

# Draft Environmental Impact Statement Executive Summary

*South Valley Corridor Project*  
Spokane County Washington

December 2005



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION





**SOUTH VALLEY CORRIDOR PROJECT  
SPOKANE COUNTY, WASHINGTON**

**DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

Submitted pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act  
42 U.S.C. 4322(2)(c)

by the

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION

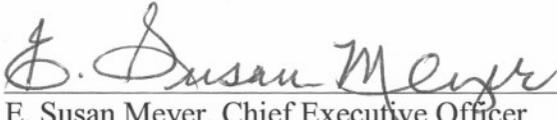
and

SPOKANE TRANSIT AUTHORITY

12/29/05  
Date of Approval

  
R.F. Krochalis, Regional Administrator  
For the Federal Transit Administration

DEC 29 2005  
Date of Approval

  
E. Susan Meyer, Chief Executive Officer  
Spokane Transit Authority

## **Abstract**

The proposed action improves the existing urban transportation system in the South Valley Corridor in the Spokane, Washington, metropolitan region. The South Valley Corridor Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement provides five alternatives for consideration. These include the No-Build Alternative, Separate Track Light Rail Transit (LRT) Alternative, Shared Track LRT Alternative, Bus Rapid Transit Alternative, and the Minimum Operate Segment Alternative. The analysis considered potential long-term, short-term and cumulative effects on mobility, the environment, land use, cultural resources, safety, economic and community development potential. It also considered project affordability, cost effectiveness, operating efficiencies. Mitigation measures to reduce anticipated impacts are detailed in the document. The analysis will be used to select the Locally Preferred Alternative for the South Valley Corridor.

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A 45-day period has been established for comments on this document. Comments may be submitted in writing or may be made orally at the public hearing(s). Written comments should be submitted to Mr. Kim Traver, Project Manager at the above address. Information on the public hearing can also be obtained from the project website at [www.spokanelightrail.com](http://www.spokanelightrail.com)

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## S.1 BACKGROUND

Despite aggressive development of a traditional road network, the Spokane, Washington, region has experienced a 300 percent increase in measured traffic congestion since 1990, with an estimated annual cost of \$32 million<sup>1</sup>. Moreover, in 1998, the region was designated a serious nonattainment area for air quality due to high levels of carbon monoxide. More recently, the region has improved its air quality through transportation programs and projects in adherence with the State Implementation Plan. However, the region must continue to work to prevent or reduce congestion associated with traffic growth and its negative impacts on air quality. In response, the Spokane Regional Transportation Council (SRTC) and the Spokane Transit Authority (STA) are jointly proposing the South Valley Corridor Project (SVCP) to provide high-capacity transit (HCT) in the South Valley Corridor. The South Valley Corridor extends east from downtown Spokane through the City of Spokane Valley and unincorporated Spokane County, to the City of Liberty Lake.

This Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) addresses the proposed alternatives for the SVCP, which are intended to proactively address congestion and help shape the growth in the South Valley Corridor. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) is the Lead Federal Agency for the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review of this project, which includes this DEIS. STA is the lead local agency for the SVCP and would serve as the local applicant for all federal, state, and local permits. STA's local partners are the SRTC, Spokane County, The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and the cities of Spokane, Spokane Valley, and Liberty Lake.

The Spokane region has been considering HCT in the South Valley Corridor for over 30 years. In 1974, WSDOT conducted a conceptual study of the potential for light rail in Spokane. In the early 1980s, the Spokane region began to pursue a transportation system that would offer choices to the public, rather than emphasizing one mode of transportation over others. In 1993, the SRTC published the *High Capacity Transportation System Plan Phase I Study*, which evaluated the potential for HCT in the Spokane region. In 1994, SRTC published the *Phase II HCT System Plan*, which recommended selection of the South Valley Corridor for HCT development. In 1995, it published the *Spokane Valley Transportation Study*, which evaluated the need for transportation improvements in the corridor and identified alternatives for further consideration. In 1997, SRTC published the *South Valley Corridor High Capacity Transportation Investment Study*. It evaluated high-occupancy vehicle lanes, LRT, and busway alternatives for meeting transportation needs in the corridor and identified LRT as the preferred alternative. In subsequent years, the SRTC, Spokane County, and cities of Spokane, Spokane Valley, and Liberty Lake adopted policies calling for both HCT in the corridor and land uses along the expected route that would support HCT. In 2001, STA secured funding from FTA to develop and evaluate HCT alternatives for the corridor.

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<sup>1</sup>Texas Transportation Institute, May 2005.

## **S.2 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION**

### **Project Purpose**

The SVCP has four primary purposes:

- 1) Contribute to the implementation of the Spokane region's transportation strategy to respond to the growth in the region, consistent with the comprehensive plans adopted by the affected jurisdictions.
- 2) Provide a high capacity transit option as a modal choice for an integrated, balanced regional transportation network that is less dependent upon road expansion, new construction, and added conversion of urban real estate to automobile parking.
- 3) Increase the linkage between activity centers through high capacity transit to enhance regional mobility for the growing population and labor force by taking advantage of available publicly-owned former railroad right-of-way (ROW) in the South Valley Corridor.
- 4) Provide high capacity transit to help achieve the Spokane region's dynamic economic development objectives.

### **Project Need**

#### **Low-Density, Auto-Oriented Development**

Without the SVCP, future development in the Spokane region would continue to be predominantly low-density and auto-oriented. Net residential density in the corridor is now about 4.5 dwelling units per acre. Together with implementation of local policies intended to encourage mixed use development, high capacity transit (HCT) could foster higher density development in the South Valley Corridor, in particular in the vicinity of station nodes where such development would be supported by good regional transit access.

#### **Growth in Population and Jobs**

Historical and projected growth in population and jobs demonstrate the need to plan for and manage growth in a manner consistent with the policies of local jurisdictions in the South Valley Corridor. From 1990 to 2000, population in the census tracts of the South Valley Corridor grew by 27 percent, representing an annual average rate of growth of 2.4 percent. The populations of Spokane Valley, Liberty Lake, and the unincorporated area between them are projected to grow by up to 46 percent between 2000 and 2020. The number of jobs in Spokane County grew by 31 percent from 1990 to 2000. The number of jobs in Spokane Valley, Liberty Lake, and the unincorporated area between them is projected to grow by 33 percent between 2000 and 2025.

## **Growth in Travel Demand**

Total east-west travel demand in the project area is projected to grow from approximately 306,000 average daily person-trips in 2000 to approximately 452,000 in 2025. This is an increase of 48 percent, representing average annual growth of 1.6 percent per year. Total average daily person-trips in the Spokane region are projected to grow from approximately 2.9 million in 2000 to approximately 4 million in 2025. This is an increase of 41 percent, representing average annual growth of 1.4 percent.

## **PROJECT GOALS**

STA's goals for the SVCP are to:

- Goal 1. Maximize Mobility Improvements
- Goal 2. Maximize Environmental Benefits
- Goal 3. Maximize Cost Effectiveness
- Goal 4. Maximize Operating Efficiencies
- Goal 5. Maximize Mutual Support Between Transit and Land Use
- Goal 6. Provide Project Affordability: limit the estimated capital and annual operation and maintenance costs to amounts the community is able to fully fund
- Goal 7. Maximize Economic Development Benefits: maximize project benefits to the local economy
- Goal 8. Maximize Community Development Benefits: increase access to public services, community facilities, and recreation/entertainment venues
- Goal 9. Respond to Community Preferences for HCT: offer the mode alternative for which there is a stated or implied community preference.

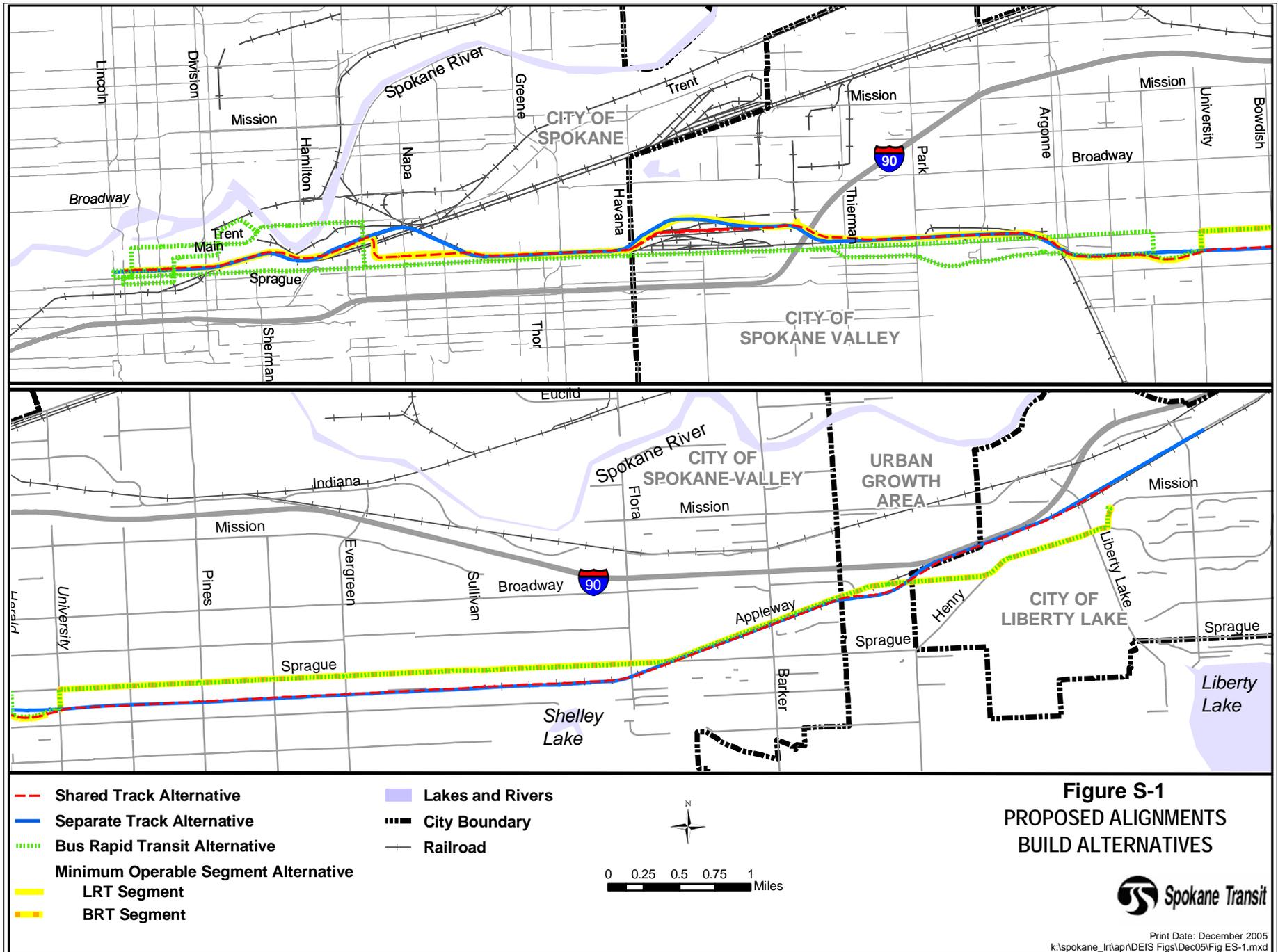
## **S.3 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED**

### **No-Build Alternative**

Under the No-Build Alternative, no South Valley Corridor Project would be undertaken. As analyzed in this DEIS, the No-Build Alternative is defined as the existing transportation system, plus all programmed transportation network improvements in the financially constrained Transportation Improvement Program for Spokane County.

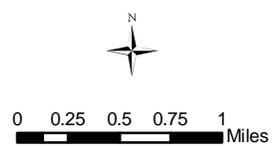
### **Build Alternatives**

Each alternative for providing HCT in the SVC is described below. Figure S-1 shows the alignments of the alternatives. Table S1 summarizes the principal ways in which the build alternatives differ from one another. It also includes a summary of the alternative maintenance and storage facility sites under each build alternative.



**Figure S-1**  
**PROPOSED ALIGNMENTS**  
**BUILD ALTERNATIVES**

- - - Shared Track Alternative
- Separate Track Alternative
- ⋯ Bus Rapid Transit Alternative
- Minimum Operable Segment Alternative
- LRT Segment
- BRT Segment
- Lakes and Rivers
- City Boundary
- Railroad



**Table S1 Summary of Build Alternative Characteristics**

<b>Feature or Impact</b>	<b>Separate Track Light Rail Transit</b>	<b>Shared Track Light Rail Transit</b>	<b>Bus Rapid Transit, Sprague Option</b>	<b>Bus Rapid Transit, Trent Option</b>	<b>Minimum Operable Segment</b>
<b>Mode</b>	Light rail transit (LRT)	Light rail transit (LRT)	Bus rapid transit (BRT)	Bus rapid transit (BRT)	LRT to University City, BRT to Liberty Lake
<b>Length (miles)</b>	16.1	15.5	15.5	16	16.4 (7.9 miles LRT, 8.5 miles BRT)
<b>Eastern terminus</b>	New Transit Center at Molter Road in Liberty Lake	Vicinity of Existing Liberty Lake Transit Center	Existing Liberty Lake Transit Center	Existing Liberty Lake Transit Center	LRT segment: Valley Transit Center; BRT segment: Existing Liberty Lake Transit Center
<b>Tracks</b>	Separate east and west tracks, separate from freight railroad tracks	Single track for both EB and WB with passing tracks. Uses UPRR tracks between Fancher and Argonne Roads	N/A	N/A	Single track for both EB and WB with passing track locations. Uses UPRR tracks between Lacey and Havana Streets and between Fancher and Argonne Roads
<b>Number of stations</b>	14	14	13 pairs	14 pairs	LRT 8 BRT 6 pairs
<b>Park and ride lots/spaces</b>	7/2,450	7/2,450	6/815	6/815	7/1,015
<b>Number of major bridges</b>	4	0	0	0	0
<b>Service</b>	M-S: every 10 mins. 7AM-8PM; every 30 mins. 5AM-7AM & 8PM-11PM. Sundays: every 30 mins. 5AM-11PM	M-S: every 15 min. 7AM-8PM; every 30 min. 5AM-7AM & 8PM-11PM.. Sundays: every 30 min. 5AM-11PM.	M-S: every 15 min. 7AM-7PM; 30 min. 5AM-7AM & 7PM-11PM. Sundays: every 30 min. 5AM-11PM.	M-S: every 15 min. 7AM-7PM; 30 min. 5AM-7AM & 7PM-11PM. Sundays: every 30 min. 5AM-11PM.	M-S: every 15 min. 7AM-8PM; every 30 min. 5AM-7AM & 8PM-11PM. Sundays: every 30 min. 5AM-11PM
<b>Vehicles</b>	22, electric	15 diesel	9 low-floor buses	10 low-floor buses	5 diesel LRT vehicles & 5 buses
<b>Maintenance and Storage</b>	75,000 sq. ft. facility on 20.5-acres at either Playfair Race Track site or site south of Fairgrounds	Similar to Separate Track option, but with smaller facility on 15-acre site	One-acre site at Playfair Race Track site, site south of Fairgrounds, or Boone Facility, or use of existing Fleck Service Center	Same as Sprague Option	LRT: 5-acre site at Playfair Race Track site, site south of Fairgrounds, or use of existing Fleck Service Center. BRT: .75-acre site at Playfair Race Track site, site south of Fairgrounds, Boone Facility, or use of existing Fleck Service Center

## **Separate Track Light Rail Transit Alternative**

The Separate Track Light Rail Transit (LRT) Alternative would provide passenger rail service between The Plaza Transit Center in downtown Spokane and the Liberty Lake Transit Center, over a route 16.1 miles long. The Separate Track LRT Alternative would operate on its own set of tracks, which would be separate from tracks used by freight railroads. There would be separate eastbound and westbound LRT tracks. At different segments of its route, the line would operate in existing streets, within existing freight rail rights of way, along vacant right of way formerly used for rail service, and along new right of way that parallels existing freight rail right of way. The Separate Track LRT Alternative would provide a high level of transit service by running vehicles every ten minutes during peak periods, limiting stops, using pre-boarding fare collection, using exclusive right of way, and possibly using traffic signal priority where it crosses streets and roads.

## **Shared Track LRT Alternative**

The Shared Track LRT Alternative would provide passenger rail service between The Plaza in downtown Spokane and the Liberty Lake Transit Center, over a route of 15.5 miles. It is a scaled-back version of the Separate Track LRT Alternative described above. One major difference is that it would be single-track, i.e., east-bound and west-bound trains would use the same tracks, except at five locations, where there would be passing tracks. A second major difference is that LRT trains would operate on UPRR tracks on one or more sections, depending on which design option is selected between Lacey Street and Argonne Road. A lower-cost design option of this alternative is referred to as the “Single-Track Option.” It is similar to the Shared Track Alternative with lower cost characteristics such as the use of single-unit diesel light rail vehicles, shorter passing tracks and further scaled back station and park and ride facilities.

## **Bus Rapid Transit Alternative**

The Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Alternative would provide “premium, enhanced” bus service between The Plaza Transit Center in downtown Spokane and the Liberty Lake Transit Center, over a route of approximately 16 miles in length. “Premium, enhanced” means service and design features that are like LRT. The BRT service, Sprague and Trent options, would operate on existing roadways (primarily Sprague Avenue), sharing existing lanes with other traffic. The BRT Alternative would expedite service by running vehicles every fifteen minutes, limiting stops, using pre-boarding fare collection, receiving priority at some traffic signals, and “jumping” traffic queues at some intersections.

## **Minimum Operable Segment Alternative**

The Minimum Operable Segment (MOS) Alternative, also referred to as the “University City Light Rail Alternative,” would provide LRT service in the western half of the corridor and BRT service in the eastern half. An LRT line would operate between The Plaza Transit Center in downtown Spokane and a station at the Valley Transit Center in Spokane Valley, over a route 7.9 miles in length. A BRT line would operate between the Valley Transit Center and the Liberty Lake Transit Center, over a route also 8.5 miles in length. Except for the differences described in the detailed description in Chapter 2, the MOS Alternative would be a combination of the Shared Track LRT Alternative and the BRT Alternative. MOS refers to the minimum length of LRT that

might be considered to be feasible. The MOS Alternative would be an interim transit strategy, with the extension of LRT to Liberty Lake anticipated at a future time.

## **S.4 COMPARISON OF BUILD ALTERNATIVES**

### **High Capacity Transit Alternatives**

Table S2 lists selected data and qualitative comparisons among the build alternatives. These are drawn from the environmental impacts that are described and analyzed in Chapter 3 and the evaluation presented in Chapter 6 of the DEIS. Included are selected direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts of the high capacity transit build alternatives and how they compare in terms of the redevelopment potential of station areas.

The evaluation applied the nine criteria listed below, which the STA Board adopted as goals for the project described above.

1. Mobility Improvements
2. Environmental Benefits
3. Cost Effectiveness
4. Operating Efficiencies
5. Transit Supportive Land Use
6. Project Affordability
7. Economic Development Potential
8. Community Development Potential
9. Community Preferences for HCT

**Table S2 Summary Comparison of Build Alternatives**

<b>Feature or Impact</b>	<b>Separate Track Light Rail Transit</b>	<b>Shared Track Light Rail Transit</b>	<b>Bus Rapid Transit, Sprague Option</b>	<b>Bus Rapid Transit, Trent Option</b>	<b>Minimum Operable Segment</b>
<b>MOBILITY IMPROVEMENTS</b>					
<b>Year 2025 daily boardings on new mode*</b>	4,890	3,394	3,250	2,989	3,000
<b>Travel time savings – hours of net transportation system user benefit (in comparison with No-Build)</b>	3,033	1,920	890	1,126	1,818
<b>Length of corridor served by dedicated fixed-guideway LRT</b>	16.1 miles	15.5 miles	0	0	7.9 miles
<b>ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS</b>					
<b>Air Quality – Reduction in regional daily generation of CO</b>	Reduced by 324 lbs.	Reduced by 209 lbs.	Reduced by 143 lbs.	Reduced by 130 lbs.	Reduced by 165 lbs.
<b>Noise Impact – Number of impacted properties / number of impacted properties where impacts cannot be mitigated</b>	248/0	398/0	0	0	43/0
<b>Water Quality – new impervious surface area created (acres)</b>	20.1	20.1	5.32	5.43	6.32
<b>Historic – Number of potentially historic properties impacted</b>	One site potentially impacted	One site potentially impacted	No impact	No impact	One site potentially impacted

\*Differences in predicted ridership for the Separate Track and Shared Track alternatives are attributable to the difference in peak-hour service frequency of 10 minutes and 15 minutes, respectively.

**Table S2 Summary Comparison of Build Alternatives**

<b>Feature or Impact</b>	<b>Separate Track Light Rail Transit</b>	<b>Shared Track Light Rail Transit</b>	<b>Bus Rapid Transit, Sprague Option</b>	<b>Bus Rapid Transit, Trent Option</b>	<b>Minimum Operable Segment</b>
<b>Railroad interfaces – Miles of alignment assumed to share tracks with freight railroads</b>	0	1.8 miles	0	0	2.9 miles
<b>Private property – displacements required</b>	4 businesses	3 businesses	1 business	1 business	2 businesses
<b>COST EFFECTIVENESS</b>					
<b>Annualized cost (capital and operations) per transit rider (new mode)</b>	\$45.2	\$20.5* and \$40.3	\$8.6	\$10.3	\$20.0
<b>OPERATING EFFICIENCIES</b>					
<b>Operations &amp; Maintenance (O&amp;M) cost per revenue vehicle hour (new mode)</b>	\$234.9	\$237.3** and \$196.7	\$95.9	\$95.9	\$158
<b>Total boarding rides per vehicle hour</b>	20.1	18.8	24.7	20.9	23.8

\*Lower number reflects estimates associated with “Single-Track” LRT Design Option. Higher number is associated with the “Shared Track LRT Alternative.”

\*\*Larger number reflects estimates associated with the “Single-Track” LRT Design Option. Lower number is associated with the Shared Track LRT Alternative.

**Table S2 Summary Comparison of Build Alternatives**

<b>Feature or Impact</b>	<b>Separate Track Light Rail Transit</b>	<b>Shared Track Light Rail Transit</b>	<b>Bus Rapid Transit, Sprague Option</b>	<b>Bus Rapid Transit, Trent Option</b>	<b>Minimum Operable Segment</b>
<b>TRANSIT SUPPORTIVE LAND USE</b>					
<b>Consistency with local government plans and policies regarding transit-oriented development and land use</b>	Consistent: Full corridor development of light rail anticipated to positively influence transit supportive land use development	Consistent: Full corridor development of light rail anticipated to positively influence transit supportive land use development	Consistent: BRT anticipated to influence development of transit supportive land uses	Consistent: BRT anticipated to influence development of transit supportive land uses	Consistent: Partial corridor development of light rail anticipated to positively influence transit supportive land use development
<b>PROJECT AFFORDABILITY</b>					
<b>Total capital cost of proposed alternative (2008 dollars), in millions</b>	\$658	\$226* and \$408	\$61	\$65	\$157
<b>Annual operating and maintenance cost of proposed alternative (2004 dollars), in millions</b>	\$16.6	\$6.2* and 10.3	\$3.7	\$4.0	\$5.8
<b>Total capital cost per mile of proposed improvement (2008 dollars), in millions</b>	\$40.9	\$14.6* and \$26.3	\$3.3	\$3.6	\$9.8

\*Lower number reflects estimates associated with the “Single-Track” LRT Design Option. Higher number is associated with the Shared Track LRT Alternative.

<b>Table S2 Summary Comparison of Build Alternatives</b>					
<b>Feature or Impact</b>	<b>Separate Track Light Rail Transit</b>	<b>Shared Track Light Rail Transit</b>	<b>Bus Rapid Transit, Sprague Option</b>	<b>Bus Rapid Transit, Trent Option</b>	<b>Minimum Operable Segment</b>
<b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL</b>					
<b>Relative potential for significant economic development benefits</b>	More potential based on studies concluding that LRT would positively influence property value, new development, redevelopment and local government sales tax and property tax revenues *	More potential based on studies concluding that LRT would positively influence property value, new development, redevelopment and local government sales tax and property tax revenues*	Some potential based on studies concluding that BRT would not as significantly influence new development or property values*	Some potential based on studies concluding that BRT would not as significantly influence new development or property values*	Potential, but less than other light rail alternatives since this alternative only has LRT in a portion of the corridor*
<b>COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL</b>					
<b>Degree of influence in promoting pedestrian use of the alternative (new mode)</b>	Most likely to promote greater pedestrian use, measured by the number who walk to transit as recorded in the transportation modeling results	More likely to promote greater pedestrian use, measured by the number who walk to transit as recorded in the transportation modeling results	Promotes pedestrian use, measured by the number who walk to transit as recorded in the transportation modeling results	Promotes pedestrian use, measured by the number who walk to transit as recorded in the transportation modeling results	Likely to promote greater pedestrian use, measured by the number who walk to transit as recorded in the transportation modeling results
<b>COMMUNITY PREFERENCES FOR HCT</b>					
<b>Responses to surveys in Project Web site, newsletter, and information kiosks **</b>	Majority of respondents preferred a LRT Alternative	Majority of respondents preferred a LRT Alternative	Minority of respondents preferred a BRT Alternative	Minority of respondents preferred a BRT Alternative	Majority of respondents preferred a LRT Alternative

\* Marketek /Applied Economics, July 2005, Socioeconomic and Revenue Impacts on a Proposed Light Rail System for Spokane, Washington, p. ii.

\*\* Public preference measured by over 2,200 documented responses pending validation through statistical survey methods.

## **S.5 FINANCIAL SUMMARY**

### **Project Capital Funding**

Potential local funding sources include sales tax revenues, property taxes (including from tax increment financing), and property owner assessments. Potential federal funding sources include FTA’s Section 5309 New Starts Program, Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Funds, Surface Transportation Program Funds, and FTA Section 5307 Formula Grants. These potential funding sources can be applied in various amounts. Whether these funds are made available and in what amounts will depend on a number of factors, including the federal criteria, competition for limited federal funds, local government spending priorities, and the will of the voters in the

Spokane region, if additional tax revenue is required. It may be possible to fund the lower-cost alternatives without Federal participation.

## **Operations and Maintenance**

Farebox revenues and local sales tax revenues would fund operations and maintenance. A voter-approved sales tax increase will likely be required to operate and maintain any of the build alternatives into the future.

## **S.6 MITIGATION MEASURES**

The most serious potential impacts of the build alternatives that can be mitigated are the potential impacts on noise levels and water quality and the interface issues between light rail vehicles and freight railroad vehicles under the Shared Track LRT and MOS Alternatives necessary to provide safe operations. FTA and STA would determine specific mitigation, once a preferred alternative is selected. Mitigation of noise impacts could include noise specifications when transit vehicles are purchased; treatments of transit vehicle wheels; treatments of vehicle mechanical systems, such as fans; keeping the running surface of LRT rails smooth; time-of-day restrictions on transit system operations; sound barriers; and sound insulation for buildings. Mitigation of potential water quality impacts would consist of structural best management practices (BMPs), application of non-structural BMPs, and frequent inspection and maintenance. These would address both storm runoff and spill prevention. Under the Shared Track LRT and MOS Alternatives, the Federal Railroad Administration would likely require time-of-day separation between LRT use of shared tracks and freight rail use of tracks.

## **S.7 COORDINATION, CONSULTATION, AND COMMENTS**

Three standing committees met throughout the course of the project to review activities and provide advice and guidance. First, a Steering Committee was established by the STA and SRTC Boards to oversee project activities. It is made up of STA and SRTC Board members, other elected officials and citizens of the Spokane region, and makes recommendations to the STA Board. A Citizens Advisory Committee, made up of interested citizens, also met monthly throughout the course of the project. It makes recommendations to the project Steering Committee. A Technical Advisory Committee, made up of planning and engineering managers from jurisdictions along the corridor met periodically to review technical progress of the Project and to coordinate project development to avoid conflicts with other transportation and public works projects. It also makes recommendations to the project Steering Committee.

Public involvement for the SVCP included:

- DEIS public and agency scoping sessions in 1998, 2002 and 2003;
- SRTC public outreach in the early project phases from 1996 – 1998; and
- An extensive STA public outreach program conducted by STA beginning in 2001.

The STA public involvement program began in 2001 and will continue through the DEIS hearing process and eventual adoption of a Locally Preferred Alternative. The public involvement efforts included public discussions, written communication, visual communication, media relations, computer technology, a project web site and other tools such as the use of three interactive kiosks that displayed project information and solicited input at various public locations throughout Spokane. The kiosks provide a three question informal survey, which is also included on STA's project web site. In fall/early winter 2005, a statistically valid survey is scheduled to help validate the documented public responses regarding mode preferences, willingness to commit funds, and expected availability timeframe. Chapter 4 lists meetings, community education and public outreach activities conducted, including outreach efforts to minority and low-income populations.

Once this DEIS is published, a 45 day comment period will commence, to include at least one formal opportunity for public comment prior to the selection of a locally preferred alternative as described below.

## **S.8 ISSUES TO BE RESOLVED**

Following the release of this DEIS for public review, several issues must then be resolved:

***Selection of the Locally Preferred Alternative*** – During a 45-day review period, STA will hold a public hearing / open house. The purpose will be to provide further information about the project alternatives and to solicit formal public comment regarding this DEIS. Following the close of the review period, a report will be prepared that documents all comments received. It is then anticipated that the regional committees established for oversight of this project (Citizens Advisory Committee, Technical Advisory Committee and Steering Committee) will provide input regarding selection of a locally preferred alternative (LPA). This alternative could be the No-Build Alternative or it could be one of the Build Alternatives. The LPA recommendation will be documented in a Locally Preferred Alternative Report that will be available for public review and presented to the STA Board of Directors for adoption. Other public jurisdictions in the region may also resolve to accept the LPA as part of their comprehensive land use and transportation plans and policies. It is anticipated that the recommendation will include next steps to be taken if the action is approved.

***Establish Plan for Funding and Operations*** – If a Build Alternative is selected as the LPA, a Plan for Funding and Operations will be developed to identify specific funding components for implementation of the selected project. It is anticipated that the majority of funding will be through local sources with significant likelihood that a regional vote would be required to authorize additional tax revenues to be dedicated to the development and operation of the alternative selected.

***Identification of Specific Mitigation Plan*** – Further analysis including preliminary engineering and refinement of the environmental analysis will be conducted as necessary to provide more detailed project definition of the LPA and a plan for the mitigation of any adverse impacts. This activity, coupled with the plan for funding and operations will allow a revised schedule for project implementation to be established.

***Preservation of Existing Right of Way*** – Whether or not a Build Alternative is selected, STA and its partner jurisdictions in the South Valley Corridor may wish to take additional steps to preserve portions of the existing right of way for future use by this project or other future transportation uses.

***Agreements with Jurisdictions and Railroads*** – If a Build Alternative is selected as the LPA, STA would need to establish agreements with other public jurisdictions through which the selected alternative passes. These would establish the conditions under which the use of public rights of way may occur, the participation in the project by each jurisdiction, and conditions that must be met by STA in order to receive jurisdictional permits for the project. If a light rail alternative is selected, then STA would also need to secure agreements with the Railroads (BNSF and UPRR) for use of railroad rights of way and possible arrangements for joint use of freight railway tracks. The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) would also need to review and concur with any conditions where a light rail alternative would operate within a shared right of way or shared track environment.

***Coordination with Other Projects*** – STA will need to continue to coordinate its interests for the South Valley Corridor Project with several other possible transportation projects that are in various stages of development in the Spokane Region. These include:

- the City of Spokane’s proposal to extend Riverside Avenue east of Division Street in the Riverpoint Campus area;
- the proposal by SRTC known as Bridging the Valley to consolidate railroad operations of the UPRR and BNSF from Spokane to Athol, ID;
- the possibility of extending Appleway Boulevard east of University Road in Spokane Valley;
- the feasibility study to consider development of a downtown Spokane Streetcar system; and
- WSDOT’s ongoing North Spokane Corridor project.

If a Build Alternative is selected for the South Valley Corridor Project its development will need to be coordinated with each of these projects.