

FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT/RECORD OF DECISION AND SECTION 4(F) EVALUATION

WEST LAKE CORRIDOR PROJECT MARCH 2018

*Federal Transit Administration and Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District
In cooperation with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers*



Federal Transit
Administration

NICTD



West Lake Corridor Final Environmental Impact Statement/
Record of Decision and Section 4(f) Evaluation

WEST LAKE CORRIDOR PROJECT

Final Environmental Impact Statement/Record of Decision and Section 4(f) Evaluation

Volume 1: Main Text

March 2018

Prepared by
United States Department of Transportation,
Federal Transit Administration
and
Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District

In Cooperation with
United States Army Corps of Engineers

Pursuant to

National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 USC § 4332); Efficient Environmental Reviews for Project Decision making (23 USC § 139); Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for Implementing the Procedures of the National Environmental Policy Act (40 CFR Parts 1500–1508); FHWA/FTA Environmental Impact and Related Procedures (23 CFR Part 771); Section 4(f) requirements (49 USC § 303 and 23 USC § 138) and regulations (23 CFR Part 774); and Clean Water Act (33 USC § 1251 et seq.).

Handwritten signature of Marisol R. Simón in blue ink.

Marisol R. Simón, Regional Administrator
U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Transit Administration

Handwritten signature of the date of approval, "3/1/2018", in blue ink.

Date of Approval

Handwritten signature of Michael Noland in blue ink.

Michael Noland, General Manager
Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District

3/1/2018

Date of Approval



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WEST LAKE CORRIDOR PROJECT FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

Responsible Agencies

Federal Lead Agency: United States Department of Transportation; Federal Transit Administration (FTA)

Local Project Sponsor: Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District (NICTD)

Cooperating Agency: United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)

Title: West Lake Corridor Project

Location: Lake County, Indiana and Cook County, Illinois

Abstract

FTA and NICTD, in cooperation with USACE, have prepared this Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the West Lake Corridor Project (Project) in Lake County, Indiana, and Cook County, Illinois. The Project is an approximately 9-mile proposed southern branch extension of NICTD's existing South Shore Line (SSL) commuter rail service between the town of Dyer and the city of Hammond, Indiana. Traveling north from the southern terminus near Main Street at the Munster/Dyer municipal boundary, the Project would include new track operating at grade on a separate right-of-way (ROW) to be acquired adjacent to the CSX Transportation (CSX) Monon Subdivision railroad in Dyer and Munster. The Project alignment would be elevated from 45th Street to the Canadian National Railway (CN) Elsdon Subdivision railroad at the Maynard Junction in Munster. North of the CN railroad, the Project alignment would return to grade and join with the publicly owned former Monon Railroad corridor in Munster and Hammond, Indiana, and continue north. The Project would relocate the existing Monon Trail pedestrian bridge crossing over the Little Calumet River and build a new rail bridge at the location of the former Monon Railroad Bridge. The Project alignment would cross under Interstate 80 and Interstate 94 and continue north on the former Monon Railroad corridor to Sibley Street. From Douglas Street north, the Project would be elevated over all streets and rail lines using a combination of retaining walls, elevated structures, and bridges. The Project would terminate just east of the Indiana Harbor Belt railroad at the Illinois/Indiana state line, where it would connect with the SSL. Project trains would operate on the existing Metra Electric District (MED) line for the final 14 miles, terminating at Millennium Station in downtown Chicago.

Discussions of the proposed alignment, stations, maintenance and storage facility, traction power substations, guideway, vehicles, and operating frequencies are included in this FEIS. This FEIS includes the Project's Purpose and Need Statement and a description of the alternatives currently and previously considered including a No Build Alternative and three build alternatives with design options – Commuter Rail, Indiana Harbor Belt, and Hammond Alternatives.

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Project was made available to the public and agencies for review and comment on December 16, 2016 in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act. The comment period closed on February 3, 2017. During that time three public hearings were held in the Project Area to facilitate public input. A summary of the comments received during the review period is presented in **Chapter 9** of this FEIS.



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Appendix H contains all comments received on the West Lake Corridor Project DEIS and corresponding responses.

After the close of the comment period on the DEIS, NICTD selected the Hammond Alternative Option 2 as the Locally Preferred Alternative on May 12, 2017. This FEIS evaluates the environmental, transportation, social, and economic impacts associated with the Project including methods and regulations, agency coordination (where applicable), anticipated direct long-term (operating) and short-term (construction) impacts. This FEIS also addresses the following: environmental justice compliance; Section 4(f) compliance; Section 106 compliance; finance; evaluation of alternatives; and public involvement and agency coordination.

This FEIS is a combined document consisting of the FEIS and the Record of Decision (ROD) for the Project, pursuant to 23 United States Code § 139(n).

More information can be found on the Project website at <http://www.nictdwestlake.com>.

The following persons may be contacted for additional information concerning this document:

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