

NEC FUTURE: A Rail Investment Plan for the Northeast Corridor

# Our Future on Track

Resource Agency Briefing  
January 2017

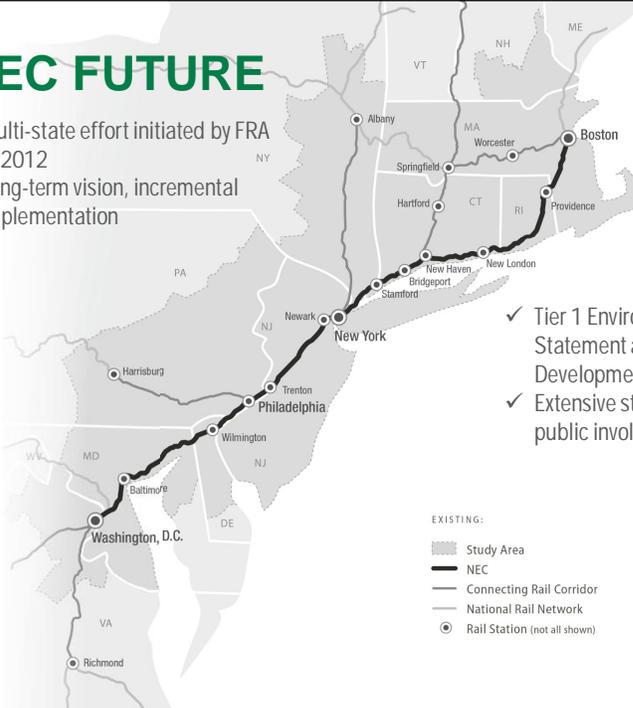


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## NEC FUTURE

- ✓ Multi-state effort initiated by FRA in 2012
- ✓ Long-term vision, incremental implementation



- ✓ Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement and Service Development Plan
- ✓ Extensive stakeholder, agency, and public involvement

## Purpose and Need

Purpose: upgrade aging infrastructure and improve the reliability, capacity, connectivity, performance, and resiliency of passenger rail service on the NEC for both intercity and regional trips, while promoting environmental sustainability and economic growth.

Key Needs:

- State of Good Repair
- Performance
- Environmental Sustainability
- Connectivity
- Resiliency
- Economic Growth
- Capacity

## Tier 1 EIS Process

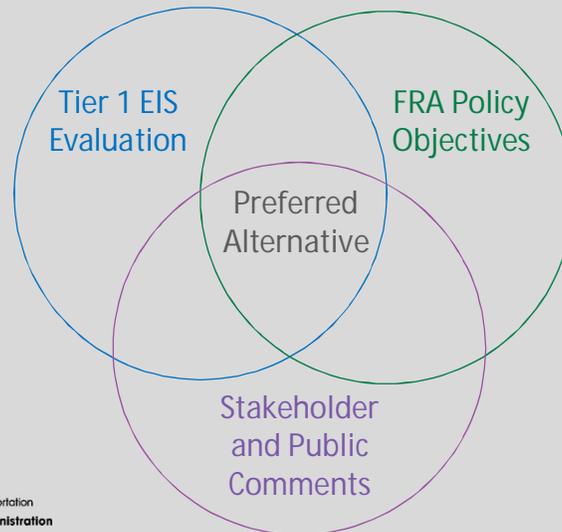
- Tier 1 Draft EIS issued *November 13, 2015*
  - Compared 3 Action Alternatives with a No Action Alternative
  - Did not recommend a Preferred Alternative
- Public Comment Period ended *February 18, 2016*
  - Over 3,200 individual submissions received
  - Comment Summary report and all comments posted online
- Tier 1 Final EIS released *December 16, 2016*
  - Incorporates and responds to public comments
  - Identifies and evaluates a Preferred Alternative
  - NOA published *December 23, 2016*, in Federal Register
- Record of Decision – 2017
  - 30-day waiting period – means FRA will not issue a ROD before January 31, 2017



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## Approach For Identifying the Preferred Alternative

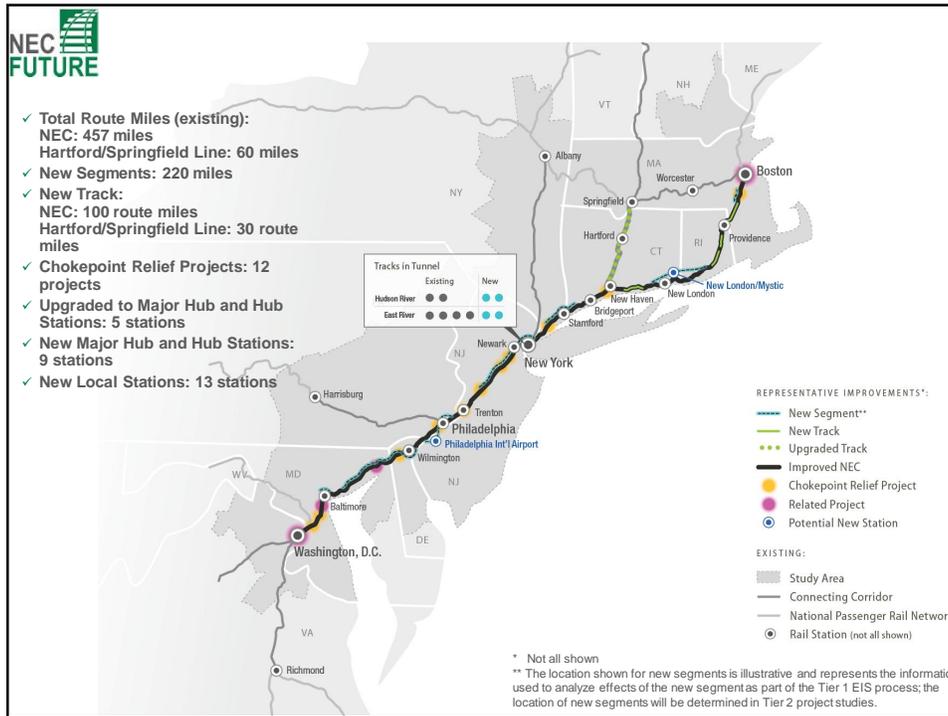


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## Preferred Alternative: Grows the NEC to Meet Future Demand

- Brings the NEC to a state of good repair
- Focuses on the existing NEC as an integrated passenger rail network of Intercity and Regional service
- Eliminates chokepoints and adds track to accommodate growth, enhance flexibility, and improve reliability
- Expands the reach of the NEC to new markets and connecting corridors
- Creates future opportunities to expand service on the NEC and its connecting corridors

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## Preferred Alternative: *Enhanced Performance*

- More Trains
  - Supports 3-5 times as much Intercity service with trains every 15 minutes during peak
  - Accommodates planned growth by the Regional rail operators
  - NEC ridership projected to double by 2040 to 520 million/year
- Faster Trips:
  - WAS-NYP in as little as 2 hours 10 minutes
  - NYP-BOS in as little as 2 hours 45 minutes
- More Reliable Service
  - Elimination of choke points and aging infrastructure minimize delays and enhance safety

## Preferred Alternative: *A More Connected Region*

- Convenient transfers between Intercity and Regional rail trains
- Incorporation of the New Haven-Hartford-Springfield Corridor into the NEC, with expanded service and one-seat rides to central New England
- A new Intercity station at the Philadelphia International Airport plus expanded service to NEC airport stations at BWI, Newark, Hartford, and Providence
- Improved connections to connecting corridors
  - Southeast (Richmond and Charlotte)
  - Keystone (Harrisburg)
  - Empire (Albany/Buffalo)
  - Knowledge/Vermonter (Vermont/Montreal and Inland Route to Boston)



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## Preferred Alternative: *Customer and Operator Friendly*

- Customer Convenience
  - More one-seat rides
  - Multiple train options at many stations
  - Coordinated schedules for easy and fast transfers
- More Efficient Operations
  - Simpler schedules
  - Shorter dwell times at major stations
  - Through service at Washington, D.C., and New York City
  - Opportunities for common equipment specifications and procurement



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## Preferred Alternative: *A Vibrant Economy*

- Reliable, frequent and fast travel across a region facing growing congestion
- Expanded access to jobs and workers
- Increased ridership supports station area expansion and development
- Significant job generation during construction
- Reduced vulnerability to service disruptions



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## Tier 1 Final EIS

- Presents the features and service proposed for the Preferred Alternative and evaluates potential effects on and benefits to the built and natural environment
- Documents responses to comments on the Tier 1 Draft EIS received during the comment period
- Provides corrections to the Tier 1 Draft EIS in response to comments received



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## Tier 1 Final EIS

- Presented in two volumes (see Volume 1, Chapter 2, Reader's Guide)
- Volume 1:
  - Physical characteristics and environmental assessment of Preferred Alternative
  - Tier 1 Draft EIS comments and responses (Chapter 11 and Appendix JJ)
  - Final Section 106 Programmatic Agreement (Appendix GG)
- Volume 2:
  - Tier 1 Draft EIS in full with edits, clarifications, and omissions highlighted (new text underlined)
  - Errata sheets for each chapter/appendix denoting changes



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## Tier 1 Final EIS

- Consistent with the Tier 1 Draft EIS
  - Uses the same key concepts, effects-assessment methodologies, data sources and data sets
  - Volume 2, Appendices provide effects-assessment methodologies, data sources and data sets
- GIS database (Data viewer) – inclusive of representative routes, stations, service types, and resource data
  - Used to assess effects for each alternative evaluated throughout the process
  - FRA offered access to the Data viewer to federal and state agencies

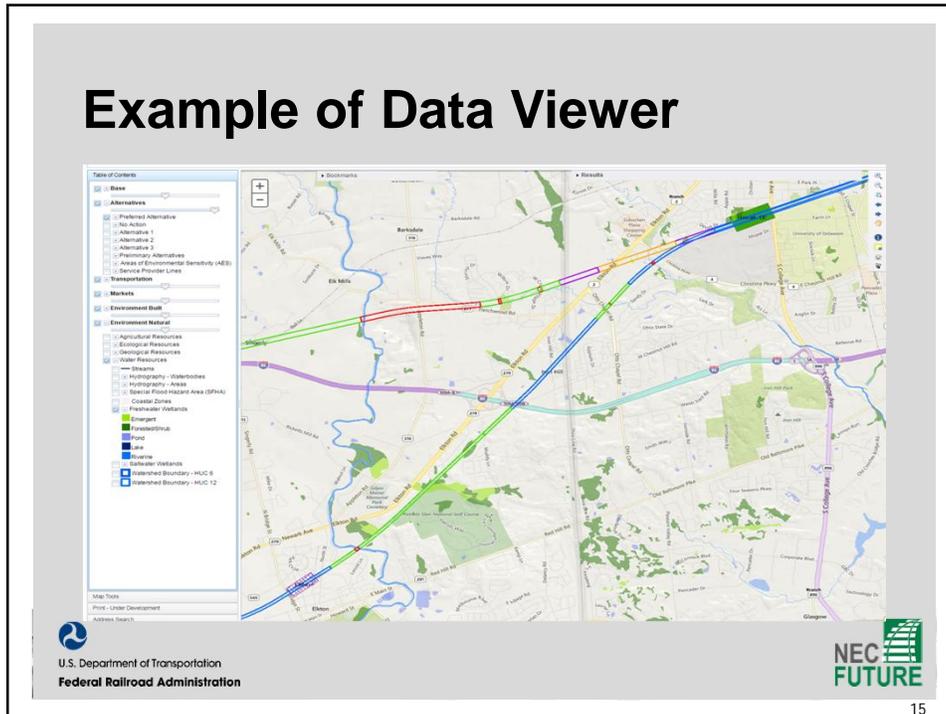


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## Example of Data Viewer



## Tier 1 Final EIS

- Findings of Tier 1 Final EIS insufficient to obtain permits or to allow construction to begin
  - High-level analysis based on readily available information, conceptual engineering, and not on field investigations
  - Tier 2 project studies will identify required permits and mitigation for unavoidable impacts
- Avoidance and mitigation will be further considered during Tier 2 project studies and could include:
  - Changes in construction types
  - Shifting routes
  - Adaptation measures for existing infrastructure
  - Construction methods and materials

## Tier 1 Final EIS

- Representative routes and construction characteristics are the basis for the analysis in the Tier 1 EIS
- New segments, separate but connected to the NEC, are illustrative of improvements necessary to add train service, improve travel times, and improve resiliency
  - New segments compliment the existing NEC; they do not result in abandoning parallel segments of the existing NEC
- Tier 2 studies are required next steps to decide where, when and how new segments should be added to achieve NEC FUTURE service and performance targets
  - Tier 2 studies will ensure state, regional and local involvement as well as comprehensive public outreach



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## How will this Tier 1 EIS be used during Tier 2 projects?

- Provides a starting point for subsequent Tier 2 project studies:
  - Use of NEC FUTURE Purpose and Need
  - Guide to potential areas of impact input to the Tier 2 study scopes of work
  - Established agency coordination and Government-to-Government relations with federally-recognized tribes
  - As a framework for advancing compliance with environmental regulations (Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act)



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## How can the Section 106 PA be used during Tier 2 projects?

- Establishes the framework for continued compliance with Section 106 during future environmental review processes
- Includes state-specific appendices that allow the Section 106 consultation process for Tier 2 undertakings to be adapted as necessary based on each state's requirements
- Identifies potential Consulting Parties
- Identifies federally-recognized tribes consulted with during government-to-government relations
- Continuation of coordination with involved parties
- Lack of involvement in the Tier 1 NEC FUTURE process does not preclude involvement at project level.



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## Next Steps

- Waiting period
  - December 23, 2016 – January 31, 2017
  - Brief agencies and interested parties
  - Consider feedback
  - A ROD will not immediately follow the Waiting Period
- Public meetings
- Issue Record of Decision that defines the Selected Alternative and FRA commitments
- Develop Service Development Plan
  - Collaboration with NEC Commission and stakeholder states
- Implementation
  - Coordination/leadership from states & railroads
  - Phasing/sequencing of improvements
  - Funding/financing plans
  - Project-level environmental analysis
  - On-going resource and regulatory agency involvement



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