

# Federal Transit Administration Region IV Broward County Commuter Rail South Project Finding of No Significant Impact

## Introduction

This document provides the basis for a determination by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) of a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the Broward Commuter Rail (BCR) South Project. This determination is made in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, and FTA's implementing procedures under 23 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 771.121.

Broward County, in cooperation with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) on behalf of the FTA for the BCR South Project. That EA was developed pursuant to 23 CFR Part 771.119 and the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations for implementing NEPA (40 CFR 1500). The EA was also prepared in accordance with State of Florida laws and regulations. The EA describes the potential impacts on the human and natural environment that may result from the project and was made available for public comment from July 19, 2024, to August 18, 2024.

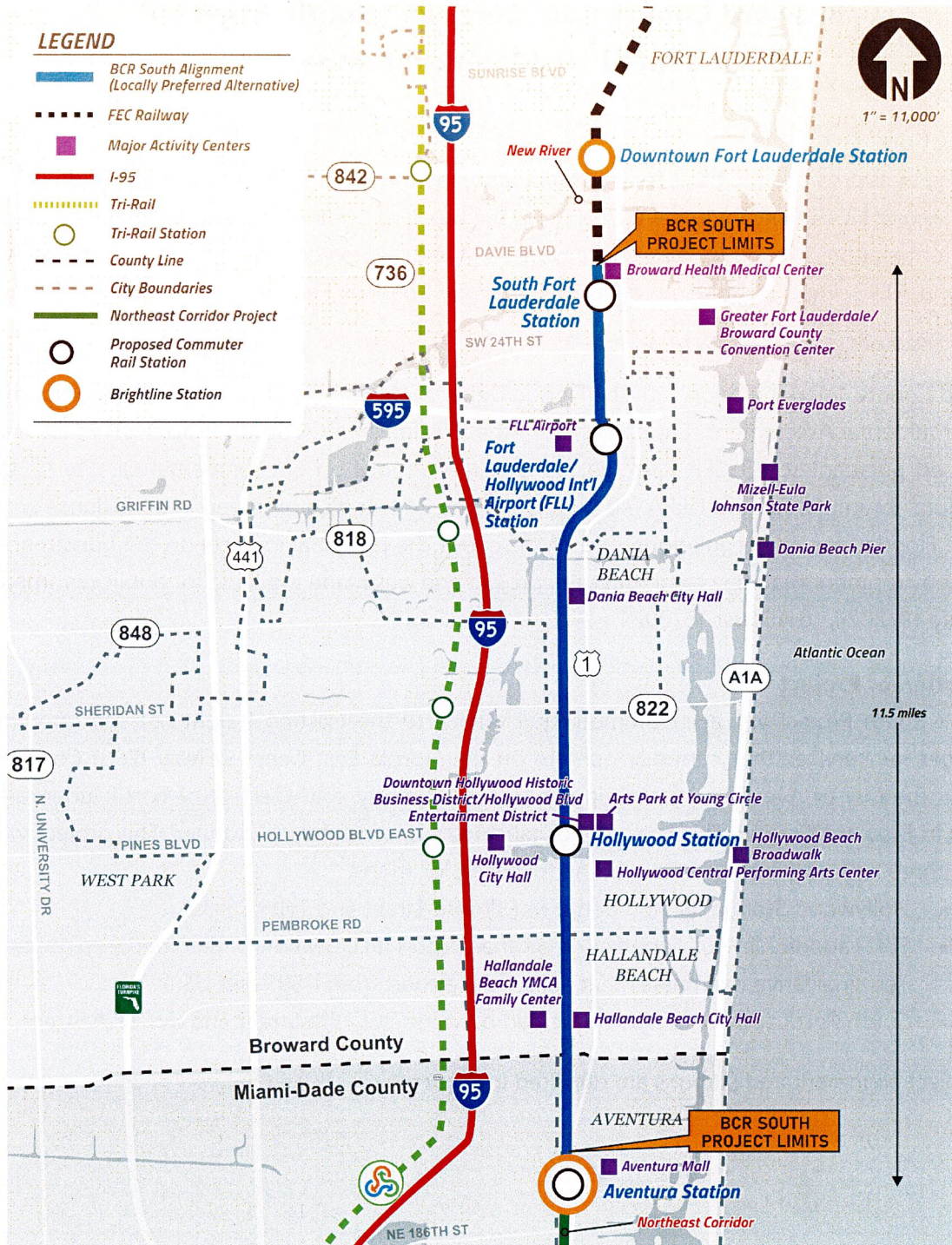
## Description of Project

The BCR South Project will add commuter rail service to the existing freight rail and intercity passenger rail services that currently operate on the Florida East Coast Railway (FEC) Corridor between the City of Aventura, located in Miami-Dade County, and the City of Fort Lauderdale, located in Broward County. This is a total distance of approximately 11.5 miles. The project will include three new passenger stations at the following locations:

- Hollywood Station located between Fillmore Street and Tyler Street
- Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport (FLL) Station located between the two Terminal Drive overpasses that access the airport from I-595 and US 1
- South Fort Lauderdale Station located between SW 15th Street and SW 17th Street

The project alignment and stations are depicted in **Figure 1**.

**Figure 1: BCR South Project Location and Alignment Map**



CONCEPTUAL - SUBJECT TO CHANGE

The primary needs for this project are based on providing an alternate mode of transportation for critical north–south regional and local travel capacity and serving the existing and future population growth in the region and corresponding sustainable land use and economic development in the project area. The secondary needs for the project are based on enhancing intermodal connectivity by developing a seamlessly integrated multimodal network and improving transit service in the eastern high-density travel market. The project enhances safety and intermodal connectivity through the introduction of passenger rail service and three new passenger stations. The project is anticipated to help relieve traffic locally and enhance mobility and connectivity by providing transportation options that do not require roadways and automobiles.

The project includes track modifications at the approaches and three proposed commuter rail stations along with commuter parking improvements. All three station platforms will be located next to siding tracks and an additional dwell track is proposed north of the South Fort Lauderdale station.

All three stations include the following amenities:

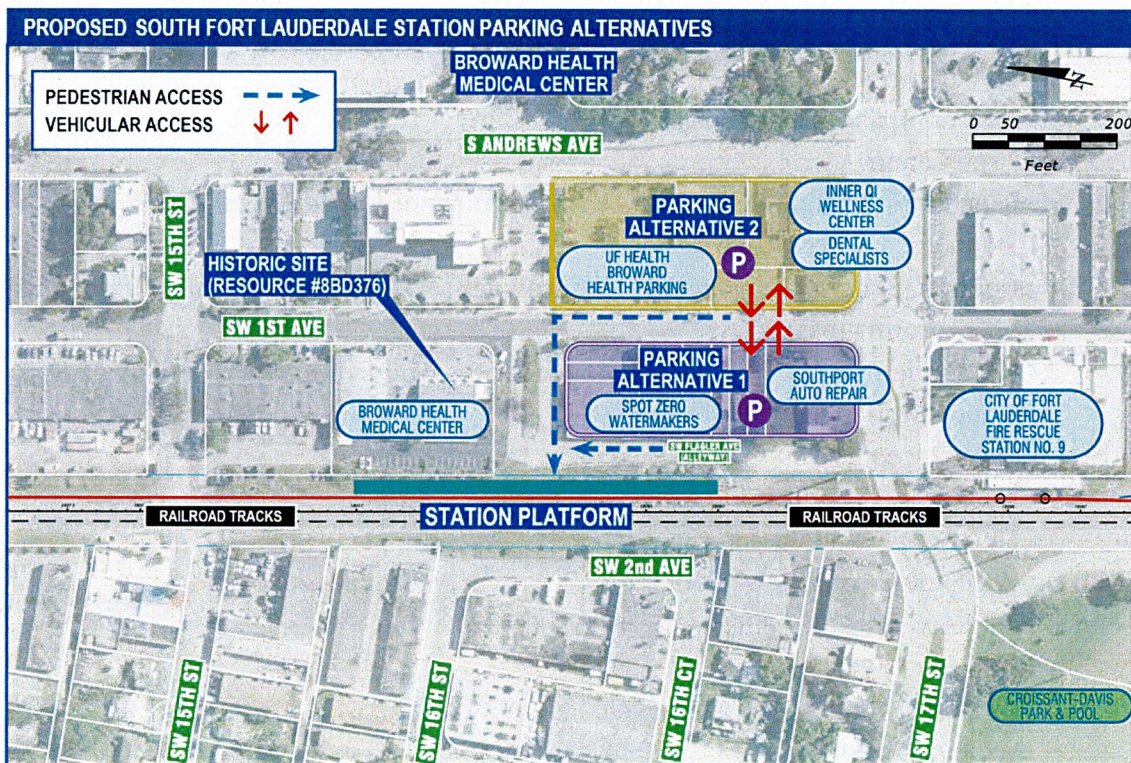
- Ticket Zone with at least two Ticket Vending Machines (TVM) (Operator Specific)
- Staff Information Booth
- ADA Compliant Clear Zone(s)
- Fixed Canopy
- Benches for Seating Compliant with Department of Justice 28 CFR Part 36 ADA Standards for Accessible Design
- Lighting (direct with minimum 5-foot candles (FC) on all portions of platform and off-platform areas)
- Information Sign(s) (e.g., passenger information, logo, route maps, and schedules)
- Station Stop ID Sign(s)
- Trash Receptacle(s)
- Hose bibs along platform for maintenance.
- Emergency Fire Hydrant
- Wayfinding Totem
- Public-Address System (Operator Specific)
- Emergency Call Boxes
- CCTV (Operator Specific)
- Wi-Fi Access
- Handrails as necessary along platform, ramps, and sloping sidewalk
- Inter-Track Fence
- Level-Boarding Platform (Operator Specific)
- Staff and Customer Bathroom Facilities

SFTL Station Parking Alternatives

The project identified two candidate sites, Parking Alternative 1 and Parking Alternative 2, that could be developed as parking structures to accommodate the proposed station in South Fort Lauderdale (see **Figure 2**). The BCR South project proposes to build a new parking garage for the commuter station on one of these sites. A Preferred Parking Alternative will be selected during final design.

*Parking Alternative 1:* Parking Alternative 1 is located between SW 1st Avenue and Flagler Avenue alley close to the station platform in the block south of SW 16th Street (shown in purple). This potential parking site has one property owner and will require the relocation of two separate business tenants.

*Parking Alternative 2:* Parking Alternative 2 is located between Andrews Avenue and SW 1st Avenue and is further away from the station platform in the block south of SW 16th Street. This potential parking site is accessible from SW 17th Street via the SW 1st Avenue entrance. This potential parking site has three property owners and will require two business relocations.



**Figure 2: SFTL Station Location & Parking Alternatives**

### **Summary of Public Involvement and Agency Coordination**

The EA was made available for a public and agency comment period from July 19, 2024, to August 18, 2024. Copies of the EA were made available for review online and at Broward County Transit Headquarters (1 North University Drive, Suite 3100A, Plantation, Florida 33324), at FTA Region 4 Office (230 Peachtree Street, NW Suite 1400, Atlanta, GA 30303) and also at the following Broward County Public Library locations:

- 100 S Andrews Avenue, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301
- 1 Park Avenue East, Dania Beach, FL 33004
- 2600 Hollywood Boulevard, Hollywood, FL 33020
- 300 S Federal Highway, Hallandale Beach, FL 33009

A series of notices of the availability of the EA were published in the local newspaper of general circulation in the project area in English, Spanish, and Creole. These were the Sun Sentinel (English), El Heraldo (Spanish), En USA (Spanish), and Haiti en Marche (Creole). A project website was also established and contained notices, maps, and project documentation. An in-person Public Meeting was also held on May 22, 2024, and a Virtual Public Meeting was held on May 23, 2024. A summary of the public and agency comments received during the public and agency comment period of the EA and responses to these comments are included in **Attachment A** along with a letter of support from the Broward Metropolitan Planning Organization. Minor updates to the EA have been addressed as a result of the comments and an Errata Sheet that summarizes these updates is included as **Attachment B**.

### **Summary of Environmental Consequences**

The potential for the BCR South Project to result in impacts to the human and natural environment is discussed in detail in the EA and summarized below. No significant impacts were identified.

#### Social

The project will enhance connectivity to communities by introducing commuter service and three new passenger stations. The project will also enhance the economy by improving connectivity, mobility, and access to residential, employment, business and travel centers. The project will not directly impact any community facilities and the project will not result in barriers dividing established neighborhoods. The project is consistent with the City of Hollywood 2024 Comprehensive Plan, the City of Fort Lauderdale 2024 Comprehensive Plan, and the Broward County 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan.

#### Visual/Aesthetics

The passenger stations, parking garages, bus stops, and passenger drop-offs that will be introduced by the project are similar to existing infrastructure in the vicinity of the project. The

architecture and final aesthetic design elements of each station have not been determined at this time and will be further developed during final design. No unique landscape or aesthetic resources that might be impacted by the project were identified. Plans will be coordinated through final design to incorporate features that fit the local development standards, and no significant direct impacts to aesthetic or the visual environment are anticipated.

#### Transportation

The project will expand the modes of transportation available to the public and provide a means of transportation other than the use of roadways. The introduction of transit options may be particularly important for populations that rely on public transportation. Providing additional modes of transportation will have a positive impact on these populations as it allows them to travel more affordably and conveniently between areas and reduces barriers to accessing important resources such as jobs, education opportunities and health care. The FLL Airport Station will provide visitors with alternatives to transportation options such as car rentals and ride share services. The Hollywood and South Fort Lauderdale Stations will provide additional means to move between residential and commercial areas as well as access the Broward Health Medical Center and FLL Airport. Impacts to traffic patterns are anticipated to be minor and localized, as discussed above. Traffic analysis indicated that the queues generated by a BCR South commuter train crossing a roadway will generally clear prior to the next train crossing. The project is anticipated to enhance mobility and connectivity with the introduction of passenger rail service and three new passenger stations linking communities and providing multiple transit options besides automobiles.

#### Environmental Justice

Executive Order 12898, *Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations*, requires that the U.S. Department of Transportation and the FTA to make environmental justice part of their missions by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority populations and/or low-income populations (collectively referred to "Environmental Justice populations"). Environmental Justice populations occur in the project area at each of the three proposed passenger stations. Adverse effects from the project are anticipated to be experienced equally by all populations in the project area and will not be predominantly borne by minority or low-income populations. The project is anticipated to enhance community cohesion, safety, connectivity, and mobility. Those benefits will be available to minority and low-income populations, many of which may not own vehicles and may be more reliant on public transportation. Adverse effects will not be appreciably more severe or greater in magnitude where there are minority or low-income populations. For these reasons, disproportionately high or adverse effects to Environmental Justice populations will not occur.

### Acquisitions and Federal Uniform Relocation Act Compliance

The project will not result in any residential relocations. Business displacements and relocations are anticipated at the South Fort Lauderdale Station as a result of constructing a new commuter parking garage. Under Parking Alternative 1, one property owner will be impacted, and this displacement will require the relocation of two separate business tenants. Under Parking Alternative 2, three property owners will be impacted, and the displacement will require two business relocations.

The Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 (Uniform Act) will be carried out in accordance with CFR Title 49, Subtitle A, Part 24. (Public Law 91-646 as amended by Public Law 100-17) to ensure that all displaced owners and tenants will be compensated fairly. For these reasons, no significant impacts from relocations are anticipated.

### Section 4(f) of the U.S. Department of Transportation Act of 1966

Section 4(f) of the USDOT Act of 1966 is a national policy which states that the Secretary of Transportation may not approve transportation projects that use publicly owned parks, recreation areas, wildlife and waterfowl refuges, or any significant historic site unless a determination is made that there is no prudent or feasible alternative to using that land, and that all possible planning has been done to minimize harm. There are no wildlife refuges, preserves, or protected lands in or adjacent to the project area. Furthermore, no Section 4(f) use of any historic resources is anticipated. Croissant Park and Dowdy Field are publicly owned parks available for recreation and are located near the proposed project. The project will not directly impact or occupy any parks or recreational resources. No right-of-way is anticipated from Dowdy Field or Croissant Park, no long-term impacts to park property or operations are anticipated, and there will be no impacts to the features and attributes that qualify these parks as Section 4(f) resources. For the above reasons, no Section 4(f) use of protected resources is anticipated.

### Cultural Environment and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966

A Cultural Resources Assessment Survey (CRAS) was conducted to identify National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) -eligible or potentially-eligible resources as well as any archaeological resources in the project's Area of Potential Effect (APE). The CRAS resulted in the identification of four historic resources that are NRHP-listed or determined NRHP-eligible. Background research identified no previously recorded archaeological sites within the archaeological APE. One approximately 620-foot-long segment at the northern end of the archaeological APE for the South Fort Lauderdale Station is within an area recently designated as part of the South Bank New River – Tarpon River Archaeological Zone. Archaeological monitoring of ground disturbing activities occurring within the locally designated South Bank New River – Tarpon River Archaeological Zone is recommended during construction. The CRAS concluded that no adverse direct or indirect

effects to cultural resources are anticipated. The State Historic Preservation Officer reviewed and provided concurrence on June 7, 2024.

#### Endangered Species Act

A Natural Resources Evaluation Report was prepared for this project and determined that no adverse effects are anticipated to any Federal or state listed species from the project. The project corridor is heavily urbanized and lacks natural habitats for wildlife. No designated Critical Habitat occurs in or adjacent to the project, so no destruction or adverse modification of Critical Habitat is anticipated. The Standard Protection Measures for the Eastern Indigo Snake will be implemented during construction, as described in the Mitigation Measures section of this document.

#### Floodplains

According to the Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) data from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, parts of the project fall within the 100-year floodplain at the FLL Airport Station and SFTL Station. Although the proposed improvements involve work within the horizontal limits of the 100-year floodplain in some areas, no work will be performed below the 100-year flood elevation and, as a result, no floodplain impacts are anticipated.

#### Water Resources and Water Quality

The Biscayne Sole Source Aquifer underlies the project, and a Water Quality Impact Evaluation and US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) Sole Source Aquifer Checklist were completed. Coordination with the USEPA determined that no significant impacts are anticipated to any Sole Source Aquifer if certain conditions are adhered to and Best Management Practices (BMPs) are implemented. Those conditions and BMPs are described below in the Mitigation Measures section of this document.

All stormwater discharges will be treated in compliance with all Federal, state, and local requirements and Standard BMPs will be implemented to avoid and minimize impacts to downstream waters during construction. Direct impacts to surface waters under the project will occur to an existing, manmade stormwater pond at the FLL Airport Station. That stormwater pond is considered an Other Surface Water. For the above reasons and because the project will comply with all applicable Federal, state, and local stormwater regulations and criteria, no significant impacts to water resources are anticipated.

#### Noise and Vibration Findings

The existing FEC Corridor currently experiences noise from freight rail and increase in rail activity due to the BCR South Project are not anticipated to introduce new or significant noise or



vibrations. Construction of the proposed stations, associated facilities, and track improvements are not expected to have any significant noise or vibration impact.

#### Hazardous Materials

Sources of potential contamination risk to the project were identified within a 150-foot buffer of the limits of construction at each of the three proposed passenger stations. A total of 36 sites of potential contamination risk to the project were identified and include 11 Medium Risk and 25 Low Risk sites. Risk ratings are the same for Parking Alternative 1 and Parking Alternative 2, which will each require ROW from a Low Risk site. No other ROW from contaminated sites is required. Broward County has established procedures regarding Real Property acquisition and related contamination investigations that will be followed, as described in the Mitigation Measures section of this document.

#### Utilities

The proposed BCR South improvements will not significantly impact existing utilities. Broward County Transit has identified existing Utility Agency/Owners (UAOs) and will continue to coordinate with utility providers prior to and during construction to minimize impacts. If impacts are unavoidable, design alternatives will be reviewed to allow for the relocation of impacted facilities in a manner that minimizes cost to the UAO and disruption to their customers.

#### Safety

The project is not anticipated to result in any long-term impacts to safety or emergency response times. No fire or law enforcement facilities will be directly impacted. The project will provide safety improvements, including enhanced sidewalk connectivity between parking, vehicle drop-offs and the proposed passenger stations with ADA-compliant ramps at intersections as well as relocated or new traffic signals, highway-rail grade crossings modifications including new flashers and gates, new or relocated advance warning devices, and new or reconstructed sidewalks.

#### Construction Impacts

Noise and vibration during construction will be short in duration and highly localized around the site of construction. Downstream erosion and sedimentation as well as air pollutants and fugitive dust will be minimized through the implementation of BMPs, as described in the Mitigation Measures section of this document. Access to businesses will be maintained throughout the construction of the project, minimizing impacts to existing businesses. Temporary impacts to traffic anticipated during construction will occur, but these impacts will be highly localized and short-term in duration.

### Other Resources and Federal Laws

No impacts will occur to wetlands, air quality, farmlands, navigable waterways, wild or scenic rivers, essential fish habitats, coastal resources, or energy.

### **Mitigation Measures**

#### Sole Source Aquifer

To avoid and minimize impact to the Biscayne Sole Source Aquifer and consistent with coordination with the USEPA, Broward County will adhere to the following BMPs during road construction:

1. FDOT Design Manual Chapter 320 Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP)
2. FDOT Standard Specification for Road and Bridge Construction
  - a. Section 6 – Control of Materials
  - b. Section 104 – Prevention, Control, And Abatement of Erosion and Water Pollution
  - c. Section 455 – Structures Foundations
3. U.S. Bureau of Reclamation Engineering Geology Field Manual – Chapter 20 Water Control.  
(<https://www.usbr.gov/tsc/techreferences/mands/geologyfieldmanual-vol2/Chapter20.pdf>)

Furthermore, all debris from any demolition of the existing structures must be properly contained and removed from the site prior to construction of the new structure. If applicable, all county flood plain management plans and public notification processes must be followed. During construction, it is the EPA's understanding and expectation that those responsible for the project will strictly adhere to all Federal, State, and local government permits, ordinances, planning designs, construction codes, operation, maintenance, and engineering requirements, and any contaminant mitigation recommendations outlined by federal and state agency reviews. All best management practices for erosion and sedimentation control must also be followed and State and local environmental offices must be contacted to address proper drainage and storm water designs. Additionally, the project manager will contact State and local environmental officials to obtain a copy of any local Wellhead Protection Plans.

#### Cultural Resources

Archaeological monitoring of ground disturbing activities occurring within the locally designated South Bank New River – Tarpon River Archaeological Zone is recommended during construction.

#### Endangered Species

A determination of May Affect, Not Likely to Adversely Affect was made for the Eastern indigo snake using the US Fish and Wildlife Service Effect Determination Key. In accordance with that

key, Broward County commits to implementing the *US Fish and Wildlife Standard Protection Measures for the Eastern Indigo Snake* during construction.

#### Contamination

During design and prior to construction, and in support of any Real Property acquisitions, further contamination investigations (e.g. Phase II Contamination Assessments, additional regulatory database document review) could further reduce risks to the project from contamination. These additional investigations are most warranted at sites rated Medium Risk and will further characterize and evaluate the potential for encountering hazardous materials or contaminated soils. Any hazardous materials that are encountered will be handled and disposed of in accordance with all local, state, and Federal regulations.

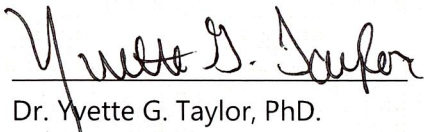
If dewatering is necessary during construction, a South Florida Water Management District Water Use/Dewatering Permit will be required. Additionally, Chapter 27 of the Broward County Code requires that dewatering approval be obtained from Broward County for any dewatering within one-quarter mile of contamination. An FDEP National Pollution Discharge Elimination System Permit is anticipated and any discharge from a petroleum-contaminated site may also require a generic permit from FDEP. The contractor will be held responsible for ensuring compliance with any necessary dewatering permit(s). A dewatering plan will be necessary to avoid potential contamination plume exacerbation. Standard Best Management Practices will be implemented to avoid and minimize contamination impacts. All permits will be obtained in accordance with Federal, state, and local laws and regulations.

#### Water and Air Quality

Potential impacts to air quality and downstream habitats, wetlands, and Other Surface Waters will be avoided and minimized through the application of BMPs from the FDOT *Standard Specification for Road and Bridge Construction*.

**NEPA Finding**

FTA has reviewed the EA and supporting documents, public and agency comments, and responses to comments. Based on the Environmental Assessment of the Project and its associated supporting documents, which are incorporated herein by reference, the Federal Transit Administration, pursuant to 23 CFR §771.121, finds that there are no significant impacts on the quality of the human environment associated with the construction and operation of the BCR South Project, and therefore, the preparation of an environmental impact statement is not necessary.

  
Dr. Yvette G. Taylor, PhD.  
Regional Administrator

Date: 9-5-2024