

7.0 FINDINGS AND NEXT STEPS TOWARD IMPLEMENTATION

The project Purpose and Need Statement, presented in Section 3.0 outlines the issues that support the need for fixed guideway transit and services in the Wilmington region. The project Steering Committee presented the following categorical motivations behind this support:

- Transportation Improvement (Intermodal Connectivity)
- AGT as an impetus for improved Quality of Life
- Work, home, retail and tourist destination
- Insure a logical and sound AGT system

The statement subsequently developed provided the rationale for the alternative alignment corridor segments presented as fixed guideway coverage in the New Castle County service area. These alignment corridor alternatives varied in terms of optimal speed characteristics, routing, station location, number of stations, environmental impacts, and potential costs. Working closely with the project Management and Steering Committees, the study team evaluated the alternative segment base on seven evaluation criteria contained in the Purpose and Need Statement. The key segments that comprise the initial 24-mile alignment corridor begins at Peoples Plaza on Route 40, proceed via Route 1 to downtown Wilmington and then on the Route 202 to the Blue Ball Properties.

The feasibility of two Monorail/AGT system concepts (large/high speed versus small/moderate speed) was assessed from the perspective of FTA New Start criteria and recently refined alternative land use scenarios contained in the WILMAPCO 2025 Regional Transportation Plan. The projected 2025 daily ridership was estimated at 12,800 total boardings with the surged peak-hour demand estimated at 1,500 passengers in the peak direction.

The life cycle cost analysis shows that there is no significant cost difference between the large and small systems. The large Monorail/AGT system is estimated to cost \$1.4 billion or \$59 million per mile. A logical first segment for the system that conforms to Wilmington city and regional goals, would be from downtown Wilmington (Amtrak Station) to the Blue Ball Properties. It is recommended that the potential of this segment be studied further. There were no fatal flaws identified that would prohibit inclusion of Monorail/AGT in a study of mass transportation alternatives in the Wilmington metropolitan area. **The overall Monorail/AGT system is worthy of further study in the context of a larger alternatives analysis that would consider this type of system along with other viable transit alternatives for the region.**

An appropriate step subsequent to this study would be an FTA Transit Alternatives Analysis. Under such a study, the full range of transit options would be explored. Public input would clearly be important in helping to define the route such a system might take, the location of any stations, and the relative importance of competing demands and potential impacts that might result from its implementation.

The conclusion of the Transit Alternatives Analysis is the New Start Evaluation. This evaluation compares the proposed transit alternative for the subject location with other proposed systems

around the country. In addition to the quantitative measures is the need to establish local support. The public involvement program will be key in demonstrating support for the project.

Beyond the Transit Alternatives Analysis would be an environmental impact study. Such a study is initiated with a scoping meeting. Scoping is the process whereby responsible parties offer guidance on key issues and concerns that should be addressed in the course of the study. Both in scoping, and throughout the study, public participation would be essential to both inform the public of the project's progress but also to gain insight on local conditions that might otherwise not be evident.

As the project moves into design and construction, public outreach will continue to be important. Appropriate outreach programs would need to be included in each subsequent phase.