, 2011). On August 15, 2012, Burlington Trailways took over the Greyhound routes from Omaha (though Greyhound is still maintaining the terminals), including the route from Omaha to Chicago, which features stops in Des Moines, Iowa City, Davenport, and Moline. Bus ticket prices vary from \$40 to \$126 (FRA and Iowa DOT, 2012).

Megabus.com, a subsidiary of Coach USA, is a low-fare express bus service that recently added daily service between Chicago and Omaha with stops in Iowa City and Des Moines. Megabus.com provides two round-trips per day: one in the morning and one in the late evening. The full one-way trip from Chicago to Omaha takes 8 hours and 50 minutes. In addition to low fares, Megabus.com offers competitive amenities including Wi-Fi service, power ports at each seat, and on-board restrooms. However, Megabus.com does not always provide traditional sheltered station stops. In Chicago, the station stop is located adjacent to Union Station. In Omaha, the station stop is adjacent to the parking garage at Crossroads Mall (Megabus.com, 2012).

Current passenger rail service between Chicago and Omaha is part of Amtrak’s long-distance service on the *California Zephyr*. Travel time from Chicago to Omaha on the current Amtrak long-distance, conventional-speed service is approximately 8 hours and 55 minutes and travel time from Omaha to Chicago is approximately 9 hours and 36 minutes (Amtrak, November 7, 2011). Long-distance trains are designed for long-distance passengers and are often inconvenient for regional travelers. Tickets purchased with 2 weeks advanced notice typically cost \$69 to travel from Chicago to Omaha and \$108 to travel from Omaha to Chicago (FRA and Iowa DOT, 2012). The arrival and departure times in Omaha are late at night or early in the morning, which is not consistent with convenient intercity travel. The only major metropolitan community in Iowa that currently has access to passenger rail is Council Bluffs via the once-a-day Amtrak *California Zephyr* (Iowa DOT, December 27, 2010).

Inclement winter weather in the Study Area often creates conditions that impact both highway and air travel, creating a need for an alternative mode that is less prone to winter service interruptions. For example, winter storms (storms lasting 4 or more hours with snowfall rates of 0.20 inch per hour or more) in Iowa reduce traffic volumes by an average of 29 percent (ranging from 16 to 47 percent) depending on total snowfall and wind speeds (Knapp, Kroeger, and Giese, February 2000).

1.4 DECISIONS TO BE MADE

Iowa DOT and FRA must comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) due to the proposed use of FRA’s High-Speed Intercity Passenger Rail Program funds for the Project. “The NEPA process is intended to help public officials make decisions that are based on understanding of environmental consequences, and take actions that protect, restore, and enhance the environment” (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 1500.1).

FRA has issued guidance supporting a tiered NEPA approach that includes Tier 1 NEPA documents followed by Tier 2 NEPA documents (FRA, August 14, 2009). With a tiered approach, the Tier 1 NEPA document evaluates impacts of a broad-scale project with focus on more qualitative than quantitative impacts on specific resources. Following completion of the Tier 1 NEPA document and the associated decision document, Tier 2 NEPA documents

are developed to evaluate quantitatively the environmental impacts within one or more specific logical sections or phases of the Project, which would be developed through separate but related projects.

The purpose of this Tier 1 EIS is to provide environmental resource and regulatory agencies, the public, and decision makers with a full understanding of the service-wide environmental impacts of the Project alternatives. Decisions to be made through this Tier 1 EIS process include selection of a preferred corridor and identification of communities served by station stops, frequency of service, speed of service, and a plan for phased implementation of service. Prior to implementation of passenger rail service between Chicago and Council Bluffs-Omaha, Tier 2 NEPA documents will be developed for the logical sections or phases identified in Chapter 5, Next Steps.

1.5 OTHER TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS

In addition to the Chicago to Council Bluffs-Omaha Regional Passenger Rail System Planning Study, numerous transportation projects in and near the Study Area are in various stages of development. These major transportation projects for passenger rail, commuter rail, tollways, and interstate travel are described below. Some of the identified projects are considered in this Tier 1 EIS as part of the cumulative effects analysis in Section 3.26.

Of the MWRRI corridors identified in Section 1.1, the following are currently funded passenger rail projects and are under development at various stages of planning and implementation:

- Chicago to Detroit (Pontiac), Michigan
- Chicago to St. Louis, Missouri
- St. Louis, Missouri, to Kansas City, Missouri
- Chicago to Moline, Illinois (the Illinois portion of the Chicago to Iowa City project)
- Chicago to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to Twin Cities, Minnesota, to Duluth, Minnesota

Illinois DOT is in the early planning stages for a passenger rail project between Chicago and Dubuque, Iowa.

Chicago's Metra has planned improvements to help offset the demand from the increasing population in northeast Illinois. Metra's four primary projects are the following (Commuter Rail Division of the Regional Transportation Authority, 2012):

- Suburban Transit Access Route (STAR Line) – Suburb-to-suburb commuter rail service between Joliet, Illinois, and O'Hare International Airport
- SouthEast Service (SES) – Commuter service in south Suburban Cook and Will counties
- Union Pacific Northwest (UP-NW) Line – Expansion of service to eastern McHenry County and the addition of express and reverse-commute service to northwest Cook County
- Union Pacific West (UP-W) Line – Capacity, speed, and reliability improvements for Cook, DuPage, and Kane counties

In addition to the aforementioned projects, Metra has initiated an Environmental Assessment and design of an extension of the BNSF Railway (BNSF) line from Aurora to Oswego, Illinois.

The Illinois State Toll Highway Authority has two capital programs. *Move Illinois* is a \$12 billion program to improve mobility, relieve congestion, reduce pollution, create jobs, and link economies in the Midwest (Illinois Tollway, 2012). This program includes improvements to existing tollways as well as the development of new tollways. The second capital program is the *Congestion-Relief Program* that was initiated in 2005 with \$5.8 billion to reduce travel times, rebuild and restore the existing system, and the recently constructed south extension of I-355 into Will County (Illinois Tollway, 2012).

Both Illinois DOT and Iowa DOT have numerous localized interstate improvement projects. Some of the larger projects near the Study Area include:

- Illiana Corridor (Illinois) – A proposed project south of Joliet, Illinois, that would provide a direct connection between I-55 in Illinois and I-65 in Indiana. The Tier 1 Final EIS and ROD were signed by FHWA on January 17, 2013 (Illinois DOT and Indiana DOT, January 2013).
- Elgin O’Hare West Bypass Study (Illinois) – A tiered analysis of transportation issues west of O’Hare International Airport that has identified a multi-modal alternative including a new expressway, arterial, transit, and bicycle/pedestrian improvements (FHWA, FAA, Illinois DOT, and Illinois State Toll Highway Authority, October 2012). The Tier 2 Final EIS was signed by FHWA on October 30, 2012 (FHWA, FAA, Illinois DOT, and Illinois State Toll Highway Authority, October 2012), and the Record of Decision was issued on December 12, 2012 (FHWA and FAA, December 2012).
- Council Bluffs Interstate System (CBIS) Improvements Project (Iowa) – A multi-phased project focused on improving I-80, Interstate 29 (I-29), and Interstate 480 (I-480) within the Omaha/Council Bluffs metropolitan area to improve mobility, reduce congestion and crashes, and add capacity along five roadway segments (Iowa DOT, 2012a). A Record of Decision on the Tier 1 process was issued on October 26, 2005, and Tier 2 NEPA documentation has been completed for Segments 1, 2, and 3. Segment 1 is fully constructed, and Segments 2 and 3 are under construction. For Segments 4 and 5, NEPA evaluations would be planned in the future.

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CHAPTER 2 ALTERNATIVES

This chapter identifies the initial range of route alternatives proposed for consideration for the Study. Route alternatives are the alternatives for the overall Project route and identify the termini and alignment for the service. The screening criteria and multi-step process used to evaluate these route alternatives, and the results of the alternatives analysis are also described. Subsequent to the route screening process, options for service (speeds, frequencies, and station stops) were identified, reviewed, and screened, and design options for route connectivity through the Des Moines, Iowa, area and the Council Bluffs, Iowa, and Omaha, Nebraska, area were considered. Although preliminary design would address specific infrastructure needs during the Tier 2 NEPA process, which may include the evaluation of design options, connectivity options must be initially addressed during preparation of the Tier 1 NEPA process. The No-Build Alternative and Build Alternative (including its phased implementation) are described in detail in this chapter. Finally, a summary of potential impacts of the No-Build Alternative and Build Alternative is provided.

2.1 ROUTE ALTERNATIVES DEVELOPMENT AND SCREENING

The identification of route alternatives and the screening process were documented in an Alternatives Analysis Report (FRA and Iowa DOT, 2012). This report was made available for review as discussed in Sections 4.1.3 and 4.3.1. Section 2.1 provides a summary of the Alternatives Analysis Report, which was revised in response to comments and is included in Appendix A.

2.1.1 Initial Range of Route Alternatives

The potential route alternatives for the Corridor have been evaluated based on reviews of previous studies and also the ideas and concepts that were suggested by resource agencies and the public during the scoping process.

The range of route alternatives includes the No-Build Alternative and existing or former freight-only or freight-passenger routes that may have been previously identified by the MWRRRI and other studies. Entirely new construction on new right-of-way (ROW) (that is, a greenfield route) was considered but determined to be unreasonable because of the cost of new ROW and the challenge of timely acquisition of property. Additionally, grading entirely new ROW, rather than expanding as needed along existing ROW, would cause more impact on the natural and human environments¹ than on-alignment route alternatives.

¹ The natural environment includes living and non-living things that are naturally on earth, whereas the human environment is the remaining portion of the environment that has been modified by man.

The No-Build Alternative, the five previously established passenger rail routes in the Corridor (Route Alternatives 1 through 5), and the combination of Route 4 and Route 5 (Route Alternative 4-A) compose the initial range of route alternatives proposed for consideration for the Study. These route alternatives are shown in Figure 2-1, including the major cities through which they travel. The No-Build Alternative is included to provide a basis for comparison to the other route alternatives (40 CFR 1502.14; 64 FR 28545).

2.1.2 Screening Methodology

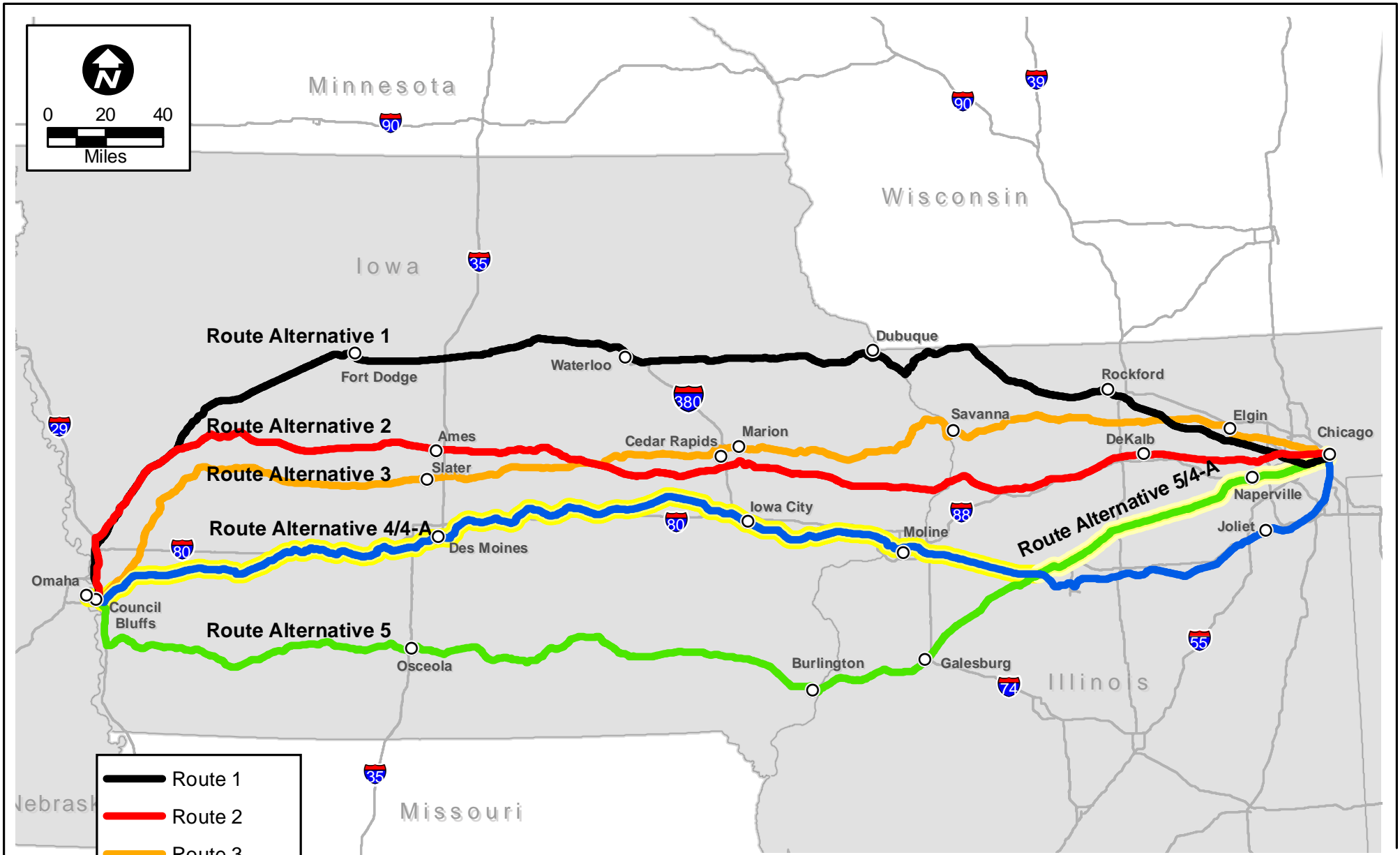
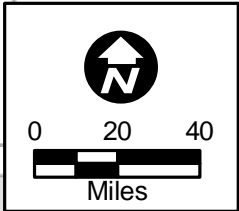
The methodology for screening route alternatives consisted of developing screening criteria and performing the screening process. The screening process included two steps: an initial coarse-level screening to identify whether any route alternative would be hindered by major challenges (and would thus be eliminated from further evaluation) and a subsequent fine-level screening to evaluate each route alternative in greater quantitative and qualitative detail. This two-step screening process was intended to allow the Tier 1 EIS to focus on only those route alternatives that would meet the purpose and need for the service and that are reasonable and feasible.







2.1.3 Screening Criteria

The screening process for evaluating and eventually selecting reasonable and feasible route alternatives to carry forward for detailed consideration in the Tier 1 EIS relied on four broad screening criteria that were used for coarse- and fine-level screening. These four criteria are noted below, with Table 2-1 identifying and describing subcriteria for coarse-level screening, and Table 2-2 identifying and describing subcriteria for fine-level screening:

- Meeting the purpose and need for passenger rail service between Chicago and Omaha (this is a critical criterion under NEPA because those alternatives that don't meet the underlying purpose and need for a project are eliminated from further consideration)
- Technical feasibility (this criterion addresses physical and operational considerations for a project)
- Economic feasibility (this criterion applies to economic considerations of anticipated revenue and costs)
- Environmental concerns (this criterion considers whether there would be substantial concerns with respect to impacts on the natural and human environment)

These screening criteria were used to compare the merits and drawbacks of each route alternative during both levels of the two-step screening process. Appendix A includes additional description of the criteria and the screening process for identification and review of route alternatives.



-  Route 1
-  Route 2
-  Route 3
-  Route 4
-  Route 5
-  Route Hybrid



**Chicago to Council Bluffs - Omaha
Route Alternatives**

Chicago to Council Bluffs - Omaha
Regional Passenger Rail System Planning Study

DATE	May 2013
FIGURE	2-1

2.1.4 Screening Process

A two-step screening process—coarse-level screening and fine-level screening—was used to evaluate proposed route alternatives using the four screening criteria. The purpose of the two-step screening process was to eliminate route alternatives burdened by major challenges. The coarse-level screening was applied to the initial range of route alternatives, unreasonable alternatives were eliminated from further consideration, fine-level screening was applied to the remaining alternatives, and the one or more alternatives that passed through the fine-level screening process were carried forward for detailed evaluation under the Tier 1 NEPA process.

2.1.4.1 Coarse-Level Screening of Route Alternatives

Coarse-level screening is a high-level screening to determine which route alternatives meet the purpose and need, are technically and economically feasible, and are environmentally reasonable. Route alternatives that met all of these criteria were carried forward to fine-level screening. Route alternatives that did not meet all of these criteria were eliminated from further consideration. The route alternatives that did meet purpose and need were evaluated based on technical, economic, and environmental criteria. These criteria and their factors for evaluation are presented in Table 2-1; the Purpose and Need criterion and the Environmental Concerns criterion each have subcriteria defined for evaluation (see Appendix A for more comprehensive information on the screening process). Information gained during the scoping process was used to help compare and screen route alternatives.

A 500-foot wide buffer was applied to each of the route alternatives analyzed in the coarse-level screening. This buffer provided a conservative limit for screening the route alternatives.

Table 2-1. Coarse-Level Screening Criteria

Criteria	Factors
Purpose and Need: Travel Demand	Other than the Chicago and Omaha/Council Bluffs metropolitan areas, what is the population served by the route alternative?
Purpose and Need: Competitive and Attractive Travel Modes	Would the route alternative provide a time-competitive route compared to other route alternatives?
Technical Feasibility	Would the route alternative involve substantially more technical hurdles than other route alternatives? Factors considered include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major construction efforts, such as major earthwork and major new bridges • Potential for freight train traffic conflicts and scope of engineering solutions for such conflicts
Economic Feasibility	Would the route alternative have costs far in excess of its anticipated benefits? Would the route alternative be substantially more expensive than other route alternatives?
Environmental Concerns: Major Challenges	Based on qualitative analysis, does the route alternative have major environmental (natural and human environment) challenges compared to other considered route alternatives?
Environmental Concerns: Sensitive Areas	Based on qualitative analysis, would the route alternative traverse substantially more environmentally sensitive areas (such as wetlands, wildlife and waterfowl refuges, cultural resources, and park and recreation lands) than other route alternatives?
Environmental Concerns: Right-of-Way	Would the route alternative require substantially more ROW acquisition than other route alternatives?

2.1.4.2 Fine-Level Screening of Route Alternatives

Fine-level screening was conducted to determine which remaining route alternatives would be carried forward for detailed evaluation in this Tier 1 EIS. During fine-level screening, route alternatives carried forward from the coarse-level screening were further screened for their ability to offer the highest potential ridership; the least potential construction, operation, and maintenance cost; and the least potential impact on the natural and human environment.

In order to estimate potential impacts, a preliminary impact area was identified for each route alternative. Existing ROW was assumed to be 100 feet wide throughout each route alternative. A buffer ranging from 25 to 50 feet wide was then applied where necessary to accommodate additional track needs, to promote efficient track maintenance, and to mitigate any operating disruptions generated by passenger trains. Therefore, the buffer area applied is specific to each route alternative. The preliminary impact area analyzed for each route alternative in the fine-level screening included the estimated 100-foot-wide ROW and the 25- to 50-foot-wide buffer area for additional track.

The criteria and their factors evaluated during fine-level screening are listed in Table 2-2. Purpose and Need, Technical Feasibility, and Environmental Concerns each have subcriteria defined for evaluation. The environmental criteria were selected from those resources that were readily quantifiable, and often include constraints on project development. Some of the resources selected for screening would also require permits or approvals. Consequently, although not every environmental resource included in this NEPA document was considered for initial screening of alternatives, the resources selected for screening were known to be key constraints.

Table 2-2. Fine-Level Screening Criteria

Criteria	Factors
Purpose and Need: Travel Demand	Does a preliminary travel demand analysis indicate that the route alternative would attract a substantially greater or lesser number of riders compared to other route alternatives? Would the route alternative attract sufficient ridership to be an economically feasible alternative?
Purpose and Need: Competitive and Attractive Travel Modes	Based on information from coarse-level screening, determine if running times can be further refined for each route alternative. Would the route alternative provide a time-competitive route compared to other route alternatives?
Technical Feasibility: Passenger and Freight Capacity	Determine general infrastructure improvements that would be required to deliver desired passenger train speeds and schedules. Determine general infrastructure improvements required to maintain existing and future freight train services while enabling prioritized passenger-train operation.
Technical/Economic Feasibility: Alignment	Would the route alternative involve a more challenging alignment or grading problems, including flyovers, in order to meet speed and capacity requirements?
Technical/Economic Feasibility: Structures	Establish conceptual costs for structures for each route alternative for purposes of comparison.
Technical/Economic Feasibility: Grade Crossings	Determine the number of new and expanded grade crossings and grade separations for each route alternative for purposes of comparison.
Economic Feasibility:	Determine high-level project cost for route alternative comparison utilizing subcomponents that address alignment, structures, grade crossings, etc. Determine operating and maintenance costs for each route alternative as a basis for comparison.
Environmental Concerns: Environmental Impacts	<p>Upon initial evaluation of the route alternative and quantification of conceptual environmental effects, would the route alternative have the potential to impact substantially more environmentally sensitive areas in the following categories compared with other route alternatives?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streams • Floodplains • Wetlands • Farmland • Threatened and endangered species • Cultural resources • Potential Section 4(f)/6(f) protected properties • Environmental justice • Noise and vibration • Hazardous materials
Environmental Concerns: Right-of-Way	Determine conceptual ROW acquisition for each route alternative for purposes of comparison (refined from coarse-level screening). Would the route alternative require acquisition and demolition/disruption of substantially more structures, developments, agricultural resources, or features of the existing built environment (including homes, businesses, farms, and historic properties listed on the NRHP) than other route alternatives?

2.1.4.3 Results of Route Alternative Screening Process

The coarse- and fine-level screening of route alternatives is documented in detail in the Final Alternatives Analysis Report (FRA and Iowa DOT, 2012), included in Appendix A. A draft version of that report was available for public review during preparation of the Tier 1 Draft EIS. Comments on the Draft Alternatives Analysis Report were considered in development of the final version of that report. The coarse-level screening process eliminated Route Alternative 3 from further consideration because it would have the highest cost; require a substantial permitting effort; result in unacceptably high impacts on landowners because of the ROW needs; and cause extensive impacts on communities, infrastructure, wetlands, streams, and wildlife habitat. The fine-level screening process eliminated Route Alternatives 1, 2, 4, and 5 from further consideration because they were neither reasonable nor feasible alternatives. Therefore, Route Alternative 4-A is the only route alternative carried forward for further analysis in the Tier 1 EIS. Below is a summary from the Alternatives Analysis Report providing the rationale for eliminating or carrying forward the aforementioned route alternatives. As discussed in the Alternatives Analysis Report, the base case represents the lowest cost or shortest travel time and varies depending on the criterion. Route Alternative 4 had the lowest estimated cost and was considered to be the base case for the preliminary cost estimate, and Route Alternative 2 had the shortest travel time and was the base case for the comparison of travel times.

Route Alternative 1

Route Alternative 1 did not meet the purpose and need for the Project because it would not attract the necessary ridership from Iowa communities and the Omaha/Council Bluffs metropolitan area to generate adequate revenue. In addition, because this route alternative is longest and slowest of the route alternatives, it would not offer a competitive travel time, and because of its length, Route Alternative 1 would have excessive operations and maintenance costs. Route Alternative 1 also did not meet the technical/economic criteria because it would require a major new structure over the Mississippi River and its costs were excessive compared to the base case of preliminary cost estimates for improvement of Route Alternative 4, which had the least expensive costs. Route Alternative 1 was determined to be neither reasonable nor feasible.

Route Alternative 2

Despite the fact that it has the shortest travel time, Route Alternative 2 did not meet the purpose and need for the Project because it would not attract adequate ridership or generate the necessary revenue to make the service viable. Route Alternative 2 also did not meet the technical/economic criteria; it would require extensive new ROW and a major new structure over the Mississippi River. Route Alternative 2 did not meet the economic criterion because of the excessive capital cost requirements. Route Alternative 2 would cost approximately \$1 billion more than the base case, without providing any additional service or ridership benefits. Route Alternative 2 was determined to be neither reasonable nor feasible.

Route Alternative 3

Of the six route alternatives, the greatest challenges are presented by Route Alternative 3. Not only would Route Alternative 3 have the highest cost, but also the permitting effort would be substantial. Establishing approximately 225 miles of new railroad ROW would create unacceptably high impacts on landowners, and the resulting permitting process would be extremely long. An extended permitting process could void the early baseline data prior to the permit being issued, thus requiring a second round of baseline data gathering and potentially requiring a re-evaluation of the findings of the Tier 1 EIS. Constructing essentially greenfield railroad for Route Alternative 3 would have significant impacts on communities, infrastructure, wetlands, streams, and wildlife habitat. Former bridges across major rivers would need to be reconstructed at high costs and environmental impacts. In addition to the high cost of ROW acquisition and bridge reconstruction, track and infrastructure would also need to be reestablished at an appreciable cost. As a result of the extremely high environmental and economic hurdles to re-establishing this abandoned rail corridor and anticipated local opposition and controversy, Route Alternative 3 was deemed unreasonable and was eliminated from further study during the coarse-level screening process.

Route Alternative 4

Route Alternative 4 does not meet the purpose and need for the project because the Chicago terminus of Route Alternative 4 is at La Salle Street Station instead of Chicago Union Station and provides substantially less connectivity at Chicago. It would not provide for the connection to the MWRRI high-speed network, which is connected through the Chicago hub at Chicago Union Station. This connection would be costly, have impacts on urban areas that the connection would be constructed through, and is not practical.

Route Alternative 4 was the least costly (not accounting for a connection from La Salle Street Station to Chicago Union Station) and was considered to represent the base case for comparison of preliminary costs of the other route alternatives; it would attract adequate ridership and would generate adequate revenue. However, Route Alternative 4 currently does not have a direct connection to Chicago Union Station and does not have adequate capacity for the proposed Chicago to Council Bluffs-Omaha passenger trains to travel on the commuter train routes that they would share in the Chicago urban area. Route Alternative 4 would require extensive upgrades of the track structure between Wyand and Joliet. In addition, Route Alternative 4 would require extensive addition of capacity to mitigate freight traffic between Wyand and Joliet, and freight and commuter traffic between Joliet and Chicago Union Station.

East of Wyand, Illinois, Route Alternative 4 comprises the former Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad (CRI&P), which served La Salle Street Station in Chicago. Studies for the Chicago to St. Louis high-speed passenger rail corridor have identified a potential connection alignment between La Salle Street Station and Chicago Union Station. This potential connection alignment would connect the former CRI&P track to La Salle Street Station (now owned by Metra and used for commuter passenger trains) and parallel tracks approximately 1 mile to the west (now owned by Union Pacific Railroad (UP) and Norfolk Southern Railway [NS]) that provide a direct connection to Chicago Union Station. This connection alignment would use an existing NS line that departs from the former CRI&P (now Metra)

line and passes underneath the UP and NS lines. A new connection track would need to be constructed in the northeast quadrant of this underpass so Chicago to Council Bluffs-Omaha passenger trains could move directly between Chicago Union Station and the former CRI&P (now Metra) route without a reverse movement west of the underpass. This connection track would be constructed through an urban neighborhood and would require the acquisition and demolition of businesses on at least one city block. It would also require grade-separation structures that would result in additional property acquisition in this neighborhood. Capacity of the former CRI&P (now Metra) line is limited, and placement of the Chicago to Council Bluffs-Omaha passenger trains on this line would likely require significant capacity improvements, such as an additional main track. The majority of the ROW of the former CRI&P (now Metra) line is fully occupied by the existing main tracks. Additional ROW would be needed for an additional main track and would require extensive acquisitions of adjacent homes and businesses. Based on the lack of an existing connection from La Salle Street Station to Chicago Union Station and the lack of capacity on the former CRI&P (now Metra) line, as well as the associated cost and impacts of constructing a connection and providing additional capacity, Route Alternative 4 was determined to be neither reasonable nor feasible.

Following publication of the Tier 1 Draft EIS for the Project, the Record of Decision for the Tier 1 Chicago to St. Louis High-Speed Rail Corridor Program (FRA, December 2012) was signed by FRA. That Record of Decision indicated that a connection is planned from Metra's Rock Island District track to Chicago Union Station along Route Alternative 4. However, several processes need to occur before the project plans would be implemented and the service would be operational. An initial subsequent process would be development of an FRA-required Tier 2 site-specific NEPA document to evaluate the section of the program that includes the connection. The proposed connection would require land acquisition in an urban setting. In addition, the capacity and level of service of the proposed connection is unknown. Consequently, the potential exists that the connection might not be present, or may not have adequate capacity, which would affect planning and design for the Project. Because the comparison of route alternatives for the Project was conducted based on the review of existing conditions, the lack of a current connection was a critical element in reviewing the practicality of this route alternative.

Route Alternative 5

Route Alternative 5 did not meet the purpose and need for the Project because it would not attract adequate ridership or generate the necessary revenue to make the service viable. Route Alternative 5 also did not meet the technical/economic criteria; it would require extensive new ROW and a major new structure over the Mississippi River. Route Alternative 5 did not meet the economic criterion because of the excessive capital cost requirements. Route Alternative 5 would cost approximately \$1.2 billion more than the base case, without providing any additional service or ridership benefits. Route Alternative 5 was determined to be neither reasonable nor feasible.

Route Alternative 4-A

Route Alternative 4-A was identified as the Build Alternative for the Project and has been carried forward for further analysis in the Tier 1 EIS. Table 2-3 (derived from Table 7-1 from the Final Alternatives Analysis Report, which is included in Appendix A and provides detailed information on the screening process) illustrates the comparison of the criteria from fine-level screening supporting the screening process. Route Alternative 4-A was carried forward for detailed evaluation because, when compared to the other route alternatives considered during fine-level screening, it:

- Meets Project purpose and need (purpose and need)
- Has relatively low construction complexity and relatively low construction costs (technical and economic feasibility)
- Has grade-crossing complexity similar to all route alternatives (technical feasibility)
- Is the shortest route alternative (purpose and need)
- Has a competitive passenger-train travel time (purpose and need)
- Serves the largest population (purpose and need)
- Has the highest ridership and farebox revenue forecast (purpose and need, and economic feasibility)
- Has direct access to Chicago Union Station (technical and economic feasibility)
- Has no unreasonable environmental resource issues (environmental concerns)

Route Alternative 4-A was determined to be the only reasonable and feasible route alternative reviewed in the Alternatives Analysis Report.

Table 2-3. Route Alternative Comparison

Criteria	Relative Ranking of Route Alternative					
	Route Alternative 1	Route Alternative 2	Route Alternative 4	Route Alternative 5	Route Alternative 4-A	No-Build Alternative
Purpose and Need: Travel Demand	774,000 total population served	523,940 total population served	1,034,000 total population served	167,000 total population served	1,034,000 total population served	No additional service
Ridership Forecast	505,000 to 715,000	375,000 to 550,000	640,000 to 885,000	255,000 to 370,000	680,000 to 935,000	None
Revenue Forecast	\$15.2 to \$22.2 million	\$14.7 to \$22.0 million	\$22.9 to \$32.2 million	\$11.2 to \$16.6 million	\$24.2 to \$33.9 million	None
Preliminary Running Time^a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Base at 79 mph + 43 minutes • Base at 90 mph + 43 minutes • Base at 110 mph + 40 minutes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Base at 79 mph • Base at 90 mph • Base at 110 mph 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Base at 79 mph + 17 minutes • Base at 90 mph + 22 minutes • Base at 110 mph + 25 minutes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Base at 79 mph + 18 minutes • Base at 90 mph + 16 minutes • Base at 110 mph + 13 minutes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Base at 79 mph + 4 minutes • Base at 90 mph + 8 minutes • Base at 110 mph + 14 minutes 	Not Applicable
Purpose and Need: Competitive and Attractive Travel Modes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 516 miles long • Excessive travel time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 479 miles long • Competitive travel time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 490 miles long • Competitive travel time • Lack of connection to Chicago Union Station 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 496 miles long • Competitive travel time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 474 miles long • Competitive travel time 	No new travel mode
Technical Feasibility: Passenger and Freight Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Mississippi River Bridge • Freight congestion Dubuque terminal • Partial second main track 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Mississippi River Bridge • New third main track entire distance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freight congestion Des Moines terminal • Partial second main track 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Mississippi River Bridge • New third main track entire distance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freight congestion Des Moines terminal • Partial second and third main track 	No change to existing capacity
Technical/Economic Feasibility: Alignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heavy curvature on approaches to Mississippi River valley • Moderate curvature in Iowa • Heavy earthwork requirements on approaches to Mississippi River valley 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Light curvature • Heavy earthwork requirements to add third main track 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderate curvature along Illinois River • Moderate curvature between Des Moines and Atlantic • Moderate earthwork requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Light curvature • Heavy earthwork requirements to add third main track 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderate curvature between Des Moines and Atlantic • Moderate earthwork requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No change to existing alignments

Criteria	Relative Ranking of Route Alternative					
	Route Alternative 1	Route Alternative 2	Route Alternative 4	Route Alternative 5	Route Alternative 4-A	No-Build Alternative
Technical/Economic Feasibility: Structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New or improved East Dubuque Tunnel • New Mississippi River bridge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Mississippi and Des Moines (Kate Shelly) bridges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grade separation with UP at Des Moines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Mississippi River bridge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grade separation with UP at Des Moines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No changes to structures
Technical/Economic Feasibility: Grade Crossings	High number of grade crossings, but not technically complicated	Substantial challenges at each grade crossing	High number of grade crossings, but not technically complicated	Substantial challenges at each grade crossing	High number of grade crossings, but not technically complicated	No changes to grade crossings
Economic Feasibility^b	Base cost + \$550 million	Base cost + \$1,005 million	Base cost	Base cost + \$1,230.6 million	Base cost + \$147.2 million	Not applicable
Environmental Concerns: Environmental Impacts	No unreasonable environmental resource issues identified	No unreasonable environmental resource issues identified	No unreasonable environmental resource issues identified	No unreasonable environmental resource issues identified	No unreasonable environmental resource issues identified	No unreasonable environmental resource issues identified
Environmental Concerns: Right-of-Way	2,200 acres needed (600 urban/1,600 rural)	3,200 acres needed (950 urban/2,250 rural)	2,100 acres needed (800 urban/1,300 rural)	3,000 acres needed (850 urban/2,150 rural)	2,200 acres needed (800 urban/1,400 rural)	None
Meets Purpose and Need	No	No	No	No	Yes	No
Carried Forward	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes^c

Notes:

^a Preliminary running time is shown as the base, or lowest, speed at each anticipated train speed (79, 90, and 110 mph) plus the length of time in minutes that each route alternative exceeds the base running time. Route Alternative 2 has the shortest running time, which is referred to as the base. Actual numbers for the base running time are not provided because they were developed using high-level analysis and were used only to show the relative time as compared to other alternatives.

^b Economic feasibility is shown as the base, or lowest, cost plus the dollar amount (in millions) that each route alternative exceeds the base cost. Route Alternative 4 had the lowest estimated cost, which is referred to as the base cost. Actual numbers for the base cost are not provided because they were developed using high-level analysis and were used only to show the relative cost as compared to other alternatives.

^c While the No-Build Alternative does not meet purpose and need, it is carried forward to provide a basis of comparison to any route alternative (40 CFR 1502.14; 64 FR 28545).

2.2 DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES

The No-Build Alternative and the Build Alternative (Route Alternative 4-A) are carried forward for further analysis in this Tier 1 EIS and are described below.

2.2.1 No-Build Alternative

The No-Build Alternative would consist of the current trackage and operations with the present level of maintenance and no appreciable change to current track configuration or operations. The No-Build Alternative would not involve construction and operation of intercity passenger rail service from Chicago to Omaha, but independently planned construction of passenger rail service from Chicago to Moline would still occur. This project is referred to as the Chicago to Quad Cities Expansion Program and includes operation of two round-trips per day at speeds of up to 79 mph, a connection to join BNSF and Iowa Interstate Railroad (IAIS) track near Wyanet, Illinois, as well as improvements at Eola Yard in Eola, Illinois. Construction for the Chicago to Quad Cities Expansion Program is anticipated to commence in 2013 and the service to be operational by 2015.

Other transportation projects in the vicinity of the proposed Chicago to Council Bluffs-Omaha Regional Passenger Rail System could occur independently, with or without the Project, and include the projects listed below (Section 3.26.2 provides more information on these projects, and Section 1.5 discusses some of the projects).

MWRRI Projects:

- Chicago to Detroit-Pontiac, Michigan
- Chicago to St. Louis, Missouri
- Chicago to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to Twin Cities, Minnesota, to Duluth, Minnesota

Metra Projects:

- STAR Line SES
- UP-NW Line
- UP-W Line
- BNSF Line Aurora to Oswego Extension

Additional projects to facilitate passenger rail systems in Illinois and Iowa include:

- Illinois: Midwest Train Equipment Fleet
- Illinois: Chicago Terminal Limits for the Midwest Regional Rail System
- Illinois: Chicago to St. Louis High-Speed Rail Corridor
- Illinois: Amtrak Illinois Zephyr Galesburg Congestion Relief Project
- Iowa: Ottumwa Subdivision Capitalized Maintenance
- Iowa: Ottumwa Subdivision Crossover Improvements

Major roadway projects:

- Illinois: *Move Illinois*
- Illinois: *Congestion-Relief Program*
- Illinois: Illiana Expressway
- Illinois: Elgin O'Hare West Bypass
- Iowa: Ottumwa Subdivision Capitalized Maintenance
- Iowa and Nebraska: CBIS Improvements Project

Other intercity passenger rail services that currently operate within or adjacent to the Chicago to Omaha Corridor, including Amtrak's *California Zephyr* and *Southwest Chief*, and Illinois' state-supported, Amtrak-operated *Illinois Zephyr* and *Carl Sandburg* services, are assumed to continue to operate under the No-Build Alternative. The *California Zephyr* and *Southwest Chief* are categorized as long-distance trains, with schedules and accommodations oriented for passengers traveling long distances, such as between Chicago and California.

Accordingly, these trains have schedules designed primarily to serve their target long-distance markets, and include both sleeper and full-service diner accommodations for passengers. As such, while they operate within or adjacent to the Chicago to Omaha Corridor, their operation is not specifically designed to meet the needs of travelers within that Corridor. The *Illinois Zephyr* and *Carl Sandburg* are operated by Amtrak under contract to the State of Illinois and are supported by financial assistance provided through appropriations by the Illinois Legislature. They are categorized as regional trains with daytime schedules, begin and end their trips between their endpoints within the same calendar day, and do not offer sleeper or full-service diner accommodations for passengers. While the design of the operation of these services is similar to what is contemplated for the Chicago to Omaha Corridor, they generally service different geographic markets.

Similarly, under the No-Build Alternative, other forms of long-distance and regional transportation, such as commercial airline and bus services, are assumed to continue operating within the Corridor in the same manner as current operations.

The No-Build Alternative would not meet the project purpose and need because intercity passenger rail service would not be reestablished in Iowa City or Des Moines, there would not be an attractive alternative to highway or airline travel; and congestion of these modes of transportation in the Corridor would not be reduced. As population increases, demand for regional and long-distance travel services is projected to increase, and the number of flights, bus trips, and personal vehicle trips would increase, causing increased congestion.

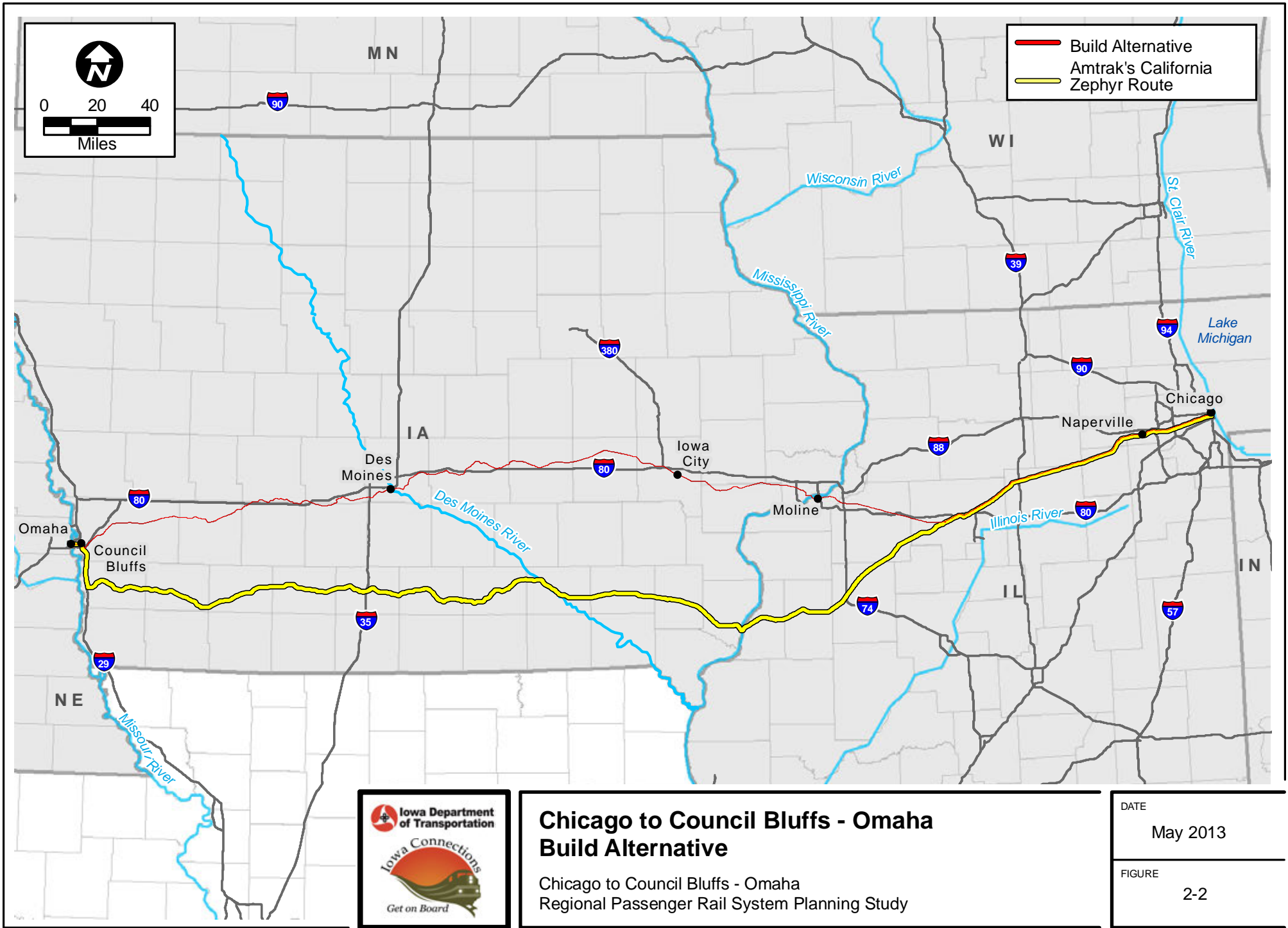
The No-Build Alternative was retained for detailed analysis to allow equal comparison to the Build Alternative carried forward and to help decision makers and the public understand the consequences of taking no action. NEPA requires consideration of no action to serve as a baseline for comparison with the proposed action.

2.2.3 Build Alternative

The Build Alternative consists of the improvements associated with Route Alternative 4-A to accommodate up to seven round-trip passenger trains per day at maximum speeds of up to 110 mph. Current maximum train speeds vary along the Corridor due to existing operations, traffic volumes, and infrastructure condition. The Build Alternative, shown in Figure 2-2, is approximately 475 miles long and consists of tracks currently owned and operated by four rail carriers between Chicago and Omaha. Figure 2-2 also shows the route of the *California Zephyr*; this service is anticipated to continue regardless of whether the Chicago to Council Bluffs-Omaha Project is constructed. These four rail carriers and the approximate distances of trackage² on which the Build Alternative would operate are as follows:

- Amtrak – 1.6 miles from Chicago Union Station to 21st Street in Chicago
- BNSF – 110.5 miles from 21st Street in Chicago to a proposed connection with IAIS near Wyanet, Illinois
- IAIS – 45.9 miles from a proposed connection with BNSF near Wyanet, Illinois, to its connection with BNSF near Silvis, Illinois
- BNSF – 5.1 miles from its connection with IAIS near Silvis, Illinois, to its connection with IAIS near Rock Island, Illinois
- IAIS – 172.7 miles from its connection with BNSF near Rock Island, Illinois, to its connection with UP near Short Line Yard, East Des Moines, Iowa (this section includes the Government Bridge, a multiple-span movable bridge across the Mississippi River owned and maintained by the U.S. Army, Rock Island Arsenal, and administered by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers [USACE])
- UP – 12 miles from its connection with IAIS near Short Line Yard, East Des Moines, Iowa, to its connection with IAIS near West Des Moines, Iowa
- IAIS – 125 miles from its connection with UP near West Des Moines, Iowa, to its connection with UP at Pool Yard, Council Bluffs, Iowa
- UP – 2.5 miles from its connection with IAIS at Pool Yard, Council Bluffs, Iowa, to its connection with BNSF at Tower A, Omaha, Nebraska
- BNSF – 0.5 mile from its connection with UP at Tower A, Omaha, Nebraska, to the vicinity of the Omaha Amtrak station

² The distances of trackage are only approximate because there have been changes in mileposts over the 150 years that the railroads have been operating, and in several locations, the length depends on which main track the mileage is estimated along.



Chicago to Council Bluffs - Omaha Build Alternative

Chicago to Council Bluffs - Omaha
Regional Passenger Rail System Planning Study

DATE
May 2013

FIGURE
2-2

Subsequent to the identification of Route Alternative 4-A as the Build Alternative, further evaluations were conducted by Iowa DOT regarding the infrastructure needed to support operations on the Project. The aforementioned list of existing track does not account for new track anticipated to be needed in a few locations, such as upgrading the connection of BNSF and IAIS tracks at Wyanet, and connections in Des Moines, and through Council Bluffs to Omaha. Additionally, the need for stations and maintenance facilities to support the passenger rail operations was identified. The planned increase in train speeds involved a preliminary review of existing at-grade rail crossings. A process to review service options including number of round-trips per day, train speeds, and types and numbers of station stops was conducted. Due to predicted funding limitations, implementation phases for the Project were studied. In addition, current and projected freight and passenger operations were reviewed. The following subsections summarize the evaluations performed to help define the Build Alternative.

2.2.3.1 Infrastructure

For the Build Alternative to function efficiently, improvements would be required. A preliminary analysis of improvements was conducted in support of the Tier 1 Draft EIS, and was refined in this Tier 1 Final EIS after additional modeling and operational analyses were performed. This resulted in a list of required improvements to meet minimum infrastructure needs; however, specific locations for improvements are currently unknown. A detailed study of the specific design for each identified improvement would not be conducted until Tier 2 analysis of the Project. The types of improvements needed include infrastructure upgrades, at-grade roadway crossings, stations, and layover and maintenance facilities. Consequently, although one Build Alternative is being evaluated in this Tier 1 Final EIS, there are alternatives for infrastructure improvements being evaluated at the Tier 1 level.

The Build Alternative would include construction of new main track, sidings, and connection tracks; upgrades to existing track to enable faster passenger train speeds and the desired passenger train service reliability; installation of wayside signaling systems³ to enable Centralized Traffic Control (CTC)⁴ as the method of operation throughout the route; and installation of a Positive Train Control (PTC)⁵ system where not already implemented.

Throughout the Corridor, connections to the existing main track would be required for meet/pass events, access to industries, and capacity for maintenance-of-way activities. The additional main track constructed may be discontinuous through urban areas and across bridges. Revisions of and improvements to the signaling systems would be implemented.

³ A wayside signaling system is a system adjacent to the railroad tracks that helps provide for control of train movements with visual indications through lights, mast arms, or electronic signals.

⁴ CTC is a method of train traffic control in which a dispatcher remotely controls signals and switches. Trains must observe the controlled signals (Bryan, May 1, 2006).

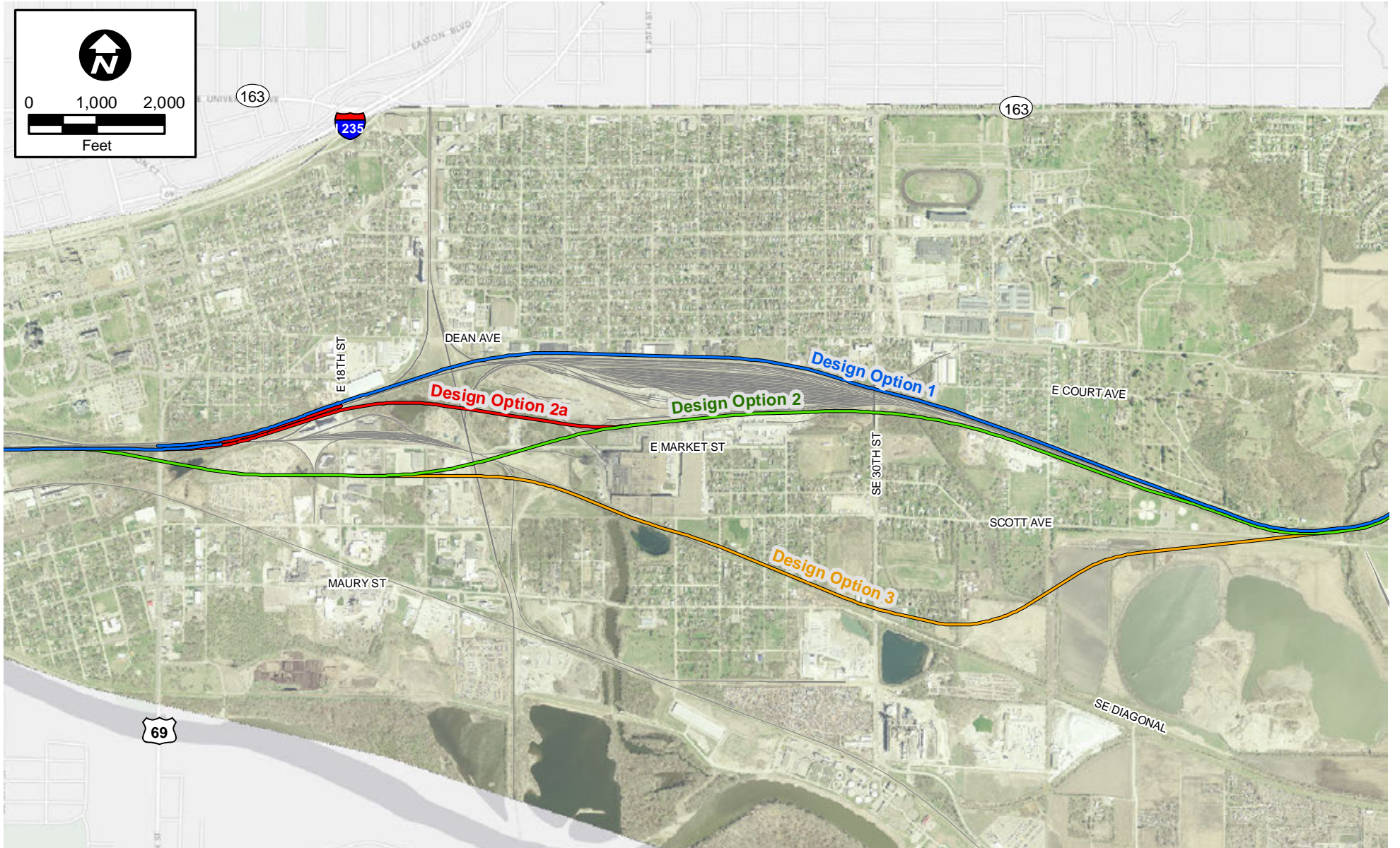
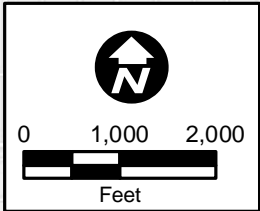
⁵ PTC is defined by FRA as “communication-based/processor-based train control technology that provides a system capable of reliably and functionally preventing train-to-train collisions, overspeed derailments, incursions into established work zone limits, and the movement of a train through a main line switch in the improper position” (FRA, June 7, 2012).

The preliminary analysis of improvement needs was conducted along the Corridor to establish a boundary of the area potentially disturbed during construction of the Project. The area potentially needed to construct the improvements constitutes the Potential Impact Area, and is further described in the introduction to Chapter 3. Based on preliminary modeling of capacity and demand completed for this Tier 1 Final EIS, expansion of the Potential Impact Area was not required. There is the potential that based on Tier 2 analysis, improvements may be required outside the Tier 1 Potential Impact Area. If the Tier 1 Potential Impact Area is expanded, areas added to the Potential Impact Area would be studied in detail in the Tier 2 NEPA documents. In addition, detailed capacity modeling will be conducted during Tier 2 analysis to identify more specific requirements for revisions of and improvements to the wayside signal system, crossovers and interlocking plants, and connection tracks in order to provide adequate capacity for the proposed passenger trains. In the event that these improvements would occur outside the Tier 1 Potential Impact Area, studies during Tier 2 would characterize these areas and document the changes relative to preliminary boundaries identified during Tier 1.

In consideration of existing infrastructure, train traffic, roadways, urban land uses, and abandoned rail corridors, a few alignment options within the Corridor were identified. There are multiple alignment options through East Des Moines, Iowa, and across the Missouri River between Council Bluffs, Iowa and Omaha, Nebraska, as well as multiple station location options in Des Moines, Council Bluffs, and Omaha. Consequently, the Potential Impact Area includes all alignments and locations currently under consideration. Figure 2-3 illustrates potential options for connecting the Corridor through Des Moines, and Figure 2-4 shows potential options for crossing of the Missouri River. The Tier 2 analysis will confirm selection of the alignment locations and station locations.

2.2.3.2 Station Stops

Station stops considered include all of the stops identified in the Final Alternatives Analysis Report (see Appendix A) as well as additional stops. The proposed passenger rail service would continue to use existing Amtrak long-distance or Illinois-state-sponsored service stations at Chicago Union Station, La Grange Road, Naperville, Plano, Mendota, and Princeton, Illinois; and potentially at Omaha, Nebraska. New stations or reuse and modification of existing or past stations are proposed at Geneseo and Moline, Illinois; Iowa City, Grinnell, Des Moines, Atlantic, and Council Bluffs, Iowa; and potentially Omaha, Nebraska. Proposed station locations for Des Moines, Council Bluffs, and Omaha are shown in Figure 2-5 along with alternative station locations. The proposed location in Des Moines is at or near the former Rock Island railroad station between 4th and 5th Streets. In Council Bluffs, the proposed location is adjacent to the Council Bluffs Energy Center (CBEC) Railway, with alternate locations off the BNSF Council Bluffs Subdivision, at or near the former Rock Island/Milwaukee Road Council Bluffs Union Station, off Valley View Drive, and in the southeast quadrant of the I-80 and U.S. Highway 6 interchange. The proposed location in Omaha is at the former Burlington Route station, with alternate locations in north downtown, by the CenturyLink Center, the former Union Station, and the current Amtrak station. Figure 2-6 shows proposed locations for stations in Grinnell (in the southeast quadrant of the intersection of IAIS and UP rail lines), at or near the former Rock Island station, and Atlantic (at or adjacent to a former Rock Island railroad station).

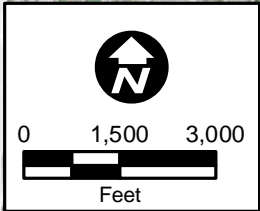


Des Moines Design Options

Chicago to Council Bluffs - Omaha
Regional Passenger Rail System Planning Study

DATE
May 2013

FIGURE
2-3

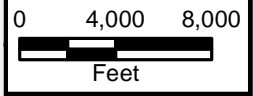
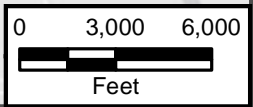
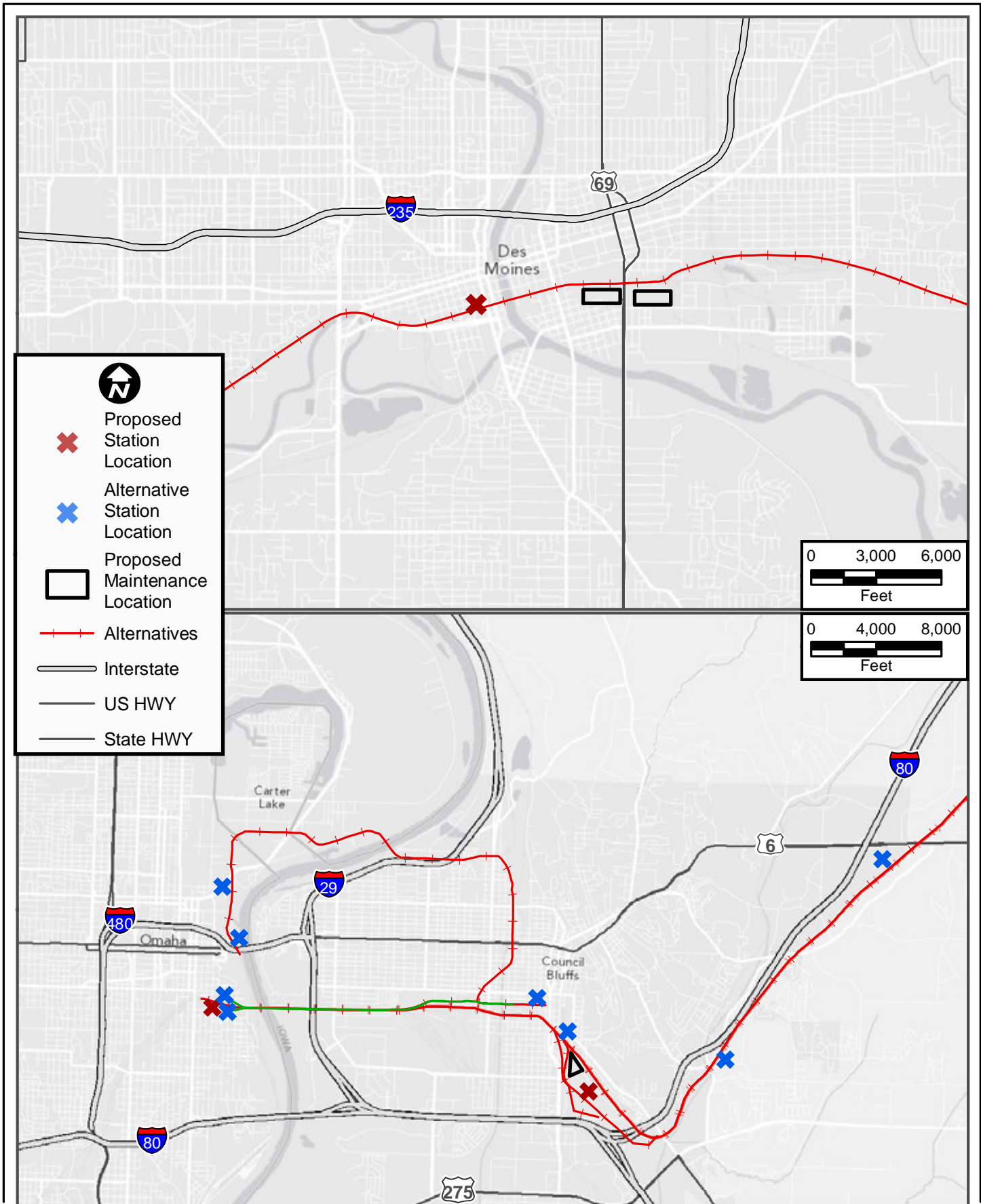


Missouri River Crossing Design Options Council Bluffs, IA and Omaha, NE

Chicago to Council Bluffs - Omaha
Regional Passenger Rail System Planning Study

DATE
May 2013

FIGURE
2-4

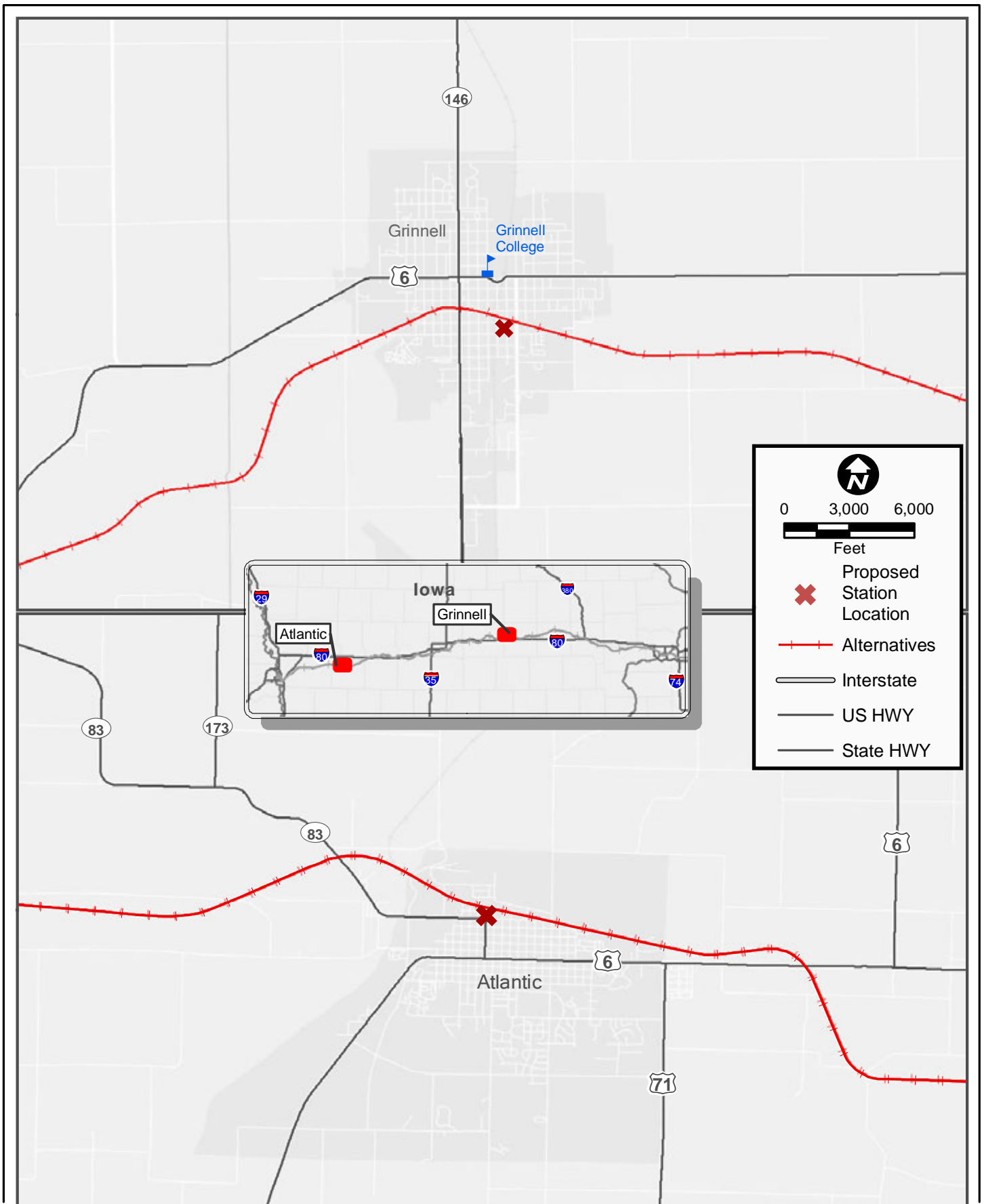


**Proposed Station and Maintenance Locations
Des Moines and Council Bluffs/Omaha**

Chicago to Council Bluffs - Omaha
Regional Passenger Rail System Planning Study

DATE
May 2013

FIGURE
2-5



**Proposed Station Locations
Grinnell and Atlantic**

Chicago to Council Bluffs - Omaha
Regional Passenger Rail System Planning Study

DATE	May 2013
FIGURE	2-6

Specific sites for passenger rail stations in Iowa City, Grinnell, Des Moines, Atlantic, and Council Bluffs, Iowa, and Omaha, Nebraska, have not yet been determined. However, since publication of the Tier 1 Draft EIS, Iowa DOT has continued to coordinate with different municipalities regarding their preferences for station locations. These preferences are being evaluated, but final decisions have not been made; therefore, no options identified in this Tier 1 EIS have been eliminated. Final site selection, construction, and operation of these passenger rail stations will be evaluated in subsequent Tier 2 NEPA documents.

2.2.3.3 Maintenance Facilities

An overnight train layover and light maintenance facility would be required in the Des Moines and Omaha/Council Bluffs metropolitan areas. Specific sites for these facilities have not yet been determined; however, Figure 2-5 shows proposed areas that could host maintenance facilities in the Des Moines and Omaha/Council Bluffs metropolitan areas. Interim layover and light maintenance facilities may be required at Moline or Iowa City depending on implementation strategies. The development of Moline and Iowa City layover and maintenance facilities could occur as part of implementation of other passenger rail projects. Tentative locations for these facilities could be near IAIS Rock Island Yard in Moline and in Coralville, Iowa, southwest of the I-80 and Coral Ridge Avenue interchange. These sites, as well as any interim-phase train layover and light maintenance facilities required, will be evaluated in subsequent Tier 2 NEPA documents.

In addition to light maintenance, heavy maintenance for locomotives and train sets would be required. The aforementioned Des Moines and Omaha/Council Bluff locations for light maintenance could potentially be selected to also support heavy maintenance activities. The method by which such maintenance would be performed has not yet been determined. Potential methods include construction of a dedicated maintenance facility for the Project, contracting with existing Amtrak or Metra heavy maintenance facilities in Chicago, or contracting with a third-party contractor using an existing railroad heavy maintenance facility at some other location. The heavy maintenance facility for the Project if constructed as part of the Project will be evaluated through Tier 2 analysis.

2.2.3.4 At-Grade Crossings

There are approximately 850 at-grade roadway crossings on the Build Alternative. Grade crossing surfaces and warning systems would need to be improved to meet safety standards for passenger trains traveling at 110 mph. All crossings would undergo diagnostic studies during Tier 2 analysis for identification of improvement needs in concert with Illinois DOT, the Illinois Commerce Commission, and the host railroad in Illinois; Iowa DOT and the host railroad in Iowa; and the Nebraska Department of Roads and the host railroad in Nebraska. The crossing analysis would evaluate all crossings with potential for closure under the Build Alternative. Warning devices would be installed based on speed-dependent criteria. Existing warning devices would be reused where practical if they conform to the speed-dependent criteria.

2.2.3.6 Service Options

An iterative process was conducted for determining the optimum number of round-trips per day, train speeds, and types and numbers of station stops for the Build Alternative. The process considered ridership and revenue, as well as general operation and maintenance costs, as maximum frequency and speed increased and as station stops were added. Service options considered between two and seven round-trips per day between Chicago and Omaha, and also between Chicago and Des Moines; maximum speeds of between 79 and 110 mph; and two types of station stop service, standard-stop or selected-stop, as defined below. Station stops intersected by Route Alternative 4-A were considered. Station stops are typically located at the largest intermediate cities, or as close as possible to the largest intermediate cities, in order to attract and serve the largest possible ridership. In addition, potential station stops in suburban areas and smaller urban areas were evaluated to determine whether such stops would increase overall ridership and revenue despite longer overall Corridor travel times, to determine potential ridership gained from each urban area, and to determine the anticipated effect on Corridor-wide ridership and travel time. Standard-stop service would involve a train stopping at all identified station stops, and selected-stop service would involve a train stopping at only some identified station stops.

The iterative process was bounded by considering the feasibility and practicality of low and high limits of trains, train speeds, and types and numbers of station stops. Providing more than seven round-trips per day would not generate substantial additional ridership, so the maximum service level evaluated was seven round-trips per day. The maximum speed range was identified based on estimated costs of implementing the service. Speeds above a maximum of 125 mph would require closure or costly grade separations of all existing at-grade crossings in order to comply with FRA high-speed rail corridor guidelines for grade-crossing safety. In addition, extensive reduction of curvature would be required in order to obtain speeds in excess of 110 mph over most of the route. Passenger train maximum speeds below 79 mph would not generate optimum ridership and would be comparable to automobile travel times.

Service options were compared based on estimated travel times, ridership, revenue, and general operation and maintenance costs. The primary criteria used to screen the service options were the ridership and revenue forecasts because they are indicative of competitiveness with other modes of transportation. Average Chicago to Omaha travel time varies between speed regimes but does not vary substantially for the service options considered within each speed regime. As anticipated, the 110 mph design speed resulted in the quickest trips and the highest estimated ridership. Iowa DOT selected the optimum service option (described in the following paragraph) for full implementation, and eliminated other considered options for full implementation (such as different combinations of speeds and station stops) that did not have adequate ridership and revenue, and did not have sufficient station stops. Although all service options considered were feasible, the eliminated options for full implementation were not reasonable and did not fully meet the purpose and need for the Project to the extent of the optimum service option. The selection of a service option for study was based on service development planning and did not consider environmental impacts. As presented in Section 2.2.2.6, a phased implementation of the optimum service option is advisable given anticipated funding availability. The optimum service option would be implemented in various phases.

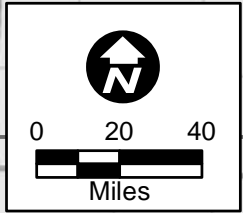
Operations under the Build Alternative would ultimately include a combination of standard-stop and selected-stop service. Selected-stop station stops would be Chicago Union Station, Naperville, Princeton, and Moline, Illinois; Iowa City, Des Moines, and Council Bluffs, Iowa; and Omaha, Nebraska. Standard-stop service would include the selected-stop locations as well as station stops at La Grange Road, Plano, Mendota, and Geneseo, Illinois, and Grinnell and Atlantic, Iowa. Figure 2-7 shows the locations of all station stops. There would be up to seven round-trip passenger trains per day travelling between Chicago and Des Moines, with five of these round-trips continuing to Omaha. The passenger trains would travel at speeds of up to 110 mph, with travel time averaging under 7 hours from Chicago to Omaha and under 5 hours from Chicago to Des Moines. These travel times are competitive with the personal automobile.

2.2.3.7 Phased Implementation

Based on experience with other passenger rail projects, and on service development planning for this Project, FRA and Iowa DOT anticipate that the Chicago to Council Bluffs-Omaha Project would be incrementally funded and that construction and operations would be implemented in phases. The specific phasing of the Project is not known at this time but would be determined as funding is allocated to the Project.

The Project is anticipated to expand from the baseline of two round-trips per day from Chicago to Moline at a maximum speed of 79 mph (included in the Quad Cities Expansion Program passenger rail project) and service extended to Iowa City (included in the Chicago to Iowa City project). The Project would then be extended westward sequentially from Iowa City, to Des Moines, to Council Bluffs, and then to Omaha. At a maximum speed of 79 mph, average travel times between Chicago and Omaha would be approximately 8 hours, and between Chicago and Des Moines would be approximately 6 hours.

The speed and the frequency of round-trips would increase with subsequent implementation phases up to a maximum of 110 mph and up to seven round-trips per day from Chicago to Des Moines, with five of the round-trips extending from Chicago to Omaha. Full implementation would be realized over many years of phased implementation as federal and state funds are allocated to the Project. Section 5.6 provides additional background on the phased implementation of logical sections or phases of the Project, which would be developed through separate but related projects. The Tier 2 NEPA process would address phased implementation in detail as successive projects are proposed.



● Station Stop - - Selected Stop and Standard Stop	— Build Alternative
○ Station Stop - - Standard Stop Only	— Amtrak's California Zephyr Route



Chicago to Council Bluffs - Omaha Station Stops

Chicago to Council Bluffs - Omaha
Regional Passenger Rail System Planning Study

DATE	May 2013
FIGURE	2-7

Between publication of the Tier 1 Draft EIS and this Tier 1 Final EIS, Iowa DOT conducted service development planning for the Project and drafted a Service Development Plan (SDP). The SDP is a planning document that addresses the rationale for and details of the proposed passenger rail service, including a plan for phased implementation of the service, an operating plan for each phase of service, and a capital and financial plan for determining the types and amounts of funding needed for each phase of service. The SDP has an approximate 20-year planning horizon, but under phased implementation, full implementation of the Project would extend beyond 20 years. Therefore, Iowa DOT, in coordination with FRA, decided to focus the SDP on the interim implementation phase, which is the phase of the Project that would be implemented within this 20-year planning horizon. The interim implementation phase would likely include four round-trips per day at 79 mph between Chicago and Council Bluffs, while full implementation would be five to seven round-trips per day at 110 mph between Chicago and Omaha. Consequently, although the Tier 1 Draft EIS evaluated potential impacts of full implementation of the Project, FRA decided that the Tier 1 Final EIS would also include an analysis of the potential impacts of the interim implementation phase. Section 3.28 has been added to this Final EIS for assessing these potential impacts in a qualitative manner. Service development planning for the later phases leading up to full implementation would be completed in coordination with the Tier 2 NEPA analyses for those phases.

Based on service development planning, the interim implementation phase would likely require additional ROW acquisition only in particular areas. Most of the improvements could be constructed within existing ROW. ROW acquisition is anticipated at the following locations, listed from east to west within the Corridor:

- West of Wyanet at the Wyanet Connection
- Geneseo Station
- Colona Junction
- Moline second main track
- Moline Station
- Moline Layover Facility
- Davenport second main track
- Iowa City second main track
- Iowa City Station
- Coralville Layover Facility
- East of Marengo at the bypass of IAIS Homestead Yard
- Grinnell Station
- Des Moines bypass of UPRR Short Line Yard
- Des Moines second main track
- Des Moines Layover Facility
- Des Moines Station
- Atlantic Station
- Council Bluffs new track
- Council Bluffs Station
- Council Bluffs Layover Facility

The largest needs for ROW for service through the interim implementation phase occur at the Wyanet Connection and in Des Moines. ROW needed for the Wyanet Connection is likely to be greater than for the improvements in Des Moines, but the improvements in Des Moines would be more complicated to design and construct because of the dense, urban environment. Based on the SDP, Grinnell Station, Atlantic Station, and Council Bluffs facilities would not be needed or developed until after service to Des Moines has been established.

As discussed above, detailed quantitative impacts based on preliminary design and refined construction footprints would be identified and evaluated during Tier 2 analyses. Avoidance and minimization of impacts would be implemented during Tier 2; mitigation for impacts that could not be avoided would be coordinated with resource agencies, and necessary permits would be acquired before construction occurred.

2.2.3.8 Current Passenger Service

Based on initial coordination and for the purposes of the Tier 1 NEPA process, it is assumed that Amtrak and the State of Illinois would continue their respective passenger services in conjunction with the proposed Chicago to Council Bluffs-Omaha service. Similarly, other forms of long-distance and regional transportation such as airplane and bus services are assumed to continue operating in and between the Chicago and Omaha/Council Bluffs metropolitan areas in the same manner as current operations. Further interaction between the States of Iowa and Illinois, and coordination with Amtrak would occur for the continuation of the service of through ticketing and Amtrak ticket marketing and point-of-sale system. The aforementioned system is common to all Amtrak long-distance and state-supported, Amtrak-operated regional trains, as well as many commuter trains and bus services.

2.2.4 Preferred Alternative

In accordance with the requirements of 40 CFR 1502.14, FRA has identified a preferred alternative for this Project: the Build Alternative, Route Alternative 4-A. The Build Alternative is preferred because it meets the purpose and need for the Project, giving the public a viable option for efficient transportation between Chicago and the Omaha/Council Bluffs metropolitan area, and points near and between those Project termini.

2.3 SUMMARY OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS

Table 2-4 summarizes the potential impacts of the No-Build Alternative and full implementation of the Build Alternative based on the detailed analysis documented in Chapter 3 of this Tier 1 EIS. The potential impacts reported in Table 2-4 are based on construction occurring within the entire Potential Impact Area. For analysis in this Tier 1 EIS, the area along all alignment options under consideration was evaluated as if it would be impacted, and the Potential Impact Area also includes a buffer to account for future flexibility in design to avoid or minimize environmental impacts. Consequently, the potential impacts predicted to be caused by construction are overestimated. For example, although 104,150 linear feet of streams are present within the Potential Impact Area, many feet of streams would be undisturbed where no new bridges or widening of existing bridges would be required. Specific resource impacts, such as whether there would be an adverse effect under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, a use of property under

Section 4(f) of the U.S. Department of Transportation Act, or an adverse effect under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, would be determined during Tier 2 analyses.

Table 2-4. Summary of Impacts

Resource Topic	No-Build Alternative	Build Alternative
Transportation	Increased traffic congestion on highway system	Competitive transportation alternative; reduced freight traffic interference; safety improvements; changes in travel patterns where unsafe at-grade crossings are closed; temporary construction impacts (delays, detours)
Land Use, Zoning, and Property Acquisitions	Minor impacts (much less than Build Alternative)	Impacts on land use, primarily on industrial and farmland
Agricultural Resources	Minor impacts (much less than Build Alternative)	3,190 acres prime farmland; 840 acres statewide important farmland
Socioeconomic Environment	Minor improvements to socioeconomic conditions (Chicago to Quad Cities only)	Economic benefits provided through job creation, joint development, improved accessibility, and increased economic activity (Chicago to Omaha)
Title VI and Environmental Justice	No disproportionately high and adverse impacts	Beneficial economic and mobility impacts; potential impacts on Environmental Justice population area in Des Moines
Elderly and People with Disabilities	New accessible service between Chicago and Quad Cities	New accessible service between Chicago and Omaha
Public Health and Safety	Improvements to at-grade crossings and signals (Chicago to Quad Cities)	Improvements to at-grade crossings and signals (Chicago to Omaha)
Noise and Vibration	Minor impacts (much less than Build Alternative)	1.7 new noise impacts per mile; 7.0 new vibration impacts per mile
Air Quality	Increase in pollutant emissions over time due to fewer modal shifts	Decrease of most pollutant emissions due to increased modal shifts
Hazardous Waste and Waste Disposal	Minor impacts (much less than Build Alternative)	Minor impacts on 3 Superfund (NPL) sites, 34 leaking underground storage tanks, 27 Non-National Priorities List sites, and 1 wastewater treatment facility site
Cultural Resources	No Project impacts	60 historic resources (37 buildings, 1 structure, 3 bridges, and 19 historic districts)
Parks and Federally or State-Listed Natural Areas	No Project impacts	44 parks, 24 recreation areas, and 22 natural areas
Section 4(f) and 6(f) Properties	No Project impacts	44 public parks, 21 public recreation areas, 8 public refuges, and 60 historic properties
Visual Resources and Aesthetic Quality	Minor impacts on sensitive receptors	Impacts on visual resources (parks, natural areas, riparian corridors) and sensitive receptors in Des Moines
Waterways and Water Bodies	Minor impacts	Streams: 104,150 linear feet Lakes: 32 acres Ponds: 33 acres

Resource Topic	No-Build Alternative	Build Alternative
Wetlands	Minor impacts	238 acres (1 acre aquatic bed, 84 acres emergent, 33 acres scrub-shrub, and 120 acres forested)
Water Quality	Minor potential impacts	24 streams on 303(d) list of impaired water bodies; more impacts than No-Build Alternative
Floodplains	Minor impacts	1,657 acres
Topography, Geology, and Soils	Minor impacts	More impacts than No-Build Alternative, but minor impacts on Loess Hills
Natural Habitats and Wildlife	Minor impacts	178 acres of natural terrestrial habitat; aquatic habitat impacts; potential impacts from train/animal collisions; <u>potential stormwater runoff pollution</u>
Threatened and Endangered Species	Suitable habitat for federally and state-listed species	Suitable habitat for federally and state-listed species with potential for impact from constructing a new Missouri River crossing
Energy Use and Climate Change	Increase in energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions due to fewer modal shifts	Long-term decrease in energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions due to increased modal shifts
Construction Impacts	Minor, temporary impacts	Substantially more impacts than No-Build Alternative, but temporary in nature
Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitments of Resources	Minor commitments of land, construction materials, financial resources, and energy consumption by automobiles	Substantial commitments of land, construction materials, financial resources, and energy consumption
Short-Term Use versus Long-Term Productivity	Short-term construction impacts of other projects, including benefit of construction employment; minimal reduction in long-term productivity of natural resources; and improvement in transportation network	Short-term construction impacts (including benefit of construction employment) and reduction in air pollutant emissions and long-term productivity of natural resources beyond that of the No-Build Alternative; improved long-term socioeconomic productivity through transportation network enhancement
Indirect and Cumulative Impacts	Increase in vehicular traffic congestion and decrease in air quality and energy	Reduced traffic congestion and vehicle emissions; reduced ridership of other transportation modes; improved air quality and safety; indirect impacts on parks, natural areas, and wildlife; increased chance of hazardous material incidents and water pollution; transit-oriented development near stations

Note: All potential impacts shown are preliminary and have been evaluated at a Tier 1 level of analysis. Impacts will be reviewed and revised as necessary within future Tier 2 NEPA documents.

CHAPTER 3 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Chapter 3 describes the existing social, economic, and environmental conditions in the Study Area, which serve as a baseline for comparing the potential impacts of the route, type of service, frequency of service, and station stops carried forward as the Build Alternative in this Tier 1 EIS. Chapter 3 also identifies potential environmental consequences that would result from the No-Build Alternative and implementation of the Build Alternative, as well as mitigation measures that could be used to avoid or minimize some of those potential environmental consequences. The impacts associated with full implementation of the Build Alternative are addressed by individual resource in Sections 3.1 through 3.27. As discussed in Section 2.2.2.6, Phased Implementation, service development planning was conducted between publication of the Tier 1 Draft EIS and this Tier 1 Final EIS. It was determined that the last phase of the Project that would be implemented within the 20-year planning horizon of the SDP would be four round-trips per day at 79 mph between Chicago and Council Bluffs, which is referred to as the interim implementation phase. Therefore, impacts associated with the interim implementation phase would be less than those of full implementation and are addressed by resource in Section 3.28.

The methodology for conducting the review and evaluation of the social, economic, and environmental resources is in accordance with federal regulations and guidelines, including NEPA (42 USC 4321-4347); FRA's Procedures for Considering Environmental Impacts (Environmental Procedures) (64 FR 28545); and regulations published by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) on implementing NEPA (40 CFR 1500).

The Study Area for the Build Alternative is approximately 500 miles long from Chicago, Illinois, through Iowa, to Omaha, Nebraska, and 500 feet wide on each side of the existing rail centerline for a total width of 1,000 feet. The Study Area was reviewed using recent aerial and satellite high-resolution photographic imagery; maps of topography, hydrography, and other features; and the most recent geographic information system (GIS) data for a variety of environmental resources. Because of the length of the Corridor and because this is a Tier 1 analysis, field visits for resource review were not conducted.

The existing railroad ROW along the Corridor was assumed to be 100 feet wide; although the actual ROW varies, this assumption was determined to represent a reasonable average width. A buffer was then applied to accommodate additional track needs to promote efficient track maintenance and reduce operating disruptions. The existing ROW and estimated additional ROW that would be necessary for track and siding construction and improvements at station locations constitutes the Potential Impact Area. The anticipated amount of additional ROW required was conservatively estimated to allow for future design and to accommodate design constraints. Because there are multiple potential station locations in Council Bluffs, Iowa, and Omaha, Nebraska, and multiple design options through East Des Moines, Iowa, and across the Missouri River between Council Bluffs and Omaha, there is more than one potential alignment currently under consideration in those areas. During Tier 2 analyses, one

alignment would be selected. For analysis in this Tier 1 EIS, the area along all alignments under consideration was evaluated as if it would be impacted. Consequently, the Potential Impact Area overestimates the area that would be directly impacted by construction of the Build Alternative to account for estimated ROW needs and multiple potential alignments in particular areas.

The No-Build Alternative would not involve construction and operation of intercity passenger rail service from Chicago to Omaha, but would include other programmed transportation improvements (identified in Section 2.2.1). This includes independently planned construction of passenger rail service from Chicago to Moline, with subsequent operation of two round-trips per day at speeds up to 79 mph. This project is referred to as the Chicago to Quad Cities Expansion Program and is being evaluated by Illinois DOT and FRA in Tier 2 NEPA analyses on three separate subprojects: Chicago to Wyanet, Illinois; the Wyanet Connection of BNSF and IAIS track; and Wyanet to Moline, Illinois. Two of the areas of potential concern for environmental impacts from construction of the Chicago to Quad Cities Expansion Program are Eola Yard in Eola, Illinois, and Wyanet; these areas are addressed for potential impacts under the No-Build Alternative for most resources assessed in this EIS. Construction for the Chicago to Quad Cities service is anticipated to commence in 2013 and the service to be operational by 2015.

The Chicago to Quad Cities Expansion Program passenger rail project would affect a portion of the same rail corridor as the Chicago to Council Bluffs-Omaha Project. Consequently, the impacts associated with construction of the Chicago to Council Bluffs-Omaha Project between Chicago and Moline would actually be less than estimated for this analysis. Operational impacts for two round-trips per day associated with the Chicago to Quad Cities service were considered in this analysis.

In this Tier 1 EIS, the following general outline is used to summarize the analysis conducted for each resource. With the exception of coastal zone management, all resources identified in FRA's Environmental Procedures have been assessed. Coastal zone management was not evaluated because the Study Area does not include any coastal zones.

- **Methodology and Regulatory Requirements** – Summarizes the impact analysis methodology and the regulatory requirements for each resource, including the sources for the data collected and the applicable government agencies involved in the regulation of each resource.
- **Affected Environment** – Describes the existing social, economic, or environmental conditions for each resource and their general locations within the Study Area.
- **Impacts of No-Build Alternative** – Evaluates the potential impacts of the No-Build Alternative.
- **Impacts of Build Alternative** – Evaluates the potential impacts of the Build Alternative as it is proposed to be fully implemented, but also addresses potential impacts of phased implementation.
- **Potential Mitigation Measures** – Reviews potential mitigation measures, including avoidance and minimization, appropriate for the Tier 1 EIS. Specific mitigation measures would not be identified until preparation of Tier 2 NEPA documents.

The assessment of impacts focuses on the Potential Impact Area and is quantified for many resources, but impacts are evaluated qualitatively for some resources because of data availability and variation in the region of influence for those resources. For example, land use data were not available at the same level of detail throughout the approximately 500-mile-long corridor. Consequently, land use impacts are addressed qualitatively, with specific information on a few locations where it is known that additional ROW would be required and affect land use. Also, some resources, such as air quality and cultural resources, use different regions of influence to evaluate potential impacts. The individual resource sections describe the area reviewed for the relevant region of influence and discuss whether impacts are evaluated quantitatively or qualitatively. Impacts of phased implementation are addressed qualitatively in this Tier 1 EIS.

Appendix B contains figures showing the Study Area and Potential Impact Area as well as resources present within 0.5 mile of the rail corridor. Depending on the view of the figure and various database information, some resources are also shown outside 0.5 mile of the rail corridor. The figures were derived using recent aerial and satellite high-resolution photographic imagery, and the most recent GIS data for a variety of environmental resources. Resource data were not digitized for this Tier 1 analysis.

3.1 TRANSPORTATION

The transportation analysis includes considerations of all passenger and freight transportation modes (that is, automobile, air, bus, and rail) of the regional transportation network.

3.1.1 Methodology and Regulatory Requirements

Transportation considerations are evaluated in accordance with FRA's Environmental Procedures.

Coordination has taken place with Illinois DOT, Iowa DOT, Nebraska Department of Roads (NDOR), regional Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), and Councils of Government (COGs) to obtain readily available long-range transportation plans, including information related to air travel, along the Corridor. Major existing and planned transportation facilities for each transportation mode along the Corridor have been identified, including existing locations with substantial levels of congestion. Information regarding vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and average daily traffic (ADT) volumes for major highways in the Corridor have been collected from Illinois DOT, Iowa DOT, and NDOR. Information regarding intercity bus and passenger rail service has been collected from MPOs, COGs, and appropriate state long-range transportation plans. As appropriate, local transit services have been identified along the Build Alternative, particularly at potential station locations.

3.1.2 Affected Environment

The existing transportation network, including any nearby airports, along the Corridor is shown in Appendix B, Figures 1 through 162. Total trips for the No-Build Alternative for the year 2040, by travel mode, along the Corridor is provided in Table 3.1-1. These numbers reflect the base modal split accounting for the proposed improvements to passenger rail service between Chicago and Moline as part of the Chicago to Quad Cities Expansion Program, which is included as part of the No-Build Alternative.

Table 3.1-1. Total Trips by Mode for the Year 2040

Mode of Travel	Total Trips ^a	Percent of Total
Automobile	108,300,000	97.7%
Air	1,832,000	1.7%
Bus	533,000	0.4%
Passenger Rail	168,000	0.2%
Total	110,833,000	100%

Note:

^a Excludes short trips of less than 100 miles.

3.1.2.1 Automobile Travel via the Interstate and Highway Network

Without new passenger rail service provided by the Build Alternative, approximately 98 percent of all travel between Chicago and Omaha is estimated to be by personal automobile. The primary travel route is I-88 between Chicago and East Moline, approximately 160 miles, and I-80 between East Moline and Downtown Omaha, approximately 313 miles. From southern Chicago, the entire route along I-80 from Chicago to Omaha is approximately 470 miles. A one-way trip by automobile between Chicago and Omaha along either of these routes at posted interstate speeds takes approximately eight hours.

As noted in the Iowa 2012 long-range transportation plan, *Iowa in Motion – Planning Ahead 2040*, VMT on Iowa highways is expected to continue to steadily increase (Iowa DOT, 2012). As discussed previously in Section 1.3.2.2, if capacity or other improvements are not made by 2040, peak-period congestion along I-80 and Iowa highways will continue. Within urban sections in the Quad Cities, Iowa City, Des Moines, and Council Bluffs, where traffic congestion is the greatest, there is limited ROW to expand due to existing development. Furthermore, according to the Iowa long-range transportation plan, freight truck traffic is expected to increase by 62 percent through 2040 on major highway corridors, with a substantial amount of this traffic on I-80, creating additional conflicts with vehicular traffic and further contributing to congestion. The Illinois 2012 long-range transportation plan, *Transforming Transportation for Tomorrow*, indicates a continued steady increase in VMT, an increase of 23 percent by 2040 (Illinois DOT, 2012). The Nebraska 2012 long-range transportation plan, *Vision 2032*, noted a 102 percent VMT increase by the year 2030 for the Omaha/Council Bluffs metropolitan area (NDOR, 2012).

3.1.2.2 Air Service

Air service is currently available between major cities in the Study Area. Commercial air service is provided in Chicago (Chicago O’Hare International Airport and Chicago Midway International Airport), Moline (Quad Cities International Airport), Des Moines (Des Moines International Airport), and Omaha (Eppley Airfield). Direct flight service between Chicago and Omaha is served by American Airlines, Southwest Airlines, United Airlines, and U.S. Airways. Typical flight times range from 1 hour and 20 minutes to 1 hour and 40 minutes. Direct flight service between Chicago and Des Moines is served by American Airlines, Southwest Airlines, United Airlines, and U.S. Airways. Typical flight times range from 1 hour and 15 minutes to 1 hour and 25 minutes. Direct flight service between Chicago and

the Quad Cities is also served by American Airlines, United Airlines, and U.S. Airways. Typical flight times range from 52 minutes to 56 minutes. There is no direct service between Moline and Omaha or between Des Moines and Omaha; typical connections go through Chicago or Minneapolis.

3.1.2.3 Bus Service

Bus service is provided in a majority of mid-to-large sized cities, with intermittent service in smaller towns. Service between Chicago and Omaha, with multiple stops, was provided by Greyhound. On August 15, 2012, Burlington Trailways took over the Greyhound routes from Omaha (though Greyhound is still maintaining the terminals), including the route from Omaha to Chicago, which features stops in Des Moines, Iowa City, Davenport, and Moline. Typical bus service includes two trips per day: one in the early morning and one in the late evening. Typical travel time by bus between Chicago and Omaha ranges from 9 hours and 15 minutes for “Express” service to 9 hours and 40 minutes for regular service (Greyhound, 2011).

Megabus.com, a subsidiary of Coach USA, is a low-fare express bus service that recently added daily service between Chicago and Omaha with stops in Iowa City and Des Moines. Megabus.com provides two round-trips per day: one in the morning and one in the late evening. The full one-way trip from Chicago to Omaha takes 8 hours and 50 minutes. In addition to low fares, Megabus.com offers competitive amenities including Wi-Fi service, power ports at each seat, and on-board restrooms. However, Megabus.com does not always provide traditional sheltered station stops. In Chicago, the station stop is located adjacent to Union Station. In Omaha, the station stop is adjacent to the parking garage at Crossroads Mall (Megabus.com, 2012).

3.1.2.4 Passenger Rail Service

Current passenger rail service between Chicago and Omaha (the route is shown in Figure 2-2) is part of Amtrak’s national or long-distance service on the *California Zephyr*, which terminates in Oakland, California. The *California Zephyr* serves four stops in Illinois, five stops in Iowa, and one stop in Nebraska along the BNSF line: Chicago, Naperville, Princeton, and Galesburg, Illinois; Burlington, Mt. Pleasant, Ottumwa, Osceola, and Creston, Iowa; and Omaha, Nebraska. Travel time from Chicago to Omaha on the current Amtrak long-distance service is approximately 8 hours and 55 minutes while travel time from Omaha to Chicago is approximately 9 hours and 36 minutes, compared to approximately 8 hours for travel by automobile (Amtrak, 2012). Arrival and departure times in Omaha are typically late at night or early in the morning. Other intercity passenger rail services currently operate within or adjacent to a portion of the Corridor in Illinois, including Amtrak’s *Southwest Chief* (Chicago to Fort Madison, Iowa, at the Illinois/Iowa border) and Illinois’ state-supported, Amtrak-operated *Illinois Zephyr* and *Carl Sandburg* services operating between Chicago and Quincy, Illinois. The Metra fixed-route commuter rail service currently operates on the BNSF rail corridor between downtown Chicago and Aurora, providing passenger rail service generally from 4:30 am through 2:00 am.

3.1.2.5 Freight Rail Service

The BNSF rail line in Illinois, the IAIS rail line in Iowa, and small segments of the UP rail line in Des Moines and the Omaha/Council Bluffs metropolitan area are located within the Corridor. BNSF is a high-volume Class I carrier with mostly double track sections. Within the Corridor, the BNSF line carries a traffic density of 40 to 59.9 million gross tons per mile per year (MGT) (North American Railroad Map, 2010). IAIS is a small volume Class II carrier with mostly single track sections. Within the Corridor, the IAIS line carries a traffic density of less than 1 MGT (North American Railroad Map, 2010). The main commodities handled by BNSF in the Corridor are coal, food products, chemicals, and fertilizers. The main commodities handled by IAIS in the Corridor are farm products, food products, waste, scrap products, lumber, and chemicals/fertilizers. Additional freight rail in the Corridor includes UP track located along 12 miles in the Des Moines area and 2.5 miles in the Omaha/Council Bluffs metropolitan area.

3.1.3 Impacts of No-Build Alternative

Under the No-Build Alternative, the Project would not be built, and impacts on transportation are not anticipated beyond those that could occur due to other projects. Travel originating in the Corridor west of Moline, Illinois, would continue to use predominantly automobiles and buses along I-80 and the Iowa highway network. Other intercity passenger rail services that currently operate within or adjacent to the Chicago to Omaha Corridor, including Amtrak's *California Zephyr* and *Southwest Chief*, and Illinois' state-supported, Amtrak-operated *Illinois Zephyr* and *Carl Sandburg* services, are assumed to continue to operate. Congestion would continue to increase along I-80 and I-88, resulting in more travel delays and increased conflicts with truck freight traffic. Negative impacts of congestion include lost opportunity costs for motorists, wasted fuel consumption, raised travel costs, increased air pollution, delays for emergency vehicles and increased traffic on parallel road networks. There could also be more delays at at-grade railroad crossings because of more vehicular traffic.

3.1.4 Impacts of Build Alternative

Within portions of the Study Area with single track, a parallel track would need to be installed to minimize delays and interference with existing freight rail traffic. In addition to new track or upgrades to existing track, other improvements associated with new passenger rail service would include upgrades to existing crossings and signals. All of these improvements would indirectly benefit existing freight rail service within the Potential Impact Area.

Throughout the Corridor, the rail lines cross numerous public and private roads, highways, and interstates with at-grade and grade-separated crossings (see Section 3.7.2 for more detailed information). With new passenger rail service and anticipated speeds up to 110 mph, existing single track sections would be upgraded to double track, and existing at-grade crossings would be upgraded as necessary to help ensure that the most sophisticated warning devices appropriate for the area are available for passenger rail service.

During Tier 2 analysis, there would be further evaluation of whether some crossing locations would be closed and others would be grade separated. Redundant and/or unsafe crossings (due to proximity of existing road intersections, skewed geometry, etc.) may be eliminated where alternate access can be reasonably provided, resulting in some changes to the travel patterns of the existing transportation system. In some locations, where appropriate and feasible, implementation of grade-separated crossings would improve the safety, traffic flow, and efficiency of the transportation system.

Construction activities for improvements related to grade crossings would result in temporary impacts on the vehicular transportation system, including traffic congestion, delays, detours, disrupted access to properties and neighborhoods, and potential conflicts with construction equipment. Specific construction impacts would be evaluated in more detail in Tier 2 NEPA analyses.

The Build Alternative would provide new passenger rail service between Chicago and Omaha. New high-speed passenger rail service within the Study Area would share the rail infrastructure with existing freight rail operations on BNSF, IAIS, and UP rail line tracks. Other intercity passenger rail services that currently operate within or adjacent to the Chicago to Omaha Corridor are assumed to continue to operate. Potential impacts of this new service would be conflicts with existing passenger rail service along a portion of the BNSF line and freight rail service along BNSF, IAIS, and UP lines. This potential conflict would be minimized through safety upgrades and capacity improvements along all of the rail lines and the likely construction of a second rail along the IAIS line.

Under the Build Alternative, estimated average travel times between Chicago and Omaha would be under 7 hours. Between Chicago and Des Moines, the estimated average travel time would be under 5 hours. The Build Alternative would provide both standard-stop and selected-stop services. Travel demand and diversion forecasts for 2040 for the Build Alternative were performed, as shown in Table 3.1-2. A large percentage of the trips are due to diversion from auto, bus, and air trips. Approximately 71 percent of the passengers are diverted from autos, 17 percent from bus service, and 2 percent from air service. The Build Alternative would also generate an induced demand, estimated to be approximately 10 percent.

The operation of this new passenger rail service could potentially impact local traffic patterns at the station locations. Traffic volumes as well as parking demand would increase. Details on the impact to the local road network and parking facilities would be discussed in the Tier 2 NEPA analyses.

Table 3.1-2. Total Rail Ridership by Diverted Travel Mode

Travel Mode	Estimated Diversions for the Build Alternative (passengers per year)
Automobile	1,366,300
Bus	324,700
Air	40,900
Induced Demand	190,900
Total	1,922,800

3.1.5 Potential Mitigation Measures

To reduce impacts on other transportation modes, the Build Alternative would include safety and capacity improvements. These potential improvements include double tracking and signal upgrades to address safety concerns at intersections and to limit disruption of existing freight rail service. These improvements are described in detail in Section 3.7, Public Health and Safety. The contractor also would be required to coordinate with Illinois DOT, Iowa DOT, and NDOR, as well as the appropriate local jurisdictions, to develop and implement a traffic control and safety plan. This plan would include measures to shift traffic away from the work zone during construction periods, which would directly impact traffic flow and the existing transportation system.

Specific mitigation measures, to the extent required, will be identified and discussed during Tier 2 analysis after design details are known, recorded in NEPA documents as specific impacts are identified, and implemented prior to construction.

3.2 LAND USE, ZONING, AND PROPERTY ACQUISITIONS

The assessment of land use, zoning, and property acquisitions includes consideration of the Project's impact on existing and future land uses, public zoning policy, and potential areas of property acquisitions and/or relocations where additional ROW may be required.

3.2.1 Methodology and Regulatory Requirements

The regulatory framework pertaining to relocations of residents and businesses is the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, as amended, and the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Due to the length of the Study Area, land use data collection was limited to available statewide satellite land cover data in GIS format and was supplemented by aerial and satellite photography. Relevant land use planning maps in a usable GIS format and public zoning data were collected from regional MPOs and COGs for potential station locations only and will be reviewed more thoroughly in the Tier 2 analysis. Generalized land use data were separated into agricultural, rural-undeveloped, rural-residential, and urban-developed categories.

3.2.2 Affected Environment

An aerial view of the Corridor is shown in Appendix B, Figures 1 through 162. Different land uses are readily identifiable in the figures, which include the Study Area and adjacent land. The Study Area traverses three states, 24 counties, and 82 urban areas over approximately 500 miles. Throughout the Study Area, there is a wide diversity of land use types, patterns, and densities. Within urban areas, the predominant land use types are industrial and commercial, and to a lesser extent, established urban and suburban residential. Within rural areas, the predominant land use type is agricultural, with a few scattered rural residences. Because rural areas contain cropland or open areas, they are considered to have fewer sensitive land uses than urban areas.

The eastern terminus of the Study Area includes the urban-industrialized areas of Chicago as well as its suburban cities and exurban bedroom communities. The predominate land uses in these areas are urban-industrial, commercial, and to a lesser extent, established urban and suburban residential areas. These land uses are long-established and are adjacent to existing high-volume passenger and freight rail lines.

The central portion of the Study Area consists of rural-agricultural communities (population less than 10,000), rural economic centers (population 10,000 to 50,000), and mid-to-large cities (population of 50,000 to 200,000+) within Illinois and Iowa. The majority of the rural-agricultural communities in the Study Area have stagnant to declining populations. In the past, the agricultural industry served as the main economic base for many of these communities; however, as the agriculture industry has become more efficient and less labor intensive, some of the population began to shift to larger cities or other industries including health care, education, and to a lesser extent, small manufacturing and retail. Rural economic centers are largely residential; however, they do include support retail and services for smaller rural/agricultural communities within the area. Land uses within these areas are rural-agricultural with a few scattered rural residences. Within rural economic centers, there are a few commercial and service uses with modest concentrations of residential.

Mid-to-large cities include cities or groups of cities serving the center of a larger metropolitan area. The Quad Cities are a group of five mid-sized cities (East Moline, Moline, and Rock Island, Illinois, and Davenport and Bettendorf, Iowa) that collectively serve as a major economic center on the western Illinois/eastern Iowa Mississippi River border. Historically, the Quad Cities' dominant economic sectors were manufacturing and support industries; however, over the past 30 years, the economies of these cities have become more diverse with the revitalization of downtown and older industrial areas. The existing land uses in these communities within the Study Area are primarily industrial. However, within and adjacent to downtown areas, there are established commercial, office, and residential neighborhoods.

The western terminus of the Study Area includes the Omaha/Council Bluffs metropolitan area. Land uses are predominately industrial, with office, commercial, and parkland near downtown Omaha and industrial and commercial areas near I-80 in central Omaha.

3.2.3 Impacts of No-Build Alternative

Under the No-Build Alternative, the Project would not be built, and impacts on existing land uses and zoning are not anticipated beyond those that could occur due to other projects. The need for ROW in support of the Chicago to Quad Cities service would result in a minimal change in land use based on the potential amount of land required adjacent to existing ROW. The majority of the ROW would need to be acquired for construction of the Wyanet Connection to join BNSF and IAIS track near Wyanet, Illinois.

3.2.4 Impacts of Build Alternative

For the Build Alternative, a majority of main line improvements would occur within or close to existing ROW, with few direct impacts on adjacent land uses. The land would be converted from its current condition to a railroad grade, and track would be constructed. Likely land use impacts would include potential acquisition of additional ROW for

improvements around identified station areas. Two locations where new ROW would be required that would impact existing land uses are the following:

1. The Build Alternative may require further improvement of the Wyanet Connection (approximately 1 mile south of Wyanet, Illinois) to facilitate two additional round-trips per day at speeds up to 110 mph. This area is shown in Appendix B, Figures 38 and 39. Consequently, more ROW, with farmland and other land use conversion, would potentially be required for the Build Alternative at this location.
2. The Build Alternative includes a southern alignment option through southern Des Moines, Iowa, (Des Moines Design Option 3) that would require substantial property acquisition for a new alignment. Although this area is industrial in character, sensitive land uses that would be directly impacted include an established residential neighborhood and Chester Field Park. This area is shown in Appendix B, Figures 114 and 115.

New station areas may need to be rezoned through the local development review process. Existing stations that are approved during final site selection would likely need rehabilitation and/or upgrading with modern amenities to meet accessibility requirements. For the most part, improvements within these stations would be limited to the existing station site. However, additional property may need to be acquired for parking or other improvements. Other selected station locations may be greenfield¹ or greyfield² sites where stations do not exist and will need to be constructed. Impacts on adjacent land uses will be analyzed further during Tier 2 studies, when more specifics are known about station areas. In addition to stations, other improvements outside of existing ROW would include layover and maintenance facilities. The layover and maintenance facility location, size, and other program needs will be defined during Tier 2 studies.

Additional direct impacts would occur adjacent to future station areas and layover and maintenance facilities. The proposed passenger rail service would continue to use existing Amtrak stations at Chicago, La Grange Road, Naperville, Plano, and Princeton, Illinois; and potentially at Omaha, Nebraska. Direct land use impacts adjacent to these areas would be very limited because they are existing stations with current operations and would need modest improvements to accommodate new service. New stations or reuse and modification of pre-existing stations are proposed at Mendota, Geneseo, and Moline, Illinois; Iowa City, Grinnell, Des Moines, Atlantic, and Council Bluffs, Iowa; and potentially Omaha, Nebraska. Rehabilitation of existing stations may result in impacts on surrounding areas. The Geneseo and Moline stations will be improved as part of the Chicago to Quad Cities Expansion Program. Minimal additional improvements would be needed to these two stations for Chicago to Council Bluffs-Omaha service. The land use surrounding the new or pre-existing stations is described for each station below.

¹ Greenfield sites are locations that have been previously undeveloped.

² Greyfield sites are formerly developed, economically obsolescent, outdated, failing, moribund and/or underused real estate assets or land.

Because pre-existing stations in Mendota, Geneseo, Iowa City, Grinnell, and Atlantic are intact and only rehabilitation of the structures would be expected, no long-term adverse impacts are anticipated in the areas surrounding the stations. The Mendota, Illinois, station has commercial property to the west and residential property to the east of the station. The Geneseo, Illinois, station is surrounded by commercial, industrial, and residential land uses. The Iowa City, Iowa, station is located to the south of downtown and is surrounded by multi-family housing and commercial properties. Land use surrounding the pre-existing station in Grinnell, Iowa, is mostly residential and some commercial. The pre-existing Atlantic, Iowa, station is surrounded by mostly industrial development. (Illinois Department of Agriculture, 2001; and Giglierano, n.d.)

The Moline, Illinois, station is a proposed multi-modal facility located in downtown Moline. The I-Wireless Center (an event center) is north of the station location. A mix of commercial and industrial land use surrounds the rest of the proposed facility (City of Moline, Illinois, November 13, 2001).

Specific sites for passenger rail stations in Des Moines and Council Bluffs, Iowa, and Omaha, Nebraska, have not yet been determined. Potential alternative locations for Des Moines, Council Bluffs, and Omaha stations are shown in Figure 2-5. Final site selection, construction, and operation of these passenger rail stations and associated parking will be evaluated in subsequent Tier 2 NEPA documents.

An overnight train layover and light maintenance facility would be required in the Des Moines and Omaha/Council Bluffs metropolitan areas. Specific sites for these facilities have not yet been determined; however, they will be evaluated in subsequent Tier 2 NEPA documents when specific sites are identified.

In the Tier 2 NEPA documents, more detailed land use and zoning analysis will occur. This will include detailed impact analysis on the land uses within and surrounding future station and layover and maintenance facilities. The analysis will include review of designated impact areas and other areas where ROW acquisition would occur to accommodate faster speeds and additional main line track and sidings. The Tier 2 analyses will focus on site-specific issues (including parking) and sensitive land uses such as residential, parkland, and institutional (for example, churches and public buildings) uses.

3.2.5 Potential Mitigation Measures

Potential mitigation measures include minimizing the Build Alternative footprint and associated improvements to existing ROW, layover facility, and station areas to the greatest extent possible. When the acquisition of adjacent land cannot be avoided, the provisions of the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, as amended, and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 would be followed. During Tier 2 analyses, the extent of land use, zoning, and property acquisition impacts would be analyzed for potential mitigation issues that may be identified through agency coordination and the public involvement process. Specific mitigation measures, to the extent required, would be identified and discussed during Tier 2 analysis after design details are known, recorded in NEPA documents as specific impacts are identified, and implemented.

3.3 AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

The agricultural resources assessed in this Tier 1 EIS include land with soils designated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) as prime farmland and farmland of statewide importance, as defined in Section 3.3.2.

3.3.1 Methodology and Regulatory Requirements

The regulatory framework pertaining to farmland is the Farmland Protection Policy Act of 1981 (7 CFR 658). Other regulations that pertain to farmland on a state level include the the Illinois Farmland Preservation Act (IFPA) (505 Illinois Compiled Statutes [ILCS] 75) and Iowa Code Chapter 352, County Land Preservation and Use (Iowa Code §§ 352.1 to 352.13 (2005)). There is no farmland in the Study Area in Omaha, Nebraska.

Collection of information included GIS data from the NRCS database regarding soil designations of prime farmland and farmland of statewide importance within the Study Area.

3.3.2 Affected Environment

The majority of the Study Area in Illinois and Iowa is agricultural land composed of soils that are highly suitable for growing crops. The Study Area in Nebraska is located in urban built-up areas of the City of Omaha and does not include farmland. Agricultural lands near or within the Study Area in Illinois and Iowa are shown in Appendix B, Figures 1 through 162. The Farmland Protection Policy Act of 1981 defines farmland and separates it into three categories, as follows:

- **Prime Farmland** – “Land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, fiber, forage, oilseed, and other agricultural crops with minimum inputs of fuel, fertilizer, pesticides, and labor, and without intolerable soil erosion, as determined by the Secretary” of USDA (7 USC 4201(c)(1)(A)). These are soils that occur on slopes less than 6 percent.
- **Unique Farmland** – “Land other than prime farmland that is used for production of specific high-value food and fiber crops, as determined by the Secretary.... Examples of such crops include citrus, tree nuts, olives, cranberries, fruits, and vegetables” (7 USC 4201(c)(1)(B)).
- **Farmland of Statewide or Local Importance** – “Farmland, other than prime or unique farmland, that is of statewide or local importance for the production of food, feed, fiber, forage, or oilseed crops, as determined by the appropriate State or unit of local government agency or agencies, and that the Secretary determines should be considered as farmland” (7 USC 4201(c)(1)(C)). These are soils that generally can also be highly productive for cropland, but occur on slopes greater than 6 percent or have limitations in drainage or flood control that are more difficult to overcome.

Farmland does not include land already in or committed to urban development or water storage. Therefore, the city limits of towns and cities within the Study Area were excluded from the farmland assessment, as were bodies of water. There are no soils designated as unique farmland in the Study Area.

The prime farmland soils within the Study Area are categorized with qualifiers, as follows:

- All areas are prime farmland
- Prime farmland if drained
- Prime farmland if drained and either protected from flooding or not frequently flooded during the growing season
- Prime farmland if protected from flooding or not frequently flooded during the growing season
- Prime farmland if irrigated

Within the Study Area, the majority of prime farmland soils are on slopes of less than 6 percent and are composed of mostly silt loams and silty clay loams as well as minor amounts of loams, sandy loams, fine sandy loams, loamy fine sands, and clay loams. The soils designated as farmland of statewide importance are generally on slopes that are 6 percent or greater, the majority of which are loams, silt loams, and silty clay loams as well as minor amounts of clay loams, sandy loams, loamy sands, fine sandy loams, and loamy fine sands.

3.3.3 Impacts of No-Build Alternative

Under the No-Build Alternative, the Project would not be built, and impacts on farmland resources are not anticipated beyond those that could occur due to other projects. The Chicago to Quad Cities Expansion Program would contribute minimal impacts on farmland soils as a result of constructing new track embankment for the Wyanet Connection in addition to potential culvert replacements/extensions and bridge replacements/additions in other portions of the Corridor. The Chicago to Quad Cities Expansion Program would impact both prime farmland and farmland of statewide importance. Specific quantitative impacts on farmland from the Chicago to Quad Cities Expansion Program would be determined as the project progresses through its required Tier 2 NEPA documentation. The Eola Yard improvements would not impact farmland.

3.3.4 Impacts of Build Alternative

Construction of the Build Alternative would directly impact farmland where areas of additional ROW would be necessary. Those impacts would be relatively minor for farmland properties, constituting approximately 5 percent of the Study Area, because only minor linear amounts would be needed for adding track and siding to the existing railroad grade. No severances of existing farmland would occur. The total approximate impacts on farmland soils would be as shown in Table 3.3-1.

Table 3.3-1. Farmland Impacts

State	Prime Farmland (Acres)	Farmland of Statewide Importance (Acres)
Illinois	1,460	150
Iowa	1,730	690
Nebraska	0	0
Total	3,190	840

3.3.5 Potential Mitigation Measures

Because the Build Alternative would result in impacts on farmland, coordination would take place with NRCS as part of the Tier 2 NEPA process. Completion of form NRCS-CPA-106, Farmland Conversion Impact Rating for Corridor Type Projects, would be required to determine if farmland impacts are above the threshold level for consideration of farmland protection measures. A form would need to be developed for each county traversed by the Build Alternative.

In addition, to comply with the 1982 Illinois Farmland Preservation Act, notification would be sent to the Illinois Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Land and Water Resources, regarding any land acquisition projects located outside municipal corporate limits. This would be initiated during the Tier 2 NEPA process. Specific mitigation measures, to the extent required, would be identified and discussed during Tier 2 analysis after design details are known, recorded in NEPA documents as specific impacts are identified, and implemented.

3.4 SOCIOECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

The evaluation of the social and economic environment considers population, employment, demographic shifts, community disruption or cohesion, effects on commerce, and general state, regional, and local economies. In addition to assessing potential adverse impacts from community disruption, the assessment considers likely benefits resulting in any potential increase in economic activity in and near the Study Area.

3.4.1 Methodology and Regulatory Requirements

Applicable livability principles from the Partnership for Sustainable Communities—a joint initiative from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA)—are considered. Socioeconomic considerations were evaluated in accordance with FRA's Environmental Procedures.

Social and economic characteristics were gathered from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2010 Census and the American Community Survey (ACS). Data collected include population and employment (existing and future trends), demographic shifts, general housing information, and community services, such as schools and emergency services. Major social communities and economic centers along the Study Area were identified from GIS data. Demographic data were collected at the county level within rural areas and at the city level within urban areas (that is, communities with population greater than 50,000).

3.4.2 Affected Environment

The socioeconomic environment near or within the Study Area is shown in Appendix B, Figures 1 through 162. Buildings and land uses comprising the socioeconomic environment within the cities and small towns include businesses, schools, churches/places of worship, parks, community centers, hospitals, emergency facilities, and other public buildings.

3.4.2.1 Population

The Study Area comprises nine counties in Illinois (Cook, DuPage, Kane, Kendall, DeKalb, LaSalle, Bureau, Henry, and Rock Island), fourteen counties in Iowa (Scott, Muscatine, Cedar, Johnson, Iowa, Poweshiek, Jasper, Polk, Dallas, Madison, Guthrie, Adair, Cass, and Pottawattamie), and one county in Nebraska (Douglas). These counties have a combined 2010 population of 8,778,473 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Population within these counties increased by 11.4 percent between 1970 and 2010. This compares to a 51.9 percent increase in the overall U.S. population, a 15.4 percent increase for the State of Illinois, a 7.9 percent for the State of Iowa, and a 21.3 percent increase for the State of Nebraska over the same time period. A summary of population trends for all counties in the Study Area is included in Appendix C, Table 1.

Between 1970 and 2010, the population of five counties in Illinois (DuPage, Kane, Kendall, DeKalb, and LaSalle) increased, while the population of four counties (Cook, Bureau, Henry, and Rock Island) declined. During the same time period, the population of ten counties in Iowa (Scott, Muscatine, Cedar, Johnson, Iowa, Poweshiek, Polk, Dallas, Madison, and Pottawattamie) increased, while the population of four counties (Jasper, Guthrie, Adair, and Cass) declined. The population of Douglas County, Nebraska, increased by 32.8 percent between 1970 and 2010. The single largest gain in population by percent was Kendall County, Illinois, which experienced a 335 percent increase between 1970 and 2010. The next largest population change by percentage was Kane County, Illinois, at 105.3 percent and Dallas County, Iowa, at 153.5 percent over the same time period. The largest population declines by percentage in the counties in the Study Area over this time period were Adair and Cass counties in Iowa at 19 and 17.9 percent, respectively. Throughout the Study Area, counties in rural areas outside of urban areas have tended to have population declines while counties within urban areas have tended to grow steadily. The exception is urban counties within older industrial areas outside of Chicago and the Quad Cities that have experienced population declines due to a general slowdown of the manufacturing industry. Appendix C, Table 1 shows population change for all counties within the Study Area compared to each state and the United States. Appendix C, Tables 2 and 3 show population changes for all cities and villages within 0.25 mile of the Study Area.

There are 82 urban areas within 0.25 mile of the Study Area. Eleven of the 82 cities (Chicago, Cicero, Berwyn, Naperville, and Aurora, Illinois; Davenport, Iowa City, Des Moines, West Des Moines, and Council Bluffs, Iowa; and Omaha, Nebraska) are classified as urban. The total population of these urban areas represents almost 92 percent of the total population of all cities and villages within 0.25 mile of the Study Area. Chicago alone comprises 68 percent with a 2010 population of 2,695,598. Between 1970 and 2010, Chicago and Cicero, Illinois, experienced significant population declines, while the remaining eight cities experienced modest to significant population increases. A portion of Chicago's population decline can be attributed to an exodus to the Chicago suburbs during the 1970s and 1980s, including suburban communities within the Study Area such as Berwyn, Naperville, and Aurora, Illinois. In the 1990s and 2000s, population decline in Chicago and population increases in the suburbs slowed.

Outside of the Chicago metropolitan area, the largest urban areas are Davenport, Iowa City, Des Moines, and Council Bluffs, Iowa, and Omaha, Nebraska. Each of these cities has experienced modest population increases between 1970 and 2010. Other urban areas

comprise portions of larger metropolitan areas. East Moline, Moline, and Rock Island in Illinois, and Davenport and Bettendorf in Iowa, on the Illinois/Iowa border comprise a larger metropolitan area referred to as the Quad Cities, with a total population of 381,342. West Des Moines, which has experienced a significant population increase between 1970 and 2010, is part of the Des Moines metropolitan area. Council Bluffs, which has experienced a modest population increase from 1970 to 2010, is part of the Omaha/Council Bluffs metropolitan area.

The remaining cities and villages with a population of less than 50,000 comprise approximately 8 percent of the total population of all areas within 0.25 mile of the Study Area. These cities and villages tend to be very small, with a median population of 2,093. With the exception of suburban communities outside large metropolitan areas, a majority of these communities had a stable to steadily declining population between 1970 and 2010.

3.4.2.2 Employment

There are a number of diverse industry employment sectors within the Study Area, especially within urbanized counties. The employment sectors in the most urbanized counties (Cook, DuPage, Kane, LaSalle, and Rock Island counties in Illinois; Scott, Johnson, Polk, and Pottawattamie counties in Iowa; and Douglas County in Nebraska) are very diverse with few dominant sectors. However, the employment sectors in the rural counties are largely dominated by retail trade and manufacturing. Agriculture is still an important industry sector within these counties; however, farming operations are becoming more efficient and are less labor dependent than in the past. Overall, the dominant industry sectors for all counties are educational services, health care, and social assistance. This is consistent with the statewide averages. Appendix C, Table 4 provides a detailed summary of industrial employment sectors for each county in the Study Area.

Only one county in Illinois (Cook) and five counties in Iowa (Scott, Muscatine, Jasper, Polk, and Pottawattamie) have a 2010 unemployment rate greater than their respective statewide average. The majority of counties with high unemployment rates are urbanized; however, there are a few exceptions in rural counties including Muscatine County, Iowa, which has the second highest unemployment rate of any county in the Study Area. Cook County, Illinois, which includes the City of Chicago, has the highest unemployment rate in the Study Area. Appendix C, Table 5 provides a detailed summary of 2010 employment status statistics for all counties within the Study Area.

The Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1965, as amended (PWEDA) indicates that an area is considered economically distressed if it has an unemployment rate that is at least 1 percent greater than the national average unemployment rate (8.3 percent, July 2012). Currently, only one county within the Study Area, Cook County, Illinois (9.9 percent), meets this criterion; however, Muscatine County (8.1 percent) is close to the national average unemployment rate. Data on per capita income for all counties in the Study Area are provided in Appendix C, Table 6.

3.4.3 Impacts of No-Build Alternative

Under the No-Build Alternative, the Project would not be built, and impacts on socioeconomic conditions are not anticipated beyond those that could occur due to other projects. Socioeconomic conditions cover a wide variety of interrelated social and economic factors, including demographic shifts, increased economic activity, and employment opportunities. The Chicago to Quad Cities service is expected to contribute minimal impacts to socioeconomic conditions through construction funding being expended for the Project and temporarily improving employment and expenditures in local markets. In the case of the No-Build Alternative, slight demographic shifts and increased economic activity would be limited to modest improvements to passenger rail service between Chicago and Moline, Illinois. For station locations along the Chicago to Quad Cities service, there would be an increase in direct local employment with the potential for indirect employment through nearby development.

3.4.4 Impacts of Build Alternative

The Build Alternative would result in minimal impacts on socioeconomic conditions. Economic impacts would include the potential for disruption of vehicular traffic to existing businesses and community facilities including schools, churches/places of worship, parks, community centers, hospitals, emergency services, and other public buildings along the route alternative during construction, which may make it difficult to access these facilities.

There is the potential that some business properties may need to be acquired; in these cases, the business would be compensated for the acquisition and the relocation in compliance with federal and applicable state law. Businesses closing or relocating outside of the local area would cause a reduction in property tax income for the local government. These impacts would be identified during Tier 2 analysis after design details are known, and mitigated in Tier 2 through coordination with local communities and agencies and other measures as described in Section 3.23.

Long-term economic impacts along the Corridor would be beneficial because the Chicago to Council Bluffs-Omaha service would provide connections to major markets in the Study Area. There would be temporary access impacts during construction and long-term impacts for travel across at-grade crossings by the public and community service vehicles. While the Chicago to Council Bluffs-Omaha service would cause some disruptions to existing businesses and neighborhoods during construction, appropriate measures would be taken to mitigate impacts to adjacent areas. These measures are described in Section 3.23. Other impacts potentially affecting social conditions include accessibility and safety issues to adjacent neighborhoods and activity centers. Appropriate safety measures would be taken and are described in Section 3.7.

The Build Alternative includes a southern alignment option through southern Des Moines (Des Moines Design Option 3) that has the potential to disrupt established neighborhoods and existing economic activity with the construction of a new rail line. This area is shown in Appendix B, Figures 114 and 115. Potential direct impacts include the displacement of homes and businesses. No attempt was made to determine the number of potential displaced homes and businesses at the Tier 1 level of analysis because the result would be speculative; aerial photographic analysis without ground truthing would make it difficult to differentiate

businesses from residences and to account for multifamily residences. However, during Tier 2 analyses, potential displacements will be quantified and addressed in the associated NEPA documents. Impacted development within this area is described in further detail in Section 3.2. Potential indirect impacts include disruption of travel patterns during and after construction through the construction of new rail lines that would transect the existing street network within the area. In most areas, a rail corridor already exists, so community cohesion would be minimally affected overall, with some impacts projected in urban areas.

Short-term economic benefits would be derived from the Build Alternative through an increase in employment for construction-related jobs, and increased economic activity from those employees patronizing local businesses and service establishments along the Corridor and in areas of future stations. Long-term economic benefits would include the potential for increased economic activity within cities along the Study Area near identified stations. The Build Alternative may help to revitalize urbanized areas near future stations by attracting higher-density and mixed-use development, which provides new employment and housing options. Additionally, the Build Alternative would link cities along the Study Corridor, thereby improving mobility and expanding employment opportunities over a larger geographic area; this benefits employers by expanding the labor market and offering employees more choices of where to live. The location of housing in relation to jobs, services, and amenities appreciably enhances the quality of life. The level of benefit depends on the frequency and speed of service. For areas between stations, there would be limited economic benefits. Due to these long-term economic benefits and quality of life benefits, as stated above, high-speed passenger rail has broad support within major communities throughout the Study Area.

The following communities within the Study Area have active advocacy organizations that promote economic development through passenger rail development:

- The Quad Cities Rail Coalition, sponsored by the Quad Cities Chamber of Commerce, is an advocacy group promoting new passenger rail service to provide a positive impact on the region's economy and quality of life. This coalition of 10,000 members includes elected officials, community leaders, community organizations, and residents. Renew Moline also has created economic development plans using the new Amtrak station as a catalyst for development and economic revitalization.
- The Greater Des Moines Partnership sponsored *Capital Crossroads*, a regional plan that advocates support for high-speed rail through the Des Moines metropolitan area. Building on the planned high-speed rail service between Chicago and the Quad Cities, *Capital Crossroads* recommends raising awareness and building support for extending the line through Des Moines to Omaha. The Greater Des Moines Partnership is an economic development advocacy group supported by over 280 public and private investors and focuses on economic development, workforce attraction and retention, downtown development and regional business development. Additionally, high-speed rail service for the Des Moines metropolitan area will be considered in the *Tomorrow Plan*, currently under development, which provides a long-term blueprint for the region.

- In the Omaha/Council Bluffs metropolitan area, the Metropolitan Area Planning Agency (MAPA), a COG, began a similar process in the fall of 2012 to develop a regional vision named *Heartland 2050*. MAPA's *Long Range Transportation Plan 2035* notes existing planning efforts for high-speed rail service; however, it does not make specific recommendations. Furthermore, these plans and initiatives articulate the economic and social benefits of the Project from a local perspective. Overall, local, regional, and state economics are anticipated to benefit from the Project, both in the short term during construction and long-term during operation of the Project.

3.4.5 Potential Mitigation Measures

Station locations will be further defined and delineated in Tier 2 analyses, and potential impacts on socioeconomic conditions will be identified along with strategies to avoid or mitigate these impacts. In addition, public involvement and agency coordination activities may result in identification of potential mitigation needs. Specific mitigation measures, to the extent required, will be identified and discussed during Tier 2 analysis after design details are known, recorded in NEPA documents as specific impacts are identified, and implemented.

3.5 TITLE VI AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

The environmental justice assessment was conducted to determine whether minority or low-income communities, potential environmental justice areas, are present within or adjacent to the Study Area. Minority populations may include, but are not limited to, African Americans, Hispanics, Asian Americans, and Native Americans. Low-income is defined as a person whose household income is at or below the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services poverty guidelines. The assessment also addresses people with limited English proficiency (LEP). A more detailed assessment of these populations will be conducted during Tier 2 analyses when more specific impacts are known. The mobility of the elderly and people with disabilities within the Study Area is addressed in Section 3.6.

3.5.1 Methodology and Regulatory Requirements

The methodology for conducting the review and evaluation of minority and low-income populations is in accordance with federal regulations and guidelines, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; NEPA; FRA's Environmental Procedures; guidelines published by CEQ on implementing NEPA; Environmental Justice Guidance (CEQ, December 10, 1997); Executive Order (EO) 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations; and USDOT Order 5610.2(a). LEP populations are evaluated in accordance with EO 13166, Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency.

Demographic data from the 2010 Census, including total population, ethnicity, and poverty status, were compiled at the city and county levels within and adjacent to the Study Area. Population and minority (racial and ethnic) data are reported by the U.S. Census Bureau, and income and language (LEP) data are reported by the ACS. State-level data were also gathered as a basis for comparison. At potential station locations, census-tract-level data were gathered for adjacent tracts, as appropriate.

The demographic composition of the No-Build and Build Alternatives in this Tier 1 EIS were reviewed to determine whether minority populations and/or low-income populations that exceed the state averages are present. Data from counties along the Study Area were also aggregated and used for comparison. Minority and low-income populations tend to be concentrated in urban areas. This trend was confirmed and documented in the analysis.

To determine if an environmental justice population would be disproportionately adversely impacted by the Project, the existence and location of substantial minority and low-income populations within the Study Area was determined. Minority and low-income populations within the affected areas were compared to the statewide or citywide average. Environmental justice populations were identified where either the environmental justice population percentage 1) is greater than 50 percent of the affected area's population, or 2) exceeds the statewide or citywide environmental justice percentage by more than 50 percent, as shown in Appendix D (FTA, 2012).

Using GIS data as well as spatial and demographic data from the 2010 Census and the ACS, the counties and cities in the Study Area were analyzed to highlight areas of substantial minority populations and/or low-income populations. Counties, cities, and/or census tracts within the Study Area were then highlighted for environmental justice populations. The potential for clusters of environmental justice populations to incur disproportionately high and adverse impacts was evaluated and documented.

A potential direct impact is the displacement of residents or businesses. However, for the Tier 1 EIS, potential displacement areas were identified and compared based on estimated ROW needs because exact areas for ROW acquisition are not known during the Tier 1 EIS. A qualitative evaluation was conducted to determine potential indirect impacts, which are discussed in Section 3.26.

Specific impacts would be identified and assessed in the Tier 2 NEPA documents, and a determination would be made as to whether potential impacts are disproportionately high and adverse as compared to other affected populations. During Tier 2 analysis, LEP populations would be identified, and specific approaches to providing access to services will be documented. A preliminary screening of these populations was conducted within cities with significant minority populations.

3.5.2 Affected Environment

Census data were collected at the county level for the Study Area and the city level within 0.25 mile of the Potential Impact Area to identify potential environmental justice populations (see Appendix D). There are 24 counties transected by the Study Area (9 in Illinois, 14 in Iowa, and 1 in Nebraska). There are 82 cities and villages within 0.25 mile of the Study Area (40 in Illinois, 41 in Iowa, and 1 in Nebraska).

In addition to Census data, aerial photographic images were reviewed to evaluate the affected environment. Aerial images with environmental resource information are provided in Appendix B, Figures 1 through 162. Although minority and low-income population data are not portrayed directly in the figures, urban areas (which are evident in the figures) typically host a higher proportion of minority and low-income populations.

Minority Populations

Five counties (Cook in Illinois; Scott, Johnson, and Polk in Iowa; and Douglas in Nebraska) and ten cities and villages (Chicago, Cicero, Berwyn, and Aurora, Illinois; Davenport, West Liberty, Iowa City, Coralville, and Des Moines, Iowa; and Omaha, Nebraska) have a minority population that is 50 percent greater than their respective statewide average. Chicago and Cicero are the only cities to have a minority population in excess of 50 percent of the total population. Appendix D, Tables 1, 2, and 3, provide a summary of population by race for all counties, cities, and villages within 0.25 mile of the Study Area.

Low-Income Populations

No counties in the Study Area have a low-income population that is 50 percent greater than their respective statewide average (see Appendix D, Table 4). However, eight cities and villages (Chicago and Carbon Cliff, Illinois; and Davenport, Atalissa, Iowa City, University Heights, Marengo, and Ladora, Iowa) have a low-income population that is 50 percent greater than their respective statewide average. A summary of low-income populations for all cities and villages within 0.25 mile of the Study Area is provided in Appendix D, Tables 5 and 6. No county, city, or village in the Study Area had a low-income population in excess of 50 percent of the total population.

Limited English Proficiency Populations

An analysis of LEP populations for cities with substantial minority populations is provided in Appendix D, Table 13. Minority populations within the Study Area may include large proportions of populations with LEP.

3.5.3 Impacts of No-Build Alternative

Under the No-Build Alternative, the Project would not be built, and impacts on environmental justice populations are not anticipated beyond those that could occur due to other projects. The Chicago to Quad Cities Expansion Program would occur through La Grange and Moline, Iowa, which include environmental justice populations. However, that program would likely not cause disproportionately high and adverse impacts to these populations because it is not anticipated that appreciable ROW would be required through urban areas where these populations are highest. West of Moline, Illinois, minority and low-income populations would not realize the mobility and economic benefits provided through access to new passenger rail service.

3.5.4 Impacts of Build Alternative

The Build Alternative could have direct and indirect impacts on minority and low-income populations. Direct impacts affect environmental justice populations through potential property displacements for new or improved stations as well as the need for additional ROW for track and associated improvements on existing alignments or additional ROW for new alignments. Most improvements would be within existing ROW. Improvements outside of existing ROW are limited to areas that would be upgraded from single track to double track, new alignment connections at Wyanet and potentially Des Moines, intersection safety improvements, and upgrades to stations for new passenger rail service. Indirect impacts affect adjacent environmental justice populations temporarily through increased traffic

congestion, delays, noise, and vibrations during construction. A more detailed assessment of indirect impacts is presented in Section 3.23.

Other impacts would occur through increased noise and vibrations caused by the operation of new higher speed rail service; this service would be new along IAIS and UP rail lines within the Corridor and would be additional service along the BNSF and Amtrak rail lines within the Corridor. Other direct and indirect impacts relate to safety at rail crossings and traffic delays due to increased train speeds and volumes through counties, cities, and villages with environmental justice populations. Section 3.7.4 addresses public health and safety impacts in more detail.

Based on the noise analysis documented in Appendix F and summarized in Section 3.8.4, the Build Alternative is projected to result in 1.0 new moderate noise impact per mile, 0.6 new severe noise impact per mile, and a combined total of 1.6 noise impacts per mile. The increase in train noise is not significant; consequently, environmental justice populations are not anticipated to be disproportionately affected by noise. A more detailed evaluation of moderate and severe noise and vibration impacts for specific areas within the Potential Impact Area would be conducted during Tier 2 analyses when specific ROW requirements and improvements are known.

2010 Census data were analyzed for census tracts transected by and adjacent to potential station sites within the Study Area. Potential station locations and the demographic, race, and poverty level information for all of the affected census tracts are provided in Appendix D, Tables 7, 8, 9, and 10. Demographic data for stations located in Des Moines and Council Bluffs, Iowa, and Omaha, Nebraska, were not included because the locations of those stations are not known at this time. There are minority populations greater than 50 percent of their respective citywide average within impacted census tracts at the following stations: La Grange Road (Census Tract 8195) and Moline (Census Tract 223) in Illinois; and Atlantic (Census Tract 1905) in Iowa. In addition, there are low-income populations greater than 50 percent of their respective citywide average within impacted census tracts at the following stations: La Grange Road (Census Tract 8195) and Moline (Census Tract 223) in Illinois; and Iowa City (Census Tract 16), Grinnell (Census Tract 3704), and Atlantic (Census Tract 1905) in Iowa.

The Build Alternative includes an optional alignment through Des Moines (Des Moines Design Option 3) that would impact both minority and low-income populations. This area is shown in Appendix B, Figures 114 and 115. Census Tract 52 has a low-income population of 50.9 percent, which is substantially greater than the citywide average of 16.3 percent. Specific demographic information for minority and low-income populations is provided in Appendix D, Tables 11 and 12. Through the early conceptual design process, locations where additional ROW would be required were evaluated to determine if impacts on residential areas could be avoided or minimized depending on which side of the existing track the improvements would be located. Through refinements in the conceptual design, impacts on adjacent uses can potentially be further minimized during the Tier 2 analyses.

Minority populations within the Study Area may include large proportions of populations with LEP. During Tier 2 analyses, these affected populations would be identified for impacted areas, and specific approaches to providing access to services and for public involvement would be documented as appropriate.

The higher speed passenger rail service under the Build Alternative would provide economic and quality of life benefits to minority and low-income populations through improved mobility and access to an alternative transportation mode serving multiple destinations throughout the Corridor. However, these benefits would be limited to the area near the identified station stops. Some of these populations would also be impacted through potential displacements, noise, increased congestion, and other impacts. Specific impacts would be evaluated and addressed during Tier 2 analyses.

3.5.5 Potential Mitigation Measures

Specific mitigation measures, to the extent required, would be identified and discussed during Tier 2 analysis after design details are known, recorded in NEPA documents as specific impacts are identified, and implemented.

3.6 ELDERLY AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

This environmental consideration includes an assessment of the transportation and mobility of elderly populations and populations with physical or mental disabilities. The assessment was performed with the acknowledgement that these populations live within and along the Corridor, but does not rely on data for the specific numbers of these populations by location.

3.6.1 Methodology and Regulatory Requirements

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Aging, considers persons that are 65 years or older as elderly (Administration on Aging, 2011). Elderly populations are protected under the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended, and the Older Americans Act of 1965, as amended. Populations with disabilities are protected under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Generally, these four acts ensure that those associated population groups are not excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services – Administration on Aging website and the Department on Aging websites of each state were reviewed in regard to transportation and mobility issues (Illinois Department on Aging, 2012; Iowa Department on Aging, 2012; Nebraska State Unit on Aging, 2012). In addition, various metropolitan websites were reviewed to obtain public transportation information.

3.6.2 Affected Environment

Gathered data were reviewed and a general description of the means of transportation available to elderly populations and populations with physical or mental disabilities was prepared. Elderly and disabled persons are more likely to have health conditions, including vision, hearing, or mobility losses, which prevent them from driving. This increases their reliance on Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible transportation services that provide a link to other services that are needed in order to remain independent. The means of transportation that cross or travel adjacent to the Study Area, and that are available to elderly and disabled populations in the major metropolitan regions of the Study Area, include fixed-route bus services, fixed-route commuter and passenger rail services, and paratransit services in which people with disabilities can reserve transportation in advance. Persons with

disabilities which prevent them from riding the regular fixed route public transit services are eligible for paratransit service.

Census data regarding the elderly population is presented in Chapter 1, Table 1-4. Aerial images with environmental resource information are provided in Appendix B, Figures 1 through 162. Although elderly and disabled data are not portrayed directly on the figures, the major transportation network in the urban areas and small towns (which are evident in the figures) is shown. The means of transportation available to elderly and disabled populations are summarized below.

3.6.2.1 Chicago/Naperville, Illinois

In the Chicago metropolitan area, including Naperville, ADA accessible public transportation is provided under the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) as follows:

- *Chicago Transit Authority (CTA)* – Fixed-route bus and commuter rail services. (CTA, 2011)
- *Metra* fixed-route commuter rail service – Currently operating on the BNSF rail corridor from downtown Chicago to Aurora. (Metra, 2012)
- *Pace* – Fixed-route suburban bus service (Pace, 2012a) with direct connections to and from CTA and Metra (Pace, 2012c), and paratransit services to persons with disabilities. (Pace, 2012b)
- *Amtrak* – Currently operating passenger trains from downtown Chicago to Wyanet, Illinois in the Study Area. (Amtrak, 2012).

3.6.2.2 East Moline/Moline/Rock Island, Illinois and Davenport/Bettendorf, Iowa (Quad Cities)

In the Quad Cities metropolitan area, ADA accessible transportation services are provided as follows:

- *Rock Island County's Metro* – Fixed-route bus service in East Moline, Moline, and Rock Island, Illinois, and paratransit service for people with disabilities. (MetroLINK, 2012)
- *CitiBus* – Fixed-route bus service in Davenport, Iowa and a paratransit service through a contract with River Bend Transit, for people with disabilities. (City of Davenport, Iowa, 2012)
- *Bettendorf Transit System* – Fixed-route bus service that connects with CitiBus and crosses the Mississippi River to downtown Moline where it provides a connection with the Metro, and provides a paratransit service through a contract with River Bend Transit. (City of Bettendorf, Iowa, 2012).

3.6.2.3 Iowa City/Coralville, Iowa

In the Iowa City/Coralville metropolitan area, ADA accessible transportation services are provided as follows:

- *Cambus* – University of Iowa's fixed-route bus transportation service routes available to students, faculty, staff, and the general public, and paratransit service for students, faculty, and staff who are disabled. (University of Iowa, 2009).

- *Iowa City Transit (ICT)* - Fixed-route bus service. (City of Iowa City, Iowa, 2012a)
- *Coralville Transit System (CTS)* – Fixed-route bus service routes. (City of Coralville, Iowa, 2012)
- *Johnson County SEATS* (Special needs and Elderly Assisted Transportation System), a paratransit service provided by ICT and CTS. (City of Iowa City, Iowa, 2012b)

3.6.2.4 Des Moines, Iowa

In the Des Moines metropolitan area, public transportation and ADA accessible transportation is provided as follows:

- *Des Moines Area Regional Transit Authority (DART)* – Fixed-route bus service and a paratransit service to elderly and disabled persons (DART, 2010).
- *Heart of Iowa Regional Transit Agency (HIRTA)* – Door-to-door bus services to the general public; with an emphasis on the elderly, low-income persons, and persons with disabilities; on a demand-response basis in a seven-county area outside of, and surrounding Polk County (HIRTA, 2012). The Study Area lies within three of those counties: Jasper, Dallas, and Madison.

3.6.2.5 Atlantic, Iowa

In the Atlantic area, accessible public transportation (small buses and vans) is provided by the Southwest Iowa Transit Agency (SWITA), which serves all residents in an eight-county area (Southwest Iowa Planning Council, 2012), two of which are in the Study Area: Cass and Pottawattamie.

3.6.2.6 Omaha/Council Bluffs, Iowa

In the Omaha/Council Bluffs metropolitan area, ADA accessible transportation services are provided as follows:

- *Metro* – Fixed-route bus service, with several routes on the Omaha side and a few that travel into the Council Bluffs area, and a paratransit service within the Omaha city limits for people with disabilities (Transit Authority of the City of Omaha, 2012a and 2012b).
- *Special Transit Service (STS)* – Paratransit service within the Council Bluffs city limits, provided by the Department of Public Works for people with disabilities (City of Council Bluffs, Iowa, 2012).

3.6.2.7 Intercity Bus Service

Three commercial bus lines, Burlington Trailways, Greyhound, and Megabus, offer ADA accessible transportation service between Omaha and Chicago, enabling the elderly and disabled persons to travel between intermediate major urban areas as follows:

- *Burlington Trailways* – Chicago, Naperville, Moline, Rock Island, Davenport, Iowa City, Des Moines, and Omaha. (Burlington Trailways, 2012)

- *Greyhound* – Chicago, LaSalle, Davenport, Iowa City, Des Moines, Atlantic, and Omaha (Greyhound, 2011)
- *Megabus* – Chicago, Iowa City, Des Moines, and Omaha. (Megabus.com, 2012)

3.6.2.8 Intercity Airline Service

Four airlines provide direct nonstop service between Chicago and Omaha: American Airlines, Southwest Airlines, United Airlines, and U.S. Airways. These airlines provide transportation services that accommodate the elderly and people with disabilities. Nonstop airline service is also offered between Chicago and the intermediate major urban areas as listed below. However, airline travel from Omaha to any of those intermediate cities, or between any of the intermediate cities served by airlines, is indirect and requires at least two flights, with a connection in an airline hub city such as Chicago, Minneapolis, Denver, or Houston.

- *American Airlines* – Chicago, Moline, Des Moines, Omaha (American Airlines, 2012)
- *Southwest Airlines* – Chicago, Des Moines (service began September 30, 2012), Omaha (Southwest Airlines, 2012)
- *United Airlines* – Chicago, Moline, Des Moines, Omaha (United Airlines, 2012)
- *U.S. Airways* – Chicago, Moline, Iowa City, Des Moines, Omaha (U.S. Airways, 2012)

3.6.3 Impacts of No-Build Alternative

Under the No-Build Alternative, the Project would not be built, and direct impacts on the elderly and people with disabilities, as well as their transportation and general mobility, are not anticipated beyond those that could occur due to other projects. However, the Chicago to Quad Cities service would not result in permanent adverse impacts on the transportation and mobility of the elderly and people with disabilities, as there would be no permanent change of existing public transportation routes. Minimal temporary impacts could occur as a result of some detours or delays during construction in the vicinity of grade crossing improvements related to the Chicago to Quad Cities Expansion Program. In addition, beneficial impacts would occur as a result of providing an additional means of accessible public transportation between Chicago and the Quad Cities, and the Eola Yard improvements would reduce train traffic congestion and improve on-time performance of passenger train service.

3.6.4 Impacts of Build Alternative

The Build Alternative would have no permanent direct adverse impacts on the existing transportation services and general mobility of elderly persons and persons with disabilities. Although minimal temporary impacts on existing public transportation routes could occur as a result of detours or delays during construction in the vicinity of at-grade and grade-separated crossing improvements, the facilities and services proposed under the Build Alternative would provide beneficial impacts by improving or developing accessible station facilities and improving at-grade crossings of existing public transportation routes. The Build Alternative would also provide an additional means of accessible public transportation for the elderly and disabled populations, support expanded transit operations for efficient use of the

transit system, and increase the availability of transportation options that connect to other cities beyond their immediate region.

Through ROW acquisition, it is possible that some elderly populations and populations with physical or mental disabilities could be displaced. Those impacts would be addressed along with the general population as described in Section 3.2.

3.6.5 Potential Mitigation Measures

A more detailed analysis of potential adverse and beneficial impacts on the elderly and disabled populations, mitigation measures, and the public involvement process would be provided in the Tier 2 NEPA documents. Specific mitigation measures, to the extent required, would be identified and discussed during Tier 2 analysis after design details are known, recorded in NEPA documents as specific impacts are identified, and implemented prior to construction. It is anticipated that any adverse impacts from the Build Alternative on the elderly and people with disabilities would be mitigated by providing beneficial ADA compliant services and facilities for those populations. Throughout the NEPA process, public involvement would include public open houses and public information distribution to reach elderly and disabled populations and obtain input regarding issues and concerns of those populations.

3.7 PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY

This discussion includes considerations for the health and safety of residents and communities and for the level of protection that would be provided in relation to construction activities and long-term operations associated with the Project.

3.7.1 Methodology and Regulatory Requirements

The regulatory framework pertaining to public health and safety includes the ADA, the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act of 1976 (RCRA) and its amendments, and the Occupational Health and Safety Act of 1970. Public health and safety considerations were evaluated in accordance with FRA's Environmental Procedures.

Highway/rail at-grade crossing information was collected from the FRA Grade Crossings database. The database provides spatial crossing information that originates from the National Highway-Rail Crossing Inventory Program. Data collection included obtaining the number of existing at-grade crossings along the Study Area. During Tier 2 analysis, more detailed information would be gathered from public outreach efforts for other areas such as unusually busy at-grade crossings or farm crossings.

Publications and resource materials from FRA and other USDOT agencies were reviewed for general safety information including, but not limited to, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, High-Speed Passenger Rail Safety Strategy (FRA, 2009), the Rail Safety Improvement Act of 2008 (Public Law 110-432), and the Federal Railroad Safety Act (FRSA) (49 USC §20101 et seq.). During Tier 2 analysis, coordination would take place with the host railroads to obtain information regarding the level of protection afforded the public in regard to health and safety issues.

3.7.2 Affected Environment

Aerial photographs illustrating many at-grade rail crossings by roads, trails, and other transportation pathways are shown in Appendix B, Figures 1 through 162.

The Study Area predominantly consists of existing BNSF freight and passenger rail lines and IAIS freight rail lines from Chicago, Illinois, through Iowa, to Council Bluffs, Iowa, and Omaha, Nebraska, with some UP track in the Des Moines and Omaha/Council Bluffs metropolitan areas, and Amtrak track within the Chicago terminal area. The BNSF line is mostly double and triple track, is signalized, and is under CTC. The IAIS line is single track, is non-signalized, and operates under track warrant control (TWC).

UP owns a portion of the IAIS route in Des Moines through Shortline Yard that is non-signalized and within yard limits as well as a portion of the route through West Des Moines that is non-signalized and is leased, managed, and dispatched by IAIS under TWC. The UP portion of the route in the Omaha/Council Bluffs metropolitan area is signalized and operated under CTC. The Amtrak portion of the route consists of approximately 0.75 mile of yard tracks in the Chicago terminal area that are signalized and operate under CTC.

There would be construction of 1 mile of new track approximately 1 mile south of Wyanet, Illinois, to create an at-grade connection of the BNSF and IAIS rail lines. Throughout this approximately 500-mile rail Corridor, the rail lines cross numerous public and private roads, highways and interstates with at-grade and grade-separated crossings. Currently, there are approximately 1,033 public or private road/rail crossings within the Study Area. This equates to just over two crossings per mile on average. There are approximately 514 public crossings and 519 private crossings. Approximately 78 percent of these crossings are at-grade and 22 percent grade-separated. The at-grade crossings have various forms of warning devices ranging from active gates and flashing signals, to passive protective lights and bells, to simple cross-buck warning signs at rural crossings. FRA has established train control requirements for train movements above 79 mph (49 CFR 236). For train speeds between 80 and 110 mph, the highest speed being considered for this EIS, FRA recommends the installation of the most sophisticated warning or traffic control devices that fit the location. Examples include dispatcher-controlled electrically locked gates, bells, flashing lights, and constant warning time devices.

Rail improvements must meet the requirements of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), FRA, and the ADA for construction, operations and maintenance. Requirements for public health, such as RCRA, also apply and are addressed in Section 3.10.

3.7.3 Impacts of No-Build Alternative

Under the No-Build Alternative, the Project would not be built, and impacts on public health and safety are not anticipated beyond those that could occur due to other projects. The other projects considered as part of the No-Build Alternative in this Tier 1 EIS are the Chicago to Quad Cities Expansion Program passenger rail project, including the Chicago to Wyanet, Wyanet Connection, and Wyanet to Moline projects. The Chicago to Quad Cities service would contribute to increased train operations along this portion of the Corridor. The Chicago to Quad Cities service would introduce additional passenger trains with speeds of up to 79 mph and new crossings in Wyanet; consequently, the potential for at-grade conflicts would increase without the likely addition of upgraded warning or traffic control devices.

Construction, operations, and maintenance associated with the Chicago to Quad Cities Expansion Program would need to meet OSHA, ADA, RCRA and other requirements to help protect the safety and health of workers and the public.

3.7.4 Impacts of Build Alternative

The Build Alternative would include substantial track and signal upgrades to address public safety and to limit conflicts with existing freight rail service. Along the IAIS line, additional track would be added and a CTC system would be installed, including a wayside signal system and remote control switches. The IAIS's dispatching center would be upgraded as needed. Both BNSF and IAIS's dispatching centers would be automatically notified as trains from one railroad are routed onto the other railroad.

The Build Alternative would provide new passenger rail service on approximately 115 miles of track owned by BNSF between Chicago and Wyanet, Illinois; over 1 mile of new track to connect the BNSF line to IAIS at Wyanet, Illinois; and approximately 378 miles of IAIS track between Wyanet and Council Bluffs, Iowa, and Omaha, Nebraska. With new passenger rail service and anticipated speeds up to 110 mph, existing single track sections would be upgraded to double track, the existing TWC system would be replaced with a CTC system with PTC integration, and existing at-grade crossings would be upgraded as necessary to help ensure that the most sophisticated warning devices appropriate for the area are available for high-speed rail service. Dispatcher-controlled switches would be installed at existing and new freight sidings. Tree and brush clearing would be performed as needed to provide necessary sight distances for the wayside signal system. Construction of these improvements would provide temporary impacts that are described in more detail in Section 3.23. Safety issues would be mitigated through these improvements. During Tier 2 analysis, there would be further evaluation of whether some crossing locations would be closed and others would receive grade-separated crossings. Safety at stations would also be evaluated, with safety improvements proposed as warranted.

When compared to vehicular highway travel, passenger rail service is a safer alternative. According to the National Safety Council, based on miles traveled, personal motor vehicle travel is 12 to 20 times more likely to result in a fatality than passenger rail travel. In addition, construction, operations, and maintenance associated with the Build Alternative would meet OSHA, FRA, ADA, RCRA, and other requirements to help protect the safety and health of workers and the public.

3.7.5 Potential Mitigation Measures

Specific mitigation measures, to the extent required, would be identified and discussed during Tier 2 analysis after design details are known, recorded in NEPA documents as specific impacts are identified, and implemented prior to construction. Due to the increased speed of HSR service, there are a number of safety measures and strategies that would be considered to protect the health and safety of passengers as well as motor vehicles and pedestrians at existing or new at-grade crossings. FRA guidance recommends the following safety measures and strategies, which would be addressed in Tier 2 (FRA, 2009):

- Upgrade the existing train traffic control system throughout the entire Corridor including conversion of the existing TWC along the IAIS to CTC.

- Where practical, it is recommended that public and private grade crossings be consolidated along the HSR route. Redundant and/or unsafe crossings (due to proximity of existing road intersections, skewed geometry, etc.) should be eliminated where alternate access can be reasonably provided.
- For public and private at-grade crossings, especially within and on the fringe of populated areas, install the most sophisticated traffic control/warning device appropriate for the location, such as median barriers, special signage, flashing lights, four-quadrant gates, etc. In general, private crossings should be treated the same as public crossings.
- Private crossings within industrial developments and rural areas with a prevalence of heavy trucks and farm equipment can pose significant dangers. For these private crossings that cannot be closed, consideration should be given to providing a locking device when not in use.
- Active warning systems for pedestrians are essential where the HSR line crosses existing sidewalks, trails, and bike routes. This is especially the case with crossing near parks, schools and other activity centers.
- Education and public outreach are important to prepare road users for the challenges inherent at future HSR crossings. The public will need to be informed that HSR trains travel at significantly higher speeds than existing trains in the Study Area. Exclusively relying on visual and/or audible cues to judge the arrival of HSR trains can be extremely dangerous.
- Station locations may warrant additional security improvements such as extra lighting, surveillance cameras, and other security measures.

3.8 NOISE AND VIBRATION

In general, noise can be defined as unwanted sound. Sound is produced by the vibration of sound pressure waves in the air, and sound pressure levels are expressed in units called decibels (dB). The human hearing organs do not perceive all sounds equally, and a mathematical weighting scale is used to put more emphasis (or weighting) on frequencies that humans perceive, and also to de-emphasize the frequencies that humans do not perceive very well. The A-weighting scale, expressed as A-weighted decibels (dBA), accounts for the human perception of hearing. Estimates of environmental noise in this analysis are expressed with a dimension of time associated with them. Two descriptors are used: L_{eq} and L_{dn} . As used in this analysis, the equivalent noise level (L_{eq}) is an energy-based average noise level that occurs over a 1-hour period. The day-night noise level (L_{dn}) is a combination of 24 consecutive hourly L_{eq} values, with the addition of a 10-decibel penalty to values that occur between 10:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. In this manner, the L_{dn} accounts for additional annoyance associated with noise events that occur at night and can potentially disrupt sleep.

Airborne noise and ground-borne vibration (GBV) were evaluated in this analysis, consistent with precedent applied by FRA on other Tier 1 studies for high speed passenger rail projects. Vibration, as addressed in this analysis, consists of rapidly fluctuating motions through the ground expressed as GBV. Various federal agencies establish noise and vibration criteria to help ensure that federally funded projects are evaluated for noise and vibration impacts compared to criteria. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and FRA established similar

procedures and guidelines for assessing train noise and categorizing impacts as no impact, moderate impact, or severe impact.

Noise and vibration receptors include residences, businesses, and locations where noise sensitivities exist due to the types of land use or activities such as parks, picnic areas, recreation areas, schools, churches, libraries, and hospitals. Consequently, urban areas adjacent to rail ROW have more receptors than rural areas.

3.8.1 Methodology and Regulatory Requirements

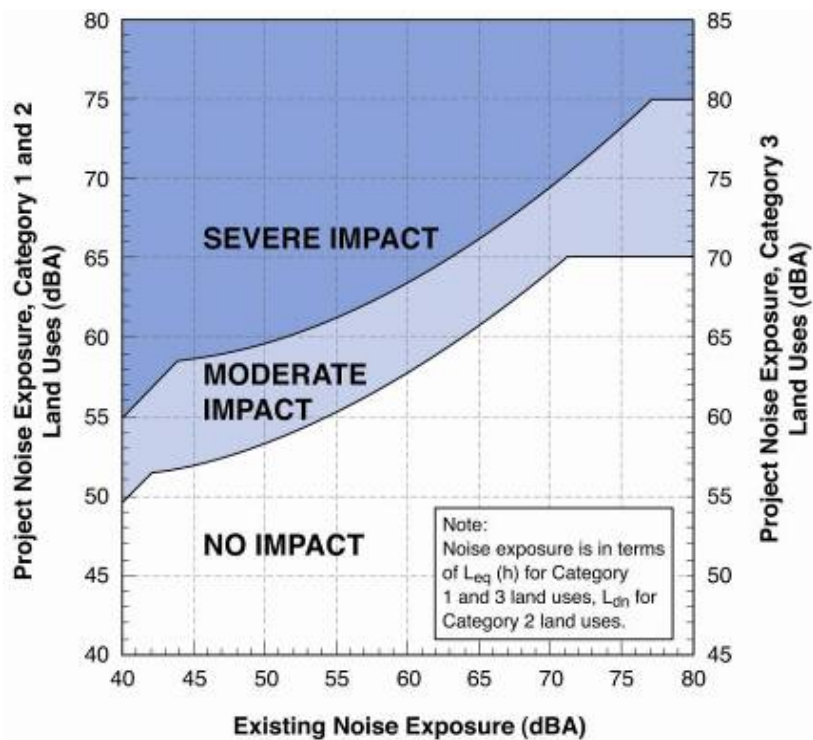
FRA implemented Railroad Noise Emission Compliance Regulations (49 CFR 210) to comply with the Railroad Noise Emission Standards established by the USEPA in 40 CFR 201.

The noise and vibration assessment followed FTA guidelines published in “Transit Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment” (May 2006). FRA published virtually identical guidance for assessing noise and vibration from high speed passenger trains in 2005. FRA uses FTA methods for noise and vibration impact assessment. Consistent with other FRA Tier 1 NEPA evaluations, a screening application of the general noise assessment was conducted, and a GBV assessment was prepared in accordance with FTA guidelines.

The FTA noise impact criteria are defined by two curves, representing severe and moderate noise impacts, which are defined below.

- **Severe Impact.** A significant percentage of people are highly annoyed by noise in this range. Noise mitigation would normally be specified for severe impact areas unless it is not feasible or reasonable (unless there is no practical method of mitigating the impact).
- **Moderate Impact.** In this range, other project-specific factors are considered to determine the magnitude of the impact and the need for mitigation. These factors include the predicted increase over existing noise levels, the types and number of noise-sensitive land uses affected, existing outdoor-indoor sound insulation, and the cost-effectiveness of mitigating noise to more acceptable levels.

The FTA noise impact criteria are summarized in Graph 3.8-1, below. The graph illustrates existing noise exposure and Project-related noise exposure, and demonstrates that FTA noise impact thresholds vary with existing noise levels. Although the graph below references all three land use categories used by FTA, this analysis focused on Category 2 (land uses where overnight sleep occurs).



Graph 3.8-1. FTA Noise Impact Criteria

In a Tier 1 EIS, the focus is on receptors in land uses where overnight sleep occurs (primarily residences), which is consistent with FRA guidance for Tier 1 NEPA reviews. Residences were identified by visual inspection of digital aerial photographs; no windshield surveys were performed. Park and recreation areas identified through a separate analysis of those resources were also noted as receptor locations for the noise and vibration analysis.

Passenger trains would operate at the maximum authorized speed of 110 mph where and when possible, but sustained 110 mph stretches are not present on this route. The noise and vibration analyses evaluated average speeds that account for permanent speed reductions for curves, urban area ordinances, station stops, etc., and the speed loss that occurs when accelerating and decelerating out of and into each of those speed reductions. Freight trains have switching and other work events, and permanent speed restrictions for yard areas, curves, and urban ordinances, etc. The noise and vibration analyses also evaluated average freight train speeds.

Both the No-Build and Build Alternatives were assessed for the effects of airborne noise and GBV. The No-Build Alternative is the expected effect of a future freight rail traffic increase, without the addition of the passenger trains from Chicago to Omaha, combined with current service levels of commuter rail traffic from Chicago to Wyanet. The Build Alternative is the expected effect of the same freight rail traffic increase and commuter rail traffic along with the Project-related passenger rail traffic from the Project.

Data from several sources was used to generate train traffic counts on the proposed route for use in the noise and vibration assessment, including information from railroads, train traffic data from FRA crossing data, and operational data. The FRA grade crossing database was incorporated in this assessment to identify the locations of public at-grade rail crossings where locomotive horns are used, and also to identify where quiet zones exist. Noise from locomotive horn use was not included in this assessment in areas where quiet zones currently exist, because horns are not used in those zones.

Potential impacts of both airborne noise and GBV were assessed. FTA and FRA guidance for assessing noise and GBV from passenger trains were used in a screening application of FTA's general noise assessment methods. The FTA noise impact criteria were used to assess the potential for noise impacts. The screening application of the general noise assessment methods only identified potential noise impacts at residential lands; it did not distinguish between moderate and severe noise impacts (as defined by FTA and FRA).

Aerial photography was collected showing the existing land uses along the Study Area and existing noise levels were estimated along its route. Residential land uses were identified from aerial photography. Changes in train volumes (passenger and freight) were identified, and estimates for train volumes and average train speeds were developed. This information was used to subdivide the Study Area into sections with similar traffic conditions.

Existing noise levels in the Study Area were estimated using a multi-step process. Land uses along each section were evaluated to estimate development density, which was used to further subdivide the portions of the Study Area into areas of similar rail traffic volumes or "conditions," development density, and then existing noise levels or "noise conditions." Following FTA/FRA guidance, noise impact thresholds were then determined based on the existing noise levels. By objectively establishing traffic and noise "conditions" with corresponding noise impact thresholds, the process of evaluating project-related noise throughout the entire corridor was simplified. The traffic and noise "conditions" are discussed in more depth in the following section.

The FRA grade crossing database was used to identify at-grade crossings for the Study Area and to identify any quiet zones. Potential noise and GBV impacts were identified by plotting noise impact contours and identifying residential land uses (land use category 2) within those contours. No other land use category was included in the screening application of the general noise and GBV assessment methods. This methodology has been approved by FRA for use on Tier 1 NEPA assessments.

3.8.1.2 Noise

The first step in the noise assessment was to identify existing noise levels. This assessment used methods published by FTA (May 2006) to estimate existing noise levels based on factors such as proximity to roadways, highways, and railroads, and also by population density. Using FTA guidance, the highest estimate of existing noise levels produced by these methods was incorporated into this assessment. In accordance with FTA and FRA guidance, this assessment used the existing noise level to identify the noise impact threshold. The noise impact threshold was determined by locating the measured or estimated existing noise level in FTA's *Transit Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment – Final Report*, Table 3-4, which identifies noise impact thresholds corresponding to the existing noise levels (FTA, May 2006).

The range of train volumes and speeds present in the Study Area was summarized as a series of traffic conditions (A through J). Because sustained speeds of 110 mph would not be possible on the route, the noise and vibration analyses evaluated average speeds that account for permanent speed reductions for curves, urban area ordinances, station stops, etc., and the speed loss that occurs when accelerating and decelerating out of and into each of those speed reductions. Consequently, a speed of 100 mph was used to represent the maximum average speed of passenger trains. The noise and vibration analyses also evaluated average freight train speeds. This allowed the Corridor to be subdivided into sections with similar train traffic characteristics. A series of traffic conditions, or zones, were identified throughout the rail line; each traffic condition represents a range of similar rail traffic and surrounding land use (and existing noise levels). Assigning traffic conditions to the Study Area allowed it to be logically subdivided into subsections, simplifying the noise analysis. A total of ten traffic conditions were defined, as shown in Table 3.8-1. These “traffic conditions” were used only to facilitate the analysis; noise analysis results are reported by county and municipality.

Table 3.8-1. Summary of Traffic Conditions

Traffic Condition		Trains per Day	Average Train		
Designation	Location		No. of Cars	No. of Locomotives	Speed
Future Freight Trains (No-Build & Build Alternatives)					
A	Chicago-Aurora	60.0	105.0	3.0	45.0
B	Aurora-Wyanet	36.0	105.0	3.0	45.0
C	Wyanet-Silvis	14.0	141.4	3.0	35.0
D	Silvis-Rock Island	22.0	106.4	2.0	5.0
E	Rock Island-Iowa City	12.0	123.2	3.0	35.0
F	Iowa City	14.0	115.5	2.0	5.0
G	Iowa City-E. Des Moines	12.0	123.2	3.0	35.0
H	Des Moines	14.0	115.5	2.0	10.0
I	W. Des Moines-Council Bluffs	10.0	105.0	3.0	35.0
J	Council Bluffs-Omaha	90.0	141.4	3.0	10.0
Chicago-area Passenger Trains (No-Build Alternative)					
A	Chicago-Aurora	102.0	9.0	1.0	60.0
B	Aurora-Wyanet	8.0	9.4	2.0	70.0
Future Passenger Trains (Build Alternative)					
A	Chicago-Aurora	116.0	9.0	1.0	60.0
B	Aurora-Wyanet	22.0	8.0	2.0	100.0
C	Wyanet-Silvis	14.0	7.1	2.0	100.0
D	Silvis-Rock Island	14.0	7.1	2.0	40.0
E	Rock Island-Iowa City	14.0	7.1	2.0	100.0
F	Iowa City	14.0	7.1	2.0	40.0
G	Iowa City-E. Des Moines	14.0	7.1	2.0	100.0
H	Des Moines	14.0	7.1	2.0	40.0
I	W. Des Moines-Council Bluffs	14.0	7.1	2.0	100.0
J	Council Bluffs-Omaha	14.0	7.1	2.0	40.0

As discussed in the previous section, the range of development density present throughout the Study Area was simplified into the three land use categories used in the FRA horn noise model (rural, suburban, and urban). These particular land use categories were used because they are logical subdivisions of existing land use and they are consistent with land use categories used in the FRA horn noise model. The building-induced (acoustical) shielding assumptions used in that model for each respective land use were also incorporated into this analysis. A series of noise categories or “noise conditions” were then created by combining traffic conditions and the three categories of development density. Table 3.8-2 summarizes the Noise Condition definitions. Using this approach, the Study Area was subdivided into the “noise conditions,” and each noise condition was modeled for representative results throughout the Study Area. As noted previously, the noise analysis results were reported by county and municipality.

Table 3.8-2. Noise Condition Definitions

Noise Condition	Traffic Condition	Development Density
1	A	Urban
2	A	Suburban
3	B	Rural
4	B	Suburban
5	B	Urban
6	C	Rural
7	C	Suburban
8	D	Suburban
9	D	Urban
10	E	Rural
11	E	Suburban
12	E	Urban
13	F	Suburban
14	F	Urban
15	G	Rural
16	G	Suburban
17	H	Suburban
18	H	Urban
19	H	Rural
20	I	Rural
21	I	Suburban
22	J	Urban
23	J	Suburban

This analysis evaluates locomotive horn noise at at-grade crossings and noise from wheel-rail interaction, called wayside noise. Based on the FRA database, this analysis assumes that a quiet zone exists between Chicago and Aurora. These portions of the Study Area comprise much of Noise Condition 1 and Noise Condition 2. Furthermore, most crossings appear to be grade-separated through Council Bluffs, Iowa, to Omaha, Nebraska. This portion of the Study Area comprises Noise Condition 22. Horns are apparently not used on any Noise Condition 1, 2, or 22 rail sections; therefore, locomotive horn analyses were not performed for these sections.

The FRA locomotive horn noise model does not model several different trains at the same time, and was therefore not used on this analysis. The horn noise contours were created using methods in the FTA and FRA guidance documents, and incorporating some of the features of the FRA horn noise model (the 0.25-mile contour distance, and the shielding equations).

3.8.1.3 Vibration

For the GBV assessment, the locations of existing vibration-sensitive land uses were identified and reviewed. In addition, the collected data regarding surface geology were reviewed for application to the assessment of vibration impacts.

Vibration impact assessments are based upon the highest expected level of vibration for repeated vibration events. The vibration impact criterion varies depending upon the number of vibration events per day; a greater number of vibration events will lower the threshold for expecting a community response to the vibration. The number of vibration events may range from less than 30 (infrequent) to more than 70 (frequent) events per day depending on location. FTA recommends, however, that the frequent-event criterion be applied for line-haul freight trains because of the lengthy vibration event caused by the rail cars and the greater weight and axle loads of freight trains versus passenger trains.

Operations under both the No-Build and Build Alternatives were evaluated to assess the potential vibration impact along the Study Area. The Build Alternative includes passenger trains moving at 100 mph, along with existing freight train traffic, on continuously welded rail (CWR).

The assessment began with a data gathering task and construction of a GIS database for the Project. The railroad alignments, surface geology, aerial photography, and train traffic data (the number of locomotives and rail cars) were among the critical information gathered. Geology sources included GIS data and maps available at the Illinois State Geological Survey, Iowa Geological Survey, and Nebraska Geological Survey websites. Appendix E includes data related to development of vibration curve adjustment factors used to support the vibration analysis. Train traffic data were compiled during the noise assessment. The traffic conditions developed for use in the noise assessment documented in the first part of this section were also applied in the vibration analysis. The traffic conditions provided in Table 3.8-3 is a condensed version of Table 3.8-2 for use in the vibration analysis.

As in the noise analysis, the vibration analysis also categorized sections of the rail line into “traffic conditions.” These “traffic conditions” were used only to facilitate the analysis; vibration analysis results are reported by county and municipality. Table 3.8-3 refers to sections of rail that have specific combinations of train speed and frequency (although for the vibration assessment, the frequent-event criterion is assumed). Table 3.8-3 is a condensed version of Table 3.8-2 as it applies to the vibration analysis.

Table 3.8-3. Traffic Conditions

Traffic Condition	Location	Speed (mph)	
		No-Build Alternative	Build Alternative
A	Chicago-Aurora	60	60
B	Aurora-Wyanet	70	100
C	Wyanet-Silvis	35	100
D	Silvis-Rock Island	5	40
E	Rock Island-Iowa City	35	100
F	Iowa City	5	40
G	Iowa City-E. Des Moines	35	100
H	Des Moines	10	40
I	W. Des Moines-Council Bluffs	35	100
J	Council Bluffs-Omaha	10	40

Once the necessary datasets had been gathered, the vibration impacts for existing and future scenarios under the No-Build and Build Alternatives were analyzed.

This Tier 1 NEPA vibration assessment only assessed Project-related GBV at land uses where overnight sleep occurs (primarily residences) for the same reasons as noted in the noise section.

The quantitative noise assessment was completed using GIS data and by calculating the distance to No-Build and Build Alternative train noise impact thresholds using FTA guidance. As noted above, noise levels calculated with this model were compared to FTA noise impact criteria to assess the potential for incremental increases in the number of train noise impacts. Similarly, the distance to No-Build and Build Alternative vibration impact thresholds was calculated and plotted as GIS contours, and was used to identify the incremental change in vibration effects associated with the proposed Project. The incremental changes are in comparison to those impacts projected to occur under current conditions.

3.8.2 Affected Environment

Various resources, including sensitive receptors such as residences, parks, and recreational areas, within the Study Area are shown in Appendix B, Figures 1 through 162. The current rail traffic, speed, and noise conditions were identified in Tables 3.8-1, -2, and -3.

3.8.3 Impacts of No-Build Alternative

Noise and vibration impacts were evaluated quantitatively and are reported separately below.

3.8.3.1 Noise

The noise impacts, as defined by FTA, at residential land uses adjacent to the Study Area were estimated for the No-Build Alternative; these are future noise impacts beyond those currently occurring in the existing environment. Table 3.8-4 presents the increase in noise impacts predicted to occur in each municipality along the Build Alternative and sorts the impacts as moderate or severe grade crossing and wayside (that is, wheel/rail) noise impacts. The entire Corridor was evaluated; rural areas are listed as unincorporated in the table. Evaluation of noise impacts under the No-Build Alternative provides a context for reviewing noise impacts associated with the Build Alternative.

Table 3.8-4. Incremental Increase in Noise Impacts Associated with the No-Build Alternative

Municipality	Moderate		Severe		Total
	Grade Crossing	Wayside	Grade Crossing	Wayside	
Adair County					
Adair	0	1	0	0	1
Stuart	5	0	4	0	9
Unincorporated	3	0	0	0	3
Adair County Total	8	1	4	0	13

Municipality	Moderate		Severe		Total
	Grade Crossing	Wayside	Grade Crossing	Wayside	
Bureau County					
Arlington	8	0	9	1	18
Malden	13	0	11	0	24
Mineral	17	0	5	0	22
Princeton	21	1	10	1	33
Sheffield	16	0	6	0	22
Wyanet	26	0	18	0	44
Unincorporated	9	5	12	0	26
Bureau County Total	110	6	71	2	189
Cass County					
Anita	3	0	1	0	4
Atlantic	4	3	1	0	8
Wiota	2	0	1	0	3
Unincorporated	0	3	0	1	4
Cass County Total	9	6	3	1	19
Cedar County					
Durant	24	0	4	0	28
Unincorporated	4	2	3	0	9
Cedar County Total	28	2	7	0	37
Cook County					
Berwyn	0	122	0	50	172
Brookfield	0	131	0	50	181
Chicago	0	413	0	188	601
Cicero	0	50	0	18	68
Hinsdale	0	19	0	4	23
La Grange	0	83	0	21	104
Riverside	0	77	0	118	195
Western Springs	0	61	0	25	86
Cook County Total	0	956	0	474	1,430
Dallas County					
De Soto	3	1	0	0	4
Dexter	10	0	6	0	16
Van Meter	4	3	2	0	9
Unincorporated	8	1	4	0	13
Dallas County Total	25	5	12	0	42
DeKalb County					
Sandwich	39	7	28	6	80
Somonauk	50	0	20	1	71
Unincorporated	1	1	2	0	4
DeKalb County Total	90	8	50	7	155

Municipality	Moderate		Severe		Total
	Grade Crossing	Wayside	Grade Crossing	Wayside	
Douglas County					
Omaha	0	365	0	152	517
Unincorporated	0	20	0	11	31
Douglas County Total	0	385	0	163	548
DuPage County					
Aurora	0	3	0	1	4
Clarendon Hills	0	76	0	27	103
Downers Grove	0	117	0	52	169
Hinsdale	0	79	0	33	112
Lisle	0	54	0	26	80
Naperville	0	143	0	38	181
Westmont	0	58	0	32	90
Unincorporated	0	109	0	51	160
DuPage County Total	0	639	0	260	899
Guthrie County					
Casey	4	0	1	0	5
Menlo	11	0	2	0	13
Stuart	11	0	1	0	12
Unincorporated	2	1	0	1	4
Guthrie County Total	28	1	4	1	34
Henry County					
Annawan	26	0	12	0	38
Atkinson	20	1	13	0	34
Colona	33	9	8	5	55
Geneseo	52	0	20	0	72
Unincorporated	9	17	11	4	41
Henry County Total	140	27	64	9	240
Iowa County					
Ladora	23	4	12	1	40
Victor	18	5	4	0	27
Unincorporated	18	28	6	5	57
Iowa County Total	59	37	22	6	124
Jasper County					
Colfax	32	15	9	2	58
Kellogg	18	0	5	0	23
Mitchellville	0	0	1	0	1
Newton	62	11	26	0	99
Unincorporated	28	5	18	1	52
Jasper County Total	140	31	59	3	233

Municipality	Moderate		Severe		Total
	Grade Crossing	Wayside	Grade Crossing	Wayside	
Johnson County					
Coralville	2	3	2	0	7
Iowa City	45	200	22	109	376
Oxford	13	5	5	0	23
Tiffin	13	9	12	3	37
University Heights	2	16	0	0	18
Unincorporated	7	0	10	0	17
Johnson County Total	82	233	51	112	478
Kane County					
Aurora	0	66	0	9	75
Montgomery	16	0	13	0	29
Unincorporated	0	27	0	0	27
Kane County Total	16	93	13	9	131
Kendall County					
Montgomery	0	1	0	0	1
Oswego	0	14	0	13	27
Plano	50	13	23	17	103
Unincorporated	16	29	5	33	83
Kendall County Total	66	57	28	63	214
LaSalle County					
Earlville	45	0	14	0	59
Leland	21	1	15	1	38
Mendota	41	24	15	8	88
Unincorporated	8	4	9	1	22
LaSalle County Total	115	29	53	10	207
Madison County					
Earlham	9	0	8	0	17
Unincorporated	2	1	1	0	4
Madison County Total	11	1	9	0	21
Muscatine County					
Atalissa	18	0	6	0	24
Stockton	13	0	15	0	28
West Liberty	24	0	6	0	30
Wilton	32	0	18	0	50
Unincorporated	16	2	13	1	32
Muscatine County Total	103	2	58	1	164

Municipality	Moderate		Severe		Total
	Grade Crossing	Wayside	Grade Crossing	Wayside	
Polk County					
Altoona	7	1	1	0	9
Des Moines	34	18	10	4	66
Mitchellville	47	0	30	0	77
Pleasant Hill	7	0	0	0	7
West Des Moines	23	1	11	0	35
Unincorporated	4	2	5	0	11
Polk County Total	122	22	57	4	205
Pottawattamie County					
Council Bluffs	90	151	36	46	323
Hancock	0	1	0	0	1
McClelland	9	0	8	0	17
Unincorporated	7	11	2	0	20
Pottawattamie County Total	106	163	46	46	361
Poweshiek County					
Brooklyn	2	1	2	0	5
Grinnell	47	0	28	0	75
Malcom	3	0	4	0	7
Victor	2	0	1	0	3
Unincorporated	5	2	3	0	10
Poweshiek County Total	59	3	38	0	100
Rock Island County					
Carbon Cliff	0	1	0	0	1
East Moline	165	1	97	0	263
Moline	115	13	90	10	228
Rock Island	25	3	10	0	38
Silvis	37	8	8	0	53
Rock Island County Total	342	26	205	10	583
Scott County					
Davenport	112	61	55	0	228
Durant	2	1	0	0	3
Walcott	28	1	11	0	40
Unincorporated	2	4	0	1	7
Scott County Total	144	67	66	1	278
No-Build Alternative Grand Totals	1,803	2,800	920	1,182	6,705
	4,603		2,102		

Table 3.8-4 shows that under the No-Build Alternative, 4,603 moderate and 2,102 severe noise impacts are estimated to occur along the approximately 500 mile corridor; these impacts are beyond those predicted to occur under current conditions . Under the No-Build Alternative, the Project would not be built, and noise and vibration impacts are not anticipated beyond those that could occur due to other projects. The Chicago to Quad Cities service would contribute to slightly increased noise along that portion of the Chicago to Omaha route.

3.8.3.2 Vibration

Projected rail traffic under the No-Build Alternative was assessed to identify the incremental increase in GBV effects on residential land uses in the Study Area. Table 3.8-5 presents the vibration impacts associated with the No-Build Alternative.

Table 3.8-5. Ground-borne Vibration Impacts Associated with the No-Build Alternative

County	Municipality	No. of Impacts		
		Existing Conditions	No-Build Alternative	Increase
Adair County	Adair	0	No change	No change
	Stewart	3	No change	No change
	Unincorporated	0	No change	No change
	Adair County Total	3	No change	No change
Bureau County	Arlington	33	No change	No change
	Malden	42	No change	No change
	Mineral	7	No change	No change
	Princeton	54	No change	No change
	Sheffield	7	No change	No change
	Wyanet	89	No change	No change
	Unincorporated	26	No change	No change
Bureau County Total	258	No change	No change	
Cass County	Anita	0	No change	No change
	Atlantic	3	No change	No change
	Wiota	1	No change	No change
	Unincorporated	1	No change	No change
Cass County Total	5	No change	No change	
Cedar County	Durant	17	No change	No change
	Unincorporated	0	No change	No change
Cedar County Total	17	No change	No change	
Cook County	Berwyn	282	No change	No change
	Brookfield	328	No change	No change
	Chicago	845	No change	No change
	Cicero	87	No change	No change
	Hinsdale	33	No change	No change
	La Grange	153	No change	No change
	Riverside	338	No change	No change
	Western Springs	144	No change	No change
Cook County Total	2,210	No change	No change	

County	Municipality	No. of Impacts		
		Existing Conditions	No-Build Alternative	Increase
Dallas County	De Soto	0	No change	No change
	Dexter	2	No change	No change
	Van Meter	1	No change	No change
	Unincorporated	0	No change	No change
	Dallas County Total	3	No change	No change
DeKalb County	Sandwich	177	No change	No change
	Somonauk	128	No change	No change
	Unincorporated	5	No change	No change
	DeKalb County Total	310	No change	No change
Douglas County	Omaha	0	No change	No change
	Douglas County Total	0	No change	No change
DuPage County	Aurora	6	No change	No change
	Clarendon Hills	207	No change	No change
	Downers Grove	221	No change	No change
	Hinsdale	176	No change	No change
	Lisle	117	No change	No change
	Naperville	356	No change	No change
	Westmont	171	No change	No change
	DuPage County Total	1,506	No change	No change
Guthrie County	Casey	3	No change	No change
	Menlo	0	No change	No change
	Stuart	2	No change	No change
	Unincorporated	1	No change	No change
	Guthrie County Total	6	No change	No change
Henry County	Annawan	21	No change	No change
	Atkinson	16	No change	No change
	Colona	38	No change	No change
	Geneseo	32	No change	No change
	Henry County Total	140	No change	No change
Iowa County	Ladora	10	No change	No change
	Marengo	1	No change	No change
	Victor	1	No change	No change
	Unincorporated	11	No change	No change
	Iowa County Total	23	No change	No change
Jasper County	Colfax	5	No change	No change
	Kellogg	1	No change	No change
	Mitchellville	0	No change	No change
	Newton	26	No change	No change
	Unincorporated	16	No change	No change
	Jasper County Total	48	No change	No change

County	Municipality	No. of Impacts		
		Existing Conditions	No-Build Alternative	Increase
Johnson County	Coralville	0	No change	No change
	Iowa City	20	No change	No change
	Oxford	1	No change	No change
	Tiffin	20	No change	No change
	University Heights	0	No change	No change
	Unincorporated	5	No change	No change
	Johnson County Total	46	No change	No change
Kane County	Aurora	272	No change	No change
	Montgomery	49	No change	No change
	Unincorporated	32	No change	No change
	Kane County Total	353	No change	No change
Kendall County	Montgomery	2	No change	No change
	Oswego	42	No change	No change
	Plano	173	No change	No change
	Sandwich	1	No change	No change
	Unincorporated	139	No change	No change
	Kendall County Total	357	No change	No change
LaSalle County	Earlville	96	No change	No change
	Leland	75	No change	No change
	Mendota	160	No change	No change
	Unincorporated	28	No change	No change
	LaSalle County Total	359	No change	No change
Madison County	Earlham	4	No change	No change
	Unincorporated	0	No change	No change
	Madison County Total	4	No change	No change
Muscatine County	Atalissa	0	No change	No change
	Stockton	9	No change	No change
	West Liberty	3	No change	No change
	Wilton	16	No change	No change
	Unincorporated	6	No change	No change
Muscatine County Total	34	No change	No change	
Polk County	Altoona	1	No change	No change
	Mitchellville	7	No change	No change
	Des Moines	0	No change	No change
	West Des Moines	13	No change	No change
	Unincorporated	0	No change	No change
	Polk County Total	21	No change	No change
Pottawattamie County	Hancock	0	No change	No change
	McClelland	2	No change	No change
	Council Bluffs	7	No change	No change
	Unincorporated	1	No change	No change
	Pottawattamie County Total	10	No change	No change

County	Municipality	No. of Impacts		
		Existing Conditions	No-Build Alternative	Increase
Poweshiek County	Brooklyn	3	No change	No change
	Grinnell	30	No change	No change
	Malcom	4	No change	No change
	Victor	0	No change	No change
	Unincorporated	3	No change	No change
	Poweshiek County Total	40	No change	No change
Rock Island County	Carbon Cliff	0	No change	No change
	East Moline	0	No change	No change
	Moline	0	No change	No change
	Rock Island	0	No change	No change
	Silvis	0	No change	No change
	Rock Island County Total	0	No change	No change
Scott County	Durant	0	No change	No change
	Walcott	12	No change	No change
	Davenport	8	No change	No change
	Unincorporated	1	No change	No change
	Scott County Total	20	No change	No change
Total Vibration Impacts		5,773	No change	No change

Analysis results indicate that vibration impacts under the No-Build Alternative are not projected to change. The increase in freight traffic, by itself, does not increase vibration velocity levels on a per-event basis (per train pass-by), nor does the change in freight cars and other components of a train, or freight train length, increase vibration velocity on a per-event basis. The organic growth in freight train activity is not projected to travel at faster speeds than currently occur in the Study Area. Therefore, GBV velocity levels (which are evaluated on a per-event basis) are not projected to increase. The Chicago to Quad Cities service would contribute to slightly increased vibration along that portion of the Chicago to Omaha route.

3.8.4 Impacts of Build Alternative

Noise and vibration impacts were evaluated quantitatively and are reported separately below.

3.8.4.1 Noise

The incremental increase in noise impacts, as defined by FTA, at residential land uses adjacent to the Study Area were estimated for the Build Alternative, which includes the proposed addition of seven round-trips per day at 110 mph from Chicago to Omaha; as noted previously in Section 3.8.1.1, for modeling purposes, speeds were evaluated at an average speed of 100 mph. Table 3.8-6 presents the increase in noise impacts predicted to occur in each municipality along the Build Alternative and sorts the impacts as moderate or severe grade crossing and wayside (that is, wheel/rail) noise impacts. The entire Corridor was evaluated; rural areas are listed as unincorporated in the table.

Table 3.8-6 shows that the distribution of Build Alternative-related noise impacts is scattered throughout the Corridor. Areas with high existing traffic volumes and quiet zones are expected to experience a minor incremental increase in train noise associated with the Build Alternative. Conversely, areas with low existing traffic volumes, slow trains, and fewer or no quiet zones are expected to experience a larger incremental increase in train noise associated with the Build Alternative.

Table 3.8-6 reflects the trend of a low incremental increase in noise impacts in Chicago where train volumes are already high but much of the area along the Build Alternative consists of a quiet zone. The values in the table represent future impacts associated with the Build Alternative beyond those that would occur under existing conditions. Analysis results show that municipalities in the Quad Cities, where train speeds and volumes are low and quiet zones do not exist, are likely to experience a larger incremental increase in train noise levels and corresponding impacts associated with the Build Alternative. The influence of quiet zones on the magnitude of the incremental increase in train noise impacts suggests they represent an opportunity to mitigate many of the predicted impacts. Mitigation opportunities are discussed in Section 3.8.5.

Table 3.8-6. Incremental Increase in Noise Impacts Associated with the Build Alternative

Municipality	Moderate		Severe		Total
	Grade Crossing	Wayside	Grade Crossing	Wayside	
Adair County					
Adair	0	3	0	0	3
Stuart	12	0	4	0	16
Unincorporated	0	0	3	0	3
Adair County Total	12	3	7	0	22
Bureau County					
Arlington	11	0	12	1	24
Malden	14	0	14	0	28
Mineral	19	0	8	0	27
Princeton	25	0	11	2	38
Sheffield	26	0	6	0	32
Wyanet	29	0	23	0	52
Unincorporated	9	6	14	1	30
Bureau County Total	133	6	88	4	231
Cass County					
Anita	5	2	2	0	9
Atlantic	7	5	1	1	14
Wiota	5	0	0	0	5
Unincorporated	1	3	0	1	5
Cass County Total	18	10	3	2	33

Municipality	Moderate		Severe		Total
	Grade Crossing	Wayside	Grade Crossing	Wayside	
Cedar County					
Durant	38	0	4	0	42
Unincorporated	12	3	5	0	20
Cedar County Total	50	3	9	0	62
Cook County					
Berwyn	0	128	0	54	182
Brookfield	0	135	0	52	187
Chicago	0	435	0	191	626
Cicero	0	55	0	20	75
Hinsdale	0	19	0	4	23
La Grange	0	87	0	23	110
Riverside	0	82	0	122	204
Western Springs	0	61	0	26	87
Cook County Total	0	1,002	0	492	1,494
Dallas County					
De Soto	6	3	0	0	9
Dexter	20	0	5	0	25
Van Meter	7	4	2	1	14
Unincorporated	14	3	4	0	21
Dallas County Total	47	10	11	1	69
DeKalb County					
Sandwich	42	8	39	9	98
Somonauk	54	0	26	1	81
Unincorporated	1	1	3	0	5
DeKalb County Total	97	9	68	10	184
Douglas County					
Omaha	0	392	0	154	546
Unincorporated	0	21	0	11	32
Douglas County Total	0	413	0	165	578
DuPage County					
Aurora	0	3	0	1	4
Clarendon Hills	0	81	0	33	114
Downers Grove	0	126	0	53	179
Hinsdale	0	85	0	35	120
Lisle	0	59	0	28	87
Naperville	0	148	0	41	189
Westmont	0	59	0	38	97
Unincorporated	0	113	0	52	165
DuPage County Total	0	674	0	281	955

Municipality	Moderate		Severe		Total
	Grade Crossing	Wayside	Grade Crossing	Wayside	
Guthrie County					
Casey	12	1	0	0	13
Menlo	19	0	1	0	20
Stuart	16	0	2	0	18
Unincorporated	3	3	0	1	7
Guthrie County Total	50	4	3	1	58
Henry County					
Annawan	29	0	17	0	46
Atkinson	23	0	17	1	41
Colona	31	6	20	11	68
Geneseo	69	0	28	0	97
Unincorporated	11	22	14	8	55
Henry County Total	163	28	96	20	307
Iowa County					
Ladora	30	5	12	1	48
Victor	20	5	5	0	30
Unincorporated	33	30	12	7	82
Iowa County Total	83	40	29	8	160
Jasper County					
Colfax	28	18	20	4	70
Kellogg	31	2	2	0	35
Mitchellville	0	0	1	0	1
Newton	93	9	14	0	116
Unincorporated	32	5	27	2	66
Jasper County Total	184	34	64	6	288
Johnson County					
Coralville	3	2	2	0	7
Iowa City	51	194	24	135	404
Oxford	17	4	5	0	26
Tiffin	18	2	10	4	34
University Heights	2	13	0	2	17
Unincorporated	11	1	11	0	23
Johnson County Total	102	216	52	141	511
Kane County					
Aurora	0	79	0	11	90
Montgomery	19	0	15	0	34
Unincorporated	0	30	0	0	30
Kane County Total	19	109	15	11	154

Municipality	Moderate		Severe		Total
	Grade Crossing	Wayside	Grade Crossing	Wayside	
Kendall County					
Montgomery	0	2	0	0	2
Oswego	0	14	0	13	27
Plano	59	15	23	18	115
Unincorporated	20	35	6	33	94
Kendall County Total	79	66	29	64	238
LaSalle County					
Earlville	51	0	18	0	69
Leland	23	1	16	1	41
Mendota	47	24	18	11	100
Unincorporated	8	3	12	2	25
LaSalle County Total	129	28	64	14	235
Madison County					
Earlham	18	1	7	0	26
Unincorporated	1	2	2	0	5
Madison County Total	19	3	9	0	31
Muscatine County					
Atalissa	22	0	5	0	27
Stockton	15	0	19	0	34
West Liberty	28	1	10	0	39
Wilton	40	0	24	0	64
Unincorporated	18	6	20	1	45
Muscatine County Total	123	7	78	1	209
Polk County					
Altoona	10	0	1	0	11
Des Moines	41	21	13	7	82
Mitchellville	54	0	47	0	101
Pleasant Hill	14	1	0	0	15
West Des Moines	26	5	16	0	47
Unincorporated	6	2	5	0	13
Polk County Total	151	29	82	7	269
Pottawattamie County					
Council Bluffs	92	161	36	48	337
Hancock	0	1	0	0	1
McClelland	14	0	10	0	24
Unincorporated	9	13	3	1	26
Pottawattamie County Total	115	175	49	49	388

Municipality	Moderate		Severe		Total
	Grade Crossing	Wayside	Grade Crossing	Wayside	
Poweshiek County					
Brooklyn	7	1	1	0	9
Grinnell	71	0	22	0	93
Malcom	6	0	2	0	8
Victor	4	0	0	0	4
Unincorporated	6	5	4	0	15
Poweshiek County Total	94	6	29	0	129
Rock Island County					
Carbon Cliff	0	2	0	0	2
East Moline	169	1	102	0	272
Moline	115	13	97	10	235
Rock Island	26	3	12	0	41
Silvis	38	8	9	0	55
Rock Island County Total	348	27	220	10	605
Scott County					
Davenport	116	85	65	4	270
Durant	2	1	0	0	3
Walcott	41	1	11	0	53
Unincorporated	4	4	0	1	9
Scott County Total	163	91	76	5	335
Build Alternative Grand Totals	2,179	2,993	1,081	1,292	7,545
	5,172		2,373		

Analysis results for the Build Alternative show 5,172 moderate and 2,373 severe noise impacts compared to existing conditions. Compared to the No-Build Alternative, a low incremental increase in new noise impacts per mile associated with the Build Alternative would occur: 569 moderate and 271 severe noise impacts over an approximately 500-mile-long corridor. The Build Alternative is projected to result in approximately 1.1 new moderate noise impacts per mile, 0.6 new severe noise impact per mile, and a combined total of 1.7 new noise impacts per mile over approximately 500 miles. On this basis, the incremental increase in train noise is not significant.

Analysis results show that 6,705 new noise impacts are projected to occur under the No-Build Alternative and 7,545 new noise impacts are projected to occur under the Build Alternative. This is an increase of approximately 13 percent and is spread throughout the corridor. Of these impacts, 309 are changes from moderate to severe (the Build Alternative does not introduce new severe noise impacts at locations that were previously not impacted).

Of the new noise impacts predicted to occur under the Build Alternative, 3,260 of them are attributed to locomotive horn use, and they occur in areas where locomotive horns are currently in use (with many of them occurring under the No-Build Alternative). As noted

under the No-Build Alternative, the analysis does not account for any change in at-grade intersections to grade-separated intersections where horns would not be required. Implementing quiet zones has the potential to further reduce these impacts. Because of the preliminary nature of this Tier 1 analysis and the acknowledgement that upgrade of some at-grade intersections would be known during Tier 2, these grade-crossing impacts are not considered significant. The remaining 4,285 new noise impacts attributable to the Build Alternative are associated with wayside noise and are spread throughout the corridor (equivalent to less than one noise impact per mile), which makes mitigation challenging and potentially impractical in some areas based on the consideration of feasibility and reasonableness of noise barriers for a few receptors. Because of the limited number of noise impacts per mile, these impacts are also not considered significant.

3.8.4.2 Vibration

Projected rail traffic under the Build Alternative, which includes the proposed addition of seven round-trips per day at 110 mph from Chicago to Omaha, was assessed to identify the increase in GBV effects on residential land uses in the Study Area. As noted previously in Section 3.8.1.1, for modeling purposes, speeds were evaluated at an average speed of 100 mph. Table 3.8-7 presents the vibration impacts predicted to occur in each municipality along the Build Alternative. The results are provided in total impacts, including existing conditions and the increase associated with the Build Alternative. There would be no incremental increase in vibration impacts for Cook and DuPage counties.

Table 3.8-7. Ground-borne Vibration Impacts Associated with the Build Alternative

County	Municipality	No. of Impacts		
		Existing Conditions	Build Alternative	Increase
Adair County	Adair	0	4	4
	Stewart	3	19	16
	Unincorporated	0	3	3
	Adair County Total	3	26	23
Bureau County	Arlington	33	44	11
	Malden	42	56	14
	Mineral	7	48	41
	Princeton	54	99	45
	Sheffield	7	51	44
	Wyanet	89	127	38
	Unincorporated	26	43	17
	Bureau County Total	258	468	210
Cass County	Anita	0	7	7
	Atlantic	3	22	19
	Wiota	1	5	4
	Unincorporated	1	4	3
	Cass County Total	5	38	33
Cedar County	Durant	17	59	42
	Unincorporated	0	10	10
	Cedar County Total	17	69	52

County	Municipality	No. of Impacts		
		Existing Conditions	Build Alternative	Increase
Cook County	Berwyn	282	282	No change
	Brookfield	328	328	No change
	Chicago	845	845	No change
	Cicero	87	87	No change
	Hinsdale	33	33	No change
	La Grange	153	153	No change
	Riverside	338	338	No change
	Western Springs	144	144	No change
	Cook County Total	2210	2210	No change
Dallas County	De Soto	0	9	9
	Dexter	2	27	25
	Van Meter	1	18	17
	Unincorporated	0	17	17
	Dallas County Total	3	71	68
DeKalb County	Sandwich	177	238	61
	Somonauk	128	189	61
	Unincorporated	5	12	7
	DeKalb County Total	310	439	129
Douglas County	Omaha	0	15	15
	Douglas County Total	0	15	15
DuPage County	Aurora	6	6	No change
	Clarendon Hills	207	207	No change
	Downers Grove	221	221	No change
	Hinsdale	176	176	No change
	Lisle	117	117	No change
	Naperville	356	356	No change
	Westmont	171	171	No change
	Unincorporated	252	252	No change
DuPage County Total	1506	1506	No change	
Guthrie County	Casey	3	10	7
	Menlo	0	20	20
	Stuart	2	20	18
	Unincorporated	1	6	5
	Guthrie County Total	6	56	50
Henry County	Annawan	21	92	71
	Atkinson	16	61	45
	Colona	38	134	96
	Geneseo	32	176	144
	Unincorporated	33	82	49
	Henry County Total	140	545	405
Iowa County	Ladora	10	64	54
	Marengo	1	3	2
	Victor	1	38	37
	Unincorporated	11	60	49
	Iowa County Total	23	165	142

County	Municipality	No. of Impacts		
		Existing Conditions	Build Alternative	Increase
Jasper County	Colfax	5	59	54
	Kellogg	1	30	29
	Mitchellville	0	1	1
	Newton	26	145	119
	Unincorporated	16	64	48
	Jasper County Total	48	299	251
Johnson County	Coralville	0	13	13
	Iowa City	20	186	166
	Oxford	1	26	25
	Tiffin	20	62	42
	University Heights	0	23	23
	Unincorporated	5	20	15
Johnson County Total	46	330	284	
Kane County	Aurora	272	516	244
	Montgomery	49	83	34
	Unincorporated	32	33	1
	Kane County Total	353	632	279
Kendall County	Montgomery	2	2	0
	Oswego	42	65	23
	Plano	173	286	113
	Sandwich	1	1	0
	Unincorporated	139	203	64
	Kendall County Total	357	557	200
LaSalle County	Earlville	96	144	48
	Leland	75	97	22
	Mendota	160	282	122
	Unincorporated	28	42	14
	LaSalle County Total	359	565	206
Madison County	Earlham	4	26	22
	Unincorporated	0	7	7
	Madison County Total	4	33	29
Muscatine County	Atalissa	0	21	21
	Stockton	9	45	36
	West Liberty	3	38	35
	Wilton	16	65	49
	Unincorporated	6	36	30
Muscatine County Total	34	205	171	
Polk County	Altoona	1	14	13
	Mitchellville	7	72	65
	Des Moines	0	22	22
	West Des Moines	13	30	17
	Unincorporated	0	11	11
	Polk County Total	21	149	128

County	Municipality	No. of Impacts		
		Existing Conditions	Build Alternative	Increase
Pottawattamie County	Hancock	0	1	1
	McClelland	2	19	17
	Council Bluffs	7	53	46
	Unincorporated	1	24	23
	Pottawattamie County Total	10	97	87
Poweshiek County	Brooklyn	3	11	8
	Grinnell	30	118	88
	Malcom	4	11	7
	Victor	0	5	5
	Unincorporated	3	16	13
	Poweshiek County Total	40	161	121
Rock Island County	Carbon Cliff	0	6	6
	East Moline	0	138	138
	Moline	0	124	124
	Rock Island	0	11	11
	Silvis	0	5	5
	Rock Island County Total	0	284	284
Scott County	Durant	0	2	2
	Walcott	12	55	43
	Davenport	8	293	285
	Unincorporated	1	7	6
	Scott County Total	20	357	337
Total Vibration Impacts		5773	9277	3504

The vibration analysis identified approximately 7.0 new vibration impacts per mile associated with the Build Alternative. Analysis results indicate that GBV impacts occur when train speeds reach 100 mph. The Build Alternative would introduce seven round-trip trains at up to a maximum speed of 110 mph each day. Therefore, there would be 14 train pass-by events per day at this speed. Analysis results also show that the number of vibration impacts in each municipality is related to the density of residential development in areas adjacent to the rail line. In some areas of the Corridor, the magnitude of Build Alternative-related vibration impacts would be greater than in other areas. On a Project-wide basis, approximately 7.0 additional vibration impacts (due to 14 daily pass-by events) per mile are not considered significant. However, the number of vibration impacts is projected to dramatically increase in more densely populated portions of the study area, particularly where train speeds may reach a maximum of 110 mph. The magnitude of the increase in vibration impacts attributable to the Build Alternative is considered to be significant.

Table 3.8-8 presents a simple comparison of vibration impact contour distances for existing conditions, the No-Build Alternative, and the Build Alternative, which includes the 100 mph train service.

Table 3.8-8. Distances to Category 2 Ground-Borne Vibration Impacts

Scenario	GBV Impact Level (VdB)	Distance to Impact Level (ft)									
		Traffic Cond. A	Traffic Cond. B	Traffic Cond. C	Traffic Cond. D	Traffic Cond. E	Traffic Cond. F	Traffic Cond. G	Traffic Cond. H	Traffic Cond. I	Traffic Cond. J
Existing Conditions	72	475	495	230	50	140	17.5	140	42	140	51
No-Build Alternative	72	475	495	230	50	140	17.5	140	42	140	51
Build Alternative	72	475	660	540	320	335	155	335	155	335	184

As expected, as the train speed increases, the distance to the GBV impact contour also increases. Appendix B, Figures 1 through 162 show vibration contours relative to buildings and other features. The contours labeled as “Existing” are essentially equivalent to the No-Build Alternative contours, and those labeled as “Future” represent the Build Alternative contours. Areas outside of, or beyond the vibration impact contour are predicted to experience train-induced GBV levels below the FTA/FRA vibration impact threshold. Generally, the trains under the No-Build Alternative will not travel at different speeds than the existing train traffic, and individual vibration events are therefore calculated to be equal in magnitude. Traffic condition A represents the portion of Chicago where the speed of the trains under the Build Alternative does not increase from the trains under No-Build Alternative; therefore, the vibration impact distance does not change.

3.8.5 Potential Mitigation Measures

As shown above, the presence or absence of quiet zones has a great effect on the predicted number of train noise impacts. Locomotive horn use at public at-grade crossings causes the majority of the predicted noise impacts. Therefore, minimizing locomotive horn use in the Study Area represents the greatest opportunity to mitigate potential Build Alternative-related noise impacts. The Build Alternative would upgrade some electronic circuitry through installation of constant time circuitry (warning lights) at public at-grade roadway-rail crossings. In effect, the Build Alternative would install the electronic infrastructure for quiet zones. Municipalities predicted to experience an increase in train noise impacts can choose to initiate the process of developing quiet zones to take advantage of and build on the infrastructure provided by the Build Alternative.

The introduction of trains with speeds up to 110 mph in the Study Area has potential to cause a significant amount of GBV, particularly in urban areas where population density is greatest. During the Tier 2 NEPA process, measures to mitigate GBV would be evaluated and implemented to reduce the potential vibration impacts. Specific mitigation measures, to the extent required, would be identified and discussed during Tier 2 analysis after design details are known, recorded in NEPA documents as specific impacts are identified, and implemented.

3.9 AIR QUALITY

Air quality refers to the condition of the surrounding air in relation to the source and amount of pollutant emissions.

3.9.1 Methodology and Regulatory Requirements

The regulatory framework pertaining to air quality is the Clean Air Act of 1970 (as amended) (CAA). Primary and secondary National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) established by the CAA are used as a basis for the review of potential air quality impacts.

Coordination has taken place with the USEPA, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (Iowa DNR), the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (Illinois EPA), and the Air Quality Division of the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality (NDEQ). Published data regarding the air quality status of each county in the Study Area were gathered. These data pertain to criteria air pollutant levels as compared to NAAQS, and each county has been designated under a status of attainment, nonattainment, or maintenance.³

USEPA regulates air pollution in accordance with primary and secondary NAAQS established by the CAA, as amended. Iowa DNR, Illinois EPA and NDEQ regulate air pollutants and operate air monitors throughout each state. Illinois developed Illinois Ambient Air Quality Standards that are similar to the NAAQS. Iowa and Nebraska use the NAAQS to measure air quality. The NAAQS currently address six criteria pollutants. These pollutants are: carbon monoxide (CO), nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), ozone (O₃), lead (Pb), particulate matter (PM), and sulfur dioxide (SO₂). Particulate matter has been further defined by size. There are standards for particulate matter smaller than 10 microns in diameter (PM-10) and smaller than 2.5 microns in diameter (PM-2.5). Most O₃ forms as a result of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and nitrogen oxides (NO_x) reacting with sunlight. Areas of the country where air pollution levels persistently exceed the NAAQS are designated as nonattainment areas.

FRA, in coordination with USEPA, must make a determination that a federal action conforms to one or more applicable state implementation plans (SIPs) to achieve attainment of the NAAQS. General conformity emissions thresholds, defined in 40 CFR 51, Subpart W, are defined by the nonattainment or maintenance status for each criteria pollutant in the Study Area. If emissions from an action are below these thresholds, conformity analysis is not required. The applicable *de minimis* thresholds are as follows:

- O₃, 100 tons per year of either NO_x or VOC
- Pb, 25 tons per year
- PM-2.5, 100 tons per year
- PM-10, 100 tons per year

In addition to the criteria air pollutants for which there are NAAQS, USEPA also regulates air toxics. Many air toxics originate from human-made sources, including on-road mobile sources, non-road mobile sources (such as airplanes or locomotives), and stationary sources

³ Attainment = meets national air quality standards. Nonattainment = does not meet national air quality standards and mitigation measures are being utilized. Maintenance = is close to national air quality thresholds and steps are being taken to reduce concentration of pollutants.

(such as factories or refineries). Mobile Source Air Toxics (MSATs) are those pollutants that are known or suspected to cause cancer or other serious health effects, such as reproductive effects or birth defects, or adverse environmental effects. Research into the health impacts of MSATs is ongoing; USEPA is in the process of assessing the risks of various kinds of exposures to these pollutants.

Emissions of air toxics from diesel locomotive engines are expected to be measured as a subset of either PM and/or hydrocarbons (HC). USEPA has established emission standards for these pollutants for newly manufactured and remanufactured locomotives.

These standards are dependent on the date a locomotive is first manufactured; the most stringent set of standards applies to locomotives originally manufactured in 2015 and later. The vast majority of PM emitted by locomotive diesel engines is in the form of PM-10. USEPA is projecting that the PM-10 and HC emissions from the national passenger locomotive fleet are already on an accelerating downward trend, and will continue to drop as a result of USEPA’s emissions standards.

3.9.2 Affected Environment

The existing general air quality of the counties in the Study Area has been reviewed to assess if any of the counties are currently in nonattainment or maintenance for criteria pollutants. Table 3.9-1 identifies those counties currently designated as nonattainment or maintenance areas by USEPA (USEPA, 2012). Lead is not considered in the conformity analyses found later in this section because no transportation modes considered emit lead from operation.

Table 3.9-1. Nonattainment and Maintenance Areas within the Study Area

Criteria Pollutants	County	State	Status
Particulate matter less than 10 microns in diameter (PM-10)	Cook County – Lyons Township and Southeast Chicago	IL	Maintenance
	LaSalle County - Oglesby	IL	Maintenance
Particulate matter less than 2.5 microns in diameter (PM-2.5)	Cook County	IL	Nonattainment
	DuPage County	IL	Nonattainment
	Kane County	IL	Nonattainment
	Kendall County	IL	Nonattainment
8-hour ozone (O3)	Cook County	IL	Maintenance
	DuPage County	IL	Maintenance
	Kane County	IL	Maintenance
	Kendall County	IL	Maintenance
Lead (Pb)	Cook County	IL	Nonattainment
	Pottawattamie County	IA	Nonattainment

Source: USEPA, 2012

3.9.3 Impacts of No-Build Alternative

Under the No-Build Alternative, the Project would not be built, and impacts on air quality are not anticipated beyond those that could occur due to other projects. Over time, air quality would worsen as vehicle congestion increases on the roads and highways between Chicago and Omaha. Specific quantitative impacts or benefits on air quality from the Chicago to Quad

Cities service would be determined as that project progresses through its required Tier 2 NEPA documentation.

3.9.4 Impacts of Build Alternative

Table 3.9-2 shows the pollutants evaluated under the general conformity analysis for the Build Alternative. Emissions are estimated for full implementation by the year 2040 based on ridership forecasts for the Build Alternative. This analysis includes the assessment of air quality impacts of the Build Alternative in counties that are currently designated as maintenance or nonattainment. All counties which qualify as maintenance or nonattainment for emissions evaluated in the operational analysis are in the Chicago area.

Along the Corridor, there would be a reduction in all types of emissions except NO_x emissions, which would increase slightly due to the additional diesel fuel burned as a result of the increase in passenger train traffic by switching passengers from auto to rail. The slight increase in NO_x emissions would occur because of the diversion of passengers from other travel modes through use of enhanced and increased passenger rail service. The net change in emissions calculated below in Table 3.9-2 is a result of utilizing the travel demand model information and USEPA guidance for emissions factors, based upon travel mode. Calculations are shown in Appendix F, and trip diversion and ridership information can be found in Section 3.1.4. Although the emissions shown in Table 3.9-2 are below the *de minimis* threshold for the designated nonattainment and maintenance counties, this general conformity analysis would need to be verified in the Tier 2 NEPA analyses. Construction-related emissions may also be addressed during Tier 2 analyses.

Table 3.9-2. Summary of General Conformity Determination for the Build Alternative in 2040

Pollutant	Route Miles in Area	De Minimis Threshold	Train Emissions Increase				Net Emissions Change
			Cook County	DuPage County	Kane County	Kendall County	
HC	55.60	100.00	3.62	3.99	1.35	3.17	-17.38
NO _x	55.60	100.00	81.85	90.23	30.57	71.49	33.52
PM-10	4.00	100.00	0.51	N/A	N/A	N/A	-0.10
PM-2.5	55.60	100.00	2.06	2.27	0.77	1.8	-2.93

Note:

All numbers are in tons per year. Net Emissions Change includes reduction in passenger vehicles, bus, and plane emissions from trips diverted to trains shown in Table 3.1-1. Ridership used for the emissions analysis was the low range of the estimate. The Chicago nonattainment area includes the counties and townships listed in Table 1. PM-10 is listed for 4 route miles because the area of concern for nonattainment is only the area of Lyons Township in the Chicago Area.

Because this alternative includes new train service, impacts from the Build Alternative on air quality are unavoidable. However, overall emissions would be less because this additional rail service is replacing passenger vehicles, bus, and plane trips along a similar route, and trains produce fewer emissions per passenger than other modes of transportation.

As shown in Table 3.9-3, operation of the Build Alternative between Chicago and the Omaha/Council Bluffs metropolitan area would directly impact air quality by increasing NO_x

emissions by 420 tons/year in 2040. However, there would be a reduction of CO₂ emissions by 23,513 tons/year, a reduction in HC emissions totaling 142 tons/year, and a reduction in SO₂ emissions of approximately 2.7 tons/year. Calculations are shown in Appendix F, and trip diversion and ridership information can be found in Section 3.1.4. The emissions numbers in Table 3.9-3 pertain to totals for the entire Corridor. General conformity, however, pertains to nonattainment and maintenance areas only, as discussed above.

Table 3.9-3. Build Alternative – 2040 Estimated Changes in Air Pollutants from Diversion of Passenger Vehicle, Bus, and Plane Trips (Tons per Year)

	Additional Train Emissions	Reduction in Emissions			Net Change
		Vehicles	Buses	Planes	
HC	109.15	182.61	67.56	0.84	(141.86)
CO	717.01	1,430.62	543.13	5.27	(1,262.00)
NO _x	2,465.31	1,473.44	554.78	16.89	420.20
PM-10	63.99	72.59	27.52	0.00	(36.12)
PM-2.5	62.07	60.32	23.32	0.00	(21.57)
SO ₂	1.81	3.04	1.02	0.48	(2.74)
CO ₂	191,186.83	157,670.93	53,203.23	3,826.06	(23,513.38)

3.9.5 Potential Mitigation Measures

During the Tier 2 NEPA studies, mitigation to reduce NO_x emissions would be considered and investigated, such as converting fleet vehicles from diesel fuel to alternative fuels or implementing idling restrictions for locomotives at station stops and maintenance facilities. Although emissions are below their *de minimis* thresholds for the designated nonattainment and maintenance areas, as demonstrated in Table 3.9-3 for the Build Alternative, general air quality conformity analysis modeling may be required during Tier 2 NEPA analysis to verify these findings. Although unlikely for this Project, if pollutants are determined to be above *de minimis* for nonattainment and maintenance areas, specific mitigation measures, to the extent required, would be identified and discussed during Tier 2 analysis.

3.10 HAZARDOUS WASTE AND WASTE DISPOSAL

This resource includes hazardous materials and waste sites, either from the presence of stored materials or due to past spills or leaks.

3.10.1 Methodology and Regulatory Requirements

The regulatory framework governing activities potentially affecting hazardous materials and waste sites include the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA), the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980 (CERCLA) as amended, RCRA, the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA), and the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA). USEPA is the federal agency overseeing hazardous waste management. State agencies' regulatory frameworks include the Illinois EPA's Hazardous Waste Program (35 Illinois Administrative Code 700-739), the Iowa DNR's Hazardous Waste Remedial Fund and Sites Registry (under Sections 455B.424, 455B.426 and 455B.427 of the Code of Iowa), and NDEQ's Title 128, Nebraska Hazardous Waste Regulations.

Data were gathered from USEPA's Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Information System (CERCLIS) list of final National Priorities List (NPL) hazardous material sites (USEPA, 2012a, b, and c). According to the USEPA, the NPL is "...a list of national priorities among the known releases or threatened releases of hazardous substances, pollutants, or contaminants throughout the United States..." (USEPA, March 2, 2012). The NPL list includes Superfund sites, which can pose a severe contamination risk or threat to public health and/or the environment. Data from USEPA's Facility Registry System (FRS) were also gathered; these data include other less severe sites (not on the NPL list) that store or generate hazardous materials. Some of the non-NPL sites are described as "brownfield" sites, which are lands that are contaminated because they were previously used for industrial or certain commercial uses, but have the potential to be reused or redeveloped once they are appropriately cleaned up. Data for non-NPL sites in Iowa were supplemented with data that were gathered by Iowa DOT. Data were compiled for leaking underground storage tank (LUST) locations using the Illinois EPA, Iowa DNR, and NDEQ websites. Data for waste water treatment facilities were compiled from the FRS, Iowa DOT data, and aerial photography. In addition, Illinois EPA, Iowa DNR, and NDEQ websites were reviewed for locations of municipal landfills.

The data gathered for hazardous material and waste sites were reviewed, and a general description of those areas was prepared. A hazardous material or waste is any chemical, biological, or physical substance (liquid, solid, gas, or sludge) that can be potentially harmful to public health or the environment. Hazardous materials or wastes can be substances such as solvents, pesticides, or discarded commercial, industrial, or medical waste.

3.10.2 Affected Environment

The hazardous material and waste sites near or within the Study Area are shown in Appendix B, Figures 1 through 162.

Based on the hazardous materials and waste sites data, it was determined that there are no NPL (Superfund) sites located within or adjacent to the Study Area in Illinois. However, there are two NPL sites within the Study Area in Iowa, and one in Nebraska:

- The **Des Moines TCE (Trichloroethylene) Site** (Appendix B, Figure 116) encompasses approximately 200 acres and is located in the south central portion of the City. The site was listed because of VOC contamination in the soil and groundwater, caused by solvents and other activities conducted for pesticide and herbicide formulation. Clean-up has taken place, and remedial activities included capture and extraction of contaminated groundwater, treatment of the recovered groundwater, and continuing groundwater monitoring by Iowa DNR (USEPA, 2012a). In addition, pesticide-contaminated soils have been removed from the site, a large portion of which has been covered with an asphalt cap to eliminate pesticide exposure. Long-term actions will include operation and maintenance activities necessary to ensure the protectiveness of the remedial actions. The fourth 5-year review for the site was completed by USEPA in February 2008, concluding that the remedial actions remain protective (USEPA, April 2, 2012).

- The **Railroad Avenue Groundwater Contamination Site** (Appendix B, Figure 117) is approximately 1,000 acres located in West Des Moines. The description of a portion of this site within the Study Area includes each side of Railroad Avenue west of 1st Street, which is directly adjacent to the north and south sides of the Study Area. The site, which contains two separate plumes (that is, areas where contamination has spread in groundwater) was listed because of VOC contamination in municipal water wells and groundwater (USEPA, 2012c). Remedial activities have taken place, including aerators and sparge wells to remove residual contamination from the groundwater. Both plumes are currently stable, and groundwater continues to be monitored. The plumes are not migrating and are decreasing in overall concentration (USEPA, May 20, 2010).
- The **Omaha Lead Site** (Appendix B, Figure 162) includes contaminated surface soils on properties in the city of Omaha, Nebraska, that have been contaminated as a result of historic air emissions from lead smelting/refining operations. The total area of the site is approximately 27 square miles and encompasses the eastern portion of the greater metropolitan area. Facilities released lead-containing particulates into the atmosphere through smokestacks and other processes. The pollutants were transported downwind in various directions and deposited on the ground surface. Surface water and groundwater are not affected by the lead-contaminated soils of the site (USEPA, March 26, 2010). The USEPA cleanup activities, which began in 1999, include removing contaminated soil, replacing it with clean soil, and installing turfgrass sod. By the end of 2011, 10,000 residential yards had been remediated, and approximately 4,100 more are expected to be cleaned up by 2015 to complete the work. Public parks, playgrounds, and child care facilities have also been cleaned up, but other land uses are not scheduled to be remediated under the project (USEPA, December 15, 2011).

Other less severe (non-NPL) hazardous material sites within the Study Area include industrial facilities dealing with plastics, metals, agricultural products, and building materials; and commercial sites such as automotive repair/maintenance facilities, dry cleaners, and petroleum companies. There are several non-NPL hazardous material sites within the Study Area including 73 in Illinois, 84 in Iowa, and 7 in Nebraska. The facility names and general locations of these sites are shown in Appendix G, Tables 1, 2, and 3. Some of the non-NPL sites are brownfield sites. The current lists of municipal landfills indicate that there are no landfills located within the Study Area, with the exception of the former Tuttle Street Landfill site listed above as part of the Des Moines TCE NPL site.

The state listings of LUST sites within the Study Area include 219 in Illinois, 116 in Iowa, and 73 in Nebraska.

The Study Area contains 21 municipal or industrial waste water treatment facilities, in the form of large sewage treatment plants, sewage lagoons, or small liquid waste treatment facilities (Appendix G, Table 4). Two of those facilities are located in Illinois and 19 are located in Iowa. There are no waste water treatment facilities in the Study Area in Nebraska.

3.10.3 Impacts of No-Build Alternative

Under the No-Build Alternative, the Project would not be built, and impacts on hazardous materials or waste sites are not anticipated beyond those that could occur due to other projects. The Chicago to Quad Cities Expansion Program would likely have no impacts on hazardous material and waste sites as a result of constructing new track embankment for the Wyanet Connection. A preliminary investigation in 2010 in support of the Tier 1 EIS did not identify any sites of major concern (Iowa DOT, 2010). In other areas where a minor amount of additional ROW may be needed for upgrades to the rail line, there is a minimal potential for impacts on hazardous material and waste sites. Improvements in Eola Yard could encounter contamination from past spills or leaks of hazardous materials. Specific impacts from this project on hazardous material and waste sites would be determined as the project progresses through its required Tier 2 NEPA documentation. In addition, it is anticipated that the No-Build Alternative would not result in the exposure of hazardous materials from adjacent sites, and would minimally increase the chance of a hazardous material incident during refueling or maintenance operations, or from a spill during operation of the trains.

3.10.4 Impacts of Build Alternative

The impacts on or effects from non-NPL sites, LUST sites, or waste water treatment facilities would pose a lesser risk of contamination than NPL Superfund sites. Table 3.10-1 presents a summary of the number of hazardous material and waste site impacts within the Potential Impact Area.

Table 3.10-1. Hazardous Material and Waste Sites Impacts

State	NPL Superfund	Non-NPL	LUST	Waste Water Treatment
Illinois	0	13	15	0
Iowa	2	12	11	1
Nebraska	1	2	8	0
Total	3	27	34	1

As a result of increased train traffic from operations of the Build Alternative, in addition to operations at maintenance and layover facilities, there could be a moderate increase in the chances of a hazardous material incident during refueling, maintenance operations, or from a spill during operation of the trains. As a result, water quality could potentially be affected as railway contaminants or accidental chemical/fuel spills from operations and maintenance activities could reach water resources adjacent to, or downstream of the Potential Impact Area. However, with appropriate permanent best management practices (BMPs) in place, water quality impacts from hazardous materials would be avoided or minimized.

3.10.4.1 NPL Superfund Sites

As a result of acquiring ROW and adding sidings and track, the Build Alternative would potentially affect, and/or be affected by the three NPL Superfund hazardous material/waste sites discussed previously: the Des Moines TCE Site, the Railroad Avenue Groundwater Contamination Site, and the Omaha Lead Site. Due to the overall size and extent of these sites, effects may be unavoidable. Although the Build Alternative is within the contamination

areas of these sites, specific impacts cannot be determined in this Tier 1 analysis. The potential for exposure to hazardous waste contamination during construction may vary. Considering cleanup efforts at the Des Moines TCE Site, there may be a low potential for contamination during construction activities. In the vicinity of the Railroad Avenue Groundwater Contamination Site, the potential for contamination is less predictable because remediation has been focused on removing contaminants from the groundwater. The cleanup of contaminated soils in the Omaha Lead Site includes only residential yards, public parks, playgrounds, and child care facilities. Consequently, the Corridor, extending primarily through industrial use areas within the boundaries of the Omaha Lead Site, could have some residual lead contamination in soil. As such, the need for mitigation or cleanup procedures could substantially affect project cost.

3.10.4.2 Non-NPL Sites

The Build Alternative would potentially affect, and/or be affected by 27 non-NPL hazardous material or waste sites as listed in Appendix G, Tables 1, 2, and 3. Of those sites, 13 are in Illinois, 12 are in Iowa, and 2 are in Nebraska. Four of the sites in Illinois are designated as brownfields. Two of the sites in Nebraska, Gould Incorporated and American Smelting and Refining Company (ASARCO) Incorporated, are also included in the description of the Omaha Lead NPL Superfund site.

3.10.4.3 Leaking Underground Storage Tank (LUST) Sites

The Build Alternative would potentially affect, and/or be affected by 34 LUST sites as listed in Appendix G, Table 4. Of those sites, 15 are in Illinois, 11 are in Iowa, and 8 are in Nebraska.

3.10.4.4 Waste Water Treatment Facilities

The Build Alternative would potentially affect, and/or be affected by one waste water treatment facility as listed in Appendix G, Table 5. This site is a small liquid waste treatment facility in Des Moines, in conjunction with the Titan Tire Corporation industrial complex.

3.10.4.5 Solid Waste Disposal

The construction of the Build Alternative has the potential to generate waste material from clearing plant material, excavation of soil and rock, and removal of existing track and railroad ties where replacement is warranted. Other examples of site waste may include construction material packaging, broken equipment/parts, and other excess material. It is anticipated that some of the rock and soil material could be reused for fill material in other construction areas associated with the Build Alternative or other nearby construction projects. During typical construction activities, small amounts of soil may be contaminated through on-site motor or hydraulic oil spills. Recyclable construction materials would be taken to recycling facilities that are in compliance with federal, state, and local regulations. Construction debris that cannot be recycled would be disposed of in permitted landfills following proper disposal procedures and in compliance with federal, state, and local regulations. State and local regulations may include prohibitions or limitations on burning of construction debris, and control measures to limit pollution if tree trunks and limbs are permitted to be burned on site.

Within the limited areas of additional ROW acquisition, there may be instances where demolition of existing structures or buildings would be required. Some of these materials may be recycled. However, some of these buildings or structures may include small amounts of hazardous waste; especially in older industrial areas that are prevalent in the developed portions of the Study Area fronting existing rail lines, and in some cases, testing of hazardous waste may be required. Handling, collection, and disposal of waste materials would be performed according to federal, state, and local regulations, including any waste materials generated by maintenance and layover facilities.

3.10.5 Potential Mitigation Measures

As a result of impacts on or from NPL Superfund sites, there is a potential for exposure to hazardous waste contamination during construction, and the need for mitigation or cleanup procedures, depending upon the location of impacts. Requirements for safety procedures and protection of human health and the environment would be established to help ensure that there would be no further contamination of adjacent sites and to provide a safe working environment during construction.

In areas of additional ROW acquisition or excavation, there is a potential for exposure of hazardous materials from adjacent sites during construction; however, the level of risk and potential mitigation measures cannot be determined in this Tier 1 analysis. A more detailed investigation of specific site limits, contamination boundaries, and impacts would be performed as part of the Tier 2 NEPA documents. Specific mitigation measures, to the extent required, would be identified and discussed during Tier 2 analysis after design details are known, recorded in NEPA documents as specific impacts are identified, and implemented.

All solid waste materials generated during construction of the Build Alternative could be recycled or properly disposed of in accordance with the provisions of each state's solid waste management statutes and regulations, and local regulations.

3.11 CULTURAL RESOURCES

The consideration of impacts on cultural resources is subject to several federal laws, regulations and guidelines. Principal among these are NEPA and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (Section 106). Section 106 is implemented through adherence to the regulations 36 CFR 800, issued by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP). The FRA, as lead federal agency, is responsible for compliance with both statutes. NEPA and the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) encourage federal agencies to coordinate their efforts for compliance with both statutes. Since compliance with neither statute substitutes for the other, FRA is required to gather and prepare information about cultural resources that meets the requirements of both statutes.

3.11.1 Methodology and Regulatory Requirements

Section 106 requires federal agencies to take into account the effects of their undertakings on historic properties (any prehistoric or historic district, site, building, structure, or object listed on or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places [NRHP]). The Section 106 process is being completed to be compatible with the NEPA process.

Section 106 compliance for this Tier 1 EIS and future Tier 2 NEPA documents will be consistent with procedures for a phased approach governed by 36 CFR 800.4(b)(2).

Early coordination packages describing the Project and soliciting information were sent to the Illinois, Iowa, and Nebraska State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs). The Area of Potential Effect (APE) for the Study was designated as 250 feet on either side of the rail centerline for a total width of 500 feet. FRA sent an email message to the Illinois, Iowa, and Nebraska SHPOs seeking concurrence on the reasonableness of the APE and requesting access to data on historic resources recorded in national and state registers of historic places (see Appendix O). Concurrence with the APE was assumed in accordance with 36 CFR 800.3(c)(4) based on no SHPO responses within 30 days from receipt of the email message. Data on historic properties were gathered from a National Park Service (NPS) database of sites on the NRHP, and from the aforementioned SHPOs' files and databases (GIS and Excel formats). Sites listed on the NRHP and those confirmed as eligible for listing on the NRHP were identified within the APE.

As the lead federal agency, FRA coordinated with several tribes. These tribes were identified using a compiled list of documented federally recognized tribes with former and current habitation in Illinois, Iowa, and Nebraska along the Corridor. Input from the tribes, including their Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (THPOs), is being used by FRA to identify cultural resource issues of concern to be addressed in this Tier 1 EIS and future Tier 2 NEPA documents.

The objective during the Tier 1 evaluation is to identify the locations of known historic properties and important cultural and historic resources within the APE, and assess the potential for impacts on those properties. Specific effect determinations will not be conducted during Tier 1 analysis. During Tier 2 NEPA evaluations, as more detailed information is available for review of the preferred alternative and specific service alternatives are identified, effect determinations on historic properties for each section of the Project (see Chapter 5 for a discussion of likely individual sections to be addressed in Tier 2) will be proposed to SHPOs and THPOs, as appropriate. If any adverse effects are identified during the Tier 2 NEPA process, they will be addressed through SHPO/THPO consultation and will be in compliance with 36 CFR 800.5 and 800.6.

Procedures to help ensure that the effects and impacts on cultural resources are appropriately considered and coordinated for purposes of Section 106 and NEPA may be addressed under the terms of a Programmatic Agreement (PA) pursuant to 36 CFR 800.14. The PA would be developed during the Tier 2 NEPA process, and would guide FRA and the consulting parties⁴ in their deliberations on how to take into account the effects of the project for Section 106 purposes, as well as provide coordinative procedures for considering impacts to important cultural and historic resources for purposes of NEPA.

⁴ Section 106 consulting parties may include, but are not limited to, the SHPO, THPO, Indian tribes and Native Hawaiian Organizations, local governments, applicants for Federal assistance or approvals (e.g., State DOTs), and others with a demonstrated legal or economic interest or concern with the effects on historic properties.

3.11.2 Affected Environment

Railroads served to expedite the development of Illinois, Iowa, and Nebraska by providing efficient and quick transportation pathways. The proposed route includes railroads initially constructed in the 1800s. The rail section from Davenport to Iowa City is one of the earliest railroad lines constructed in Iowa, and the alignment has changed minimally since its original construction in 1855. This section also hosted two significant historic events: the Mormon exodus from the State of Illinois, and John Brown's last trip through Iowa prior to the raid at Harpers Ferry, West Virginia (Iowa SHPO, 2012). Historic sites, with the exception of archaeological sites whose specific locations are determined to be confidential, within the Study Area are shown in Appendix B, Figures 1 through 162. Appendix H includes a table of all historic sites that are listed on the NRHP or eligible for listing on the NRHP within the APE for the Study. The table data are organized from east to west within the APE by county.

The APE includes 213 historic resources listed on the NRHP or eligible for listing on the NRHP, including buildings (residential, commercial, and industrial), historic districts, bridges and other structures, and an archaeological site. Several of the properties are related to the operation of the railroad. The density of cultural resource site locations is highest in urban areas.

3.11.3 Impacts of No-Build Alternative

Under the No-Build Alternative, the Project would not be built, and therefore would not directly impact any historic properties from construction, nor cause indirect impacts from operations of passenger trains (such as ground vibration) along the Study Area.

Consequently, no new impacts are projected to occur beyond those that could occur due to other projects. The Chicago to Quad Cities service would contribute to slightly increased noise and ground vibration along this portion of the Chicago to Omaha route. The Chicago to Iowa City Intercity Passenger Rail Service Tier 1 Service Level Environmental Assessment, which included the Chicago to Quad Cities service, indicated that no impacts on significant cultural resource properties were anticipated to occur for the Wyanet Connection and Eola Yard improvements. The Chicago to Quad Cities Expansion Program has the potential to affect historic properties within and between the aforementioned cities, but the impacts would be addressed as part of the Tier 2 NEPA process and Section 106 consultation for that project. Similarly, historic properties impacted during construction of other transportation projects noted in Section 2.2.1 would be addressed as part of Section 106 consultation.

3.11.4 Impacts of Build Alternative

The Potential Impact Area, which accounts for the area potentially disturbed by construction, includes 60 historic resources (37 buildings, 1 structure, 3 bridges, and 19 historic districts) either listed on the NRHP or eligible for listing on the NRHP, as noted on Table 3.11-1.

Direct impacts on NRHP resources could occur within the Potential Impact Area, and indirect impacts (such as visual and noise impacts) on historic resources could occur within the APE. As the Project proceeds into the Tier 2 NEPA process, avoidance of these properties would be considered. The rail line near Chicago Union Station is located underground beneath the United States Post Office in Cook County, and no expansion of the line is projected to occur in this area of the Build Alternative; consequently, although listed in Table 3.11-1, the post office would not be affected.

Table 3.11-1. Historic Resources within the Potential Impact Area

NRHP Site Number ^a	County and State	Site Name	Site Type
	Cook, IL	Union Station – Chicago	Building
01000868	Cook, IL	United States Post Office – Chicago	Building
	Cook, IL	Water Tower, Well House, and Pump House – (Riverside Landscape Architecture District)	Building
69000055	Cook, IL	Riverside Landscape Architecture District	District
	Cook, IL	Berwyn Suburban Station	Building
	Cook, IL	Stone Avenue Station	Building
06000011	DuPage, IL	Downtown Hinsdale Historic District	District
77001516	DuPage, IL	Naperville Historic District	District
93001238	Kendall, IL	Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad Depot	Building
85000979	DeKalb, IL	Von KleinSmid Mansion	Building
	LaSalle, IL	Illinois Central Railroad Freight House	Building
	Bureau, IL	Bridge over TR 170B carrying BN RR	Bridge
78003433	Bureau and Henry, IL	Hennepin Canal Historic District	District
07000856	Rock Island, IL	Moline Downtown Commercial Historic District	District
82002596	Rock Island, IL	Rock Island Lines Passenger Station	Building
69000057	Rock Island, IL	Rock Island Arsenal	District
04000175	Rock Island, IL	Lock and Dam No. 15 Historic District	District
	Scott, IA	Littig Brothers/Mengel and Klindt/Eagle Brewery	Building
	Scott, IA	St. Mary’s Roman Catholic Church Complex – Rectory	Building
	Scott, IA	St. Mary’s Roman Catholic Church Complex – Convent	Building
	Scott, IA	St. Mary’s Roman Catholic Church Complex – St. Mary’s Church	Building
84001558	Scott, IA	St. Mary’s Roman Catholic Church Complex	District
	Scott, IA	House	Building
	Scott, IA	House	Building
	Scott, IA	Davenport Paper Box Company	Building
	Scott, IA	Ewert and Richter Express and Storage Company (West Building)	Building
	Scott, IA	Ewert and Richter Express and Storage Company (East Building)	Building
	Scott, IA	Neu, Vincent J., Auto Dealership	Building
	Scott, IA	Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific Railroad Elevated Rail Bed	Structure
	Scott, IA	Matthews Building	Building
	Scott, IA	National Biscuit Company	Building
83003656	Scott, IA	Hamburg Historic District	District
03001290	Scott, IA	Crescent Warehouse Historic District	District
84001538	Scott, IA	St. Anthony’s Catholic Church Complex	District
	Muscatine, IA	Chicago, Rock Island, & Pacific Railroad – Wilton Depot	Building
02001035	Muscatine, IA	West Liberty Commercial District	District
	Johnson, IA	House	Building
	Johnson, IA	House	Building

NRHP Site Number ^a	County and State	Site Name	Site Type
	Johnson, IA	House	Building
	Johnson, IA	Prizler House	Building
	Johnson, IA	House	Building
	Johnson, IA	Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific Passenger Station	Building
04001321	Johnson, IA	Melrose Historic District	District
73000732	Johnson, IA	South Summit Street District	District
64500787	Iowa, IA	Amana Colonies	District
76000805	Poweshiek, IA	Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad-Grinnell Passenger Station	Building
91000384	Poweshiek, IA	Grinnell Historic Commercial District	District
82000410	Jasper, IA	Arthur, Thomas House	Building
	Polk, IA	Grocers Wholesale Company Warehouse	Building
	Polk, IA	Municipal Court and Public Safety Building	Building
03001262	Polk, IA	Linden Heights Historic District	District
88001168	Polk, IA	Civic Center Historic District	District
	Adair, IA	Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad: Stuart Passenger Station	Building
	Adair, IA	Adair Viaduct	Bridge
	Cass, IA	Chicago, Rock Island, & Pacific Railroad Depot	Building
95000856	Pottawattamie, IA	Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad Passenger Depot	Building
74001110	Douglas, NE	Burlington Station	Building
96000769	Douglas, NE	Omaha Rail and Commerce Historic District	District
93000558	Douglas, NE	10th Street Viaduct	Bridge
71000484	Douglas, NE	Union Passenger Terminal	Building

Sources: Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, September 2012, Architectural properties data for the Chicago to Omaha Corridor, provided by Trey McGhee, Chief Information Officer, on September 14, 2012.

Illinois State Museum, July 2012, Archaeological sites and surveys data for the Chicago to Omaha Corridor, provided by Nick Klobuchar, Site File Administrator, on July 16, 2012.

Iowa Office of the State Archaeologist, July 2012, Archaeological sites and surveys data for the Chicago to Omaha Corridor, provided by Colleen Eck, Site Records Manager, on July 18, 2012.

Iowa State Historic Preservation Office, 2012, Architectural properties data for the Chicago to Omaha Corridor, provided by Berry Bennett, Iowa Site Inventory Coordinator, on August 3, 2012 (shapefiles), and August 14, 2012 (database information).

National Park Service, n.d., National Register of Historic Places Spatial Database, Retrieved July 6, 2012, <http://nrhp.focus.nps.gov/natreg/docs/Download.html>.

Nebraska State Historical Society, July 2012, Archaeological sites and surveys data for the Chicago to Omaha Corridor, provided by Trisha Nelson, Curator, Archaeology Collections, on July 17, 2012.

Nebraska State Historical Society, August 2012, Architectural properties data for the Chicago to Omaha Corridor, provided by Patrick Haynes, Historic Resources Survey & Inventory Coordinator, on August 15, 2012.

Note:

^a Site number is the NRHP listing number for the resource. Sites eligible for listing are not on the NRHP, and thus have no NRHP listing number.

Cultural resources within the APE but outside the Potential Impact Area were reviewed for indirect impacts, such as visual intrusion or audible impacts, as a result of construction activities and future operation of the passenger rail system. Depending on the proximity of cultural resources to operating trains, structures may be identified for protection from noise and vibration impacts and incompatible visual intrusions. If the Build Alternative would require diminishment of historic properties, these may be considered potential adverse effects and require further Section 106 consultation. The consultation with SHPOs would be conducted during Tier 2 analyses to determine the preferred method of mitigation.

The replacement of existing rail, ties, and ballast, which is a common practice that is essential to operation and maintenance of any railroad, would not likely represent any adverse effects to historic properties. New stations may be constructed and existing stations may be modified for the Build Alternative, but the specific locations and plans for modification would not be known until Tier 2 analyses, and would be reviewed at that time for potential impacts on historic properties.

3.11.5 Potential Mitigation Measures

Mitigation measures may be developed in accordance with the terms of a PA between FRA and consulting parties including the ACHP and SHPOs. The timing of the PA would be determined based on input from the consulting parties. The PA would focus on Study commitments, documentation of the qualities that contribute to the historic significance of resources, review procedures, and products to be produced for mitigating adverse effects during the preparation of Tier 2 NEPA documents. The procedures of the PA would specify the sequence and scheduling of decisions to be reached and the manner by which these efforts would be coordinated. Specific mitigation measures, to the extent required, would be identified and discussed during Tier 2 analysis after design details are known, recorded in NEPA documents as specific impacts are identified, and implemented.

3.12 PARKS AND FEDERALLY OR STATE-LISTED NATURAL AREAS

Parks are defined as lands that have been officially designated as such by a federal, state, or local agency. Natural areas are lands designated by Congress or federal or state agencies as wildlife refuges, waterfowl production areas, wildlife management areas, nature preserves, and recreation areas. These designated natural areas can contain rare plants, animals, and other unique natural features, and may also contain habitat for spawning and nursery areas, nesting and feeding areas, or wintering areas. For purposes of this Tier 1 EIS, state-listed natural areas are defined as public lands managed by Illinois DNR, Iowa DNR, or NGPC. Parks and natural areas may contain recreational resources (such as trails, ball fields, and swimming pools), and recreational resources can also exist independently. For this Tier 1 EIS, federal, state, and local park and recreational resources were identified and assessed for potential impacts. Publicly owned parks, recreation areas, and wildlife or waterfowl refuges that are considered to be significant resources are also addressed in Section 3.13 as Section 4(f) properties.

3.12.1 Methodology and Regulatory Requirements

Potential impacts on parks, recreational resources, and natural areas (as identified in the introduction to this section) would be evaluated in accordance with CEQ guidelines implementing NEPA and FRA's Environmental Procedures.

Data from several sources were used to evaluate potential effects on public parks, recreational resources, and natural areas within the Study Area. Sources included federal, state, and county websites (including GIS data where available), atlases, such as Illinois, Iowa, and Nebraska DeLorme Atlases, aerial photography, and aerial photography mapping programs such as Google Maps. A GIS database of the Study Area was compiled with input from Iowa DNR, Illinois DNR, NGPC, and other state agencies. Data were not digitized for this Tier 1 analysis. For example, GIS shapefiles of trails in Iowa and Nebraska were acquired and used in the analysis, but were not readily available for Illinois. Consequently, the figures in Appendix B only illustrate Iowa and Nebraska trails.

The name, general location (municipality, county, and state), type, and size of the park, recreational resource, or natural area were identified. Federally and state-listed sites in the Study Area of a sufficient size to be visible were mapped. Local sites were identified and mapped if the boundaries were known.

The analysis for this Tier 1 EIS focused on identifying the number of public parks, recreational resources, and natural areas located within the Study Area and identifying the types of activities with the potential to impact those resources. The activities that would have potential to impact public parks, recreational resources and natural areas include upgrading rail infrastructure and the construction of new passenger stations. Impacts could be through physical modifications of land or effects from increasing noise levels. Specific types and degrees of impacts on individual resources (such as ROW acquisition and impacts on characteristics of a resource) will not be known until further design of rail facilities takes place during Tier 2 analysis, and will be evaluated in Tier 2 NEPA documents. During Tier 2, resource data would be updated in GIS through digitization of field data and publicly available information.

3.12.2 Affected Environment

Public parks, recreational resources, and natural areas within the Study Area are shown in Appendix B, Figures 1 through 162. There are 101 parks (city, county, and state), 65 recreational areas (trails, athletic fields, golf courses, a state recreation area, stadiums, and swimming pools), and 44 natural areas (including wildlife management areas, state natural areas, county forest preserves, woodlands, research areas, and open space). Appendix I includes a table of all public parks, recreational resources, and natural areas within the Study Area.

3.12.3 Impacts of No-Build Alternative

Under the No-Build Alternative, the Project would not be built, and impacts on parks, recreational resources, and natural areas are not anticipated beyond those that could occur due to other projects. The Chicago to Quad Cities service would contribute to slightly increased air emissions and noise in parks, recreation areas, and natural areas along this portion of the Corridor. The Chicago to Iowa City Intercity Passenger Rail Service Tier 1

Service Level Environmental Assessment, which included the Chicago to Quad Cities service, indicated that no impacts on parks or recreation areas were anticipated to occur for the Wyanet Connection and Eola Yard improvements, but some prairie areas would likely be disturbed to construct the Wyanet Connection.

3.12.4 Impacts of Build Alternative

The Potential Impact Area includes 44 parks, 24 recreational resources, and 22 natural areas, as listed in Appendix I. In most instances, only a very small portion of the resources are within the Potential Impact Area, which was developed with a sufficient buffer to facilitate design refinement and likely reduction of the area during Tier 2 NEPA analysis. There are three parks (Tiffin City Park in Tiffin, Iowa; Twin Creek Park in Pleasant Hill, Iowa; and Waterworks Park in Des Moines, Iowa) and two natural areas (Zoo Woods Forest Preserve in Riverside, Illinois, and Correll Wildlife Area near Adair, Iowa) that are transected by the Build Alternative. There are six locations where there are parks, recreation areas, or natural areas on opposite sides of the Build Alternative:

- Veeck Park and Pierce Park, and Pierce Park and Highland Park in Hinsdale, Illinois
- Heritage Woods Preservation Area and Burlington Park, and Old Plank Park and the Naperville Country Club in Naperville, Illinois
- Steven G Bridge Park and Blackberry Oaks Golf Course in Bristol, Illinois⁵
- Finkbine Golf Course and Finkbine Prairie in Iowa City, Iowa

Avoidance of these properties would be considered in the Tier 2 analysis. Unavoidable impacts would be further analyzed in the Tier 2 and Section 4(f) NEPA documents. The greatest potential for temporary impacts would be during culvert replacement or bridge work, or during construction of passenger stations or maintenance facilities.

3.12.5 Potential Mitigation Measures

Potential mitigation measures include avoidance or minimization of impacts, and if avoidance is not possible, replacement of wetlands. Specific mitigation measures, to the extent required, would be identified and discussed during Tier 2 analysis after design details are known, recorded in NEPA documents as specific impacts are identified, and implemented prior to construction.

3.13 SECTION 4(f) AND 6(f) PROPERTIES

Section 4(f) protected properties are any publicly owned lands of a public park, recreation area, or wildlife and waterfowl refuge of national, state or local significance or any land of a historic site of national, state, or local significance (as determined by the federal, state, or local officials having jurisdiction over the park, area, refuge, or site) within the meaning of Section 4(f) of the USDOT Act (49 USC 303(c)).

⁵ Steven G. Bridge Park is not currently within the Potential Impact Area, but could be if Blackberry Oaks Golf Course would be avoided.

Section 6(f) lands are defined as parkland or recreation land that was acquired or developed with funding authorized under Section 6(f) of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965 (LWCF). These lands cannot be converted to non-park/recreation use without the approval of the National Park Service. Conversion of these lands is allowed if it is determined that there are no practicable alternatives to the conversion and that there will be provision of replacement property. The replacement property must be of at least equal fair market value and of reasonably equivalent usefulness for recreation purposes as the land proposed to be taken.

3.13.1 Methodology and Regulatory Requirements

FRA cannot approve any program or project that requires the use of Section 4(f) protected properties unless there is no feasible and prudent alternative to the use of such land. In addition, the program or project must include all possible planning to minimize harm to the park, recreational area, wildlife and waterfowl refuge, or historic site resulting from such use. One exception to the aforementioned requirement is if FRA determines that the use of the property, including any measure(s) to minimize harm (such as any avoidance, minimization, mitigation, or enhancement measures) would have a *de minimis* impact. A direct use occurs when there is a physical incorporation of land into a transportation facility. A constructive use occurs when a project does “not incorporate land from a section 4(f) resource, but the project's proximity impacts are so severe that the protected activities, features, or attributes that qualify a resource for protection under section 4(f) are substantially impaired and the resource can no longer perform its designated function (49 USC 303).

Potential impacts on Section 4(f) and 6(f) properties will be evaluated in accordance with FRA's Environmental Procedures, the requirements set forth in 49 USC 303 for Section 4(f) lands, and 36 CFR 59, Land and Water Conservation Fund Program of Assistance to States.

3.13.2 Affected Environment

Appendix B, Figures 1 through 162 show public parks, recreational resources, and wildlife and waterfowl refuges of national, state, or local significance for the Study Area. The figures also show historic sites of national, state, or local significance that qualify as Section 4(f) protected properties.

In Appendix J, Table 1 lists all public parks, public recreational, public natural areas, and historic properties within the Study Area, including a 500-foot buffer (for parks, recreation areas, and natural areas) and a 250-foot buffer on either side of the existing rail centerline for historic sites. Section 4(f) properties were identified in the entire Study Area to accommodate for future Tier 2 analysis. Within the Study Area, there are 101 parks (city, county, and state), 59 public recreational areas (trails, athletic fields, golf courses, a state recreation area, stadiums, and swimming pools), and 18 public natural areas (including wildlife management areas, state natural areas, county forest preserves, woodlands, research areas, and open space). The Study Area also includes 213 historic properties listed on the NRHP or eligible for listing on the NRHP, including buildings, bridges, other structures, and Historic Districts that would likely qualify as Section 4(f) properties.

3.13.3 Impacts of No-Build Alternative

Under the No-Build Alternative, the Project would not be built, and impacts on Section 4(f) and 6(f) resources are not anticipated beyond those that could occur due to other projects.

3.13.4 Impacts of Build Alternative

The Potential Impact Area, which includes land likely to be disturbed during construction and thereby resources on which the Project would have direct effects, includes 44 public parks, 21 public recreational resources, 8 public refuges, and 60 private and public historic properties, as listed in Appendix J, Table 2. In most instances, only a very small portion of each resource is within the Potential Impact Area, which was developed with a sufficient buffer to facilitate design refinement and likely reduction of the area during Tier 2 NEPA analysis. In some cases, resources protected by Section 4(f) are transected by the Potential Impact Area, as discussed in Section 3.12.4; three parks (Tiffin City Park in Tiffin, Iowa; Twin Creek Park in Pleasant Hill, Iowa; and Waterworks Park in Des Moines, Iowa) and two natural areas (Zoo Woods Forest Preserve in Riverside, Illinois, and Correll Wildlife Area near Adair, Iowa) are transected.

As the Project proceeds into Tier 2 analysis, avoidance of these properties would be considered. Unavoidable potential impacts would be further analyzed in the Tier 2 NEPA documents. The greatest potential for temporary impacts would be during culvert replacement or bridge work, or during construction of passenger stations or maintenance facilities.

It is not anticipated that any impacts would result in a constructive use of these Section 4(f) resources. Further evaluation of the potential impacts would be addressed during Tier 2 analysis when more details of the design and operation of the Build Alternative are known.

An initial review of the National Park Service LWCF database identified three individual parks and five park districts or community park departments within the Potential Impact Area that received LWCF funding (Appendix J, Table 3 includes a list of these properties):

- Cook County Forest Preserve District, Cook County, Illinois
- Community Park, Clarendon Hills, Illinois
- Naperville Park District, Naperville, Illinois
- Tiffin City Park, Tiffin, Iowa
- Altoona Parks Department, Altoona, Iowa
- City of West Des Moines Parks and Recreation, West Des Moines, Iowa
- Walnut Woods State Park, Polk County, Iowa
- City of Omaha Parks and Recreation, Omaha, Nebraska

During Tier 2 analysis, coordination would occur with the administering agencies to determine if lands within the Potential Impact Area were improved with LWCF funding. If any areas are considered to be LWCF lands, potential impacts would be addressed during Tier 2 analysis.

3.13.5 Potential Mitigation Measures

Unless exceptions for *de minimis* impact findings are applicable, a feasible and prudent alternative that avoids resources protected under Section 4(f) must be selected. If two or more alternatives affect Section 4(f) lands, the one causing the least relative harm to Section 4(f) properties must be selected, unless the overall environmental impacts of the other alternative are greater.

Where impacts on Section 4(f) properties cannot be avoided, all possible planning must be completed to minimize impacts. Minimization of harm could include alternative design that lessens the impact on Section 4(f) resources and/or mitigation measures that compensate for residual impacts. Minimization and mitigation measures would be determined through consultation with the official of the agency owning or administering the resource. Section 6(f) lands would be avoided to the extent practicable. For LWCF lands that cannot be avoided, there would be provision of replacement property that is of at least equal fair market value and of reasonably equivalent usefulness for recreation purposes as the land proposed to be taken.

Specific mitigation measures, to the extent required, would be identified and discussed during Tier 2 analysis after design details are known, recorded in NEPA documents as specific impacts are identified, and implemented prior to construction.

3.14 VISUAL RESOURCES AND AESTHETIC QUALITY

This resource includes both natural and built visual scenic resources along the Study Area and the general aesthetic quality of the visual environment, including the track facility, trains, and stations.

3.14.1 Methodology and Regulatory Requirements

The regulatory framework pertaining to visual resources and aesthetic quality is FRA's Environmental Procedures.

To determine which visual resources are unique and have potential scenic qualities, a review of each state's scenic byways websites was conducted, and data for public parks, recreation areas, and natural areas (including conservation areas, forest preserves, wildlife refuges, and wildlife management areas) were gathered from the Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI), Bing Maps aerial imagery, Iowa DOT natural resources database, Iowa DNR, U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Department of Transportation, and the land holdings database of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The ESRI hydrography data, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) National Hydrography Dataset (NHD), Iowa DOT rivers databases, and Bing aerial photography were used to compile the list of major rivers with riparian woodlands. In addition, data were obtained for the NPS's historic sites listed in the NRHP, as these sites typically possess aesthetic visual qualities. A compilation of municipal area information, including urban and small town environments and residential neighborhoods, was derived from ESRI data and Bing aerial photography.

3.14.2 Affected Environment

There are two distinct categories of views to be considered in discussing the visual environment: 1) views from the train, which are views of visual/scenic resources; and 2) views of the railroad facilities (sidings and track, trains, and stations) from an adjacent vantage point, by people who are sensitive to those views (adjacent residential areas). Public parks, recreational resources, and natural areas within the Study Area are shown in Appendix B, Figures 1 through 162. The figures also readily portray a plan view of rural and urban viewsheds.

3.14.2.1 Views from the Train

The majority of the visual environment through which the route travels is characterized by flat to gently sloping plains of open agricultural cropland, interspersed with areas of gently rolling hills. The remainder of the Study Area travels through the urban built-up environments of the major metropolitan areas of Chicago, the Quad Cities, Iowa City, Des Moines, and Omaha/Council Bluffs; and the built environments of the smaller towns located between those major cities.

Potential visual/scenic resources within or adjacent to the Study Area were divided into six categories: 1) public parks; 2) recreational areas; 3) natural areas (see lists of these three resources in Appendix I); 4) major perennial river corridors with riparian woodlands (see list in Appendix K); 5) historic sites (see list in Appendix H), and 6) city/small town areas. Potential visual/scenic resources within or adjacent to the Study Area include 101 parks, 65 recreation areas, 44 natural areas, 76 major perennial rivers with riparian woodlands, 213 properties listed on or eligible for listing on the NRHP, and 78 built-up environments of the cities (including suburbs) and small towns.

Although the dominant agricultural cropland and pastureland in the Study Area can exhibit visual qualities of their own, the major perennial river corridors contain woodlands and surface water that provide visual contrasts to the vast open areas of the agricultural countryside, and contrasts with the built environments within the cities and towns. The expansive Mississippi and Missouri Rivers would provide unique scenic views as the passenger trains travel on the bridges over these water resources.

Many of the parks, recreation areas, and natural areas also contain wooded areas, manicured open fields, and/or water bodies, which can provide visual interest. In addition, historic buildings and structures scattered within the cities and towns, possess unique architectural elements that can provide scenic qualities for on-looking passengers. In some instances, the remainder of the buildings in the urban areas and small towns can possess aesthetic qualities and provide views of urban and small town character, if they are well-maintained and in harmony with the context of the surrounding environment.

A unique scenic resource in the Study Area is at the west edge of Iowa where the Loess Hills landform provides a visual environment of peaked hills, steep side slopes, narrow ridge crests, and sometimes vertical bluffs of exposed tan-colored silt, contrasting with the relatively flat surrounding landscape.

3.14.2.2 Views of the Railroad Facilities

Individuals concentrated in the adjacent residential areas of municipalities (cities, suburbs, and towns) who would have the potential for undesirable views of the railroad facilities are considered to be sensitive visual receptors. There are 79 municipal areas along the rail line that contain potential sensitive visual receptors.

Existing views of the railroad sidings and track are uniform and similar throughout the Study Area. Although the sidings and track are low-profile visual elements in the landscape, the current trains are vertical elements that are periodically seen by sensitive viewers. Currently, views of passenger and freight trains occur frequently in the Chicago to Wyanet, Illinois portion of the Study Area. The residential areas within the cities and towns along the Study Area from Wyanet to Council Bluffs, Iowa, currently experience periodic views of only freight trains. Existing train stations and depots are also visible to residents in adjacent neighborhoods. However, the architecture of the depot buildings is typically considered aesthetically pleasing and some are listed in the NRHP.

3.14.3 Impacts of No-Build Alternative

Under the No-Build Alternative, the Project would not be built, and impacts on visual/scenic resources and sensitive visual receptors are not anticipated beyond those that could occur due to other projects. The Chicago to Quad Cities Expansion Program would result in potential minor impacts or alterations on visual/scenic resources as a result of constructing new track embankment for the Wyanet Connection as it traverses part of the riparian woodland of a major perennial waterway (Pond Creek). The Eola Yard improvements would be in a railroad yard, and negligibly changed views from a train or of the railroad facilities. In addition, potential culvert replacements/extensions and minor bridge replacements/additions at other major perennial rivers along the Study Area could result in minor alterations of those visual/scenic resources. It is anticipated that there would be minimal or no direct impacts on other visual/scenic resources because of little or no additional ROW acquisition in the remainder of the Study Area. Specific impact areas will be identified during the Chicago to Quad Cities Tier 2 NEPA analysis as more specific project limits are identified.

3.14.3.1 Views from the Train

Views of the visual/scenic resources from the passenger trains, may vary in duration depending on train speed, the distance of the resource from the Corridor, and the presence or absence of vegetation or structures that could act as visual barriers prior to arrival near the visual/scenic resource.

Culvert replacements or extensions, and bridge replacements or additions, at the major perennial river crossings would necessitate removal of some of the riparian woodland, which is an aesthetic feature of those resources. However, the removal of vegetation may be beneficial by opening up the views to the remaining or distant portions of the visual/scenic resource. To improve site distance at crossings for vehicle and train traffic, tree and brush clearing could occur, which could open up views to other visual/scenic resources that may be in the vicinity of those areas.

3.14.3.2 Views of the Railroad Facilities

With the additional passenger trains, running two round-trips per day at 79 mph from Chicago to the Quad Cities, there would be a minimal increase in the frequency of views of the trains, from sensitive visual receptors in the vicinity. Consequently, the effects of the Chicago to Quad Cities Expansion Program on the receptors would be minimal, since residents in those areas are already accustomed to views of the trains.

3.14.4 Impacts of Build Alternative

The construction activities of the Build Alternative, including tree and brush clearing, placement of fill material for additional track and siding, stream relocations, culvert replacement or extensions, bridge replacement or additions, and new or expanded station areas, could have the potential to impact visual/scenic resources and affect sensitive visual receptors present in the Study Area.

3.14.4.1 Views from the Train

As indicated in Section 3.12, the Build Alternative could result in impacts on 44 public parks, 24 recreational areas, 22 natural areas, and 78 city and small town environments. In addition, all 76 of the major perennial rivers and/or their riparian areas would either be crossed or potentially impacted by longitudinal encroachments on the riparian area, thereby resulting in minimal linear alterations of these resources. Siding and track additions, culvert replacements or extensions, and bridge replacements or additions, would necessitate removal of some of the wooded areas, considered to be aesthetic features. However, the removal of vegetation may be beneficial by opening up the views to the remaining or distant portions of the visual/scenic resource, as well as the water surface in relation to the major rivers. Only small portions of these visual/scenic resources would be within the Potential Impact Area because additional ROW would be abutting the existing ROW rather than being on new alignment. As a result, alteration of these resources and effects on the views of those resources would most likely be minimal. In addition, the expansive Mississippi and Missouri Rivers would provide unique scenic views as the passenger trains travel on the bridges over these water resources.

The Build Alternative would have linear impacts on the Loess Hills landform area as a result of adding track and siding through this unique visual resource in the northeast portion of Council Bluffs, Iowa. The linear impacts would be minimal and the existing views of the Loess Hills would remain open for the passengers of the trains. An additional area of impact in the Loess Hills would result from a potential new station location just southeast of the intersection of I-80 and Highway 6, in the northeast corner of Council Bluffs (Appendix B, Figures 156 and 157). This area is characterized by rolling hills of open grassland. A new station facility in this area would result in impacts to the scenic resource by removing the natural landform on this property, and replacing it with a building and parking facilities.

The Build Alternative has the potential to affect 60 scenic historic properties (buildings, structures, bridges, or historic districts) within the Potential Impact Area (Table 3.11-1). However, measures to avoid or minimize impacts to those scenic historic resources would be analyzed in the Tier 2 NEPA documents. In addition, impacts to the scenic urban character and small town character of the built-up environments would be minimal, as there would be very little, if any, additional ROW required in these areas.

Although the Build Alternative would result in impacts on several visual/scenic resources, those impacts would be minimal and would be offset by the beneficial impacts on the passengers of the trains by providing visual access to those resources throughout the Study Area. To improve site distance at some crossings for vehicle and train traffic, tree and brush clearing may be required. However, this could also open up views to other visual/scenic resources that may be in the vicinity of those areas.

Views of the visual/scenic resources from the passenger trains may vary in duration depending on train speed, the distance of the resource from the Corridor, and the presence or absence of vegetation or structures that could act as visual barriers prior to arrival at the vicinity of the visual/scenic resource.

3.14.4.2 Views of the Railroad Facilities

The improvements under the Build Alternative would be visually similar to the existing railroad facilities. The views of the additional sidings and track, from the residential neighborhoods of the cities and small towns in the Study Area, would be similar to the existing views to which the adjacent residents are already accustomed. Although they are currently accustomed to seeing passenger trains and freight trains between Chicago and Wyanet, and only freight trains between Wyanet and Omaha, the proposed alternative would add seven more passenger trains per day at speeds up to 110 mph between Chicago and Omaha. The passenger trains would be shorter and faster than the freight trains, resulting in views of the trains that would be of shorter duration than those of the freight trains.

Although the visual/scenic resources provide views for passengers on the trains, in some cases, the visibility of the railroad facilities from those resources could be considered an incompatible visual intrusion, depending upon the sensitivity of the resource. As indicated in Section 3.13, all of the 44 public parks, 21 of the public recreation areas, 8 of the public natural areas, and all 60 of the historic properties are considered Section 4(f) resources, and as such, views of the railroad facilities from these resources would be a consideration in the impacts evaluation on those resources. It is not anticipated that visual impacts would adversely affect any of those resources because the views of railroad facilities are not new, and because of the visual/scenic resources' proximity to the railroad. Visual considerations and impact avoidance or minimization in regard to Section 4(f) resources would be analyzed further in the Tier 2 NEPA documents.

The Build Alternative follows existing railroad alignments and would travel by residential areas containing sensitive visual receptors who are currently accustomed to seeing trains. One exception would be in the east side of Des Moines, where the Des Moines Design Option 3 alignment would pass through a residential neighborhood along the abandoned Wabash rail corridor parallel to the Southeast Connector (Appendix B, Figures 114 and 115). This neighborhood is currently not exposed to views of railroad facilities, and Design Option 3 would bisect the neighborhood, resulting in a negative visual impact on these sensitive visual receptors.

One station area in Grinnell, Iowa and a potential station area in Omaha may be located adjacent to, or in the vicinity of residential areas. Those sensitive visual receptors would be subject to views of the stations. Although there may be a change in the existing environment, new development or expansion of the facilities could incorporate appropriate

aesthetic design elements and landscaping to complement or enhance the visual quality of the existing surroundings.

A more detailed analysis of visual/scenic resources, sensitive visual receptors, the potential degree of change or alteration to existing resources and views, and considerations for aesthetic quality in station design, will be addressed in the Tier 2 NEPA documents.

3.14.5 Potential Mitigation Measures

Through continued public involvement, residents' concerns about the potential views of the railroad facilities would be identified. Mitigation and impact minimization efforts would be addressed in more detail in the Tier 2 NEPA documents and could include consideration of potential measures such as appropriate re-vegetation of disturbed areas of the scenic resources, visual screening of railroad facilities from adjacent residential areas, and appropriate design of aesthetic features and landscaping that would complement and blend with the context of the surrounding visual environment.

Specific mitigation measures, to the extent required, would be identified and discussed during Tier 2 analysis after design details are known, recorded in NEPA documents as specific impacts are identified, and implemented prior to construction.

3.15 WATERWAYS AND WATER BODIES

Waterway and water body resources include perennial and intermittent streams, and lakes and ponds as designated on USGS maps and USFWS National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) maps.

3.15.1 Methodology and Regulatory Requirements

The regulatory framework pertaining to these water resources includes Section 404 of the Clean Water Act of 1972 (as amended) and the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899 (33 USC 401 et seq., as amended and supplemented; 23 CFR 650, subparts D and H, 33 CFR 114-115).

The ESRI hydrography data and the NPS Nationwide Rivers Inventory (NRI) were used to compile GIS data for locations of waterways, in the form of rivers and perennial and intermittent streams. Waterway information was supplemented by stream data from the USGS NHD, the Illinois Natural Resources Geospatial Data Clearinghouse, and Iowa DOT databases. Additional data included the USFWS NWI maps for designations of deep water lakes (lacustrine) and open water ponds (palustrine unconsolidated bottom). In addition, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources' (Iowa DNR, March 25, 2009a, and March 25, 2009b) website was reviewed to obtain input regarding special designations of Meandered Sovereign Waters, a designation unique to Iowa.

In conjunction with the Tier 2 NEPA documents, a more detailed impact analysis of waterways and water bodies would be conducted, including field surveys, at which time there is the potential for additional waterways and water bodies to be found. Smaller streams with an Ordinary High Water Mark (OHWM) and connections to jurisdictional streams that were not included in the mapping databases may be found. Coordination would take place with the USACE to determine which water resources are jurisdictional or non-jurisdictional for Section 404 permitting purposes and mitigation requirements, in addition to coordination with state resource agencies.

For permitting purposes, the project lies within three USACE regulatory districts: the Chicago District for eastern Illinois, the Rock Island District for central and western Illinois and most of Iowa, and the Omaha District for Nebraska which includes Nebraska and a small portion of Iowa west of the federal levee system in Council Bluffs, Iowa. Section 401 Water Quality Certification is required prior to issuance of a Section 404 permit by USACE. Illinois provides a joint permit application form which is submitted to the Illinois DNR, Illinois EPA, and USACE for a floodplain permit, Section 404 permit, Section 401 Water Quality Certification, and public waters permits. Iowa provides a joint permit application form which is distributed to Iowa DNR and USACE to obtain a Section 404 permit, Section 401 Water Quality Certification, a floodplain construction permit, and a Sovereign Lands/Waters construction permit. The Omaha District has a separate permitting process whereby a Section 404 permit application for an individual permit is coordinated with NDEQ. NDEQ regulates stream impacts under its Section 401 Water Quality Certification authority. The U.S. Coast Guard's Section 9 bridge permit would be required for any new bridge structures over rivers that are considered navigable by the Coast Guard, as well as a Section 10 permit from the USACE.

Jurisdictional water resources are considered Waters of the U.S., and as such, the discharge of fill material below the OHWM of jurisdictional waters is regulated by the USACE and would require a Section 404 Permit in the design stage, in addition to mitigation.

3.15.2 Affected Environment

When railroad lines were first built in the Midwest, they were located along the valleys of rivers and creeks, wherever possible, to take advantage of the level and nearly level terrain, thereby minimizing cut and fill construction operations. Consequently, the Study Area runs parallel to and perpendicular to waterways throughout the Study Area. The waterways and water bodies near or within the Study Area are shown in Appendix B, Figures 1 through 162.

The 76 major named perennial streams in the Study Area are listed in Appendix K, Table 1 by state and county. The Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal, the Des Plaines River, the Mississippi River, and the Missouri River are important waterways in the Study Area that are used for commercial navigation. These rivers would be crossed on existing bridges, with the exception of the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal which runs parallel to the route in the downtown Chicago area. There are also smaller perennial streams and intermittent streams throughout the Study Area. Some segments of a particular stream run perpendicular, parallel, or skewed to the Study Area, or lie within it in more than one location.

Special designations by the NPS have also been given to a few of the waterways near the Study Area. The NPS has compiled the NRI, which is a listing of free-flowing river segments "...that are believed to possess one or more 'outstandingly remarkable' natural or cultural values judged to be of more than local or regional significance" (NPS, August 19, 2011). Although there are no segments of NRI-listed streams directly within the Study Area, four streams are crossed that have NRI segments in relative proximity to the Study Area: the Fox River (2 miles), Big Indian Creek (0.75 mile), and Big Bureau Creek (1.5 miles), all of which are in Illinois; and the Cedar River (1 mile) in Iowa.

The Iowa DNR designates the Cedar River, Iowa River, Des Moines River, and Raccoon River as Meandered Sovereign Rivers which require special permitting, if impacted.

Although Iowa DNR also designates some stream segments as Protected Water Areas (Scenic Rivers), none are within the Study Area.

There are 20 water bodies designated as deep water lakes (lacustrine) on the NWI maps, and 197 open water ponds (palustrine unconsolidated bottom) scattered along the Study Area (Appendix B, Figures 1 through 162). Most of the lakes are the result of previous surface mining excavations, while a few were formed by damming streams. Although Iowa DNR has also designated certain lakes as sovereign, none are located in the Study Area.

3.15.3 Impacts of No-Build Alternative

Under the No-Build Alternative, the Project would not be built, and no project related impacts on waterways and water bodies are anticipated beyond those that could occur due to other projects. As part of the Chicago to Quad Cities Expansion Program, minimal disturbance would occur outside existing ROW, except for a BNSF and IAIS connection near Wyanet, Illinois. There would be direct impacts to a perennial stream (Pond Creek) as a result of constructing new track embankment for the Wyanet Connection and relocation of a linear water of the U.S. for the Eola Yard improvements. In addition, minor impacts on waterways and water bodies from potential culvert replacements/extensions and bridge replacements/additions in other areas of the project may also occur. Specific quantitative impacts from this project on waterways and water bodies would be determined as the project progresses through its required Tier 2 NEPA documentation. There is also the potential for temporary construction impacts from possible culvert or bridge replacements along the remainder of the rail route, as a part of ongoing maintenance.

3.15.4 Impacts of Build Alternative

Impacts from the Build Alternative on waterways are unavoidable since some stretches of the existing railroad were originally built along waterways and floodplains.

As shown in Table 3.15-1, construction of the Build Alternative would directly impact approximately 323 waterway segments, totaling approximately 104,150 linear feet. These waterway segments would be impacted by construction activities including placement of fill material for additional track and siding, culvert replacement or extensions, and bridge replacement or additions. In some areas, these impacts would include relocation of parallel stream segments that would be impacted by new track embankments. Although the Build Alternative would cross all four of Iowa's Meandered Sovereign Rivers, none of the NRI stream segments would be directly impacted. The rail line would cross the Mississippi River on an existing bridge and may cross the Missouri River on an existing bridge or one or two new bridges in order to support additional passenger train service for the Build Alternative. The Build Alternative would also impact portions of seven lakes, totaling approximately 32 acres, and 44 ponds, totaling approximately 33 acres.

Although construction impacts on waterways and water bodies would occur as a result of soil erosion and potential construction pollutant loading of stormwater runoff, they would be temporary and would cease after construction is completed. However, the avoidance or minimization of sediment or construction pollution would be accomplished in appropriate areas by the use of stormwater Best Management Practices (BMPs), and federal and state water quality requirements, as discussed in Section 3.17, Water Quality.

Table 3.15-1. Impacts on Waterways and Water Bodies

State	Perennial Streams	Intermittent Streams	Lakes	Ponds
Illinois				
No.	41	54	4	11
L.F. / Ac.	16,880 L.F.	17,360 L.F.	5 Ac.	4 Ac.
Iowa				
No.	65	162	3	28
L.F. / Ac.	15,360 L.F.	54,235 L.F.	27 Ac.	27 Ac.
Nebraska				
No.	1	0	0	5
L.F. / Ac.	315 L.F.	0 L.F.	0 Ac.	2 Ac.
Total				
No.	107	216	7	44
L.F. / Ac.	32,555 L.F.	71,595 L.F.	32 Ac.	33 Ac.

Notes:

No. = Number; L.F. = Linear Feet; Ac. = Acres

3.15.5 Potential Mitigation Measures

In conjunction with the Tier 2 NEPA documents, the waterways would be reviewed to determine where it is possible and practical to avoid or minimize impacts.

Mitigation options available for unavoidable impacts on jurisdictional waterways and water bodies would be discussed in more detail during the Tier 2 NEPA documents. Mitigation measures could include mitigation banking, in-lieu fees, and on-site or off-site permittee-responsible mitigation. During the design process, coordination would take place with the USACE and appropriate state resource agencies to develop mitigation strategies. Specific mitigation measures, to the extent required, would be identified and discussed during Tier 2 analysis after design details are known, recorded in NEPA documents as specific impacts are identified, and implemented prior to construction.

3.16 WETLANDS

The regulatory definition of wetlands, as adopted by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA, May 11, 2012) and USACE to administer the USACE’s Section 404 permit program is “[Wetlands are] those areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. Wetlands generally include swamps, marshes, bogs and similar areas.” For this analysis, this resource includes vegetated wetland areas as designated on the USFWS NWI maps.

3.16.1 Methodology and Regulatory Requirements

The regulatory framework pertaining to wetlands includes Section 404 of the Clean Water Act of 1972 (as amended); EO 11990, Protection of Wetlands (42 FR 26961); USDOT Order 5660.1A, Preservation of the Nation's Wetlands; and the Interagency Wetland Policy Act of 1989 (20 ILCS/830/1-2, et seq.) and administrative rules promulgated thereunder (17 Illinois Administrative Code Part 1090).

In conjunction with the Tier 2 NEPA documents, a more detailed impact analysis of wetlands would be conducted, including field surveys, to determine which areas meet the USEPA and USACE regulatory criteria and definition of a wetland, and to determine the type and boundaries of those wetland areas. There is also the potential for additional wetlands to be found in the course of those surveys. Coordination would take place with the USACE to determine which wetland areas are jurisdictional or non-jurisdictional for Section 404 permitting purposes and mitigation requirements, in addition to coordination with state resource agencies.

The permitting approach for wetlands follows the Section 404 requirements identified in Section 3.15.1. The USFWS NWI database was used to compile GIS data for locations of vegetated wetland areas within the Study Area.

3.16.2 Affected Environment

Appendix B, Figures 1 through 162, show the NWI wetlands near or within the Study Area. The NWI maps are based on a classification system known as the Cowardin System, which classifies the types of ecosystems related to water resources (Cowardin et al., 1979). Typical vegetated wetlands in the Midwest include, but are not limited to, emergent (herbaceous), scrub-shrub, and forested wetlands.

Areas that are mapped as vegetated wetlands on the NWI maps have the potential of being regulated by the USACE. The regulatory definition of wetlands emphasizes that wetlands must possess three essential characteristics before a positive determination of a wetland can be made: hydric soils,⁶ a prevalence of hydrophytic vegetation,⁷ and a persistent wetland hydrology.

The vegetated wetland systems present within the Study Area include Palustrine Aquatic Bed (PAB), Palustrine Emergent (PEM), Palustrine Scrub-Shrub (PSS), and Palustrine Forested (PFO). Although there are several wetland areas scattered throughout the Study Area, most of the larger concentrations of wetlands occur in the floodplains of, and adjacent to, the following perennial streams:

- Little Rock Creek (Appendix B, Figure 19)
- Somonauk Creek (Appendix B, Figure 20)
- Big Bureau Creek (Appendix B, Figure 37)
- Green River (Appendix B, Figures 50 through 52)
- Rock River (Appendix B, Figure 53)

⁶ Hydric soils are soils “that formed under conditions of saturation, flooding, or ponding long enough during the growing season to develop anaerobic conditions in the upper part” (NRCS, August 18, 2011).

⁷ Hydrophytic vegetation is “plant-life that thrives in wet conditions” (Illinois DNR, 2012).

- Mississippi River (Appendix B, Figures 55 through 57)
- Cedar River (Appendix B, Figures 66 and 67)
- Wapsipinicon Creek (Appendix B, Figure 69)
- Iowa River (Appendix B, Figure 75)
- Clear Creek (Appendix B, Figures 76 through 80)
- Big Bear Creek (Appendix B, Figures 85 through 88)
- Little Bear Creek (Appendix B, Figures 91 and 92)
- South Skunk River (Appendix B, Figures 105 through 108)
- Fourmile Creek (Appendix B, Figures 113 and 114)
- Raccoon River (Appendix B, Figures 116 through 122)
- Turkey Creek (Appendix B, Figures 136 through 140)
- East Nishnabotna River (Appendix B, Figure 142)
- West Nishnabotna River (Appendix B, Figures 148 and 149)
- Missouri River (Appendix B, Figures 160 through 162)

3.16.3 Impacts of No-Build Alternative

Under the No-Build Alternative, the Project would not be built, and project related impacts to wetlands would not occur beyond those that could occur due to other projects. The Chicago to Quad Cities Expansion Program would contribute to minimal impacts on a wetland area as a result of constructing the Eola Yard improvements. In addition, other minor wetland impacts would occur as a result of potential culvert replacements/extensions and bridge replacements/additions at other wetland areas in the Corridor. Specific quantitative impacts on wetlands from this project would be determined as the project progresses through its required Tier 2 NEPA documentation. There is also the potential for temporary construction impacts from possible culvert or bridge replacements along the remainder of the rail route, as a part of ongoing maintenance.

3.16.4 Impacts of Build Alternative

Impacts from the Build Alternative on wetlands that are located adjacent to existing ROW are unavoidable since some stretches of the existing railroad were originally built along several waterways and floodplains where wetlands occur.

As shown in Table 3.16-1, construction of the Build Alternative has the potential to directly impact approximately 372 wetlands within the Potential Impact Area, totaling approximately 238 acres, the majority of which would occur in Iowa. These wetlands would be impacted by construction activities, including placement of fill material for additional track and siding, culvert replacement or extensions, and bridge replacement or additions. As discussed in the introduction to Chapter 3, the anticipated amount of additional ROW required was conservatively estimated to allow for future design and to accommodate design constraints. Consequently, the Potential Impact Area overestimates the area that would be directly impacted by construction of the Build Alternative to account for estimated ROW needs and multiple potential alignments in particular areas. As the project proceeds into the Tier 2 NEPA analyses, wetland impacts will most likely be reduced as actual ROW requirements are determined and minimized where practicable.

Although construction impacts on wetlands may occur as a result of soil disturbance and potential construction pollutant loading of stormwater runoff, they would be temporary and would cease after construction is completed. However, the avoidance or minimization of sediment or construction pollution would be accomplished in appropriate areas by the use of stormwater BMPs, and federal and state water quality requirements, as discussed in Section 3.17, Water Quality.

Table 3.16-1. Impacts on Wetlands (by type)

State	Palustrine				Total
	Aquatic Bed (PAB)	Emergent (PEM)	Scrub-Shrub (PSS)	Forested (PFO)	
Illinois					
No.	2	38	5	29	74
Ac.	1	16	1	13	31
Iowa					
No.	0	128	27	126	281
Ac.	0	56	31	106	193
Nebraska					
No.	0	11	3	3	17
Ac.	0	12	1	1	14
Total					
No.	2	177	35	158	372
Ac.	1	84	33	120	238

Notes:

No. = Number; Ac. = Acres

3.16.5 Potential Mitigation Measures

In conjunction with the Tier 2 NEPA documents, wetlands would be reviewed to determine where it is possible and practical to avoid or minimize impacts.

Mitigation options available for unavoidable impacts to jurisdictional wetlands would be discussed in more detail during the Tier 2 NEPA documents and could include mitigation banking, in-lieu fees, and on-site or off-site permittee-responsible mitigation. The mitigation strategies to be identified and selected would account for the fact that not all mitigation options are available to all states and USACE Districts. During the design process, coordination would take place with the USACE and appropriate resource agencies to develop appropriate mitigation strategies. Specific mitigation measures, to the extent required, would be identified and discussed during Tier 2 analysis after design details are known, recorded in NEPA documents as specific impacts are identified, and implemented prior to construction.

3.17 WATER QUALITY

Water quality refers to the potential effects of sediment erosion and chemical pollution on surface water resources (streams, lakes, ponds, wetlands) and on groundwater in relation to karst areas.

3.17.1 Methodology and Regulatory Requirements

The federal Water Pollution Control Act (later amended to become the Clean Water Act), Section 303(d), requires that each state identify those waters that are not meeting the state's water quality standards. Other regulations pertaining to water quality include Sections 401 and 402 of the Clean Water Act of 1972 (as amended) and EO 12088, Federal Compliance with Pollution Control Standards (43 FR 47707). The list of surface waters provided in Section 3.16.2 was reviewed.

To determine potential karst regions in the Study Area, information was obtained from Internet data and mapping by the Illinois State Geological Survey (ISGS), Illinois Department of Natural Resources (Illinois DNR), Iowa DNR, Nebraska DNR, and Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA). The most recent 303(d) lists of impaired waters were gathered from the websites of Illinois EPA, Iowa DNR, and NDEQ. Well locations were compiled from the Illinois Natural Resources Geospatial Data Clearinghouse website, the Iowa DOT database, and the Nebraska DNR website. Data for waste water treatment facilities in all three states were compiled from USEPA's Facility Registry System and were supplemented with Iowa DOT data, and aerial photography.

3.17.2 Affected Environment

As discussed in Sections 3.15.2 and 3.16.2, the Study Area contains perennial and intermittent waterways, wetlands, and other surface water resources, all of which can be affected by runoff of pollutants from the project. Appendix B, Figures 1 through 162, show the water resources near or within the Study Area.

As discussed in Section 3.15.1, there are no NRI stream segments located within the Study Area, however, there are four streams crossed by the Study Area that have NRI segments in proximity to, and downstream of, Study Area. They are: the Fox River (2 miles; Appendix B, Figure 13), Big Indian Creek (0.75 mile; Appendix B, Figure 25), Big Bureau Creek (1.5 miles; Appendix B, Figure 37), all of which are in Illinois; and the Cedar River in Iowa (1 mile; Appendix B, Figures 66 and 67).

The Study Area also includes four rivers in Iowa (Cedar River, Iowa River, Des Moines River, and Raccoon River) which Iowa DNR designates as Meandered Sovereign Rivers, which require special permitting, if impacted.

The federal Water Pollution Control Act, Section 303(d), requires that each state identify those waters which have uses that are impaired by pollutants and, as a result, are not meeting the state's water quality standards. This list of water quality limited (impaired) surface waters is referred to as the 303(d) List. There are 28 streams (Appendix L, Table 1) included on the 303(d) list (USEPA, March 6, 2012), but no other water bodies within the Study Area.

In addition to runoff of pollutants potentially affecting surface water resources, groundwater also can be affected by runoff as surface flow can be quickly lost through caves, sinkholes,

and open fractures where there is minimal, if any, soil cover to act as a filter. Bedrock near the ground surface, composed of easily dissolved limestone and dolomite, is referred to as karst terrain and is characterized by fractures, caves, sinkholes, springs, and losing streams.⁸ Groundwater in karst areas is highly susceptible to contamination from any pollutants that could travel with stormwater surface flow and into karst features.

According to mapping available through the Illinois DNR, ISGS, and NEMA websites, the Study Area does not pass through any major karst areas in Illinois or Nebraska. Although Iowa DNR mapping shows that the Study Area is not within major karst areas, it is on the southern edge of a potential karst region in the eastern portion of the state (Iowa DNR, 2012). A small portion of the potential karst areas are mapped in the Study Area in the northeast corner of Muscatine County and along the south side of the Muscatine/Cedar County line.

There is also a potential for water wells to be located adjacent to the existing railroad ROW. The locations of wells have not been determined for this Tier 1 analysis but would be investigated in the Tier 2 NEPA studies.

The Study Area contains 21 municipal or industrial waste water treatment facilities, in the form of large sewage treatment plants, sewage lagoons, or small liquid waste treatment facilities. These facilities are discussed as part of Section 3.10.

3.17.3 Impacts of No-Build Alternative

Under the No-Build Alternative, the Project would not be built, and permanent project related impacts on water quality would not occur beyond those that could occur due to other projects. The Chicago to Quad Cities Expansion Program would result in potential temporary impacts on water quality as a result of constructing new track embankment for the Wyanet Connection and implementing the Eola Yard improvements, and potential culvert or bridge replacements in other areas of the Project where water resources would be impacted. Specific impacts from this project on water quality would be determined as the Project progresses through its required Tier 2 NEPA documentation. There is also the potential for temporary construction impacts from future culvert or bridge replacements along the remainder of the rail route as a part of ongoing maintenance.

The current rail routes between Chicago and Omaha would continue to be used, resulting in continued potential minor impacts on water quality. Erosion and sedimentation from railroad grades to adjacent water resources, and potential pollutant runoff and spills from operation and maintenance activities could potentially reach adjacent water resources.

3.17.4 Impacts of Build Alternative

The Build Alternative would cross 24 of the 28 streams on the 303(d) List of Impaired Waters (water quality limited waters) within the Study Area. The remaining four streams would not be crossed or otherwise encroached upon, but are close enough to the Study Area to have the potential of receiving runoff from the Study Area.

⁸ A losing stream is a stream where flow is reduced as it moves downstream because it infiltrates into the ground, recharging groundwater.

The Build Alternative would also potentially affect the water quality of several other water resources described in Sections 3.15 and 3.16 as a result of soil erosion from stormwater runoff, fill material placed in water resources, and construction of bridges and culverts or culvert extensions. The avoidance or minimization of sediment or construction pollution would be accomplished in appropriate areas by the use of stormwater BMPs, and federal and state water quality requirements, as discussed below for potential mitigation measures.

Construction activities of the Build Alternative have the potential to temporarily affect water quality as a result of soil erosion and potential construction pollutant loading of stormwater runoff. BMPs would be used during construction to control water pollution through the use of temporary measures as discussed below for potential mitigation measures.

The potential for the Build Alternative to adversely affect groundwater is minimal, since there are no major karst areas within the Potential Impact Area. The Build Alternative is located at the southern edge of a “potential” karst area, which would be investigated further in the Tier 2 NEPA documents, in coordination with Iowa DNR. BMPs would be used to divert any stormwater or pollution runoff from entering karst features, if present in the Study Area.

The Build Alternative has the potential to affect groundwater in areas with groundwater wells. Although the exact locations of groundwater wells have not been determined as part of the Tier 1 analysis, wells would be investigated in the Tier 2 NEPA documents, and/or during preliminary design, when more specific locations and impacts can be determined.

3.17.5 Potential Mitigation Measures

The potential of the Build Alternative to adversely affect water quality during construction activities could be mitigated by the development and implementation of Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plans (SWPPPs) and the use of temporary and permanent stormwater BMPs to avoid or minimize sediment pollution and water quality impacts by reducing stormwater runoff from the site. In addition, disturbance to stream banks and riparian zones could be minimized and limited to only that which is necessary to construct the Build Alternative.

Specific mitigation measures, to the extent required, would be identified and discussed during Tier 2 analysis after design details are known. The Tier 2 NEPA documents would further address mitigation measures and control of pollutants and sediments in regard to the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permitting, SWPPPs, and BMPs. In addition, each state’s required Section 401 Water Quality Certifications would be addressed.

The Tier 2 NEPA documents would also address the need for mitigation of impacts on mapped or unmapped water wells, including proper abandonment of the wells (such as plugging and sealing) to prevent groundwater pollution from construction and from future operations and maintenance. Specific mitigation measures would be implemented prior to construction.

3.18 FLOODPLAINS

This resource includes areas of 100-year floodplain (areas with a one percent annual chance of flooding) as defined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in accordance with 44 CFR 59.1.

3.18.1 Methodology and Regulatory Requirements

The regulatory framework pertaining to floodplains is EO 11988, Floodplain Management (42 FR 26951), which affords avoidance and minimization considerations to floodplains. As stated in this policy, federal agencies are required "... to avoid, to the extent possible, the long- and short-term adverse impacts associated with the occupancy and modification of floodplains, and to avoid direct and indirect support of floodplain development wherever there is a practicable alternative". In addition, the State Emergency Management Agencies (SEMAs) have floodplain management programs.

Digital 100-year floodplain data (Zone A and Zone AE), based on FEMA's Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) of Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHAs), were compiled from the FEMA website. SFHAs (or 100-year floodplains) are the areas subject to flooding by the one percent annual chance flood. SFHA Zone A is designated as having no base flood elevations determined, whereas in SFHA Zone AE, base flood elevations have been determined. Where floodplain data for some counties were not available in digital format, the FIRMs were used to digitize the 100-year floodplain within the Study Area. However, there are some streams in three counties in Iowa, for which FEMA floodplain mapping was not available in the Study Area, including Mud Creek in the southeast corner of Cedar County, Little Bear Creek and Big Bear Creek throughout Poweshiek County, and Turkey Creek in the northwest corner of Adair County.

EO 11988, Floodplain Management, requires federal agencies to avoid adverse impacts on floodplains, to the extent possible, and to avoid situations that would support floodplain development if a practicable alternative exists (42 FR 26951). Potential avoidance and minimization of impacts on 100-year floodplains would be further evaluated in the Tier 2 NEPA documents. Coordination with the SEMAs, which have Floodplain Management Programs, the DNRs of each state, and local floodplain administrators would be initiated for any proposed encroachments in a 100-year floodplain area, and to discuss floodplain development permitting and potential mitigation measures.

3.18.2 Affected Environment

Most of the major perennial waterways within the Study Area have 100-year floodplains mapped by FEMA, in addition to some of the other smaller waterways within the Study Area. When railroad lines were first built in the Midwest, they were located along valley floodplains of rivers and creeks, wherever possible, to take advantage of the level and nearly level terrain, to minimize cut and fill construction operations. As such, the Study Area runs parallel to several waterways and their adjoining floodplains throughout the Study Area, in addition to crossing several floodplains at a perpendicular or skewed angle. Appendix B, Figures 1 through 162, show the floodplains near or within the Study Area.

Major flooding in the Study Area in the past quarter century has occurred in 1993, 2008, and 2011, resulting in some railroad lines being under water or washed out in some places, causing delays and closures. During the 1993 flood, IAIS reported that trains were moving at only 10 mph throughout much of the Corridor because of saturated ground (Haefner et al., May 1996). During the 2008 flood, the IAIS Railroad operations were out of service for approximately 10 days because of flooding in Des Moines and a washout between Omaha and Des Moines. A train near Davenport wrecked when it hit a washout, and the IAIS tracks between Davenport and Iowa City were closed for 13 days (Changnon, July 2009). Near Atalissa, Iowa (Muscatine County), severe damage occurred to about a mile of track that was washed out (Iowa DOT, August 2008). However, the Missouri River flooding of 2011 resulted in the IAIS line becoming busier, as other railroad companies used the IAIS tracks as a detour route for their damaged tracks (Grizel, 2011).

3.18.3 Impacts of No-Build Alternative

Under the No-Build Alternative, the Project would not be built, and impacts on floodplains are not anticipated beyond those that could occur due to other projects. The Chicago to Quad Cities Expansion Program would contribute to minimal impacts to floodplain areas. With the No-Build Alternative, there would be direct impacts on the 100-year floodplain of a perennial stream (Pond Creek) as a result of constructing new track embankment for the Wyanet Connection and on the 100-year floodplain of Indian Creek for the Eola Yard improvements. Potential culvert replacements/extensions and bridge replacements/additions would cause additional minor floodplain impacts. Specific quantitative impacts on floodplains from the Chicago to Quad Cities Expansion Program would be determined as the project progresses through its required Tier 2 NEPA documentation. There is also the potential for temporary construction impacts from possible culvert or bridge replacements along the remainder of the rail route, as a part of ongoing maintenance.

3.18.4 Impacts of Build Alternative

Since some stretches of the existing railroad were originally built along and across the floodplains of several waterways, floodplain impacts from the Build Alternative would be unavoidable. The Build Alternative would cross and permanently encroach on several 100-year floodplain areas as a result of adding track and siding, bridge additions or replacements, and culvert replacements or extensions. Approximately 1,657 acres of 100-year floodplains are within the Potential Impact Area of the Build Alternative as shown in Table 3.18-1.

Table 3.18-1. 100-Year Floodplain Impacts

State	100-Year Floodplain (Acres)
Illinois	369
Iowa	1,273
Nebraska	15
Total	1,657

3.18.5 Potential Mitigation Measures

Impacts on the 100-year floodplains and regulatory floodways would be assessed during Tier 2 analysis, and would include a discussion of the no-rise requirement in regulatory floodway areas. In accordance with EO 11988 (42 FR 26951), these discussions would also include avoidance and minimization measures, potential impacts on the natural and beneficial floodplain values, significant changes in flooding risks or damage, and the potential for incompatible floodplain development. Coordination with the SEMAs, the DNRs of each state, and local floodplain administrators would be initiated to discuss floodplain development permitting and potential mitigation measures. Specific mitigation measures, to the extent required, would be identified and discussed during Tier 2 analysis after design details are known, recorded in NEPA documents as specific impacts are identified, and implemented prior to construction.

3.19 TOPOGRAPHY, GEOLOGY, AND SOILS

This resource includes the general topographic, geologic, and general soil conditions within the Study Area, as well as caves and mines.

3.19.1 Methodology and Regulatory Requirements

Applicable national and state regulatory framework related to geology, such as the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977, will be listed and addressed as they relate to the Project.

The general topographic information was compiled through review of online maps from the websites of the ISGS, the Iowa Geological and Water Survey (IGWS), and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln School of Natural Resources. Information regarding the general geologic conditions, caves, sinkholes, and mining for each state was compiled from the websites of the ISGS, the IGWS, the NEMA, and the Nebraska Conservation and Survey Division (NCSD) within the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. The soils data were obtained from the NRCS and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln School of Natural Resources.

3.19.2 Affected Environment

Appendix B, Figures 1 through 162 show an aerial view of the Study Area. Although two-dimensional, topography, geology, and soils can be inferred through observing water bodies and areas with surface relief near or within the Study Area, as well as using known databases such as GIS and aerial photography.

3.19.2.1 Topography

The topography of the Study Area within Illinois is dominated by the Till Plains physiographic section, characterized by flat to gently sloping plains interspersed with areas of gently rolling hills. There are two exceptions at the east end of the Study Area with Chicago's urban area in the mostly level Chicago Lake Plain physiographic region, and Chicago's suburban area located in the Wheaton Morainal Country physiographic region characterized by rolling hills and broad ridges of deposited glacial material (ISGS, July 1, 2004).

The topography of the Study Area within Iowa is dominated by the Southern Iowa Drift Plain landform region extending over most of the southern half of the state. This landform is characterized by plains and gently to steeply rolling hills and valleys. The only contrasts occur near each end of the state in the nearly level river floodplain areas of the Mississippi and Missouri River Alluvial Plains, and at the west end of the state where the thick deposits of wind-blown silt make up the Loess Hills landform. Over the years, erosion has resulted in a landscape of peaked hills, steep side slopes, narrow ridge crests, and sometimes vertical bluffs of tan-colored exposed silt, resulting in the Loess Hills in the Council Bluffs area (Iowa DNR, 2012b). Across the Missouri River in Nebraska, the general topography of the Omaha area changes back to a rolling hills landform.

3.19.2.2 Geology

According to ISGS (Kolata, 2005) and Iowa DNR's Geological & Water Survey, (Iowa DNR, 1998 and 2004), the general underlying bedrock geology within the Study Area is predominantly sedimentary rock consisting of limestone, dolomite, sandstone, and shale.

In the Study Area, the bedrock of the Silurian Age occurs in eastern Illinois; the Ordovician Age occurs in central Illinois; and the Pennsylvanian Age occurs in western Illinois. The Iowa bedrock geologic maps and stratigraphic column indicate that the bedrock geology within the Study Area is of the Silurian and Devonian Ages in eastern Iowa, the Mississippian Age near central Iowa, and a narrow portion of Cretaceous Age bedrock within the Pennsylvanian Age region in western Iowa. In western Nebraska in the Omaha area, the bedrock is mostly limestone and shale of the Late Pennsylvanian Age (Miller, 1922).

Karst topography is characterized by caves, sinkholes, and open fractures. Geologic maps indicate that there is no bedrock at or near the surface within or near the Study Area in Illinois, and none of the karst regions of Illinois that contain caves and sinkholes are in or near the Study Area (ISGS, April 16, 2010) nor are there karst areas in the Study Area in Nebraska (NEMA, 2011).

A review of cave mapping (National Speleological Society, 2009), and karst and sinkhole mapping (Iowa DNR, 2012a), indicated that most of Iowa's major karst regions that include caves and sinkholes are located outside of the Study Area to the north. However, Iowa DNR mapping shows that the Study Area is on the southern edge of a potential karst region in the eastern portion of the state. A small portion of the potential karst areas are mapped in the Study Area in the northeast corner of Muscatine County and along the south side of the Muscatine/Cedar County line, between Wilton and West Liberty.

3.19.2.3 Underground Mining

Coal has been the major resource extracted by underground mining in a relatively small portion of the Study Area. The potential hazard of underground mining is subsidence, in which the land above the mined area sinks because of the collapse of the mine roof below. Coal mining maps for Iowa (GeoCommons, 2003) indicated that eight mining entrance points are located within the Study Area in Des Moines, which had a large underground mining industry up until the mid 1900s. However, more detailed research would be conducted in the Tier 2 NEPA process to confirm the presence or absence of underground mines in the Study Area.

3.19.2.4 Soils

The majority of general soil associations (or groups) within the Study Area are divided into regions and are similar across each state, in that most were formed in loess (wind-blown soil deposits). A map of the soil regions in Illinois (NRCS, 2012b) indicates that the soils within the Study Area are dominated by silt loam and silty clay loam soils; with the exception of the Chicago urban area which also contains loam and fine sand. The alluvium (stream-deposited) soils of the Mississippi River floodplain are also silt loam and silty clay loam.

A map of the soil regions in Iowa (NRCS, 2012a) indicates that the majority of the soils in the Study Area are dominated by silt loam, silty clay loam, and clay loam soils, with the exception of the silty clay alluvium soil of the Missouri River floodplain. The soils within the Study Area in Omaha consist of the silty clay, silt loam, and loamy fine sand soils in the Missouri River floodplain and the silt loam and silty clay loam soils in the remainder of the Omaha area (University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 1998).

According to the NRCS, soils that are considered hydric are those soils that are sufficiently wet in the upper part to develop anaerobic conditions during the growing season. For the most part, hydric soils are formed under saturated conditions and are present in the wetland areas throughout the Study Area, indicating poor drainage or seasonal high water tables.

3.19.3 Impacts of No-Build Alternative

Under the No-Build Alternative, the Project would not be built, and impacts on topography, geology, and soil conditions would not occur beyond those that could occur due to other projects. The Chicago to Quad Cities Expansion Program would contribute to minimal impacts to topography, geology, and soils. It is anticipated that there would be no impacts from topography, geology, or soils having characteristics that would adversely affect the construction of new embankment for the Wyonet Connection, Eola Yard improvements, potential culvert extensions/replacements, or bridge replacements.

3.19.4 Impacts of Build Alternative

In areas where additional ROW is required for construction of the Build Alternative, grading operations would be necessary through the flat to gentle slopes and through the gently to steeply rolling hills and valleys of the Study Area. The rolling topography of the Loess Hills landform region would be encountered in the area just east of Council Bluffs, Iowa. The Build Alternative would have linear impacts on the Loess Hills landform area as a result of adding track and siding in the northeast portion of Council Bluffs, Iowa, and it is anticipated that the linear impacts would be minimal. An additional area of impact in the Loess Hills would result from a potential new station location just southeast of the intersection of I-80 and Highway 6, in the northeast corner of Council Bluffs (Figures 156 and 157). A new station facility in this area would result in impacts to this resource by removing the natural landform on this property, and replacing it with a building and parking facilities. These topographic conditions are not expected to pose an adverse challenge because the site is adjacent to an existing railroad grade and minimal cut and fill would be required. However, one of Iowa DOT's special provisions for construction states that land disturbance within the Loess Hills region for the use of borrow material should be avoided or minimized unless there is no practicable alternative (Iowa DOT, November 16, 2010).

Although the Build Alternative would impact a potential karst area near the east end of the Iowa portion of the proposed Project, it is at the edge of this potential karst area and is a relatively small portion of the entire Study Area. Bedrock encountered in the Potential Impact Area would increase construction costs, but would not be an insurmountable challenge for the project. The Build Alternative would not impact the underground mining entrances located in the Des Moines, Iowa area, however, the potential for karst terrain and mining subsidence are considerations that would be investigated further in the Tier 2 NEPA process.

The grading operations of the Build Alternative would impact various soil types in the Potential Impact Area, most of which are silt loams and silty clay loams, which would not pose adverse construction challenges. Although the silty clay soils of the Missouri River floodplain have a high shrink-swell potential, and hydric soils in wetland areas would require proper drainage prior to construction, these conditions are not anticipated to be adverse challenges to building additional railroad facilities. Because the soils of the Loess Hills area are highly prone to erosion in cut areas, considerations for proper slope and erosion control measures would be necessary in the design stage. During the design process, specific soil types within the project construction area will be determined, as well as the engineering limitations of those soils in relation to new siding placement and the design of new facilities at station locations.

Topographic, geologic, and soil conditions would be taken into further consideration as the Project progresses into the Tier 2 analyses and particularly into design.

3.19.5 Potential Mitigation Measures

No requirements for mitigation related to topographic, geologic, and soil conditions are anticipated, with the exception of impacts on the Loess Hills area. According to Iowa DOT, areas in the Loess Hills with native vegetation should be given priority for avoidance and minimization. Cultivated land and previously disturbed land can receive less consideration. If borrow sites or land disturbance within the Loess Hills area are unavoidable, coordination should take place with Iowa DNR regarding possible mitigation measures. Specific mitigation measures, to the extent required, would be identified and discussed during Tier 2 analysis after design details are known, recorded in NEPA documents as specific impacts are identified, and implemented.

3.20 NATURAL HABITATS AND WILDLIFE

This resource includes various types of natural terrestrial habitats and the wildlife that uses these habitats. Natural areas may be lands designated by Congress or federal or state agencies as wildlife refuges, waterfowl production areas, wildlife management areas, nature preserves, high quality natural communities, natural areas, and wildlife sanctuaries. On the state level, natural areas are public lands managed by Illinois DNR, Iowa DNR, or the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission (NGPC).

3.20.1 Methodology and Regulatory Requirements

The regulatory framework pertaining to natural habitats and wildlife include the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act of 1934 (as amended) (FWCA), the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 (as amended) (MBTA), the Pittman-Robertson Act of 1937 (PRA), the Wilderness Act

of 1964 (WA), and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act of 1940 (as amended) (BGEPA). In addition, each state has regulations pertaining to wildlife and habitat, such as the Illinois Wildlife Code (520 ILCS 5/), the Illinois Endangered Species Protection Act (520 ILCS 10/11(b)), Illinois Natural Areas Preservation Act (525 ILCS 30/17), and administrative rules promulgated thereunder (17 Illinois Administrative Code Part 1075), the Iowa Code (Chapter 481A Wildlife Conservation), and Title 163 (NGPC) of the Nebraska Administrative Code (Chapter 4 Wildlife Regulations). Natural habitats and wildlife are also protected under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973, which is discussed in Section 3.21.

The MBTA and the BGEPA were implemented to offer protection to avian species. The MBTA makes it unlawful to pursue, hunt, take, capture, kill, or sell migratory birds; and the BGEPA prohibits anyone from taking bald or golden eagles, including their parts, nests, or eggs, without a permit issued by the Secretary of the Interior. Among other actions, “take” includes disturbance of eagles to the degree that it substantially interferes with breeding, feeding, or sheltering behavior, or results in injury, death, or nest abandonment. In addition to protection from direct harm, the BGEPA also prohibits activities that disrupt eagles at nests, foraging areas, and important roosts because loss of these areas can disturb or kill eagles.

During the scoping process for this Study, letters were sent to Illinois DNR, Iowa DNR, and NGPC to invite the agencies to provide input and data relating to high-quality natural communities, managed natural areas, and general wildlife habitat types and locations. During the scoping process, Illinois DNR offered to perform an EcoCAT⁹ review within two miles on each side of the centerline of the Study Area and provided GIS Natural Heritage Database information regarding natural areas, including high quality natural communities, Illinois Natural Areas Inventory (INAI) sites, and land enrolled in Illinois Nature Preserves Commission (INPC) land protection programs (Nature Preserves and Land and Water Reserves). Iowa DOT provided GIS database information gathered from Iowa DNR, including natural areas, wildlife management areas, and past and present forest stand areas. The NGPC Nebraska Heritage Program website (NGPC, 2012) was reviewed and it was determined that there are no listed natural areas within the Study Area in Nebraska. General wildlife information on the websites of Illinois DNR, Iowa DNR, and NGPC was also obtained. The websites of the Illinois Forest Preserve Districts by county were used to obtain forest preserve locations. Information regarding the location of national wildlife refuges was obtained from the USFWS.

3.20.2 Affected Environment

Over the years, intensive agriculture and development have fragmented and reduced the amount of woodland and prairie habitat available for wildlife, and have decreased the quality of the wildlife habitat areas that remain. Each state has developed a proactive wildlife action plan (comprehensive wildlife action strategy) to assess the health of wildlife and to determine

⁹ EcoCAT is the Ecological Compliance Assessment Tool of Illinois DNR, developed to help state agencies and units of local government comply with threatened and endangered species requirements. The system uses databases, GIS, and a set of programmed decisions to help identify the presence of and potential impact on threatened and endangered species.

strategies to conserve the numerous wildlife species of each state, including a full array of wildlife as well as those in greatest need of conservation, and their associated habitats (Illinois DNR, July 11, 2005; Iowa DNR, 2012; NGPC, August 2005). These habitats provide food and shelter for over a thousand species in each state, including mammals, birds, fish, reptiles, amphibians, mussels, and snails, as well as several thousand insect species. Although not an all inclusive list, some of the most common wildlife species (excluding insects) that can be seen inhabiting the region surrounded by the Study Area generally include the following:

- Mammals – opossum, raccoon, cottontail rabbit, red fox, gray squirrel, white-tailed deer
- Birds – cardinal, blue jay, purple martin, robin, wild turkey, ruffed grouse, quail, mallard duck, Canada goose
- Reptiles – eastern garter snake, bull snake, ornate box turtle
- Amphibians – spotted salamander, northern leopard frog
- Fish – green sunfish, smallmouth bass, channel catfish, flathead catfish
- Invertebrates – giant floater mussel, common mucket, garden snail

Each state has compiled lists of specific natural areas or natural communities that provide habitat for the region’s wildlife population, which are shown in Appendix M, Table 1 and displayed on Appendix B, Figures 1 through 162. Appendix M, Table 1 also indicates the type of habitat that is characteristic within the Study Area, including: woodlands (upland and riparian), savanna, prairies/grassland, shrubland, and aquatic habitat. Illinois DNR has compiled a list of INAI sites, which are categorized as follows:

- Category I – High quality natural community and natural community restorations
- Category II – Specific suitable habitat for state-listed species or state-listed species relocations
- Category III – State dedicated Nature Preserves, Land and Water Preserves, and Natural Heritage Landmarks
- Category IV – Outstanding geological features
- Category V – Unusual concentrations of flora or fauna and high quality streams

The INPC’s land protection program consists of a list of Nature Preserves, Land and Water Reserves, and Natural Heritage Landmarks. Appendix M, Table 1 lists one INPC site, in addition to INAI Category I, II, and III areas located within the Study Area in Illinois. There are also forest preserves within the Study Area in Illinois, which are under the jurisdiction of the forest districts of Cook, DuPage, and DeKalb counties.

Iowa DNR has compiled a list of nature preserves throughout the state, but none are within or adjacent to the Study Area. However, a review of Iowa DNR data provided by Iowa DOT indicated that remnant prairies on public lands, wildlife management areas, and other natural areas exist within the Study Area in Iowa. Although there are no designated “state forests” located within the Study Area in Iowa, certain past and present forest stand areas (originally described by district foresters in forest stewardship and project plans), which are currently managed, protected, or under development by Iowa DNR; also occur within the Study Area.

The largest natural habitat in the Study Area is the USFWS Port Louisa National Wildlife Refuge, which occurs along the wide Iowa River floodplain in Iowa County, Iowa near Marengo (Appendix B, Figures 82 through 85). The Refuge is approximately two miles in width and 42 miles in length, extending through Iowa County and into Tama County to the northwest. Approximately 10.5 miles of the Refuge property travels through the Study Area, and although most of the Refuge is on the north side of the railroad ROW, a relatively small portion is also on the south side. It is managed by Iowa DNR and is comprised of several thousand acres of wildlife habitat that includes riparian woodland, savanna (mix of grassland with scattered trees), and grassland.

The Study Area in Nebraska contains no listed natural areas, with the exception of the Missouri River.

In addition to the Mississippi and Missouri rivers listed in Appendix M, Table 1, the aquatic resources within the Study Area that provide natural habitat for fish, invertebrates (such as mussels), and amphibian species include the numerous streams, wetlands, lakes, and ponds that are discussed in Sections 3.15 and 3.16. Several of the natural areas listed in Appendix M, Table 1 also have streams running through the properties.

The east-west trending Study Area is located in the north-south trending bird migration route through Illinois, Iowa, and the Missouri River corridor known as the Mississippi Flyway, which is used yearly by land birds, shore birds, and water fowl. According to information from Illinois DNR, the Mississippi River riparian corridor in the Study Area is suitable habitat for bald eagles, which were observed in the area in 2004 and 2009. The potential for occurrences of migratory bird nesting, foraging, or roosting areas would be studied further in the Tier 2 NEPA documents.

3.20.3 Impacts of No-Build Alternative

Under the No-Build Alternative, the Project would not be built, and impacts to natural habitats and wildlife would not occur beyond those that could occur due to other projects. The Chicago to Quad Cities Expansion Program would result in potential minor impacts to terrestrial as well as aquatic habitats and wildlife as a result of constructing new track embankment for the Wyandot Connection, in addition to potential culvert replacements/extensions and minor bridge replacements/additions. The Eola Yard improvements may also result in minor impacts on aquatic habitats. Field reviews will be conducted as the Chicago to Quad Cities Expansion Program progresses through the Tier 2 NEPA process to determine the presence or absence of wildlife or their habitats. To improve site distance at crossings for vehicle and train traffic, tree and brush clearing is expected to occur, which could impact natural habitats that may be present in the impact area. Specific clearing and impact areas will be identified during the Chicago to Quad Cities Tier 2 NEPA analysis as more specific project limits are identified.

The wildlife species that may be present in the region of the Study Area have been continually exposed to train traffic in varying degrees. The potential for train/animal collisions and the effects of noise and vibration on migratory birds and other wildlife, which can vary considerably among species, will be further analyzed during Tier 2 NEPA analysis in coordination with USFWS and state resource agencies.

The current rail routes between Chicago and Omaha would continue to be used. Existing environmental impacts such as erosion and sedimentation from railroad grades to adjacent water resources, and potential pollutant runoff and spills from operational and maintenance activities would continue to affect any natural habitat and wildlife species that may be present adjacent to the rail corridor. There is also the potential for temporary construction impacts from future culvert or bridge replacements along the remainder of the rail route, as a part of ongoing maintenance.

3.20.4 Impacts of Build Alternative

The construction activities of the Build Alternative—including tree and brush clearing, placement of fill material for additional track and sidings, stream relocations, culvert replacement or extensions, and bridge replacement or additions—could have the potential to impact terrestrial and aquatic natural habitats of wildlife species present in the Study Area. Tree and brush clearing would be necessary to construct additional track and embankment, and to improve site distance at crossings for vehicle and train traffic. This clearing would impact natural habitats and may consequently impact the wildlife species that inhabit those areas.

Adjacent natural communities were historically fragmented by construction of the existing railroad alignment. Since the proposed widening activities about the existing ROW, impacts from the Build Alternative would be relatively minimal and linear, and would not further fragment remaining large parcels of natural habitat areas.

Embankment placed in wetlands, lakes, and ponds; stream relocations; culvert replacement or extensions; and bridge replacement or additions would directly impact aquatic species habitats. In addition, temporary disruptions of aquatic species movement and hydrological flow could occur, thereby affecting in-stream habitats both upstream and downstream of the Build Alternative.

Appendix M, Table 2 lists the natural areas that would be directly impacted by construction of the Build Alternative within the Potential Impact Area. It is estimated that approximately 178 acres of natural terrestrial habitat areas would be directly impacted, in addition to 104,150 linear feet of stream habitat, 238 acres of wetland habitat, 32 acres of lakes, and 33 acres of ponds (Table 3.20-1).

Table 3.20-1. Natural Habitat Area Impacts

Habitat Type	Illinois	Iowa	Nebraska	Total
Terrestrial (in Acres)				
Upland Woods	7	17	0	24
Riparian Woodland	0	8	0	8
Savanna/Upland Woods/Grassland Mix	0	19	0	19
Savanna/Riparian Woods/Grassland Mix	0	111 ^a	0	111
Riparian Shrubland	0	1	0	1
Prairie/Grassland	0	11	0	11
Prairie (High Quality Natural Community)	4	0	0	4
Riverine (Bridged)	0	0	0	0
Total				178
Aquatic				
Streams (Linear Feet)	34,240	69,595	315	104,150
Wetlands (Acres)	31	193	14	238
Lakes (Acres)	5	27	0	32
Ponds (Acres)	4	27	2	33

Note:

^a The USFWS Port Louisa National Wildlife Refuge accounts for +/- 109 acres.

The majority of natural habitat impacts would occur at the USFWS Port Louisa National Wildlife Refuge property since it abuts both sides of the rail corridor for 10.5 miles. Impacts to the Refuge property would most likely be unavoidable. Minimization of impacts would be analyzed in the Tier 2 NEPA process when more specific project limits can be identified through engineering refinements.

Some natural areas within the Study Area that are not directly within the Potential Impact Area could be affected by other aspects of the Build Alternative, as described below.

The wildlife species that are present along the rail corridor have been continually exposed to train traffic in varying degrees. However, improvements of the Build Alternative—including new CWR track, and new trains and equipment having less overall weight than freight trains—would result in less noise and vibration than the existing train noise and vibration that the resident and migratory species have been experiencing. It is therefore anticipated that impacts from noise and vibration would be negligible. During Tier 2 NEPA analysis, coordination with USFWS and state resource agencies would take place to identify potentially affected migratory birds and wildlife. More detailed investigations of the potential effects of noise and vibration on migratory birds and other wildlife, which can vary considerably among various species, would be performed for Tier 2 NEPA documents, when train speed, noise, and vibration can be more accurately calculated.

Although no online published data were readily available pertaining to numbers of train and wildlife collisions, those types of accidents can occur at any time and have a tendency to be most prevalent in the winter months, when wildlife can more easily move along the plowed railroad right-of-way (USFWS, October 12, 2004). The effect of the increase in the frequency of trips and speed of train traffic, in regard to the potential for train collisions with

mobile animal species and migratory birds, will be further analyzed in Tier 2 NEPA documents.

The increase in train traffic and railroad ROW could also increase the chances of impacts from erosion and sedimentation from railroad grades to adjacent aquatic habitat, and potential pollutant runoff and spills from operational and maintenance activities, which could affect natural habitats and the water quality of aquatic habitats that may be present adjacent to the rail corridor. However, permanent BMPs would provide measures to avoid or minimize those types of impacts. There is also the potential for temporary construction impacts from future culvert or bridge replacements along the remainder of the rail route, as a part of ongoing maintenance.

Land disturbance, wetland disturbance, tree and brush clearing, and culvert and bridge replacements could affect potential migratory bird and/or eagle nesting, foraging, or roosting areas that may be present in the Study Area. The Illinois DNR has identified the Mississippi River riparian corridor as suitable habitat for bald eagles, which have been previously documented in that portion of the Study Area. Also the NGPC has identified bald eagles in the Missouri River corridor. Specific locations requiring clearing or structure removal would be identified during the Tier 2 NEPA analysis when a more specific extent of project limits would be determined. At that time, coordination with the USFWS, Illinois DNR, Iowa DNR, and NGPC would take place to determine potential locations of migratory bird and/or eagle occupancy within the Study Area, in addition to determining seasonal nesting, roosting, and foraging requirements of potentially affected species. To comply with the MBTA and the BGEPA, restrictions may be placed on the timing of clearing and other construction disturbance activities, to help ensure avoidance or minimization of impacts.

3.20.5 Potential Mitigation Measures

Data specific to the study would be obtained through coordination with USFWS, Illinois DNR, Iowa DNR, and NGPC during the Tier 2 NEPA process. The existing information regarding migratory birds, and natural terrestrial and aquatic habitat would be used as background data for conducting field surveys to determine the existence of high quality natural communities and migratory bird habitat in the Study Area. During the Tier 2 process, avoidance and minimization of impacts would be assessed, and unavoidable impacts to natural habitats would be coordinated with USFWS and state resource agencies to determine compliance with regulatory requirements and potential mitigation measures to protect species and offset impacts, which could include restrictions on construction activities in specific areas during the breeding/nesting seasons.

The Tier 2 NEPA process would also include coordination with Iowa DNR regarding mitigation of woodland impacts according to Iowa Code 314.23, Environmental Protection, which requires woodland replacement by "... plantings as close as possible to the initial site, or by acquisition of an equal amount of woodland in the general vicinity for public ownership and preservation, or by other mitigation deemed to be comparable to the woodland removed, including, but not limited to, the improvement, development, or preservation of woodland under public ownership."

Specific mitigation measures, to the extent required, would be identified and discussed during Tier 2 analysis after design details are known, recorded in NEPA documents as specific impacts are identified, and implemented.

3.21 THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES

This evaluation includes threatened and endangered species listed by the USFWS and Designated Critical Habitats (DCHs), and consideration of state-listed threatened and endangered species.

3.21.1 Methodology and Regulatory Requirements

The regulatory framework pertaining to threatened and endangered species includes the ESA of 1973, administered by USFWS. In addition, state-listed species are regulated by the Illinois Endangered Species Protection Act (520 ILCS 10), administered by the Illinois DNR as advised by the Illinois Endangered Species Protection Board; the Iowa Endangered Plants and Wildlife Law (Chapter 481B of the Code of Iowa), administered by the Iowa Natural Resources Commission and Iowa DNR; and the Nebraska Nongame and Endangered Species Conservation Act (Neb. Rev. Stat. §§ 37-801-11), administered by the NGPC.

The ESA defines endangered species as those that are “in danger of extinction within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of [their] range,” and defines threatened species as “those animals and plants likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of their ranges” (16 USC 1531 et seq.). Vertebrate animal species and subspecies, invertebrate animal populations, and plant species and varieties (including fungi and lichens) are eligible for listing under the ESA.

The USFWS website provides information on federally listed threatened and endangered species and DCHs. The Illinois DNR, Iowa DNR, and NGPC websites also provide data relating to state-listed threatened and endangered species. In addition, the Illinois DNR offered to perform an ECOCAT review and provided GIS Natural Heritage Database information regarding general locations within 2 miles of the Study Area centerline of federally and state-listed threatened and endangered species, high quality natural communities, and INAI sites. The INAI sites included Category II – specific suitable habitat for state-listed species or state-listed species relocations.

3.21.2 Affected Environment

The compiled data for federally and state-listed threatened and endangered species were reviewed to describe the affected environment.

3.21.2.1 Federally Listed Threatened and Endangered Species

USFWS currently lists 16 threatened or endangered species that occur, or have the potential of occurring, in the specific counties of the Study Area, as shown in Table 3.21-1.

Table 3.21-1. Federally Listed Threatened and Endangered Species

Common Name	Scientific Name	Status	Counties	Designated Critical Habitat (DCH)	Habitat Description
Decurrent false aster	<i>Boltonia decurrens</i>	T	LaSalle & Bureau, IL	None	Disturbed alluvial soils
Leafy prairie clover	<i>Dalea foliosa</i>	E	Cook, DuPage, & LaSalle, IL	None	Prairie remnants on thin soil over limestone
Hine's emerald dragonfly	<i>Somatochlora hineana</i>	E	Cook & DuPage, IL	Calcareous (high in calcium carbonate) spring-fed marshes and sedge meadows overlaying dolomite bedrock, along and near the Des Plaines River in Cook and DuPage Counties, Illinois.	Spring-fed wetlands, wet meadows and marshes
Mead's milkweed	<i>Asclepias meadii</i>	T	Cook & DuPage, IL & Adair, IA	None	Virgin prairies
Spectaclecase mussel	<i>Cumberlandia monodonta</i>	E	Rock Island, IL & Scott & Muscatine, IA	None	Large Rivers (Mississippi River) in areas sheltered from the main force of the current
Higgins eye pearl mussel	<i>Lampsilis higginsii</i>	E	Rock Island, IL & Scott & Muscatine, IA	None	Mississippi River from Rock River to Steel Dam
Prairie bush clover	<i>Lespedeza leptostachya</i>	T	Cook & DuPage, IL & Scott, Muscatine, Cedar, Johnson, Iowa, Poweshiek, Jasper, Polk, Dallas, Madison, Guthrie, Adair, Cass & Pottawattamie, IA	None	Dry to mesic prairies with gravelly soil
Indiana bat	<i>Myotis sodalis</i>	E	Kendall, DeKalb, LaSalle, Bureau, Henry & Rock Island, IL & Scott, Muscatine, Cedar, Johnson, Iowa, Poweshiek, Jasper, Polk, Dallas, Madison, Guthrie, Adair, & Cass, IA	Blackball Mine, located in the Pecumsaugan Creek-Blackball Mines Nature Preserve in LaSalle County, Illinois.	Caves and mines (hibernacula); upland forests and small stream corridors with well developed riparian woods (foraging and roosting).
Eastern prairie fringed orchid	<i>Platanthera leucophaea</i>	T	Cook, DuPage, Kane, Kendall, DeKalb, LaSalle, Bureau, Henry & Rock Island, IL & Johnson, IA	None	Mesic to wet prairies

Common Name	Scientific Name	Status	Counties	Designated Critical Habitat (DCH)	Habitat Description
Sheepnose mussel	<i>Plethobasus cyphus</i>	E	Rock Island, IL & Scott & Muscatine, IA	None	Shallow areas in larger rivers and streams (Mississippi River and possibly Rock River)
Topeka shiner	<i>Notropis topeka</i>	E	Dallas, IA	The North Raccoon River and adjacent off-channel and side channel pools, Elm Branch, and Swan Lake Branch in Dallas County, Iowa.	Prairie streams and rivers
Piping plover	<i>Charadrius melodus</i>	E	Cook, IL & Pottawattamie, IA	None	Wide, flat, open sandy beaches with very little grass or other vegetation. (Missouri River) Nesting territories often include small creeks or wetlands.
		T	Douglas, NE	None	
Western prairie fringed orchid	<i>Platanthera praeclara</i>	T	Scott, Muscatine, Cedar, Johnson, Iowa, Poweshiek, Jasper, Polk, Dallas, Madison, Guthrie, Adair, Cass & Pottawattamie, IA & Douglas, NE	None	Wet prairies and sedge meadows
Pallid sturgeon	<i>Scaphirhynchus albus</i>	E	Pottawattamie, IA & Douglas, NE	None	Missouri River
Interior least tern	<i>Sterna antillarum</i>	E	Polk & Pottawattamie, IA & Douglas, NE	None	Bare alluvial and dredged spoil islands. Barren to sparsely vegetated sandbars along rivers, sand and gravel pits, or lake and reservoir shorelines
Whooping crane	<i>Grus americana</i>	E	Douglas, NE	None	(During migration) sparsely vegetated shallow water in wetlands, lakes, ponds, and riverine areas, away from human activity

Sources: Illinois – USFWS, March 2012a, *Illinois County Distribution, Federally Threatened, Endangered, and Candidate Species*, retrieved March 2012, <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/endangered/lists/illinois-cty.html>.

Iowa – USFWS, March 2012b, *Iowa County Distribution of Federally Threatened, Endangered, Proposed and Candidate Species*, retrieved March 2012, http://www.fws.gov/midwest/endangered/lists/iowa_cty.html.

Nebraska – USFWS, February 2012, *Endangered, Threatened, Proposed, and Candidate Species in Nebraska Counties*, retrieved March 2012, <http://www.fws.gov/nebraskaes/Library/NECounty2012.pdf>.

Notes: E = Endangered, T = Threatened

Although the species listed above have the potential to occur in various suitable habitats in the Study Area, their presence or absence has not been determined in this Tier 1 study. However, the natural habitats in the Study Area that are known to have the potential for suitable habitat for federally listed threatened or endangered species include the following:

- *Rock River* – Sheepsnose mussel (*Plethobasus cyphus*) (endangered) – Rock Island and Henry counties, Illinois
- *Mississippi River* – Higgins eye pearlymussel (*Lampsilis higginsii*) (endangered), Spectaclecase mussel (*Cumberlandia monodonta*) (endangered), sheepsnose mussel (endangered) – Rock Island County, Illinois, and Scott County, Iowa
- *North Raccoon River* – DCH for the Topeka shiner (*Notropis topeka*) (endangered) – Dallas County, Iowa
- *Missouri River* – Piping plover (*Charadrius melodus*) (endangered in Iowa, threatened in Nebraska), pallid sturgeon (*Scaphirhynchus albus*) (endangered) – Pottawattamie County, Iowa, and Douglas County, Nebraska

3.21.2.2 State Listed Threatened and Endangered Species

In addition to federally listed species, there are also threatened and endangered species listed by each state, that occur or have the potential of occurring in the specific counties of the Study Area, as shown in Appendix N Table 1 and the lists of species following Table 1. Potential habitat for state-listed species in Illinois counties in the Study Area ranges from a high of 69 endangered species and 43 threatened species in Cook County, to a low of five endangered species and five threatened species in DeKalb County. In Iowa, potential habitat ranges from a high of 35 endangered species and 34 threatened species in Muscatine County, to a low of zero endangered species and two threatened species in Cass County. Douglas County, Nebraska includes potential habitat for three endangered species and four threatened species.

In this Tier 1 analysis, occurrence locations of state-listed species were not available from Iowa DNR and NGPC. However, Illinois DNR provided Natural Heritage Database information, which indicated that the state-listed species are located within the Study Area, as shown in Table 3.21-2.

Table 3.21-2. Illinois State-Listed Threatened and Endangered Species in Study Area

Common Name	Scientific Name	Federal Status	State Status	County
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>		T	Cook
Blanding's Turtle	<i>Emydoidea blandingii</i>	-	E	Cook
Pretty Sedge	<i>Carex woodii</i>	-	T	Du Page
Shadbush	<i>Amelanchier interior</i>	-	T	Du Page
Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	-	E	Du Page
Yellow-headed Blackbird	<i>Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus</i>	-	E	Du Page, Bureau
Black-crowned Night-Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	-	E	Du Page
Greater Redhorse	<i>Moxostoma valenciennesi</i>	-	E	Kane
Earleaf False Foxglove	<i>Agalinis auriculata</i>	-	T	Henry
Black Sandshell	<i>Ligumia recta</i>		T	Rock Island
Higgins Eye Pearlymussel	<i>Lampsilis higginsii</i>	E	E	Rock Island

Source: Illinois DNR, 2012, Natural Heritage Database,
<http://dnr.state.il.us/conservation/naturalheritage/inhd.htm>.

Notes:

E = Endangered, T = Threatened,

The INAI lists the following three natural habitats within the Study Area, designated as Category II – specific suitable habitat for state-listed species or state-listed species relocations:

- *Maple Grove Forest Preserve* (INAI #0527) – contains habitat for the pretty sedge and shadbush, which is state-listed as threatened– Du Page County, Illinois
- *Eola Road Marsh* (INAI #1470) – contains habitat for the common moorhen, yellow-headed blackbird, black-crowned night heron, and blanding's turtle, which are state-listed as endangered – Du Page County, Illinois
- *Mississippi River, Moline* (INAI #1295) – contains habitat for the Higgins eye pearlymussel, which is federally and state-listed as endangered, and the black sandshell (mussel), which is state-listed as endangered – Rock Island County, Illinois

3.21.3 Impacts of No-Build Alternative

Under the No-Build Alternative, the Project would not be built, and impacts on federally or state-listed threatened or endangered species would not occur beyond those that could occur due to other projects. It is anticipated that the Chicago to Quad Cities Expansion Program would have no adverse effects on federally listed species, and may have potential minor impacts to state-listed species, if only temporary, as a result of constructing potential culvert replacements/extensions, bridge replacements/additions, and track and embankment improvements in the vicinity of state-listed species occurrences. New track embankment for the Wyonet Connection would most likely not affect any state-listed species. However, the Eola Yard improvements could potentially result in minor linear impacts to the Eola Road Marsh, which is suitable habitat for state-listed species. Field reviews would be conducted as the Chicago to Quad Cities Expansion Program progresses through the Tier 2 NEPA process to determine the presence or absence of threatened or endangered species, or their habitats.

Specific clearing and impact areas would be identified during Tier 2 analysis as more specific project limits are identified.

Although there is no DCH for federally listed species within the Chicago to Quad Cities study area, some state-listed species have been recorded. Those that may be present along the study area have been continually exposed to train traffic in varying degrees. The potential for train collisions and the potential effects of noise and vibration on threatened and endangered species will be further analyzed during the Tier 2 NEPA process in coordination with USFWS and state resource agencies.

3.21.4 Impacts of Build Alternative

3.21.4.1 Federally Listed Threatened and Endangered Species

The Build Alternative would have no direct impacts on the DCH of any federally listed threatened or endangered species based on current information from USFWS. As shown in Appendix B, Figure 122, the Corridor is located approximately 1,200 feet downstream of the Topeka Shiner (*Notropis topeka*) DCH, which occupies the North Raccoon River and terminates at the confluence of the North Raccoon, South Raccoon, and Raccoon rivers. The North Raccoon River is DCH for the Topeka shiner (*Notropis topeka*). Although the DCH is 1,200 feet from the Corridor, further analysis in Tier 2 NEPA studies would be necessary to verify the DCH location in coordination with USFWS.

The Build Alternative would cross the Rock River, Mississippi River, and the Missouri River, which are suitable habitat for the five federally listed species discussed previously within the existing affected environment. It is anticipated that no new bridge structures would be required over the Rock River and Mississippi Rivers, and therefore no direct or adverse impacts on those species would occur in these river corridors. However, it is possible that one or more new bridge structures could be needed across the Missouri River between Council Bluffs, Iowa, and Omaha, Nebraska. Consequently, consultation with the USFWS, Iowa DNR, and NGPC would be required during Tier 2 analysis to address potential impacts to threatened and endangered species in this portion of the alternative.

The presence of most of the habitat types that are suitable for the federally listed species in the Study Area would not be determined until Tier 2 analysis for the Project. However, it is likely that the upland and riparian woodland areas in the Iowa counties of the Study Area may potentially provide suitable foraging and roosting habitat for the endangered Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*), although there is no DCH for this species in the Study Area. The Build Alternative would result in impacts to wooded areas, as discussed in Section 3.20. However, impacts would be linear and minimal, rather than fragmenting large parcels of wooded areas, and would not contribute to further fragmentation since the proposed alternative would directly abut the existing ROW.

The construction activities of the Build Alternative, including tree and brush clearing, placement of fill material for additional track and siding, stream relocations, culvert replacement or extensions, and bridge replacement or additions, could have the potential to impact terrestrial and aquatic habitats of federally listed threatened or endangered species, if present.

The presence or absence of federally listed threatened and endangered species is not known at this time. However, field surveys and coordination with the USFWS and state resource agencies would take place during the Tier 2 studies, when more specific project limits would be identified, to determine the potential for threatened or endangered species in the Study Area, and the potential for avoidance or minimization of impacts on any species that may be present.

The discussion in Section 3.20.4 regarding potential effects of train collisions, and noise and vibration on wildlife also pertains to federally listed species that may be present in the Study Area. At this Tier 1 level of study, the specific locations of federally listed species are unknown. More detailed investigations would be performed during Tier 2 analysis, in coordination with USFWS, when field surveys identifying the presence or absence of federally listed species can be performed. The potential for impacts from erosion and sedimentation, pollutant runoff and spills, and temporary construction impacts would also be further analyzed in the Tier 2 NEPA documents.

Because there is a potential for federally listed threatened or endangered species occurrences in the Study Area, there is a need for Section 7 consultation with USFWS during Tier 2 analysis. The USFWS has participated in the Project scoping process and would continue to be consulted during the Tier 2 NEPA process, where construction-related effects and activities of the Build Alternative would be more definitively assessed to determine whether or not there would be an adverse effect on federally listed threatened or endangered species. Illinois DNR, Iowa DNR, and NGPC would also be involved in these future coordination efforts.

3.21.4.2 State-Listed Threatened and Endangered Species

The construction activities of the Build Alternative, including tree and brush clearing, placement of fill material for additional track and siding, stream relocations, culvert replacement or extensions, and bridge replacement or additions, could potentially impact state-listed threatened or endangered species. However, the presence or absence of these species along most of the Study Area is not known at the Tier 1 level of analysis, with the exception of the Study Area in Illinois, as discussed below and shown in Table 3.21-3. Field surveys and coordination with Illinois DNR, Iowa DNR, and NGPC would take place during the Tier 2 NEPA studies to determine the potential for the existence of state-listed threatened or endangered species in the Study Area, specific clearing and impact areas, and the potential for avoidance or minimization of impacts on any species that may be present.

The discussion in Section 3.21.4.1, above, regarding potential effects of train collisions, noise and vibration, erosion and sedimentation, pollutant runoff and spills, and temporary construction impacts on federally listed species also pertains to state-listed species that may be present in the Study Area, and would be further analyzed in the Tier 2 NEPA documents.

Illinois DNR, Iowa DNR, and NGPC have participated in the Project scoping process and would continue to be consulted in the Tier 2 NEPA process, when construction-related effects and activities of the Build Alternative can be more definitively assessed to determine whether or not there would be effects on state-listed threatened or endangered species.

An analysis of the state-listed species information provided by Illinois DNR indicated that the habitat for the state-listed threatened and endangered species listed in Table 3.21-3 may

be directly impacted by the Build Alternative. However, direct physical impacts on individual species would not be determined until Tier 2 analysis.

Table 3.21-3. Illinois State-Listed Threatened and Endangered Species Potential Impacts

Common Name	Scientific Name	Federal Status	State Status	County
Blanding's Turtle	<i>Emydoidea blandingii</i>	-	E	Cook
Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	-	E	Du Page
Yellow-headed Blackbird	<i>Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus</i>	-	E	Du Page, Bureau
Black-crowned Night-Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	-	E	Du Page
Earleaf False Foxglove	<i>Agalinis auriculata</i>	-	T	Henry
Black Sandshell	<i>Ligumia recta</i>	-	T	Rock Island
Higgins Eye Pearlymussel	<i>Lampsilis higginsii</i>	E	E	Rock Island

Source: Illinois DNR, 2012, Natural Heritage Database, <http://dnr.state.il.us/conservation/naturalheritage/inhd.htm>.

Notes:

E = Endangered, T = Threatened

In addition, the following two INAI Category II (specific suitable habitat for state-listed species or state-listed species relocations) natural habitats could be impacted by the Build Alternative:

- *Eola Road Marsh* (INAI #1470) – contains habitat for the common moorhen, yellow-headed blackbird, black-crowned night heron, and Blanding’s turtle, which are state-listed as endangered – Du Page County, Illinois. Impacts = 0.8 acre
- *Mississippi River, Moline* (INAI #1295) – contains habitat for the Higgins eye pearlymussel, which is federally and state-listed as endangered, and the black sandshell (mussel), which is state-listed as endangered – Rock Island County, Illinois. No impacts are anticipated with use of the existing bridge over the river.

The habitat of species shown in Table 3.21-3 are within the Potential Impact Area, and although some of the locations of state-listed species occurrences listed in Table 3.21-2 are located outside of the Potential Impact Area, they lie within the Study Area and may still be affected by noise, vibration, train collisions, or pollutants as described previously.

3.21.5 Potential Mitigation Measures

Section 7 consultation with USFWS will be conducted during the Tier 2 NEPA process to determine if a federally listed species or habitat is present. If it is determined that the Build Alternative could have the potential to affect a federally listed species, a biological assessment would be prepared to determine the Build Alternative’s potential effect on one or more species, pursuant to Section 7 of the ESA. If a potential impact to a federally listed species is identified, formal consultation is required with USFWS, and USFWS would prepare a biological opinion on whether the proposed activity would adversely affect (jeopardize the continued existence of) a listed species. Project modification for avoidance or

minimization of impacts, or mitigation measures for unavoidable adverse impacts would be determined as part of the formal consultation.

Potential impacts on state-listed threatened and endangered species would be coordinated with the Illinois DNR, Iowa DNR, and NGPC, as appropriate, during the Tier 2 NEPA documents, at which time these agencies would search database records specific to the Study Area. Database information regarding species locations and habitat requirements would be a basis for conducting field surveys to determine existence of state-listed species in the Study Area. During the Tier 2 NEPA process, avoidance or minimization of impacts would be assessed, and unavoidable impacts on state-listed species would be coordinated with the state agencies to determine potential mitigation measures.

Specific mitigation measures, to the extent required, would be identified and discussed during Tier 2 analysis after design details are known, recorded in NEPA documents as specific impacts are identified, and implemented prior to construction.

3.22 ENERGY USE AND CLIMATE CHANGE

This resource includes the use of fuel and the relative energy use for various modes of transportation. Climate change refers to the climate's possible relationship to changes in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

3.22.1 Methodology and Regulatory Requirements

This assessment evaluates potential commitments of energy resources likely to be involved in the Project and any potential energy conservation likely to reduce the use of petroleum or natural gas, consistent with the policy outlined in EO 12185, Conservation of Petroleum and Natural Gas (44 FR 75093). The current regulatory framework affecting greenhouse gases includes the Clean Air Act of 1970 (as amended) and CEQ's NEPA Guidance on Consideration of the Effects of Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Emissions.

Transportation model data were collected from Illinois DOT, Iowa DOT, and NDOR, as well as from regional MPOs and COGs, and are used in this analysis for passenger rail ridership forecast.

Relevant collected transportation data were reviewed, and a general discussion was prepared on the relative efficiencies of the various transportation modes used between Chicago and Omaha and intermediate points in relation to energy consumption and GHG emissions. A more detailed discussion of specific modes of transportation within the Study Area is provided in Section 3.1 and a more detailed discussion of emissions is provided in Section 3.9.

3.22.2 Affected Environment

All transportation modes, including new passenger rail service, require various forms of energy resources and each of these resources have different implications on energy use and climate change. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, typical passenger trains are 31 percent more energy efficient than automobiles, and 14 percent more energy efficient than planes based on average British Thermal Units (BTUs) per passenger mile, see Section 3.1 for more information. Therefore, diverted passenger trips from automobiles, buses, and trains to passenger rail can reduce energy consumption and reduce GHG emissions. GHG

emissions released into the atmosphere absorb¹⁰ and emit¹¹ radiation within the thermal infrared¹² range. Because part of this radiation is reflected back towards the lower atmosphere, it results in an elevation of the average surface temperature. This process is the fundamental cause of the greenhouse effect, which is the key contributor to climate change (Encyclopedia Britannica Online, 2012). Carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions, especially those produced by automobiles, are key contributors to GHG emissions.

3.22.3 Impacts of No-Build Alternative

Under the No-Build Alternative, the Project would not be built, and impacts on energy use and climate change would not occur beyond those that could occur due to other projects. Under the No-Build Alternative, passenger train service would not be as readily available to the public west of Moline, resulting in the continued reliance of automobiles, buses, and planes for transportation for this portion of the Study Area. With the continued trend in substantial increases in VMT within the Study Area, energy consumption and GHG emissions would likely continue to steadily increase under the No-Build Alternative. The Chicago to Quad Cities service would slightly reduce the rate of increase.

3.22.4 Impacts of Build Alternative

The Build Alternative would provide expanded passenger rail service between Chicago and Omaha. With speeds up to a maximum of 110 mph, seven round-trips per day, with standard-stop service to major and minor destinations in the Study Area, the Build Alternative would provide a competitive transportation alternative compared to automobiles, planes, and buses. For example, as noted in Section 3.1, an automobile trip from Chicago to Omaha is approximately 8 hours compared to approximately less than 7 hours for rail service. Energy would be consumed during construction of the Build Alternative, but benefits to future energy expenditures for transportation and reduced potential for GHG emissions would be realized. Based on a preliminary passenger rail forecast, the Build Alternative would provide a net reduction on energy consumption and GHG emissions through diverted trips from automobiles, buses, and trains to new passenger rail service.

This reduction on energy consumption is quantified through a number of factors including reduction in GHG emissions and fuel consumption from automobiles and planes. These factors were derived from modal passenger mile diversions from a rail ridership model developed for the Build Alternative and analysis of energy efficiency by mode.

Implementation of the Build Alternative has the potential to provide energy savings and would reduce the transportation system's impact on climate change. Based on the modal diversions in ridership forecasts, the Build Alternative would decrease automobile traffic by approximately 646.3 million passenger-miles per year and would reduce bus travel by approximately 153.6 million passenger-miles per year. CO₂, the main GHG emission, would

¹⁰ Absorption – The way in which the energy of a photon is taken up by matter, typically the electrons of an atom. (Physics - electromagnetic radiation).

¹¹ Emit – the emission spectrum an element or compound is the spectrum of frequencies of electromagnetic radiation emitted by the element's atoms or the compound's molecules.

¹² Thermal infrared – also known as long-wave infrared, is referring to the light with wavelength 8 – 15 Micrometers.

decrease by approximately 23,513 tons per year. Although new passenger trains would consume approximately 17.1 million gallons of fuel per year, automobile fuel consumption would decrease by approximately 17.8 million gallons per year. Emission calculations and fuel consumption information can be found in Appendix F.

3.22.5 Potential Mitigation Measures

Mitigation may not be required for energy and climate change due to the positive impact and the diverted trips from other modes lowering the overall amount of CO₂ emissions along the Study Area.

3.23 CONSTRUCTION IMPACTS

This environmental consideration includes a discussion of potential impacts from construction equipment and personnel, as well as impacts on the public during construction.

3.23.1 Methodology and Regulatory Requirements

The regulatory framework pertaining to the consideration of construction impacts on the environment is NEPA (42 USC 4321-4347).

Coordination took place with FRA, and data collection included a review of published FRA data regarding construction impacts pertaining to waste disposal, water quality, air, noise, vibration, access, and traffic and safety. The collected data and information were reviewed and descriptions prepared for the following considerations for impacts associated with construction activities:

- Waste Disposal – solid and hazardous
- Water Quality – erosion and sediment; fuel and lubricant spills
- Air Quality – equipment emissions and fugitive dust
- Noise – heavy construction equipment
- Vibration – potential drilling and blasting
- Access – access to facilities, services/businesses, and parking; pedestrian and rail access
- Traffic and Safety – traffic management; detours; public safety measures

3.23.2 Affected Environment

Section 3.23.1 lists considerations for impacts attributed to typical construction activities associated with the proposed main line rail and associated improvements including intersection and signal upgrades, stations and maintenance facilities. Specific construction activities would be described in Tier 2 NEPA documents as the Project improvements and future operations are more defined.

Sensitive resources that could be most affected by these construction activities are sensitive land uses (residential neighborhoods, schools, etc.), environmental justice populations (low income and minority populations), elderly and disabled populations, and parks and recreational areas. These resources are described in detail in Sections 3.2, 3.5, 3.6, and 3.12, respectively. Mitigation measures are described in Section 3.23.5.

Appendix B, Figures 1 through 162 show an aerial view of the Study Area, which illustrates the partly urban and mostly rural nature of the Corridor.

3.23.3 Impacts of No-Build Alternative

Under the No-Build Alternative, the Project would not be built, and impacts caused by construction would not occur beyond those that could be related to other projects. The Chicago to Quad Cities service would contribute to slightly increased air emissions and noise along the eastern portion of the Chicago to Omaha Corridor. Construction for the Chicago to Quad Cities service would occur primarily within existing ROW, therefore limiting construction impacts. The exception would be for construction occurring in ROW to be acquired south of Wyanet, Illinois, for a connection between the IAIS track and the BNSF track; this area is in a rural location with scattered rural residences. Construction for the Chicago to Quad Cities Expansion Program, as well as other ongoing and planned construction activities, would need to follow environmental requirements for construction such as stormwater permitting to minimizing construction impacts.

3.23.4 Impacts of Build Alternative

The Build Alternative would require additional ROW for main line and ancillary improvements; however, construction activities directly impacting adjacent development would be limited to areas in close proximity to existing rail facilities.

Construction of the Build Alternative would result in the commitment of land where additional ROW is needed. The land would be converted from its current condition to a railroad grade and track. Construction materials would consist largely of steel, concrete, ballast rock, and wood. These resources are not in short supply and many of the materials could be recycled for other projects when they no longer meet the design needs for passenger rail service.

Typical main line improvements proposed for the Build Alternative include construction of an additional track through much of the Study Area to increase rail capacity and limit conflicts with existing rail operations. The areas where additional track is needed are located in primarily rural areas where adjacent land uses are associated with agricultural uses. Further improvements may be needed to the Wyanet Connection, with potential to expand the construction footprint that would be previously disturbed as part of the Chicago to Quad Cities service. In addition to main line improvements, other major construction activities include a potential off-alignment optional connection through Des Moines, Iowa. Other construction activities include an upgrade of the rails, cross ties, signalization, and grade crossing protection throughout the Potential Impact Area. Construction of these improvements would result in temporary impacts, including increases in waste disposal, potential impacts to water quality, air quality, increased noise levels, vibration, dust, traffic congestion, visual changes, and disrupted access to properties and neighborhoods. Specific construction impacts would be evaluated in more detail in Tier 2 NEPA analyses.

The considerations for construction activities listed in Section 3.23.1 are evaluated here for potential impacts.

3.23.4.1 Waste Disposal

The construction of the Build Alternative has the potential to generate waste material from clearing plant material, excavation of soil and rock, and removal of existing track and railroad ties where replacement is warranted. Other examples of site waste may include construction material packaging, broken equipment/parts, and other excess material. It is anticipated that some of the rock and soil material would be reused for fill material in other construction areas associated with the Build Alternative or other nearby construction projects. During typical construction activities, small amounts of soil may be contaminated through on-site motor or hydraulic oil spills and previously contaminated soils. Groundwater from past disposal could also be encountered and need to be properly handled.

During Tier 2 NEPA analysis, areas would be reviewed for potential contamination concerns, and some sampling and analysis may be performed as warranted. Further sampling may be conducted as needed to better characterize and determine the extent of contamination.

Within the areas of additional ROW acquisition, there may be instances (such as during construction of the southern alignment option in Des Moines adjacent to the Southeast Connector) where demolition of existing structures or buildings would be required within the areas of additional ROW acquisition. However, some of these buildings or structures may include small amounts of hazardous waste; especially in older industrial areas that are prevalent in the developed portions of the Study Area fronting existing rail lines.

3.23.4.2 Water Quality

In some instances, construction activities would occur within, adjacent to, or near streams, wetlands, and bodies of open water. As described above, construction debris, materials and potential spills may occur and have the potential to impact water quality from stormwater runoff from the construction site.

3.23.4.3 Air Quality

Construction activities would include short-term air emissions from on-site heavy equipment as well as fugitive dust and particle debris from demolition and excavation activities.

3.23.4.4 Noise and Vibration

Most construction activities would involve heavy equipment that generates a large amount of noise. Some construction activities, including pile driving and rock excavation with explosives, would generate a high decibel level, and in some cases, would cause vibrations that may temporarily affect properties off-site. A majority of the construction activities would occur in remote agricultural or rural areas away from concentrated residential areas and other sensitive land uses. Areas that could be impacted by noise and vibration would be identified in Tier 2 analyses.

3.23.4.5 Access

During construction, access to adjacent properties may be impacted on a temporary basis. Construction would primarily occur in rural or agricultural areas with limited traffic. However, within urban areas and small communities, existing businesses could experience

inconvenience and potential short-term economic hardship during construction because of access disruptions and traffic delays.

3.23.4.6 Traffic and Safety

Slow-moving heavy equipment would be entering and exiting the construction sites in the Study Area throughout the construction period. If not properly planned and coordinated with local jurisdictions, this can cause conflicts with existing traffic and can impact motorized and non-motorized safety.

3.23.5 Potential Mitigation Measures

Impacts from construction activities would be reviewed and mitigation would be considered during the development of the Tier 2 NEPA documents. The potential for Build Alternative construction impacts may be mitigated through the following measures:

- Waste Disposal
 - Recycling of construction debris, if possible, at facilities that are in compliance with federal, state, and local regulations
 - Testing of any hazardous waste encountered, if required
 - Performing handling, collection, and disposal of waste materials in accordance with federal, state, and local regulations
- Water Quality
 - Managing stormwater runoff through NPDES and all other federal, state, and local permitting processes
 - Implementing BMPs for control of soil erosion and other pollutants
 - Properly storing hazardous materials away from water bodies and wetlands in a self-contained upland location
- Air Quality
 - Adhering to construction permit conditions and all state and local regulations in regard to emissions and exhaust, fugitive dust, and burning of debris
- Noise and Vibration
 - Equipping and maintaining muffling equipment for trucks and other construction machinery to minimize noise emissions
 - Limiting times and duration of construction activities adjacent to sensitive land uses
 - Employing limits and controls on drilling and blasting activities
- Access
 - Developing a traffic mitigation plan for construction sequencing to maintain reasonable access to adjacent properties, including special provisions to accommodate emergency vehicle access to the site and adjacent properties, as well as adjacent populations of elderly and disabled persons

- Traffic and Safety
 - Coordinating with Illinois DOT, Iowa DOT, and NDOR as well as local jurisdictions to develop and implement a traffic control and safety plan

Specific mitigation measures, to the extent required, would be identified and discussed during Tier 2 analysis after design details are known, recorded in NEPA documents as specific impacts are identified, and implemented.

3.24 IRREVERSIBLE AND IRRETRIEVABLE COMMITMENTS OF RESOURCES

Irreversible commitments involve the use or destruction of a specific resource (for example, energy and natural resources such as water, minerals, or timber) that cannot be replaced within a reasonable time frame. Irretrievable resource commitments involve the loss in value of an affected resource that cannot be restored as a result of the action (for example, extinction of a threatened or endangered species or disturbance of a cultural site).

3.24.1 Methodology and Regulatory Requirements

Irreversible and irretrievable commitments of resources directly relate to the trade-offs of implementing a project versus not implementing a project. Irreversible and irretrievable impacts were evaluated in accordance with NEPA (42 USC 4321-4347); guidelines published by CEQ on implementing NEPA (40 CFR 1502.16); and FRA's Environmental Procedures.

Data gathered from the review of all applicable resources analyzed in the Tier 1 EIS were used, especially the consumption of energy (as derived from the assessment of air pollutants generated from the operation of the proposed passenger trains between Chicago and Omaha) and natural resources (as derived from the assessment of water resources, topography, geology, and soils, natural habitats and wildlife, wetlands, and threatened and endangered species). Additionally, land use committed to conversion for the transportation improvements was addressed. Specific government agency coordination is not typically conducted for this resource evaluation and was not performed for this Study.

The potential use of existing resources and land were assessed. The change in the use of resources was qualitatively assessed, and the potential for irreversible and irretrievable use of these resources was identified. Resources considered in this analysis were those resources on which the Project would have a direct or indirect effect. Tier 2 analyses would assess specific impacts to the extent known from the design process.

The extent of irreversible and irretrievable commitments of resources was assessed to determine if mitigation would be required.

3.24.2 Affected Environment

Appendix B, Figures 1 through 162 show various resources within the Study Area, portions of which may be disturbed or eliminated to implement the Project, such as farmland, parkland, streams, wetlands, woodlands, wildlife habitat, and cultural resources. Resources that would not originate directly within the Study Area and would most likely need to be acquired from outside the Study Area could include steel, petroleum, natural gas, concrete materials, ballast rock, and wood.

3.24.3 Impacts of No-Build Alternative

Under the No-Build Alternative, the Project would not be built, and new commitments of resources would not occur beyond those that could occur related to other projects. The Chicago to Quad Cities service would contribute to some commitment of resources for that project for constructing the Wyandot Connection and Eola Yard improvements. Also, energy resources would continue to be consumed by automobile travelers between Chicago and Omaha at a slightly higher rate than with the Build Alternative.

3.24.4 Impacts of Build Alternative

Construction of the Build Alternative would result in the irreversible and irretrievable commitment of land where additional ROW is needed. The land would be converted from its current condition to a railroad grade and track.

Construction materials would consist largely of steel, concrete, ballast rock, and wood. Whereas the use of these materials would be largely irretrievable, these resources are not in short supply and many of the materials could be recycled for other projects when they no longer meet the design needs for passenger rail service.

Several energy resources would be committed to the Project, including petroleum, natural gas, electrical, and manpower expenditures for construction, operation, and maintenance. These resources are generally irretrievable.

In addition to the above resources commitments, federal and state financial resources would be irreversibly and irretrievably committed to the Project for the development of Tier 2 NEPA documentation, design, construction, operation, and maintenance. These financial resources would no longer be available for other federal or state projects.

3.24.5 Potential Mitigation Measures

Irreversible and irretrievable impacts do not require mitigation; consequently, no mitigation measures are proposed.

3.25 SHORT-TERM USE VS. LONG-TERM PRODUCTIVITY OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Balancing the relationship between short-term impacts and long-term productivity is an important consideration in determining project feasibility. The following sections discuss short-term impacts to and use of resources, and long-term effects and benefits/losses that could be expected under the No-Build and Build Alternative.

3.25.1 Methodology and Regulatory Requirements

Short-term impacts to and use of resources in relation to long-term productivity were evaluated in accordance with NEPA, guidelines published by CEQ on implementing NEPA, and FRA's Environmental Procedures.

Data were gathered from the review of construction impacts and all applicable resources analyzed in this Tier 1 EIS. This analysis qualitatively discusses the relationship between short-term impacts to and use of resources, and the long-term benefits and productivity of the environment.

3.25.2 Affected Environment

Various resources within the Study Area are shown in Appendix B, Figures 1 through 162.

3.25.3 Impacts of No-Build Alternative

Under the No-Build Alternative, the Project would not be built, and impacts are not anticipated beyond those that could occur due to other projects.

3.25.3.1 Short-Term Impacts

Construction for the Chicago to Quad Cities Expansion Program could contribute to potential short-term construction impacts related to the following:

- Hazardous materials and waste disposal
- Water quality (erosion and sedimentation, and/or potential fuel and lubricant spills)
- Air quality (equipment emissions and fugitive dust)
- Noise and vibration (construction equipment)
- Property access
- Traffic and pedestrian delays and detours

In addition, short-term employment, use of materials to construct the project, and purchases of goods and services generated by project construction could create a short-term increase in the local economy that would end once the construction phase is completed.

3.25.3.2 Long-Term Benefits

In the region between Chicago and the Quad Cities, the introduction of additional passenger rail service would contribute to modest improvements in the transportation network, socioeconomic conditions, and safety for at-grade crossings.

3.25.3.3 Long-Term Losses/Impacts

Long-term adverse impacts on the social and natural environment would be minimal because most of the construction would be contained within existing ROW. Long-term productivity could be minimally affected with some reduction in farmland, slight increases in noise and vibration impacts on sensitive receptors, and increased collision impacts with wildlife. However, traffic congestion could increase, and energy resources may continue to be consumed by other modes of transportation between Chicago and Omaha, at a slightly higher rate than with the Build Alternative. This, in turn, could result in increased pollutant emissions and decreased air quality.

3.25.4 Impacts of Build Alternative

Implementation of the Build Alternative would result in the short-term impacts and use of resources as described below, while increasing the long-term benefits and productivity of passenger rail transportation, land use, and economic systems.

3.25.4.1 Short-Term Effects

The Build Alternative would contribute to short-term construction impacts similar to those of the No-Build Alternative, discussed above, but to a greater extent because of a longer corridor and additional ROW. In addition, short-term employment, use of materials to construct the project, and purchases of goods and services generated by project construction could create a short-term increase in the local economy that would end once the construction phase is completed.

3.25.4.2 Long-Term Benefits

In the region between Chicago and Omaha, the addition and enhancement of passenger rail service would contribute to improvements in the transportation network and access within the region by providing competitive passenger rail service that would meet the needs of increased future travel demand and more efficient travel between major urban centers. A reduction in air pollution emissions would occur as a result of passenger rail service replacing automobile, bus, and plane trips, and decreased congestion on local streets and highways. Improved accessibility within the region would also result in economic benefits through employment opportunities, potential for transit-oriented development, and increased economic activity. Other long-term benefits would include improvements in safety for at-grade crossings and providing an accessible alternative mode of transportation for minority, low-income, elderly, and disabled populations.

3.25.4.3 Long-Term Losses/Effects

Although the Build Alternative would result in some permanent impacts to waterways, water bodies, wetlands, floodplains, plant communities, natural habitat, and wildlife, coordination with resource agencies would be conducted to minimize impacts through appropriate mitigation measures. Other long-term losses/effects on the productivity of the environment would include the following:

- Removal of existing farmland from productivity
- Reduction of the local tax base as a result of acquiring farmland, commercial, and industrial property for additional railroad ROW
- Potential economic impacts on other modes of public transportation
- Potential acquisition of park land, recreation land, and natural areas
- Noise and vibration impacts on sensitive receptors
- Collision impacts on wildlife

With the initial implementation phase, there would also be less long-term benefits and productivity. As the Project extends westward, and speeds and the frequency of round-trips increase with subsequent implementation phases, more operational-related impacts would occur, and more energy and resources would be required. However, there would be more long-term benefits and productivity within or adjacent to the Potential Impact Area.

3.25.5 Potential Mitigation Measures

The potential mitigation measures for short-term and long-term impacts are discussed in the previous sections for each respective resource in this chapter.

3.26 INDIRECT AND CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

CEQ regulations implementing NEPA define indirect effects as those that are caused by the action and are later in time or farther removed in distance, but are still reasonably foreseeable. Indirect effects may include growth-inducing effects and other effects related to induced changes in the pattern of land use, population density or growth rate, and related effects on air, water, and other natural systems, including ecosystems (40 CFR 1508.8(b)).

CEQ regulations define cumulative impacts as “the impact on the environment which results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency (federal or non-federal) or person undertakes such other actions. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time” (40 CFR 1508.7). Thus, cumulative impacts include the direct and indirect impacts of a project together with the impacts from reasonably foreseeable future actions of other projects.

Railroad corridors resulted in direct and indirect impacts on the environment in the Midwest commencing in the mid-1800s. However, for this analysis, the focus on past actions is limited to approximately the last 20 years. The time frame for future actions considered is commensurate with the time frame of full implementation, estimated to be the year 2040, or information available in current long-range transportation plans.

Direct and indirect effects of the Project, as well as other past, current, or reasonably foreseeable regional and state-wide projects, are relevant for review of cumulative impacts. Major local projects could also contribute to cumulative effects on a resource.

3.26.1 Methodology and Regulatory Requirements

The methodology for conducting the review and evaluation of indirect and cumulative impacts is in accordance with federal regulations and guidelines, including NEPA, and CEQ guidelines implementing NEPA.

Indirect effects were evaluated in accordance with 40 CFR 1508.8(b) and FRA’s Environmental Procedures. The cumulative impacts with respect to the Project were evaluated in accordance with 40 CFR 1508.7, CEQ guidance on assessing cumulative impacts (CEQ, January 1997), and other sources, including FRA’s Environmental Procedures.

Data from the following sources was used during review of the potential indirect and cumulative impacts on the human and natural environment as a result of the Project:

- Identification of other major transportation projects in the Study Area vicinity through planning documents, including state transportation improvement plans, the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative, state long-range transportation plans, comprehensive plans developed by regional MPOs and COGs
- Land use information
- Internet sources, such as agency or news websites
- Input from government agencies as part of the scoping process

The collected data were reviewed, and projects that could incrementally affect the existing environment along with the Project were characterized. The primary information acquired for

Tier 1 analysis for cumulative impacts was related to major transportation projects. Coordination with planning agencies to acquire specific information about local projects for consideration would occur during Tier 2 analyses.

The effects of past actions were addressed as part of the existing or baseline condition for each resource relevant to the analysis. Any present or reasonably foreseeable future development (warranting an Environmental Assessment [EA] or EIS analysis) identified within the Study Area was considered. Specific local roadway improvement projects and minor projects near the Study Area are likely numerous and would be evaluated in Tier 2 NEPA analyses.

The potential for other development or other changes to the existing land use or environment potentially induced by the Project was assessed. This includes further development of land in the vicinity of the Study Area and at stations, or changes in traffic circulation that could require modification or construction of transportation infrastructure that could generate indirect reasonably foreseeable effects on the human and natural environment. The direct impacts on each resource were considered, and the likelihood of the Project to induce additional indirect changes was considered.

Resources on which the Project would have no direct or indirect effect were not considered in the cumulative effects analysis. Resources were considered within a resource-appropriate Study Area (for example, water resources were considered within a watershed), and the area that would be impacted directly and indirectly varied among different resources.

3.26.2 Affected Environment

Rail projects associated with indirect or cumulative impacts relative to the Build Alternative include the completion of the Midwest Regional Rail System itself. Of the MWRRRI corridors with a terminus in Chicago, identified in Section 1.1, the following are currently funded passenger rail projects and are under development at various stages of planning and implementation:

- Chicago to Detroit (Pontiac), Michigan
- Chicago to St. Louis, Missouri
- Chicago to Moline, Illinois (the Illinois portion of the Chicago to Iowa City project)
- Chicago to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to Twin Cities, Minnesota, to Duluth, Minnesota

Illinois DOT is in the early planning stages for a passenger rail project between Chicago and Dubuque, Iowa.

Chicago's Metra has planned improvements to help offset the demand from the increasing population in northeast Illinois. Metra's four primary projects are the following (Commuter Rail Division of the Regional Transportation Authority, 2012):

- STAR Line – Suburb-to-suburb commuter rail service between Joliet, Illinois, and O'Hare International Airport
- SES – Commuter service in south Suburban Cook and Will counties
- UP-NW Line – Expansion of service to eastern McHenry County and the addition of express and reverse-commute service to northwest Cook County

- UP-W Line – Capacity, speed, and reliability improvements for Cook, DuPage, and Kane counties

In addition to the aforementioned projects, Metra has initiated an Environmental Assessment and design of an extension of the BNSF line from Aurora to Oswego, Illinois.

Other railroad projects include the implementation of other high-speed intercity passenger rail projects. Final Design/Construction and Preliminary Engineering/NEPA projects in Illinois and Iowa are:

- Illinois: Midwest Train Equipment Fleet – This project would provide new rolling stock for the Midwest states of Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, Missouri, Ohio, and Wisconsin.
- Illinois: Chicago Terminal Limits for the Midwest Regional Rail System – This project would provide final design and construction for the Quad Cities (the terminal station would be in Moline), Milwaukee, and Detroit corridors as well as preliminary design and NEPA work for the St. Louis, Detroit, and Milwaukee corridors.
- Illinois: Chicago to St. Louis High-Speed Rail Corridor – This project would complete the first phase of ground work for the high-speed rail corridor; it would include final design, rehabilitation and construction of existing sidings, new sidings, and development of a second main line to accommodate train meet points associated with the high-speed rail corridor as well as accompanying signal, bridge, and crossing work.
- Illinois: Amtrak Illinois Zephyr Galesburg Congestion Relief Project – This project would construct three new BNSF tracks in Galesburg for staging freight trains to improve passenger train service, build a third main line track through the Galesburg passenger station to improve efficiencies, and install a new connection between Brookfield and Mendota.
- Iowa: Ottumwa Subdivision Capitalized Maintenance – This project would reduce temporary speed restrictions of the *California Zephyr* (Amtrak 5 and 6) on the BNSF Ottumwa Subdivision across southern Iowa.
- Iowa: Ottumwa Subdivision Crossover Improvements – This project would improve the service performance of the *California Zephyr*, consisting of two daily Amtrak trains (Amtrak 5 and 6) that operate between Chicago's Union Station and Amtrak's Emeryville station.

Illinois has one planning project, which consists of studying the feasibility of 220 mph high-speed express passenger service between Chicago and St. Louis. Iowa also has one planning project, which seeks funding for the planning effort for the complete MWRRI corridor from Chicago to Omaha. Nebraska has no planning projects.

Specific roadway improvement projects within or crossing the rail corridors are numerous. Major projects for tollways and interstates were considered for this Tier 1 analysis.

The Illinois State Toll Highway Authority has two capital programs. *Move Illinois* is a \$12 billion program to improve mobility, relieve congestion, reduce pollution, create jobs, and link economies in the Midwest (Illinois Tollway, 2012). This program includes improvements to existing tollways as well as the development of new tollways. The second

capital program is the *Congestion-Relief Program* that was initiated in 2005 with \$5.8 billion to reduce travel times, rebuild and restore the existing system, and the recently constructed south extension of I-355 into Will County (Illinois Tollway, 2012).

Both Illinois DOT and Iowa DOT have numerous localized interstate improvement projects near the Study Area. Some of the larger projects under review include:

- Illiana Corridor (Illinois) – A proposed project south of Joliet, Illinois, that would provide a direct connection between I-55 in Illinois and I-65 in Indiana (Illinois DOT and Indiana DOT, January 2013)
- Elgin O’Hare West Bypass Study (Illinois) – A tiered analysis of transportation issues west of O’Hare International Airport that has identified a multi-modal alternative including a new expressway, arterial, transit, and bicycle/pedestrian improvements (FHWA, FAA, Illinois DOT, and Illinois State Toll Highway Authority, October 2012)
- CBIS Improvements Project (Iowa) – A multi-phased project focused on improving I-80, I-29, and I-480 within the Omaha/Council Bluffs metropolitan area to improve mobility, reduce congestion and crashes, and add capacity (Iowa DOT, 2012)

Although a local project, the Southeast Connector project for the City of Des Moines, Iowa is within the Study Area, and is relevant to the Project. The Southeast Connector is an arterial roadway for a major, multi-lane roadway connecting the Martin Luther King Jr. Parkway at SW 2nd Street to the U.S. Highway 65 (US 65) bypass. The project is currently under construction, with one section of the roadway opened from SW 2nd Street to SE 9th Street.

The aforementioned projects are in different phases of planning and construction; consequently, the availability of information on specific impacts of the projects varies. Being a Tier 1 level of analysis with a nearly 500 mile Study Area, the assessment of cumulative impacts was a qualitative evaluation of the potential for cumulative impacts rather than a detailed quantitative analysis of past, current, and reasonably foreseeable future projects. If necessary, a more detailed review of potential indirect and cumulative impacts of projects would be conducted during Tier 2 NEPA analyses for individual sections of the Project.

3.26.3 Impacts of No-Build Alternative

Under the No-Build Alternative, the Project would not be built, and new direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts are not anticipated beyond those that could occur due to other projects. The Chicago to Quad Cities service would contribute to slightly increased air emissions energy consumption and noise along this portion of the Chicago to Omaha route. Potential direct, or indirect, and cumulative impacts of those improvements are being addressed in Tier 2 NEPA documents currently underway.

The No-Build Alternative would result in a slight indirect impact on transportation due to the lack of passenger rail service between Moline and Omaha. This indirect impact would primarily be in the form of increased traffic congestion as travelers between Moline and Omaha would continue to use existing roadways. In addition, the No-Build Alternative would have a slight negative contribution to cumulative impacts on transportation by continuing the dependence on personal automobiles on highways for travel between Moline and Omaha, and to a more limited extent, between Chicago and Moline. Selection of the

No-Build Alternative would not result in an indirect impact through the elimination of the Moline to Omaha component of the MWRRI corridor from Chicago to Omaha; the Chicago to Quad Cities service would continue as a separate project.

3.26.4 Impacts of Build Alternative

The impacts of the Build Alternative are addressed collectively under subheadings for indirect impacts and cumulative impacts.

3.26.4.1 Indirect Impacts

Construction and operation associated with any phase of the Build Alternative has the potential to cause indirect impacts. The following is a list of potential indirect impacts identified through evaluation of various environmental resources:

- Operation of passenger trains at speeds up to 110 mph would result in increased noise and ground vibration, as well as air emissions, and visual and aesthetic impacts. These direct impacts could potentially result in indirect impacts of reduced use of nearby parks, recreation areas, and natural areas. Section 4(f) properties could be indirectly affected by noise, ground vibration, aesthetics, and access issues. Additionally, there could be indirect impacts on wildlife through reduced use of areas near train operations. Threatened or endangered species could potentially be indirectly affected by air emissions and water quality impacts affecting habitat.
- The passenger train service could have the indirect effect of reducing ridership on current transportation services, such as intercity bus and flight service, by offering a competitive alternative to these modes. Diverted trips from these modes to passenger rail service may have implications to the viability of these modes in the future.
- Potential indirect positive impacts include a slight reduction in vehicular congestion on I-88 and I-80 within the Study Area. This would have positive impacts on air quality, safety and reduce future delays due to congestion.
- Commencement of passenger service and modification of at-grade crossings could indirectly affect traffic flow from previous traffic conditions.
- As a result of increased train traffic, as well as activities at stations and maintenance facilities, there would be an increased chance of a hazardous material incident. Potential indirect impacts could also affect water quality as railway contaminants or accidental chemical/fuel spills from operations and maintenance activities could reach water resources adjacent to, or downstream of the project area. However, with appropriate BMPs in place, water quality impacts from hazardous materials would be avoided or minimized.
- Noise and vibration from passenger rail traffic could cause indirect impacts to cultural resources by affecting visitor experience. Also, there is the potential for induced transit-oriented development in the vicinity of station areas, which may indirectly affect nearby cultural resources.
- Potential indirect impacts to downstream water bodies and wetlands could occur from culvert and/or bridge replacements.

- Transit-oriented development could result indirectly from the construction and use of station locations.
- Adjacent land uses could be indirectly impacted from changes in traffic flow at rail crossings and near future station sites. Temporary traffic indirect impacts would occur through closings during construction rerouting traffic through adjacent neighborhoods and business areas. Lack of convenient access can cause increased travel time and delay for local residents and potential economic impacts to businesses that depend on convenient accessibility such as auto-oriented retail and services, drive-through restaurants, etc. Long-term indirect impacts would occur through potential increased congestion and traffic delays near crossings with new passenger rail service.
- There would be a temporary increase in GHG emissions from construction activities from on-site equipment as well as increased delays and congestion from automobile and bus traffic.
- The Build Alternative would result in indirect positive impacts on air quality from contributing to the development of a more complete multi-modal transportation system within the Study Area and encouraging changes in long-term travel behavior and advocacy for more energy efficient modes of transport that improve air quality.
- Upgrades to rail infrastructure may indirectly benefit existing freight service.

At a Tier 1 level of evaluation, it is not anticipated that these impacts would be substantial; further evaluation of potential indirect impacts would be addressed during Tier 2 analysis when more details of the design and operation are known. For example, the potential for indirect impacts on wildlife resulting from potential direct impacts on water quality would be evaluated and addressed during Tier 2 analysis. Specific mitigation measures, to the extent required, would be identified and discussed during Tier 2 analysis after design details are known, recorded in NEPA documents as specific impacts are identified, and implemented prior to construction.

3.26.4.2 Cumulative Impacts

The majority of projects listed in Section 3.26.2 are linear transportation projects, often occurring either in existing ROW or adjacent to existing ROW (which in urban and suburban areas, is land that has been previously disturbed). Because drainage is often constructed parallel to transportation improvements, it is likely that many of these projects would be affecting drainage and could involve impacts to wetlands and other waters of the U.S. In rural areas, it is likely that the other projects may be affecting farmland, natural areas, and wildlife habitat primarily through expansion of existing corridors.

Given that the majority of construction impacts of the Build Alternative (such as filling of wetlands) would be within existing ROW and that nearly the entire additional ROW required is adjacent to existing ROW, the physical impacts would be very localized. Unless other projects are occurring in these immediate areas, the Build Alternative holds minimal potential for significant adverse cumulative impacts.

Station development associated with the Build Alternative has the potential to result in induced development in close proximity to the stations. However, station locations would be selected through coordinated efforts with local city/county/metropolitan area planners to help

ensure that the sites and opportunities presented for growth development are suitable to handle increased traffic and other demands, minimizing the potential for adverse cumulative impacts.

With the additional passenger trains (running seven round-trips per day at speeds up to 110 mph between Chicago and Des Moines, and with five of those trips continuing to Omaha), the number of noise and vibration occurrences, potential collision impacts, and water quality/pollutant-related impacts would increase over existing conditions, as described for the Build Alternative and for the Chicago to Quad Cities project Expansion Program in the No-Build Alternative.

When considered collectively with the projects listed above, the Build Alternative would have a slight beneficial contribution to cumulative impacts by improving overall air quality and reducing roadway congestion and would have the potential for increased transit-oriented development. Should construction of the Build Alternative occur simultaneously with some of the above-listed projects, existing passenger and freight rail services could see temporary increases in delays and congestion, but overall train traffic would be maintained throughout construction.

Many of the transportation projects identified in Section 3.26.2 are improvements along existing alignments, with reconstruction or other modifications occurring either within or adjacent to existing ROW. New impacts of the identified transportation projects outside existing ROW would be relatively narrow and linear. Consequently, cumulative impacts on resources within a designated area, such as a watershed or ecosystem, would likely be minor. The geographic distribution of the identified transportation projects further reduces the potential for significant cumulative impacts.

The majority of the Route Alternative 4-A corridor is in rural areas dominated by farmland uses. Highly developed areas are also present along the corridor. Land use throughout the Route Alternative 4-A corridor is likely to remain unchanged with the implementation of the Build Alternative and other proposed projects. Suburban areas associated with large cities such as Chicago and Des Moines are likely to incur the most change in land use with a potential for cumulative impacts because the land available for modification is in areas where population is increasing.

Section 3.26.4.1 reported various benefits resulting from more efficient and enhanced transportation systems. Given the numerous planned transportation projects, air quality, mobility, and safety would cumulatively benefit. Minimal negative cumulative impacts associated with these projects would likely occur on farmland, habitat, wetlands, and streams along Route Alternative 4-A.

As Tier 2 analyses are conducted, additional information on projects with the potential to cause cumulative impacts will be collected, and a more detailed analysis of cumulative impacts would be conducted, as warranted.

3.26.5 Potential Mitigation Measures

Per CEQ guidance titled *Forty Most Asked Questions Concerning CEQ's National Environmental Policy Act Regulations*, "All reasonable mitigation measures that could improve the project are to be identified, even if they are outside the jurisdiction of the lead agency or the cooperating agencies, and thus would not be committed as part of the RODs of

these agencies” (46 FR 18026). Specific mitigation measures, to the extent required, would be identified and discussed in Tier 2 NEPA documents as specific indirect and cumulative impacts are identified after design details are known, recorded in NEPA documents as specific impacts are identified, and implemented.

3.27 PERMITS

This section includes anticipated federal, state, and local permits and/or approvals that may be required based on a review of federal and state government agency databases. The presence of wetlands, floodplains, navigable waters, and other resources discussed in previous sections were reviewed to identify the likely permits required prior to construction.

Under the No-Build Alternative, the Project would not be built, and thus would require no permits or approvals. However, the Chicago to Quad Cities Expansion Program would be responsible for acquisition of all necessary permits and approvals prior to construction.

Construction of the Build Alternative would likely require the permits and approvals described below. Local and construction permits would be discussed in the Tier 2 NEPA documents when specific impacts are determined.

3.27.1 Section 404 Permit

Section 404 of the Clean Water Act regulates the discharge of dredged, excavated, or fill material in wetlands, streams, rivers, and other waters of the United States. The USACE is the federal agency authorized to issue Section 404 Permits for certain activities conducted in wetlands or other waters of the United States. The Project lies within three USACE regulatory districts: the Chicago District for eastern Illinois, the Rock Island District for central and western Illinois and all of Iowa, and the Omaha District for the Missouri River floodplain and Nebraska. Generally, any project that includes construction activities in new ROW and/or impacts an aquatic resource requires a Section 404 Permit. Project-related construction activities that require Section 404 review include:

- Culvert extensions
- Bridge/culvert replacements
- Riprap placement and/or flood emergency repairs
- Dredging, excavation, and fill in jurisdictional waters
- Any construction in or around streams or wetland areas

To obtain authorization to disturb regulated aquatic resources, the permit applicant must identify the waters present through wetland delineation and/or stream determination, avoid protected resources where possible, minimize unavoidable impacts, and if necessary, mitigate any remaining impacts. The USACE issues two types of Section 404 permits: general and individual. General permits include Nationwide Permits and Regional General Permits that are issued periodically for categories of activities that result in only minimal adverse impacts to the aquatic environment. Individual permits are issued for projects with more significant adverse impacts on a case-by-case basis. Individual permit authorizations are based on a public interest review that includes a comment period for resource agencies and the public. At a Tier 1 analysis, it is difficult to determine the number and type of permits that may be needed. The number and type of permits would depend on the nature of each Tier 2 project’s specific construction requirements, phasing, and location.

General Permits are reviewed by the USACE and are typically issued within 45 days of submittal. Individual permits require a 90 to 120-day review time, including a 30-day public notice period. Failure to obtain a necessary Section 404 authorization or to comply with the terms and conditions of a Section 404 authorization may result in an enforcement action including a cease and desist order to stop all project work and significant fines until the project is in compliance.

3.27.2 Section 401 Water Quality Certification

Section 401 of the Clean Water Act gives authority to each state to issue a water quality certification for any project that needs a 404 Permit. The 401 Certification is a verification by the state that the project will not violate water quality standards. The following state agencies issue water quality certifications for activities within the Study Area:

- Illinois EPA. USACE provides the Section 404 application to Illinois EPA for review under Section 401 Water Quality Certification. Additional approvals are required by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources/Office of Water Resources (Illinois DNR/OWR) for construction activities within a public body of water and within floodways in accordance with the Illinois Wetland Policy Act of 1989.
- Iowa DNR. The Iowa Water Resources Section of the Office of Location and Environment (OLE) reviews preliminary plans and project concepts for all projects likely to be affected by Section 404.
- NDEQ. The NDEQ regulates stream impacts under its Section 401 Water Quality Certification authority, in conjunction with the USACE's Section 404 permit.

Section 401 water quality certifications for construction would be obtained from each state for Tier 2 projects during the design phase of the Project and in conjunction with the Section 404 permits. Discharge of stormwater during construction would be addressed under the NPDES permitting and with BMPs.

3.27.3 Section 9 USCG Bridge Permit

To help enforce the General Bridge Act of 1946, the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) Bridge Permit, also often referred to as a Section 9 Permit, is required to construct a new bridge or reconstruct or modify an existing bridge over navigable waters of the United States. The purpose of the General Bridge Act of 1946 is to preserve the public right of navigation and prevent interference with interstate and foreign commerce. USCG policy is to protect the freedom of navigation and the quality of the environment, meeting the reasonable needs both of navigation and land traffic.

Typical activities requiring a USCG Bridge Permit are:

- Constructing a new bridge over a canal, channel, stream, river, lake or other navigable body of water.
- Modifying an existing bridge or causeway.
- Making repairs that alter structural configuration or navigational clearances.
- Significantly modifying any substructure or superstructure components.

For the Project, one or two new bridge crossings may be required over the Missouri River. Coordination has commenced with USCG under this Tier 1 EIS, and would continue during the Tier 2 NEPA analyses to determine and define permitting requirements.

3.27.4 Section 10 Permit

Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899 requires that regulated activities conducted below the ordinary high water (OHW) elevation of navigable waters of the United States be approved by the USACE. Until 1968, the Rivers and Harbors Act was administered to protect only navigation and the navigable capacity of the nation's waters. In 1968, in response to a growing national concern for environmental values, the policy for review of Section 10 permit applications was revised to include additional factors such as fish and wildlife, conservation, pollution, aesthetics, ecology and general welfare. Regulated activities include the placement/removal of structures, work involving dredging, disposal of dredged material, filling excavation, or any other disturbance of soils and sediments, or modifications of a navigable waterway. One combined application can be submitted for both Section 404 and Section 10 permits. These permits may be required for any major river crossing improvements.

3.27.5 Section 402 National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit

USEPA regulates non-point source discharges through its stormwater program pursuant to the Clean Water Act. The USEPA has given Illinois, Iowa, and Nebraska the responsibility to administer the NPDES permit to govern stormwater runoff from construction activities that disturb one acre of land or greater.

Illinois EPA administers and enforces NPDES permits in Illinois. Illinois EPA uses General Permit No. ILR10 for construction activities that will result in the disturbance of 1 or more acres of land subject to the Clean Water Act, the Illinois Environmental Protection Act and the Illinois Pollution Board Rules and Regulations. In order for stormwater discharges from construction sites to be authorized to discharge under this general permit, the applicant must submit a NPDES Notice of Intent (NOI) in accordance with state requirements. Unless notified to the contrary, 30 days after the date the NOI is received by Illinois EPA, applicants who submit a NOI in accordance with the requirements of this permit are authorized to discharge stormwater from construction sites under the terms and conditions of this permit.

Iowa DNR administers and enforces NPDES permits in Iowa. In most cases, Iowa DNR uses General Permit No. 2 for construction activities that will result in the disturbance of one or more acres of land subject to the Clean Water Act. A general permit can be cost-effective, as a large number of facilities can be covered under a single permit. A general permit may be written to cover categories of point sources having common elements. After a general permit has been issued, the Project applicant must submit a NPDES NOI to Iowa DNR. Upon receipt of a NOI, Iowa DNR may request additional information, notify the applicant that it is covered by the general permit, or require the applicant to apply for an individual permit.

In Nebraska, NDEQ issues the construction stormwater general permit or CSW general permit. This general permit authorizes the discharge of pollutants in stormwater discharges associated with construction activities that will result in the disturbance of one or more acres of land subject to the Clean Water Act and the Nebraska Environmental Protection Act. The CSW general permit covers stormwater discharges associated with both small and large

construction activities. As part of the permit process, applicants must submit a NPDES NOI to NDEQ prior to the start construction activities. Before submitting a NOI, the applicant must document that the discharges are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any state or federally listed endangered or threatened species.

3.27.6 Section 408 Approval

33 USC 408 (Section 408) authorizes the Secretary of the Army to permit others to modify existing USACE projects under certain circumstances. Section 408 is likely to pertain to temporary or permanent modifications to existing flood control structures from construction of the proposed high speed rail facilities. A Section 408 approval is issued by the USACE if it is determined that a temporary occupation or use of the structure will not pose a public safety hazard. There are two levels of Section 408 approvals: minor and major. Minor approvals are reviewed and approved by the USACE at the District level. Major approvals are initially reviewed at the USACE District level, then undergo a quality assurance review by Major Subordinate Command prior to being forwarded to Headquarters for final approval by the Chief of Engineers. The type of modifications and potential impact to existing flood control structures determines the need for a minor versus major approval.

3.27.7 Floodplain Development Permit

A permit is required before construction or development begins within any SFHA. These areas are defined as land covered by the floodwaters of the base or 100 year flood. If FEMA has not defined the SFHA within a community, the community would require permits for all proposed construction or other development in the community, so that it may determine whether such construction or other development is proposed within flood-prone areas. Permits are required to ensure that proposed development projects meet the requirements of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and each community's local floodplain management ordinance. Each community reviews proposed projects to verify that all required permits required by federal or state law have been received. Coordination would take place with each state's Department of Natural Resources and local jurisdictions, as appropriate, to determine specifics regarding permits for floodplain impacts. Illinois provides a joint permit application form that is submitted to the Illinois DNR, Illinois EPA, and USACE for floodplain and public waters permits. Iowa provides a joint permit application form which is distributed to Iowa DNR and USACE to obtain a floodplain construction permit, as well as other water-related permits. In Nebraska, flood management permits are submitted to the Nebraska DNR.

3.27.8 Air Pollution Control Permits

Illinois EPA issues an air pollution control permit for a stationary source that has the potential to emit air pollutants including NO_x, SO₂, PM, CO, VOM, HAP, GHG, and Pb. There are two types of permits in Illinois: construction permits and operating permits. Iowa DNR administers a construction permit that tracks potential GHG emissions. In Nebraska, the Air Quality division of Nebraska DEQ administers air quality permits for construction

and operations. The Project will likely need a construction permit for batch plants¹³ and equipment that may emit air pollutants. An air quality permit for operations is not anticipated.

3.27.9 40 CFR Part 61 - NESHAP

The Illinois EPA is designated to enforce National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants (NESHAP) regulations for the handling of asbestos during demolition, renovation and disposal. If asbestos is encountered during construction or renovation, the owner or responsible party is required to notify Illinois EPA through a Notification of Demolition and Renovation Form. Both Iowa and Nebraska have a similar process where the owner or responsible party is required to disclose and coordinate asbestos removal with Iowa DNR or NDEQ, respectively.

3.27.10 Iowa Sovereign Lands Construction Permit

Iowa DNR administers a permit for impacts to lands or waters designated as sovereign. Sovereign lands are lands under the jurisdiction of the Natural Resource Commission and managed by the Commission for public access, such as: Meandered Sovereign Rivers, Meandered Sovereign Lakes, Sovereign Islands, State Forests, Wildlife Management Areas, State Parks, and State Preserves. Any construction on, above, or under state-owned lands and/or waters must secure a Sovereign Lands Construction Permit from Iowa DNR in advance of work.

3.27.11 Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Formal Notice and Airspace Review

The Project may require formal notice and airspace review under 14 CFR 77 (Federal Aviation Regulation Part 77, Objects Affecting Navigable Airspace). The FAA provides a Notice Criteria Tool on its website to determine potential conflicts with civilian and military airports. This tool will be utilized in Tier 2 analyses when the Project footprint is further defined.

3.27.12 Potential Mitigation Measures

Specific mitigation measures would be implemented as appropriate per each individual permit and approval. For example, Section 404 Permits may require mitigation measures for both temporary and permanent impacts to wetlands, streams, rivers, and other waters of the United States. Specific mitigation measures, to the extent required, would be identified and discussed during Tier 2 analysis after design details are known, recorded in NEPA documents as specific impacts are identified, and implemented.

¹³ Batch plants are temporary areas where aggregate, asphalt or concrete mixes are created and then sent to the actual site of construction.

3.28 INTERIM IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

As discussed in Section 2.2.2.6, Phased Implementation, the interim implementation phase of the Project is the last phase that would be implemented within the 20-year planning horizon of the SDP. The interim implementation phase would consist of four round-trips per day at 79 mph between Chicago and Council Bluffs. FRA decided that this Tier 1 Final EIS would include an analysis of the potential impacts of the interim implementation phase. Therefore, this section presents a qualitative review of the impacts that the interim implementation phase would have on each resource previously reviewed for impacts under full implementation of the Build Alternative in Sections 3.1 through 3.27.

The interim implementation phase was evaluated based on two main categories of activities likely to cause environmental impacts: 1) ROW acquisition and construction (footprint-dependent impacts), and 2) operation and maintenance of the system. Some resources were evaluated individually, and some were addressed in aggregate. In addition, some resources would be affected by only one category, and some resources would be affected by both categories. For example, natural habitats and wildlife can be directly affected by vegetation removal as a result of ROW acquisition and construction impacts, and can also be affected by train operations as a result of noise, vibration, and animal collision impacts.

Whereas the interim implementation phase would be a step toward full implementation (which would have the greatest impacts), less ROW acquisition and construction would be required in this phase and fewer operations would occur. Consequently, adverse environmental impacts would be less than for full implementation of the Build Alternative, and impacts are reported relative to the estimated impacts of full implementation (previously described in Sections 3.1 through 3.27). Beneficial impacts, such as reduced cumulative air emissions from more efficient transportation of people, would not occur to the same extent as under full implementation of service.

3.28.1 ROW Acquisition and Construction Impacts on Resources

Potential impacts on resources affected by the acquisition of ROW and performance of construction activities for the interim implementation phase are discussed qualitatively below. ROW would be acquired and the existing land features would be modified to support construction of new sidings, conversion of sidings to main track, construction of main track, modification of existing stations, acquisition and improvement of former stations or development of new stations, and development of layover and maintenance facilities. Des Moines is the area where much of the ROW would be required during the interim implementation phase.

This impact evaluation did not include the Elderly and People with Disabilities resource and the Public Health and Safety resource because these were determined to be minimally affected during construction activities. Although there are air emissions as well as noise and vibration associated with construction activities, these resources were not included below because the impacts are minor in comparison to operational impacts for the Noise and Vibration and the Air Quality resources.

Transportation

A minimal amount of new ROW acquisition through most of the Corridor and less required construction would result in less temporary construction impacts on the transportation system than would full implementation. Minor temporary impacts would occur as a result of detours or delays during construction in the vicinity of at-grade and grade-separated crossing improvements. Upgrades to existing track, crossings, and signals would benefit existing freight rail service, but to a lesser degree than that of full implementation.

Land Use, Zoning, and Property Acquisitions Agricultural Resources

Although most of the improvements would be constructed within existing ROW, minor amounts of ROW acquisition would be required at stations, at layover and maintenance facilities, and in cities where improvements such as parking and additional track would be required. Likely land use impacts would be related to improvements to existing stations or construction of new stations and layover and maintenance facilities. However, additional ROW requirements would be less than that of full implementation and would result in less land use and zoning changes and less farmland acquired.

Socioeconomic Environment Title VI and Environmental Justice

Acquisition of farmland and businesses, resulting in the businesses closing or relocating outside of the local area, would cause a reduction in property tax income for the local government. However, acquisition and associated economic impacts (both adverse from acquisition and a reduction in tax base and beneficial from temporary employment) would be less than under full implementation. Short-term economic benefits would be realized through employment for construction jobs and those employees patronizing local businesses, although to a lesser extent than under full implementation. Socioeconomic impacts would also include the potential for disruption of vehicular traffic to existing businesses and community facilities in populated areas during construction, but would occur to a lesser extent than under full implementation. Environmental justice populations, especially those in the Des Moines area, could be displaced during property acquisition, but not to the extent that would occur under full implementation.

Hazardous Waste and Waste Disposal

A minimal amount of new ROW acquisition through most of the Corridor would result in minimal impacts on non-NPL sites, LUST sites, and wastewater treatment facilities. In the vicinity of the NPL-listed Des Moines TCE Site, there is a low potential for exposure to contamination because of recent cleanup efforts. In the vicinity of the NPL-listed Railroad Avenue Groundwater Contamination Site, the potential for contamination is less predictable but would most likely be less than that of full implementation. Because the interim implementation phase would terminate in Council Bluffs, construction activities would not affect nor be affected by the Omaha Lead Site. During construction, requirements for safety procedures and protection of human health and the environment would be established to prevent contamination.

Cultural Resources

Parks and Federally or State-Listed Natural Areas

Section 4(f) and 6(f) Properties

A minimal amount of new ROW acquisition through most of the Corridor would result in minimal direct impacts on historic properties, parks, recreational resources, natural areas, and Section 4(f) and 6(f) properties, and would be less than under full implementation. The potential for cultural resource and Section 4(f) impacts would likely be greatest in city areas where structures are listed, or eligible for listing, on the NRHP, and where station areas would be modified and improved.

Visual Resources and Aesthetic Quality

A minimal amount of new ROW acquisition and conversion to transportation purposes through most of the Corridor would result in less direct impacts on visual resources than under full implementation. During construction, sensitive visual receptors would be subject to the visual intrusion of construction operations, although temporarily and to a lesser extent than under full implementation.

Waterways and Water Bodies

Wetlands

Water Quality

Floodplains

A minimal amount of new ROW acquisition through most of the Corridor would result in minimal direct impacts and temporary construction impacts on waterways, water bodies, wetlands, water quality, and floodplains. Minor impacts would occur from placement of fill material for additional sidings, potential culvert replacements/extensions, and bridge replacements/additions, but these impacts would be less than under full implementation. Potential water quality impacts could be caused by soil erosion from stormwater runoff or by construction pollutant runoff, but to a lesser extent than under full implementation. The avoidance or minimization of water quality impacts would be accomplished in appropriate areas by using BMPs.

Natural Habitats and Wildlife

Threatened and Endangered Species

A minimal amount of new ROW acquisition through most of the Corridor, and primarily through urban areas, would result in minimal direct impacts on natural habitat, wildlife, and threatened and endangered species, and would be less than under full implementation. It is anticipated that no impacts would occur on designated critical habitat of federally listed species. Impacts on woodland habitat, which is potential summer habitat for the federally endangered Indiana bat, would be minimal. Minimal impacts may occur on state-listed species habitat but would be less than under full implementation. Construction activities could result in temporary potential impacts on natural habitats and wildlife species from vegetation removal, erosion, construction pollutant runoff, noise, and vibration, but to a lesser extent than under full implementation.

Topography, Geology, and Soils Construction Impacts

Construction of improvements would result in temporary construction impacts, including increases in waste disposal; potential impacts on water quality and air quality; increased noise levels, vibration, dust, traffic congestion, and visual changes; and disrupted access to properties and neighborhoods. However, these temporary impacts would be to a lesser extent than under full implementation. The existing topographic, geologic, and soil conditions are not expected to pose an adverse challenge to the construction of any phase of implementation.

Energy Use and Climate Change Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitments of Resources Short-Term Use Vs. Long-Term Productivity of the Environment

Construction of improvements would result in the irreversible and irretrievable commitment of minor amounts of land where additional ROW is needed, use of construction materials, and use of energy resources (petroleum, natural gas, electrical, and manpower). However, those commitments would be less than those required for full implementation. Construction of improvements would contribute to potential short-term construction impacts on resources, as stated previously, and would include a temporary increase in GHG emissions from construction equipment and idling vehicles at traffic delays. In addition, short-term employment, use of materials to construct the Build Alternative, and purchases of goods and services generated by construction of the Build Alternative could create a beneficial short-term increase in the local economy, but to a lesser extent than under full implementation. The long-term benefits to the environment relate to operation of the passenger train service and is discussed in Section 3.28.2.

Indirect and Cumulative Impacts

With the interim implementation phase, indirect and cumulative impacts from ROW acquisition and construction could occur to some resources as described in Section 3.26.4.1, but to a lesser extent than those of full implementation.

Permits

The permits discussed in Section 3.27 for full implementation would also apply to the interim implementation phase of the Project depending on the type and extent of impacts. Multiple iterations of the same permit would be necessary as the project progresses through each phase of development. After acquiring some permits for initial construction, it would be necessary to apply for those same types of permits in subsequent phases of development.

3.28.2 Operation and Maintenance Impacts on Resources

Potential impacts on resources affected by operation and maintenance activities during the interim implementation phase are discussed qualitatively below. Operation activities include train service and associated activities, and maintenance activities include track and siding maintenance, cleaning and repairing of the rolling stock at layover and maintenance facilities, and upkeep of the stations.

Agricultural Resources; Cultural Resources; Waterways and Water Bodies; Wetlands; Floodplains; and Topography, Geology, and Soils are not evaluated because operation and maintenance activities would minimally affect those resources. Construction Impacts are not discussed below because although maintenance activities might include some construction activities with associated impacts, it would not be to the same extent as initial construction. Although there would be permits associated with management and disposal of hazardous wastes, most permits are associated with construction activities; therefore, Permits are not discussed below.

**Transportation
Land Use, Zoning, and Property Acquisitions**

Potential impacts of the new passenger rail service during the interim implementation phase would include some conflicts with existing passenger rail and freight rail services. Because of the slower speed and fewer trips associated with the interim implementation phase, modal trips would be in the process of shifting or being diverted from automobile, bus and air trips, but not to the extent that would occur under full implementation.

Travel demand and diversion forecasts for 2030 for interim implementation of the Build Alternative were performed, as shown in Table 3.28-1. A large percentage of the trips are due to diversion from automobile, bus, and air trips.

Table 3.28-1. Total Rail Ridership by Diverted Travel Mode

Travel Mode	Estimated Diversions for the Build Alternative (passengers per year)
Automobile	462,600
Bus	159,000
Air	11,000
Induced Demand	63,400
Total	696,000

The operation of new passenger rail service could potentially impact local traffic patterns, land use, and zoning at the station locations and could cause increased traffic volumes and parking demand, but to a lesser extent than under full implementation.

Socioeconomic Environment

Under the interim implementation phase, impacts and benefits on the socioeconomic environment could occur, but to a lesser extent than under full implementation. Long-term economic benefits would include the potential for improvements in the local economy along the Corridor and station areas by providing connections to major markets and cities, improving mobility, and expanding employment opportunities over a large geographic area. The Project may help to revitalize urban areas near future stations by attracting higher-density and mixed-use development, which would provide new employment and housing options.

***Title VI and Environmental Justice
Elderly and People with Disabilities
Public Health and Safety***

The incremental increase in train noise and ground vibration would be less than under full implementation, which was determined to not result in disproportionate impacts on environmental justice populations. An optional alignment through Des Moines (Des Moines Design Option 3) has the potential to impact both minority and low-income populations. During Tier 2 analyses, refinements in the design options could avoid or minimize impacts on adjacent minority and low-income populations caused by operation and maintenance activities.

The Project would provide economic and quality of life benefits to minority, low-income, and elderly populations and to people with disabilities by providing accessible public transportation and station facilities and by improving mobility through an alternative transportation mode that serves multiple cities throughout the Corridor, although to lesser extent than under full implementation. Improvements would also include track and signal upgrades to address public safety and to limit conflicts with existing freight rail service. However, the level of improvements would be less than that required for full implementation, thereby resulting in a lesser degree of benefits to public health and safety.

Noise and Vibration

The interim implementation phase would have fewer train operations at lower speeds. Reducing the number of trains per day reduces the number of train noise events, which can potentially result in lower noise levels. However, at slower train speeds, the duration of the train pass-by event increases. The net effect of these potential changes is also influenced by the number and speed of other trains operating on the same rail segment and by the existing non-train noise environment. As a result, simply reducing the number of trains per day and their speed does not necessarily directly correlate to a reduction in cumulative train noise.

The noise model used for the analyses documented in the Tier 1 Draft EIS was run for the Tier 1 Final EIS using the same assumptions for full implementation of the Build Alternative with the exception of the number of trains and speeds for passenger rail operations, and the western termini ending in Council Bluffs. Consequently, the incremental change in noise impact contour distances was determined. Under most noise conditions, the noise contours for moderate and severe impacts decreased by a few to more than 20 feet, ultimately resulting in a slight decrease of adversely impacted noise receivers compared to full implementation. Appendix P includes tables of model assumptions used for the interim implementation phase and the contour distance reduction from track centerline.

Train-induced GBV is a function of train speed. Consequently, the slower speed under the interim implementation phase would cause lower amounts of GBV, and the potential for vibration impacts would be less than under the maximum speed proposed for full implementation. Therefore, the width of the vibration impact contours would be less. The magnitude of this decrease varies depending on soil conditions. For the interim implementation phase, the distance to the vibration impact contour decreases typically between 60 and 110 feet at the slower maximum speed of 79 mph compared to speeds of up to 110 mph for full implementation.

Hazardous Waste and Waste Disposal

Because of track and crossing upgrades, the safety of hazardous material transportation by freight trains would improve, but to a lesser degree than under full implementation. In addition, there is the potential for fuel and pesticide spills during operation and maintenance activities, but the potential would be less than under full implementation.

Parks and Federally or State-Listed Natural Areas Section 4(f) and 6(f) Properties

Slower speeds and fewer trains would cause less noise and lower amounts of ground vibration than under full implementation. Consequently, the potential for indirect proximity impacts and incompatible visual intrusions to parks, recreation areas, natural areas, and Section 4(f) and 6(f) properties (including cultural resources listed on or eligible for listing on the NRHP) would be less than under full implementation. It is not anticipated that these impacts would be substantial or would result in a Section 4(f) constructive use of the resources.

Visual Resources and Aesthetic Quality

Although there are a few locations where a new connection or alignment would be established, the interim implementation phase primarily would follow existing railroad alignments and would travel by residential areas containing sensitive visual receptors who are already accustomed to views of trains and existing stations. New train stations would incorporate aesthetic elements to complement the visual quality of the surroundings. As a result, visual impacts on residents would be minimal and consequently less than those under full implementation. However, with fewer trips than under full implementation, fewer passengers would benefit from scenic views from the trains as they pass by visual resources.

Water Quality

Potential pollutant runoff and spills from operation and maintenance activities could potentially reach adjacent water resources, but to a lesser extent than under full implementation.

Natural Habitats and Wildlife Threatened and Endangered Species

The operation of four round-trips per day at 79 mph would potentially affect wildlife and threatened and endangered species, but to a lesser degree than under full implementation. The potential for train collisions with mammalian species and migratory birds would occur, but to a lesser extent than under full implementation.

Air Quality Energy Use and Climate Change Irreversible and Irrecoverable Commitments of Resources

Because of the slower speed associated with the interim implementation phase, modal trips would be in the process of shifting or being diverted from automobile, bus and air trips, but not to the extent that would occur under full implementation. Consequently, reductions in energy consumption and cumulative air emissions (including GHG) from more efficient

transportation of people would still occur, but not to the same extent as under full implementation. However, the interim implementation phase would still be in conformity in the designated nonattainment and maintenance areas because the emissions would still be under the *de minimis* threshold. Several irretrievable energy resources would be committed for operation and maintenance, including petroleum, natural gas, electrical, and manpower, but to a lesser extent than under full implementation.

Short-Term Use Vs. Long-Term Productivity of the Environment

Short-term construction impacts (described in Section 3.28.1) would be offset by long-term benefits, including a reduction in air pollution emissions, decreased congestion on local streets and highways, improved accessibility within the region, increased economic activity and employment opportunities, potential for transit-oriented development, and improved safety for at-grade crossings. However, these benefits would not occur to the same extent as under full implementation of rail passenger service.

Indirect and Cumulative Impacts

With the interim implementation phase, indirect and cumulative impacts on some resources from operation and maintenance could occur as described in Section 3.26.4.1, but to a lesser extent than under full implementation.

3.28.3 Potential Mitigation Measures

The potential need for mitigation and potential mitigation measures that were discussed for each resource under full implementation of the Build Alternative also pertain to adverse impacts resulting from the interim implementation phase. However, mitigation requirements would most likely be less than under full implementation. Actual mitigation for adverse impacts on resources would be conducted during each phase of development and would be incremental as the phases advance. Mitigation measures will be discussed further during Tier 2 analyses.

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CHAPTER 4

COMMENTS AND COORDINATION

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

4.1 AGENCY OUTREACH

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

4.1.1 Early Coordination

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

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

- Illinois Historical Preservation Agency (Illinois State Historic Preservation Office)
- Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs
- Illinois Nature Preserves Commission
- State of Illinois
- Iowa agencies
 - Iowa Agriculture Development Authority
 - Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship
 - Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs
 - Iowa Department of Human Services
 - Iowa Department of Natural Resources
 - Iowa Department of Public Health
 - Iowa DOT Districts
 - Iowa Economic Development Authority
 - Iowa Environmental Protection Commission
 - Iowa State Parks Bureau
 - Iowa State Preserves Advisory Board
 - Iowa Transportation Commission
 - State Historical Society of Iowa (Iowa State Historic Preservation Office)
 - State of Iowa
- Nebraska agencies
 - Nebraska Department of Aeronautics
 - Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality
 - Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services
 - Nebraska Department of Natural Resources
 - Nebraska Department of Roads District 2
 - Nebraska Department of Roads Rail and Public Transportation
 - Nebraska Game and Parks Commission
 - Nebraska State Historical Society (Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office)
 - State of Nebraska

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

Summary of Comments

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

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

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

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

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

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

Table 4-1. Summary of Agency Scoping Comments

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

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

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

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

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

Agency	Issue	Comment	Response
Nebraska			
Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality	Permitting and Approvals	As with any facility, permits may be required prior to beginning construction or operation. At a minimum, FRA should be aware of the possible requirements for the following permits:	Comments noted. Section 3.27 of the Tier 1 EIS identifies potential known permits and approvals to help expedite future environmental review and permitting during the Tier 2 NEPA process.
	Water Quality	A Construction Storm Water Permit will be required if there is greater than 1 acre of disturbance of land, which is likely with this Project.	
	Waste	Wastes generated from construction and/or demolition during this Project must be properly disposed at a permitted landfill or recycled.	
	Wetlands	USACE should be contacted regarding Section 404 needs.	
	Air Quality	<p>Any contamination of city roadways will require prevention and/or clean-up per the City of Omaha specifications. Depending on the final route and location in Douglas County as well as installation of stationary equipment, NDEQ Title 129 (outside of city limits) and/or Omaha Air Quality Control regulations (inside of city limits) would apply to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land clearing and construction-disposal of waste materials by open burning. • Asbestos assessment and abatement prior to any structure demolition. • Fugitive dust control during all land clearing and construction activities. • Construction and/or operating permits for stationary engines, boilers, emergency generation equipment, and other equipment. 	
	Permitting and Approvals	Until further along in the planning process, it is unknown whether there may be additional regulatory requirements. NDEQ strongly urges FRA to contact it to determine other requirements. It has been NDEQ's experience that early and open communication helps facilitate the permitting process.	NDEQ will be coordinated with on additional permitting concerns for the Tier 2 Project that would occur in Nebraska.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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4.1.2 Cooperating Agencies

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

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

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

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

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

4.1.3 Milestones

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

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

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

4.2 TRIBAL OUTREACH

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.3 STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH

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

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

4.3.1 Outreach Tools

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

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

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

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

Table 4-2. Outreach Tools and Usage Summary

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

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

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

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

4.3.2 Scoping Meeting

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.3.3 Alternatives Analysis Meetings

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

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

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

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

4.3.4 Community Survey Results

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

Table 4-3. Community Survey Results Summary

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

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

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

4.4 TIER 1 DRAFT EIS PUBLIC HEARING AND COMMENT PROCESS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.5 FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES FOR INPUT

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

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

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CHAPTER 5 NEXT STEPS

As stated in Chapter 1 and throughout this Tier 1 Final EIS, public, resource agency, and tribal input will be considered to complete the Tier 1 process. Following the Tier 1 process, Tier 2 studies and NEPA documentation must occur before final design and implementation can be completed. This chapter describes how FRA, Iowa DOT, and Illinois DOT plan to complete the Tier 1 process and the additional analysis required for Tier 2 studies, NEPA documentation, and design needed to advance the proposed Project.

5.1 TIER 1 COMPLETION

The Tier 1 Draft EIS was issued to solicit input on the preferred alternative from the public, resource agencies, tribes, and Native American groups. Comments received on the Draft EIS during the comment period were used to prepare and issue this Tier 1 Final EIS that addresses these comments. Subsequent to distribution of the Final EIS, a Record of Decision (ROD) will be developed, documenting the decision of selecting the preferred alternative and the process for accommodating mitigation measures that will be implemented in subsequent phases of the Project. Because this is a Tier 1 NEPA document, most mitigation measures represent commitments for further coordination with the public, resource agencies, tribes, and Native American groups during Tier 2 studies as more detailed information on the design of the Project is developed.

5.2 TIER 2 SECTIONS

As funding becomes available, Tier 2 studies and NEPA documentation would be advanced for logical sections of the proposed Project. That is, one or more sections could be developed as individual projects that would comprise components of the Chicago to Council Bluffs-Omaha Regional Passenger Rail System Program. Separate Tier 2 NEPA documentation would be prepared for each of the sections identified; the specific class of NEPA document has not yet been determined for each of the Tier 2 sections. Each of the sections would have independent utility and, therefore, could be improved with or without improvements to other sections. Likewise, each of the sections could be implemented in phases, as discussed further in Section 5.6. Preliminary design and NEPA documentation would be conducted in support of those Tier 2 studies because such details are necessary to identify the resources that would be impacted by construction activities and on a long-term basis. At this time, the following Tier 2 sections are anticipated for full implementation, but these sections may be combined, modified in the future, or revisited based on available funding:

- **Chicago to Aurora, Illinois, Track Improvements** – This Tier 2 NEPA document would include the evaluation of the track, drainage structure, roadway crossing, and train-control system improvements necessary to provide capacity for additional passenger trains along this section of the alignment in Illinois. Potential station platform, layover, and maintenance facility improvements at Chicago Union Station will also be included.

- **Aurora, Illinois, to the Wyanet Connection near Wyanet, Illinois, Track Improvements** - This Tier 2 NEPA document would include the evaluation of the track, drainage structure, roadway crossing, station, and train-control system improvements necessary to provide capacity and to increase speeds to up to 110 mph for additional passenger trains along this section of the alignment in Illinois.
- **Wyanet Connection near Wyanet, Illinois, to Iowa City, Iowa, Track Improvements** – This Tier 2 NEPA document would include the evaluation of the track, drainage structure, roadway crossing, and train-control system improvements necessary to provide capacity and to increase speeds to up to 110 mph for additional passenger trains along this section of the alignment in Illinois and Iowa.
- **Mississippi River Bridge** – This Tier 2 NEPA document would include the evaluation of the Government Bridge across the Mississippi River between Rock Island, Illinois, and Davenport, Iowa, for the capacity and capability necessary for additional passenger trains.
- **Iowa City, Iowa, Station** – This Tier 2 NEPA document would include the evaluation of the potential acquisition and/or rehabilitation of the existing former Rock Island Route station in Iowa City, including platform, parking, and site improvements. Should acquisition or rehabilitation not be possible, an evaluation of alternative station locations and designs would be conducted in lieu of the analysis of rehabilitating the existing station.
- **Iowa City, Iowa, Layover and Maintenance Facility** – This Tier 2 EPA document would include the evaluation of passenger train layover and maintenance facility location and design alternatives.
- **Iowa City to Short Line Yard, Des Moines, Iowa, Track Improvements** – This Tier 2 NEPA document would include the evaluation of the track, drainage structure, roadway crossing, and train-control system improvements necessary to provide capacity and to increase speeds to up to 110 mph for additional passenger trains along this section of the alignment in Iowa.
- **Grinnell, Iowa, Station** – This Tier 2 NEPA document would include the evaluation of the potential acquisition and/or rehabilitation of the existing former Rock Island Route station in Grinnell, including platform, parking, and site improvements. Should acquisition or rehabilitation not be possible, an evaluation of alternative station locations and designs would be conducted in lieu of the analysis of rehabilitating the existing station.
- **Des Moines, Iowa, Short Line Yard Improvements** – This Tier 2 NEPA document would include the evaluation of alignment and design alternatives necessary to provide the capacity for additional passenger trains through the Short Line Yard terminal area. It would also include the evaluation of the track, drainage structure, roadway crossing, and train-control system improvements necessary to provide capacity and to increase speeds to up to 70 mph through Des Moines for additional passenger trains along the alignment in Iowa.

- **Des Moines, Iowa, Station** – This Tier 2 NEPA document would include the evaluation of the potential acquisition and/or rehabilitation of the existing former Rock Island Route station in Des Moines, including platform, parking, and site improvements. Should acquisition or rehabilitation not be possible, an evaluation of alternative station locations and designs would be conducted in lieu of the analysis of rehabilitating the existing station.
- **Des Moines, Iowa, Layover and Maintenance Facility** – This Tier 2 NEPA document would include the evaluation of passenger train layover and maintenance facility location and design alternatives.
- **Des Moines to Council Bluffs, Iowa, Track Improvements** – This Tier 2 NEPA document would include the evaluation of the track, drainage structure, roadway crossing, and train-control system improvements necessary to provide capacity and to increase speeds to up to 110 mph for additional passenger trains along this section of the alignment in Iowa.
- **Atlantic, Iowa, Station** – This Tier 2 NEPA document would include the evaluation of the potential acquisition and/or rehabilitation of the existing former Rock Island Route station in Atlantic, including platform, parking, and site improvements. Should acquisition or rehabilitation not be possible, an evaluation of alternative station locations and designs would be conducted in lieu of the analysis of rehabilitating the existing station.
- **Council Bluffs, Iowa, Station** – This Tier 2 NEPA document would include the evaluation of alternative station locations and designs in Council Bluffs, including the potential acquisition and/or rehabilitation of the existing former Rock Island Route station in Council Bluffs, including platform, parking, and site improvements.
- **Omaha, Nebraska/Council Bluffs, Iowa, Layover and Maintenance Facilities** – This Tier 2 NEPA document would include the evaluation of passenger train layover and maintenance facility location and design alternatives.
- **Council Bluffs, Iowa, to Omaha, Nebraska, Track Improvements** – This Tier 2 NEPA document would include the evaluation of alignment and design alternatives necessary to provide the capacity for additional passenger trains through the Council Bluff-Omaha terminal area. It would also include the evaluation of the track, drainage structure, roadway crossing, and train-control system improvements necessary to provide capacity and to increase speeds to up to 40 mph for additional passenger trains along this section of the alignment in Iowa and Nebraska.
- **Missouri River Bridge** – This Tier 2 NEPA document would include the evaluation of alternative bridges and bridge locations across the Missouri River between Council Bluffs, Iowa, and Omaha, Nebraska, for the capacity and capability necessary for additional passenger trains anticipated by the Project.
- **Omaha, Nebraska, Station** – This Tier 2 NEPA document would include the evaluation of the alternative station locations and designs in Omaha, including the potential acquisition and/or rehabilitation of the existing former Burlington Route station in Omaha, including platform, parking, and site improvements.

5.3 ADDITIONAL STUDIES

Multiple NEPA documents would be developed during the Tier 2 NEPA process but are anticipated to be a mixture of Environmental Assessments for areas such as the Missouri River crossing between Council Bluffs, Iowa, and Omaha, Nebraska, and Categorical Exclusions for areas with minimal effects. Public involvement would occur during Tier 2 studies, primarily through NEPA, but there may also be separate coordination regarding the design of stations and other railroad facilities. Public input would be considered in the NEPA and design processes.

In addition to NEPA documentation for evaluation of the Tier 2 sections, numerous studies would be completed as part of the Tier 2 NEPA process to determine the specific nature and quantity of impacts. The analysis would consider avoidance and minimization of impacts on sensitive environmental resources. For each Tier 2 section, the following studies may be required:

- Detailed local-level alternatives analysis
- Wetland delineations and identification of Section 404 permitting requirements
- Cultural resources surveys and Section 106 consultation
- Threatened and endangered species surveys
- Engineering surveys
- Noise and vibration analysis
- Section 4(f) evaluation
- Phase I Environmental Site Assessments
- Air emissions analysis in non-attainment areas
- Station-area traffic studies

5.4 MITIGATION PLANNING

In addition to the Tier 2 studies, mitigation for impacts would also be developed. Anticipated types of mitigation include wetland mitigation, construction timing restrictions for threatened and endangered species, implementation of a stormwater pollution and prevention plan, implementation of best management practices, and documentation of historic railroad structures and other historic properties. Specific mitigation during the Tier 2 process would be determined in consultation with the federal or state agency responsible for assessing impacts on a given resource. As needed, formal consultation would occur with resource agencies to address obligations to minimize and mitigate impacts, such as those obligations under Section 7 of the ESA and Section 106 of the NHPA. For example, a Section 106 PA could be developed after the Tier 1 process that would address the process of consultation between FRA, tribes and Native American groups, Iowa DOT, Illinois DOT, and the Illinois, Iowa, and Nebraska SHPOs, as well as other consulting parties, for meeting historic preservation compliance requirements.

5.5 PROJECT COMMITMENTS

This Tier 1 Final EIS identified mitigation commitments for each relevant resource section in Chapter 3. During the Tier 1 process, the primary commitments have been to work with the public, resource agencies, tribes, and Native American groups to identify specific mitigation measures during the Tier 2 process and subsequently implement those measures.

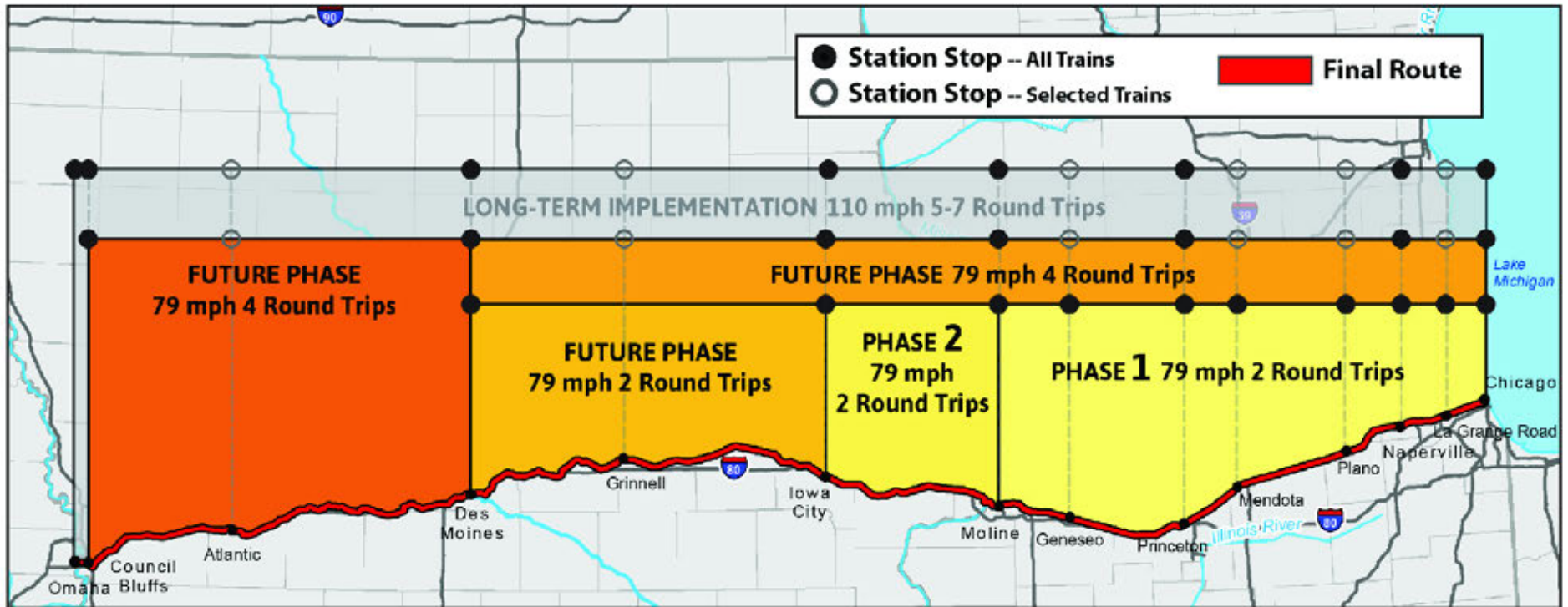
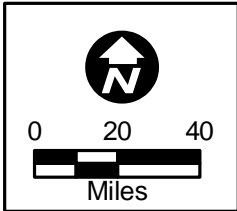
5.6 PHASED IMPLEMENTATION

Based on experience with other passenger rail projects and on service development planning for this Project, Iowa DOT anticipates that the Chicago to Council Bluffs-Omaha Project would be incrementally funded and that construction and operations would be implemented in phases. Within the approximate 20-year planning horizon of the SDP, initial and successive phases have been considered through the interim implementation phase, which is the last phase that would be implemented using existing SDP information. Funding initially could be allocated for improvements of facilities to support speeds lower than a maximum of 110 mph, or to improve/construct particular stations and maintenance and layover facilities. Service initially could start with fewer stations, at lower speeds, and with fewer round-trips. As more funding is allocated to the Project, further improvements could be implemented to expand service. The specific phasing of the proposed Project is not known at this time but will be determined as funding is allocated to the proposed Project. Figure 5-1 illustrates the proposed implementation phases.

Based on current service development planning, the proposed Project is anticipated to commence with two round-trips per day from Chicago to Moline at a maximum speed of 79 mph (Phase 1); Phase 1 is funded and would occur independently as part of the Quad Cities Expansion Program passenger rail project. Phase 2 would include two round-trips per day between Chicago and Iowa City. The Project would then be extended westward to Des Moines, with two and then four round-trips per day between Chicago and Des Moines. The last phase of the proposed Project that would be implemented within the 20-year planning horizon of the SDP would be four round-trips per day between Chicago and Council Bluffs. The proposed schedule developed for the SDP for these phases includes the following estimated timeframes:

- Chicago to Moline (two round-trips) – construction 2014-2015; service begins December 31, 2015
- Chicago to Iowa City (two round-trips) – construction 2015-2016; service begins 2017
- Chicago to Des Moines (two round-trips) – construction 2020-2021; service begins 2022
- Chicago to Des Moines (four round-trips) – equipment procurement 2024; service begins 2025
- Chicago to Council Bluffs (four round-trips) – construction 2028-2029; service begins 2030

After additional service development planning is completed in the future, the service would be extended to Omaha; currently estimated to commence in 2040. Ultimately, the speed and the frequency of round-trips would increase with subsequent implementation phases up to a maximum of 110 mph and up to seven round-trips per day from Chicago to Des Moines, with five of the round-trips extending from Chicago to Omaha. Full implementation would be realized over many years of phased implementation as federal and state funds are allocated to the proposed Project.



Implementation Phases

Chicago to Council Bluffs - Omaha
Regional Passenger Rail System Planning Study

DATE
May 2013

FIGURE
5-1

CHAPTER 6 LIST OF PREPARERS

This Tier 1 EIS was prepared by numerous professionals comprising the Chicago to Council Bluffs-Omaha Regional Passenger Rail System Planning Study team.

6.1 FEDERAL RAILROAD ADMINISTRATION

The following FRA staff was responsible for overall project management, technical direction, and review of the Tier 1 EIS.

Federal Railroad Administration

Name	Qualifications/ Background	Project Role/ Responsibilities
Andréa Martin	MA Ed. Curriculum and Instructional Development; BS Environmental Management; 8 years of experience	Project oversight and reviewer

6.2 IOWA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

The following Iowa DOT staff were responsible for project management, technical direction, and review of the Tier 1 EIS.

Iowa Department of Transportation

Name	Qualifications/ Background	Project Role/ Responsibilities
Tammy Nicholson	BS Civil Engineering; 22 years of experience with highway location studies and rail transportation.	Office Director – Rail Transportation
Amanda Martin	BS Community and Regional Planning; 14 years of experience managing federally funded projects/activities, planning studies, and working with state and local agencies on various multimodal transportation planning projects.	Project Manager –Agreements, EIS, Service Development Plan, Conceptual Design, and Financial Progress Reporting
Janet Vine	MS Estuarine Ecology; 6 years of experience managing NEPA process and documentation.	NEPA Lead – EIS
Tracey Bramble	BS Journalism and Mass Communications; 26 years of experience in media relations including media buys, copywriting, editing, and design.	Public Involvement Lead – Assisted with development and approval of content for webpage, meeting materials, and stakeholder toolkit.

Name	Qualifications/ Background	Project Role/ Responsibilities
Ed Engle	MS Civil Engineering and Environmental Science; BS Chemical Engineering; Licensed professional engineer; 25 years of technical/research experience with 18 years related to transportation.	Engineering Lead – Service Development Plan and Conceptual Design
Diane McCauley	BA Art Education; 35 years of experience in management analysis, graphics presentation, training, and marketing.	Public Involvement – Assisted with development of content for webpage, meeting materials, and stakeholder toolkit.
Laura Hutzell	BS Community and Regional Planning; 3 years of experience in transportation planning.	GIS/Data – EIS
Anne Turcotte	MRP Regional Planning; 2 years of experience in multimodal and long-range transportation planning.	GIS/Data – EIS
Mary Jo Key	38 years of experience working in various positions with the Iowa Department of Transportation, including the past 10 years managing state and federal rail transportation projects.	Project Maintenance – Assisted with organization and storage of project documents and other various project activities.
Mark Lane	BS Education; 25 years of experience in digital video production; 20 years of experience in web and graphic design.	Web Design – Developed webpage, generated analytic reports, and assisted with video production activities.
Mike Coon	BFA; 40 years of video production experience including broadcast, advertising, and corporate television, including 14 years in transportation programming; training in commercial art, photography, music, and basic electronics.	Video Production – Developed all video productions included for online public information meetings.
Christina Andersen	BS Journalism and Mass Communications; 7 years of experience in copywriting and graphic design.	Graphic Design – Assisted with development of meeting materials and stakeholder toolkit.
Jari Mohs	38 years of experience in project coordination, editing, design, and public relations.	Public Involvement – Assisted with review and approval of webpage, meeting materials, and stakeholder toolkit.

6.3 ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

The following Illinois DOT staff were responsible for review of the Tier 1 EIS.

Illinois Department of Transportation

Name	Qualifications/ Background	Project Role/ Responsibilities
Miriam Gutierrez	BA History; 3 years of experience in rail program planning	Bureau Chief of High Speed and Passenger Rail
Walt Zyznieuski	MA Environmental Studies; BS Geography; 30 years of experience in environmental resources	Air and Noise Impact Analysis and Review; General NEPA Content Review
Tom Brooks	MLA Landscape Architecture; 18 years of experience in land use and natural resources	Natural Resources Review and Comment
Emilie Eggemeyer	MS Historic Preservation; BS Historic Preservation; 4 years of experience in cultural resource research and review	Historic Documentation Review
Brad Koldehoff	MA Anthropology/Archaeology; BA Anthropology; 30 years of experience with cultural resources	Archaeology and Historic Coordination Analysis and Review

6.4 HDR ENGINEERING, INC. AND HNTB CORPORATION

HDR Engineering, Inc. and its subcontractor HNTB Corporation were responsible for supporting FRA and Iowa DOT in preparing the Tier 1 EIS. The following individuals were key members of the project team.

HDR Engineering, Inc.

Name	Qualifications/ Background	Project Role/ Responsibilities
Will Sharp	MS Civil Engineering; BS Civil Engineering; 27 years of experience in project management, roadway location studies, roadway design, environmental compliance, and traffic engineering.	Project Manager – EIS, Service Development Plan, and Conceptual Design.
John Morton	MS Engineering Management; BS Civil Engineering; 38 years of experience in design, permitting, and approval of civil engineering structures, with specialized experience and training in environmental compliance, NEPA compliance, mitigation design, Clean Water Act permitting, public involvement, and interagency coordination.	Senior Advisor – EIS, and QA/QC Review.
Mark Hemphill	MA History; BA History; 18 years of experience in the railroad industry in operating, mechanical, engineering, and program management with a particular expertise in train operations and control systems.	Task Manager – Service Development Plan, and QA/QC Review.

Name	Qualifications/ Background	Project Role/ Responsibilities
Kelly Farrell	MBA Business Administration; BS Environmental Sciences/Studies (Natural Resources); 14 years of experience in threatened and endangered species habitat surveys, identification, and reports; wetland identification and delineation; Section 404 and NPDES permitting; federal and state agency coordination; NEPA projects including EAs and EISs; fatal flaw analysis; and wetland mitigation site monitoring.	Deputy Project Manager – Prepared draft Purpose and Need (Chapter 1), Alternatives (Chapter 2), and Next Steps (Chapter 5).
Brian Goss	MS Environmental Sciences/Studies (Geochemistry and Mineralogy); BA Geological & Related Sciences; 26 years of experience in environmental analysis, including the preparation of NEPA and supporting compliance documents.	EIS Document Manager – Conducted technical review of Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences (Chapter 3), prepared draft Comments and Coordination (Chapter 4) and Indirect and Cumulative Impacts section.
Randy McCart	MA Geography; BS Geography; BS Education; 31 years of experience in NEPA program experience, environmental assessments, and environmental impact statements.	Senior Environmental Analyst – Prepared draft sections on Parks and Natural Areas, Section 4(f)/6(f), and Irreversible and Irrecoverable Commitments of Resources.
Tim Casey	BS Biological/Life Sciences; AS Science; 26 years of experience in performing noise and vibration analyses, and finding solutions to address noise and vibration on projects throughout the United States and Puerto Rico.	Senior Environmental Analyst – Prepared draft section on Noise and Vibration Impacts.
Alan Stanfill	MA Anthropology; BA Anthropology; 38 years of experience as an archaeologist and cultural resource manager in the private and public sectors.	Senior Environmental Analyst – Prepared draft section on Cultural Resources.
Theresa McClure	MA Public Policy, Public Relations/Org Comm (Strategic Public Relations and Political Management); BA Geography; 9 years of experience in implementing project-specific outreach plans.	Public Involvement Specialist – Planned public information meetings, developed framework for webpage and stakeholder database, and provided data input for Chapter 4.
Alex Fischer	BS Environmental Studies; 1 year of experience in GIS, NEPA compliance, threatened and endangered species, wetland delineation, monitoring, and reports.	Environmental Analyst – Prepared Park and Natural Area tables, and Section 4(f)/6(f) tables
Dylan Eigenberger	MA Anthropology; BA Archaeology; 5 years of experience in cultural resources management.	Environmental Analyst – Prepared Cultural Resources APE and potential impact area tables
Scott Reed	MBA Environmental Sciences/Studies; BS Geology; 21 years of experience in managing environmental projects.	Senior Environmental Analyst – Conducted QA/QC of Draft EIS chapters and sections.
Janice Reid	BS Sociology; AA Liberal Arts/Sciences; 22 years of experience in transportation planning and environmental documentation.	Senior Environmental Analyst – Conducted QA/QC of Draft EIS chapters and sections.

Name	Qualifications/ Background	Project Role/ Responsibilities
Rose Hargrave	MS Biology; BA Biology; 35 years of experience in the management of environmental regulatory programs and multidisciplinary teams as well as in preparation of EISs, EAs, and technical reports for a wide variety of projects.	Senior Environmental Analyst – Conducted QA/QC of Final EIS chapters and sections.
Amy Sorensen	AS Geographic Information Systems; AS Education; 8 years of experience in Geographic Information Systems (GIS), including reading, interpreting, and understanding legal descriptions, maps, plats, aerial photographs, and other GIS-related source information.	GIS Specialist – Managed GIS data collection and environmental analysis, and generated EIS figures.
Kim Gust	MA English Composition and Rhetoric; BSE English; 15 years of experience in developing templates and style guidelines, technical editing, copy editing, compiling references, formatting, and preparing documents for publication.	Technical Editor – Established document templates, performed technical editing of EIS, and prepared document for publication.

HNTB Corporation

Name	Qualifications/ Background	Project Role/ Responsibilities
Randy Wade	MS Water Resource Management; BA Economics; 38 years of experience in environmental management, policy and systems planning in natural resources, state economic development and transportation.	Project Manager/Senior Advisor – Service Development Plan and Task Lead for Station Development and Financial Analysis, and QA/QC Review.
Steve Wells	MS Urban & Regional Planning; BS Political Science; 23 years of experience in transportation planning, environmental planning, and NEPA documentation.	Project Manager – Conducted QA/QC review of various EIS sections.
Kip Strauss	MBA; Master of City Planning; MS Transportation Engineering; BA Liberal Arts; 19 years of experience in transportation planning.	Deputy Project Manager – Conducted QA/QC review of various EIS sections.
Gretchen Ivy	MS Engineering Management; BS Civil Engineering; 14 years of experience in NEPA management, environmental, and transportation planning.	Environmental QA/QC Reviewer – Provided EIS preparation oversight and reviewed EIS Chapter 3.
Caron Kloser	MS Horticulture; BS Agronomy; 27 years of experience in NEPA environmental and transportation planning.	Environmental QA/QC Reviewer – Reviewed environmental Technical Memoranda and EIS Chapter 3.

Name	Qualifications/ Background	Project Role/ Responsibilities
Tim Flagler	MLA Landscape Architecture; BFA Fine Arts; 10 years of experience in site design and master planning; 17 years of experience in NEPA environmental and transportation planning, natural resource field investigations, and wetland delineations.	Senior Environmental Task Leader – Prepared sections of EIS Chapter 3, including Agricultural Resources, Elderly & Disabled, Hazardous Waste, Visual Assessment, Water Resources, Wetlands, Water Quality, Floodplains, Topography, Geology, Soils, Natural Habitats, Wildlife, T&E Species, and Short-term vs. Long-term Productivity. Conducted QA/QC review of other sections.
Brian Comer	Masters of Community and Regional Planning; BA Political Science and History; 14 years of experience in land use, transportation, and environmental planning.	Senior Planner – Prepared sections of EIS, including Transportation, Land Use, Socioeconomic Environment, Title VI and Environmental Justice, Public Health and Safety, Construction Impacts, and Permits.
Betty Burry	MPA; 25 years of experience in communications and public engagement and education; 12 years of experience in NEPA public engagement processes.	Reviewer.
Brandon Yarbrough	MS Urban and Regional Planning – Environmental Planning; BA Earth Science and Geology; 5 years of experience in NEPA, environmental and transportation planning, and natural resource investigation; 7 years of experience in application of GIS for alternative development and environmental analysis.	Environmental Planner – Provided document preparation assistance, conducted QA/QC of GIS data analysis, and managed GIS data collection and environmental analysis.
Eric Strack	MS Civil Engineering; BS Civil Engineering; 3.5 years of experience in transportation design, transportation planning, and environmental planning.	Engineer II – Prepared sections of EIS, including Air Quality and Energy, and conducted GIS environmental impact analysis.
Robert Hosack	MUP Urban Planning; BS Geography; 1 year of experience in transportation planning; 3 years of experience in GIS.	Urban Planner – Conducted data collection and GIS, and assisted with EIS preparation for Environmental Justice.
Cindy Doran	Over 10 years of experience in graphic design and creative layouts.	Graphic Designer – Prepared corridor route maps and cover graphics.
Corey Fischer	MS Urban and Regional Planning; BS Geospatial Sciences; 2 years of planning experience.	Infrastructure Planner – Assisted in preparation of sections of EIS, including Land Use and Environmental Justice, conducted QA/QC review for other sections, compiled references.

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INDEX

A

access, 1-5, 1-9, 1-10, 1-13, 1-14, 2-10, 2-17, 3-7, 3-17, 3-19, 3-20, 3-21, 3-22, 3-23, 3-30, 3-112, 3-113, 3-114, 3-115, 3-118, 3-119, 3-124, 3-125, 3-135, 4-4, 4-15, 4-16, 4-17, 4-18, 4-29, 4-38

accessible, 2-29, 3-10, 3-17, 3-23, 3-24, 3-25, 3-26, 3-27, 3-28, 3-29, 3-119, 3-125, 3-137, 3-139, 4-33

aesthetic quality, 2-29, 3-75, 3-76, 3-77, 3-78, 3-80, 3-124, 3-129, 3-134, 3-138

affected environment, 3-2, 3-3, 3-8, 3-12, 3-14, 3-20, 3-23, 3-28, 3-38, 3-58, 3-61, 3-67, 3-71, 3-73, 3-76, 3-81, 3-84, 3-87, 3-90, 3-92, 3-96, 3-102, 3-107, 3-110, 3-112, 3-116, 3-118, 3-121, 4-35

agricultural resources, 2-6, 2-29, 3-8, 3-9, 3-12, 3-13, 3-76, 3-96, 3-113, 3-114, 3-133, 3-136, 4-2, 4-26

air quality, 2-29, 2-30, 3-3, 3-57, 3-58, 3-59, 3-60, 3-112, 3-113, 3-114, 3-115, 3-118, 3-124, 3-125, 3-126, 3-130, 3-132, 3-135, 3-138, 4-4, 4-10, 4-14, 4-26, 4-33, 4-36

airline service, 1-9, 1-12, 3-4, 3-7, 3-26, 4-7

airlines, 1-12, 2-14, 2-28, 3-4, 3-5, 3-26, 3-110, 3-111, 4-26, 4-28, 4-30, 4-31, 4-32, 4-39

Alternatives

See Build Alternative, No-Build Alternative, or Route Alternative

Amtrak, 1-1, 1-2, 1-13, 2-13, 2-14, 2-15, 2-18, 2-23, 2-28, 3-5, 3-6, 3-10, 3-18, 3-22, 3-24, 3-28, 3-122, 4-13, 4-15, 4-27, 4-28, 4-30, 4-37

aquatic resources, 2-30, 3-97, 3-98, 3-99, 3-100, 3-101, 3-107, 3-127

Area of Potential Effect (APE), 3-66, 3-67, 3-70

asbestos, 3-131, 4-10

attainment, 3-57, 5-4

automobile travel, 1-9, 1-10, 1-11, 2-24, 2-25, 2-30, 3-3, 3-4, 3-5, 3-6, 3-7, 3-59, 3-68, 3-110, 3-111, 3-117, 3-119, 3-123, 3-125, 3-136, 3-138, 4-7, 4-12, 4-30

B

bedrock, 3-88, 3-93, 3-95, 3-103

benefits, 1-9, 2-4, 2-7, 2-9, 2-29, 2-30, 3-6, 3-14, 3-18, 3-19, 3-21, 3-23, 3-58, 3-111, 3-117, 3-118, 3-119, 3-125, 3-126, 3-133, 3-135, 3-136, 3-137, 3-138, 3-139, 4-13, 4-16, 4-26, 4-27, 4-31, 4-33, 4-36

Best Management Practice (BMP), 3-63, 3-82, 5-4

BNSF Railway (BNSF), 2-13, 2-15, 2-17, 2-18, 3-2, 3-5, 3-6, 3-7, 3-9, 3-22, 3-24, 3-28, 3-29, 3-82, 3-113, 3-122, 4-13

brownfield, 3-61, 3-62, 3-64

Build Alternative, 1-1, 2-1, 2-10, 2-13, 2-14, 2-15, 2-16, 2-17, 2-23, 2-24, 2-25, 2-28, 2-29, 2-30, 3-1, 3-2, 3-3, 3-4, 3-6, 3-7, 3-8, 3-9, 3-10, 3-11, 3-13, 3-14, 3-17, 3-18, 3-20, 3-21, 3-22, 3-23, 3-26, 3-27, 3-29, 3-32, 3-35, 3-37, 3-38, 3-46, 3-47, 3-51, 3-52, 3-55, 3-56, 3-59, 3-60, 3-63, 3-64, 3-65, 3-67, 3-70, 3-72, 3-74, 3-78, 3-79, 3-82, 3-85, 3-88, 3-89, 3-91, 3-94, 3-95, 3-99, 3-100, 3-107, 3-108, 3-109, 3-111, 3-113, 3-114, 3-115, 3-117, 3-118, 3-119, 3-121, 3-124, 3-125, 3-126, 3-127, 3-132, 3-135, 3-136, 3-137, 3-139, 4-35

bus service, 1-2, 1-5, 1-9, 1-10, 1-11, 1-12, 1-13, 2-14, 2-28, 3-4, 3-5, 3-6, 3-7, 3-23, 3-24, 3-25, 3-59, 3-60, 3-110, 3-111, 3-119, 3-124, 3-125, 3-136, 3-138, 4-7, 4-15, 4-26, 4-27, 4-28, 4-29, 4-30, 4-32, 4-36, 4-38, 4-39

businesses, 2-6, 2-9, 3-8, 3-14, 3-17, 3-18, 3-20, 3-31, 3-112, 3-114, 3-125, 3-133, 4-13, 4-16, 4-17, 4-26, 4-27, 4-30, 4-31, 4-32, 4-33, 4-36, 4-37

C

California Zephyr, 1-13, 2-13, 2-14, 2-15, 3-5, 3-6, 3-122, 4-7, 4-13, 4-27, 4-28, 4-30, 4-37, 4-38

carbon dioxide (CO₂), 3-60, 3-111, 3-112, 4-26, 4-30

carbon monoxide (CO), 3-57, 3-60, 3-130

caves, 3-87, 3-92, 3-93, 3-103

Census, 1-9, 1-10, 1-11, 3-14, 3-15, 3-19, 3-20, 3-22, 3-24

centralized traffic control (CTC), 2-17, 3-28, 3-29

Chicago Union Station, 1-5, 1-6, 2-8, 2-9, 2-10, 2-11, 2-15, 2-18, 2-25, 3-67, 5-1

churches, 3-11, 3-14, 3-17, 3-31

Clean Air Act (CAA), 3-57, 3-110

climate change, 2-30, 3-110, 3-111, 3-112, 3-135, 3-138, 4-3, 4-5, 4-26, 4-36

commercial property, 1-12, 2-14, 3-4, 3-8, 3-9, 3-11, 3-25, 3-61, 3-62, 3-67, 3-68, 3-69, 3-81, 3-119

community centers, 3-14, 3-17

commuter rail service, 1-1, 1-14, 3-5, 3-24, 3-32, 3-121

congestion, 1-11, 1-12, 1-15, 2-11, 2-13, 2-14, 2-29, 2-30, 3-3, 3-4, 3-6, 3-7, 3-22, 3-23, 3-26, 3-58, 3-113, 3-118, 3-119, 3-122, 3-123, 3-124, 3-125, 3-126, 3-135, 3-139, 4-12, 4-13, 4-14, 4-26, 4-29, 4-30, 4-36, 4-38, 4-39

construction, 2-1, 2-4, 2-5, 2-10, 2-13, 2-17, 2-18, 2-23, 2-25, 2-28, 2-29, 2-30, 3-1, 3-2, 3-7, 3-8, 3-9, 3-11, 3-13, 3-14, 3-17, 3-19, 3-22, 3-23, 3-26, 3-27, 3-28, 3-29, 3-37, 3-56, 3-59, 3-60, 3-64, 3-65, 3-67, 3-70, 3-71, 3-72, 3-74, 3-75, 3-78, 3-80, 3-81, 3-82, 3-83, 3-85, 3-86, 3-88, 3-89, 3-90, 3-91, 3-92, 3-94, 3-95, 3-99, 3-101, 3-102, 3-107, 3-108, 3-110, 3-111, 3-112, 3-113, 3-114, 3-115, 3-116, 3-117, 3-118, 3-119, 3-121, 3-122, 3-123, 3-124, 3-125, 3-126, 3-127, 3-128, 3-129, 3-130, 3-131, 3-132, 3-133, 3-134, 3-135, 3-136, 3-139, 4-3, 4-5, 4-8, 4-9, 4-10, 4-11, 4-12, 4-23, 4-27, 4-28, 4-29, 4-37, 4-38, 5-1, 5-4, 5-5

contamination, 3-61, 3-62, 3-63, 3-65, 3-88, 3-114, 3-133, 4-10

Councils of Government (COGs), 3-3, 3-8, 3-19, 3-110, 3-120

criteria pollutant, 3-57, 3-58

crossings

- at-grade, 2-17, 2-23, 2-24, 2-29, 3-6, 3-17, 3-26, 3-27, 3-28, 3-29, 3-30, 3-33, 3-36, 3-52, 3-56, 3-118, 3-119, 3-124, 3-133, 3-139, 4-12
- grade-separated, 3-6, 3-7, 3-26, 3-28, 3-29, 3-36, 3-52, 3-133, 4-29, 4-38

cultural resources, 2-4, 2-6, 2-29, 3-3, 3-65, 3-66, 3-67, 3-70, 3-116, 3-124, 3-134, 3-136, 3-138, 4-36, 5-4

D

decibels, 3-30, 3-114

demographic 1-9, 3-14, 3-17, 3-19, 3-20, 3-22, 4-30

designated critical habitat, 3-102, 3-103, 3-105, 3-107, 3-134, 4-8

detour, 2-29, 3-7, 3-26, 3-91, 3-112, 3-118, 3-133

disabilities, 2-29, 3-19, 3-23, 3-24, 3-25, 3-26, 3-27, 3-112, 3-115, 3-119, 3-132, 3-137, 4-27

diversion, 3-7, 3-59, 3-60, 3-89, 3-136

E

eagles, 3-96, 3-98, 3-101, 4-12

economic, 1-2, 2-2, 2-4, 2-6, 2-7, 2-8, 2-9, 2-10, 2-11, 2-12, 2-29, 3-1, 3-2, 3-9, 3-14, 3-16, 3-17, 3-18, 3-19, 3-21, 3-23, 3-66, 3-115, 3-118, 3-119, 3-125, 3-133, 3-136, 3-137, 3-139, 4-4, 4-12, 4-13, 4-14, 4-15, 4-16, 4-17, 4-18, 4-26, 4-31, 4-32, 4-33, 4-36

elderly, 2-29, 3-19, 3-23, 3-24, 3-25, 3-26, 3-27, 3-112, 3-115, 3-119, 3-132, 3-137, 4-27, 4-37

emergency facilities, 3-14

emergency services, 3-14, 3-17

emissions, 1-9, 2-29, 2-30, 3-57, 3-58, 3-59, 3-60, 3-62, 3-71, 3-110, 3-111, 3-112, 3-113, 3-114, 3-115, 3-118, 3-119, 3-123, 3-124, 3-125, 3-130, 3-131, 3-132, 3-135, 3-138, 3-139, 4-13, 4-14, 4-26, 5-4

employment, 2-30, 3-14, 3-16, 3-17, 3-18, 3-118, 3-119, 3-133, 3-135, 3-136, 3-139

endangered species, 2-6, 2-30, 3-96, 3-102, 3-103, 3-104, 3-105, 3-106, 3-107, 3-108, 3-109, 3-110, 3-116, 3-124, 3-130, 3-134, 3-138, 4-3, 4-8, 4-11, 5-4

Endangered Species Act (ESA), 2-29, 3-96, 3-102, 3-109, 5-4

energy, 2-30, 3-110, 3-111, 3-112, 3-116, 3-117, 3-118, 3-119, 3-123, 3-125, 3-135, 3-138, 4-12, 4-18, 4-27, 4-30, 4-31, 4-37, 4-39

environmental justice, 2-6, 2-29, 3-19, 3-20, 3-21, 3-22, 3-112, 3-133, 3-137, 4-27

Environmental Protection Agency

- See U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA)

Eola Yard, 2-13, 3-2, 3-13, 3-26, 3-63, 3-67, 3-72, 3-77, 3-82, 3-85, 3-88, 3-91, 3-94, 3-98, 3-106, 3-117

F

farmland, 2-6, 2-29, 3-10, 3-12, 3-13, 3-14, 3-116, 3-118, 3-119, 3-125, 3-126, 3-133, 4-12, 4-26

floodplain, 2-6, 2-30, 3-81, 3-82, 3-84, 3-85, 3-90, 3-91, 3-92, 3-93, 3-94, 3-95, 3-98, 3-119, 3-127, 3-130, 3-134, 3-136, 4-3, 4-4, 4-5, 4-11

forest preserve, 3-71, 3-72, 3-73, 3-74, 3-75, 3-96, 3-97, 3-106

forest, state, 3-97, 3-131

freight rail service, 3-6, 3-7, 3-8, 3-29, 3-126, 3-133, 3-136, 3-137

fuel, 3-6, 3-12, 3-59, 3-60, 3-63, 3-110, 3-111, 3-112, 3-118, 3-124, 3-138, 4-12, 4-26, 4-27, 4-36

full implementation, 1-5, 2-24, 2-25, 2-27, 2-28, 3-1, 3-59, 3-120, 3-132, 3-133, 3-134, 3-135, 3-136, 3-137, 3-138, 3-139, 4-32, 5-1, 5-5

G

geology, 2-30, 3-36, 3-37, 3-92, 3-93, 3-94, 3-116, 3-135, 3-136

grassland, 3-78, 3-97, 3-98, 3-100

greenfield, 2-1, 2-8, 3-10

greenhouse gas, 2-30, 3-110, 3-111, 3-125, 3-130, 3-135, 3-138

greyfield, 3-10

groundwater, 3-61, 3-62, 3-63, 3-83, 3-87, 3-88, 3-89, 3-114, 3-133, 4-11

H

hazardous materials, 2-6, 2-30, 3-60, 3-61, 3-62, 3-63, 3-64, 3-65, 3-115, 3-118, 3-124, 3-138

historic district, 2-29, 3-65, 3-67, 3-68, 3-69, 3-73, 3-78

historic resources, 2-29, 3-66, 3-67, 3-68, 3-69, 3-78

homes, 2-6, 2-9, 3-17, 4-30, 4-33, 4-34, 4-36

hospitals, 3-14, 3-17, 3-31, 4-30, 4-39

housing, 3-11, 3-14, 3-18, 3-136

hydric soils, 3-84, 3-94, 3-95

hydrophytic vegetation, 3-84

I

Illinois Department of Natural Resources (Illinois DNR), 3-70, 3-71, 3-81, 3-84, 3-87, 3-88, 3-95, 3-96, 3-97, 3-98, 3-101, 3-102, 3-105, 3-106, 3-108, 3-109, 3-110, 3-128, 3-130, 4-1, 4-3, 4-9, 4-21

impact

construction, 2-29, 2-30, 3-7, 3-82, 3-85, 3-86, 3-88, 3-91, 3-99, 3-101, 3-108, 3-112, 3-113, 3-115, 3-117, 3-118, 3-119, 3-125, 3-132, 3-133, 3-134, 3-135, 3-136, 3-139

cumulative, 2-30, 3-120, 3-121, 3-123, 3-124, 3-125, 3-126, 3-127, 3-135, 3-139, 4-3, 4-7, 4-19, 4-26, 4-36

direct, 3-9, 3-10, 3-17, 3-20, 3-21, 3-26, 3-67, 3-77, 3-78, 3-82, 3-91, 3-107, 3-121, 3-124, 3-125, 3-134

indirect, 2-30, 3-18, 3-20, 3-21, 3-22, 3-67, 3-70, 3-120, 3-124, 3-125

moderate, 3-31, 3-32, 3-38, 3-47, 3-137

severe, 3-31, 3-32, 3-38, 3-47, 3-137

induced development, 3-121, 3-124, 3-125

industrial property, 2-29, 3-8, 3-9, 3-10, 3-11, 3-15, 3-16, 3-30, 3-61, 3-62, 3-64, 3-65, 3-67, 3-88, 3-114, 3-119

interim implementation phase, 1-1, 2-27, 2-28, 3-1, 3-132, 3-133, 3-135, 3-136, 3-137, 3-138, 3-139, 5-5

Iowa Department of Natural Resources (Iowa DNR), 3-57, 3-60, 3-61, 3-70, 3-71, 3-75, 3-80, 3-81, 3-82, 3-87, 3-88, 3-89, 3-93, 3-95, 3-96, 3-97, 3-98, 3-101, 3-102, 3-105, 3-107, 3-108, 3-110, 3-128, 3-129, 3-130, 3-131, 4-2

Iowa Interstate Railroad (IAIS), 2-13, 2-15, 2-17, 2-18, 2-23, 2-27, 3-2, 3-6, 3-7, 3-9, 3-22, 3-28, 3-29, 3-82, 3-91, 3-113, 4-6, 4-13, 4-15, 4-16, 4-17

irretrievable commitments, 2-30, 3-116, 3-117, 3-135, 3-138

irreversible commitments, 3-116

J

jobs, 1-15, 3-18, 3-122, 3-133, 4-9, 4-17, 4-18, 4-27, 4-37

K

karst, 3-87, 3-88, 3-89, 3-93, 3-95

L

lakes, 2-29, 3-80, 3-82, 3-83, 3-87, 3-92, 3-98, 3-99, 3-100, 3-104, 3-128, 3-131, 4-11, 4-15, 4-18, 4-23

Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), 3-73, 3-74, 3-75

land use, 1-9, 2-18, 2-29, 3-3, 3-8, 3-9, 3-10, 3-11, 3-14, 3-31, 3-32, 3-33, 3-34, 3-35, 3-36, 3-38, 3-43, 3-46, 3-52, 3-62, 3-112, 3-113, 3-114, 3-115, 3-116, 3-118, 3-120, 3-121, 3-125, 3-126, 3-133, 3-136, 4-26

layover facilities, 2-17, 2-23, 2-27, 3-10, 3-11, 3-63, 3-65, 3-132, 3-133, 3-135, 4-9, 5-1, 5-2, 5-3, 5-5

lead (Pb), 3-57, 3-58, 3-62, 3-63, 3-64, 3-133

lead agency, 3-65, 3-66, 3-126, 4-3, 4-7, 4-8, 4-21, 4-22

locomotive, 2-23, 3-33, 3-35, 3-36, 3-37, 3-51, 3-56, 3-57, 3-58, 3-60

Loess Hills, 2-30, 3-76, 3-78, 3-93, 3-94, 3-95

long-term, 2-30, 3-11, 3-17, 3-18, 3-19, 3-61, 3-117, 3-118, 3-119, 3-125, 3-135, 3-136, 3-139, 4-31, 5-1

low-income, 3-19, 3-20, 3-21, 3-22, 3-23, 3-25, 3-112, 3-119, 3-137, 4-27

M

maintenance facilities, 2-17, 2-23, 3-10, 3-11, 3-60, 3-62, 3-72, 3-74, 3-112, 3-124, 3-132, 3-133, 3-135, 5-1, 5-2, 5-3

Meandered Sovereign Rivers, 3-80, 3-81, 3-82, 3-87, 3-131

Metra, 1-1, 1-14, 1-15, 2-8, 2-9, 2-13, 2-23, 3-5, 3-24, 3-121, 3-122

Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), 3-3, 3-8, 3-110, 3-120, 4-12

migratory birds, 3-95, 3-96, 3-98, 3-100, 3-101, 3-138, 4-3, 4-8, 4-12

minorities, 3-19, 3-20, 3-21, 3-22, 3-23, 3-112, 3-119, 3-137

Mississippi River Bridge, 2-11, 2-12, 5-2

Missouri River Bridge, 5-3

N

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), 1-13, 1-14, 1-15, 2-1, 2-2, 2-4, 2-5, 2-9, 2-14, 2-18, 2-23, 2-25, 2-27, 2-28, 3-1, 3-2, 3-7, 3-8, 3-11, 3-13, 3-14, 3-18, 3-19, 3-20, 3-23, 3-27, 3-29, 3-31, 3-32, 3-33, 3-38, 3-56, 3-59, 3-60, 3-63, 3-65, 3-66, 3-67, 3-70, 3-71, 3-72, 3-73, 3-74, 3-75, 3-77, 3-78, 3-79, 3-80, 3-82, 3-83, 3-84, 3-85, 3-86, 3-88, 3-89, 3-90, 3-91, 3-92, 3-93, 3-95, 3-98, 3-100, 3-101, 3-102, 3-106, 3-107, 3-108, 3-110, 3-112, 3-113, 3-114, 3-115, 3-116, 3-117, 3-120, 3-121, 3-122, 3-123, 3-125, 3-127, 3-129, 3-131, 4-5, 4-6, 4-7, 4-9, 4-10, 4-11, 4-12, 4-16, 4-21, 4-23, 4-24, 4-26, 5-1, 5-2, 5-3, 5-4

National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), 2-28, 3-65, 4-23, 5-4

National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES), 3-89, 3-115, 3-128, 3-129, 3-130

National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), 2-6, 3-65, 3-66, 3-67, 3-68, 3-69, 3-73, 3-75, 3-76, 3-77, 3-134, 3-138, 4-36

Nationwide Rivers Inventory (NRI), 3-80

natural areas, 2-29, 2-30, 3-70, 3-71, 3-72, 3-73, 3-74, 3-75, 3-76, 3-78, 3-79, 3-95, 3-96, 3-97, 3-98, 3-99, 3-100, 3-119, 3-124, 3-125, 3-134, 3-138

natural communities, 3-95, 3-96, 3-97, 3-99, 3-100, 3-101, 3-102

natural community, high quality, 3-97, 3-100

natural habitats, 2-30, 3-95, 3-98, 3-99, 3-100, 3-101, 3-105, 3-106, 3-109, 3-116, 3-119, 3-132, 3-134, 3-138, 4-8

Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality (NDEQ), 3-57, 3-60, 3-61, 3-81, 3-87, 3-128, 3-129, 3-131, 4-2, 4-4, 4-10

Nebraska Department of Natural Resources (Nebraska DNR), 3-87, 3-130, 4-2, 4-4, 4-11

Nebraska Game and Parks Commission (NGPC), 3-70, 3-71, 3-95, 3-96, 3-101, 3-102, 3-105, 3-107, 3-108, 3-110, 4-2, 4-4, 4-11

neighborhoods, 2-9, 3-7, 3-9, 3-10, 3-17, 3-75, 3-77, 3-79, 3-112, 3-113, 3-125, 3-135

nitrogen dioxide, 3-57

No-Build Alternative, 1-1, 2-1, 2-2, 2-11, 2-12, 2-13, 2-14, 2-28, 2-29, 2-30, 3-1, 3-2, 3-3, 3-6, 3-9, 3-13, 3-17, 3-20, 3-21, 3-26, 3-28, 3-32, 3-35, 3-37, 3-38, 3-42, 3-43, 3-46, 3-51, 3-52, 3-55, 3-56, 3-58, 3-63, 3-67, 3-71, 3-74, 3-77, 3-82, 3-85, 3-88, 3-91, 3-94, 3-98, 3-106, 3-111, 3-113, 3-117, 3-118, 3-119, 3-123, 3-124, 3-126, 3-127, 4-6, 4-27, 4-35

noise, 2-6, 2-29, 3-22, 3-23, 3-30, 3-31, 3-32, 3-33, 3-34, 3-35, 3-36, 3-37, 3-38, 3-46, 3-47, 3-51, 3-56, 3-67, 3-70, 3-71, 3-98, 3-107, 3-108, 3-109, 3-112, 3-113, 3-114, 3-115, 3-118, 3-119, 3-123, 3-124, 3-126, 3-132, 3-134, 3-135, 3-137, 3-138, 4-3, 4-6, 4-7, 4-8, 4-27, 4-37, 5-4

nonattainment, 3-57, 3-58, 3-59, 3-60, 3-139

O

ozone, 3-57, 3-58

P

paratransit service, 3-23, 3-24, 3-25

parks, state, 3-70, 3-71, 3-72, 3-131

particulate matter, 3-57, 3-58, 3-59, 3-60, 3-130

passenger rail service, 1-1, 1-5, 1-6, 1-9, 1-11, 1-13, 1-14, 2-2, 2-13, 2-14, 2-18, 2-27, 3-2, 3-3, 3-4, 3-5, 3-6, 3-7, 3-10, 3-17, 3-18, 3-21, 3-23, 3-29, 3-59, 3-67, 3-71, 3-110, 3-111, 3-113, 3-117, 3-118, 3-119, 3-123, 3-124, 3-125, 3-136, 4-3, 4-7, 4-12, 4-13, 4-15, 4-18, 4-26, 4-27, 4-28, 4-29, 4-30, 4-32, 4-33, 4-34, 4-36, 4-37, 4-38, 4-39

pedestrians, 3-29, 3-30, 3-112, 3-118, 3-123, 4-15

permits

Air Pollution Control, 3-130

Floodplain Development, 3-90, 3-92, 3-130, 4-4, 4-11

General, 3-127, 3-128, 3-129

Individual, 3-81, 3-127, 3-128, 3-129, 3-131

NPDES, 3-128, 3-129

Section 10, 3-81, 3-129

Section 9, 3-128

Sovereign Lands Construction, 3-81, 3-131

physiographic, 3-92

planes

See airlines

pollutants, 2-29, 2-30, 3-57, 3-58, 3-59, 3-60, 3-61, 3-62, 3-82, 3-86, 3-87, 3-88, 3-89, 3-99, 3-101, 3-108, 3-109, 3-115, 3-116, 3-118, 3-126, 3-129, 3-130, 3-131, 3-134, 3-138

pollution, 3-87, 3-89, 3-129, 3-130

ponds, 2-29, 3-77, 3-80, 3-82, 3-83, 3-87, 3-91, 3-98, 3-99, 3-100, 3-104

population, 1-5, 1-9, 1-10, 1-11, 1-14, 2-4, 2-10, 2-11, 2-14, 2-29, 3-9, 3-14, 3-15, 3-16, 3-19, 3-20, 3-21, 3-22, 3-23, 3-24, 3-27, 3-34, 3-56, 3-97, 3-120, 3-121, 3-126, 4-14, 4-15, 4-17, 4-29, 4-30, 4-31, 4-38, 4-39

prairie, 3-72, 3-96, 3-97, 3-100, 3-103, 3-104, 4-8, 4-23

preserves
 forest, 3-71, 3-72, 3-73, 3-74, 3-75, 3-96, 3-97, 3-106
 nature, 3-70, 3-95, 3-96, 3-97, 3-103
 state, 3-131

Project need, 1-9, 2-2, 2-4, 2-6, 2-10, 2-11, 2-12, 4-27

Project purpose, 1-9, 2-2, 2-4, 2-6, 2-10, 2-11, 2-12, 4-7, 4-19, 4-28

property acquisition, 2-9, 2-29, 3-8, 3-11, 3-133, 3-136, 4-28, 4-29, 4-37

public health, 2-29, 3-8, 3-22, 3-27, 3-28, 3-61, 3-132, 3-137, 4-27

public involvement, 3-11, 3-19, 3-22, 3-27, 3-80, 4-1, 4-14, 4-28, 4-37, 5-4

Q

quiet zone, 3-33, 3-36, 3-47, 3-52, 3-56

R

rail operations, 2-17, 3-7, 3-113, 3-137, 4-27, 4-37

rail safety, 3-27, 3-28, 3-29, 3-30

railroads, 1-1, 2-8, 2-23, 3-27, 3-29, 3-33, 3-34, 3-67, 3-70, 3-79, 3-81, 3-82, 3-85, 3-88, 3-90, 3-91, 4-1, 4-3, 4-5, 4-6, 4-9, 4-13, 4-15, 4-16, 4-17, 4-27, 5-4

receptors
 sensitive, 2-29, 3-38, 3-118, 3-119
 visual, 3-77, 3-78, 3-79, 3-80, 3-134, 3-138

recreation areas, 2-29, 3-31, 3-32, 3-70, 3-71, 3-72, 3-73, 3-75, 3-76, 3-79, 3-124, 3-138

recycling, 3-64, 3-115

regulatory floodway, 3-92

residential property, 3-8, 3-9, 3-10, 3-11, 3-22, 3-33, 3-38, 3-43, 3-46, 3-52, 3-55, 3-62, 3-64, 3-67, 3-75, 3-76, 3-77, 3-79, 3-80, 3-112, 3-114, 3-138

ridership, 2-5, 2-6, 2-7, 2-8, 2-9, 2-10, 2-11, 2-24, 2-30, 3-7, 3-59, 3-60, 3-110, 3-111, 3-124, 3-136, 4-7, 4-12, 4-18, 4-27, 4-37

rivers, 1-6, 2-8, 2-18, 3-75, 3-76, 3-77, 3-78, 3-80, 3-81, 3-87, 3-90, 3-93, 3-103, 3-104, 3-107, 3-127, 3-128, 3-129, 3-131, 4-3, 4-5, 4-6, 4-11, 4-12, 4-14, 4-38, 5-2, 5-3, 5-4

Route Alternative 1, 2-2, 2-7, 2-11, 2-12, 4-29, 4-38

Route Alternative 2, 2-2, 2-7, 2-11, 2-12, 4-14, 4-15, 4-16, 4-18, 4-29

Route Alternative 3, 2-2, 2-7, 2-8, 4-29

Route Alternative 4, 2-2, 2-7, 2-8, 2-9, 2-11, 2-12, 4-3, 4-4, 4-8, 4-9, 4-14, 4-16, 4-17, 4-18, 4-29, 4-31, 4-38

Route Alternative 4-A, 2-2, 2-7, 2-10, 2-11, 2-12, 2-13, 2-15, 2-17, 2-24, 2-28, 3-126, 4-14, 4-16, 4-31, 4-38

Route Alternative 5, 2-2, 2-9, 2-11, 4-14, 4-16, 4-29, 4-38

S

safety, 2-23, 2-24, 2-29, 2-30, 3-7, 3-8, 3-17, 3-21, 3-22, 3-27, 3-28, 3-29, 3-65, 3-69, 3-112, 3-115, 3-116, 3-118, 3-119, 3-124, 3-126, 3-130, 3-132, 3-133, 3-137, 3-138, 3-139, 4-3, 4-6, 4-7, 4-26, 4-27, 4-29, 4-36, 4-38

savanna, 3-97, 3-98, 3-100

scenic resources, 3-75, 3-76, 3-77, 3-78, 3-79, 3-80

scenic rivers, 3-82

schools, 3-14, 3-17, 3-30, 3-31, 3-92, 3-112, 4-33, 4-38

Section 4(f), 2-6, 2-29, 3-70, 3-72, 3-73, 3-74, 3-75, 3-79, 3-124, 3-134, 3-138, 5-4

Section 401 Water Quality Certification, 3-81, 3-89, 3-128

Section 408 Approval, 3-130

Section 6(f), 3-73, 3-75

sediment, 3-82, 3-86, 3-87, 3-89, 3-112

short-term, 2-30, 3-18, 3-90, 3-114, 3-115, 3-117, 3-118, 3-119, 3-133, 3-135, 3-139

signals, 2-17, 2-18, 2-29, 3-6, 3-8, 3-28, 3-29, 3-112, 3-122, 3-133, 3-137, 4-16, 4-28, 4-37

sinkholes, 3-87, 3-92, 3-93

socioeconomic environment, 2-29, 2-30, 3-14, 3-17, 3-118, 3-133, 3-136, 4-7

soils, 2-30, 3-12, 3-13, 3-61, 3-62, 3-64, 3-82, 3-83, 3-84, 3-86, 3-88, 3-89, 3-92, 3-94, 3-95, 3-103, 3-114, 3-115, 3-116, 3-129, 3-134, 3-135, 3-136, 3-137

spills, fuel, 3-60, 3-63, 3-88, 3-99, 3-101, 3-108, 3-112, 3-114, 3-118, 3-124, 3-138

stakeholders, 4-23, 4-24, 4-31, 4-35, 4-39

State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), 3-66, 3-67, 3-69, 4-2, 4-3, 4-9, 4-21

stations, 1-5, 1-6, 1-11, 1-13, 1-14, 2-1, 2-17, 2-18, 2-21, 2-22, 2-23, 2-24, 2-25, 2-26, 2-30, 3-1, 3-3, 3-5, 3-7, 3-8, 3-10, 3-11, 3-17, 3-18, 3-19, 3-21, 3-22, 3-26, 3-29, 3-30, 3-70, 3-71, 3-72, 3-74, 3-75, 3-76, 3-77, 3-78, 3-79, 3-80, 3-94, 3-95, 3-112, 3-121, 3-122, 3-124, 3-125, 3-132, 3-133, 3-134, 3-135, 3-136, 3-137, 3-138, 4-3, 4-5, 4-6, 4-12, 4-14, 4-15, 4-16, 4-17, 4-18, 4-26, 4-27, 4-29, 4-30, 4-36, 4-37, 4-38, 5-1, 5-2, 5-3, 5-4, 5-5

stormwater, 2-30, 3-82, 3-86, 3-88, 3-89, 3-113, 3-114, 3-115, 3-128, 3-129, 3-134, 5-4

streams, 2-6, 2-7, 2-8, 2-28, 2-29, 2-30, 3-78, 3-80, 3-81, 3-82, 3-83, 3-84, 3-87, 3-88, 3-89, 3-90, 3-91, 3-97, 3-98, 3-99, 3-100, 3-103, 3-104, 3-107, 3-108, 3-114, 3-116, 3-126, 3-127, 3-128, 3-131, 4-4, 4-11, 4-33

sulfur dioxide (SO₂), 3-57, 3-60, 3-130

Superfund, 2-29, 3-60, 3-61, 3-63, 3-64, 3-65

sustainable, 3-14

T

terrestrial habitat, 2-30, 3-95, 3-98, 3-99, 3-100, 3-101, 3-107

threatened species, 3-96, 3-102, 3-103, 3-104, 3-105, 3-106, 3-107, 3-108, 3-109, 3-110, 3-116, 3-124, 3-130, 3-134, 3-138

topography, 2-30, 3-1, 3-92, 3-93, 3-94, 3-95, 3-116, 3-135, 3-136

track warrant control (TWC), 3-28, 3-29

traffic, 1-12, 1-13, 2-4, 2-8, 2-15, 2-17, 2-18, 2-29, 2-30, 3-4, 3-6, 3-7, 3-8, 3-17, 3-21, 3-22, 3-32, 3-33, 3-34, 3-35, 3-36, 3-37, 3-38, 3-43, 3-46, 3-47, 3-52, 3-56, 3-59, 3-63, 3-77, 3-79, 3-98, 3-99, 3-100, 3-101, 3-107, 3-111, 3-112, 3-114, 3-115, 3-116, 3-118, 3-121, 3-123, 3-124, 3-125, 3-126, 3-128, 3-133, 3-135, 3-136, 4-6, 4-12, 4-13, 4-14, 4-15, 4-16, 4-18, 4-26, 4-27, 4-28, 4-29, 4-30, 4-37, 4-38, 5-4

train amenities, 4-30, 4-39

transit-oriented development, 2-30, 3-119, 3-124, 3-125, 3-126, 3-139

transportation network, 1-2, 2-30, 3-3, 3-24, 3-118, 3-119

transportation plans, 1-2, 3-3, 3-4, 3-19, 3-120, 4-13, 4-14

travel demand, 1-9, 2-4, 2-6, 2-11, 3-7, 3-59, 3-119, 3-136

U

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), 2-15, 3-80, 3-81, 3-83, 3-84, 3-86, 3-127, 3-128, 3-129, 3-130, 4-1, 4-4, 4-8, 4-10, 4-11, 4-21, 4-39

U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), 3-81, 3-128, 3-129, 4-1, 4-3, 4-5, 4-21

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), 3-14, 3-31, 3-57, 3-58, 3-59, 3-60, 3-61, 3-83, 3-84, 3-87, 3-129, 4-1, 4-3, 4-6, 4-7, 4-21

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), 3-75, 3-96, 3-98, 3-100, 3-101, 3-102, 3-107, 3-108, 3-109, 4-1, 4-3, 4-8, 4-11, 4-12, 4-21

underground mining, 3-93, 3-95

Union Pacific Railroad (UP), 1-14, 2-8, 2-9, 2-12, 2-15, 2-18, 3-6, 3-7, 3-22, 3-28, 3-121, 3-122, 4-14, 4-16, 4-38

V

vehicles, 3-6, 3-17, 3-29, 3-59, 3-60, 3-115, 3-135, 4-26, 4-27

vibration, ground-borne (GBV), 3-30, 3-31, 3-32, 3-33, 3-36, 3-38, 3-43, 3-46, 3-52, 3-55, 3-56, 3-137

views from the train, 3-76, 3-77, 3-78, 3-79, 3-138

views of the railroad facilities, 3-76, 3-77, 3-78, 3-79, 3-80, 3-138

visual resources, 2-29, 3-75, 3-78, 3-134, 3-138

volatile organic compounds (VOCs), 3-57, 3-61, 3-62

W

waste, hazardous, 2-29, 3-60, 3-61, 3-63, 3-64, 3-65, 3-112, 3-114, 3-115, 3-118, 3-133, 3-136, 3-138

waste, solid, 3-64, 3-65, 3-112

water bodies, 2-29, 2-30, 3-76, 3-80, 3-81, 3-82, 3-83, 3-87, 3-92, 3-115, 3-119, 3-124, 3-134, 3-136

water quality, 2-30, 3-63, 3-82, 3-86, 3-87, 3-88, 3-89, 3-101, 3-112, 3-113, 3-114, 3-115, 3-118, 3-124, 3-125, 3-126, 3-128, 3-134, 3-135, 3-138, 4-4, 4-10, 4-31

waterfowl production areas, 3-70, 3-95

waterfowl refuges, 3-70, 3-72, 3-73

waterways, 2-29, 3-80, 3-81, 3-82, 3-83, 3-85, 3-87, 3-90, 3-91, 3-119, 3-134, 3-136, 4-3, 4-5

wetland hydrology, 3-84

wetlands, 2-4, 2-6, 2-7, 2-8, 2-30, 3-72, 3-83, 3-84, 3-85, 3-86, 3-87, 3-94, 3-98, 3-99, 3-100, 3-101, 3-103, 3-104, 3-114, 3-115, 3-116, 3-119, 3-124, 3-125, 3-126, 3-127, 3-131, 3-134, 3-136, 4-3, 4-4, 4-7, 4-8, 4-10, 4-11, 4-33, 4-37, 4-39

wildlife, 2-4, 2-7, 2-8, 2-30, 3-95, 3-96, 3-97, 3-98, 3-99, 3-100, 3-108, 3-116, 3-118, 3-119, 3-124, 3-125, 3-129, 3-132, 3-134, 3-138, 4-1, 4-3, 4-7, 4-8, 4-11, 4-37

wildlife management areas, 3-70, 3-71, 3-73, 3-75, 3-95, 3-96, 3-97, 3-131

wildlife refuges, 3-70, 3-72, 3-73, 3-75, 3-95, 3-96, 3-98, 3-100

woodland, 3-71, 3-73, 3-76, 3-96, 3-101, 3-107, 3-116, 3-134

woodland, riparian, 3-75, 3-76, 3-77, 3-97, 3-98, 3-100, 3-107

woods, upland, 3-97, 3-100

Wyanet Connection, 2-27, 2-28, 3-2, 3-9, 3-10, 3-13,
3-28, 3-63, 3-67, 3-72, 3-77, 3-82, 3-88, 3-91, 3-94,
3-98, 3-106, 3-113, 3-117, 4-13, 5-2

Z

zoning, 2-29, 3-8, 3-9, 3-11, 3-133, 3-136

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