



Chapter 9

Public and Agency Involvement



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9 Public and Agency Involvement

9.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the comprehensive agency coordination and public involvement program conducted by FTA and NICTD for the duration of the Project. Public involvement was initiated as part of the DEIS process. To facilitate this process, a *Public and Agency Coordination Plan* (see DEIS, Appendix F) was prepared to identify actions needed for obtaining meaningful agency and public participation. These consultation and coordination efforts were designed to satisfy the requirements of NEPA, Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act, Section 6(f) of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Executive Order 12898 on environmental justice, and Section 106 of the NHPA.

An effective public involvement process provides for an open exchange of information and ideas between the public and transportation decision-makers. The overall objective of a public involvement process is that it be proactive and provide complete information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions, and opportunities for early and continuing involvement [23 CFR Parts 450.212 and 450.316(b)(1)]. It also provides mechanisms to solicit public comments and ideas, identify circumstances and impacts that might not have been known or anticipated, and build support among members of the public who are stakeholders in transportation investments that affect their communities.

The *Public and Agency Coordination Plan* was re-evaluated after publication of the DEIS. Based on comments and as part of the process to finalize the EIS, two new documents were developed: a *Public Involvement Plan* (PIP) (**Appendix D** of this FEIS) and a *Social Media Protocol and Strategy Plan* (**Appendix D** of this FEIS). The PIP was developed to provide a framework for how the public involvement activities would be conducted through the FEIS process. The PIP, a dynamic document, has been updated periodically based on input from stakeholders, the public, and results from previous engagement activities. The *Social Media Protocol and Strategy Plan* was established to document social media protocol and plan for engagement activities as a part of the Project. The goal of the *Social Media Protocol and Strategy Plan* is to broaden the Project's reach and understanding.

The DEIS documented public and agency coordination information related to the scoping process and alternatives development and screening. This chapter summarizes work completed in the DEIS phase; however, it focuses on public and agency outreach associated with completion of this FEIS. This FEIS provides public and agency coordination information related to the results of the public hearings and DEIS comment period, the FEIS Preferred Alternative, environmental impacts and proposed mitigation commitments, and the next steps in the process (funding, engineering design, construction, and Project implementation).

9.2 Public and Agency Coordination and Strategy Plans

Public outreach and planning for the Project were conducted in compliance with federal requirements (40 CFR Part 1506.6). These federal requirements state that public participation enables all interested parties to have the opportunity to provide input and comment to the process and be made aware of project developments. NEPA requires agencies to consider the environmental impacts of their actions, document their analysis, and make this analysis available to agencies, tribal entities, and the public for review prior to taking action (40 CFR Part 1500). NEPA also requires federal agencies to use an interdisciplinary approach

as they plan and make decisions that could affect the environment, working collaboratively with other agencies that have jurisdiction or special expertise in the project's issues (40 CFR Part 1501). This approach includes agency-provided public notice of hearings and public meetings, and the availability of environmental documents to inform those persons and agencies that might be interested or affected.

The *Public and Agency Coordination Plan* (see DEIS, Appendix F), PIP (**Appendix D** of this FEIS), and *Social Media Protocol and Strategy Plan* (**Appendix D** of this FEIS) identify the outreach efforts that FTA and NICTD planned to undertake during the Project's environmental review process. A key focus of these documents was to facilitate Project understanding with the public and agencies. The plans also served to solicit ideas, input, and comments on the Project, and provide opportunities to seek feedback on the potential transportation, social, and environmental consequences. The plans describe the Project's overall approach and involvement techniques used to provide FTA and NICTD with the benefit of public and agency insights during the course of the environmental review process.

The overall goals for public involvement for the completion of the EIS include the following:

- Create frequent opportunities for public involvement, focusing on going to the public and stakeholder groups where they are.
- Engage stakeholders in a focused fashion to capture local feedback and increase Project understanding.
- Provide clear, timely, and accurate information to ensure that the public has a solid understanding of the Project.
- Respond to public questions, comments, and concerns throughout the process.
- Use innovative engagement methods to reach more individuals and pilot new tools to reach communities typically underserved in engagement efforts.
- Conduct targeted outreach to populations within the immediate Project Area.
- Offer a variety of platforms to provide input, including online and in-person coordination opportunities.
- Convey complex, technical information using plain language and graphics.
- Comply with federal and state requirements.

The intended outcome is that the public, including stakeholders, has actively participated in the Project process and has assisted NICTD in developing the Project. A secondary outcome is that there is buy-in and ownership of the investment direction set for transit in the West Lake Corridor.

9.3 Outreach Tools

To meet the goals of public involvement for completion of this FEIS, several outreach tools were used to communicate with the public and agencies. For the completion of this FEIS, NICTD continued using a Project website and database, written materials, and email as a means to communicate with the public and agencies as described in the DEIS, Section 9.2.4, but also focused on in-person and online engagement and outreach.

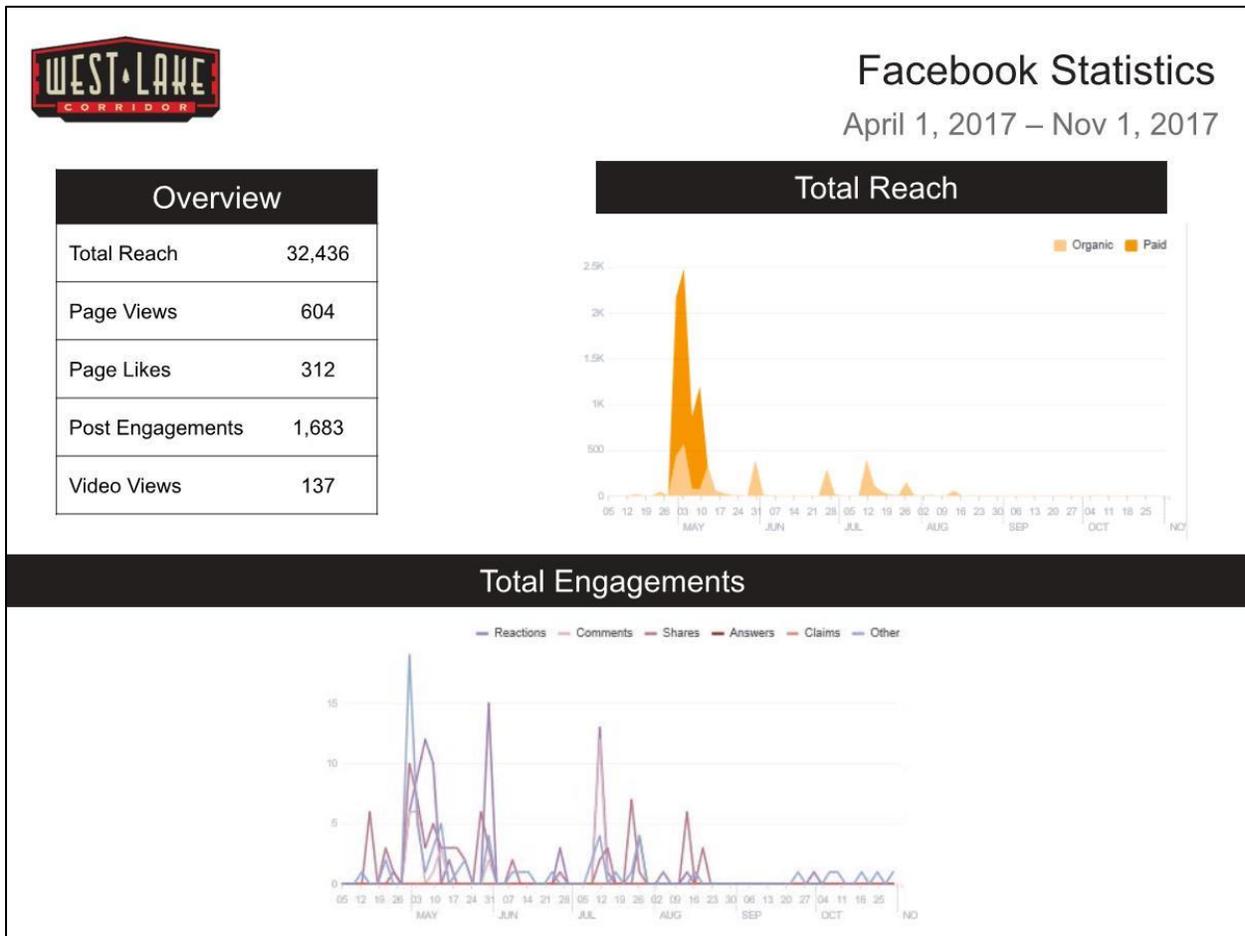
To enhance outreach for the remainder of the EIS process, NICTD developed and distributed two newsletters, a fact sheet, the project schedule, three press releases, legal notifications,

several maps, station concept plans, and project images; began using social media (<https://www.facebook.com/WestLakeCorridorProject>); released an enhanced version of the Project website (<http://www.nictdwestlake.com>); used a dedicated Project telephone hotline [(219) 250-2920]; used a dedicated email address (project.email@nictdwestlake.com) to record stakeholder comments; and increased the use and scope of in-person engagement. These tools are described in additional detail below, and related materials are provided in **Appendix D**.

- In-person engagement included a public informational open house, briefings of elected officials, targeted resident and property owner information meetings, a speakers' bureau, pop-up booths, and translation. Project staff was also present at public outreach events for related studies (TOD, TIP, and roadway improvement projects) to answer questions and provide Project information. In-person engagement is discussed in additional detail in **Section 9.4**.
- Legal notifications were issued and posted to the Project website as required to keep stakeholders informed. The following legal notifications were published: Notice of Availability and Public Hearing for the DEIS (English and Spanish), DEIS Availability and Public Hearing Flier, Website Announcement, and DEIS Review and Public Hearing Announcement. These materials are included in **Appendix D**. In addition, copies of the newspaper ads advertising the DEIS public hearings and their associated affidavits are included in **Appendix D**.
- The 2017 spring newsletter provided a summary of the DEIS public hearings, a Project update, and answers to frequently asked questions that were developed based on public and agency comments received during the DEIS process. The spring newsletter was mailed to 13,312 addresses and emailed to 452 addresses, and 250 additional copies were available for local distribution. The newsletter was also posted to the Project website. A fall newsletter was released electronically in November 2017. The fall newsletter provided a Project update, Project funding information, and answers to frequently asked questions. It was advertised through social media, posted to the Project website, and emailed to target addresses.
- Online media kits were developed to provide media representatives and public information officers with useful Project information. The media kits provided fact sheets, press releases, Project logos, Project maps and renderings, contact information, and links to social media.
- The following press releases were issued to keep stakeholders informed of Project developments:
 - May 12, 2017 – News Release: South Shore Line Announces Updated Station Plans for West Lake Corridor Project
 - September 7, 2017 – RDA Readies Federal Funding Bid
 - September 8, 2017 – South Shore Line Files Rating Application for West Lake Corridor and Double-Track NWI Projects
- Social media were used to promote engagement activities and increase understanding of Project benefits. A Facebook profile (<https://www.facebook.com/WestLakeCorridorProject>) was implemented as described in the *Social Media Protocol and Strategy Plan* (**Appendix D**). Posts were made, on average, on a biweekly basis (that is, every 2 weeks). Posts included a mixture of graphics and text-based updates and connected viewers with the Project website for additional information and educational materials. Materials posted to the Project website were also posted to social media outlets as appropriate. Social media comments were used to obtain insight into the public's sentiment and were used to track

the outreach and communication approach. NICTD also implemented one round of targeted Facebook advertisements to promote the informational open house and to direct the public to visit an online meeting offered parallel to the in-person open house. The Facebook advertisements resulted in a total reach of over 32,000. The West Lake Corridor page received 312 likes between the target period of April 1 and November 1, 2017. There were 137 video views during the target period. **Figure 9.3-1** summarizes Facebook statistics for the Project.

Figure 9.3-1: Summary of Facebook Statistics

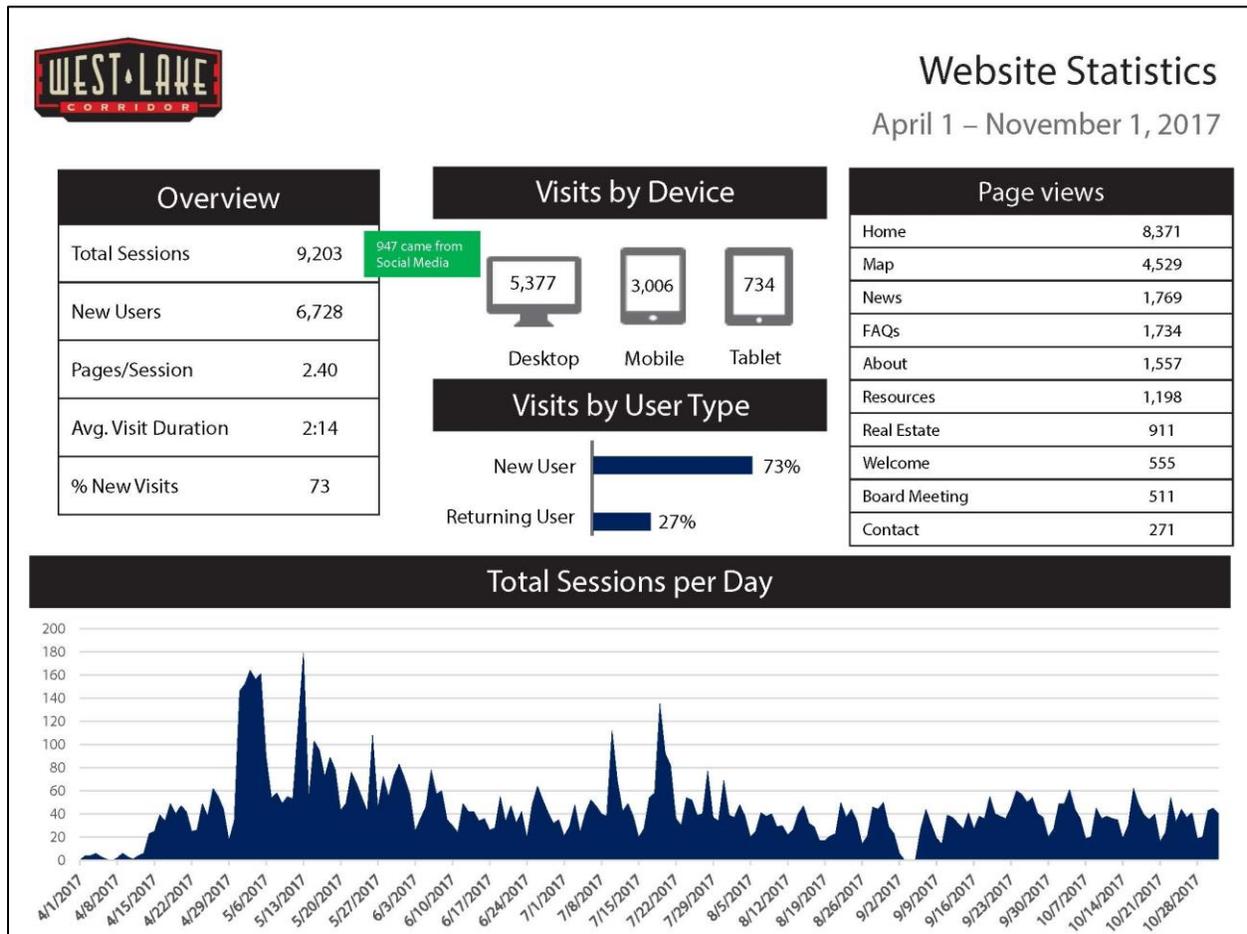


Source: HDR 2017a.

- A revised Project website (<http://www.nictdwestlake.com>) was rolled out in May 2017. It was designed to integrate with social media and serve as an outreach tool and hub for information, resources, and online engagement opportunities for the Project plans. As identified in the DEIS phase, the website has continued to provide updates on Project milestones to interested parties and opportunities for the public to submit online comments/questions about the Project. The website has also been updated to include a translation link for limited-English-proficiency viewers and to encourage stakeholder requests of in-person presentations by the Project Team. The website is mobile-friendly and ADA-accessible. The Project Team has tracked hits on a monthly basis to evaluate the website's success. The website would continue to be updated if the Project were to advance through engineering,

construction, and service implementation. Online materials available on the Project website include an online comment form and contact information, meeting materials including presentations and display boards, maps, videos, Project renderings, resource documents for review and comment, an online media kit, Project news, notifications, frequently asked questions, and Project photographs. Between April 1 and November 1, 2017, 9,203 website sessions were logged. About 950 hits came from social media. Currently, 73 percent of the page visitors are new users, and the remaining 27 percent are returning users. The site receives a steady number of hits per day. The site was visited most heavily after the initial website roll-out. **Figure 9.3-2** summarizes the Project website activity.

Figure 9.3-2: Summary of Project Website Activity



Source: HDR 2017a.

- The Project telephone call log [(219) 250-2920] was implemented to track and organize Project-related telephone calls. The log was initiated in 2014 and received multiple telephone calls.
- The Project email log (project.email@nctdwestlake.com) was implemented to track and organize Project-related email comments and requests. The log was initiated in 2014 and received several emails since the publication of the DEIS.

9.4 Public Outreach Activities

9.4.1 Summary of DEIS Phase Public Outreach

9.4.1.1 Scoping Coordination

According to CEQ's NEPA regulations (40 CFR Part 1500), federal and state lead agencies are required to engage in the agency and public scoping process to help define the appropriate range of issues and the depth and breadth of analysis to be addressed in a major environmental document. Scoping documentation remains the same as presented in the DEIS (see DEIS, Section 9.3.1). The following discussion summarizes the scoping coordination.

During the initial Project planning and DEIS phase of the Project, a *Public and Agency Coordination Plan* was created to identify the outreach efforts that FTA and NICTD planned to undertake during the Project's environmental review process. A key focus of the plan was to facilitate Project understanding with the public and agencies. It also served to solicit ideas, input, and comments on the Project, as well as provide opportunities to seek feedback on the potential transportation, social, and environmental consequences.

Public outreach efforts were extensive and broad-reaching through the DEIS phase. With the initiation of NEPA scoping with the issuance of the Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS on September 30, 2014, in the Federal Register, Volume 79, Number 189, NICTD invited public participation in the environmental review process. During the 30-day scoping period from October 13, 2014, to November 11, 2014, FTA and NICTD provided the public with multiple opportunities to submit comments, including online submission through the Project email address, through the website online comment section, by mail to the Project office, via the automated phone line, by transcription at the scoping meeting, and through comment cards provided at the scoping meeting held on October 28, 2014.

Ninety-four people attended the scoping meeting. An agency scoping meeting was also held on October 28, 2014, at the Center for Visual and Performing Arts in Munster, Indiana. Sixteen people attended.

A total of 144 public comments were received during the scoping period. The comments were used to identify Project support and needs, information about the Project Area, and ideas regarding the scope of the Project and range of solutions that should be evaluated. Of the comments received, 40 percent were in favor of the Project and 32 percent were opposed to the Project. The following environmental issues were raised in the comments: noise and vibration impacts on residential properties, impacts on property values, impacts on adjacent businesses and residences, property acquisitions and potential displacements, impacts on the Monon Trail, impacts on parking in adjacent neighborhoods, and safe access to stations.

Other issues were also raised, including information requests, agency support (specifically, whether Metra would accept the Project), corridor recommendations, and alternative accommodations (specific to the existing Gary Station). A summary of the main comments received from the public is provided in **Section 9.9** by subject area. A complete compilation of the public comments is provided in the DEIS, Appendix F.

NICTD conducted four workshops in November 2015 at locations in the Project Area to maintain engagement with the public through the NEPA phase. One workshop was conducted to specifically encourage agency and elected official attendance, and the other three were held in each of the three municipalities along the Project Area to encourage local attendance (November 9, 10, and 11, 2015, in Dyer, Hammond, and Munster, respectively). At these



workshops, the environmental process, Project features, and changes since the scoping meetings were discussed.

To advertise the workshops, NICTD issued a press release to three newspapers: *The Times of Northwest Indiana*, *Northwest Indiana Post-Tribune*, and *Gary Crusader*. NICTD also posted meeting announcements on the Project website, posted fliers at SSL stations, sent postcards to residents in the Project Area, sent email blasts to stakeholders listed in the Project database, distributed Project fliers, and provided notifications to schools in the Project Area to engage parents. Copies of the press release, newspaper advertisements, and flier can be found in the DEIS, Appendix F.

In total, 324 people attended the workshops and 16 public comments were received. Spanish-language interpreters were available at the workshops and Spanish translations of Project outreach materials were available upon request.

9.4.1.2 Public Hearings

Three public hearings were held after the DEIS publication on December 16, 2016:

- January 17, 2017 – between 6 and 8 PM at Protsman Elementary School in Dyer
- January 18, 2017 – between 6:30 and 8:30 PM at Washington Irving Elementary School in Hammond
- January 19, 2017 – between 6 and 8 PM at Centennial Park in Munster

The public hearings were attended by 651 people (143 in Dyer, 118 in Hammond, and 390 in Munster). The purpose of the hearings was to provide information about the Project, present the results of the DEIS (including potential impacts and benefits), answer questions, and provide an opportunity to comment on the DEIS, Section 4(f), Section 6(f), and Section 106 evaluations. A fact sheet was available as a handout, and exhibit boards presented information about the Project. A Spanish translator was available at the hearings.

9.4.1.3 DEIS Comment Period

The DEIS comment period was open for 45 days between December 16, 2016, and February 3, 2017. Comments were encouraged through comment cards at the public hearings, transcription by the court reporter at the public hearings, mail, email (project.email@nictedwestlake.com), Project website (<http://www.nictedwestlake.com/comment-online.html>), and telephone. Over 1,400 comments were received from 464 distinct commenters during the DEIS comment period. Comments are summarized in **Section 9.9** and are available in **Appendix H** of this FEIS along with responses.



9.4.2 Summary of FEIS Phase Public Outreach

9.4.2.1 Public Open House

A public informational open house was hosted by NICTD on May 13, 2017, between 10 AM and 12 PM at Kenwood Elementary School in Hammond. The purpose of the open house was to provide a Project update, demonstrate how comments were addressed, answer questions, and engage the Hammond communities in the Project. Updates were based on changes implemented as a direct result of comments received during the DEIS comment period.

A handout was provided and exhibit boards were presented that focused on the recommended alternative, four proposed stations, and the Project MSF. A Spanish translator was available at the open house. The meeting materials were also posted to the Project website, allowing online review for those who could not attend the open house.

The open house was advertised through direct mail (438 letters in addition to email notification to the Project mailing list), website, social media, and flier distribution (83 attempted deliveries, with 36 accepted and 46 not delivered). A total of 52 people attended the open house. After the open house, NICTD sent thank-you emails to 37 meeting attendees to encourage their continued involvement in the Project.

Meetings hosted by NICTD were held in locations that were ADA- and transit-accessible. Information was provided in alternative formats and/or languages by request. A comprehensive calendar of all outreach events was posted on the Project website and was updated throughout the Project process. Throughout the Project, groups were also encouraged to request Project presentations from NICTD. Outreach techniques were implemented using materials written in plain language.

The outreach techniques include a balance of in-person and online tools to maximize engagement. In-person engagement activities were implemented after publication of the DEIS and included a public open house, briefings to elected officials, targeted resident and property owner information meetings, a speakers' bureau, pop-up booths, and language translation.

9.4.2.2 Online Engagement

Online engagement is critical to reaching a greater audience. For this reason, the engagement strategy for the Project included a robust series of online tools including a spring newsletter, media kits, press releases, and legal notifications; implemented the use of social media (<https://www.facebook.com/WestLakeCorridorProject>); released an enhanced version of the Project website (<http://www.nictdwestlake.com>); used a dedicated Project telephone hotline [(219) 250-2920]; used a dedicated email address (project.email@nictdwestlake.com) to record stakeholder comments; and increased the use and scope of in-person engagement. These tools are discussed in **Section 9.3** and the materials are included in **Appendix D**.



9.5 Agency Coordination

Agency coordination has been ongoing throughout the environmental review process for the development of the EIS. FTA and NICTD performed agency coordination to achieve an open exchange of information, ideas, and concerns throughout the environmental review process and to avoid or minimize potential impacts on the natural and human environments.

Applicable federal, state, regional, and local agencies were invited to be involved in the EIS process by becoming a cooperating or participating agency through an invitation letter issued in October 2014. FTA was responsible for inviting all cooperating and participating agencies.

Based on responses to the initial letters and subsequent follow-up, USACE is considered a cooperating agency.

The agencies listed below are considered participating agencies in the EIS process. No changes to the cooperating or participating agencies list has occurred since publication of the DEIS. Refer to the DEIS, Chapter 9, Section 9.4.1, for additional information.

- NPS
- USEPA
- USFWS
- INDNR
- Chicago Department of Transportation
- CMAP
- CTA
- Metra
- RTA
- RDA
- NIRPC
- City of Hammond
- Cook County
- Town of Dyer
- Town of Munster

A cooperating agency is any federal agency, other than a lead agency, that has jurisdiction, by law or special expertise, with respect to any environmental impact involved in a project or project alternatives.

Participating agencies are federal, state, tribal, regional, and local government agencies that may have an interest in the Project. Nongovernmental organizations and private entities cannot serve as participating agencies.

Accepting the designation as a participating agency did not indicate Project support and did not provide the agency with increased oversight or approval authority beyond its statutory limits. Agencies learned about the Project and what alternatives were considered from the DEIS. Cooperating and participating agencies also provided guidance on Project decisions to help create a high-quality transit service that addresses the needs of the local community.

9.5.1 DEIS Phase Agency Outreach Summary

Agency coordination associated with the DEIS phase of the Project is discussed in Chapter 9 and Appendix E of the DEIS. This included Project notifications, data collection, coordination of environmental resources and engineering issues, involvement in the scoping process, workshops, and Project review. Agency outreach activities included letters and mailings, meetings, agency workshops, monthly stakeholder calls, a Dyer town council meeting, as well as Metra and freight rail meetings.

On November 9, 2015, NICTD hosted a workshop at the Munster Town Hall to update public officials and agencies regarding the Project and to provide an opportunity for attendees to comment on the Project station locations, MSF locations, layover track, and alignment. Twenty-six officials attended.

9.5.2 FEIS Phase Agency Outreach Activities

Agency coordination that has occurred since publication of the DEIS includes requests for participation in meetings and public events, agency comments, comment resolutions, comment responses, discussion of engineering issues, discussion of environmental resources including potential impacts and proposed mitigation and commitments, and information related to proposed refinements of the FEIS Preferred Alternative.

Outreach techniques used in the DEIS were used for the completion of the EIS process. The Project Team also used additional outreach techniques identified in the *PIP and Social Media Protocol and Strategy Plan*, including the revised website, additional online tools (the revised Project website, stakeholder email updates, elected official briefings, and social media), and in-person engagement (meetings, design workshops, biweekly and monthly agency conference calls, and the public informational open house).

Agency outreach included local agency meetings with municipalities, agency design workshops, TOD bus tours and workshops, the public informational open house, biweekly coordination meetings, monthly local agency Project update calls, email updates, value engineering meetings, and other meetings as needed to develop the design, coordinate agency comments and environmental impacts, complete the EIS process, and plan for future phases.

NICTD held biweekly meetings with FTA and monthly meetings with USACE, the cooperating agency. These meetings were held via either conference call or in person. NICTD held biweekly stakeholders' calls with officials from the Towns of Dyer and Munster and the City of Hammond. The purpose of the calls was to brief the officials on the status of the Project, get input regarding activities in each municipality that could affect the Project, and address any issues related to the Project that the officials might have. Individual meetings with all three municipalities have also been held regularly to review design plans and resolve technical issues.

Two meetings have occurred with USEPA and FTA. NICTD also coordinated with the railroads, Lansing Municipal Airport, and the MPO (NIRPC). Agencies were also involved in the coordination of this West Lake Corridor Project with other projects and studies such as the West Lake TOD Project, Joe Orr Road Extension Study, and NIRPC Amendment to the 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan and FY 2018–2021 TIP.

A list of agency coordination that has taken place during the FEIS phase is provided in **Table 9.7-1**.

9.6 Stakeholder Coordination

Stakeholder coordination is vital to building and sustaining meaningful participation for all stakeholders. Since publication of the DEIS, NICTD has focused on stakeholder outreach, specifically targeting EJ populations. In addition to the three public hearings in January 2017 and the public informational open house in May 2017, NICTD has enhanced outreach through use of elected official briefings, targeted resident and property owner information meetings, a speakers' bureau, pop-up meetings, coordination with other projects and studies, and language translation.

9.6.1 Briefings of Elected Officials

Elected officials fill roles that are critical to successful Project implementation. In addition to providing informational Project briefings, the Project Team also requires guidance on the overall Project direction and key decisions. In-person meetings with elected officials occurred as requested, following distribution of a Project update newsletter. Project materials were also available for download on the Project website.

9.6.2 Targeted Resident and Property Owner Information Meetings

Given the size of the Project Area and the number of affected properties, property owner meetings were an effective way to coordinate directly with affected residents and owners. The Project Team scheduled two large-format meetings, one in Hammond and one in Munster, with 70 to 90 residents and owners at each meeting. For these meetings, invitations were sent to the owners of directly affected parcels with instructions regarding how to sign up to attend one of the meetings.

At the meetings, NICTD staff presented a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation about the acquisition process followed by an extensive question-and-answer session to respond to questions. NICTD staff handed out cards and shared the NICTD real estate acquisition hotline phone number, which could be called by any property owner or person with a question related to real estate. Project maps and FTA Land Acquisition brochures were available at the meetings, and staffers were on hand to educate residents about the land-acquisition process and answer questions. If a resident was unable to attend the scheduled meetings, they were directed to request a meeting by appointment or call the real estate hotline.

9.6.3 Speakers' Bureau and Pop-up Booths

Establishing a speakers' bureau can be an effective tool in garnering Project support, providing an opportunity to share Project information at major milestones, and becoming a community resource for agencies and the public. A speakers' bureau is a core group of speakers who are available for community gatherings, neighborhood groups, churches, or professional or civic organizations upon request and help take the Project "on the road," reaching a larger cross-section of community meetings or gatherings.

For this Project, pop-up booths were established as an outreach tool to share Project information and reach a larger cross-section of stakeholders. The booths were set up at festivals and community gatherings within the Project Area during a variety of timeframes (mornings, afternoons, and evenings).

The goals of these outreach methods were to increase overall Project awareness and provide key information to interested and affected stakeholders. Events were staffed accordingly to engage attendees, and usually included a NICTD staff member and member of the public

outreach team. To reach more groups, including traditionally underserved populations, and to limit overlapping efforts, when possible NICTD joined with other community stakeholder outreach efforts.

Eleven speakers' bureau meetings and five pop-up booth events were conducted since publication of the DEIS, as shown in **Table 9.7-1**. The events ranged from professional or civic group luncheon gatherings to pop-up booths at parks and festivals. Events were staffed to engage attendees, raise Project awareness, and answer Project-related questions.

As part of the development of the PIP, the Project Team identified areas of low-income or minority populations and identified a list of organizations within those areas. The Project Team notified leaders of these traditionally underserved populations of the availability of speakers' bureau staff to present to a group or organization. In addition, the Project Team identified standing meetings, such as neighborhood, civic, ministerial alliances, NAACP, and Urban League meetings for additional engagement sessions that could consist of information sharing and input opportunities. The list of organizations contacted is provided in Appendix A of the PIP.

9.6.4 Coordination with Other Projects and Studies

Coordination with other projects and studies in the Project Area allows the Project Team to identify, avoid or minimize conflicts, share information, and develop comprehensive plans.

Since publication of the DEIS, NICTD has coordinated with several projects and actively participated in meetings for those projects to answer Project-related questions and avoid or minimize potential conflicts. Coordination with the other projects also ensures that development of the West Lake Corridor Project supports the separate projects.

NICTD has attended meetings specific to the West Lake TOD Project, RDA, NIRPC Amendment to the 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan and FY 2018–2021 TIP, and Joe Orr Road Extension Study. **Table 9.7-1** summarizes the coordination that has occurred with other projects and studies.

9.6.5 Environmental Justice Strategies

Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, defines EJ as the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people—regardless of race, ethnicity, income, or education level—in transportation decision-making. EJ programs promote the protection of human health and the environment, empowerment via public participation, and the dissemination of relevant information to inform and educate affected communities. EJ outreach activities for this Project were done in accordance with Executive Order 12898; USDOT's Updated Final Order on Environmental Justice, 5610.2(a) (USDOT 2012); and FTA Circular 4703.1, *Environmental Justice Policy Guidance for Federal Transit Administration Recipients* (FTA 2012).

The strategies NICTD used to build and sustain meaningful participation for all stakeholders during the DEIS phase is described in Chapter 9 of the DEIS. Since publication of the DEIS, NICTD held three public hearings in January 2017, a public informational open house in May 2017, and continued outreach targeting EJ communities in the Project Area to keep these community members engaged in Project development (see the *West Lake Corridor Project Environmental Justice Technical Report* in **Appendix G5**).

NICTD conducted this open house to engage the Hammond communities in the Project, many of which are identified as EJ communities. NICTD's outreach efforts included an open house invitation mailed to community organizations and interested parties and open house flyer distribution to community organizations and interested parties.

After the close of the formal comment period on the DEIS, communication with local community groups, schools, hospitals, and other organizations that would include or serve EJ populations was initiated through the Project website, a newsletter mailing, social media and targeted Facebook advertisements, presentations, participation at local community events, and in-person meetings with targeted stakeholders.

The Project website was redesigned to include a translation link for limited-English-proficiency viewers and was updated regularly with renderings, progress updates, and plans. The website and all outgoing communications encouraged interested groups to submit requests for in-person presentations by the Project Team by using the online comment form or Project telephone hotline or by submitting an email to the Project email address.

9.6.6 Translation

Organization leaders within the Project Area recommended translating existing Project communication tools to increase input opportunities for non-English-speaking residents. Spanish was identified as a language other than English that would increase participation. In response, NICTD installed Google Translate on the Project website, which allowed visitors to choose their preferred language. Upon request with notice, Project materials could be translated into Spanish, and a Spanish interpreter could be present for meetings.

Public meeting notifications included a statement in Spanish directing the public to the Project website for more information. A Spanish interpreter was present at all public meetings. No requests were made for translated materials.

9.7 Summary of Public, Agency, and Stakeholder Outreach and Coordination

Table 9.7-1 summarizes the outreach activities conducted since the publication of the DEIS. The outreach activities are presented in three categories: public meetings, agency coordination, and stakeholder coordination.



Table 9.7-1: Summary of FEIS Outreach and Coordination Activities

Date ^a	Host Organization and Event	Location	Meeting Purpose	Number of Attendees ^b
Public Meetings				
January 17, 2017	Public hearing for DEIS	Protsman Elementary School, Dyer, Indiana	Formal public hearing to present the DEIS and DEIS Preferred Alternative and to solicit comments.	143
January 18, 2017	Public hearing for DEIS	Washington Irving Elementary School, Hammond, Indiana	Formal public hearing to present the DEIS and DEIS Preferred Alternative and to solicit comments.	118
January 19, 2017	Public hearing for DEIS	Centennial Park, Munster, Indiana	Formal public hearing to present the DEIS and DEIS Preferred Alternative and to solicit comments.	390
March 21, 2017	NIRPC TIP public hearing ^c	NIRPC offices, Portage, Indiana	Public meeting sponsored by NIRPC to adopt the long-range plan and TIP amendments. NICTD was present to answer train-related questions.	N/A
March 22, 2017	NIRPC TIP public hearing ^c	Hammond Civic Center, Hammond, Indiana	Public meeting sponsored by NIRPC to adopt the long-range plan and TIP amendments. NICTD was present to answer train-related questions.	N/A
March 22, 2017	NIRPC TIP public hearing ^c	Hammond Civic Center, Hammond, Indiana	Public meeting sponsored by NIRPC to adopt the long-range plan and TIP amendments. NICTD was present to answer train-related questions.	N/A
March 28, 2017	NIRPC TIP public hearing ^c	Center for Visual and Performing Arts, Munster, Indiana	Public meeting sponsored by NIRPC to adopt the long-range plan and TIP amendments. NICTD was present to answer train-related questions.	N/A
March 29, 2017	NIRPC TIP public hearing ^c	City Hall, Michigan City, Indiana	Public meeting sponsored by NIRPC to adopt the long-range plan and TIP amendments. NICTD was present to answer train-related questions.	N/A
May 13, 2017	Informational open house	Kenwood Elementary, Hammond, Indiana	Open house to present Project updates, Project station designs, and proposed impacts on specific EJ, local business, and local community groups.	52



Date ^a	Host Organization and Event	Location	Meeting Purpose	Number of Attendees ^b
Agency Coordination				
January 5, 2017	Local agency meeting	Hammond City Hall, Hammond, Indiana	Meeting with city staff to discuss drainage, civil, and environmental aspects of the Project.	15
January 5, 2017	Local agency meeting	Munster Town Hall, Munster, Indiana	Meeting to discuss drainage, civil, and environmental aspects of the Project.	10
January 12, 2017	Local agency coordination – NIPSCO	NICTD offices, Chesterton, Indiana	Meeting to discuss the Project, data-collection needs, and land acquisition, and identify potential gas and electrical line conflicts and potential solutions.	9
January 26, 2017	Local agency meeting – Indiana Harbor Beltline (IHB)	IHB Main Office, 161st Street, Hammond, Indiana	Meeting to discuss the Project and design approach, review exhibits, and exchange information.	5
February 1, 2017	Local agency meeting – town council and town manager	Munster Town Hall, Munster, Indiana	Meeting to discuss upcoming residents' meeting (February 10, 2017) and concerns with Ridge Road Station.	2
February 10, 2017	Town of Munster – community meeting with town council	Munster Town Hall, Munster, Indiana	Open-format meeting to answer Project-related questions.	150
February 17, 2017	Indiana State Historic Preservation Officer	DNR offices, Indianapolis, Indiana	Meeting to discuss and resolve SHPO comments and Section 106 process.	11
February 14, 2017	RDA – Munster/Dyer TOD workshop: Alternative schemes ^d	Centennial Park, Munster, Indiana	RDA presented TOD ideas and held a workshop. The meeting provided highlights from a TOD market study and gathered feedback on a series of proposed schemes for each station area (Munster Ridge and Munster/Dyer Main Street). ^e NICTD was present to answer Project questions.	N/A



Date ^a	Host Organization and Event	Location	Meeting Purpose	Number of Attendees ^b
February 16, 2017	RDA – Hammond TOD workshop #1: alternative schemes ^d	Kenwood Elementary School, Hammond, Indiana	RDA presented TOD ideas and held a workshop. The meeting provided highlights from a TOD market study and gathered feedback on a series of proposed schemes for each station area (Hammond Gateway and South Hammond). NICTD was present to answer Project questions.	N/A
February 21, 2017	Hammond Plan Commission	Hammond City Hall, Hammond, Indiana	Meeting to discuss what is needed for Project rating in relation to zoning and TOD.	15
March 3, 2017	Local agency meeting – Norfolk Southern Railroad	Norfolk Southern Railroad office, Atlanta, Georgia	Meeting to discuss the Project and design approach, review exhibits, and exchange information.	2
March 8, 2017	Design workshop	NICTD offices, Chesterton, Indiana	Follow-up meeting to the December 8, 2016, meeting on engineering issues (the project manager session); the Project Team’s engineering task leaders again presented their design development and referenced the incorporation of elements discussed previously; NICTD and RDA were in attendance.	10–12
March 9, 2017	Local agency coordination	Munster, Indiana	Meeting to discuss the Project including engineering issues, TOD, highway-rail street crossings and Quiet Zones; ditches; station aesthetics, parking, traffic, TOD, and locations (Ridge Road and Main Street Station); Broadmoor bridge pedestrian access; Belden Lane pedestrian tunnel; bicycle trail at Fisher Street; Pennsy Greenway; landscape ordinance; and traffic noise.	5–6
March 9, 2017	Local agency coordination – Town of Dyer	Dyer, Indiana	Meeting to discuss the Project including TOD, Joe Orr Road extension, triangle property along Main Street, and Munster/Dyer Station.	5–6



Date ^a	Host Organization and Event	Location	Meeting Purpose	Number of Attendees ^b
March 9, 2017	Local agency coordination – City of Hammond	Hammond, Indiana	Meeting to discuss the Project including TOD, South Hammond Station, Hammond Gateway Station, Little Calumet River crossing and trail, Monon Trail, traffic issues, engineering issues, potential Section 6(f) impacts, and potential business impacts.	7
March 9, 2017	USEPA	N/A	Conference call to discuss USEPA comments on DEIS.	7
March 15, 2017	Local agency coordination- Lansing Municipal Airport	Lansing, Illinois	Meeting with Lansing Airport to discuss the Project's potential impact on the airport's runway protection zone.	5
April 5, 2017	Local agency coordination – City of Hammond	Hammond, Indiana	Meeting to confirm City of Hammond–owned properties and request site access for survey.	5–6
March 27, 2017	Local agency coordination – NIPSCO	Hammond, Indiana	Meeting to discuss the Project's crossing of the Grand Calumet River and NIPSCO property site visit.	10–12
May 30, 2017	RDA – Hammond TOD workshop #2: open house ^d	Centennial Park, Munster, Indiana	Open-house workshop that allowed participants an opportunity to see the preferred concept plans for proposed TOD surrounding the two new train stations in Dyer and Munster before they are finalized for the New Starts grant application.	N/A
June 1, 2017	RDA – Hammond TOD workshop #3: open house ^d	Kenwood Elementary, Hammond, Indiana	Open-house workshop that allowed participants an opportunity to see the preferred concept plans for proposed TOD surrounding the two new train stations in Hammond before they are finalized for the New Starts grant application. This meeting was a follow-up to workshop #2.	N/A
June 2, 2017	Joe Orr Road meeting with NIRPC, Town of Dyer, Town of Munster, Lansing Airport, and RDA	NIRPC offices, Portage, Indiana	Meeting to coordinate among all organizations regarding how the Joe Orr Road (planned, unfunded) Extension Study intersects with the West Lake Corridor Project; responsibility to lead Joe Orr Road Extension Study rests with the Town of Munster.	15



Date^a	Host Organization and Event	Location	Meeting Purpose	Number of Attendees^b
June 5, 2017	Local agency meeting – City of Hammond	Hammond City Hall, Hammond, Indiana	Meeting to discuss the soil boring plans and access to public properties.	4
June 7, 2017	Hammond Police and Fire Departments	Hammond Police Department, Hammond, Indiana	Meeting to discuss Project and safety concerns.	N/A
June 14, 2017	Telephone conversation – City of Hammond	N/A	Telephone conversation regarding South Hammond parking.	2
August 21, 2017	USEPA and USACE	HDR offices-Chicago, Illinois	Discussion of NICTD’s responses to USEPA’s comments and wetland mitigation efforts with USACE.	10
September 26, 2017	Value engineering study – discussion meeting	NICTD offices, Chesterton, Indiana	Meeting to discuss scope of value engineering study and available information for review.	25
Stakeholder Coordination				
January 5, 2017	One Region – Lake County On Track Breakfast	Wicker Park, Highland, Indiana	NICTD conducted an informational presentation.	300
January 12, 2017	One Region – cocktail event with young families	Briar Ridge Country Club, Schererville, Indiana	Project presentation and question-and-answer session.	50
January 13, 2017	One Region – TOD bus tour	Various locations	Bus tour to inspire West Lake TOD Project options.	45
January 15, 2017	One Region and Jewish Federation of Munster – joint meeting	Munster, Indiana	Project presentation and question-and-answer session.	50
January 19, 2017	One Region – Purdue student luncheon	Purdue Northwest (Lake County Campus), Indiana	Panel discussion of Project.	70
February 7, 2017	Schererville Town Council GOP – meeting	St. John Township Center, Merrillville, Indiana	Project presentation and question-and-answer session.	30
February 8, 2017	Rotary Crown Point – meeting	Geisen Funeral Home, Crown Point, Indiana	Project presentation and question-and-answer session.	40



Date^a	Host Organization and Event	Location	Meeting Purpose	Number of Attendees^b
February 28, 2017	Pulaski Park Neighborhood Association – meeting	American Legion, Hammond, Indiana	Project presentation and question-and-answer session.	15
March 10, 2017	One Region – TOD bus tour	Various TOD sites, Illinois	Bus tour of nine sites in Illinois to inspire West Lake TOD Project options; elected officials were on the tour.	45
March 14, 2017	League of Women Voters	Patrick’s Grill, Michigan City, Indiana	Project presentation and question-and-answer session.	30
April 3, 2017	Valparaiso Rotary Club – meeting	Valparaiso, Indiana	Project presentation and question-and-answer session.	120
April 5, 2017	Hammond Real Estate – targeted meeting	Washington Irving Middle School, Hammond, Indiana	Meeting with potentially affected homeowners. Real estate process, Uniform Act, and Project were presented and discussed.	150
April 11, 2017	Hammond Rotary Club – meeting	Purdue Northwest (Lake County Campus), Hammond, Indiana	Project presentation and question-and-answer session.	9
April 24, 2017	City Schools of Hammond – meeting	41 Williams Street, Hammond, Indiana	Meeting to discuss Project, safety concerns, Eggers School, and other school concerns.	N/A
April 28, 2017	Partners for Clean Air – annual luncheon	Hammond Marina, Hammond, Indiana	Meeting to present the Project and discuss air quality.	60
May 1, 2017	Hammond Fair Housing Plan leaders – targeted meeting	City Hall, Hammond, Indiana	Meeting to discuss the Project and real estate and connecting work with the City of Hammond’s new fair housing plan.	3
May 17, 2017	Park Ridge Condominium Association – targeted meeting	8220 Harrison Avenue, Munster, Indiana	Meeting to discuss the Project and answer questions; condo is directly adjacent to the proposed ROW.	4
June 10, 2017	Dyer Summer Fest	Pheasant Hills Park, Dyer, Indiana	Booth set up to discuss the Project and answer questions.	18



Date ^a	Host Organization and Event	Location	Meeting Purpose	Number of Attendees ^b
June 14, 2017	Little Calumet River Basin Commission – targeted meeting	Munster, Indiana	Meeting to discuss Project and relocation of River Trail.	N/A
June 16, 2017	Munster Community Hospital – targeted meeting	Community Hospital, Munster, Indiana	Meeting to discuss Project and hospital concerns.	N/A
June 25, 2017	Sunday Market in the Park	Centennial Park, Munster, Indiana	Pop-up info booth set up to discuss the Project and answer questions.	20
July 16, 2017	Sunday Market in the Park	Centennial Park, Munster, Indiana	Pop-up info booth set up to discuss the Project and answer questions.	27
July 19, 2017	Festival of the Lakes	Wolf Lake Memorial Park, Hammond, Indiana	Pop-up info booth set up to discuss the Project and answer questions.	8
July 20, 2017	Festival of the Lakes	Wolf Lake Memorial Park, Hammond, Indiana	Pop-up info booth set up to discuss the Project and answer questions.	10
Additional materials may be inserted as coordination continues with targeted organizations in which coordination has been attempted but not completed.				

Source: HDR 2017a.

^a Coordination associated with the DEIS is discussed in Chapter 9 and Appendix F of the DEIS.

^b Some meetings did not use formal sign-in sheets. Official attendance is noted as not available (N/A).

^c This meeting was sponsored by NIRPC as part of a separate study for the Amendment of the 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan and FY 2018–2021 TIP. For additional information, visit the NIRPC website at <http://www.nirpc.org/2040-plan/transportation/transportation-improvement-program-tip>.

^d This meeting was held as part of the West Lake TOD Project. The West Lake TOD Project is a planning process that will create TOD plans for areas around four new stations that are proposed as part of the West Lake Corridor Project. Project staff were present to answer train-related questions, provide stakeholder outreach, and understand stakeholder concerns related to the Project station designs. Additional information is available through the West Lake TOD Project website: <http://westlaketod.civicpage.com>. Workshop #1: Building Blocks with Keypad Polling occurred in the fall of 2016 prior to the publication of the DEIS.

9.8 Consultation Pursuant to Section 106, Section 4(f), and Section 6(f)

9.8.1 Section 106 of the NHPA

Coordination activities required under the regulations pursuant to Section 106 of the NHPA (54 USC § 306108) were implemented during the course of the Project and are included in **Appendix B**. Section 106 of the NHPA requires FTA and NICTD to consider the effects of the Project on historic properties and seek comments from consulting parties based on their special knowledge of, concern for, or mandated regulatory role relative to historic properties (36 CFR Part 800).

FTA initiated the Section 106 process in September 2014 with the Illinois SHPO and Indiana SHPO (INDNR-DHPA) concurrent with the NEPA environmental review process. Thereafter, FTA invited agencies, organizations, and individuals to participate in the Section 106 process, and, if they accepted, they were designated consulting parties for Section 106 consultations.

The Hammond Historical Society, Hammond Historic Preservation Commission, Indiana Landmarks (Northwest Field Office), Lake County Historical Society, and Peoria Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma accepted the invitation to be Section 106 consulting parties. The views of the public were also considered throughout the Section 106 process and will continue to be solicited concurrently with the meetings conducted as part of the environmental review process.

As part of the Section 106 process, FTA and NICTD identified historic properties within the Project's APE and assessed potential adverse effects. This information was distributed to the Illinois SHPO, the Indiana SHPO, and consulting parties for review and comment as part of Section 106 consultations.

A consultation meeting was held on June 22, 2016, to review recommendations regarding Determinations of Eligibility for resources within the APE and Determinations of Effects resulting from the Project. On September 9, 2016, the Illinois SHPO concurred that the Project would not affect any archaeological historic properties or historic properties in Illinois.

Based on feedback from the SHPOs and consulting parties, FTA revised the Section 106 technical studies and developed mitigation measures for potential effects on historic and archaeological resources, which are documented in the MOA (**Appendix B**).

On November 7, 2016, FTA sent letters to the SHPOs and consulting parties to obtain their input on the draft MOA and request concurrence from the SHPOs on FTA's determinations of eligibility and effects for the DEIS Build Alternatives. On December 14, 2016, the Indiana SHPO sent a letter to FTA commenting on the draft MOA and technical studies (**Appendix B**). The Indiana SHPO sent another letter on February 3, 2017, with comments on the information laid out in the DEIS regarding historic resources that lie partly or entirely within the state of Indiana. The Indiana SHPO also sent concurrence with the *West Lake Corridor Archaeological Survey* in a letter to FTA on September 6, 2017.

On September 13, 2017, FTA received a letter from the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation in regards to documentation received regarding adverse effects on properties listed or eligible for listing in the NRHP. The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation concluded that its participation in Section 106 consultation was not needed.

On November 7, 2017, FTA sent the final MOA to INDNR requesting concurrence and its signature. **Appendix B** includes the fully executed MOA, signed on December 12, 2017, by FTA, NICTD, and the Indiana SHPO.

9.8.2 Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966

Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966 established requirements for USDOT (including FTA) to consider publicly owned parks and recreational areas that are accessible to the general public, publicly owned wildlife and waterfowl refuges, and publicly or privately owned historic sites of federal, state, or local significance in developing transportation projects (49 USC § 303). Section 4(f) prohibits use of these resources for transportation projects unless (1) it is proven that there is no feasible and prudent alternative to the use and the action includes all possible planning to minimize harm or (2) the agency determines that the use of the property, including any measure(s) to minimize harm, would have a *de minimis* impact on the property [23 CFR Part 774.3(a)].

This law, commonly known as Section 4(f), is now codified in 23 USC § 303 and 23 USC § 138 and is implemented by FTA through the regulations at 23 CFR Part 774. Additional guidance on the implementation of Section 4(f) is provided FHWA's *Section 4(f) Policy Paper* (FHWA 2012). FTA has formally adopted this guidance, and analysis was conducted consistent with the guidance.

The DEIS NEPA Preferred Alternative identified use of three Section 4(f) resources—the OK Champion Building, the Pennsy Greenway, and Pennsy Path—and the relocation of a short stretch of the Erie Lackawanna Trail. The FEIS Preferred Alternative still uses the OK Champion Building, the Pennsy Greenway, and Pennsy Path, but no longer uses the Erie Lackawanna Trail.

The FEIS Preferred Alternative would permanently incorporate one historic resource, the OK Champion Building, and would cause *de minimis* impacts on one recreational resource, the Pennsy Greenway and Pennsy Path. Mitigation measures for the loss of the OK Champion Building are documented in the Section 106 MOA. These measures are a full recording consistent with HABS and HAER, an appropriate display or interpretive material concerning the OK Champion Building that would be located near this resource, and a nomination to the NRHP for the P.H. Mueller Sons Hardware Building.

The Pennsy Greenway and Pennsy Path would be treated in a manner that continues their availability for public use after interruptions attributable to construction. After mitigation, the Pennsy Greenway and Pennsy Path would continue to provide the public benefit it provided before the Project.

The newspaper advertisements for the DEIS public hearings on January 17, 18, and 19, 2017, indicated that impacts on Section 4(f) resources would occur (**Appendix D**). Additionally, NICTD and FTA presented the potential impacts on Section 4(f) resources from the NEPA Preferred Alternative in the DEIS public hearings, pursuant to 23 CFR Part 774.5(b)(2)(i). The public had the opportunity to verbally comment on these potential impacts at the public hearings as well as in writing during the DEIS 45-day comment period from December 16, 2016, to February 3, 2017.

In addition, and as described in **Chapter 7** and in **Table 9.7-1**, NICTD and FTA conducted outreach efforts with area residents, property owners, and key stakeholders with respect to development and selection of the FEIS Preferred Alternative and its effects on recreational areas and historic properties, including Section 4(f) resources. This effort included coordination with the Indiana SHPO, the Illinois SHPO, and other consulting parties as part of the Section 106 process for historic properties (see **Section 9.8.1**), as well as with the City of Hammond and the Town of Munster for recreational areas. On September 29, 2014, FTA initiated Section 106 consultation with both the Indiana and Illinois SHPOs. Coordination and consultation with the two SHPOs, consulting parties, and the public has continued in the NEPA process. In



addition, to meet the Section 4(f) coordination and review requirements [23 CFR Part 774.5(a)], this evaluation was sent to the U.S. Department of the Interior (USDOI) on December 21, 2017, for a 45-day review and comment period. The USDOI correspondence dated February 5, 2018, indicated no comments or objections to FTA's approval of the Section 4(f) evaluation. The USDOI correspondence is included in **Appendix C**.

9.8.3 Section 6(f) of the LWCFA

The LWCFA (16 USC § 4601-4–4601-11 et seq.) regulates the use of parklands that were purchased or developed using LWCFA funds. Section 6(f) of the LWCFA, administered by the Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation and USDOI's National Park Service (NPS), provides funding for acquiring property and developing public recreational facilities, and protects against the loss of that property to other uses. The act states, "No property acquired or developed with assistance under this section shall, without the approval of the Secretary [of the Department of the Interior], be converted to other than public outdoor recreation uses" [16 USC § 4601-8(f)(3)].

Section 6(f) applies when a project proposes to convert property where LWCFA grant funds have been used to purchase or redevelop all or a portion of the property (36 CFR Part 59 et seq.). When property is proposed to be converted, mitigation is required in the form of replacement property of at least equal recreation value. NICTD's review of the Indiana listing of properties identified two properties within the Project Area that have received LWCFA grant funds.

The DEIS NEPA Preferred Alternative required ROW from the Erie Lackawanna Trail in Hammond. As design progressed, it was determined that the FEIS Preferred Alternative would no longer need to change any portion of this trail; therefore, there would no longer be a Section 6(f) conversion of the Erie Lackawanna Trail. The DEIS did not recognize the Dan Rabin Plaza as a Section 6(f) property. Comments received on the DEIS identified that portions of the Dan Rabin Plaza were purchased with LWCFA funds. The FEIS Preferred Alternative would have no Section 6(f) conversion of the Dan Rabin Plaza since it would cross over the northwest corner of the eastern portion of the plaza, which is considered the recreational portion. Although Section 6(f) funds were used for this portion of the plaza, the Project would be elevated on structure at least 25 feet above the plaza at this location. No columns would be placed in this portion of the Dan Rabin Plaza, and the Project would not require permanent incorporation of the plaza's recreational property.

Section 6(f) LWCFA resources would not be affected as part of the FEIS Preferred Alternative. Related coordination is available in **Appendix C**.

9.8.4 Summary of Public Comments and Findings

Section 4(f), Section 6(f), and Section 106 resources and impacts associated with the DEIS NEPA Preferred Alternative were presented at the January 2017 public hearings. Eleven comments were received about Section 4(f) resources and potential impacts, and 11 comments were received regarding Section 6(f) resources and potential impacts. Public hearing materials and related comments are provided in **Appendices D** and **H**, respectively.

In addition, to meet Section 4(f) coordination and review requirements [23 CFR Part 774.5(a)], on December 21, 2017, the Section 4(f) evaluation was made available to USDOI for a 45-day review and comment period prior to finalization. The USDOI concurrence is available in **Appendix C**. The officials with jurisdiction over the recreational Section 4(f) resources that are subject to *de minimis* impacts by the FEIS Preferred Alternative have all given their written



concurrence with the findings of *de minimis* impact. The letters from these officials are provided in **Appendix C**. FTA, NICTD, and the Indiana SHPO have reviewed and signed the MOA for the mitigation of the adverse effect on historic properties. The MOA is provided in **Appendix B**.

9.9 Comment Summary

As part of the FEIS/ROD, responses to substantive comments are required to be assessed both individually and collectively and provided in the combined FEIS/ROD. CEQ regulations [40 CFR Part 1503.4(b)] and FTA regulations (23 CFR Part 771.125) state that an FEIS must discuss all substantive comments received on a DEIS within the FEIS/ROD, and a response must be provided even if the comment does not warrant further agency response.

All comments received during the EIS process have been reviewed. This section summarizes comments received by FTA and NICTD during the scoping process and during the 45-day public comment period for the DEIS. Comments received prior to the publication of the DEIS through the public and agency scoping meeting and the public and agency workshops are provided in the DEIS, Appendix F. The following is a summary of those comments.

9.9.1 Summary of Scoping Comments

A total of 144 public comments were received during the 30-day scoping period from October 13, 2014, to November 11, 2014. The comments were used to identify Project support and needs, information about the Project Area, and ideas regarding the scope of the Project and range of solutions that should be evaluated. Of the comments received, 40 percent were in favor of the Project and 32 percent were opposed to the Project. The following environmental issues were raised in the comments: noise and vibration impacts on residential properties, impacts on property values, impacts on adjacent businesses and residences, property acquisitions and potential displacements, impacts on the Monon Trail, impacts on parking in adjacent neighborhoods, and safe access to stations.

Other issues were also raised, including information requests, agency support (specifically, whether Metra would accept the Project), corridor recommendations, and alternative accommodations (specific to the existing Gary Station). A summary of the main comments received from the public is provided below by subject area. A complete compilation of the public comments is provided in the DEIS, Appendix F.

NICTD received 16 comments at the public workshops conducted on November 9, 10, and 11, 2015, in Dyer, Hammond, and Munster, respectively. At these workshops, the environmental process, Project features, and changes since the scoping meetings were discussed.



9.9.2 Summary of DEIS Comments

The DEIS 45-day comment period began on December 16, 2016, when notice of the availability of the document was published, and ended on February 3, 2017. Hard copies of the DEIS were made available at the following locations:

- Munster Branch of the Lake County Public Library
8701 Calumet Avenue, Munster, IN 46321
- Hammond Public Library, 564 State Street,
Hammond, IN 46320
- Dyer-Schererville Branch of the Lake County
Public Library, 1001 W. Lincoln Highway,
Schererville, IN 46375
- NICTD's Administrative Office, 33 East U.S. Highway 12, Chesterton, IN 46304

A copy of the DEIS is also available to view on or download from the Project website:
<http://www.nictdwestlake.com>.

During the comment period, FTA and NICTD received over 1,400 comments from agencies, Project stakeholders, and the general public on the DEIS in 464 communications. Comments were received from 35 different organizations, businesses, and petitions and from over 490 individuals. Note that some individuals commented in more than one format, some individuals signed only petitions, names associated with an organization are not listed in the list of individuals unless they commented as an individual as well, and some individuals did not provide a name.

As comments were analyzed and responses were initiated, some topics were divided into additional categories. For example, traffic was divided into traffic–auto and traffic–freight. For this reason, the original estimate of the number of comments published in the spring newsletter, the Public Hearing Summary document, and through social media provided different and smaller comment totals than those presented in this chapter. **Table 9.9-1** identifies organizations, businesses, and petitions that submitted comments during the DEIS comment period.

Comment Collection Methods

- **Public Hearing:** Oral remarks transcribed by court reporter
- **Comment Card:** Provided and accepted at the public hearings
- **Mail:** NICTD
33 East U.S. Highway 12
Chesterton, IN 46304
- **Website:** <http://www.nictdwestlake.com/comment-online.html>
- **Email:** project.email@nictdwestlake.com
- **Phone:** (219) 250-2920

Table 9.9-1: Commenting Organizations, Businesses, and Petitions during the DEIS Comment Period

Organizations, Businesses, and Petitions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alliance Coatings, LLC (Turner) • Alliance for Regional Development (Schlickman) • AMTRAK (Rogers & Terdich) • Bridge Program Manager, Ninth Coast Guard District (Striffler) • Brunswick/Hanover Assoc (Erhart) • Cedar Lake Chamber of Commerce (Jostes) • Chicago South Shore and South Bend Railroad • City of Hammond • CN Railroad (Kuxmann & Matteucci) • Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage (Jen Poskin) • Concerned Families of the West Lake Corridor Project • Consolidated Rail Corporation (Conrail) • dogoodproductions@yahoo.com • Dyer Fire Department • Dyer Town Council • Forest County Potawatomi Community • Greater Northwest Indiana Association of Realtors • Hammond Historic Preservation Commission (Poland) • INDNR – Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology(Carr) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metra • Miami Tribe of Oklahoma • Munster Historical Society • NiSource • Norfolk Southern Corporation • Northwest Indiana Area Health Center • One Region • Petition – Meadow Lake Condo Association • Petition against the NEPA Preferred Plan (Paula Johns et al.) • Petition to save Green Corridor in South Hammond, Indiana • Robinson Engineering, Ltd. • Sierra Club • South Shore Trails • Town of Munster • United States Department of the Interior (Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance) • United States Environmental Protection Agency

Source: HDR 2017a.

Comments were transmitted in several ways including written communications (letters, email communications, Project website, phone, and comment cards filled out at public hearings) and by people testifying at public hearings.

All communications received or postmarked by the end of the DEIS comment period have been captured in a comments matrix. Each communication was assigned a unique identifying number. Since many of the communications received included multiple comments, the first task was to identify comments within the communication and, after this was done for all communications, to group comments into categories by topic (e.g., noise, air quality, and property impacts or acquisitions).

Examples of comments and associated topics include “Why is the Project needed?” (purpose and need topic), “Will residents be able to keep their homes by not having a Ridge Station?”(property acquisition/relocations topic), and “Add the no-whistle measures so that we don’t also have that constant distraction 20+ times per day” (noise topic). Using this approach, all similar comments were grouped together for a response.

A total of 31 general-comment topics were identified from the list of comments. **Table 9.9-2** identifies the 31 general comment topics and the percentage of comments that are captured per



category. The following topic areas received the most comments: general support (15 percent of comments received), general opposition (10 percent), roadway connectivity to subdivisions (9 percent), and automobile traffic (8 percent).

Other comments included concerns about funding/taxes/referendum, property relocation, noise and vibration, and alternatives. There were 80 requests for additional information. Comments were also submitted regarding cultural resources, Section 6(f) resources, recreational/Section 4(f) resources, EJ, and ADA compliance.

Table 9.9-2: Summary of Comments by General Topic

Topic	Frequency	Topic	Frequency
Support	15%	Property Values	2%
Oppose	10%	Purpose and Need	2%
Roadway Connectivity to Subdivisions	9%	Water Resources	2%
Automobile Traffic	8%	Air Quality	1%
Alternatives	7%	Cultural/Section 6(f)/ Section 106 Resources	1%
Noise/Vibration	5%		
Other	5%	Freight Traffic	1%
Property Acquisitions	5%	Hazardous Materials	1%
Funding/Taxes/Referendum	4%	Recreational/Section 4(f) Resources	1%
Public Involvement/NEPA Process	4%	Roadway	1%
Safety and Security	4%	Socioeconomics	1%
Bicycle/Pedestrian	3%	Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)	<1%
Neighborhoods/Quality of Life	3%	Environmental Justice	<1%
Transit-oriented Development	3%	None	<1%
Aesthetics/Visual	2%	South Shore Line	<1%
General Environmental/Ecological Resources	2%	Utilities	<1%

Source: HDR 2017a.

9.9.3 Responses to DEIS Comments

All comments received on the DEIS have been documented, and substantive comments have been responded to in this FEIS. NICTD received a total of 464 communications in the form of letters, website comments, emails, phone calls, public testimony at the public hearings (court reporter), and comment cards during the 45-day DEIS comment period. Many of the communications contained multiple comments. Many comments were very similar, and master responses to these comments were prepared. Where comments included more-specific and detailed questions, detailed responses were drafted by FTA and NICTD. Over 1,400 comments were extracted from the 464 communications.

Appendix H contains all comments received on the West Lake Corridor Project DEIS and corresponding responses. Comments from agencies, municipalities, stakeholders, and their corresponding responses are grouped alphabetically by organization. Comments from the



general public and their corresponding responses are listed alphabetically by the last name of the commenter and their corresponding Comment IDs to make finding a specific individual's comment(s) easier.

The tables of comments and corresponding responses are organized as follows:

- Comment ID Number: A unique comment identification number assigned to each comment
- Commenter's Last Name
- Commenter's First Name
- Organization
- Communication Number: A unique number for each comment in the chronological order in which it was received
- Comment Type: Email, letter by email, mail, verbal testimony, etc.
- Topic: As described in **Table 9.9-2**
- Comment
- Response

9.9.4 Next Steps

Public and agency involvement will continue as the Project advances through engineering design, construction, and service implementation. The involvement includes the coordination of commitments described in this FEIS/ROD, including Section 106 and Section 4(f) evaluation mitigation.

The main tools that will be used for future public and agency coordination include the Project database (email and mailing), Project website (<http://www.nicdwestlake.com>), social media (Facebook and Twitter @WestLakeCorridorProject), and meetings. These tools will be used to provide stakeholders with Project updates as well as ease the transition to future phases of the Project. The website will continue to house important Project materials and will be updated as the Project advances through future phases, including the final published FEIS/ROD.