



U.S. Department
of Transportation

**Federal Railroad
Administration**

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

March 23, 2011

RE: DesertXpress High-Speed Passenger Train Final EIS and Section 4(f) Evaluation

Dear Sir/Madam:

Enclosed is the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Section 4(f) Evaluation for the DesertXpress High-Speed Passenger Train Project (project). The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) is the Lead Agency for the DesertXpress project. FRA worked with several Cooperating Agencies, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Surface Transportation Board (STB), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and National Park Service (NPS), and with added participation from the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and the Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT), to prepare the EIS for this project.

What is the DesertXpress project?

The project is proposed by DesertXpress Enterprises, LLC (Applicant) and involves the construction, operation, and maintenance of a high-speed passenger train along the 200-mile corridor between southern California (Victorville) and Las Vegas, Nevada. The project would include stations and maintenance facilities at each end of the rail alignment in Victorville and Las Vegas. The purpose of the project is to provide reliable and safe passenger rail transportation between southern California and Las Vegas.

Earlier steps in the environmental review of the DesertXpress project

In March 2009, the FRA published a Draft EIS and Section 4(f) Evaluation for the DesertXpress project. The Draft EIS disclosed all environmental effects associated with the alternatives, whether they are adverse or beneficial, and allowed for the public to review and comment on the document. Following publication of the Draft EIS, the Applicant proposed several modifications and additions based upon substantive comments received during the public and agency review to reduce or avoid significant environmental effects. These project modifications and additions were analyzed in a Supplemental Draft EIS and Section 4(f) Evaluation, published by FRA in August 2010.

What is included in this Final EIS?

The information presented in and the comments received on the Draft EIS and Supplemental Draft EIS were considered when preparing this Final EIS. This Final EIS addresses any changes to the DesertXpress project Draft EIS and Supplemental Draft EIS as a result of public or agency comments. This Final EIS also provides an evaluation of the potential environmental effects of the "Preferred Alternative," which was selected by the Lead and Cooperating Agencies from the range of Action Alternatives presented in the Draft EIS and Supplemental Draft EIS. The "Preferred Alternative" is the option/alternative that the Lead and Cooperating Agencies believe would best fulfill each agency's statutory mission and responsibilities, in consideration with

economic, environmental, and technical factors.

The Preferred Alternative rail alignment would be almost entirely located within the existing I-15 corridor, with tracks running alongside freeway travel lanes. The Preferred Alternative also specifies station and maintenance facility sites and identifies Electrical Multiple Unit (EMU) as the locomotive technology. This Final EIS compares the environmental effects of the Preferred Alternative to the other Action Alternatives. Mitigation measures are included to reduce or eliminate adverse environmental effects of the Preferred Alternative.

What's next in the environmental review process?

This Final EIS is being made available to the public in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act. The Final EIS will be circulated for a 30-day waiting period commencing on the publication date of the Environmental Protection Agency's notice of availability in the Federal Register, which is expected to be Friday, April 1, 2011. Following this waiting period, the Lead and Cooperating Agencies will each issue a Record of Decision on the proposed project. A Record of Decision is a concise public document that formally states the decision of the federal agency on the project and explains factors considered in reaching the decision.

The Final EIS is also available at public libraries identified below as well as on the internet at the following address: <http://www.fra.dot.gov/rpd/freight/1703.shtml>.

Victorville City Library

15011 Circle Drive
Victorville, CA 92395

Barstow Library

304 East Buena Vista
Barstow, CA 92311

Las Vegas Library

833 Las Vegas Blvd. N.
Las Vegas, NV 89101

Clark County Library

1401 Flamingo Road
Las Vegas, NV 89119

Written concerns on this Final EIS should be sent by mail and received by **Monday, May 2, 2011**, addressed to the Federal Railroad Administration as follows:

Attn: DesertXpress
Ms. Wendy Messenger
Federal Railroad Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue S.E., MS-20
Washington, DC 20590

Sincerely,



David Valenstein
Division Chief
Environment and Systems Planning