Date: 24 June 2019

Grant Applicant: Franklin Regional Transit Authority (FRTA)

Project Name: Proposed FRTA Bus Maintenance and Operations Facility
Sandy Lane, Village of Turners Falls, Montague, MA

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION REQUIRED
FOR PROBABLE CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION
SECTION
23 C.F.R. § 771.118(d)

A. DETAILED PROJECT DESCRIPTION: Please add a description of the site selection process that describes alternative locations that were considered.

In SFY15, MassDOT hired STV, Incorporated (STV) to work with FRTA and provided a Site Selection Analysis Report. The report provided an evaluation and assessment on four (4) potential sites for a new FRTA Vehicles Maintenance and Operations Facility. STV focused on evaluating various constraints and impacts at all of the four sites, conducted analysis and developed conceptual layouts to define the necessary area required for the new facility. STV analyzed ridership, zoning, noise impacts and various physical and environmental aspects of each site. The conclusion of the report recommended a site in Greenfield, MA owned by the Town of Greenfield, despite the fact the site had a history of environmental contamination. The entire Site Selection Analysis Report can be viewed online at: http://www.frta.org/wp-content/uploads/20150710-FRTA-Final-Site-Selection-Report.pdf). Upon further investigation into the ongoing site environmental monitoring and testing it was determined to discontinue pursuit of this specific site for FRTA’s project and re-start the search for a different site location. In late SFY16 the Town of Montague contacted FRTA with a potential site for FRTA’s project on town-owned land on Sandy Lane in the Village of Turners Falls in Montague, MA.

B. LOCATION (INCLUDING ADDRESS): Has this site been previously developed? If so, what was it used for? Will the project involve cutting down trees?

According to the Town Planner this site is a former gravel pit that has been filled in with clean soil from a previous Town project and has not had any other development. Trees were previously cut down and removed from the site by another contractor to stage equipment and gain access to the newly constructed solar project to the west of FRTA’s project site. There are some remaining trees that will need to be cut down and removed for this project.
B. **TRAFFIC IMPACTS:** “Twenty-three (23) revenue vehicles will be stored and thirty-five (35) revenue vehicles will be serviced at the proposed Maintenance and Operations Facility.” Where will the twelve (12) other revenue vehicles be stored?

The remaining twelve (12) other revenue vehicles are stored off-site with other transportation providers, primarily Councils on Aging, that are in the outer reaches of our service area. Those vehicles will come into the Bus Maintenance and Operations Facility periodically for routine maintenance and other vehicle repairs.

E. **TRAFFIC IMPACTS:** “Only minimal impacts to local roadways or intersections are anticipated during non-peak hours as a result of the proposed project.” What are the impacts during peak hours?

On average, there is 1-4 buses entering and exiting the site per hour. Here is a list of the current driver runs to give a better indication of traffic impacts on and off of the project site:

- Run 1: Pull out at 4:20am; Pull in at 12:20pm
- Run 2: Pull out at 4:45am; Pull in at 12:45pm
- Run 3: Pull out at 6:10am; Pull in at 2:10pm
- Run 4: Pull out at 6:45am; Pull in at 2:45pm
- Run 5: Pull out at 8:45am; Pull in at 4:45pm
- Run 6: Pull out at 10:45am; Pull in at 6:45pm
- Run 7: Pull out at 10:45am; Pull in at 6:45pm
- Run 8: Pull out at 11:30am; Pull in at 7:30pm
- Run 9: Pull out at 6:00am; Pull in at 10:05am
- Run 10: Pull out at 6:30am; Pull in at 10:35am
- Run 11: Pull out at 7:45am; Pull in at 10:55am
- Run 12: Pull out at 8:00am; Pull in at 2:00pm
- Run 13: Pull out at 10:30am; Pull in at 2:35pm
- Run 14: Pull out at 12:55pm; Pull in at 6:50pm
- Run 15: Pull out at 2:30pm; Pull in at 7:40pm
- Run 16: Pull out at 2:55pm; Pull in at 7:45pm

G. **HISTORIC RESOURCES:** Please describe the process that was used to determine that there are no cultural, historic, or archaeological resources in the immediate vicinity.

Cultural resources within the project area were identified through archival research and review of online databases.
For above ground resources: a file review was completed via the Massachusetts Historical Commission’s (MHC) cultural resources information system (MACRIS). This review included the identification of any inventoried historic resource within 0.25 miles of the project area that have been listed, or are eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). In addition, a review of the NRHP online database was also completed. The results of this review indicated that there are no NRHP eligible or NRHP listed properties within the project area or within 0.25 miles of the project area. Based on this review, it was determined that the project will have no impact on documented historic resources.

For archaeological resources: a review was performed of documented historic and precontact archaeological resources as well as previous archaeological surveys within 1 mile of the project area using a restricted-access layer on MACRIS that is available to TRC’s archeologist. The results of this review identified 13 precontact sites and 1 historic site within a 1 mile search radius, the closest site being documented 0.20 miles from the project area. No archaeological surveying has been conducted in the immediate vicinity of the project site, and there are no documented archaeological sites on, or adjacent to, the project area. Based on the findings of this review, it was determined the project will have no direct impact on known archaeological resources.

J. ACQUISITIONS & RELOCATIONS REQUIRED: “The site is currently vacant and no displacements of residences of businesses will occur.” However, the maps provided appear to show the presence of a parking lot, a building, equipment, and dirt roads within the parcel to be acquired.

The maps referenced in the comment identify the boundary of the parcel upon which the project site is located, rather than the boundary of the project site. The project site occupies only a portion of the complete parcel to be acquired (please see the renderings and design drawings provided in Figure 3 of the CatX document), and the site does not include the parking lot, building, and equipment identified in the comment. Please see the attached figure which was provided in the CatX within the stormwater report and shows the boundaries of the project site.

Q. IMPACTS ON ECOLOGICALLY-SENSITIVE AREAS AND ENDANGERED SPECIES: Please provide details related to potential impact on the Northern Long-eared Bat and the Northeastern Bulrush, both of which are protected under the Endangered Species Act and may be present in this area.

According to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service’s (USFWS) 4d Rule protecting the threatened northern long-eared bat (NLEB) (Myotis septentrionalis),
incidental “take” of NLEB outside of hibernacula resulting from activities other than tree removal is not prohibited. Incidental “take” resulting from tree removal is prohibited if it occurs within a 0.25 mile radius of known NLEB hibernacula, cuts or destroys known occupied maternity roost trees, or cuts or destroys any other trees within a 150-foot radius from the known maternity tree, during the pup season (June 1 through July 31). According to the Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP) there are no known hibernacula or maternity roost trees within 0.25 miles of the project area (https://mass-eoeea.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Viewer/index.html?appid=de59364ebbb348a9b0de55f6febfdf52).

Northeastern bulrush (*Scirpus ancistrochaetus*) is an endangered plant species known to occur in only two locations in Massachusetts. One of these two locations is the Town of Montague. Northeastern bulrush is an obligate wetland species that requires fluctuating water levels, full sun, and mesotrophic or oligotrophic water chemistry (medium to low productivity). It is threatened by permanent changes in water level such as filling or draining, as well as competition with dense vegetation such as invasive common reed (*Phragmites australis*) and purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*). No wetland habitat, of any kind, occurs within the project site or the parcel to be acquired (see Figure 4 in the CatX document), therefore northeastern bulrush is not present on the project site and would not be impacted by project activities. There is an intermittent stream which is located (at its nearest point) approximately 400 feet east of the project site boundary, which does not provide suitable habitat for northeastern bulrush. In addition, a potential and a certified vernal pool, with some surrounding non-jurisdictional isolated wetland, are present approximately 400 feet south of the project site boundary. Neither of these vernal pools, nor the associated wetlands, will be impacted by construction activity or site runoff. All stormwater will be contained on site and in the event of a 100-year flood event, any overflow will be diverted northeast and away from the stream and vernal pools.

The action described above meets the criteria for a NEPA categorical exclusion (CE) in accordance with 23 C.F.R. § 771.118(d)