



U.S. Department
of Transportation

**Federal Transit
Administration**

REGION VI
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New Mexico, Oklahoma,
Texas

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November 22, 2023

Thomas C. Lambert, President & Chief Executive Officer
Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County, Texas
1900 Main St.
P.O. Box 61429
Houston, TX 77208

RE: NEPA Determination for the METRORapid University Corridor Project

Dear Mr. Lambert:

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has reviewed the environmental documentation that the Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County (METRO) submitted for the **METRORapid University Corridor Project** (the Project). The Project would construct an approximately 25-mile bus rapid transit (BRT) line from Westchase Park & Ride to Tidwell Transit Center in the City of Houston, Texas (City). The BRT line would operate in dedicated, METRO-owned right-of-way from Westchase Park & Ride to Interstate-610 then transition to the center of City-owned and maintained streets. The Project would include 42 stations plus one stop at each end with accessible platforms, level boarding, next-bus arrival signs, security cameras, lighting, and offboard fare payment via ticket vending machines, electronic fare cards, or mobile devices. Based on a review of the environmental documentation provided by METRO, FTA finds that the Project meets the criteria for a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) categorical exclusion in accordance with FTA's regulations implementing NEPA (23 CFR 771).

On October 24, 2023, FTA determined the Project would have No Adverse Effect on historic or archeological properties under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and supporting regulations (36 CFR 800). FTA sought concurrence with this determination from the Texas Historical Commission (THC), as the official with jurisdiction, and provided THC notice of FTA's intent to use the outcome of the Section 106 process to inform FTA's determination under Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966 (49 U.S.C. § 303) and supporting regulations (23 CFR 774). On November 17, 2023, THC concurred with our Section 106 determination.

Based on the concurrence of the officials with jurisdiction, FTA now determines the Project would have *de minimis* impact to resources protected under Section 4(f). FTA finds that the Project would not adversely affect the features, attributes, or activities qualifying Mandell Park, Peggy Park, and Diez Street Park for protection under Section 4(f).

Therefore, FTA determines that the Project does not, either individually or cumulatively, have any significant environmental impact, and is categorically excluded from a detailed environmental analysis under 23 CFR 771.118(d).

Additionally, METRO, through its documentation, has demonstrated how it will incorporate environmental mitigation measures into the Project's design, leading to an environmentally preferred outcome. FTA encourages METRO to track the progress of its mitigation measures, and any other documented commitments, as well as continue its public involvement effort in order to ensure mitigation measures are fully realized and perform as expected.

This NEPA determination applies only to the Project as described in the supporting materials and documentation provided by METRO. Any changes which would result in significant environmental impacts, including disclosure of new information or previously unidentified concerns, would require a re-evaluation pursuant to 23 CFR 771.129. Please retain this communication for future Federal grant purposes. Should you have any questions, please contact Ronisha Hodge at (817) 978-0576 or via email at ronisha.hodge@dot.gov. FTA looks forward to continuing to work with you on this project.

Sincerely,

Gail Lyssy
Regional Administrator
Federal Transit Administration, Region VI