Title
Southeast high speed rail (SEHSR): a case study

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**Southeast High Speed Rail (SEHSR): A Case Study**

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**Abstract**

An overview
With tremendous economic and population growth, the Southeast needs a comprehensive, multi-modal transportation system. High speed rail service will provide business and leisure travelers with a competitive and affordable alternative to air and automobile travel for trips of 100 – 500 miles.

High speed rail in the Southeast will mean top speeds of 110 mph, using advanced energy efficient diesel locomotives, with average trip speeds of 85 – 87 mph. Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia have joined forces with their business communities to form a four-state coalition to develop a high speed rail network connecting their states with Washington, DC, and the Northeast. This rail network will be developed incrementally, upgrading mainly existing rail rights-of-way and requiring few new right-of-way acquisitions. Environmental, planning, and engineering work is further along in the Washington–Richmond–Raleigh–Charlotte section of SEHSR, where local track and infrastructure upgrading is already taking place, shortening travel times and providing greater capacity and trip reliability.

**Tiered environmental process**

North Carolina and Virginia, working with FHWA and FRA, completed the Tier I EIS for the Washington–Charlotte portion of SEHSR in October 2002. This study phase examined the need for the project and looked at potential impacts on natural and manmade environments along nine possible route alternatives. Twenty-six public workshops and 18 public hearings were held to solicit feedback on the project. Meetings were regularly held with local and state leaders, railroads, state and federal planners, and resource agencies as part of the process.

The purpose and need developed during this phase included: provide affordable transportation options; ease the growth of congestion of alternate travel modes; improve air quality; improve transportation safety and provide efficient energy use; and minimize environmental impacts.

The Tier II EIS is currently underway for the Petersburg, VA–Raleigh, NC, portion of SEHSR, providing a detailed analysis of possible local impacts, including station spacing, and location and capacity of the trackage infrastructure.