



Draft Scoping Document

WBS #: 5.02

Glassboro-Camden Line EIS

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Prepared for:



Revision 00

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1 OVERVIEW

The Glassboro-Camden Line (GCL) Light Rail Project is a proposed expansion of transit service in southern New Jersey, traversing the communities within the corridor from Glassboro to Camden. The proposed line would restore passenger rail service along the existing Conrail rail right-of-way using light rail vehicles similar to the NJ TRANSIT River LINE. Light rail along this corridor was selected as the Recommended Alternative based on the two-year Alternatives Analysis (AA) study completed in 2009.

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) is the lead federal agency for the project, with the Delaware River Port Authority (DRPA) and Port Authority Transit Corporation (PATCO) serving as joint lead agency. DRPA/PATCO is partnering with FTA to advance the project and seek federal funding.

This Draft Scoping Document provides details of project scoping, the first step of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process. This document also summarizes the analysis that has been completed and the work proposed.

Contained within this Draft Scoping Document is a discussion of the following topics:

- Overview of the NEPA Process
- Purpose and Need for the Project and Related Goals and Objectives
- Description of Primary Study Area
- Alternatives to be Studied
- Social, Economic and Environmental Impacts
- Overview of the Scoping Process, including Scoping Meeting Details
- Public Outreach and Agency Coordination

1.1 OVERVIEW OF THE NEPA PROCESS

With completion of the Southern New Jersey to Philadelphia Mass Transit Expansion Alternatives Analysis (2009), FTA, in coordination with DRPA and PATCO, has initiated the preparation of an EIS. The two major components of the EIS are the Draft EIS and Final EIS.

The Draft EIS will be prepared in accordance with NEPA, as amended, and will conform to FTA policies and guidelines relative to NEPA and Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations, as set forth in 64 FR 28545 (May 26, 1999) and 23 CFR 771. The Draft EIS will address, as necessary, Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation (DOT) Act of 1966 (49 U.S.C. 303) and other relevant federal and state laws and regulations. The Draft EIS will also address the provisions of Section 6002 of Public Law 104-59, "The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU)." The Draft EIS will document the environmental conditions, describe the possible social, economic, and environmental impacts and benefits of the project, and identify proposed mitigation measures.

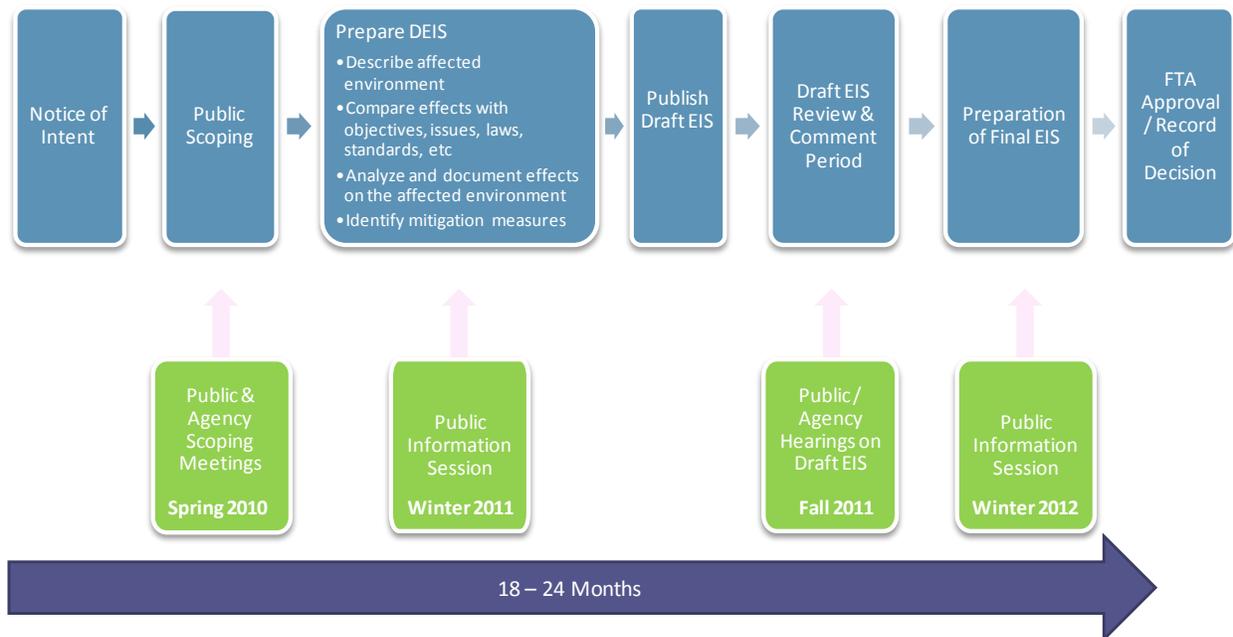
This Draft Scoping Document is the first part of the scoping process required under NEPA guidelines. The broader purpose of the scoping process is to provide the opportunity for the public and government agencies to review information on the GCL and offer comments with the intent of establishing the scope and content of the EIS. This document provides information to the public and agencies about the EIS process, project issues and the alternatives to be considered, and the environmental resource areas that will be examined.

Comments received from the public and agencies during scoping will be reviewed by FTA and DRPA/PATCO, and then incorporated into a Final Scoping Document, which provides the starting point for the preparation of the Draft EIS.

After completion and publication of the Draft EIS, that document will be available for public and agency review and comment. Public Hearing(s) are expected to be scheduled for Fall 2011 to receive comments from the public and agencies on the document. At the end of the comment period, the Final EIS will be prepared; this document would respond to any comments on the Draft EIS and present any clarifications or refinements to the alternatives that may have been developed subsequent to the issuance of the Draft EIS. The Final EIS is intended to be used by involved and participating agencies as the basis upon which to issue their findings, and allow for approval of the proposed action.

If FTA approves the Final EIS, it would issue a Record of Decision (ROD), and at that point, advanced project design can begin. The entire EIS process is summarized on Figure 1-1, and approximate time periods for each activity are framed.

Figure 1-1: EIS Study Process



2 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

2.1 PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of the GCL project is to improve transit service along the Glassboro to Camden corridor in Southern New Jersey, with a focus on increasing mobility and improving links between established communities and activity centers.

The Glassboro to Camden corridor is characterized by older, densely populated communities that developed along the rail line, as well as by major employment and activity centers, including universities, medical centers and other institutions. However, connections between these activity centers and the people who access them are not efficient, and travel along the corridor is difficult. With regard to transit service especially, the corridor lacks competitive and reliable transit options between the major communities and activity centers.

Trips along the corridor are made primarily by car. Major roadways experience congestion during peak hours, and even greater travel demands associated with growth in population and employment are predicted for the future in Gloucester and Camden counties. This growth will contribute to continued increases in travel times, vehicle miles of travel, air pollutants and greenhouse gases. In addition, this auto dependence has contributed to and continues to encourage development “sprawl” into open space and agricultural land, requiring new supporting infrastructure, and does not encourage growth in the established communities as promoted by state and local “Smart Growth” initiatives.

The proposed 18-mile GCL traverses established communities and would provide a new reliable transit system competitive with auto travel, linking activity centers, employment destinations and established residential areas. This reliability and competitiveness would encourage a modal shift from auto to transit, and contribute to reductions in congestion, travel times, vehicle miles of travel, air pollutants and greenhouse gases. Locating the proposed GCL within or adjacent to the existing Conrail railroad right-of-way would minimize property acquisition and take advantage of an underutilized transportation corridor. Moreover, its location amid established communities would encourage growth and economic development consistent with “Smart Growth” programs and policies at local, state, and regional levels.

The following project goals were derived from the needs, and reflect the plans and desires of the communities along the Glassboro to Camden corridor and Southern New Jersey as a whole, as articulated during the extensive public outreach and agency coordination process and needs assessment analyses performed during the AA study.

Provide More Transit Choices and Improved Quality of Service: Since the study corridor lacks high quality, readily available transit service, transit investments should be focused on improving service and increasing access.

Develop a Transit Network that Improves Links between People and Activity Centers: Cost-effective transit improvements that are integrated with residential areas and employment centers will increase both convenience and productivity, as well as encourage its use.

Reduce Highway Congestion with Competitive Transit Investments: Transit investment should also be directed at reducing congestion. By offering new transit solutions, reductions in vehicle miles traveled, traffic congestion, air pollution and energy consumption can be achieved.

Maximize Existing Transportation Assets and Minimize Impacts to the Environment: It is desirable to invest in transit projects that minimize and reduce impacts to environmental resources, promote less land-consumptive development, and utilize existing rail or highway rights-of-way.

Support State and Local Planned Growth Initiatives: Transit improvements should also encourage planned and controlled growth, consistent with the “Smart Growth” program and policies on the state and regional level and master planning/zoning on the municipal level.

Promote Economic Development and Improve Quality of Life: Developing alternative transit improvements provides the opportunity to encourage economic development and enhance quality-of-life conditions. To retain and attract residents and encourage economic growth, transit improvements must offer competitive and reliable service to important destinations.

2.2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

The concept of providing improved passenger rail access to Southern New Jersey dates back to the 1930's, with many past studies addressing various corridors and transit technologies. The most recent impetus for improved transit began in 2003, when DRPA/PATCO initiated the “Southern New Jersey to Philadelphia Transit Study”, completed in 2005. The study concluded with a “short list” of recommendations, including new transit service along the Conrail railroad right-of-way from Glassboro to Camden. These recommendations formed the basis for the Southern New Jersey to Philadelphia Mass Transit Expansion Alternatives Analysis initiated by DRPA in 2007 and completed in 2009. Alternatives employing one of two modes were analyzed: fully-separated heavy rail service similar to the PATCO Speedline; or diesel Light Rail similar to the NJ TRANSIT River LINE. These alternatives were located within rights-of-way of major study area highways—such as Route I-676, NJ Route 42, the Atlantic City Expressway and NJ Route 55 —and within the existing Conrail freight rail right-of-way from Glassboro to Camden.

As a result of a comprehensive analysis of these alternatives, the Light Rail alternative from Glassboro to Camden, aligned mainly within the existing Conrail railroad right-of-way, was chosen as the Recommended Alternative. This alternative, along with a No Action Alternative, and a Transportation System Management (TSM) Alternative, are being evaluated in the Draft EIS study.

2.3 SCOPE OF THE DRAFT EIS

2.3.1 Primary Study Area Definition

The primary area of effect to be examined extends approximately 500 feet from either side of the 18-mile-long alignment between Glassboro and Camden, primarily along the existing Conrail right-of-way. This width is the typical extent for potential direct impacts for the environmental effects that will be examined. The size and width of the study area will vary based upon the type of impact being evaluated and the typical extent of its effects.

2.3.2 Alternatives

The alternatives expected to be included in the EIS include:

No Action Alternative: The No Action Alternative represents future conditions in the EIS analysis year of 2035 without the GCL Project. The No Action Alternative includes the existing transit and transportation system in southern New Jersey plus planned improvements for which the need, commitment and financing have been identified, and which may reasonably be expected to be implemented. This Alternative is included in the Draft EIS as a means of comparing and evaluating the impacts and benefits of the GCL alternatives.

Transportation System Management (TSM) Alternative: The TSM alternative consists of enhancements and upgrades to the existing transportation system to address some of the needs and purpose of the project at less capital cost. These upgrades can include bus route restructuring and headway reductions, express and limited-stop service, intersection improvements, and other limited infrastructure improvements that enhance the transportation system. The specific combination of improvements to be incorporated into the TSM will be developed during the EIS process.

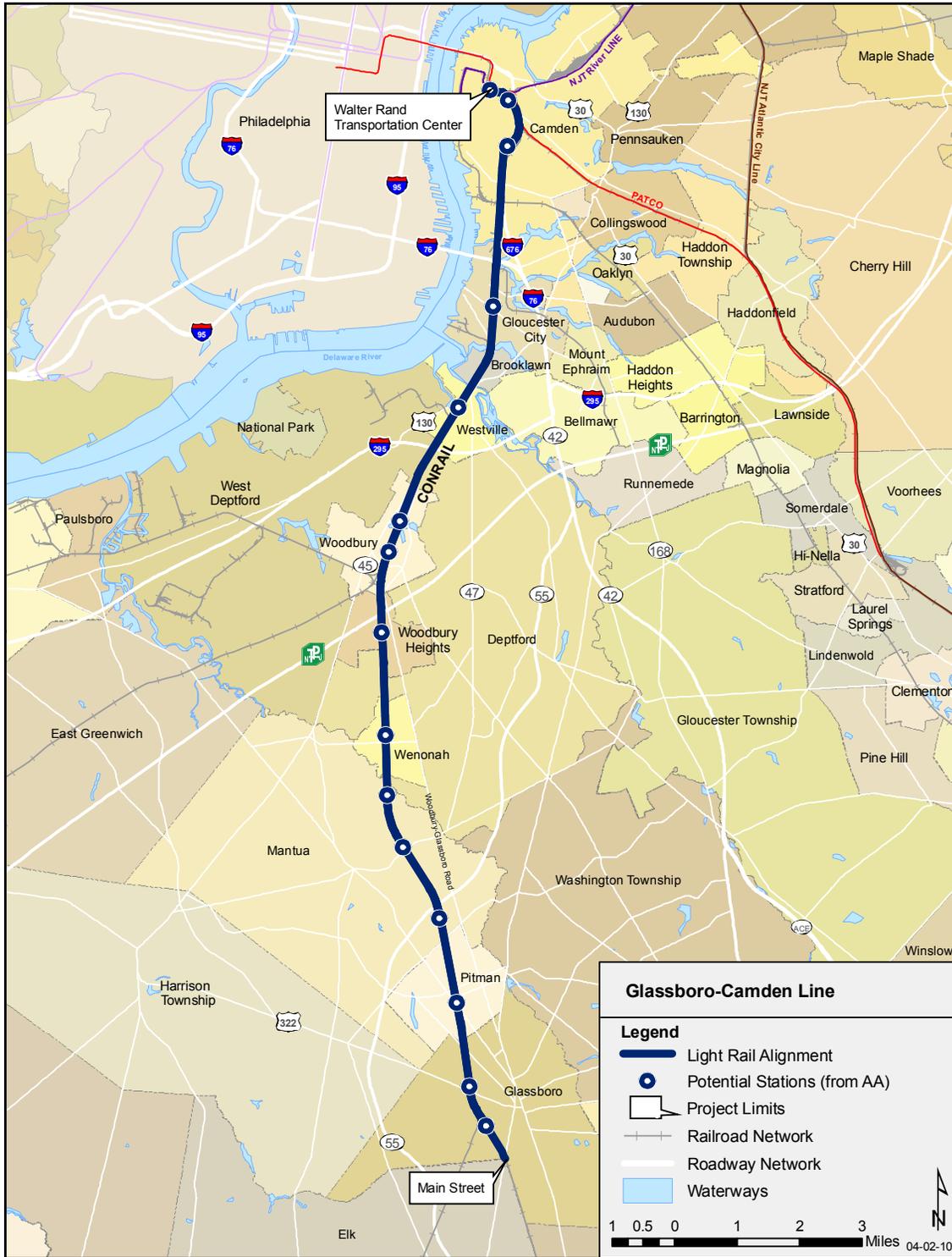
Light Rail Alternative: Based on the results of the 2009 Alternatives Analysis study of transit options, light rail service from Glassboro to Camden was selected as the Recommended Alternative to provide expanded transit service in Gloucester and Camden counties. This alternative will be the focus of the Draft EIS assessment and documentation.

The Light Rail Alternative would traverse the communities of Glassboro, Pitman, Sewell, Mantua Township, Deptford Township, Wenonah, Woodbury Heights, Woodbury, Westville, Brooklawn, Gloucester City and Camden. The new line would primarily run along Conrail's freight alignment, which is roughly parallel to Woodbury-Glassboro Road and NJ Route 45. The northern segment in Camden would follow a new right-of-way adjacent to I-676 before entering an in-street alignment to reach Walter Rand Transportation Center where riders could transfer to the PATCO Lindenwold Line and the NJ TRANSIT River LINE.

The Light Rail Alternative would use diesel-powered light rail vehicles, operating on new dedicated tracks and/or sharing portions of Conrail track with temporal separation. Approximately fourteen (14)

new stations would be located along the alignment; station locations will be studied in detail during the EIS phase. Figure 2-1 depicts the proposed GCL.

Figure 2-1: GCL Project Map



2.4 SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

The Draft EIS will document the prevailing and projected physical, social, economic and environmental conditions that comprise the “setting” on which the GCL will be superimposed to assess its impacts on the array of resource areas described below. This information will be presented in text, tables and graphics. As noted above, the No Action Alternative and a TSM Alternative will be evaluated, in addition to the GCL. As warranted, measures to mitigate predicted adverse impacts will be investigated and recommended.

A comprehensive and up to date inventory of the environmental setting will be prepared using secondary sources to the greatest extent possible, and supplemented by original field reconnaissance as needed. For certain analyses, the “Build” conditions will be compared to No Action conditions. In other cases, comparisons of the “Build” and existing conditions would be more appropriate, consistent with analysis methods sanctioned by project review agencies. Both construction-related and long-term impacts will be addressed. Impact assessment methods and findings will be coordinated with the appropriate resource and regulatory agency having jurisdiction over the particular resource. This coordination will extend to the identification and recommendation of mitigation measures, if needed, and will be documented in a section of the Draft EIS. The resource areas to be addressed in the Draft EIS will include:

- Transportation (Traffic, Parking, Transit, Pedestrians and Freight Rail)
- Land Use, Zoning and Public Policy
- Demographics, Socioeconomics and Neighborhoods
- Environmental Justice
- Visual and Aesthetic Conditions
- Air Quality
- Noise and Vibration
- Archaeological Resources and Section 4(f) Evaluation
- Historic Resources and Section 4(f) Evaluation
- Ecology and Water Resources
- Parklands and Section 6(f) Evaluation
- Contaminated Materials
- Safety and Security
- Economic Impacts
- Energy
- Utilities
- Indirect and Cumulative Effects

3 SCOPING PROCESS

The scoping process provides the opportunity for the public and government agencies to review information on the GCL and offer comments with the intent of establishing the scope and content of the EIS. Scoping begins with the publication in the Federal Register of a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare a Draft EIS. A copy of the NOI that appeared in the Federal Register on April 19, 2010 is included in the Appendix. This Draft Scoping Document has been prepared, as one part of the scoping process, to provide information to the public and agencies on the Draft EIS process, issues, alternatives and resource areas to be assessed. This Draft Scoping Document will be mailed to pertinent federal, state and local agencies, and can be provided upon request to other interested parties. The document is also available on the project website (www.GlassboroCamdenLine.com).

Public comments on this Draft Scoping Document will be considered and addressed by the lead agencies. Significant issues raised through public or agency comments received during the scoping process will be incorporated into a revised document. Comments may be conveyed orally at public scoping meetings, in writing, or by e-mail throughout the duration of the scoping process. Formal comments must be received by June 10, 2010 to be considered as part of the Final Scoping Document.

3.1 SCOPING MEETINGS

Agency and public scoping meetings are being held to review the study history, scope and approach, and to receive comments and suggestions for consideration from agencies and the general public. Both groups will be asked to comment on the purpose and need for transit improvements, on the alternatives to be analyzed, and on social, economic and environmental issues of concern.

The following materials are being utilized to inform the public and agencies of the public scoping meetings: a public scoping meeting flyer; project updates via electronic email notification; public notices in local and regional newspapers; and media/press releases. Ample advance notification is being provided to the public regarding the public scoping meetings, through a variety of media advertisements (newspaper, radio, cable television, website), in addition to the print material being posted throughout the project area (local eateries, libraries, post offices, municipal buildings, businesses, chambers of commerce, tourism offices, tourist locations, religious organizations, education facilities, community groups and other cooperating establishments).

Public and agency scoping meetings for the Draft EIS are being held at the following locations on the following dates:

Agency Meeting

Monday May 3, 2010

2:00pm-4:00pm – Combined Presentation, Discussion/comments

DRPA, One Port Center

2 Riverside Drive, Camden, NJ 08103

Public Meeting #1**Thursday May 6, 2010**

5:30pm Information Session

6:30pm-8:30pm Presentation and Formal Comment Period

Camden County College - Camden Technology Center**200 North Broadway, Camden, NJ 08102**

FREE PARKING WITH VALIDATION

Garage located at 6th and Penn Street, Camden NJ 08102

Transit: PATCO, River LINE & NJ TRANSIT Bus at Walter Rand Center

Public Meeting #2 / #3**Tuesday May 11, 2010**Afternoon Session:

1:30pm Information Session

2:30pm-4:30pm Presentation and Formal Comment Period

Evening Session:

5:30pm Information Session

6:30pm-8:30pm Presentation and Formal Comment Period

Rowan University – Henry M. Rowan Building**201 Mullica Hill Road, Glassboro, NJ 08028**

FREE Parking Available, Lots M-1 & D-1

Accessible from Robert Bowe Blvd and North Campus St.

Transit: NJ TRANSIT Buses 412, 313, & 408

3.2 PUBLIC OUTREACH AND AGENCY COORDINATION

Public involvement and agency coordination are fundamental components of the EIS process. Various methods described below will be developed and implemented to: enhance public and stakeholder understanding of the project; provide venues for public and stakeholder comment; and advance toward public and stakeholder acceptance and support for the GCL.

A Public Involvement Plan (PIP) has been developed outlining the public involvement strategy for the project. The PIP is organized to involve a full demographic spectrum around the GCL study area in the planning and public involvement process. Key components of the program include:

- An extensive mailing list (Electronic & U.S. Mail) of individuals and organizations, which was compiled during the Alternatives Analysis study that will be updated and utilized to provide direct project communication
- Public meetings and public information sessions at key project milestones as well as other targeted outreach meetings throughout the study
- Establishment and maintenance of a project website (www.GlassboroCamdenLine.com) as a tool to provide information and receive feedback

- Communications techniques including the preparation and distribution of advertisements, flyers and other print materials to keep the public and stakeholders informed; establishment of project e-mail addresses and a dedicated phone line to receive comments, inquiries and feedback; and media announcements about project activities and upcoming meetings and events.

An Agency Coordination Plan (ACP), as required by Section 6002 of SAFETEA-LU, has been prepared and will be implemented to facilitate the dissemination of information about the project and the Draft EIS to federal, state, regional and local agencies, to encourage open discussion of project details and issues, and to provide opportunities for agency comments and questions. The agency coordination process is being initiated with an agency scoping meeting. Following this meeting, agencies will be involved throughout the EIS process for review and discussion of Draft EIS technical details and findings.

These documents, as well as other project information, will be available on the project website (www.GlassboroCamdenLine.com) or through written request to Ms. Victoria Malaszecki, Envision Consultants, Ltd., P.O. Box 536, Mullica Hill, NJ 08062. Both the PIP and ACP will be updated throughout the EIS process by incorporating refinements to the public outreach and agency coordination process.