

Birmingham In-Town Transit Partnership Project

Ecologically Sensitive Areas and Endangered Species

August 2008

2008-TA-0609

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REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION OF GREATER BIRMINGHAM
Serving the Governments and Municipalities of Blount, Chilton, Jefferson, Shelby, St. Clair, and Walker Counties

Post-It® Fax Note	7671	Date	7/9/08	# of pages	2
To	D. L. Howard				
Co./Dept.	RPC				
Phone #					
Fax #	205-328-3304				
FROM:	Sandy M				
Co.:	USFWS				
Phone #:	251-441-5184				
Fax #:	251-441-6222				

June 20, 2008

Bill Pearson, Field Supervisor
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service - Southeast Region
1208-B Main Street
Daphne, Alabama 36526

SUBJECT: Regional Planning Commission (RPC), Documented Categorical Exclusion for the In-Town Transit Partnership Project in Birmingham, Alabama

Dear Mr. Pearson:

This letter concerns the In-Town Transit Partnership Project (ITP) in metropolitan Birmingham, Alabama, proposed by the Regional Planning Commission (RPC). RPC has identified the need to improve mobility and access in downtown Birmingham and connecting the downtown to the surrounding residential communities. The project area is centered on Birmingham City Center and the UAB campus. Attachment A is a project study area map.

RPC has undertaken an alternatives analysis to investigate transit alternatives in the project area and to conduct an examination of the potential benefits and costs of constructing the proposed transit improvements. These studies were conducted in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). Based on our discussions with Federal Transit Administration Region IV staff, the next step is the completion of a Documented Categorical Exclusion (CE). As a part of this process, RPC is requesting that the US Fish and Wildlife Service verify the existence of protected species or critical habitats within the project's study area. The study area is shown in the attached figure.

There are two components to this transit project: a city center/ UAB Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) alignment and several neighborhood connector routes. As shown in Attachment B, the City Center/ UAB BRT project would include converting an existing travel/ parking lane into a dedicated bus only lane within the existing curb to curb cross section. There would be small bus shelters, consisting of weather protection, trash receptacles, and next bus displays, spaced approximately 1/4 mile apart. The neighborhood connector routes would use small transit vehicles operating in mixed traffic on existing streets. An initial environmental scan indicates that threatened and endangered species exist within Jefferson County. However the proposed improvements are unlikely to impact any of these resources. The entire study area is within downtown Birmingham, where no natural habitats, other small landscaped areas, parks, and tree plantings, exist. The project would occur within existing transportation rights-of-way and no offsite storage or maintenance facilities are proposed. Vehicles would use the existing transit facilities. A list of threatened and endangered species in Jefferson County can be found in Attachment C.



STATE OF ALABAMA
DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES
64 NORTH UNION STREET
MONTGOMERY, AL 36130

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July 14, 2008

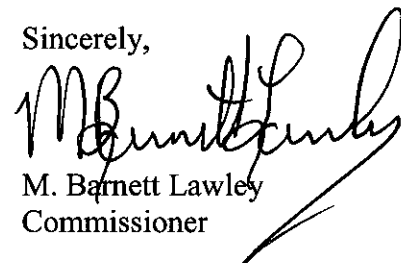
Mr. Darrell L. Howard
Principal Transportation Planner
Center for Regional Planning and Design
1731 First Avenue North, Suite 200
Birmingham, AL 35203

Re: Regional Planning Commission (RPC), Documented Categorical Exclusion for the
In-Town Transit Partnership Project in Birmingham, Alabama

Dear Mr. Howard:

The State Lands Division of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources has reviewed the above mentioned project and submits the following comments. We agree with the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham that the project as proposed should have no impact on any sensitive species. We have no objection to the project as proposed. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this project.

Sincerely,



M. Barnett Lawley
Commissioner



Please review the attachments to this letter and provide written comments on the likelihood of the project affecting any ecologically sensitive areas or endangered species. We would appreciate receiving your response to this letter within 30 days. If you have any questions, you may call me at (205) 251-8139.

Sincerely,



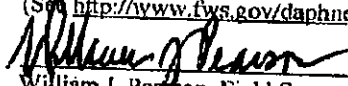
Darrell L. Howard, AICP
Principal Transportation Planner

Enclosures



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1208-B Main Street - Daphne, Alabama 36526
Phone: 251-441-5181 Fax: 251-441-6222

No federally listed species/critical habitat are known to occur in the project area. As described, the project will have no significant impact on fish and wildlife resources. IF PROJECT DESIGN CHANGES ARE MADE, PLEASE SUBMIT NEW PLANS FOR REVIEW. We recommend use of best management practices specific to your project (See <http://www.fws.gov/daphne/section7/bmp.html>).



William J. Pearson, Field Supervisor

7/8/08

Date

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