

**South Suburban Commuter Rail Corridor:**  
Land Use and Local Financing Study

**Project Management Plan**

March 13, 2003

## **Introduction**

The southeast portion of Cook County, Illinois comprising the majority of the South Suburban Commuter Rail Corridor is an area actively pursuing redevelopment to facilitate balanced economic growth and vitality in the northeastern Illinois region. A critical band of communities, stretching from Dolton in Cook County to Beecher in Will County, is focused on improving the assets of the southeastern metropolitan region in terms of transportation, housing and employment opportunities, through comprehensive planning and joint-economic development efforts.

At present, few public transportation services exist east of Halsted Street (IL 1) in southeastern Cook County and south of the Will County border, where significant population growth is forecasted. The heavily used Electric District Line, Metra's easternmost commuter rail line in Illinois, serves the two northernmost communities in the Corridor. However, the Electric District's southwest alignment quickly moves out of reasonable reach for residents of the communities in the middle and southern parts of the Corridor. The CATS regional model predicts that a new South Suburban Commuter Rail line east of the Electric District would generate some 21,400 daily riders by the year 2020.

The communities realize that transportation, housing and employment are linked, and that to make progress on one front requires making progress in all three. In conjunction with other cooperative planning activities through the Calumet Corridor Planning Council, the communities are putting forth great effort to advance the detailed planning and implementation phases of the proposed new SouthEast Service, a project included in the *2020 Regional Transportation Plan*. To complement Metra's technical studies currently underway, the communities have successfully secured funding through an Illinois Tomorrow grant to develop Corridor Planning Standards and to undertake land use and local finance planning associated with the proposed new commuter rail service.

The RTA, through the Regional Technical Assistance Program (RTAP), is providing the local match for the Illinois Tomorrow planning grant on behalf of the Corridor communities. The RTA is also facilitating the coordination of work lead by Metra with that lead by the local communities. This project management plan is intended to clearly articulate the study process for this corridor planning effort, the decision-making structure and the roles and responsibilities of each party involved.

## **Corridor Population and Employment**

The South Suburban Commuter Rail Corridor (the "Corridor") is centered around a proposed new commuter rail line to serve the suburbs in southeastern Cook and northeast Will Counties. As currently proposed, the SouthEast Service line would extend from Beecher in Will County to downtown Chicago - a distance of approximately 38 miles. The South Suburban Commuter Rail Corridor is comprised of the following communities: Beecher, Crete, Steger, South Chicago Heights, Chicago Heights, Glenwood, Thornton, South Holland and Dolton. An alternative alignment for part of the

proposed SouthEast Service could additionally include the communities of Phoenix, Harvey, Posen, Dixmoor, Blue Island and Calumet Park.

According to 2000 Census figures, total population within the communities directly adjacent to the proposed Corridor (excluding the city of Chicago) is approximately 188,000. The total employment in the Corridor is approximately 75,000, with the highest employment density in the area of Chicago Heights.

The Corridor communities vary significantly in terms of urbanization, population, demographics and employment. The three communities in the southernmost portion of the Corridor - Beecher, Crete and Steger - are either surrounded by, or adjacent to, agricultural land; annexation and new development have resulted in population growth during the past decade. Looking ahead, the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission (NIPC) 2020 population forecasts indicate that 86% of the Corridor's total population growth is anticipated to occur in these three southernmost communities, adding an expected 10,000 to 19,000 residents. The variation in the forecast depends upon whether the planned South Suburban Airport is built west of Beecher.

Generally speaking, the communities become more urban the further north one travels along the Corridor, and increasingly more dense with respect to both population and employment densities. Over the past decade, roughly half of the Corridor communities have experienced stable or declining population. However between 1990 and 2000, the communities of Dolton, Blue Island, Dixmoor, Posen, South Chicago Heights, Steger and Crete experienced population increases ranging from 7% to 13%.

Dolton, Thornton, Steger and Crete experienced an increase in employment during the past decade. NIPC projects that employment will increase in all of the Corridor communities by the year 2020, with the majority of the employment growth expected to occur in the Cook County portion of the Corridor.

Considering the Corridor communities in the context of the Chicago Metropolitan area provides additional perspective. The South Suburban communities are, as a whole, experiencing a declining proportion of the region's population, job growth and new housing development. Over the past few decades, the private sector has looked to other areas of northeastern Illinois in locating new business parks and headquarters. The job base in the Corridor communities has remained largely industrial and small business-oriented. As the industrial sector has declined, a new economic base has not taken hold. The result is that building structures and supporting infrastructure have not been modernized over time; the unemployment rate is relatively higher than in other areas of the region, and the median housing value and household income remain relatively lower.

The communities and area business organizations are undertaking a collaborative effort to improve their economic well-being through a program of planning and marketing. The Calumet Corridor Planning Council (CCPC) was established in the year 2000, to

undertake coordinated planning, economic development, transportation, and growth management. In June 2002, the Council completed a Calumet Corridor Economic Development Plan Study. The study presents a coordinated vision of and specific economic development strategies for the Calumet Corridor, which includes a portion of the geographic area covered by the South Suburban Commuter Rail Corridor.

## **Study History and Background**

Interest in commuter rail service in the southeast suburbs first gave rise over ten years ago. The Corridor was officially submitted to the Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS) in 1996 for consideration in the regional transportation planning process, and is included in the region's federally approved *2020 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)* as a planned transit improvement. Likewise, the proposed new commuter rail service has been submitted for inclusion in the 2030 RTP, currently under development by CATS.

Metra has been studying railroad issues in the southeast suburbs since 1996, focusing on the UP/CSX freight line. Metra's Phase 1 of the *South Suburban Commuter Rail Feasibility Study*, completed in 1999, established the physical feasibility of utilizing the UP/CSX rail line for new commuter rail service. The Phase 1 Feasibility Study identified fifty potential rail segments that could be combined for possible passenger service and recommended the further examination of four alternative alignments. All four of the recommended alternatives included the LaSalle Street Station as the Chicago terminus.

Through a *Phase 1A Interim Report* issued in September 2000, Metra narrowed the number of alignments for further study from four to two. The report included some preliminary environmental assessment work and concept engineering. Confident that the CATS 2020 RTP modeling results indicate service viability from a potential ridership standpoint, Metra initiated Phase 2 of the *South Suburban Commuter Rail Feasibility Study* in early 2001 with a *Line Capacity Analysis (LCA)* study.

The primary focus of the LCA is an operational simulation of the two alternative alignments recommended by the *Phase 1A Interim Report*. The simulations and analysis will examine the potential for operational integration with existing freight traffic, identify achievable passenger service levels, and help determine the extent of needed new infrastructure. Completion of the LCA is currently anticipated in Spring 2003.

The RTA and the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) are facilitating additional progress in the Corridor by committing resources for planning work to complement Metra's study of railroad operational issues. The *South Suburban Commuter Rail Land Use and Local Financing Study* will help affected communities plan and prepare for potential implementation of future commuter rail service by considering transit-supportive community/land development and local financing tools for potential commuter rail service. The Study will encompass the Corridor communities along the UP rail line, as well as those affected by the alternative segment through Blue Island. The Study will also address the impacts of alternative alignments for local land use, including the downtown redevelopment efforts of South Holland.

This Study will establish local corridor planning standards and provide vital information for local communities regarding transit supportive development opportunities and suitable financing mechanisms. The *South Suburban Commuter Rail Land Use and Local Financing Study* will help the South Suburban Corridor communities make an informed decision regarding a locally preferred alternative for corridor transit service. This Study is funded primarily through an Illinois Tomorrow grant co-sponsored by South Holland and the RTA, with funds for the local match provided through the RTA's RTAP program.

The Calumet Corridor Planning Council will provide overall policy direction for the *South Suburban Commuter Rail Land Use and Local Financing Study* through its specially created South Suburban Commuter Rail Corridor (SSCRC) Subcommittee, comprised of all affected municipalities. The Village of South Holland will serve as the lead applicant on behalf of the Corridor communities, with staff from the South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association managing the project on behalf of South Holland. A Project Review Committee, comprised of representatives from the regional planning agencies (RTA, NIPC and CATS), will review and provide guidance at critical steps in the Study process. Further discussion of the overall framework for undertaking the study follows.

## **Framework for Undertaking the Study**

### ***Program and Study Objectives***

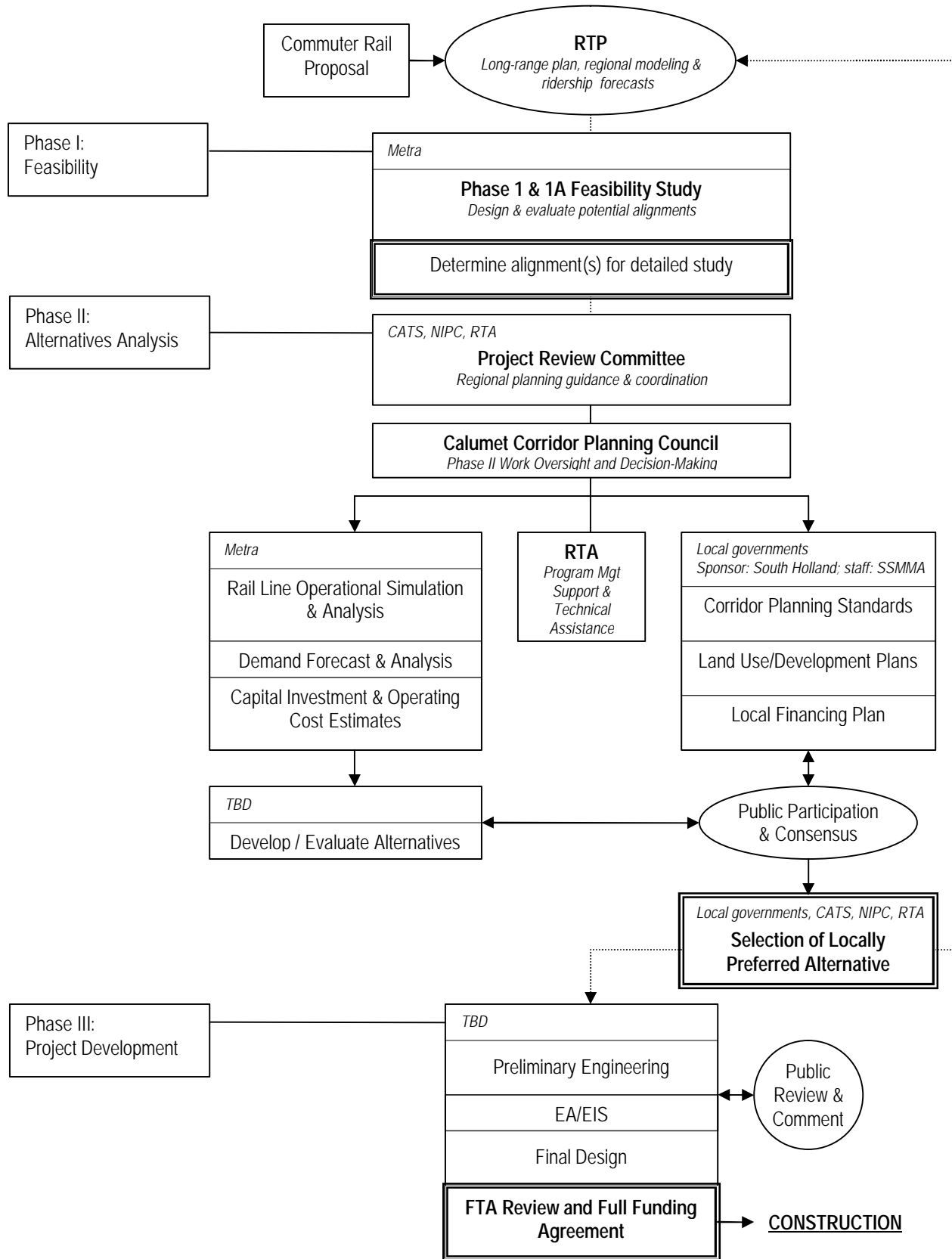
The establishment of a locally preferred alternative for new transit service is driven by the following directives and objectives:

1. to commit as necessary towards a feasible solution offering the greatest net, possible advantages to the corridor communities and the region;
2. to develop and apply a common set of study principles, assumptions and performance standards; and
3. to present a systematic foundation for the informed selection of a locally preferred transit alternative.

Figure 1 on the following page depicts the overall program phases and the respective components of each program phase. The three sub-studies comprising the municipal component of the South Suburban Commuter Rail Corridor Study are highlighted within Phase II Alternatives Analysis; and are the subject of this Project Management Plan.

The objective of the *Land Use and Local Financing Study* is to identify land use opportunities and local financing contributions to ultimately establish and support a locally preferred alternative for the South Suburban Commuter Rail Corridor. The Study

# Multi-Year Program Plan Diagram for the South Suburban Commuter Rail Corridor



will define and quantify *planning standards* for the corridor reflecting local values including mobility, connectivity, efficiency, safety and local preferences.

The *land use component* will define and quantify existing and future land use conditions and transit supportive land use policies within the corridor that will impact implementation of transit service. Finally, the *financing component* will identify and assess revenue capacity and acceptance of local financing mechanisms that could be used if a project moves to implementation.

### ***Project Scope***

The anticipated scope of work for the three components of the *Land Use and Local Financing Study* is described in this section. This anticipated scope will be further refined through the process of procuring professional services. The final project scope to be undertaken will be attached to this Project Management Plan, as Exhibit A.

#### ***Corridor Planning Standards***

Corridor Planning Standards reflecting local values will be developed and will serve as a framework for discussing policy issues and to ultimately establish a locally preferred alternative. The following baseline set of values and definitions are proposed to guide the development of local Corridor Planning Standards: mobility, connectivity, efficiency, safety and local preferences.

#### ***Land Use Component***

Local land use plans and potential station areas will be utilized to identify and evaluate existing land use, infrastructure, major trip generators, population and employment throughout the Corridor for transit-supportiveness. Existing opportunities and challenges facing South Suburban Corridor rail service will be identified. Station area, local and corridor land use planning recommendations and implementation strategies specific to the South Suburban Corridor will be developed to enhance the transit-supportiveness of the Corridor environment.

#### ***Local Financing Component***

The financing component will identify and assess the revenue sources and the capacity of local financing mechanisms to support the project if it moves to implementation. Financing mechanisms, such as Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts, special service areas, etc., and other innovative options will be considered. The various funding sources and financing mechanisms will be evaluated and a realistic local financing plan will be developed for the Corridor to support the implementation of the proposed South Suburban Commuter Rail Service.

### ***Project Schedule***

The project is anticipated to be completed within a twelve month time period. An anticipated project schedule is attached as Exhibit B, and will be updated throughout the course of the project.

## **Organizational Framework and Approach**

### *Village of South Holland*

The Village of South Holland is the lead applicant and grant recipient for this project, and is responsible for securing Illinois Tomorrow funds for 90% of the total project cost. (The RTAP funds will provide the 10% local match.) As the grant recipient, South Holland is responsible for executing a technical services agreement with the RTA and all subsequent amendments. South Holland is also responsible for procuring consultant services in connection with this project, submitting invoices to the RTA and IDOT for reimbursement, making timely payment to consultants for work performed, and ensuring that all grant requirements and legal obligations are satisfactorily met. As the grant recipient, the Village of South Holland is responsible for ensuring that appropriate parties and resources are committed to fulfill this grant, and for providing any additional assurances and certifications requested by the RTA.

### *The South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association (SSMMA)*

The South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association will be responsible for day-to-day project management and administration, consultant oversight and convening the Calumet Corridor Planning Council.

The SSMMA Transportation Planner will serve as the primary contact with the RTA and with project consultants for this project. He/she will ensure adherence to project schedule and satisfactory development of the work product. He/she will convene the Calumet Corridor Planning Council and ensure that the Council's guidance and policy direction are incorporated into consultant work efforts. He/she will process and forward to South Holland all invoices submitted by the project consultants for their approval and submission to the RTA and IDOT for reimbursement. Ms. Kim Mathias-D'Souza will perform these functions for the SSMMA until the Transportation Planner position is permanently filled.

SSMMA Executive Director Ed Paesel will provide additional support, including facilitation of policy direction and governance, as needed.

### *Calumet Corridor Planning Council (CCPC)*

The Calumet Corridor Planning Council was established in 2000 as an Illinois intergovernmental entity (non-profit association) to provide a forum for coordinated planning, economic development, transportation, growth management and environmental issues among south suburban communities within the I-94/IL-394 and IL 1 area, as well as the proposed South Suburban Commuter Rail Corridor. Through its Governing Board, the Calumet Corridor Planning Council will provide overall policy direction and governance for this study. The Calumet Corridor Planning Council will convene over the course of this study to discuss and build consensus for Corridor Planning Standards, Land Use recommendations, Local Financing mechanisms and related policy directions. The Calumet Corridor Planning Council will monitor study progress and approve final work products developed by the consultants.



Following is a list of the current members of the Calumet Corridor Planning Council:

Beecher	Lansing
Burnham	Lynwood
Chicago Heights	Sauk Village
Crete	South Chicago Heights
Dolton	South Holland
Ford Heights	Steger
Glenwood	Thornton

In addition, the following affected communities along the South Suburban Corridor who are not currently members of the Calumet Corridor Planning Council will be invited to participate in the oversight and policy direction of this project as members of a subcommittee established by the CCPC Governing Board: Blue Island, Calumet Park, Dixmoor, Harvey, Phoenix and Posen.

#### *Municipal Partners*

Each of the municipal partners included in this study will designate a voting representative to provide policy direction and governance for this project through the Calumet Corridor Planning Council. They will also assist consultant data collection by providing materials reasonably requested for the undertaking of this project and will participate in special workshops, interviews and/or public involvement activities agreed upon in the final scope of work for this project.

#### *Project Review Committee*

A joint Project Review Committee, comprised of representatives from the regional planning bodies of the RTA, CATS and NIPC, will provide additional guidance with respect to scoping, procurement of consultants and conformity to project planning guidelines. The Project Review Committee is currently comprised of the following:

RTA: Mr. John DeLaurentiis, Deputy Executive Director, Planning  
CATS: Mr. Donald Kopec, Associate Executive Director  
NIPC: Mr. James Ford, Assistant Director

#### *Regional Transportation Authority (RTA)*

The RTA is responsible for the planning and programming of mass transit improvements, coordination of service board efforts, provision of funding estimates of transit improvements relating to regional transportation plans and programs, development of transit planning issues funded through a variety of sources, and compliance with state and federal mass transit regulations. The RTA will be responsible for coordinating this Study with related efforts of the service boards, municipal partners and the public as mandated by State statute and the Interagency Agreement with CATS, IDOT and NIPC. The RTA will rely upon existing regional transportation policy-making mechanisms to seek and encourage input from other public and private regional planning concerns.

The RTA will provide administrative and technical assistance as necessary to support the local project manager and project governance structure.

Michelle Ryan, Principal Analyst, Corridor Planning Studies will serve as the primary contact for this project and will provide direct day-to-day project management on behalf of the RTA.

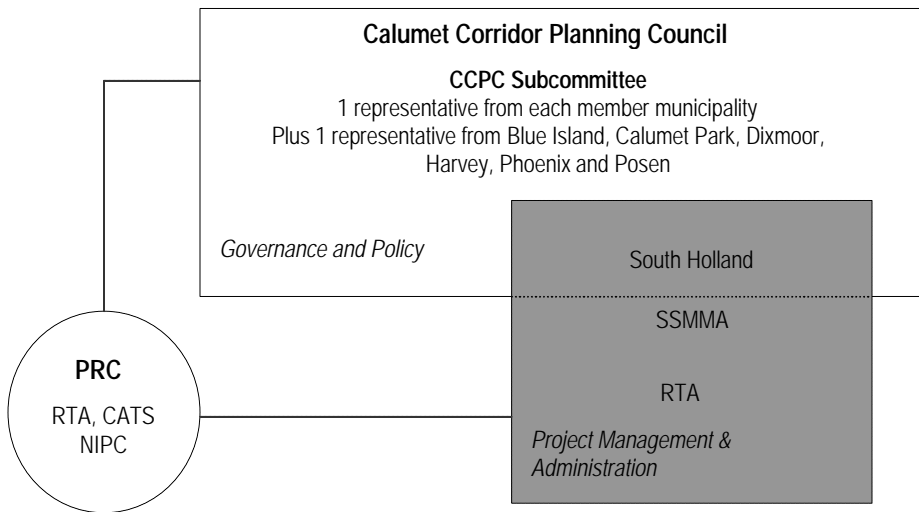
Bill Lenski, Manager, Corridor Planning Studies will provide additional technical support and assistance as needed to facilitate cooperative planning and corridor decision support tools.

*Metra and Pace*

Metra and Pace will be invited to attend meetings of the CCPC and public workshops relevant to this project. The service providers will furnish project consultants with findings and intermediate work products from prior and on-going studies, when requested.

The following diagram portrays decision-making responsibilities for the South Suburban Commuter Rail Corridor Land Use and Local Financing project:

**Decision Making Diagram for the South Suburban Corridor Project**



**Procurement of Consultant Services**

The SSMMA will develop and publish a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for consultant services, in conjunction with the Village of South Holland, and in accordance with the

Village's written policy for consultant procurement.. The consultant selection team will be responsible for developing evaluation criteria, reviewing qualifications, and interviewing and ranking prospective consultant teams. With input from the PRC, the consultant selection team will detail a desired approach and scope of services with the top-ranked consultant firm. On behalf of South Holland, SSMMA will complete formal negotiations with the highest ranked consultant team, and agree upon a final scope and budget (to be incorporated into this Project Management Plan as Appendix A). The agreed upon scope and budget shall be submitted to the RTA for concurrence, prior to contract execution.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>STUDY HISTORY AND BACKGROUND</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERTAKING THE STUDY</b>	<b>4</b>
<i>STUDY OBJECTIVES</i>	<b>4</b>
<i>PROJECT SCOPE</i>	<b>6</b>
<i>PROJECT SCHEDULE</i>	<b>6</b>
<b>ORGANIZATIONAL FRAMEWORK AND APPROACH</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>PROCUREMENT OF CONSULTANT SERVICES</b>	<b>9</b>