

**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION****Federal Transit Administration****Environmental Impact Statement;  
Crossroads Arena Project/Bufalo  
Inner Harbor Development Project  
Bufalo, New York**

**AGENCY:** Federal Transit Administration.

**ACTION:** Notice of intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for the Crossroads Arena Project/Bufalo Inner Harbor Development Project.

**SUMMARY:** Pursuant to section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, as implemented by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 CFR parts 1500–1508) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) regulations under 23 CFR part 771, the FTA and the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA) intends to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) to study the reconfiguration and redevelopment of a portion of the Bufalo Inner Harbor located in the City of Bufalo, New York. The proposed project would be financed through funding from the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA), the New York State Thruway Authority, the City of Bufalo and Erie County. The project is being administered by the Empire State Development Corporation (ESDC) in cooperation with NFTA.

**I. Project Description**

The proposed action (Inner Harbor Development Project) consists of reconfiguration and redeveloping approximately 6 acres of land in downtown Bufalo, located along the Bufalo River near the southern terminus of the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority's (NFTA's) light rail rapid transit (LRRT) system at the foot of Main Street. A conceptual plan for redevelopment of the project site was prepared by the City of Bufalo in 1996 and sets the basis for the project. The principal elements of this plan included the construction of a new Naval and Military Museum, which currently occupies a portion of the project site; the reconfiguration of the Bufalo River shoreline to create two new inlets with direct access to Main Street to accommodate existing naval vessels that are part of the museum's collection, transient boats, water taxis, and tour boats; a visitor's center; a waterfront promenade to provide continuous pedestrian/bicycle access; a new or enhanced intermodal LRRT station to serve the project area; and the creation of Greenway Plaza, a new

public space serving as a hub for all bicycle and pedestrian trail systems, with areas for new development of commercial/entertainment facilities.

The Inner Harbor Development Project is intended to enhance public access to the water's edge; enhance ridership on the LRRT system; and encourage intermodal opportunities between waterborne, transit, automobile, pedestrian and bicycle route systems. Additionally, the project is also expected to facilitate and promote private investment by further capitalizing on intermodal opportunities offered in the project area.

The EIS will analyze reasonable alternatives that will assist in achieving the objectives of the Inner Harbor Development Project. Three alternatives will be formulated through a series of workshops with major stakeholders, agencies, and the general public. Although still being formulated, the alternatives will include consideration of a new/enhanced intermodal LRRT station; reconfiguration of the Bufalo River shoreline to increase access; identification of new private development sites in the project area; and establishment of new pedestrian/bicycle/automobile circulation routes through the project area. In addition, the EIS will assess the No-Action alternative to serve as a basis for comparison with the other alternatives and proposed action.

The EIS will evaluate all potential significant social, economic, and environmental effects of the alternatives. These would include issues involving land use/zoning/development policies; coastal zone management policies and navigable waterways; coordination with other projects planned in the study area and cumulative impacts from these projects; traffic, bicycle, and pedestrian circulation; transit ridership; parking; historic/archaeological resources and parklands; aesthetics; water quality; air quality; hazardous materials; and effects to minority and low income populations in accordance with federal guidelines concerning environmental justice. Both positive and negative impacts will be evaluated for the construction period and for the long-term period of operation. Significant potential adverse impacts resulting from analysis of the proposed action and alternatives will be discussed in terms of avoidance measures or minimized through the implementation of mitigation measures, where reasonable and appropriate.

**II. Scoping Process/Public Scoping Meeting**

The FTA is initiating a scoping process for the purpose of determining the scope of issues to be addressed in the EIS. All interested individuals and organizations as well as Federal, state, and local agencies, are invited to participate in identifying any significant social, economic, and environmental concerns related to the Inner Harbor Development Project. A draft Scoping Document describing the purpose of the project and impact issues is being mailed to affected Federal, State and local agencies as well as interested parties. Copies of the draft Scoping Document may be obtained by contacting Ms. Ruta Dzenis, Project Director, Empire State Development Corporation at (716) 856–8111. A Public Scoping Meeting concerning the Inner Harbor Development Project will be held on: November 24, 1997, 6:30 p.m., Bufalo and Erie County Public Library, Lafayette Square, Main Auditorium (Clinton Street Entrance), Bufalo, New York 14203.

Following a presentation on the project, comments on the scope of the EIS will be received and transcribed at this meeting.

Scoping comments may be submitted at the public scoping meeting and/or submitted in writing at the address listed below. It is important that interested parties and Federal, State, and local agencies take this opportunity to identify environmental concerns that should be addressed in the EIS. Further, because the preliminary design components of the Inner Harbor Development Project are currently being formulated and refined, the scoping process offers an opportunity to incorporate public environmental concerns into the urban design and engineering processes of the project.

Written comments on the scope of alternatives and impacts to be considered must be received by 5:00 pm January 16, 1998. Written comments should clearly describe the specific social, economic, and environmental issues and concerns that the commentor believes that the EIS should address. Written comments should be sent to: Ms. Ruta Dzenis, Project Director, Empire State Development Corporation, Western New York Region, 420 Main Street, Suite 717 Liberty Building, Bufalo, New York 14202.

**III. FTA and State Procedures**

The EIS process will be conducted in accordance with NEPA, CEQ, and FTA regulations under 23 CFR part 771. Following the completion of the scoping

process, a draft EIS will be prepared and made available for public review.

Following a 45-day public comment period and public hearing on the draft EIS, a final EIS will be prepared with appropriate revisions and additions responding to all substantive comments received. The final EIS will serve as the basis for a Record of Decision issued on the proposed action.

Because the proposed action also includes actions/funding by New York State, county and local agencies, it is

required to be assessed in accordance with the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA). ESDC will serve as the lead agency for SEQRA documentation. The content and format of the EIS will be designed to also serve as the SEQRA documentation for the action. All time frames, public notices, public hearings, and comment periods will be coordinated in accordance with both NEPA and SEQRA requirements.

#### **IV. Contacts**

For further information on this project, please contact: Anthony G. Carr, Director, Office of Planning and Program Development, Federal Transit Administration at (212) 264-8162.

Issued on November 7, 1997.

**Thomas J. Ryan,**

*Regional Administrator.*

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