

Key Points

D-O LRT Review Process

The 45-Day Comment Period

Federal law requires a 30-day public comment period for the D-O LRT Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). In an effort to allow the public, agencies, and local governments more time to review the DEIS, GoTriangle expanded the official public comment period to 45 days. The public comment period starts with the publication of the DEIS in the Federal Register. A firm publication date for the DEIS has not yet been set by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), but GoTriangle staff estimates that the publication could be as early as August 24th. Any comments submitted to GoTriangle during the 45-day public comment period will become part of the official project record; GoTriangle will respond to all substantive comments in the combined Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS)/Record of Decision (ROD).

MPO September Board Meeting

The MPO Board should consider conducting their September 9th meeting in the evening because many members of the public are expected to provide comments to the Board at that meeting, which will include a GoTriangle video presentation of the DEIS. Staff has designated the September 9th meeting for this activity because a DEIS publication before about August 31st would put the Board's October 14th meeting outside the 45-day comment period. FTA recommends that this MPO public comment process not be called a "hearing" to avoid confusing the public.

MPO and Agency Comments

The MPO, agencies, and local jurisdictions can submit their own comments about the proposed D-O LRT Project to GoTriangle at any time, and are encouraged to share comments with GoTriangle before the DEIS is published. The advantage of submitting comments during the 45-day public comment period is that GoTriangle will provide a response to any substantive comments in the FEIS.

Comments received during the September 9th MPO meeting are for the consideration of the MPO Board; these comments should not be forwarded to GoTriangle (per FTA guidance).

MPO and Agency Approval

The MPO Board should provide a resolution or letter of support for the DEIS by its November 11, 2015, meeting because GoTriangle will need to submit the combined FEIS/ROD to the FTA by December 1, 2015. The support correspondence can have suggested minor changes to the DEIS, such as "provide bicycle and pedestrian connections at all stations," but should avoid major conditions of support such as "support if alternative "X" is chosen and the ROMF is located at "Y." These major conditions might prevent GoTriangle from meeting the 24 month deadline imposed by the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP 21) legislation.

The elected bodies of the cities, counties, and towns are also encouraged to provide a resolution or letter of support, but this is not required.. The FTA will notice if support correspondence is missing from any key jurisdiction.

Comments in the Official Project Record

GoTriangle will provide a statement that the MPO can read at its public input activities that will notify members of the public that their comments must be submitted to GoTriangle during the 45-day comment period to become part of the official project record. A citizen comment presented to the MPO (or agency or local jurisdiction) will not become part of the official project record even if that agency forwards the comment to GoTriangle. All official DEIS comments must follow the procedure set out in the Notice of Availability, as published in the Federal Register.

No Substantive Changes in DEIS

The public, elected officials, and staff are not likely to encounter any substantive changes in the DEIS given the ongoing stream of presentations to community groups and elected officials. A few sections that identify the rationale for particular decisions will have some additions and changes but there is very little change to the data and none to the alignment designations. In addition, all the public comments and official correspondence received by GoTriangle from 2012 through June 30, 2015, are available online at www.OurTransitFuture.com. Public comments are added to this website monthly.