

# Chicago Transit Authority

## Red Line Extension Alternatives Analysis Study

### Screen 3 Public Involvement Responses to Public Comments and Questions

31 August 2009

Written questions and comments regarding the Red Line Extension Alternatives Analysis Study were submitted by a variety of individuals and groups from throughout the Chicago region at the study's Screen 3 Public Meetings held on June 3 and 4, 2009. In addition, public comments and questions on Screen 3 were submitted directly to the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) via e-mail and postal mail through June 25, 2009.

All of the questions and comments have been collected and compiled to provide a comprehensive review of the issues 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 may be evaluated and/or reflected in subsequent project phases 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 Screen 3 presentation materials which are posted on CTA's Web site [www.transitchicago.com](http://www.transitchicago.com) (News and Initiatives, Alternatives Analysis Studies).

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 and Timeline**

### **General Comment:**

What is the timing of the Environmental Impact Study, Preliminary Engineering, Final Design, Construction and Operation of the Red Line Extension?

### **Pertains to Specific Comments:**

45, 52, 64, 85, 86, 87, 88

### **Response to Overall Comment Category:**

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 although the EIS and PE can be done concurrently. Initiation of each step is also contingent upon federal approval and 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.

The current Red Line Extension Alternatives Analysis study is being completed in summer 2009, with the adoption of a locally preferred alternative by the Chicago Transit Board. The subsequent project phase, Environmental Impact Study, is projected to begin in fall 2009. A specific completion year depends on factors outside CTA's control, but is expected no earlier than 2016.

### **Other Specific Comments Noted on this Topic:**

#### **Comments:**

30. Will there be public involvement in the Environmental Impact Study? If so, how will that public involvement be conducted?

104. Can additional meetings be scheduled to explain the proposals? In talking to people, most were unaware of the four highlighted proposals in the June 4th meeting. People again and again asked if the extension was going to run down i-57. Although the meetings in June were effective in introducing the analysis, many residents in the effective communities are not informed of the proposals.

#### **Response:**

Yes, the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will have several opportunities for public involvement.

The purpose of the EIS is to provide full and open evaluation of environmental issues and alternatives, and to inform decision-makers and the public of reasonable alternatives that could avoid or minimize adverse impacts and enhance the quality of the environment.

The EIS process begins with Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) publication of a *Notice of Intent* to prepare an EIS in the *Federal Register* along with similar CTA announcements in local newspapers and other media. At this time, a tentative list of alternatives and impacts is established and presented to the public and interested government agencies for comment. This notification is part of *scoping* - the process of affording an early opportunity for the public and agencies to identify potential issues to be addressed in the EIS. Scoping includes the provision of materials describing the project, alternatives, impacts, and any other relevant information known about the proposed undertaking. These materials are distributed to invite early comments, which will be accepted at scoping meetings – anticipated to be held in fall 2009 – and through written comments.

Following scoping, the EIS is prepared in two stages – draft and final. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) provides an opportunity for government agencies and the public to review a proposed

project and alternatives. The principle components of a DEIS include discussion of the following 1) the purpose of and need for action; 2) alternatives, including the proposed action; 3) the affected environment; and 4) environmental consequences. A DEIS must be signed by the FTA Regional Administrator and the authorized official of the local lead or cooperating transit agency. The approved DEIS is then concurrently filed by FTA with the US Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) and distributed by the local lead agency.

After completion of the circulation period, all substantive written comments and the public hearing testimony are addressed and the preparation of a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) begins. The principle components of the FEIS include: 1) identification of a preferred alternative; 2) responses to comments made during the circulation period; 3) commitments to mitigate adverse impacts of the project; 4) evidence of compliance with related environmental statutes, Executive Orders and regulations; and 5) a description of changes that have been made to the project since the DEIS was published. Once the appropriate FTA official has approved the FEIS, it is concurrently filed by FTA with the US Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) for publication of a notification of availability for a 30-day circulation period in the Federal Register and it is distributed and advertised through local media by the local lead agency.

**Comments:**

- 32. Will there be a bidding process for the Preliminary Engineering? If so, when will that process begin?
- 33. Who will compose the Project Management team during the Preliminary Engineering phase? Is there a place for community on the project management team?

**Response:**

CTA anticipates that the Preliminary Engineering (PE) team will be chosen in 2010. There are two steps that must be completed before the PE team will be selected and PE initiated. After the completion of the Alternatives Analysis study, CTA will submit an Application to Enter Preliminary Engineering to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to receive a project rating. First, CTA must receive a favorable rating by FTA to advance to PE. Second, CTA must obtain funding to begin PE. Typically, funding for New Starts projects is obtained at the federal level – more information about funding is provided in Topic Category 8. After these two steps are completed, CTA will procure a consulting team to perform PE services for the Red Line Extension project.

The procurement process will follow standard CTA procurement guidelines, as outlined on the CTA website [www.transitchicago.com](http://www.transitchicago.com) (click on Doing Business, then Procurement Information). Since PE comprises the technical work to develop and design the engineering specifications for the project, this work is not typically scoped to include community participation. However, this work is often performed in conjunction with the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), which allows for extensive community participation to understand potential project impacts and evaluate mitigation strategies. Mitigation strategies developed and approved in the EIS phase are incorporated into PE project designs.

**Comment:**

- 48. Would acquiring space for trains cause a delay in final decision?

**Response:**

At this early stage in the process, it is difficult to predict delays associated with land acquisition. Specific issues such as required land acquisition will be studied in the next steps, Preliminary Engineering and the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement. Required land acquisition typically begins after completion of the Environmental Impact Statement and the issuance of a Record of Decision.

## **2. Relationship of Red Line Extension to Other Proposed Transit Projects**

**General Comment:**

Wouldn't this area be better served by the Metra Electric Gray Line service? Can this extension connect to existing Metra Electric or South Shore services?

**Pertains to Specific Comments:**

18, 19, 27, 55, 62, 70, 71

**Response to Overall Comment Category:**

Various proposals – the Gray Line or the Gold Line -- call for operational changes to increase service frequency on the Metra Electric District Line and improve CTA connections to this facility as well as fare integration between regional transit services. This would terminate at a station in downtown Chicago. It would not have the same connectivity to the CTA rail rapid transit system that provides accessibility to the entire Chicago area that an extension of the CTA Red Line would provide.

Improved Metra Electric Service meets some of the needs of the study area, such as reducing the lengthy transit commute times experienced by many residents of the study area. However, it will not be included as a build alternative in the current Alternatives Analysis because it does not comprehensively address all of the needs of the project, including alleviating the bus and passenger congestion at 95<sup>th</sup> Street Red Line station or reducing travel times of passengers that transfer from bus to CTA rail to access their destination. Additionally, as noted in the Screen 1 analysis (available at [www.transitchicago.com](http://www.transitchicago.com) – click on News and Initiatives, then Alternatives Analysis Studies) commuter rail has several characteristics that are less favorable for the study area than other modes analyzed (such as bus and heavy rail).

There is potential for connection of the proposed Red Line extension to the Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District (NICTD) South Shore Commuter Rail Line in the vicinity of 130<sup>th</sup> Street, where the two lines would be adjacent to each other. This potential connection will be explored in further detail during Preliminary Engineering. A connection between the Red Line Extension and Metra Electric District at Kensington/115<sup>th</sup> Street station is not possible, as the proposed Red Line Extension routing crosses the Metra Electric District Line approximately one-half mile to the south of the Kensington/ 115<sup>th</sup> Street station.

**Other Specific Comments on this Topic:**

**Comments:**

20. Since the money for this project will be included in the general transportation project, what priority will the Red Line extension be given? Is it mainly a matter of getting on the books while other projects are completed?

23. I understand that the CTA as an organization does not consider any of the proposed rail projects. If limited funds are available, what factors will influence where the funds are directed?

**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 130<sup>th</sup> 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 studies for each. Alternatives Analysis studies for all four projects are currently underway following the same federally mandated process as the Red Line Extension study, but addressing the unique transportation needs of their respective study areas.

A key objective of the Federal Transit Administration's Alternatives Analysis 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.

CTA is preparing all of the New Starts projects to be advanced simultaneously from Alternatives Analysis with the selection of Locally Preferred Alternatives in each study area by fall 2009 and has not expressed a priority for any project as they are all intended to address important transportation objectives in their respective study areas.

**Comment:**

77. If CTA acknowledges that 95th/Dan Ryan (Red Line) as it is unsafe why did the Brown Line project and Blue Line projects start first?

**Response:**

CTA uses a variety of factors to prioritize among many worthy projects for which there are limited resources. The Red Line Alternatives Analysis Study has identified deficiencies at the 95<sup>th</sup> Street bus terminal including narrow sidewalks connecting to surrounding neighborhoods, inadequate space within the terminal for passenger circulation and bus maneuvering and frequent presence of pedestrians in the bus drive lanes. These conditions are not desirable because they make transit less attractive and make the terminal less safe. The proposed LPA is intended to address this bus and passenger congestion (among other goals) and prevent conditions from deteriorating in the future.

The Cermak (Douglas) Blue Line Branch reconstruction project, which is now served by Pink Line trains, was prioritized for reconstruction because of the substantially deteriorated condition of track, structure and station facilities that had reached the end of their useful life. Prior to reconstruction, train speeds were slowed to no more than 15 miles per hour over most of the branch to minimize the risk of further damage to the structure or derailment significantly lengthening commute times and depressing ridership. Conditions were so deteriorated CTA considered suspending service, but funds were secured through the New Starts program for reconstruction.

The Brown Line Capacity Expansion project was motivated by the significant ridership growth on the Brown Line over the last decade. In response to increasing rush hour crowding, train frequencies were increased to the maximum possible. As ridership continued to grow, crowding on rush hour trains exceeded CTA loading standards and the capacity expansion project was planned to lengthen platforms to accommodate 8-car trains (from 6 cars). The \$530 million project, now nearing completion, also modernized stations and made them accessible for people with disabilities.

### **3. Alternatives Analyzed**

**General Comment:**

Explain the alternatives that were analyzed.

**Pertains to Specific Comments:**

8, 11, 26, 34, 40, 55, 79, 88, 89, 103, 105

**Response to Overall Comment Category:**

CTA evaluated five alternatives in the Red Line Extension Alternatives Analysis Screen 3, including the No-Build Alternative, two Transportation System Management (TSM) / Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Alternatives on Halsted Street and Michigan Avenue, respectively, and two heavy rail (HRT) alternatives terminating on Halsted Street and adjacent to the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) right-of-way, respectively.

The No-Build Alternative considers the system if no changes are made to transit services in the study area between today and the forecasted year of evaluation, 2030. Existing transit service in the study area includes 22 CTA bus routes and seven Pace bus routes operating on the edge or within the study area, offering extensive north-south and east-west travel options throughout the study area, and primarily

terminating at the 95<sup>th</sup> Street station. The 95<sup>th</sup> Street station includes a bus terminal facility with 20 bus bays.

Next, CTA evaluated two bus alternatives from Screen 2, combining a TSM – a low-cost option – and BRT for evaluation in Screen 3. The first TSM/BRT Alternative is an enhanced bus route from the 95<sup>th</sup> Street station to Halsted Street and 127<sup>th</sup> Street/Vermont Avenue, operating in mixed-traffic on Halsted Street. Bus stop locations are proposed at 103<sup>rd</sup> Street, 111<sup>th</sup> Street, 119<sup>th</sup> Street and 127<sup>th</sup> Street/Vermont Avenue, with park-and-ride facilities at each stop. The second TSM/BRT Alternative is an enhanced bus route from the 95<sup>th</sup> Street station to 130<sup>th</sup> Street via East 95<sup>th</sup> Street, Michigan Avenue, East 127<sup>th</sup> Street, South Indiana Avenue and East 130<sup>th</sup> Street. Bus stop locations are proposed at 103<sup>rd</sup> Street, 111<sup>th</sup> Street, 115<sup>th</sup> Street and 130<sup>th</sup> Street, with park-and-ride facilities at each stop. These alternatives do not propose to use exclusive lanes; however, implementation of transit signal priority at signalized intersections – to increase bus speeds by extending the green light cycle at traffic signals when needed – is proposed along the Halsted Street and Michigan Avenue portions of the respective routes. A fleet of enhanced 60-foot hybrid articulated buses are proposed. Finally, with each of the bus alternatives, expansion of the 95<sup>th</sup> Street terminal – extending the existing bus bays along State and Lafayette Streets approximately 250-feet north to 94<sup>th</sup> Street – to improve circulation and safety is also included.

In addition to the two bus alternatives, two rail alternatives were also evaluated in Screen 3. The first alternative is the Halsted Street HRT elevated alternative. This alternative would depart the current CTA 95<sup>th</sup> Street terminal station and follow the I-57 Expressway median, transitioning to an elevated structure at Halsted Avenue and traveling south on Halsted Street to 127<sup>th</sup> Street/Vermont Avenue. This alternative is 5.0 miles long and has four proposed stations– at 103<sup>rd</sup> Street, 111<sup>th</sup> Street, 119<sup>th</sup> Street, and 127<sup>th</sup> Street/Vermont Avenue – consistent with modern rapid transit station spacing. The second HRT alternative is the UPRR HRT elevated alternative. This alternative would follow the I-57 Expressway as it traveled south from the 95<sup>th</sup> Street terminal station until the UPRR corridor (adjacent to Eggleston Avenue), where it would turn south to follow the corridor to approximately 111<sup>th</sup> Street, and then southeast until it crosses over the Metra Electric District tracks at about 119<sup>th</sup> Street; here, the corridor deviates from the UPRR corridor, continuing southeast at-grade adjacent to the Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District (NICTD) South Shore tracks to the proposed terminal location at 130<sup>th</sup> Street near the I-94 Bishop Ford Freeway. This alternative is 5.3 miles long and has four proposed stations – at 103<sup>rd</sup> Street, 111<sup>th</sup> Street, 115<sup>th</sup> Street, and 130<sup>th</sup> Street.

For each of the proposed rail extension alternatives, an intermediate alternative was also evaluated. The intermediate alternative for the Halsted Street HRT elevated alternative would terminate at the proposed 119<sup>th</sup> Street station – for a total distance of 3.8 miles and three new stations. The intermediate alternative for the UPRR HRT elevated alternative would terminate at the proposed 115<sup>th</sup> Street Station – for a total distance of 3.3 miles and three new stations.

All rail transit alternatives would be powered via an electric third rail, consistent with the existing CTA system and rail cars would be equivalent to those used by the existing fleet. Note that with regard to the UPRR Corridor, CTA and UPRR operate services with incompatible train cars and power systems; therefore, in the proposed UPRR Corridor, CTA would have its own dedicated tracks. The elevated alternative would operate adjacent to existing UPRR freight right-of-way (currently at-grade). All alternatives currently have bus terminal facilities and Park and Ride lots proposed in proximity to each station.

Other recommendations and preferences for potential alternatives, alternative design elements, and alternatives extending beyond the study area were provided on the question/comments cards submitted by the public. Staff will review all suggestions and incorporate in the analysis those that merit further consideration.

**Other Specific Comments on this Topic:**

**Comment:**

25. Can the land east of the UP south of 119th be used to shorten the line & bring it to grade sooner?

**Response:**

Yes, concept plans for the Red Line Extension show that traveling southbound after crossing over the Metra Electric District tracks, the Red Line Extension would be at-grade (street level) adjacent to the NICTD South Shore tracks.

**Comment:**

37. Why are all the trains & buses centered around Halsted?

**Response:**

Within the study area, the majority of north-south existing bus service is located on Halsted Street and Michigan Avenue. These streets have multiple CTA and Pace bus routes operating on them. During Screen 3 of the Alternatives Analysis study, the two Red Line rail extension alternatives that were studied included Halsted Street and the Union Pacific Railroad corridor, which is located to the east of Halsted Street.

**Comments:**

73: Why haven't you considered building the rail line on the I-57 expressway?

74: Why not use Medium of I-57 it would be less destruction to surrounding neighborhoods.

97: The 107 Throop area would be a great second stop on the extension line...

**Response:**

During Screen 1, the I-57 Expressway corridor was analyzed. The I-57 Expressway was one of nine corridors that were examined as part of the Universe of Alternatives. The I-57 Expressway corridor was not recommended for further study in Screen 1 because it was located at the far western edge of the study area and did not address all of the needs of the project, including directly serving population and employment in the study area. Additionally, transit access is more difficult to this corridor due to its location in the median of the expressway. For more information about Screen 1, see the project website at [www.transitchicago.com](http://www.transitchicago.com).

**Comment:**

92. If the rail ended as 115th St wouldn't the likelihood of completing the line be having to go back to this long term drawing board? Another 30 years? Won't this shortchange the prospects for future ridership.

**Response:**

CTA examined the possibility of ending the Red Line Extension at 115<sup>th</sup> Street to see if it would better position the project to compete for Federal Transit Administration New Starts funding by improving its cost-effectiveness and also lowering the overall cost of the project. The Red Line Extension is unlikely to be built without the federal New Starts funding. CTA will continue its discussions with the Federal Transit Administration as it continues through the New Starts process (Environmental Impact Statement, Preliminary Engineering, and Final Design) to determine the terminal location of the Red Line Extension. In addition, the current federal surface transportation bill expires this fall, and the re-authorization has the potential to contain revisions to the New Starts process, including changes as to how projects are rated and funding commitments to the program. These potential changes could impact decisions as to whether to terminate the Red Line at 115<sup>th</sup> Street or 130<sup>th</sup> Street.

If the Red Line Extension were to terminate at 115<sup>th</sup> Street, it is unknown as to when the line could be extended to 130<sup>th</sup> Street. Funding availability will likely be a key factor in the timing. It is anticipated that opening and operating a Red Line Extension to 115<sup>th</sup> Street will result in increased ridership in the corridor, thus strengthening an already strong travel market.

#### **4. Access to Proposed Red Line Extension Stations**

**General Comment:**

How will Union Pacific trains affect access to the red line station? Have you considered pedestrian bridges?

**Pertains to Specific Comments:**

6, 24, 34, 96

**Response to Overall Comment Category:**

For the Union Pacific Railroad heavy rail transit elevated alternative, Union Pacific freight railroad trains may affect access to the Red Line Extension at the proposed 103<sup>rd</sup> Street and 111<sup>th</sup> Street stations. At these two stations areas, the Union Pacific Railroad right-of-way has approximately 25-30 trains per day using the at-grade corridor, interrupting street traffic and access to potential Red Line Extension stations. Station design options that facilitate or improve access, such as the inclusion of pedestrian bridges at these proposed station locations, will be analyzed in the subsequent Preliminary Engineering project phase (see Topic Category 12 for more information).

At the proposed Red Line Extension 115th Street/Michigan Avenue station, the Union Pacific Railroad is grade separated, so that access to the Red Line Extension station can be maintained by using Michigan Avenue, which passes underneath the Union Pacific Railroad.

## **5. Proposed Red Line Extension Operations and Yard**

**General Comment:**

Is a rail yard included in the alternatives, even the shortened alternatives? How does a new yard site factor into the evaluation of alternatives, including cost-effectiveness?

**Pertains to Specific Comments:**

39, 65

**Response to Overall Comment Category:**

Yard capacity is an important concern when planning for rail line expansion and additional vehicle requirements. Analysis suggests that current CTA yard capacity is sufficient for CTA needs, including additional cars that would be added with the proposed Red Line Extension.

Three rail yards are accessible from the Red Line and considered in a yard capacity analysis. Howard Yard (at the north end of the current Red Line) has a practical operational capacity of 254 cars, while 98<sup>th</sup> Street Yard (at the south end of the current Red Line) has a capacity of 234 cars and Linden Yard (at the north end of the Purple Line) has a capacity of 76 cars, for a combined total of 564 cars. The current Rail Car Assignment (as of Spring 2009) provides for 356 cars to be assigned to the Red Line, 88 cars assigned to the Purple Line and 6 cars assigned to Yellow Line service. The total car assignment for the three lines is 450 cars. Because the Red Line operates 24 hour service, 48 Red Line "road cars" will be in service at all times, resulting in a normal maximum total of 402 cars that might be stored in the three yards at any given time. This would indicate that the existing total yard capacity of 564 cars is sufficient to cover the current maximum storage requirement.

Several other factors are also considered when evaluating total yard capacity. Cars may not be evenly distributed between yards, based on the cars that must be available from each yard to meet the daily service requirements or peak period requirements for each line, plus car requirements for maintenance and spares. For the yards/shops to function effectively, the yards should not be filled to capacity. For this study, it is assumed that for efficient operation, yards should not exceed more than 90 percent of their maximum capacity. These factors, combined with the assumption of an additional 78 cars for the Red Line Extension (and additional two cars for the Yellow Line Extension), indicates that the combined Red, Yellow, and Purple Line yard capacity must be at least 482 cars, which is still less than the current maximum combined 564 car capacity of the Howard, 95<sup>th</sup> and Linden Yards.

Since yard capacity is not a constraining factor for advancing the Red Line Extension, a new yard is not included in the project plans or cost assumptions for the Red Line Extension. Therefore, additional yard costs do not weigh into cost-effectiveness analyses. However, a potential yard site has been identified and may be pursued using non New Starts funding.

One additional factor to consider when evaluating yard capacity is associated maintenance shop capacity and condition. The 98<sup>th</sup> Street Shop facility is currently 40 years old and at the end of its useful life. CTA has identified replacement of this facility as a state-of-good repair need. While the existing shop can be

replaced at its current site, one of the advantages of extending the rail line is that it does allow CTA to consider other sites, which may have additional benefits, for a replacement location. Options to shorten the proposed heavy rail alternatives limit available options for a new yard site; however, if shortened options are considered and alternate shop and yard sites are pursued, non-revenue track (at a cost of up to about \$100 million) could be added to the shop replacement cost to extend the line to proposed maintenance locations.

**Other Specific Comments Noted on this Topic:**

**Comment:**

28. What is the travel time 130th to Madison?

**Response:**

Travel time on the proposed Union Pacific Railroad heavy rail transit elevated alternative from the 130<sup>th</sup> Street station to the Monroe Street station is estimated to be 40 minutes.

**6. Proposed Red Line Extension Parking Facilities**

**General Comment:**

Describe the park and ride facilities including locations, fees, and number of parking spaces proposed.

**Pertains to Specific Comments:**

4, 56, 63, 88, 95

**Response to Overall Comment Category:**

At this stage in the Red Line Extension project development, general assumptions about park-and-ride facilities were made so that estimate costs for these facilities could be included in total capital and operating cost estimates. However, details for proposed park-and-ride facilities have not yet been finalized. The subsequent project phases, Preliminary Engineering and Environmental Impact Statement, will evaluate land availability and impacts of proposed station locations and adjacent facilities and will provide design requirements for park-and-ride at each station. For the Screen 3 analysis, 1500 total park-and-ride spaces were assumed to be distributed among each of the four stations (or three stations for the shortened alternatives) for each heavy rail transit alternative. The greatest park-and-ride demand (and availability) is assumed at the proposed terminal station for each alternative.

The Chicago Transit Board is responsible for setting the parking rates. Current parking rates for CTA park-and-ride facilities are between \$4 and \$5 (except for longer-term parking at Rosemont and Cumberland).

**Other Specific Comments Noted on this Topic:**

**Comment:**

26. Why not use MWRDGC vacant land at 130th for park & ride?

**Response:**

Subject to ongoing discussions with the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRDGC), CTA is considering property in the vicinity of 130<sup>th</sup> Street for a station and park-and-ride facilities. The potential use of this land will be evaluated in the next steps, Preliminary Engineering and the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement.

**Comment:**

110. I strongly agree with the choice of the UP alignment, but I am troubled by the inclusion of park and ride at all of the stations. If this line is intended to revitalize the areas around the stations at 103rd, 111th, and 115th, parking lots will work against that. Plus- why would we want to increase car traffic around these neighborhood-oriented stations? Better would be to concentrate parking at 130th/Bishop Ford Espy where there would be easy onto access. If access from I-57 is desired, perhaps, a parking deck could be

built over the expressway just south of 95th St, with dedicated lanes to/from I-57 and a direct pedestrian connection to the 95th Street Red Line Station.

**Response:**

There are no existing CTA park-and-ride facilities on the Dan Ryan branch of the Red Line. The Red Line Extension provides an opportunity to serve auto access to the Red Line. Although the Red Line Extension park-and-ride facilities have not been sized yet, it is anticipated that the majority of the parking will be provided at the 130<sup>th</sup> Street terminal station. In the subsequent project phases, the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement and Preliminary Engineering, the Red Line Extension station park-and-ride facilities will be located and sized, and traffic impacts of these park-and-ride facilities will be evaluated. The construction of a park-and-ride facility over the Dan Ryan Expressway on the south side of 95<sup>th</sup> Street was not considered for the Red Line Extension project due to high capital costs and community concerns.

## **7. Evaluation Criteria Used in the Alternatives Analysis Study**

**General Comment:**

41. The social and economic benefit factor for the UP Route should be higher, against your heavy rail measurement. Can a review of factors be re-examined prior to June 18th?

**Response:**

The Screen 3 analysis of social factors reveals some differentiation between the Halsted and UPRR alternatives. The UPRR alternative is higher than the Halsted alternative in percentage of population under 18, poverty-status and zero-car households. Beyond these factors, all the alternatives are similar as previously analyzed in Screen 2, with approximately the same total population and employment (both now and in 2030), and approximately the same percentages of minority population (all being much higher than Cook County as a whole), population age 64 and over, and population with a mental, physical, or sensory disability. No alternative significantly stands out to be better or worse than any other alternative with regards to social factors, and each adequately serves poverty, minority, youth, senior, and disabled populations as well as zero-car households and poverty-status populations (as designated by the 2000 US Census). Because of this lack of differentiation, all alternatives receive a neutral comparative social factor rating.

## **8. Funding of Red Line Extension Construction and Operations**

**General Comment:**

How will the construction and operation of the Red Line Extension be funded? Is CTA seeking matching funds?

**Pertains to Specific Comments:**

14, 16, 20, 22, 72

**Response to Overall Comment Category:**

Two types of funding are needed for the extension – operating funds and capital funds.

CTA's operating budget supports day-to-day service delivery on its bus and rail system and determines the frequency and hours of service offered. Approximately half of CTA's operating budget comes from customer fares and revenue generated from advertising, concessions and other sources. The other half comes from regional sales taxes, real estate transfer taxes, and matching funds from the State of Illinois. Once the Red Line Extension is built and operational, funds to operate the system are anticipated to be consistent with funding mechanisms that support CTA's other bus and rail transit services.

Meanwhile, CTA has initiated this Alternatives Analysis study for the Red Line Extension as a first step towards obtaining capital funding for the project through the Federal Transit Administration's "New Starts"

grant program.<sup>1</sup> This program provides funding for major public transit infrastructure projects throughout the U.S. through a highly competitive process. These are discretionary funds that are only available for system expansions and do not compete with federal funds that CTA receives for capital maintenance (or state of good repair) needs.

Upon successfully advancing through Alternatives Analysis, Environmental Impact Statement, and Preliminary Engineering, a project may receive a Full Funding Grant Agreement (FFGA) from the federal government. The FFGA can provide federal funds for up to 80 percent of a project's capital cost including Final Design, although typically project sponsors request 50 percent or less to increase the competitiveness of their projects. Other non-federal funds (in Illinois, these have traditionally been state funds) will comprise the remainder of capital funding. It is possible to seek alternative sources of federal and non-federal funding for the project – such as private sector funding, where available through partnerships or other agreements – 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.

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. 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.

At the present time, CTA has limited funding to begin the subsequent Environmental Impact Statement project phase; however, no funding has been identified for completion of the New Starts process.

**Other Specific Comments on this Topic:**

**Comment:**

45. Who was funded this transportation surveys and how much did they cost?

**Response:**

The Red Line Extension Alternatives Analysis Study cost \$1.8 million; funding was appropriated for the study by the U.S. Congress through the Federal Transit Administration's 5339 Alternatives Analysis grant program.

**Comments:**

50: Does this extension depend on the stimulus money from the state to complete?

75: Will the Red Line Extension project get any money from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act? If so how will that stimulus money effect phases and time-line for project?

**Response:**

CTA did receive funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA); however that funding had very strict requirements. The objective of this funding was to get people working right away, and was only applicable to projects that were "shovel-ready," or had completed final design and were ready for construction. As discussed in Topic Category 1, there are five formal project phases for the Red Line Extension project, including Alternatives Analysis, Environmental Impact Statement, Preliminary Engineering, Final Design, and Construction. Unfortunately, this project still has several planning and design steps before construction, so stimulus funding from the ARRA was not applicable to the Red Line Extension project.

CTA used available ARRA funding to purchase new buses, allowing CTA to replace older buses that are more than 12 years old, which is the life expectancy of a bus. Additionally, CTA was able to put people to work right away replacing ties in the rail system and making other facility improvements. So while the ARRA funding was put to good use, it was not available for this project because it had to be spent in such a short time frame.

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<sup>1</sup> 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 Orange Line to Ford City, extending the Yellow Line to Old Orchard Road, and constructing the Circle Line.

**Comment:**

79. If funding is not available for the red line extension, what alternative plan is in place to relieve congestion at the 95th Street station?

**Response:**

CTA is an aging transit system and has a large state of good repair funding need, including replacement of buses and railcars, system improvements to electric, signal and communication systems, track structure and facility repairs, and other miscellaneous needs. State of good repair needs are traditionally funded through federal formula and state funding sources designated for capital improvements and investments. CTA's state of good repair needs are currently estimated at nearly \$7 billion.

If funding is not available for the Red Line Extension, capital improvements at the 95<sup>th</sup> Street Station would need to be prioritized against other systemwide state of good repair needs and funded through the federal formula and state funding sources designated for this type of investment. As described in the TSM alternative, expansion of the bus facility at 95<sup>th</sup> Street to accommodate existing demand would cost approximately \$72 million.

## **9. Alternatives Analysis Public Involvement Process and Format**

**General Comment:**

What is the public involvement process? Does the public involvement process for the Red Line Extension Alternatives Analysis study allow individuals to comment on the options?

**Pertains to Specific Comments:**

13, 21, 29, 31, 77, 104

**Response to Overall Category Comment:**

Public comments are collected through CTA public outreach for each screen of the Alternatives Analysis Study. CTA participates in individual stakeholder meetings as necessary to discuss options and listen to individual stakeholder concerns. Additionally, CTA hosts community stakeholder meetings with representatives of various community groups throughout the study area. We also have met or offered to meet with city, county, state and federal elected officials in the study area and surrounding communities. Meetings also included faith-based organizations, other community and commerce 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 for future project phases, please contact Darud Akbar, CTA Government and Community Relations at [dakbar@transitchicago.com](mailto:dakbar@transitchicago.com).

Public comments are also solicited at the public involvement meetings. The public involvement process for the Red Line Extension Alternatives Analysis study included two public involvement meetings at the conclusion of Screen 1, Screen 2 and Screen 3/LPA analyses. Note that for each set of Screening meetings, material presented was identical. The Screen 1 meetings were held at Chicago State University and West Pullman Public Library. The Screen 2 meetings were held at the West Pullman Historic Visitors Center and the Woodson Regional Public Library. The Screen 3 meetings were held at Olive-Harvey College and the Woodson Regional Public Library. CTA's goal in emphasizing written questions and comments has been to ensure everyone's thoughts are collected and reviewed. During the outreach meeting, some of these comments are addressed; however, public comments were accepted for three weeks after the outreach meetings. 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.

The comments received during the public outreach process can and do shape the development of project alternatives. For example, CTA considered the strong preference of public comments in favor of the Union Pacific Railroad heavy rail transit alternative as one criteria in the evaluation and recommendation of a Locally Preferred Alternative in the Screen 3 evaluation process. Additionally, as noted in Topic Category 10, there will be additional opportunities for public involvement in subsequent project phases, including the subsequent Environmental Impact Statement phase.

After the first public meeting for each of the three Screening phases, the presentation, technical boards and maps discussing the screening analysis – including the screening process, evaluation criteria, and analysis results and recommendations – were posted on the CTA website at [www.transitchicago.com](http://www.transitchicago.com) (News and Initiatives, Alternatives Analysis Studies, Red Line Extension). As noted above, responses to each written comment collected during the outreach process are addressed in this document, which is also available publicly on the CTA website, by email or in hard copy.

## **10. Potential Red Line Extension Economic and Environmental Impacts**

### **General Comment:**

What will be the economic and environmental impact of the Red Line Extension? How and when will the analysis be conducted? Does it evaluate equity issues or include an environmental justice analysis?

### **Pertains to Specific Comments:**

1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 9, 10, 30, 48, 51, 53, 57, 60, 61, 66, 67, 68, 69, 78, 91, 93, 94, 102, 103, 105, 110, 111

### **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 Red Line Extension. The environmental review process required by the *National Environmental Policy Act* of 1969 (NEPA) and related laws include environmental impact analyses and the preparation of documentation for public review. Per Federal Transit Administration (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 Red 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 – including environmental justice. 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 specific comment sections below for more details on particular impacts.

### **Other Specific Comments regarding Noise and Vibration Impacts:**

#### **Comments:**

3, 93

#### **Response:**

Noise and vibration impacts will be measured according to FTA guidance described in the document “Transit Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment” (FTA-VA-90-1003-06). This assessment includes monitoring existing noise levels along the corridor and using computer models to predict the change in noise levels associated with the extension for residents and other sensitive noise receptors along the corridor. Where noise impacts are predicted to exceed certain thresholds, mitigation strategies will be developed. Mitigation strategies could include rail vehicle measures (vehicle skirts, undercar absorption, and resilient or damped wheels), and guideway measures (sound barriers, rail lubrication on sharp curves, and ballasted track).

**Other Specific Comments regarding Property Acquisition:**

**Comments:**

3, 48, 51, 57, 66, 68, 69, 78, 94, 102, 103, 105

**Response:**

The recommended locally preferred alternative, the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) alignment would be located adjacent to the east or west edge of the UPRR right-of-way (ROW). The width of the UPRR ROW ranges from 65 to 135 feet; however, a 50-foot separation distance between the Red Line Extension and the UPRR tracks for safety purposes would require property acquisition from a combination of public, residential, commercial, and Union Pacific properties. Preliminary analysis in Screen 3 determined that both the east and west alignment options for this alternative (discussed in more detail in Topic Category 12) would include between 100-140 property acquisitions or displacements, which will be studied in much greater detail in the subsequent project phase. The Environmental Impact Statement phase will study potential impacts, including community preservation, to both determine the alignment option that minimizes impacts and propose mitigation measures.

Public acquisition of private property is governed by federal and local laws, including the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act. 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. Many highway and transit projects require relocations. For example, the CTA's recent Brown Line Expansion Project required some relocations. Furthermore, if relocations or other environmental impacts are found to be too objectionable for alignments adjacent to the Union Pacific Railroad right-of-way, then the Halsted Street alternative for the Red Line Extension could also be examined.

**Other Specific Comments regarding Business Impacts and Economic Development:**

**Comments:**

1, 2, 3, 9, 53, 110, 111

**Response:**

The Red Line Extension is anticipated to support economic development in the study area, especially in the vicinity of the four new stations. The extension will improve access to these areas, including job access for workers and result in greater foot traffic for retail development.

For example, CTA has been coordinating with the City of Chicago Department of Community Development to secure an easement for a potential station at the site of a proposed grocery store and other shopping development near 115<sup>th</sup> Street and South Michigan Avenue. The recommended locally preferred alternative would provide access to the proposed development and underscores the types of benefits that can be achieved from coordinated transit and city planning. These types of economic development benefits will be further evaluated in the subsequent Environmental Impact Statement project phase.

For business relocation impacts, see comments regarding Property Acquisition (also in Topic Category 10).

**Other Specific Comments regarding Jobs:**

**Comment:**

10, 61, 67

**Response:**

CTA will continue to work with all stakeholder groups to provide information and opportunities for all qualified applicants. All contract procurement will follow CTA's competitive bidding requirements open to all qualified firms. CTA has an established procurement process that works with disadvantaged business enterprises under the Illinois Unified Certification Program. This project will follow the same procurement process as other CTA projects. More information about CTA's competitive bidding requirements is available on the CTA web site at [www.transitchicago.com](http://www.transitchicago.com). In addition, CTA is working with the Mayor's

Office of Workforce Development to ensure that training and jobs access will be available to support the construction of the proposed Red Line Extension.

**Other Specific Comments regarding Safety and Security:**

**Comment:**

5, 7

**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 at stations and onboard transit vehicles.

During subsequent detailed design phases, particular attention will be devoted to physical security measures than can be incorporated into the design including CCTV monitoring, lighting, vandal-resistant materials, and clear sightlines.

**11. Potential Red Line Extension Impacts on Existing CTA and Pace Services**

**General Comment:**

How will communities beyond the potential extension (south, east or west) be served, depending on which alternative is selected?

**Pertains to Specific Comments:**

8, 35, 49, 54, 59

**Response to Overall Comment Category:**

The Red Line Extension heavy rail alternatives will result in shortened feeder bus rides, including to residents in the south and southeastern portion of the study area. East-west feeder buses in the study area and beyond via 103<sup>rd</sup>, 111<sup>th</sup>, 115<sup>th</sup>, 119<sup>th</sup>, and 127<sup>th</sup>/130<sup>th</sup> would provide access to a Red Line Extension heavy rail alternative. In addition, the proposed stations on either Red Line Extension heavy rail alternative would have park-and-ride facilities, which are not available on the existing Red Line Dan Ryan branch.

If the Red Line Extension extends to 115<sup>th</sup> Street, instead of 130<sup>th</sup> Street, bus service would be provided from the southern portion of the study area, including Altgeld Gardens, to the new Red Line Extension 115<sup>th</sup>/Michigan station. These feeder bus trips to the 115<sup>th</sup>/Michigan station would be over two and one-half miles shorter than going to the 95<sup>th</sup> Street station.

**Specific Comments on this Topic:**

**Comments:**

36. How will bus services be distributed among the new train station?

47. What would the station at 130th St (UPRR) be connected to? (Bus-Access to suburbs BRT?)

**Response:**

Routes that currently go east-west along 103<sup>rd</sup>, 111<sup>th</sup>, 115<sup>th</sup> or 119<sup>th</sup> Streets would be reconfigured to serve new proposed rail station locations on those streets, instead of traveling north to 95<sup>th</sup> Street Station. Also buses coming from the south, including Pace buses from the south suburbs, would also connect at intermediate stations instead of traveling to 95<sup>th</sup> Street Station before connecting with the Red Line. The goal of service reconfigurations to bus routes would be to improve travel times by reducing time spent on buses and at the 95<sup>th</sup> Street bus terminal and facilitate a faster transfer to rail. In summary, bus routes considered for reconfiguration include CTA Routes 9, 30, 34, 103, 106, 108, 112, and 119, and Pace Routes 352 and 359.

The Red Line Extension 130<sup>th</sup> Street station would include park-and-ride facilities for automobile access. It is anticipated that CTA bus Routes 30 South Chicago and 34 South Michigan, and Pace bus route 348 Riverdale Connector will serve a proposed Red Line Extension 130<sup>th</sup> Street station.

In addition, CTA and Pace regularly review existing bus service for improvements and will continue to do so while the Red Line Extension project progresses through the federal New Starts grant process, which includes several phases (see Topic Category 1 for more information about the New Starts process). Opportunities to make changes to bus service between now and the completion of the Red Line Extension will include public input before any changes are implemented permanently.

**Comment:**

40. Similar to your presentation on the Heavy Rail findings, improvement to the 95th St station need to be considered to your findings for the UP Route and its needs to address overuse at the 95th St station.

**Response:**

The Red Line Extension will relieve congestion at the 95<sup>th</sup> Street Station by shortening and re-routing several CTA and Pace bus routes that currently serve the 95<sup>th</sup> Street Station to serve the proposed Red Line Extension intermediate and new terminal stations. Buses that currently serve the 95<sup>th</sup> Street Station that are proposed to be shortened to terminals at new Red Line Extension stations include CTA Routes 103 – West 103<sup>rd</sup> Street, 106 – East 103<sup>rd</sup> Street, 111 – Pullman/111<sup>th</sup>/115<sup>th</sup>, 119 – Michigan/119<sup>th</sup>, and Pace bus routes 348 – Riverdale Connector, 352 – Halsted, and 359 – Robbins/S. Kedzie. These bus re-routings will result in the reduction of current 95<sup>th</sup> Street station bus terminal congestion, both in terms of the number of bus vehicles serving the station, a reduction in passenger-bus conflicts as passengers walk from their bus drop-off/pick-up locations to the station house, and the total number of passengers on the station platform.

**Comment:**

90. Would the extension eliminate the "back up" that generally occurs from 69th to 87th St. from time-to-time especially during the rush hours? Is this caused by limited space in train yard?

**Response:**

Today, Red Line trains approaching 95<sup>th</sup> Street station are often delayed outside the station because trains are occupying both terminal tracks. This delay is not a result of insufficient capacity in the rail yard, but is an indication of a rail terminal station that has reached or is exceeding capacity. CTA seeks to manage these delays by minimizing the time trains spend laying over at the 95<sup>th</sup> Street platform and returning to service. Ideally, the 95<sup>th</sup> Street terminal station would be configured to have three tracks with two island platforms similar to terminals at the Orange Line or O'Hare Blue Line, which offers an additional track to store trains and prepare trains for a return trip. With the expressway on either side of the tracks, limited right-of-way width does not allow for this design. The extension will allow for a modern station configuration to be constructed, which should minimize or eliminate delays approaching the new terminal station.

## **12. Issues to be Addressed in Preliminary Engineering**

### **General Comment:**

Will green technologies or environmental engineering be used? Will pedestrian access to stations adjacent to the UPRR be provided? Will the UPRR extension be on the east or west side of the UPRR right-of-way? What station amenities may be included in station design?

### **Pertains to Specific Comments:**

17, 34, 64, 94, 95, 96

### **Response to Overall Comment Category:**

A number of comments received include suggestions for detailed project design elements. These comments are noted and will be evaluated during Preliminary Engineering.

## **13. Statements of Support or Opposition of the Extension**

### **General Comment:**

Statements of support or opposition to the extension and the locally preferred alternative presented were provided on the question/comment cards submitted by the public. CTA staff will review statements of support or opposition to the extension; other suggestions will be considered for incorporation into the analysis as appropriate.

### **In Support:**

15, 38, 42, 43, 44, 46, 54, 58, 76, 81, 82, 83, 84, 95, 98, 99, 100, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111 (includes 512-signature petition in support of recommended locally preferred alternative)

### **In Opposition:**

101

### **Support for Other Alternatives:**

105

## **14. Other**

### **General Comment:**

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

### **Pertains to Specific Comment:**

80

### **Response to Overall Comment Category:**

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.

CTA Customer Service representatives were in attendance at the public meetings for the Red Line Extension and were available to answer specific questions on existing CTA services and to take suggestions for improvements to those services. Any questions submitted to the Red Line Extension study team that covered customer service topics were outside the purview of this study itself. The study team notes these questions and comments for the record and refers them to the CTA Customer Service Department for an independent response and filing through CTA's established Customer Service procedures.