DANBURY BRANCH PASSENGER RAIL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM
FTA ALTERNATIVES ANAYSIS/EIS STUDY

Spring/Summer 2010 http://www.danburybranchstudy.com

NEPA EVALUATION PROCESS

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) was signed into federal law in 1970 to protect, maintain, and enhance the environment. The Act requires that any project that is fully or partially financed by a federal agency must be analyzed in terms of its potential social and environmental consequences. This analysis includes consultation with other interested agencies, documentation of findings, and availability of information to the public for comment before implementation.

The Act has an established process to evaluate potential impacts and to document the resulting decisions. There are three documentation processes that correspond to the significance of environmental impact. These three process are Categorical Exclusions (CE), Environmental Assessments (EA), and Environmental Impact Statements (EIS). The Danbury Branch Improvement Program requires an Environmental Impact Statement.

Key components of the NEPA process are:

- Purpose and Need Statement
- Alternatives Analysis
- Impacts and Mitigation
- Interagency Coordination
- Public Involvement
- Comments

For more information regarding the NEPA process, please visit: http://environment.transportation.org, under "Environmental Issues" select "NEPA Process."

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

When a proposal for a project receiving federal financing significantly affects the quality of the human environment, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) must be completed. An EIS Includes detailed information regarding the proposed action and its alternatives. The EIS is an important tool to assist in the decision making process for projects that have potential environmental impacts such as the Danbury Branch Improvement. Interested parties, including the public and local agencies, are encouraged to provide input into the preparation of the EIS including comments on the draft EIS.

Key Milestones of the Danbury Branch EIS are:

- Notice of Intent – Published in May 2008
- Scoping – Completed in Fall 2008
- Draft EIS (DEIS) – Expected Fall/Winter 2010
- Final EIS (FEIS) – Expected Spring 2011
- Record of Decision (ROD) – Expected Summer 2011

Upon completion of the DEIS, the statement will be circulated and a public comment period of about 60 days will begin. After the comment period has ended, the FEIS is prepared and responds to questions and concerns raised during the comment period. Comments are evaluated and incorporated into the FEIS. The FEIS also identifies the preferred alternative.

The Record of Decision (ROD) is the final step in the EIS process and cannot be made until 30 days after the FEIS is filed. This comprehensive document includes the final decision and supporting evidence; identifies all other alternatives considered and why they were not selected; singles out environmentally friendly alternatives and explains why they may not have been selected; lists all environmental commitments made in the EIS; and adopts a monitoring and enforcement program for any applicable mitigation.

WORK COMPLETED TO DATE

Phase I of the study has been completed. This phase included a feasibility study to examine the needs of and identify potential improvements to Danbury Branch Commuter Rail. The purpose and need of the Danbury Branch Improvement Program has been established along with objectives to accomplish these purposes. The Purpose and Need is clearly identified in the Final Scoping Report published during Phase II of the study.

A high demand has been recognized in the area given that residential growth is primarily concentrated in the southern end. Route 7 volumes exceed intended capacity, and the ability to provide additional highway capacity is constrained for a number of reasons. Preliminary ridership forecasts indicate that a 20% increase in ridership could be created by extending the line to New Milford.

Public outreach has already commenced with several public meetings intended to gather input from residents. A Study Advisory Committee (SAC) was created to meet routinely and help steer the project ina way that serves the best interest of the region. There is an ongoing effort to continue coordination and public outreach.

Thirty-two alternatives were initially identified. These were evulated and narrowed down to five alternatives for final consideration in Phase II. Both social and environmental data have been collected to assist in determining the preferred alternative. Eighteen technical memoranda have been reviewsedand approved by regulatory agencies and CTDOT.

The Existing Transportation Systems Report has been completed. This includes train performance calculations, data to initiate travel forecasting, and a draft Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Report. The Existing Rail Infrastructure Report also has been completed. Lastly, the Draft EIS Outline is complete, and a Draft EIS report is expected in Fall/Winter 2010.

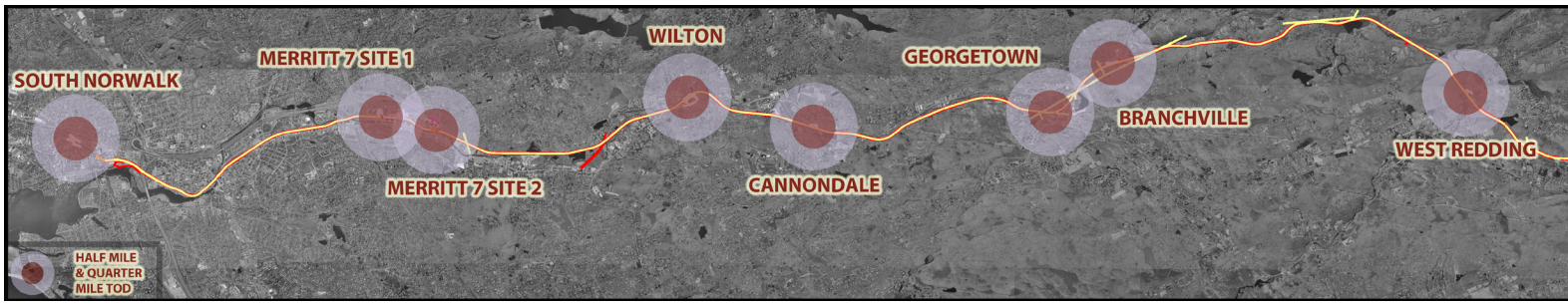
TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT:

Definition: Transit Oriented Development (TOD) is defined as a mixed-use community within an average 2,000-foot walking distance of a transit stop and core commercial area. TOD mixes residential, retail, office, open space, and public uses in a walkable environment, making it convenient for residents and employees to travel by transit, bicycle, foot, or car.

Guiding Principles for TOD in the Danbury Branch Corridor:

- Quality and Level of Commuter Rail Service – Improvements to frequency and reliability of service have an overall positive impact on TOD for the Branch.
- Level of Parking – It is critical to balance the need for increased commuter rail parking along the Branch line stations with the attractiveness and quality of the TOD environment.
- Quality of Pedestrian Access and Walkability within Each TOD Site – TOD relies on a safe, convenient network of sidewalks and pathways within a few minutes walk from the station, typically defined as one-quarter and one-half mile from the station.
- Control of Traffic Congestion at Each TOD Location – Careful planning of rail station access is critical to TOD in order to minimize congestion during peak hours.
- Balance of New Residential and Mixed Use Development – Successful TOD is based upon four components: density that is greater than the community average; a mix of residential, commercial, service employment, and public uses; pedestrian-friendly buildings; and a defined center with multiple attractions.

DANBURY BRANCH RAIL STATION SITES WITH POTENTIAL TOD WITHIN A HALF MILE RADIUS



DANBURY BRANCH ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS / EIS

IMPACT SUMMARY

ACTION OF EACH ALTERNATIVE

Alternative A "No Build." Action – nothing.

Alternative B "Transportation System Management." Action - make the most of what is there, such as service and operator improvements. No capital costs or vehicle procurement.

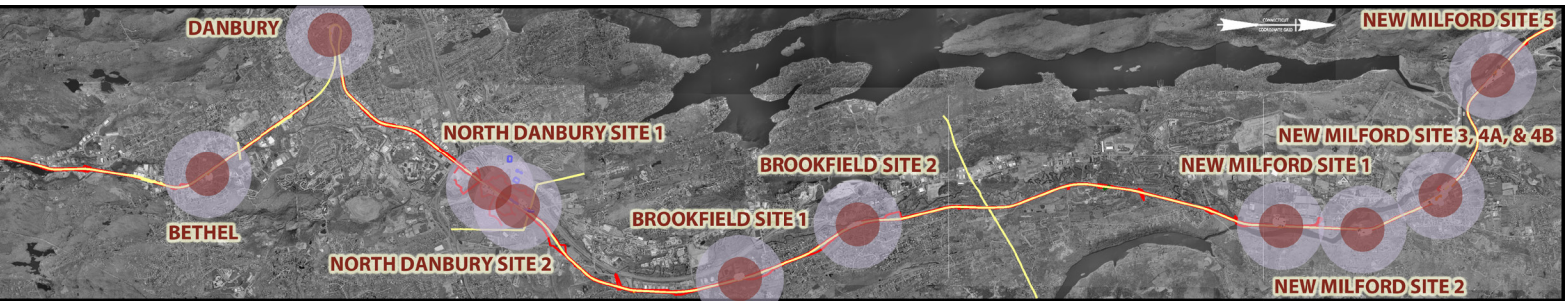
Alternative C "South Norwalk to Danbury Improvements." Action - between Norwalk and Danbury, approximately 23 miles, make track improvements, upgrade bridges, improve parking facilities and build traction power/catenary system.

Alternative D "Extension from Danbury to New Milford." Action - Extend passenger rail service 14 miles from Danbury to New Milford. Build new track signal system, 3 new stations, parking, and new maintenance and storage yard. Optional: new traction power system.

Alternative E "Improvements from South Norwalk to Merritt 7/Wilton." Action - Between South Norwalk and Wilton, approximately 7.5 miles, make track improvements, upgrade bridges, improve parking facilitiesm abd build new traction power/catenary system.

IMPACT SUMMARY

Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D	Alternative E
Positive: No New Capital Costs No New Operating Costs No New Environmental Impacts **Negative:** EPA Nonattainment Area Increased Roadway Congestion Increased Travel Time within Corridor Decreased Travel Time Reliability Does not encourage Transit Supportive Land Use and Economic Development	**Positive:** No New Capital Costs No Natural Resource Impacts More Frequent Rail and Transit Services Potential Air Quality Improvements Fosters Transit Supportive Land Use and Economic Development **Negative:** Increased Operating Costs Potential Increase in Noise and Vibration Greater Demand for Limited Parking	**Positive:** Faster and More Frequent Rail and Transit Services Potential Air Quality Improvements Fosters Transit Supportive Land Use and Economic Development Potential Reduction in Corridor Increased Parking to meet Demand **Negative:** New Capital Costs Increased Operating Costs Environmental Impacts (e.g. Natural Resources, Construction, Noise and Vibration) Property Acquisition	**Positive:** New Rail and Transit Services Potential Air Quality Improvements Potential Reduction in Corridor Congestion Fosters Transit Supportive Land Use and Economic Development New Station and Parking Facilities **Negative:** New Capital Costs New Operating Costs Environmental Impacts (e.g. Natural Resources, Construction, Noise and Vibration, and Cultural Resources) Property Acquisition	**Positive:** Air Quality Improvements Reduced Trip Time Higher Ridership Forecast Lessened Environmental Impacts (e.g. Emissions and Noise) **Negative:** Higher Capital Costs Visual Impact Due to Catenary Lines



BRANCH LINE NEWS

CENTRALIZED TRAIN CONTROL AND SIGNALIZATION PROJECT – UPDATE

The Centralized Train Control and Signalization System (CTC System) is a separate project from the Improvement Program and will allow for train movements and switches to be controlled remotely from MetroNorth's control center in Grand Central Terminal, rather than manually controlled by a train crew member. The system will relay important information to the conductors regarding the condition of the track ahead. The CTC System will ultimately integrate all train movements, switches, and signals over the Danbury Branch, replacing the existing "manual block" system.

MetroNorth has already relocated approximately half of all the existing communication and signal power cables along the Branch. None of the work required to complete the installation of this system will disrupt regular weekday peak commuter rail service. However, during an 80-day continuous weekday, off-peak track outage (Mon-Fri from 9:30AM to 4:00PM), regular weekday off-peak commuter rail service will be disrupted. Bus service will be available during this period. This disruption is anticipated to occur from August 2, 2010 through November 19, 2010. The goal is to have this work completed by mid-November so that the trains will be providing full service in time for the holidays. Signal power substations are anticipated to be completed by September 15, 2011, and the system should be up and running for beneficial use by May 15, 2012.

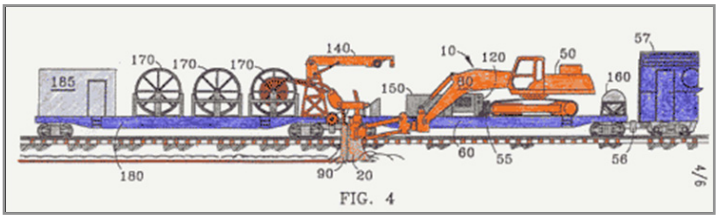


FIG. 4

The installation of the CTC system provides additional safety and operational flexibility to the Danbury Branch. The assumption that the CTC system is complete is built into all five of the alternatives being considered for the Danbury Branch Improvement Program.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Public involvement in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) occurs at two key stages: the Scoping Process and during the review of the draft-Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). The Danbury Branch Scoping Review occurred in 2008. The DEIS review is expected to occur in Winter 2011. The Pre-DEIS meetings are a requirement of the Connecticut Environmental Policy Act (CEPA) and serve as an additional opportunity for the public to be engaged in the project.

Comment forms will be distributed at all of the public meetings and can be returned to the address provided on the form. Additional comments can be provided at the project's website: HTTP://WWW.DANBURYBRANCHSTUDY.COM.

For further information about the project, please contact:

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