

Chicago Transit Authority Orange Line Extension Alternatives Analysis Study

Screen 1 Public Involvement Responses to Public Comments and Questions

20 October 2008

Written questions and comments regarding the Orange 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 19, 2008 at Ford City Mall in Chicago. 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 9, 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:

78, 85

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 Orange Line Extension project is currently conducting its Alternatives Analysis study. The Orange 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, 3 potential corridors and 3 alignments that should be studied further. Screen 2 will further refine these corridors, technologies and alignments. In the next screen potential station locations, vehicles and alignments 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. Overall Orange Line Extension Project Timeline, Purpose and Need

General Comment:

What is the timeline of the project?

Pertains to specific comments:

18, 23, 28, 46, 77, 78, 79, 80, 98

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 Orange Line Extension project's "purpose and need" is to improve transportation access and enhance opportunity for economic development within the study area. In particular, transportation improvements are needed to reduce the significant bus and passenger congestion at CTA's existing Midway Airport Orange Line terminal station; better accommodate growth in employment opportunities along Cicero Avenue and air travel at Midway Airport since the opening of the Orange Line in 1993; reduce lengthy bus trip times to access the Midway Airport Orange Line terminal station from neighborhoods south and southwest of Midway Airport; and alleviate traffic congestion due to expected growth in the study area population and employment. Extending Orange Line transit service south of Midway Airport is intended to stimulate economic development and enhance job opportunities by improving access to, within, and beyond the study area and shortening transit travel times through faster and more direct transit service.

The Orange 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 each alternative 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 Orange 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:

96: We were told that Ford City Mall will shut down in 3 yrs. So why are you extending transportation to a closed mall?

Response:

The purpose and need for transportation improvements in the study area extend beyond serving the Ford City Mall. Specifically, transportation improvements are needed to reduce the significant bus and passenger congestion at CTA's existing Midway Airport Orange Line terminal station; better accommodate tremendous growth in employment opportunities along Cicero Avenue and air travel at Midway Airport since the opening of the Orange Line in 1993; reduce lengthy bus trip times to access the Midway Airport Orange Line terminal station from neighborhoods south and southwest of Midway Airport; and alleviate traffic congestion due to expected growth in the study area population and employment.

Additionally, CTA maintains relationships with several stakeholders in the study area, including the representatives of Ford City Mall. The CTA met with Ford City Mall to discuss possible alternative alignments that may be adjacent to mall property. At this time, CTA is not aware of any plans to close the Ford City Mall.

3. Orange Line Extension Study Area

General Comments:

Why is the study area so small? Will future development extend further south or west?

Pertains to specific comments:

62, 88, 89, 107

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 Orange Line Extension study area is bounded by the current terminus of the existing CTA Orange Line at Midway Airport / 59th Street (5900S) on the north, 79th Street (7900S) on the south, Laramie Avenue (5200W) on the west, and Pulaski Road (4000W) on the east. The study area is one and a half (1.5) miles east-to-west and approximately two and a half (2.5) miles north-to-south. These boundaries define an area with numerous opportunities for improving transit connections and growing transit market share. A key goal of the Orange Line Extension is to improve transportation access and enhance opportunities for economic development. In particular, transportation improvements are needed to reduce the significant bus and passenger congestion at CTA's existing Midway Airport Orange Line terminal station; better accommodate tremendous growth in employment opportunities along Cicero Avenue and air travel at Midway Airport since the opening of the Orange Line in 1993; reduce lengthy bus trip times to access the Midway Airport Orange Line terminal station from neighborhoods south and southwest of Midway Airport; and alleviate traffic congestion due to expected growth in the study area population and employment. Extending Orange Line transit service south of Midway Airport is intended to stimulate economic development and enhance job opportunities by improving access to, within, and beyond the study area and shortening 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 or west will be considered in Screen 2 in conjunction with possible alignments of the guideway terminal.

4. Alignments (Corridors) Analyzed

General Comment:

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

Pertains to specific comments:

1, 2, 8, 33, 40, 41, 42, 43, 45, 48, 49, 50, 52, 54, 61, 87, 95, 102, 104, 107

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) Cicero Avenue Corridor, one of the major north-south arterials in the study area. Cicero Avenue is a wide street with six lanes of traffic and a median. The corridor attracts heavy traffic and truck volumes and includes a concentration of retail stores and hotels supporting Midway Airport. 2) The next corridor is the Belt Railway/Cicero Avenue Corridor that, similar to the existing Orange Line would be an extension of rapid transit service down the existing but underutilized Belt Railway until the south end of the Belt Railway Yard, and then transitioning west to Cicero Avenue. 3) The Belt Railway/Kostner Avenue Corridor is similar to the Belt Railway/Cicero Avenue Corridor, but at the south end of the Belt Railway Yard, would then transition east to Kostner

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Avenue. 4) The final corridor is the Pulaski Avenue Corridor, another north-south corridor on the east end of the study area. Both the Cicero Avenue and Pulaski Avenue Corridors are currently served by existing bus routes.

Other Specific Comments Noted on this Topic:

Comment:

84. Why was the Pulaski Road Corridor eliminated from further evaluation?

Response:

The evaluation process used for the Orange Line Extension Alternatives Analysis includes two screens. Both screens apply criteria to a decreasing number of potential transportation investments until a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) is determined. The first screen – presented at the Orange Line Extension outreach meeting in August 2008 – is primarily qualitative, while the second screen – likely to be completed in Spring 2009 – will be primarily quantitative. The first screen included two steps.

In Screen 1 Step 1, the Alternatives Analysis began with identifying a “universe” of alternatives—all of the conceivable transit service improvements that may address the purpose and need for the project within the study area. These alternatives included a wide array of transit vehicle technologies, four potential corridors through the study area, and four possibilities for vertical profiles (elevated, trench, subway, and at-grade). This universe of alternatives was evaluated in Screen 1 to identify a shortlist of specific technologies, corridors, and profiles that may best satisfy the project’s goals and objectives.

In Screen 1 Step 2, the transit vehicle technologies were evaluated for study area suitability according to the length of commute, typical station spacing, operating speed and system applicability. Simultaneously, the corridors through the study area were evaluated according to social factors (land use, neighborhoods and communities, and population access) and transportation factors (system usage and accessibility). Next, in combination with possible vertical profiles, the corridors and technologies that were found to be suitable to the study area were then 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.

For more information on the Screen 1 evaluation criteria or evaluation results of each alternative, please see the detailed summaries available for review on the Screen 1 presentation boards, which are available for download at the CTA’s website www.chicagotransit.com as noted in the introduction to this document.

The Pulaski Road Corridor was eliminated because it did not address the purpose and need of the project as well as other corridors. Specifically, the Pulaski Road Corridor has fewer significant activity centers and opportunities for connecting with existing transit routes than other corridors.

5. Transit Vehicle Technologies (Modes) Analyzed

General Comment:

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

Pertains to Specific Comments:

1, 2, 39, 104

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 Orange 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, two different options in terms of profile will be considered, including elevated and in-trench. HRT and BRT technologies will be further evaluated in Screen 2.

Other Specific Comments on this Topic:

Comments:

- 58. What would be the cost of building a bus rapid transit system as opposed to a building a heavy rail system?
- 59. What is the cost difference between the bus transit and rail transit?

Response:

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) along with Heavy Rail Transit (HRT) are the two technologies that, based upon the analysis, will be brought forward into the next planning and evaluation phase. While BRT can utilize separate lanes, station construction, special signalization, and other infrastructure, BRT within this study will be confined to at-grade (or in-street) operations. This reduces the infrastructure requirements -- and costs relative to HRT -- as confirmed by several BRT services in operation throughout the U.S. More specific cost estimates will be developed prior to the selection of a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA).

Screen 1 findings recommend BRT alternatives to operate on Cicero Avenue at-grade. HRT is recommended to be carried forward to further evaluate its operation along the Belt Railway/Cicero Avenue and Belt Railway/Kostner Avenue corridors along an elevated right-of-way or in trench. Many factors in addition to cost will be evaluated in the consideration and eventual selection of the mode best suited for the projected level of ridership, including the appropriateness for the corridor, environmental compatibility, traffic impacts, safety, and visual impacts. Positive impacts will be identified as well, such as the anticipated positive impacts on community and commercial development and expanded employment opportunities.

Comment:

- 81. How would the Bus Rapid Transit system work? Would it take up a lane on the street?

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 efficiently 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 that operates at street level, or at-grade, can operate in the middle of a roadway, by taking an existing lane, using parking lanes during dedicated periods, or by adding a lane and operating on the side of a roadway. The specific at-grade alternatives for BRT have not yet been determined and will be developed in conjunction with Screen 2. CTA will coordinate with the Illinois Department of Transportation when evaluating this issue. Maintaining traffic flow and related efficiencies is a major consideration in CTA's planning of this extension. The effect of a BRT alternative on existing road capacity will continue to be a primary consideration when planning and designing route alignments.

6. Proposed Orange Line Extension Stations

General Comment:

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

Pertains to Specific Comments:

11, 43, 52, 53, 61, 63, 64, 94, 95, 107

Response to Overall Category Comment:

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

7. Proposed Orange Line Extension Operations

General Comment:

How will the service operate? What will be the fare?

Pertains to Specific Comments:

67, 70, 75, 76, 99, 108

Response to Overall Category Comment:

At this time, specific operating hours, fares, and other operational issues associated directly with the Orange Line Extension have not been determined. These operating issues will be assessed throughout subsequent preliminary and final engineering studies and through construction. It is expected, however, that any new CTA service will be generally consistent with current CTA operating conditions at the time of opening of any new transit improvement to provide customers with frequent and reliable travel options. Any new CTA service and associated facilities would be consistent with American with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements.

Other Specific Comments on this Topic:

Comment:

87. If the Kostner Corridor if selected will there be enough room for storage of the trains (train yards) or will homes further south be in the way for a train storage yard?

Response:

There is enough capacity at yard north of Orange Line Midway Airport terminal station to accommodate the storage of additional trains. A new yard facility is not anticipated in conjunction with this extension project; however, operating details will be evaluated in further detail during the subsequent Screen 2 of the Alternatives Analysis.

8. Potential Property Acquisition and Impacts

General Comment:

Alternatives with less residential displacement are preferred. How will you handle displaced residents due to property acquisition?

Pertains to Specific Comments:

9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29, 31, 32, 34, 35, 36, 38, 44, 52, 53, 55, 80, 87

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 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.

Other Specific Comments on this Topic:

Comment:

93. How would the line affect Ford City Mall?

Response:

A final determination on the transit technology, alignment and vertical profile will need to be established before potential property impacts can be fully assessed. As mentioned above, 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 and economic impacts 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.

CTA maintains relationships with several stakeholders in the study area, including representatives of Ford City Mall. The CTA has met with Ford City Mall to discuss possible alternative alignments that may be adjacent to mall property and anticipates that if an adjacent alignment was pursued as an LPA, coordination will continue with the goal of a mutually beneficial project outcome.

9. Alternatives Analysis Public Involvement Process and Format

General Comment:

Is all the information (evaluation criteria, etc.) available to the public? How can I get a copy of the materials presented?

Pertains to Specific Comments:

4, 5, 6, 7, 91, 105, 107

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. Meetings also included community organizations, and city and state agencies such as the Chicago Department of Transportation, 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 Orange 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 Ford City Mall. 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 and presentation boards are available in electronic format at www.transitchicago.com – click on Initiatives, then Alternatives Analysis Studies, then Orange 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 efficiently 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.

The written comments received at the public meetings and other detailed comments submitted subsequently 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) 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.

10. Funding for Orange Line Extension Construction and Operations

General Comment:

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

Pertains to Specific Comments:

66, 71, 72, 85, 106

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 Orange 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 Orange 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 Orange 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.

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 Yellow Line to Old Orchard, and the constructing the Circle Line.

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, the Orange Line to Midway, and the Yellow Line to Skokie—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.

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.

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

General Comment:

Will the Orange Line Extension connect with existing CTA and regional services? Is this part of the region's plan?

Pertains to specific comments:

3, 8, 10

Response to Overall Category Comment:

A key goal of the Orange Line Extension is to utilize and integrate existing regional transit services to the greatest extent possible. CTA bus and rail lines, Metra commuter rail lines, and Pace suburban bus services are interrelated. The Orange Line Extension will be designed to make convenient connections between all transit services with which it intersects. In the Alternatives Analysis study, opportunities for connections between the CTA Orange 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, Cook County, the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP), and affected freight railroads to promote coordination within the region's transportation network. The Orange Line Extension's Purpose and Need includes effectively managing future traffic growth in the study area. The CTA seeks opportunities to connect with other transportation elements as opportunities permit.

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 Orange 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, www.sp2030.com.

Other Specific Comments on this Topic:

Comment:

67. How does this impact Metra fares?

Response:

No changes to Metra fares are anticipated as part of this study.

Comments:

68. How will the Belt Railway construction be affected?

69. Do you have approval to construct on their site?

92. What impact will the Canadian purchase of the Belt railroad have on your Cicero belt and Kostner belt corridors? Also what effects will their reroute some of the freight trains have on these corridors or other routes?

Response:

CTA is currently coordinating with the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT) to preserve right-of-way in the Belt Railway corridor. If a Belt Railway alternative (including the Belt Railway/Cicero Avenue or Belt Railway/Kostner Avenue Corridors) is advanced as the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA), CTA will work with the Belt Railway or subsequent owners to purchase right-of-way or secure necessary easements to construct the extension. Rail transit alternatives will not share tracks with freight trains and therefore impacts to existing freight operations are anticipated to be minimal. Impacts will be analyzed in detail subsequent to Alternatives Analysis in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) phase.

Comment:

104. How would the Orange Line Extension impact current CTA bus services?

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 Orange Line Extension, the number of routes terminating at the current Orange Line Midway Airport 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:

106. 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 studies for each. Alternatives Analysis studies for all four projects are currently underway following the same federally mandated process as the Orange 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.

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 Orange 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 www.sp2030.com.

12. Potential Orange Line Extension Parking Facilities

General Comment:

Will parking facilities be proposed and where will they be located?

Pertains to specific comments:

53, 90

Response to Overall Category Comment:

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 the Screen 2 process. At that time, the location of each station, the area served, and proximity to major arterials and/or highways will determine whether parking is recommended at each station. If parking is determined to be advantageous at a proposed station, ridership forecast for those stations will determine the number of parking spaces and the type of parking facility required (e.g. parking lot, parking garage).

13. Potential Orange Line Extension Economic and Environmental Impacts

General Comment:

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

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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Pertains to specific comments:

14, 15, 20, 25, 39, 57, 66, 93, 94, 103

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 Orange 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 Orange 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 8 for additional information about potential property acquisition and impacts.

Regarding the economic impact of the Orange 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 Orange Line Extension may be developed in later studies.

Other Specific Comments on this Topic:

- 38. Has the City/CTA conducted a crime impact analysis to determine if there will be an increase in crime in surrounding communities?
- 56. Will a study be considered about the possible rise in crime due to more access to this area?

Response:

Safety and security are a top priority at the CTA. The CTA works with the City of Chicago and adjacent municipalities 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.

Comment:

- 83. Will this bring jobs to the residents of this area? Will they be earmarked just for the residents in the construction zone?

Response:

All contract procurement will follow CTA's competitive bidding requirements open to all qualified firms. More information about CTA's competitive bidding requirements is available on the CTA web site at www.transitchicago.com.

Comment:

- 22. Would the extension create more traffic?
- 30. What steps will be taken to keep increased traffic and parking from clogging already congested area?
- 40. Concern with private auto traffic interference.

Response:

The Orange Line Extension project's purpose and need is to improve transportation access and enhance opportunity for economic development within the study area. In particular, transportation improvements are needed to reduce the significant bus and passenger congestion at CTA's existing Midway Airport Orange Line terminal station; better accommodate tremendous growth in employment opportunities along Cicero Avenue and air travel at Midway Airport since the opening of the Orange Line in 1993; reduce lengthy bus trip times to access the Midway Airport Orange Line terminal station from neighborhoods south and southwest of Midway Airport; and alleviate traffic congestion due to expected growth in the study area population and employment.

As part of the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement, the traffic and parking impacts of the proposed transit improvements will be evaluated in more detail. CTA coordinates with the Illinois Department of Transportation and the Chicago Department of Transportation when evaluating traffic issues. Maintaining traffic flow and related efficiencies is a major consideration in CTA's planning of this extension.

14. General Customer Service Questions / Compliments / Complaints

General Comment:

General comments related to CTA and/or CTA service.

Pertains to specific comments:

1, 48, 73, 74, 98, 99, 100, 108

Response to Overall Category Comment:

CTA Customer Service representatives were also in attendance at the public meetings for the Orange 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 Orange 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.

15. Other

General Comment:

This section includes general comments, overall viewpoints, or other observations that can be characterized as public input into the study process.

Pertains to specific comments:

47, 51, 60, 65, 82, 97, 101

Response to Overall Category Comment:

These comments do not ask a question but rather point out specific views on the subject, which have been noted.

Other Specific Comments on this Topic:

- 37. Does this have anything to do with the Olympics coming to Chicago, "a Possibility"?
- 86. Is the bottom line The City is preparing for the future Olympics?

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 Orange 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.