



A Rail Investment Plan for
the Northeast Corridor

Our Future on Track

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE
TIER 1 FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL
IMPACT STATEMENT

DECEMBER 2016



U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Railroad Administration



A Long-Term Vision is Needed

The Preferred Alternative: a Vision for Growth on the Northeast Corridor

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) has released the Tier 1 Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for NEC FUTURE, the comprehensive planning effort for the Northeast Corridor (NEC) rail line from Washington, D.C., to Boston. The Tier 1 Final EIS presents the FRA's Preferred Alternative, a vision for future growth on the NEC that incorporates feedback from the public and stakeholders along the corridor.

The Preferred Alternative defines an investment plan for the NEC that would **grow the role of rail** in the Northeast, providing the capacity to dramatically increase the number of trains and improve the railroad's performance. The Preferred Alternative focuses investment on the existing NEC, improving reliability by bringing it to a state of good repair and eliminating chokepoints that cause delays. Trains would operate frequently with improved connections, greatly enhancing travel options. Travel time would also improve. This vision reflects public preferences and is supported by the FRA's analysis.

The Preferred Alternative would:

- Provide the capacity for up to five times as many Intercity trains as today, with multiple trains each hour, and double the number of Regional rail trains during peak hours
- Achieve high on-time reliability and efficient performance
- Reduce travel time, shortening commutes and enabling faster trips:
 - Washington, D.C., to New York City in as little as 2 hours and 10 minutes
 - New York City to Boston in as little as 2 hours and 45 minutes
- Improve connections, with new stations, easier access to airports from the NEC, and enhanced service to connecting corridors
- Enhance passenger convenience, with coordinated schedules and ticketing for seamless travel across the NEC
- Improve the efficiency of rail operations through opportunities for service integration
- Provide a broader range of travel choices

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE MEETS KEY NEEDS:



Aging Infrastructure



Connectivity



Capacity



Performance



Resiliency



Sustainability



Economic Growth

It takes many years to plan, design, and build major rail infrastructure, which can last for a century or more. With multiple owners and operators on the NEC, a coordinated approach is critical to ensure that different investments made along the corridor work together to the benefit of all users. As the first comprehensive plan for the 457-mile Northeast Corridor rail line in 40 years, NEC FUTURE will establish a framework for future projects that may be undertaken and financed by the federal government, states, and railroads in the coming decades.

The Preferred Alternative, described below and in the Tier 1 Final Environmental Impact Statement, indicates the FRA's direction toward selecting an investment plan for the NEC. The FRA will identify the Selected Alternative in the Record of Decision, the next and final step in the Tier 1 environmental process.

Why Grow the NEC?

The Northeast United States is the world's fifth largest economy, contributing 30 percent of all jobs in the U.S. and generating 20 percent of the nation's Gross Domestic Product. By 2040, the Northeast is expected to add seven million new residents, putting further pressure on all travel modes. Stronger, more reliable transportation options—including investment in the Northeast Corridor—are essential to support mobility and sustain the region's economic growth.

The Tier 1 Draft EIS, published in November 2015, evaluated three distinct visions for the NEC's future that would either maintain, grow, or transform the role of rail in the Northeast. The FRA received comments on the Tier 1 Draft EIS from over 3,200 individuals, agencies, and interested organizations. The Preferred Alternative represents a balanced approach, favored by many stakeholders, that supports growth while addressing the most immediate needs for the NEC's aging infrastructure. Information on the FRA's process for identifying the Preferred Alternative can be found in the Tier 1 Final EIS, available online at www.necfuture.com.

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REGIONAL RAIL: passenger rail service within a metropolitan area



INTERCITY: passenger rail service between metropolitan areas, including Intercity-Express, Intercity-Corridor, and long distance services

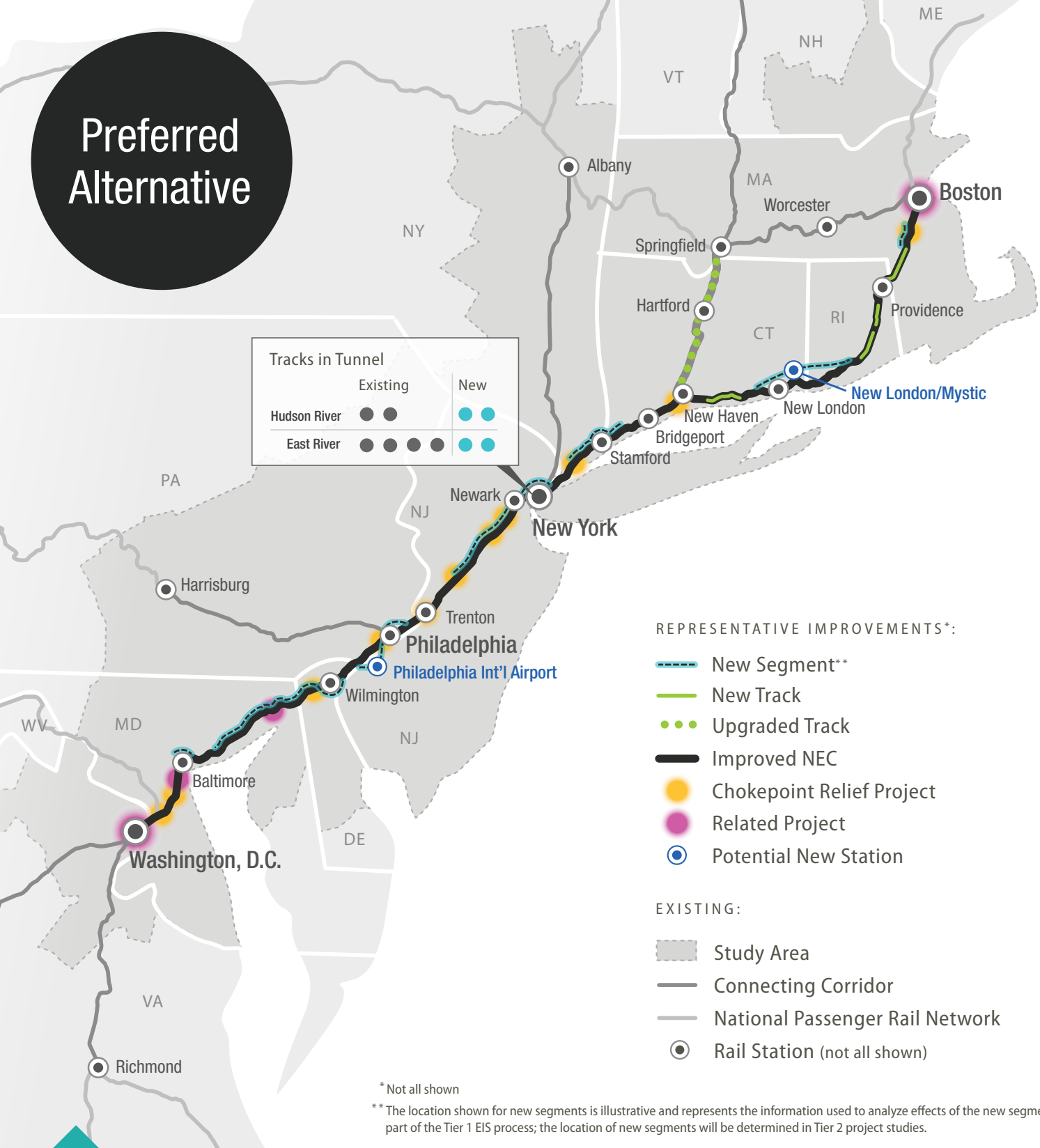
INTERCITY-EXPRESS: premium Intercity service that makes limited stops and offers the shortest travel times



METROPOLITAN: a new type of Intercity service that operates with high performance equipment, stops at a mix of Intercity and Regional rail stations, and offers lower fares

Service Types Included →

Preferred Alternative



* Not all shown

** The location shown for new segments is illustrative and represents the information used to analyze effects of the new segment as part of the Tier 1 EIS process; the location of new segments will be determined in Tier 2 project studies.

The Preferred Alternative includes improvements to bring the NEC to a state of good repair and relieve chokepoints that cause delay. It adds new track to grow the NEC to four tracks at most locations, with more tracks in areas with the greatest demand. In addition, the Preferred Alternative integrates direct service on the Hartford/Springfield Line into the NEC, with upgraded track and electrification.

The FRA has also determined a need for new track segments in particular geographic sections of the NEC. New segments in the following areas would grow capacity, allow higher speeds to reduce travel time, and enhance system resilience:

- Baltimore to Wilmington, supporting speeds up to 220 mph
- Replacement of the Baltimore and Potomac (B&P) tunnel
- In Philadelphia, connecting to an Intercity station at the Philadelphia International Airport
- Two new tracks in tunnels under both the Hudson and East Rivers to an expanded Penn Station New York
- Southeastern Connecticut to Western Rhode Island, supporting higher speeds and increased frequencies

Better Service for Passengers

MORE RELIABLE, FREQUENT TRAINS:

- Double the number of Regional rail trains during peak hours in major metropolitan areas, making it easier to commute by rail (for instance, at the Hudson River crossing, today's 21 trains per hour would double to 42)
- Up to five times the number of Intercity trains, giving travelers more choices and the opportunity for spontaneous trips

BETTER CONNECTIONS TO MORE PLACES:

- Frequent, direct service to Hartford, CT, and Springfield, MA and points in between, integrating the Hartford/Springfield Line with the NEC
- Additional one-seat rides among communities on the NEC, and between NEC markets and connecting corridors, including Harrisburg, PA, Richmond, VA, and points south of Richmond
- Access to airports, with frequent connections to Baltimore-Washington International Airport, Philadelphia International Airport, Newark Liberty International Airport, T.F. Green Airport, and Bradley International Airport
- 22 new stations with Intercity or Regional rail service, expanding upon the 116 stations served today
- Five station upgrades to Hubs, with Regional rail and new Metropolitan service that fills gaps in regional connectivity: Odenton, MD; Secaucus, NJ; Greens Farms, CT; Hartford, CT; and T.F. Green Airport, RI

FASTER TRIPS:

- Trips between Boston and New York City in 2 hours 45 minutes, a decrease of 45 minutes from today's best time
- Trips between Washington, D.C. and New York City in 2 hours 10 minutes, a decrease of 35 minutes from today's best time
- Reductions in delays for all services, saving time and reducing frustration for both Regional rail and Intercity passengers

MORE SERVICE OPTIONS TO CHOOSE FROM:

- More Regional rail service in every metropolitan area for easier commutes and trips throughout the day
- New, affordable Metropolitan service that stops frequently at more stations and links local and metropolitan markets
- More Intercity-Express trains with higher quality amenities and reduced travel times

INCREASED CONVENIENCE:

- Integrated, seamless service, with a unified schedule for the NEC and a single ticket from any point on the NEC to one's destination
- Regular, repeating and predictable service patterns
- Easier transfers, with coordinated arrivals at Hub stations





Benefits for Cities and Communities

The Preferred Alternative would:

STRENGTHEN ECONOMIES WITH:

- Expanded access to jobs and skilled workers
- Economic development opportunities in cities to leverage new or improved rail connections
- Enhanced economic integration among Northeast cities
- Improved rail-airport connections, benefitting business travel and tourism
- Reduced vulnerability to service disruptions, as rail infrastructure is improved and new segments provide redundancy

INCREASE ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY WITH:

- Lower greenhouse gas emissions as travelers shift to rail from other modes of transportation, generating air quality benefits
- Reduced energy use
- Resiliency to flooding and extreme weather events

A MORE RESILIENT NEC

The Preferred Alternative includes infrastructure both north and south of New York City that would improve the resiliency of the NEC. In particular, the investment in new infrastructure in the off-corridor sections of the Preferred Alternative would provide an opportunity to locate and design the infrastructure in a way that minimizes its risk to impacts from floods and extreme heat. In addition to upgrading the NEC to be more resilient, the Preferred Alternative includes redundant track outside of the areas of risk that would provide alternative routing during flooding events or other situations where the track needs to be closed, allowing some service to be maintained.



Achieving the Vision

Achieving the system-wide benefits of the Preferred Alternative will require implementation of many interrelated projects, requiring a coordinated process over time. The Preferred Alternative provides a flexible approach to implementation, allowing investments to be made in phases as funding becomes available. It also provides flexibility to respond to immediate needs or changing market conditions. States and railroad operators would work together to determine the order in which the improvements are made, and affected communities would have an opportunity to help shape future rail infrastructure projects during Tier 2 project development processes.



Next Steps

In the coming months, the FRA will complete the NEC FUTURE planning process and move toward implementation. The next steps include:

A 30-DAY WAITING PERIOD

The FRA will hold a 30-day waiting period after release of the Tier 1 Final EIS. This waiting period allows the public to review and provide feedback on the Preferred Alternative and the contents of the Tier 1 Final EIS. This is not a formal comment period and the FRA will not respond to individual comments as was required for the Tier 1 Draft EIS. The FRA will consider feedback on the Preferred Alternative received during the waiting period and then identify an alternative, referred to as the Selected Alternative, in the Record of Decision (ROD). The Selected Alternative documented in the ROD may or may not be the same as the Preferred Alternative described in the Tier 1 Final EIS.

RECORD OF DECISION (ROD)

The ROD will document the formal selection of an investment program (referred to as the Selected Alternative). The Selected Alternative will serve as a framework to guide future Tier 2 project investments on the NEC. The issuance of the ROD will complete the Tier 1 NEPA process.

SERVICE DEVELOPMENT PLAN (SDP)

The SDP will detail the process for implementing the Selected Alternative, including a first phase of projects to address the most critical needs on the NEC. The SDP will be prepared in 2017.

To learn more about NEC FUTURE and the Preferred Alternative, please refer to the Tier 1 Final EIS, available online at www.necfuture.com. See Volume 1, Chapter 4 for a description of the Preferred Alternative and its development; Chapters 5, 6, and 7 for an assessment of transportation, economic, and environmental effects; Chapter 10 for information on phasing and implementation; Chapter 11 for a description of public and agency involvement, and Appendix JJ for FRA's responses to comments received on the Tier 1 Draft EIS.

Also available online is the Programmatic Agreement prepared under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. The Programmatic Agreement, contained in Appendix GG, provides a framework for compliance with Section 106 in future Tier 2 actions that could affect historic properties along the NEC.

Thanks for your help in keeping

Our Future on Track



U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Railroad Administration



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