

EP 660

EI-16560

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U.S. Department
of Transportation

Federal Railroad
Administration

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

MAR 19 2009

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

Dear Sir/Madam:

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) is serving as the lead federal agency for the environmental review of the DesertXpress project and has prepared the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) accompanying this letter. The DesertXpress project is proposed by DesertXpress Enterprises, LLC, to provide reliable and safe passenger rail transportation along an approximate 200-mile corridor between Southern California (Victorville) and Las Vegas, as an alternative to automobile or air travel. The DEIS has been prepared in cooperation with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Surface Transportation Board (STB), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and the National Park Service (NPS), with the added participation of the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and the Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT).

The project would use proven high-speed rail technology and be constructed as a grade-separated, dedicated double track, passenger-only railroad predominantly in the median of or immediately alongside Interstate 15 (I-15), adding transportation capacity to the freeway corridor. The DEIS identifies and analyzes the potential environmental impacts (both beneficial and adverse) that could occur to a range of environmental resources as a result of the construction and operation of the project alternatives. At this time, the federal agencies have not designated a preferred alternative, and are considering the impacts of the project and seeking public and agency comments to inform the decision on a preferred alternative.

The DEIS is being made available to the public in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act for comment through May 22, 2009. FRA will hold three hearing on the DEIS:

Las Vegas Area:

Tuesday, April 28, 2009
5:30 - 8:00 p.m.
Hampton Inn Tropicana
4975 Dean Martin Drive
Las Vegas, NV 89118

Barstow Area:

Wednesday, April 29, 2009,
5:30 - 8:00 p.m.
Ramada Inn
1511 East Main Street
Barstow, CA 92311

Victorville Area:

Thursday, April 30 2009
5:30 - 8:00 p.m.
Green Tree Golf Course
14144 Green Tree Boulevard
Victorville, CA 92395

The deadline for comments on this DEIS is May 22, 2009. Comments submitted via US mail must be postmarked by this date and addressed to:

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

Comments sent via email should be sent no later than 5:00 pm Eastern Standard Time on May 22, 2009 addressed to: Wendy.Messenger@dot.gov with the subject line, "DesertXpress DEIS"

Sincerely,

David Valenstein
Environmental Program Manager