

2017

FRA Rail Program Delivery

Meeting

Planning/ Alternatives Analysis/ NEPA Integration

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Today's Discussion

1. Integration of the 3 Critical Pre-Construction Rail Project Delivery Elements:
 - ▶ Service Planning/Preliminary Engineering
 - ▶ Alternatives Analysis
 - ▶ NEPA
2. Purpose and Need
3. Hierarchical Framework For Rail Project Alternatives

Need for Strong Coordination

Planning ↔ NEPA ↔ Alternatives Analysis

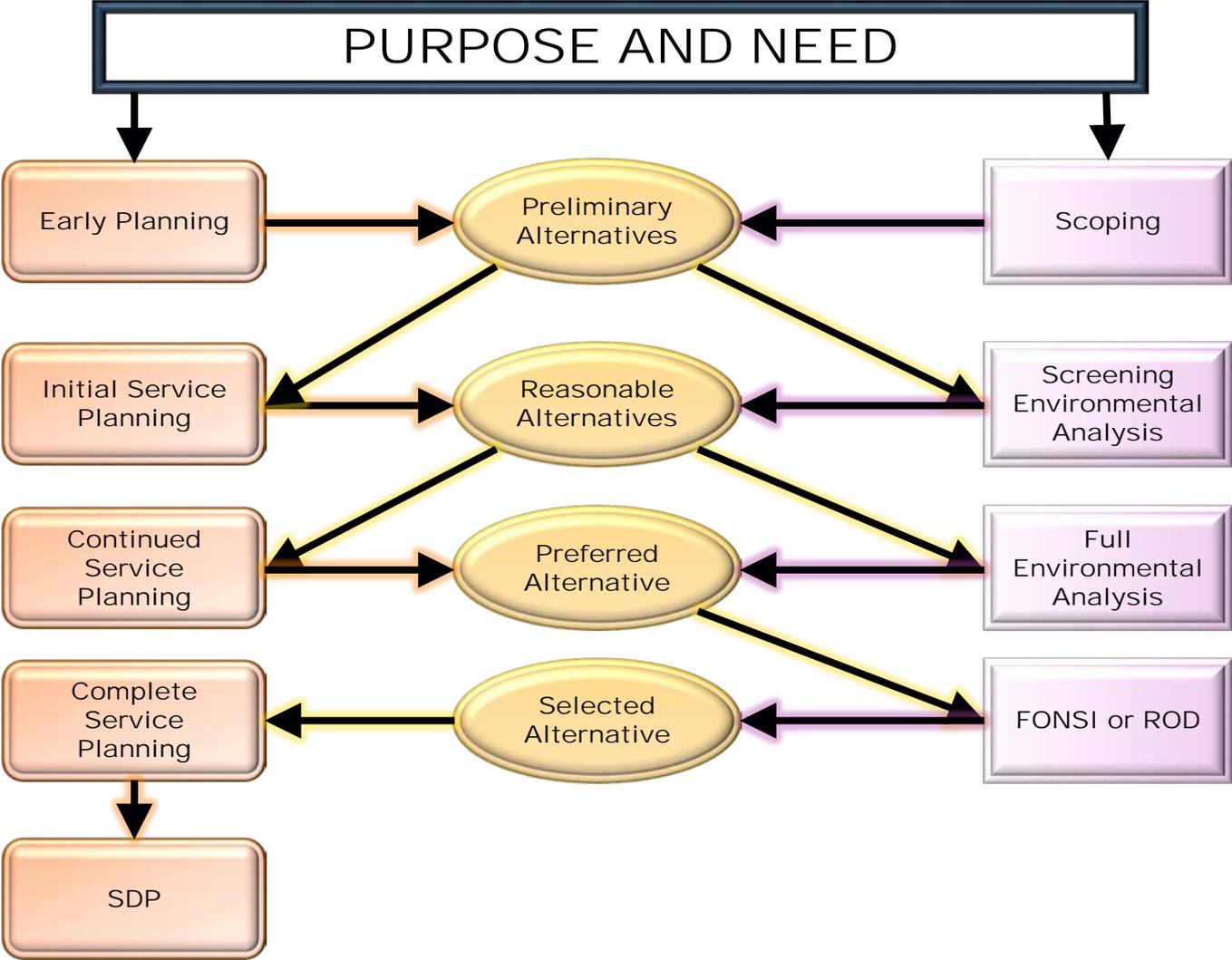
- ▶ Each process is conducted largely in parallel with distinct activities
- ▶ Need to allow for critical nodes of interaction across processes
- ▶ Need to allow for multiple iterations where warranted

Successful outcomes result from close and frequent coordination and communication among the teams implementing these three processes

SERVICE PLANNING

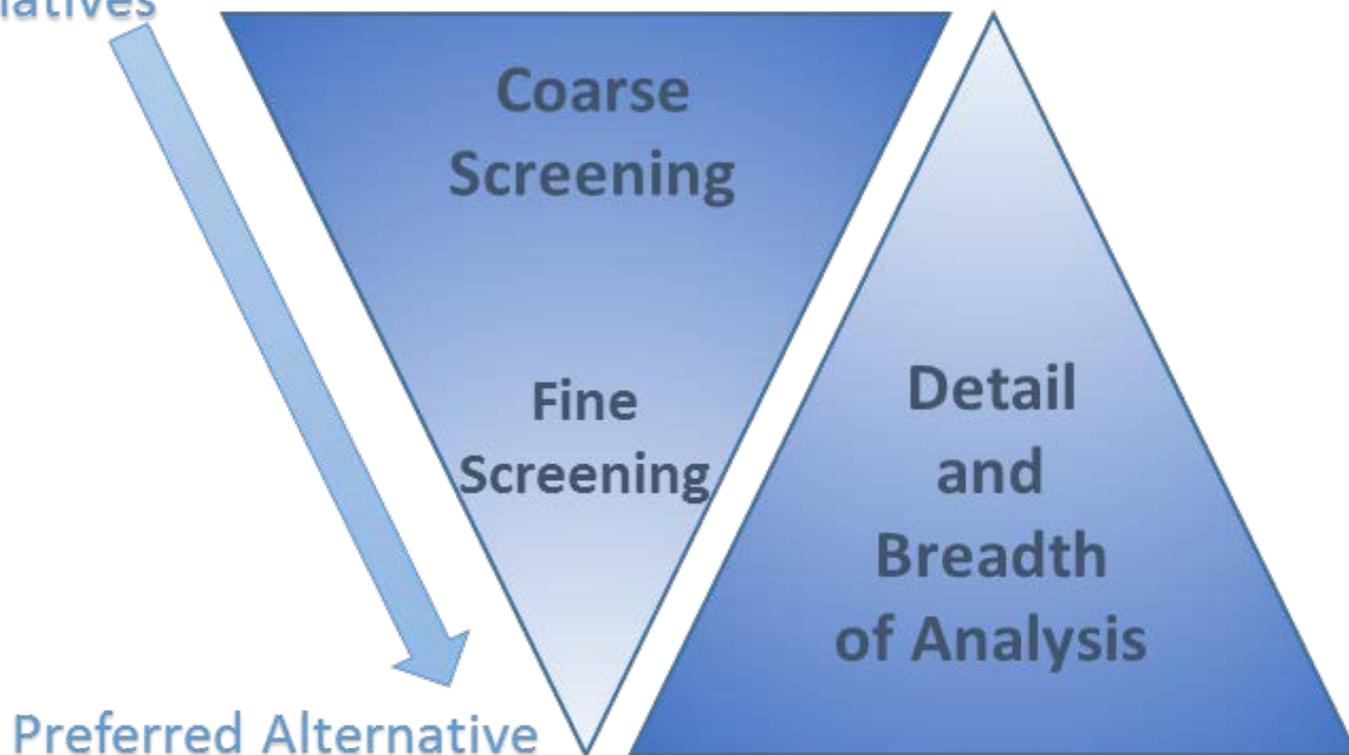
ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS

NEPA



Narrowing Alternatives = Intensifying Analysis

Preliminary Alternatives



Ways to Avoid Common Integration Pitfalls

- ▶ Start all three processes early
- ▶ Ensure a full range of alternatives is considered
- ▶ Consider environmental constraints throughout the alternatives analysis
- ▶ Engage the public during all phases of planning and alternatives analysis in a manner consistent with NEPA

Purpose and Need

Complexities and Importance

NEPA Purpose and Need

Core of NEPA & the Underpinning of Alternatives Analysis

- ▶ If project sponsor doesn't know what it wants, chances are slim it will get it
- ▶ Stakeholders need to know what you are trying to do to provide meaningful input
- ▶ Required to be legally defensible

Reasonableness of the Purpose and Need Statement

- ▶ Agencies have considerable latitude in developing the need statement
- ▶ However, the need statement must not be arbitrary
- ▶ The agency cannot simply accept an applicant's statement of need

Attributes of Purpose and Need Statement

- ▶ Consistent among Planning, AA and NEPA
- ▶ Promotes Meaningful Public Input
- ▶ Focuses Environmental Document
- ▶ Directs Identification of Alternatives
- ▶ Basis for Screening Alternatives
- ▶ Critical in Legal Challenges

Importance of Clearly Defining Purpose and Need - Example

- ▶ DOT Proposal - Regulate highway transportation of radioactive materials
- ▶ Underlying Need - Safe highway transport
- ▶ NY City Sued - Alternative of Barging around the City was not considered
- ▶ NY City Lost - Although barging is an alternative to highway transport, it does not address the need for safe highway transport

Purpose and Need Elements – *Primary, Secondary, Contingent*

- ▶ Primary Objectives: Clearly state what MUST be achieved
 - ▶ *All Alternatives addressed must be capable of achieving primary objective*
- ▶ Secondary Objectives: List other possible goals (“nice-to-haves”)
 - ▶ *Alternatives evaluated based on ability of meeting secondary objectives*
- ▶ “Contingent” Objectives: Primary objective must be met “subject to...”
 - ▶ *Can include financial and implementability conditions*

Purpose and Need Elements – *Scale of the Project*

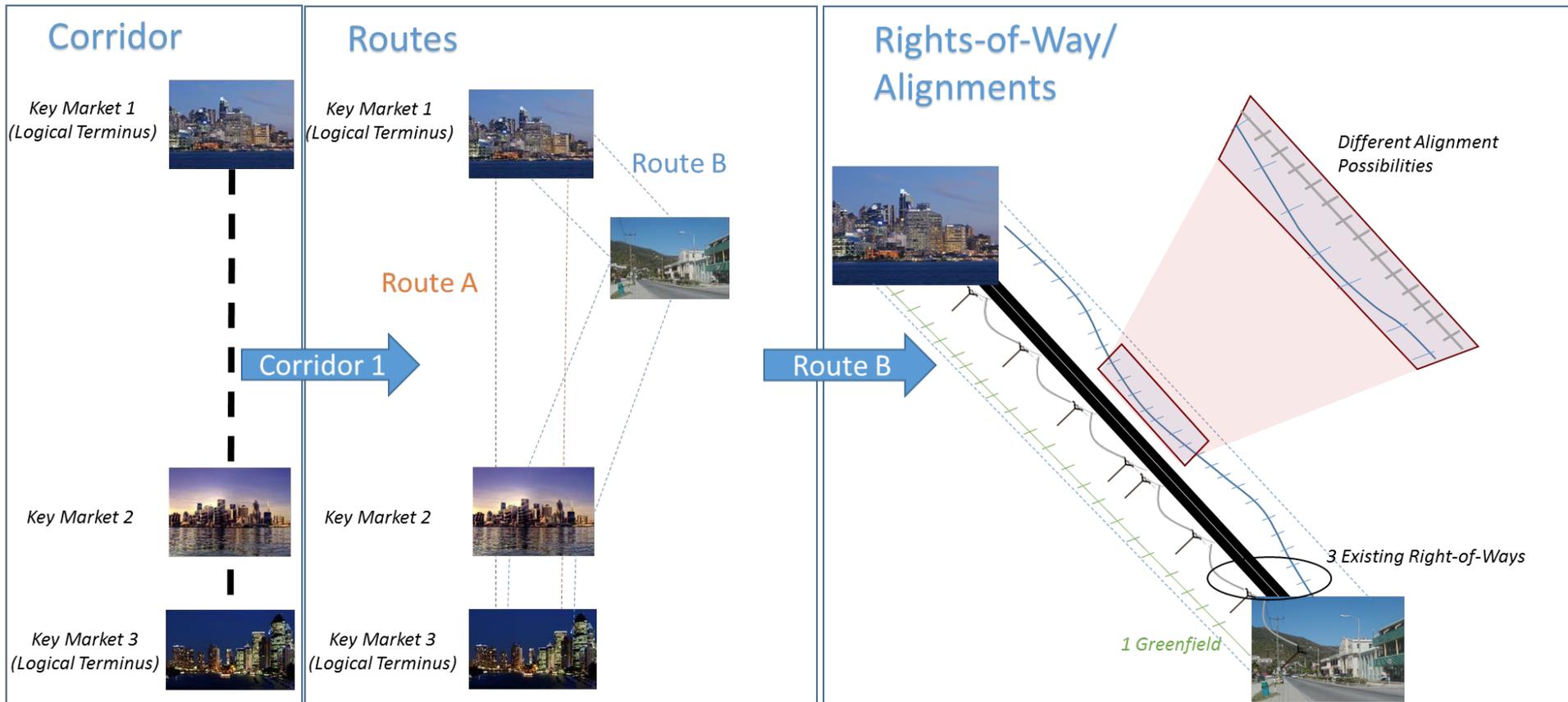
<i>Project Scale</i>	<i>Purpose and Need Elements</i>
Individual, discrete projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• State of good repair• Improve operational reliability• Reduce travel time• Improve operational flexibility• Increase capacity• Improve safety
Smaller comprehensive projects (no fundamental change to transportation system)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase access to passenger rail service as a transportation option• Achieve target trip times between key markets• Accommodate specific travel itineraries• Achieve target operational financial performance of service• Enhance local economic competitiveness
Larger comprehensive projects (fundamentally change transportation system)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduce need for additional investment in other modes• Reduce congestion in other modes• Improve overall mobility across all modes• Foster general economic development and growth

Hierarchical Alternatives Framework

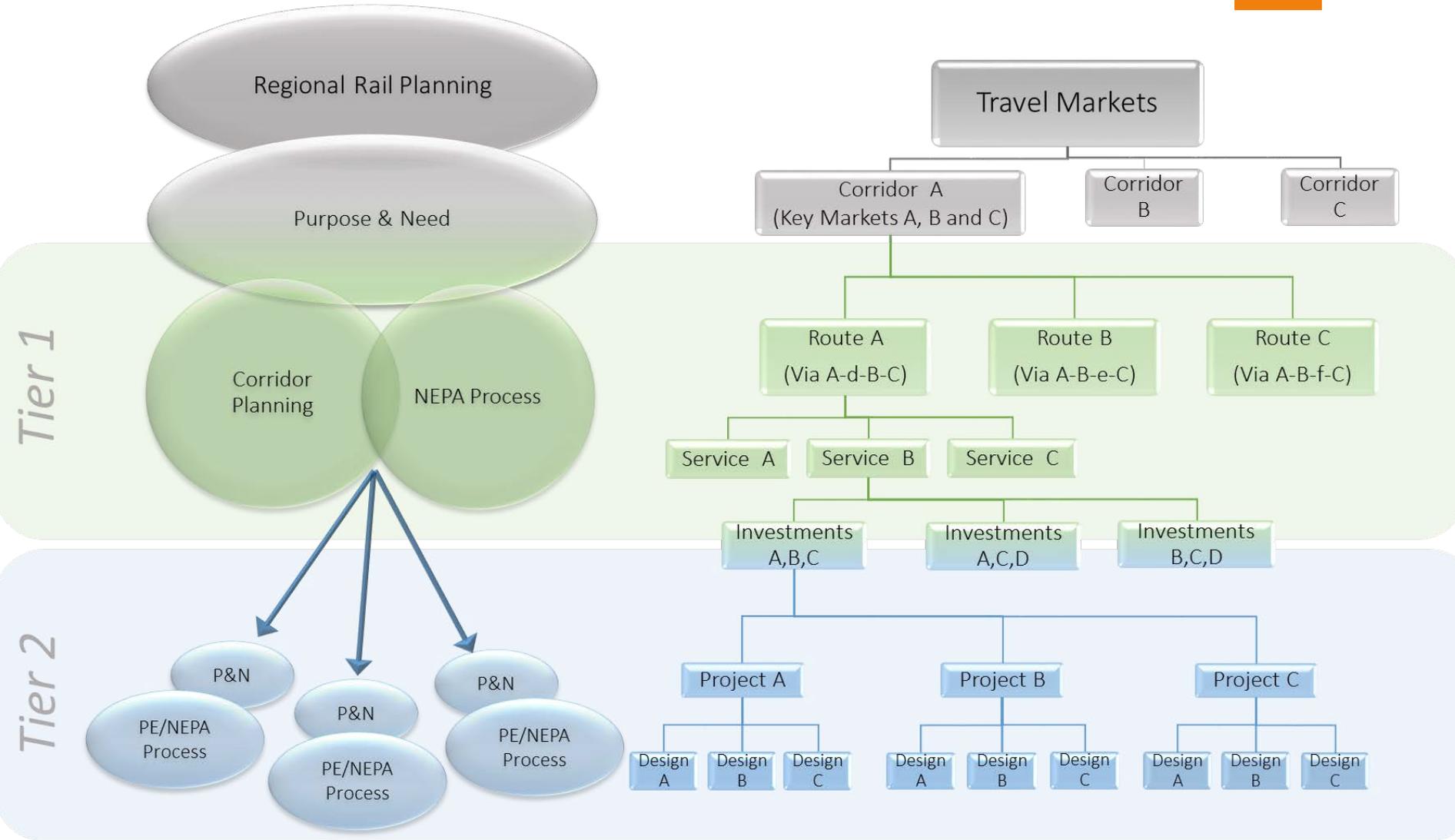
Alternatives Analysis from Regional Planning to
Project Design

Terminology –

Corridors, Routes, Rights-of-Way, Alignments



Hierarchy of Alternatives Definition



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Thank you!

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