



**SOUTH FLORIDA EAST COAST (FEC)  
ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS**

**F.M. NO. 417031-1-22-01**

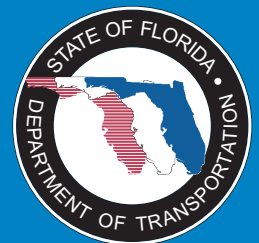
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***Notice of Intent***

*Prepared by:*



***Gannett Fleming***



***January 2009***

## **DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

Federal Transit Administration

**AGENCY:** Federal Transit Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation and Florida Department of Transportation

**ACTION:** Continuation of the Early Scoping–Efficient Transportation Decision Making Process for the South Florida East Coast Corridor Transit Analysis

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**SUMMARY:** The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) issue this notice to advise governmental agencies, the public and other interested stakeholders of the availability of the Final Conceptual Alternative Analysis/Environmental Screening Report (AA/ESR). In addition, this notice also serves to advise governmental agencies, the public and other interested stakeholders of FTAs and FDOTs intent to continue the early scoping and planning-level National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)/Florida’s Efficient Transportation Decision Making (ETDM) process previously initiated for the South Florida East Coast Corridor Transit Analysis (SFECCTA) study.

The FTA and FDOT published a notice of intent (NOI) in the Federal Register on March 28, 2006 (Volume 71, Number 59) to advise the public of their intent to prepare a Tier 1 Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (DPEIS) for the SFECCTA. The study is designed to evaluate a range of transportation improvement alternatives intended to provide passenger transit service along an 85-mile section of the existing Florida East Coast (FEC) Railway corridor between Miami and Tequesta. During the first phase of the SFECCTA transportation improvement Alternatives Analysis (AA), a Tier 1 Draft DPEIS was completed that identified a number of transportation alternatives. [While a programmatic or tiered NEPA–ETDM process was initially undertaken, the form, substance, and eventual outcome of that process, as it was being pursued, may be likened to another recognized NEPA process - early scoping. The early scoping and planning-level NEPA/ETDM process will continue in an integrated decision-making continuum.](#) The Tier1 DPEIS has been renamed to the Conceptual AA/ESR. An electronic copy of this final report is available upon request from the below contact.

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The second phase of the SFECCTA will continue the AA process integrated with NEPA principles and processes with the preparation of a Detailed AA/ESR. The second phase is intended to result in the selection of one or more locally preferred alternatives (LPA). At the conclusion of the planning-level NEPA/ETDM process and selection of at least one LPA, the LPA will be subject to the appropriate environmental review under the NEPA. If the selected LPA(s) would have significant impacts, an environmental impact statement (EIS) would be initiated with a NOI published in the Federal Register and final scoping of the EIS.

**DATES:** Phase 2 Early Scoping Meetings

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Written comments on this notice are welcomed and should be submitted by **[DATE]** to: Scott P. Seeburger, Project Manager, Florida Department of Transportation, District 4, Planning and Environmental Management, 3400 West Commercial Boulevard, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33309-3421, (954) 777-4632, [scott.seeburger@dot.state.fl.us](mailto:scott.seeburger@dot.state.fl.us)

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

The NOI (Volume 71, Number 59), issued jointly, by FTA and FDOT, specifically addressed a two-step AA process, Tier 1 and Tier 2. Following issuance of the NOI, a public scoping process was initiated for the first phase of the study in accordance with 40 CFR 1501.7 that included numerous meetings as well as a public hearing. Scoping is prescribed by NEPA, primarily to identify issues/concerns and the range of alternatives to be considered. Initiating the scoping process early in the AA process, as was done for this study, is particularly useful in situations where, as here, proposed actions (LPAs) have not been identified and multiple transportation alternatives are under consideration in a broad corridor. The Council on Environmental Quality NEPA regulations allows scoping to be initiated early in the AA process as long as there is appropriate public notice and enough information available on the proposal so that the public and relevant agencies can participate effectively [see Council on Environmental Quality, “Forty Most Asked

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Questions Concerning CEQ's National Environmental Policy Act Regulations," 46 Fed. Reg. 18026, 18030 (1981), (Answer to Question 13)]. Thus far, information developed cooperatively with more than 90 key agencies and stakeholders, as well as the public, is more than adequate to continue an effective scoping process for transportation alternatives in the 85-mile long FEC Railway corridor.

The initial phase of the SFECCTA AA was conducted concurrent with and merged into a formal environmental review process in complete accordance with NEPA guidelines in order to preserve decisions resulting from the AA process. In addition, per FDOT policies and guidelines, an Advance Notification was prepared and the project was screened through the State of Florida's ETDM process. Although the study was initiated before the implementation of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), the SFECCTA study also complied with many of the requirements regarding the environmental review process of environmental studies to be created by Section 6002 SAFETEA-LU.

Through an iterative screening process a broad range of conceptual alternatives were considered. The first phase of the SFECCTA AA identified a shortlist of modal technologies and general alignments consistent with the FTA definition of conceptual alternatives. During this first phase, the study applied corridor-level NEPA principles and processes in the evaluation of alternatives and their environmental impacts as well as in the collaboration with governmental agencies and the public involvement program. The entire process was documented in a DPEIS. This environmental statement served as the administrative record to document the environmental analysis performed to support each phase of decision-making, federal agency oversight, agency coordination, and public comments and responses. The DPEIS identified 13 Build Alternatives comprised of four categories of modal technologies, three individual corridor sections, and the FEC Railway as the general alignment. A copy of the renamed final report, Conceptual AA/ESR, has been circulated to affected Federal, State, and local government agencies and to other interested stakeholders. The report may also be viewed or downloaded from the project's website at [www.sfecstudy.com](http://www.sfecstudy.com). Bound copies of the Conceptual AA/ESR

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will be available for public review, between **November xx, 2008 to December xx, 2008,**  
**at the following locations:**

This circulation and comment period will conclude the first phase of the AA process.

The SFECCTA study will continue into its second phase of the AA process with the preparation of a Detailed AA/ESR consistent with the FTA definition for detailed alternatives. The continuation of linking the AA process with NEPA principles and processes will build upon the analysis and results of the Conceptual AA/ESR. Because FDOT may seek New Starts funding for one or more of the LPAs, linking the AA process with NEPA principles and processes will also serve as the vehicle for consideration of alternatives consistent with the provisions of 49 U.S.C. § 5309 (Alternatives Analysis). In addition, such an approach will produce sustainable decisions that will prevent decisions from being revisited during the final definition of alternatives or third phase of the SFECCTA study.

During the second phase of the SFECCTA study, the statement of purpose and need for the transportation improvement projects will be refined, as well as alternative means of meeting that purpose and need, thereby promoting an efficient NEPA process. Continuing the scoping process into the second phase of the study provides a means through which duplication, waste, and delay that could otherwise be experienced in situations such as this may be avoided. The second phase of the AA process will examine alignments, modal technologies, station locations, east-west connections, the location of maintenance facilities, highway grade and waterway crossings, costs, funding, ridership, economic development, land use, engineering feasibility, and environmental factors in the selected corridor.

To satisfy § 5309, AA requirements, FDOT will also evaluate options for transportation improvements in the study area that do not involve significant capital investment including Transportation Systems Management improvements and the implications of taking no action (i.e., the “no build” alternative). At the conclusion of the second phase,

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one or more LPA(s) (the “proposed actions”), as well as the appropriate project-specific NEPA processes, will be identified.

In conjunction with issuance of this notice, and consistent with provisions 23 U.S.C. § 139, a coordination plan for public and agency participation in and comment on the environmental review process for issues and alternatives under consideration here and at subsequent phases of the process will be prepared.

The FTA and FDOT have sought and received comments from all interested individuals and organizations, public agencies, and Native American tribes on the second phase of the SFECCTA planning-level NEPA principles/ETDM processes through FDOTs Advance Notification/ETDM process. Comments were solicited on the refinement of the purpose and need for transit improvements in the corridor, the range of alternatives (including transit mode(s) and alignment(s) to be considered), methodologies and level of detail for evaluating alternatives.

Issued On:

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Ms. Yvette G. Taylor

Regional Administrator, FTA Region 4

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