



TIER 1 FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
VOLUME 2

11. Agency and Public Involvement

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11. Agency and Public Involvement

11.1 INTRODUCTION

Decisions about the future of the Northeast Corridor (NEC) affect a wide range of stakeholders, from today's rail passengers and the agencies and operators providing services on the NEC to the residents, travelers, businesses, and communities potentially affected by the outcomes of NEC FUTURE. Since the inception of NEC FUTURE, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) has been committed to an open and transparent public involvement process that involves these stakeholders in a shared process to identify the best solutions without a preconceived outcome.

Given the geographic scale and diversity of the Study Area, the large number of organizations and jurisdictions potentially affected, and the array of complex issues being considered, the FRA has implemented a broad, multifaceted agency and public involvement process.

This chapter summarizes NEC FUTURE's extensive public involvement and agency consultation activities, including public and agency scoping, as well as the public involvement and agency consultation meetings, briefings, and presentations that the FRA held in support of the development of the alternatives and Tier 1 Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Tier 1 Draft EIS). For purposes of this discussion, agency stakeholders include the following:

- ▶ Federal and state departments of transportation
- ▶ Federal and state environmental resource and regulatory agencies
- ▶ Railroad and transit operators
- ▶ Other state agencies and transportation authorities
- ▶ Metropolitan planning organizations
- ▶ Local government agencies

Public stakeholders include non-governmental organizations, advocacy organizations, businesses, rail passengers, and the general public.

11.2 OVERVIEW AND APPROACH TO PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND AGENCY CONSULTATION

Appendix F, Agency and Public Involvement, contains the goals and framework for the public and agency involvement processes outlined in the Public Involvement Plan and Agency Coordination Plan.

The FRA used a consistent approach to agency and public involvement activities throughout the Study Area, with a single set of public information materials, one program website (www.necfuture.com), and meeting materials and publications that are primarily corridor-wide in scope. Within this framework, the FRA coordinated meetings and other outreach activities on a regional basis within three regions defined as follows:

- ▶ South: Washington, D.C., Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania
- ▶ Central: New Jersey, New York
- ▶ North: Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts

Two unique elements shaped the agency and public involvement process for NEC FUTURE. The first is the FRA's close coordination with the NEC Infrastructure and Operations Advisory Commission (NEC Commission), an organization that was established through federal legislation to promote mutual cooperation and planning for the NEC.¹ The NEC Commission members include representatives from the U.S. Department of Transportation (U.S. DOT), the NEC states and Washington, D.C., Amtrak, and non-voting representatives of the freight railroads that operate over the NEC. Connecting states and commuter operators on the NEC also participate as non-voting representatives. Since the NEC Commission will play a primary role in implementing the rail investment plan developed through NEC FUTURE, its involvement in the program has been especially important.

Another unique element of the NEC FUTURE agency involvement process is the early engagement of environmental agencies through a special partnership with the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ). In January 2012, the CEQ selected NEC FUTURE as one of five projects to participate in its National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Pilot Program to identify, evaluate, and disseminate innovative ways to prepare NEPA reviews. The year-long pilot program was designed to promote early collaboration with federal and state environmental agencies for efficient environmental decision-making, and to help identify best practices for environmental collaboration in a complex, multi-state planning process. The pilot program set the stage for ongoing coordination among resource and regulatory agencies throughout the preparation of this Tier 1 Draft EIS, as described in Section 11.4.7.1.

To support informed dialogue and effectively contribute to decision-making, agency and public involvement activities for NEC FUTURE have been closely integrated with the technical development of this Tier 1 Draft EIS, including the development of alternatives described in Chapter 4, Alternatives Considered. The FRA used information gained through agency and public engagement to better understand stakeholder concerns and to integrate information and ideas provided by stakeholders and the public into the work process.

11.3 SCOPING PROCESS

NEC FUTURE began with a scoping process that enabled agencies, stakeholders, and the public to learn about and contribute to shaping the alternatives the FRA would analyze in detail as well as the technical analyses the FRA would conduct. The FRA carried out the scoping process in accordance with NEPA and the FRA's Procedures for Considering Environmental Impacts. Scoping took place over a four-month period from June 22 through October 19, 2012. During this period, the FRA invited the public to comment on the Purpose and Need for the rail investment plan, the Study Area, the range of alternatives to be considered, and the types of environmental consequences to be evaluated in this Tier 1 Draft EIS.

The FRA initiated the scoping process with the publication of a Notice of Intent (NOI) in the *Federal Register* on June 22, 2012 and invited interested parties to submit comments on the project website,

¹ 49 U.S.C. 24905

by e-mail, or by mail by September 14, 2012.² In addition, interested parties could provide comments in person at scoping meetings via either written comment card or oral testimony. A Scoping Package that provided information on NEC FUTURE’s early statement of Purpose and Need, Study Area, goals and objectives, planning context, and public involvement process was posted on the project website (see Appendix F, Agency and Public Involvement).

11.3.1 Public Scoping Meetings

The FRA held scoping meetings in August 2012 in each of the eight NEC states and Washington, D.C. Public and agency meetings were held at each location on the same date. The public scoping meetings consisted of an open house, a presentation, and opportunities for public and private oral testimony recorded by stenographers. Table 11-1 shows the dates and locations of the scoping meetings. Each public scoping meeting was held from 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Table 11-1: Scoping Meeting Dates and Locations

Date	City, State	Location
8/13/2012	Boston, MA	Massachusetts State Transportation Building 10 Park Plaza
8/14/2012	New Haven, CT	Shubert Theater 247 College Street
8/14/2012	Baltimore, MD	University of Baltimore, Thumel Conference Facilities 11 W. Mount Royal Street
8/15/2012	Newark, NJ	North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority Board Room One Newark Center
8/16/2012	New York City, NY	Moynihan Station 380 West 33 rd Street
8/20/2012	Philadelphia, PA	Southeast Pennsylvania Transportation Authority Board Room Complex 1234 Market Street
8/20/2012	Wilmington, DE	Carvel State Office Building 820 N. French Street
8/21/2012	Washington, D.C.	Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments 777 N. Capitol Street, NE
8/22/2012	Providence, RI	State Administration Building One Capitol Hill

Source: NEC FUTURE team, 2012

In addition to the NOI, the FRA widely publicized the scoping meetings and public comment period through legal notices and display advertisements in more than 30 newspapers, including regional editions of the *Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, and *METRO* (a free newspaper handed out at transit stops). The *Scoping Summary* (Appendix F, Agency and Public Involvement) provides a full listing of the notices and advertisements by newspaper and date.

² The original comment period closed on September 14, 2012; however, the FRA extended the comment period to October 19, 2012, as discussed in Section 11.3.3.

In total, over 500 people attended the nine public scoping meetings. Attendees included residents, rail passengers, elected officials, agency representatives, business and civic organizations, advocacy organizations, and members of the media.

11.3.2 Agency Scoping Meetings

In addition to their participation in the public scoping meetings, agency representatives had the opportunity to attend agency scoping meetings for NEC FUTURE. These meetings included a presentation and discussion. The intent of these meetings was to exchange information and to prepare the agencies to develop formal scoping comments if they chose to do so. The agency scoping meetings were held from 10:30 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. at the same locations and dates as the public scoping meetings listed in Table 11-1. In addition, the FRA held an agency scoping webinar on September 24, 2012, for those unable to attend a meeting in person.

The FRA mailed agency scoping invitations to 252 federal, state, regional, and local agencies, and rail and transit operators. The FRA also invited tribal governments with lands or resources in the Study Area to the agency scoping meetings. The *Scoping Summary* (Appendix F, Agency and Public Involvement) provides a list of the agencies that received invitations. A total of 194 people representing 105 organizations and tribes attended the agency scoping meetings.

11.3.3 Extension of Comment Period

As originally noticed, the scoping comment period was to close on September 14, 2012. However, the FRA extended the scoping comment period to October 19, 2012, in response to early comments received during the scoping process. This extension was noticed in the *Federal Register* on September 9, 2012. Appendix F includes both the original NOI and the extension NOI.

11.3.4 Comments Received

The FRA reviewed and analyzed nearly 2,500 distinct comments. These included comments from approximately 800 individuals and representatives of agencies and organizations. The scoping comments addressed a wide range of topics including the Study Area, Purpose and Need, alternatives, funding, environmental assessment, and public involvement process. Both corridor-wide and location-specific comments were received. The following are highlights of the corridor-wide comments:

- ▶ A central theme was the desirability of an incremental approach that would repair and strengthen the existing NEC before adding new services. This could include bringing the entire NEC into a state of good repair, improving operations and connections, and a phased approach to increase capacity, reduce travel times, and extend coverage.
- ▶ Connectivity and coordination were also key themes; comments addressed the need to improve connections between regional and local service through improved scheduling, increased capacity and through-ticketing, and to improve connections with airports and local transit.
- ▶ Another theme was balancing service to existing NEC cities with service to new markets.
- ▶ Some commenters recommended a focus on near-term, low-cost investments, while others called on the FRA to “think big” and consider improvements beyond the next 30–40 years.

- ▶ Support was expressed for new technologies and operating practices.
- ▶ Some comments suggested clarifying project goals with additional language on affordability of rail service, climate change, and support for economic development.
- ▶ Some commenters stressed the importance of an open and inclusive public process, with regular opportunities for dialogue.

Other concerns were specific to a particular state, metropolitan area, or locality:

- ▶ Many agencies stressed the importance of coordinating and supporting related plans, programs, and policies in their respective areas. Other agencies mentioned the need to be sensitive to changing demographic trends and new visions for future development.
- ▶ In each region, participants expressed support for local projects or proposals, such as the North-South Rail Link in Boston, trans-Hudson capacity options in New York and New Jersey, and bridge and tunnel projects in Maryland.
- ▶ Comments addressed the potential for serving new stations or maintaining and improving service to existing stations; many comments stressed the benefits of improved rail service to downtowns and metropolitan areas.
- ▶ Participants requested the expansion of the Study Area to include areas such as Montreal, Maine, Vermont, and Virginia.

The *Scoping Summary* (Appendix F, Agency and Public Involvement) provides a detailed summary of the scoping comments).

11.3.5 Effect of Scoping Comments on Tier 1 EIS Development

The FRA reviewed, categorized, and considered all comments received during the public comment period in the development of this Tier 1 Draft EIS. Scoping comments were valuable in refining the Purpose and Need (see Chapter 3), defining program alternatives (see Chapter 4), understanding the affected environment (see Chapter 7), and informing the public and agency involvement process. Comments received from agencies were also important in developing the analytical resource methodologies used to assess the Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences.

11.4 AGENCY CONSULTATION

The FRA conducted an extensive agency consultation process for this Tier 1 Draft EIS. In addition to the agency scoping process described previously, this process included coordination with federal and state transportation and environmental agencies throughout the Study Area, railroad and transit operators, metropolitan planning organizations (MPO), and local governments, along with a concurrent Section 106 consultation process.

The FRA structured agency consultation activities according to key program milestones to promote transparency and facilitate an informed environmental review process that complies with applicable regulations. The knowledge, data, and input that the following agencies shared through these activities were essential in preparing this Tier 1 Draft EIS:

- ▶ Federal and State Departments of Transportation – This group includes administrations within the U.S. DOT, state DOTs, and other state agencies that plan for and provide transportation infrastructure and/or services within the Study Area.
- ▶ Federal and State Environmental Resource and Regulatory Agencies – This group includes federal and state agencies with responsibility for the environmental resources addressed in this Draft Tier 1 EIS.
- ▶ Railroad and Transit Operators – This group includes railroad and transit operators (including freight railroads) that operate along the existing NEC and its connecting corridors.
- ▶ Other State Agencies and Transportation Authorities – This group includes other select state agencies within the Study Area, such as planning and economic development agencies, as well as bi-state or multi-state agencies. Metropolitan planning organizations within the Study Area play a prominent role in transportation planning throughout their respective regions and serve as representatives of their member municipalities and counties.
- ▶ Local Government Agencies – This group includes select county and local agencies within the Study Area.
- ▶ Technical Working Groups – The service planning and environmental review processes require technical information in multiple areas. To develop this information, a number of Technical Working Groups (TWG) were formed: Alternatives Development, Environmental, Engineering and Capital Cost, Operations, and Ridership and Revenue. The TWGs included FRA representatives, as well as members of the stakeholder community to seek their input on the methods proposed to conduct analysis as well as to review outputs of analysis. Stakeholders also provided valuable insights on past, ongoing, and future planning efforts that informed the alternatives development process and environmental analysis.

11.4.1 Lead and Cooperating Agencies

Sections 1501.5–1501.6 of the CEQ Regulations for Implementing NEPA define federal agency roles and responsibilities in the NEPA process. The lead federal agency is the designated federal agency that is responsible for undertaking and ensuring compliance with NEPA. For NEC FUTURE, the FRA is the designated lead federal agency.

The CEQ regulations also define cooperating agencies. Section 1508.5 defines cooperating agencies as those federal agencies, other than the lead agency, that have jurisdiction by law or a special expertise with respect to any environmental impact involved in a proposal (or a reasonable alternative) for legislation or other major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. The FRA invited the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to be a cooperating agency, in light of the FTA's special expertise in passenger rail alternatives and environmental reviews, and in consideration of the many commuter railroads that might seek FTA funding to implement projects subsequent to the NEC FUTURE Tier 1 EIS Record of Decision. The FTA accepted the FRA's invitation to be a cooperating agency, and since that time, the FRA has coordinated with the FTA on a regular basis on the development of alternatives and this Tier 1 Draft EIS.

11.4.2 Federal Agencies

The FRA coordinated with other federal agencies on several levels. First, periodic coordination meetings for NEC FUTURE occurred at the headquarters level with other U.S. DOT modal administrations, including the FTA, the Federal Highway Administration, the Federal Aviation Administration, and the Maritime Administration. These meetings provided an avenue for consideration of the multimodal implications of NEC FUTURE and ensured that leadership from other U.S. DOT modes remained fully informed about the progress of NEC FUTURE. Second, division representatives of some of the modal administrations attended the other coordination meetings described in this chapter, such as the agency scoping meetings, the March 2014 agency update meetings, and the environmental resource and regulatory coordination meetings. Third, federal environmental resource and regulatory agencies were key partners in the CEQ Pilot and subsequent coordination process.

11.4.3 Northeast Corridor Commission

As described in Section 11.1, the FRA coordinated regularly with the NEC Commission. This coordination included biweekly calls or meetings with NEC Commission staff, frequent meetings, and webinars with the NEC Commission Planning Committee, and occasional briefings for the NEC Commissioners.

11.4.4 State Transportation Agencies and Railroad Operators

Throughout the course of the program, the FRA held a variety of meetings and briefings with state transportation agencies and railroad operators to provide for dialogue and timely exchange of information. The meetings created opportunities to share information and obtain input on study elements or findings, as well as insight and guidance from stakeholders toward improving the study process. Table 11-2 lists in chronological order the meetings held with state DOTs and railroad operators. (Beyond the meetings shown in the table, additional consultation with many of these organizations took place as part of the NEC Commission coordination process.)

Table 11-2: Meetings with State Transportation Agencies and Railroad Operators

Date	Stakeholder
3/16/2012	NJ TRANSIT
3/19/2012	Amtrak
5/3/2012	Webinar with Amtrak, commuter, and freight railroads (CSX Corporation, Norfolk Southern Railway, Providence & Worcester RR)
5/15/2012	Amtrak Board of Directors briefing
5/22/2012	New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA); MTA-Metro-North Railroad; MTA-Long Island Rail Road
6/14/2012	State of Connecticut Executive
6/21/2012	PANYNJ
6/21/2012	Virginia Department of Rail & Public Transportation
6/25/2012	New York State DOT, New York Metropolitan Transportation Council (NYMTC), New York City DOT, PANYNJ, Westchester County DOT, New York City Economic Development Corporation, New York City Department of City Planning
7/12/2012	North Carolina DOT briefing
7/24/2012	Pennsylvania DOT/City of Philadelphia

Table 11-2: Meetings with State Transportation Agencies and Railroad Operators (continued)

Date	Stakeholder
9/7/2012	Amtrak
10/5/2012	Meeting with Corridor States (Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts)
10/11/2012	Port Authority of New York & New Jersey (PANYNJ) and Federal Aviation Association
10/23/2012	Rhode Island DOT and Providence & Worcester RR
10/24/2012	Massachusetts DOT
10/25/2012	Massachusetts DOT/Boston Region MPO
11/26/2012	Maryland DOT/Maryland Transit Administration
1/7/2013	PANYNJ – Port Authority Trans-Hudson (PATH)
1/8/2013	Massachusetts DOT Program Managers
3/13/2013	Connecticut DOT
3/13/2013	NJ TRANSIT
3/14/2013	Amtrak
3/21/2013	District of Columbia DOT
4/1/2013	Maryland DOT
4/4/2013	New York State DOT
4/5/2013	Rhode Island DOT
4/8/2013	MTA
4/26/2013	PANYNJ
5/20/2013	Metro-North Railroad
5/23/2013	Delaware DOT
6/21/2013	Massachusetts DOT
9/20/2013	Amtrak
9/26/2013	Virginia Department of Rail & Public Transportation
11/13/2013	NJ TRANSIT
11/19/2013	MTA
11/21/2013	Amtrak
11/22/2013	Connecticut DOT
12/4/2013	Massachusetts DOT
12/17/2013	Rhode Island DOT
1/15/2014	Freight railroads (CSX Corporation, Norfolk Southern Railway, Providence & Worcester RR)
1/23/2014	Amtrak
2/25/2014	Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority
4/23/2014	Virginia Department of Rail & Public Transportation
6/12/2014	NJ TRANSIT
6/12/2014	NJ TRANSIT, MTA, Connecticut DOT
6/18/2014	Maryland DOT and Maryland Area Regional Commuter
6/26/2014	MTA
6/30/2014	Connecticut DOT
7/2/2014	Massachusetts DOT, Massachusetts Bay Area Transportation Authority (MBTA)
7/9/2014	Amtrak
7/9/2014	Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority, Delaware DOT

Table 11-2: Meetings with State Transportation Agencies and Railroad Operators (continued)

Date	Stakeholder
8/26/2014	MTA
8/28/2014	Freight railroads (CSX Corporation, Norfolk Southern Railway, Providence & Worcester RR)
9/15/2014	Amtrak
9/16/2014	NJ TRANSIT
9/16/2014	Connecticut Transportation Commissioner
9/24/2014	Webinar for Adjoining States (Vermont DOT, New Hampshire DOT, Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority, North Carolina DOT)
10/28/2014	Pennsylvania DOT
10/29/2014	Massachusetts DOT, MBTA
12/12/2014	NY Metropolitan Transportation Authority
1/28/2015	Amtrak Board of Directors briefing
1/15/2015	Virginia Railway Express
2/23/2015	NJ TRANSIT
3/4/2015	NY Metropolitan Transportation Authority
3/23/2015	Amtrak

Source: NEC FUTURE team, 2015

11.4.5 Metropolitan Planning Organizations and Local Governments

The MPOs of the Northeast region play a critical role in transportation analysis and decision-making in their respective metropolitan regions, and as such have served as partners for NEC FUTURE, both on technical and policy levels. There are approximately 49 MPOs in the Study Area.³

The FRA coordinated with the MPOs and conducted periodic outreach to local governments. Staff-level coordination with MPOs included both general briefings and technically focused meetings at individual MPOs, such as coordination on travel demand and air quality data and analysis; webinars to brief or update groups of MPOs on the program; and a coordination webinar in July 2014 to which all of the MPOs were invited. This webinar launched further coordination with the MPOs on the specific topics of land cover, climate change, air quality, Environmental Justice (EJ) outreach, and economics. The FRA also provided presentations as requested for MPO decision-making bodies, technical committees, and at various MPO forums and events. The MPOs were also invited to participate in agency scoping meetings and in the March 2014 agency update meetings described in Section 11.6.

The FRA coordinated with county and municipal governments less extensively than with MPOs because of the broad, Tier 1 level of review undertaken. The FRA invited municipal officials in cities along the existing NEC to the public scoping meetings described in Section 11.3. The FRA also invited city officials (from locations with significant levels of existing Intercity rail service) to participate in agency scoping meetings and in the subsequent March 2014 agency update meetings described in the next section. (The *Scoping Summary* in Appendix F, Agency and Public Involvement, lists these cities among the agency scoping invitees.)

³ The number of MPOs in the Study Area is in flux because of ongoing consolidation amongst some MPOs.

The FRA also met with individual representatives of several cities on request, and city representatives took part in various coordination meetings concerning related initiatives currently underway on the NEC. Briefings on the program were also provided to Nassau and Suffolk Counties' (New York) representatives to explain the program and discuss potential Long Island route options. In addition, a brochure was sent to the chief elected official of each municipality along the existing NEC and Representative Routes prior to the November 2014 public open houses. The brochure described the program and invited participation at the open houses or through the website. Table 11-3 lists meetings held with MPOs and local governments and agencies for NEC FUTURE.

Table 11-3: Meetings with Metropolitan Planning Organizations and Local Government Agencies

Date	Metropolitan Planning Organizations and Local Agencies
6/14/2012	North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA)
6/25/2012	NY State interagency meeting with NYSDOT, NYMTC, and others
7/24/2012	Pennsylvania DOT/City of Philadelphia interagency meeting with DVRPC and others
10/4/2012	Metropolitan Area Planning (MAP) Forum – NYMTC, NJTPA, South Western Regional Planning Agency (SWRPA), Greater Bridgeport Valley MPO, Housatonic Valley MPO
11/14/2012	WILMAPCO – presentation at Our Town Forum, Newark, DE
3/11/2013	NJTPA
3/19/2013	Nassau County Department of Public Works
3/25/2013	Baltimore Metropolitan Council (staff briefing)
3/28/2013	SWRPA
5/14/2013	New Haven Economic Development Commission
5/28/2013	Connecticut MPOs briefing (webinar)
6/20/2013	NYMTC Program, Finance, and Administration Committee (PFAC)
6/28/2013	WILMAPCO (staff briefing)
7/22/2013	Suffolk County Department of Economic Development and Planning
5/16/2014	MAP Forum
9/29/2014	Suffolk County briefing
10/8/2014	Nassau County briefing
11/10/2014	Capitol Region Council of Governments (presentation to Council)
11/25/2014	Baltimore Metropolitan Council (presentation to Council)
1/8/2015	WILMAPCO (presentation to Council)
2/19/2015	WILMAPCO (presentation to Technical Advisory Committee)
6/11/2015	MAP Forum

Source: NEC FUTURE team, 2015

11.4.6 Agency Update Meetings

In March 2014, the FRA held agency meetings in each NEC state and Washington, D.C. The purpose of the meetings was for the FRA to provide an update on the program and the approach being used to develop this Tier 1 Draft EIS. All agency representatives previously invited to participate in the August 2012 agency scoping meetings were invited to attend, including federal, state, and regional transportation and environmental agencies, MPOs, and city officials in jurisdictions with existing intercity service on the NEC.

A total of 136 agency representatives participated in these meetings, which included a presentation and discussion. Several main themes emerged during these discussions, including the nature of the decision-making process, expected outcomes, coordination with individual states and other projects on the corridor, the role of high-speed rail, funding, and freight movement considerations.

11.4.7 Environmental Resource and Regulatory Agency Engagement Process

11.4.7.1 Council on Environmental Quality Pilot Project

In January 2012, the CEQ and the FRA announced the selection of the NEC FUTURE Tier 1 EIS as a pilot project to demonstrate the effectiveness of early collaboration with federal and state environmental agencies in efficient environmental decision-making. The pilot project was designed to help avoid the conflicts and delays often found in complex, multi-state transportation projects by engaging environmental resource and regulatory agencies early in the environmental review and assessment process.

To overcome the challenge of coordinating across multiple agencies and within their respective organizations, the FRA designated formal points of contact for NEC FUTURE with federal and state resource and regulatory agencies. The FRA identified points of contact at the headquarters level and, if appropriate, at the regional or field office level. State transportation and economic development representatives, as well as State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPO), also participated in the pilot project to foster communication and integrate the transportation planning and environmental review processes.

The year-long pilot project was officially completed in January 2013. During the pilot project, the FRA held regional resource meetings and/or webinars with designated points of contact in April, June, and October 2012, and a corridor-wide webinar was held in January 2013; most regional meetings were also available as a webinar. The meetings were informal roundtables to discuss program elements such as the Study Area, program goals, preliminary components of the Purpose and Need, data collection results and the scoping process, and how best to coordinate with the agencies. The FRA informed agencies about the program's status, involved them in the alternatives development process, and engaged the agencies in topic-specific impact assessment discussions. This process enabled the FRA to engage the agencies as partners both in the NEPA process and in the structuring of the future agency-coordination effort.

An achievement of the CEQ Pilot was the development, by the FRA and a group of federal agencies, of a Statement of Principles that identifies an approach and protocols for future collaboration with federal agencies (Appendix F). The following federal agencies have concurred with the Statement of Principles:

- ▶ Federal Railroad Administration
- ▶ Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
- ▶ National Marine Fisheries Service – National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
- ▶ U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- ▶ U.S. Coast Guard

- ▶ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- ▶ U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- ▶ U.S. National Park Service

11.4.7.2 Ongoing Coordination

Although the CEQ Pilot concluded in January 2013, the FRA continued to meet regularly with the involved federal and state resource and regulatory agencies. The pilot project established a foundation for ongoing agency coordination throughout NEC FUTURE and is intended to facilitate subsequent project-level environmental reviews. Table 11-4 lists these meetings.

Table 11-4: Regional Resource Meetings

Date	Regional Resource Meeting
4/10/2012	Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Pilot Regional Resource meeting, North Region, Boston, MA
4/13/2012	CEQ Pilot Regional Resource meeting – Central Region, New York, NY
4/18/2012	CEQ Pilot Regional Resource meeting – South Region, Hanover, MD
6/19/2012	CEQ Pilot Regional Resource Meeting – South Region, Philadelphia, PA
6/26/2012	CEQ Pilot Regional Resource Meeting – North Region, Hartford, CT
6/28/2012	CEQ Pilot Regional Resource Meeting – Central Region, Trenton, NJ
10/16/2012	CEQ Pilot Regional Resource Meeting – South Region, Washington, D.C.
10/22/2012	CEQ Pilot Regional Resource Meeting – Central Region, New York, NY
10/23/2012	CEQ Pilot Regional Resource Meeting – North Region, Providence, RI
11/8/2012	CEQ meeting on CEQ Pilot – Washington, D.C.
1/11/2013	CEQ Review Meeting – Washington, D.C.
1/25/2013	CEQ Pilot Webinar for Resource Agencies
3/27/2013	Regional Resource and Regulatory Agency webinar
6/18/2013	Regional Resource and Regulatory Agency – North Region, Boston, MA
6/20/2013	Regional Resource and Regulatory Agency – Central Region, New York, NY
6/25/2013	Regional Resource and Regulatory Agency – South Region, Philadelphia, PA
12/3/2013	Resource and Regulatory Agency webinar – New York, NY and webinar
11/6/2014	Regional Resource and Regulatory Agency – Central Region, New York, NY
11/14/2014	Regional Resource and Regulatory Agency – North Region, Boston, MA
11/19/2014	Regional Resource and Regulatory Agency – South Region, Philadelphia, PA

Source: NEC FUTURE team, 2015

Through this agency coordination, the FRA established specific resource working groups to inform various aspects of the development of this Tier 1 Draft EIS. Additionally, the FRA created an Environmental TWG that convened to discuss specific resource areas being covered in this Tier 1 environmental analysis. The resource working groups coordinated with the Environmental TWG. The FRA requested the agencies to participate in select Environmental TWG meeting(s) to help develop resource-specific impact assessment methodologies and to discuss the appropriate Tier 1 EIS outputs versus what would be more appropriately addressed in future Tier 2 analyses. In addition, in July 2015, the FRA conducted a series of technical briefings with multiple resource and regulatory agencies to discuss the treatment of specific resources in the Tier 1 Draft EIS.

11.4.8 Section 106 Consultation

The NEC FUTURE agency coordination process includes consultation with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), SHPOs, and Government-to-Government consultation with Indian tribes, undertaken as part of the Section 106 review process. Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 promotes the preservation, enhancement, and productive use of historic resources. It is administered through a review process that ensures historic properties and cultural resources are considered during the development of any federal project. The FRA has chosen to conduct the Section 106 process for NEC FUTURE concurrently with this Tier 1 Draft EIS process.

The FRA initiated the Section 106 and Government-to-Government consultation process in June 2012. Appendix G provides full details on the Section 106 process, including a listing of the FRA's meetings with the ACHP, the SHPOs, and the Indian tribes. The consultation process has resulted in preparation of a draft Programmatic Agreement that establishes the phased process by which the FRA will complete the identification, evaluation, and assessment of effects on historic properties, including those with religious and cultural significance to tribal nations. The FRA also worked with the signatories of the draft Programmatic Agreement to identify consulting parties that will provide future input to the Section 106 process. Appendix G includes the draft Programmatic Agreement.

11.4.9 Section 4(f) Coordination

During the agency coordination process, the FRA met with representatives from the National Park Service (NPS), ACHP, and SHPOs. The FRA presented effects-assessment methodologies and preliminary findings of analysis to inform possible effects under Section 4(f). Coordination with NPS, ACHP, and SHPOs occurred at various points throughout the development of this Tier 1 Draft EIS as part of the Environmental TWG and various agency-specific briefings. Appendix E, Section E.16, provides documentation of Section 4(f) coordination.

11.4.10 Section 7 Coordination

The FRA met with representatives from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to discuss the approach to conducting Section 7 consultation at the programmatic level for NEC FUTURE. Additionally, the FRA presented ecological resource effects-assessment methodologies and preliminary findings as part of an Environmental TWG meeting. In August 2014, a meeting was held specifically to address Section 7 requirements for NEC FUTURE. Appendix G provides documentation of coordination with the USFWS, NMFS, and NOAA.

11.5 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT (BEYOND SCOPING)

In addition to the public scoping process conducted in 2012, the FRA used a variety of communications tools, meetings, workshops, and informal outreach activities to inform and engage the public and interested organizations in NEC FUTURE.

11.5.1 Communication Tools

The FRA developed a series of communication tools to support the public outreach and environmental review process, which included a website, contact database, newsletters and fact sheets, media outreach, and social media.

11.5.1.1 Website

The FRA developed a website to serve as the primary portal for informing the public and stakeholders about the program, as well as soliciting comments and questions about the program. Key technical reports, newsletters, and meeting materials are made available for download through the website.

The website also includes a searchable glossary of technical terms used on the site and in program reports, a translation feature (Google Translate), a Spanish page with summary-level information on the program, and links to the FRA's social media (Facebook and Twitter).

The website was designed for compliance with Section 508 accessibility guidelines. In addition, it was designed in a format suitable for mobile devices, to accommodate persons who primarily access the internet through cell phones as well as travelers. The website is updated frequently to provide current information.

As of June 2015, the website has had 29,000 unique visitors, 45,000 sessions (or periods that a user is actively engaged), and 133,000 page views. Of these sessions, 64 percent were first-time visits. The highest website activity occurred in April 2013, October 2013, and the fall of 2014. These dates correspond with media publicity surrounding public outreach events and the release of project reports.

11.5.1.2 Contact Database

A master contact database was created and updated throughout the project. As of June 2015, the e-mail contact list contains over 3,500 contacts, and over 160 comments have been submitted through the website. The comments range from general comments about the planning process, geographic specific comments, and comments by rail riders about specific travel needs and preferences. All comments are relayed to the technical team for consideration.

11.5.1.3 Newsletters and Fact Sheet

The FRA created a series of newsletters to keep stakeholders and the public up-to-date on project developments and solicit input. The newsletters were electronically distributed to all contacts on the e-mail contact list and were also used in hard-copy mailings and distributed at meetings. Table 11-5 presents the newsletters that were developed to coincide with key milestones. Appendix F presents copies of the newsletters. In addition to the newsletters, an illustrated fact sheet was prepared for distribution at meetings, program briefings, and via the website. The fact sheet provided an overview of NEC FUTURE and was updated periodically.

Table 11-5: Newsletters

Date	Articles
#1: Summer 2012	Study Advances, What Alternatives will NEC FUTURE study?, NEC FUTURE Scoping Meetings Schedule, Stay Informed, What's Next?
#2: Winter 2013	A Public Dialogue Begins: Scoping Highlights, Scoping Themes, December Dialogues – Continuing the Discussion, Next Steps – Developing Alternatives for NEC FUTURE, Questions & Answers
#3: Spring 2013	NEC FUTURE Station Pop-Up Tour Travels the Corridor, Preliminary Alternatives Report Identifies Options for the NEC FUTURE, April Dialogues Focusing on Alternatives for the NEC, FRA Perspective, Follow NEC FUTURE on Facebook
#4: Fall 2014	Household Travel Survey to Inform NEC FUTURE, Update on Alternatives Development, Environmental Review Process – A Programmatic Approach
#5: Summer 2015	Alternatives Evaluation Moving Forward; Tier 1 EIS Alternatives Introduced at Public Open Houses; Economic Development Workshops Inform Analysis

Source: NEC FUTURE team, 2015

11.5.1.4 Media Outreach

Media outreach was performed at key project milestones. During Scoping, the FRA prepared media advisory materials and responded to requests for interviews. In 2013, with the release of the Preliminary Alternatives Report, a second media advisory was prepared, along with a press briefing. For the fall 2014 public open house meetings, the FRA also prepared a media advisory that was widely distributed. In addition, newspaper and other media articles that feature NEC FUTURE are listed on the project website.

11.5.1.5 Social Media

The FRA utilized both Facebook and Twitter to post and tweet before and during Scoping, at the release of the Preliminary Alternatives Report in April 2013, and to publicize various outreach events described below, including the rail station outreach described in Section 11.5.4 and the fall 2014 public open houses. In addition, a short video describing the program was developed and is available on the FRA's YouTube channel.

11.5.2 Regional Public Workshops

Subsequent to Scoping, the FRA held two sets of regional public workshops to provide an opportunity for informal discussion and feedback and to further inform the alternatives development process. The first set of workshops took place in December 2012 and the second set took place in April 2013. Each set of workshops included one session in each of the three program regions (North/South/Central). The FRA varied the locations for the second set of workshops, to provide the opportunity for convenient access for people in other areas of the corridor.

The FRA held the workshops between 5:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. An hour-long webinar version of the workshop was also offered each time, for the convenience of those unable to attend. The workshops were open to all, but pre-registration was required. Publicity consisted of e-mail invitations to the program contact list and social media postings.

11.5.2.1 December Dialogues

In December 2012, the FRA hosted the December Dialogues workshops (Table 11-6). Two webinars were also offered to accommodate interested persons unable to travel to one of the workshop sites. These took place during the afternoon and evening of December 6.

Table 11-6: December Dialogues Workshops Locations

Date	Region	City	Location
12/3/2012	North	Boston, MA	Massachusetts State Transportation Building 10 Park Plaza
12/4/2012	South	New York, NY	Moynihan Station 380 West 33 rd Street
12/5/2012	Central	Philadelphia, PA	SEPTA 1234 Market Street
12/6/2012; 3 PM	n/a	Webinar #1	n/a
12/6/2012; 6 PM	n/a	Webinar #2	n/a

Source: NEC FUTURE team, 2015

A total of 142 people participated. The December Dialogues consisted of a presentation, facilitated break-out groups, and general discussion. In the first exercise, participants were asked to review a list of goals drawn from the preliminary Purpose and Need Statement, as well as potential additions or refinements to those goals based on scoping comments. There was general agreement at each location with the initial set of goals and the proposed refinements, with discussion of potential additions to the list and suggestions for specific ways of applying the goals. Common themes across locations included the following:

- ▶ Improve connections between commuter and Intercity rail, as well as between NEC rail services and other modes, including buses and airports.
- ▶ Begin by improving the current system to a state of good repair. Only after that is done should any expansion of service occur.
- ▶ The plan should be cost effective and affordable—both affordable to build, maintain, and operate and affordable for customers.
- ▶ The environmental goals should address emerging threats such as climate change and rising tides.
- ▶ Reduce trip time, connect and grow downtowns and foster transit-oriented development.
- ▶ Seek to increase mode share and grow rail ridership.

Input from this exercise was used to further develop the program goals.

The second exercise focused on defining the passenger rail service characteristics most important to the participants (i.e., to a typical commuter, intercity traveler, or downtown/business representative). In all locations, frequency and reliability were viewed as the most important service characteristics from the perspective of rail commuters and downtown business interests, while travel time was most important from the intercity traveler perspective. When representing themselves or

their organizations, the highest-ranked service characteristics were travel time, reliability, and frequency, in that order.

The results of the December Dialogues underscored the importance of providing a range of investment scenarios for the NEC, as well as a flexible approach to the use of additional railroad capacity, allowing operators to respond to changing needs.

11.5.2.2 April Dialogues

In April 2013, the FRA hosted another set of regional workshops using a similar format (Table 11-7).

Table 11-7: April Dialogues Workshops Locations

Date	Region	City	Location
4/8/2013	North	New Haven, CT	Gateway Community College 20 Church Street
4/9/2013	Central	Newark, NJ	NJTPA One Newark Center
4/10/2013	South	Washington, D.C.	Hall of States 444 North Capitol Street
4/18/2013	n/a	Webinar	n/a

Source: NEC FUTURE team, 2015

A total of 193 people participated. The April Dialogues began with a presentation followed by facilitated exercises that allowed participants to provide feedback on the Preliminary Alternatives (including the different service options, program levels, and route options entailed) and the evaluation criteria.

For the April Dialogues overall, the service option that focused on frequency emerged as the preferred choice, with faster service a second choice. Frequency was perceived as more important than speed across most groups in New Haven and Washington, D.C., while faster service was noted as a higher priority for most of the groups in Newark. In contrast, there was little interest in the service option emphasizing one-seat rides. Many participants expressed a willingness to transfer between local and express services if convenient cross-platform transfers were provided.

At each workshop, participants stressed the importance of connectivity between rail services and between rail and other modes. Participants varied in their preference of program levels, with the strongest support for Program Levels C and D and some support for a “B/C” range. See Appendix B, *Preliminary Alternatives Report*, for additional information on program levels. No groups in any location preferred Program Level A as an end state. However, many expressed support for an incremental “fix it first” approach that would start with the Program Level A improvements.

While most groups favored a second spine alternative (Program Level D), they had divergent views on which route option was preferable. Table 11-8 summarizes the feedback received on the Preliminary Alternatives’ routes.

Concerning evaluation criteria, the most preferred criteria across the workshops as a whole were ridership, followed by economic development and sustainability, cost, and service effectiveness.

Table 11-8: Summary of Feedback on Preliminary Alternative Routes at April Dialogues, 2013

Program Level	Preliminary Alternative	Potential Advantages	Potential Disadvantages
A - C	1–11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incremental benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not enough additional service or capacity
D	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High-speed service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficult to construct Coastal vulnerability
	13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High-speed service Avoids coastal areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental impacts of greenfield portions Bypasses New Haven
	14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High-speed service Service to Long Island Connects economic activity centers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental impacts of greenfield portions Bypasses Providence Long Island route not viable
	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High-speed service Service to Long Island 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental impacts of greenfield portions Delmarva route not viable from market or environmental perspective Bypasses New Haven, Baltimore and Providence Long Island route not viable Too many stops in Connecticut

Source: NEC FUTURE team, 2015

The results of the April Dialogues confirmed the importance of preserving a range of program levels in this Tier 1 Draft EIS, reflecting different visions for the future of the NEC. They also confirmed the importance of evaluating multiple route options, as the FRA has done.

11.5.3 Public Open Houses

The FRA hosted a series of public open house meetings for NEC FUTURE in November 2014. The purpose of these meetings was to introduce the Action Alternatives, give participants a better understanding of what to expect from a Tier 1 level of analysis, and provide an informal opportunity for the public to learn about the program, ask questions, and provide comments.

An open house meeting was held in each of the eight NEC states and Washington, D.C. Each meeting followed the same format, consisting of a series of display stations without a formal presentation. NEC FUTURE staff members were on hand to talk with participants and answer questions. The open houses took place 4:00–7:00 p.m. at the locations shown in Table 11-9.

A total of 377 participants attended the nine meetings. Attendees included a mix of rail riders and advocates, agency and city government representatives, real estate and development organizations, university students, and elected officials.

Meeting materials consisted of a set of 15 display boards and two videos. The FRA organized the display boards into stations focused on an overview of the program, preliminary information on the Action Alternatives, and the environmental review process. A final “exit” station provided information on next steps and public involvement, including ways of staying involved.

Table 11-9: Public Open House Locations

Date	City	Location
11/5/2014	New York, NY	Hotel Pennsylvania, 401 7 th Avenue
11/6/2014	Newark, NJ	North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority, One Newark Center
11/10/2014	New Haven, CT	Gateway Community College, 20 Church Street
11/12/2014	Providence, RI	Rhode Island Convention Center, One Sabin Street
11/13/2014	Boston, MA	Boston Public Library, 700 Boylston Street
11/17/2014	Washington, D.C.	Hall of States, 444 North Capitol Street
11/18/2014	Baltimore, MD	University of Baltimore Student Center, 21 Mt. Royal Avenue
11/19/2014	Philadelphia, PA	Southeast Pennsylvania Transportation Authority Board Room Complex, 1234 Market Street
11/20/2014	Wilmington, DE	Delaware Technical Community College, 333 Shipley Street

Source: NEC FUTURE team, 2015

In addition to the display boards, the FRA provided two short video loops—an introductory video on the program and an animation of existing train movements on the NEC. The introductory video featured footage of the NEC and statements from the FRA Administrator and Program Manager. The animation illustrated the high volume and mix of trains using the NEC today. In addition to these materials, comment cards and desk copies of technical reports were available. Participants were also asked to fill out a brief survey at the exit station with questions about their use of the NEC and their satisfaction with the information provided at the meeting.

Publicity for the meetings included comprehensive media outreach by the FRA, e-mail notifications to the NEC FUTURE e-mail list, social media messaging, a direct mail brochure, station-based outreach, and placement of posters in public locations near meeting venues. The FRA also conducted targeted outreach to EJ communities, including a mailing to EJ organizations and local officials, media advisories to minority media outlets, and distribution of meeting information through MPO partners. The station-based outreach included placement of over 100 publicity posters at selected Amtrak and commuter rail stations. The targeted stations included 22 Amtrak stations (including selected stations on the Keystone and Empire corridors and Hartford and Springfield), eight NJ TRANSIT stations, and additional commuter rail stations selected by Maryland Area Regional Commuter (MARC), Southeast Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA), and MTA-Long Island Rail Road. In addition, the FRA provided staffed “pop-up” information booths at the Hartford, CT, and Ronkonkoma, NY, stations, with information on the program and the Connecticut and New York open house meetings, respectively.

While discussion topics varied by location, common themes included the following:

- ▶ The need to fix the existing NEC before expanding
- ▶ The importance of freight
- ▶ Questions about the feasibility of a Long Island route
- ▶ Relationship of NEC FUTURE to specific projects including the Baltimore and Potomac (B&P) Tunnel, Amtrak’s Gateway initiative, New Haven-Hartford-Springfield rail, and plans for rail service from Washington, D.C., to Richmond, VA

- ▶ Cost, phasing (what improvements would be done when), and the difference between the Tier 1 and Tier 2 phases of the NEPA process
- ▶ The ability to modify or combine elements of more than one alternative
- ▶ The importance of airport connections
- ▶ Fare prices and affordability, particularly compared to intercity bus service
- ▶ Climate change
- ▶ The importance of the NEC to the economy
- ▶ The potential for transit-oriented development
- ▶ The importance of station areas and stations as destinations
- ▶ Opportunity for seamless ticketing
- ▶ The need to accommodate bikes on board
- ▶ The travel patterns of the Millennial generation, with implications for rail station access modes

Many of these concerns were similar to those raised in previous meetings and in scoping testimony.

11.5.4 Rail Station Outreach

The FRA conducted outreach activities targeting engagement with rail riders at 16 NEC stations over three weeks in April and May 2013. The station “pop-up” tour used a portable kiosk and handout to promote awareness among existing riders and encourage their involvement in NEC FUTURE. The FRA selected stations to engage riders with a variety of trip purposes, including intercity travelers and commuters.

The kiosk featured graphic displays with information on the Study Area, schedule, and alternatives development process. The FRA was on hand to share information and respond to questions from persons who stopped by the kiosk. Beginning at 7:00 a.m. each day, the tour was designed to interact with a wide range of passengers, including commuters traveling through the stations, and to encourage them to visit the project website. The tour reached over 12,000 rail passengers, including commuters and intercity travelers of all ages. The FRA’s social media accounts were regularly updated throughout the tour. Table 11-10 shows the locations included in the tour.

A similar activity was conducted in October 2014 to provide publicity at two stations off the existing NEC: Ronkonkoma, NY, and Hartford, CT. In addition, publicity posters describing NEC FUTURE and opportunities for public involvement were placed in approximately 40 rail stations prior to the November 2014 public open houses. Riders provided comments on a range of topics related to existing service and future options for the NEC, including concerns about the condition of existing infrastructure, equipment and stations; reliability; customer service; connections and schedule coordination, and stopping patterns (including suggestions about city pairs and ideas for new express services).

Many riders expressed concern about the timing of proposed improvements (with several stating that 2040 is too long to wait for improvements). Others volunteered information on their travel

patterns, including the factors affecting their choice of the train and the particular stations and services used. This information was relayed to the FRA for consideration in the development of the Action Alternatives.

Table 11-10: Station Pop-Up Appearances

Date	Station
4/22/2013	Washington, D.C.
4/23/2013	Baltimore, MD
4/24/2013	Wilmington, DE
4/25/2013	Philadelphia, PA
4/26/2013	Trenton, NJ
4/29/2013	Hamilton, NJ
4/30/2013	Newark, NJ
5/1/2013	New York, NY
5/2/2013	New York, NY
5/3/2013	Stamford, CT
5/6/2013	Bridgeport, CT
5/7/2013	New Haven, CT
5/8/2013	Old Saybrook, CT
5/9/2013	Providence, MA
5/10/2013	Route 128, MA
5/11/2013	Boston, MA
10/22/2014	Ronkonkoma, NY
10/31/2014	Hartford, CT

Source: NEC FUTURE team, 2015

11.6 OTHER STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS, BRIEFINGS, AND PRESENTATIONS

In addition to the coordination meetings outlined in Section 11.4, the FRA held a variety of meetings and briefings throughout the project to share information on the project and obtain input or feedback on study elements or findings, as well as insight and guidance from stakeholders to inform the study process.

11.6.1 Economic Development Workshops

In October 2014, the FRA conducted a series of invitational workshops in major markets along the NEC to help inform the economic effects assessment described in Chapter 6. Table 11-11 lists the nine locations where the workshops were held and the market areas discussed at each location. Private developers, local planners, economic development professionals, and academic institutions were invited to the workshops to help understand the key factors that affect station area development, broader economic development, and barriers to development.

Table 11-11: Economic Development Workshop Locations

Date	Location	Markets Discussed
10/1/2014	Arlington, VA	Washington, D.C. and suburban Maryland and Virginia
10/2/2014	Philadelphia, PA	Philadelphia, Harrisburg, PA, and Wilmington, DE
10/3/2014	Baltimore, MD	Baltimore and other Maryland markets
10/8/2014	New York, NY	New York City (five boroughs)
10/14/2014	Boston, MA	Boston, MA and Providence, RI
10/15//2014	Rocky Hill, CT	New Haven and Hartford, CT and Springfield, MA
10/16/2014	Stamford, CT	Westchester, NY, and Southern Connecticut
10/17/2014	Newark, NJ	New Jersey
10/30/2014	Farmingdale, NY	Long Island
8/4/2015	Webinar	Corridor-wide

Source: NEC FUTURE team, 2015

The workshops provided participants with an overview of NEC FUTURE along with information about the No Action and Action Alternatives. Stakeholders provided valuable insights and information for their respective markets concerning the potential for localized station area development, agglomeration/productivity impacts, and effects on the labor market. Qualitative information from the workshops was used to identify economic development evaluation factors for use in comparing alternatives, and helped to inform the economic effects assessment described in Chapter 6.

All workshop conversations explored the tradeoffs among travel speed, connectivity, reliability, and frequency of service. Participants uniformly valued reliability of service. Participants in the southern and central parts of the corridor indicated that speed was secondary, and that frequency of service and connectivity to target markets were the most important qualities needed for enhanced rail service to spur development in their communities. In the northern portion of the corridor, however, speed was valued more highly. Participants indicated that there was a threshold effect regarding the prioritization of speed and frequency—faster travel speeds were more important up to the point where they permitted a Boston to New York day trip. Once that speed was attained, additional frequencies and types of service became more important, as seen in responses in the southern portion of the corridor.

Collectively, the workshop discussions highlight some of the major factors that will influence station area development, agglomeration, and labor market outcomes. Based on these factors, a series of evaluation factors was developed for use in a qualitative ranking of the alternatives.

The FRA prepared a document⁴ that summarizes the information, ideas, and perspectives shared during the workshops. In addition, the FRA conducted a webinar to review the summary document with stakeholders.

11.6.2 Presentations to Interested Organizations

The FRA provided presentations on NEC FUTURE for a variety of stakeholder organizations, as well as at universities and conferences. Table 11-12 lists these presentations.

⁴ Economic Development Workshops Summary, July 2015, www.necfuture.com

Table 11-12: Presentations to Interested Organizations

Date	Organizational Briefing
3/12/2012	Regional Plan Association (RPA) Business Alliance for Northeast Mobility, Philadelphia, PA
11/13/2012	RPA Business Alliance for Northeast Mobility, New Haven, CT
1/24/2013	Women's Transportation Seminar, Philadelphia Chapter, Philadelphia, PA
2/4/2013	United South and Eastern Tribes, USET Impact Week, Arlington, VA
3/16/2013	National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP), VA/D.C./MD Region, Washington, D.C.
4/6/2013	NARP Mid-Atlantic Region, Harrisburg, PA
4/6/2013	NARP New England Region, Portland, ME
4/13/2013	NJ Association of Rail Passengers, Bordentown, NJ
4/17/2013	NJ TransAction, Atlantic City, NJ
5/12/2013	Central Jersey Forum, Hillsborough, NJ
6/5/2013	American Public Transit Association, Philadelphia, PA
6/13/2013	Virginia High Speed Rail Association, Richmond, VA
6/24/2013	National Association of Regional Councils, Philadelphia, PA
8/12/2013	Raritan Valley Coalition, Somerville, NJ
10/30/2013	North American Strategic Infrastructure Leadership Forum, Washington, D.C.
11/8/2013	American Planning Association - New York Metro Chapter
1/13/2014	Transportation Research Board, Public Involvement Poster Session, Washington, D.C.
1/13/2014	Transportation Research Board, Committee on Intercity Rail, Washington, D.C.
1/15/2014	Presentation for SOKA University visiting students, New York, NY
2/25/2014	U.S. High-Speed Rail Association, Washington, D.C.
2/22/2014	Morgan State University, Baltimore, MD
4/29/2014	American Planning Association National Planning Conference, Atlanta, Georgia
6/17/2014	American Public Transit Association, Montreal, Canada
10/28/2014	American Planning Association – Delaware/Maryland Chapter Conference, Newark, DE
1/19/2015	Transportation Research Board Annual Meeting, Washington, D.C.
4/21/2015	NJ TransAction, Atlantic City, NJ
5/21/2015	Women's Transportation Seminar Annual Meeting, Chicago, IL
6/22/2015	American Public Transit Association, Salt Lake City, UT

Source: NEC FUTURE team, 2015

11.7 TARGETED OUTREACH TO ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE POPULATIONS

The NEC FUTURE public involvement process includes targeted outreach to low-income and minority populations, which have historically been under-represented in transportation decision-making. EJ populations⁵ are a significant component of the overall Study Area population, which includes over 20 million minority residents and over 5 million low-income residents.

Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations. E.O. 12898, issued on February 11, 1994, promotes nondiscrimination in

⁵ U.S. DOT Environmental Justice Order 5610.2(a), issued on May 2, 2012, defines minority individuals as persons belonging to one of the following groups: American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, Black (not of Hispanic Origin) and Hispanic or Latino. It defined low-income individuals as persons whose household income is at or below the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services poverty guidelines.

federal programs affecting human health and the environment, and requires that minority and low-income populations be provided access to public information and an opportunity to participate in matters relating to the environment. U.S. DOT released an updated Environmental Justice Order 5610.2(a) on May 2, 2012, reinforcing the agency's commitment to EJ principles.

The FRA has followed inclusive public involvement practices throughout NEC FUTURE such as holding all public meetings in transit-accessible locations, providing notices in minority media, placing all meeting materials online and encouraging questions and comments through the website, utilizing visualization graphics to explain key concepts, and providing opportunities for informal interaction outside of traditional meetings. In addition, the program website includes a translation feature (Google Translate) and is designed in a mobile-friendly format, for convenient use by persons who rely on cell phones for internet access. The FRA translated selected materials into Spanish, which was identified as the language spoken by the largest number of persons with limited English proficiency along the existing NEC and the routes of the Action Alternatives.

Beyond these basic practices, to assist in understanding and communicating with the varied EJ populations present in the Study Area, the FRA provided information to and encouraged involvement in the program by organizations that represent minority and low-income communities in each state and Washington, D.C. The FRA also provided information on the program to chief elected officials in jurisdictions with EJ population concentrations as part of the outreach to local officials described in Section 11.4.5.

- ▶ The FRA developed an EJ contact list for NEC FUTURE, including organizations representing low-income and minority persons in each state and Washington, D.C., in areas along the existing NEC. The list was expanded with additional contacts gained through research and referrals, as well as organizations serving areas along the Representative Routes for this Tier 1 Draft EIS, once these were defined. Periodic e-mail alerts, including meeting invitations, updates, and e-newsletters were sent to these organizations, which are listed in Appendix F.
- ▶ During the Scoping process described in Section 11.3, the FRA placed display advertisements in minority media outlets (in English and Spanish as appropriate), as detailed in the *Scoping Summary* (Appendix F, Agency and Public Involvement). E-mail notices about the scoping process and scoping meetings were sent to organizations on the EJ contact list.
- ▶ For the public open houses in November 2014 (described in Section 11.5.3), a more extensive targeted outreach process was conducted. This included the following elements:
 - Prior to the open houses, a brochure was mailed to EJ organizations and local officials representing EJ populations along the NEC. The brochure provided background on the program and its potential significance for communities, an invitation to the open houses, and information on the public involvement process and other ways of participating in NEC FUTURE.
 - The FRA solicited assistance from MPOs in the Study Area to share EJ contact lists and/or help distribute meeting information through their EJ and general distribution lists, social networks, and websites.

- Open-house publicity materials, including rail station posters and electronic flyers, referred Spanish-speaking readers to meeting information in Spanish on the program website, and a Spanish-speaking staff person was present at each meeting.
- The FRA circulated a media advisory to minority media outlets.
- ▶ While not targeting EJ populations specifically, the FRA designed the rail station outreach described in Section 11.4.4 to be inclusive of all segments of the population, and followed the principle of going directly to people who might not otherwise learn about the program or attend a meeting. During the station outreach, the FRA engaged in discussions with thousands of passengers from widely diverse backgrounds.
- ▶ A Spanish language web page was added to the website with background information on the program, including a Spanish-subtitled version of the program video.

11.8 DOCUMENTATION

Along with engaging the public for better decision-making, one of the vital functions of a public involvement program is to provide a fully documented project record of how and why decisions were made. To this end, the agency and public involvement process and the topics raised by stakeholders and the public have been documented and summarized throughout NEC FUTURE. Ideas and concerns raised by the public have been shared with the FRA to be appropriately integrated into the planning and environmental review process. In addition to the discussion in this chapter, more information on how the FRA has addressed stakeholder input in the preparation of this Tier 1 Draft EIS can be found in the *Scoping Summary* (Appendix F, Agency and Public Involvement) and in Chapter 4, Alternatives Considered.