



Scoping Summary Report

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Prepared for:

Federal Transit Administration and Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District

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Acronyms

CDOT	Chicago Department of Transportation
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CMAP	Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning
CRP	Comprehensive Regional Plan
CTA	Chicago Transit Authority
DEIS	Draft Environmental Impact Statement
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
FEIS	Final Environmental Impact Statement
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
FRA	Federal Railroad Administration
FTA	Federal Transit Administration
IHB	Indiana Harbor Belt
IDEM	Indiana Department of Environmental Management
IDNR	Illinois Department of Natural Resources
IDOT	Illinois Department of Transportation
INDNR	Indiana Department of Natural Resources
INDOT	Indiana Department of Transportation
LWCF	Land and Water Conservation Fund
MAP-21	Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21 st Century
MED	Metra Electric District
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NICTD	Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District
NIRPC	Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission
NOI	Notice of Intent
NPS	National Parks Service
NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service
RDA	Regional Development Authority
ROD	Record of Decision
RTA	Northeastern Illinois Regional Transportation Authority
SAFETEA-LU	Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users
SSL	South Shore Line
USACE	United States Army Corps of Engineers
USDOI	United States Department of Interior
USHUD	United States Department of Housing and Urban Development
USDOT	United States Department of Transportation
USEPA	United States Environmental Protection Agency
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Overview

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District (NICTD) have initiated the environmental review process for the West Lake Corridor Project (Project) in Lake County, Indiana and Cook County, Illinois in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other regulatory requirements. A Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) is being prepared as part of this process, with the FTA as the Federal Lead Agency and NICTD as the Local Project Sponsor responsible for implementing the Project under NEPA.

The environmental review process builds upon NICTD's prior West Lake Corridor studies that examined a broad range of alignments, technologies, and transit modes. The studies concluded that a rail-based service between the Munster/Dyer area and Metra's Millennium Station in Downtown Chicago would best meet the transportation needs of the study area. Thus, NICTD advanced a "Commuter Rail" Alternative for more detailed analysis in the DEIS. NEPA also requires consideration of a "No Build" Alternative to provide a basis for comparison to the Commuter Rail Alternative.

- **No Build Alternative:** The No Build Alternative is defined as the existing transportation system, plus any committed transportation improvements included in the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission's (NIRPC) *2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan* (CRP) (2011) and Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning's (CMAP) *Go To 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan* (2014) through the planning horizon year 2040. It also includes capacity improvements to the existing Metra Electric District's (MED) line and Millennium Station as part of NICTD's and the Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority's (RDA) *20-Year Strategic Business Plan* (2014).
- **Commuter Rail Alternative:** The Commuter Rail Alternative would involve an approximate 9-mile southern extension of NICTD's existing South Shore Line (SSL) between Dyer and Hammond, Indiana (**Figure 1-1**). The Project would include new track improvements along the existing CSX Transportation and former Monon railroad corridors, with a flyover to the existing SSL in Hammond. Four stations would be included at Munster/Dyer Main Street, Munster Fisher/45th Streets, South Hammond, and Downtown Hammond. A maintenance facility would also be needed to store and maintain the vehicles. Trains on the new Project branch line would connect with the existing SSL and ultimately MED line to the north, providing new transit service between Dyer and Metra's Millennium Station in Downtown Chicago.

Two alignment design options are also being considered for the Project, including a possible extension to St. John, Indiana on the southern end and another along the Indiana Harbor Belt (IHB) Kensington Branch through Calumet City, Burnham, and Chicago, Illinois on the northern end. Design options for four other possible station locations and three potential maintenance facility sites are also being studied.

1.2 Purpose of Report

This report documents compliance with NEPA Scoping requirements for the environmental review process and summarizes the comments, feedback, and input received from the agencies and public during the Scoping period for the Project.

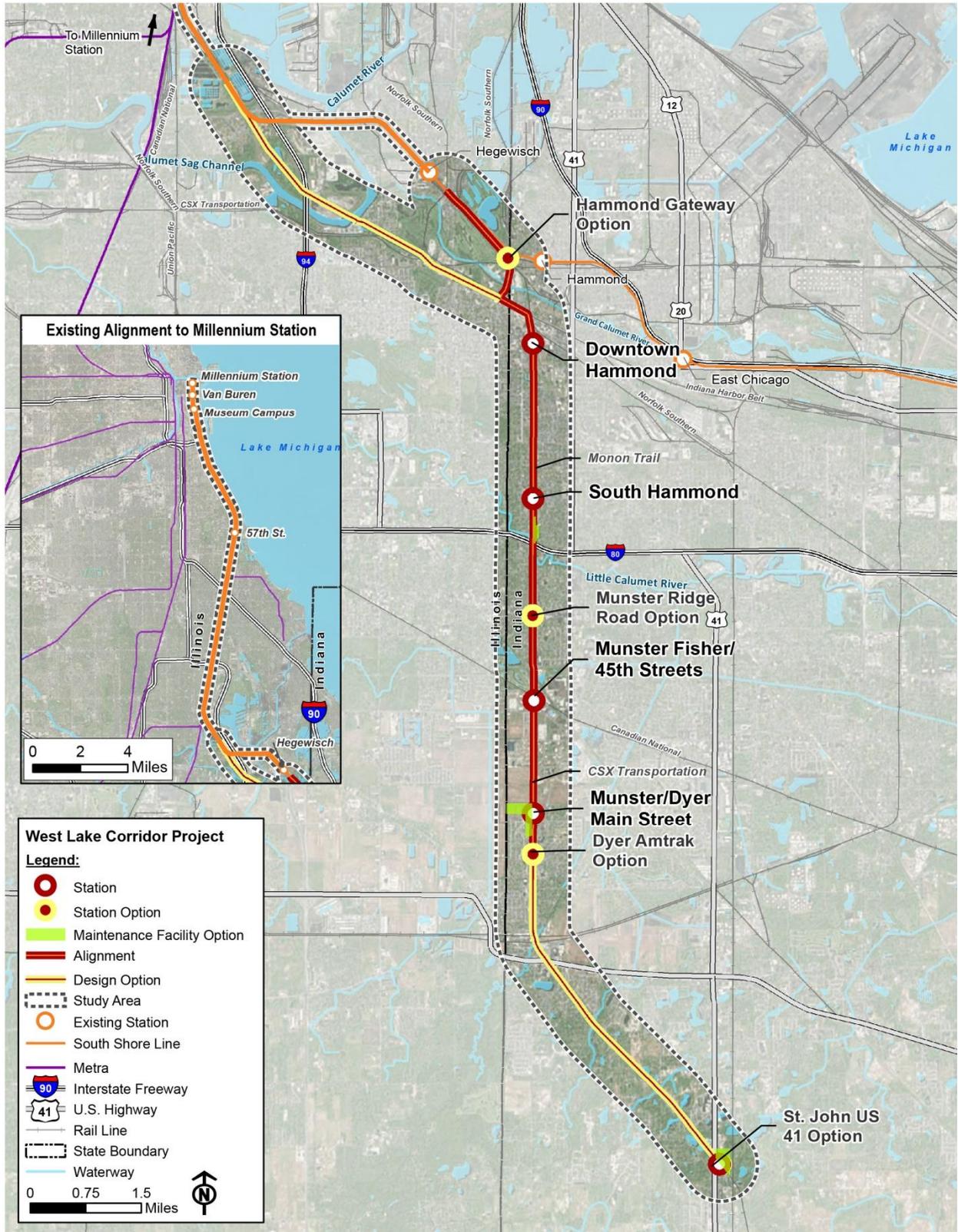


Figure 1-1 West Lake Corridor Project Study Area

2. SCOPING PROCESS

2.1 Overview of Scoping Process

According to the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) NEPA Regulations (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] § 1500), federal and state lead agencies should 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. In short, Scoping is the process of determining the "scope" of the EIS. It takes place at the beginning of the environmental review process and serves the following purposes:

- Identifying a range of actions, reasonable alternatives, and impacts to be considered;
- Connecting previous planning decisions with current project development;
- Establishing a decision-making framework;
- Looking for opportunities to streamline the project and collaborate with partners; and
- Organizing the study and defining boundaries and responsibilities.

During the Scoping process, agency and public comments are solicited in response to the information provided and are used to identify reasonable alternatives and potential environmental effects in the preparation of the EIS. The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) Section 6002 specifies that the lead agencies must provide Cooperating and Participating Agencies and the public the opportunity for involvement during the development of the purpose and need statement and range of alternatives.

2.2 Initiation of Scoping

The FTA issued the Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an EIS in the Federal Register, Volume 79, Number 189, on September 30, 2014. The NOI notified interested parties regarding the intent to prepare the EIS, provided information on the nature of the proposed Project and possible alternatives, and invited public participation in the environmental review process. The NOI also provided information on how and when comments on the scope of the EIS should be submitted. Additionally, the NOI supplied information, including the dates, times and locations of the agency and public Scoping meetings. The published NOI is provided in **Appendix A**.

2.3 Scoping Period and Meetings

The Scoping process was conducted in accordance with NEPA and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) requirements. The 30-day Scoping period began on October 13, 2014 and ended November 11, 2014. The FTA and NICTD invited agencies and organizations by letter to participate in the Scoping process and attend Scoping meetings. The public was notified via newspaper advertisements, website, mail-out, email blasts, and flyers. The FTA and NICTD held both the Agency and Public Scoping Meetings for the Project on October 28, 2014 at the Center for Visual and Performing Arts, 1040 Ridge Road, Munster, Indiana 46321. Details of the Agency and Public Scoping process and comments received are provided in the following sections.

3. AGENCY SCOPING

The FTA and NICTD invited agencies to participate in the environmental review process by inviting them to be Cooperating Agencies and/or Participating Agencies under NEPA or a Consulting Party under Section 106 of the NHPA. Each is described in the following sections. Sample invitation letters are provided in **Appendix B**.

3.1.1 Cooperating Agencies

According to CEQ (40 CFR 1508.5), a "Cooperating Agency" means 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 proposed project or project alternative. A state or local agency of similar qualifications or, when the effects are on lands of tribal interest, a Native American tribe may, by agreement with the lead agencies, also become a Cooperating Agency. Cooperating Agencies are by definition Participating Agencies as well, and while the roles and responsibilities of both are similar, the Cooperating Agencies have a slightly greater degree of authority, responsibility, and involvement in the environmental review process.

The FTA mailed Cooperating Agency invitation letters to two agencies with a potential interest in the Project: the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). The USACE accepted the invitation to be a Cooperating Agency. The FRA declined the initiation to participate as a Cooperating Agency, but elected to serve as a Participating Agency in the process instead. Responses from the two agencies are provided in **Appendix D**.

3.1.2 Participating Agencies

Participating Agencies can be federal, state, tribal, regional, and local government agencies that may have an interest in the Project. The FTA mailed Participating Agency invitation letters to the agencies listed in **Table 3-1** (Agencies Invited to Serve as Participating Agencies). The table also indicates which agencies accepted the invitation to participate. Responses from the agencies are provided in **Appendix D**.

Table 3-1: Agencies Invited to Serve as Participating Agencies

Agency	Response to Invitation
Federal	
• Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)	No Response
• Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Illinois Division	No Response
• Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Indiana Division	No Response
• US Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)	No Response
• US Department of Housing and Urban Development (USHUD)	No Response
• US Department of Interior (USDOI), National Park Service (NPS)	Accepted Invitation
• US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA)	Accepted Invitation
• US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)	Accepted Invitation
State	
• Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR)	No Response
• Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT)	No Response
• Illinois Environmental Protection Agency	No Response
• Illinois State Department of Agriculture	Declined Invitation
• Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM)	No Response
• Indiana Department of Natural Resources (INDNR)	Accepted Invitation
• Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT)	No Response
• Indiana State Department of Agriculture	No Response
Regional	
• Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT)	Accepted Invitation
• Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP)	Accepted Invitation
• Chicago Transit Authority (CTA)	Accepted Invitation
• Metra	No Response
• Northeastern Illinois Regional Transportation Authority (RTA)	Accepted Invitation
• Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority (RDA)	Accepted Invitation
• Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC)	Accepted Invitation
Local	
• City of Calumet	No Response
• City of Chicago	No Response
• City of Hammond	Accepted Invitation
• Cook County	Accepted Invitation
• Lake County	No Response
• Town of Dyer	Accepted Invitation
• Town of Munster	Accepted Invitation
• Town of St. John	No Response
• Village of Burnham	No Response
• Village of Dolton	No Response

3.1.3 Section 106 Consulting Parties

The FTA initiated the Section 106 Consultation Process for the Project with the State Historic Preservation Offices -- INDNR Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology and Illinois Historic Preservation Agency -- on September 29, 2014. In the initiation letters to the SHPOs (see **Appendix B**), the FTA delegated authority to NICTD to undertake coordination activities regarding the preparation of information, analyses, and graphics in support of the Section 106 Consultation Process for the Project.

Thereafter, NICTD invited historic organizations to be Section 106 Consulting Parties based on their special knowledge of, concern for, or mandated regulatory role relative to historic properties in the Project study area, and the FTA invited Native American tribal governments to participate. A sample invitation letter for Section 106 Consulting Parties is provided in **Appendix B. Table 3-2** (Organizations Invited to Serve as Section 106 Consulting Parties) shows the organizations and tribes that were invited to participate in the Section 106 consultation process. Of those listed, the Hammond Historical Society, Indiana Landmarks (Northwest Field Office), Lake County Historical Society, and Peoria Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma accepted the invitation to be a Section 106 Consulting Party. Responses from these organizations and tribe are provided in **Appendix D**.

Table 3-2: Organizations Invited to Serve as Section 106 Consulting Parties

Organization	Response to Invitation
Historic Agencies/Organizations	
• Calumet City Historical Society	No Response
• Dyer Historical Society	No Response
• Dolton Historical Society	No Response
• Griffith Historical Society	No Response
• Hammond Historic Preservation Commission	No Response
• Hammond Historical Society	Accepted Invitation
• Indiana Landmarks – Northwest Field Office	Accepted Invitation
• Indiana Landmarks	No Response
• Lake County Historical Society	Accepted Invitation
• Landmarks Illinois	No Response
• Munster Historical Society	No Response
• Preservation Chicago	No Response
• Schererville Historical Society	No Response
• St. John Historical Society	No Response
Tribes	
• Ho-Chunk Nation	No Response
• Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska	No Response
• Iowa Tribe of Oklahoma	No Response
• Miami Tribe of Oklahoma	No Response
• Otoe-Missouria Tribe	No Response
• Peoria Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma	Accepted Invitation
• Potawatomi - Citizen Potawatomi Nation	No Response
• Potawatomi - Forest County Potawatomi	No Response
• Potawatomi - Hannahville Indian Community	No Response
• Potawatomi - Pokagon Band of Potawatomi	No Response
• Potawatomi - Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation	No Response
• Sac and Fox Tribe of the Mississippi in Iowa/Meskwaki	No Response
• Sac and Fox Nation of Missouri in Kansas and Nebraska	No Response
• Sac and Fox Nation of Oklahoma	No Response
• Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska	No Response

3.2 Agency Scoping Meeting

An Agency Scoping Meeting was held to solicit comments from agencies invited to participate in the environmental review process for the Project. Meeting details are as follows:

- **Time:** Tuesday, October 28, 2014, 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM
- **Location:** Center for Visual and Performing Arts, 1040 Ridge Road, Munster, Indiana
- **Attendees:** 16 signed in

The meeting included a PowerPoint presentation by NICTD, followed by an open session for questions and answers. In addition to poster display boards in the room, participants were provided with a Project fact sheet and Scoping Booklet. The Scoping Booklet provided information about the Project, including the Project background and description, NEPA requirements, procedures and schedule, purpose and need, initial alternatives considered, issues to be considered in the EIS, agency involvement, and outreach and public participation. Meeting materials are provided in **Appendix C**, and the agency sign-in sheets are found in **Appendix D**.

3.3 Agency Scoping Comments

The agency scoping comments are summarized in this section, with the detailed comments from each agency provided in **Appendix D**. The main comments received from the agencies involve the following environmental resources or other issue areas:

- Monon Trail and safety of users
- Erie Lackawanna Trail
- Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) parks
- Noise and vibration impacts
- Air impacts
- Hazardous materials and contaminated sites
- Contamination and remediation of Grand Calumet River
- Proposed crossing over the Grand Calumet River
- Wetlands, nature and forest preserves, and critical habitat
- Federally and State listed threatened and endangered species and migratory bird populations
- Soil stabilization
- Historic districts
- Environmental justice and transit-dependent populations
- Proposed maintenance facility locations and associated noise, air, and traffic impacts
- Proposed station locations
- Size of parking areas at proposed stations
- Transit-oriented development and economic opportunities at proposed stations
- Induced development
- Diesel trains and associated noise and air impacts
- Electric trains and electric lines to accommodate them
- Freight traffic

- Grade crossing safety
- Mitigation
- Green buildings
- Resolution of support for the project

City of Hammond

- Erie Lackawanna Trail, which merges with the Monon Trail in the study area at Douglas Street, and the Dan Rabin Transit Plaza are recipients of a LWCF grant.
- Wishes to retain the Monon Trail and would like to know how the Project would affect the trail and trail users and how fencing or separations between the trains and trail users would affect the neighborhoods and downtown area.
- Expressed comments about the proposed location of maintenance facility south of 173rd Street.
- Would like to know how electric lines would be constructed if electric trains were used and expressed concerns with diesel trains.
- Opposed to the proposed line being used for freight traffic.
- Would like to know how the proposed alignment would affect street crossing at State Street and Willow Court and how it would affect the Chicago Street/Gostlin Street reconstruction project.
- Inquired about the size and location of parking facilities, impacts from lighting from the parking area, and buffering from adjacent uses at the proposed station locations in Hammond. The city also questions the potential of using the existing parking structure in Downtown Hammond.
- Proposed station locations present the opportunity for transit-oriented development, which could provide new housing and economic development opportunities. The city looks forward to pursuing the project with NICTD.
- In addition to the potential noise and air impact, the city noted issues with ground contamination that may exist in the former Monon yard or along the proposed alignment.
- Two National Register Historic Districts are located in the study area: Forest Avenue Area and Downtown Hammond.

INDNR, Co-Trustees

- Grand Calumet River is one of the most contaminated rivers in the country due to a long history of chemical dumping and discharges. Contaminated segments average 8 to 10 feet in depth.
- USEPA, IDEM, INDNR, and USFWS have partnered to remediate and restore the West Branch of the Grand Calumet River. The Indiana Natural Resource trustees do not want to see the remediation damaged by new bridge piers in the river channel.

INDNR, Division of Fish and Wildlife

- INDNR checked the Natural Heritage Program data and concluded that the Project would not affect any INDNR owned nature preserves. They also concluded that no plant or animal species listed as state or federally threatened, endangered, or rare have been reported to occur within the Project corridor.

- NICTD and FTA should avoid or minimize impacts to fish, wildlife and botanical resources to the greatest extent possible, and compensate for impacts. INDNR recommended several measures to avoid or minimize potential impacts including: utilizing existing structures to produce fewer impacts to streams, wetlands, and surrounding habitat; bank stabilization; formal wetland remediation; mitigation plan for potential impacts to riparian habitat and wetlands; soil stabilization for exposed soils; and several additional measures to avoid, minimize or compensate for impacts to fish, wildlife and botanical resources.

NIRPC

- Issued Resolution 14-32 in support of increased investment in commuter rail connecting Chicago to Northwest Indiana and the expansion of the West Lake Corridor. The Commission sees itself as a partner with NICTD and as a regional policy body is strongly committed to the successful implementation of a commuter rail project in Northwest Indiana.

USACE

- Any impacts to wetlands and waterways will require a permit from the USACE under the authority of Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. Efforts to avoid and minimize these impacts must be made.

USFWS

- Wetlands may exist in the Fisher 45th Street area in southern Munster. Wetlands delineations will be necessary in this area.
- There may also be wetlands associated with the proposed crossings of the West branch Little Calumet River, West Branch Grand Calumet River, and/or Calumet River/Calumet Sag Channel, depending upon the route chosen.
- IHB route would bisect the Beaubien Woods Forest Preserve in Illinois, which contains numerous wetlands and the Burnham Prairie Nature Preserve.
- Existing bridge over the West Branch Little Calumet River includes several piers within the river channel, which are known to collect debris and contribute to flooding problems during high water events. Therefore, the DEIS needs to evaluate the impacts of leaving this bridge in place to serve the commuter line versus removing it and replacing it at the same site with a clear span bridge with no in-channel piers.
- USFWS will request mitigation for wetland losses; the mitigation ratio for the loss of forested wetland is 4:1, with 2: or 3:1 for emergent and scrub-shrub wetlands.
- USFWS, in conjunction with the other Natural Resources Trustees (INDNR and IDEM) has been working with the USEPA to remediate the severely polluted sediments within both the West and East Branches of the Grand Calumet River in Indiana. Because of the dredging and capping, the Trustees are opposed to any construction activities that could compromise the integrity of the cap, including the placement of piers and abutments for a new railroad bridge. If it is determined by the FTA that a new bridge will be necessary to cross the West Branch Grand Calumet within Hammond, this bridge must be a clear span, with no piers or abutments within the river channel.
- DEIS will need to evaluate potential impacts to migratory bird populations and the presence of bald eagles nesting/attempting to nest within wetland and woodland habitats in the Grand Calumet/Cal-Sag Channel/Lake Calumet area. The Project sponsor should avoid or minimize impacts wherever possible.

- There are several threatened and endangered species and critical habitat in Lake County and Cook County; however, the USFWS stated that none of the Lake County listed species are known within the West Lake Corridor Project Study Area. Most of the Cook County listed species are also not known within the Corridor, including the Hine's emerald dragonfly and its Critical Habitat. However, the USFWS does not know the status of some of the species within the Forest Preserves, Nature Preserves, and other protected habitats within the Corridor.

USDOJ, NPS

- There are 21 LWCF projects within Lake County Indiana that may be within or close to the West Lake Corridor Study Area. Each of these sites is encumbered by the LCWF Act and Section 6(f). The NPS recommended that the INDNR be contacted to determine the exact location for each of these 21 sites.

USEPA

- Northern portion of the study area near the West Branch Grand Calumet River is in a designated Area of Concern in the Great Lakes Basin. There have been ongoing remediation efforts by EPA and the INDNR to address polluted sediments in the river. EPA wants to ensure that the integrity of the remediation is maintained and that efforts are not disturbed and/or disrupted. If a new bridge crossing is necessary for the project, then it is recommended that the bridge be designed to span the river without piers or abutments that would compromise the integrity of the remediation efforts.
- Lake County, Indiana and Cook County, Illinois are designated non-attainment for the 2008 8-hour ozone standard. EPA plans to propose a revised ozone standard December 1, 2014 and finalize in October 2015.
- Concurs with the general environmental resources and potential impacts identified in the Scoping Booklet and NOI. The EPA provided additional comments and recommendations on:
 - Identification and assessment of alternatives and options
 - Transit-dependent populations
 - Populations with environmental justice concerns
 - Air quality
 - Water resources
 - Vegetation and wildlife habitat
 - Induced development
 - Green buildings
 - Mitigation

3.4 Section 106 Consultations

The following is a summary of the comments received through the Section 106 consultation process. The comments are provided in **Appendix D**.

INDNR, Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology

- Requested additional information to facilitate their identification and evaluation under 36 CFR 800.3, 800.4 and recommended review of INDOT's *Cultural Resources Manual*. The agency also identified contact persons for follow-up.

Peoria Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma

- There may be places of traditional religious or cultural importance present or within the vicinity of the proposed project and further consultation is requested.

4. PUBLIC SCOPING

Members of the public were invited to participate in a public Scoping meeting. The meeting was intended to inform the public of the EIS process, as well as provide an opportunity to comment on the purpose and need, alternatives being considered, key environmental considerations, and public and agency coordination process.

NICTD issued a press release and advertised the public Scoping process and meetings in three study area newspapers, *Sun Times*, *Times*, and *Gary Crusader*. NICTD also posted an announcement of the meetings on the Project's website, sent e-mail blasts to stakeholders listed in the Project database, distributed project flyers, and mailed postcards to over 19,500 residences and businesses in the study area. The press release, newspaper advertisements, postcard, and flyer can be found in **Appendix A**.

4.1 Public Scoping Meeting

The Public Scoping Meeting for the environmental review process was held as follows:

- **Time:** Tuesday, October 28, 2014, 6:30 PM to 8:30 PM
- **Location:** Center for Visual and Performing Arts, 1040 Ridge Road, Munster, Indiana
- **Attendees:** 94 signed in

Meeting participants were asked to sign in and were given a project factsheet, Section 106 handout, and comment card. The meeting began with a welcome and definition of meeting format, which was followed by a PowerPoint presentation that summarized the purpose of the project, study process and execution timeline, alternatives being considered, and key environmental considerations. An open house was convened after the presentation. During this time, meeting participants were able to walk around the room and learn more about the Project via display boards. Project staff was available to provide additional information and answer any questions. Participants were able to provide verbal comments directly to a court reporter that was present on site and/or they could submit written comments on comment cards. Completed comment cards could be submitted at the meeting or submitted after the meeting. A copy of the meeting presentation and materials is provided in **Appendix C**, with the public sign-in sheets found in **Appendix E**.

4.2 Public Comments Received

Over the course of the Scoping period, NICTD provided the public with multiple opportunities to submit comments. These were offered via online submission through the Project e-mail or website online comment section, by mail to the NICTD Project office, via the automated phone line, transcribed at the Scoping meeting, and through comment cards that were provided at the Scoping meeting. In total, 144 public comments were received through these outreach methods. The following is a breakdown of the number of comments received:

- **Online:** 110
- **Mailed:** 3
- **Automated Phone:** 10
- **Comment Cards:** 15
- **Transcribed:** 6

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 **Appendix E**.

Support for the Project

The following is a summary of the support or lack of support for the Project:

- Of the 144 comments received, 40 percent were in favor of the Project. Reasons for support included economic growth, improved connectivity, expanded access, and overall positive benefits.
- Of the 144 comments received, 32 percent were against the Project. Reasons for the lack of support included costs and taxpayer burden; the need to prioritize other basic infrastructure improvements, such as roads and bridges; and the Project does not reflect the needs of the larger community; impacts to residential properties.

Environmental Issues

The following environmental issues were raised in the comments:

- Noise and vibration impacts to residential properties
- Impacts to property values
- Impacts to adjacent businesses and residences
- Property acquisitions and potential displacements
- Impacts to the Monon Trail
- Impacts on parking in adjacent neighborhoods
- Safe access to stations

Other Issues

- There were several requests for additional information.
- One comment challenged the project in concept and the value proposition that it would potentially deliver.
- One comment wanted to know whether the Project would be accepted by Metra.
- One commenter recommended utilizing the former Michigan Central (MC) route between Hammond and Kensington.
- There was a question on whether the Gary Station would be shut down to accommodate this Project expansion.

5. SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

The Scoping process documented in this report complies with NEPA and Section 106 requirements, providing both the agencies and public an opportunity for early input into the environmental review process for the Project. The agency and public comments received during Scoping will help the FTA and NICTD finalize the Project's purpose and need, alternatives considered, and issues to be addressed in the DEIS. The input received will provide direction into the assessment of the social, natural environment, and economic factors considered in the DEIS.

A DEIS document will be prepared following Scoping to more fully assess the Project and disclose potential impacts. The DEIS will:

- Identify the Purpose and Need for the Project;
- Describe the Project and alternatives considered;
- Evaluate the affected environment and potential environmental impacts of the Project;
- Propose actions that will help mitigate unavoidable impacts;
- Enable decision-makers to identify the solution that best meets the Project Purpose and Need; and
- Provide the public and agencies opportunities to review and comment on the Project.

The DEIS document will be circulated for public and agency comment over a 45-day review period. During this time, a public hearing(s) will be held to present the results of the DEIS and formally record all comments received. Following the public review period, NICTD will select a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) for the Project that can further advance in the environmental review process, as well as FTA's New Starts funding program.

In order to complete the environmental review process, the FTA intends to issue a single Final EIS (FEIS) and Record of Decision (ROD) document pursuant to Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) Section 1319 Accelerated Decisionmaking in Environmental Reviews, unless FTA determines statutory criteria or practicability considerations preclude a combined document. The FEIS/ROD would respond to comments received on the DEIS, include the LPA selected for the Project, and state the environmental findings and mitigation requirements.