Thank you for attending today's public meeting on the New Orleans Rail Gateway Program.

Baker

Special Assistance

- **If you require special assistance due to a disability in order to participate in today's public meeting, please see a Study Team representative at the Welcome table.**
- **Si usted necesita ayuda especial debido a una discapacidad con el fin de participar en la sesión pública de hoy, consulte a un representante del Equipo de Estudio en la mesa de bienvenida.**
- **Nếu bạn là người khuết tật cần sự giúp đỡ trong lúc tham dự cuộc họp này, làm ơn liên hệ với bộ phận tiếp tân.**

If you require special assistance due to a disability in order to participate in today's public meeting, please see a Study Team representative at the Welcome table.

Purpose of Today's Meeting

- **Provide an open-house style (open forum) opportunity to learn about the New Orleans Rail Gateway Program and talk informally with Study Team representatives**
  - **Present an overview of the New Orleans Rail Gateway (NORG) Program**
  - **Describe the study process for preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)**
  - **Explain how to receive Study information and participate in the decision-making process**
  - **Solicit input on issues of concern regarding this Study**

Today's public meeting is an informal, open-house style or open forum format.

We'll present an overview of the New Orleans Rail Gateway Program, the study process for preparing an Environmental Impact Statement and provide an opportunity for all interested parties to express their views.

In order to get the most out of this presentation, please refer to the materials that were handed out at the Welcome Table.

After you've listened to this presentation, review the project exhibits, talk with Study Team representatives, and give us your comments.

This public meeting is an important part of the transportation decision-making process and your input is encouraged and appreciated.

We hope you find this meeting interesting and informative.

The Federal Railroad Administration and the DOTD are preparing an EIS for the New Orleans Rail Gateway Program and infrastructure in Jefferson and Orleans Parishes, in coordination with the New Orleans Regional Planning Commission (NORPC) and the railroads operating in the New Orleans metropolitan area.

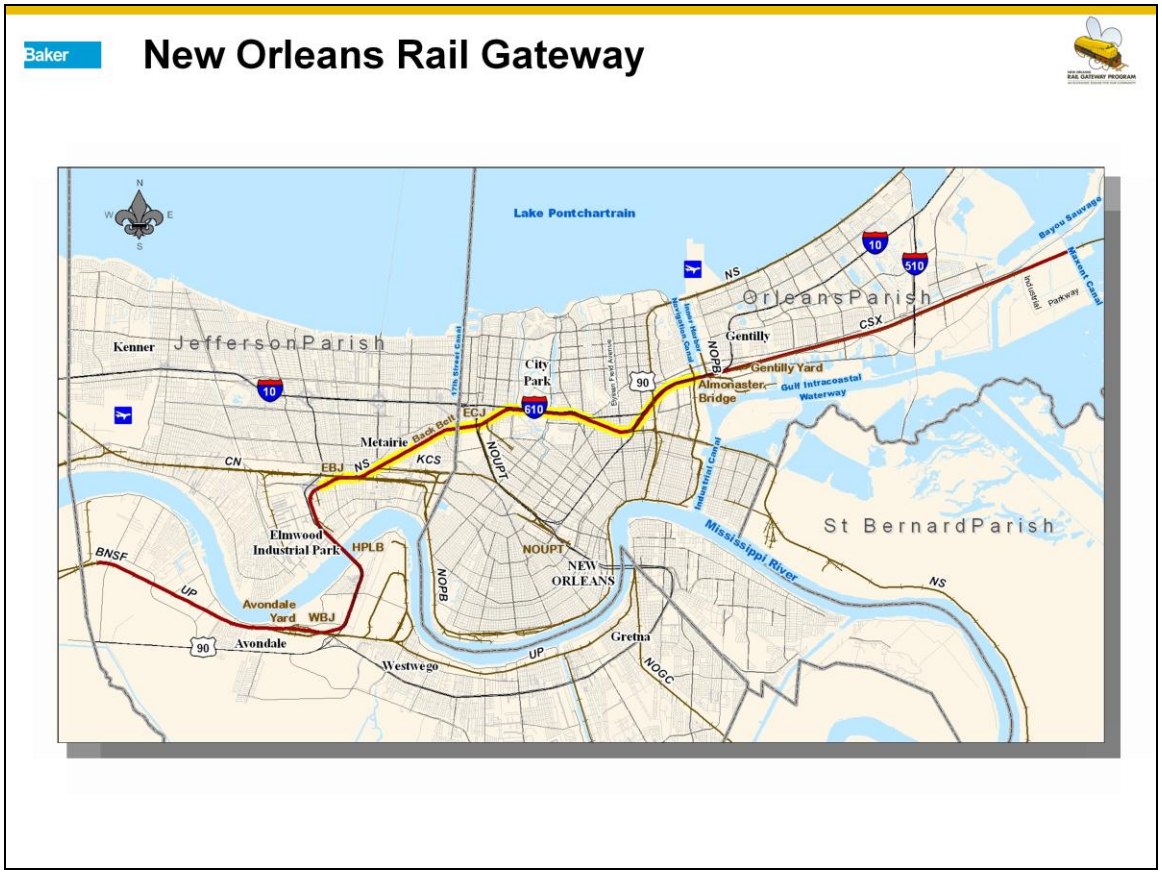
The Class I railroads, which are members of the Association of American Railroads (AAR), include Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway (BNSF), CN, CSX, Kansas City Southern Railway (KCS), Norfolk Southern Railroad (NS), and Union Pacific (UP) railroads, the terminal switching railroad, the New Orleans Public Belt Railroad (NOPB), and the National Railroad Passenger Corporation or Amtrak. DOTD and these railroads are advancing the NORG Program as a public-private partnership (P3) among these entities.

Baker

New Orleans Rail Gateway

The NORG is a rail corridor within Jefferson and Orleans Parishes, beginning on the west bank of the Mississippi River near the St. Charles/Jefferson Parish line.

From the Parish line it proceeds easterly along the tracks of the UP and BNSF through the Avondale Yard at West Bridge Junction (WBJ) and crosses the Mississippi River on the Huey P. Long Bridge (HPLB), which is owned and operated by the New Orleans Public Belt Railroad.



At the base of the HPLB, it traverses East Bridge Junction (EBJ) to the Back Belt tracks owned and operated by the Norfolk Southern Railway.

The NORG proceeds along the Back Belt, entering the City of New Orleans at the 17th Street Canal.

It proceeds through the City of New Orleans along the Back Belt, and connects with CSX trackage at Elysian Fields Avenue, and continues on CSX trackage crossing the Inner Harbor Navigation Canal at the Almonaster Bridge.

Baker

New Orleans Rail Gateway

It continues easterly traversing the CSX Gentilly Yard and proceeding through New Orleans East to its terminus near Industrial Parkway.

Baker

New Orleans Rail Gateway

- **Six of seven Class I Railroads**
- **Fourth largest US rail gateway**
- **One of only three rail gateways that are both rail interchange hubs and major Mississippi River rail crossing**
- **1.7 Million rail cars annually**
- **Port of New Orleans - #8 Port by tonnage**
- **Second, only to Chicago, in needing major improvements**

The NORG serves six Class I Railroads and three Amtrak passenger rail routes and the NOPB railroad links the Port of New Orleans, the eighth largest tonnage port in the United States, to the national rail network.

The Gateway is a critical link in the national freight rail system.

It is one of five major rail interchange points between the eastern and western Class I Railroads, and the Huey P. Long Bridge is one of only four Mississippi River rail bridges.

NORG is one of only three national rail gateways that are both rail interchange hubs and major Mississippi River rail crossings.

New Orleans is the fourth largest US rail gateway, but ranks second, behind Chicago, in needing major improvements.

Baker

Why are Improvements Needed?

- **Antiquated control systems and switches slow travel times through the Gateway**
- **Flood gates limit emergency responsiveness**
- **Almonaster Bridge requires frequent unscheduled maintenance**
- **Current freight demand routinely impacts both rail and road traffic**

  Average cumulative delays experienced daily:

  - **29.7 hours of Rail delays**
  - **112.4 hours of Vehicle delays**
  - **12.1 hours of Truck delays**
- **Future freight demand will increase negative community impacts and decrease regional economic competitiveness**

Throughout the NORG, trains must observe a maximum speed of 20 mph, necessitated, in part, by antiquated control systems and switches.

Flood gates at various locations are closed up to 24 hours prior to and following storm events, such as Hurricane Katrina in 2005, limiting the railroads' ability to transport evacuees and emergency supplies.

The NORG includes the existing Almonaster Avenue Bridge across the Inner Harbor Navigation Canal (IHNC), an 80 year old structure that is subject to frequent breakdowns. The electrical and mechanical components of the bridge are obsolete and are the cause of continual maintenance problems. In the closed to navigation position, the bridge has virtually no vertical clearance for marine traffic.

Due to its existing design and limited capacity, the Gateway cannot efficiently handle current traffic volumes, routinely resulting in delays to both rail and road traffic.

The Gateway handles approximately 35 freight trains per day with a cumulative delay of nearly 30 hours per day for train meets, including deceleration and acceleration.

Each of the 20 at-grade crossings along the Gateway handles over 20 trains per day. Several of these crossings are moderate to high volume arterials, carrying between 10,000 and 20,000 vehicles daily. The average cumulative delays experienced daily for vehicles and trucks at these crossings are 112.4 hours and 12.1 hours, respectively.

The Gateway is not able to accommodate anticipated future freight demand. The U.S. Department of Transportation forecasts that import and export freight tonnage could double by the year 2020 and domestic freight tonnage could increase by approximately 60 percent. Growth of shipping port traffic will also increase rail traffic in the Gateway.

This will result in negative impacts to the community and decreased regional economic competitiveness.

Baker

Purpose and Need

- **Reduce vehicle congestion at street crossings**

The purpose of this study is to identify a Program of Projects that:

Reduce vehicle congestion at street crossings

Baker

Purpose and Need

- **Reduce vehicle congestion at street crossings**
- **Improve emergency evacuation conditions**

Improve emergency evacuation conditions

Baker

Purpose and Need

- **Reduce vehicle congestion at street crossings**
- **Improve emergency evacuation conditions**
- **Improve vehicle and pedestrian safety**

Improve vehicle and pedestrian safety

Baker

Purpose and Need

- **Reduce vehicle congestion at street crossings**
- **Improve emergency evacuation conditions**
- **Improve vehicle and pedestrian safety**
- **Improve overall environmental quality**

Improve overall environmental quality

Baker

Purpose and Need

- Reduce vehicle congestion at street crossings
- Improve emergency evacuation conditions
- Improve vehicle and pedestrian safety
- Improve overall environmental quality
- Improve traffic reliability at the Almonaster Bridge

Improve traffic reliability at the Almonaster Bridge

Baker

Purpose and Need

- Reduce vehicle congestion at street crossings
- Improve emergency evacuation conditions
- Improve vehicle and pedestrian safety
- Improve overall environmental quality
- Improve traffic reliability at the Almonaster Bridge
- Correct physical and operational deficiencies to improve rail traffic flow and better serve existing and future users of the Gateway

And correct physical and operational deficiencies to improve rail traffic flow and better serve existing and future users of the Gateway.

Baker

Previous Studies

- **Analysis of Alternatives in Alleviating Railroad – Community Conflicts in Jefferson Parish, Louisiana (FRA 1975)**
- **Old Metairie Railroad Project Final EIS (FHWA 1989)**
- **A Comprehensive Study of Problems in the Old Metairie Railroad Corridor in Jefferson and Orleans Parishes in Louisiana (FRA 1996)**
- **New Orleans Rail Gateway & Regional Rail Operations Analysis (DOTD 2002)**
- **New Orleans Rail Gateway Infrastructure Plan (AAR 2004)**
- **New Orleans Rail Gateway Infrastructure Feasibility Analysis (DOTD 2007)**
- **New Orleans Rail Gateway Benefits Report (AAR 2008)**

Over the past 35 years, the FRA, the DOTD, the New Orleans Community and the railroads have examined rail improvements within the Gateway that would reduce delays and improve rail service to rail customers in the greater New Orleans region. Most recently, the DOTD, NORPC, and the AAR, representing Amtrak and the six Class I freight railroads serving New Orleans, studied improvements to the Gateway that would:

- improve rail service,
- reduce rail impacts on the adjacent communities, and
- further the economic recovery and development of the metropolitan area.

Studies in 2002, 2004, and 2007 evaluated potential physical and operational improvements to eliminate the worst chokepoints and improve freight movement.

Baker

2007 Infrastructure Feasibility Analysis

- **Evaluated possible improvements to the Back, Front and Middle Belts**
- **Front Belt improvements were determined unfeasible**

The 2007 NORG Infrastructure Feasibility Analysis (2007 Study) evaluated possible improvements to the Back Belt, Front Belt along the Mississippi River, and the Middle Belt along the Earhart Expressway/I-10 Corridor.

Improvements to the Front Belt were determined to be unfeasible due to the adjacent development and numerous at-grade crossings.

Baker

2007 Infrastructure Feasibility Analysis

- **Evaluated possible improvements to the Back, Front and Middle Belts**
- **Front Belt improvements were determined unfeasible**
- **Back Belt improvements considered eliminating or grade separating most grade crossings**

Back Belt improvements included grade separating numerous highway-railroad crossings to improve highway traffic flow and would provide limited additional rail capacity with minimal track construction.

Baker

2007 Infrastructure Feasibility Analysis

- **Evaluated possible improvements to the Back, Front and Middle Belts**
- **Front Belt improvements were determined unfeasible**
- **Back Belt improvements considered eliminating or grade separating most grade crossing**
- **Middle Belt improvements evaluated the "Carrollton Curve"**
- **Middle Belt improvements appeared to offer the best benefit**

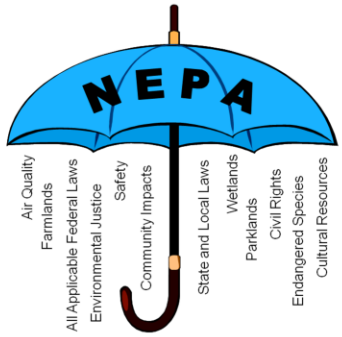
Middle Belt improvements included creating a new route between East Bridge Junction (EBJ) and East City Junction (ECJ) by linking existing, but lightly used rail lines through Jefferson and Orleans Parishes. Commonly known as the "Carrollton Curve", this route was first identified in 1955 and would reroute trains to the Earhart Expressway/I-10 corridor to provide additional rail capacity through a more industrial part of the City of New Orleans.

While the Back and Middle Belt improvements both improved public safety by eliminating or separating most highway-rail grade crossings, the Middle Belt improvements appeared to offer the best benefits for both the public and the railroads, and would improve emergency evacuation procedures by eliminating flood-prone highway underpasses on I-10 and Airline Highway.

Baker

Why prepare an EIS?

- **National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA)**
  - Consider every significant aspect of the environmental impact of the Propose Action
  - Use an interdisciplinary approach
  - Inform and involve the public of potential impacts and alternatives
- **Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)**
  - Explain the development process
  - Identify alternatives considered, the potential impacts, and measures to mitigate those impacts
  - Document the decision-making process and decisions made
- **Draft and Final EISs will be distributed for public review**
- **Today's meeting is part of the public involvement process**



The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) declared the Nation's policy on protecting the environment. NEPA requires Federal agencies to use all practicable means within their authority to protect the environment, and establishes a process for analyzing and disclosing the impacts of Federal actions on the environment. The Act also established the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) to oversee and advance the goals of NEPA.

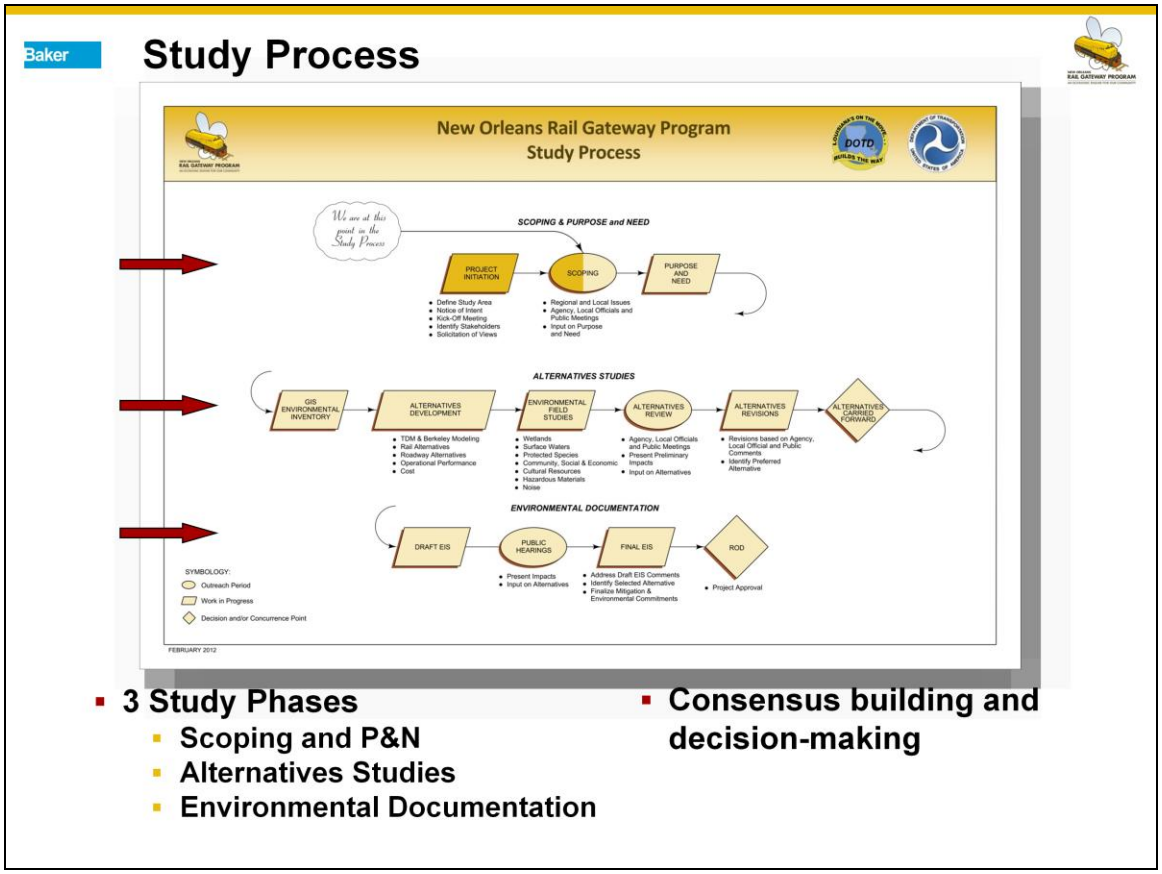
NEPA's objective is to improve Federal decision-making through early involvement of the public and Federal, state, tribal, and local agencies in the planning process and through disclosure of the impacts associated with proposed actions and alternatives. To assist Federal agencies achieve this objective, the Council on Environmental Quality developed regulations and guidance for implementing NEPA that outline the analytical and disclosure processes for environmental impact statements (EIS), environmental assessments (EA), and categorically-excluded actions (CE).

An environmental impact statement (EIS) is a decision-making tool, it describes the positive and negative environmental effects of a proposed action and lists one or more alternative actions that may be chosen instead of the action described in the EIS.

An EIS is being prepared for the NORG because the Program of Projects have the potential to significantly affect the quality of the human environment. The EIS will evaluate the environmental and related impacts of upgrading the Gateway and infrastructure.

Draft and Final versions of the EIS will be distributed for public review.

Today's meeting is part of the public involvement process.



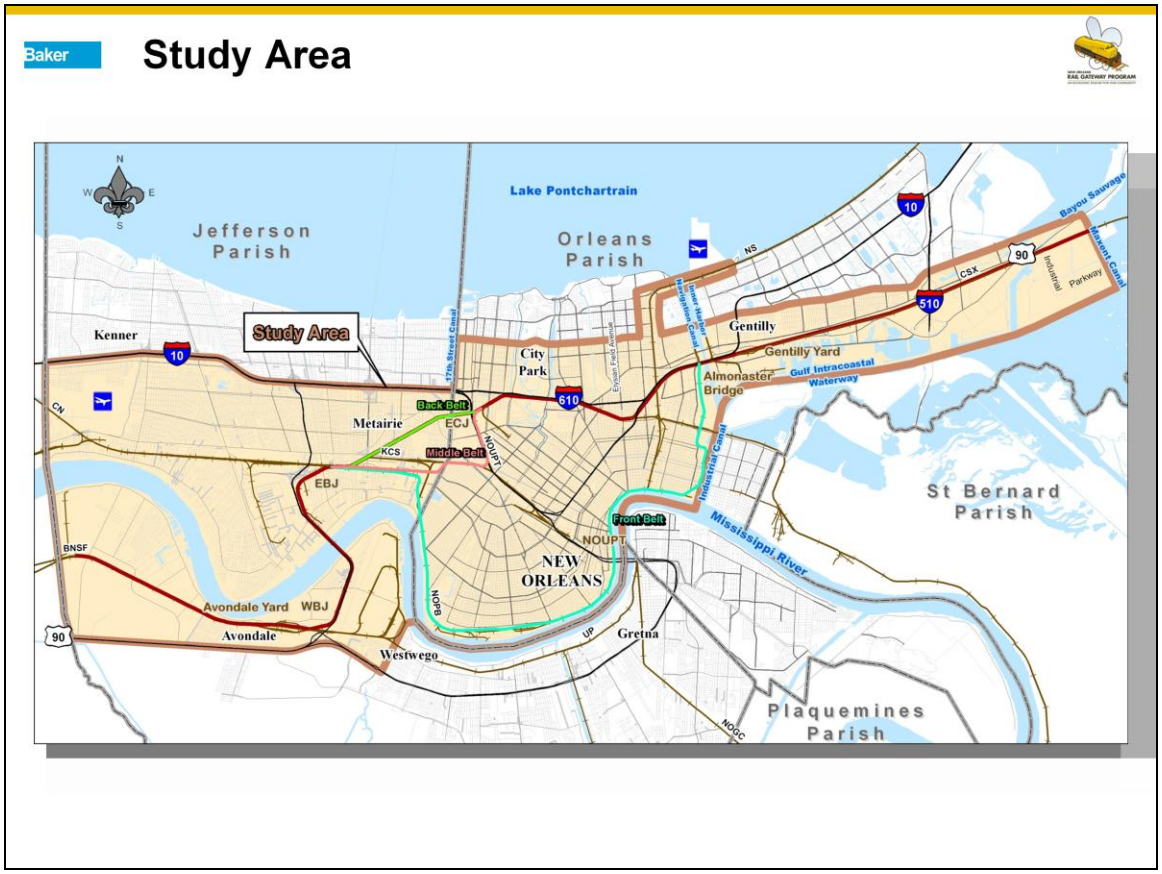
The multi-step study process adopted for the NORG Program EIS involves three (3) primary phases and includes:

Scoping and Purpose & Need Assessment which includes the identification and evaluation of a broad range of transportation alternatives and consensus on important program and environmental issues

Alternatives Studies which develops specific rail and roadway improvements and identifies a Preferred Program of Projects

Environmental Documentation, which consists of the preparation of the Draft EIS and other supporting documents. The Draft EIS will be subject to public review and Public Hearings will be held. The Final EIS, addressing comments raised on the Draft EIS, will be prepared and distributed again for public review. Ultimately a Selected Program of Projects will be identified in the Record of Decision.

Through proactive coordination, public outreach and consensus building, decisions are made at the end of each phase of study.

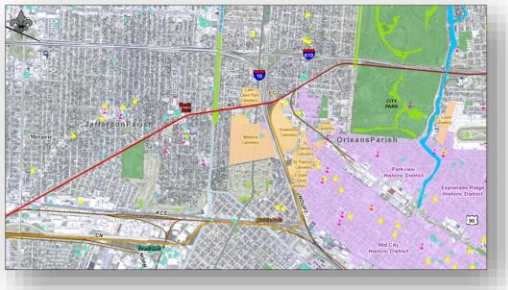


For the purposes of the EIS, a 110 square mile Study Area has been established that includes the NORG corridor and the other existing rail corridors within the New Orleans metropolitan area, and is of sufficient geographic extent to allow for a variety of alternatives to be considered and potential impacts to the human, natural and cultural environments to be assessed.

Engineering and Environmental Studies

- **Engineering Studies**
  - Rail & Roadway Operations Performance
  - Rail & Roadway Conceptual Engineering
  - Capital cost, operations and maintenance estimates

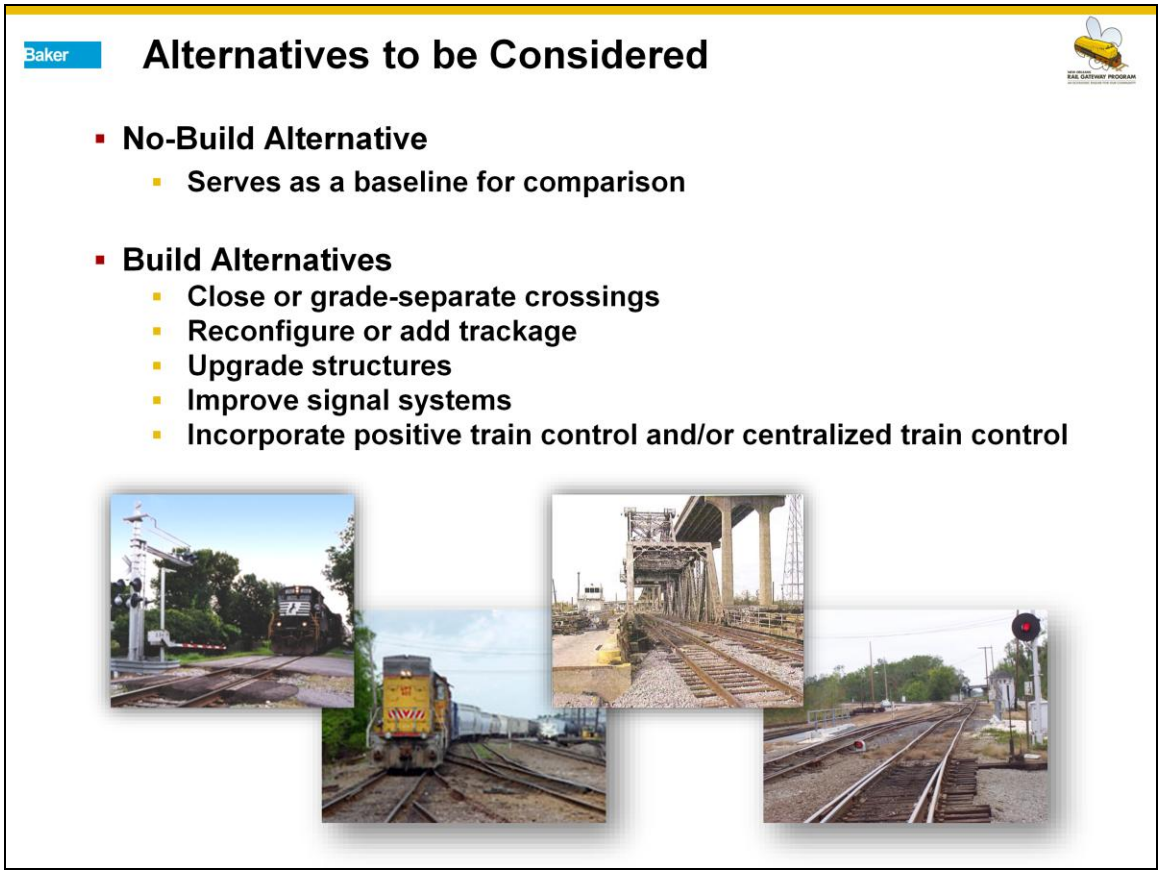
- **Environmental Studies**
  - Socio-Economics - Community Impact Assessment
  - Ecology and Water Resources
  - Historic and Archaeological Resources
  - Visual Character and Aesthetics
  - Hazardous Materials
  - Air Quality, Noise & Vibration



Engineering and environmental studies will be focused within the Study Area.

Engineering studies will evaluate rail and roadway operations performance, identify physical improvements and prepare capital cost, operations and maintenance estimates.

The environmental studies will evaluate direct, indirect and cumulative changes to the social, economic, and physical environment. The evaluation will take into account both beneficial and adverse affects and identify measures to avoid, minimize, and mitigate adverse community and environmental impacts.



Alternatives evaluated will include a No-Build Alternative and various Build Alternatives.

The No-Build Alternative is defined to serve as the baseline for comparison of all alternatives, and represents the transportation system (highway and rail) as it exists, and as it would exist after completion of programs or projects currently funded or being implemented.

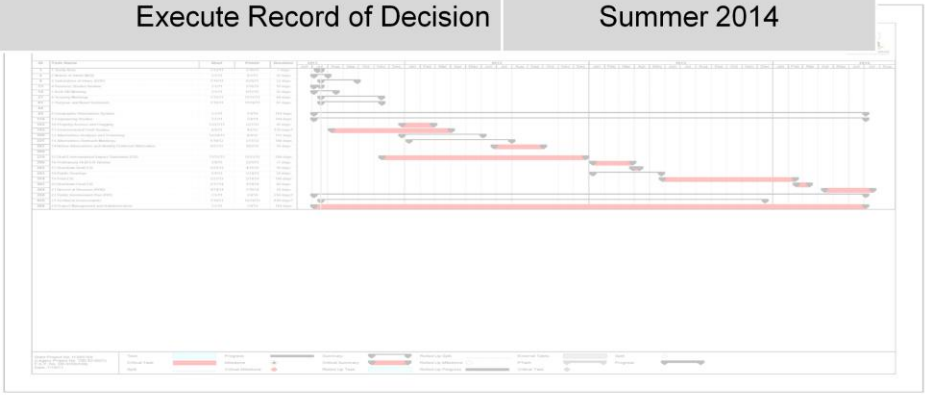
The Build Alternatives will include a program of rail and roadway infrastructure and operations improvements (program of projects) that are cost-feasible and satisfy the stated purpose and need. Improvements considered could include, but not be limited to, closing or grade-separating crossings, reconfiguring or adding trackage, upgrading structures (including culverts and over/underpass structures), improving signal systems, and incorporating positive train control (PTC) and/or centralized train control (CTC).

The Build Alternatives would include the alternatives evaluated in the 2007 Study and additional alternatives identified during scoping and the alternatives development process.

Baker

36-Month Schedule

Milestone	Target Date
Scoping Meetings	*February 2012*
Alternatives Outreach Meetings	Summer 2012
Distribute Draft EIS & Public Hearings	Spring 2013
Distribute Final EIS	Spring 2014
Execute Record of Decision	Summer 2014



The study is anticipated to take about three years to complete. Public meetings, similar to this one, are planned during the alternatives phase and Public Hearings will be held after the Draft EIS is distributed. If necessary, additional meetings will be scheduled to present study efforts and receive comments.

If you signed in tonight, you will be on the mailing list to receive study information and future public announcements. Public meetings will also be announced through newspaper notices, advertisements, press releases and on the project website.

Baker

Public Involvement

- **Proactively engage the Stakeholders**
  - **Public Meetings & Hearings**
  - **Project Website**
    www.dotd.la.gov/administration/public_info/projects/NORG
  - **Project Mailings and Notices**
  - **Press Releases**
  - **Newsletters**
  - **Community surveys**
  - **Special Assistance**

If you require special assistance due to a disability in order to participate at future public meetings, please contact
Mr. Dean Goodell, Intermodal Transportation Manager by mail, at

Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development
P.O. Box 94245
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9245

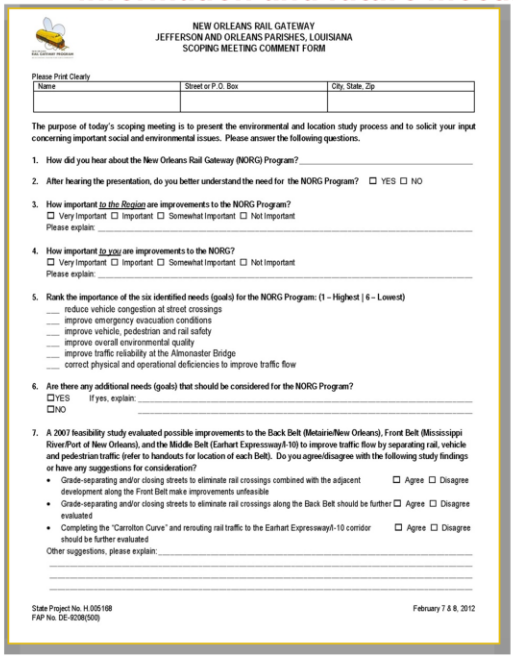
or by telephone at (225) 379-3031,
at least five (5) working days prior to the public meetings dates.

Public involvement initiatives, including public meetings, newsletters, and outreach to engage low-, minority-, and other environmentally-disadvantaged groups will be used throughout the study. Opportunities for public participation will be announced through mailings, notices, advertisements, press releases and a project Web site.

Baker

Stay Involved!

- ***If you signed in at the Welcome Table, you will receive study information and future meeting announcements***



NEW ORLEANS RAIL GATEWAY
JEFFERSON AND ORLEANS PARISHES, LOUISIANA
SCOPING MEETING COMMENT FORM

Please Print Clearly

Name	Street or P.O. Box	City, State, Zip

The purpose of today's scoping meeting is to present the environmental and location study process and to solicit your input concerning important social and environmental issues. Please answer the following questions.

1. How did you hear about the New Orleans Rail Gateway (NORG) Program? _____
2. After hearing the presentation, do you better understand the need for the NORG Program? ☐ YES ☐ NO
3. How important *to the Region* are improvements to the NORG Program?
   ☐ Very Important ☐ Important ☐ Somewhat Important ☐ Not Important
   Please explain: _____
4. How important *to you* are improvements to the NORG?
   ☐ Very Important ☐ Important ☐ Somewhat Important ☐ Not Important
   Please explain: _____
5. Rank the importance of the six identified needs (goals) for the NORG Program: (1 – Highest | 6 – Lowest)
   ___ reduce vehicle congestion at street crossings
   ___ improve emergency evacuation conditions
   ___ improve vehicle, pedestrian and rail safety
   ___ improve overall environmental quality
   ___ improve traffic reliability at the Almonaster Bridge
   ___ correct physical and operational deficiencies to improve traffic flow
6. Are there any additional needs (goals) that should be considered for the NORG Program?
   ☐YES If yes, explain: _____
   ☐NO _____
7. A 2007 feasibility study evaluated possible improvements to the Back Belt (Metairie/New Orleans), Front Belt (Mississippi River/Port of New Orleans), and the Middle Belt (Earhart Expressway/I-10) to improve traffic flow by separating rail, vehicle and pedestrian traffic (refer to handouts for location of each Belt). Do you agree/disagree with the following study findings or have any suggestions for consideration?
   - Grade-separating and/or closing streets to eliminate rail crossings combined with the adjacent development along the Front Belt make improvements unfeasible ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree
   - Grade-separating and/or closing streets to eliminate rail crossings along the Back Belt should be further evaluated ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree
   - Completing the "Carrollton Curve" and rerouting rail traffic to the Earhart Expressway/I-10 corridor should be further evaluated ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree

   Other suggestions, please explain: _____

State Project No. H.005168
FAP No. DE-9208(500)

February 7 & 8, 2012

- **Comment at today's meeting**
  - Oral Comment Station
  - Written Comment Station
- **Comment by Mail**
  - NORG
    c/o The Hawthorne Agency, Inc.
    818 Howard Avenue, Suite 300
    New Orleans, LA 70113
- **All comments must be post-marked no later than February 18, 2012**
- **DOTD Website (www.dotd.la.gov)**
  - Public Meeting Handouts
  - Community Survey
  - Comment Form
- **Telephone Inquiries - (504) 488-6196**

We want your comments on the information presented today.

If you want to comment at today's public meeting, you can make a verbal statement at the Oral Comment Station or you can complete the Comment Form that is included in the handout materials and deposit it in the box at the Written Comments Station.

If you prefer to mail us your comments, please mail them to:

NORG

c/o The Hawthorne Agency, Inc.

818 Howard Avenue, Suite 300

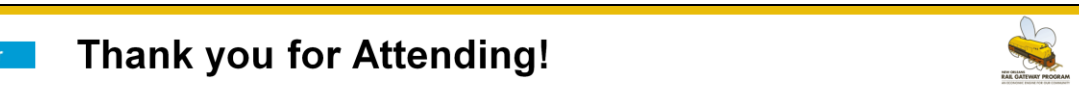
New Orleans, LA 70113

All comments must be post-marked no later that February 18, 2012 to become part of the public record.

Please complete your full name and address information. Anonymous comments cannot be fully considered.

Baker

Thank you for Attending!



THANK YOU

- **Your input is important**
- **Give us your comments**
- **Ask us questions – We're here to assist you**

This public meeting is an important part of the transportation decision-making process and your input is encouraged and appreciated.

After this presentation, please review the project exhibits, talk with Study Team representatives, and give us your comments.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask one of the Study Team representatives. We're all wearing name badges. **Remember, the only bad questions are the ones not asked!**

Thank you again for attending today's public meeting!