Tier 1 Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)
What is the Atlanta to Chattanooga High Speed Ground Transportation (HSGT) Project?

- Proposed high-speed passenger rail service that would connect Atlanta, Georgia and Chattanooga, Tennessee;
- Includes preparation of a Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA); and
- Identifies a Preferred Corridor in which to implement high-speed passenger service.
What is the purpose of the Atlanta to Chattanooga HSGT Project?

The Project would enhance intercity travel by:

– Expanding transportation capacity;
– Increasing mobility options; and
– Providing an alternative to highway and air travel.
Why is the Atlanta to Chattanooga HSGT Project Needed?

• Provide enhancement for regional transportation mobility and accessibility in response to the following transportation problems:
  – Population and employment growth and increased transportation demand;
  – Congested transportation corridor in the Project study area; and
  – Limited transportation options.

• Spur economic growth and regional vitality
• Provide safe, efficient, reliable transportation options
• Improve air quality nonattainment areas and minimize environmental impacts from transportation projects
Who is involved in the Project?

- Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) – Federal Lead Agency;
- Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT);
- Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT); and
- Other Key Partners:
  - Environmental resource and regulatory agencies
  - Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO)
  - Other public agencies and transportation providers
  - Interested organizations
  - Public
What is the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)?

- Requires Federal agencies to:
  - Consider the potential impacts of their actions on the human and natural environment;
  - Provide an opportunity for public participation in the decision-making process before project decisions are made;
  - Publicly disclose the decision-making process and all decisions made; and
  - To avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse effects where feasible.

- Often “tiered” for a project with a large scope
  - Tier 1 NEPA – agencies prepare a Tier 1 EIS
  - Tier 2 NEPA – may be any level of NEPA documentation that addresses site-specific environmental factors necessary to move forward with a project
What is a Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)?

- A planning document
- Defines a preliminary project purpose and need
- Defines a broad project study area for further analysis
- Identifies all reasonable corridor alternatives
- Identifies and describes environmental resources and factors within the project study area
- Interdisciplinary approach to decision-making
  - Consultation and coordination among agencies
  - Public participation
- Publicly discloses decision-making and planning process
What are the key objectives of this Tier 1 EIS process?

• A broad, high-level environmental review of a defined project study area;

• Development of the HSGT Project purpose and need; and

• Identification of potential environmental resources within the project study area, including:
  – “Desktop analysis” based on available mapping information; little or no field investigations conducted
  – Conservative estimates of potential effects that will be further refined and evaluated should subsequent planning work for the project take place
What are potential HSGT Technologies?

• HSGT is defined as vehicle travel speeds above 180 MPH
• HSGT technology would be further studied and selected should the Project proceed to a Tier 2 NEPA Phase

Steel-Wheeled

Maglev (Magnetic Levitation)
How were the Corridor Alternatives Developed?

Segments Identified to Define Corridor Alternatives

15 Preliminary Corridor Alternatives
- Meet project purpose and need
- Competitive travel times
- Support economic development

4 Tier 1 EIS Alternatives
- No Build Alternative
- I-75 Corridor Alternative
- East Corridor Alternative
- I-75/Rome Corridor Alternative
What Corridor Alternatives were evaluated in the Tier 1 EIS?

- **No Build Alternative** - Project Study Area’s transportation system as anticipated in 2040
- **Three Corridor Alternatives**
  - I-75 Corridor
  - East Corridor
  - I-75/Rome Corridor
I-75 Corridor Alternative

- Begins at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport (HJAIA); follows proposed tunnel section through downtown Atlanta to near I-285; follows I-75 into downtown Chattanooga from I-285
- 8 potential stations
East Corridor Alternative

- Begins at HJAIA and follows proposed tunnel section through downtown Atlanta to near I-285; follows I-75 north to Cartersville; continues along existing CSX rail parallel to US 411; continues north along I-75 to downtown Chattanooga
- 8 potential stations
I-75/Rome Corridor Alternative

- Begins at HJAIA and follows proposed tunnel section through downtown Atlanta to near I-285; follows I-75 north to the proposed Cartersville station; follows US-411 to Rome; continues north to downtown Chattanooga
- 9 potential stations
How were the Corridor Alternatives Evaluated?

- Transportation Effects – ridership, travel time
- Planning-level project costs
- Environmental Consequences – key resource areas

Transportation
Noise and Vibration
Historic and Archaeological Resources
Air Quality
Water Resources
Parks and Wildlife Refuges
Environmental Justice
Biological Resources
How do the Corridor Alternatives Compare?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Needs</th>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Corridor Alternative</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>I-75</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enhance regional transportation mobility and accessibility</td>
<td>Time to Travel Corridor Alternative End to End (minutes)</td>
<td>88</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Daily Ridership (number of boardings)</td>
<td>11,725</td>
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<td>Spur economic growth and regional vitality</td>
<td>Capital Cost (2014$ millions)</td>
<td>$8,760</td>
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<td>Minimize environmental impacts</td>
<td>Proportion of Corridor Alternative within Existing Transportation Corridor</td>
<td>76%</td>
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<td>Noise-sensitive Land Uses (acres)</td>
<td>5,914</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Vibration-sensitive Land Uses (acres)</td>
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<td>Known Historic Resources (number)</td>
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<td>Wetlands (acres)</td>
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<td>Stream Crossings (number)</td>
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<td>Floodplains (acres)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Parks &amp; Wildlife Refuges (number)</td>
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<td>Known Threatened and Endangered Species Habitats (number)</td>
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What is the Best Performing Corridor Alternative?

- **I-75 Corridor**
  - Fastest travel times
  - Lowest capital costs
  - Smallest number of environmental impacts
What are the Next Steps?

- **Fall 2016 and Winter 2017**
  - ✓ Receive and review public and agency comments

- **Winter and Spring 2017**
  - ✓ Prepare Tier 1 Final EIS/Record of Decision (ROD)

- **Summer 2017**
  - ✓ Publish Tier 1 Final EIS/ROD
How can you participate?

• Comment at tonight’s meeting
  ✓ Speak with a member of the Project Team
  ✓ Speak privately to a court reporter
  ✓ Fill out a comment card

• Visit the project website to review project materials:
  http://www.dot.ga.gov/IS/Rail/AtlantatoChattanooga

• Send comments to: AtlChatt@dot.ga.gov

• Will accept comments through November 30, 2016
Thank You!