Mr. Stephen Banta  
Chief Executive Officer  
Valley Metro  
101 N. First Avenue  
Suite 1300  
Phoenix, AZ 85003

Re: Gilbert Road Extension Project  
Finding of No Significant Impact

Dear Mr. Banta:

Based on our review of the Environmental Assessment, dated April and August, 2013, for the proposed Gilbert Road Extension Project, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has issued a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). A copy of the FONSI is enclosed.

Copies of the FONSI and supporting documentation information should be made available to affected government agencies, the public, and should be posted in the project website. Notice of availability for the FONSI should be published in local newspapers and provided directly by you to affected governmental agencies, including the State Intergovernmental Review contact established under Executive Order 12372.

Please note that if a grant is approved for this project, the standard terms and conditions of the grant contract will require Valley Metro to undertake the mitigation actions identified in the Environmental Assessment.

Thank you for your cooperation in meeting the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act. If you have any questions, please contact Ms. Dominique Paukowits, at (415) 744-2737.

Sincerely,

Leslie T. Rogers  
Regional Administrator

Enclosure
Finding of No Significant Impact

Grant Applicant: City of Phoenix

Project Sponsor: Valley Metro

Proposed Project: Gilbert Road Light Rail Transit Extension

The Environmental Assessment (EA) for this project was prepared in cooperation with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C 4321 et seq.); the Federal Transit Laws (49 U.S.C. Chapter 53); Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA); Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966 (49 U.S.C. 303); Executive Order 12898 (Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations); and the Clean Air Act (42 U.S.C. 7401 et seq.); among other Federal laws and requirements.

Description

Valley Metro, in cooperation with the City of Mesa, proposes to construct a 1.9-mile light rail extension to the region’s light rail system from the future eastern terminus near the intersection of Main Street/Mesa Drive (part of the Central Mesa Extension project currently under construction) east to the intersection of Main Street/Gilbert Road, in Mesa, Arizona. The project will provide a one-seat ride from central Mesa to the north-central region of Phoenix, a distance of 25 miles. In addition, the extension will connect citizens of Mesa to the region’s largest employment centers and attractions along the METRO light rail system, such as: The Phoenix Convention Center, Chase Field (ballpark), US Airways Center (arena), Sky Harbor International Airport, Arizona State University (main and downtown campuses), University of Arizona College of Medicine, Gateway Community College, and several other major employment and cultural facilities.

Operations will utilize existing light rail vehicles and will include a traffic signal priority system (predictive priority) and two roundabouts to allow for faster travel times. At Gilbert Road, the existing Valley Metro LINK service will connect with the light rail and operate in mixed traffic as a skip-stop express service to Superstition Springs Transit Center (near Power Road and US 60) as it does today. With implementation of the Gilbert Road Extension project, Valley Metro LINK service will be discontinued along Main Street between Mesa Drive and Gilbert Road to eliminate service duplication.

The Gilbert Road Extension project will include stations in the center of the roadway that are level with the vehicle entrance/exit points to facilitate level boardings and alightings. The platforms will include shelter canopies, benches, trash receptacles, public water fountains and real-time transit information. A total of two stations will be constructed. A new park-and-ride facility will be built near the Gilbert Road/Main Street end-of-line light rail station on the southwest corner of Main Street/Gilbert Road. Each light rail station will serve one or more existing bus routes in the area.
Alternatives Considered

The following three alternatives were evaluated in the EA:

- 4-Lane alternative, which preserves the existing four travel lanes on Main Street, two travel lanes in each direction and the bicycle lanes;
- 2-Lane alternative, which eliminates two through travel lanes (one in each direction), providing a total of two travel lanes and the bicycle lanes; and
- 2-Lane alternative with roundabouts, which included a design option incorporating modern roundabouts at five street locations.

City of Mesa and Valley Metro staff and the public participated in the environmental review process, including a public scoping process, stakeholder meetings, a two-tier alternatives development process and preparation and review of the EA, with all parties providing comments on design elements and features of each alternative. As a result of this process, City of Mesa and Valley Metro developed a refined alternative, which combined elements of all three alternatives into a new Build Alternative (Hybrid), and the Build Alternative (Hybrid) was selected as the Preferred Alternative. The Build Alternative (Hybrid), the Preferred Alternative, and the No Build Alternative were also evaluated in the EA. This Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) applies to the Build Alternative (Hybrid).

The Build Alternative (Hybrid) would narrow the roadway down to two traffic lanes (one lane in each direction) from the end point of the Central Mesa Extension project, at the intersection of Main Street and Hobson Road, to Main Street and Miller Street. From Miller Street to Lazona Drive, the existing four traffic lanes (two lanes in each direction) and left-turn lanes will be maintained to help offset the potential traffic impacts at the intersection of Main Street and Stapley Drive. East of Lazona Drive, Main Street would be narrowed back down to two travel lanes (one lane in either direction) to the intersection of Main Street and Guthrie Street. From Guthrie Street to Gilbert Road the existing four traffic lanes (two lanes in each direction) and turn lanes will be maintained. On-street parking would be provided where sufficient space is available. In addition, this alternative will include the installation of two roundabouts at Horne and Harris Drive to provide continuous traffic flow in the east and west travel directions.

The Preferred Alternative was adopted by the Mesa City Council on April 4, 2013. The Gilbert Road Extension is planned to begin operations in 2018.

Environmental Effects

FTA served as the lead agency and Valley Metro served as a joint-lead agency in the preparation of the EA in compliance with NEPA, 42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq., and with FTA’s regulations, 23 CFR Part 771. The EA analyzes and describes the project’s potential significant impacts, and was issued in June 2013.

The EA found that the project’s construction and operation would cause no adverse environmental effects that would not be mitigated. This would apply to all applicable environmental elements including Air Quality, Land Use and Zoning, Environmental Justice, Social Impacts, Transportation, Noise and Vibration, Hazardous Materials, Water Resources,

**Mitigation Measures to Minimize Harm**

Valley Metro has adopted specific environmental commitments and standard construction practices as part of the project description to address typical short term impacts that occur from construction. Valley Metro has incorporated mitigation measures into the project to reduce or avoid adverse environmental impacts specifically pertaining to acquisition/relocation of properties; noise and vibration; historic and archaeological resources; visual and aesthetics; and water quality. The measures and commitments are listed in Table 4 in the Executive Summary of the EA.

Consultation pursuant to Section 106 of the NHPA with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) was initiated in November 2012. FTA received concurrence from the SHPO with FTA’s Area of Potential Effect (APE) and finding of no adverse effect to historic and archaeological resources on June 25, 2013. This consultation satisfies the requirements and recommendations of 36 CFR Part 800, and as a result, compliance with Section 106 of the NHPA has been achieved. The FTA letter initiating consultation with SHPO and the SHPO concurrence letter are provided in Appendix F1 of the EA.

The proposed project would incorporate a small portion of the parking areas on two properties that are eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places into the project; therefore, the project would result in a “direct use” of land from two potential historic properties.

FTA’s rule establishing procedures for determining that the use of a Section 4(f) property has a *de minimis* impact on the property is found at 23 CFR Parts 771 and 774. In accordance with the provisions of 23 CFR 774.5(b), 774.7(b) and 774.17, FTA has determined that the acquisition of the small amount of property results in no adverse effect (a finding that SHPO concurred with) and therefore the project would result in a *de minimis* impact to Section 4(f) properties. The project also does not result in a “constructive use” or “temporary occupancy” of Section 4(f) properties. Therefore, the coordination required in 23 CFR 774.5(b) has been completed.

**Agency Coordination and Public Outreach**

Valley Metro conducted a public and agency scoping meeting in September 2012 to inform the public of the proposed project and to solicit input on potential concerns, alternatives, and measures to reduce effects. Valley Metro held a Public Open House in October 2012 to provide the public with updates on the status of the project. Stakeholder meetings were conducted between May and October 2012, to inform the public and receive feedback from the public regarding the project.

The EA was released for public review on June 7, 2013, with the comment period extending to July 13, 2013. Hard copies were made available for viewing at the Valley Metro office and the City of Mesa Main Library. The EA was also available on the Valley Metro website at www.valleymetro.org/gilbertroad. A Notice of Availability (NOA) was published in The East Valley Tribune (English), The Mesa Republic (English) and La Voz (Spanish).
A list of comments received during the public comment period and responses to those comments is included as Appendix L to the EA.

**Environmental Findings**

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 construction and operation of the proposed Gilbert Road Extension.

Approved: [Signature]  
Leslie T. Rogers  
Regional Administrator  
Federal Transit Administration, Region IX  
Date: NOV 15 2013