

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**Federal Highway Administration****Environmental Impact Statement:
Bronx County and New York County,
NY**

AGENCY: Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), DOT.

ACTION: Notice of intent.

SUMMARY: The FHWA is issuing this notice to advise the public that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be prepared for a proposed bridge improvement project in Bronx County and New York County, New York.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: (1) Harold J. Brown, Division Administrator, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Leo O'Brien Federal Building, 9th Floor, Albany, New York 12207; Telephone: (518) 431-4127 or (2) Richard Maitino, Regional Director, New York State Department of Transportation—Region 11 Office, Hunter's Point Plaza, 47-40 21st Street 8th Floor, Long Island City, New York 11101; Telephone: (718) 482-4526.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The FHWA, in cooperation with the New York State Department of Transportation and the New York City Department of Transportation (NYCDOT), will prepare an EIS on the proposal to rehabilitate, reconstruct, or replace the Willis Avenue Bridge over the Harlem River in Bronx County and New York County, New York.

The Willis Avenue Bridge is one of six bridges which span the lower Harlem River, providing a continuous street grid system between upper Manhattan and the southwest Bronx. Opened to traffic in 1901, the four-lane Willis Avenue Bridge, a swing bridge, is now open for one-way Bronx-bound vehicular travel with complementary Manhattan-bound service provided on the Third Avenue Bridge, several blocks to the north. The bridge is used by approximately 70,000 vehicles daily outbound from Manhattan, with 4,800 vehicles in the PM peak hour, when traffic is heaviest. The proposed project raises a number of environmental issues including effects on historic resources, water quality, natural resources, hazardous materials contamination, and parkland.

Improvements to the bridge are considered necessary to provide for the existing and projected traffic demand by improving land width and geometry of the bridge and its approach ramps, reducing the rate of accidents, increasing the bridge's load carrying capacity, improving the bridge's bicycle

and pedestrian facilities, and addressing all structural and seismic deficiencies of the present structure. Alternatives under consideration include (1) Taking no action; (2) an on-line rehabilitation of the existing bridge; (3) an on-line replacement, and (4) an off-line replacement. Incorporated into and studied with the various build alternatives will be design variations of bridge type (moveable or fixed) and materials (concrete or steel). All proposed alternatives retain four Bronx-bound lanes.

Letters describing the proposed action and soliciting comments will be sent to appropriate Federal, State, and local agencies, and to private organizations and citizens who have previously expressed or are known to have interest in this proposal. A public scoping meeting, for the purpose of soliciting comments from the public on the proposed scope of work for the EIS, will be held in November 1999. To ensure that the full range of issues related to this proposed action are addressed and that all significant issues are identified in the upcoming EIS, comments and suggestions are invited from all interested parties. Comments or questions concerning this proposed action and the EIS should be directed to the NYSDOT or FHWA at the addresses provided above.

After completion of the Draft EIS, a public hearing will be held. Public notice will be given of the time and place of the meeting and hearing. The Draft EIS will be available for public and agency review and comment prior to the public hearing.

(Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Program Number 20.205, Highway Research, Planning and Construction. The regulations implementing Executive Order 12372 regarding intergovernmental consultation on Federal programs and activities apply to this program)

Authority: 23 U.S.C. 315; 23 CFR 771.123. Issued on October 21, 1999.

Douglas P. Conlan,
District Engineer, FHWA, Albany, New York.
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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**Surface Transportation Board**

[STB Finance Docket No. 33807]

**Washington County Railroad
Company—Modified Rail Certificate**

On October 6, 1999, Washington County Railroad Company (WCRC), a noncarrier, filed a notice for a modified certificate of public convenience and

necessity under 49 CFR 1150, Subpart C, *Modified Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity*, to operate a 14-mile rail line owned by the State of Vermont (the line).¹

The line was approved for abandonment by Montpelier and Barre Railroad Company in *Montpelier and Barre Railroad Company—Entire Line Abandonment—From Graniteville to Montpelier Junction in Washington County, VT*, Docket No. AB-202 F (ICC served Mar. 12, 1980), and acquired by the State of Vermont on November 21, 1980. The Washington County Railroad Corporation (WACR) filed a notice for a modified certificate of public convenience and necessity on November 17, 1980, and a modified rail certificate was issued to WACR authorizing it to operate the line as of November 17, 1980.² On February 2, 1999, WACR agreed to assign its lease of the line to New England Central Railroad, Inc. (NECR).³ NECR accepted the assignment on February 9, 1999, and operated the line through the close of business on September 8, 1999, when it terminated operations over the line. Vermont Railway, Inc. (VTR) filed a notice for a modified certificate of public convenience and necessity on September 14, 1999, and a modified rail certificate was issued to VTR for the immediate interim operation of the line while VTR and the State of Vermont negotiated and entered into a lease and operating agreement that would govern future operations of the line by VTR or a subsidiary of VTR.⁴ On September 30, 1999, WCRC and the State of Vermont entered into an agreement whereby WCRC would operate the line, unless modified, through June 30, 2004. WCRC states that, effective immediately, it will replace VTR as the operator of the line.⁵

¹ WCRC was incorporated on September 23, 1999, for the purpose of providing rail service over the line for the State of Vermont.

² See *Washington County Railroad Corporation—Operations—From Montpelier Junction to Graniteville, VT*, Finance Docket No. 29536F (ICC served Jan. 2, 1981).

³ See *New England Central Railroad, Inc.—Modified Rail Certificate*, STB Finance Docket No. 33715 (STB served Feb. 26, 1999).

⁴ See *Vermont Railway, Inc.—Modified Rail Certificate*, STB Finance Docket No. 33800 (STB served Sept. 24, 1999).

⁵ WCRC states that it is owned by the same persons who control VTR. WCRC further states that it has the same officers and directors as VTR and two other Class III carriers, Clarendon & Pittsford Railroad Company, and Green Mountain Railroad Corporation. WCRC states that an exemption will be sought under 49 U.S.C. 10502 from the prior approval requirements of 49 U.S.C. 11323-25 for the control of WCRC by individuals who control other rail carriers. Common control authority or an exemption is needed before WCRC may begin rail carrier operations.