

Orange Line Extension Project Scoping Report

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Section 1

Introduction

1.1 Overview

The Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) is proposing to make transportation improvements by extending the Orange Line, a heavy rail transit line, to connect Midway Station at the Midway International Airport to Ford City. CTA and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) will be preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that will evaluate the environmental effects of constructing and operating the proposed extension. FTA is the federal lead agency and CTA is the local lead agency.

The Orange Line opened in 1993, providing service to the southwest side of Chicago and Midway International Airport. The original project proposal was for the southern terminal of the Orange Line to be located in the vicinity of the Ford City Mall. Due to funding limitations, the terminus was shortened to Midway Airport. The regional long range transportation plan developed by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP), has included an extension of the Orange Line since the early 1990s.

In 2008, CTA and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) began the Alternatives Analysis (AA) process, for the proposed Orange Line Extension. The Orange Line Extension project has completed an Alternatives Analysis (AA) and conducted early scoping on the potential range of alternatives. The results of that study may be found in the Locally Preferred Alternative Report (CTA 2009) and which is incorporated here by reference. The AA provides the reasoning for decisions regarding the identification and narrowing of the range of alternatives. The AA process identified an initial set of four corridors and eleven transit modal technologies. The process screened these options into a set of four conceptual alternatives that potentially met the project purpose. These alternatives were screened against criteria related to constructability, right-of-way constraints, impacts of configurations, and operational concerns. This screening step narrowed the range of alternatives to three build alternatives and a no build alternative and a transportation system management (TSM) alternative. These alternatives were screened against the goals, objectives, and evaluation criteria established for the project. In addition, input from stakeholders, the public, and agencies was solicited in the process of narrowing the range of alternatives. The AA process resulted in the identification of a locally preferred alternative (LPA), the No Build Alternative, and a TSM Alternative that will be carried forward into the DEIS. A Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) was identified through the AA process and designated by the Chicago Transit Board in August 2009.

The study of the Alternative Analysis is situated about 10 miles southwest of the Chicago Central area (commonly referred to as the “Loop”) and encompasses approximately four square miles. The boundaries of the study area are 59th Street on the north, 79th Street on the south, Pulaski Road on the east, and Laramie Avenue on the west. Chicago Midway Airport is located in the northwestern portion of the study area.

The study area boundaries are major, recognizable streets, used to clearly define where possible alternatives would be considered. However, travel patterns and analysis beyond the study area

are integral components to the study and are included as necessary.

The study area encompassed parts of three community areas within the City of Chicago, along with portions of the Village of Bedford Park and the City of Burbank. Chicago community areas include portions of Ashburn, Clearing, and West Lawn. The study area is highly developed, with significant residential (primarily single family), industrial, transportation and commercial (retail and office) development.

The EIS will evaluate the LPA along with a No Build Alternative, and a Transportation System Management (TSM) Alternative developed during the AA process. Subsequent to the completion of the AA process, FTA and CTA initiated the public and agency NEPA scoping to obtain input on the scope of the EIS. The Notice of Intent (NOI) identified the three alternatives carried forward from the AA for evaluation. This report summarizes the results of the NEPA scoping process.

The Draft EIS (DEIS) will build upon the AA studies and form the basis for performance of Preliminary Engineering and preparation of a subsequent Final EIS. One of the primary purposes of scoping is to identify possible environmental impacts of the project, and eliminate proposed alternatives with substantial environmental impacts from further analysis. Transit improvements on the southwest side could be financed with a mix of local, state, federal New Starts, and other federal funds. Accordingly, the project will be executed in compliance with current FTA Section 5309 New Starts guidelines, and all environmental documents will satisfy NEPA requirements.

1.2 Project Area

The proposed project area is located about 10 miles southwest of the Chicago Central Area (commonly referred to as the “Loop”). The limits of the project area are from 59th Street on the north to 79th Street on the south. Midway International Airport is located in the northwestern portion of the project area.

The project area includes parts of the community areas of Ashburn, Clearing, and West Lawn within the City of Chicago, and is adjacent to the Village of Bedford Park and the City of Burbank. The project area is highly developed, with significant residential (primarily single family), industrial, transportation and commercial (retail and office) developments.

1.3 Alternatives

The Orange Line Extension EIS will include an evaluation of a No Build Alternative, a Transportation System Management Alternative, and a Fixed Guideway Alternative which is the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA). These alternatives are briefly described below.

1.3.1 No Build Alternative

The No Build Alternative is defined as the existing transportation system, plus any committed transportation improvements. Committed transportation improvements include projects that are already in the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) financially constrained Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The Orange Line project area has one road

improvement project included in the FY 2007 – 2012 TIP; the Cicero Avenue Smart Corridor Project from 37th Street to 63rd Street.

Bus transit service under the No Build Alternative would be focused on the preservation of existing services and projects. The transit network within the project area is projected to be substantially the same as it is now. All elements of the No Build Alternative are included in each of the other alternatives.

1.3.2 Transportation System Management (TSM) Alternative

The TSM Alternative is Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) that would operate west on 59th Street from the 59th Street Midway Station bus terminal to Cicero Avenue, and then south on Cicero Avenue from 59th Street to approximately 76th Street. Proposed BRT service would operate in mixed traffic with traffic signal priority on the Cicero Avenue segment.

The TSM Alternative is 2.3 miles long and would not include any intermediate stops. There would be no exclusive bus lanes along the Cicero Avenue portion of the route. A new park and ride facility would be constructed at the proposed terminal stop at approximately 7600 S. Cicero. Bus route 67 67th/69th/71st would be re-routed to terminate at the new Ford City Station.

1.3.3 Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA): Fixed Guideway Alternative

The proposed LPA would operate partly in a trench and partly at-grade along the Belt Railway Company (BRC) of Chicago right-of-way between the existing Midway station and approximately 6400 south, where it would transition to an elevated structure above Marquette Road. It would travel under 59th Street and 63rd Street allowing those cross streets to remain open to traffic. It then would veer to the southwest over the BRC Clearing Yard and then continue south on an elevated structure along Cicero Avenue to a new terminal station located on Cicero Avenue at approximately 76th Street.

Summary:

- Transportation improvements that are already in the CMAP Fiscal Year 2007-2012 TIP as described in the No Build Alternative
- Heavy rail transit line extension from Midway Station to a new Ford City terminal station
- 2.3-mile extension with no intermediate stops (conceptual alignment design allows for one future station in the vicinity of the elevated structure at Marquette Road)
- Park & Ride facility and improved bus terminal at new proposed terminal station at approximately 76th Street
- Pace buses from the south will continue to directly serve Midway Station
- Bus route 67- 67th/69th/71st re-routed to terminate at the new proposed Ford City terminal station

Two alignment options along Cicero Avenue to 76th Street will be studied in the EIS:

1. An alignment above the median of Cicero Avenue (recommended to reduce property acquisition costs and impacts to existing businesses); and
2. An alignment located directly east of the Cicero Avenue right-of-way.

1.4 Summary of Purpose and Need

The purpose of the Orange Line Extension project is to improve access to the existing Orange Line for southwest side and southwest suburban residents and businesses, support the area's ongoing economic development efforts, and strengthen the competitiveness of transit in the reverse commute market.

The need for the project is based on the following considerations:

- Access to the Orange Line is currently constrained by limited parking availability.
- Access to the Orange Line by bus or auto is unreliable due to congestion approaching the existing terminal station.
- Few uncongested roadways are available to access the current Orange Line terminal because of wider than usual arterial street spacing, which limits mobility for residents and businesses.

1.5 Project Participants

The project participants include FTA, CTA, and CTA's consultants. CTA's consultants include the CWC Transit Group and CWC's subconsultants. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has been identified as a cooperating agency. Other project participants include federal, state, and local participating agencies identified in accordance with the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act - A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) 6002. Participating agencies have been identified and are listed in Appendix C.

1.6 Purpose of Report

The following report summarizes the public participation process for, and the public comments resulting from, the Orange Line Extension public scoping meetings and comment period. The process of determining the scope, focus, and content of an EIS is known as "scoping." Scoping meetings are a useful opportunity to obtain information from the public and governmental agencies. In particular, the scoping process asks agencies and interested parties to provide input on the proposed alternatives, the purpose and need for the project, the proposed topics of evaluation, and potential impacts and mitigation measures to be considered.

Section 2

Scoping Process

2.1 Early Scoping Activities

In 2008, CTA and FTA began the Alternatives Analysis (AA) process, for the proposed Orange Line Extension. As part of a two step screening process, CTA held two public meetings between 2008 and 2009 in order to help define the purpose and need and identify a range of reasonable alternatives. This AA process is an early public scoping process and was conducted consistent with the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) guidelines.

Early scoping included a series of two screening evaluations and public outreach efforts. The first step, Screen 1, included meeting with stakeholders and elected officials followed by one public meeting. The public meeting was held on August 19, 2008. A total of 100 persons attended the public meeting and 10 representatives of 7 organizations attended the stakeholder briefing held prior to the public meetings.

The second step, Screen 2, again included a stakeholder briefing, followed by a public meeting. The public meeting was held on April 22, 2009. A total of 50 persons attended the public meeting, and 6 representatives of 5 organizations attended the stakeholder briefing held prior to the public meetings.

Screen 1

- August 19, 2008 - public meeting

Screen 2

- April 22, 2009 - public meetings

During early scoping, CTA evaluated four alternatives, and in August 2009, the Chicago Transit Board designated the Fixed Guideway Alternative as the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) for further study in the EIS. The LPA was chosen, in part, due to agency participation and public participation through review and comments.

2.2 Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) Scoping Activities

In accordance with NEPA, CTA and FTA have initiated the environmental review process for the Orange Line Extension. An EIS will be prepared to identify impacts related to project construction and operation. As part of the initial phase of the environmental process, a public scoping meeting was hosted to receive public comments on the alternatives and issues that should be examined as part of the environmental analysis. The public meeting is also a requirement of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act:

A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), which requires project proponents to provide opportunities for public participation in transportation decision-making. The process of determining the scope, focus, and content of an EIS is known as "scoping." Scoping meetings are a useful opportunity to obtain information from the public and governmental agencies. In particular, the scoping process asks agencies and interested parties to provide input on the proposed alternatives, the purpose and need for the project, the proposed topics of evaluation, and potential impacts and mitigation measures to be considered.

2.2.1 Public Participation Plan

NEPA and SAFETEA-LU require project proponents to provide opportunities for public participation in transportation decision-making. In order to meet the requirements of these two Acts, a Public Participation Plan (Appendix A) was developed to guide CTA through a comprehensive public participation process for the Orange Line Extension EIS scoping phase. The plan includes public participation goals, strategies to engage the public, key audiences to be addressed and the plan for notification and outreach for the scoping phase of the project. The Public Participation Plan that is included in Appendix A was developed specifically for the scoping process and will be updated to address outreach needs for the release of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

2.2.2 Coordination Plan

Section 6002 of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) established an environmental review process for transit projects that has now been included in Section 139 of Title 23 of the U.S. Code. Section 139 directs agencies to prepare a plan for coordinating public and agency participation and comments in the environmental review process for a project. The coordination plan describes how the lead agencies will provide opportunities for input from both the public and other agencies. The Coordination Plan includes the Public Participation Plan described above in Section 2.2.1.

2.3 Initiation of Scoping - Notice of Intent (NOI)

FTA published the NOI in the Federal Register on September 1, 2009. The publication of the NOI is the official federal notification of the agency's intent to prepare a DEIS. The NOI included notification of the dates and locations of the agency and public scoping meetings, the public comment period, as well as a description of the project purpose and need and alternatives. The NOI initiates the NEPA scoping process. A copy of the NOI is in Appendix B. Comments were accepted by CTA from the date of publication of the NOI in the Federal Register (September 1, 2009) through October 27, 2009. This provided a public comment period of 57 days.

2.4 Agency Scoping

2.4.1 Participating Agencies

Participating agencies can be Federal, State, tribal, regional, and local government agencies that may have an interest in the project. In accordance with SAFETEA-LU Section 6002 requirements, CTA, in coordination with the FTA, prepared and mailed participating agency invitation letters to 81 agencies with a potential interest in the project in September 2009. The identification of potential participating agencies built on the list of agencies identified through the AA process.

The responsibilities of these agencies include, but are not limited, to:

- Participating in the NEPA process starting at the earliest possible time, especially with regards to the development of the purpose and need statement, range of alternatives, methodologies, and the level of detail for the analysis of alternatives.
- Identify, as early as practicable, any issues of concern regarding potential environmental

or socioeconomic impacts of the project.

- Participate in the issue resolution process, described in the Coordination Plan.
- Provide meaningful and timely input on unresolved issues.
- Participate in the scoping process.

Accepting the designation as a participating agency does not indicate project support and does not provide the agency with increased oversight or approval authority beyond its statutory limits.

Participating agencies for the project are listed in Appendix C and include federal, state and local agencies with an interest in the project because of an overlap in their area of jurisdiction or some specialized knowledge of potential project effects. Invited federal agencies automatically become a participating agency unless they decline the invitation in writing, while local and state agencies much accept the invitation. The final list of participating agencies then includes federal agencies that both accepted and did not decline as well as state and local agencies that accepted the invitations.

Agencies were given 30 days from the date of the letter to respond. Agencies may also request to be added at any time during the process. Appendix D contains two sample invitation letters; one that was sent to federal agencies and tribes and one that was sent to state, regional, and local agencies.

2.4.2 Cooperating Agencies

Cooperating agencies are, by definition in 40 CFR 1508.5, federal agencies with jurisdiction, by law or special expertise, with respect to any environmental impact involved in the proposed project. A state or local agency of similar qualifications may, by agreement with the lead agency, also become a cooperating agency. The 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 Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has requested to become a cooperating agency for the Orange Line Extension project because a portion of the proposed route extends along Cicero Avenue which is also State Route 50. Alterations to state highways may require FHWA action.

2.4.3 Agency Scoping Meeting

One Agency Scoping meeting was held as follows:

Time: Thursday, September 24, 2009, 1:30 P.M.

Location: CTA Headquarters, Conference Room C
567 W. Lake Street
Chicago, IL 60661

Attendees: 14, representing the following agencies and jurisdictions (sign-in sheet included in Appendix E):

- Federal Aviation Administration
- Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT)
- Illinois Secretary of State Office
- Metra
- Pace
- Village of Bedford Park
- City of Chicago, Department of Community Development
- Chicago Housing Authority
- Chicago Department of Aviation
- Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT)
- City of Chicago, Streets and Sanitation
- Chicago Department of Environment

CTA hosted and presented the meeting with FTA present to observe. The meeting included a PowerPoint presentation similar to the one shown at the public scoping meetings and described in Section 2.5.4.1 with some additional information on the AA process.

2.4.3.1 Agency Scoping Meeting Comments

The topics addressed in the question and answer session included:

- Coordination with other service providers.
- Effects on Pace bus routes, access, and connections.
- Potential street closures related to construction.
- Potential effects on street lighting.
- Potential effects on Cicero Avenue bridge over the rail yard.
- Height of elevated track and potential effects on aviation.
- Potential for noise impacts.
- A discussion of CDOT property that could potentially be used for the project.

The agency scoping meeting minutes are included in Appendix E.

2.5 Public Scoping

Public scoping is an important element in the process of determining the focus and content of an EIS. Scoping helps to identify the range of actions, alternatives, environmental effects, and mitigation measures to be analyzed in depth, and helps eliminate from detailed study those

issues that are not pertinent to the final decision on the proposed project. Scoping is an effective way to bring together and address the concerns of the public, agencies, and other interested parties.

Notification of the public scoping meeting was completed via several forms of media as described further in this section. This outreach was in addition to the official notice published in the Federal Register. One public scoping meeting was held on September 21, 2009 as described in Section 2.5.4.

2.5.1 Notification Database

CTA maintained and updated the stakeholder database developed during the AA study to track interested individuals and groups. To the extent possible, CTA includes mailing addresses as well as email contact information on the database.

The database includes those who participated in the early scoping AA process by attending a meeting or providing comment during the process.

In addition to those identified through the AA process, the notification database was expanded to include residents and businesses adjacent to the proposed build alternative alignment. Addresses for businesses and residences on parcels either immediately adjacent to the proposed alignment or separated from the alignment by a street, park, vacant parcel, or one residence, were also added to the notification database.

At the time of the scoping meetings, 498 entries were listed on the Orange Line Extension project database. A list of the public agency database entries is provided in Appendix F.

2.5.2 Public Notification Activities

In order to engage the public to participate in the environmental review process and attend the scoping meeting, some basic strategies were used including: 1) make it easy to participate, 2) provide easy-to-understand information that helps people provide informed scoping comments and 3) provide multiple ways to obtain information and provide comment and ensure stakeholders are aware of the planning process and are shown how public input will be used.

Invitations were mailed directly to people on the project mailing list and e-blast invitations were sent to the e-mail distribution list. Newspaper display ads were placed in a total of 9 publications, transit cards were placed on public transit and flyers were placed at strategic locations in the project area. Additionally, a project web page was developed to provide all of the project information and pertinent scoping information.

2.5.2.1 Direct Mail Notice

Scoping meeting invitations were mailed on September 1, 2009 to a list of 498 entries that included elected officials, government agencies (including local agencies not described in Agency Scoping discussion in Section 2.4), tribes, general interested persons, businesses, organizations, neighborhood associations and property owners adjacent to both sides of the proposed build alternatives routes. The notice provided information on scoping, the alternatives, how to provide a comment, and the public scoping meeting information. The

mailed invitation included information in English, Spanish and Polish. (Appendix G).

2.5.2.2 Transit Cards

In order to reach a large audience of transit riders, “transit cards” or “car cards” with the public scoping meeting information were placed in various buses and stations in the project area. (Appendix G) Approximately 411 transit cards were distributed on September 4, 2009 for posting at all Orange Line stations and on bus routes originating from the Archer Garage.

2.5.2.3 E-mail Notification

An invitation e-mail was created that included information on the public scoping meeting and how to provide comments. The e-mail was sent to approximately 210 addresses on September 5, 2009. A copy of the email notification is included in Appendix G.

2.5.2.4 Newspaper Advertisements

To invite the public to the scoping meeting and notify individuals about the comment period, display advertisements for the scoping meetings were placed in nine newspapers within the project area. Newspapers were selected based on their geographic focus, language needs, and audited circulation numbers. Display ads ran during the week of September 8, 2009 through the week of September 18, 2009. Ads were placed in different papers on different days of the week throughout the notification period. Ads were placed in the two papers with the largest circulation twice, running a week apart. In addition, a legal notice was placed in the Chicago Tribune on September 8, 2009. The display ads and legal notice are included in Appendix G.

Table 2-1. Newspaper Display Advertisements

Newspaper	Ad Size	Geographic Coverage	Language	First Ad Date	Second Ad Date
Chicago Sun-Times	1/4 page	Region	English	Tues, 9/08/09	Tues, 09/15/09
Hoy	1/4 page	Citywide	Spanish	Fri, 9/11/09	--
RedEye	1/4 page	Citywide	English	Wed, 9/09/09	--
La Raza	1/4 page	Citywide	Spanish	Sun, 9/13/09	--
Chicago Tribune - City and SW Zone	1/4 page	City, SW suburbs	English	Fri, 9/11/09	Fri, 9/18/09
Southtown Star	1/4 page	S. Suburbs	English	Sun, 9/13/09	--
Southwest News Herald	¼ page	South	English	Fri, 9/10/09	--
Southwest Shopper	½ page	South	English	Tue, 9/08/09	--
Clear Ridge Reporter	¼ page	South	English	Wed, 8/09/09	--
Legal Notice: Tribune	N/A	Region	English	Tue, 9/08/09	--

Source: CWC Transit Group

2.5.2.5 Project Web Site

A project web site, www.transitchicago.com/orangeEIS/, was developed for the Orange Line EIS. The site includes information about the project, the environmental review process, and the scoping information. The site also included information about how to submit scoping comments and who to contact for additional information. The web site prominently featured the dates and times of the public scoping meeting, as well as links to directions using public transit to access the meeting location. Website content included the scoping booklets, presentations made at the public scoping meeting, and other information of interest to the public from the AA process. The website will continue to be updated at key milestones. Some materials posted to the website were translated into Spanish and Polish.

2.5.2.6 Additional Outreach During Public Scoping Period

In order to maximize the coverage of the outreach effort for the scoping meetings, a media release (Appendix G) was sent to local press outlets, meeting announcements were posted on local on-line community calendars, and flyers (Appendix G) were put in key locations around the area. The meeting announcement was distributed to the following village hall and library locations:

- Village of Bedford Park
- Village of Bridgeview
- Village of Burbank
- Village of Evergreen Park

- Village of Forest View
- City of Hometown
- Village of Oak Lawn
- Village of Stickney
- Village of Summit
- Archer Heights Branch Public Library
- Bedford Park Library
- Bridgeview Public Library
- Brighton Park Branch Public Library
- Gage Park Branch Public Library
- Garfield Ridge Library Branch
- Oak Lawn Public Library
- Sherman Park Branch Public Library
- Stickney/ Forest View Public Library
- Summit Public Library
- Thurgood Marshall Branch Public Library
- West Lawn Library Branch
- Wrightwood-Ashburn Branch Public Library.

2.5.2.7 Limited English Proficiency Analysis

A fundamental requirement of NEPA is communication with local citizens who could be affected by a project. This means that informational materials should effectively communicate to everyone in a project area. Historically, Chicago has been home to a significant number of people of Polish descent, from first generation immigrants to those whose families have lived in the area for many years. The City of Chicago, as well as nearby suburbs, continue to be home to a large Polish-speaking population. To ensure this population was included in public outreach materials and meetings, an analysis of the Orange Line study area was undertaken.

Using US Census 2000 data, as summarized in “The Polish Community in Metro Chicago” published by the Polish American Association, it was determined that the Orange Line study area covers the following Chicago community areas and municipalities with a high percentage of person of Polish ancestry:

- Clearing (Chicago Community Area 64) – 29.5% Polish ancestry
- West Lawn (Chicago Community Area 65) – 17.5% Polish ancestry
- Bedford Park (Village) – 19.6% Polish ancestry
- Burbank (City) – 30.3% Polish ancestry

Approximately 30% of Polish foreign born persons speak English poorly or not at all, and approximately 40% of those with Polish ancestry speak Polish at home. Based on this analysis, scoping materials were provided in Polish and a Polish translator was available at the public scoping meeting.

2.5.3 Elected Official and Stakeholder Briefings

There were no briefings with elected officials or stakeholders held on the Orange Line Extension project during the scoping process. Meetings were held with stakeholders during the alternatives analysis screening process.

2.5.4 Public Scoping Meeting

CTA hosted one public scoping meeting to inform the public about the project and gather input on the scope of the environmental studies, draft purpose and need, and alternatives to be evaluated. The meeting was conducted in compliance with NEPA guidelines, and was held at Hancock College Preparatory High School located at 4034 West 56th Street in Chicago. This location is within the project area, accessible by public transit, and ADA compliant. The scoping meeting was set approximately five weeks in advance of the end of the public comment period on October 27, 2009.

For the convenience of all attendees, bus lines to and from the meeting sites were publicized on some notices and on the website. In order to provide the greatest opportunity for community participation, meetings were scheduled in the early evening on weekdays.

A total of 53 people signed in at the meeting. There may have been a few additional attendees at the meeting who did not sign in. Approximately 17 people provided verbal and/or written comments at the meetings. An additional 22 comments were received via letters, email, and mailed comment cards throughout the public scoping period.

Meeting:

Time: Monday, September 21, 2009, 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.
Location: Hancock College Preparatory High School
4034 West 56th Street
Chicago, IL 60629
Attendees: 53 people signed in
Comments: 11 verbal, 6 written

2.5.4.1 Public Scoping Meeting Format

The scoping meeting began with a 45-minute open house format. During the open house session, project team members were present at project display boards to answer questions related to the technical aspects of the project. The open house session provided attendees with an opportunity to review the project information and clarify their understanding of the project and environmental process prior to the start of the presentation and subsequent comment period. Spanish, Polish, and sign language interpreters were made available at the meeting. Following the open house period, a PowerPoint presentation was made to provide attendees with information regarding the purpose of scoping and information on the project purpose and

need, background, the recently completed AA process, and the alternatives being carried forward into the DEIS (Appendix I). Emphasis was placed on the importance of the community providing comments before the comment deadline, at the public meetings or via email, fax, or postal mail.

Following the presentation, the meeting shifted into a formal public comment session, which was recorded by a court reporter. Members of the public provided verbal comments to CTA on the scope of the EIS and the project, which were recorded in a formal transcript (Appendix K). Comments were also accepted by comment sheets at the meeting and by mail, fax, and e-mail after the meeting until the close of the comment period on October 27, 2009. The oral comment period was moderated, and speakers were asked to limit their comments to three minutes.

Those requiring translation were provided with six minutes. After the public comment portion of the meeting, the project team was again available to answer technical questions at the informational display boards until the end of the meeting time.

Agenda:

6:00-6:45 pm Open House

6:45-6:55 pm Presentation

6:55-7:55 pm Public Comments

7:55-8:00 pm Next Steps/Adjournment

2.5.4.2 Public Meeting Materials

Each meeting attendee was offered the following materials: an EIS scoping information booklet, a comment sheet, and a speaker card (Appendix H). The scoping information booklet provided a project overview and included the following sections: purpose of the EIS and scoping, environmental issues to be considered in the EIS, project overview, project alternatives, project purpose and need, public participation, how to participate in the decision-making process, and next steps. This scoping information booklet was also available in Spanish and Polish and was posted on the project web site.

The comment sheet allowed attendees to submit written comments during or after the meeting. The comment sheet was designed as a self-mailer so that individuals could easily mail comments to CTA if they needed more time to develop them after the public scoping meeting (Appendix H). The speaker card was provided for attendees to fill out and turn in before or during the public comment session if they wanted to give verbal comments. The speaker cards were provided to the hearing facilitator and names were announced to allow people to approach the microphone to make a comment (Appendix H).

Project exhibit boards were developed and used during the public open house part of the meeting. The boards included: No-Build Alternative, the Transportation System Management Alternative, the Locally Preferred Alternative, Project Purpose and Need, How to Submit Comments, How to Stay Involved, Welcome to the Meeting, Environmental Review Process, Issues Potentially Considered in the Environmental Impact Statement, Meeting Agenda, and the Project Timeline (Appendix J). Exhibit boards were also posted on the website.

2.6 Comments Received

The public scoping period was from September 1, 2009 to October 27, 2009 which was greater than the 45 calendar days required by FTA rules. People were provided opportunities to comment in writing or orally at the two public scoping meetings or they could comment in writing via email, fax, or postal letter. The comment cards distributed at the public meeting were designed to facilitate return of written comments both at the public meeting and via postal mail later during the public comment period. Email comments could be sent to a project specific email address found on the project website and included in all notice materials distributed. In total, approximately 39 comments were received by the close of the public comment period. All comments received are included in Appendices K, L, and M.

At the September 21st public scoping meeting, 53 people signed in, 11 people made formal public comments and 6 submitted written comments by the end of the meeting. An additional 22 written comments were received on the Orange Line Extension project by the close of the public comment period.

Section 3

Summary of Scoping Comments

3.1 Introduction

CTA accepted comments on the Orange Line Extension project throughout the entire scoping period, from September 1, 2009 until October 27, 2009. Agencies, community groups, members of the public, elected officials, and other interested parties submitted an approximate total of 39 letters, emails, comment cards, and individuals' oral testimony during this period. The summary table (Table 3-1) provides a tally of the topics discussed in the comments.

It should be noted that the combined numbers of comments listed in the following subsections and the summary table will be greater than the total number of comment submissions because some commenters discussed multiple topics in their submission. Topics covered in the comments included the purpose and need, the alternatives to be analyzed in the DEIS, potential impacts and mitigation measures, and other substantive issues. This section contains a summary of comments received during the scoping period.

3.2 Summary of Substantive Comments

All comments were reviewed and categorized in an electronic database. The database contains information documenting the name of the commenter, the agency or organization the commenter represented, the method by which the comment was received, the topic categories addressed in the comment. The full text of each comment is included in Appendices K, L, and M.

The comments were largely fit into three topic categories. The major categories of comments were the project purpose and need (approximately 4 comments), the alternatives to be studied in the DEIS (including alignment options, station location options, and potential design features; approximately 24 comments), and environmental impacts and mitigation measures (approximately 23 comments). The following sections contain summaries of the comments from each major category.

Table 3-1 provides a summary of the comments received during the scoping period. Transcripts of the spoken comments submitted at the public scoping meetings and full text of all written public comments are provided in Appendices K and L. Agency comments are provided in Appendix M.

Table 3-1 Comment Summary		
Purpose and Need	Ease congestion on Cicero Avenue Ease congestion in the region Provide more transit options, specifically to Midway Airport and Chicago hotels	
Proposed Alternatives	<u>Support No-Build (0)</u> <u>Support TSM (0)</u>	<u>LPA (24)</u> Support (21) Do Not Support (3)
Design Comments	<u>Stations (6)</u> Stations suggested at 67 th , Marquette Road, 71 st or 72 nd , 75 th , 79 th , or Ford City Mall Extend the line with no intermediate stations	<u>Design Features (4)</u> Recycling stations Use alternative energy Lighting design to reduce light pollution Natural stormwater management Native landscaping Green roofs Bike access and parking
Other Alternatives	1. Extend to Harlem Ave. 2. Extend south and east to Evergreen Plaza 3. Extend to Oak Lawn and Illinois Tollway	<u>Design Features (cont)</u> Use permeable paving Incentives for alternate fuel vehicles Adequate bus bays for Pace, CTA, Paratransit Operator facilities Passenger information Signal priority for bus access Pedestrian bridge over Cicero Ave. and/or over rail yard
Potential Impacts	Transportation Impacts (12) Land Acquisitions, Displacement and Relocations(4) Community and Neighborhood Impacts (8) Visual and Aesthetic Impacts (2) Noise and Vibration (5)	4. Extend south on Kostner Ave. from 71 st to 75 th 5. Extend east after Marquette toward Kostner Ave. Natural Resources (1) Economic and Fiscal Impacts (5) Safety and Security (6) Construction Impacts (3) Public Services (2)

Note: Tallies are approximate

3.3 Comments Related to Purpose and Need

Most comments regarding the purpose and need for the project cited the benefits of the rail extension. In total, approximately 4 comments related to purpose and need were received. The general topics that these comments addressed were:

- Easing congestion on Cicero Avenue and in the region.
- Providing more transit options, specifically to Midway Airport and nearby hotels.

3.4 Comments Related to Alternatives

An approximate total of 24 comments specifically discussed the alternatives. The majority of the comments, approximately 21, supported the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA). Many comments simply indicated a preference for the Locally Preferred Alternative without indicating the reason for their choice. Those that did comment on reasons for supporting the LPA included benefits for businesses and travelers and the potential for congestion relief among the reasons for their support. Three comments opposed the extension citing noise, the proximity to backyards and to business. A few comments mentioned other alignments. There were no comments specific to the no build or the TSM alternative.

3.4.1 Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA)

Approximately 21 comments were received expressing a preference for the LPA. Comments on this alternative included:

- Potential to enhance neighborhoods by easing congestion and providing more transit options.
- Potential to be beneficial to the environment.
- Potential conflict with FAA airspace at 67th Street (also known as Marquette Road in study area).
- Potential to increase litter and crime around the stations.
- Potential to increase congestion on Cicero Avenue and around the stations.
- Potential construction effects.
- Potential noise and vibration impacts.
- Potential impacts to parking around the stations.
- Potential to increase rodent problems.
- Concern about the cost.
- Potential disruption to the neighborhood and quality of life.

3.4.2 Station Locations and Connections

Approximately six comments suggested station locations and connections that the Orange Line Extension could make. The comments pertaining to station locations and connections included:

- Extend line to Ford City with no stations in-between.
- A station at 67th Street, 71st Street, 75th Street and Ford City Station.
- A station at 67th Street to benefit area residents, college students and seniors that live at 67th and Cicero Avenue.
- A connection to Ford City Mall.
- A station between Midway and Ford City.
- A station at the shopping mall at 79th Street.

- A station at 67th, 71st and 75th streets.
- A station at 72nd Street and Cicero Avenue.

Two comments referred to station locations outside the study area:

- A station in Chinatown.
- A station between 35th Street and Archer and Western.

3.4.3 Other Alignments

CTA received approximately 17 comments suggesting alignments for the Orange Line Extension other than the LPA Alternative. A number of these comments were related to additional stations which are listed above in section 3.4.2 and several comments suggested that the extension should be longer than is proposed. Suggested alternative alignments included:

- Extend line further south than Ford City and east towards Western, offering service to/from Evergreen Plaza
- Extend line to Harlem Avenue rather than Ford City.
- Extend line south on Cicero Avenue to Oak Lawn and to Illinois Tollway.
- Extend line directly southbound on Kostner Avenue from 71st Street to 75th Street.
- Extend line east after Marquette Street toward Kostner Avenue.

3.4.4 Design Features

Approximately four comments were submitted suggesting additional design features to be taken into consideration. Suggestions regarding design features were primarily related to issues of sustainability. These features include the following:

- Recycling opportunities at stations and parking areas.
- Alternative energy options including solar, solar thermal, wind and more to provide electricity and heating/cooling.
- Solar arrays (on rooftops and large expanses) to return energy to the grid.
- Downward facing lighting to reduce light pollution.
- Bioswales and rain barrels.
- Native landscapes with little to no irrigation.
- Green roofs.
- Bicycle access and parking.
- Permeable paving for the park-and-ride areas.
- Charging stations for electric vehicles.
- Include sufficient bus bays at the stations to accommodate both Pace fixed/express routes, Regional ADA Paratransit services, and CTA bus routes.

- Include bus operator facilities and passenger information as well as bus priority access such as transit signal priority or bus-activated signals to allow buses to enter/exit the terminal with minimal congestion.
- A bridge over Cicero Avenue to accommodate pedestrians in Ford City over the tracks.

3.5 Comments Related to Potential Impacts

Approximately 23 comments received pertained to specific potential impacts of the project. Commenters discussed a wide range of potential impacts, though the majority touched upon noise, safety, community compatibility, and transportation-related issues such as traffic, parking, and bike and bus access to park and rides. The comments on each type of impact are summarized in the following subsections.

3.5.1 Transportation Impacts

Approximately 12 comments touched on potential transportation impacts including potential impacts to traffic circulation, parking, and access to park and rides by bikes, buses, and pedestrians. Comments included the following issues:

- Need for easy access for first responders such as police, fire and medical response during an emergency.
- Potential construction related impacts on traffic, especially on Cicero Avenue.
- Potential impacts to neighborhood parking.
- Potential effects on traffic patterns and congestion around airport and in the region.
- Need for parking permits in neighborhoods around stations.
- Need for bicycle and pedestrian access to parking garages and rail line.
- Use of bus services to access rail line.

3.5.2 Land Acquisition, Displacement, and Relocations

Four comments about land acquisition, displacement, and relocations were received. The issues addressed in these comments include concern from the potential impacts to existing properties as a result of the project. One comment noted that environmental justice should be evaluated with relation to historical and/or privately owned parcels that may need to be acquired.

3.5.3 Community and Neighborhood Impacts

Eight comments about neighborhood compatibility and potential community impacts were received. The comments focus primarily on compatibility issues with heavy rail transit extending behind homes in a residential neighborhood. Comments included the following issues:

- Issues of compatibility between heavy rail transit and residential neighborhoods.
- Potential to have beautification programs done for the area.
- Potential for increase in gang and homeless people around the stations.

3.5.4 Visual and Aesthetic Impacts

Two comments about visual and aesthetic impacts were received. Comments were primarily related to the potential for blight around the stations and the general appearance of elevated tracks in the area.

3.5.5 Noise and Vibration

Approximately five comments about noise and vibration were received. The issues addressed in these comments included noise and vibration from the trains moving along the tracks and potential damage to buildings adjacent to the proposed transit line due to vibration (no specific buildings identified). One comment requested that the CTA do a detailed noise and vibration study, including the additive effects associated with Midway airport operation.

3.5.6 Natural Resources

One comment was received about natural resources. The issue addressed in the comment included the potential impacts related to flooding in the belt line area at 64th and 65th Street.

3.5.7 Economic and Fiscal Impacts

Approximately five comments received concerned the economic and fiscal impacts of the project. These comments included the following issues:

- Concerns about the project costs compared to other projects across the country.
- Potential impact to property values of the homes near the extension.
- Several suggested design variations were mentioned as potentially being lower cost options.

3.5.8 Safety and Security

Six comments about safety and security were received. Comments included the following issues:

- Ability of first responders to access construction areas.
- Potential need for additional security at 67th Street Station.
- Potential safety impact from overcrowded trains and buses.
- Potential impact for increased crime at stations and surrounding neighborhoods.

3.5.9 Construction Impacts

Three comments about construction effects were received. Comments included the following concerns:

- First responders need access to and through construction zones.
- Potential disruption of neighborhood traffic patterns and parking.
- Need for proper storage, removal and recycling of construction and demolition debris.

3.6 Comments Submitted by Federal, State, and Other Agencies

Eight agencies submitted comments during the scoping period. Most of the topics mentioned were also covered in the comments discussed in the previous sections. However, some of the agency comments presented new issues, including requests to ensure compliance with government-mandated policies and regulations, coordination among transit providers, and safety concerns. The agency comments are summarized in the following sections, and full text of the agency comments is provided in Appendix M. The concerns of all the agencies will be addressed both through the DEIS analysis and through on-going coordination with CTA.

There were no comments from federal agencies. Comment letters were received from two state agencies, one regional transit provider, three City of Chicago agencies, and two nearby Villages.

3.6.1 Comments Submitted by State Agencies

The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency did not have any objections to the proposed project and highlighted the future need to obtain construction permits for construction stormwater management and the potential need to obtain permits from the US Army Corps of Engineers if there would be any in-water work. The Illinois State Police highlighted concerns for first responders including access to construction zones and access to elevated tracks.

3.6.2 Comments Submitted by Other Agencies

The Pace suburban bus service, the City of Chicago Department of Streets and Sanitation, Chicago Department of Environment, Chicago Police Bureau of Patrol, Village of Bridgeview, and the Village of Oak Lawn submitted comments covering some of the topics mentioned in previous sections, as well as:

- Evaluate opportunities for sustainability actions such as recycling stations, use of solar energy, sustainable management of stormwater, incentives for use of fuel efficient or alternative fuel vehicles, and/or reuse and recycling of construction debris.
- Evaluate potential impacts of construction and operation on the need for services from other City departments including staffing levels and specialized rail training.
- Evaluate impacts on street lights, street lighting levels, and street trees.
- Evaluate potential security risks from concealed or remote access points.
- Arterial road access to proposed stations should be evaluated for adequate grade crossings, street parking, and intersection configurations to accommodate connecting bus movements.
- Station design should include consideration of access requirements for both Pace and CTA bus routes and Regional ADA Paratransit, operator facilities, passenger information, and bus priority access.
- Evaluation of connecting bus service to new stations should consider likely route restructuring that would occur to reduce service overlap.
- Potential impacts to wildlife and ecosystems, energy use, land use, natural resources, neighborhood compatibility, environmental justice, and noise and vibration.

- Potential benefit to economic development, businesses and Toyota Park sports arena visitors.
- Need for flexible design to facilitate future extensions.
- Need to include bicycle transportation considerations including bicycle/pedestrian greenbelt and bicycle parking in parking structures and bicycle access onto trains.

Section 4

Responses to Comments

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of scoping is to provide an opportunity for agencies and the public to comment on the purpose and need, the range of alternatives proposed for analysis, and to help the project proponent identify issues that should be evaluated in the DEIS analysis. Therefore, all comments that fall within the scope of the NEPA process will be addressed in the DEIS. CTA will also continue to work closely with agencies and stakeholder groups to address issues identified through scoping.

4.2 Comments Related to Purpose and Need

There were no comments directly related to the stated purpose of the project. A number of comments did affirm many of the previously identified needs for the project. The DEIS will expand and clarify the purpose and need statement in response to these comments.

4.3 Comments Related to Alternatives

The Orange Line Extension project has completed an Alternatives Analysis (AA) and conducted early scoping on the potential range of alternatives. The results of that study may be found in the Locally Preferred Alternative Report (CTA 2009) and which is incorporated here by reference. The AA provides the reasoning for decisions regarding the identification and narrowing of the range of alternatives. The AA process identified an initial set of four corridors and eleven transit modal technologies. The process screened these options into a set of four conceptual alternatives that potentially met the project purpose. These alternatives were screened against criteria related to constructability, right-of-way constraints, impacts of configurations, and operational concerns. This screening step narrowed the range of alternatives to three build alternatives and a no build alternative and a transportation system management (TSM) alternative. These alternatives were screened against the goals, objectives, and evaluation criteria established for the project. In addition, input from stakeholders, the public, and agencies was solicited in the process of narrowing the range of alternatives. The AA process resulted in the identification of a locally preferred alternative (LPA), the No Build Alternative, and a TSM Alternative that will be carried forward into the DEIS.

Most commenters expressed a preference for the LPA. Comments that included reasons for a stated preference also provide insight into potential impacts or benefits of the alternatives. These insights into potential impacts are helpful in guiding the impact analysis of the DEIS. Comments that provide this insight are also counted as a comment on a particular resource discipline and will be included in the analysis of potential impacts.

A few comments expressed a preference for an alternative that is not currently proposed for consideration in the DEIS. The DEIS will summarize alternatives previously considered and eliminated and the process used to do so. Alternatives that do not meet the project purpose and need will not be evaluated further.

4.4 Comments Related to Potential Impacts

Potential impacts or benefits of alternatives identified by commenters will be analyzed in the DEIS. Insights into how a particular alternative may affect traffic, neighborhoods and communities, safety, or accessibility in the project area and the region are a valuable result of the scoping process. Many comments reflected an awareness of the traffic congestion issues within the project area and the potential benefits that may result from the project. Specific comments on each potential impact will be used to guide the analysis of the alternatives.

Specific comments on potential impacts were related to traffic circulation and congestion, parking issues, safety, community and neighborhood compatibility, economic development opportunities, visual and aesthetic concerns, noise and vibration, and construction activities.