

**FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION
REGION III**

Finding of No Significant Impact

Project: Ardmore Transit Center

Applicant: Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA)

Project Location: Ardmore, Lower Merion Township, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania

Proposed Project

The Proposed Action involves the construction of the Ardmore Transit Center within the Ardmore Business District. The proposed improvements will occur between, approximately, Station Avenue and the Amtrak Line and Anderson Avenue and the Lower Merion Township Building. The Ardmore Transit Center is composed of three main elements: the reconstructed Ardmore Station, located on the site of the existing train station; the Parking Garage, located on the site of the existing municipal (Athensville) parking lot; and a mixed-use building with below grade parking for tenants, located at the site of the existing SEPTA/Amtrak and municipal parking lots.

The proposed action described above fully meets the project purpose and needs outlined in the attached Environmental Assessment (EA). This alternative improves pedestrian and vehicular circulation around the proposed train station. The new replacement station, high-level platforms and associated facilities are in full compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The parking garage and other associated roadway improvements will help to address existing and future parking needs. The inclusion of retail and commercial space in the new mixed-use building will be consistent with the revitalization plan for Downtown Ardmore and is consistent with the Lower Merion Township Ardmore Master Plan. The Ardmore Transit Center does not require the acquisition of private property, nor does it require demolition of buildings that contribute to the Ardmore Commercial Historic District.

Agency Coordination and Public Opportunity to Comment

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) granted approval to circulate the Environmental Assessment on September 8, 2010. The Environmental Assessment was made available for public review on November 4, 2010 and deposited at the Lower Merion Township Building, Ardmore Library and posted to the Lower Merion Township website (<http://www.lowermerion.org/>). The Environmental Assessment was circulated to the resource agencies on November 4, 2010. The opportunity for a Public Hearing and the availability of the Environmental Assessment was published in the Main Line Times on November 4, 2010 and December 2, 2010 and in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* on November 11, 2010. A Public Hearing and Open House was held on December 9, 2010 at the Lower Merion Township Building. The Public Comment Period for the Ardmore Transit Center Project Environmental Assessment began upon publication of the Notice of Availability on November 4, 2010 and ended on December 23, 2010; a period of 49 calendar days.

The results of the public outreach program and responses to public and agency comments are contained in the attached *Response to Comments Document*, dated February 2011.

Comments on the EA

Comments were accepted by mail, at the Public Hearing and through a dedicated project e-mail address (ArdmoreTransitCenter@gfnet.com). Ten agencies, organizations, and individuals submitted comments. Of these, five comments were received from government agencies or government officials. In addition, two written comments from the general public were received at the Open House, and four individuals offered public testimony during the Public Hearing. There were no comments received from the project-specific email address. Responses to these comments are included in the *Response to Comments* document prepared for the project and made part of this finding document.

The comments received from the government agencies or officials were either in support of the project or had no comment on the project. Two comments from AMTRAK were technical in nature. Additionally, the remaining comments, including all of the comments from the public, were technical in nature. These comments addressed items such as parking for businesses on Station Avenue, garage size and the width of Lancaster Avenue. No comments in opposition to the project were received.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Finding

FTA served as lead agency under NEPA for the project. SEPTA in cooperation with Lower Merion Township prepared an EA in compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, executive orders and agency guidance (listed in Section 1.5 of the EA). The EA analyzes and describes the project's potential impacts.

Potential impacts were identified and evaluated in the EA, including: Land Acquisitions and Displacements, Land Use and Zoning, Air Quality, Noise, Water Quality, Wetlands, Floodplains, Navigable Waterways and Coastal Zones, Ecologically Sensitive Areas, Threatened and Endangered Species, Traffic and Parking, Energy Requirements and Potential for Conservation, Historic Properties and Parklands, Construction, Aesthetics, Community Disruption and Environmental Justice, Safety and Security, Secondary Development, Consistency with Local Plans, and Hazardous Materials.

After carefully considering the EA, its supporting documents and the public comments and responses, **FTA finds under 23 CFR 771.121 that the proposed project will have no significant adverse impacts on the environment.** The record provides sufficient evidence and analysis for determining that an EIS is not required.

Land Use and Zoning

The Study Area incorporates five land uses: commercial, mixed-use, municipal/institutional, open space, and surface parking. The proposed Ardmore Transit Center Project will not result in changes to mixed-use, institutional, retail, and commercial land uses in the project study area. Surface parking will be expanded to address the project need for increased parking in the Project Study Area. The proposed project is compatible with surrounding land use and changes to the existing land uses will not result in any significant impact.

According to the latest revised zoning map of Lower Merion Township and the Chapter 155 Zoning from the Code of Lower Merion Township, the project area has parcels within two zoning districts. The majority of the Ardmore Transit Center Project is zoned Ardmore Special Development District (ASDD1), which allows for mixed-use development with business services, commercial, and higher density residential uses. The Zoning Chapter 155 was updated in 2007 to include the Mixed-Use Special Transit

District (MUST). The MUST was established as an overlay zoning district to encourage the development of transit-supportive mixed-use neighborhoods. The MUST provides a zoning overlay for all commercially zoned lots in the Ardmore Development District that are located within a 1,500 foot radius of the Ardmore Train Station. The MUST provides the dimensional standards for development, design standards, and density requirements.

The Ardmore Transit Center Project involves transit improvements and transit-supportive mixed-use development features that are consistent with the MUST and therefore will not result in any significant impact.

Land Acquisitions and Displacements

The proposed Ardmore Transit Center Project will not require acquisition of business or residential properties. The Ardmore Transit Center Project will require easements and/or long-term leasing of the SEPTA/Amtrak and Municipal (Athensville) parking lots for the construction of the Ardmore Train Station, the mixed-use building and proposed "Main Street". The SEPTA /Amtrak parking lot is owned by Amtrak but leased to SEPTA. The Municipal Lot is owned by the Township. An ADA accessible pedestrian tunnel will be constructed to the east of the existing pedestrian tunnel and provide a connection between the Ardmore business district and Suburban Square.

The Dranoff Plan for development includes the Ardmore West, Schaufele, and Cricket lots. These lots are owned by the Township. The development of these lots does not involve federal funding. Acquisitions and associated uses for Ardmore West, Schaufele, and Cricket lots will be further defined during the next phases of the redevelopment plan.

Implementation of the proposed Ardmore Transit Center Project will not require acquisition of business or residential properties. Development will occur on publicly owned land and easements. The existing Amtrak Right-of-Way will be defined during final design. The proposed project will not result in acquisition and relocation of business or residents and therefore the impacts are not considered significant.

Air Quality

As part of the Clean Air Act (CAA) requirements, the US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) established National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for principal pollutants for the protection of public health. These principal pollutants include carbon monoxide, particulate matter (PM), lead, nitrogen dioxide, ozone, and sulfur dioxide. Two particle sizes are regulated for PM, particles less than 10 micrometers in diameter (PM10) and less than 2.5 micrometers in diameter (PM2.5).

The Delaware Valley region does not meet the standards for ozone and PM2.5. This means that the USEPA has designated the Philadelphia region as an air quality "non-attainment area". Montgomery County is included in this area. Transportation projects located within a non-attainment area must meet the conformity requirements of 40 CFR 93. This requires documentation that the transportation project will conform to the data and assumptions used in the State Implementation Plan (SIP) and will not exceed NAAQS.

The Ardmore Transit Center Project is not expected to result in adverse air quality impacts for transportation-related pollutants. The Ardmore Transit Center project includes transportation components consisting of a train station, parking garage, and roadway improvements. The train station

portion of the project is exempt from all conformity requirements under 40 CFR 93.126. The train station and train traffic are not considered to be factors for consideration of air pollutants.

The Ardmore Transit Center Project is included on the approved Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Since the TIP has been determined to be in conformance with the State Air Quality Implementation Plan (SIP), the project is considered to be in conformance. **Therefore, the FTA finds that at both the regional and "project" level, the project conforms to the SIP and meets the requirements of the CAA.**

Noise

The existing Ardmore Transit Station area has a mix of commercial and residential land use. The existing sound level sources are a mix of noise from transit trains and Amtrak trains approaching or passing through the Ardmore train station, or noise from traffic on surrounding streets. Implementation of the Ardmore Transit Center Project is not expected to change transit operations. The proposed project involves the construction of a mixed-use building that includes residential units in the vicinity of the train station; therefore, future sound levels were predicted in order to determine if any impact will occur.

The measured, existing background sound level was an Ldn of 72.3 dBA. The existing noise level and SEPTA and Amtrak train operations were entered into the FTA Noise Impact Assessment Spreadsheet model. Based on the FTA noise impact model the total predicted project sound level for a building within 50 feet of the railroad is an Ldn of 65 dBA and does not exceed the FTA impact criteria used for the project (Category 2 for residential receivers). **Because the general noise impact assessment showed no moderate or severe noise impact, the FTA concludes that the project will not create significant noise impacts.**

Water Quality

No surface waters are located within the project study limits. However, an Erosion and Sedimentation Control Plan will be prepared for the project and implemented during construction. **The FTA finds that no adverse impacts to water quality would occur as a result of the proposed project.**

Wetlands

Wetlands are not located within the project study area. Therefore, no wetland impacts will occur on this project. **The FTA finds that the project meets Federal wetlands requirements.**

Flooding

FEMA-mapped 100-year floodplains are not located within the project study area. Therefore, there will be no impact to floodplains resulting from this project. **The FTA finds that no adverse impacts to any 100-year floodplains or floodways would occur as a result of the proposed project.**

Navigable Waterways and Coastal Zones

No navigable waterways or coastal zones are located within the project study area; no impacts to navigable waterways or coastal zones will result from this project. **The FTA finds that no adverse impacts to any navigable waterway or coastal zone would occur as a result of the proposed project.**

Ecologically Sensitive Areas and Threatened and Endangered Species

No threatened or endangered species or their habitats were identified in the project study area. No ecologically sensitive areas exist in or adjacent to the project study area. The project will have no impact on ecologically sensitive areas or state or federal threatened or endangered species. **The FTA concludes that the proposed project will not have an adverse impact on ecologically sensitive areas or threatened or endangered species.**

Traffic and Parking

A traffic analysis was conducted in 2005 and updated in 2009. The traffic analysis included descriptions of the existing traffic conditions, operations, and a review of projected no-build and build conditions. A comparison of results for the 2020 No-Build and Build conditions with planned local roadway modifications shows that most intersections would operate at an acceptable level of service (LOS). Under the build condition, the Lancaster Avenue and Station Avenue intersection would operate at LOS B during the A.M. peak period and LOS C during the P.M. Peak period. During the PM peak period, Lancaster Avenue and Anderson Avenues would operate at LOS D. A traffic study will be completed during final design to further define traffic conditions and identify options and make recommendations to improve specific intersections.

Energy Requirements and Potential Conservation

The proposed Ardmore Transit Center Project involves transit facilities improvement and transit-oriented development that encourages the use of the transit system and the revitalization of downtown Ardmore. Therefore the project helps to create a sustainable, transit oriented development that is more efficient than existing land-development plans that are dependent on traditional automobile oriented transportation.

Historic & Cultural Resources

Two resources eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places are located within the project study area, the Ardmore Commercial Historic District and the Main Line of Pennsylvania Railroad (Philadelphia to Harrisburg). Through coordination with the State Historic Preservation Officer, it was determined that there will no effect on the Mainline of the Pennsylvania Railroad and there will be no adverse effect on the Ardmore Commercial Historic District. The Ardmore Transit Center Project was designed to be compatible with the architecture and scale of the Ardmore Commercial Historic District in order to minimize the effect of the proposed project on the existing historic resources. **Therefore, the FTA finds that the project will have no effect on any identified or likely cultural or historic resources, and that the Section 106 coordination and consultation requirements for this project have been fulfilled.**

Section 4(f)

There will be no acquisition of land from either the Ardmore Commercial Historic District or the Mainline of the Pennsylvania Railroad; no actual use of a Section 4(f) property will occur. Because the Ardmore Transit Center Project will not have an adverse effect on either the Ardmore Historic Commercial District or the Mainline of Pennsylvania Railroad, there will be no constructive use of these Section 4(f) Resources. Therefore, there will be no Section 4(f) resources impacted by this project. **The FTA finds**

that the proposed project will not use any historic site, public park, or recreational resources protected by Section 4(f).

Archaeological Resources

Two locations with historic archaeological potential were identified as a result of the Phase Ia Archaeological Survey. These potential archaeological sites are located beneath the existing train station and the Amtrak/SEPTA/Municipal Surface Parking Lot. Additional testing will be required prior to construction to confirm and describe the presence of archaeological resources at these locations.

Due to the potential presence of archaeological resources beneath the existing station and parking lot, a Programmatic Agreement (PA) between the Federal Transit Administration, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority, Lower Merion Township and the Pennsylvania Historic and Museum Commission was executed on September 15, 2009. The provisions of the PA include research, Phase Ib/II Archaeology Survey, Effects Determination (if necessary), Site Avoidance or Data Recovery (Phase III Archaeology), if necessary. Additional public outreach will be required if an archaeological site eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places is identified on site and recovery is required. All archaeological site testing will be conducted prior to project construction. **Based on the cultural resources analysis and coordination with the SHPO, the FTA finds that the project will have no effect on any identified or likely archaeological resources, and that the Section 106 coordination and consultation requirements for this project have been fulfilled.**

Parklands and Recreation Areas

There are no Parks or Recreational facilities present in the project study area. Therefore, there will be no impacts to Parklands or Recreation Areas resulting from this project.

Hazardous and Environmentally Sensitive Materials

One site with a recognized environmental concern was identified as a result of both the Phase I ESA and Phase II EA conducted for the project. An auto repair shop occupied a site that is currently covered by the municipal parking lot located between the SEPTA/Amtrak parking lot and the Lower Merion Township Police Services Building. While the site soils were analyzed and determined to meet PADEP Clean Fill Standards, some site remediation may be required prior to or during construction as impacted soils not located during the initial testing may be identified at other locations during construction. Material handling specifications will be prepared for the contract that requires the contractor to temporarily stockpile and sample soil that will be transported off site for reuse or disposal.

Both asbestos containing building materials (ACBM) and lead-based paint (LBP) were identified in the existing station building. Remediation for both ACBM's and LBP will be required during demolition of the existing station building.

Construction Impacts and Mitigation

The Ardmore station operations, transit and Amtrak Services will not be interrupted by the construction of the Ardmore Transit Center project. Station operations and all transit services will be maintained during construction. The project will be phased in such a manner as to avoid and minimize impact to commuters, the community, pedestrian and vehicular traffic, environmental resources, and businesses

in the area. **The FTA finds that no significant impacts are reasonably anticipated as a result of construction from the proposed action.**

Aesthetics

The proposed project occurs adjacent to the Ardmore Commercial Historic District. This Historic District includes a mix of building types and architectural styles. The Ardmore Transit Center project will result in the construction of new buildings within the Ardmore Business District. The proposed station complex is compatible with the Ardmore Commercial Historic District and meets the goals of the Ardmore Master Plan.

Community Cohesion

Based on the scope of the project and the existing site conditions, impacts on community cohesion, interaction, and population loss are not expected. The project will not alter the current land uses patterns. The project site is located within the Ardmore Business District and not in principal residential areas. Access to community facilities and emergency response time would not be changed by the project. **FTA finds that the proposed project will not have any impact on Community Cohesion.**

Environmental Justice

The Ardmore Transit Center Project will occur, in part, within a census block that has a minority population above the average for Ardmore and that has a low-income population above the average for Ardmore. The project will not involve the acquisition of businesses, residential properties or community facilities and will occur on the site of the existing station and parking areas. Therefore, no impacts or disproportionately adverse effects on environmental justice populations (minority or low income), minority businesses or other disadvantaged populations (i.e. elderly) will occur as a result of the project. **FTA finds that the proposed project will not result in disproportionately high and adverse effects on minority or low-income populations.**

Safety and Security

The Ardmore Transit Center project is located in a highly visible area that includes the Lower Merion Township Administration Building and the Police Services Building. There are no safety and security problems identified in the project area. The proposed Ardmore Transit Center will be designed to meet SEPTA and Amtrak requirements, including security features. Safety and security provisions during construction will be identified and developed during final design and will be included in the construction documents.

Secondary Development

One of the needs of the Ardmore Transit Center Project is to promote revitalization in the Ardmore Business District. It is expected that the Ardmore Transit Center will encourage revitalization and redevelopment in the vicinity of the Ardmore Transit Center. Revitalization and redevelopment of specific properties in and around the Ardmore Transit Center Project study area is desirable and conforms with Lower Merion Township's Comprehensive Plan.

Consistency with Local Plans

Several local and regional plans and studies were reviewed to determine if the proposed Ardmore Transit Center project is consistent with land use and transportation plans or policies. The following studies and plans were reviewed as part of this analysis: Horizons: *The Year 2025 Plan for the Delaware Valley* (2004); *Transportation Plan, Shaping Our Future, A Comprehensive Plan for Montgomery County, 2025* (n.d.); *Land Use Plan, Shaping Our Future, A Comprehensive Plan for Montgomery County, 2025* (n.d.); *Comprehensive Plan, Lower Merion Township* (1979); *Ardmore Transit Center Plan* (October, 2003); *Ardmore Redevelopment Area Plan* (January, 2005); *Ardmore Revitalization Plan Update* (March, 2005); *Existing Land Use and Conditions Report for an Area within Ardmore* (April, 2004).

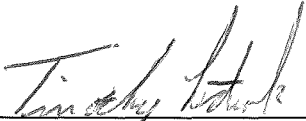
The proposed Ardmore Transit Center Project is consistent with elements of each plan that are focused on land use goals such as mixed use, compact development, open space, transportation goals (including station improvements), pedestrian accessibility, and parking. Therefore, the proposed project is consistent with both local and regional planning studies.

Environmental Finding

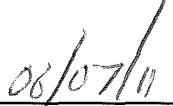
The following documents are attached and incorporated by reference as part of this finding of no significant impact:

- Environmental Assessment (February 2011)
- Response to Comments (February 2011)

Based on the Environmental Assessment and its associated supporting documents, **the Federal Transit Administration finds pursuant to 23 CFR 771.121 that there are no significant impacts on the environment associated with the development and operation of the proposed Ardmore Transit Center project.**



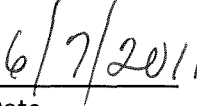
Timothy Lidiak, AICP
Community Planner
Federal Transit Administration



Date



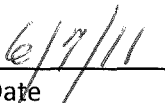
Michele Destra, Director
Office of Planning and Program Development
Federal Transit Administration



Date



Letitia A. Thompson
Regional Administrator
Federal Transit Administration



Date