

Chicago Transit Authority Yellow Line Extension Alternatives Analysis Study

Screen 1 Public Involvement Responses to Public Comments and Questions

10 November 2008

Written questions and comments regarding the Yellow Line Extension Alternatives Analysis Study were submitted by a variety of individuals and groups from throughout the Chicago region at the study's Screen 1 Public Meeting held on August 26, 2008 at National-Louis University in Skokie. In addition, public comments and questions on Screen 1 were submitted directly to the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) via e-mail and postal mail through September 16, 2008.

All of the questions and comments have been collected and compiled to provide a comprehensive review of the topics raised along with CTA's responses. Every question, comment, and suggestion submitted during the public comment period has been compiled in the "Outreach Comment Database" (see separate document). Each question has been recorded verbatim and assigned a number that corresponds with the answers provided in this document, ensuring every question or comment submitted has been reviewed and answered or acknowledged. Collectively, the public comments and preferences will be considered in the evaluation of alternatives and concepts introduced through the public involvement process and may be evaluated and/or reflected in advancing alternatives as appropriate.

Many of the comments received were very similar in nature. As a result, similar comments and their responses have been grouped by topic and "General Comment" heading below to avoid duplicative responses. Questions or comments requiring individual or specific responses are also included below along with unique responses. In order to understand some terms used in the Comments and Responses, it may be necessary to review the original presentation materials which are posted on CTA's Web site www.transitchicago.com.

The list below shows the index of topics covered in the report, along with the number of comments received for each. Because comments often refer to more than one topic, the numbers associated with each do not equal the total number of comments received.

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1. FTA's Alternatives Analysis Process

General Comment:

Please describe the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) Alternatives Analysis process and its components.

Pertains to Specific Comments:

64, 68

Response to Overall Category Comment:

Alternatives Analysis has, for over 25 years, been a key part of FTA's decision-making process for awarding grant funding to support fixed guideway transit projects. Federal law requires that projects seeking grant funding from FTA's New Starts program be based upon the results of an alternatives analysis study and subsequent preliminary engineering. Alternatives analysis has also been a part of established transportation planning practice in the United States for several decades. At its core, alternatives analysis is about supporting local decision-making. An effective alternatives analysis answers the questions: What are the transportation problems in a corridor? What are their underlying causes? What are viable options for addressing these problems? What are their costs? What are their benefits?

The Yellow Line Extension project is currently conducting its Alternatives Analysis study. The Yellow Line Extension Alternatives Analysis study will have two steps or "screens." Screen 1, which has just been completed and presented to the public, has issued preliminary findings regarding corridors, alignments, and vehicle technologies that should be advanced to Screen 2 for further analysis. These findings have determined 2 vehicle technologies, 2 potential corridors and 3 profiles that should be studied further. Screen 2 will further refine these corridors, technologies and profiles. In the next screen potential station locations, vehicles and profiles will be discussed in more detail, costs and ridership will be projected and operational questions considered. Ultimately, this process will result in the selection of a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) which, with FTA approval, will subsequently undergo environmental analysis and preliminary engineering.

A detailed description of the formal FTA Alternatives Analysis process is available at the Federal Transit Administration's web site http://www.fta.dot.gov/planning/newstarts/planning_environment_2396.html.

2. Previous Studies Related to the Yellow Line Extension

General Comment:

Cost and ridership data for a proposed extension already exist. How is this study different than those in the past?

Pertains to Specific Comments:

43, 68, 72, 73, 76

Response to Overall Category Comment:

The FTA New Start grant program requires conceptual transit project proposals to proceed through a formal process of planning, design, and construction. The process involves five formal steps: Alternatives Analysis (AA); Environmental Impact Statement (EIS); Preliminary Engineering (PE); Final Design (FD); and Construction. In some situations, local analysis or studies are completed prior to the AA; this stage of the project prior to the five formal steps required for the FTA New Starts grant program is referred to as Concept Development.

A proposed Yellow Line Extension has been in Concept Development, through its inclusion in local and regional transit studies, since 1968. Most recently, in 2002, the Village of Skokie, with financial support from the Regional Transit Authority (RTA), initiated its own feasibility study to introduce an intermediate station on the existing Yellow Line as well as extending the line north from the current Yellow Line Dempster Street terminal station to Old Orchard Road. The study's purpose included identification of

transportation needs and the evaluation of potential rail transportation alternatives for improving mobility in the study area. In addition, the feasibility study provided preliminary estimates on ridership and costs.

Preliminary estimates from Concept Development will be updated as part of the Yellow Line Extension AA. As each phase of the project advances – from Concept Development through PE and FD – estimates will be refined. During the AA phase, methods used to develop quantitative estimates will be reviewed by the FTA and the ridership and cost estimates refined during the AA will contribute to the determination of a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA).

Specific responses to cost and ridership inquiries will be addressed in subsequent question/comment Topic Areas 12 and 13, respectively. Please see these topic areas for additional information.

3. Overall Yellow Line Extension Project Timeline, Purpose and Need

General Comment:

What is the timeline of the project? What objectives does this study aim to address?

Pertains to Specific Comments:

29, 31, 63, 68, 74, 82, 83, 101, 120, 132

Response to Overall Category Comment:

The FTA New Start grant program requires conceptual transit project proposals to proceed through a formal process of planning, design, and construction. Upon completion of this process, the project is ready for operation. The process involves five formal steps: Alternatives Analysis (AA); Environmental Impact Statement (EIS); Preliminary Engineering (PE); Final Design (FD); and Construction. Each of these steps typically takes 2-3 years to complete. Initiation of each step is also contingent upon continued availability of federal and local funding, the timing of which will also affect the overall project schedule. For highly complex projects the Final Design and Construction steps take longer, particularly if construction is implemented in sequential phases rather than all at once.

In the Alternatives Analysis step, the project's purpose and need is identified, alternatives to address the purpose and need are developed and evaluated, comprehensive and on-going public involvement is initiated, and a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) is determined. The Yellow Line Extension project's "purpose and need" is to improve transportation access to major activity centers and support Skokie's land use plans. In particular, transportation improvements aim to enhance access to the concentration of institutional, employment and retail activity in the Old Orchard area, leverage existing transit infrastructure to provide locally oriented rapid transit service, support local land use and development goals, and to alleviate traffic congestion due to expected growth in Skokie's population and employment. Extending Yellow Line transit service north of the Dempster Street terminal station is intended to improve access to, within, and beyond the study area and reduce transit travel times through faster and more direct transit service.

The Yellow Line Extension project is currently in the Alternatives Analysis phase. The next step is preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). In this step, potential environmental, financial and economic impacts of alternatives are identified, potential environmental impacts of the LPA are analyzed, environmental mitigation strategies are developed, public hearings are conducted to receive input, and a formal Record of Decision is received from the FTA upon successful completion. The Preliminary Engineering step involves engineering effort to support the EIS (30% design level), development of project phasing and construction staging, and feasibility review of mitigation approaches for construction or operational impacts. In the Final Design step the engineering design started in PE is completed, capital and operating cost estimates are updated and construction drawings are prepared, and a Full Funding Grant Agreement is obtained from the FTA upon successful completion. The Construction step commences when federal and local matching funds are secured.

The current Yellow Line Extension Alternatives Analysis study is expected to conduct public involvement meetings for Screen 2 in 2009. Identification of an LPA and completion of the study is also anticipated in 2009.

Other Specific Comments Noted on this Topic:

Comment:

56. How quickly will this happen if the Olympics are in Chicago?

Response:

CTA is working closely with the 2016 bid team and believes that the present transit system can handle transit needs for the 2016 Olympics. The Yellow Line Extension project is not linked with Chicago's bid for the 2016 Olympics. However, any improvements made to the current system could only benefit the City's Olympic bid application.

4. Yellow Line Extension Study Area

General Comment:

What area does the Yellow Line Extension Alternatives Analysis study encompass? Will future Yellow Line rapid transit service extend further north or south?

Pertains to Specific Comments:

20, 22, 28, 30, 31, 34, 46, 49, 50, 51, 66, 83, 86, 101, 121, 137

Response to Overall Category Comment:

A key component of the Alternatives Analysis process is specifying a study area of a definite size for the project. The goal is to establish a specific area and to define the transit challenges and opportunities within this particular space, so that potential solutions can be measured against these defined challenges. Keeping the study area focused also helps to avoid confusion between multiple unique transit project proposals within the same city or region. Too large a study area can make it too difficult to determine accurately whether the potential solutions effectively address the identified transportation needs.

The Yellow Line Extension study area is bounded by the current terminus of the existing CTA Yellow Line at Dempster Street on the south, Old Orchard Road on the north, Central Avenue/Harms Road on the west, and Skokie Boulevard on the east. The study area is one mile east-to-west and approximately one and a half (1.5) miles north-to-south. These boundaries define an area with opportunities for improving transit connections and growing transit market share. The Yellow Line Extension project's "purpose and need" is to improve transportation access to major activity centers and support Skokie's land use plans. In particular, transportation improvements aim to enhance access to the concentration of institutional, employment and retail activity in the Old Orchard area, leverage existing transit infrastructure to provide locally oriented rapid transit service, support local land use and development goals, and to alleviate traffic congestion due to expected growth in Skokie's population and employment. Extending Yellow Line transit service north of the Dempster Street terminal station is intended to improve access to, within, and beyond the study area and reduce transit travel times through faster and more direct transit service. The study area boundaries encompass the areas that would benefit most directly from such transit service improvements.

Opportunities for future extensions south from Oakton Street will not be considered in this study; however, opportunities for future extensions north will be considered in Screen 2 in conjunction with possible alignments of the guideway terminal.

Other Specific Comments on this Topic:

Comment:

82. ...The last time I checked, Skokie had not been annexed in to the city of Chicago... CTA should be planning for the withdrawal of all service extending beyond the city limits.

Response:

The CTA operates the nation's second largest public transportation system with a service area that covers the City of Chicago and 40 surrounding suburbs. The CTA also coordinates with the Regional

Transportation Authority (RTA) and Pace and Metra, which provide transit service throughout the six-county northeastern Illinois region.

5. Alignments (Corridors) Analyzed

General Comment:

There is support/opposition for specific corridors and/or please provide clarification on the various corridors considered.

Pertains to Specific Comments:

13, 16, 18, 19, 27, 52, 53, 67, 69, 77, 86, 91, 93, 99, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 121, 122, 123, 124, 128, 129, 133, 134

Response to Overall Category Comment:

Several recommendations and preferences for potential alignment extensions were provided on the question/comment cards submitted by the public. Many are derivations of the alternatives already defined. Others significantly differ from the alternatives proposed by the CTA. Staff will review all suggestions and incorporate in the analysis those that offer merit for further consideration. Suggested alignments that are predominantly or entirely outside the defined study area will not be considered.

Regarding the defined alternatives, four (4) different north/south corridors were defined and reviewed as part of the universe of alternatives. Collectively, these alternatives encompass the entire study area. From west-to-east across the study area alternatives include: 1) Edens Expressway Corridor. This corridor is adjacent to commercial and residential districts; however, the expressway right-of-way creates a physical barrier between a potential transit guideway and the communities and commercial centers it intends to serve. 2) The next corridor is the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) Corridor that would be an extension of rapid transit service down the existing but unused UPRR right-of-way. This corridor would travel north to Old Orchard Road, either toward activity centers on the east or west side of the Edens Expressway. Land uses adjacent to this corridor are residential, commercial, industrial, and institutional. 3) The Gross Point Road/Skokie Boulevard Corridor extends northeast from the current Yellow Line Dempster Street terminal station. 4) The final corridor is the Skokie Boulevard Corridor, another north-south corridor on the east end of the study area. Both the Gross Point Road/Skokie Boulevard and Skokie Boulevard Corridors are currently served by existing bus routes and travel through residential and commercial corridors.

Two corridors were selected to advance to Screen 2 analysis – the UPRR Corridor and the Gross Point Road/Skokie Boulevard Corridor.

Other Specific Comments Noted on this Topic:

Comments:

45. How will they be able to move the Electrical towers in the UPRF corridor to make room for 2 tracks?
59. What about moving the electric towers on the UP line (Terminal Ave?)
62. How much width increase will be needed for the UP Line (bus route or train elevated or grade) and or at the Skokie Blvd/Gross Pt. lines?

Response:

CTA is aware of constraints associated with the existing Union Pacific Railroad right-of-way. Costs associated with addressing known constraints will be reflected in the cost estimates produced as part of the Yellow Line Extension Alternatives Analysis (AA). Detailed design will follow in Preliminary Engineering. Guideway width requirements will be developed for each alternative advancing to Screen 2 in the Yellow Line Extension AA, and compared with available ROW to identify conflicts.

6. Vertical Profiles Analyzed

General Comment:

What vertical profiles (elevated, at-grade, trench or underground alignments) are being considered for each alternative? Where applicable, grade crossings should be avoided.

Pertains to Specific Comments:

16, 27, 62, 69, 101

Response to Overall Category Comment:

Four alignments (or profiles) are possible for any transit service: below ground (subway), open cut (trench), above ground (elevated), or at-grade (street level). The current CTA system features trains that operate on each of the four alignments at various points within the rail system. Following modern transit industry practice, preference will be given to vertical profiles that avoid grade crossings for rail alternatives.

CTA-compatible heavy rail will be considered in elevated, trench, or at-grade alignments in the Yellow Line Extension Alternatives Analysis. Bus rapid transit will only be considered at-grade, because the benefits of lower construction costs could not be realized if it used an elevated structure or subway alignment.

In Screen 1, vertical profiles for corridors and transit technologies (rail, bus, etc.) were evaluated according to general environmental, transportation, and economic parameters. These general evaluation criteria were used to eliminate alternatives that were not capable of meeting the project's goals. See Topic Area 5 for more information. Preferences for potential vertical profiles that were provided on the question/comment cards submitted by the public will be reviewed by staff and profiles that offer merit will be incorporated into the analysis for further consideration.

7. Transit Vehicle Technologies (Modes) Analyzed

General Comment:

There is support for Bus Rapid Transit or Heavy Rail Transit.

Pertains to Specific Comments:

7, 8, 9, 16, 20, 46, 52, 62, 67, 74, 84, 85, 86, 87, 93, 95, 98, 99, 100, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 117, 118, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 127, 128, 129, 133, 135

Response to Overall Category Comment:

Several recommendations and preferences for modes were provided on the question/comment cards submitted by the public. Staff will review all suggestions and incorporate in the analysis those that offer merit for further consideration.

During Phase 1, eleven transit technologies were evaluated applying a series of screening factors including vehicle operating speed, station spacing requirements, capacity, reliability, and daily use in revenue transit operations. Preliminary findings for Screen 1 identified two technologies to advance to more detailed evaluation -- Bus Rapid Transit, or BRT, and Heavy Rail Transit, or HRT -- the existing type of Yellow Line technology -- to be carried forward. The other nine technologies were deemed not as well suited to this study area due to factors like the operating speed and other compatibility issues. Bus Rapid Transit will be considered only as an at-grade application or in-street operation. For Heavy Rail Transit, three different options in terms of profile will be considered, including elevated, in-trench, and at-grade. HRT and BRT technologies will be further evaluated in Screen 2.

Other Specific Comments on this Topic:

Comment:

17. Will the buses be hybrids like in NYC?

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Response:

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) is a high capacity, permanent, integrated system that uses buses or specialized vehicles on roadways or dedicated lanes to quickly and reliably transport passengers to their destinations, while offering the flexibility to meet transit demand. BRT systems can also incorporate features such as bus transit signal priority, permanent BRT stations, and pre-boarding fare collection to improve service. BRT systems can be customized to community needs and incorporate state-of-the-art technologies that improve efficiency and passenger convenience.

BRT propulsion systems and other features have not yet been determined at this stage in the planning process. If a BRT alternative advances as the Locally Preferred Alternative after Screen 2, more analysis will be completed in subsequent project design phases to recommend specific bus technologies and amenities. Preference will be given to environmentally friendly fuel technologies.

8. Proposed Yellow Line Extension Stations

General Comment:

Where would stations on the proposed Yellow Line Extension be located?

Pertains to Specific Comments:

33, 54, 85, 89, 136

Response to Overall Category Comment:

Station locations for the advancing BRT and HRT alternatives will be identified as part of Screen 2.

Other Specific Comments on this Topic:

Comments:

- 55. What is the status of the Oakton St. station?
- 91. My overall thought is that any area residents can easily commute to Howard or Skokie--and additional stops are just not needed.
- 131. Does the planning for the Yellow Line extension also include infill stations along the existing Yellow Line, in Skokie or Evanston?

Response:

The infill station at Oakton Street is being designed and funded by the Village of Skokie in cooperation with CTA. According to the Village of Skokie, site selection is complete for the Oakton Station and final engineering is underway. Oakton Station final engineering and construction bid packages are expected to be completed by the end of 2008.

Consistent with other planned and committed transportation projects, this station will be assumed to exist when making assessments about future performance of the proposed Yellow Line Extension.

Comment:

- 66. Will the CTA in Evanston with have the Skokie swift at dodge Asbury or ridge for the train station?
- 99. I think there should be two stations in south Evanston: Ridge... and Dodge/N. California...
- 101. As for a station in Evanston, build it at Dodge Ave.
- 121. I would also like to comment on a proposed stop on the line at either Ridge, Asbury or Dodge...

Response:

Responsibility for the planning, design and funding for stations on existing rail lines resides with local jurisdictions and are not part of the scope of this study.

9. Proposed Yellow Line Extension Operations

General Comment:

Will the Yellow Line continue to operate on weekends? Will additional cars be added to Skokie Swift Yellow Line trains? For rail alternatives, would there be two tracks?

Pertains to Specific Comments:

15, 85, 89, 99

Response to Overall Category Comment:

At this time, specific operating hours, fares, and other operational issues associated directly with the Yellow Line Extension have not been determined. These operating issues will be addressed in Screen 2 and refined throughout subsequent preliminary and final engineering studies and through construction. Any new CTA service and associated facilities would be consistent with American with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements.

10. Potential Property Acquisition and Impacts

General Comment:

Alternatives with less residential displacement are preferred. Will properties need to be acquired? What impacts will this have on adjacent residences and property values?

Pertains to Specific Comments:

32, 47, 63, 103, 120, 126

Response to Overall Category Comment:

At this early stage in the Alternatives Analysis study, CTA cannot determine how much private property, if any, would need to be acquired in order to construct and operate the selected alternative. A final determination on the transit technology, alignment and vertical profile will need to be established before potential property impacts can be fully assessed. Although likely positive and negative impacts will be considered in screening alternatives, private property impacts are determined in detail as a part of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The EIS process is a requirement for federal funding and mandates that environmental impacts—including impacts upon private property—must be evaluated in order to receive federal approval. The EIS process begins after the Alternatives Analysis process ends and a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) is determined. Public acquisition of private property is governed by federal and local laws. In accordance with these laws, affected property owners would be compensated for their properties based on fair market values and can be provided relocation costs.

11. Alternatives Analysis Public Involvement Process and Format

General Comment:

Do you coordinate with local officials and other stakeholders? How can I get a copy of the materials presented and information about future meetings?

Pertains to Specific Comments:

2, 3, 44, 61, 80, 81, 88, 116

Response to Overall Category Comment:

Public involvement is a key component of this process. The outreach has already begun including a community stakeholders meeting with representatives of various community groups throughout the study area. We also have met or offered to meet with local, county, state and federal elected officials in the study area and surrounding communities. Meetings also included community organizations, and city and state agencies such as the Illinois Department of Transportation, Regional Transportation Authority, Metra, and Pace. If your organization would like to be included in the stakeholder's meetings please contact Darud Akbar, CTA Government and Community Relations at dakbar@transitchicago.com.

The public involvement process for the Yellow Line Extension Alternatives Analysis study also includes two public involvement meetings, at the conclusion of the Screen 1 and Screen 2/LPA analyses. The Screen 1 meetings were held at National Louis University. A meeting location and date for Screen 2 has not yet been determined. The meeting locations must be close to public transit and accessible to people with disabilities. Suggestions for meeting locations may be sent to Darud Akbar, CTA Government and Community Relations at dakbar@transitchicago.com.

Meetings are announced through ads in neighborhood newspapers and publications as well as public alerts on CTA trains and buses, at rail stations, on the CTA Web site, and distributed to print and broadcast media via news releases.

The format of the meetings included groups of presentation boards containing detailed information on each area of analysis in the study, where individual conversations between the public and project staff knowledgeable about that area of analysis could take place. The public meetings also included a community presentation that provided information in a slideshow format led by the study's project managers. The presentation slides and arcade boards are available in electronic format at www.transitchicago.com – click on Initiatives, then Alternatives Analysis Studies, then Yellow Line Extension – or via paper copy by request to Darud Akbar, CTA Government and Community Relations at dakbar@transitchicago.com.

Meeting attendees were requested to submit questions and comments in a written format. CTA's goal in emphasizing written questions and comments has been to ensure everyone's thoughts are collected and reviewed. The intent is for everyone to have an equal opportunity to participate in the process. In addition, by reviewing and responding to similarly worded questions, the presenters addressed multiple individuals at once and avoided repetition during the public meetings. CTA and the consultant team staff have also been available to answer any individual questions on a one-on-one basis following the general question and answer period at each meeting.

Written comments received at the public meetings and other subsequently submitted comments are being answered individually for the record in this document, which will be made available publicly on the CTA Web site, by email to public meeting participants, and in hard copy by written request. All of the comment cards and other written communications (primarily emails and letters from elected officials) will collectively become part of the evaluation process and will be submitted to the Federal Transit Administration as a part of the official documentation for the Alternatives Analysis study.

12. Funding for Yellow Line Extension Construction and Operations

General Comment:

How will the construction and operation of the Yellow Line Extension be funded, especially with CTA's current budget issues?

Pertains to Specific Comments:

11, 12, 14, 42, 57, 64, 65, 74, 82, 83, 93, 96, 100, 101, 127, 130

Response to Overall Category Comment:

CTA's operating budget supports day-to-day operations and helps determine the service frequency and hours CTA can offer on its bus and rail system. Half of CTA's operating budget comes from customer fares and revenue generated from sources such as advertising and concessions. The other half of the operating budget comes from regional sales taxes and matching funds from the State of Illinois. No federal funds are available specifically to cover operating expenses. Once the Yellow Line Extension is built and operational, the funds to operate the system will come from fare revenue as well as local and state funding sources, consistent with the funding mechanisms that support CTA's other bus and rail transit services.

Meanwhile, CTA's capital funding is provided both by the federal government and State of Illinois and is granted specifically for improvement projects such as rail station renovations, track and structure rehabilitation, bus and rail car purchases, and rail extensions. It is federal capital funding that is being sought for the Yellow Line Extension and other New Starts projects. Capital funds help the CTA maintain and improve its service, but federal rules prevent its use for day-to-day operations expenses.

CTA has initiated this Alternatives Analysis study for the Yellow Line Extension as a first step towards obtaining capital funding for the project through the Federal Transit Administration's "New Starts" grant program.¹ This program provides funding for major public transit infrastructure projects throughout the U.S. through a highly competitive process. Upon successfully advancing through the four phases of project implementation (Alternatives Analysis, Environmental Impact Statement, Preliminary Engineering, and Final Design) a project will be qualified to receive a "Full Funding Grant Agreement" (FFGA) from the U.S. Government. The amount of funding in the FFGA covers up to 80 percent of the project's capital costs. Other federal, State and local funds comprise the remainder of capital funding. It is possible to seek alternative sources of federal and non-federal funding for the project, but the federal New Starts grant program is specifically intended to support transit projects of this nature and is the public funding mechanism generally most capable of doing so.

As indicated above, to ultimately secure federal New Starts grant funding, matching funds for at least 20 percent of the project's capital costs are required from sources other than the New Starts grant program mainly from non-federal (i.e., state and local) sources. From 2000 through 2004, the Chicago region's matching funds came from the State of Illinois through the Illinois FIRST legislation. The Illinois FIRST legislation expired on June 30, 2004. Since that time, CTA has been working with the Illinois Legislature to enact a replacement to Illinois FIRST and ensure that all future federal transit funds available to the Chicago region can be fully utilized.

CTA is simultaneously pursuing solutions to its overall operating and capital funding challenges while also positioning itself (through Alternatives Analysis studies such as this one) to secure capital funding to meet the region's future transit infrastructure needs. While it is necessary and critical for CTA to obtain the capital and operating resources it needs to maintain its system in a state of good repair on an ongoing basis, it is equally important to plan for the future; there is little value in maintaining an existing system if it will not adequately address future travel needs. CTA's overall Capital Improvement Program not only identifies funding needs to maintain the existing system in a state of good repair, but it also identifies and addresses future needs to serve growing regional transit travel demands. With a growing population and shifting travel patterns and travel needs, it is important to anticipate CTA customers' future needs and plan accordingly. For example, many of today's key transit links—including the Blue Line to O'Hare and the Orange Line to Midway—were made possible by past generations who understood the need to invest in transit's future even as they addressed significant day-to-day financial pressures.

¹ CTA is also conducting concurrent Alternatives Analysis studies for other candidate New Starts expansion projects that have been authorized by the U.S. Congress—including extending the Red Line further south, extending the Orange Line to Ford City Mall, and the constructing the Circle Line.

It is also important to recognize that federal capital funding for transit system expansion projects comes largely from the New Starts grant program funds that are allocated separately from federal formula funds dedicated to ongoing "state of good repair" capital improvements. While federal formula funds may be used for infrastructure renewal projects, New Starts funds are discretionary funds that can only be used for system expansions. Given that CTA has demonstrated need for both formula and New Starts funding, it is prudent that CTA take all necessary steps to obtain funding from both sources and not focus on just one while passing up the other. CTA does not propose diverting its federal formula funds to support system extensions and expansions.

Other Specific Comments on this Topic:

Comments:

- 48. Do you have order of costs for any of the [alternatives]?
- 72. The extremely high costs required... results in a capital cost of \$9,250 increased ridership-day-year based on a 10-year life.
- 73. These costs do not include the costs required to move some electrical towers necessitated by 2-track system. The condemnation of properties in the path, or the procurement of new rapid transit cars at \$6mil.

Response:

Preliminary capital and operating costs for the advancing BRT and HRT alternatives will be identified as part of Screen 2.

13. Ridership Estimates and Related Issues

General Comment:

How were ridership numbers generated?

Pertains to Specific Comments:

33, 43, 76, 120

Response to Overall Category Comment:

As required by FTA guidance, CTA is working in cooperation with other regional transportation agencies and the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) to develop a regional travel forecasting computer model that can be used to predict ridership for the various alternatives being studied using information on projected population, employment, congestion, and other factors. This computer model is based on other models already used by CMAP for other regional transportation planning purposes. In Screen 2, ridership estimates will be developed for alternative comparisons.

Previous ridership data produced for an earlier Concept Development study (see Topic 2 for more information), prior to the Yellow Line Extension Alternatives Analysis, will be updated in Screen 2, when ridership estimates are generated for current project alternatives.

14. Relationship between the Potential Yellow Line Extension with Other Proposed and Existing Transportation Services / Facilities

General Comment:

Will CTA coordinate with other regional transit providers or the proposed bike path on the existing UPRR right-of-way?

Pertains to Specific Comments:

2, 35, 99

Response to Overall Category Comment:

A key goal of the Yellow Line Extension is to utilize and integrate existing regional transit services to the greatest extent possible. The Yellow Line Extension will be designed to make convenient connections between transit services with which it intersects. In the Alternatives Analysis study, opportunities for connections between the CTA Yellow Line Extension and Pace bus services will be explored. These connection possibilities will be further described and analyzed in Screen 2.

As a part of the Alternatives Analysis process, CTA meets regularly with representatives of Metra, Pace, the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA), the Chicago Department of Transportation, the Illinois Department of Transportation, the Village of Skokie and adjacent municipalities, Cook County, and the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) to promote coordination within the region's transportation network. The CTA is aware of the proposed bike path on the existing UPRR right-of-way and will give consideration to this plan while analyzing alternatives in this corridor.

In order to qualify for federal funding, regional transportation projects must also be included in an official Regional Transportation Plan. Chicago's Regional Transportation Plan is prepared by the CMAP with input from local and state government agencies (including CTA), community organizations, and the general public. The plan is updated regularly and the Yellow Line Extension project is included in the plan. The most recent comprehensive update of the 2030 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) was prepared in 2006 and involved extensive public outreach meetings throughout the region in May and June of 2006. A technical update of the 2030 RTP was also completed earlier this year. Additional information on this plan can be found on CMAP's "Shared Path 2030" web site, <http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/sp2030/sp2030main.aspx>.

Other Specific Comments on this Topic:

Comment:

83. The rail alternative threatens rerouting current Pace connections with Metra and increasing costly competing Pace routes such as #626 to inflate ridership on the proposed extension to more justifiable levels.

Response:

The structure of existing bus routes in the study area may be changed to complement new high-capacity transit service. Depending on the specific route of the Yellow Line Extension, the routes connecting with the current Yellow Line Dempster Street terminal station may be reduced, which would reduce congestion in and around this facility. The objective of these bus service modifications is to improve the schedule reliability, customer convenience and overall travel time. Any proposed changes to project area bus service will be presented at future public meetings as information and for public comment.

Comment:

130. Rail investment should be prioritized, first going to heavily-traveled existing branches, then to other proposed projects which may benefit more customers, such as the proposed Circle Line.

Response:

Every five to six years, the United States Congress enacts legislation that authorizes federal funding for highway, transit, motor carrier, safety, and research programs across the country. This federal support represents the primary source of capital funding for CTA and other transit agencies throughout the U.S.

The current legislation, known as SAFETEA-LU (Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act - A Legacy for Users), authorizes the federal transit and highway programs through 2009. President Bush signed the act into law on August 10, 2005.

The SAFETEA-LU legislation authorized CTA to seek federal New Starts grant support for four new rail lines or line extensions including: the Red Line Extension to 130th Street; the Orange Line Extension to Ford City; the Yellow Line Extension to Old Orchard; and the Circle Line. In order to qualify for New Starts funding, CTA is required to perform comprehensive Alternatives Analysis (AA) studies for each. AA studies for all four projects are currently underway following the same federally mandated process as the Yellow Line Extension study, but addressing the unique transportation needs of their respective study areas.

A key objective of the Federal Transit Administration's AA process is to measure all transit projects from across the nation by the same set of standards. This process ranks projects based on this measurement and not on where they are located. In this way, the benefits and costs of a project can be objectively measured in comparison to all others. Acknowledging that each project has a unique purpose and need, the process allows multiple projects from the same region to be rated highly. It is not unusual for a large region such as Chicago to seek approval for several major transit initiatives at the same time. In the late 1990s, CTA won New Starts funding approval for both the Cermak (Douglas) Branch reconstruction and the Brown Line capacity expansion project at the same time. Metra has also received New Starts funding for multiple projects at the same time. New York City in 2005 had two multi-billion dollar transit projects approved for New Starts funding.

In order to qualify for federal funding, regional transportation projects must also be included in an official Regional Transportation Plan. Chicago's Regional Transportation Plan is prepared by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning² (CMAP) with input from local and state government agencies (including CTA), community organizations, and the general public. The plan is updated regularly and the Yellow Line Extension project is included in the plan. The most recent comprehensive update of the 2030 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) was prepared in 2006 and involved extensive public outreach meetings throughout the region in May and June of 2006. A technical update of the 2030 RTP was also completed earlier this year. Additional information on this plan can be found on CMAP's "Shared Path 2030" Web site <http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/sp2030/sp2030main.aspx>.

15. Potential Yellow Line Extension Parking and Pedestrian / Bicycle Access Facilities

General Comment:

Will there be pedestrian or bike access? Will parking facilities be proposed and where will they be located?

Pertains to Specific Comments:

1, 4, 6, 10, 52, 54, 75, 77, 101, 117

Response to Overall Category Comment:

The Yellow Line Extension project's purpose and need is to improve transportation access to major activity centers and support Skokie's land use plans. In the planning phase, pedestrian and bicycle access to key activity centers will be evaluated in conjunction with each alternative. The CTA will continue to work with the Village of Skokie in subsequent engineering and design phases to ensure that access to the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) is available across all modes.

Parking facilities associated with the proposed transit improvements in the study area are considered along with station locations in Screen 2. The amount of parking to be constructed is determined by forecast station usage. Proposed station locations will be addressed in Screen 2. At that time, station

² CMAP was created in 2006 by the merger of the Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS) and the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission (NIPC).
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location, the area served, and proximity to major arterials and/or highways will determine whether parking is recommended. If parking is determined to be advantageous, a ridership forecast will be completed to determine the number of parking spaces and the type of parking facility required (e.g. parking lot, parking garage).

16. Potential Yellow Line Extension Economic and Environmental Impacts

General Comment:

What will be the economic and environmental impact of the Yellow Line Extension? What will be the noise impacts?

Pertains to Specific Comments:

87, 93, 98, 120, 129, 136

Response to Overall Category Comment:

An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will analyze in detail the social, economic, and environmental consequences and benefits of the proposed Yellow Line Extension. The environmental review process required by the *National Environmental Policy Act* of 1969 (NEPA) and related laws includes environmental impact analyses and the preparation of documentation for public review. Per FTA guidance, the environmental evaluation begins upon completion of the Alternatives Analysis study, and it will result in a detailed written statement on the anticipated environmental impacts of the Yellow Line Extension improvements and the steps that will be taken to address impacts to the community and the natural environment.

Typically, environmental reviews for proposed transit projects address the potential impact areas of air and water quality, noise and vibration, historic and cultural properties, parklands, contaminated lands, displacement of residences and businesses, and community preservation. During the federal environmental review process, the CTA will work concurrently with state and other local agencies to also comply with state and local environmental laws. The environmental review process includes opportunities for public review and comment. See Topic Area 10 for additional information about potential property acquisition and impacts.

Regarding the economic impact of the Yellow Line Extension, FTA guidance requires an economic analysis to be conducted as a part of Screen 2 of the Alternatives Analysis. In general terms, it may be noted that numerous transit studies suggest that transit investments result in economic development. A recently conducted study by the U.S. Department of Transportation, found that for every \$1 billion invested in transit projects, 47,500 jobs are created or sustained. Specific projections for the Yellow Line Extension may be developed in later studies.

Other Specific Comments on Rail Safety:

Comments:

36, 37, 41, 52, 60, 70, 103

Response:

Depending on the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA), guideway and vehicle safety measures will be designed using modern engineering standards. For rail alternatives, this may include grade-separation and/or fencing where appropriate to limit access to infrastructure and system components.

Other Specific Comments on Station and Community Safety:

Comments:

119, 120

Response:

Safety and security are a top priority at the CTA. The CTA works with the City of Chicago and other municipalities served by the CTA to provide plain-clothed and uniformed patrols of system property, in

addition to hired private security guards. Similar safety and security measures will be implemented as part of the extension.

Other Specific Comments on Traffic and Congestion:

Comments:

38, 39, 40, 58, 71, 103, 120, 123, 132

Response:

The Yellow Line Extension project's purpose and need is to improve transportation access to major activity centers and support Skokie's land use plans. In particular, transportation improvements aim to enhance access to the concentration of institutional, employment and retail activity in the Old Orchard area, leverage existing transit infrastructure to provide locally oriented rapid transit service, support local land use and development goals, and to alleviate traffic congestion due to expected growth in Skokie's population and employment.

As part of the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement, the traffic and parking impacts of the proposed transit improvements – at key intersections, at proposed terminal locations, and throughout and beyond the study area – will be evaluated in more detail. Depending on the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA), local bus routes may be reduced or reconfigured. Additionally, if a rail alternative is selected as the LPA, CTA will evaluate the merits of grade separation at major intersections. CTA coordinates with the Illinois Department of Transportation and local municipalities when evaluating traffic issues. Maintaining traffic flow and related efficiencies is a major consideration in CTA's planning of this extension.

17. General Customer Service Questions / Compliments / Complaints

General Comment:

General comments related to CTA and/or CTA service.

Pertains to specific comments:

78, 96, 137

Response to Overall Category Comment:

CTA Customer Service representatives were also in attendance at the public meetings for the Yellow Line Extension and were available to answer specific questions on existing CTA services and to take suggestions for improvements to those services. Many questions submitted to the Yellow Line Extension study team also covered these topics, which are outside the purview of the study itself. The study team notes these questions and comments for the record and has referred them to the CTA Customer Service Department for an independent response and filing through CTA's established Customer Service procedures.

18. Other

General Comment:

This section includes general comments and viewpoints that can be characterized as public input into the study process.

Pertains to specific comments:

5, 21, 23, 24, 25, 26, 79, 90, 92, 94, 96, 97, 137

Response to Overall Category Comment:

These comments do not ask a question or refer to a specific issue, but rather point out general views on the subject, which have been noted. Thank you for your feedback.