

Lewis Military Reservation and McChord Air Force Base. The DEIS includes a Major Investment Study (NUS) that examines the overall need for the project and alternative means of reducing or meeting the demand for additional transportation capacity and a Draft 4(f) Evaluation.

The new roadway would compound existing barriers to wildlife movement for many species and would isolate the habitat north of the roadway. This habitat has been used by the western gray squirrel, which is listed as threatened by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. The DEIS evaluated impacts to western gray squirrel and Garry oak (also known as Oregon white oak) woodland habitat from the proposed roadway based on available information and field reconnaissance. Oak woodlands are important because this type of habitat has been greatly reduced in western Washington and because it is important habitat for the western gray squirrel. The DEIS committed to a genetic analysis of western gray squirrels and a detailed mapping and evaluation of oak woodlands as part of the EIS process. Both additional studies are now available for public review as part of the environmental documentation of the proposed roadway. These additional studies do not change the purpose and need for the project, the range of alternatives considered, the overall impacts or the range of potential mitigation measures described in the DEIS.

(Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Program Number 20.205, Highway Research, Planning and Construction. The regulations implementing Executive Order 12372 regarding intergovernmental consultation on Federal programs and activities apply to this program.)

Issued on: June 1, 1999.

James A. Leonard,

Transportation and Environmental Engineer.
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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Transit Administration

Environmental Impact Statement on the Northstar Corridor Project Located Between Minneapolis and the St. Cloud Area, Minnesota

AGENCY: Federal Transit Administration (FTA), DOT.

ACTION: Notice of Intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement.

SUMMARY: The Federal Transit Administration is issuing this notice to

advise interested agencies and the public that a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) is being prepared for transit elements of the Northstar Corridor project located in the Trunk Highway 10/47 (TH 10/47) corridor between Minneapolis and the St. Cloud area, Minnesota.

DATES: Interagency and public scoping and information meetings will be held on Thursday, July 29, 1999 from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m., and from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. on July 27, 28 and 29, respectively.

Interagency Scoping Meeting

Thursday, July 29, 1999 from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m., Fridley City Hall, 6431 University Avenue Northeast, Fridley, MN 55432

Public Scoping Meetings

Tuesday, July 27, 1999 from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., Whitney Senior Community Center, 1527 Northway Drive, St. Cloud, MN 56303

Wednesday, July 28, 1999, from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., Sherburne County Courthouse, 13880 Highway 10, Elk River, MN 55330

Thursday, July 29, 1999 from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., Fridley City Hall, 6431 University Avenue Northeast, Fridley, MN 55432

ADDRESSES: Written comments on the scope of analysis and impacts to be considered should be sent by August 20, 1999 to: Mr. Tim Yantos, Project Director, Northstar Corridor Development Authority, 2100 Third Avenue, Anoka, MN 55303

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Joel P. Ettinger, FTA Region 5, 200 West Adams Street, Suite 2410, Chicago, IL 60606, Telephone: (312) 353-2789.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) (the federal lead agency) in cooperation with the Northstar Corridor Development Authority (NCDA), a joint powers board (local lead agency), will prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Northstar Corridor project.

I. Scoping

The FTA and the NCDA invite interested individuals, organizations and federal, state and local agencies to participate in defining the alternatives to be evaluated in the EIS; in identifying social, economic or environmental impacts to be evaluated; and suggesting alternatives that are less costly or have fewer environmental impacts while achieving similar transportation objectives. An information packet, referred to as the Scoping Booklet, will

be circulated to all federal, state or local agencies having jurisdiction in the project, and all interested parties currently on the NCDA mailing list.

Others may request this Scoping Booklet by contacting:

Stephanie Eiler, Anoka County, 1440 Bunker Lake Boulevard, Andover, MN 55304, Phone: 612/862-4230, Fax: 612/862-4201, E-Mail: sceiler@pubserv.co.anoka.mn.us

Four public scoping meetings will be held in the study area. An interagency scoping meeting will be held on July 29, 1999 from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Fridley City Hall, and three public scoping meetings will be held on July 27, 28 and 29, 1999 from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. at the Whitney Senior Community Center, the Sherburne County Courthouse and the Fridley City Hall, respectively. People with special needs should call Stephanie Eiler at 612-862-4230. The buildings are accessible to people with disabilities.

Scoping comments may be made at the Public Scoping Meetings or in writing by August 20, 1999. Comments or questions should be directed to Mr. Tim Yantos at the address provided above.

II. Description of the Study Area and Transportation Needs

The Northstar Corridor study area can be described as a long, narrow 70-mile transportation corridor that extends from downtown Minneapolis to the St. Cloud area along TH 10/47 and the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) railroad. The study area is bordered by the Mississippi River on the west and extends approximately 3 to 5 miles to the east of TH 10/47. The proposed Corridor would connect to the Hiawatha Light Rail Transit (LRT) in downtown Minneapolis. The Hiawatha LRT line would continue to the Minneapolis/St. Paul Airport and the Mall of America.

The NCDA initiated a Major Investment Study (MIS) in May of 1998, pursuant to federal regulations, and conducted a feasibility study of commuter rail in the Corridor. Phase I of this process focused on identifying the purpose and need for transportation improvements in the Corridor, identifying and screening the alternative transportation solutions, and evaluating the feasibility of commuter rail service in the Corridor.

During Phase I of the Study, the issues identified in the Northstar Corridor that relate to transportation include: a lack of coordination between transportation investments and land use development; a high accident rate along the TH 10/47 corridor; decreasing mobility on TH 10/

47; a lack of corridor-wide transit service; and the lack of alternative transportation modes.

A public involvement program was conducted during Phase I of the project to receive input from the public and stakeholders in the Corridor. Public outreach presentations were given to over 30 community groups. Communications to the public were via a newsletter and a monthly Project Update to the NCDA distribution list of approximately 1000 names/addresses, a Web Site, and a series of three public information open houses.

III. Alternatives

Phase I of the MIS process defined and evaluated eight transit technologies for the Northstar Corridor: bus, commuter rail, light rail transit (LRT), diesel multiple unit (DMU), heavy rail, monorail, automated guideway transit (AGT), and personal rapid transit (PRT). Each of these transit technologies was reviewed based on the following evaluation parameters: capital cost, proven technology, operating environment, ability to accommodate at-grade station access, optimal station spacing distance, environmental impacts, and other considerations such as ridership potential and implementation. Based on this transit technology screening analysis, the following transit technologies have been recommended for further analysis: Bus, LRT and Commuter Rail. The scoping process will review the full range of modal technologies considered and the evaluation process followed.

The alternatives proposed for consideration in the Northstar Corridor DEIS include:

1. *No-Build Alternative*—No change to transportation services or facilities in the Corridor beyond already committed projects. This includes only those roadway and transit improvements defined in the appropriate agencies' Long Range Transportation Plans and Transit Development Plans for which funding has been committed.

2. *Transportation Systems Management Alternative*—Low cost infrastructure and bus transit improvements, Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS), Travel Demand Management, bus operations, and Transportation Systems Management improvements will be included in this alternative.

3. *Commuter Rail Alternative*—A commuter rail line on the existing BNSF rail line to include all facilities associated with the construction and operations of the commuter rail line, including right-of-way, structures, track, stations, park-and-ride lots, storage and

maintenance facilities as well as the respective rail and bus operating plans will be elements of the alternative. The extension of the Hiawatha Corridor LRT service to the commuter rail line will be included in this alternative. The Commuter Rail Alternative will also incorporate the elements of the No-Build Alternative and will include feeder bus improvements to provide access from local and regional land uses to the commuter rail connection.

IV. Probable Effects/Potential Impacts for Analysis

The FTA and the NCDA will evaluate significant environmental, social and economic impacts of the alternatives analyzed in the EIS. Primary environmental issues include: land use, historic and archeological resources, traffic and parking, noise and vibration, neighborhoods and environmental justice, floodplain encroachment, coordination with ongoing related transportation and economic development projects, and construction impacts. Other issues the EIS will address include natural areas, rare and endangered species, air and water quality, groundwater, energy, potentially contaminated sites, displacements and relocations, ecosystems, water resources, hazardous waste, parklands, and energy impacts. The impacts will be evaluated both for the construction period and for the long-term period of operation of each alternative. In addition, cumulative effects of the proposed project and any irreversible or ir retrievable commitment of resources will be identified. Measures to avoid or mitigate any significant adverse impacts will be developed.

V. Procedures

In accordance with the regulations and guidance established by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), as well as 23 CFR 450 and 23 CFR 771 of the FHWA/FTA planning and environmental regulations and policies, the DEIS will include an evaluation of the social, economic and environmental impact of the alternatives. The EIS will also comply with the requirements of the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 (CAAA) and with the Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice. The EIS will also meet the requirements of the US Environmental Protection Agency's transportation conformity regulations (40 CFR 93 and 23 CFR 450.322(b)(8)). After its publication, the DEIS will be available for public and agency review and comment. Public hearings will be held on the DEIS.

The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) will consider the

public and agency comments received during the public and agency circulation of the DEIS and the NCDA will select the preferred alternative. Then the NCDA, with FTA as federal lead agency, will continue with the preparation of the FEIS. Opportunity for additional public comment will be provided throughout all phases of project development.

Issued on: June 1, 1999.

Donald Gismond,

Deputy Regional Administrator.

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Maritime Administration

[Docket No. MARAD-99-5761]

Information Collection Available for Public Comments and Recommendations; Notice and Request for Comments

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, this notice announces the Maritime Administration's (MARAD's) intentions to request extension of approval for three years of a currently approved information collection.

DATES: Comments should be submitted on or before August 6, 1999.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jeffrey McMahon, Office of Sealift Support, MAR-630, Maritime Administration, 400 Seventh St., S.W., Room 7307, Washington, D.C. 20590. Telephone: 202-366-2323, or FAX 202-366-3889.

Copies of this collection can also be obtained from that office.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title of Collection: Application and Reporting Elements for Participation in the Maritime Security Program.

Type of Request: Extension of currently approved information collection.

OMB Control Number: 2133-0525.

Form Numbers: None.

Expiration Date of Approval: February 28, 2000.

Summary of Collection of Information: The Maritime Security Act of 1996 established the Maritime Security Program which supports the operations of U.S.-flag vessels in the foreign commerce of the United States through assistance payments. Participating vessel operators receive assistance payments and are required to make their ships and other commercial transportation resources available to the Government during times of war or