



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Highway
Administration**

Minnesota Division

December 14, 2021

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Margaret Anderson Kelliher
Commissioner of Transportation
Department of Transportation
MS 120, Transportation Building
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

Re: Finding of No Significant Impact
Rush Line Bus Rapid Transit
From Downtown St. Paul to White Bear Lake
In Ramsey County, Minnesota

Dear Commissioner Margaret Anderson Kelliher:

Enclosed is a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) as requested by Marni Karnowski's October 28, 2021, letter. The Rush Line BRT Project is a proposed 15-mile long BRT route connecting Saint Paul, Maplewood, White Bear Township, Vadnais Heights, Gem Lake and White Bear Lake. It would include 21 stations, and the route would generally run along Robert Street, Jackson Street, Phalen Boulevard, Ramsey County rail right-of-way and Highway 61.

The proposed project includes a new dedicated guideway bridge over I-694. This bridge construction necessitates an FHWA approved right of way agreement. The scope of the Interstate right-of-way agreement is the FHWA nexus to the proposed project.

This Finding concludes that the project will not significantly impact the human or natural environment.

A Notice of Availability of the FONSI must be sent to Federal, State, and local government agencies that are likely to have an interest in the undertaking; and to the State intergovernmental review contacts. It is encouraged that agencies which commented on the Environmental Assessment (or requested to be informed) are advised on the project decision, the disposition of their comments and proved a copy of the FONSI.

Philip Forst
Environmental Specialist

Enclosure

PJF

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FTA - Greep – Anthony.greep@dot.gov

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION
MINNESOTA DIVISION
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

Right of Way Use Agreement
For Metro Transit Rush Line Bus Rapid Transit
In the Cities of St. Paul, Maplewood, White Bear Township, Vadnais Heights, Gem Lake
and White Bear Lake
Ramsey County, Minnesota

Whereas, the proposed action is an element of an undertaking sponsored by the Ramsey County 'Rush Line Bus Rapid Transit', for which the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), serving as the lead federal agency, has issued a Final Environmental Assessment (EA) on May 11, 2021, and later issued a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) on October 5, 2021.

The FTA invited the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to participate as a Cooperating Agency in the development of an EA for the Rush Line Bus Rapid Transit Project. The FHWA agreed to be a Cooperating Agency. As permitted by 23 CFR 771.121 (c), the FHWA has reviewed the FTA's EA and subsequent FONSI with the intent of adopting select elements of the environmental review and issuing a separate decision document. This separate National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) decision document is necessary for FHWA to take an approval action on a right-of-way (ROW) agreement which allows a portion of I-694 ROW to be used for construction and maintenance of the Rush Line Bus Rapid Transit.

The proposed FTA project would construct an approximate 15-mile dedicated transitway in Ramsey County. The transitway requires the use of I-694 ROW. The primary FHWA nexus to the FTA project is that the use of I-694 ROW and airspace require FHWA approval action of a ROW agreement. FHWA participation in the project development process led to a determination that an FHWA Interstate Access Request is not required for the current FTA preferred alternative.

After independent evaluation of (1) the need, environmental issues, impacts, and mitigation measures contained in the Final EA, (2) its review of substantive comments and responses, and (3) other agency determinations including the Minnesota Department of Transportation's (MnDOT) October 2021 request to issue a FONSI, the FHWA finds that:

The proposed FHWA action (the scope of the anticipated FHWA-approved ROW agreement) as described in the body of this FONSI and described in the FTA EA will not have significant impacts to the human or natural environment. Furthermore, the FTA documentation largely incorporated FHWA's comments as a Cooperating Agency and meets the analysis required for the FHWA environmental process.

The FHWA has sufficient evidence and analysis to determine that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. The FHWA takes full responsibility for the accuracy, scope, and content of the portions of the EA adopted for the proposed project. Mitigation associated with the impacts of proposed project as described in the FTA EA, the appendices to the FTA FONSI, this FONSI, and any subsequent permit actions needed for the project, will be delivered during final design and construction.

The FTA FONSI (Appendix A) makes a commitment to maintain adequate space to not preclude reasonably foreseeable highway expansion for mainline I-694 and mainline Highway 36. Fulfilling this commitment will ensure both areas continue adequate operation as regional and nationwide freight routes that include oversize/overweight vehicles.

FHWA hereby adopts the elements of the May 2021 FTA EA relevant to the execution of the anticipated FHWA-approved ROW agreement and the operation of the Interstate System.

This FONSI is subject to reevaluation if significant changes occur in the final design or if construction is delayed. Furthermore, the application of this FONSI is limited to the scope for the work as outlined in MnDOT's October 28, 2021, letter requesting partial adoption of the Ramsey County and FTA EA. Any additional changes to the scope of the FHWA ROW agreement are subject to additional review and determinations in distinct National Environmental Policy Act processes.

William Lohr, P.E.
Field Operations Team Leader

December 14, 2021 ____
Date