

congestion. To date, there has been no investment in fixed guideway systems or in new highways to facilitate commuting and links between the development centers along radial transportation routes that cross the corridor. The current east-west connections include bus transit and to a lesser degree, roadways. Commuters must use a north and south means to travel east-west. The area has limited infrastructure for east-west travel, with two primary routes consisting of East-West Highway (MD 410) and University Boulevard (MD 193), neither of which provides a direct connection between Silver Spring and New Carrollton. These routes are heavily congested during peak periods and increasingly unable to accommodate the traffic demands. The focus of the EIS will be to identify a preferred transit alternative that will reduce travel time, provide an alternative to traveling on congested roadways, and improve transit access to central business districts within the area while examining the socioeconomic, cultural and natural environmental considerations on a local and regional basis.

III. Alternatives

The alternatives proposed for evaluation include:

- A no-build alternative, which includes the current network plus all ongoing, programmed, and committed projects listed in the latest Transportation Improvement Program;
- A TSM alternative, which would include improving existing transit services such as additional bus service and routes, and which also serves as a baseline for evaluation against which all other alternatives may be compared for federal funding purposes (referred to as the FTA Future Baseline);
- Bus Rapid Transit alternatives; and
- Light rail alternatives.

Each build alternative will explore the construction of new transportation infrastructure, such as tracks, stations, and maintenance yards. Underground, surface and/or aerial design options may be developed for each of the build alternative alignments. Multi-modal alternatives will also be explored.

IV. Probable Effects

The FTA and MTA will evaluate all potential changes to the social, cultural, economic, built and natural environment, including land acquisition and displacements; land use, zoning, economic development; parklands; community disruption; aesthetics; historical and archaeological resources; traffic and parking; air quality; noise and vibration; water quality; wetlands;

environmentally sensitive areas; endangered species; energy requirements and potential for conservation; hazardous waste; environmental justice; safety and security; and secondary and cumulative impacts. Key areas of environmental concern include areas of potential new construction (e.g., structures, new transit stations, new track, etc.). Impacts will be evaluated for both the short-term construction period and for the long-term period of operation associated with each alternative. Measures to avoid, minimize and mitigate any significant adverse impacts will be identified.

V. Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Procedures

Previously, a Notice of Intent (NOI) was published in the **Federal Register** on September 21, 1994, which announced the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement for the Georgetown Branch Transitway/Trail in Montgomery County, Maryland. The subsequent Draft Environment Impact Statement (DEIS) was completed in May 1996, and evaluated transportation improvements between the central business districts (CBDs) in Bethesda and Silver Spring, Maryland. The DEIS evaluated both a busway and light rail transit alternative in conjunction with a parallel hiker/biker trail. A Final Environmental Impact Statement was never produced for this study.

This NOI for the Bi-County Transitway Project extends the previous projects limits beyond Silver Spring to New Carrollton. An EIS will be prepared in accordance with section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (as amended), as implemented by the Council of Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 CFR parts 1500–1508), Federal Transit Administration (FTA) regulations (23 CFR part 771), and the FTA Statewide Planning/Metropolitan Planning regulations (23 CFR part 450). These studies will comply with the requirements of the National Historical Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, section 4(f) of the 1966 U.S. Department of Transportation Act, the 1990 Clean Air Act Amendments, Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice, and other applicable rules, regulations, and guidance documents.

In addition, MTA intends to seek Section 5309 New Starts funding for the project. As provided in the FTA New Starts regulation (49 CFR part 611), New Starts funding requires the submission of certain specific information to FTA to support a request to initiate preliminary engineering, which is normally done in conjunction with the NEPA process.

Upon completion, the Draft EIS will be available for public and agency review and comment. Public hearings will be held. Based on the findings of the Draft EIS and the public and agency comments received, a preferred alternative will be selected that will be further detailed in the Final EIS.

Issued on: August 27, 2003.

Herman C. Shipman,

Acting Regional Administrator, Region III, Federal Transit Administration.

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

[Docket No. NHTSA–2003–16031]

Notice of Receipt of Petition for Decision That Nonconforming 2001 and 2002 Mitsubishi Evolution VII, Left Hand Drive Passenger Cars Are Eligible for Importation

AGENCY: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, DOT.

ACTION: Notice of receipt of petition for decision that nonconforming 2001 and 2002 Mitsubishi Evolution VII, left hand drive (LHD) passenger cars are eligible for importation.

SUMMARY: This document announces receipt by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) of a petition for a decision that 2001 and 2002 Mitsubishi Evolution VII LHD passenger cars that were not originally manufactured to comply with all applicable Federal motor vehicle safety standards are eligible for importation into the United States because (1) they are capable of being readily altered to conform to the standards, and (2) they are substantially similar to vehicles that were originally manufactured for importation into and sale in the United States and that were certified by their manufacturer as complying with the safety standards.

DATES: The closing date for comments on the petition is October 3, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Comments should refer to the docket number and notice number, and be submitted to: Docket Management, Room PL–401, 400 Seventh St., SW., Washington, DC 20590. Docket hours are from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Anyone is able to search the electronic form of all comments received into any of our dockets by the name of the individual submitting the comment (or signing the comment, if submitted on behalf of an association,