



COMMUNITY ADVISORY GROUP

Summary of March 25 and 26, 2014

Preliminary Draft Environmental Impact Statement Meetings

The Grand Crossing Rail Project Team is using the Illinois Department of Transportation's (IDOT) Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) process to develop the project's preliminary engineering design and corresponding Environmental Impact Statement. This process engages all project stakeholders, including neighborhood residents, elected officials, community and business leaders, interest groups, government agencies, and anybody who interacts with the railroads and roadways in the project study area. The intent of the CSS process is to identify and have a clear understanding of the community's transportation concerns. Community input will help shape a solution for the Grand Crossing Rail Project that best balances the transportation needs of this project with the concerns and values of the community.

As part of this CSS process, the Project Team invited area residents and representatives from businesses, police and fire districts, non-profits, churches, and schools to form two Community Advisory Groups. These two groups – one for neighborhoods in the northern part of the study area and one for those in the southern part – served as a forum for community leaders and residents to meet periodically to discuss the community's thoughts and ideas about the project. These Community Advisory Groups were integral to shaping the project, providing input to the problem statement and purpose and need, the alternatives considered, and selection of the preferred alternative. The Community Advisory Group membership roster is provided as Attachment A.

On March 25 and 26, 2014, the fourth round of Community Advisory Group meetings were hosted at the Sherwood Park Field House and Grand Crossing Park Field House, respectively. The purpose of these meetings was to gather input on the mitigation measures that will be included in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and mitigation measures still under investigation. This memorandum describes the format and content of the March 25 and 26 Preliminary Draft Environmental Impact Statement meetings, the input received from Community Advisory Group members during these meetings, and the next steps for the project's public outreach program.

1. Meeting Format and Agenda

The Community Advisory Group-North Meeting was held on Tuesday, March 25, 2014 from 1:30pm to 4:00pm at Sherwood Park Field House, 5701 S. Shields Avenue, Chicago and was attended by 18 people. The Community Advisory Group-South Meeting was held on

Wednesday, March 26, 2014 from 1:30pm to 4:00pm at the Grand Crossing Park Field House, 7655 S. Ingleside Avenue, Chicago and was attended by 17 people. A sample invitation letter is provided as Attachment B.

Project Team staff included Samuel Tuck III, Emily Kushto, George Outlaw, and Jakita Trotter from IDOT, as well as several members of the consultant team, including Tony Pakeltis, Craig Moore, and Elizabeth Hynes of Parsons; Michael Hurley of DLZ; and Margarite Wypychowski, Veronica Cruz, Josh Druding¹, and Marielle Sainvilus² of public outreach subconsultant Carolyn Grisko and Associates. Other attendees included Joe Alonzo and Jeffrey Sriver of the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT), Derrick James of Amtrak, and Chuck Allen of Norfolk Southern. Alderman Willie Cochran attended the North meeting; Barrett Finnegan from Congressman Bobby Rush's office and Loren Harris from Alderman Michelle Harris's office attended the South meeting.

The north and south meeting attendance lists are included as Attachment C, and handout materials provided to each attendee can be found in Attachment D. Handout materials included:

- Meeting agenda
- Project study area map
- Alternatives handouts:
 - Summary of Proposed Improvements
 - Preferred Alternative Details
 - Property Impacts
 - Proposed Street Closures
- Noise and Vibration Impacts
- Meeting presentation handout
- Summary of Community Advisory Group Preferred Alternative Meetings (October 2012)
- IDOT photo release form
- Comment form
- Information on existing job training programs, including the Chicago Urban League Transportation Construction Apprenticeship Readiness Training Program and the IDOT Highway Construction Careers Training Program (HCCTP)
- CREATE Employment Opportunities factsheet
- Railroad and City of Chicago contact information

Details on the discussions that took place during these meetings are provided in Section 2 below.

After a safety briefing, IDOT's CREATE Public Outreach Manager, Jakita Trotter, welcomed attendees and asked all meeting attendees to introduce themselves. She then walked through

¹ North meeting only

² South meeting only

the agenda for the meeting, which included Project Team introductions, a recap and review of the material presented at previous meetings, presentation of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement impact evaluation, a group discussion about potential mitigation measures, and a summary of upcoming outreach activities and next steps. Ms. Trotter then summarized the CSS process and laid out meeting guidelines to ensure that the afternoon proceeded in an efficient manner so that everyone had the opportunity to participate. She also highlighted the goals of the meeting, which were to:

- Present impact evaluation results,
- Brainstorm potential mitigation measures to lessen the project's impacts and expand its benefits to the community, and
- Hear participants' input on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

Next, Parsons Project Manager Tony Pakeltis delivered the technical presentation, which began with a review of the Grand Crossing Rail Project and the Project Team's technical activities since the last round of Community Advisory Group meetings in October 2012, which included an impact evaluation of No Build and Build alternatives, noise and vibration analyses, a special waste study, road closure and drainage engineering studies, and identification of potential mitigation measures. He then reviewed the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, including the topics studied and impacts identified. He then laid out potential mitigation measures for each of the impacts, including both the standard measures that will be included in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and additional ideas that are still under investigation. He concluded this portion of the presentation with an overview of the noise barrier locations recommended in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement noise and vibration study.

The Project Team's presentation was followed by a group discussion during which Community Advisory Group members discussed the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and proposed mitigation measures presented by Mr. Pakeltis, as well as participants' ideas for additional mitigation measures. This discussion exchange is described further in Section 2. The meeting concluded with a discussion of next steps, the process for circulating the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, and other opportunities for community input, including the Draft Environmental Impact Statement public hearings.

A copy of the presentation slides is included as one of the handouts in Attachment D.

2. Group Discussion

Both meetings included a discussion among the full group. Questions and comments heard are summarized below (with Project Team responses shown in red). The intent of the conversation was not to reach agreement on or commit to any particular mitigation measures at the meeting, but rather to brainstorm and discuss ideas that the Project Team could then take back to the CREATE Partners (i.e., U.S. DOT, IDOT, CDOT, Amtrak, and the freight railroads) for further consideration and possible incorporation in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

North (March 25, 2014):

- Does your analysis take into account construction-period impacts such as noise, vibration, location of construction storage sites, and routing of construction vehicles?

- *In addition to assessing the long-term effects of the project and identifying mitigation measures to address them, the Draft Environmental Impact Statement also considers impacts that would occur during the approximately three-year construction period. Construction-period impacts identified in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement include temporary air quality, noise, and vibration impacts, as well as temporary changes to rail operations and vehicular and pedestrian traffic. Because the construction-period noise and vibration effects would be temporary, no construction-related noise or vibration mitigation is proposed at this time.*

Detailed information on the location of construction staging areas or routing of construction vehicles is not available at this time because the detailed design of the project and plans for staging construction will not be developed until Phase II (Final Design) and Phase III (Construction). To help address this uncertainty, one of the mitigation commitments included in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement is continued coordination with the Community Advisory Group throughout Phases II and III so that you will have the opportunity to provide input on the construction process as those details become available.

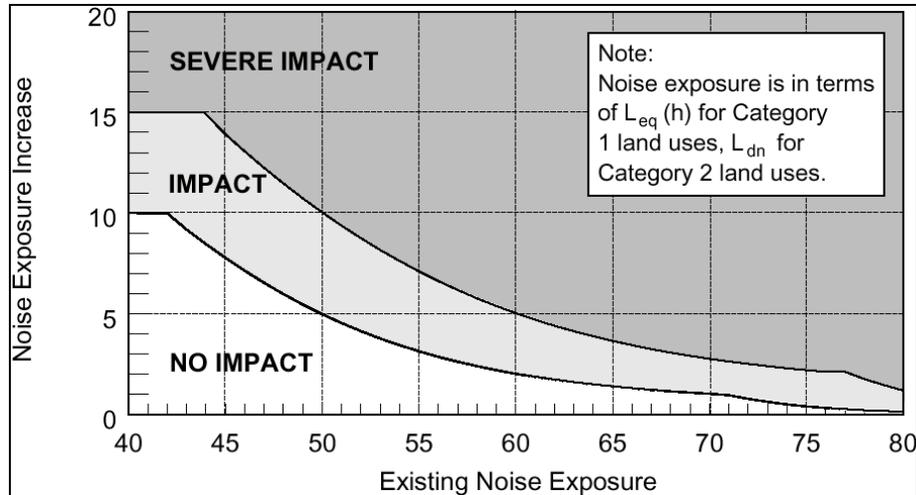
- We need more information about construction details before moving forward. If you're going to issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) for construction, you should have more detail than what you've provided so far.

- *The next step in the project timeline would be an RFP for Final Design, not an RFP for Construction. Many of the details you requested [during the Project Team's March 11, 2014 meeting with Alderman Cochran] would be developed during Final Design.*

- How do you define “moderate” and “severe” noise impacts?

- *Mr. Pakeltis walked the group through the noise and vibration methodology and shared several figures and tables from Draft Environmental Impact Statement. He described how the noise and vibration analysis for the project was conducted and explained the results.*

The Project Team assessed noise levels in accordance with the CREATE Noise and Vibration Assessment Methodology (IDOT, 2013), which is based on Federal Transit Administration (FTA) procedures and impact criteria. This guidance defines moderate and severe noise impacts quantitatively based on the increase from the existing noise level, as shown in the following exhibit (which was shown to the group):



- What causes the increases in noise for rail projects?
 - *Noise impacts are related to three main variables: the speed of trains, the number of trains, and the length of trains.*
- How will you mitigate the noise and vibration caused by constructing noise barriers?
 - *The contract bid documents will have language regarding noise requirements during construction. Mr. Tuck added that IDOT will consider the noise and vibration impacts of various construction techniques (e.g., drilled shafts versus pile driving) if the project advances to Final Design and Construction.*
- How will you document and respond to construction noise impacts? Will you use noise monitors?
 - *Alderman Cochran made specific recommendations – including vibration monitoring and construction time restrictions – to the Project Team at a prior meeting with the alderman. These recommendations are under consideration by the CREATE Partners.*
- Why is soil being tested in the portion of the project area south of 55th Street?
 - *Those tests are not part of this project; soil testing for the Grand Crossing Rail Project would occur during Phase II (Final Design). In general, soil is tested during transportation projects when the project involves bridges or other aerial structures (to assist in determining the appropriate structural foundations) or when property is acquired (to test for special waste contamination).*
- What is the target date for the project?
 - *The target completion date for Phase 1 is November 30, 2014. Phases II and III are not yet funded, so no target dates for Final Design or Construction have been established. (If Phases II and III are not funded, there will be no project.)*

- Have you conducted air quality monitoring?
 - *No; in accordance with Federal and CREATE air quality guidance, the air quality impact methodology looks at changes in fuel consumption, which will decrease as a result of the project due to improved efficiency of train movements. Air Quality monitoring was not required to make this determination.*
- Consider adding pine trees to absorb air quality pollutants.
 - *We will take your idea for adding pine trees along the corridor back to the CREATE Partners for consideration.*
- Can you commit to long-term air quality monitoring? The current 250 trucks per day traveling through the neighborhood will increase to 1,000 trucks per day after the project
 - NS would not be expanding its 47th Street Intermodal Yard without CREATE.
 - *We will take your idea for long-term air quality monitoring back to the CREATE Partners for consideration.*
- Did NS hold meetings like this one for its 47th Street Intermodal Yard Expansion project?
 - *No; NS is a private company advancing its project with private funds, so they are not subject to the same federal environmental requirements as the Grand Crossing Rail Project. Mr. Allen added that NS did, however, provide extensive testimony on the yard expansion project before the Chicago Plan Commission and the Chicago City Council, so the project has been vetted publicly.*
- How can you determine the length and effectiveness of noise barriers when you haven't started construction yet? No receptor or measurement can adequately determine noise impacts.

The Project Team followed the CREATE Noise and Vibration Assessment Methodology (IDOT, 2013), which spells out the parameters for determining whether a noise barrier is both feasible (i.e., able to be constructed in a way that reduces the noise impact) and reasonable (i.e., cost-effective). The guidance defines these terms quantitatively. During the earlier presentation, Mr. Pakeltis explained that the Project Team's noise abatement evaluation identified four feasible and reasonable noise barrier locations, which would benefit 126 dwelling units along the corridor.

However, when a project falls within Census tracts that have a high percentage of minority and/or low income individuals relative to the general population (called "environmental justice" areas in the Federal regulations), the definition of "reasonable" can be expanded up to approximately double the cost that otherwise would apply. The purpose of environmental justice regulations is to ensure that projects like this one avoid, minimize, or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects – including social and economic effects – on minority populations and low-income populations, and to ensure the full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision making process.

Using the broader definition of reasonable allowed under CREATE Program polices, three of the noise barriers could be extended, which would benefit an additional 244 dwelling units.

- Noise barriers should be built along the full length of the project, and the cost estimate should reflect this so that the appropriate level of federal funding can be requested.
 - *[The Project Team noted this comment.]*
- These meetings should be held during the evening or on Saturday so that individuals do not have to take time off from work.
 - *Noted. The Public Hearings – which are meant to include a much broader audience from among the general public – will be held on weekday evenings.*
- I am in favor of the proposed improvements, I just want the opportunity to weigh in on how it will happen – this is the time to address these concerns.
 - *Noted; thank you for your participation today.*
- The Project Team should be careful not to use jargony vocabulary that may not be familiar to the public (for instance, many people may not understand the difference between a “public hearing” and a “public/community meeting.”)
 - *We will be clear about this in our public hearing notices, invitations, and advertisements.*
- Who receives notices about Community Advisory Group meetings? I heard about this through word-of-mouth.
 - *The Community Advisory Groups – one for neighborhoods in the northern part of the study area and one for those in the southern part – serve as a forum for community leaders and residents to meet periodically to discuss the community’s thoughts and ideas about the project. These Community Advisory Groups include residents and representatives from businesses, police and fire districts, non-profits, churches, schools, and other organizations with an interest in the project.*

At the beginning of the project, the Project Team worked with local elected officials to develop an initial list of potential Community Advisory Group members to invite to the first round of meetings. We then asked participants at those meetings to recommend others with whom the Project Team should meet (either individually or through inclusion on the Community Advisory Groups), and have continued over the course of the project to add all individuals and organizations that expressed an interest in participating. Community Advisory Group Members were invited to the meeting by personal letter and/or email according to their stated preference.

For Public Hearings (as with previous meetings open to the general public), the Project Team will use a combination of methods to promote the hearings in order to maximize public participation. These methods will include:

- *Invitation letters to Community Advisory Group members, local elected officials, and city agencies owning property within the study area.*
- *Email blasts sent to all individuals on the project’s emailing list.*

- *Postcards mailed to property owners that could be potentially affected by property acquisition and distributed at community meeting places throughout the study area, including Teamwork Englewood, Sherwood and Grand Crossing Parks, the Kelly and Grand Crossing branches of the Chicago Public Library, Chicago Police Department district offices, and Aldermanic offices..*
- *Door hangers (which will contain the same information as the postcards) throughout the project area to target residents who may not have received a notice in the mail, focusing on areas with the greatest potential for impacts.*
- *Advertisements in local and regional newspapers.*
- *Website postings on the project website (www.grandcrossingrail.com) and online community bulletins/websites such as Englewood Portal, R.A.G.E., and EveryBlock Chicago.*
- *Through our Community Advisory Group members and elected officials.*
- What jobs will be available if this and other projects are constructed? We should have this information now so that job seekers can get trained in advance. Also, the railroads should hold a job fair.
 - *[The Project Team noted this comment.]*

South (March 26, 2014):

- Were noise and vibration measurements taken as part of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement noise and vibration analysis?
 - *Short- (~30 minute) and long-term noise measurements were taken as part of the analysis. No vibration measurements were taken. This methodology follows the procedures laid out in the CREATE Noise and Vibration Assessment Methodology (IDOT, 2013), which is based on Federal Transit Administration (FTA) procedures and impact criteria.*
- Did you consider the future location of New Life Covenant Church as a noise receptor in your noise impact analysis?
 - *Yes, and we assumed the worst case location in terms of where we placed the noise receptor to ensure that we captured any potential impacts to the new church.*
- At what proximity to the rail line/project does a noise impact occur?
 - *There is no set distance that triggers an impact; noise levels are related to three main variables: the speed of trains, the number of trains, and the length of trains. Impacts are identified on a floating scale based on the predicted increase relative to existing conditions.*

- What is the projected number of trains per day that will pass the new location of New Life Covenant Church?
 - *Six Amtrak trains per day are projected along the new alignment adjacent to the new church location. The Project Team will coordinate with NS to provide the anticipated average number of freight trains per day.*
- We already experience vibration impacts from passing and idling trains – what will the impact be when this project is built?
 - *Using figures and tables from the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, Mr. Pakeltis walked the group through the noise and vibration methodology, described how the noise and vibration analysis for the project was conducted, and explained the results.*

The Project Team assessed vibration levels in accordance with the CREATE Noise and Vibration Assessment Methodology (IDOT, 2013), which defines impact levels for ground-borne vibration and ground-borne noise, as shown in Draft Environmental Impact Statement Table 3-16 (which was shown to the group). The fact that you can feel a train passing or idling does not necessarily mean that it constitutes a vibration impact as defined in the noise and vibration methodology.

TABLE 3-16: GROUND-BORNE VIBRATION (GBV) AND GROUND-BORNE NOISE (GBN) IMPACT CRITERIA FOR GENERAL ASSESSMENT

Land Use Category	GBV Impact Levels ¹ (VdB re 1 micro inch/sec)			GBN Impact Levels ¹ (dB re 20 micro Pascals)		
	Frequent Events ²	Occasional Events ³	Infrequent Events ⁴	Frequent Events ²	Occasional Events ³	Infrequent Events ⁴
Category 1: Buildings where low background vibration is essential for interior operations.	65 VdB ⁵	65 VdB ⁵	65 VdB ⁵	N/A ⁵	N/A ⁵	N/A ⁵
Category 2: Residences and buildings where people normally sleep.	72 VdB	75 VdB	80 VdB	35 dB(A)	38 dB(A)	43 dB(A)
Category 3: Institutional land uses with primarily daytime use.	75 VdB	78 VdB	83 VdB	40 dB(A)	43 dB(A)	48 dB(A)

- Can you give us some examples of what various levels of noise and vibration sound/feel like to give us a better understanding of what constitutes an impact?
 - *Mr. Pakeltis presented Figures 3-7 and 3-8 from the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, which provide examples of where various sounds and vibration sources fall on the impact scale. (Figures are provided at the end of this report.)*

- Given the age of existing structures, would vibration from this project, added to existing rail traffic, result in a cumulative vibration impact that would damage these structures?
 - *No; the results of the vibration analysis show that damaging vibration levels will not be reached anywhere in the project area.*
- Does your vibration analysis take into account the higher levels of freight traffic predicted for the study area?
 - *Yes.*
- My understanding is that the Grand Crossing Rail Project is a passenger rail project, and that freight trains would not use the new tracks that would be added as part of the project. Is this true?
 - *No. The purpose of the project is to provide a new, more direct route to Chicago's Union Station for Amtrak's City of New Orleans, Illini, and Saluki trains, and to provide sufficient capacity to accommodate both passenger and freight traffic along the project corridor. While the new tracks would be used by Amtrak trains throughout much of the corridor, both freight and Amtrak trains would have the ability to operate on all tracks in the corridor. Mr. Allen added that freight trains are most likely to use the new tracks in the North 1 alignment area.*
- Have you considered the potential for vibration impacts to historic buildings like the Grand Crossing Park Field House?
 - *Yes, the project would not result in vibration impacts to any historic buildings. The Grand Crossing Park Field House is too far from the rail line to trigger a vibration impact.*
- How will you handle the routing of trucks during construction to minimize impacts to the community? We also know from our experience with other construction projects in this neighborhood that vermin will be a problem once digging for construction begins – how will this be handled?
 - *Detailed information on the location of construction staging areas or routing of construction vehicles is not available at this time because the detailed design of the project and plans for staging construction will not be developed until Phase II (Final Design) and Phase III (Construction). To help address this uncertainty, one of the mitigation commitments included in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement is continued coordination with the Community Advisory Group throughout Phases II and III so that you will have the opportunity to provide input on the construction process as those details become available.*

The Project Team is committed to mitigating issues related to vehicle routing and vermin infestations during construction. The City of Chicago will be actively involved with both of these issues, and representatives from the City are present at the meeting today.

- Are you still considering lowering 76th Street as part of the project? If so, could there be flooding and sewer impacts?
 - *Yes, it is proposed that 76th Street would be lowered as part of the project; details of the lowering will be determined during Phase II (Final Design). The preliminary drainage study conducted for the project indicates that lowering 76th Street is feasible without having a negative impact on drainage.*
- Are you considering noise barriers for the area near 76th Street and Avalon Avenue? We already experience noise and vibration impacts from existing rail operations.
 - *Based on the results of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement noise analysis, no noise barriers are recommended for that area because no project-related noise impacts were identified in that area.*
- Have you coordinated with the Sanitation regarding possible street lowerings?
 - *No, this coordination would occur during Phase II (Final Design).*
- What is environmental justice and what are some examples of how you considered it in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement?
 - *Federal regulations direct agencies like IDOT to assess whether a project would disproportionately impact minority and/or low-income populations by considering the project's effects on those groups relative to the overall population. The purpose of environmental justice regulations is to ensure that projects like this one avoid, minimize, or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects – including social and economic effects – on minority populations and low-income populations, and to ensure the full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision making process.*

Because much of the Grand Crossing Rail Project study area falls within Census tracts that have a high percentage of minority and/or low income individuals, the Project Team is considering a range of mitigation measures that are above and beyond those that are typically included in a Draft Environmental Impact Statement. Mr. Pakeltis reviewed the potential environmental justice mitigation measures that are still under investigation, which were covered in his presentation. The measures under investigation include:

 - *Improving remnant land parcels throughout the study area.*
 - *Considering assistance for negative mortgage holders on a case-by-case basis.*
 - *Extending proposed noise barriers to benefit additional dwelling units.*
 - *Funding for job training initiatives such as provide funding to grow existing programs and training inspectors.*
 - *Funding for education programs such as support for science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) curriculum in area elementary schools.*

One of the goals for today's meeting is to solicit feedback on these ideas and hear participants' thoughts on other possible mitigation measures. No decisions have

been made on these measures; input received here today and from the public throughout the public comment period is an important part of determining what ultimately will be included in the project.

- What is the timeline for the project?
 - *The target completion date for Phase 1 is November 30, 2014. Phases II and III are not yet funded, so no target dates for Final Design or Construction have been established. The earliest that construction would begin is 2017, and it would likely take two to three years to build the project.*
- Who is investigating job training? Can Amtrak seek funding for job training in addition to construction funding?
 - *The CREATE Partners are currently considering options for job training programs, including how they could be funded as part of this project.*
- What opportunities for community input will there be during Phase II?
 - *Ms. Trotter responded that IDOT will continue to hold Community Advisory Group meetings and maintain the project website and other project communication.*
- If you wait until Phase III to start job training programs, it will be too late; it needs to happen now so people are qualified when construction-related job opportunities arise. Chicago is also a union city.
 - *Noted. The CREATE Partners are currently considering options for job training programs.*
- Where would the funding for Phases II and III come from?
 - *We do not know what the mix of funding would be yet, but it could be a mix of Federal, State, and railroad dollars.*
- Is IDOT aware of a meeting that was recently held in Chicago at which Federal legislators laid out a funding plan for the project?
 - *The group contemplated which meeting this would have been and decided that it was likely one of the meetings that the U.S. House of Representatives Transportation and Infrastructure Committee held around the U.S. Community Advisory Group member CeCe Edwards attended the meeting and will send her materials to Ms. Trotter.*
- Is it correct that there would be no permanent or temporary street closures in the South 1 portion of the study area?
 - *No permanent street closures are proposed for the South 1 alignment or CN Connection area. The need for temporary street closures during construction would be decided during Phases II and III.*
- Can we fax our comment sheets?
 - *Yes, please fax them to Tony Pakeltis at 312-930-0018.*

- Will IDOT pursue funding for Phase II only (then Phase III later), or will they seek funding for Phases II and III together?
 - *This has not been decided yet. Mr. Allen stated that often, funding is pursued separately for Final Design (Phase II) and Construction (Phase III), but this is not a given.*

4. Next Steps

The Project Team will incorporate input from today's discussion into the Draft Environmental Impact Statement before finalizing and circulating the document later this spring. Public hearings will then be held during the Draft Environmental Impact Statement open comment period to provide the general public with the opportunity to learn about and comment on the project. Finally, the Project Team will incorporate public input from the hearings and comment period and prepare the Final Environmental Impact Statement.

In addition to these formal venues for comment, the Project Team encourages Community Advisory Group members and the general public to provide input on the project at any time. Comments can be submitted by:

- Email: info@grandcrossingrail.com
- Online comment form: www.grandcrossingrail.com/comment.html
- Phone: Tony Pakeltis, Parsons: (312) 930-5268
- Fax: Tony Pakeltis, Parsons: (312) 930-0018
- Mail:

Grand Crossing Rail Project
Parsons
10 South Riverside Plaza, 4th Floor
Chicago, Illinois 60606
ATTN: Tony Pakeltis

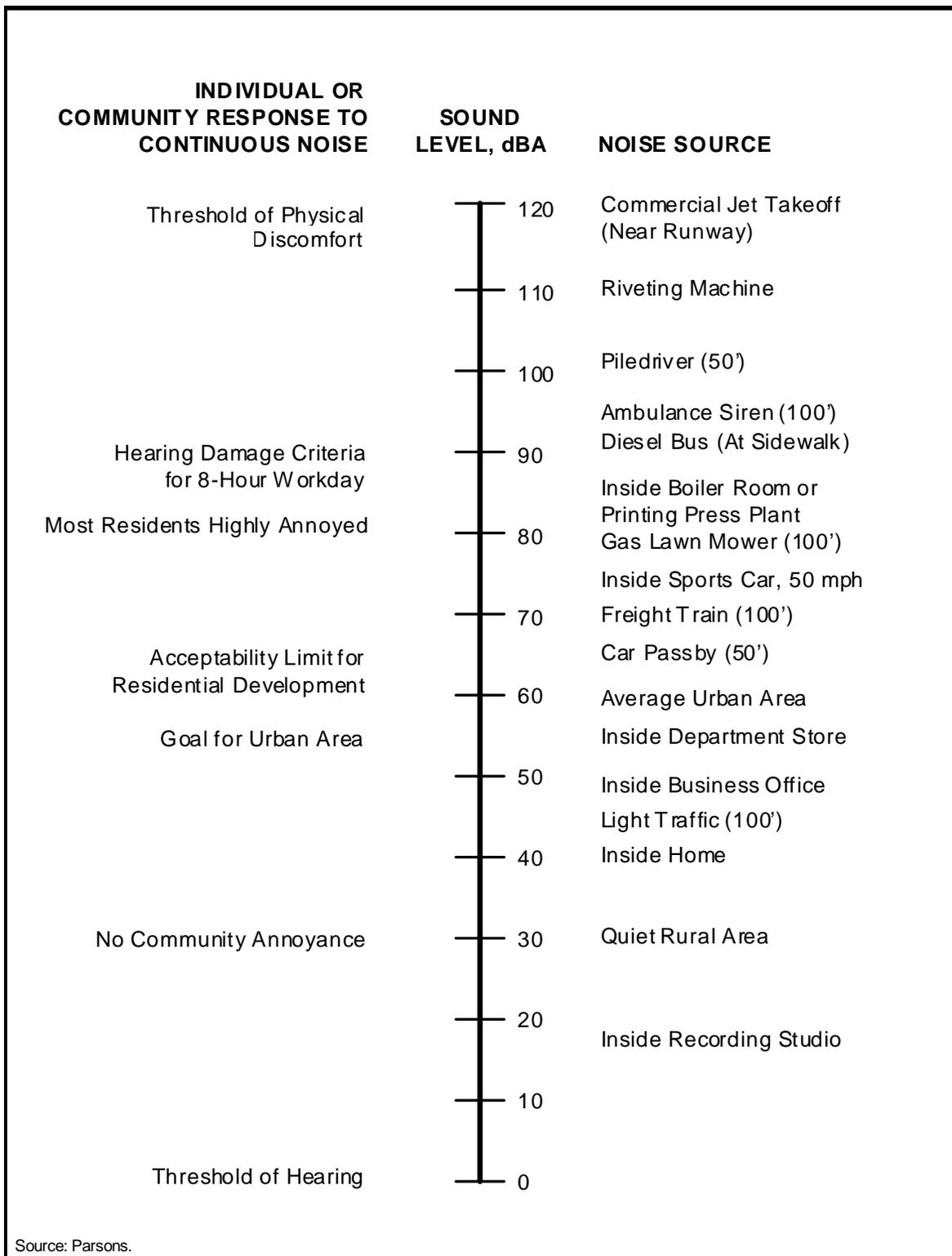


Figure 3-7: Typical A-Weighted Sound Levels

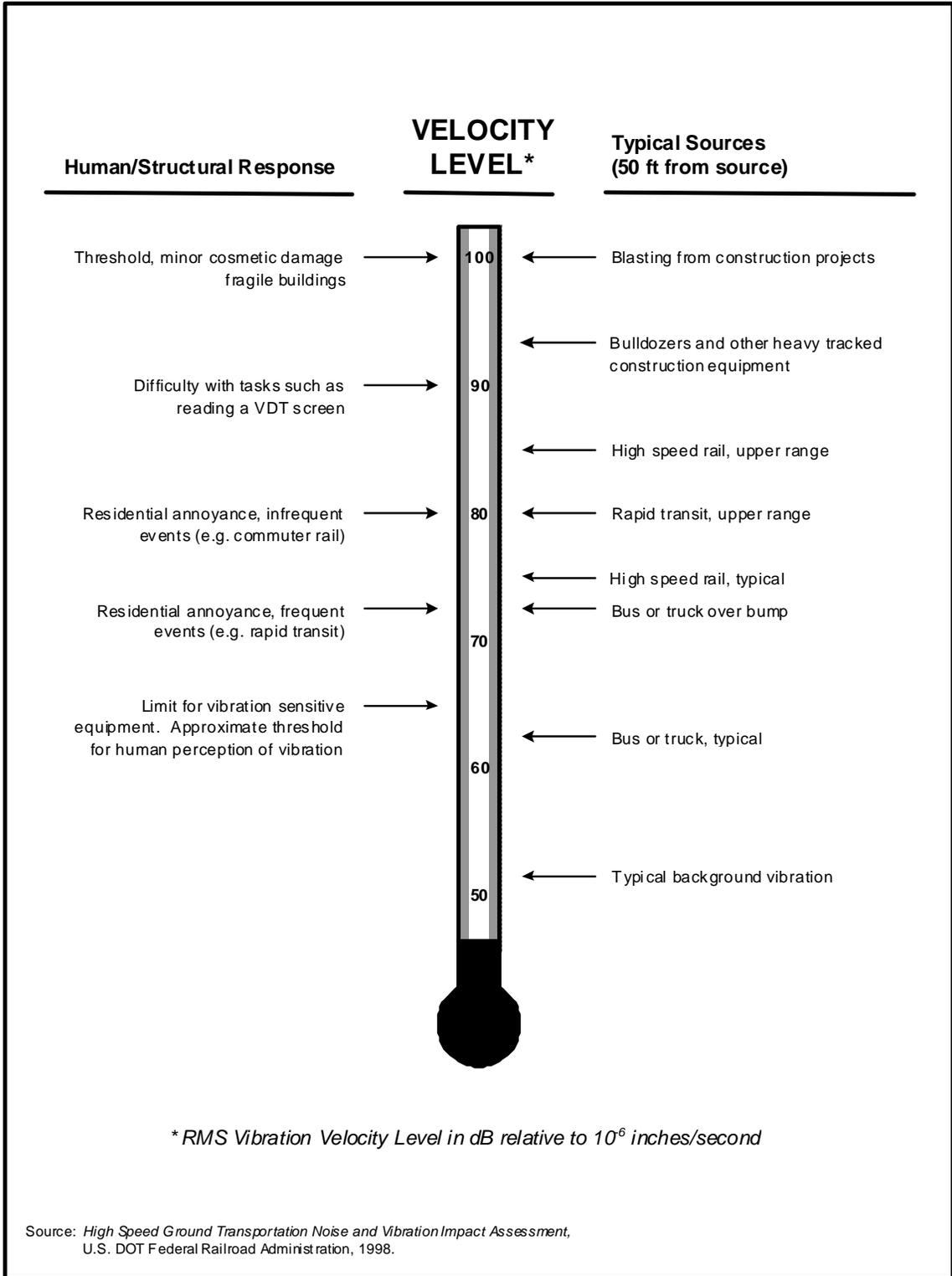


Figure 3-8: Typical Levels of Ground-Borne Vibration