

with increased bus service in the North Corridor, and any additional reasonable alternatives that emerge from the scoping process. Scoping will be accomplished through meetings and correspondence with interested persons, organizations, the general public, and federal, state and local agencies.

The EIS will address the need to improve mobility and reverse-commute access in the corridor, reduce adverse environmental impacts in the region, provide long-term, cost-effective transportation infrastructure and services, and enhance regional economic development.

DATES: *Comment Due Date:* Written comments on the alternatives and impacts to be considered should be sent to Mr. Michael L. Bradley, Director of Rail Development, Central Ohio Transit Authority, 1650 Lake Shore Drive, Suite 300, Columbus, Ohio 43204 by August 15, 2003.

Scoping Meetings: Three public scoping meetings and one interagency scoping meeting will be held. The public scoping meetings will be held on July 22 and 23, 2003. The interagency scoping meeting will be held on July 24, 2003. See **ADDRESSES** below for the specific time and place of each meeting.

ADDRESSES: Written comments on the scope of the analysis and the impacts to be considered should be sent by August 15, 2003 to: Mr. Michael L. Bradley, Director of Rail Development, Central Ohio Transit Authority, 1650 Lake Shore Drive, Suite 300, Columbus, OH 43204.

Public Scoping meetings will be held at the following locations:

Tuesday, July 22, 2003 at Rhodes Office Tower, Lobby Hearing Room, 30 East Broad Street, Columbus, Ohio from 8 to 10 a.m. COTA will give a presentation on the proposed action at 8:30 a.m.

Tuesday, July 22, 2003 at St. Stephen's Community House, 1500 17th Avenue, Columbus, Ohio from 6 to 8 p.m. COTA will give a presentation on the proposed action at 6:30 p.m.

Wednesday, July 23, 2003 at North Broadway United Methodist Church, 48 East North Broadway, Columbus, Ohio from 6 to 8 p.m. COTA will give a presentation on the proposed action at 6:30 p.m.

The appropriate federal, state, and local agency offices will be notified individually about the time and location of the interagency scoping meeting.

The locations of the scoping meetings are accessible to persons with disabilities. Any individual with a disability who requires special assistance to participate in the scoping

meetings should contact Mr. Michael L. Bradley, Director of Rail Development, Central Ohio Transit Authority, 1650 Lake Shore Drive, Suite 300, Columbus, Ohio 43204 or should call the project information line at (866) "RAILCOTA or COTA TDD at (614) 228-1832 available weekdays 8:30 a.m.—5:30 p.m.), or should send an e-mail to info@cotafasttrax.com by July 14, 2003 in order for COTA to make necessary arrangements.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ms. Vanessa Adams, Senior Community Planner, Federal Transit Administration, 200 West Adams Street, Suite 320, Chicago, Illinois 60606-5232; phone: (312) 353-2789.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the federal lead agency, in cooperation with the Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA), the local lead agency, is preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for proposed transportation improvements in the North Corridor and adjacent areas. The lead agencies will also seek the cooperation of the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC), the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) responsible for transportation planning in metropolitan Columbus.

The transportation improvements have been defined through a Major Investment Study (MIS) conducted in 1995 and updated in 2001, which included extensive public outreach and interagency involvement. The MIS is available for public review at the COTA office by contacting Mr. Michael Bradley as described under **ADDRESSES** above. In accordance with the regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, the scoping process will be used to determine the alternatives to be considered in detail in the EIS and the impacts of those alternatives to be evaluated. The results of the MIS will not be re-visited unless significant costs or impacts not fully evaluated in the MIS are identified during scoping. FTA and COTA also expect the scoping process to identify alternative design concepts for evaluation. Alternative alignments and designs that meet the project purpose and need as reflected in the regional transportation plan will be addressed in the EIS.

I. Scoping

FTA and COTA invite interested individuals, organizations, and federal, state, and local agencies to participate in

defining the alternatives to be evaluated and identifying any significant social, economic and environmental issues related to the alternatives. Comments on the appropriateness of the alternatives and impact-related issues are encouraged. Specific suggestions on additional alternatives to be examined and issues to be addressed are welcomed and will be considered in establishing the final study scope. Comments may be made orally at the meetings or in writing no later than August 15, 2003.

COTA staff will be present at the scoping meetings to describe corridor alternatives, answer questions, and receive comments. Additional opportunities for public participation will be provided throughout the EIS preparation to review findings and results and to solicit comments. Interested persons will be notified of project progress through a continuing community information program and materials distributed to the project mailing list that will include all scoping participants.

II. Description of Study Area and Project Need

The study area for the North Corridor Light Rail Transit project (NCLRT) is located within the metropolitan area of Columbus, Ohio in the City of Columbus and Franklin and Delaware Counties. The transit alternative extends approximately 13 miles between the Franklin/Delaware County line in the Polaris area and downtown Columbus and centered on a path generally parallel to Interstate-71. The northern terminus of the transit study area is the intersection of Flint Road and Lazelle Road at the Franklin and Delaware county line and the southern terminus is the intersection of High Street and Fulton Street in downtown Columbus. The study area is generally bounded on the west by the Olentangy River and State Route 315 and on the east by State Route 3 (Cleveland Avenue/Westerville Road). Because one of the transit alternatives includes the shared use of the CSX Transportation (CSXT) and Norfolk Southern (NS) railroad right-of-way, the study will also evaluate impacts on the regional freight railroad network in Central Ohio.

Most of the corridor is within the urban setting of the City of Columbus, but it also includes the suburban communities of Minerva Park, Riverlea and portions of the cities of Worthington and Westerville. Several major activity centers are located within the corridor and at the northern and southern termini, including cultural sites, entertainment districts, hospitals,