

Rail Law Alert No. 1

06.22.12

FRA Publishes Notice of Intent to Prepare Environmental Study for Northeast Corridor Passenger Rail Improvements

On June 22, 2012, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) published a notice in the *Federal Register* announcing the preparation of a Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to evaluate potential passenger rail improvements between Washington, DC, and Boston.

Led by FRA, the project, billed as NEC FUTURE, involves the coordination of the states along the corridor, the Northeast Corridor Infrastructure and Operations Advisory Commission, Amtrak, and other local, state and federal stakeholders. NEC FUTURE is aimed at defining current and future markets for the development of improved passenger rail service and capacity on the Northeast Corridor (NEC), developing an incremental program of improvements to meet the identified needs, and creating a regional planning framework for the program. The Tier 1 EIS will evaluate the whole of the existing NEC passenger rail spine and its connecting corridors, with the potential for analysis of areas outside the existing NEC and tributary lines.

In conformance with the requirements of the federal High-Speed Intercity Passenger Rail Program, the NEC FUTURE project will also involve the preparation of a Service Development Plan. The final Tier 1 EIS and Service Development Plan will together comprise the Passenger Rail Corridor Investment Plan for the NEC, which will be implemented through more detailed Tier 2 EIS review, planning, and construction.

FRA will schedule public meetings at nine locations on the corridor in August 2012 to solicit comments on the proposed scope of the environmental review, the project's purpose and need, alternatives, and methodologies for evaluating the project's anticipated effects. The public comment period on the notice of intent will close on **September 14, 2012**. Further information is available at the project's website. FRA instructs interested parties to comment online via the website or by e-mail.