• The condition of the internal components of the brake valves at the 2 year COT&S interval is excellent.

• All of SEPTA's MU locomotives with air compressors are equipped with air dryers, as are all of its shop air supplies. (SEPTA has no yard air plants).

• SEPTA's MU fleet is confined to a small area. All air brake valves are rebuilt at one location, and failures are entered into a computer tracking system for monitoring of brake system performance to aid in quick identification of and reaction to any failure trends.

• Testing recently completed by Metro-North Railroad (Metro-North) demonstrating that extending COT&S to 1104 days could be accomplished without compromising brake system reliability and safety was successful. While SEPTA's equipment is not identical to Metro-North's, SEPTA feels the hardware and service requirements are very similar.

Interested parties are invited to participate in these proceedings by submitting written views, data, or comments. FRA does not anticipate scheduling a public hearing in connection with these proceedings since the facts do not appear to warrant a hearing. If any interested party desires an opportunity for oral comment, they should notify FRA, in writing, before the end of the comment period and specify the basis for their request.

All communications concerning these proceedings should identify the appropriate docket number [e.g., Waiver Petition Docket Number H–97–2] and must be submitted in triplicate to the Docket Clerk, Office of Chief Counsel, FRA, Nassif Building, 400 Seventh Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20590. Communications received within 45 days of the date of this notice will be considered by FRA before final action is taken. Comments received after that date will be considered as far as practicable. All written communications concerning these proceedings are available for examination during regular business hours (9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.) at FRA's temporary docket room located at 1120 Vermont Avenue, N.W., Room 7051, Washington, D.C. 20005.

Issued in Washington, D.C. on May 20, 1997.

**Grady C. Cothen, Jr.,**

*Deputy Associate Administrator for Safety Standards and Program Development.*

[FR Doc. 97–14247 Filed 5–30–97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910–06–P

## DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

### Federal Transit Administration

### Environmental Impact Statement on the Mid-Harlem Third Track Project Between Mount Vernon West and Crestwood Stations, Westchester County, NY

**AGENCY:** Federal Transit Administration (DOT).

**ACTION:** Notice of intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement.

**SUMMARY:** The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and Metro-North Commuter Railroad Company (Metro-North) intend to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS), in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA), on a proposal by Metro-North to undertake transportation improvements to its Harlem Line between Mount Vernon West and Crestwood Stations (the ''Mid-Harlem Third Track Project'' or the ''Proposed Action'').

Metro-North's Harlem Line, extending 76.6 miles from Grand Central Terminal in Manhattan north through the Bronx, Westchester, Putnam and Dutchess Counties, is the most densely traveled line in the Metro-North system. Metro-North is fast approaching capacity on the entire Harlem Line due to capacity constraints in the mid-Harlem section. The Mid-Harlem Third Track Project will allow Metro-North to maintain, improve and expand service for all Harlem Line customers, future users and the region well into the 21st Century.

The Mid-Harlem Third Track Project includes Build Alternatives which entail the upgrade of an existing third track between Mount Vernon West and Fleetwood and the construction of a 2.5 mile third track between Fleetwood and Crestwood Stations. The Proposed Action includes a Build Alternative preferred by Metro-North which will be identified throughout the NEPA process as the ''Preferred Alternative.'' In addition to the Preferred Alternative, the EIS will evaluate the No-Build Alternative, three (3) Build Alternatives, and three (3) Operational Alternatives, as well as any other reasonable alternative(s) raised during the scoping process.

Scoping for the Mid-Harlem Third Track Project will be accomplished through correspondence with interested persons and organizations, as well as with federal, state and local agencies. One (1) public scoping meeting will be conducted. A draft Scoping Document will be made available to those persons and agencies and may be obtained by contacting the person designated below.

**DATES:** *Comment Due Date:* Written comments on the scope of alternatives and impacts must be submitted by Friday, July 18, 1997. Written comments should be sent to Ms. Kim A. Smith, Assistant Director—Capital and Long Range Planning, Metro-North Commuter Railroad Company, 347 Madison Avenue—19th Floor, New York City, New York, 10017. Oral comments should be made at the scoping meeting scheduled below. (Oral comments made at the scoping meeting will be transcribed. Assistance will be provided for the hearing impaired.) *Scoping Meeting:* The public scoping meeting concerning the proposed Mid-Harlem Third Track Project will be held on: June 18, 1997, 7:30 p.m. to 10 p.m., Westchester County Center, White Plains, New York.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Mr. Anthony Carr, Director, Office of Planning and Program Development, Federal Transit Administration at (212) 264–8162.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

### I. Scoping

FTA and Metro-North invite all interested individuals and organizations, as well as federal, state, and local agencies, to participate in identifying the reasonable alternatives to be evaluated in the EIS and identifying any significant social, economic, and environmental issues related to the Mid-Harlem Third Track Project. A draft Scoping Document describing the purpose of the project, the proposed alternatives and the impact issues to be evaluated is being mailed to affected federal, state, and local agencies and to interested parties. Others may request the draft Scoping Document by contacting Ms. Smith at (212) 340–2693. Scoping comments may be made orally at the public scoping meeting or submitted in writing by Friday, July 18, 1997. (See the Scoping Meeting section above for the time and location.)

During the scoping process, comments should focus on identifying specific social, economic, and/or environmental issues to be evaluated and suggesting reasonable alternatives which may be less costly or less environmentally damaging, while achieving similar transportation objectives. Scoping is not the appropriate forum in which to indicate a preference for a particular alternative. Comments on preferences should be communicated after the draft EIS has been completed and issued for review

and comment. If you wish to be placed on the mailing list to receive further information as the project develops, contact Ms. Smith as described above.

Following the public scoping meeting a final Scoping Document will be prepared that will contain the transcript from the public scoping meeting, any written comments received, as outline of the decisions that have been made during the scoping process, and a summary of the issues to be evaluated in a draft EIS.

## II. Description of Study Areas and Project Need

Metro-North's Harlem Line extends 76.6 miles from Grand Central Terminal in Manhattan north through the Bronx, Westchester, Putnam and Dutchess Counties. It is the most densely traveled line in the Metro-North system as it is primarily a two track railroad as distinguished from the three and four tracks on the Hudson and New Haven lines.

The area where construction of the Build Alternatives would take place extends along the railroad right-of-way from Mount Vernon West to Crestwood Station, a distance of approximately 3.6 miles.

Approximately 74,000 passengers were carried on the Harlem Line on an average weekday in 1996. Metro-North is fast approaching capacity on the entire Harlem Line as it is constrained by the four mile section of two tracks between Mount Vernon West and Crestwood. The high frequency of service that traverses this two track section, exacerbated by the limiting physical characteristics of the two track railroad, constrains Metro-North's ability to improve service for the entire Harlem Line.

The Mid-Harlem Third Track will enable Metro-North to provide a greater degree of schedule flexibility by allowing the expansion of service for existing and future customers on the entire Harlem Line. Harlem Line ridership has increased an average of 2.6% annually (1984–1996), and is projected to increase on average another 1.9% annually (1996–2020). Without the third track, only one or two additional trains can be added in either the morning or evening peak hours when 40% of all Harlem Line peak period customers travel. Elimination of this capacity constraint is a prerequisite for adding the additional trains needed to keep pace with demand.

The completion of the Mid-Harlem Third Track Project will meet the needs of Harlem Line customers by providing the following benefits:

- Increase Capacity/Serve New Markets
- Improve Service to Existing Customers
- Support Regional Economic Conditions
- Mitigate the Impacts of Construction and Maintenance Projects
- Improve Service Reliability
- Improve Air Quality

## III. Alternatives

The EIS will analyze reasonable alternatives that may achieve the Proposed Action's goals. In addition to Metro-North's preferred configuration of the Mid-Harlem Third Track (the ''Preferred Alternative''), seven (7) other Alternatives have been defined, and will be evaluated in the EIS: three (3) build Alternatives, three (3) Operational Alternatives and the No-Build Alternative.

The Preferred Alternative involves the upgrade of an existing third track between Mount Vernon West and Fleetwood and construction of a new 2.5 mile third track from Fleetwood to Crestwood to the west of the existing mainline tracks. Two of the Build Alternatives involve construction on the east side of the right-of-way in the area of Bronxville Station. The third Build Alternative involves an alignment that includes the upgrade of the existing third track between Mount Vernon West and Fleetwood Stations, compresses to two tracks north of Fleetwood Station and expands again to three tracks south of Bronxville Station to Crestwood Station. Under all Build Alternatives, the portion of the third track located between Bronxville and Crestwood would be built between the existing tracks, with all construction on Metro-North property. The No-Build Alternative presents conditions with service provided with the existing track configuration. In addition to the Build and No-Build Alternatives, three Alternatives that consider modifications to Metro-North's operations without changing track configurations: reducing signal spacing and train speeds; installing communication-based signalling; and consolidating and/or eliminating service at certain stations to allow for additional service to other stations, will also be evaluated. All alternatives, including the No-Build Alternative, involve lengthening of trains as needed and as feasible.

## IV. Probable Effects/Potential Impacts for Analysis

In the EIS, FTA/Metro-North will evaluate all significant social, economic, and environmental effects, or potential impacts, of the alternatives. Social, economic and environmental impacts proposed for analysis include land acquisitions and displacements, land use and zoning, secondary development, water quality, wetlands, flooding, navigable waterways and coastal zone, ecologically sensitive areas, threatened and endangered species, traffic and parking, air quality, noise and vibration, energy and conservation, historic/archaeological resources and parklands, construction/community disruption, aesthetics, safety and security, consistency with local plans, hazardous materials, electric and magnetic fields, and environmental justice. Special attention will be given to potential impacts related to traffic, noise and vibration and air quality. Both positive and negative impacts will be evaluated for the construction period and for the long-term period of operation. Measures to mitigate any significant adverse impacts will be considered.

## V. FTA Procedures

The EIS process will be conducted according to regulations and guidelines established by NEPA, as well as FTA's regulations found at 23 CFR part 771, and associated guidance documents. The social, economic, and environmental impacts of the Mid-Harlem Third Track Project will be assessed, and, if necessary, the project will be revised or refined to minimize and mitigate any adverse impacts. After its publication, the draft EIS will be available for public agency review and comment. A public hearing will be held. On the basis of the draft EIS and comments received, FTA/Metro-North will complete a final EIS.

Issued on: May 28, 1997.

**Anthony G. Carr,**

*Director, Office of Planning and Program Development.*

[FR Doc. 97–14313 Filed 5–28–97; 3:44 pm]

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## DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

### Surface Transportation Board

**[STB Finance Docket No. 33358]**

### Wisconsin Central Ltd.; Acquisition Exemption; Tomahawk Railway, Limited Partnership

**AGENCY:** Surface Transportation Board, DOT.

**ACTION:** Notice of exemption.

**SUMMARY:** The Board exempts, under 49 U.S.C. 10502, from the prior approval requirements of 49 U.S.C. 10902, Wisconsin Central Ltd.'s (WCL)