



# **Orange Line Extension** **Connecting Midway to Ford City**

**Environmental Impact Statement Scoping Information**

**September 2009**





# INTRODUCTION

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 impacts of constructing and operating the extension.

## PURPOSE OF THE EIS AND SCOPING PROCESS

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (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 will be hosted to receive public comments on the alternatives and issues that should be examined as part of the environmental analysis. This 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.



## ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

Environmental issues to be examined in the EIS include:

- Cultural resources
- Wildlife and ecosystems
- Energy use
- Land acquisition, displacements and relocations
- Land use
- Natural resources (including air quality and water resources)
- Neighborhood compatibility and environmental justice
- Parklands/ recreational facilities
- Safety and security
- Transportation
- Visual and aesthetic impacts
- Noise and vibration
- Zoning and economic development and secondary development

## PROJECT OVERVIEW

In 2006, the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) began the Alternatives Analysis process, for the proposed Orange Line Extension. As part of a two step screening process, CTA has held two public meetings over the past two years in order to gather input from the public regarding alternative options. CTA evaluated several alternatives and has adopted the Fixed Guideway Alternative as the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) for further study in the EIS. The proposed Orange Line Extension will be further refined during the conceptual design phase of the project and is being carried forward for additional study in the EIS.



.....

## PROJECT ALTERNATIVES TO BE EVALUATED IN THE EIS

The EIS will include an evaluation of the following alternatives:

### **No Build Alternative**

The No Build Alternative is defined as the existing transportation system, plus any committed transportation improvements that are already in the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) Transportation Improvement Program. The Orange Line Project Area has one road improvement project included in the FY 2007 - 2012 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), the Cicero Avenue Smart Corridor Project from 37th Street to 63rd Street scheduled for completion in 2009. All elements of the No Build Alternative are included in each of the other alternatives.

Summary:

- Existing transportation system
- Plus committed transportation improvements: the Cicero Avenue Smart Corridor Project
- Bus transit service focused on the preservation of existing services and projects
- Transit network projected to be substantially the same

### **Transportation System Management (TSM) Alternative**

The proposed TSM Alternative is a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) alternative that operates 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.

Summary:

- No Build Alternative, plus:
- Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) that operates from 59th Street Midway Station bus terminal to approximately 76th Street
- 2.3 miles long with no intermediate stops
- Operates in mixed traffic with signal priority on Cicero Avenue segment; no exclusive lanes along Cicero Avenue portion
- Park-and-ride facility at approximately 7600 S. Cicero
- Bus route **67** 67th/69th/71st re-routed to terminate at the new Ford City Station



## Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA): Fixed Guideway Alternative

The proposed LPA would extend the heavy rail transit line from Midway Station at the Midway International Airport south along the Belt Railway Company (BRC) right of way from 59th Street to Marquette Road, crossing the Belt Railway Company Clearing Yard and ending on Cicero Avenue.

Summary:

- No Build Alternative, plus:
- Heavy rail transit line extension from Midway Station to 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)
- Operates partly in a trench and partly at-grade along the Belt Railway Company 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 in the median of Cicero Avenue to a new Ford City terminal station located on Cicero Avenue at approximately 76th Street
- Park-and-ride facility and improved bus terminal at new proposed Ford City terminal station
- Pace buses from the south will continue to directly serve Midway Station
- 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 EIS: 1) alignment above the median of Cicero Avenue (recommended to reduce property acquisition costs and impacts to existing businesses) and 2) alignment located directly east of the Cicero Avenue right-of-way

**Other alternatives may also be identified in the scoping process.**

## Orange Line Extension | Locally Preferred Alternative



**Orange Line Extension • Environmental Impact Statement Scoping Information**



.....

## PROJECT 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, limiting mobility for residents and businesses.

## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Throughout the EIS process, CTA will offer a number of opportunities for you to get involved in the Orange Line Extension project. Whether you want to take an active role in shaping this project or just want to stay informed, CTA looks forward to your participation in the months ahead. To ensure that the issues most important to residents, public agencies, and other involved parties are addressed in this review, CTA is hosting a scoping meeting to collect public input. The input gathered from the scoping meeting will help shape the scope of the study, its design efforts and the assessment criteria used in evaluating improvement options.

Additional opportunities to participate will be provided throughout the environmental review process in order to solicit feedback regarding specific needs and concerns.



## HOW TO PARTICIPATE

### **Attend a Meeting**

Monday, September 21, 2009

6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Hancock College Preparatory High School

4034 W. 56th Street

Chicago, IL 60629

Oral and written comments can be made at the meetings.

### **Comment**

Provide written comments on the proposed project alternatives and potential environmental impacts. Comments will be considered in the scoping process if received by October 27, 2009.

Mail your comments to:

Jeffrey Busby

General Manager, Strategic Planning

Chicago Transit Authority

P.O. Box 7602

Chicago, IL 60680-7602

Or e-mail:

OrangeExtension@transitchicago.com

Comments can be submitted by mail or e-mail.

### **Stay Involved**

For project information, visit: [www.transitchicago.com/OrangeEIS](http://www.transitchicago.com/OrangeEIS)

If you would like to be added to the project mailing list or e-list for future updates, please send your contact information to Darud Akbar, Government & Community Relations Officer, Chicago Transit Authority, P.O. Box 7567, Chicago, IL 60680-7567, call (312) 681-2708 or e-mail [dakbar@transitchicago.com](mailto:dakbar@transitchicago.com).

## THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS AND NEXT STEPS

After the scoping period, CTA will start preliminary engineering and prepare a Draft EIS. The public will have an opportunity to comment on the Draft EIS during a 45-day public comment period. During the review period, CTA will host public hearings to receive comments on the Draft EIS from the public and agencies. CTA will then prepare a Final EIS that includes responses to public comments.

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) will consider the Final EIS and prepare a Record of Decision (ROD) selecting the preferred alternative. Issuance of the ROD indicates that CTA has satisfied all of the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). While CTA can advance on preliminary engineering concurrently with the environmental analysis, the issuance of the ROD will allow CTA to move forward with final design and construction of the Orange Line.

TARGETED PROJECT SCHEDULE			
Fall 2009	2010-2011	2011-2013	2016
Public Scoping Meeting, September 21, 2009	Preliminary Engineering and Draft EIS	Final EIS, ROD, Final Design, Start of Construction	Open for Operation