

**NORTHERN BRANCH CORRIDOR
DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT and
SECTION 4(f) STATEMENT
IN
BERGEN COUNTY and HUDSON COUNTY, NEW JERSEY**

Abstract

The proposed action involves the reinstatement of passenger rail service on an active freight rail line, which includes the rehabilitation of the rail line, construction of passenger stations and a vehicle base facility, and associated infrastructure improvements, such as viaducts, necessary to operate freight and passenger service on the Northern Branch line. The project improvements will take place in Bergen County and Hudson County, New Jersey.

The maximum extent of the study corridor extends 12 miles from the existing terminus of the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail (HBLR) system in the Township of North Bergen, Hudson County through the Boroughs of Fairview, Ridgefield, Palisades Park, and Leonia, and City of Englewood, in Bergen County and terminates in the Borough of Tenafly, also in Bergen County. One Build Alternative extends only from the North Bergen HBLR terminal to the City of Englewood, but in all circumstances, the alignment proposed for use is an existing, active freight railway operated by CSX Transportation. Historically, the CSX freight line supported passenger rail service, but that service was discontinued in the 1960's. Consequently, the reinstatement of passenger rail service will return to the area a mode of transit currently unavailable, with the intention of decreasing roadway congestion and improving overall mobility in the region.

The Alternatives considered include two Build Alternatives and the No Build Alternative. The two Build Alternatives propose light rail transit vehicles. Both Build Alternatives and the No Build Alternative were carried through the technical environmental analysis as part of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). This analysis and impact statement considered potential effects on land use and economic activity, community facilities and services, natural resources and habitats, air quality, noise, vibration, hazardous materials, traffic and parking, historic resources, archaeological resources, environmental justice, and construction impacts. Additionally, potential adverse effects on parkland, historic, and archaeological resources were examined pursuant to Title 49 U.S.C. §303, formerly Department of Transportation Act of 1966, §4(f).

The Preferred Alternative (Light Rail to Tenafly) proposes to operate light rail over the full extent (12 miles) of the study corridor, beginning in North Bergen and ending in Tenafly. This alternative would connect with the HBLR service, providing a connection through to the Hudson Riverfront via the existing HBLR service. Stations would be located in North Bergen, Ridgefield, Palisades Park, Leonia, Englewood (three stations), and Tenafly (two stations). The majority of construction activity and infrastructure development will occur within the existing railroad right-of-way. The DEIS provides detail on the potential impacts resulting from the implementation of the Preferred Alternative, the other Build Alternative and the No Build Alternative, and the mitigation measures developed to reduce the incidence and severity of any adverse impacts.

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