



March 31, 2009

**Re: FTA Alternatives Analysis/Environmental Impact Statement
Danbury Branch Improvement Program
Spring Update 2009**

Dear Study Advisory Committee Member:

I am writing to update you on our work involving the Connecticut Department of Transportation's Danbury Branch Alternatives Analysis/Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) project and our intention to hold the next Danbury Branch Study Advisory Committee meeting in early summer 2009. Since completion of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) scoping process in early fall, 2008, work on this important project is proceeding on schedule. Outlined below are highlights of ongoing work to be completed by the end of this year. Prior to the next Advisory Committee meeting, we will send you a data disk of documents we have prepared to date, as well as a summary of work completed. This information is related to the alternatives being considered to improve Branch line service, as well as new station alternatives resulting from the proposed extension of service to New Milford.

At the next meeting, we will review overall progress as well as seek your input and comments on the documents we have sent. The schedule of activities related to the overall Danbury Branch Alternatives Analysis and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is as follows:

The following is schedule for completion by the end of this year:

- Environmental Data Collection: Available mapping and on-site reviews are being conducted to document the study corridor social and environmental resources. Data collection includes existing facilities and potentially new or relocated facilities. This data provides baseline information regarding the locations, types, and significance of environmental and community resources and constraints. Environmental and community resources that must be considered for an EIS include : topography, geology, soils, noise and vibration, air quality, energy, vegetation, wildlife, fisheries, rare-threatened-endangered species, wetlands, floodplains, floodways and stream channel encroachments, historical resources, archeological resources, prime farmland and farms, land use, hazardous/contamination, surface and groundwater resources, public recreational/4(f)/6(f) lands, socioeconomic environment and environmental justice, land use, municipal services, scenic roads, and visual/aesthetic.
- Environmental Data Analysis: Analysis is conducted to verify and identify those resources that are within the study corridor and that may be affected by any change in the rail service and/or infrastructure. This analysis will be used to evaluate each of the EIS alternatives with regard to their potential impacts upon known and mapped environmental and community resources.
- Existing Conditions Documentation: The existing service and related infrastructure, as well as the relevant social and environmental data are being documented in individual topical technical memorandums through mapping and text. Each technical memorandum will include graphics (including digital orthophoto maps) illustrating the infrastructure and locations of environmental resources.
- Alternatives Development and Refinement: Phase 1 identified five alternative concepts selected for further consideration. In addition, the EIS Scoping process identified an additional option for consideration (extension from New Milford to Pittsfield, MA). Also, there were transportation planning and operational issues that were not addressed in the preliminary screening in Phase 1. This task will focus on defining the alternatives identified from Phase 1

and the additional options, through preparation of preliminary operating plans. The Phase 1 alternatives are:

- A) No Build
 - B) Transportation Systems Management
 - C) Build Alternative - Rail realignments, passing sidings and electrification
 - D) Extension of passenger service from Danbury to New Milford
 - E) Partial electrification from South Norwalk to the vicinity of the Merritt Parkway with expanded feeder and regional bus service.
- Alternatives Analysis/Evaluation: Each of the defined alternatives will be evaluated regarding their operational benefits and deficiencies, considering future demand forecasts.

The following is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2010:

- Draft EIS /Section 4(f) Evaluation: The Draft EIS will provide a detailed evaluation regarding the social and environmental impacts of each of the alternatives. The Draft EIS will be reviewed by the Advisory Committee and regulatory agencies for accuracy and compliance with state and federal requirements. The Draft EIS will subsequently be published for public review and comment.

The following is scheduled to be completed by summer 2011:

- Final EIS /Section 4(f) Evaluation: Considering all review comments, the Final EIS will be prepared and submitted to the regulatory agencies for further review and approval. The federal action resulting from this process will be a Record of Decision. The Final EIS and Record of Decision will be published for public information.

Subsequent Phases:

- Engineering Design: Secure the funding needed to complete engineering design of the study recommendations (including environmental permits and property acquisition).
- Construction/implementation: Secure the funding needed to complete construction/implementation.
- Operations: Securing the funding needed to maintain and operate the equipment and service

Please feel free to contact the study team through the study web site at: <http://www.danburybranchstudy.com>

You can also contact me in the interim if you have any questions at stephen_gazillo@urscorp.com or through my address and phone number below. Thank you.



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