



TOWN OF OLD LYME

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March 23, 2016

By Electronic and Regular Mail

Mr. David Carol
Joint Venture Program Manager
Parsons Brinkerhoff/AECOM Joint Venture
NEC Future
4528 Binfords Ridge Rd.
Charlotte, NC 28226

Ms. Rebecca Reyes-Alicea
Northeast Corridor Joint Program Advisor
USDOT - Federal Railroad Administration
One Bowling Green, Suite 429
New York, NY 10004

Re: NEC Future

Dear David and Rebecca:

Let me begin by thanking both of you, as well as Becky Blatnica, Deputy Program Manager, Amishi Castelli, Environmental lead, from the John A. Volpe National Transportation System Center, U.S. Department of Transportation, and Ruby Siegel, AECOM, for meeting with us in Old Lyme on March 11. Our discussion of the NEC Future Tier 1 Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and the potential effects of the concepts addressed therein on the town of Old Lyme and the surrounding region was very helpful. We truly appreciated your time and effort in coming to Old Lyme, the wealth of information you provided to us, and your sincere willingness to listen to our input and address our concerns. I would like to describe in this letter the most important understandings we took away from that meeting.

The Process

The Tier 1 EIS is intended to be a very high level, conceptual "vision" for addressing the northeast corridor's current and future rail needs. The FRA will now proceed to develop a preferred alternative, which is expected to be publicly announced this summer. Whether public comments will be solicited has not yet been decided.

Next fall, the FRA will publish a Tier 1 Final EIS and a Record of Decision (together, the “Tier 1 Record”), which will set forth in detail the analysis and rationale underlying the EIS and will serve to direct and inform the Tier 2 EIS. The Tier 1 Record will clearly note the importance of the Connecticut River Estuary and its environmental¹ concerns.

In the first half of 2017 the FRA will publish a “Service Development Plan,” effectively a blueprint for implementation of the Tier 1 EIS. This plan will propose the phasing of the Tier 2 EIS projects, taking into account on all relevant factors, such as levels of service, funding, state government input and railroad input. Once the Service Development Plan has been finalized, the Tier 2 process will be introduced and will proceed on a project-by-project basis over an extended time period as dictated by future events, including service demand and funding availability. Each Tier 2 EIS will address in detail all project elements, such as the specific location, design and construction features, will include a detailed environmental impact statement, and will have a life span of three years.

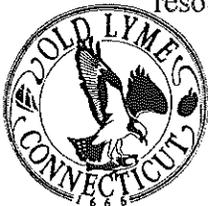
Alternative 1

Alternative 1 in the Tier 1 Draft EIS contemplates a new bridge over the Connecticut River from Old Saybrook to Old Lyme and then an aerial structure over the western portion of the town, including the Historic District. If this section of Alternative 1 (the Old Saybrook to Kenyon, Rhode Island bypass) remains part of the preferred alternative in the final Tier 1 EIS, then in all events this section of the route will be constructed utilizing an underground tunnel instead of a bridge and aerial structure. The tunnel will be bored, not “cut and covered,” and will likely extend from the Old Saybrook train depot (probably using the Tilcon Aggregate site as a staging area) to the Whippoorwill Road abutment on the north side of Interstate 95 in Old Lyme. The precise route of the tunnel, and the location of necessary ventilation shafts, will be determined in the applicable Tier 2 EIS, taking into account harm and disruption to the environment, historical properties and the town during and after construction.

The Preferred Alternative

In developing the preferred alternative the FRA will analyze further the three alternatives set forth in the Tier 1 Draft EIS and will take into account, among other things, the policy objectives of the FRA and the Department of Transportation, all of the public comments, and other input received. In evaluating the Old Saybrook to Kenyon bypass portion of Alternative 1 for inclusion in the preferred alternative, the FRA will carefully consider the following:

¹ In this letter the term “environment” refers to ecological and hydrologic/water resources, not the much broader meaning used in the Tier 1 Draft EIS.



(a) Information from us and the federal Environmental Protection Agency regarding the potential environmental impact on the Connecticut River Estuary. In particular, it will evaluate the potential impact on the estuary according to established criteria--ecologically sensitive habitat, threatened and endangered species, and an essential fish habitat, and the estuary's designation as a Ramsar Estuary of Global Importance and, potentially, as a National Estuarine Research Reserve.² Representatives from the Connecticut River Council of Governments, the Nature Conservancy, the Connecticut Audubon Society, the Roger Tory Peterson Estuary Center and the Old Lyme Land Trust will compile for your review detailed information regarding the potential impact of the proposed tunnel on this estuary, and the FRA will advise us of its conclusions regarding the relevance of this information;

(b) The National Register of Historic Places-listed properties as well as the National Historic Landmark-listed properties, as contemplated in the Section 106 procedures in the Federal Registry and the statements of the Advisory council on Historic Preservation. The FRA will also consider the significance of Old Lyme being listed as a Preserve America Community. We would also appreciate advice from the FRA regarding this analysis. We understand that the impact of construction activity, including vibration and displacement, on historic structures will be evaluated as part of the Tier 2 process; and

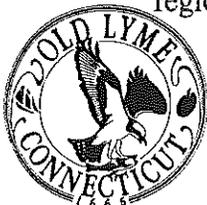
(c) The impact on residential areas, open space and archeological sites.

The FRA anticipates that the preferred alternative will incorporate elements of each of the three alternatives presented in the Tier 1 Draft EIS. If the preferred alternative does not include the Old Saybrook to Kenyon bypass, then it will no longer be reflected on EIS plans and maps and the public will be able to rest assured that the FRA has definitively abandoned this route.

Current Shoreline Route

The current train service on the Connecticut shoreline (Shore Line East and Amtrak) will be continued and enhanced, regardless of the nature of the preferred alternative. Each of the three proposed alternatives contemplates, and the preferred alternative will include, substantial upgrades to the existing rail system sufficient to restore the system to a state of good repair and harden the line for improved resiliency. The amount allocated to this work is \$20 billion.

² A description of the various designations applicable to the lower Connecticut River region is found in Exhibit A hereto.



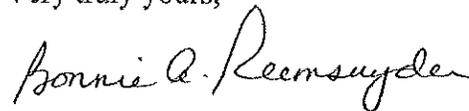
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Please contact me with any questions or comments you have regarding this letter, including particularly any of our understandings that you believe may be incorrect. We would greatly appreciate the opportunity to be updated by your team as the preferred alternative is developed, especially as you address the Old Saybrook to Kenyon bypass. We will, of course, respond promptly to any questions or issues that arise and, if it would be useful, we would meet with you in Washington or elsewhere.

Thank you very much.

Very truly yours,



Bonnie A. Reemsnyder
First Selectwoman

CC: Sam Gold, Executive Director, RiverCOG
John Forbis, Old Lyme
Bennett Bernblum, Old Lyme
Board of Selectmen

