

Description of Study and Area Project Need

Within the context of the Long Island Transportation Corridor MIS/DEIS the study corridor is self-defining to a great extent owing to the geographic configuration of Long Island. The Long Island Study Corridor is therefore composed of the two suburban counties, Nassau and Suffolk; the two New York City counties, Queens and Kings (Brooklyn); and that portion of the New York County Central Business District generally referred to as Midtown Manhattan. Excluding the Mid-town Manhattan (CBD) portion of the study corridor the study area covers approximately 1377 square miles of land area with a population density of 6.8 million people.

The Long Island Study Corridor's access to the Mid-town Manhattan CBD is provided by the MTA Long Island Rail Road, an extensive highway network consisting of Interstate highways, expressways, parkways and the local street grid, the MTA New York City Transit and a number of private bus and ferry services as well as private automobiles.

Overall the above transportation facilities are operating at or above their respective design capacities during peak travel periods and experience excessive levels of congestion resulting in increased travel time, lost productivity, customer dissatisfaction and contravention of National Ambient Air Quality Standards. The region's high utilization of existing facilities, high population density and the physical constraints associated with the separation of Manhattan Island and Long Island by the East River necessitating bridge or tunnel connections all contribute to creating a problematic environment for addressing the Long Island Study Corridors mobility issues.

Currently, the LIRR has only one Manhattan terminal at Pennsylvania Station (Penn Station) on the West Side of Manhattan between 31st and 33rd Streets and 7th and 8th Avenues. However, this facility currently operates at capacity and is shared by three railroads—LIRR, New Jersey Transit (NJT), and Amtrak—each of which is seeking additional capacity for its present and projected patronage. Moreover, surveys indicated that a significant number of LIRR customers have East Midtown destinations and are therefore not adequately served by a Penn Station destination.

The primary goals of the Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) are to provide transport capacity, enhance mobility

and reduce the number of vehicles on the region's congested highway, bridges and tunnels; unfortunately, the LIRR's ability to meet these goals is constrained by capacity limitations during peak hours, particularly at Pennsylvania Station. Therefore, the LIRR is impeded in its ability to attract and serve new riders, in the peak period.

The major highway corridors in Long Island Study Corridor are noted for their major congestion problems. According to the findings of the LIRR Network Strategy Study, 52% of the New York State's total vehicle hours of delay occurs on Long Island roadways. These conditions inhibit the region's ability to attain compliance under the federally imposed National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) as required under the Clean Air Act.

All of the MTA New York City Transit's (NYCT) 25 subway routes serve portions of the Long Island Study Corridor including the busiest trunk lines in the city—the number 4, 5 and 6 services on the Lexington Avenue Line, the number 7 service on the Flushing Line, and the E, F and R services on the Queens Boulevard Line. Portions of the subway system parallel portions of the LIRR in Queens and Brooklyn. However, while these subway and LIRR routes parallel one another they do not necessarily compete with one another—the LIRR principally carries customers from Nassau and Suffolk Counties and the far eastern portion of Queens while the subways principally serve inner city passengers of Queens and Brooklyn.

The Queens Boulevard Line, which offers connecting express subway services at LIRR's Jamaica Station, is currently one of the top two most heavily used subway lines in the NYCT system. During the morning peak hour, approximately 30 trains per peak hour carry in excess of 66,000 passengers per hour, at a volume/capacity ration of 1.296 or 30% over capacity.

The Flushing Line, which offers connecting service at LIRR stations at Hunterspoint Avenue, Long Island City and Woodside Queens, is currently operating above capacity, carrying approximately 36,700 passengers into Manhattan at a volume/capacity ration of 1.083 or 8.3% over capacity.

Based upon U.S. Bureau of the Census data and New York Metropolitan Transportation Council (NYMTC) projections, population, labor force and employment in the five county Long Island Study Corridor have all experienced a net growth from 1980 to the present, and all are projected to continue to grow in the future. The increases indicated by these trends will

increase the number of trips made, including commutation travel between the residential communities on Long Island and the commercial hub of Manhattan.

Alternatives

The alternatives proposed for evaluation include: No-action which involves no change to transportation services or facilities in the corridor beyond already committed projects of the 1992–1996 MTA Capital Program; the TSM alternative, which consists of low-to-medium cost improvements to the facilities and operations of the LIRR, NYCT and the highway network in addition to the currently planned highway and transit improvements in the corridor. All other reasonable alternatives proposed through the study scoping process will be considered.

Probable Effects

FTA, FHWA and the LIRR plan to evaluate in the MIS/DEIS all social, economic, and environmental impacts of the alternatives. Among the possible issues to be investigated are the potential increase in transit ridership, impacts on highway use, the capital outlays needed to implement an alternative, the cost of operating and maintaining the facilities created by an alternative, and the financial impacts on the funding agencies. Environmental and social impacts, both positive and negative, proposed for analysis include environmental justice, land use and neighborhood impacts, traffic, parking, and pedestrian impacts near stations, visual impacts, impacts on cultural resources, and noise and vibration impacts. Impacts on natural areas, rare and endangered species, air and water quality, ground water, hazardous waste and geologic forms will also be covered. The impacts will be evaluated both for the construction period and for the long-term period of operation. Measures to mitigate significant adverse impacts will be considered.

FTA and FHWA Procedures

In accordance with the Federal Transit Laws, the Federal Aid Highway Act and FTA/FHWA policy, the DEIS/MIS will be prepared in conjunction with an analysis of alternatives and Conceptual Engineering. After its publication, the MIS/DEIS will be available for public and agency review and comment, and a public hearing will be held. On the basis of the MIS/DEIS and the comments received, and with input from the Project Steering Committee, the Technical Advisory Committee, the Citizens Advisory Committee and the Metropolitan