Birmingham intermodal Transfer Facility, Phase II

Birmingham, AL

Administrative Action

Finding of No Significant Impact

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Documentation prepared by:
City of Birmingham, AL

For the:

United States Department of Transportation
Federal Transit Administration

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Date of Approval

FOR George T. Thomas
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Federal Transit Administration

Finding of No Significant Impact

Prepared by the
City of Birmingham, Alabama
In consultation with the
Federal Transit Administration

Project Name:	Birmingham Intermodal Transfer Facility, Phase II
Project Location:	Birmingham, AL
Grantee:	City of Birmingham, AL
FTA Grant No.:	AL-04-0026-02

1. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Finding

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) served as the lead agency under NEPA for the proposed project. The City of Birmingham prepared a Supplemental Environmental Assessment (EA) in conformance with NEPA, 42 USC Section 4321 et seq., and with FTA's regulations, 23 CFR Part 771. The Supplemental EA updates a previous EA prepared by the City of Birmingham in June 1998 for which a FONSI was issued by the FTA in March 1999. The Supplement EA analyzes and describes the project's potential significant impacts.

The FTA reviewed the Supplemental EA, which was issued in September 2011. The Supplemental EA found that the project's construction and operation would cause no significant adverse environmental effects that would not be mitigated. This applies to all applicable environmental elements including Air Quality, Land Use and Zoning, Environmental Justice, Social Impacts, Transportation, Noise, Hazardous Materials, Water Resources, Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Recreation, Safety and Security, and Public Services and Utilities.

After carefully considering the Supplemental EA, the supporting documents, and the public comments and associated responses, FTA finds under 23 CFR 771.121 that the proposed project, with the mitigation measures to which the city of Birmingham has committed, will have no significant impacts on the environment. The record provides sufficient evidence and analysis for determining that an environmental impact statement (EIS) is not required.

2. Description of Action

As part of Phase II of the Intermodal Transfer Facility (ITF), the City of Birmingham plans to construct a new facility housing Amtrak and Greyhound stations and MAX public transportation offices in conjunction with the expanded MAX bus facility as an integrated, multimodal transportation center linking intercity rail, intercity bus, public transportation,

taxis, car/van pools, and bicycles, as well as the long-term potential of light-rail service pending further study under an FTA funded "New Starts" program. The present MAX bus system facility will be modified to the extent necessary to increase bus service, provide for the City Center Circulator, airport shuttle, bicycles, and pedestrian transportation activities in the area. Supporting automobile parking area will accommodate approximately 200 cars. Upon completion of Phase II, the operations of Amtrak, Greyhound, and the existing MAX Bus Transfer Facility will be consolidated into a single complex.

3. Recommended Alternative

The Recommended Alternative for development of Phase II of the ITF is to construct the proposed facilities adjoining the existing MAX Bus Transfer Facility on property south of Morris Avenue between 14th Streets and 19th Streets North.

The Recommended Alternative provides the most effective location for the ITF by providing an efficient internal layout, good access to existing facilities and minimal environmental impacts.

4. Public Opportunity for Comment

Public comments on the Supplemental EA were solicited from August 6 through September 6, 2011. Outreach efforts during this period included:

- Access to the Supplemental EA through the city's web page;
- Opportunities to review hard copies at multiple locations in the City;
- Advertisement in the Birmingham News, a local daily newspaper of general circulation;

During the 30-day public comment period no comments were received by the City. In general there has been no public opposition to the proposed project and no specific mitigation plan is required.

5. Mitigation Measures to Minimize Harm

A list of mitigation measures is included in Section 4.17 of the Supplemental EA. The public comment period did not reveal new impacts requiring mitigation. Mitigation measures include:

- If archeological discoveries are made during the construction process, work should immediately cease and the City of Birmingham will be contacted.

- An NPDES permit for storm water discharge associated with construction activities should be obtained prior to commencing construction. Erosion and sediment controls and other applicable BMPs shall be implemented during construction in

accordance with the Jefferson County Erosion and Sediment Control Ordinance, the Construction Best Management Practices Plan, and NPDES Permit parameters.

- Access to the remaining groundwater recovery wells will be provided to CSXT until such time as ADEM determines that remediation has been completed and no further action is required.
- Low cut-off fixtures and low-pole mount lighting will be implemented within the vicinity of the Jemison Flats residential building in the area.
- An in-depth underground utility survey will be completed before the commencement of the project for design the utility connections.

6. Natural Environmental Impacts

Air Quality

The proposed project will not result in any additional sources of air pollution in the Birmingham or Jefferson County area. The Greyhound bus traffic in the area already exists in other parts of the City. Train traffic already exists in the area.

The Federal Department of Transportation and the Alabama Department of Transportation $PM_{2.5}$ Hot Spot Analysis Checklist was completed and it has been determined that the proposed project is exempt because it consists of the reconstruction or renovation of existing transit buildings and structures. There are not expected to be any significant changes in $PM_{2.5}$ emissions in the project area. The proposed project is expected, instead, to improve air quality by promoting the use of mass transportation and to reduce the number of personal vehicles used in the downtown area. Also, by consolidating transportation alternatives the proposed action is expected to decrease overall personal vehicle miles traveled.

Noise and Lighting

The proposed action will result in some increase in street traffic within the business district of Birmingham. Since the L&N railroad is a major east-west railroad artery, there is already extensive railroad traffic in the area. There will be no additional train traffic associated with the proposed action.

There will be an increase in bus and automobile traffic due to the proposed facility. While this would have some effect on noise levels in the immediate area, the effect would not be significant compared to current noise levels. There currently exist many various noise generators that contribute to the ambient noise level of the area. Due to the surrounding areas located in the heavily developed urban core of Birmingham central business district, these generators include bus and automobile traffic already

routed through the area. The noise impacts associated with the proposed action will have no significant impact on noise levels in the area.

The additional lighting which will be implemented as a result of the proposed action will have no significant impact on the surrounding community. Low cut-off fixtures and low-pole mount lighting will be implemented within the vicinity of the Jemison Flats residential building in the area.

Surface Water

No surface waters are present on or near the subject site. The construction activities at the project site are expected to disturb approximately 5.75 acres of land (the total project area acreage) and, therefore, require an Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System general stormwater permit (ALR100000) prior to land disturbing activities. Additionally, appropriate Best Management Practices (BMPs) must be implemented in accordance with this permit. A Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Permit must also be obtained from the City of Birmingham.

Erosion and runoff control measures should be used to filter sediment generated by construction activities. These should include, at a minimum, silt fence around exposed soils to contain runoff and temporary vegetation in areas which will remain unworked for short periods to minimize erosion. Existing stormwater drainage may need to be modified to handle anticipated runoff.

HAZMAT/Underground Storage Tanks

The approximate depth to groundwater at the subject site is between 5 to 15 feet deep in most areas. The project site is presently undergoing remediation for historic diesel fuel and gasoline releases associated with past railroad operations. Five existing free product recovery/monitoring wells will remain in the proposed parking lot area for access by CSXT for free product recovery.

These wells will remain in place until a no further action determination is made by ADEM, at which time they will be properly abandoned in accordance with current ADEM requirements. All construction activities impacting the free product recovery wells will be carried out with ADEM concurrence.

The parking lot construction schedule will be coordinated with ongoing quarterly free product removal activities to ensure no disruption in the remediation activities. Once completed, the parking area will act as a cap that will retard groundwater (precipitation) infiltration that may impact the underlying free product and thus facilitate remediation.

Wetlands

No wetlands are present on or near the site. Project implementation should therefore not impact any wetlands.

Floodplains

No floodplains are present on or near the site. Project implementation should therefore not impact any floodplains.

Geology

Site geology will not be significantly impacted as a result of project implementation.

Soils

The Urban Land soils currently covering the site are historically overlain with commercial, industrial, and high-density residential facilities. Moreover, given erosion control measures and the relatively flat terrain surrounding the project site, soil loss from the site should be insignificant. Therefore, there will be no significant impact to existing soils.

If, during project construction, site drainage features are changed in such a way as to divert water towards any drainage structures, erosion control measures will be implemented to minimize soil transport and diversion of waters into drainage structures.

Topography

Site topography will not be significantly impacted as a result of project implementation.

Flora

The flora population at the site is quite limited. Project implementation therefore will not have a marked impact on the plant environment.

Fauna

Significant fauna communities were not identified or known to exist in or around the subject properties. Therefore, the proposed project should not impact animal populations.

Threatened and Endangered Species

No threatened and endangered species were encountered and no habitat sufficient for their survival exists on the subject site or adjacent areas. As a result, no impact to threatened and endangered species should occur.

Unique and Critical Habitats

Unique and critical habitats were not identified or known to exist. Therefore, there should be no impacts to any such habitats.

7. Traffic Impacts

Traffic

The proposed project will result in additional traffic due to the park-and-ride facility as well as additional bus traffic associated with the bus transfer facility. The previous Environmental Assessment for the MAX Bus Transfer Facility stated that there would be an additional 60 buses entering the facility each day and 60 buses exiting. Parking facilities (park-and-ride and additional parking at the Amtrak station) will be available for approximately 200 additional vehicles. It is not anticipated that all of these additional vehicles will arrive at one time or access the facility on the same roads, therefore they will not increase the current traffic load above the 500 vehicle per hour per lane limit for the collector roads. Neither is it anticipated that the level of service currently existing on the streets adjacent to the proposed project site will decrease from their current A and B status to less than a C status as described in the 1979 FTA Guidelines for Environmental Assessments.

Parking

A new 200-space park-and-ride lot will be constructed at the new facility. It is expected that these parking facilities will mitigate any increased parking demands as a result of the proposed project. Workers, shoppers, and other pedestrians who normally travel downtown in personal vehicles will have more convenient mass transit, thereby decreasing the demand for parking in other downtown locations.

8. Social Environment Impacts

Potable Water

The proposed project will increase the potable use of water on site due to the construction of new facility restrooms. However, there should be no discernable impact on the potable water supplies.

Sewer

The proposed construction will not cause a significant increase in the amount of wastewater treated at the Jefferson County wastewater treatment plant serving this area.

Electricity and Natural Gas

The primary increase in electricity and natural gas usage will be as a result of waiting rooms and additional lighting. The proposed project will not create a significant increase in the amount of electricity and natural gas used.

Recreation and Leisure

The proposed project will improve transportation and facilitate better access to recreational venues and parks within the City, including the new Railroad Park, which is readily-accessible along 18th Street on the south side of the L&N Railroad. Since there will be no rights-of-way required to the Railroad Park, there will be no impacts to this greenspace.

Regional Characteristics

No regional characteristics should be affected by this project.

Population

The proposed actions will not have a significant effect on the population of Birmingham.

Economic Activity and Employment

It is expected that the proposed facility will increase economic activity and employment. Employed contractors, construction workers, and administrative employees should significantly increase the need for employment as well as economic activities. The Intermodal Transfer Facility is also expected to increase the use and attractiveness of mass transit, thus increasing the economic viability of the Birmingham area.

Environmental Justice

There are no disparate impacts anticipated on minority communities. Instead, the improved availability of transportation options is expected to benefit low income and minority residents of Birmingham.

Land Use and Zoning

The subject site and surrounding areas are zoned as Central Business District and Light Industrial District. The area to the south of the L&N Railroad line is zoned as Park. The proposed project is compatible with the existing land use and zoning regulations for the subject property. Therefore, impacts to zoning and land use are considered "generally not significant".

Fire Protection

The Birmingham Fire and Rescue Service, Station Number 6 is the closest station to the proposed project site. The station is located at 317 15th Street North, just a few blocks away.

Security

The facility will provide additional security for the safety of the patrons of the proposed projects. This should make the project site and surroundings areas safer.

9. Impacts to Cultural Resources

Historical and Archaeological Resources

The proposed project is located in the heavily-developed urban core of the Birmingham Central Business District. The Alabama Historical Commission (AHC) was consulted in 1998 during the preparation of the previously-approved ITF EA to determine if any historical or archeological resources were present or were known to exist at or near the subject site. The AHC was contacted to update this Supplemental EA. The AHC did not find that there were any historic structures on the subject property, nor did the agency state that the project was located in a National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) district. The AHC did state that the proposed project is adjacent to a historical district and requested coordination with the Birmingham Architectural Review Board Design Review Committee (DRC). The DRC confirmed that the ITF Phase II project will not have any impacts on historic properties located near the project area. Therefore, no such resources should be affected by this project. If during construction any evidence of historical or archeological significance is discovered, construction activities should cease and the City of Birmingham should be notified immediately.

10. Construction Impacts

Construction of the project will not significantly or adversely impact the surrounding area. Temporary minor inconveniences, such as construction traffic and noise, may occur during construction of the ITF, Phase II. All construction activities will be constrained to the site and undertaken in accordance with applicable state and local requirements.

11. Environmental Finding

Based on the Final Supplemental Environmental Assessment and its associated supporting documents, the Federal Trait Administration finds pursuant to 23 CFR 771.121 that there are no significant impacts on the environment associated with the development and operation of Phase II of the Birmingham Intermodal transfer Facility. Therefore, and environmental impact statement (IES) or further environmental analysis is not required.

The following document is attached and incorporated by reference as part of this FONSI:

- Final Supplemental Environmental Assessment (September 2011)