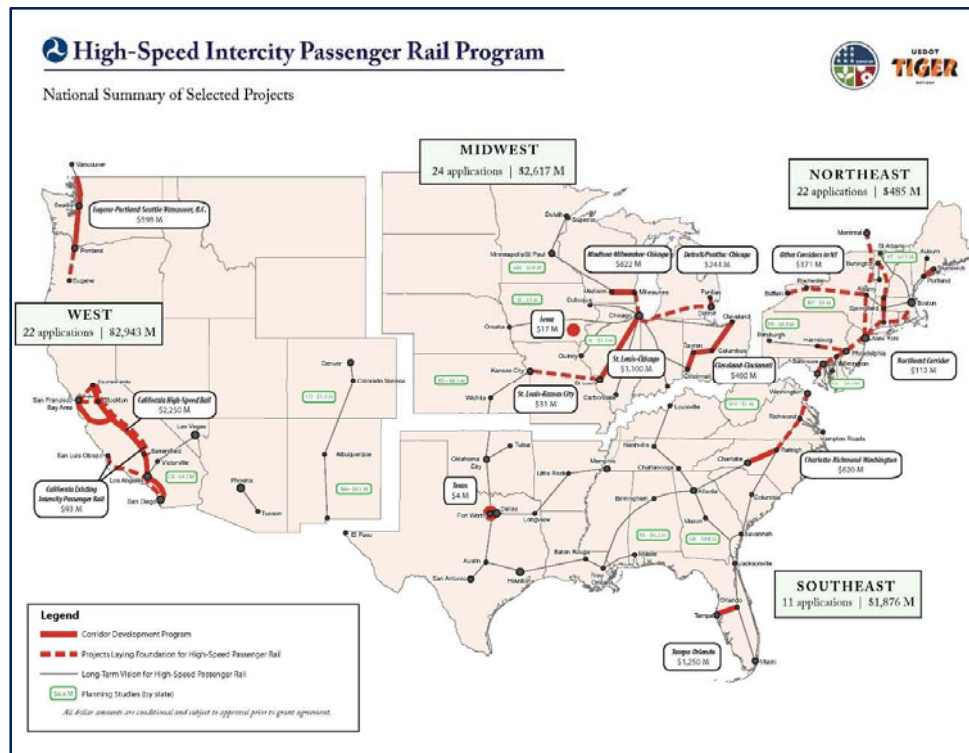


Illinois Planning and Environmental Studies for FRA Applications for
High-Speed and Intercity Passenger Rail (HSIPR)

Prepared by
Tim Selover, PE, AICP
Parsons Brinckerhoff

On April 16, 2009, President Obama described his “Vision for High Speed Rail” in the United States and announced the inclusion of High-Speed and Intercity Passenger Rail (HSIPR) projects under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). There are several key corridors which are shown below.



In response to the June 23, 2009 Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) guidance on implementing the vision for developing HSIPR projects, the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) prepared applications for funding for the FRA’s Track 1, 2, and 3 Programs.

For Track 1 applications for final design and construction of “ready to go” projects, the FRA required completed project-level National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documentation, such as final environmental impact statements (EIS), environmental assessments (EA), or categorical exclusions (CE). For Track 2 applications, which include the development of a set of inter-related projects that result in the implementation of new high speed or intercity passenger rail corridors, the FRA required a corridor-wide EA to be performed to comply with NEPA requirements. This corridor-wide EA documents potential environmental impacts at the corridor or program level. In addition, the FRA established evaluation criteria for all of the HSIPR applications that included economic recovery benefits and other public benefits. Below is a summary of the applications tracks:

- **Track 1:** “Ready to go” projects
- **Track 2:** Inter-related projects for implementing new high-speed or intercity rail corridor
- **Track 3:** Design and environmental studies in preparation for Tracks 1 & 2
- **Track 4:** For projects with at least 50% non-federal share

The IDOT applications for HSIPR projects included the following projects:

Track 1

- Validation that the Chicago – St. Louis High Speed Rail Project Final EIS (Jan 2003) and the Record of Decision (Jan 2004)
- CE for Chicago – St. Louis High Speed Rail Corridor
- CE for Galesburg Congestion Relief Project

Track 2

- EA for double-tracking of the Chicago – St. Louis HSR Corridor
- EA for re-introducing intercity passenger rail for the Chicago – Dubuque Corridor

Track 2 Application Summaries

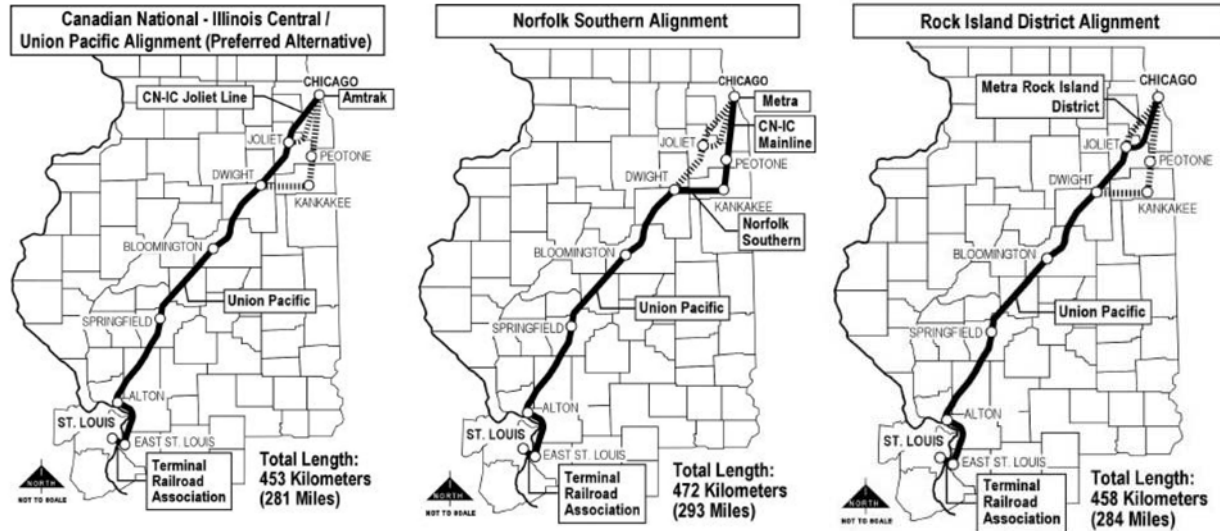
The Track 2 applications were due on October 2, 2009 and included an EA as part of the application for both the Chicago-St. Louis and Chicago-Dubuque corridors. Below is a summary of both of these projects.

Chicago-St. Louis Corridor Environmental Assessment

An EIS was prepared for this corridor in 2003 and included a preferred alternative. This preferred alternative uses the existing Amtrak routing between Amtrak Station in St. Louis and Union Station in Chicago. This routing uses the Union Pacific Railroad between St. Louis and Dwight. Between Dwight and Chicago, three routing options were examined. They included:

- Canadian National – Illinois Central / Union Pacific Alignment: This routing is the current Amtrak service via the Union Pacific and Canadian National.
- Norfolk Southern Alignment: This routing uses the Canadian National – Illinois Central mainline and Norfolk Southern (formerly Conrail) via Kankakee and would serve the proposed South Suburban Airport.
- Rock Island District Alignment: This routing uses the Union Pacific between Dwight and Joliet and the Metra Rock Island District between Joliet and Chicago Union Station.

These routings are shown below:



Source: Final Environmental Impact Statement Chicago – St. Louis High-Speed Rail Project, FHWA-FRA, January 2003

The Chicago – St. Louis corridor project proposed to provide a double track mainline between St. Louis and Chicago. Other project elements include, rehabilitate the existing mainline, in terms of roadbed; tie replacement, rail and ballast; and install or upgrade train signaling where necessary. Maximum speed will be 110 mph between St. Louis and Joliet, and current maximum speeds between Joliet and Chicago. It is anticipated that the vast majority of construction activities, including staging areas, will be within existing railroad rights-of-way.

Chicago-Dubuque Corridor Environmental Assessment

Previous studies for this corridor include a Feasibility Study on Proposed Amtrak Service Chicago – Rockford – Galena – Dubuque (Revised June 22, 2007) that examined options for incremental improvements to support one round trip per day between Chicago and Dubuque, and an ongoing Transit Alternatives Analysis study being conducted by the Northern Illinois Commuter Transportation Initiative (NICTI) that is looking at passenger and commuter rail options between Elgin and Rockford, Illinois.

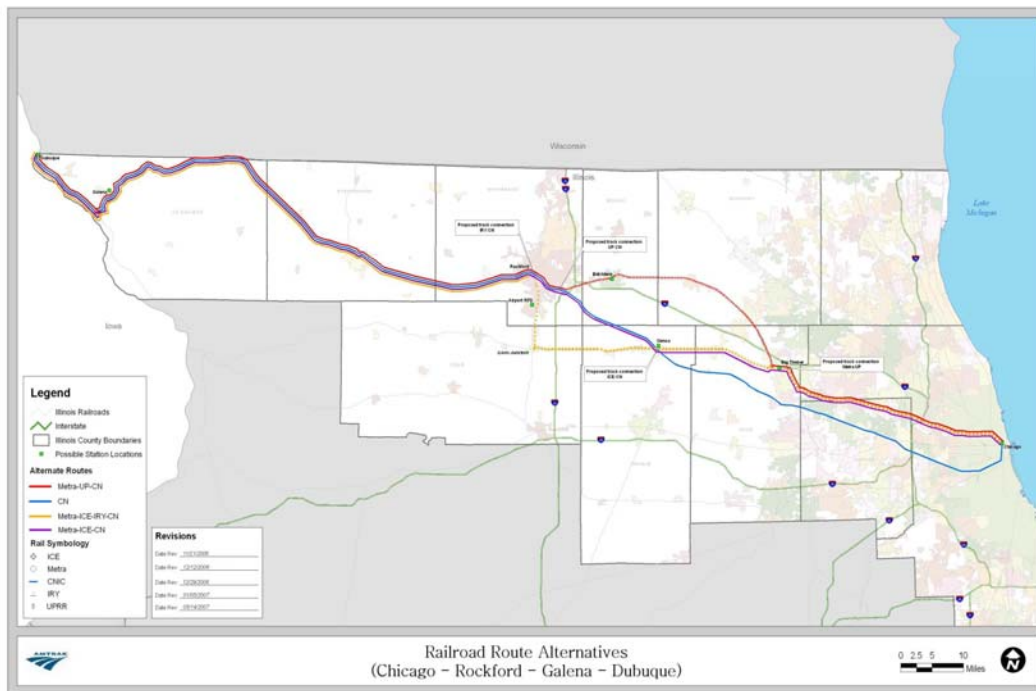
Based on the previous studies, several routing options were examined to provide service from Chicago to Dubuque. These routings include:

- Route A: Chicago – Elgin – Rockford – Galena – Dubuque via Amtrak/Metra/UP/CN: This routing begins at the Amtrak Chicago Terminal in downtown Chicago and uses the Metra Milwaukee District West (MD-W) Line to Big Timber; the Union Pacific (UP) Belvidere Subdivision to Rockford; and the Canadian National (CN) Freeport Subdivision to Dubuque serving stations in Chicago, Bensenville, Belvidere, Alpine Road, Rockford, Freeport, Galena, and Dubuque.
- Route B: Chicago – Elgin – Genoa – Rockford Airport – Rockford – Galena – Dubuque via Amtrak/Metra/ICE/IRY/CN: This routing begins at the Amtrak Chicago Terminal in downtown Chicago and uses the Metra MD-W Line to Big Timber; the Iowa, Chicago,

and Eastern (ICE) Railroad [now the Canadian Pacific (CP) Railway] to Davis Junction; the Illinois RailNet (IRY) to Rockford; and the CN Freeport Subdivision to Dubuque serving stations in Chicago, Bensenville, Genoa, Rockford Airport, Rockford, Freeport, Galena, and Dubuque.

- Route C: Chicago – Elgin – Genoa – Rockford – Galena – Dubuque via Amtrak/CN: This routing begins at the Amtrak Chicago Terminal in downtown Chicago and uses the Canadian National Freeport Subdivision to Rockford and Dubuque, serving stations in Chicago, West Elgin, Genoa, Alpine Road, Rockford, Freeport, Galena, and Dubuque.
- Route D: Chicago – Elgin – Genoa – Rockford – Galena – Dubuque via Amtrak/Metra/ICE/CN: This routing begins at the Amtrak Chicago Terminal in downtown Chicago and uses the Metra MD-W Line to Big Timber; the ICE Railroad to Genoa; and the CN Freeport Subdivision to Rockford and Dubuque serving stations in Chicago, Bensenville, Genoa, Alpine Road, Rockford, Freeport, Galena, and Dubuque.

These routings are shown below.



Source: Feasibility Report on Proposed Amtrak Service Chicago-Rockford-Galena-Dubuque, Amtrak, Rev. June 22, 2007

The Chicago – Dubuque corridor project will rehabilitate existing rail infrastructure to 79 mph maximum operating speeds in order to restore previous intercity passenger rail service (Amtrak last served this route in 1981). It will rehabilitate roadbed; replace ties, rail and ballast; and install or upgrade train signaling where necessary. It is anticipated that the vast majority of construction activities, including staging areas, will be within existing railroad rights-of-way.