

Abstract

New Jersey Transit Corporation (NJ TRANSIT) proposes to design and construct the NJ TRANSITGRID TRACTION POWER SYSTEM (proposed Project), a first-of-its-kind microgrid designed to provide highly reliable power to support limited service in a core segment of NJ TRANSIT's and Amtrak's critical service territory. As defined by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), a microgrid is a local energy grid with control capability, which means it can disconnect from the traditional grid and operate autonomously.

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) selected the NJ TRANSITGRID TRACTION POWER SYSTEM as one element of the "NJ TRANSITGRID" project, a Public Transportation Resilience Project in response to Superstorm Sandy. FTA's selection of the proposed Project makes it potentially eligible for funds made available under the Disaster Relief Appropriations Act of 2013 (Pub. L. 113-2). FTA's selection of the NJ TRANSITGRID project was published in Federal Register Notice Vol. 79, No. 214, 65762-65765 on Wednesday, November 5, 2014 (Table 1, Funding ID D2013-RESL-009 "NJ TRANSITGRID").

The proposed "NJ TRANSITGRID" Project selected by FTA consists of two elements.

1. NJ TRANSITGRID TRACTION POWER SYSTEM - The proposed Project would include a natural gas-fired electric power generating plant (referred to as the Main Facility), and the electrical lines, substations and other emergency generators to distribute the power to required areas. The Main Facility would utilize combined-cycle technology resulting in power generation capacity of 104 to 140 megawatts (MW). The preferred site for the Main Facility is in Kearny, Hudson County, New Jersey. The electrical lines would be located in Kearny, Jersey City, Hoboken, Bayonne, Weehawken, Union City, and North Bergen, New Jersey; specifically, within or adjacent to the existing Morris & Essex Rail Line between Newark, NJ and Hoboken Rail Yard; and the Hudson Bergen Light Rail Line.
2. NJ TRANSITGRID DISTRIBUTED GENERATION SOLUTIONS would provide power to certain train stations, bus garages and other transportation infrastructure in northeastern New Jersey.

As the administer of potential federal funds, FTA is the designated federal lead agency responsible for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act of 1970 (NEPA) pursuant to NEPA implementing regulations 40 CFR Part 1500-1508 and USDOT implementing regulations 23 CFR 771. Owing to the proposed NJ TRANSITGRID TRACTION POWER SYSTEM potential for significant environmental impacts, FTA has directed the preparation of this draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) for that element in accordance with 23 CFR 771.123.

The NJ TRANSITGRID DISTRIBUTED GENERATION SOLUTIONS project elements would be constructed to function independently from the NJ TRANSITGRID TRACTION POWER SYSTEM project and provide independent utility with regard to mass transit resilience. Therefore, FTA determined that the NJ TRANSIT GRID DISTRIBUTED GENERATION SOLUTIONS elements would undergo separate environmental review pursuant to 23 CFR 771 and are not included in the DEIS.

The purpose of the proposed Project is to enhance the resiliency of the electricity supply to the NJ TRANSIT and Amtrak infrastructure that serves key commuter markets in New York and New Jersey to minimize public transportation service disruptions. The region's public transportation infrastructure is vulnerable to power outages due to the nature of the existing centralized power distribution system and the intensity and frequency of severe weather events. The microgrid would be capable of providing energy to portions of Amtrak's Northeast Corridor, NJ TRANSIT's Morris & Essex Line, and NJ TRANSIT's HBLR system during power outages. The microgrid would generate power 24 hours per day/7 seven days per week.

This DEIS has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the NEPA of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4332 § 1969), Section 106 of 23 CFR Part 771.123, and Section 4(f) of 49 U.S.C. 303. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) are cooperating agencies for this DEIS.

Pursuant to 49 U.S.C. 304a(b) [and 23 U.S.C. 139(n)(2)], FTA will use Errata Sheets to complete the DEIS and issue a single document that consists of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Record of Decision (ROD) unless FTA determines that the statutory criteria or practicability considerations as defined in U.S. Department of Transportation "Guidance on the Use of Combined Final Environmental Impact Statements/Records of Decision and Errata Sheets in National Environmental Policy Act Reviews" (April, 25, 2019) preclude issuance of a combined document.

This DEIS is being made available so that agencies and the public can review and comment on the proposed Project and its potential impacts. A Notice of Availability on the DEIS is available through the Federal Register at <https://www.federalregister.gov/>.

DEIS PUBLIC COMMENT DATES: The Draft EIS is available for a 60-day public review period from May 20, 2019 through July 19, 2019, pursuant to NEPA. Written comments sent to NJ TRANSIT will be accepted until the close of business on July 19, 2019.

DEIS AVAILABILITY This DEIS is available for agency and public review and comment on the proposed Project and its potential impacts from the project website: <http://njtransitresilienceprogram.com/nj-transitgrid-overview/njtransitgriddocuments/>

A hardcopy is also available for review at the Federal Transit Administration Region 2 Office, 1 Bowling Green Room 429, New York, NY, 10004 and at NJ TRANSIT Headquarters, One Penn Plaza East, Newark, NJ 07105.

DEIS PUBLIC HEARINGS: Two public hearings providing an opportunity for public comment on the project are scheduled:

- Date/Time: June 18, 2019, 2-4 pm and 7-9 pm. A presentation of the project will be made at 2:30 PM and 7:30 PM, followed by the opportunity for hearing attendees to provide comments to the project committee. Comments on the DEIS can also be provided directly through dictation (but not to the larger group in attendance) and in writing.
- Location: Saint Peter's University, The Duncan Family Sky Room, 6th Floor 47 Glenwood Avenue Jersey City, NJ 07306.

PUBLIC COMMENT ADDRESSES: Written comments on the DEIS must be sent to one of the following:

- NJ TRANSIT Resilience Program, Capital Planning and Programs Department, One Penn Plaza East, 8th Floor, Newark, NJ 07105.
- The project website: <http://njtransitresilienceprogram.com/contact-us/>
- Federal Transit Administration Region 2 Office, 1 Bowling Green Room 429, New York, NY, 10004

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

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Mr. Dan Moser, Community Planner, FTA Region 2, One Bowling Green, Room 429, New York, NY 10004.