

August 15, 2011, the Union Pacific Railroad (UP) has petitioned the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) for a waiver of compliance extension from certain provisions of the Federal railroad safety regulations contained at 49 CFR 240.117(e)(1)–(4); 49 CFR 240.305(a)(1)–(4) and (6); and 49 CFR 240.307. FRA assigned the petition Docket Number FRA–2006–25862.

The Confidential Close Call Reporting System (C3RS) pilot project for the UP North Platte Service Unit was initially approved by FRA on September 12, 2007. The 5-year time limit is expiring and subject to FRA approval, UP desires to continue the pilot project until November 18, 2014.

A copy of the petition, as well as any written communications concerning the petition, is available for review online at <http://www.regulations.gov> and in person at the U.S. Department of Transportation's (DOT) Docket Operations Facility, 1200 New Jersey Ave., SE., W12–140, Washington, DC 20590. The Docket Operations Facility is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal Holidays. If you do not have access to the Internet, please contact FRA's Docket Clerk at 202–493–6030 who will provide necessary information concerning the contents of the petition.

Interested parties are invited to participate in these proceedings by submitting written views, data, or comments. FRA does not anticipate scheduling a public hearing in connection with these proceedings since the facts do not appear to warrant a hearing. If any interested party desires an opportunity for oral comment, they should notify FRA, in writing, before the end of the comment period and specify the basis for their request.

All communications concerning these proceedings should identify the appropriate docket number and may be submitted by any of the following methods:

- *Web site:* <http://www.regulations.gov>. Follow the online instructions for submitting comments.
- *Fax:* 202–493–2251.
- *Mail:* Docket Operations Facility, U.S. Department of Transportation, 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE., W12–140, Washington, DC 20590.
- *Hand Delivery:* 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE., Room W12–140, Washington, DC 20590, between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal Holidays.

Communications received within October 31, 2011 will be considered by FRA before final action is taken. Comments received after that date will be considered as far as practicable.

Anyone is able to search the electronic form of any written communications and comments received into any of our dockets by the name of the individual submitting the comment (or signing the comment, if submitted on behalf of an association, business, labor union, *etc.*). You may review DOT's complete Privacy Act Statement in the **Federal Register** published on April 11, 2000 (Volume 65, Number 70; Pages 19477–78), or online at <http://www.dot.gov/privacy.html>.

Issued in Washington, DC, on September 23, 2011.

Robert C. Lauby,

Deputy Associate Administrator for Regulatory and Legislative Operations.

[FR Doc. 2011–25064 Filed 9–28–11; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910–06–P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Transit Administration

Early Scoping Notice

AGENCY: Federal Transit Administration, DOT.

ACTION: Early Scoping for the Southwest Corridor Plan in Metropolitan Portland, OR.

SUMMARY: The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Metro (Oregon) regional government issue this early scoping notice to advise other agencies and the public that they intend to explore alternatives for improving transit service between downtown Portland and Sherwood, in Multnomah and Washington counties. The early scoping is occurring within the context of the Council on Environmental Quality's regulations for complying with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Several alternatives will be examined to explore their potential for implementation of a major transit capital investment under the New Starts funding program including light rail, bus rapid transit, rapid streetcar, high occupancy vehicle lanes, high occupancy toll lanes and a transportation system management (TSM) alternative. Public workshops have been planned and are described below. The FTA Alternatives Analysis (AA) process, as described in 49 U.S.C. 5309 (a) (1), will assess a wide range of public transportation alternatives designed to address the transportation problems within the corridor. This process will involve a more robust and detailed level of alternatives and will ultimately lead to the selection of a locally preferred alternative.

The initial phase of AA will provide adequate information to determine which alternative(s) to pursue for further analysis for implementation and what level of environmental analysis would be necessary for project implementation. In the second phase, the project may solicit [or obtain] additional public, agency, and tribal input to identify the nature and scope of the environmental issues that should be addressed during NEPA review, following appropriate public notice (anticipated in 2013). This NEPA scoping process will vary depending on whether the project requires an environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement. Metro and FTA will notify the public of NEPA scoping after that decision has been made.

Information about upcoming public meetings and about the project's purpose is set forth below.

DATES: Six public events will be held to accept comments on the following dates and locations:

- SW Corridor Plan/Tigard Open House/Barbur Concept Plan, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., September 28, 2011, Tigard Library, Tigard.
- PSU Farmers' Market, 8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m., October 8, 2011, West Park Avenue and Southwest Montgomery Street, Portland.
- King City/Tigard Area Farmers' Market, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., October 16, 2011, 11831 SW., Pacific Hwy @ Hwy 99 & 217.
- 24th Annual Great Onion Festival, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., October 16, 2011, Archer Glen Elementary School, 16155 SW Sunset Blvd. Sherwood.
- 8th Annual West Coast Giant Pumpkin Regatta, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., October 22, 2011, Tualatin Commons, Tualatin.

The public meetings will have information and staff available to discuss the project and answer questions, and there will be opportunities for spoken and written comments. Information is also available on the Metro Web site at: <http://www.swcorridorplan.org>. Written scoping comments are requested by October 28, 2011 and can be sent or emailed to the address below, submitted at the public meetings, or provided via the online comment form available at <http://www.swcorridorplan.org>.

Any individual who requires special assistance, such as a sign language interpreter, to participate in a public workshop should contact Jenn Tuerk at (503) 797–1756 or trans@oregonmetro.gov.

Interagency and Tribal Coordination Meetings:

Interagency and Tribal coordination meetings will occur at various times throughout this study to identify evaluation criteria, and to assist in developing and screening alternatives during this planning process.

ADDRESSES: Written comments to inform the scope of this project should be submitted by October 28, 2011 to Jenn Tuerk, Metro, 600 NE Grand Ave., Portland, OR 97232. Telephone: (503) 797-1756. E-mail: jenn.tuerk@oregonmetro.gov.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: John Witmer, Community Planner, Federal Transit Administration, Region 10, 915 Second Ave., Room 3142, Seattle, WA 98174. Telephone: (206) 220-7964; E-mail: John.Witmer@dot.gov

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Early Scoping

Early scoping is a NEPA process that is particularly useful in situations where, as here, a proposed action (the locally preferred alternative) has not been identified and several broad alternatives are under consideration. While scoping generally follows issuance of a notice of intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), which must describe the proposed action, it “may be initiated earlier, as long as there is appropriate public notice and enough information on the proposal so that the public and relevant agencies can participate effectively.” Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), “Forty Most Asked Questions Concerning CEQ’s NEPA Regulations,” 46 CFR parts 18026, 18030 (1981) (answer to question 13). In this case, available information is adequate to permit the public and agencies to participate effectively. Early scoping provides a way to avoid duplication, waste and delay.

New Starts Planning

New Starts is a discretionary FTA funding program for major capital investments in transit. Planning for an anticipated transit project in the Southwest Corridor will adhere to New Starts’ required Alternatives Analysis process as outlined in 49 U.S.C. 5309(a)(1). The alternatives analysis process requires a broad evaluation of alternatives by examining several options of mode and alignment that could address defined mobility needs, in order to determine which particular investment strategy should be advanced for more focused study and development. The result is a clearly defined project problem statement and an analysis of planning-level alternatives, which are helpful

precursors to NEPA’s required statement of purpose and need and consideration of specific project alternatives. Where state and local planning can lead toward a well defined purpose and need statement and satisfy the requirements for NEPA, including scoping, it should not have to be duplicated later in that process. See 40 CFR 1506.2(b). Accordingly, in the Southwest Corridor AA, Metro will explore alternative configurations of mode, alignment, and stations, and will examine costs, funding, ridership, economic development, land use, engineering feasibility, and environmental factors associated with each. All alternatives will be compared to (i) A “No-Build” alternative, which represents the future transportation system through the year 2035 without Southwest Corridor transit improvements, and (ii) a Transportation Systems Management (TSM) alternative, which will examine methods for improving transit in the Southwest Corridor without significant new capital investment (for instance, more frequent bus service, new or expanded park and ride capacity, and/or freeway or arterial transit priority improvements). Following this analysis, a locally preferred alternative—the “proposed action”—will be determined, as will the appropriate level of NEPA review (environmental assessment or EIS). If an EIS is warranted, FTA will publish a notice of intent in the **Federal Register** and will invite and consider comments on the proposed action’s purpose and need, the range of alternatives to be considered, and the potentially significant environmental impacts.

The Southwest Corridor and Regional Planning

The Southwest Corridor runs 15 miles from Portland, Oregon to Sherwood, Oregon. It generally follows Interstate 5 (I-5) and State Highway OR 99W (99W). The two highways parallel each other closely from Portland to Tigard, where they diverge. I-5 and 99W serve as the main travel routes between Portland, Tigard and Tualatin; 99W is the main travel route to the cities of King City and Sherwood. Arterials and bus service support movements in and through the corridor. The arterial, collector, and local street network in the vicinity of much of the corridor is winding and discontinuous because of the varying topography and suburban style development patterns. Pedestrian connectivity is limited, much of the area lacks sidewalks and crosswalks, and bicycle paths are discontinuous.

The Southwest Corridor Plan seeks to create livable and sustainable communities by simultaneously

planning for synergistic investments and policies in land use and transportation. The resulting projects and policies from the plan will leverage public investments for improved mobility and increased access to employment, housing, education, and other services. The Southwest Corridor Plan calls for local land use planning, which will identify land use actions and investments (including transit) to support livable communities; a Corridor Refinement Plan to examine the function, mode, and general location of transportation improvements; and the New Starts Alternatives Analysis (AA).

The Southwest Corridor Plan implements the 2040 Growth Concept, adopted in 1995, and the 2035 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), adopted in 2010. In 2008, the Metro Council adopted six desired outcomes that describe a sustainable and prosperous region; those outcomes, along with the DOT/HUD/EPA Partnership for Sustainable Communities livability principles, guide the Southwest Corridor Plan. The RTP identified the Southwest Corridor as the corridor with the greatest need for multimodal regional transportation investments, and identified the Southwest Corridor as the region’s next priority for transit investment measured by 25 evaluation criteria, including the potential to improve transit service for the highest number of new and existing riders. The corridor ranked highest among the 55 corridors examined.

Purposes of the Southwest Corridor AA

The Southwest Corridor AA will determine how a transit investment could best meet livability and community needs, provide environmental benefits, and support the economy. The plan will evaluate the potential for implementation based on costs, benefits and efficiencies of operations. In this corridor, a transit investment should:

- Increase economic opportunities by improving movement/access between markets.
- Increase access to major regional destinations and activity centers; regionally significant employment, educational and commercial centers; and affordable housing.
- Address increasing growth in an already congested corridor by providing affordable transportation options for households and businesses.
- Improve safety and efficiency for all modes of travel .
- Develop solutions to the constraints of the existing landscape.
- Limit carbon and other air pollutant emissions by planning for efficient and

complementary land use and transportation solutions .

- Be fiscally sustainable.
- Avoid or minimize environmental impacts of the transportation system.
- Enhance the natural environment and access to natural areas.

Issued on: September 19, 2011.

R.F. Krochalis,

Regional Administrator, Region 10.

[FR Doc. 2011-25060 Filed 9-28-11; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-57-P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Transit Administration

Environmental Impact Statement; North Corridor Transit Project, Seattle (WA) Metropolitan Area (King and Snohomish Counties)

AGENCY: Federal Transit Administration, DOT.

ACTION: Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

SUMMARY: In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Federal Transit Administration and the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority (Sound Transit) intend to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Sound Transit's proposed extension of the Central Link Light Rail system from Seattle in King County to the city of Lynnwood in Snohomish County, Washington. The EIS will also be prepared in accordance with Washington's State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA). This Notice of Intent initiates scoping for the EIS, invites interested parties to participate in the EIS process, provides information about the purpose and need for the proposed transit project, includes the general set of alternatives being considered for evaluation in the EIS, and identifies potential environmental effects to be considered. With this notice, Sound Transit and FTA invite public comments on the scope of the EIS, and announce the public scoping meetings that will be conducted. Alternatives being considered for evaluation in the EIS include a No-Build alternative and various build alternatives to develop light rail in the North Corridor. The light rail alternatives are based on the most promising alternatives identified through an Alternatives Analysis study completed by the project. Early scoping for the alternatives analysis phase was previously announced in the **Federal Register** on September 27, 2010. Results of the alternatives analysis are described below.

DATES: Written comments on the scope of alternatives and impacts to be considered in the EIS must be received no later than October 31, 2011, and must be sent to Sound Transit as indicated below.

Information about the proposed project, the Alternatives Analysis findings, and the EIS process will be available at three public scoping meetings and one tribal and agency scoping meeting. Sound Transit and FTA will accept comments at those meetings, which will be held on the following dates and locations:

Public Meetings

October 11, 2011: 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., Shoreline Conference Center, 18560 1st Avenue NE., Shoreline, WA 98155.

October 13, 2011: 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., Embassy Suites, 20610 44th Ave. W, Lynnwood, WA 98036.

October 18, 2011: 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., Ingraham High School, 1819 N. 135th St., Seattle, WA 98133.

Agency and Tribal Meeting

October 11, 2011: 2 p.m. to 4 p.m., Shoreline Conference Center, 18560 1st Avenue NE., Shoreline, WA 98155.

Invitations to the interagency scoping meeting have been sent to appropriate Federal, tribal, state, and local governmental units.

All public meeting locations are accessible to persons with disabilities who may also request materials be prepared and supplied in alternate formats by calling Roger Iwata, (206) 689-4904 at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting for Sound Transit to make necessary arrangement. Persons who are deaf or hard of hearing may call (888) 713-6030 TTY.

Scoping information as well as other general information and a project library are available on Sound Transit's Web site at: <http://www.soundtransit.org/NCTP>.

The scoping period extends to October 31, 2011, or 30 days from the date of this notice, whichever is later. Written scoping comments are requested by October 31, 2011 at the address below, or they can be submitted at the public meetings.

ADDRESSES: Lauren Swift, North Corridor Transit Project, Sound Transit, 401 S. Jackson Street, Seattle, WA 98104-2826, or by e-mail to northcorridorscoping@soundtransit.org.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: John Witmer, Community Planner, Jackson Federal Building, 915 Second Avenue, Suite 3142, Seattle, WA 98174; Phone: (206) 220-7964; e-mail: John.Witmer@dot.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background: On September 27, 2010, FTA and Sound Transit issued an early scoping notice in the **Federal Register** for the North Corridor Transit Project Alternatives Analysis. Sound Transit has now completed the Alternatives Analysis, which provides the basis for identifying the most promising alternatives to be evaluated. FTA and Sound Transit are now informing the public of their intent to initiate the NEPA review, based on the findings of the Alternatives Analysis.

Description of the North Corridor

The proposed project would begin at Northgate Transit Center in north Seattle and end at the Lynnwood Transit Center. The corridor generally follows Interstate 5 (I-5), the major north-south route through Washington State and serves a large commuter market traveling between Snohomish and King Counties and the City of Seattle. It is within a geographically constrained area between Puget Sound to the west and Lake Washington to the east, which limits transportation options. This dense urban area comprises one of the region's most productive markets for transit.

The Regional Transit System and the North Corridor

Sound Move, Sound Transit's first phase of regional transit investments for urbanized Pierce, King and Snohomish counties, was approved and funded by voters in 1996. The Sound Move program included light rail, commuter rail and regional express bus infrastructure and service, including the Central Link light rail system between the University of Washington, downtown Seattle, Tukwila and SeaTac. In 2009, Sound Transit began light rail operations between downtown Seattle and SeaTac. Link light rail north from downtown Seattle to the University of Washington is now under construction and is scheduled to open in 2016. The North Link extension from the University of Washington to Northgate is planned to begin operation in 2021. Voters in 2008 authorized funding for the extension of the regional light rail system in the North Corridor from Northgate to Lynnwood as part of the Sound Transit 2 (ST2) Plan. In addition, the ST2 Plan includes an East Link light rail line from downtown Seattle to Bellevue and Redmond to the east, and a South Link extension from SeaTac to Redondo/Star Lake in southern King County.